

Sports

Tampa Bay Rays win, end Houston Astros' 12-game winning streak

Carpenter hit tiebreaking homer as St Louis edged Philadelphia

HOUSTON: Wilson Ramos produced an RBI single in the eighth inning, and the visiting Tampa Bay Rays snapped the Houston Astros' 12-game winning streak with a 2-1 victory on Tuesday at Minute Maid Park. Ramos, who leads all American League catchers in voting for the All-Star Game, lined a pitch from Astros right-hander Hector Rondon that just cleared the glove of leaping third baseman Yuli Gurriel and scored Matt Duffy, who opened the frame with a double to right field. Rondon (1-2) had worked 13 consecutive scoreless appearances, and he stranded Adeiny Hechavarria at second base after entering in relief of Justin Verlander with two outs in the seventh. Duffy and Ramos both went 2-for-4 while Joey Wendle also posted a multi-hit game. The Rays prevented Houston from setting a franchise record for consecutive wins. Right-hander Sergio Romo notched his fourth save by recording the final two outs of the ninth.

CARDINALS 7, PHILLIES 6

Matt Carpenter hit the tiebreaking homer in the ninth inning as part of a three-RBI performance as St. Louis edged host Philadelphia. Carpenter deposited an 0-2 pitch from Phillies right-hander Seranthony Dominguez (1-1) just inside the right-field foul pole with two outs in the ninth. Tommy Pham and Kolten Wong added solo homers for the Cardinals. Odubel Herrera and Carlos Santana homered for Philadelphia, the 11th for each.

GIANTS 6, MARLINS 3

Buster Posey homered and then got involved in a beanball war that prompted the ejection of Miami starting pitcher Dan Straily and manager Don Mattingly, helping San Francisco to extract a small measure of revenge with a win at AT&T Park. After Giants starter Dereck Rodriguez plunked Lewis Brinson, one of the heroes of Miami's come-from-behind win Monday, in the top of the second inning, both pitchers and benches were warned to avoid further retaliation. Mattingly complained to the umpires after they'd warned his team even though it was Brinson who was hit Tuesday night, closing his argument by saying to Posey, "You're next." Sure enough, after the Giants had increased their lead to 3-0 in the third inning, Straily nailed Posey, resulting in the pitcher's ejection, as well as his manager's.

ANGELS 5, DIAMONDBACKS 4

Ian Kinsler homered and Mike Trout reached base four times for the second game in a row, helping Los Angeles snap a three-game losing streak with a narrow win over Arizona. Angels pitcher Felix Pena, making his first career

major league start, gave up one run on two hits and three walks, but lasted just four innings. Four Angels relievers combined to pitch the final five innings, Blake Parker pitching the eighth and ninth for his eighth save. Trout drove in two runs with a single, walked twice and reached on catcher's interference, raising his on-base percentage to a major league-best .469.

ROCKIES 10, METS 8

Nolan Arenado hit the first of three consecutive home runs in a six-run third inning, and Colorado held on to beat visiting New York. Trevor Story and Ian Desmond also homered in the third to help the Rockies end an eight-game home losing streak. It was the longest home losing streak since Colorado lost nine in a row at Mile High Stadium in its inaugural 1993 season. Asdrubal Cabrera and Kevin Plawewski had two hits apiece for New York, which had its three-game winning streak snapped.

TWINS 6, RED SOX 2

Eduardo Escobar knocked a tiebreaking single to center field that plated two runs in a four-run eighth inning to help Minnesota beat Boston to start a three-game series. Escobar's hit trickled past Red Sox center fielder Jackie Bradley Jr. for his second error of the season, scoring Ryan LaMarre from second and Joe Mauer from first to make it 4-2. Escobar went to third on the error. Minnesota reliever Zach Duke (3-2) got the win despite allowing a run on two hits in the eighth inning. Boston reliever Robby Scott (0-1) took the loss in his season debut, permitting two runs on no hits and a walk in one-third of an inning.

DODGERS 4, CUBS 3 (GAME 1)

Pinch hitter Kyle Farmer hit a two-out, two-run double in the ninth inning to give visiting Los Angeles a win over Chicago in the first game of a day-night doubleheader. The afternoon game was rescheduled from Monday night after rain and a failing bank of lights at Wrigley Field forced the postponement of the series opener. It was the first of seven games to be played between the two teams in a span of 10 days. The Dodgers were 1-for-12 with runners in scoring position before Farmer pulled a pitch from Justin Wilson (1-2) down the left field line and into the corner.

CUBS 2, DODGERS 1 (10) (GAME 2)

Albert Almora hit a walk-off RBI single to right field in the 10th inning as Chicago earned a doubleheader split against Los Angeles in the nightcap. Kris Bryant tripled into the right field corner to open the bottom of the 10th against



HOUSTON: George Springer #4 of the Houston Astros slides around Wilson Ramos #40 of the Tampa Bay Rays in the first inning but missed home plate and was called out after being tagged at Minute Maid Park on Tuesday in Houston, Texas. — AFP

Dodgers reliever Brock Stewart (0-1). Javy Baez was intentionally walked before Almora delivered his game-winning hit. Rob Zastryzny (1-0) picked up the victory after recording one out in the 10th when he retired Yasmani Grandal on a fly ball to right field with the bases loaded. The Dodgers were 2-for-15 with runners in scoring position.

RANGERS 4, ROYALS 1

Cole Hamels allowed just four hits and an unearned run in seven innings and rookie third baseman Isiah Kiner-Falefa and right fielder Nomar Mazara each had three-hit games to lead visiting Texas past Kansas City for its fourth straight win. Keone Kela picked up his 17th save in 17 opportunities in 2018 and 19th in a row dating back to last season with a 1-2-3 ninth for the Rangers. Jake Diekmann struck out two in a perfect eighth to garner his eighth hold. Hamels (4-6), who has a 1.45 ERA and .176 opponent batting average in his last five road games, walked three and

struck out seven and departed after throwing 108 pitches, 72 of which were strikes.

AS 4, PADRES 2 (10)

Jed Lowrie hit a two-run homer with two outs in the top of the 10th inning after his team tied the game on a two-out homer in the ninth to give Oakland an inspiring win over San Diego in the opener of a short two-game series at

PETCO PARK

Marcus Semien singled with one out in the 10th and was at third on a stolen base and a throwing error by catcher Raffy Lopez when Lowrie connected on a 374-foot drive to right off Padres right-handed reliever Adam Cimber (3-3). Right-hander Lou Trivino (4-1) struck out two in two perfect innings to earn the win as A's relievers retired 10 of the final 11 Padres batters to end the game. Right-hander Blake Treinen got his 16th save.—Reuters

WORLD CUP 2018

**Today's Matches
(All local timings)**

Denmark	15:00	Australia
France	18:00	Peru
Argentina	21:00	Croatia

Low-key and long-hitting, Johnson reigns as number one

WASHINGTON: Dustin Johnson overcame injuries and personal issues to become a major golf champion, the long-hitting American star with a low-key attitude grabbing the world number one ranking in 2017. After losing the top spot to compatriot Justin Thomas in May, the 33-year-old son-in-law of ice hockey legend Wayne Gretzky bounced back with a PGA Tour win in Memphis to reclaim the top ranking. Even after a disappointing third place finish in the US Open—where he led by four shots through 36 holes only for his putting touch to desert him at the weekend—Johnson, a man figuring to take a leading Ryder Cup role, was promptly installed by Westgate Las Vegas SuperBook as the early 12-1 betting favorite to win the British Open.

US Open winner Brooks Koepka, a good friend of Johnson, sounded like someone who would take that bet. "He's going to win another (major)," Koepka said. "In my mind, he's probably one of the most talented guys to ever play the game. And the attitude, the work ethic, everything that he brings to it—he will, when he's done, go down as one of the best of all time." Johnson joined the US PGA Tour in 2008 and has won at least once in each of his 11 seasons, capturing January's Tournament of Champions in Hawaii before collecting his 18th US PGA title at Memphis.

Johnson matched Tiger Woods for the most tour wins since 2008. "It's very difficult to win out here. The talent level of the guys on tour is very high and it's hard to get it done," Johnson said. "So to win 11 consecutive years is something I'm really proud of and I want to continue that streak as long as I can." The only longer US PGA season win streaks belong to 18-time major winner Jack Nicklaus at 17 and 14-time major champion Woods at 14. Johnson nearly captured his first major title at the 2010 PGA Championship, with a one-shot lead entering the final hole. He appeared to have made bogey after landing in a sandy nature area but was issued a two-stroke penalty after it was deemed he had grounded his club in a bunker, dropping to fifth place.—AFP

Langer hopes Australia will be better for 'brutal' England loss

NOTTINGHAM: Australia coach Justin Langer hopes his side will be better for a "brutal" and record-breaking defeat by England in the third one-day international in Nottingham on Tuesday that was "nothing like" anything he had ever seen before. England piled up 481 for six, the highest ever total in men's ODI history, following hundreds by Alex Hales (147) and Jonny Bairstow (139), with Jason Roy (82) and skipper Eoin Morgan, who made a quickfire 67, also taking part in the Trent Bridge run-spree.

In reply, world champions Australia were dismissed for just 239 as England won by 242 runs—their heaviest victory and Australia's largest defeat, in terms of runs, at this level.

Langer said Australia, now 3-0 down in the five-match contest against 2019 World Cup hosts England, "can't have had a worse day" as they suffered a 14th defeat in 16 completed ODIs. Amid a welter of depressing statistics for the tourists, England hit a staggering 21 sixes and 41 fours, while Australia paceman Andrew Tye's nine wicketless overs cost 100 runs.

'SHOCK'

Former Australia batsman Langer admitted the crushing reverse which condemned his side to their fourth straight bilateral series defeat in this format, topped even an extraordinary 2006 ODI that saw South Africa make 438 for nine in reply to Australia's 434 for four at Johannesburg's Wanderers ground. "It's a shock," said a stunned Langer. "That is literally England at its best. It's no fluke that they are No.1 in the world. I've never seen anything like that. I was in Johannesburg when Australia got 400 and South Africa then got it, but that was just brutal," he added. "Hopefully our young guys can learn from it—it doesn't get harder than that."

Australia are, however, in England without six first-choice players. Former captain Steve Smith and his deputy David Warner, two of the world's best batsmen, are serving

Ashes to kick off new World Test Championship

NEW DELHI: The Ashes between arch rivals England and Australia will kick off the mammoth new World Test Championship in July next year, according to a world governing body schedule released yesterday. The nine top-ranked sides in the world will compete in the new tournament, with each side playing six series on a home-and-away basis against mutually selected opponents in a two-year cycle.

The five-Test ashes will kick off the first championship in July next year, with the top two teams to square off in a June 2021 final. Other Test series in the programme include the West Indies' three-Test tour of



LONDON: Australia's coach Justin Langer (C) takes part in a practice session at the Oval cricket ground in London. — AFP

year-long bans for their roles in March's ball-tampering scandal in Cape Town—which also led to then coach Darren Lehmann's resignation and his subsequent replacement by Langer. In addition, the Ashes-winning fast-bowling trio of Mitchell Starc, Pat Cummins and Josh Hazlewood are all injured, as is all-rounder Mitchell Marsh. The upshot is that Langer has still to enjoy an international win as Australia coach. "I've known what the task is before this game, it's to build a team and to get better," said Langer, once a mentor to former England captain-turned-administrator Andrew Strauss when they both played for Middlesex. "I've got massive respect for England and the way they are playing their cricket," added the 47-year-old West Australian, saying the top three of Roy, Bairstow and Hales reminded him of the celebrated trio of Adam Gilchrist, Matthew Hayden and Ricky Ponting who all played key roles in Australia's 2003 and 2007 World Cup wins. "Their top three are brutal," said Langer. "The way they are playing is reminiscent

of how we used to play in our day with Gilly, Matthew Hayden and Ricky Ponting at the top."

'DAD NOT HEADMASTER'

But Langer was adamant Australia should not have been bowled out with 13 overs left in their innings on the "best batting track in the world" on Tuesday. "We've got to bat against the top and against spin," he said. "For us to get bowled out in the 37th over on the best batting track in the world—there was huge missed opportunities there for some of our batters. Can't have had a worse day."

Meanwhile, Langer said his job was to boost the morale of all his side ahead of Thursday's fourth ODI at Chester-le-Street, the headquarters of northeast county side Durham. "I have to look after them all. These are the days when you are like a dad not a headmaster. We'll look after them. It was a tough day but we'll keep chipping away at it tomorrow." — AFP

India and New Zealand hosting Sri Lanka, both in July, while the last league game will be in April 2021 with the West Indies visiting Sri Lanka. Meanwhile Pakistan, who start their Test championship journey in October next year in Sri Lanka, have not been given a series against India amid growing political tensions between the two countries.

South Africa will kickstart their campaign in India in October 2019. The ICC gave its nod to the Test championship last year as part of measures to boost the flagging fortunes of the traditional five-day format beloved of purists but with often lacklustre spectator and television viewer numbers. ICC chief executive David Richardson called it a "genuine solution that gives fans around the world the chance to engage regularly with international cricket that has meaning and the possibility of a global title at the end". The new Future Tours Programme (FTP) released by the ICC features all series and tournaments of Test, ODI and Twenty20 cricket for the 2019-2023 period.

New Test entrants Ireland and Afghanistan will play

against each other in February next year and go onto play 12 five-day games each between 2019 and 2022.

Afghanistan have matches scheduled at their home base India and away against Australia, while Ireland will host New Zealand and travel to England. The 12 Test playing nations and the Netherlands will also participate in a 13-team one-day international League that will act as a qualification pathway for the 50-over 2023 World Cup.

Hosts India along with the seven highest-ranked sides in the ODI league at the end of March 2022 will directly qualify, while the bottom five sides will get a second chance to enter through qualifiers.

The structure of the men's FTP (2018-23) includes: ICC Cricket World Cup - 2019 and 2023 ICC World T20 - 2020 and 2021 World Test Championship Cycle 1 - 2019-2021 (final 2021) Cycle 2 - 2021-2023 (final 2023)

All bilateral Tests, ODIs and T20Is outside of the above competitions. — AFP