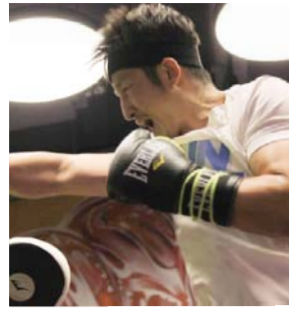


Sports

McIlroy hoping to catch his wave at British Open



China boxing star Zou primed for biggest battle



THURSDAY, JULY 20, 2017

ARRESTED SPANISH FEDERATION CHIEF FACES BLEAK FUTURE

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SERRE-CHEVALIER: Stage winner Slovenia's Primoz Roglic, left, and Colombia's Jhon Darwin Atapuma, right, climb during the seventeenth stage of the Tour de France cycling race over 183 kilometers (113.7 miles) with start in La Mure and finish in Serre-Chevalier, France, yesterday. —AP

CYCLING

ROGLIC WINS STAGE, FROOME EXTENDS TOUR LEAD

SERRE-CHEVALIER: Former champion ski-jumper Primoz Roglic took a sensational solo victory on the mountainous 183km 17th stage of the Tour de France yesterday. Chris Froome came home third to stretch his overall lead to 27 seconds as Rigoberto Uran moved up to second and Fabio Aru dropped to fourth, with Romain Bardet remaining third.

Slovenia's Roglic, 27, was junior world ski-jumping champion in 2007 but switched to cycling in 2012. "To win a stage, I've dreamt about it many times," said Roglic, whose girlfriend and family were at the finish of the Tour's 'Queen stage', which started in La Mure. "It's crazy, incredible. There are no words. Right now I cannot really form all these feelings. Later probably I will know how big it is." He was part of an initial 33-man breakaway

that was whittled down to just six riders when Roglic attacked solo 6.4km from the summit of the hors category Col du Galibier, which at more than 2,600 metres above sea level was the highest point of this year's Tour.

He crested the climb, 28km from the finish in Serre-Chevalier, with a lead of just over a minute and half on a group of chasers including the top contenders. On the descent, Roglic easily managed his lead while a five-man chase group developed, including Froome.

But Italian Aru, who started the day second at 18sec, had been dropped by an acceleration from Bardet just before the Galibier summit and he was chasing desperately to limit his losses. Uran took second, 1min 13sec behind Roglic, to snatch six bonus seconds that moved him up to second, on the same

time as Bardet. Froome also took four bonus seconds for finishing third to help increase his lead, and he revealed he was congratulated by French President Emmanuel Macron at the finish. "It's a great honour to be congratulated by the president, it's also a very good thing for the Tour and the sport that he came here," said Froome, 32. "My legs are better than in the Pyrenees, today I felt good. I think also for tomorrow, we have the finish on the Col d'Izoard which will be very, very difficult."

Aru came in 31sec later to drop to fourth at 53sec ahead of today's second straight Alpine stage with its brutal finish at the summit of the imposing Col d'Izoard.

BARDET ATTACKS

Up front, Roglic proved the strongest of the

breakaway riders despite the presence of twice former Tour winner Alberto Contador, who couldn't follow the Slovene's acceleration on the Galibier. Further down the mountain-side, Bardet and Ireland's Dan Martin put in a succession of attacks that split up the yellow jersey contenders. Briton Simon Yates was one of the first to struggle and eventually lost a couple of minutes to see his lead in the young rider's competition ahead of South African Louis Meintjes cut to 2min 28sec.

He also lost sixth place to Martin. Aru was the next to struggle with the succession of accelerations, firstly by Martin but then several times from Bardet. The Frenchman went over the summit with Froome, Uran and Warren Barguil for company while Mikel Landa, the yellow jersey's Sky team-mate, caught them

on the descent.

Behind, Aru kept losing time, with Yates dropping even more on the rapid drag downhill to the finish. Earlier in the stage, Colombian climber Nairo Quintana had been distanced on the first category Col du Telegraphe, the twice runner-up continuing to struggle during this year's Tour having raced May's Giro d'Italia. He dropped out of the top 10, with Contador moving back up to ninth and Barguil 10th.

Meanwhile German sprint king Marcel Kittel pulled out before the halfway point of the stage after crashing in the first 20km. Kittel had won five stages during the race and held the sprinters' green jersey, which has now passed to Australian Michael Matthews, winner of two stages himself. —AFP

SWIMMING

SCANDAL THREATENS FINA ON EVE OF WORLD CHAMPS

BUDAPEST: Swimming's governing body FINA has been drawn into a financial scandal days before both their presidential elections and the start of the swimming world championships in Budapest. Kuwait's Husain Al Musallam, who is standing unopposed as FINA's first vice-president, has been caught up in a controversy for appearing to demand a 10 per cent cut of potential sponsorship deals.

In his role as general director of the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA), the 57-year-old is heard asking for 'commissions' on deals worth "40 to 50 million" dollars in a tape recording obtained by The Times and Germany's Spiegel Online. The exchange is said to be between a prospective Chinese marketing agent and Musallam, who suggested that 10 per cent of any sponsorship deals arranged for the OCA should be separately channelled to him. Ahead of their elections in Budapest on Saturday and Sunday's start of swimming action at the world championships in the Hungarian capital, FINA said none of their regulations had been breached.

"These allegations are a matter for OCA to comment on although FINA will monitor developments carefully," said FINA in a statement. "However, it was determined there was no case to answer based on the information that is available to FINA at this time. "Moreover, there was no breach of any FINA regulations." The OCA denied any wrongdoing on Musallam's part and questioned the timing of the articles.

"The OCA firmly denies that OCA officials requested commissions for OCA sponsorship deals and confirms that no commission or money was paid to OCA officials, directly or indirectly, for OCA sponsorship deals," read the statement.

"All money for sponsorship deals went directly

to the OCA. "The OCA is fully aware of the tape in question and its content and believes that this tape is being used in a politically motivated campaign ahead of the upcoming FINA elections scheduled for 22 July 2017." The International Olympic Committee (IOC) told The Times and Der Spiegel that it had passed the allegations to its chief ethics investigator. It is not the first time this year that Musallam has courted controversy. In April, The Times revealed, he was effectively identified in a US

Department of Justice indictment as a co-conspirator who allegedly paid bribes to a football official.

Musallam is the right-hand man of Olympic powerbroker and OCA president Sheikh Ahmad Al Fahad Al Sabah, who in April resigned from his FIFA after being identified as a co-conspirator, along with Musallam, in the US indictment. The recording obtained by The Times has emerged from the FBI investigation into Musallam and Sheikh Ahmad. — AFP



BUDAPEST: Team Singapore competes in the Women's Team Free Routine preliminary during the synchronised swimming competition at the 2017 FINA World Championships in Budapest, yesterday. — AFP

SOCCER

SOLANKE SHINES AS LIVERPOOL BEAT PALACE

HONG KONG: New signing Dominic Solanke came off the bench to score as Liverpool beat Crystal Palace 2-0 in a pre-season game in Hong Kong yesterday.

The 19-year-old suggested he could prove a summer bargain at just \$4 million as he linked up well with fellow striker Divock Origi, who also got on the scoresheet in the Premier League Asia Trophy win. "It's been a smart move for him and for us," Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp said of Solanke's transfer from Chelsea.

"He saw the opportunity and we could see it also. You could see immediately he is a smart player. He's a skilled boy and we are happy about this. We will help him all we can." Origi set up the first goal for Liverpool on the hour mark with a clever back-heel that found Solanke unmarked and the teenager made no mistake, finishing coolly in the stifling Hong Kong heat.

Origi then rifled home Liverpool's second in the 79th minute, to the delight of a crowd of 40,000. Klopp's new-look front line proved a welcome distraction for the German coach following reports that Leipzig had rejected a huge bid of \$86 million for star

midfielder Naby Keita.

Klopp bristled when asked about the Keita situation as rumours circled that the Guinea international's agent had been spotted in Hong Kong. "Are we in Macau?" asked Klopp in reference to the world's largest gambling hub, situated just across the Pearl River Delta from Hong Kong. "What do you know? Sixty-six million (pounds) turned down today? I don't think about this. "Today both teams played good football," added Klopp, turning his attention back to events on the pitch. "In the second half we made some changes and we scored. We changed the formation and it was nice to watch."

Liverpool will face Leicester City in the Asia Trophy final on Saturday after the Foxes won the earlier match 7-6 on penalties over West Bromwich Albion following a 1-1 stalemate in normal time. New signing Jay Rodriguez gave West Brom the lead with a stunning finish after nine minutes, only for Riyad Mahrez to squeeze the ball past Ben Foster to level things up midway through the first half. "Jay's strike was fantastic," said West Brom boss Tony Pulis. — AFP