



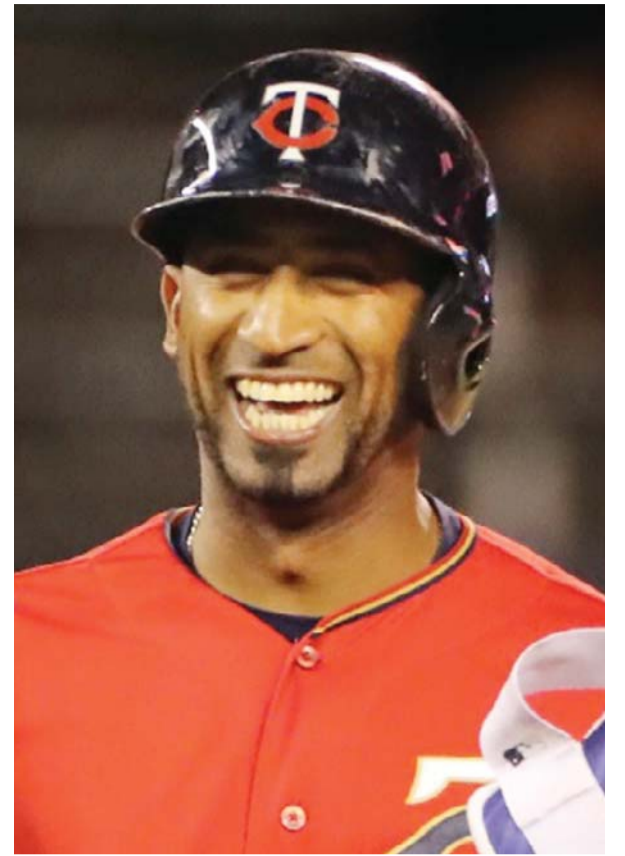
Adam Duval



Jay Bruce



Julio Teheran



Eduardo Nunez

ALL-STARS FROM CELLAR-DWELLERS GET RARE SPOTLIGHT

SAN DIEGO: For Adam Duval, Jay Bruce, Julio Teheran and Eduardo Nunez, the All-Star Game is as close to the spotlight as they're likely to get this season.

Their teams are far from contention, on track to lose 100 or more games. "Obviously it means a lot. But it would be better if we were winning or playing better as a team," said Duval, whose Cincinnati Reds are 32-57.

"But this is where we are in this stage of the

process. We are rebuilding, and Cincinnati has been very vocal about that. I think we have a lot of the pieces of the puzzle. We have a very good foundation and we are doing the things necessary to be successful in the future," he said. Bruce is also on the Reds, who haven't won a title since the 1990 Nasty Boys team and seem years from contending again. "I will consider myself a Red until I am no longer in uniform," he said. "Remember, I was traded last

year and it didn't happen and here I am an All-Star with the Reds. If the Reds think it is in the best interest of the organization, that they can maybe get better, they will do it."

Teheran's Atlanta Braves are 31-28, the worst record in the majors, a team that stripped down in preparation for next year's move to suburban SunTrust Park. "It's kind of been a hard year. We have been an up-and-down team," the pitcher said. "But it's some-

thing you don't think about it. You only control what you can control. I know I don't have a lot of wins but I'm going to keep doing what I do and that is to go out there and get people out. It doesn't matter if you have run support or not. You have to help your team win."

Nunez plays for the Minnesota Twins, who are 32-56 and far from the power that won titles in 1987 and 1991. "We are struggling, we know that. But we have to see the good side

and I'm here trying to represent my team and my fans in Minneapolis," he said. "Yes this is the highlight. I was very excited. I didn't expect it. I went from looking for more playing time to making the All-Star team is amazing."

The former Yankees infielder has 12 homers and 40 RBIs. "You can't control numbers. You work to get good numbers but you don't have any control. The opportunity was very big for me. It made a big difference," he said. —AP

MURRAY TARGETS TOP RANKING AFTER WIMBLEDON TRIUMPH

LONDON: World number two Andy Murray has set his sights on overtaking Novak Djokovic at the top of the rankings after capturing his second Wimbledon crown on Sunday. Murray, who reunited with coach Ivan Lendl last month, has reached the finals of his last five tournaments, winning in Rome and at Queen's Club before beating Milos Raonic in straight sets to end a 36-month hunt for a third grand slam title.

Murray's triumph and Djokovic's third-round loss means 4845 ATP ranking points now separate them.

"I would love to get to number one, for sure, and the way to do that is to show up every week and be focused on that event," Murray told British media.

"It's definitely a goal. It's something I

spoke to my team about, something I chatted to Ivan about. "This has been a great tournament for me but, if I want to win a few slams over the next few years, I am going to have to get better. I know that he (Djokovic) will come back strong from this because of the player he is."

Djokovic arrived in London as the holder of all four grand slams and the Serb had not been beaten on the big stage since losing to Switzerland's Stan Wawrinka in the 2015 French Open final.

"Novak is still clearly number one in the world right now. He is not just going to go away because he has had one bad tournament. You can't forget what he has done in the last 18 months or so-it has been incredible," Murray added. —Reuters

SHARAPOVA TO MISS OLYMPICS

NEW YORK: Maria Sharapova will miss next month's Rio Olympics after the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) on Monday decided to defer its decision on the Russian multiple grand slam champion's appeal against a two-year doping ban until September.

Sharapova was seeking to have her ban, which was imposed on her by the International Tennis Federation (ITF) in June, wiped out or reduced and a decision was initially expected to be announced by July 18. The postponement of the ruling

came as Sharapova and the ITF needed more time to "complete and respond to their respective evidentiary submissions", the CAS said in a statement. "A decision is expected to be issued by 19 September 2016," it added.

The 29-year-old former world number one was named in Russia's official entry list for the Olympics tennis tournament. Sharapova was banned last month following a positive test for the banned drug meldonium during January's Australian Open. —Reuters



Joe Root

ENGLAND'S ROOT READY FOR NUMBER THREE ROLE

LONDON: England batsman is confident he can cope with the added responsibility of batting at number three during the upcoming Test series against Pakistan.

Root has been promoted one place up the order following former number three Nick Compton's decision to take time out from cricket following a poor series against Sri Lanka. Although not true of Compton, number three has historically been the place occupied by a team's leading batsman. Root, who had a brief spell as an England opener, was persuaded to make the move by captain Alastair Cook and coach Trevor Bayliss. Now the 25-year-old Yorkshireman will slot in at number three for the first of a four-Test series against Pakistan starting at Lord's on Thursday. "We had a few discussions throughout the season that it could be a possibility moving forward," Root told a Lord's news conference on Tuesday. "I think the fact I had quite a long time to think about it and to chat it over with the selectors and Trevor and Cook, it probably made it a bit easier, rather than being thrown into the role," added Root, who has scored nearly 3,500 runs in his 42 Tests at an average of over 52 with nine hundreds. "The way they've dealt with it has been really good and it's given me time to get my head around it."

"I feel pretty comfortable going into the series and it's now just about trying to make sure that moving forward that's something I feel comfortable with and I can keep making big scores and contributing to winning Test matches." Root denied England's middle-order would be weakened by his promotion and the ongoing absence through injury of all-rounder Ben Stokes. "I think that's probably harsh," said Root. "Someone like Jonny

Bairstow would consider himself a middle-order batsman and he's taken his game to another level."

He added: "Guys like James Vince, who will really be looking forward to getting back out playing red-ball cricket again."

"He's got a little bit of experience under his

belt and will gain confidence from that."

Pakistan left-arm quick Mohammad Amir is set to make his return to Test cricket on Thursday at Lord's—the ground where he incurred a five-year ban for deliberately bowling no-balls against England in the 2010 "spot-fixing" row. —AFP

MLB SCRAPS PLANS TO PLAY IN LONDON IN 2017

SAN DIEGO: London is not calling for Major League Baseball next year. MLB has given up plans to play regular-season games in the British capital in 2017. Baseball Commissioner Rob Manfred said in January that his staff was working hard at playing in London, and MLB officials looked at the renovated Olympic Stadium as a possible venue. The Red Sox likely would have been one of the teams involved.

"There was discussion about London early on," union head Tony Clark said Monday. "Unfortunately there were a number of moving pieces related to London that shortened our window in an effort to try to find common ground on that happening, and we weren't able to get it done in time."

Dan Halem, MLB's chief legal officer, said that ongoing collective bargaining negotiations and next spring's World Baseball Classic kept the league from pursuing a London series for next year.

"We did not have enough time to work out all the details to play in London in 2017," Halem said. "We continue to discuss interna-

tional play with the union, including playing games in London."

Clark also was non-committal about having players on 25-man active rosters made available for the 2020 Olympics, which will be held in Tokyo from July 24-Aug. 9. The International Olympic Committee executive board voted last month to support a six-nation tournament that year in both baseball and women's softball, and the full IOC is to vote in August.

Baseball became a medal sport for the 1992 Barcelona Olympics but was dropped for the 2012 London Games and won't be played this year in Rio de Janeiro. In 2008, only those not on 25-man big league rosters as of late June were allowed to compete - the US team included Jake Arrieta and Stephen Strasburg - both All-Stars this year. "Is there an appreciation for the value of having baseball in the Olympics? Yes, there is," Clark said. "Is there an appreciation for the season and how or if it could work with our active players? Yeah, there's a conversation, but we run into the same roadblocks we always have." —AP



Maria Sharapova