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CRICKET | Page 2

England thrash Sri Lanka again to return to top of T20 rankings



FOOTBALL | Page 3

Arsenal thrashed by Brighton, sorry Tottenham lose again

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FOCUS

Glitzy Asian Games opening after troubled build-up

Japanese Emperor Naruhito declared the Aichi-Nagoya Games open in the presence of Olympic Council of Asia President HE Sheikh Joaan and International Olympic Committee chief Coventry



OCA president HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani, Japan's Emperor Naruhito (third from left), Empress Masako (third from right), Japan's Crown Prince Akishino (second from right), Crown Princess Kiko (right) and IOC President Kirsty Coventry (left) attend the opening ceremony of the 2026 Asian Games at Paloma Mizuho Stadium in Nagoya yesterday. (AFP)

Japan welcomes more than 11,000 athletes competing for 369 gold medals in a whopping 43-sport programme

Reuters
Nagoya, Japan

The 20th Asian Games opened in Nagoya yesterday with a glittering ceremony of dance and fireworks following a buildup marred by operational gaffes and logistical problems.

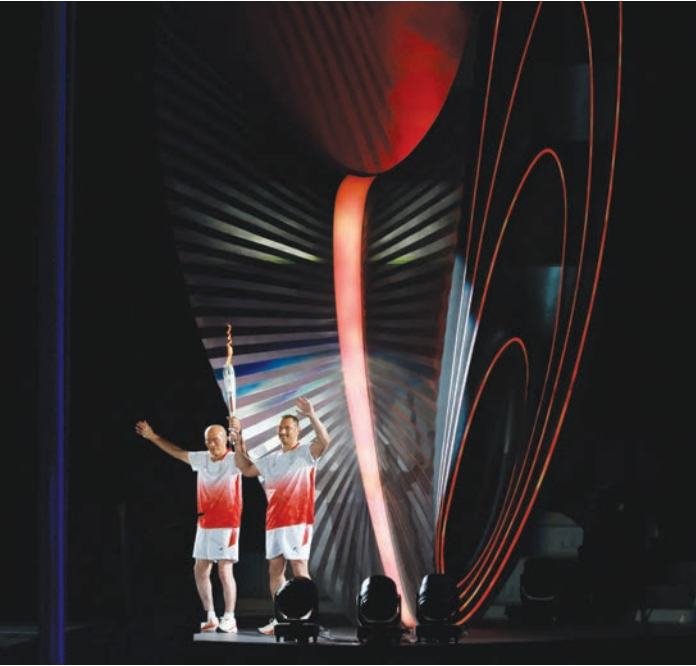
Five years after the Tokyo Olympics played out at empty venues due to COVID-19 restrictions, Japan welcomed fans to the Mizuho Park Athletic Stadium for a curtain-raiser that was initially subdued before bursting into a festival of colour and sound.

Emperor Naruhito declared the Games open after watching the parade of 45 nations and regions at a dignitaries' table along with International Olympic Committee boss Kirsty Coventry. Naruhito's visit with royal family members was accompanied by a heavy security operation. Organisers had said up to 10,000 police would be deployed for the ceremony.

"While the world is too often divided by conflict, they (the Asian athletes) remind us that sport remains a powerful force for peace, understanding and friendship among nations," Olympic Council of Asia President HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani said in a speech. "Tonight, the eyes of Asia - and indeed much of the world - turn to Japan. What we will see over the next few days will inspire us. It will move us. And it will remind us of what we are capable of when we come together for Asia. Japan has set the stage. Now it is time for Asia to inspire the world once again," Sheikh Joaan said.

COMPLAINTS FROM ATHLETES AND OFFICIALS

Japan's father-and-son duo of Shigenobu Murofushi and Koji Murofushi, both former Asian Games champions in hammer throw, jointly lit the cauldron after climbing a set of stairs at the end



Japan's Asian Games gold medalist in hammer throw Shigenobu Murofushi (left) and his son Olympic gold medalist in hammer throw Koji Murofushi carry the torch during the opening ceremony of the Asian Games yesterday. (AFP)

of the torch relay. Organisers will hope the ceremony can draw a line under a rocky buildup laden with complaints from athletes and officials involving accommodation and transport.

Japan's reputation for precision and efficiency has been under scrutiny as the nation welcomes more than 11,000 athletes competing for 369 gold medals in a whopping 43-sport programme.

Instead of building a dedicated Games village, organisers have housed the athletes and officials in a mix of hotel rooms, temporary wooden containers and a cruise ship docked in the bay as a cost-cutting measure.

Several national team delegations, including hosts Japan, have found the arrangements below par, complaining of mix-ups and double-bookings, while South Korea said the containers at Garden Pier were too cramped for their basketballers.

India's powerful cricket board took matters into their own hands, arranging for the men's star-studded cricket team to stay in a separate hotel due to a tight allocation of beds from organisers.

Delegations have also lamented

long waits for the athletes registering on arrival and have found buses turning up late or sending their athletes to the wrong venues.

The Olympic Council of Asia, which runs the quadrennial Games, acknowledged the problems yesterday but played them down as teething difficulties.

Directed by Yukihiko Tsutsumi, the opening ceremony made a low-key start, with classical music and dance on a heart-shaped stage before the parade of nations which featured a delegation from reclusive North Korea.

The spectacle ramped up later though, with dancers in boiler suits marking Nagoya's manufacturing tradition and a fireworks display closing the night. The ceremony's theme was "Harmonic Heart Beat" - intended to communicate Asian solidarity at an event often riven by geopolitical tension and historic grudges.

However, hopes for a peaceful Games have already been undermined by several incidents.

Taiwan's delegation temporarily refused to participate in their welcoming ceremony on Friday after sports minister and former Olympic champion Lee Yang was



Members of Qatar's delegation wave their national flag during a parade at the opening ceremony of the 2026 Asian Games at Paloma Mizuho Stadium in Nagoya yesterday. (AFP)



Performers take part in the opening ceremony of the 2026 Asian Games in Nagoya yesterday. (AFP)



Fireworks illuminate the Paloma Mizuho Stadium at the end of the opening ceremony of the Asian Games in Nagoya yesterday. (AFP)

blocked from attending it. The South Korean men's hockey team were upset when North Korea's national anthem was played at the stadium before a match instead of their own. While competitions for basketball, soccer and other

sports have already started, the first gold medal will be won today, likely in the triathlon.

A high-class swimming competition kicks off in Tokyo today, with the programme featuring China's 100m freestyle world-

record holder Pan Zhanle and 13-year-old sensation Yu Zidi. Apart from traditional Olympic sports, the Games will stage regional favourites kabaddi and sepak takraw along with quirky, modern events.

CRICKET

Brook's England sweep Sri Lanka in one-sided series

FAST BOWLER SONNY BAKER DECLARED MAN OF THE MATCH



England's Harry Brook holds the trophy as he celebrates with teammates after winning the series against Sri Lanka following the third Twenty20 International at Old Trafford in Manchester yesterday. (Reuters)

Reuters
Manchester

Jos Buttler hit an unbeaten half-century as dominant England beat a sorry Sri Lanka by eight wickets to complete a 3-0 series whitewash and replace India on top of the T20 world rankings after the final match of the series in Manchester yesterday.

The win, with 62 balls to spare, was a 15th in a row for England over Sri Lanka in the format.

Chasing a modest 125, after Sri Lanka collapsed to 124 all out with seven balls remaining, the hosts were 22-1 after opener Aneurin Donald was stumped for 13 but Buttler and captain Harry Brook then stepped up and took control, ending the six-over powerplay at 82-1.

Buttler, who on Thursday became the first batsman to reach 15,000 career T20 runs, brought up his half-century with a six and sent England to a winning 126-2 with another as he added a top-scoring 62 from 32 deliveries to his tally while Brook contributed 33 before being run out.

Brook ended as top overall scorer and player of the series.



England's Sonny Baker appeals during the third Twenty20 against Sri Lanka at Old Trafford in Manchester yesterday. (Reuters)

"I think everybody stepped up in this series," said Brook. "Every game has been slightly different and we're playing the conditions extremely well."

SRI LANKA BOWLED NINE WIDES

Sri Lanka bowled nine wides, two going all the way to the boundary.

England, unchanged from the side that won the second T20 by six wickets in Cardiff on Thursday, again won the toss and opted to bowl as they chased the sweep, with a strong breeze blowing at

Old Trafford. Will Jacks, Jofra Archer and Player of the Match Sonny Baker took two wickets each as Sri Lanka faded after ending their powerplay at 47-2.

Opener Pathum Nissanka (36 off 24) top scored for the visitors before being caught by Brook off Jacks while Kamindu Mendis was caught by Jacks off Archer for 35 from 28 balls.

Wanindu Hasaranga (seven from six) knocked a bail off his own wicket after taking a hefty swing at an Archer delivery and tail-ender Eshan Malinga was run

out for a duck by Liam Dawson while seeking a single.

Captain Charith Asalanka was needlessly run out for 16 as Sri Lanka slumped to 83-4.

"A very disappointing series for us in both the major departments, batting and bowling... this is an important eye-opener for us of where we stand right now in T20 cricket comparing to the best teams in the world," said Asalanka.

"This is a time to get together as players, support staff, and our Sri Lanka cricket board as well to find solutions for these T20 problems. These are the best 15 players right now so we have to find solutions in the right way."

England won the first T20 in Southampton by 119 runs, with Brook scoring an unbeaten 114.

England play three one-day internationals against Sri Lanka next week, starting at Durham's Chester-le-Street ground on Tuesday with matches at Leeds' Headingley on Thursday and London's Oval on Sunday.

BRIEF SCORES

England 126 for 2 (Buttler 62*)
beat Sri Lanka 124 (Nissanka 36, Baker 2-17, Archer 2-23, Jacks 2-31) **by eight wickets**

SPOTLIGHT

'Freak' injury leaves all-rounder Ravindra in doubt to play India

AFP
Wellington

Accomplished all-rounder Rachin Ravindra is in doubt for New Zealand's home series against India following a "freak accident" while filming a commercial shoot, New Zealand Cricket announced yesterday.

Team management said Ravindra dislocated his shoulder while attempting to take a diving catch during a promotional event involving the host broadcaster on Wednesday.

A statement said the 26-year-old has been cleared of major structural damage but it is "unclear" if he will play a part in the five-match T20 series starting on October 22.

Five one-day internationals and two Tests follow shortly afterwards.

New Zealand's performance manager Mike Sandle said Ravindra landed awkwardly on a safety mat during filming.

"It was a really unfortunate injury," Sandle said.

"We're gutted for Rachin and our key priority is making sure he recovers well and gets back on the field as soon as he can.

"As with all commercial shoots involving our players, the activities were agreed in advance by all parties, with appropriate safety measures in place.

"It was a bit of a freak accident, and we'll continue to review our



Rachin Ravindra dislocated his shoulder while attempting to take a diving catch during a promotional event involving the host broadcaster on Wednesday.

processes around events like this in the future." Ravindra, a left-handed batsman and spin bowler, has been a mainstay of New Zealand teams across all three formats since his debut in 2021, playing 115 international matches.

New Zealand coach Rob Walter said Ravindra's rehabilitation will be carefully managed, ahead of the Indian visit, which is followed by a four-Test series in Australia.

"With a heavy schedule of Test cricket in the next six months, we don't want to rush Rachin back sooner than we need to," Walter said.

ATHLETICS

Superhero-suited Hodgkinson powers to Athlos 800m title

AFP
London

Keely Hodgkinson ended a rocky season in fine fashion on Friday, shrugging off hamstring concerns to win the 800 metres at the all-women's Athlos London 2026 while dressed in a black, hooded speedsuit that made her look more superhero than middle-distance runner.

Britain's Olympic champion pulled away from the field over the final 200 metres to clock one minute 56.40 seconds and win by more than two seconds at StoneX Stadium, marking the first Athlos event outside the US after two New York meetings.

"I would have loved to have had (an event like this) when I was younger," Hodgkinson said. "This is fun... life is supposed to be about enjoying it."

After finishing second to Switzerland's Audrey Werro at last week's World Athletics Ultimate Championships in Budapest, Hodgkinson revealed she had suffered a hamstring tear at the European Championships in Birmingham a few weeks earlier.

She said an MRI last season showed she had a rare split hamstring tendon, which allows her to keep competing through injury but may also increase her risk of recurring problems.

The 24-year-old showed no sign of injury on Friday, instead embracing the event's playful spirit in her suit reminiscent of Cathy Freeman at the 2000 Olympics, and dark glasses.

"I know, it's pretty sick," she said. "It's a project I've been working on with Nike for a long time. I thought what a place to bring it out, an all-women's event. It went down a treat."

Reddit co-founder Alexis Ohanian created Athlos to give women's athletics a fresh spotlight, pairing attractive prize money and athlete ownership opportunities with a more entertainment-focused approach.

That vision was on full display in London, where athletes made individual walkouts, the long jump unfolded on a raised stage beside the track and winners received custom Tiffany & Co. crowns.

American Sha'Carri Richardson, victorious in the 100m in 10.80 seconds, said Athlos's arrival in London showed the event was beginning to make its mark globally.

"It is going to continue to grow and the world is watching," Richardson said.

The 100m was one of just seven disciplines in the streamlined event that had no qualifying rounds, and six athletes competing in each of the straight finals.

Winners pocketed \$65,000 with prize money extending down to sixth place (\$6,000), and a \$250,000 bonus for anyone breaking a world record.

"I just graduated college and I'm broke, so this is amazing," American Alyssa Jones said after winning the long jump with 6.66m.

No world records were under serious threat on Friday as athletes contended with chilly 17 Celsius conditions and end-of-season fatigue. Six days after winning the women's 1,500m in Hungary, Klaudia Kazimierska of Poland nipped Britain's Georgia Hunter Bell at the line to win the women's mile in 4:19.43, 0.11 faster than Hunter Bell.

"Georgia looked like she was in control but Klaudia said 'not today,'" said Ohanian, who was watching alongside his wife and tennis great Serena Williams. "Wow. It's sport, that's why we love it."



MOTOGP

Martin wins Austrian sprint after Acosta crash

AFP
Spielberg, Austria

Jorge Martin won yesterday's Austrian MotoGP sprint race to retake the championship lead from Marc Marquez, after Pedro Acosta crashed out with victory in sight.

Martin started from pole after edging Marquez in qualifying at the Red Bull Ring, but Acosta swept past the title rivals on the opening lap of the sprint.

The KTM rider looked set for a second sprint win of the season before sliding off his bike after running wide into the gravel with less than four laps to go, dropping down the order and eventually being forced to retire.

Martin took advantage of Acosta's mishap as the Aprilia rider moved three points clear of Marquez in the overall standings.

Ducati star Marquez finished second ahead of Marco Bezzecchi on the other factory Aprilia.

"I was a bit lucky with Pedro's crash because without it I would be second," said Martin, who had relinquished his championship lead last weekend after suffering from nerve compression in his right arm. "I thought my chances were over but I never gave up... and was pushing to my maximum. To come from behind and then win at the end is so good."

"We are ready for tomorrow. I



Aprilia Racing's Spanish rider Jorge Martin (left) and Ducati Lenovo Team's Spanish rider Marc Marquez compete during the Sprint event of the Grand Prix of Austria in Spielberg, Austria, yesterday. (AFP)

hope we can continue with this pace," added the 2024 world champion.

'PERFECT SATURDAY'

Japan's Ai Ogura took fourth place in front of Alex Marquez and two-time former world champion Francesco Bagnaia.

Martin secured his third pole of the season earlier yesterday, beating Marquez by just 0.015 seconds in a closely fought qualifying session. Acosta completed an all-Spanish front row after setting the pace in Friday's practice.

Marquez has reignited his ti-

tle challenge by winning five of the last seven races. He called it a "perfect Saturday" after coming second in both qualifying and the sprint race. "We did the maximum today. The main target for the sprint race was to finish just behind Jorge. We did it," said Marquez. "Tomorrow we will try again to finish just behind him because he's faster, Pedro is faster. Bezzecchi also has a very good pace and tomorrow will be a long race."

Acosta, racing at KTM's home circuit, will try to make amends today as he targets the first MotoGP victory of his career. He will

leave the Austrian team to join Marquez at Ducati next season.

Austrian MotoGP starting grid

Front row
1. Jorge Martin (ESP/Aprilia), 2. Marc Marquez (ESP/Ducati), 3. Pedro Acosta (ESP/KTM)

2nd row
4. Marco Bezzecchi (ITA/Aprilia), 5. Ai Ogura (JPN/Aprilia-Trackhouse), 6. Alex Marquez (ESP/Ducati-Gresini)

3rd row
7. Francesco Bagnaia (ITA/Ducati), 8. Fabio Di Giannantonio (ITA/Ducati-VR46), 9. Fabio Quartararo (FRA/Yamaha)

4th row
10. Johann Zarco (FRA/Honda-LCR), 11. Brad Binder (RSA/KTM), 12. Fermin Aldeguer (ESP/Ducati-Gresini)

5th row
13. Raul Fernandez (ESP/Aprilia-Trackhouse), 14. Pol Espargaro (ESP/KTM-Tech3), 15. Luca Marini (ITA/Honda)

6th row
16. Diogo Moreira (BRA/Honda-LCR), 17. Enea Bastianini (ITA/KTM-Tech3), 18. Takaaki Nakagami (JPN/Honda)

7th row
19. Franco Morbidelli (ITA/Ducati-VR46), 20. Alex Rins (ESP/Yamaha), 21. Jack Miller (AUS/Yamaha-Pramac)

8th row
22. Toprak Razgatlioglu (TUR/Yamaha-Pramac)

PREMIER LEAGUE

Brighton stun Arsenal as Tottenham gloom deepens

BRIGHTON END ARSENAL'S 100% START TO MOVE THIRD, WINS FOR EVERTON AND NEWCASTLE

Reuters
Brighton

Brighton and Hove Albion brought Arsenal's perfect start to the season to an abrupt end with a stunning 3-0 demolition of the Premier League champions on the south coast on Saturday.

Pascal Gross and Charalampos Kostoulas rewarded Brighton's first-half dominance with precise finishes and Chema Andres struck with a header after the interval as Arsenal slumped to their heaviest defeat for three years.

Earlier, Tottenham Hotspur scored their first Premier League goals of the season but they proved in vain as they remained without a victory, going down 3-2 at home to Aston Villa.

Promoted Hull City suffered their first league defeat of the season as they lost 2-1 at Newcastle United while Everton moved into the top five as they beat Ipswich Town 1-0.

Arsenal had won seven successive matches since the start of the campaign, including their opening four Premier League games, to begin their title defence in ominous fashion.

But the wheels fell off spectacularly against a free-scoring Brighton side who moved into third place.

'NOT RESPECTING THE GAME'
"A really disappointing result and performance. Brighton were another gear up from us. We were extremely poor technically and not respecting the game," Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta said.



Brighton's Spanish midfielder Chema Andrés scores the team's third goal during the English Premier League match against Arsenal at the American Express Community Stadium in Brighton, southern England, yesterday. (AFP)

Wearing a special blue-shirted kit to mark their 125th anniversary, Fabian Huerzeler's Brighton produced an intensity that Arsenal simply could not match.

Gross beat Arsenal keeper David Raya in the 31st minute with a low

shot that went in off the upright - his fourth goal in his last five games - and Kostoulas scored with a similar effort following a counter-attack less than a minute after Bukayo Saka was close to an equaliser at the other end.

Andres punished some slack marking to head in from close range from Gross's corner.

Arsenal have 12 points from five games, the same as Manchester City who can move three points clear at the top if they beat Sun-

derland on Sunday. Brighton, who have scored a league-leading 16 goals, have 10 points.

TOTTENHAM LURCH DEEPER INTO TROUBLE
Aston Villa breathed a sigh of relief

as they claimed their first league win of the season but Tottenham's season lurched deeper into trouble after a third league defeat of the season.

Villa keeper Zion Suzuki produced several fine saves to frustrate Tottenham and Unai Emery's side took the lead in first-half stoppage time when summer signing Johan Manzambi tapped in while the hosts were down to 10 men after Micky van de Ven was off the pitch receiving treatment for a cut face.

Nicolas Jackson doubled Villa's advantage in the 67th minute, finishing clinically to put the visitors firmly in control and Emi Buendia struck 11 minutes from time with a rocket to the top corner from 22 yards.

Many Tottenham fans had streamed to the exits before Conor Gallagher and Jan Paul van Hecke scored late on to salvage some respectability for Roberto De Zerbi's strugglers. "Today I was very disappointed, very sad, very frustrated for the performance. Because we can't lose this game in this way, absolutely," De Zerbi, whose side have two points heading into the international break, told reporters.

Thierno Barry's goal was enough for unbeaten Everton to take the points against Ipswich and move fifth. Abdul Fatawu was sent off for a second yellow card for Ipswich in the 67th minute.

Newcastle galloped into a two-goal lead against Hull with Joe Willock and Lewis Hall scoring in the opening seven minutes but were forced to hang on as Mohamed-Ali Cho replied for the visitors midway through the second half.

COMMENT

Brighton defeat a 'big lesson' against complacency for Arsenal: Arteta

AFP
Brighton, United Kingdom

Mikel Arteta said Arsenal's 3-0 defeat by Brighton was a reminder of "how tough every game" in the Premier League is as the defending champions were beaten for the first time this season.

Brighton dominated from the off at the Amex Stadium and punched holes in Arsenal's normally resolute defence thanks to long-range strikes from Pascal Gross and Charalampos Kostoulas before half-time.

Chema Andres rose highest to head in a third from a corner early in the second period as Arsenal lost by more than two goals for the first time in over three years.

"Extremely disappointed. First of all I think we have to congratulate Brighton for the victory, I think they deserve it," said Arteta yesterday.

"I think they were the better team. From our side there were certain basics that you need to accomplish in football, especially in the Premier League, that we were very far from."



Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta looks on after the Premier League match against Brighton & Hove Albion in Brighton yesterday. (Reuters)

The Gunners have been tipped to cruise to the title after ending their 22-year wait to be crowned champions of England last season.

Arsenal started the campaign in ominous fashion, winning all seven games before yesterday in all competitions.

But Arteta said defeat served a timely reminder ahead of a three-week international break of how tough the season will be.

"It's a big lesson for us. Is that a reminder to some of the players

how tough every game is," added the Spaniard. "That's not going to take away what the team has done and the boys have done in the last six or seven weeks since coming back from the World Cup."

"With 18 players coming back, what we've done and the way we've competed and the amount of games we've won has been remarkable."

"But this is a big lesson for all of us to understand what it takes to win at this level."

SPOTLIGHT

Frankfurt clip high-flying Freiburg's wings in tough Bundesliga clash

AFP
Berlin

Freiburg missed a chance to return to the top of the Bundesliga table yesterday, after being held to a 2-2 draw at Eintracht Frankfurt.

Bayern Munich's ruthless 7-0 win over Union Berlin on Friday put the Bavarians ahead of Freiburg atop the table, but the Black Forest outfit failed to respond as they dropped points for the first time this season to remain second in the table.

Several new members of Germany coach Jurgen Klopp's 44-man squad shone on both sides in a see-sawing encounter.

Frankfurt's Younes Ebnoutalib finished off a lovely team move to score 10 minutes in, just days after celebrating a surprise maiden Germany call-up.

Derry Scherhant, another of Klopp's lesser-known new additions, levelled things up for Freiburg but Jonathan Burkardt edged Frankfurt back in front.

Scherhant created a second for Yuto Suzuki to grab Freiburg a point and leave them level with Bayern on 10 points.



Eintracht Frankfurt's Younes Ebnoutalib (left) in action with Freiburg's Matthias Ginter during their Bundesliga match in Frankfurt yesterday. (AFP)

Freiburg's Philipp Treu, another member of Klopp's new-look Germany squad, told media: "Of course, I would have liked to join the national team as the league leader - with my head held high."

"But now we're the hunters again. And we enjoy that, too."

Borussia Dortmund can move past both to the top of the table with a win away at Stuttgart in Saturday's late game.

West Ham loanee Niclas Füll-

krug continued his stunning form on his return to Germany, scoring for a third-straight Bundesliga match as hosts Werder Bremen came from two goals down to win 3-2 against Augsburg.

Füllkrug levelled things up with a blistering long-range effort in the 86th minute, before former Bayern defender Mitchell Weiser blasted in a winner in stoppage time.

Elsewhere, Hamburg notched their first goal, win and points of the season in a comfortable 2-1 home victory over Cologne.

Albert Gronbaek laid on goals for Nicolas Capaldo and Yussuf Poulsen to help the hosts, one of the historical giants of German football, drag themselves off the bottom of the table.

Hamburg climbed past Borussia Moenchengladbach, who lost their fourth straight game in a wild 4-3 defeat by visitors Mainz.

Just days after bidding farewell to sacked coach Eugen Polanski, things went from bad to worse for the hosts.

Gladbach also missed a penalty in the defeat and are now the only Bundesliga side without a point after four matchdays.

FOCUS

Martinez's timely brace saves Inter in Serie A top-two clash with Roma

AFP
Rome

Lautaro Martinez rode to Inter Milan's rescue yesterday as the Serie A champions fought back from two-down to force a 2-2 draw at Roma.

With both sides holding perfect records heading into the top-two clash in the capital, it was an early season glimpse of what may well be the Scudetto race this term.

Gian Piero Gasperini's Roma have arguably been the most impressive team in Italy so far this season, with Donyell Malen's free-scoring form and a miserly defence giving them four wins from four.

Manu Kone's double had given Roma a 2-0 lead at half-time but for the second time in a week Cristian Chivu's side, inspired by Martinez's brace, showed mettle as the champions fought back from such a deficit.

Following the announcement earlier in the day of the death of Sandro Mazzola at



Inter Milan's Lautaro Martinez celebrates scoring their first goal in the Serie A clash against AS Roma at Stadio Olimpico, Rome, Italy, yesterday. (Reuters)

the age of 83, both sides paid homage to the former Inter Milan and Italy playmaker prior to kick-off, with the Nerazzurri also sporting black armbands.

Roma raced out of the blocks as Kone sent them ahead with less than six minutes on the clock when he readjusted his body well to rifle home Nahuel Molina's knock-down.

It was the France midfielder's first goal of the season as Inter again made a sluggish start that will worry coach Cristian Chivu.

The champions had also bounced back from being 2-0 down inside the opening 16 minutes at home to Udinese to emerge 5-3 winners on Monday.

But Inter were not at the races for most of the opening period at the Stadio Olimpico as Paulo Dybala twice threatened to double the hosts' advantage.

France forward Marcus Thuram had a golden opportunity to get Chivu's men level in the 26th minute but could only fire straight at Roma goalkeeper Mile Svilar.

A clever Curtis Jones pass then pre-

sented Alessandro Bastoni with a chance at goal seven minutes later, but the Italy defender thrashed the ball against the post from a tight angle.

However, just as Inter slowly seemed to be waking up, Kone had the ball in the net again when he tucked in from close range at the back post on 37 minutes.

His celebrations were initially cut short by the assistant's flag before VAR intervened and, after a lengthy review, referee Davide Massa pointed to the centre circle as the 25-year-old skipped off in delight after notching the sixth Serie A goal of his career.

INTER AWAKEN

Former Inter defender Chivu must have delivered some choice words to his charges at half-time as his side started the second period with a bang.

Inter captain Martinez halved the deficit less than a minute after the interval with a scuffed finish from Thuram's pull-back that just crept perfectly into the side netting of Svilar's far post.

Dutch forward Malen came within a forehead's breadth of adding to his tally of six goals in the 68th minute with a slick touch and turn in a crowded box.

But there was no goal as his venomous strike cannoned away to safety off Inter stopper Josep Martinez's brow.

FINAL 10 MINUTES

Just as the match appeared to be petering out going into the final 10 minutes, a sudden goalmouth scramble saw Svilar make a sharp save before Martinez headed onto the bar under pressure.

Inter, however, managed to recycle the ball and it came back to the Argentine international inside the box and this time he made no mistake as he controlled with his thigh and arrowed a finish past the Serb to ensure the spoils were shared.

Elsewhere, third-place Cagliari climbed to 12 points courtesy of a 1-0 win at Udinese, while Bologna and Torino played out a 1-1 draw in Emilia-Romagna.

Venezia host Roma's city rivals Lazio in Saturday's final match.

OCA chief visits Asian Games media centre



Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) President HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani visited the Main Press Centre (MPC) and International Broadcast Centre (IBC) for the 20th Asian Games Aichi-Nagoya 2026, accompanied by IOC President Kirsty Coventry yesterday. Sheikh Joaan toured the facilities, reviewing broadcast operations, technical equipment, digital technologies and media services supporting coverage of the Games. He also inspected workspaces, studios and broadcasting facilities designed to assist media professionals from across Asia and around the world. At the MPC, Sheikh Joaan and Coventry met nine young reporters selected from across the continent under the OCA's 'Asian Games for All' programme. They discussed their experiences covering the Games and the programme's role in developing the next generation of sports journalists through hands-on experience at a major continental event.

FOCUS

We don't want Asiad host Japan losing money, says OCA DG

'What Japan have done here could be the future example for cost-reduction of events'



Members of Japan's delegation wave their country's national flag during the opening ceremony of the Asian Games at Paloma Mizuho Stadium in Nagoya yesterday. (AFP)

AFP
Nagoya, Japan

Japan's hosting of the Asian Games with huts and a cruise ship is an example for other nations if they want to stage major events without breaking the bank, a senior Olympic official said yesterday.

The build-up to Asia's biggest sporting spectacular has been overshadowed by a shortage of accommodation in Nagoya for the more than 17,000 participants. Some countries have also complained about the quality of the rooms, especially in the shipping container-style huts. Japanese organisers did not build an athletes' village, as is normally done, in a bid to cut costs.

About 4,000 participants are housed instead on cruise liner Costa Serena, which is sitting in Nagoya's port, with another 2,000 in the wooden huts.

The rest are in hotels in the city and across Aichi prefecture. Despite com-

plaints from some teams, Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) director general Husain al-Musallam said Japan should be applauded for trying to do something different. "Everyone talks about the cost of the Games and how the Games should be managed, and then Japan comes up with a new idea and tries something where there is no athletes' village," he said.

"Because the most important thing we are taking care of as the OCA for the host is what will happen after the closing. What's going to happen to your investment after the closing? We don't want Japan to lose their money for nothing."

Al-Musallam said nations with a desire to host major international competitions - not just the Asian Games - should take note. "What Japan have done here, and Aichi-Nagoya and Olympic Council of Asia, could be the future example for the cost-reduction of multi-sport events such as the Asian Games," he said.

Games offer 'deepest apologies' for South Korea anthem blunder

Asian Games organisers offered "deepest apologies" on Saturday for playing the North Korean national anthem for the South Korean men's hockey team.

South Korean officials were left angered by the latest mishap to hit the Nagoya-Aichi Games, which officially opened after a troubled build-up.

At their Friday contest against Bangladesh, South Korea's players lined up for the traditional playing of the anthems, only to look bemused as North Korea's song rang out.

Organisers then played Bangladesh's anthem and later the South Korean one, the South's Yonhap news agency said. South Korea went on to win 5-0.

"During the men's hockey match between (South) Korea and Bangladesh on September 18, an incorrect national anthem was mistakenly played before the match," the Asian Games organising committee told AFP yesterday.

The statement said that, on Friday,

"officials responsible for (National Olympic Committee) relations visited the delegation of the Republic of Korea and offered their sincere apologies for the incident".

"We will also work to prevent a recurrence and would like to express our deepest apologies to all those affected by this matter."

A stadium announcer apologised for the blunder but Min Tae-seok, coach of South Korea, was unimpressed.

"This is a really serious problem. When we protested, they said, 'We're sorry. It wasn't that it wasn't prepared, there was a mistake on the part of those responsible for playing it,'" he said.

"But this is something that simply should never happen."

The build-up to the Games has been overshadowed by complaints from teams about the quality and amount of accommodation.

Some teams were also stranded at the airport for up to six hours when they landed this week.

Qatar swimmers begin Asian Games campaign today

Qatar's swimming team will launch its campaign at the 20th Asian Games Aichi-Nagoya 2026 today, with three swimmers set to compete on the opening day at the Aquatics Centre in Tokyo. Qatar's seven-member swimming squad features Mohamed Mahmoud, Ali Tamer, Saad Eddin Saad Eddin, Emil Mounir Fouzai, Abdullah al-Ghamri, Tamim al-Humaida and Mohamed Aziz Jilani.

Mahmoud will compete in the men's 200m individual medley heats, while Tamer lines up in the 100m freestyle and al-Ghamri contests the 100m backstroke. The team will return to action tomorrow in the 4x200m freestyle relay.

The swimming programme features 41 individual and relay events. Qatar's swimmers have completed an intensive preparation programme, including a training camp in France, focused on sharpening their technical and physical readiness.

The team heads into the continental competition after a strong showing at the 2026 Gulf Games in Qatar, where its swimmers collected 26 medals.

Qatar's swimmers will target personal bests and aim to strengthen the country's presence on the Asian swimming stage.



Meanwhile, Qatar begin their men's handball campaign at the Asian Games today against Hong Kong, targeting a fourth consecutive gold medal.

The Qataris have dominated the event in recent editions, winning gold at Incheon 2014, Jakarta 2018 and Hangzhou 2022. They also claimed bronze at Busan 2002 and silver at Doha 2006. Qatar have been drawn in Group A alongside hosts Japan, China and Hong Kong. Group B features Bahrain, Kuwait, Republic of Korea, Iran and Kazakhstan. The top two teams from each group will advance to the quarter-finals, making a strong start important for Qatar as they target top spot.





Artists perform during the opening ceremony of the 2026 Asian Games at Paloma Mizuho Stadium in Nagoya yesterday. (AFP)

AL-BUENAIN PRAISES OPENING CEREMONY

Jassim bin Rashid al-Buenain, Secretary-General of the Qatar Olympic Committee, praised the opening ceremony of the 20th Asian Games. He described the ceremony as exceptional, noting that it showcased the spirit of unity and solidarity among Asian athletes while highlighting Nagoya's industrial heritage.

In a press statement, Al-Buenain said: "We look forward to a participation that befits Qatar and its sporting stature. We have been committed to providing the best possible conditions for our athletes, and we hope this preparation will be reflected in their performance during the competitions through the achievement of the desired results."

He added: "We take pride in our athletes who bear the responsibility of representing Qatar at this major continental sporting event. We have confidence in their ability to give their best, and to demonstrate sportsmanship, determination, and the resolve to achieve the best possible results across the various competitions."

The Secretary-General of the Olympic Committee stated that competition at the Asian Games would be fierce, given the participation of the continent's elite athletes. "Our goal," he said, "is for every athlete to enter the competition with confidence and focus, delivering performances that reflect the progress Qatari sports is witnessing."

He also commended the efforts of the technical and administrative staff and all delegation members, noting that everyone is working with a unified team spirit to support the athletes throughout the Games. He wished the entire delegation success and expressed hope for achieving further accomplishments that would be a source of national pride.