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Australia axe Labuschagne for Zimbabwe, South Africa ODI series



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FOCUS

Qatar still planning to host MotoGP and F1 races

Reuters
London

Qatar is still planning to host MotoGP and Formula One races in November despite uncertainty due to conflict in the region, Qatar Motor and Motorcycle Federation (QMMF) President Abdul Rahman bin Abdullatif al-Mannai said yesterday.

Formula One has said it will make a final decision in mid-September about the November 29 race at the Lusail circuit near Doha, with the season set to end in Europe if Qatar and Abu Dhabi cannot go ahead.

MotoGP is scheduled to race at the same track on November 8. The World Endurance Championship (WEC) has cancelled its October 24 round in Qatar.

“Qatar has been safe for months now. Our airport is 100% opera-



QMMF President Abdul Rahman bin Abdullatif al-Mannai

tional, including transit flights between Asia and Europe. If you visit Qatar, you will see we are back to normal life, so we're really looking forward to hosting races again soon,” al-Mannai said in a Q&A issued by the QMMF.

“We are up and running and preparing for MotoGP and it's the same with our discussions with Formula One. Of course, there are

things that we cannot predict. It's difficult. We don't know what's going to happen. The situation has been fluid, even though it's been really quiet so far. It depends on what happens in the next couple of months or so.

“For us, we cannot stop the plans. We have to be ready. We are taking it one step at a time to see the situation and assess. But so far, everything is good. Everything is a go-ahead.”

The US-Israeli conflict with Iran started in February and has led to the near closure of the Strait of Hormuz shipping channel. Washington has mainly held off from hitting Iran's major oil and gas infrastructure, a move Iran says would be met with devastating attacks against its Gulf neighbours. The Middle Eastern races are significant contributors to Formula One's revenues through hosting fees worth many tens of millions of dollars.



Qatar MotoGP remains scheduled to race at Lusail Circuit on November 8.

QATAR CUP

Al Rayyan edge Al Shamal on penalties to enter final

Al Sadd fight from being a goal down to beat Al Gharafa 2-1 in first semi-final at Khalifa International Stadium

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Al Rayyan held their nerve in a dramatic penalty shootout to defeat a resurgent Al Shamal 5-4 and book their place in the Qatar Cup final, where they will face Al Sadd.

The thrilling semi-final at Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium yesterday, finished 3-3 after extra time before Al Rayyan prevailed from the spot in front of a large and enthusiastic crowd.

The decisive moment in the shootout came when Al Shamal's Mohamed Ali Ben Romdhane sent his penalty over the crossbar. Al Rayyan goalkeeper Mahmud Abunada had earlier produced a crucial save to put his side in control.

Al Shamal goalkeeper Babacar Seck also made a save during the shootout, but it was not enough to prevent Al Rayyan from securing their place in the final.

The contest had already produced a dramatic finish in regulation time. Al Rayyan appeared to have snatched victory when Julien De Sart scored in the sixth minute of stoppage time, putting his side ahead.

However, Al Shamal responded almost immediately, with Baghdad Bounedjah finding the net in the seventh minute of added time. The goal was subsequently ruled out by VAR following a foul in the build-up, sending the match into the penalty shootout.

Roger Guedes scored a brace for Al Rayyan (24th minute & 74' penalty) while Wesley Said (64th minute and 27th minute) and Romdhane (54th minute) had scored for Al Shamal.

It was goals galore as both teams played attacking football while severely testing the two goalkeepers. Bounedjah's strike added more drama and thrill for fans before the goal was struck down and penalties were called for.

In the shootout, Alex Collado, Nassim Mubarak, Musaab Khidir and Abdelkarim Fadalla scored for Al Shamal while Fahad Waad and Romdhane missed.

For Al Rayyan, Julien Sart, Wes-



Al Rayyan players celebrate their dramatic penalty shootout win over Al Shamal in Qatar Cup semi-final yesterday.

ley Said, Hisham Ali, Guedes and Andre Amaro scored while Gregoire De Magalhaes missed.

At the Khalifa International Stadium, holders Al Sadd sailed into the Qatar Cup 2026 final with a spirited comeback to defeat Al Gharafa 2-1 in the first semi-final.

Al Gharafa took the lead in the 14th minute when Frank Magri finished clinically after being picked out by a perfect pass from Yacine Brahimi.

The Wolves responded strongly, piling pressure and finding the equalizer in the 26th minute. Hashim Ali unleashed a stunning long-range strike after Al Gharafa had initially cleared a set-piece delivery.



Wesley Said of Rayyan also scored a brace in the match.



Al Sadd entered Qatar Cup final with a spirited comeback to beat Al Gharafa 2-1. **PICTURE:** Noushad Thekkayil

ANNOUNCEMENT

Labuschagne axed as Australia unveil WC plans

SEASONED HANDS MARSH, HEAD AND HAZLEWOOD RETURN

Reuters
Sydney

Marnus Labuschagne was dropped from the Australia squad for this month's one-day international series in Zimbabwe and South Africa yesterday, casting doubt over his participation in next year's World Cup defence.

The South African-born batsman has been a stalwart of the Australia ODI team since 2022 and helped them win a sixth World Cup in India three years ago.

The 32-year-old right-hander averages 21.87 with a high score of 77 not out in the 50-over format since the start of 2024, however, and there was no place for him in the 17-man squad for six ODIs announced yesterday.

Chief selector George Bailey declined to speculate on Labuschagne's future in the Test team, which is also under threat after a poor run of form, but stressed the importance of the upcoming ODI tour for World Cup preparations.

"We're separating those formats out so this was a one-day cricket conversation," he told reporters via a video call.

"I think this is a pretty important tour for us. It's hard to get



the link, but Zimbabwe and South Africa, that's where the World Cup will be played late next year.

"There's not a whole lot of (ODI) games (before that) and the opportunity that's ... awarded

to some of those other players to continue building out their roles ... will be really important.

"(Marnus), again, he's played some really important one-day cricket for us, at his best. That

looks a certain way, but the way that squad and team is structuring up, there just wasn't space for him."

All-rounder Mitchell Marsh, opener Travis Head and paceman Josh Hazlewood all return to the squad after missing Australia's most recent ODI outings against Bangladesh.

Fast bowlers Pat Cummins and Mitchell Starc will join the squad for the three ODIs against South Africa, which follow a similar number of matches in Zimbabwe.

Uncapped Joel Davies and fellow youngsters Oliver Peake and Cooper Connolly were all included in the party for the tour, which begins against Zimbabwe in Harare on September 15.

The squad for the three Tests in South Africa in October will be named later this month.

"We just we're still working through what that test squad is going to look like and exactly what we feel we'll need in South Africa," said Bailey.

SQUAD: Xavier Bartlett, Alex Carey, Cooper Connolly, Pat Cummins, Joel Davies, Nathan Ellis, Cameron Green, Josh Hazlewood, Travis Head, Josh Inglis, Spencer Johnson, Mitchell Marsh, Oliver Peake, Matthew Renshaw, Billy Stanlake, Mitchell Starc, Adam Zampa

SPOTLIGHT

South Africa crush Zimbabwe by 43 runs



Lhuan-dre Pretorius' 94 carried South Africa.

Reuters
Windhoek, Namibia

South African opener Lhuan-dre Pretorius powered his side to a comfortable 43-run victory over Zimbabwe yesterday in the fourth match of the Twenty20 tri-series also involving hosts Namibia.

Pretorius came close to a maiden T20 international century, scoring 94 as South Africa elected to bat first and scored 185-7 at the Namibia Cricket Ground.

Zimbabwe were bowled out for 142 in reply with captain Sikandar Raza top-scoring with 45 and pace bowler Duan Jansen taking 3-21.

Pretorius hit 15 boundaries in his 51-ball innings before being bowled in the penultimate over.

He and Dewald Brevis, who scored 41, added 86 runs for the second-wicket partnership.

Zimbabwe quickly had their backs to the wall, teetering on 66-8 in the 10th over before the last two partnerships gave their scorecard respectability. They were dismissed after 17.4 overs.

Zimbabwe take on Namibia tomorrow, followed by Namibia against South Africa in the last of the round-robin matches. The two teams with the most points after four matches each will contest Sunday's final.

BRIEF SCORES
South Africa 185 for 7 (Pretorius 94, Brevis 41, Madhevere 3-20, Evans 2-33) **beat Zimbabwe 142** (Raza 45, Fortuin 4-24, Jansen 3-21) **by 43 runs**

FOCUS

Star pacer Bumrah back in India's T20 squad for Afghanistan series

AFP
New Delhi

Jasprit Bumrah was yesterday named in India's T20 squad for three matches against Afghanistan this month, but will need fitness clearance to play.

India, led by Shreyas Iyer, have a near full-strength 15-man squad for the matches to be held at New Delhi's Arun Jaitley Stadium on September 13, 15 and 17.

The 32-year-old Bumrah has not bowled since the second ODI of the England series in Cardiff on July 16 due to an impact injury he suffered in the match.

Apart from Bumrah, three other players including Harshit Rana, Washington Sundar and Nitish Kumar Reddy have made the squad but will need fitness clearance by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) to play.

Afghanistan, who have long used India and the United Arab Emirates as home venues, will of-



ficially be the hosts for the series.

SQUAD: Shreyas Iyer (capt), Abhishek Sharma, Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, Sanju Samson (wk), Ishan Kishan (wk), Tilak Varma (vice-capt), Shivam Dube, Nitish Kumar Reddy*, Axar Patel, Washington Sundar*, Varun Chakaravarthy, Ravi Bishnoi, Jasprit Bumrah*, Arshdeep Singh, Harshit Rana*.
-- *Subject to fitness clearance

PAKISTAN SELECTOR MISBAH RESIGNS AFTER COACH SACKED

KARACHI: Pakistan cricket selector and ex-captain **Misbah-ul-Haq** resigned following the shock sacking of red-ball head coach Sarfaraz Ahmed in the wake of successive Test defeats to England, sources told AFP yesterday.

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) announced on Monday that Ahmed was being replaced by white-ball coach Mike Hesson, from New Zealand, for the last Test starting in Birmingham on September 9.

The board also sent seven players home from the England tour and replaced bowling coach Umar Gul with Australian Ashley Noffke in a move that has drawn criticism in Pakistan.

The shake-up follows Pakistan's embarrassing innings and 103-run defeat at Hedingley and a 194-run drubbing at Lord's, giving England an unbeatable 2-0 lead.

Seven players - Mohammad Rizwan, Imam-ul-Haq, Salman Ali Agha, Ali Usman, Aamir Jamal, Muhammad Awaiz Zafar and Khurram Shahzad - were sent home, with five of them replaced by uncapped players.



Former Pakistan captain and selection committee member Misbah later resigned in protest at not being consulted over the changes, sources told AFP.

"Misbah sent his resignation to the PCB by email on Monday night and is yet to receive a reply," sources close to Misbah said. Several former coaches and players were left shocked over the unprecedented shake-up

with a match still to play. "What an absolutely ridiculous situation," ex-Pakistan coach Mickey Arthur told AFP from the United Kingdom.

"It makes me sad because I know what Pakistan could become with proper leadership, planning and structure." He added it was "very disrespectful" to have sacked Ahmed. Former selector and Pakistan spinner Tauseef Ahmed called the changes "unprecedented and unjust", adding they had "created a polluted atmosphere in Pakistan cricket."

"You don't treat your senior players like this," Tauseef told AFP.

Former Pakistan captains Shahid Afridi and Shoaib Malik were also critical of the decision. "It's not the way to treat your senior players," Afridi told AFP.

"Such major decisions during a series are disturbing."

"The players dropped from the squad are still our national cricketers who have served Pakistan," said Malik, adding: "Accountability starts once a tour is done, not in the middle of it."

REACTION

Former captains question Pakistan board's 'panic-button' squad shake-up

Reuters
Lahore

The Pakistan Cricket Board's decision to axe seven players and the head coach after two crushing defeats by England triggered a furious backlash from former captains and coaches who branded the shake-up as panic-driven chaos.

The PCB said it was sending former captains Mohammad Rizwan and Salman Ali Agha home while Sarfaraz Ahmed, who was appointed as the head coach of the test team in April, was replaced by the country's white-ball coach, Mike Hesson.

Pakistan lost the first test against England by an innings and 103 runs and the second by 194 runs to go 2-0 down in the three-match series, failing to score more than 200 in all four innings.

Ali Usman, Aamer Jamal, Awaiz Zafar and Khurram Shahzad were also sent home and the replacements include players who have either played a handful of tests or none at all.

"I'm trying to convince myself this is all OK, but it is not," former captain and ex-PCB chairman Ramiz Raja told *BBC Radio*. "It just shows Pakistan cricket has hit a panic button."

Former all-rounder Shahid Afridi said he saw no logic or reasoning for selecting white-ball players for a Test series.

"Even the replacements make no sense - T20 players have been included for a Test match in England?" Afridi wrote on X.

"What is this thinking and approach? Why has the coach been axed after five test matches? This is the most shocking decision ever by a selection committee which includes so many experienced selectors."

The selection committee includes former cap-



Shahid Afridi

tain Misbah-ul-Haq, who has offered his resignation which the PCB has yet to accept, according to *Cricinfo*.

'ABSOLUTELY RIDICULOUS'

Mickey Arthur, who coached Pakistan from 2016 to 2019, said the PCB had made "absolutely ridiculous decisions" ahead of the third Test next week, which Pakistan must win to avoid a series whitewash.

"This is the reason they are in the mess they are because they constantly chop and change players, coaches and selectors and there is no stability," he wrote. "Planning, stability and structure = consistent performance!"

Former England batter Kevin Pietersen could not resist a quip, saying new captain Babar Azam would have a tough time listing the team's changes at the toss. "Maybe the toss should start the night before?" he wrote.

BIG BASH LEAGUE

Former England captain Stokes signs for Adelaide Strikers

AFP
London

Former England captain Ben Stokes has signed for Adelaide Strikers in Australia's Big Bash League.

Stokes retired from international cricket midway through England's recent Test series defeat against New Zealand.

The 35-year-old has continued played domestic county cricket for Durham since his exit from England duty.

He had been dropped for the second Test against New Zealand after breaking a team curfew in a nightclub incident also involving England team-mate Gus Atkinson.

Stokes's decision to play for Adelaide takes him back into the T20 franchise world after a brief stint at Big Bash side Melbourne Renegades in 2015.

He is available for the entire tournament, which runs from mid-December to January 26, and is reportedly set to earn around £260,000 (\$351,000).

"I'm really excited to be joining the Adelaide Strikers. I've always enjoyed playing in Australia, and when the opportunity came up to join the Strikers it was one I couldn't pass up," said Stokes,



A social media montage released by Adelaide Strikers announcing the signing of Ben Stokes.

who played 122 Tests, 114 ODIs and 43 T20s for England.

"Adelaide Oval is an incredible place to play cricket, the Big Bash is a fantastic competition and the Strikers have an exciting group, so I'm looking forward to meeting the players, getting stuck in and contributing to a successful season."

Maphaka backs himself to step up for South Africa

At just 20 years of age, Kwena Maphaka could be in line to step into the shoes of South Africa pace legend Kagiso Rabada when the defending ICC World Test Championship champions host

Australia later this year. "I really hope that KG [Rabada] is back in time. But if that doesn't happen, it's one of those things where somebody has to step up, and if that's me, I'm really confident in my abilities," Maphaka told *Cricinfo*.

Rabada injured his right hamstring during training a few days ago and was subsequently ruled out of the ODIs against Australia.

Should Rabada be unavailable, Maphaka believes he is ready to step up and lead the attack if called upon to do so.

"I've led a bowling attack before with the Lions, with South Africa under-19 and I've been in the Proteas for a little bit now. So yeah, I'm really confident in my abilities."

Maphaka burst onto the scene at the 2024 ICC Under-19 Men's Cricket World Cup, where he was the leading wicket taker and was named the Player of the Tournament.

He has since made his foray into the South Africa national team, playing in two Tests, three ODIs and 19 T20Is.

"The biggest thing for me was really working on my consistency. I was decent in the T20 format, but there was a lot of work to do in the longer formats that would also help in T20s," he said.

TENNIS

Keys tames nerves to beat Korneeva, Fritz advances

Fritz powers past young wildcard Darwin Blanch in straight sets in US Open first-round clash

Reuters
New York

American Madison Keys overcame early jitters to down Russian Alina Korneeva 7-5 6-4 in the first round of the US Open yesterday, exorcising the demons of her early exit a year ago.

Also yesterday, American Taylor Fritz powered past young wildcard Darwin Blanch in straight sets in their first-round clash at Arthur Ashe Stadium.

Fritz controlled the tempo throughout, leveraging 14 aces and converting 4 break points to seal a commanding 6-3, 6-2, 6-4 victory in under two hours.

Blanch displayed glimpses of powerful shot-making, but nine double faults and an inconsistent first-serve percentage proved costly against the 9th seed.

Fritz conceded zero break opportunities on his own serve, capitalizing on 91% of his first-serve points to secure a smooth transition into the second round.

Just months after winning her first Grand Slam title at the 2025 Australian Open, Keys crashed out in the first round at Flushing Meadows after being overcome by debilitating nerves.

But Keys felt more at home this time around - improving her first-serve percentage from 48% in the first set to nearly 70% in the second. She will next meet either Czech Lucie Havlickova or Hungarian Anna Bondar.

"It's so hard to play the first round of a Grand Slam. So nervous and wanting to do well," said Keys. "So grateful I was able to fight through that."

Keys looked at first as though she would cruise through the match on Arthur Ashe Stadium as she won the first three games but



USA's Madison Keys (left) greets Russia's Alina Korneeva after her victory during their first-round match on day three of the US Open at the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center in New York yesterday. (AFP)

the Russian broke back in the fifth when Keys hit a forehand shot wildly out of bounds.

After trading breaks again, Keys broke her opponent on her third set point with a fine backhand strike and improved her level across the board in a competitive second set.

Down 4-2 in the second set, Korneeva came out on top following a nifty cat-and-mouse exchange near the net to break back but her relief was short-lived.

She was left scrambling for a backhand shot just out of reach as she dropped serve again in the eighth game.

Keys handed her opponent the break with a handful of mistakes in the ninth but regained her composure to clinch it in the next game with one of her signature forehand strikes.

Once you step on the court, you want to win, says Alcaraz

His wrist injury kept him off the court for so long that Carlos Alcaraz had trouble remembering what to do when he finally got back on it.

"I kind of forgot what match day looks like," said Alcaraz on Monday at the US Open after playing his first match in 139 days. "I didn't actually remember what I used to do in the warm-up. That's why I was really nervous, because I just kind of forgot the competition."

Alcaraz would eventually re-claim himself and turn back Roman Safiullin in straight sets, 6-4, 6-4, 6-4. For a while there, the Spaniard existed solely in Instagram snapshots: Rehabbing in the gym, mock-serving with a string-less racquet; back

out on the practice courts alongside Holger Rune, etc. But fans in Arthur Ashe Stadium caught him in the flesh once again on Day 2, as the 23-year-old launched his attempt to become the first man to successfully defend the US Open title since Roger Federer won five straight between 2004 and 2008.

"I was trying to enjoy it as much as I could, trying not to think about anything else," he said after his match.

"But it's easy to say, difficult to do. Once you step on the court, playing an official match, playing the first round, you want to win. You don't know what's going to happen in the match after four, four-and-a-half months.

"You don't know what's going to happen in your body, in your mind, everything. It's totally different."

Emotional Wawrinka falls to Berrettini in last Grand Slam

NEW YORK: Former US Open champion Stan Wawrinka bade farewell to Grand Slam tennis on Monday, losing in straight sets to Italian Matteo Berrettini in the opening round at Flushing Meadows.

Wawrinka, a three-time Grand Slam champion who will retire after 2026, fought neck and neck with the Italian for the first two sets before his level dropped in a quickly-played third set. The score was 7-6, 7-6, 6-0.

Cheers of "Let's Go Stan!" and "We love you, Stan" emanated from the crowd.

But Wawrinka - alone with Andy Murray as the only players to win multiple Grand Slams in a period dominated by Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal and Novak Djokovic - couldn't mount a comeback. The match ended with a Berrettini drop shot. Following an embrace of the Berrettini at the net, Berrettini saluted Wawrinka, drawing loud applause.

"This opportunity to finish here was really meaningful for myself," said Wawrinka, who became a bit teary in a short speech following a brief on-court celebration of his career.

"I'm going to miss it for sure," he added after the match on the Grandstand stadium, the third biggest court at the US Open. Wawrinka, currently ranked 127th, was only able to play at the US Open after being granted a late wildcard when original wildcard recipient Patrick Kypson withdrew with injury.

Tennis fan Ryan Loar said he was disappointed with the original wildcard snub by the US Tennis



USTA CEO Craig Tiley (left) and US Open Tournament Director Eric Butorac (right) present Stan Wawrinka of Switzerland with a poster after a loss against Matteo Berrettini of Italy. (AFP)

Association but praised tournament organizers for the on-court celebration of Wawrinka's career, which included a video of his greatest moments at the New York Grand Slam.

The crowd cheered loudly at a replay of match point from the 2016 final when Wawrinka lifted his arms after an overhit return from favorite Djokovic gave the Swiss player the trophy.

"It's just an underdog story," Loar said. "It's so fun."

Loar was part of a group of eight San Francisco-based fans donning gray "Stan the Man" t-shirts the group ordered after the wildcard was announced and had delivered to their hotel.

"He seems like an ordinary guy. Dad bod," said Dave Kaval, another in the group. "With that look, it's amazing. He's like the most relatable tennis player."

MOTORSPORT

Ferrari celebrate Schumacher anniversary with special livery



Mick Schumacher drives the Ferrari F2004 of his father Michael Schumacher during a display run before the race at Tuscan Grand Prix in Mugello, Scarperia e San Piero, Italy, on September 13, 2020. (Reuters)

Reuters
Monza, Italy

Ferrari will have a special livery and team kit at Monza this weekend to commemorate Michael Schumacher's first Italian Grand Prix win with the Formula One team and his decade at Maranello from 1996 to 2006.

This year marks 30 years since the seven-times world champion, then with two titles to his name, joined Ferrari from Benetton.

The German's arrival transformed the team and started a golden period for Ferrari, with Schumacher going on to win five championships in a row and the team six successive constructors' titles.

Schumacher, now 57, has not been seen in public since he suffered a serious brain injury in an accident while skiing in the French Alps in December 2013.

Ferrari yesterday said the SF-26 cars of Charles Leclerc and Lewis Hamilton, also a seven-times champion, would have a livery inspired by Schumacher's first Ferrari 310 - predominantly red with some white on the wings and black as well as seven stars and the German's logo using the letters M and S.

Officials said there will also be three cars from Schumacher's Ferrari career on display - the F310, the 248 from 2006 and the F2002 from one of the most dominant seasons ever.

The 2002 car will be driven by Schumacher's former teammate

Rubens Barrichello on Saturday and four-times champion Sebastian Vettel on Sunday.

Schumacher's 1996 win at Monza was Ferrari's first at home since 1988 and they return this weekend with a good chance of another victory with Leclerc and Hamilton having each won once this season and the team second in the standings.

Ferrari last won at Monza in 2024 with Leclerc, who also won in 2019.

Hamilton, who joined Ferrari last year, is a five-time winner at Monza with McLaren and Mercedes.

Italian Kimi Antonelli, the championship leader for Mercedes, is set to start at the back of the grid due to penalties triggered by power unit changes.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Qatar Basketball Federation unveils Under-19, Under-16 league schedules

By Sports Reporter
Doha

The Qatar Basketball Federation (QBF) has approved the schedule for the first stage of the Under-19 Basketball League for the 2026-2027 sports season.

The league will feature 36 games across nine rounds, all hosted at the Federation Hall, with participation from Qatar Club, Al Sadd, Al Rayyan, Al Arabi, Al Gharafa, Al Wakrah, Al Ahli, Al Shamal, and Al Khor.

The competition kicks off on Monday, September 14, 2026, with four matches: Al Khor vs. Al Sadd and Al Wakrah vs. Al Arabi at 5:00 p.m., followed by Al Gharafa vs. Al Shamal and Al Khor vs. Al Wakrah at 6:30 p.m.

Round two on Monday, September 21, will feature Qatar Club vs. Al Wakrah and Al Rayyan vs. Al Shamal at 5:00 p.m., then Al Arabi vs. Al Khor and Al Sadd vs. Al Gharafa at 6:30 p.m.

Round three, scheduled for Monday, September 28, includes Al Wakrah vs. Al Rayyan and Al Khor vs. Qatar Club at 5:00 p.m., followed by Al Gharafa vs. Al Arabi and Al Shamal vs. Al Ahli at 6:30 p.m. Round four on Monday, October 5, will see Al Rayyan vs. Al Khor and Al Ahli vs. Al Wakrah at 5:00 p.m., while Qatar Club faces Al Gharafa and Al

Arabi meets Al Sadd at 6:30 p.m. Round five resumes on Tuesday, November 3, with Al Khor vs. Al Ahli and Al Gharafa vs. Al Rayyan at 5:00 p.m., followed by Al Sadd vs. Qatar Club and Al Wakrah vs. Al Shamal at 6:30 p.m.

Round six on Tuesday, November 10, will feature Al Ahli vs. Al Gharafa and Al Shamal vs. Al Khor at 5:00 p.m., then Al Rayyan vs. Al Sadd and Qatar Club vs. Al Arabi at 6:30 p.m.

Round seven continues on Monday, November 16, with Al Sadd vs. Al Ahli and Al Arabi vs. Al Rayyan at 5:00 p.m., followed by Al Gharafa vs. Al Shamal and Al Khor vs. Al Wakrah at 6:30 p.m. Round eight, set for Monday, November 23, will include Al Ahli vs. Al Arabi and Al Shamal vs. Al Sadd at 5:00 p.m., while Al Wakrah faces Al Gharafa and Al Rayyan meets Qatar Club at 6:30 p.m.

The first stage concludes on Monday, November 30, with round nine: Al Arabi vs. Al Shamal and Qatar Club vs. Al Ahli at 5:00 p.m., followed by Al Sadd vs. Al Wakrah and Al Gharafa vs. Al Khor at 6:30 p.m.

Under-16 Basketball League set to kick off on Sept 13

QBF yesterday unveiled the schedule for the Under-16 Basketball League for the 2026-2027 sports season. The first stage will feature 36 games across nine rounds, all hosted at the Federa-

tion Hall, with participation from Qatar Club, Al Rayyan, Al Khor, Al Sadd, Al Wakrah, Al Gharafa, Al Ahli, Al Shamal, and Al Arabi.

The competition begins on Sunday, September 13, 2026, with four matches: Qatar Club vs. Al Rayyan and Al Khor vs. Al Sadd at 5:00 p.m., followed by Al Wakrah vs. Al Gharafa and Al Ahli vs. Al Shamal at 6:30 p.m.

Round two on Sunday, September 20, will feature Al Gharafa vs. Al Khor and Al Shamal vs. Al Wakrah at 5:00 p.m., then Al Sadd vs. Qatar Club and Al Rayyan vs. Al Arabi at 6:30 p.m.

Round three, scheduled for Sunday, September 27, includes Al Khor vs. Al Shamal and Qatar Club vs. Al Gharafa at 5:00 p.m., followed by Al Arabi vs. Al Sadd and Al Wakrah vs. Al Ahli at 6:30 p.m. Round four on Sunday, October 4, will see Al Shamal vs. Qatar Club and Al Ahli vs. Al Khor at 5:00 p.m., while Al Gharafa faces Al Arabi and Al Sadd meets Al Rayyan at 6:30 p.m.

After a scheduled break, round five resumes on Monday, November 2, with Qatar Club vs. Al Ahli and Al Arabi vs. Al Shamal at 5:00 p.m., followed by Al Rayyan vs. Al Gharafa and Al Khor vs. Al Wakrah at 6:30 p.m. Round six on Sunday, November 8, will feature Al Ahli vs. Al Arabi and Al Wakrah vs. Qatar Club at 5:00 p.m., then Al Shamal vs. Al Rayyan and Al Gharafa vs. Al Sadd at 6:30 p.m.

CYCLING

Gutsy Tronchon claims surprise Vuelta stage 10 victory in a chaotic sprint

Reuters
Madrid

Bastien Tronchon of Groupama-FDJ United snatched victory in a photo finish on stage 10 of the Vuelta a Espana yesterday following a 184.7 km hilly ride through southern Spain.

The pace quickened a kilometre before the finish line as Astana's Yevgeni Fedorov broke clear along-

side Xabier Azparren of Q36.5, building a brief lead over the peloton before being caught just before the finish line and allowing Frenchman Tronchon to secure a surprise victory in the final sprint.

Denmark's Magnus Cort of Uno-X Mobility took second place and Belgian Thibau Nys of Lidl-Trek finished third.

The victory marked the 24-year-old's first Grand Tour stage win and the third of his career.

"I launched my sprint and I fin-

ished it on the line, but I wasn't sure if there were some guys in front or not, so I did not put my hands in the air," he explained at the finish. "It's crazy.

"I can't believe it," he added.

"The last two days were really hard for me, and today I was good. I said to Guillaume (Martin) 'go full gas until you die' and I take the win, so it's crazy.

"Really not," he said when asked if he thought he could do something like this in the Vuelta.

"Because the preparation was not really good, I didn't feel good in the last weeks, it was a bit strange, not like the other years, but I was like 'trust the process, and we'll see'.

"When I took the start I was like 'OK, the job is done so now I just need to race like I like to, and go for all'.

Spain's Enric Mas of Movistar retained the overall leader's red jersey, finishing safely in 36th place in the main peloton.



FOCUS

Man City set to sign Fernandez, Ndiaye on deadline day

Barcelona confirm Gabriel arrival from Premier League champs Arsenal

AFF

London

Manchester City are closing in on a £125m deal (\$167mn) for Chelsea's Enzo Fernandez that would equal the British transfer record and are also expected to recruit Everton's Iliman Ndiaye before yesterday's transfer deadline.

City are spearheading a frantic final day of spending as they aim to arm Enzo Maresca with a squad capable of winning the Premier League for the first time in three seasons. Fernandez, who previously thrived under Maresca at Chelsea, has been linked with a move to the Etihad for months.

But it took until the final hours before the 2200 GMT deadline for an agreement to be reportedly struck with the fee for the Argentine set to match what Liverpool paid for Alexander Isak on the final day of the window last year.

Fernandez will form a completely revamped City midfield alongside England international Elliot Anderson and Moroccan Ayyoub Bouaddi, who themselves cost over a combined £200mn.

Senegal forward Ndiaye is also set to bolster the City attack to round off more than £400mn spent on new recruits in a deal worth £65mn. But City also brought in close to £300mn from the sales of World Cup winner Rodri, Savio, Nico Gonzalez, Tijjani Reijnders and James Trafford.

Champions Arsenal, by contrast, had a quiet deadline day after their pursuit of Atletico Madrid's Julian Alvarez fizzled out.

The Gunners had been rivaling Barcelona for the Argentine's signature, but the Spanish champions instead turned to Arsenal to fill their need for a forward with the signing of Gabriel Jesus.

"I had a chance 10 years ago and life took me in another direction, but now I can be here and it's a dream for me," said Gabriel.

Liverpool splashed out on



France forward Bradley Barcola on Monday, spending £123mn to lure him from Paris Saint-Germain.

But the Reds attempts to further add to their squad look to have been frustrated with bids for Crystal Palace's Ismaila Sarr and Brighton's Yankuba Minteh knocked back, meaning Cody Gakpo is set to stay despite interest from City and Tottenham.

Liverpool did complete the signing of Belgian goalkeeper Lucca Brughmans, but he will be loaned back to Genk for the rest of the season.

Ibrahim Mbaye was another wide player linked with a move to Anfield, but he has instead joined Aston Villa for a reported £47mn.

Mbaye played 31 times in all competitions for PSG last season as the French club won the Cham-

pions League and the Ligue 1 title.

The 18-year-old appeared four times for Senegal at the recent World Cup, netting against France to become the youngest African player to score in the men's tournament.

Villa also bolstered their defence by signing Southampton centre-back Taylor Harwood-Bellis in a £29 million deal.

Tottenham are keen on a loan move for Chelsea winger Mykhailo Mudryk after missing out on Ndiaye and Gakpo, with a £7 million swoop for his Blues teammate Tosin Adarabioyo also lined up by the north Londoners.

Spurs have also loaned Pape Matar Sarr on a one-year deal to Juventus with an obligation to buy for a fee of 27.5 million euros (\$31.9mn), should Sarr fulfil cer-

tain conditions. Chelsea agreed a £40mn deal to sign 18-year-old Honest Ahanor from Atalanta from 2027, with the Italy defender spending this season on loan at Crystal Palace.

City winger Jack Grealish is set to rejoin Everton on loan after his spell with David Moyes's men last season. Everton are also on the verge of signing United States forward Folarin Balogun from Monaco for £40mn.

Newcastle landed Belgium forward Matias Fernandez-Pardo from Lille in a £51 million swoop.

Newcastle, who are rebuilding following the close-season departures of Anthony Gordon, Bruno Guimaraes and Sandro Tonali, have also sent German striker Nicolas Woltemade on loan to Juventus.

SPOTLIGHT

Germany defender Rudiger announces retirement

AFF

Berlin

Germany defender **Antonio Rudiger** yesterday announced his international retirement, two months after last playing for Germany at the 2026 World Cup.

The 33-year-old made 86 appearances for the four-time world champions.

"After some time reflecting, the moment has come for me to end my national team career and clear the way for the young generation," Rudiger said in a social media post.

Rudiger made his debut in 2014, a month before Germany won the World Cup, but was not included in the squad which travelled to Brazil.

The centre-back said he wanted to focus on his club side Real Madrid, where he is under contract for the remainder of the season.

"A new chapter begins for me now, in which I will focus entirely on my club," Rudiger said.

Born in Berlin, Rudiger came

through the Borussia Dortmund and Stuttgart youth systems before moving to Roma and later Chelsea in 2017, where he won the 2021 Champions League.

He moved to Real in 2022 and won the Champions League and La Liga in 2024.

Rudiger's time in the heart of the German defence coincided with a poor decade for the traditional heavyweights.

Germany crashed out at the group stage at the 2018 and 2022 World Cups, before a last-32 exit at the hands of minnows Paraguay in 2026, Rudiger's last match in Germany colours.

"Even though the big title eluded us in recent tournaments and we had to endure some painful defeats, this time was an incredibly special chapter for me-one that will shape me forever," Rudiger continued.

His highlight at international level was winning the 2017 Confederations Cup.

Rudiger's time at Dortmund overlapped with new Germany coach Jurgen Klopp's tenure at the club, but the defender did not make a first-team appearance.



MESSI LEGACY WILL 'LIVE FOREVER', SAYS BECKHAM

David Beckham said Lionel Messi's "legacy will live forever" after the Argentina legend announced his retirement from international football.

Messi on Monday revealed he had called time on his remarkable career with Argentina after 207 caps and 125 goals.

The 39-year-old won the 2022 World Cup in Qatar and his last game for his country was Argentina's World Cup final defeat against Spain in July.

Messi's brilliance for Argentina and Barcelona made him one of the world's greatest ever players.

Former England captain Beckham has had a close-up view of Messi's career as an opponent

and now as co-owner of the forward's current side Inter Miami.

"This is the moment we get to look back on and realise how grateful we were to witness the greatness of a young kid with a dream," Beckham wrote on Instagram on Tuesday.

"Leo, you have been a credit to yourself, your family, your friends and your country. Leading by example and creating inspiration for millions of children not just in Argentina but around the whole world."

"Leo, you delivered the greatest gift to your country and, for that, your legacy will live forever. Congratulations on all you achieved for Argentina."

Mosimane confirmed as South Africa coach after delay

Pitso Mosimane was confirmed as South Africa coach yesterday, 24 days after the national football association approved his appointment. On August 8, association president Danny Jordaan said, "we need to tie up some loose ends", but the delay was unexpectedly long.

Mosimane succeeds Belgian Hugo Broos, 74, who retired after leading South Africa to the knockout stages of a World Cup for the

first time in North America this year. Mosimane has just 23 days to prepare the national team for their first 2027 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) qualifier, at home to Guinea. While Guinea failed to reach the 2025 AFCON tournament in Morocco, they boast one of the top Europe-based African strikers in Serhou Guirassy of Borussia Dortmund. Former South Africa striker Mosimane, 62, will

be taking charge of Bafana Bafana (The Boys) a second time after an unsuccessful two-year stint from 2010. Under his leadership, South Africa failed to qualify for the 2012 AFCON, and he was fired after a home draw against Ethiopia in a 2014 World Cup qualifier. The AFCON failure was embarrassing as the team celebrated after a draw with Sierra Leone, believing they had qualified, only to

discover later they misunderstood the head-to-head rule. Mosimane was much more successful at club level, winning the CAF Champions League once with Pretoria-based Mamelodi Sundowns, then twice with Cairo outfit Al Ahly. He also won the CAF Super Cup three times. His six titles make him the most successful black coach in CAF club competitions.

LA LIGA

Yamal, Raphinha bag braces as Barcelona rout Rayo

AFF

Barcelona

Barcelona's teenage star Lamine Yamal and Raphinha both struck twice as the champions beat Rayo Vallecano 5-2 on Monday to continue their perfect start to the campaign.

Sergio Camello netted a brace for the visitors at Camp Nou but Hansi Flick's Barca managed to record a third win from three matches from an entertaining battle.

With his first goal, Yamal, 19, hit the milestone of 50 for the club - two years younger than Barcelona icon Lionel Messi was when he managed the feat.

"I think the first half we played really fantastic, the goal, 1-0 against us, can happen but the reaction was quite good and I loved a lot of things I saw in the first half," Flick told DAZN.

The Barca coach was not happy his team let Rayo score a second time when they were leading 3-1 in the second half.

"When you are 3-1 ahead espe-

cially at home you have to control the game much better," explained Flick. "We have the quality to control it, to have more ball possession. The mentality of our team and some players is always wanting to attack."

Barcelona started brightly but fell behind after Jules Kounde allowed Alvaro Garcia to race beyond him.

The Rayo midfielder crossed for Camello to finish clinically first time into the top corner.

Stung, champions Barcelona hit back quickly with quickfire goals from Raphinha and Yamal.

Raphinha, who has played up front during the start of the season amid Barcelona's failed battle to land Atletico Madrid striker Julian Alvarez, continued his rich vein of goalscoring form.

The Brazil international showed excellent footwork to leave Pathe Ciss for dead and then produced a cool finish.

Watching on from the stands was Arsenal striker Gabriel Jesus, poised to join Barca before the transfer window closes on Tuesday and clearly facing a battle with his compatriot to start up front.



Barcelona's forward Raphinha (right) celebrates scoring his team's fourth goal with Lamine Yamal during the La Liga match against Rayo Vallecano de Madrid at Camp Nou Stadium in Barcelona. (AFP)

"For me he's a top striker and of course for us very important, he can give us a lot of things and very happy that he's here," said Flick of

Jesus. Shortly afterwards teenager Yamal scored his first of the season after Rayo conceded possession in a dangerous area following

a defensive mix-up. Yamal opened up some space and brilliantly whipped the ball into the near top corner to bring up his half-centu-

ry for Barca. Flick's side stretched their lead early in the second half when Florian Lejeune bundled Anthony Gordon's cross into his own net.

However, youngster Xavi Espot could not handle Camello at a Rayo corner and the forward nodded home his second of the game to give the visitors a fighting chance. The electric Gordon helped create Raphinha's second of the night and the Brazilian's fifth of the season, making him La Liga's top goalscorer.

Former Newcastle winger Gordon backheeled the ball to Raphinha who tucked home to secure Barca's win, with Yamal further extending their advantage in stoppage time.

"In the last games (Yamal) could not score, but he's shown his quality through his career. Today he scored and we're happy for him," said Barca midfielder Marc Bernal.

The youngster, who Flick said was arriving back at his top level after suffering a hamstring injury in April, produced a lethal curling finish from the edge of the area in the 90th minute after substitute Karim Adeyemi teed him up.