

Van Aert in high-speed crash in Around Flanders race

AFP | Waregem, Belgium

Belgian cyclist Wout van Aert was the main victim of a spectacular high-speed crash during the Around Flanders cycling classic on Wednesday.

A mass collision in the peloton caused by an uneven road surface brought down up to a dozen riders, with Van Aert suffering major abrasions to his back as his yellow Visma team jersey was ripped almost entirely off.

The accident occurred on a three-lane highway where there appeared to be one lane slightly higher than the neighbouring two. Other high-profile riders hurt were Eritrea's Biniam Girmay, Belgian Jasper Stuyven of Lidl-Trek and his Danish teammate Mads Pedersen.



Slovenian Tadej Pogacar, team UAE, takes the lead of the 18th one-day classic 'Strade Bianche' (White Roads) cycling race between Siena and Siena, Tuscany

All four of those riders have won major classics and would have been contenders for the Tour of Flanders on Sunday and Paris-Roubaix next Sunday, two major dates on the one-day racing calendar.

Van Aert was one of the favourites for Sunday's Tour of Flanders where up to 750,000 fans usually turn out for Belgium's biggest sports event.

The 29-year-old Van Aert sobbed and rocked in agony as he was placed onto a stretcher and transferred to an ambulance.

Spain prosecutors want Rubiales jailed for 2.5 years for World Cup kiss

AFP | Madrid, Spain

Spanish prosecutors are seeking two-and-a-half years jail for disgraced ex-football chief Luis Rubiales who is facing trial for kissing Spain midfielder Jenni Hermoso on the lips against her will, court documents showed Wednesday.

Prosecutors also want Rubiales, who has been charged with sexual assault and coercion, to pay at least 50,000 euros (\$54,000) in compensation to Hermoso, they wrote in a document sent to Spain's Audiencia Nacional court, a copy of which was seen by AFP.

During the incident, which took place on August 20 after Spain beat England to win the Women's World Cup final in Australia, Rubiales held Hermoso's head in both hands and forcibly kissed her on the lips.



Spain's defender #20 Rocio Galvez is congratulated by President of the Royal Spanish Football Federation Luis Rubiales (R) next to Spain's Jennifer Hermoso after winning the Australia and New Zealand 2023 Women's World Cup final football match between Spain and England at Stadium Australia in Sydney

The kiss took place live in front of the world's cameras, provoking widespread outrage and prompting his suspension by world football governing body FIFA.

At the time, Rubiales brushed it off as "a consensual" peck on the lips, but Hermoso, 33, said it was not.

Under Spanish law, a non-consensual kiss can be classed as sexual assault -- a criminal category that groups all types of sexual violence.

Rubiales "grabbed the player's head with both hands, and surprisingly and without consent or the player's acceptance, he kissed her on the lips," they wrote.

After realising the kiss could have "personal and professional consequences" with his suspension by FIFA on August 26, Rubiales and his entourage began to exert "constant pressure" on Hermoso so that she "publicly justify" the kiss as consensual.

The pressure caused her "anxiety and intense stress" for several months, they wrote. Prosecutors requested that the 46-year-old face a year behind bars for the kiss, and 18 months jail for the charge of coercion.

Djokovic splits from Ivanisevic with bitter sweet message

AFP | Paris, France

Novak Djokovic and Goran Ivanisevic are to go their separate ways, the tennis world number one announced on Wednesday, ending a five-year association which yielded 12 Grand Slams.

Djokovic brought Croatia's 2001 Wimbledon champion on board as a member of the coaching team ahead of the grass court Grand Slam in 2019 and although the Serbian admitted their "on-court chemistry had its ups and downs", it also resulted in huge success.

However, Djokovic has had by his high standards a poor start to the year, losing to eventual champion Jannik Sinner of Italy in the Australian Open semi-finals. The 36-year-old Serbian then lost to Sinner's unheralded compatriot Luca Nardi in the third round at Indian Wells, prompting him to withdraw from the Miami tournament for what he claimed were scheduling reasons.

"Goran and I decided to stop working together a few days ago," Djokovic posted on Instagram. "Our on court chemistry had its ups and downs, but our friendship was always rock solid."

"In fact, I am proud to say (not sure he is) that apart from winning tournaments together, we also had a side battle in Parchisi going on... for many years," he said, referring to the online game.

"And -- that tournament never stops for us. Šefinjo, thanks for everything my friend. Love you."

Djokovic said the volatile and charismatic Ivanisevic had brought more than just his tennis acumen to the partnership, which was exactly what he and his then head coach Marian Vajda had been looking for.

"I remember clearly the moment I invited Goran to be part of my team," said Djokovic.

"It was back in 2018, and Marian (Vajda) and I were looking to innovate and bring some serve magic to our duo."

"In fact, not only we brought serve, but also lots of laughter, fun, year end no1 rankings, record breaking achievements and 12 more Grand Slams (and a few finals) to the count since then."



Footballer Son Jun-ho 'grateful to be home'

AFP | Seoul, South Korea

Son Jun-ho said he was grateful to be safely home with his family after the South Korean international's release from 10 months' detention in China. The 31-year-old World Cup midfielder made his first public comments since Seoul's foreign ministry said on Monday that he had been freed and was home.

Son, who was playing for Chinese Super League side Shandong at the time, was detained in May last year "on suspicion of accepting bribes by non-state employees".

Chinese authorities have given no more information about the case, but its domestic football is in the grip of a major anti-corruption campaign.

"I'm grateful that I have safely returned and am able to spend comfortable time with my family and enjoy ordinary daily life," Son wrote on Instagram, together with a photo showing a spot of light in the night sky. The post was inundated with messages of support, including from fellow players.

Kanoo Motors Rolling Drag Night to bring fun yet competitive activity at BIC

TDI | Manama

Motorsport enthusiasts can invite their family or friends for an exciting head-to-head challenge at Bahrain International Circuit this (BIC) today, in the Kanoo Motors Rolling Drag Night.

This unique event offers participants the opportunity to bring their very own car or motorbike and go one-on-one down the circuit's quarter-mile drag strip against an opponent.

This fun yet competitive activity gives wannabe-drag racers the incredible experience of powering down BIC's world-class strip—which is a part of the prestigious NHRA Worldwide Network of the U.S.-based National Hot Rod Association (NHRA)—and enjoy the thrill with a fellow-racing lover.

Kanoo



Motors Rolling Drag Night is similar to BIC's Ebrahim K Kanoo Drag

and Drift Nights, with the only difference being at the start, which is done with a rolling speed of 80kph.

Thursday's activity is scheduled to be held from 8.30pm to 1.30am. It continues the busy and exciting programme of events this holy month of Ramadan at "The Home of motorsport in the Middle East".

The cost to participate is BD22 for each driver or rider. Spectators can watch from the stands for a nominal fee of BD2.

Just as in all activities at BIC, safety is paramount for all taking part. Cars and motorbikes must thus go through scrutineering before being able to hit the strip.

Kanoo Motors Rolling Drag Night is the perfect opportunity for an engaging, yet friendly, battle. Both participants will be able to push their vehicles to their very limit within the secure and controlled environment at BIC.



In addition to the Kanoo Motors Rolling Drag Night, also available on Thursday is BIC's most mind-boggling passenger ride: the Dragster Experience.

Known as "the Fastest Ride on Earth", fans will have a chance to get a taste of pure speed as they are taken from zero to 100kph in just one second while in the cockpit of a 10,500cc Top Dragster. The Dragster Experience is available at BD44 for the first passenger while a second passenger can get 50 per cent off.

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