

Sports

Sun eclipsed at world swim as Milak crushes Phelps record

Brutal schedule looked to have taken its toll on Sun

GWANGJU: Chinese giant Sun Yang suffered defeat yesterday after an emotional week in which he has clashed with rival swimmers over doping allegations, while Hungarian teenager Kristof Milak shattered Michael Phelps's 200m butterfly world record. Triple Olympic champion Sun had already retained his 200 and 400m crown in Gwangju but he finished a distant sixth in the 800m final behind Italian Gregorio Paltrinieri, who claimed gold in seven minutes, 39.27 seconds from Norway's Henrik Christiansen.

A brutal schedule looked to have taken its toll on Sun, who has been involved in angry confrontations with Australian Mack Horton and Britain's Duncan Scott after they snubbed him at two different medal ceremonies in response to bombshell claims made in a FINA doping panel report. The leaked document alleged that Sun destroyed blood samples after he was visited by testers last year. After taking bronze behind Milak, South Africa's Chad le Clos weighed in as the sample-smashing row rumbled on.

"They should all be banned for life, the guys that have cheated," he sniffed. "What Duncan did was fantastic." Sun has yet to address the subject but the 27-year-old admitted a pile-up of races had taken its toll. "I was exhausted," winced the Chinese idol. "My legs and arms felt sore — the hardest part is juggling a tight schedule but I'll have to do that at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics." An 11-time world champion, Sun accused Horton of "disrespecting China" by refusing to step onto the podium for the winner's national anthem after the 400m final at the weekend.

And Sun, who has complained privately of being shunned by other athletes in Korea, went eyeball to

eyeball with Scott after Tuesday's 200m medal presentation. The Briton ignored Sun's offer of a handshake and would not join him on the top step for photos, sparking a fiery reaction from the Chinese star. He wagged his finger in Scott's face and yelled: "You loser, I win!" Both men received formal warnings from FINA, as did Horton, but several athletes have come out in support of their silent protests.

'Great move'

Le Clos added: "He respected the podium, didn't shake his hand and I respect that. Great move by him." Horton called Sun a "drug cheat" at the 2016 Rio Olympics in reference to a three-month ban Sun had previously served for taking a stimulant he has always maintained was approved medication for a heart problem. The Australian reignited their war of words with his snub at the weekend, prompting Chinese state-run media to brand him a "clown" and online trolls to leave death threats on his social media accounts.

Meanwhile, Milak stormed to gold in the men's 200m fly, clocking a blistering 1:50.73 to obliterate Phelps's 10-year-old mark by almost eight tenths. "It's a tremendous honour to beat such a great record," said the 19-year-old, who was in elementary school when American legend Phelps went 1:51.51 at the 2009 world championships in Rome. "Everyone will try to catch me, but I will be ready." Elsewhere, Italian Federica Pellegrini retained her 200m freestyle title in 1:54.22, while Britain's Adam Peaty completed an unprecedented hat-trick of world doubles in the 50 and 100m breaststroke as he romped to gold in the



GWANGJU: Hungary's Kristof Milak competes in the final of the men's 200m butterfly event during the swimming competition at the 2019 World Championships at Nambu University Municipal Aquatics Center. — AFP

one-lap final in 26.06.

The 24-year-old, who smashed his own 100m world record earlier this week, also helped Britain to bronze in the mixed 4x100m medley relay. Cate Campbell blew past American Simone Manuel with an

extraordinary anchor leg to bring Australia gold in 3:39.08. "I feel like a bear who's been in hibernation," said Campbell after two days off. "I was starting to get a little bit restless — there are only so many episodes of 'Friends' I can watch." — AFP

Alarm in New Zealand as school rugby numbers drop

WELLINGTON: As the All Blacks chase a third straight World Cup in Japan, the schoolboy rugby competitions that forged many of New Zealand's stars face an "alarming" fall in player numbers amid concerns about elite schools poaching top talent. Schoolboy rugby is a big deal in New Zealand — senior matches are televised nationally and the rivalries between some schools date back more than a century.

Before Jonah Lomu, Richie McCaw and Dan Carter became All Blacks legends, they were honing their skills for Wesley College, Otago Boys' High and Christchurch Boys' High respectively. The prestigious Auckland Grammar boasts that 51 All Blacks have emerged from its rugby program, while Christchurch Boys' High (46) and Wellington College (35) have similar pedigrees. "It's part of the fabric of New Zealand society, rugby in all walks of life is, and certainly we've got strong traditions in our schools," said Peter Gall, who co-authored an independent report into secondary schools rugby released earlier this year.

The report, commissioned by New Zealand Rugby, found that while the game was booming among schoolgirls, boys were increasingly turning to alternative sports such as basketball. "The numbers of boys playing the game at secondary school is trending downwards at an alarming rate, especially considering the overall secondary school roll has been steadily increasing," it said.

"Decreasing numbers of players leads to fewer teams and problems in forming meaningful, viable competitions." Figures from School Sport NZ show the number of schoolboy rugby players declined from 25,841 in 2014 to 21,532 in 2018, a fall of 17 percent. Over the same period, basketball's popularity surged 41 percent from 13,130 to 18,498. In Auckland, the number of secondary school rugby teams fell from 225 to 181 between 2013 and 2018, a trend Gall said was echoed nationwide.

'Brazen' poaching

The report pointed to a range of reasons for the decline, including the "fragmented



WELLINGTON: In this picture taken on July 3, 2019, Nelson College's Taya Brown (C) is tackled by Whanganui's Harry Godfrey during the Quadrangular Rugby Tournament match between Nelson College and Whanganui Collegiate. — AFP

and confusing" structure of schoolboy competitions, a lack of qualified coaches and concern over the physical nature of the game. It also said the hyper-competitive nature of some competitions, with schools running rugby programs akin to semi-professional academies, was "creating disquiet and questionable outcomes".

The report's release came shortly after controversy blew up in the Auckland 1A competition, when schools threatened to boycott St Kentigern College over its recruitment policies. The row highlighted many of the concerns in Gall's report, with the wealthy private school accused of using scholarships to lure top talent that delivered it five titles in seven years.

"They're not building from the ground up, from year nine to 11. They're going after the superstars and it's brazen," Napier Boys' High principal Matthew Bertram said at the time. St Kentigern eventually backed down and signed a code of conduct imposing conditions on player recruitment. But Gall said the issue was not confined to one school. Students cited in the report said that a win-at-all-costs mentality had detracted from their enjoyment of rugby.

'At war with the clubs'

Gall said a major problem was in-fighting

always wanted to win a second one. I didn't want to just have Houston," said Herman, who shot a final round two-under 70. He rolled in three birdies and had one bogey on Sunday to finish with a 26-under 262 total on the Keene Trace Golf Club course in Nicholasville, Kentucky. Kraft was in contention on the back nine until he made back-to-back bogeys on 16 and 17 which left Herman needing just a par on the par-four 18 to take the title.

Herman coolly landed his approach on the green then two putted for the victory. "If you are not making birdies you are going to be chasing," Herman said. "We just held off everyone else. It was just the two of us coming down stretch he made a couple of mistakes." Kraft shot a 70 while Austria's Sepp Straka made a late charge but finished two shots back in sole third place after a six-

between schools, clubs and provincial unions over control of schoolboy competitions. He said without good governance it was difficult to adopt policies to make the game more inclusive, encourage participation and place emphasis on values, rather than just winning. "It can't be done on an ad hoc basis, there needs to be more planning and strategic thinking about how to grow the game," he said. "There needs to be a lot more cooperation... and less self-interest. "There's some provinces where the clubs are at war with each other and at war with the school and the schools are at war with the clubs and the provincial union. That can't go on."

In response to the report, New Zealand Rugby has appointed a secondary schools manager and is formulating a new structure to oversee how the game is run. Gall said one benefit of maintaining a healthy schoolboy rugby scene was the conveyor belt of talent for the All Blacks and other New Zealand teams. "Rugby's still a big sport and has a large following, it's not like it's going to fall over," he said. "It will always be there at schoolboy level but, saying that, by building up the base of the pyramid with greater participation rates you're creating more opportunities for the cream to rise to the top." — AFP

under 66. Australia's Matt Jones fired a 63 to finish in a tie for fourth with Austin Cook who had a 70.

The 41-year-old Herman is a former assistant pro at one of President Donald Trump's golf courses in New Jersey. He says he played a round recently with the President and got some putting advice which he put to good use. "He gets me going in the right direction with golf," said Herman. "I took his advice and put a new putter in play." Some might find it odd that a PGA Tour player would be taking advice from Trump, who has been accused of inflating his golf accomplishments and his claims to have won 18 club championships have also been widely challenged by a number of golf experts. But Herman said his former employer inspires him. "He motivates me and puts me in a good spot," Herman said. — AFP

Russian boxer Maxim Dadashev dies after fight

MOSCOW: Russian boxer Maxim Dadashev has died from brain injuries sustained in a fight in Maryland, the Russian boxing federation announced on Tuesday. "Maxim Dadashev has died in the United States following injuries sustained during his fight with Subriel Matias," the federation said in a statement. The 28-year-old underwent emergency brain surgery in Washington after his super-lightweight bout with Puerto Rican Matias on Friday was stopped after the 11th round by his cornerman James "Buddy" McGirt.

Dadashev, known as "Mad Max", was unable to walk to the dressing room and was immediately hospitalized. Doctors operated to relieve pressure from swelling on his brain. McGirt, who said after the fight he "couldn't convince" his fighter to stop but opted to throw in the towel when he saw him "getting hit with more and more clean shots as the fight went on," told ESPN on Tuesday he was wracking his brain wondering if he could have done things differently.



LAS VEGAS: In this file photo taken on October 20, 2018, Maxim Dadashev (L) of Russia battles with Antonio de Marco of Mexico during a super lightweight bout. — AFP

No-deal Brexit could spell end of 'Kolpak' players

LONDON: A no-deal Brexit could mean "Kolpak" cricketers are gone from the English county game by 2021, according to updated guidance from the England and Wales Cricket Board. The Kolpak ruling means that citizens of countries that have signed European Union Association Agreements, who are lawfully working within an EU country, have the same free movement rights as EU citizens.

Kolpak signings as well as cricketers with EU passports are currently eligible

"It just makes you realize what type of sport we're in, man," McGirt told ESPN — which streamed the fight on its ESPN+ platform. "He did everything right in training, no problems, no nothing. My mind is like really running crazy, right now. Like what could I have done differently? But at the end of the day, everything was fine (in training). "He seemed OK, he was ready, but it's the sport that we're in. It just takes one punch, man."

Russian boxing chief Umar Kremlev told Russian media that Dadashev's body would be repatriated home and that his family would receive financial aid. Dadashev's widow, Elizaveta Apushkina, also issued a statement, confirming the fighter's death "with great sadness. "He was a very kind person who fought until the very end. Our son will continue be raised to be a great man like his father," she said of the St. Petersburg-born fighter who trained in Oxnard, California.

Dadashev took an unbeaten 13-0 record into the 140-pound non-title fight. Dadashev, whose manager Egis Klimas also handles Vasily Lomachenko and Sergey Kovalev, turned pro in April of 2016 and relocated to Southern California to pursue his ring ambitions, eventually signing with promoters Top Rank. Top Rank chairman Bob Arum issued a statement recalling Dadashev as "a terrific young man." ESPN, which streamed the bout on ESPN+, also issued a statement. — AFP

Herman wins Barbasol Championship

LOS ANGELES: Jim Herman finally earned that elusive second PGA title of his career, winning the Barbasol Championship by one stroke over Kelly Kraft who stumbled to the finish with two bogeys down the stretch. Herman's only other win on the PGA Tour came three years ago when he captured the Houston Open by one shot over Henrik Stenson of Sweden.

"The last couple of years have been a little lean. A lot of missed cuts. I never lost hope. I

to play in England without counting as an "overseas" player, employment rulings that would both be directly affected by Britain's withdrawal from the European Union. The ECB has issued an email to the 18 first-class counties noting a series of potential implications. One such outcome involves the United Kingdom departing from the EU on October 31 without an agreement, which has frequently been floated by incoming prime minister Boris Johnson.

In that case new Kolpak registrations would be impossible and existing deals would likely cease at the end of the 2020 season. There are dozens of Kolpaks signed to counties, with the most high-profile including former South Africa international Morne Morkel, Wayne Parnell, Duanne Olivier, Simon Harmer and Kyle Abbott. Some would be easily earn overseas deals in the event of their current status being revoked but many more would expect to leave the county circuit. — AFP