

## CYCLING

## BRITISH CYCLING OPERATED 'CULTURE OF FEAR' SAYS LEAKED REVIEW

**LONDON:** British Cycling has been accused of creating a "culture of fear", with a leaked review also saying it made a "shocking and inexcusable decision" to reverse findings into allegations of sexism.

The Daily Mail, citing Friday a leaked draft copy of an independent review into British Cycling by UK Sport, said an inquiry led by British Cycling's grievance officer Alex Russell found "considerably more" than one of the nine claims against former technical director Shane Sutton by rider Jess Varnish could be proven. It was revealed in December that Australian coach Sutton, who together with Dave Brailsford has been widely credited for overseeing the transformation of British Cycling into a medal-winning powerhouse, had been found guilty of one count of using inappropriate language but that insufficient evidence could be found to support eight other charges.

The ruling failed to satisfy either Sutton, who resigned in April last year but who has repeatedly denied misconduct, or Varnish,

who had her funding removed after failing to qualify for Rio 2016.

Varnish said Sutton's response was to tell her to "go and have a baby". Eventually, a review into the culture of British Cycling's world-class performance programme led by British Rowing chair Annamarie Phelps was set up. According to the Mail, the leaked draft review said British Cycling looked to change Russell's conclusions in a bid to retain the highly-regarded Sutton. "The actions of the British Cycling board in that regard are shocking and inexcusable," the paper quoted the review as saying. "They also call into serious question whether the composition of the British Cycling board is fit to govern a national sporting body." The review reportedly said British Cycling had been badly governed for years.

## 'BULLYING'

According to the Mail, the review said former performance director Brailsford, now in charge at track outfit Team Sky, had been

an "untouchable" figure. Management was "characterised by fear and bullying from leadership figures".

"Since the late 2000s, cracks in terms of the climate and culture have been present," the report added, according to the Mail. "Instead of being repaired as they should have been, those cracks were ignored in pursuit of medal success."

That will make uncomfortable reading for UK Sport who've repeatedly emphasised their "no compromise" formula for funding that is based solely on prospects of that medal success.

British Cycling, responding in a statement, said it now accepted "that the world class programme leadership focused on athlete performance and medal delivery without sufficient care and attention to the overall staff and athlete culture and environment". Last week, British Cycling was criticised by United Kingdom Anti-Doping before a committee of lawmakers for failing to keep proper records of drugs given to rid-

ers. UKAD chief executive Nicole Sapstead revealed to a committee of lawmakers that British cycling officials had told her that information relating to star rider Bradley Wiggins had been lost after a team doctor's computer was stolen on holiday in Greece in 2014. An eight-time Olympic gold medallist, Wiggins has faced repeated questions about his medical history since Russian hackers Fancy Bears revealed documents last September which showed he received TUEs (therapeutic use exemptions) for the corticosteroid triamcinolone to coincide with three major races in 2011, 2012 and 2013 — including his victory in the 2012 Tour de France.

TUE's are official notes allowing athletes to use otherwise banned substances for the treatment of legitimate medical conditions. But many within cycling claim the system is open to abuse. Wiggins, however, has always denied any wrongdoing and insisted he needed the treatment to deal with a pollen allergy. — AFP

CHIEFS BEAT HURRICANES  
26-18 IN SUPER RUGBY

**HAMILTON:** The Wellington-based Hurricanes failed the first test of their Super Rugby title defense yesterday when beaten 26-18 by the Hamilton-based Chiefs in a rain-drenched third round match. After beating the Sunwolves 83-17 and the Melbourne Rebels 71-6 in their first two matches, the Hurricanes seemed likely to mount a formidable defense of their first Super Rugby title. But in their first match against a New Zealand opponent, they were substantially outplayed by the Chiefs who adapted better to conditions made marginal by an almost unprecedented rainstorm which brought flooding to New Zealand's upper North Island.

The match was decided in the first half when the Hurricanes were reduced to 13 men by yellow cards awarded for inconsequential offenses which allowed the Chiefs to score two tries and lead 17-6 at halftime.

The Hurricanes mounted a brief rally, scoring a try which cut the lead to 23-18 after 78 minutes but the Chiefs were able to ease away to a more comfortable victory with a penalty in injury time. The Chiefs have now won their first three matches of the season against New Zealand opponents, beating the Dunedin-based Highlanders, Auckland-based Blues and the Hurricanes ahead of next weekend's match against the last-placed Melbourne Rebels.

Their ability to maintain discipline and control in horrendous conditions decided the match. "Sometimes you get those conditions and it definitely changes the way you play footy," Chiefs captain Sam Cane said. "You've got to tactically be pretty smart and your defense has got to be strong."

"I thought although with ball in hand we weren't as clinical as we could be, in pretty trying conditions we were good enough to get it done. "We did take our chances and we chanced our arm a few times, especially in that first half when there were chances to take a shot at goal and we backed our set piece." The Hurricanes played most of the first half under extreme pressure when they lost flanker Ardie Savea to a yellow card for collapsing a maul and lock Michael Fatialofa for a no-arms tackle. The Chiefs scored through lock Brodie Retallick to take a 7-3 lead after 15 minutes when they exploited numbers at a scrum with Savea in the sin-bin. They then scored a vital try to winger Tony Pulu on halftime when Fatialofa was still in the sin bin, taking a 17-6 lead to the break.

Fullback Damien McKenzie maintained a perfect kicking record in appalling conditions, landing penalties which took the Chiefs to leads of 20-6 and 23-11 and made any Hurricanes comeback more difficult.

Winger Julian Savea scored in the 78th minute but McKenzie re-established an emphatic margin with his final penalty. "I think the Chiefs showed us, especially in the first half, the discipline side of things," Hurricanes captain Dane Coles said. "I think they kicked into space well which put us on the back foot and our set piece didn't go too well in the first half which got them in the game." —AP

## RUGBY

JONES GETS CRANKY AS  
ENGLAND EYE HISTORY

**LONDON:** It's strange trying to create a siege mentality when your team have won 17 Tests in a row but that appears to be England coach Eddie Jones's approach heading into today's Calcutta Cup clash against Scotland at Twickenham. Victory this weekend would see England equal world champions New Zealand's record of 18 successive Test wins by a 'tier one' nation and might even be enough to retain the Six Nations title should Wales beat Ireland yesterday.

A win would also leave England going for back-to-back Grand Slams in Dublin next weekend. Jones has overseen 16 of England's 17 consecutive victories and has won all his matches as Red Rose coach since taking charge following the team's first-round exit on home soil at the 2015 World Cup. The Australian has been widely praised for his central role in England's revival, yet appeared personally insulted when his team were left perplexed by Italy's 'no ruck' ploy at Twickenham last time out, saying it was as unsporting as underarm bowling in cricket.

Jones, possibly annoyed at being outfoxed, however, briefly-England still scored five second-half tries in a 36-15 win over Italy-remained tetchy after naming his side on Thursday. "There was someone confused in the first half and it wasn't our players," said Jones. Of course, so long as England keep winning, Jones can pretty much say what he likes in a bid to ease the pressure on his team. There was certainly some method in his comments about Scotland, with the former Australia and Japan boss saying: "Scotland's a well-coached side and Vern Cotter is a good rugby coach so they will participate in the spirit of the game."

## FARRELL CONFUSION

It was an attempt to limit Scotland while praising them, although Cotter's men showed an eye for a trick when centre Alex Dunbar joined a line-out before scoring against Ireland. But Jones's response to a question about the fitness of centre Owen Farrell, who suffered a training ground leg injury on Thursday, was surreal, with the coach proclaiming the goal-kicker "doubtful" before, moments later, declaring he would be "alright"

Jones has made three changes, with wing Jack Nowell, centre Jonathan Joseph and scrum-half Ben Youngs all earning a recall. Meanwhile fit-again powerhouse back-row Billy Vunipola returns to the bench, with Nathan Hughes retaining the No 8 shirt. England also have strength in depth at loosehead prop, where Joe Marler has held off



**PARIS:** In this Saturday, March 19, 2016 file photo, England's Ben Youngs celebrates the victory after the Six Nations international rugby match between France and England at the Stade de France stadium in Saint-Denis, outside Paris. England recalled backs Ben Youngs, Jonathan Joseph and Jack Nowell for Scotland's visit to Twickenham in Six Nations rugby today. —AP

Mako Vunipola, Billy's brother, to win his 50th cap. Marler and his front row colleagues could be key to the outcome, as Scotland have struggled at the scrum this season in the absence of injured cornerstone prop WP Nel.

And for all Stuart Hogg is a leading candidate to tour New Zealand with this year's British and Irish Lions, England will look to test the dashing Scotland fullback's much-talked about defence. But if the likes of rampaging lock Johnny Gray can disrupt England up front, mercurial Scotland fly-half Finn Russell could still feature heavily.

Scotland last won at Twickenham in 1983 and, even more significantly perhaps, it's nine years since they beat England anywhere. But this Six Nations has already seen Scotland defeat both Ireland and Wales and it will be the Scots, rather than England, who claim the Triple Crown if they record just their fifth win at Twickenham this weekend.

Cotter, who made just one change, with Hamish Watson replacing injured back-row forward John Hardie, said: "England haven't lost for a long while and we are playing them at home. "I thought with Italy's ruck tactics they adapted well but they'll be annoyed about that and they won't want to be caught out again. — AFP