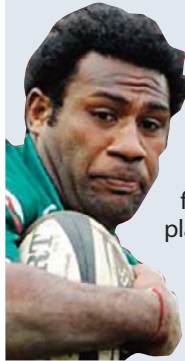


SHOCK AS FIJI'S SERU 'RAMBO' DIES AT 37

SUVA: Former Fiji international Seru Rabeni died yesterday at the age of just 37, rugby officials in the Pacific nation said, prompting shock and tributes from teammates and fans. Rabeni represented Fiji in the 2003 and 2007 World Cups, combining speed with a brutal tackling style that earned him the nickname "Rambo". He also played top-flight rugby in England, New Zealand and France during a 16-year career which included a five-year spell at Leicester. "Incredibly sad news to hear Seru Rabeni has passed away. Rest in peace big man," Fiji Sevens coach Ben Ryan tweeted. Fiji-born former Wallaby Lote Tuqiri said Rabeni was "a great man taken away too young", while ex-Samoa centre Eliota Faumaono-Sapolu said Pacific rugby had lost one of its greats. "Stunned! RIP Seru Rabeni," he tweeted. "Absolutely hated every minute playing against you constantly smashing and stepping me." Scotland's James Hamilton, a former team-mate at Leicester, described Rabeni as "an incredible player and lovely man." England great Jonny Wilkinson, another playing contemporary of Rabeni, tweeted: "Seru Rabeni's passing is incredibly sad. What a player and a team man. Our support and best wishes go to his family.—AFP



ANNIE POWER MAKES AMENDS WITH CHAMP HURDLE TRIUMPH

LONDON: Annie Power atoned for her final fence fall at last year's Cheltenham Festival by leading from start to finish to win the Champion Hurdle yesterday's opening day of the 2016 edition. Ridden by Ruby Walsh and trained by the leading jockey's fellow Irishman Willie Mullins, Annie Power was roared home by enthusiastic supporters at the Prestbury Park course in Cheltenham, south-west England, as she became the first mare to win the Champion Hurdle in 22 years. At last year's Festival, the leading jumps meeting of the English horse-racing season, Annie Power had the separate mares hurdle at her mercy only to fall at the last fence. That would have been the fourth win on the first day for Mullins, and Annie Power's fall was estimated to have saved bookmakers a £50 million (\$72 million) payout. But Annie Power never looked in any danger of repeating that error as she became the first mare (female horse) to win the Champion Hurdle since Flakey Dove back in 1994, with Tuesday's 5/2 favorite beating second-placed My Tent or Yours by five lengths.—AFP

JUDY MURRAY QUILTS FED CUP CAPTAINCY

LONDON: Judy Murray has given up her role as captain of Great Britain's Fed Cup team, the Lawn Tennis Association announced yesterday. Murray, the mother of British tennis star Andy Murray, was appointed to skipper the side in the Fed Cup—the leading women's international team tennis tournament in 2011. But while Andy led Britain to victory in last year's Davis Cup, the men's equivalent, Judy was unable to have anything like the same impact from off the court, with her side failing to gain promotion to the elite World Group from the Europe/Africa zone. Judy Murray recently became a grandmother for the first time following the birth of Andy's daughter Sophia last month and has been heavily involved in various schemes to promote grassroots tennis in Britain. Last month, Britain won two Fed Cup matches—despite the absence through illness of Australian Open semi-finalist Johanna Konta—but lost to Belgium with a place in the World Group II play-offs at stake. Afterwards Judy Murray made no secret of her frustration with the format of the competition, the 56-year-old saying: "I'm fed up with it. Everybody wants to get out of this zone.—AFP

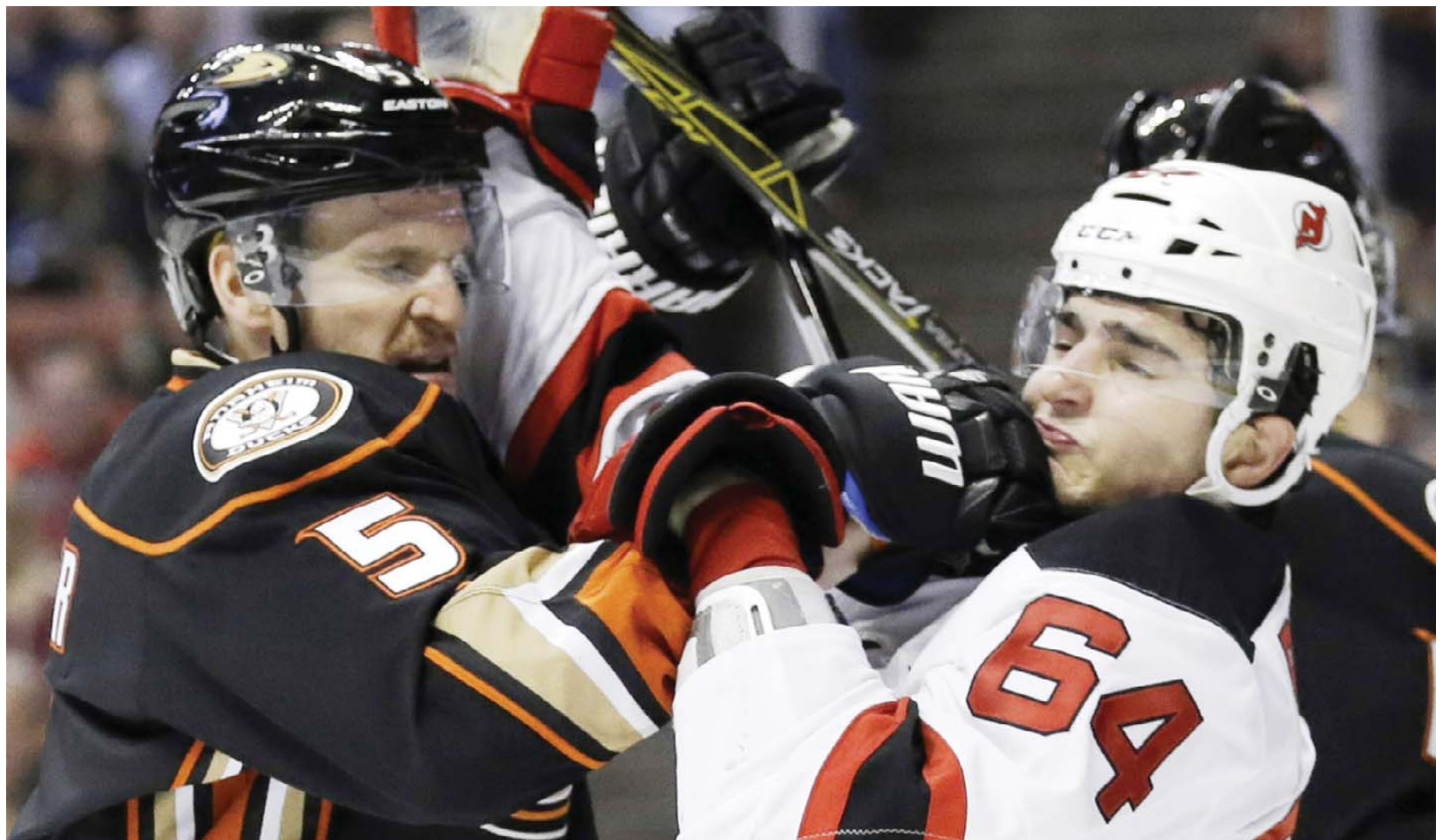


NHL results/standings

NY Islanders 3, Florida 2; Los Angeles 5, Chicago 0; Calgary 7, St. Louis 4; Nashville 3, Edmonton 2; Winnipeg 5, Vancouver 2; Anaheim 7, New Jersey 1.

Western Conference						
Central Division						
	W	L	OTL	GF	GA	PTS
Dallas	41	20	9	227	203	91
St. Louis	41	21	9	187	179	91
Chicago	41	23	6	195	173	88
Nashville	35	22	13	192	179	83
Minnesota	32	27	10	182	172	74
Colorado	35	31	4	188	198	74
Winnipeg	29	35	5	181	205	63
Pacific Division						
Los Angeles	41	22	5	185	154	87
Anaheim	38	21	9	174	160	85
San Jose	38	24	6	203	179	82
Arizona	30	32	7	185	211	67
Vancouver	27	29	12	166	197	66
Calgary	29	35	5	189	217	63
Edmonton	27	38	7	171	212	61
Eastern Conference						
Atlantic Division						
Boston	39	23	8	213	188	86
Tampa Bay	40	24	5	190	163	85
Florida	38	22	9	194	170	85
Detroit	34	24	11	173	182	79
Ottawa	32	30	8	202	218	72
Montreal	32	31	6	187	194	70
Buffalo	28	33	9	167	190	65
Toronto	23	34	11	160	201	57
Metropolitan Division						
Washington	49	14	5	219	160	103
NY Rangers	39	23	7	197	181	85
NY Islanders	38	21	8	193	168	84
Pittsburgh	36	24	8	188	173	80
Philadelphia	32	23	12	174	180	76
Carolina	31	26	12	170	186	74
New Jersey	33	30	7	154	178	73
Columbus	28	33	8	180	215	64

Note: Overtime losses (OTL) are worth one point in the standings and are not included in the loss column (L).



CALIFORNIA: Anaheim Ducks defenseman Korbinian Holzer brawls with New Jersey Devils center Joseph Blandisi during the first period of an NHL hockey game in Anaheim, Calif on Monday, March 14, 2016. — AP

KINGS HAMMER SLUMPING BLACKHAWKS 5-0

CHICAGO: Kris Versteeg and Milan Lucic scored 18 seconds apart in the first period as the Los Angeles Kings beat the slumping Chicago Blackhawks 5-0 on Monday night. Vincent Lecavalier, Dustin Brown and Tyler Toffoli also scored as Los Angeles improved to 8-2-1 in its last 11 games. Jonathan Quick made 32 saves in his 41st career shutout, helping the Pacific Division leaders kill off each of Chicago's six power-play opportunities. The Blackhawks (41-23-6) lost for the fourth time in five games, including three in a row against St. Louis, Dallas and Los Angeles - three potential playoff opponents. The defending Stanley Cup champions are just 9-10-2 since their franchise-record 12-game win streak. The slide has dropped Chicago into third in the tough Central Division with just 12 games left on its schedule.

ISLANDERS 3, PANTHERS 2

Cal Clutterbuck scored the tiebreaking goal with 1:39 remaining to cap New York's three-goal third period, lifting the Islanders past Florida. Kyle Okposo and Josh Bailey scored earlier in the third as the Islanders scored all their goals in a 5 1/2-minute stretch after trailing 2-0 heading to the final period. Thomas Greiss finished with 23 saves as the Islanders snapped a two-game skid and pulled one point behind the crosstown-rival Rangers for second place in the Metropolitan Division. Aleksander Barkov had a goal and an assist, Nick Bjugstad also scored and Jonathan Huberdeau had two assists for the Panthers. Roberto Luongo stopped 25 shots.

PREDATORS 3, OILERS 2

James Neal had his sixth career hat trick, leading Nashville to a win over the Oilers. The Predators have earned at least a point in 15 of their last 16 games. They swept the three game season series from Edmonton. Jordan Eberle and Iiro Pakarinen scored for the Oilers.

FLAMES 7, BLUES 4

Michael Frolik scored three times, included two short-

handed goals, as Calgary beat St. Louis. Sean Monahan had two goals and Joe Colborne and Mark Giordano also scored for Calgary. Dougie Hamilton and Johnny Gaudreau each had three assists.

Paul Stastny scored twice and Scottie Upshall and Kevin Shattenkirk each had a goal for St. Louis, which had won six straight. Shattenkirk had a power-play goal at 3:28 of the third and Stastny added his second of the game 10 minutes later to pull the Blues to 5-4. Frolik's second score gave the Flames some breathing room with 3:11 remaining and he added an empty-netter with 35 seconds to go for his 14th of the season.

DUCKS 7, DEVILS 1

Jakob Silfverberg scored three goals for his first NHL hat trick, leading Anaheim to a rout of New Jersey. Corey Perry scored his team-high 29th goal, Nick Ritchie had his first in 25 NHL games and Ryan Kesler got the go-ahead goal early in the second period. Andrew Cogliano added a goal and two assists, helping Anaheim beat the Devils for the fifth straight time. The Ducks remained two points behind the Pacific Division-leading Los Angeles Kings, who won 5-0 at Chicago. Former Anaheim forward Devante Smith-Pelly scored for the Devils, unable to complete a sweep of their three-game California trip after a 3-0 win over San Jose and a 2-1 overtime decision against Los Angeles.

JETS 5, CANUCKS 2

Marko Dano had two goals and an assist as Winnipeg beat Vancouver. Tyler Myers and Alexander Burmistrov each added a goal and an assist for the Jets, and Mark Scheifele also scored to extend his points streak to eight games. Mathieu Perreault had two assists and Michael Hutchinson finished with 26 saves. Jared McCann and Jake Virtanen scored for Vancouver, and Jacob Markstrom stopped 24 shots. The Canucks came in having won two straight for the eighth time this season, but failed to get their first three-game winning streak. — AP



CHICAGO: Chicago Blackhawks defenseman Brent Seabrook (right) collides with left wing Artemi Panarin (second left) while Los Angeles Kings center Tyler Toffoli (left) and defenseman Drew Doughty (second right) looks on during the second period of an NHL hockey game on Monday, March 14, 2016. — AP

IOC RETESTS BEIJING DRUG SAMPLES AHEAD OF GAMES

LONDON: Armed with enhanced techniques, the IOC is retesting hundreds of doping samples from the 2008 Beijing Olympics to weed out drug cheats before they can compete in this year's Summer Games in Rio de Janeiro. In an interview with The Associated Press, IOC medical director Dr Richard Budgett said athletes who competed in Beijing and are likely to be selected for Rio are having their stored samples reanalyzed to catch any violators who evaded detection eight years ago. "We want to protect the clean athletes who are going to be competing in Rio," Budgett said. "We are making sure that athletes who cheated back in 2008 don't get to compete in Rio in 2016."

The International Olympic Committee stores blood and urine samples from each game so they can be reanalyzed years later with improved testing methods. Any positive tests can lead to retroactive sanctions, disqualifications and loss of medals. The statute of limitations for retesting was extended in 2015 from eight to 10 years, meaning the Beijing samples remain valid through 2018. "Many of the athletes who are likely to be selected for Rio will have their samples retested a couple of years earlier than we need to," Budgett told AP on the sidelines of the Tackling Doping in Sport conference in London. "There are some new analyses that are available. The samples are in the process of being retested. It's in the hundreds."

"We've cooperated very closely with the international federations, finding out which athletes are still competing, finding out which athletes are likely to be selected for Rio," he added. "If we've got samples for them from Beijing, we're doing that testing." Budgett said the process should be completed in the next few weeks. "If we have any adverse analytical findings, there will be a sanctioning process and those athletes will be very unlikely to compete in Rio," he said.

Noting that scientific techniques will continue to improve in the next two years, the IOC is keeping the other Beijing samples for retesting closer to the 2018 deadline, Budgett said. It's not the first time that samples from

Beijing have been retested. A few months after those games, the IOC reanalyzed nearly 1,000 of the total of 4,000 samples with a new test for the blood-boosting drug CERA. Five athletes were caught, including 1,500-meter gold medalist Rashid Ramzi of Bahrain.

Budgett said some samples from the 2012 London Olympics are also being retested now on a targeted basis ahead of the Rio Games, although most are being saved for later reanalysis. "We want to reserve samples for the expected advances that will happen over the next six years," he said. Nearly 500 doping samples from the 2006 Winter Olympics in Turin have already been retested. The IOC has not disclosed whether those retests had produced any positive cases.

Five athletes were caught in retests of samples from the 2004 Athens Olympics, including men's shot put winner Yuriy Bilonog of Ukraine. On a separate issue, Budgett said he is confident that Brazil's national anti-doping agency will comply with World Anti-Doping Agency rules by next week's deadline to prevent Rio's drug-testing laboratory from being ruled ineligible for the Olympics. The Brazilian agency has until March 18 to meet WADA's guidelines. If it fails, the Rio lab would be declared non-compliant, meaning thousands of doping samples during the games would have to be sent out of Brazil for testing, posing major logistical and financial issues.

Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff is scheduled to sign a decree on March 15 that would bring the agency into compliance. "We're very hopeful that it finally will be resolved," Budgett said. "The laboratory itself is performing well and really is state-of-the-art. We always have a Plan B. Anything can happen. That's there in case, but I do not expect to be using it." Budgett said the IOC plans to carry out a "similar number" of tests in Rio as the 5,000 conducted in London. An intelligence unit created by WADA is targeting athletes for testing in the lead up to the games. "We're not talking about the numbers any more, we're talking about the quality," Budgett said.—AP

BLACKS PLAYING MEN'S HOOPS AS FOOTBALL LAG BEHIND IN DEGREES

PHILADELPHIA: Young black men playing basketball and football for the country's top college teams are graduating at lower rates than black male students at the same schools - despite having financial and academic support that removes common hurdles preventing many undergraduates from earning a degree, a new report has found. While 58 percent of black male undergraduates at the 65 schools in the Power 5 conferences got degrees within six years, 54 percent of black male student-athletes at the same schools graduated, according to an analysis of the 2014-2015 academic year by University of Pennsylvania researcher Shaun Harper.

Harper said the graduation gap represents a wide and systemic issue worse than isolated scandals seen on individual campuses. "It happens just about everywhere," said Harper, director of Penn's Center for Race and Equity in Education. "Generations of young black men and their par-

ents and families are repeatedly duped by a system that lies to them about what their life chances are and what their athletic outcomes are likely to be." Just as the attention of the sports world shifts to March Madness, the home page for the NCAA's website features data on how few student-athletes are drafted to play professional sports, promoting its efforts to educate college players. The NCAA men's and women's basketball tournaments begin this week. According to estimated data from the NCAA, only 1.2 percent of college men's basketball players are drafted by the NBA and only 1.6 percent of college football players are drafted by the NFL. "Although there is a great deal of interest in basketball this time of year, we think it is important to remind fans of what our mission is - to provide student-athletes educational opportunities that will last a lifetime," Bob Williams, NCAA senior vice president of communications, said in a statement to The Associated Press.—AP