

## PATRICK KANE SELECTED US ALTERNATE CAPTAIN

**COLUMBUS:** A year after Patrick Kane's career appeared in jeopardy because of a sexual assault claim, the Chicago Blackhawks star was named one of the alternate captains for the United States for the World Cup of Hockey.

"It's a huge honor for sure," Kane said. "It's one of those things I don't know if I was expecting to receive that, but at the same time, I still think it's a responsibility I can handle and hopefully take somewhat of a leadership role and take charge."

The sexual assault case in his hometown of Buffalo, New York, was dropped Nov. 5 for what the prosecutor said was a clear lack of evidence, and Kane quickly put the off-ice troubles aside. He had an early 26-game points streak and became the first American-born player to win the Art Ross (top scorer) and Hart (most valuable player) trophies.

"Sometimes you look back, it's almost like a blur, it went by so quick," he said. "It didn't seem like it at the

time but it was a really fun year." He had 106 points (46 goals, 60 assists) to become the first player to crack the 100-point mark in four seasons, and finished 17 points ahead of runner-up Jamie Benn of the Dallas Stars.

"He was on a roll early, got his confidence going and never looked back," said David Backes, the Boston center and US teammate. Along the way Kane might have grown up as well. The incident in Buffalo was the latest of several brushes with the law in his career.

"I'm 27 years old. I'm going to be 28 later this year; you want to maximize your potential," he said. "You want to get all you can out of your prime while you're still young, maybe advance that prime into your later years too. That's where my thinking is now."

US and Columbus Blue Jackets coach John Tortorella knew Kane's reputation but did not know him before the Americans' training camp opened Monday in the Ohio city.

"He has matured. We all see that," the coach said. "A lot of things have gone on with him obviously. Just talking to with him one-on-one here in the past couple of days you can see the maturity."

That's why Kane was named an alternate captain, along with the Minnesota Wild's Ryan Suter, to captain Joe Pavelski of the San Jose Sharks.

### MORE RESPONSIBILITY

"I want (Kane) to take more responsibility now," Tortorella said. "He's ready for more responsibility as a leader of a US team where before it was 'Kane, go play' and he's really good at it. I think he's ready for more responsibility and I'm ready to give it to him because he deserves it." The game has always come easy for Kane, who has won Stanley Cups with the Blackhawks in 2010, 13 and '15 and a silver medal at the 2010 Vancouver Olympics. But last season he went to a different level. — AP

## CASTRO GRABS LEAD AT PGA PLAYOFF EVENT

**CHICAGO:** Roberto Castro fired a seven-under par 65 to grab a one-stroke lead over fellow American Brian Harman after darkness halted Thursday's opening round of the US PGA BMW Championship. Castro, seeking his first PGA title, birdied the second and fourth holes and added another at the par-5 ninth for a solid start, then birdied six of the final nine holes only to take a bogey at 18 to halve his edge. "I started off pretty well," Castro said. "Got going coming back and was thinking about birdies."

Lightning and heavy rain in the Indianapolis area stopped play for three hours and 31 minutes, leaving the late threesomes in the field of 70 no hope of finishing before sunset.

"There have been a lot of delays this year so we are used to it," Castro said. "I'm glad we got to get the round in." In all, 36 players were forced to conclude their first rounds yesterday before an early start to the second round in hopes of completing play before storms return to the 7,516-yard Crooked Stick layout.

All players completed the front nine except Australia's Aaron Baddeley, who has a 13-foot eagle putt at the ninth when play resumes. US major champions Dustin Johnson and Jason Dufner shared third on 67 with compatriot Chris Kirk, who had the back nine yet to play. Argentina's Fabian Gomez was in the clubhouse on 68 with Japan's Hideki Matsuyama at four-under with six holes to play and England's Paul Casey and Australian Adam Scott on four-under with eight holes remaining. Top-ranked Aussie Justin Day opened on 73 with six bogeys and five birdies. Third-ranked Rory McIlroy of Northern Ireland was three-under after 10 holes. He opened with a birdie and had tap-in birdies at the par-5 fifth and ninth. He made a five-footer for birdie at the par-3 sixth but missed a six-footer for par at eight.

Castro has a pair of runner-up PGA finishes for his top showings, at Congressional in 2013 and this year at Quail Hollow. Castro sank a 17-foot birdie putt at the second and drained a



**CARMEL:** Roberto Castro hits his tee shot on the second hole during the first round of the BMW Championship at Crooked Stick Golf Club on Thursday in Carmel, Indiana. — AFP

stunner from 54 feet to birdie the fourth, but the highlight shot of his round was a 41-foot chip-in birdie at the 14th. He missed an eagle chip-in at the par-5 15th by inches then sank a 15-foot birdie putt at the par-3 17th only to miss the green with his approach at 18 and suffer his lone bogey. "Those greens were firm and really gettable after the delay," Castro said.

"To make a lot of birdies was a great

way to start." Harman made a 34-foot birdie chip at the seventh and birdied three of the last five holes on the front side. He followed with a 15-foot eagle putt at the 15th and a clutch 21-foot par putt at 16th.

World number two Johnson could have shared second but closed with a bogey after finding water off the tee while Dufner birdied three of the last four holes to stand on 67. — AFP

## UNDER-FIRE TOULON FACE TOUGH TOULOUSE TEST

**PARIS:** Under-fire Toulon will undergo a true test of their mettle when they host Toulouse in Top 14 action this weekend, while defending champions Racing 92 face a daunting trip to Clermont. Brive, surprise leaders after the opening three rounds of the new season, travel to rock-bottom Grenoble tomorrow aiming to leave their hosts with four defeats from four.

Toulon might boast an expensively-assembled star-studded line-up and a bench that most clubs can but only dream, but outspoken president Mourad Boudjellal did not hold back after last week's 25-21 home defeat by Brive. "The reality is that we should have had three losses," blasted Boudjellal, his side having scraped a second round victory over Pau, having gone down to newly-promoted Bayonne in their opening games. "Up against three teams who say they're playing to stay up, we should have had three defeats, that's what's most worrying."

"I concluded from that, that we're not at the level of staying up. "We have four matches ahead of us. You can't dream. It's going to be heavy and the team I saw here will pay badly."

"The players need to take responsibility. It's not the coaches who make mistakes on the pitch. We're nearing the end of my patience. "Training is over. Now we have to move on to serious things. "That doesn't necessarily mean I'm going to fire the coaches. I can fire myself."

"That we can muck up almost eight years in one match, it's shameful. From what we've seen, we're playing to stay up. A team with 800 international caps that's playing to stay up, that's the reality. Quite simply, I think we're awful."

"Luckily, and I've thanked him, we have (goal-kicking Wales full-back Leigh) Halfpenny. I've rarely seen my team play so badly." Toulon received further bad news when one of their star players, South African flanker Juan Smith, was ruled out of action for four months after rupturing his left biceps against Brive.

His absence follows that of Australian wing Drew Mitchell and South African Bryan Habana, away on international duty, with the injury list already including James O'Connor, Anthony Etrillard, Matt Giteau, Ayumu Goromaru, Duane Vermeulen and Jean-Charles Orioli.

Toulouse playmaker Toby Flood, the former England fly-half, suggested that his team needed to move the ball around against Toulon, the three-time European champions. "We've only scored three tries this season, it's something we have to improve on," he said, warning not to underestimate Boudjellal's team. "It's complicated at Toulon at the moment, they might change manager after three matches, but that changes nothing, it's Toulon, the best team over the last four or five years."

"They're really strong, they can play anywhere and have talented players. If we think they're going to be trembling, that they're already beaten, we've already lost the match." — AFP