

# Federer Quietly Hoping for Dream Return to No. 1

ROTTERDAM, Netherlands (AFP) - Roger Federer said Monday he could allow himself to dream about recapturing the world number one spot at this week's Rotterdam tournament and becoming the oldest man ever to hold the position.

To climb back to the top at the age of 36, the Swiss must at least reach the semi-finals.

If seedings hold up, that means he would have to defeat compatriot and friend Stan Wawrinka in what would be a high-profile quarter-final.

"I would love to be in that position with anyone, but with Stan it would be like a Grand Slam final, a big-time match," said Federer, fresh from winning a 20th Grand Slam title at the Australian Open.



Roger Federer is dreaming of returning to number one at the age of 36 -- to do so he must reach at least the semi-finals at the Rotterdam tournament

"I'm hoping to get to number one and hoping to do it this week. You always want to do it the tough way, it's not easy to get there."

"The achievement would be quite incredible. It's exciting to see Stan in my section and it's great to have him back (after knee surgery in July)."

Federer made a relatively late decision to play at the event, which he won in 2005 and 2013.

He said that after winning in Melbourne a fortnight ago, he felt good enough to compete this week and is also considering playing in Dubai in two weeks' time.

"I didn't expect to win Australia, I played it not thinking about number one," he said.

"I didn't think of the rankings at all in Melbourne. Afterwards, I thought I could always play Rotterdam, I'd love to play, give it a go and see what happens."

## Froome to Ride Out Asthma Drug Row on Spain's Ruta del Sol



2016 Rio Olympics - Cycling Road - Final - Men's Individual Time Trial - Pontal - Rio de Janeiro, Brazil - 10/08/2016. Chris Froome (GBR) of United Kingdom competes.

LONDON (Reuters) - Chris Froome will start his 2018 season as favorite for Spain's Ruta del Sol on Wednesday, defying calls from senior figures in world cycling to withdraw from racing over the adverse drug test result he returned last September.

The four-times Tour de France winner had twice the permissible amount of the asthma medication Salbutamol in his system after stage 18 of the Tour of Spain - a race he went on to win - but the Team Sky rider, who says he has done nothing wrong, did not receive a provisional suspension.

International Cycling Union president David Lappartient and rival

riders Romain Bardet and Vincenzo Nibali have all said the British cyclist should cease racing until his case is resolved.

And pressure on Froome increased last weekend when Jonathan Vaughters, manager of the EF Education First - Drapac p/b Cannondale team, suggested the presence of the previous Ruta del Sol winner at the five-day event and other upcoming races will be "damaging to cycling".

But Froome and Team Sky remain intent on the 32-year-old riding out the controversy with a full racing program, including May's Tour of Italy and July's Tour de France.

## Maradona: Argentina Need Higuain, Tevez at World Cup

BUENOS AIRES (Dispatches) - Diego Maradona has called on Argentina coach Jorge Sampaoli to recall forwards Gonzalo Higuain and Carlos Tevez for this year's World Cup in Russia.

Despite his prolific form for Juventus, Higuain has yet to play a competitive match for the Albiceleste since Sampaoli was appointed coach last June.

Tevez, who rejoined his former club Boca Juniors in January after a disappointing year with Shanghai Shenhua, last featured for the national team in October 2015.

Among those given a chance by Sampaoli in recent matches is Inter Milan's Mauro Icardi, who has failed to score in four appearances for his country.

"It's embarrassing to rely on

Icardi. Pipa Higuain is 10 times better than Icardi," Maradona told El Popular. "That guy [Sampaoli] doesn't know anything. The only thing he knows is what he's going to eat at his friend's house. Pipa has to have a new chance."

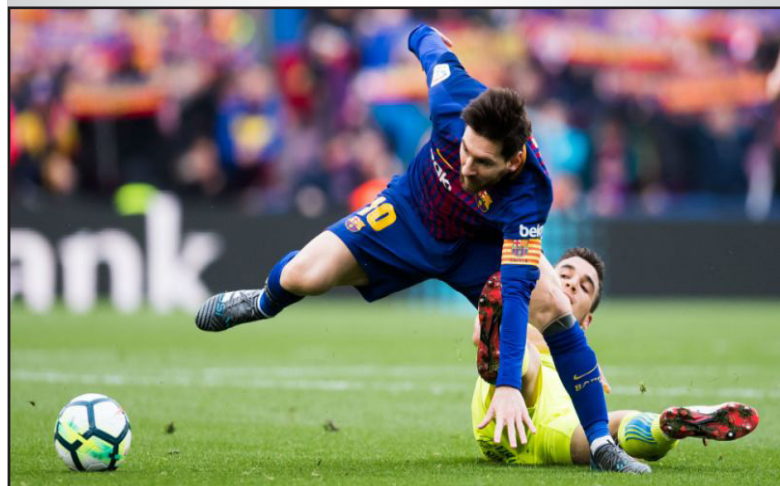
Maradona said of Tevez: "Of course [he should be recalled]. It's not a debate. We don't have anything else. We're scraping the bar-

rel to get a number nine."

Argentina struggled during the South American zone 2018 World Cup qualifying tournament and only secured a ticket to Russia in the last match against Ecuador with a Lionel Messi-inspired 3-1 victory in Quito.

Maradona said the two-time World Cup winners no longer commanded respect from their rivals.

## Barcelona Held by Getafe



Following last weekend's 1-1 derby draw at Espanyol, leaders Barcelona were unable to return to winning ways against Getafe.

BARCELONA (Dispatches) - Barcelona were held to a second consecutive draw as Getafe left Camp Nou with a hard-earned 0-0 draw.

For the first time since the April 2012 Clasico against Real Madrid, Barca failed to register a shot on target during the first half of a home game in LaLiga, although Luis Suarez did have a brilliant volley ruled out for offside.

Ernesto Valverde's side belatedly shifted through the gears after half-time but it was not enough to breach some stubborn resistance from Pepe Bordalas' visitors.

It means Atletico Madrid, who picked up a third consecutive victory at Malaga on Saturday, have trimmed Barcelona's advantage at the summit to seven points.

If Diego Simeone's men can make further inroads before the teams meet at Camp Nou on March 4, LaLiga might just have a title race as opposed to a procession this season.

Yerry Mina was handed a full debut at the heart of a makeshift Barcelona defence, with full-back Lucas Digne partnering the Colombia international at centre-half.

It was a factor in a stuttering start from LaLiga's leaders, although Mina's playmaking ca-

pabilities from deep appeared at-tuned to Barca's famed style.

Damian Suarez made a perfectly judged challenge to deny Lionel Messi when Ivan Rakitic's chipped pass found Barcelona's talisman in the 32nd minute.

Getafe continued to threaten when they could at the other end and Angel Rodriguez latched on to a clever ball behind Rakitic from Francisco Portillo, twisted into space past Mina and had a strike deflected narrowly wide from the edge of the box.

Luis Suarez had twice been frustrated by the linesman's flag by the time a correct offside call meant his fabulous 44th-minute volley on the end of Messi's floated free-kick was chalked off, leaving the Uruguay star furious.

Philippe Coutinho finally managed to give Vicente Guaita some work in the 50th minute, although his well-struck, curling effort was too close to the Getafe goalkeeper.

The flag stayed down in the 56th minute but there was further anguish for Luis Suarez on the end of Paco Alcacer's clever flick when he slammed wide.

Guaita thrust out a left hand to keep out a more testing Coutinho attempt but Getafe's response to Barcelona's most enterprising spell of the match was impres-

sive.

## Winter Olympic Results

### Canada's Kingsbury Storms to Gold in Men's Moguls

PYEONGCHANG, South Korea (Dispatches) - Canada's Mikael Kingsbury stormed his way to gold in men's moguls, filling the one hole in his resume with a dynamic performance in the final round on Monday night.

Kingsbury, a six-time world champion and silver medalist in Sochi four years ago, posted a score of 86.63, the best of any in the three elimination rounds. His victory gives Canada its third straight Olympic gold in the event.

A rare wobble in the 2014 Olympic finals cost Kingsbury the top spot on the podium. There were no mistakes this time. Kingsbury celebrated with a fist pump following his electric winning run at a frigid Phoenix Snow Park.

Matt Graham of Australia took silver, with Daichi Hara of Japan earning bronze. Canada's Marc-Antoine Gagnon finished fourth and American Casey Andringa made a surprise run to the finals before winding up fifth.

### Fourcade Storms to Victory in Biathlon

Martin Fourcade of France stormed to victory in the men's Olympic 12.5km biathlon pursuit on Monday, surging clear after the third shoot to repeat his success in Sochi four years ago and claim his third Olympic gold medal.

Swedish prodigy Sebastian Samuelsson battled past Benedikt Doll to claim the silver with the German having to settle for bronze.

Starting eighth following a disappointing performance in Sunday's sprint, Fourcade faltered slightly in the early going. He missed one of his first five shots as he struggled to find his range.

By the second shoot he was back to his best and engaged in a battle for the lead with Arnd Peiffer, who won the sprint gold medal 24 hours earlier.

Fourcade took the lead after the third shoot, hitting all five shots before streaking away, leaving Peiffer behind to ski a penalty lap following a costly miss that put him out of the medals race.

The Frenchman never looked back, hitting his last five shots and



pumping his fist before taking off on the final lap and cruising across the line waving a French flag in a time of 32.51 minutes.

### Wust Wins 1,500m for Record 10th Medal in Speed Skating

Ireen Wust of the Netherlands claimed a record 10th Olympic speed skating medal when she won gold in the women's 1,500 metres at the Gangneung Oval on Monday.

Wust, who is also the first Dutch athlete to win five Olympic gold medals, crossed the line in one minute 54.35 seconds, with Japan's Miho Takagi taking the silver and another Dutch skater Marrit Leenstra winning bronze.

### Geisenberger Sets Gold Medal Pace in Luge as Germany Hit Back

A day after Felix Loch's shock meltdown, Germany's peerless luge team got back on track as

reigning champion Natalie Geisenberger emerged in the gold medal position after Monday's opening runs of the women's singles.

Twice champion Loch's failure to seal the deal in the men's event cast a gloom over the team on Sunday but confident smiles returned as Geisenberger led a German one-two at the top of the timesheets.

With a combined time of one minute 32.454 seconds, the blonde policewoman held a slender lead of 0.12 seconds over fellow German Dajana Eitberger at the Olympic Sliding Centre.

Their compatriot and 2010 champion Tatjana Huefner was in fourth place, another boost for the luge superpower's hopes of extending their reign over the women's event to 20 years on Tuesday.

Canada's Alex Gough was third, and will hope to hold firm in the German maelstrom after just missing out on the medals in Sochi.

### Anderson Retains Snowboard Slopestyle Gold

Sochi champion Jamie Anderson of the United States battled

challenging cross winds that had delayed the start of the final to win her second successive Olympic gold in the women's snowboard slopestyle at the Pyeongchang Games on Monday.

The start of the final, which included all of the athletes after qualifying was canceled on Sunday because of poor weather, had been delayed due to the strong winds.

Only five riders made it down the first run without falling in the difficult conditions, which also included hard snow, with Anderson scoring 83.00 points to give her an almost 10-point advantage heading into the second run.

It was enough to hold off Canada's Laurie Blouin, who took silver with 76.33 on her second run, and Finland's Enni Rukajarvi, who added bronze to her silver from Sochi four years ago, with 75.38 points.

None of the riders were able to complete two error-free runs.

There was a particularly scary moment when Slovakia's Klaudia Medlova landed flat on her back after missing a grab during her first run but she did complete her second and finished 24th.