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MOTOGP

Spaniard Marquez makes history with eighth MotoGP world title

Page 3

OCA chief meets ORDECA president and treasurer in El Salvador



HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani, President of the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA), met senior officials of the Central American Sports Organisation (ORDECA) in El Salvador to discuss ways to strengthen sporting cooperation and further support the Olympic Movement. The meeting was attended by Jose Armando Bruni Ochoa, President of ORDECA and the Olympic Committee of El Salvador; Jose Obaldo Zavala Valladares, Treasurer of ORDECA and President of the Honduran Olympic Committee; and Herman Pastor Jr., Vice President of the Belize Olympic and Commonwealth Games Association.

Perez praises al-Khelaifi for role in ending Super League dispute

Real Madrid President Florentino Perez praised Paris Saint-Germain president Nasser al-Khelaïfi on Saturday during the club's general assembly for his role in resolving the European Super League dispute. Speaking to delegate members at Real Madrid City in Valdebebas, Perez reflected on the peace agreement reached earlier this year with UEFA and European Football Clubs (EFC), formerly known as the European Club Association (ECA).



Addressing the assembly, Perez credited al-Khelaifi, who serves as chairman of the EFC, for brokering peace between the warring factions.

"We didn't come this far to win judgements but to implement them. And that's what we're doing," Perez said.

"Thanks to having the justice system on our side, on February 11th we reached an agreement not from a position of weakness, but from a position of reason, with UEFA, EFC, and ECA. "I want to thank al-Khelaifi and the owner of Chelsea for being key in bringing our positions closer together," he stated.

FIFA U-17 WORLD CUP QATAR

South Korea storm into Round of 32, Egypt defeat Qatar

'We put that game plan into practice, and communication between the players was excellent'

By Sports Reporter
Doha

South Korea became the first team to secure qualification for the Round of 32 at the FIFA U-17 World Cup Qatar 2026 after recording a convincing 6-0 victory over New Caledonia at Aspire Zone yesterday.

The action-packed day also saw Saudi Arabia claim an impressive victory over France, hosts Qatar suffer a 2-0 defeat against Egypt, and Uruguay and Greece strengthen their qualification hopes with important wins.

South Korea delivered a dominant performance against New Caledonia, scoring five goals in the opening 27 minutes to put the contest beyond their opponents. Kim Jiwoo was the standout performer, finding the net twice before completing his hat-trick after the break.

"Our game plan is about sharing the ball, sharing ideas and being the protagonists on the pitch. I think we were able to score because we put that game plan into practice, and the communication between the players was excellent. I'm happy I was able to contribute to the team, even in a small way," said Jiwoo.

Despite the heavy defeat, New Caledonia goalkeeper Sylvain Ipeze enjoyed a memorable moment by saving Ahn Sunhyun's penalty.

In Group D, Saudi Arabia produced one of the day's biggest surprises by defeating France through a clinical counter-attacking goal from Shaman Alkahtani.

The forward finished precisely after substitute Zaid Alburi broke down the left flank and delivered a dangerous cutback. Goalkeeper Abdullah Almas also played a crucial role, making several important saves to frustrate the French attack. The result moved Saudi Arabia level with France on three points. Greece strengthened their hopes of reaching the knockout stage with a dramatic late 2-1 victory over Panama. Georgios Siozios opened the scoring with a powerful long-range effort after capitalising on a loose pass. Panama responded through Estevis Lopez, who headed home after substitute Joseph Lopez created the opportunity.

However, Sarafianos Papasarafianos settled the contest in the closing moments, breaking through the middle before calmly slotting home the winner.

Egypt, meanwhile, celebrated their first victory of the campaign with a deserved 2-0 triumph over hosts Qatar. Captain Ahmed Safwat opened the scoring with an excellent volley from Ahmed Beshir's cleverly chipped pass.

Khaled Mokhtar doubled Egypt's advantage with a close-range finish. Despite Qatar's efforts to mount a comeback, Egypt's organised defence stood firm to secure all three points.

Group B produced two closely contested encounters. Ecuador and Uganda played out a goalless draw despite creating opportunities at both ends. Ecuador will now face South Korea in their final group match, while Uganda prepare to take on New Caledonia.

Denmark and Australia also shared the points after a hard-fought 0-0 draw. Elvin Mehicic came close for Denmark in the first half, while Australia's Akol Akon and Emmett Shaw threatened after the interval. However, neither side could find the breakthrough.

Argentina returned to winning ways with a 2-1 victory over Mozambique in Group C. Matheo Machuca and Simon Escobar gave the South Americans a two-goal advantage before Alirio Cuna pulled one back for Mozambique before half-time.

Argentina held on to claim their first win and revive their qualification hopes. Uruguay completed the day's action with an emphatic 4-1 comeback victory over Haiti, moving to six points from two matches in Group D. Marvenly Exilas gave Haiti a surprise lead, but Lautaro Muniz and Pablo Barreiro turned the game around before half-time. Nicolas Rodriguez and Alan Soares added two more goals after the break to seal an impressive victory. With qualification battles intensifying, yesterday's results have set up an exciting final round of group-stage fixtures as teams continue their pursuit of a place in the Round of 32.



South Korea's Kim Jiwoo celebrates after completing his hat-trick against New Caledonia yesterday.



Action from Qatar-Egypt Group A match.



Argentina's Simon Escobar celebrates after scoring a goal against Mozambique in a Group C match yesterday.

Al Shamal to meet Saudi's Al Ahli at Al Bayt today

Hosts Al Shamal will be on a mission to extend their unbeaten run against teams from Saudi Arabia when they meet Al Ahli Saudi FC in the AFC Champions League Elite 2026-27 at the Al Bayt Stadium today.

Qatar's Al Shamal sensationally defeated Al Hilal SFC 3-1 on Matchday Three, having earlier held Al Ittihad Club to a 1-1 stalemate.

Al Shamal, however, could not follow up their win against Al Hilal as they suffered a 1-0 defeat against Islamic Republic of Iran's Esteghlal FC three weeks ago.

They will be up for the challenge though as victory will see them not only drawing level with Al Ahli on eight points but also keep their Round of 16 hopes alive.

Al Shamal coach David Prats speaking ahead of the tie, said, "We are looking to perform at the required level and secure a win to keep our chances of qualifying for the round of 16 alive."

Meanwhile, Al Shamal's Algerian star Riyad Mahrez said, "Our focus is on securing a win despite the difficulty of facing a strong team."

Two-time defending champions Al Ahli, while still unbeaten, have endured an inconsistent campaign so far with two wins and two draws.

Their Dutch coach Marino Pusic said, "We are ready for the match, and our goal is to win and keep competing for the continental title."

They will, however, be confident of their chances as not only are Al Ahli unbeaten in their last AFC Champions League Elite matches, they have not tasted defeat in their last 13 games against teams from Qatar in the competition.



Al Shamal coach David Prats

CRICKET

SPOTLIGHT

India post 720/9 and pick up two late Kiwi wickets

'I just wanted to stay there as long as possible and just make my impact'

Reuters
Wellington


India's Rishabh Pant plays a shot during day four of the first Test against New Zealand at the Basin Reserve in Wellington yesterday. *(AFP)*

New Zealand were 119-2 at the close of play as they fought to save the first test after India declared on 720-9 with an imposing first-innings lead of 352 on the fourth day in Wellington yesterday.

Rishabh Pant earlier scored a century as India, desperate for points to stay in the race for the World Test Championship final, put the tiring home bowlers to the sword to bump up their record tally ahead of the declaration.

New Zealand's hopes of a result rest on batting for much of the remainder of the match and forcing a draw despite losing Tom Latham for a duck and first-innings centurion Henry Nicholls for 31.

Opener Devon Conway, who scored his 22nd Test half-century on his way to an unbeaten 59, and Rachin Ravindra (27 not out) will resume on day five with the Black Caps still 233 runs from forcing India to bat again.

India's pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah (1-33) again made an early breakthrough by sending Latham back from the second ball of the innings, the New Zealand skipper edging behind to take a pair.

Nicholls, whose 175 was the backbone of New Zealand's first-innings 368, got an edge and a bit of thigh pad on a Prasidh Krishna delivery and Dhruv Jurel showed stunning reflexes to take the catch at short leg.

Jurel had earlier become the sixth batter to score a half century in India's innings before being caught in the deep for 78, triggering the declaration an hour before tea. India had resumed on 486-4 on another sunny morning at the Basin Reserve with the clear intent of pushing their 118-run lead out to the sort of tally that would take the possibility of a New Zealand victory out of the equation.

There are few better batters for such a task than Pant and the swashbuckling wicketkeeper showed the full range of his shots as he approached his ninth test hundred.

"I just wanted to stay there as long as possible and just make my impact," Pant said.

"I just keep it simple most of the time. Whenever I see the ball, I try to hit it. I think that if it's in my area, I'll try to hit it for sure."

He reached the milestone with a booming six over long-off and two more soon afterwards took him to 108 sixes in his Test career, the most of any batter apart from England's Ben Stokes (138).

"Mostly whenever I'm trying to get 100, I try to get it with a six. But because of that, I've also missed a lot of hundreds," Pant added. "So I was very patient about it, but when the mid-off came up, I was like, 'This is the right opportunity. I might take it'."

Pant was finally caught on the boundary for 128 off the bowling of Ravindra to bring up lunch but the punishment for New Zealand continued into the second session. India's final score was well clear of their previous best innings tally in New Zealand of 520 all out in Hamilton in 2009 - a match they won by 10 wickets.

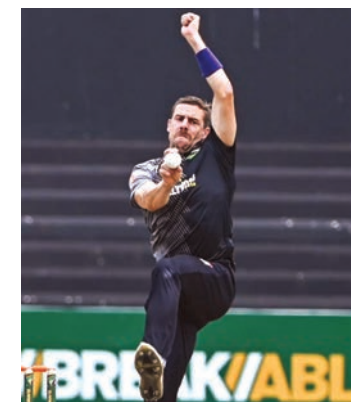
All-rounder Glenn Phillips (3-154) picked up a couple of wickets as the Indian batters went for their shots ahead of the declaration to make his figures a bit more respectable. Seamer Jacob Duffy, though, finished with unenviable figures of 1-201 from his 33 overs, only 28 runs shy of New Zealand's most expensive ever bowling display, which spinner Stephen Boock tallied against Pakistan in 1989.

BRIEF SCORES
New Zealand 368 and 119 for 2 (Conway 59*, Ravindra 27*, Prasidh 1-20) **trail India 720 for 9 dec** (Rahul 136, Pant 128, Gill 98, Jaiswal 85, Padikkal 80, Jurel 78, Phillips 3-154) **by 233 runs**

PREVIEW

South Africa make two changes for second Test against Bangladesh


Tony de Zorzi


Anrich Nortje

Reuters
Gauteng Province, South Africa

South Africa have made two changes to their starting XI for the second and final Test against Bangladesh in Centurion today, with batter Tony de Zorzi and fast bowler Anrich Nortje included as the home side seek to win the series.

Stand-in captain Aiden Markram confirmed the team on Sunday with De Zorzi included in place of regular skipper Temba Bavuma, who has a calf injury. Nortje comes into the side for Dane Paterson.

South Africa won the first Test by nine wickets, strengthening their position at the top of the World Test Championship table as they look to defend the title they claimed against Australia at Lord's last year.

Markram said the wicket looks as though it will have pace and bounce as the game goes on.

"This looks like a pretty typical Centurion wicket," he said. "Generally, it can start off on the slower side and it just quickens up throughout the game.

"It's known for a bit of pace and bounce, but also known as a venue where you can score big runs if you get in."

Markram has stood in for Bavuma before and said the way the team operates will make it easy for him to do so again.

"We've worked really well, to be honest," he said. "Temba is still going to be around this week, so I think it's quite a smooth transition, if there even is a transition.

"Shuks (coach Shukri Conrad) is obviously really strong in his ways as well, and from my point of view, it's just about trying to carry those good things forward and trying to get a pulse of the game as quickly as you can, assessing conditions as quickly as you can and coming up with plans from there."

Bangladesh scored 400 in their first innings at The Wanderers and took the Test to the fifth day. Markram praised their application and expects more of the same at Centurion.

"They batted well. They made 400 in the first innings, and first-innings runs, especially of that amount, will keep you in the game for quite a long period of time," he said.

ANNOUNCEMENT

England's Jacks out of T20 Australia tour due to hand injury

Reuters
Sydney



England all-rounder **Will Jacks** has been ruled out of the remainder of the white-ball tour of Australia after suffering a broken hand, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) said yesterday.

The 28-year-old sustained the injury while attempting a caught-and-bowled chance off Ben Dwarshuis during Australia's three-wicket victory in the opening Twenty20 International in Melbourne on Saturday.

England have not yet named a replacement for Jacks, who had been earmarked to captain the side in the fifth and final T20 in Canberra on December 2, with regular skipper Harry Brook set to leave the tour early to prepare for England's trip to South Africa.

Australia lead the five-match series 1-0 with the second match set to be played tomorrow in Queensland.

MATCH REPORT

Nawaz's all-round show trumps Tilak's ton in Doha

By Sports Reporter
Doha


Hasan Nawaz (third right) celebrates with his Pakistan teammates during their Asia Cup Rising Stars match against India A at West End International Cricket Stadium in Doha yesterday.

Pakistan yesterday clinched a thrilling 48-run victory over arch-rivals India in a high-scoring encounter, driven by a commanding all-round masterclass from Hasan Nawaz on day three of Asia Cup Rising Stars tournament.

India A captain Tilak Varma stroked his second successive century in the tournament with an exact score of 100 but still ended on the losing side.

Batting first, Pakistan posted a formidable total of 313. The foundation was laid by crisp half-centuries from top-order batters Maaz Sadaqat (59) and Farhan Yousaf (56), who rotated the strike effortlessly and punished loose deliveries.

However, it was Nawaz who provided the late acceleration, hammering a blistering 79 to propel Pakistan past the 300-run mark. For India, bowlers Vipraj Nigam (2-46) and Suryansh Shedge (2-55) fought valiantly, picking up timely wickets to prevent the total from ballooning completely out of reach.

In reply, India's chase got off to a flying start, powered by an aggressive 70 from Abhishek Sharma. Skipper Varma anchored the innings with immense composure, crafting a magnificent century that kept Indian hopes alive deep into the contest.

Despite Varma's heroics, the mounting scoreboard pressure proved decisive. Nawaz returned with the ball to dismantle the middle order, claiming 3-45, while pacer Ali Raza matched his effort with 3-56. India eventually folded for 265.


India A captain Tilak Varma (right) and teammate Shahbaz Ahmed during their Asia Cup Rising Stars match against Pakistan yesterday.

Pakistan captain Abdul Samad said: "Thanks to Almighty Allah for the win. The way our openers put the opposition under pressure was exception after which Hasan Nawaz and I did the job. Everyone was exceptional with the bat today. The message was clear that we have to put a good total on this wicket. We knew we needed to score more than 300 as India are a good batting side." India captain Varma said: "The way Abhishek started and how Shahbaz contributed was very important. Unfortunately he got out, but had he stayed with me for a couple of overs, we could have finished the game. Credit to the two Pakistan fast bowlers how they bowled tight lines and lengths. For me the best is winning the game, which was not the case today. Had any batter supported me, I could have finished the game."

In another match yesterday, Nepal beat the UAE by six wickets. Batting first, UAE scored 121 in 39.5 overs. In reply, Nepal scored 123-4 in 22 overs.

BRIEF SCORES
Pakistan 313 (Nawaz 79, Sadaqat 59, Farhan 56, Nigam 2-46, Shedge 2-45) **beat India 265** (Tilak 100, Abhishek 70, Nawaz 3-45, Ali Raza 3-56) **by 48 runs**

Hazlewood says was never close with Khawaja but has no issues with book



Australia fast bowler **Josh Hazlewood** said he and Usman Khawaja were never particularly close but that he bore no resentment towards his former teammate over an autobiography which has reignited debate around the 2018 ball-tampering scandal.

Khawaja alleged in his book that knowledge of the plan to use sandpaper on the ball during the tour of South Africa extended beyond the three players who were sanctioned over the scandal.

Hazlewood has said he had no knowledge of the plot and the 35-year-old suggested his limited interaction with Khawaja outside the team environment.

"In any work environment, whether it be sport or in the office, and you have a team of 20, there's two or three who you just don't get along with in terms of hanging out," Hazlewood said in an interview in News Corp newspapers.

"You get on with each other to a professional point of view... and I didn't hate them or avoid them at all costs, but I didn't go out of my way to hang out with them.

"It wasn't the closest team. It's been thrown around now about bowlers versus batters, but at that point in time, it might have been true to a degree."

Hazlewood said he had no issue with either the publication or timing of Khawaja's book '*Sabr*'.

"Nothing really sat badly with me...

"If that's how he wants to portray things and tell his story, then go for it," he added.

SPOTLIGHT

MotoGP star Marquez wins record 8th premier class title

Race won by Marco Bezzecchi, who held a 102-point advantage over Marquez at one stage this season

Reuters
Portimao, Portugal

Ducati's Marc Marquez sealed the 2026 MotoGP crown at the Portuguese Grand Prix yesterday, his eighth-place finish enough to establish an unassailable lead in the standings and place him alongside the great Giacomo Agostini on eight premier-class titles.

Marquez needed to finish in the top nine in Sunday's race and despite starting second on the grid, the Spaniard rode with caution to finish eighth and seal the title with a round to spare.

The race was won by Marco Bezzecchi, who held a 102-point advantage over Marquez at one stage this season, while his Aprilia team mate Jorge Martin and Trackhouse rider Raul Fernandez completed the podium.

However, all eyes were on Marquez, who marked the occasion by scaling a scaffold to address the cheering fans before watching a big-screen montage of the defining moments of his career.

As a final flourish, the Spaniard ascended a staircase accompanied by the silhouette of a goat on the screen, a nod to his growing 'Greatest of All Time' status, before receiving a golden commemorative helmet from Agostini himself.

He then attached another plaque with his name engraved on it on the Tower of Champions before embracing and lifting it over his head.

"We need to be happy. I know that we are here celebrating a historic moment. I know how I suffered," said an emotional Marquez, who underwent double surgery midway through the season.

"I know that in the middle of the season, the fans believed more than I did.

"My people believed more than I did. But I kept pushing, I kept doing my best.

"I said last year that it was a championship where I was at peace with myself. This one is for all the fans that believed in me from 2020 until now. So thanks to all of you, this is for all of you."

Marquez came agonisingly close to securing the title in Saturday's sprint but his hopes were dashed when he crashed out on the penultimate lap while running in third place, a finish that would have been sufficient to crown him champion.

But unlike Saturday's overcast conditions and spots of rain on the circuit, yesterday's 25-lap race was held in bright sunshine.


Team Ducati Lenovo Team's Marc Marquez celebrates with supporters after becoming the new world champion following the Portuguese Grand Prix at the Algarve International Circuit in Portimao. *(AFP)*

Martin needed to outscore Marquez by 18 points while the Ducati rider's equation was far more simple: secure a top-nine finish regardless of his rivals' results to get his hands on the trophy. Marquez had been cautious in the sprint but this time he shot off the line to take the lead from polesitter Bezzecchi while several riders jostled for position behind him, with Martin moving up from seventh to fourth.

But Marquez was soon swallowed up by the faster Aprilia bikes around him, with the championship leader quickly falling to seventh as he exercised caution amid aggressive overtaking.

A crash from Pedro Acosta moved Marquez up to sixth but he had to concede two places to Fabio Di Giannantonio and Ai Ogura, with the Ducati rider happy to open the door to let them pass knowing eighth would be good enough for the title.

Up front, Bezzecchi finally moved past Fernandez to take the lead on lap 15 while Martin also found a way past three laps later with an identical overtake to make it a factory Aprilia one-two.

On lap 19, Marquez fell to ninth as KTM's Brad Binder nudged him aside to overtake and there was concern from his legion of fans at the Algarve International Circuit, but a crash from Diogo Moreira on the last lap moved Marquez up to eighth.

"Super happy about the season, obviously some highs and some lows, but my best season in MotoGP so far," said Bezzecchi, who missed races with his own injuries.

"Still a lot of things to improve. But congrats to Marc, he really deserves everything.

"He's one of the strongest riders in history, so to fight with him is an honour.

"Hopefully next year I will fight again and make his life even harder."

TENNIS

Alcaraz downs Zverev to win ATP Finals in Turin

AFP
Turin

Carlos Alcaraz won the ATP Finals with a 6-2, 7-6 (9/7) victory over world number one Alexander Zverev in the title match in Turin yesterday.

After becoming the youngest man to complete a career Grand Slam at the start of the season with victory in the Australian Open, the 23-year-old has bookended an up-and-down year with a first title at the season-ending showpiece tournament.

Alongside Roger Federer, Andre Agassi and Novak Djokovic, Alcaraz now forms part of an exclusive list of men to have won all four majors and the ATP Finals.

With his illustrious compatriot Rafael Nadal never managing to win the season-ending tournament, Alcaraz became the first Spanish champion since Alex Corretja in 1998.

A wrist injury caused Alcaraz to miss a good chunk of the middle of the season and following that victory in Melbourne he failed to add to his seven major titles.

But since returning in August, he has enjoyed a blistering end to the year, winning his last 14 matches to capture trophies at the Vienna Open, the Paris Masters for the first time and now the elusive ATP Finals.

He lost in the season-ender's final to Jannik Sinner last year, but with the injured Italian having curtailed his season, Alcaraz found himself again in the Turin title match against a world number one.

Zverev, a two-time ATP Finals champion, broke his Grand Slam duck this season by claiming the French and US Opens, catapulting him above Alcaraz and Sinner to the top of the rankings.


Spain's Carlos Alcaraz poses with the trophy after victory against Germany's Alexander Zverev during the title clash of the ATP Finals in Turin yesterday. *(AFP)*

The top two seeds in Italy, Alcaraz and Zverev were a cut above the rest all throughout the tournament, both topping their respective pools with three wins from three.

The first set of Alcaraz's semi-final win over Ben Shelton was the only frame either player had dropped all week.

Indeed Zverev had marched into the final without dropping a service game, but he was mightily tested straight out of the traps by Alcaraz as the world number three forced three break points in the very first game before the German dug in to hold.

Alcaraz was not so wasteful two games later, however, as he broke Zverev to love when the 29-year-old overcooked a mid-court forehand.

Zverev forced break-back points in the next game but, after failing to convert, he was left to rue his luck even further as the Spaniard broke to 30 to grow his lead to 4-1.

Zverev wiped out one break but Alcaraz was nonetheless firmly in the ascendancy and pounced for a third time on the Hamburg native's serve in an entertaining seventh game which saw Zverev dejectedly chuck his racquet to the floor after netting a smash from an Alcaraz tweener lob.

A netted backhand by Zverev - his 19th unforced error of the match - on Alcaraz's first set point then brought an end to a surprisingly sloppy opening frame.

The rampant Alcaraz closed in on victory in the third game of the second set as he again broke the out-of-sorts Zverev to love.

But there was a twist in the tale as Zverev broke back to level at 4-4, before confidently consolidating and asking Alcaraz to serve to stay in the set.

Despite falling love-30 down, Alcaraz rallied to hold and, with both players again solid on serve, the set went the distance.

The Murcian took a 3-0 lead in the tie-break before Zverev won the next six points to bring up three set points.

But the Spaniard struck back to wipe them out before getting a mini-break to bring up championship point on his own serve.

The first went begging when he whipped a forehand into the tramlines but he brought up a second with a drop-shot and sealed the title with with a backhand.

China's Wang wins in Hong Kong but 'must work harder' to stop An

Hong Kong: Wang Zhiyi won badminton's Hong Kong Open in style yesterday and then said she needs to work harder if she is to stop world number one An Se-young from making history. With reigning Olympic and world champion An absent to recharge her batteries, China's Wang powered to the title without dropping a game all week.
In a year where South Korea's An has dominated, Wang beat Thailand's Pornpawee Chochuwong 21-16, 21-11 in the women's final.
It was the 26-year-old Wang's second title of the year, having stunned An in the final of the prestigious All England Open in May.
That was the only blip in a phenomenal season for An, who has not lost since and has otherwise been unbeatable in clinching 11 titles in 2026. An will return to action at the season-ending BWF World Tour Finals next month in Hangzhou and if she wins will be the first player in history -- man or woman -- to clinch 12 titles in a season.
There was more disappointment for Thailand in the men's title decider, with Kunlavut Vitidsarn pulling out of the final against Denmark's Anders Antonsen because of a back injury.
Malaysia celebrated their first men's doubles crown in Hong Kong in 27 years.
Man Wei Chong and Tee Kai Wun defeated Indonesia's Leo Rolly Carnando and Daniel Marthin 21-19, 21-18.
On a successful day for Malaysia's doubles teams, Pearly Tan and Thinaah Muralitharan sealed the women's doubles title.



FORMULA 1

Brilliant Verstappen wins Las Vegas Grand Prix



Red Bull Racing's Dutch driver Max Verstappen celebrates on the podium after winning the Las Vegas Grand Prix at the Las Vegas Strip Circuit. *(AFP)*

AFP
Las Vegas

Red Bull driver Max Verstappen roared to a superb victory at the Las Vegas Grand Prix on Saturday, holding his nerve in a thrilling 50-lap battle to claim the 75th win of his career.

Verstappen dug deep to fend off Mercedes' newly crowned world champion Kimi Antonelli and teammate George Russell in a race that saw a jaw-dropping 35 lead changes.

McLaren's Lando Norris took second place while Oscar Piastri finished third at the end of a hectic final few laps which saw Russell strike a wall before Antonelli faded down the stretch.

"Crazy, I mean really, really surreal - something that I've never seen before in Formula One myself," Verstappen said after clinching victory by six tenths of a second.

"Just a crazy amount of fighting. The slipstream was so big that it was just impossible to drive off. Crazy how many people were just following.

"So yeah, very happy with such a crazy race to come out on top."

Verstappen's victory leaves the Dutchman second in the standings with 304 points, with Ferrari's Lewis Hamilton third on 267 points. Russell is fourth with 264 points, the same total as Norris.

With the drivers' championship already settled, Verstappen started on pole looking for a win to boost his chances of finishing second behind Antonelli.

The pre-race build-up had been dominated by talk of tension between Verstappen and Mercedes' driver Russell, who had been irked by the Dutch driver during Friday's final practice.

Russell had angrily declared that "somebody has got to stand up to that guy", and for long periods of Saturday's thriller the 28-year-old British driver seemed determined to take on the challenge.

Russell swarmed all over his rival, with the duo swapping first and second throughout a chaotic race but Verstappen always looked to have the Briton's measure.

Eventually it was Antonelli who emerged as Verstappen's biggest threat, the Italian passing Russell to take second on lap 39 and then scrapping relentlessly with Verstappen for the remainder of the race. Russell's challenge came to an abrupt end on lap 48 as he locked up and clipped a wall. Antonelli then suffered a loss of power that allowed Norris and Piastri to force their way onto the podium.

"I think that must have been the most chaotic race ever in the history of Formula One," Norris said afterwards.

"I didn't know what was happening half the time. It had everything. It was tough. A fun day. Chaotic. But a fun day."

Teammate Piastri added: "They say Las Vegas is the entertainment capital of the world and I think that was pretty entertaining.

"Every time you caught the back of the train or you overtook someone you thought you were going to win the race by 10 seconds, but then you'd get ahead and suddenly realize that the slipstream was doing a lot of help," the Australian added. "A crazy race to be part of but very happy to end it on the podium."

There was drama behind the leaders, with Ferrari duo Hamilton and Charles Leclerc locking horns - and cars - once again after their tussle at the Mexican Grand Prix.

Hamilton and Leclerc collided as they battled on lap 38. Hamilton eventually finished in seventh place, with Leclerc crossing in 10th.

It marked another stormy episode between the two Ferrari drivers, with Hamilton at one stage urging the pit team to tell Leclerc to "back off" as he attempted to chase the leading pack. Leclerc and Hamilton had also clashed at the Mexican Grand Prix on the opening lap, wrecking the team's hopes of victory.

FOCUS

Lusail International Circuit readies for F1 Qatar Grand Prix

By Sports Reporter
Doha



With just a week remaining before the Formula 1 Qatar Airways Qatar Grand Prix 2026, Lusail International Circuit is putting the final touches to preparations for the three-day event, scheduled to take place from November 27 to 29.

At a press conference held at the circuit yesterday, officials outlined the progress made in preparing the venue, the entertainment and fan experiences planned for the race weekend, and the coordinated efforts of key partners to ensure the successful delivery of one of Qatar's major international sporting events.

Representatives from Lusail International Circuit, the tournament security force, Ooredoo and Visit Qatar attended the briefing, highlighting their respective roles in ensuring a safe, seamless and world-class experience for spectators, teams and visitors.

During the briefing, Lusail International Circuit provided an update on the venue's readiness, highlighting infrastructure, operational planning, entertainment and fan engagement. The focus remains on delivering a seamless experience for spectators, teams, media and all stakeholders throughout the race weekend.

On the occasion, Ali al-Dosari, Executive Director of Operations at Lusail International Circuit said: "With just one week to go, we are ready to welcome fans, teams, and drivers back for the Formula 1 Qatar Airways Qatar Grand Prix 2026. Our priority is to deliver a smooth, safe and memorable experience for every fan, team and stakeholder attending the Grand Prix. Our teams have been working throughout the year, and particularly over the past few weeks, to ensure that all operational, logistical and spectator arrangements are in place ahead of the event."

"I would like to extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to all our partners for their continued support and valuable contributions to the success of this event. We also thank all teams and stakeholders for their efforts and dedication in completing the preparations, and we look forward to welcoming fans to Lusail International Circuit next week."

Fan experiences will once again play a prominent role in the 2026 Grand Prix, with a diverse programme of activities and entertainment extending beyond the on-track action. Highlights include post-race concerts on Saturday featuring Egyptian music icon Ahmed Saad, followed by an electrifying performance by international artist Jason Derulo on Sunday. With a strong focus on accessibility, inclusivity and sustainability, the programme is designed to deliver a well-rounded experience for all, catering to different audience interests while encouraging greater participation and engagement throughout the race weekend.

The tournament security force further outlined its role in supporting the safe and secure delivery of the Grand Prix, highlighting the coordination, planning and operational measures in place to manage the anticipated influx of spectators and ensure the safety of visitors throughout the event.

On the occasion, Captain Abdulla al-Sulaiti from the tournament security force commented, "Our priority is to ensure that every spectator enjoys a seamless, safe and memorable experience throughout the race weekend. This begins from the moment fans leave their accommodation, through their journey to Lusail International Circuit, their arrival and access to the venue, and right through to their return. We have worked closely with Lusail International Circuit, the organizing committee and all relevant stakeholders to ensure that every aspect of the spectator journey is carefully coordinated, with comprehensive arrangements in place to facilitate smooth access, efficient crowd movement and a comfortable experience for everyone. We also encourage fans to plan their journeys in advance, arrive early and follow the designated routes and guidance provided. Through collective efforts and cooperation, we aim to ensure that every visitor leaves Qatar with wonderful memories of an exciting race and an exceptional experience at Lusail."

The participation of Visit Qatar, Destination Partner, and Ooredoo, Founding Partner, highlighted the importance of strategic partnerships in enhancing the overall event experience, reinforcing Qatar's position as a leading destination for international sporting and entertainment events, and showcasing their respective contributions to the Grand Prix.

Abdulhadi al-Marri, Senior Manager of Partnerships at Visit Qatar, said: "Hosting the Formula 1 Qatar Airways Qatar Grand Prix 2026 marks an important milestone in strengthening Qatar's position as a global sports tourism destination and provides an opportunity to showcase the country's diverse tourism offerings and experiences to a worldwide audience. Through our role as the Official Destination Partner of the event, Visit Qatar continues to deliver an integrated visitor experience that extends beyond the sporting action, inviting fans to discover the country's cultural, heritage and entertainment attractions, while enjoying its diverse hospitality and accommodation offerings. The event also reflects Qatar's advanced infrastructure and strong organizational capabilities, which position the country to host major international events and reinforce its standing as a destination that welcomes visitors from around the world throughout the year."

Sabah Rabiah al-Kuwari, Senior Director of Marketing Communications at Ooredoo Qatar said, "we are proud of our partnership in this global event and aim to deliver an exceptional connectivity experience for fans and organizers through our 5G+ network, the first of its kind in Qatar, offering higher speeds, greater capacity and enhanced reliability,"

He explained that Ooredoo has completed comprehensive network upgrades at Lusail International Circuit, enhancing coverage, increasing capacity and optimizing performance to ensure seamless, reliable connectivity throughout the race while supporting essential services and event operations. With preparations entering their final week, Lusail International Circuit continues to work closely with its partners and key stakeholders to deliver an exceptional race weekend for fans in Qatar and visitors from around the world.

PREMIER LEAGUE

Liverpool thrash Man United 4-0 in Pochettino debut

MCBURNIE STRIKES LATE AS HULL DENT BRIGHTON'S TITLE BID

AFP
Liverpool


Liverpool's Dominik Szoboszlai celebrates after scoring the opening goal during the Premier League match against Manchester United at Anfield in Liverpool yesterday. *(AFP)*

Mauricio Pochettino endured a nightmare start as Manchester United manager after Liverpool struck twice inside the first 13 minutes against 10 men to set up a 4-0 win at Anfield.

United never recovered from Leny Yoro's controversial red card after just eight minutes as Dominik Szoboszlai and Florian Wirtz quickly made Liverpool's man advantage count.

Teenager Rio Ngumoha rounded off a stunning individual with Liverpool's third before Victor Munoz completed the rout.

Defeat leaves United still rooted second bottom of the Premier League and gave Pochettino an early indication of the huge job he has ahead to restore the 20-time English champions to their former glories.

Liverpool climb into the top four and within seven points of leaders Arsenal to rekindle faint hopes of challenging for the title.

Pochettino answered United's call after Michael Carrick was sacked last week after winning just one of the Red Devils' first 10 league games in charge.

The Argentine has been linked with a move to Old Trafford for a decade, but failed to make a strong first impression on the United fans. Pochettino's bold team selection backfired with the centre-back pairing of Matthijs de Ligt and Yoro at fault for the game's decisive moment.

De Ligt, on his first Premier League start for nearly a year, let a long ball down the middle and go and allowed Alexander Isak to bear down on goal.

The Swedish striker took a heavy touch before he was clipped by Yoro, but referee Sam Barrott still deemed the French defender had denied a clear goalscoring opportunity and produced a red card.

Szoboszlai rubbed salt into United wounds by drilling home the resulting free-kick from the edge of the box.

Moments later Ngumoha skipped past Diogo Dalot and crossed for Wirtz to hook a shot in off the underside of the bar.

Having relegated Harry Maguire to the bench, Pochettino was forced to turn to the veteran centre-back just 22 minutes in to try and stem the bleeding.

United lost 7-0 at Anfield three years ago and a switch to a back five helped avoid similar damage, albeit with the help of some wayward Liverpool finishing.

Maguire made a brilliant block to deny Isak a third goal just before half-time. Bradley Barcola and Isak were guilty of wasting huge chances early in the second half.

But Barcola's blistering pace created Liverpool's third just after the hour mark.

The French international destroyed Lisandro Martinez for pace before picking out Ngumoha to slot home.

Wirtz rounded off one of his best Liverpool displays since a £100 million move from Bayer Leverkusen last year with the assist for Munoz to crash home the fourth goal eight minutes from time.

Liverpool fans rejoiced in their rivals' pain with chants of "you are going down".

United have not been relegated since 1974 but find themselves in a battle for survival despite still enjoying one of the biggest revenues in world football.

The 34 goals they have conceded in all competitions is the worst defensive record of any team in Europe's top five leagues this season.

Earlier Hull striker Oli McBurnie damaged Brighton's title challenge with a pair of stoppage-time goals to seal a 2-0 win after an inspired display from Tigers goalkeeper Konstantinos Tzolakis.

Brighton were left to rue Tzolakis's incredible performance and their lack of a ruthless touch in front of goal at the MKM Stadium on Sunday.

Crucially, the Seagulls finished with 10 men after Costinha was sent off for a second booking in the closing minutes.

McBurnie ensured Hull took advantage of Costinha's dismissal as the Scotland international struck twice in the final seconds.

Arsenal's 2-2 draw at Newcastle and Manchester City's 1-1 draw with Fulham on Saturday had given Brighton the chance to accelerate their title challenge.

Brighton have already beaten Arsenal and City this season to to emphasise their ability to trade blows with the Premier League's heavyweights. But their failure to kill off Hull suggested it remains unlikely they can keep pace with champions Arsenal over the course of an entire season.

LA LIGA

Leaders Barca mount impressive Villarreal comeback win

AFP
Barcelona

Spanish champions Barcelona came back from two goals behind to beat Villarreal 3-2 yesterday and restore their three point lead at the top of La Liga.

Barca edged clear of Jose Mourinho's Real Madrid, who had pulled level with them on Saturday after beating Celta Vigo. Two goals inside seven minutes from Tajon Buchanan and Tani Oluwaseyi gave Villarreal a commanding lead at Camp Nou and Barca winger Lamine Yamal missed a first-half penalty.

However, the Catalan giants struck three times in an 11-minute spell in the second half to claim victory.

Gerard Martin and Fermin Lopez pulled Barca level before Pau Navarro's own goal gave them the three points. Barca have now won four consecutive matches across all competitions since their Clasico defeat by Real Madrid in October.

"We suffered because we started the game badly, we let in two goals very early. I'll remember how the team reacted but we have to work to ensure this doesn't happen again," Barca midfielder Pedri told DAZN.

"Against a team like this you can't always turn things around from two down."

Barcelona coach Hansi Flick hailed his team's comeback, something they have made a habit of during his reign.

"We made two mistakes and they scored two times... but the reaction that we had was unbelievable," Flick told reporters.

The hosts were caught snoozing in the early afternoon sunlight and Buchanan fired Villarreal ahead in the fifth minute.

Lopez gave the ball away with a careless pass and Canada international Buchanan produced a perfect sliced effort from distance to send the visitors ahead.

Two minutes later Villarreal doubled their advantage when Oluwaseyi, another Canadian, broke in down the left flank and smashed an effort over Joan Garcia into the roof of the net.

Flick's side should have pulled one back when Oluwaseyi felled Yamal in the area and a penalty was given after a VAR review.

Yamal took it himself but dragged his effort against the post and wide.

The winger tried to make amends with a burst inside from the wing before half-time but Peter Gulacsi palmed away his cross-shot and the goalkeeper and his defence combined to thwart Eric Garcia on the follow-up. Barcelona came out invigorated in the second half and quickly dragged themselves back into the match.

Pedri shot wide and Gulacsi saved from Lopez's low effort before Martin found the net in the 57th minute. Pedri crossed the ball in from the left for the defender to head home.

Four minutes later Lopez slammed home the second after being teed up by Yamal, and the third was quick to follow.

A clever backheel pass by Yamal fed Eric Garcia, whose cross was bundled into the back of his own net by Navarro.

Substitute Anthony Gordon was denied by Gulacsi and then appealed for a penalty after a bump from Santi Comesana but went down too easily.

Barcelona's protests on the sidelines were vehement and referee Alejandro Hernandez Hernandez's report revealed Lopez, who had already been substituted off, was sent off for dissent, but had already walked down the tunnel before he could be shown a red card.


Barcelona's Fermin Lopez celebrates scoring an equalising goal during the La Liga match against Villarreal at Camp Nou Stadium in Barcelona yesterday. *(AFP)*