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Cummins defiant as 'Sandpapergate' roils Australian cricket



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Shelton on brink of ATP Finals last four after beating Jodar



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Union of Arab FAs backs Infantino for another term as FIFA president

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FOOTBALL

Late goals give Qatar winning start to FIFA U-17 World Cup

Australia upset Argentina, South Korea ease past Uganda and Ecuado edged New Caledonia



Qatar and Panama players battle for the ball during the FIFA U-17 World Cup Qatar at Aspire Zone. **PICTURES:** *Noushad Thekkayil*



Aspire Zone Competition Complex is lit up as Qatar and Panama players line up before their FIFA U-17 World Cup match yesterday.

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Qatar struck twice in injury time to seal a dramatic 2-0 victory over Panama and send the home fans into raptures in their opening match of the FIFA U-17 World Cup Qatar 2026, which kicked off at Aspire Zone yesterday.

With the game appearing to be heading to a goalless draw, Qatar were awarded a late spot-kick after Stephen Dominguez stuck out a leg and brought down Dhiaddine Benyatla in his area. Taha Nassir calmly slotted away the resulting penalty.

The hosts then sealed the victory in the 95th minute when Abdoulaye Ndiaye broke clear over the Panama defence and rifled the ball into the net.

Qatar coach Alvaro Mejia was pleased with the victory. "This is something we have to celebrate. I hope this gives us a little bit of confidence to continue growing in the tournament. We know the games are going to be very tough. It's very good for the kids coming here as fans to see the national team win the game. It's good news for everyone here in Qatar."

This is the second of five consecutive editions of the FIFA U-17 World Cup that Qatar will host through to 2029. A total of 104 matches will be played by 48 teams. Most matches will take place at the Competition Complex in Aspire Zone, with the final to be played at Ahmad bin Ali Stadium on December 13.

HE Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa bin Ahmed al-Thani, Minister of Sports and Youth and Chairman of the tournament's Local Organising Committee said: "Once again, the world of football unites in Qatar. This time, a new generation of young players will shine on our fields and capture the imagination of millions. Over the next few weeks, these future stars will remind everyone of the power of the beautiful game in bringing people together while promoting the virtues of sportsmanship and mutual respect."

In another Group A match, a strong second half propelled Greece past ten-man Egypt 2-1. Daniel Tamer's sending-off midway through the first half tilted things towards the Greeks, and Konstantinos Souvlatzis would break the deadlock, followed by a second through Konstantinos Karangelis. Ziad Souidi pulled a goal back for Egypt but Greece would hang on.

Souvlatzis said: "It was the best game I ever played atmosphere-wise and I hope to repeat it. All goals are dedicated to my family. Today only the win matters and I hope to continue like this."

In Group B, Jhon Guerrero's first-half strike proved enough for Ecuador to eke past New Caledonia. It was one-way traffic for much of the contest and the Oceanians' resistance was eventually broken when Guerrero played a one-two with Holger Quintero and side-footed home. It could have been more for the South Americans, but New Caledonia goalkeeper Sylvain Ipeze pulled off a string of fine saves to keep the score down.

Classy South Korea proved too strong for Uganda 3-0. Kim Jiho gave the Koreans an early lead, blasting a shot beyond goalkeeper Ashraf Lukyamuzi. Uganda, backed by a passionate following, battled hard and Isima Magala almost levelled. South Korea always looked a threat, though, and doubled their advantage when a Nam Ian shot deflected in off Uganda defender Mujad Mbalire. Kim Jiwoo then curled in a fine third to complete the scoring.

Kim Jiho said: "It was our first World Cup match, so all the players were nervous, but we were able to get the win because we played together as one team."

In Group C, Alirio Cuna scored a brilliant brace as Mozambique celebrated their debut at the U-17 showpiece with a comprehensive 4-0 victory over Denmark.

Khezane got the African side up and running in just the fourth minute with a powerful low drive. Cuna found space between two Denmark defenders to double their tally before opportunistically firing home a rebound after Nhampule Junior's effort struck the woodwork. Substitute Mubai sealed a day to remember for magnificent Mozambique in injury time.

Meanwile, Akol Akon led the way as Australia beat Argentina 2-0. The Aussies held firm against the Argentinian pressure thanks to goalkeeper Charlie Wilson-Papps and then landed a big blow when Akon's cross was diverted into net by Alvaro Guich. Akon wasn't done and doubled the lead by rounding Valentin Reigia and finishing, capping a dream opener.

A Loan Merrifield double helped France open their campaign in perfect fashion with a 3-1 win over Haiti. France's No. 11 reacted quickest in the box to rifle a Firmin Thetiot cutback home, before doubling his money with a cool finish after being put through by Aly Traore. Half-time arrival Seydou Konate then crossed for fellow substitute Noha Tiehi to extend their lead. Macenat Prophete stole in to net late on for Haiti, but it was merely a consolation.

Meanwhile, substitute Facundo Rodriguez scored a late long-range winner as Uruguay twice came from behind to defeat Saudi Arabia 3-2. Faris Bushaqraa scored the first of two penalties after Zaid Alburi's shirt was pulled, but Pablo Barreiro levelled with a shot from the edge of the box.

Barreiro was penalised for bringing down Abdullah al-Dawsari, with Bushaqraa again making no mistake, before taking the corner which Jawad Alhashemal-sayed could only deflect into his own net.

QATAR STARS LEAGUE

Mahrez rescues Shamal with stoppage-time penalty against Ahli



Al Shamal's Riyad Maherz in action against Al Ahli at Al Thumama Stadium.

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Al Shamal fought back with a stoppage-time penalty to snatch a 1-1 draw against Al Ahli in a dramatic Qatar Stars League encounter at Al Thumama Stadium yesterday. Ahli looked set to claim all three points after Erik Exposito converted a penalty in the 74th minute, but Riyad Mahrez rescued a point for Shamal with another spot-kick deep into stoppage time.

The match took a dramatic turn when Shamal were reduced to 10 men in the 90+1 minute after Nassim Ben Aissa was sent off for a foul on Ahli's Ismail Mohamad. However, Shamal refused to give in and earned a late penalty in the 90+10 minute, which Mahrez converted to level the score.

Both penalties were awarded following VAR reviews. Ahli's spot-kick came after Ahmed Suhail brought down Erik Hernandez inside the box, while Shamal were awarded theirs when Ayoub Amraoui pulled down Baghdad Bounedjah during a corner.

Earlier, Mahrez came close to giving Shamal the lead in the 39th minute, but his superb curling effort struck the crossbar. The draw took both teams to 13 points, with Shamal fifth and Ahli sixth in the standings. Al Rayyan and Al Duhail lead the table on 21 points each, followed by defending champions Al Sadd on 18 and Al Arabi on 14.

SADD SEEK RESPONSE AGAINST LUSAIL

Meanwhile, Al Sadd will look to bounce back from their defeat to Al Rayyan when they take on Lusail SC at Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium on Friday.

Coach Razvan Lucescu stressed the importance of securing all three points as his side look to return to winning ways and stay in contention for the league summit. Speaking at the pre-match press conference, the Romanian said preparations had gone well during the international break, with the players working hard and remaining focused on the upcoming fixtures.

However, the return of several players from international duty meant the coaching staff had to assess their physical and technical readiness ahead of the match.

Lusail, meanwhile, will be aiming to extend their winning run after victories over Al Sailiya and Qatar SC in the previous two rounds. Lusail are seventh with 12 points.

Coach Emanuel Mesquita said the results had lifted the team's confidence and morale, adding that preparations had been positive and the players were in good physical and technical condition.

While acknowledging the challenge posed by one of Qatar's most successful clubs, Mesquita said Lusail were determined to continue their positive run and collect another three points.

REMAINING FIXTURES

Today: Al Sadd vs Lusail, Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium, 4pm; Al Duhail vs Qatar SC, Abdullah Bin Khalifa Stadium, 4pm; Al Gharafa vs Al Arabi, Thani Bin Jassim Stadium, 6:30pm

Tomorrow: Al Wakrah vs Al Sailiya, Saoud Bin Abdulrahman Stadium, 4pm; Al Shahania vs Al Rayyan, Suhaim Bin Hamad Stadium, 6:30pm



Lusail players train ahead of their match against Al Sadd.

CRICKET

SANDPAPERGATE

Cummins defiant as pressure mounts after latest claims

AFP
Sydney

Pat Cummins remained defiant yesterday after he was dragged back into the "Sandpapergate" scandal by Cameron Bancroft's explosive revelations, with his position as Australia Test captain called into question.

Bancroft, a central figure in the 2018 ball-tampering plot in South Africa that rocked world cricket, dropped a grenade late Wednesday in a lengthy newspaper column by claiming the whole team knew what was going on. It came just days after Cummins held a 70-minute press conference to repeat the same allegations by Usman Khawaja in his autobiography, calling them "100 percent wrong".

Bancroft was the player who used sandpaper during a Test in Cape Town to make the ball swing, with a Cricket Australia probe concluding only he, then-skipper Steve Smith and his deputy David Warner were responsible. They were all sent home in disgrace and banned.

In a statement to several Australian media outlets, Cummins' manager Neil Maxwell said: "Pat's position hasn't changed in eight years. He's been consistent and adamant from day one. Pat feels for Cam of course. He has been through a lot. We would urge people to again read Pat's interview transcript."

"There is nothing he hasn't answered and that includes in response to what Cam has now said. Pat has rebuilt the Australian cricket team. That 24-year-old in Cape Town resolved to fix the team and spent eight years doing it," he added.

Cummins resumed training yesterday, alongside Josh Hazlewood, ahead of a Sheffield Shield game, but was tight-lipped. Calls are mounting for his position to be reviewed. "Pat Cummins' future as Test captain should be placed under immediate review after Cameron Bancroft's stunning accusation that the skipper didn't tell us the truth," *The Australian* newspaper said in an opinion piece.


Australia captain Pat Cummins resumed training yesterday, alongside Josh Hazlewood, ahead of a Sheffield Shield game, but was tight-lipped about Cameron Bancroft's explosive revelations. *(Reuters)*

National broadcaster ABC agreed with the sentiment, saying "his position as captain of the Australian Test team is now questionable", while the *Sydney Morning Herald* stated: "Cummins' captaincy in peril".

The naming of Australia's squad for their home Test series against New Zealand in December-January was expected this week but has now been pushed back. Hours before Bancroft's revelations, Cricket Australia said it would not reopen its investigation but instead set up a forum for players to share their experiences about 2018.

Chief executive Todd Greenberg also declared Cummins' version of events was not under scrutiny. "No, the captain doesn't need to be cleared. No one's looking to be cleared," Greenberg said.

Bancroft had suggested in a 2021 interview the bowling group, including Cummins, knew about the scheme. In response, Cummins, Hazlewood, Mitchell Starc and Nathan Lyon all denied publicly they were aware of the plan. Starc reiterated his stance last week. Hazlewood and Lyon have yet to comment. Neither has Smith.

Bancroft said he felt "angry and betrayed" by Cummins' denials. "It was not just the three of us – Steve Smith, David Warner and I – who knew about me using sandpaper on the ball in South Africa. It was the whole team," he wrote. "The final straw for me to write this account was Australian cricket captain Pat Cummins's press conference."

In a brief interview with broadcaster Channel Nine, Bancroft said he felt "freed" by coming clean. "Obviously, yesterday was a really big day for me. Really emotional day and obviously been carrying a lot of this stuff for a long period of time," he said. "I feel really freed and really happy to be able to do that."

He refused to answer when asked if Cummins should stand down. In other revelations, Bancroft claimed Warner first raised the prospect of using sandpaper during the second Test at Port Elizabeth and coaches Darren Lehmann and David Saker were "certainly present" during talks about the issue.

Lehmann, who quit in the days after Cape Town, has denied knowing anything. Speaking on ABC radio during the third Australia v England one-dayer in Hobart on Wednesday, he said he would work through Bancroft's allegations. "It's only just come to light. I just need to sit back and process all that and work through each allegation," he said.

FOCUS

Sri Lanka fightback delays Pakistan victory in 2nd Test

'We have an 80-run-plus lead. If we could add another 15-20 then it's game on'

AFP
Rawalpindi

Sri Lanka mounted a resilient rearguard to stave off an innings defeat and frustrate Pakistan yesterday, reaching 309-9 on day three of the second and final Test in Rawalpindi.

Milan Rathnayaka hit an unbeaten 60 while Sonal Dinusha (54) and Kusal Mendis (53) defied Pakistan's pace attack, avoiding an innings defeat and delaying a result.

At close, Asitha Fernando was the other unbeaten batter on two as the tourists batted in all three sessions to add 235 runs after resuming on 74-3.

The visitors now lead by 82 runs and will hope for a miracle to avoid a defeat or pull off a win.

Sri Lanka's fightback was aided by a hamstring injury to Pakistan fast bowler Saqib Khan, who was unable to bowl on Thursday, weakening the hosts' attack as the Pindi Stadium pitch became easier to bat on.

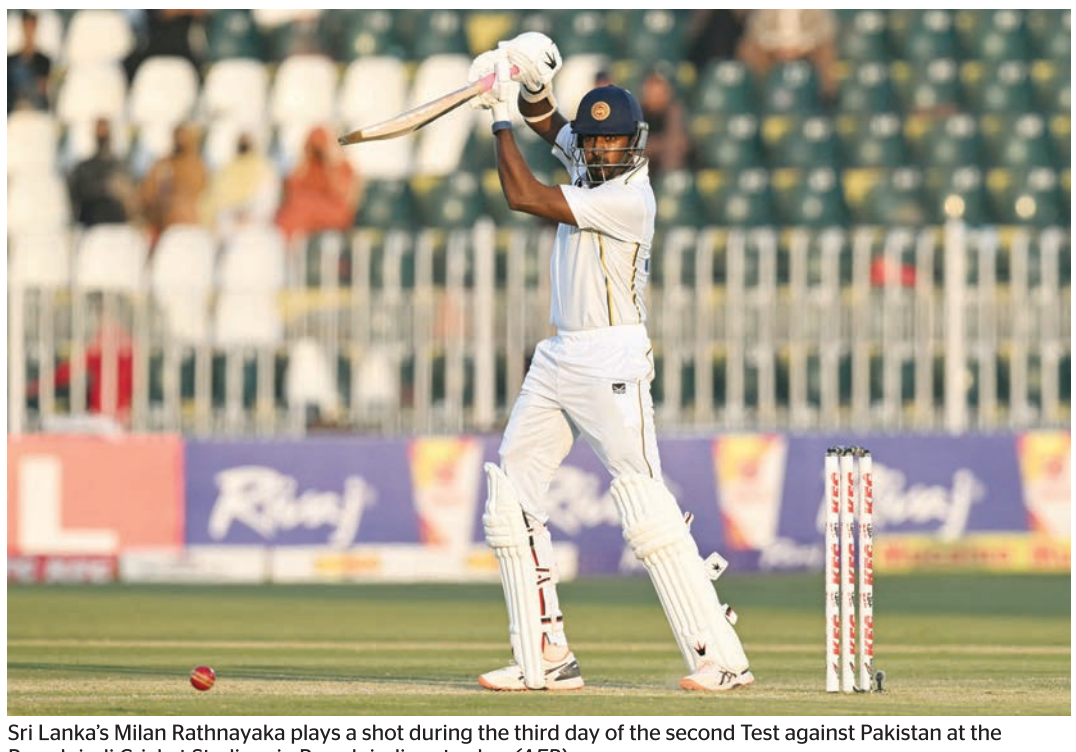
Pakistan wicketkeeper Ghazi Ghori praised the home side's bowlers despite the injury to Saqib Khan.

"Unfortunately one of our bowlers got injured but the other three strived hard and made up for that loss," said Ghazi.

"We are confident that we can chase the target but we will need to do it with discipline."

Sri Lanka batter Sonal Dinusha said his team still had a chance of pulling off an upset.

"I am happy with the way we batted," said Dinusha.


Sri Lanka's Milan Rathnayaka plays a shot during the third day of the second Test against Pakistan at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium in Rawalpindi yesterday. *(AFP)*

"We have an 80-run-plus lead so if we could add another 15-20 then it's game on."

On 167-5 at lunch, Sri Lanka were staring at an innings defeat, but Dinusha and Sri Lanka skipper Kusal put on a fighting 81-run stand for the sixth wicket, leaving Pakistan frustrated.

Kusal hit a miscued sweep off spinner Salman Agha onto his stumps, trudging off in disappointment. He hit eight boundaries in his 24th Test half-century.

Kusal, who reached 5,000 Test runs when on 13, became the 12th Sri Lankan to achieve the milestone, doing so in his 77th Test.

Dinusha and Rathnayaka then prolonged the fight as the duo erased Pakistan's 227-run lead, adding 53 for the seventh wicket.

It was Aamer Jamal who broke the stand with the second new ball, getting Dinusha caught at mid-wicket by Azan Awais off a miscued pull shot. Dinusha's resolute knock had seven boundaries. Jamal was the pick of the bowlers with 3-67, while Mohammad Abbas took 2-54.

Earlier in the morning, Jamal had provided Pakistan with an early breakthrough when he trapped Dhananjaya de Silva (37) lbw with a sharp incoming delivery.

Razaullah also had Pasindu Sooriyabandara (38) caught brilliantly by wicketkeeper Ghazi Ghori diving to his left.

BRIEF SCORES: Sri Lanka 98 and 309 for 9 (Rathnayaka 60*, Dinusha 54, Mendis 53, Jamal 3-67) **lead Pakistan 325** (Ghori 54, Awais 47, Razaullah 42, Kumara 5-95) **by 82 runs.**

JO'BURG TEST

Harmer spins South Africa to win over Bangladesh

AFP
Johannesburg

Simon Harmer cleaned up the Bangladesh tail to help South Africa to a nine-wicket victory in the first Test at the Wanderers Stadium yesterday, before it was revealed that the hosts will have to do without their captain Temba Bavuma for the rest of the series.

South African skipper Bavuma will miss the second Test against Bangladesh, which starts next Monday in Centurion, because of a calf injury that he suffered while batting during the first match of the two-Test series.

"It's frustrating," he told journalists at the end of day five. "I'm under the supervision of the medical team and in that rehab process now to get ready as soon as I can."

The win took South Africa to the top of the current World Test Championship table with six wins from their eight matches in the competition.


South Africa's Simon Harmer (left) celebrates after the dismissal of Bangladesh's Mehidy Hasan Miraz in Johannesburg. *(AFP)*

It was also Bavuma's 14th win in 16 Tests as captain - a record achieved by no other captain in Test history. Off-spinner Harmer took six wickets for 51 runs as Bangladesh were bowled out for 168 after starting the final day on 100 for five.

South Africa needed just 12 runs to win but Bangladesh off-spinner Mehidy Hasan had first innings top-scorer Marques Ackerman caught at slip for a duck before it was achieved.

Looking ahead to the rest of South Africa's programme, which includes the second Test against Bangladesh, three home Tests against England and two away against Sri Lanka, Bavuma said: "The pressure is always there.

"I think the expectation is going to keep rising in terms of what we are trying to do as a team. How we try to deal with it is to stay internally focused."

Bavuma suffered a right calf strain which forced him to retire hurt on the third day. He resumed batting the next day but did not field during Bangladesh's second innings. Bangladesh captain Najmul Hossain Shanto said scoring 400 in the first innings after deciding to bat first was a sign of the progress being made by the team, with the Wanderers pitch known for assisting the bowlers in the early stages.

"Normally we don't win the toss and bat in these kind of conditions. This is a big plus," he said.

Shanto added that Bangladesh's fast bowlers had performed well in recent years but it was disappointing that South Africa had been able to score 557 in their first innings.

BRIEF SCORES: South Africa 557 (Ackerman 157, Rickelton 102, Mahmud 4-118) **and 12 for 1** (Markram 8*, Mehidy 1-1) **beat Bangladesh 400** (Hridoy 137, Litton 120, Rabada 5-70) **and 168** (Litton 39, Harmer 6-51, Rabada 3-48) **by 9 wickets.**

SPOTLIGHT

Nicholls ton, Phillips 94 not out script NZ recovery after 70 for 5

AFP
Wellington

Henry Nicholls scored an unbeaten 113 yesterday as New Zealand overcame a brilliant return from India's Jasprit Bumrah to end the first day 243-5 in the first Test in Wellington.

Nicholls and Glenn Phillips, who was 94 not out, rescued New Zealand from 70-5 shortly after lunch, their 173-run partnership giving the hosts the honours on a testing opening day.

They were made to fight through spells of relentless fast bowling from Bumrah, playing his first Test in almost a year.

The 32-year-old took the wicket of captain Tom Latham with the third ball of the innings after India captain Shubman Gill won the toss and ended with 3-52 from 17 overs.

Outside of Bumrah, New Zealand's batsmen were barely troubled following a difficult opening session prompted by India captain Shubman Gill winning the toss and deciding to bowl.

Nicholls arrived at the crease on the fourth ball of the morning, defending stoutly and restricting the use of his favoured cut shot.

The result was a composed and controlled hundred that relied on patience more than swashbuckling stroke play.

It was Nicholls' 12th Test hundred and his sixth at the Basin Reserve.

"You play at a venue like this and against a team like India, it's a special occasion," Nicholls said.

"For me it's just trying to enjoy that, get in the fight, assess what's in front of you and put us in a good position."

Nicholls found an able partner in Phillips, who walked to the crease shortly after lunch and immediately found his timing with powerful drives and deft cut shots.

The pair blunted Bumrah after his three early wickets and cashed in on more wayward bowling from the other quicks, Akash Deep, Anshul Kamboj and Prasidh Krishna.

"He's great," Nicholls said of Phillips.

"The way he counter-attacks, the way he runs between the wickets, we gel quite well in that respect.

"I find whenever you bat with someone who's looking to put that much pressure on the bowlers, sometimes it can make your job a little easier."

Nicholls gave his first chance on 102, Devdutt Padikkal dropping the simplest of catches after a mistimed pull shot.

Bumrah had left-hander Latham trying to leave only to see the ball swing back into his off stump.

He then removed Daryl Mitchell after a sharp catch from Yashavsi Jaiswal at short leg, and added Tom Blundell to his ledger after lunch, caught at first slip.

He was the only bowler who hit consistently good lengths on a Basin Reserve wicket with ample grass that demanded fuller deliveries aimed at the stumps.

Indian batting coach Sitanshu Kotak said the less experienced bowlers could learn from how Bumrah adjusted to New Zealand conditions.

"Not only with his line and length, but the amount of movement he gets, the way his bowl talks," Kotak said.

"We can learn from where Bumrah bowls and how he adjusts things and the skill he possesses."

New Zealand were 60-4 at lunch with Conway falling to Kamboj (1-57) as he edged a full ball to wicketkeeper Rishabh Pant.

Rachin Ravindra and Nicholls combined for a 39-run partnership before Ravindra slashed at a short ball, edging to Pant for 15 of Deep (1-33).

BRIEF SCORES: New Zealand 243 for 5 (Nicholls 113*, Phillips 94*, Bumrah 3-52) *vs India.*


New Zealand's Henry Nicholls plays a shot during day one of the first Test against India in Wellington yesterday. *(AFP)*

TENNIS

Shelton on brink of ATP Finals last four after beating Jodar

AFP
Turin

American Ben Shelton beat Spaniard Rafael Jodar 7-6 (10/8), 7-5 to take a big step towards the semi-finals of the ATP Finals yesterday.

With his second win in three group-stage matches, world number four Shelton moved closer to joining Alexander Zverev and Carlos Alcaraz in the last four.

The American, 24, had to work hard against Jodar who held two set points in the first set tie-break. After clinching a hard-fought opening set that lasted over an hour, Shelton quickly broke Jodar's serve in the second.

Trailing 3-1 and then 4-2, the 10th-ranked Spanish newcomer mounted a comeback.

The 20-year-old levelled at 4-4 and then took a 5-4 lead but eventually wilted, losing three consecutive games and falling to his third defeat of the week in his debut at the elite season-ending event.

"It was really tough," said Shelton.

"Rafa is a great player. So many weapons and such a great competitor as well. I knew it wasn't going to be an easy match going in and I was happy to get through some tough moments in the first set, early, when I was down break points to get to the tie-break.

"When I was in the tie-break, I felt confident. A tricky second set and being up a break and losing it. But I think I fought well and competed well. The 5-5 game was a dogfight and I am really happy to get that W."

Shelton will be in the semis unless seventh-ranked Frenchman Arthur Fils beats world number one Zverev in straight sets.

Jodar said he was "super proud" of what he had achieved during a whirlwind breakthrough season.

"I didn't know what I was going to face and what we could expect in the first season," he said.

"I've given everything on court in every match that I've played. That is something that I'm very proud of, not giving up in any match.

"It's very difficult to compete against these types of guys. You have to pay a lot of attention to every detail. You have to play at a very high level, not having many ups and downs during the match.

"That's what I've learned this year, that if you want to compete against the best players in the world, you have to have a consistency during the tournaments and during the months to be at the top."

Meanwhile world number three Alcaraz is awaiting the results of an MRI scan he underwent Thursday on a hamstring injury picked up in his win over Russia's Daniil Medvedev on Wednesday.



USA's Ben Shelton hits a return to Spain's Rafael Jodar during the ATP Finals match in Turin yesterday. *(AFP)*

HORSE RACING

Dumonet keeps perfect record with back-to-back wins

DUMONET CLAIMS THE LATE SHEIKH ALI BIN FALEH AL THANI CUP

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Nasser Essa al-Kuwari's Dumonet maintained his unbeaten record this season, securing back-to-back feature race victories with a win in the The Late Sheikh Ali Bin Faleh Al Thani Cup yesterday.

At Al Uqda Racecourse, the Ibrahim Saeed Al-Malki-trained four-year-old gelding produced a sweeping late charge under jockey Patrick Cosgrave in the 2100m Thoroughbred Conditions contest, overhauling his rivals before pulling decisively clear in the closing strides.

Inherent dictated a steady pace throughout the early and middle stages, with Kovanof tracking the leader while Cosgrave patiently bided his time aboard Dumonet. The tempo increased over the final 800m as the runners began to position themselves for the decisive stages. Kovanof took command early in the home straight, but Aablan and Aafoor were quick to close on the new leader. With the three seemingly set to fight out the finish, the complexion of the race changed dramatically inside the final 200m.

Dumonet came storming from behind, producing a devastating burst of acceleration that rendered the efforts of his rivals futile. Having swept past the leading trio, the gelding pulled decisively clear in the closing strides to seal another memorable triumph.

Al Jeryan Stud's Aafoor emerged from the battle for the minor honours to secure second under Szczepan Mazur for trainer MHK al-Attiyah. Thor's Hammer, carrying the colours of Al Rufaa Racing, finished a further ¾ length behind in third for trainer Jassim al-Ghazali and jockey Alberto Sanna.

Dumonet had earlier made his mark in Qatar with his first local victory, landing the 1600m Thoroughbred feature to claim the QA Gr3 Barzan Cup at Al Rayyan Racecourse on October 29 and take his career tally to five wins.

Makhmal Al Shahania and Basham Al Shahania gave Rudy Nerbonne a quick-fire double with two winning debuts before Monapia prevailed in a pulsating blanket finish. Real Trouble made an impressive Qatar debut while Al Jaish's pillar-to-post victory gave Elvis Guerra his first success in Qatar. Fighter stole the show with a remarkable front-running performance before Dumonet took the honours in the feature race.

Al Sij Al Sakab made a triumphant seasonal return while Flame Fair rounded off proceedings with a commanding victory, completing a double for his connections.


Sheikh Mohammed bin Faleh al-Thani presented The Late Sheikh Ali Bin Faleh Al Thani Cup to the connections of Dumonet, accompanied by QREC Chairman Hamad bin Abdulrahman al-Attiyah yesterday. **PICTURES:** *Juhaim*


Jockey Patrick Cosgrave takes Dumonet past the winning post in the Thoroughbred Conditions (Class 2) for the The Late Sheikh Ali Bin Faleh Al Thani Cup at the Al Uqda Racecourse yesterday.

RESULTS

13th Al Uqda Race Meeting - The Late Sheikh Ali Bin Faleh Al Thani Cup
(Horse, Trainer, Jockey)
Thoroughbred Handicap 0-70 (Class 6) (Division 2)
Flame Fair, Deborah Amanda Clare Mountain, Mohammed Hassan Ali Alabdulmalik
Local Purebred Arabian Handicap 80-110 (Class 2)
Al Sij Al Sakab, Jassim Hamad al-Atteya, Jefferson Smith
The Late Sheikh Ali Bin Faleh Al Thani Cup - Thoroughbred Conditions (Class 2) (Shalfa Qualifier)
Dumonet, Ibrahim Saeed al-Malki, Patrick Cosgrave
Thoroughbred Handicap 85-105 (Class 2)
Fighter, Deborah Amanda Clare Mountain, Mohammed Hassan Ali Alabdulmalik
Local Thoroughbred Conditions (Class 2)
Al Jaish (QA), Elvis Armas Guerra, Faleh Bughenaim
Thoroughbred Novice Plate (2yo Only) (Class 5)
Real Trouble (IRE), Hamad al-Jehani, Soufiane Saadi
Thoroughbred Handicap 75-95 (Class 3)
Monapia (FR), Ahmed al-Jehani, Arnaud De Lepine
Purebred Arabian Maiden Plate (3yo Only) (Class 6)
Basham Al Shahania, Rudy Andre Nerbonne, Soufiane Saadi
Local Purebred Arabian Maiden Plate (Class 6)
Makhmal Al Shahania (QA), Rudy Andre Nerbonne, Saleh Salem al-Marri.

EQUESTRIAN

Al-Mansoori, Noora shine in Hathab Tour

By Sports Reporter
Doha

The sixth leg of the 10th edition of the Longines Hathab Qatar Equestrian Tour began yesterday, with Amer Hamad al-Mansoori winning the Silver Tour and Noora Jassim al-Thani claiming the Amateur class. The tour, organised by the Qatar Equestrian Federation in partnership with Al Shaqab, runs through June 2027.

Al-Mansoori clocked 40.37 seconds on Gatsby to take the Silver Tour, ahead of Hamad Nasser al-Qadi, who finished in 41.02 seconds on Happy Tina, while Saad Ahmed al-Saad was third in 41.19 seconds on Fashion. Khalid Sanad al-Nuaimi, a member of the tournament's organising committee, presented the awards to the top three finishers.

In the Amateur class, Noora claimed first place in 17.02 seconds aboard Jabana. Nasser Hamad al-Thani was second in 17.87 seconds on Equinox, while Al Reem Hamza al-Kuwari finished third in 18.07 seconds on Ardfrey. The awards were presented by Saeed al-Rashdi, deputy tournament director.

The competition continues today with the Future Riders round, set at 70cm and contested over two phases, followed by an Open round at 110cm. The day will conclude with the Gold round for individuals and teams at 140cm, featuring a points-accumulation format with a Joker obstacle.


In the Amateur class, Noora Jassim al-Thani claimed first place in 17.02 seconds aboard Jabana.

167 Horses to Compete in Qatar Local Arabian Horse Show

The Qatar Racing & Equestrian Club (QREC), chaired by Hamad bin Abdulrahman al-Attiyah, will host the 6th Qatar Local Arabian Horse Show for Local Bred at the outdoor arena of the Qatar Equestrian Federation from November 20 to 22, with 167 horses set to compete over three days.

The event follows the conclusion of the 6th Qatar Arabian Breeders Cup, which witnessed keen competition and highlighted the dedication of Qatari owners to breeding high-quality Purebred Arabian show horses.

Speaking ahead of the event, Show Director Majid Nasser al-Kaabi said the first two days would feature qualifying classes, with the champions in the colt, filly, mare and stallion categories to be crowned on the final day.

"A large number of Qatari studs and farms are taking part in the show, including Mudhar Stud, Al Adeed Stud, Al Sraiya Stud, Al Buraq Stud, Al Dawasir Stud and Al Obayyah Stud, alongside several other owners," al-Kaabi said.

He added: "The qualifying classes will feature yearling, two-year-old and three-year-old colts and fillies, mares aged 4-6 and 7-11 years and over, and stallions aged 4-6 and 7-11 years and over. The yearling colt and yearling filly classes have each been divided into two sub-classes due to the high number of entries in their respective classes. The qualifiers will compete for the championship titles on the final day when fierce competition for gold medals is expected across all championship classes."

The 5th Qatar Local Arabian Horse Show for Local Bred, held in October last year, saw six horses crowned champions across the championship classes. Salma Al Wajba, owned by SK Arabians, claimed gold in the Yearling Filly Championship while Barq Umm Aludham of Al Gewan Stud took top honours in the Yearling Colt Championship. Sheikh Hamad bin Ali al-Thani celebrated a golden double as Farida Mudhar and Essam Mudhar won the Junior Filly and Junior Colt Championships respectively. Elham Al Jamal of Al Yusufiya Arabians secured the gold medal in the Mare Championship while Bahi Al Jaham of Al Jaham Stud claimed the Stallion Championship title.



KENYAN MARATHON CHAMP JEPCHIRCHIR GETS 3-YEAR DOPING BAN

Reigning marathon world champion Peres Jepchirchir has been banned for three years for doping, the Athletics Integrity Unit (AIU) said yesterday, in the latest blow to the reputation of Kenyan athletics. The highly decorated 33-year-old Jepchirchir, who also won Olympic gold in the Covid-delayed Tokyo Games in 2021, was suspended after an out-of-competition sample showed traces of the banned blood booster EPO. The AIU confirmed she had been given a full ban for three years from October 20.

Two other Kenyan runners were banned. Veronica Loleo, half-marathon silver medallist at the World Road Running Championships in 2026, was given three years for the same offence. And Ronald Korir, a fourth-place finisher in the 2023 Berlin Marathon, received a six-year ban after he was unable to explain abnormalities in his Athlete Biological Passport.

They join more than 140 Kenyan athletes, including current women's marathon world record-holder Ruth Chepngetich, who have been suspended or banned by the AIU since 2017. "The Kenyan authorities have made a lot of progress in the fight against doping in the last five years, but these cases highlight that there is still a long way to go," AIU chief executive Brett Clothier said in a statement.

The AIU said Jepchirchir's out-of-competition sample had been collected in Kenya prior to her victory in the Sydney Marathon in August.

Jepchirchir has had a lauded career - a former world record-holder in the half-marathon, a four-time World Marathon Major winner, and titles in the 2024 London Marathon, the 2022 Boston Marathon, and the 2021 New York Marathon.

FIFA PRESIDENCY

Union of Arab FAs backs Infantino for another term

Infantino to face Diallo and Tashima for the FIFA president's post

Reuters
Cairo

The Union of Arab Football Associations (UAFA) said it backed Gianni Infantino's candidacy for another term as FIFA president.

UAFA said in a statement its endorsement recognised Infantino's efforts and contributions to the development and growth of football during his tenure

The organisation said those efforts, along with the work of FIFA's leadership, had contributed to the continued development of football worldwide The election will take place in March 2027, with Infantino set to face challengers for the first time after being re-elected unopposed in 2019 and 2023

FIFA said yesterday that Infantino would face challengers Philippe Diallo, president of the French Football Federation, and Kozo Tashima, honorary president of the Japan Football Association.

Infantino has faced repeated calls to resign since the collapse of his FIFA Forward Enterprise (FFE) proposal, which sought private investment in a new entity controlling commercial rights linked to major FIFA competitions, including the World Cup. He subsequently abandoned the project and apologised over the way it was handled at a closed FIFA Council meeting.

UAFA, founded in 1974, represents 22 national football associations across Africa and Asia, and its backing gives Infantino the endorsement of an established regional body.

Infantino gave his best wishes to the candidates, saying in a statement that the election was a celebration of the sport's democratic values "Let this be an electoral period of positive ideas – for the betterment of our global game – carried out with honour, respect and in the spirit of fair play which our game stands for," Infantino said

INFANTINO HANDS OUT TROPHIES AS IRAN'S BEIRANVAND WINS AFC PLAYER OF THE YEAR AWARD

Meanwhile, Infantino handed out trophies at the Asian Football Confederation annual awards yesterday, including to Iran goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand as AFC Player of the Year, hours after he was confirmed as running for reelection.

The Swiss met a number of global football's powerbrokers at the awards in Thailand, including AFC President Salman bin Ibrahim al-Khalifa.



Iran's Alireza Beiranvand receives the men's AFC player of the Year award from FIFA President Gianni Infantino and Asian Football Confederation president Salman bin Ibrahim al-Khalifa at the AFC award ceremony in Bangkok. *(Reuters)*

Beiranvand received his trophy from Infantino and Sheikh Salman. North Korea's Kim Kyong Yong won the women's award.

The 34-year-old Beiranvand is the first keeper to win the trophy since it was introduced in 1994 and the fifth Iranian named the continent's best player, following Khodadad Azizi, Ali Daei, Mehdi Mahdavikia and Ali Karimi. He was recognised for his performances at club level with Tractor FC and for the national team. "Receiving this award is an incredibly historic, unforgettable and emotional moment in my life," said Beiranvand.

"But above all I feel an immense sense of happiness and pride in representing my country. I do not see this award as an individual achievement. It is an honour that belongs to the people of Iran."

Beiranvand won the men's award ahead of Saudi Arabian duo Feras al-Brikan and Salem al-Dawsari and was recognised for his performances at the World Cup, where Iran narrowly missed out on a place in the knockout rounds.

Kim became the second player from North Korea to win the women's award after being recognised for her performances in Naegohyang FC's title-winning campaign in the Asian Women's Champions League. Go Kuroda was named men's coach of the year after steering Japan's Machida Zelvia to the Asian Champions League Elite final, where they lost to the Matthias Jaissle-coached Al-Ahli of Saudi Arabia. Iran's Marziyeh Jafari retained the women's coaching award for her work with Bam Khatoon in the Asian Women's Champions League.

South Korea's Lee Kang-in was the men's International Player of the Year after featuring for Paris Saint-Germain in their Champions League triumph this year, while Australia's Caitlin Foord won the women's award, having claimed the Champions Cup with Arsenal.

CRICKET

Sri Lanka, Bangladesh cruise to victories at Asia Cup Rising Stars

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Sri Lanka 'A' and Bangladesh 'A' made winning starts to their Asia Cup Rising Stars campaigns with commanding victories over Afghanistan 'A' and Hong Kong respectively in Doha yesterday.

At the West End Park International Cricket Stadium, Sri Lanka 'A' produced a disciplined bowling display before cruising to a six-wicket win over Afghanistan 'A'.

After opting to bowl, Sri Lanka's attack bundled out Afghanistan for 139 in 35.3 overs, with Darwish Rasooli standing out with a determined 80 off 89 balls, including eight fours and two sixes.

Rasooli received little support from the other end as Sri Lanka's bowlers kept a firm grip on the innings. Left-arm spinner Chamika Heenatigala led the charge with an impressive three for 11, while Nipun Dhananjaya claimed two for 10.

The modest target posed few problems for Sri Lanka, who reached 144 for four in just 21.4 overs. Lasith Croospulle top-scored with 40 off 48 balls, while Nishan Madushka contributed 30. Captain Pavan Rathnayake remained unbeaten on 29, with Sineth Jayawardene adding 28.

At the University of Doha for Science and Technology, Bangladesh 'A' enjoyed an equally comfortable outing, chasing down Hong Kong's 219 for eight with eight wickets and nine overs to spare.

Captain Saif Hassan and Yasir Ali were the architects of the victory, combining for an unbroken 113-run partnership. Saif led from the front with an unbeaten 86 off 116 deliveries, while Yasir struck a brisk 71 not out from just 51 balls to complete a dominant chase.

Bangladesh had lost opener Parvez Hossain Emon for 12 early in the innings, but Saif steadied the response alongside Shahadat Hossain Dipu. The pair added 84 for the second wicket before Dipu fell for a valuable 43.

Earlier, Hong Kong made a shaky start after being put in to bat, slipping to 52 for three before Anshy Rath and Aizaz Khan revived the innings with a 128-run fourth-wicket partnership.

Rath made 77, while Aizaz contributed 67, but their dismissals in quick succession halted Hong Kong's momentum. Iqbal Hossain Emon was Bangladesh's leading bowler with three for 33.

BRIEF SCORES

Afghanistan 'A' 139 in 35.3 overs (Darwish Rasooli 80, Chamika Heenatigala 3/11, Nipun Dhananjaya 2/10, Wanuja Sahan 2/28, Janith Liyanage 2/28) **lost to Sri Lanka 'A' 144/4 overs in 21.4** (Lasith Croospulle 40, Nishan Madushka 30, Pavan Rathnayake 29*, Sineth Jayawardene 28) by 6 wickets

Hong Kong 219/8 in 50 overs (Anshy Rath 77, Aizaz Khan 67, Iqbal Hossain Emon 3/33) **lost to Bangladesh 'A' 220/2 in 41 overs** (Saif Hassan 86*, Yasir Ali 71*, Shahadat Hossain 43) by 8 wickets.



Lasith Croospulle top-scored with 40, while Nishan Madushka contributed 30 as Sri Lanka 'A' beat Afghanistan 'A' at the West End Park International Cricket Stadium in Doha.

Pochettino vows to ease pressure on struggling Man United players

London: Mauricio Pochettino said he wants to ease the pressure on Manchester United's under-performing players as he prepares for a baptism of fire at Liverpool on Sunday.

The former Tottenham and Chelsea boss, who wrapped up his reign as United States coach just days ago, said he would "start from zero" as the new manager at Old Trafford.

Pochettino, 54, who replaces the sacked Michael Carrick, has a huge job on his hands, with the 20-time English champions in the relegation zone after their worst start to a league campaign for 40 years.

The Argentine, speaking to in-house media in his first full interview as United boss on Thursday, said he wanted to free up his players as he aims to create a winning culture.

"The players need to express their talent," he said. "We need to create the environment and the platform for the players to perform. That is the most important thing. And that is our priority now. It is to work with them and try to take the pressure. Pressure needs to bring energy, the responsibility needs to bring energy.

"Because if not, it is too heavy to put all that pressure and responsibility on your back. When you connect with the game, you connect through your talent and when you feel freedom, when you feel happy, when you want to play for your team-mates, when you want to play for your family, when you want to play for your club, your fans, that is what we need to create all together."

Egyptian singer Saad to headline Saturday Night at F1 Qatar GP

Doha: Lusail International Circuit (LIC) has announced that Egyptian singer and composer Ahmed Saad will take to the Lusail Live stage on Saturday, November 28.

Known for his fresh pop and Arabic music, Saad is also a philanthropist dedicated to social causes and will bring a regional flavour to the race weekend.

Born in Cairo and raised in an artistic family, Saad graduated from a Higher Institute of Music in Egypt and began his professional music career in 2003 with the release of his debut album, *"Ashki Le Meen"*, which was well received by audiences across the Arab world.

In 2007, following a series of successful singles, he released his second album, *"Waheshtini Oyounak"*, which included hit tracks such as *"Garhona"*, *"Kafaya Keda"* and *"Kol Leila"*. His growing presence on music television channels and the popularity of his music videos further boosted his profile, and he has since released over 100 singles.

Described as a shining star of Egypt, Saad has captivated millions of music enthusiasts across the globe, with songs that have become anthems of love and passion. His music



has earned him global recognition, including collaborations with international artists and a feature in the American TV series "Moon Knight".

Saad's soulful vocals have evolved over the years, transitioning from country music to pop and ultimately to Khaliji, and he is widely recognised as a "musical king" with forays into genres including Arabic pop, Khaliji and Egyptian pop.

His releases include *"Sayrina Ya Donia"*, *"El Eid"*, *"Wasa' Wasa"*, *"El Youm El Helw Da"*, and *"Aleiky Oyoun"* with the latter alone garnering 227 million views. His 2022 super hit album smashed sales records and earned him millions of fans worldwide, further cementing his place in the music industry.

In the build up to the performance, Saturday at the Formula 1 Qatar Grand Prix will feature qualifying session, setting the grid for the Grand Prix on Sunday.

Fans attending the Grand Prix can catch Saad live with entry included across all three-day ticket categories. A three day general admission ticket at Lusail Hill priced at QR600, and three-day grandstand tickets are also available in the main grandstand (QR2,000), the north grandstand (QR1,500) and the Turn 2 and Turn 16 grandstands (QR1,000).

University students can enjoy 20% off (from QR480) and senior citizens aged 60 and above can enjoy 25% off (from QR750), with valid ID. Access to Saad's performance is included with all ticket types.

Limited hospitality tickets are also available with the F1 Experiences Champions Club. Tickets are selling fast for Qatar's biggest motorsport and entertainment event. Fans can secure their place by visiting tickets.lcsc.qa.

FOCUS

Youth Games begin, inspiring a promising sporting future



The padel group-stage competition got underway at The Dome courts at Qatar Foundation yesterday.

By Sports Reproter
Doha

The inaugural edition of the 2026 Youth Games got underway on Wednesday evening. Organised by the Qatar Olympic Committee (QOC) in collaboration with the Qatar Shooting and Archery Association and the Qatar Padel Federation, under the slogan "Towards a Sporting Generation and a Promising Future."

The competitions are being held at The Dome at Qatar Foundation and the Lusail Indoor Shooting Range, attracting a large number of young sporting talents aged between 12 and 17. The initiative reflects the QOC's commitment to investing in the potential of the next generation and nurturing young sporting talent.

The boys' padel group-stage competition got underway at The Dome courts at Qatar Foundation, with 32 matches played across the under-14, under-16 and under-18 age categories.

Abdulrahman al-Mulla, Padel Competition Director at the 2026 Youth Games, said the Qatar Padel Federation attaches particular importance to the event, viewing it as a strategic opportunity to identify young talent and assess players' technical abilities.

This will help discover promising players and integrate them into a comprehensive development program aimed at building a new generation capable of representing Qatari padel with distinction at the Doha 2030 Asian Games and other upcoming continental and international competitions.

The Lusail Indoor Shooting Range hosted the 10m air pistol competitions for boys and girls under the age of 17.

The competitions saw ten shooters qualify for the boys' final, namely: Hassan Ali Sabri Mohamed Thabet, Nasser Mohammed Nasser Barman al-Rayashi, Ahmed Mohammed Mujtaba, Nasser Salah Mihdar Hussein Alkeldi, Yassein Hammad, Abdullah Hashem Thabit Abdullah al-Saadi, Essa Sultan Jassim al-Maadeed, Mohammed Edris Bin Ibrahim Souli, Mohammed Puthukkudi and Saeed Mubarak Ali al-Awami.

Meanwhile, the following ten shooters qualified for the girls' final: Joud Ali al-Kinani, Kady Ayman Saleh, Aljouri Salah Mihdar Hussain Alkeldi, Mashael Abdulmajid Abdulsamad Sheikh, Tasnim Boughogal, Lana Mohamed Abdelhamid Bahig, Aya Yusri al-Jahed, Wasayef Owaida Alhajri, Reem Faisal Almeer, and Fatima Nawaf Alhajri.

Masoud al-Athba, Shooting and Archery Competition Manager at the Youth Games, said athletes aged 12 to 17 are a key focus of Qatar's shooting development programme, receiving the support and training needed to join the Qatar senior team and represent the country at the Doha 2030 Asian Games and future international events.