

POLE VAULTER SUES FOR POTHOLE INJURIES

Greek pole vaulter Kostas Filippidis is suing the owners of the Athens Olympic Stadium for 530,000 euros after a pothole left him injured during a practice session, his lawyer reported Monday. The 30-year-old gold medal winner in the 2014 World Indoor Championships injured his left knee during the June 19 training session and is asking compensation through a lawsuit filed in the Athens Court of First Instance. "The serious injury caused him to stay out of the stadiums and in a particularly important time for himself, missing three top international competitions," the suit filed by lawyer Vasilis Chirdaris on behalf of the athlete said. In the lawsuit Filippidis claims that he and his coach Dimitris Kyteas had warned the stadium personnel numerous times about the pothole in the runway of the pole vault jump in the indoor training facility of the stadium without it being fixed. The Athens Olympic Stadium is owned by the Greek state and hosted the Athens 2004 Olympic Games.

—AFP



Maria Sharapova of Russia signs autographs after her win against Jennifer Brady of USA at the Stanford University Taube Family Tennis Stadium on Monday.

Sharapova makes winning return

AFP, Los Angeles



Five-time Grand Slam champion Maria Sharapova made a battling return to US hardcourts on Monday with a 6-1, 4-6, 6-0 victory over American Jennifer Brady in Stanford, California.

"I feel like I just want to hug everyone and say thank you," Sharapova told fans in a post-match interview. "It's my first match in the States in a really long time, and it's the closest thing to home for me."

The former world number one from Russia hadn't played in the US since March of 2015, before serving a 15-month doping suspension for the use of meldonium.

She returned to competition in April, but her comeback has been disrupted by a hip injury that forced her to withdraw from Wimbledon qualifying.

Sharapova, whose ranking has fallen to 171 in the world, received a wild card into the premier level tournament in Stanford, where she was tested Monday by the 80th-ranked Brady.

Sharapova got off to a brisk start. Although she needed to save three break points in the sixth game to take a 5-1 lead in the opening set, she broke in the next game to seize the set before Brady won the second.

"I had a bit of a letdown but that's the way it is," Sharapova said. "You finish a set and think you've got it, but she came out firing, capable of hitting winners and big serves."

Early in the third Sharapova fought off two break points to consolidate her lead, and wrapped up the match after two hours and two minutes.

"I feel like I face a lot of things: not competing for a long time, an opponent who's able to play some great tennis... I feel like I'm playing catch-up against everyone who's had a head start," Sharapova said. "All that matters is that I keep playing."

Sharapova, who has also accepted a wildcard into the WTA tournament in Cincinnati -- another key warmup for the US Open -- booked a second-round meeting with seventh-seeded Ukrainian Lesia Tsurenko, a 6-3, 6-3 winner over Spain's Lara Arruabarrena.

10TH MEN'S ASIA CUP Hosts Bangladesh in tough group

SPORTS REPORTER

Hosts Bangladesh have been drawn in Pool A alongside strong opponents -- India, Pakistan and Japan -- in the 10th Men's Asia Cup Hockey Tournament, which is scheduled to be held in Dhaka from October 11 to 22.

Pool B features South Korea, Malaysia, China and Oman, informed Bangladesh Hockey Federation's general secretary Abdus Sadeque yesterday.

"The draw took place at the FIH headquarters in Switzerland on July 28 and we have been informed on Monday," said Sadeque, adding that Bangladesh will start their campaign against Pakistan in one of the two matches of the opening day at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium.

The next two Pool matches against India and Japan will be held on September 13 and 15 respectively.

Coach Mahbub Harun termed Bangladesh's Pool A as a tough one, and opined that it would be hard for his team to progress far.

"We have been pitted against tough opponents. It could have been better had we got an opponent like China or Oman," Harun said. "Now we have to target the place-deciding matches to produce good results because it will be tough to do well against India, Pakistan and Japan in pool matches."

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh hockey team will leave for China tomorrow to play eight matches against different provincial teams as a part of their preparations for the Asia Cup.

Neymar's bonus held up

AFP, Barcelona



Barcelona have blocked payment of a 26-million-euro bonus for star attacker Neymar as speculation mounts that he will move to Paris Saint-Germain, a source at the club said Tuesday.

The Brazilian football star, who is due to come back for training on Wednesday morning, is at the centre of an apparent tug of war between the two European giants in what would be the most expensive transfer fee in football history.

Speculation is mounting that the 25-year-old could quit Barcelona for PSG for a world-record 222 million euros.

"These 26 million euros have been placed with a notary pending to see if the player continues," the source, who refused to be named, told AFP.

The renewal bonus was agreed on a year ago when Neymar extended his contract with Barcelona until 2021, and was due to be paid to the player after he completed a year. But the club has decided to put it on hold pending to see how the situation evolves.

The contract Neymar signed also increased the buy-out clause from 200 to 222 million euros, which PSG are

reportedly willing to pay. Neymar's future is the talk of Spanish football, and particularly Barcelona supporters.

After a successful pre-season tour in the United States, the footballer flew to China for a promotion trip. But he studiously avoided commenting on the situation.

On Wednesday, Barcelona players -- who have reportedly grown sick of the ongoing saga surrounding their Brazilian teammate -- resume training after their summer break, with a double session in the morning and in the afternoon. Neymar has been called to training, the club source said, although Spanish sports media doubt he will show up.

The move seems just a matter of time now, especially after the French club contacted local authorities in Paris to organise a 'mega-unveiling' for the Brazilian, akin to the one they had after acquiring Zlatan Ibrahimovic in 2012. On that occasion, PSG presented the enigmatic Swedish forward in Place du Trocadero before thousands of fans. According to reports in the French media, Trocadero could once again be the venue, as PSG seek a symbolic setting for the grand display of transfer-market virility.

PSG are already counting on the support of the French police, who are putting together a strategy to avoid overcrowding and traffic congestion.

Les Parisiens have also started the process of clearing out some players in order to make room for Neymar in their FFP books, with Serge Aurier and Blaise Matuidi expected to be heading towards the exit.

Various reports in the English media have stated that right-back Aurier will join Manchester United after he was displaced in the playing eleven by Dani Alves. Meanwhile, reports in the Italian media suggest that Juventus are keen on midfielder Matuidi.

Barcelona are also stepping up their efforts in the market as they seek a suitable replacement. A second improved 90-million-euro bid for Liverpool midfielder Philippe Coutinho was reportedly rejected, with Jurgen Klopp restating that the midfielder would not be leaving Anfield.

That has led to speculation that the board will now make a serious move for Atletico Madrid striker Antoine Griezmann. They have also been looking at Juventus' Paulo Dybala, but he is looking increasingly likely to stay put in Turin.



Brazil superstar Neymar poses for photographs during a fashion event in Shanghai on Monday.

PHOTO: AFP

QUICK SINGLES

The following are a few samples of stories that did not make the print edition. However, if they pique your interest, you can always read them online on The Daily Star website by simply scanning the QR codes listed below:

Dynamites rope in Cremer

Zimbabwe captain Steve Cremer joins Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) defending champions Dhaka Dynamites after his recent performances caught the attention of the BPL franchise.

Smith upbeat as dispute nears end

Australia captain Steve Smith is upbeat about the pay crisis being almost over.

Real expected to give MLS stars intense match

Veteran goalkeeper Tim Howard says top North American club players should expect "cut-throat" competition from Spanish giants Real Madrid.

Man City set for Spain trip after season opener

Manchester City have made the unusual decision to travel to Spain for a training camp less than a day after their opening Premier League fixture.

Win-win for Paris, LA

AGENCIES, Paris



Paris was celebrating victory on Tuesday in its bid to host the 2024 Olympic Games after

Los Angeles announced its intention to host the 2028 event instead in return for financial sweeteners.

Officially, French President Emmanuel Macron gave Monday's announcement by Los Angeles a cautious welcome, hailing a "very important step" on the road to hosting the Games.

The deal was described by International Olympic Committee president Thomas Bach as a "win-win" agreement for both cities and the Olympic movement.

But despite the fact that Paris is now

effectively the only remaining candidate to host the 2024 Summer Games, Macron and other bid leaders shied away from overt triumphalism until an official announcement.

"France notes the decision of Los Angeles to put forward its candidature for 2028 and to reach an agreement with the IOC and Paris," a statement from Macron's office said.

Macron spoke to Bach following Los Angeles' announcement and was "delighted by this very important step towards France obtaining the Games in 2024".

Announcing the decision on Monday, Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti said "this deal was too good to pass up".

However others were less circumspect, with French newspapers celebrating the Paris win and Tony

Estanguet, the Paris bid co-leader, saying he could see "nothing standing in the way of Paris staging the Games".

"This time we've won it," said a headline on the front page of Le Parisien newspaper.

Paris, which will host the Games for a third time, endured the disappointment of failed bids in 1992, 2008 and 2012.

Both Paris and Los Angeles had wanted to host the 2024 Olympics, with the winner to be officially named by the IOC on September 13 in the Peruvian capital Lima.

But the possibility that Los Angeles would abandon a 2024 bid and instead accept the 2028 Games has been growing since the IOC decided in July that it would attempt to award both Games at its Lima meeting. The French capital insisted it only wanted to host the Games in 2024, on the 100th anniversary of the city's 1924 Olympics, prompting Los Angeles to soften its stance and consider hosting the 2028 Games.

And confirmation of the decision everyone was expecting came on Monday night.

"I am proud to announce the Olympic Games are coming back to the United States of America," Los Angeles Mayor Garcetti said at a ceremony at the StubHub Center stadium.

The President of the United States Donald Trump also chimed in saying: "For the first time in a generation, the Olympics are coming back to the United States," Trump said in a White House statement. "The United States has a remarkable history of passionate and loyal support for the Olympic Movement. No country ever won more Olympic medals. America always shines brightly during the Games, and LA 2028 will be no exception.

Like Paris, this will bring the Games back to Los Angeles for a third time, after the city hosted in 1932 and 1984.



Los Angeles mayor Eric Garcetti announces LA becoming the 2028 Olympic Games host in Carson on Monday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Bolt ready to fire in 100m defence

AFP, London



Jamaican sprint legend Usain Bolt labelled himself the underdog as he seeks to round off his glittering individual track career with the defence of his world 100m title this week.

"That's what I keep reading and what my team keeps telling me, so I've got to prove myself again," the 30-year-old said in a warning shot to pretenders to his crown in the blue riband event of the IAAF World Championships.

Bolt started this season in sluggish form, running two 10sec-plus times before finally hitting some form at the Monaco Diamond League.

"The last race I ran was 9.95sec, which shows I'm going in the right direction," he said.

"It's a championships and the two rounds always help me. I've been here many times. It's go-time, so let's go!"

He added: "Usain Bolt has retired unbeaten in an individual event, unbeatable, unstoppable -- for me that would be the best headline!" "If I show up at a championships you know I'm fully confident and ready to go, and my coach, I'm ready to go."

Bolt refused to single out who would be his closest rival for the 100m, with heats on Friday before the semifinal and final on Saturday at the same stadium in east London where he won treble gold at the 2012 Olympics.

"The seven people who are going to be in that race with me, they're the biggest challengers," he said.

Bolt has dominated sprinting since taking double individual gold at the Beijing Olympics in 2008, going on to win a further six Olympic golds and also picking up 11 world titles.

He also holds world records of 9.58 and 19.19sec in the 100 and 200m, both set when winning at the 2009 Berlin worlds.

In a glitzy press conference organised by his long-term sponsors Puma and hosted by Welsh ex-hurdler Colin Jackson, Bolt picked out his then-world record breaking victory in the 200m at the Beijing Olympics in 2008 as the stand-out performance of his career.

Abahani face Farashganj today

SPORTS REPORTER

The second round of the Saif Power Battery Bangladesh Premier League starts today at Bangabandhu National Stadium, with defending champions Abahani taking on Farashganj SC in the lone fixture.

Five-time champions Abahani made a winning start with a hard-fought 3-2 win over newcomers Saif Sporting Club, and they will certainly be looking forward to keeping their winning run intact while Farashganj will look for a turnaround in fortunes following their 0-2 defeat at the hands of last edition's runners-up Chittagong Abahani.

In the first six matches of the first round, foreign recruits dominated the show with 11 goals out of a total of 18 scored. Abahani's Nigerian striker Emeka Darlington, Sheikh Russel KC's Gambian striker Dawda Cessey and Rahmatganj MFS's local striker Rashedul Islam Shuvo are jointly on top of the goal scorer's chart with two goals each.

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