

## Langer vows new culture as Aussie coach

## India refuse pink ball day-night Test on Australia tour



Royal Challengers Bangalore captain and batsman Virat Kohli (right), plays a shot while Mumbai Indians wicketkeeper Ishan Kishan looks on during the 2018 Indian Premier League (IPL) Twenty20 cricket match between Royal Challengers Bangalore and Mumbai Indians at the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bangalore on May 1. (AFP)

## Kohli to star for Surrey in June

LONDON, May 3, (AFP): India captain Virat Kohli will play for English County Championship side Surrey in June with an eye to adapting to English conditions ahead of leading his country on tour later in the summer.

Kohli should be available for three County Championship games against Hampshire, Somerset and Yorkshire.

The right-handed batsman could also feature in three one-day Cup

matches against Kent, Middlesex and Glamorgan.

"It has long been an ambition of mine to play county cricket and I am thankful to Alec Stewart and Surrey for allowing me the opportunity to join them during their 2018 season," said Kohli in a Surrey statement.

India take on England in three-match T20 and One-Day series in July before a five-match Test series.

"We are thrilled to have signed the biggest name in world cricket for the

month of June," said Surrey director of cricket Alec Stewart.

"Playing and training alongside Virat will be a massive benefit for our players who will have the opportunity to learn so much from him.

"At a time when there is much discussion around the future of county cricket, the arrival of Virat should give our domestic game a massive boost and positive exposure around the cricketing world which in turn can benefit every county."

NEW DELHI, May 3, (AFP): India have refused to play a day-night Test during the tour of Australia later this year because of doubts over the quality of the pink ball, their cricket board said Thursday.

"Yes, it's pretty clear that we are not playing a day-night Test in Australia, no doubt about it," BCCI administrator Vinod Rai told AFP.

Cricketer Australia (CA) had wanted the first Test in Adelaide from December 6 played under lights to tap on the growing popularity of pink-ball cricket.

But the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) said they did not want to get involved in an experiment in a high-profile series.

## CRICKET

"We have been saying this all along that we are experimenting with pink ball cricket in the Duleep Trophy (India's domestic competition) and that's it for now," said Rai.

CA chief executive James Sutherland has lobbied hard for top-ranked India to play a day-night match, but hinted the tourists were scared of conceding an advantage to Australia, who have won all three pink ball Tests at Adelaide.

"I think everyone in world cricket knows that, to be frank, I think they want to come out here and beat us," said Sutherland.

"There's a sense, or a reality, that Australia has won each of the pink-ball Test matches that have played in Australia and there may be a sense that it gives us a bit of an advantage," Sutherland told SEN Radio Wednesday.

Observers believe the tour could be one of India's best chance to record a first Test series win in Australia as the hosts' star players Steve Smith and David Warner are serving 12-month bans for ball tampering.

Rai, who heads a special committee appointed by India's Supreme Court to

## New Zealand weighing 1st Pakistan tour since 2003

WELLINGTON, May 3, (AFP): New Zealand say they are considering their first cricket tour to Pakistan since 2003 but Australia on Thursday shut the door on an appearance in the insurgency-wracked country.

New Zealand Cricket is carrying out "due diligence" after a request to play a Twenty20 game in Pakistan, where the team hotel in Karachi was hit by a deadly suicide blast in 2002.

"At the moment NZC is doing due diligence on the request and consulting with security providers, the government, and the players," a spokesman told Radio New Zealand.

"We will respond to the PCB when this process has been completed."

Pakistan will host tours by Australia and New Zealand in October and November, with the matches due to be played in the United Arab Emirates.

But the Pakistan Cricket Board has asked both teams to play the tours' Twenty20 games in Pakistan, where

international cricket is only now creeping back after a long hiatus.

International tours to Pakistan stopped in 2009 when gunmen attacked the touring Sri Lankan team's bus in Lahore, killing eight people.

New Zealand last toured Pakistan in 2003, the year after a suicide bombing outside their Karachi hotel killed 15 people.

However, Cricket Australia said it had no plans to play in Pakistan.

"The safety and security of Australian players is our number one priority," a spokesman told AFP. "From an Australia team perspective, we are not contemplating moving our current bilateral-tour arrangements from taking on Pakistan in the Middle East, when they host the next series."

International fixtures have been slowly returning to Pakistan, with Zimbabwe, Sri Lanka, a World XI and West Indies all visiting the country without incident.

run the BCCI, said India would not be forced into playing a day-night Test.

Meanwhile, Justin Langer vowed to fix the scandal-hit Australian cricket team's behaviour and win back respect after being named head coach in all three formats of the game Thursday.

The former Test opener, 47, starts his new role on May 22 for a four-year term which takes in two Ashes series, a World Cup and a World Twenty20 tournament.

He takes the reins at a time of crisis

following the 12-month suspensions of ex-captain Steve Smith and his deputy David Warner over a ball-tampering scandal which also saw previous coach Darren Lehmann quit.

"The expectations are high in the Australian cricket team. We have got to make sure the behaviours are good. If we do that, I think the outcomes will look after themselves," Langer told a media conference.

"I think one of the things that's really important is that we keep looking to earn respect. To me, respect is worth more than all the gold in the world."

Cricketer Australia has ordered a review of the damaged sport's culture in the wake of the scandal during the third Test against South Africa in Cape Town that tarnished Australian cricket's reputation.



Langer

## Unseeded Jaziri dumps out top-seeded Cilic in Istanbul

Kvitova marches through Prague Open semis

PARIS, May 3, (Agencies): World No 4 and defending champion Marin Cilic was dumped out of the clay-court ATP event in Istanbul in his first match by unseeded Tunisian Malek Jaziri on Thursday.

Former US Open champion Cilic was the top seed in Turkey, but was well-beaten 6-4, 6-2 by world No 78 Jaziri in their second-round encounter.

Croatia's Cilic, who lost in both last year's Wimbledon final and January's Australian Open final to Roger Federer, was playing in his first match since a defeat by Kei Nishikori at the Monte Carlo Masters two weeks ago.

Jaziri will take on either Brazilian Thiago Monteiro or Czech Jiri Vesely in the quarter-finals.

In Prague, second-seeded Petra Kvitova advanced to the Prague Open semifinals after dominating fellow

## TENNIS

Czech Katerina Siniakova 6-3, 6-3 on Thursday.

On the way to her third straight-sets victory, Kvitova hit 21 winners at her debut in the tournament.

She next faces sixth-seeded Zhang Shuai of China who defeated Jasmine Paolini of Italy 6-4, 6-3.

Kvitova and Zhang have a 2-2 record against each other.

Seventh-seeded Mihaela Buzarnescu of Romania reached her second semifinal this year by beating Kristyna Pliskova of the Czech Republic 6-2, 6-3.

She will meet Italian Camila Giorgi, who knocked out former US Open champion Samantha Stosur 6-2, 6-3.

Former world number one Serena Williams has withdrawn from the Madrid Open as she continues to regain full fitness ahead of the French Open later this month, the tournaments organisers said on Thursday.

The 36-year-old, who won the Madrid Open in 2012 and 2013, returned to the WTA tour in March after giving birth to her first child last September.

Williams, a 23-times grand slam singles champion, was ousted by her sister Venus in her comeback tournament at Indian Wells and last played in her first round defeat by Japan's Naomi Osaka at the Miami Open.

"We regret the absence of Serena and we wish her a speedy recovery," tournament director Manolo Santana said in a statement on the Madrid Open website.

"She is one of the great champions of our sport, she has always offered a show to the tournament and we hope to see her again at the Caja Magica in the future."

Poland's Agnieszka Radwanska has also withdrawn from the Madrid Open, which runs from May 7-13, due to a back injury.

Williams missed the first grand slam

## Penultimate bout

## Norwegian boxer to be 1st woman to feature on HBO

LOS ANGELES, May 3, (AP): Cecilia Braekhus was barely a teenager when she began sneaking out the window of her family home in Bergen, Norway, to train secretly as a kickboxer. Although she had an instinctive love for the excitement and discipline of combat sports, she wasn't quite sure how to tell her parents.

Two decades later, Braekhus' unusual outlet for her adolescent energy is still her passion as she enters the biggest fight of her career.

When Braekhus steps into the famed outdoor ring in Carson, California, on Saturday night to defend her four welterweight title belts against Kali Reis, they will become the first women to fight on HBO in the premium US cable network's 45-year history of boxing coverage.

"America is always the dream for every fighter to come and make it big," Braekhus said Wednesday. "Every fighter on the planet wishes and dreams to be on the biggest boxing stage in the world. I know there's a lot of fighters, a lot of male fighters, who would do anything to be where I am on Saturday,

so this is a big deal."

Born in Colombia and adopted by Norwegian parents as a toddler, the 36-year-old Braekhus (32-0, 9 KOs) forged a fighting career in a homeland where such pursuits were quite unusual in the 1990s.

"Norway is a very safe country," Braekhus said. "We are very spoiled. It's a rich country. It's a good, peaceful country, and the main sports are skiing and football, stuff like that. But that doesn't mean it fits everyone. So I was looking for something that was fitting me, and when I walked into that gym, right away I knew this was it. It was like meeting your husband, you know? The love of your life.

It was like love at first sight. You just know."

Braekhus turned pro 11 years ago, and nobody in her generation has done it better. Fighting mostly in Germany and Denmark, she became a champion

## BOXING

in 2009 and made 21 consecutive title defenses, eventually graduating to arenas in Oslo and in her hometown on Norway's west coast after the nation repealed its ban on pro boxing in late 2014.

Her latest assignment is in a whole new world. Braekhus and Reis are in the penultimate bout on a show headlined by middleweight king Gennady Golovkin's title defense against Vanes Martirosyan.

"Considering all the different elements, the historical moments, I think everybody is feeling that something very special is going to happen," Braekhus said. "There is something in the air. You just feel there's really history."

Braekhus' breakout fight originally was scheduled for the pay-per-view card of Golovkin's rematch with Canelo Alvarez in Las Vegas. When Alvarez was suspended for failing a doping test and Roman "Chocolatito" Gonzalez couldn't put together a short-notice fight to appear on the HBO telecast, the network selected Braekhus for the coveted slot.

of the year at the Australian Open in January and could also be ruled out of the French Open, which is held from May 21 to June 10.

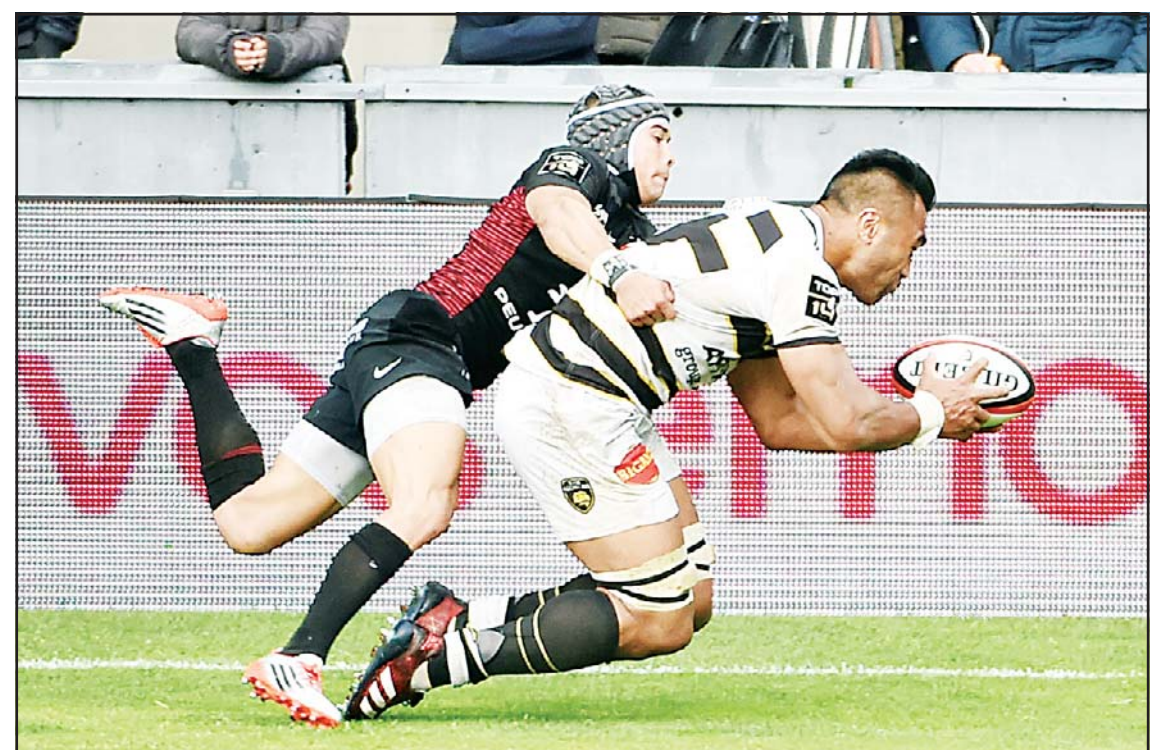
The Swiss is currently second in the world rankings behind Rafael Nadal, but depending on his long-term rival's results on clay over the next six weeks, could arrive in Germany as the world number one.

In Munich, defending champion Alexander Zverev had to dig deep to win his second-round match at the ATP tournament in Munich on Wednesday after a scare against fellow German Yannick Hanfmann.

The 26-year-old Hanfmann, ranked 118th in the world, took the first set, which lasted an hour, in a marathon tie-break before Zverev clawed his way back for a 6-7 (12/14), 6-4, 6-2 victory.



Norway's Cecilia Braekhus (center left), and Kali Reis (center right), pose during a boxing news conference in Los Angeles on May 2. The pair are slated to fight during the boxing event at StubHub Center in Carson, California on May 5. (AP)



La Rochelle's New-Zealander Number eight Victor Vito (right), scores a try during the French Top 14 rugby union match between Toulouse and La Rochelle, at the Ernest Wallon Stadium in Toulouse, on April 29, southern France. (AFP)

## Ireland wing Trimble announces retirement

## Super Rugby eyes US expansion

SYDNEY, May 3, (AFP): Super Rugby chiefs are reportedly considering expanding into the United States, undeterred by their previous failed attempt to increase the southern hemisphere competition to 18 teams.

Australia's Fairfax Media said a leaked paper titled "SANZAAR 2030 Strategy" examined long-term options for the competition, including a push into North America.

Fairfax said one possibility was a 20-team, four-conference format likely to feature at least one US team.

Attempting to gain a foothold in the lucrative but ultra-competitive US market would be a bold move for SANZAAR, particularly after the 18-team debacle.

The experiment, which ended this year after two seasons, added an extra three teams to the competition,

## RUGBY

including Argentina's Jaguares and the Sunwolves of Japan.

SANZAAR's strategy paper found the resulting competition was "confusing, lacked integrity and was ultimately not supported by fans, stakeholders and commercial partners," Fairfax reported.

Ireland and Ulster wing Andrew Trimble announced on Thursday he will retire at the end of the season.

The 33-year-old won 70 Ireland caps between 2005 and 2017, helping Joe Schmidt's men claim the 2014 Six Nations title.

Trimble, who has made a record 229 appearances for Ulster, also featured when Ireland claimed their maiden win over New Zealand in Chicago in November 2016.

In an open letter published by Ulster and the Irish Rugby Football Union, Trimble called time on a sparkling career that included 17 Test tries.

"I know that I've been incredibly fortunate to have realised not one of my dreams, but two of them — to play for Ulster and to play for Ireland," he said.

## American football under fire over the 'treatment' of cheerleaders

WASHINGTON, May 3, (AFP): Cheerleaders are a staple of American professional sports.

But the treatment of the scantily-clad women who encourage their teams from the sidelines is drawing scrutiny.

The New York Times published an article Wednesday about questionable treatment of cheerleaders for the Washington Redskins, a National Football League (NFL) team, during a trip by the squad to Costa Rica in 2013.

And cheerleaders for two other NFL teams, the New Orleans Saints and the Miami Dolphins, have filed lawsuits recently alleging discrimination.

The Times spoke to several members of the 36-strong Redskins cheerleading squad who went on the weeklong trip to an exclusive resort in Costa Rica for a photo calendar shoot.

Speaking anonymously, several cheerleaders said they were made to be pose topless or wearing only body paint for pictures taken for the calendar — although it would not include nude shots.

They complained that sponsors and luxury suite holders at Redskins stadium — all of whom were men — were granted access to the photo

shoots.

Nine cheerleaders were also allegedly made, at the end of a 14-hour day of posing and dance practice, to attend an event at a nightclub as escorts for the sponsors.

"They weren't putting a gun to our heads, but it was mandatory for us to go," one of the cheerleaders told the Times. "We weren't asked, we were told."

The arrangement did not involve sex, the cheerleaders said, but they were not comfortable with it.

Stephanie Jokikian, the director and choreographer of the Redskins cheerleading squad, insisted she had not forced anyone to attend the nightclub event.

"I was not forcing anyone to go at all," Jokikian told the Times. "I'm the mama bear, and I really look out for everybody, not just the cheerleaders. It's a big family. We respect each other and our craft," she said. "It's such a supportive environment for these ladies."

The newspaper said the cheerleaders were not paid for their participation in the Costa Rica trip but received transportation costs, meals and lodging.

The Times said it had interviewed dozens of current and former cheerleaders for its story.

"These have been some of the most fulfilling days of my life and I feel nothing but gratitude for them."

Ulster's operations director Bryn Cunningham said Trimble should be proud of his lengthy top-level career, adding that he had been a "class act both on and off the pitch".

Harlequins wing Tim Visser, who scored 14 tries in 33 internationals, has announced his retirement from Scotland duty to focus on his club career.

"Playing for Scotland has been the biggest honour of my life. I feel it has been even more special by not being my country of birth but where I had grown to call home," said the Dutch-born player.

A new World Series Rugby competition will introduce power tries worth seven points, faster scrums, quick lineouts, and more substitutions when it kicks off on Friday in Australia.

After Perth team Western Force were dumped when Super Rugby contracted to 15 teams this season, billionaire mining tycoon Andrew Forrest devised a seven-match competition which he says will evolve into a six-team Indo-Pacific Rugby Championship next year.



Trimble