

Sports

Sparkling Maori All Blacks stun Ireland in tour opener

Irish paid for ill-discipline and inaccuracy

HAMILTON: Ireland conceded they were a distant second best after opening their tour of New Zealand with a 32-17 loss to a sparkling Maori All Blacks in Hamilton on Wednesday. In a worrying sign three days out from the first Test of a three-match series against New Zealand, the Irish paid for ill-discipline and inaccuracy against a Maori outfit who scored all their four tries in the first half to open a 32-10 lead at the break. Despite wet conditions at Waikato Stadium, the home team weren't afraid to take risks and strung together some sweeping attacking moves, with two tries emanating from within their own half.

Fly-half Josh Loane kicked 12 points and was a constant menace with ball in hand. Ireland paid for a heavy penalty count against them in the opening half, with their problems exacerbated by an aimless kicking game and a back-peddalling scrum. Coach Andy Farrell will be concerned about the health status of at least two of his players, after back Jamie Hume and prop Cian Healy were assisted from the field nursing leg injuries.

Farrell fielded an inexperienced, virtual second-string, side with most of his likely starters for the first Test at Auckland on Saturday watching on from the grandstand. He took some positive elements from "a game of two halves" but said the Maori were clearly deserved winners. "We're

disappointed. We know it was a big week for the Maori boys but it was a big week for some of our guys, playing for Ireland for the first time," Farrell said. "There was really good stuff from certain individuals but a lot of dumb stuff along the way."

"It was brilliant as far as our learning is concerned because that's what you've got to iron out if you want to make it to the top." Maori captain Brad Weber said all of his players were encouraged to attack with ball in hand if they saw space. "We just wanted the boys to play with a bit of flair and at a speed that we would hope that Ireland couldn't handle," he said. "That first half certainly showed it. It was fun to be part of, man. We're all Maori so we all want to bring out that flair."

Ireland's New Zealand-born Bunde Aki captain crossed to put his side 10-8 ahead in response to an early try from impressive Maori fullback Zarn Sullivan. The home side then took control with three tries in the space of 11 minutes in the leadup to halftime, with wing Shaun Stevenson, halfback Weber and forward Cullen Grace all crossing. A more even second half threw up just one try, when Ireland forward Gavin Coombes burrowed across. The two teams will meet again in Wellington on July 12, midway between the second and third Tests. —AFP



HAMILTON: Brad Weber (center) of the New Zealand Maori feeds the scrum during the rugby union match between the New Zealand Maori and Ireland at Waikato Stadium in Hamilton on June 29, 2022. —AFP

PGA and European tours unveil 13-year joint venture

WASHINGTON: The PGA Tour and European Tour announced a 13-year operational joint venture on Tuesday, uniting in a tighter alliance to combat the new Saudi-backed LIV Golf Series. The new partnership through 2035 follows a strategic alliance unveiled last November that saw co-sanctioning of the Scottish Open, Barbasol Championship and Barracuda Championship events to provide more playing opportunities. There will also be a defined path for players to move from the European Tour to the PGA Tour.

From 2023, the top 10 players in the season-ending European Tour rankings will earn PGA Tour cards for the following season. "We are thrilled with today's announcement of this expanded partnership," PGA Tour commissioner Jay Monahan said. "We will continue to collaborate on a global schedule and key commercial areas as we draw our organizations and memberships even closer together while innovating to provide the most entertaining and compelling golf possible to fans around the world."

The move is also aimed at boosting prize money on both tours and comes as LIV Golf has lured away top players with the richest purses in golf history. LIV Golf debuted in England earlier this month and its second event is set to tee off Thursday at Pumpkin Ridge in Oregon. They feature 54-hole formats with shotgun starts and team and individual competitions.

Dustin Johnson, Patrick Reed, Bryson DeChambeau, Brooks Koepka, Phil Mickelson and Sergio Garcia are among the players who have opted for LIV Golf despite concerns over human rights issues by the Saudi financiers. The PGA Tour banned 17 members and former members who played in the first LIV event and warned that more indefinite suspensions would follow for players taking part in subsequent tournaments. In the wake of more recent player departures, the PGA announced plans for higher prize money in several events and three new international tournaments with large purses.

Strengthens both tours

As part of the new joint venture, the PGA Tour will increase its stake in European Tour Productions from 15 percent to 40 percent. The European Tour "will guarantee growth in annual prize funds to its membership for the next five years, all above the record 2022 levels", according to a news release from the tours. "This move will significantly enhance the meritocracy that has successfully served the professional game on both sides of the Atlantic for more than 50 years," said Keith Pelley, European Tour chief executive officer. "Today's announcement strengthens both tours for the betterment of both memberships..." "I passionately believe that this move is the right thing for our players, our tour, our fans and the game of golf in general." —AFP

DeChambeau: Saudi LIV Golf critics should 'move on' from 'bad'

LOS ANGELES: Bryson DeChambeau says he understands criticism of the Saudi-backed LIV Golf Series over human rights issues, but said Tuesday people need to "move on" from past "bad" Saudi actions. The 2020 US Open champion spoke ahead of Thursday's kickoff of the upstart tour's first US event and second overall at Pumpkin Ridge in North Plains, Oregon. Asked about concerns over the new circuit's financial backers, the 28-

MLB suspends 12 for roles in Angels, Mariners brawl

NEW YORK: Major League Baseball has announced suspensions for 12 people in the wake of Sunday's benches-clearing brawl between the Los Angeles Angels and Seattle Mariners. The punishments imposed included three members of the visiting Mariners and nine members of the Angels and for some began with games on Monday.

Seattle outfielder Jesse Winker received a seven-game ban while shortstop J.P. Crawford was issued a five-game suspension and outfielder Julio Rodriguez got two games. Angels interim manager Phil Nevin was hit with a 10-game ban and Anthony Rendon, an injured third baseman who entered the melee despite an arm in a cast, earned a five-game suspension and will not be allowed on the bench for the next seven games.

Angels pitchers Ryan Tepera and Andrew Wantz were each given three-game bans and pitcher Raisel Iglesias was handed a two-game suspension. Among Angels staff, assistant pitching coach Dom Chiti was banned for five games, catching coach Bill Haselman for one game and both bench coach Ray Montgomery and translator Manny Del Campo for two games.

Seattle's three players, all ejected from Sunday's 2-1 road loss to the Angels, will appeal the punishments, with the team being told it will be allowed to stagger the suspensions to reduce how badly they will be shorthanded. The Mariners already

Lyon bags five in spin battle

GALLE: Nathan Lyon's five-for helped Australia bowl out Sri Lanka for 212, before the hosts hit back with three wickets in a fast-moving opening Test on Wednesday. The tourists reached 98 for three at stumps after Sri Lankan spinner Ramesh Mendis struck twice, including David Warner's key wicket for 25, on a turning pitch at the picturesque Galle stadium. Steve Smith was run out on six after a mix up with opener Usman Khawaja, unbeaten on 47, and returned to the pavilion waving his hands in dismay. Khawaja and fellow left-hander Travis Head, on six, were batting with Australia still trailing by 114 runs in their first innings.

Mendis, an off-spinner, trapped Warner lbw after the left-handed opener hit five boundaries in an attacking stay at the wicket. Marnus Labuschagne was out on an attempted reverse sweep but it was Smith's wicket that brought the home crowd alive. The former captain was turned down midway for a quick single by Khawaja and failed to make the crease despite a desperate dive. Khawaja, who survived a missed stumping by wicketkeeper Niroshan Dickwella, kept up the fight till close of play.

Earlier, Dickwella made a defiant 58 before

year-old American said people need to look at the good things LIV Golf could bring.

"I understand people's decisions on their comments and whatnot. But as it relates to me, I have made my own decision," DeChambeau said. "Golf is a force for good and I think as time goes on, hopefully people will see the good they are doing and what they are trying to accomplish rather than looking at the bad that has happened before. I think moving on from that is important and going and continuing to move forward in a positive light is something that could be a force for good for the future of the game."

Saudi money is backing the richest prizes in golf history with \$25 million at stake in this week's 54-hole tournament. It has lured a number of US PGA Tour stars despite bans for those who jump to LIV Golf. Asked about concerns with Saudi involvement, four-time major winner Brooks Koepka



ANAHEIM: The Seattle Mariners and the Los Angeles Angels clear the benches after Jesse Winker #27 of the Seattle Mariners charged the Angels dugout after being hit by a pitch in the second inning at Angel Stadium of Anaheim. —AFP

have three top batters on the injured list and cannot add to their 40-man roster to replace suspended players.

Winker said the Angels' manager Nevin and injured infielder Rendon fanned the flames after both teams were tense over batters being hit by opposing pitchers over two days. "If the guy in the cast and their manager don't talk, nothing happens."

the Sri Lankan innings folded in the third session following the hosts' decision to bat first at the start of the two-match series. Lyon, who bagged his 20th five-wicket haul in Tests, combined with fellow spinner Mitchell Swepson, a leg-spinner who took three wickets, to rattle the opposition batting. Fast bowlers Pat Cummins and Mitchell Starc struck early with a wicket each as Sri Lanka took lunch at 68-2. The spinners soon took charge on a pitch traditionally known to assist the slow bowlers.

The left-handed Dickwella counter-attacked during his 59-ball stay at the crease and put on key partnerships, including a 54-run stand with Mendis, who made 22, for the seventh wicket. Dickwella reached his fifty off 42 balls in the second session but Lyon finally got him out, also sending back Mendis after tea. Lyon got his fifth wicket in Lasith Embuldeniya and Swepson, who was on a hat-trick denied by Dickwella, ended the innings after 59 overs.

Angelo Mathews also contributed to the Sri Lankan total with his 39 and stood with Dickwella in a 42-run stand broken by Lyon. Sri Lanka are bowling with four spinners and a lone fast bowler in Asitha Fernando. Debutant leg-spinner Jeffrey Vandersay bowled three overs. The island nation, which won the one-day international series against Australia 3-2, is battling an unprecedented economic crisis, with people across the country struggling to pay for food, fuel and other necessities. —AFP

said, "We're here to play golf. We're excited about it. We're going to go out there, put on the best show we can."

American Pat Perez, also making his LIV debut this week, replied, "I don't have any concerns. I'm playing golf. This group has provided me an opportunity to play golf and have a different schedule and that's my only concern. I understand the topics you're trying to bring up, and they're horrible events, but I'm here to play golf. That's my deal."

Players said a smaller schedule, only eight events this year, and richer purses were major reasons they made the jump to LIV Golf. "I wanted to spend more time with my children," said 2018 Masters winner Patrick Reed. "I wanted to be a dad. And to have an opportunity where I can play with some of the top players in the world. The reason why we're able to do that is because our purses are higher." —AFP

But they were talking, and I didn't want to talk," Winker said. "As far as I'm concerned, it's done." Nevin received the toughest punishment only 19 games into his stint as interim manager. "What's done is done. Yesterday's over and done with," Nevin said. Wantz received three games for intentionally throwing at Winker in the second inning and will not appeal. —AFP

Roglic insists Jumbo twin front can deliver Tour de France win

COPENHAGEN: Tour de France title challengers Primoz Roglic and Jonas Vingegaard of Jumbo Visma believe their team's two-leader strategy can finally deliver cycling's most treasured title after consecutive narrow defeats. Roglic and Vingegaard came second to arch-rival Tadej Pogacar in 2020 and 2021 respectively, but said on Wednesday UAE Team Emirates' 23-year-old Slovenian can be beaten by their united front.

"As long as we work together, doing as good as possible together, we believe that we can beat him," Roglic said two days before the 109th edition of the 21-day race starts with three stages in Denmark. Roglic pulled out in week one last year after a fall and on Wednesday denied feeling any threat from his junior partner Vingegaard who shone in his absence. "We make each other stronger. When you have strong individuals around, the whole team gets stronger," said the 32-year-old triple Vuelta a Espana winner.

Vingegaard, a modest former fish-factory worker, said he and Roglic enjoyed going for a beer together. "Primoz and I are good friends also out of bike racing," said the 25-year-old who was born and raised in the far north of Denmark in the small community of Hillerslev. "But it is totally different from last year. Last year I came to the Tour as a helper. And now I am one of the leaders of the biggest race in the world." Both Roglic and Vingegaard spoke about it being crucial to survive the first week, although team boss Merijn Zeeman took issue with that notion. "I don't like the term surviving because we are not afraid. We stay on the bike and stay upfront," Zeeman said of Jumbo's tendency to race from the front. "Surviving sounds like we are not sleeping at night because we are afraid of the first week."

He described the decision to head up the team with two strong lead riders as the best tactically. "They are both in really, really good shape and close to each other," Zeeman said of his two leaders. "In the best scenario, both of them are better than Pogacar. But there is a strong possibility that is not going to happen. It's not a secret that Pogacar is the big favourite. We need everybody to be at his top level and we definitely need a two-leader strategy. —AFP