**CRICKET**

Kishan’s 98 helps India thrash Sri Lanka in first T20 in Lucknow

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**GULF TIMES SPORT**

**QATAR TOTAL ENERGIES OPEN**

Swiatek stuns Sabalenka as Ostapenko beats Muruguru

ANETT KONTAVEIT ENDS ONS JABEUR CAMPAIGN, MARIA SAKKARI BEATS COCO GAUFF TO ENTER SEMI-FINALS

**FOCUS**

Djokovic loses No.1 ranking to Medvedev in Dubai shock

Friday, February 25, 2022
Rajah 24, 1443 AH

By Ronan de Kernes

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ohl tennis star Iga Swiatek yesterday stunned Belinda Bencic of Switzerland to win a semi-final clash against sixth seed Maria Sakkari of Greece. She then went on to win the semi-final to make it to the finals of the Qatar Total Energies Open, which is being played at the Turkish Airlines Arena in Doha. Swiatek, who was the sixth seed, defeated Sakkari in three tight sets, to set up a final against second seed Karolina Pliskova.

The 21-year-old Swiatek, who has had a meteoric rise to the top of the women’s tennis rankings, is one of the brightest stars in the sport. She has won seven titles this year, including the French Open, and is ranked second in the world. Sakkari, who is ranked 12th, is also a formidable opponent and has reached the semi-finals of the US Open and the Ordina ASB Classic in New Zealand this year.

Swiatek, who is known for her aggressive game and powerful serve, was in fine form against Sakkari. She won the first set 6-4, and the second set 6-3, before Sakkari fought back to win the third set 6-4.

In the final, Swiatek will face Pliskova, who defeated third seed Petra Kvitova in the semi-finals. Pliskova, who is ranked third in the world, dominated the Czech in straight sets, winning 6-3, 6-1.

Ostapenko, meanwhile, faced a more challenging opponent in the form of Romania’s Sorana Cirstea. Ostapenko, who is ranked eighth in the world, defeated Cirstea in two tight sets, winning 6-4, 6-3.

The 25-year-old Ostapenko, who was born in Latvia, has had a successful year so far, winning titles in Lugano, Rabat and Prague. She will now face the winner of the Swiatek-Pliskova match in the final.

Muruguru, who is ranked 67th in the world, faced a stern test in the form of Germany’s Laura Siegemund. Murphy, who is ranked 76th, won the first set 6-4, but was unable to hold her lead as Siegemund took the second set 6-2. In the third set, Siegemund won the crucial final game 6-4, to win the match 2-1.

The 23-year-old Siegemund, who is known for her powerful serve and aggressive gameplay, has had a successful year so far, winning titles in Moscow and Hong Kong.

**FOCUS**

Djokovic loses No.1 ranking to Medvedev in Dubai shock

The 2022 ATP Dubai Duty Free Tennis Championships saw Novak Djokovic lose his world No.1 ranking to Daniil Medvedev. The Russian, who is ranked No.2, defeated Djokovic in straight sets 6-4, 6-2 to claim the top spot, which the Serb had held since 2020.

The result means that Medvedev, who won the US Open last year, has overtaken Djokovic in the world rankings. The two players had been neck-and-neck for the No.1 position, with Djokovic leading by just two places.

Djokovic, who has won 20 Grand Slam titles, including three Australian Opens, said he was disappointed to lose his ranking. "I didn’t expect to lose it this quickly," he said. "But that’s the way it goes. I’ll focus on the positives and try to win as many titles as possible in the future."
Kishan’s 89 helps India beat Lanka in first T20

We were really poor in all three departments. They batted beautifully and read the conditions really well.

I was happy with the result and we won. It was a very good performance. We batted very well and bowled very well.

Elgar banks on shaken South Africa bouncing back in must-win Test

SA Heroines

South Africa captain Elgar banked on his team bouncing back in the must-win Test with a ton.

Elgar was at his defiant best as South Africa’s batting line-up showed promise.

Opening batsman Elgar made a solid 109 while skipper De Kock made a quickfire 80 in the first innings. South Africa made 286, which is currently the highest score in the series.

Elgar’s knock was well-supported by Quetta’s regular batsmen Amla and Du Plessis, who added 100 runs for the third wicket.

The pair’s partnership was crucial in setting up the stage for South Africa’s batting line-up.

PREVIEW

Elgar, who was in Amla’s grip for a long period of time, was out for a 109.

South Africa will now face West Indies in the second Test, which is a must-win match for the hosts.

Elgar’s ton was the highlight of the day as he rescued South Africa from a precarious situation.

FOCUS

Kishan’s 89 helps India beat Lanka in first T20

India beat Sri Lanka by six wickets in the first T20 International at the J Noise in the Week.

India were in a bit of a pickle after losing the first T20 to Sri Lanka. But they came back strong and won the second T20 to level the series.

India’s bowlers were in full flow as they bowled Sri Lanka all out for 127. India then chased down the target with ease.

Root ‘grateful to survive Ashes cull’

England’s Joe Root said he was ‘grateful to still hold his place’ in the team after surviving the Ashes cull.

The England captain said he was ‘lucky enough’ to still be in the team.

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Root, however, was ruled out of the Test series in Australia with a lingering elbow injury.

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Spotlight

Andrew Flintoff

Andrew Flintoff has opened up about his battle with alcoholism.

The former England cricketer said he had struggled with alcoholism for many years.

Flintoff said he had become a different person after seeking help.

Andy ‘ain’t hanging around’

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ANDERSON’S PRAYING FOR ENGLAND RECALL AFTER WEST INDIES AXE

James Anderson

James Anderson has said he is praying for an England recall after being dropped for the West Indies Tests.

The 39-year-old fast bowler has not played for England since July 2018 but has been desperate to come back into the team.

Anderson said he had been working hard to get back into form and was hoping to be in the squad for the New Zealand series in March.

South Africa’s batsmen have a point to prove in their second Test against South Africa, according to Quinton de Kock.

The South African captain said his team would be focused on starting the series on a high.

De Kock said his team would be confident of bouncing back after losing the first T20.

India’s under-19s beat Sri Lanka in their first T20 international in Harare.

The under-19s dominated the game from start to finish, winning by 57 runs.

The young Indians showed their class with bat and ball.

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FOOTBALL

UEFA to strip Russia of Champions League
final at Munich meet

SCHALKE REMOVE GAZPROM SPONSORSHIP FROM FRONT OF SHIRTS

When asked whether Russia would be expelled from the European football competitions, UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin said: “We have already decided to remove Gazprom’s sponsorship from the front of the shirts of Schalke 04.”

Ceferin was speaking at a news conference following the UEFA Council meeting in Nyon on Monday, where the governing body of European football decided to impose sanctions against Russia.

“We have decided to impose sanctions against Russia in line with the decisions taken by UEFA,” Ceferin said.

The sanctions are expected to be lifted once Russia withdraws from the competition.

The decision has been taken after Russia’s President Vladimir Putin signed a law on Wednesday that allows the country to be suspended from international football.

Ceferin said that UEFA would work with the Russian Football Union (RFU) to ensure that the sanctions are lifted as soon as possible.

He added that UEFA would continue to support the Russian football team and its players.

Ceferin also said that UEFA would work with the Russian government to ensure that the sanctions are lifted as soon as possible.

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EQUESTRIAN

Fredricson trumps Ahlmann on opening day at CHI Al Shaqab

I knew I needed to take short turns without losing control to beat Christian’s time. Hansson WL is an amazing horse.’’

CHI AL SHAQAB DAY ONE RESULTS

Qatar Olympic Committee President H.E. Sheikh Hassan bin Thani attended the CHI Al Shaqab as he continued his quest to support the sport of equestrianism.

CHI Al Shaqab: The event, which was the first of two consecutive days of competition, saw riders from all over the world come together to showcase their skills in the beautiful setting of Qatar’s Al Shaqab Resort.

Qatar Sports Investments President H.E. Khalid bin Ahmad bin Jabor Al Thani also attended the event, along with other dignitaries and spectators.

The event included a variety of disciplines, with riders competing in jumping, dressage, and show jumping events.

The winners of the first day were

- Fredricson
- Ahlmann
- Hansson WL

The second day of the event is scheduled for March 26 and 27, with more competitions and events taking place.

QOC to organise inaugural Spartan Race on March 25 and 26

Dubai: The Qatar Olympic Committee (QOC) has announced the organisation of the inaugural Spartan Race (Qatar) on March 25 and 26.

This race, which is a part of the Spartan Race World Championship series, will see participants tackle a gruelling course full of obstacles and challenges.

The event is expected to attract hundreds of participants from around the world, who will compete in a variety of races, including a 25km ultra-trail, a 10km trail, and a 5km open race.

Register now to join in the excitement and test your limits in the Middle East’s toughest race yet!