

Sports

Rodriguez batters Srisaket to retain bantamweight crown

Corruption-tainted boxing federation excluded from 2024 Olympics

News in brief

Jacobs wins Italian 100m title

RIETI: Reigning Olympic champion Marcell Jacobs continued his preparations for next month's world championships by winning the Italian men's 100 metres title on Saturday. The 27-year-old was not at his best but took victory in 10.12 seconds, four hundredths of a second quicker than second-placed Chituru Ali, after posting 10.17sec in the heats. Jacobs, who also won the world 60m indoor title earlier this year, only ran his first two 100m races of the season last month in Savona. "It was useful to resume competition," he told RAI Sport on Saturday. "I'm not yet able to manage a complete 100m, especially with two races in an hour. In training I had to do everything at a moderate pace. So it was more difficult to manage at a high intensity. In the closing stages, I had a little more trouble and decided to hold back a little to avoid any fitness problems." Jacobs is scheduled to run in Stockholm next Thursday before flying to the worlds which get underway in American city Eugene on July 15.

Rugby's all-women officials

LISBON: In a rugby first, the men's international between Italy and Portugal on Saturday was refereed by an all-women line-up of officials. Hollie Davidson, the referee from Scotland, was assisted on the pitch by England's Sara Cox and Aurelie Groizeleau of France. Another Englishwoman, Claire Hodnett, was the television match official for Italy's 38-31 win in Lisbon shown live on Portuguese television. As well as being the first men's rugby Test officiated entirely by women, it was also the first time a woman referee had taken charge of a side, Italy, figuring in the Six Nations. Davidson in 2017 became the first woman full-time professional rugby referee, appointed by the Scottish federation. Up to Saturday she had refereed games in the United Rugby Championship and Challenge Cup.

Rivers United win first title

ABUJA: Rivers United were crowned Nigerian league champions on Sunday after closest rivals Plateau United lost 2-1 at Akwa United to give the Port Harcourt side an unassailable lead with three rounds of matches still to play. Rivers United, who play away at Nasarawa United later Sunday, have 71 points from 34 matches, 10 points clear of Plateau United, who have played 35 matches, while Remo Stars are a distant third on 53 points. Winning the league earns United a place in next season's CAF Champions League. It is the first major honor for Rivers United since they were formed following a merger of Port Harcourt's two top clubs - Dolphins and Sharks - in 2016. They are owned by oil-rich Rivers State Government, who have made them one of the best-run clubs in Nigeria. The club nicknamed "The Pride of Rivers" feature the league's joint leading scorer Chijoke Akumeto, who has 16 goals, and winger Ishaq Kayode, who has netted 15 goals.

Min-kyu wins Korea Open

CHEONAN: South Korea's Kim Min-kyu won the national title at the Korea Open Golf Championship on Sunday, clinching his first victory on home soil. Kim claimed the title after a fierce battle, with the final round of the Asian Tour event at Woo Jeong Hills Country Club in Cheonan going to a playoff. The 21-year-old headed into his penultimate hole tied in first place at five-under-par, but his drive veered left and out of the course. The final round went to a three-hole aggregate playoff, sending Kim and Cho Min-gyu back to the 16th hole, with the pair vying for their first career titles. Both Kim and Cho missed the green at the 18th, but while Cho missed his par putt, Kim slotted in his birdie putt to win the national title. "To be honest, this is unreal," Kim said. "I was tense but the results were really good. I feel amazing," he told reporters.

Felix admits 'bit of sadness'

EUGENE: Allyson Felix admitted to a "little bit of sadness" in the wake of her final US athletics championship race on Saturday, but was in no doubt her decision to retire in August is the right one. "I think more than anything this season showed me I have no doubts about walking away," said the seven-time Olympic gold medalist. "There's nothing left. This season for the first time I felt like I didn't have that fight in me. And that's who I am. So I knew when I felt that fading away there was nothing to do but be grateful and watch all of these amazing athletes take it from here." Felix, who owns 29 world and Olympic medals and ran in her first national championships as a teenager 21 years ago, isn't quite done with the sport yet. Her sixth place finish in the 400m on Saturday will likely put her in position for relay consideration at the World Championships at Eugene's Hayward Field July 15-24.

Rovanpera wins Safari Rally

NAIVASHA: Finland's Kalle Rovanpera won the Kenya Safari Rally for the first time on Sunday to stretch his lead at the top of the world championship standings. The victory is the fourth podium finish in six races this season for the impressive 21-year-old who remained dominant after a major scare when his Toyota rolled in Friday's Superspecial stage outside Nairobi. "It feels great to win the Safari. I have to say this was the hardest rally I have ever done, and to be honest, we have to thank our team," Rovanpera said. The race was dominated by Toyota with Britain's Elfyn Evans taking second 52.8sec behind and Japan's Takamoto Katsuta, who finished runner-up last year, dropping into third, 1min 42.7sec behind the winner. Last year's Safari Rally winner Sebastian Ogier, who was the quickest in the morning powerstage dress rehearsal, was over two minutes adrift in fourth. —From AFP

LOS ANGELES: American Jesse Rodriguez stopped the Thai veteran Srisaket Sor Rungvisai in the eighth round on Saturday to successfully defend his World Boxing Council junior bantamweight title. The unbeaten 22-year-old from Texas dominated the veteran Srisaket from start to finish before a hometown crowd at San Antonio's Tech Port Arena. Rodriguez, who is the youngest current world champion, improved to 16-0 with 11 knockouts following a one-sided victory. Rodriguez landed heavier punches throughout the bout, and knocked the 35-year-old Srisaket to the canvas with a crisp left hook in the seventh round.

The end came in the eighth as Rodriguez let fly with a flurry of combinations that left Srisaket struggling to defend himself before the referee stepped in to halt the punishment. The victory confirmed Rodriguez as one of the most exciting talents in boxing. "What more can I say. I told everybody I was a special fighter and I proved that tonight," Rodriguez said afterwards. "We came out here tonight and put on a show." It was a first title defense for Rodriguez, who won the title with a unanimous decision victory over veteran Carlos Cuadras in February.

Boxing federation

Meanwhile, Boxing's corruption-tainted world governing body will once again be excluded from organizing their own events at the 2024 Olympics in Paris, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) confirmed on Friday. The International Boxing Association (IBA) had already been barred from the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo with the organization's presence in the 2028 Los Angeles Games also uncertain.

"In the interest of the athletes and the boxing community, the IBA will not be running qualifications and Olympic events," IOC sports director Kit McConnell told a press conference. Boxing will take place at Paris 2024 but McConnell said



Jesse Rodriguez

the Olympic organization remained "very concerned by the governance, the refereeing and judging process and the finances" of the amateur boxing body.

The recent re-election of IBA president, the Russian Umar Kremlev, has been called into question by the Court of Arbitration for Sport and the IOC are also concerned about "its financial dependency" on the giant Russian gas company Gazprom. Many Olympic boxing tournaments have been tainted by suspicions of corruption of judges and referees, from the 2004 Olympic Games in

Athens to the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio.

The IOC will decide "in due time" on the terms of organization of boxing in Paris, "by working closely with the organizing committee and the representatives of the athletes", McConnell added. Although boxing, which made its Olympic bow in St Louis in 1904, is guaranteed to be on the Paris 2024 program, its presence at the Los Angeles 2028 Olympics is still in the balance. "We've been looking for clarity from the IBA for many years," said McConnell. "The (IOC) board felt enough was enough." —AFP

Javier stars in Astros no-hitter as Yankees shut out

NEW YORK: Cristian Javier tossed seven scoreless innings to set up a combined no-hitter as the Houston Astros shut out the New York Yankees with a 3-0 victory in the Bronx on Saturday. Javier, 25, struck out 13 from 115 pitches before being removed in the seventh inning at Yankee Stadium. Hector Neris and Ryan Pressly then finished the job to complete the first no-hitter against the Yankees in 19 years. The feat was made even more remarkable by the fact that the Yankees have arguably the most formidable batting line-up in Major League Baseball. They have the best record in the major leagues this year and are the only team with more than 50 wins.

Javier's starring role was even more galling for the

Yankees given that New York had their top ace Gerrit Cole on the mound. Cole joined the Yankees in 2020 after leaving Houston as a free agent in a blockbuster nine-year \$324 million deal. Javier was signed by Houston for \$10,000 as an undrafted free agent from the Dominican Republic in 2015. "I feel really happy, really proud right now for this moment that God has given me," Javier said through an interpreter after the game.

Astros manager Dusty Baker applauded Javier's "command and control." "Everybody talks about velocity all the time, but the velocity without command and control is no good," Baker said. "That was the key, getting ahead of the hitters. And he was getting ahead of some pretty good hitters. That's a day that he'll never forget. Nor us, either." Pressly, who secured the final out, took satisfaction from the fact the win came at Yankee Stadium. "A no-hitter is pretty special either way, anywhere you do it," Pressly said. "The fact that it was here in Yankee Stadium, that's a really good lineup over there. It's special, but I think if you throw a no-hitter, in general, it's going to be special." —AFP



NEW YORK: Gleyber Torres #25 of the New York Yankees completes a double play over Michael Brantley #23 of the Houston Astros during the top of the sixth inning at Yankee Stadium on June 25, 2022. —AFP

NSW top Queensland, force decider in State of Origin series

PERTH: A rejuvenated New South Wales forced a decider in the best-of-three State of Origin rugby league series after a scintillating 44-12 victory over Queensland on Sunday. Under pressure after an upset home defeat in the opener, an aggressive NSW ran their bitter rivals ragged in game two in front of a capacity crowd of nearly 60,000 fans on a crisp and clear night at Perth's Optus Stadium. After a see-saw first stanza, the Blues ran in five of their seven tries in a blistering second half to easily prevail on a greasy surface, where players numerous slipped over but conditions failed to dampen the high-octane spectacle.

The desperate Blues made seven changes for the must-win clash after a 16-10 defeat in a tense open-

er in Sydney. The move paid dividends, particularly the inclusion of Api Koroisau who was brilliant as starting hooker after getting the nod over Damien Cook. The series decider will be played at Suncorp Stadium in Brisbane on July 13. "We were more brutal and hungry. There were no second chances," said NSW captain James Tedesco. "It's very pleasing and we'll enjoy the win but it's going to be a big test at Suncorp."

Queensland gamely withstood NSW's expected early onslaught before running out of gas in a reality check for rookie coach Billy Slater, who is considered one of the greatest players ever. "We tried to match their energy in the first half but they were too good... they had the ball too much and scored points," said Queensland star Cameron Munster. A pumped-up Blues side went on the attack from the get-go but the Maroons weathered the assault and slowly gained ascendancy, which was rewarded when Felise Kaufusi burst through to produce the opening try.

The Blues regrouped through the deadly boot of

Nathan Cleary, whose deft kick allowed debutant Matt Burton to steam through and score his first try in Origin. The manic action continued when the speed of full-back Kalyn Ponga set up a Munster try as Queensland regained the lead. But their momentum was stymied when Kaufusi was controversially sent to the sin bin for holding down in the tackle and NSW took advantage with Brian To'o finishing off a slick pass from Burton to give the Blues a slim two-point lead at the long break.

NSW's confidence spilt into the second stanza when a Daniel Tupou try broke the game open before consecutive tries to a dominant Cleary had under pressure coach Brad Fittler standing from his seat and celebrating with gusto. It was just the second time the showpiece event has headed to Western Australia, which hasn't had a professional rugby league team in 25 years in a state where the dominant football code is Australian Rules. NSW will be hoping that history repeats itself: in 2019, a 38-6 game two victory in Perth powered them to a famous come-from-behind series victory. —AFP

Schauffele leaves it late to retain Travelers lead

NEW YORK: Xander Schauffele produced a late birdie spree to hold onto a slender lead at the PGA Tour's Travelers Championship Saturday with a three-under-par 67. Schauffele, who led by five shots after Friday's second round, will take a one-shot advantage into Sunday's final round at TPC River Highlands in Cromwell, Connecticut.

But the 28-year-old from California left it late to ensure he would remain on top of the leaderboard on Saturday with a pair of birdies on the 16th and 17th holes to drop to 17 under. He rolled in a 16-foot birdie putt at the par-three 16th and then drilled an iron from the fairway to a few feet for a further birdie on the 17th. That ultimately allowed Schauffele to finish the day just in front of red-hot Patrick Cantlay, who had a bogey-free seven-under-par 63 to move to 16 under.

Schauffele is looking forward to a final round duel against close friend and Ryder Cup playing partner Cantlay. "It will be fun. I've been looking forward to playing with Pat in a final round," he said. "We don't get paired together very often in regular tournaments, only in those team ones. So there's a certain level of comfort we have playing with each other and hopefully that pays off and hopefully we can make a lot of birdies." Cantlay was similarly enthused by the prospect of a final day shoot-out with his friend.

"We actually haven't played that much together in tournament play, maybe only three times in the last three, four years. So it will be good to go out there again with him," Cantlay said. "It's always nice to be out with him, if he's on my team or if he's not. I'm going to go out there tomorrow and try as hard as I can and let the chips fall where they may." Sahith Theegala is three off the lead on 14 under after his six-under-par 64. The highlight of Theegala's round came with a brilliant eagle three on the par-five 13th, when he reached the green in two before rolling in an 11-foot putt.

The only blemish on an otherwise flawless round came at the 18th, where he made bogey. Kevin Kisner is one behind Theegala on 13 under after his four-under-par 66. Scotland's Martin Laird is tied for fifth with Lee Kyoung-hoon on 12 under. Laird and Lee both carded four-under-par 66s. Four players including first round co-leader J.T. Poston are tied for seventh on 11 under, while Scottie Scheffler heads a quartet on 10 under after a five-under-par 65.

But there was more disappointment for Northern Ireland's Rory McIlroy. The four-time major-winner who shot an eight-under-par 62 in the first round had fallen away on Friday after a second round that included a quadruple bogey eight on the 12th hole. McIlroy navigated his return to the 12th safely on Saturday with a par, but was already struggling after making a double-bogey and bogey on the front nine. Two more bogeys on the 14th and 16th holes left him tied for 31st place on six under, 11 shots off the lead. —AFP



CROMWELL: Xander Schauffele of the United States plays his shot from the 17th tee during the third round of Travelers Championship at TPC River Highlands on June 25, 2022. —AFP