

### S AFRICA'S DUMINY CALLS TIME ON TEST CAREER

**JOHANNESBURG:** South Africa batsman JP Duminy has decided to quit test cricket but will continue to feature in the shorter formats of the game, the 33-year-old said in a statement yesterday. "After long and careful deliberation, I have decided to retire from first-class and test match cricket with immediate effect," the left-hander, who scored 2,103 runs in 46 tests, said. "It is an experience that cannot be replaced and one I will always cherish. Test cricket has always been the pinnacle and I've been fortunate enough to experience some memorable highlights with the Proteas and also in first-class matches with the WSB Cape Cobras." Duminy, who also bowls off-spin, made his test debut in 2008 against Australia in Perth. "In the years ahead, my focus will be placed on attaining limited-overs cricket success for South Africa and the WSB Cape Cobras..." he added. — Reuters



### DEMBELE SUFFERS HAMSTRING INJURY IN FIRST LEAGUE START

**MADRID:** Ousmane Dembele suffered a hamstring injury and was substituted in his first La Liga start for Barcelona during their clash with Getafe yesterday. The French winger was taken off in the 29th minute for Gerard Deulofeu, with the scoreline goalless at the Coliseum Alfonso Perez. "Ousmane Dembele has a hamstring injury in his left leg, more tests are needed to find out the extent of the injury," said Barcelona in a statement. Dembele, Barcelona's record signing, had started against Juventus in the club's 3-0 Champions League win on Tuesday. Reports in Spanish media suggested the 20-year-old would miss three weeks, which includes league fixtures against Eibar, Girona and Las Palmas, as well as a Champions League clash in Lisbon against Sporting. Dembele became Barcelona's record signing in August when the Catalans paid Borussia Dortmund a fee which could reach 147 million euros (\$175.53 million) with add-ons, after Neymar departed for Paris Saint-Germain. — Reuters

### FALCAO TO ADMIT TO TAX FRAUD IN SPAIN

**MADRID:** Colombian footballer Radamel Falcao, who played for Atletico Madrid between 2011 and 2013, will plead guilty to tax fraud in Spain and pay a fine of 6.9 million euros in order to avoid a trial, a source on his legal team said yesterday. Falcao, who now plays in the French league for Monaco, was accused of not properly declaring around 5.6 million euros earned in image rights between 2012 and 2014. The striker will plead guilty to the charge, taking sole responsibility, a source on his legal team said, confirming reports in Spanish newspaper El Mundo. Falcao paid 8.2 million euros to the Spanish authorities in July so the agreement will result in around 1.3 million euros being returned to the player, the source said. The Spanish prosecutor's office was unavailable to confirm the reports. Spanish authorities have investigated numerous football players for allegedly failing to properly declare earnings from image rights.—Reuters



### MOTOR RACING

## VETTEL BEATS RED BULL DUO FOR SINGAPORE POLE

**SINGAPORE:** Ferrari's Sebastian Vettel put himself on pole position to retake the Formula One lead from Lewis Hamilton with a sensational late lap in Singapore Grand Prix qualifying yesterday. Hamilton, who leads the German by three points with seven rounds remaining, qualified his Mercedes only fifth for Sunday's night race with team mate Valtteri Bottas set to start alongside in sixth.

Dutch teenager Max Verstappen will start second for Red Bull, after going fastest in the first two phases of qualifying, with Australian team mate Daniel Ricciardo third and Ferrari's Kimi Raikkonen fourth.

Vettel, who lost the lead to Hamilton at the previous race in Italy, is a four times winner in Singapore and the pole was also his fourth in the city state as well as the 49th of his Formula One career. It was also his third of the season but he had to put everything on the line when it really mattered to beat the Red Bulls in a close-run session, lighting up the timing screens with a lap of one minute 39.491 seconds.

"I'm still full of adrenaline so maybe whatever I say doesn't make any sense," a breathless Vettel, who let out a loud whoop of joy over the team-radio, said after he stepped out of the car. "The car was tricky but it came alive and it was getting better and better as the night progressed, so I'm really happy that we got it done."

### RICCIARDO CONFIDENT

Red Bull had topped the timesheets in every session leading up to qualifying and had looked on course for their first front row lockout since the US Grand Prix in 2013, with Verstappen also fastest in the opening two phases of qualifying.

Had he been on pole, the 19-year-old would have been the youngest driver in the history of the sport to start from the top slot. "I think the final lap was not great but we were quite close so I'm pretty happy with that," said the Dutch driver, who turns 20 in two weeks' time.

"During the race it will be difficult to pass him so we have to see on the first lap," Ricciardo, a winner in Azerbaijan in June, also remained confident. "I'm still confident we'll get victory. I think we've got a good package. Seb turned it on in qualifying but I'm looking forward to tomorrow," said the Australian. There were few smiles at Mercedes, with the champions arriving in Singapore fearing it would be a tough weekend but secretly hoping for better. "You always hope for better but probably its realistically where we are in Singapore," said team boss Toto Wolff. "There seems to be a certain pattern that some cars go better on the slow, twisty stuff. And that is Ferrari and Red Bull." Hamilton, who took a record 69th career pole at Monza by a huge margin, never looked in contention.

"We knew that today would be tough," he said. "I definitely didn't anticipate Ferrari would be as strong as they were. I thought Red Bull would be as quick as they were but we still remain hopeful."

"I got everything I could out of the car, everything and more," he added. Nico Hulkenberg was seventh for Renault ahead of Fernando Alonso and Stoffel Vandoorne, who put both McLarens in the top 10 a day after the former champions agreed to swap Honda power for Renault in 2018.

Spaniard Carlos Sainz, set to move to the works Renault team next year, rounded out the top 10 for Toro Rosso. —Reuters

## KYLE BUSCH WINS PLAYOFF POLE AT CHICAGOLAND SPEEDWAY

**JOLIET:** Kyle Busch raced to the top spot at Chicagoland. But Brad Keselowski was the driver pegged as the No. 1 target by the rest of the Cup field. Keselowski shook up a lazy Friday at Chicagoland Speedway with a tweet that accused NASCAR of letting Toyota get ahead of the rest of the manufacturers.

NASCAR should have been buzzing about the start of its 10-race playoff to crown a champion. Instead, it was 140 characters and verbal jabs that stole the show. Busch opened his bid for a second NASCAR Cup championship with a lap of 187.963 mph to win the pole Friday night at Chicagoland. "I'm way behind in payback, just FYI," Busch said. "He's way ahead. If anybody's going to be getting it, it's going to be him."

Busch and Joe Gibbs Racing teammate Denny Hamlin will start on the front row and fellow Toyota driver Martin Truex Jr. was third. Truex has four wins and the Furniture Row Racing driver is a favorite to win his first career Cup title.

"I'd like to know what Toyota's paying Brad, because he's been our best spokesman," Hamlin said. NASCAR playoff drivers Kevin Harvick, Keselowski and Kyle Larson had the next three spots.

Keselowski said this week Fords didn't have the speed needed to win the championship and suggested the championship finale would be comprised of four Toyota

drivers. "Winning counts and sometimes you have to catch a little bit of luck. That happens. The fastest car doesn't always win. That has been the case a few times with late yellows and so forth," Keselowski said Friday. "Winning races is more than one thing, it always has been and always will be. You always like to be close but right now we aren't close."

Keselowski, the 2012 Cup champion, considers himself a bit of a spokesman at times for the sport given his tenure and accomplishments. He's locked in to a long-term deal with Penske and Ford and has rarely backed down from speaking on the state of the industry.

"I am not looking over my shoulder worrying about getting a ride with another manufacturer one day and that gives me some privileges that maybe some other guys don't have," he said. Busch and Keselowski have long been rivals and tangled on and off the track.

"If you ask Brad, he can fix the world's problems," Busch said. Top 10 spots for other drivers racing for the championship over the final 10 races include: Chase Elliott eighth, Austin Dillon ninth, and Matt Kenseth 10th.

Ryan Blaney is 12th, seven-time champion Jimmie Johnson starts 14th, Ricky Stenhouse Jr. is 15th, Ryan Newman 16th, Kurt Busch 17th, Jamie McMurray 19th and Kasey Kahne 25th. — AP



**JOLIET:** Kyle Busch, driver of the #18 Skittles Sweet Heat Toyota, prepares to practice for the Monster Energy NASCAR Cup Series Tales of the Turtles 400 at Chicagoland Speedway yesterday in Joliet, Illinois. — AFP



**LAKE FOREST:** Marc Leishman of Australia pulls a club from his bag on the eighth hole during the second round of the BMW Championship at Conway Farms Golf Club on Friday in Lake Forest, Illinois. — AFP

### GOLF

## LEISHMAN BACKS GOOD START WITH A LOW SCORE AT BMW

**LAKE FOREST:** Marc Leishman has a short memory when it comes to golf, which only helped him at the BMW Championship. He forgot all about that 62 in the opening round. He was nearly just as good Friday with a 7-under 64 to open a three-shot lead over Jason Day and Rickie Fowler going into the weekend at Conway Farms. "I really took that as a challenge today, to not take it for granted that you're just going to make birdies," Leishman said. "You still have to earn every birdie. I think when you do get ahead of yourself, that's when bad stuff can happen."

There was plenty of good stuff from the guys chasing him in the third FedEx Cup playoff event. Day, who has gone 16 months since his last victory, chipped in from behind the 14th green for his second eagle of the week, and then added a third eagle with one swing. He made a hole-in-one on the 17th hole with a 7-iron that turned into a playoff for multiple parties.

It carried day to a 65, putting him in the last group on the weekend with Leishman. BMW awarded \$100,000 to the Evans Scholars Foundation, and then Day decided to give the car he won to the Evans Scholars, which will yield another full, four-year scholarship for another student.

Fowler also chipped in for eagle on the reachable par-4 15th hole on his way to a 64. "The ultimate goal is to win this week," Day said. "That's the thing I've been trying to do this whole season - at least win once, and try to build on that."

Leishman was at 16-under 126, two short of the 36-hole record Day set at Conway Farms two years ago on his way to a wire-to-wire, six-shot victory. Leishman has some experience with that, but it was long ago and the memory is vague, naturally. He recalls opening with a 70 at the Toyota Southern Classic on the Von Nida Tour in Australia and winning big.

He already has 18 birdies in 36 holes at Conway Farms, where the scoring average was a shade under 69 through two rounds. It hasn't been easy for everyone, particularly defending champion Dustin Johnson. The world's No. 1 player can't seem to buy a putt, and even when he started to make a little progress, he finished bogey-bogey by taking two chips to get on the 17th green and hitting into the water on the 18th. Patrick Cantlay extended his remarkable run this season with a 65, leaving him alone in fourth place but six shots behind. Cantlay returned after three years away to cope with a severe back injury and the death of his close friend and caddie, Chris Roth, who was hit by a car as they were walking to dinner.

Cantlay is playing his 11th tournament this year, yet he is No. 41 in the FedEx Cup and could get into the Tour Championship if he finishes in the top 30 after this week. Phil Mickelson is trying to work his way into the top 30, and while he sputtered with two birdies, two bogeys and too many pars, he drilled an approach to 5 feet on the par-5 14th for an eagle. He shot 69 and was at 7-under 135, in a tie for 12th.

### SUCCESSIVE FINISHES

Jordan Spieth, No. 1 in the FedEx Cup after successive runner-up finishes in the playoff events, only managed a 70 and joined Mickelson in the group at 135. Leishman is hitting his stride at just the right time. Two weeks ago at the TPC

Boston, he took a two-shot lead into the back nine only to get passed by Justin Thomas and Spieth by shooting 40 on the back nine to finish third behind Thomas.

After a week at home in Virginia, with the clubs never leaving the garage, he picked up where he left off. It's easy to overlook Leishman because the Australian has only two PGA Tour victories, including the Arnold Palmer Invitational earlier this year. He's OK with that, and laughs at hearing fans whisper as he walks by, "Who's that bloke?" That was his phrase, though apparently he's heard it Down Under, too. As for that short memory, he does have some specific recall of tournaments long ago. One of them was eight years ago in the Chicago area. It was his rookie season on the PGA Tour. He made an eagle on the 18th hole at the TPC

Boston just to advance to the third round at No. 67. Then, he was paired with Tiger Woods in the final round at Cog Hill. "I remember being really, really nervous on the first tee, which I'm generally not a nervous person, but that was a new thing for me," he said.

He also remembers having an eagle putt on the ninth hole, with Woods well to the right off the tee and then stuck behind a tree. Woods hit a 9-iron out of trouble and ended up making birdie, and he went on to win by eight shots. But that was a big day for Leishman. He tied for second and advanced to the Tour Championship for the first time, leading to his first appearance in the Masters. That's no longer an issue. Leishman now is No. 7 in the FedEx Cup and simply trying to win to get into the top five heading to the Tour Championship. — AP

## AUSTRALIA AND FRANCE LEAD 2-1 IN SEMIFINALS

**LILLE:** Two-time Grand Slam champions Nicolas Mahut and Pierre-Hugues Herbert beat Filip Krajinovic and Nenad Zimonjic 6-1, 6-2, 7-6 (3) for France to lead Serbia 2-1 in the Davis Cup semifinals yesterday.

Apart from a scare in the third set when the Serb pair won four games in a row, Mahut and Herbert were in control on the indoor clay court and put France one win away from its 18th Davis Cup final.

In the other semifinal in Brussels, Australia also needs just one more point to reach the final for the first time since it won the title in 2003 after John Peers and Jordan Thompson breezed past Arthur de Greef and Ruben Bemelmans of Belgium 6-3, 6-4, 6-0.

"It was surprising. Davis Cup doubles you usually see marathon five-setters," Thompson said. A highly anticipated contest between Belgium's David Goffin and Nick Kyrgios could become the climax of today's reverse singles in the Belgian capital.

In the northern city of Lille, the French were flawless on their service games until 5-2 in the third set when Herbert was broken after he hit a double fault. The Serbian duo broke again

following two beautiful winners from Krajinovic - a perfect lob and passing shot - but the French proved stronger in the tiebreaker. "We are super happy and very proud," said Herbert, who won Wimbledon and the US Open with Mahut. "It's never easy to serve for the match, I felt weaker at the worst time." Mahut, who has been hampered by a calf injury in recent weeks, thanked the medical staff for enabling him to play.

"They did not count their hours to put me back on my feet," he said. "This victory is also theirs." Friday's singles were played outdoors but organizers decided to close the roof at Pierre Mauroy Stadium because of forecasts of bad weather.

In the absence of Novak Djokovic, Viktor Troicki, and Janko Tipsarevic, Serbia was given little chance against the French, but Dusan Lajovic gave Serbia a 1-0 lead on Friday before Jo-Wilfried Tsonga won the second singles. In today's first reverse singles, Tsonga can clinch the tie for France with victory over Lajovic. If he fails, the tie will be decided in the final singles between Lucas Pouille and Serb debutant Laslo Djere. — AP



**BRUSSELS:** Australia's John Peers, right, and Jordan Thompson return the ball during a Davis Cup World Group semi-final doubles tennis match against Belgium in Brussels, yesterday. — AP