

25 Pacific rugby: The great brawn drain that left poor nations behind



26 England greets Boycott, Strauss given knighthoods



27 Belgium, Netherlands hit four as Germany edge closer to Euros



DONGGUAN: Nico Laprovittola of Team Argentina drives to the basket against Team Serbia during the 2019 FIBA World Cup Quarter-Finals at the Dongguan Basketball Center yesterday in Dongguan, China. — AFP

Scola shines as Argentina oust Serbia

NBA banning 'ninja-style' headbands: Report

DONGGUAN: Argentina's grand old man Luis Scola knocked down a series of key buckets in a fourth quarter surge yesterday to crush Serbian hopes and propel the South Americans into the semi-finals of the FIBA Basketball World Cup.

Scola, 39 years old and the last remaining member of Argentina's "Golden Generation" that won the Olympics in 2004, finished with a team-high 20 points in the 97-87 win. The outcome leaves Argentina undefeated in the World Cup, hosted this year by China, and headed for a Friday match-up against the winner of USA-France, who tip off on Wednesday.

For the Serbs, shooting guard Bogdan Bogdanovic of the NBA's Sacramento Kings led all scorers with 21 points, while Denver Nuggets big man Nikola Jokic added 16.

The bigger Serbians, who had looked dominant in group play behind do-it-all centre Jokic, had to play catch-up against the quick Argentines throughout their

quarterfinal contest in Dongguan in southern China.

Serbia finally grabbed a 70-68 fourth quarter lead on a three-pointer by the Memphis Grizzlies' Marko Guduric and looked like they might make amends for a frustrating 81-69 second-round loss to Spain, the only blemish in their World Cup campaign to that point.

But that's when Scola stepped up, scoring eight rapid-fire points in a 21-6 Argentina run that dropped the curtain on Serbia's World Cup. "We believed it. It wasn't impossible. We have a great team and we have great energy," said Argentina forward Patricio Garino. Scola is by far the oldest player in the relatively young Argentine squad.

"The way we played today is an example of what we want to do over the years," Garino said.

Argentina were the more fluid of the two teams throughout the game, moving the ball well and spreading out the scoring. Serbia had looked like title contenders after demolishing their opponents in the group phases by

a average 40.8 points per game. But the subsequent loss to Spain rocked the Serbs and they never seemed able to find a consistent rhythm against a pesky Argentine defence. Jokic was valiant in defeat as his team relied heavily on him, but he got little support for most of the game from his team's long-range shooters, who had been among the most accurate from the three-point range throughout the tournament. "We should have played better defense and more concentrated. The toughest matches are the quarter-finals but now we have lost the chance to win a medal," said Bogdanovic. "The best thing we can do now is to fight to at least be the fifth." Meanwhile, the NBA will ban players from wearing "ninja-style" headbands next season amid safety concerns, ESPN reported on Monday.

Several players including All-Star Jimmy Butler sported the headgear last season, a band of fabric tied at the back of the head with the two ends flowing loose.

However the on-court fashion trend had never been

formally approved by the NBA, and now the league has moved to outlaw the accessory.

"The ninja-style headwear is not part of the NBA uniform and hasn't been through the league approval process," NBA spokesman Mike Bass told ESPN in a statement. "Teams have raised concerns regarding safety and consistency of size, length and how they are tied which requires a thorough review before consideration of any rule change. "When some players began wearing them last season, we didn't want to cause a disruption by intervening mid-season, but we notified our teams in May that they would not be part of this season's uniforms."

Philadelphia 76ers player Mike Scott was critical of the decision while other players were bemused by the ruling.

"I love that someone at the NBA had to type the words 'ninja-style (headwear)' and 'consistency of size and length' as their job today," wrote the Detroit Pistons' Blake Griffin. — AFP

Astros bash seven homers, hammer A's

HOUSTON: Houston battered Oakland pitching for 11 runs on 12 hits — six of them home runs — in the first two innings as the Astros hammered the visiting Athletics 15-0 to set a franchise record for home wins on Monday night. Robinson Chirinos went 3-for-4, crushed a pair of home runs and drove in a career-high-tying six runs to help the Astros match their club record with seven homers in a game. Yordan Alvarez belted a pair of solo homers, and Alex Bregman clouted a three-run homer as Houston won for the fifth in a row and for the 17th time in the past 21 games. Jose Altuve went 3-for-3 with a two-run homer and two runs, and Michael Brantley had a solo homer and two runs for Houston. Zack Greinke (15-5) tossed six scoreless innings to beat the A's for the second time since being acquired by the Astros at the trade deadline. Mike Fiers (14-4) allowed nine runs on nine hits in one-plus inning for Oakland, which mustered just three hits.

YANKEES 5, RED SOX 0

Austin Romine and Gio Urshela homered, James Paxton threw 6 2/3 shutout innings and New York blanked host Boston in the finale of a four-game series. Paxton (13-6) won his eighth straight start, giving up four hits and three walks and striking out seven. The victory was the Yankees' 14th in 19 meetings with the Red Sox this season, their most over Boston in a single year in the expansion era (since 1961). New York won for the 12th time in its last 16 games, while Boston lost its third straight. The defeat officially eliminated the Red Sox from American League East division title contention.

METS 3, DIAMONDBACKS 1

Pete Alonso hit two solo shots to as he continues his chase of baseball's single-season rookie home run record, and New York beat visiting Arizona in the opener of a pivotal four-game series. The Mets, who remained four games behind the Chicago Cubs in the race for the second National League wild card, snapped a two-game losing streak. The Diamondbacks, who fell to 2 1/2 games back of the Cubs, lost their second straight and fell for just the third time in 14 games. Alonso gave the Mets a quick lead with a

homer in the first and provided their final run in the fifth. The two homers give him a major-league-leading 47, five shy of the rookie record set by the Yankees' Aaron Judge in 2017.

BRAVES 7, PHILLIES 2

Ronald Acuna Jr. and Josh Donaldson homered to lift visiting Atlanta past Philadelphia in the opener of a four-game series. Acuna also walked twice and scored three runs while Dansby Swanson had a hit, a run and two walks for Atlanta. Freddie Freeman ripped three hits and Ozzie Albies had two hits for the Braves, who have won 10 of 11. Braves starter Mike Foltynewicz (6-5) allowed three hits and one run in seven innings. He struck out seven and walked none. Corey Dickerson and Cesar Hernandez homered for the Phillies, who slipped to three games behind the Cubs in the NL wild-card race.

BREWERS 8, MARLINS 3

Rookie Trent Grisham belted a career-high five hits, and hometown hero Yasmani Grandal smashed a two-run homer to lead Milwaukee over host Miami. The Marlins left the bases loaded four times, going 0-

for-5 in those situations as Milwaukee won its fourth straight game. The Brewers are trying to catch the division-rival Cubs, who remained two games ahead of Milwaukee in the chase for the NL's final wild-card spot. Grisham went 5-for-6 with three singles, a double, a triple and two RBIs. Grandal, a former Miami Hurricane star, went 2-for-5 with two runs, and Lorenzo Cain went 3-for-5 with one RBI to power a 12-hit Brewers attack.

CUBS 10, PADRES 2

Shortstop Nico Hoerner had three hits and four RBIs in his major league debut, and Nicholas Castellanos and Kyle Schwarber homered in support of Kyle Hendricks as visiting Chicago defeated San Diego. Hoerner, 22, the Cubs' first-round pick (24th overall) in the 2018 draft, was 3-for-5 with a triple and two runs. He was promoted Monday morning as Addison Russell underwent concussion tests after being beamed Sunday in Milwaukee. Castellanos, who also had three hits, gave the Cubs a quick lead with a two-run homer in the first off Padres starter Cal Quantrill. It was Castellanos' 25th homer of the season. Schwarber hit his 35th homer of the season leading off the Cubs' five-run fifth. — Reuters