

Sports

World trounces USA to jump start all-star weekend

Simmons won the battle of two hottest rookies in the league

LOS ANGELES: Team World attacked the rim and dominated from three-point range as the internationals kicked off the NBA 2018 All-Star Weekend festivities with a 155-124 victory over Team USA on Friday. Serbian guard Bogdan Bogdanovic scored 26 points and drained seven of 13 from beyond the arc and his Sacramento Kings teammate Buddy Hield tallied a team-high 29 points in the Rising Stars Game at Staples Center arena. "I got hot first and then Bogie (Bogdanovic) got hot and he continued to stay hot," said Hield, of the game which features 20 of the top first- and second-year NBA players. "I think Bogie had 29 and I had 26. So it was good tonight for both of us."

“World is showing progress catching up to American basketball”

"We represented Sacramento well and represented our countries well. The whole thing was to come here and stay aggressive and get the win." Canada's Jamal Murray, who plays for the Denver Nuggets, delivered 21 points and seven assists and Dario Saric, of Croatia, scored 18 and made four-of-seven three pointers. Boston Celtics Jaylen Brown led Team USA with a game high 35 points and 10 rebounds while Los Angeles Lakers Kyle Kuzma scored 20 points and Jayson Tatum of the Celtics had 15.

Australia's Ben Simmons won the battle of the two hottest rookies in the league this season, scoring 11 points and dishing out 13 assists for Team World compared to Donovan Mitchell's seven points and seven assists for the USA. Team Worlds 10 players came from nine different countries with Canada leading the way

with two, Murray and Toronto's Dillon Brooks. The World led 78-59 at the half then stretched that to a whopping 36 points at the end of the third quarter. Their biggest lead was 39 points.

WORLD BEATERS

"It was the all-star game so it wasn't like a really competitive game," said Hield, of the Bahamas. "But the world is getting better. "I am proud to see a lot of guys around the world from France, Australia, you have (Joel) Embiid from Cameroon. The world is showing progress catching up to American basketball."

The World dominated from three-point range hitting 41 percent (23 of 56) of their attempts compared to just 27 percent for the Americans. "It seemed like somewhere in the late first quarter and early second quarter we just started making a bunch of threes

and pulled away," said World coach Rex Kalamian, who is an assistant coach with the Toronto Raptors. USA coach Roy Rogers said they tried to mix it up in the second half but they just didn't shoot well enough to win.

"Even at halftime we talked about adjustments we were trying to make. They tried. But unfortunately it was just one of those nights where the shots didn't go down for us," said Rogers, an assistant coach with the Houston Rockets. "What I told the guys afterwards is every game is a learning experience.

You choose what you want to learn from this game."



LOS ANGELES: Jaylen Brown #7 of the USA Team goes up for the dunk against the World Team during the Mountain Dew Kickstart Rising Stars Game during All-Star Friday Night as part of 2018 NBA All-Star Weekend at the STAPLES Center on Friday in Los Angeles, California. — AFP

Rogers said he even had to do some in-game coaching because he didn't want it to turn into a slam-dunk contest at the end like several of these all-star games have in the past. "The last two minutes I got on my guys about not finishing the game the right way and they got back on track," he said. "Overall I was satisfied with

their competitive spirit." Rogers said this rookie class is helping re-define the style of play in the NBA.

"It is no longer a cookie-cutter league where big guys just stay on the post," he said. "This rookie class symbolises where the NBA is headed-speed, athleticism and shooting ability." — AFP

It's not finished yet says 'world best' Kohli

JOHANNESBURG: Indian captain Virat Kohli, labelled the best batsman in the world by head coach Ravi Shastri, wants his team to rise to one more challenge before they finish their gruelling South African tour.

"The tour is not over," said Kohli ahead of a three-match Twenty20 series starting at the Wanderers Stadium in Johannesburg on Sunday. After leading India to a crushing 5-1 one-day international series victory to compensate for a 2-1 Test series defeat to the South Africans, Kohli said India were still hungry for success.

"That is the frame of mind we are in and we are looking forward to the T20s now," he said. Kohli capped an exceptional personal performance by hitting 129 not out in the sixth one-day international in Centurion on Friday, taking his aggregate to a world bilateral one-day series record of 558 runs at an average of 186. Shastri lauded Kohli's leadership and his batting skills: "I've seen him batting across all conditions, all formats. It's not just averages, it's the way you get runs, when you get it and then to back those runs up on what the team does. "I would safely say he is the best batsman in the world."

'NO BACKWARD STEPS'

Asked whether he considered himself the best, Kohli told journalists: "I am not competing with anyone. I only look to help my team. If you are thinking about the team special things happen. "If you are thinking about being ahead of someone else, you'll be found



CENTURION: India batsman and captain Virat Kohli celebrates his half century during the sixth One Day International cricket match between South Africa and India at the Super Sport Park in Centurion on Friday. — AFP

out very soon by this game."

Kohli said India had pledged not to take "a backward step" after losing the first two Tests in South Africa. He said their win in the third and final Test had been a turning point. "We have created momentum which has lasted until now. It's with us and we have to make the most of it, even until the last day of the tour."

Ten of the 13 Indian players who appeared in the one-day series are in the T20 squad, while eight of South Africa's squad played in the one-day games. With a Test series against Australia starting on March 1, South Africa have rested all their likely Test players with the exception of AB de Villiers.

De Villiers, who was once himself described by Kohli as the best batsman in the world, had a poor one-day series in comparison to his Indian Premier League teammate, making only 62 runs in three innings and needs to find his best form ahead of the Tests against Australia.

A key for South Africa will be to master Indian wrist spinners Kuldeep Yadav and Yuzvendra Chahal, who took a combined 33 wickets in the one-day games.

Squads:

South Africa: JP Duminy (captain), Farhaan Behardien, Junior Dala, AB de Villiers, Reeza Hendricks, Christiaan Jonker, Heinrich Klaasen (wkt), David Miller, Chris Morris, Dane Paterson, Aaron Phangiso, Andile Phelukwayo, Tabraiz Shamsi, Jon-Jon Smuts.

India: Virat Kohli (captain), Rohit Sharma (vice-captain), Jasprit Bumrah, Yuzvendra Chahal, Shikhar Dhawan, MS Dhoni (wkt), Dinesh Karthik (wkt), Kuldeep Yadav, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Manish Pandey, Hardik Pandya, Axar Patel, Lokesh Rahul, Suresh Raina, Shardul Thakur, Jaydev Unadkat

Fixtures:

March 18, Johannesburg
March 21, Centurion
March 24, Cape Town. — AFP

NZ quick to bury T20 debacle as England loom

AUCKLAND: New Zealand wasted no time debating bowling woes after a record Twenty20 loss to Australia as they regrouped yesterday ahead of their tri-series showdown against England.

Martin Guptill described Friday night's loss to Australia as "disheartening" but quickly added: "We haven't really got a lot of time to dwell on it." When Guptill was flailing away at the top of the New Zealand innings in Auckland, victory seemed certain, which would have made Sunday's clash with England in Hamilton a mere training exercise before Wednesday's final for which Australia had already qualified.

But after the big-hitting opener smacked 105 off 54 balls as New

Zealand posted a seemingly daunting 243, Australia canded the New Zealand bowling to produce the highest run chase in Twenty20 history to win by five wickets.

Ben Wheeler was severely put away and had gone for 64 from 3.1 overs when he was forced out of the attack for bowling two waist-high no balls. Senior bowlers Tim Southee and Trent Boult both went for more than 40 but Guptill refused to blame the attack for the dramatic defeat.

"I don't think you can really say that," he said. "Australia came out and played extremely well and struck it well pretty much from ball one. "To put 240 on the board and to lose the game, it's a little bit disheartening, but we haven't really got a lot of time to dwell on it, because we've got another game in two days' time, so it's a quick turnaround, and get out there tonight."

New Zealand beat England by 12 runs when they met earlier in the week setting up an all-or-nothing showdown today. Should England win the return match, then the side with the superior overall run rate will progress to the final against Australia. —AFP

Kenya's Simader draws inspiration from super-G shock

PYEONGCHANG: Kenya's Sabrina Simader said yesterday she would be inspired to surprise a few people herself after watching Czech skier Ester Ledecka win one of the most astonishing Winter Olympic races of all time.

Simader, the first speed skier to race for Kenya and only its second Winter Olympic athlete, finished 38th out of 44 in the women's super-G, in which Ledecka - better known as a snowboarder - came from nowhere to beat defending champion Anna Veith of Austria by a hundredth of a second.

"It was so cool and so emotional, also for me, because I mean - a Czech girl wins the Olympics, and nobody expected that before," Simader told reporters. "I hope I can also surprise some other people in the next race."

That won't be at the Olympics, however, as the teenager has finished her programme in Pyeongchang - rebounding in the super-G from the disappointment of failing to complete the second run of the giant slalom



PYEONGCHANG: Kenya's Sabrina Simader reacts after competing in the Women's Giant Slalom at the Yongpyong Alpine Centre during the Pyeongchang 2018 Winter Olympic Games in Pyeongchang. — AFP

on Thursday.

It was the biggest milestone yet for the young woman, born in Kenya and raised in Austria, who hated skiing when she first tried it out as a little girl. "I learned it at three years (old) from my stepfather in Austria. He has his own ski lift, a small one, so I learned it there and I fell in love - not at

the beginning, but afterwards."

She remembered her first reaction: "Oh no, it's too cold and I never saw snow and it was like, 'Oh my gosh, no.'" Sixteen years on, she is still living in Austria, training with the Austrian team and hoping she can get more funding to pursue her ambitions in the sport. — Reuters

Iran protests ban on wrestler who threw bout to avoid Israel

TEHRAN: Iran's wrestling federation said late Friday it would protest a decision to ban one of its athletes and the national coach for deliberately throwing a match to avoid fighting an Israeli opponent. Alireza Karimi Mashiani threw a match against his Russian opponent in the under-23 world championships in Poland in November to avoid fighting Israel's Uri Kalashnikov in the next round.

The Islamic republic does not recognise the Jewish state, placing it in the same "Great Satan" category as the United States, and forbids its sportsmen from competing against Israelis.

On Friday, the United World Wrestling Disciplinary Chamber banned Karimi Mashiani from competition for six months, and banned his coach Hamidreza Jamshidi for two years. "The federation will protest the verdict," Iran Wrestling Federation president Rasoul Khadem said on state television. Khadem blamed the ban on pressure from the International Olympic Committee, which he said was itself "under the influence of big political and economic powers of the

world". "During his six-month ban, Karimi Mashiani can take part in domestic competitions and in the final stage of the national team selection. "His ban will be over before the 2018 Jakarta Asian Games and the World Championship," Khadem added.

Karimi Mashiani threw his quarter-final bout against Russian Alikhan Zhabrayilov in the under-86 kilogramme freestyle contest. Footage shows him leading in the match until his coach starts shouting "Alireza, lose" from the sidelines.

Karimi Mashiani then repeatedly rolled over to hand his opponent a dozen points and victory. He also refused to take the mat against an Israeli opponent at the World Championships in Hungary in 2013.

The United World Wrestling Disciplinary Chamber found that Karimi Mashiani "on instruction of his coach Jamshidi, wilfully lost his quarter finals match against Alikhan Zhabrayilov". "Both wrestler and coach were found to have acted in direct violation of the International Wrestling Rules and the UWW Disciplinary Regulations," it said in a statement.

Iran said it had fought for months to limit the impact of the decision and reduce the proposed fine. A statement from the Iran Wrestling Federation on its website said such situations were bound to recur and be even "more serious and complicated" in future.

"It is hoped that a solution is thought of by competent authorities for resolving this issue." — AFP