

Sports

Photo of the Day



Professional surfer Carissa Moore surfs in Tahiti. — Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

IOC confirms protest ban remains

WASHINGTON: The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has confirmed that athletes are still banned from protesting at the Games after several sports moved to allow protests in the wake of George Floyd's death in police custody, the Telegraph has reported.

Rule 50 of the Olympic Charter states "no kind of demonstration or political, religious or racial propaganda is permitted in any Olympic sites, venues or other areas." Athletes who breach the rule are subject to discipline on a case-by-case basis and the IOC issued guidelines in January clarifying that banned protests include taking a knee and other gestures.

The IOC told the Telegraph the guidelines were still in place and that it would not speculate on "hypothetical cases 13 months before the Olympic Games", the newspaper said.

Floyd, a 46-year-old African-American man, died after a white Minneapolis police officer pressed his knee into Floyd's neck for nearly nine minutes on May 25.

His death sparked worldwide protests against racial injustice, with several soccer players in Germany's Bundesliga delivering their own messages of support during games. World governing body FIFA, which has shown zero tolerance for players expressing their views on the field, has asked competition organisers to use "common sense" regarding protests over Floyd's death.

NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell, who was widely criticised for the league's handling of Colin Kaepernick's kneeling protests in 2016, said on Friday the NFL had made mistakes in not listening to players and encouraged them to speak out and "peacefully protest". Anti-racism movements was discussed at an IOC executive board meeting yesterday.

While athlete protests at the Olympics are rare, at the 1968 Mexico City Games black U.S. sprinters Tommie Smith and John Carlos bowed their heads and raised black-gloved fists on the podium to protest racial inequality. — Reuters

Dana White says Abu Dhabi 'Fight Island' to host UFC 251

Stevenson dominates as boxing returns to Las Vegas

NEW YORK: Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) chief Dana White said on Tuesday the mixed martial arts promotion's "Fight Island" was located in Abu Dhabi and it will host four events next month including UFC 251.

White had said in April that the UFC was close to securing a private island to stage bouts for international fighters unable to enter the United States due to travel restrictions amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

He said Yas Island was being prepared to host UFC 251 on July 11 and three Fight Night events — on July 15, 18 and 25 — with all the infrastructure needed being set up at the venue which is less than a mile from the international airport.

"Everything will happen on the island," White said on the UFC's Facebook page. "Nobody will leave the island. They're going to have their own private training quarters where people can train themselves."

"We really do have an Octagon (for training) out in the sand. The infrastructure's going to be unbelievable. The people in Abu Dhabi do everything right." The three championship fights in UFC 251 will be headlined by the welterweight bout between challenger Gilbert Burns and champion Kamaru Usman.

The UFC postponed several events scheduled between March and May due to the novel coronavirus outbreak, which has killed over 110,800 people in the US. The promotion resumed action without fans present on May 9 in Florida.

Meanwhile, undefeated American Shavkat Rakhimov stopped Felix Carballo with a punishing body shot in the sixth round Tuesday to win the main event of boxing's first major fight card since

the start of the coronavirus outbreak.

The 22-year-old Stevenson easily won the 10-round non-title fight by delivering a devastating left hand to Carballo's rib cage for the knockdown at 1:31 of the sixth round.

Stevenson, who is the World Boxing Organization featherweight champ, completely dominated the Puerto Rican to improve to 14-0 with eight knockouts. There were no fans allowed into the MGM Grand Hotel and Casino conference center because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

"It's a different atmosphere," Stevenson said. "Losing the weight was different. Training in the gym was different. I couldn't be around anybody. Even when fighting and there was no crowd was different. I would catch him with mean shots and there would be no 'Ooohs' or 'Aaahs.'"

Stevenson also forced Carballo to take a knee in the first round. Stevenson said he injured his left hand in the fifth round but was still able to land solid blows. "I hit him with everything I could early. I wobbled him a bunch of times. He took a lot of punishment, and I started realizing that head shots weren't going to get him out of here. So I started going to the body more," Stevenson said.

Stevenson, who is black, wore a T-shirt reading "Black Lives Matter" for his post-fight interview. "My people right now, they're protesting and there's a lot going on in our community, a lot of people trying to stand up for what's right," he said. "I couldn't really go out there and protest with them because I had a fight coming up and I didn't want to risk catching corona."

"Now that the fight is over, I'll go out there and protest. Mask up, gloved up, I'll go out there and help my people out." — Agencies



SAN JUAN: File photo taken on March 25, 2014 shows Dana White, President and CEO of the UFC, addresses the audience during a press conference in San Juan Puerto Rico. Mixed martial arts supremo Dana White said yesterday his Ultimate Fighting Championship will stage a series of bouts on Yas Island in Abu Dhabi next month to ease travel headaches for international fighters. — AFP

Sammy to confront ex-Sunrisers players on racist language

MUMBAI: Former West Indies captain Daren Sammy has sought clarification from his former Sunrisers Hyderabad team mates over potentially racist language directed at him when he was part of the Indian Premier League franchise from 2013-14.

Sammy said he did not know the meaning of a Hindi word that some unnamed Sunrisers team mates would call him and only became aware of its racial connotations after watching a TV show that discussed the issue. "I was listening to (Indian-American comedian) Hasan Minhaj talking about how some of the people in his culture view or describe black people," Sammy said on Instagram.

"... I was angry after listening to him describing a word that they use to describe black people, which he was saying is not in a good way... and it was degrading."

"Instantly I remembered when I played for Sunrisers in 2013 and 2014, I was being called the exact

same word he described that was degrading to us black people.

"I will be messaging those people... Because if it was in any way, shape or form what Minhaj said it meant, I'm very disappointed and I'd still be angry and deserve an apology from you guys."

Several elite athletes have spoken out about racism in sport and society after the death of George Floyd, an unarmed black man, in police custody in Minneapolis.

Sammy said the word was also used to describe Sri Lankan team mate Thisara Perera.

"I assumed it meant something else that was uplifting. But every time I was called it, it was me and Thisara, there was always laughter in the moment."

"... But you could understand my frustration and my anger when it was pointed out to me that it wasn't funny at all."

Sunrisers Hyderabad declined to comment when contacted by Reuters. — Reuters

USOPC chief backs athlete protests

LOS ANGELES: The United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee has signalled it will challenge rules banning athletes from protesting at the Olympics after hearing from US athletes last week.

In an open letter to Team USA athletes released late Monday, USOPC chief executive Sarah Hirshland said US officials had until now "failed to listen and tolerated racism and inequality."

The statement follows weeks of protests across the United States against racism and police brutality following the death of unarmed black man George Floyd at the hands of police in Minneapolis on May 25.

The USOPC had faced scrutiny for its sanctions handed out to hammer thrower Gwen Berry and fencer Race Imboden, who both protested on the podium during last year's Pan-American Games in Lima.

Berry, who raised a clenched fist on the podium, and Imboden, who knelt down, were given a year's probation by the USOPC and warned they could face severe sanctions if they carried out similar protests again.

International Olympic Committee rules bar any "demonstration or political, religious or racial propaganda" at the Games.

However Hirshland hinted the US would seek to review that policy after setting up an



USOPC chief executive Sarah Hirshland.

athlete-led group which would "challenge the rules and systems in our own organisation that create barriers to progress, including your right to protest." The move came after Hirshland held "town hall" meetings with dozens of US athletes last week to hear their views.

Hirshland added that the pain suffered by members of the black community was "unconscionable." "For decades you have spoken about equality and unity and sacrificed your moment on the podium to call for change," Hirshland wrote.

"And we have failed to listen and tolerated racism and inequality. I am sorry. You deserve better. You matter. Black lives matter."

"It is time to match your courage...to remove the barriers, to change the rules, and to empower black voices to be heard."

Berry, who last week had demanded an apology from the USOPC over its handling of her case, described Hirshland's remarks as "encouraging."

"I think it demonstrates that athletes' peaceful protesting is powerful and it can promote change," Berry was quoted as saying by the Washington Post on Tuesday.

"It's a step in the right direction. We need to challenge the rule."

In remarks to USA Today, Berry added she believed athletes should be allowed to protest peacefully at the Olympics. — AFP

"For Olympic athletes, we literally only get one chance every four years," Berry said. "So it's important to them. If they want to speak in that moment, they (should) have the right to, because they worked for that." — AFP