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PADEL WORLD CUP

Qatar suffer clean sweep in opener against Portugal

By Sports Reporter
Doha



Qatar's Rashed Nawaf in action at the FIP World Cup Qatar 2026 at Khalifa International Tennis and Squash Complex yesterday.



In the women's competition, defending champions Spain made a flying start, sweeping Germany 3-0 in Group A.

Qatar suffered a 3-0 defeat to Portugal in their opening tie in the men's competition of the FIP World Cup Qatar 2026 at the Khalifa International Tennis and Squash Complex yesterday.

Portugal, bronze medallists in the 2024 edition, proved too strong for the hosts, winning all three matches in straight sets to make a winning start to their Group C campaign.

Pedro Araujo and Pedro Graca put Portugal ahead with a 6-2, 6-2 victory over Qatar's Mohammed Saadon al-Kuwari and Hamad Adel Waly.

Diogo Jesus and Pedro Perry then sealed the tie, beating Rashed Nawaf and Mishari Nawaf 6-4, 6-4. Miguel Deus and Nuno Deus completed the clean sweep with a 6-3, 6-1 win over Rayan Abdulla Aljufairi and Essa Shannan Alharrasi.

Qatar will now look to bounce back against Chile and Germany in Group C as they seek to reach the knockout stages. The top two teams from each group will advance to the quarter-finals, with the group stage taking place over the first three days.

Meanwhile, defending champions Argentina began their men's title defence against France, Australia and the Netherlands in Group A.

In the women's competition, defending champions Spain made a flying start, sweeping Germany 3-0 in Group A. Claudia Fernandez and Bea Gonzalez opened with a 6-0, 6-1 win over Kurz and Blaschke before Paula Josemaria and Martina Calvo beat Renic and Hofer 6-1, 6-0.

Gemma Triay and Marta Ortega completed the rout with a 6-0, 6-0 victory over Ermann and Schmitz.

Argentina also began their campaign with a 3-0 win over Chile in Group B. Runners-up in 2024, Argentina were led by Virginia Riera and Julieta Bidahorria, who beat Del Real and Candia 6-0, 6-1. Martina Fassio and Claudia Jensen followed with a 6-2, 6-0 victory over Lobo and Bentjerodt, while 16-year-old Victoria Vilchez and Aranzazu Osoro completed the sweep with a 6-2, 6-3 win over Arancibia and Ahumada.

France edged Belgium in the other Group B tie. After Bahurel and Collombon beat Pysson and Boeykens, Belgium levelled through Wyckaert and Mestach's three-set win over Pothier and Touly. Lea Godallier and Clara Mansart then secured the tie for France with a 6-1, 6-2 victory over Sermant and Vierendeels.

In Group D, Portugal secured their tie against the United States after winning the first two matches. Patri Ribeiro and Sofia Araujo recorded a 6-0, 6-0 victory over Riobueno and Ruiz, while 15-year-old Andrea Anchando and Ana Catarina Nogueira beat Dubins and Rodriguez Sanchez 6-4, 6-4. The Americans won the third match.

The Netherlands also opened with a 3-0 victory over Paraguay. Koek and De Vocht beat Kudo and Miranda 7-6, 6-1, Luttikhuis and Hemmes defeated Bareiro and Cepede 6-3, 6-0, while Betz and Groenveld completed the sweep with a 6-1, 6-1 win over Salsamendi and Garcia.

Italy were equally dominant in Group C, winning all three matches against Egypt. Carolina Orsi and Giorgia Marchetti beat El Halaby and Morales 6-3, 6-0, Clarissa Aima and Giulia Sussarello defeated Tawfik and Fathy 6-2, 6-3, while Giulia Dal Pozzo and Emily Stellato completed the 3-0 result with a 6-2, 6-0 win over Hakim and El Nimr.

Sweden also made a winning start in the group, needing just two matches to secure their tie against Indonesia through opening victories for Girdo and Sjoland, and Bjork and Kjaergaard.

AFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE ELITE

Al Sadd hold Saudi's Al Ahli, Gharafa hit by heavy defeat

DRAW AT THE JASSIM BIN HAMAD STADIUM TOOK SADD TO TWO POINTS AFTER FOUR MATCHES

By Sports Reporter
Doha



Al Sadd's Pedro Miguel and Al Ahli's Galeno vying for the ball during the AFC Champions League Elite match in Doha.

Al Sadd earned a hard-fought 0-0 draw against defending champions Al Ahli Saudi while Al Gharafa were given a 5-0 thrashing by Saudi Arabia's Al Qadsiah in the AFC Champions League Elite yesterday.

The draw at the Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium took Al Sadd to two points after four matches, while Al Ahli moved to eight points to maintain their unbeaten record. At Al Rayyan's Thani bin Jassim Stadium, Al Gharafa slumped to their fourth consecutive defeat as Al Qadsiah registered their second win to strengthen their hopes of reaching the Round of 16.

In Doha, after plenty of back-and-forth by Sadd and Ahli but with chances at a premium, Ahli's Artem Bondarenko attempted to resolve the situation in the 14th minute with an ambitious effort from 18 yards that sailed over.

Al Sadd striker Giovani's speed down the left, meanwhile, posed problems for the defence but the Qatari side's attacks fizzled out before they could trouble Edouard Mendy.

Eduard Spertsyan's effort from range in the 27th minute sparked the match into life but the Al Ahli midfielder's shot swerved just over the bar while Claudinho's attempt at the opposing end moments later came closer to an opening goal, with Mendy forced to tip the striker's blistering strike over.

Meshaal Barsham replicated his counterpart's actions in the 39th minute to deny Roger Ibanez's close-range header and then pulled off a superb finger-tip save two minutes later, pushing Galeno's inswinger against the right post.

The pace picked up in the second half as the visitors' Ivan Toney missed from close range and then dragged his shot across the face of goal while Mendy prevented an Al Sadd strike by parrying Roberto Firmino's effort from just outside the box.

The two-time champions would have taken the lead in the 66th minute if not for a timely clearance by defender Paulo Otavia, who blocked Spertsyan's goal-bound shot on the line with Barsham slightly off-position.

The Al Sadd custodian was in the right place and time, however, when he launched himself to the left to deny substitute Matheus Goncalves' curling shot in the 84th minute, the keeper then having an easier time collecting Ibrahima Diaby's header four minutes later before making a final save from Gonçalves in injury time.

Meanwhile, a first-half blitz saw Al Qadsiah Club register their second victory after cruising Al Gharafa. Quinones was the star with a brace as Saudi Arabia's Al Qadsiah boosted their progression hopes while condemning Qatar's Al Gharafa to their fourth consecutive defeat. Al Qadsiah threatened early, with Tijjani Reijnders shooting narrowly wide in the second minute after Christopher Bonsu Baah picked him out inside the box.

The Saudi Pro League side continued to press and took the lead in the 17th minute after a fine buildup, with Julian Quinones delivering a through ball for Abu al-Shamat, who finished with a volley which looped over goalkeeper Ahmed Kone.

Al Qadsiah nearly doubled their lead four minutes later when Musab al-Juwayr's effort was blocked, before Reijnders headed against the crossbar from al-Shamat's delivery, with Quinones then sending his overhead kick sailing over the bar. Quinones, however, made no mistake two minutes later when he rose highest to meet Bonsu Baah's cross, sending his powerful header into the top of the net.

The Qatari outfit tried to respond by pushing forward but that made matters worse as Al Qadsiah capitalised on the gaps with Yasser al-Shahrani reacting quickest inside a packed box to poke home after Reijnders' initial effort was blocked.

Quinones doubled his tally two minutes later, converting Reijnders' pass from just outside the box to leave Al Gharafa with a mountain to climb in the second half.

Al Gharafa made three changes at the start of the second half, bringing on Yacine Brahimi, Feras Sassi and Saif Eldeen Fadllalla, with the move almost paying dividends in the 51st minute.

Brahimi forced a fine save from goalkeeper Koen Casteels before setting up Sassi inside the box two minutes later, but the latter could only rattle the right post from inside the area.

Any hope of a fightback was put to bed in the 81st minute after Gharafa were caught out again on the counter-attack with Mahamadou Sangare setting free Mohammed al-Qahtani, who sidestepped his marker before slotting past Kone.

Al Shamal face Esteghlal

Meanwhile, Al Shamal will look to build on their impressive victory over Al Hilal when they take on Iran's Esteghlal FC in Basra, Iraq, today. The win over Hilal lifted the Qatar side to sixth in the standings after they had opened their campaign with two draws.

They will now aim to maintain that momentum and strengthen their bid for a place in the Round of 16.

Meanwhile, Esteghlal suffered their first defeat of the campaign last week, going down 2-0 to the UAE's Shabab Al Ahli, who brought an end to their opponents' perfect start.

The Iranian side managed just one shot on target from nine attempts and will be keen to rediscover the form that brought them two successive wins at the start of the competition.

SPORT

COMMENT

Australia still a very good team: McDonald

Reuters
Cape Town

Coach Andrew McDonald acknowledged Australia underachieved in South Africa but called for calm and backed his team in the face of the flood of criticism that has come their way after the 2-1 series loss to the Proteas.

The timidity with which Australia conceded defeat on the final day of the third Test at Newlands last weekend - bowled out for 111 in pursuit of 288 - sparked calls for heads to roll in the team, team management and board of selectors.

"It's still a very good cricket team with a lot of very good players in there," McDonald told reporters in South Africa before the squad headed home.

"Some legends of the game, or down the path they will be acknowledged as legends of the game. So we've got to balance that out with who comes in, what the next decisions are."

Critics have accused Australia of sticking with underperforming players and not managing the transition of an ageing test squad.

The Newlands defeat was their third in five Tests, costing them the number one world ranking and jeopardising their campaign to reach a third straight World Test Championship final next year.

They next have a four-Test home series against New Zealand in December and January followed by a trip to India to play a five-match series.

McDonald conceded that Marnus Labuschagne had probably blown his chance to continue with 131 runs at an average of 21.83 in the series, but did not entirely close the door on the 32-year-old top-order batsman.

"We believed in Marnus for this tour, we'll have to reassess that as we move forward," McDonald said.

"There's still a very good cricketer there. Every time he drops back to state level, he outperforms the others ... But he hasn't taken his opportunity on this tour."

Steve Smith scored 83 runs in the first two Tests in South Africa but withdrew from the decisive third with a neck problem. McDonald said he did not think the experience had moved the 37-year-old any closer to making a call on his retirement.

"We are planning for him to play against New Zealand in Perth," McDonald said. "I think first and foremost, it's understanding what's going on with the neck issue ..."

McDonald pointed to the successful return from injury of Cameron Green and a century from Smith's replacement Josh Inglis in the third test as batting positives from the tour.

Nathan Lyon, 38, probably suffered by comparison with South Africa's off-spinner Simon Harmer, who took 14 wickets over the series and played a decisive role in the Newlands test.

"I don't think it's something to review now," McDonald said of Lyon, who took six wickets in the two tests he played.

"I think we sit back and we'll go through (Sheffield) Shield cricket. Nathan will be preparing for the first Test match in Perth."

McDonald said competing in foreign conditions was always a challenge but acknowledged Australia had not played as well as they might have in South Africa.

"In the emotion of the current situation ... my answer ... would be we've underachieved here," he said. "I think people put a lot of sort of premium on the key series, and that's ultimately where you are judged. We understand that, we realise that."


Australian cricket coach Andrew McDonald.

CRICKET

Varma to lead India A at Rising Stars Asia Cup

The 8-team tournament to be held in Doha from Nov 19-29

By Sports Reporter
Doha

World Cup winner Tilak Varma will lead a strong India A squad at the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) Rising Stars Asia Cup to be held in Doha from Nov 19-29, the BCCI announced yesterday.

Hard-hitting batsman Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, 15, is also part of the squad that is placed in Group B alongside the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Nepal and Pakistan A.

World number one batsman in T20s, left-handed Abhishek Sharma will likely partner Sooryavanshi at the top for India in the 10-day tournament was won by Pakistan last year.

Group A comprises Bangladesh A, Sri Lanka A, Afghanistan A and Hong Kong, China.

The top two teams from each group will advance to the semi-finals, scheduled for Nov 26 and 27. The final will take place on Nov 29.

Doha is set to become the epicenter of continental cricket as the Qatar Cricket Association (QCA) rolls out the red carpet for the Asian Rising Stars Cup.

Action gets underway at the state-of-the-art West End International Cricket Ground and the Doha University of Science and Technology Stadium, where eight formidable sides begin their quest for silverware.

The competition brings together an exciting mix of powerhouse reserve squads and rising international contenders.

Group 1 features Pakistan (Shaheen), India (A), Nepal, and the United Arab Emirates, while Group 2 boasts Sri Lanka (A), Bangladesh (A), Afghanistan (A), and Hong Kong (China).


Tilak Varma will lead 15-player India A squad in Doha this month.

While four of Asia's most prominent nations deploy their promising 'A' teams, squads like Nepal and the UAE earned their hard-fought stripes through stellar qualification runs at the Asian Men's Elite Cup in Malaysia.

The tournament roars to life on November 19 with a pair of opening fixtures as Bangladesh (A) locks horns with Hong Kong at the Doha University of Science and Technology Stadium, while Sri Lanka (A) battles Afghanistan (A) across town at the West End International Cricket Ground.

The group battles heat up quickly on November 20 when Pakistan (Shaheen) takes on the UAE and India (A) faces Nepal, followed the next day by clashes between Sri Lanka (A) and Hong Kong, and Bangladesh (A) versus Afghanistan (A).

All roads lead to the West End International Stadium on November 22, however, when the cricket world pauses for the most anticipated fixture of the group stage: Pakistan (Shaheen) versus India (A).

Steeped in fierce historical rivalry and drawing immense global interest, this blockbuster showdown promises fireworks. Meanwhile, the UAE and Nepal will lock horns at the Doha University of Science and Technology Stadium on the very same day.

Following further group action on November 23, the preliminary stage reaches its crescendo on November 24 with high-stakes encounters between India (A) and the UAE, and Pakistan (Shaheen) and Nepal, sealing the fate of the four teams advancing to the knockout rounds.

The road to the championship narrows significantly on November 26 and 27, as the West End International Cricket Ground hosts the semi-finals, pitting Group 1's winner against Group 2's runner-up, and vice versa.

Finally, the ultimate battle for glory unfolds on November 29, when the two semi-final victors collide on the grand stage to crown the new champion of the Asian Rising Stars Cup.

India A squad
Abhishek Sharma, Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, Prabhsimran Singh (WK), Tilak Varma (C), Rajat Patidar (VC), Rinku Singh, Kumar Kushagra (WK), Suryansh Shedge, Shahbaz Ahmed, Vipraj Nigam, Harsh Dubey, Tanush Kotian, Harshit Rana, Prince Yadav, Arshad Khan

CHESS

Al-Mudahka appointed representative of FIDE International Relations

By Sports Reporter
Doha



In a move underscoring Qatar's growing influence in the global sporting arena, the International Chess Federation (FIDE) has announced the appointment of Qatar Chess Association (QCA) President **Mohammed al-Mudahka** as its Representative for International Relations.

The appointment follows a decision by the FIDE Executive Board during its recent meeting, reflecting continued confidence in al-Mudahka's extensive administrative background.

Having previously served as FIDE's Executive Director for International Relations, al-Mudahka expressed deep gratitude for the endorsement from the federation's leadership. He highlighted that Qatari sports have consistently proven their excellence on the international stage, adding that this new role serves as a significant milestone for the local chess community.

According to al-Mudahka, the position will positively drive the development of chess within Qatar in the coming period, elevate its international standing, and forge new pathways for bilateral cooperation and future growth.

Al-Mudahka brings a wealth of experience to the role, having built a distinguished administrative career across regional and international institutions.

His past credentials include serving as FIDE's representative at the International University Championship in 2020, alongside his election as Vice President of the Arab Chess Federation, cementing his active and enduring presence in both Arab and global chess governance.

ODI

Ravindra, Chapman to miss series against India

Reuters
Auckland



Rachin Ravindra and Mark Chapman will miss New Zealand's one-day international series against India this month as they continue to recuperate from shoulder and hamstring injuries respectively, the team said yesterday.

All-rounder Ravindra's right shoulder requires more recovery time before he is able to field at full capacity, the team said in a statement

Batter Chapman underwent an MRI scan which showed his left hamstring required another two weeks of rehabilitation before he is fit to return

Tim Seifert, who had been selected for the fourth and fifth ODIs only, will now be in the squad for the full series, while Henry Nicholls will come in for the first three games and Dean Foxcroft for the last two

The series starts in Auckland on Wednesday with further matches in Wellington and Hamilton before the last two games in Tauranga

India, who won the T20 series 3-2, will also play two tTests against the Black Caps

Batters De Zorzi, Hamza return to South Africa Test squad

CAPE TOWN: South Africa have named batters Tony de Zorzi and Zubayr Hamza in their squad for the two-match home Test series against Bangladesh, but seamer Lungi Ngidi remains sidelined by injury.
De Zorzi has recovered from a hamstring problem that kept him out of the recent 2-1 series win over Australia.
Hamza won the last of his eight Test caps against New Zealand in 2024
Fast bowler Anrich Nortje has recovered from the groin injury that kept him out of the third Test against Australia, and is part of a pace attack including Dane Paterson and Kagiso Rabada, and all-rounders Corbin Bosch, Marco Jansen and Wiaan Mulder. Ngidi's hamstring injury meant he was not considered for selection by South Africa, whose series win over Australia took them to the top of the Test world rankings for the first time since 2016.
The first Test is at the Wanderers Stadium in Johannesburg from Nov 15-19, and the second at Centurion Park in Pretoria.

South Africa squad
Temba Bavuma (captain), Marques Ackerman, Matthew Breetzke, Corbin Bosch, Tony de Zorzi, Simon Harmer, Zubayr Hamza, Marco Jansen, Keshav Maharaj, Aiden Markram, Wiaan Mulder, Anrich Nortje, Dane Paterson, Kagiso Rabada, Ryan Rickelton

ANNOUNCEMENT

Australia rest Test players for England white-ball series

Reuters
Sydney

Australia have rested most of their frontline Test players for the home one-day international and Twenty20 series against England over the next month.

Experienced all-rounder Mitchell Marsh will captain both teams.

Travis Head, Matthew Renshaw, Cameron Green, Alex Carey, Josh Inglis and Cooper Connolly are the only players from the side that lost a Test series in South Africa on Saturday to back up in the ODI team. None will play the T20s.

Fast bowler Mahli Beardman, 21, returns to international cricket following an injury layoff and is one of six players named in both squads. All-rounders Jack Edwards and Liam Scott were two others and are set to represent their country on home soil for the first time. Promising young batsman Oliver Peake, 20, was named in the ODI squad.

"We are in the middle of a highly demanding phase of our schedule," chief selector George Bailey said in a statement.

"Our multi-format players are transitioning directly from the tour of South Africa into an ODI and T20 series, leaving a narrow window to ensure the squad is physically prepared and fresh for the upcoming New Zealand Test series."

The ODI series begins in Perth on November 13 with further matches in Adelaide and Hobart. There will be five T20 clashes in Melbourne, Gold Coast, Brisbane, Sydney and Canberra in late November and early December.

Australia host New Zealand in four Tests starting on December 9.

ODI squad
Mitchell Marsh, Xavier Bartlett, Mahli Beardman, Alex Carey, Cooper Connolly, Jack Edwards, Cameron Green, Travis Head, Josh Inglis, Spencer Johnson, Ollie Peake, Matthew Renshaw, Liam Scott, Adam Zampa
T20 squad
Mitchell Marsh, Xavier Bartlett, Mahli Beardman, Nikhil Chaudhary, Tim David, Joel Davies, Jack Edwards, Nathan Ellis, Jake Fraser-McGurk, Sam Harper, Spencer Johnson, Mitchell Owen, Lachlan Shaw, Adam Zampa


Experienced all-rounder Mitchell Marsh will captain Australia in an ODI and a T20 series against England this month.

FOCUS

Eala talks 'intimidating' Nadal, fan frenzy in breakthrough year

AFP
Hong Kong

Philippines tennis trailblazer **Alex Eala** remembers the moment it struck her just how wildly popular she had become, telling AFP: "It was shocking."

It was a hot and sunny January day in Melbourne this year and the Filipina was playing in the main draw at the Australian Open for the first time.

Huge lines of fans from her country queued up to catch a glimpse of her and the intimate court used for the first-round match against the American Alycia Parks was packed beyond bursting.

Eala lost and, after spending some time greeting her supporters, she was whisked out of the arena by the kind of security detail usually reserved for heads of state.

"Hard to forget," the 21-year-old said in an interview at this week's Hong Kong Open, reminded of the episode.

"Yeah, it was shocking.

"I've experienced crowds before but I think that was probably my first experience where it was of that magnitude.

"And I think those moments kind of hit a bit stronger when they're unexpected."

Back in the Philippines, which has never had a world-class woman tennis player before, Eala was already on the way to becoming a superstar.

Then at Wimbledon in July she reached the last 16 - her best performance at a Grand Slam - and a photo of her diving full-length to make a shot went viral.

Next came history as she beat four-time major champion Naomi Osaka in the semi-finals in Washington, DC and defeated top seed Jessica Pegula for the title.

Eala was the first player from the Philippines to win a WTA singles crown.

She is now at a career-high 17 in the world and it has become a feature of women's tennis that wherever she plays she is mobbed by huge crowds of her compatriots.

Learning from Venus

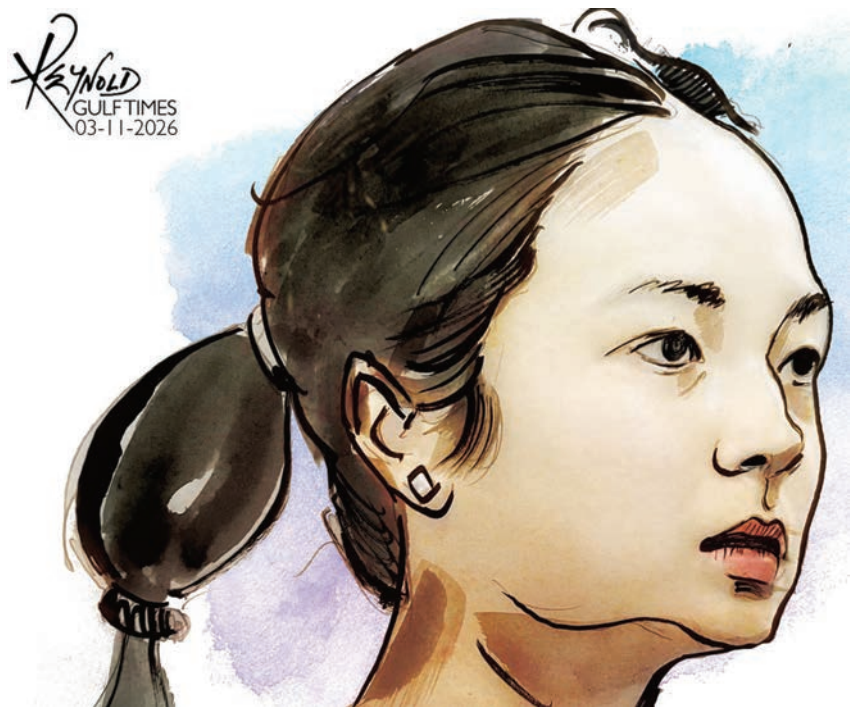
Part of Eala's charm in the eyes of her followers is that she does not shy away from engaging with her many fans.

How does she do it even after losing?

"I do my best to give back to them," said Eala, who is the second seed in Hong Kong and starts her title bid against Parks.

"It's something that I can do to show them that it (their support) is appreciated."

Eala's rise to prominence has seen her play alongside multiple Grand Slam winner Venus Williams in doubles. The 46-year-old Williams is also playing in Hong Kong this week. "I think when you're able to work so closely or be in the vicinity of someone of that magnitude or someone like Venus, you notice a lot of things, and I try to be a little observant," said Eala.



"The mindset that she has of aggression on court is amazing and the work ethic is incredible. "I think the work ethic is something that is difficult to achieve."

'Intimidating' Nadal

Rafael Nadal is another legend of the game that Eala can draw knowledge from, having come through at his academy in Mallorca.

When Eala was named in September by *Time* magazine in a list of most influential rising stars in the world, Nadal fondly recalled she was the first player he shared a tennis court with since his retirement two years ago. The Spaniard called her "a wonderful person - warm, approachable and humble".

"It isn't easy to handle becoming a true phenomenon at such a young age," he wrote.

Eala said that Nadal is in communication with her coach "most of the time".

"Every once in a while, yes, we are in contact," she said.

"He'll congratulate me or I message him on the 10th anniversary of the academy and things like that."

Can she just phone up the 22-time Grand Slam champion any time?

"I'm sure I can, he's really open like that," she replied. "He's really super down-to-earth, very humble. But that doesn't take away from the fact that I still get intimidated when I'm around him."

MOTORSPORT

Antonelli becomes youngest Formula 1 world champion

'I am so grateful for this moment - and it is one I will live forever'

AFP
Mexico City

Kimi Antonelli became Formula One's youngest world champion and Italy's first since 1953 when he finished third behind multiple champions Max Verstappen and Lewis Hamilton in Sunday's thrilling and crash-hit Mexico City Grand Prix.

The 20-year-old Italian drove his Mercedes to a 16th podium finish of the season with a blend of audacity and professionalism that belied his age in a hotly contested race of two safety cars and a red flag stoppage.

"Thank you so much, we did it," he said tearfully on the team radio on his slow-down lap as his esteemed race engineer Peter Bonnington told him it was "a pleasure to be on the journey with you, but it's just the first chapter".

Antonelli soon regained his composure and after thanking his family and Mercedes he added: "We did it. I am so grateful for this moment - and it is one I will live forever. I'm speechless, just trying to process what has happened.

"It's been an incredible season and to share the podium with Max and Lewis is truly incredible. I felt more tense this weekend, but I am so happy we got it done."

At 20 years and 68 days old, he became the youngest champion by more than three years to four-time champion Sebastian Vettel and Italy's first since Alberto Ascari of Ferrari in 1953.

In a two-part race, divided by a 45-minute pause when Valtteri Bottas crashed heavily in his Cadillac, Red Bull's four-time champion came home 0.799 seconds ahead of seven-time champion Hamilton's Ferrari with Antonelli third 3.207 seconds adrift. It was Verstappen's record-extending sixth win in Mexico, his third this year and the 74th of his career.

Charles Leclerc was fourth in the second Ferrari, after sparking race-long ill-feeling in his team with an opening lap tangle with team-mate Hamilton, who started on pole. "I think we had the pace to win today, but it wasn't meant to be and we'll take it offline and figure out what we can do in the background," said a visibly irritated Hamilton.



Mercedes' Italian driver Kimi Antonelli (also inset) holds an Italian flag as he celebrates winning the world championship title in Mexico City. *(AFP)*

"We have to hold some serious talks behind the scenes."

Outgoing world champion Lando Norris was fifth in his McLaren with Antonelli's Mercedes team-mate George Russell, who needed to win the race to have any chance of stalling the Italian's sprint to the title, in sixth. They were followed home by Oscar Piastri in the second McLaren, Alpine's Franco Colapinto, Liam Lawson in the Racing Bull and Pierre Gasly in the second Alpine. "The first start made the race for me," said Verstappen who charged from fifth to second on the opening lap.

"We lacked some pace, but I hung in there and I was sweating at the end to keep Lewis behind."

Hamilton made a clean start from his record 105th pole position and held the lead down the 800-metre charge to Turn One as Russell struggled to resist Leclerc and a rampant Verstappen.

The Monegasque had clearly cast team loyalty aside and attacked again into Turn Four, running off-track to take the lead. A stunned Hamilton was then passed by Verstappen while Antonelli, from fifth passed Russell for fourth.

On a chaotic first lap, Isack Hadjar spun after contact with Russell and fell to last while Hamilton radioed Ferrari to say he was "pushed out by my own team-mate".

The stewards noted the incident and on lap 13 announced a five-second penalty for Leclerc who gained an advantage and 10 seconds for Russell for causing a collision. Leclerc opened a 2.5 seconds lead by lap 10 after an early virtual safety car intervention when both Aston Martins retired, Lance Stroll parking his at Turn Five. For Ferrari, it became a high-speed soap opera as Leclerc pitted, on command, on lap 27 with Verstappen following to pass him in the pits as he served his penalty. Hamilton led again, but for one lap before pitting.

Antonelli pitted eventually on lap 43 and fell to fourth as Cadillac's Bottas crashed after suffering a suspension failure at Turn One. A safety car was deployed before the race was red-flagged.

After a hiatus, the remaining 25-lap sprint on softs re-started with Hamilton, restored to third ahead of the champion elect, surging past Leclerc, who locked up.

Antonelli sat tight in third as Hamilton continued to press Verstappen and it was entirely appropriate that the young Italian, in tears as he crossed the line, was led in by two of the all-time great drivers with 11 championships between them.

ZVEREV SAYS 'SPECIAL' FEELING AFTER ASCENT TO WORLD NO.1

Alexander Zverev said yesterday that rising to world number one was a special feeling as he heads into the Paris Masters guaranteed to be top of the pile come the end of the year.

German Zverev had been tipped to become one of the dominant forces of men's tennis but a combination of injuries and the rise of Jannik Sinner and Carlos Alcaraz had left him without a Grand Slam victory until he triumphed at this year's French Open.

Now 29, Zverev added the US Open to his trophy haul in September and on Monday celebrated on court with the ATP world number one trophy at the Paris Masters, where he is top seed.

"When I won my first Grand Slam, it was different kind of emotions... I had a lot of heartbreaks, a lot of tough moments, I had a lot of losses in the finals. So that was a different kind of feeling," Zverev told reporters.

"To finally make it, it was the biggest relief that I have ever felt in my career. But both trophies are individually special and individually different, because winning a Grand Slam is the biggest tournament that we can win in tennis.

"But this, you have to play the best season for an entire year. It's a completely different feeling, but this feels special, as well."

Zverev will kick off his Paris Masters campaign tomorrow against Italy's Lorenzo Musetti, with whom he has lost three of his five matches.

(AFP)

TENNIS

Venus taking it 'one week at a time' after 17th loss in a row

AFP
Hong Kong

Venus Williams said she was taking it "one week at a time" after suffering her 17th loss in a row in singles tennis with a straight-sets defeat to a player half her age at the Hong Kong Open yesterday.

The 46-year-old former world number one went down 6-2, 6-3 to fellow American Mary Stoiana in the opening round.

Williams, now ranked 597, let out a yell and stumbled when chasing a return in the first set, just about managing to stay on her feet but going down 5-2.

Stoiana, who is ranked 113, faced a crowd heavily in her opponent's favour but refused to relent in the second set to condemn Williams to another early exit. Williams, a seven-time Grand Slam singles champion, last won a singles match on the WTA Tour in July 2025.

"I haven't made any plans for next year, also this year I didn't make plans, just took it one step at a time," said the veteran, asked if she would be back for singles tennis in 2027. "We'll see."

"I'm going to ask what Serena's doing, probably copy her," she added, appearing to make light of questions about her future.

Asked by AFP about the reference to her sister, a 23-time major singles winner who made a shock return to tennis this year, she said: "We've always motivated each other.

"I'm really fully focused on every one week at a time, and whatever happens will happen, and I don't have pressure to decide or anything."

Williams lost in straight sets at the Guangzhou Open to Austrian teenager Lilli Tagger last week. Before that, Williams last played at the US Open in August-September, when she lost in the first round to Sofia Kenin, again without winning a set.

Williams reached the semi-finals of the Guangzhou doubles with Indonesia's Janice Tjen. She is also in doubles action in Hong Kong. The 23-year-old Stoiana faces top seed Sorana Cirstea of Romania or Russian-born Uzbek Maria Timofeeva in the last 16.

Shelton adds former Alcaraz coach Ferrero to team

Ben Shelton, who reached his first Grand Slam final at the US Open in September, is adding former Carlos Alcaraz mentor Juan Carlos Ferrero to his team, both parties said.

"Huge addition to my team for this upcoming season," Shelton said in an Instagram story featuring a photo of himself and Spain's Ferrero. "Excited to get started ... Let's get it."

Shelton, 24, is at a career-high fourth in the world with a career-best four titles in 2026.

The American left-hander reached his first major final in New York, beating Alcaraz in a five-set quarter-final but eventually falling to Alexander Zverev in the title match. Shelton has largely been coached by his father, Bryan Shelton, winner of two singles titles in his own ATP playing career.

Al Shaqab to host Arabian Horse Championship

The Al Shaqab International Arabian Horse Championship will get underway tomorrow at the Longines Outdoor Arena, with purebred Arabian horses competing for titles across various age categories until November 7.

Classified as an International Category B event under the regulations of the European Conference of Arab Horse Organisations (ECAHO), the championship will be held in accordance with approved international standards.

The first day's competitions will begin at 3pm with 14 rounds, including categories for newborn fillies and colts, one-, two-, and three-year-old fillies and colts, as well as competitions for mares and stallions divided into three age categories: 4-6 years, 7-10 years, and 11 years and above. The championship features six final rounds, including categories for yearlings, fillies and colts, young fillies and colts, mares, and stallions.

The top three finishers in each qualifying round will advance to compete for gold, silver, and bronze medals in their respective categories.

The competitions will be held in accordance with the regulations and requirements approved by the European Arabian Horse Organization (EAPO), which governs the participation of eligible horses.



CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Carrick shrugs off United sack talk ahead of Roma tie

Carrick's position is precarious following Saturday's loss to Chelsea

AFP
Manchester

Michael Carrick brushed off suggestions he has just two games left as Manchester United boss as he prepares his underperforming side for today's Champions League clash against Roma.

Carrick's position at Old Trafford is increasingly precarious following Saturday's 2-0 defeat at Chelsea, which extended United's winless run in all competitions to nine games – they last had a longer such sequence in 1984.

Former United and England midfielder Carrick was asked at his pre-match press conference whether he felt he had just two games remaining at the helm – against Roma and Aston Villa. The Villa match on Sunday comes just before an international break, potentially giving the United hierarchy an opportunity to make a managerial change.

"No, not at all," said the 45-year-old, in his first full season in charge.

"If you look into the future, you never know what's going to happen. I don't know what's going to happen. That doesn't change the way I feel, how we're preparing for the game tomorrow. I'm actually really looking forward to the game, can't wait for the game tomorrow. You might think I'm crazy with the results we've had and what's going on, but I genuinely can't wait."

Carrick also said he had "no concerns" over the commitment of out-of-form Argentine centre-back Lisandro Martinez, who was sent off in United's defeat at Stamford Bridge. The defender had previously criticised club chiefs over a lack of investment in the squad.

"Things happen in football, sometimes you do things, sometimes you make decisions, sometimes you make mistakes, sometimes it goes well for you, but the commitment is not an issue for sure," said Carrick.

The United head coach insisted the dressing room was in "a good place" despite the club's terrible start to the season. "Perception is a funny thing. You can make things look all sorts of different ways and think about all sorts of different things," he said.

"I've said it before, the commitment of the players to the club, to me, to each other, I don't question that at all. We need to play better, we can make better decisions, but commitment is not a thing at all."


Manchester United's coach Michael Carrick (right) with his assistant Jonny Evans during a training session in Manchester, on the eve of the Champions League match against Roma. *(AFP)*

United are just one place above the Premier League relegation zone after taking a mere seven points from their nine matches so far this season.

And they are 20th in the Champions League table following a dismal 4-1 defeat away at Como last month. Only the top 24 teams will progress beyond the league phase.

But midfielder Kobbie Mainoo, sitting alongside Carrick at press conference, said United could turn things around. "We've not had the results we've wanted," said the 21-year-old. "But we need to look forward now. There's big, big games ahead and I feel like we're one win away from changing that."

Carrick has fond memories of facing Roma as a member of Alex Ferguson's team, scoring twice in United's 7-1 quarter-final second-leg triumph in the Champions League in 2007.

"It was a magical night, I have to say," he recalled. "It was one of the best nights, one of the best games, one of the best atmospheres I've been fortunate enough to witness. The fact that I scored a couple and that was very unusual gives me great memories, but it was more the emotion of the night. I have to say, it was a special one."

SPOTLIGHT

Barca equal to PSG, Real Madrid: Gordon

AFP
Barcelona

Barcelona winger **Anthony Gordon** insisted his team are not below the likes of Paris Saint-Germain and Real Madrid, despite recent defeats by both sides. Hansi Flick's side were unbeaten until facing European champions PSG on October 20, but lost 4-2 in Paris before a 2-1 Clasico defeat at home on October 25 by Madrid. Spanish title holders Barcelona last won the Champions League in 2015 and questions remain about their ability on the biggest occasions.

"I don't think they're above (us). We have to take responsibility for both losses because they're the two biggest games we played so far this season and we lost, but I don't think they're above us," Gordon told reporters.



"I think we're a fantastic team and on any given day we can beat anybody. In these two games, the PSG game has a bit of context... on the weekend in their league they rested their whole team. We didn't have this privilege, so we were really tired in the game. This is normal, fine, we have to take responsibility, but I think they had a massive advantage with this."

Gordon said his team deserved to win the Clasico, which Real Madrid claimed with a late goal from Kylian Mbappe as Barca's defence crumbled. "Madrid is the one game, the most important game we want to win. For me we should have," continued Gordon.

"For me were there much better team in the game, we had all the ball, all the possession, the better chances, but we were a slight bit off our best game. It cost us in the end, we conceded two very bad goals. Against this kind of opposition and this level of player it can really hurt you in these games. We'll learn for next time and I'm really excited to play these type of teams again to show what we can do."

Barca host Premier League side Aston Villa today as they aim to get back on track in the Champions League, before visiting Atletico Madrid on Sunday in La Liga. Villa hold a 100 percent record so far in the Champions League, defeating Viking, Fenerbahce and Club Brugge.

Morsy finishes fifth in 200m breaststroke at Youth Olympics



Qatar swimmer Adam Morsy finished fifth in the men's 200m breaststroke final at the Dakar 2026 Youth Olympic Games in Senegal yesterday, clocking 2:17.07 seconds. Japan's Iori Miyazaki won gold in 2:12.33, with Lithuania's Domas Vilimas taking silver in 2:13.50 and Uzbekistan's Muhammadismail Rahmonov claiming bronze in 2:15.79. Morsy will return to the pool for the 100m and 50m breaststroke events on November 3 and 5, respectively. Qatar's four-member contingent at the Games also includes athletes Dana Salem and Abubakr Idris and fencer Adham al-Deeb. Idris will compete in the 110m hurdles, while al-Deeb is scheduled to take part in the individual foil event on November 9. Salem will compete in the 200m sprint on November 10. Organised by the International Olympic Committee, the Youth Olympic Games provide an international platform for young athletes, primarily aged 15 to 17.

Can PSG win a third straight Champions League without injured Kvaratskhelia?

Paris: As Paris Saint-Germain head to Spain to face Villarreal today, the French club's quest to win a third consecutive Champions League title is under threat as injuries to key players raise doubts about the strength of their squad for another tilt at European glory. PSG's thrilling 4-2 win two weeks ago against Barcelona was overshadowed by the sight of Khvicha Kvaratskhelia having to be helped off injured in the second half.

The Georgian was probably the best player in last season's Champions League knockout rounds, with seven goals and four assists in eight games up to and including the final against Arsenal.

But the rupture to the anterior cruciate ligament in his right knee which the 25-year-old suffered in the win over Barcelona means he is unlikely to return this season. That is a hammer blow for PSG, who have become Europe's outstanding club side since Kvaratskhelia joined from Napoli in January last year.

Luis Enrique's team began this season's league phase with three wins from three and are well set to reach the knockout stage, but PSG must now be mulling whether to sign a replacement for Kvaratskhelia in the January transfer window.

"Not especially. No injury means we need to sign a new player. None," Enrique said when asked if PSG now needed to go shopping. "I already said at the start of the season that our team could stay the same, even with two or three injuries. That said, we are always open to the possibility of new players. But not just because we have injuries."

PSG had already taken something of a risk by selling Bradley Barcola to Liverpool in August in a blockbuster 145mn euro ($162mn) transfer. Goncalo Ramos, Lee Kang-in and Ibrahim Mbaye all made significant attacking contributions in the last two seasons, but were allowed to leave too.

However, Enrique described the business done by the club during the summer as "exceptional", saying: "I am very happy to begin the season with the number of players that we have".

PSG signed Maghnes Akliouche, a French international winger or midfielder, from Monaco and Spain's World Cup final match-winner Ferran Torres from Barcelona, each for a reported 50mn euros. They also recruited Belgian international winger Mika Godts from Ajax for a reported 55 million euros.

Torres scored seven goals in his first six appearances, but has gone six games without finding the net. Godts got off to a slow start but has just scored in back-to-back games.

But as the new signings settle, there are renewed doubts about Ousmane Dembele's ability to stay fit after he suffered a hamstring injury against Barcelona -- a player whose minutes were very carefully managed last season is now out for several weeks.

And it is not just in attack where PSG have injuries, with centre-back and captain Marquinhos and left-back Nuno Mendes sidelined. In that case, perhaps the answer to all their problems is right-back Achraf Hakimi, scorer of a hat-trick in Friday's 5-1 win at Le Havre in Ligue 1.

"He is more of an attacker," said Enrique, who has overseen more wins than any other coach in PSG's history. "He plays higher up the pitch and has the ability to make runs and set up goals. He is the best right-back in the world. What I like is that he is always at the highest level, always ready. That means a lot."

PSG made it nine straight wins in that game, despite having only two starters from last season's Champions League final in their line-up. With competition to PSG lacking in France, being able to rest key players in Ligue 1 and still win remains something which could help them when it comes to Europe.

BASKETBALL

Mini World Cup kicks off with 32 schools participating

The Mini World Cup 2026-2027 began yesterday at Qatar Sports Club, bringing together 32 schools representing 32 countries. Organised by the FIBA Basketball World Cup Qatar 2027 Local Organising Committee (LOC), in collaboration with the Qatar School Sports Federation, the initiative aims to promote basketball among school students and engage younger generations in activities leading up to Qatar's hosting of the global tournament next year.

The opening day was attended by Burton Shipley, Chairman of the FIBA Basketball World Cup Qatar 2027 Organising Committee; Dr. Ahmad Abdulla al-Buenain, Director General of the LOC; and Predrag Bogosavljev, FIBA Basketball World Cup Qatar 2027 Director.

Each of the 32 participating schools has selected a country to represent and compete under its name, creating an experience that mirrors the format of the FIBA Basketball World Cup. The initiative allows students to learn about different cultures while taking part in basketball competitions, fostering teamwork, respect and sportsmanship.

The opening day featured four matches, with Almaahad Al Dinee (Qatar) securing a 64–13 victory over Nasser Al Athiya School (Senegal). GEMS American Academy Qatar (USA) defeated Birla Public School (Cameroon) 71-26, while Qatar-Finland International School (Dominican Republic) recorded a 36-26 win over Rajagiri Public School (Greece). In the closest contest of the day, American Academy School (Japan) edged Lycee Français Bonaparte (Slovenia) 47–45.

The schools have been drawn into eight groups of four teams each. Every team will play three matches in the first round, with a total of 48 games scheduled between November 2 and 26.

Group A features Almaahad Al Dinee (Qatar), Rajagiri Public School (Greece), Qatar-Finland International School (Dominican Republic) and Nasser Al Athiya School (Senegal). Group B comprises Beverly Hills International School (Spain), DPS Monarch International School (Argentina), Loyola International School (Iran) and Hartford American School (Ukraine).

Group C brings together GEMS American Academy Qatar (USA), Lycee Français Bonaparte (Slovenia), American Academy School (Japan) and Birla Public School (Cameroon), while Group D includes Podar Pearl School (Serbia), The Cambridge School (Türkiye), Edison Global Academy – Lusail (Mexico) and The Lebanese School (Lebanon).

Group E consists of Al Khor International School (France), Newton International Academy (Finland), International School for Medical Science and Engineering (New Zealand) and Jordanian School Qatar (Jordan). Group F features Global Academy – Muaither (Canada), Leaders International School – Doha (Lithuania), Qatar Technical Secondary School for Boys (China) and Belgravia High School (Côte d'Ivoire).

Group G comprises Ibn Taymiyyah Secondary School for Boys (Germany), Alpha Cambridge School (Poland), Global Academy – Al Waab (South Sudan) and Philippine International School – Qatar (Philippines). Group H includes DPS Modern Indian School (Australia), Stafford Sri Lankan School Doha (Brazil), Beta Cambridge School (Angola) and Al Rayan Private School (Croatia).

The top two teams from each group will advance to the second round, scheduled for January 2027. The 16 qualifying teams will be divided into four groups of four, carrying forward their first-round results. The top two teams from each second-round group will progress to the quarterfinals, while the remaining teams will compete in classification matches.

The quarterfinals are scheduled for April 6 and 7, 2027, followed by the semifinals on April 11 and the third-place playoff on April 15. The final will take place on the closing day of the Schools Olympic Program.

