

## TAYLOR FORCED TO RETIRE BECAUSE OF HEART PROBLEM

**LONDON:** Nottinghamshire and England batsman James Taylor has been forced to retire at the age of just 26 because of a "very serious" heart condition, his county announced yesterday. Taylor, who won the last of his seven caps in England's most recent Test against South Africa at Centurion three months ago, withdrew from Nottinghamshire's opening and ongoing County Championship match at home to Surrey because of illness.

The Midlands county announced on its website yesterday that "specialist scans revealed yesterday (Monday) that the 26-year-old has the very serious heart condition, ARVC (Arrhythmogenic Right Ventricular Arrhythmia)." Taylor, whose condition requires surgery, told his Twitter followers: "Safe to say this has been the toughest week of my life! My world is upside down. But I'm here to stay and I'm battling on! #lifestooshort." His diagnosis is similar to that of former Bolton Wanderers footballer Fabrice Muamba, whose career was cut short after he collapsed on the pitch in 2012. England and Wales Cricket Board director Andrew Strauss, Taylor's first England Test captain, said: "It is both shocking and saddening to hear that James' career has been cut short in such a sudden and unexpected manner."

"Throughout his career, he has constantly impressed with his determination to make the absolute most of his ability, and it is immensely cruel that such a hard-working player will be unable to fulfil his great potential in the international arena. "The ECB will work closely with Nottinghamshire and together we will do everything possible to help James through this difficult period, and aid him in his recovery." Taylor's absence from Nottinghamshire's first-class match against a Cambridge student team last week was put down to a viral condition.

### 'MODEL PROFESSIONAL'

Nottinghamshire director of cricket Mick

Newell said no one at Trent Bridge had any idea about the severity of Taylor's condition. "Myself and all of James' team-mates and colleagues are terribly sad to hear this news, which comes as a big shock to us all," Newell said. "He is a model professional, the most hard-working I've ever known in cricket, making it all the more difficult to accept that his career has been cut short in this way."

"It goes without saying that he has the very best wishes of us all in terms of recovering from his operation, and that we are looking forward to seeing him back at Trent Bridge when he is fit and able." Former team-mates and opponents took to Twitter to voice their sadness, with current England batsman Moeen Ali saying: "Such bad news to hear about a top player @jamestaylor20 what a talent. Wish you all the best in your recovery! Topguy."

Meanwhile Michael Clarke, the former Australia captain, said: "Really feel for @jamestaylor20 Absolutely devastated for you." Born in Nottingham, the diminutive Taylor—the son of a jockey—made his first-class debut for Leicestershire in 2008, with the middle-order batsman making his Test bow against South Africa at Headingley four years later.

But after those first two caps in 2012, he had to wait more than three years for another Test appearance. Recent months had witnessed some of Taylor's best international performances, including impressive displays as a close-in fielder. Although his seven Tests, in which he averaged a modest 26, did not yield a hundred, with his top score of 76 coming against Pakistan in Sharjah in November last year. Taylor also made 27 one-day international appearances, averaging 42.23, with his lone century scored against Australia at Old Trafford in September.

His first-class career saw Taylor score more than 9,000 runs, at an average of over 46, including 20 hundreds. —AFP



**CHICAGO:** Chicago Cubs' Addison Russell hits a three-run home run during the eighth inning of an opening baseball game against the Cincinnati Reds on Monday, in Chicago. — AP

## FINNEGAN LOSES NO-HIT BID IN 7TH AS RUSSELL, CUBS TOP REDS 5-3

**CHICAGO:** Reds left-hander Brandon Finnegan pitched 6 2/3 hitless innings before allowing a single to David Ross, but Addison Russell hit a three-run home run while Chicago roughed up Cincinnati's bullpen in a 5-3 victory Monday night in the Cubs' home opener. Ross' single started a two-run rally, with Jason Heyward cutting the Cubs' deficit to 3-2 with a bases-loaded single off Tony Cingrani. In the eighth, Cingrani (0-1) walked Ben Zobrist with one out and hit Jorge Soler. Russell then drove Jumbo Diaz's first pitch out to left-center, whipping the packed crowd into a frenzy and sending the Cubs to their sixth victory in seven games, matching their best start since 1998. Jon Lester pitched six innings, allowing three runs and five hits. Adam Warren (1-0) worked a scoreless eighth for his first win as a Cub, and Hector Rondon struck out the side in the ninth for his second save in as many chances.

### ORIOLES 9, RED SOX 7

Chris Davis hit a tiebreaking, three-run homer off new closer Craig Kimbrel in the ninth inning and drove in five runs, carrying Baltimore over Boston in David Ortiz's final home opener. Kimbrel (0-1), the All-Star reliever acquired in an offseason trade from San Diego, entered with the score 6-6. He walked Caleb Joseph with one out and Manny Machado with two outs, then gave up Davis' home run to center on a 97 mph pitch. Mookie Betts homered off Zach Britton leading off the bottom half, and Boston had two on and no outs when Ortiz grounded into a double play. Britton then struck out Hanley Ramirez for his third save. Brad Brach (2-0) pitched a perfect eighth. The Orioles improved to 6-0 and remain the lone unbeaten team in the major leagues. They had been shut out in their previous three trips to Fenway, outscored 17-0.

### ASTROS 8, ROYALS 2

Collin McHugh bounced back from the shortest start of his career by pitching seven scoreless innings and Colby Rasmus hit a two-run homer as Houston won its home opener over Kansas City. Carlos Correa had three hits and two RBIs for Houston, Jose Altuve had three hits and rookie Tyler White added a pair of hits for his fourth multi-hit game this year. McHugh (1-1) allowed eight hits and struck out four to bounce back from his last start, in which he allowed six runs and walked two in 1/3 of a 16-6 loss to the Yankees. Chris Young (0-2) allowed nine hits and six runs in 4 2/3 innings. The Astros jumped on him early and were up by 1 in the first after an RBI double by Correa when Rasmus launched a towering shot to the second deck in right field to make it 3-0.

### MARLINS 10, METS 3

Giancarlo Stanton homered to cap a seven-run second inning against Steven Matz, and Miami handed the touted rookie his first regular-season loss. Marcell Ozuna homered and doubled to break out of an early slump, and Adeiny Hechavarria had three RBIs from the No. 8 spot in the lineup. By the sixth inning, every Marlins starting position player had a hit and scored a run. Chris Johnson reached base four times in his first start for Miami, and J.T. Realmuto had three of the team's 15 hits. Martin Prado had two singles and two walks in a game that dragged on for 3 hours, 45 minutes, before a sparse crowd at Citi Field. Chris Narveson (1-0) pitched 1 1/3 scoreless innings and struck out two in relief. Matz (0-1) was pulled after 1 2/3 innings.

### ANGELS 4, ATHLETICS 1

Mike Trout hit his first home run of the season, Nick Tropeano pitched five scoreless innings in his season debut as Los Angeles beat Oakland and ace Sonny Gray. Trout struck out looking twice but homered on the first pitch he saw from Gray in the sixth, a towering two-run shot that ricocheted off the right side of the bleachers just below the luxury suites in left center

field. Gray (1-1) allowed three runs over 6 1/3 innings, struck out six and walked three. Tropeano (1-0) gave up six hits in five-plus innings.

### WHITE SOX 4, TWINS 1

Austin Jackson hit a two-run, two-out single in the fourth inning, one pitch after just missing a grand slam, and Minnesota dropped to 0-7 with a loss in its home opener. It is the worst start for the franchise since the original Washington Senators lost their first 13 games in 1904, according to STATS. Jose Quintana (1-0) completed six smooth innings with one run allowed for the White Sox, who have won five of their first seven. Twins starter Kyle Gibson (0-2) was charged with one earned run over 5 2/3 innings.

### NATIONALS 6, BRAVES 4

Falling to 0-6 for the first time in nearly 30 years, Atlanta lost to Washington, which used Wilson Ramos' four singles and two RBIs to help cover up a shaky start by Max Scherzer. Scherzer (1-0), pitching on a full week's rest, won despite allowing two-run doubles to A.J. Pierzynski and Nick Markakis in the first two innings. The righty wound up going six innings and didn't let Atlanta score again in front of a sparse crowd announced as 18,119. Ramos drove in the go-ahead run off Bud Norris (0-2) in the fifth, breaking a 4-all tie. Daniel Murphy hit a two-run shot off Norris in the first.

### PIRATES 7, TIGERS 4

Gregory Polanco had two of Pittsburgh's six doubles, and the Pirates chased Justin Verlander during the fifth inning. Verlander (0-1) allowed seven runs and 10 hits - five of them doubles - in

4 1-3 innings. Jonathan Niese (1-0) gave up four runs - three earned - and five hits in six innings. Mark Melancon pitched a one-hit ninth for his third save.

### RANGERS 7, MARINERS 3

Colby Lewis allowed one run on four hits over six innings against Seattle's struggling offense and Rougned Odor drove in three runs to lead Texas. Lewis (1-0) allowed a first-inning run on Nelson Cruz's two-out RBI double, then retired 13 straight before allowing an infield single to open the sixth when he failed to cover on Leonys Martin's bouncer to first. The Rangers erased a 1-0 deficit with runs in the second, third and fourth off Hisashi Iwakuma (0-1), who gave up three runs on eight hits in six innings.

### PADRES 4, PHILLIES 3

Alexi Amarista's safety squeeze in the seventh scored the go-ahead run in Philadelphia's home opener. Wil Myers hit a solo homer for the Padres, who benefited from a strange double play and two video reviews going their way. Kevin Quackenbush (1-0) struck out the only batter he faced, and Fernando Rodney pitched the ninth for his first save for the Padres. Aaron Nola (0-2) allowed four runs and six hits, striking out a career-best nine in seven innings.

### CARDINALS 10, BREWERS 1

Michael Wacha (1-0) allowed four hits in six scoreless innings, and St. Louis had 10 extra-base hits in its home opener. Jeremy Hazelbaker was 4 for 4 with a triple, double and sacrifice fly, lifting his average to .526, and fellow rookie Almedys Diaz had two doubles. Yadier Molina had three hits, two RBIs and an uncontested steal off Taylor Jungmann (0-1). — AP



**SHARJAH:** In this file photo, England's batsman James Taylor, right, and Jose Buttler shake hands after the 3rd One Day Test Internationals between Pakistan and England at the Sharjah Cricket Stadium in Sharjah. James Taylor has been forced to retire from cricket at the age of 26 after being diagnosed with a serious heart condition. — AP

## WILLETT VOWS TO TAKE MASTERS TITLE IN HIS STRIDE

**MANCHESTER:** Danny Willett returned to England yesterday promising to take his shock Masters title win in his stride as he arrived at Manchester Airport to the glare of television cameras.

Few outside of golf had heard of the 28-year-old Yorkshireman before his victory at Augusta National last week saw him claim the first major title of his career.

But all that changed when Willett held his nerve on Sunday following leader Jordan Spieth's final-round collapse to become the first Englishman to win the Masters in 20 years. "It's a nice way to get back into the airport," a smiling Willett said ahead of the short final leg of his journey home to Sheffield to see wife Nicole and new baby son Zachariah, who was born shortly before the start of last week's Masters.

Willett, wearing the green jacket given to Masters' winners, added: "It's been pretty big in America but until you get home I don't think you can quite realise the scale of what's going on."

"Hopefully we just take it in our stride and enjoy what we've done," said the new world number nine. "We've had a lot of encouraging messages from really nice people around the world offering advice if I need it so we've got a lot of good people on our side. I think we'll be all right."

### 'Crazy'

Willett thought he would have to miss

the Masters, because he wanted to be present for the birth of his son, which he thought would be on April 10 — the day of the final round at Augusta.

But Zachariah was born on March 29 instead and that meant Willett could be present at his birth before flying to the United States. Fame was thrust upon Willett last week and he admitted: "It's still a bit crazy, everything's still up in the air but I think it'll start slowly sinking in," he said. "I've got a couple of hours left then hopefully we'll be able to go home and lock the door. "I'm looking forward to spending time with Nic and little man and just enjoying what we've just done. Watching it over, seeing the reruns, and going back to being a dad. Got to change some nappies." Willett said the important thing now for his career was that he and his management team did not radically alter an approach to golf that has seen him rise from outside the top 100 at the end of 2013 to a place inside the top 10 and four professional titles.

"We'll just keep doing the things we've been doing, ticking the boxes we said we'd do day by day and making sure we're trying to get better every time we go out and work," he explained.

"That's all you can do. If along the way fortunately you play some good golf and win some more tournaments then fantastic but we're just going to keep doing all the things we have been doing and hope things continue." —AFP



**MANCHESTER:** Britain's Danny Willett arrives at Manchester Airport, England, yesterday, after his victory at the Masters on Sunday. Willett arrived back in Britain having become the first European to win the Masters since 1999 and only the second English player to receive the green jacket. — AP

## MLB results/standings

Pittsburgh 7, Detroit 4; Baltimore 9, Boston 7; San Diego 4, Philadelphia 3; Chicago White Sox 4, Minnesota 1; St. Louis 10, Milwaukee 1; Washington 6, Atlanta 4; Miami 10, NY Mets 3.

American League				National League				
Eastern Division				Eastern Division				
	W	L	PCT		W	L	PCT	
Baltimore	6	0	1.000	-	Washington	4	1	.800
NY Yankees	3	2	.600	2.5	Miami	2	3	.400
Boston	3	3	.500	3	NY Mets	2	4	.333
Toronto	3	4	.429	3.5	Philadelphia	2	5	.286
Tampa Bay	2	4	.333	4	Atlanta	0	6	0
Central Division				Central Division				
Chicago White Sox	5	2	.714	-	Chicago Cubs	6	1	.857
Kansas City	4	2	.667	0.5	Cincinnati	5	2	.714
Detroit	3	2	.600	1	Pittsburgh	5	2	.714
Cleveland	2	2	.500	1.5	St. Louis	4	3	.571
Minnesota	0	7	0	5	Milwaukee	3	4	.429
Western Division				Western Division				
Oakland	4	4	.500	-	San Francisco	5	2	.714
Texas	4	4	.500	-	LA Dodgers	4	3	.571
Houston	3	4	.429	0.5	Colorado	3	3	.500
LA Angels	3	4	.429	0.5	San Diego	3	4	.429
Seattle	2	5	.286	1.5	Arizona	2	5	.286

## IRELAND REVEAL AFGHAN SERIES

**LONDON:** Ireland will face Afghanistan in a five-match one-day series at Belfast's Stormont ground in July, officials announced yesterday. The teams are two of the world's leading non-Test or Associate nations. Afghanistan impressed again on the international stage during the recent World Twenty20 in India, where they caused losing finalists England to suffer a top-order collapse and beat eventual champions the West Indies in a group match.

For Ireland, the July 10-19 series will be their first five-match campaign and comes in a home season that also sees them playing two Test nations in Sri Lanka and Pakistan.

"We're certainly getting close to the

amount and variety of fixtures we need to continue our international development," Ireland coach John Bracewell said in a Cricket Ireland statement.

"The more games we play in varying conditions the more we learn and grow as a cricketing nation." The former New Zealand off-spinner added: "I expect the five game series against Afghanistan will be tough and fiercely competitive. "They had an excellent series win in both ODI's (one-day internationals) and T20 against Zimbabwe last year, and continued that form in the World Twenty20, beating the eventual champions West Indies, which was a fantastic achievement for them and the Associate cricket cause." —AFP