

To subscribe
GULF TIMES
Newspaper
Please call
444 666 35



FORMULA 1 | Page 2

Alpine's Gasly takes shock pole for Italian Grand Prix



FOOTBALL | Page 4

Inter Milan roar back in five-goal thriller with Napoli

To advertise here,
PLEASE CALL
444 666 21

Sunday, September 6, 2026
Rabia | 24, 1448 AH

GULF TIMES

SPORT

TENNIS

Zheng rallies to stun Keys, Anisimova out in US Open third round

Page 3

PREMIER LEAGUE

Haaland keeps new-look City perfect, Spurs held by Forest

Crystal Palace battle back to beat Fulham 3-2, Bournemouth let lead slip again in 2-2 Newcastle draw

AFP
London

New-look Manchester City overcame a spirited challenge from Coventry yesterday courtesy of an Erling Haaland goal to stay perfect in the Premier League, as blunt Tottenham were held to a goalless draw at Nottingham Forest.

Enzo Maresca is now the man in the Etihad hotseat after the emotional departure of long-serving Pep Guardiola, while there has been significant churn among the playing staff. One of the new arrivals, Enzo Fernandez, played a major part in City's first-half goal, feeding Antoine Semenyo, who crossed for Haaland to head home his third of the season.

Table-topping City have won all three of their Premier League matches ahead of next week's Manchester derby at Old Trafford.

Former Chelsea boss Maresca said that teams needed "ugly moments" as well as free-flowing football after the stodgy win, in which newly promoted Coventry squandered chances.

"I really liked today for different reasons," the Italian told the BBC. "First half we could have scored one or two more, but we worked together to win, so I am happy.

"It is difficult against teams in a low block, I felt we dealt very well with that. Anxiety from the fans is normal.

"Nine out of 10 of these games you end with bad feeling, but it is important to win 1-0."

Midfielder Fernandez arrived at the Etihad on transfer deadline day in a £125 million (\$170 million) deal, which equalled the British record.

Maresca handed his former charge at Chelsea a start after Nico O'Reilly sustained an injury in the warm-up, while fellow new sign-



Manchester City's Erling Haaland beats Coventry's Aurèle Amenda to the header to score the only goal of the Premier League match in Manchester yesterday. (Reuters)

ing Ilman Ndiaye also made his debut for the club.

The City boss is working with a reshaped squad following several high-profile departures, including those of former Ballon d'Or

winner Rodri, Bernardo Silva and John Stones. As well as Fernandez and Ndiaye, big-money arrivals include England midfielder Elliot Anderson and Morocco teenager Ayyoub Bouaddi, who both

featured yesterday. Tottenham also spent heavily in the summer transfer window in a desperate effort to avoid fresh embarrassment after finishing 17th in successive seasons. They travelled to the City

Ground, after defeats to Brentford and Newcastle, to face a team that twice beat them heavily last season, and still searching for their first Premier League goal of the new campaign.

Forest had the ball in the net midway through the second half after calamitous Spurs defending, but Neco Williams's strike was ruled out for handball following a VAR check.

The 0-0 draw means that Forest, who, like Spurs, flirted with relegation last season, are also still seeking their first win.

"Disappointed for the result but for the performance very happy, considering we started to work together last Thursday for the first time, for the first day," Spurs boss Roberto De Zerbi told Sky Sports, referring to the end of the transfer window.

He added: "If we improve in the last third I think we can score many goals because we have the players with big qualities. Now is a tough moment to accept this result because I think we played well."

Newly-promoted Hull moved into second after a 0-0 draw against Aston Villa extended their unbeaten start back in the top flight. A new-look Villa side to the one that won the Europa League last season is yet to score in the Premier League and have had just one shot on target in three games.

Vitaly Janelt opened the scoring for high-flying Brentford against Sunderland but Enzo Le Fee levelled from the penalty spot late in the game to force a 1-1 draw.

Leeds drew 1-1 at Brighton while Tyrick Mitchell scored two goals as Crystal Palace twice came from behind to earn a 3-2 win at Fulham, with Ben Chilwell netting the winner.

In the early kick-off, Newcastle recovered from going 2-0 down to secure a 2-2 draw against Bournemouth, staying unbeaten in all competitions under new manager Matthias Jaissle.

On Friday, Antonio Iraola's Liverpool beat Ipswich 2-0 to claim their first win of the season.

QATAR STARS LEAGUE

Al Sadd thrash Al Gharafa 4-1 to make it three in a row



Al Sadd's Akram Afif celebrates scoring his team's third against Al Gharafa at the Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium yesterday.

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Al Sadd thrashed Al Gharafa 4-1 at Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium yesterday to make it three straight wins in the Qatar Stars League (QSL).

The unbeaten defending champions moved top of the table with nine points, while Al Gharafa slipped to ninth with three points after suffering their second defeat.

Yusuf Abdurisag began the goal-scoring for The Wolves converting a Roberto Firmino cross with ease in the very 5th minute of the game. Abdurisag then did a celebratory jig along with Akram Afif and Firmino much to the delight of their fans.

The Al Sadd mood continued with Claudinho added a second goal in the 12th minute. Left unmarked, the Brazilian midfielder flicked in an Afif lob to score.

Afif himself joined the party in the second session (50th minute) as he broke through the ranks and beat the rival goalkeeper depositing the ball in the right corner.

Al Gharafa got one on board in the 82nd minute as Yacine Brahimi collected a Florinel Coman cross to shoot high centre into the net.

Al Sadd however continued to

rule the roost and a fast break in the 90+3' saw Firmino sliding, inside right in the box, to connect a Boualem Khoukhi assist. A fifth for Al Sadd seemed on its way in a final stoppage-time attempt but Younes El Hannach's shot from the right side of the box was cut off in the top centre by Al Gharafa's goalkeeper Khalifa Ababacar.

Al Duhail hold Al Rayyan 1-1

Earlier at the Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium, Al Duhail held Al Rayyan to a 1-1 draw in their third round match. The result ended The Lions' winning run but took their tally to 7 points, while Al Duhail moved to 5 points with their second draw result in the league so far.

Al Rayyan made an early breakthrough with Roger Guedes directing home a Jassem Gaber header following a corner kick in the 5th minute of the match.

Al Duhail came close to equalizing in added time of first half but Al Rayyan goalkeeper Mahmud Abunada stood in the way.

The Red Knights succeeded later in the 72nd minute when an alert Tahsin Mohammed cashed in on a defence error. He grabbed the ball and made a left-footed strike from top of the box into the left corner. Al Rayyan pushed hard for a winner towards the end but it remained elusive.



Al Duhail's Tahsin Mohammed celebrates after scoring against Al Rayyan at the Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium yesterday.

FORMULA 1

Alpine's Gasly seizes first career pole ahead of Russell

French driver's sole win so far was at Monza in 2020, Ferrari's Leclerc lines up third, Hamilton fourth

Reuters
Monza, Italy

French Formula One driver Pierre Gasly upset the favourites to grab a stunning career-first pole position with Renault-owned Alpine at the Italian Grand Prix yesterday.

Gasly, who won at Monza with Red Bull-owned AlphaTauri (now Racing Bulls) in 2020 and lives in nearby Milan, seized pole from Mercedes's George Russell with his final effort and a lap of one minute 21.786 seconds - 0.060 quicker than the Briton.

"It's been nine years trying to chase the opportunity to get a pole," said Gasly, who was the last of the pole contenders to complete his final flying lap. "I won my first race in Monza and got my first pole at this track. It's something special around here."

Gasly had already hinted at something special in the earlier phases, leading Q1 and fourth fastest in Q2, and his mechanics erupted in jubilation as the pole was confirmed - a day after he had been stripped of third place at last June's Monaco Grand Prix.

The pole was also the first for Renault's team since they became Alpine in 2021.

PIASTRI THIRD AND LECLERC FOURTH ON THE GRID

Russell, a title contender, hailed an incredible performance by the 30-year-old Frenchman in his 190th start.

"We were finishing a game of chess about 15 minutes before qualifying and he beat me there and I went 'well, I think I will beat you in qualifying' and here we are, he's ahead of me again," said the Briton.

McLaren's Oscar Piastri qualified third at the 'Temple of Speed' but was then handed a three-place drop for impeding Red Bull's Liam Lawson.

That created an all-Ferrari second row with Charles Leclerc, a two-time winner of his team's home race, directly behind Russell and teammate Lewis Hamilton in fourth after the seven-time world champion had sneaked into the final phase by the skin of his teeth - 0.001 of a second.

Red Bull's Max Verstappen, last year's race winner, will line-up fifth with Piastri sixth.

Mercedes's championship leader Kimi Antonelli, who is 59 points clear of Russell and Hamilton, qualified seventh but will go to the back due to engine penalties.

That lifted Alpine's Franco Colapinto to seventh instead with



Alpine's Pierre Gasly celebrates after qualifying in pole position along with second placed Mercedes' George Russell and third placed McLaren's Oscar Piastri at Autodromo Nazionale Monza in Italy. (Reuters)

McLaren's reigning world champion Lando Norris, winner of the previous two races, eighth on the grid. Racing Bulls' Arvid Lindblad and Audi's Gabriel Bortoleto completed the top 10.

RUSSELL'S BIG CHANCE TO CUT THE GAP

Today will be Russell's big opportunity to cut the gap to Antonelli, although he too will have to take a similar engine penalty later in the

season and probably in Azerbaijan later this month.

Antonelli obeyed orders and did his best to help Russell by providing a tow but will be championing for points, even if a podium

looks a long shot too far. Monza is the fastest track on the calendar, with slipstreaming opportunities and chances to overtake, and how long Gasly can stay ahead is the big question even if he does have a car with the same Mercedes engine.

Russell was on provisional pole after the first flying laps, with Gasly only third, and team boss Toto Wolff suggested Verstappen had cost him the fraction of a second needed.

"You always need to take everybody seriously. They (Alpine) have a huge amount of straight-line speed. They've taken away a lot of drag and on a single lap, that proved to be what is necessary," said Wolff. "The race is a completely different ball game, so we shall see."

The main drama before the final seconds was caused by Hamilton, still outside the top 10 with three minutes to go in Q2 before hauling himself to safety while Bortoleto missed out by the slimmest of margins.

Ferrari F1 fans who were gathered in their tens of thousands around the circuit breathed a sigh of relief but yesterday already looked like damage limitation for the Italian team, with hopes of doing better today.

CYCLING

Pogacar to miss Worlds after season ends abruptly

AFP
Paris, France

Tadej Pogacar will end his season prematurely after undergoing surgery on a fractured collarbone sustained in a crash at the Vuelta a Espana, he said yesterday, with the injury ruling him out of this month's world championships.

"Of course, this isn't the way I wanted my season to finish. Right now, the most important thing is to recover properly and give my body the time it needs," Pogacar said in a UAE Team Emirates-XRG statement.

The five-time Tour de France champion crashed out of the Vuelta last weekend and was taken to hospital after a heavy fall on stage eight. He also suffered a concussion and cervical fracture, along with multiple cuts and bruises.

Pogacar had been leading by a massive three minutes and 50 seconds a week into the 21-day race and was the overwhelming favourite for victory in his bid to complete a career clean sweep of the three Grand Tours.

In July, Pogacar joined an elite club of five-time Tour de France winners with Jacques Anquetil, Eddy Merckx, Bernard Hinault and Miguel Indurain.

The 27-year-old was bidding to become only the fourth rider to complete a Tour-Vuelta double in the same season.

"It has been a season with many special moments and I'm proud of



Slovenian rider Tadej Pogacar wearing the overall leader's yellow jersey cycles to the finish line to win the 14th stage of the 113th edition of the Tour de France on July 18, 2026. (AFP)

what we achieved together. Now I'll focus on getting healthy, supporting the guys from home, and coming back next year ready for what's ahead," said Pogacar.

The Slovenian star had planned to target a record-equalling third world road race title in Montreal later this month before eyeing a sixth straight Giro di Lombardia victory in October.

"Following his crash, there is absolutely no pressure for Tadej to return to racing this year. His health and recovery are the prior-

ity," said UAE Emirates team principal Mauro Gianetti.

Medical director Adrian Rottunno said Pogacar was recovering well, but there was no benefit in rushing his return to racing.

"Tadej is progressing well following surgery and we are very satisfied with his recovery to this point," he said.

"However, given the combination of his injuries... we have taken the decision, together with Tadej, that he will not return to competition this season."

The team also announced that Pogacar had signed a contract extension through to the end of the 2032 season.

"From the beginning, this team has felt like home for me," Pogacar said.

"We have grown together over the years and shared some incredible moments, so I'm very happy to extend my contract until 2032 Pogacar added.

"There is still a lot I want to achieve in this sport and I believe this is the right place to do it."

FOCUS

Brenner climbs to victory in Vuelta stage 14, in-form Mas retains red jersey

AFP
Jaén, Spain

German Marco Brenner fought off Santiago Buitrago to claim a mountaintop victory from a long-range breakaway on stage 14 of the Vuelta a Espana yesterday.

Overall leader Enric Mas extended his lead as he finished 25 seconds ahead of veteran four-time Vuelta winner Primož Roglič, who slipped from second to third overall behind Felix Gall.

Mas leads Gall by 2min 06sec with Roglič just four seconds back.

Spain's Carlos Rodriguez finished the stage third at the end of the 154.5 kilometre ride from Jaén to La Pandera and climbed into the top 10 overall.

A large early breakaway established a gap of more than seven minutes on the

peloton, including Mas. With around 52km remaining, Kevin Vermaerke attacked to take a solo lead, which the American maintained until Georg Steinhauser caught him with 15km left.

The German left Vermaerke behind as he began the final climb up the Sierra de la Pandera as weekend crowds cheered on the riders.

Guillaume Martin came across to join Steinhauser, followed by Mario Aparicio, opening up a gap of nearly a minute on the rest of the break.

Buitrago and Brenner caught them with just over three kilometres remaining before forging ahead.

Buitrago attacked first but Brenner came past him to claim victory.

Further down the slope, the red jersey-wearing Mas and Gall dropped Roglič and Richard Carapaz in the general classification battle.

Roglič finished 25 seconds behind Mas and Gall, with Ecuadorian Carapaz, fourth overall, a further six seconds back.

Cycling superstar Tadej Pogacar was leading the race until a crash on stage eight forced him to abandon his bid to win a first Vuelta and become only the ninth man to complete the full set of Grand Tours.

He underwent surgery on a fractured collarbone and confirmed yesterday that his season was over.

Today's 15th stage, the riders travel a winding 189.7km route from Palma del Rio to Cordoba.

Tudor Pro Cycling Team's Marco Brenner celebrates winning stage 14 at the Vuelta a Espana in Jaén, Spain, yesterday. (Reuters)



SPOTLIGHT

Qatar Basketball Men's League from October 10

By Sports Reporter
Doha

The Qatar Basketball Federation (QBF) has announced the schedule for the Qatar Basketball Men's League for the new 2026-2027 sports season.

The competition will tip off on Saturday, October 10, 2026, with the participation of nine clubs: Al Khor, Al Rayyan, Qatar, Al Sadd, Al Gharafa, Al Ahli, Al Shamal, Al Wakrah, and Al Arabi.

The first round will continue until Monday, November 9.

The Men's General League begins with a single-round league format before moving into the second stage, which will adopt a knockout system to determine the season's champion.

The first round features 36 matches across nine rounds, according to the program approved by the Federation, with games hosted at Al Gharafa and Al Rayyan arenas.

Al Arabi enters the new season as the defending champion of the last three editions, raising its tally to 11 titles in the history of the General League.

Al Rayyan leads the all-time record with 18 titles, followed by Qatar with 7. Al Sadd, Al Gharafa, Al Shamal, and the former Army Club each hold two titles, while Al Ahli has one, won in the 2000-2001 season.

The opening round kicks off on Saturday, October 10, with two matches at Al Gharafa Arena: Al Rayyan vs. Al Khor at 6:00 p.m., followed by Al Sadd vs. Qatar at 8:00 p.m.

The round continues on Mon-



day, October 12, with Al Gharafa vs. Al Ahli at 6:00 p.m. and Al Wakrah vs. Al Shamal at 8:00 p.m., also at Al Gharafa Arena. Al Arabi will rest in the first round.

Round Two will be held on Wednesday and Thursday, October 14-15.

Al Rayyan Arena will host Qatar vs. Al Ahli at 7:00 p.m. and Al Gharafa vs. Al Wakrah at 9:00 p.m. on Wednesday.

On Thursday, Al Gharafa Arena will stage Al Khor vs. Al Sadd at 6:00 p.m. and Al Arabi vs. Al Rayyan at 8:00 p.m. Al Shamal will rest in this round.

Round Three begins Saturday, October 17, at Al Gharafa Arena with Al Wakrah vs. Qatar at 6:00 p.m. and Al Ahli vs. Al Khor at 8:00 p.m.

The round concludes Monday, October 19, with Al Sadd vs. Al Arabi at 6:00 p.m. and Al Shamal vs. Al Gharafa at 8:00 p.m. Al Rayyan rests in this round.

TENNIS

Keys, Anisimova crash out in blow to home hopes

Zheng mounted a tremendous comeback to beat Keys as Anisimova lost to Potapova; Swiatek through

Reuters
New York

American hopes took a major hit in the US Open third round yesterday as Chinese qualifier Zheng Qinwen mounted a tremendous comeback to beat Madison Keys and Amanda Anisimova crashed out against Anastasia Potapova.

The 2023 champion Coco Gauff will aim to turn around the momentum for American fans when she plays Spain's Cristina Bucsa. In another home loss, US ninth seed Taylor Fritz lost to Argentine Francisco Cerundolo 3-6 4-6 6-3 6-4 6-4 in what was his earliest exit from his home major in four years.

Zheng was down 5-0 in the deciding set but found her mettle to defeat the 2017 runner-up Keys 1-6 7-6(3) 7-5 on the Grandstand, collapsing on the court in utter joy as she fights back from a career slump.

The Olympic champion reached the quarter-finals for the second straight time only two years ago but was forced to go through qualifying this time around, as a chronic right elbow injury derailed her career progress.

"Finally one time a bit of luck is on my side," said Zheng.

The 10th-seeded Anisimova, last year's runner-up, was unable to reverse her fortunes in a frustrating year at the majors, with a 6-2 7-5 defeat to Potapova.

The Austrian earned her deepest run at the US Open as she saved 13 of the 16 break points she faced in a terrific defensive display by the 24th seed.

A meeting between Filipina fan favourite Alexandra Eala and American Iva Jovic could test the home crowd's allegiance in the first match of the evening programme on Arthur Ashe Stadium.

Also yesterday, eighth seed Iga Swiatek of Poland was stretched to two tie-breakers on way to beating Marie Bouzkova of the Czech Republic.

Swiatek, winner of six Grand Slams, yesterday won 7-6, 7-6.

Earlier yesterday defending champion Carlos Alcaraz continued to fly high at the US Open while Aryna Sabalenka overcame a distraction from the smell of cannabis in the Flushing Meadows complex to reach the fourth round.

While the attention briefly drifted beyond tennis at the sprawling venue, former champion Daniil Medvedev stayed clear-headed to beat Arthur Rinderknech and keep pace with the top contenders heading into the second week.

Two-times US Open women's



Qinwen Zheng of China reacts after defeating Madison Keys of the US at the US Open in New York. (AFP)



Austria's Anastasia Potapova looks on against USA's Amanda Anisimova at the US Open in New York yesterday. (AFP)

doubles champions Venus Williams and Serena Williams rolled back the years on Arthur Ashe Stadium in the evening, but the sisters were unable to get past Maya Joint and Chan Hao-ching, losing 6-3 6-7(6) 7-6(10-7).

Alcaraz arrived in New York having been sidelined for more than four months with a wrist injury, but the Spaniard looked sharp again as he thumped China's Wu Yibing 6-3 6-4 6-1 on the main showcourt to stay on track for a third title.

"After four months without competing ... when you play an official match with the nerves

and everything, the day after or right after, your body can feel really tight," Alcaraz said. "It didn't happen to me, and I'm feeling better and better after every match. It feels like I've been competing the whole time. I've surprised myself with the way I'm recovering after every match."

The seven-times Grand Slam champion next meets Tommy Paul after the American 20th seed beat Alexander Bublik 6-4 3-6 6-7(4) 6-1 6-3.

Medvedev remained unblemished with a 6-4 6-4 6-4 win over Rinderknech, while Valentin Vachrot went out after a 6-4 6-2 6-4

defeat by 11th seed Frances Tiafoe.

Stefanos Tsitsipas continued his resurgence with a 2-6 6-1 7-6(3) 6-1 victory over 18th seed Jiri Lehecka before Mariano Navone, who stunned Novak Djokovic in the first round, crashed out 6-4 6-4 6-3 to Tomas Martin Etcheverry.

American fans left disappointed by the Williams sisters' defeat had reason to cheer late at night when home hope Ben Shelton beat Denis Shapovalov 7-6(3) 6-7(5) 6-3 6-4.

Shelton, a US Open semi-finalist in 2023, will next face Tsitsipas, the former Australian Open and French Open runner-up.

"I have been watching his matches. I think he's playing great," Shelton said of Tsitsipas, who upset Cincinnati champion Arthur Fils in the opening round.

"I think that his style of tennis can be very, very effective on all surfaces, all-court game, great athlete. We played once my first year on tour. Really looking forward to it."

SABALENKA STOPS PLAY

Sabalenka's pre-tournament form had raised plenty of concerns, but the top seed looked to have left her slump in the rear-view mirror as she did not face a single break point in her 6-3 6-4 victory over Uzbekistan's Kamilla Rakhimova.

Her only issue during the morning session match was the smell of cannabis drifting into Louis Armstrong Stadium and she stopped play to alert the chair umpire.

Defending champs Sabalenka, Alcaraz face hometown heroes



Spain's Carlos Alcaraz gestures after defeating China's Wu Yibing at the US Open. (AFP)

The US Open enters its round of 16 today, with defending champions Aryna Sabalenka and Carlos Alcaraz taking on American hopes Taylor Townsend and Tommy Paul respectively while Ben Shelton, the highest-ranked American in the men's draw, faces a difficult test against Stefanos Tsitsipas.

TOP WOMEN'S MATCH: ARYNA SABALENKA V TAYLOR TOWNSEND

Sabalenka's improved serve helped her to secure a comfortable third-round victory, as she landed 10 aces in a straight-sets win over Kamilla Rakhimova. The four-time Grand Slam winner, who is aiming for a hat-trick of US Open titles, has yet to drop a set in the tournament, and was more affected by the smell of cannabis in the Louis Armstrong Stadium than her opponents. "If they're going to keep smoking, I might get high," Sabalenka joked after the match. The 28-year-old Belarusian has not fallen short of the semi-finals in the last five editions, but faces an upbeat opponent in

Townsend, who is aiming to reach the quarter-finals of a Grand Slam for the first time.

"I think this is the most free that I've ever been on the court... it's my time, I'm ready to take it, I'm ready to go," Townsend said about facing the world number one.

TOP MEN'S MATCH: TOMMY PAUL V CARLOS ALCAZAR

The last five times that defending champion Alcaraz played Paul, the Spaniard won. But the world number three rarely had it easy against the American, who forced Alcaraz into nervy tiebreaks six times in their eight meetings. "Really difficult one to play. I think he's really dangerous for everyone on the tour. The way he plays... it's really complicated to dominate the ball," Alcaraz said about facing Paul. Paul, a former Australian Open semi-finalist, is coming off a hard-fought win over Alexander Bublik, the player who knocked the American out of the U.S. Open last year. "I think I played Carlos more than anybody on tour, which is kind of crazy... I'm going to do my best," Paul said.

FOOTBALL

Infantino tight-lipped on abandoned proposal, says FIFA focused on growth

Reuters
Katowice, Poland

FIFA President Gianni Infantino, who attended the opening match of the Under-20 Women's World Cup in Katowice yesterday, remained tight-lipped about whether he regrets his abandoned proposal to sell a stake in the World Cup.

The event is the first tournament organised by world soccer's ruling body since the Swiss administrator called off the plan, which valued the commercial rights of the World Cup and other FIFA tournaments at \$20bn.

The proposal was abandoned in late July following a fierce backlash and boycott threats from regional governing bodies, including Europe's UEFA and major stakeholders in the sport.

"I'm very happy to be here in beautiful Poland, in Katowice, a fantastic setting for this Under-20 FIFA Women's World Cup. It's great," Infantino said at the opening game between hosts Poland and Argentina.

"This is what we do, this is about giving opportunities, giving chances to teams with players, talents from all over the world, increasing number of participants."

Infantino did not answer questions about whether he regretted the last six weeks.



FIFA President Gianni Infantino arrives at the stadium before the Under-20 Women's World Cup Group A match between Poland and Argentina in Katowice, Poland, yesterday. (Reuters)

"You know, there will be a lot to say, but there will be a right place and a right time to say this," he said. "It's not today, it's not here. But, here today we are enjoying football."

On Thursday, FIFA accused UEFA of launching a smear campaign and argued that its opposition to the selloff was motivated by a desire to preserve European football's dominance.

Infantino was in Katowice with senior members of FIFA including Secretary General Matthias Graftstrom and refereeing chief Pierluigi Collina.

UEFA President Aleksander Ceferin, who had previously ruled out running against Infantino in FIFA's presidential election, did not attend the game. Infantino gave another indication that he could fight next March's presidential election on the basis that he is best placed to continue to spread wealth to poorer nations.

"We are continuing at FIFA to work to give every corner of the world a chance, an opportunity for dignity, to find ways and means for them to become better and to participate and to celebrate football," he said.

FLICK HOPING BARCA'S YAMAL CAN FACE VALENCIA AFTER KNOCK

BARCELONA: Barcelona coach Hansi Flick is hoping teenage star Lamine Yamal is fit to face Valencia in La Liga today after taking a knock. The 19-year-old winger did not train with his teammates yesterday but instead worked by himself at the training ground.

"For tomorrow we have to wait, I cannot say it today," Flick told reporters yesterday. "We have to decide if it's better that he rests or he starts from the beginning. I'll speak with him and we'll decide that."

"Lamine is a player who likes to play football," Flick said Yamal will travel with the team to Mestalla stadium, where Barca are looking to continue their 100 percent start to the season.

"He trained separately and everything was good, he will travel with us tomorrow," said Flick.

"He took a hit and he had some pain so we said it's better that he trains separately," added the coach.

"After the training he said everything was good so he will travel and hopefully he can play tomorrow." Yamal impressed in the 5-2 win over Rayo Vallecano on Monday, netting his first two goals of the season.

Rivals Real Madrid slipped up in a 1-0 defeat at Real Betis on Friday, giving champions Barca the chance to establish themselves as sole league leaders. "When you see the game yesterday, Real Madrid also played well... they had big, big chances," said Flick.

"This is football, (slipping up) can always happen. For us it's important that we focus on ourselves." New arrival Gabriel Jesus is likely to begin on the bench with winger Raphinha staying as the starting striker after notching five goals in three games playing out of position.

"In this moment (Raphinha) is doing really great," explained Flick. "He's the best option for us at the moment in this position."

Barcelona spent the summer fruitlessly pursuing Atletico Madrid striker Julian Alvarez but Raphinha's blistering start to the La Liga season suggests they may already have the firepower they need. The Brazilian winger has bagged five goals in three



games playing out of position as Barca's number nine ahead of today's visit to Valencia at Mestalla. Barca boast a 100 percent record and are level on nine points with Jose Mourinho's revamped Real Madrid, and Real Betis.

The Catalan giants failed to land the forward they craved to replace Robert Lewandowski and Ferran Torres, who left earlier in the summer, and instead settled for a deadline day deal with Arsenal for Gabriel Jesus.

However even former Manchester City striker Jesus admits it will be hard for him to upgrade an attack already flourishing with his compatriot Raphinha leading the way.

"I don't think I'm coming to improve (the team) because it's already... great," admitted Jesus at his presentation on Tuesday.

"I'm just coming to help." Raphinha is expected to keep his role as the team's centre-forward in the weeks ahead, although the start of the Champions League will encourage coach Flick to rotate.

Last season Raphinha suffered several injury problems, so Jesus could lighten his burden.

SERIE A

Inter roar back in five-goal thriller with Napoli

'It isn't easy coming back from World Cup without preparation'

AFP
Rome

A last-gasp winner from Lautaro Martinez sealed a breathless win for Inter as the Serie A champions fought back from two goals down to edge visiting Napoli 3-2.

"I'm happy we managed to fight back, that was missing last year," Martinez told DAZN. "Every year we are raising the bar and trying to shout that on the pitch."

Both goalkeepers were forced into early saves in a sign of what was to come in an end-to-end encounter that remained goalless at half-time after Federico Dimarco's free-kick rattled the Napoli cross bar.

The game exploded in the second half when Matteo Politano guided home a shot in the 50th minute before Rasmus Hojlund's curler doubled the Napoli lead three minutes later. The visitors impressed despite the injury-enforced absence of influential midfielder Scott McTominay.

Inter responded almost immediately when Martinez hammered in his first goal of the season from a Dimarco cross. Substitute Marcus Thuram came agonisingly close to a leveller when he headed off the post. The France international would not be denied twice, though, and smashed a towering header past Alex Meret in the 82nd minute to level the scores.

Chances fell at both ends before Martinez's penalty box instincts proved decisive in the 91st minute as Napoli failed to clear in a goal-mouth scramble and the Argentina striker pounced to settle an extraordinary match.

Martinez was part of the Argentina squad that reached the World



Inter Milan's forward Lautaro Martinez celebrates scoring his team's first goal during the Serie A match against Napoli at the San Siro stadium in Milan yesterday. (AFP)

Cup final on July 19. "The important thing is to get back into shape, it isn't easy coming back from the World Cup without doing the preparation," said Martinez.

The result sent Inter top of the table on nine points, while Napoli remained on three points. Both sides begin their Champions League campaigns next week, when Inter travel to Real Madrid and Napoli host Arsenal today.

Earlier, a late Che Adams strike

sealed a 2-1 comeback win for Torino as Fiorentina's nightmare start to the season continued.

Mateo Pellegrino's long-range strike put Fiorentina in front early in the second half, but a pile-driver from Rolando Mandragora - who had only joined Torino from La Viola four days earlier - drew the scores level.

Scotland international Adams sealed his side's first points of the season in the 82nd minute, pluck-

ing a cross out of the air and flicking it in from close range to stun the Stadio Artemio Franchi crowd.

Fiorentina signed 13 players and appointed new coach Fabio Grosso over the summer after a humbling 15th-place finish last season.

The two-time Italian champions have lost their first three games by an aggregate score of 9-1, and were booed off by their own fans following a performance that left them in last place.

LIGUE 1

PSG still winless as Monaco go top

AFP
Paris

Paris Saint-Germain's slow start to the French season continued on Friday as the reigning European champions went in front only to lose 2-1 at home to Monaco, who are top of Ligue 1.

Captain Marquinhos gave PSG the lead just past the half-hour mark at the Parc des Princes, where Luis Enrique's team were playing in front of their own fans for the first time in this campaign.

But Monaco hit back in the second half as Flavio Nazinho equalised before Belgian winger Stanis Idumbo fired in the winner for the principality side, who are top of the early standings with three wins from three.

PSG, who announced before kick-off that coach Luis Enrique had signed a three-year contract extension to stay in charge until 2030, will begin their bid to win a third consecutive Champions League title next midweek at home to Slovan Bratislava.

However, they will do so off the back of a stuttering start domestically, with just two points on the board three games into their latest Ligue 1 title defence - that leaves them seven points behind Monaco already.

"We clearly deserved to win. That is my opinion," said Luis Enrique.

"I saw the game and it was the typical game in which we were better than the opposition and created a lot more chances, but the opposition goalkeeper was the best player on the pitch."

The Qatar-owned club beat Aston Villa last month to win the UEFA Super Cup, but then lost to Lens in the French Champions Trophy before drawing their first two Ligue 1 outings, away to Rennes and Lille respectively.

They had come from two goals down late on in both of those games, with Marquinhos grabbing a last-gasp leveller a week ago in Lille.

The Brazilian defender, PSG's captain, opened the scoring here on 31 minutes when he converted Khvicha Kvaratskhelia's ball across the face of goal with his chest.

PSG looked on course at that

point for a welcome victory against a Monaco side coming off a turbulent week.

The principality side, now coached by Brazilian ex-Atletico Madrid defender Filipe Luis, had been hoping to make a big sale to the Premier League before the transfer window closed to offset failing to reach this season's Champions League.

But they were left reeling as United States World Cup star Folarin Balogun backed out of a £40 million (\$54 million) transfer to Everton on deadline day.

That was just after Monaco had pulled out of a deal to sell Lamine Camara to Chelsea.

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, was left out here and has not played for his club this season.

"Balogun is a Monaco player and as long as he is a Monaco player, and when he is fit, he will be available to help the club," said Filipe Luis.

Senegal midfielder Camara did feature for the visitors, who almost fell further behind just after the restart when Maghnes Aklouch - facing his old side - hit the bar.

Instead, Monaco drew level on 58 minutes when Portuguese left-back Nazinho headed in at the back post from a Jordan Teze delivery.

Monaco then went ahead on 72 minutes when Aleksandr Golovin supplied Idumbo and he beat Matvey Safonov at the goalkeeper's near post.

It is the second season running in which PSG have lost at home to Monaco, with the introduction off the bench late on of reigning Ballon d'Or Ousmane Dembele and Spain World Cup final hero Ferran Torres not enough to save the hosts.

Torres had a late goal disallowed for an offside against Dembele, before the latter was denied by a superb Lukas Hradecky save deep in stoppage time. Lyon beat Auxerre 3-1 earlier and are in second place, two points behind Monaco and level on points with Lille who won 1-0 at Toulouse on Thursday thanks to an Ayase Ueda goal.



Paris Saint-Germain's Brazilian defender Marquinhos (centre) scores his team's first goal during the Ligue 1 match against Monaco at the Parc des Princes stadium in Paris. (AFP)

ATHLETIC BILBAO CRUSH SIMEONE'S FLAT ATLETICO

Athletic Bilbao thumped Atletico Madrid 3-0 in La Liga on a miserable Saturday afternoon for Diego Simeone's side.

Nico Williams, Robert Navarro and Oihan Sancet's goals gave the Basque hosts a resounding victory at their San Mames stadium. Athletic secured back-to-back wins under former Borussia Dortmund coach Edin Terzic, after losing their first two matches of the campaign. Simeone's Atletico fell to their first defeat of the season, putting up little fight in the second half after Athletic made the breakthrough with two quick strikes from Williams and Navarro. "Their two goals, in the blink of

an eye, did us a lot of damage," Atletico's Pablo Barrios told Movistar. Atletico must pick themselves up for Wednesday's visit to face Liverpool in the Champions League at Anfield. "(We had) two minutes of inattention and poor decision-making in situations we should have handled better," said Simeone. "Bilbao capitalised on that lapse." Striker Julian Alvarez, who tried to leave the club to join Barcelona this summer, returned as a substitute after illness in an ineffective second half appearance. The visitors had the better of the opening period, although they failed to create many clear-cut

chances after an early opportunity for Lee Kang-In. The South Korean international struck a shot against the post in the third minute after the hosts were carved open. Athletic goalkeeper Unai Simon saved from Alex Baena as Atletico threatened, while Sancet came close at the other end with a blast into the side-netting. Pablo Barrios hit the post before the break for Atletico, who were sucker-punched early in the second half by Terzic's side. The Williams brothers combined for Athletic's first, with Inaki's deflected shot headed home by younger sibling Nico after 46 minutes. Navarro doubled Athletic's lead in

the 48th minute, steering home after Inaki Williams played him in. "We were good in the first half but the game got away from us in those (couple of) minutes," said Simeone. "We lacked in the second half everything that we had in the first." Simeone rang the changes, including sending on want-away striker Alvarez to little effect. The Argentina international struggled to get involved in the game, and produced just one shot from the edge of the box, saved comfortably by Simon. Sancet wrapped up Athletic's victory in the 90th minute when he stroked home a loose ball after a blocked cross.

BUNDESLIGA

Champions Bayern Munich held to draw by stubborn Schalke

AFP
Berlin

Defending champions Bayern Munich were held to a scoreless draw by promoted Schalke in the Bundesliga yesterday.

The draw ended Bayern's run of 67 consecutive matchdays atop the Bundesliga table. It was the first time they failed to score since February 2025. Seven-time German champions Schalke have not beaten Bayern since 2011 and had not even taken a point off the Bavarian giants in nine years - a run of 12 straight defeats.

"That's who we are. That's what defines us, and everyone can be proud of their performance today," said the impressive Schalke goalie Loris Karius, who was named man of the match. The former Liverpool 'keeper deflected the post-match praise to his defenders, telling Sky Germany: "I just had to shout instructions to the lads: keep going, push up, drop back!"

With Harry Kane and Michael Olise starting from the bench, Bayern dominated the ball but created few clear chances as stubborn Schalke dug deep to pick up their first point of the season.

Luis Diaz had an excellent chance with 54 minutes gone

when through on the advancing Karius, but the Colombian's chip was too soft and was cleared off the line by Robin Gosens.

Bayern's best chance came late when a long-range Kane effort was kept out by an excellent save from Karius, who leapt high to palm the ball to safety. His opposite number, Bayern captain Manuel Neuer was heavily booed by home fans every time he touched the ball on his return to the club where he started his career. It will likely be the 40-year-old's final match in Gelsenkirchen, his home town, before his expected retirement at the season's end. "A win would have been nice," Neuer said, adding "but some of my family will be happy about the result and so it's okay as it is. I enjoyed myself."

Despite the defeat, Bayern will be buoyed by the return of Jamal Musiala, who revealed he is suffering from a neurological condition after collapsing in pre-season games.

Nwaneri helps Dortmund on debut

Arsenal loanee Ethan Nwaneri provoked a late own goal as Borussia Dortmund came from two down to win 3-2 at Hoffenheim.

Hoffenheim were the better team for the opening hour but lost their way as Dortmund clicked



Bayern Munich's forward Luis Diaz fails to score past Schalke's goalkeeper Loris Karius during the Bundesliga match in Gelsenkirchen, Germany, yesterday. (AFP)

into gear and romped to victory with three goals in the final 30 minutes. Nwaneri, the youngest player in Premier League history, arrived on a season-long loan

from Arsenal on deadline day and came on with half an hour played.

"I liked what I saw," Dortmund coach Niko Kovac said of Nwaneri. "That's what we brought him in

for... Maybe it wasn't officially his goal, but he created it."

"The team played all or nothing football," Kovac added. "And when you (do that)... the gaps start

opening up." Hoffenheim were two up with 54 minutes played thanks to goals from Leon Avdullahu and Tim Lemperle. Striker Serhou Guirassy gave the visitors hope when he scored just after the hour mark and then set up Fabio Silva five minutes later. In the 86th minute, Nwaneri cut down the left and squared a shot which took a big deflection off home defender Albian Hajdari and landed in the net.

Bundesliga newcomers Elversberg continued their excellent top-flight arrival with a 4-3 win at Borussia Moenchengladbach, making it two wins from two this season. Elversberg fought back from 3-1 down and took the lead in stoppage time when Maurice Krattenmacher scored the winner.

Elversberg, with a population of just 13,000, are the smallest town ever to have a German top-flight side but opened the season with a shock 3-2 win over Bayer Leverkusen last week.

Leverkusen rebounded from that disappointment by putting sorry Union Berlin to the sword in a 4-0 home victory. Elsewhere, West Ham loanee Niclas Füllkrug scored his second goal in three games since returning to Germany to help Werder Bremen to a surprise 3-1 home win against RB Leipzig.