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Jansen, Rabada put South Africa in sight of win over Australia



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Dakar Rally 2027 will move from Saudi Arabia to Africa, sources say

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FOOTBALL

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QATAR STARS LEAGUE

Rayyan defend top spot as Sadd seek to end losing run

Rayyan lead standings with 14 points, two ahead of a chasing trio comprising Sadd, Arabi and Duhail

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Al Rayyan will look to strengthen their grip on top spot when they face Al Sailiya in the seventh round of the Qatar Stars League tomorrow, while Al Sadd aim to halt a run of four consecutive defeats across domestic and continental competitions when they take on Al Shahania today.

Rayyan lead the standings with 14 points, two ahead of a chasing trio comprising Sadd, Arabi and Duhail, all on 12 points. Rayyan missed the chance to extend their advantage in the previous round after being held to a goalless draw by Al Gharafa despite creating several scoring opportunities.

They will now be keen to return to winning ways against bottom-placed Sailiya, who gained a confidence boost after fighting back from two goals down to draw 2-2 with Qatar SC and claim their first point of the season. Sailiya will hope to build on that result, although they face a formidable challenge against the league leaders.

Sadd, meanwhile, will be under pressure to respond when they meet Al Shahania in the opening match of the round at Khalifa International Stadium today. The defending champions have suffered successive 2-3 defeats against Arabi and Duhail in the league, leaving them second on 12 points, level with Arabi and Duhail but ahead on goal difference.

Their recent struggles have been compounded by defeats to Iran's Esteghlal and Saudi Arabia's Al Hilal in the AFC Champions League Elite, increasing the pressure on coach Razvan Lucescu to turn the team's fortunes around. "The match against Al Shahaniya is very important for us. We must focus and give our best in order to return to winning ways," the Romanian said ahead of the match.

Lucescu called on his players to respond strongly, adding: "I expect a strong reaction from the players in order to achieve victory over Al Shahaniya. We must work, fight, and do our utmost to return to winning ways."

Shahania, however, will also be eager



Al Sadd's coach Razvan Lucescu (right) speaks to left-back Paulo Otavio during a training session yesterday, on the eve of the QSL match against Al Shahania.

to recover after a 6-0 thrashing by Arabi in the previous round. They have seven points and are in eighth place and will need a much-improved defensive display to challenge the defending champions.

In today's other match, Al Gharafa host Al Ahli at Thani bin Jassim Stadium, with both sides looking to bounce back from disappointing results.

Gharafa were held to a goalless draw by Rayyan in the previous round, leaving them with five points in 10th place. The Amir Cup holders have made a slow start to their league campaign and will be determined to get back to winning ways. Al Ahli, seventh with seven points, suffered a 3-0 defeat against Al Wakrah and will be

equally keen to respond. Gharafa assistant coach Antonio Henriquez said preparations had proceeded normally despite the short turnaround between matches, adding that the team was accustomed to the demands of a congested schedule through its regular participation in the AFC Champions League. Ahli coach Borja Jimenez, meanwhile, said his team needed to improve and restore its balance after the defeat to Wakrah. He acknowledged Gharafa's strength despite their recent results and urged his players to remain focused throughout the match.

Tomorrow, Al Shamal will look to revive their campaign when they face Qatar SC at Abdullah bin Khalifa Stadium. Last season's



Al Rayyan players warm up during a training session yesterday.

runners-up were held to a goalless draw by Lusail after suffering a 4-0 defeat to Duhail, leaving them fifth with nine points. Qatar SC, meanwhile, are still searching for their first victory. They let slip a two-goal lead against Sailiya to draw 2-2 and have collected three points from three draws, leaving them second from bottom.

Saturday's meeting between Al Wakrah and Al Arabi at Khalifa International Stadium promises to be one of the round's most intriguing contests, with both teams showing encouraging form.

Arabi followed their victory over defending champions Sadd with a commanding 6-0 win against Shahania. The results have lifted them to 12 points and third place, level with Sadd and Duhail but behind the champions on goal difference.

Wakrah have also found their rhythm, recording a second consecutive victory with a 3-0 win over Ahli. They have eight points in sixth place and will aim to maintain their momentum against an Arabi side firmly involved in the title race.

Duhail will close the round when they host Lusail at Abdullah bin Khalifa Sta-

dium on Saturday. Back-to-back victories over Shamal, whom they defeated 4-0, and Sadd, whom they beat 3-2, have revived their title ambitions.

Duhail have moved to 12 points in fourth place. They will be keen to extend their winning run against a Lusail side that held Shamal to a goalless draw in the previous round. Lusail, who are competing in the top flight for the first time, have six points in ninth place and will look to continue their stubborn form and take something from the encounter.

ROUND 7 FIXTURES

TODAY: Al Shahania vs Al Sadd at Khalifa International Stadium | 5:30pm; Al Gharafa vs Al Ahli at Thani Bin Jassim Stadium | 7:45pm

Tomorrow: Al Shamal vs Qatar SC at Abdullah Bin Khalifa Stadium | 5:30pm; Al Sailiya vs Al Rayyan at Suhaim Bin Hamad Stadium | 7:45pm

On Saturday: Al Wakrah vs Al Arabi at Khalifa International Stadium | 5:30pm; Al Duhail vs Lusail at Abdullah Bin Khalifa Stadium | 7:45pm

FIA WORLD AND MIDDLE EAST BAJA CUPS

World-class entry for next week's Qatar International Baja

By Sports Reporter
Lusail

The Qatar Motor and Motorcycle Federation (QMMF) announced a world-class entry for the Qatar International Baja, which takes place from October 28th to 31st.

The Lusail-based event hosts the penultimate rounds of the FIA World and Middle East Baja Cups and round five of the FIM Bajas World Cup.

Thirty-seven cars, 45 motorcycles and eight quads will compete over the three-day itinerary, with 11 FIA crews registered for the FIA World Baja Cup and 15 concentrating on the regional Baja series.

Six of the leading 10 drivers chasing glory in the FIA World Baja Cup are present in Qatar, in addition to three of the leading five drivers in the FIA Middle East Baja Cup. Amongst drivers and navigators from 20 nations are nine crews aiming for success in the Ultimate category, a dozen entered in the Challenger class, 13 in SSV and three in the Stock section for series-production cross-country machines.

A pair of Toyota Hilux IMT Evos run by SVR head the FIA World Baja Cup contingent in the hands of the Portuguese duo of Francisco Barreto and Paulo Fiuza and South Africa's Saood Variawa and Charan Moore. The French duo of Lionel and Lucie Baud crew the solitary diesel-engined X-Raid Mini JCW Rally.

Victory in last weekend's Baja Portalegre 500 has lifted Barreto into third in the



Qatar's Nasser Saleh al-Attiyah has entered this year's FIA Middle East Baja Cup as a privateer with Frenchman Max Delfino in an Optimus MD Rallye.

Drivers' Championship behind the absent Dania Akeel and Challenger front-runner Mitchel van den Brink.

The Dutchman heads a Challenger section that also includes Oman's Hamed al-Wahaibi and the QMMF Team quartet of Abdulaziz al-Kuwari, Nouef al-Sowaidi, Khalifa Saleh al-Attiyah and Rashid al-Muhannadi and additional Taurus entries for local drivers Ahmed al-Kuwari and Mohammed al-Attiyah.

Nasser Saleh al-Attiyah has entered this year's FIA Middle East Baja Cup as a pri-

vateer with Frenchman Max Delfino in an Optimus MD Rallye. The Qatari legend has already claimed maximum points in Saudi Arabia and Jordan this season and will be aiming for a hat-trick of wins as he hopes to add the FIA Middle East Baja title to his long list of achievements.

Fernando Alvarez leads the way in the SSV category but will face competition from the QMMF Team's Mohammed al-Marri, local privateers Mohammed al-Atteya, Abdulla al-Khelaifi and Ghanim al-Attiyah, the Saudi duo of Hamad al-Harbi



Mitchel van den Brink is the Challenger pace-setter in the FIA World Baja Cup.

and Maha al-Hamali and several other international crews.

Abdulla al-Rabban represents the host nation in the Stock category. He faces competition from the Saudi duo of Majed al-Thunayyan and Abdullah al-Shegawi. Al-Thunayyan holds second in the FIA World Baja Cup rankings behind the absent Al-Mashna al-Shammeri and needs just eight points from his sixth start of the season to win the title. Al-Shegawi is registered for the regional Baja Cup.

Leading Junior rider Alex McInnes currently heads the FIM Bajas World Cup by two points from Abdulhalim al-Mogheera. The KTM duo will battle it out alongside an impressive motorcycle field that also includes multiple defending FIM champion and third-placed Mohammed al-Baloshi and three-time event winner Konrad Dabrowski.



Alex McInnes currently heads the FIM Bajas World Cup by two points.

Other riders with previous experience of specialist desert racing conditions and the unique navigational skills needed to prevail in Qatar include Australia's Martin Chalmers, Great Britain's Ethan Lane, Brett Hunt, Robert Wallace and Makis Rees-Stavros, Germany's Philip Horlemann and Dabrowski's leading female team-mate Joanna Modrzewska.

Mohammed al-Kubaisi and Abdulattif Mojadam represent the host nation, while the two-wheel field also includes the talented Jordanian Abdullah Abu Aisheh and Lebanon's Rafic Eid.

Ahmed al-Jaber holds a seven-point advantage over Hani al-Noumesi in the quad category but the duo face strong competition in Qatar from the likes of Abdulaziz al-Atawi, last year's event winner Abdulaziz Ahli and Badr al-Hamdan in the eight-strong field.

CRICKET

Sooryavanshi told to be patient by Iyer

AFP
Christchurch, New Zealand

Vaibhav Sooryavanshi “can’t just walk straight into the team”, India captain Shreyas Iyer said yesterday, after calls for the teenage sensation to be unleashed for the T20 series against New Zealand starting in Christchurch this week.

The 15-year-old Sooryavanshi made his international debut for India in July but has been used sparingly against top opponents despite his glittering Indian Premier League form.

India landed in New Zealand on Tuesday, two days before they begin their 40-day tour including five T20s, five one-day internationals and two Test matches.

It marks 100 years of sporting ties between the two nations.

“He has many more years ahead to get opportunities,” Iyer said when asked about the teenager’s role in the squad.

“It’s not as if he can just walk straight into the team right now because our openers have been scoring consistently and also won us the World Cup.”

Sooryavanshi has taken the cricketing world by storm after making his IPL debut aged 14 years and 23 days in 2025. Nine days later he scored his first IPL century.

In eight T20 internationals



Captains New Zealand's Mitchell Santner (right) and India's Shreyas Iyer pose with the trophy ahead of the first Twenty20I at Hagley Oval in Christchurch. (AFP)

Sooryavanshi is averaging just over 30 at a strike rate of 186, below his IPL average of 44 and strike rate of nearly 229.

Since July Sooryavanshi’s rivals for India’s opening spot, Sanju Samson and Abhishek Sharma, have averaged 25 and 30 respec-

tively, at strike rates of 172 and 200. Iyer said Sooryavanshi would learn plenty from the tour, with or without game time.

“Look at it this way: coming overseas like this will give him a fair idea of how the game plays on these particular wickets, so next

time when he comes he will be very well prepared for these conditions.”

New Zealand captain Mitchell Santner said he was aware of Sooryavanshi’s talents from playing in the IPL but pointed to the power of India’s whole lineup.



India's Vaibhav Sooryavanshi (centre) attends a training session at Hagley Oval in Christchurch yesterday. (AFP)

“I think he has a huge part to play for India, whether it’s in this series or in the future,” Santner said.

“If he does get a crack guys have found it quite hard to stop him, but we’ve got some plans for him.”

Santner said conditions would be seam friendly in the opening match at Hagley Oval.

India would have to get used to some unfamiliar conditions as they start the series, he said.

“Temperature-wise, you know, we’ve always when we’ve gone to India, it’s hot, it’s humid,” Santner said.

“Here tomorrow night could be the flip side for India, could be a little bit cold, maybe windy, some cold hands.”

New Zealand are without Will O’Rourke, Mark Chapman and Zak Foulkes for the T20 series but will be able to lean on the power hitting of Finn Allen and Tim Seifert at the top of the order.

India recalled seamer Bhuvneshwar Kumar after a four-year absence while Jasprit Bumrah was rested as part of workload management after he played a key part in the team’s recent Asian Games gold medal in Japan.

SPOTLIGHT

Jansen, Rabada put South Africa in sight of victory

Australia collapse to 99 all out before being asked to follow on

AFP
Gqeberha, South Africa

Marco Jansen and Kagiso Rabada bowled South Africa to within sight of a series-levelling victory on the fourth day of the second Test at St George’s Park yesterday.

Australia were 156 for four in their follow on innings after being shot out for 99 earlier in the day. They were still 170 runs short of making South Africa bat again.

Travis Head survived an early chance and was unbeaten on 87. Steve Smith did not come out to bat in the second innings after appearing to be struggling with a neck injury while making top score of 28 in Australia’s first innings.

Jansen took five for 33 as Australia crashed to their fourth-lowest total against South Africa and Rabada made two crucial breakthroughs in the second innings.

Rabada dismissed Australian opening batsman Nic Maddinson cheaply for the second time in the match and later bowled Matt Renshaw, who was man of the match in Australia’s 214-run win in the first Test.

With a first innings lead of 326 runs, South Africa enforced the follow-on despite fast bowler Anrich Nortje being out of action with a groin injury. Nortje



South Africa's Marco Jansen (left) celebrates after dismissing Australia's Scott Boland (right) on day four of the second Test at St Georges Park in Gqeberha yesterday. (AFP)

dismissed Marnus Labuschagne in the first innings but bowled only 3.3 overs before pulling up injured.

In Nortje’s absence, South African captain Temba Bavuma used Rabada, Jansen and fellow seamer Wiaan Mulder in short spells and made extensive use of off-spinner Simon Harmer, who bowled 18 overs and took two wickets.

Harmer broke a 92-run sec-

ond wicket stand between Head and Labuschagne when the latter went for a big hit and was caught by Jansen running back from mid-on as the ball was held up in a stiff breeze.

Tall left-arm Jansen was superb in the first innings. He struck with his first ball of the match when he had nightwatchman Scott Boland caught behind in the second over of the day.

He followed up with the wickets of Head, Renshaw, Alex Carey and Beau Webster as Australia collapsed.

BRIEF SCORES

Australia 99 (Smith 28, Jansen 5-33, Mulder 2-14, Rabada 2-33) **and 156 for 4 (f/o)** (Head 87*, Rabada 2-30, Harmer 2-47) **trail South Africa 425 for 9 decl by 170 runs**

COMMENT

Pacer Shami not giving up hope of India return



Reuters
Mumbai

Mohammed Shami said he was determined to work his way back into the India team after the injury-plagued fast bowler was again left out of the squad for their multi-format tour of New Zealand.

Shami has taken 462 international wickets in 197 matches across all three formats but last featured for India in March 2025 during their successful Champions Trophy campaign, in which he was the team’s joint-highest

wicket-taker. The 36-year-old, whose career has been disrupted by leg issues, told reporters yesterday he would never lose hope of returning to the international arena.

“In any profession, you shouldn’t leave hope. You should always have a goal,” he said.

“If we are playing in the Ranji Trophy, it is to win the title for the state, right? Goals should always be there. I don’t deny that I have that goal.”

Shami was dropped by Bengal for their Ranji Trophy match against Services last week but he said that decision was based on the pitch being better for spin and

that his fitness was not the issue. “I am still at my peak,” he added. “You all can see it for yourselves, I trained today and yesterday as well.”

Shami was the leading wicket-taker when India won the 2023 ODI World Cup on home soil but looks unlikely to feature in their title defence next year.

“I don’t think that far ahead. You never know what will happen in life,” he said.

“You don’t know who will score runs or take wickets.”

India begin their five-match T20 series against New Zealand today, with five more ODIs and a two-Test series to follow.

MOTORSPORT

Formula 1 title beckons for Antonelli but he may have to wait a little

Reuters
Austin, Texas

Kimi Antonelli is set to become Formula One’s youngest champion, and Italy’s first in 73 years, but the 20-year-old Mercedes driver will have to win and hope the stars align if he is to convert his first ‘match point’ in Texas on Sunday.

Four years old when Sebastian Vettel became the hitherto youngest champion at 23 with Red Bull in 2010, the racer from Bologna has a mighty 102-point lead over teammate George Russell ahead of the US Grand Prix in Austin.

There will be a maximum 125 points remaining to win after the chequered flag drops at the Circuit of the Americas, meaning Antonelli -- in his second season at the pinnacle of motorsport -- will clinch the title if he extends his lead by 23.

Only a win would give him that margin but the Italian will still need Russell and Ferrari’s seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton to finish no higher than ninth or fifth respectively. Otherwise the wait to become Italy’s first champion since Alberto Ascari in 1953 rolls on to at least Mexico City a weekend later.

“I know it’s very close, I know it’s there, but I just need to make sure that I keep doing the best I can. You know, the mindset is always the same, to go out there and win and perform the best way I can,” Antonelli said after finishing third in Singapore, the race before Austin.

That result was his 14th podium of the season.

ONE-IN-25 CHANCE OF TAKING TITLE IN AUSTIN?

“We’re in that very uncomfortable phase of the season where you have to navigate the Thursday media with everyone saying ‘Oh, you could do it... you’ve got a first match point?’ said deputy principal Bradley Lord in a team podcast. “People love this tennis com-

parison of match points, don’t they? But I think there’s something like a one-in-25 chance of that being remotely possible in Austin.

“Our focus is how can we get the car in its sweet spot and then go and score as many points as possible.”

Russell, who crashed in the Singapore sprint and then started the main race at the back of the grid due to an engine penalty, will be thinking exactly that.

Antonelli has won eight of 17 rounds so far but the momentum has been more with Red Bull’s four-time champion Max Verstappen, winner of the last two races in Malaysia and Singapore and also last year’s winner in Austin from pole position.

“You look at the recent races and Red Bull have been very much best. In Baku, Max was a similar level to me. We go to Malaysia, a totally different track, and Singapore another different track, and he’s dominated the last two weekends,” said Russell.

Verstappen is 119 points behind Antonelli and has said he just wants to have fun for the remaining races, given the championship pressure is off.

Both Mercedes drivers will have the latest upgrade package for the first of three successive race weekends in Texas, Mexico and Brazil.

McLaren’s reigning champion Lando Norris was runner-up in Austin last year with Ferrari’s Charles Leclerc third and both could be in the mix again while Hamilton’s record in the United States is second to none.

“The last few races have not been great for us, but I think we’re getting stronger again and Austin is probably a better circuit for our car,” said McLaren’s chief technical officer Rob Marshall, whose team will also have some upgrades.

The weekend will also see a novel crossover, with four MotoGP riders set to take to the track for a demonstration ride on Saturday. The two-wheeled series and Formula One have a common owner in US-based Liberty Media.



SPOTLIGHT

QREC honours season leaders at glitzy awards ceremony

A tribute film honouring the late HH the Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani was highlight of the show



QREC Chairman Hamad bin Abdulrahman al-Attiyah, Deputy CEO and Director of Support Services Ahmed AmanAlla al-Sheebani, and Racing Manager Abdulla al-Kubaisi pose for a group photo with the award winners.

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Qatar Racing & Equestrian Club (QREC) hosted a spectacular awards ceremony, honouring the leading owners, trainers, jockeys and horses of the 2025/2026 racing season, ranked according to the prize money they earned.

The ceremony was attended by QREC Chairman Hamad bin Abdulrahman al-Attiyah, Deputy CEO and Director of Support Services Ahmed AmanAlla al-Sheebani and Racing Manager Abdulla al-Kubaisi, alongside the award recipients representing owners, trainers, jockeys, sponsors and media organisations.

One of the ceremony's most memorable highlights was a special tribute film honouring the late HH the Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani. The tribute marked a particularly significant moment in the evening, reflecting

the fact that horse racing in Qatar is far more than a sport. It is a fundamental part of the nation's identity and a cherished heritage passed down through generations.

The prominent position Qatari horse racing enjoys on the international stage today is the fruit of wise and visionary leadership, enduring passion and a deep love for the Purebred Arabian horse. QREC therefore took the opportunity to express its profound appreciation and gratitude to the leader who laid the foundations of this rich sporting legacy, championed Qatar's equestrian traditions and inspired generations of Qataris to strive for excellence. The ceremony also featured speeches by the QREC chairman and al-Sheebani, who reflected on QREC's progress over the past season and the scale of its achievements.

In a touching gesture of remembrance and appreciation, QREC paid tribute to the late veteran sports journalist Fayez Abdel Hady, who passed away just days before



QREC Chairman Hamad bin Abdulrahman al-Attiyah delivers a speech during the awards ceremony.

the ceremony. Over several decades, he played a prominent role in covering QREC's activities and reporting on the major events and milestones that marked its development throughout its history. The ceremony honoured his memory with deep respect and gratitude, recognising his distinguished contribution to horse racing and equestrian journalism in Qatar.

Wathnan Racing topped the

owners' standings following an outstanding season of impressive results and victories, from the opening race meeting to the final fixture. Among Qatari non-sheikh owners, Al Wasmiyah Farm claimed the leading owner award while Jassim al-Ghazali headed the trainers' rankings based on handicap ratings. Hamad Ahmed al-Malki al-Jehani took the honours as leading Qatari trainer.

Marco Casamento was named leading jockey, with Faleh Bughnaim taking the leading Qatari jockey award. Salman Fahad al-Hajri was recognised as the leading Qatari apprentice jockey.

Among the horses ranked by prize money earned in their respective categories, Wathnan Racing's Lippo de Carrere topped the Purebred Arabian standings, with Chdia, in the same ownership, taking the leading mare honours. Alhaarith, owned by Al Wasmiya Farm, headed the four-year-old Purebred Arabian colts' rankings while Geina, representing Dukhan

Racing, was the leading four-year-old Purebred Arabian filly.

Zah'ran Al Shahania, owned by North Racing, topped the locally bred Purebred Arabian horse rankings while Wathnan Racing's Razika claimed the leading mare honours. Hay'er Al Shahania, owned by Mansour bin Mesfer al-Shahwani, headed the standings for locally bred four-year-old Purebred Arabian colts, with Grace Secret, representing Umm Al-Shukhut Farm, taking the corresponding fillies' title.

In the remaining categories, also determined by prize money earned, Wathnan Racing's Make Me King was named leading Thoroughbred horse while Warm-ing, owned by Khalid Ghanem Mohammed Rabiah al-Kuwari, topped the Thoroughbred mares' standings. Basalt, owned by Mansoor bin Ebrahim bin Saad al-Mahmoud, claimed the leading four-year-old Thoroughbred colt award while Bint Mohaather, representing Al-Jeryan Stud, took the

corresponding fillies' honours.

Among the three-year-olds, August George, owned by Sheikh Mohammed bin Salman bin Mohammed bin Abdulaziz al-Thani, was the leading Thoroughbred colt while Rose of Spain, owned by Osama Omar Ismail al-Dafa, secured the leading filly title. Al Faisal, representing Al-Emadi Racing, was named leading locally bred Thoroughbred horse.

Wathnan Racing completed a clean sweep of the remaining locally bred Thoroughbred categories, with Doha Bu Thaila topping the mares' standings, Best Way and War Lady, both owned by Wathnan Racing, claimed the leading locally bred four-year-old Thoroughbred colt and filly titles respectively. The ceremony also recognised the QREC's sponsors and partners, whose support has contributed to the significant progress made in horse racing, as well as media organisations whose coverage highlighted the advances achieved during the season.

HORSE RACING

Keheilah Al Sakab lands Asherij Cup

MUQTARIB HOLDS OFF SHAWAQ ALSEEJ IN A GRIPPING FINISH

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Keheilah Al Sakab made a winning seasonal re-appearance, storming to victory in the feature Asherij Cup at Al Rayyan Racecourse yesterday.

The five-year-old grey mare, owned by Khalid Hamad al-Atteya, came from the rear with a powerful late surge to sweep past her rivals and overhaul the long-time leader in the home straight, winning by a convincing 1¼ lengths in the 1200m contest for three-year-old+ Local Purebred Arabian Handicap 60-90, Fillies & Mares.

Trained by Jassim Hamad al-Atteya and ridden by Marco Casamento, Keheilah Al Sakab produced an impressive performance to return to the winner's circle.

MHK al-Attiyah-trained AJS Najma came second for Al Jeryan Stud under jockey Arnaud De Lepine. Damaah, whose early efforts had kept the field at bay for much of the race, finished another 2¼ lengths behind in third. She carries the colours of Abdulaziz Saleh al-Jaber, with Alberto Sanna riding for trainer Hadi al-Ramzani.

Saad Ali al-Kubaisi, Deputy Director of the QREC Registration & Studbook Department, presented the cup.

In the Local Purebred Arabian Graduation, Muqtarib edged his rival Shawaq Alseej by a neck for trainer Maayouf bin Hashim al-Shamari and jockey Salman Fahad al-Hajri. Blazing Sunset secured a comfortable four-length victory in the Thoroughbred Handicap. Trained by Rashid al-Jehani and ridden by Szczepan Mazur, the winner produced a convincing performance in the 1900m race.

Tafawok claimed the Local Thoroughbred Handicap in a close finish, winning by a head for trainer Jihad El Ahmad and jockey Alberto Sanna. Al Jaroudi recorded victory in the Purebred Arabian Maiden, scoring by 2¼ lengths for trainer Dr Fahad Salman al-Hajri and jockey Salman Fahad al-Hajri.

Star With Purpose claimed one of the meeting's widest winning margins, taking the Thoroughbred Maiden Plate by 6½ lengths. Ha-



Connection of Keheilah Al Sakab celerate after the grey mare won the Asherij Cup at Al Rayyan Racecourse yesterday. **PICTURES: Juhaïm**



Jockey Marco Casamento guides Keheilah Al Sakab to Asherij Cup win yesterday.

mad al-Jehani trained the winner, who was ridden by Lukas Delozier.

In the opening contest of the seven-race meeting, Zaaem secured a narrow victory in the Thoroughbred Handicap 0-60, prevailing by a head for trainer Ibrahim Saeed al-Malki and jockey Faleh Bughenaim.

RESULTS
3rd Al Rayyan Race Meeting - Ashrej Cup

WINNERS: Horse, Trainer, Jockey
1 - Asherij Cup, Local Purebred Arabian Handicap
Keheilah Al Sakab, Jassim Hamad al-Atteya, Marco Casamento
2 - Local Purebred Arabian Graduation
Muqtarib, Maayouf bin Hashim al-Shamari, Salman Fahad al-Hajri
3 - Thoroughbred Handicap
Blazing Sunset, Rashid al-Jehani, Szczepan Mazur
4 - Local Thoroughbred

Handicap
Tafawok, Jihad El Ahmad, Alberto Sanna
5 - Purebred Arabian Maiden
Al Jaroudi, Dr Fahad Salman al-Hajri, Salman Fahad al-Hajri
6 - Thoroughbred Maiden Plate
Star With Purpose, Hamad al-Jehani, Lukas Delozier
7 - Thoroughbred Handicap 0-60
Zaaem, Ibrahim Saeed al-Malki, Faleh Bughenaim

MOTORSPORT

Dakar Rally 2027 will move from Saudi to Africa, sources say

Reuetrs
Paris

The Dakar Rally will return to Africa for its 49th edition due to the situation in the Middle East and in particular in Saudi Arabia, where the race has been held since 2020, three people involved in the World Rally-Raid Championship told Reuters.

According to the sources - two drivers and a team manager - the race will start in Europe with a prologue either in Spain or Portugal, before heading to Morocco for the remainder of the event, which is expected to feature around 12 stages.

The Dakar Rally is scheduled to run from January 9 to 22.

Race organisers Amaury Sport Organisation (ASO), the International Automobile Federation and International Motorcycling Federation did not immediately respond to Reuters requests for comment.

The Middle East situation has forced organisers to adapt their plan amid escalating hostilities between Saudi Arabia and Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthis movement, which has stepped up attacks on Saudi cities, airports and energy infrastructure.

ASO unveiled the original route in May, with the start and finish in King Abdullah Econom-



ic City, but had recently been working on an alternative route in the north of the kingdom, two drivers and a team member told Reuters this month.

However, the situation has deteriorated further, with a strike on Riyadh's international airport on October 10 killing at least 12 people and wounding more than 300.

The Dakar Rally was initially scheduled to run from January 1 to January 15, with a record 5,320 km (3,306 miles) of timed stages planned for the 2027 edition, the race's eighth in Saudi Arabia.

The event started in 1978 as a race from Paris and across the Sahara to the Senegalese capital in West Africa and has long been regarded as the world's toughest motorsport challenge.

It was later staged in South America between 2009 and 2019, after leaving Africa for security reasons.

Japan win men's team gold at world gymnastics championships

Japan won the men's team title at the Artistic Gymnastics World Championships in Rotterdam, with Daiki Hashimoto producing a standout display as he helped his country finish ahead of Russia and China. The battle for gold went down to the final of six rotations, with Japan and China separated by a mere one-tenth of a point, while Russia remained in contention, a further half point back. Japan prevailed under pressure, thanks in large part to an excellent routine from Hashimoto on the horizontal bar. China's hopes were damaged when Yang Haonan made two costly mistakes in the floor exercise, stepping out of bounds before landing on his hands. The errors opened the door for Russia to snatch silver, led by the consistency of Daniel Marinov across the parallel bars, vault and floor. The top three teams secured the first qualification places for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics. Britain missed out on the podium after finishing in fourth place.

The team final also offered a glimpse of today's individual all-around competition, where a much-anticipated duel is expected between defending world champion Hashimoto and his Japanese teammate Shinnosuke Oka, the Olympic champion. With China's Zhang Boheng, who beat both Japanese gymnasts at last month's Asian Games, sidelined by injury, the Russians could emerge as the main challengers. Marinov and 18-year-old Arsenii Dukhno, who finished third in qualification behind the two Japanese gymnasts on his senior world championship debut, both delivered solid performances in Rotterdam's Ahoy Arena.

SPOTLIGHT

Lusail Circuit gears up for a landmark month of MotoGP and F1

Lusail International Circuit is gearing up to host the MotoGP Qatar Airways Grand Prix of Qatar from November 6 to 8 and the Formula 1 Qatar Airways Qatar Grand Prix 2026 from November 27 to 29.

With just three weeks separating the two championships, November will bring a packed calendar of world-class motorsport action and exceptional entertainment experiences for fans and families from around the world.

With preparations entering their final stages, Lusail International Circuit is putting the finishing touches in place across grandstands, hospitality areas and wider event infrastructure, ensuring the venue is ready to welcome visitors from Qatar and beyond.

Abdulaziz Ali al-Muhammadi, CEO of Lusail International Circuit, said: "We are looking forward to welcoming the world back to Lusail International Circuit in November for two of the most anticipated events on the international motorsport calendar, just three weeks apart. Our preparations are nearing completion, with our teams focused on ensuring that every aspect of the venue is ready to deliver an exceptional experience for fans, as we do



Alongside the on-track action, both Formula 1 and Motogp Qatar Grands Prix will offer an extensive range of entertainment, interactive activities and cultural experiences, creating a destination where motorsport, family entertainment and Qatari hospitality come together.

every year."

He added: "The fan experience remains at the heart of our preparations for every event hosted by Lusail International Circuit. We are constantly working to provide a comprehensive experience for every visitor, whether they are motorsport enthusiasts or families looking to enjoy special moments together, reflecting our commitment to renowned hospitality and organisational excellence."

Alongside the on-track action, both events will offer an extensive range of entertainment, interactive activities and cultural experiences, creating a destination

where motorsport, family entertainment and Qatari hospitality come together.

At the Formula 1 Qatar Grand Prix, fans can look forward to entertainment activities for all ages, headlined by the Fan Forum, which offers an opportunity to get closer to the stars of Formula 1 and hearing from them.

The experience will be complemented by live music and DJ performances, alongside a range of attractions, including racing simulators, arcade games, obstacle course and miniature racing circuit. Families can also enjoy creative workshops, cultural experiences, and kids' activities exploring



race car design and aerodynamics, as well as sustainability initiatives featuring recycled art installations and workshops.

The MotoGP Grand Prix of Qatar will offer its own exciting line-up of entertainment and activities for spectators of all ages, adding to the thrill of the on-track action.

Fans can also look forward to special appearances by their favourite riders on a stage in the fan zone, where they will have the opportunity to see them up close and hear from them on stage. Live music and DJ performances throughout the event will further enhance the atmosphere, creating

an exciting experience for fans both on and off the track.

Across both events, spectators can enjoy dedicated children's activities, photo opportunities and a diverse selection of food and beverage options, with charging facilities also available.

As Lusail International Circuit prepares to welcome two of the world's leading motorsport championships, the venue continues to build on Qatar's reputation as a destination for major international sporting events, with a focus on delivering memorable experiences for fans from around the world.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Manchester United thrashed by Como

PAZ BRACE INSPIRES STATEMENT WIN OVER RED DEVILS



Como's Nicolas Paz (centre) celebrates scoring his team's third goal during the UEFA Champions League match against Manchester United at the Stadio Giuseppe Sinigaglia in Como, Italy, yesterday. (AFP)

AFP
Como, Italy

Alasdair Mackenzie Manchester United's struggles deepened with a dismal 4-1 Champions League defeat at Como yesterday, piling further pressure on under-fire manager Michael Carrick.

Nico Paz's brilliant double inspired debutants Como to a famous win, with Tasos Douvikas and Jacobo Ramon also on target for the Italians.

Only a late Joshua Zirkzee goal spared United from suffering their joint-heaviest defeat in the competition as the crisis-hit visitors' winless run extended to seven games.

United boss Carrick faced mounting pressure after a poor run of three draws and three defeats in all competitions sealed their worst start to a league campaign for 40 years.

But a lacklustre Red Devils team failed to muster a response

in the wind and rain of northern Italy as they were thoroughly outclassed to remain on three points in the Champions League.

Cesc Fabregas's side have enjoyed a fairytale rise from Serie B to Europe's elite club competition over the last three years, but their dismantling of the three-time European champions will go down as one of the greatest results in club history.

Argentina international Paz lit up the Stadio Giuseppe Sinigaglia with superb solo efforts either side of Douvikas's accomplished finish, before Ramon's header completed the rout as Como claimed their second win of the league phase to move up to six points.

With both sides facing a string of injuries, there was one major surprise in Carrick's team as defender Matthijs de Ligt returned for his first appearance in 11 months following injury, replacing the suspended Leny Yoro.

Diogo Dalot had an early sight at goal when his shot curled inch-

es wide of the far post, but Como immediately went up the other end and showed superior cutting edge.

Paz received the ball on the edge of the box, shifted it onto his favoured left foot and guided a finish home to give the hosts a dream start inside two minutes.

It exposed familiar flaws for United, who conceded inside the opening minute in their 2-0 defeat to Atletico Madrid last week and have now kept one clean sheet in 11 games this season in all competitions.

Como's confidence grew with the lead as they dominated possession and restricted rudderless United to having no shots on target before half-time, while threatening themselves through Douvikas and Martin Baturina.

Carrick made a double change at the interval to try and lift a sluggish performance as Amad Diallo and Carlos Baleba replaced Andrey Santos and Matheus Cunha.

But they were caught cold once

again as Paz slipped a through ball into Douvikas's path and the Greece international lifted a first-time finish into the top corner three minutes into the second half.

Como captain Lucas Da Cunha squandered a promising chance to make it three by shooting wide.

But the home crowd did not have to wait long to celebrate again as Paz nicked the ball off a hesitant Baleba in midfield before driving forward and finishing coolly in the 57th minute.

A shell-shocked United defence almost conceded a fourth when Paz, eyeing a hat-trick, had a curling effort saved by a diving Senne Lammens.

Number four arrived with 14 minutes to go when unmarked centre-back Ramon roamed forward to head home an inviting cross.

It sparked an exodus of fans in the away end, who missed substitute Zirkzee's stoppage-time strike in United's one bright moment of the evening.

SETBACK

PSG's Kvaratskhelia's season in doubt after torn ACL

AFP
Paris

Paris Saint-Germain could be without star winger Khvicha Kvaratskhelia for the rest of the season after he tore his ACL in the Champions League win against Barcelona while Ousmane Dembele also faces weeks out of action, the European champions said.

PSG said Kvaratskhelia "is set to undergo surgery in the coming days" after he suffered the injury in the 4-2 league phase win against Barcelona at the Parc des Princes on Tuesday.

Kvaratskhelia slumped to the turf without any apparent contact and left the pitch just before the hour mark. The club gave no timeline for his return to action but recovery from anterior cruciate ligament surgery typically takes between six and nine months, meaning the Georgia international can at best hope to be back for the closing stages of the season.

"Why me? I've never left anything to chance. I'd probably prepared for this match better than I ever have before. I thought I was ready for anything, but not for this," Kvaratskhelia posted in Georgian on Instagram.

The 25-year-old added that he was "ready to spend these next months in work, pain and tears".

The former Napoli winger has

established himself as one of Europe's most exciting attacking players and played a leading role in helping PSG to win back-to-back Champions League titles in the last two seasons.

Like Dembele, he is one of the contenders for the Ballon d'Or, which will be awarded on Monday. Dembele, the current Ballon d'Or holder, as well as PSG's captain and defender Marquinhos will both be sidelined for "several weeks" with thigh injuries they suffered in the win against Barcelona.

Dembele, 29, had to be substituted after 20 minutes due to his injury while Brazil international Marquinhos was withdrawn after an hour. France international Dembele, who scored six goals at this year's World Cup, struggled with injuries last season and PSG coach Luis Enrique used him sparingly in Ligue 1, preferring to keep him for Champions League games.

Dembele was also beset by injuries at his previous club, Barcelona. In the absence of two of their attacking stars, PSG will need to rely on summer signings Maghnes Akliouche, Mika Godts and Ferran Torres, the Spain international who scored the winning goal in the World Cup final in July.

PSG host Ligue 1 leaders Lyon on Sunday in their next domestic match and they are next in action in the Champions League on November 3, with a trip to Spanish side Villarreal.



Paris St Germain's Khvicha Kvaratskhelia leaves the pitch after sustaining an injury during the UEFA Champions League match against Barcelona in Paris on Tuesday. (AFP)

BARCELONA TAKE HEART DESPITE THIRD STRAIGHT DEFEAT TO PSG

Paris: Midfielder Pedri said before Barcelona's clash with Paris St Germain that the game would show where his team stood in Europe. Their 4-2 defeat on Tuesday suggested Hansi Flick's side are not yet among the continent's elite, but they may be closing the gap.

Barcelona arrived in Paris with a perfect record across all competitions this season, yet there was a feeling in Spain that PSG would provide a truer measure of their

credentials in the Champions League, the one major trophy that has eluded them under Flick.

Their attacking firepower has overwhelmed opponents in LaLiga, but doubts remain over whether Flick's aggressive approach leaves Barcelona exposed against stronger European sides. Those concerns resurfaced when Desire Doue opened the scoring in the 38th minute.

Barcelona had mitigating circumstances.

Marc Bernal was a surprise starter in midfield, instead of Rodri, while Eric Garcia and Jules Kounde were missing from the defence through injury.

Joan Garcia's eight first-half saves underlined PSG's greater comfort with the frantic tempo Barcelona sought to impose.

After another excellent Garcia save to open the second half, Barcelona clicked into gear and began to take control.

Xavi Espot, 19, marked his first Cham-

pions League start with the equaliser, displaying composure beyond his years.

Lamine Yamal also emerged as the focal point of Barcelona's attack after a subdued first half. PSG struggled to live with his incisive passing and looked vulnerable as Barcelona enjoyed more of the ball until Lucas Hernandez's set-piece goal in the 72nd minute.

Eventually, PSG delivered one too many blows and Barcelona's resistance was

broken. Their confidence remained intact though.

"Despite today's result, we competed well," said captain Raphinha on Movistar+, adding that "it was a good test and shows that we can compete."

Flick struck a similarly upbeat note. "We need to analyse the match, but I saw some very good things and things that we should build upon. I don't want to be negative; I'm feeling positive," he said.