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Qatar honours for gutsy Siklosi and Moellhausen



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Sadd continue winning streak with win over Markhiya



Monday, January 30, 2023
Rajab 8, 1444 AH

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Dominant India win inaugural U-19 Women's T20 World Cup

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TENNIS

Djokovic lands 10th Australian Open title, 22nd Grand Slam

Serb beats Tsitsipas 6-3, 7-6 (4), 7-6 (5) to equal Nadal's mark; Djokovic hails comeback title as 'the biggest victory in my life'

AFP
Melbourne

An emotional Novak Djokovic called it “the biggest victory in my life” after sweeping past Stefanos Tsitsipas to win a 10th Australian Open title and equal Rafael Nadal's 22 Grand Slam crowns yesterday.

The Serb will return to world number one as he overcame a hamstring injury and off-court drama to defeat the Greek third seed 6-3, 7-6 (7/4), 7-6 (7/5) on Rod Laver Arena. The 35-year-old climbed to his player's box afterwards to embrace his mother and broke down in uncontrollable tears, collapsing to the ground sobbing.

His father Srdjan was again missing after he sparked controversy by posing with a fan carrying a Russian flag featuring Vladimir Putin's face following his son's quarter-final win.

The emphatic victory over Tsitsipas capped a remarkable return for Djokovic to Melbourne Park, having missed last year's tournament when he was deported over his Covid vaccination stance.

“I have to say this has been one of the most challenging tournaments I've ever played considering the circumstances, not playing last year, coming back this year,” he said, wearing a jacket with 22 emblazoned on it.

“I want to thank all the people that made me feel welcome, comfortable, to be in Melbourne.

“I try to pinch myself and really live through these moments, it's a long journey,” added Djokovic, who was more emotional than usual. “Only my team and family know what we have been through in the last four or five weeks and this is why I'd probably say this is the biggest victory in my life considering the circumstances.”

'NOT GOING ANYWHERE'

There had been an air of inevitability about Djokovic triumphing once more. After his three-year ban from Australia was lifted, he won the lead-up Adelaide



Serbia's Novak Djokovic holds the Norman Brookes Challenge Cup after his victory against Greece's Stefanos Tsitsipas in the final of the Australian Open in Melbourne yesterday. (AFP)

International before reinforcing his status as an all-time great in Melbourne. His dominant win drew him level with Nadal on a record 22 Slams, two clear of now-retired Roger Federer.

The Spanish great made a second-round exit with a hip injury, one of a series of shocks which upended the men's and women's draws during the first major of the year. “I guess we always find the A-game on the Slams,” Djokovic said of equal-

ling his old rival Nadal. “This is what I feel both Nadal and myself probably still fight for. It is still what motivates us the most, winning the biggest titles in our sport and trying to keep up with the young guns. Tennis is in good hands,” he added. “But we're still not going anywhere.”

Nadal and Djokovic have won 16 of the last 19 Slams. The 36-year-old Spaniard though is set to slide down the rankings when they are released today, in

contrast to Djokovic. The Serb will dethrone Spanish teenager Carlos Alcaraz and return to the top for the first time since June. Tsitsipas will climb one place to three.

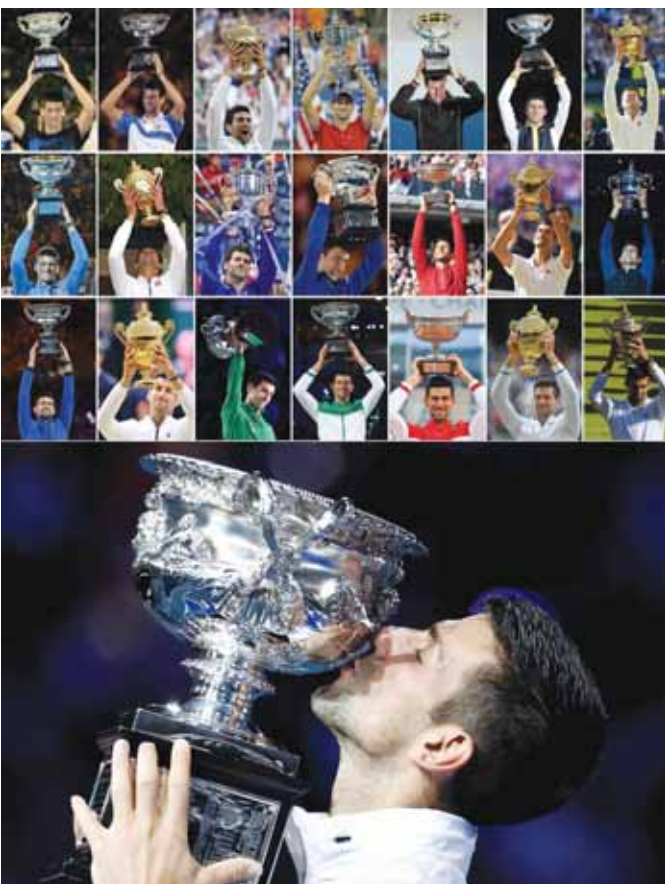
TSITSIPAS 'STEP FORWARD'

Both men were back on a court that helped them rise to stardom. Djokovic won his first Grand Slam in 2008 on Rod Laver Arena while Tsitsipas burst on the scene in 2019 when he stunned

NOVAK FACTFILE

(x denotes seeding)
Novak Djokovic (SRB x4)
Age: 35
World ranking: 5
Prize money: \$166,905,513
Career titles: 93
Grand Slam titles: 22
Australian Open best: Champion (2008, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2015, 2016, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2023)
Coach: Goran Ivanisevic
Path to the AO 2023 win:
1st rd: bt Roberto Carballes Baena (ESP) 6-3, 6-4, 6-0
2nd rd: bt Enzo Couacaud (FRA) 6-1, 6-7 (5/7), 6-2, 6-0
3rd rd: bt Grigor Dimitrov (BUL x27) 7-6 (9/7), 6-3, 6-4,
4th rd: bt Alex de Minaur (AUS x22) 6-2, 6-1, 6-2
Quarter-final: bt Andrey Rublev (RUS x5) 6-1, 6-2, 6-4
Semi-final: bt Tommy Paul (USA) 7-5, 6-1, 6-2
Final: bt Stefanos Tsitsipas (GRE x3) 6-3, 7-6 (7/4), 7-6 (7/5)

Leading Grand Slam men's singles champions
22 - Rafael Nadal (ESP), 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)



This combination photo created shows Serbia's Novak Djokovic posing with his 22 Grand Slam titles. (Top row L to R): Australian Open 2008, Australian Open 2011, Wimbledon 2011, US Open 2011, Australian Open 2012, Australian Open 2013, Wimbledon 2014; (second row L to R) Australian Open 2015, Wimbledon 2015, US Open 2015, Australian Open 2016, French Open 2016, Wimbledon 2018, US Open 2018; (third row L to R) Australian Open 2019, Wimbledon 2019, Australian Open 2020, Australian Open 2021, Wimbledon 2021, Wimbledon 2022; and (bottom centre) Australian Open 2023. (AFP)

vic's 33rd, appeared nervous, losing the first set.

But he battled back into contention in a much closer second set as his confidence grew, earning his first break point – and set point – when Djokovic blasted a backhand wide.

But the Serb clung on to keep the set on serve and it went to a tiebreak, where his greater experience roared to the fore.

Against the odds, Tsitsipas broke for the first time in Djokovic's opening serve in set three, only to relinquish the advantage immediately after a gripping rally. It again went to a tiebreak,

where Djokovic once again raised a level.

“I've had the privilege to play a lot of difficult, high-intensity matches, but I would like to say one more time Novak brings the best out in me,” said Tsitsipas, who is still yet to win a major.

“He's the greatest that has ever held a tennis racquet, for sure. I don't think there's any reason for me to be affected by today's loss,” he added.

“It is a step forward. I'm looking forward to scoring more points during this season, making bigger results, fighting for bigger trophies.”

Ten of the best: Djokovic's dominance at Australian Open

First Serb: 2008 - Becomes first Serb to win a Grand Slam. Then 20, he burst into the big time with a straight-sets victory in the semi-finals over world number one Roger Federer. In the final he beat Frenchman Jo-Wilfried Tsonga.

“Every player dreams of winning a Grand Slam. I am still not fully aware of what I have achieved these past two weeks,” the young Djokovic said.

Three-year wait ends: 2011 - It was three long years before Djokovic secured a second major triumph, and he put his success down to a gluten-free diet. It heralded a golden year where he won three of the four Grand Slam titles.

He lost only one set the entire fortnight in Melbourne including defeating defending champion Federer again in the semi-finals, before overpowering Andy Murray in the final. Djokovic said he decided to change his backroom team, as well as his diet, after a disappointing 2010.

The longest final: 2012 - Djokovic's first successful Grand Slam defence involved feats of endurance rarely witnessed before in tennis. After

a five-set battle against Murray in the semi-final, he then had to fight for almost six hours against Rafael Nadal to win the title. It was the longest Grand Slam singles final in the Open era and ended at 1:37am. Djokovic ripped off his shirt and roared at the end of the epic match which he won 5-7, 6-4, 6-2, 6-7 (5/7), 7-5 in 5hr 53min.

Title hat-trick: 2013 - Djokovic became the first man since the Open era began in 1968 to win three Australian titles in a row after overpowering Murray in four sets. “It's definitely my favourite Grand Slam, my most successful Grand Slam. I love this court,” said Djokovic.

Revenge over Wawrinka: 2015 - Djokovic was beaten in the 2014 quarter-finals by Stan Wawrinka, the eventual champion, but was back to his punishing best a year later. After exacting revenge on the Swiss in the semi-finals he again rolled over Murray for the title, inflicting a humiliating 6-0 bagel on the Scot in the final set to tie Andre Agassi on the all-time list with eight Grand Slam titles. His wife Jelena had given birth

to their son Stefan three months earlier. “I think it has deeper meaning, more intrinsic value now to my life because I'm a father and a husband,” said Djokovic.

'Djokovic Slam': 2016 - The records kept tumbling as he clinched a sixth Melbourne crown to equal Roy Emerson's pre-Open era record and win a third consecutive major title after Wimbledon and the US Open in 2015. He would complete the “Djokovic Slam” at the French Open to hold all four majors at the same time. He defeated Murray for a fourth time in the championship match.

Sampras eclipsed: 2019 - After two years battling injury, including undergoing elbow surgery, he swatted aside old rival Nadal in the final to claim a record seventh Australian Open and 15th Grand Slam title to go ahead of his childhood idol, Pete Sampras.

Great eight: 2020 - Djokovic captured his eighth Australian Open title and earned his 900th tour-level match win on the way. Federer

was dispatched in straight sets in the semi-final but Dominic Thiem gave Djokovic his hardest final since the Nadal epic in 2012. Djokovic eventually fought back from two sets to one down to secure his 17th major. “Obviously at this stage of my career, Grand Slams are the ones I value the most. They are the ones I prioritise,” he said.

Stomach for the fight: 2021 - Djokovic looked on his way out when he could barely run because of an abdominal injury in the third round against Taylor Fritz, but somehow survived in five sets. He was unable to train between matches, but grew fitter with every passing round and reached the final. World number four Daniil Medvedev went the way of the Serb's eight previous final opponents as a rampant Djokovic extended his perfect record in finals in Melbourne.

More controversy, more glory: 2023 - The fourth seed returned after missing the 2022 edition when he was deported over his Covid stance. There were concerns over how he would be received by the crowd and there was



Novak Djokovic (right) with Stefanos Tsitsipas after winning the Australian Open final in Melbourne yesterday. (Reuters)

hamstring trouble too, but the Serb got a warm reception and the injury improved as he went deeper into the tournament. There was yet more controversy when his father Srdjan was pictured posing next to a Russian flag featuring Vladimir Putin's face. Djokovic put it all aside to reach the final and beat Tsitsipas for a 10th Melbourne title and record-equalling 22 Slam crowns. (AFP)

FOCUS

Dominant India win U-19 Women’s World Cup

www.u19worldcup.com
Potchefstroom, South Africa

A brilliant new-ball performance was followed by a calm run-chase as India cruised to victory over England in the ICC U-19 Women’s World Cup final, sealing their triumph with seven wickets in hand and six overs to spare.

Having won the toss and decided to put England in to bat, India’s bowlers more than justified the decision with a ruthless display.

Opening bowlers Titas Sadhu and Archana Devi ripped through the England top order, reducing them to 22/4 after six overs, with key batter Grace Scrivens one of those to fall.

Sadhu bowled her four overs straight through, going for just six runs and picking up two wickets. Devi was slightly more expensive, but her 2/17 included the crucial dismissals of Scrivens and Niamh Holland (10).

Wickets continued to tumble, with England not able to see out their full allocation of overs despite resistance from Ryana MacDonald-Gay (19). And the final wicket fell with 17 balls still remaining, leaving India a target of just 69 to win.

England had pulled off a great escape in the semi-final against Australia, but lightning did not strike twice.

Shafali Verma’s aggressive 15 from 11 balls cut into the target early on, but the removal of both openers gave India a temporary scare. Hannah Baker had Verma caught, before Scrivens removed Shweta Sehrawat.

But Soumya Tiwari and Gongadi Trisha settled things down with an excellent and composed partnership.

The pair got to within one hit of the target when Trisha went for glory and was cleaned up by Alexa Stonehouse.

But India didn’t have to wait long for the winning moment, with Soumya Tiwari knocking a single to see it through with an unbeaten 24 from 37 balls, exactly what her side required on the big stage.

And the celebrations were huge as India claimed the title in the first-ever ICC U-19 Women’s T20 World Cup.

Player of the match, Sadhu, for

her 2 for 6 from four overs, said: “It’s really surreal because all of us have been looking forward to this day for a long time now.”

India coach Nooshin Al Khadeer said: “This is a moment that we’ve waited for for very long. We have a very good future.”

Grace Scrivens, the England captain, said yesterday: “I’m not sure they were all very pretty wickets, but I’ll take them. Obviously we’re gutted with the way it went today. Our batting let



Indian players celebrate winning the inaugural ICC Women’s U-19 World Cup in Potchefstroom, South Africa, yesterday. India beat England by seven wickets in the final.

us down, we’ve been so strong through this tournament. All these girls are unbelievable and I love captaining this side that has so much talent.”

BRIEF SCORES
India 69 for 3 (Trisha 24, Tiwari 24*, Baker 1-13) **beat England 68** (MacDonald-Gay 19, Sadhu 2-6, Chopra 2-13) **by 7 wickets**

CRICKET

Bavuma and Miller sparkle as Proteas bag England series

‘Playing England is always tough, your disciplines are always being tested’

Reuters
Bloemfontein, South Africa

Captain Temba Bavuma struck a superb 109 from 102 balls as South Africa chased down a record target in Bloemfontein to beat England by five wickets yesterday and take an unassailable 2-0 lead in their one-day international series.

Hosts South Africa won the toss and elected to bowl first, but after a slow start England accelerated superbly to post a formidable 342 for seven in their 50 overs.

The home side reached their target with five balls remaining for a record chase at the Mangaung Oval, smashing the previous best mark of 274 by South Africa against Australia in 2020.

They finished on 347-5. Only India have chased more runs to beat England in ODI cricket when they reached 356-7 in Pune in 2016.

The result is a boost for South Africa, who need a clean sweep of the series to stay on course for guaranteed qualification for the World Cup in India this year.

“Playing England is always tough, your disciplines are always being tested,” Bavuma said at the post-match presentation. “Chasing 340 like that will give us a lot of confidence. The wicket in Bloemfontein is nice and suits the way we want to play. I was glad to remind myself how to count to 100!”

The visitors’ total yesterday was boosted by a magnificent unbeaten 94 in 82 balls from captain Jos Buttler and an excellent 80 from 75 deliveries from Harry Brook, who made a duck on his ODI debut in the opening match of the series.



South Africa’s David Miller in action during the second One Day International against England at Mangaung Oval, Bloemfontein, South Africa, yesterday. (Reuters)

Moeen Ali chipped in with a fluent 51 from 45 balls as England smashed 181 from the last 20 overs of their innings.

South Africa were always up with the rate in their reply, which was anchored by Bavuma, who scored a timely third ODI century having come in for recent criticism following poor white ball form.

David Miller took the team home with

a masterful 58 from 37 balls and Aiden Markram chipped in with a 49 at better than a run a ball. “To post 342 was a fantastic effort from the guys, but it was a great chase,” Buttler said. “Credit to South Africa, Temba led from the front. “We have come to win games of cricket, but there is also a bigger picture as well in terms of building towards the World

Cup.” The final match of the series is in Kimberley on Wednesday.

BRIEF SCORES
England 342-7 in 50 overs (J. Buttler 94 not out, H. Brook 80, M. Ali 51) **lost to South Africa 347-5 in 49.1 overs** (T. Bavuma 109, D. Miller 58 not out) by 5 wickets

Kohli, Rohit hail India’s T20 Women’s World Cup win

New Delhi: Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma led tributes yesterday to India’s Under-19 women’s team after their Twenty20 World Cup triumph in South Africa, hailing victory as a “special moment”.

India, led by rising star Shafali Verma, hammered England by seven wickets in the final of the inaugural tournament in Potchefstroom.

Titas Sadhu, 18, led the bowling to dismiss England for 68, a total the batters overhauled with six overs to spare and hand England their first loss in the tournament.

“Big congratulations to the U-19 girls cricket team for winning the World Cup. Well done on making the nation proud,” Rohit, senior men’s skipper, tweeted.

Kohli called the win a “special moment”.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) announced a cash prize of more than \$600,000 and invited the

squad to witness the third and final T20 men’s match between India and New Zealand in Ahmedabad on Wednesday.

“Women’s Cricket in India is on the upswing and the World Cup triumph has taken the stature of women’s cricket several notches higher,” BCCI secretary Jay Shah wrote on Twitter. “This is surely a path-breaking year.”

The victory comes ahead of the inaugural women’s Indian Premier League scheduled in March.

BCCI recently earned \$572.5mn as it announced the winners of bids to own five WPL teams.

The media rights for the league were sold for \$116.7mn to Viacom18 for the next five seasons.

“The timing of this historic win combined with the pending Women’s IPL has the potential to shift the balance of power in the women’s game in a few years,” said West Indies cricketer-turned-commentator Ian Bishop.

BOXING

Beterbiev stops Yarde to retain belts

Reuters
London

Unbeaten light-heavyweight world champion Artur Beterbiev stopped Britain’s Anthony Yarde in a thrilling eight rounds at London’s Wembley Arena on Saturday to retain his WBC, IBF and WBO belts.

The Russian-born Canadian sent the Briton to the canvas with a punishing right and, after a count, the challenger’s corner signalled to referee Steve Gray to stop the fight two minutes and one second into the round.

Montreal-based Beterbiev, 38, was behind on two of the three judges’ scorecards at that point but the victory, against an underdog who turned out to be a real threat, took his professional

record to 19-0-0. Yarde, 31, is now on 23 wins with three defeats and no draws.

Both men suffered facial cuts as they traded blows at a ferocious pace from the opening bell, Yarde under his right eye and Beterbiev to his left eyelid.

Yarde twice lost his gumshield in a pulsating fight that saw both men hammered against the ropes and landing stinging blows.

Beterbiev made every punch count but Yarde held in there and landed a crunching right in round five before then being caught by an uppercut. Round seven was another classic, Yarde pushing Beterbiev into a corner but the champion turning it around to rain down blows on the Briton. “He gave one of the best fighters in the world the toughest fight he’s ever had,” said promoter George Warren of Yarde.

BOTTOMLINE

Bowlers restrict New Zealand batting as India win the second T20 clash

AFP
Lucknow, India

India’s batting lacked fluency but a strong performance from their bowlers in the second Twenty20 international against New Zealand set up a six-wicket win in a low-scoring thriller in Lucknow yesterday to level the series at 1-1.

Following a top-order wobble, captain Hardik Pandya (15 not out) and Suryakumar Yadav (26 not out) combined for a crucial 31-run partnership as they helped the hosts reach 101-4 on the penultimate ball, chasing

ing New Zealand’s 99-8. India captain Pandya said yesterday: “I always believed we will finish the game. It went quite deep, but that is how it is. These kind of games, it is important to not panic. Rather than taking risks, we rotated the strike, having said that, this is a shocker of a pitch.”

He added: “We need to make sure we have better pitches. Even 120 would have been a winning total here. We kept to our plans, we made sure they will not rotate the strike, and the wickets kept falling. Dew didn’t play much of a role because if you see they were able to spin the ball more than us. It was a shocker of a wicket. The

ball was flying for even the fast bowlers.”

Spinners Ish Sodhi and Michael Bracewell picked up a wicket apiece, while Indian batters Ishan Kishan and Washington Sundar were both run out.

New Zealand had posted a strong total of 176 in the first game on Friday, but were unable to repeat that on a pitch that offered plenty of turn, and India’s bowlers put them under pressure throughout the innings.

Five Indian bowlers picked up a wicket before Arshdeep Singh dismissed Sodhi and Lockie Ferguson.

“It was a great game of cricket,” Santner said. “We bowled well, got really close, another 10-15 runs would have helped. With the bounce out there, it looked quite challenging. When you are batting, you are not too sure what a good score. We were looking at 140-160 when 120 would have been a good score.”

The third and final T20I of the series will take place in Ahmedabad on Wednesday.

BRIEF SCORES
New Zealand 99-8 in 20 overs (M. Santner 19 not out; A. Singh 2-7) **lost to India 101-4 in 19.5 overs** (S. Yadav 26 not out; M. Bracewell 1-13) **by 6 wickets**



FENCING

Qatar honours for gutsy Siklosi and Moellhausen

‘It has been a wonderful competition, and I am happy that I won in the end. I’ve enjoyed my stay in Qatar’

By Sports Reporter
Doha

After three days of exciting sword crossing, the curtain finally fell on the Qatar Grand Prix Fencing Championship 2023 at the Aspire Dome in Doha with Hungary’s Gergely Siklosi beating Belgian Neisser Loyola 15-10 to win the men’s category while Brazil’s world No 36 Nathalie Moellhausen scripted an upset by defeating her higher-ranked opponent, the 7th-ranked Marie-Florence Candassamy of France, 15-8 to emerge as champion in the women’s category.

The President of the Qatar Fencing Federation (QFF), Abdullah Ali al-Maadeed, along with the QFF board of directors and other top dignitaries, attended the final event and the award ceremony.

En route to the final of the Qatar leg of the one-series, nine-city International Fencing Federation (FIE)-organized Epee competition, world No 8 Siklosi defeated Japan’s Akira Komata (ranked 27th) in the semi-finals, while No 14 Loyola got the better of world No 1 Yannick Borel of France in what was arguably the most exciting clash of the competition, winning 15-14 to book his final ticket.

“It has been a wonderful competition, and I am happy that I won in the end. It was a tough match, and I fought against a worthy opponent. I’ve enjoyed my stay in Qatar, and I would like to praise the organisers for the well-organized competition,” Siklosi said.

“I’m delighted that I’m leaving with the championship medal on my neck,” Siklosi added.

In the women’s category, Moellhausen trounced Hungary’s Eszter Muhari (ranked 24th), while Candassamy defeated Hong Kong’s Man Wai Vivian Kong (the world No 3) to set up the exciting final.

“It wasn’t an easy victory considering the ranking of my opponent and the good fight she fought, but I am happy that I won

today. I am leaving with much delight after having had a good outing in Qatar. I hope to continue in this form throughout the season,” Moellhausen said after her victory. Each of the winners walked away with the \$5,000 winner’s cash prize, besides the championship medal, while the finalists were rewarded with \$3,000 each.

The semi-finalists also got \$1,500 for their efforts.

While all eyes were on No 1-ranked Yannick Borel of France to add the Doha competition champion’s medal to his rich collection, the 34-year-old 2018 individual world champion, who is also a four-time team world champion and four-time individual European champion, however, fell short when it mattered most against the 24-year-old Cuban-born Belgian, who relocated to Belgium when he was 16 after his father was appointed national coach of the Belgian team.

The women’s category threw up a lot of surprises, as world No 1 Choi In-jeong could not make it out of the round of 64, her first game of the tournament, as all the top 32 fencers got a bye into the round of 64.

The two-time team Olympic silver medalist and three-time team Asian champion suffered an embarrassing 15-10 defeat at the hands of Switzerland’s Angeline Favre (world No 40).

Her teammate on the South Korean team, Sera Song (the world No 2), was also stopped in the quarter-finals by Candassamy, who recorded a 15-12 victory over the 2022 world champion.

QFF president said yesterday: “We are happy that everything went well and the competition ended on a good note for the athletes and the fans. I would like to congratulate the winners on their victory, and I would also like to extend my appreciation to my team for the successful organization of the competition.

Points collected from the \$22,000 total prize money event count in the Olympic qualification race for the 2024 Paris Olympic Games.



President of the Qatar Fencing Federation Abdullah Ali al-Maadeed poses with the winners of the men’s category on the final day of the Qatar Grand Prix Fencing Championship 2023 at the Aspire Dome in Doha yesterday.



Fencers in action on the concluding day of the Qatar Grand Prix Fencing Championship 2023 at the Aspire Dome yesterday.



The medal winners in the women’s category are seen at the prize distribution ceremony.

MCILROY LEADS IN DUBAI

Dubai: Rory McIlroy leads the Dubai Desert Classic into the weather-delayed final round by three shots despite dumping his second into the water guarding the 18th green yesterday.

After the bogey on his last hole, the world No 1 signed for a third round seven-under-par 65.

That helped McIlroy move to 15-under ahead of today’s conclusion - three clear of English duo Callum Shinkwin (67) and Dan Bradbury (68) tied for second at 12 under.

For McIlroy it was a sense of déjà vu as last year he found the same water on the 18th to eventually lose the Desert Classic title to Viktor Hovland. “I’m always going to hit good enough shots to make birdies and hole some putts but keeping the mistakes off your card is the secret for me,” said McIlroy, a two-

time winner of the tournament. He added: “I made one bogey out there today, which I’m pretty frustrated about. You know, the other 17 holes were very good. Overall, it was much better today. I need to go out and do the same tomorrow.”

The four-time major champion was excited about securing a win in his first start of the season for the first time in his career. “I have a nice opportunity to start the year with a win, and try to build off of that.”

The 23-year-old Bradbury is living a dream, having secured his DP World Tour membership after winning the Joburg Open in November while playing on an invitation. The man from Wakefield was paired with McIlroy yesterday, and said: “You hear so many ‘Rory’s and then you just hear a random ‘Dan’ in the middle of it, you can’t help

but smile. But it’s nice to know that there are people out there wishing me well.”

Last week’s Abu Dhabi champion Victor Perez (66) was among a large group tied for fourth place at 11-under par. That included five LIV Golf players - Patrick Reed (69), Ian Poulter (69), Shaun Norris (67), Adri Arnaus (70) and Richard Bland (71). McIlroy started the day at 8-under par after an indifferent second round of 70, but four birdies in the first four holes lifted him to a share of the lead. He then made eight straight pars, before another stretch of four birdies in five holes. The finale was a disappointing bogey. McIlroy is guaranteed to retain his No1 position after Spain’s Jon Rahm came up short in the final round of the Farmers Insurance Open on the PGA Tour.

GOLF

Homa claims Farmers Insurance Open

AFP
Los Angeles

Max Homa fired seven birdies in a six-under par 66 on Saturday to grab the US PGA Farmers Insurance Open at Torrey Pines as overnight leader Sam Ryder and world number three Jon Rahm faded.

Homa, ranked 16th in the world, nabbed his sixth US PGA Tour title and his fourth in come-from-behind fashion.

He capped his round with a four-foot birdie putt at 18 -- where his second shot was a putt from just off the green. His 13-under par total of 275 put him two strokes in front of Keegan Bradley, who had six birdies in his six-under 66.

“I think it’s a ton of patience and a

lot of confidence,” Homa, 32, said of his come-from-behind wins in a post-round television interview.

“Winning takes a lot of luck but it takes, I think, a lot of patience. Especially on these final rounds, 18 holes is a marathon and a lot of stuff goes on.”

Five off the lead to start the day, Homa chipped in for birdie at the third, and rolled in a 13-footer at the fifth. He added birdies at the sixth, ninth and 11th before his lone miscue of the day at 14.

He curled in a 15-foot birdie at the 16th to tie Ryder atop the leaderboard, but Homa was one in front when he reached 18 after Ryder fell back with a double-bogey at the 15th. Ryder, a 33-year-old chasing his first PGA title in his 147th start, got off to a promising start with a 13-foot birdie at the first.

He rebounded from back-to-back

bogeys at the seventh and eighth with a birdie at the 10th, where he stuck his 189-yard second shot three feet from the pin.

But at 15 he was in deep rough off the tee on the way to dropping two shots.

He made one more bogey at 17, where he was unable to get up and down from a greenside bunker and a three-over 75 left him tied for fourth on 279.

That was one stroke behind two-time major winner Collin Morikawa, who was in solo third after a 69.

“Just didn’t get it done,” Ryder said. “I battled hard, though... battled a lot but hopefully there’s going to be more opportunities.”

Rahm had been expected to be the player pressuring Ryder, going for a victory that could have seen him return to number one in the world.

SPOTLIGHT

Germany edge past Belgium to win hockey World Cup in thrilling fashion



Germany’s players pose with the trophy after winning the FIH men’s Hockey World Cup 2023 at the Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar yesterday. (AFP)

AFP
Bhubaneswar, India

Germany came from 2-0 behind to overcome defending champions Belgium and win the hockey World Cup yesterday in a dramatic see-saw final ending in a sudden death shootout.

Belgium went ahead in the first quarter in Bhubaneswar, India with Florent Van Aubel collecting the ball after a deflection and smashing it powerfully into the backboard.

Moments later Tanguy Cosyns doubled Belgium’s lead, collecting a neat cross in front of the German goal for an easy tap-in. Germany reviewed the goal decision but it stood.

Early in the second quarter Belgium’s keeper Vincent Vanasch saved a penalty stroke but just before half-time Niklas Wellen got one back for Germany.

Germany then scored through Gonzalo Peillat to make it 2-2 and in the final period

Year	Winners, runners-up, 3rd place
2022	Germany, Belgium, Netherlands
2018	Belgium, Netherlands, Australia
2014	Australia, Netherlands, Argentina
2010	Australia, Germany, Netherlands
2006	Germany, Australia, Spain
2002	Germany, Australia, Netherlands
1998	Netherlands, Spain, Germany
1994	Pakistan, Netherlands, Australia
1990	Netherlands, Pakistan, Australia
1986	Australia, England, W Germany
1982	Germany, Australia, Australia
1978	Pakistan, Netherlands, Australia
1975	India, Pakistan, West Germany
1973	Netherlands India, W Germany
1971	Pakistan, Spain, India

captain Mats Grambusch squeezed a shot between Vanasch’s legs to go ahead 3-2.

But with under two minutes remaining, Belgium’s Tom Boon equalised from a penalty corner, taking the game into a shootout. This

went to sudden death and Germany won 5-4. “Belgium is a world-class team. They have so much quality. We knew it would be a huge clash against them,” Wellen, named player of the match, said afterwards.

“If you come back from two goals down three times in a row, it’s not luck. It’s our quality, it’s our mentality. And we showed that again today,” he said.

“The last few weeks have been the best of my life,” said Wellen, who scored in the final. Wellen also became a father during the tournament. “The win today is just incredible. I’m speechless.”

Belgium hockey’s golden generation were hoping to win their second World Cup in a row, after cruising into the final despite having the tournament’s oldest side.

Their passage to the final included a shoot-out victory over the Netherlands in the semi-finals and a 2-0 thumping of New Zealand in the quarters. On their way to the final Germany beat England and then Australia.

QNB STARS LEAGUE

Al Sadd continue winning streak with win over Markhiya

AL GHARAFa BOUNCED BACK FROM AN EARLY DEFICIT TO BEAT AL SAILIYA 2-1

By Sports Reporter

Doha

Holders Al Sadd maintained their winning streak by defeating Al Markhiya 1-0 in the QNB Stars League match at the Al Sadd Stadium yesterday.

Striker Baghdad Bounedjah scored the winner for Al Sadd in the 12th minute of the match.

It was another positive result for The Wolves, who after being strengthened by the return of their top stars are continuing their winning march and upward climb in the rankings table.

The defending champions are now on 16 points, while Al Markhiya remained on nine points. Al Sadd struck early with a fine goal following a free-wheeling action when Rodrigo Tabata set the ball through for Musaab Khedir to send in a cross to Bounedjah in the centre to run the ball into an open net as the goalkeeper had rushed out to the left.

But for being beaten at that, Al Markhiya's goalkeeper Loukay Sherif Ashour did a good job for his team throughout the match holding on to several solid attempts from Al Sadd. One of glorious chances for Al Sadd came in the 59th minute when their mercurial forward Akram Afif sent in a curling kick from top left of the box, but the ball went on to hit the far right post. On the rebound, Musaab took a kick, but goalkeeper Ashour dived to stave away the danger.

Soon in the 63rd minute, Bounedjah had another chance of doubling the lead when put through with a fine ball, but he failed to beat goalkeeper Ashour.

Al Sadd kept Al Markhiya on their toes with several attacking moves. In the 73rd minute, Afif provided Santi Cazorla with a good pass, but the Spaniard also failed to beat the goalkeeper.

Earlier in the opening half, Al Sadd were successful in scoring in the 28th minute as Pedro Miguel struck, but he was ruled off-side.



Al Sadd striker Baghdad Bounedjah (second right) celebrates with teammates after scoring against Al Markhiya in the QNB Stars League match at Al Sadd Stadium yesterday.

Al Sadd had two off-sides in the match, with their players being eager to latch on to the ball.

Al Markhiya, who did a superb job defending, also had their chances and a great one in the 79th minute when Aymen Hussein headed off a long ball, but an alert Al Sadd goalkeeper Saad al-Sheeb foiled their hopes.

AL GHARAFa BEAT AL SAILIYA
Al Gharafa bounced back from an early deficit to beat Al Sailiya 2-1 at the Al Ahli Stadium.

After Moroccan professional Ismail Khafi took Al Sailiya ahead in the 10th minute, Al Gharafa struck back through goals from Mehdi Tahrat (46th minute) and Farid Boulaya (78th minute).

With this victory, Al Gharafa moved on to 16 points and thus

put an end to a series of negative results. It was The Cheetahs' first victory under Portuguese coach Pedro Martins.

Al Sailiya remained on four points in the last place after suffering their ninth defeat.

At the start, Al Sailiya went with all force in search of a victory that would put them back on the right track at the start of second leg of the league. Their new professional player Khafi indeed succeeded in helping them take the lead after a long ball played by goalkeeper Abdulrahman Mohamed.

After snatching the ball from Mohamed Ali who fell, the Al Sailiya striker found the net. The second half too witnessed dangerous moves, especially by Al Gharafa who pressed hard

through the flanks and penetrated from the depths to score the equalizer.

Mehdi scored following a ball played by Yacine Brahimi. In the 63rd minute, Ishak Belfodil missed an opportunity to score off a perfect cross by Brahimi.

Al Gharafa players continued to miss opportunities and this time it was Ahmed Alaeldin, who was denied by the post in the 68th minute after he dodged three defenders inside the penalty area and hit the ball.

Brahimi kept making attempts at the goal and one such move paid off for Al Gharafa. The Algerian passed the ball inside the penalty area to Moayad Hassan who, in turn, set up Boulaya who fired it in.

In the third match of the day,

Al Ahli defeated Umm Salal 3-1.

Meanwhile, Al Duhail coach Hernan Crespo spoke to the media ahead of their match against Al Wakrah.

"Our preparations for the match went off normally and we know that we will face a very dangerous team that has managed to score many victories and are one of the top teams. But I am very confident in the team's abilities to present what is required on the pitch.

"Since the start of the season, we have not entered any match with full ranks and we always suffer from injuries and absences. Now, defender Semedo will be missed due to injury and I am happy that there are players who can compensate for the absences," said Crespo.

FOOTBALL

Brighton knock holders Liverpool out of FA Cup

Reuters

Brighton, England

Holders Liverpool were knocked out of the FA Cup after losing 2-1 at Brighton & Hove Albion in the fourth round yesterday as Kaoru Mitoma struck the winning goal in stoppage time.

Harvey Elliott put Liverpool ahead, Lewis Dunk equalised before halftime and the score stayed at 1-1 until Mitoma found the net in the 92nd minute with a fine finish.

It was the second time Brighton defeated Liverpool in two weeks, having also beaten Jurgen Klopp's side 3-0 in the Premier League.

"Unbelievable ending. Sometimes you've got to win a game like that. We weren't at our best today. Nowhere near it. But we ground it out against a top side and got the win," Dunk told ITV Sport.

"We feel like we can beat anyone on our best days and we showed here we can beat them on our not-so-good days. We've got everything in our squad to keep pushing on and hopefully we can go further in the competition."

Earlier, Liverpool's teenage midfielder Elliott put them ahead in the 30th minute with a low shot into the far corner following a clever pass from Mohamed Salah.

Brighton equalised nine minutes later when Dunk got a flick on a long-range effort from Tariq Lamptey which deflected into the goal, with goalkeeper Alisson Becker wrong-footed.

Elliott, who also scored in Liverpool's win in the third-round replay, could have made

it 2-1 before halftime as he latched on to Cody Gakpo's pass but Lamptey made a superb last-ditch tackle.

ANOTHER CHANCE

Liverpool had another chance on the hour mark when Salah connected with a wonderful pass from James Milner but the Egypt forward chose to whip in a cross instead of taking a shot and Brighton keeper Jason Steele easily blocked it.

The tie looked set for a replay when Brighton's Solly March missed a golden opportunity to score in the 71st minute when he failed to beat the onrushing Alisson from close range after Mitoma set him up with a brilliant low cross.

But Mitoma took things into his own hands, scoring a superb goal following a free kick as he controlled the ball on the half volley, dummied and rifled it home.

It was another disappointing result for Liverpool who have struggled with form and injuries this season and are ninth in the Premier League standings.

"This season has been nowhere near good enough. At the start of the year, we wanted a fresh start but that hasn't happened. We've been worse," Liverpool defender Andy Robertson said.

"In the league, we haven't been good enough and now we're out of both cups," he added.

Championship Stoke City progressed to the fifth round after beating fourth-tier Stevenage 3-1 as Jacob Brown scored an early goal followed by a stunning strike from Josh Laurent and a penalty by Lewis Baker.



Brighton's Japanese midfielder Kaoru Mitoma (centre) celebrates with teammates after scoring their second goal during the English FA Cup fourth round match against Liverpool in Brighton yesterday. (AFP)

Qatar Cup 2023 semi-finals on February 9

The Qatar Stars League (QSL) has announced the dates for Qatar Cup 2023, which will feature Al Sadd, Al Duhail, Al Wakrah and Al Arabi, the top four teams in 2021-2022 season QNB Stars League in that order.

The semi-finals will be held on February 9, 2023, at the Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium. The tournament format stipulates that the first-placed team in the league championship plays fourth-placed team and second-placed team plays with third-placed team. Accordingly, Al Sadd will play against Al Arabi and Al Duhail will play against Al Wakrah. The final is scheduled for April 6, 2023.



AL-QADI CLAIMS BIG TOUR CLASS



Ghanim Nasser al-Qadi won the Big Tour Class in the ninth round of Longines Hathab Qatar Equestrian Tour on Saturday when he guided his 13-year-old stallion Morocco in a flawless winning round at the Longines Arena at Al Shaqab. The Qatari rider completed the winning round in 43.42s to top the timesheets and secure the biggest individual prize of the day of QR15,000. Al-Qadi had earlier completed the qualifying round in 66.48s, but picked up four penalties on the way. Little Lord Pezi 2, with Khalid Mohamed al-Emadi in the saddle, was the second fastest to complete the winning round faultless, completing the routine in 50.18 secs. Mohamed Saeed Haidan and D Saucedo clocked 41.30s but also had four penalties on the way. The next round of the popular equestrian series will take place from February 23-25.

SERIE A

Sassuolo leave Milan's title defence in tatters, Monza stun Juventus 2-0

AFP

Milan

AC Milan's Serie A title defence is as good as over after yesterday's 5-2 home humbling at the hands of Sassuolo which plunged the champions into deep crisis, while Monza stunned Juventus 2-0 in Turin.

Everything that could go wrong for troubled Milan did at a gloriously sunny San Siro, with two goals ruled out for offside and a shocking defensive display condemning them to another heavy loss after also being hammered by Lazio and Inter Milan in the last 10 days.

Milan will be a whopping 15 points off the Scudetto pace if league leaders Napoli beat fierce rivals Roma in late match, and they will also drop out of Serie A's top four if either Roma or Lazio, who host Fiorentina later in the day, avoid defeat.

Next up is the derby against second-placed Inter who thumped Milan 3-0 in the Super Cup less than a fortnight ago as Milan try to end an alarming slump which began with throwing away a two-goal lead to draw with Roma three weeks ago.

"We have to react, we're probably not going to win the title again but we have to fight to qualify for the Champions



Sassuolo's defender Martin Erlic (right) congratulates teammate Matheus Henrique after he scored the team's fifth goal during the Serie A match against AC Milan in Milan yesterday. (AFP)

League," said Pioli to Sky in Italy. "Ever since we drew with Roma we've not been able to do things right tactically or mentally."

Pioli's team are fourth after allowing Sassuolo to win for the first time since late October thanks to an inspired performance from Domenico Berardi.

The Italian netted his team's fourth and had a hand in three more as Gregoire Defrel, Davide Frattesi, Armand Lauriente and Matheus Henrique all scored in a free-wheeling performance, from Alessio Dionisi's side are 16th but yesterday's shock

win took them eight points ahead of Verona who sit just inside the relegation zone and face Udinese tonight.

"Today we approached the game really well and we've sent a strong signal that this is the team we are," said Berardi.

Monza completed a stunning double over Juve on a day of shocks in Italy, a mature performance belying the fact that the club owned by Silvio Berlusconi are playing in their first ever Serie A season. Bought by former Italian prime minister Berlusconi in 2018, minnows Monza confirmed their mete-

oric rise from the lower leagues to move above Juve and into 11th place. First-half strikes from Patrick Ciurria and Dany Mota were enough for a historic win at the Allianz Stadium for Monza, who also had Gianluca Caprari's brilliant early finish chalked off for offside.

Mota's third goal of a season was emblematic of how comfortable they feel at this level, the Portuguese skipping past Wojciech Szczesny and sliding home after great work from Carlos Augusto. September's 1-0 win over Juve was Monza's first ever in Serie A as well as being Raffaele Palladino's first match in charge.

Yesterday's victory came after the latest performance which showed why his team will almost certainly be in Italy's top flight come next season.

Goalkeeper Michele Di Gregorio stepped in with superb saves from strikes by Angel Di Maria, Arkadiusz Milik and Manuel Locatelli when Monza's defence had to hold off a Juventus siege in the second half. But not even the return of Dusan Vlahovic after three months away could help Juve from falling to their fourth league defeat of the season. That, and the points penalty for illicit transfer activity inflicted earlier this month, have left Juve languishing in 13th place and 15 points away from the European places.