



Azzedine Lagab (centre) of Algeria is seen with Yusif Mirza (left) of the UAE and David Per (right) of Austria after the third and final stage of the 2014 Tour of Zubarah yesterday. Lagab won the yellow jersey while Mirza secured the white jersey, Per clinched the blue jersey. Also seen are Primoz Roglic and Vadim Shaekhov.

Swimming: Phelps dodges jail in drunk driving case

BALTIMORE: Olympic swimming great Michael Phelps looked to the future yesterday, including the Rio Olympics in 2016, after he dodged a stint in prison for drunk driving.

The most decorated Olympian of all time struck a remorseful tone when he appeared in a Baltimore courtroom where he acknowledged the DUI charge against him.

As his defence lawyer pleaded for leniency, it emerged that the 29-year-old is attending Alcoholics Anonymous sessions after completing 45 days of intensive rehab at the Meadows addiction treatment center in Arizona.

"During my 45-day programme, I was able to find out a lot about myself that I never knew," Phelps, in a dark suit and heavy-rimmed glasses, told Judge Nathan Braverman.

He added: "I'm looking at a much brighter future than I have had in the past."

Phelps -- still under a six-month suspension from competitive swimming -- could have landed in prison for driving too fast after a few too many at Baltimore's chic Horseshoe casino in the early hours of September 30.

But Braverman opted to heed a state prosecutor's recommended penalty -- a one-year suspended sentence, plus 18 months of supervised probation, during which Phelps must abstain totally from alcohol.

Phelps will be free to go outside the United States to train and compete, the judge said, but wherever he is he must stick firmly to his alcohol addiction treatment.

"It sounds like you know what you need to do," Braverman told Phelps, adding that he hoped the case would in time become "a footnote to a legendary career."

Phelps was arrested for driving under the influence once before, when he was 19, in rural Maryland. His traffic record also included a 2006 speeding rap.

Yesterday's outcome clears the way for Phelps -- whose 22 Olympic medals include 18 golds -- to resume his return to top-notch competitive swimming.

Due to the six-month suspension imposed by USA Swimming in the days after his arrest, Phelps will not be taking part in the 2015 world swimming championships in Russia, his attorney Steven Allen told the court.

However, Phelps "is in the process of training for the upcoming Olympics" in Rio de Janeiro, said the lawyer, who gave no further details.

Phelps pulled over Phelps in a white Range Rover SUV after he was clocked doing 84 miles (135 kilometers) per hour in a 45 mph zone in Baltimore's undersea Fort McHenry Tunnel.

After the arresting officer whiffed alcohol in the vehicle, Phelps underwent a breathalyzer test that found a blood alcohol level of 0.14 percent -- well above the Maryland legal limit of 0.08 percent. Within hours, as news of his arrest got out, Phelps went on Twitter to acknowledge his error and express regrets to his fans -- but gave no hint of any alcohol issues.

His appearance in Maryland District Court -- minus the beard he sported in a cheerful Thanksgiving family photo on Instagram -- was a celebrity moment in a morning when Braverman was otherwise shoveling through dozens of routine traffic cases. Phelps said nothing as he arrived with his mother Debbie, his two sisters and former Baltimore Ravens linebacker Ray Lewis, a local hero and close friend of the six-foot-four (1.93-meter-tall) swimmer.

Allen took pains to stress Phelps' involvement with youth groups, saying his client understood he was a role model and that he wanted his misfortune to stand as a lesson to others to beware the dangers of drink.

Leaving the courthouse, after paying \$57.50 in court fees, Phelps told reporters that the past three months had been among the hardest in his life. **AFP**

Lagab keeps cool to win Tour of Zubarah title

Star UAE rider Yusif Mirza tops stage three to pocket key points

BY RIZWAN REHMAT

DOHA: Algeria's Azzedine Lagab yesterday produced a shock win at the Tour of Zubarah where defending champion Yusif Mirza was left ruing a hip injury that killed his chances of landing a second successive trophy in Qatar.

Mirza, however, clinched the third and final stage of the four-day event with a slick finish opposite Zubarah Fort where Adria Mobil's Primoz Roglic grabbed the second spot.

In third place was Uzbekistan's Vadim Shaekhov. Mirza yesterday clocked a time of 2 hours 44 minutes 46 seconds, a time shared by the top seven riders in stage three yesterday.

Lagab, who stunned with a stage win on Thursday, finished in 20th spot to secure his maiden triumph in Qatar.

The Algerian ended the tour with an overall time of 8:20:52 whereas Kristjan Fajt was 44 seconds adrift of the time set by Lagab.

Martin Weiss of Austria was 25



Adria Mobil rider David Per who won the blue jersey.

seconds off the pace set by Lagab. "It was my first race in Qatar. We took the first stage and I wore the yellow jersey. I didn't expect to be in 20th spot to secure his maiden triumph in Qatar.

The Algerian ended the tour with an overall time of 8:20:52 whereas Kristjan Fajt was 44 seconds adrift of the time set by Lagab.

Martin Weiss of Austria was 25

in January. I have another goal which is to do well in African Championship. Another one of my top races is in March - the Tour of Algeria," Lagab added.

"It was a well organised race here in Qatar. It is different from my previous races. We faced a lot of crosswind," the Algerian said.

Mirza, who won stage two on Friday, was a relieved man after nailing the white jersey.

The UAE rider was representing Team Giant GMS.

David Per of Adria Mobil secured the blue jersey.

"You see this (showing peeled skin on right hip). I did not recover well, but I am very happy. Sometimes you can't control the things that are not in your hands. It is in God's hands. But I am happy to do well with a new team. You (journalists) asked me on first day about my team," Mirza said.

Mirza accumulated a tally of 52 points over four days.

"Now I have answered for my new team. I hurt myself on the first stage. It was windy and I went down. There was too much of a gap in stage one. I did well in the stages two and three (he won both). But I did well and I grabbed the white jersey.

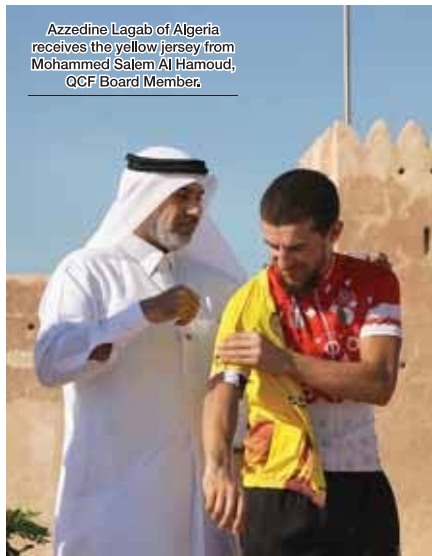
"I beat my rivals in the sprints. I made a lot of effort. On the final sprint, I made a breakaway and won the final sprint. I got 15 points more in the general classification. I am still happy with white jersey," Mirza said.

"All these points will help me in my qualification for Rio Olympics. I got 10 bonus points today. I got 10 points yesterday (Friday) and 8 in the prologue (on Wednesday). So I picked up 28 (bonus) points here. In Tour of Sharjah I got 40, so I have 68 points now. I am going in the right direction," the 26-year-old added.

Qatar's Afif Abdullah finished the third stage in 27th spot. Branko Filip, the Qatar coach, said: "We knew we don't have a chance in general classification. Here you need a strong team. Every rider here has a strong team. We didn't focus on the team. Abdullah got a puncture 10kms from the finish."

He added: "This event is very strong. We had the Algerian riders and some good names from Europe. All riders from the region were tired. Except Mirza, they were tired. We just had two-day rest after a 10-day event in Sharjah. I think we had too many tired riders. We had 14 starts in 18 days." **THE PENINSULA**

Azzedine Lagab of Algeria receives the yellow jersey from Mohammed Salem Al Hamoud, QCF Board Member.



Results and standings

Top-10 results in stage three

1	Yusif Mirza, Team Giant, 2:44:46
2	Primoz Roglic, Adria Mobil, same time
3	Vadim Shaekhov, China 361' Cycling Team, same time
4	Gabor Kazsa, Racing Cycles - Kastro Team, same time
5	S Schonberger, Team Gourmetfein Simplon Wels, same time
6	Mansoor Mohamed, Team Bahrain same time
7	Steven Lampier, Velosure - Giordana Racing Team, same time
8	Mario Schoibl, Team Gourmetfein Simplon Wels, 0:10 seconds
9	Martin Weiss, Tirol Cycling Team, same time
10	Kristjan Fajt, Adria Mobil, same time

Top-5 riders in general classification

1	Azzedine Lagab.....	8:20:52
2	Kristjan Fajt.....	0:14
3	Martin Weiss.....	0:25
4	Mario Schoibl.....	0:29
5	David Per.....	0:32

Top-5 riders in points classification

1	Yusif Mirza.....	52
2	David Per.....	29
3	Roman Van Uden.....	26
4	Martin Weiss.....	26
5	Primoz Roglic.....	25

Top-3 teams

1	Adria Mobil.....	25:03:43
2	Austria.....	3:52
3	Algeria.....	6:39



Yusif Mirza after winning stage three yesterday.