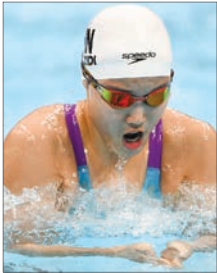


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CRICKET | Page 2

Australia bowling
attack boosted
as Cummins and
Starc return



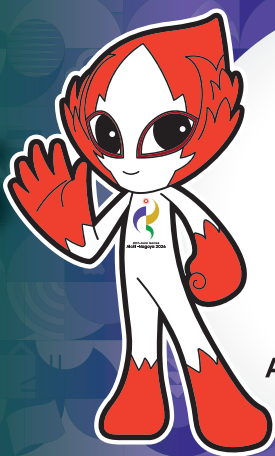
SWIMMING | Page 4

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SPOTLIGHT

QOC highlights journey from Asian Games Doha 2006 to 2030

By Sports Reporter
Nagoya, Japan

The Qatar Olympic Committee (QOC) hosted an official reception in Nagoya on Monday, bringing together around 100 guests from across the Asian Olympic movement to celebrate sport, culture and Qatar's journey towards hosting the Asian Games in Doha in 2030.

Held at the Qatar delegation headquarters at the TIAD Hotel, the reception was attended by representatives of National Olympic Committees, sporting organisations and delegations participating in the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Games.

The event was held under the patronage of HE Sheikhha Hind bint Hamad al-Thani, Member of the QOC Board of Directors, and attended by HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani, President of the Olympic Council of Asia.

In her remarks, Sheikhha Hind highlighted Qatar's experience in hosting major sporting events and the shared values of hospitality and connection that bring people together through sport.

A short film tracing Qatar's Asian Games journey from Doha 2006 through Aichi-Nagoya 2026 and towards Doha 2030 was screened during the evening. It placed athletes, spectators and the wider sporting community at the centre of Qatar's hosting story. Guests were also treated to Qatari cuisine prepared by chef, restaurateur and cultural ambassador Noof al-Marri, showcasing the country's culinary heritage. A live Oud performance added to the cultural programme.

Before the reception, guests visited Bayt Qatar, where they experienced interactive



The Qatar Olympic Committee (QOC) hosted an official reception in Nagoya yesterday, which was held under the patronage of HE Sheikhha Hind bint Hamad al-Thani, Member of the QOC Board of Directors.

cultural and digital activities and explored Qatar's sporting journey from Doha 2006 to Doha 2030.

QOC Secretary General Jassim bin Rashid al-Buenain said the reception provided an opportunity to strengthen ties with partners across the Asian Olympic movement. "This reception was a wonderful opportunity to come together with friends and partners from across the Asian Olympic movement and celebrate the strong connections that sport has created between our communities," he said.

"From Doha 2006 through Aichi-

Nagoya 2026, Qatar's journey with the Asian Games has been shaped by the athletes, sporting organisations and people who have shared this journey with us. Bringing a piece of Qatar to Nagoya through Bayt Qatar has allowed us to share our culture, hospitality and sporting experience with our Asian family. The evening also provided a meaningful moment to reflect on that journey and look ahead to Doha 2030, when we will have the privilege of welcoming Asia back to Qatar."

Sheikha Asma al-Thani, QOC Director of Marketing and International Coopera-



HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani, President of the Olympic Council of Asia, with guests at an reception hosted by the Qatar Olympic Committee.

tion, said the Asian Games had a special place in Qatar's sporting history.

"The Asian Games hold a special place in Qatar's sporting journey. Twenty years ago, Doha welcomed Asia for the 2006 Asian Games, and today we are together again in Aichi-Nagoya. In four years the Games will return to Doha, continuing a connection that has brought athletes, sporting leaders and communities from across Asia together through sport," she said.

She added that Bayt Qatar was designed to give visitors an opportunity to experience Qatar's culture, hospitality and

sporting heritage while building connections ahead of Doha 2030.

Qatar's participation in Aichi-Nagoya marks another chapter in its longstanding relationship with the Asian Games. Since hosting the 2006 edition, the country has continued to develop its sporting infrastructure and expertise through major international events. With preparations under way for Doha 2030, Qatar's presence in Nagoya is also providing an opportunity to engage with athletes, delegations and sporting organisations from across Asia and showcase the country's culture.

ROUND-UP

Beach volleyball, 3x3 basketball teams off to flying start at Asiad

Qatar's men's skeet team top standings after day one, while table tennis team advanced to last 16

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Qatar beach volleyball team opened their Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Games campaigns with straight-set victories, while the men's 3x3 basketball team also recorded two wins yesterday.

The men's skeet team finished the opening day at the top of the standings, while Qatar's handball team secured its second consecutive victory. The men's table tennis team also advanced to the Round of 16.

In beach volleyball, Ahmed Tijan and Cherif Younouss, representing Qatar 1, defeated the Philippines 2-0 in their Group A opener. The Qatari pair dominated from the start, winning the first set 21-7 before completing the victory with a 21-10 second-set success. Qatar 2, represented by Moussa al-Khair and Mohamed Ihab, also began with a 2-0 victory, overcoming South Korea 21-13, 21-9.

TWO WINS FOR 3X3 TEAM

Qatar's men's 3x3 basketball team also enjoyed a perfect opening day, beating Indonesia 10-7 before defeating Chinese Taipei 18-15. The two victories give Qatar an encouraging start to its campaign and strengthen its position in the group.

QATAR MEN LEAD SKEET STANDINGS

Qatar's men's skeet team finished the opening day at the top of the team standings at the Aichi Prefecture shooting range. Rashed Saleh al-Athba, Nasser Saleh al-Attayah and Ali Ahmed al-Ishaq combined for 145 hits, two ahead of Chinese Taipei and Kazakhstan, who were tied on 143.

Al-Athba was Qatar's leading individual shooter in third place with 49 hits. Al-Attayah was ninth with 48, while al-Ishaq was 12th.

In the women's skeet, Qatar finished 12th and last in the team standings with 127 hits. Reem al-Sharshani led the team with 45 hits in 11th place, followed by Hajar



In beach volleyball, Ahmed Tijan and Cherif Younouss defeated the Philippines 2-0 in their Group A opener.

Mohammed in 17th with 42. Sarah Ghulam Mohammed recorded 38. China and Kazakhstan shared the top spot in the women's team standings on 143, with India third.

In the men's 10m air rifle, Abdullah Zain al-Sunaidi and Khalid al-Sharshani both scored 616.8 points to finish 36th and 37th respectively. Abdulrahman Ahmed was 38th with 616.0. Qatar placed 12th among 13 teams.

TABLE TENNIS TEAM ENTER LAST 16

Qatar's men's table tennis team advanced to the Round of 16 after edging Macau 3-2 in their Group A match. The team comprised Abdullah Abdulhussain, Rawad Akram al-Nasser, Mohammed Abdulhussain, Sultan Khalid al-Kuwari and Ahmed Eid Qarni.

Qatar will face another test in the round of 16 at Sky Hall Toyota today. The women's team, meanwhile, lost 0-3 to Hong



Qatar's 3x3 basketball team enjoyed a perfect opening day, beating Indonesia 10-7 before defeating Chinese Taipei 18-15.



Rashed Saleh al-Athba was in third place with 49 hits after day one.

Kong in Group E.

SWIMMERS FINISH SIXTH IN RELAY

Qatar's 4x200m freestyle relay team qualified for the final after clocking 7:24.10 in the



Qatar handball team defeated China 30-25 to make it two wins from two in Group A.

heats. The quartet of Ali Tamer, Mohamed Mahmoud, Saad El-Din Saad El-Din and Emile Fouzai finished sixth in the final in 7:20.25. Saad El-Din is scheduled to compete in the 1500m freestyle today, while Qatar will feature in the 4x100m relay.

HANDBALL TEAM BEAT CHINA

Qatar defeated China 30-25 to make it two wins from two in Group A. The result took Qatar to four points, level with Japan at the top of the group. Their final group match against Japan on Friday will determine the final positions.

Qatar made a strong start, taking a 3-0 lead and later going 9-5 ahead before leading 12-8 at half-time. China fought back to reduce the deficit, but Qatar regained control after the break and pulled away to secure the win. Qatar are seeking to defend the gold medal won at the previous three editions of the Asian Games.

GYMNASTS BEGIN CAMPAIGN

Qatar's artistic gymnastics team also began its campaign at Nagoya General Gymnasium. In the men's individual qualification on the rings, Rakan Misfer Al-Harthi scored 13.900 points to finish third, while Mehrdad Barat Ghadimi scored 13.400 for 14th place.

BUSY SCHEDULE TODAY

Qatar will be involved in a busy programme today, with action in volleyball, basketball, equestrian, fencing and other sports. Equestrian competition resumes after being postponed on Monday because of weather conditions.

Qatar will also feature in fencing, while karate and women's volleyball continue with placement matches.

The women's 3x3 basketball team begins its campaign against Sri Lanka before taking on China in the group stage.

CRICKET

Pacers Cummins, Starc return for South Africa ODIs

Australia's attack boosted by inclusion of experienced bowlers

Reuters
Johannesburg

Australia's bowling attack for their three one-day internationals against South Africa has been considerably strengthened with captain Pat Cummins and Mitchell Starc joining the squad along with all-rounder Jack Edwards, Cricket Australia said yesterday.

Cummins and Starc sat out the 3-0 series win in Zimbabwe over the last week but will play in the series in South Africa, which starts in Durban on Thursday.

Edwards, 26, is in line to make his ODI debut after diverting from the Australia A tour of India, while fast bowlers Billy Stanlake and Spencer Johnson return home after competing in Zimbabwe.

Stanlake suffered a side strain and will have medical scans on his return to Australia.

Johnson was deemed surplus to requirements after playing two of the three matches in Harare.

Edwards has played a single Twenty20 international against Pakistan in January and offers cover with Cameron Green struggling with a sore shoulder, which caused him to sit out the three fixtures in Zimbabwe.

Meanwhile wicketkeeper batsman Josh Inglis said Australia's dramatic one-wicket victory over Zimbabwe will give the



Australia pace spearhead Pat Cummins.

squad confidence they can fight their way through difficult situations, which could prove vital at next year's one-day interna-

tional (ODI) World Cup. After their openers departed early on Sunday, wicketkeeper-batter Inglis (103) scored his second ODI

century to help Australia reach their target of 272 with one ball to spare, completing a 3-0 series whitewash.

"I think we're going to get in those situations again," said Inglis.

"For those guys to have done that today with a World Cup 12 months away, it will leave a good feeling with them, and they'll have a better idea of how to go about that situation again next time."

INGLIS GLAD HE FOUND FORM AT RIGHT TIME

Despite losing his wicket and needing teammate Nathan Ellis to steer the side over the finish line, Inglis said he was glad to find his rhythm after scores of 4 and 21 in the first two matches of the series.

"We just play a lot of Twenty20 cricket now, and it's just me finding the right tempo for one day cricket, and I sort of found that today," the 31-year-old added.

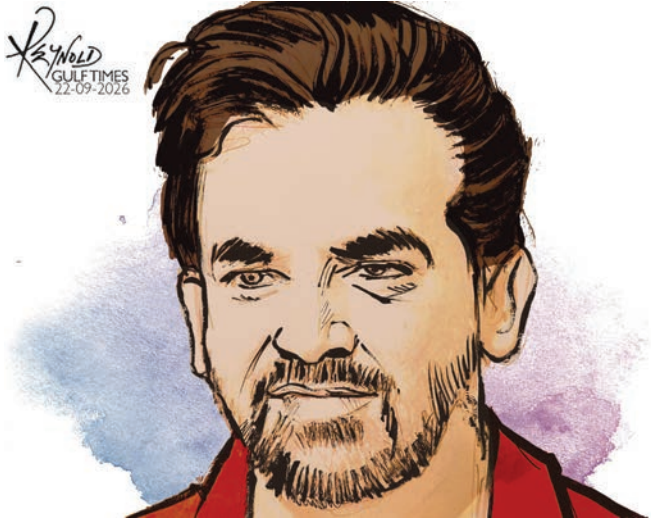
"Playing in a slightly different role with a younger team, I've probably got to take some more responsibility in batting at number four.

"I wasn't there right at the end, but to get there until the 40th over and get a hundred, I'm happy with it."

Australia next face 2027 World Cup co-hosts South Africa in a three-match ODI series beginning on Thursday.

ANNOUNCEMENT

CSK announce Zaheer as coach for IPL 2027



Agencies
Chennai

Chennai Super Kings yesterday announced former India left-arm pacer **Zaheer Khan** as the team's new head coach for IPL 2027.

A crucial part of India's successful World Cup 2011 campaign, Zaheer comes with a vast experience across formats having played 92 Tests, 200 ODIs and 17 T20Is for India in a career that spanned 14 years.

In the IPL, Zaheer has played 100 matches and turned to coaching roles post his retirement.

Rupa Gurunath, owner, Chennai Super Kings, said in a statement posted on the franchise's website: "We are pleased to confirm Zaheer Khan as the head coach for Chennai Super Kings. Zaheer's distinguished playing career and proven ability to nurture young talent make him a valuable addition to our setup. We are confident that his guidance will help strengthen the core of this franchise."

KS Viswanathan, Managing Director, Chennai Super Kings, said: "Zaheer is a world class bowler and has been a mentor to many young cricketers, especially fast bowlers, over the years. As a player, Zaheer was one of the key reasons for In-

dia's success in the 2000s. He's one of the finest cricketing brains and we look forward to having him in our family."

Zaheer said: "It's an honour to be a part of one of the most successful teams in the history of the IPL. As a cricketer, I have faced CSK on the field and have thoroughly enjoyed the contests. The atmosphere created by the Superfans at Chepauk make it even more special. I can't wait to join the legacy franchise with such a rich history."

According to Viswanathan, Zaheer's name was discussed and agreed upon by the team's leadership group. "We wanted to get the views of the cricket management including MS Dhoni, Rituraj (Gaikwad) and Sanju (Samson)," Viswanathan told Cricinfo.com. "There were a lot of discussions with the owners also."

Zaheer's contract will be a year long and he is expected to start his role soon. The IPL retention window normally is November though franchises have not been given any firm date, the report on cricinfo.com added.

Zaheer, who had a 14-year competitive cricket career capped by an ODI World Cup win in 2011, was recently with Lucknow Super Giants as their mentor until September 2025. He was with Mumbai Indians from 2018 to 2022

PREVIEW

World champions India take on minnows Japan in first bilateral T20

Agencies
Nagoya

A historic, landmark fixture unfolds today as world champions India take on Japan in a one-off T20 International.

While the host region for the broader Asian Games is Aichi-Nagoya, this historic encounter takes place at the Sano International Cricket Ground in Tochigi, serving as a landmark celebration of 75 years of India-Japan diplomatic relations.

On paper, it is a mismatch of massive proportions. India enters as the reigning T20 World Cup champions, whereas Japan, ranked 41st globally, is stepping onto the field against a Full Member nation for the very first time.

However, for Japanese cricket - a sport steadily carving out space in a baseball-dominated culture - hosting the world's biggest cricketing powerhouse is a watershed milestone.

Led by Shreyas Iyer, India is us-



India's captain Shreyas Iyer (right) shakes hands with Japanese skipper Kendel Kadowaki-Fleming during a press conference on the eve of their T20 match in Tochigi yesterday. (AFP)

ing this match as a vital tune-up before their Asian Games campaign. With explosive firepower in Abhishek Sharma, Ishan Kishan, and Shivam Dube, alongside a lethal bowling attack featuring Arshdeep Singh and Jasprit Bumrah, the Men in Blue have all bases covered.

Captain Kendel Kadowaki-Fleming leads a spirited, mostly home-grown Japanese side. Supported by all-rounder Ibrahim Takahashi and opening partner Lachlan Yamamoto-Lake, Japan isn't just looking to make up the numbers; they aim to showcase their growth on the global stage.

EVENEPOEL WINS RECORD 4TH STRAIGHT WORLD TIME-TRIAL TITLE

Montreal, Canada: Jacques KLOPP Olympic champion **Remco Evenepoel** etched his name into the history books with a dominant fourth successive world time-trial victory in Montreal on Sunday. The 26-year-old Belgian came into the race as the overwhelming favourite and he did not disappoint. Evenepoel was already more than half a minute ahead of the rest by the second intermediate time-check just over half way through the race. By the finish, the Belgian had put almost a minute into second-placed Filippo Ganna with Paul Seixas taking third another 15 seconds back. Evenepoel became the first man to win the time-trial world title four times in a row, while also equaling the record number of overall titles held by German Tony Martin and Swiss Fabian Cancellara. "It's amazing. It was obviously the goal to come and win here for the fourth time in a row. It was a big motivation," said Evenepoel. "I'm super happy. It was a wonderful experience." Already the Olympic champion in both this discipline and the road race, Evenepoel has not lost a time-trial since the 2025 Tour de France. He has enjoyed his best season to date, winning the Amstel Gold Race, Clasica San Sebastian and Grand Prix de Quebec, as well as finishing second behind Tadej Pogacar at the Tour de France. His next objective will be to win a second road-race world title next Sunday, and become the first man to do the double in the same year. "There's quite some time to rest now and enjoy this special course," he said. "Full focus on Sunday from Tuesday." Ganna had started slowly and was only 10th at the



first time-check, but by the third, he had moved up into second spot. But he could not make any headway into Evenepoel, who did not stop increasing his lead from the start to the finish. Young Swede Jakob Soderqvist, the under-23 champion in this discipline last year, was second to Evenepoel at the first two time-checks but faded over the last 10km and finished fifth. Teenage French starlet Seixas, gauged his effort better and put in a strong ride over the final 10km to finish third. In the women's race, Swiss Marlen Reusser retained her world time-trial title as her main rival Demi Voltering finished a disappointing eighth. Time-trial queen Reusser celebrated her 35th birthday with an ultimately comfortable victory, but not before Briton Zoe Backstedt gave her a scare. Backstedt had been quickest at the first two intermediate time-checks on the 39.2km course but Reusser powered away in the second half to beat the 21-year-old by 40 seconds, with German Franziska Koch finishing third, a further six seconds back.

FOCUS

Carse needs time away from international cricket, says captain Brook

AFP
London

England white-ball captain Harry Brook says Brydon Carse needs time away from international cricket following a turbulent few weeks for the fast bowler.

The 31-year-old was arrested and de-arrested by police on a night out with his Durham teammates in Derby, central England, last month.

On Friday, police confirmed an investigation into an alleged assault had ended, with no further action taken.

The South Africa-born Carse has continued to play for county side Durham but has not been chosen by England in any format of the game since the incident.

He is the subject of an investigation by the independent cricket regulator, although the England and Wales Cricket Board have con-

firmed Carse is available for selection.

England white-ball head coach Brendon McCullum last week called for Carse to "get his house in order" before an international return and Brook believes his teammate and close friend needs time out of the spotlight.

Asked yesterday whether he had spoken to Carse, Brook, England's one-day international and T20 captain, told the BBC: "I'm very good mates with Carsey. I've spoken a lot with him. Those conversations are private."

"I think he just needs time away from the international scene. He's working on a few things behind the scenes and hopefully he'll be ready at some point in the future."

Carse, who has not played for England since the fifth Ashes Test in January, missed the first half of the English season because of injury.

His arrest was the latest in a series of off-field incidents involv-

ing England, with Brook himself involved in an altercation with a nightclub bouncer in New Zealand last October.

New England Test head coach Stephen Fleming has said that restoring standards will be as important as results while McCullum has challenged his limited-overs teams to be the "fittest, strongest, most dynamic, most robust cricket team in the world."

Ahead of the first ODI against Sri Lanka at Chester-le-Street today, Brook added: "We should all be role models to everybody in the world, on and off the field. Everybody is extremely aware of it now."

Adil Rashid will miss the first game of the three-match series because of a hand injury, replaced in the side by fellow leg-spinner Rehan Ahmed.

Fleming said it would be "wrong" to ask former captain Ben Stokes to reverse his international retirement before next year's Ashes.



England's white ball team mentor Kevin Pietersen (left) chats with captain Harry Brook (centre) and Test coach Stephen Fleming at Old Trafford in Manchester. (AFP)

Stokes dramatically announced the end of his England career - and four-year spell as Test skipper - during a defeat by New Zealand

at Trent Bridge in June that condemned his team to a 2-1 series loss. The 35-year-old has continued playing for his county side

Durham and has also signed up for a stint with the Adelaide Strikers in Australia's Big Bash League.

But Fleming, who met with Stokes soon after arriving in England, played down the prospect of a fairytales return.

"I went up to Durham and spoke to Ben, which was good. He's really happy and seemed to be really at peace with his decision," Fleming, who previously worked with Stokes at Chennai Super Kings in the Indian Premier League, told reporters. "I've worked with Ben quite a bit. We've got a really good relationship... He seems really happy and comfortable with what he's doing."

Fleming, speaking later to the BBC, insisted he would not ask Stokes to perform a U-turn.

"I respect his decision too much," he said. "To try to turn that around and question that is wrong."

Former New Zealand captain Fleming was appointed in July.

FOCUS

Mbappe says having Zidane as France coach ‘like a film’

AFP
Madrid

Kilian Mbappe said yesterday playing under new France coach Zinedine Zidane, 15 years after the French football icons first met, is like “something from a film”.
Former Real Madrid boss Zidane will take charge of Les Bleus for the first time since replacing Didier Deschamps on Friday in their Nations League match against Turkey in Izmit.
“He was the first person who picked me up to take me to Real Madrid, to the training complex. I was 13 or 14, so it was a long time

ago,” Mbappe said in an interview with Spanish daily AS of meeting Zidane at a trial for Real Madrid’s youth teams.
“Now he’s my national team coach. It’s like a film, but it’s amazing. It’s real.”
Deschamps’s final tournament of a 14-year stint in charge ended in disappointment as France were well beaten by Spain in the World Cup semi-finals in July.
The two-time world champions start their preparations for Euro 2028 with four Nations League matches in the expanded international break, also facing Belgium twice and Italy at the Stade de France. “We’re starting a new process with France.

We have two years to prepare for the European Championship and that’s what we’re focused on now,” Mbappe said. “It’s a new era with a new coach. We have the Nations League coming up, four games, and we’ll see how they go.
“It’s going to be new for everyone because all we’ve known is Deschamps. It’s going to be a change for us, but I think everything is going to go very well.”
Mbappe has enjoyed a strong start to the season with Real Madrid, scoring eight goals in as many games in all competitions, but he failed to find the net in Sunday’s derby defeat by Atletico Madrid. Jose Mourinho returned to the Santiago Bernabeu tasked

with ending two seasons without a major trophy, but Madrid are already six points behind reigning champions Barcelona in La Liga.
“Other people can talk, but we have to do more and work to bring the excitement back to Real Madrid and bring the trophies back,” he added. Mourinho hit out at the refereeing in the 2-1 loss to Atletico, but Mbappe was not as forthright in his criticism.
“I have my thoughts, but I keep them to myself. I’ve never been that kind of player and I’m not going to start now,” he said.
“The referee is human and makes mistakes, but I don’t want to get into that.”



France’s head coach Zinedine Zidane takes part in a training session in Paris yesterday. (AFP)

SPOTLIGHT

Mancini signals decisive break with Italy’s past

Italy face Belgium, Turkey and France in demanding Nations League

Reuters
Rome

Roberto Mancini set a demanding tone as Italy gathered yesterday, insisting on immediate progress while mounting a strong defense of his heavily overhauled squad for his first match back as coach.
Speaking ahead of UEFA Nations League fixtures against Belgium, Turkey, and France, Mancini defended his decision to hand first call-ups to nine players while omitting experienced stalwarts of the team. “Had I called all the experienced players, you would have said, ‘always the same players,’” Mancini told reporters.
“It is appropriate to get to know young players to build a strong team for the future. We needed more players than usual because we have four games and want to see them on the pitch.”
“We don’t know how long it will take, but we’ll have to be quick in understanding the players we have and figuring out what they can give us in the future,” he added.
Addressing lingering frustration over Italy’s past failures, including missing out on a third consecutive World Cup this year, Mancini acknowledged fans’ right to be upset but called for unity.
“The past doesn’t count anymore,” Mancini said.
“When a fan feels betrayed, he has the right to be upset, and you have to accept it. We must do things well and bring the national team where it belongs so things will settle.” Mancini returned to the bench following a chaotic summer for the Italian



Italy’s head coach Roberto Mancini runs with a ball during a training session in Coverciano yesterday. (AFP)

football federation. He took over after Gennaro Gattuso’s departure and a brief, fraught attempt to appoint Andrea Pirlo collapsed amid a fierce backlash over Pirlo’s commercial ties to a Russian betting company. The situation got newly elected Italian football federation (FIGC) President Giovanni Malago

off to a rocky start, but Mancini dismissed any sense of internal pressure ahead of Friday’s opener in Rome against Belgium.
“The president is calm, so we must think about our job, do well and win the first game against Belgium, which won’t be so easy,” Mancini noted. “We must think

about our duties.” The FIGC confirmed squad adjustments as Inter Milan defender Federico Dimarco withdrew due to injury and was replaced by Aston Villa’s Matteo Ruggeri, following the earlier replacement of AS Roma midfielder Bryan Cristante by Como’s Samuele Ricci.

ANNOUNCEMENT

De la Fuente’s gets new Spain deal after World Cup success

Reuters
Madrid

When Luis de la Fuente took the Spanish national team job, he was the quiet federation man after the noise and glitz of Luis Enrique, a coach many fans had to Google and some media dubbed “Luis de la Who?”
Three trophies, 50 matches and one World Cup later, the once-mocking question has a resounding answer: he is the future. De la Fuente has signed a six-year extension until the end of the 2032 European Championship, the Spanish FA (RFEF) said yesterday after ratifying his contract at an executive meeting.
The deal, agreed during the triumphant World Cup campaign, is the longest tenure ever approved for a Spain head coach and takes him through the 2028 European Championship, 2030 World Cup and 2032 European Championship. According to sources close to the federation, it also includes a considerable pay rise – a fitting reward for a man who has turned patience, planning and a decade of academy graft into Spain’s most dominant spell in generations.
De la Fuente has delivered the 2023 Nations League, the 2024 European Championship and the 2026 World Cup. The only trophy to slip away was the less important 2025 Nations League, which Spain lost to Portugal on

penalties. Spain are also on the longest unbeaten run in their history, 38 matches without defeat.
Yesterday, under Madrid’s scorching heat at the RFEF’s Ciudad del Futbol training ground, De la Fuente sat alongside federation president Rafael Louzan and the trophies that trace his rise from youth-team craftsman to architect of the side everyone is trying to catch.
His path was never glamorous. A former hard-working full back at Athletic Bilbao, De la Fuente built his coaching life away from club football’s glare, joining the RFEF in 2013 and working his way through Spain’s youth system.
That background, once used against him, became his greatest strength. Rodri, Unai Simon and Mikel Merino were part of his European Under-19 champions in 2015. Merino, Mikel Oyarzabal, Dani Olmo and Fabian Ruiz later shared Under-21 success with him, while Pedri, Martin Zubimendi and Marc Cucurella were part of Spain’s Olympic silver-medal campaign in Tokyo.
By the time he inherited the senior side in December 2022 after Spain’s disappointing World Cup in Qatar, De la Fuente already knew the habits and hearts of a generation. “During the 2024 Euros, we began to emphasise a word that gave us a great deal of security, confidence and strength – family. We want the Spanish national team to be a family and that is honestly how we feel,” he said yesterday.



Carrick demands Man United response after ‘pathetic’ jibes

Michael Carrick struck a defiant tone after Manchester United equalled their worst start to a Premier League season, but Sunday’s woeful 1-1 draw at Fulham left the beleaguered boss under mounting pressure. Trailing to Lisandro Martinez’s farcical own goal, United were just moments away from a third successive defeat on another dispiriting afternoon for Carrick.
Matheus Cunha’s deflected 89th minute equaliser spared United from fresh humiliation.
But escaping with a barely-deserved point against a winless side sitting second-from-bottom of the Premier League was hardly cause for celebration.
With only one win so far this season, United have matched their lowest points total after five matches in the Premier League era. Sitting in 12th place with five points, Carrick’s men equalled the mark set by Louis van Gaal’s United in 2014-15, when they went on to finish fourth.
The statistics are damning enough in their own right but the eye-test during their moribund performance at Craven Cottage provided an even more insightful look at what ails United.
Lacking a cutting edge in attack, bereft of defensive organisation and, in the words of Cunha, short of energy and drive until they fell behind, this was the kind of flawed display that has scarred so many United seasons since their last title in 2013.
Carrick was expected to build on last season’s climb to a third-place finish during his spell as interim boss.
But having hauled United from the wreckage of Ruben Amorim’s self-destructive reign, Carrick is in danger of losing his way in his first season as permanent boss.
A wretched 2-0 defeat at promoted Hull on the opening weekend set alarm bells ringing among the United faithful.
Beaten in the Manchester derby by an Erling Haaland goal that should have been disallowed last weekend, United then blew a two-goal lead at home for the first time in 50 years in a League Cup meltdown against Brighton.

LIGUE 1

Torres on target as PSG beat Marseille

AFP
Paris

Ferran Torres continued the impressive start to his Paris Saint-Germain career by scoring the opener as the French and European champions won 2-1 at bitter rivals Marseille in Ligue 1 on Sunday. Spain World Cup final hero Torres came off the bench to replace Khvicha Kvaratskhelia just before the hour mark and headed in a Desire Doue cross to give PSG the lead in the 66th minute at the Velodrome.
That brought the game to life, with England midfielder Angel Gomes scoring an excellent equaliser for Marseille on 72 minutes only for PSG captain Marquinhos to win the game for the visitors three minutes later.
The Brazilian defender met a Nuno Mendes cross and had his initial effort saved by Marseille goalkeeper Jeffrey de Lange before bundling in the rebound. United States star Timothy Weah, a former PSG player, was then sent off for a second booking as



PSG’s Ferran Torres scores their first goal against Marseille during the Ligue 1 match. (Reuters)

Marseille finished the game a man down.
Torres scored PSG’s winning goal in Brest last weekend and now has seven goals in six appearances in all competitions since joining the reigning European champions from Barcelona. He has only started three times.
“We knew that for us it was one of the most important matches of the season. We knew it wouldn’t

be easy but we managed to get the victory,” Torres said at full-time, with PSG now up to sixth in the table, five points behind leaders Monaco after five fixtures. “Now we can go away and play for our countries and disconnect from club football for a bit.”
Torres, whose extra-time goal gave Spain victory over Argentina in the World Cup final in the United States in July, is in the squad as

La Roja play their first game since that tournament away to England in the UEFA Nations League next weekend.
Struggling Marseille have now suffered four straight Ligue 1 defeats, and five losses in a row in all competitions. They therefore find themselves in the relegation zone as club football takes a three-week break. Monaco extended their unbeaten start to the campaign by beating Lens 2-1 on Friday, and the principality side are two points clear at the top of Ligue 1 from both Lyon and Paris FC. Lyon hammered Rennes 4-0 on Saturday, while Paris FC won 2-1 against Strasbourg. Lille missed the opportunity to move level on points again with Monaco as they lost 2-1 at Nice on Sunday.
Algerian international Mohamed Amoura got what proved to be the winner for Nice, with Japan’s Ayase Ueda scoring for Lille, his third goal in four games since signing from Feyenoord. Former Aston Villa striker Cameron Archer scored in a third straight game for Auxerre as Will Still’s team defeated Brest 2-1.

SPOTLIGHT

Bayt Qatar showcases FIBA World Cup 2027

By Sports Reporter
Nagoya, Japan

The Local Organising Committee (LOC) of the FIBA Basketball World Cup Qatar 2027 is promoting next year's tournament at Bayt Qatar in Nagoya, Japan, as part of the 20th Asian Games Aichi-Nagoya 2026.

Three promotional days are being held, with the first held on Sunday, and the next two scheduled for September 23 and 29, giving visitors, athletes, officials and members of the international sporting community an opportunity to learn more about Qatar 2027 and the fan experience planned for the tournament.

A major attraction is the Naismith Trophy, the FIBA Basketball World Cup trophy, which is on display at Bayt Qatar. Visitors can view the trophy, take photographs and take part in interactive activities, while souvenirs are also being distributed. Qatar will host the FIBA Basketball World Cup from August 27 to September 12, 2027, becoming the first country in the Middle East to stage the tournament. A total of 32 teams will compete in 92 games, all in Doha.

The LOC is highlighting Qatar's



preparations, supported by its sporting infrastructure and experience gained from hosting major international events over the past two decades.

One of the defining features of Qatar 2027 will be its compact format, with all matches being played at four venues: Lusail Arena, Al Janoub Arena, Ali Bin Hamad Al Attiyah Arena and Al Duhail Arena. The proximity of the venues will allow fans to travel easily between matches and experience more of the tournament.

The LOC is also placing a strong emphasis on activities beyond the arenas, with fans expected to have

opportunities to enjoy entertainment, explore Qatari culture and experience the country's tourism attractions. Mead al-Emadi, Executive Director of Marketing and Commercial Operations at the FIBA Basketball World Cup Qatar 2027 LOC, said the promotional programme in Nagoya was an important part of the build-up to the tournament.

"Staging these promotional days at Bayt Qatar provides an important opportunity to introduce fans to the FIBA Basketball World Cup Qatar 2027 and what awaits them during the tournament, particularly with fans and sporting

delegations from across Asia currently in Nagoya," al-Emadi said.

"Through these activities, we aim to bring fans closer to the tournament and introduce them to the Qatar 2027 experience, from the competition featuring the world's best national teams to the integrated experience awaiting fans both inside and outside the arenas."

She added: "We want the fan journey to Qatar 2027 to begin before they arrive in Doha, and these activities provide an opportunity to engage directly with them and introduce them to the tournament. Displaying the Naismith Trophy at Bayt Qatar also gives visitors a special opportunity to get closer to one of the most iconic symbols of the FIBA Basketball World Cup, and we look forward to continuing this engagement with fans as we approach the tournament in August 2027."

The programme is also showcasing Qatar 2027's first ticket passes, launched to mark the one-year-to-go milestone. The passes include the Lusail Series Pass, Final Phase Pass and Follow My Team Qatar Pass, allowing fans to secure tickets ahead of the tournament. Bayt Qatar, which opened on September 19 alongside



Qatar ace shooter Nasser Saleh al-Attiyah poses with FIBA Basketball World Cup trophy at Al Bayt Qatar in Nagoya yesterday.

the Asian Games, is also showcasing Qatar's sporting journey, from the 2006 Asian Games in Doha to its hosting of major international events and preparations for the

FIBA Basketball World Cup 2027 and the Doha 2030 Asian Games.

The venue also offers visitors an insight into Qatar's culture, identity and sporting heritage.

SWIMMING

China's Yu smashes record again with second gold medal

'I'm very excited and happy. This is the result of our team's hard work'

AFP
Tokyo

China's 13-year-old swimming sensation Yu Zidi smashed another Asian Games record for her second gold in as many days yesterday, two years out from the Los Angeles Olympics.

Yu gave another glimpse of her enormous potential in Tokyo as she scorched to victory in the women's 200m individual medley in 2min 06.10sec.

That was 0.72sec faster than the previous Asian Games record, held by compatriot Yu Yuting, and only 0.40sec off the world record held by Canada's Summer McIntosh. It was the fastest time in the world this year.

"I'm very excited and happy," said the beaming teenager. "This is the result of our whole team's hard work."

Yu finished 1.89sec in front of Yu Yuting, with Japan's Mio Narita third. It gave her a second gold in as many days after also winning the 200m butterfly.

"I feel even happier winning this second gold medal than I did with the first one," she said.

Yu became the youngest swimming world championships medallist in history last year when she won bronze as a 12-year-old as part of China's 4x200m freestyle relay team.

She also finished just outside the medals in fourth in three world individual events.

She has embellished her growing reputation this year, notably with a victory over multiple American Olympic champion Regan Smith in March.

She said she was still learning her craft and there were "points I need to pay more attention to".

"I'm capable of doing them but maybe I don't always do them consciously," she said.

"Once I go over them again in my head, I can execute them."

The China team won six of the seven golds on offer on the opening day in the pool Sunday but they did not have things all their own way a day later.

Japan's hotly tipped Shin Ohashi and China's Dong Zhihao both took gold after a dead heat in the men's 100m breaststroke.

Ohashi looked to have won it until Dong roared back late in the race and both touched the wall in 58.64sec. China's defending champion Qin Haiyang was third. "I'm really happy to get a gold but it was a tie so it's a little frustrating," said Ohashi. "The feeling is 50-50."

Hong Kong's Siobhan Haughey defended her title in the women's 200m freestyle, romping home in a time of 1:54.96.

The 28-year-old finished 1.62sec ahead of silver medallist Li Jiaping of China. Haughey said "a



Gold medallist China's Yu Zidi competes in the final of the women's 200m individual medley during the Asian Games at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre in Tokyo yesterday. (AFP)



Gold medallist Zidi Yu celebrates after winning the women's 200m Individual Medley Final with silver medallist China's Yiting Yu and bronze medallist Japan's Mio Narita yesterday. (Reuters)

lot has happened" since she completed the Asian Games 100m-200m freestyle double three years ago in Hangzhou.

"The swimming world has changed so much, there are so many rising swimmers coming up so you never know what's going to happen," she said. South Ko-

rea's Kim Young-beom set a new Games record in winning men's 50m freestyle gold in 21.66sec.

China's Xu Jiayu won the men's 50m backstroke, while teammate Wan Letian won the women's event. China won the men's 4x200m freestyle relay, overhauling Japan on the final lap.

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FOOTBALL

North and South Korea fight out 1-1 draw in niggly clash

AFP
Fukuroi, Japan

North and South Korea drew 1-1 in the women's football at the Asian Games yesterday in a niggly meeting between neighbours who are still technically at war.

Just over 2,000 fans watched the group match at the 50,000 capacity stadium in Shizuoka which staged matches when Japan co-hosted the 2002 World Cup with South Korea. Among the sparse crowd was a group of North Korean fans wearing red t-shirts, some with the country's flag painted on their faces.

Others held signs reading, "Let's win for our country".

North Korea, who have excelled at youth level in women's football in recent years, took the lead in the first half from close range through Chae Un Yong.

South Korea levelled after the break when Yun Su-jeong finished smartly.

The two teams shared tepid high-fives at the end but did not exchange words. South Korea

had three players booked to the North's one, and there were a total of 27 fouls during the contest.

The first was after less than 30 seconds.

The neighbours remain technically at war because the 1950-53 Korean war ended with an armistice rather than a peace treaty.

"It was the young players' first time playing against DPR (North) Korea and they were nervous," said South Korea coach Shin Sang-woo, whose side faces Uzbekistan in the quarter-finals.

Asked if he shook the hand of his opposite number, Pak Song Jin, Shin replied: "The leaders of (North Korea) made no handshakes. That was the practice for a long time."

"In this football game we just need to achieve results. The political situation does not matter."

North Korea are also into the last eight. Asked if playing their neighbours made for a special occasion, Pak said: "There's nothing special. It's just within the framework of football."



South Korea and North Korea players vying for the ball in the women's Group F match during the 2026 Asian Games in Fukuroi, Shizuoka, yesterday. (AFP)

THAI BADMINTON PLAYER FIRST DOPING CASE AT ASIAN GAMES

Thai women's badminton player **Pitchamon Opatniputh** became the first known doping case at the Asian Games in Japan yesterday, testers said.

The 19-year-old returned a positive sample for the banned substance furosemide and has been provisionally suspended, the International Testing Agency said.

The teenager, who is ranked 18th in the world and regarded as a rising star back home, had been due to face China today in the team event. The first full day of badminton action at Asia's biggest sporting spectacle was on Sunday.

"The athlete is prevented from competing, training, coaching or participating in any activity during the Asian Games Aichi-Nagoya 2026," the ITA said.

The agency noted that Pitchamon can challenge the provisional suspension at the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS).

"The athlete also has the right to request the analysis of the B-sample," it added.

Furosemide can be used by competitors to excrete water for rapid weight loss.

The sample was collected by the ITA during out-of-competition testing on September 17.

