



Four Nations Final: Lockyer Trays and Succeeds, For the Last Time

It is done now. Laid to rest — a legacy read to be spread out, widely assessed, and lauded for decades to come. Darren Lockyer's career — and almost exhausting last-hurrah campaign that went from Brisbane's Suncorp Stadium to Leeds' Elland Road — is finished. "Before the game I remember putting the boots on and thinking 'this will be the last time,'" Lockyer said. "There was a bit of a moment." Not only would it be his final professional competitive match but it was a Four Nations final against England in the Tri Nations final. And, as they say in Queensland, commeth the moment, commeth Darren Lockyer. Playing the kind of terrific match that we have been accustomed to over his legendary 17-year career, executing his kicking game to aplomb, Lockyer capped the performance with a last-minute try in the 30 to 8 victory. Lockyer, however, would miss the conversion from directly in front — a moment that may forever be to his career what Don Bradman's final innings duck was to his. "[It was a] nice try," Lockyer said afterward. "Just a shame about the kick." But the finale wasn't all a party. At halftime, the English hung in to trail by a slim 8 to 6 margin, and the 34,000 home fans threatened to bring them home to spoil Lockyer's night. But as Jharal Yow Yeh scored in the 57nd minute, man of the match Jonathon Thurston got over the line in the 62nd minute, and Greg Inglis widened the gap further in the 69th, Lockyer was allowed to play out his career anxiety-free — knowing he would go out a winner.



Golf: In the Presidents Cup, USA Remain in Office

In the first thing that has gone to script for Tiger Woods for over two years, the Presidents Cup was left for the icon to clinch — and Woods secured the ultimate 17th point in a 4&3 victory over Aaron Baddeley at Royal Melbourne Golf Club last weekend. And, really, a lot could be told in that single match. For all Greg Norman's hooting and hollering that he wouldn't have picked Woods, that his guys were going to 'hand the yanks their hearts'. Norman pushed for a new world order. Pushed to buck the trend on the American dominance of this event. But, in the end, it was the same old guys winning the same old way — 19 to 15, securing a seventh victory to the Internationals' one, with one draw. American captain Freddie Couples' players feed off his cucumber-cool demeanour, and showed more poise than the Internationals throughout the event. Norman would eventually blame much of the loss on the foursomes, and it was that 4 to 1 drubbing on the Saturday morning in the alternate-shot format which saw the US really get away. The US team, Norman argued, play alternate shot every year — at the Ryder Cup against the Europeans in even years and the Presidents Cup against the Internationals in odd. For the Internationals to better themselves, something would have to be done for the Internationals to familiarize themselves. Many of the Internationals, and alarmingly the Australians, looked out of sorts. Jason Day, for the most part, played like the Presidents Cup rookie he was — and was devoured by Hunter Mahan 5&3 on Sunday, in what was a crucial match. Going into the Australian PGA Championship held at Coolum Hyatt Regency, Queensland, Day's form and ability to bounce back will be especially interesting. All year, he stressed on how much he wished to impose himself on the Presidents Cup, and to not have succeeded — at least to the degree he would have liked — will be a real blow. Heading to his home state of Queensland, and playing his first professional tournament there, there could be no better tonic for Day.

The PGA Championship will be held at Coolum Hyatt Regency, Queensland, from this Thursday the 26th through to Sunday, the 27th. Along with Day, the likes of American Rickie Fowler and British Open winner Darren Clarke will contest the event. And due to a generous government initiative, Saturday will be free entry for the public...



Soccer: City Stay on the Bright Side, Despite Record Losses

This year, nobody has won quite like Manchester City. With a wealth of talent at their disposal, Robert Mancini's side has tossed the city's conventional hierarchy to the wayside — and disposed of its traditional superior Manchester United by scores as devastating as 7 to 1. But all this excess, of course, must come at a cost. The biggest cost in the history of English Football, in fact — a record annual loss of AU\$309 million. Facing this, the Manchester City brass have stressed that it's all part of the plan. "Our losses, which we predicted as part of our accelerated investment strategy, will not be repeated on this scale in the future," said City CEO Graham Wallace. And perhaps this may be true. From their opening 12 games, they garnered 11 wins and a single draw. The most memorable victory of which was undoubtedly their 6 to 1 destruction of arch rival, and last year's premiers, Manchester United. Whilst Mancini has conceded they will likely not go through the season undefeated, there is definitely the feeling that he is building a lasting dynasty at the helm of this oil-rich club. "As players, as a team, we are strong now but the season is long and there will be difficult moments ahead." And even despite the losses, with an Etihad Airlines deal due to bring in over \$50 million a year, plus the increasing revenue that comes with English Premier League and European Champions League success, none of those "difficult moments" will come clearing any cheques.

Basketball: Patty "Cakes" Makes for China

Patty "Cakes" Mills whirlwind tour of the National Basketball League is over. Yet, as it was expected, he will not be heading back to the NBA and his Portland Trail Blazers. "Hey everyone! Just wanted to let you all know that I got an unbelievable opportunity to play in China," said Mills via his Twitter account. "Just want to thank all the basketball fans in Australia for their support while I've been here. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity!" It ended a short career with the Melbourne Tigers, who signed him to a rather rapturous reception — especially by NBL standards — a mere couple of months prior. He played just nine games for the Tigers and averaged 18.6 points per game and five assists. In his final match for, he scored an NBL-best 32 points in a loss to the Adelaide 36ers. With the league just celebrating its heritage weekend, as Mills as teammates donned the old jerseys of the Tigers' Gaze-led heyday, Mills' move again exemplifies the league's inability to sustain momentum. Mills' offer is said to be over \$1 million from Xinjiang Flying Tigers, which is believed to be ten times what he made in the NBL — more than enough for the former Tiger to fly the coup.

SELL OF APPROVAL

Harry Hamstrung: Although the injury was overshadowed by the Socceroos shocking 1-0 loss to Oman, preventing them from securing the single point they needed to progress to the next stage of World Cup qualification, Harry Kewell's hamstring twinge certainly left a few feeling uneasy. He didn't play in the recent game against Thailand — and is questionable to face the Perth Glory on Sunday.

Daly Dose of Idiocy: Two-time major champion and long-time troublemaker John Daly one-upped his recent Austrian Open ejection by walking out on the Australian Open and facing a possible lifetime ban from the Australian PGA. The highly colourful American is far past his best, and is merely wasting a spot in our proudest tournaments.

World Cup Hangover: The joke might begin "An All Black stumbled into a bar..." but as this story ended in an assault, there is nothing funny about All Blacks winger Zac Guildford's behavior. Naked, blind drunk, wet and recovering from a motorcycle accident, the 22-year-old shocked a bar in the Cook Islands by storming in an assaulting two males. Battling alcoholism in the past, Guildford will face a tough battle to keep his test spot.

BEST BUYS

Pearson Female Athlete of the Year: Queensland's 110-metre hurdles world champion Sally Pearson has scaled her greatest height by being named the IAAF female athlete of the year, putting her amongst the hallowed company of Usain Bolt — who took out the male equivalent for the third time in four years. A year before London 2012, the timing couldn't be better.

Sheedy's Fine China Idea: Kevin Sheedy, the nutty professor of AFL coaching, has hatched one of his craziest ideas yet — his Western Sydney Giants playing for premiership points in China. Proposed as the opener for the 2013 season, he wants his team to gain the initial foothold in Asia. America's Major League Baseball has done something very similar in Japan in the past to great success. Why not?

The Final Stop on Darren Lockyer's Farewell Tour: While Darren Lockyer didn't get the NRL premiership he wanted to cap his career — after facial injuries prevented him playing the preliminary final — he is staring a Four Nations title in the face this weekend, as the Kangaroos take on England at Wembley Stadium. The Kangaroos have struggled in big games, but Lockyer is looking to leave a stamp here.