

## Sports

Photo of the day



Max Verstappen of Netherlands and Red Bull Racing celebrates with his team in the F1 Grand Prix of Abu Dhabi. —Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

## Celtics confirm death of 12-time champion KC Jones

NEW YORK: KC Jones, a 12-time NBA champion as a player and coach and 1956 Olympic gold medalist, has died, his former club the Boston Celtics announced. He was 88. Jones, who was inducted into the Basketball Hall of Fame in 1989, captured 10 titles as a player, two more as a coach and two others as an assistant coach. "The Celtics family mourns the loss of twelve-time NBA champion, two-time NCAA champion, Gold medal-winning Olympian and Hall of Famer KC Jones as we celebrate his remarkable career and life," the Celtics said in a statement.

Jones played college basketball at the University of San Francisco, winning 1955 and 1956 national crowns and a 1956 Melbourne Olympics title alongside future Celtics teammate Bill Russell. Russell tweeted that he was told Jones died Friday morning. "The way that he was revered by the players he played with, by the people he worked with, by the players that played for him, he was special," said current Celtics coach Brad Stevens. With the Celtics, Jones won eight consecutive titles from 1959 to 1966. The club retired his jersey number, 25, in 1967.

Only Celtics teammates Russell and Sam Jones won more career NBA titles as players. "Where KC Jones went, winning was sure to follow," the Celtics said. Jones joined Russell, Michael Jordan, Magic Johnson, Quinn Buckner, Jerry Lucas and Clyde Lovellette as the only players to complete the "Triple Crown" of NBA and NCAA titles plus Olympic gold. Jones served as an assistant coach for the 1972 NBA champions Los Angeles Lakers and served as head coach for the Washington Bullets for three seasons, but he joined the Celtics coaching staff in 1978 and was an assistant when they won the 1981 NBA crown. —AFP

## Gutsy Rahane century puts India in driving seat against Australia

## India build an ominous 82-run lead

MELBOURNE: Stand-in skipper Ajinkya Rahane rode his luck to hit a gritty unbeaten century as India built an ominous 82-run lead over Australia on day two to take a stranglehold on the second Test in Melbourne yesterday. It was a determined and crucial knock against a world-class attack by the mid-mannered 32-year-old, who assumed the captaincy from Virat Kohli after he returned home for the birth of his first child.

Batting at four, he faced 200 balls for his 104 to steer India to 277 for five before rain ended play 15 minutes early. Ravindra Jadeja was not out 40. The hosts took just four wickets during a frustrating day in the field as the match began to slip away with India zeroing in on levelling the series after losing the first Test by eight wickets in Adelaide.

"Not our best day, but not our worst," said Australia's Mitchell Starc, who has two wickets but also saw catches put down off his bowling. "Jinx (Rahane) batted really well through the day there and they had some pretty good partnerships. "I thought there was some really good stuff from us as well, we just didn't capitalize on some of the chances we created to finish in a better position. "We're just going to have to back up tomorrow and take five wickets as quick as we can."

While Rahane was the hero, it was a gutsy Indian team performance, with three 50-plus wicket partnerships to help silence their critics after being skittled for their all-time low of 36 last week. Debutant Shubman Gill chipped in with an impressive 45 and paid tribute to Rahane. "His knock was all about patience. Sometimes against such a high-quality bowling attack you go into your shell and then you're not able to score runs," he said. "The way Ajinkya played, it was such a magnificent knock to watch, the way he

saw off the tough periods and the loose balls he was making sure he put them all away."

## Problems

On a steamy day at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, India resumed on 36 for one in reply to Australia's first innings 195, having weathered 11 overs Saturday when they lost Mayank Agarwal for a duck to Starc. In an action-packed morning, the Australian attack consistently hit its line and length with Pat Cummins bagging Gill then the experienced Cheteshwar Pujara for 17. That brought Rahane to the crease and - first with Hanuma Vihari, then Rishabh Pant and finally Jadeja - he built half-century stands to put India in a strong position. He brought up his 12th Test ton in his 67th game, and his second in Melbourne, with a four off Cummins, but he enjoyed some good fortune. Australia removed first slip during Starc's first spell in the final session and lived to regret it with Rahane getting an edge on 57 that would almost certainly have been caught if the fielder was there.

He had a huge let-off on 73 when he was dropped at second slip by Steve Smith and again on 104 when the ball popped out of Travis Head's hands as he landed after taking the catch. Jadeja, back in the team after missing the first Test injured, ably supported Rahane after Vihari fell for 21 attempting to sweep Nathan Lyon, with Smith taking the catch. That brought the exuberant Pant to the crease. Preferred to Wriddhiman Saha as wicketkeeper, he scored a breezy 29 before becoming Starc's 250th Test victim, caught by Tim Paine for his 150th dismissal.

India were reduced to 64 for three before lunch after Cummins caused all sorts of problems. He signaled his intent with the first ball of the day, which zipped past



MELBOURNE: India's Ajinkya Rahane (left) celebrates scoring his century (100 runs) as teammate Ravi Jadeja (right) looks on during the second day of the second cricket Test match between Australia and India at the MCG in Melbourne yesterday. —AFP

Pujara's bat. Paine called for a review, believing it took a nick, but replays showed it was not out. Cummins finally got the wicket he deserved when Gill, who added 17 to

his overnight score, got a nick and Paine took the catch. He then removed Pujara, again enticing an edge with Paine holding a brilliant diving catch. —AFP

## Momota wins Japan title to cap comeback after car crash

TOKYO: Badminton world number one Kento Momota won the All-Japan championships yesterday to complete the first step of his comeback, nearly a year after suffering serious injuries in a car crash. Momota came from behind to beat world number 11 Kanta Tsuneyama 18-21, 21-12, 21-17 in Tokyo, marking a successful return from the accident that left him fearing his career might be over after fracturing an eye socket.

"The win gave Momota his third straight national title, and he immediately turned his thoughts towards making his international comeback at the Thailand Open in January. "I had the initiative in the first game but then I started to lose my cool once I had the lead," said Momota. "I think that's because I'm still not used to playing matches. In the second and third games, I wanted to put all my feeling into it regardless of technique or tactics, and I think I willed myself to the win."

"The Thailand Open starts in the new year and I'll be able to play against players from overseas. I want to go there and show what I can do as the top Japanese player." Momota was badly hurt in January when the vehicle taking him to the airport after he won the Malaysia Masters crashed, killing the driver. He admitted to feeling nervous as he returned to competition this week in Tokyo, and he was pushed to the limit by Tsuneyama, who took him to 16-16 in the final game only to crumble with victory in sight.

"I was too cautious," said Momota, who also had to come from a game down in the quarter-finals. "Before, my game was about using everything I'd built up over time, and my results gave me the confidence to do that. "This week, I hadn't played for a long time so I was very anxious going into each match. But I think my game will start to return now that I've won this title." Momota is one of Japan's brightest hopes for a gold medal on home soil at the coronavirus-postponed Tokyo Games next year. —AFP

## Jamieson strikes as Pakistan stumble in reply to NZ's 431

MOUNT MAUNGANUI: New Zealand were banking on a deteriorating pitch to defend their Kane Williamson-anchored 431 after reducing Pakistan to 30 for one on day two of the first Test at Mount Maunganui yesterday. Abid Ali was not out 19 with nightwatchman Mohammad Abbas yet to score after Kyle Jamieson removed opener Shan Masood for 10.

The Bay Oval pitch, Williamson's home wicket, is renowned for supporting the bowlers on the first and last day. But Williamson said it was already showing signs it would favor spin through the middle stages, while New Zealand sweated on the availability of short-ball specialist Neil Wagner. "Hopefully the cracks start to open and hopefully it starts to deteriorate," Williamson said. "Spin will come more into play. There are bits of rough as well so

## Hanyu caps masterful comeback with Japan national title

TOKYO: Two-time Olympic figure skating champion Yuzuru Hanyu crowned his comeback from a 10-month layoff with a commanding victory at the Japanese national championships on Saturday, Hanyu, who had been out of action since February after deciding his asthma made competing in this season's Grand Prix series too risky amid the coronavirus pandemic, blew the competition away in Nagano with an effortlessly graceful free skate for an overall score of 319.36.

The win gave the 26-year-old superstar his first national title since 2015 and earned him a place at next spring's world championships in Stockholm. "Last year was very frustrating for me, and a part of me is happy that I was able to take revenge," said Hanyu, who finished second at last year's nationals. One day after unveiling a new high-octane short program routine set to Robbie Williams's "Let Me Entertain You," Hanyu performed to the more subdued "Heaven and Earth" but

I've no doubt spin will definitely have a role."

The immediate concern for New Zealand was the availability of Wagner who was to have a scan at the end of the day after being hit on the foot by a Shaheen Afridi yorker when he batted. Wagner managed three overs when Pakistan batted but was clearly in pain. New Zealand, having started the day at 222 for three, added a further 209 runs before Wagner was the last man out. The innings was headlined by Williamson's 129, his 23rd Test century, with sizeable contributions from BJ Watling (73) and Henry Nicholls (56) to go with Ross Taylor's 70 on the first day.

## Patience and concentration

Williamson described his knock as "really satisfying" after New Zealand were sent into bat on a green wicket and with Afridi and Mohammad Abbas making life difficult with swing and seam on the first day. Although there was not the same movement on day two, the drying pitch started to show signs of turn which brought spin into play with Yasir Shah taking three wickets, including the prized scalp of Williamson.

Nicholls, who had partnered Williamson in a 133-run stand for the fourth wicket, was the first to fall, bizarrely

still wowed the crowd with his artistry and skill. He began with a quad loop and a quad salchow before nailing a triple axel into a double toe loop. He then landed a quad toe loop into a triple toe loop, a quad toe loop-single euler-triple salchow combination, then finished with a triple axel. Hanyu has been training by himself this year, with his Canadian coach Brian Orser unable to join him because of travel restrictions, and he again sat alone clutching a Winnie the Pooh tissue box as he waited for his scores.

"I've been working on my own for a long time and that's meant I've had more worries and anxieties to deal with," said Hanyu. "But I haven't really been alone. Training on my own has made me appreciate the connections I have. Of course I've been getting advice from afar, but I've taken more strength from the goodwill people have sent me." Pyeongchang Olympic silver medalist Shoma Uno was denied a fifth straight national title, finishing second with 284.81 points. Teenager Yuma Kagiyama, who won the NHK trophy last month in his senior Grand Prix debut, was third with 278.79.

Hanyu endured a disappointing 2019 by his stellar standards, finishing second to Uno at nationals and losing out to American Nathan Chen at the Grand Prix Final. He will now aim to claim a third world title next spring after booking his place in Stockholm. "Last year, I felt like I wasn't developing any more," said Hanyu. —AFP



NAGANO: Yuzuru Hanyu of Japan performs during the men's free skating at the Japan's figure skating national championships in Nagano on December 26, 2020. —AFP