

Blake blames delays for Bolt's injury

LONDON, AUG 13 /-/- Jamaican sprint relay team member Yohan Blake has blamed the delay in starting the race for Usain Bolt's injury that ended his glorious career in agony at the World Championships here. Bolt, running the final race of his career, suffered cramps on his left hamstring as he sought to chase down the British and American rivals in the last lap of the men's 4x100m relay race. He suddenly stumbled and hobbled a few strides before falling down on the track in pain and agony. Blake said the lengthy wait in cold conditions contributed to Bolt's injury. The final race of Saturday's evening session started later than initially planned, following medal ceremonies for the men's 5000m and women's high jump. "They were holding us too long... it was atrocious. That long wait contributed (to Bolt's injury). Inside it was cold. We keep warming up and waiting, then warming up and waiting. I think I got the better of us," Blake said. "You have to think about the athletes because we were in the mixed zone too long, over 40 minutes. A hero of the sport to go down like that? As a true friend, I did not want to see that. He was saying he was sorry, but there was nothing to be sorry for; he's done it for us (during his career). It was cold and there was 40 minutes and two medal presentations before we started. It was crazy," added the 2011 world 100m champion Blake. Justin Gatlin, who snatched a gold in 100m dash to spoil Bolt's individual farewell race, suggested the same. "I think it was the elements. I am sorry he (Bolt) got this injury. I understand

the magic of TV and that everything has to happen for viewers at home but we were held a little long before we went out. We were out of our clothes and it was quite cold. I lost all my heat and sweat. I think if that hadn't happened, may be we would have run quicker, as would other teams," Gatlin said. "It was a recipe (for possible injury). I don't want to say this but I understand we need to be ready early but I think we took our clothes off a little too early. It's a little chilly in here so I think that's where the cramp came from. That's what he (Bolt) suffered with. He was running out there cold," added Gatlin who ran the second leg for silver-winning American team. Bolt was his long-time rival and he lost five successive Olympic and World Championship races to him. Nonetheless, Gatlin paid tribute to the Jamaican. "No one wants to see Usain go out like that, with an injury. All of us up here have been inspired by his career, for athletes, from 2004 until now. Everything that has happened so far. Congratulations on his legendary career," he added. Christian Coleman, who ran the anchor leg for USA, said "Usain Bolt is a legend who has inspired us. I was just blessed to be here, to be on the line with him. I will tell my grandkids about this one day." In fact, he had beaten Bolt three times in this competition - in 100m semifinals, finals (where he took a silver) and the sprint relay (PTI)



Usain Bolt of Jamaica reacts in pain during a relay race. —REUTERS

Lahiri drops to tied 68 as putter fails him in third round

CHARLOTTE (US), AUG 13 /-/- India's Anirban Lahiri struggled with his putter and slipped from tied 43rd to joint fifth over 70 and he total went to eight-over 221. Later today, Lahiri will try and gain some confidence for the coming weeks, including the FedExCup playoffs. Kevin Kisner (72) stayed ahead but only by a shot over Hideki Matsuyama (73), whose game seemed to have deserted him. Also tied second was the world No. 203 Chris Stroud (71). Justin Thomas (69) and Louis Oosthuizen (71) were tied fourth at five-under, while Grayson Murray (73) was sixth at three-under. Lahiri missed a bunch of putts and messed up a couple of chips, but he did have a great day off the tee. From where he was very accurate. Lahiri said, "I would be putting things mildly if I said I was only disappointed. It was one of those days, when nothing went my way. I missed a lot of putts, including two very small ones." He said he was frustrated with a double bogey and a bogey on first two holes. From there on, it was a fight to just hang in. He had a bogey and a birdie on sixth and seventh, as he turned in three-over. Birdies on 10th and 15th were neutralised by bogeys on 11th and 12th. On the 11th, he missed more than three feet resulting in a bogey and on 12th, he went into the rough and got only to the fringe in three and ended with a second successive bogey. The Green Mile, which was kinder to him on the first two days, extracted a double as he missed a four-foot tap-in for a bogey on the 16th. Co-leaders Kisner and Matsuyama, besides Jason Day (77), saw a lot of drama on the final stretch of three holes called the Green Mile. Starting the proceedings at six-under, Day even went to seven-under with a birdie, but by the time the front nine ended, he was five-under. He parred 10th and 11th and over the next, his card had everything except a par. He doubled the 12th, bogeyed 13th, birdied three in a row from 14th to 16th and then bogeyed 17th and messed up with a quadruple bogey, raising questions over his shot selection. He could have got away with a bogey or worse a double but he went in for a shot that he expected to miss the tree and the bushes within hand-shaking distance. From four-under, he fell to even par in one single hole. Kisner, too, had a roller-coaster final five holes. He birdied the 14th and on 15th he had an eagle putt, which horse-shoed out, but he did get a birdie and went into double figures at 10-under. At that stage he was two ahead of Chris Stroud (71) and four clear of Matsuyama. But mental errors led to a double bogey at the 16th where he went into the water, and by the time he had the ball into the cup, it was a double. On the 18th, Kisner hit into the hazard line on the creek, but he was lucky that the ball hit the stone bridge over the creek and bounced over. Stroud, eight-under after 16, bogeyed the 17th and 18th to fall to six-under. Matsuyama, who bogeyed the 12th and 16th, missed a lot of putts but managed to keep par for the last five holes to stay just one behind Kisner. "They also gave him a chance to become the first Japanese player to win a Major. (PTI)

PCB Objects: U-19 Asia Cup shifted from Bengaluru to Malaysia

New Delhi, Aug 13 /-/- The Asian Cricket Council today decided to shift the U-19 Asia Cup tournament from Bengaluru to the Malaysian capital Kuala Lumpur after the Pakistan Cricket Board refused to send its team to India. Owing to the prevailing political tension between the two countries, PCB chairman Najam Sethi raised objections and it was unanimously agreed that the continental tournament be moved out of India. According to sources, BCCI secretary Amitabh Choudhary didn't object to the shifting of venue. The matter of shifting the tournament to Malaysia was amicably agreed by all participants in the development and executive committees, since no one wanted it marred by security considerations of any member," he said. (PTI)

Barcelona to sign Paulinho from Guangzhou Evergrande for EUR 40 million: Reports

RIO DE JANEIRO, AUG 13 /-/- Barcelona have struck a deal to sign Brazilian midfielder Paulinho from Guangzhou Evergrande, according to media reports. The Catalan side agreed to meet Paulinho's 40 million euro release clause after weeks of negotiations with the Chinese Super League club. Xinhua news agency reported on Sunday citing the Folha de S.Paulo newspaper. It added that Guangzhou Evergrande's Brazilian coach, Luiz Felipe Scolari, confirmed the transfer. The news of the deal comes less than two weeks after Paulinho's compatriot Neymar departed the Camp Nou in a world record 222 million euro (\$32.4 million) transfer to Paris Saint-Germain. Paulinho has been in sublime form this year, scoring 12 goals in 29 matches for his club across all competitions. Guangzhou currently lead the Chinese Super League standings and are in the quarterfinals of the Asian Champions League.

Gatlin hails Bolt the 'showman' despite relay flop

LONDON, AUG 13 /-/- A sentimental Justin Gatlin hailed Usain Bolt as an "amazing showman" whose career would certainly not be defined by him pulling up with cramp in the world 4x100m relay. The Jamaican's final competitive race. "There was high drama in last night's relay as anchor Bolt received the baton in third place before eventual gold medalists Britain and runners-up America. Less than 50 metres down the track, Bolt suddenly pulled up, clutching his left leg, tumbling to the track with what was later diagnosed as a hamstring cramp. "This is farewell time, I am sentimental about it already now," said Gatlin, who stormed to 100m gold in London, US teammate Christian Coleman taking silver to relegate Bolt to a disappointing bronze in his individual send-off. "In the warm-up area we give ourselves respect and greet each other," Gatlin said of Bolt, who bows out of competition with a startling haul of eight Olympic gold medals and 14 world medals, nine of which are gold. Gatlin, who has served two doping bans, put the blame for Bolt's cramp partly at the amount of time the athletes spent on the track before the starter's gun went off. "There was a cool breeze out there. But the conditions were the same for everybody," said the 35-year-old, who won the 100m at the 2004 Olympics in Athens and the 2005 worlds in Helsinki before serving his second ban between 2006-10 for taking testosterone. "I think it was the elements. I am sorry he got this injury. He is still the best in the world. It was a recipe. I don't want to say this but I understand we need to be ready early but I think we took our clothes off a little too early. It's a little chilly in here so I think that's where the cramp came from. That's what he suffered with. He was running out there cold." But Gatlin, who was roundly booed at the Lon-

don Stadium before both the 100m and relay, insisted: "Usain Bolt is a great athlete. "You can't let this championships define what he's done in the past. He has done amazing things. He's still the man, you know. That was his farewell race and we wish him the best and hope he recovers soon."

Referring to Bolt's mooted future ambassadorial role within athletics' world governing body the IAAF, Gatlin added: "He's coming back in a couple of years. He'll be ready, he has a passion for the sport. He loves the fans and they love him. He loves the sport too much to walk away. He's a showman." Japan snatched a surprise bronze medal, Kenji Fujimori to runner in the relay, added: "Usain Bolt's name will always live on. (AFP)

Federer reaches Rogers Cup final

MONTREAL, AUG 13 /-/- Roger Federer continued his longest winning streak in five years by reaching the Rogers Cup final. The second-seeded Federer used a 6-3, 7-6 (5) victory over unseeded Robin Haase of the Netherlands yesterday to reach his sixth final of the year and win his 16th consecutive match. He had considering skipping the event, which would have been disastrous for the promoters with world No. 1 Andy Murray as well as Novak Djokovic and Stan Wawrinka already out with injuries. But Federer decided to play and now has a chance to add to a tally that includes Australian Open and Wimbledon titles this year. "I'm very happy that I've made it here," he said. "It was a good decision for me. If I would have known I would have gone to the finals, I would have said 'yes' right away. Sometimes you've just got to wait and see how you feel. I'm most happy that I'm actually really healthy going into the finals. I haven't wasted too much energy. I've been able to keep points short. I've been very clean at net. I think my concentration and just my playing has gone up a notch. I'm just playing better."

Federer is looking for a third Rogers Cup title, but his first in Montreal, having won in 2004 and 2006 in Toronto. A victory would give Federer, currently ranked third in the world, one of the top



two seeds at the U.S. Open beginning Aug. 28 in New York. The 36-year-old Federer has his longest winning streak since 2012. Next up is 20-year-old Alexander Zverev, who stopped Denis Shapovalov's impressive run with a 6-4, 7-5 victory in the second semifinal. Federer has won of their three meetings, including a victory over the German on grass in June.

Paes not to be considered; Yuki, Saketh to make a comeback

NEW DELHI, AUG 13 /-/- Veteran Leander Paes is out of contention but top singles player Yuki Bhambhani will make a comeback to the Indian Davis Cup team along with Saketh Myneni when the AITA Selection Committee meets on Monday in Thiruvananthapuram to make a new captain squad for the World Group Play-off tie against Canada in September. The 44-year-old Paes was included in the six-man squad for the previous tie against Uzbekistan in Bengaluru in April this year but was left out of the final four by the new captain Mahesh Bhupathi. Upset and embarrassed, Paes had left the venue mid-way into the tie, prompting Bhupathi to reveal on Facebook that he had never promised Paes a spot in the final four and that his action was final nail in the coffin. The AITA does not want a repeat of any such unsavoury incident and also that Paes is now behind three Indian players - Rohan Bopanna (21), Divij Sharan (53) and Purav Raja (54) - in the rankings, the winner of the 18 Grand Slam titles is not to be considered by the Committee. Both Bhambhani, who recently beat world number 22 Gael Monfils, and Saketh Myneni had missed the Uzbekistan tie due to their respective injuries. Now that they are back on the ATP Tour, they will take their places back in the side for the September tie in Edmonton. Ramesh Ramanatha who created a ripple

by beating world number eight Dominic Thiem will be the other singles player in the team. Bopanna Bhambhani will make a comeback to the Indian Davis Cup team along with Saketh Myneni when the AITA Selection Committee meets on Monday in Thiruvananthapuram to make a new captain squad for the World Group Play-off tie against Canada in September. The 44-year-old Paes was included in the six-man squad for the previous tie against Uzbekistan in Bengaluru in April this year but was left out of the final four by the new captain Mahesh Bhupathi. Upset and embarrassed, Paes had left the venue mid-way into the tie, prompting Bhupathi to reveal on Facebook that he had never promised Paes a spot in the final four and that his action was final nail in the coffin. The AITA does not want a repeat of any such unsavoury incident and also that Paes is now behind three Indian players - Rohan Bopanna (21), Divij Sharan (53) and Purav Raja (54) - in the rankings, the winner of the 18 Grand Slam titles is not to be considered by the Committee. Both Bhambhani, who recently beat world number 22 Gael Monfils, and Saketh Myneni had missed the Uzbekistan tie due to their respective injuries. Now that they are back on the ATP Tour, they will take their places back in the side for the September tie in Edmonton. Ramesh Ramanatha who created a ripple

I don't decide Philippe Coutinho's Liverpool future: Jurgen Klopp

LONDON, AUG 13 /-/- Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp said on Saturday he has no control over whether Philippe Coutinho will stay at the club or move to Barcelona. Coutinho emailed a transfer request to the club on Friday after Liverpool's owners, Fenway Sports Group, issued a strangely worded statement saying the midfielder would not be sold in the transfer window. Barcelona have had two bids rejected by Liverpool for Coutinho, who is keen to move to Spain, according to British media reports. Coutinho missed Liverpool's 3-3 draw with Watford on Saturday. Asked about the Brazilian's situation, Klopp said: "As a manager of a football club, I have bosses that decide, for example, just in general, if we sell a player or if we don't sell him. Then I have to accept it. If they don't sell him, then I am not involved any more. I'm responsible for all of our players, not just one or two or three, but all of them. I can't say anything about it, the only thing is I work with the players I have. That's what I'm always doing." The German said he did not think Coutinho's transfer request changes his situation. "I don't think it changes anything. It was pretty clear what the club said about it. That's all," he said. "You have to ask the club. I don't make the decision. I didn't see the club insiders today. You have to ask them." Asked if Coutinho had let down his team mates with his request, Klopp said: "I am not part of the discussion with the group."

World Championship: Not thinking about reaching final, only focused on first round, says Kidambi Srikanth

NEW DELHI, AUG 13 /-/- With successive Super Series titles to his credit, K Srikanth might be a strong contender at the World Championship but the Indian ace says he isn't counting his chickens before they hatch. Despite making three back-to-back final appearances, Srikanth said he wants to start with a clean slate and would not even think of lowering his guard at the World Championship where the field boasts of the cream of World badminton. "I usually playing well and I am confident. But everyone comes with their full fitness for such a big event. So for me it is not about thinking what I would do if I reach final but about how I will play in the first round," Srikanth told PTI. "I got a big

break after the three events. After such a break the first rounds are also very tough, so I was taking it match by match and I didn't set any targets," added the Indian, whose mid-season surge saw him rise to the top of the Destination Dubai Rankings. Srikanth said he would have to pull throttle from the opening round itself as even a slight dip in performance can cost one a match at such a big event. "Every opponent is different and all the top 20 are playing well and it is about playing 100 percent from the first round itself," said the former World No. 3, who will face Russian Sergey Svirid in the first round of the Glasgow event starting from August 21. "When you play an unseeded player, he doesn't have

anything to lose while you will have pressure, so you can't expect to win if you play at 90 per cent." The 24-year-old from Guntur said he doesn't think much about his opponents as he believes it is all about how he conducts himself during the match. "I don't really want to think what others are thinking. I just want to think about my game. It is not about others, it is about me, what I feel during a match and how I really play my best during the match," the eighth-seeded Indian said. "I am a person, who believes that it is 90 per cent hard work and 10 per cent luck, which is like believing in God. So during a match, it is 90 per cent my hard work, and rest 10 per cent is about luck. At 20-19, there is not much

to play, you depend on luck for your opponent to make some mistake," he explained. Asked if there would be pressure, Srikanth said: "These big events will have pressure because people will want to do well, so there will be definitely pressure but I can only think about doing well." A Roger Federer fan, Srikanth said the Swiss win at the Wimbledon in April inspired him. "It is always a big motivational factor for me to see Federer make a comeback from injury and win a Grand Slam at his age. His will is very strong, he was dominating everyone. He really let loose in the Wimbledon and winning it without losing a set. Those scores, beating a younger opponent in final, these are big inspiring factors," he said.

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