

Sports

Dolphins punished, stripped of 2023 first-round NFL Draft pick

F1 star Hamilton takes ownership stake in NFL Broncos

NEW YORK: The NFL stripped the Miami Dolphins of their 2023 first-round NFL Draft pick and punished owner Stephen Ross on Tuesday for tampering with star quarterback Tom Brady and rival coach Sean Payton. The penalties were handed down after the conclusion of a six-month probe by independent investigator Mary Jo White on allegations of tampering and tanking games. "The investigators found tampering violations of unprecedented scope and severity," NFL commissioner Roger Goodell said.

Ross and Dolphins vice chairman Bruce Beal were found to have violated NFL anti-tampering rules by "impermissible communications" with seven-time Super Bowl champion Brady while he was under contract to the New England Patriots and Tampa Bay Buccaneers and with Payton while he coached the New Orleans Saints. The Dolphins will forfeit their 2023 first-round pick and their 2024 third-round choice.

Ross was fined \$1.5 million and suspended through October 17. He cannot go to the Dolphins' facility or represent the club and team at NFL gatherings during the span. He was removed from all NFL committees. Beal was fined \$500,000 and banned from league meetings for the 2022 season. "I know of no prior instance of a team violating the prohibition on tampering with both a head coach and star player, to the potential detriment of multiple other clubs, over a period of several years," Goodell said. "Similarly, I know of no prior instance in which ownership was so directly involved in the violations."

Tanking allegations raised by former Dolphins coach Brian Flores against Ross, including financial incentives and other encouragement to deliberately lose games, were not punished. The probe supported Flores and concerns about comments made by Ross but found there were no serious offers made to reward lost games.

Beal was found to have made improper contact with Brady from August 2019 through the 2019 playoffs while he was with the Patriots, what were described as "numerous and detailed discussions" with reports to Ross. There was also contact with

Brady after the 2021 season when Brady was still under contract to Tampa Bay before his brief retirement and return to the Bucs.

Ross and Beal contacted Brady about becoming a limited partner and possibly an executive and quarterback with the Dolphins. Payton's agent was contacted last January about a head coaching job with the Dolphins before announcing his retirement. The Saints were not asked to allow such contact.

'Strongly disagree'

Ross said he would not fight the sanctions in order to avoid becoming a distraction to the team. "With regards to tampering, I strongly disagree with the conclusions and the punishment," Ross said in a statement. "However, I will accept the outcome because the most important thing is that there be no distractions for our team as we begin an exciting and winning season. I will not allow anything to get in the way of that."

The probe found the Dolphins did not deliberately lose 2019 games to improve the team's position in the 2020 draft nor did Ross instruct such actions. But it found Ross said "on a number of occasions" that draft position should take priority over record and Flores expressed concern to club executives about such remarks. In relation to Flores alleging he was offered \$100,000 to lose games, the probe found there were "differing recollections about the wording, timing and context" but it was not meant as a serious offer.

Ownership stake

In another development, seven-time Formula One world champion Lewis Hamilton has joined the ownership group of the NFL's Denver Broncos, the team announced Tuesday. The Broncos entered into a sale agreement with the Walton-Penner family in June pending ownership approval of the deal, which is expected to come next Tuesday. "Excited to join an incredible group of owners and become a part of the @Broncos story!!" Hamilton tweeted. "Honored to work with a world class team and serve as an example of the value of more diverse leadership



MIAMI GARDENS: Tua Tagovailoa #1 of the Miami Dolphins directs a drill during training camp at Baptist Health Training Complex in Miami Gardens, Florida. —AFP

across all sports."

The 37-year-old Englishman posted a photo of his dog wearing a Broncos' scarf and shirt and added, "Roscoe already thinks he made the team". Wal-Mart store heir Rob Walton, his daughter Carrie Penner and son-in-law Greg Penner paid \$4.65 billion, the largest sale price for any North American sports team, to purchase the Broncos. Former US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was added to the ownership group last month and Hamilton, a record 103-time F1 race winner, is the latest high-profile investor.

"We're delighted to welcome seven-time Formula One world champion Sir Lewis Hamilton to our ownership group," Walton said in a statement. "He's a champion competitor who knows what it takes to

lead a winning team and a fierce advocate for global equality, including in his own sport. "With over 100 race wins, Lewis is considered the most successful F1 driver of all time. His resilient spirit and standard of excellence will be an asset to the ownership group and the Broncos organization."

The sale must be approved by at least 24 of the NFL's 32 club owners to complete the purchase from the Pat Bowlen Trust. Bowlen purchased the Broncos in 1984 and died in 2019. The vote is likely only a formality and it is scheduled for an owners' meeting next week. The Broncos won their third Super Bowl crown in 2016 but have not made the playoffs since. They went 7-10 last year for a fifth consecutive losing season. —AFP



Kuwait Gymnastics Federation prepare national teams

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait Gymnastics Federation announced a plan to prepare the national team for the upcoming events starting with the Arab Men and Women Championship in Algeria in September. Chairman of the Board of KGF Fahad

Al-Soula said the Girls Rhythmic Gymnastics team will travel to Kazakhstan to join a training camp for 23 days in preparation for the Arab Championship. The delegation will be headed by member of women committee Suad Al-Kandari and team manager Lujain Al-Asfour.

Al-Soula, who also heads the Arab Federation said the Men and Women teams will leave to Georgia on Saturday for a 20-day training camp in preparation for the same Championship, and they includes 12 men and 6 women. Al-Soula said the Parkour team will be in a training camp in Liverpool from August 10. They will participate in the world championship in Bulgaria next month.

in going to the Nationals.

Soto, who helped the Nationals win the 2019 World Series, was MLB's hottest trade prospect after the 23-year-old Dominican outfielder rejected a 15-year contract extension offer worth \$440 million last month. He joins a Padres team, powered by top-hitting infielders Manny Machado and Fernando Tatis Jr., that owns a 58-46 record. While San Diego trails the Los Angeles Dodgers by 12 games in the National League West division, the club is in a wildcard playoff position.

The Padres lost their only two World Series appearances, in 1984 and 1998, and have reached the playoffs only once since 2006, falling to the Dodgers two years ago in the division series after their only winning season since 2010. Soto, who is set to become a free agent after the 2024 season, has a career .291 batting average with 119 home runs and 358 runs batted in over five seasons. The two-time All-Star was the 2020 National League batting champion with a .351 average and won last month's Home Run Derby at the MLB All-Star Game.

At age 21, Soto hit three homers in the 2019 World Series to help spark the Nationals to victory in a seven-game showdown with Houston. "He was a big part of our success in '19," Martinez said. "Those memories will never go away. We talked about them for a while. He's a great kid." Bell, 29, is batting .301, a career-high, with 14 homers and 57 RBI for the Nats this season, his second in Washington after five seasons in Pittsburgh. His contract expires after the current campaign. Hosmer, 32, helped the Kansas City Royals capture the 2015 World Series and owns a career .277 batting average with 196 homers and 875 RBI. —AFP

Soto and Bell sent to Padres in MLB blockbuster deal

WASHINGTON: Washington Nationals slugger Juan Soto and first baseman Josh Bell were sent to the San Diego Padres on Tuesday in a blockbuster deal at the Major League Baseball trade deadline. Teams raced to make final roster moves for the last two months of the campaign, but the biggest was Soto and Bell boosting the Padres' dreams of a first World Series title.

Washington obtained shortstop CJ Abrams, pitcher MacKenzie Gore, first baseman Luke Voit and three prospects in exchange for Soto and Bell. "When the Padres reached the tall threshold we had for the trade, we decided to make the trade," said Mike Rizzo, the Nationals president of baseball operations. "It was a well-rounded package. We like the talent level of all the players." The Nationals have MLB's worst record at 35-69. Nats manager Dave Martinez said it was a "crazy" day of "mixed emotions" at seeing Soto depart while welcoming new talent.

"What he meant to us, for the Nationals family, for the fans, for the city, we should cherish that," Martinez said. "With the players we got, the future is bright and we're looking forward to that." A no-trade clause in first baseman Eric Hosmer's contract allowed him to reject a move to the Nationals, so the Padres instead shipped him to the Boston Red Sox for cash and two prospects. Voit replaced him

Kyrgios cruises in first match since Wimbledon

WASHINGTON: Wimbledon runner-up Nick Kyrgios won in his first match since making his Grand Slam final debut, ripping American Marcos Giron 6-3, 6-2 on Tuesday at the ATP and WTA Washington Open. The 27-year-old Australian fired 12 aces and saved the lone break point he faced to oust Giron in 59 minutes for a triumphant return at the US Open hardcourt tune-up.

After a 3-3 start, Kyrgios won nine of the last 11 games for the victory despite memories of a poor effort in a first-round exit last year during "a dark time in my life." "I just really wanted to force myself to have high energy and pull out a performance," Kyrgios said. "My confidence was a bit low coming out just because just being on that court again. I got disgraced last year first round, and it was tough to stomach. I'm proud of my performance today. It wasn't easy." World number 63 Kyrgios, whose most recent title came at Washington in 2019, booked a second-round match against US 14th seed Tommy Paul.

Kyrgios said he has struggled to move on after his Wimbledon final loss to Novak Djokovic last month. "That match hurts," Kyrgios said. "To have that opportunity and come up short wasn't easy for me to stomach. "It was hard. I feel like a Grand Slam final doesn't come around so often for us normal players. That was like the golden opportunity. "I'm doing all the right things to put myself in that position again. I don't think we thought it was possible to contend for Grand Slams, but now it's a genuine thing."

A hearing in Australia on common assault charges against Kyrgios from a January 2021 incident had originally been scheduled for Tuesday but last month was moved to August 23, six days before the start of the US Open. "I've got people in my corner and my team dealing with those things. They are out of my



WASHINGTON: Nick Kyrgios of Australia plays a shot against Marcos Giron of the United States during Day 4 of the Citi Open at Rock Creek Tennis Center on August 02, 2022. —AFP

control," Kyrgios said. "All I can do is just continue to work and keep my head down and do what I love to do every day."

Top seed Andrey Rublev advanced to the third round by defeating Britain's Jack Draper 6-4, 6-2. World number eight Rublev dispatched the 81st-ranked English left-hander in 83 minutes without surrendering a break. Rublev will play for a quarter-final berth Thursday against an American, either Jack Sock or Maxime Cressy. Rublev, 24, seeks his fourth ATP title of the year and the 12th of his career after crowns at Marseille and Dubai in February and Belgrade in April.

Rublev, who wrote "No War Please" on a camera lens at Dubai, was among Russian players banned from Wimbledon because of his homeland's military invasion of Ukraine. "There's nothing more important than to have peace and love all around the world," Rublev said. "I do believe that, by being united and doing good things for the peace, if tennis will be example of it, maybe other sports will follow and maybe one day sport can be without politics." —AFP

Women's British Open breaks new ground at Muirfield

GULLANE: In a week when England's European Championship football victory was hailed as a major breakthrough for female sport, Muirfield will make history by staging the Women's British Open golf championship. The famed Scottish links course has been host to 16 men's British Opens-but the club has not always been so welcoming to women and received widespread criticism with a vote to maintain an all-male membership policy in 2016.

Following the backlash-and a threat to remove the club from the Open rota-the decision was overturned in 2017 and five years on the best women's golfers in the world will face the challenge set by one of the sport's toughest tests. For 2009 champion Catriona Matthew, it is a dream come true. The two-time winning European Solheim Cup captain has lived in North Berwick all her life, just a few minutes drive from Muirfield.

"Growing up, I could never have imagined playing in a British Open at Muirfield, it's going to be a great experience for everyone," said the 52-year-old, who has been given the honor of hitting the first tee shot on Thursday morning. "It elevates the

Championship going to (men's) Open venues. Hopefully, girls and boys will be inspired by seeing the men and women play over the same courses. "I've been a litter picker and a scorer at men's Opens here, it will be nice to actually play in a Championship."

'Childhood dream'

Sweden's Anna Nordqvist will defend the title she won at Carnoustie a year ago-an ideal venue for someone whose Scottish husband grew up in the Dundee area. "Carnoustie is a special place for me but it is just as special to be defending at Muirfield," said the 35-year-old three-time major winner.

"If someone had told me when I was growing up that one day I would win a British Open I would have said they were crazy. Winning the British was my childhood dream." The first four of the year's five majors have produced winners from different countries in American Jennifer Kupcho (Chevron Championship), Australian Minjee Lee (US Open) and South Korea's Chun In-gee (PGA Championship), while Canada's Brooke Henderson won the Evian Championship two weeks ago. Henderson is now relishing the chance of triumphing at successive majors. "I think Muirfield is the best links course I have ever played," said the 24-year-old. "It means a lot to all of us to be here. It's hosted so many men's Opens and this is proof that the women's game is continuing to grow and hopefully it is making a difference for future generations." —AFP