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GULF TIMES SPORT

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QNB STARS LEAGUE

Al Arabi ease past Qatar SC after Soria shown red card

MOAYAD HASSAN AND AMRO SURAG STRIKES GIVE AL GHARAFI 2-1 VICTORY OVER AL SAILIYA

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Two second-half goals ensured Al Arabi got off to a winning start in their opening QNB Stars League match against 10-man Qatar SC at the Education City Stadium yesterday.

Ahmed Fathi (70th minute) and substitute Ibrahim Nasser Kalla (90th minute) scored the goals for Al Arabi, fetching them three valuable points.

Qatar SC suffered a setback when their captain Sebastian Soria was shown the red card by referee Salman Falahi in the 59th minute of the match. Soria, while trying to charge with the ball, had brought down Ahmed Fathi who was running alongside.

Soria was earlier cautioned with a yellow card in the 16th minute after fouling against rival captain Abdulla al-Marafi. After a goalless first half and Soria's departure in the second, Al Arabi who had failed to make good of a few chances gained momentum. Their star winger Yousef Msakni had a chance to score in the 67th minute but failed to get hold of the ball, from a pass from forward Aaron Boupendza, when in front of the goal.

Eventually, Al Arabi scored the first goal in the 70th minute when Msakni set up a pass inside the box for Ahmed Fathi to score off a deflection from rival goalkeeper Sataa Al Abbasi, who till then had done a good job under the bar. An alert Ahmed Fathi latched on to



Al Arabi players celebrate after their win over Qatar SC in the QNB Stars League at the Education City Stadium yesterday.

the ball after Aaron's kick from the right bounced off the goalkeeper's hands.

The lead for Al Arabi saw the game slow down somewhat before Kalla produced a super shot in the 90th minute. It was a thrilling strike as Kalla, running in from the right, swung into ac-

tion straight-away and when inside the penalty area was given a superb back heel pass by Hassan. Kalla shot it perfectly and into the goal.

Earlier in the 24th minute, Msakni and Qatar SC's Khaled Mahmoudi were involved in an unfortunate head colli-

sion while going for the ball. Both players were immediately attended to by the medical teams and were back in action.

In yesterday's second match, Al Gharafa edged past Al Sailiya 2-1 at the Khalifa International Stadium. Moayad Hassan gave Al Gharafa the lead in the



Al Gharafa's Algerian defender Mehdi Tahrat in action against Al Sailiya at the Khalifa International Stadium yesterday.

31st minute with a left-footed shot, before Amro Surag doubled the lead in 48th minute.

Al Sailiya pulled one back through substitute Mohanad Ali's header from a

cross in the 67th minute.

However, Al Gharafa managed to hold on the lead despite multiple attacks from Al Sailiya to start with a victory.

PREVIEW

Duhail begin campaign with a tough encounter against Wakrah

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Despite missing eight of their Qatari players for the opening few matches of the QNB Stars League, Al Duhail coach Hernan Crespo is confident of a good start to their campaign.

Duhail face a full-strength Al Wakrah today at the Education City Stadium in what is expected to be a tough match for the former champions.

Duhail, who finished runners-up in the last two seasons to Al Sadd, will be hoping to finish ahead of their bitter rivals Sadd this time. Crespo guided the team remarkably well in the AFC Champions League group stage held in Saudi Arabia, and now will hope he will have a good start in the league as well.

Duhail have a strong attack despite the absence of Qatar players with Michael Olunga, Nam Tae-Hee, Ferjani Sassi and Edmilson Junior leading the front line. They have also contracted Portuguese defender Ruben Semedo following the departure of Belgian defender Toby Alderweireld.

"I am happy that I am part of this league. We are looking for a positive start to this season in our first match. And while we are proud of the fact that many of our players are with the Qatar national team preparing for the 2022 FIFA World Cup, we will miss them at the same time," Crespo said yesterday.

"But we have young players who deserve to be with us and they have made great efforts during our training camp and are now ready for our first appearance this season. We will show everyone how focused and capable the team is towards achieving the desired re-



Al Duhail's Edmilson Junior train yesterday, on the eve of the QNB Stars League match against Al Wakrah.

sults," the former Argentine star added.

Crespo said he expected Duhail to be strong contenders for titles. "I do not promise to win titles, but I promise you that we will be tough competitors for all championships. Our players work exceptionally hard daily because everyone respects the identity of Al Duhail and wants the team to continue displaying top professional levels that the

club is known for," said Crespo.

Meanwhile, Al Wakrah had emerged as the dark horses last season having finished overall third in the standings. The team would be keen for the new challenge of the new season and aim to achieve the best possible position. Spaniard Marquez Lopez is guiding Al Wakrah for the fifth season in a row and has with him a group of prominent

players who continue with the side.

AL RAYYAN TAKE ON AL SHAMAL

In another match today, Al Rayyan face Al Shamal at the Al Sadd Stadium. Both teams will take to the pitch with an aim of making a strong start to their league championship and seek a good result which would serve as a motivation and morale boost for the season ahead and



Al Rayyan coach Nicolas Cordova speaks at a press conference yesterday.

to make up for what they missed last season. Although Al Shamal achieved their goal last season, with good planning and aim of staying in the QNB Stars League this season, they would be looking to gain on the experience and work harder under Moroccan coach Hicham Zahid. Al Shamal would certainly seek to rise higher in the ranking and to stay away from being in the realms of relegation.

Al Rayyan are looking forward to a strong start and a better appearance after their difficult last season where they were far from finishing in the top four.

Al Rayyan finished eighth last season with 24 points and perhaps would look for more technical stability following their success under Chilean coach Nicolas Cordova, who enabled the team to reach the AFC Champions League Round of 16.

Cordova said: "A good beginning is always a difficult task but we have prepared the best way we can. Our overseas training camp was good and the team's physical preparation has also been good. We are ready to win the first match."

He added: "Al Shamal did well in the last league season and for us meeting them in the opening match would be a tough contest. We lack in foreign professionals, unlike Al Shamal who have completed all their recruitments, but we will give our everything to make a winning start."

Al Shamal have signed up French player Loic Lander, Moroccan Yacine Bammou, and are continuing with their Iraqi professional Amjad Atwan, and Jordanian striker Ali Alwan, besides Argentinian Matias Nani. Last season, Al Shamal occupied the 10th place in the table with 22 points, only two points behind Al Rayyan. A strong and exciting encounter is on cards.

Al Shamal coach Hisham Zahid said: "I would like to thank my players for the efforts they made during the preparation period and overseas camp in Turkey. I also thank the club's management, which overcame all obstacles and provided all means of comfort, in addition to its keenness to support the team with new players, be they Qataris or foreigners. I also thank the coaching staff with me as well as the medical and fitness staff for their great efforts in the past period."

SPORT

CRICKET

Burl, Jongwe star for Zimbabwe in first T20 series win

'We talked a couple of times on the positive brand of cricket we want to play'

AFP
Harare

A 79-run seventh-wicket partnership between Ryan Burl and Luke Jongwe proved crucial as Zimbabwe beat Bangladesh by 10 runs yesterday to win a Twenty20 international series between the countries for the first time.

After slumping to 67-6 off 13 overs in the third and final match, Burl and Jongwe smashed eight sixes and six fours between them off 31 balls to offer hope to the hosts.

Both Jongwe (54) and Burl (35) were dismissed during the penultimate over as they looked to hammer medium-pacer Hasan Mahmud over the ropes.

Zimbabwe finished their 20 overs on 156-8 and, in a tense finish at Harare Sports Club, restricted Bangladesh to 146-8 for a 2-1 series triumph.

A 17-run victory for Zimbabwe last Saturday was followed one day later by a seven-wicket win for the tourists.

The Zimbabwe total was achieved despite losing their regular top scorer, Pakistan-born Sikandar Raza, for a golden duck.

Mahmud and Mehidy Hasan were the pick of the Bangladesh bowlers, both finishing with identical figures of 2-28 off four overs.

"I am delighted with the guys. We talked a couple of times on the positive brand of cricket we want to play. We never give in on that," said recently hired Zimbabwe coach Dave Houghton.

TRICKY POSITION

"Today, we were in a tricky position and a couple of players down the order got us a match-winning score. So I am happy with the cricket we are playing, I hope it continues for a long time."

Stand-in Bangladesh captain Mosaddek Hossain said: "Ryan Burl made the difference. Batting wise, we lost wickets too early. From the beginning, our bowling was very good."



Bangladesh batsman Anamul Haque Bijoy lies on the pitch after losing his wicket as Zimbabwe wicket keeper Regis Chakabva and bowler Wessly Madhevere celebrate during the third and final T20 international at the Harare Sports Club. (AFP)

"Everyone knows how good we are in one-day internationals and we are very confident going into the three match series from Friday."

Always slightly behind the required run rate, Bangladesh reached 131-6 off 18 overs, leaving them requiring 26 runs to snatch victory in the match and the series.

Victor Nyauchi, one of three changes to the Zimbabwe team convincingly beaten on Sunday, restricted Bangladesh to seven runs in the penultimate over. Needing 19 off the final over, Jongwe

held his nerve with the ball to secure the win for Zimbabwe.

Afif Hossain finished as Bangladesh's leading scorer with an unbeaten 39 off 27 deliveries.

Nyauchi took three wickets and Brad Evans, another change after the second T20 loss, claimed two for Zimbabwe, who have won seven of eight matches in the shortest format since the beginning of July.

The change in fortunes after 3-0 T20 and one-day international whitewashes at home to Afghanistan coincided

with the appointment of former star Houghton.

Bangladesh were without captain and wicketkeeper Nurul Hasan due to a finger injury, which has also ruled him out of the three-match ODI series.

BRIEF SCORES

Zimbabwe 156-8, 20 overs (R. Burl 54, L. Jongwe 35; Mehidy Hasan 2-28, Hasan Mahmud 2-28) **beat Bangladesh 146-8, 20 overs** (Afif Hossain 39 not out; V. Nyauchi 3-29, B. Evans 2-26) **by 10 runs**
Series: Zimbabwe won 2-1

FOCUS

India and Pakistan to clash on Aug 28 in Asia Cup in UAE

Reuters
New Delhi

Arch-rivals India and Pakistan will clash in an Asia Cup Sunday blockbuster in Dubai on Aug. 28, the organisers said yesterday.

Bilateral cricket remains suspended between the bitter neighbours who play each other only in multi-team tournaments.

A day after Sri Lanka take on Afghanistan in the opener, India and Pakistan will lock horns in the tournament's most anticipated match.

The nine-team Twenty20 tournament was shifted to the United Arab Emirates last month due to the political and economic crisis in Sri Lanka, who retain the hosts' honour.

Pakistan beat India by 10 wickets in a T20 World Cup match in Dubai last year in their previous encounter.

Dubai hosts 10 matches, including the Sept. 11 final, while

three will be played in Sharjah, ACC president Jay Shah, who is also the secretary of the Indian cricket board, said on Twitter.

SCHEDULE

(All matches to start at 6:00pm UAE Standard time)

Group A

28 August, India v Pakistan: Dubai

31 August, India v Qualifier: Dubai

2 September, Pakistan v Qualifier: Sharjah

Group B

27 August, Sri Lanka v Afghanistan: Dubai

30 August, Bangladesh v Afghanistan: Sharjah

1 September, Sri Lanka v Bangladesh: Dubai

Super 4: B1 v B2: **3 September:** Sharjah

A1 v A2: **4 September:** Dubai

A1 v B1: **6 September:** Dubai

A2 v B2: **7 September:** Dubai

A1 v B2: **8 September:** Dubai

B1 v A2: **9 September:** Dubai

Final: **11 September:** Dubai

ENGLAND TO PLAY SEVEN T20S ON FIRST PAKISTAN TOUR IN 17 YEARS

Karachi: England will play seven Twenty20 internationals against Pakistan on their first visit to the country in 17 years, the Pakistan Cricket Board said yesterday.

England will arrive in mid-September and play four T20s in Karachi, with the other three matches in Lahore, and then return in December for three Tests.

England's last tour to the country was in 2005 before Pakistan were forced to play international matches at neutral venues in the UAE following a 2009 attack on the Sri Lankan team bus in Lahore.

International cricket gradually returned to Pakistan in 2015 but suffered another setback when New Zealand pulled out of an ODI tour just minutes before a one-day international in September last year, citing security alerts.

A week later, England withdrew its men's and women's teams from tours to Pakistan. Both tours were rescheduled

after the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) gave assurances over security.

Pakistan successfully hosted Australia for the first time since 1998 earlier this year.

"We demonstrated our event planning and operational skills in the highly successful series against Australia in March-April this year and I am confident we will be able to replicate these when England visit us," said PCB director of international cricket, Zakir Khan.

SCHEDULE

Tuesday, Sept 20 - 1st T20I, Karachi

Thursday, Sept 22 - 2nd T20I, Karachi

Friday, Sept 23 - 3rd T20I, Karachi

Sunday, Sept 25 - 4th T20I, Karachi

Wednesday, Sept 28 - 5th T20I, Lahore

Friday, Sept 30 - 6th T20I, Lahore

Sunday, Oct 2 - 7th T20I, Lahore

SPOTLIGHT

England recall Robinson for South Africa Tests

AFP
London

England have recalled **Ollie Robinson** into a 14-man squad for this month's first two Tests of a three-match series against South Africa.

Robinson has not played for England since the Ashes ended in January due to several fitness issues, mainly surrounding his back. But the 28-year-old seamer took nine wickets in Sussex's recent County Championship match against Nottinghamshire before earning an England recall in place of the injured Jamie Overton.

Struggling opener Zak Crawley has retained his place in an otherwise unchanged squad.

Robinson will now look to add to an impressive tally of 39 wickets in nine Tests at 21.28 when England face South Africa in the first Test at Lord's starting on August 17.

Robinson will have a chance to press his claim for a place in the Test XI by playing for the second-string England Lions in their four-day tour match against South Africa at Canterbury next week.

England have won all four of their Tests under a new leadership duo of captain Ben Stokes and red-ball head coach Brendon McCullum, including

a 3-0 whitewash of world champions New Zealand. "After an excellent start to the summer under Brendon McCullum and Ben Stokes, we're looking forward to an exciting Test series against a strong South Africa side," said Mo Bobbat, men's performance director at the England and Wales Cricket Board as the squad was announced on Tuesday.

"The selectors have picked a squad for the first two Tests at Lord's and Old Trafford with continuity in mind.

"It's good to get Ollie Robinson back in the mix after his recent injury. He will continue his progress by playing for the Lions against South Africa in a four-day match at Canterbury next week."

Following a poor Ashes series, where his approach to fitness was questioned in public by the England coaching staff, Robinson missed the subsequent tour of the West Indies with back spasms.

He was due to play for a County Select XI against New Zealand in May, only to miss out with a stiff back, before a bout of Covid-19 caused him to spend more time on the sidelines before he returned to action at Trent Bridge.

If Robinson proves his fitness with the Lions, he will be competing alongside James Anderson, Stuart Broad, Matthew Potts and Craig Overton for a place in England's pace attack at Lord's. The remainder of the Lions squad is due to be announced on Friday.

England squad for the first two Tests:

Ben Stokes (Durham, capt), James Anderson (Lancashire), Jonny Bairstow (Yorkshire), Stuart Broad (Nottinghamshire), Harry Brook (Yorkshire), Zak Crawley (Kent), Ben Foakes (Surrey, wkt), Jack Leach (Somerset), Alex Lees (Durham), Craig Overton (Somerset), Matthew Potts (Durham), Ollie Pope (Surrey), Ollie Robinson (Sussex), Joe Root (Yorkshire)

Fixtures

Aug 17-21: England v South Africa, 1st Test, Lord's

Aug 25-29: England v South Africa, 2nd Test, Old Trafford

Sep 8-12: England v South Africa, 3rd Test, The Oval



TENNIS

Osaka's father back in coaching role

Reuters
Washington DC

Naomi Osaka said she is excited to have her father back as coach after splitting with Wim Fissette as the four-times Grand Slam champion returns from an Achilles injury that ruled her out of the grasscourt season.

The Silicon Valley Classic, where Osaka will play Zheng Qinwen in the first round, is her first event after ending a three-year partnership with Belgian Fissette, who guided her to wins in the 2020 US Open and the Australian Open the following season.

Osaka, 24, said they parted on good terms and all she needed was some fresh energy.

"It was really good times with

Wim and he's a really amazing coach," she told reporters. "He's a very ambitious guy. I was getting injured and I'm sure he would have wanted to go to Wimbledon. So it was two different mindsets, I would say. But he's a really cool guy still."

Osaka's father, Leonard Francois, previously served as her primary coach until the 2018 season.

"I wanted to bring my dad back because he always makes me think outside the box," added the former world number one. Whenever I think something is really bad he always makes me realise that things are much more positive than they seem. When I get stressed out he starts dancing or something to make me feel better."

Injuries and poor form have seen Osaka slip to 41 in the



Naomi Osaka of Japan interacts with a fan during the Mubadala Silicon Valley Classic, part of the Hologic WTA Tour, at Spartan Tennis Complex in San Jose, California. (AFP)

world rankings, with the 2021 triumph at Melbourne Park her last title on Tour.

Meanwhile in San Jose, Elena Rybakina made a first-round exit from the Silicon Valley Classic in San Jose on Monday.

Rybakina, playing her first match since her win over Ons Jabeur in the final of the grass-court major, lost 1-6 6-2 6-0 to Daria Kasatkina. Seventh seed Rybakina looked to be in control

early on but lost 12 of the last 14 games of the match.

In Washington, Venus Williams suffered an opening round defeat at the WTA 250 Citi Open on her return to singles action after almost a year out.

The 42-year-old, playing singles for the first time since last August, lost 4-6 6-1 6-4 to Canadian qualifier Rebecca Marino under the lights in Washington, DC.

Suryakumar shines as India beat Windies



Suryakumar Yadav of India hits a boundary during the third T20I against the West Indies at Warner Park in Basseterre, Saint Kitts and Nevis, yesterday. Yadav scored 76 as India chased down the target of 165 set by the West Indies to take a 2-1 lead in the five-match series. India completed their seven-wicket win yesterday with an over to spare. Earlier in the second T20I on Monday, West Indies beat India by wickets. India won the first clash by 68 runs. (AFP)

Gold rush at the Commonwealth Games



Silver medallist England's Laura Stephens (left), gold medallist Australia's Elizabeth Dekkers (centre) and bronze medallist Australia's Brianna Throssell pose with their medals during the presentation ceremony after the women's 200m butterfly swimming final at the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham yesterday. **Right:** Gold medallist England's Brodie Williams poses during the medal presentation ceremony for the men's 200m backstroke swimming final. (AFP)

TENNIS

Djokovic likely to miss the US Open

'Tennis is not interesting or authentic when the best are not allowed to compete'

Reuters
New York

There is a petition circulating to allow **Novak Djokovic** to play at the US Open but the Serbian appears likely to miss the entire North American hardcourt swing barring a sudden change in Covid-19 protocols in the United States and Canada.

Djokovic has refused to take the Covid-19 vaccine yet the 21-times Grand Slam winner remains on the entry lists for the ATP 1000 events in Montreal and Cincinnati that serve as tune-ups for the August 29-September 11 U.S. Open in New York. In the case of the U.S. Open, which does not have a vaccine mandate, organisers previously said that per the Grand Slam Rule Book, all eligible players are entered into the main draw based on their ranking 42 days prior to the first Monday of the event.



U.S. Open organisers also said that while they do not have a vaccination mandate in place for players, they will respect the U.S. government's position regarding travel into the country for unvaccinated non-U.S. citizens. Former world number one Djokovic, whose website shows no upcoming events, said last week he was preparing for

the U.S. Open as if he will be allowed to compete in the year's final Grand Slam despite not being vaccinated.

Djokovic's camp and organisers of the three North American hardcourt events did not im-

mediately respond when asked by Reuters on Tuesday for comment. The hashtag #LetNovakPlay was circulating on social media as a slew of Djokovic supporters voiced their support for a player who moved to within

one of Spaniard Rafa Nadal's record of 22 Grand Slam titles after his Wimbledon triumph last month.

"Tennis is not interesting or authentic when the best are not allowed to compete," one Twitter

user wrote while another felt winning a tournament where Djokovic is not able to play is less impressive: "There will be an * after every tournament winners name where Novak isn't allowed to play!"

Another post with the same hashtag brought up U.S. President Joe Biden, who is fully vaccinated and twice boosted but tested positive on Saturday just three days after having emerged from isolation after testing positive for the first time on July 21. "Quadruple-vaxxed Biden tested positive for Covid again. But unvaccinated Covid-recovered Djokovic can't play in U.S. Open. He is apparently too big a risk to the U.S. healthcare system," the tweet read.

An online petition that launched a month ago calling for the United States Tennis Association to work with the U.S. government to allow Djokovic to compete in the U.S. Open was edging closer to its target of 50,000 signatures on Tuesday.

The focus on Djokovic's status ahead of a Grand Slam is far from new as he was unable to defend his Australian Open crown this year after being deported from the country over his vaccination status in January. Djokovic has previously said he was prepared to miss Grand Slam tournaments rather than take the Covid-19 vaccine.

GOLF

Woods rejected \$700-800mn LIV offer, Norman says



AFP
New York

Tiger Woods turned down an offer of about \$700-800mn to take part in the Saudi-funded LIV Golf series, the rebel circuit's chief Greg Norman said.

Fifteen-time major champion Woods has always made clear his opposition to the series.

Speaking in an interview on Fox News with Tucker Carlson, LIV chief executive Norman was asked if it was true that the American golf legend was offered "700, 800, a billion dollars" to join the breakaway circuit.

"That number was out there before I became CEO so that number's been out there, yes," Norman, a former world number one who is the public face of LIV Golf, said in the interview at Trump National in Bedminster, New Jersey, where the third LIV Golf Invitational was held last weekend.

"And look, Tiger is a needle-mover, right? So of course you are going to look at the best of the best."

"They had originally approached Tiger before I became CEO, so yes, that number is

somewhere in that neighbourhood." The 46-year-old Woods has consistently declared his loyalty to the PGA Tour and said he has no intention of following the likes of other major winners, such as Phil Mickelson, Bryson DeChambeau, Sergio Garcia and Dustin Johnson in jumping ship to the upstart LIV.

"I disagree with it," Woods said ahead of the British Open in St Andrews last month when asked about his fellow professionals who have been tempted to join the hugely lucrative circuit.

"I think that what they've done is they've turned their back on what has allowed them to get to this position," Woods said.

"And who knows what's going to happen in the near future with world-ranking points, the criteria for entering major championships?"

"Some of these players may not ever get a chance to play in major championships. That is a possibility. We don't know that for sure yet."

The LIV series, spearheaded by Norman and bankrolled by Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund, offers record prize money of \$25mn per 54-hole event with shotgun starts and no cut.

SPOTLIGHT

Chinese trailblazer Feng announces retirement



Reuters
Shanghai

China's first major winner **Shanshan Feng** announced her retirement from professional golf yesterday, saying she wanted to "slow down a little" and spend more time with her family.

Feng became the first player from her country, male or female, to win a major with her victory in the Women's PGA Championship in 2012, five years after she earned an LPGA Tour card.

Feng won 10 LPGA titles and attained the world number one ranking in 2017.

The 32-year-old also won a bronze medal at the 2016 Rio Olympics but was unable to get onto the podium in Tokyo last year, finishing eighth in her last competitive appearance.

"To those who know me, I set a goal of playing 10 full years of professional golf at the very beginning of my career back in 2007," Feng wrote in a post on

her Instagram page. "It is year 15 now."

"Now it is time for me to try something different. In recent years, the global pandemic has changed a lot of things, and has me reflecting. I have been travelling for the majority of my past years."

"It is time to slow down a little, focus more on my personal growth, and spend some time with my family."

Feng, who is currently working in a coaching role with the women's national team, added that she wanted to help nurture the next generation of Chinese golfers.

"I have a dream that one day in future professional golf, we see more of us Chinese players," Feng said.

"The players and the resources together can help this sport grow tremendously, and create some future Chinese champions along the way. To achieve that, I will be devoting my heart and sweat off the course in helping young talents grow."

MOTORSPORT

Sargeant set to make F1 debut with Williams at US Grand Prix

Reuters
New York

Williams academy driver **Logan Sargeant** is set to become the first American in seven years to feature in a Formula One race weekend when he participates in the first practice session at the United States Grand Prix in October.

Sargeant will take over Williams driver Nicholas Latifi's FW44 for the 60-minute session at the Circuit of the Americas in Austin, Texas, the team said in a statement yesterday.

The 21-year-old Florida native, currently competing in his first season of Formula Two, is in line to become the first American since Alexander Rossi in 2015 to take part in an F1 grand prix weekend.

"I'm super excited to be given this opportunity to drive my first free practice in Austin," Sargeant said. "To be given the chance at the US Grand Prix is something extremely special to me. "A massive thank you to Williams for putting the trust and belief in me to do a good job. The goal for me will be to learn as much as possible in the new generation of cars. "I'm looking forward to making the most of this experience and really enjoying it."

Sargeant has made an impressive start to his rookie season in Formula Two with



Carlin, notching two feature race wins along with two podiums to sit third in the standings. He became the first American to win a race in the rebranded Formula Two series when he triumphed at Silverstone in May. Rossi, who now drives in IndyCar, won in Abu Dhabi in 2013 in what was then the GP2 series. Sargeant got his first taste of Formula One machinery when he took part in a young driver test with Williams in Abu Dhabi last December. All F1 teams must run a driver with limited F1 experience in at least two Friday first practice sessions this season.

Red Bull, Honda extend technical support deal

Red Bull have extended their power unit support agreement with Honda until the end of the 2025 season after the Japanese manufacturer's departure from Formula

One, the team said in a statement yesterday. Honda withdrew from F1 at the end of 2021 after powering Max Verstappen to his maiden world championship, winning a drivers' title for the first time since the late Brazilian triple champion Ayrton Senna triumphed with McLaren in 1991.

The Austrian outfit set up their own powertrain company to use Honda's intellectual property to provide power units for their main Red Bull Racing Formula One team and Italy-based sister team AlphaTauri.

The partnership was initially intended to last until the end of 2023, with Red Bull set to take over the operation, but will now run until the end of 2025, when the sport introduces the next generation of power units. Red Bull are currently leading both Formula One championships by a comfortable margin, with Dutch driver Verstappen heading for a second straight world title.

"We thank Honda for their positive response to working together. We are excited to continue our partnership in F1," Red Bull's team adviser Helmut Marko said.

"We have had a successful relationship so far, winning the drivers' championship in 2021 and currently leading the drivers' and teams' classifications, with the aim of securing both 2022 titles." Honda, which left as a constructor in 2008, announced last year its departure from F1

Portugal to host 2023 MotoGP season opener

The 2023 MotoGP season will open in Portugal rather than its usual starting point in Qatar, the International Motorcycling Federation (FIM) announced in Paris yesterday.

Since 2007, the season has started with a night race in Qatar but the Losail circuit, which also hosts a Formula One Grand Prix, is scheduled for renovation. It is expected to host its MotoGP race later in the season. The Portuguese Grand Prix will be held at Portimao in the Algarve on March 26.

The track will also host a winter test session in the week before the Grand Prix. The track has hosted MotoGP since 2020 and the last two races have been won by reigning world champion Fabio Quartararo of France.

The final schedule for the entire 2023 MotoGP season will be announced "in due course," FIM said.

as an engine manufacturer at the end of 2021 to focus on zero-emission technology. Formula One teams and manufacturers have agreed to "freeze" power unit development from the start of 2022 until the end of 2025, when the engine regulations are set for a revamp.

PREMIER LEAGUE

City, Liverpool renew title fight as clubs flex financial muscle

Guardiola has let plenty of experience go to rivals with Gabriel and Zinchenko joining Arsenal

AFP
Manchester, United Kingdom

Premier League clubs have splashed an estimated £1bn (\$1.2bn) in the arms race for new talent ahead of the start to the 2022/23 season on Friday, but champions Manchester City remain the side to beat. After winning four league titles in five years, Pep Guardiola's squad has been bolstered by the biggest name arrival of the summer in Erling Haaland.

The Norwegian had his choice of Europe's top clubs after scoring 85 goals in 88 games for Borussia Dortmund and followed in the footsteps of his father Alf Inge – a former City captain – to the blue side of Manchester. Haaland may have had a debut to forget as he missed a glaring opportunity towards the end of City's 3-1 Community Shield defeat to Liverpool on Saturday, but Guardiola warned the pretenders to his side's throne that "the goals will come".

"There is no reason not to be confident," added Guardiola. "What these guys have done, not just in the Premier League, but in the cups, the steps we have made in Europe and in many things."

In a window of significant change at the Etihad, Argentine forward Julian Alvarez and England international midfielder Calvin Phillips have also arrived. But Guardiola has let plenty of experience go to Premier League rivals with Gabriel Jesus and Oleksandr Zinchenko heading to Arsenal and Raheem Sterling joining Chelsea.

Liverpool are best placed to pounce on any slipping of City's standards. Jurgen Klopp's side were denied a historic quadruple by the finest of margins last season as they were pipped to the title by a point and lost the Champions League final 1-0 to Real Madrid after winning the League and FA Cup.



Liverpool's Trent Alexander-Arnold (left) and Manchester City's Jack Grealish vie for the ball during the Community Shield match at the King Power Stadium in Leicester on Saturday.

The Reds have also refreshed their front line with the imposing presence of Darwin Nunez coming in to compensate for the loss of Sadio Mane to Bayern Munich. Nunez did make an immediate

impact in the Community Shield, winning a penalty and scoring to turn the game in Liverpool's favour late in the game. City and Liverpool have dominated English football for the past five

years, but if there is to be a challenge from the chasing pack, it could come from Tottenham. Ahead of Antonio Conte's first full season in charge, the Italian has been heavily backed by the

normally thrifty Spurs board with the signings of Richarlison, Yves Bissouma, Ivan Perisic, Djed Spence, Clement Lenglet and Fraser Forster.

Crucially, Tottenham have also retained the star duo of Harry Kane and Son Heung-min as they aim for a first league title in 62 years. Arsenal have been in blistering pre-season form with Jesus on fire in thrashings of Chelsea and Sevilla.

Chelsea boss Thomas Tuchel blasted his side as "not competitive" after losing 4-0 to the Gunners in Orlando and the Blues are a team in transition following Todd Boehly's takeover. There is also plenty of work ahead for new Manchester United manager Erik ten Hag with the uncertain future of Cristiano Ronaldo hanging over start of a new era for the Red Devils.

Amid the scale of big spending from English clubs, Newcastle have been surprisingly quiet in their first summer window since a takeover from the Saudi sovereign wealth fund. The Magpies have spent just short of £60m on Dutch defender Sven Botman, England goalkeeper Nick Pope and a permanent deal for left-back Matt Targett.

New boys Nottingham Forest have splashed over £70m on 12 new signings in the two-time European champions' first season back in the top flight for 23 years. That sum does not even include a one-year deal for Jesse Lingard worth a reported £200,000-a-week after he joined on a free transfer from Manchester United.

Aston Villa's transfer business is arguably the best example of the growing financial gulf between the Premier League and the rest of Europe. French international midfielder Boubacar Kamara and Brazilian centre-back Diego Carlos have turned their backs on Champions League football with Marseille and Sevilla respectively to join Steven Gerrard's side, who finished 14th in the English top flight last season.

SPOTLIGHT

Lewandowski, Bayern clear air after rocky Barca move



Reuters
Munich

New Barcelona striker Robert Lewandowski said farewell to his former Bayern Munich teammates and club staff during a brief visit to the Bundesliga champions' headquarters yesterday, despite his rocky departure and spat with Bayern bosses.

The Poland forward, who scored 344 goals for Bayern in 375 games during his eight years at the club, joined Barca in a deal worth 45m euros (\$46.06m) last month after forcing a move from the German club.

The 33-year-old and Bayern bosses have criticised each other over the way they handled the transfer, with Lewandowski saying there had been a lot of "politics" from the side of the club who were "trying to find an argument" to sell him.

Bayern in turn said the situation had been caused by the player who asked to leave despite having a contract to 2023. "Everything is fine. I met everyone and thanked them," Lewandowski told Sky television from his car before driving away from the club offices. "I will never forget what I received here and what I experienced. That is the most important thing for me," he said. "Last week was a bit complicated but sometimes this is part of football."

Bayern sports director Hasan Salihamidzic spoke with Lewandowski during his brief visit and they cleared the air. "Robert came into my office to say goodbye and we talked for 15 minutes," he said in a club statement. "I addressed everything and we cleared everything. Robert did great things for Bayern and that's what should remain. He knows as well what he has to thank Bayern for."

Lewandowski won almost every domestic and international club title with Bayern, including eight league crowns, three German Cups, the Champions League and Club World Cup among others. He is the Bundesliga's second highest all-time scorer behind the late Gerd Mueller.

South American countries set to launch official 2030 World Cup bid

Montevideo: Four South American countries will launch an unprecedented joint bid to host the 2030 World Cup with the hope of bringing the global showpiece back to its first home. Uruguay, Argentina, Paraguay and Chile's intention to bid has long been in the making. More than three years ago they committed to create a local organising committee to co-ordinate with South American football's governing body CONMEBOL to plan their bid. But it has taken until now for the "Juntos 2030" (Together 2030) bid to be made official. It centres on the desire to "bring the World Cup back to its original home: South America," said CONMEBOL president Alejandro Dominguez. The very first edition of the World Cup in 1930

was held in Uruguay and won by the hosts, beating their neighbours Argentina 4-2 in the final. The joint South American bid aims to stage the 2030 final in the very same Centenario stadium that hosted the first title match 100 years earlier. "For us it should be called the 2030 Centenary World Cup," said Uruguay's sports minister Sebastian Bauza. "What we have to focus on is the Centenary World Cup. The 100 year celebration of the first World Cup will be here. Back to the legend, back to its roots!"

Should it be successful, though, the two tournaments could not be more different. In 1930 there were only 13 teams and the entire tournament was played in the same city - Montevideo - in just three

stadiums. In 2030 there will be 48 teams with around 15 stadiums used across the four countries. If successful it would be the first time that as many as four countries host the World Cup. The 2026 tournament has already been awarded to three countries - Canada, Mexico and the United States.

Despite the Latin American region being one of the worst hit by the coronavirus pandemic, Chile's sports minister Alexandra Benado insisted in an interview published on Monday that all four countries remain in a position to host the tournament. "Our proposal will be austere and sustainable and will meet FIFA's demands," Benado said.

The joint South American bid will likely come up against at least two other proposals. Spain and

Portugal have officially submitted a joint bid while Morocco have repeatedly insisted they will bid to become only the second ever African country to host the finals.

The United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland decided in February to abandon a joint bid that would have seen five FIFA member federations hosting the tournament. There has also been tentative talk of an Israeli bid alongside the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain. The last World Cup to be hosted in South America was Brazil 2014. More than half of the 21 World Cup finals already staged have been in Europe but later this year Qatar will host the finals, only the second time they will be in Asia.

FOCUS

Captain Williamson lauds teammates as England celebrate historic Euros win

Reuters
London

England captain Leah Williamson said the Lionesses had inspired women and young girls up and down the country as her team celebrated their Euro 2022 triumph in central London on Monday following their 2-1 extra-time win over Germany the day before.

Sarina Wiegman's side showed off the trophy in front of thousands of hollering fans less than a day after they captured their first major title by eclipsing record eight-time European champions Germany at Wembley Stadium. "I think England have hosted an incredible tournament and we've changed the game in this country - and hopefully across Europe and across the world," Williamson said.

"We said we wanted to make our legacy about winning and that's what we did. The legacy of the tournament was already made before that final game - what we've done for women and young girls who can look up and aspire to be us."

Thousands of fans, many draped in England flags or wearing replica shirts, packed into the fenced off celebration area in London's Trafalgar Square, with thousands more surrounding the perimeter after



queues had formed at 0700 local time.

The team celebrated in style on the makeshift stage, dancing and singing and lifting the trophy, a unique sight for many young England fans. The previous England senior team success was the men's side winning the World Cup in 1966, at a time when women's football was banned in the country.

Some players looked a bit bleary-eyed having been up till the early hours celebrating but still roused themselves to sing classic England anthems with the crowd and take

selfies. Offices around the square opened their windows to also catch a glimpse of England's heroines who have transformed many people's perceptions of the women's game with their high quality performances and ability to draw record crowds.

Full back Lucy Bronze drew huge cheers in particular when she said "there's still a lot more we can still get our hands on next year," referring to the World Cup which will be hosted in Australia and New Zealand in 2023.

Jota signs new long-term contract with Liverpool

Liverpool: Forward Diogo Jota has signed a new long-term contract with Liverpool, the Premier League club said yesterday. Liverpool did not disclose the length of the deal but British media reported the Portugal international has signed a five-year extension, keeping him at Anfield until 2027.

Jota helped Liverpool win the FA Cup and League Cup last season, while they finished second in the Premier League just a point behind Manchester City and reached the Champions League final, which they lost to Real Madrid. The 25-year-old arrived at Anfield from Wolverhampton Wanderers in 2020 and has scored 34 goals in 85 appearances for the reds in all competitions. Jota joins teammates Mohamed Salah, Trent Alexander-Arnold, Jordan Henderson, Virgil van Dijk and Fabinho in committing his long-term future to the club.

AARON RAMSEY SIGNS FOR NICE

French Ligue 1 side Nice on Monday announced the arrival of Wales midfielder Aaron Ramsey a week after the 31-year-old left Juventus with a year left to run on his contract. Ramsey

joined Juve in 2019 as a free agent after spending almost eight years at Arsenal and won the Serie A title in his first campaign in Turin.

Last season, he spent five months on loan at Rangers before helping his country to qualification for this year's World Cup with a play-off win over Ukraine. According to various sources Ramsey has signed a one-year contract with Nice.

FABREGAS JOINS ITALIAN SERIE B SIDE COMO

Spanish midfielder Cesc Fabregas, who won the World Cup in 2010, has signed for Como and was unveiled by the Italian Serie B club on Monday. "I want to bring Como back to where the club deserves to be, in Serie A," Fabregas told a press conference.

"I wasn't chasing money. I was looking for a project that I was enthusiastic about," he added, stressing that he was committing himself to the "long term" beyond his two-year contract and was thinking of becoming a shareholder in the club, which is run by former Chelsea and England midfielder Dennis Wise.

Fabregas, who previously

played for Arsenal, Barcelona and Chelsea, had a frustrating season last year, not playing for Monaco's first team after September. The club, which was founded in 1907, finished 13th in Serie B last season. Como begin their season on Saturday away to Serie A side Spezia in the Italian Cup.

AJAX BAN SIGNS ASKING PLAYERS FOR THEIR SHIRTS

Ajax Amsterdam have banned fans from bringing signs into Johan Cruyff Arena asking players for their shirts after matches, Dutch media reported.

The club have told the Ajax supporters association that they had noticed an increasing number of such signs at games, mostly being held by children.

It was no longer possible for the players to fulfil all the requests and when players walked by without handing over a shirt they were often criticised as arrogant, the club said. The cardboard being used also posed a fire hazard, the club said, and several signs were confiscated on Saturday when the stadium hosted the season-opening Super Cup match between Ajax and PSV Eindhoven.