

## Sports

# Africa's fastest man Omanyala on a 'sprint mission' for Kenya

## Kenyan targets 100m at World Athletics Championships

## News in brief

### \$750,000 Indonesia golf event

**JAKARTA:** Major winners Lydia Ko and Kim Hyo-joo will be the star attractions when women's professional tour golf returns to Indonesia for the first time in a decade next month. World number five Ko of New Zealand and South Korea's eighth-ranked Kim will head a 40-player field for the inaugural Simone Asia Pacific Cup, the first event in the country since the 2012 Indonesia Ladies Open. They will compete over 54 holes of stroke play from August 18-20 for a total of \$500,000 in individual prize money at the Pondok Indah Golf Course, Jakarta, the Ladies Asian Tour announced. Their scores will also count towards a team event, where an additional \$250,000 purse is up for grabs for 20 two-player teams formed from 15 golf associations across the Asia-Pacific region.

### NBA adopts play-in tournament

**NEW YORK:** NBA club owners voted Tuesday to have the play-in tournament become a full-time path to the playoffs and toughened rules on teams making intentional fouls to deny fast-break scoring runs. Both changes were made after unanimous recommendations from the NBA's competition committee for both moves. The NBA staged a play-in tournament on a one-year basis in the 2020-21 season and extended that for an extra season in 2021-22. Under that format, teams who finish the regular season with the seventh-highest through 10th-highest winning percentages in each conference compete to decide the seventh and eighth playoff seeds. In the 2022-23 NBA campaign, the play-in tournament will be staged April 11-14, between the end of the regular season on April 9 and the start of the playoffs on April 15.

### Raphinha set to join Barcelona

**BARCELONA:** Brazil winger Raphinha, who played a pivotal role in Leeds United retaining their place in the Premier League last season, is poised to sign for Barcelona after the clubs agreed to the deal in principle on Wednesday. The 25-year-old will cost the Catalans a reported 55 million euros (\$55.3million) - with a potential 15 million euros in add-ons - and sign a five year contract. "Barcelona and Leeds United Football Club have reached an agreement in principle for the transfer of Raphael Dias Belloli, Raphinha, pending the player passing his medical," read a statement on the Barcelona website. Barcelona said they were buying: "a winger who is excellent in one on ones, taking on defenders being a key part of his game." Raphinha spent two seasons at Elland Road, scoring 17 goals and providing 12 assists after they signed him from Ligue 1 outfit Rennes for £17 million - the French side are due a cut of the transfer fee.

### Djokovic to open tennis courts

**VISOKO:** Recently-crowned Wimbledon champion Novak Djokovic arrived in Bosnia on Wednesday to inaugurate tennis courts at a 'pyramid park' that he regularly visits to recharge his batteries. The tennis star, known for his new-age spiritual interests, is fond of a hill town of Visoko, where thousands flock every year to what some believe are an ancient man-made pyramid complex with healing powers - a claim rejected by scientists. The 35-year-old Serb, who claimed his 21st Grand Slam title on Sunday, visited the site for the first time in 2020 and called it a "paradise on earth". He has returned to the "Bosnian Pyramids of the Sun" complex at least four times, either alone or with his family, to be always warmly welcomed by its founder Semir Osmanagic. Bosnian businessman and ancient civilisation aficionado Osmanagic said the idea to construct a regional tennis training centre was born during Djokovic's last visit in March.

### Suzuki confirms MotoGP exit

**PARIS:** Suzuki said on Wednesday they had come to an agreement with championship promoters Dorna to leave MotoGP at the end of this season, four years before the end of their contract. Their current deal with the sport started in 2015 and was due to finish in 2026. In May, the Japanese manufacturer said they wanted to quit MotoGP for financial reasons, which were also cited by the team on Wednesday. "Motorcycle racing has always been a challenging place for technological innovation, including sustainability, and human resource development," Suzuki's representative director and president Toshihiro Suzuki said in a team statement. "This decision means that we will take on the challenge to build the new motorcycle business operation by redirecting the technological capabilities and human resources we have cultivated through the motorcycle racing activities to investigate other routes for a sustainable society," he added. —From AFP

**NAIROBI:** Africa's fastest man Ferdinand Omanyala is on a mission to put sprinting on the map in Kenya, a country where the long-distance runner is king. The 26-year-old Kenyan is hoping to shine in the 100m at the World Athletics Championships opening this week in Eugene, Oregon.

But he was facing a race against time on Wednesday to obtain a US visa to enable him to get to Oregon for the 100m heats on Friday. "Sad that I haven't travelled to Oregon yet and 100m is in 2 days. Visa delays!!" he posted on Instagram. "We are anxiously waiting for the US embassy to issue visas for a number of athletes, including Omanyala. Hopefully they will be able to fly out today," Athletics Kenya executive member Barnabas Korir told AFP.

Omanyala is the third quickest man in the world this season behind Americans Fred Kerley and Trayvon Bromell. He wears two wristbands on his right arm: one, made of black and green beads, bears the numbers 9:85, his season-best 100m time set in May. The other, a bracelet crafted from leather and metal, is inscribed with 9:77, the African record he set last September. It made him the ninth fastest man ever, behind four Americans and three Jamaicans.

Making the podium in Eugene would be an historic first for an African runner. Namibia's Frankie Fredericks twice won Olympic silver in the 100m in the 1990s, but his one gold and three silvers in the World Championships were all over 200m. Omanyala said he has set his sights on at least reaching the final on July 16. "I'm targeting 9.6," he told AFP in an interview during a training session at the main stadium in the Kenyan capital Nairobi. "That will be my biggest achievement. And of course, I am going for the win."

### 'Something big'

As well as Kerley and Bromell, his opposition in Oregon should include Olympic gold medalist Marcell Jacobs of Italy and the 2019 world champion Christian Coleman. "I am an athlete who runs

## Murray breezes into last 16 at ATP Hall of Fame Open

**NEWPORT:** Britain's Andy Murray cruised into the second round of the ATP Hall of Fame Open on Tuesday with a 6-2, 6-0 romp over American Sam Querrey. In windy conditions, the 35-year-old Scotsman captured the last 10 games, taking advantage of all six of his break-point chances to advance in 54 minutes over 281st-ranked Querrey. "It was really awful conditions to play tennis in, to play well, so breezy and difficult," Murray said. "I'm sorry maybe the tennis wasn't that much fun to watch but we're doing the best we can given the conditions."

Sixth seed Murray next plays for a quarter-final berth in the grass-court event against 202nd-

## McIlroy chasing 'Holy Grail' as St Andrews hosts 150th Open

**ST ANDREWS:** St Andrews hosts the 150th British Open from Thursday with Rory McIlroy starting as the favourite for the Claret Jug while a determined Tiger Woods hopes to make an impact at a venue where he has triumphed twice before. Record crowds for the week of 290,000 are expected on Scotland's east coast for this landmark edition of the world's oldest golf tournament, which comes to the Old Course for the 30th time. With fine weather expected to continue for much of the week, it is shaping up to be a fitting way to mark a historic British Open, even if the sport continues to be rocked by the fallout caused by the breakaway LIV Series.

## Tour de France's protest reaches global audience

**ALBERTVILLE:** When French environmental campaigners "Dernier Renovation" briefly halted the Tour de France in the Alps on Tuesday, they hooked into a global audience with sport becoming an increasingly popular medium for viral stunts by protestors. Climate activists "Just Stop Oil" garnered a great deal of publicity at the British Grand Prix Silverstone circuit in July while, others have also glued themselves to artistic treasures from the likes of Vincent van Gogh.

But sports appears to reach more people and some estimates say the Tour de France, over the 21 stages, reaches up to 3.5 billion viewers across the 190 countries in which it is broadcast. Broadcasters cut away to a view of the Alps where holiday crowds were enjoy-

ing a sunny day out in 24 degrees Celsius (75 degrees Fahrenheit) temperatures for the 15 minutes or so that the Tour de France stage 10 was held up. But the protest has gone viral.

The same group members who sat on the road between the ski resort Les Ports du Soliel to the altiport of Megeve, recently interrupted the French tennis Open at Roland Garros in June. "Alize", as she was identified at the time of the May protest, chained her neck to the net and knelt on the iconic red clay, also reaching a huge audience. With the group's name written at neck level on her white T-shirt bearing the simple and powerful slogan written in English, not French "We have 1028 days left", the images reached a global platform.

On Tuesday the same woman chained herself by the neck to a fellow protester, her T-shirt bearing the same slogan but this time adding a sense of the clock ticking - "We have 989 days left". Identified as "Alice, 32" on the group's website, the protester explained her action, and her words have reached a global audience.

"I would prefer not to have had to do



**NAIROBI:** Kenya's sprinter Ferdinand Omanyala runs during a training session at the Kasarani stadium in Nairobi. In six years of dazzling rise, he has made a place for himself in a country where long-distance runners are kings: Ferdinand Omanyala intends to continue popularizing the sprint in Kenya by shining in the 100m at the 2022 World Athletics Championships which start on July 15, 2022. —AFP

well under pressure. So I am looking forward to getting better in Oregon, because now everybody who is an athlete will be there," said Omanyala, who beat Kerley in May. The young athlete and his coach Duncan Ayiemia have been mapping out ways to make sprinting more popular in Kenya, renowned for its top middle and long-distance runners.

"Normally it's long distance in Kenya, so I want the 100 metres to be something big in Kenya this year," said Ayiemia. Omanyala became the first Kenyan sprinter to reach an Olympic semi-final at the Tokyo Games last year. The chemistry student took up athletics six years ago after playing rugby sevens. "When I started athletics, my aim was to make people know that Kenyans can sprint, that is

something that has changed," he said.

### 'Beating the odds'

Omanyala, who hails from western Kenya and is the third of five brothers, said he has had to overcome obstacles, not least the distance. "In a medium- and long-distance country, it's a challenge coming up as a sprinter," he said. "Even the national federation at some point did not believe there could be a sprinter in Kenya. You have to beat all these odds." One hurdle he overcame was being allowed to represent Kenya at the Tokyo Olympics after Athletics Kenya relaxed a decision to prohibit any banned athletes from taking part in international competitions. —AFP



Andy Murray

upcoming events to grab a seeded spot at the US Open. "That's a big goal of mine these next few weeks," Murray said. "I've been playing better the last few months. But if you want to have deep runs in the biggest tournaments it does help to have a seeding so I'll try my best to do that. "One match closer today. Hoping for a good run here." —AFP



**ST ANDREWS:** Northern Ireland's Rory McIlroy plays from the 17th tee during a practice round for the 150th British Open Golf Championship on The Old Course at St Andrews in Scotland on July 13, 2022. —AFP



**ALBERTVILLE:** Team Arkea-Samsic's French rider Warren Barguil (center) cycles in a lone breakaway leading the race during the 11th stage of the 109th edition of the Tour de France cycling race, 151.7 km between Albertville and Col du Granon Serre Chevalier on July 13, 2022. —AFP

this," she says, explaining she would rather have been with her grandfather watching the Tour on the television from his sofa.

She goes on to predict a dystopian future without a Tour de France before finishing her message by stating she "decided instead to react and help avoid human suffering and create a new world. Everything can change". There is con-

sensus in France that by fighting against the Tour de France, publicity can be attained - but that it is so popular that movements risk damaging their reputations. Green politics is growing fast and the narrative of a concerned young woman wanting to watch the Tour with her grandfather, likely bridged a generation gap. —AFP