

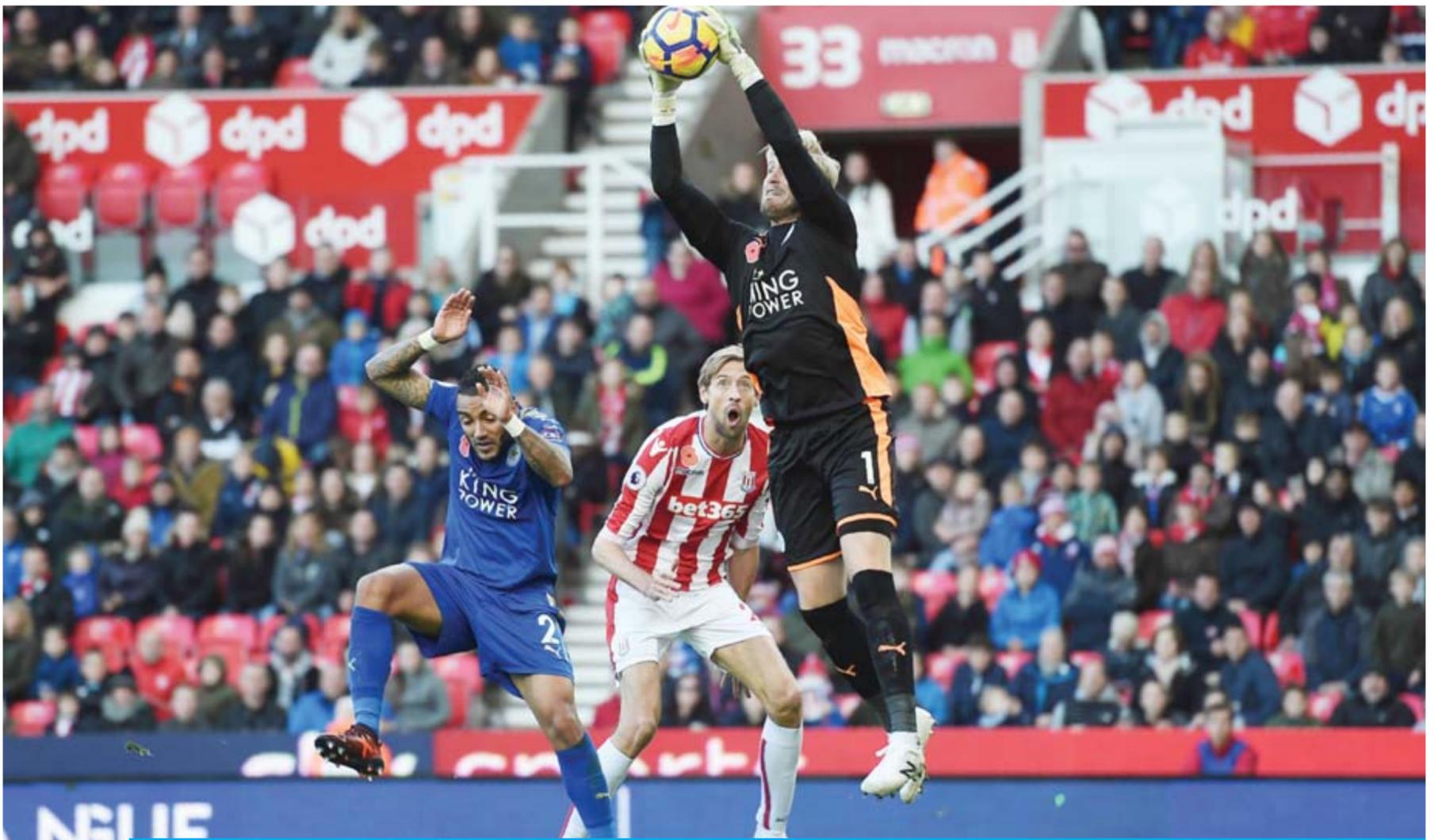
13 Russians dominate as Kolyada wins Grand Prix on debut



14 Wallabies hit 60 against Japan in European warm-up



15 Valencia put pressure on La Liga leaders, Atletico bounce back



STOKE-ON-TRENT: Leicester City's Danish goalkeeper Kasper Schmeichel catches the ball during the English Premier League football match between Stoke City and Leicester City at the Bet365 Stadium in Stoke-on-Trent. — AFP

Leicester stretch unbeaten run

‘It is an encouraging game which is important for the future’

STOKE-ON-TRENT: Former England striker Peter Crouch came off the bench to rescue a point for Stoke City in a 2-2 draw yesterday, denying new Leicester manager Claude Puel a second consecutive win of his young managerial reign.

The 2015-16 Premier League champions are now unbeaten in six games in all competitions after early season struggles but will be disappointed they twice let their lead slip and in the end were indebted to goalkeeper Kasper Schmeichel, who made a fantastic flying stop in the dying seconds. Leicester parted company with Craig Shakespeare last month after slipping into the relegation zone but have recovered

strongly under caretaker boss Michael Appleton and ex-Southampton boss Puel and were in 10th spot before a clutch of matches that kicked off later. In an entertaining game Jamie Vardy and Riyad Mahrez posed a constant threat and winger Demarai Gray earned another start just days after signing a new deal at the club.

“I am happy with the attitude of my players, it was a good game, good intensity and passion,” said Puel. “We had a lot of chances today. It is difficult to accept one point but Kasper saved well at the end so then OK, we take a point. It is an encouraging game which is important for the future.”

Stoke manager Mark Hughes praised Crouch for turning the game around. “Peter Crouch was effective when he came on. He always gets himself in a good position and he understood what was required. He changed the game for us,” he said.

Puel's side took the lead just after the half-hour mark when Vicente Iborra lashed home a half volley after the ball fell at his feet following a corner and Leicester had clear chances to stretch their lead. First, Jack Butland saved superbly from Shinji Okazaki, in for the injured Ben Chilwell, and Iborra headed over from another corner. But Leicester were made to rue their profligacy six minutes after their opener when

Eric Maxim Choupo-Moting played an incisive defensive-splitting ball first time into the feet of Xherdan Shaqiri, whose left-footed shot from the right side of the penalty area found the net via the inside of the post. Mahrez put Leicester back in front with half an hour to go, moments after Schmeichel pulled off an impressive save from Ryan Shawcross. But they were pegged back again when Crouch, brought on just three minutes earlier, headed in a Shaqiri corner in the 73rd minute to earn a point. Only three other players—Jermain Defoe, Ole Gunnar Solskjaer and Nwankwo Kanu—have more Premier League goals than Crouch as a substitute. — AFP

Krajunic stuns Isner to reach Paris Masters final

PARIS: Qualifier Filip Krajunic reached the Paris Masters final after an upset 6-4, 6-7 (2), 7-6 (5) win against ninth-seeded John Isner yesterday. The 25-year-old Serb slid onto his back and sobbed, his arms raised, after sealing victory on his first match point. Krajunic then knelt and kissed the court.

The defeat ended the big-serving Isner's bid to reach the season-ending ATP Finals in London. Isner was a runner-up in Paris last year and again falls short of an elusive first Masters title. Krajunic is the lowest-ranked

player in a Masters final since 191st-ranked Andrei Pavel in Paris in 2003.

The 77th-ranked Krajunic had only won 17 matches in his whole career - thwarted by a wrist injury - before this tournament. He will play for his first career title against either 16th-seeded American Jack Sock or home favorite Julien Benneteau, who play later. Neither has won a Masters title, either. Sock can still qualify for London if he wins the tournament.

Krajunic, who looked fresher on court than Isner, is the first qualifier to reach a Masters final since Jerzy Janowicz in 2012, also in Paris. Krajunic was helped by not having to play his quarterfinal because top-ranked Rafael Nadal pulled out with a right knee injury. Nadal has not said whether he will be fit enough to play in the season-ending ATP Finals, starting Nov. 12 in London.

Serving for the first set, Krajunic held to love when Isner sent a two-handed backhand into the net. With Isner serving at 4-4 and 40-30 in the ninth game of the second

set, the match was halted for six minutes when several medical staff attended to a female spectator, who was then taken away.

She appeared fully conscious and had her eyes open. Isner dominated the second-set tiebreaker and clenched his fist after leveling the match with an ace. The 32-year-old Isner forged a break point at the start of the third set, but missed it with a wasteful forehand which went long.

A powerful forehand gave Isner another chance on Krajunic's serve at 30-40 in the ninth game, but Krajunic saved that one, too. In a tense decisive tiebreaker, Isner led 3-0 but Krajunic rallied to move 5-4 ahead. Isner's 31st ace steadied him but a superb return to Isner's feet on the next point gave Krajunic match point on his serve.

A whipped forehand winner into an open side of the court was enough, prompting wild celebrations from Krajunic's coach, Petar Popovic, who was topless as he shook his fists in delight. — AP



PARIS: Serbia's Filip Krajunic celebrates winning against USA's John Isner during the semi-final round at the ATP World Tour Masters 1000 indoor tennis tournament in Paris. — AFP