

Sports

Photo of the Day



Mohammed Balooshi (ARE) races during stage 4 of Rally Dakar 2020 from Neom to Al-Ula, Saudi Arabia.. — Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

MLB season to start in July: Commissioner

LOS ANGELES: The 2020 Major League Baseball season is set to start in July, commissioner Rob Manfred said Tuesday, after players signed off on health protocols and agreed to report to training.

The announcement that the season will begin July 23 or 24 comes after weeks of wrangling between owners and players over a framework for a season shortened by the coronavirus pandemic.

"Major League Baseball is thrilled to announce that the 2020 season is on the horizon," Manfred said in a statement.

"We have provided the Players Association with a schedule to play 60 games and are excited to provide our great fans with baseball again soon."

Manfred's comments came after the Major League Baseball Players Association said its members would report to training camps on July 1.

"All remaining issues have been resolved and players are reporting to training camps," the union said.

MLB and the MLBPA had been at loggerheads over how to salvage a season that should have begun on March 26.

The league proposed a succession of deals that would have seen the players receive only a percentage of their salaries, prorated by number of games played.

Players pushed back against the league proposals, noting that they had already agreed to a pay cut in March and should not be required to accept a further reduction in salary. — AFP

Djokovic's charity event exposes risks faced by professional athletes

Kyrgios hits out at Djokovic 'stupidity'

BELGRADE: Novak Djokovic aimed to help people affected by the COVID-19 pandemic with his charity tournament but with a number of players testing positive for the virus after attending the event, it could imperil the resumption of professional tennis.

The men's world number one was the fourth player to contract the virus after Bulgarian Grigor Dimitrov, Croatia's Borna Coric and Viktor Troicki previously tested positive after playing in the Adria Tour event in the Balkan region.

The tournament was among many events that have recently been held while professional tennis remains suspended due to the pandemic.

But there was one key difference about Djokovic's event. While the other tournaments were contested without any fans in attendance and those present adhered to social distancing rules, Djokovic's Adria Tour attracted a capacity crowd in the Serbian capital, where players interacted, embraced and partied like they did in pre-COVID-19 days.

"Djokovic shot himself in the foot by organising the Adria Tour," Radmilo Armenulic, a former Yugoslavia Davis Cup coach, told Reuters by phone.

"The organisation of the Belgrade leg was catastrophic, the stands were so full that fans were virtually sitting on top of each other. He staged this event with the

best of intentions but it turns out it was a big mistake."

While the players hugged at the net, played basketball, posed for pictures and attended news conferences together, Djokovic also organised nights out in Belgrade and pictures and videos of him dancing with the players made it to social media.

The players, however, did not break any government protocols in Serbia or Croatia with both countries easing lockdown

measures weeks before the event.

But it highlighted the risks of athletes from different countries being in close proximity to one another, which could be a concern for the men's ATP and women's WTA Tour when they resume the professional circuit in August after five months.

The United States Tennis Association (USTA) has also announced plans for the US Open Grand Slam to be held as scheduled from Aug. 31 in New York and govern-

ing bodies are expected to have strict protocols in place.

"We have to be careful because we also have to be conscious that even with extreme measures, you could actually end up having some players testing positive," ATP chairman Andrea Gaudenzi told the New York Times.

BUBBLE

During the US Open, players and guests must wear masks when onsite unless practising or competing and testing will be conducted before travelling to the United States and at least once per week along with daily temperature checks.

Top players, including Djokovic, have in recent times expressed their displeasure at the stringent measures, something that the ATP and the WTA are also expected to incorporate at their tournaments.

Gaudenzi said he hoped players will be more receptive to restrictions following the Adria Tour fiasco.

Stacey Allaster, the new US Open tournament director, said organisers had to take a "leap of faith" regarding players' willingness to follow the protocols. "If you think about it, we really designed this tournament around a bubble," said Brian Hainline, the chief medical officer for the NCAA.

"If someone becomes infected, that's a possibility, if they go out and they put

“ It was a big mistake ”

measures weeks before the event.

But it highlighted the risks of athletes from different countries being in close proximity to one another, which could be a concern for the men's ATP and women's WTA Tour when they resume the professional circuit in August after five months.

The United States Tennis Association (USTA) has also announced plans for the US Open Grand Slam to be held as scheduled from Aug. 31 in New York and govern-

"The legacy is beyond stadia facelifts, gym equipment and higher participation — the legacy for World Rugby is that it also created the third-biggest broadcast market," he said.

"That is a legacy for all rugby because our revenues get pushed around 120 unions."

Gosper said the rugby world had traditionally been reliant on France and Britain and the challenge now was to sustain a third sizeable market.

"That is the reason we went to Japan and Asia, was to create new markets and participation," he said.

"It gives us a bigger commercial footprint to put back into other areas of the world."

'RISKING THEIR LIVES?'

Gosper believes the success of Japan 2019 will give World Rugby chiefs confidence that rugby-playing nations with a similar profile can host the tournament. USA Rugby filed for bankruptcy earlier this year but Gosper said that did not rule the United States out of bidding for the 2027 or 2031 tournaments.

"I am sure that their time will come," he said. "The bankruptcy does make it slightly more complex but everything is more complex in the world now in both the short term and medium."

"We are looking at 2027 and 2031 (both bids will run at the same time)."

"To put on a Rugby World Cup it requires financial effort beyond any one union."

"England and France have economic muscle from their governments and in the USA case it would be more private concerns. — AFP

Japan 2019 left 'huge legacy', says World Rugby CEO

LONDON: The 2019 Rugby World Cup has left a "huge legacy" in Japan and its success should embolden countries such as the United States to bid for future events, says World Rugby CEO Brett Gosper.

The 61-year-old Australian spoke to AFP as audit giant EY released its report, "The economic impact of Rugby World Cup 2019".

EY estimated that 46,000 jobs were created or sustained for the tournament and £4.3 billion (\$5.4 billion) — a record for a Rugby World Cup — was generated in economic output.

Gosper said "Japan 2019 was one of the greatest, maybe the greatest, of all World Cups" and exceeded all expectations. "For Japan there is a huge legacy," he said via video call. "There was an uptick in participation at schools, younger audiences on social media and, on TV, 58 million watched the Scotland v Japan game."

"It shows it was a major national ubiquitous event for all age groups."

Gosper said the tournament had attracted swathes of new players to the sport in Asia and also created a new source of income alongside traditional markets.

Fahad Al Musallam discusses quads

KUWAIT: Kuwait's quad athlete and motocross champion Fahad Al Musallam has recently been interviewed on the sport. Speaking enthusiastically, he shared his professional opinion to help those interested in also taking the dive into this unique all-terrain vehicle.

The now ubiquitous 4-wheel vehicle that seats up to two people can be seen on beachside paths all across the GCC, where their universal utility is of advantage across dunes and on the grounds of family beach houses.

Fahad Al Musallam encourages those who have an interest and are still at a young age to begin with a 50cc engine. This will give the basics without any extraneous bells and whistles.

"From there you should upgrade to a 90cc," Said Al Musallam. "Something along the lines of a Yamaha Raptor 90, for example, will expand your knowledge base and prepare you for the upscale of even higher cc quads."

He stressed the importance of gradually upgrading as the quad rider had the current bike down to pat. Furthermore, Al Musallam went on discussing the reasons behind this method as a logical progression and relationship between the driver and the motor vehicle, wherein one continues to build on what they have learned through continuous expansion of their understanding and experience until they finally reached the level of expert.

For adults, he recommends skipping the



BELGRADE: Serbian tennis player Novak Djokovic (L) talks to his wife Jelena during a match at the Adria Tour, Novak Djokovic's Balkans charity tennis tournament in Belgrade. —AFP

themselves at a behaviour where their behaviour is risky, they're really taking on a responsibility of saying what I'm doing is not that important to my fellow players."

Armenulic, however, believes it will take the sport at least a year to go back to where it was before the pandemic and professional circuit should not resume before next year's Australian Open.

"Unfortunately, this virus is still present, and it is a new reality that we are still learn-

ing to cope and live with," Djokovic, a 17-times Grand Slam singles champion, said.

"I am hoping things will ease with time so we can all resume lives the way they were. I am so deeply sorry our tournament has caused harm. We were wrong and it was too soon." Australian tennis star Nick Kyrgios has taken aim at Novak Djokovic's "stupidity" after the world number one contracted coronavirus at an exhibition tennis tournament in the Balkans. —AFP



50cc and 90cc quads, and beginning with the 450cc variety. He is secure in his trust in suggesting Yamaha as a maker of quads in good standing. As such he has stated that the Yamaha YFZ450R as a contender to consider when researching suitable quads for enthusiasts and adrenaline seekers alike.

The advantage of the Yamaha YFZ450R is its large body, capable of carrying equipment with no added stress to its body and engine, and its already proven reliability over the years.

For any person thinking of practicing daily in the pursuit of professional status, he also states that the Yamaha Raptor 700R is an equally superb option to the YFZ450R.

"These two models will definitely help you hone your skills as a hobbyist quad rider," He said. "The main difference between the two is that 700R has a massive

engine and a lower seated position, so you'll be extremely comfortable on it. Plus the lower center of gravity ensures a firmer handling grip."

But Fahad Al Musallam also made sure to address the needs of casual enthusiasts. These are people who enjoy quads for the sake of the ride, and for whom driving for personal satisfaction was the main goal. "You can't go wrong trying out the Yamaha Grizzly 700. Take it anywhere. Do anything with it and just enjoy the ride." He said.

When it came to the topic of safety, Fahad had a few important words to say on the subject. "Always wear full gear and a helmet. It makes all the difference if an unexpected tumble should ever happen." He also said to consider the corner turn, as oversteering was the most common error that quad users made.