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Kohli, Siraj power India to record ODI win over SL



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Nadal launches title defence at the Australian Open today



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FOOTBALL

Arsenal sink Spurs to move eight clear, Chelsea ease pressure on Potter

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MOTOR SPORT

Al-Attiyah shooting for Qatari sporting immortality

AFP
Riyadh

“My story is included in the history books for school children” Nasser Saleh al-Attiyah proudly told ESPN in 2017 and with yesterday’s fifth victory in the Dakar Rally he has guaranteed another chapter will be added.

The 52-year-old shares top billing as Qatar’s most accomplished sportsman with high jumper Mutaz Essa Barshim but it is the latter’s Olympic gold medal - he shared the title in Tokyo in 2021 - that al-Attiyah would covet more than anything.

Al-Attiyah has competed in every Olympics in skeet shooting since the 1996 Games in Atlanta showing the same gritty determination he has done in umpteen Dakar Rallies to secure himself a medal of any kind.

Eventually it arrived as he won a shoot-off in the 2012 Games in London beating Russian Valer-

iy Shomin - improving on his fourth place in 2004.

“This time I told myself that I must win the medal - for my country, for all Arabs,” al-Attiyah told Sport360.

“I have everything in my home except an Olympic medal. It means so much.”

Al-Attiyah - who was winning only Qatar’s fourth ever Olympic medal - had really hit his sporting straps as it came a year after the first of his victories in the Dakar Rally.

Four Dakar Rally wins later - with his co-pilot and the man he calls his best friend Mathieu Baumel - and failing to medal at the Rio Games in 2016 his appetite is far from sated.

He still entertains hopes of winning gold in the 2024 Games in Paris and inspiring more Qatari school children to take up either shooting or car racing.

“After reading about me, a lot of youngsters want to participate in shooting and racing,” he says. Al-Attiyah once had three

sports on the go but dropped horse riding fearing a hand injury would prevent him competing in his other two sporting pursuits.

His love of derring-do and daredevilry had pushed him towards becoming a pilot as well but then he shelved it.

“I had dreams of becoming a pilot, especially since my cousins were pilots and I was the youngest among them,” he told Jordan News in 2021. “They graduated from flight school in the UK.”

However, a chance opportunity to partner another cousin in a Rally persuaded him his feet belonged on the ground and not up in the air.

His father Saleh it was, though, who had set him on the path to both his preferred sports.

Saleh bought him a Nissan Patrol when he was 18 and he enjoyed instant success nationally whilst al-Attiyah senior also took him hunting.

“My father said ‘Nasser, you are a hunter. If you want to improve, you need to practice clay

pigeon,” al-Attiyah told ESPN.

“It will help you concentrate and help your mind to be strong.” “And later when I realised I was getting good at it, I decided to keep shooting.”

Al-Attiyah says that far from one proving to be a distraction they complement each other.

“Juggling between two professional sports and feeling the pressure to be the best in both is very challenging,” he told Qatari website Q Life in 2018.

“Shooting has helped me excel in rally driving because of the immense concentration needed. It helped me stay mentally strong.”

For the moment al-Attiyah awaits a new generation to replace him.

“The Qatar government says if you find another Nasser, we will let you retire,” he told ESPN.

“Until now there is no one else like me, so I keep shooting.”

If that results in him winning gold in Paris next year then he may have a history book solely devoted to him.



Toyota Gazoo Racing’s Nasser al-Attiyah and co-driver Mathieu Baumel celebrate winning the Dakar Rally in Al Hofuf to Dammam, Saudi Arabia, yesterday. (AFP)

ARABIAN GULF CUP

Qatar’s young players can create history, says coach

The three-time winners take on Iraq in the first semi-final as defending champions Bahrain face-off against Oman

By Sports Reporter
Basra, Iraq

Coach Bruno Pinheiro yesterday warned opponents Iraq that his young side will be aiming to go all-out and grab the chance ‘to create history’ when the two sides clash in the Arabian Gulf Cup semi-final today.

Qatar, the Asian champions, drew 1-1 against the UAE on Friday to qualify for the last-four stage while hosts Iraq beat Yemen 5-0 to reach the semi-finals.

“History is not a measure of what we can or cannot do. I feel these young players can create history,” Pinheiro said at a pre-match press conference.

“Winning is important for everybody to change the image and get the win for our fans. We are focusing on what we can change. Perhaps this will give us the motivation to accomplish a win - something that has been absent for long,” he added.

“I hope that all players will be prepared despite the short gap between matches. I am sure that it will be a difficult match and the team which with less mistakes will win but we are sure of our tactical preparation,” the Qatar coach said.

“Iraq is a good team. Their players have impressive physical strength. They have home advantage as they are playing home soil. I am sure they will do their best to win but we are also ready,” he added.

“I will not announce the playing XI as I am focusing on recovery of the players. Everybody made a great effort and due to the short time there’s no room for lots of substitutions until players are fully aware of the tactics



implemented on the field. I believe that their fans will prove to be a big support for Iraq, but this won’t put us under pressure. It is going to be fun and we are ready to absorb the pressure. I have to say this is all good experience for my players to play in such tough circumstances,” Pinheiro said.

Qatari player Hamam Amin said yesterday: “We are happy to have reached the semi-finals. Now we want to win against Iraq who are a strong team on their home soil. We will put our efforts to win!”

Iraqi coach Jesus Casas said his team is riding good momen-

tum going into the semi-finals. “Reaching the semi-finals is a great honour for us. In the beginning of the tournament, we were lacking in confidence and we were receiving negative feedback but the players showed character after the first match,” Casas said yesterday.

“Qatar are a big team that has players from the 2022 World Cup, but we are playing on our home soil. We are aiming to satisfy our fans. Yes, it would be a difficult match but we hope that luck would be on our side,” the Spaniard said.

“All players are well prepared. I am not intimidated by Qatar although it’s a good team but we have to be careful from making any silly mistakes that could cost us dearly. Football always throws up with surprises. When I saw the stadium full, I was thrilled because I haven’t seen something similar before. The fans have been very supportive,” the coach said.

“I am expecting a physical match. That’s why we have worked on players rotation. If we reached extra time, it’s going to get difficult and both teams will

be exhausted by then,” the Iraqi coach said.

“I will rely on 11 best players for this match. I might use other players also. Each one of them has a different personality therefore all of them are important for me. We are close to the final and I am dealing with each match differently. There is no doubt that Qatar is the most important team at this stage,” he added. “The playing strategy depends on each match - for example in the match against Saudi Arabia we made some changes due to the weather and pitch condi-



Qatar coach Bruno Pinheiro addresses a media conference in Basra, Iraq, yesterday. **Below:** Iraq coach Jesus Casas takes a question.

tions. Football is similar to life; you have to be open to change,” he concluded.

Iraqi player Mohamed Nazem said yesterday: “This match is different than the group stage matches. We are expecting a difficult match.” We thank our coach giving us great confidence. Qatar has experienced elements but our advantage is us playing in front of our fans.”

In the day’s other semi-final, defending champions Bahrain face Oman. The Qatar vs Iraq match kicks off at 4:15pm while the Bahrain vs Oman clash starts at 8:15pm.



President of the Arab Gulf Cup Football Federation (AGCFF) Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa bin Ahmed al-Thani has announced that the 26th Gulf Cup will be hosted by the State of Kuwait in December 2024

CRICKET

Kohli smashes 166 as India crush Sri Lanka by world record margin of 317 runs

Kohli surpassed SL great Mahela Jayawardene's 12,650 ODI runs to enter the top five all-time run getters

AFP
Thiruvananthapuram

Virat Kohli smashed an unbeaten 166 to help India beat Sri Lanka by 317 runs and record the highest ever victory margin in a one-day international as they swept the series 3-0 yesterday.

Kohli's third century in his last four matches and a 116 by opener Shubman Gill powered India to 390-5 in Thiruvananthapuram.

Fast bowler Mohamed Siraj then returned impressive figures of 4-32 as India bowled out the tourists for 72 in 22 overs as India went past New Zealand's 290-run thrashing of Ireland in 2008.

Kohli, the player of the match and series, said: "It (the awards) is the by-product of the intent I have. Mindset is to help the team, and put the team in strong position. I have played for the right reasons and that has helped."

He added: "Ever since I came back from the break, I am feeling good and I don't have desperation to get to a milestone. I want to continue doing that and am content."

"Today I was happy to be batting out there and in that space I end up playing good cricket. I am in a nice space right now, just be organic. Shami has always been there for us with the new ball. But the way Siraj has come in and done with the new ball has been fantastic. He picks wickets in the powerplay, which was an issue in the past. It is a great sign for us heading into the World Cup."

A 131-run second-wicket stand between Gill and Kohli stood out after India elected to bat first.

Gill put on 95 runs for the opening wicket with skipper Rohit Sharma, who made 42, to set the tone for the team's batting



India's Virat Kohli celebrates after scoring a century during the third and final one-day international (ODI) against Sri Lanka at the Greenfield International Stadium in Thiruvananthapuram yesterday. **Right:** India's Mohamed Siraj celebrates after taking the wicket of Sri Lanka's Avishka Fernando (right) during the third ODI. (AFP)

domination. Rohit missed out on a fifty after he fell to Chamika Karunaratne but Gill kept up the attack with Kohli and raised his second ODI hundred, celebrating it with a fist bump.

Gill smashed Jeffrey Vandersay for four fours in the over after the ton, but was soon bowled off a slower delivery from Kasun Rajitha.

"King Kohli" put on another century partnership with Shreyas Iyer, who hit 38, and went on to record the ton with his arms and bat raised to an applauding crowd.

The ball before Kohli got his hundred saw a nasty collision at the square-leg boundary between Vandersay and Ashen Bandara, with both fielders

stretched off. Dunith Wellalage came in as a concussion substitute for Vandersay and batted for the tourists at number eight.

Kohli changed gears after his 46th ODI century - three behind Sachin Tendulkar's all-time record of 49 - as he smashed Karunaratne for two successive sixes.

Kohli, who surpassed Sri Lankan great Mahela Jayawardene's 12,650 ODI runs to enter the top five all-time run getters, reached his 150 in 106 balls and finished off with 13 fours and eight sixes. Sri Lanka were never in the chase after Siraj struck thrice in his first five overs including the wickets of Avishka Fernando, for one, and Kusal



Mendis, bowled on four, he tourists kept losing wickets to Siraj's pace and swing and the quick also ran out Karunaratne with a direct throw that caught the batsman off guard and out of his crease at the striker's end.

Mohamed Shami and Kuldeep Yadav picked two wickets each to flatten Sri Lanka's batting with 28 overs to spare, with the tour-

ists losing nine wickets and injured Bandara not batting.

BRIEF SCORES
India 390-5 in 50 overs (S. Gill 116, V. Kohli 166 not out; K. Rajitha 2-81, L. Kumara 2-87) **beat Sri Lanka 73 all out in 22 overs** (N. Fernando 19, K. Rajitha 13 not out; M. Siraj 4-32) **by 317 runs**
Series: India won series 3-0

CYCLING

Pikulik wins opening stage of 2023 Tour Down Under

AFP
Adelaide

Poland's Daria Pikulik rode powerfully in a bunch sprint finish to claim the first stage of Australia's Women's Tour Down Under outside Adelaide yesterday.

Pikulik (Human Powered Health) surged through an opening for her first World Tour stage win from France's Clara Copponi (FDJ-Suez) and Australia's Georgia Baker (Team Jayco-AIUla) at the end of the 110.4-kilometre Glenelg to Aldinga stage.

"I didn't expect to win today, this is my first World Tour race and my first race with my new team," Pikulik said.

"I can't believe I win today. I'm just a Polish girl making the dream come true."

With time bonuses Pikulik will take the leader's jersey into today's more hilly 90-km second stage from Birdwood to Uraidla.

"Daria Pikulik is our triple podium star," her team tweeted. "Stage victory, Leader's jersey, Sprints jersey. Not a bad return for your first road race in #HumanPoweredHealth colours."

The three-stage Women's TDU now forms part of the UCI World Tour, with points on offer. Pikulik, predominantly a track rider, used her powerful sprint finish to take the stage after the peloton reeled in a two-strong breakaway comprising Australians Isabelle Carnes (Ara Skip Capital) and Gina Ricardo (Team Bridgelane) with 10km to the finish line.

Leading Australian contender Amanda Spratt, who has won the TDU for three consecutive years (2017-2019) finished fifth in the opening stage for her Trek-Segafredo team.

Spratt lies eighth overall, 10 seconds down going into the second stage.

Another prominent local contender, Grace Brown, leading the French FDJ-Suez team, is fourth overall after the first stage, seven sec-



Polish rider Daria Pikulik from team Human Powered Health celebrates winning stage one of the Women's Tour Down Under - a UCI cycling event - in Adelaide yesterday. (AFP)

onds down on the leader. After Baker's third-place finish, her Team Jayco AIUla tweeted: "A big effort on a hard and windy day, the squad back Baker for the finish and she rounds out the podium with 3rd on what was a fast and frantic dash to the line."

AUSTRALIA'S WOMEN'S TOUR DOWN UNDER RESULTS
Adelaide, Australia: Results from the first stage of the women's Tour Down Under yesterday, a 110.4km ride from Glenelg to Aldinga:

1. Daria Pikulik (POL/Human Powered Health) 3hr 3min 1sec. 2. Clara Copponi (FRA/FDJ-SUEZ) at 4sec. 3. Georgia Baker (AUS/Team Jayco-AIUla) 6sec. 4. Grace Brown (AUS/FDJ-SUEZ) 7sec. 5. Alexandra Manly (AUS/Team Jayco-AIUla) 8sec.

FOCUS

Former cyclist Westra dies at 40 after battling depression

AFP
The Hague

Former Dutch cyclist Lieuwe Westra, runner-up to Bradley Wiggins in the 2012 Paris-Nice, has died aged 40 after a life-long battle with depression, his biographer and Dutch media announced yesterday.

Westra was part of the Astana team that helped lift Vincenzo Nibali to victory in the Tour de France in 2014.

That season he picked up stage wins in the Tour de Catalonia and the Criterium du Dauphine.

Nicknamed 'the Beast' for his unrelenting riding style Westra's body was found at his business premises on Saturday near the northwest Dutch city of Enkhuizen, local broadcast-

er Omrop Fryslan said, quoting family sources. "Lieuwe Westra, 40, died on Saturday afternoon," his biographer Thomas Sijtsma tweeted.

"Over the last few years the former rider fought a battle with himself and lost," Sijtsma said, adding "Rest softly, Beast".

Born in Friesland in 1982, Westra in 2009 turned professional, joining the Vacansoleil team. The former road worker in his first year won the Tour de Picardie and was earmarked to have the potential to become one of the great riders from the Netherlands.

He took his first WorldTour victory with a stage win in the 2012 Paris-Nice race, ending second overall behind Olympic gold medalist and Tour de France winner Wiggins.

Westra also won the Tour of Denmark that same year as well

as winning the first of two national time-trial titles.

In 2017 he unexpectedly stepped away from his professional cycling career.

"Westra gave personal reasons for his decision. The previous autumn he admitted suffering from depression, partly due to a broken relationship, while he also doubted his existence as a professional cyclist," the ANP national news agency said.

Westra also admitted in a 2018 biography that he used the controversial substance cortisone during his career.

"I injected it into my own body to be able to cycle faster, to win prizes and to get compliments," Westra said in his book.

"You need to seek the boundaries of what is acceptable if you wanted to compete with the big boys," Westra said.

Whirlwind Burl knock wins T20 series for Zimbabwe over Ireland

Harare: A whirlwind unbeaten 30 by Ryan Burl, better known as a leg spinner than a brisk batsman, lifted Zimbabwe to a 2-1 Twenty20 series victory over Ireland in Harare yesterday. Ireland were put in to bat and made 141-9 with Harry Tector top scoring on 47 as they sought to buck a trend in this series of the side fielding first winning. Captain Craig Ervine scored 54 to lift Zimbabwe to 116-5 with three overs remaining and Burl then became the unlikely hero, hammering two sixes and three fours off 11 deliveries.

Another bowler, Luke Jongwe, won the match and the series, hitting a four off the last ball of the penultimate over to take Zimbabwe to 144-6, and a four-wicket triumph. It was a dramatic end to a series that began with a five-wicket win for

Zimbabwe on Thursday, followed by a six-wicket victory for the tourists two days later.

"It's a great place to be at the moment, winning a series against Ireland with some of your lesser experienced players. It's very exciting for the future," said Ervine. "The guys are confident ahead of the one-day international series (starting on Wednesday)."

BRIEF SCORES
Ireland 141-9 in 20 overs (H. Tector 47, C. Campher 27, G. Dockrell 23; W. Madhevere 2-8, L. Jongwe 2-23, T. Chatara 2-26, R. Burl 2-28) **lost to Zimbabwe 144-6 in 19 overs** (C. Ervine 54, R. Burl 30 not out, I. Kaia 23; B. White 2-26, B. McCarthy 2-32) **by 4 wickets**
Series: Zimbabwe win 2-1

TENNIS

Nadal launches title defence as Australian Open ushers in new era

'IT'S PROBABLY ONE OF THE TOUGHEST FIRST ROUNDS POSSIBLE, BEING SEEDED'

Reuters
Melbourne

Rafa Nadal will kick off his Australian Open title defence today with a first round test against rising Briton Jack Draper as a new era begins on the blue hardcourts of Melbourne Park.

At the first Grand Slam following Roger Federer's retirement and Serena Williams's "evolving away" from tennis, Spaniard Nadal carries the flame for the fading golden generation as he bids for a 23rd major title and third at Melbourne Park.

The 36-year-old is third up at Rod Laver Arena, returning to the centre court where a year ago he conjured the "miracle of Melbourne", coming back from two sets down to topple Daniil Medvedev in a five-set classic.

However, as Nadal observed on Saturday, tennis moves quickly. The top seed has had only one win since September's US Open and admitted his title defence was vulnerable to an early shock after two straight defeats in the lead-up.

A young man in a hurry, 21-year-old Draper surged into the top 40 after a run to the Adelaide II semi-finals last week and has previously recorded wins over a slew of top players, including Stefanos Tsitsipas and Felix Auger-Aliassime.

"It's probably one of the toughest first rounds possible, being seeded," Nadal said of the match-up. "I'm here to just give myself a chance."

With local hero Ash Barty having retired last March after ending Australia's 44-year wait for a home winner, the women's tournament will feature a new champion.

Top seed Iga Swiatek is strong favourite to succeed Barty and win her first title at Melbourne Park, having won two of the four Grand Slams in 2022.

The reigning French and US Open champion opens her campaign against Jule Niemeier in the



Spain's Rafael Nadal during a practice session in Melbourne yesterday. (Reuters)

first evening match at Rod Laver Arena, the German who gave Swiatek a huge scare in the US Open fourth round.

With American tennis looking for a new champion in the post-Serena era, Coco Gauff will open the day session at Rod Laver Arena against Czech Katerina Siniakova.

Big things have been expected of Gauff since her stunning run to the fourth round at Wimbledon in 2019 in her Grand Slam

debut at the tender age of 15. Now 18 and with her first major final under her belt after last year's French Open, Gauff may be among the strongest candidates to fill the vacuum left by Williams.

The women's tournament has been described as one of the most open in years, with only two former champions in the draw.

Only one will remain after Sofia Kenin and Victoria Azarenka play off in the third match at

Margaret Court Arena.

Medvedev, the men's seventh seed, will return to the scene of last year's final heartbreak when he faces unseeded American Marcos Giron in the late match at Rod Laver Arena.

Third seed Stefanos Tsitsipas, a three-times semi-finalist at Melbourne Park, will meet France's Quentin Halys at Margaret Court Arena, while women's runner-up Danielle Collins starts against Russian Anna Ka-

linskaya at the Kia Arena.

LEADING TITLE WINNERS

- 22-Rafael Nadal (ESP)
- 21-Novak Djokovic (SRB)
- 20-Roger Federer (SUI)
- 14-Pete Sampras (USA)
- 12-Roy Emerson (AUS)
- 11-Rod Laver (AUS), Bjorn Borg (SWE)
- 10-Bill Tilden (USA)
- 9-Fred Perry (GBR), Ken Rosewall (AUS), Ivan Lendl, Andre Agassi, Jimmy Connors (all USA)

FOCUS

Ruud arrives at Melbourne Park with humble expectations

Reuters
Melbourne

Casper Ruud reached two Grand Slam finals in a stellar 2022 and is seeded second at the Australian Open but the Norwegian is downplaying his chances at Melbourne Park, saying he will be "more than happy" just to reach the fourth round.

The world number three, who also won three claycourt titles last year, lost to Rafa Nadal in the French Open final before falling to Carlos Alcaraz in the US Open final and Novak Djokovic in Turin.

Ruud, who faces Tomas Machac in his Melbourne Park opener, told reporters on Saturday he wanted to "stay humble" in terms of his expectations. The 24-year-old said his progress had given him plenty of reasons to believe in himself but knows how difficult it is to get to major finals year after year.

"I'd love to do it and I'm going to give it a try, but the odds are not in favour of that happening," he added.

Ruud had an inauspicious start to last year, withdrawing from the Australian Open with an ankle injury suffered a day before his opener.

"Here we are, I've reached two finals," Ruud said. "But nothing's changed too much. Honestly, I know that it's possible, which is a nice feeling."

"At the same time I know the competition is so hard and so strong that I cannot expect myself to do well every single time I play a Slam."

Ruud was going strong at the 2021 Australian Open, reaching the fourth round of a Grand Slam for the first time, before retiring against Andrey Rublev.

"A quarter-final is a great result, in my eyes. A semi-final even (better)," he said. "My best result here is fourth round, which I still look at as a great result."

"If I'm able to reach fourth round this year, I'll be more than happy about it."

"At the same time I know that my belief in reaching even further is there. I know it has happened before, so it's easier in a way to think it could happen again."



Norway's Casper Ruud during a practice session in Melbourne. (Reuters)

GOLF

Two eagles lift Buckley to lead

AFP
Los Angeles

Hayden Buckley had two eagles in a six-under-par 64 on Saturday to grab a two-shot lead after three rounds of the Sony Open, where he's chasing a first US PGA Tour title.

The 26-year-old American holed out from the fairway for an eagle at the 10th, then broke free atop the leaderboard with another eagle at the par-five 18th, where his approach from the fairway settled two feet from the pin. He was two strokes clear of overnight leader Chris Kirk, David Lipsky and Ben Taylor. England's Taylor carded a five-under-par 65 to join the group on 13-under 197 while Lipsky fired a second straight 66 and Kirk posted a 68.

Andrew Putnam charged up the leaderboard with an eight-under 62 that featured 10 birdies, and was joined on 198 by South Korean Kim Si-woo, who signed for a 64.

Buckley, who finished tied for fifth at the Zozo championship in October, said his round was "a testament to being patient."

"I missed a three-, four-footer for birdie kind of early on and I just stuck with it," he said, adding that he didn't feel as in control as he had on Friday. "I hit a lot of greens, obviously, but I hit them in some tougher spots today - a lot of shots pin-high, with a lot more break and a little bit quicker putts," he said. "I feel like I just played smart."

On a day when a dozen players held at least a share of the lead at Waialae Country Club in Honolulu, Hawaii, Buckley's eagles made the difference. The first came after he "chunked" his tee shot at the 10th, then hit his 50-degree wedge second shot "a hair thin."

Buckley admitted he thought it might miss the green, but instead it hit the putting surface and rolled in. At 18 he said he was "just trying to play to the front edge." "Luckily I had



Hayden Buckley of the United States reacts to a birdie putt on the 18th green during the third round of the Sony Open at Waialae Country Club in Honolulu, Hawaii. (AFP)

a great number and hit a five-iron in close."

Buckley will be playing in the final group of the final round for the first time in a US PGA Tour event. Taylor and Lipsky are also chasing maiden US tour wins, although Lipsky's three international titles include an Asian Tour victory in 2012 and European Tour wins in 2014 and 2018. Taylor rebounded from an opening bogey with six birdies, rolling in a six-footer at the 18th.

"Solid round," he said. "I had a little bit of a hiccup on the first with an early bogey ... but we had level shoulders on us today."

Lipsky opened with back-to-back bogeys, but had seven birdies the rest of the way. After a bogey at 17 he rolled in an 11-foot birdie at the last. Kirk kept himself in the hunt despite a nightmare start. His overnight lead evaporated instantly when he hit it out of bounds off the first tee on the way to a double bogey. He responded with a birdie from the fringe at the second, and added birdies at the sixth and ninth before another setback at the 13th, where he was in a fairway bunker and

a greenside bunker. Kirk holed out for birdie from a greenside bunker at the 14th and birdied 16, but he couldn't take advantage of the par-five finishing hole.

LEADING THIRD-ROUND SCORES
(USA unless noted, par-70)

- 195-Hayden Buckley 67-64-64
- 197-David Lipsky 65-66-66, Ben Taylor (ENG) 66-66-65, Chris Kirk 64-65-68
- 198-Andrew Putnam 70-66-62, Kim Si-woo (KOR) 67-67-64
- 199-Will Gordon 69-67-63, Nate Lashley 69-65-65
- 200-Nick Taylor (CAN) 70-68-62, Ben Griffin 65-68-67, Maverick McNealy 66-67-67, J.J. Poston 67-66-67, Austin Eckroat 66-66-68, Kim Seong-hyeon (KOR) 65-67-65, Harry Hall (ENG) 66-69-66, Carl Yuan (CHN) 70-65-66, An Byeong-hun (KOR) 70-65-66, Matt Kuchar 70-67-64, Stewart Cink 66-68-67, Kevin Yu (TPE) 67-66-68, Denny McCarthy 65-68-68, J.J. Spaun 66-64-71

Continental Europe hold on to claim Hero Cup

Poland's Adrian Meronk sank the decisive putt as Continental Europe held off Great Britain and Ireland in singles to win the inaugural Hero Cup. Francesco Molinari's side had an 8.5-6.5 lead overnight at Abu Dhabi Golf Club and built on that winning six of the 10 singles games to triumph 14.5 to 10.5.

The 2018 British Open champion Molinari led from the front with a 3&2 victory over Shane Lowry. Britain and Ireland captain Tommy Fleetwood and Tyrrell Hatton posted comfortable 3&2 and 5&4 wins over Thomas Pieters and Antoine Rozner, and Matt Wallace kept them in the hunt with a 2&1 success over Thomas Detry. But the Continentals maintained their advantage as Nicolai Hojgaard beat Seamus Power one up, while Victor Perez and Sepp Straka were too strong for Jordan Smith and Ewen Ferguson. Meronk then nailed his birdie putt from more

than 30 feet on the 18th green in his one up victory over England's Callum Shinkwin to see the Continental Europe team home.

"I think both teams showed a very competitive but fair spirit. Obviously to my guys - incredible job. I'm super proud of each one of you. "I got to know some guys that I didn't know very well and I can say that European golf is in very safe hands."

Fleetwood said: "We obviously came here to win and wanted to do it for each other. "The first thing I said at the start of the week was 'your team-mates don't remember if you play bad, miss a putt or lose a point'. "But everybody remembers if you don't give 100 percent and I couldn't have asked for any more from anybody this week." European Ryder Cup captain Luke Donald was in attendance ahead of this year's edition against the United States in Rome.

FOOTBALL

Immobile blow but Lazio see off Sassuolo to keep in Euro chase

AFP
Rome

Lazio recovered from the early exit of injured captain Ciro Immobile to post a 2-0 win at Sassuolo yesterday to keep their Champions League hopes alive. Mattia Zaccagnini opened before the break by converting a penalty awarded after Sassuolo defender Jeremy Toljan handled the ball off a corner.

Felipe Anderson added a second deep into injury time with Lazio, in fifth, moving three

points behind third-placed Juventus and Inter Milan, who are level on points, and four adrift of champions AC Milan.

Maurizio Sarri's side took advantage of second-placed AC Milan's 2-2 draw at Lecce, with Juventus on Friday crushed 5-1 by Napoli, who are top of the standings with a healthy nine-point advantage. Lazio host AC Milan next weekend, with Immobile now in doubt after being substituted after a quarter of an hour due to discomfort in the right thigh. It is a fresh blow for the 32-year-old striker, who has already missed several

games earlier this season with a left thigh problem.

The leading Serie A scorer in activity with 189 goals is aiming for the top scorer title for the fifth time to equal the record set by Swede Gunnar Nordahl in the 1950s with AC Milan. But Immobile currently only has seven goals on the clock, five behind Victor Osimhen of Napoli. Sassuolo remain mired in the depths, sitting 16th after their sixth defeat in seven matches.

Sixth-placed Atalanta and AS Roma, just behind the Bergamo side but equal on points.

FOCUS

International equestrian stars to gather in Doha for Commercial Bank CHI AL SHAQAB

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Now in its 10th year, the Commercial Bank CHI AL SHAQAB Presented by Longines will again be the signature annual event at Doha's world-famous Al Shaqab equestrian centre, from February 23-25 2023, supported by Commercial Bank (Title Sponsor), Longines (Presenting Partner) and ExxonMobil (Main Sponsor).

Top-ranking local and international equestrian athletes will compete in the Olympic disciplines of Showjumping, Dressage and Para-Dressage, demonstrating how the special bond that develops between a horse and a rider can produce exceptional performances even at an elite level such as this – one of only five annual CHI competitions in the world.

This year, organisers are pleased to welcome a growing number of competitors, both horses and riders, from across the Middle East – and regional participation is very

much encouraged.

The exciting competition at CHI AL SHAQAB can only be enhanced by added local interest in the fortunes of top equestrians from around the Arab world.

At the 2022 event, Germany's Marcus Ehning (riding Stargold) took top honours in the Showjumping Grand Prix Final, ahead of Sweden's Evelina Tovek (riding Winnetou de la Hamente Z) and the Netherlands' Maikel

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van der Vleuten (riding Beauville Z).

The Freestyle Dressage category was won by Henri Ruoste from Finland (on Kontestro DB), while the Grade 1 Freestyle Para-Dressage title went to Norway's Jens Lasse Dokkan (on Aladdin).

Commenting on this year's competition, Al Shaqab Executive Director Khalifa al-Attiya, said: "We at Al Shaqab, and indeed

the entire Qatari nation, are proud and honoured to host the Commercial Bank CHI AL SHAQAB Presented by Longines – now established as a highlight of the global equestrian sports calendar.

"As the most celebrated competition of its kind in the Middle East and Asia regions, CHI AL SHAQAB brings together those riders and horses who stand

at the pinnacle of their disciplines. "Again, this year we will deliver a festival of extraordinarily high-quality sport, as well as cultural, educational, and family entertainment activities for guests of all ages. We look forward to welcoming everyone."

Joseph Abraham, Group Chief Executive Officer, Commercial Bank, said: "We are pleased to be the Title Sponsor for the fourth consecutive year of this premier equestrian event, the Commercial Bank CHI AL SHAQAB presented by Longines. We are dedicated to supporting Qatar's aspirations of becoming a premier international sports hub and we recognise the significance of sports in shaping Qatar's economy and international presence."



FOOTBALL

Arsenal go eight points clear at the top, Chelsea win

Isak earns Newcastle last-gasp win over Fulham after Mitrovic penalty reprieve

AFP
London

Arsenal moved eight points clear at the top of the Premier League with a 2-0 win over Tottenham in the north London derby as Chelsea eased the pressure on manager Graham Potter by beating Crystal Palace 1-0 yesterday.

Newcastle struck late to beat Fulham 1-0 to reclaim third place and keep alive their title aspirations.

But Arsenal will take some stopping if they are to be denied a first league title since Arsene Wenger's "Invincibles" in 2003/04 after a first league win away to Tottenham in nine years.

A dominant first-half display from the visitors did the damage as Hugo Lloris palmed Bukayo Saka's cross into his own net before Martin Odegaard's long-range effort found the bottom corner.

Aaron Ramsdale denied Spurs their customary comeback from two goals down this season after the break with saves from Harry Kane and Ryan Sessegnon. A fourth home defeat in five league games leaves Tottenham five points adrift of the top four.

Kai Havertz scored the winner for Chelsea with a towering second-half header on the day the Blues announced the signing of Mykhailo Mudryk for a fee that could rise to 100mn euros (£88mn, \$108mn).

Chelsea also paid tribute to former player and manager Gianluca Vialli ahead of their first home game since the Italian great died earlier this month aged 58 from pancreatic cancer.

The action on the field was also overshadowed by the official announcement during the first half that Chelsea had completed the signing of Mudryk, taking their spending beyond £400mn in the first season under Todd Boehly's consortium. There has not been much to show for that investment so far, but Potter's injury-ravaged squad did enough to grind out just a second win in 10 league games.

Havertz made the breakthrough as he rose highest to power home Hakim Ziyech's cross from a well-worked corner on 64 minutes.

"The crowd were great. They recognised the moment we were in, they recognised the young players on the pitch, and they stuck with the guys and got us over the line," said Potter.

Despite a much-needed win, Chelsea remain 10 points off the top four after Newcastle kept their title dreams alive at St James' Park.

SUPER SUB ISAK

The Magpies were given a huge let-off when Aleksandar Mitrovic saw a second-half penalty ruled out against his former club for a double touch of the ball.

The Serbian slipped as he took the spot-kick and his right-footed effort rebounded off his left foot into the net.



Arsenal's midfielder Martin Odegaard (left) celebrates scoring a goal against Tottenham Hotspur in London yesterday. (AFP)

Newcastle took full advantage as club-record signing Alexander Isak came off the bench to head in the winner a minute from time. Isak has now scored three goals in four Premier League appearances, but

his last came back in September due to injury. "The goal was a special moment," said Newcastle boss Eddie Howe.

"So pleased for Alex. You want to hit the ground running at a new club and he



Chelsea's new signing, midfielder Mykhailo Mudryk, is introduced to the crowd at half-time in the Premier League match against Crystal Palace at Stamford Bridge in London yesterday. (AFP)



Newcastle United's Alexander Isak celebrates with teammates after scoring against Fulham at the St James' Park in Newcastle yesterday. (Reuters)

did before the injury. He had to wait and watch the team do well in his absence. He's worked hard. For these moments the work was worth it."

The victory takes Newcastle back above Manchester United into third in the table on goal difference.

RESULTS

Chelsea 1 (Havertz 64) Crystal Palace 0
Newcastle 1 (Isak 89) Fulham 0
Tottenham 0 Arsenal 2
(Lloris 14-og, Odegaard 36)

SPOTLIGHT

PSG meets fans at Khalifa Stadium on January 18



Paris Saint-Germain kick off their Qatar Winter Tour with an open training session for fans at Khalifa's International Stadium on January 18 at 6:30pm. Doors open at 4:00pm. Fans will share the unique experience of watching their favourite stars as they in prepare for their friendly versus Saudis' All Star XI on January 19.

Over 15,000 tickets are now available for only QR20 on Q-Tickets. Tickets are selling fast so we encourage you to book your seats as soon as possible.

The club is delighted to offer such an exclusive experience once again for its fans in Qatar.

Disappointing Atletico drop more points in Almeria draw

Atletico Madrid dropped two more points in an increasingly frustrating campaign with a 1-1 draw at Almeria yesterday in La Liga. The visitors went ahead through Angel Correa but El Bilal Toure pegged back Diego Simeone's side, fourth and 13 points behind leaders Barcelona.

Atletico should have won the game in the second half but Almeria goalkeeper Fernando Martinez made stunning saves to deny Alvaro Morata and Correa. Sergio Reguilon, who came on as a substitute, was sent off for Atletico for two yellow cards in under five minutes in the final stages.

Simeone's side have now won just one of their last six league games, against bottom-of-the-table Elche, and could not bounce back from their defeat by Barcelona last weekend.

"We had a lot of chances to score," Atletico defender Mario Hermoso told DAZN.

"You are left with a strange feeling when you aren't capable of winning."

"If we had scored three clear chances in the first half and three in the second, the game would have been more comfortable, and with a bigger scoreline, they had two chances." Atletico had taken the lead in the 18th minute after a clever dummy by Antoine Griezmann allowed Correa to run on to Geoffrey Kondogbia's pass.

The Argentine fired home at the near post to record his 50th league goal for the Rojiblancos.

Sergio Akieme lashed over as Almeria searched for an instant response, more than holding their own in the first half. Eventually the hosts levelled before the break through Toure, netting his fourth league goal of the season with a powerful header from Lucas Robertone's cross.

The Mali international found space behind Axel Witsel and capitalised brilliantly.

Robertone continued to prove a thorn in Atletico's side in the second half, playing a fine ball to Colombian striker Luis Suarez, who sent an effort wide.

Atletico substitute Morata should have levelled at the end of a swift counter but Almeria goalkeeper Fernando clawed out his effort and then pushed the loose ball to safety.

The stopper then produced another sublime save with his leg to deny Correa from point blank range.

Fernando's saves saw his team move three points clear of the relegation zone, up to 13th.

"Sometimes they take two shots and score two goals and other times you are lucky enough to be able to help the team," Fernando told DAZN. (AFP)