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CRICKET | Page 2

Agha helps Pakistan down Sri Lanka in tri-series opener



TENNIS | Page 3

Chwalinska fights back to win Wuhan Open title

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Monday, October 19, 2026
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SPORT

PREMIER LEAGUE

Arsenal strike late to keep pressure on Man City as Man United held

Page 4

Abdulqader carries Qatar flag at Asian Para Games Opening Ceremony

Qatari Paralympic champion Abdulrahman Abdulqader carried the national flag at the Opening Ceremony of the 5th Asian Para Games Aichi-Nagoya 2026 in Japan yesterday. The ceremony was held at Mizuho Stadium in Nagoya, with athletes from 45 countries competing across 18 sports at the Games, which run until October 24. Jassim bin Rashid al-Buenain, Vice President of the Olympic Council of Asia for the Doha 2030 Asian Games and Secretary General of the Qatar Olympic Committee, attended the ceremony. Dr. Ahmad Abdulla al-Buenain, CEO of the Doha 2030 Asian Games Organising Committee, was also present. Qatar has sent a 12-member delegation of male and female para-athletes competing in three sports: goalball, athletics and swimming. Earlier, Jassim bin Rashid al-Buenain met with Qatar's athletes and Dr. Hassan al-Ansari, Secretary-General of the Qatar Sports Federation for People with Disabilities. Al-Buenain was briefed on the preparations as he praised the athletes' efforts and determination to represent Qatar at the Asian Para Games.

Sheikh Joaan attends CANOC General Assembly

HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani, President of the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) and Qatar Olympic Committee (QOC), attended the General Assembly of the Caribbean Association of National Olympic Committees (CANOC), held in Curacao with the participation of representatives of National Olympic Committees from across the Caribbean. Sheikh Joaan's participation comes as part of ongoing efforts to strengthen cooperation between the OCA and CANOC and expand opportunities for partnership between the two organisations, supporting the development of the Olympic Movement in both regions. His participation also reflects a shared commitment to exchanging expertise and strengthening solidarity among National Olympic Committees in Asia and the Caribbean.

QATAR STARS LEAGUE

Tahsin's stoppage-time strike helps Al Duhail edge Al Sadd

Al Rayyan miss chance to extend their lead at the top after being held to a 0-0 draw by Al Gharafa

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Al Duhail dealt defending champions Al Sadd a second consecutive defeat, snatching a dramatic 3-2 victory with a stoppage-time winner in the Qatar Stars League yesterday, as leaders Al Rayyan were held to a goalless draw by Al Gharafa.

Tahsin Mohammed struck in the fourth minute of added time to settle a thrilling contest at Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium after Al Sadd had fought back from two goals down to level the score before half-time.

The result left Al Sadd on 12 points in second place, two behind leaders Al Rayyan, who moved to 14 points after their draw at Thani bin Jassim Stadium. Al Duhail, meanwhile, claimed their second successive win to move to 12 points but remaining fourth behind Sadd and Al Arabi because of goal difference

Al Duhail made the brighter start and took the lead in the ninth minute when Cameroonian Jean-Charles Castelletto headed home from a corner. They continued to threaten, with Al Sadd goalkeeper Meshaal Barsham denying Marco Verratti before Krzysztof Piatek went close with a shot and a header.

The visitors doubled their advantage in the 28th minute. Piatek drove forward before laying the ball off for Sultan Al-Brake, who arrived from deep and finished confidently.

Al Sadd had struggled to make an impact in the opening half-hour but found a way back through former Liverpool striker Roberto Firmino. The Brazilian capitalised on a defensive error by compatriot Lucas Melo and set up Giovanni Henrique, who reduced the deficit in the 32nd minute.

The comeback was completed in first-half stoppage time. Firmino played Youssef Abdel-Razzaq through on goal, and the forward finished to make it 2-2 at the break.

Al Duhail resumed the attack after the interval, with Almoz Ali firing over before



Al Duhail's Tahsin Mohammed attempts to get past Al Sadd's Giovanni Henrique during the Qatar Stars League match yesterday.

Barsham kept out efforts from Tahsin and substitute Omar Sekou. Castillo thought he had restored the lead with a header from a corner in the 74th minute, but the goal was ruled out following a VAR review for handball.

Al Sadd threatened at the other end as the match entered its final stages. Akram Afif broke through on goal in the 80th

minute, but Al Duhail goalkeeper Salah Zakaria produced an important save to preserve the draw.

The decisive moment arrived deep into stoppage time. Piatek's effort came back off the crossbar, and Tahsin reacted quickest to turn in the rebound and seal all three points for Al Duhail.

Al Duhail's Bassam al-Rawi, named man



Al Gharafa's Adam Ounas (left) and Al Rayyan's Julien De Sart battle for the ball at the Thani bin Jassim Stadium yesterday.

of the match, said: "We put in a great effort against a difficult team, and we need to think about the upcoming matches. We fought for this very important victory for the rest of the journey."

Al Sadd goalkeeper Barsham said defensive mistakes had proved costly. "We committed some errors in the defensive line, which cost us the loss in today's match against Al Duhail.

"We need to review ourselves and return to our previous level, and we will work on that in the coming period. We fell into some defensive errors against Al Duhail, and we promise our fans that we will return despite what happened," he said.

Meanwhile, Al Rayyan missed the chance to extend their lead at the top after being held to a 0-0 draw by Al Gharafa at Thani bin Jassim Stadium.

Al Rayyan pressed for an early breakthrough, with Ahmed Alaa sending a cross into the area in the 14th minute that found

no teammate. Roger Guedes then came close from a free-kick in the 23rd minute, his effort striking the crossbar.

Al Gharafa responded a minute later when Franck Magri broke into the penalty area and unleashed a powerful shot, only for Al Rayyan goalkeeper Mahmoud Abunada to turn it behind for a corner.

Al Rayyan continued to push forward, and Ahmed al-Janahi delivered a cross for Guedes in the 35th minute, but Al Gharafa's defence cleared the danger as the first half ended goalless.

Guedes struck the post again in the 59th minute after finding space inside the area, as Al Rayyan continued to search for a winner.

Al Gharafa grew into the contest and threatened through Ferjani Sassi, whose effort was blocked by the Al Rayyan defence in the 75th minute. Neither side could find a breakthrough in the closing stages, and the points were shared.

SECOND TEST

Boland strikes twice on rain-hit day one



Australia's Scott Boland prepares to deliver a ball on day one of the second Test against South Africa at St Georges Park in Gqeberha yesterday. (AFP)

AFP
Gqeberha, South Africa

Australia's Scott Boland took two wickets in two balls on a severely rain-shortened first day of the second Test against South Africa at St George's Park yesterday.

South Africa, sent in to bat, were 20 for two when play was called off after two short periods of play during which only 12.2 overs were bowled.

But it was enough for Boland to strike two crucial blows. He dismissed Aiden Markram and David Bedingham - South Africa's most successful batsmen in their defeat in the first Test in Durban.

Coming on as first change, Boland bowled Markram for 11 with his tenth delivery, a ball which nipped in off the pitch to crash into Markram's middle stump off an inside edge. Then he produced a ball which seamed away

to have Bedingham caught behind first ball he faced.

Boland was making only his 20th appearance in Australia's 50th Test since making a sensational debut when he took six for seven against England in Melbourne in December 2021.

He has had to wait his turn behind Australia's world-class pace trio of skipper Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc and Josh Hazlewood.

He got his chance yesterday, replacing off-spinner Nathan Lyon when Australia decided to field an all-seam attack on a green-tinged pitch in heavily overcast conditions.

"Scotty Boland has been incredible whenever he's played Test cricket," Cummins said after winning the toss.

"When there's anything in the wicket, he gets a lot of seam movement, super accurate, and then even if it does flatten out, he brings control, experience.

"He's the whole package."

Rain started falling ten minutes after the

toss and delayed the start by two hours. Markram hit two boundaries off Starc before play was halted with South Africa on 11 for no wicket after 5.3 overs.

Boland was brought into the attack after the players returned in the afternoon and immediately struck a challenging length.

New cap Marques Ackerman was unbeaten on five and captain Temba Bavuma was on four when rain brought what proved to be the final stoppage of the day.

Boland for Lyon was the only change from the Australian team that won the first Test by 214 runs.

South Africa made three changes, with fast bowler Kagiso Rabada returning after recovering from a hamstring injury.

He replaced left-arm spin bowler Keshav Maharaj.

Ackerman and fellow batsman Matthew Breetzke replaced Tristan Stubbs and Kyle Verreynne with Ryan Rickelton taking over from Verreynne as wicketkeeper.

CRICKET

Centurian Agha helps Pakistan down Sri Lanka

PAKISTAN START TRI-SERIES WITH A COMMANDING WIN

AFP
Rawalpindi, Pakistan

Salman Agha marked his return to international cricket with a century as Pakistan beat Sri Lanka by 37 runs in the one-day tri-series opener in Rawalpindi yesterday.

The 32-year-old scored a 90-ball 107 with a six and 10 fours to anchor Pakistan's 305 in 49.5 overs, before skipper Shaheen Shah Afridi grabbed 3-55 to keep Sri Lanka down to 268 in 48.1 overs.

The hosts now play England in the second match on Tuesday - also in Rawalpindi - in the series seen as a build-up for next year's 50-over World Cup in southern Africa.

Pavan Rathnayake (79) and Janith Liyanage's 60 kept the visitors in the chase during a fighting 119-run fifth wicket stand.

Opener Kamindu Mendis also contributed with a fluent 44.

Rathnayake cracked two sixes and six boundaries while Liyanage's knock had five boundaries, but once both fell only Dasun Shanaka (28) really troubled the scorers as Sri Lanka lost their last five wickets for just 15 runs.

Naseem Shah, Haris Rauf and Faheem Ashraf chipped in with two wickets apiece for Pakistan.

MISERABLE THREE MONTHS

Earlier, Agha, coming out of a miserable last three months, propelled Pakistan to victory.

He was sent home ahead of the third Test in England in August after captaining the team in the first match. "These times come on you and I thought that I will



Pakistan's Salman Agha celebrates after scoring a century as teammate Arafat Minhas watches during the tri-series one-day international against Sri Lanka at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium yesterday. (AFP)

go back in domestic cricket and make things right with my performances," said Agha, who was also sacked as Pakistan's T20I captain.

"I was looking to hit the ball in the pockets to rotate the strike so that we can take our team beyond 300 so we batted aggressively in the end."

Agha hit two consecutive boundaries off pacer Asitha Fernando to complete his fourth one-day international hundred, finally

falling to the same bowler in the 47th over. He added 97 runs for the fifth wicket with Hasan Nawaz (37) and another 64 for the sixth with Arafat Minhas, who made 18. Left-arm pacer Dilshan Madushanka had jolted Pakistan with the wickets of openers Saim Ayub (seven) and Fakhar Zaman (16). Debutant Saad Baig scored a brisk 40-ball 39 with two sixes and three fours.

Along with Babar Azam (45), the pair lifted the score during

their 74-run stand. Fast bowler Eshan Malinga dismissed both in successive overs to halt Pakistan's progress before Agha came into his own. Malinga was the pick of the Sri Lanka bowlers with a career-best 4-46, while Fernando took 3-59.

BRIEF SCORES

Pakistan 305 (Salman 107, Malinga 4-46, Asitha 3-59) **beat Sri Lanka 268** (Rathnayake 79, Liyanage 60, Afridi 3-55) **by 37 runs**

COMMENT

Australia's Smith says head blow left him anxious in Durban Test



Australia's Scott Boland (third right) celebrates with his teammates including Steve Smith (third left) after dismissing South Africa's Aiden Markram on day one of the second Test in Gqeberha yesterday. (AFP)

Reuters
Gqeberha, South Africa

Australia batsman Steve Smith said he was anxious after being hit on the head and facing the prospect of another concussion after a blow playing against South Africa in the first Test a week ago.

Former captain Smith has previously suffered multiple concussions in his career, and he had to go through concussion protocols after a bouncer from Anrich Nortje hit him on the helmet last Monday during the second-last day of the clash at Kingsmead in Durban.

"I was a little bit anxious after the hit, to be honest," Smith said on Sunday before the start of the second Test at St George's Park in a television interview.

"It was a decent knock, and the rest of that day, I wasn't travelling too well, and I think it was more to do with anxiety, of hoping not to feel what I felt in the past, waking up the next morning and things like that.

"So, yeah, fortunately, I woke up well. I passed all the tests, and things recovered pretty quickly," Smith added as he prepared to take part in the rain-delayed second Test.

The 37-year-old was assessed on the field by the physio and the doctor, and his helmet was changed as is mandatory for all

such hits, but he continued his innings, scoring 27 runs as Australia built a large lead.

PASSED CONCUSSION PROTOCOLS

But then Smith did not take to the field at the start of South Africa's second innings on Monday, instead being subjected to the concussion protocols, which he passed.

He returned from the start of the last day's play on Tuesday to help his side to a 214-run victory and a 1-0 lead in the three-match series.

Smith, who is 28 short of 11,000 Test runs, was the first player replaced in a Test after the introduction of a concussion substitute. He was struck on the back of the head by a Jofra Archer bouncer in the 2019 Ashes Test at Lord's in London.

He also suffered a concussion after being hit on the head in practice during Australia's One Day International series in England in 2020 and two months later, back home in Sydney, woke on the morning of the second ODI against India with vertigo and was sick.

There have also been incidents in Sri Lanka in 2022, at the last World Cup in India and last December in the Ashes at Adelaide where he was ruled out of the third Test about 20 minutes before the toss with a vestibular issue, the sensory system located in the inner ear that controls balance and spatial orientation.

BOXING

Dubois beats Wardley in short order to retain WBO heavyweight title

Reuters
London

Daniel Dubois retained his WBO heavyweight belt with a one-sided and devastating second-round stoppage of fellow Briton Fabio Wardley in their world title rematch on Saturday.

The 29-year-old champion made a storming start at London's O2 Arena and Wardley's legs went from under him for a count within 17 seconds of the opening bell as Dubois floored him with a straight right.

Wardley, 31, beat the count and could have been stopped at the end of the first round when he took a further brutal pounding on the ropes but was saved by the bell. There was no escape from the onslaught of blows in the second with Dubois picking up where he left off and Wardley taking punch until the towel was thrown in and referee Steve Gray brought the fight to a close.

"Fabio is a great warrior, coming in for a second time, but it was my time and my era," said "Triple D", never a man for long speeches. "I had my intentions, bad intentions, from the beginning.

"Our back was against the wall the first time, this time we just had to go out there and show that we



Daniel Dubois in action with Fabio Wardley during their WBO world heavyweight title fight in London. (Reuters)

mean business and that's what we did tonight." Dubois dealt Wardley his first defeat as a professional when he came back from two knockdowns, the first after 16 seconds, to take the title in the 11th round of a thunderous and bloody clash in Manchester last May.

Wardley, promoted to WBO champion last November after Ukraine's Oleksandr Usyk vacated the title, was acclaimed for his courage and refusal to give in first time around but on Saturday he looked a shell of the man seen in Manchester. He now has a 20-2-1 record with Dubois on 24 wins with three defeats.

FOCUS

Fundora knocks out Hadribeaj to retain WBC superwelter crown

AFP
Las Vegas

Sebastian Fundora defeated Ermal Hadribeaj with a final-round knockout to retain his World Boxing Council super welterweight crown in Las Vegas on Saturday.

The towering 6ft 6in (1.98m) Fundora used his height and reach advantages to dominate his Albanian opponent in an attritional 12-round contest.

Fundora sealed victory just before the bell rang at the end of the 12th round, flooring Hadribeaj with a brutal left hand that sent his opponent sprawling.

Earlier, Hadribeaj had made a bright start, connecting with a series of stiff jabs in the opening round to rock Fundora.

But Fundora asserted his dominance in the second round, wobbling Hadribeaj with a left hand



WBC super welterweight champion Sebastian Fundora after defeating Ermal Hadribeaj in Las Vegas, Nevada. (Reuters)

and forcing the Albanian onto the defensive.

Fundora continued to score regularly and a frustrated Hadribeaj had a point deducted in the third round for excessive holding.

A flurry of Fundora upper-

cuts in the fifth round left the 28-year-old from California in control and he remained comfortably ahead on points over the closing rounds.

Fundora improved to 25-1-1 (17 knockouts) while Hadribeaj fell to 23-1-1.

TENNIS

Davidovich Fokina beats Jodar to win Shanghai Masters

'I GAVE EVERYTHING BUT IT WASN'T MEANT TO BE TODAY'

AFP
Shanghai

Alejandro Davidovich Fokina fought back to beat rising star Rafael Jodar in the final of the Shanghai Masters yesterday to claim the biggest title of his career.

The gutsy world number 26 from Spain outlasted his tiring compatriot 1-6, 7-6 (7/5), 6-4.

"I don't know what to say, I don't know what I feel. Just like a huge relief," Davidovich Fokina said.

It is a first title at the prestigious 1000 level for the 27-year-old, who extended his winning streak in China to 10 matches after claiming victory in Chengdu.

The 20-year-old Jodar, ranked 13 and rising fast, was the youngest man to reach the final in Shanghai.

Despite that he called it "another tennis match".

"I just tried to enjoy the moment," he said.

"I gave everything but it wasn't meant to be today."

Jodar was ruthless to start with.

He reached over his shoulder to save a point before winning it with an overhead smash as he broke for a swift 2-0 lead.

Davidovich Fokina put pressure on his backhand, but Jodar kept calm as his opponent succumbed to a series of errors.

Jodar broke again for 5-1 before closing out the first set after just 27 minutes with an ace.

Davidovich Fokina dropped serve to hand Jodar a 3-2 lead in the second set, but finally came up with some answers in the next game, falling on his back to save a point at the net and level at 3-3.



Spain's Alejandro Davidovich Fokina kisses the trophy after his victory against Spain's Rafael Jodar in the Shanghai Masters yesterday. (AFP)

Both men battled to hold serve in a run of intense rallies, with the duo needing to restart a point during the ninth game when a ball rolled onto the court.

Davidovich Fokina was shouting in frustration but saved two break points to go up 6-5 when Jodar returned into the net.

But the younger Spaniard would not crumble, sending down a dangerous backhand to force a tie-break.

Davidovich Fokina held his nerve in the tie-break to force a decider. He was suddenly in control, breaking Jodar's serve in the first game.

Jodar grabbed back a break but the older man led 3-2 when Jodar fired long. Jodar needed a medical timeout for his right thigh at 4-3 down.

He buckled in pain during a must-win ninth game, keeping the match alive for a bit longer but

needing a trainer for his left thigh when trailing 5-4.

Davidovich Fokina sensed victory and claimed the title on his second championship point.

"This is going to be a memory for the rest of my life," the victor said during the trophy ceremony.

He also commended his opponent.

"You are 20-years-old but man, you have a future. And you're gonna be here many times."

FOCUS

Chwalinska fights back to win Wuhan Open in title breakthrough

AFP
Wuhan

Maja Chwalinska pulled off an impressive comeback to defeat Britain's Sonay Kartal 2-6, 6-4, 6-2 and claim the first tour-level title of her career at the Wuhan Open yesterday.

The Polish 16th seed trailed by a set and a break before she turned things around to become just the fourth player to win her maiden tour-level title at a WTA 1000 event.

She joins Naomi Osaka (2018 Indian Wells), Bianca Andreescu (2019 Indian Wells) and Victoria Mboko (2025 Montreal) in that exclusive club.

The 25-year-old Chwalinska started the year ranked 146 in the world and provided one of the biggest surprises of the season when she reached the French Open final as a qualifier in June.

"(This title) tastes very sweet. I feel like I still don't realise that I won," Chwalinska said in the post-match press conference.

"But it feels special, because after French Open, it was obviously amazing, but then I had some tough moments. I feel like people also were very rough towards me. And it took a toll on me as well.

"I'm just a human. But I kept working really hard and I'm just very grateful that my work paid off."

The talented lefty will now rise to a career-high No.11 in the world, making her top-20 debut when the new rankings are released today.

"I feel like my energy level was very low at the beginning, but also Sonay played amazing," added Chwalinska.

"Gradually I started to play much better and much more aggressive. Also, the depth on my shots improved.

"I feel what I'm proud of is the fighting spirit that I had. I just wanted to fight for every single ball and hoped that things would click at some point."

Kartal, who was contesting her second tour event back from a six-month hiatus due to a spinal stress fracture, entered Wuhan ranked 170 in the world but will return to the top 50 after reaching the first WTA 1000 final of her career.

The first set was one-way traffic, with Kartal dictating play with heavy hitting from the baseline and Chwalinska scrambling to defend from all corners of the court.

It took three breaks of serve and 45 minutes to give Kartal a one-set lead and send her closer to the biggest title of her career.

Chwalinska found her legs in the second set and began to put pressure on the Kartal serve by employing the methods that helped her knock out her compatriot Iga Swiatek in the semi-finals: extending the rallies, running down every ball, and mixing things up with her smooth touch.

Despite saving 10 out of 13 break points and holding a 2-0 advantage early in the frame, Kartal surrendered the second set after 71 minutes.

Kartal ran out of steam in the decider as Chwalinska broke twice to secure the trophy on her third championship point after a gruelling two hours and 43 minutes. "It was a very physical battle and I think I had my chances and I think that's maybe where the rust of six months off comes in," said Kartal.

"But overall I'm very happy with my performance. Obviously not the result I wanted and it's going to sting for a little while but I think for me the positives this week outweigh that result today. So yeah I'm leaving here head out high and in a good spot overall."



Poland's Maja Chwalinska kisses the trophy after winning the Wuhan Open final against Britain's Sonay Kartal in Wuhan yesterday. (AFP)

CHINA'S YIN WINS IN SHANGHAI FOR BACK-TO-BACK LPGA TITLES

Home hero Yin Ruoning celebrated back-to-back LPGA Tour titles with a thrilling one-stroke victory in Shanghai yesterday.

China's Yin carded a final-round four-under-par 68 at an energised Sheshan Golf Club to emerge victorious from a showdown with overnight leader Choi Hye-jin.

The 24-year-old Yin, winner at the FM Championship in Boston in August on her previous start on tour, finished on 11-under, one shot

clear of Choi. It was Yin's seventh LPGA title and her second in Shanghai, having won the tournament in 2024.

South Korea's Choi was left kicking herself, having been in the lead after all three previous rounds and seemingly on course for her maiden LPGA crown.

She started the final day with a two-shot advantage over Yin but successive bogeys at the seventh and eighth saw her lead evaporate.

Roared on by the home fans, Yin was on the charge, four of her five birdies coming in her last nine holes.

She sank a nerveless putt for birdie on the 17th that effectively sealed the deal, celebrating with an understated pump of the fists.

South Korea's Amy Yang was third on eight-under, with Japan's Rio Takeda another shot back.

(AFP)

GOLF

Spain's in-form Chacarra wins DP World India Championship

AFP
New Delhi

Red-hot Spaniard Eugenio Chacarra won his fourth DP World Tour title yesterday with a two-shot victory in the weather-hit tournament in New Delhi.

Chacarra, who won the Dutch Open and the Open d'Italia in June and Indian Open last year, finished on 21-under and moves to the top of the Race to Dubai rankings.

Chacarra overtook the American Patrick Reed, who finished on eight-under at Delhi Golf Club.

Six-time major champion Rory McIlroy, who had been in the hunt after the weather-disrupted first two days, is third in the Race to Dubai and finished tied 42nd at four-under. The 26-year-old Chacarra carded a final-round two-under-par 70 and pumped his fist to celebrate his third win on the European tour this season.

"I know it's not going to be easy," Chacarra said of his Race to Dubai chances.

"Rory in Dubai always plays good and I know it's going to be a big battle. Patrick, too. Two of the best players in the world coming for me now, and I know they're not going to make it easy."

A teary-eyed Chacarra dedicated the win to his grandfather, who died 10 days earlier, saying: "He is watching me somewhere from up there."



Eugenio Chacarra poses with the trophy after winning the DP World India Championship at the Delhi Golf Club in New Delhi yesterday. (AFP)

Chacarra's recent form has been impressive. In his previous two tournaments he was tied second at the Open de Espana and third at the FedEx Open de France.

New Zealand's Daniel Hillier was second on 19-under in the Indian capital and Chacarra's fellow Spaniard Angel Hidalgo and Poland's Adrian Meronk were tied third on 15-under.

England's Tommy Fleetwood, the defending champion, finished tied fifth at 13-under.

With the tournament playing catch-up, Chacarra, who broke his toe a couple of weeks ago and overcame a neck problem,

completed his third round in the morning to extend his sole lead.

He carded a nine-under-par 63 and kept up the charge in the final round with three birdies against one bogey.

"Last week it was really tough (broken toe), but this week doing all the ice and taking all the medications was better," said Chacarra.

"But my neck was just a bad position at night on Monday. My physio did a great job and made me compete.

"And playing at less than 100 percent and to be able to win against this field gives me great motivation."

SPOTLIGHT

Youth Games to nurture emerging talent ahead of 2030 Asian Games

QNA
Doha

Qatar's commitment to developing young sporting talent will take centre stage with the inaugural 2026 Youth Games, scheduled to be held in Doha from November 18 to 22, as the country steps up efforts to prepare a new generation of athletes for future competitions, including the 2030 Asian Games.

Held under the theme "Towards a Sporting Generation... and a Promising Future," the event will target young athletes aged 12 to 17, providing them with a competitive platform to showcase their abilities, develop their skills and explore opportunities for advancement in sports.

Director of the 2026 Youth Games Hind al-Abraham told Qatar News Agency (QNA) the tournament represents an important initiative for identifying promising athletic talent and encouraging young people to participate in physical and competitive activities.

She said outstanding participants will be monitored in coordination with the relevant authorities to assess their potential and explore opportunities to integrate them into training programmes and future athlete development plans.

The initiative is expected to strengthen their prospects of representing Qatar in upcoming sporting events.

Al-Abraham explained that the organising committee is maintaining close coordination with sports federations and specialised technical committees to monitor athletes' performances, evaluate their technical abilities and identify those with the potential to progress in shooting, archery and padel.

She added that the focus on younger age groups reflects the Qatar Olympic Committee's commitment to establishing a sustainable foundation for the country's sporting future. Beyond expanding participation in physical activities, the initiative

aims to identify promising athletes, refine their skills and create pathways for them to improve their technical and competitive capabilities.

The hosting of the 2030 Asian Games in Doha further highlights the importance of these efforts, al-Abraham said, emphasising the need to prepare athletes with the experience and abilities required to compete on major regional and international stages.



Investing in talent from an early age is essential to building a strong sporting future for Qatar, she said, adding that developing young athletes will help strengthen the country's presence in regional, continental and international competitions.

The five-day Youth Games will feature shooting, archery and padel, offering participants opportunities to test their abilities across different disciplines in a competitive environment.

The tournament is expected to serve as an important step in broadening the base of sports participation, discovering emerging talent and preparing young athletes to progress to higher levels of performance and excellence.

Through initiatives such as the Youth Games, Qatar aims to build a new generation of athletes capable of contributing to the country's long-term sporting ambitions and competing at major international events in the years ahead.

PREMIER LEAGUE

Arsenal strike late to keep pressure on City

Struggling Manchester United drop more points in a 1-1 draw against Leeds

AFP

London

Arsenal struck late to beat Nottingham Forest and keep the pressure on Premier League leaders Manchester City, while struggling Manchester United dropped more points in a draw at Leeds.

The Gunners faced Forest a day after pacesetters City celebrated a seventh win out of seven at home to Ipswich, shrugging off the fallout following the club's guilty verdict for serious financial irregularities.

Defending champions Arsenal huffed and puffed against Oliver Glasner's struggling side but finally secured the breakthrough when substitute Noni Madueke's effort found the net in the 80th minute after a deflection off Jair Cunha.

That was the only shot on target in the entire game for the under-par Gunners. Forest defender Murillo went close to a sensational equaliser in stoppage time after jinking his way into the box, but Arsenal held on for a 1-0 win, taking them three points behind City.

"We did it all together," Madueke said. "We showed great determination and I think we showed a champion spirit here tonight, so really pleased."

Earlier, Manchester United travelled to the home of bitter rivals Leeds desperate to find a spark but were forced to settle for a 1-1 draw after Dominic Calvert-Lewin cancelled out Bryan Mbeumo's first-half opener.

United now have just one win in seven league games this season and are winless in their past six matches in all competitions. United manager Michael Carrick – in his first full season in charge – is scrambling for answers, with his team looking short of quality and confidence.

The sense of a growing crisis at Old Trafford was exacerbated by a midweek outburst from defender Lisandro Martinez,



Arsenal's Noni Madueke scores against Nottingham Forest in the Premier League at the City Ground in Nottingham. (Reuters)

who took aim at the United hierarchy after a 2-0 defeat at Atletico Madrid in the Champions League.

Carrick chose to focus on the positives after the game at Elland Road, insisting that the draw was a step in the right direction.

"If there's any weakness, it gets found out today," he told Sky Sports. "I could feel before the game that the players were ready for it. It wasn't perfect, our confidence isn't sky-high, but the players were trying to do the right things. In moments we looked really good. Defended really well as a team."

Argentina centre-back Martinez gave an explosive interview in Spain on Tuesday during which he criticised the lack of investment in the summer transfer window. Carrick insisted on Friday that United had "moved on" from the incident and Mar-

tinez was named in the starting line-up at Elland Road.

Mbeumo, playing as United's target man, wasted a couple of chances but broke the deadlock in the 35th minute when he guided a Yuri Tielemans cross into the bottom corner for his fourth goal of the season.

Leeds put the visitors under sustained pressure after the break and were level in the 51st minute when England forward Calvert-Lewin controlled the ball on his chest and finished at full stretch after Tarik Muharemovic's header from a corner. Carrick made attacking substitutions in search of a winner, bringing on Mason Mount and Matheus Cunha, but neither side could make the breakthrough.

United, in 13th spot, have their fewest wins at this stage of a top-flight cam-

paign since 1986/87.

Elsewhere, Brighton humbled Crystal Palace 5-0, including a sensational Diego Gomez effort from the halfway line. Fabian Hurler's team were three goals up inside 10 minutes after an own goal from Palace defender Jaydee Canvot, Gomez's spectacular effort, and a strike from Yasin Ayari.

Further goals from Charalampos Kostas and substitute Jack Hinshelwood in the second half deepened Palace's pain. Only three sides in Premier League history have scored more goals in their first seven games of a season than Brighton's haul of 23 in the current campaign.

Bournemouth beat 10-man Sunderland 2-0 with goals from Marcus Tavernier and Evanilson for their first league win of the season.

Qatar to host Gulf Cup for Veteran Players from October 30

Doha: The Gulf Football Federation (GFF), in collaboration with Qatar's Local Organising Committee (LOC), has announced that the second edition of the Gulf Cup for Veteran Players will take place from October 30 2026 to November 5 in Qatar.

The star-studded tournament will bring together football legends from the eight Gulf federations, with 15 matches taking place across three venues: Grand Hamad Stadium, Hamad bin Khalifa Stadium and Saoud bin Abdulrahman Stadium.

Defending champions Iraq have been drawn into Group A, and will join Saudi Arabia, Oman, and Kuwait. Hosts Qatar are in Group B, alongside UAE, Bahrain and Yemen. Tournament matches will consist of two halves of 20 minutes each, with no limits on substitutions. If a match in the knockout stage ends in a draw after 40 minutes, a penalty shoot-out will be played.

The tournament will get underway at Grand Hamad Stadium on October 30 at 5:30pm, when Qatar face Bahrain. The final will take place on November 5 at 7pm at Saoud bin Abdulrahman Stadium. Entry to matches is free of charge and includes seating for disabled fans.

Matches of the Gulf Cup for Veteran Players will take place during the rest days of the ongoing GFF U-17 Gulf Cup 2026, once again showcasing Qatar's ability to host multiple sporting events at the same time.

Qatar's exciting football calendar also includes the FIFA U-17 World Cup Qatar 2026, which will take place from November 19 to December 13 at the state-of-the-art Competition Complex in Aspire Zone.



SPOTLIGHT

Milan hold off Atalanta in Serie A as Como return to winning ways



AC Milan's Mario Gila (right) celebrates after scoring against Atalanta at the San Siro stadium in Milan yesterday. (Reuters)

AFP

Milan

AC Milan held off Atalanta with a 3-2 win in Serie A, while Cesc Fabregas's Como ended their winless streak with a 3-1 victory at lowly Fiorentina.

Goncalo Ramos, Adrien Rabiot and Mario Gila netted for Ruben Amorim's side as they climbed to fourth in the table on 15 points. Gianluca Gaetano and Nikola Krstovic pulled two back for the visitors in the second half but it was too little, too late for Atalanta as they succumbed to a fourth defeat of the campaign.

After Milan racked up four goals in a comprehensive Champions League win away to RB Leipzig midweek, it was another promising attacking display, but Amorim will be disappointed with his charges' sloppiness at the back.

Club-record signing Ramos converted from the spot after 24 minutes to get Milan up and running at the San Siro, before France midfielder Rabiot wrongfooted Atalanta goalkeeper Marco Carnesecchi to double the lead shortly before half-time. Ramos had a spot-kick saved by Carnesecchi but a close-range header from Gila from the resulting corner on 57 minutes made the points look safe, until Atalanta sparked to life.

Gaetano benefited from flat-

footed defending to steer past Mike Maignan from inside the six-yard box to get Atalanta on the scoreboard in the 66th minute. Milan then had to endure a nervous final 10 minutes when Krstovic was given too much space in the box and Raoul Bellanova picked him out to sweep the ball home.

In Tuscany, first-half goals by Mattia Liberati and Nico Paz put Como in charge, before Marin Pongracic halved the deficit shortly before the interval. Anastasios Douvikas netted early in the second period to put to bed any hope of a Florentine comeback and keep the hosts locked in the relegation zone on four points.

For Como it was a first win in four matches in all competitions, going back over the international break to mid-September. After a strong start to the campaign, Como's charge stalled with a 2-0 loss at Frosinone, followed by a goalless draw at home to 10-man Roma and Wednesday's 3-2 reversal away to Feyenoord in the Champions League. "We played a very complete game," Fabregas said. "There are risks when you play the way we do. There's no such thing as perfect tactics."

Earlier, Lecce won 3-0 at Udinese, with Kialonda Gaspar, Konan N'Dri and Jamil Siebert all finding the net. Lazio travel to Juventus in late match, where a win would take the Romans level on 19 points with Inter Milan atop the table.

BUNDESLIGA

Leverkusen clip Freiburg's wings

AFP

Leverkusen, Germany

Ibrahim Maza and Patrik Schick combined to score two goals as Bayer Leverkusen came from behind to beat in-form Freiburg 2-1 in the German Bundesliga.

After a shock defeat to promoted Elversberg in the season opener, Leverkusen have now picked up 13 of a possible 18 points and sit fourth, level with third-placed Freiburg on points but behind on goal difference.

Replaced by Bayern Munich atop the Bundesliga table after Vincent Kompany's men thumped RB Leipzig on Saturday, Freiburg host the Bavarian giants next weekend.

Schick's goal 14 minutes from time made him the first Leverkusen player to score in each of the first six matches in a Bundesliga season.

"It was a lot of fun, especially against such a strong opponent. Huge respect to Freiburg but we showed what we can do," Algeria attacker Maza said.

"Schicky and I are building some pretty good chemistry. The more time we spend playing together, the better it's getting. It's going pretty well right now."

Freiburg coach Julian Schuster said his side would learn from the defeat ahead of Bayern's visit next Sunday.

"It was completely unnecessary that we lost and dropped points here today," he said. "But despite that there's plenty of positives to take out of it that will make us stronger and definitely help us," he added.

The Bundesliga's form team, Freiburg, took the pitch in Leverkusen under the watchful eyes of Germany coach Jurgen Klopp.

In October, Klopp called four Freiburg players up to the Germany squad for the first time and two of those combined for the opener with 14 minutes gone.

Right-back Philipp Treu laid on a counter-



Bayer Leverkusen's Nathan Tella (left) and Freiburg's Philipp Lienhart vie for the ball during the Bundesliga match in Leverkusen yesterday. (AFP)

attacking opener for Derry Scherhant with a clever flick. Five minutes later, Schick played a smart one-two with former Aston Villa winger Moussa Diaby before flicking to Maza who slammed home.

Schick blasted over the bar on the hour but did not need to wait long for his next opportunity. With 15 minutes remaining, Maza dribbled in from the right and evaded several Freiburg defenders before playing an in-perfect pass for Schick to guide a controlled strike home.

Rock bottom Borussia Moenchengladbach

are still searching for a first point of the season after losing 2-1 at home against fellow strugglers Hoffenheim.

Hoffenheim's Bambase Conte opened the scoring with his second goal in two games since a surprise call-up to Klopp's Germany squad in October.

Wael Mohya pulled one back for the hosts just after the break but Alexander Prass put Hoffenheim back in front shortly afterwards as the visitors, who host Lyon in the Europa League on Thursday, won just their second game of the season.

Monaco fall at Lorient as Sinayoko snatches win for Paris FC

Paris: Noah Cadiou's second-half penalty for Lorient prevented Monaco returning to the top of Ligue 1 as the principality outfit fell to a 1-0 defeat in Brittany.

Monaco are one of four teams level on points at the top of the table as they were joined by Paris FC, who edged Rennes 4-3 thanks to Lassine Sinayoko's injury-time penalty winner.

Rennes dropped to fifth, a point behind, despite forward Esteban Lepaul's hat-trick of penalties in Paris. That left champions Paris Saint-Germain, who beat Strasbourg 3-1 on Saturday, top on goals scored ahead of their cross-town rivals and Lille, with

Monaco just behind on goal difference. Wing back Demba Sylla earned the penalty on the hour mark at the Stade du Moustoir as he was felled by Monaco captain Denis Zakaria. Finnish goalkeeper Lukas Hradecky dived the right way, but Cadiou placed his spot-kick into the corner.

In Paris, Maxime Lopez twice gave the hosts the lead, only for Lepaul, who earned his first France cap in the recent international window, to equalise from the spot.

Lassine Sinayoko looked to have given PFC the victory 15 minutes from time, only for Brazilian substitute Otavio's clumsy

handball to hand Lepaul the chance to level up a third time.

But Sinayoko had the last word, drilling home his penalty after VAR intervened to punish Valentin Rongier's shirt tug on the Mali forward.

Marseille picked up a much-needed win as they thumped Angers 5-2 to pull away from the relegation zone. Lilian Raolisoa gave Angers the lead but Marseille replied with goals before half-time from Himad Abdelli and Nouhoum Kamissoko.

Amine Gouiri scored his fifth goal of the season for Marseille when he tucked home the rebound after his penalty was

saved by Anthony Lopes.

Amine El Ouazzani struck from the spot to pull a goal back for Angers but late efforts from Amine Harit and Igor Paixao wrapped up just a third win in seven league matches for Marseille.

Bruno Genesio's side began the weekend after the relegation play-off spot only on goal difference, having also lost their first two games in the Europa League.

Le Havre remain rooted to the foot of the table as Cameroon forward Danny Namaso's brace helped Auxerre come away from Normandy with a 3-1 victory.