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Arshdeep sparks India fightback to seal series win over New Zealand



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Lopetegui future adds intrigue to Qatar's South Korea clash

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GOLF

McIlroy dedicates record-equalling eighth Race to Dubai title to father

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Sheikh Joaan chairs Doha 2030 board meeting to review master plan for Asian Games





The Board of Directors of the Organising Committee for the 21st Asian Games – Doha 2030 reviewed the Games master plan and its key components at its fourth meeting of 2026. The meeting was chaired by HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani, President of the Qatar Olympic Committee and Chairman of the Organising Committee's Board of Directors. The Board discussed the latest organisational and operational preparations for the Games and reviewed progress against the approved plans and timelines. Discussions also covered ways to strengthen coordination among public and private sector stakeholders to ensure readiness across the sectors involved in organising the Games, and to draw on Qatar's experience in hosting major continental and international sporting events. The Board also discussed the use of existing sports facilities and infrastructure, as well as the Games' sustainable legacy. It reviewed ongoing efforts to apply best practices in sustainability, innovation and governance.

SPOTLIGHT

Qatar set for packed football calendar through December

FIFA U-17 World Cup will be the centrepiece of the programme



Hassan Rabia al-Kuwari, Executive Director of Marketing and Commercial Affairs at the Local Organising Committee for Football Events and Mohamed Rashid al-Khanji, Executive Director Communications, address a press conference in Doha yesterday. **PICTURE:** *Ram Chand*

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Qatar is preparing to host a packed programme of major football tournaments and matches from November through December, headlined by the FIFA U-17 World Cup Qatar 2026, FIFA Intercontinental Cup, Qatar Cup final and Qatar-UAE Super Cup.

Hassan Rabia al-Kuwari, Executive Director of Marketing and Commercial Affairs at the Local Organising Committee for Football Events, said preparations were complete for the busy schedule, which will bring leading national teams and clubs to Qatar.

Speaking at a roundtable with local media yesterday, al-Kuwari said the FIFA U-17 World Cup will be the centrepiece of the programme, with Qatar hosting the tournament for the second consecutive year as part of an agreement to stage five editions.

The tournament will feature 48 teams and approximately 104 matches from November 19 to December 13. Al-Kuwari said the withdrawal of the United States and its replacement by the Dominican Republic would not affect the tournament's schedule or preparations.

He added that the event would offer more than football, with entertainment and family activities planned alongside the matches to create a festive atmosphere for fans.

The final will be played at Ahmad bin Ali Stadium, giving fans and the younger generation an opportunity to experience one of Qatar's FIFA World Cup venues. Tickets start at QR20 and will be available through the Road to Qatar platform.

Qatar will also host the final three matches of the FIFA Intercontinental Cup on December 9, 12 and 16.

On December 9, Mexico's Toluca will face the yet-to-be-determined South American champion in the FIFA Derby of the Americas at Jassim bin Hamad Stadium. The same venue will host the FIFA Challenger Cup on December 12, featuring the winner of that match against South Africa's Mamelodi Sundowns.

The final will take place at Ahmad bin Ali Stadium on December 16 and will feature Paris Saint-Germain, the UEFA Champions League holders.

The domestic calendar will see Al Sadd and Al Rayyan meet in the Qatar Cup final at Khalifa International Stadium on December 14. Al-Kuwari said the clash between two of Qatar's most popular clubs was expected to attract a large crowd, with tickets going on sale on December 1.

The Qatar-UAE Super Cup will then be held from December 17 to 20, featuring eight clubs from the two countries in four matches, two in Qatar and two in the UAE.

Al Sadd, Al Shamal, Al Rayyan and Al Gharafa will represent Qatar, with the UAE teams completing the eight-club line-up. The Qatar fixtures will be played at Jassim bin Hamad Stadium on December 17 and Ahmad bin Ali Stadium on December 19, while the UAE matches will be held at Hazza bin Zayed Stadium on December 18 and Mohammed bin Zayed Stadium on December 20.

Al-Kuwari said tickets for the upcoming tournaments and matches would be sold through the Road to Qatar platform, providing fans with a single channel for ticket purchases. All tickets will be electronic, with no paper tickets issued, to facilitate stadium entry and improve the matchday experience.

He said the packed calendar underlined Qatar's continued role as a host of major international football events, following a series of international and friendly matches in recent weeks, including Qatar's fixtures against Australia and South Korea, as well as matches involving Saudi Arabia and Uzbekistan.

MOTORSPORT

Team Qatar lead Asian Le Mans standings after stunning comeback



Team Qatar's Abdulla al-Khelaifi, Julian Hanses and Maxime Martin celebrate on the podium at Circuit Paul Ricard in France.

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Team Qatar produced a stunning comeback to win the LMGT3 class in Race 1 of the Asian Le Mans Series at Circuit Paul Ricard in France, before securing a fifth-place finish in Race 2 to leave the opening round leading the championship standings.

The victory was particularly impressive given the team's difficult start to the weekend. Mechanical problems prevented Team Qatar from completing qualifying, forcing the crew to start both four-hour races from the back of the grid.

However, the setback did little to affect the team's determination. Starting from last place, Team Qatar delivered a remarkable recovery in Race 1, displaying impressive pace and consistency to fight through the field and claim the LMGT3 victory.

Qatar's Abdulla al-Khelaifi shared the winning car with Germany's Julian Hanses and Belgium's Maxime Martin. The trio combined to deliver a memorable result for Team Qatar by Iron Lynx.

The team continued its strong form in Race 2, once again starting from the back of the grid. A determined drive saw the crew make further progress through the field to finish fifth in the LMGT3 class.

The results gave Team Qatar an excellent start to its championship campaign, with the Race 1 victory and Race 2 top-five finish putting it at the top of the LMGT3 standings after the Paul Ricard round.



SPORT

FOCUS

Arshdeep sparkles as India win NZ series

Reuters
Mount Maunganui, New Zealand

India pulled off a remarkable escape in Tauranga yesterday, with Arshdeep Singh leading a pace-led fightback to secure a thrilling 22-run win over New Zealand and seal the five-match one-day international series 3-1.

Defending a modest 209, India looked destined for defeat as New Zealand cruised to 64-1 before the visitors' pacers sparked a dramatic collapse, with the hosts losing five wickets for 55 runs before crashing out on 187 in 48.1 overs.

Put in to bat, India made a cautious start, mindful of their crushing 244-run defeat in the previous ODI, but their approach unravelled as New Zealand's bowlers ripped through the top order before Axar Patel and Ishan Kishan helped the visitors recover to 209 all out in 42.1 overs.

New Zealand openers Will Young and Nick Kelly capitalised on the platform laid by their bowlers and looked on course for a comfortable chase before India's bowlers breathed life into the contest in the middle overs, relentlessly attacking the stumps and denying the hosts any opportunity to counterattack.

Yash Thakur built pressure with a disciplined spell, while Mohammed Siraj and Arshdeep struck at regular intervals as the hosts slumped from 64-1 to 119-6.

Dean Foxcroft top-scored with 31 off 42 balls and attempted to steady the innings as wickets tumbled around him, but Yash removed him to claim his maiden ODI wicket.

Captain Mitchell Santner's 24 off 31 balls offered resistance, but India's bowlers continued to chip away and eventually wrapped up the tail to complete a memorable victory.

"We didn't have a great batting but our bowlers all bowled with the same direction and we were able to execute," said captain Shreyas Iyer, who backed his seamers for the bulk of the innings before turning to spin in the 36th over.

"This whole series was not a good one for batters but the mindset is to take the team through irrespective of the conditions," Iyer added.

Player of the Match Arshdeep finished with figures of 3-30, while Siraj and spinner Patel picked up two wickets apiece and the remaining bowlers claimed one each.

"India bowled really well tonight," Santner said.

"Shreyas did a great job rotating his seamers and holding Axar back. If we took each partnership a little longer, we would've won the game. It was a great bowling performance from India."

Earlier, New Zealand's attack kept India on the back foot throughout, with fast bowler Matthew Fisher striking early to remove veterans Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli.

Patel, who survived two chances, stitched together a 52-run partnership with Shreyas (22) before combining with Kishan in a bid to rebuild the innings.

Patel and Kishan scored 46 apiece, while Naman Dhir contributed a late 22 before pacer Jacob Duffy and Santner wrapped up the tail.

Santner (3-47) and Duffy (3-60) claimed three wickets each, while Fisher finished with two.

India and New Zealand will next meet in a two-test series beginning on November 19.

BRIEF SCORES
India 209 (Axar 46, Kishan 46, Santner 3-47, Duffy 3-60) **beat New Zealand 187** (Foxcroft 31, Arshdeep 3-30, Axar 2-28) **by 22 runs.**


India's Arshdeep Singh and Virat Kohli celebrate the wicket of New Zealand's Kristian Clarke during the fifth ODI at the Bay Oval in Mount Manganui yesterday. *(AFP)*

CRICKET

Banton, Atkinson power England to win over Australia

'The whole innings, we looked like we were in control'

Reuters
Adelaide

England opener Tom Banton struck a superb century and fast bowler Gus Atkinson claimed four wickets as they beat Australia by 135 runs in the second One-Day International in Adelaide yesterday to level the three-match series at 1-1.

Australia won the toss and elected to bowl, but Banton set the tone for England's imposing total by taking the attack to the hosts from the outset. The right-hander reached the second ODI century of his career from just 86 balls before finishing with 121 off 99 deliveries, including 12 fours and four sixes.

After England lost Ben Duckett with the score at 19-1, Banton and Joe Root (62) rebuilt the innings with a 137-run second-wicket partnership, the highest stand for that wicket by an England pair in a 50-over match on Australian soil.

Australia briefly worked their way back into the contest with three wickets in the middle overs, but wicketkeeper-batter Jordan Cox counterattacked with 67 off 49 deliveries and all-rounder Will Jacks struck an unbeaten 54 from 40 balls to propel England to 355-6, their highest ODI total on Australian soil.

Xavier Bartlett was the pick of Australia's bowlers with figures of 3-72.

Set 356 to win, Australia slumped to 29-4 after Atkinson ripped through the top order.

Matt Renshaw (63) and Cameron Green (64) mounted a spirited fightback to keep Australia in contention, but spinner Liam Dawson removed both batters to extinguish the home side's hopes.

Australia's lower order offered some late resistance through Jack Edwards (17), Adam Zampa (18), Spencer Johnson (14) and Riley Meredith (17 not out), but they were eventually bowled out for 220.

"We obviously bowled first thinking there might have been a little bit in the wicket, which probably sounds weird to say at the Adelaide Oval, and try to maximise those early overs," Australia captain Mitch Marsh said at the presentation.

"I thought they batted really well. We tried a lot through the 50 overs, a few different plans with Meredith bowling bumpers, and all sorts of stuff.

"Credit to England. They played well. We know they are a good side. A really rounded side and they showed that tonight."

England's attack maintained the pressure throughout, with Atkinson finishing with outstanding figures of 4-28. Dawson and all-rounder Sam Curran chipped in with two wickets apiece as the tourists wrapped up a comprehensive victory.

"The whole innings, we looked like we were in control," England captain Harry Brook said. "We countered their bad balls, put them under pressure when we needed to and Banton played an exceptional innings...

"The depth that we have means we were able to go on and get that 350."

Australia had won the opening ODI in Perth by seven wickets, with the series now set for a decider in Hobart on Wednesday.

BRIEF SCORES
England 355 for 6 (Banton 121, Cox 67, Root 62, Jacks 54*, Bartlett 3-72) **beat Australia 220** (Green 64, Renshaw 63, Atkinson 4-28) **by 135 runs**


England's Tom Banton (right) celebrates his century with England's Jordan Cox during the second ODI at the Adelaide Oval yesterday. *(AFP)*

Sayers says entire Australia team knew about Sandpapergate

ADELAIDE: Former Australia test bowler **Chadd Sayers** backed Usman Khawaja's claims about the Sandpapergate scandal yesterday, saying he believes everyone in the side during the 2018 tour of South Africa knew sandpaper was being used to alter the condition of the ball.

The tampering, discovered during the third Test at Newlands in Cape Town, led to former captain Steve Smith and vice captain David Warner being banned for 12 months by Cricket Australia (CA) from elite cricket. Cameron Bancroft received a nine-month suspension for his part in the incident.

Khawaja wrote in his autobiography "Sabr: Finding my way in Cricket and Life", released on Tuesday, that knowledge of the plan was not limited to the three players who were punished and was more widespread within the team.

In the wake of the new allegations, CA has ruled out reopening its 2018 investigation, while Warner has accused the sports body of orchestrating a cover-up by ignoring key witnesses and seeking to pin blame on three players.

"I believe that everyone in that side knew what was going on and what was being used," Sayers told *SEN radio*. Sayers, 39, also echoed Khawaja's claim that sandpaper was used during the second Test at Port Elizabeth, saying he was the player who removed it from the field.



"It (sandpaper) was given to me to take off, so that wasn't planned or anything. I was just the player who took the drinks out at the time ... it was passed on to me," he said.

Sayers, who made his only Test appearance for Australia in the fourth Test of the 2018 South Africa tour, said he was never interviewed as part of CA's inquiry.

He added that maybe it was because he was 12th man and didn't play in the game or perhaps because he knew too much information.

"I'm not too sure," he said.

Fast bowler Mitchell Starc denied any prior knowledge of the incident on Tuesday, while Australia captain Pat Cummins dismissed suggestions of his involvement, describing the allegations as "utter nonsense" on Friday.

Sayers, however, said he is convinced the entire team, including the bowlers, knew what was happening.

"When you're trying to get the ball to reverse, everyone has to buy in because if one little thing goes wrong in the field to the ball, it stops it from reversing straight away. I'm pretty confident to say that everyone knew," he said.

"I didn't like how he (Cummins) did go at Usman and got personal," Sayers said.

"I probably get why but I just don't think it needed to happen."

SPOTLIGHT

UDST win titles at QCSF Rapid Chess Tournament



By Sports Reporter
Doha

The Qatar Collegiate Sports Federation (QCSF) Rapid Chess Tournament for men and women wrapped up at Lusail University on 14 November, following two days of intense competition that began on 13 November.

The event witnessed the participation of talented students from higher education institutions across Qatar, with competitors showcasing their skills, concentration and strategic abilities.

The awards were presented by Rashid Saeed Adiba , the Secretary-General of QCSF, in the presence of Dr Nizam Hindi, President of Lusail University, and Hamad al-Tamimi , the Executive Director of the Qatar Chess Association (QCA).

In the men's individual event, Yousef Tariq Amarneh of the University of Doha for Science and Technology (UDST) emerged victorious, claiming the top spot.

Turki Saeed al-Kuwari of Qatar University took second place, while Haitem Nasser of Hamad Bin Khalifa University finished third. UDST also topped the men's team standings, followed by Qatar University and Lusail University in second and third place, respectively.

The women's competitions saw further success for UDST. Maryam Abed won the individual title, followed by teammate Victoria Honorides in second place, while Senanur Kartal of Qatar University secured third. UDST also claimed the women's team title, with Qatar University finishing runner-up and Lusail University taking third place.

As part of the closing ceremony, the three organizing partners - QCSF, Lusail University and QCA - exchanged commemorative shields.

The tournament was organised through a joint partnership between the three institutions and saw broad participation from male and female students representing universities and other higher education institutions across the country.

JO'BURG TEST

Hridoy's 137, Rabada's five-for steal the show

Reuters
Johannesburg

Bangladesh batsman **Towhid Hridoy** continued his red-hot batting form with a 137-run knock to put his side in a strong position on 327-6 at stumps on the first day of the opening Test against South Africa at the Wanderers on Sunday.

Hridoy, who scored a double century against the West Indies in Sylhet last week, produced a flourish of quality shots to become only the second Bangladesh player to score a Test ton in South Africa and help his side recover after they lost their first three wickets in the opening nine overs.

Hridoy was trapped leg before wicket by Marco Jansen with the last delivery of the day, ending a record partnership with Litton Das, who will return on Monday on 92 not out.

The 206-run sixth-wicket partnership lifted Bangladesh from 121-5 and is a record for the team in South Africa, more than double their previous best.

The 25-year-old Hridoy is playing in his fourth Test, having debuted in June, and evidently relishes South African conditions, having scored 350 not out for Bangladesh A against South Africa A in Potchefstroom in August.

Das, 32, helped him through his innings, calming him at times as he attempted risky runs, but



there was little Hridoy could do as Jansen trapped him plumb, bookending the day for South Africa, who also took a wicket with the first ball.

Debutant Mahfijul Islam was caught with the opening delivery of the match as he got a thick edge to a rising delivery from Kagiso Rabada and was snagged at gully by Marco Jansen.

It was the fourth time that South Africa had taken a wicket with the first ball of a Test and Rabada quickly got two more, dismissing Mominul Haque for a duck as he nicked through to wicketkeeper Ryan Rickelton and then bowling captain Najmul Hossain Shanto for 12 to leave Bangladesh, who won the toss and elected to bat, reeling at 22-3.

BRIEF SCORES
Bangladesh 327 for 6 (Hridoy 137, Litton 92*, Tanzid 67, Rabada 5-51) **vs South Africa**

GOLF

McIlroy dedicates record 8th Race to Dubai title to father

Hatton edges out Chacarra to win DP World Tour Championship

AFP
Dubai

Joy Chakravarty An emotional Rory McIlroy sealed a record-equalling eighth Race to Dubai title yesterday after a second-placed finish behind Tyrrell Hatton at the DP World Tour Championship edged out Eugenio Chacarra.

McIlroy dedicated the win to his father Gerry who had a double lung transplant at the end of September and has been in a Cleveland hospital since then.

"My dad is a massive part of my life and has been my biggest supporter," said the Northern Irishman who tied the record of Scotland's Colin Montgomerie after a dramatic final round of the season-ending $10mn DP World Tour Championship.

"He is the one that got me into the game and the one that told me to follow my dreams and never give up and never think that you're not good enough.

"It's obviously been difficult. He has been living with this for 18 months, and it got to the point where the last resort was a transplant. Thankfully, the operation was a success and he's recovering well.

"It's been a stressful time for our family. If things were not looking as good as they were, I probably wouldn't have felt comfortable travelling or being too far away.

"I went up to see him before I left for Abu Dhabi a couple of weeks ago, and he said to me, 'Rors, go and win me The Race to Dubai'. That was in my head for the last two weeks, and I really wanted to do it for him."

The tournament itself was a runaway win for England's Hatton (66) even if all eyes were on the fascinating battle between McIlroy and Spain's Chacarra, playing a group behind him.

It all came down to the 18th hole, where McIlroy made a disappointing par to finish on 10-under



England's Tyrrell Hatton (right) celebrates with the trophy after winning the DP World Tour Championship tournament, alongside Northern Ireland's Rory McIlroy, who celebrates with the Harry Vardon Trophy after winning the Race to Dubai title at Jumeirah Golf Estates in Dubai yesterday. *(AFP)*

par, but that was good enough for a solo second place.

That took his ranking points to 5,044.86. Chacarra also could not get a birdie on the final hole and closed with a 69 for a tied third place at eight-under alongside Finland's Oliver Lindell (65).

The European number one crown was secured with a bogey-free round of five-under par 67. Chacarra's final round featured six birdies but also three bogeys.

"It was a good fight. I just came out short," said Chacarra.

"Obviously, when you play with the best in the world, and he's played here 14, 15 times, you knew it was going to be tough, and he had a better day than I did."

Hatton finally finished with seven birdies against a solitary mistake on the third hole on a day when he again dazzled with brilliant short iron and wedge play.

The win was worth $3mn and he also climbed to third in the Race to Dubai behind McIlroy and Chacarra, his career best finish.

"This is really special. I was really nervous today. I didn't say anything to anyone in my team or even to Emily (wife). I've had a bit of heartbreak around here, and I felt like it was going to be a difficult day," said Hatton, runner-up in the championship in 2016 and 2022 and who has now matched Jon Rahm's record of winning six Rolex Series (DP World Tour's version of elevated events) titles.

"I was just trying to keep my head down and try and make birdies. Just really proud of how I played on the back nine. The putter was amazing and it certainly saved me all week."

Chacarra, Patrick Reed, Casey Jarvis, Jayden Schaper, Daniel Hillier, Jacob Skov Olesen, Lindell, Andy Sullivan, Bernd Wiesberger and Joe Dean secured the 10 PGA Tour cards that were up for grabs based on the Order of Merit positions.

The new season of the DP World Tour starts in two weeks in Australia with the BMW Australian PGA Championship.

TENNIS

Zverev too strong for Jodar in ATP Finals

AFP
Turin



Germany's Alexander Zverev hits a return to Spain's Rafael Jodar during the ATP Finals in Turin yesterday. *(AFP)*

World number one Alexander Zverev cruised through his opening match at the season-ending ATP Finals yesterday defeating Spanish debutant Rafael Jodar 6-4, 6-4.

Zverev, who won the tournament in 2018 and 2021, needed just one hour and 27 minutes to overcome the season's breakout star. Ranked 11th in the world the 20-year-old Jodar is making his debut at the elite eight-player tournament.

Zverev had been eliminated in his opening match at the Paris Masters - the final Masters 1000 event of the year - and endured a lacklustre autumn as he blamed mental and physical exhaustion.

However, with 10 aces and a strong return of serve he stifled Jodar, who dropped his serve in the seventh game of the first set and again in the third game of the second."It wasn't the per fect match, but I'm happy; it's a great start to the tournament for me," Zverev said.

In the round robin stage, the German is also set to face American Ben Shelton and Frenchman Arthur Fils who were scheduled to play each other later.

Zverev secured the world number one ranking in early November after winning his first two Grand Slam titles in 2026, but the 29-year-old is not necessarily the favourite in Turin.

Italy's Jannik Sinner won the last two editions of the Finals but he has not played since winning Wimbledon in July due to a knee injury. Spaniard Carlos Alcaraz, ranked third in the world, who plays American Frances Tiafoe on Monday, is considered the favourite following his comeback from a wrist injury with three wins in five tournaments - Tokyo, Vienna and the Paris Masters.

ANDREEVA BOOK WTA FINALS TITLE CLASH WITH SVITOLINA

French Open winner Mirra Andreeva beat Jessica Pegula 6-3, 6-4 on Saturday to book a WTA Finals title showdown with former champion Elina Svitolina in Indian Wells, California.

Ukraine's Svitolina, who won the WTA Finals in 2018, fell to Ashleigh Barty in the final in the following year but hadn't been back since, powered past Wimbledon champion Linda Noskova 6-2, 6-1 to give herself a shot at another triumph in the elite season-ending event. The 32-year-old, back in the top 10 this year for the first time since before her daughter, Skai, was born in 2022, will face a rising star in 19-year-old Andreeva. The Russian teen won her maiden major at Roland Garros this year and with her victory over Pegula is assured of rising from third to second in the world rankings.

Andreeva remained unbeaten in her WTA Finals singles debut, having posted round robin victories over sixth-ranked Svitolina, world number two Aryna Sabalenka and Diana Shnaider. She's the youngest player to make the final since a 17-year-old Maria Sharapova in 2004 and joined Serena Williams and Chris Evert as the only players to win their first four matches in the event in straight sets.

For Pegula it was a match of missed chances, the fifth-ranked American unable to build on early breaks in both sets.

Andreeva double-faulted on break point to give Pegula a 2-1 lead in the opening set. But the Russian broke back immediately, whipping a crosscourt forehand winner on her third break chance to make it 2-2. Andreeva saved a pair of break points in the fifth game and broke again for a 5-3 lead.

Pegula had a chance to extend the set in the next game, but on break point she smashed what looked to be an easy backhand at the net past the baseline and Andreeva held to pocket the first. Andreeva double-faulted to give Pegula a break chance in the fourth game of the second and the American converted for an imposing 3-1 lead. But once again Andreeva broke back immediately, winning five of the last six games to close out the victory in one hour and 25 minutes.

FOCUS

Young cycle sensation Seixas ends stunning year with Japan win

AFP
Saitama, Japan

Cycling prodigy Paul Seixas ended his spectacular breakout year with another win in Japan yesterday, finishing ahead of world champion Brandon McNulty in the Tour de France's Saitama Criterium.

The 20-year-old Frenchman this year became the youngest winner of the Giro di Lombardia and finished fourth in his debut Tour de France. He won his first World Tour level events at the week-long Tour of the Basque Country and the Fleche Wallonne one-day classic.

He topped the podium again in Japan after reeling in American McNulty in another assured performance. "I'm really satisfied, it ends the season well," said Seixas.

"The strategy was good, it was to attack on lap 14.

"I did it, after that I caught Brandon and that was it."

Seixas, who only turned 20 in September, became the fourth-youngest winner of one of cycling's prestigious Monument one-day classics with his Lombardia victory.

That was more than two years younger than Tour de France king Tadej Pogacar and Olympic champion Remco Evenepoel when they won Liege-Bastogne-Liege in 2021 and 2022 respectively.

When asked how he deals with his new-found fame, he said: "I don't mind".

"I have my own pressure and I deal with it," he said. McNulty broke clear with a late attack but Seixas hit back to overtake him with just under 3km to go.

Norway's Torstein Traen finished third. McNulty is ending a season that saw him become the first American in 33 years to win the men's road race world title.

The 28-year-old said "it wasn't to be" after his late attack on Seixas.

"My overall strategy was to save for the last few laps and then try to go a little bit early and surprise them," he said.

"They were a bit stronger, or Paul was."



Decathlon CMA CGM Team's Paul Seixas celebrates winning the Saitama Criterium race yesterday.

ALKAYDAH AL SRAIYA BEST SENIOR MARE, HAMALEEL AL SHAQAB TOP YEARLING FILLY AT 6TH QATAR ARABIAN BREEDERS CUP

The three-day 6th Qatar Arabian Breeders Cup horse show organised by the Qatar Racing & Equestrian Club (QREC) culminated with the finale on Sunday. The Senior Mares Championship saw Alkaydah Al Sraiya take the top honours with gold. Mayar Jathab of Jathab Arabians was awarded silver and Bashayer Al Bawadi of Al Bawadi Stud, the bronze. QREC chairman Hamad bin Abdulrahman al-Attiyah honoured the winning teams of the class.

In the Yearling Fillies Championship, Hamaleel Al Shaqab of Al Shaqab claimed gold ahead of Al Jassimya Farm's Luna Aljassimya (silver) and Sheikh Hamad Ali A TH al-Thani-owned Mashael Mudhar, which won bronze. Saad Ali al-Kubaisi, Deputy Show Director honoured the winners of this category. The Yearling Colts Championship was won by Al Thamer Stud's Jeryan Al Thamer while Haddaj Al Sraiya of Al Sraiya Stud was awarded silver and Harid Al Jood of Al Jood Stud the bronze. Majid Nasser al-Kaabi, Show Director, awarded the winning teams. The Junior Fillies Championship's top honours went to Falwa Al Shaqab of Al Shaqab while Qamasha Al Shaqab won silver. The bronze went to Elyssa Al Jood of Al Jood Stud. Amer al-Hmaidi, Director of Qatar Endurance Racing Club awarded the winners.

In the Juniors Colts category, Dstoor Al Sraiya claimed gold ahead of Shalesh Al Shaqab (silver), while Azzam Umm Aludham, owned by Nasser Mohammed MA al-Hajri, took the bronze. Mohammed Hamad Hobash, Director of Equestrian Services at QREC, awarded the winners.



QREC Chairman Hamad bin Abdulrahman al-Attiyah honours the team of Alkaydah Al Sraiya which won the Senior Mares Championship gold. **PICTURES:** *Juhaim*



Saad Ali al-Kubaisi, Deputy Show Director, awarded the Yearling Fillies Championship gold winner Hamaleel Al Shaqab.

YAMAGUCHI WINS KUMAMOTO MASTERS WITH AN ABSENT

Japan's Akane Yamaguchi beat China's Wang Zhiyi to win the Kumamoto Masters title on home soil yesterday, with all-conquering world number one An Se-young not competing at the tournament. World number two Yamaguchi downed third-ranked Wang 21-14, 22-20 to claim her fourth title of a women's badminton season dominated by An.

The South Korean has won an incredible 11 titles, including the world and Asian Games crowns, and has lost only one match all year. Of the titles An did not win in 2026, she finished runner-up at the All England Open and pulled out injured from the Japan Open. Yamaguchi was happy to give the fans in western Japan something to cheer about.

"There aren't so many tournaments held in Japan, especially in Kumamoto, which is my training base," said the 29-year-old.

"I was able to win in front of my supporters and that gave me a different happiness to the other stops on the tour."

Yamaguchi has lost the last 11 matches she has played against An. The pair could meet again at the season-ending World Tour Finals in China next month.

India's Lakshya Sen won the men's singles title, beating Japan's Koki Watanabe 13-21, 21-18, 21-14.

It was world number 13 Sen's second straight title, following his success at the Hylo Open in Germany. He said he would "love to continue this form".

(AFP)

PREVIEW

Lopetegui future in focus as Qatar set to face South Korea

Hosts had suffered a disappointing 3-0 loss to Australia on Friday

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Qatar face South Korea in an international friendly at Abdullah bin Khalifa Stadium tomorrow, with coach Julen Lopetegui's future adding another layer of interest to the Asian champions' final fixture of the November international window. The match comes four days after Qatar suffered a disappointing 3-0 defeat to Australia at the same venue, with three first-half goals exposing defensive weaknesses and leaving Lopetegui with plenty to address.

Qatar struggled to cope with Australia's intensity and high press, conceding to Riley McGree, Tete Yengi and Nestory Irankunda inside the opening 40 minutes. Lopetegui had described the Australia and South Korea friendlies as important tests of his team's progress against two of Asia's leading sides.

The South Korea fixture could also prove significant in assessing the next phase of Lopetegui's tenure, with reports in Spain indicating that the Spanish coach is unlikely to continue with Qatar beyond the expiry of his contract in April 2027.

According to reports, the postponement of the Asian Cup is understood to have changed the situation surrounding Lopetegui's future. The coach and the Qatar Football Association have yet to begin discussions over a contract extension, while the absence of the Asian Cup from his current contractual cycle has raised questions over whether his tenure will continue beyond April.

Lopetegui took charge of Qatar after a difficult run of results and guided the team through the World Cup qualification playoffs. He subsequently helped Qatar secure their first-ever point at a World Cup, drawing with Switzerland in San Francisco, but under him Al Annabi also suffered dismal defeats to Canada and Bosnia.

He also led the team to the Gulf Cup semi-finals, where they lost to eventual champions Saudi Arabia on penalties.

The 60-year-old has spoken positively about his experience in Doha, but his future remains uncertain. With his contract currently running until April, Tuesday's meeting with South Korea could mark the final match of his present project at international level.

For Qatar, however, the immediate focus will be on responding to the heavy defeat by Australia and ending the November window on a stronger note. The South Koreans will provide another demanding test, and Lopetegui will be looking for a much-improved defensive display and greater attacking threat from a Qatar side seeking a positive response in front of home supporters.



Qatar players during a training session ahead of their international friendly against South Korea tomorrow. The match will be played at Abdullah Bin Khalifa Stadium. The kick off is at 5pm.

FOCUS

Fourth Qatar-UAE Super Cup to take place in December



The Organising Committee for the Qatar-UAE Super Cup has announced that the fourth edition of the tournament will take place in both countries from December 17 to 20, featuring eight clubs, with four teams representing each country, competing in four matches for four titles.

The tournament will kick off on December 17 at 7pm, with the Challenge Shield match, which will see Qatar's Al Shamal SC, runners-up of the Qatar Stars League (QSL), face UAE's Shabab Al Ahli, runners-up of the ADNOC Pro League, at Jassim bin Hamad Stadium in Doha.

On December18, Hazza bin Zayed Stadium will host the Super Shield match between UAE's Al Ain FC, champions of the ADNOC Pro League, and Qatar's Al Sadd SC, QSL champions at 7pm. In the tournament's third fixture, on December 19 at 7pm, Qatar's Al Rayyan SC will take on UAE's Al Wahda FC in the Challenge Cup match at Ahmed bin Ali Stadium.

The fourth edition will conclude on December 20 at 7pm, with the Super Cup match between Al Jazira FC, representing the UAE President's Cup, and Qatar's Al Gharafa SC, winners of the Amir Cup. The match will take place at Mohammed bin Zayed Stadium in Abu Dhabi.

The tournament reflects the strong sporting cooperation between the Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, contributing to strengthening ties between clubs from both countries and supporting the development of football across the Gulf region.

Match tickets will go on sale at a later date.

Tenerife return to action with emotional De Miguel tribute after striker's death

Madrid: Spanish second division team Tenerife returned to action yesterday for the first time since the death of striker Jesus De Miguel, with emotional tributes before and during their game against Ceuta.

De Miguel died on November 3, a day after colliding with Andorra goalkeeper Jesus Owono during a league match at home. Tributes took place around the country and on Sunday at the Heliodoro Rodriguez Lopez stadium, Tenerife paid their own respects.

A lengthy standing ovation bookended a minute of silence before the match. In the ninth minute play was stopped and a further round of applause followed, while a video of De Miguel was shown around the stadium, as occurred in all first and second tier games in Spain last weekend.

Tenerife fans also unfurled a banner reading "Jesus De Miguel, 9, eternally blue and white."

Tenerife forward Nacho Gil opened the scoring in the 40th minute and he celebrated by holding up De Miguel's shirt to the crowd. Gil then revealed a message written under his shirt saying "Demi (De Miguel's nickname), always in our hearts."

Neal Viereck added a second four minutes from time to seal a 2-0 win for Tenerife, ending a run of six games without a win.

Tenerife are 14th in the Segunda standings, while Ceuta are bottom.

SPOTLIGHT

Ronaldinho makes winning return in Italy's third division

AFP
Ravenna, Italy

Greying and rounder in the face than during his prime, Ronaldinho made a winning return to professional football yesterday for Ravenna, an ambitious club in Italy's third tier aiming to reach Serie A.

Under the watchful eye of Ignazio Cipriani, the Italian-American businessman who has owned the club since 2024, Ronaldinho perfectly played his role as the centrepiece of a clever PR stunt.

The 46-year-old Brazilian great put in a low-key performance in his first competitive match since playing for Fluminense in 2015, as Ravenna, bidding for promotion to Serie B, beat local rivals Forli 2-0 in front of a packed Stadio Bruno Benelli on Italy's Adriatic coast.

Known for his dynamic dribbling and often outrageous ball control in his heyday, Ronaldinho largely strolled around the pitch and laid off simple passes to his teammates, who would once upon a time not have been anywhere near his level as players.

Ronaldinho's arrival has given Ravenna a previously unimaginable profile, and Cipriani would no doubt have been delighted to see the pack of reporters and photographers that descended on the Benelli.

The 2005 Ballon d'Or winner only played in the first half but was involved in the move which ended with Giulio Donati smashing hosts Ravenna ahead in the 36th minute.

Ronaldinho entered the field to great fanfare, with the 5,000-capacity Benelli having a temporary stand with 1,800 places – dubbed "R10" – added for the occasion.

Flares and smoke bombs were let off in the stands while Andrea Bocelli's "Con Te Partiro" blasting out of the stadium's speakers.

And he left after the first half, but not before plenty of handshakes with his teammates and match officials.



Ronaldinho in action for Ravenna during the Serie C match against Forli in Ravenna, Italy. *(Reuters)*

Only he knows whether he will play for Ravenna again, although he had only taken part in a single training session with his teammates before this one-off appearance.

He only arrived in Italy a few days before yesterday's match, suggesting that he hasn't committed himself for the long haul.

Ravenna, who have not even played in Serie B since 2008, are second in their regional group in Serie C and came into the weekend's fixtures six points behind leaders Spezia.

One team for each of the three groups will be directly promoted to Serie B, with the final spot in the second tier decided by a play-off.

NATIONS LEAGUE

Denmark rout Ronaldo-less Portugal

AFP
Braga, Portugal

Portugal were hammered 4-1 by Denmark on Saturday, an embarrassing Nations League defeat in their first match without Cristiano Ronaldo following the superstar forward's retirement from international football.

Rasmus Hojlund starred with a superb brace as Denmark moved into second place in Group A4 and closed in on a spot in the quarter-finals with a brilliant display in Braga.

The Danes are on nine points from five fixtures, three behind Portugal who were already sure of qualification for the last eight having won all four of their previous group fixtures.

A draw against third-placed Norway on Tuesday, 3-1 winners over Wales earlier, will see Denmark through while Portugal hope that Saturday's disaster isn't a sign of things to come. "There are no nights to forget; it was a night of learning, of seeing the mistakes we made," said Portugal midfielder Bruno Fernandes. "Denmark were also very clinical -- they scored from the chances they had and it was a match where things ultimately went wrong for us."

Ahead of kick-off Portugal paid tribute to Ronaldo, who announced his exit from the international game last week, with the team and mascots walking out wearing Ronaldo's number seven and his name on their jerseys.

Fans held up a huge banner which read "Thank you captain" as the teams entered the field, while applause rolled around the stadium once the match clock hit seven.

Ronaldo made his debut for Portugal in 2003 and went on to establish world records for goals and appearances in international football, netting 146 times in 234 matches.

The highlight of his international career was winning Euro 2016, but it ended badly when the 41-year-old fell out with Portugal coach Jorge Jesus over not being selected for a Nations League fixture in September.

That row led to the five-time Ballon d'Or winner being handed a 30-day suspension by the Portuguese football federation and his subsequent retirement, and Portugal looked like they needed prime Ronaldo in a dismal display.



Denmark's Rasmus Hojlund (left) vies for the ball with Portugal's Ruben Dias during the UEFA Nations League match in Braga. *(AFP)*

Denmark were the better team from the first minute and it was no surprise when the away team went in at the break thanks to Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg's spot-kick in the 43rd minute.

Hojlund lashed home a brilliant volley four minutes after the restart and seven minutes later left the home crowd shell-shocked with a strike of which Ronaldo would have been proud, the Napoli striker skipping past Ruben Dias before crashing home a powerful shot from the edge of the area.

Boos and whistles began to ring out at the Estadio Municipal when Joachim Andersen headed in the fourth, and Bernardo Silva's late consolation effort barely dampened the discontent.

Antonio Nusa opened the scoring for Norway just before the hour mark in Oslo with a fine low strike before Andreas Schjelderup tapped home a perfect low cross from Erling Haaland, who rounded off the scoring from the penalty spot two minutes from time.

Wales briefly had hope of getting a result when David Brooks' chipped finish halved the deficit in the 79th minute, but Craig Bellamy's team will finish bottom of the group and risk being relegated to League B.

Ronaldo Jr takes next Portugal step as dad exits international scene

Cristiano Ronaldo Jr was watched by a number of senior internationals as he made his Portugal Under-17 debut on Thursday, playing the final 20 minutes of a 4-0 European Championship qualifying win over Andorra.

Vitinha, Ruben Neves, Goncalo Ramos and Joao Felix were among those in attendance at the Portuguese FA's Cidade do Futebol complex in Oeiras, on the outskirts of Lisbon, before their own training session.

For the 16-year-old Al Nassr forward, known as Cristianinho, it was another step up the international ladder - and a debut that came at a moment of changing generations.

Coach Filipe Ramos named him in his 23-player squad on November 2, three days before his father retired from international football.

The eldest son of Portugal's former captain made his Under-15 debut in 2025 before progressing to the Under-16s, collecting 13 appearances across those two age groups.

Portugal next host Bulgaria and Serbia in the first qualifying round for the 2027 Under-17 European Championship, with the top two teams advancing. All their matches will take place at Cidade do Futebol.