

25 Seager homers twice as Dodgers clinch 7th consecutive National League West title



26 Kolkata: Birthplace of the Calcutta Cup, and still India's rugby hub



27 Delight, chaotic scenes as Qatar held by India in WCup qualifier



DONGGUAN: France's Evan Fournier (R) takes a shot during the Basketball World Cup quarter-final game between US and France in Dongguan yesterday. —AFP

France eliminate USA in major upset

Australia surge into Basketball World Cup semi-finals for first time

DONGGUAN: France blew the Basketball World Cup wide open yesterday by handing the United States their first loss in the competition in 13 years in their quarterfinal clash, powered by a double-double from big man Rudy Gobert of the Utah Jazz.

The historic 89-79 win for France eliminates the Americans early from the competition in China, dashing their hopes of a third straight title. The prospect of an American exit had looked increasingly possible after the USA sent a squad of second-tier stars and the loss is likely to prompt soul-searching in USA basketball.

Gobert, the two-time NBA Defensive Player of the Year, had three blocks, including a key rejection down the stretch to help France seal the victory in the southern Chinese city of Dongguan.

The 7ft, 1in centre called the win "unbelievable". "I've been dreaming about this for a while. I was thinking we might never get the opportunity (to beat the USA) again and I told that to the guys," Gobert said.

"It doesn't mean much if you don't win the gold, but it will go down as one of the biggest wins of my career and one of the biggest wins for French basketball for sure." In a hint of the sniping that may result in the United States over the debacle, shooting guard Donovan Mitchell, who lead the Americans with 29 points, hit back at critics of the team.

"You guys are going to go on and say who we didn't have but why don't you all focus on who we do have?" he told reporters. "We have 12 guys that want to compete for America, just like every other country. It sucks that some of our country people don't feel that way about us, but we don't care. We wanted to compete and we did." France will play Argentina on Friday, who made it to the final four by defeating Serbia.

The USA loss sets up an enticing consolation match with Serbia on Thursday. Packed with NBA players, the two were tournament favourites and will be trying to salvage pride.

Yesterday's contest was marked by

big lead changes, and Mitchell's jumpers and slashing moves to the basket helped the Americans cut down a 10-point French advantage in the third quarter to seize back the lead.

But Mitchell cooled in the fourth and the French came back, led by Gobert and sharp-shooting small forward Evan Fournier of the Orlando Magic, who led France in scoring with 22 points. Fournier slashed to the hoop for a driving lay-up to give France the lead again at 78-76 with about three minutes remaining in the game. With under a minute left and down by four, Mitchell squirted into the lane for a layup but Gobert smothered the shot by his Jazz teammate and the Americans were never able to get any closer.

The win raises the prospect of France adding a Basketball World Cup title to the football World Cup hardware they won in Russia last year.

Meanwhile, San Antonio Spurs' Patty Mills was in sparkling form once more for Australia as they reached the Basketball World Cup semi-finals for

the first time yesterday.

The Boomers, who had never gone beyond the quarter-finals in 11 previous appearances, defeated tournament debutants the Czech Republic 82-70 and will meet Spain on Friday.

This was undefeated Australia's sixth win in a row in China and in doing so they avoided becoming the latest surprise casualty at this unpredictable World Cup.

Australia were heavy favourites in Shanghai against the Czechs, who bravely hung on until midway through the third quarter, when the Boomers cranked up the pressure.

Australia survived the World Cup "Group of Death" also including Canada, Senegal and Lithuania, before beating the Dominican Republic and then fellow semi-finalists France.

Veteran Australian Andrew Bogut was again loudly booed throughout by fans in Shanghai upset with a tweet he wrote in July about Chinese swimming star Sun Yang. He goaded the crowd afterwards with a dance as he came off the court. —AFP

Coleman denies doping, hits out at drug 'smears'

LOS ANGELES: US sprinter Christian Coleman hit back at criticism of his three missed doping tests yesterday, insisting he had never taken performance-enhancing drugs and never would.

Coleman, the favourite for the 100m at the World Championships in Doha, risked a suspension after drug-testers were unable to locate him on three separate occasions in a 12-month period.

However the charges against him were withdrawn because of a technicality on September 2 after the United States Anti-Doping Agency (USADA) received guidance on how the 12-month window should be calculated.

Coleman, who had previously denied any wrongdoing in a statement released in August, took to social media yesterday to elaborate on his case.

In a post on Instagram, the 23-year-old insisted he was a clean athlete, emphasising he does not even take legal supplements. "Therefore I have never failed a drug test and

never will," Coleman said.

"I'm the biggest advocate for clean sport because I know the sacrifice and what it takes to make it to this level. "I shouldn't have to defend myself but for the first and last time I literally do not take ANY supplements or protein powders. Nothing even legal to help with recovery. Nothing. I work hard at practice, drink water and Powerade, rest, and work even harder the next day."

In a separate video message posted on Youtube, Coleman appeared to accuse USADA of attempting to "smear" his reputation, and pointed the finger at US authorities for releasing details of his case into the public domain.

The first reports of Coleman's case appeared in Britain's Daily Mail newspaper. USADA had refused to comment on the case until Coleman himself issued a statement to NBC on August 24.

"It shouldn't have even been a public ordeal," Coleman said. "I've never heard of a situation where an athlete doesn't have their own privacy, they don't get an opportunity to clear their name before any public knowledge is out there."

"It's a shame on USADA that this was public knowledge, that they didn't know their own rules — that they expect athletes to know the rules but they can't follow their own."

The case against Coleman stalled after the sprinter's lawyers pointed out under existing rules, his three where-

abouts tests should not have been classified as three missed tests.

His first offence occurred on June 6 last year. A doping control officer attempted to test the sprinter and discovered he had failed to update his whereabouts information to reflect his location.

Two more whereabouts failures were logged on January 16 this year and April 26. However Coleman's team successfully argued under current rules, his first missed case should have been backdated to the first day of that quarter — April 1, 2018 — which would mean the dates of the three offences fell outside the required 12-month timeframe for a doping offence to have occurred.

Coleman yesterday broke down the details of how each missed test happened. He said the first incident in June 2018 happened when he was injured and sought treatment in Oregon, forgetting to notify drug testers of his change in location. "That's on me, that's my fault," he said. The second incident in January occurred when he changed the time of a weight session near his base in Kentucky from 9am to 8am. A doping control officer arrived to administer a test. Coleman, who said he was only 10 minutes from his home at the time, said he did not receive a call from the tester.

"She said that she came while I was at weights and that she attempted to call," he said. "I didn't get a call, I didn't even know that I had a missed test." —AFP

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