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Champions Arsenal claim Premier League top spot as Havertz seals win at Liverpool

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SPOTLIGHT

Sheikh Joaan attends Youth Olympic Games opening ceremony







HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani, President of the Qatar Olympic Committee and the Olympic Council of Asia, attended the opening ceremony of the Dakar 2026 Youth Olympic Games at the Abdoulaye Wade Stadium in Diamniadio, Senegal, as Qatar's young athletes joined the parade of nations.

Athlete Adam Morsy had the honour of carrying the Qatari flag, leading the country's delegation at the ceremony, which brought together sport, culture and the arts in a celebration of Africa's identity and heritage under the theme 'Africa Welcomes, Dakar Celebrates'.

The opening ceremony was also attended by a distinguished gathering of dignitaries, led by Bassirou Diomaye Diakhar Faye, President of the Republic of Senegal; Kirsty Coventry, President of the International Olympic Committee; Fatima Sultan al-Kuwari, Chief Executive Officer of Qatar's Bid for the 2036 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Representatives of National Olympic Committees, International Sports Federations and delegations from participating countries were also in attendance.

Their presence underscored the Games' international standing and their role in fostering communication, connection and closer ties among the various stakeholders of the global Olympic Movement.

Young athletes from around the world took part in the parade of delegations, creating a colourful display of cultural diversity and international friendship. The ceremony also featured the raising of the Olympic flag, the Olympic Anthem and the Olympic Oath, reaffirming the Olympic values of excellence, friendship and respect.

Music, dance and traditional Senegalese and West African performances added to the celebrations, bringing together the region's cultural traditions and the creativity of its younger generations. The official mascot, Ayo, a young lion wearing a traditional Tingandé hat associated with the Fulani people, also featured prominently, reflecting Senegal's cultural heritage and the historic significance of hosting the first Olympic sporting event in Africa.

Team Qatar's youth contingent at Dakar 2026 comprises four athletes: Adam Morsy in swimming; Dana Salem and Abu Bakr Idris in athletics; and Adham al-Deeb in fencing.

Qatar's athletes are set to begin their campaigns on 2 November. Adam Morsy will compete in the 100m and 50m breaststroke events on November 3 and 5, respectively. Idris will take part in the 110m hurdles, while El Deeb is scheduled to compete in the individual foil event on November 9. Dana will compete in the 200m on November 10.

Competitions will be held across Dakar, Diamniadio and Saly, bringing together approximately 2,700 athletes in 25 sports and 153 medal events. The program also features 10 engagement sports, which do not award medals and are designed to introduce young people to a wider range of sporting activities.

Organised by the International Olympic Committee, the Youth Olympic Games provide an international platform for young athletes, primarily aged 15 to 17, to compete, develop and exchange experiences. Senegal's role as host marks a historic first for Africa, as the country becomes the first on the continent to stage the Youth Olympic Games.

Beyond competition, Dakar 2026 celebrates the principles of universality, solidarity and unity in diversity. The Games reflect the Olympic philosophy of placing sport at the service of humankind, using sport to bring people together, strengthen mutual understanding and promote respect across cultures and nations.

AFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE ELITE

Al Sadd face must-win test against champions Al Ahli

Lucescu's team looks to upset Saudi's Al Ahli and kick-start Asian campaign at Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium

By Sports Reporter
Doha



Al Sadd head coach Razvan Lucescu addresses the media yesterday.



Al Gharafa players during a training session ahead of their AFC Champions League Elite match against Al Qadsiah Club.

Al Sadd have little margin for error as they prepare to take on defending champions Al Ahli of Saudi Arabia in the AFC Champions League Elite today, with the hosts desperately seeking their first victory of the campaign at Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium.

While Al Sadd are still searching for a breakthrough in this season's continental competition, Al Ahli arrive in Doha looking to keep their title defence on course and move closer to an unprecedented third consecutive crown.

The Qatar Stars League side came agonisingly close to collecting all three points in their previous outing, only to concede an 84th-minute equaliser in a 1-1 draw against Saudi Arabia's Al Qadsiah. Although the result ended their wait for a first point of the campaign, it did little to ease the pressure on head coach Razvan Lucescu and his players.

Al Sadd, who lifted the continental crown in 2011, will need a much-improved performance against an Al Ahli side with the quality and experience to punish any lapses.

For Lucescu, today's encounter presents an opportunity to turn a difficult start into a positive result and give his team's campaign some much-needed momentum.

Speaking on eve of the crucial tie, the Romanian said, "Beating Al Ahli is our chance to continue our Asian journey and we are only thinking about winning. We must fight in the remaining five matches.

"We realize the importance of achieving victory and we must play the match with the highest levels of focus."

Al Sadd goalkeeper Meshaal Barsham said, "Facing Al Ahli is a big challenge and we are ready to achieve our first Asian victory this season. We realize the difficulty of our situation and we are striving to correct our course."

Victory, however, can only be achieved if Al Sadd put away their chances with just two of their eight attempts against Al Qadsiah on target. Al Sadd's recent 4-1 win against Al Shamal in the Qatar Stars League should keep them in good stead and a good start against Al Ahli can help them turn the tide.

But it won't be easy against an Al Ahli side that have won two on the bounce after opening their campaign with a 1-1 stalemate with Uzbekistan's Pakhtakor as Marino Pusic starts to get the balance of his team right.

Al Ahli's Dutch coach Marino Pusic said, "The match is a strong opponent but we look forward to winning and securing the three points."

Al Ahli's English player Ivan Toney, said, "We are aware of the difficulty of the match against a well-known team in Asia, and we will need to exert all our efforts if we are to come out with a victory."

Another tough test for Al Gharafa

Al Gharafa can expect another tough test when they host Al Qadsiah Club in the AFC Champions League Elite match at Thani Bin Jassim Stadium today.

Qatar's Al Gharafa have yet to register points on the board while Saudi Arabia's Al Qadsiah have the Round of 16 firmly in their sights.

Last week's 2-1 defeat to two-time defending champions Al Ahli means Al Gharafa are on their longest ever losing streak in the continental competition.

Al Gharafa coach Pedro Martins said Al Gharafa must get back on track after losing their last three matches, noting that his team has not had enough time to prepare for the encounter, despite its crucial importance in their quest to qualify for the next round.

"Al Qadisiyah is a strong team that has displayed improved performances in their recent matches, in addition to possessing high-caliber players. This necessitates maintaining focus and avoiding the mistakes made in previous games, most notably the red cards received by Ismail Bennacer against Al Hilal and Seydou Sano against Al Ahli," Martins said.

Martins expressed his hope that the positive atmosphere within the team following their victory over Qatar SC in the eighth round of the Qatar Stars League will contribute to delivering the required performance against Al Qadisiyah.

He said Al Gharafa had performed well in their three previous matches in the continental championship, despite not securing a victory. He emphasized that the match against Al Qadsia would be different from their encounters with Al Hilal and Al Ahli of Saudi Arabia, given that each team has its own distinct style and approach to play.

A fourth defeat would well see a premature end to their hopes and Al Gharafa must maximise home ground advantage to revive their campaign. Al Qadsiah, on the other hand, are unbeaten after three matches with head coach Brendan Rodgers highly confident that his side will progress.

Victory today will take Al Qadsiah to eight points and with Al Gharafa on the ropes, former Liverpool tactician Rodgers will be expecting his players to be firing on all cylinders. Al Gharafa player Ahmed Bashir Kone stated that the team is required to give their all to get back on track in the Al Qadsia match, which demands focus from all players, showcasing their full potential and striving for the three points.

He added, "Our chances of competing are still alive, and we must recover and work harder to avoid dropping any more points, starting with our next match."

Kone concluded by stressing the importance of achieving victory to revive their hopes of qualifying for the next round, despite some absences within the team. He added that the victory in the last round of the Qatari league against Qatar SC would be a significant morale booster before the Asian match.

SPORT

Pakistan's youthful resurgence delights tri-series final hero Fakhar

LAHORE: Fresh off a thrilling victory in the ODI tri-series final against Sri Lanka, centurion **Fakhar Zaman** yesterday opened up about the grit, tactical shifts, and rising young talent that propelled Pakistan to a historic 326-run chase at Gaddafi Stadium.
In an exclusive conversation with Pakistan Cricket Board's (PCB) social media, the veteran opener reflected on his affinity for high-stakes matches, an injury scare that threatened to derail his innings, and why the emergence of fearless youngsters like Saad Baig and Arafat Minhas signals an exciting new era for Pakistan cricket.
Having endured a quiet run earlier in the tournament, Fakhar responded with a magnificent 99-ball 127 to anchor Pakistan's record-equalling chase. When asked about his uncanny knack for delivering in title deciders, Fakhar revealed that captain Shaheen Afridi humorously pointed out his trend of saving his best for the ultimate stage.
"Shaheen joked that I either only perform in finals or fail elsewhere," Fakhar said. "In high-pressure games, I simply remind myself to give a little more time to settle. When your day arrives and the ball starts coming off the middle, everything falls into place," he said.
Fans watching the final experienced anxious moments when Fakhar spent a significant portion



of Sri Lanka's innings off the field. Addressing the injury scare, the left-hander admitted it looked grim at first.
"My knee twisted during fielding, and initially, I thought I wouldn't be able to bat at all. I told Shaheen and Babar it looked unlikely," he explained.
Fortunately, team physios confirmed it was minor joint irritation rather than a structural injury. Once out in the middle, running between the wickets warmed up his body, allowing him to bat without discomfort.
With Pakistan stumbling early after losing quick wickets in pursuit of 326, Fakhar combined with young wicketkeeper-batter Saad Baig for a crucial 149-run partnership. Fakhar heaped high praise on the youngster's composure under pressure.
"Saad came in when we were under severe early pressure. His fearless strokeplay and brilliant flow allowed me the breathing space to take my time and build my innings," Fakhar said. "Having a junior player show that kind of temperament gives massive confidence to the entire dressing room."
Fakhar emphasized that a stable team environment and unwavering backing from leadership are vital for player performance, noting how crucial it is to shield players from external media noise.
"The best thing this management has done is trust the players completely and block out outside noise. When captains and coaches tell you that you are their main man, it gives you the mental freedom to express yourself without fear of failure," he said.
Concluding the conversation, the veteran opener expressed profound satisfaction with the fighting spirit displayed by the newer members of the squad, including all-rounder Minhas and batsman Hasan Nawaz, who ultimately got Pakistan across the line.
"It's a huge relief and a massive boost for us seniors to know that the youngsters aren't just contributing with occasional performances, but are actively winning matches under pressure. It creates a healthy, competitive environment, and that is exactly where Pakistan cricket needs to be," Fakhar said.

CRICKET

Seifert blasts 93 as New Zealand beat India

The hosts win by 7 wickets in fifth and final T20 match

AFP
Hamilton, New Zealand

Tim Seifert narrowly missed a maiden international century but did enough to steer New Zealand to a seven-wicket win over India in the fifth and final T20 yesterday.

Opener Seifert found some form with the bat, blasting 93 off 50 balls as the home side eased to 195-3 off 18 overs, after Adam Milne had earlier taken 4-19 to restrict the target to 192.

The result wasn't enough for New Zealand to salvage the series, which the tourists won 3-2 after winning the first three games.

New Zealand captain Mitchell Santner lamented his team's failure to win either of the first two matches, which were both tight contests in Christchurch, before finding form late in the series.

"I think those small moments in the first couple of games let us down," said Santner, referring primarily to fielding mistakes, including some important dropped catches.

"We probably could have won those games, or should have, and then the series would have looked a lot different.

"But from a cricketing point of view, there was a lot of really good stuff from our team."

Seifert had scored just 36 runs across the first four matches but the big-hitting right-hander found his touch at Seddon Park, swinging the game in New Zealand's favour by blasting 11 fours



New Zealand's Glenn Phillips bats during the fifth T20 against India in Hamilton yesterday. *(AFP)*

and five sixes. He looked devastated when he played on to Nitish Kumar Reddy in the 16th over, having posted an 18th half-century before failing once again to reach three figures.

Glenn Phillips finished on 65 not out to complete an exceptional series with the bat, which included 107 when New Zealand won game four in Auckland on Friday.

Phillips's 341 runs across the five games was the most scored by any batsman in a bilateral T20 series.

The previous record was held by England's Phil Salt, who scored 331 runs against the West Indies in 2023.

Earlier, Milne's pace proved hard to handle as India were restricted to 191-8, boosted by rapid half-centuries to Ishan Kishan and captain Shreyas Iyer.

The pair combined for 93 off 7.1 overs for the third wicket after both openers fell cheaply to Milne, before Kishan departed for 61 and Iyer for 50. Iyer said India should have pushed on to reach a higher score from

"Kishan and I created momentum but we lost back-to-back wickets," he said.

"It wasn't an easy wicket to play on, especially when the ball was seaming, but when you come overseas, you are challenged by different aspects of the game.

"We could have been better with our bowling and fielding - we were a bit sloppy."

The teams will next contest a five-match one-day international series, starting in Auckland on Wednesday, before playing two Tests.

BRIEF SCORES
New Zealand 195 for 3 (Seifert 93, Phillips 65*) **beat India 191 for 8** (Kishan 61, Iyer 50, Milne 4-19) **by seven wickets**

BOXING

Canelo's love affair with ring burns bright as he reclaims world title



Mexico's Canelo Alvarez celebrates after defeating France's Christian Mbilli during their WBC super middleweight world championship bout in Riyadh yesterday. *(AFP)*

Reuters
Riyadh

Twenty-one years, hundreds of millions of dollars and a place among boxing's all-time greats have done nothing to dim Saul "Canelo" Alvarez's hunger.

For all the riches and glory, the Mexican still finds his greatest joy within the unforgiving confines of a 25-square-metre ring, where he reclaimed the world title on Saturday with a unanimous points win over Christian Mbilli.

The bout went ahead in Riyadh after a week in which the Saudi-led coalition said it intercepted Iran-aligned Houthi missiles and drones aimed at the capital. Security concerns led to the cancellation or postponement of several Saudi events, including the Six Kings Slam tennis exhibition.

The 36-year-old Alvarez, returning to the ring for the first time in more than a year, relied on his trademark counter-punching and precise body shots to overcome the French champion and re-establish himself among boxing's elite.

The judges scored the fight 115-112, 116-111 and 117-110.

"It's something unbelievable. It feels like my first title. Now, after 21 years as a professional, 16 years ago I won my first title. Now I won that title again. I'm so proud of my team," Canelo said. "I love boxing. That's why I'm here, because I still love boxing and I enjoy it a lot."

Mbilli, who entered the contest with a record of 29 wins and one draw, looked to unsettle the Mexican with his relentless pressure and higher punch volume, but Alvarez landed the cleaner blows, including a sharp uppercut that made his opponent stagger in the seventh round.

The victory marked a significant comeback for Alvarez, who suffered only the third defeat of his professional career when American Terence Crawford outpointed him by unanimous decision in September 2025.

That loss cost Alvarez his undisputed super-middleweight crown, ending his reign as holder of the division's four major titles.

Mbilli, 31, had been elevated to full WBC champion after Crawford's departure from the division, having previously held the interim title. The Cameroon-born boxer had fought to a split draw against Lester Martinez on the undercard of the Alvarez-Crawford showdown, ending a run of 29 consecutive professional victories.

Saturday's result improved Alvarez's record to 64 wins, three defeats and two draws and handed Mbilli the first loss of his professional career.

ATHLETICS

Kenyan Chepkirui takes back New York Marathon title, Almgren wins on his debut

AFP
New York

Kenyan Sheila Chepkirui took back her New York City Marathon crown in two hours, 24 minutes and 36 seconds yesterday, while Sweden's Andreas Almgren (2:06:01) won the men's race in his debut over the distance.

The 2024 champion Chepkirui was running all by herself when she crossed the line, two years after she held off compatriot Hellen Obiri, who finished third, a second slower than American Jess McClain (2:24:42).

The half-marathon world champion Almgren finished 13 seconds ahead of Italian Yemaneberhan Crippa, while Kamohelo Mofolo (2:06:26) of Lesotho was third.

Defending champion Obiri and Chepkirui broke away from the lead pack with about four miles to go and Obiri ran on her opponent's heels for much of the final stretch of the course, hoping for more magic after breaking the course record last year.

Obiri had appeared all but assured of second spot on the podium, but let the silver medal slip through her fingers in the final moments, as McClain came out of nowhere to sprint past her and cross the line a second faster.



Kenya's Sheila Chepkirui celebrates on the podium after winning the women's race at the 2026 New York City Marathon in New York City. **Right** Andreas Almgren of Sweden reacts after he crossed the finish line to place first in the men's race. *(AFP)*

"The last mile was really tricky and I had to be patient because I knew Hellen was really strong," said Chepkirui.

"I had to really push up to the finish line," she said.

Marathon debutant Almgren looked to be a veteran over the distance as he hung in with a crowded lead pack through the famously demanding and hilly course.

He pulled away from the defending champion Benson Kipruto with one mile left and waved his arms as he coaxed more cheers from the crowd after building a comfortable lead.

"When Benson starting picking up the pace with 5k left I just thought, 'I've got the legs today'," said Almgren, who cruised through the final metres.

"You can't ask for a better debut... I'm about to start crying," he added.

There was a lot of anticipation surrounding Almgren's arrival in New York and he lived up to the hype as he became the first European man in three decades to triumph across the five boroughs, and said he planned to tackle the 26.2 miles again.

"It's better than anything I could have ever imagined," he said.

The race kicked off under pristine conditions the morning after Halloween, as bleary-eyed partygoers staggered back to their apartments while runners made the journey to the starting line for the year's final major. In the men's wheelchair race, Swiss Marcel Hug snared his eighth New York win through a thrilling sprint finish with rival Daniel Romanchuk, crossing the line a second ahead of the American in 1:28:14.

Hug's compatriot Catherine Debrunner had no drama in the women's race, crossing the line in 1:40:02, while Tatyana McFadden (1:48:28) finished second after outlasting fellow American Susannah Scaroni (1:48:32).

Scaroni lined up on Staten Island after giving birth in August and her baby son Jonah was on hand for a celebratory photo after she crossed the finish line.

Irish European athletics champion Ciara Mageean dies aged 34

BELFAST: Irish middle-distance runner **Ciara Mageean**, who won European gold and competed at two Olympic Games, has died aged 34, her family announced yesterday.
"At 6:30am this morning, Ciara lost her battle with cancer surrounded by her loved ones," said a statement posted on the athlete's Instagram account.
Mageean's death comes just weeks after she married her long-term boyfriend in Belfast.
She had been receiving treatment for bowel cancer, revealing her diagnosis in July 2025 and subsequently disclosing that the disease was at an advanced stage.
Originally from Portaferry in County Down, Northern Ireland, Mageean established herself as one of Ireland's leading middle-distance runners, setting several national records.
She represented Ireland at the 2016 Rio Olympics and the Tokyo Games held in 2021.
Her greatest sporting achievement came in 2024 when she claimed the 1,500 metres title at the European Athletics Championships in Rome.
But an Achilles injury prevented her from competing at the Paris Olympics that year.
Mageean remained remarkably positive throughout her period of illness saying she was "continuing



to find the joy in everyday" as she thanked people for their support following her diagnosis.
Speaking to the BBC in June, she said she was "grateful" for having a career "that many others didn't get to have".
Tributes poured in for Mageean, who also won a European silver and bronze in the 1500m (2022/2016 respectively) and finished second in the event in the 2022 Commonwealth Games.
"The country has lost a hero," the Olympic Federation of Ireland said in a statement.
"Beyond the medals, records and sporting accolades, Ciara will be remembered for her warmth, courage and tremendous strength of character," said Northern Ireland's First Minister Michelle O'Neill. Irish Prime Minister Micheal Martin said he was "deeply saddened" by Mageean's "untimely passing".

TENNIS

Alcaraz beats De Minaur to win Vienna title

Shnaider defeats Fernandez to lift Tokyo title, first trophy for Darts in Guangzhou

Reuters
Vienna

Carlos Alcaraz beat Alex de Minaur 6-1 6-4 to win the Vienna Open yesterday, claiming his fourth title of the season and the 28th of his career, and extending his ATP 500 winning streak to 26 matches.

The 23-year-old Spaniard arrived in Vienna on the back of titles in Doha and Tokyo and completed a perfect 16-0 record at ATP 500 events in 2026, capping another dominant week without dropping a set across his five matches.

Alcaraz seized control from the opening stages, breaking De Minaur's serve in the first game and quickly establishing a double-break advantage as the Australian struggled to contain the world number two's intensity.

The seven-time Grand Slam champion raced through the opening set 6-1, repeatedly punishing short balls and forcing errors from De Minaur.

Although the 27-year-old Australian put up greater resistance in the second set and kept pace for long spells, Alcaraz delivered a high-quality all-court performance to close out victory in 97 minutes and secure his seventh consecutive win over De Minaur.



Spain's Carlos Alcaraz celebrates with the trophy after winning the final at the Erste Bank Open 2026 in Vienna, Austria, yesterday. *(AFP)*

Alcaraz will head to next week's Paris Masters brimming with confidence after his flying start to the European indoor swing, having already qualified for the season-ending ATP Finals in Turin.

De Minaur, meanwhile, will turn his attention to Paris as he continues his push to qualify for the ATP Finals for a third consecutive year.

SHNAIDER TOO GOOD FOR FERNANDEZ

Russia's Diana Shnaider won her first title of the year with a hard-fought victory over Leylah Fernandez in Tokyo yesterday and couldn't wait to tell her mum all about it. The world number 13 beat Canada's Fernandez 6-4, 5-7, 6-2 to win the Pan Pacific Open and then went straight to her phone to call home.

"I was calling my mum - I wanted to hear her voice after winning a title and share a first few moments with her," the 22-year-old Shnaider said. "She said 'you've just finished and already you're calling me?" It was Shnaider's first title since Monterrey in August last year and the sixth of her career.

She looked to be cruising to victory after winning the first set and taking a 4-0 lead in the second. World number 23 Fernandez came back to win the second set, but Shnaider regained control to close out the match.



Russia's Diana Shnaider celebrates after beating Canada's Leylah Fernandez in the final at the WTA Pan Pacific Open in Tokyo yesterday. *(AFP)*

BRITAIN'S DART CLAIMS FIRST WTA TITLE

Harriet Dart clinched the first WTA tour singles title of her career after battling back to beat Austrian Lilli Tagger 4-6 6-3 6-4 in the Guangzhou Open final yesterday.



Britain's Harriet Dart celebrates with the trophy after winning the Guangzhou Open. *(AFP)*

The British number five, ranked 115th in the world and coached by former Wimbledon champion Marion Bartoli, overcame a sluggish start after being broken in the opening game

Dart recovered to draw level at 4-4 in the first set but Tagger immediately broke again and served out the opener. The first break point of the second set went to Dart, who took it for 5-3.

MOTOGP

Marquez wins in Malaysia to close in on the world title

AFP
Sepang, Malaysia

Marc Marquez moved to within touching distance of an eighth world title with an imperious victory at the Malaysian MotoGP yesterday.

The Ducati star romped to a dominant win in 40min 14.236sec, finishing 4.172sec ahead of Red Bull's Pedro Acosta as his younger brother Alex Marquez came third, almost six seconds adrift.

Marquez is now 44 points ahead of his closest championship rival Jorge Martin after a seventh victory this season.

It was also his third triumph in Malaysia in the MotoGP class, having last won in Sepang back in 2018.

With Aprilia's Martin missing the Sepang weekend with a broken wrist, his fellow Spaniard Marquez can seal the championship next weekend in Qatar.

"Closer, but not done," the 33-year-old Marquez said of the championship race.

"So in the end, same mentality. Try to keep pushing, try to be super focused because there are not many races to go, but many moments to go."

After Qatar there are just two weekends left in the campaign.

Marquez wasted no time in snatching the lead from his brother as the riders came into Turn 1 from the start, and the siblings briefly traded places before the older Marquez edged ahead in scorching conditions.



Ducati Lenovo Team's Marc Marquez celebrates after winning the Malaysian Grand Prix at Sepang International Circuit yesterday. *(Reuters)*

Marquez began to pull away from the chasing pack to develop a 1.7 sec advantage over his brother, who was valiantly defending his second spot against Acosta.

Acosta was rewarded for his persistence as the Red Rull rider snatched second place from Alex Marquez on Lap 10.

At the front Marquez coasted to victory unchallenged to continue his purple streak in the second half of the 2026 season.

Despite closing in on another world title, Marquez refused to get carried away.

"Looks like this weekend I took Alex Marquez's skills in Malaysia because I was riding exactly like how he rode last year when he won," said Marquez.

Alex Marquez said he will undergo right shoulder surgery in Madrid after this, ultimately ruling him out of the Qatar race next week.

"It's time to take that surgery and try to come back stronger in Valencia," he said, referring to the last race of the season.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Yamaha pulls out of Qatar MotoGP over 'Middle East situation'

AFP
Sepang, Malaysia

Yamaha said yesterday it will not participate in next weekend's Qatar MotoGP, citing "the situation in the Middle East".

Diplomatic efforts to end the Middle East war have been punctuated by repeated threats from the United States and Israel to resume bombardments of Iran.

The war began on February 28 with joint US-Israeli strikes on Iran, which retaliated by targeting, among others, Gulf countries allied with Washington.

Yamaha issued a statement after yesterday's Malaysian MotoGP saying they would not be taking the risk of going to Qatar.

"Yamaha has not identified sufficient grounds to change its existing company-wide travel restrictions," the Japanese manufacturer said.

Yamaha's riders are France's Fabio Quartararo, the 2021 world champion, and Spaniard Alex Rins.

Australia's Jack Miller, who rides for the Japanese operation's satellite team Yamaha-Pramac, will have been happy with the decision as he made clear his reluctance to travel to Qatar just before Yamaha issued their statement.

"I have no desire to go," said Miller. "Just like everyone else. There are 19 (out of 22 riders) who do not want to go there.

The MotoGP Group said it was "disappointed" by the decision and said that "Yamaha's non-participation also carries sporting implications".

"While we recognise the team is subject to a broader corporate policy restricting travel to the Middle East, we do not believe this decision reflects the extensive assurances provided to all championship stakeholders," it said. MotoGP said talks with Qatari organisers and safety advisers had not flagged any reasons to change plans for the event. There are just three races left in the season, starting in Qatar.

Ducati's reigning seven-time world champion Marc Marquez won the race at Sepang and could clinch the title in Doha.

KHALED AL-JUMAAT WINS QCA TOURNAMENT



The third edition of the Qatar Classic Chess Cup, organized by the Qatar Chess Association (QCA) at the Qatar Training Center, concluded with 22 Qatari players competing over seven rounds. Khaled al-Jumaat was crowned champion, topping the final standings with 6 points. Hamad al-Kuwari finished second with 5.5 points, and Turki al-Kuwari came in third with 5 points. Mohammed al-Mudahka, President of QCA, gave away the prizes.

FOCUS

Tantish, Khalili shine as Doha Old Port opens new triathlon season

By Sports Reporter
Doha



The Doha Old Port Triathlon brought together athletes of all ages for swimming, cycling and running. In the Sprint race, Abdulrahman Tantish took the overall title in 1:02:03, while Shaheen al-Kaabi won the men's Super Sprint in 37:35.

Preparations began at 5:15 a.m., when registration and the transition area opened. The swim course opened for warm-ups at 5:40, roads were closed to traffic at 6:30, and the transition area closed to all athletes at 6:45 until the end of the races. Starts followed across a range of distances to suit every age group.

Race Categories

- Sprint (ages 16+): 750 m swim (individual and relay), 20 km bike (4 laps), 5 km run (3 laps)
- Super Sprint (ages 14+): 375 m swim, 10 km bike, 3.2 km run
- Short Triathlon (ages 10–11 and 12–13): 200 m swim, 5 km bike, 1.6 km run
- Youth Aquathlon (ages 7–9): 200 m swim, no bike leg, 1.6 km run

Swimmers started together from within the water, with separate starts for men and women.

They swam counter-clockwise, keeping the buoys on their left. The bike course was flat and technical, with plenty of bumps and stone-paved curbs, and had no water stations.

The run followed a route around the Old Port's green area, with water stations and a designated waste-disposal zone.

Only road bikes were permitted; time-trial (TT) bikes, clip-on aero bars and integrated bars were banned, as were wetsuits.







Helmets were mandatory. Drafting behind competitors of the same gender was allowed, while drafting behind the opposite gender meant immediate disqualification. Each athlete was responsible for counting their own laps and staying on course.

FIP WORLD CUP QATAR 2026

Qatar drawn against Portugal as defending champs Argentina, Spain begin campaigns

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Qatar will have their work cut out when they take on Portugal, Chile and Germany in the men's competition of the FIP World Cup Qatar 2026, with the hosts handed a challenging draw ahead of the November 2 start in Doha.

Defending men's champions Argentina, meanwhile, will begin their title defence against France, Australia and the Netherlands, while women's champions Spain have been drawn against Brazil, Germany and Great Britain as the 32 participating nations discovered their group-stage opponents.

The draw, held ahead of the tournament, sets up an exciting week of competition at the Khalifa International Tennis and Squash Complex, where the world's leading padel nations will compete for the biggest prize purse in the history of the World Cup.

Argentina, who lifted the men's title in the previous edition, will be favourites to progress from their group. Spain, runners-up in Doha two years ago, have been placed alongside the UAE, Sweden and Paraguay.

Portugal, who finished third in 2024, will provide the biggest challenge for Qatar in Group C, with Chile and Germany completing the line-up. Italy, Brazil, the United States and Mexico make up the remaining men's group.

In the women's event, Spain will start as the team to beat following their world title triumph. Argentina, another major contender, face France, Chile and Belgium in their group. Italy, Sweden, Egypt and Indonesia will compete in Group C, while Portugal, the Netherlands, the United States and Paraguay have been drawn together in Group D.



International Padel Federation and Qatar Padel Federation officials pose after the draw ceremony yesterday.

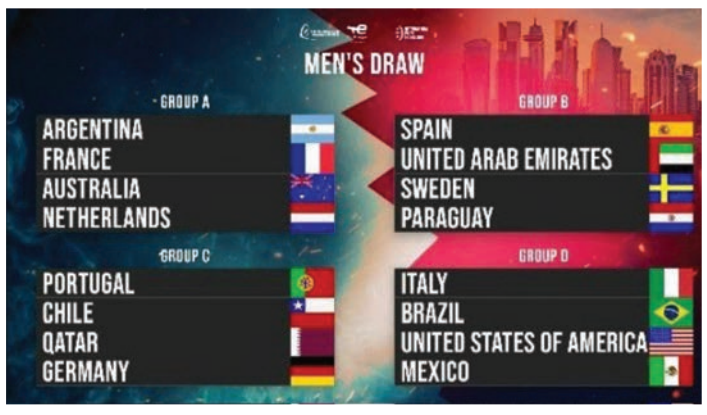
Organised by the International Padel Federation (FIP) in partnership with the Qatar Padel Federation, the tournament will offer a total prize fund of €1.2mn, with the amount divided equally between the men's and women's competitions.

Each team will play the other three sides in its group in ties comprising a best-of-three-match format. Women's matches are scheduled to begin at 2pm, with the men's competition starting at 6pm. The group stage will run for the first three days, with the knockout rounds getting under way on November 5.

The top two teams from each group will progress to the quarter-finals, while the other sides will continue playing for positions between ninth and 16th.

The semi-finals will be held on November 6, with the tournament concluding a day later. The third-place matches will take place in the morning before the finals decide the men's and women's world champions.

All eyes will then turn to Doha's Centre Court for the crowning of the new champions, bringing the curtain down on a tournament that promises to be a major showcase for the sport. For Qatar, playing in front of a home crowd adds extra significance to the challenge, with the hosts hoping to make the most of home advantage against some of the strongest teams in international padel.





PREMIER LEAGUE

Arsenal end Anfield hoodoo to go top

HAVERTZ SEALS THE DEFENDING CHAMPIONS' WIN AT LIVERPOOL

AFP
Liverpool

Arsenal moved to the top of the Premier League with their first win away to Liverpool in 14 years as Kai Havertz's early strike secured a 1-0 victory for the Gunners.

The defending champions were made to suffer after the German's 16th-minute opener but held out for what could be a telling win in their quest to retain the title.

Arsenal climbed three points clear of Manchester City at the top of the table.

But with City expected to be hit with a severe points penalty, unless they can overturn a guilty verdict on over 100 charges of breaking Premier League rules, Arsenal dealt a huge blow to their most likely rivals for the title.

Liverpool produced arguably their spell of Andoni Iraola's early months in charge with a blistering 30 minutes after conceding, but failed to take their chances as the Spaniard suffered just his second defeat in 14 games since arriving from Bournemouth.

Mikel Arteta was stinging in his criticism of the Arsenal side that crashed out to fourth-tier Fleetwood on Tuesday in one of the biggest ever League Cup shocks.

The Arsenal boss got the response he desired in a strong start from the champions.

Havertz was one of the biggest culprits for wasting chances in midweek but made amends with a simple finish from Declan Rice's precise low cross.

The early goal lit the touchpaper for a pulsating first 45 minutes as Liverpool roared back. Iraola and Arteta played together as boys for Basque side Antiguoko Kirol Elkartea.

Arteta's old friend gave his side one of the most uncomfortable afternoons they have experienced in recent seasons as Arsenal's rock-solid defence was left clinging on for half-time.

All of Liverpool's three £100mn-plus ($134mn) forwards started together and there are signs the relationship between Alexander Isak, Florian Wirtz and Bradley Barcola is beginning to flourish.


Arsenal's Kai Havertz and Liverpool's Jeremy Jacquet vying for the ball during their Premier League match on Saturday. *(Reuters)*

Isak did Arsenal a favour by not going down as he was pulled back by Jurrien Timber when just failing to connect with a wicked delivery from Barcola.

The visitors still had chances on the counter-attack as Bruno Guimaraes pulled a shot just wide before Timber inadvertently blocked Noni Madueke's ball across goal with Havertz waiting to apply the finish.

Up the other end, Wirtz curled a free-kick onto the bar from a narrow angle and Alexis Mac Allister should have buried a header into the goal rather than finding the stand behind David Raya's goal.

Half-time allowed Arsenal the chance to reset and take the wind out of Liverpool's sails as Iraola's men tired in the second period.

Alisson Becker produced a stunning save to turn behind Christos Tzolis's shot that was arrowing into the bottom corner to keep Liverpool in the game.

That intervention counted for little as Arsenal rode out the closing stages to register another clean sheet and an eighth win in nine league games. Defeat leaves fifth-placed Liverpool nine points adrift of the leaders and already facing a mountain to climb to get back in the title race.

LAZIO PULL CLEAR AT SERIE A SUMMIT

Gennaro Gattuso's Lazio consolidated their position at the top of Serie A yesterday with a 2-1 victory over Cagliari, nudging ahead of Inter Milan after the two clubs had started the weekend level on points.

Lazio made a poor start as Cagliari took the lead through M'Bala Nzola in the 20th minute before goals in either half from Gustav Isaksen and Andrea Pinamonti gave them a sixth straight Serie A win.

With 28 points from 10 games, Lazio moved three clear of Inter after they lost the Milan derby. Unbeaten Roma sit third on 24 points and Como climbed back to fourth with a 1-0 win over rock-bottom Venezia. Lazio last won Serie A in 2000 and this is the best start to a league campaign in the club's history.

As has been the case in recent home matches, Lazio played in front of largely empty sections of the Stadio Olimpico, with many ultras and supporters continuing their boycott in protest against owner and president Claudio Lotito, whom they accuse of failing to invest sufficiently in the squad.

Como's victory at home over lowly Venezia on Sunday was a fifth consecutive victory across all competitions. The hosts dominated, but needed a penalty to find the back of the net. Como captain Lucas Da Cunha converted in the 43rd minute for the French international's first goal of the season.

"This is the type of match we found hard to win last season," Da Cunha told DAZN.

Cesc Fabregas's side had slipped to fifth when AC Milan beat champions Inter 3-1 on Saturday. Como moved one point behind Roma, who beat Udinese 5-2 on Saturday.

"This victory is really important in terms of our maturing process," said Fabregas. "Our state of mind is irreproachable," added the 39-year-old Spaniard.

Como resume their Champions League campaign against Lens on Wednesday.

In a season in which Italian teams have struggled in Europe, Como have the best record of the Serie A clubs in the Champions League, sitting ninth in the 36-team standings, with six points from three games.

Como, who were playing in Italy's third division as recently as 2021, beat Manchester United 4-1 in the last round of European matches.

LA LIGA

Mbappe strikes after China controversy as Real beat Santander

AFP
Santander, Spain

Kylian Mbappe moved on from a tumultuous week by scoring a penalty to help Real Madrid win 3-0 at Racing Santander yesterday.

The French forward narrowly lost out on the Ballon d'Or to Bayern Munich's Harry Kane on Monday and then had to apologise after a social media storm following a video in which he joked about former Chinese leader Mao Zedong.

Real Madrid's match, along with other Spanish fixtures this weekend, was not broadcast by Chinese state television because of the fallout.

Jude Bellingham and Yan Diomande were also on target to keep third-place Madrid within three points of leaders Barcelona, who thrashed Alaves 6-1 on Saturday.

Jose Mourinho's side have won six straight games across all competitions and are a point behind city rivals Atletico Madrid, who beat Levante 2-0.

"In the first half we were very strong, we came out to play well," Mourinho told reporters.

"The team is growing, playing well, I think we should have scored even more goals with the chances we had."

Mbappe won a soft penalty as he went down under little pressure from Matteo Prati, smashing it home to put Madrid ahead at the Sardinero stadium in the 11th minute.

It was the 27-year-old's 12th league goal of the season, trailing only Barcelona's Raphinha with 15 in the scoring charts.

Madrid had control of the game and a fine pass from Arda Guler sent Bellingham through on goal for the second.

The England international knocked the ball past the goalkeeper and rolled home for his 50th goal since joining Madrid in 2023.

Guler spurned a good opportunity for the third after being set up by Mbappe, before Madrid's record signing Diomande lashed home from the edge of the box.

The hosts started the second half well, pushing Madrid back, much to the chagrin of Mourinho, who yelled at his players.

Madrid regained their control and racked up several more chances, with Mbappe hitting the post and Bellingham denied by Racing goalkeeper Julen Agirrezabala.

Racing won a penalty after Madrid's Aurelien Tchouameni handled in the box, but the award was cancelled after a VAR review.

Bellingham had a second goal ruled out in stoppage time after he strayed offside before finding the net and Endrick bent an effort narrowly wide from distance.

Hosts Racing, 16th, back in La Liga for the first time in 14 seasons, fell to their first home defeat of the campaign.

Earlier Sevilla, sixth, suffered a 3-1 loss at Getafe, who moved into mid-table.

"(Madrid's penalty award) annoys me," Racing coach Jose Alberto told DAZN.

"Evidently we came across a great Madrid, who put us under a lot of pressure in the first half hour, and were much better than us, but what conditions everything was the first goal and the penalty."


Real Madrid's Kylian Mbappe (left) celebrates scoring the opening goal with team-mate Dean Huijsen during the La Liga match against Racing de Santander in Santander yesterday. *(AFP)*