

### CONGO FIRE COACH AFTER WCUP DEFEAT

**BRAZZAVILLE:** Congo have fired coach Pierre Lechantre, making him the fourth coaching casualty since last month's kick-off of the group stages of Africa's World Cup qualifiers. Congo's 1-0 loss at Uganda on Saturday followed a home defeat to Egypt in October and left the country bottom of Group E without any points. Congo also failed to qualify for January's African Nations Cup finals in Gabon. The decision was announced after the Frenchman met Congo Football Federation officials on Tuesday. He had been in the job for almost one year in which time Congo won just once in seven outings. The 66-year-old's departure follows the firing of coaches in Algeria, Gabon, Libya after October's opening series of group games. South Africa suspended coach Ephraim Mashaba on Sunday despite the weekend win over Senegal for allegedly insulting top football association officials and he will face a disciplinary hearing this week. If he is fired it will mean 25 percent of the coaches who started the group phase will have lost their jobs in less than 60 days. Lechantre won the African Nations Cup with Cameroon in 2000 and has also been national coach of Qatar and Mali. — Reuters



### MEN'S ROCKIES RACES OFF FOR LACK OF SNOW

**PARIS:** A lack of snow at Lake Louise, Canada, has seen World Cup circuit organisers cancel the men's downhill and super-G races scheduled there for late November. The races had already been put back twice and would have been the first of the men's speed events for the upcoming season on the weekend of November 26-27. "While we have good snow conditions on the upper mountain, we didn't have enough cold to get to the finish line for the men. We will continue our efforts for successful races for the ladies and look forward to the men returning next year," said Brian Lynam, race chairman at Lake Louise. The women have two downhills and a super-G scheduled for Lake Louise at the start of December. While snow in North America is late this season there's plenty at the European stations of Val-d'Isère in the French Alps and in the Italian Dolomites at Val Gardena. One of those two stations is likely to host the men's Lake Louise races. Further good news for ski fans is that World Cup downhill races at Beaver Creek in the United States on December 2-4 will go ahead thanks to good snowfall there. — AFP

### KENYA TO HOST HKAS SECURITY THREAT EASES

**NAIROBI:** Kenyan cricketers are looking forward to playing their first international game after a four-year hiatus when they host Hong Kong in a World Cricket League qualifier in Nairobi tomorrow. Due to security concerns, Kenya was forced to play their first home game of the tournament against the United Arab Emirates in Southampton, England in June 2015. Kenya has not played at home since a series of bomb attacks hit the capital in 2012. Coach Thomas Odoyo says playing at the Nairobi Gymkhana club would provide boost his side, which is currently fifth in the competition. "It's pleasing for us that we are coming back to play in the conditions we are used to" said Odoyo, a former national team all-rounder. "This gives us an advantage over our rivals, Hong Kong who are playing here for the first time." The attacks followed Kenya's decision to send troops to Somalia to battle the Shabaab militant group, which had threatened the country's tourism sector. But of particular concern for Odoyo and his players is the sudden change of the weather in Nairobi, which has been experiencing heavy rains over the past two days. —AFP



Officials at the press conference of Jiu Jitsu 2016.



## RENAULT AL BABTAIN IS AN OFFICIAL PLATINUM SPONSOR OF INTERNATIONAL JIU-JITSU COMPETITION

**KUWAIT:** "Renault Al Babtain" announced its platinum sponsorship for the Kuwait International Championship of Jiu Jitsu 2016 in a press conference that took place yesterday, as part of its ongoing support of activities that aim to raise awareness on the benefits of sports for individuals and the society.

The Kuwait International Championship of Jiu Jitsu 2016 will take place in the Ice Skating Rink on the 18th and 19th of November.

The platinum sponsorship agreement with Renault Al Babtain was announced by the organizing committee of the International Championship of Kuwait for Jiu Jitsu. The Championship will kick off on Friday, 17th November with the participation of more than 300 athletes representing 20 countries, and a referee crew panel coming from the USA to supervise the championship.

The chairman of the organizing committee of the International Jiu Jitsu Championship in Kuwait, Abdulmohsen Saleh Al-Babtain, said: "The purpose behind this championship is to have Kuwait's name known as a sports hub internationally, and to provide the opportunity for young people to showcase their talents in a professional framework and under the supervision of the global judging crew."

"As a committee, we aspire to spread awareness and culture of sports for everyone, and employ the youth with their high energy spirit in sports, to create a generation that is capable to compete not only in Jiu Jitsu, but in all sports," he added. Makram Khater, Group General Manager - Marketing at Al-Babtain Group said: "In line with Renault and Al Babtain Group's strategies, we continuously support various sports and cultural initiatives

that help build a healthy society." "We are proud of our platinum sponsorship of the first ever Kuwait International Championship for Jiu Jitsu 2016, and we're looking forward to an electrifying, ground-breaking event," he added. The Public Authority for Sports is the strategic partner of the International Championship of Kuwait for Jiu Jitsu, in addition to the Kuwait Olympic Committee, acting as governmental partners. Other sponsors include Total as a platinum sponsor; together with the Gulf Bank of Kuwait, Spark Gym, Riselts Company - supplier of nutritional supplements, and Ibis hotel, as Gold sponsors.

The organizing committee of the championship is inviting the audience to participate in the success of this sporting event. Renault Captur cars will also be displayed during the event in the Ice Skating Rink.



Abdulmohsen Saleh Al-Babtain



Makram Khater

### IRISH LOOK TO DIASPORA BACKING FOR 2023 BID

**DUBLIN:** IRELAND'S 2023 Rugby World Cup bid is hoping the large Irish diaspora in the United States could be their trump card. The IRFU officially launched their candidacy for the global showpiece in Dublin on Tuesday, pitting themselves against France and potential bidders South Africa, both of whom have experienced hosting the tournament. A final bid must be submitted by June, with the winning decision announced by the World Rugby Council on November 15, 2017. While France and South Africa have been there and done it, the IRFU hope their unique ability to spread the rugby gospel to the much desired North American market could swing things their way. Awarding the 2019 World Cup to Japan shows World Rugby are open to expanding the game beyond traditional borders, and the US is expected to join the race to host the 2027 tournament. Hosting the tournament in Ireland four years earlier, with a significant number of fans based in the North America expected to tune in to, or travel to the Emerald Isle, is something Philip Browne, the IRFU Chief Executive, was keen to mention in Dublin.

"It's going to be a World Cup involving the whole island of Ireland, and we have a good mix of stadia, all within easy walking distance of city centres," Browne said. "We hope by having standing terracing there will be accessible tickets for real rugby fans and we're going to provide those fans with a unique celebration of rugby, a unique fan experience."

"The other thing we bring to the party, which no one else can is the 80 million people around the world—the Irish diaspora. "One of the key issues for World Rugby is: How do you open up the American market? We possibly have the answer."

"We have 34.5 million [people] in the USA, another four million of Irish descent in Canada. There were 62,300

people at the match in Chicago. I'd say 45-50,000 were Irish supporters, even if they weren't all from Ireland. "There were about 7,000 people [travelling] from Ireland, but the rest were based in North America and the rest of the world. "We can provide a platform for World Rugby to promote the game into areas of the world they haven't been able to up to now." Winning the bid was said to be worth an estimated EUR800m to the Irish economy, while bid organisers predicted the largest number of travelling fans in tournament history, with Scottish, Welsh and English fans all expected to travel in their numbers to the island.

A list of 12 venues, four rugby and eight from the native Gaelic Games Association, was announced, with World Rugby expected to whittle that down to between eight and ten after the winning bid is chosen. To get the win, Ireland will need approximately 19 votes from the World Rugby Council, and discussions have already begun in earnest - with the IRFU speaking with their counterparts from the US and Canadian Unions in Chicago last week, ahead of their timely victory over reigning World Champions New Zealand.

"Listen, there are no votes in the bag at all," Browne said. "The reality is that we've just launched and it's up to us to go out over the next 12 months and persuade people of the value and benefit of our bid to world rugby. "Yes, we've started our conversations. We've started our conversations in Chicago with the Canadians and the US, we met people yesterday in London and we'll be meeting more people between now and Christmas, and after Christmas. "So the hard work really starts now in terms of actually putting the detail on the bid and then having those conversations, trying to persuade people that our bid is of value to world rugby."

The 2023 tournament will run from September 15 to November 4. — AFP

### IRELAND CAN INFLICT PAIN ON ALL BLACKS

**LONDON:** New Zealand were punished for showing "a lack of respect" to Ireland when they lost in Chicago and could be in for another shock in Saturday's rematch at Dublin's Aviva Stadium, according to former Lions wing Luke Fitzgerald.

Joe Schmidt's side delivered one of rugby's biggest shocks of the year by winning 40-29 11 days ago to end the All Blacks' 18-game winning run and become the first team since South Africa in 2004 to score 40 points against them.

Fitzgerald, who retired from rugby earlier this year with 34 caps for Ireland and one for the British and Irish Lions, said Steve Hansen's world champions would be a tougher proposition on Saturday as Ireland bid to become the first side to post back-to-back victories against them since South Africa in 2009.

"Do I think we can beat New Zealand again? I absolutely do," said Fitzgerald. "It's a really uphill task, they'll be really hurting after that [defeat in Chicago]."

"I think they showed a little bit of arrogance there and lack of respect with some of their selections."

"I think they'll be really, really pumped up for this one. I'd say they'll do a little bit more research behind the scenes on us. I'd say they were a little bit under-cooked in that department and, from my own perspective, some of the selection mistakes that they made they won't make them again."

New Zealand bounced back from the loss by making 12 changes to score 10 tries in a 68-10 win over Italy last Saturday, when Ireland also played free-flowing rugby to beat Canada 52-21.

The All Blacks are hoping influential second row Sam Whitelock is fit to return after injury, allowing them to move Jerome Kaino back to flanker. Ireland ruthlessly exploited that scrum weakness in Chicago and Fitzgerald expects a similar gameplan on Saturday.

"The things we did well, we can definitely do again," he said. "I think the pressure we got on all around the park, the desire we showed... I think in front of a packed Aviva Stadium we can definitely do that again."

Ireland's standout player in Chicago, scrum half Connor Murray, has recovered from a muscle injury and is fit to play. —Reuters



Joe Schmidt