

Sports

Dumoulin toughs out Giro d'Italia despite knee injury

UCI suspends four for potential anti-doping breach

FRASCATI: Former Giro d'Italia winner Tom Dumoulin confirmed yesterday he will continue this year's race despite a knee injury picked up in a fall on the fourth stage.

"Knee still hurts but we hope it will get better through the day. Will give everything I have to make it. Fingers crossed," the Dutch rider, winner of the three-week race around Italy in 2017, wrote on Twitter.

The fifth stage, a short 140km run from Frascati, just south of Rome, to Terracina, will be mostly raced under the rain, with a 1.5km home straight which should set the scene for a spectacular sprint finish.

"He (Dumoulin) has been cleared to race by the team's medical staff, but is still suffering with his knee," his Sunweb team said. "He will give it his best shot and see what the day brings."

Dumoulin came second at both the Giro d'Italia and the Tour de France in 2018, as well as winning the 2017 Giro and the 2017 world championships time-trial, making him a chief contender in all major tours and races.

"For sure, the overall ranking is over for me," Dumoulin said on Tuesday. The 28-year-old is now in 56th position 4min 30sec behind race leader Primož Roglič of Slovenia. "There is no fracture, which is good news, but my knee is very swollen," he added.

Meanwhile, four European cyclists, including two retired riders, have been provisionally suspended for potential doping violations following information from the Austrian law enforcement authorities, the International Cycling Union (UCI) said yesterday.

Slovenia's Kristijan Koren of Team Bahrain Merida

and Croatian Kristijan Durasek of UAE Team Emirates as well as former riders Alessandro Petacchi and Borut Bozic have been notified of potential Anti-Doping Rules Violations (ADRV) as part of the 'Operation Aderlass' investigation.

Koren is competing at the Giro d'Italia and will not be allowed to start yesterday's stage according to the regulations. Italian Pettachi, 45, retired in 2015, while 38-year-old Slovenian Bozic ended his cycling career last year and is now Assistant Sports Director at Team Bahrain Merida.

The four are under investigation for employing prohibited doping methods between 2012 and 2017. "The UCI and the Cycling Anti-Doping Foundation (CADF)... have been in close contact with the sport and state authorities involved in the Aderlass investigation, in particular with the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) and the Austrian law enforcement authorities," UCI said in a statement.

Operation Aderlass is looking into blood doping, a process where athletes have blood transfusions to increase their stamina and performance—a method prohibited under WADA regulations.

The provisional suspension begins on the day of the notice and a UCI Anti-Doping Tribunal will be established to hear the anti-doping rules violations. UAE Team Emirates have suspended 31-year-old Durasek.

"The Team hopes that Durasek can prove he was not involved in the affair. Should it be proven otherwise, he will be terminated immediately," they said in a statement. Team Bahrain Merida have also provisionally suspended 32-year-old Koren and Bozic.



FRASCATI: Team Sunweb rider Netherlands' Tom Dumoulin rides during stage five of the 102nd Giro d'Italia - Tour of Italy - cycle race, 140kms from Frascati to Terracina. — AFP

"The team strictly advocates zero-tolerance doping policy and has therefore provisionally suspended both members concerned," the Bahrain-based team said in a statement. "We would like to stress that both cases

relate to the 2012 and/or 2013 seasons. The team always carries out thorough medical checks (including biological passport checks) of any new signed rider." — Agencies

Kohli defends leaving out Pant for World Cup

NEW DELHI: India picked veteran Dinesh Karthik over rising talent Rishabh Pant for the World Cup because of his composure under pressure, captain Virat Kohli said in an interview released yesterday.

The selection of the 33-year-old Karthik in the 15-member squad was sharply criticised by some former cricketers who felt the 21-year-old Pant should have been given a chance. Since making his debut in 2018, Pant has impressed with his batting, including a maiden Test century in England.

He scored 488 runs from 16 matches in the just-finished Indian Premier League, while Karthik made 253 runs from 14 games. Both players are vying for the reserve wicketkeeper slot behind former skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni.

"In pressure situations, he (Karthik) has shown composure. It was something that everybody on board was convinced about. He has the experience," Kohli told the Times of India newspaper. "If, god forbid, something happens to MS (Dhoni), Karthik can be



Virat Kohli

immensely valuable behind the wickets. As a finisher, he's done well.

"So, it was the overall exposure to a tournament of this magnitude that was taken into primary consideration," said Kohli. After making his debut in 2004, Karthik has played 91 one-day internationals while Pant has five to his name.

Kohli, who will be leading India for the first time at the World Cup, said he was not both-

ered about the constant attention he gets as a batsman and captain. "I don't want to be the centre of everything. Nobody wants that. But when your intent is to make the team win, eventually you end up doing things which are always going to be seen," said Kohli, the world's number one Test and one-day player.

"I would always put my body on the line for the team." India are chasing their third World Cup after wins in 1983 and 2011. — AFP

Morgan banned from fourth Pakistan ODI for slow over-rate

BRISTOL: England will have to find a new captain for the fourth one-day international against Pakistan on Friday after skipper Eoin Morgan was banned from the match by the International Cricket Council for a slow over-rate offence.

Morgan was sanctioned after World Cup hosts and favourites England took around four hours to bowl their 50 overs in a six-wicket win over Pakistan in the third ODI at Bristol on Tuesday. He was also fined 40 percent of his match fee and his players 20 percent of theirs after match referee Richie Richardson ruled England were two overs short after time allowances were taken into consideration.

As Morgan had previously been found guilty of a minor over-rate offence during the Barbados ODI against the West Indies on February 22, this latest incident constituted his second minor over-rate offence within a 12-month period and so led to a one-game ban.

"The suspension means Morgan will miss the fourth ODI against Pakistan in Nottingham on Friday," said an ICC statement issued yesterday. England

have been rotating their side during the Pakistan series as they look at options before naming a final 15-man squad for a home World Cup starting later this month.

BUTTLER OPTION

England may well have rested Morgan for at least one game during the five-match Pakistan series in order to give vice-captain Jos Buttler more leadership experience. As it is, star batsman Buttler, rested at Bristol, could now return as captain for Friday's match at Nottingham's Trent Bridge.

Buttler has captained England in five ODIs and four Twenty20 matches, while Test skipper Joe Root is also a mainstay of England's one-day team. Morgan's cumulative punishment will not roll over to the World Cup, with an ICC spokeswoman telling AFP that all players taking part would start the tournament with a "clean slate".

Jonny Bairstow also found himself censured by former West Indies captain Richardson as a result of events in Bristol. The England wicket-keeper was reprimanded for breaching level one of the ICC's code of conduct relating to "abuse of cricket equipment or clothing, ground equipment or fixtures and fittings" when smashing his stumps in frustration after he was bowled for a match-winning 128.

In addition, one demerit point has been added to his disciplinary record. England are 2-0 up against Pakistan, with games in Nottingham and Leeds to come, after rain forced the abandonment of last week's opener at The Oval. — AFP

Bairstow century sees England overpower Pakistan

BRISTOL: Jonny Bairstow's commanding hundred was the centrepiece of World Cup hosts England's six-wicket win over Pakistan in the third one-day international at Bristol on Tuesday. England generally prefer batting first but captain Eoin Morgan decided to give them experience of chasing just weeks away from the World Cup by opting to field first after winning the toss.

Bairstow's 128 in a score of 359 for four-England's second highest winning total batting second in an ODI-helped put the home side 2-0 up with two to play in a five-match series. Test captain Joe Root made 43 as Pakistan became increasingly ragged in the field, England winning with 31 balls—or more than five overs—to spare. Moeen Ali was 46 not out, with Morgan unbeaten on 17.

The only downside for Morgan on Tuesday was that he risked being suspended for a slow over-rate—England took four hours to bowl 50 overs. Earlier, Imam-ul-Haq's excellent career-best 151 saw Pakistan to 358 for nine.

That left England with a seemingly challenging target, particularly as they had rested Jos Buttler following his match-winning 110 not out in the second ODI at Southampton on Saturday.

OPENERS RUN RIOT

But Bairstow and opening partner Jason Roy, who made 76 after Shaheen Shah Afridi dropped an easy chance to catch him at mid-off on 21, shared a blistering stand of 159 inside 18 overs. The pair took advantage of a good pitch, short boundaries, fast outfield and an inexperienced Pakistan attack—Mohammad Amir was again ruled out with chicken pox—to repeatedly send the ball soar-



BRISTOL: England's Jonny Bairstow plays a shot during the third One Day International (ODI) cricket match between England and Pakistan at The Bristol County Ground in Bristol. —AFP

ing over the ropes.

"I was really pleased with that hundred," Bairstow told Sky Sports. "Coming back into English conditions after playing in the IPL (Indian Premier League) was a big change and it's nice to hit the ground running."

Morgan added: "Roy and Bairstow were absolutely outstanding and really did set the platform." Meanwhile Pakistan captain Sarfraz Ahmed took some consolation from his side's batting display.

"The way we put runs on the board, I was very confident," he said. "But the bowling wasn't quite up to the mark." Roy set the tone for England's reply with a huge straight six off Afridi and flat-batted medium-pace Faheem Ashraf's first ball straight back over the bowler's head for another.

He eventually sliced Faheem to Asif Ali at cover-point, having hit eight fours and four sixes. Bairstow, dropped on 86 when Faheem could not hold a tough caught and bowled chance off a fierce drive, was severe on anything short and went to his seventh ODI

hundred off 74 balls, including 12 fours and three sixes. He eventually fell when he bottom-edged a pull off Junaid Khan into his stumps, with England well on their way at 234 for two in the 29th over.

Earlier, Chris Woakes bolstered his chances of being included in England's final 15-man World Cup squad with four wickets for 67 runs in a maximum 10 overs. The Warwickshire paceman reduced Pakistan to 27 for two, a full-length ball having Fakhar Zaman - fresh from a hundred at Southampton—edging to Root at second slip before a sharp off-cutter bowled Babar Azam. But left-handed opener Imam went to his sixth hundred in 27 ODIs—and first against England—off 97 balls. The 23-year-old nephew of Pakistan great and selection chief Inzamam-ul-Haq, upped his tempo by driving left-arm quick David Willey for six.

Imam surpassed his previous ODI best of 128 against Zimbabwe at Bulawayo last year before he was bowled, giving himself room, by Curran. — AFP

English cricket chiefs admit Hundred 'mistakes' as draft announced

LONDON: English cricket bosses have accepted they made mistakes in promoting "The Hundred", their controversial new short-form tournament that is due to start next year. The England and Wales Cricket Board faced huge public criticism for suggesting the 100-balls-per-side competition was aimed at attracting a new audience as opposed to existing fans.

Questions have also been raised about whether there is a need for another short-form event in an already congested calendar, given the success of Twenty20 matches and the new competition's potential impact on English cricket's existing 18 first-class counties.

On Wednesday, the ECB confirmed that a televised player draft for The Hundred would be held on October 20, ahead of the inaugural competition, starting in July 2020. Yet more than two years on from when county bosses first discussed the eight-team city-based concept, the ECB has still to confirm team names and venues for the five-week event.

"We've definitely made mistakes in the build-up, but this is about the future of the game. This is about growing cricket," said ECB chief executive Tom Harrison. The ECB have long

insisted The Hundred is essential in attracting the next generation of cricket supporters.

According to their research, just five percent of British children aged six to 15 list cricket in their top two favourite sports. "We have the ability to extend our fanbase into young families, diverse communities and young people to give them an experience they potentially haven't felt through the current offerings," said Harrison.

In 2005, the ECB controversially abandoned terrestrial television coverage of international cricket in England following that year's Ashes series. But 11 Hundred matches will be broadcast free to air on the BBC, with satellite channel Sky screening all the games in the tournament.

England director of cricket Ashley Giles likened the hostility to The Hundred to concerns surrounding the advent of Twenty20. "When I was a player back in 2003 and Twenty20 came in, we hated it," the former England spinner recalled.

"To the point where my side Warwickshire were in the first finals day, and I didn't go and play in it because it was seen as some sort of sideshow. It certainly isn't that now." — AFP