

Sports

IAAF has been left 'frustrated' as Russian athletes ban upheld

IAAF to rebrand as World Athletics

MONACO: The IAAF has been left "frustrated" by Russian back-sliding on issues critical to the country's reintegration into global track and field, a top official said yesterday. Rune Andersen, head of the doping task force for the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF), said he had recommended to the 27-strong IAAF Council, which duly followed his advice, that it uphold its ban on Russian athletes, first imposed in 2015 over mass state-sponsored doping.

Andersen said Russia had paid out more than \$3.2 million (2.8m euros) for the Task Force's work and had also committed to paying any more costs, so the "cost condition has been met". He added "progress has been made on the second outstanding issue," that of retrieving data and samples from a Moscow laboratory at the heart of the scandal.

Those have been passed on to the Athletics Integrity Unit (AIU), a watchdog founded by the IAAF to combat doping in the sport, and it will not be until they report back that they have everything they need that the Task Force will consider that issue resolved.

The AIU are also investigating whether Russian athletics federation (RUSAF) officials were involved in the alleged cover up of a doping offence by high jumper Danil Lysenko. "Reinstatement cannot be considered while that investigation remains pending," Andersen said. A Sunday Times story on June 2 alleged RUSAF officials had fabricated documents to show Lysenko, the 2017 world silver medalist, was too ill to provide his whereabouts after failing to make himself available for out-of-competition drug testing.

Russia authorities came out blazing, saying they were victims of an "information war" and questioning the timing of the story ahead of the IAAF Council meeting.

BANNED COACHES, DOCTORS

"Finally the Task Force noted recent allegations that

banned coaches and banned doctors continue to work with Russian athletes," Andersen said.

"If so, that calls into question whether RUSAF is able to enforce doping bans and whether all RUSAF athletes have embraced the change to a new anti-doping culture proclaimed by RUSAF, both of which are conditions to reinstatement.

"The Task Force shares the Council's frustration at progress in two areas being undermined by apparent back sliding in two other areas. "It hopes the outstanding issues can be resolved soon."

The last global event Russia appeared in was the 2015 Beijing world championships, but dozens of Russian athletes cleared by the IAAF have gone on to compete as neutrals.

While US-based long jumper Darya Klishina was the sole Russian athlete cleared to participate at the 2016 Rio Olympics, 74 Russian athletes competed as neutrals last year and 68 have been cleared since the start of 2019. The next chance Russia has of seeing the ban overturned will be at a IAAF Council meeting in Doha just days before the September 27-October 6 world championships in the Qatari capital, leaving a hypothetical window open for its reintegration almost four years on from the initial ban.

Meanwhile, world athletics' governing body, the IAAF, is to rebrand as World Athletics, it was announced yesterday. The International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) was initially founded in 1912 as the International Amateur Athletic Federation.

The body, currently presided over by Britain's two-time Olympic 1500m gold medalist Sebastian Coe, took its present name in 2001 and World Athletics should be operational from October.

"World Athletics' builds upon the organisation's restructuring and governance reform agenda of the past four years to represent a modern, more creative and positive face for the sport," said Coe, who took



IAAF president Sebastian Coe (left) and Rune Andersen.

over from disgraced long-time head Lamine Diack in August 2015.

Coe said the IAAF Council, meeting in Monaco, agreed it made "the sport more accessible to a wider audience while giving the global governing body the opportunity to more clearly communicate its mission as the leader of the world's most participatory sport".

"The hope is that our new brand will help attract and engage a new generation of young people to athletics." IAAF CEO Jon Ridgeon was slightly blunter in his

assessment of the IAAF brand.

"The IAAF name has been in existence for over 100 years, but it has little understanding or relevance to those outside of athletics," he said. "The new identity creates a symbol that can stand alone and work with partners and events."

The new brand identity will begin its rollout in October after the world championships in Doha and following congress' approval of the change to the federation's legal name. — AFP

Rugby Australia slams Folau 'media campaign' after leaked letter

SYDNEY: Rugby Australia has lashed out at Israel Folau for disrupting the sport after an explosive letter accusing the governing body of leaking details of his code of conduct hearing was made public. Folau sent the letter to the Rugby Australia board after Sydney's Daily Telegraph ran a series of stories last week on his dramatic fall from grace for homophobic comments on social media.

The reports included intimate details of his tribunal hearing, which was meant to be private. Super Rugby's

record try scorer opted not to appeal against the ruling that he was guilty of a "high level" breach of the sport's code of conduct and instead launched legal action, asserting he was simply posting a message from the Bible. In his letter, which was also obtained by the Telegraph and published on Saturday evening, Folau alleged that Rugby Australia was the source of the leaks, which he called "blatantly unfair". "I would like to know why Rugby Australia has not managed to maintain the integrity of its processes and ensure that information was kept private and confidential," he said.

"For example, I am not 'sick of rugby' and whoever told the media that I am is telling lies. "Another example is the way the media has been told that your expectations were made clear to me by Ms (Raelene) Castle. We all know that is far from the truth," he added, referring to Rugby Australia's chief executive.

"It makes me sad that these things have apparently been told to the media by someone at Rugby Australia. If you are not the source, why has no one come out to set

the record straight?" Rugby Australia hit back in a statement, saying the "media campaign" being run by Folau's camp was affecting all levels of rugby and had overshadowed a crunch Super Rugby match between the NSW Waratahs-Folau's former team and the ACT Brumbies in Sydney.

"Rugby Australia has acted with complete professionalism and integrity at all times through the process in which Mr Folau was found by an independent three-member tribunal panel to have made multiple, serious breaches of the Professional Players Code of Conduct," it said. "While we will continue to respond to any legal action as required and will continue to defend the values that underpin our game and the work done by the hard working volunteers, we will not engage in a running media commentary."

Folau's Instagram post that "Hell awaits" gays and others he considers sinners sparked heated debate in Australia, with some defending his right to express views he sees as central to his religious beliefs. — AFP

Jaguares outplay Sharks to win South African conference

Buenos Aires: The Argentine Jaguares won the South African conference and secured a home quarter-final in Super Rugby when they outplayed the Coastal Sharks 34-7 in Buenos Aires Saturday.

Full-back Emiliano Boffelli and winger Sebastian Cancelliere scored two tries each as the home side romped to a bonus-point victory after leading 12-0 at half-time. The winning margin could have been much wider as fly-half Joaquin Diaz Bonilla missed four of eight shots at goal and Boffelli failed with his only penalty attempt.

Topping the South African table confirmed the progress of the Jaguares, who won just four matches of 15 three years ago in their debut season. Beating the Sharks gave the South Africans a 10 win-five loss record this season and they are set to triumph at home to bottom team the Sunwolves next Friday in the final league round.

If the Jaguares win, they will finish second overall behind runaway leaders the Canterbury Crusaders of New Zealand, and enjoy home advantage again if they reach the semi-finals. The Crusaders, seeking a third consecutive title and 10th overall, are on 58 points having completed their 16-match regular season schedule.

Jaguares have 46 points and the ACT Brumbies from Australia 43 and both are assured of home quarter-finals, along with the fourth-placed Wellington Hurricanes from New Zealand. "Winning the South African conference with a match to spare is a wonderful achievement for us," said Jaguares skipper and centre Jeronimo de la Fuente. "The side did not start the season particularly well, but winning twice on our last visit to South Africa and winning three of four matches in Australasia turned it around. "I congratulate all the players in the squad, the coaches and the management for a job well done. We have worked hard and deserve whatever success comes our way."

Sharks skipper and scrum-half Louis Schreuder said: "We had to start well to have any chance of winning here, but instead we found ourselves on the back foot for most of the first half. "We conceded too many penalties during the opening 40 minutes, which often turned promising attacking situations into a need to defend near our tryline.

"However, we are not out of the running for a quarter-finals place. If we can beat the Stormers in Cape Town next Saturday, I believe we will make it." Cancelliere held off rival winger Makazole Mapimpi to score the first Jaguares try after only four minutes and Boffelli then got his first, which Diaz Bonilla converted for a 12-point advantage.

Instead of scoring to nudge back into contention, the Sharks conceded further tries to Boffelli and Cancelliere and trailed 29-0 by the hour mark. The Sharks finally scored 12 minutes from time at Estadio Jose Amalfitani when centre Andre Esterhuizen powered over after a rolling maul and full-back Curwin Bosch converted.

But the Jaguares had the final say in the 80th minute when winger Santiago Carreras ran on to a grubber kick and dotted down for his first Super Rugby try. — AFP

Sir Winston wins 151st Belmont Stakes in upset

ELMONT: Sir Winston came from behind to win the 151st running of the \$1.5 million Belmont Stakes in Elmont, New York by a length on Saturday. Favourite Tacitus, whose late charge came up short, was second and Joveia third around the sprawling, 1 1/2-mile dirt track on a warm, sunny day.

Sir Winston came on strong late, moving from the rail to the outside down the stretch to overtake pace-setter Joveia and finish in a relatively slow two minutes, 28.30 seconds. While making his move, Sir Winston appeared to cut off Preakness Stakes winner War of Will, initially raising the prospect of a challenge similar to one that disqualified Maximum Security after it crossed the line first at this year's Kentucky Derby.

Both Sir Winston and War of Will, however, are trained by Mark Casse and no protest was made. "I said all week long that he was doing really well," a smiling Casse said of the 10-1 winner. "What can I say, it's just exciting."

He said second-favourite War of Will, ridden by Tyler Gaffalione, did not run his best race on Saturday. "I could see War of Will was struggling," Casse said. "He was maybe a little flat today and I saw jockey Joel (Rosario) cut the corner a little bit (on Sir Winston) and I could see where War of Will was getting a little weary."

The win was just the third in 10 starts for Sir Winston, who finished second in the Peter Pan Stakes at Belmont last month. The race is the final leg of US thoroughbred racing's Triple Crown, which was not up for grabs after Kentucky Derby winner Country House did not run in the Preakness due to illness. He did not compete at Belmont either.

The race caps a wild Triple Crown season that saw the first disqualification of a horse that crossed the line first at Churchill Downs and a rider thrown from his horse at the start of the Preakness.

The races were also contested amid growing controversy around the sport as 27 horses have died at Southern California's Santa Anita Park since the racing season began in late December. The latest fatality came on Wednesday when two-year-old colt Derby River was euthanized after suffering a fractured shoulder, renewing calls for a suspension of racing at the venue. — Reuters



MONTREAL: Pole position qualifier Sebastian Vettel of Germany and Ferrari and second place qualifier Lewis Hamilton of Great Britain and Mercedes GP talk in parc ferme during qualifying for the F1 Grand Prix of Canada at Circuit Gilles Villeneuve in Montreal, Canada. — AFP

Vettel grabs dramatic pole

MONTREAL: Sebastian Vettel ended Mercedes' run of early-season qualifying supremacy on Saturday when he claimed a dramatic late pole position for Ferrari in a crash-hit showdown at the Canadian Grand Prix.

"I feel so very, very happy for the team," Vettel said. "I am full of adrenaline and the last few weeks have been tough for us. The car felt very good and now I hope we can carry that into the race." The four-time champion repeated his 2018 success, when he won from pole, by outpacing championship leader Lewis Hamilton of Mercedes by two-tenths of a second at the Circuit Gilles Villeneuve. It was Vettel's first pole position triumph of the season, his first pole in 17 races since last year's German Grand Prix and a signal that Ferrari's superior straight-line speed was well-suited to the track.

"Seb did a stunning lap and he deserved to be on pole," said Mercedes team chief Toto Wolff. "Lewis picked up a couple of mistakes in the hairpin." Defending five-time champion Hamilton of Mercedes had appeared to be on course for his record seventh Canadian pole until the final laps, when he was outpaced by Vettel in the dying seconds. "We're certainly very happy and the entire weekend here we have been performing ok so this is a positive surprise for us," said Ferrari team boss Mattia Binotto. "The track will improve. It will be a lot hotter day so it will be a tough race."

Vettel's Ferrari team-mate Charles Leclerc claimed third place on the grid. "I don't really know how I struggled with

the car and the set-up," he said. "Congratulations to Seb. He deserves it and hopefully I'll have a better race from my side tomorrow.

"We are strong on the long run pace and hopefully it will be the same tomorrow and we can have a good run."

Vettel beamed as he talked to a congratulatory Hamilton after the session. Vettel clocked a best lap of one minute and 10.240 seconds to beat Hamilton's lap in 1:10.446. "He's bloody good in qualifying," said Vettel, pointing to Hamilton. "Hard to crack... I really enjoyed it."

"You know what, the feeling in the car when it just keeps coming and the feeling - it felt so good. I enjoyed it and I'm very happy and happy for the team over the last few races, it's been very tough." Hamilton said: "I don't feel disappointment. We gave it everything I had got. They were faster and in the last sector they were killing us, the timing was right, procedures were perfect, we had P1 for a second, but we knew they were quick.

"I'm glad I was able to split the Ferraris. The weather is fantastic, we've got some great fans here so hopefully we can put on a great show." Mercedes had been fastest in qualifying in five of the six races since the start of the year and will now face a battle to extend their record run of six season-opening wins in Sunday's race.

It was the 56th pole position of Vettel's career and came after Kevin Magnussen had crashed into the "wall of champions" in his Haas car at the end of Q2. He was unhurt. Daniel Ricciardo of Renault qualified fourth, ahead of Pierre Gasly of Red Bull and Valtteri Bottas in the second Mercedes. The Finn spun in Q3 and was unable to recover and clock an improved lap.

Nico Hulkenberg was seventh in the second Renault ahead of the two McLarens of Lando Norris and Carlos Sainz. Magnussen qualified 10th. — AFP