

Sports

ATP hands Kyrgios suspended 16-week ban for poor behaviour

PARIS: Australian tennis star Nick Kyrgios received a suspended 16-week ban from the ATP yesterday and was placed on probation for six months for “aggravated behaviour” following a number of on-court outbursts over the past year.

The suspension is deferred pending Kyrgios’ compliance with several strict conditions mandated by the ATP, which include seeking additional support from a specialist in behavioural management during the off-season.

“The suspension will be lifted at the end of the six-month probationary period provided that the above conditions are met,” the ATP said in a statement. It added the same applied to a \$25,000 fine. Tour organisers opened an investigation into Kyrgios following an explosive meltdown at last month’s Cincinnati Masters which saw him smash two racquets, launch an abusive tirade at the chair umpire before appearing to spit at the official during a second-round match.

He was fined \$113,000 for ball abuse, leaving the court without permission, an audible obscenity and unsportsmanlike conduct during his loss to Russia’s Karen Khachanov. But the ATP decided to extend the inquiry into the volatile Kyrgios, who was also disqualified and fined for throwing a chair on to court during the Rome Masters in May.

“The investigation... has concluded that Kyrgios has been found to have committed aggravated behaviour under the Player Major Offense

provision in the ATP Code,” the governing body said yesterday. “The investigation found a pattern of behaviour related to Kyrgios’s verbal abuse of officials and/or spectators in the past 12 months that constitutes a violation” of the ATP rule book, it added. Kyrgios, 24, has five days to appeal the decision.

‘PRETTY CORRUPT’

However, he avoided further punishment for calling the ATP “pretty corrupt” during the US Open. “Following a clarification issued by the player the following day, it was determined that the incident did not constitute a Player Major Offense, and no additional penalties were applied,” the ATP said.

Tennis great Rod Laver this month called for Kyrgios to be suspended over bad behaviour, saying his fellow Australian appeared not to be learning from his mistakes. Laver, an 11-time Grand Slam champion who is considered one of the sport’s greatest players, said time away from tennis could be the answer.

“Whatever they have done hasn’t worked so far, so maybe a suspension is the only answer,” he told The Sydney Morning Herald. “I’m not sure he’s learned anything from any of the things that have gone on.” Kyrgios served a three-week ban in 2016 after being accused of not trying at the Shanghai Masters. His initial eight-week suspension was reduced after he agreed to see a sports psychologist. He lost in the first round of



ZHUHAI: Nick Kyrgios of Australia hits a return against Andreas Seppi of Italy during their men’s singles first round match at the Zhuhai Championships tennis tournament in Zhuhai in China’s southern Guangdong province. — AFP

the Zhuhai Championships on Wednesday, after which he said that he could sit out the rest of the season because of a collarbone injury. Kyrgios has already pulled out of next week’s China Open and will head home to Australia to recover.

“Unfortunately a collarbone injury I sustained at Laver Cup has escalated and has forced me to pull out of the Asian swing,” Kyrgios wrote on Twitter. “I’ll be heading back to Australia to rest and recover. See you all soon,” he added. — AFP

Australia’s Finch eyeing Test comeback



Aaron Finch

SYDNEY: Australia’s one-day skipper Aaron Finch is keen to play Test cricket again after watching the top order fail to fire during the recent Ashes series.

The 32-year-old was dumped after scoring just 97 runs in three Tests as an opener against India last summer, later declaring his chances of padding up again had “probably slipped away”.

But he is reinvigorated and eyeing another chance after David Warner, Marcus Harris and Cameron Bancroft all misfired against England.

Finch said plans to score as many runs as possible in the upcoming domestic Sheffield Shield season to catch the attention of selectors ahead of the home Test series against Pakistan and New Zealand, starting in November.

“For me personally, it’s about probably having one really good crack at trying to get back to the Test team again,” he told SEN sports radio on Wednesday. “Obviously (I’ll) just try and get some runs, get some big runs there. That’s my plan.

“If it doesn’t happen, it doesn’t happen. I’m comfortable with that.”

Finch, an aggressive short-format specialist who has played just five Tests, is taking inspiration from Matthew Wade, who forced his way back into the Test team by hammering more than 1,000 Shield runs last season. “I think it’s a credit to himself, but also the hard work he’s done on his technique and the coaches down at Tassie (Tasmania) have done a fantastic job,” he said of Wade, who hit two Ashes hundreds.

Finch’s state side Victoria have four Shield games for him to shine ahead of the opening Test against Pakistan on November 21 in Brisbane. — AFP

Karachi gears up for first one-day international in 10 years

KARACHI: Karachi hosts a one-day international for the first time in 10 years when Pakistan take on a depleted Sri Lanka on Friday, furthering the country’s revival in international cricket. “History will be made on Friday when Karachi will host the first ODI,” said Pakistan captain Sarfaraz Ahmed.

“We must thank the Sri Lankan team for touring us.” Teams have been reluctant to visit the cricket-mad country since a militant attack on the Sri Lankan team bus in Lahore in 2009. Although no players were killed in the attack, several were injured and eight people died.

The attack forced Pakistan to play all their “home” Tests and most of its short-form games in the United Arab Emirates with Zimbabwe becoming the first team to return to Pakistan in 2015.

That tour was followed by a Twenty20 series by a World XI in 2017, a one-off T20 match against Sri Lanka that same year, and the West Indies for a Twenty20 series in Karachi in 2018. The current tour — comprising of three one-day internationals and as many Twenty20s — was tainted by the withdrawal of 10 Sri Lankan players who cited security fears.

Sri Lanka then stalled the tour after receiving information of a possible militant attack on the team, before the all clear was finally given last week. Pakistan have put in place stringent security measures normally re-

served for heads of state. All the arrangements are being led by the country’s military, with around 2,000 security personnel on alert at the team’s hotel and at the ground. Sri Lankan skipper Lahiru Thirimanne — captaining the side after regular skipper Dimuth Karunaratne pulled out — is confident cricket will be in focus.

“SLC (Sri Lanka Cricket) has presented us the security plan which we are getting in Pakistan so I am pretty happy with that and I explained to my family as well, so they don’t have a concern,” said Thirimanne earlier this week.

The captain said the decision by some of his teammates to pull out of the tour was a “personal matter”. “We still have a good team,” he said. “I believe if we play to our potential we can do very well.”

Sarfaraz and fast bowler Wahab Riaz are the only Pakistani players who have played a one-day international in Karachi before — back in 2008. “I can’t wait for Friday,” said Sarfaraz, who took over as ODI captain in 2017. The remaining ODIs will also be in Karachi on Sunday and Wednesday. The two teams will also play three Twenty20 internationals — all in Lahore — on October 5, 7 and 9.

Teams:

Pakistan: Sarfaraz Ahmed (captain), Babar Azam (vice-captain), Abid Ali, Asif Ali, Fakhar Zaman, Haris Sohail, Mohammad Hasnain, Iftikhar Ahmed, Imad Wasim, Mohammad Amir, Mohammad Nawaz, Mohammad Rizwan, Shadab Khan, Usman Shinwari, Wahab Riaz.

Sri Lanka: Lahiru Thirimanne (captain), Danushka Gunathilaka, Sadeera Samarawickrama, Avishka Fernando, Oshada Fernando, Shehan Jayasuriya, Dasun Shanaka, Minod Bhanuka, Angelo Perera, Wanindu Hasaranga, Lakshan Sandakan, Nuwan Pradeep, Isuru Udana, Kasun Rajitha, Lahiru Kumara. — AFP