

PRIME TIME

friday — (all times are kuwait local)

09:30 tennis	bein sports 8hd
10:30 basketball	bein sports 7hd
11:30 soccer	bein sports 5hd
15:30 soccer	bein sports 5hd
16:00 soccer	bein sports 1hd
16:25 soccer	bein sports 2hd
21:50 soccer	bein sports 1hd
22:35 soccer	bein sports 6hd

# Sports

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'Maguire weak link'

## Kazakhstan launch campaign in 'style'

ASTANA, March 21, (RTRS): Kazakhstan began their Euro 2020 qualifying campaign by thrashing Scotland 3-0 in a raucous atmosphere inside the Astana Arena on Thursday.

Scotland were blown away inside the opening 10 minutes of the Group I clash as Yuriy Pertsukh and Yan Vorogovskiy both finished in style to put the hosts in control.

There was no way back for a disappointing Scotland side when Baktiyar Zainutdinov's header made it 3-0 in the 50th minute.

Kazakhstan, 117th in the FIFA rankings, looked dangerous every time they attacked on the slick artificial surface and Scotland managed only two attempts on target on a night to forget for them.

It was all too easy for the Kazakhs as a simple ball forward split the Scotland defence in the sixth minute and Pertsukh took a touch before driving past keeper Scott Bain.

Scotland barely had time to compose themselves before their defence again went missing to allow Vorogovskiy to slide home from Islambek Kua't's superb pass.

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The Czech Republic are hoping to exploit a perceived weakness in England's defence by targeting centre back Harry

## SOCCER

Maguire during their Euro 2020 qualifier on Friday, striker Matej Vydra has said.

Vydra, who also plays for Burnley, said his club had employed a similar strategy when they faced Maguire's Leicester City team in the Premier League this season and the approach paid dividends with the defender being sent off early on.

"(England's) attack is very strong. Defense, I don't say it's not strong as well, but it's not as strong as the attack," Vydra told reporters.

"For example, Maguire. We talked about him at Burnley before we played against Leicester. In some moments it seems he doesn't know what's happening behind him, that's why he got a red card after five minutes in the match against Burnley."

With England missing Manchester City centre back John Stones due to injury, Maguire is set to be joined by either Everton's Michael Keane or Vydra's Burnley teammate James Tarkowski in central defense.

Vydra said the Czechs planned to disrupt England's passing game by snapping into tackles and denying their opponents time on the ball.

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Chelsea striker Olivier Giroud wants to move back to France when his contract expires at the end of the season after growing frustrated by a lack of playing time under manager Maurizio Sarri.

Giroud has not started a Premier League game for Chelsea since the club signed Argentina international striker Gonzalo Higuain in January.

"The future may be hectic this summer," Giroud told French radio station RTL. "I'm not afraid to go down a level to have more playing time. It could be I end my career in France."



Kazakhstan's Roman Murtazayev (left) and Scotland's Scott McKenna challenge for the ball during the Euro 2020 Group I qualifying soccer match between Kazakhstan and Scotland at Astana Arena stadium on March 21. (AP)

# Ichiro takes final bow, Mariners sweep Athletics at Tokyo Dome



Seattle Mariners starter Yusei Kikuchi pitches against the Oakland Athletics in the first inning of Game 2 of their Major League Baseball opening series at Tokyo Dome in Tokyo on March 21. (Inset): Seattle Mariners right fielder Ichiro Suzuki announces his retirement during a press conference. (AP)

'I have achieved so many of my dreams in baseball'

**TOKYO, March 21, (RTRS): Ichiro Suzuki took a final bow in the eighth inning and the Seattle Mariners worked overtime to send him out a winner, claiming a 5-4 victory in 12 innings to sweep the two-game set from the Oakland Athletics at Tokyo Dome on Thursday.**

Ichiro's storied 27-year career ended with a dramatic exit in the eighth inning. After taking his position in right field, Mariners manager Scott Servais pulled Ichiro to the delight of a raucous, sellout crowd that responded with an extended ovation as the worst-kept secret in the building was confirmed.

Ichiro officially announced his retirement from baseball — after 19 seasons in Major League Baseball — Thursday evening in the Tokyo Dome, where emotional hugs and tears flowed from the top row of the stadium to the Seattle dugout. Each plate appearance and fielding opportunity was met with rousing applause.

"I have achieved so many of my dreams in baseball," Ichiro said, "both in my career in Japan and, since 2001, in Major League Baseball. I am honored to end my big league career where it started, with Seattle, and think it is fitting that my last games as a professional were played in my home country of Japan."

"I want to thank not only the Mariners, but the Yankees and Marlins, for the opportunity to play in MLB, and I want to thank the fans in both the US and Japan for all the support they have always given me."

The Mariners broke a 4-4 tie when Domingo Santana brought in the go-ahead run with one out and the bases loaded, scoring Dee Gordon with a sharp ground ball to Marcus Semien. Santana sprinted down the first base line to beat Jurickson Profar's relay and prevent a double play.

"I had a very happy time playing with him since spring training til this day, Ichiro told us it is a gift for him to play here. But for me he gave me the greatest gift that I get to play with him," said Mariners starter Yusei Kikuchi, who battled tears during the game and afterward measuring the gravity of the moment with his childhood hero.

Mariners closer Hunter Strickland recorded the save for the second consecutive night for the Mariners (2-0) with a 1-2-3 bottom of the 12th. Santana again was the hero, chasing

down Profar's fly ball to left field and crashing against the wall in a successful effort to record the final out.

As the 45-year-old Suzuki left the field in the eighth, every Mariners'

## BASEBALL

player, coach and staffer was greeted with an embrace. Compatriot Yusei Kikuchi broke down in tears. The crowd erupted for the loudest ovation



Seattle Mariners right fielder Ichiro Suzuki returns to the field for waiting fans after Game 2 of the Major League Baseball opening series against the Oakland Athletics at Tokyo Dome in Tokyo on March 21. The 45-year-old Mariners star announced his retirement Thursday night, shortly after waving goodbye at the Dome. (AP)

## Angels, Trout make record deal official

LOS ANGELES, March 21, (RTRS): The Los Angeles Angels and two-time Most Valuable Player Mike Trout announced the 12-year contract that will likely keep the outfielder an Angel for the rest of his career.

"This is where I wanted to be all along," Trout said in a statement released by the team Wednesday night. "I have enjoyed my time as an Angel and look forward to representing the organization, my teammates and our fans for years to come."

The new contract adds 10 years to the final two years of his existing six-year deal signed in 2014. The total 12-year deal is worth anywhere from \$426.5 million to more than \$430 million.

"Mike Trout, an athlete whose accomplishments have placed him among the greatest baseball players in the history of the game, has agreed to wear an Angels uniform for his entire career," Angels owner Arte Moreno said in a statement.

The deal smashes the massive contract signed by Bryce Harper — 13 years, \$330 million with the Philadelphia Phillies — on March 2.

The Angels set a press conference for 3 pm local time Sunday in Anaheim to trumpet the deal with Trout.

Arizona Diamondbacks pitcher Zack Greinke had the record MLB annual average salary at \$34.4 million. Trout would eclipse that mark with \$36 million AAV.

of the night as he lifted his cap and acknowledged the crowd before stepping into the dugout and sharing a moment with Mariners Hall of Famer Ken Griffey Jr.

A half-inning prior his last plate appearance nearly resulted in an infield base hit, just barely beaten by Marcus Semien's toss from short to the groans of disdain from the crowd. Tim Beckham, the go-ahead run, was stranded on second base.

Kikuchi became the first Japanese player to begin his career on home soil the same night Ichiro became the only Japanese-born MLB player to finish his in Japan.

"Since I was a primary school player," Kikuchi said, "I took trains and buses to see ball games, June in my third grade year, I saw Ichiro back then (with Orix) he was a super hero for me. He was my adoration and every time I saw him I was very nervous. Butterflies in my heart in my chest and I spoken with him with excitement. It is the greatest gift for me to be able to spend time with him. I have learned a great deal from him just looking at the way he practices and I would like to

make the best use of this experience throughout my career."

The left-handed starting pitcher was spotted a 3-0 lead with Ryon Healy and Mitch Haniger home runs in the second and third innings. The rookie navigated through four harmless innings before Oakland slugger Khris Davis chased him with two outs in the fifth. Davis struck an RBI single, rendering Kikuchi ineligible for the decision. Oakland tacked on another run via a Jay Bruce handling error at first base the next at bat.

Marco Estrada went five innings on the other side, and striking out one in his Athletics debut and improving upon Mike Fiers' tough outing in the opener. He settled down after Seattle's power exhibit to retire the last seven batters he faced.