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CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Yamal vs PSG: Ballon d’Or backdrop to marquee clash

‘The best way to defend against Yamal is to have the ball. That’s our idea but it won’t be easy’

AFP
Paris

Next week the winner of the most prestigious individual award in football will be announced at the Ballon d’Or ceremony in London, and some of the leading contenders for the prize will be on the same pitch today when Paris Saint-Germain host Barcelona in the UEFA Champions League.

In the home camp, there is a remarkable total of 10 players among the 30 nominees, including last year’s laureate Ousmane Dembele. Facing up to them, Barcelona have three of their own candidates, with last year’s runner-up Lamine Yamal and 2024 winner Rodri along with defender Pau Cubarsi, another member of Spain’s triumphant World Cup side.

The battle for the Ballon d’Or gives an edge to this game that might otherwise be lacking, given the relatively limited stakes for these two powerhouses in the new league phase format of Europe’s elite club competition.

The individual prize to recognise the standout player of each season does not carry the same weight or significance everywhere, but it is a major talking point in France – it was created by France Football magazine in the 1950s – and in Spain where Barcelona and Real Madrid campaign loudly for their candidates.

In Madrid they are backing Kylian Mbappe. He has been making his own case in public, as has Yamal, the 19-year-old winger who starred as Barcelona won La Liga and then won the World Cup with Spain. “I think all those who watch football understand the argument in my favour. I go out onto the pitch, I have fun, and I play well,” Yamal said recently.

“Fortunately I have also won a lot of titles with Barca and in addition to that I won the most important title of all, the World Cup. But beyond that I think my way of playing is my strongest argument and what makes me different.”

The voting by a jury of journalists from the top 100 countries in the FIFA rankings is only based on last season, but Yamal has already made a formidable start to this campaign and scored a stunning goal in



Barcelona’s forward Lamine Yamal controls the ball during a training session at the Parc des Princes stadium in Paris. (AFP)

Barcelona’s 5-2 weekend win at Betis in La Liga. At a press conference, PSG coach Luis Enrique revealed his plan to neutralise Yamal.

“The best way to defend against Lamine Yamal is to have the ball. That’s our idea, but it won’t be like that because we know how difficult it is to play against Barca. We have to remain focused and attentive. We have to overcome this as a team,” said the Spanish coach.

Asked to draw a comparison between Yamal and Lionel Messi, Enrique declined to do so: “Lamine is improving in every aspect of the game. Comparing him to Messi,

the greatest player of all time, would benefit no one. Lamine is very intelligent, he wants to become the best version of himself, but it is better not to compare him to Messi,” Enrique added.

Not that PSG, who are going for a third consecutive Champions League title this season, are scared of him. “I wouldn’t say we are afraid,” insisted PSG midfielder Vitinha. “He is one of the best players in the world. What he does is incredible. He is exceptional. It is always interesting to play against these types of players, but not just him. We are facing a great team, not only Lamine.”



Paris Saint-Germain’s defender Illia Zabarnyi (left) passes the ball to forward Desire Doue during a training session yesterday. (AFP)

Vitinha, the 26-year-old Portuguese playmaker, came third in the 2025 Ballon d’Or ranking. Dembele won it last year off the back of an extraordinary season in which he scored 35 goals in all competitions and helped inspire PSG to their first ever Champions League title.

Last season was less exceptional, even if he still found the net 20 times including in the Champions League final against Arsenal, and the 29-year-old France star has been making his case in the media too.

“I have never been the chosen one, but I worked hard and last year I was rewarded for a fantastic year,” he said in response to comments by Mbappe in relation to the Ballon d’Or. “This year we will see, but there is no pressure. I’m easy.”

PSG might be the outstanding club team just now, but their problem could be the lack of one obvious candidate. Khvicha Kvaratskhelia was surely the best player in last season’s Champions League, but the Georgian winger did not go to the World Cup. Fabian Ruiz is in the unique position of having won the Champions League and World Cup, but lacks the real superstar pedigree. Ferran Torres swapped Barca

for PSG after scoring the only goal in the World Cup final, yet is not seen as a realistic Ballon d’Or winner.

“I have big respect for both Kylian and Yamal. They are amazing players,” said PSG president Nasser al-Khelaifi recently. “But I would go for sure for my players. We have three players: Dembele, ‘Kvara’ and also Fabian Ruiz, who is the only one to have won all the trophies. They deserve it.”

FLICK CLARIFIES BARCELONA BACKLINE OPTIONS

Meanwhile, Barcelona coach Hansi Flick has confirmed that Raphinha could return to starting XI against Paris St Germain today in the Champions League, amid a defensive injury crisis. The Catalan club lost both Jules Kounde and Eric Garcia to injury on Sunday, leaving them with just five fit senior defenders. Raphinha could make first start for Barcelona since September 19 after hamstring issue.

Flick says Kounde will be back “soon” and could play against Real Madrid on Sunday. Midfielders Rodri Hernandez and Frenkie de Jong were cited by Flick as makeshift options for backline.

SPOTLIGHT

Asian Games flag begins journey across Qatar on the Road to Doha 2030

The Doha 2030 Asian Games Organising Committee has launched the Doha 2030 Flag Tour, bringing the Asian Games flag to schools, universities and institutions across Qatar following the country’s formal receipt of the flag at the closing ceremony of the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Games.

Since the tour began on October 11, the Flag has visited Academy School at Qatar Foundation, Qatar Academy, the University of Doha for Science and Technology and Qatar University. Students had the opportunity to see the flag first-hand and meet athletes from across a range of sports, including champions and medallists who are helping to inspire the next generation.

Over the coming weeks, the flag will continue to visit communities and institutions across the country, creating opportunities for young people, athletes, families and wider stakeholders to connect with Qatar’s journey towards hosting the Asian Games Doha 2030.

Dr. Ahmad Abdulla al-Buenain, Chief Executive Officer of the Doha 2030 Asian Games Organising Committee, said: “The arrival of the Asian Games flag in Qatar marks an important milestone on the road to Doha 2030. Through this tour, we want the flag to meet the people and communities who will shape the journey ahead, particularly the young generation who will grow up with, participate in and experience the Games. From schools and universities to wider institutions across Qatar, the flag Tour will create opportunities to share the values of sport, ambition and



connection as we prepare to welcome Asia in 2030!”

The flag tour will bring together Qatari athletes, students, educators and wider institutions through conversations and shared flag moments focused on the journey towards Doha 2030. It will create opportunities for participants to reflect on sport, ambition and

the role they hope to play in Qatar’s future, while linking the legacy of Doha 2006 with the generation that will grow up with and experience Doha 2030. The initiative forms part of the wider Doha 2030 journey and reflects the spirit of ‘The Games We Live For’, bringing athletes, young people and communities together through sport.

Qatar goalball team take part at Asian Para Games

Qatar goalball team in action at the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Para Games in Japan yesterday. The goalball team lost both their matches against Iran and Thailand. Qatar has sent a 12-member delegation of male and female para-athletes competing in three sports: goalball, athletics and swimming.

SPOTLIGHT

Use Bumrah sparingly, Shastri urges India

Agencies
Mumbai

India should keep **Jasprit Bumrah** fresh for next year's one-day international World Cup by selecting him mainly for Test cricket and using the pace spearhead sparingly in other formats, former coach Ravi Shastri said.

Bumrah was recalled to India's test squad for their two-match series in New Zealand last week, but will not play in the five ODIs and five Twenty20 internationals that precede the Tests.

Bumrah's career has been disrupted by back injuries, with the 32-year-old having to undergo surgery in 2023.

He was ruled out of a two-Test series against Sri Lanka in August due to a left knee injury, but returned to T20 action at the Asian Games and helped India win gold.

"I don't think he should play all three formats till the ODI World Cup," Shastri, who coached India from 2017 to 2021, told Indian media yesterday.

"He should play Test cricket and should play sporadically between one-day in-

ternationals and T20 cricket. He also shouldn't be playing the whole lot.

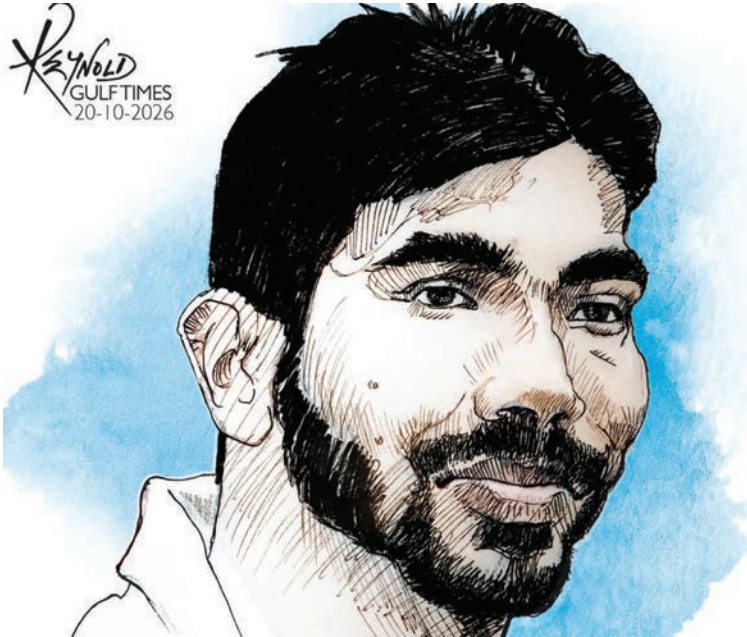
"I would rather preserve him for the test matches. That's very important. He becomes a key member of that Indian side. Then he should be used sparingly in the other formats."

Following their tour of New Zealand, India will host Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe in limited-overs series, before hosting Australia in a five-Test series which concludes in February. The 2027 World Cup will be held in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia from October 2 to November 21.

Retired spinner Powar joins BCCI selection committee

Retired off-spinner Ramesh Powar has been included in the India men's senior selection committee from the West Zone. The committee will now be chaired by Pragyan Ojha.

The BCCI's cricket advisory committee, comprising Ashok Malhotra and Jatin Paranjape, picked Powar to fill the vacancy in the committee after chief selector Ajit Agarkar's term ended on October 4, ahead of Wasim Jaffer, among others, [www.cricinfo.com](#) reported.



Powar, an offspinner from Mumbai, played two Tests and 31 ODIs between 2004 and 2007 and, after retirement in 2015, served as the head coach of the In-

dia women's team in two separate stints - when they won an Asia Cup title as well as a Commonwealth Games silver medal - and also coached Mumbai and Gujarat in domestic cricket.

He has also been a bowling coach at the BCCI's Centre of Excellence.

The chair of the men's selection committee is appointed based on seniority in terms of international matches played, with Tests being given preference.

That meant Ojha, a veteran of 24 Tests, took charge after Agarkar's exit.

Ojha has been a member of the committee since September 2023, alongside Shiv Sunder Das, RP Singh and Ajay Ratna, and served as the interim head after Agarkar's term, leading the panel that selected the squads for the upcoming all-format tour of New Zealand.

Earlier this week, former India opener Jaffer confirmed that he had applied for the selector's spot. If appointed, he would have been the chair of the committee, having played 31 Tests.

India men's senior selection committee: Pragyan Ojha (chair), Shiv Sunder Das, RP Singh, Ajay Ratna, Ramesh Powar

CRICKET

Rain no bother as Boland restricts Proteas to 97/5

SKIPPER TEMBA BAVUMA HOLDS FORT FOR THE HOME SIDE



Australia's Scott Boland (left) celebrates after taking the wicket of South Africa's Ryan Rickelton on day two of the second Test at St Georges Park in Gqeberha yesterday. (AFP)

Reuters
Gqeberha, South Africa

Australia paceman Scott Boland continued to torment South Africa's batsmen with two more wickets yesterday to leave the hosts on 97 runs for five wickets at stumps on the second day of the second Test at St George's Park.

Boland finished the rain-affected day with figures of 4-31 to put Australia in a strong position with South Africa to resume on Tuesday with captain Temba Bavuma 41 not out and Wiaan Mulder unbeaten with two runs.

Play got underway at 3:45 p.m. local time (1345 GMT) with 30.4 overs bowled after heavy rain in the morning threatened to wash out Monday's play.

Boland, who took two wickets in the one hour of play possible on Sunday, added a third in the third over of the second day's



South Africa's Temba Bavuma watches the ball after playing a shot on day two of the second Test against Australia at St Georges Park in Gqeberha yesterday. (AFP)

play, inducing an edge from debutant opener Marques Ackerman, who was dismissed for six.

Matthew Breetzke, brought into the home line-up after the 214-run defeat in the first Test in Durban last week, then departed

for four runs after he was also caught behind by wicketkeeper Alex Carey, playing away from his body to Mitchell Starc's left-arm delivery.

South Africa were in a precarious position at 40-4 but Bavuma

led a fightback with Ryan Rickelton as they put on 52 runs for the fifth wicket.

Rickelton was dropped on 26 by leg slip Marnus Labuschagne off captain Pat Cummins in what looked a regulation chance, but he only added five more runs before a brilliant one-handed catch by Matt Renshaw at first slip gave Boland a fourth wicket.

Bavuma provided some home hope with a resolute innings in spite of the relentless pressure from the Australian attack, which had to do without Josh Hazlewood, who took a career-best 6-49 in the first Test but was absent with an upset stomach.

No more rain is forecast for the rest of the Test as Australia look to wrap up the three-match series. Extra time is to be added to all three sessions on Tuesday.

BRIEF SCORES
Stumps South Africa 97 for 5 (Bavuma 41*, Mulder 2*, Boland 4-31) **vs Australia**

FOCUS

McLaren to sell 5 F1 cars, all driven by champions and one by actor Pitt



Reuters
London

McLaren are selling five fully-functioning Formula One cars driven by champions, including Lewis Hamilton and the late Brazilian Ayrton Senna, with one also tested by Hollywood actor Brad Pitt.

The cars, to be sold through high-end dealer Tom Hartley Jr. and expected to raise tens of millions of dollars, will be prepared by the reigning constructors' champions for their next owners.

Hartley Jr. also sold the collection of former F1 supreme Bernie Ecclestone and 20 road cars belonging to the late McLaren co-owner Mansour Ojeh.

"We have decided to part with these iconic McLaren Formula One cars because we feel that having them simply sitting in storage is a disservice to what they represent," McLaren Racing CEO Zak Brown said in a statement on Sunday.

"These cars were built to be driven and raced, and we want to see them being used and enjoyed. We believe that is the best way to keep our history alive and our heritage business active."

PITT DROVE ONE AFTER FILMING F1 MOVIE

The five span 32 years of McLaren history, starting with two MP4/6A cars (chassis numbers 04 and 07 with Honda V12 engines) raced by Austrian Gerhard Berger and tested by Senna during the 1991 title-winning campaign.

Chassis 04 finished second in a one-two at the San Marino Grand Prix with the McLarens lapping the entire field. Chassis 07 came second at McLaren's home British Grand Prix. Both have been in McLaren's possession ever since.

A 2012 McLaren MP4/27A (chassis 01) raced by 2009 world champion Jenson Button and tested by seven-times world champion Hamilton is also for sale.

Two cars raced exclusively by reigning champion Lando Norris in 2021 and 2023 complete the group.



The 2023 McLaren was driven by Hollywood star Brad Pitt in a private test at Austin's Circuit of the Americas in June last year. Pitt reportedly took it up to a speed of 197mph (317kph).

The 2021 McLaren MCL35M took Norris to the podium in Imola, Monaco and Monza while the 2023 MCL37A-03 won successive races in Singapore and Japan and was tested post-season by a roster of drivers including Norris's teammate Oscar Piastri and Mick Schumacher, son of F1 great Michael.

The 2023 McLaren was driven by Pitt in a private test at Austin's Circuit of the Americas in June last year in connection with his starring role in "F1 the Movie" and is the most modern F1 car offered for sale to a private owner. Pitt reportedly took it up to a speed of 197mph (317kph).

"It is incredibly rare for a collector to have the opportunity to acquire race-driven Grand Prix cars directly from the manufacturer and team that built and campaigned them, and that makes this a very special offering," said Hartley. "These five cars will be offered individually and there is no time pressure whatsoever. Our priority, and McLaren's, is to find the right homes for them."

Although no prices were given, they are expected to range from £5mn (\$6.7mn) to as much as 10 million.

A McLaren MP4-25A raced by Hamilton to victory in Turkey in 2010 sold for £4.8mn in 2021 while a winning 2001 Ferrari raced by Michael Schumacher fetched \$7.5mn New York in 2017.

BADMINTON



South Korean An wins record 47th international title in style

Reuters
Copenhagen

Olympic badminton champion **An Se-young** became the sport's most decorated women's singles player on Sunday after the South Korean claimed her

47th international title at the Denmark Open.

An's 21-23 21-14 21-18 win over Japan's Akane Yamaguchi in the final in Odense took her clear of Susi Susanti of Indonesia, who won 46 titles before retiring in 1997.

Badminton's governing body BWF noted that titles in regional games were excluded from the

tally and that records had only been kept since 1989. "I want to make a lot of history and break records but I focus on one match at a time," said An, who has been ranked world number one for 105 consecutive weeks.

"That is my motivation. The crowds turn out for me and I'm happy people enjoy every match

I play." An has won six singles titles on the BWF World Tour this year, while also winning gold medals at the Asian Games, world championships, Uber Cup and other regional tournaments. The 24-year-old's only defeat in 2026 came in the All England Open final in March when she lost to China's Wang Zhiyi.

Meanwhile Alex Lanier put on a masterclass at the Denmark Open to defeat home favourite Anders Antonsen 21-15, 13-21, 21-13 in a thrilling men's singles final. Playing in his very first tournament since capturing the World Championship crown, the 21-year-old French sensation showed immense composure in front of a partisan Odense crowd.

FIP Promises Aspire Academy draws huge international padel field

Aspire Academy hosted and organised its second highly successful International Padel Federation (FIP) Promises event, attracting more than 130 competitors. Alongside local Qatari players, 28 other nations were represented, including players travelling from South Africa, Spain and Argentina and the GCC. The FIP Promises Aspire Academy features 104 teams across the four age categories, under-12, under-14, under-16 and under-18, making it the largest FIP Promises event in the region in 2026. The FIP Promises Tour is the International Padel Federation's official junior circuit, providing international competition for players in the under-12, under-14, under-16 and under-18 age categories. Hosting an FIP Promises event reinforces Aspire Academy's commitment to developing Qatar's young padel talent by offering its student-athletes valuable international competition on home soil. It also highlights Aspire Academy's key role in sup-



porting padel development not just in Qatar, but across the region. The Tournament Director and Aspire Academy Senior Padel Coach Ignacio Gorbea highlighted the benefits of hosting such events. "It is very important for us to show the world what we are doing here at Aspire Academy with the padel project that we started just three

years ago," he explained. "An FIP Promises tournament not only highlights the progress that our players here in Qatar are making but also the expertise that Aspire Academy boasts: the coaching teams, the marketing and communications department, organisers, logistics, and volunteers. "Padel is growing at a rapid pace around the

world and we are incredibly proud at Aspire Academy of the level our players have reached." "We have received some really good feedback from coaches, players, parents and other federations too. That's important to us because we have been working on this tournament for several months now.



PREVIEW

New York Knicks face tall task in NBA repeat bid

NBA SUPERSTAR LEBRON JAMES TO MAKE DEBUT WITH 76ERS

AFP
Los Angeles

Jalen Brunson and the New York Knicks say they're starting from scratch as they aim for an elusive NBA championship repeat with the San Antonio Spurs spearheading a host of rivals as the 2026 season tips off today.

"We just have to find a way to turn the page and move on," NBA Finals Most Valuable Player Brunson said as the Knicks began their preparations in September three months after ending the storied franchise's 53-year title drought with an epic defeat of San Antonio.

The Knicks return their starting five, but a sour note has already been sounded in the pre-season as star center Karl-Anthony Towns said he was "extremely disappointed" by the Knicks' public announcement that they were pausing contract extension talks with him and Josh Hart.

Additionally, no team has won back-to-back titles since the Golden State Warriors in 2018, and Victor Wembanyama's Spurs are just one of the clubs tipped to keep it that way.

The Oklahoma City Thunder, led by two-time reigning MVP Shai Gilgeous-Alexander, are eager to reassert themselves after the Spurs ended their title repeat bid in the Western Conference finals.

Closer to home in the Eastern Conference the Knicks will contend with a retooled Philadelphia 76ers squad now featuring all-time leading scorer LeBron James and Jaylen Brown, who earned Finals MVP honors with the Bos-



Jaylen Brown (left) of the Philadelphia 76ers celebrates with LeBron James against the Boston Celtics in the second quarter during the preseason game at Xfinity Mobile Arena in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. (AFP)

ton Celtics in 2024. Four-time champion James, still a force at 41, agreed to slash his salary in his quest for a fifth ring.

Along with Brown he'll team with former MVP big man Joel Embiid, All-NBA point guard Tyrese Maxey and 21-year-old phenom VJ Edgecombe.

The 76ers will be out to make an early statement when they take on the Knicks at Madison Square Garden today, part of a three-game opening day slate.

The Miami Heat have also added star power in the shape of two-time MVP Giannis Antetokounmpo. Antetokounmpo,

who led Milwaukee to the crown in 2021, arrived from the Bucks in a blockbuster trade and could form a lethal partnership with Bam Adebayo - who poured in 83 points in one game last season.

But nowhere are the expectations higher than in San Antonio. The Knicks were still celebrating their Finals victory when Wembanyama started counting the days to the 2027 championship series.

San Antonio used the disappointment of their 2013 Finals loss to Miami to fuel their run to the 2014 title, and Wembanyama says the current Spurs squad is deter-

mined to bounce back in the same way.

"We're fighting for the top spot of the mountain," says the towering French center, who reached his first NBA Finals in only his third season.

At just 22 Wembanyama is a bona fide star. He was the 2026 Defensive Player of the Year and finished third in MVP voting. An abundance of other talented players at coach Mitch Johnson's disposal includes Dylan Harper, who emerged as a consistent threat at the rim in the playoffs after being limited by injuries in the regular season.

FOCUS

Svitolina announces separation from Monfils

Reuters
Madrid

World number six Elina Svitolina said yesterday that she and former tennis player Gael Monfils were ending their marriage, with the Ukrainian adding that the emotional toll of Russia's war in her homeland left her needing to rediscover herself.

The couple married in July 2021 and welcomed a daughter, Skai, in October 2022.

Announcing the separation in an Instagram post, Svitolina described the personal struggles she has faced since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 and the impact they had on her life away from the tennis court.

"This is the most difficult thing I have ever had to share," Svitolina wrote. "Everyone knows how much Ukraine means to me. What I have rarely spoken about is what the war has done to me inside.

"Last year, I told you I needed to step away from the court because I wasn't in the right emotional space. Today, I want to open up a little more. What you didn't see were the sleepless nights, the doubts, and the feeling of slowly losing myself.

"Gael saw all of it. He never let go of my hand. We fought through this together for a long time, with everything we had. But some battles happen deep inside you, and no amount of love from someone else can win

them for you." Svitolina asked for kindness and privacy as the family navigates the separation, stressing there was no one to blame.

"With time, I came to understand that I need to find my way back to myself and that I cannot do that within our marriage," the 32-year-old Australian Open semi-finalist added.

"It is the hardest truth I have ever had to face and the hardest thing I have ever had to tell the person I love.

"Gael listened. He has respected what I need with a strength and grace I will never forget. Gael has loved me through my greatest joys and my darkest moments, and I have loved him with all my heart...

"Skai will always come first. Our marriage is ending, but our family is not. We will always be her parents, side by side, at every step of her life...

"There are only two people who loved each other deeply and a story that is changing shape."

On the court, four-times Grand Slam semi-finalist Svitolina recently secured her place at the season-ending WTA Finals in Indian Wells, California.

Frenchman Monfils, 40, a former world number six and one of the most charismatic players of his generation, has retired from professional tennis, according to the International Tennis Integrity Agency.

He planned to retire at the end of 2026 and bid farewell at November's Paris Masters but the ITIA now lists him as retired.



France's Gael Monfils and Ukraine's Elina Svitolina walk onto the court before their mixed doubles semi-final at the US Open in New York on August 26, 2026. (Reuters)

GOLF

Singh wins first title since 2023, clinching SAS Championship



Vijay Singh of Fiji poses with the trophy after winning the SAS Championship at Prestonwood Country Club in Cary, North Carolina. (AFP)

Reuters
North Carolina

There is not much Vijay Singh has not accomplished on golf courses around the world.

The 63-year-old Fijian has won three major championships among his 34 PGA Tour titles and is a member of the World Golf Hall of Fame.

He added another trophy to his collection Sunday, prevailing at the SAS Championship in Cary, N.C., after shooting his third consecutive 3-under-par round of 69. The victory made him the second-oldest player to win a tournament in PGA Tour Champions history.

Singh proved best at navigating the tough conditions Saturday and Sunday, finishing at 9-under 207. He finished two strokes ahead of another golfing icon, South African Ernie Els, who also shot a 69 on Sunday to finish at 7 under.

Defending champion Alex Cejka of Germany and Tag Ridings tied for third at 6

under, three strokes back. Singh shared the lead after two rounds with Tim O'Neal and Sweden's Freddie Jacobson. O'Neal, playing alongside Singh, shot a 1-over 73 to finish in a tie for fifth, while Jacobson carded a 2-over 74 and fell into a tie for 10th.

The victory was Singh's first in more than three years and his sixth on the Champions Tour. He won the Ally Challenge in August 2023 but had not recorded a top-10 finish in 2026 heading into the weekend at Prestonwood Country Club.

"This one feels good right now. Hopefully it's going to boost me up for the next few events to come and for next year," Singh said. "I think I kind of rededicated myself a little bit. I have been very lazy practicing. I've been working out, but I haven't been practicing very much. So I think I have to start doing that, which I started doing that again and I think that's why I won today, I guess. Just the extra work that got me through."

Singh's playing partners got off to better starts than the eventual champion. O'Neal reached 8 under with birdies at Nos. 1 and

4, while Jacobson also got to 8 under with birdies at Nos. 2 and 7. They led Singh by two strokes through seven holes, but the tournament turned on the ninth, when O'Neal made a double bogey and Jacobson a bogey.

Singh hit a quality approach shot and sank a short birdie putt to pull even with Jacobson at 7 under.

The Fijian took the lead for good with a chip-in birdie at No. 10 and extended his advantage to three strokes with another birdie at the par-5 12th. Singh parred the remaining holes, while Els got no closer than two strokes after birdieing the 17th.

Singh was reunited with longtime caddie Wayne De Haas, and the two were on the same page about how to handle the chilly conditions.

"I told Wayne, I said, 'You know, if it's cold and windy, it's going to be tough playing today so we just have to play well, don't try to win the tournament in the first nine holes,'" Singh said. "I said, 'It's going to be a long day and let's stick in there,' and I played well on the back nine as well."

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Semenyo out, Haaland may be fit to face AEK

Semenyo limped to the tunnel following Saturday’s 3-2 home win over Ipswich

Reuters
Manchester

Manchester City forward Antoine Semenyo has been sidelined for up to eight weeks after suffering a knee injury at the weekend but striker Erling Haaland could be fit for Tuesday’s Champions League clash at home to AEK Athens, manager Enzo Maresca said.

Ghana international Semenyo limped to the tunnel following Saturday’s 3-2 home win over Ipswich Town, shortly after Haaland took a knock on his foot and ankle in stoppage time.

Maresca said Semenyo’s injury was not as bad as first feared but the 26-year-old, who has two goals and three assists in the Premier League this season, needed time to recover.

“It could be eight weeks. Now the most important thing is recovery. When he is back in December it will be like a new player. Collateral. It’s not muscle,” he told a press conference ahead of the AEK game.

Semenyo was among the substitutes against Ipswich but came off the bench in the 77th minute at the Etihad Stadium.

“We tried to save him, we tried to keep him fresh, just give him some minutes, he didn’t play a lot but sometimes things happen, we cannot control,” added Maresca.

The manager said there were also some doubts about Norwegian Haaland’s fitness, but he remained hopeful. “He can be available, we will see, we have a session now. We have some doubts after Saturday’s game. He was quite good yesterday, better. So we will see today,” Maresca added.

Haaland’s double against Ipswich helped City remain perfect in the top flight with seven straight wins. The 26-year-old has netted in his last eight appearances for City, scoring 12 times.

“For sure, to replace Erling it is always difficult but we have some different op-



Manchester City’s manager Enzo Maresca (left) with defender Ruben Dias and midfielder Elliot Anderson during a training session in Manchester, on the eve of their UEFA Champions League match against AEK Athens. (AFP)

tions,” Maresca said. “Phil (Foden) can be one of the solutions, not the only one... but now, at the moment the number nine is Erling.”

Maresca is eyeing the AEK match as a chance for City to bounce back from last week’s 4-2 loss at home to European champions Paris St Germain, which left City 17th in the table with three points from two matches. “I think the response after the PSG game was quite good ... It’s a Champions League game, different competition, but the ambition has to be the same, try to win games,” he added.

GUEHI INSISTS PLAYERS HAVE ‘TRUST AND BELIEF’ IN MAN CITY

Meanwhile, Manchester City defender Marc Guehi said a “pretty calm” squad have “a lot of trust and belief in the football club” despite the English giants being found guilty of more than 100 breaches of Premier League financial rules.

City have made an impressive start to the season under new manager Maresca, winning all of their seven opening league games to lead the Premier League table by three points from champions Arsenal.

But those results have been achieved

against the backdrop of a mass of guilty verdicts, which have led to calls for City to be hit with huge points deductions, colossal fines and even the stripping of some of their Premier League titles.

Significantly, however, no punishments have yet been announced and City, who have repeatedly denied wrongdoing, are appealing against the verdicts.

The only blemish to City’s on field form so far in the current campaign has been a 4-2 defeat in the Champions League by title-holders Paris Saint-Germain, with City eager to returning to winning ways in Europe at home to AEK Athens.

England defender Guehi, speaking at a pre-match press conference, said: “The team spirit has been really good, every single person, player, staff and fans are backing us and it has been great to see. We’re pretty calm. There’s a lot of relaxed faces because we have a lot of trust and belief in the football club and what’s been going on here.”

“It can be very easy to be affected by the noise that’s going on. But I’m so happy to see the team spirit, the team bonding and everyone taking to what’s happening and just focusing on the football,” he added.

Guehi, who joined City from Premier League rivals Crystal Palace in a £20mn (\$26.6mn) move in January last year, was asked how he had come to trust the club.

“Ever since I’ve got to the club, the club have been fantastic with me,” the 26-year-old replied. “The support that I’ve had, tough times on the pitch and off the pitch “I’m aware already of the success the club has already had in the past and I want to be someone who’s part of the future success.”

Questioned on whether Enzo Maresca’s players had been given any details about why the City hierarchy were so confident of mounting a successful appeal against the decision of an independent commission, Guehi answered: “No, nothing’s been said. The only thing that’s been said is to focus on the football, which is all we can do.”

CAS ruling on Africa Cup of Nations final expected at end of November

Zurich: A decision on Senegal’s appeal after being stripped of this year’s Africa Cup of Nations title will be made at the end of November, the Court of Arbitration for Sport said.

Senegal are contesting the Confederation of African Football’s decision to declare Morocco champions, despite Senegal beating the hosts 1-0 after extra time in January’s final in Rabat, and their arguments, plus those of Morocco and CAF, were heard by CAS in Lausanne on October 8.

At the time, CAS said it expected a decision within days but has now decided to issue a complete ruling, including legal grounds, known as a CAS Award. “This process will require several weeks, with the CAS Award expected at the end of November 2026,” CAS said in a statement.

Senegal walked off the pitch for 14 minutes after a penalty was awarded against them late in regulation time, with several players returning to the dressing room in protest before they resumed play.

Morocco missed the spot kick, sending the match into extra time, where Senegal scored the winner to secure victory.

However, they were stripped of the title two months later after CAF’s Appeal Board ruled that Senegal had forfeited the match by walking off the pitch, overturning the result and awarding a 3-0 victory to Morocco.

Senegal quickly followed with an appeal to sport’s highest court CAS, which was lodged on March 25 but heard some six months later. The basis of their arguments is that the referee’s decision is final and he allowed the match to be completed.

“I know it’s a long wait for the fans a few months after the final between Senegal and Morocco,” CAS Director General Matthieu Reeb said outside the hearing earlier this month.

“I expect the decision to come not today, not tomorrow, but a few days later. The facts are set, are clear and the discussions will be on some procedural issues and legal aspects,” he added.

The CAS panel is presided over by French sports law expert Gerald Simon with assistance from Italian international law professor Luigi Fumagalli and Hamburg-based attorney and professor of law at the University of Zurich Ulrich Haas.

CAS decisions are called awards and hold the same value as a national court judgement, enforceable in accordance with the New York Convention on the Recognition and Enforcement of Foreign Arbitral Awards. CAS awards may be enforced by sports federations or state courts, depending on the circumstances.

SPOTLIGHT

Ronaldo handed 30-day ban for leaving Portugal camp



Reuters
Lisbon

Cristiano Ronaldo was suspended for 30 days by the Portuguese FA on after leaving the national team camp following a rift with coach Jorge Jesus over his role in the side.

The federation’s disciplinary council said it had upheld the charge against the 41-year-old forward in full and imposed a fine of 255 euros (\$285.83). Ronaldo left Portugal’s base in Copenhagen before their Nations League match against Denmark earlier this month, having accused Jesus of twice breaking his word about his role after he was an unused substitute against Norway.

Jesus denied making any agreement with Ronaldo but left the door open for his return following Portugal’s 2-1 win.

The disciplinary council’s non-professional section found Ronaldo had intentionally committed an offence under Article 160(1) of the federation’s disciplinary regulations. Proceedings were opened on October 9 over facts reported two days earlier. The statement did not

specify which matches or activities the suspension would cover, or whether time already served under a provisional suspension would count towards the 30-day sanction.

Ronaldo later apologised for failing to acknowledge supporters after the Norway match and for leaving his teammates, saying he remained available for selection after serving any punishment arising from the incident. Portuguese FA president Pedro Proenca has said everyone within the federation wanted Ronaldo to return to the national team once the matter was resolved.

FOCUS

Visa presale opens for FIFA U-17 World Cup Qatar tickets

With one month to go until the FIFA U-17 World Cup Qatar 2026, ticket sales are now live at www.roadtoqatar.qa, beginning with an exclusive presale period for Visa cardholders. General public sales will open on October 26.

The tournament, taking place at the state-of-the-art Competition Complex at Aspire Zone from November 19 to December 13, with the final at Ahmad bin Ali Stadium, will feature as many as eight matches a day for a total of 104 matches across 48 teams.

All tickets are digital and are available as a Day Pass, which will enable fans to attend multiple matches a day, as well as cultural and entertainment activities at the Fan Zone, in what will be an electrifying football festival-like atmosphere. Day Passes are priced at QR20 per matchday for the group stage, round of 32, round of 16 and quarter-finals. A maximum of six Day Pass tickets per person can be purchased per matchday.

Fans can also purchase a Prime Pass, which will enable them to reserve seats for high demand matches.



The FIFA U-17 World Cup Qatar 2026 will take place at Aspire Zone from November 19 to December 13, with the final at Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium.

Tickets are priced at QR35 for the group stage, round of 32 and round of 16, the quarter-finals and semi-finals, and QR20 for the third-place play-off,

with availability limited in line with each pitch’s seating capacity. A maximum of four Prime Passes per person can be purchased for each main pitch,

per matchday. The final will be held at Ahmad bin Ali Stadium on December 13, with match tickets available in category 1 at QR30 and category 2 at QR15. A maximum of six tickets per person can be purchased for the final.

Tickets also include accessible seating options for disabled fans. Accessibility tickets are priced at QR20 for group stage through to third-place play-off, and QR 15 for the Final, and include one complimentary companion ticket.

Disabled fans can request accessible seats by sending an e-mail to: accessibility.tickets@sc.qa. A limited number of accessible parking spaces is available, with passes distributed closer to match days on a first-come, first-served basis.

The FIFA U-17 World Cup is the second of five consecutive editions that Qatar will host through 2029, continuing its successful 48-team format introduced in Doha last year.

Hosts Qatar have been drawn into Group A alongside Egypt, Greece and Panama, and will play their opening match against Panama on November 19 at 6:30pm.

Raya proud of Arsenal’s ‘incredible’ reaction after third straight win

London: Arsenal goalkeeper David Raya says the way the Premier League champions bounced back from their surprise defeat by Brighton last month with three straight wins since the international break has been “incredible”.

Mikel Arteta’s men, who visit Bayern Munich in the Champions League on Wednesday, had several weeks to ponder their 3-0 loss to Brighton.

But since getting back together, they have made it three wins from

three, with Noni Madueke’s late goal securing a 1-0 success at Nottingham Forest on Sunday.

“We came back very, very strong, especially after that tough defeat against Brighton and having 19 days since then to play a game,” Raya said.

“The way we responded, the way we played, the way we came back, is incredible, you know. So, delighted with the performances we have put in every single game. There are things to

improve, of course, as always, but we just take the positives and we’re looking forward to Wednesday now.”

Madueke’s 80th-minute deflected strike was Arsenal’s only shot on target at the City Ground, but the manner of Arsenal’s victory demonstrated their ongoing ability to grind out results – a quality much in evidence during last season’s title-winning triumph. “(We showed) maturity and a lot of desire,” Raya said. “Keep doing

the right things and the ball will get into the net. We had experiences in the last two years where we drew 0-0 here (Forest), so I think we showed a lot of character to keep digging the result and in the end with a few crosses and a few of Bukayo’s (Saka’s) balls, the ball went in thanks to Noni. He’s a special player and it’s going to be a special goal for him to get the win at such a difficult ground and such a difficult team. So, I’m delighted for him.”

Marseille, Lille official club stores looted amid unrest in France

Paris: Olympique de Marseille and fellow French top-flight club Lille said their official stores were looted during weekend unrest in France. Marseille condemned the incident at its shop on La Canebiere, the city’s historic main avenue, while Lille thanked everyone who had helped and offered support.

France had some of its worst unrest in years at the weekend, with thousands of people arrested and shops looted or damaged during protests over high prices and declining public services.

Earlier yesterday, Marseille authorities imposed a ban on public gatherings and demonstrations across the city after violent protests and looting. The ban runs from midday until 8 pm.

“Olympique de Marseille condemns in the strongest possible terms the acts of violence and looting targeting its official store on the Canebiere and expresses its solidarity with its partner Puma, which operates the store,” the club said in a statement.

“These events have caused significant property damage, forcing the club to temporarily close this store to the public. Fans may, however, continue to visit OM’s other official stores in Marseille. The club will inform its fans as soon as conditions allow for a reopening ...”

Fellow Ligue 1 club Lille said its store on Rue Faidherbe in the downtown area was hit by severe vandalism and looting on Saturday and would remain closed until further notice.

“LOSC would also like to acknowledge and thank everyone who has offered support over the past few hours - first and foremost our store employees, but also the many passersby, fans and non-fans alike, who spontaneously offered their help, a helping hand, and words of comfort,” Lille said on Sunday.

A major cleanup operation took place on Sunday in cities across France, from Lille in the north to Marseille in the south and from Strasbourg in the east to Bordeaux in the southwest, where a masked group invaded the residence of the local prefect.

Marseille are ninth in the league table after seven matches and return to action on Thursday when they visit Austrian side Sturm Graz in the Europa League. Lille are fourth in Ligue 1 and host Turkish champions Galatasaray in the Champions League tomorrow.