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Scorchers beat Heat for fifth Big Bash League title



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Messi hits winner as PSG rally back to beat Toulouse

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Sunday, February 5, 2023
Rajab 14, 1444 AH

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Arsenal title bid rocked by Everton, dismal Liverpool crash again

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MOTORSPORT

Dominant al-Attiyah reigns supreme at Saudi Baja-Hail

‘Target now is Abu Dhabi, where we will face Loeb and the Audis. All good over the last two days, no problems’

Agencies
Hail, Saudi Arabia

Qatar's Nasser Saleh al-Attiyah won the car category at the 2023 Saudi Baja-Hail yesterday. The overnight leading Toyota Hilux star and his French co-driver Mathieu Baumel were fastest on the second 184km selective section on a chilly morning and sealed victory by the winning margin of 15min 19sec on the opening round of the FIA World Cup for Cross-Country Bajas.

Mohamed al-Balooshi came home in fifth place on the day's motorcycle stage – with the day's win falling to Canada's Jonathan Finn – but the MX Ride Dubai rider had done enough to clinch the win on the opening round of the FIM Bajas World Cup by 21min 09sec.

Saudi rider Haitham al-Tuwaijri overhauled first day leader Abdulaziz Ahli to snatch quad success, while Saudi Can-Am driver Saleh al-Saif won the FIA T3 section for lightweight prototype vehicles and young Spaniard Pau Navarro prevailed in the FIA T4 class.

Al-Attiyah had taken a 7min 42sec lead into the final day, once a series of time penalties had been imposed on several of his rivals, and the Toyota driver won the second stage by 5min 27sec to continue his dominant start to the season in the cross-country rallying discipline and follow up a fifth Dakar triumph with more Saudi success. Al-Attiyah said: "This is a good start. We were happy to compete here and to win here another time. The target now is Abu Dhabi, where we will face Loeb and the Audis. All good over the last two days, no problems."

Polish rival Krzysztof Holowczyc was second quickest in his X-raid Mini John Cooper Works Rally Plus with co-driver Lukasz Kurzeja and did enough to finish as runner-up on his first desert



Qatar's Nasser Saleh al-Attiyah (right) and French co-driver Mathieu Baumel celebrate after winning the Saudi Baja-Hail yesterday.

rally for eight years. Al-Attiyah's Toyota team-mate Juan Cruz Yacopini recovered strongly from a collision with a spectator's car at the end of Friday's stage and had been reinstated in third overall by rally officials before the start of the final day. The Argentine took full advantage of the Stewards' decision to reimburse him with 15 lost minutes and he and Spanish navigator Daniel Oliv-eras were third quickest to confirm the

final place on the podium.

On-stage delays for Yasir Seaidan enabled Team Black Horse Can-Am driver Al-Saif to snatch fourth overall and the T3 win from his fellow countryman by just nine seconds. Defending champion Fernando Alvarez came home in sixth overall, third in the class and picked up T3 points for second in the FIA World Cup for Cross-Country Bajas.

Al-Saif's co-driver Nasser al-Kuwari was competing in Hail for the first time. The Qatari said: "I am proud of this result. I missed the people, the stages and the rally here in the past. After 40km, it was a tricky place and we saw Yasir coming from the opposite way, lost. We let him pass and we drive behind for about 100km. Then we stopped to change the belt, cut every corner to reach the finish and we won by nine

seconds! It was really close."

Young Spaniard Pau Navarro and his French co-driver Michael Metge were second quickest in T4 on the day, but that result was sufficient for the FN Speed Team Can-Am driver to clinch T4 success and seventh overall. Brazilian Cristiano Batista won the day's stage but suffered massive time penalties after crashing and running his Can-Am on three wheels on Friday.

Behind eighth-placed local driver Dania Akeel, the French duo of Jeremie Warnier and Loic Minaudier were second in T4 and ninth overall in a Polaris RXR Pro R. Brazil's Otavio Sousa rounded off the top 10 and finished fifth in T3.

Local favourite Khalid al-Feraihi is taking part in the FIA Middle East Cup for Cross Country Bajas but suffered long delays and time penalties on the opening day with alternator failure on his Nissan and finished at the rear of the field. With al-Balooshi sealing a third motorcycle win in Hail by setting the fifth quickest time, his brother Sultan looked set to snatch second overall for the MX Ride Dubai team after Jordanian Abdullah Abu Aishah dropped over 38 minutes to the leading group after getting lost. But numerous time penalties were imposed on several riders inside the top 10 for waypoint violations and Sultan slipped back to 10th.

"Today we opened the stage and I was really happy with my navigation," said the triumphant al-Balooshi. "I had really decent navigation and a good pace. Nobody catch me. I was really happy. I knew when you open the route that there is a big opportunity that the guys from behind will catch you. But I focused up front, I did my job, one kilometre at a time and it paid off and I arrived with a big back."

Qatar-based Australian Martin Chalmers finished second on his Beta 450. Missed waypoint time penalties had ruined Alex McInnes's challenge

on Friday, but the young Briton recovered well to seal top junior honours and third place. The day's stage-winning Jonathan Finn came home in fourth overall, local rider Mishal Al-Ghuneim was fifth and a disappointed Abu Aisheh finished sixth.

Emirati Hamdan al-Ali, Great Britain's Brett Hunt, Australian Andrew Houllihan and Sultan al-Balooshi rounded off the top 10.

- TOP 5 FINAL POSITIONS CARS**
 - Nasser Saleh al-Attiyah (QAT)/ Mathieu Baumel (AND) Toyota Hilux Overdrive; 3hr 56min 17sec
 - Krzysztof Holowczyc (POL)/Lukasz Kurzeja (POL) Mini John Cooper Works Rally Plus; 4hr 11min 36sec
 - Juan Cruz Yacopini (ARG)/Daniel Oliveras (ESP) Toyota Hilux Overdrive; 4hr 15min 19sec
 - Saleh al-Saif (SAU)/Nasser al-Kuwari (QAT) Can-Am Maverick (T3); 4hr 33min 28sec
 - Yasir Seaidan (SAU)/Alexei Kuzmich (ARE) Can-Am Maverick X3 (T3); 4hr 33min 37sec
- BIKES**
 - Mohamed al-Balooshi (ARE) KTM 450 Rally; 5hr 43min 30sec
 - Martin Chalmers (AUS) Beta 450; 6hr 05min 34sec
 - Alex McInnes (GBR) Husqvarna FE 450; 6hr 12min 06sec
 - Jonathan Finn (CAN) Honda CRF 450 RL; 6hr 16min 13sec
 - Mishal al-Ghuneim (SAU) KTM 450 Rally; 6hr 28min 17sec
- QUADS**
 - Haitham al-Tuwaijri (SAU) Yamaha Raptor 700; 6hr 16min 10sec
 - Abdulaziz Ahli (ARE) Yamaha Raptor 700; 6hr 17min 07sec
 - Hani al-Noumes (SAY) Yamaha Raptor 700; 8hr 19min 41sec

QNB STARS LEAGUE

Duhail retain four-point lead; al-Somah's hat-trick sinks Rayyan

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Al Duhail maintained their four-point lead at the top of the QNB Stars League after a 2-1 win over Al Ahli yesterday. Their closest rivals Al Arabi also won yesterday, thanks to Omar al-Somah's hat-trick to pile misery on Al Rayyan.

At the Abdullah bin Khalifa Stadium, Khaled Mohamed opened the scoring in the 21st minute, before Sultan al-Brake doubled the lead for Duhail in the 44th minute. Abubakar Mohamed pulled one back for Ahli in the 53rd minute but the visitors could not force an equaliser.

Duhail were wary of The Brigadiers who had been in good run of late. Duhail had more of the ball possession and created more chances.

Al-Somah, meanwhile, got Arabi back to winning ways at the Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium after having lost two successive matches. The Syrian striker scored in the 34th, 52nd and 67th minutes. Morocco's World Cup star Sofiane Boufal made his debut for Rayyan but could not stop them from crashing to eight defeat in 12 matches as they languish at 10th place.

It was Arabi's one of the best performances this season, especially in the second half. The victory margin would have swelled had it not been for their



Al Duhail's Sultan al-Brake (second right) celebrates with teammates after scoring against Al Ahli yesterday.

missed opportunities.

Arabi began to impose themselves from the start and that culminated in the first goal, with al-Somah finding the target off Rafinha's cross. Rayyan found it difficult to make a comeback and their attack lacked understanding. Despite that, they almost scored not long after the second half started, but Vargas' shot hit the crossbar.

Arabi, meanwhile, doubled their lead, with al-Somah scoring a second

time. As Rayyan retreated, Arabi continued the pressure and Al Somah was at it again off a counter-attack led by Msakni. Arabi almost added another goal in stoppage time, but Msakni's shot hit the crossbar.

Earlier, reigning champions Al Sadd climbed to third after 2-0 win over at home. Baghdad Bounedjah (ninth minute) and Akram Afif (88th minute) scored for the winners. This was Al Sadd's fourth successive win after

league resumed after World Cup break.

Sadd, who took to the field sans their star and skipper Hassan al-Haydous, excelled equally good, with goalkeeper Saad al-Dossari captaining the side. The Wolves did not take them long to fetch the lead.

A through ball saw Akram Afif run down the left swiftly to connect and pass it to his right for Mohamed Waad to strike from the centre. The kick saw Umm Salal goalkeeper Khalifa Aba-



Al Arabi's Omar al-Somah (right) celebrates after scoring against Al Rayyan.

bacar fall down in the process and for the ball to ricochet and Bounedjah rushed in to score coolly.

Umm Salal suffered a blow in the 78th minute when their left-back Atef Mohammed was given marching orders after a second yellow after a sliding foul against a rushing Khoukhi.

Umm Salal's hopes were further dented as Afif produced the second goal. Running down the left, Afif gave a pass to Bounedjah just outside the box

on the left. Bounedjah broke into the danger area and sent a cross to Ali Asad, who relayed the ball back to Afif – waiting in the centre – to score.

Meanwhile, Al Gharafa scored a 4-0 win over Al Wakrah. Homam al-Ameen with a brace (18th and 75th minutes), Yacine Brahimi (54th minute) and Muayad Hassan (63rd minute) scored the goals. The win and the valuable three points saw Al Gharafa move to fifth, while Al Wakrah are sixth.

TWENTY20

Scorchers beat Heat to win fifth Big Bash League

AFP
Perth

Teenager Cooper Connolly's big hitting at the death and skipper Ashton Turner's heroic 53 saw Perth Scorchers beat Brisbane Heat to win an unprecedented fifth Twenty20 Big Bash League title yesterday.

Their fireworks propelled them to 178-5 and a nail-biting five-wicket win with four balls left in front of a record 53,886 parochial fans at Perth Stadium after Brisbane put on 175-7.

It was a successful title defence by a side who beat the Sydney Sixers in last season's decider, with yesterday's win securing a fifth trophy in only the competition's 12th year.

"It's a surreal feeling. I've played a lot of games of cricket but you never know how it will pan out," said man-of-the-

match Turner after his 32-ball knock. "We are in rarefied air at the moment, we have a lot of guys in form and that's not always the case. A lot of guys have contributed to wins throughout the season."

A victory looked highly unlikely when Turner was run out after a horror mix-up with Nick Hobson, leaving them needing 39 needed off 19 balls.

But young gun Connolly smashed 25 off 11 balls to turn the game on its head.

He crunched 18 of those from a James Bazley over to leave them needing 20 off the final 12 balls.

Hobson then smashed a huge six followed by a no-ball five in the last over to secure the victory.

"At 19 (years old) to have this crowd cheer for me, couldn't have asked for anything better. It's a dream come true," said left-hander Connolly.

"I had full confidence in myself."

The clash culminated a season marked by thrilling finishes, controversial moments, outstanding individual performances, and more than one million fans through the turnstiles.

Perth earned home-ground advantage after finishing on top of the regular season table, then knocking off the Sixers in a qualifying match last weekend.

The Heat only finished fifth and had to come through three knockout games, all away from home, to reach the final.

Both teams were depleted with the Heat's Usman Khawaja, Marnus Labuschagne, Matt Renshaw and Mitchell Swepson all departing earlier this week for Australia's tour of India.

The Scorchers were without fast bowler Lance Morris and teammate Ashton Agar who are also preparing for the four-Test Border-Gavaskar series starting on Thursday in Nagpur.

Heat skipper Jimmy Peirson won the toss and batted first

with Josh Brown coming out with all guns blazing, smacking 25 off the opening 11 balls.

But his luck soon ran out and after the opening barrage, the Scorchers restricted Brisbane to 86-1 by the halfway mark.

Jason Behrendorff removed Sam Heazlett for 34, snapping a dangerous 79-run stand with Nathan McSweeney, then Peirson for three in the same over.

McSweeney fell for 41 before Max Bryant smashed an aggressive 31 from 14 balls to ensure a handy total.

In reply, Scorchers opener Stephen Eskinazi made a brisk 21 before a schoolboy run out, then Michael Neser clung on to a high catch to remove Cameron Bancroft for 15.

When Aaron Hardie went for 17 in the following over, they were wobbling at 54-3.

But Turner and Josh Inglis put on a high-quality 80 in 52 balls before Connolly and Hobson sealed the win.



Perth Scorchers players celebrate with the trophy after winning the BBL Twenty20 final against Brisbane Heat in Perth yesterday. (AFP)

CRICKET

Captain Brathwaite, Chanderpaul stand tall for West Indies

'The guys were bowling well so you have to dig in and score when you can'

AFP
Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

West Indies openers Kraigg Brathwaite and Tagenarine Chanderpaul scored half-centuries before rain ended play early in the first day of the first Test against Zimbabwe yesterday.

Play will begin at 0930 local time (0730 GMT) on the next four days to compensate for the lost time, although there are concerns of further weather interruptions. The tourists were 112-0 off 51 overs in Bulawayo as they sought to extend an unbeaten Test record against the hosts having won seven of the previous 10 and drawn three.

"The pitch looked good for batting, but we knew rain would be a factor," said captain Brathwaite of his decision to bat having won the toss.

"Today is history, today is gone, we have to come back tomorrow and start setting the foundation again. Obviously, Zimbabwe are going to come back strong, so it is important that we start well tomorrow."

Chanderpaul said: "You have to be patient up front. The guys were bowling well so you have to dig in and score when you can."

Brathwaite was first to reach 50, thanks to three runs from

a drive past mid-off, and also scored two fours in an unbeaten 55 when rain intervened.

Chanderpaul was also 55 not out at the Queens Sports Club having scored a second half-century in only a third Test appearance. His knock included eight fours.

The first Test of two in southwestern Zimbabwe marked the debut of West Indies legend Brian Lara as national teams performance mentor.

Lara, scorer of 11,953 runs in 131 Tests, is assisting interim coach Andre Coley as the West Indies seek a return to winning ways after a 2-0 Test series loss in Australia two months ago.

Spinners Wellington Masakadza (0-13) and Brandon Mavuta (0-18) were the most successful Zimbabwe bowlers.

Craig Ervine captained Zimbabwe as Sean Williams is injured while star all-rounder Sikandar Raza missed out due to franchise commitments in the United Arab Emirates.

SCOREBOARD	
WEST INDIES	
K. Brathwaite	not out 55
T. Chanderpaul	not out 55
Extras	(nb2) 2
Total	(O wkt, 51 overs) 112
Bowling: R. Ngarava 0-2-23-0, V. Nyauchi 15-5-27-0, B. Evans 11-1-31-0 (2nb), W. Masakadza 9-5-13-0, B. Mavuta 7-1-18-0.	



West Indies opener Tagenarine Chanderpaul in action during the first day of the first Test against Zimbabwe in Bulawayo, yesterday.

FOCUS

Australia's Green an 'outside chance' for India Test



Australian skipper Pat Cummins (left) with coach Andrew McDonald.

AFP
Bengaluru

Australian all-rounder Cameron Green remains an "outside chance" to play the first Test against India despite lingering injury troubles, coach Andrew McDonald said yesterday.

Green has been sidelined since the end of last year when a sharp delivery from South Africa's Anrich Nortje fractured his finger in Perth and forced him to miss the final Test of that tour.

The 23-year-old was named in Australia's squad in the hopes he would be match fit for the four-Test series starting Thursday in Nagpur.

"We've got a fair bit to work through before the first Test match, but we haven't put a clear line through him or... put him on the team sheet yet," McDonald told reporters in Bangalore after a morning training session.

"He's made some significant steps forward in the last couple of days, probably to my surprise," he added.

"So there's still an outside chance that everything going well he might be on the team sheet."

The series is Australia's last

before this year's Indian Premier League season gets underway.

Green became the T20 league's second-most expensive overseas player ever in December when he was purchased at auction by the Mumbai Indians.

Australia are in the middle of a four-day warm-up regime in Bangalore before they head to Nagpur next week.

India hold the Border-Gavaskar trophy after triumphing in their last three series against the Aussies, who last won a series in India back in 2004.

Australian skipper Pat Cummins expects a hard slog leading the tourists' pace attack but said he was excited for the looming showdown between the world's top two Test teams.

"Coming here to India, a lot of the talk is around big spinning wickets, maybe fast Test matches, but it's not always the case," he told reporters.

"You need to get into the grind at times," he added.

"That role as a fast bowler may be just bowling plenty of overs for not a heap of reward, but doing your job for the team.

"I really enjoyed that aspect of the last tour. There's always plenty of people watching, so lots to play for."

GOLF

Kitayama grabs lead at rainy, windy Pebble Beach

AFP
San Francisco

Kurt Kitayama steered a steady course in demanding conditions on Friday to take a one-shot lead in the Pebble Beach Pro-Am, where he's chasing his first US PGA Tour title.

The Californian, who has two European Tour titles on his resume, parred his first nine holes and had three birdies and a bogey coming in to post a two-under par 70 for a nine-under total of 134. He was one stroke clear of first-round leader Hank Lebioda, Kevin Mitchell, Brando Wu and Joseph Bramlett.

"Today was really tough," said Kitayama, who played the par-72 Pebble Beach Golf Links, one of three courses in use over the first three rounds along with par-72 Spyglass Hill and the par-71 Monterey Peninsula course. "Overall, I'm really happy with where I'm at and how I played today."

Of the group sharing second, three played at Monterey Peninsula, where Wu carded a 66, Mitchell posted a 68 and Bramlett carded a 67. Lebioda, who opened with a 63 at Monterey Peninsula on Thursday, carded an even par 72 at Pebble Beach. Lebioda teed off on 10 and had the solo lead at 10-under after birdies at the 10th and second, but he dropped back with a double-bogey at the par-three fifth.

After gusting winds hit the later starters on Thursday, morning rain and more blustery winds pushed up scores on Friday morning. More rain and wind was forecast for the weekend, and tee times were moved up to try to miss the worst of it. England's Justin Rose and Ireland's Seamus Power both said the weather reminded them of home.

"It was a bit of a dreary kind of day, kind of English I suppose," said Rose, whose three-under par round at Spyglass Hill included a hole in one at the par-three 15th. A special day always when you manage to have a hole-in-one," he said. "I believe it's my 12th."

"Kind of felt like I could have kicked on from that point a little more," added Rose, who had two late bogeys and finished the day tied for 11th, three shots off the lead.

Power headlined a group sharing sixth on seven-under par after firing an impressive seven-under par 64 at Monterey Peninsula that included six birdies and an eagle at the par-five 16th. Power said he played in the rain through the first five or six holes, with blustery winds around the turn before "the last few holes were very pleasant."

"It was one of those days kind of like back home in Ireland where you

get a lot of seasons in one day," he said. "Even when you get opportunities in the fairway the greens because of the rain are soft. So trying to keep the ball close to the hole, it can be challenging. I was able to make some putts to cover up some of the mistakes."

Play was stopped at the 11th hole at Pebble Beach after a caddie for one of the amateur players collapsed and received CPR before being taken to a nearby hospital.

"During the second round of the AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am, there was a medical emergency at No 11 at Pebble Beach involving an amateur's caddie," the PGA Tour said in a statement. "The caddie has been rushed to Montage Health for evaluation."

The PGA Tour players in that group, Max McGreevy and Beau Hossler, were allowed to take some time to collect themselves, warm up

and resume play. Golf Channel reported that the caddie was expected to recover.

LEADING SCORES	
(USA unless noted) 9-under	
134 - Kurt Kitayama	64-70
8-under	
135 - Keith Mitchell	67-68, Brandon Wu 69-66, Joseph Bramlett 68-67, Hank Lebioda 63-72
7-under	
136 - Seamus Power (IRL)	72-64, Ryan Moore 67-69, Eric Cole 65-71
137 - Satoshi Kodaira (JPN)	69-68, Scott Stallings 67-70
6-under	
137 - Brent Grant	68-69, Viktor Hovland (NOR) 70-67, Harry Higgs 66-71, Andrew Novak 68-69, Peter Malnati 71-66, Martin Trainer (FRA) 65-72, Garrick Higgo (RSA) 69-68
138 - Denny McCarthy	69-69, Richy Werenski 68-70, Justin Rose (ENG) 69-69, Kevin Yu (TPE) 68-70



Kurt Kitayama plays his shot from the 11th tee during the second round of the AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am in Pebble Beach, California. (AFP)

FOOTBALL

Messi hits winner as PSG rally to beat Toulouse 2-1

Paris St Germain recover from a woeful start and extend their lead to 8 points

AFP
Paris

Lionel Messi scored a superb second-half winner as a Paris Saint-Germain side missing the injured Kylian Mbappe and Neymar came from behind to beat Toulouse 2-1 yesterday and consolidate their lead at the top of Ligue 1.

Dutch midfielder Branco van den Boomen gave mid-table Toulouse the lead at the Parc des Princes from a 20th-minute free-kick, only for Achraf Hakimi to curl in the equaliser with half-time approaching. Messi then put PSG in front just before the hour mark with a glorious first-time strike on his left foot low into the corner of the net from just outside the area.

It was Messi's 10th Ligue 1 goal of the season and his 15th for his club this campaign, as the World Cup winner stepped up in the absence of PSG's two other superstar attackers. The Qatar-owned club are now eight points clear at the top of the table from Marseille.

Mbappe will miss that game and the Champions League last-16 first leg against Bayern Munich on February 14 after being ruled out for three weeks with a thigh injury suffered in the 3-1 win at Montpellier last Wednesday. Neymar missed a second successive game here with an apparently minor adductor problem, meaning it was left to Messi to lead the attack alongside the 20-year-old Hugo Ekitti with support from Vitinha and Carlos Soler.

But Christophe Galtier's side have other issues, with Sergio Ramos unable to play, Marco Verratti suspended, and Renato Sanches forced to come off in tears just 12 minutes into the game. "Leo is holding the team together," Galtier told broadcaster Amazon Prime. "It is not



Paris Saint-Germain's Lionel Messi (right) vies for the ball with Toulouse's Anthony Rouault during the Ligue 1 match in Paris yesterday. (AFP)

just two players we are missing. There is Kylian and 'Ney' but also Marco Verratti and Sergio Ramos.

"He takes on the role of leader naturally, and he did so in mid-week too. He was so important to the way we played. He takes the initiative. We need to give him the ball even more."

Portuguese midfielder Sanches was starting for just the fifth time since joining from Lille at the start of the season but had to

come off with what looked like a hamstring injury.

He was replaced by teenage defender El Chadaille Bitshiabu, with Danilo Pereira moving up into the midfield, and the substitute was partly responsible when PSG fell behind.

Bitshiabu was booked for bringing down Zakaria Aboukhalil 25 metres from goal, and Van den Boomen sent the resulting free-kick low into the left corner of the

net with Gianluigi Donnarumma beaten. Messi hit the post from a corner and Toulouse had another goal disallowed for offside before the home side drew level seven minutes from half-time as Hakimi collected a Soler pass, cut in from the right flank and curled a shot on his left foot into the far corner from 20 metres. Hakimi then turned provider as he set up Messi to make it 2-1 on 58 minutes, the goal standing

despite Toulouse coach Philippe Montanier feeling it should have been disallowed as Marquinhos blocked the goalkeeper's view while in an offside position.

The outcome was rarely in doubt after that with PSG - who have had some recent wobbles - deserved winners. Anthony Rouault did force a good save from Donnarumma deep into injury time before Messi hit the post again right at the death.

LA LIGA

Atletico draw with Getafe, Elche win

AFP
Madrid

Atletico Madrid were unable to tighten their grip on fourth place in La Liga as they fell to a 1-1 draw with lowly Getafe yesterday.

Angel Correa sent Atletico ahead in the derby clash but Enes Unal clinically converted a penalty to level for the relegation-battling visitors.

Saul, who was Atletico's hero last weekend off the bench, scoring the winner against Osasuna, became the villain at the Metropolitano.

The Spanish midfielder handled Borja Mayoral's header in the box to concede the penalty a few minutes after coming on.

Diego Simeone's side dominated the first half but failed to create many clear chances.

However they moved ahead on the hour mark when Correa fired home after Thomas Lemar's shot was saved.

The goal was initially flagged offside but was awarded after checking on VAR, by which time Correa had been substituted, celebrating his strike already wearing a big coat on the sidelines.

Atletico's joy was shortlived, with Unal firing home from the spot in the 83rd minute after Saul's handball.

Yannick Carrasco flashed a shot wide after a surging run down the left flank as Atletico chased a late winner.

The Belgium winger wildly hammered another effort over the bar from distance with Simeone urging his team forward from the sidelines.

Atletico striker Memphis Depay, on as a substitute, angrily appealed for a penalty when he tangled with Dejene Dakonam in the box but referee Mateu Lahoz ignored him.

Getafe goalkeeper David Soria made a fine save to keep the Dutch forward at bay at the death.

Atletico stay fourth but missed a chance to move closer to Real Sociedad, third, four points above the Rojiblancos with a game in hand.

Getafe are 19th on 18 points, two from safety.

Earlier, La Liga's bottom side Elche stunned Villarreal 3-1, winning their first game all season.

The Yellow Submarine, provisionally fifth, are chasing Champions League qualification but were sunk by a Pere Milla hat-trick at the Manuel Martinez Valero Stadium.

Elche did not manage a win in the first half of the season but finally triumphed in their 20th game, with Milla firing home in the third minute to open the scoring.

Gerard Moreno levelled but Elche moved ahead in stoppage time at the end of the first half.

Milla converted a penalty after Jorge Cuenca brought down Ezequiel Ponce to restore the advantage for Pablo Machin's side.

The forward then netted again from the spot after he had been fouled in the second half to seal his team's win, although he was taken off injured before the hour mark.

Elche, on nine points, are 11 from safety and have played a game more than Valladolid, 17th, who face Real Sociedad on Sunday.

Espanyol shared a 1-1 draw with Osasuna, Martin Braithwaite equalising for the hosts after Ante Budimir's opener.

Both sides finished with 10 men after Ez Abde and Ronael Pierre-Gabriel were dismissed for second yellow cards in the first half as they scrapped with each other.



Atletico Madrid's Angel Correa celebrates scoring his team's first goal during the La Liga match against Getafe in Madrid. (AFP)

BUNDESLIGA

Haller on target as Dortmund crush Freiburg for fourth straight win

AFP
Berlin

Sebastien Haller crowned his recent return from testicular cancer with an emotional goal for Borussia Dortmund yesterday, as Union Berlin knocked Bayern Munich off the top of the Bundesliga with a dramatic late win over Mainz.

Six months after a shock diagnosis which saw him miss the entire first half of the season, Haller finally opened his account for the club he joined last summer.

The Ivory Coast international's second-half header prompted wild celebrations among his team mates and helped Dortmund to a 5-1 win over Freiburg which kept them within two points of leaders Union.

"I've been waiting for this moment since day one. When I scored the goal, it felt like the whole stadium was on fire," Haller told Sky. "I am happy, but the way is still long, so we will keep walking and hope for more goals," he added.

Freiburg were reduced to ten men early in the first half after French full-back Kiliann Sildillia was booked twice in the space of two minutes.

Former Freiburg player Nico Schlotterbeck then heaped more misery onto his old club, his low snapshot beating goalkeeper Mark Flekken at the near post to give Dortmund the lead.

Schlotterbeck and Niklas Sule handed Freiburg a lifeline with some farcical defending on the stroke of half-time, allowing Lucas Hoeler to sweep in an unexpected equaliser.



Dortmund's Sebastien Haller (right) celebrates with teammate Jude Bellingham after scoring against SC Freiburg in Dortmund, Germany, yesterday. (AFP)

Yet Karim Adeyemi wriggled his way through the Freiburg box to restore the lead with a neat finish early in the second half, before goals from Haller, Julian Brandt and Giovanni Reyna completed the rout.

Meanwhile in the capital, Union Berlin were working on their own fairytale as a late winner from US international Jordan Siebatcheu sent the high-flying minnows top of the table.

Former Union player Marcus Ingvartsen had cancelled out Kevin Behrens' first-half opener with a late penalty, but the Berliners rallied to claim a fourth straight win in 2023.

The win had Union fans singing about winning the title, but captain Christopher Trimmel said his side were keeping their feet on the ground.

Eintracht Frankfurt also remained within four points of the top as France forward Randal Kolo Muani ran riot in a 3-0 win over hapless Hertha Berlin.

Having put Frankfurt ahead from the penalty spot, Kolo Muani ghosted through the Hertha back line to make it 2-0 before the half-hour mark, before Aurelio Buta added a third on the stroke of full time.

RB Leipzig's 0-0 draw at Cologne meant that Frankfurt remain a point adrift of the Champions League places in fifth.

Hertha have slumped to four straight defeats since the beginning of 2023, and are now five points adrift of safety after fellow strugglers Bochum cruised to a 5-2 win over Hoffenheim.

Philipp Hofmann gave Bochum a deserved lead with a tap-in before Philipp Forster and Takuma Asano showed up a lifeless Hoffenheim defence to make it 3-0 by half-time.

Erhan Masovic and Moritz Broschinski added two more for Bochum after the break, with Christoph Baumgartner and Munas Dabbur grabbing consolation goals for the visitors.

Al-Juwayr sends Al Hilal into Club World Cup semis

RABAT: Teenager Musab al-Juwayr scored the crucial spot kick as Al Hilal beat CAF Champions League winners Wydad Casablanca 5-3 on penalties (1-1 after extra time) yesterday to set-up a Club World Cup semi-final with Flamengo.

Al-Juwayr, 19, converted after Yahya Attiat-Allah's miss for the Moroccans, playing 350km down the coast from their home city. Defender Ayoub El Amloud had opened the scoring for the outfit on home soil before team-mate Yahya Jabrane was shown a second yellow card for unsportsmanlike behaviour on the 91st minute. Midfielder Mohamed Kanno equalised for the Saudis, invited to the tournament, and sent the game into extra time after 94 minutes. Kanno then followed El Amloud off the field four minutes into the additional half an hour for the same reason. Al-Juwayr secured his side's place in Tuesday's last four tie in Tangier with an effort from the spot on just his 21st senior appearance.



Al Hilal's Musab al-Juwayr celebrates after their victory against Wydad Casablanca in the Club World Cup in Rabat yesterday. (Reuters)

SIX NATIONS

Van der Merwe's late try gives Scotland win over England

AFP
Twickenham, United Kingdom

Duhan van der Merwe's late try saw Scotland to a thrilling 29-23 Six Nations win at Twickenham yesterday as England were denied a win in their first match under new coach Steve Borthwick.

The hosts looked as if they would launch the Borthwick era with a victory when 23-22 ahead six minutes from time.

But Edinburgh winger Van der Merwe then crossed for his second try of the match, with Finn Russell converting before the visitors held out to record successive Calcutta Cup wins at Twickenham for the first time.

"It's some result for us. To do it in the last 5-10 minutes is always good," Scotland head coach Gregor Townsend told ITV. "It was an emotional game and then a much better second half from us," he added. England twice led in a first half where home wing Max Malins scored his first two tries and were 20-12 ahead when prop Ellis Genge plunged over early in the second half.

But they were unable to seal victory as Scotland fought back in style. But for England, booed from the pitch after a limp Twickenham defeat by South Africa in their last appearance, the climax to a dire 2022 that resulted in coach Eddie Jones being sacked, there was some consolation in the way their attack performed in a seven-try thriller, although questions will be



Scotland's wing Duhan van der Merwe dives across the line to score a try during the Six Nations match against England at Twickenham Stadium in London yesterday. (AFP)

asked about their defence seven months out from the World Cup.

"We started 11 days ago," said England captain Owen Farrell. "There has been massive improvement... For now, we will give credit to Scotland for sticking at it like they did."

An entertaining first half ended with England narrowly ahead at 13-12.

Scotland opened the scoring in the 14th minute Sione Tuipulotu's well-judged grubber kick was touched down by fellow midfielder Huw Jones for the recalled centre's fifth try in as many Tests against England.

Russell added the conversion and Scotland led 7-0.

But England's re-shaped pack started to get into the game as the hosts laid siege to Scotland's line.

Borthwick's side kept possession for 15 phases before fly-half Marcus Smith cross-kicked to the right corner, with Malins diving on the ball for a first try in 15 career England appearances.

Farrell, however, missed the conversion and Scotland responded in stunning fashion just before the half-hour with a stunning solo try from Van der Merwe, who scored Scotland's lone touchdown in an 11-6 win over England in 2021 that ended their 38-year wait for a Twickenham triumph.

Receiving the ball just inside his own half, the winger set off on a curving run that saw him beat five England players - doubtless to the anger of England defence coach Kevin Sinfield - and culminated with a hand off of No 8 Alex Dombrandt.

Russell's conversion came back off the post, with Scotland now 12-5 ahead.

England, however, hit back with lock Ollie Chessum and Genge involved in a slick handling move before flanker Lewis Ludlam found Malins, who sidestepped stranded Scotland full-back Stuart Hogg, en route to his second try of the match. Farrell, unusually for a world-class goal-kicker, missed the conversion.

HORSE RACING

Saadi leads Midrass to Mesaieed Cup win, completes double

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Jockey Soufiane Saadi registering a quick-fire double as Ghazwan Racing's Midrass won the Mesaieed Cup yesterday.

At the Al Uqda Complex track, Saadi guided the seven-year-old to win the 1400m Handicap (65-85) for four-year+ Purebred Arabians by a length and a half to land the feature race of the day for trainer Hadi al-Ramzani.

Saadi was in the winner's enclosure early with Khalid bin Ghanem al-Kuwari's Thunder Cat in the penultimate race. Thunder Cat remained unbeaten in 2003 with a second victory in a row in the Handicap (0-90) for three-year-old Thoroughbreds. Zuhair Mohsen's trainee was partnered by Saadi to a half-length win in the 1400m race.

Abdulaziz Jassim al-Boenain, Al Uqda Complex Manager, presented the trophies to the winners.

Earlier, Sheikh Faisal bin Hamad bin Jassim al-Thani's homebred Hallab came out on top in the 1,200m Conditions for four-year+ Local Thorough-

breeds, as jockey Alberto Sanna, with a fantastic ride, guided the Mohamed Khaled Elahmed-trained four-year-old to pip Al Gamamah by a head.

Jockey Marco Casamento completed a double on the day as he rode the Triple Two Racing-owned Ikef De Bozouls to win the 2,100m Handicap (0-85) for four-year-old+ Purebred Arabians by a length for trainer Mohamed Ghazali.

Mohamed Abdulhadi al-Hajri's King Of Ice claimed the 1400m Handicap (55-75) for four-year-old+ Thoroughbreds by three quarters of a length for trainer Dr Fahad Salman al-Hajri as the four-year-old broke his maiden tag with Ronan Thomas in the saddle.

The 1400m Maiden for four-to-six year-old Purebred Arabians saw Al Shaqab Racing's homebred four-year-old Muna take the spoils by three and a half lengths for trainer Eric Lemartinel in an impressive performance under jockey Faleh Bughanaim.

Earlier, Sheikh Mohamed bin Salman al-Thani's Observing kicked off the Mesaieed Cup Day making a winning Qatar debut in the 2,100m Maiden for four-Six-year-old Thoroughbreds. Ridden by Marco Casamento for trainer

Jassim Ghazali, the four-year-old made it past the post comfortably, winning by two lengths and a half.

RESULTS

(Horse, Trainer, Jockey)
1 - Mesaieed Cup - Purebred Arabian Handicap 65-85
 Midrass, Hadi al-Ramzani, Soufiane Saadi
2 - Thoroughbred Handicap 0-90 (3yo only) (Class 3)
 Thunder Cat, Zuhair Mohsen, Soufiane Saadi
3 - Local Thoroughbred Conditions
 Hallab, Mohamed Khaled Elahmed, Alberto Sanna
4 - Purebred Arabian Handicap 0-85
 Ikef De Bozouls, Mohamed Ghazali, Marco Casamento
5 - Thoroughbred Handicap 55-75 (Class 5)
 King Of Ice, Dr. Fahad Salman F S Al Hajri, Ronan Thomas
6 - Purebred Arabian Maiden Plate
 Muna, Eric Lemartinel, Faleh Bughanaim
7 - Thoroughbred Maiden Plate (Class 6)
 Observing, Jassim Ghazali, Casamento



Soufiane Saadi rides Midrass to Mesaieed Cup victory yesterday. PICTURE: Juhaim

PREMIER LEAGUE

Arsenal title bid rocked by Everton

Dismal Liverpool crash again; ten-man United cement their grip on third place

AFP
London

Mikel Arteta urged Arsenal to dig deep after a shock 1-0 defeat at Everton dented the Premier League leaders' title bid, while Liverpool's troubled season hit a new low with a woeful 3-0 loss at Wolves yesterday. Arteta's side were beaten for just the second time in 20 league games this season as James Tarkowski headed Everton's winner in the 60th minute.

The Gunners' only other league defeat came at Manchester United in September. Arsenal still lead second placed Manchester City by five points, but the champions can close the gap to two points if they win at Tottenham today.

"This is not going to be a rose pathway," said Arteta of Arsenal's road to the title. "This is going to be tricky and we will have to dig in and play much better than we did today."

Everton came into the game on a run of four league defeats at Goodison Park for the first time since 1958. That disastrous form cost Frank Lampard his job and Sean Dyche's appointment got the desired bounce with a first win in 11 games.

While third-bottom Everton boosted their bid to avoid relegation, their Merseyside rivals Liverpool crashed to a fourth defeat in their last seven games in all competitions, a miserable run featuring only one win. Jurgen Klopp's side are languishing in 10th place, 11 points adrift of the top four amid their worst season of Klopp's seven-year reign.

It is the first time since 2012 that Liverpool have lost three successive away league games, while they have already conceded more league goals this season than they did in the entirety of last term. Facing a struggling team who kicked off



Everton and Arsenal players clash during the Premier League match at the Goodison Park in Liverpool, Britain. (Reuters)

in the relegation zone, Liverpool immediately crumbled as Joel Matip deflected Hwang Hee-chan's cross into his own net after five minutes.

Wolves debutant Craig Dawson doubled the lead after 12 minutes when the defender smashed in from 10 yards. With Wolves fans taunting Klopp with chants of "you're getting sacked in the morning", Ruben Neves sealed the rout with a 71st minute finish from Adama Traore's cross.

Ten-man Manchester United cemented their grip on third place with a 2-1 win against Crystal Palace. In the seventh minute, United were awarded a penalty after VAR showed Will Hughes handled Marcus Rashford's cross, with Bruno Fernandes coolly converting from the spot.

Rashford struck in the 62nd minute with a composed finish from Luke Shaw's

cross. United were reduced to 10 men in the 70th minute when Brazil midfielder Casemiro grabbed Will Hughes by the throat. Jeff Schlupp's 76th minute strike set up a tense finish but United held on to win six successive home league games for the first time since 2017.

Fresh from reaching their first League Cup final for 47 years in midweek, fourth placed Newcastle had to settle for a 1-1 draw against lowly West Ham at St James' Park. Callum Wilson fired Newcastle ahead after three minutes, but West Ham levelled in the 32nd minute through Lucas Paqueta. It was the first goal conceded by Newcastle in 574 minutes of Premier League action dating back to November.

Brentford climbed to seventh place and pushed bottom of the table Southampton deeper into trouble with a 3-0 win. Kaoru Mitoma's 87th minute header gave sixth

placed Brighton a 1-0 victory against second bottom Bournemouth.

Leicester twice came from behind to win 4-2 at Aston Villa.

RESULTS

Aston Villa 2 (Watkins 9, Souttar 32-og) Leicester 4 (Maddison 12, Iheanacho 41, Tete 45, Praet 79); Brentford 3 (Mee 41, Mbeumo 44, Jensen 80) Southampton 0; Brighton 1 (Mitoma 87) Bournemouth 0; Everton 1 (Tarkowski 60) Arsenal 0; Manchester United 2 (Fernandes 7-pen, Rashford 62) Crystal Palace 1 (Schlupp 76); Newcastle 1 (Wilson 3) West Ham 1 (Paqueta 32); Wolves 3 (Matip 5-og, Dawson 12, Neves 71) Liverpool 0
Playing today (GMT): Nottingham Forest v Leeds (1400), Tottenham v Manchester City (1630)
Played Friday: Chelsea 0 Fulham 0

SPOTLIGHT

Premier Padel announce 8 events, more to be added

Premier Padel has announced its eagerly-anticipated 2023 calendar which will see the official global tour take place in five continents over at least eight tournaments in 2023.

The season will once again begin in Doha with the Ooredoo Qatar Major Premier Padel at the Khalifa Tennis & Squash complex from February 26-March 5, before moving to Europe for the Italy Premier Padel Major; taking place at the Foro Italico from 10-16 July. From Rome, the tour heads to Spain for the first P1 event of the season. The Madrid Premier Padel P1 will take place from 17-23 July.

The tour then moves to Argentina for the Mendoza Premier Padel P1 from 31 July - 6 August, before returning to Europe for the third Major of the season. The Greenweez Paris Premier Padel Major which takes place at the world-famous Stade Roland-Garros from 4-10 September.

Between the Majors will be a trip to the pyramids, the NEW-GIZA Premier Padel P1 takes place between 30 October - 5 November. The final Major of the year takes Premier Padel back to the 'birth place' of padel, Mexico. The GNP Mexico Major Premier Padel takes places from 27 November - 3 December.

The finale of the 2023 Premier Padel season will be in Italy with the Milano Premier Padel P1, at the Allianz Cloud from 4-10 December. Further tournaments may be added in consultation with the Professional Padel Association.

Nasser al-Khelaifi, Chairman of Premier Padel, said: "We are delighted to announce our tournaments for 2023, returning to the cities and places which welcomed Premier Padel so warmly last year. As a tour fully focused on the athletes, players will always remain at the heart of everything we do. We look forward to another spectacular Premier Padel season."

Premier Padel tournaments will continue to offer record prize money. The purse for Majors is set at €525,000, while P1 will receive €300,000 and prize money for P2 tournaments will be set at €150,000.

As with all Premier Padel tournaments, the FIP ranking points system will comprise: 2,000 points attributed to the winning pair of the Majors; 1000 points for P1 tournaments; 500 points for P2 events; and then relevant points ladder down the existing CUPRA FIP Tour. The 2023 Premier Padel season will be broadcast live around the world in more than 180 territories.



Qatar team shine at taekwondo tournaments



Qatar taekwondo team won five medals - one gold, two silver and two bronze - at international championships in Turkiye and the UAE. Othman Boularas (centre) clinched gold in poomsae category at the Turkish Open Championship. Boularas also claimed another silver medal in the event. Qatar players also won three medals in Arab Cup in Fujairah, UAE. Nour Nizar won silver in over 68kg class, while bronze medals were bagged by Waddah Khalil al-Ahmad in over 87kg and Saad Nasser al-Sulaiti in under 57kg class. Qatar players will now compete in Turkish Open Championship (Feb 10-14) and World Taekwondo Championship, which will be held in Azerbaijan from May 29-June 6.

FOCUS

Stage set for Katara Boxing Championship

By Sports Reporter
Doha

The 2023 Katara Boxing Championship will be held from Feb 15-18, the Qatar Boxing Federation (QBF) president Sheikh Fahad bin Khaled al-Thani announced at a press conference yesterday. Salim Lazraq, the Technical Director of QBF, was also present at the press conference.

This month's Katara Boxing Championship will be the fifth edition of the event, the QBF president said. "We will have an extensive participation of boxers from all sports clubs in the country," Sheikh Fahad said. "We are continuing with our preparations for the start of the Katara Boxing Championship. This is one of the most important tournaments that the Qatar Boxing Federation is keen to hold every year. This event allows us to give the opportunity to a big number of players in top competitions," he added.

"The championship is held within the framework of the federation's strategy that focuses on internal activity. Our season will start with the Katara Boxing Championship, then the boxing competition for the



Qatar Boxing Federation (QBF) president Sheikh Fahad bin Khaled al-Thani.

Beach Games next March, which will be organized by the Qatar Olympic Committee. In April, there will be the Qatar Junior and School Championship followed by the Qatar Tour," the QBF president said.

"We want to see the young boxers get to learn while they compete and improve their skills. The tournament always gets great interest from all players in Qatar. The number of participants increases from year to year.

We are very pleased about that," he said.

The tournament will be attended by boxers falling in the youth category (U-15 and U-16 years), the juniors category (U-17 and U-18), and the Open class (19-49 years).

He said the competitions will be held in 13 weights (from 46-48kg, 51 and 54kg). And 57, 60, 63.5, 67, 71, 75, 80, 86, 92, and +92). The tournament will kick-off on February 15 with weight and medical examinations.