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SPORT



TENNIS

Third-ranked Pegula, Medvedev power into US Open third round

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QATAR STARS LEAGUE

First win in sight as Ahli face Qatar SC, Sailiya to meet Arabi

‘I have confidence in our players’ ability to perform at the required level and deliver a strong showing’



Al Ahli coach Borja Jimenez and player Ismail Mohammed while speaking to the media ahead of their match against Qatar SC.

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Al Ahli and Qatar SC will go head-to-head in the third round of the Qatar Stars League (QSL) at Al Thumama Stadium today, with both sides targeting their first victory of the season.

The two teams have collected just one point each from their opening matches and will be eager to secure all three points. Al Ahli sit 10th in the standings after a thrilling 3-3 draw with Lusail in their previous outing. Coach Borja Jimenez believes his side must turn their performances into results.

“We dropped two points in our previous match against Lusail, and the team has no option but to win to gain points and confidence,” Jimenez said.

“The team is performing well. They just need to secure points and then they will be outstanding in the remaining matches.

“We need focused play against Qatar SC, especially since they are also a strong team,” he added.

Qatar SC, meanwhile, are 11th after suffering a heavy 6-2 defeat to Al Sadd before earning a point in a draw with Al Wakrah.

Coach Marquez Lopez acknowledged the challenge facing his side, particularly with several players unavailable.

“Our match against Al Ahli is crucial and our goal is to achieve a positive result,” Lopez said.

“The absences are significant, especially when they involve more than one key player. In our first match, we fielded five players who were making their debut, so we are working with the available players and preparing them appropriately.

“Al Ahli are a strong team and they have signed six new players who have strengthened their squad. We expect a tough match against them,” he added.

With both sides still searching for their first win, Thursday’s encounter promises to be a closely contested battle for valuable points.

The day’s second match will see Al Sailiya take on Al Arabi at the Khalifa International Stadium at 7.15pm. Al Sailiya are at the bottom

of the table with zero points, having lost the first two matches. They would hope to break their losing streak and make a fresh start.

Meanwhile, Al Arabi occupy seventh place with two points and aim to make up for lost ground and achieve their first win to improve their position in the standings.

Al Arabi coach Cosmin Contra, while speaking to the media ahead of the match against Al Sailiya, said, the upcoming match against Al Sailiya is very tough. The fact that the opponent stumbled at the beginning of the season does not mean the match will be easy.

“Our team’s tactical system is improving with each match and I have complete confidence in the ability of all players to translate the tactical ideas to the field and return with all three points to strengthen the team’s position in the standings,” he added.

Al Sailiya coach Mirghani Al Zain said, “The match against Al Arabi will be tough and challenging. I have confidence in our players’ ability to perform at the required level and deliver a strong showing.”



Qatar SC players during a training session ahead of their third round QSL match against Al Ahli.

Tomorrow, Al Shamal will play Al Shahania while Lusail will meet Al Wakrah.

Defending champions Al Sadd, who have won both their games so far and also the Qatar Cup semi-final, will play Al Gharafa on Saturday while Al Duhail meet Al Rayyan earlier the same evening.

SCHEDULE

Today:

5pm: Al Ahli vs Qatar SC at Al Thumama Stadium

7.15pm: Al Sailiya vs Al Arabi at Khalifa Intl Stadium

Tomorrow:

5pm: Al Shamal vs Al Shahania at Al Bayt Stadium

7.15pm: Lusail vs Al Wakrah at Lusail Stadium

On Saturday:

5pm: Al Rayyan vs Al Duhail at Ahmaad Bin Ali Stadium

7.15pm: Al Sadd vs Al Gharafa at Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium.



Al Arabi players during a training session yesterday.

FOCUS

Balogun rejected Everton move over transfer ‘treatment’

AFP
London

Folarin Balogun’s £40mn (\$54mn) move to Everton from Monaco collapsed hours before the transfer window closed because the United States striker pulled out over his “treatment” by the Premier League side, the Ligue 1 club’s managing director said yesterday.

Balogun - who was at the centre of controversy at the World Cup after US President Donald Trump successfully intervened to force FIFA to suspend a red card so he could play against Belgium in the last 16 - had undergone a medical in England before Everton started to raise some concerns about his fitness.

Although the Premier League side decided to proceed with the deal - after a couple of hours of discussions between the two clubs’ medical departments - Ba-

logun pulled the plug himself. “Five minutes before the close of the (English) transfer window... I signed the contract, and Everton signed the contract,” Monaco managing director Thiago Scuro told reporters.

“At the last moment, the player decided not to sign. And basically, the allegation of Balogun is that: ‘I’m not feeling well by the way the club treated me.’

“I’m not feeling well by the way the medical department of Everton brought doubts about my future or my health!”

“I have nothing, so I’m not comfortable to sign a long contract here.”

Some reports had said that Everton had attempted to renegotiate the fee for the 25-year-old Balogun, but Scuro did not mention any such discussions.

Balogun had emerged as a late target for the Toffees after Guinea-Bissau international Beto completed a move to Serie A

club Fiorentina. His decision to back out has left Everton light on forwards for the new season, although they did secure the return of Jack Grealish on a season-long loan deal from Manchester City, for the second consecutive campaign.

Everton also signed English defender Ainsley Maitland-Niles from French club Lyon.

Balogun caught the eye with his performances at the World Cup this year, but after a red card he received in the USA’s defeat of Bosnia-Herzegovina in the round of 32 ruled him out of the last-16 clash with Belgium, Trump intervened.

FIFA’s decision to suspend the card, allowing Balogun to play against Belgium, attracted widespread criticism aimed at the world football governing body’s chief Gianni Infantino, who developed a close relationship with Trump.

The USA lost the game 4-1

and Balogun later admitted that the furore affecting the red card had affected the team’s performance.

Balogun, who was born in New York City but grew up in London, has scored 31 goals in 91 appearances for Monaco.

His decision to remain has left Monaco in a financial pickle, as they had budgeted for his sale.

They had discussed selling Senegal midfielder Lamine Camara to Chelsea if the Balogun deal fell through, but had pulled out of that when they thought their striker would leave - which he may yet do as some leagues have yet to shut their transfer windows.

“We still have other markets open, and we are having discussions about different players, including Balo,” said Scuro.

“Let’s see what can still happen until Thursday because we still have markets that have the financial capacity to do something,” he said.



SPOTLIGHT

Cricketers set ‘to get best rooms at Asian Games’

‘The teams in cricket are being offered hotel accommodation’

AFP
Tokyo

Cricketers at this month's Asian Games in Japan will have better accommodation than athletes from many other sports, the head of Japanese cricket said yesterday, after concerns were raised about a lack of five-star hotels for players.

A Sri Lankan official said this week that some of Asia's top teams had raised doubts over facilities and accommodation at the Games, which are taking place in Nagoya and the wider Aichi area from September 19.

Cricket is a minor sport in Japan and games will be played at a new purpose-built ground with reports of tents serving as dressing rooms and distant washroom facilities.

There is no dedicated athletes' village at the Games, with organisers instead relying on cabins in a cruise ship, rooms in temporary wooden containers and hotels.

Organisers said last week that accommodation was already stretched to the limit after the number of Asian Games athletes ballooned to 17,000.

By comparison there were around 11,000 at the 2024 Paris Olympics.

The cricket tournament is being run by the Asian Games organising committee in collaboration with the Asian Cricket Council (ACC). Naoki Alex Miyaji, the CEO of the Japan Cricket Association (JCA), told AFP that the two bodies had been discussing accommodation options "for a long time".

"The (participating) teams in cricket are being offered hotel ac-



Japan team players are seen during a practice match ahead of the Asian Games set to take place in Aichi-Nagoya from September 19 to October 4.



Naoki Alex Miyaji, CEO of JCA

commodation," Miyaji said yesterday. "Many other sports are

being accommodated in much more limited facilities such as a cruise ship or container hotels," he added.

Matches will be played at Koro-gi Sports Park, a converted baseball field that is a 40-minute train ride away from central Nagoya.

Media reports in India said the country's cricket board was unhappy with arrangements and might send a second-string squad after originally naming 15 players led by Shreyas Iyer and including 15-year-old rising star Vaibhav Sooryavanshi.

Miyaji said that Japanese organisers "only had 17 months to prepare and had to start from

scratch" for cricket at the Games.

He said they had been working "to ensure that the best facilities are provided within the limited timeline and facility restrictions".

"Despite being temporary, the facilities will provide as comfortable a space as possible for the players and officials," he said.

Miyaji said the pitch, which is being prepared by the curator of the 35,000-capacity Pallekele International Cricket Stadium in Sri Lanka, would be of a high standard.

"From what I have seen, the playing surface and field will be the best seen in cricket's inclusion in the Asian Games," he added.

ANNOUNCEMENT

India replace Sri Lanka as hosts of Women's CT

Reuters
Mumbai

The inaugural Women's Champions Trophy originally scheduled to be held in Sri Lanka will now take place in India in February next year, the International Cricket Council said yesterday.

The ICC stripped Sri Lanka of the event due to government interference in the board of Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC), which has an interim committee in place for an overhaul of the governance framework at the SLC.

"The first-ever edition of the ICC Women's Champions Trophy will take place from Feb-

ruary 14 to 28 in India next year," the ICC said in a statement.

"The event was originally scheduled to take place in Sri Lanka, but has now been moved to India as Sri Lanka Cricket continues to make the requisite reforms outlined at the ICC's Annual Conference in July."

All the matches in the inaugural edition of the six-team event will be played at the Cricket Club of India in Mumbai and the Vadodara International Cricket Stadium in Vadodara.

"The ICC Women's Champions Trophy 2027 marks an exciting new chapter for women's cricket," ICC Chairman Jay Shah said.

"As the inaugural edition of the tournament, it will bring together the best teams in

the world in an intense, high-quality competition, while creating even greater incentive for teams to continue rising through the rankings and competing for a place on the global stage.

"With a marquee ICC women's event now taking place every year, we have a significant opportunity to build greater momentum, provide more consistency and create a stronger rhythm for the women's game, its players and its fans around the world."

Reigning T20 World Cup champions Australia, England, India, New Zealand, South Africa and Sri Lanka are the six teams that will compete in a round-robin league, with the top two sides advancing to the final on February 28.

FOOTBALL

GFF signs partnership agreement with Al Nasr Trading Company



The Gulf Football Federation (GFF) yesterday signed a strategic partnership agreement with Al Nasr Trading Company, to be the official partner of the Gulf Cup 27, which will be hosted by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia from September 23 to October 6, 2026, as part of the ongoing cooperation between the two sides and in support of the progress of Gulf football.

The signing ceremony, which took place at the headquarters of the GFF in Doha, was attended by Jassim Sultan al-Rumaihi, Secretary General of GFF, along with Yousef Faisal al-Rashid, CEO of Al-Nasr Trading Company, and a number of federation officials and company executives.

On this occasion, al-Rumaihi said: "We are proud of this partnership with one of the leading commercial companies, which has demonstrated over the past years a clear commitment to supporting the Gulf Federation's tournaments and various events. This partnership is based on mutual trust and common goals, and it confirms the Gulf Federation's keenness to continue attracting leading brands and enhancing the commercial sponsorship system and the marketing value of its tournaments."

He added: "The joining of Al-Nasr Company to the sponsors of the Gulf Cup 27 is an important addition, and we look forward to building on the success, interest and enthusiasm achieved in the Gulf Cup tournaments, which will reflect positively on the outputs of Gulf football."

For his part, al-Rashid said: "We are proud to continue our partnership with the Gulf Football Federation, which reflects Al-Nasr Company's commitment to supporting Gulf sports and contributing to the development of the sports scene in the region. Sponsoring Gulf Cup 27 represents an extension of our vision to support tournaments and events that bring together the people of the Gulf and enhance the spirit of competition and communication among them."

He added: "We believe in the importance of sports as a platform that brings together fans and strengthens communication between the peoples of the region, and through this partnership we look forward to continuing to support the Gulf championships and contributing to their success and consolidating their position as one of the most prominent sporting events in the region."

The new agreement is an extension of the successful cooperation that has brought the two sides together over the past two years, as Al Nasr continues to sponsor the most prominent Gulf football competitions, thus enhancing its presence in the sporting events organized by the Federation.

The GFF looks forward to continuing its fruitful partnership with Al Nasr Company, which will contribute to the advancement of Gulf football and build on the successes achieved by the Gulf Cup throughout its history.

In this regard, Abdullah al-Shaib, Regional Marketing Director at Al-Nasr Trading Company, said: "Through this sponsorship, we seek to enhance Al-Nasr's presence in the most prominent Gulf sporting events, and to communicate more closely with football fans in the region, reflecting our future directions and our keenness to support Gulf sports."

The Gulf Cup 27 tournament will be held at King Abdullah Sports City Stadium and Prince Abdullah Al Faisal Stadium, in the first edition of the prestigious Gulf event to be held in Jeddah.

The transfer of the tournament from the Arabian Gulf to the Red Sea through Jeddah's hosting of "Gulf Cup 27" gives a new dimension and a different experience that reflects the diversity of Saudi cities and their ability to organize major sporting tournaments, in addition to the fact that the tournament is one of the most closely associated sporting events with the conscience of the peoples of the region.

England drop fast bowler Carse for final Pakistan Test

LONDON: England have left fast bowler **Brydon Carse** out of their squad for the third and final Test against Pakistan at Edgbaston, the England & Wales Cricket Board said yesterday.

The 31-year-old Carse missed the second Test after being arrested following an incident outside a Derby nightclub. He remains under investigation by Derbyshire Police, British media reported. Carse's replacement, 23-year-old left-armers Sonny Baker, retained his place in the squad after England secured an unassailable 2-0 lead in the series by thrashing Pakistan by an innings and 103 runs at Headingley and by 194 runs at Lord's.

England are bidding for a series sweep in the last Test starting next Wednesday.

England squad: Joe Root (captain), Jofra Archer, Gus Atkinson, Sonny Baker, Shoaib Bashir, Harry Brook, Sam Cook, Jordan Cox, Ben Duckett, Emilio Gay, Dan Lawrence, Ollie Pope, Ollie Robin

Sri Lanka name 2 new players for England white-ball tour Sri Lanka Cricket yesterday named two new players in their white balls squads to tour England this month for three T20 internationals and three one-day games.

Sachindu Colombage, 28, who has not played international cricket, has been included in the 16-member ODI squad. All-rounder Tharindu Rathnayake, 30, who has played two Tests, was named in the 16-man T20 squad. The first T20 is on September 16 at Southampton, with the second two days later in Cardiff.



The final T20 is on September 19 at Manchester.

The ODI series begins on September 22 at Chester-le-Street, followed by matches at Headingley on September 24 and The Oval on September 27.

Sri Lanka one-day squad: Kusal Mendis (capt), Pathum Nissanka, Kamil Mishara, Kamindu Mendis, Charith Asalanka, Janith Liyanage, Pavan Rathnayake, Dasun Shanaka, Wanindu Hasaranga, Dunith Wellalage, Maheesh Theekshana, Sachindu Colombage, Dushmantha Chameera, Eshan Malinga, Asitha Fernando, Dilshan Madushanka

Sri Lanka T20 squad: Kusal Mendis (capt), Pathum Nissanka, Kamil Mishara, Lahiru Udara, Kamindu Mendis, Charith Asalanka, Janith Liyanage, Dasun Shanaka, Dunith Wellalage, Wanindu Hasaranga, Maheesh Theekshana, Tharindu Rathnayake, Dushmantha Chameera, Eshan Malinga, Nuwan Thushara, Binura Fernando

CYCLING

Brennan clinches Vuelta a Espana stage 11

Reuters
Madrid

Briton Matthew Brennan prevailed in a chaotic sprint for the finish line in stage 11 of the Vuelta a Espana yesterday, as the 21-year-old Visma-Lease a Bike rider claimed his third stage win in his maiden Grand Tour.

Brennan, who also won the second and fourth stages, beat Bryan Coquard (Cofidis) and Jordi Meeus (Red Bull-Bora-Hansgrohe) in a photo finish in Lorca.

Red jersey holder Enric Mas (Movistar) retained his overall lead, remaining a minute and 18 seconds ahead of four-times winner Primož Roglič (Red Bull-Bora-Hansgrohe) as nearly the entire peloton crossed the finish line together after the 153.8-km ride from Cartagena.

Points classification leader Wout van Aert expertly led teammate Brennan to the front after the final turn and he overtook Coquard and crossed the finish line with his hand raised in victory.

"We took the initiative again today... it was fantastic work in the last 10 km to keep us in the right place," said Brennan, who won Britain's National Under-23 Championships last year. "I'm



Team Visma-Lease a bike's British rider Matthew Brennan crosses the finish line to win the 11th stage of the Vuelta a Espana 2026, a 151.3-km race between Cartagena and Lorca, yesterday. (AFP)

with a team full of massive champions... I'm thankful that they go full gas for me." UAE Team Emirates-XRG, whose leader Tadej Pogacar withdrew from the race after a crash in stage eight, could have lost another rider when Kevin Vermaerke went down in

a crash with Hamish McKenzie (Jayco AlUla). American Vermaerke got back up, however, and carried on as the peloton shut down all the early attacks, reaching speeds of nearly 46 km per hour going into the last 10 kilometres of the mostly flat stage. The peloton

was together amid a frantic battle to stay ahead in the final kilometre, but the Visma-Lease a Bike riders successfully collaborated to set up Brennan's dash to the finish line. The race returns to the mountains today with a 166.6-km ride from Vera to Calar Alto.

TENNIS

Pegula, Medvedev power into US Open third round

Pegula needed just 56 minutes to trounce Sofia Kenin, the former Australian Open champion

AFP
New York

World number three Jessica Pegula and former champion Daniil Medvedev raced into the third round of the US Open yesterday with straight-sets victories.

Pegula needed just 56 minutes to trounce Sofia Kenin, the former Australian Open champion now ranked 110th, 6-3, 6-1.

Seventh-seeded Medvedev downed US wild card Sebastian Gorzny 6-1, 6-3, 7-5.

Pegula, who is among a trio of players who could supplant Aryna Sabalenka atop the world rankings in New York, dropped just seven points on serve.

"I was just trying to stay focused on what I needed to do," said the 2024 US Open runner-up, who next meets another former finalist, Leylah Fernandez.

The Canadian breezed past Thailand's Mananchaya Sawang-kaew 6-4, 6-1.

Medvedev, who has struggled in the hard court build-up to the year's final Grand Slam, dominated 731st-ranked Gorzny.

He fired 14 aces and saved the lone break point he faced, although he was distracted briefly when a pair of small birds perched on the Louis Armstrong Stadium net and he was forced to replay a point he thought he'd won.

"I saw them straight away and I thought the point would stop straight away and we didn't," Medvedev said. "And the moment I hit the winner we stop. I was not happy with the decision."

He was happy enough with his game, however.

"The first two sets he was not playing the best tennis of his life maybe. The third set was much more competitive," Medvedev said.

"At the same time I feel like I had more break points and put more pressure on him."

Defending champions Car-



Russia's Daniil Medvedev remonstrates with the umpire during the second set in his match against Sebastian Gorzny of the US in Flushing Meadows in New York yesterday. (Reuters)

los Alcaraz and Aryna Sabalenka highlighted the day-four action.

World number one Sabalenka, gunning for a rare US Open threepeat, takes on 160th-ranked Russian qualifier Polina Iatcenko before second-ranked Alcaraz caps the night session against Portugal's Jaime Faria.

Alcaraz won his seventh major title at the Australian Open in January but arrived in New York an unknown quantity after a wrist injury forced a four-month layoff that saw him miss Roland Garros and Wimbledon. He dispelled doubts with a straight-set victory over Roman Safiullin and will look for further improvement against 72nd-ranked Faria.

Other seeded players chasing third-round berths yesterday included eighth-seeded American Ben Shelton and his 11th-seeded compatriot Frances Tiafoe. Bran-

don Nakashima, the in-form 16th seed who was also reckoned to be among the contenders to end American men's 23-year major title drought, was upset by 46th-ranked compatriot Alex Michelsen 6-3, 6-4, 6-4.

Meanwhile, sixth-seeded Australian Alex de Minaur was hoping to finally get his campaign underway in a first-round match against Italian Andrea Guerrieri that was postponed from Tuesday by rain.

Spain's Paula Badosa, who was serving for her match when rain stopped play on Tuesday night, returned to finish off Australian Daria Kasatkina 6-1, 6-4 and book a second-round clash with fourth-seeded American Coco Gauff.

Zverev soaks up pressure to advance, rain plays spoilsport
Alexander Zverev weathered a storm from Lorenzo Sonego to

reach the US Open second round on Tuesday and keep alive his bid to reach a third straight Grand Slam final, after relentless rain wreaked havoc with the schedule at Flushing Meadows.

Americans Madison Keys, Coco Gauff and Taylor Fritz earlier powered through under the roof of Arthur Ashe Stadium before new crowd favourite Alexandra Eala underlined her growing promise with a near-flawless display.

French Open champion and Wimbledon finalist Zverev, handed top billing in New York in the absence of injured world number one Jannik Sinner, was taken the distance by Sonego but came through with a 6-4 3-6 6-7(7) 7-5 6-4 win.

"I'm just happy I won, that's it," Zverev said after four hours and 53 minutes on court.

"I'm happy that I won this battle and it was exactly what I needed ...



Jessica Pegula of the United States reacts against Sofia Kenin during their match at the 2026 US Open. (Reuters)

good things happen after you fight through these matches."

Zverev was two points from defeat at one stage but kept his composure when it mattered to set up a clash with Quentin Halys.

Thousands of poncho-wearing ticketholders wandered around the grounds earlier in the day, as rain forced a long delay to the start of the action on the outdoor courts.

Among those closely followed was American teenager Thea Frodin, who served as the tennis-playing double for a young Serena Williams in the 2021 film "King Richard."

She earned the praise of the home crowd but did not get a Hollywood ending in her WTA Tour-level debut against second seed Elena Rybakina, who played down serious injury concerns with a clinical 6-3 6-2 win.

Lorenzo Musetti then followed on the largest of the outdoor courts with a comprehensive 6-3 6-3 7-5 defeat of Briton Arthur Fery, who made a surprise run to the Wimbledon semi-finals.

Alex de Minaur was slated to close out the programme on Grandstand against Italian qualifier Andrea Guerrieri but his was among several matches cancelled



Alexander Zverev of Germany reacts against Lorenzo Sonego of Italy during the first-round US Open match in New York. (AFP)

for the day when the rain returned in the evening. Organisers will have to complete a total of 14 first-round matches on Wednesday, including those that were suspended.

French showman Gael Monfils celebrated his 40th birthday with a 2-6 6-1 6-2 6-0 win over Adolfo Daniel Vallejo to keep his farewell Grand Slam campaign alive.

SPOTLIGHT

Woods loses driver's license for five years in plea deal, avoids jail time

Reuters
Martin County, Florida

Tiger Woods will have his license suspended for five years after reaching a plea deal in his impaired-driving case yesterday that will allow the decorated golfer to avoid jail time.

The 15-times major champion, who initially pleaded not guilty, entered a no-contest motion on all charges and was adjudicated guilty at a change-of-plea hearing he attended at Martin County Courthouse.

Judge Darren Steele said two five-year driver's license suspensions will run at the same time, one on a reckless driving charge and one on a careless driving citation.

"There are no exceptions. If you were to drive for any reason at all, you would go immediately back to jail," Steele told Woods.

The 50-year-old Woods, who was also handed about \$1,500 in fines as part of the plea deal, has 30 days to appeal the ruling which dropped the more serious offense of driving under the influence.

Woods, dressed in a dark suit and tie, arrived at the Martin County Courthouse seated in the front passenger seat of a black SUV and did not answer questions from reporters as he and girlfriend Vanessa Trump, the ex-wife of Donald Trump Jr, walked in and out of the building for the hearing.

State Attorney Thomas Bakkedahl told reporters he was comfortable with the outcome of the case and outlined the prosecution's challenges in proving Woods, who has a documented pharmacological tolerance after multiple back and knee surgeries, was impaired by hydrocodone.

"Both toxicologists reviewing the information and evidence provided to them were of the opinion that there was insufficient proof," Bakkedahl said. "I don't make the facts; I accept them as they are brought to me of his impairment."



Tiger Woods appears in County Judge Darren Steele's courtroom for a plea hearing from an arrest in March at the Martin County Courthouse in Stuart, Florida, US, yesterday. (Reuters)

Bakkedahl, who defended the handling of the case amid criticism that Woods could get favourable treatment given his fame, also had a message for the golfer.

"If I can send any message to Mr. Woods, it's simply this: of all the people in the world who should not get behind the wheel of the car, it's the gentleman who is one of the most recognizable faces on the planet," said Bakkedahl. "Somebody will see him, whether it's in Georgia or Nevada or New York or where have you. He's not to drive a car."

Woods, regarded as the greatest golfer of his generation and one of the most famous athletes on the planet, initially pleaded not guilty to driving under the influence charges stemming from his rollover crash in March.

At the time, Woods told authorities he was looking down at his phone and did not realise the truck in front of him had slowed down before his crash. No one was injured in the crash.

According to a probable cause affidavit, Woods had two hydrocodone pills in his pocket and officers observed him to be lethargic, slow, "sweating profusely" with eyes that were bloodshot, glassy

and pupils that were "extremely dilated".

Steele had granted Woods' request to travel outside the United States to receive treatment in a controlled environment and, in a March statement, the golfer said he was stepping away to seek treatment and focus on his health.

In May, the judge granted prosecutors' request to subpoena Woods' prescription drug records, covering a period from the start of 2026 to March 27, the day Woods' Land Rover rolled over on a two-lane road near his Jupiter Island home in Florida.

In July, the judge granted a similar request that allowed prosecutors to obtain hospital records connected to the golfer's medical treatment following his crash.

Woods, who has not played in an official event since the 2024 British Open, has won 15 major championships, second only to Jack Nicklaus with 18. He also has won 82 PGA Tour events, a record he shares with Sam Snead.

He spent a record 683 weeks as world number one and is the only player to have held all four major titles at the same time, a feat known as the "Tiger Slam".

GOLF

US and International teams add captain's picks for Presidents Cup

Reuters
New York

Geoff Ogilvy used half of his captain's picks yesterday to add Presidents Cup rookies Nick Taylor, Nico Echavarria and Ryo Hisatsune to an International Team that will look to snap a lengthy losing streak against a stacked US squad that added some major heft.

Ogilvy also named Canadian Corey Connors, South Korea's Sungjae Im and South African Christiaan Bezuidenhout to his 12-player team who will seek to avoid an 11th consecutive loss to the United States when they meet from September 24-27 in Chicago.

A US team that already included six players inside the top 11 of the world rankings was bolstered with the addition of some major champions as Brandt Snedeker named Justin Thomas and world number 10 Xander Schauffele among his six captain's picks.

Snedeker also selected Patrick



Cantlay and Presidents Cup rookies Chris Gotterup, Jacob Bridgeman and Jackson Koivun.

The 2026 edition of the Presidents Cup, a biennial event that pits a US team against a lineup of international players from outside Europe, will be held at Medinah Country Club's Course No. 3 and the competition will begin with five fourball matches on the opening day. The US are 13-1-1 in the Ryder Cup-style competition with their only loss coming at Royal Melbourne Golf Club in Australia in 1998. World number one Scottie Scheffler, Cameron

Young, Wyndham Clark, Sam Burns, Russell Henley and Collin Morikawa all previously clinched automatic berths on the US team.

"You look to your best players to kind of pull the cart for you and go out there and lead the charge. And so we're very fortunate on our side," said Snedeker.

"We have a bunch of great guys in the team room, guys who love to lead, guys who lead by example, guys who lead by being vocal, and they're all bought in."

The six automatic spots on the International Team were filled by Kim Si-woo (South Korea), Ryan Fox (New Zealand), Hideki Matsuyama (Japan), Min Woo Lee (Australia), Tom Kim (South Korea) and Adam Scott (Australia).

Ogilvy, who has served as a captain's assistant in four previous Presidents Cups, feels his team have the perfect balance and he is looking forward to the challenge that awaits at Medinah.

"I don't think I've had 12 guys more enthusiastic and more energetic at this point of the tournament than we have this time," said Ogilvy.

Hadjar out for Monza with Lawson, Tsunoda continuing to fill in

MONZA: Red Bull's Isack Hadjar will miss this weekend's Italian Grand Prix at Monza as he recovers from injury, with Liam Lawson replacing him for the second race in a row and Yuki Tsunoda continuing as a stand-in for Racing Bulls. Both Red Bull-owned Formula One teams confirmed their lineups yesterday for the 13th round of the season at one of the fastest tracks on the calendar. Frenchman Hadjar injured his wrist in training ahead of last month's Dutch Grand Prix at Zandvoort, with Red Bull promoting New Zealander Lawson back to the senior team they had demoted him from last year. Tsunoda is the official reserve driver for both teams but the experienced Japanese has been drafted in alongside British rookie Arvid Lindblad at Racing Bulls, the Italy-based sister team traditionally used to develop young drivers. Lawson, 24, finished seventh at the Dutch Grand Prix and sits ninth in the standings with 49 points

while his Red Bull teammate Max Verstappen, who crashed out of his home race on the opening lap, is sixth. "Liam will drive alongside Max at the Italian Grand Prix in Monza, while Isack continues to make encouraging progress following the wrist injury sustained during the summer break," Red Bull said in a statement. "The team is closely monitoring his rehabilitation and will take no unnecessary risks with his return to competition and wishes him a speedy recovery."

WRIST INJURY

Hadjar had sounded hopeful of making his return at Monza. "It's my first injury ever in my whole existence, career, whatever. So it's weird to be on the bench. I'm not happy about it, for me and for the team," he said when he put in an appearance at Zandvoort. "It's not swollen, which is a good sign. Actually, it's healing fast. Every day I have a bit more mobility and I'm hopeful for Monza."

FOCUS

Messi's exit leaves Argentina rebuilding

AFP
Buenos Aires

Argentina face a testing transition period as they attempt to move on from Lionel Messi's international retirement, with question marks also hanging over the futures of coach Lionel Scaloni and several ageing players.

Messi vacated the famous number 10 shirt on Monday, after 21 years of carrying Argentinian hopes on his shoulders.

It was a burden that weighed heavily initially, before a golden era late in his career during which the South American giants won three major titles, including the 2022 World Cup.

The 39-year-old's last competitive match for Argentina was the 1-0 loss to Spain in the World Cup final in July.

Of the 17 players who featured in that match for Scaloni's side, only two will be under the age of 30 when the next World Cup kicks off in South America in 2030.

Veteran centre-back Nicolas Otamendi, 38, retired from international duty in the wake of the loss to Spain in New Jersey, when Argentina were thoroughly outplayed by younger, more vibrant opponents. Goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez has since suggested he may follow suit, as has 32-year-old

midfield enforcer Leandro Paredes, who was slapped with a 10-match ban by FIFA for attacking Spain players after the final whistle.

"If he (Messi) isn't there, it will be hard for everything to keep working the way it used to," Paredes told Argentinian TV channel TN.

Rodrigo De Paul's international career has also been heavily linked with his Inter Miami teammate's.

The biggest question marks surround the future of coach Scaloni, who has overseen the most successful spell for the Albiceleste since the days of Diego Maradona.

The 48-year-old, whose team are known as the "Scaloneta" at home, was appointed in 2018 and ended Argentina's 28-year wait for a major trophy with victory in the 2021 Copa America.

The former Deportivo La Coruna right-back's current deal runs out in December.

Scaloni had reportedly agreed a contract extension until 2030 before the World Cup, but he cast doubt on his future after the poor performance in the final. "I already have an idea of what I want to do," Scaloni said after the loss.

"I'm going to honour my contract, and then we'll see. I need to think, because I don't know if it's possible to achieve something as great as this."

The next World Cup will be largely held in Spain, Portugal and



Argentina's head coach Lionel Scaloni (right) walks as Argentina's forward Lionel Messi (centre) and midfielder Leandro Paredes sit during a training session at the Atlanta United Training Centre in Marietta, Georgia, on July 16, 2026, ahead of the World Cup final against Spain. (AFP)

Morocco, but Argentina will be one of three South American nations hosting one match, thus gaining automatic qualification.

First, though, they will be targeting a third consecutive Copa America crown in 2028.

Despite Messi's retirement, there will likely still be plenty of

familiar faces in a squad who will remain title favourites.

Lisandro Martinez and Cristian Romero have established themselves as the first-choice centre-half pairing.

Enzo Fernandez, who moved to Manchester City from Chelsea on Monday for a fee that equalled

the British transfer record, and Alexis Mac Allister have made the central midfield positions their own, while Messi's departure could give Inter Milan's Lautaro Martinez and Atletico Madrid forward Julian Alvarez more space to shine up front.

Alvarez in particular will be ex-

pected to improve significantly on his ratio of 15 goals in 59 caps. Messi himself believes the long-term future is bright for his country.

"I've given it my all. I have nothing left to give, and besides, there are great young players coming up who deserve their chance," he said when announcing his retirement.

Exciting Como youngster Nico Paz made two appearances at the World Cup and could become a more regular starter, while 23-year-old Giuliano Simeone - son of former Argentina stalwart Diego Simeone - impressed as a substitute in the semi-final win over England.

Real Madrid winger Franco Mastantuono did not make the World Cup squad but has already won four international caps at the age of 19.

Argentina's next generation impressed at last year's Under-20 World Cup in Chile, reaching the final for the first time since 2007 before losing to Morocco.

Argentina currently have no fixtures scheduled for the international break later this month but the Argentinian football association is reportedly planning a possible farewell match for Messi, the country's record goalscorer and record appearance maker with 125 goals in 207 games.

He leaves a huge hole - but a new generation will endeavour to fill it.

PREMIER LEAGUE

Top clubs splash cash to shatter transfer record

'We are always looking to bring in world-class players and Enzo fits the bill'

AFP
London

Premier League clubs smashed their spending record for a single transfer window for the second straight season as Manchester City's signing of Enzo Fernandez took the total outlay close to £3.5bn (\$4.7bn).

A frantic final two days of the window, which closed at 2200 GMT on Tuesday, pushed spending in the summer window significantly beyond last season's record of £3.14bn. More than half of the clubs in the English top flight broke their transfer records, with multiple deals topping £100mn.

Chelsea midfielder Fernandez, 25, signed for Enzo Maresca's City late Tuesday for £125mn, matching the British record fee Liverpool paid 12 months ago for forward Alexander Isak. Argentina's Fernandez will be part of a new-look City midfield alongside England's Elliot Anderson, who arrived from Nottingham Forest shortly after the World Cup for £116mn.

City also snapped up Senegal forward Iliman Ndiaye from Everton in a deal worth £65mn, taking their summer spending above £450mn. Former Ballon d'Or winner Rodri, who captained Spain to World Cup glory in July, has joined Barcelona while long-serving pair Bernardo Silva and John Stones have also left City.

"At Manchester City, we are always looking to bring in world-class players and Enzo fits the bill," said City's director of football Hugo Viana. Fernandez, sent off during Argentina's defeat by Spain



Argentina midfielder Enzo Fernandez has joined Manchester City from Chelsea for a reported fee of £125m.

in the World Cup final in July, said: "Every player wants to be part of a club like this".

Chelsea were also busy during a summer rebuild under new manager Xabi Alonso, bringing in England forward Morgan Rogers from Aston Villa for £117mn as their marquee signing.

A clutch of other arrivals include Maxence Lacroix, Emiliano Martinez, Jordan Henderson and Danny Welbeck, but a deal to sign Monaco midfielder Lamine Camara collapsed late on Tuesday.

Premier League champions Arsenal had a quiet deadline day after their pursuit of Atletico Madrid's Julian Alvarez fizzled out. The Gunners had been rivalling Barcelona for the Argentina international's signature. The Spanish champions turned to Arsenal 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 Jesus.

The Gunners, who ended their 22-year wait for a Premier League title last season, made significant additions earlier in the transfer window, bringing in Bruno Guimaraes and Ezri Konsa.

Liverpool, dethroned as champions by Arsenal, signed France winger Bradley Barcola from Paris Saint-Germain on Monday for a fee potentially rising to around £124mn. But the Reds' attempts to further strengthen their squad were frustrated with bids for Crystal Palace's Ismaila Sarr and Brighton's Yankuba Minteh rejected, meaning Cody Gakpo will stay at Anfield despite interest

from City and Tottenham. Liverpool, under new manager Andoni Iraola, have lost several senior players, including Andrew Robertson, Mohamed Salah and Ibrahima Konate.

They have drawn their first two Premier League games, adding to fears that they lack depth, particularly in defensive positions.

Tottenham have spent more than £300mn on new players after finishing just one place above the relegation zone last season, with Newcastle midfielder Sandro Tonali, Mateus Fernandes and Omar Marmoush all joining the north London club.

Yet Roberto de Zerbi's men have still started the season poorly, failing to score in defeats by Brentford and Newcastle in their opening two league matches.

SPOTLIGHT

Dortmund cruise past fifth-tier opponents in German Cup opener

AFP
Berlin

Borussia Dortmund cruised to a comfortable 5-0 win over amateur fifth-division HEBC Hamburg in their German Cup opener on Tuesday, with 18-year-old Samuele Inacio bagging a first-half brace.

Daniel Svensson and Fabio Silva got on the scoresheet for the visitors, who also benefitted from an own goal from HEBC defender Janek Wrede.

Wrede, the club captain, works as a scout for first division Hamburg. HEBC goalkeeper Jan-nik Schoon, who expertly saved a long-range effort from Germany midfielder Felix Nmecha, works as a teacher aide but told Sky Germany he had already taken Wednesday off work.

The amateur side moved the match from their 2,500-seat home to the 57,000-strong Volkspark Stadion, home of

Bundesliga side Hamburg.

Despite surrendering home advantage with much of the crowd bathed in Dortmund yellow, the official attendance was 45,917, a German Cup record for a match involving a fifth-tier team, while much of the revenue will flow to HEBC.

Dortmund coach Niko Kovac made seven changes, although deadline-day newcomer Ethan Nwaneri arrived too late on his season-long loan from Arsenal to take part.

HEBC held the 2024 Champions League finalists at bay for the opening half-hour but Dortmund's pressure told, with the hosts conceding an own goal in the 33rd minute before Svensson netted three minutes later.

Teenage forward Inacio then bagged a brace before half-time to put any hopes of a shock upset well beyond doubt.

Former Wolves forward Silva added a fifth just before the hour mark to add gloss to Dortmund's victory.

DECISION

Captain Aubameyang quits Gabon team

AFP
Libreville, Gabon

Gabon captain Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang has announced that he is stepping back from the national team, saying he felt "humiliated" by his exclusion and subsequent reinstatement after the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations in Morocco.

The top scorer in the history of the Panthers was singled out by the Gabonese government as responsible for the AFCON failure. "They humiliated and smeared me even though I played at the AFCON while injured," the 37-year-old said in a television interview.

"This is the last straw, and I'd rather stop here."

Gabon were eliminated from the AFCON in the group stage after three defeats, the last of which came against Ivory Coast.

"It's a part of our national identity that has been weakened," Gabonese President Brice Clotaire Oligui Nguema said at the time. The government fired the coaching staff, suspended the team until further notice and sidelined Aubameyang and 38-year-old Bruno Ecuele Manga. The suspension of these veteran mainstays of the squad sparked a wave of outrage among Gabonese supporters.

"I think the team's problems run much deeper than the lit-



tle person that I am," said Aubameyang who was one of Europe's top strikers during his time at Borussia Dortmund and Arsenal.

The Gabonese striker has set himself what is likely to be a final challenge in Europe, leaving Marseille to join Deportivo La Coruna, who have just returned to La Liga after a long spell in the wilderness.

Gabon's new national team coach, Sebastian Migne, will now have to plan without Aubameyang as he prepares his team for their first qualifiers later this month for next year's AFCON. Gabon are in Group A with World Cup quarter-finalists Morocco as well as Niger and Lesotho.

FERNANDEZ 'DIDN'T HESITATE' OVER RECORD CITY MOVE

Enzo Fernandez said he "didn't hesitate for a second" when Manchester City made contact in his first interview since joining the club for a British record-equalling transfer fee of £125mn (\$169mn). The Argentina midfielder completed his move from Chelsea on Tuesday's transfer deadline day, taking City's spending to more than £450mn - a Premier League record for a single transfer window. The 25-year-old joined Chelsea from Benfica in January 2023 for a then-British record fee

of £107mn. His move to the Etihad matches the £125mn Liverpool paid for Alexander Isak last year. Fernandez, sent off in Argentina's 1-0 defeat by Spain in the World Cup final in July, had been linked with a move to Real Madrid earlier in the summer transfer window. Fernandez, who has signed a five-year deal, said he had "always dreamed of being at a club as big as City".

"To be honest, from the first day they believed in me and called me to say they wanted me to join the

club, I didn't hesitate for a second," he added. "It's a club... that has won a lot in recent years. It's a club that is making history in football and, for me, it's a huge challenge." Enzo Maresca is now at the helm at City after Pep Guardiola's departure and has overseen a significant rebuild following the high-profile exits of Rodri, John Stones and Bernardo Silva. Fernandez, who won the World Cup with Argentina in 2022, said despite the churn at the Etihad, City were building an "incredible"

team. He added he was looking forward to working again with Maresca, who previously coached him at Chelsea. "He is a top manager, honestly," he said. "I had him at my previous club. They were incredible moments. I learned so much with him. He's very similar to Latin people, very passionate. So, for me, it's a pleasure to work with him. I'm also grateful because he was very important in bringing me here. So it's a huge pleasure for me to work alongside him and enjoy it."