

## FRENCH FAVORITES RETURN TO TOUR DOWN UNDER

**SYDNEY:** French outfit Ag2r La Mondiale yesterday confirmed a return to the Tour Down Under with a strong team, led by explosive climber Maxime Bouet, aiming for stage wins. Ag2r is the only team to have competed every year since the race began, and they are bringing a seven-man roster led by Bouet for the January event, with compatriots Maxime Daniel and Sebastien Turgot focused on pushing to the front in sprint finishes. Tour Down Under race director Mike Turtur said Ag2r was popular with fans and consistently delivered strong results. "Maxime Bouet is an all-rounder and he's particularly good on rolling terrain with short, sharp climbs," Turtur said. "The varied terrain across the 2014 Santos Tour Down Under route will appeal to Bouet and the Ag2r lineup and I'm sure we'll see dynamic performances from this experienced group of riders." The season-opening race, in Adelaide from January 19-26, was won this year by Dutchman Tom-Jelte Slagter from Blanco Pro Cycling. — AFP



## MANCHESTER UNITED PLANE ABORTS LANDING IN GERMANY

**LONDON:** Manchester United's plane had to abort its landing seconds from touchdown as the squad flew to Germany for yesterday's Champions League match with Bayer Leverkusen, British media reported. The chartered 185-seater Monarch Airlines Airbus 321 jet circled before landing safely at the second attempt, 10 minutes late at Cologne's Konrad Adenauer Airport on Tuesday. "The aircraft, carrying the squad and back room staff, was 400 meters from the Cologne runway when the pilot was alerted to another plane on the ground and had to quickly abandon the descent and rise sharply," the Manchester Evening News reported on its website (www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk). United central defender Rio Ferdinand tweeted: "Landed in Germany .... just .... I've only just recovered after that choppy landing!" United, who declined to comment on the incident, will reach the last 16 with a win in the Group A clash at the Bay Arena. — Reuters

## PROUD KLOPP HERALDS DORTMUND RESOLVE

**BERLIN:** Borussia Dortmund put their European campaign firmly back on track with a 3-1 win over Napoli on Tuesday, shrugging off talk of a crisis after three straight defeats with a performance reminiscent of last season's superb run to the final. Coach Juergen Klopp had nothing but praise for his team's ability to recover from its worst run of form since 2010, while missing an entire first-choice defense through injury. "We want to continue living our Champions League dream despite all the prophecies of doom," Klopp told reporters. "It all looks better now but we still need to win in Marseille." The victory was positive news for Dortmund in many ways, lifting the side up to second place in Group F ahead of Napoli with a better head-to-head record against the Italians going into the final matchday. Last season's runners-up will now secure a spot in the knockout stage for the second year in a row if they beat Olympique Marseille next month. — Reuters



## NFL AND NHL CONCUSSION CASES 'ARE NOT THE SAME'

**NEW YORK:** Three months after the NFL agreed on a \$765 million settlement with thousands of ex-players for concussion-related health problems, a group of their NHL peers is going to court, too. Hockey has proven to be an equally dangerous sport as football, but that doesn't mean the link between collisions on the ice and post-career trouble will lead to a similar outcome. The legal and cultural surroundings of the NFL and NHL concussion lawsuits are more distinct than alike.

Former NFL players haven't just taken the league to task for their concussion-related concerns; they've sued over all kinds of alleged misconduct, including their rights to memorabilia and highlight film revenue. In the NHL, there's more blatant loyalty expressed by the players who used to don the uniforms. Hockey players have a penchant for closing ranks when controversy arises, and this is no different. Two prominent former players, Ken Daneyko and Keith Primeau, expressed disinterest in pursuing concussion claims against the league when interviewed prior to the introduction of the lawsuit despite their lingering physical side effects from years of playing the game.

Jeremy Roenick, in an interview with The Associated Press on Tuesday, was even more outspoken about his disregard for the lawsuit that was filed Monday in federal court in Washington. "I'm not going to tell people what to do and say they're all trying to cap on the system right now. That's their prerogative," said Roenick, a 20-year veteran of five NHL teams. "They can put themselves in public. They can go after the league that they craved to be in since they were little kids and paid their salary. ... I've always lived in the fact that I played the game of hockey knowing there was a lot of risk to be taken."

I went on the ice knowing that my health and my life could be altered in a split second, and I did it because I loved the game," Roenick said he had 13 concussions during his career. "I can tell you that the teams I was with handled it very well and professionally throughout the whole ordeal," Roenick said. Ten former players, including All-Star forward Gary Leeman, are named as plaintiffs in the class-action lawsuit. It alleges the NHL hasn't done enough to protect players from concussions and seeks court-approved, NHL-sponsored medical monitoring for the players' injuries as well as monetary damages.

Attorney Steve Silverman said a total of about 200 former players have signed up to be included in the action. "What the NFL concussion lawsuit did, not in the minds of the lawyers but in the minds of the former players, was give them confidence and hope that, yes, David can slay Goliath," Silverman said on Tuesday.

Among the allegations: The NHL knew or should have known about scientific evidence that players who sustain repeated head injuries are at greater risk for illnesses and disabilities both during their hockey careers and later in life. Even after the NHL created a concussion program to study brain injuries affecting NHL players in 1997, the league took no action to reduce the number and severity of concussions during a study period from 1997 to 2004.

The league didn't do anything to protect players from unnecessary harm until 2010, when it made it a penalty to target a player's head. NHL Deputy Commissioner Bill Daly said on Monday the league is "completely satisfied with the responsible manner in which the league and the players' association have managed player safety over time" and that it intends to defend the case "vigorously."

Leeman, who played for the Toronto, Calgary, Montreal, Vancouver and St. Louis from 1983-1996, suffered multiple concussions and sub-concussive impacts during his career, according to the lawsuit. Since his retirement, he's suffered from post-traumatic head syndrome, headaches, memory loss and dizziness. Michael McCann, a sports law professor at the University of New Hampshire, expected this lawsuit to come like most observers of the NHL and the sports world in general.

But he questioned whether the case is as strong as that of the former NFL players. "I don't know if I saw in this complaint as much as we saw in the complaint against the NFL, in terms of allegations of misconduct. Much of this complaint focused on how the NHL could've made the game safer at various points of time and how the league knew of information and didn't allegedly share it," McCann said.

"In the NFL, there was the allegation that the league went out of its way to cloud the science. I didn't see any of that in this complaint. I saw the NHL could've done more and was interested in making money. Maybe there are ethical issues, but I don't see how that's necessarily a strong legal argument." The complaint accused the NHL of being aware of studies dating to the 1920s of the danger the sport can cause to the head. "Those studies are publicly available. So it's hard to call that any kind of fraud," McCann said. "It seems as if players and their own union could've availed themselves of that information." — AP

# BAKER LEADS NO 12 WICHITA ST PAST BYU

**KANSAS CITY:** Ron Baker scored 23 points, making six straight free throws down the stretch, and No 12 Wichita State held off BYU for a 75-62 victory Tuesday night in the title game of the CBE Classic. Fred VanVleet and Cleanthony Early added 12 points each for the Shockers (7-0), who trailed by two at halftime but used hustle and physical play inside to wear down the Cougars. Wichita State was clinging to a 68-62 lead when Baker was popped by BYU's Nate Austin, who was given a flagrant-2 foul and ejected from the game. Baker made both free throws with 45.3 seconds left, and then two more when he was fouled with just more than 30 seconds remaining. The Cougars (5-2) were then hit with a technical foul on their bench for protesting a series of calls, and Baker tacked on two more free throws to put the game out of reach. It was just the second in-season tournament that the Shockers have won since the 1963-64 season. They captured the Cancun Challenge before their Final Four run last season. Matt Carlino had 21 points and Tyler Haws scored 17 for the Cougars, who missed a series of 3-pointers in the closing minutes that could have changed the outcome of the game. BYU finished 5 of 21 from beyond the arc. As evenly matched as the teams were much of the night, both had long stretches of dominance in the first half before BYU emerged with a 36-34 lead at the break.

### No 8 Syracuse top California 92-81

**LAHAINA:** Syracuse is used to winning at the Maui Invitational. One more victory for the Orange and it will be three titles in three trips. Tyler Ennis scored 28 points and led two key second-half runs that carried No 8 Syracuse past California 92-81 on Tuesday night in the tournament semifinals. The Orange will play for the championship Wednesday against No 18 Baylor, which edged Dayton 67-66. Syracuse won the Maui Invitational in 1990 and 1998. "These two games out here have been great games, great for our team," Coach Jim Boeheim said. Syracuse scored 51 points in the second half, shooting 55 percent and making five of seven 3-point attempts. Ennis had 17 points and Trevor Cooney scored 20 of his 23 after the break. "Our guards were unbelievable today and I didn't even know that until I looked at the stat sheet," Boeheim said. "I knew they were pretty good, but they were better." Jerami Grant finished with 19 points while CJ Fair had 14 points and seven rebounds. Cooney said it's different to shoot in a small gym. "We play in a dome, it's open, different backdrop and this is totally different for us," Cooney said. "The gym is warm, the legs get going and you can get into a rhythm here and that's what we have been doing." Ennis hit a layup during a nine-point run started by Grant's putback dunk. The spurt lasted more than 2 minutes and gave Syracuse (6-0) its first double-digit lead with less than 8 minutes left.

### No 21 Michigan survive against Temple 74-70

**PHILADELPHIA:** Tori Jankoska scored 19 points and pulled down 11 rebounds as No 21 Michigan State survived to beat Temple 74-70 Tuesday night. Temple's Feyonda Fitzgerald scored 13 first-half points as the Owls (3-1) powered to a 32-28 lead at the break. The lead would get as high as seven before MSU (5-1) would reel them. The teams traded buckets most of the second half, but MSU was able to take a three-point lead with 3:17 left. Temple's Tyonna Williams cut the lead to 67-66 after a pair of free throws. Jankoska answered with a jumper, pushing the lead back to three. Temple never got closer, and MSU closed out the game at the line. Annalise Pickrel added 18 points for MSU while Becca Mills scored 13 points to go with her nine rebounds. Kiana Johnson added six assists. Fitzgerald paced Temple with 24 points, and Williams added 14.



**KANSAS CITY:** Cleveland Melvin #12 of the DePaul Blue Demons looks to pass as Connor Lamhorn #21 and Cameron Ridley #55 of the Texas Longhorns defend during the CBE Hall Of Fame Classic consolation game on November 26, 2013. — AFP

### West Virginia roll past Old Dominion 78-60

**CANCUN:** Eron Harris scored 19 points Tuesday night as West Virginia rolled past Old Dominion 78-60 to advance to the championship game of the Cancun Challenge. Harris shot 7 of 10 from the field and led three other Mountaineers in double digits. Terry Henderson scored 14, Juwan Staten had 13 points, nine assists and Devin Williams had a double-double with 12 and 10. "Juanny (Staten) was really good again tonight," said West Virginia coach Bob Huggins. In his six games, Staten has 47 assists and five turnovers. West Virginia (5-1) shot 56 percent from the field, including 8 of 19 from 3-point range and led by as many as 25 points in the second half in snapping Old Dominion's four-game winning streak. The Mountaineers were up by 12 at halftime and extended their lead thanks to 15-of-24 shooting in the second half. They were 5 of 9 from behind the arc in the second half and had their biggest lead with 6:33 left. Old Dominion won the battle on the glass, 35-28, with 16 rebounds coming on the offensive end. "Just think what we could do if we could get a defensive rebound," Huggins said. "We keep giving up a dozen or more and we're not going to be able to keep doing that. We can do that and make some shots and win, but we can't keep doing that against good people. That's what we continue to harp on them."

### No 5 Notre Dame stun No 25 DePaul 92-76

**SOUTH BEND:** Natalie Achonwa scored 17 points and Kayla McBride had 16 to help No 5 Notre Dame beat No 25 DePaul 92-76 on Tuesday night for its second victory over a ranked opponent this season. Taya Reimer had 15 points and 14 rebounds off the bench for the Fighting Irish (5-0), who won their 28th consecutive regular-season game and 15th straight at home. DePaul (3-1) was led by 18 points from reserve Megan Rogowski in the Blue Demons' first game in eight days. Notre Dame outrebounded DePaul 58-33 and held the Blue Demons to 30 percent shooting in a dominant second half.

### No 13 UConn beat Loyola (Md) 76-66

**HARTFORD:** DeAndre Daniels had 21 points and eight rebounds to help keep No. 13 Connecticut remained undefeated with a 76-66 win over Loyola, Md, on Tuesday night. Ryan Boatright added 13 points and eight boards for the Huskies (7-0) and Lasan Kromah, a transfer from George Washington, chipped in with a season-high 12 points. Dylan Cormier had 23 points for Loyola (4-1). The senior guard had been averaging just under 30 points per game. A 3-pointer by Cormier early in the second half cut what had been a 15-point UConn lead to 38-35. Kromah gave The Huskies some breathing room, hitting a 3-pointer, then stealing the ball and going in for a layup that put the Huskies up 61-50. A 3-pointer by Daniels closed the 10-2 run and gave UConn a 14-point lead. The Greyhounds cut the lead to nine late, but couldn't get closer.

### No 18 Baylor rally past Dayton 67-66 in Maui

**LAHAINA:** Baylor led Dayton for a little more than 16 seconds in the second half Tuesday night. They were the right 16 seconds. Cory Jefferson had a go-ahead putback in the waning moments and the 18th-ranked Bears rallied for a 67-66 victory in the semifinals of the Maui Invitational. "We led 1-2 and we finished leading by one," Baylor coach Scott Drew said. "Everything else was chasing Dayton." The Bears will play No 8 Syracuse for the tournament championship Wednesday night. After trailing nearly the entire game, Baylor (6-0) whittled away a 10-point deficit over the final 7 minutes. The Bears were down by one when Kenny Chery missed a jumper off the front of the rim, but Jefferson was all alone for the rebound and his layup gave Baylor a 67-66 lead with 16 seconds to go. Vee Sanford missed a contested shot in close for Dayton with 2 seconds left, Devin Oliver's tip-in attempt bounced off the rim and Baylor grabbed the rebound as the final buzzer sounded. "I don't know how I missed it," Oliver said. Royce O'Neale and Chery had 13 points each for the Bears. Jefferson, Gary Franklin and Isaiah Austin added 10 apiece. "We just wanted to be tough. Our mental toughness was in question as a team, so we just wanted to stay together, be tough and try to pull one out and that's what we did," Chery said.

### Rally falls short in 63-57 loss to No 10 Wisconsin

**CANCUN:** Wayne Evans got into foul trouble early, but came off the bench to help recharge a struggling Saint Louis offense that was trailing No 10 Wisconsin by 15 points. Driving into the paint and drawing fouls, Evans scored four free throws and a layup in a little over a minute to help make it a 5-point game with 1:10 to play. But fouls proved the Billikens' undoing, and the Badgers scored five free throws in the final minute to blunt the surge and win 63-57 to advance to face West Virginia in Wednesday's finals of the Cancun Challenge. Rob Loe led the reigning Atlantic 10 Conference champion Billikens (5-1) with 15 points, Austin McBroom scored 14 and Evans, who is averaging 13.6 points per game this season, finished with 12. Saint Louis beat Oral Roberts 72-55 on Thursday and Bowling Green 74-47 on Saturday to advance to the semifinals against Wisconsin (7-0). Evans scored 14 points against Bowling Green as the Billikens led wire-to-wire. Wisconsin's Traevon Jackson led all scorers with 16 points Tuesday and Frank Kaminsky added 12 for the undefeated Badgers. Kaminsky grabbed eight rebounds and had four blocks that helped Wisconsin to a 20-15 halftime lead. Jackson stepped up to help squash the Billikens' second-half run. With the win, Wisconsin is off to its best start of the Bo Ryan era. The Badgers have not opened the season with seven consecutive wins since starting 11-0 in 1993-94.



Walter Thurmond

# SEAHAWKS CB THURMOND SUSPENDED

**RENTON:** Back from their bye week, with the best record in the NFL and heading into a Monday night showdown with the Saints, Pete Carroll and the Seattle Seahawks spent Tuesday dealing with the kinds of distractions they believed were over. Instead, the Seahawks are adding to the list of player suspensions they've faced since Carroll took over in 2010. "We're still trying to work through it. I'll say it again, I've always found myself looking for guys that maybe other people don't see something special in and we take a chance on a guy here or there that needs some extra consideration and care," Carroll said. "And sometimes guys they have issues and things pop up but I've always been kind of hopeful and make guys find the best in them and bring it out. Sometimes it works out and sometimes it doesn't. We'll certainly hang with our guys and take care of them." Starting cornerback Walter Thurmond was officially suspended Tuesday by the NFL for the team's next four games for violating the league's substance abuse policy, leaving the Seahawks short handed going into Monday's matchup against New Orleans.

Thurmond will be eligible to return to the active roster on Monday, Dec 23, before the final game of the regular season, but his absence leaves a hole in a secondary that was previously missing starting cornerback Brandon Browner because of a groin injury. Thurmond's suspension was first reported by NFL.com over the weekend. Thurmond took to Twitter and apologized on Sunday, writing, "Yes I made a mistake and I have to live with the consequences. I'm disappointed in myself for letting my teammates and family down."

Thurmond's is the sixth Seattle player officially suspended for substance-abuse or performance-enhancing drugs violations by the league since 2011. That doesn't include Richard Sherman, whose suspension was overturned on appeal late last season. "I don't know that we can expect to be perfect. We would like to be, but that isn't the case," Carroll said. "It's a big challenge for these guys to do right and we want them to do it and carry through and be there when we need them and count on them. It doesn't always work that way. It presents opportunities for other guys."

We've always championed that and our guys have always come through and they'll do that again in this instance." Thurmond has started three games this season for Seattle, including the team's last game against Minnesota when he had his first interception of the season and returned it 29 yards for a touchdown. Even when he wasn't starting, Thurmond was a critical member of one of the NFL's best secondary units as the fifth defensive back in passing situations.

Thurmond beat out veteran Antoine Winfield, whom Seattle signed in the offseason, for the nickel cornerback spot during training camp. He had struggled with injuries throughout his career but was finally healthy and playing well ahead of an off-season where he will be a free agent. Seattle moved quickly to fill Thurmond's roster spot, signing veteran Perrish Cox, who worked out for the team recently after being released by San Francisco on Nov 12. Cox played in 25 games over two seasons with the 49ers in a reserve role after starting nine games for Denver in 2010.

Seattle had also worked out former cornerback Marcus Trufant, who has not played this season, before deciding on signing Cox. The Seahawks are likely to lean on young backups Byron Maxwell and Jeremy Lane. Maxwell had been seeing more playing time, especially on passing downs when Thurmond would move inside to cover slot receivers. Lane started three games late last season when Browner was serving a four-game suspension for using performance enhancing drugs and Thurmond was injured.

Carroll also indicated that DeShawn Shead will be promoted from the practice squad to the active roster, but that move was not made official on Tuesday. Presumably, Shead's promotion will coincide with a roster move involving Browner, who is also reportedly facing a suspension for a substance-abuse violation. Shead can play both cornerback and safety. It's his second season with the Seahawks, most of that spent on the practice squad. He was added to the 53-man roster late last season but was inactive for each game. He's been getting paid this season at the same rate as a second-year player on the 53-man roster according to the NFLPA database. Carroll said despite the continued problems he doesn't believe his message or approach needs to change. "We'll always look to do it better. We're on it. I think this team is very strong about where we're going and what we're doing. Because somebody slips, that doesn't mean we're not on track," Carroll said. "I believe we're on a tremendous track right now." — AP