

Lofgren prepares for departure in style

Claudine Roghi wins women's race

RIYADH — Bengt Lofgren prepared for his impending departure from Saudi Arabia in the way he knows best — by running fast and beating all-comers at the Riyadh Road Runners' 30km race on the weekend here.

Dirab Golf Course played host to the race on this occasion, the golf course providing a stunning backdrop to the hordes of exhausted runners pounding the tarmac between the luscious green fairways.

Sixty-five runners completed the course, which is a club record

and demonstrates the depth of distance running talent that is emerging in the capital city. However, head and shoulders above them all were Bengt Lofgren and Claudine Roghi — the usual suspects leaving all others trailing in their wake.

In the male race, the much-improved Abdulmajeed Al-Muayquil led throughout the first lap, with Omani national Abdulwahed Al-Murshidi on his shoulder throughout. However, Al-Murshidi began to tire as the kilometers racked up, slipping back through the field and eventually finishing in 9th place. Lofgren caught up with Al-Muayquil at around the 12km marker, and from there they ran together until the start of

the closing straight. At this point Lofgren used his vast experience and stamina to pull away from his Saudi rival, and eventually crossed the line in a rapid time of 2:09:31, with Abdulmajeed a mere 33 seconds behind. In third place was Sebastien Kurch, the German staying strong at the end and keeping the onrushing Irishman Pdraig Cusack at arm's length.

In the female race, Nikki Layne matched Roghi yard for yard throughout the course of the entire race. However Roghi, who showed great resilience to run 30km a mere week after finishing a 72km challenge in Oman (along with Pdraig Cusack, Abdulwahed Al-Murshidi and Pierre Delbecq), managed to

fight off the challenge of Layne in the final meters — remarkably the top two females were only split by 2 seconds after the full race distance!

Franziska Saller, reigning half marathon champion, took third place in a very respectable time of 2:41:42, coming home just behind club Chairman Richard Slater.

The organizers thanked Dirab Golf Course for the use of its venue, Burj Al-Hamam restaurant for the Shawarmas after the race and Carrefour Tala Mall for providing food and water.

The next race for the club is the Gulf International Bank Riyadh Marathon, which looks set to be a fantastic day out this



Bengt Lofgren (L) battling it out with Abdulmajeed Al-Muayquil

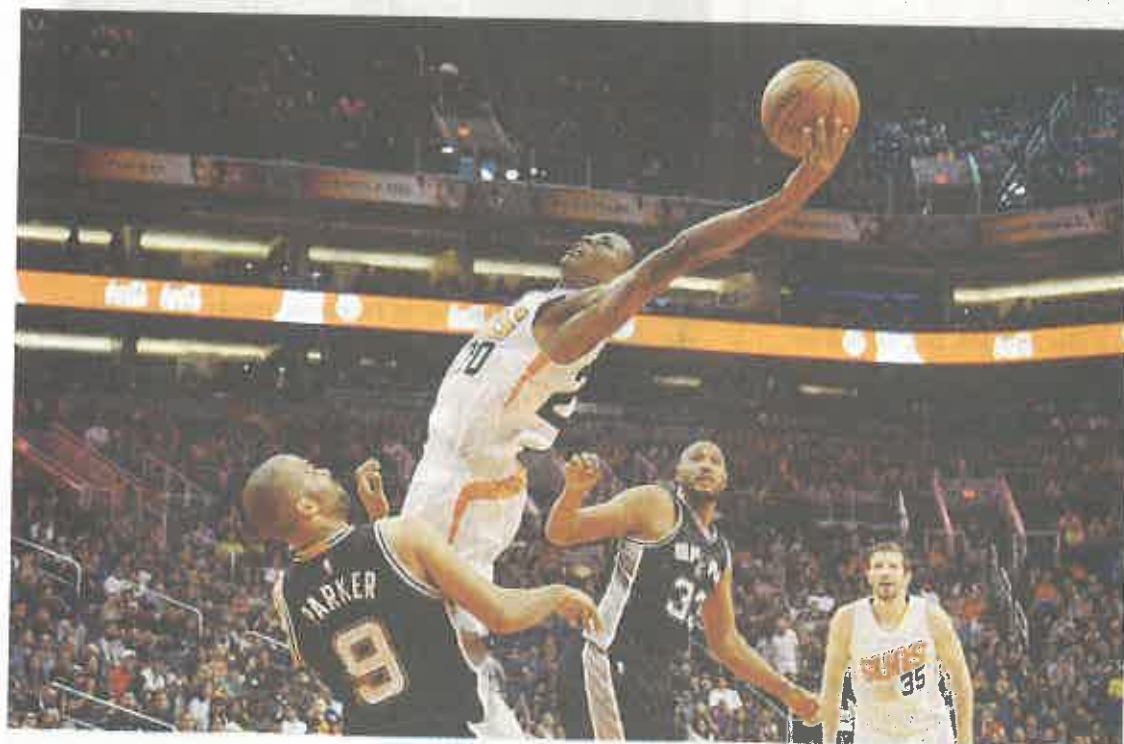
weekend (Feb. 26).

Results

Male race: 1. Bengt Lofgren (SWE) 2:09:31, 2. Abdulmajeed Al-Muayquil (KSA) 2:10:31, 3. Sebas-

tien Kurch (DEU) 2:15:21.

Female race: 1. Claudine Roghi (NZ/FRA) 2:25:56, 2. Nikki Layne (GB&NI) 2:25:58, 3. Franziska Saller (DEU) 2:41:42. — **SG**



Phoenix Suns' guard Archie Goodwin (No. 20) grabs an rebound pass over San Antonio Spurs' guard Tony Parker (L) during the second half at Talking Stick Resort Arena Sunday. — Reuters

Davis scores 59

Hamlin clinches Daytona 500

■ Pole sitter Chase, favorite Earnhardt Jr. crash out
■ Toyota sweeps top three spots

DAYTONA BEACH, FLORIDA — Denny Hamlin won the Daytona 500 in an electrifying photo-finish over Martin Truex Jr. Sunday to put Toyota in Victory Lane for the first time at the Great American Race.

Matt Kenseth had looked poised to add his name to the short list of three-time Daytona 500 winners when he led inside the final half-lap, but instead it was his Joe Gibbs Racing teammate who passed Truex only a few feet from the finish line to claim victory by a wafer-thin 1/100th of a second, the smallest margin in the 58-year history of the race.

Kyle Busch, who gave Toyota its first NASCAR Sprint Cup

"This is a proud moment for everyone at Toyota. It was my 11th try at getting the Daytona 500.

"I don't know where that came from. I don't even know what I did, but it just all came together. I just got the push."

Hamlin had led almost half the race but with one lap to go sat fourth before making a daring push to the front, brushing past 2009 and 2012 winner Kenseth, who lost control and dropped back into the pack before regaining control.

"They don't get any more crushing than that," said Kenseth. "We were unbelievably fast and that was the position I want to be in."

"I saw Denny was fast enough and I felt he was going to go around me if I didn't block him. I tried to get in front of him to get some momentum and I couldn't do it and got sideways there."

"We went for it and came up short."

With Kenseth out of contention, it was a sprint to the checkered flag and Hamlin

probably should have run him up a bit more, but I thought we were close enough.

"Congrats to Denny. He got me by a couple feet."

Rookie Chase Elliott, son of twice Daytona 500 winner and NASCAR Hall of Famer Bill Elliott, got his career off to a spectacular start by becoming the youngest ever Daytona pole sitter.

And the 20-year-old coolly led the 40-car field to the green flag as the massive crowd at the iconic Speedway, which underwent a \$400 million renovation, jumped to its feet and cheered.

Elliott, taking over the coveted seat in the Hendricks Motorsports No. 24 Chevrolet left vacant when three-time Daytona champion Jeff Gordon retired at the end of last season, also brought out the first caution of the day on lap 20 of the 200 lap race when he lost control and spun into the infield, ripping the nose off the car.

With 30 laps left, pre-race favorite Earnhardt's day came to a