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FOOTBALL

Asian Cup latest event in Saudi to be postponed after attacks

TOURNAMENT TO REMAIN IN SAUDI ARABIA, NEW DATES TO BE SUBMITTED TO FIFA

AFP
Kuala Lumpur

The 2027 Asian Cup in Saudi Arabia will be postponed from January to December due to "exceptional circumstances" in the region, the continent's football governing body said yesterday.

A number of sports events in Saudi Arabia have been cancelled or postponed in recent weeks following Houthi attacks on the country.

The Asian Cup was originally scheduled to take place from January 7 to February 5 next year.

The new dates for the continental showpiece are December 23, 2027, to January 21, 2028.

"The organising committee for AFC Asian Cup approved to reschedule the flagship national team tournament in light of the current exceptional circumstances arising from developments in the region," the Asian Football Confederation said in a statement.

The AFC also cited "substantial logistical complexities and travel disruptions".

"The new dates of the tournament will be presented to FIFA for approval," it said. Local organisers insisted last month that the Asian Cup was "on schedule", despite growing fears for the fate of the tournament because of the security situation in Saudi Arabia and the wider Middle East.

The Saudi cities of Jeddah, Riyadh and Al Khobar are set to stage the month-long competition.

The decision to move the tournament back almost a year came after "extensive discussions and close consultation" between Saudi officials and the AFC, the Kuala Lumpur-based governing body said.

"Exceptional circumstances have been created for the organisation and delivery of the competition as originally scheduled, making the postponement necessary in the interest of all participating teams, officials, spectators and other stakeholders," it said.

Yemen's Iran-backed Houthis have targeted Saudi infrastructure, including airports, since hostilities resumed.

The Houthis are fighting a Saudi-led coalition supporting Yemen's internationally recognised government, a civil war that reignited in July following a years-long truce. The 2027 Dakar Rally was moved out of Saudi Arabia last month.



Coaches of Asian national football teams pose next to the trophy and in front of a screen showing the results of the final draw for the 2027 AFC Asian Cup during a ceremony in Diriyah, on the outskirts of Riyadh, on May 9, 2026. *(AFP)*

An exhibition tennis tournament due to feature Novak Djokovic, Carlos Alcaraz and Alexander Zverev was postponed. The WTA Finals were also scheduled to be held in Riyadh but will instead take place at Indian Wells in the United States.

Domestic football matches and Asian Champions League games have also been affected.

The AFC was under growing pressure from Asian football associations to postpone the tournament out of fears for player and fan safety.

Following the announcement of the postponement, Yasser al-Misehal, chairman of the local organising committee, vowed that Saudi Arabia was "fully ready".

"The tournament will move to the new dates, and our preparations will continue as planned," he told the Saudi Press Agency.

"We're working closely with the AFC and all our partners to make sure the tournament runs smoothly and meets the high standards expected of Saudi Arabia and the Asian Cup."

The organisation representing South Korean players was among those that had expressed severe reservations about the competition going ahead early next year.

Football Australia chairman Anter Isaac said postponing was the right move. "The safety and wellbeing of players, staff and fans come first," Isaac said.

PADEL WORLD CUP

Qatar's Rashed-Mashari win

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Newly crowned Asian Games champions Rashed Nawaf and Mashari Nawaf continued their impressive form, leading Qatar's charge with a convincing straight-sets victory in the FIP World Cup Qatar 2026 at the Khalifa International Tennis and Squash Complex yesterday.

The Qatari duo produced a strong performance to defeat Chile's Matias Negrete Oliva and Daniel Salinas Ordenes 6-3, 6-3 in their second Group C tie, giving the home team an important boost in the competition.

Fresh from their Asian Games success, Rashed and Mashari displayed their quality and composure to secure the win in straight sets, underlining their growing reputation on the international stage.

However, it was a mixed day for the Qatari teams, with the other two pairings unable to get past their Chilean opponents.

Earlier, Khalid Saadon al-Kuwari and Mohammed al-Khanji suffered a 6-2, 6-2 defeat against Javier Valdes and Cristobal Molina. In the final tie of the day, Mohammed Saadon al-Kuwari and Hamad Adel Waly fought hard but eventually went down 2-6, 7-6, 6-3 to Chile's Sebastian Muñoz Campos and Angel Torres in a closely contested encounter.

Despite the setbacks in the other matches, Rashed and Mashari's victory provided a positive note for Qatar as the hosts continued their campaign in the prestigious international team competition.

In the women's section, seven national teams have made a perfect start in Doha, recording two victories in the space of 24 hours. Spain (Group A), Argentina and France (Group B), Italy and Sweden (Group C), and Portugal and the Netherlands (Group D) remain unbeaten after the first two ties.



Rashed Nawaf and Mashari Nawaf in action during their Group C match against Chile's Matias Negrete Oliva and Daniel Salinas Ordenes at the FIP World Cup Qatar 2026 yesterday.

The most closely contested group is that of the reigning world champions, who yesterday beat Great Britain 3-0 thanks to a double 6-0 victory for Andrea Ustero and Martina Calvo over Norton/Jackson, a double 6-1 win for Marta Ortega and Bea Gonzalez against Gibson/Nicholas, and a 6-0 6-1 victory for Ari Sanchez and Paula Josemaria, reunited for the occasion, over Phillips/Tordoff.

However, the most important result of the day was Germany's comeback victory over Brazil, secured by wins for Kurz/Blaschke against Cirne/Giusti Gomes (6-2 6-2) and Hering/Plumer against Abarzua/Rousselet (6-1 6-1). With Spain-Brazil and Germany-Great Britain scheduled for the third tie, Germany have high hopes of reaching the knockout stage.

In Group B, Argentina celebrated a 3-0 victory over Belgium, with Delfi Brea and Martina Fassio (6-0 6-0 against Sermant/Van Mol), Aranzazu Osoro and Virginia Riera (6-4 6-2 against Pysson/Boeykens), and Julieta Bidahorria and Claudia Jensen (6-1 6-1 against Wyckaert/Mestach) all contributing to the win. France also secured a 3-0 victory over Chile, thanks to Louise Bahurel and Alix Collombon (6-2 6-0 against Arancibia/Lobo), Clara Mansart and Lea Godallier (6-0 6-0 against Candia/Chahuan), and Carla Touly and Lucile Pothier (6-0 6-1 against Araneda/Ahumada).

Argentina and France will meet on Wednesday with top spot at stake. The same scenario awaits Italy-Sweden and Portugal-Netherlands in Groups C and D, following today's 3-0 victories for both teams in each group. Italy beat Indonesia with a 6-0 6-0 win for Giulia Dal Pozzo and Caterina Baldi over Rosejaya/Armini, a 6-1 6-0 victory for Emily Stellato and Giulia Sussarello against Putria/Gumulya, and a 6-2 6-2 win for Clarissa Aima and Giorgia Marchetti over Sabatini/Rompies.

Sweden also recorded a 3-0 victory against Egypt, with Amanda Girdo and Juni Sjoland (6-2 4-6 6-1 against El Nimr/Tawfik), Hanna Borjesson and Lisa Andersson (6-3 6-2 against El Halaby/Faidallah), and Linnea Bjork and Ajla Behram (6-0 6-0 against Hakim/Fathy).

AFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE ELITE

Asani's last-gasp strike sinks Shamal

By Sports Reporter
Basra

Jasir Asani's stoppage time strike earned Esteghlal a 1-0 win over Al Shamal in their AFC Champions League Elite match in Basra yesterday.

The victory meant the Iran club rebounded in style from last week's defeat to Shabab Al Ahli while there was disappointment for Qatar's Al Shamal, who had gone into the tie buoyant after defeating Al Hilal last week.

Al Shamal made just one change from the starting lineup that had stunned Al Hilal 3-1, while Esteghlal opted for two changes following their 2-0 defeat to Shabab Al Ahli.

Saman Fallah warmed the gloves of Al Shamal goalkeeper Babacar Seck from distance in the sixth minute while at the other end, Habib Far Abbasi pulled off a fine save to tip Baghdad Bounedjah's curling effort over the bar.

The Algerian forward was within shooting range again three minutes later when Mohamed Ben Romdhane laid the ball nicely at the top of the box but Bounedjah's effort went straight at Abbasi.

The Esteghlal goalkeeper continued to frustrate Al Shamal, denying Bounedjah again from inside the box following a swift counter-attack.

The Iranian side threatened in the closing stages, with Jaloliddin Masharipov floating a fine cross to Saleh Hardani, whose volley narrowly went wide of the left post.

Esteghlal started the second half aggressively and almost broke the deadlock in the 51st minute, with the move starting with Amirmohammad Razzaghinia dispossessing Riyad Mahrez in his own half.

The midfielder then embarked on a swift sprint, exchanging passes with Saeid Saharkhizan, who laid the ball for Jasir Assani who relayed it to Razzaghinia whose shot was denied by a diving Babacar Seck.

Seck kept his side in the game when he saved Esmaeil Gholizadeh's close range shot moments later, before a deflected clearance by Federico Bais in the 75th minute redirected the ball back to Asani, but Seck pulled off another fine save to foil the Albanian.

Asani made amends in the second minute of stoppage time after Mohammadhossein Eslami threaded a neat pass to the forward to slot the ball past a sprawling Seck.

There was more woe for Al Shamal as Youssouf Sabaly was sent off after receiving his second yellow card two minutes later as Esteghal stayed in sight of the Round of 16.



Esteghlal's Jasir Asani (left) celebrates with team-mates after scoring against Al Shamal in the AFC Champions League Elite match in Basra yesterday.

SPORT

RETIREMENT

Maxwell bows out as cricket's great what-if


Australia's Glenn Maxwell in action during ICC Champions Trophy match against England in Lahore, Pakistan, on February 22, 2025. *(AFP)*

Reuters
Sydney

Part entertainer, part enigma, Glenn Maxwell will go down in cricket folklore as the game's great what-if - a maverick shot-maker whose limited-overs wizardry never extended to red-ball cricket.

Where many of his peers stuck to the batting manual, Maxwell rewrote it with his 360-degree stroke-play, which made field settings a nightmare for rival captains.

It could not be risk-free, but Maxwell cared little as he pulled off reverse hits and cheeky scoops with a gum-chewing nonchalance.

Fans expected spectacle whenever Maxwell walked out with the bat and, more often than not, he delivered it with his unorthodox shots. The definitive example came at the 2023 ODI World Cup. Chasing 292 against Afghanistan and with Australia reeling at 91-7, Maxwell conjured up an unforgettable 201 not out off 128 balls to complete a chase that had looked impossible.

That sense of occasion was present from his Australia debut, an ODI against Afghanistan in 2012, and it studded his career.

A two-time ODI World Cup winner, Maxwell also hit the winning runs in Australia's maiden T20 World Cup triumph in 2021 under captain Aaron Finch.

Fittingly, Finch fronted the tributes to Maxwell after a 286-match international career spanning 14 years.

"Without doubt one of the most destructive players the game has ever seen and easily one of the most innovative of our generation," Finch wrote on Instagram. "Some of the things you've done on a cricket field have been absolutely ridiculous.

"You've played innings that most of us could only dream of and produced some of the greatest moments this game has ever seen. You've changed the way the game is played and inspired so many along the way."

T20 ROYALTY

Maxwell's value was always three-dimensional: explosive batting, savvy off-spin, and electric fielding that saved runs and snared jaw-dropping catches. It made him T20 royalty, especially in the Indian Premier League (IPL).

Maxwell, 38, was an IPL millionaire at 25 and earned the nickname the "Big Show" after his first ODI series - a moniker he resented.

"At the start, I thought if I fight it, I'm going to have to live with it even more, so I tried to sort of ride with it," Maxwell said in 2014. "I'm just trying to shake it off because it's starting to go too far.

"It's not about what I'm about. I'm all about trying to entertain and...I just love being out there trying to hit balls for four and six."

That ability made him a crowd magnet - evident in his 12.4 million followers across social media platforms.

The long run was not without quiet chapters, and Test cricket never became his stage.

Maxwell played only seven Tests between 2013 and 2017, scoring 339 runs at a modest average of 26.

He took a mental health break from the sport in 2019 and recounts the episode in his autobiography in a candid assessment of the struggles that lay beneath his confident exterior.

CRICKET

India kick off NZ ODI series with eye on World Cup

The first of five ODI matches to be played in Auckland today

Agencies
Auckland

After a commanding win the T20 series, India now turn their attention to the five-match ODI series against New Zealand today when the two teams play the first of five matches in Auckland.

Last week, India beat New Zealand 3-2 in a five-match T20I series. After the five-match ODI series, India will play two Tests against New Zealand to wrap up a busy all-format tour.

Captain Shubman Gill yesterday said the ODI and Test series are equally 'important' as India get ready to begin their countdown for next year's 50-over ICC World Cup to be held in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia next year in Oct and Nov.

"Both the ODI and Test series are very important," Gill said on the eve of the first ODI in Auckland yesterday. "If it was in my hands and all the players were fit, I would have liked to have all the players who we are looking at playing during the World Cup (for the full ODI series), but the two Test matches are also very important," Gill said.

India played a five-match T20 before the ODI series but Gill wished the scheduling could have been different.

"If it had been one-day first, then T20, and then Test, we could have played all five (ODI) matches (with our strongest squad), but (we couldn't do this) because the gap between the one-day (series) and Test matches was very small," Gil explained.

"... because we are playing the one-dayers in between (the T20Is and Tests), the players in the Test team are having to miss the last two one-dayers," he said.


India captain Shubman Gill with team coach Gautam Gambhir in Auckland yesterday.


Rohit Sharma during a net session in Auckland yesterday.

Speaking of the ICC World Test Championship, Gill said: "The WTC scenario has become very interesting. The series that happened between Australia and South Africa was really interesting, and has balanced the table very nicely. Hopefully if we play well in the Test series here, and then we play Australia at home, so that gives us a chance of playing in the final."

Gill said India would miss the services of star all-rounder Hardik Pandya who is not available for the New Zealand trip.

"Firstly, I think he is a great player," Gill said of Pandya. "The qualities that he brings to the team, not many players in the world possess those qualities, to be able to have a fast-bowling allrounder who can bowl (in any phase) of the game, with the new ball, middle overs and death overs, and the kind of batting he has.

"It's been very unfortunate that he hasn't been able to play since the IPL, and yes we have had multiple conversations. He was supposed to play the India A matches (against Australia A), but just before that he had some niggles again, so hopefully he will be fit soon and he will play some domestic cricket, and then hopefully we will see him back in the side soon," he said.

FOCUS

Conway out of India ODI after collision with Henry in practice

Reuters
Auckland

New Zealand Cricket (NZC) said opener **Devon Conway** will miss the first one-day international against India due to a head injury after colliding with teammate Matt Henry during training at Eden Park in Auckland yesterday.

The players were attempting a catch when they clashed and Conway was ruled out with concussion after a head injury assessment, NZC said in a statement.

"Both players will continue to be monitored and their involvement in the series against India will be updated in due course."

New Zealand are already missing Rachin Ravindra due to a shoulder injury and Mark Chapman, who has a hamstring problem.

Captain Mitchell Santner confirmed Tim Seifert will take Conway's place but was hopeful that Henry would be available for Wednesday's match.

"He (Conway) is obviously very good in one-day cricket and was biding his time in the T20 series," Santner told reporters. "I guess



another one of those freak accidents that happens." India, who won the preceding T20 series 3-2, are using the five-match ODI series as part of their preparations for next year's World Cup.

"The World Cup will certainly be at the back of our mind," India captain Shubman Gill told reporters. "These conditions are going to be much similar to those in South Africa ... Keeping that in mind, the experience will be valuable for both our batters and bowlers."

Gill and batter KL Rahul will sit out the final two ODIs to prepare for the two Tests that follow.

SPOTLIGHT

Lusail sparkle in Qatar Table Tennis League with impressive wins





By Sports Reporter
Doha

Lusail Sports Club maintained its strong form in the Qatar Table Tennis League season, securing well-deserved 3-0 victories against both Al Wakrah and Al Rayyan. These results underscore the club's readiness to compete at a high level throughout the current season.

Lusail began its campaign with a challenging encounter against Qatar SC, the reigning league champions.

The team delivered an impressive, competitive, and determined performance, taking a 2-1 lead. However, Qatar SC fought back to level the score at 2-2, forcing a decisive fifth match, which the defending champions ultimately won.

Despite the 3-2 final score, the Lusail players earned praise for their commendable performance.

In their subsequent matches, Lusail secured a convincing 3-0 win over Al Wakrah, followed by another 3-0 victory against Al Rayyan. These results highlight the team's technical growth and its ability to compete effectively against various opponents in the tournament.

These outcomes reflect the ongoing efforts by Lusail Sports Club's management to develop its sports programs and strengthen the club's presence across various local competitions.

This is achieved by supporting athletes, fostering an environment conducive to skill development, and identifying new sporting talent.

Looking ahead, Lusail Sports Club aims to build on this positive momentum and continue its winning streak, further solidifying its standing within the Qatari table tennis landscape and striving for even greater achievements. Achievements during the 2026/2027 sports season

CYCLING

Giro d'Italia to tackle three motor-racing circuits

AFP
Rome

Giro d'Italia organisers RCS revealed yesterday a "particularly tough" route for the race's 110th edition in 2027, taking in three motor racing circuits.

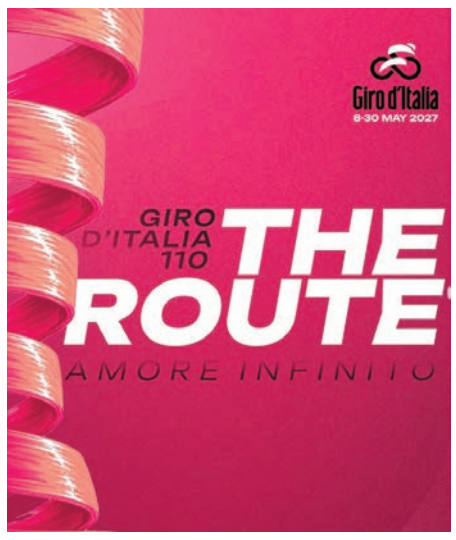
The quest to succeed Giro champion Jonas Vingegaard begins in Trieste on May 8 and will end in Rome on May 30 following more than 3,400 kilometres and over 50,000 metres of elevation gain.

It will have passages around the Mugello and Monza motor racing circuits, as well as the Misano Adriatico, where the fourth stage on May 11 will end.

TWO INDIVIDUAL TIME-TRIALS

There will be two individual time-trials, like the 2027 Tour de France, and a penultimate stage taking in the mighty Monte Zoncolan.

It will be a mountainous conclusion to the race, with the highest point, the 2,618m Passo di Gavia, crested on the 16th stage and a brutal 18th stage with the Madonna di Campiglio coming after two trips up the Passo Durone.



After two successive starts abroad - in Albania and Bulgaria - next year's race begins in Italy but the second stage will be ridden entirely in neighbouring Slovenia - home to the 2024 champion and five-time Tour de France winner Tadej Pogacar.

UNLIKELY TO START

He is unlikely to be on the start line as he targets a record-breaking sixth Tour success, but French starlet Paul Seixas said recently he had not decided which of the main two Grand Tours to ride next year.

The first six stages lend to breakaways and sprint finishes but the seventh stage will see the overall contenders battle it out in a mountainous 19.6km time-trial, ending with a 12.5km-long climb.

The Giro d'Italia Women will begin in Viareggio, Tuscany on May 29, ending in a mountainous ninth stage in Val d'Aoste on June 6.

It will cover 1,132km with 17,450m of elevation gain, significantly more than the 12,500m of the 2026 edition.

The successor to Demi Vollering will no doubt be decided during the final two mountainous stages, an 11km individual time-trial followed by the Val d'Aoste finale.

MOTORSPORT

Al-Attiyah will compete in exciting new Oman Baja in December

Agencies
Muscat

Nasser Saleh al-Attiyah, the six-time Dakar Rally winner and the newly-crowned FIA Middle East Baja Cup champion, confirmed in Qatar at the finish of last weekend's Baja that he would enter the Oman International Baja on December 17th-19th.

The Sultanate's first ever Baja-type event to run to FIA and FIM regulations is being observed for inclusion in the 2027 sporting calendars and already has a date pencilled in for being the third round of the FIA Middle East Baja Cup on November 4th-6th, 2027.

Al-Attiyah is currently in Dubai preparing for the final round of the regional series in an Optimus MD Rallye before heading into back-to-back events in Saudi Arabia and Abu Dhabi. But the 21-time regional rally champion will take part in the Bidiyah-based Oman International Baja in a Taurus T3 Max entered in the FIA Challenger category. He won the 2024 Dubai International Baja in a similar car with Spanish navigator Pablo Moreno.

He already has a record nine victories in the Oman International Rally, one of the most popular rounds of the FIA Middle East Rally Championship.

Al-Attiyah said: "It's been a very busy few days and we have several events coming up over the next few weeks but I wanted to go to the Oman Baja. Oman is a candidate for next year and I promised the organisation that I would come and support the event in December.

"I will enter the Challenger T3 category. Mister Hamed Al-Wahaibi told me that if I came with the Ultimate car, the Optimus, he would not compete! He said that if I come with the Challenger, he will compete. I promised that I would come with the Challenger from Nasser Racing..."

The Oman International Baja will run in conjunction with the last three days of the Bidiyah Sands Carnival, which is being hosted by Wilayat of Bidayah in the North Al-Sharqiyah Governorate between November 19th and December 19th.

It will take place over a challenging roue through the neighbouring Sharqiya dunes and the surrounding sands of the Rub al-Khali.

Organised by the Oman Automobile Association (OAA), it will run in partnership with the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth and the Al-Sharqiya North Governorate with sponsorship from Shell Oman.


The newly-crowned FIA Middle East Baja Cup champion Nasser Saleh al-Attiyah will take part in the Oman International Baja from December 17 to 19.

TENNIS

Djokovic battles through Paris Masters opener

'I'M VERY HAPPY. I FOUND A GOOD GROOVE IN THE END'

AFP
Paris

Novak Djokovic battled from behind to beat Valentin Vacherot 6-7 (5/7), 7-5, 6-1 in the first round of the Paris Masters yesterday.

For the 24-time Grand Slam winner, it marked a return to winning ways at ATP 1000-level tournaments for the first time since his run to the fourth round at Indian Wells back in March.

Djokovic also enacted his own bit of revenge on Vacherot in just the second meeting between the pair - the Monegasque downed the 39-year-old on his way to a sensational Shanghai Masters title last season.

More important for the veteran, however, were the further points he can gain in the French capital as he bids to earn his spot in the season-ending ATP Finals later November.

Djokovic is currently 11th in the race to the eight-man tournament in Turin.

His last appearance at the Paris Masters came three years ago, when he won his seventh title against Grigor Dimitrov.

"I'm very happy," Djokovic said. "This is the year where I've got a lot of support (in Paris).

"I found a good groove in the end. I'm pleased about that, and I think it's the energy created in the stadium - that's what this year's victory is all about."

In an even opening frame, Vacherot got his nose in front at the end of an error-strewn first-set tie-break as he put together a run of four points to take the lead.

The 27-year-old kept up the momentum at the start of the second set, instantly breaking Djokovic to 30.

After getting on the scoreboard at 2-1, Djokovic called for a medical timeout during which he received a massage on his right shoulder.


Serbia's Novak Djokovic serves to Monaco's Valentin Vacherot during their Paris Masters match yesterday. *(AFP)*

The short stoppage seemed to break Vacherot's concentration as he dropped his serve straight away.

On Djokovic's second break point, Vacherot completely misjudged a routine return from his opponent and could only watch in disbelief as the ball bounced on the line right in front of him.

Vacherot then received treatment for a foot issue and soon found himself pegged back to one set-apiece as Djokovic displayed his trademark killer instinct to seize his first break opportunity in the 12th game of the set and send the match to a decider.

The 10th seed ground down Vacherot in his first service game to get his nose in front 2-0.

A second break of serve put Djokovic firmly in control and he sealed the victory with a backhand winner down the line.

He will next meet Rinky Hijikata in the second round.

Holger Rune, who defeated Djokovic in the 2022 final, exited at the first hurdle in this edition as he continues his return from injury.

The Dane lost 7-5, 6-4 to Tommy Paul.

Former world number five Andrey Rublev went down in a third-set tie-break to Tomas Martin Etcheverry, while 15th seed Learner Tien battled past lucky loser Adolfo Daniel Vallejo in a three-setter.

Rising French star Moise Kouame was unable to recreate his Roland Garros heroics as the 17-year-old went down 6-3, 6-1 to lucky loser Nuno Borges, the Portuguese taking full advantage of his late call-up in place of Shanghai Masters champion Alejandro Davidovich Fokina.

But it was better news for 46th-ranked home player Quentin Halys, who eliminated Wimbledon semi-finalist Arthur Fery in straight sets.

French world number 68 Arthur Rinderknech - Vacherot's cousin - also progressed through to the next stage, after Argentine 16th seed Francisco Cerundolo retired early in the third set of their encounter.

Later, the second round gets underway as US Open finalist and third seed Ben Shelton opens his campaign in Paris against Cameron Norrie, before 20-year-old Spaniard Rafael Jodar tests his mettle against former world number two Casper Ruud.

TRAGEDY

Spanish footballer De Miguel dies after collision with keeper

AFP
Madrid

Tenerife striker **Jesus de Miguel** died yesterday as a result of injuries he suffered in a sickening collision with FC Andorra's goalkeeper in a Spanish second division match.

"Broken with pain, with a lump in our throat and unable to believe this is real, CD Tenerife announces the tragic death, at 8:00 am (7am GMT), of Jesus de Miguel Alameda," his club Tenerife said in a statement.

"No words can ease the pain, nothing can lessen this great feeling of sadness. Our thoughts are with the family, his close friends and Tenerife fans, who today are grieving over this terrible news."

De Miguel, 30, was fouled in the middle of the pitch by Equatorial Guinea international goalkeeper Jesus Owono, who had raced out of his goal to try and clear the ball.

The incident happened towards the end of the match at the Heliodoro Rodriguez Lopez stadium, with the teams level at 2-2. Owono was sent off and the match was subsequently abandoned.

Spanish media said that De Miguel suffered a cardiac arrest and was resuscitated. The player was taken to hospital and placed in intensive care, with Tenerife later saying that De Miguel's condition had "worsened neurologically", before his death.

"I am so deeply sorry. Rest in peace, Jesus," former Barcelona defender Gerard Pique, Andorra's majority shareholder, wrote on social media.

Andorra also sent their "most sincere condolences" to De Miguel's family, team-mates and Tenerife.

Real Madrid, Barcelona, Atletico Madrid and other clubs in Spain also sent messages of condolence, as well as the Spanish football federation (RFEF).

"Shattered by this sad news, the Royal Spanish Football Federation wishes to express our deepest sorrow at his passing today," wrote the federation in a statement.

The RFEF postponed Tuesday's matches in the Copa del Rey and Copa de la Reina, "as a gesture of respect and solidarity".

Real Madrid held a minute of silence before their training session on Tuesday.

"Immense sadness, there are no words," Madrid's French forward Kylian Mbappe wrote on Instagram.

La Liga side Espanyol also delayed the presentation of their new coach Eder Sarabia to Wednesday.

Top flight chief Javier Tebas and Spanish sports minister Milagros Tolon also posted messages of condolence.

"Today we all share the terrible pain of an irreparable loss," wrote Tebas on X.

"We share in your grief," wrote Tolon, offering her "deepest condolences to (De Miguel's) family and loved ones", as well as Tenerife, the players and staff.

De Miguel had been at Tenerife for just over a season, having joined in the summer of 2025 from Castellon. The striker helped the team gain promotion to the second division.

The forward began his career with Leganes at youth level in the Madrid suburbs, playing for a string of teams, including Unionistas de Salamanca, before signing for Castellon in 2023.



HONG KONG OPEN

Eala defies last-minute switch to launch title bid

AFP
Hong Kong

Alex Eala threw off the shock of a last-minute change of opponent to launch her Hong Kong Open title bid with a straight-sets win yesterday.

The Philippines trailblazer, now at a career-high of 17 in the world, beat Australia's Emerson Jones 6-4, 6-3.

Eala faces Tereza Valentova of the Czech Republic in the last 16.

The 21-year-old Eala, who this year became the first Filipina to win a WTA Tour title, was scheduled to play Alycia Parks in her opening match.

But the American pulled out at the 11th hour with injury, giving the 18-year-old lucky loser Jones the opportunity of an upset.

Eala took the late switch in her stride, and with backing from a large number of her compatriots in the crowd, got the job done in 83 minutes.

"I'm definitely not used to my opponent changing that late," said Eala, the second seed.

"It was just a new experience. I guess that's the tour, you kind of have to be ready for anything," Eala said.

Eala said that Hong Kong feels like a home tournament.

"I've been competing here ever since I was very young. I've been here many, many times," she said.

"There's a huge Filipino community, and the Hong Kong community has been very hospitable towards me, my family, my team, and all of the players.

"Besides it being geographically very close to home, it feels very familiar."

Earlier in the day, top seed Sorana Cirstea rallied from an early break down in the final set to defeat Maria Timofeeva 7-6, 1-6, 7-5 and advance to the second round.

Cirstea will next face American Mary Stoiana, who defeated seven-time Grand Slam champion Venus Williams in straight sets on Monday.

Fifth seed Talia Gibson, who reached a career-high ranking of No. 36 this week, overcame a 5-3 deficit in the opening set to defeat Oleksandra Oliynykova 7-6, 6-1.



Russell says 'tough to deal with' after failed Formula 1 title bid

George Russell has "spoken from the heart" to admit it was "tough to deal" with seeing his Formula One title bid disintegrate. The Briton's Mercedes team-mate Kimi Antonelli became the sport's youngest world champion and Italy's first since 1953 on Sunday in Mexico City. Mercedes were fined for allowing Russell, the clear pre-season favourite, to skip his post-race media duties having left the track early. Russell's disappointing campaign was in stark contrast to the 20-year-old Antonelli's historic year.

"Now feels like a pretty suitable moment to speak from the heart," Russell wrote on Instagram late Monday.

"This season started off exactly how I had hoped but it very quickly unravelled with tough luck and poor performances. It's been the first proper season of my career where I've had more bad days than good. Has it been tough to deal with? Yes, very. Has it been tough to pick myself up week in, week out? Yes, very.

"Confusion at times? Often.

"All I know is that I've given it my all and 2026 was not meant to be my year."

In a campaign that was supposed to be all about Russell, the 28-year-old was upstaged by Antonelli and sits fourth in the championship. Team boss Toto Wolff said Mercedes had let him down with an unresponsive car. Russell was at pains to congratulate Antonelli for what he called "an absolutely incredible season".

PREVIEW

Iraola urges Liverpool to 'kill' Fenerbahce's hostile atmosphere

AFP
Istanbul

Andoni Iraola has urged Liverpool to stop Fenerbahce in Wednesday's Champions League clash by killing the hostile atmosphere generated by their raucous fans.

Iraola is expecting a deafening atmosphere at the Sukru Saracoglu stadium in Istanbul, but the Liverpool boss is confident his side can cope with the unwelcoming environment.

The Spaniard believes Liverpool must cut off the connection between Fenerbahce's players and their passionate fans by taking the sting out of the game. "Tomorrow, it's not going to be easy. It's always difficult to come to Turkey and play and we have to be very ready," Iraola said on Tuesday.

"They have experienced players who know how to play in this competition. We have to try to kill the confidence and momentum they can have with the supporters.

"Champions League away days are difficult and we know this, especially in this stadium and atmosphere. We have to be mentally very ready. "We want to continue how we have done in the Champions League. It is a good chance to get to 12 points and then finish in the top eight."

Stopping Fenerbahce's momentum in such a febrile atmosphere might be easier said than done for Liverpool.

In Sunday's 1-0 defeat against Premier League champions Arsenal, Liverpool failed to register a shot on target in a home league game for the first time since records began in 2003.

That lack of cutting edge has been an issue at times for Liverpool this season as they adapt to Iraola's preferred style of play.

But their 100 per cent Champions League record this season has seen them score six against LASK, four against Villarreal and two against Atletico Madrid, compared to 11 in nine Premier League matches.

Asked if he had learnt from Liverpool's impotence against Arsenal, Iraola added: "It is difficult when you lose but honestly I am happy with a lot of things from the other day.

"I liked a lot of things but we still need to improve, especially attacking the box. "A lot of times we were there with the numbers but not making the proper runs and waiting for second balls.

"We put Arsenal under pressure and they defended well but I liked a lot of things."

Fifth-placed Liverpool are already nine points behind leaders Arsenal in the title race.

It is hardly the start Iraola would have been hoping for in his first season since arriving from Bournemouth to replace the sacked Arne Slot.

"I think we have had better results in the Champions League and Carabao Cup but it's very early in the season to establish comparisons," Iraola said.

Liverpool will be without Dutch midfielder Ryan Gravenberch, who was left at home after reporting discomfort with a heel problem during the warm-up on Sunday.



Liverpool's coach Andoni Iraola with his players during a training session yesterday. *(AFP)*

SHOOTING

Lihao wins 10m air rifle gold at World Championships

South Korea's Ban stages comeback to clinch women's gold

By Sports Reporter
Doha

China's Olympic champion Sheng Lihao secured his first men's 10m air rifle gold medal at the ISSF World Championships - Doha 2026 after edging compatriot Ma Sihan by a single point in a thrilling final at the Lusail Shooting Range yesterday.

Sheng produced a winning score of 254.1 points, finishing just ahead of Ma, who settled for silver with 253.1 points, as China dominated the event with a one-two finish.

"I felt the competition went surprisingly smoothly, and I also saw that the other competitors put in some excellent performances," Sheng said.

The victory marks another major milestone in the career of the 21-year-old, who has now completed an impressive collection of major international titles in the men's 10m air rifle.

Already an Olympic champion, Sheng previously won the event at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games, the 2024 ISSF World Cup Final, the 2023 Asian Championships, the Hangzhou 2022 Asian Games and the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Games.

His latest triumph at Lusail range adds the one major honour that had been missing from his impressive collection - a world championship title in the event.

The victory also carries significant importance for China beyond the medal standings, securing a quota place in the men's 10m air rifle competition at the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games.

The ongoing ISSF World Championships is the first event in the qualification pathway for LA28, making the result an important early step in China's preparations for the next Olympic cycle.

For Sheng, the gold medal not only strengthens his position among the world's leading rifle shooters but also underlines his remarkable consistency at the highest level of international competition.

Earlier on Tuesday, Sheng topped the qualification round with 637.2 points, averaging more than 10.6 per shot. He also helped China set a world record in the men's team event, combining with Ma and Zhang Changhong, who each scored 632.2, for a total of 1,901.6.

After leading through the first 10 shots of the final, Sheng briefly lost the top spot following the first elimination series. He responded with scores of 10.8 and 10.9 in the next series and remained in front thereafter. Holding a 0.9-point



China's Olympic champion Sheng Lihao in action during the 10m air rifle final at the ISSF World Championships at the Lusail Shooting Range yesterday.



South Korea's Ban Hyo-jin (centre) celebrates after winning the women's 10m air rifle final yesterday.

In the women's 10m air rifle final, South Korea's Olympic champion Ban Hyo-jin zadvantage over Ma heading into the final series, Sheng sealed the title with two scores of 10.7.

Ma took silver in his World Championships debut, while Croatia's Miran Maricic claimed bronze with 229.9 points and secured an Olympic quota place for his country.

China's Zhang finished fourth, just 0.3 points off the podium, while Croatia's Josip Sikavica placed fifth. That allowed Slovakia's Patrik Jany, who finished sixth, to secure the remaining quota place, as each National Olympic Committee can win a maximum of one quota in each event at the ongoing championships.

In the women's 10m air rifle final, South Korea's Olympic champion Ban Hyo-jin staged a comeback to beat China's Han Jiayu by 0.9 points and win the title.

Ban trailed Han by 1.1 points after the opening 10 shots but steadily closed the gap in the following series, taking the lead after 20 shots. The 19-year-old maintained her momentum to claim gold with 253.1 points. Han finished second with 252.2, while her compatriot Wang Zifei climbed from eighth place to take bronze with 231.0.

Ban and Han thus secured LA28 quota places for South Korea and China, respectively, while fourth-placed Oceanne Muller earned a third quota for France.

The World Championships run through November 13, with the 10m air rifle mixed team and men's 25m rapid fire pistol events scheduled today.

FOCUS

Qatar set to host Arab Golf Championships for the first time

By Sports Reporter
Doha

The Qatar Golf Association (QGA) is gearing up to host the 45th Arab Men's Golf Championship and the 17th Arab Ladies' Golf Championship at Doha Golf Club from November 4 to 11, 2026, marking the first time the country has staged the prestigious regional competitions.

The championships are expected to attract a strong field of Arab golfers, with 52 players representing 14 countries competing in the men's event and 21 players from nine countries taking part in the ladies' competition.

With participating nations bringing their leading players, the championships are expected to feature intense competition for both team and individual honours. The experience and quality of the competitors, coupled with the ambition of each national team to secure a podium finish, promise an exciting week of golf.

The official programme will begin with the arrival of participating delegations on November 4, followed by practice rounds on November 5 and 6. The opening ceremony is scheduled for Friday, November 6, at 3:30 p.m., with competition getting underway on November 7.

The ladies' championship will conclude on November 9, while the men's competition will finish on November 10. The closing ceremony and prize presentation are scheduled for the same day at 3:30 p.m.

QGA president Hamad Abdulla al-Mana expressed his pride at the country's selection as host, describing the occasion as an important milestone for golf in Qatar.

"We are honoured to host the 45th Arab Men's Golf Championship and the 17th Arab Ladies' Golf Championship in Qatar for the first time. We are delighted to welcome all our fellow Arab delegations to their second home and wish them every success and a pleasant stay," Al Mana said.



QGA president Hamad Abdulla al-Mana.

He emphasised that preparations for the championships had been completed, with the association fully prepared to welcome the participating teams and deliver an event befitting the stature of Arab golf.

"All preparations are complete, and we are fully ready to welcome the participating teams and deliver a championship that reflects the standing of Arab golf. We are committed to providing the conditions that enable every player to perform at their best," he said.

"We look forward to strong competition played in a spirit of sportsmanship, and to an event that strengthens the bonds of friendship and cooperation among Arab golf federations."

Hosting the two championships represents a significant step forward for the Qatar Golf Association and reinforces the country's growing role in regional sports.

The event will also provide an important opportunity for Qatar's national team golfers to compete on home soil, in front of local supporters, while gaining valuable experience against some of the region's best players.

Beyond the sporting competition, the championships are expected to strengthen relationships between Arab golf federations, encourage greater cooperation and contribute to the continued growth and development of golf across the region.

Under-fire Jaissle accepts blame for Newcastle misery

Newcastle manager Matthias Jaissle told angry fans to blame him for Monday's damaging 1-0 defeat against Everton. Jaissle's side were condemned to a fourth loss in their last five games in all competitions when Everton striker Thierno Barry scored early in the second half at St James' Park. Newcastle midfielder Jacob Ramsey was sent off in the closing seconds for a crude foul on Harrison Armstrong before boos rained down on Jaissle and his players at the final whistle. Newcastle are languishing in 13th place in the Premier League as the pressure mounts on Jaissle.

"After a performance like that I can understand. That's the reality and I am responsible for that," Jaissle said.

"We need to work on the things we need to improve and after today that is a lot."

The Magpies have won just twice in their last seven matches in all competitions, leading to mounting speculation that Jaissle is already in danger of the sack. Hired following Eddie Howe's surprise close-season exit, the former Red Bull Salzburg and Al-Ahli boss has struggled to make an impact on Tyneside.

Jaissle desperately needs a win at Fulham on Saturday to ease the pressure heading into the international break. That two-week gap gives Newcastle's Saudi owners an opportunity to consider making a managerial change before the team return to action against champions Arsenal. *(AFP)*