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South Africa set Australia 288 to win decisive third Test



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Marquez tops practice, Martin withdraws due to injury

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QATAR STARS LEAGUE

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MOTORSPORT

Al-Attiyah leads after gruelling day at Qatar International Baja

Poland's Dabrowski and Emirati al-Bastaki led the way in the motorcycle and quad categories



Nasser Saleh al-Attiyah and his navigator Max Delfino charge towards opening stage win in Qatar International Baja yesterday.



KTM rider Konrad Dabrowski has an overnight lead of 5min 18sec.

By Sports Reporter
Lusail

Local hero Nasser Saleh al-Attiyah and his French navigator Max Delfino managed tyre wear carefully to storm into a 6min 15.3sec lead after the gruelling opening 336.45km selective section at the Qatar International Baja.

Poland's Konrad Dabrowski and Emirati Khalifa al-Bastaki led the way in the motorcycle and quad categories.

The longest stage of the season in the FIA World Baja Cup didn't disappoint and offered significant navigational challenges, tyre wear and a high rate of attrition in energy-sapping desert temperatures.

Al-Attiyah opted to run first on the road and made a strong start out of the blocks to carve out a useful early lead over Portugal's Francisco Barreto, one of the leading FIA World Baja Cup pace-setters. Barreto and his navigator Paulo Fiúza stayed on their coat tails for much of the first half of the stage and, when Al-Attiyah eased his pace to conserve tyre wear on his rear-wheel drive Optimus MD Rallye, Barreto reduced the margin to less than 20 seconds in his SVR Toyota Hilux IMT Evo.

But al-Attiyah went on the attack again in the last 100km and the outcome was settled in his favour when the Portuguese made a navigational mistake and had to retrace his steps before the finish.

Al-Attiyah said: "We needed to manage the tyres for the first 200km. We tried to push for the last 100. The tyres are completely gone. We needed to make a strategy, otherwise you can have a puncture. We did a good job and have a good position for tomorrow."

Barreto added: "We lost a little bit of time on the final part of the stage. We lost two waypoints and we came back to take them. We were near from Nasser all the stage and that's the reason we lost the time. We are first in the World Cup and that's where we need to finish. We will push tomorrow to make sure we keep this position."

While the pair were the class of their respective Middle East and World Cup Baja fields, the QMMF's Abdulaziz al-Kuwari and Oriol Mena delivered a stunning performance in their Can-Am to lead the Challenger class in third place.

Aliyyah Koloc was also in good form with navigator Marcin Pasek and was classified in fourth with her Red-Lined Revo GTR, the UAE-based youngster finishing 1min 36.6sec in front of Khalifa Saleh al-Attiyah and Stephane Duple in the second of the QMMF Challenger cars.

The French father and daughter pairing of Lionel and Lucie Baud didn't let their lowly start position affect them unduly and remain in contention for valuable FIA World Baja Cup points with sixth place in an X-Raid Mini JCW Rally.



QMMF's Abdulaziz al-Kuwari and Oriol Mena delivered a stunning performance in their Can-Am to lead the Challenger class and are in overall third place.

Koloc's father Martin and his navigator Hugo Magalhaes held seventh with Ahmed El-Shamy and Leonard Cremer guiding their Century CR6 to eighth. Hamed al-Wahaibi teamed up with Francois Cazalet to hold ninth in a new Can-Am Challenger and the South Racing Can-Am Team's Fernando Alvarez and Xavier Panseri rounded off the top 10 and led the SSV category. Al-Wahaibi's title rival Mitchel van den Brink stopped with technical issues and lost considerable time.

Qatar's Ahmed al-Kuwari, Ghanim al-Attiyah, Nouef al-Sowaidi and Mohammed al-Marri were just outside the top 10 in 11th, 13th, 14th and 15th overall. Three punctures pushed Saood Variawa down to 16th. Qatar's Abdulla al-Rabban led the Stock class from Saudi rival Majed al-Thunayyan.

Italy's Christiano Gabbarrini did not start. David Mabbs's regional title challenge suffered a setback when he stopped with gearbox issues after 58.69km and Fahad al-Fahad's strong run in the second Optimus MD Rallye was curtailed with mechanical issues after 70.83km.

DABROWSKI LEADS MCINNES

Konrad Dabrowski began his challenge for a record fourth motorcycle victory in Qatar from 10th on the road and the Duust Rally Team rider was quickly into a competitive pace. He caught the leading group and set the virtual pace throughout the stage to claim victory over FIM Bajas World Cup leader Alec McInnes by 5min 17sec. This gave the KTM rider an overnight lead of 5min 18sec over the Motozone Racing Briton.

The Pole said: "It was a tough day. I caught Alex around km 13, couldn't drop him and we caught the lead group. Then I was leading for most of the time. I didn't know what to do to lose the guys. I tried to see if anyone wanted to open. They did but never Alex. He was keeping me in front. At the end he told me his road book device had broken.

"The safest option for him was to follow me. I understand. I had no idea what to do because the gap between us was only one second and that would be really tight on Saturday. I decided to take a small break about 45km from the finish. For 15km, I drank water and took a few breaths and, for the last 20km, I did a full gas sprint, with 110% of effort and I managed to drop him and get some time for tomorrow."

Rival McInnes added: "My road book was actually broken for the last 80km. I was just chasing Konrad's dust. In the end, it got a little bit too dangerous so I backed off a little. I have a decent gap behind. The championship is the main thing."

Dakar experience was vital with the difficult navigation and testing terrain and Frenchman Romain Dumontier moved into third overall at the expense of Slovenian rival Toni Mulec. Young British talent Ethan Lane held fifth, ahead of Michael Anderson.

Dumontier said: "It was new for me here. I knew it would be demanding with the navigation. I tried to take it easy and focus on that. Five months I didn't ride a rally bike with navigation. I needed to start again to get the focus and the capacity with the speed. I made some small mistakes. I needed to manage because I am alone without mechanics or spare parts. We will see. There is no strategy. I will try to ride well and hope they maybe make a mistake..."

Pole Norbert Swietochowski was a non-starter and Lebanon's Louis Abou Nader retired after an accident. Simon Marcic was running inside the top 10 until he stopped after the second refuelling point with mechanical issues.

Aussie Andrew Houlihan continued after an accident and then missed the final part of the stage to return to Lusail. Brett Hunt lost time with a sheared navigation tower and Badr al-Hamdan stopped on the run north along the western coast.

FIM quad championship leader Ahmed al-Jaber stayed clear of trouble on his Yamaha to lead the quad category by 2min 14sec from Emirati Khalifa al-Bastaki until he incurred late time penalties and gifted the stage win to his rival. Title contender Hani al-Noumesi held third, ahead of Abdulaziz Ahli and Abdulaziz al-Atawi.

Quad tail-ender Matteo Lardori lost his way early in the stage and became detached from the pack. Saudi rider Abdulrahman Alabdullatif was cut adrift and lost his way south of Dukhan.

Today, desert action concludes with a selective section of 204.79km that crosses the unique landscapes of southern Qatar and includes a pass through the demanding dunes in the Sealine region in the southeast of the country. The stage is split into two sections of 88.79km and 115.42km by a neutralization. The first motorcycle is on stage at 7.10am with the leading car going live at 9.30am.



FIM quad championship leader Ahmed al-Jaber in action.

QATAR INTERNATIONAL BAJA POSITIONS AFTER SS1 (TOP 5)

Cars
1. Nasser Saleh al-Attiyah (QAT)/Max Delfino (FRA) Optimus MD Rallye; 3hr 39min 15.3sec
2. Francisco Barreto (POR)/Paulo Fiuza (POR) Toyota Hilux IMT Evo; 3hr 45min 30.6sec
3. Abdulaziz al-Kuwari (QAT)/Oriol Mena (ESP) Can-Am Maverick R; 3hr 27min 05.9sec
4. Aliiyah Koloc (UAE)/Marcin Pasek (POL) Red-Lined Revo GTR; 3hr 36min 05.1sec
5. Khalifa Saleh al-Attiyah (QAT)/Stéphane Duple (FRA) Taurus T3 Max; 3hr 37min 41.7sec

Motorcycles – top 20 only
1. Konrad Dabrowski (POL) KTM 450 Rally Replica; 3hr 50min 34sec
2. Alex McInnes (GBR) KTM 450 RFR; 3hr 52min 52sec
3. Romain Dumontier (FRA) KTM 450 Rally Factory; 4hr 03min 10sec
4. Toni Mulec (SLO) KTM 450 Rally Replica; 4hr 05min 01sec
5. Ethan Lane (GBR) KTM 450 Rally; 4hr 17min 09sec

Quads
1. Khalifa al-Bastaki (UAE) Yamaha YFZ 450R; 4hr 52min 32sec
2. Ahmed al-Jaber (KSA) Yamaha Raptor; 4hr 52min 50sec
3. Hani al-Noumesi (KSA) Yamaha 700; 5hr 00min 20sec
4. Abdulaziz Ahli (UAE) Yamaha Raptor 700; 5hr 13min 19sec
5. Abdulaziz al-Atawi (KSA) Yamaha Raptor 700; 5hr 58min 23sec

CRICKET

T20I SERIES

Phillips hits 102 as New Zealand beat India

AFP
Auckland

Glenn Phillips scored a sublime century as New Zealand made their highest T20 score in an 87-run win against India in Auckland yesterday.

Phillips hit 10 sixes as he blasted 107 from just 49 balls, steering New Zealand to a record 259-7 in their fourth international of the five-match series.

He was well supported by a blistering 25-ball 65 by all-rounder Michael Bracewell, who hit six sixes during his stay.

India won the toss for the fourth time running, electing again to bowl after batting last led them to a 3-0 series lead.

Phillips made a lightning start after coming to the crease with the score at 34-2 in the third over, and initially found good support in opener Finn Allen, who made 31.

New Zealand's innings was teetering at 112-4 in the 11th over when Bevon Jacobs was removed.

But Bracewell's arrival heralded a 115-run partnership in just 40 balls, taking New Zealand's total to 227-5 when he fell in the 18th over.

Phillips hit four straight sixes from Nitish Kumar Reddy in the 16th over to begin the final onslaught, 85 runs coming from the last five overs.

It was Phillips' third T20 international century.

India lost two wickets in the opening over in response, Sanju Samson and Ishan Kishan falling to Jacob Duffy.

Needing 13 runs per over, India lost wickets regularly as New Zealand's bowlers adjusted far better to the conditions than they did four days earlier in Wellington, where they conceded 178 runs in the first 10 overs.

Captain Mitchell Santner had another double strike in the ninth over, taking his 150th and 151st T20 international wickets, before Duffy took two in two balls in the 12th as India collapsed to 121-8.

Duffy finished with 4-23 from his four overs, and Santner took 2-24 from his four, as India reached 172-9 in the chase.

The fifth and final T20 of the series will be played in Hamilton tomorrow.

BRIEF SCORES
New Zealand 259 for 7 (Phillips 107, Bracewell 65, Mayank 3-48) **beat India 172 for 9** (Tilak 35, Duffy 4-23, Santner 2-24, Fisher 2-40) **by 87 runs**



New Zealand's batsman Glenn Phillips celebrates his century during the 4th T20 international against India at Eden Park in Auckland yesterday. *(AFP)*

SPOTLIGHT

South Africa set Australia 288 to win third Test

MULDER TOP-SCORES WITH 115 WHILE RICKELTON MAKES 101

Reuters
Cape Town

Ryan Rickelton and Wiaan Mulder struck centuries as South Africa were bowled out for 387 to close day four of the decisive third Test against Australia yesterday, setting the touring side a victory target of 288 on the final day.

Australia toiled, taking a single wicket in the opening two sessions before a burst after tea, but it was still very much the home side's day and sets up an intriguing tussle today.

Mulder top-scored with 115, his fourth Test century, while Rickelton amassed 101 as the pair ensured Australia will need to complete the second highest successful run chase in 137 years of Test cricket at Newlands.

The highest was achieved by Ricky Ponting's Australia side in 2002 when they chased down 331 to clinch the series.

The pitch is starting to show signs of wear, with Australia batter Josh Inglis saying on Thursday a chase of over 200 would be a difficult one batting last.

They will need considerably more than that at more than three runs an over against a South African bowling attack that has had its feet up for more than a day-and-a-half.

South Africa resumed on the fourth morning at 140 for four wickets and lost only Matthew Breetzke (43) in two sessions as he fell to a pull shot and was caught on the boundary, a familiar mode of dismissal for the home side this Test.

Rickelton and Mulder put on 154 for the sixth wicket as they took few risks and accumulated runs.

There was considerable turn for spinner Nathan Lyon (2-101) and variable bounce for the seamers.

Mulder was the last man out as he tried to up the tempo, caught on the boundary to bring a close to the day. The series is level at 1-1 after Australia won the first Test by 214 runs in Durban and South Africa responded with a victory by an innings and 31 runs in Gqeberha.

The winners of the match will occupy the number one spot in the Test world rankings, which is currently held by Australia.



South Africa's Ryan Rickelton (left) and South Africa's Wiaan Mulder talk during day four of the third Test against Australia at Newlands stadium in Cape Town yesterday. *(AFP)*

BRIEF SCORES
South Africa 329 and 294 for 5 (Rickelton 83*, Ackerman 62, Mulder 46*, Starc 2-51) **lead Australia 429** (Inglis 102, Carey 80, Renshaw 74, Harmer 4-104, Jansen 3-60) **by 194 runs**

PREVIEW

Pakistan take on party poopers Sri Lanka for first home tri-series win



Pakistan captain Shaheen Shah Afridi and Sri Lanka skipper Kusal Mendis pose with the tri-nation series trophy in Lahore yesterday.

AFP
Lahore, Pakistan

Pakistan are aiming to win a tri-series on home soil for the first time but face a stiff challenge from party poopers Sri Lanka in the final in Lahore today.

The hosts lost their three previous tri-series on home turf, finishing runners-up to Australia in 1994, Sri Lanka in 2004 and New Zealand last year.

This time, Pakistan have won three matches on the trot -- two against England and one against Sri Lanka -- before losing to the latter in their final group game, bowled out for just 110.

Head coach Mike Hesson admitted his side has yet to play at their best.

"To get three wins in a row was a good sign but I still don't think we have played our best game yet," said Hesson. "Hopefully we are saving that for the final."

Pakistan will hope misfiring opener Fakhar Zaman and star batter Babar Azam return to form, having scored 31 and 118 respectively in four matches.

Sri Lanka shocked England last week by chasing down 430 -- the second-highest target in ODI history -- and gave them another scare in pursuit of a 387-run target before losing by 55 runs on Thursday.

Skipper Kusal Mendis was bullish ahead of the weekend, saying: "We are quite confident going into the final."

"Although the loss against England was disappointing, we have taken some valuable lessons from that game."

For Sri Lanka, middle-order batter Pavan Rathnayake has been in sublime form, scoring two centuries against England and 79 runs against Pakistan.

Mendis, whose side punctured the home atmosphere when they beat Pakistan by eight wickets at the same venue on Tuesday, was not ready to take the home team lightly.

"Pakistan are a very good side, and playing them in their own conditions makes them a challenging opponent and we can never underestimate them," Mendis said.

The tri-series is seen as a build-up to next year's ODI World Cup co-hosted by South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia.

FIRST TEST

Chase sparks Bangladesh collapse in Mirpur

AFP
Mirpur, Bangladesh

West Indies captain Roston Chase ripped through Bangladesh's top order to leave the hosts reeling at 79-6 on the third day of the first Test in Mirpur yesterday.

Bangladesh held a 106-run lead at stumps, with concussion substitute Jaker Ali and Nayeem Hasan -- both on 18 -- at the crease when bad light stopped play early.

Earlier, off-spinner Nayeem took four wickets to bowl West Indies out for 245, conceding a lead of 27 runs in response to Bangladesh's first-innings total of 272.

"We are in a very good position," West Indies batting coach Floyd Reifer said after the day's play. "We bowled in disciplined areas, stuck to the team plans and everyone really hustled out there in the heat."

Reifer added: "If we're going to chase 125 runs, I think that's really possible for us on a pitch like that. But obviously, you have to get early wickets."

West Indies resumed the day on 134-4 and continued to frustrate Bangladesh through a fifth-wicket partnership between Tagenarine Chanderpaul, who top-scored with 56, and Justin Greaves.



West Indies' captain Roston Chase (right) celebrates with teammates after taking the wicket of Bangladesh's Towhid Hridoy during the third day of the first Test in Mirpur yesterday. *(AFP)*

The pair added 65 runs before Shoriful Islam broke the stand, with Chanderpaul edging to second slip where captain Najmul Hossain Shanto took a sharp catch.

Bangladesh had to wait for another breakthrough as Greaves kept up the defiance with skipper Chase, who made an unbeaten 43 after being dropped on 27, for company.

Off-spinner Nayeem broke through by trapping Greaves lbw for 46 shortly before lunch, leaving West Indies at 213-6.

Chase came out attacking, while Joshua Bishop contributed 15 before being stumped off Mehidy Hasan Miraz.

Bishop had earlier been dropped on 11 by Mominul Haque at short leg, with the Bangladesh batter suffering concussion while attempting the catch. He was replaced by Jaker.

Nayeem, who took 4-33, then cleaned up the tail, removing Shamar Joseph and Jomel Warrican in the 81st over before dismissing Jayden Seales in the next.

West Indies fast bowler Joseph struck in the second over to send back opener Tanzid Hasan for a duck. Shadman Islam, who scored 105 in the first innings, and Shanto briefly steadied things before Chase took control and bowled the opener for 13.

Chase had Towhid Hridoy out for a duck two balls later and trapped skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto lbw for 10 in his next over to leave Bangladesh tottering at 33-4 before rain interrupted play for around 30 minutes.

West Indies continued their assault after the break as Warrican trapped Litton Das lbw for four before bowling Mehidy Hasan Miraz to reduce Bangladesh to 53-6.

BRIEF SCORES
Bangladesh 272 and 79 for 6 (Jaker 18*, Nayeem 18*, Chase 3-25, Warrican 2-19) **lead West Indies 272** (Chanderpaul 56, Campbell 54, Greaves 46, Nayeem 4-33) **by 106 runs**

FOCUS

Lancashire exit came as shock, says Anderson

Reuters
London

Former England fast bowler **James Anderson** has said he was shocked when Lancashire chose not to renew his contract, ending a 25-year association with his home county.

The 44-year-old, England's leading Test wicket taker with 704 victims in 188 matches, retired from international duty in 2024.

"I was being told they thought the best way for the team to move forward was without me. I was quite shocked. It was quite brief," Anderson told the *BBC Tailenders* podcast yesterday.

"I wanted to see my career out with Lancs (Lancashire). I don't know if my career is done, we'll have to wait and see, but it would be nice at some point if someone would let me retire."

"It feels very similar," Anderson told his Tailenders podcast when comparing the end of his England and Lancashire careers.

"I finished the season thinking 'was it something I did? Was I doing something wrong?'. And then I get told this news and now I'm thinking it even more.



"I'm thinking 'this is happening again, is there something fundamentally wrong with me as a person?'. Your head just races and I didn't know what to make of it for a good week. You're thinking 'I'm never going to play cricket again!'"

Anderson, who captained Lancashire's red-ball side for the first time this season, took 50 wickets at an average of 17.68 as the county finished seventh in the eight-team second division. Anderson said he was excited by new opportunities, including his role as captain and co-owner of the Napoli Knights in the Italia T10 league.

"I have to attack it like that and not dwell too much on how or why it finished at Lancs," he said.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Dakar Rally moved to Portugal, Morocco

AFP
Paris, France

Portugal and Morocco will host the 2027 Dakar Rally the organisers announced yesterday after it was moved from Saudi Arabia following repeated attacks on the kingdom by Yemen's Houthis.

The drivers, motorcyclists and truck drivers will tackle the prologue and first special stage in Portugal followed by 11 stages of the gruelling rally -- covering almost 8,000 kilometres with 4,341km of specials -- in Morocco.

It is the first time since 2007 that the rally, created in 1978, returns to Africa.

"Although it has been moved, the 49th edition of the Dakar will still meet the sporting standards which has always made the event the most demanding of endurance rallies," said race director David Castera.

"Despite the short amount of time we have had we have put together a real Dakar.

"The competitors will discover the kingdom (Morocco) from one end to the other. "We are going to explore all its unique features on a route whose size we haven't seen before."

The race, formerly called the Paris-Dakar, used to be follow a route from the French capital to the Senegalese capital Dakar. But security threats along its route in North Africa meant that from 2009 it was held in South America, and from 2020 in Saudi Arabia.

Organisers said they intend to bring the rally back to Saudi Arabia in 2028 to celebrate its 50th edition.

The moving of the Dakar Rally is just the latest sporting event in the region to be affected by conflict in the Middle East.

An exhibition tennis tournament due to feature Novak Djokovic, Carlos Alcaraz and Alexander Zverev has been postponed until late December.

The WTA Finals were also scheduled to be held in Riyadh next month but will instead take place at Indian Wells in the US.

This season's Formula One Grand Prix in Jeddah was cancelled, while the race in Bahrain was called off and later rescheduled under the same name in Malaysia.

The final round of the World Rally Championship in Saudi Arabia next month has also been scrapped.

The last two races of the F1 season in Qatar (November 29) and Abu Dhabi (December 6) are still on the calendar, as is the Qatar MotoGP next month.

However, the mouth-watering WBC super-middleweight title bout between defending champion Christian Mbilli and Mexican legend Saul 'Canelo' Alvarez is going ahead in Riyadh today.

Dakar Rally organisers had hoped to keep the 2027 race in Saudi Arabia by working on a new route in the northern part of the country.

But the latest strikes, including one targeting Riyadh airport this month, which killed 13 people and injured hundreds more, have rendered that impossible.

In recent weeks, Houthi attacks on Saudi civilian infrastructure have reached a scale unprecedented since the start of the conflict in Yemen in 2014.



MOTOGP

Marquez tops practice, Martin lasts only 3 laps

'It's true that it was our first lap with the soft rear tyre'

Reuters
Kuala Lumpur


Ducati Lenovo Team's Spanish rider Marc Marquez takes a corner during the first practice session of the Malaysian Grand Prix at the Sepang International Circuit yesterday. *(AFP)*

Ducati's MotoGP championship leader Marc Marquez topped the timesheets in Malaysian Grand Prix practice despite a crash yesterday while title rival Jorge Martin lasted only three laps due to his wrist injury.

Marquez dusted himself off after an early tumble at turn 15 to set the fastest time at 1:57.000, edging out his brother Alex by 0.109 seconds.

"The crash made me a little upset as it ended up limiting our track time. It's true that it was our first lap with the soft rear tyre, which made the front push a little more," Marc Marquez said.

"The pace is excellent, but the important thing is not to overdo it. The time attack is where I struggle a little more, but when the tyre grip drops, I feel really good."

MARTIN SET FOR BUSY SATURDAY

While Marquez directly advanced to today's Q2 qualifying session, Spanish compatriot Martin -- 10 points behind in the championship -- will have to tackle Q1 as he continues to recover from a wrist fracture he suffered at the Australian Grand Prix. With Marquez showing strong pace, the reigning champion appears well-positioned to extend his points advantage in Malaysia.

Martin had admitted to reporters on Thursday that he could not even brush his teeth with his right hand but was hoping to ride at the weekend.

Although he had been medically cleared for practice on Thursday, Aprilia decided the best course of action was to give him time to recover.

"We decided together with the doctors not to continue, wait this night and see his condition tomorrow morning," Aprilia's team manager Paolo Bonora said. "It's better to take no risk."

Martin will return for the Free Practice 2 session today ahead of qualifying and the sprint.

EQUESTRIAN

Cherif claims Gold Tour victory at Hathab


Ali bin Yousef Al-Rumaihi, vice-chairman of the tournament's organising committee, presented the awards to the winners of the Gold Tour.

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Cyrine Cherif claimed victory in the Gold Tour on her horse Triple T, clocking 29.82 seconds without faults on the second day of the fourth leg of the 10th Longines Hathab Qatar Equestrian Tour at the Qatar Equestrian Federation's indoor arena.

Hamad Nasser al-Qadi finished second on Happy Tina in 30.66 seconds, while Abdulaziz Khalid al-Bukhari took third place on Genghis in 30.88 seconds.

In the team competition, Al Kass Channel topped the standings with a combined time of 65.93 seconds.

Al Shaqab Academy finished second in 68.25 seconds, while Al-Salam placed third in 64.35 seconds.

Ali bin Yousef Al-Rumaihi, vice-chairman of the tournament's organising committee, presented the awards to the winners yesterday.

In the 110cm Open Class, Saeed Hamad Juma took first place on Duros in 45.75 seconds. Ghanem Nasser al-Qadi finished second on Furia in 45.9 seconds, while Ali Khalid al-Obaidli placed third on Roxette in 46.8 seconds.

Al-Obaidli also won the junior category, completing the course on Roxette in 46.8 seconds. Abdullah Mohammed al-Marri finished second on Curt Lilly in 46.97 seconds, while Alia Ahmed al-Khater took third place on Denver in 49.71 seconds.

In the 70cm Future Riders class, Nayla Mohammed al-Thani claimed victory on Malaga in 49.81 seconds. Manar Rashid al-Shahwani finished second on Coco Chanel in 50.31 seconds, while Mohammed Abdulrahman al-Marri took third place on Jiel in 50.42 seconds.

The fourth leg concludes today with the Future Riders class, featuring a two-phase competition over 90cm, followed by the Bronze Tour individual and team competitions over 120cm.

The Diamond Tour, set at 150cm, will bring the showjumping programme to a close. The final day will also feature dressage competitions in the Preliminary, Elementary and Medium (Level 1) categories.

ZVEREV FINALLY TAKES HIS PLACE AT THE SUMMIT



VIENNA: Alexander Zverev, who spent years waiting for his moment to reach the summit of his sport only for a new golden generation to surge past him, has claimed the honour that long eluded him by climbing to the top of the world rankings.

Zverev had long been one of the brightest talents to emerge in the 2010s, but his path, like that of his peers, was largely blocked by the enduring dominance of Roger Federer, Rafa Nadal, Novak Djokovic and Andy Murray.

Despite winning two ATP Finals titles on either side of an Olympic gold medal in 2021, Zverev struggled to make a similar impact at the Grand Slams as Jannik Sinner and Carlos Alcaraz formed a new roadblock when the greats began to decline.

All that changed this year, however, as Zverev, 29, capitalised on injuries to his major rivals and found another level to claim the French Open and US Open titles.

"It's incredibly special," said Zverev, who will take over from Sinner on Monday and become the 30th man to top the world rankings since they were introduced in 1973.

"It's something I've worked towards for years and you have to show great tennis the whole year to be in this position."

Zverev will become only the second world number one, after Daniil Medvedev, from the crop of players now largely in their late 20s and early 30s who emerged during the "Big Four" era but never displaced them.

The summit had been within Zverev's reach before, but a serious ankle injury at the 2022 French Open derailed his push, and Grand Slam success continued to elude him on his return as Sinner and Alcaraz accumulated 12 majors between them.

But Zverev triumphed at Roland Garros and Flushing Meadows and reached the Wimbledon final this year.

"I've had a lot of difficult moments in my career: the lost Grand Slam finals, the injury in 2022," Zverev added.

"But I always somehow kept believing, kept going. This year I also took the step of changing my game a little and rebuilding it, at 29.

"The way this season has gone is a dream."

TENNIS

Medvedev into Vienna semis

AFP
Vienna


Russia's Daniil Medvedev after beating France's Adrian Mannarino at the Erste Bank Open 2026 in Vienna, Austria, yesterday. *(AFP)*

Daniil Medvedev will meet Carlos Alcaraz in the semi-finals of the Vienna ATP 500 tournament after beating Frenchman Adrian Mannarino yesterday, securing a place in the year-end ATP Finals in the process.

Medvedev, the world number five, won 6-2, 6-3 against his 73rd-ranked opponent.

The Russian joins Alexander Zverev, who will become world number one in the next ATP rankings on Monday, Alcaraz, and Ben Shelton in the season-closer, which will run November 15-22 in Turin.

Medvedev has only missed the cut for the ATP Finals once since 2019. Yesterday, he closed out on his second match point on the Frenchman's serve.

Since his elimination in the round of 16 at the US Open in early September by Frances Tiafoe, Medvedev has won tournaments in Hangzhou and Almaty, and reached the semi-finals of the Shanghai Masters 1000 and the Beijing ATP 500.

Standing between him and the final in the Austrian capital is seven-time Grand Slam champion Alcaraz.

The 23-year-old Spaniard beat American Tommy Paul 6-4, 7-6 (7/2) in the quarter-finals. "I think I played great tennis," Alcaraz said after extending his record to 14-0 in 500-level tournaments this season. "I would say, overall, just happy for the battle and happy I found my way to get the win in straight sets."

Also yesterday, Zverev beat Britain's Arthur Fery for a spot in the last four. Zverev won 6-0, 6-2.

Eala aiming to finish season with bang after Tokyo exit

Philippines sensation Alexandra Eala lost in the quarter-finals in Tokyo yesterday and said she had "high motivation" to finish her breakthrough season with a bang next week in Hong Kong. Eala lost 2-6, 7-6 (7/5), 6-4 against Russian number three seed Diana Shnaider in her debut appearance at the Pan Pacific Open.

The world number 19 has one more tournament left in a season that saw her become the first player from the Philippines to win a title on the women's WTA Tour in Washington in August.

Eala will be among the favourites for the title in Hong Kong, and she said she was not in the mood to look back on her achievements yet.

"I'm super excited, and I'm going in with high motivation," said the 21-year-old.

"I'm trying to put my reflections off for one more week because of said motivation. Check back in a week." Eala won five straight games to take control of the first set, but the second set was a far closer affair.

Neither player managed to break their opponent's serve, but world number 13 Shnaider edged the tie-breaker. Shnaider went a break up early in the third set and Eala needed treatment on her right foot before the Russian clinched the match with an ace.

Eala said the match had been "a huge battle".

"Both of us could take the match to a really, really high level," she said. "I'm proud of that despite the loss, but I do think I had my chances. Next time, hopefully do better in those moments," she added.

Eala was playing in Japan for the second time in two months after reaching the semi-finals at the Asian Games in Nagoya.

"To be in front of the crowd and to play in this atmosphere is always super special," she said. "I love Japan as a whole, whether I'm here for tennis or not, so I really had fun."

Shnaider will play Mia Pohankova in the semi-finals after the 18-year-old Slovakian beat American Alycia Parks 7-6 (7/3), 6-3.

Uzbekistan's Kamilla Rakhimova will play Canada's Leylah Fernandez in the other semi-final.

Fernandez advanced when world number one Elena Rybakina withdrew with a neck injury.

QATAR STARS LEAGUE

Sadd sweep aside Shamal to go top

Wolves move one point clear of Rayyan, who face Arabi today

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Al Sadd stormed to the top of the Qatar Stars League with a commanding 4-1 victory over 10-man Al Shamal at Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium yesterday, keeping them firmly in their bid for a fourth consecutive title.

The defending champions took full advantage of their numerical superiority after the break, scoring three goals to seal a convincing win and move one point clear of Al Rayyan, who face Al Arabi at Al Thumama Stadium today. Giovani Henrique gave Sadd an early lead in the 11th minute before Al Shamal suffered a major setback when Mohamed Ben Romdhane was sent off for violent conduct in the 45th minute.

Despite being reduced to 10 men, Shamal managed to draw level in first-half stoppage time through Riyad Mahrez, who converted a penalty to give his side renewed hope.

However, Sadd took control after the interval. Mohamed Camara restored the champions' lead in the 62nd minute before Qatar international Akram Afif extended their advantage six minutes later. Former Liverpool forward Roberto Firmino completed the scoring in the 80th minute to seal Sadd's sixth victory in eight league matches.

The result lifted Sadd to 18 points, one ahead of second-placed Rayyan, who have a game in hand. Al Duhail are third with 15 points, while Arabi occupy fourth place on 12 points ahead of their meeting with the league leaders.

Sadd entered the match looking to build on their 4-0 victory over Al Shahaniya last week after suffering two successive league defeats. They had also earned their first point in the AFC Champions League Elite with a 1-1 draw against Saudi Arabia's Al Qadsiah.

Shamal, meanwhile, were hoping to carry their impressive 3-1 victory over Saudi giants Al Hilal in the continental competition into the domestic league. However, the defeat left David Prats' side on nine points in eighth place after a fourth consecutive league match without a win.

Earlier, Al Gharafa beat Qatar SC 2-0 at Thani Bin Jassim Stadium, with Yacine Brahimi scoring twice in the closing stages.

After a goalless first half, the Algerian midfielder broke the deadlock in the 74th minute with a long-range effort following a pass from Dame Traore. He sealed the victory in the 88th minute, dribbling past Nasir Peer Baksh inside the box before beating the goalkeeper.

The win took Al Gharafa to seventh place with nine points, while Qatar SC remained on six after suffering their fourth defeat of the season.

At Al Khor Stadium, Al Ahli edged Al Shahania 2-1 to claim their third league victory and move to 11 points. Ghanem al-Minhali put Al Ahli ahead in the 57th minute with a powerful strike from inside the box. Al Shahania appeared to have rescued a point when Abdoulaye Traore equalised in the 85th minute, but their hopes were dashed two minutes later.

Driss Fettouhi restored Al Ahli's lead in the 87th minute, turning in a floating assist from Benjamin Bourigeaud to secure all three points. The victory was Al Ahli's first under returning head coach Nebojsa Jovovic, who previously coached the club from 2019 to 2023. The eighth round continues today, with leaders Al Sadd now watching closely as Rayyan seek to reclaim top spot against Arabi at Al Thumama Stadium. Al Sailiya face Lusail, while Al Duhail take on Al Wakrah in the other fixtures.



Al Sadd and Al Shamal players battle for the ball during the Qatar Stars League match at Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium yesterday.


Yacine Brahimi scored twice as Al Gharafa beat Qatar SC at Thani Bin Jassim Stadium.

TODAY'S FIXTURES
Al Sailiya vs Lusail at Suhaim Bin Hamad Stadium | 5:15pm; Al Arabi vs Al Rayyan at Al Thumama Stadium | 7:30pm; Al Duhail vs Al Wakrah at Abdullah Bin Khalifa Stadium | 7:30pm

SPOTLIGHT

Arteta tells Dowman Premier League is 'not Disneyland'

Reuters
London

Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta said teenager Max Dowman must learn to cope with the demands of elite football after the winger's red card in the League Cup defeat at fourth-tier Fleetwood Town, with the 16-year-old having to serve a three-match suspension.

Dowman, who will miss tomorrow's Premier League trip to Liverpool, was sent off in the 85th minute of Tuesday's fourth-round loss after an altercation with defender Harrison Neal as Arsenal lost 5-3 on penalties following a 1-1 draw. "This is the environment, this is the reality. We are not in Disneyland, we are in the Premier League," Arteta told a press conference following criticism from football fans over his reaction to Dowman after the red card.

Arteta gave the teenager a stern look as he left the pitch at Fleetwood's Highbury Stadium and exchanged words with Dowman on his way down the tunnel, later saying that the issue was something the pair had spoken about before kickoff.

"We look after him so much but at the same time we're going to demand from him like everybody else because he needs to earn the right to play. Because the other boys, what are they going to say to me? You need to be fair," Arteta said.

Arteta said his response was driven by frustration over the consequences for Dowman, adding that the teenager's profile meant he was likely to attract attention from opponents. He dismissed any suggestion of a rift with the winger.

"There are no issues. We had a talk yesterday. I have done it. That's why I am so protective of these things, especially with young players because we have made these mistakes and you know how much you can get punished and how much it can change what happens next," Arteta said.

The Spaniard also voiced his disappointment after an independent regulatory commission upheld Dowman's ban, rejecting Arsenal's appeal against the dismissal and punishment. "Very disappointed, to be fair, especially with the reckless tackle that he received. His reaction is minimal compared to the action," he said of Neal's challenge on Dowman.

On the injury front, Arteta said midfielder Declan Rice and defender Riccardo Calafiori had resumed training after missing the Fleetwood match with issues suffered in last weekend's home win over Everton in the Premier League.

Bukayo Saka, however, remains sidelined with the thigh problem he picked up in the Champions League draw at Bayern Munich on October 21. "He needed another scan to see how much of the fluid has resolved. Afterwards we'll know more about it," Arteta added.

He also spoke about facing his former teammate Andoni Iraola's side in a "big game" as Arsenal look to claim their first win against Liverpool at Anfield since September 2012. The two managers are from the Basque region and played together for youth team Antiguoko in San Sebastien.

"It's a privilege. Someone who has been your teammate, that you spent so many beautiful moments together when we were younger. To be facing each other, to be close, massive clubs in this country, in Europe, in a big match like this, it's a blessing," he said.

Champions Arsenal are second behind Manchester City on goal difference with 21 points from eight games, six points ahead of fourth-placed Liverpool.

"We expect a big game on Sunday; we're looking forward to it for sure. It's been 14 years since we last won there, so it's time to do it," added Arteta.


Arsenal's Max Dowman walks off the pitch after being sent off during the League Cup match against Fleetwood Town at Highbury Stadium, in Fleetwood, Britain, on Tuesday. *(Reuters)*

FOCUS

Qatar beat Bahrain in veteran Gulf Cup

The Gulf Cup for Veteran Players got underway today in Doha as football legends from across the region returned to the pitch in a series of exciting fixtures. Hosts Qatar beat Bahrain 2-1 in the tournament's opening match at the Grand Hamad Stadium, followed by a 2-0 win for UAE against Yemen.

The opening day also saw Saudi Arabia and Kuwait play out to a 1-1 draw at the Saoud bin Abdulrahman Stadium, while Iraq beat Oman 5-0.

The Gulf Football Federation (GFF), in coordination with Qatar's Local Organising Committee (LOC), is hosting the second edition of the tournament.

Football veterans from the eight Gulf federations are competing in 15 matches across three venues. Matches consist of two halves of 20 minutes each, with unlimited substitutions. If a knockout match ends in a draw after 40 minutes, a penalty shoot-out will be played.

Entry is free of charge, with accessible seating available for fans with disabilities.

The final will take place at Saoud bin Abdulrahman Stadium on, November 5 at 7pm.


Hosts Qatar beat Bahrain 2-1 at the Grand Hamad Stadium,

Flick praises Yamal 'mentality' after missing out on Ballon d'Or

Barcelona: Barcelona forward Lamine Yamal has "reacted very well" following the disappointment of the Ballon d'Or being awarded to Harry Kane, his coach Hansi Flick said.

Despite winning La Liga with the Catalan club and lifting the World Cup with Spain, the 19-year-old winger came third in the vote for the best player in the world on Monday, behind Kane and Kylian Mbappe.

"Harry Kane deserved it, but you already know what I think about Lamine. He's at the level required to win this award," Flick said ahead of the La Liga leaders' home match against Alaves. "I'm very proud of Lamine. He reacted very well and was very focused in training. That's the way to respond. His mentality is very good for the team."

Yamal will have a chance to put any lingering disappointment behind him today when Barcelona will look to correct course at home to Alaves following two high-profile defeats. After winning their first 11 matches in all competitions, Barcelona were flying but then came undone when they travelled to PSG in the Champions League last Tuesday.

That 4-2 reverse in the French capital was swiftly followed up by a Kylian Mbappe-inspired 2-1 loss at home to Real Madrid in La Liga last weekend. "The most important thing tomorrow is to win," Flick said. "The team is playing well and we believe in our strengths. I've seen a good training session and a positive mood. We have to show that tomorrow. Alaves are a team that know how to defend well, but we're Barca and we want to show our best version."

Barcelona still hold a two-point lead at the top of La Liga ahead of their meeting with Atletico Madrid. While the German coach admitted he does not like losing, he insisted that the campaign is "a long road".

"It's at the end of the season that we can win trophies," he added. "We have to deal with it. We could have won, but we have to accept defeat and learn from it."

Africa Cup of Nations reverts back to being held every two years

Paris: African football's showpiece tournament, the Africa Cup of Nations will be held every two years the continent's ruling body announced, in a reversal of a decision taken last year.

The African Football Confederation (CAF) had decided last year that the tournament would take place every four years. CAF said part of the reasoning for performing a U-turn on the decision was the length of time it would take for AFCON's replacement competition, the Africa Nations League Pan-African Competition, to become financially viable.

CAF president Patrice Motsepe said added that the decision was also taken in the interests "of African players employed by football clubs outside Africa".

That may prove contentious with their clubs looking at losing key players every two years as opposed to four. Next year's tournament is being co-hosted by Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda and CAF said the following three would take place in 2028, 2031 and 2033.

"The forthcoming FIFA World Cup will take place in 2030 and in accordance with the FIFA tradition, the final tournament of the AFCON and other Confederations National Teams competitions may not take place during the year of the FIFA World Cup," said Motsepe, explaining the three-year gap between the 2028 edition and the following one.

The winner of the 2025 renewal is still in abeyance with the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) likely to rule at the end of November on Senegal's appeal of the decision to strip them of the title and award it to hosts Morocco.

INTER AND AC MILAN UNVEIL NEW STADIUM PLANS

Inter and AC Milan unveiled their new "Generali Stadium", which will replace the iconic San Siro stadium from the 2031/32 season. It will be shaped "low in the body, and it rises up at either end" behind the goals, architect Norman Foster said in Milan.

The design aims to bring spectators as close to the pitch as possible, with the stands behind the goals set at a steep 37-degree incline, said David Manica, a stadium specialist who collaborated with Foster on the project.

The stadium, sponsored by the Italian insurance giant Generali, will also be capable of hosting American football games, rugby matches and concerts. AC Milan and Inter paid 197mn euros to acquire the current stadium and its adjacent parking areas, where they intend to build their new, shared home. The project for the new San Siro – which will have a capacity of 71,500 seats, compared to the current 75,000 – will cost the two clubs 1.2 billion euros. Construction is set to begin in 2028.

Milan's current stadium – one of the most iconic in European football and often likened to a "concrete cathedral" – is the largest in Italy. But the venue, which opened in 1926, no longer meets the needs of spectators or the clubs, despite undergoing several renovations over the decades.