

REJUVENATED WEBSTER RELISHES CASTLEFORD RETURN

LONDON: Despite almost quitting a year ago, Jake Webster believes he has up to three years left in him as he prepares to return to action with Castleford Tigers this week.

The former Melbourne Storm veteran, 32, sat out the end of last season with nerve damage in his shoulder and was beginning to question whether to move on from professional rugby altogether.

But a 45-mile (72-km) move from Hull to Castleford to be closer to the Tigers, along with a successful pre-season, has rejuvenated him and he is raring to go against Wakefield in the Super 8s on

Friday. "Last season I was looking at some easier options, perhaps not playing full-time anymore, but then pre-season gave me a bit of hope," said Webster, who signed a new deal with the Tigers earlier this season.

"I've really found a new lease of life at the club this season. I got my chance because of injuries and now I'm loving it again. I feel I've got a least another year in the legs and hopefully two or three. We moved to Castleford with my wife, which took 45 minutes off my journey, and that helps the legs as well.

"The injury last year was nerve dam-

age in my arm, which was a bit of a scare. This year I damaged my ankle ligaments so it's been a bit of torture having to watch the guys. "But I'm getting back and hopefully will be good to go against Wakefield." Friday's clash is a must-win for the Tigers if they are to maintain any hope of making the Super League playoffs. Currently sixth, they must win all four of their remaining games and hope that St Helens in the fourth and final spot lose all of theirs.

BURNS HOMEWARD BOUND

This weekend, therefore, they need a

favour from Hull FC, the table-toppers and newly minted Challenge Cup winners. Black and Whites coach Lee Radford believes the best is still to come from his squad. "That's the togetherness we have in this team," he said. "We have the ingredients there to go on from this. We have the foundations in place to go and achieve more. "There's the League Leaders' Shield to still play for and then we could be only 80 minutes away from a Grand Final."

Saints this week announced they are releasing Travis Burns, their Australian stand-off, who is currently on loan at

Leigh. The 32-year-old former Hull KR co-captain had another year left on his contract with Saints, but has not played for them since April and will return with his family to Australia.

"It is the right time to move back home and take up a new challenge," said Burns. "My wife and kids have followed me around Australia and the UK for several years and now it's time to put them first." Wigan kick off the round by welcoming Widnes today, while Challenge Cup runners-up Warrington will aim to bounce back at Catalans Dragons on Saturday. — AFP

THREE RUSSIANS FAIL RETROACTIVE BEIJING DOPE TESTS

LAUSANNE: Three more Russian Olympic medallists have tested positive for banned substances in retroactive dope tests originally taken at Beijing 2008. Six sportsmen-five weightlifters and one track and field athlete-four of whom won medals, were named on Wednesday as doping controllers use new methods to analyse samples taken from both Beijing and the London 2012 Games. The other three athletes were from the former Soviet Republics of Armenia, Moldova and Azerbaijan.

Russia's 4x400m women's silver medalist Tatiana Firova, the only athlete, tested positive for the banned steroid turinabol and testosterone. Russian weightlifter Nadezda Evstuykhina, who was third in the women's -75kg, was found to have turinabol and the blood booster EPO in her system, and Marina Shainova, who was second in the under 58kg category, had traces of turinabol and stanozolol, another steroid.

Armenia's Tigran Martirosyan, who won bronze in the under 69kg category, was

positive for turinabol and stanozolol.

Moldovan Alexandru Dudoglo and Azeri Intigam Zairov, who lifted respectively in the -69kg and -85kg divisions, are also suspended. Weightlifting has a sorry history when it comes to doping with five athletes excluded from the Rio 2016 Games earlier this month due to positive tests.

Just days after the Olympics in Brazil came to an end, the International Weightlifting Federation (IWF) revealed the names of 15 more athletes, including three Beijing gold medallists, to have failed reanalysed Games dope tests.

Around 100 athletes have failed retested Olympic doping samples from Beijing and London, including many Russians as the IOC grapples with numerous drug scandals that rocked the build-up to the Rio Games.

The plethora of doping scandals resulted in around a third of the Russian delegation being prevented from taking part in Rio as various international sporting federations punished the country in the wake of a damaging World Anti-Doping Agency report accusing Russia of state-sponsored doping. — AFP

RUSSIA TO HOLD ALTERNATIVE EVENT FOR BANNED ATHLETES

MOSCOW: Russia will hold a two-day competition next week for its Paralympic squad banned from Rio, a top sports official said yesterday after Switzerland's federal court rejected their final appeal. "We're planning to hold on September 7-8 a series of tournaments for the country's Paralympic athletes at the training bases in the Moscow region," R-Sport news agency quoted Russia's Paralympic Committee head Vladimir Lukin as saying.

Switzerland's Federal Supreme Court on Wednesday rejected an appeal aimed at overturning a blanket ban on Russia from the Paralympics over allegations of state-run doping.

The ruling-which followed an earlier rejection by the Lausanne-based Court of Arbitration for Sport-means that Russia

appears to have exhausted all legal alleyways to get back into the Paralympics before they start on September 7.

Last week Russian President Vladimir Putin lashed out against the ban, calling the decision "outside the law, morality, humanity". But Putin vowed to give Russia's banned Paralympians a platform "to show all their skills".

A Kremlin spokesman said yesterday that it was still to be decided if Putin would attend the event. Russia's Olympic squad narrowly escaped a total ban from the Rio Games, although all of their track and field team except US-based long-jumper Darya Klishina were prevented from competing due to the allegations of state-sponsored drug cheating and corruption. — AFP



KUWAITI ATHLETES LEAVE FOR RIO 2016 PARALYMPICS

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait's disabled team will head to Rio de Janeiro today to participate in the Paralympics to be held there from Sept 7 until Sept 18.

Kuwait Disabled Club President Shafi Al-Hajiri said the team will participate in Athletics with five players, Hamad Al-Adwani, Ahmad Naqa, Nasser Saleh, Abdallah Al-Seif and Mohammad Mijbel, in addition to shooter Atif Al-Dousari.

Al-Hajiri said the team will participate under the Kuwaiti flag as per laws of the International Disabled Sports Federation, and hoped Kuwait



athletes win Olympic medals to have Kuwait's flag and anthem there. He said the club prepared its six players through foreign training camps the last of which was in Turkey for the athletics and in Germany for shooter Al-Dousari.

Al-Hajiri appreciated the attention Kuwait's disabled sports are receiving from Information Minister, State Minister for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah, who provided all types of support to the club to enhance the players' level. He also thanked Director General of Public Authority for Sports Sheikh Ahmad Mansour Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah for his continued support.

ANTI-DOPING GROUP SEEKS REFORM OF 'DEEPLY DAMAGED' SYSTEM

COPENHAGEN: Top officials of the IOC and other sporting bodies would be banned from being members of anti-doping agencies under new proposals for tackling drugs in sports.

Leaders of 17 anti-doping organizations met in Copenhagen this week to consider ways of fixing a "global anti-doping effort that has been deeply damaged" and to "ensure that the disturbing events of recent years are not repeated."

Among the group's aims was to remove the "fundamental conflict of interest that exists when anti-doping decisions are controlled by sports organizations" - a shot at the current ties between the World Anti-Doping Agency and International Olympic Committee.

The president of WADA is Craig Reedie, a senior IOC member from Britain whose dual role has come under scrutiny during the scandal over state-sponsored doping in Russia. Reedie served as an IOC vice president and member of the policy-making executive board until his term expired during the Olympics in Rio de Janeiro. He is now a regular IOC member. The Copenhagen summit proposed a rule that would forbid officers, directors, employees and all decision-makers of anti-doping bodies from also holding a top position in any international federation or "major event organization."

The Institute of National Anti-Doping Organizations said the proposal would "prevent the inherent conflict of interest that exists when a sports organization is tasked with both promoting and policing itself."

The IOC set up WADA in 2009 and provides 50 percent of the agency's funding, with national governments covering the other half.

IOC President Thomas Bach has proposed making the anti-doping system independent from sports organizations and called for the creation of an independent agency to carry out global drug testing. The IOC has scheduled a meeting for Oct. 8 to consider ways of improving the international system.

The exposure of widespread doping in Russia has led to a crisis in confidence in the entire global anti-doping fight. IOC members blamed WADA for not acting early enough to deal with evidence of Russian doping, while the IOC was accused of being soft on Russia by not banning



President of WADA Craig Reedie

the country entirely from the Rio Games.

The anti-doping leaders meeting in Denmark represented countries that included the United States, Australia, Canada, France, Germany and Britain. They said WADA should be strengthened and given the independence and authority to impose sanctions for "large scale subversions of the anti-doping system," such as the state-backed system in Russia. WADA currently has had no power to impose sanctions against a sport or a country, leaving that to the IOC and other bodies. "WADA must have authority and capacity to investigate and to impose proportional sanctions and consequences for all instances of code non-compliance," the officials in Copenhagen said in their final statement.

They also expressed "unequivocal support" for the completion of the investigation into Russian doping by Canadian lawyer Richard McLaren. His report detailed manipulation of drug samples at the 2014 Sochi Winter Games,

as well as cover-ups of doping tests across dozens of summer and winter sports.

The leaders called for "increased protection and support" for whistleblowers, including Yulia Stepanova and her husband, Vitaly, who helped expose the doping culture in their homeland.

"All relevant organizations should do everything in their power to protect and ensure safety, security and sustainable future for Yulia and Vitaly and the other whistleblowers," the statement said. The IOC rejected Stepanova's bid to compete in the Rio Games after the IAAF recommended the 800-meter runner be allowed to participate as a neutral athlete.

Stepanova and her husband have been living in the United States. She said recently that she fears for her safety and has switched residences after hackers breached a WADA database that records her whereabouts. Bach said in Rio that the IOC was "not responsible for dangers to which Mrs. Stepanova may be exposed." — AP



KUWAIT DISABLED SPORTS CLUB HONOUR NAJI AL-HAI

KUWAIT: Kuwait Disabled Sports Club lauded the achievement of Kuwait's formative artist Naji Al-Haii at the London innovative Arabs gathering, which witnessed the participation of a large number of Arab innovators in many fields.

KDSC Secretary General Abdallah Al-Azmi, during the reception of Artist Al-Haii, that his win of two prizes, the first for his work through competing with other artists, and the second was in appreciation of the organ-

izing committee of the winning work.

Al-Azmi said, the club under the leadership of Shafi Al-Hajiri is keen on supporting its members in all fields and allow them to innovate, and asked all disabled innovators to utilize their energy to hoist Kuwait's flag high in the field of formative arts.

He dedicated this achievement to HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Kuwait people.