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Liverpool got timing of Gakpo deal right: Klopp



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Casamento rides Emperor Maximus to Qatar Derby win



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Australia hammer South Africa to win second Test to seal series

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LOSS

The King: Pele dies at 82

Pele, widely regarded as the best to have played the game, scored a world record 1,281 goals in 1,363 games



Reuters
Sao Paulo

Pele, the legendary Brazilian soccer player who rose from barefoot poverty to become one of the greatest and best-known athletes in modern history, died yesterday at the age of 82.

Sao Paulo's Albert Einstein hospital, where Pele was undergoing treatment, said he died at 3:27pm "due to multiple organ failures resulting from the progression of colon cancer associated with his previous medical condition."

The death of the only man to win the World Cup three times as a player was confirmed on his Instagram account. "Inspiration and love marked the journey of King Pele, who peacefully passed away today," it read, adding he had "enchanted the world with his genius in sport, stopped a war, carried out social works all over the world and spread what he most believed to be the cure for all our problems: love."

Pele had been undergoing chemotherapy since he had a tumour removed from his colon in September 2021.

He also had difficulty walking unaided since an unsuccessful hip operation in 2012. In February 2020, on the eve of the coronavirus pandemic, his son Edinho said Pele's ailing physical state had left him depressed.



In 2005, Pele joined late Argentina legend Diego Maradona at the launch of Aspire Academy in Doha.

Pele, whose given name was Edson Arantes do Nascimento, joined Santos in 1956 and turned the small coastal club into one of the most famous names in football.

In addition to a host of regional and national titles, he won two Copa Libertadores, the South American equivalent of the Champions League, and two Intercontinental Cups, the annual tournament held between the best teams in Europe and South America.

He took home three World Cup winner's medals, the first time as a 17-year-old in Sweden in 1958, the second in Chile four years later - even though he missed most of the tournament through injury - and the third in Mexico in 1970, when he led what is considered to be one of the greatest sides ever to play the game.

He retired from Santos in 1974 but a year later made a surprise comeback by signing a lucrative deal to join the New York Cosmos in the then nascent North American Soccer League.

In a glorious 21-year career he scored 1,283 goals.

Pele, though, transcended soccer, like no player before or since, and he became one of the first global icons of the 20th century.

With his winning smile and an aw-shucks humility that charmed legions of fans, he was better known than many Hollywood stars, popes or presidents - many if not most of whom he met during a six-decade-long career as player and corporate pitchman.

He credited his one-of-a-kind mix of talent, creative genius and technical skill to a youth spent playing pick-up games in small-town Brazil, often using grapefruit or wadded-up rags because his family could not afford a real ball.

Pele was named "Athlete of the Century" by the International Olympic Committee, "Football Player of the Century" by world soccer body FIFA, and a "national treasure" by Brazil's government.

His celebrity was often overwhelming. Grown adults broke down crying in his presence with regularity. As a player, souvenir-seeking fans often rushed the field following games and tore off his shorts, socks and even underwear.

His house in Brazil was less than a mile from a beach, but he didn't go there for some two decades because of fear of crowds.

Yet even in unguarded moments among friends, he rarely complained. He believed that his talent was a divine gift, and he spoke movingly about how soccer allowed him to travel the world, bring cheer to cancer patients and survivors of wars and famine, and provide for a family that, growing up, often did not know the source of their next meal.

"God gave me this ability for one reason: To make people happy," he said during a 2013 interview with *Reuters*. "No matter what I did, I tried not to forget that."



In 1973, Pele visited Qatar with his Santos team, defeating Al Ahli 3-0 in a friendly played at Doha Stadium.

PELE FACTFILE



Full name: Edson Arantes do Nascimento
Date of birth: October 21, 1940
Place of birth: Tres Coracoes, Brazil
Club career
• 1956-1974 Santos
• 1975-1977 New York Cosmos
Club honours
• Intercontinental Cup winner (1962, 1963)
• Copa Libertadores winner (1962, 1963)
• Sao Paulo state champion (1956, 1958, 1960, 1961, 1962, 1964, 1965, 1967, 1968, 1969, 1973)
• Sao Paulo state top scorer 11 times: 1957 (17 goals), 1958 (58), 1959 (45), 1960 (33), 1961 (47), 1962 (37), 1963 (22), 1964 (34), 1965 (49), 1969 (26), 1973 (11)
• Brazilian Cup winner (1961, 1962, 1963, 1964, 1965, 1968)
• North American Soccer League (1977)
International career
92 caps for Brazil, **77** goals
• First cap - 7/7/1957, Brazil 1 Argentina 2
• Last cap - 18/7/1971, Brazil 2 Yugoslavia 2
International honours
• World Cup winner - 1958, 1962, 1970 (pictured above)
• Copa America finalist - 1959
Distinctions
• Named athlete of the century by the International Olympic Committee (1999)
• FIFA Player of the Century (2000)
• Honorary Ballon d'Or winner (2014)
Selected records
★ Only player to win three World Cups
★ Youngest goalscorer in a World Cup final and youngest World Cup winner (age 17 in 1958)
★ 1,281 career goals in 1,363 matches (according to FIFA)
★ Brazil's all-time leading scorer (77 goals)
★ 127 goals in a calendar year (1959)
★ Eight goals in one game (Santos 11 Botafogo 0, November 1964)
Personal
• Married twice - Rosemeri dos Reis Cholbi (1966-1982) and Assira Lemos Seixas (1994 - present)
• Three sons, three daughters

'Pele is eternal': Neymar leads tributes to Brazil legend



Brazil's Pele celebrates after scoring the opening goal during the 1970 FIFA World Cup match against Italy at Estadio Azteca in Mexico City on June 21, 1970.

Neymar led the tributes to Pele after the Brazil legend's death yesterday as the Paris Saint Germain star said his iconic compatriot had "transformed football into an art".

Pele passed away aged 82 after suffering "multiple organ failure" following a long battle with cancer and the football world was quick to salute arguably the sport's greatest ever player.

Nicknamed "O Rei" (The King), Pele scored more than 1,000 goals before retiring in 1977.

Brazil forward Neymar hailed Pele, a three-time World Cup winner, in a social media post alongside two pictures of himself with the legend.

"Before Pele, '10' was just a number," the heir to Pele's famed shirt number wrote on Instagram.

"But that beautiful sentence is incomplete. I would say that before Pele, football was just a sport.

"He transformed football into an art, into entertainment... Football and Brazil gained status thanks to the King. He has gone, but his magic will remain. Pele is ETERNAL!"

Like Pele, France striker Kylian Mbappe shot to stardom after winning the World Cup at a young age.

Mbappe helped France lift the World Cup in 2018 and also scored a hat-trick in Les Bleus' dramatic penalty shoot-out defeat against Argentina in the tournament's 2022 final earlier this month.

"The king of football has left us but his legacy will never be forgotten. RIP KING," PSG forward Mbappe tweeted.

Former England World Cup winner Geoff Hurst hailed Pele as the "greatest of all time".

Hurst played against Pele in the 1970 World Cup, with Brazil winning a group stage match between the two countries 1-0, and rated the forward as the best he ever faced.

"I have so many memories of Pele, without doubt the best footballer I ever played against (with Bobby Moore being the best footballer I ever played alongside)," Hurst tweeted.

"For me Pele remains the greatest of all time and I was proud to be on the pitch with him. RIP Pele and thank you."

Hurst's record as the only man to score a World Cup final hat-trick - in England's 4-2 victory against West Germany in 1966 - was equalled by Mbappe in Qatar.





CRICKET

MATCH REPORT

Australia hammer South Africa to take the Test series

'I thought how Warner and Smith batted in the heat was pretty gutsy. (Mitchell) Starc and (Cameron) Green as well, put their injuries behind them and turned up'



The Australian team walks off after defeating South Africa on the fourth day of the second Test at the MCG in Melbourne yesterday. *(AFP)*

AFP
Melbourne

South Africa were on the wrong end of a "hammering" against rampant top-ranked Australia yesterday, losing the second Test by 182 runs and with it the series.

The loss capped a dismal first two Tests for the visitors who slumped by six wickets in the opener at Brisbane inside two days, with a potential face-saving third match at Sydney still to play.

"It is not easy at the moment. That was bit of a hammering," Proteas skipper Dean Elgar said.

Australia declared on Wednesday at 575-8 built on the back of man-of-the-match Warner's 200 and a gutsy 85 from Steve Smith in searing heat, in reply to South Africa's first innings 189, and then took complete control with the ball.

South Africa resumed day four on 15-1 after Elgar went for a duck before rain halted play early on Wednesday.

But their resistance didn't last long with three wickets falling before lunch at the Melbourne Cricket Ground and the rest in the second session as they succumbed for 204.

Temba Bavuma top-scored with 65 while Nathan Lyon took 3-58 in a depleted, injury-hit, attack.

"The win is right up there. We have had a number of great contests against South Africa over the years. It's really sweet and something to be proud of," said Australian skipper Pat Cummins.

"I thought how Warner and Smith batted in the heat was pretty gutsy. (Mitchell) Starc and (Cameron) Green as well, put their injuries behind them and turned up."

It leaves South Africa facing a trip to Sydney next week for the final Test with only pride to play for and potentially some changes to a batting line up that has largely failed to fire.

"We have got to do a lot of reflection going ahead once again. There are a few positives coming out of this Test but not a lot," Elgar said.

"There's lot to play for (in Sydney), South Africa are a proud cricketing nation and 2-1 sounds a lot better than 3-0," he added.

Australia will have a new-look team with Green and Starc already ruled out with finger injuries as they race the clock to be ready for a blockbuster series in India in February.

Josh Hazlewood is set to return for Starc after recovering from a side strain, with Green's replacement to be decided.

The wickets fell despite the hosts' attack being depleted, with Green, who took 5-27 in their first innings, not bowling due to a fractured finger.

Theunis de Bruyn (28), Sarel Erwee (21) and Khaya Zondo (one) all departed before lunch at the hands of Australia's high-class pace attack.

Then the spin of Nathan Lyon, and two careless run outs, ended any hope they had in the second session.

Starc was also nursing a bruised and bloodied finger, but he played through the pain and his sheer pace caused plenty of problems.

Erwee, who resumed on seven, hit a superb drive for four off him as his confidence grew, but Starc quickly got his revenge, trapping him lbw with a cracking yorker.

De Bruyn began on six and built up to 28, but he soon followed his teammate back to the pavilion.

This time Scott Boland did the damage, enticing an edge that was taken by the ever-reliable Smith in the slips for his 150th catch.

He is 14th on the all-time list, led by Indian great Rahul Dravid's 210.

South Africa were under the pump and needed to dig in, but Bavuma inexplicably attempted a single from Cummins and Khaya Zondo was easily run out by a Travis Head underarm throw.

It left them teetering at 65-4 before Bavuma and Kyle Verreynne knuckled down.

But Boland struck again soon after lunch with Verreynne, one of their best batsmen this series, out lbw for 33.

Lyon's spin removed Marco Jansen before another disastrous run out involving Bavuma, with Keshav Maharaj out after a confusing mix-up and Starc made a direct hit.

More weak dismissals by Lyon and a rare wicket for Smith ended the match.

SCOREBOARD

South Africa 1st innings 189
Australia 1st innings 575-8 decl
South Africa 2nd innings (overnight 15-1)

D. Elgar *c Carey b Cummins*	0
S. Erwee *lbw Starc*	21
T. De Bruyn *c Smith b Boland*	28
T. Bavuma *c sub (Harris) b Lyon*	65
K. Zondo *run out*	1
K. Verreynne *lbw Boland*	33
M. Jansen *lbw Lyon*	5
K. Maharaj *run out*	13
K. Rabada *c Cummins b Lyon*	3
A. Nortje *not out*	8
L. Ngidi *b Smith*	19
Extras (b1, lb5, nb2)	**8**
Total (all out, 68.5 overs)	**204**

Fall of wickets: 1-0 (Elgar), 2-47 (Erwee), 3-57 (De Bruyn), 4-65 (Zondo), 5-128 (Verreynne), 6-144 (Jansen), 7-174 (Maharaj), 8-176 (Bavuma), 9-177 (Rabada), 10-204 (Ngidi)
Bowling: Starc 18-4-62-1, Cummins 16-8-20-1 (nb2), Boland 15-2-49-2, Lyon 17-1-58-3, Smith 2.5-0-9-1
Man of the Match: Dave Warner

FOCUS

Australia captain Cummins hails 'gutsy' efforts from injured teammates



Australia's captain Pat Cummins signals for an umpire's review on the fourth day of the second Test against South Africa at the MCG in Melbourne yesterday. *(AFP)*

Reuters
Melbourne

Australia captain Pat Cummins hailed teammates Mitchell Starc and Cameron Green for their courage under fire after the injured duo played through pain to help the side complete a series-sealing victory over South Africa yesterday.

Paceman Starc snapped a tendon in the middle finger of his bowling hand during a fielding mishap on day one of the second test in Melbourne but bowled a full load and took a wicket on day four as Australia won by a thumping innings and 182 runs.

All-rounder Green retired hurt after his index finger was broken by an Anrich Nortje delivery but returned to the crease on day three to score an unbeaten 51, adding to his five-wicket haul earlier.

"(It's) probably a good time to mention all the incredible achievements this week. Starcy with a finger that's going to put him out for a few weeks, to have the bravery to go out and do that," Cummins told reporters.

"Cam Green, the same, 'gutsing' it out for us.

"We saw Steve Smith and Davey (Warner) on day two in 38 degrees - gutsy, gutsy innings.

"It just speaks volumes for the team at the moment. Everyone would do anything for each other so we're in a really good place."

The Boxing Day Test triumph gave Australia an unassailable 2-0 lead ahead of the third and final match in Sydney, while shoring up top spot in the World Test Championship.

It also capped an exceptional year for Australia in Test cricket, with Cummins's side winning seven out of 10 matches, including a series win in Pakistan.

After Sydney, Australia will switch focus to the tour of India in February with the Ashes in England to follow.

With veteran opener Warner shrugging off a lean run in a brilliant 200 in the Melbourne heat and a depleted attack still easily able to deal with South Africa, Cummins said he was leading a special Australian team.

"Yeah, probably the best Test team I've played in, just in terms of how well settled everyone is, how well everyone knows their gameplan," he said. "In terms of captaining I don't feel like I have to do much at all. Everyone looks after themselves. You just kind of make sure the buses are on time - which the team manager does.

"It's just in a really sweet spot at the moment. We know it's not going to stay like this forever. But I think we can just all kind of sit back and appreciate the place that we are in at the moment because it's really special

"We're having a hell of a lot of fun as well doing it together with some of our best mates."

Rashid named Afghanistan Twenty20 captain



DUBAI: Rashid Khan will captain Afghanistan in Twenty20 internationals after being named as the replacement for Mohamed Nabi by the Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB) yesterday.
Nabi stepped down as captain in November, after Afghanistan were eliminated from the T20 World Cup without winning a match. This will be Rashid's second stint as captain. The spinner resigned immediately after Afghanistan's squad was announced for the 2021 World Cup last year, saying the selection committee had not obtained his consent for the team. "I have the experience of leading my country before, there is a great bunch of guys with whom I have a good understanding and feel pretty comfortable," Rashid said. "We will try to stick together, will work hard to put things on the right track and bring pride and joy to our country and nation."
Rashid's first assignment as captain will be a three-match T20 series against the United Arab Emirates in February.

BOTTOMLINE

Pakistan fight to avoid defeat in the first Test



Pakistan's Abrar Ahmed (left) jokes with New Zealand's Kane Williamson during the fourth day of the first Test at the National Stadium in Karachi yesterday. *(AFP)*

AFP
Karachi

Pakistan will need to bat-out the last day to avoid defeat in the first Test after New Zealand gained the upper hand yesterday through a masterly undefeated double-hundred by Kane Williamson in Karachi.

Trailing by 174 runs after the first innings, Pakistan finished the fourth day on a precarious 77-2, with Imam-ul-Haq on 45 and nightwatchman Nauman Ali four.

Pakistan have lost their last four Tests - including a first-ever 3-0 whitewash at the hands of England - and are now 97 runs behind with eight wickets intact.

The home team's task of salvaging a draw shouldn't ordinarily be onerous on a National Stadium pitch that has not so far taken sharp turn, but their propensity for middle-order collapses recently has given New Zealand the sniff of victory. Opener Abdullah Shafique was the first wicket to fall as he played an injudicious lofted shot off spinner Michael Bracewell, and was caught at mid-on for 17.

Then Shan Masood was adjudged leg before off Ish Sodhi for 10 before Haq and Nauman saw off the day.

Earlier, Williamson's unbeaten double century enabled the visitors to declare their first innings on 612-9 - a good 174-run lead over Pakistan's 438. Williamson reached 200 with a single off spinner Abrar Ahmed, batting for ten hours and striking 21 boundaries and a six in an innings which saw him overturn two leg-before decisions on 13 and 116. He also survived two stumpings off spinner Nauman on 15 and 21.

Resuming on 440-6, Williamson and Sodhi defied Pakistan's bowling in the first session as the pair took the total to 595 before their seventh wicket stand was broken. Sodhi was caught off Ahmed for 65 to better his previous best, also against Pakistan in Abu Dhabi in 2018.

"It's nice to be part of a number of partnerships that has given us a competitive total and put us in a reasonable position," said Williamson, who has now scored a double century every year for the last four.

But he still thought it would be tough to force a win.

SCOREBOARD

Pakistan 1st innings 438
New Zealand 1st innings (overnight 440-6)

T. Latham *c sub (Ghulam) b Ahmed*	113
D. Conway *lbw b Nauman*	92
K. Williamson *not out*	200
H. Nicholls *b Nauman*	22
D. Mitchell *c Sarfaraz b Ahmed*	42
T. Blundell *lbw b Wasim*	47
M. Bracewell *c Wasim b Ahmed*	5
I. Sodhi *c Azam b Ahmed*	65
T. Southee *c Masood b Nauman*	0
N. Wagner *c Salman b Ahmed*	0
Ajaz Patel *not out*	0
Extras (b7, lb11, nb1, w2, penalty 5)	**26**
Total (for 9 wkts dec, 194.5 overs)	**612**

Fall of wickets: 1-183 (Conway), 2-231 (Latham), 3-272 (Nicholls), 4-337 (Mitchell), 5-427 (Blundell), 6-436 (Bracewell), 7-595 (Sodhi), 8-596 (Southee), 9-597 (Wagner)
Bowling: Hamza 26-3-83-0, Wasim 34-6-105-1, Ahmed 67.5-8-205-5, Nauman 63-5-185-3 (1nb, 2w), Azam 4-1-11-0
Pakistan 2nd innings

A. Shafique *c sub (Phillips) b Bracewell*	17
Imam-ul-Haq *not out*	45
S.Masood *lbw b Sodhi*	10
N. Ali *not out*	4
Extras: (nb1)	**1**
Total (for two wkts, 31 overs)	**77**

Fall of wickets: 1-47 (Shafique), 2-71 (Masood)
Bowling: Southee 6-3-8-0, Patel 9-1-29-0, Bracewell 9-1-23-1, Sodhi 7-1-17-1 (1nb)
Toss: Pakistan

FOUR-TIME CHAMPION NASSER SALEH AL-ATTIYAH GETS READY FOR 2023 DAKAR RALLY





Toyota's driver Nasser Saleh al-Attiyah of Qatar and his co-driver Mathieu Baumel of France ride during a training session by the Red Sea in Yanbu ahead of the 2023 Dakar Rally which will take place in Saudi Arabia from tomorrow until January 15, 2023. Al-Attiyah has won the Dakar title four times in 2011, 2015, 2019 and early this year. **Right:** An aerial view of a bivouac by the Red Sea coast near Saudi Arabia's Yanbu ahead of the 2023 Dakar Rally. *(AFP)*

SPOTLIGHT

Pele, eternal king of the beautiful game

When he finally retired in 1977, Pele had scored more than 1,000 goals. He scored 77 for Brazil, a tally equalled at the recent World Cup by Neymar

AFP
Rio de Janeiro





Football legend and member of the 1958, 1962 and 1970 World Cup-winning Brazilian teams, Pele is seen during the World Cup 2006 opening ceremony in Munich, Germany, June 9, 2006. Pele, widely regarded as the greatest player of all time, died yesterday at the age of 82 after battling kidney problems and colon cancer. **Right:** In this photo taken on June 9, 2016, Diego Maradona (left) and Pele attend a football match at the Jardin du Palais Royal in Paris on the eve of the Euro 2016. *(Reuters/AFP)*

Pele was the best-loved footballer of his or any other generation, the eternal master of the beautiful game.

He won the World Cup with Brazil in 1958, 1962 and 1970, his sumptuous range of skills making him the embodiment of his country's golden age of football.

When he finally retired in 1977, Pele had scored more than 1,000 goals. He scored 77 for Brazil, a mark only equalled at the recent World Cup by Neymar. But his impact on his sport went far beyond the pitch as he also became a money-making phenomenon, lending his name to sportswear, credit cards and watches among an array of products.

Born Edson Arantes do Nascimento in October 1940, Pele played his first game for Santos as a 15-year-old in 1956.

He earned a call-up to the national team a year later, scoring on his debut against Argentina. In 1958 he was picked for the World Cup in Sweden.

His participation at the finals had been a matter of fierce debate in Brazil, with many critics questioning whether the slender-framed teenager was ready for the physical demands of the tournament.

Nursing a knee injury on arrival in Sweden, Pele was unavailable for Brazil's opening two matches. He might also have been forced to sit out their third, against the Soviet Union, had coach Vicente Feola decided to heed the advice of a team psychologist who had urged that Pele was "infantile" and not fit for duty.

In the event Feola opted to play the youngster, and it paid off. Working in tandem with Garrincha and his famously bent legs, Pele gave a virtuoso display as the Soviets were vanquished 2-0. Once in the team, Pele made it impossible for him to be removed. A winning goal in the quarter-final against Wales and a hat-trick in the 5-2 semi-final victory over France were followed by two more in the final win over Sweden.

Still only 17, Pele had become the youngest World Cup winner in history. The next two tournaments, however, were to be unhappy experiences. Twenty-one by the time of the 1962 World Cup in Chile, an older, stronger Pele had been expected to take the tournament by storm. He gave a tantalising glimpse of what he was capable of with an electric individual goal against Mexico in Brazil's opening 2-0 win. But he aggravated an existing injury in the second game, against the Czechs, and was forced to sit out the remainder of the tournament as his countrymen successfully defended their title.

Pele's frustration that injury had limited his appearances in Chile were nothing compared to the sickening disappointment of England in 1966 where, unprotected by referees, he was literally kicked out of the tournament.

Brutally assaulted by Bulgaria's defence in the first game to the extent that he was forced to miss the second match, the nadir came against Portugal. Two crippling challenges by Joao Morais left a tearful Pele being carried from the Goodison Park pitch in Liverpool swearing never to play in a World Cup again.

"I don't want to finish my life as an invalid," he said.

Thankfully, Pele's disconsolate vow was to prove an empty threat. He returned four years later in Mexico to spearhead what is regarded as the greatest team of all time.

Where 1966 had been viewed as a victory for cynicism, the 1970 tournament, and Pele and Brazil's winning contribution to it, have become synonymous with the beautiful game. It is a testament to the quality of Pele's play in Mexico that he is remembered for the goals he didn't score as much as for the ones he did. An outrageous attempt to lob Czechoslovakia's goalkeeper from inside his own half and a magical dummy against Uruguay in the semi-finals are among the finest moments of World Cup history.

Though he was to continue playing club football for his beloved Santos and later the New York Cosmos, Pele retired from international duty in 1971, making an emotional farewell in front of 180,000 fans at the Maracana in Rio de Janeiro.

"Pele was the most complete player I've ever seen," England's Bobby Moore recalled later. "He had everything."

Once his World Cup heroics were finished, Pele, who was nicknamed "O Rei" (The King) and finished on 91 caps, helped try to kickstart an American revolution in football.

In 1977, he inspired New York to the national title in his final season with the club which featured fellow greats Franz Beckenbauer, Italian striker Giorgio Chinaglia and former Brazil captain Carlos Alberto.

He appeared in the 1981 film *Escape to Victory* about Allied prisoners of war during World War II along with the likes of Michael Caine, Sylvester Stallone and Moore.

Between 1995 and 1998, he was even Brazil's Extraordinary Minister for Sport, while he also regularly appeared in public as an ambassador for numerous commercial brands.

He suffered a series of health problems in later life, undergoing surgery on his hips, kidney stones and on a colon tumour.

That did not stop him living life to the full, and he married for the third time in 2016, tying the knot with Marcia Aoki.

FOCUS

Liverpool got timing of Gakpo deal right: Klopp

AFP
London



Jurgen Klopp says Liverpool's £40mn ($48mn) swoop for PSV Eindhoven forward **Cody Gakpo** will have an effect on his plans for the January transfer window. Klopp landed the highly-rated Gakpo during three days of negotiations with the 23-year-old's representatives over Christmas.

Netherlands international Gakpo impressed at the World Cup in Qatar, prompting Liverpool to make their move before Manchester United could seal a deal for the rising star. Another forward was not top of Klopp's list of priorities, with Liverpool's midfield still needing reinforcements.

But the Reds boss was keen to keep Gakpo out of United's hands, even if he might now have less to spend in January.

"I would say in principle it's like this for all people in the world: the money you spend has an impact on the money you can spend (in the future)," Klopp told reporters yesterday.

"We know what we want to do and we will see if we can do it.

"It's about money, of course, but it's more about how it always was, about the right players as we are really happy that we could get Cody.

"He is a young player with a lot of potential. If he would have already been scoring 40 goals in Spain or whatever he would be unaffordable. These kind of things, it's all about timing. That's why we were really convinced. He could always make the next step and that makes it interesting."

Gakpo scored in each of the Netherlands group matches at the World Cup and his versatility across the forward line means he fits the Klopp mould of being a multi-functional player.

However, with the window not officially open until Sunday and Liverpool playing Leicester today and Brentford on Monday, Gakpo might have to wait a while for his debut.

"We are obviously very early (in the January market) which is good. There might be a chance for Brentford but not really," Klopp said.

"January 1 is a Bank Holiday but the papers some other people have to sign would have to be done at 12pm on the second, and I'm not too positive that will happen. We will not rush it anyway. Probably Wolves (in the FA Cup on January 7). The position he played most often is obviously the left wing, that is clear, but he can play in different positions. He played for Holland and PSV in different positions, it's all fine."

Liverpool, who are sixth in the league with 25 points from 15 matches, face a Leicester team that were outclassed by Newcastle in a 3-0 defeat on Monday, and Klopp said he expects a reaction from Brendan Rodgers' side.

STAR JAMES FEELING FRUSTRATED AS 38TH BIRTHDAY APPROACHES

Miami: Los Angeles Lakers superstar **LeBron James** remains "locked in" on basketball with his 38th birthday fast approaching, but the four-time NBA champion made it clear yesterday he wants to be a title contender.

James, who turns 38 today, reflected on his career after another frustrating Lakers defeat, this one to the Miami Heat.

With superstar Anthony Davis sidelined by injury, the Lakers have dropped five of their last six games and are 14-21 this season. It's not the kind of situation that James - still averaging nearly 30 points per game - wants to be in.

"I'm a winner, and I want to win and give myself a chance to win and still compete for championships," James said. "That has always been my passion, that has always been my goal since I entered the league as an 18-year-old kid out of Akron, Ohio. And I know it takes steps to get there, but once you get there and know how to get there, playing basketball at this level just to be playing basketball is not in my DNA. It's not in my DNA anymore."

Even as the Lakers are struggling just to put themselves in play-off position, James is still averaging almost 30 points per game and is on track to surpass Kareem Abdul-Jabbar as the league's all-time leading scorer, perhaps in early February.



"If you look at the history of the game, it doesn't seem that many have played at this level with this many years and this many miles and things on their resume," he said.

"I'm very humbled at the same time to be able to play the game that I love still at this level and still be a focal point of opposing teams."

But championships remain the goal, and James indicated that the Lakers' troubles have perhaps made the glimpses of what post-NBA life might be like look more appealing.

"I think about a little bit of everything," he said. "I think about how much of the world I'm going to see when I'm done playing the game."

James has said he wants to keep playing until his oldest son, Bronny, reaches the NBA, which would be in 2024 at the earliest under current rules.

However, that plan apparently doesn't include toiling in a mid-table team. "I think about how much longer I'm going to play the game," he said. "I think about that I don't want to finish my career playing at this level - from a team aspect. I want to still be able to compete for championships, because I know what I can still bring to any ball club with the right pieces," James said - a comment sure to be interpreted as a nudge to the Lakers to make some moves before the February 9 trade deadline.

HORSE RACING

Casamento rides Emperor Maximus to Qatar Derby win

Crowley guides Francois Rohaut-trained Moshrif to a comfortable victory in the Qatar International Derby

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Al Rufaa Racing's Emperor Maximus ridden by Marco Casamento timed its run to perfection at the last stretch to win the feature event at the Qatar Derby yesterday. At the Al Rayyan Racecourse, it was another action packed 10-race card with racing connoisseurs witnessing some thrilling battles in the 23rd Race Meeting of the Qatar Racing and Equestrian Club (QREC).

The marquee race – 2,000m Qatar Derby (QA Group 1) – Thoroughbreds, Class 1- Far Bend – offered $500,000 in prize money including $285,000 for the winner. And for the large part it looked like Upton Park, ridden by Tomas Lukasek, would walk away with the top honours until Gassim Ghazali-trained Emperor Maximus put in a scintillating run with 500 metres to go.

The three-year-old bay colt picked up pace at the right moment and was expertly guided by Casamento to clinch a 1¾ length victory. Alban Elie De Mieulle-trained and Soufiane Saadi-ridden Persian Royal was third after narrowly beaten by Upton Park.

Meanwhile, Jim Crowley piloted Francois Rohaut-trained Moshrif to a comfortable five-length victory in the Qatar International Derby (Group 2) – Purebred Arabians for four-year-old only – Far Bend, which carried a total purse of $200,000

The Al Rayyan Stakes Thoroughbreds 1,400m race was won by Alban Elie De Mieulle-trained Bariloche, which gave a double for jockey Ronan Thomas, who had earlier led Atlantic Sun to victory in Local Thoroughbred Premium Maiden Cup – the first race of the day.

Meanwhile, Maxime Guyon and Tomas Lukasek also bagged a brace of victories yesterday. Guyon, who scored a hat-trick of wins on Qatar Oaks day on Wednesday, completed his double after riding Al Ghadeer to a half-length win in Qatar Derby (Group 3) - Purebred Arabians for three-year-olds only.

Devious Company handed trainer Gassim Ghazali his first win of the day by claiming the Derby Day Thoroughbred Handicap Cup 75-95 – Class 3 title.

Lukasek completed a quick brace by leading Ibrahim Saeed al-Malki-trained Harb to win in 1850m Qatar Derby - Local Thoroughbreds for three-year-old only, soon after guiding al-Malki-trained Dayyan to Al Rayyan Thoroughbred Handicap Cup triumph.

Lukas Delozier also stood in the victory stand after riding Rudy Andre Nerbonne-trained Muale'm to win in 2,000m Qatar National Derby - Local Purebred Arabians for four-year-old only – Far Bend.

Also yesterday, Wasim al-Sahn-trained Hadlan with Tom Marquand in the saddle claimed the Qatar Derby - Local Purebred Arabians for three-year-old only, winning the 1600m race by over a length.

RESULTS 24TH RACE MEETING - QATAR DERBY
(Horse, Trainer, Jockey)
1. Qatar Derby (QA Gr1) - Thoroughbreds (3yo Only) (Class 1) (Far Bend)
Emperor Maximus, Gassim Ghazali, Marco Casamento
2. Qatar International Derby (Gr2 Pa) - Purebred Arabians (4yo Only) (Far Bend)
Moshrif, Francois Rohaut, Jim Crowley
3. Al Rayyan Stakes - Thoroughbreds (2yo Only) (Class 1) (Far Bend)
Bariloche, Alban Elie De Mieulle, Ronan Thomas
4. Qatar National Derby - Local Purebred Arabians (4yo Only) (Far Bend)
Muale'm, Rudy Andre Nerbonne, Lukas Delozier
5. Qatar Derby (Gr3 Pa) - Purebred Arabians (3yo Only)
Al Ghadeer, Francois Rohaut, Maxime Guyon
6. Qatar Derby - Local Purebred Arabians (3yo Only)
Hadlan, Wasim al-Sahn, Tom Marquand
7. Qatar Derby - Local Thoroughbreds (3yo Only)
Harb, Ibrahim Saeed al-Malki, Tomas Lukasek
8. Al Rayyan Thoroughbred Handicap Cup 0-85 (2yo Only) (Class 4)
Dayyan, Ibrahim Saeed al-Malki, Tomas Lukasek
9. Derby Day Thoroughbred Handicap Cup 75-95 (Class 3)
Devious Company, Gassim Ghazali, Maxime Guyon
10. Local Thoroughbred Premium Maiden Cup
Atlantic Sun, Alban Elie De Mieulle, Ronan Thomas



HE the Minister of Sports and Youth Salah bin Ghanem bin Nasser al-Ali crowned the winners of the Qatar Derby (QA Group 1) – Thoroughbreds, Class 1 – Far Bend, which was won by Al Rufaa Racing's Emperor Maximus at the Al Rayyan Racecourse. QREC Chairman Issa bin Mohamed al-Mohannadi is also seen. **PICTURES:** *Juhaim*


Marco Casamento celebrates after riding Emperor Maximus to victory in the feature event at the Qatar Derby yesterday.


QREC Chairman Issa bin Mohamed al-Mohannadi presents a trophy to connection of Moshrif, which won the Qatar International Derby (Group PA) yesterday.

Rayyan sign Japanese defender Taniguchi


QNB Stars League side Al Rayyan yesterday unveiled their new signing Japanese defender Shogo Taniguchi in the presence of club president Sheikh Ali bin Saud bin Ahmed al-Thani and coach Nicolas Cordova. The 31-year-old centre-back started in two matches during Japan's World Cup campaign in Qatar, where they reached the last 16. At Rayyan, Taniguchi is replacing Palestine defender Yasser Hamad who is injured. Taniguchi joined Kawasaki Frontale from University of Tsukuba in 2014 and went on to win four J-League titles with the club, who he captained from 2020.

SPOTLIGHT

Mbappe says will 'never' get over WC heartbreak

AFP
Paris

Kylian Mbappe said he will never get over the disappointment of losing the World Cup final after the France star scored the winner on his return to action for Paris Saint-Germain on Wednesday night. "I think I'm never going to get over it," Mbappe said, speaking 10 days after he scored a hat-trick in the final against Argentina which the South Americans won in a penalty shootout. Mbappe said he had been through some "difficult times" since the defeat but he showed few signs of the setback in Qatar as he won and converted a 96th minute penalty to give PSG a last-gasp 2-1 win against Strasbourg on Ligue 1's resumption following the World Cup break.

"As I said to my teammates, there is no reason why the club should pay the price for the failure of the national team, they are two very different situations," 24-year-old said. "It does me good to come back with a win and to have a link with the club, the supporters and my teammates."

Mbappe shrugged off Argentina keeper Emiliano Martinez's taunts after the World Cup final, saying he did not 'waste energy on such futile things' as he awaited the return of Paris Saint Germain teammate Lionel Messi.



During Argentina's homecoming, a group of fans set alight a makeshift coffin lid adorned with a cross and a picture of Mbappe. Martinez clutched a toy baby with Mbappe's face on it during an open-top bus parade through the capital on December 23. "The celebrations, they're not my problem. I don't waste any energy on such futile things," Mbappe said. "What's important for me is to give the best of myself for my club, and we're looking forward for Leo (Messi) to return to continue scoring and winning matches."

Asked about Argentina's World Cup-winning captain Messi, who will return to the Paris club after the New Year, Mbappe said he congratulated him following the final. "It was a life's goal for him, for me as well, but I failed, so you must always remain a good sportsman," he said. Meanwhile, Neymar, who was left in tears after Brazil were knocked out by Croatia in the quarter-finals of the World Cup, was sent off for two yellow cards in PSG's victory. Captain Marquinhos had put the hosts ahead with an early header but the Brazilian defender scored an own goal after 51 minutes as some of PSG's stars appeared to be suffering a post-Qatar hangover.

Neymar picked up a yellow for a petulant flick in the face of a Strasbourg player and then earned another for a blatant dive in the penalty area just after the hour.

Mbappe had been a constant menace for PSG but was unable to find the target with two clear-cut chances. But deep into second-half injury time he was brought down in the penalty area and converted the winner from the spot in the 96th minute. The victory put PSG eight points ahead of Lens, who must beat Nice to keep up.

HAALAND CAN GET BETTER, HE IS NOT AT HIS BEST, SAYS CITY COACH GUARDIOLA

Leeds, England: Manchester City coach Pep Guardiola believes Erling Haaland is not at his best and can get even better despite the Norwegian becoming the fastest player to reach 20 goals in Premier League history during his side's 3-1 win at Leeds United.

Haaland continued his incredible goalscoring form with two second-half strikes at Elland Road on Wednesday night to reach 20 goals from just 14 appearances — seven games faster than the next quickest player to reach such a goal tally. The Norway international has scored 26 times in 20 appearances under Guardiola in all competitions — the quickest that any player has reached 25 goals under the City boss with top-flight clubs. "He missed chances, hopefully he can do better," Guardiola said.

"But the numbers are exceptional, he is an incredible threat for us and always in the right position at the right time. I have the feeling he is not at his best. It is a matter of time. Of course we are delighted but that little pace he had at the beginning of the season, now he maybe struggles a little bit, but it's a question of time. I am still more than satisfied but I had the feeling in the first part of the season he was sharper."

Haaland had plenty of time to ponder his next move as Norway did not take part in the World Cup in Qatar, a time period that the 22-year-old insisted helped intensify his hunger for more. "I've been at home, a bit mad that I've not been at the World Cup," he said. "I recharged my batteries. Watching other people score to win games at the World Cup triggered, motivated and irritated me. I'm more hungry and more ready than ever."

Haaland's efforts at Elland Road would have been particularly sweet given he was born in Leeds — his father Alfie played for the Yorkshire club — and he used to be coached by Leeds manager Jesse Marsch at RB Salzburg.

City moved to within five points of Arsenal at the top of the table as they bounced back from a shock defeat to Brentford before the World Cup. Haaland was still left unsatisfied after failing to beat Illan Meslier with three one-on-ones. "I could've scored five, that's the truth," Haaland said. "We win, that's the most important thing. You see Arsenal at the top now, we have to hunt them, but for me as a striker, I could've scored a couple more. That's life, I have to practise more."

Despite seeing his former striker leave Leeds just two points clear of the Premier League relegation zone, Marsch had only good words to say about Haaland on another record-breaking night. "I am just really happy for him," Marsch said. "In some ways watching him score is painful, I want him in a different kit. But when you know some of these young men, and you see their qualities as people, you want them to do their best, just not against your team. But my gosh I am happy for him, he is such a great person."

Haaland should have made his mark inside 45 seconds as he was denied by a fine save from Meslier when clean through. That set the tone for a first half of frustration for City as a series of glorious chances came and went.

Meslier won another battle with Haaland, while two glaring misses from Jack Grealish left Guardiola with his head in his hands. However, Leeds crucially failed to hold out until half-time on level terms as the visitors finally made their dominance count in first half stoppage time. Kevin De Bruyne opened up the Leeds defence for the opener and when Riyad Mahrez's shot was parried by Meslier, Rodri swept the rebound into the net.