

FRIEDEMANN VOGEL; JONATHAN NACKSTRAND

# SPORT

# Saved!

Eriksen collapses on pitch but recovering after swift response from referee, team-mates and medical teams

Pages 2&3



## Dane awake in hospital and is 'doing well'

Molly Hudson

Denmark's Group B match against Finland at the European Championships was suspended last night after their midfielder, Christian Eriksen, collapsed on the pitch late in the first half in Copenhagen. The match restarted later on the request of both sets of players after Eriksen was stabilised and taken to hospital.

A throw-in was taken by Thomas Delaney towards Eriksen, the Inter Milan and former Tottenham Hotspur midfielder, who fell in the 43rd minute as the ball came towards him. Anthony Taylor, the English referee officiating his first match at a major international tournament, and players quickly signalled to the bench for medical assistance for the 29-year-old, and moved him into the recovery position.

Eriksen received CPR on the pitch

from medics, and was surrounded by visibly distressed team-mates who created a shield around him to obstruct the scene from television cameras. Eriksen's wife, Sabrina Kvist Jensen, was seen in tears and came down from the stands on to the pitch, where she was comforted by the Leicester City goalkeeper Kasper Schmeichel and Simon Kjaer, the Denmark captain.

The match at the Parken Stadium was suspended soon after and Taylor signalled for players to return to the dressing rooms. The Denmark manager Kasper Hjulmand entered the pitch to check on Eriksen's condition and the mental state of his team-mates.

Finland's players left the pitch, some of them in tears, while many of the Denmark players remained around Eriksen until temporary

**Continued on page 2 →**

# ERIKSEN 'STABLE' AFTER

**Christian is awake, his condition remains stable. He remains hospitalised at Rigshospitalet for examinations.**

→ Continued from page 1

shields were erected around him. BBC commentary and footage continued for some time while Eriksen was stricken, showing the distressing scenes in detail, including those of Eriksen's wife. The pundit Ian Wright tweeted "cut to the studio ffs".

Eriksen was pictured conscious as he was taken away on a stretcher and reports suggested he raised his hand as he was carried off.

"Following the medical emergency involving Denmark's player Christian Eriksen, a crisis meeting has taken place with both teams and match officials... the player has been transferred to the hospital and has been stabilised," a Uefa spokesman said. The Danish FA also confirmed that Eriksen had been taken to a nearby hospital for examination.

Supporters went from shocked silence, to showing their support for Eriksen, and were asked to remain in the stadium. Travelling Finnish fans, of which there were about 3,000, chanted "Christian" with Danish fans answering "Eriksen". They greeted the news from the stadium announcer that Eriksen was stable and awake with a roar.

Eriksen has more than 100 caps and is one of Denmark's star players. He began his career at Ajax and played for seven years at Tottenham. He moved to Inter Milan in January 2020 and helped them to win Serie A this year.

"I can't believe what we are witnessing. Football goes out of the window," said Alex Scott, the BBC pundit. "You are thinking about his family and the players. I picked up the phone and texted my mother to say I love her. It's a reminder of how quickly things can change."

The game was goalless when play was stopped. The Denmark FA released a statement at 7pm, announcing that it would restart after players had been reassured of Eriksen's condition.

"Christian is awake, his condition remains stable. He remains hospitalised at Rigshospitalet for examinations. The match against Finland will be played. This happens after the players have been confirmed that Christian is okay."

"Following the request made by players, Uefa has agreed to restart the match between Denmark and Finland," the governing body said. "The last five minutes of the first half will be played, there will then be a five-minute half-time break followed



## LEWIN IMPRESSED BY SWIFT RESPONSE

Gary Lewin, the former Arsenal and England physiotherapist, was among those who were impressed by the quick and highly professional response of the players and the medical team after Christian Eriksen collapsed. "The medical team will have gone into what we call the 'emergency action plan'. Every team and stadium has an action plan," Lewin said. "The medical team will have tried to stabilise him on the pitch."

"I have to commend the players, the way they protected him and stood around him, I thought was incredible. It showed amazing team spirit. Once the team have stabilised him, they would have got him into the cardiac position. I think that's obviously where he is now. I believe the early reports are he is conscious, so let's cross our fingers."

"The picture of him leaving the ground with oxygen, that's another sign that whatever happened, the action taken by the medical team was very, very quick and very, very efficient. All I can say is what an amazing job they all did."

On Twitter a doctor, Sadi Raza MD, suggested that Eriksen went into ventricular tachycardia fibrillation, a "fast, irregular and highly unorganized electrical rhythm of the heart that precedes a cardiac arrest".

by the second half." Last night's other Group B game, between Belgium and Russia, went ahead with Eriksen's Inter team-mate Romelu Lukaku and his former Spurs team-mates Toby Alderweireld and Jan Vertonghen involved.

An FA statement read: "Our thoughts are with Christian and family." England's press conference, where former Spurs team-mate of Eriksen, Harry Kane, was due to speak, was cancelled.

Messages in support included one from Fabrice Muamba, who suffered a cardiac arrest on the pitch in a match while playing for Bolton Wanderers against Tottenham in 2012, and recovered after his heart stopped for 78 minutes.

The Uefa president Aleksander Čeferin said: "Moments like this put everything in life into perspective. I wish Christian a full and speedy recovery and pray his family has strength and faith. The unity of the football family is so strong and he and his family carry with them the good wishes and prayers of everyone. I heard of fans of both teams chanting his name. Football is beautiful and Christian plays it beautifully."

## MUAMBA TWEETS HIS SUPPORT

Among the first people to respond to Eriksen's collapse was Fabrice Muamba, someone who realised, perhaps more than anyone, the seriousness of the situation.

Muamba, who tweeted "Please God" within minutes of Eriksen falling to the ground, suffered a cardiac arrest and collapsed while playing for Bolton Wanderers against Tottenham Hotspur in March, 2012, aged 23.

After receiving lengthy attention on the pitch Muamba was taken to a specialist unit at a London hospital. His heart stopped beating for 78 minutes but he recovered. In August that year he retired from professional football.



## Finland's historic victory is merely a footnote

Scorer Pohjanpalo urges Finnish fans to curb the celebrations



**DENMARK** 0

**FINLAND** 1  
Pohjanpalo 59

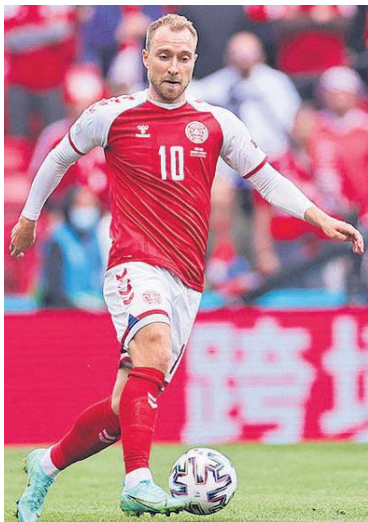
Molly Hudson

Tournament debutants Finland sealed a surprise victory over Denmark in a match overshadowed by the collapse of the Denmark midfielder Christian Eriksen. The match, having been suspended at the end of the first half, resumed after a delay of almost two hours, at the request of both sets of players. Denmark struggled to recover and dropped what could be crucial points in group B.

On a night when the football family came together to support Denmark and Eriksen, the result felt largely irrelevant. But, with Eriksen stable in hospital, both teams

# COLLAPSING ON PITCH

FRIEDEMANN VOGEL; MARTIN MEISSNER



## Henry Winter

Uefa has duty to examine broader issues of stars pushing themselves to limit after awful scenes



So many thoughts and fears rushed through the mind when watching with horror the pictures of Christian Eriksen's collapse during Denmark's Euro 2020 game against Finland in Copenhagen. Football is wonderful, it's entertainment and an escape, especially in the time of a pandemic, but it's only a sport. To see a human being on a football field in such grave danger, requiring CPR, rightly commanding countless prayers, places a pastime, albeit a passionately followed one, in its proper perspective.

Immediately the love, support and prayers for Eriksen poured forth. A cerebral and technical force for Inter Milan after shining with Tottenham Hotspur, Ajax and Odense, the midfielder is admired widely as a special footballing talent, and also a low-key and highly likeable man. Soon the relief flowed when the DBU, the Danish FA, reported that Eriksen was awake and stabilised, Facetimeing his team-mates, the prayers answered. The rapid response of the referee, Anthony Taylor, and the swift attention of medical staff at the Parken Stadion cannot be praised enough.

But questions still need answering. Elite players such as Eriksen are so extensively examined, so what brought about this collapse? This will clearly, and rightly, be a private discussion between Eriksen and the medical staff of Denmark and Inter.

Any conjecture on cause is presumptuous, let alone premature. But, generally, football needs to heed, examine and learn from this distressing situation. Players constantly exert themselves to the point of exhaustion, pushing their bodies to the limit, and the game's custodians have a duty to safeguard their health.

Because so many players are so well paid, and so frequently perceived as super-human, it can be forgotten they are flesh and blood, vulnerable to the same physical and emotional vicissitudes as the rest of us. They're human. That is why, when Uefa investigates what occurred, it needs to look into broader issues such as the stress on a player's body, especially in a year without a proper pre-season.

There is so much to reflect on. There is some anger at television intrusion into the fear on the face of

Eriksen's partner. Leave her alone. Show some respect. Media moralising about other media is never a good or particularly sustainable look but the judgment was wrong by the directors here. The enormity of the story was already established without gratuitous images of a distressed loved one. Back in the BBC studio, Gary Lineker handled the story with the requisite dignity, empathy and authority. As an aside, this was a reminder of the importance of having an experienced broadcaster at the helm, not the latest bright young thing. The look in Lineker's eyes alone captured what every viewer was feeling. Please God, let him be OK.

All life is precious but for those who love football, who love those who bring joy through football, Eriksen's collapse triggered a flood of concern and compassion and love. Euro 2020 was supposed to be the antidote to the year of Covid,

**Because so many players are so well paid it can be forgotten they are flesh and blood**

the moment when the party started again. Eriksen represents the joy of football, let alone the humility of a man who thought nothing of taking the Tube while at Spurs.

To love football is to love Eriksen. He's all about technique, so clever, both with still ball and moving. Eriksen has always been about the appliance of his very special science with a work ethic not always properly appreciated. During Spurs' run to the final of the Champions League in 2019, sports scientists tracked his movement, and nobody came close in distance covered: 12.28km in a game, with Dele Alli next on 12.02.

When there was talk of Eriksen leaving Spurs, a fan lamented the looming loss to Inter of their "most creative player since Glenn Hoddle".

Eriksen's collapse brought a wave of love – for a player who represents the sport so well and, most importantly, for a human being, a family man. Everyone, everyone, wishes him the speediest and fullest of recoveries.

put their emotions aside to return in front of a vocal, supportive crowd.

Denmark did begin with genuine hopes of going far into the competition. The side's spine includes the Leicester City goalkeeper Kasper Schmeichel, the Chelsea defender Andreas Christensen, the Tottenham Hotspur midfielder Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg and Eriksen, of Inter Milan, providing not only familiar names but a mix of experience and quality.

Finland's hopes largely centred around the Norwich City striker Teemu Pukki, who scored ten of their 16 goals in qualifying. It was in Denmark that Pukki developed his craft, scoring 72 goals in 164 games for Brøndby.

The long throw of Daniel O'Shaughnessy – who was also eligible to play for Ireland, through his father – was an early feature, looking to find Pukki. But soon Finland's back three had turned into a back five, as they began to bank up to protect their goal.

Denmark's first shot of note came from the 22-year-old striker Jonas Wind, who tested Lukas Hradecky from range, before Hojbjerg had the

Finland goalkeeper leaping to tip his header over the bar.

Finland were eager to close down their opponents but were often clumsy in their defending and the first half was punctuated by stoppages and fouls, including a yellow card for Robin Lod, the Finland midfielder, in the opening three minutes, before Eriksen's collapse halted the game.

The early exchanges of the final five minutes of the first half and opening of the second after the match resumed were understandably low-key, as the players eased themselves back in after the prolonged stoppage, before Finland burst into life. Threatening throughout the match from aerial positions, Finland's goal came from a header from Joel Pohjanpalo.

A cross from the left-wing back Jere Uronen found the forward, who headed down. The ball bounced just in front of Schmeichel, who allowed the ball to slip through his gloves – on another day he may have expected to do better. Pohjanpalo's goal was historic for his country, but celebrations were muted.

Denmark continued to control

possession and had a golden chance to equalise after Yussuf Poulsen went down under minimal contact in the area, Hojbjerg stepping up to take the penalty. Penalties are usually a nerve-jangling event but this one felt as though it held even more significance after the earlier events, and Hojbjerg never looked confident as he strode up to the ball and fired a tame effort low to the left of Hradecky. The Tottenham midfielder briefly dropped to his knees, face into the turf as he saw his effort saved.

As Taylor blew his whistle to eventually signal full-time there were celebrations on the pitch for Finland's victory, but at the forefront of everyone's mind was a celebration of Eriksen's health.

**Star man:** Joel Pohjanpalo (Finland)  
**Denmark** (4-3-3): K Schmeichel 6 – D Wass 6 (J Stryger Larsen 75 7), S Kjaer 7 (J Vestergaard 63 6), A Christensen 7, J Maehle 6 – C Eriksen 7 (M Jensen 43 7), P-E Hojbjerg 6, T Delaney 7 (A Cornelius 76 6) – Y Poulsen 7, J Wind 6 (A Skov Olsen 63 7), M Braithwaite 6  
**Finland** (3-5-2): L Hradecky 8 – J Toivio 7, P Arajuuri 7, D O'Shaughnessy 7 – J Raitala 7 (S Vaisanen 90, 7), R Lod 6, T Sparv 7 (R Schuller 76 7), G Kamara 7, J Uronen 8 – J Pohjanpalo 8 (M Forss 84 7), T Pukki 8 (J Kauko 76 7)  
**Booked:** Lod, Sparv  
**Referee:** Anthony Taylor

# WALES RESCUE UNLIKELY POINT

GARY JACOB



Baku

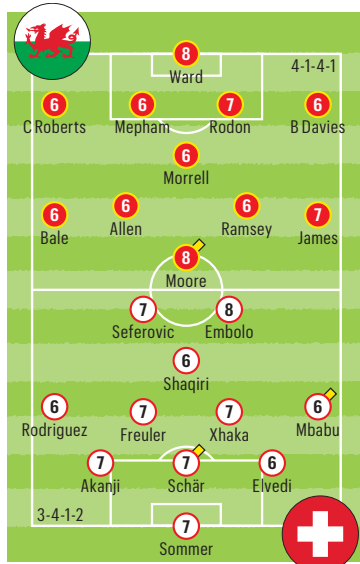
**B**y now Wales should know the futility of excluding Kieffer Moore. The 6ft 5in striker has been on the periphery since Robert Page took temporary charge and, not for the first time, he showed his ability to make an impact, ensuring that Wales did not make a losing start to their group A campaign.

The Cardiff City target man was thrown into the qualifying campaign and his goals helped Wales to reach this tournament. A surprise starter here in Baku, he repaid Page's faith, heading home an equaliser 16 minutes from time that was a sucker-punch for Switzerland, who dominated possession and rued missed chances. The impressive Brel Embolo headed them into the lead after the interval and they were denied by Danny Ward's fingertip saves and VAR chalking off Mario Gavranovic's flick with five minutes left.

Relief washed through the ranks of those in red and on they go, pulling unlikely results out of the bag. Wales players and staff were locked arm-in-arm in the centre circle at the end before they went across to salute about 80 fans behind one goal, perhaps a quarter of the supporters who have made the 3,000-mile trip.

Wales were the lowest-scoring finalists in qualifying, tied with North Macedonia, and since taking temporary charge in November Page has used a false nine in key games, at the expense of Moore. In Page's eight previous matches in charge, Moore only started in friendlies against the USA and Mexico. And in last week's warm-up against Albania, Page gave Moore – who came off the bench – a telling-off for not working the channels.

Moore, wearing a red bandage to cover a head injury suffered early on,



**Star man** Danny Ward (Wales). **Substitutions:** Wales D Brooks (for James 75), E Ampadu (for Ramsey 90+3). **Booked** Moore. **Switzerland** D Zakaria 6 (for Shaqiri 66), M Gavranovic (for Seferovic 84). **Booked** Schär, Mbabu. **Referee** C Turpin (Fr). **Attendance** 8,782.

showed what he could do as he pulled off at a short corner to meet Joe Morrell's cross and score a fourth header among his six goals for his country. "He has been terrific, he poses a threat, not just because of his presence," Page said. "He has a great touch, his link-up play is very good and he is a willing runner."

"He deserved his goal. Coming into the friendlies he did not need minutes, he has played week in, week out in the Championship so we had to protect him, and he has given us the rewards."

Wales played poorly for large parts here and they invited pressure by being so deep. Gareth Bale was quiet, and had he been any other player he

**2017** Wales 'keeper **Danny Ward** has not played a league game since 2017

might have been taken off. He curled a dangerous free kick across the face of goal and was justified in throwing his hands down in frustration when no one gambled to try to meet it. But that was it.

Aaron Ramsey struggled to get joy going forward. Dan James showed his pace could frighten defenders as he pushed the ball beyond Nico Elvedi and crossed for Moore to force Yann Sommer into an excellent tip over. James also breezed past Fabian Schär, who sensibly took a booking for blocking the winger as Wales broke.

But at the back there are questions over Chris Mepham and Joe Rodon, who were exposed by the pace and power of Embolo. Page went berserk when Haris Seferovic ghosted past Ramsey and skied over the bar, and the same player was guilty of a similar miss from closer range after a layoff from Embolo.

Switzerland arrived having won six games on the spin and they dominated midfield and possession. Xherdan Shaqiri had either scored or assisted nearly half of Switzerland's goals at tournaments since 2014 and he was keen to offer a reminder of his talents to potential suitors, having become a bit-part player at Liverpool. He dropped deep to find space and to evade the attention of Joe Allen, who shadowed his former Stoke City teammate and twice lost him early.

Shaqiri's near-post corners caused havoc and there were warnings before they scored from a set piece. Schär got in front of Moore and his back flick was kept out by Ward.

Shaqiri struck a deeper ball after the restart and Embolo rose above Connor Roberts to steer a header into the corner. It was reward for the Swiss pressure and Embolo nearly fashioned a second goal as he dribbled his way past defenders and teed up Kevin Mbabu, who scuffed across goal.

Switzerland were on top but their decision to withdraw Shaqiri backfired when Moore scored. Embolo headed wide before Gavranovic turned home and thought he had won it, but Wales survived after an agonising wait for VAR to save them.



Moore heads in Wales's equaliser in Baku to earn a point against Switzerland

## Brave and bandaged Moore puts star Bale in the shade

Wales talisman took a back seat as Cardiff City striker produced a towering performance

IAN HAWKEY



Gareth Bale got the run of the shaded side of the pitch for the hottest bit of Baku's early evening, one small blessing in the fierce heat. What he did not have enough of, however, was the ball. He is the captain of a Wales team who know their strengths, who claimed a priceless point yesterday because they stuck to their belief in those strengths, but they will hope that their supply lines to the front are not as constricted in their next contest, against Turkey.

Their heroes against Switzerland emerged from the shaded area of a squad where the limelight shines principally on the captain. Danny Ward, whose saves preserved the

### EURO 2020 RESULTS

GROUP A	P	W	D	L	Pts
Italy	1	1	0	0	3
Wales	1	0	1	0	1
Switzerland	1	0	1	0	1
Turkey	1	0	0	1	0

**FIXTURES**  
**Wednesday** Turkey v Wales; Italy v Switzerland.  
**June 20** Italy v Wales; Switzerland v Turkey.

GROUP B	P	W	D	L	Pts
Belgium	1	1	0	0	3
Finland	1	1	0	0	3
Denmark	1	0	0	1	0
Russia	1	0	0	1	0

**FIXTURES**  
**Wednesday** Finland v Russia.  
**Thursday** Denmark v Belgium.  
**June 21** Finland v Belgium; Russia v Denmark.



GROUP C	P	W	D	L	Pts
Austria	0	0	0	0	0
Holland	0	0	0	0	0
North Macedonia	0	0	0	0	0
Ukraine	0	0	0	0	0

**FIXTURES**  
**Today** Austria v N Macedonia; Holland v Ukraine. **Thursday** Ukraine v N Macedonia; Holland v Austria. **June 21** Ukraine v Austria; N Macedonia v Holland.

GROUP D	P	W	D	L	Pts
Croatia	0	0	0	0	0
Czech Republic	0	0	0	0	0
England	0	0	0	0	0
Scotland	0	0	0	0	0

**FIXTURES**  
**Today** England v Croatia. **Tomorrow** Scotland v C Republic. **Friday** Croatia v C Republic; England v Scotland. **June 22** C Republic v England; Croatia v Scotland.



## PLAYER RATINGS

by Gary Jacob

### WALES (4-1-4-1)



#### DANNY WARD



8/10

Got nod over Wayne Hennessey in March and continues to impress. Pulled off a smart early stop to deny Fabian Schär and fingertip saves from Bree Embo and Mario Gavranović.

#### CONNOR ROBERTS



6/10

Made an important intervention to deny Ricardo Rodríguez but allowed Embolo to climb above him to score and was rarely able to use his strength of getting forward.

#### CHRIS MEPHAM



6/10

Found it tough going in the step up in class against Haris Seferović and Embolo. Was lucky not to concede a penalty when he grabbed the shirt of the latter.

#### JOE RODON



7/10

Embolo breezed past the Tottenham Hotspur centre-back too easily after the break, winning the corner that led to the goal, but otherwise Rodon acquitted himself well.

#### BEN DAVIES



7/10

The experienced Spurs left-back showed his steadying influence and made a number of clearances, but was also dispossessed by Kevin Mbabu in a dangerous position.

#### JOE ALLEN



6/10

Was told to shadow Xherdan Shaqiri and lost his former Liverpool team-mate twice early on. He did not have the legs to stop the Wales midfield being overrun.

#### GARETH BALE



6/10

Did not have the impact he made in the opening game of the Euros five years ago. Strangely subdued, apart from a brilliant free-kick that evaded his team-mates.

#### JOE MORRELL



6/10

Nice cross to claim an assist for the equaliser but mostly struggled against superior opponents, which is no surprise when he hardly plays for Luton Town in the second tier.

#### AARON RAMSEY



6/10

Spent most of his time backtracking to help the midfield. Delivered one excellent cross but perhaps the biggest plus was him playing a full match after recent fitness struggles.

#### DAN JAMES



7/10

Pace and direct running unsettled Switzerland and forced Schär into a block. Gave his manager a surprised look when substituted, but Robert Page said that he looked tired.

#### KIEFFER MOORE



8/10

Wales look a better balanced side with him and Page saw sense in giving the big man from Cardiff City the nod. He justified the selection with a superb headed goal.

**TOTAL**  
**73/110**

#### Substitutes

David Brooks had little time to make an impact; Ethan Ampadu came on in stoppage time.

draw, has scarcely experienced first-team football lately at Leicester City; Kieffer Moore was a long way from international contention when Wales charged through the previous European Championship five years ago. The rise of Moore, the target man born in Torquay, is its own fairytale, and this was the story's best chapter so far. He even looked like a warrior icon, with a wide bandage across his head, like some modern-day Mervyn Davies.

As for Bale, he kept some of his powder dry, and after a year of club cameos, rather than a season spent collecting the serial trophies and plaudits that used to be his standard, it would be fanciful to imagine him entering these Euros at full, majestic gallop.

The flames of Wales's fire licked highest in the first ten minutes. By the time Bale crossed to the sunny side of the pitch, beads of sweat on

### It was fanciful to imagine Bale entering these Euros at full, majestic gallop

his forehead, for his first opportunity poised over a dead ball, they had begun to wheeze for being so starved of possession. That free kick, on the half-hour, had been awarded thanks to their most dashing counterattack, a Daniel James sprint that ended with Fabian Schär reconciled to losing the duel. The Newcastle United defender tripped

**Bale failed to spark Wales in Baku**



James, cynically. Bale's free kick was arched threateningly in the Swiss penalty area. There was no Welsh head on it.

By that time, the most sought Welsh head was wrapped in its bandage, Moore having returned from medical checks to the action after a painful collision with Kevin Mbabu. Blood had been drawn, and Moore would be forgiven if

painful memories had been stirred too. He has suffered a fracture to his skull in the recent past – 2½ years ago, playing for Barnsley.

But this is a brave footballer, who cherishes second chances. His journey up the professional game began at a lower rung than

most of his colleagues in the Wales squad. Into his twenties, Moore was still combining his football with part-time work as a lifeguard and personal trainer. He made his debut for Wales at 27, and his club career has taken off on the back of his Welsh success.

He scored 20 Sky Bet Championship goals this season for Cardiff City, whom he joined in 2020, a higher return than anywhere else in his picaresque journey, from Truro City to Wigan Athletic.

He scored his sixth, and most valuable, international goal in his 17th cap. That he had started in Robert Page's XI, ahead of more obviously mobile alternatives, had been an issue for mild debate. Moore would endure some frustrations through the first hour. When Wales had played effectively to 6ft 5in Moore's obvious fortes, via James's fine first-half cross, they created their best chance of a lead, Yann Sommer

palming the effort over the crossbar. When the circumstances invited another Moore leap, from Bale and then Aaron Ramsey's expertly delivered free kicks, the target man would be well marshalled by Swiss sentries.

For the equaliser, he slipped their handcuffs, his movement crafty, his header, served by Joe Morrell, brilliantly steered past Sommer. Wales are entitled to regard him as their rescuer. He was thrilled with his goal. "This a big occasion, and I've loved every minute of it," Moore said, of his major-tournament debut.

"He's been terrific at international and club level," Page said, keen to point out there is more to Moore than just that powerful, bandaged forehead. "He poses a threat, and not just because of his presence.

"He's got a great touch and his link-up play is good. He thoroughly deserved his goal."

#### GROUP E

	P	W	D	L	Pts
Poland	0	0	0	0	0
Slovakia	0	0	0	0	0
Spain	0	0	0	0	0
Sweden	0	0	0	0	0

#### FIXTURES

**Tomorrow** Poland v Slovakia; Spain v Sweden. **Friday** Sweden v Slovakia. **Saturday** Spain v Poland. **June 23** Sweden v Poland; Slovakia v Spain

#### GROUP F

	P	W	D	L	Pts
France	0	0	0	0	0
Germany	0	0	0	0	0
Hungary	0	0	0	0	0
Portugal	0	0	0	0	0

#### FIXTURES

**Tuesday** Hungary v Portugal; France v Germany. **Saturday** Hungary v France; Portugal v Germany. **June 23** Germany v Hungary; Portugal v France.

#### KNOCKOUT STAGE

##### ROUND OF 16

**June 26**

- 2nd in Group A v 2nd in Group B
- 1st in Group A v 2nd in Group C

**June 27**

- 1st in Group C v 3rd in Groups D/E/F
- 1st in Group B v 3rd in Groups A/D/E/F

**June 28**

- 2nd in Group D v 2nd in Group E
- 1st in Group F v 3rd in Groups A/B/C

**June 29**

- 1st in Group D v 2nd in Group F
- 1st in Group E v 3rd in Groups A/B/C/D

##### QUARTER-FINALS

**July 2**

- Winner R16 match 6 v Winner R16 match 5
- Winner R16 match 4 v Winner R16 match 2

**July 3**

- Winner R16 match 3 v Winner R16 match 1
- Winner R16 match 8 v Winner R16 match 7

##### SEMI-FINALS

**July 6**

- Winner QF2 v Winner QF1

**July 7**

- Winner QF4 v Winner QF3

##### FINAL

**July 6**

- Winner SF1 v Winner SF2



Lukaku scores his and Belgium's opening goal last night, before, far right, paying tribute to his stricken club colleague, Christian Eriksen

KIRILL KUDRYAVTSEV

## LUKAKU'S TRIBUTE TO ERIKSEN



After scoring his side's opening goal against Russia, the Belgian striker heads straight to the corner and one of the television cameras.



He then leans into the lens and can be heard saying: "Chris, Chris, I love you!". He and the Dane are team-mates at Italian champions Inter Milan.

# Lukaku helps Belgium live up to their top billing

<b>BELGIUM</b> Lukaku 10, 88, Meunier 34	<b>3</b>
<b>RUSSIA</b>	<b>0</b>

Paul Rowan

The highest-ranking team in the world demonstrated that they may also be in the mood to shed the tag of greatest underachievers with a clinical and decisive victory in their opening group B game against Russia in Saint Petersburg. Romelu Lukaku, in particular, seemed to have his game face on, opening the scoring early in the first half, and once Thomas Meunier scored a second around the half-hour mark, the game was a something of a

cruise for Belgium. Russia had long given up hope of getting anything out of the match when Lukaku scored a second goal five minutes from the end, set up by Meunier. The defender powered through his static opponents from midfield and slotted the ball through to Lukaku, who displayed his customary deadliness in front of goal to slide past Anton Shunin and spark Belgian celebrations.

The Russia manager, Stanislav Cherchesov, went for experience, handing a start to the 37-year-old defender Yuri Zhirkov, even though the veteran's appearances for Zenit Saint Petersburg this year have been severely restricted by injury.

With injuries to three of Belgium's most high-profile and experienced players – Kevin De Bruyne, Eden Hazard and Axel Witsel – keeping them

out of the starting line-up, there was a somewhat unfamiliar look to the most experienced team at the Euros, with rare tournament starts for Leander Dendoncker in midfield and Thorgan Hazard, brother of the Belgium captain, Eden. The Real Madrid man was on the bench and the captain's armband was worn by Christian Eriksen's former Tottenham Hotspur teammate Jan Vertonghen.

There were suggestions from the Belgium camp that they were preoccupied by what had happened on the pitch in Copenhagen hours earlier, but it was the Russians who were quickly punished for a lack of concentration. The home side had made a bright start and there appeared little danger when Dries Mertens's lofted ball into the Russian penalty area went right into the path of Andrei Semenov, but the centre half made a mess of his attempt to control the ball.

As a result, it landed nicely into the path of Lukaku, who swivelled and struck a first-time shot that bobbed into the corner of the net from 12 yards, wrongfooting the goalkeeper, Shunin. Lukaku made for the nearest television camera, kissed the lens and said "Chris, Chris I love you", in tribute to Eriksen, his stricken Inter Milan team-mate.

Eight minutes later Lukaku went in search of his 62nd international goal when he burst into the box, but was brilliantly tackled by Georgi Dzhikiya. When the big striker then retrieved the ball and set up Dendoncker, the Wolverhampton Wanderers player blasted the ball over the bar.

Such wastefulness was nothing compared with what Russia were doing at the other end, where they over-elaborated, particularly when the ball was lofted into the Belgian box



**Star man** Romelu Lukaku (Belgium).  
**Substitutions:** Belgium T Meunier 7 (for Castagne 27), E Hazard (for Mertens 72), T Vermaelen (for Vertonghen 77), D Praet (for Carrasco 77).  
**Russia** D Cheryshev 5 (for Kuzyaev 30), V Karavaev 5 (for Zhirkov 43), I Diveev 6 (for Barinov h-t), M Mukhin 5 (for Zobnin 63), Al Miranchuk 5 (for Cheryshev 63).  
**Referee** A M Mateu Lahoz (Sp).

and a couple of headed opportunities were spurned. The sense of lethargy was heightened by the ease with which Yuri Tielemans was able to beat their press to set up Belgium attacks. Roberto Martínez's side were in complete control and looked like scoring a second when Hazard had a chance from close range, but Shunin spread himself to block.

Shunin did not do so well with Hazard's next effort, a low cross whipped into the box, which the Russian goalkeeper could only beat into the path of Meunier, on in place of

Timothy Castagne, who had left the field after a clash of heads. The substitute kept his head well to stroke the ball into the net from close range, leaving Belgium two goals up just after the half-hour mark.

There was more bad news for Russia as the former Chelsea man Zhirkov hobbled off to be replaced by Vyacheslav Karavaev minutes from half-time.

The Russians had made it far too easy for Belgium, who nonetheless looked shaky when the ball was crossed into the box. Perhaps frustrated by his lack of opportunities, Russia's giant centre forward and leading goalscorer, Artem Dzyuba, instead tried to knock Belgium out of their stride by barging into Vertonghen early in the second half and sending the Benfica player flying.

A successful Russian press at the start of the second half did expose some brittleness in Belgium's defence but the Russians ran out of steam quickly. Belgium felt able to afford themselves the luxury of bringing Eden Hazard off the bench to replace Mertens, even though the former Chelsea player has seen little action at Real this season. Vertonghen also left the pitch looking shaken after that clash with Dzyuba.

With Tielemans in control in midfield, Belgium appeared happy to maintain their dominance of possession but showed little ambition, hardly surprising when the threat from Russia was so negligible.

But then Belgium got their third and the dreaded Mexican wave reappeared, even with the stadium half-full. The crowd had hardly distinguished themselves by whistling the Belgian players at the start for taking a knee, on what was, all in all, a night for Russian football to forget.

# Jonathan Northcroft

## England manager has had extra year to prepare for Euros yet on eve of first game, there are plenty of uncertainties



The first action on the Wembley pitch at Euro 96 was an opening ceremony whose theme was “Merrie England.” There were dancers in medieval capes, knights on horseback, a model dragon and skydivers descending with national flags. There was Sir Stanley Matthews, Mick Hucknall, the Duke of Kent.

There were so many people on the field, doing such vigorously “merrie” things that amid the confusion, a lancer fell off his steed and paramedics arrived to discreetly scrape the poor guy into a van.

The whole thing, to a (then) young Scot in the press box, seemed the nonsense of a country so weird about identity that it wasn’t even sure what decade it was in. Part of Euro 96’s joy was just being in England as a country seemed to come together and renew itself, sparked by the happiness of some decent football being played.

By the end of the tournament it felt a different, younger and more unified place. The identity – articulated by Baddiel and Skinner’s *Three Lions* – was something more modern and fun. Hip hop (The Fugees) topped the charts and the Spice Girls were bursting on to the scene. People were suntanned and happy. The jesters and lancers had gone.

It seems too much to hope, in so divided and weary a Britain, with Covid still casting shadows, for Euro 2020 to have similar tonic powers. The carnival may largely be restricted to the bit happening on the grass between the referee’s whistles, but there is still a pressing need for a new England to come together.

A need in football terms. Gareth Southgate has taken his country on positive adventures since being skydived in when Sam Allardyce was swiftly shown the door in 2016, yet he arrives at this, another English “home” tournament, at an odd point in the journey. It is one where there are so many uncertainties and so few fixed points in terms of what England will do in games.

What’s the best formation? Who is the starting right back? Left back? Centre backs? Jordan Henderson or Kalvin Phillips? Jack Grealish or Phil Foden? Jack Grealish and Phil Foden? Does Raheem Sterling play? It is hard to remember another major nation – let alone England – going into a finals among the favourites yet wrestling with so many questions.

The only thing that can be predicted, with confidence, in terms of England’s starting XI against Croatia this afternoon is that it will be an XI who have never previously started a game together. Go through the permutations and you will see this is true. A brand new XI for a finals for which there has been a record amount of time to rehearse. Let that sink in.



**The only thing we can predict is that this will be an XI who have never started together**

Assessing the options, it is best to start with the obvious. Harry Kane, of course, will lead from the front, but who fits around him? Mason Mount, one of Southgate’s favourite players, given not only his creativity but energy and flexibility, is a near-cert for a role supporting Kane from midfield. To the sides there is Foden, the jewel of England’s development system and the young English player with the capacity to go furthest in their career. Or there is Grealish who simply looks like the one opposition are least comfortable facing.

But there is also Sterling, to whom Southgate is loyal, and similarly Marcus Rashford. Neither ended the club season in form but the England manager’s philosophy is to go by what players do for him. Over the course of his reign, Sterling and

Rashford are the players who have both scored and assisted more goals by far – except for Kane.

Grealish, for all the thrills, has only two assists in seven internationals, and it is worth remembering that before he was capped, Southgate told the Aston Villa captain that he wanted to see an improvement in his goal-involvement numbers. Pressing from the front is a Southgate principle, and Grealish was also among the forward players he lectured for not doing enough harriving against Romania.

A personal view is that Grealish is too much of an X-factor player to keep bottled up, and should play along with Foden, and Mount, but the expectation is that Sterling, Mount and Foden will get the nod. “This is not fantasy football. You have to find the right balance,” Southgate’s assistant, Steve Holland, has said. For that reason, it is likely England will start with two measured midfielders, and that Phillips will be preferred to Henderson for fitness reasons.

Midfield-to-front is the easy part. Southgate said months ago that he knew ten of the XI who would start against Croatia but that was before

injuries, loss of form and the emergence of new options – and no department is more in flux than the defensive one. When Harry Maguire twisted an ankle against Aston Villa on May 9, it was the most cataclysmic injury Southgate could have faced, outside of Kane being crocked. It almost robbed him of two centre backs in one, for John Stones plays with nowhere near the same clarity and security without a “big brother” centre half partnering him. For Manchester City it’s Rúben Dias, for Manchester City it’s his guide.

The truth is that not one of Southgate’s alternative pairings looks convincing or complementary. He reached for Ben White in the young defender as a replacement after Trent Alexander-Arnold’s injury, having seen Tyrone Mings and Conor Coady in training. Mings is likely to partner Stones today but a hunch is that the composed White may end up a starter by the end of the tournament.

Southgate also considers Kyle Walker, Luke Shaw and Reece James to be capable of playing in the middle and the team practised with a back three in training last week, yet 3-4-1-2

### TODAY’S OTHER EURO 2020 TIES

#### Group C

**Austria v North Macedonia**  
North Macedonia make their bow in the tournament, while Austria look for their first win in Euro finals  
● ITV/talkSPORT, kick-off 5pm

#### Holland v Ukraine

The Dutch are back after missing out on the previous World Cup, to take on Andriy Shevchenko’s side  
● ITV/talkSPORT, kick-off 8pm

was the system used in England’s three most recent performances – the defeat by Belgium and the draw and defeat against Denmark in the Nations League last autumn.

Maguire could make the bench today, but more as a morale-boosting presence than realistic substitute option. Those with knowledge of his injury, which involved damage not just to ligaments but to muscle tissue, say it is remarkable testament to his determination that he is even back in training at this point.

So, England may well line up as Pickford – Walker, Stones, Mings, Chilwell – Phillips, Rice, Mount – Foden, Kane, Sterling. Southgate has been wowed over the past fortnight by Jude Bellingham and the wonderkid could come on to become England’s youngest tournament player.

There are some understandable reasons for England’s instability, though it was odd to see, in the warm-up games, Southgate field players who won’t even be at the finals. But it may also have to be accepted that flux is part of his style. He has created a sense of opportunity and buzz around England, where the door is always open to a new talent, a player in form, or one coming from left field, and the system and side he went with at the 2018 World Cup were also late to emerge. The sin against Croatia in the semi-final of that tournament was playing to their strengths and not England’s by, after an initial flurry, sitting off and allowing a slow-paced game to be played out in midfield, where Croatia had the talent and greater numbers.

Today should be about speed, pressing, attacking and keeping the ball moving on the deck. Some horror stats from the defeat by Croatia in Russia: Pickford kicking long 40 times, almost 50 per cent of Henderson’s forward passes being unsuccessful, Kane losing the ball 21 times.

In Rome on Friday, Italy showed how to do it – in terms of how to take inspiration from a home crowd, how to play fast, mobile, buccaneering football. Now, over to England.

# 'Grealish is closest

## Wayne Rooney

I'd start Villa man with Foden and Mount – England are best on front foot



**W**hen I came through, people compared me to Paul Gascoigne, but I was a completely different player. Now everyone is saying Phil Foden is the new Gazza because of his haircut – but they are looking at the wrong England player.

Jack Grealish is the closest thing I've seen to Gazza on a football pitch. He has a lot to do to reach Gazza's levels but his style of play, how he takes the ball and runs with it in a way that is so awkward to play against, his sheer confidence on the field – it all reminds me of the legend I watched at Everton, and then trained with when I joined their first-team squad.

For England, I think Harry Kane is their most important player, but Grealish is the one who is going to light up the tournament. He has to play. Just like Gazza, his style is suited to the international game, where moments of inspiration often make the difference. If you're looking for someone to open a team up with a bit of magic then Grealish is the one who can do it for Gareth Southgate's side.

He attracts defenders, draws fouls and wins free kicks in dangerous areas. He creates chances and scores goals too. Foden is a top player, a footballer who – as you see at Manchester City – will link play up, pass and move and can dribble too. But it's Grealish who commits

**What England don't want is a negative performance today in an attempt to nick a 1-0 victory**

defenders more, dragging them out of position, which will create space for other players.

If I were Southgate, I would play Grealish and Foden. There's no need to choose between them. I'd get Mason Mount on the pitch too and let those talents play with freedom. The last thing England should do with the attacking players they have – and with Harry Maguire out – is sit back.

I think what we're all hoping for at this tournament is for England to go on the front foot; what you don't want against Croatia is a negative performance and an attempt to nick a 1-0 win. Because of the personnel at Southgate's disposal, his side are at

### WEMBLEY WEATHER

TODAY



27°C

5% chance of rain

Sunshine all day with a light northwesterly wind

their best when taking the game to the opposition.

Croatia will be tough. We saw in the semi-final of the 2018 World Cup that when you drop off and allow them time on the ball, the Croatians have the quality to hurt you. They're less comfortable when you go at them. Think of Luka Modric, a brilliant footballer but the same age as me, nearing 36. You saw in the Champions League, when Chelsea faced Real Madrid, that when you put pressure on Modric, he is not the same player. He doesn't like players running off him, in his face and getting round him. Whereas if you're going to sit there and let him have the ball, he will hurt you all day long.

I'd love to manage Grealish. If I did, I'd encourage him to express himself, to not be afraid of mistakes or giving the ball away, especially in the final third. And I'd say to the players behind him that if the opposition counterattack then delay it, and let Grealish get back, because some players just need to play with freedom.

I'd loved to have played with Grealish too. I was a player who studied defenders, and when he takes the ball and draws them out of position, I would have been looking to exploit the spaces they left.

Kane must be licking his lips. In Grealish, Foden and Mount – not forgetting Raheem Sterling, if he's involved – he has players who can open up the opposition and get the ball to him in the box.

In the warm-up games, Kane was still playing as he does for Tottenham Hotspur, dropping deep. Now is when he needs to become more selfish and just stay in the area. He should be saying to himself: "I'm just going to wait in the area, stay within the width of the goal and let these players find me." He has got to trust those lads and be there in the right position to finish it off.

Kane has to play higher than he did against Austria recently. It would be a waste and a shame if Grealish and co were using their skill and ability to get the ball into the right

**Grealish has the qualities to open up defences in a way that will leave Kane licking his lips**



## Graeme Souness

Modric is a talent apart but at 35 he is past his best. England's midfield can bully him



We all remember how the World Cup semi-final slipped away from England three years ago despite them taking an early lead against Croatia from Kieran Trippier's free kick. They could not control the game or protect that lead as Ivan Perisic equalised midway through the second half, before Mario Mandzukic's goal won it in extra time.

The bad news is England still lack a playmaker capable of dictating the tempo of a match. The good news is that the current Croatia are not the same side who beat them in Russia after England enjoyed an obliging run to the final four.

What Gareth Southgate would give right now for a player like Paul Scholes,

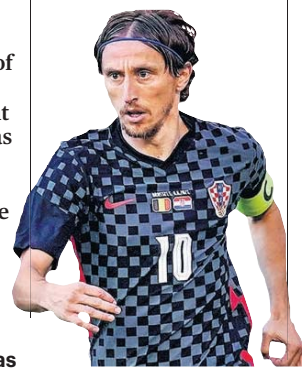
someone to sit in central midfield with that sixth sense for the ebb and flow of a match. Somebody who can loan the ball out and take it back.

A playmaker dictates the play and England do not have one. It's something you can improve on as you get older, but it must be in you to start with. That understanding of where the game is going, that you don't always have to be on the front foot, getting it forward as quickly as you can. You're looking to shift people around and create space and openings, instead of hitting the front men as quickly as possible.

I love Mason Mount, I love Phil Foden and Jack Grealish will get you on the edge of your seat, but

**Modric is not the force he once was**

**Scots will be tougher for England than Croatia**



England do not have someone who can control a game and its tempo. Jordan Henderson, Calvin Phillips and Declan Rice are all solid central midfielders, but they are not maestros, they are honest Joes, who will never let you down in terms of effort. But at this level it's about having that sixth sense of where the game is going, where the opposition are vulnerable, trying to keep the ball, switching play. You're trying to sicken the opposition by starving them of possession.

Luka Modric can do all of the above and has had a fantastic career, but at 35 his best days are definitely behind him.

Modric has that sixth sense to set the tempo of a game, as he did three years ago, and he does not give away possession cheaply, but



# we have to Gazza ... He must start'

areas and yet he wasn't in a position to convert, as happened a couple of times in that Austria friendly. If I was managing him, I'd say, "I don't want you deep, I don't want you coming for the ball, I want you being around that box. These players will find you – and if they don't, I'll deal with them and make sure they do."

If Kane can focus on being a No 9 and not drifting into No 10 positions, he can win the Golden Boot, just like he did at the 2018 World Cup. He is probably the most proven goalscorer England have had since Gary Lineker, and in training you would just admire the quality of his finishing: left foot, right foot, headers. It's why you want him in the box. Another reason for him to play high is that it will keep the opposition backline deep, creating pockets of space.

I think what you see in the present England team are a group of young lads, full of confidence, and that is maybe a difference from when I was playing. I always went into tournaments fancying myself and the team to do well but I could always see the doubt in certain others.

It only takes two or three players to be uncertain and it will spread throughout a team. I wouldn't start with Marcus Rashford because it's clear that, in this moment, he isn't playing with the most confidence – whereas other lads are full of belief. I'd keep Rashford in reserve, ready to make an impact after coming on.

Because four third-placed teams qualify, it feels like there is less pressure on England than going into previous opening games, but a win would set the whole country off, get the fans going and almost put

## FA MAKE FINAL PLEA TO FANS TO RESPECT TAKING THE KNEE

After Gareth Southgate's powerful address to the nation on Tuesday, urging unity, the FA has made a final plea for fans to respect England's players taking a knee when they begin their Euro 2020 campaign, against Croatia at Wembley today.

Here is the statement: "Major tournaments don't come around often and when they do, it's an opportunity to unite friends, families and the country. This collective support is what spurs our team on during challenging moments and it gives them the best chance of succeeding.

"As the team has reiterated many times, they will collectively take the knee ahead of their fixtures during the tournament.

"They are doing this as a mechanism of peacefully protesting against discrimination, injustice and

inequality. This is personally important to the players and the values the team collectively represents.

"This gesture of unity and fighting against inequality can be traced back as far as the 18th century. It is not new, and English football has made it very clear that it does not view this as being aligned to a political organisation or ideology. There can be no doubt as to why the players are taking the knee and what it represents in a footballing context.

"We encourage those that oppose this action to reflect on the message you are sending to the players you are supporting.

"Please respect their wishes and remember that we should all be united in the fight to tackle discrimination. Together. They will do their best for you. Please do your best for them."

Southgate's side in the second round already. If they lose, all of a sudden that second game, against Scotland, becomes a horrible match to play in.

The players who have never been in tournaments before will discover that there is nothing like them. The biggest difference is probably the build-up to games. Everyone on Sky Sports, ITV, the BBC and talkSPORT speaking about them, journalists and ex-players like me offering their opinions. I'd be delighted if none of the squad is reading this column. I hope they have been able to switch off from it all and chill out.

Before my first tournament game – against France at Euro 2004 – I made the mistake of engaging with all the coverage and read an interview with the France player Lilian Thuram, where he talked about me being this 18-year-old kid who wasn't ready.

That was in my head when I steamed into a challenge with him and caught him with an elbow. I got away with it but nowadays I would have been done by VAR and got a straight red card.

I am going to be at Wembley today to enjoy something I have always wanted to experience: watching England as a fan. It will be my first time at a game as just an ordinary England supporter. I'm taking my kids. They'll be in England shirts and I wanted to get a new England tracksuit to wear, but my wife has vetoed it. Though you never know, I may still try and get away with one.

We are looking forward to it so much and I hope Southgate's players are too, and go in full of positivity. They have talent and they're playing for England, in a tournament, at Wembley. What could be better?

## TODAY'S LIKELY LINE-UPS



## THREE KEY MATCH-UPS

### Ben Chilwell v Ivan Perisic

Chilwell will have his work cut out against the veteran Perisic, who caused England all sorts of problems in Croatia's 2-1 World Cup semi-final win in 2018. Perisic has been involved in 11 goals at major tournaments for Croatia. Perisic will also swap wings with Rebec to renew his duel with Kyle Walker.

### Mason Mount v Luka Modric

The 35-year-old Modric will be in the middle of a strong Croatian midfield three, but will be the main creator. The two met in the Champions League semi-finals when Chelsea beat Real Madrid, after which Modric asked for Mount's shirt in a changing-of-the-guard moment.

### Harry Kane v Duje Caleta-Car

England's captain was on the periphery of the game when these countries met in the World Cup semi-final in Moscow. This time, he is likely to come up against Caleta-Car. The Marseilles defender, 24, is strong, good on the ball and in the air.

England's midfield can still bully him and make him less effective today. Not by resorting to fouls, but with their energy.

Without a top-class playmaker, they can be a bit like Liverpool's midfield at its best: efficient and not enjoyable to play against. Lesser teams will just keep giving the ball back to you, but the best teams can usually deal with that intensity. I may be biased, but I genuinely think Scotland will give England a tougher game on Friday than Croatia will today and surprise a lot of people, perhaps including themselves. Steve Clarke sets out his team so they're hard to beat, which is a good place to start.

Where Scotland are vulnerable is they do not have somebody who can score goals from nothing. Every

goal is hard-earned for them. Croatia and the Czech Republic must feel a bit sorry for themselves because they are playing two teams away from home in Scotland and England. Yes, it's diluted somewhat because of the number of supporters who will be in Wembley and Hampden Park – a quarter of capacity – but they will still feel hard done by to be facing two host nations in the same group.

England should not have any fears going into today's game. They will have too much in most areas for Croatia and I expect them to win by a couple of goals. Dejan Lovren is no longer at Liverpool for a reason. Mateo Kovacic is a squad player at Chelsea and was not playing towards the end of the season when they were going for trophies, so the

supporting cast to Modric is not as strong as it was three years ago. There will be tougher tests ahead for England.

You are only as strong as the weakest part of your team. Southgate will want a Euros where Jordan Pickford, his goalkeeper, does not make the headlines until July 11. History suggests he is capable of making mistakes in big games, such as the rash challenge that injured Virgil van Dijk or the goal he previously conceded at Anfield when he failed to turn a routine ball over the crossbar and left Divock Origi with a tap-in. If Pickford makes a mistake in the group games, will Southgate stick with him for the knockouts?

England's manager must also be praying that nothing happens to

Harry Kane and that the centre of his defence does its job, whatever system he goes with and whether or not Harry Maguire is fit to play. You're going into the unknown with Tyrone Mings and Ben White at this level. Maguire and John Stones are used to it – they play at big clubs.

Stones has everything to be an absolute star as a centre back except, perhaps, that concentration at a vital time. It may seem like a small thing to get right, but if you make a mistake as a centre back it generally leads to a shot at goal.

Nevertheless, I expect England to win today and make it out of the group without too much trouble. Yet their lack of a playmaker like Scholes could still come back to bite them when they meet the big boys later in the tournament.

## BIG MATCH FACTFILE

### Head-to-head – Played 10



### Previous Euros meeting

Croatia 2-4 England – Lisbon, 2004 Win

### England in Euros openers – Played 9



# José Mourinho

**Southgate should ditch Pickford, play Mings in a back four and opt for a combative midfield if England are to shake off history and make a winning start against Croatia**



**E**ngland have never won their opening game in the Euros but I am expecting them to beat Croatia today. Of course it is not an easy match, but if they can counter Croatia's strength in midfield then I believe England can break that negative history.

Garth Southgate has so much choice going forward but it's with midfield combativity in mind that I would pick this 4-2-3-1 team to start for England. My regret is not including Jude Bellingham, but I think he can still go on to be a big player in this tournament.

## GOALKEEPER

My choice in goal is Dean Henderson. It's not that I'm not a fan of Jordan Pickford – but I am a fan of Henderson, because I know his quality. I met him as a kid at Manchester United. He trained with me, and was in the squad that won the League Cup.

It's true that when he asked if he could go on loan to Shrewsbury Town he told me, "The next time you see me I'll come back as [the United] No 1." As coaches we were looking at each other thinking, "This kid is crazy, he hasn't played a game for us and thinks he can go to Shrewsbury and come back as the main man." But it shows his positive attitude.

United made a great pathway for him through loans – Shrewsbury, then to Sheffield United in the Sky Bet Championship, and letting him

stay there for the Premier League – and his development has been amazing. He's a very good goalkeeper. You can say he didn't play 50 per cent of United's matches this season but Pickford had injuries and problems at Everton too.

## DEFENCE

I am going with a back four of Kyle Walker, John Stones, Tyrone Mings and Ben Chilwell. I don't think you need to go three at the back against Croatia. Maybe if you are playing

Germany, who have gone with a back three after a bad time in qualifying, or against France and Kylian Mbappé, who can kill you from a certain position, so you need more cover.

Southgate and his assistant, Steve Holland, who impressed me during my second spell at Chelsea, have created the option to do either a back three or four, but four is all you need for this game. At right back, I love Reece James, but I choose Walker for his experience. It can be useful that he has a touch of the centre back about him too.

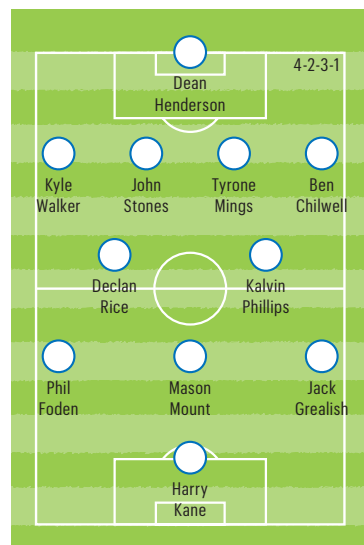
If Harry Maguire is out, I choose Mings, because the team need a voice, and leadership. He is like a captain at Aston Villa, very vocal, aggressive in his communication. I think Stones needs that without Maguire alongside him. Stones needs Rúben Dias at Manchester City, so he needs Maguire, he needs Mings.

At left back Luke Shaw has had a good season for United but for this game I prefer Chilwell. He is stable, makes few mistakes, and is good going forward. He comes from a back five at Chelsea but he's intelligent and can adapt. He's good in the air, which is important at defensive set pieces.

## MIDFIELD

I am sure some people will be saying you can play Mason Mount as one of the midfielders, plus Bellingham, Jack Grealish, Phil Foden. I would say:

### HOW MOURINHO WOULD HAVE ENGLAND LINE UP TODAY



COMPLETELY FREE

£5

BET BUILDER

ENGLAND V CROATIA

✓ MODRIC ANYTIME ASSIST

✓ WALKER TO BE BOOKED

✓ ENGLAND TO WIN

✗ 10.5+ CORNERS

PADDYPOWER

Please Gamble Responsibly

BeGambleAware.org <sup>®</sup> 18+

Helpline: 0808 8020 133

Offer applies to new and existing customers. Max 1 free £5 bet per customer. Applies to all pre match Bet Builder bets on England v Croatia only. Min 2+ legs. Must have previously deposited with a debit card, Apple Pay or Paysafe to avail of the offer. Excludes shop bets. T&Cs apply.

**Before we compare Foden to David Silva, remember that Silva is due a statue at City – give Foden time**

## ATTACK

I would pick Mount behind Kane, and then Foden right and Grealish left. That means a right winger who is left-footed and vice versa, which I like. Rashford is a better player on the left. On the right, he doesn't find space the way he can on the left, which is his more natural position, where he can cut in. He is very linear, 10 per cent of the player he can be on the left – but the left is the best position for Grealish, and I feel he has to play.

Foden? Before we compare him to David Silva, we have to remember that Silva is due a statue at City. We need to give Foden time, but he is developing very similar qualities.

## TACTICS

This is a team that can play but can also stop Croatia playing because if you allow Marcelo Brozovic, Mateo Kovacic and Modric to have the ball, they can hide it from you. I am not saying they will kill you, because Croatia don't have top attackers, but they can certainly disturb you if you let them dominate. You need a strong midfield to compete.

England shouldn't be afraid to push up high. Croatia aren't a counterattacking threat. Ante Rebic has pace and maybe later they could bring on Andrej Kramaric, but Stones is very fast, Walker too. Mings is not very fast but reads the game well. England shouldn't be afraid to push up the lines and take control.

Croatia are not what they were at the 2018 World Cup. They lost Ivan Rakitic, they lost Mario Mandzukic. They aren't very strong in defence. Dejan Lovren, 31, and Domagoj Vida, 32 – these aren't young guys any more. Sime Vrsaljko didn't play much for Atletico Madrid this season.

They have spirit, but England have more options. Rashford and Sterling can come on to attack space, and to kill opponents who are tired or on yellow cards. Or you can introduce Sancho, to break defensive walls if you need, or Bellingham, who is much more offensive than Phillips and has that old profile of the box-to-box midfielder.

## MAGUIRE AND HENDERSON

I am behind Southgate in the discussion about taking Maguire and Jordan Henderson, even with injury. I would do exactly the same thing.

Some players are different – you have to gamble on them, especially if you have a squad of 26. You have the chance to bring a couple of players to see what happens and I understand it totally with Maguire and Henderson.

It depends on the player. Italy put Marco Verratti in the squad even though he is recovering from injury, because he's Verratti. He's another player worth the gamble. Henderson and Maguire are leaders and good influences even if they don't play – and when they are ready, they can go directly into the team.

# David Walsh

**How can we not empathise with black players who are being racially abused by a small number of their own fans?**



On the Tuesday of Masters week at Augusta National in April, Cameron Champ stood outside the clubhouse and began shooting the breeze about changes to Georgia's voting laws that would make it more difficult for black people to vote. He was dead against, and though it shouldn't have, it did feel extraordinary to hear such candour from a pro golfer on a topic related to politics and equality.

Champ is black. Since Lee Elder became the first black player to tee it up at the 1975 Masters, Champ is the fourth to follow in his footsteps. If this is progress, the pace is glacial. The tournament committee this year added Elder to the select group of "official starters" but the game needs more than gestures, however well intentioned.

Gareth Southgate, though, would enjoy an evening in Champ's company, because here is a 25-year-old unprepared "to stick to the football". Having listened to any number of pro golfers say precisely what you'd expect them to say, Champ was a breath of challenging but fresh air. He recalled a moment from the BMW Championship at Olympia Fields outside Chicago last year where he'd worn one white golf shoe, the other black.

On the white, he'd written the names Breonna Taylor and Jacob Blake. Four months before Taylor had been shot dead by police in Kentucky. In the same week as the BMW Championship, Blake was hit by four of seven shots aimed at his back in Wisconsin. Blake survived, though he's now confined to a wheelchair.

At the practice range, Champ's shoes were noticed. "I got asked by three different people, who are they? To me, that proves the point of why I'm doing it." He tried to tell us that as much as he loves playing golf for a living, he will not allow himself to be defined by his profession. "You know, it's my job, it's what I love to do, but there's a lot more to all of us on tour."

Of course there will be those who would prefer Champ to stick to golf, to refrain from stitching the word "equality" onto the side of his cap. It depends upon your perspective. Michael Jordan and LeBron James have been the two greatest basketball players in my lifetime and though Jordan was the one I most enjoyed watching, James understood how to use his status to bring about better understanding and change. He's never been prepared to stick to basketball.

How can we look the other way when we know that England's black footballers are being racially abused by a small number of their own team's fans after a game has been lost? This, remember, is a problem that shows no sign of going away, and if the England players decide as a group that going down



**Taking a knee has proved divisive**

on one knee is an appropriate protest against the racism to which they're being subjected, how can we not empathise?

I admire Southgate for having the bravery to support his players in their decision to take a knee before every game in this tournament. It was good too that Steve Clarke and Scotland came to the decision that they did, for while one respects their preference for "standing" against racism, they have reversed that for the game against England.

There was much to admire in how the captain, Andrew Robertson, explained his team's decision: "Taking the knee in this tournament matters as a symbol of solidarity. The Scotland team stands against racism but we will kneel against ignorance and in solidarity on June 18th."

Last week I listened to the LBC presenter James O'Brien speak with Tom, an England fan. Let me give you a sense of how the debate went.

## WHY LAURENCE WANTS ENGLAND TO LOSE



Fresh from his dismal showing in the London mayoral elections, Laurence Fox, the *Lewis* actor, decided to embarrass himself some more by reacting to to England's commitment to taking a knee with the following tweet: "I'm embarrassed to be British. I hope any team but ours wins in any future sporting endeavour. Tell me a single thing to moderate my thinking? Millionaire woke babies protesting inequality on two hundred grand a week. We deserve everything that is coming. Weak men. Weak." Nice.

"Tom is in Hampstead. Tom what would you like to say?"

"Good morning. I was at the Riverside yesterday and I booed the knee."

"Why do you think the players are doing it?"

"I know the reasons they said they're doing it."

"So you booed that, then?"

"My undertone is that when I hear the words Black Lives Matter, I think of burning buildings in America, attacking the police and violent protest."

"Have you tried not thinking of that? Have you tried thinking of what the words actually mean?"

"One of my aunts was killed during a Black Lives Matter protest last year."

"And that's appalling, but have you tried thinking of what the words actually mean?"

"I understand what they mean and I agree."

"What do they mean?"

"They're saying black lives also matter."

"So why do you boo?"

"Because of what I've just said when I think of those words."

"If I walk into a room and you're kneeling, I don't get to tell you why you're kneeling or what you're showing support for, I get only to ask you, and we've asked the footballers why they're doing it and they've told us, Tom."

"Which I respect."

"Well you don't. The polar opposite of respecting it, mate, is booing it. . . . You completely and categorically disrespect it."

"I think if you made a bold statement, rather than just taking the knee every week, I would respect it more."

"What impact do you think it has on the players when they get booed by their own fans?"

"Honestly I think that part is bad and I'm one of the people that do it. The biggest story now is the divide between the [England] fans and the players."

"What do you think the word support means?"

"Getting behind, encouraging."

"So you're there to make them play worse?"

"No, I've spent the best part of £50,000 or £60,000 over the last ten years following England."

"By booing the players, do you think it's likely to make them play better or worse?"

"I think it's a very touchy subject. . . . It's not about the football that I'm booing them."

"Do you think it will make them play better or worse?"

"I guess worse."

"Are you going to boo them at the Croatia game?"

"Absolutely."

For reasons not entirely related to football, I hope England have a terrific tournament.



"Calm down." Southgate is the one who has to choose the team with the responsibility on his shoulders and I think a little stability is needed, which is why I would pick Calvin Phillips alongside Declan Rice. Phillips brings balance, and that's needed for this game.

It means leaving out one of my favourite players in Bellingham, even though I love everything about him. It's very dangerous when you compare a young player with the top of the tops but he has something of Frank Lampard about him.

If Lampard shoots ten times, he scores nine goals. He always hit the target. But this kid is also capable of scoring goals, he defends with the aggression of a midfielder player and also has the potential and creativity to be offensive. I like him. The way he plays, I can't believe he is only 17.

I would play him every match except for this one, because Rice and Phillips give more stability and from a strong base you can play the way you want, with Harry Kane plus three of Sancho, Foden, Mount, Grealish, Marcus Rashford, Raheem Sterling. It's a great choice to have.

# CZECH MATES



Coufal, left, and Soucek have made a big impact at West Ham and are sure to be key players for the Czech Republic at the Euros

Scotland and England will be tested by the energy of a side containing Vladimir Coufal and Tomas Soucek

DAVID MOYES



At Euro 96, the Czech Republic were based in Preston. I was player-coach at Preston North End and took the opportunity to observe them in training. The pitches they used were at a local rugby club called Grasshoppers, and they stayed at the Marriott hotel on the edge of town.

I remember standing behind a goal watching guys such as Patrik Berger and Karel Poborsky practise, thinking that while clearly there was talent in their squad, they would not stand much chance in the tournament. Yet they got out of their group, beating Italy at Anfield – I was there in the stands – and then went all the way to the final, losing to Germany at

## MOYES SIGNS NEW THREE-YEAR DEAL

The West Ham United manager David Moyes, 58, has been rewarded with a new three-year contract after securing Europa League qualification this season courtesy of a sixth-place finish in the Premier League. "This is where I want to be and I'm happy," Moyes told the club's website.

He initially managed West Ham between November 2017 and May 2018, but returned for a second spell in December 2019.

**They gave me a lesson: that it's not always the team with the most stars that does well, but the one which comes together best as a unit**

Wembley only after a golden goal. That was a lesson in tournament football. It is not always the team with the most stars that does well, but the one which comes together best.

Czech football is having a resurgence, and Scotland and England will find themselves tested by the energy and commitment of opponents epitomised by two of my players at West Ham United: Vladimir Coufal and Tomas Soucek.

Vladimir, 28, and Tomas, 26, came to us from Slavia Prague, who beat Rangers and Leicester City on their way to the Europa League quarter-finals, and who have five players in Jaroslav Silhavy's squad. The one downside of all this success, for the Czechs, is that they no longer have the surprise factor. Scotland and England will be well aware of their capabilities.

Tomas and Vladimir are as hard-working and honest as you will ever meet. Their attitude is incredible. Tomas played almost every minute of every Premier League game and, after his arrival, Vladimir sat out only one league match. Both are super athletes and tough, resilient boys who just want to play. As a manager they are a pleasure because they are so low maintenance with such high standards.

In fact, their appetite for work is so great that we found it really hard to keep them away from the training ground. At times I nearly had to lock the gates to keep them out. They were never pleased when I gave the squad a day off and the morning after one particularly hard evening game, I remember Tomas coming in, desperate to get out on the pitches and run.

We talk about taking care of injured players, but they are the other side of the coin – two guys who will play a match and get up the next day wanting to get to training and push their bodies to the limit all over again.

Both, I believe, are part of the reason there has been a change in mentality around the club. Their enthusiasm is infectious.

Other players have seen the rewards that working so hard can bring, and thought: "Why not us?" Their hunger is something that, quite often nowadays, you do not see from British players who have been overpaid in their younger years. In Tomas and Vladimir, I see boys who have fought hard and endured struggles to get themselves to the Premier League

and are determined to make every second count.

When I signed Tomas, shortly after returning to West Ham in the middle of the 2019-20 season, I was looking to add a midfielder player and wanted one with running power and the ability to score. Doesn't everyone? Recruiting those types, especially on a budget, is hard but I could see from his data in the Champions League that Tomas covered big distances and could make an impact playing at a high level – he had scored for Slavia versus Borussia Dortmund and Inter Milan.

I spoke to him on the phone and liked how he came across, his hunger, his keenness. And, right from the start, it was obvious that we had brought in not just a good footballer but a really good person. We kept asking him who else was worth taking from the Czech league and he told us Slavia had this really good right back – Vladimir. We were about to lose Pablo Zabaleta, and Ryan Fredericks had suffered a few injuries, so we were running short in the position and contacts in the Czech Republic gave us some great feedback on Vladimir.

Sometimes in football you need to be lucky. With recruitment, you can do all your research and due diligence but there is still an element where fortune is required and, just like Tomas, Vladimir turned out to be the right player at the right time. He is an old-fashioned full back, a steady Eddie, who is committed, good at defending, gets forward to cross and gives you consistency and availability. He got seven assists for us in the Premier League this season. Tomas got ten goals. A midfielder who scores that volume for you is so important.

Something else they brought is ambition. These are two boys who are used to Champions League football and wanted to get back to that level. At no point in the season did they not expect West Ham to be challenging for a Champions League spot and, every game, they expected to win.

Tomas was a neighbour of mine when he first arrived in London, staying in the same apartments, with his girlfriend and daughter. Then Vladimir was in the apartments, with his wife and children. Both are family-orientated lads, settled quickly and have been popular at the training ground.

The staff and I have a laugh with them. When their old club was on such a good run in Europe, I kept suggesting to them that maybe I had signed the wrong Slavia players, though when Slavia beat Rangers they gave me plenty back.

Originally, the Czechs were going to be based in Edinburgh for the Euros and I had planned to visit them but they switched their camp to Prague so I will only see Tomas and Vladimir on the pitch. They are such brilliant lads that I would love them to have big tournaments. Though I have warned them that if they even think about beating Scotland, they are in trouble.

• David Moyes has requested his fee for this column be donated to Muscular Dystrophy UK, a charity supporting the 70,000 people living with muscle-wasting conditions in the UK.



ON TV

Scotland v Czech Republic  
Tomorrow 2pm, BBC 1

# Rod Liddle

Joy of Euros is in sides who really fancy themselves coming a cropper



The title “Euro 2021” would have had a weird kind of ring to it, as if football were a sport nobody much cared about, like rugby, and thus had to hold its tournaments in an odd-numbered year.

This feeling was confirmed by the necessarily sparse attendance for Friday’s opening game in Rome – as if we were watching, say, Doncaster Belles v Everton Ladies, rather than Italy v Turkey.

In fairness, the away supporters kicked up a hell of a racket until they realised that their team were hopeless, when they shut up for a bit. Italy were fine, although perhaps not deserving of all the accolades poured upon them, and probably not deserving of my tip for the championship. I always tip Italy and, sure enough, they are always evicted earlyish before returning home to be pelted with gelato, stale gnocchi and dismembered parts of Vespa motorcycles by the histrionically disappointed locals.

Still, the weirdness notwithstanding, I have been looking forward to this tournament for a year and nothing will stop me from enjoying it, not even Gareth Southgate’s knee-bending vanity project. There is much to look forward to, not least the asinine ejaculations from the array of

expert pundits. Why did Turkey lose on Friday? The pundits opined that it was because they “didn’t turn up” – and yet I saw them, with my own eyes.

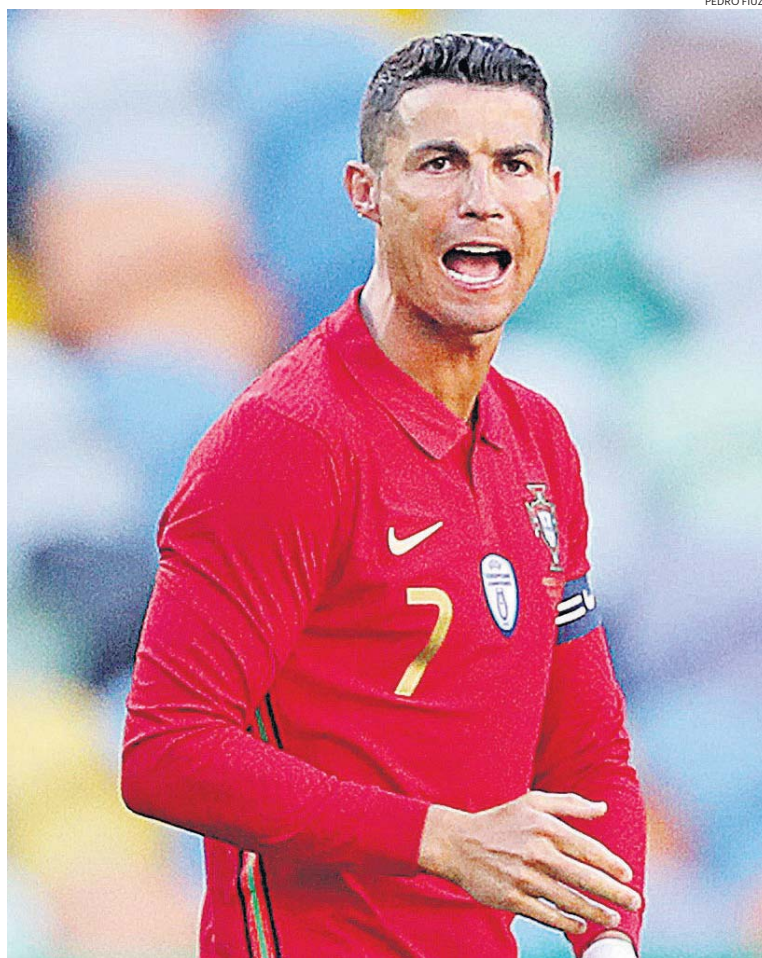
Asked for one piece of advice to the Welsh team before their game yesterday against Switzerland in the famous European sporting capital of Baku, Dean Saunders said: “They’ve got to turn up.” Well, it would be a start.

Was Dean alluding to the ramshackle public transport in Azerbaijan, or the clogged roads? England, we were told, would also need to “turn up” for today’s fixture against Croatia (although if it’s OK with you, I’d prefer it if Tyrone Mings didn’t, given that he’ll probably last about 15 minutes before being sent off for throttling a Croat having been caught out of position at a corner).

Regarding England, I have long been resigned to the players being on their knees both before the match and indeed after 90 minutes have elapsed. I would be deliriously happy if Southgate could prove me wrong – and he could start by fielding an XI that includes both Jack Grealish and Phil Foden. And not Jordan Henderson.

At least let us exit with verve and talent on display.

I notice, too, that the commentators are terribly respectful these days and don’t make slighting



Ronaldo and defending champions Portugal are never short of confidence

references to how odd foreigners are. They do not even point out when foreign players have names that, in English, are either a direct contradiction of their playing abilities, such as Immobile (Italy), or a slight exaggeration of them, such as Okay (Turkey).

Schadenfreude is one of the most compelling reasons for watching the other teams compete, the pleasure of seeing a national side who really rate themselves, come a cropper. For most British people this usually

The pundits opined that Turkey ‘didn’t turn up’ – and yet I saw them, with my own eyes

means laughing at any misfortune that might befall the Germans, but not for me.

My thrill will come in watching the likes of Portugal and France flouncing off after three games, their countries in uproar, Ronaldo looking thoroughly piqued and hard done by, everyone suddenly deciding that Kylian Mbappé isn’t the greatest young player on earth but just a kind of gilded Steve Guppy.

It probably won’t happen, of course, but one can always hope – and a bookies’ and pundits’ favourite usually crashes out at the group stage.

My big fear is that this time, it will be the turn of England. Everybody seems to think we will breeze through via our last game against the Czech Republic, forgetting what happened when we last played them. They are no mugs.

Strangely, I would like Scotland to do well. On paper they have an awful squad, surely one of the two or three weakest in the tournament. But they will be buoyed by playing two games at Hampden and one at Wembley, where they will assuredly “turn up”. They have a certain momentum with them, if you can call beating Luxembourg 1-0 momentum. Like Wales, it is a miracle they got through, a triumph of mind over matter – I hope it stays with them.

I also hope that the refereeing will be of the standard laid down by the Dutchman, Danny Makkelie, in the first match.

I am so bored with penalties being given when a defender’s hand accidentally touches the ball. Makkelie, to his credit, was having none of it, no matter how loud the Italians moaned, and he even looked affronted when one penalty appeal was referred to VAR.

So bring it all on. If England can’t win, I would like to see the title go to Hungary, to cheer up that nice Mr Orbán. But we can’t always get what we want.

# Alyson Rudd

England wilt, Wales are temporary and Japan aren’t in Europe – my family’s flag tradition



We stood on the pavement on the opposite side of the street and sighed in aesthetic appreciation of what we had achieved – but only for a few seconds because my elder son dashed back indoors like a firefighter upon hearing the mewling of a kitten.

The England flag was wilting and required a tightening. This always happens. It is always England’s flag that droops or becomes ruffled. Read into that what you will.

Thursday was Flag Day. The day we choose which 5ft x 3ft flags fly to signify the start of a major football tournament. The day we discover problems.

Elder son explained to his flat-mates that he had to make the trip home as it was as important to his

mother as Christmas.

“So, you put up bunting?” one of them had asked, puzzled.

This is not what we do. The flags are big and bold and each tells a story. There are rules – which determined without debate the fate of four of the eight flags. The remainder required the art of persuasion and compromise.

The holders always have a spot, so Portugal’s place was secured. Usually, the host nation is guaranteed representation and that was potentially tricky this year with 11 host cities but easily resolved as we always fly the cross of St George and the final will be held at Wembley. Debutants are always honoured and so it was with a high degree of glee that I put up the

slightly crazy but uplifting sunshine flag of North Macedonia.

I used to make my children watch obscure Finland matches so they could see the artistry and brilliance of Jari Litmanen, who won 137 caps across four decades. At last, I could fly the blue and white Finland flag. Then came a sense of duty. We should reflect the presence of Wales and Scotland, surely, as part of the British Isles? There was not a great deal of enthusiasm, but as one objection was that they were unlikely to progress far, I argued that we should put up their flags and take them down as they are knocked out. That meant six of the eight starting places were by now determined, which left me standing forlornly in the middle of the living room holding a brand new, fresh-out-of-the-wrapping Hungary flag.

“Why did I buy this?” I asked. This is Hungary’s fourth appearance at the Euros. They are not debutants, and we are all too young to care about mighty Magyar Ferenc Puskas. We scratched our heads.

“Maybe you bought it because they are one of the hosts,” elder son said, “so it definitely deserves a place. And it’s brand new.” There was the added bonus that



The Rudd household decked out with flags and ready for Euro 2020

the Hungary flag would confuse passers-by, bound to see the red, white and green stripes and assume they were looking at Italy. Hungary, then, made the cut.

That left elder son holding Ukraine, younger son holding Belgium and me holding Denmark with one space remaining.

“Ukraine is under threat from Russia and needs our support,” elder son said. “Plus we need the balance of their yellow-and-blue colour scheme.”

“My bedroom is at the front of the house, and I want to hear people confusing Belgium with Germany,” younger son said. “It will be funny.”

“I’ve tipped, in order to be

contrary, Denmark to win the Euros,” I said, “and I had such a lovely time partying with the Danes when they won against the odds in 1992.”

There was a brief impasse, resolved when it was determined that if I was so sure Denmark would do well, then their flag could, in a few weeks, replace that of Hungary. Belgium, it was determined, could also wait its turn given how sure younger son was that neither Gareth Bale nor Andy Robertson would progress from the group stage. Which left Ukraine, with its dash of politics as well as its sky blue and yellow stripes to offset the overall predominance of green and red, to win through.

Not everyone in my corner of southwest London is as excited about the tournament. The very first passing neighbour assumed the flag of North Macedonia was that of Japan.

“But you know Japan isn’t in Europe,” I said.

“Oh, I thought the World Cup was on,” she said nonchalantly.

As I type these words a man, laden with shopping, has stopped to take a photograph of my house. This is my interlude as tourist attraction, educationalist and, quite possibly, attention seeker.








EURO  
2020.  
WE'RE  
ALL  
OVER  
IT.

OFFICIAL RADIO PARTNER

# LIONS' FIRST ROAR. COVERED.

ENGLAND v CROATIA **talkSPORT**  KO 14:00  
PLUS, AUSTRIA v NORTH MACEDONIA **talkSPORT**  KO 17:00  
NETHERLANDS v UKRAINE **talkSPORT**  KO 20:00



EVERY GAME. EVERY GOAL. DAB · ONLINE · SMART SPEAKER · APP · 1089/1053 AM. SCAN THE QR CODE TO DOWNLOAD THE APP

# ENGLAND DRIVING RO

**Captain's form suffers as side shorn of the most redoubtable players succumb meekly to Kiwis**

**SIMON WILDE**



Joe Root has experienced some tough days in his four years as England captain but few as depressing as this. Normally the most fluent of players, he was reduced to near strokelessness as he attempted to shore up a miserable batting collapse, edging his way to 11 from 60 balls before aiming a cut at an inviting short ball from left-arm spinner Ajaz Patel and feathering a catch to the wicketkeeper.

He would normally put such a ball away for four every time but by this point his mind must have been scrambled by the turbulence of the previous 6½ hours. Root's departure left England further in the mire at 76 for seven, still nine runs behind, and with every prospect of defeat inside three days.

His slowest score of ten or more in

105 Tests behind him, and after he had finally lifted his shoulders and dragged himself off the pitch, Root must have thought back to the morning drinks break when he implored his players to up their game. The bowlers had responded but his youthful batting line-up had not. They had proved juvenile in every sense. He must have reflected, too, on the wisdom of a policy that had determined to give England's IPL players this series off. Those who are fit are now playing for their counties. What a brilliant idea.

Without Ben Stokes, Jos Buttler and Chris Woakes, Root has been stripped of his best counsel and his most selfless cricketers, and paid the price. In their absence, and under intense pressure from a superbly organised New Zealand side, discipline simply collapsed. New Zealand are heading for only their third Test series win in England – their first since 1999.

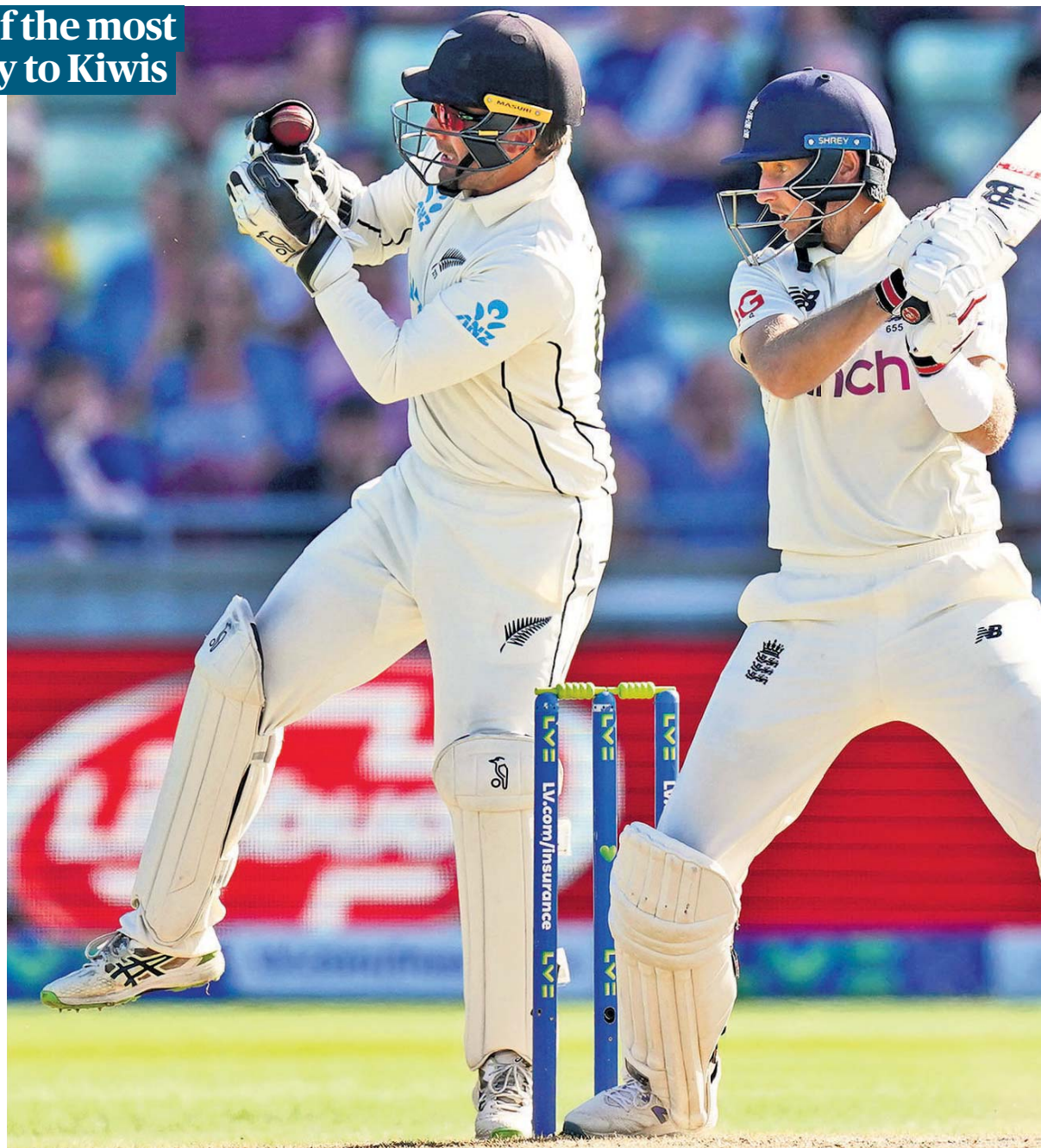
The three-day humiliation was averted thanks to the brave resistance of Mark Wood and Olly Stone, two of Root's stoutest characters, who added 44 – Wood hoisting his side into the lead by hitting Patel over midwicket for six – before Wood fell to the tireless Neil Wagner for 29, the top score of the innings. With Stuart Broad quickly following, England reached the close ahead by 37 with one wicket left, Stone unbeaten from 53 balls.

England had started batting again at 3.15pm and immediately they were in trouble as Rory Burns, their most dependable batsman of the series, fell for a second-ball duck, edging a ball he might have left from Matt Henry low to second slip where Tom Latham, New Zealand's stand-in captain, took a fine catch to his right.

Dom Sibley then fended a ball timidly to Daryl Mitchell at third slip, again off the bowling of Henry. Zak Crawley and Root took England through to the tea interval on 18 for two but the carnage soon continued after the restart as New Zealand's ability to bypass what was still a pretty flat pitch and make the ball move through the air – to an extent not matched by England – made life a constant headache.

Crawley, who had walked to the wicket with a series of anaemic-looking scores behind him, got away some sweet shots for precious runs only to be beaten on the inside edge by a nip-backer to give Henry a third wicket in 5.1 overs.

That Root agreed to review a decision that was incontrovertible showed the state of England's fractured thinking and five overs later he was party to equally desperate thinking when Ollie Pope was adjudged leg-before to Wagner. Like Crawley, Pope played some nice looking shots but like Crawley he is searching for a substantial score and this has manifested itself in manic



## SCOREBOARD

**England: First Innings 303** (D W Lawrence 81 not out, R J Burns 81; T Boulton 4-85).

**England Second Innings 122-9**

R J Burns c Latham b Henry	0
D P Sibley c Mitchell b Henry	8
Z P Crawley lbw b Henry	17
J E Root c Blundell b Patel	11
O J D Pope lbw b Wagner	23
D W D Lawrence c Blundell b Wagner	20
J R D Bracey b Patel	8
O P D Stone not out	15
M A D Wood c Blundell b Wagner	29
S C J Broad b Boulton	1
J M J Anderson not out	0
<b>Extras (b5 lb4 nb1)</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Total (9 wkts, 41 overs)</b>	<b>122</b>
<b>Fall</b> 1-0, 2-17, 3-30, 4-58, 5-58, 6-71, 7-76, 8-120, 9-121	
<b>Bowling</b> Henry 12-2-36-3; Boulton 10-2-34-1; Wagner 10-1-25-2; Patel 9-4-25-2	

**New Zealand: First Innings 388** (overnight 229-3)

L R P Taylor c Bracey b Stone	80
H M P Nicholls c Bracey b Wood	21
T A P Blundell c Root b Broad	34
D J P Mitchell c Crawley b Stone	6
N J P Wagner b Anderson	0
M J P Henry lbw b Wood	12
A Y P Patel lbw b Broad	20
T A P Boulton not out	12
<b>Extras (b13 lb21 nb1)</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Total (119.1 overs)</b>	<b>388</b>
<b>Fall</b> 1-15, 2-137, 3-229, 4-292, 5-312, 6-335, 7-336, 8-353, 9-361	
<b>Bowling</b> J Anderson 29-9-68-1; S Broad 23-1-8-48-4; M Wood 25-3-85-2; O Stone 24-5-92-2; J Root 15-3-45-0; D Lawrence 3-0-16-1	
<b>Umpires</b> R Illingworth and R Kettleborough	

behaviour. Calm down, slow down, and he might make the sort of score he is looking for.

Wagner followed up with a fine delivery to take Dan Lawrence's outside edge. Lawrence had shown promise in the first innings but the pressure was now altogether different. James Bracey walked out to the middle, trailed by two ducks and heartfelt cheers from a Saturday

crowd who recognised an underdog in need of support. He pushed his third ball wide of mid-on for a single, then struck a boundary, before going too far across to sweep Patel and dragging onto his leg stump.

Led by Broad with four for 48, England had fought back well to keep the deficit below 100. The only successes of the morning were Stone removing Ross Taylor for 80 and

Wood having Henry Nicholls caught down the leg side with the next delivery after hitting him on the head.

After lunch, England came out with renewed purpose. Stone had Mitchell smartly caught at mid-wicket by Crawley pulling and James Anderson accounted for Wagner. Wood took over from Stone and trapped Henry stone-dead leg-before and Broad then mopped up the last two wickets.

Further evidence of England's rudderlessness came with further mishaps in the field. Taylor was dropped on 68 by substitute fielder Sam Billings and Tom Blundell should have been dismissed for a third-ball duck but Bracey dived too far to his right.

Bracey will give way to Buttler when England next take the field in a Test but several of the top-order batsmen are earmarked to face India and Australia. At the moment, those challenges look utterly beyond them – and Root must surely know that.

## SILVERWOOD: KIWIS TAUGHT US A LESSON

Chris Silverwood, England's head coach and now head selector, admitted last night his side were given "a lesson" by New Zealand.

"It was not good enough. We need to improve." Silverwood said after his side were reduced to 122 for nine and on the brink of defeat

in the second Test. "We need to work on our batting, there's no point running away from it. We need to get in the nets and figure it out. It's a little bit of technique and mental. They've got to work with the coaches to find something that works with their technique."



# NOT TO DISTRACTION

KIRSTY WIGGLESWORTH

## NEW INNINGS, SAME OLD STORY

Rory Burns falls to Matt Henry's second ball, edging a rash attempted drive to second slip. Henry strikes again in the fourth over, removing Dom Sibley, caught at third slip



0-1



58-4

After Henry traps Crawley leg-before, Ollie Pope is outsmarted by Neil Wagner, who gets the ball to swing back in, beating the bat and hitting Pope on the knee roll. Pope is given out, and on review it comes down to umpire's call



58-5

Dan Lawrence plays at a length ball outside off from Neil Wagner, which he edges to Tom Blundell. In the 17th over, England are five wickets down. James Bracey followed in the 22nd and Joe Root in the 26th, leaving England 76-7.

## WOAKES BACK IN T20 SQUAD FOR FIRST TIME IN SIX YEARS

Chris Woakes returns to England's T20 squad for the first time since 2015 after being named in the 16-man group to face Sri Lanka in a three-match series at the end of this month. David Willey, the Yorkshire all-rounder, and Liam Dawson, the Hampshire left-arm spinner, have also been recalled. Eoin Morgan captains the squad, with Jos Buttler and Sam Curran also included after being rested for the New Zealand Test matches.

England T20 squad to face Sri Lanka  
Eoin Morgan (Middlesex, capt), Moeen Ali (Worcestershire), Jonny Bairstow, Dawid Malan, Adil Rashid, David Willey (all Yorkshire), Sam Billings (Kent), Jos Buttler, Liam Livingstone (both Lancashire), Sam Curran, Tom Curran, Jason Roy (all Surrey), Liam Dawson (Hampshire), Chris Jordan (Sussex), Chris Woakes (Warwickshire), Mark Wood (Durham)

Vitality T20 series v Sri Lanka  
June 23 Cardiff (6.30pm)  
June 24 Cardiff (6.30pm)  
June 26 Ageas Bowl (2.30pm)

A leaden Root cuts into the hands of Blundell to leave England facing certain defeat in both match and series after an abject batting performance that exposed the technical deficiencies and the inexperience of a young batting line-up at Edgbaston

## Simon Hughes

Poor pitches are hampering England's batting. New Zealand have moved on from veggie gardens and dribblies



Auckland was recently voted the world's most liveable city in a survey by *The Economist's* Intelligent Unit (Zurich was the highest-ranked European city at No 7). With its excellent weather, spacious, leafy suburbs, interesting terrain (it is built on seven extinct volcanoes), and range of beautiful sandy coves, the City of Sails is certainly a magnificent place to spend an English winter, as I discovered on several extended stays there.

It was not a place to be a batsman, however. Many New Zealand club grounds had several playing areas, with their boundaries overlapping. Often the boundary line in a neighbouring game ran through the edge of the square in yours. So when you were batting, not only were you confronted by nine fielders and a wicketkeeper in your match, but the close proximity of several others (usually with their back to you) moving into their deep positions in the game next door. It was extremely off-putting.

What made it worse, however, was the standard of the pitches. They were almost universally terrible, the original "veggie gardens" (of which the Kiwis are famously proud).

They were soft and mottled and horrible to try to bat properly (or bowl quickly) on. The most successful bowlers trundled in and sent down 67mph doobers that nipped off the seam and popped up or scuttled, hitting everything but the middle of the bat. The 'keeper stood up to the stumps, there was a ring field and it was almost impossible to score except by occasionally having a big hack across the line, often with fatal results.

These bowlers were known locally as dribblies and every club and district team had one. They were descended in a line from Dayle Hadlee (Richard's brother), Warren Stott and the former captain Bev Congdon through his successor Jeremy Coney, Martin Sneddon, Gavin Larsen and Chris Harris. Honest and legitimate though these bowlers were, they held New Zealand cricket back. The country produced only two really world-class cricketers in that time – Martin Crowe and Richard Hadlee. It was all down to these cabbage patch pitches.

When their former off spinner, John Bracewell, was appointed New Zealand head coach in the early 2000s, he implored the nation to

improve its playing surfaces. And improve them they did.

Within a decade, New Zealand were producing classy batsmen capable of playing orthodox cricket and making double hundreds – as well as genuine pacemen and potent swing bowlers. And that is essentially the make-up of their side now. All their top five batsmen play in conventional style and average well over 40 in first-class cricket. They have a battery of lively fast bowlers. There is not a dribbly in sight. Firm, largely dry, beige-coloured pitches have transformed their game.

When you try to understand why the batting of the England Test team is so fragile and uncertain, look no further than the standard of our pitches. English county cricket has become like the New Zealand domestic game of the 1990s.

The marginalisation of the four-day game to spring and autumn, the need to get results to seek promotion (or avoid relegation) and the desire to play to your strengths does not

encourage the preparation of firm, dry surfaces. Mower-blade levels are set to high and pitches are verdant. Durham's new captain, Scott Borthwick, recalls barely being able to distinguish the pitch from the outfield at Trent Bridge for Durham's first four-day match of the season in April.

Nagging, 72mph seamers hold sway. Kent's Darren Stevens is the prime example. Since 2011, he has taken almost 500 first-class wickets at an average of under 20. Stevens, Tim Murtagh, Ryan Higgins and Josh Davey are England's Sneddon and Larsen. They are the new dribblies. Their skills are further enhanced by first-class matches regularly continuing under lights (ie in cloudy conditions) which makes batting even more of a lottery.

The result is a generation of county batsmen who average in the thirties. You can reel them off at random – Keaton Jennings, Sam Robson, Mark Stoneman, Adam Lyth, Ben Duckett, James Vince, Joe Denly, Dawid Malan, Tom Westley and more recently Dom Sibley, Zak Crawley and Dan Lawrence.

Not one of these players – all of whom have played Tests in the past few years – averages 40 in first-class cricket. The only batsmen that do in the present side, apart from Joe Root, who everyone knows is a class act, are Rory Burns and Ollie Pope. And where do they play most of their cricket? The Oval, renowned as the best batting pitch in the country.

It is not a prerequisite to have a stonking first-class batting average to be a success at Test level, as Marcus Trescothick and Michael Vaughan, in particular, proved. But they were the exception that proved the rule.

In this era when you are confronted by a barrage of highly skilled, adequately rested and well drilled opposition bowlers armed with more data than Professor Chris Whitty, you need to know your game and be very comfortable with it. And what you see with this England side is batsmen tinkering with already strange, idiosyncratic methods, triggering and bobbing and shuffling in and out of line like errant soldiers trying to get in rhythm, with consequently erratic results. If county playing surfaces don't improve, England's Test-match mediocrity will continue.

● Simon Hughes is editor of *The Cricketer* magazine

### THE YEAR OF THE DUCK

Rory Burns's and Dan Lawrence's ducks yesterday were the 26th and 27th for England in eight Tests this calendar year

Jonny Bairstow (7 innings)	3
Rory Burns (8)	3
Dan Lawrence (11)	3
Dom Sibley (14)	3
James Bracey (3)	2
James Anderson (4)	2
Jofra Archer (4)	2
Stuart Broad (4)	2
Zak Crawley (11)	2
Sam Curran (2)	1
Olly Stone (3)	1
Mark Wood (4)	1
Dom Bess (2)	1
Jack Leach (8)	1

# Alastair Cook

**Crawley's dismissal looked like he was caught in two minds – between defence and attack. He must rediscover the fearlessness he showed last summer, before he runs out of chances**



I do not know Zak Crawley the man, but I do rate Zak Crawley the player. Anyone who can score 267 against, we should remember, a decent Pakistan attack, as he did last summer, must have the talent to succeed at Test level. I certainly cannot discern any obvious flaws in his technique.

In 12 innings since that knock, however, he averages 10. I will not dwell on his experiences in India and Sri Lanka over the winter, because it was his first proper tour to Asia and a couple of the pitches in the former were akin to a batsman's graveyard.

Those mitigating circumstances cannot be applied to the surfaces at Lord's or here at Edgbaston, and when he got in in the second innings yesterday, he looked very fluent, before missing a straight one. That fluency may be part of the problem. We know that Chris Silverwood has been keen to stress the importance of the top order building a platform for a potentially destructive middle order of Joe Root, Ben Stokes, Ollie Pope and Jos Buttler. Keeping the scoreboard ticking over remains key, but so too is batting time.

In contrast to Dominic Sibley and, to a lesser extent, Rory Burns, Crawley's intent to score is clear from the outset and he looks every bit a world-class batsman when he plays his shots, which is what makes his first-innings dismissal so curious.

I do not want to say that his mind was frazzled because I am not around to observe him in the dressing room, but the shot which ended with him being caught in the slips looked like that of a man in two minds – caught

between defence and attack. It betrayed doubt. It is a question of whether that doubt stems from loss of form, or about the nature of his role within the batting unit. Or both.

If you go back to the third Test at Ahmedabad in February, he raced to a half-century before his dismissal led to England slumping from 80-3 to 112 all out. I am not blaming him for that collapse but he has only got out of single figures once since then – yesterday's innings of 17.

He and Pope are meant to be the future of England but the Surrey batsman too has dug himself into a rut. At least Pope is getting starts, having made it into double figures in 11 of his past 12 innings. The problem is that he is not going on to post scores – his highest in that period being 34. Unlike Crawley, he cannot plead that he has to face the new ball. Yesterday he got himself into an awful position, across the crease.

Pope, in particular, would do well to look at the example of his captain. We had been saying for what felt like the best part of two years that Joe Root was guilty of not converting fifties into hundreds. And then he went big in Sri Lanka and India to confirm his class and appetite.

Both Pope's and Crawley's travails illustrate how critical the mental side of the game is. I hope both will be honest enough to admit they have a problem and will respond by seeking out the help of ex-players and other specialists. They are both in the infancy of their careers and there is no shame in acknowledging that it takes time and concentration to adjust to the heightened challenge of international cricket.



## PLAYERS WILL BE PUNISHED FOR TWEETS

England players and ECB staff will continue to be punished for offensive historical social media posts despite calls for an amnesty, the governing body has decided.

The board met last week and have announced a review of their guidelines on social media. That comes after Ollie Robinson, the 27-year-old fast bowler, was suspended from international cricket for racist and sexist tweets posted in 2012 and 2013. James Anderson, Jos Buttler,

Eoin Morgan, an unnamed England player who posted when he was under 16 and five Lancashire cricketers were also found to have made offensive comments online previously.

The governing body insists that the review will not affect ongoing investigations or "prevent further disciplinary action being taken in the future". No decisions have been taken by the ECB on further sanctions for Robinson, pictured, or the other players.



What is less obvious is that you seldom get tested as relentlessly in Test matches as you do against this New Zealand attack. For all the frailties of England's batting, you cannot underestimate the quality of the opposition's bowling (it is hard not to believe that they would have won the first Test without the third day washout). And to think they made six changes from Lord's.

Trent Boult, Neil Wagner and Matt Henry have given England nothing – witness Root struggling to 11 off 61 balls before being trapped by Ajaz Patel. Boult, we know, can swing the ball, but Wagner and Henry achieved sharp movement too. Other than James Anderson, England's bowlers are not as reliant on swing, but it must have been chastening for them to see how the New Zealand trio were rewarded for pitching the ball up.

## YOUR GUIDE TO FRIDAY'S SHOWDOWN BETWEEN INDIA AND NEW ZEALAND TO DECIDE WORLD'S BEST TEST NATION

### What is the World Test Championship?

It is a two-year league for Test cricket, created to give context to the longstanding exchange of bilateral series. It was originally planned to start in 2013 but was twice postponed before getting under way with the England-Australia series in 2019. Previously the team at the top of the Test rankings in April each year received the ICC Test championship mace

### How does it work?

The top nine ranked Test teams were originally scheduled to play three home and three away series between July 2019 and April 2021, with the top two then contesting a final. Because of the pandemic, however, teams were unable to play all their scheduled series – Australia and South Africa played only four – and a percentage of points won became the determining

factor. India (72.2 per cent) and New Zealand (70.0) led the table ahead of Australia (69.2) and England (61.2). England needed to win their recent series in India 3-1 to qualify for the final but they were beaten 3-1.

### When and where is the final?

India and New Zealand meet on Friday at the Ageas Bowl, Southampton. The match was originally planned for Lord's but because of the pandemic

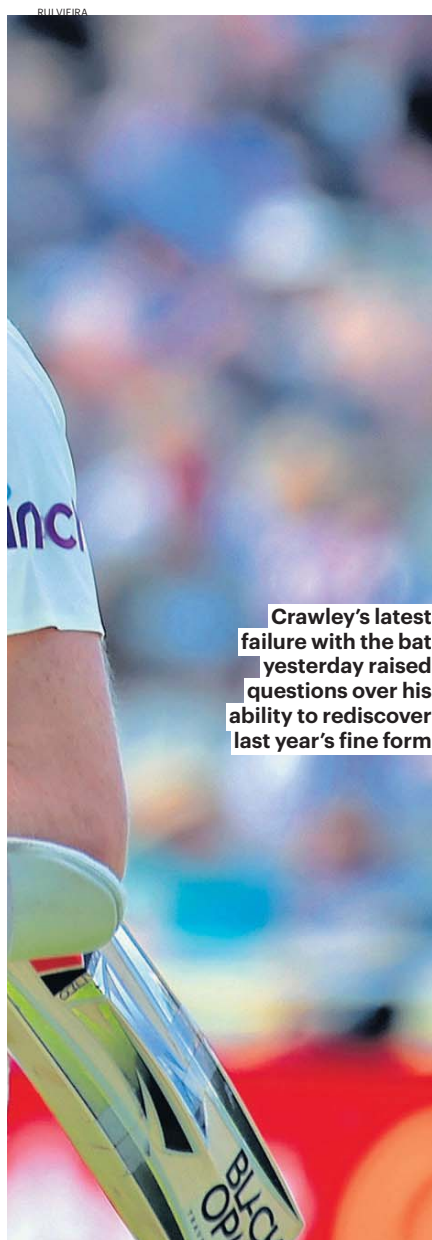
it was decided it would be safer for the teams to stay on site at the venue, and the Ageas Bowl has its own hotel.

### What happens if it rains?

The match is scheduled for five days but if time is lost due to bad weather and the shortfall cannot be made up on earlier days there is

scope for the game to be extended into a sixth day. The match referee, rather than the English umpires Richard Illingworth and Michael Gough, will update the teams and media on the situation as the match progresses. If the match still ends in a draw or a tie the teams will be declared joint winners.





**Crawley's latest failure with the bat yesterday raised questions over his ability to rediscover last year's fine form**

England really only did this on a consistent basis yesterday afternoon (and after they had got the ball changed). Then we saw how difficult it could be to bat in what otherwise looks like a decent pitch.

Ross Taylor, for example, was all over the place, but found a way. He has a habit of falling across the crease but also showed great concentration and some fine judgment and shot selection too, to work through the difficult spell. When a team as a group can apply themselves like that, it allows them to build a first-innings lead and put the pressure back on their opponents. England then wilted under that pressure.

It is also the kind of concentration and judgment that a team collectively need to be the best in the world – and right now that is how New Zealand look.

## FAMILIAR FAILINGS

Ollie Pope has scored in the 20s in six of his 12 Test innings this year

- ◆ First innings
- ◆ Second innings

First Test, v India	34	28
Second Test, v India	22	12
Third Test, v India	1	12
Fourth Test, v India	29	15
First Test, v New Zealand	22	20*
Second Test, v NZ	19	23

\*Not out

**England are not as reliant on swing but it must be chastening to see New Zealand rewarded for pitching the ball up**

## I HAVE SYMPATHY FOR SUSPENDED ROBINSON

My international career was still quite young when Twitter took off in the late 2000s. I was not really one for reading traditional media, like newspapers, so I gave social media a wide berth too. Why bother with the distraction?

At that point, I may have been in the majority in the England dressing room; by the time I played my last Test, in 2018, I would have been in the minority. A social media presence is the norm now for most young professionals. Even if they were not brought up with it, they are soon told that an enhanced social media profile is no disadvantage to landing sponsorship deals.

I have never felt more comfortable with my absence from Twitter, Instagram or any of the other channels than in the past week. Ollie Robinson was 18 when he sent the offending tweets that surfaced during the first Test and have landed him a suspension. They are deeply embarrassing for him and no one can condone them.

I cannot help but have some sympathy, however. His youth at the time of sending those messages must be a mitigating factor. Then there is the way he found himself cast into the centre of a media furore without any warning on day one of his first Test.

The way he reacted — seven wickets and an innings of 42 — showed huge character. I am not sure if, playing my debut Test, I would have been able to turn in such an impressive display. That he now feels the need to take a break from cricket reveals how much the week took out of him.

James Anderson, Jos Buttler and Eoin Morgan, below, subsequently came under the spotlight for historical postings. The best response to all of this is for our top players to get involved in the education programmes that the Professional Cricketers' Association and wider society are undertaking. Wearing a Unity T-shirt is all very well but let's try to find a way of getting them out in front of schools or cricket academies preaching the message of diversity. As has been said before, the 2019 World Cup-winning team was the model of a modern, multi-ethnic England.



# Rough start for Taylor, but Diamonds triumph

ALLAN MCKENZIE/REX



Taylor, who failed with the bat, attempts a stumping against the Stars

## Elizabeth Ammon

Sarah Taylor could muster only two runs from five balls on her return to professional cricket, but she ended the day on the winning side as Northern Diamonds moved to the top of table in the Rachael Heyhoe Flint trophy with a three-wicket win over South East Stars.

The fourth round of matches in this newly formed eight-team regional competition was being played without most of England's centrally contracted players, who are in Bristol for their Test match against India, which starts on Wednesday.

Sterre Kalis, the Holland international, made 75 from 106 balls in leading the Diamonds to chase down a target of 251 with four balls to spare after they had been struggling on 70 for five. The England bowlers Jenny Gunn and Beth Langston also made fifties — the latter unbeaten from only 53 balls — to secure the Diamonds' second win of the tournament.

It was Kirstie White's 73 off 90 balls that underpinned the Stars' score of 250 for six from their 50 overs, supported by a series of useful contributions that included an unbeaten 42 by Aylish Cranstone. Her late cameo featured six boundaries.

Central Sparks were knocked off the top of the table after suffering their first defeat of the tournament despite an unbeaten century from their captain Eve Jones, as North West Thunder edged home by two wickets at New Road. Sparks were bowled out for 203 after recovering from 17 for three thanks to Jones, who battled through the 50 overs.

The Thunder spinner, Hannah Jones, took three wickets in an excellent ten-over spell. Jones was ably supported by the captain Alex Hartley, who went for only 26 runs from her ten overs.

The Loughborough-based Lightning team had a comfortable win over Sunrisers, who remain bottom of the table after slumping to a fourth consecutive defeat. Lightning's victory was inspired by a fifty from Michaela Kirk and four wickets for Teresa Grave. Kirk hit nine boundaries, sharing partnerships of 57 with Sarah Bryce and 47 with Kathryn Bryce. A 51-run partnership for the fifth wicket between Abbey Freeborn and Sonia Odedra effectively sealed the win.

Meanwhile in St Lucia, West Indies capitulated to an innings defeat in the first Test against South Africa. A career-best 141 not out by Quinton de Kock, in his first innings since being relieved of the captaincy, gave South Africa a huge 219-run first innings lead, after they had bowled out West Indies for 97.

Five-wicket hauls by Lungchi Ngidi in the first innings and Kasigo Rabada in the second innings, combined with support from the third seamer, Anrich Nortje, proved too much for the West Indies.

Only Roston Chase showed any resistance to the pace and skill of the three South African seamers, making 62. The opener Kieran Powell was the next highest scorer with 14.

Keshav Maharaj removed Chase, who tried to cut a flighted delivery, and West Indies lasted only another nine overs before being skittled for 162 and losing by an innings and 63 runs.

## Will there be fans?

About 4,000 spectators can be admitted each day, or 25 per cent of the Ageas Bowl's capacity, in line with Covid regulations.

## How have the teams prepared?

New Zealand will have played two Tests against England. They rested Kane Williamson, left, in the second Test, at Edgbaston, to give him time to recover from an elbow

injury, and made six changes to the team who drew at Lord's, so 17 players in their squad will have had meaningful game time. The India squad arrived in England on June 3 and immediately had three days of quarantine. They have since been involved in intensive training at the Ageas

Bowl but will not play a formal match before the final.

## Who are favourites?

Playing the match in England may favour New Zealand, whose home conditions are not dissimilar to those here. The Indian camp feel New Zealand

have an advantage through playing two matches against England in the build-up while they have been confined to training. Ravi Shastri, India's head coach, claimed that India had already proved they are the best team in the world by topping the ICC rankings for 43 months between October 2016 and April 2020. But Shastri also said that as the first World Test Championship final, this was

arguably "the biggest [Test match] ever" and India's captain, Virat Kohli, left, agreed. Brendon McCullum, the former New Zealand captain, said that India's bowling attack was the best that the country had ever put out to deal with all conditions

## Will there be future Test championships?

Yes. The ICC recently confirmed that the world Test

championship would be staged across a two-year cycle through to 2031, when the next broadcast rights deal ends.

The next championship will run from July this year until June 2023. Where the finals of these championships will be staged has yet to be confirmed. Shastri has suggested a best-of-three final would be a fairer way of determining the best side.



# Bath secure Champions Cup spot

Stuart Barnes  
The Rec

Nothing much at stake for Northampton Saints. They were too many points behind Harlequins to make the play-off games. Bar pride, this match against Bath was, on paper, pointless.

That was anything but the case for Bath. The news that London Irish could not fulfil Saturday's fixture at Bristol because of Covid gave this game a lovely little end-of-season twist.

Bath started the week eighth in the Premiership – the Champions Cup cut-off position. The cancellation at Ashton Gate means Irish will presumably be awarded two points, as has been the case for all Covid-suffering sides throughout this campaign.

From having the slenderest of one-point advantages over the Brentford-based team, they ran on to the Recreation Ground knowing they were a point adrift of Irish, who did not take the field. For Bath, this game had a point – one to be specific – the one bonus point required to qualify for the Champions Cup.

The Saints may have had little to play for but a team stripped of pressure can be a dangerous opponent, and the East Midlands team have been playing some slick stuff of late. In contrast, Bath were on the verge of a fifth straight Premiership defeat.

The home side started in determined mood. An early penalty from Rhys Priestland, in his farewell game, reflected his team's supremacy. But Bath have a habit of not capitalising on periods of dominance.

Bayliss ran half the pitch to secure Bath's bonus point with the clock red

30  
BATH

24  
NORTHAMPTON SAINTS

Saints showed how to turn territory into points as James Grayson, Tom Wood and Courtney Lawes worked the hulking Taquele Naiyaravoro over for his first try.

From the 22nd-minute restart Bath responded. Sam Underhill charged down Alex Mitchell for an immediate riposte. A couple of minutes later another international back-row forward crossed as Taulupe Faletau ran an inside support line to connect with a sizzling Anthony Watson.

The Lions winger looked razor sharp but queered his pitch by failing to touch down after Ben Spencer (whose boot and brain leave one wondering why England have so readily dismissed him) had neatly opened the blind side.

Three minutes later a motivated Naiyaravoro punctured the Bath mid-

field. The ever-elegant Rory Hutchinson took the support pass and stood Joe Cokanasiga up as he squeezed in at the corner. It was a 14-point swing and with Naiyaravoro ambling in for the Saints' third and a 19-15 half-time lead, that eighth European berth was back in the balance.

The second half kicked off with Watson again guilty of losing the ball in possession with Spencer running a would-be scoring line. But in the 45th minute the Bath forwards made no mistake as Jacques du Toit crashed over from close range.

A sweeping counterattack from the increasingly impressive Tom de Glanville put Bath in position to score the fourth try and claim the bonus point to put them into the Champions Cup. Again they fluffed their lines, again the Saints struck back, having had less

## GALLAGHER PREMIERSHIP

	P	W	D	L	F	A	B	Pts
Bristol (Q)	22	17	1	4	561	379	15	85
Exeter (Q)	22	17	0	5	624	356	14	82
Sale (Q)	22	16	0	6	537	401	10	74
Harlequins (Q)	22	13	1	8	703	564	15	71
Northampton	22	11	0	11	469	457	11	57
Leicester	22	11	0	11	478	492	8	54
Bath	22	10	0	12	494	604	12	52
Wasps	22	9	0	13	539	624	14	50
L Irish	22	6	2	14	439	531	14	48
Newcastle	22	9	0	13	385	512	5	45
Gloucester	22	7	0	15	450	518	13	45
Worcester	22	4	0	18	326	567	11	27

possession and territory. James Grayson was the scorer this time as the lead swung back and forth.

Priestland nudged Bath back ahead from in front of the posts in the 62nd minute while Naiyaravoro was in the

sin-bin. Zach Mercer replaced Underhill on the occasion of his 100th and farewell game before leaving for Montpellier. Bath maintained control of field position; the penalties racked up. The catch-and-drive lineout appeared the likeliest route to the fourth try and bonus point. Tom Doughty, the replacement hooker, celebrated a set-piece score but for a fourth time the officials correctly brought celebrations to a premature end.

An increasingly battered Northampton saw Efran Painter head to the bin; given the lack of incentives this was an afternoon of real character on their part.

Not until the last seconds of the match did Bath break out from deep. Josh Bayliss, the replacement flanker, scorched half the length of the pitch for the try. It was a thrilling end to a

## Stuart Barnes

Can ripping up the rulebook take this free-spirited Harlequins side all the way to the title? Maybe



Any anarchists out there will be rooting for Harlequins come the Gallagher Premiership play-offs. Their journey to the top four has been one like no other. Eight games into the season and the director of rugby, Paul Gustard, left the club "by mutual consent". Under the

former England defence coach, the Londoners had won only two matches.

Seventh in the Gallagher Premiership, there was more written about their good fortune because of relegation being postponed than fanciful talk of titles. Yet here they are. Billy Millard is the club's general manager

but this is a side without either a director or head of rugby; call the role what you will.

Last week I was on a panel discussing the Premiership director of the season. When the subject of Harlequins cropped up, no one was entirely sure who exactly should be nominated. Nick Evans, Adam Jones, Jerry Flannery? Maybe Danny Care or Marcus Smith. This team have handed over much of the minute-to-minute decision-making to the players. The improvement is clear.

Gustard placed much faith in the established twin virtues of organisation and discipline. Rumour was doing the Premiership rounds: there was too much of it, metaphorical straitjackets were holding free spirits such as Care and Smith back. The echoes with what

has been happening across the road at Twickenham are plain as day.

Harlequins' highly rated fly half was being linked with Bath (ironically, as under Stuart Hooper, the club has hardly been a hotbed of instinctive rugby). But it was Gustard who walked; Smith remained and has become the talking point of this season's Premiership. His freedom to play it as he sees it has been instrumental in the stunning change of fortunes.

England, on one side of the dual carriageway, have been playing what they were told. Harlequins, what they see. You would be hard pushed to recognise their rugby as the same sport at times. Quite how Smith will fit into the Eddie Jones template against the United States and Canada is surely the England rugby question

You would be hard pushed to recognise their style of rugby as the same sport at times

DAVID ROGERS



## BRISTOL END REGULAR SEASON IN FIRST PLACE

Pat Lam's transformation of Bristol Bears into Gallagher Premiership contenders took another step forward yesterday when it was confirmed that they finished the regular season in first place.

That it came thanks to a Covid-19 outbreak at London Irish is unlikely to trouble Lam and his team. Irish returned several positives and a "significant number" of the squad were ruled out as close contacts. As per the Premiership's regulations for cancellations because of Covid, Bristol were awarded four points for the match and Irish two.

Three years after they were promoted to the Premiership, Lam's team will face Harlequins — 54-26 victors over Newcastle Falcons at Twickenham Stoop yesterday — at Ashton Gate next week in the first of the semi-finals. Exeter Chiefs beat Sale Sharks 20-19 at Sandy Park yesterday and they will play again in the second semi-final at the same venue.

London Irish's two points might have been enough to take them into the Champions Cup, but Bath's victory over Northampton prevented that. The West Country side took seventh place, Wasps eighth, Northampton fifth and Leicester Tigers sixth to complete the Champions Cup places.

disappointing season for Bath but the sun was shining. Bath had their European place and the Saints their pride; 3,019 fans celebrated victory and a return to the Recreation Ground as Johnny Cash sang *Ring of Fire*. Dave Egerton would have loved it.

**Star man** Ben Spencer (Bath).

**Bath:** Tries Underhill (22min), Faletau (25), Du Toit (46), Bayliss (80). **Cons** Priestland 2. **Pens** Priestland 2. **Northampton:** Tries Naiyaravoro 2 (19,40), Hutchinson (36), Grayson (59). **Cons** Grayson 2.

**Bath:** T de Glanville, A Watson, J Joseph, M Ojomoh, J Cokanasiga, R Priestland, B Spencer, B Obano (J Schoeman 52), J du Toit (T Doughty 60), C Judge (H Thomas 47), J McNally, C Ewels (W Spencer 72), M Reid, S Underhill (Z Mercer 52), T Faletau (J Bayliss 60).

**Northampton:** T Freeman, T Collins, F Dingwall, R Hutchinson (C Tupai 56), T Naiyaravoro, J Grayson, A Mitchell (T Litchfield 56); N Auterac, M Haywood (F van Wyck 55), P Hill (J Fish 55), A Coles, A Moon (A Ratuniyarawa 53), C Lawes, L Ludlam (O Newman 72), T Wood.

**Referee:** I Tempest. **Attendance:** 3,019.

of the summer. The benefit of the heads-up rugby once played and now espoused by Evans is there for all to see. The men from the Stoop went into the final Saturday of the regular season as the leading points-scorers in the Premiership. Whether it is a break from their own 22, or Smith taking three points rather than a kick to the corner, they have the capacity to keep the scoreboard moving like no others.

The fly half and Alex Dombrandt (another player reborn under the new regime) have been the best double act of the campaign on the front foot. The news is positive — like the way they play — but defence remains a problem. Even under Gustard, who did such a fine job with his "wolf pack" at Saracens, they were leaking points.

# Leicester back among Europe's elite

WASPS	31
LEICESTER TIGERS	38

**Chris Jones**  
Ricoh Arena

Leicester Tigers completed the first stage of their rehabilitation under Steve Borthwick by qualifying for next season's Heineken Champions Cup — an achievement matched by Wasps, who are also in a rebuilding phase.

Leicester have ended in sixth place following two seasons finishing 11th after making significant strides under Borthwick, their director of rugby, and now possess a pack of forwards that their fans will instantly recognise as being true to their traditions. This was a match to mark the many changes both teams have made or are making, with five of the Wasps pack in this game now leaving the club.

Wasps, who finished eighth, competed in last season's play-off final against Exeter Chiefs, but have experienced a difficult campaign disrupted by injuries to key players. Yet they stuck to their desire to move the ball and joined Leicester in getting a try bonus point. However, they

could not negate Leicester's scrum power and the visitors also managed the loss of Zack Henry to a second-half yellow card — they did not concede a point while down to 14 men.

Borthwick said: "I challenged the players and they have challenged me back and have worked incredibly hard. This is a young team with a hunger to learn."

Wasps started with real intent and the No 8 Sione Vailanu, who is moving to Worcester, finished off a sustained attack from close range by getting the ball down under a mound of bodies for Jacob Umaga to convert. Leicester used their ball carriers and scrum power to register their first score, with the lock Cameron Henderson scooping up the ball and reaching for the line for Johnny McPhillips to convert from out wide, and the outside half was also on target with the extra points after Matt Scott's try.

Wasps turned to their outside backs to level up the scores, with the wing Marcus Watson kicking through. Umaga picked up, evaded two tacklers and took one over with him for an excellent solo try that he converted. Shortly after McPhillips scored a penalty, he converted a rare try from the prop Dan Cole.



**Leicester secured a Heineken Champions Cup place next season**

Wasps competed so well for the restart that the ball was worked into Vailanu's hands and, after brushing past Jasper Wiese, the No 8 showed good pace to reach the tryline. Umaga's conversion cut Wasps' deficit to three points at the break. Julián Montoya scored his fifth try in six games for the Tigers, but again Wasps struck back, with the lock Will Rowlands cutting a clever line and then galloping over in his final game for the club before moving to Wales.

Leicester dealt expertly with the loss of Henry to that yellow card, with the captain, Ellis Genge, and flanker

George Martin influential figures throughout. Genge opted for a five-metre tap-and-go that led to Tomás Lavanini diving over for McPhillips to make it 13 points from the boot, with Wasps snatching a losing bonus point through Umaga's late penalty.

Lee Blackett, the Wasps director of rugby, admitted that 12 weeks ago his players were drained by the quick turnaround after the final. "You forget how much emotion there was getting to the final," he said. "There was a cumulative effect and I am proud of how we kept on fighting."

**Star man** George Martin (Leicester)

**Wasps:** Tries Vailanu 8, 36, Umaga 26, Rowlands 56, **Cons** Umaga (4) **Pen** Umaga

**Leicester:** Tries Henderson 19, Scott 23, Cole 34, Montoya 46, Lavanini 71. **Cons** McPhillips 5, **Pen** McPhillips

**Wasps:** R Miller (M Le Bourgeois 74), M Watson, M Fekitoa (J de Jongh 73), M Le Bourgeois (J Gopperth 57), J Bassett, J Umaga, D Robson (B Vellacott 76); S McIntyre (B Harris 73), T Taylor (T Cruise 58), K Brooks (J Toomaga-Allen 51), W Rowlands, J Gaskell (T Taylor 78), T Willis (T Cardall 55), B Shields (capt), S Vailanu (G Oghre 48)

**Leicester:** Z Henry (sin-bin 60-70), F Steward, M Scott, D Kelly (M Moroni 65), N Nadolo; (K Murimurivalu 51), J McPhillips, J Van Poortvliet; (B Youngs 51), E Genge (capt) (J Whitcombe 71), J Montoya (C Clare 53), D Cole (J Heyes 56), H Wells, C Henderson (T Lavanini 59), G Martin, H Liebenberg, J Wiese (O Chessum 58)

**Referee** L Pearce

## Exeter fightback sets up home semi-final against Sale

EXETER CHIEFS	20
SALE SHARKS	19

**Adam Hathaway**  
Sandy Park

Joe Simmonds decided a match billed as the battle between Exeter Chiefs' British & Irish Lions and Sale Sharks' Springboks as the champions secured a home semi-final next week. Simmonds, the Exeter fly half, stepped up to close out the game with a 45-metre penalty but Exeter will know they were in a game and Sale will be back again at Sandy Park on Saturday. They may be without their outstanding fly half AJ MacGinty, however. He went off on a stretcher with a knee strain late on.

The hooker Akker van der Merwe and flanker Cameron Neild were

early casualties for Sale, too, and could struggle to make the weekend.

MacGinty scored one try and made two others as he tortured Exeter for 45 minutes and Sale led 19-3. Yet just when Exeter, who had Dave Ewers binned in the first half, looked like bending when lock Sam Skinner was sent off for a high shot on Faf de Klerk, they came back to within two points. Simmonds did the rest.

Bristol's cancellation meant Exeter could not claim top spot but could stay second with a losing bonus point.

Sale were 14-3 up at half time after blasting out of the blocks. They picked just about their best available side with four players in the Springbok squad to face the Lions, including De Klerk and prop Coenie Oosthuizen, and they had Manu Tuilagi starting for the first time since September. Exeter fielded four Lions — Stuart Hogg, Jonny Hill, Luke

Cowan-Dickie and Sam Simmonds. MacGinty, due to captain the US against England next month, was central to creating Sale's 16-point lead. His pass found Byron McGuigan lurking on the right wing after a minute and he scored under the posts after drifting inside Henry Slade ten minutes later.

Exeter had not landed a punch, then came Skinner's unfortunate red and they were looking at a trip up to Salford next weekend. But inspired by Cowan-Dickie, inset, and Hill, their pack forced the hooker over in the 59th minute.

MacGinty kicked the restart straight out — his first error — and another series of Chiefs drives ended with scrum half Stu Townsend going over. Chiefs were still two points

adrift but Sale had Ben Curry yellow-carded, Joe Simmonds kept his calm and the sequel is on.

**Star man** Jonny Hill (Exeter Chiefs)

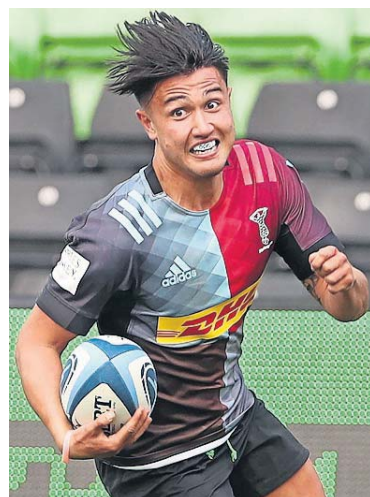
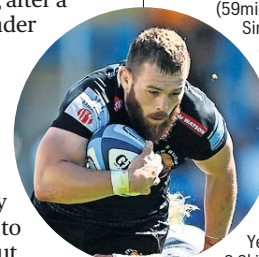
**Scorers:** Exeter Chiefs: Tries Cowan-Dickie (59min), Townsend (65). **Cons** J Simmonds 2 (61, 66). **Pens** J Simmonds 2 (6, 70)

**Sale Sharks:** Tries McGuigan (1), MacGinty (21), Reed (42). **Cons** MacGinty 2 (2, 21).

**Exeter Chiefs:** S Hogg (S Lonsdale 60); A Cuthbert, H Slade, O Devoto, T O'Flaherty; J Simmonds (capt), J Maunder (S Townsend 46); A Hepburn (B Moon 46), L Cowan-Dickie (J Yeandle 61), H Williams (M Street 61), S Skinner (sent off 53), J Hill, D Ewers (sin-bin 33-43), J Kirsten (R Capstick 27), S Simmonds.

**Sale Sharks:** S Hammersley; B McGuigan, S James, M Tuilagi (R Du Preez 56), A Reed; AJ MacGinty (S Hill 79), F De Klerk (W Cliff 73); R Harrison (B Rodd 46), A Van der Merwe (C Langdon 11), C Oosthuizen (W-G John 46), C Wiese (J Phillips 57), J-L Du Preez, C Neild (B Curry 6, sin-bin 64-74), T Curry (capt), D Du Preez.

**Referee** K Dickson (RFU). **Attendance** 3,200.



**Smith epitomises the attacking spirit of this Harlequins team**

riveting ride but now comes the serious stuff.

What was it Shaun Edwards had nailed up on the Wasps dressing room as they ran on to the field in their title-winning days? "Defences win titles." If that is the case, Harlequins haven't a hope. Without a head coach they have produced shards of glittering brilliance in the last 14 rounds of regular rugby. They romped into fourth place but were some distance from the big three.

Do Harlequins have it in them to score sufficient points against two from Bristol, Exeter and Sale to win the title? The odds are stacked against them. History backs up Edwards, be it a World Cup or Premiership final.

And that is one of the reasons many a neutral will root for the

underdogs. It is the old Kevin Keegan adage when he managed Newcastle United. If they score three, we'll score four. It worked wonderfully well for most of the season but still Newcastle could not cross the Premier League finishing line in first position. Does anyone think a team playing all-out attack will win Euro 2020?

The Quins are trying to buck trends. Be it without an overall head coach or with an emphasis on attack over defence, they have thrown caution to the wind. The players are making decisions and enjoying themselves. Whatever next?

**ON TV**

**Gallagher Premiership semi-finals**  
Next Saturday, BT Sport

# The greatest experience of my career was the 1997 tour

How a disparate group of players put their egos and ambitions to one side to beat the toughest opponents

LAWRENCE DALLAGLIO



British & Irish Lion  
1997, 2001 and 2005

Oatlands Park, May 16, 1997.

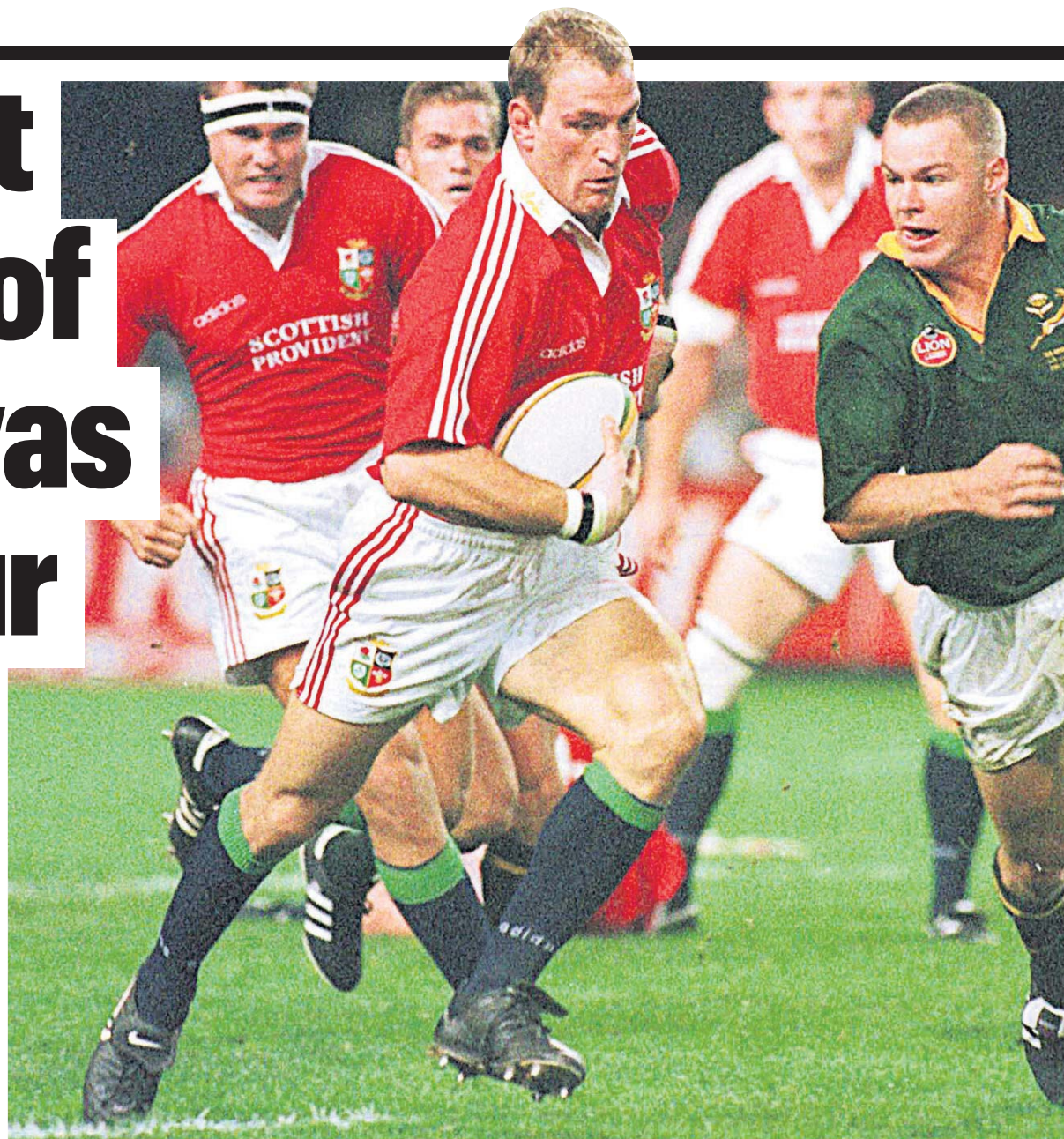
The British & Irish Lions have been gathered for nearly a week at our luxury hotel in Weybridge. It's the day before we take a night flight down to South Africa. The days together have been spent mostly in team-bonding exercises, discussing and drawing up our tour code of conduct rules and, at most, three training sessions. For our last night in the UK, the tour manager, Fran Cotton, announces that we are all going down to the local pub.

Fran, you played a blinder. The week had been going well up until then but that evening of drinking and mixing with the pub regulars was the moment the squad really gelled. I may even go so far as to say it was the moment that won us the Test series.

What you have to remember is that back then, in the early days of professionalism, the home union players didn't have the same familiarity with one another as they do now. The Heineken Cup was only in its second year, with the English clubs having boycotted the first season. Summer tours were few and far between.

The Five Nations was the only real opportunity to size up or have a beer with an England team-mate or a Scottish, Irish or Welsh opponent. The idea that the captain of England might be on familiar terms with the captain of Scotland – as he would be now – because they shared the same agent or sponsor, or attended the same corporate functions, was absurd.

Nor was the Lions culture and history ingrained in us. Only six of those picked for South Africa had been on the previous tour to New Zealand four years earlier, and Ian McGeechan hadn't coached at international level since then. By the end of that boozy night, however, the bonds that with-



## THE LIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA PART THREE



stand the heat of the battle had been formed.

In sport, as in business and politics, if you want to win people over, if you want to get the best out of them, then you need to connect their head with their heart. That's what McGeechan, his assistant Jim Telfer and Cotton did.

Fran's role sometimes gets overlooked because he wasn't involved in the day-to-day coaching, but he was an equal member of that management triumvirate. He had toured South Africa in 1974 and 1980 and wasn't going to be messed around by the host nation. He spoke the players' language. In short, he had your back.

Those early weeks were interesting because there was huge competition for places. I was marked down to play No 6, which meant the Scotland captain, Rob Wainwright, and Ireland's

Eric Miller, who was in the form of his young life, were my rivals for the Test squad (remember replacements were limited to only two then). Tim Rodber and Scott Quinnell, who had made such a big impression since his return from rugby league, were battling for the No 8 jersey.

At open-side, Richard Hill and Neil Back were turning in phenomenal performances whenever they turned out in the warm-up games. Behind the scrum, Matt Dawson was one of the stars of the series but he only started the Tests after Rob Howley had to return home with a shoulder injury.

I had been to South Africa three years earlier with England, which gave me a good idea of the physical challenge that would be coming our way. That tour had been particularly brutal even by South African stan-

dards and, with world champion status conferred on them in 1995, the Springboks weren't going to take a backward step. Nor were any of the provincial teams going to play by rugby's equivalent of the Marquess of Queensberry rules.

Again, the experience of McGeechan, Telfer and Cotton was invaluable here. Intellectually, tactically and emotionally, that trio pushed all the right buttons. Geech had spent a fortnight shadowing the New Zealand coach, John Hart, a year earlier when he had guided the All Blacks to their first series win in South Africa. He had seen the tactical preparation and physical endurance required to pull off that historic feat.

McGeechan's familiarity with the Springbok mentality also prompted some selection masterstrokes. Gregor



TIMES PHOTOGRAPHER BRADLEY ORMESHER



Against the battering ram tactics of the Springboks, Dallaglio's Lions deployed the rapier

**If route one didn't work, then they tried... route one. And if that didn't work... well, you get the idea**

Townsend at No 10 and Neil Jenkins at full back for the Tests were bold calls but you could see those coming early in the tour. When we flew out from Heathrow, however, I don't think anyone would have suggested that three of the front five would consist of Jeremy Davidson, Paul Wallace and Tom Smith. Geech understood that while we would have to absorb the physicality of the Boks, we would also have to ask questions that would take them out of their comfort zone. It was the classic judo trick of using your opponent's strength against him.

Nor was Cotton going to be pushed around when the Lions were under attack. When a spat between John Bentley and James Small – a South African World Cup hero struggling to reclaim his place – threatened to grow into something big, he put Small firmly in his place. When news broke of a training-ground fight between rival hookers Barry Williams and Mark Regan he told the media it was just two competitive players letting off steam. End of story. The stamping by Eastern Province's Marius Bosman on the knee of Doddie Weir, which ended the Scotsman's tour, was appalling and he said so, even if the punishment meted out to Bosman was a joke.

Then there was Telfer. I had been through some painful scrum sessions while at school at Ampleforth but those were armchair rides compared with the gruelling training session he oversaw before the Eastern Province fixture. If I found it gruelling, God knows how the tight-head prop, Paul Wallace, in front of me, felt taking most of the strain.

Again, this was all part of the plan. Jim knew how much emphasis the hosts would place on the scrum contest and was ensuring that we were battle-hardened. The Everest speech he delivered to the pack before the first Test was a re-iteration in verbal form of the physical challenge he had thrown down to us that day on the scrum machine. He made that connection with the head and the heart.

Looking back, that first Test in Cape Town seems to have gone according to script. South Africa put the squeeze on in the set piece and elsewhere in the tight in the first half and, though we struggled initially, we eventually achieved parity and used the ball well when we had possession. They huffed and puffed for 70 minutes but only had a 16-15 lead to show for it.

McGeechan had told us that while they would attack with the battering ram we would have to deploy the rapier and that's what Matt Dawson's solo try was – a quick, piercing and potentially fatal stab to their heart. I should add that I bought his dummy too, as well as the South African defence.

Five minutes later, the energy and confidence draining from the Boks, we stretched their defence to breaking point and Alan Tait, the Scottish centre, touched down in the corner to seal the win.

Did we celebrate that night? Of course we did. We went out after every Saturday on that tour and even managed a few drinks midweek as well. What sticks out from that particular night, however, was the pact the Test side made among ourselves that we would be up the next day, however sore our bodies and heads might be, to help the midweek team prepare for their Tuesday night fixture with the Free State Cheetahs. They repaid us with a brilliant display to win 52-30. The Test squad watched it from our hotel rooms in Durban and it gave us a huge lift.

From the Zulus dancing on the pitch beforehand to the thousands of Lions supporters making their presence felt in the stadium, the atmosphere for the second Test at King's Park was unlike anything I had previously experienced. I don't think I've ever tackled as much or seen as little of the ball as I did that day. In Gary Teichmann, Ruben Kruger and André Venter they had some heavy-duty ball-carriers and they kept coming and coming. If route one didn't work, then they tried... route one. And if that didn't work... well, you get the idea.

We stayed in the contest thanks to some resolute defence, their inability to convert their kicks and the relentless ability of Neil Jenkins to land his. It was the best display of pressure goal-kicking I have seen – and I played in the same team as Jonny Wilkinson. Nor was it lost on any of us that the man who kicked the winning drop-goal, Jeremy Guscott, would have been treated as a second-class citizen in the host nation if he had gone there five years earlier.

The greatest achievement of my rugby career? That's easy – winning the World Cup with England in 2003. The greatest experience? Even easier, the 1997 Lions tour to South Africa. Winning the series – just the second time the Lions had done that there – obviously helped but there was more to it. I was 24 at the time, not far off my peak but still with plenty to learn on and off the pitch. It was the start of the professional era but the tour still had something of the spirit of the amateur days. You were encouraged by the management to go out for a few beers – Big Fran was often picking up the tab – and there was no one around with a camera on their mobile trying to shame you on social media.

A few weeks ago, there was a tour reunion on Zoom. We shared our memories and they were interspersed with clips from the famous *Living with Lions* documentary. Watching the footage felt like an out-of-body experience, especially when I saw how much hair I had back then. In any elite sports group, you will have egos and arrogance. You might even say you need both to make it to the top. What that evening brought home was that everyone sublimated their own pride and ambition to the greater good.

In 1999, the day after Wales's Scott Gibbs scored his last-gasp try to deny the England team I was captaining a Six Nations grand slam, I got a text from Gibbs apologising for his score. Of course, he wasn't really sorry but I appreciated the message. It was a gesture equivalent to the "look" that McGeechan had told us before the second Test would one day be enough to symbolise the bonds we had forged.

That text from Scott, my friends, is what the Lions is all about. That is what the Lions of 1997 were all about.



Mourgue runs through the Leigh defence to score a sixth Catalans try

## Catalans go top after edging thriller

### RUGBY LEAGUE

LEIGH CENTURIONS **30**

CATALANS DRAGONS **36**

#### Christopher Irvine

Catalans Dragons leapfrogged the champions St Helens at the top of the Super League after a scare at the hands of bottom-placed, and still winless, Leigh Centurions.

In their gun-metal away strip, Catalans at times resembled a sleek destroyer glistening in the sun as the speed of passing and a multi-dimensional attack overwhelmed Leigh in a devastating third quarter.

At times, they were holed below the water by Leigh's persistence, the Dragons glad of the siren as they were besieged in the final minutes.

Leigh flew at their opponents, plundered three first-half tries and led 18-6. They had conceded 30 consecutive points when they revived themselves late on with tries by Ben Hellewell and Ryan Brierley. As usual, it was the mopping up at the back and priming of the attack by Sam Tomkins that got Catalans out of more than one hole and steered them to a eighth win, two points clear of St Helens and Wigan Warriors, but with Saturday's home game in doubt because of Covid cases at Leeds Rhinos.

The teams' previous clash was in 2017, the "million pound game", Catalans avoiding relegation and denying Leigh a return to the top flight. Leigh's yo-yo between the leagues has been a persistent theme. Their return this year was a process after Toronto Wolfpack's disappearance last year, but with monetary curbs and late recruitment inhibiting them.

After seven straight defeats, John Duffy departed as head coach and Kurt Haggerty was appointed caretaker for a more encouraging performance, albeit in a loss to Wakefield Trinity, and this game.

It could not have begun more encouragingly as Catalans pressed but with Leigh up in their faces,

James Maloney's pass reached the outstretched hands of Ben Reynolds. The stand-off had 95 metres to cover and held off the backpedalling Mike McMeeken for a try at the corner.

Dean Whare's offload and Tomkins's vision put Josh Drinkwater into space to put the visiting team briefly level, before Drinkwater offered a second interception try, this time to a grateful Brendan Elliot.

When Matty Gee dummied the Catalans cover, Leigh deservedly led by 12 points. They conceded a second try before the break to James Maloney latching on to Drinkwater's grubber in a choreographed move.

Having pushed passes and looked to score off every play, Catalans found rhythm and composure for four tries in 11 minutes, by Samisoni Langi, Tom Davies, Ben Jullien and Arthur Mourgue.

A Maloney penalty looked the icing on the cake, but it became more crucial as Hellewell grounded a kick and Brierley was sent clear by Junior Sa'u and slotted his fifth conversion. Just not enough for Leigh to break their duck.

**Star man** Sam Tomkins (Catalans Dragons). **Scorers:** Leigh Centurions: Tries Reynolds 3min, Elliot 14, Gee 23, Hellewell 74, Brierley 76. **Goals** Brierley (5). **Catalans Dragons:** Tries Drinkwater 10, Maloney 29, Langi 47, Davies 51, Jullien 53, Mourgue 58. **Goals** Maloney (6). **Leigh Centurions** R Brierley; B Elliot, I Thornley, J Sa'u, L Tierney; B Reynolds, J Mellor; T McCarthy, L Hood, M Ioane, B Hellewell, M Gee, J Bell. **Interchange** M Wildie, N Peteru, N Mason, N Peats. **Catalans Dragons** S Tomkins; T Davies, S Langi, D Whare, F Yaha; J Maloney, J Drinkwater; M Goudemand, M McIlorum, J Bousquet, B Jullien, M McMeeken, B Garcia. **Interchange** A Mourgue, P Seguier, L Belmas, J Baitieri. **Referee** T Grant.

### HOW THEY STAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Catalans Dragons	9	8	0	1	268	142	16
St Helens	8	7	0	1	206	70	14
Wigan	8	7	0	1	158	136	14
Warrington	9	6	1	2	302	157	13
Hull	9	5	1	3	179	143	11
Hull KR	9	5	0	4	223	204	10
Castleford	9	4	0	5	185	232	8
Leeds	8	3	0	5	150	136	6
Huddersfield	8	3	0	5	150	162	6
Wakefield	10	3	0	7	193	251	6
Salford	9	1	0	8	106	289	2
Leigh	10	0	0	10	154	352	0

### 1997 LIONS TOUR TO SA

Overall tour record

Played 13

Won

11

Lost

2



Test results v South Africa

#### First Test

Newlands Stadium  
Cape Town, June 21  
16-25 **Victory**

#### Second Test

Kings Park Stadium  
Durban, June 28  
15-18 **Victory**

#### Third Test

Ellis Park Stadium  
Johannesburg, July 5  
35-16 **Defeat**

Original squad by nationality (35 players)

England **18**

Wales **8**

Scotland **5**

Ireland **4**

# FRENCH KISS

Barbora Krejčíková claims first grand-slam singles title and delivers emotional tribute to her late mentor Jana Novotná

STUART FRASER



Tennis Correspondent

How fitting that this unpredictable French Open women's singles draw concluded with an unseeded champion. Barbora Krejčíková, ranked No 33 in the world, completed a remarkable run by becoming the first Czech female singles winner at Roland Garros since Hana Mandlíková in 1981.

This is a triumph that even the 25-year-old herself had previously felt was probably beyond her. This time last year she was ranked a lowly No 115 and resigned to the likelihood that any success would be limited to the doubles circuit, where she had already claimed three grand-slam titles.

In tears yesterday after defeating Russia's Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova 6-1, 2-6, 6-4 in the final, Krejčíková pointed to the sky in tribute to her former coach Jana Novotná, who died of cancer at the age of 49 in 2017. The 1998 Wimbledon champion had always insisted to her pupil that she had the talent to lift a major trophy one day, and her prophecy came true yesterday.

"Jana was really special to me," Krejčíková said. "We just had a really special bond. When I found out that she was ill, and later on when I found

out it's not going to end up really well, I just felt like she was giving me so much of her experience, so much of her power, of her attitude. She taught me so many things that I just felt at the end of her life I have to be there and really support her.

"I felt that if I'm going to go through this process and I'm going to just help her and support her, it's going to give me a lot of strength and I'm going to appreciate a lot of things more. I also think that she was also happy that I was there.

"That's why she's looking after me right now. That's actually why I have this many grand-slams, because she's somewhere above looking after me. She wants me to win. She knows what it means to me, and I know what it would mean to her."

It is Krejčíková's composure that

has impressed most this fortnight. While she has much experience in doubles, this was only her fifth appearance in singles at a grand-slam tournament. She maintained a high level of play under intense pressure on various occasions and is the first French Open women's champion to have saved a match point during her run – against Greece's Maria Sakkari in the semi-finals – since the Belgian great Justine Henin in 2005.

Krejčíková can be forgiven, though, for feeling a little nervy at the start of yesterday's match. She hit two double faults and dropped her serve in the opening game, only to respond in style by winning six straight games for the first set.

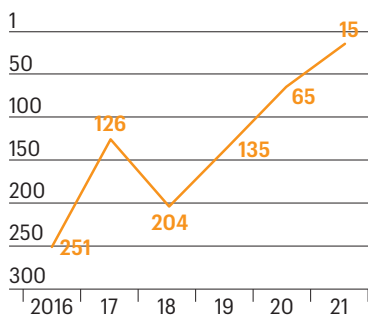
Pavlyuchenkova, aged 29 and seeded No 31, looked somewhat stunned during the break but soon found her range with her powerful groundstrokes to take a 5-2 lead in the second set. To some surprise, she then took a medical timeout for treatment on her left thigh and was pictured eating Haribo sweets – sometimes used by athletes for an increase in energy intake – during the pause in play.

Despite going on to level the match at one set all, Pavlyuchenkova was clearly not at full fitness from this point onwards. Krejčíková exposed her opponent's lack of movement by using drop shots and angled groundstrokes and claimed what proved to be the pivotal break of serve for 3-2. While two championship points were missed on the Pavlyuchenkova serve at 5-3, she made no mistake on a fourth opportunity on her own serve

## KREJČIKOVA'S RANKINGS SURGE

The 25-year-old will rise to world No 15 with victory at Roland Garros

◆ WTA ranking



Krejčíková kisses the trophy after completing her fairytale fortnight at Roland Garros by overcoming Pavlyuchenkova to claim the French Open title



## Rivalries are built in heat of the battle – not through cheap stunts

PAUL MCGINLEY



## GOLF

Row between Koepka and DeChambeau is deeply undignified and demeans the sport

One of the thrills of sport is rivalries. When I think of the great eras in sport, they are often distinguished by great rivalries: Björn Borg-John McEnroe in tennis, Ayrton Senna-Alain Prost in Formula One and Jack Nicklaus-Tom Watson in golf are the first that come to mind.

I like to see rivalries emerge during competition as character is illuminated in the heat of battle and we gauge mindsets by observing body language. I want to see rivalries emerge in battles played out in sporting arenas – to see them unfold through skill and mental fortitude.

I know this is not a populist opinion, nor even a popular one, but I take issue with the view that the recent very public spat between Bryson DeChambeau and Brooks Koepka is great for golf or even could be categorised as a rivalry. It is nothing of the sort. It is a clash of two people who clearly don't get on, see the game differently and choose to play out their differences in public. They may have gone head-to-head on social media but have never done so on the golf course.

Tensions between the two have been bubbling away for a year or so and resurfaced last month when a recorded interview of Brooks denigrating – with surprising candour, it should be said – Bryson and his views on the game was leaked in the aftermath of the US PGA Championship.

I could see where it was headed and the narrative it was likely to follow: the straight-talking macho guy (Brooks) making fun of

Koepka offered a case of beer to anyone escorted off the course for heckling DeChambeau



the golfing nerd (Bryson). I commented on a tweet from a journalist at the time who posted the video with the words: "Somebody with access to this video footage woke up this morning and chose chaos." How right he was...

Brooks then appeared again on social media earlier this month apparently encouraging the heckling of Bryson at that week's Memorial Tournament with the promise of the reward of a case of beer should anyone be escorted off the course for yelling his nickname, Brooksy, at Bryson. Brooks wasn't even playing that event, hosted incidentally by Jack Nicklaus, one of the game's finest ambassadors. He had crossed the line.

It was an intervention as unnecessary as it was undignified and signified that we had entered deep and uncharted waters. A player encouraging the public to get involved in heckling another player? New to me. To anyone who didn't have skin in the game, it



## KONTA FINDS FORM AT LAST TO REACH FINAL

After a miserable run of form, Johanna Konta has reached the final of the Viking Nottingham Open. Konta, below, beat Nina Stojanovic 6-2 6-7 (2-7) 7-5 yesterday and can claim a maiden grass-court title against Zhang Shuai, the No 4 seed from China, today.

Andy Murray will play France's Benoit Paire on Tuesday, in the first round of the Cinch Championships at Queen's Club.



in the next game to seal the silverware and a new career-high ranking of No 15 tomorrow.

"I'm extremely happy," Krejčíková added. "It's a dream come true, for sure. It's really hard to put the words together right now because there are so many emotions and so many things going through my mind.

"I'm just really happy that I was able to handle it as I did. Mentally I think that was the biggest key. I spoke with my psychologist again and we spoke about it a lot. I just knew that as soon as I'm going to enter the court, I'm just not going to be panicking any more. That was actually happening and I was really happy about that.

"It's something I have always dreamt about. I was just telling myself it would be really nice if I can get a grand-slam title in my career in all three categories [singles, women's doubles and mixed doubles]. Now it's happening, I cannot believe it. Now it's happening, wow."

Krejčíková now has the chance today to complete the rare achievement of winning both the singles and doubles in the same year. Victory with her compatriot Katerina Siniakova against Poland's Iga Swiatek and America's Bethanie Mattek-Sands in the women's doubles final would enable her to become the first since Mary Pierce in 2000 to leave Roland Garros with two trophies.

# Tsitsipas can shift weight of history

## Greek star challenges old order today having already had successes against No 1 Djokovic

Stuart Fraser

Stefanos Tsitsipas has surely had few better Friday nights. Already revelling in the aftermath of becoming Greece's first grand-slam singles finalist, the 22-year-old sat back with his feet up in a Paris hotel room and watched on television as his prospective opponents tried to batter each other into submission over the course of more than four hours. He slept safe in the knowledge that the 13-times French Open champion, Rafael Nadal, will not be across the net from him today.

Novak Djokovic will still make for formidable opposition, of course, the 33-year-old Serb bidding to join the Australians Rod Laver and Roy Emerson as the only men to complete the career grand-slam twice.

The world No 1 produced undoubtedly his best clay-court performance to overcome Nadal in a match that will be remembered as one of the greatest instalments of their 58-episode rivalry.

The task for Tsitsipas on Court Philippe-Chatrier this afternoon will not quite feel so daunting, though. He has beaten Djokovic twice in their seven meetings, and eight months ago, at the rescheduled 2020 French Open, took him to a fifth set after losing the first two of their semi-final.

Djokovic still prevailed but Tsitsipas had shown in the process that he has the belief to go toe-to-toe with one of the sport's greats on the big stage, unlike so many before him.

This is a contest between the two best players in the world this year. While Tsitsipas is presently No 5 in the ATP rankings, he narrowly leads Djokovic in the Race to Turin, which is solely based on performances in 2021.

His flashy all-round game works



Djokovic had a gruelling semi-final

best on the clay, winning two titles, in Monte Carlo and Lyons, during this European swing.

Now, aged 22, he is bidding to become the youngest man to win a major trophy since a 20-year-old Juan Martín del Potro at the 2009 US Open.

"For Tsitsipas it's a great achievement [to reach a grand-slam final], but I'm sure he doesn't want to stop there," Djokovic said. "He's in great form. He leads the race rankings and has his best results overall [39 match wins in total]. I think he has matured as a player a lot. Clay is arguably his best surface.

"We played an epic five-setter last year in the semis here and I know it's going to be another tough one. I'm hoping I can recharge my batteries as much as I can because I'm going to

**Novak could be on 19 grand-slams after this and there could be three guys on 20 after Wimbledon**

## ON TV TODAY

Men's singles French Open final  
Starts 2pm. ITV3, Eurosport

need some power and energy for that one."

This is the key question. While Djokovic played one set fewer than Tsitsipas on Friday, his semi-final lasted 36 minutes longer, finished six hours later, at 11.20pm, and consisted of far more punishing rallies.

The physical recovery will be challenging but he has much experience to draw upon. Three years ago at Wimbledon, for example, he completed a two-day, five-set semi-final against Nadal on a Saturday afternoon by winning the decider 10-8 and then came back out on to Centre Court on the Sunday to beat Kevin Anderson in straight sets.

"It's not the first time that I have played an epic semi-final in a grand-slam and then I have to come back in less than 48 hours and play a final," Djokovic said. "My recovery abilities are pretty good, I must say, throughout my career. Obviously my physiotherapist will try to do everything possible so I can be fresh. Because I played enough tennis, I don't need to train too much. It's really now just about taking things slowly until the final. I know what I need to do."

The weight of history will hang heavily today, as it is often does in this remarkable era dominated by Djokovic, Nadal and Roger Federer. As Kati Wilander, the former world No 1 and Eurosport analyst, put it: "Novak could be on 19 [grand-slam titles] after this and there could be three guys on 20 after Wimbledon."

Whether Nadal appears at the All England Club, starting on June 28, remains to be seen. He headed home to Mallorca yesterday for a period of rest and told reporters that he would make a decision on his Wimbledon participation in the coming week as he has no intention of playing a warm-up event on grass.

The transition from clay has often been difficult given his history of knee problems and this year is particularly challenging because of the one-week delay to the French Open.

looked like an orchestrated campaign to troll Bryson by Brooks.

The irony is that this new elevation of hostilities may be traced to a new initiative by the PGA Tour. It's called PIP (player impact program) and its aim was to use the pros' vast media profile to benefit the tour and in turn the profile of the game. PIP was launched recently, with \$40 million (about £28 million) to be shared every year between a small number of the top players who have had the most impact on social media.

It has been suggested that the leaked video was used by Brooks to increase his profile and earn PIP recognition. When he saw how quickly it escalated, the theory goes, he came back for more. If people are to be rewarded and heroes supposedly to emerge from dissing their fellow competitors on social media, then we should all despair.

The support that Brooks has received, particularly from some high-profile fellow professionals, for this trolling is as surprising as it is

**I worry that Bryson will endure further heckling, probably starting with his defence of the US Open this week**

disappointing. They obviously don't see how in time this could play out against them during competition, never mind the long-term effects on the game. Golf is a sport demanding high concentration levels with the chances of distraction high. It is not a reactive sport where the loud atmosphere can drown out heckling or lessen its impact. Witness a furious Rory McIlroy having to step into the crowd at the 2016 Ryder Cup in Hazeltine when an American fan made a passing comment about his private life.

If the public continue to be encouraged to join in then we will have new levels of boisterous fan engagement at tournaments. I worry that Bryson will endure further heckling, probably starting with his defence of the US Open this week. If PIP is driving this new behaviour, then we are heading for a crash, particularly when you combine it with the increasing levels of gambling we are starting to see in golf.

Players turning publicly on each

other because of a personality disconnect is no way to grow the game. Just as there may be colleagues in your workplace whose company you would prefer not to share, so there are animosities in sport and golf. We accept it, that's life. It's well known that Phil Mickelson and Tiger Woods were never bosom pals. They didn't trade insults in public, instead they used their rivalry to spur one another on to greater feats – winning seven of the 12 majors from 2004 to 2006 and dominating the PGA Tour.

I know from my own experience on Ryder Cup teams – and this is no secret – that Sergio Garcia and Pádraig Harrington have had their differences. But point me to an interview or any public statement either has given in which they have resorted to mud-slinging. You can't, because they kept it in-house. What you can point to is two thrilling finishes to majors – the 2007 Open and 2008 US PGA. That is why we think of them as rivals.

I've been in a lot of locker rooms over the years and banter is an important part of it. Some of the put-downs from caddies and players over the years would grace any of the best comedy shows. However it stayed in the locker room and never involved engaging the public or crossing the line into competitive play.

My experience is that players are well able to take care of themselves one-on-one or in small groups but the game changes when you galvanise the public to get involved.

I know and have spent time with Brooks and Bryson. They are different but I like them both. They are two of the hottest young players around and could be duelling for the highest honours for at least a decade. They need to recognise that they are playing with huge consequences for themselves, their fellow competitors and the game. I don't believe they were brought up to think facilitating an atmosphere in which the public heckle players to win bets or cases of beer is acceptable.

## ON TV

US Open  
Thursday  
to Sunday  
Sky  
Sports  
Golf

A group of five men in dark grey suits and light blue shirts, standing in a line against a white background. The man in the center is looking directly at the camera, while the others are looking slightly to the side. The man on the far left has a ring on his finger.

**BOSS**

HUGO BOSS

**UNITED**



Stand aside  
Joshua  
and Fury,  
Josh Taylor

is  
**BRITAIN'S  
BEST BOXER**



**'Don't tell me someone can't be beaten. King Kong could be in the other corner and I'd believe I'd win'**

cheekbone. I had to have a reconstruction of my face. Pretty horrific at the time. I've never played golf since." The scar has survived.

At 11, he got his black belt in Taekwondo, then won a Scottish Cup medal with Musselburgh Windsor FC, and had a trial with Heart of Midlothian. He might have remained an all-rounder had Diane not told him about the boxing classes at the Meadowbank centre. Like a duck to water, he took to it.

He had a natural gift for the game. "I'd get in from school and then jump on a 26 bus to Edinburgh," Taylor says. "It would take me the best part of an hour. Training started at seven and I would be home around ten, Mondays and Wednesdays. A couple of my friends came with me but soon stopped. I kept it up because I loved it.

"I was 14 when I started, 15 when I had my first competitive fight. To give you an idea of how small I was, my first fight was at 46kg. That's 7st 3lb at the age of 15. I was tiny, absolutely tiny. I looked like a 10 or 12-year-old. I won the Scottish championship in my seventh fight."

A good amateur career was a prelude to an extraordinary professional one. His aggressive and technically accomplished style is suited to the pro game. Fiercely competitive, eager to learn, he cut a path through the jungle. "When I lost an amateur fight, I'd rail against the decision and my dad would say, 'Son, you've only been in the sport for two years,' but I couldn't see that," he says.

"I remember trying to learn to throw the right hook to the body when I was starting out. It is now one of my signature punches. At the start it felt really awkward and I couldn't get it right. I'm not doing this, because I can't do it, I'd scream. But I didn't stop until I'd mastered it. I had to get better."

Taylor is now ranked the fifth-best pound-for-pound fighter in the sport. He says that he wants to fight Terence Crawford, considered by many to be close to the best fighter on the planet. Half-jokingly, I suggest he shouldn't have anything to do with Crawford, who looks unbeatable.

"Unbeatable?" The mention of the word offends him. "Anyone saying that to me is going to have it rammed where the sun don't shine," Taylor says. "Don't tell me someone can't be beaten. King Kong could be in the opposite corner and I would still believe I'd win."

In rising to the top, Taylor followed a trail blazed by the great Scottish lightweight Ken Buchanan. The old champ is now 75 and they have become friends. "Ken's in a home in Leith, he suffers from a bit of dementia but he's still with it," Taylor says. "I haven't been able to see him since I've come back from Vegas but in the next week or so we're going to organise that he comes down to the house for a coffee and a chat. Ken's from Leith, I'm from Prestonpans, neighbours you could say, and the similarities between us are striking."

David Walsh

Josh Taylor is talking about that fight in Miami last weekend. Logan Paul, a successful YouTuber who says he's the "internet's biggest idiot", went eight rounds with Floyd Mayweather Jr. They were scheduled to fight but their encounter hardly amounted to that.

With Mayweather and Paul, the foreplay was better than the intercourse. Paul is 18 years younger than Mayweather and 3st heavier, and if he'd been able to box half as well he talked he would have won. Still, their meeting generated an estimated \$50million (£35million) in pay-per-view earnings. Mayweather claims he got another \$30million for the logos on his shorts.

Taylor is a Scottish fighter who two weeks before had fought the American José Ramírez in Las Vegas. At stake were all four world titles in the light welterweight division. Taylor turned up with two and at the end of a compelling fight, he had all four. He is the first Briton and only the fifth fighter in boxing history to simultaneously hold four world titles.

It was also his 18th fight and 18th victory. Before sharing a ring with Taylor, Ramírez had never lost.

So how can it be that Logan Paul, a personality on social media but without any boxing talent, should earn more for his non-fight than a highly accomplished world champion? How was it that Sky Sports would show the celebrity nonsense but not the Taylor fight?

"That fight was a farce," Taylor says. "You have the best of a generation, past his best, damaging his legacy by taking these circus fights.



Taylor proudly shows off the full set of belts that he acquired thanks to a fine win over Ramirez, above

Then there's Logan Paul, who has never boxed in his life. He is thinking he's a fighter, but he is not. Why would Floyd Mayweather do this? Well, \$50 million is a lot of money.

"It's bad for boxing because it makes a mockery of the sport. I get that Logan Paul and Jake Paul [his brother, who has also entered the ring] have huge followings on social media and they're bringing a new audience to the sport. I fear that this is going to become normal though. I hope it doesn't."

He says this matter-of-factly, without whining. The game has been good to Taylor. He's the WBC, WBA, WBO and IBF light welterweight champion. He has made a lot of money. He is 30 but looks younger. His answers are animated, his enthusiasm for life undimmed by his experience of the dark trade. The only scar is one inch long and sits on his left cheekbone.

From which fight, I ask? "It's an old golf injury," he says.

He grew up in Prestonpans, a fishing village about ten miles east of Edinburgh. James, his dad, was a gardener for the council, mum Diane worked on reception at the Meadowbank Sports Centre. Motorbikes were James's passion and as soon as Josh was old enough, he was a motorbike racer.

"When I was five years old my dad built me my own bike," he says. "He got something second hand, found an engine for it, added bits on, and for Christmas, that's what I got. I had a couple of Christmases when the present was a motorbike. My earliest memories are of going to races.

"I was a six-year-old when I finished sixth in the Scottish championships, mini-motorbike racing. Kids would be up to 12, I was in a junior class and finished sixth in my first year. It would have been my dream job but it's very expensive. My mum and dad never had that kind of money."

Prestonpans is a blue-collar town.

POUND-FOR-POUND LEADERS

		W	L	D
1	<b>Canelo Álvarez</b> RING, WBA, WBC, WBO Super middleweight (38 KO)	56	1	2
2	<b>Naoya Inoue</b> RING, IBF, WBA Bantamweight (17 KO)	20	0	0
3	<b>Terence Crawford</b> WBO Welterweight (28 KO)	37	0	0
4	<b>Oleksandr Usyk</b> RING, WBA, WBC, WBO Heavyweight (13 KO)	18	0	0
5	<b>Josh Taylor</b> RING, IBF, WBA, WBC, WBO Super lightweight (13 KO)	18	0	0

The way Taylor remembers it, everyone was a fighter. Bigger kids picked on smaller ones, older ones on younger ones. Small for his age, Taylor was a target. "Son," his dad would say, "if you don't stand up for yourself, it's going to keep happening." Fearful and desperate, little Josh hit back. From then, they left him alone.

He loved Prestonpans. "Tough little town but not a ghetto," he says. "Nothing to do, but always something going on." On summer days they would go swimming in the harbour. They would sneak on to Royal Musselburgh golf course, hide in the bushes and wait until balls landed close to their cover. After pocketing a few, they would return in the evening when the course was empty and hit balls into greens or play a few holes.

He might have been a decent golfer but his cousin, Sarah Archibald, ended that. "Sarah was very good at sports," Taylor says. "I was standing behind her and she swung the club, caught me on her follow-through. Complete accident. Smashed my

DAVID WALSH



Chief Sports Writer

At the small mountain town of Andermatt, the eight-day Tour of Switzerland ends this afternoon. The Swiss tour is the last major hurdle before the best riders in the world gather in Brittany for the start of the Tour de France on June 26. Today it will be a surprise if Richard Carapaz does not clinch victory in a race he has controlled since winning the fifth stage at Leukerbad in midweek.

Carapaz is Ecuadorian and a member of Ineos Grenadiers, the team sponsored by the British billionaire Jim Ratcliffe and run by Sir Dave Brailsford. Brought into the cycling world as Team Sky in 2010, they have been dominant since winning their first Tour de France in 2012. After that first success, the team went on to win the Tour in six of the next eight years.

Success hasn't come cheaply. By the time it made for the exit door, Sky was investing between £30 million and £40 million each year. The cost for Ratcliffe has risen and is now somewhere north of £50 million. In return, Brailsford delivers. Already this season Ineos riders have won the Giro d'Italia, the Critérium du Dauphiné, the Volta Catalunya and the Tour of Romandie.

Each race has been won by a different rider and Egan Bernal's victory in the Giro has been the high point of the cycling season so far. Once criticised for their too-conservative style of racing, the team now find different ways to win. Bernal broke away from his rivals in Italy to win two stages, Carapaz counterattacked strongly to join and out-sprint Jakob Fuglsang in Switzerland last week and, at the Dauphiné, Geraint Thomas daringly attacked from the bunch at the end of a flat stage to steal a stage win.

Two or three years ago that wouldn't have happened. In encouraging a less regimented style, Brailsford acknowledges that even though this may be the strongest squad he's ever assembled, it does not have one rider with the power and potential of Tadej Pogacar, the Slovenian who won last year's Tour de France at 21.

Everything that we've seen since then suggests that Pogacar has improved this year and that his chief rival at this Tour will be his compatriot Primoz Roglic, runner-up last year. Ineos's best chance of upsetting the



TOUR DE FRANCE  
COUNTDOWN  
CAN WE BELIEVE  
WHAT WE SEE?  
PT. I

# BEST OF BRITISH ... or tainted legacy?

If Ineos reprise Tour de France glory this year against tough opposition, could we really celebrate unreservedly?

RESULTS

FOOTBALL

Vanarama play-off semi-final

<b>TORQUAY 4</b>	<b>NOTTS COUNTY 2</b>
Wright 1, 48	Rodrigues 39
Hall 102	Chicksen 51
Moxey 105 (pen)	
HT: 1-1	Att: 1,709
*After extra time, 2-2 after 90 minutes	

European Championship

<b>Group A</b>	<b>SWITZERLAND 1</b>
<b>WALES 1</b>	Embolo 49
Moore 74	
HT: 0-0	

Group B

<b>DENMARK P</b>	<b>FINLAND P</b>
<b>BELGIUM L</b>	<b>RUSSIA L</b>

TENNIS

**Paris French Open, Women's final**  
B Krejčíková (Cz) bt A Pavlyuchenkova (Russ) 6-1, 2-6, 6-4.

**Nottingham Viking Open Nottingham**  
Men's F Tiafoe (US) bt M Copil (Rom) 6-3, 6-2.

**Women's semi-finals** J Konta (GB) bt N Stojanovic (Serbia) 6-2, 6-7(2), 7-5; Shuai Zhang (China) bt L Davis (US) 6-4, 6-3.

**Halle, Germany Noventi Open, first round qualifying**  
N Basilashvili (Geo) bt R Mollerker (Ger) 7-6(9-7), 7-6(7-5); J Duckworth (Aus) bt E Gulbis (Lat) 5-7, 7-5, 6-2; I Ivashka (Bel) bt T Ipo (Japan) 6-1, 6-3; Y

Hanfmann (Ger) bt A Muller (Fr) 2-6, 6-0, 7-5; D Galan Riveros (Col) bt N Kuhn (Sp) 7-6(7-2), 4-6, 7-6(7-4); D Novak (Aut) bt Y Maden (Ger) 6-4, ret.; J Sousa (Por) bt G Barrere (Fr) 3-6, 7-7(5), 6-4; C O'Connell (Aus) bt R Albot (Moldova) 4-6, 6-3, 7-5; M Giron (US) bt D Stricker (Switz) 6-4, 7-5; R Berankis (Lith) bt CM Stebe (Ger) 6-4, 2-1 ret.; L Lacko (Slovakia) bt E Gerasimov (Bel) 6-4, 7-5; A Rinderknech (Fr) bt S Stakhovskiy (Ukr).

GOLF

**South Carolina Palmetto Championship**  
Early third-round scores  
210 B Nimmer (US) (68, 75, 67).  
211 A Baddley (Aus) (70, 73, 68); J Bramlett (US) (71, 72, 68); R Shelton (US) (72, 71, 68).  
213 R Campos (Puerto Rico) (73, 70, 70); T Fleetwood (Eng) (68, 75, 70); W Gordon (US) (68, 75, 70); R Knox (Scot) (71, 71, 71).  
214 Sungjae Im (S Kor) (75, 68, 71); A Schenk (US) (73, 70, 71); P Uihlein (US) (73, 70, 71).  
215 R Garrigus (US) (69, 74, 72); J B Holmes (US) (69, 74, 72); J Teater (US) (68, 75, 72).

RUGBY LEAGUE

**Betfred Super League**

Leigh	30	Catalans Dragons	36				
	P W D L F A Pts						
Catalans Dragons	9	8	0	1	268	142	16
St Helens	8	7	0	1	206	70	14
Wigan	8	7	0	1	158	136	14
Warrington	9	6	1	2	302	157	13
Hull	9	5	1	3	179	143	11
Hull K R	9	5	0	4	223	204	10
Castleford	9	4	0	5	185	232	8
Leeds	8	3	0	5	150	136	6
Huddersfield	8	3	0	5	150	162	6
Wakefield	10	3	0	7	193	251	6
Salford	9	1	0	8	106	289	2
Leigh	10	0	0	10	154	352	0

RUGBY UNION

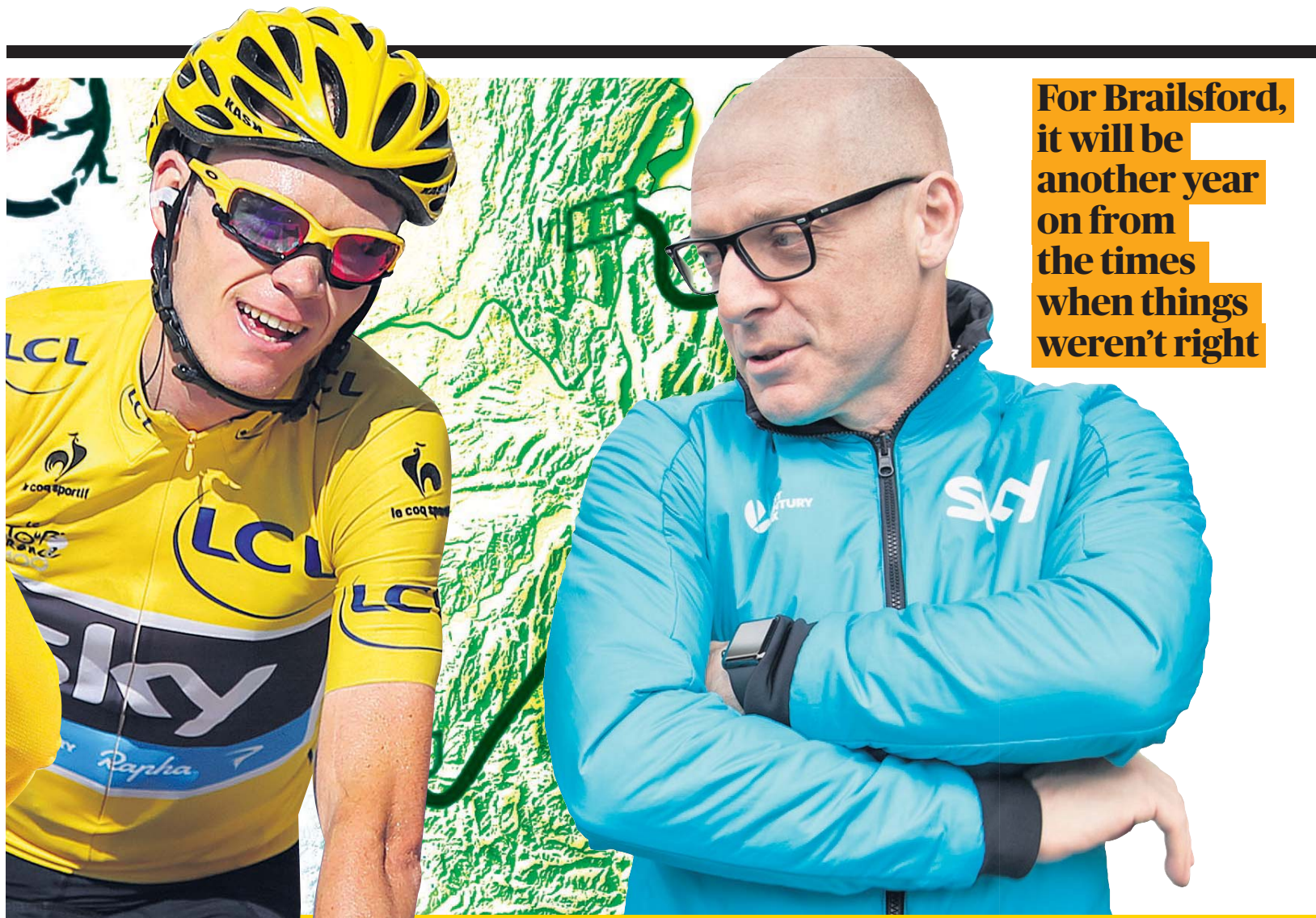
**Gallagher Premiership**

Bath	30	Northampton	24
<b>Bath: Tries</b> Underhill, Faletau, Du Toit, Bayliss. <b>Cons</b> Priestland 2. <b>Pens</b> Priestland 2. <b>Northampton: Tries</b> Naisiravoro 2, Hutchinson, Grayson. <b>Cons</b> Grayson 2. <b>HT</b> 15-19.			
<b>Bristol</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>Irish</b>
<b>Exeter</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>Sale</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Exeter: Tries</b> Cowan-Dickie, Townsend. <b>Cons</b> J Simmonds 2. <b>Pens</b> J Simmonds 2. <b>Sale: Tries</b> McGuigan, MacGinty, Reed. <b>Cons</b> MacGinty 2. <b>HT</b> 3-14.			
<b>Harlequins</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>Newcastle</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Harlequins: Tries</b> Kenningham, Care 2, Green, Lynagh, Marchant, Landajo, Gray. <b>Cons</b> Smith 5, Marchant, Tapuai. <b>Newcastle: Tries</b> McGuigan 2, Radwan, Blamire. <b>Cons</b> B Cannon 2, Hodgson. <b>HT</b> 28-12.			
<b>Wasps</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>Leicester</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Wasps: Tries</b> Vailanu 2, Umaga, Rowlands. <b>Cons:</b> Umaga 4. <b>Pen</b> Umaga. <b>Leicester: Tries</b> Henderson, Scott, Cole, Montoya, Lavanini. <b>Cons</b> McPhillips 5. <b>Pen</b> McPhillips. <b>HT</b> 21-24.			

	P	W	D	L	F	A	B	Pts
<b>Exeter (Q)</b>	22	17	0	5	624	356	14	82
<b>Bristol (Q)</b>	21	16	1	4	561	379	15	81
<b>Sale (Q)</b>	22	16	0	6	537	401	10	74
<b>Harlequins (Q)</b>	22	13	1	8	703	564	15	71
<b>Northampton</b>	22	11	0	11	469	457	11	57
<b>Leicester</b>	22	11	0	11	478	492	8	54
<b>Bath</b>	22	10	0	12	494	604	12	52
<b>Wasps</b>	22	9	0	13	539	624	14	50
<b>L Irish</b>	21	6	2	13	439	531	14	46
<b>Newcastle</b>	22	9	0	13	385	512	5	45
<b>Gloucester</b>	22	7	0	15	450	518	13	45
<b>Worcester</b>	22	4	0	18	326	567	11	27

**PRO14 Rainbow Cup**  
Sharks L Bulls L.

**Super Rugby**  
Rebels 26 Crusaders 52; Blues 31 Force 21; Waratahs 7 Chiefs 40.



**For Brailsford, it will be another year on from the times when things weren't right**

Can Ineos and their peers in today's peloton be trusted? Last week two anonymous sources from within cycling accused the Bahrain Victorious team of doping. The accusers did not offer evidence of wrongdoing.

Perhaps the most striking development of very recent times has been the success of young riders. Bernal was 22 when he won the Tour de France in 2019, Pogacar was 21 when he won last year's race. They are the two youngest winners of the Tour since 1904 and 1909, and in the all-time list of youngest winners, Pogacar is second while Bernal is fourth.

If the sport had an endemic doping culture in which experienced riders could refine their doping programme year-on-year, could two relative rookies win in their first and second Tour de France? It's not likely. In the darkest years, especially the seven dominated by Lance Armstrong, no rookie or young rider contended. It is also true that the anti-doping protocols are stronger now than in the past, but that has not been difficult.

When Ratcliffe decided to invest in the team, he first employed a law firm to discreetly investigate the team and their methods. The investigators told him they believed it was safe for him to get involved. There is nothing to suggest that the more recent successes have been achieved dishonestly. Yet the team are haunted by their past and what happened from 2011 to 2013 remains the subject of separate investigations by the World Anti-Doping Agency (Wada) and UK Anti-Doping (Ukad).

Richard Freeman, at one time lead doctor to British Cycling and Team Sky, has been struck off the medical register for failings related to the delivery of a doping product to the headquarters of British Cycling and

## TEAM SKY AND INEOS'S BUMPS IN THE ROAD

**Oct 2012** Team Sky announce that Dr Geert Leinders will stop working with the team after an internal investigation into allegations he was involved in doping earlier in his career.

**Sept 2016** Chris Froome and Bradley Wiggins are the subject of a hack by the Russian group Fancy Bear after Wada's Anti-Doping Administration and Management System is targeted. The data released alleges they used banned substances for which they obtained a therapeutic use exemption (TUE).

**Oct 2016** UK Anti-doping (Ukad) expands its inquiry into British cycling after reports that an unidentified medical package was delivered from the UK to Sky's bus in France in 2011.

Sir Dave Brailsford tells a parliamentary select committee that the package delivered to Team Sky's bus during the 2011 Tour de France was Fluimucil, a drug on the permitted Wada list to treat coughs and sore throats.

**Nov 2017** Ukad closes its investigation into the contents of the mystery Jiffy bag transported from the UK to France, stating it had been "hampered" by the lack of accurate medical records available at British Cycling.

**Mar 2018** The select committee's report finds that Wiggins and Team Sky "crossed an ethical line" by using medical drugs to enhance their performance. Wiggins rejects the accusations.

Team Sky. Freeman is appealing the Medical Council judgment. His case will be considered on November 23.

That fit-to-practise case began in February 2019 and was expected to run for four weeks. It dragged on for more than two years and by the end it was clear that the culture which underpinned extraordinary success in Olympic track cycling and at the Tour de France was, in some respects, dysfunctional.

Freeman now works two days a week as a physician's assistant. Legal fees in his fit-to-practise case ran into seven figures and were borne by the Medical Defence Union. The tribunal considered Freeman's explanation for why he'd ordered 30 sachets of testosterone implausible and concluded that he ordered it "knowing or believing" it was for an unnamed athlete.

Believing he has been wronged, Freeman is committed to an appeal that he cannot afford. His barrister, Mary O'Rourke, and his solicitor are both working on a "no win, no fee" basis, as the former doctor now earns a fraction of the £125,000 salary he enjoyed at Team Sky.

It is clear that Freeman made mistakes, and equally certain that he was not acting alone. Whoever the intended recipient of the testosterone sachets, and indeed significant amounts of the corticosteroid triamcinolone acetone, he did not order this stuff for his own use. Those who care for Freeman say his weakness was wanting to please important people in the team, most notably Sir Bradley Wiggins, Brailsford and Dr Steve Peters.

Riders of that time remember how Freeman wanted to work with riders such as Wiggins and Mark Cavendish. Another rider recalls Wiggins leasing a private aircraft to pick him up at the end of a race and Freeman being given a ride back to Manchester. But once

the Medical Council case began, Freeman found himself without friends.

His legal team emailed his former colleagues, asking if it was possible for them to write a testimonial for their client. Some replied that it would not be appropriate, others ignored the request. Freeman then began to see that he was the fall guy for a culture that wasn't what it purported to be.

O'Rourke believed Brailsford should have been a witness at the tribunal. "Dave Brailsford is the spectre missing at these proceedings," she said, summing up. "He would have been able to answer an awful lot of questions about what was going on at British Cycling and Team Sky. He was never called."

After the doctor was struck off, the *Mail On Sunday* ran a story about a British cyclist testing positive for nandrolone in 2010, but, as the amount was small, Ukad allowed British Cycling to conduct follow-up tests at a private laboratory in an attempt to ascertain the source of the substance. This is against Wada protocols and prompted an investigation, which is ongoing.

Freeman has said that he will co-operate with Wada and has in his possession emails that demonstrate that the private tests were agreed by people within British Cycling, Team Sky and Ukad.

Nothing with Freeman is ever certain, and there is a suggestion that, as Wada is refusing to offer him immunity, he is fearful of implicating himself in a new doping infraction and therefore may not co-operate, at least not until his appeal is heard.

Ukad's separate investigation into Freeman and the culture at British Cycling and Team Sky has also been paused, pending the outcome of his appeal. Time passes and Wada's ten-year statute of limitations on doping cases may mean the unofficial 2010 tests now fall outside of that statute.

Since his appearance before the digital, culture, media and sport committee in December 2016, Brailsford has not spoken publicly about the Freeman case. Back then he admitted to mistakes in his handling of issues, but no more than that.

From that point he has not spoken about the testosterone delivery, nor about the controversial therapeutic use exemptions arranged by Freeman for Wiggins, and not about the mystery that for so long surrounded the jiffy bag couriered from London to France with a product that Freeman administered to Wiggins.

His silence has not helped Freeman, nor our understanding of what was going on, but, from Brailsford's point of view, it hasn't made the problem any worse.

Peters has been similarly reluctant to engage publicly in the conversations that have taken place since Freeman has had his livelihood taken away. And the same is true of all the athletes who were winning at the Olympics and on the road.

No one condemns Freeman, but nor does anyone support him. "Richard Freeman was part of a profession that had a regulator," O'Rourke says. "Others weren't in that position. That's the difference."

Another Tour de France begins 13 days from now. Ineos Grenadiers may not have a rider strong enough to beat Pogacar, but the team will perform well and enjoy some victories.

For Brailsford, it will be another year on from the times when things weren't right.

two favourites lies in having three, possibly four potential Tour winners in their team.

Carapaz may be their strongest climber but Richie Porte, Thomas and Tao Geoghegan Hart are all capable of challenging for the Yellow Jersey. All are in good form and for a team to trouble Pogacar, they'll need to use their strength as a team rather than rely on one rider. Carapaz may ascend as well as any but the two individual time-trials will hurt his chances.

What is certain is that after the disappointment of Bernal's injury-related abandonment of last year's Tour, Ineos are better prepared for this year's race. At the very least, their less predictable tactics will make the Tour more exciting.

Along with the success comes the question of whether we can unreservedly celebrate the achievements of the Ineos team and of British cycling.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Send your letters to: The Sports Editor, The Sunday Times, 1 London Bridge St London, SE1 9GF email: sportletters@sunday-times.co.uk

## TODAY'S RACECARDS

### Doncaster

Going good to firm-good in places Draw no advantage

Rob Wright's tips: 1.45 Aweemaweh 2.15 Private Signal 2.45 Line Of Descent 3.15 Jawwaal 3.45 Zagato 4.15 Akkeringa (map) 4.45 Summer's Knight

1.45 GET HUGH TAYLOR'S TIPS ON ATTERACES.COM HANDICAP £2,862: 1M 6F (11)

1	(3)30-610	End Zone	10 (BF)	R Fell	4-9-8	J Hart
2	(10)15-050	Harbour Vision	13 (P,CD)	D Brown	6-9-8	M Crehan (3)
3	(7)600040	Spartan Fighter	33 (V)	A Brittain	4-9-7	C Hardie
4	(11)402244	Glenn Coco	25 (P,T,D)	S C Williams	7-9-7	A Atzeni
5	(8)524160	Athollblair Boy	9 (CD)	N Tinkler	8-9-6	F McManoman (3)
6	(4)255304	Thrave	13 (P,D)	M Appleby	6-9-4	F Larson (7)
7	(2)035-24	Capla Berry	12 (T,CD)	R Guest	5-9-3	W Buick
8	(1)3100-0	Blue Skyline	22 (H,T,D)	D Elsworth	4-9-3	D Costello
9	(5)-61305	Aweemaweh	12 (P,D)	M Channon	4-9-0	G Bass (5)
10	(9)64-640	Turquoise Kingdom	26 S & E	Crisford	4-8-13	L Morris
11	(6)544-32	Florenza	15 (CD)	C Fairhurst	8-8-8	A Elliott

Betting: 10-3 Capla Berry, 4-1 End Zone, 13-2 Florenza, Glenn Coco, 8-1 Athollblair Boy, 10-1 Aweemaweh, 12-1 Harbour Vision, 14-1 others

2.15 SKY SPORTS RACING SKY 415 EBF MAIDEN STAKES (GBB RACE) £3,132: 7F (9)

1	(9)	4	Aswan	16 S & E	Crisford	9-5	James Doyle
2	(8)		Austrian Theory	M Johnston	9-5	J Fanning	
3	(1)		Dynamic Talent	Darryll Holland	9-5	A Atzeni	
4	(2)		Flaming Lord	Harry Eustace	9-5	G Wood	
5	(4)		Itsgoodtoebus	N Tinkler	9-5	R Scott	
6	(3)		Oh Great	R Varian	9-5	J Mitchell	
7	(6)		Private Signal	C Appleby	9-5	W Buick	
8	(7)	6	Sir Lelo	33 T	Dascombe	9-5	Jane Elliott
9	(5)	0	Travers	25 S P	C Woods	9-5	L Morris

Betting: 7-4 Private Signal, 5-2 Aswan, 4-1 Oh Great, 8-1 Austrian Theory, 14-1 Sir Lelo, 20-1 others

2.45 VISIT ATTERACES.COM/MARKETMOVERS MAIDEN STAKES £3,024: 1M 4F (11)

1	(11)	0	Platinumcard	9 K	Dalglish	6-10-0	B Garrity (3)
2	(8)	000	Rothson	12 B	Rothwell	4-10-0	F McManoman (3)
3	(5)		Welsh Wayne	J57 T	Dascombe	4-10-0	Jane Elliott

As someone who saw both John Charles and Gareth Edwards play, I would be hard pressed to agree with Jonny Owen's view (Extra Time, June 6) that Gareth Bale is Wales's greatest sportsman/footballer. I regard his career as a waste of a great talent, for which he has been lucky to be paid a disproportionate salary. Granted he has always turned up and performed for Wales, but his commitment to Madrid has appeared frivolous and unprofessional. By contrast, Charles played in an era when he got little protection from referees, as

witnessed by him being hacked out of the 1958 World Cup. He could play outstandingly well in either attack or defence, and is still regarded in Turin as Juventus's greatest ever player. As for Edwards, the comparison would hardly flatter Bale.

**Dave Lees, Swansea**

The argument (Rod Liddle, June 6) that towns of the size of Chesterfield, Hartlepool, Rochdale and Stockport cannot now support a Football League Club is surely dashed by the example of Burnley.

The town's population is smaller than all these places, yet Burnley FC has spent the past 20 years in the top two divisions, and will shortly commence their sixth successive campaign in the Premier League.

**C.J. Rawson, Burnley**

I enjoyed your Euros supplement but if Charlie Adam is to be a BBC pundit I hope he doesn't repeat his claim that "Wales escaped from their group last time out with three points". At Euro 2016 Wales actually won group B after victories over Slovakia and Russia, pushing

England into second place in the group. I appreciate Scotland have not been at a major tournament for some time but perhaps a bit more research, Charlie?

**Phil Edge, Langport, Somerset**

Naomi Osaka's withdrawal from the French Open for reasons of mental health should be viewed in the same light as Roger Federer's withdrawal for reasons of physical health. Her current position as world No2 is testimony to her mental strength, not her weakness.

**Stan Labovitch, Windsor**

4.45 WATCH FREE RACE REPLAYS ON ATTERACES.COM HANDICAP £2,862: 1M 6F 115YDS (5)

1	(5)	-62142	Clifftop Heaven	8 M	Walford	4-10-0	J Garrity
2	(4)	4-2353	Seagulls Nest	12 M	Channon	4-10-0	G Bass (5)
3	(3)	5/53-4	Debbonair	J20 (C)	F Brennan	5-9-5	M Crehan (3)
4	(1)	061-23	Fandabidozi	11 M	Johnston	3-8-11	J Fanning
5	(2)	6055-4	Summer's Knight	20 (BF)	Sir M Prescott	3-8-4	L Morris

Betting: 9-4 Summer's Knight, 5-2 Clifftop Heaven, 3-1 Seagulls Nest, 7-2 Fandabidozi, 20-1 Debbonair

### Salisbury

Going: good to firm-good in places Draw 5F-1m, low numbers best

Rob Wright's tips: 2.08 Amal 2.38 Kool Moe Dee 3.08 Frankella 3.38 Khaadem 4.08 Kindred Spirit (nb) 4.38 Deep Snow 5.10 Rhebus Road

2.08 BYERLEY STUD RACING EXCELLENCE APPRENTICE HANDICAP £2,781: 7F (13)

1	(2)	600-50	Amal	22 J	R Jenkins	9-7	L Browne (5)
2	(10)	000-0	Yanifer	26 J	Osborne	9-6	Charlie O'dwyer (5)
3	(6)	00-601	Mountain Ash	26 B	Millman	9-6	O McSweeney
4	(15)4-304	Rainbow Sign	24 M	Pattinson	9-5	B Harris (5)	
5	(8)	-64014	Little Gem	26 (D)	C Fellowes	9-5	S Mooney (3)
6	(9)	660-03	Dama Bianca	26 (B)	M Botti	9-4	C Howarth (5)
7	(10)5560-0	Mia Mia	48 J	Portman	9-4	J Peate (5)	
8	(3)	066-00	Harworth	117 D	Brown	9-4	J Shinnick (3)
9	(11)531026	Puffin Island	54 (D)	H Spiller	9-3	O Lewis (5)	
10	(4)	00652	Queen Sarabi	26 A	Carroll	9-3	Mollie Phillips
11	(7)	440-00	Bannergirl	21 M	Gillard	9-0	Morgan Cole (5)
12	(5)	00-000	Vivian Grey	21 (T)	Joe Ponting	8-12	Erika Parkinsson
13	(1)	0000-0	Pulsation	26 (P)	M Harris	8-12	A Jary (5)

Betting: 11-4 Mountain Ash, 9-2 Queen Sarabi, 11-2 Little Gem, 6-1 Dama Bianca, 10-1 Rainbow Sign, Puffin Island, 12-1 Bannergirl, 14-1 others

2.38 YEW TREE INN HANDICAP £4,455: 5F (6)

1	(6)	3-5550	Lomu	110 (D)	D Loughnane	7-10-2	H Doyle
2	(2)	352-24	Beyond Equal	30 (C)	W Kittow	6-10-1	R Hornby
3	(4)	52-001	Rose Hip	13 (D)	A Carroll	6-10-1	T Marquand
4	(1)	5-26D6	Newyorkstateofmind	13 (B,D)	Muir & Grassick	4-9-5	David Egan
5	(3)	40-654	Kool Moe Dee	22 (D)	R Hannan	3-9-1	S M Levey
6	(5)	150-44	Coronation Cottage	12 (D)	M Saunders	7-8-9	C Bennett

Betting: 5-2 Beyond Equal, 11-4 Rose Hip, 3-1 Kool Moe Dee, 11-2 Coronation Cottage, 10-1 Newyorkstateofmind, 12-1 Lomu

3.08 BYERLEY STUD PETER & VIRGINIA WALWYN MEMORIAL NOVICE STAKES (GBB RACE) £3,726: 6F (9)

1	(5)		Allfalia	Owen Burrows	9-5	J Crowley
---	-----	--	----------	--------------	-----	-----------

2 (9) Auditor M Meade 9-5 T Marquand

3 (7) Awesome Lawson C Cox 9-5 L Keniry

4 (4) Cardinal Rover R Beckett 9-5 R Hornby

5 (2) Carewell Cover R Hughes 9-5 David Egan

6 (1) 60 Marsh Benham 15 C Hills 9-5 K Shoemark

7 (6) Pangloss A King 9-5 M Harley

8 (3) Frankella A Balding 9-0 O Murphy

9 (8) System R Hannan 9-0 S M Levey

Betting: 5-2 Frankella, 9-2 Allfalia, 6-1 System, 13-2 others

Balding, Tote: £11.70; £2.40, £1.20, £1.40, Exacta: £24.50. CSF: £23.16. Tricast: £55.29. Trifecta: £155.50

4.00 (1m 1f 209yd) 1. Betty Crean L A (R L Moore, 11-2); 2, Khaiz (6-4 fav); 3, Poet Of Life (4-1). 8 ran. Hd, ns. 1¼, ns. D Muenisier. Tote: £5.40; £1.60, £1.10, £1.60. Exacta: £16.40. CSF: £13.88.

4.35 (1m 6f) 1. General Zoff (S De Sousa, 6-1); 2, Dance To Paris (12-1); 3, Tigerten (13-2). 10 ran. ¾l, ¼l, Muir Grassick. Tote: £6.50; £2.10, £2.60, £2.20. Exacta: £62.30. CSF: £74.75. Tricast: £483.56. Trifecta: £367.40

### York

Going: good to firm

2.00 (1m 3f 188yd) 1. Nicholas T (Miss A Waugh, 10-3); 2, Arctic Fox (5-1); 3, Byron Flyer (7-2). 6 ran. NR: Civil Law, Viaduct, 1l, 1¼. J S Goldie. Tote: £3.90; £2.10, £2.50. Exacta: £19.50. CSF: £19.59. Tricast: £58.73. Trifecta: £57.10

2.35 (7f) 1. Baashir (Jim Crowley, 9-2 fav); 2, National League (11-2); 3, Dazzling Dan (11-2). 11 ran. Hd, 4¼. C Hills. Tote: £5.50; £2.20, £2.20, £2.30. Exacta: £32.20. CSF: £27.87. Tricast: £142.04. Trifecta: £122.50

3.05 (1m 5f 188yd) 1. Roberto Escobarr (Tom Marquand, 11-8 fav); 2, Red Verdon (9-2); 3, Makawee (3-1). 4 ran. 1¼l, 1¼, W J Haggas. Tote: £2.20; . Exacta: £8.00. CSF: £7.64. Trifecta: £21.30

3.40 (6f) 1. First Folio (Daniel Muscutt, 13-2); 2, Blackrod (18-1); 3, Evguson (15-1); 4, Jadwalk (7-1). 17 ran. 1¼, ¼l, J Fry Up. Tote: £9.10; £2.20, £4.50, £5.50, £1.80. Exacta: £177.00. CSF: £114.03. Tricast: £2,161.88. Trifecta: £4,982.00

4.15 (6f) 1. Bosh (Tom Marquand, 5-2); 2, Gis A Sub (13-2); 3, Bond Power (9-2). 9 ran. ns, 4l, R Hannan. Tote: £3.30; £1.20, £2.20, £1.70. Exacta: £19.80. CSF: £19.29. Trifecta: £88.70

4.50 (1m 177yd) 1. La Trinidad (Jason Hart, 4-1); 2, Delgrey Boy (3-1 fav); 3, Irv (13-2). 15 ran. Nk, 1¼l, R Fell. Tote: £4.20; £1.60, £2.00, £2.70. Exacta: £19.60. CSF: £15.13. Tricast: £80.31

5.25 (6f) 1. Mr Wagyu (Jason Hart, 13-2); 2, Pockley (16-1); 3, Abate (14-1); 4, Cottam Lane (12-1). 19 ran. NR: Dark Shot, 2¼, sh hd, J J Quinn. Tote: £7.30; £2.20, £2.60, £3.10, £3.50. Exacta: £152.70. CSF: £104.16. Tricast: £1,445.55. Trifecta: £3,443.70

5.10 GRAHAM FITCH & JANE WEBLING THANK NHS HANDICAP £2,700: 1M 4F (7)

1	(5)	04344	Marsden Cross	27 Sir	M Todd	9-9	D Probert
2	(4)	06-433	Spirit Mixer	15 (BF)	A Balding	9-8	O Murphy
3	(6)	4514	Tajdid	32 (CD)	R Hannan	9-7	S M Levey
4	(2)	004-03	Rhebus Road	17 R	Beckett	9-7	R P Downey
5	(3)	000-4	Alerta Roja	33 Sir	M Prescott	9-6	R Tate
6	(7)	33-530	Where You At	27 S	Kirk	9-4	T Marquand
7	(1)	006	George Bancroft	178 R	Varian	9-2	C Shephard

Betting: 3-1 Spirit Mixer, 4-1 Tajdid, 9-2 Rhebus Road, 11-2 others

### Downpatrick

Going: good (watered)

1.30 (2m 2f 165yd, hdle) 1. Butterfliespiere (J P O'Sullivan, 11-10 fav); 2, Optional Mix (4-1); 3, Hanoi Jane (3-1). 9 ran. NR: Bennystaria, 12l, ¾l. Peter Fahey. Tote: £2.20; £1.10, £1.60, £1.10. Exacta: £67.20. CSF: £66.28. Trifecta: £171.80

2.05 (2m 1f 65yd, hdle) 1. Itsalonglongroad (C D Timmons, 10-1); 2, Sweet Sixteen (8-1); 3, Top Line Tommy (14-1). 11 ran. NR: Monatomic, 2¼, sh hd, J C McConnell. Tote: £6.80; £1.60, £2.80, £4.70. Exacta: £27.50. CSF: £90.40. Tricast: £1,138.71. Trifecta: £419.10

2.40 (2m 5f 60yd, hdle) 1. Arizona Flyer (Mr M C O'Donovan, 9-2 fav); 2, Game Catch (17-2); 3, Newtown Pery (15-2). 14 ran. NR: Ask The Leader, Eightytwo Team, Lady Limeron, 2¼, ¾l. M Winters. Tote: £4.40; £1.40, £3.20, £3.00. Exacta: £41.60. CSF: £40.99. Tricast: £285.35. Trifecta: £375.00

3.15 (2m 5f 60yd) 1. Icee M B A (Mr T Hamilton, 7-1); 2, Natural Breeze (18-5 fav); 3, Nuttoriggio (9-2). 14 ran. NR: Ballyad, Little Mar, Roscomroe, 1¼, 4l, M Hourigan. Tote: £8.70; £3.30, £1.60, £3.50. Exacta: £17.30. CSF: £33.88. Tricast: £131.60. Trifecta: £136.60

"Does not include late results from Downpatrick

### Limerick

Going: good (good to firm in places)

1.50 (7f) 1. Dolly May (G M Ryan, 33-1); 2, Bellabel (20-1); 3, Arges (5-1). 13 ran. NR: Karakoul, Octola . Nk, nk. J J Barrett. Tote: £55.20; £11.60, £4.00, £1.70. Exacta: £1,020.60. CSF: £553.92

2.25 (6f 150yd) 1. Punk Poet (S M Crosse, 4-1); 2, Mudawy (10-3 fav); 3, Irish Acclaim (22-1). 11 ran. NR: Ice Cold In Alex, Ramon Di Loria, Nk, 1¼l, E Lynam. Tote: £5.40; £2.20, £1.10, £4.90. Exacta: £22.90. CSF: £18.04. Trifecta: £332.20

3.00 (6f 150yd) 1. Trueba (Wesley Joyce, 3-1 fav); 2, Musalsal (4-1); 3, Theriverrunndeg (40-1). 12 ran. NR: Baby Power, Vazzy, Viv Vance, 1l, 4l, J P Murtagh. Tote: £4.00; £1.30, £1.80, £9.60. Exacta: £17.30. CSF: £14.51. Tricast: £412.74. Trifecta: £330.80

"Does not include late results from Limerick  
"Does not include late results from Leicester and Worcester

## YESTERDAY'S RESULTS

### Bath

Going: firm

1.20 (1m 3f 137yd) 1. Lady Elysia (Georgia Dobie, 5-2); 2, Super Superjack (5-1); 3, Opine (6-1). 9 ran. NR: Good Impression, It's How We Roll. Sh hd, ¾l. Eve Johnson Houghton. Tote: £3.40; £1.40, £1.80, £1.30. Exacta: £17.60. CSF: £15.55. Tricast: £66.72. Trifecta: £77.10

1.55 (5f 10yd) 1. Delmona (Jane Elliott, 11-1); 2, Symphony Perfect (11-10 fav); 3, Lucky Shake (11-2). 7 ran. 1l, 2l, Tom Dascombe. Tote: £7.30; £3.50, £1.40. Exacta: £24.00. CSF: £23.20. Trifecta: £104.30

2.30 (5f 10yd) 1. Clarendon House (L Morris, 2-7 fav); 2, Kingston Star (6-1); 3, Rose All Day (11-2). 5 ran. NR: Beet The Rain, 9l, 4¼. R M H Cowell. Tote: £1.10; £1.10, £2.20. Exacta: £3.00. CSF: £2.72. Trifecta: £3.80

3.10 (1m) 1. Keeper's Choice (Tyler Heard, 13-8 fav); 2, Prize Fighting (3-1); 3, Blessed (9-1). 6 ran. NR: Air Of York, Never Said Nothing, ¾l, 2¼l, A Wintle. Tote: £2.60; £1.50, £1.80. Exacta: £7.60. CSF: £6.85. Tricast: £30.76. Trifecta: £30.10

3.45 (5f 160yd) 1. Temple Bruer (Saffie Osborne, 13-8 fav); 2, Harmony Lil (13-2); 3, Street Parade (10-1). 7 ran. NR: Michaels Choice, Sarah's Verse, ¾l, 1¼l, E Walker. Tote: £2.40; £1.40, £3.10. Exacta: £14.00. CSF: £12.65. Tricast: £78.58. Trifecta: £69.60

4.20 (1m 2f 37yd) 1. Hashtagmetoo (Saffie Osborne, 5-1); 2, Quemonda (5-4 fav); 3, Broadhaven (11-2). 4 ran. NR: Precision Storm, Red Gunner, Tropical Cyclone. Sh hd, 7l, A Osborne. Tote: £4.30; . Exacta: £10.90. CSF: £11.92.

### Chester

Going: good to firm

1.40 (5f 15yd) 1. Lost My Sock (J Fanning, 7-1); 2, Rebel At Dawn (5-2); 3, Havagomecca (7-2). 5 ran. Sh hd, ¼l, T D

Easterby. Tote: £7.20; £3.20, £1.50. Exacta: £26.90. CSF: £24.63. Trifecta: £66.50

2.10 (6f 17yd) 1. Look Out Louis (J P Sullivan, 11-2); 2, Sir Maximilian (10-1); 3, Lincoln Park (4-1 fav). 14 ran. Nk, 2¼. Miss J A Camacho. Tote: £5.30; £1.70, £3.40, £2.40. Exacta: £62.30. CSF: £56.93. Tricast: £208.36. Trifecta: £321.00



2.45 (1m 4f 63yd) 1. Elhafei (F Norton, 4

# ANATOMY OF ...PHIL MICKELSON

After a surprise win, aged 50, at the USPGA last month, the American goes into this week's US Open with renewed hope of becoming the sixth golfer to complete a career grand slam...

by Angus Oliver

## FACTFILE

Age	50	Majors won	
Height	6ft 3in	 <b>Masters</b>	2004, 2006, 2010
Weight	14st	 <b>USPGA Championship</b>	2005, 2021
World ranking	31	 <b>The Open</b>	2013
Highest ranking	2		
Professional wins	55		
Career prize money*	<b>\$94,611,761</b>		

\*PGA Tour

## GETTING FIT

Having identified the need to stay in shape in order to keep up with the big hitters of the modern game, Mickelson underwent a radical change in physique in 2019. He fasted for six days, drinking only coffee, and has since cut down on meat and sugar. He took up martial arts to improve his core strength and flexibility, he set up a wellness company selling a coffee blend containing collagen and Himalayan pink salt and he started meditating to stay "present" during rounds. What resulted was Mickelson shedding over a stone and generating the fastest average clubhead speed of his career.

## BOMBS

Having lost all that weight Mickelson finished 2019 ranked 19th for driving distance on the PGA Tour. Two of his primary drives are his "bombs" and his "hellacious seeds". "A bomb is high and nasty," he said before a tournament in May last year. "A hellacious seed is a streaming low hot runner. Tiger [Woods] likes to hit stingers and those are cute...hellacious seeds are going by a stinger so fast."

## LEFTY

Despite doing everything else in his life right-handed, Mickelson earned the moniker of "lefty" for being one of the only left-handed players on tour. It began when his father, Phil Mickelson Sr., was practicing his chipping in the garden one day and his son picked up a club and started copying him. Mickelson mirrored his father's right-handed swing, meaning he took the club back to the left, and the swing stuck.

## SHORT GAME

While Mickelson's golf has often been plagued by erratic driving, many contend that there has never been a better wedge player than him. He carries three Callaway wedges in his bag currently and is renowned for his flop shots.

## CALVES

Such are the size and definition of Mickelson's calves — "Calves like Adonis," as he brands them — that he ironically posted a five-part video workout series on social media for fans to bulk their calves like him. No wonder he has taken to frequently wearing shorts since the USGA allowed players to do so on the PGA Tour.

# LESSONS FROM A LIFE IN SPORT OLLIE PHILLIPS

Former England sevens captain on champagne, Dad's Army and coming unstuck through glue



## WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

I wasn't from a rugby family. It all stemmed from being a boisterous kid with loads of energy and a younger brother I was bashing up too many times. Mum and Dad were desperate to get me out of the house.

## MY BREAKTHROUGH MOMENT

At Durham University, I'd drive to Aldershot every weekend to play for Harlequins seconds until I joined Newcastle Falcons, 20 miles up the road. There, watching icons such as Jason Leonard and Dan Luger made me realise I was in the shop window. I started to think I could turn professional.

## THE COACH I LOOKED UP TO

Durham's Ted Wood, a Yorkshireman who loved getting stuck into soft southerners. He made a fantastic impression on me, personally and professionally.

## MY CHILDHOOD HERO

Anyone on *Living With Lions*, the 1997 tour documentary. I must have watched it 50 times. I can quote it chapter and verse. I'm obsessed.

## RUGBY NEVER GOT ANY BETTER THAN...

Captaining the Sevens World Series leg in Wellington in 2009. Everyone hated us and they played the *Dad's Army* theme before we went out. We were 17-0 down, but won 19-17. At that moment there was complete silence...

## MORNING I HAD THE HANGOVER TO END ALL HANGOVERS

2000, doing pre-match hospitality for France v England at the Stade de France. It was hot, we were sat at the bar swilling champagne and I'd no idea how pissed I was until the third bottle. My family had come over specially, but next morning I couldn't show them Paris. I slept for 48 hours.

## MY FAVOURITE GROUND

Clermont in France: they live and breathe rugby down there. It's really hostile.

## MY LEAST FAVOURITE GROUND

Welford Road. The pitch always felt smaller than others, it always rained and Leicester just wanted to beat people up. Playing on the wing, I wasn't up for that. I wanted to dance around.

## MY TOUGHEST OPPONENT

James Simpson-Daniel. He was magical. I could never read what he was going to do.

## MOST EMBARRASSING MOMENT FROM MY CAREER

Playing for Newcastle at Kingsholm, ten games into my career. It was the only time I sprayed glue on my hands. I caught the ball in the 22 and was ready to knock it 50 yards but it stuck. I thought that was the end of it, but in *Sky Rugby Club*, Will Greenwood said: "I'm sorry but we couldn't let this go" and played it in slow-motion with the caption "Phillips howler". My so-called best man showed it again on my wedding day.

## I LEARNT MOST FROM...

Newcastle coach Steve Black. He was a squat Geordie bloke, but he gave me a support structure: "Maximise your strengths, manage your



Magical... Simpson-Daniel

weaknesses". And Matt Burke, the Australian full back, who had an amazing, clairvoyant ability to predict the game.

## DAY I KNEW THE GAME WAS UP

Unfortunately, the decision was made for me. At the 2013 Sevens World Cup final, I collapsed in a heap with nobody close. I'd severed the nerve in my calf.

## MY ONE REGRET

That my last roll of the dice couldn't have been captaining Team GB at the Rio Olympics, and winning a medal.

## BEST ADVICE FOR A YOUNG SPORTSPERSON

Have an attitude of gratitude.  
John Aizlewood  
*Ollie Phillips is the founder of Optimist Performance, which specialises in performance coaching, leadership and behavioural change.*  
[optimistperformance.com](http://optimistperformance.com)

## YOUR NEXT DOWNLOAD

### MARK WALTERS: IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF ANDREW WATSON BBC IPLAYER

When Mark Walters arrived at Rangers in 1987, he was the only black player in Scottish top-flight football. However, he wasn't the first. Nor, in fact, was the half-Scottish, half-Guyanese Andrew Watson, but as a Queen's Park full back

in the Scottish Cup Final of 1881, he was the first black footballer to win a major competition. That same year, he captained Scotland when they inflicted England's 6-1 record home defeat. The engaging Walters entwines his experiences in Scotland — which began with Celtic fans throwing bananas and



darts when he made his debut at Parkhead — with those of the Greek and Latin-speaking Watson's more sedate progress

in Glasgow a century previously. As Walters notes, after Watson and a handful of peers, Scottish football became monoracial until Gilbert Heron played one league game for Celtic in 1951. Today, things are better, but as a grim interview with racially abused defender Jordan Tapping shows, far from perfect...

John Aizlewood

# Medal hopes soar for girl who didn't like swimming

## OLYMPIC GAMES

Rebecca Myers

**W**hen asked if she believes in herself, Freya Anderson says she is "getting there". The 20-year-old swimmer may have been expected to target Paris 2024 as her big ascent to the world stage, yet six weeks from the start of this year's Olympics in Tokyo, and having won six medals at last month's European Championships – including five golds – she has found herself being touted as a potential podium-finisher three years early.

As a specialist in the freestyle stroke, comparisons have been drawn between Anderson and Rebecca Adlington, who won her first gold medal in Beijing in 2008 when she was 19. Anderson, who idolised Adlington as a girl, is more than happy to take the "massive, massive" compliment. "They're very big shoes to fill," she says. "But it's nice to have people believing in me. I don't think I

could ever fill her shoes but it would be amazing if I could follow in her footsteps."

The postponement of the Games from last year has given Anderson an extra year to grow as an athlete, extra opportunities to win medals and extra attention from the press and fans. Has she noticed the increasing hype directed her way?

She scrunches her face a little and smiles, bashfully. "Kind of and I kind of try to ignore it most of the time," she says. "But, again, it is nice to have people believing in you and supporting you. Even if, sometimes, I doubt myself, it's nice to know that other people see something in me that I don't think I can see."

Sometimes, she wonders how she got here. Her earliest swimming memories are of intense shyness, hiding behind her mum's legs or getting told off for touching her feet on the floor of the pool. "I don't know how I progressed so far because I really didn't like it at the start," she says.

Despite the early nerves, Anderson always felt at home in the water. "I was a natural, even from a very young age," she says. "Once I got in, I was

totally fine, in my own little world, paddling along." She knows it's a cliché, she says, but getting into the pool is "like slipping into a different world. You just forget all the hum of the day and get on with swimming".

These days, it's time out of the pool that helps her to forget the hum of swimming. She moved to the national training centre in Bath in May, joining what she describes as a "more professional" environment. Once she has finished her Saturday morning shift in the pool, she likes to spend the weekends shopping and enjoying the restaurants of Bath with friends.

"I'm really into shopping and make-up and all of that stuff. It's therapeutic, in a way, because you spend every day looking like this," she says, gesturing at her plain sports polo top. "At the weekend, you get to make yourself feel nice and do normal-person things. It's nice to get that balance. When I'm just walking around town, I don't think of myself as a swimmer, I'm just a normal girl."

The past year has also had its share of setbacks, from injuries including a torn disc in her back to sitting out training after one of her team-mates

**'I'm really into shopping, make-up and all that stuff. It's therapeutic and nice to get a balance'**



Anderson idolised Adlington

contracted Covid-19. "That was awful – we were back to doing circuits in the kitchen and living room," she says. "But, being held back, I think it makes you stronger mentally."

The advice of senior swimmers, such as Adam Peaty and James Guy, has helped too. "I've struggled a lot in the last year with injuries and all sorts, but it's good to talk to older swimmers and to know that the best of the best go through it too, that they doubt themselves sometimes or don't enjoy it," Anderson says. "Speaking to them helps me calm down, it relaxes me. I know I'm not alone."

She is back in blistering form, as shown by those five gold medals in Budapest last month.

"It was a really nice confidence boost," she says, smiling. No doubt it will also fuel even more excitement about her prospects in Tokyo, but she doesn't seem to mind. "Adding a bit of pressure helps enhance my performance."

● Freya Anderson is a participant of the Sky Sports Scholars programme – a scheme that has provided funding and a range of support to up-and-coming athletes on their journey to Tokyo.

European Championship

Win instant prizes including free bets, boosted prices, and exclusive offers



TOURNAMENT EDITION

it's who you play with

William HILL

WHEN THE FUN STOPS STOP

BeGambleAware.org

18+

Online only. One offer per customer, per individual promotion. Player restrictions and individual promotion terms apply. William Hill rules apply. Over 18s only. For advice & information visit begambleaware.org. National Gambling Helpline 0808 8020 133.