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PREVIEW

Sadd seek redemption as Duhail eye statement win

‘It will be a very tough match between two excellent teams, and I expect it to be exciting and entertaining’

By Sports Reporter
Doha

All eyes will turn to Jas-sim Bin Hamad Stadium on Sunday evening as Qatar’s football heavy-weights, Al Sadd and Al Duhail, prepare to renew their fierce rivalry in a highly anticipated clash of the Qatar Stars League (QSL).

Whenever these two sides meet, the occasion is rarely short of drama, intensity or quality. With both teams boasting considerable technical ability and ambitions of challenging for the league title, today’s encounter promises to be another compelling chapter in one of most eagerly awaited domestic fixtures.

For defending champions Al Sadd, the mission is clear: bounce back, restore confidence and reclaim the top spot. For Al Duhail, the challenge is to build on their recent resurgence and strengthen their position among the league’s leading contenders.

Al Sadd eager to respond

The defending champions head into the derby with 12 points, but their momentum was checked by a disappointing 3-2 defeat against Al Arabi in the previous round. The result ended their winning streak and left the team eager to respond in front of their home supporters.

Against a familiar and formidable rival, Al Sadd will need to rediscover the sharpness, composure and attacking rhythm that have made them such a formidable force. The pressure is undoubtedly on, but the occasion also offers an opportunity to make an immediate statement of intent.

Head coach Razvan Lucescu knows the size of the task awaiting his players and has called for a determined, disciplined performance from the opening whistle.

“It will be a very tough match between two excellent teams, and I expect it to be exciting and entertaining. It is very important for us to give our all and achieve victory, as we need to get back on the winning track,” Lucescu said.

The Al Sadd coach stressed that desire alone would not be enough.



Al Sadd's Augustin Soria with his team-mates during a training session.

His players must remain focused, fight for every ball and maintain their concentration throughout the contest.

For Lucescu, the key will be seeing his team approach the match with the right mentality and the determination to compete until the final whistle. Against opponents of Al Duhail’s calibre, even a brief lapse in concentration could prove costly.

Al Duhail arrive with confidence

While Al Sadd are looking to recover from a setback, Al Duhail arrive with renewed belief following an emphatic 4-0 victory over Al Shamal.

That result lifted the Red Knights to nine points and third place in the standings, providing a timely boost ahead of one of their biggest tests of the campaign.

Djamel Belmadi’s side will now look to carry that momentum into today’s showdown, knowing that another victory would not only

strengthen their position but also bring them closer to the top of the table.

However, the Al Duhail coach is under no illusions about the challenge awaiting his team. He recognises that matches against Al Sadd are often decided by fine margins, with intensity and individual moments capable of changing the course of the game.

“The Al Sadd match is a derby, and it’s always a very competitive and intense game. We’ve prepared well during our training sessions and worked hard, focusing heavily on recovery from our recent matches, given the short time between games,” Belmadi said.

The coach also believes his team’s recent positive results can provide an important psychological advantage, giving the players greater confidence and motivation as they prepare for the demanding encounter.

For Al Duhail, the objective will be to turn that confidence into



Al Duhail's Almoez Ali takes part in a training session yesterday.

another convincing performance while remaining tactically disciplined against a wounded champion.

Al Rayyan face Al Gharafa

Meanwhile, table toppers Al Rayyan will meet Al Gharafa at the Thani Bin Jassim Stadium today at 7.45pm.

The match presents various challenges for both sides. Al Gharafa would be looking to regain their footing, while Al Rayyan are seeking to maintain their lead at the top.

The Cheetahs enter the clash under considerable pressure, having fallen to 10th place with a tally of only four points – a position that betrays the team’s pedigree and performance last season.

Coach Pedro Martins is striving to arrest the slide by addressing the mistakes which may have impacted their results. He would surely be hoping for a win that will restore the players’ confidence

and provide a much-needed boost to improve the team’s position in league standings.

In contrast, Al Rayyan go into the match as table toppers with 13 points, aiming to continue their winning streak. The Lions will look to carry on the momentum and remain at the top.

Al Rayyan coach Vicente Moreno said the clash was crucial for The Lions.

“Yes, it is a big and very important match for us, especially after the last match. Tomorrow we need to win and we want to win, and I hope we will put on a very good performance for ourselves and for our fans. I repeat, it is a very important match for us, and we want to win.

“We know that last season it was very difficult to beat them. We want to beat them because, after the last match, we want to win again, and we know the impact that would have on our fans. But ultimately, they also have a



Al Rayyan coach Vicente Moreno and Al Gharafa coach Pedro Martins (below) address press conferences yesterday.



very good team, and I hope we can achieve victory.”

Al Gharafa coach Pedro Martins said, “I’m confident that a turning point for us will come, and I hope we can achieve that in the upcoming match against Al Rayyan.

“Everyone is striving to change things and the players are giving their all to achieve that. Therefore, I trust in the players’ potential, abilities, and determination to change the situation, and I know they will fight for it.

“Al Rayyan started the season very well, and they have many solutions, whether in terms of local or foreign players. This is evident when the team makes substitutions, as you don’t feel a significant drop in the team’s level, which reflects the strength and balance of their group, given the quality of the players.

“But we also have our strengths that we can rely on, and we are ready and we know Al Rayyan’s style of play. We will try to avoid mistakes as much as possible so that we do not pay a heavy price in terms of the result. We will face a team that plays with great confidence, and although it does not rely much on possession, it is capable of creating problems for opponents through direct attacks and quick counter-attacks,” he added.

QATAR STARS LEAGUE

Sailiya rally from two goals down to snatch draw against Qatar SC

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Al Sailiya made a late surge to rally from being two goals down and hold Qatar SC 2-2 while a spirited Lusail played out a goalless draw with Al Shamal in their respective Qatar Stars League (QSL) round six games yesterday.

At the Abdullah Bin Khalifa Stadium, Joselu (90+5 minute) and Younes Belhanda (82nd minute) struck for Al Sailiya after Niall Mason (34th minute) and Joao Pedro (51st minute) had put Qatar SC 2-0 ahead. It was the first draw result of the league for Al Sailiya following five consecutive defeats and saw them log their first point while Qatar SC with a third draw remain on 3 points.

In a stoppage-time scamper,

Joselu picked on the ball in front of the goal as it was being cleared after a free kick, the alertness beat a diving goalkeeper Ali Nader and left him frustrated.

Earlier, Moroccan Belhanda’s free kick, taken about two yards away from the top of the box, swerved into the top right corner. Until then, Qatar SC seemed to be cruising with English pro Mason making a sharp header to a powerful Said Brahmi free kick – taken from left outside of the box, and Pedro essaying a fabulous free kick – from almost ten yards away from the box. It curled in to beat a diving Al Sailiya goalkeeper Bautista Burke to his left at the post.

Joselu celebrates after scoring Al Sailiya’s stoppage-time equaliser against Qatar SC at the Abdullah Bin Khalifa Stadium.



LUSAIL HOLD AL SHAMAL TO GOALLESS STALEMATE

At the Suhaim Bin Hamad Stadium, both Lusail SC and Al Shamal struggled to break the deadlock in a tightly contested match. Lusail, playing their maiden senior league, showed resilience at the back, while Al Shamal, who entered the fixture in fifth place, controlled more possession but lacked a clinical edge in front of goal.

Yellow cards were shown to Lusail’s Omid Ebrahimi, Franco Russo and Ali Nemati, along with Al Shamal’s Musab Kheder.

Neither team managed to convert their limited clear chances. The result left Al Shamal with 9 points from six matches, while Lusail moved up to 6 points. Both teams will look to build on the point as the league season continues.

The match saw a remarkable turnout from the “Al-Khayala” (The Knights) supporters, who held up banners bearing the club’s name and the players’ names.

They cheered the team on fervently throughout the match,



Action from the Lusail-Al Shamal match at Suhaim Bin Hamad Stadium.

a testament to the unwavering support of the Lusail fanbase, who consistently create a vibrant atmosphere whenever they

attend and back the team during league fixtures. Yesterday’s match drew an attendance of 9,402 spectators.

TRI-SERIES

England, Pakistan and SL prep up for WC

AFP
Rawalpindi, Pakistan

England, Sri Lanka and hosts Pakistan meet in a one-day international tri-series starting in Rawalpindi from today as they build up to next year's 50-over World Cup.

With the global tournament -- co-hosted by South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia -- a little under a year away, Pakistan captain Shaheen Shah Afridi described the series as vital.

"It will be important we do well as the focus will be on the World Cup and we need to get good preparations," Shaheen said ahead of his team's opener, against Sri Lanka today.

While all three sides are former World Cup champions, their recent results are less encouraging. Pakistan, champions in 1992,

have not qualified for the ODI World Cup semi-finals since 2011 and finished fifth at the last World Cup in India three years ago.

England won the title at home in 2019 but fared miserably in 2023, coming seventh.

The 1996 champions Sri Lanka were no better.

Pakistan will see the return of ace batsman Babar Azam after he was not selected for the Twenty20 series against Sri Lanka which finished last week with Pakistan winning 2-1.

England skipper Harry Brook said: "It's a great opportunity against two very strong sides and will hold us in good stead, and if we play the final it will show us where we stand," said Brook, whose team meet Pakistan on Tuesday.

All teams play each other twice before the top two clash in the October 31 final in Lahore.

England are without star batter

Jos Buttler (injured) and fast bowler Jofra Archer (rested). But they are on the back of three successive ODI series wins -- two against Sri Lanka and one over India.

Sri Lankan skipper Kusal Mendis was in positive mood.

"We have plans in place (towards the World Cup) and I hope the team shows some good progress," said Mendis.

TRI-SERIES SCHEDULE:

Oct 18: Pakistan vs Sri Lanka - Rawalpindi

Oct 20: Pakistan vs England - Rawalpindi

Oct 22: England vs Sri Lanka - Rawalpindi

Oct 25: Pakistan vs England - Lahore

Oct 27: Pakistan vs Sri Lanka - Lahore

Oct 29: England vs Sri Lanka - Lahore

Oct 31: Final - Lahore



Pakistan's captain Shaheen Shah Afridi (right), England's skipper Harry Brook (left) and Sri Lanka's captain Kusal Mendis arrive for the press conference at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium on the eve of the start of their one-day international tri-series. (AFP)

PREVIEW

Australia to look at all options before the toss

Captain Pat Cummins says he is undecided on the final playing XI

Reuters
Gqeberha, South Africa

Australia are assessing all selection options ahead of the second Test against South Africa in Gqeberha today as they look to claim the three-match series following a thumping 214-run win in the opening game.

All-rounder Cameron Green will miss out again with an abdominal strain but wicketkeeper-batter Josh Inglis will win his race to recover from a finger injury.

Whether he would start if fit remains to be seen, as Australia also ponder an all seam bowling attack that would leave out experienced spinner Nathan Lyon.

With bad weather expected on the first two days there is a chance that the game could be shortened, or that conditions would be heavily weighted in favour of the seamers.

"We always look at all options," captain Pat Cummins told reporters on Saturday. "We love playing with Nath. We saw last week, (he took) a couple of key wickets in the first innings. And even the control he gives. It makes the rest of us fast bowlers be able to function around him."

He suggested that Matt Renshaw, who scored 190 and 82 in the first Test in Durban, would remain as a middle order batter, rather than an option to open the innings as he has done before.

"After what Renners did last week, I presume he'll stay at number five," Cummins said.

"What he deserved even more credit for is that we'd asked him to do a different role and he just



Australia's captain Pat Cummins during nets ahead of the second Test against South Africa in Gqeberha.

said straight away 'yep, no worries, whatever the team needs'. "There were so many positives in addition to the runs he scored last week. He was a delight, and really helped me and Lyon get through those partnerships (with Renshaw)." South Africa lead the head-to-head in Gqeberha 4-3,

with Australia's last victory there coming in 1997.

South Africa still mulling over permutations for second Test

South Africa have not yet confirmed their playing XI for the second Test against Australia as they assess the likely impact of

the weather on the game and consider playing two spinners again.

Captain Temba Bavuma confirmed yesterday that the team were still mulling over several options for their playing personnel.

"We would like to see what happens tomorrow," he told reporters. "Whether we go with two spinners is probably one of the biggest considerations."

"Whether we go with one spinner, whether we play an all-rounder and which all-rounder that is, it all comes down to the balance of the team. Those are the dynamics we have to consider."

One thing that looks certain is a return to the team for fast bowler Kagiso Rabada, who has been cleared to play after missing the first test with a hamstring injury.

"He has been released by the fitness team and is available for selection. He will obviously be a big addition and a boost to the team on the field. He is raring to go," Bavuma said.

"The bowlers feed massively off him. He leads the attack in everything that he does and brings an extra level of confidence to the unit. Whether he is on the field or off the field, there is always a benefit. Any captain would be happy to have a guy like KG in his bowling attack, so that brings a big smile to my face."

Bavuma said his side needed to improve with the bat to challenge Australia. "We need to be much more ruthless in how we execute and, more importantly, when the opportunity is there, we need to go on and do something big for the team," he said.

"We can take the little good moments that we had with the bat (in the first Test) and build on those."

SPOTLIGHT

Pacer Rabada returns as Proteas seek to bounce back after loss in Durban

AFP
Gqeberha, South Africa

Fast bowler Kagiso Rabada will return to the South African team for the second Test against Australia starting at St George's Park on Sunday, captain Temba Bavuma said.

Rabada did not play in the first Test in Durban, where South Africa were beaten by 214 runs, but trained with the team as he completed his rehabilitation from a hamstring injury.

With the possibility of rain on the first two days of the match, both Bavuma and Australian captain Pat Cummins said they would delay finalising their teams until Sunday.

But Bavuma said Rabada was "raring to go" and pointed to the fast bowler's outstanding record against Australia.

Rabada has taken 58 wickets at an average of 21.39 in 11 Tests against Australia, including nine wickets when South Africa won the World Test Championship final at Lord's in 2025 and 11 in the corresponding match in 2017/18 when South Africa bounced back after losing the first Test in Durban.

"The bowlers feed massively off him," said Bavuma. "There's an aura and a lot of belief in KG (Rabada) and that rubs off on the other players."

Bavuma indicated that batsmen Matthew Breetzke and the uncapped Marques Ackerman would both play in a re-jigged batting line-up as South Africa seek to bat for longer periods after a poor batting performance in Durban.

"The first innings was where we fell short," he said. "To concede a lead like that on a wicket like that was rather criminal."

Cummins said Matt Renshaw was set to continue batting at number five after his man-of-the-match returns of 190 and 82 in Durban.



Fast bowler Kagiso Rabada trains ahead of the second Test against Australia starting at St George's Park today.



Fast bowler Anrich Nortje arrives for training.

Normally an opening batsman in Test cricket, Cummins said Renshaw deserved credit for his willingness to play a new role. "He just said, 'yep, no worries, whatever the team needs'."

Cummins said Cameron Green was still not ready to play after suffering an abdominal injury in the one-day series against South Africa last month, although Josh Inglis was "close" to being ready to play after recovering from a broken finger.

FOCUS

Jayawardene quits as Mumbai Indians coach

AFP
Mumbai, India

Mahela Jayawardene stepped down as head coach of Mumbai Indians yesterday to end a nearly decade-long association with one of the Indian Premier League's most successful teams.

The 49-year-old former Sri Lanka captain led Mumbai to three titles in his first stint between 2017 and 2022. He rejoined the team in 2024 but was unable to replicate his success as five-time IPL winners Mumbai finished fourth in 2025 and ninth out of 10 teams in 2026. "Together we have shared some unforgettable moments, overcome challenges and built something we can all be proud of," Jayawardene said in a statement.

"I leave with immense pride in what we have achieved together and will always carry a special place in my heart for MI.

"I wish the team every success in the years ahead."



Mahela Jayawardene

Jayawardene represented Sri Lanka in 149 Tests, 448 one-day internationals and 55 T20 matches between 1997 and 2015.

Meanwhile Delhi Capitals (DC) have signed in Chaminda Vaas as the fast-bowling coach for IPL 2027. The update comes close on the heels of Sourav Ganguly being named head coach and Yuvraj Singh appointed assistant and batting coach.

India T20 series decider with West Indies washed out

BENGALURU: India and West Indies were forced to settle for a 2-2 stalemate in their five-match Twenty20 International series after yesterday's deciding match lasted just 48 minutes before it met a watery end.

At Bengaluru's M Chinnaswamy Stadium, where play began an hour and 45 minutes behind schedule and the match was reduced to nine overs a side, India had reached 118-5 in 7.4 overs when the rain returned, forcing the umpires to call off play with not even a five-overs-a-side shootout possible.

The Chinnaswamy Stadium was hosting its first international fixture since the October 2024 Test match between India and New Zealand, and more than 20,000 expectant fans braved the inclement weather to partake of the entertainment.

Their patience was rewarded when India's batters went on the

rampage after being put in by West Indies captain Shai Hope, with Ishan Kishan, Sanju Samson and the impressive Naman Dhir leading the way.

India lashed eight fours and seven sixes in their limited batting stint, Kishan bringing up the 100th six of the series by swinging Romario Shepherd over long-leg and out of the stadium. But then, the skies opened up again, emphatically washing away any prospect of a decisive outcome.

FOOTBALL

Egypt open U-17 Gulf Cup campaign with a 5-0 win over Saudi Arabia

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Egypt opened their campaign in the U17 Gulf Cup Qatar 2026 with a 5-0 victory over Saudi Arabia at Grand Hamad Stadium yesterday.

After a goalless first half, Mohamed Gamal broke the deadlock in the 54th minute before substitute Ziad Saudi doubled Egypt's lead in the 80th minute.

Ahmed Safwat added a third in the 85th minute, while Khalid Mahmoud scored in the 96th minute and Ahmed Bashir completed the rout in the 98th minute.

Later at Saoud bin Abdulrahman Stadium, Yemen blanked Iraq 2-0.

In the second round of Group B matches on Tuesday, Saudi Arabia will face Yemen at Hamad Bin Khalifa Stadium, while Egypt take on Kuwait at Saud Bin Abdulrahman Stadium.

The top two teams from each group will advance to the semi-finals.



Organised by Qatar's Local Organising Committee in coordination with the Gulf Football Federation, the tournament runs from October 16 to November 4, featuring 10 teams and 23 matches.

ation, the tournament runs from October 16 to November 4, featuring 10 teams and 23 matches.

BASKETBALL

Doha Team ends Macau 3x3 World Tour qualifiers with victory over Bordeaux

Doha 3x3 Basketball Team concluded its campaign in the qualification stage of the 2026 Macau World Tour with an 18-16 victory over France's Bordeaux in its second game in Macau, China. The result came after the team had lost its opening game to Taipei Wan Bao 13-19.

Doha Team began its journey in Pool B against Taipei Wan Bao but was unable to overcome its opponent. The team rebounded in its second game with a hard-fought two-point win against Bordeaux, finishing the qualification round with one win and one loss.

The Doha Team roster featured Mubarak Gama, Mohammed Hashem, Dejan Ganjic, and Mahmoud Darwish.

The team competed in a three-team group, with the group winner securing a place in the main draw of the World Tour event.

The victory over Bordeaux provided a positive conclusion to Doha Team's qualifying campaign, demonstrating the squad's competitiveness in a closely con-



tested game decided by just two points, following its earlier defeat to Taipei Wan Bao.

The Macau World Tour - being held on Oct 17 and 18 - featuring 16 teams from around the world competing for the tournament title and a total prize purse of \$185,000. The event is part of the FIBA 3x3 World Tour series, which attracts some of the strongest teams in international 3x3 basketball. Under the competition format, the qualification stage consisted of groups of three

teams, with each group winner advancing to the main draw of 12 teams. The tournament also features several prominent teams, including Serbia's Ub and the Netherlands' Amsterdam Rabobank, alongside other internationally recognized contenders.

Doha Team's participation forms part of Qatar basketball's ongoing presence in international 3x3 competitions, providing players with valuable opportunities to compete against top international teams.

TENNIS

Fokina beats Zverev, sets up Shanghai final with Jodar

It was a disappointing end to the week for Zverev, a seven-time ATP Masters 1000 champion

AFP
Shanghai

Alejandro Davidovich Fokina upset top seed Alexander Zverev 5-7 6-4 6-3 yesterday to reach the Shanghai Masters final, where he was joined by fellow Spaniard Rafael Jodar after the 20-year-old sensation downed former world number one Daniil Medvedev.

Davidovich Fokina, the 25th seed, fired 36 winners in the two-hour, two-minute contest to secure only his second victory over Zverev in eight meetings.

His previous win against the German came in the round of 32 at the Canadian Open in 2023.

He earned his first break of the match to take the second set, forcing a decider with a stunning backhand passing shot on the run that capped a bruising baseline exchange and brought the crowd to their feet.

Carrying that momentum into the final set, Davidovich Fokina broke Zverev for a 2-0 lead and never relinquished control, booking a place in the second ATP Masters 1000 final of his career after finishing runner-up in Monte Carlo in 2022.

Landing 82% of his first serves and repeatedly exposing Zverev on the forehand side, the 27-year-old secured one of the biggest victories of his career.

"I knew that if I stayed there



Spain's Alejandro Davidovich Fokina hits a return to Germany's Alexander Zverev during their Shanghai Masters semi-final yesterday. (AFP)

all match, I could get at least one chance and I took it there in the second set," Davidovich Fokina said. "Then in the third set, I think I was better physically. The early break in the third set gave me a lot of power. 'I focused on just playing, not mattering about the result but enjoying.'"

Davidovich Fokina has now won nine consecutive matches in China after lifting his second tour-level title at the ATP 250 event in Chengdu last month.

It was a disappointing end to the week for Zverev, a seven-time ATP Masters 1000 champion whose best result in Shanghai remains

his runner-up finish to Medvedev in 2019.

The 29-year-old has otherwise enjoyed a fine season, ending his Grand Slam drought at the French Open before claiming a second major title at the US Open and securing the ATP year-end world number one ranking after Jannik



Spain's Rafael Jodar waves to fans after his victory against Russia's Daniil Medvedev in the Shanghai Masters yesterday. (AFP)

Sinner was sidelined for the remainder of the season with a knee injury.

Twelfth seed Jodar continued his remarkable rise by becoming the youngest Shanghai finalist in tournament history and strengthening his chances of qualifying for the ATP Finals in his first full season on the tour with a 6-3 6-4 victory over fifth-seeded Russian Medvedev.

The aggressive right-hander, who was ranked outside the world's top 900 little more than a year ago, is seeking the second ATP title of his career after capturing his maiden crown in Mo-

rocco and will now compete in his first Masters 1000 final.

"It was a very tough match," Jodar said.

"In the first set all the games were very close, with breakpoints for him, breakpoints for me.

"I'm super happy with how I handled the important moments in the first set, and also how I returned and served.

"Daniil is always a very tough player. I think he played great today. So I had to be at my best level to beat him."

Today's championship match will mark the first meeting between Jodar and Davidovich Fokina.

CHWALINSKA DOWNS SWIATEK TO SET UP WUHAN FINAL WITH WORLD NUMBER 170 KARTAL

WUHAN: Polish 16th seed Maja Chwalinska overcame an injured Iga Swiatek to reach the first WTA 1000 final of her career, handing her childhood friend and compatriot a 7-5, 6-1 defeat at the Wuhan Open yesterday.

Chwalinska will next face world number 170 Sonay Kartal, who became the lowest-ranked player to reach a WTA 1000 final with a gritty 7-6 (11/9), 7-6 (7-5) win over Jelena Ostapenko.

Swiatek, who needed to win the title in Wuhan to increase her slim chances of qualifying for the year-end WTA Finals, battled a left thigh injury during the match, which limited her movement against her crafty left-handed opponent. Meanwhile, Chwalinska did well to manage the mental challenges of the occasion as she hit yet another new milestone in a breakthrough season that saw her make a surprise run to the French Open final, as a qualifier, back in June.

"Obviously Iga wasn't 100 percent today, so I wish her all the best, of course," said the 25-year-old Pole, who is contesting just her fourth WTA 1000 main draw. "It's always tough to play against a



Poland's Iga Swiatek reacts during her semi-final against Poland's Maja Chwalinska at the Wuhan Open yesterday. (AFP)

fellow Polish player. She's a great champion, a living legend, she won everything. So it was a great honour for me to share the court with her today. "I think I still don't really realise what's going on and the fact that I won against her is actually crazy for me." The momentum swung back and forth in the opening frame before Swiatek attempted to serve for a one-set lead at 5-3.

The seventh seed could not close though, despite holding two set points, and soon found herself trailing Chwalinska 5-6. Ahead of game 12, Swiatek took a medical timeout and was in pain and in tears while getting her left thigh attended to. Chwalinska then warded off break points to scoop up the 80-minute first set. In a bizarre opening game of the second set, a tearful Swiatek had

an animated discussion with her strength and conditioning coach Maciej Ryszczyk on the sidelines, while facing two break points. She was handed a time violation warning as a result and went on to drop a fifth consecutive game. The six-time Grand Slam champion could not do much else to stop Chwalinska, who wrapped up the victory in two hours and eight minutes to set up a final showdown with Kartal. Kartal, 24, is playing just her second tour event since returning from a six-month injury layoff, having suffered a spinal stress fracture that sidelined her from March to September.

'VERY PROUD' In a close affair with 2017 French Open champion Ostapenko, Kartal showed tremendous composure and dug herself out of multiple holes to become the first British finalist in Wuhan Open history. "Wow, that was probably one of the toughest matches I've ever played," said the Briton, who survived 50 winners coming off Ostapenko's racquet to reach the biggest final of her career.



Poland's Maja Chwalinska celebrates after winning against Poland's Iga Swiatek in Wuhan Open semi-final yesterday. (AFP)

"I knew exactly how she was going to play. "At times she's unplayable and sometimes you just have to ride that wave. "Mentally I think this is one of the best performances I've had in my career. I'm very proud of that one."

After dismissing three consecutive seeds in her previous rounds, including No.6 Elina Svitolina and No.9 Belinda Bencic, Kartal made the 35th-ranked Ostapenko her latest victim to reach her second career tour-level final, and first at the WTA 1000 level.

PREMIER LEAGUE

Haaland stars in City win, Liverpool beat Brentford 2-1

NETO DOUBLE GIVES CHELSEA WIN MARRED BY MARTINEZ INJURY



Manchester City's Erling Haaland (centre) scores the team's second goal against Ipswich Town at the Etihad Stadium in Manchester yesterday. (AFP)

AFP
London

Erling Haaland starred with a double as Premier League leaders Manchester City beat Ipswich 3-2, while Liverpool came from behind to seal a 2-1 win at Brentford yesterday.

City are in turmoil off the pitch after being found guilty of more than 100 breaches of Premier League financial rules.

On the grass they have made a perfect start, with seven successive league victories marking their best opening to a Premier League season. City, who are appealing against the guilty verdict after branding it a "Premier League conspiracy", sit six points clear of champions Arsenal.

Second-placed Arsenal can close the gap with a win at Nottingham Forest on Sunday.

With City potentially facing a massive points deduction or even expulsion from the top flight if their appeal fails, it remains to be seen whether their results will even matter by the end of the season. For now, Enzo Maresca's

side are in fine form after bouncing back from their midweek loss to Paris Saint-Germain in the Champions League.

There was a defiant mood at the Etihad Stadium, where City fans booed the Premier League anthem before kick-off, while thousands waved inflatable bananas to underline their commitment to the club regardless of its plight. City supporters took toy bananas to matches to lighten the mood when the team was struggling in the late 1980s.

Phil Foden put Maresca's men ahead in the 19th minute with a sharp turn and finish after Jeremy Doku's incisive run prised open the Ipswich defence. Foden's first goal this season was followed by an Ipswich equaliser in the 21st minute when Daizen Maeda evaded Marc Guehi to fire home.

Haaland restored City's lead in the 34th minute with a pin-point header from Mateo Kovacic's cross. Haaland killed off Ipswich in the 69th minute, sprinting onto Ilman Ndiaye's pass and steering his shot past Ipswich goalkeeper Christian Walton. Zian Flemming's 90th-minute penalty, awarded for a foul by Guehi, set up a tense finale but City held on.

"Very happy with today's game, we controlled it for 95 minutes. We create chances, we score. We finish a little bit suffering together but overall, it is good," Maresca said.

In west London, Liverpool were stunned when Brentford defender Keane Lewis-Potter looped a header past Alisson Becker from Igor Thiago's cross in the 44th minute.

But the Bees were reduced to 10 men in first half stoppage-time after Yehor Yarmolyuk's head made contact with Jeremy Jacquet's face while they waited for a corner.

Liverpool lost Dominik Szoboszlai and Jeremie Frimpong to injuries, but still made their numerical advantage count in the 62nd minute. Victor Munoz cut inside and slotted a composed equaliser past Brentford's former Liverpool keeper Caoimhin Kelleher.

Alexander Isak blasted Liverpool's winner in the 70th minute after Barcola teed up the Sweden striker for his fifth goal this term.

Brentford finished with nine men following Vitaly Janelt's second booking in stoppage-time. Beaten by City in their previous league game, Liverpool are up to fifth place after inflicting Brent-

ford's first league defeat of the season.

"You see the results of Brentford at home and you have to be ready for these kinds of battles. We had 45 minutes to do the comeback and I think we played really well," Liverpool boss Andoni Iraola said.

Pedro Neto's double condemned Everton to a first defeat of the season as fourth-placed Chelsea won 2-0 at the Hill Dickinson Stadium despite the loss of goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez to a head injury. Neto opened the scoring inside the first minute of the second half and secured the points during stoppage-time. The Argentine international was involved in a sickening head clash with Everton defender Jarrad Branthwaite and was taken to hospital.

Fulham won for the first time in the league this season as Alex Iwobi's 33rd-minute goal clinched a 1-0 victory against Hull at Craven Cottage.

Alvaro Arbeloa's side moved out of the relegation zone despite having Ryan Sessegnon sent off for a crude lunge on Robinio Vaz in the final minutes. Aston Villa won 2-1 at Newcastle United in the last game of the day.

LIGUE 1

PSG fight back to beat Strasbourg after Dembele penalty miss

AFP
Paris

Ousmane Dembele missed a penalty but later scored as Paris Saint-Germain produced a fightback to win 3-1 away at Strasbourg yesterday and go to the top of the French Ligue 1 table.

PSG were trailing to an early goal by United States star Giovanni Reyna for Strasbourg at the Stade de la Meinau, and last year's Ballon d'Or winner Dembele then put a penalty wide in the 72nd minute. But Dembele made amends in style, first by setting up Illia Zabarnyi to equalise in the 78th minute and then by putting the reigning French and European champions ahead with five minutes to go.

He then played a part in setting up Desire Doue for PSG's third in stoppage time, as Luis Enrique's men made it four straight Ligue 1 wins, and six on the bounce including the Champions League.

After failing to win any of their first three domestic league matches this season, PSG are up to 14 points from seven games and are therefore top of the standings on goals scored from Monaco, before the principality club visit Lorient today.

Lille, Rennes, Paris FC and Lyon all have the opportunity to go back above PSG in the table over the weekend.

This game, one of PSG's toughest domestic tests of the season, fell awkwardly just three days after their 4-2 Champions League victory at Manchester City and three days before they

host Barcelona.

True to form, Luis Enrique therefore made sweeping changes with eight in total from the City game. Dembele was one of those relegated to the bench here with an eye on the upcoming meeting with Barcelona, his former side.

Strasbourg sought to take advantage and went in front on 17 minutes when Reyna received a Gessime Yassine pass just inside the area, turned and beat Matvey Safonov low at the goalkeeper's near post.

The visitors were grateful to Safonov for a superb save low down to deny Conrad Harder just after half-time, before Luis Enrique sent on some of the cavalry, including Dembele and Doue.

They won a penalty after a VAR check confirmed that a Doue shot had hit the arm of Pape Demba Diop, but Dembele - who scored a penalty in May's Champions League final win over Arsenal - put his spot-kick wide.

However, Dembele crossed from the right for Ukraine defender Zabarnyi to equalise with a cushioned close-range finish, and then controlled on the edge of the box before firing in to make it 2-1.

That was his first Ligue 1 goal this season to go with three in the Champions League, and Dembele - who is nominated again for this year's Ballon d'Or - then brought down a long Safonov kick before finding Ferran Torres who set up Doue to seal the win. Lille are looking to bounce back from a 3-0 Champions League loss at Arsenal when they entertain Brest later, knowing a win will take them to the summit.



PSG's Ousmane Dembele celebrates after scoring a goal with team-mates Desire Doue (right) and Maghnes Aklouch during Ligue 1 match against Strasbourg in Strasbourg yesterday. (AFP)

Diaz dazzles as Bayern batter Leipzig to go top

Luis Diaz hit a hat-trick as Bayern Munich pummeled a listless RB Leipzig 6-1 at home yesterday to climb to the top of the Bundesliga table. Borussia Dortmund had edged ahead of Freiburg into top spot after their earlier draw at Union Berlin, but Bayern responded in typically ruthless fashion to take the summit.

The dominant display was Bayern's best performance of the season and will boost their confidence days out from Wednesday's home Champions League clash with English champions Arsenal. Diaz had faced criticism after four league games without a goal but the Colombian sparked to life to terrorise Leipzig defender Lukas Klostermann down the left.

In his 100th Bundesliga match, Harry Kane scored a goal and laid on two assists as he pulled the strings from deep while Aleksandar Pavlovic and Michael Olise also got on the scoresheet. Confined to his chair with a hip complaint, Bayern coach Vincent Kompany produced a masterclass against opposite number Martin Demichelis, his former Manchester City teammate. Bayern have now won their past three games against Leipzig by a combined scoreline of 17-1. Bayern had drawn their past two matches, a rare run of middling form for the German giants, but shook off the funk early, with Diaz, Pavlovic and Olise putting the hosts in control before half-time. Diaz scored either side of a Kane tap-in after the break, with the England captain withdrawn before the hour mark ahead

of old rivals Arsenal's visit. Leipzig's Andrija Maksimovic got on the board with a late late consolation in stoppage time. Dortmund missed a chance to stay ahead of Bayern after being held to a scoreless draw at Union Berlin. After starting the season strongly with six wins in a row in all competitions, Dortmund have stalled of late, drawing two and losing one of their last three matches. Serhou Guirassy had a golden chance to snatch all three points for his side at the end of a match of few opportunities, but headed just wide with 11 minutes remaining to cap a poor game up front for the Dortmund striker. It was the first draw between the two sides in their history, with each of their previous 16 clashes in all competitions producing a winner. Compounding Dortmund's woes was a serious-looking ankle injury to substitute midfielder Konstantinos Kareltsas, who was helped from the pitch just eight minutes after coming on.

In-form Atletico scrape late win at Espanyol

Alex Baena struck in the 89th minute to snatch Atletico Madrid a 1-0 win at Espanyol and put pressure on La Liga leaders Barcelona yesterday. Diego Simeone's side, second, moved two points behind Hansi Flick's champions, who visit third-placed Real Betis later on. Spain international Baena smashed home from the edge of the box to claim the Rojiblancos an important late victory from a tight game in Cornella. Atletico have now won six consecutive games across all competitions.

SERIE A

Inter move clear at summit with Bologna win

AFP
Rome

Inter Milan pulled clear at the top of Serie A after coming from behind to beat Bologna 3-1 on Saturday, while Napoli's torrid start continued with a shock defeat by Venezia.

The champions bounced back from a disappointing midweek Champions League defeat against Club Brugge to move three points clear of second-placed Lazio, who face Juventus in Turin on Sunday.

Napoli, meanwhile, slumped to their fifth defeat in all competitions to remain ninth as bottom side Venezia picked up their first points of the season on new head coach Davide Nicola's debut.

Bologna, fresh from claiming their first win of the season against Lecce, started brightly at the Stadio Renato Dall'Ara as Tommaso Pobega fired them in front after 10 minutes before hitting the bar with a powerful shot.

But Inter, shorn of injured top scorer and captain Lautaro Martinez after he was ruled out for a month, responded through a towering Marcus Thuram header and would have gone in at the break in front were it not for a superb Lukasz Skorupski save on Francesco Pio Esposito.

Cristian Chivu's substitutions proved decisive as Carlos Augusto scored within a minute of coming on midway through the second half, before turning provider for fellow replacement Ange-Yoan Bonny late on.

Inter will now turn their attention to trying to pick up their first Champions League points at home to Shakhtar Donetsk on Wednesday.

In Venice, new Venezia head



Inter Milan's Ange-Yoan Bonny celebrates scoring his team's third goal during the Serie A match against Bologna in Bologna yesterday. (AFP)

coach Nicola masterminded a shock 1-0 win over struggling Napoli on debut as Kevin De Bruyne had a penalty saved.

Renowned survival specialist Nicola was appointed during the week to replace sacked coach Giovanni Stroppa after last season's Serie B champions failed to pick

up a single point in their opening six games.

He made an instant impact as Akor Adams struck the winner early in the second half to seal Venezia's first Serie A win over Napoli since 1942.

It marked a second defeat in a row for Massimiliano Allegri's

side after their midweek Champions League loss at Villarreal, and the first time in 25 years that Napoli have lost five of their first nine games in all competitions.

Next up for Napoli is the visit of Bodo/Glimt in the Champions League on Tuesday.

"In football you get moments like this and there is only one way out: keep working seriously and professionally, be more focused and turn this disappointment into anger," Allegri told a press conference.

"It's up to us to turn this situation around, starting with the Champions League."

A flat game came to life early in the second half when Nigeria international Adams latched on to a long ball and beat Alex Meret with a deflected strike in the 49th minute.

Allegri responded by bringing on rested stars Rasmus Hojlund and De Bruyne and the Danish striker immediately threatened when Juan Jesus denied him a tap-in with a superb goal-line block.

Hojlund won a penalty for Napoli midway through the second half when he was hauled down in the box by Matias Moreno, but De Bruyne's spot-kick was well saved by Filip Stankovic low to his right.

The Venezia goalkeeper, son of former Inter midfielder Dejan Stankovic, was decisive in the closing stages with a string of saves, including spectacular stops to deny Stanislav Lobotka and Alisson Santos.

Napoli are ninth after picking up 10 points from their first seven games, while Venezia remain bottom with three points.

Later, Roma will look to leapfrog Lazio into second place when they host Genoa.