



UNBANNED: Flavio Briatore is now free to return to racing. PHIL COLE/GETTY IMAGES

French court lifts Briatore racing ban

'Crashgate' mastermind allowed to return to racing

By JAMES FISH
Epoch Times Staff

A French court has lifted the Federation Internationale de l'Automobile's (FIA) lifetime motorsports ban on former Renault Formula One team director Flavio Briatore and awarded him \$21,500 (15,000 euros) in damages.

The Tribunal de Grande Instance in Paris ruled that the FIA, the worldwide motorsports governing body, conducted a biased investigation and did not have the legal authority to ban Briatore, as he did not hold an FIA license.

The FIA inquest and its decision were both spearheaded by former FIA President Max Mosley, who had a personal feud with Briatore.

Along with managing the Renault Formula One team, Briatore managed several other drivers. The ban cost him a sizeable amount of income.

Briatore had been banned from Formula One and all motorsports for the rest of his life after instructing driver Nelson Piquet Jr. to deliberately crash during the 2008 Singapore Grand Prix.

The accident bought out a safety car, which allowed Renault's other driver, Fernando Alonso, to catch up to the field.

The pits closed during the caution period, but drivers Nico Rosberg and Robert Kubica were forced to pit or run out of fuel. The caution interfered with their planned stops. The two were penalized, advancing Alonso to the lead. Alonso went on to win the race.

Renault technical director Pat Symonds was also banned, though only for five years. It is believed that his shorter ban reflected not only his position of lesser responsibility, but also the fact that he came forth and admitted his part in the affair while Briatore denied all involvement until driver Nelson Piquet Jr. told the FIA about the deliberate crash.

Symonds' ban has also been lifted.

The entire Renault team was given a suspended two-year ban, to go into effect if the team broke any rules in the future. The French court did not address this part of the ruling in its decision.

Nelson Piquet Jr. made a deal with the FIA for immunity if he revealed the details of the plan. He told the FIA that he only went along with the plan because he wanted to keep his job on the Renault F1 team. Despite crashing for the team, Piquet was replaced mid-2009 by Rene Grosjean.

The FIA will likely appeal the decision. Until now the FIA was seen as the ultimate power in world motorsports. The French court's ruling seriously weakens the FIA's position as final arbiter of all things racing.

The reaction to the reversal among fans and sportswriters has been mixed. Many people feel that the ban was fair, because the deliberate crash put at risk the lives and safety of Piquet, the other drivers, and the track safety crew. Many still feel that the effort to cheat to fix a race merits a lifetime ban.

Others feel that though Briatore is guilty and should be punished, the FIA is not sufficiently objective to decide a matter so serious.

U.S. beats Canada to win World Juniors gold

By RAHUL VAIDYANATH
Epoch Times Staff

The U.S. finally beat Canada to win gold at the World Junior Hockey Championship in Saskatoon on Tuesday.

The Americans won 6-5 in overtime after giving up a two-goal third period lead to their neighbors from the north.

On New Year's Eve, Canada had dealt the Americans another heart-breaking loss, coming back from a two-goal third period deficit to win in a shootout 5-4.

But this time, defenseman John Carlson, snapped a low shot past Canadian goalie Martin Jones in OT for the win. The goal came after a sequence of end-to-end rushes in an extremely entertaining contest.

"I don't know what happened to be honest," said Carlson in an interview with Canadian network TSN. "It's the biggest goal I ever scored in my life."

The U.S. last won the gold medal in 2004 but since then Canada had beaten them six times in a row. Canada had won five straight gold medals since 2004 but there would be no sixth on Tuesday.

The World Junior Hockey Championship showcases the future stars of the NHL. Last year, John Tavares led Canada to gold and now he's leading the New York Islanders after having been chosen first overall in the NHL Entry Draft this past summer.

At the outset, U.S. head coach Dean Blais talked about facing Canada. "We got to just be



JUNIOR HOCKEY RIVALS: Canada and the U.S. staged a gold medal game to remember with the Americans coming out on top 6-5 in Saskatoon on Tuesday. RICHARD WOLOWICZ/GETTY IMAGES

disciplined in the way we approach the game, not run all over the ice," said Blais.

"We got to play our game and not get too emotional."

The U.S. team had the advantage in speed. They are a highly skillful and

hungry group of future hockey stars.

END TO END

A back and forth first period ended deadlocked 2-2. Canadian goalie Jake Allen was vulnerable to the high shot over the glove hand

as both U.S. goals came from snap shots from the top of the face-off circle.

The U.S. took a 3-2 lead in the second period off a power play goal by Carlson. Carlson's slap shot from just inside the blue line flew

by an unsuspected Allen.

But sure enough, Canada tied it at 3-3 as the likely No. 1 pick in next year's entry draft Taylor Hall's centering pass bounced up in the air and fell into the U.S. net.

The U.S. once again took a two-goal lead in the third period. Backup goalie Jack Campbell, who replaced starter Mike Lee, made save after save as Canadian pressure intensified.

Jerry D'Amigo and Derek Stepan did the damage to Canada as Allen looked very shaky. Canada decided to change goalies, just as their opponents had done earlier. In came Jones for Canada.

Canada's spark plug all along had been Jordan Eberle. The diminutive forward who was a hero last year, took matters into his own hands.

"We just always believe we can come back," said Eberle about Canada's never-say-die play.

Eberle scored two goals to tie the game 5-5 as Canada threw everything they had at the Americans. That pushed the game into overtime and the Americans took advantage with their speed in four-on-four play.

"The camaraderie really helped pull us together," said Carlson about how the U.S. managed to bounce back from losing a two-goal lead.

This action-packed game proved to be the highest scoring gold medal game in tournament history.

Next year, the World Junior Hockey Championship will be played in Buffalo.

Hard road ahead for wildcard teams

Jets, Eagles, Ravens, and Packers aim to pull off what Giants did in Super Bowl XLII

By KARL YU
Epoch Times Staff

Originally introduced before the 1970 AFL-NFL merger, the wildcard system has gone through a couple of revisions over the years but essentially, the wildcard team is defined as a non-division winning playoff team.

Nine wildcard teams have gone on to reach the Super Bowl with five having captured the Vince Lombardi trophy.

The first wildcard team to make it all the way to the title game was the 1975 Dallas Cowboys, who defeated the Minnesota Vikings and Los Angeles Rams in the playoffs before succumbing to the Pittsburgh Steelers in Super Bowl X.

The first time a wildcard team captured a Super Bowl came in 1980 when the Jim Plunkett-led Oakland Raiders defeated the Houston Oilers, Cleveland Browns, San Diego Chargers, and Philadelphia Eagles en route to the title.

Hall of Fame QB John Elway won his first Super Bowl with the wildcard Denver Broncos in 1997.

The first decade of the 21st century saw three wildcard teams making it all the way to the championship and all three took home the Vince Lombardi Trophy.

The Tennessee Titans won the former AFC Central Division in 2000, a game up on the Baltimore Ravens, but it was the Ravens that would go on a run that would culminate in a 34-7 victory over the New York Giants in Super Bowl XXXV.

The Pittsburgh Steelers would win three road games during the postseason before capturing their fifth Super Bowl with a 21-10 win over the Seattle Seahawks in 2005.

And most recently, the New England Patriots' quest for an undefeated season was thwarted



WILDCARD SUCCESS: The New York Giants won Super Bowl XLII in Phoenix as a wildcard team, winning three road games just to get the chance to ruin New England's perfect season in 2008. TIMOTHY A. CLARY/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

NFL WILDCARD WEEKEND SCHEDULE

Sat. Jan. 9	N.Y. Jets (5) at Cincinnati Bengals (4)	4:30 p.m. EST
	Philadelphia Eagles (6) at Dallas Cowboys (3)	8:00 p.m. EST
Sun. Jan. 10	Baltimore Ravens (6) at New England Patriots (3)	1:00 p.m. EST
	Green Bay Packers (5) at Arizona Cardinals (4)	4:30 p.m. EST

FINAL NFL STANDINGS

National Football Conference										
NFC EAST					AFC EAST					
W	L	T	PCT	STRK	W	L	T	PCT	STRK	
z - Dallas	11	5	0	.688	W3	z - New England	10	6	0	.625
x - Philadelphia	11	5	0	.688	L1	x - NY Jets	9	7	0	.563
NY Giants	8	8	0	.500	L2	Miami	7	9	0	.438
Washington	4	12	0	.250	L3	Buffalo	6	10	0	.375
NFC NORTH					AFC NORTH					
W	L	T	PCT	STRK	W	L	T	PCT	STRK	
z - Minnesota	12	4	0	.750	W1	z - Cincinnati	10	6	0	.625
x - Green Bay	11	5	0	.688	W2	x - Baltimore	9	7	0	.563
Chicago	7	9	0	.438	W2	Pittsburgh	9	7	0	.563
Detroit	2	14	0	.125	L6	Cleveland	5	11	0	.313
NFC SOUTH					AFC SOUTH					
W	L	T	PCT	STRK	W	L	T	PCT	STRK	
* - New Orleans	13	3	0	.813	L3	* - Indianapolis	14	2	0	.875
Atlanta	9	7	0	.563	W3	Houston	9	7	0	.563
Carolina	8	8	0	.500	W3	Tennessee	8	8	0	.500
Tampa Bay	3	13	0	.188	L1	Jacksonville	7	9	0	.438
NFC WEST					AFC WEST					
W	L	T	PCT	STRK	W	L	T	PCT	STRK	
z - Arizona	10	6	0	.625	L1	z - San Diego	13	3	0	.813
San Francisco	8	8	0	.500	W2	Denver	8	8	0	.500
Seattle	5	11	0	.313	L4	Oakland	5	11	0	.313
St. Louis	1	15	0	.063	L8	Kansas City	4	12	0	.250

z - Clinched Division y - Clinched Wild Card x - Clinched Playoff Birth * - Clinched Division and Home Field

Leeds dumps Man U out of FA Cup in epic upset

Premier League's fallen angel finding its form

By PATRICK HAYDEN
Epoch Times Staff

Leeds United's Jermaine Beckford scored the only goal of the game as Old Trafford witnessed an unbelievable upset of Manchester United last Sunday.

Forty-two league places separated the two teams in the English League standings following the fall of Leeds from the top tier of English soccer in the last decade.

Manchester United had never lost at this stage of the competition or been knocked out by a lower League team in Sir Alex Ferguson's 23-year reign. But Leeds demonstrated why they are at the top of Division One (two tiers below the Premier League) with an historic victory.

Leeds earned the win by playing attacking soccer and also valiantly defending against the sustained pressure from Manchester United.

Leeds came into the match on a 15-match unbeaten run but probably thought that it was going to come to an end. But Beckford got away from defender Wes Brown to get on the end of Jonathan "Jonny" Howson's lofted pass. He then tucked the ball in at the far post in the 19th minute.

Wayne Rooney, who got past Leeds keeper Casper Ankergren, was denied by an excellent goal-line clearance from Jason Crowe as he ran back to the goal at full speed.

Leeds had chances to increase the lead as Robert Snodgrass rattled the woodwork with a free kick.

Pundits named the clash the "War of the Roses" (English Civil War) as the fixture has had much prominence in history with many memorable encounters, and this was certainly one of them.

Leeds boss Simon Grayson told BBC Radio Leeds, "Obviously I am very proud of my team and what they've done today."