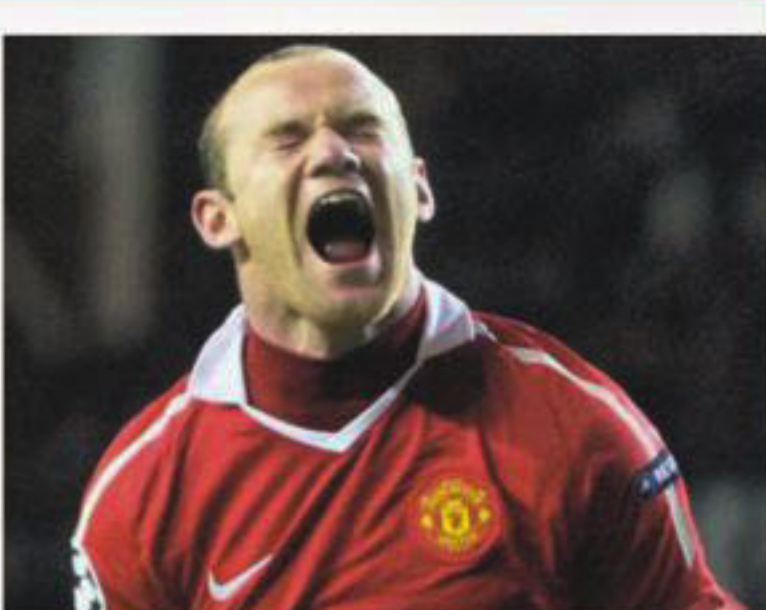


**UNITED YELLED ONE OUT**

Manchester United's victory at Anfield appeared to have been prompted by a half-time dressing down, according to Liverpool defender Mamadou Sakho and United's Morgan Schneiderlin. United's players had spent half-time arguing with each other, with Sakho saying Liverpool's first-half display had left their opponents rattled. "We could hear them shouting in the dressing room at half-time," said the French centre-back. Schneiderlin confirmed the dressing room row by saying: "When we came into the dressing room after the first half, there was some screaming and shouting but of course that is normal because in a derby you cannot lose the battle. "In the second half we did what we had to do. We scored one goal, stayed strong and, at



**Champs race into second round**

AFP, Melbourne

Defending champions Novak Djokovic and Serena Williams raced into the Australian Open second round Monday as the year's first Grand Slam was rocked by claims of widespread match-fixing in tennis.

Former winners Roger Federer and Maria Sharapova also progressed smoothly on a day of high temperatures at Melbourne Park, where one ballboy felt faint and had to be helped from the court.

Djokovic's main opponent was the 35 Celsius (95 Fahrenheit) heat as, cooling himself with ice vests on the change-overs, the top seed dispatched Korean rising star Chung Hyeon 6-3, 6-2, 6-4.

Williams also made a positive return to competitive tennis, four months after a heartbreaking defeat in the US Open semifinals ended her bid for a rare calendar-year Grand Slam.

Showing no discomfort from the swollen knee which forced her out of this month's Hopman Cup mixed-team tournament, Williams toughed it out 6-4, 7-5 against Italy's Camila Giorgi.

Williams, 34, is seeking an Open-era record-equalling 22nd Grand Slam title, while Djokovic can become only the second man to win six Australian Open crowns after Roy Emerson.

Federer was also untroubled in his 6-2, 6-

**DAY 1 HIGHLIGHTS**

Defending champions Novak Djokovic, Serena Williams through in straight sets  
- Former winners Roger Federer and Maria Sharapova also untroubled in round one  
- Action overshadowed by bombshell report alleging widespread match-fixing in tennis  
- Temperatures soar to 35 Celsius (95 Fahrenheit)  
- Caroline Wozniacki, beaten by Yulia Putintseva, becomes

1, 6-2 win over Georgia's Nicoloz Basilashvili as he continued his quest for a record-extending 18th Grand Slam title.

Sharapova, the women's winner in 2008, beat Japan's Nao Hibino 6-1, 6-3 in just 73 minutes in her first match of the year after a forearm injury forced her out of the Brisbane International.

Kei Nishikori, Tomas Berdych and Australia's Nick Kyrgios also went through without significant problems, while Caroline Wozniacki was the biggest casualty on day one.

The former world number one, who joined fellow seeds Sloane Stephens, Sara Errani and Ivo Karlovic on the sidelines, was stunned in three sets by Kazakhstan's Yulia Putintseva.

Canada's Eugenie Bouchard safely reached the second round, and Spain's Carla Suarez earned applause when she helped a ballboy from the court as he swooned in high temperatures.



World Number one Novak Djokovic of Serbia celebrates his victory in the men's singles first round match against South Korea's Chung Hyeon during the Australian Open in Melbourne yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

**BRIEF STORIES**

**DJOKOVIC'S BABY BOON**

Novak Djokovic said he needed to have more children after the birth of his baby son was followed by his best season yet. Djokovic reached all four Grand Slam finals, winning three, last season following the birth of his son, Stefan, in October 2014. "Darling, I guess we've got to make more babies," he said, presumably referring to his wife, after his first-round win over Chung Hyeon on Monday. "I'm probably going to get criticised for what I said now," the Serb added sheepishly. However, the world number one already has media on his side after he handed out chocolates at his press conference on Sunday.

**ROGER AND OUT**

Roger Federer's first-round work-out against Nikoloz Basilashvili was so routine that the highlight was arguably a spectacular catch by a ballboy. Federer chipped a loose ball to the ballboy, kneeling at the side of the net, who took a sharp one-handed catch just above the ground. "Ah, that was good to watch," purred the commentator, in footage which quickly did the rounds on the Internet.

**THE GRUNTING TENNIS RACQUET**

Many fans reached for the mute button as the notoriously noisy Maria Sharapova shrieked her way into the second round, but a new invention means that, unfortunately, players everywhere can sound like the Russian. The 'Grunting Tennis Racquet', fashioned by Japanese inventor Seiya Kobayashi, screams on its own when you swing it, meaning you can keep quiet and still sound like the five-time Grand Slam champion. One player who doesn't need the Grunting Tennis Racquet is Victoria Azarenka, Sharapova's rival in volume and a two-time Australian Open winner who makes her entrance on Tuesday. -AFP

**BCL set for long break**  
*Second round starts today*

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh Cricket League (BCL) will have a long break after the second-round matches that will kick off today at two different venues.

The four-day first-class competition will resume with the third round from February 19. The tournament committee has decided to discontinue their previous schedule to comply with national head coach Chandika Hathurusingha's plan.

The Bangladesh coach has decided to continue the preparation camp for the upcoming Asia Cup and ICC World

Twenty20 with 24 players, as a result of which the franchises will miss the services of the top players. The tournament committee therefore revised the itinerary.

"The tournament was not stopped; we just delayed the third round in the greater interests of our national team. While we have to give importance to our domestic competitions, we had to consider many things before taking this decision. The franchises are also in favour of this decision," said Akram Khan, chairman of tournament committee.

"If the top players are not part of the competition, then the standard will suffer. So it is better that we delay the rest of the tournament."

**Gayle equals Yuvi's T20 record**

REUTERS, Melbourne

West Indies batsman Chris Gayle smashed fifty from 12 balls for the Melbourne Renegades in the Big Bash League on Monday to match India's Yuvraj Singh's record for the fastest half-century in Twenty20 cricket.

Left-hander Yuvraj achieved the feat against England in a group match at the inaugural World Twenty20 in 2007 in South Africa, smashing fast bowler Stuart Broad for six sixes in one over.

Opening batsman Gayle plundered 21-year-old Adelaide Strikers bowler Greg West, playing his second T20 match, for 27 runs in the first over and hit the last four deliveries for six.

His seventh maximum took Gayle past his half-century as he deposited spinner Travis Head over the long-on boundary.

Head dismissed him five deliveries later for a 17-ball 56 with Gayle caught by wicketkeeper Tim Ludeman from a top edge.

**IPL MATCH-FIXING**  
**Ajit slapped with life ban**

AFP, Mumbai

Indian off-spinner Ajit Chandila was banned from cricket for life on Monday for his involvement in a spot-fixing scandal while batsman Hiken Shah was suspended for five years over corruption.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) found 32-year-old Chandila, who does not play international cricket, guilty of spot-fixing while playing for the Rajasthan Royals franchise in the Indian Premier League (IPL) in 2013.

Shah, a first-class domestic player from Mumbai, was suspended for approaching another player about fixing ahead of the 2015 IPL, a breach of the BCCI's code of conduct.

"Ajit Chandila is banned for life from playing or representing cricket in any form or to be associated in any way with the activities of the board or its affiliates," BCCI secretary Anurag Thakur said in a statement.

**Novak, Roger react to fixing claims**

REUTERS, Melbourne



World number one Novak Djokovic said a member of his staff was approached about fixing a match early in his career, and he questioned whether betting companies should be allowed to sponsor big tennis tournaments.

The reigning Australian Open champion was speaking after the sport was rocked by allegations that the authorities had failed to deal with widespread match-fixing.

Djokovic said that as far as he was aware there was no longer a problem with what he described as a "crime in sport" at the top level of tennis, but added that he had once been approached indirectly to throw a match.

"I was not approached directly, I was approached through people that were with my team," he said, after cruising through his opening match at the tournament against South Korean teenager Chung Hyeon on Monday.

"Of course, we threw it away right away. The guy that was trying to talk to me, he didn't even get to me directly. There was nothing out of it.

"Unfortunately, there were some, in those times, those days, rumours, some talk, some people were going around. They were dealt with. In the last six, seven years, I haven't heard anything similar."

In 2007, Djokovic said an approach had been made offering him \$200,000 to throw a match at the St Petersburg Open in Russia, a tournament he did not ultimately play in.

The 28-year-old Serb said that although he was confident there was no longer a problem at the top level, he could not speak for further down the tennis rankings.

Roger Federer was also asked about the emerging story - and admitted that he is worried. "You have to take it super serious," he said.

"This is more a question for guys in suits, not one in a tracksuit... I'd love to hear names."

"From my knowledge and information about, you know, the match fixing or anything similar, there is nothing happening on the top level, as far as I know. Challenger level, those tournaments, maybe, maybe not," said Federer.

"But I'm not entitled to really talk about it. I can give my opinion. But there is an organization, authorities, people who take care of that on a daily basis and make sure to track

**Lanka suspend bowling coach**

AFP, Colombo



Sri Lanka Cricket Monday suspended its fast bowling coach over alleged attempts at bribing players to under-perform in a Test match to ensure a surprise victory for the West Indies.

Anusha Samaranyake was suspended for two months after Sri Lanka's sports minister ordered a probe into allegations of an attempt to engineer a batting collapse in the match in Galle last October, the cricket board said in a statement.

The hosts won the match decisively. The board sacked a part-time employee, net bowler Gayan Vishwajith, and slapped a lifetime ban on him entering any cricket premises in the country over the same allegation.

Neither of the men was available for comment.

"Sri Lanka Cricket has received several complaints regarding close acquaintance of Anusha Samaranyake with the main suspect Gayan Vishwajith who had approached several national players for the alleged illegal activities of match-fixing," the statement said.

"Pursuant to a preliminary inquiry conducted in this regard, Sri Lanka Cricket has decided to suspend Anusha Samaranyake for a period of two months until further investigations are concluded."

The police Financial Crimes Investigation Department has already recorded statements from wicketkeeper Kusal Perera and star bowler Rangana Herath about an alleged offer of tens of thousands of dollars in return for a batting collapse.

Sports Minister Dayasiri Jayasekera told AFP last month that an unnamed man linked to a bookmaker had offered the two players some 10 million rupees (around \$70,000)



Barcelona superstar Lionel Messi holds up his fifth Ballon d'Or trophy before their Primera Liga match against Athletic Bilbao at the Nou Camp on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP

**'Messi injury not worth risking'**

AFP, Barcelona



Barcelona boss Luis Enrique insisted his decision to remove Lionel Messi at half-time of the European champions' 6-0 thrashing of Athletic Bilbao on Sunday was a precaution taken with Barcelona's congested fixture list in mind.

Messi paraded his record fifth Ballon d'Or to the Barca fans before kick-off and opened the scoring from the penalty spot after Gorka Iraizoz was sent-off just three minutes in for bringing down Luis Suarez inside the area.

Neymar made it 2-0 before the break when Messi was replaced by Arda Turan.

The Argentine's presence wasn't missed, though, as Suarez hit a second-half hat-trick and Ivan Rakitic also tapped home after brilliant play by Neymar to keep Barca just two points behind league leaders Atletico Madrid with a game in hand.

"We have to wait and see what the tests say, but it was a slight strain and we preferred not to risk it," said Enrique.

Barca face Athletic once more in the first leg of their Copa del Rey quarterfinal

tie on Wednesday. Should the holders get through they will have played 17 games in January and February alone, having already overcome a busy first half of the season due to Spanish Supercup, UEFA Supercup and Club World Cup commitments.

"We spoke and it didn't make any sense to risk it at 2-0 and with all that we have to come," added Enrique.

"If I don't like taking risks with any player, imagine what I am like with Leo Messi."

Athletic denied Barca a clean sweep of six trophies in 2015 on their last trip to the Camp Nou as a 1-1 draw sealed a 5-1 aggregate win for the Basques in the Spanish Supercup in August.

However, any chance the visitors had of frustrating Barca once more was ended when Suarez outmuscled Borja Etxeita and was brought down by Iraizoz after rounding the 'keeper.

"What happened in the game wasn't anything like what I or (Athletic coach) Ernesto Valverde would have imagined," Enrique continued.

"From that incident in the first few minutes the game changed completely with us in front and them down to 10 men."

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