



LEXUS RC F TEAMS IMPRESS IN 2016 AUTOBACS SUPER GT SERIES

TOCHIGI PREFECTURE: The Lexus camp lit up with celebrations at the Round 3 of the 2016 AUTOBACS SUPER GT 250km race held at the Motegi Twin Ring in Tochigi Prefecture, Japan. The race was originally scheduled to be run at Autopolis circuit in May. However, due to the aftermath of the Kumamoto earthquakes in April this year, the location and date were changed. The rescheduling saw the Round 3 qualifier and race both held on the same day - a first in the history of SUPER GT.

The reasons to cheer were plenty in the GT500 class of the race as the Lexus line-up of drivers displayed an exhilarating performance, securing positions from the sixth all the way up to the runners-up spot.

Almost clinching the top spot was the No. 39 DENSO KOBELCO SARD Lexus RC F driven by Heikki Kovalainen

and Kohei Hirate, followed by Daisuke Ito and Nick Cassidy who gave their No. 36 au TOM's Lexus RC F just the right amount of push for a podium finish in the third place.

No. 6 WAKO'S 4CR Lexus RC F and No. 19 Weds Sport ADVAN Lexus RC F claimed the fourth and fifth position, with ZENT CERUMO Lexus RC F closing the proceedings for Lexus with a sixth place finish in the exciting race.

It was a display of dominating performance from the Lexus line-up right from the get-go. The No. 39 DENSO KOBELCO SARD Lexus RC F accelerated into the lead at the start of the race, with the No. 36 au TOM's Lexus RC F following its tail in the second position, just ahead of the competitor No. 24.

Spurring a heated battle in the opening laps, an exciting four-way contest unfolded in lap 8 of the race with

title contenders No. 6 WAKO'S 4CR Lexus RC F, No. 19 Weds Sport ADVAN Lexus RC F, and competitor cars No. 12 and No. 100 competing fiercely but unable to break into the lead maintained by the two Lexus teams. The battle continued with little change in positions till the 19th lap summoned a pit stop for most teams.

Leading the race at this point, No. 39 DENSO KOBELCO SARD Lexus RC F headed for the pit stop in the 21st lap where Kohei Hirate handed the wheel to Heikki Kovalainen. Once it was back on the track, it realized that a swifter pit work from au TOM's Lexus team had edged the No. 36 car ahead in the pack, now enjoying an advantageous lead in the race. No. 36 au TOM's Lexus RC F and No. 39 DENSO KOBELCO SARD Lexus RC F fought tooth and nail for the second spot, with Heikki Kovalainen

coming within close distance of inching past Nick Cassidy who was holding the lead. After several attempts, Heikki Kovalainen was finally successful in lap 39 and now looked to overtake the competitor car No. 24 in a bid for the winner's title. While he managed to pull up on the leader's tail in the final lap, No. 24 held off the charge till the final moments of the race and went past the checkered flag. No. 39 DENSO KOBELCO SARD Lexus RC F closed in with an inspiring second place finish, propelling the driver pair Heikki Kovalainen and Kohei Hirate to the top of the season drivers ranking with 61 points. No. 36 au TOM's Lexus RC F celebrated a third spot to round up spectacular twin podium finish for the Lexus camp. Takayuki Yoshitsugu, Chief Representative, Middle East and North Africa Representative Office, Toyota

Motor Corporation, said: "Round three of the championship witnessed a domineering performance from the Lexus RC F teams. It is a moment of tremendous pride and happiness to see two podium finishes, and witness an outstanding performance from the other teams who fought fiercely to earn their spots."

Yoshitsugu added: "The insights from performances on the race track and the feedback from our racers are crucial in our efforts towards building 'ever-better' cars. Participating in motorsports and strengthening our performance in competitive events further enhance skill development in our human resources. The support of racers and fans is instrumental in driving us to greater heights of success. We thank each one for their support and congratulate the racers and our fans throughout the world."



NEWPORT: In this Monday, Oct. 4, 2016 file photo, Europe's Peter Hanson, left, and assistant captain Thomas Bjorn hold the trophy after Europe won the 2010 Ryder Cup golf tournament at the Celtic Manor Resort in Newport, Wales. Bjorn is the first Scandinavian to be appointed captain of Europe's Ryder Cup team. — AP

DENMARK'S BJORN TO CAPTAIN EUROPE AT 2018 RYDER CUP

LONDON: Denmark's Thomas Bjorn will captain the European team at the 2018 Ryder Cup in Paris, Ryder Cup Europe announced yesterday.

Bjorn, 45, vice-captain for four previous Ryder Cups, succeeds Northern Irishman Darren Clarke.

"It's a huge honour for me to be named European captain for the 2018 Ryder Cup in Paris," Bjorn said in a statement on the Ryder Cup website. "This is one of the greatest days in my career." Bjorn, who is Denmark's most successful golfer, has played in three Ryder Cups, finishing on the winning side in 1997, 2002 and 2014, and twice finished second in the British Open.

He was vice-captain of this year's team who lost 17-11 to the United States at Hazletine.

A 15-time European Tour winner, he had been the favourite for the non-playing post, after Ireland's Padraig Harrington said he wanted to play at the event, and was chosen ahead of Scotland's Paul Lawrie. "I have lived and breathed the European Tour for so long and now I will do the same with the Ryder Cup for the next two years," Bjorn

added. "I studied a lot of captains as a player and as a vice-captain and always wondered what that feeling would be like to be the one leading out a team of 12 great players."

"Now it's my turn to do just that and it is an exciting moment for me." Bjorn will be only the fourth man from outside the British Isles to captain Europe after Spanish pair Seve Ballesteros and Jose Maria Olazabal and Germany's Bernhard Langer.

He was chosen by a five-man panel of the three most recent captains-Clarke, Paul McGinley and Olazabal-plus European Tour chief executive Keith Pelley and European Tour tournament committee member Henrik Stenson. The USA's one-sided success in Minnesota in October was their first Ryder Cup triumph since 2008.

The 2018 event will take place at the Paris National from September 28-30. "Thomas is a well-respected man in our game and on the European Tour," Masters champion Danny Willett, a member of Europe's beaten 2016 team, told BBC Radio 5 Live. "From what I saw from him as vice-captain, he will make a fantastic captain." — AFP

FENG LOOKS TO EXTEND DOMINATION IN DUBAI

DUBAI: China's world number four Shanshan Feng will look to extend her domination in the Omega Dubai Ladies Masters, the season-ending championship of the Ladies European Tour, when she seeks a fourth title in last five years. Feng is the highest ranked player in the field, which also boasts of two-time major champion Suzann Pettersen of Norway and England's Charley Hull, a winner on the LPGA Tour a fortnight ago.

However, the thrill of a season-ending championship will be slightly diminished this year, with both Order of Merit and Rookie of the Year awards already decided.

American Beth Allen, who won back-to-back titles in France and Abu Dhabi, leads the Order of Merit with earnings of 311,391 euros and her lead at the top is insurmountable in the half million euro tournament that offers a winning cheque of 75,000 euros.

India's 18-year-old Aditi Ashok, who is having a sensational season, is placed second in the Order of Merit, having won her last two tournaments - the Indian Open and the Qatar Open. Her earnings of 180,415 euros cannot be matched by second-placed Spain's Nuria Llaguer even if she wins on Saturday.

Both Allen and Aditi were expected to

reach Dubai late on Tuesday for the tournament starting Wednesday, as they participated in the final stage of the LPGA Tour Qualifying School in Florida that finished on Sunday. Allen finished inside the top-20 and secured a category 12 card for next year, while Ashok was tied 23rd and will have a category 17 status.

Feng has turned around her game after a poor start to the season. She won the bronze medal in the Rio Olympic Games, and thereafter, she hasn't finished outside the top-10 in her last seven starts.

And Feng said she was keeping her goals modest, as she does at every tournament. "Top-five. It's like I said earlier, I never set a goal that will really put me under a lot of pressure. Going for a top-five is something I feel quite comfortable doing it, so I think that's maybe my goal right now," said the trail-blazing 27-year-old Chinese, who won the tournament last year by a whopping 12 shots after shooting 21-under par.

The tournament also features Cheyenne Woods, niece of 14-time major champion Tiger Woods, who made his comeback to tournament golf after nearly 16 months of injury lay-off. — AFP

KLAY THOMPSON SCORES 60 FOR WARRIORS IN ROUT OF PACERS

OAKLAND: Klay Thompson had 60 points, an NBA season high and the most by a Golden State player in more than 42 years, as the Warriors whipped the Indiana Pacers 142-106 on Monday night. Thompson scored 40 by halftime in just 18-plus minutes. He had a career-best 60 points through three quarters and called it a night, sitting down with 1:22 left in the period as fans jumped to their feet for an extended ovation. Thompson joined Hall of Famers Wilt Chamberlain, Rick Barry and Joe Fulks as the only Warriors to score 60 points in a game. Barry was the last to do so, going off for 64 on March 26, 1974, against Portland. Thompson shot 21 for 33 and 8 of 14 on 3-pointers - 15 of 22 with five 3s in the first two quarters and converted 10 of 11 free throws in 29 minutes. Kevin Durant added 20 points, eight rebounds and four assists for Golden State in another display of impressive passing. The Warriors' 15 first-quarter assists matched a club record and they wound up with 45 total - two off the franchise mark they set Nov. 24 against the Lakers.

THUNDER 102, HAWKS 99

Russell Westbrook extended his streak of triple-doubles to six games, leading Oklahoma City over skidding Atlanta. Westbrook scored 32 points, grabbed 13 rebounds and dished out 12 assists, giving him the NBA's longest streak of triple-doubles since Michael Jordan had seven in a row in 1989. Westbrook's run has sparked a six-game winning streak by the Thunder. He has reached double figures in all three categories in half of the Thunder's 22 games. By contrast, Jordan had 15 triple-doubles for the entire 1988-89 season. Despite a poor start shooting, Westbrook already had 15 points and 11 rebounds when he picked up his 10th assist with 6:20 left in the third quarter. Atlanta rallied down the stretch, but Westbrook closed it out for the Thunder. He finished with 27 second-half points to send the Hawks to their seventh straight loss and 10th defeat in the last 11 games. It's the longest losing streak for the Hawks since they dropped eight in a row in February 2014.

CAVALIERS 116, RAPTORS 112

LeBron James scored 34 points and Cleveland overcame an injury to J.R. Smith to snap their three-game losing streak with a victory over Toronto. Smith injured his left knee in the first quarter after landing on a jump shot and hobbled to the dressing room in considerable pain. He did not return, and the Cavaliers said X-rays taken at the arena were negative and that the guard would return to Cleveland on Tuesday for further examination. DeMar DeRozan had 31 points and Kyle Lowry added 24 for Toronto, which had its six-game winning streak snapped. The win was the Cavaliers' third straight this season against the Raptors, the team they beat in last season's Eastern Conference finals. It also prevented Toronto from leapfrogging Cleveland into first place in the conference. Kevin Love had 28 points and 14 rebounds. Kyrie Irving added 24 points, his career-high 10th straight game with at least 20.

ROCKETS 107, CELTICS 106

James Harden scored 37 points and Al Horford missed a shot just before the buzzer, allowing Houston to hold off Boston. The game was tied before Harden scored five straight points to make it 107-102 with less than a minute remaining. Avery Bradley made a jump shot and Harden received a flagrant 1 foul for elbowing Marcus Smart in the face. Smart made both free throws before Isaiah Thomas missed a layup. But Houston knocked the ball out of bounds with 5.2 seconds left, giving Boston one last chance. Horford drove into the lane, but his shot rolled off the rim and Harden grabbed it to secure the victory. Horford had 21 points and Thomas added 20 for the Celtics. It was the ninth 30-point game this season for Harden, who also had eight assists and seven rebounds.

SPURS 97, BUCKS 96

LaMarcus Aldridge was credited for the go-ahead basket with 21.2 seconds left after Giannis Antetokounmpo was whistled for goaltending, completing San Antonio's rally from 15 points

down against Milwaukee. The Bucks had one last shot to retake the lead, but Mirza Teletovic missed an open 3-pointer from the right corner with 3.9 seconds left. Aldridge secured the rebound and the Spurs ran out the clock. San Antonio extended its season-opening road winning streak to 12 games. Aldridge had 18 points. Kawhi Leonard finished with 22 points and nine boards. Jabari Parker had 23 points, picking up the slack for much of the fourth quarter for the Bucks with Antetokounmpo on the bench with five fouls. Antetokounmpo finished with 22 points and 11 rebounds.

TRAIL BLAZERS 112, BULLS 110

Damian Lillard had 30 points and seven assists, CJ McCollum scored 24 and Portland beat Chicago for its third consecutive victory. Allen Crabbe added 17 points for the Trail Blazers, who opened a five-game trip with their fourth win in five games. Maurice Harkless had 11 and Evan Turner finished with 10, providing a nice boost in the fourth quarter. Dwyane Wade scored 34 points for the Bulls, and Jimmy Butler finished with 26 points, seven rebounds and five assists. Chicago played without point guard Rajon Rondo, suspended one game for conduct detrimental to the team. There was no public indication from the Bulls on what triggered Rondo's suspension. He is expected to return Tuesday night in Detroit.

GRIZZLIES 110, PELICANS 108, 2OT

Marc Gasol had 28 points, including a tying 3-pointer with 7 seconds left in regulation, to go with 11 rebounds and 11 assists, and Memphis outlasted New Orleans in double overtime. Gasol blocked two shots, including one by Terrence Jones that could have given the Pelicans the lead in the final seconds of the first overtime. And the Spaniard's 17-foot jumper with 1:16 left in the second OT wound up being the winning basket. Troy Daniels hit seven 3s and finished with 29 points for Memphis, including a tying 3 with 15 seconds left in the first overtime. Anthony Davis had 28 points and 17 rebounds for New Orleans. Langston Galloway hit six 3s and scored a season-high 26 points, but missed a corner 3 that could have won it as the second extra period ended. Tony Allen had 19 points, 14 rebounds and three steals for the Grizzlies, who have won three straight despite having a handful of regulars injured.

HORNETS 109, MAVERICKS 101

Kemba Walker scored 19 points, Nicolas Batum had 14 points and 15 rebounds, and Charlotte came back to defeat Dallas. The Hornets took

advantage of a knee injury to Mavericks center Andrew Bogut late in the first quarter to dominate the paint and the boards in rallying from an 11-point, third-quarter deficit. Marco Belinelli scored 12 of his 16 points in the second half, including the team's first two 3-pointers after the Hornets missed their first 14 from long range. Six Hornets scored in double figures. Harrison Barnes scored 29 points for Dallas, and Deron Williams had his first double-double of the season with 15 points and 13 assists.

JAZZ 107, LAKERS 101

Gordon Hayward scored 23 points and Utah overcame the absence of ill coach Quin Snyder to beat Los Angeles for its sixth win in seven games. Lou Williams had 38 points, six rebounds and seven assists for the Lakers, who rallied in the fourth quarter and nearly stole a victory despite finishing their eighth loss in 11 games without five injured regulars. Rodney Hood scored 16 points and hit two difficult shots in the waning minutes to keep the Jazz on track to win their only road game in a nine-game stretch. Veteran assistant Igor Kokoskov ran the Jazz for Snyder, who fell ill earlier in the day and decided he couldn't coach shortly before game time. Utah's bus also got stuck in traffic and arrived late at Staples Center. Two nights after scoring 40 points in Memphis, Williams put together the first back-to-back 30-point games of his 12-year NBA career.

NUGGETS 106, 76ERS 98

Danilo Gallinari scored 24 points and Will Barton had 22, including a big 3-pointer late, to lead Denver over Philadelphia. Jamal Murray added 22 points for the Nuggets, who won for the second time in seven games. Ersan Ilyasova, Sergio Rodriguez and Dario Saric all had 17 points for the 76ers, who culminated a four-game homestand with their seventh straight defeat.

WIZARDS 118, NETS 113

John Wall scored 25 points, including 11 in the fourth quarter, as Washington rallied to beat Brooklyn. Bradley Beal and Otto Porter Jr. had 18 points apiece and Markieff Morris added 16 for the Wizards. Brook Lopez scored 25 and Sean Kilpatrick had 21 for the Nets. Beal's 3-pointer gave the Wizards a 107-106 lead with 3:27 left, and Wall scored five consecutive points to up the advantage to 112-106. Brooklyn pulled to 116-113 with 39 seconds left and had a chance to tie. But then Beal stole the ball from Joe Harris, the Nets' 22nd and final turnover of the game. The Wizards trailed by 16 in the first half and 66-51 at halftime before scoring the first 13 points of the third quarter. — AP



OAKLAND: Golden State Warriors' Klay Thompson, left, lays up a shot against Indiana Pacers' Kevin Seraphin (1) during the third quarter of an NBA basketball game Monday, in Oakland, Calif. — AP