

## AUSTRALIA VETERANS GET BARBARIANS CALL-UPS

**LONDON:** Australia veterans Adam Ashley-Cooper and Will Genia have both been included in the initial group of players selected by coach Vern Cotter for the Barbarians matches against England and Ulster. The invitational Barbarians face England at Twickenham on May 28 before taking on Ulster in Belfast on June 1. Wing Ashley-Cooper (116 caps) and scrum-half Genia (75 caps) were 2015 World Cup finalists when the Wallabies were beaten by champions New Zealand at Twickenham. New Zealander Cotter, who is soon to be replaced as Scotland coach by Gregor Townsend, has also called up Argentina back-row Facundo Isa and Samoa prop Census Johnston who, in common with Ashley-Cooper and Genia, are now based with French clubs. They will be joined by New Zealand's Corey Flynn, with the veteran hooker now playing for Glasgow and uncapped Connacht centre Bunde Aki, who will become qualified for Ireland later this year through residency. —AFP

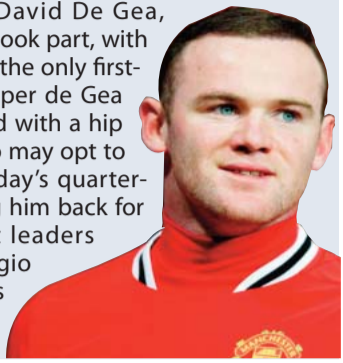


## EIGHT LEICESTER FANS ARRESTED IN MADRID

**MADRID:** Eight Leicester City fans were arrested for public disorder ahead of the English side's Champions League quarter-final, first leg with Atletico Madrid, Spanish police said yesterday. Three police officers and two fans also suffered minor injuries in clashes between police and the travelling supporters in one of central Madrid's tourist hotspots, Plaza Mayor, at 2200 local time (2000GMT) on Tuesday night. "Eight hooligans were arrested for public disorder and vandalism," a police spokesperson told AFP. Videos showed riot police charging at the Leicester fans, who had gathered to drink in the various bars and restaurants in the Plaza Mayor, a spot often invaded by travelling fans for Champions League matches. "There was a group of 70 hooligans when the police charged," said a spokesperson for the municipal emergency services. "On the ground we attended five people, three police officers and two English ultras for cuts and bruises, but nobody was taken to hospital." The police source said the intervention was caused by Leicester fans "throwing bottles at the police." — AFP

## ROONEY BACK WITH TRAINING AHEAD OF ANDERLECHT MATCH

**MANCHESTER:** Wayne Rooney was seen training with his Manchester United team-mates yesterday, a day before their Europa League tie away to Belgian side Anderlecht. The England striker missed United's last two Premier League matches, against Everton and Sunderland, with an ankle injury but was involved in the session at the English giants' Carrington training ground. David De Gea, Antonio Valencia and Ashley Young also took part, with Juan Mata, Chris Smalling and Phil Jones the only first-team regulars missing. Spanish goalkeeper de Gea missed Sunday's 3-0 win over Sunderland with a hip problem. United manager Jose Mourinho may opt to keep de Gea out of action come Thursday's quarter-final first leg match in Brussels and bring him back for this weekend's league fixture against leaders Chelsea instead. That would mean Sergio Romero continuing between the posts against Anderlecht. — AFP



Mike Chen, Cyril Despres seen during the FIA World Rally Championship 2017 in Bastia, France



Red Bull TV hosts Cyril Despres, Mike Chen, Matthew Wilson at the podium ceremony of the FIA World Rally Championship 2017, Stop 4 in Corsica, France.

# FIA WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP 2017, STOP 4 IN CORSICA, FRANCE

## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE TOUR DE CORSE

**CORSICA:** Hyundai driver Thierry Neuville from Belgium made it four manufacturers (and four nationalities) winning the first four rounds of the 2017 World Rally Championship, following one of the most intense rounds seen so far this year. Red Bull TV was there to capture all the action along with a very special guest. He is more used to tearing up the deserts in his go-anywhere cross-country Peugeot 3008DKR, but

Cyril Despres got a taste of something truly different when the Frenchman swapped his crash helmet for a microphone and joined the program hosts Mike Chen and Matt Wilson as guest reporter on the Tour de Corse. And here's what he's going to remember most about the three-day adrenaline rush on the 'Island of Beauty'...

### Riding a motorbike on the roads used for the rally

"On Friday, we made a film for the programme with a motorbike ride through the Novella stage and that was a first for me! In fact, this was only the second time I had ever been to a WRC rally. So it was really exciting just to ride through the stage and see what rally drivers experience – very narrow roads and different types of surface – but at low speed. My passenger was Red Bull TV presenter Mike Chen: Let us just say that he is a bit bigger than me, so when I brought the bike back they asked me why there was more tyre wear at the back than the front! Living the stages on a bike, my second home, was a great experience."

### Being blown away by the speed of the cars

"The sheer speed of the new generation

of cars is mind-blowing. You can't really compare it to my Dakar Peugeot, which is rear-wheel drive and heavier, or even to the experience I had last year, when I drove the Citroen DS3 WRC on gravel. This is just something else. The sheer amount of grip, acceleration and braking that these cars have is phenomenal, so to experience it up close and see the cars connected to the road is very special."

### Working out just how competitive the WRC is

"Because my background is in cross country, I'm kind of used to measuring gaps in hours and days! Here, it is amazing that you can have the top 10 drivers on a stage covered by 30 seconds: to have such tiny differences, with all the drivers going flat out, is incredible. One of my favorite

elements of the Red Bull TV show is a 3D graphic that shows you how the time gaps between the drivers translate into distances. On one stage, we saw that the winning advantage was just 59 meters after 30 kilometers! Then at the finish, the difference between second and third place was less than two seconds, while the difference between fourth and fifth was a tenth of a second! Unbelievable."

### Sharing my world with Matt and Chenny

"I've had a microphone stuck under my chin a few times before, but this was my first time commentating. It was great fun to do it with Mike Chen and Matt Wilson, and it was also nice for me to share a little bit of my world with them. Chenny was at the Dakar for the first time this year, so he's had a taste of what it's all about, but it was

all new for Matt. We had some fun times, just talking and chatting about cars, bikes and rallying; both WRC and cross country. I loved the whole atmosphere of the rally."

### Commiserating with Kris Meeke over a steak sandwich

"I know Kris Meeke from back home in Andorra, where he lives as well, and I love his attacking style: it's actually quite the opposite from the way that I drive! I didn't know he had retired from the lead with an engine problem until we saw the Citroen truck going to pick him up on Saturday. So we went to the end of the stage and managed to find him just after it happened. There was a van selling steak sandwiches, so he was having a steak sandwich and frites as a consolation! But in the end, he was quite cool about it. He was doing a

great job in the lead, and these things happen in motorsport: you just have to accept it. But at least we could commiserate with him."

Meeke took the lead on the opening day of the rally and was pulling out an advantage before an engine problem stopped him halfway through the opening day. This gave Neuville the lead, chased down by reigning world champion Sebastien Ogier. However, Ogier was delayed by a hydraulic problem and then an intermittent electrical fault on the final day of the rally, which contained the longest stage at 53 kilometers. The Frenchman managed to seal the runner-up spot from Hyundai's Dani Sordo by less than two seconds, while Neuville claimed his first win of the year by nearly a minute.



Sebastien Ogier (FRA) performs during the FIA World Rally Championship 2017 in Bastia, France on April 9, 2017



Thierry Neuville (BEL) celebrates the podium during the FIA World Rally Championship 2017 in Bastia, France on April 9, 2017

## FIGURE SKATING

# JAPAN'S ASADA 'GAVE HER ALL', HAS NO REGRETS

**TOKYO:** Japanese figure skater Mao Asada, an Olympic silver medalist and three-time world champion, said yesterday she had given her all to her competitive career and had no regrets about retiring from the sport. The 26-year-old, known for being the only woman to land the complicated triple Axel jump three times in competition, said on Monday she had lost the will to compete. Asada, who took a year off from skating before resuming training in 2015, told a packed news conference yesterday that while the decision had been difficult, she gradually came to feel it was time.

"Up to now in my skate career, I've given everything I had, and I have no regrets," said the calm and mostly smiling Asada, at one point brushing away tears.

Asada is a household name in Japan, known by the affectionate nickname "Mao-chan," and the news of her retire-

ment was plastered across newspaper front pages on Tuesday. Her retirement news conference was carried live by nearly all television stations, and several newspapers ran editorials with one calling her a "national heroine".

Plagued by knee pain this past season, Asada finished 12th at the national championship in December, the lowest finish of her career in a competition she had won six times – a situation she said was key to her decision. "The first season after returning to competition went all right, but by the second I really had to keep telling myself over and over to just keep going," said Asada, who described feeling as if she could not keep up with advances in the sport. "After the nationals I thought, 'well, that's it.'" Asada began skating at the age of five, lured into the sport by her older sister Mai, and began to draw attention while still a junior, sharing the limelight with

South Korea's Kim Yuna at the start of a long rivalry. Kim and Asada's rivalry reached a head at the 2010 Winter Games in Vancouver, when Asada had to settle for silver while Kim claimed gold. Asada was tipped as a leading medal contender at the 2014 Sochi Olympics but had a disastrous short programme, although she rebounded with a strong free skate to finish sixth overall. "After the short programme, I thought I wouldn't be able to return to Japan, and the morning of the free skate I woke still feeling that way," she said. "But the moment I stepped out on the rink I just thought I'd have to do it, and give it everything I had." Asked about her future plans, Asada said she's taking part in an ice show this summer but is still thinking about the rest. "I've been skating since I was five and have gained so much from it," she said. "So I want to do something, in some form, to give back to the sport." — Reuters



**SOCHI:** In this combination of six file photos, Japan's figure skater Mao Asada performs, clockwise from top left to right, at the ISU figure skating Grand Prix Final in Sochi, Russia, Dec. 7, 2012, at the Japan National Figure Skating Championships in Osaka, Japan, Dec. 27, 2009, at the Japan National Figure Skating Championships in Osaka, Dec. 26, 2009, at the Eric Bompard Trophy Figure Skating Grand Prix in Paris, Nov. 15, 2008, at the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, Feb. 20, 2014, and at the World Figure Skating Championships in Turin, Italy, March 26, 2010. The 26-year-old Asada, the three-time world champion announced her retirement yesterday in a press conference. — AP