



PYEONGCHANG: Aerial general views taken on April 30, 2017 show the ski jumping venue (left) and the opening ceremony venue (right) of the 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Olympics. — AFP

## PYEONGCHANG ON TRACK DESPITE SLOW TICKET SALES

PARIS: Less than nine months ahead of the opening ceremony, PyeongChang is ready to host the 2018 Winter Olympics, barring minor details, organizing committee vice president Kim Jae-Youl said yesterday. "We are right on track in terms of hardware and software," Kim told AFP in Paris where he is attending the World Ice-Hockey Championships. Kim said that 12 venues for the Games that are divided

into two clusters in the eastern coastal region of South Korea, about one-hour by high-speed train from Seoul, are 97 percent complete. "The 22 test events went really well and we just have some minor details that we have to work on." He said that athletes competing in the test events as well as international federations and the International Olympic Committee gave 'great' feedback and the

organizers had acted on it. "If the athletes are happy, then we are happy," he said. "The remaining days are for perfecting the plan." However, a key concern surrounding the weather and the potential absence of snow for the February 9-25 Games remains.

"It is hard to predict how the weather will be and whether or not we will get snow," said Kim. But he added that with its elevation of

more than 700m, snow events will take place in sub-zero temperatures. "We had plenty of snow for the test events and conditions were great," he said. "We usually have snow at that time of year but in case we don't, we have the capacity to generate more than enough artificial snow." The organizing committee is upbeat about ticket sales, he said, despite a disappointing initial

response from the public. Barely a quarter of the tickets made available by lottery from Feb 9 this year were sold before the closing date last month in a country there is little traditional support for winter sports. "We are very optimistic about tickets sales over time," said Kim. "The test events had a big impact in Korea and generated a lot of interest. I think we have made a good start." — AFP



MADRID: Italian tennis player Fabio Fognini returns the ball to Spanish tennis player Rafael Nadal during the ATP Madrid Open on May 10, 2017.—AFP

## FOGNINI TARGETING UPSET OVER UNDER-PAR MURRAY

FOIGNINO, Italy: Fabio Fognini is hoping to capitalize on the mediocre form of Britain's world number one Andy Murray when they meet in the second round of the Rome Masters yesterday. Fognini, ranked 29th in the world, booked his place in the second round with a clinical 6-1, 6-3 win over fellow Italian Matteo Berrettini on Sunday. Murray claimed his maiden Rome title with victory over Novak Djokovic in the Eternal City last year.

But the Scot, ousted by unseeded 20-year-old Croat Borna Coric at the Madrid Open last week, has admitted his game on clay has gone awry - and Fognini wants to capitalize. "It's not a bad time to be meeting him, he's not playing at his usual level. But to beat him, I'll need a big hand from the (supporters) center court," Fognini said.

Murray, who celebrated his 30th birthday yesterday, leads their ATP head to head series 3-2 and has beaten Fognini in their last two meetings. But Fognini was the only player to push Rafael Nadal to three sets last week in Madrid, where the Spaniard triumphed Sunday with victory over Dominic Thiem, and Murray said he is taking nothing for granted. "Fognini is one of the better clay-court players, for sure. He obviously would be highly motivated, I would think, playing in Italy as well," Murray said. "I have had some tough matches with him in the past, so it won't be easy. I will definitely

need to play well in that one to have a chance of winning."

Nadal underlined his status as the tournament favorite when he ousted Djokovic in their Madrid semi-final to claim his first clay victory over the Serb in three years. He then dominated Thiem in the final on Sunday to take his record on the surface to 15-0 this year, in the process moving up to fourth in the rankings ahead of Swiss rival Roger Federer. Spain's 14-time Grand Slam champion is now a strong favorite to claim his 10th French Open crown next month, although he remains tight-lipped about his ambitions. "I am aware that if I am fit and I can play well, I have the capacity to win important titles and achieve my goals," said Nadal.

It already looks ominous for Murray's hopes of defending his title, and Fognini has also given four-time Rome champion Djokovic, the defending French Open champion, the edge. "On clay he (Murray) is just a little inferior to Djokovic, given that he's never won in Paris," added the Italian. Yet Fognini, who has never made it past the third round in Rome and has a win-loss record of 5-9 in the capital, has never forgotten exiting the tournament under a hail of criticism from his home crowd in 2014. He added: "I've never had a good run in this tournament. I will never forget being whistled off the court when I was ranked 15th (in the world)." — AFP

## YANKEES SPLIT DOUBLEHEADER WITH ASTROS

NEW YORK: George Springer and Alex Bregman paid tribute to Derek Jeter in their own way - with memorable first-inning home runs off Masahiro Tanaka. Springer led off with a drive run into Monument Park just after Jeter's No. 2 was retired there in a pregame ceremony and Bregman capped a six-run first inning with a grand slam that propelled the Houston Astros to a 10-7 win over the New York Yankees on Sunday night and a doubleheader split.

Josh Reddick homered off the facing of the right-field second deck a pitch after Springer's first homer. Springer also homered leading off the second and Carlos Beltran hit an RBI double against Tanaka (5-2), who left trailing 8-0 after 1 2/3 innings and set career highs for runs and home runs allowed. Backed by a 9-0 lead, Charlie Morton (5-2) gave up four runs in 5 2/3 innings.

In the opener, Chase Headley hit a tiebreaking bases-loaded triple off Chris Devenski in New York's six-run seventh inning, and the Yankees rallied to beat Houston 11-6. Adam Warren (1-0) got the win as the Yankees stopped a three-game slide. Starlin Castro, Aaron Judge and Brett Gardner homered for New York. Evan Gattis had two hits and two RBIs for the Astros. Will Harris (1-1) got the loss.

### PHILLIES 4, NATIONALS 3, GAME 1 NATIONALS 6, PHILLIES 5, GAME 2

Ace Max Scherzer endured a scary line drive to grind out six innings while Michael Taylor hit a go-ahead two-run homer in the eighth and Washington overcame another dodgy bullpen outing in the nightcap for a doubleheader split. Bryce Harper went 3 for 4 with an RBI double in Game 2. He also hit his 12th home run in Game 1 but Philadelphia won the opener of the day-night affair after Washington's third blown save in six games.

In Game 2, Freddy Galvis gave Philadelphia another lead against the bullpen when his two-run triple off Jacob Turner (2-1) put the Phillies ahead 5-4 in the eighth. After striking out three times, Taylor homered off Pat Neshek (0-1), belting a first-pitch slider off the left field foul pole. The runs were Neshek's first allowed this season. In the first game, Ty Kelly hit a tiebreaking RBI single in Philadelphia's three-run ninth. Aaron Altherr opened the ninth with his eighth homer. Maikel Franco and Cameron Rupp hit consecutive doubles off Shawn Kelley (3-1), and Galvis walked before Kelly delivered against Koda Glover. Joaquin Benoit (1-2) pitched a scoreless eighth for Philadelphia, and Hector Neris finished for his fourth save.

### RANGERS 6, ATHLETICS 4

Nomar Mazara had the go-ahead hit for the second game in a row as the Rangers extended their winning streak to a majors-best six in a row. Mazara hit a tiebreaking RBI single with two outs in the seventh right after Elvis Andrus' RBI double, both off Ryan Madson (0-3). Carlos Gomez had three hits, including a single to start the Texas seventh, but left the game with a right hamstring strain after scoring from second on Delino DeShields' two-out infield single. Dario Alvarez (2-0) got two outs for the win and Matt Bush the save.

Yadier Molina homered twice for the Cardinals and Adam Wainwright threw seven sparkling innings. Molina recorded the third multihomer game of his career. He drilled a two-run homer off Jake Arrieta (4-3) in the second inning and added a solo drive in the eighth. Matt Carpenter also homered for St. Louis while Wainwright (3-3) allowed four hits, struck out three and walked four.

### ROCKIES 9, DODGERS 6

Pat Valaika homered twice and drove in four runs and Antonio Senzatela got the win in an emotional Mother's Day start for Colorado. Senzatela (6-1) was pitching on Mother's Day for the first time since his mom died of breast cancer last July. Like many around the league, Senzatela used a pink bat to raise awareness about the disease. The rookie right-hander is tied for the major league lead in wins. Nolan Arenado also went deep as the Rockies salvaged a split of the four-game series. Los



ARLINGTON, Texas: Texas Rangers shortstop Elvis Andrus (1) jumps off second base after throwing to first base as Oakland Athletics Matt Joyce (23) slides on the game ending double play in the ninth inning on Sunday. Oakland Athletics Jed Lowrie was out at first base and the Rangers won 6-4. —AP

Angeles led 4-3 before Valaika hit a two-run homer in the fourth off Julio Urias (0-1). Greg Holland struck out the side in the ninth for his 16th save.

### ANGELS 4, TIGERS 1

Angels star Mike Trout homered in his third straight game and Alex Meyer pitched three-hit ball into the seventh inning. Danny Espinosa hit a tiebreaking homer off Justin Verlander while Andrelton Simmons added an RBI single to chase Verlander (3-3) in the seventh. With a first-inning shot to left for his 11th homer, Trout homered in three straight games for the third time in his career, also accomplishing the feat in September 2013 and June 2016. Meyer (2-1) struck out seven in 6 1/3 innings. Bud Norris got the save.

### BREWERS 11, METS 9

Manny Pina hit a three-run homer with two outs in the eighth inning, capping Milwaukee's comeback from a six-run deficit. Pina hit a 3-2 slider from Addison Reed (0-2) over the wall in left. The Brewers scored 10 runs over their final three innings, teeing off on the Mets bullpen after a solid start by Jacob deGrom. Neftali Feliz (1-4) got the win and Corey Knebel picked up his first save.

### ROYALS 9, ORIOLES 8

Mike Moustakas homered and drove in four runs to help Kansas City rally for the win. Jorge Soler and Drew Butera also connected for the Royals. Soler's 464-foot shot to center leading off the seventh was the longest by a Kansas City player this season. The Orioles' Chris Davis reached five times on a solo homer, RBI single and three walks. Caleb Joseph hit a two-run shot in Baltimore's four-run fourth.

### BLUE JAYS 3, MARINERS 2

Kevin Pillar homered with two outs in the ninth inning to give Toronto a sweep of the four-game series. Pillar sealed the win with a blast to left off Edwin Diaz after Justin Smoak hit a two-run homer for Toronto. The Blue Jays have won five straight and seven of eight and lead the majors with 21 homers in May.

### RAYS 11, RED SOX 2

Steven Souza Jr hit a three-run homer and Jesus Sucre drove in three runs as Tampa Bay beat Boston. The Rays won for the second time in three games, a day after striking out 16 times in a loss. At 4 hours, 32 minutes, it was the longest nine-inning game in Rays history. Souza went deep during Tampa Bay's seventh-inning homer. Boston starter Drew Pomeranz (3-3) came out with left triceps tightness before the fourth inning. He gave up two runs and three hits.

### INDIANS 8, TWINS 3

Jason Kipnis homered twice and drove in four runs to help the Indians snap a three-game losing streak. Kipnis finished with four hits. Carlos Santana and Lonnie Chisenhall also homered for Cleveland, while Indians right-hander Trevor Bauer (3-4) allowed three runs in six-plus innings. Jorge Polanco hit a solo shot in the seventh, giving the Twins a home run in 15 straight games, one short of the club record.

### MARLINS 3, BRAVES 1

Tyler Moore hit a three-run homer in the seventh inning to spoil a shutout bid by R.A. Dickey as the Marlins broke a five-game losing streak. It was Moore's first homer of the year and the fourth pinch-hit shot of his career. Kyle Barraclough (1-0) pitched out of a bases-loaded situation in the seventh by retiring Kurt Suzuki. A J Ramos pitched around a leadoff walk in the ninth for his fourth save. Atlanta had eight hits and six walks but stranded 12 runners. Atlanta's Nick Markakis hit a two-out single in the fifth to drive home the game's first run. Dickey (3-3) allowed five hits in seven innings.

### WHITE SOX 9, PADRES 3

Pinch hitter Melky Cabrera had a key two-run single in Chicago's eight-run eighth inning. Cabrera, whose hit went through the right side of the infield, was one of 14 batters in the inning against three San Diego relievers. The rally denied Jered Weaver his first win with the Padres after his best outing of the season. Ryan Buchter (2-2) took the loss, walking three batters while recording only one out. Michael Ynoa (1-0) earned the win with a scoreless eighth. The White Sox got their second straight victory after a six-game slide.

### GIANTS 8, REDS 3

Brandon Belt homered again, helping San Francisco to its first three-game winning streak of the season. Belt hit his third home run in four games. Joe Panik and Eduardo Nunez each drove in two runs and Buster Posey had two hits for the Giants. Scooter Gennett drove in two runs for the Reds, who lost their third straight.

### PIRATES 6, DIAMONDBACKS 4, 10 INNINGS

Jose Osuna hit a two-run homer for Arizona with two outs in the 10th inning and Tony Watson escaped a bases-loaded jam in the bottom of the inning. Osuna hit a 3-1 pitch from Tom Wilhelmson (0-1) out to right-center field, forcing a split of a four-game series. It was Osuna's second career homer. Watson (2-0) pitched two scoreless innings. He got Jake Lamb out on a ground ball to second with the bases loaded to end the game. Josh Bell and Andrew McCutchen also went deep for the Pirates. —AP

## LEONARD'S INJURY SPOTLIGHTS A DEBATED, DANGEROUS PLAY

OAKLAND: Kawhi Leonard had already launched his jump shot and Zaza Pachulia kept sliding toward him while Leonard was in the air. Leonard landed on Pachulia's foot and crashed to the court in pain. Dirty? Possibly. Dangerous? Absolutely. The play that knocked Leonard out of the game with an injured left ankle and helped Golden State's huge rally in Game 1 of the Western Conference finals is one the NBA started cracking down on four seasons ago in an effort to protect jump shooters.

But with long-distance shots playing such a heavy role in offenses these days, the risk of injury isn't going away. Nor is the debate - one the Spurs have seen from both sides - that raged long after the Warriors' 113-111 victory Sunday. While Leonard is respected for the way he defends without fouling, opponents hated the way former defensive ace Bruce Bowen crowded too closely on their jumpers.

"We see this quite often in the NBA where that defender, they just go a little too far and you're not allowed to take the landing area away from the jump shooter," Joe Borgia, the NBA's senior vice president

of replay and referee operations, said Sunday while discussing the foul that was called on Pachulia on his "Making the Call" video segment on NBA.com. "Obviously a very dangerous situation for players, and the referee luckily stayed on that play all the way until the shooter landed and the foul was called on the play."

That wasn't enough for ABC analyst Jeff Van Gundy, who argued that Pachulia should have been called for a flagrant one for intentionally sliding under Leonard, which both players denied. "Did he step under it? Like on purpose? No," Leonard said afterward. "He was contesting a shot. The shot clock was coming down. I'll have to see the play."

Pachulia said he was just trying to contest the shot and seemed surprised at first that a foul was even called, though many observers on social media thought the play looked suspect. "Zaza's not a dirty player. You've got to time that perfectly if you want to hurt somebody," teammate Kevin Durant said. "We're not that type of team. Kawhi's an unbelievable player. We've got nothing but respect for him." —AP



Kawhi Leonard