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Smith breaks fielding record as Australia take control of 1st Test



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SPORT

FORMULA 1

Verstappen cruises to first Singapore GP win as Antonelli closes in on crown

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HORSE RACING

Al Ghariyah Cup to open QREC season on Oct 14

HH THE AMIR SWORD FESTIVAL SET FOR FEB 10, STRONG FOCUS ON DEVELOPING LOCAL RIDING TALENT

By Sports Reporter
Doha

The Al Ghariyah Cup will headline the opening meeting of the Qatar Racing and Equestrian Club's (QREC) 2026-2027 domestic racing season on October 14, marking the start of a 70-fixture campaign across the Al Rayyan and Al Uqda racecourses.

QREC, chaired by Hamad bin Abdulrahman al-Attiyah, has announced a comprehensive programme featuring a series of major cup races, prize money allocations and race conditions across all divisions, with strong support expected from local owners, trainers and jockeys.

The new season will begin at Al Rayyan with the Al Ghariyah Cup meeting, which has become a traditional season-opener in recent years. The Al Hamla Cup meeting will follow on October 15, with the opening day's action staged on the dirt track before racing switches to the turf for the second day.

Al Uqda will join the schedule for the 11th fixture of the campaign on November 14, when the Al Noof Cup meeting takes place. The programme will initially feature racing on Wednesdays and Thursdays, with Saturday fixtures added to the weekly calendar once meetings begin at Al Uqda.

The season is scheduled to conclude at Al Rayyan on April 15 with the End of Season Cup, bringing the curtain down on a campaign designed to showcase Qatar's domestic racing talent across both venues.

International Group 1 upgrade for HH The Amir Trophy
The prestigious HH The Amir Sword Festival will take place at Al Rayyan from February 10 to 13



The 70-fixture season will be held at Al Rayyan and Al Uqda racecourses with mid-April finale.

2027, marking the second consecutive year the showpiece fixture is staged across four days. The opening two days will be held on the dirt track before action moves to the turf for the final two days.

Headline news for the upcoming edition comes with the implementation of the decision by the International Grading and Race Planning Advisory Committee (IRPAC) of the International Federation of Horseracing Authorities (IFHA) to promote the HH The Amir Trophy from international Group 2 to international Group 1 status.

The premier contest stands as the flagship Thoroughbred race of the festival and on the Qatari racing calendar each season, re-

flecting the ongoing growth of the prestigious event. The upcoming festival will also feature upgrades in status for several other races. The Irish Thoroughbred Marketing Cup has been promoted to Group 3 level from Listed status while both the Dukhan Sprint Cup and the Al Rayyan Mile have been elevated to Listed status.

Season's flagship features
The Group 1 HH The Amir Trophy for Thoroughbreds and the Group 1 PA HH The Amir Sword for Purebred Arabians - the third and final leg of the Doha Triple Crown - will take centre stage on the closing day as the fourth and fifth contests on a nine-race card. Each carries a purse of \$2.5mn, marking the rich-

est prizes on the QREC calendar. For the second consecutive season, new races feature on the festival programme. The final day includes the Qatar International Thoroughbred Handicap Cup (90-110), open to international runners. Day two adds two contests: the Local Purebred Arabian Middle Distance Cup (Handicap rated 85-105 over 1,700m) and the Thoroughbred Dirt Sprint Cup (Handicap rated 85-105 over 1,200m).

For the second consecutive season, several recent additions remain on the festival programme. The final day retains the Qatar International Thoroughbred Handicap Cup (90-110), open to international runners.

Day two again features two

contests introduced last term: the Middle Distance Cup for Local Purebred Arabians (handicap rated 85-105 over 1,700m) and the Sand Sprint Cup for Thoroughbreds (handicap 80-105 over 1,200m).

Key fixtures on programme
Beyond the HH The Amir Sword Festival, the newly published programme features several key fixtures throughout the season, including The Late Sheikh Jassim Bin Mohammed Bin Thani Trophy, the Qatar Derby, the Qatar Oaks, the Guineas and Barzan Cup Day, the HH Sheikh Abdullah Bin Khalifa Al Thani Trophy, the HE Sheikh Joaan Bin Hamad Al Thani Rifle, the HH Sheikh Mohamed bin Kha-

lifa Al Thani Trophy and the Qatar Gold Sword and Trophy.

Focus on Qatari jockeys
The unveiling of the new programme comes on the heels of the Qatar Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe weekend, bringing QREC's international sponsorship campaign to a close. Attention now turns to Al Rayyan and Al Uqda for the domestic season where keen competition is expected as owners and trainers assemble top-quality strings. Action will feature elite international jockeys alongside Qatari riders, who remain a central focus for QREC management through ongoing support and development aimed at preparing them to compete at the highest level.

AFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE ELITE

Gharafa aim to bounce back against Esteghlal

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Qatar's Al Gharafa will be eager to get their AFC Champions League Elite West Zone campaign back on track when they host Iran's Esteghlal at Thani Bin Jassim Stadium today, aiming to bounce back from defeat in their group-stage opener.

Head coach Pedro Martins expressed confidence in his side's readiness for the encounter, saying preparations had gone well as Al Gharafa seek their first victory in the competition.

Speaking at the pre-match press conference, Martins said the team had been working to address individual and collective errors that have affected their performances since the start of the season.

"We have worked on addressing the individual and collective errors that have plagued the team's performance since the start of the season, and we aim to regain our usual form in the upcoming matches," he said.

Martins acknowledged that Al Gharafa face a challenging test against an Esteghlal that impressed in their previous match against fellow Qatari club Al Sadd.



Al Gharafa players in action during a training session ahead of their AFC Champions League Elite match against Iran's Esteghlal.

He described the Iranian outfit as a well-organised team with a solid defensive structure and players capable of creating scoring opportunities through counter-attacks.

Al Gharafa will therefore need to be more disciplined at both ends of the pitch as they look to overcome their opening setback. With Martins stressing the importance of correcting mistakes and restoring the team's usual form, the

match presents an opportunity for the Qatari side to secure their first points of the campaign.

Al Shamal vs Tractor FC
Qatar's Al Shamal and Iran's Tractor FC are set for a blistering face-off when they meet in the group match in Muscat's Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex today.

Tractor suffered defeat in their league stage opener while Al Shamal kicked off their campaign

with a draw. An early Yuri Cesar goal sealed the points for UAE's Shabab Al Ahli but Tractor would have felt that they, at least, deserved a share of the spoils.

The Iran side have to, however, work on their sharpness in front of goal as from the seven shots attempted against Shabab Al Ahli, only one was on target.

Al Shamal, making their AFC Champions League Elite debut, enjoyed a much better outing as they came within a whisker of defeating two-time champions Al Ittihad Club.

The Qatari side, who booked their ticket to the continental showpiece after finishing runners-up in the 2025-26 Qatar Stars League, took the lead through Baghdad Bounedjah but were denied a famous win by Georginio Wijnaldum's stoppage time equalizer.

Al Shamal's Spanish coach David Prat while speaking on eve of the match said, "We are ready for the tough match against Tractor, and the loss against Al Duhail will not affect the team."

Al Sadd, who suffered their first defeat of the Qatar Stars League (QSL) season in a thrilling encounter against Al Arabi, will look to bounce back when they take on Saudi Arabia's Al Hilal at Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium tomorrow.

Qatar's Younousse-Tijan enter Doha Open quarter-finals



Qatar's top-ranked pair Cherif Younousse and Ahmed Tijan maintained their unbeaten run at the AVC Beach Tour Doha Open 2026, defeating Indonesia's Mulyo Prasetyo Ferza and Purnomosidi Akbar Rizqy 21-13, 21-9 to advance to the quarter-finals. The recently crowned Asian Games gold medallists had earlier beaten China's Li Wei and Yuan Nengfei, and Thailand's S Nobphadon and T Poravid in straight sets to complete a dominant Pool A campaign.

SPOTLIGHT

Smith breaks fielding record as Aussies take lead

THE VETERAN BATSMAN HAS 223 CATCHES IN 126 TESTS

AFP
Durban

Steve Smith broke the Test record for the most career catches by a fielder as Australia played themselves into a strong position on the third day of the first Test against South Africa at Kingsmead yesterday.

Smith held four catches, taking his total to 223, as South Africa were bowled out for 284 in reply to Australia's first innings of 390.

Nic Maddinson (17 not out) and Travis Head (10 not out) added 33 runs off just 5.4 overs to stretch Australia's overall lead to 139 before bad light ended play for the third day in a row.

Maddinson, who laboured to a 33-ball duck in the first innings, hit two fours off Marco Jansen in the first over of the second innings and added a six off Wiaan Mulder before play was called off.

Australia's bowlers applied relentless pressure on an easy-paced pitch and a succession of South African batsmen contributed to their own dismissals by playing poor shots.

Six Protea batters reached 30 but David Bedingham's 49 was the top score.

Australian captain Pat Cummins took three for 54 and Mitchell Starc, Josh Hazlewood and Nathan Lyon claimed two wickets each as Australia's long-serving bowling quartet combined with customary efficiency.

South African batting coach Ashwell Prince defended the approach of his batsmen.

"If you look at the make-up of their bowling attack, they're heavily dependent on the three seamers and Lyon is phenomenal as a spinner able to hold one end up," said Prince.

"But they're going to come with a certain intensity that can only last for a certain period of time. I think that's the learning. Sometimes you've got to be able to absorb that intensity."

Prince said he backed his batsmen to play their own game, even though all of the top three were out caught in the slips trying to play forcing shots, while South



Australia's Steve Smith (third left) catches and dismisses South Africa's Temba Bavuma (second left) from a delivery from spinner Nathan Lyon (first right) on day three of the first Test at the Kingsmead stadium in Durban yesterday. (AFP)

TOP-10 FIELDERS WITH MOST NUMBER OF CATCHES IN TESTS

Steve Smith	Australia - 223 catches (126 Tests)
Joe Root	England - 220 catches (169 Tests)
Rahul Dravid	India - 210 catches (164 Tests)
M Jayawardene	Sri Lanka - 205 catches (149 Tests)
Jacques Kallis	South Africa - 200 catches (166 Tests)
Ricky Ponting	Australia - 196 catches (168 Tests)
Mark Waugh	Australia - 181 catches (128 Tests)
Alastair Cook	England - 175 catches (161 Tests)
Stephen Fleming	New Zealand - 171 catches (111 Tests)
Graeme Smith	South Africa - 169 catches (117 Tests)

Africa captain Temba Bavuma and Kyle Verreynne were caught by Smith at slip when they played reverse sweeps.

"Every player who walks out for every team naturally has their personal approach to batting. Some guys are more aggressive than others. Over long periods of time, they reap the rewards of that and sometimes it doesn't pay off"

LYON HAILS RENSHAW

Lyon said he expected spin to play a significant role in the remaining two days.

"I felt like (South African spinners) Kesh (Maharaj) and Simon (Harmer) both were spinning out

of the middle of the wicket yesterday and I felt the same," said Lyon yesterday.

"I did notice when the ball went quite soft that the spin probably dropped down a little bit, but it was a nice breeze out there for me today, so I felt like my shape was pretty good and was pretty happy with it."

Lyon praised Matt Renshaw, who scored 190 and was the senior partner in a record 134-run ninth wicket partnership with Lyon on Saturday that swung the match in Australia's favour.

"He had a very clear plan on how to go about it. I thought Matt Renshaw was absolutely incred-

ible. Not even talking about his knock. just his guidance, his support, the confidence that he instilled."

Smith started the day on 219 catches, one behind Joe Root of England.

He equalled the record when he caught Bavuma.

Smith, playing in his 126th Test, broke the record when he lunged to his left from second slip to hold a sharp edge from Bedingham off Cummins.

Smith was in the action again with a spectacular catch to dismiss Verreynne, again anticipating well at slip as the South African wicketkeeper made good contact with a reverse sweep which Smith held in an out-stretched right hand. His fourth catch was from an edge to slip by last man Anrich Nortje off the bowling of Beau Webster.

Smith's career haul of 223 catches exceeds the total of all but 11 specialist wicketkeepers.

BRIEF SCORES

Australia 390 and 33 for 0 (Maddinson 17*, Head 10*) **lead South Africa 284** (Bedingham 49, Cummins 3-54, Hazlewood 2-54) **by 139 runs**

ONE-OFF TEST

Hasan grabs hat-trick as Bangladesh take control in Abu Dhabi

AFP
Abu Dhabi

Fast bowler **Hasan Mahmud** took a hat-trick to help put Bangladesh into a commanding lead over Afghanistan in the one-off Test in Abu Dhabi yesterday.

The 26-year-old, fresh from his nine-wicket haul in Bangladesh's upset of Australia at Darwin in August, finished with 5-55 to dismiss Afghanistan for 240 at Sheikh Zayed Stadium.

Afghanistan skipper Rahmat Shah hit a gritty 105 not out but did not get enough support to match Bangladesh's first-innings 346.

With a first-innings lead of 106, Bangladesh consolidated their position with 223-6 at close on day three, a lead of 329 runs with four wickets intact.

At the close, Litton Das was unbeaten on five and Mehidy Hasan Miraz yet to get off the mark, giving Bangladesh a sniff of victory on a weary pitch. Resuming at 211-4, Afghanistan were dismantled by Hasan. He dismissed Ismat Alam, Qais Ahmad and Zia-ur-Rehman in successive balls to leave Afghanistan 220-8.

Hasan became only the third Bangladesh bowler after Alok Kapali (2003) and Sohag Gazi (2013) to take a Test hat-trick.

He also now has four five-wicket hauls.

"I am delighted to take a hat-



trick and more than that it's good to help the team get a strong position from where we can force a victory," he said.

Hasan's pace partner Ebadot Hossain finished with 4-56.

The Afghan captain Rahmat hit 10 fours and two sixes in his fourth Test hundred.

When Bangladesh batted for the second time, skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto with 82 and veteran batter Mushfiqur Rahim with 81 lifted them from 53-3 with a 159-run stand for the fourth wicket.

Pacers Yamin Ahmadzai (2-42) and Zia-ur-Rehman (2-55) shared the bowling honours for Afghanistan.

BRIEF SCORES

Bangladesh 346 and 223 for 6 (Shanto 82, Mushfiqur 81, Ahmadzai 2-42, Zia 2-55) **lead Afghanistan 240** (Rahmat 105*, Mahmud 5-51, Ebadot 4-56) **by 329 runs**

FOCUS

Sadaqat smashes 96 as Pakistan beat Sri Lanka to secure T20 series



Pakistan's Maaz Sadaqat plays a shot during the second T20I against Sri Lanka at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium yesterday. (AFP)

AFP
Rawalpindi, Pakistan

Maaz Sadaqat just missed out on a hundred as Pakistan upstaged Sri Lanka by 82 runs in the second T20 international yesterday, taking an unbeatable 2-0 lead in the series.

Sadaqat's 51-ball 96 and Saibzada Farhan's 44-ball 73 helped Pakistan to their highest T20 total at home of 215-3 in Rawalpindi.

Medium pacer Mohammad Imran then grabbed 3-11 to restrict Sri Lanka to 133-7 for Pakistan's biggest T20 win over the tourists.

Pakistan skipper Farhan said after the match: "I was sure that we will end up scoring more than 200 despite not scoring much in the powerplay. We have been a different T20I side in 2026 as our six-hitting ratio has improved and our batters are scoring at more than 150."

He added: "If we continue this way we will end up scoring more than 200 every time. We will play with the same intensity with which we have played these two matches in the next match."

Sri Lanka lost wickets at regular intervals with Maheesh Theekshana (32 not out) and Chamindu Wickramasinghe (29) offering some resistance once the game was beyond reach.

Kamindu Mendis (23) and Sineth Jayawardena (22) were the only others to reach double figures.

Pakistan benefited from three dropped catches by Sri Lanka as Sadaqat and Farhan punished the attack, adding 88 runs for the second wicket off just 49 balls.

Sadaqat smashed seven sixes - the joint most by a Pakistan batter in a T20s - and six fours before being dismissed off the final delivery of the innings.

Man of the Match Sadaqat said yesterday: "I was trying to make the most of my form and thank to Almighty it worked for me. I had believe in myself that I can hit the ball and there was one particular ball on which I told Hasan Nawaz that I will smash this one for a six, which I did. I play with positive intent and pick my balls to hit boundaries."

Farhan, dropped on two and 11, hit five sixes and four fours before he holed out to Dasun Shanaka in the 15th over.

Sadaqat, who was put down on 44, then cut loose and added a quickfire 72 off 31 balls for the third wicket with Hasan Nawaz (19 not out).

Pakistan plundered 70 runs in the last five overs, improving on their highest home T20 total of 208-3 against the West Indies in Karachi five years ago.

The third and final match is tomorrow at the same venue.

BRIEF SCORES

Pakistan 215 for 3 (Sadaqat 96, Farhan 73) **beat Sri Lanka 133 for 7** (Theekshana 32*, Imran 3-11) **by 82 runs**

BOTTLINE

India down WI to take 2-1 lead

AFP
Indore, India

Abhishek Sharma struck a quick 69 before Arshdeep Singh's three wickets helped India to a 14-run win over the West Indies in the third T20 international yesterday.

Opener Abhishek's 30-ball assault guided India to 223 all out, a total their bowlers defended by restricting West Indies to 209-7 in Indore, giving them 2-1 lead in the five-match series.

The previous two games had been won by the team batting second, as the West Indies knocked off a target of 250 to level the series on Friday, pulling off the second highest successful chase in T20Is.

Abhishek handed India a quick start as he put on 108 runs with fellow left-hander Ishan Kishan, who made 37, after India were put in to bat.

Sanju Samson fell for just three before India's batters responded with regular boundaries, Abhishek reaching his fifty off 18 balls.

Spinner Roston Chase broke the stand as he removed Kishan and then dismissed skipper Shreyas Iyer for one in the same over.

Pace bowler Shamar Springer cut short Abhishek's knock, which featured six fours and five sixes, as India began to wobble.

Tilak Varma (28) and Nitish Kumar Reddy (21) kept the score ticking over as wickets continued to fall.

Lower-order contributions from Axar Patel, who hit 20, and Prince Yadav, who made an unbeaten 13 off six balls, boosted the total.

In reply, West Indies lost skipper Shai Hope for five off left-arm quick Arshdeep before Shimron Hetmyer hit the same bowler for a six and three fours in a 19-run over.

Hetmyer made 43 off 26 balls before being dismissed by Naman Dhir and Rovman Powell fell for five as West Indies slipped in their chase.

Dhir struck again to send back opener Kamil Pooran, who hit a 27-ball 42, to reduce the



India's Abhishek Sharma celebrates after scoring his half-century during the third T20 international against West Indies in Indore yesterday. (AFP)

opposition to 105-4 in the 11th over. Sherfane Rutherford attempted to repeat his heroics for the second game, clubbing 32 off 20 before Arshdeep bowled him in the 18th over to effectively extinguish West Indies' hopes.

The fourth match is on Wednesday in Hyderabad.

BRIEF SCORES

India 223 (Abhishek 69, Kishan 37, Chase 2-38) **beat West Indies 209** (Hetmyer 43, Arshdeep 3-44) **by 14 runs**

India's Arshdeep Singh (second left) celebrates with teammates after taking the wicket of West Indies captain Shai Hope in Indore yesterday. (AFP)



FORMULA 1

Verstappen wins Singapore Grand Prix for first time

Ferrari's Leclerc second, championship leader Antonelli third for Mercedes

AFP
Singapore

Max Verstappen won the Singapore Grand Prix for the first time in his career yesterday to complete a perfect weekend where he also finished first in the sprint and was on pole for both races.

Red Bull's Verstappen finished 7.335sec ahead of Ferrari's Charles Leclerc with championship leader Kimi Antonelli third for Mercedes after 62 laps under the lights of the Marina Bay Street Circuit.

The four-time world champion had never won or even achieved a pole position in nine previous attempts going back to his debut for Toro Rosso in 2015.

"It has taken a while but I think this race was very good," said a delighted Verstappen, who was celebrating back-to-back wins after triumphing in Malaysia seven days ago, his first victory of 2026.

"We had pace when we needed to have it on the soft tyre and the medium. So of course very happy to win here," the Dutchman added after claiming the top step of the podium on his 250th grand prix start.

"I think the last few races have been really positive for us, we have a lot of motivation in the team to try and deliver even more results."

"Hopefully we can have a bit more fun until the end of the year."

The McLaren pair of Lando Norris and Oscar Piastri were fourth and fifth, ahead of Ferrari's Lewis Hamilton, who dropped from third on the grid to sixth after botching his tyre strategy.

Liam Lawson's RB was seventh, Nico Hulkenberg eighth in the Audi and George Russell, who started from the back of the grid because of engine penalties, came home ninth in his Mercedes.

"It was a very tough race out there, but really happy with a podium in the end," said Antonelli, who increased his championship lead to 102 points over Russell.

Isack Hadjar in the second Red Bull, who started from the pit lane, rounded out the points scorers in 10th.



Winner Red Bull Racing's Dutch driver Max Verstappen lifts his trophy as he celebrates on the podium after the Singapore Grand Prix at the Marina Bay Street Circuit yesterday. (AFP)

"We were quite strong at the beginning of the race, then we started degrading," said Leclerc.

"We did a different strategy to Max, I gave it my all and I don't regret anything. I don't think there was much more to do today."

Verstappen was put under immediate pressure from the quick-reacting Leclerc as he launched from pole position at lights out.

The Dutchman had to swoop across to his left to cut off the Ferrari driver and stay ahead into turn

one. Leclerc stuck to the rear of Verstappen through the first few laps as his teammate Hamilton kept Antonelli at bay.

Hamilton was the only one of the front-runners to start on the slower medium tyres and he was the first to pit, taking on fresh soft rubber on lap 19.

Verstappen left it until lap 32 to stop, and once all the top six had pitted, the order was the same as at the start.

Antonelli and Leclerc dived for a

RESULTS

1. Max Verstappen (NED/Red Bull) 305 km in 1hr 42min 0.785sec, 2. Charles Leclerc (MON/Ferrari) at 7.335sec, 3. Kimi Antonelli (ITA/Mercedes) at 24.573, 4. Lando Norris (GBR/McLaren) at 40.506, 5. Oscar Piastri (AUS/McLaren) at 49.644, 6. Lewis Hamilton (GBR/Ferrari) at 53.188, 7. Liam Lawson (NZL/RB) at 1:21.666, 8. Nico Hulkenberg (GER/Audi) at 1:23.386, 9. George Russell (GBR/Mercedes) at 1:24.677, 10. Isack Hadjar (FRA/Red Bull) at 1:30.862, 11. Pierre Gasly (FRA/Alpine) at 1 lap, 12. Oliver Bearman (GBR/Haas) at 1 lap, 13. Esteban Ocon (FRA/Haas) at 1 lap, 14. Carlos Sainz (ESP/Williams) at 1 lap, 15. Arvid Lindblad (GBR/RB) at 1 lap, 16. Fernando Alonso (ESP/Aston Martin) at 1 lap, 17. Sergio Perez (MEX/Cadillac) at 2 laps, 18. Alexander Albon (THA/Williams) at 3 laps, 19. Valtteri Bottas (FIN/Cadillac) at 3 laps
- The other competitors were not classified

second time under a virtual safety car caused by Lance Stroll's Aston Martin breaking down.

But Hamilton bafflingly decided to stay out on much older tyres, despite being called in by his team, an aberration that would cost the seven-time world champion a podium finish.

Leclerc on fresh rubber quickly passed Hamilton for second. Norris attempted to overtake Hamilton at the start of lap 55 only to lose his place to Antonelli, who then picked off the Ferrari to move up to third.

"I managed to take advantage of the fight with Lando and Lewis, and very happy with that," said Antonelli.

Norris did get past Hamilton, whose tyres were shot, on the next lap followed by Piastri.

"Sorry boys. I let you down today with that strategy," said Hamilton on team radio.

"My call, and I lost us valuable points. I'll try and make up for it in the next one."

SHANGHAI MASTERS

Shelton exits as Zverev advances

AFP
Shanghai

France's world number 56 Arthur Gea stunned Ben Shelton in the third round of the Shanghai Masters yesterday as the US Open finalist became the biggest casualty of the event so far.

Top seed Alexander Zverev needed three sets against another Frenchman, Quentin Halys, to reach the last 16 and close in on the number one ranking.

The 21-year-old Gea beat the big-serving American Shelton 7-6 (7/5), 7-6 (7/3) for the biggest win of his career.

"I got outplayed today," world number four Shelton told reporters. "My body wasn't ready," said Shelton, who played at the Davis Cup last month following defeat in the US Open final to Zverev.

Shelton skipped the Japan Open that ended last week due to fitness concerns.

"That's just the way this tour is sometimes," said the 24-year-old, adding that jet lag had also taken a toll.

Gea will play 13th seed Jakub Mensik of the Czech Republic next. "Amazing, to be honest," Gea said after his first win over a top-10 player. He added that he has been "more confident on court" following a breakout year that saw him clinch his first ATP title in July in Los Cabos.

He stormed into a 5-3 lead in the first set before Shelton came back fighting, levelling to 5-5 with a clutch backhand volley at the net. The two players were neck and neck in the tie-break until Gea sneaked ahead to win

MOTOGP

Bezzecchi claims Indonesia GP as Martin retakes lead

AFP
Indonesia

Marco Bezzecchi stormed to victory in Indonesia yesterday as Jorge Martin was third to retake the lead from Marc Marquez in the MotoGP world championship.

The Italian Bezzecchi, riding an Aprilia, made his move on pole-sitter Raul Fernandez in the final third of a captivating grand prix at a sweltering Mandalika International Circuit.

Spain's Fernandez came home second and compatriot Martin third, also riding Aprilia bikes. Ducati's reigning seven-time world champion Marquez finished sixth.

That meant Martin retook the lead in the championship from Marquez by two points, with five more race weekends after this. Bezzecchi is still alive in the championship title hunt in third. "It's amazing, I'm very, very happy," said Bezzecchi, who sits on 309 points in the standings.

Martin is top with 355, with Marquez on his tail on 353.

"Very happy to be back on the top step of the podium. It was a nice battle with Raul (Fernandez) and I think me and all my team deserve a result like this."

"They have been through tough times with me," said Bezzecchi, who last won a grand prix in May.

Martin, who will head to Australia in a fortnight with the most slender of leads, said he had done all he could. "I did the maximum," said Martin, who started alongside title rival Marquez on the second row of the grid. I did my best. At the start I lost a lot of positions but tried to be calm and was overtaking riders step by step.

He added: "We are still in the fight and still in the lead."

Fernandez, having to improvise to brake after fracturing two fingers in Saturday's sprint, got away cleanly from his first-ever pole. He and Bezzecchi, who started alongside him on the grid, had clashed and crashed out in the sprint.

The sprint was won by Marquez to grab the championship lead for the first time from compatriot Martin. After a third of the 27 laps in the grand prix, Fernandez kept the fellow Aprilia of Bezzecchi at bay despite his injury. Former world champion Martin was running third, with Marquez looming in fifth without ever really threatening. Fernandez, who had two



Aprilia Racing rider Marco Bezzecchi celebrates on the podium after winning the Indonesian GP at the Mandalika International Circuit in Mandalika yesterday. (AFP)

previous victories, kept his cool under tremendous pressure from Bezzecchi until lap 19, when the Italian made his move to grasp the lead. Bezzecchi streaked away from there to win by 4.260sec as Fernandez gamely hung on for second.

RESULTS:

1. Marco Bezzecchi (ITA/Aprilia) 40mins 46.582sec, 2. Raul Fernandez (ESP/Trackhouse) at 4.260, 3. Jorge Martin (ESP/Aprilia) 6.890, 4. Ai Ogura (JPN/Trackhouse) 9.378, 5. Pedro Acosta (ESP/KTM Factory Racing) 9.492, 6. Marc Marquez (ESP/Ducati) 10.778, 7. Alex Marquez (ESP/Gresini Racing) 16.821, 8. Fabio Di Giannantonio (ITA/Pertamina Enduro VR46 Racing) 19.840, 9. Fabio Quartararo (FRA/Yamaha) 19.999, 10. Enea Bastianini (ITA/Red Bull GASGAS Tech3) 21.111, 11. Brad Binder (RSA/Red Bull KTM Factory Racing) 21.912, 12. Luca Marini (ITA/Repsol Honda) 22.656, 13. Johann Zarco (FRA/LCR Honda) 26.260, 14. Franco Morbidelli (ITA/Pertamina Enduro VR46 Racing) 28.012, 15. Alex Rins (ESP/Yamaha) 31.662, 16. Diogo Moreira (BRA/LCR Honda) 34.168, 17. Maverick Vinales (ESP/Red Bull GASGAS) 55.596

Overall standings (top 10):

1. Jorge Martin (ESP/Aprilia) 355 pts, 2. Marc Marquez (ESP/Ducati) 353, 3. Marco Bezzecchi (ITA/Aprilia) 309, 4. Ai Ogura (JPN/Aprilia-Trackhouse) 259, 5. Pedro Acosta (ESP/KTM) 258, 6. Fabio Di Giannantonio (ITA/Ducati-VR46) 245, 7. Raul Fernandez (ESP/Aprilia-Trackhouse) 236, 8. Alex Marquez (ESP/Ducati-Gresini) 172, 9. Francesco Bagnaia (ITA/Ducati) 166, 10. Fermin Aldeguer (ESP/Ducati-Gresini) 125.

TENNIS

Zheng beats Andreeva to become first home player to win China Open

AFP
Beijing

Zheng Qinwen became the first home winner of the China Open yesterday as she beat Russian teenager Mirra Andreeva 7-5, 6-4.

The former world number four and current Olympic champion was a wildcard entry in Beijing, having struggled with form and fitness after elbow surgery in 2025.

It was the 54th-ranked Zheng's first title in nearly two years, and tears filled her eyes as she fell to the court in celebration.

"The feeling was incredible to win here in Beijing... in front of my home crowd is one of my dreams," she said during the trophy ceremony. "I've been through a very, very tough year," she added.



Winner Zheng Qinwen (right) and runners-up Mirra Andreeva pose with their trophies after the China Open final in Beijing. (AFP)

She congratulated Andreeva on her French Open win from earlier this year before serenading the crowd with a song about chasing the "light of dreams".

Zheng, 24, is the first Chinese player to win the prestigious tournament since its inception in 2004.

Andreeva, ranked five, was more

consistent to start with, but Zheng grabbed back a break and stayed with her 19-year-old opponent as they battled on the baseline. Zheng saved three set points to level at 5-5 and won every single point after that, sending down an ace to take the first set.

A crowd desperate to see their homegrown talent crowned champion was at times disruptive as cheers erupted before points ended and shouts for Zheng punctuated serves on both sides of the net.

But the players kept their focus, holding serve until Zheng found a way through in the ninth game of the second set, firing brilliantly against the line to break and go up 5-4.

A double-fault threatened to derail an imminent triumph until Zheng, defiant, sent down an ace to win on her first match point.

FEYSA, KIPRUTO TRIUMPH IN CHICAGO MARATHON

Ethiopian Hawi Feysa retained her Chicago Marathon crown in a heavyweight clash with Kenya's Sharon Lokedi yesterday, breaking the tape in two hours, 13 minutes and 33 seconds, while Kenya's Amos Kipruto dominated the men's race in 2:01:09. The back-to-back Boston winner Lokedi (2:14:07) battled with Feysa through much of the final six miles of the course but could not hang on as the Ethiopian slammed her foot on the gas in the final mile. Kenya's Brigid Kosgei was third in 2:14:55. Lokedi and Feysa pulled away from the lead pack around the 30-km mark, taking advantage of pristine conditions on the famously speedy course, before engaging in a tense cat-and-mouse battle that saw them trade the lead on multiple occasions from there. Kipruto exacted revenge in the men's race after

his second-place finish a year ago, adding another marathon major title following his London win four years ago. Kipruto finished 91 seconds behind Ugandan Jacob Kiplimo in 2025 but flipped the script this time around, running all by himself through the final straight after a tactically flawless performance.

Kipchoge wins first marathon in three years

Two-time Olympic champion Eliud Kipchoge won his first marathon in three years yesterday when the Kenyan great cruised to victory at Melbourne. The most-decorated marathoner in history crossed the finish line in 2hrs 9min 10sec, two seconds inside the race record. It was his first victory over the distance since Berlin in 2023 and part of his "World Tour" to raise funds for causes he believes in.

PREMIER LEAGUE

Man City shrug off uncertain future to beat Liverpool

Goals from Haaland, Doku and Cherki extend City's flawless start

AFP
Liverpool

Manchester City shrugged off the threat of swingeing sanctions to beat 10-man Liverpool 3-0 in their first game since being found guilty on more than 100 charges of breaking Premier League financial rules.

Second half goals from Erling Haaland, Jeremy Doku and Rayan Cherki extended City's flawless start under Enzo Maresca after Ryan Gravenberch had been sent off for two yellow cards. Victory reestablishes City's three-point lead at the top of the table, but the future of any title challenge rests on the outcome of the club's appeal against widespread financial impropriety.

An independent commission found City and their Emirati owners arranged "sham" deals to artificially inflate revenues and reduce costs by more than £900mn (\$1.2bn) between 2009 and 2018. No sanction has yet been handed down, but a severe points deduction or even expulsion from the English top-flight are on the table unless City overturn the decision. There has even been speculation there could be retrospective action to strip titles.

The multiple breaches of Premier League laws came during a period in which City won three titles and a clutch of other trophies.

City's rivals believe, however, that the illegal spending during that period also built the foundations for a golden era under former boss Pep Guardiola, who left at the end of last season. Liverpool were one of the clubs most affected, having finished second to City three times in the past 12 years.

City arrived under the protection of a police escort with a hostile Anfield welcome expected, but there was no repeat of the violent scenes when their team bus was pelted by bottles ahead of a Champions League clash in 2018.

Liverpool fans lined the streets to greet the visitors with chants of "cheats" and "going down", while merchandise stalls were littered with flags and scarves mocking City's financial scandal. In the iconic Kop end behind one goal a banner read "a generation of supporters cheated."

The battles between Guardiola's City and Jurgen Klopp's Liverpool in recent years became the Premier League's marquee event. But with the eyes of the world watching, Liverpool failed to rise to the occasion on the field.

New Liverpool boss Andoni Iraola's options were blunted without the injured Dominik



Manchester City's Erling Haaland celebrates with Matheus Nunes after scoring against Liverpool in the Premier League at Anfield. (AFP)

Szoboszlai, Alexander Isak and Cody Gakpo as the Spaniard suffered his first defeat since taking charge of the Reds.

The home side briefly flickered into life at the start of the second half when Lewis Koumas was denied a goal on his first Premier League start by Gianluigi Donnarumma.

An Abu Dhabi-backed takeover in 2008 transformed City from mid-table mediocrity into the dominant force of the English game. City's economic might was in full show help turn the game as Maresca could turn to Jeremy Doku off the bench early in the second half.

Within minutes the Belgian winger had been chopped down by Gravenberch, who was shown a harsh second booking and Liverpool never recovered. Doku's deflected shot was then smashed home by Haaland to break the deadlock 25 minutes from time and open the floodgates. Three minutes later Doku curled a sensational strike into the top corner himself. Cherki then exchanged a slick one-two with Josko Gvardiol before slotting under Alisson Becker to rub salt in Liverpool wounds.

FOREST'S GLASNER LOSES ON RETURN TO PALACE, HULL HOLD EVERTON

Nottingham Forest boss Oliver Glasner was beaten on his return to Crystal Palace as Daichi Kamada's first Premier League goal inspired the Eagles' 3-1 win. Glasner was back in south London for the first time since leaving Palace at the end of last season.

The 52-year-old Austrian led Palace to a shock FA Cup final triumph over Manchester City in 2025 and masterminded their UEFA Conference League success in May.

Glasner opted to quit Selhurst Park after reported issues with the club's hierarchy over their transfer policy, opening the way for his move to Forest. Forest sit in 14th place, with Palace climbing above them into 12th.

Hull extended their unbeaten home record since returning to the Premier League with an 2-2 draw against Everton at the MKM Stadium.

Fifth-placed Everton remain unbeaten in six league games, while ninth-placed Hull have lost just one of their six matches since earning promotion last season.

SERIE A

Lazio join Inter at top as Roma and AC Milan held

AFP
Rome

Lazio moved level on points with Inter Milan at the top of Serie A with a 3-1 win over Monza as pursuers Roma and AC Milan were both held. Ten-man Roma could not keep pace as Donyell Malen's red card overshadowed a 0-0 stalemate in Como to sit two points behind with leaders in third.

AC Milan were held 1-1 at Sassuolo to leave them four points adrift of the leaders in fourth.

Under Gennaro Gattuso, who has bounced back after his failure at the helm of the Italian national side who missed out on the 2026 World Cup, Lazio continued their strong start to the season.

Still unbeaten, the Roman outfit secured a fifth victory in six matches to pull level on 16 points with Inter Milan, who beat Parma 3-0 at the San Siro on Saturday.

Their run comes despite ongoing fan protests against owner Claudio Lotito that have left Lazio's home matches sparsely attended amid a stadium boycott.

Nuno Tavares gave Lazio a third-minute lead and Gustav Isaksen doubled it midway through the first half. Monza had Lorenzo Lucchesi sent off on 35 minutes for hauling down Tijjani Noslin as he broke through on goal, but the

16th-placed visitors rattled Lazio after the break, pulling a goal back and coming close to equalising before conceding a third goal in the closing stages.

Ruben Amorim's Milan maintained their unbeaten start but drew for the third time in their last four league games. Matteo Gabbia went off injured early on with the breakthrough not coming until the 63rd minute when Luka Modric slipped in Adrien Rabiot to fire home a powerful finish.

Sassuolo responded immediately as Mike Maignan was forced into a double save, and the Rossoneri's lead lasted just five minutes before substitute Cas Odenthal turned in the equaliser in a crowded box from a corner.

Roma continued their unbeaten start against Como but could only pick up a point in the first goalless draw of the Serie A season. The dismissal of league top scorer Malen for a dangerous tackle early in the second half forced Roma to scale back their ambitions after a bright start. Neither team could find the breakthrough in a clash between two sides widely regarded as dark horses for the title.

Both sides are in Champions League action on Wednesday, when Roma host Real Madrid at the Stadio Olimpico and Como travel to Feyenoord. Bologna picked up their first win of the season by beating Lecce 2-1.



Sassuolo's Cas Odenthal celebrates after scoring against AC Milan. (Reuters)

Goto fires Freiburg to Bundesliga summit

Berlin: Japan forward Keisuke Goto's late header fired ten-man Freiburg to the top of the German Bundesliga table with a 2-1 win over Schalke.

Goto's 85th minute winner saw Freiburg leapfrog Bayern Munich and Borussia Dortmund into first place, after his compatriot Yuto Suzuki was sent off in the second half. Maximilian Eggestein headed Freiburg in front from a corner early on. Schalke then hit back through a corner of their own, debutant Adrian Gantenbein smashing a loose ball in via a deflection.

Freiburg's grip on the game slipped further in the second half when Suzuki was dismissed for a second yellow card. Yet Julian Schuster's side remained positive against a defensive Schalke side and were rewarded with five minutes to play. Vincenzo Grifo picked out Goto with a curling cross into the box, and the

21-year-old nodded the ball past Schalke goalkeeper Loris Karius.

Earlier on Sunday, Borussia Muenchengladbach remained rock bottom of the table after a 2-1 defeat to local rivals Cologne, in a match overshadowed by ugly scenes on the terraces.

The game was suspended for several minutes and riot police surrounded the away block after Gladbach fans appeared to fire fireworks into the home sections after Said El Mala's superb second-half winner.

Defeat maintained pointless Gladbach's miserable start to the season as new coach Alexander Blessin failed to prevent the club falling to their fifth defeat in as many games.

The heated derby was a baptism of fire for Blessin, who replaced Eugen Polanski as Gladbach coach in September with the task of turning around a rapidly sinking ship.

Haaland vows troubled Man City will 'stick together

Liverpool: Erling Haaland said Manchester City's 3-0 win at 10-man Liverpool showed they will "stick together" after the club was found guilty of breaching Premier League financial rules.

Haaland put City ahead at Anfield before Jeremy Doku and Rayan Cherki netted to silence Anfield after Liverpool fans barraged them with taunts about the guilty verdict.

City, who are appealing against the decision, could face a massive points deduction that would likely lead to relegation or even be stripped of their titles. But for now Norway striker Haaland insisted their defiant performance at old rivals Liverpool proved they are still committed to the City cause.

"Every single person that is part of Man City,

and every fan, this is a lovely moment that will stay with us for a long time," he said.

"It was hard, but we showed amazing character from back to front. So proud of everyone. It's always tough to come here. Important to stay strong mentally, stick together and do what you can do something about and the thing we can do something about is to play good football and fight together. That's the only thing we can do."

Haaland said City's players can only concentrate on their performances while the club's Abu Dhabi-based owners deal with the legal ramifications of the verdict. "You want to win games, it's as simple as that. Perform well, play good football and win games. This was a mental battle," he said. "Proud that we man-

aged to stick together, we are mentally strong. Plenty of games coming up so time to recover and go again."

City midfielder Elliot Anderson delivered a composed display in his first taste of the rivalry with Liverpool after his close-season move from Nottingham Forest.

The England international echoed Haaland's assessment of his side's spirit, saying: "Togetherness, fight, a tough place to come and we stuck together and fought for each other. We've showed courage. The atmosphere was more than normal, arriving into Anfield and the first 10 minutes of the game. We did well to quieten the crowd. Struggled first half but second we were better and then the goals came."

Team Qatar claims historic European Le Mans Series championship podium



Team Qatar by Iron Lynx achieved a historic milestone by finishing third overall in the LMGT3 Teams' Championship of the 2026 European Le Mans Series (ELMS), becoming the first Qatari team to achieve this result. In addition, Abdulla al-Khelaifi and Julian Hanses secured third place in the LMGT3 Drivers' Championship standings. In the season finale at Portugal's Algarve International Circuit, the team led the race for approximately two and a half hours before a penalty affected its final result. Despite the setback, Team Qatar fought until the chequered flag to conclude an impressive season on the international stage. Another major highlight was al-Khelaifi securing pole position for the team, underlining its competitiveness against a strong international field.

LA LIGA

Betis rise back above Real to third

AFP
Seville

Veteran playmaker Isco struck twice to help Real Betis climb back into third place in La Liga with a 5-2 win over Osasuna.

The Andalusian side moved a point above Real Madrid, fourth, and level with second place Atletico Madrid, trailing leaders Barca by five points. Manuel Pellegrini's side claimed a sixth league win from eight matches with an exciting display of attacking football at La Cartuja stadium, where they are playing until their Benito Villamarin home is renovated, likely 2028.

Former Real Madrid midfielder Isco, 34, netted from the penalty spot after a foul on Rodrigo Riquelme, and Ez Abde doubled the hosts lead after half-an-hour with a cool finish.

Ante Budimir's own goal gave Betis their third after half-time, before the Croatian striker net-



Real Betis' Isco celebrates after scoring against Osasuna at Benito Villamarin Stadium in Seville. (AFP)

ted at the correct and Raul Garcia added another to give Osasuna a fighting chance.

Isco capitalised on a loose ball in the box to grab his second and Jose Morante bagged a fifth in stoppage time to close out Betis's big win.

Earlier on Real Sociedad de-

feated Deportivo La Coruna 3-2 in another entertaining battle.

The Basque side, sixth, eased into a three-goal lead Mario Soriano pulled one back for the visitors in San Sebastian to spark a Depor fight back. They were given further encouragement when Real Sociedad's Pablo Marin was sent off in the 66th minute for a foul on Nsongo Bil in the box and Yeremay Hernandez netted from the penalty spot. Both teams finished with 10 men after Lorenzo Amatucci brought down Mikel Oyarzabal as the last man, and Depor could not find an equaliser.

On Saturday Liga leaders Barcelona beat Getafe 3-0 to prolong their perfect start to the season, with eight wins from eight league games. Hansi Flick's side are followed by second place Atletico Madrid, who snatched a late 2-1 win at Alaves, while Jose Mourinho's Real Madrid scraped a 1-0 victory over Villarreal despite Vinicius Junior's red card for hair-pulling.