



briefly

BASKETBALL Yao to miss a week with sprained ankle

Rockets center Yao Ming has a mild left ankle sprain and is expected to be out at least a week, the NBA team said. Yao was hurt in the first quarter of Houston's 98-91 loss to the Washington Wizards on Wednesday.

An MRI exam on Thursday confirmed the injury. While the Rockets finish up their road trip, China's Yao will return to Houston to begin rehabilitation. The Rockets have limited Yao's minutes this season after he missed all of last season in the wake of surgery to repair a broken left foot.

SOCCER Inzaghi set to miss rest of season

AC Milan's 37-year-old striker Filippo Inzaghi is likely to miss the rest of the season after suffering cruciate ligament and meniscus damage in his left knee, leaving his career hanging in the balance.

"After a consultation the doctor has confirmed the need for surgery," a Milan statement said on Thursday.

Inzaghi, whose contract expires at the end of the season, suffered the injuries after coming off the bench in Wednesday's 3-1 win over Palermo.

Milan decided against offering Brazil's Ronaldo a new deal when he suffered a similar injury two years ago, but the club's esteem for Inzaghi suggests an extension may be available.

Barton says sorry for Pedersen punch

Newcastle United's Joey Barton apologized on Thursday for punching Blackburn Rovers' Morten Gamst Pedersen after being banned for three games by the Football Association for violent conduct.

The 28-year-old was charged by the FA after referee Mike Jones viewed video evidence of the incident, which he did not see when it took place in the 50th minute of Rovers' 2-1 Premier League win at St. James' Park on Wednesday.

Hours after the FA charged Barton on Thursday, he accepted the standard three-game ban for violent conduct without the need for a hearing and apologized for the incident.

Barton will now miss Saturday's match at home to Fulham, next weekend's trip to Bolton and the visit of champions Chelsea to St. James' on Nov 28.

Beckenbauer to stand down

German football legend Franz Beckenbauer said on Thursday he will not stand for re-election for world football's governing body FIFA's executive committee in 2011.

The 65-year-old, who both captained and coached Germany to World Cup titles in 1974 and 1990, revealed the news in a press release, citing personal and family reasons for his decision.

"The Kaiser" was elected to FIFA's executive committee in January 2007 but since turning 65 in September has said he wants to scale back the amount of travel he needs to do and has stood down as president of Bayern Munich.

TENNIS Roddick, Berdych, Ferrer into ATP finals

Andy Roddick, Tomas Berdych and David Ferrer secured the final three places for the season-ending ATP finals in London on Thursday after Spaniard Fernando Verdasco exited the Paris Masters.

Verdasco had to reach the final in the French capital to have a chance to qualify for the tournament featuring the world's leading eight players but lost 6-7 (4), 7-6 (2), 7-5 in the third round to local favorite Gael Monfils.

Roddick, Berdych and Ferrer, who lost 7-6 (6), 2-6, 6-3 to Austrian Jurgen Melzer, join Rafael Nadal, Roger Federer, Novak Djokovic, Andy Murray and Robin Soderling for the London showdown starting on Nov 21.

MISCELLANEOUS Zaozhuang to host top aerobics event

Zaozhuang, Shandong province, will host the grand finals of the Hosa Cup, a massive aerobics competition, from Dec 8-13. Upwards of 2,000 qualifiers from the preliminaries will compete for top prizes in 10 age groups.

The two-month preliminary round, which concluded in September, took place in 20 cities across China with a record 100,000 people taking part. Chengdu, Sichuan province, was the most popular host site with 1,323 entries, 470 more than last year's figure.

Hosa, China's No 1 fitness center brand, and the National Gymnastics Association are sponsoring the event.

AFP - CHINA DAILY - REUTERS



WILFREDO LEE / ASSOCIATED PRESS

Miami Heat guard Dwyane Wade (right) is fouled by Boston Celtics forward Paul Pierce (34) in the first quarter during an NBA game in Miami on Thursday. The Celtics won 112-107.

Allen's 3s carry Celtics past Heat again, 112-107

James the only one of Miami's 'Big Three' to be truly effective with a team-high 35 pts

MIAMI — New roster, same problem for the Miami Heat.

They just can't find a way to beat the Boston Celtics.

Ray Allen hit his first seven 3-point tries and finished with 35 points, and the Celtics never trailed in a 112-107 win over Miami on Thursday night,

beating the Heat for the second time this season and handing them a second straight home loss.

"Ray was unbelievable on both ends," Celtics coach Doc Rivers said.

Paul Pierce added 25 points and Rajon Rondo had 16 assists, adding to his NBA-leading total. Boston has won 13 of the last 14 regular-season meetings with the Heat in addition to eliminating Miami in the opening round of last season's playoffs. Then, the Celtics ended the LeBron James era in Cleveland a couple of weeks later, setting the wheels in motion for James, Dwyane Wade and Chris Bosh to team up in Miami.

A Heat team put together to win a title fell to 5-4.

"We're the best 5-4 team in the league," Wade said. "How about that? But we've got a lot of work to do."

Kevin Garnett had 16 points and 13 rebounds for Boston, which led by as many as 20.

James finished with 35 points, 10 rebounds and nine assists, narrowly missing his second straight triple-double. Wade was held to eight points on 2-for-12 shooting.

The Heat got within 110-107 on Udonis Haslem's free throws with 13.3 seconds left, but Allen hit a pair of free throws to seal it.

The Celtics topped the Heat 88-80 in the season opener on Oct 26, and Miami insisted it had gotten better since then.

So, apparently, had Boston. "Everybody just stepped in and did their job," Rivers said. "Tonight was the first night I thought we had complete trust in the next pass."

Allen hit seven 3-pointers for the 22nd time in his regular-season career, and there was nothing sneaky about the way he got open, either. It was as simple as Allen running to the open spot and waiting to see if the Celtics could get the ball to him.

When they did, he made the Heat pay. His last 3 might have been the biggest — it put Boston up 102-89 midway through the fourth quarter, and the Celtics held on from there in a frantic finish.

"It's easier said than done," Allen said.

Haslem had 21 points and 10 rebounds for Miami, which got 15 points from Bosh and 13 from Eddie House. Nate Robinson added 12 for the Celtics, who moved to 7-2.

"You get to a point where you say you try to rush it, you try to rush the process," James said.

"And we just can't do that. We're talented enough, we're going to win some games, we're going to win a lot of games. But we have to accept this process and understand that it's going to be one."

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Scott leads at Singapore Open

SINGAPORE — Australia's Adam Scott took a two-stroke lead at the halfway mark of the Barclays Singapore Open on Friday while defending champion Ian Poulter made a charge to lie in second spot before bad light stopped play.

US Open champion Graeme McDowell is also nicely poised for the weekend, posting a three-under 68 for a total of nine-under par 133 to tie for third with Swede Fredrik Andersson Hed and South Korea's Kang Kyung-nam.

Poulter and Scott shook off any fatigue they may have had playing 30 grueling holes, needing to complete their first round from Thursday when play was halted because of fading light.

In fact, the two men relished the chances offered by the par-71 Tanjong course at Sentosa Golf Club, with Poulter carding the round's lowest score of eight-under 63 for a total 10-under 132.

Starting the second round at two-under, Poulter put on a masterful display as he made eight birdies, saving



Adam Scott of Australia plays a shot on the third hole during the second round of the Singapore Open at the Tanjong golf course on Friday. REUTERS

his best for the final hole with a 100-foot putt.

"It was at least 30-odd paces from right at the back of the green to the hole, so it was getting close on to 100 feet," said Poulter.

The flamboyant Englishman fancies his chances of lifting the trophy

a second time on Sunday but knows he has his work cut on on the tougher Serapong course, where the last two rounds will be played.

"I hear it might be a bit windy on Sunday which is good, too, and so I have put myself up there in the hunt again which is all I could do," said the 34-year-old.

"It is definitely the harder of the two courses, but I like that."

Scott was pleased with his 65 to give him a total 12-under par 130 despite making two bogeys in the back nine.

"It was a shame to slow down a bit on the back nine, but that's golf, I suppose," said the 30-year-old Australian, twice a winner here in 2005 and 2006.

This year's event is being played on two courses, the Tanjong and the Serapong, in the first two rounds. The last two rounds will be played on the par-71 Serapong.

The \$6 million event is joint-sanctioned by the European Tour and Asian Tour, with a first-prize winner's check of \$1 million.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Marriage, military prompt ROK's baseball gold push

GUANGZHOU — Wedding bells and the grueling prospect of military service are prompting Kim Tae-kyun and Choo Shin-soo to capture Asian Games baseball gold for the Republic of Korea (ROK).

The ROK, the 1998 and 2002 champion, clashes with holder Chinese Taipei in its opening match in the eight-nation tournament on Saturday, while Japan, which won the inaugural Asiad title in 1994, faces the Chinese mainland on Monday.

Kim, a hard-hitting first baseman whose Japanese club Chiba Lotte Marines won the Japan Series title on Sunday, is due to marry the ROK television sports announcer Kim Seok-ryu in December.

"Seok-ryu has prepared for the wedding by herself while I was away in Japan. If I present her the champion's ring and the Asian Games gold medal, it may ease my guilty feelings," he told Korean media.

An Asian Games gold medal could save fellow 28-year-old Choo, an outfielder for the Cleveland Indians, from having to serve two years in the ROK military as Olympic and Asian Games champions are exempt from conscription.

A controversial, last-ditch option for him would be to begin the process of becoming an American citizen.

"If we play well, maybe we'll win," Choo told www.mlb.com. "That's my first goal. Then the next thing would be my military obligation. But it's not the first thing I'm trying for. I'm playing for Korea."

Kim and Choo are the only foreign-based players in the ROK squad, while Chinese Taipei features eight players plying their trade in the US major leagues.

Japan again fields amateurs from corporate-sponsored domestic leagues.

Chinese Taipei's manager Yeh Cih-hsien has a strong pitching staff led by Chen Hung-wen of the Triple-A Iowa Cubs and Yang Yao-hsun of Japan's Fukuoka Softbank Hawks.

Shortstop Hu Chin-lung, who played 14 games for the Los Angeles Dodgers in 2010, and Pittsburgh Pirate Chen Yung-chi headline a talented hitting lineup.

But Japan, whose professional stars won the inaugural World Baseball Classic in 2006 and retained the title in 2009, should not be ignored.

The ROK finished runner-up to Japan in the 2009 WBC and third in 2006.

"I had thought Taiwan were strong. But after reading a report from our analysis team, I have come to feel that Japan's amateur team are stronger," said ROK manager Cho Bum-hyun.

"We can never be complacent against Japan."

The ROK lost to an all-amateur Japan 10-7 in the 2006 Asian Games in Doha, where it also bowed 4-2 to Chinese Taipei in the semifinals to finish third behind Chinese Taipei and Japan.

Japan is in Group A here with the Chinese mainland, Thailand and Mongolia. Chinese Taipei, the ROK, Hong Kong, China, and Pakistan are in Group B. The top two teams from each group advance to the semifinals.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

HOST CITY READY FOR FIRST INT'L EQUESTRIAN EVENT

The provincial capital of Guangdong is geared up for the first international equestrian event to be held on the mainland during the Guangzhou Asian Games, with some 61 horses arriving from overseas in the Conghua venue.

"The weather conditions and facilities here are absolutely perfect," said John P Ridley, director of operations of Asian Games Equestrian Venue.

The venue, located in a hot spring valley, is the largest of its kind in China, according to local authorities.

The "specific equine disease-free zone" in Conghua, about 70 km from Guangzhou, has been approved by the European Union and the World Organization for Animal Health, allowing horses from around the world to return to their countries with a set of quarantine protocols for transportation.

"It means the equestrian venue in Conghua has become the mainland's first course to hold international horse racing events," said Wen Jiefu, director of the Asian Games equestrian venue.

The equestrian competition at the Asian Games, which includes dressage, jumping and cross-country events, takes place from Nov 14-24. The event features 105 athletes from 16 countries and regions competing for six gold medals.

Workers prepare the equestrian event at the Conghua venue.

Sixty-one horses landed on Tuesday night to prepare for the first several days of competition, and another 34 horses will fly to Conghua on Nov 16.

"They have undergone strict medical and sanitary checks upon their arrival. The absolutely perfect weather here has helped them become accustomed to the local environment," Ridley said.

Horses began training at the competition venue on Wednesday.

After the games, the Conghua venue will be used as a training center for equestrian events, according to a memorandum signed between the Hong Kong Jockey Club and the Guangzhou government. The Hong Kong Jockey Club will play an important role in the equestrian event as it will provide technical assistance and help transport horses to the venue.

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