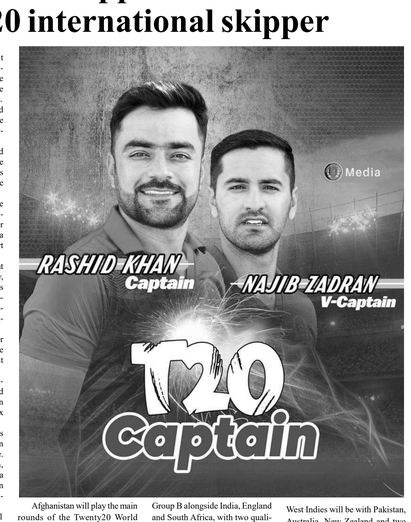
Afghanistan appoints Rashid Khan T20 international skipper



The Afghanistan Cricket Board on Tuesday appointed spinner Rashid Khan as skipper for the upcoming T20 World Cup to be held in the United Arab Emirates.

The 22-year-old had briefly led Afghanistan in 2018-19 before leaving the post saying he was better off as a player.

While he had recently voiced reservations about leading the team, fearing it could affect his bowling, Khan expressed gratitude on Tuesday.

"It is my duty now to serve my country & my team," he tweeted. "Thank you #ACBofficials for the trust & believing in me. It is a dream journey & my fans support will be the key."

Afghanistan sacked all-format skipper Asghar Afghan in May, naming Hashmatullah Shahidi as Test and one-day international captain while deferring the announcement for the Twenty20 internationals (T20Is).

Afghanistan said middle-order batsman Najibullah Zadran will be Khan's deputy for the shortest format.

Khan previously led Afghanistan in two Tests, losing one and winning the other while in seven one-day internationals he lost six and won one.

His record in the T20Is was better as he won four of the seven he captained, losing the other three.

With his uncanny leg-spin, Khan has earned a reputation as a top cricketer and is number two in T20I rankings, behind South African spinner Tabraiz Shamsi.

Khan has 95 wickets in 51 T20Is at an economy of 6.21 runs per over -- the best among current international bowlers.

Afghanistan will play the main rounds of the Twenty20 World Cup from October 17-November 14.

Afghanistan has been placed in Group B alongside India, England and South Africa, with two qualifiers from the first round to join them.

Defending champions the West Indies will be with Pakistan, Australia, New Zealand and two qualifiers in Group A.

Emma Raducanu struggled with her breathing and 'felt dizzy' during Wimbledon clash with Ajla Tomljanovic

Emma Raducanu revealed she struggled with her breathing and felt dizzy during her fourth-round Wimbledon clash with Ajla Tomljanovic before being advised to retire, saying: "I think the whole experience caught up with me."

But she was unable to complete her match against Australian Tomljanovic on Monday evening, withdrawing after an off-court medical timeout while trailing 6-4 3-0.

Writing on Twitter, Raducanu said: "Hi guys, I wanted to let everyone know that I'm feeling much better this morning. First up I want to congratulate Ajla on an incredible performance and I'm sorry our match ended the way it did.

"I was playing the best tennis of my life in front of an amazing crowd this week and I think the whole experience caught up with me. At the end of the first set, after some super intense rallies, I started to breathe heavily and felt dizzy.

"The medical team advised me not to continue and, although it felt like the hardest thing in the world not to be able to finish my Wimbledon on the court, I was not well enough to carry on.

"I want to thank the people who have cheered me on every single match, I wanted to win so badly for you! I also want to thank the All England Club, my team, the LTA, my parents and friends.

"Last night will go a long way to helping me learn what it takes to perform at the top. I will cherish everything we have achieved together this week and come back stronger! Can't wait to see what's next on my journey."

Difficulty breathing was given as the official reason for her withdrawal on Monday night but the initial lack of explanation for what caused it led to intense speculation.

John McEnroe was heavily criticised after jumping to the conclusion immediately after the match on the BBC that she could not handle the occasion, and Piers Morgan said on Twitter saying she needed to toughen up.

Andy Murray weighed in, replying to a tweet from Kevin Pietersen about mental toughness being what separated good athletes from great ones, although the former England cricketer later insisted he had not been referring to Raducanu.

Murray wrote: "No question mental toughness can be what separates the best in sport but surely both of you aren't judging her mental toughness on yesterday's match?!

"I think some of what he (McEnroe) said was fair yes.. however the timing of it was a bit off considering nobody had any clue what her issue was injury/illness/breathings issues etc at the time of his comments."

Wimbledon organisers earlier issued a statement wishing Raducanu well and defending the scheduling of the match.

In a break with convention, the contest was the final match on Court One despite all the other women's ties having been played earlier in the day ahead of the quarter-finals on Tuesday. The All England Club said in a statement: "We were very sad to see Emma forced to withdraw from her match last night and wish her all the best with her recovery. "She should be commended for the poise and maturity she has shown throughout the Wimbledon fortnight and we very much look forward to welcoming her back to Wimbledon next year and in the years to come."

The Match: Bryson DeChambeau and Aaron Rodgers claim victory over Phil Mickelson and Tom Brady

Bryson DeChambeau and Aaron Rodgers claimed bragging rights over Phil Mickelson and Tom Brady in the latest instalment of The Match.

DeChambeau teamed up the Green Bay Packers legend to win 3&2 in the made-for-TV event on Tuesday, held on the Jack Nicklaus Signature Course at The Reserve at Moonlight Basin in Montana.

Played under the modified alternate shot format, where each player hits a tee shot and then the best ball from each team is used, DeChambeau and Rodgers never trailed at any point during the exhibition contest as they saw off the reigning PGA Champion and the seven-time Super Bowl winner.

DeChambeau brought duct tape to the first tee, giving Brady grief for splitting his pants in a previous TV contest at Medalist, before winning the opening hole by chipping in from 10 yards off the green for an early birdie.

Brady drove the 392-yard third green and DeChambeau knocked a three-wood onto the putting surface, helped by the 7,500-feet elevation, with Mickelson's eagle miss enough to win the hole when his opponents three-putted from 15 feet.

Mickelson made the better drive at the par-five next to help win the hole and edge back ahead, only for DeChambeau to knock his approach at the sixth to 30 feet and set up a two-putt birdie to level the contest.

Brady holed a 10-foot birdie to win the seventh, while a 280-foot drop from the tee helped DeChambeau hit a 480-yard drive at the par-five eighth on their way to claiming the hole.

The pair remained all-square heading into the back nine, where Rodgers rolled in three straight birdies to pull him and DeChambeau clear of their opponents, before the teams both bogeyed the par-five 14th when all four players could only use one club each for the entire hole.

Mickelson and Brady took the 15th hole to close the gap to two with three holes remaining, only for Rodgers to nail a 12-foot birdie at the par-three next and claim the victory.

Defeat for Mickelson and Brady was the second time they've been beaten together at The Match, having missed out to Tiger Woods and Peyton Manning last year, while the early victory meant DeChambeau never got the chance to play the 777-yard 17th hole.

Conor McGregor must 'get his mind off boxing' to avenge shock UFC defeat by Dustin Poirier, says Claressa Shields

Conor McGregor must "get his mind off boxing" to avenge a shock UFC defeat by Dustin Poirier, says America's star boxer Claressa Shields who has launched an MMA career.

Ireland's UFC star faces Poirier in a third fight on Saturday in Las Vegas, having suffered a stoppage loss to the American in January.

The three-weight world boxing champion, who is now fully committed to the Professional Fighters League, told Sky Sports: "I think that Conor McGregor is a force to be reckoned with, but it doesn't matter who you are.

"Judging on the last fight, when Dustin Poirier kept kicking that front leg, it's like he's got to know. Even me, I know. Jab, get that leg out of there.

"You can't be in a boxing stance in MMA, you have to make sure you're ready to check that kick, catch that kick, or get it out of the way.

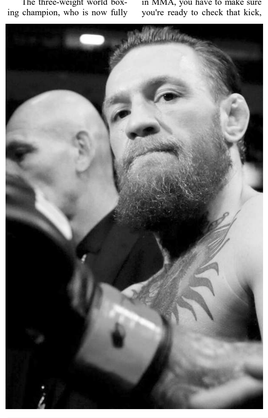
"You can't just be taking kicks and taking kicks for five, five-minute rounds, because your leg can only take so many."

Shields fears that McGregor could endure another major setback in the UFC, if he does not return to the tactics which brought him title success before his entry into boxing.

"If he fixes that, and he throws his striking, he gets back to his wrestling and all of that stuff, I think he can beat Dustin Poirier," said Shields, who is preparing for her second PFL bout in late August.

"But I feel like Dustin Poirier, right now he has his number, unless Conor McGregor really goes back to the drawing board and just like I said, switch that mind back to MMA."

AFP



England include nine uncapped players in revised squad for Pakistan ODIs after coronavirus outbreak in initial group

England have named nine uncapped players in their revised squad for the ODI series against Pakistan following a coronavirus outbreak among the initial group.

Ben Stokes returns to captain the side after recovering from a finger injury, Dawid Malan, who left the squad for personal reasons, also comes back into the fold to play alongside a host of new faces but there is no place for Alex Hales.

Test batsmen Zak Crawley and Dan Lawrence join Durham seamer Brydon Carse, Tom Helm of Middlesex, Somerset all-rounder Lewis Gregory, Surrey's Will Jacks, Gloucestershire left-armer David Payne, Sussex opening batsman Phil Salt and Middlesex wicketkeeper John Simpson as those in the 18-strong group yet to feature for England in 50-over cricket.

"It's a great opportunity to play on the biggest stage, and for most of the players selected it's not necessarily something they would have been expecting 24 hours ago," managing director of England men's cricket, Ashley Giles, said.

"It's an exciting group of players, with some young talent and some players who have impressed at domestic level over a long period of time.

"We're in unprecedented territory, in terms of replacing an entire squad and management team, and I'm very proud of how everyone has come together in order to get it done - both those within the ECB and from the county game."

England were forced to select a new team for the after seven positive Covid-19 tests pushed the entire squad into isolation.

Three England players and four backroom staff have tested positive for Covid-19, with the rest of the squad deemed close contacts.

Stokes will captain England after several weeks out with a fractured finger, despite Eoin Morgan initially saying it would be too soon for the all-rounder to be considered.

Chris Silverwood was not in charge of the ODI series against Sri Lanka as he was taking a break and will be available to return as head coach.

"We have been mindful that the emergence of the Delta variant, along with our move away from the stringent enforcement of bio-secure environments, could increase the chances of an outbreak," said Tom Harrison, chief executive at the ECB.

England have been forced to select a new team for the Pakistan ODI series after seven positive Covid-19 tests pushed the entire squad into isolation

"We made a strategic choice to try to adapt protocols, in order to support the overall wellbeing of our players and management staff who have spent much of the last 14 months living in very restricted conditions.

"Overnight we have worked swiftly to identify a new squad, and we are grateful to Ben Stokes who will return to England duties to captain.

"We also recognise the impact this news will have on our first-class counties and their men's playing squads and thank them, along with our partners Sky and Royal London, for their ongoing support in dealing with this pandemic."

Revised England squad in full: Ben Stokes (Durham, captain), Jake Ball (Nottinghamshire), Danny Briggs (Warwickshire), Brydon Carse (Durham), Zak Crawley (Kent), Ben Duckett (Nottinghamshire), Lewis Gregory (Somerset), Tom Helm (Middlesex), Will Jacks (Surrey), Dan Lawrence (Essex), Saqib Mahmood (Lancashire), Dawid Malan (Yorkshire), Craig Overton (Somerset), Matt Parkinson (Lancashire), David Payne (Gloucestershire), Phil Salt (Sussex), John Simpson (Middlesex), James Vince (Hampshire).

Sky Sports Cricket and former England captain Nasser Hussain has praised the ECB for the way they have handled the Covid bubble but says the latest outbreak will cause chaos

Sky Sports cricket expert and former England captain Nasser Hussain praised the ECB for the way they have handled the Covid bubble but says the latest outbreak will cause "absolute chaos".