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**HORSE RACING / ROYAL ASCOT**

# Wathnan Racing's Courage Mon Ami claims Gold Cup

Jockey Frankie Dettori at his brilliant best to catch favourite in closing stages to win flagship race of meeting in his final year



Wathnan Racing representatives and jockey Frankie Dettori celebrate with Britain's King Charles and Queen Camilla after Courage Mon Ami won the Ascot Gold Cup in the United Kingdom. **PICTURES:** Zuzanna Lupa

**By Sports Reporter**  
Ascot, United Kingdom

In the presence of Britain's King Charles III, Wathnan Racing had second winner of the week as their progressive four-year-old Courage Mon Ami (Frankel x Crimson Ribbon) produced an excellent performance to land the Gr 1 Gold Cup at Royal Ascot on Thursday.

Wathnan Racing's Ali al-Romaihi and Ali al-Kubaisi received the Gold Cup from King Charles III.

Just like the Wathnan Racing owned Gregory (Golden Horn) a day earlier, the unbeaten Courage Mon Ami is trained by John and Thady Gosden and was ridden by Frankie Dettori, who landed a second Gr 1 on the week of his Royal Ascot Swansong.

Pitched into Gr 1 company direct from handicaps and relatively inexperienced, Courage Mon Ami took on eleven rivals

as he stretched out to 2m4f (4,200m) for the first time.

Settled towards the rear of the field, but travelling easily in a race taken along by the eventual third placed Subjectivist (Teofilo), Courage Mon Ami took the eye from a long way out.

Scything through the field inside the final 600m, he was switched out to challenge and he galloped clear of Coltrane (Mastercraftsman) to win ahead of him by three quarters of a length.

It was the ninth win in the race for Dettori, which means he will retire two short of Lester Pig-gott's all-time record, and a 79th win at the meeting.

Dettori punched the air as he recorded his 79th victory at the meeting on Courage Mon Ami where he had his first on Mark Of Distinction in 1990. The 52-year-old described the win as 'unbelievable'.

"I didn't expect it," he said. "The last five years I've had

Stradivarius, so the pressure was on. This one I thought was a bit of a chancer coming from handicaps, but John (Gosden, the winner's trainer) was confident.

"I rode him cold (off the pace) and it just happened. I got the splits when I wanted to and he showed a turn of foot. The last half a furlong, I couldn't give in to Oisin (Murphy, on Coltrane). I thought: 'no, we've got this far, please keep going!'

"It's unbelievable. Winning the Gold Cup in my last year. I wanted to ride Courage Mon Ami to run well because I really don't know the horse and I didn't know his capability or if he was able to stay. I knew there would be pace, I wanted to swing out wide but Stéphane (Pasquier, on Big Call) kept me in and actually won me the race, because I thought: 'I'll cut the corner and see what happens! Then it happened!'

Dettori, who is enjoying a successful final year in the saddle having won the English 2000

Guineas and Oaks. Courage Mon Ami is the third consecutive four-year-old to win the Gold Cup, after Subjectivist and Kyprios, and it is conceivable all three will be in the lineup next year, when Courage Mon Ami will be in need of a new jockey.

Speaking after the race the impressed winning trainer John Gosden said: "We didn't run him here for fun, but it was Thady and Peter Shoemark's idea to enter him, not mine. He's quite mature at home, but hasn't been easy to train. It was a superb performance and a great ride from Frankie. He saved every inch, slithered through, and showed his nerves are better than mine."

Bred by Hascombe and Valiant Stud Ltd, Courage Mon Ami is a son of Crimson Ribbon (Lemon Drop Kid) and is a brother to black type performers Purple Ribbon (Gleneagles), Crimson Rosette (Teofilo) and Astronomos (New Approach).



Jockey Frankie Dettori (left) rides Courage Mon Ami to victory over jockey Oisin Murphy on Coltrane in Ascot Gold Cup.

## Asian Senior Beach Volleyball Championships: Qatar's Younousse and Tijan off to a winning start



Three-time champions Qatar's Cherif Younousse and Ahmed Tijan were off to a victorious start at the Asian Senior Beach Volleyball Championships in Pingtan, China, recording two dominant wins at the pool stage yesterday. The Olympic bronze medal winners, Cherif and Ahmed beat China's Aihemaiti Salamu and Lyu Lin 2-0 (21-17, 21-15) in the opening Pool 'B' match before defeating Iran's Salemi Bahman and Shokati Sina 2-0 (21-16, 21-12) in the second match. Qatar's second pair, Ibrahim Nassim Abdullah and Zaki Mohamed Ihab, lost their first match 0-2 (9-21, 19-21) to Indonesia's Efendi Sofyan Rachman and Pribadi Danangsyah. However, the duo then bounced back with a 2-0 (21-12, 22-20) win over Jude Garcia and James Buytrago of the Philippines.

## SPOTLIGHT

## Anderson not pleased with Edgbaston pitch

Reuters  
London

**J**ames Anderson said the lifeless Edgbaston pitch in the Ashes opener was like "kryptonite" to him and fears he will be powerless to help England fight back against Australia if the surfaces in the remainder of the series are flat and slow.

Captain Ben Stokes had asked for "flat, fast wickets" for the series but seamer Stuart Broad described the Edgbaston surface as "soulless" and one of the slowest he had encountered in England.

Anderson acknowledged he was below his best in the opener, posting match figures of 1-109 on his return from a groin injury, but said the wicket had done him no favours.

"If all the pitches are like that I'm done in the Ashes series," he wrote in his *Daily Telegraph* column.

"That pitch was like kryptonite for me.

"There was not much swing, no re-

verse swing, no seam movement, no bounce and no pace.

"I've tried over the years to hone my skills so I can bowl in any conditions but everything I tried made no difference.

"I felt like I was fighting an uphill battle. There was a bit of rustiness but I gave it everything I could.

"I know I have more to offer and contribute to the team. I want to make up for it at Lord's."

England declared on 393-8 on the first day and were in the driver's seat for much of the match but Australia's often cautious approach paid off as they claimed a two-wicket victory thanks to a 55-run ninth-wicket partnership between captain Pat Cummins and Nathan Lyon.

Anderson, however, is confident that he will be better for the game-time, regardless of his disappointing showing.

"Having played for a long time, I realise you can't take wickets every game. Sometimes it is not your week. It felt like that for me.

"I know I wasn't on top of my game



this week. It was not my best performance. I know I have more to offer and contribute to the team.

"The body felt quite good. There is some stiffness but I put that down to the unique conditions.

"We were running in on a very soft outfield then landing on a rock-hard pitch and that takes its toll on the body more than normal.

"All the bowlers were feeling that a bit."

Despite the defeat, Anderson said there were plenty of positives to take into second Test at Lord's, which begins on June 28.

"After day four (coach) Brendon McCullum said we had won already regardless of the result because of the reaction from people about the way we played, and the fact we had stuck to our style," he added.

"It feels like the way we are playing is working.

"Obviously we know we want to win, we will be judged on the result, but as a team it is good that we are judging ourselves on our performance."

## England call up teenager Ahmed to Ashes squad

Teenage leg-spinner Rehan Ahmed has been added to England's squad for the second Ashes Test against Australia as cover for Moeen Ali.

Ahmed, 18, became the youngest man to play Test cricket for England when he was picked to play in Pakistan in December. The Leicestershire player made an eye-catching debut for Ben Stokes's side in Karachi, taking seven wickets in the match and 5-48 in the second innings. But Ahmed has taken just six wickets in seven matches in the second division of the County Championship this season, at an average of more than 67.

Off-spinning all-rounder Moeen struggled with a finger blister in the dramatic first Test at Edgbaston, which Australia won by two wickets.

The 36-year-old, who was playing in his first Test for two years, still hopes to be fit for the second Test at Lord's, starting on Wednesday. There is also the possibility that England will select a four-man seam attack.

## CRICKET

## Hasaranga shines as Sri Lanka beat Oman in qualifier

Scotland are also on course for the next stage after they defeated the UAE

AFP  
Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

**L**eg-spinner Wanindu Hasaranga took his second successive five-wicket haul as Sri Lanka crushed Oman by 10 wickets in the 2023 World Cup Qualifier yesterday.

Sri Lanka now have two wins from two matches and are well-placed to reach the Super Six stage.

Scotland are also on course for the next stage after they defeated the UAE by 111 runs in the day's other Group B fixture.

Hasaranga took six wickets in the opening win over the UAE, and was at it again with five for 13 against Oman who were bowled out for just 98.

Sri Lanka needed just 15 overs to chase that total down, Dimuth Karunaratne (61 not out) leading them home.

Lahiru Kumara (3-22) also starred with the ball for 1996 world champions Sri Lanka as Oman slipped to 20 for four.

A 52-run stand between Jatinder Singh (21) and Ayaan Khan (41) hinted at a recovery before Hasaranga entered the fray. His triple wicket maiden ripped the heart out of the Omani middle order, leaving them in dire trouble at 72 for seven.

Hasaranga finally removed Ayaan before finishing off the innings by trapping Bilal Khan leg before.

Sri Lanka showed their intent from the very first ball of the chase, Pathum Nissanka (39 not out) slashing Bilal for four over point.

The pair never really looked troubled, bringing up the 50 partnership in the seventh over with Karunaratne's fifth boundary of the innings.

"He's a champion. Whenever I throw him the ball, he delivers for me," Sri Lanka skipper Dasun Shanaka said of Hasaranga. "Very good to see him keep



Sri Lanka's Wanindu Hasaranga celebrates after getting the Man of the Match award following his five-wicket haul against Oman in Harare, Zimbabwe, yesterday.

getting five-wicket hauls and man of the match awards. I think the future is really bright and they support staff and management has done a good job to keep the environment calm."

Sri Lanka have now won two in a row with matches against Ireland and Scotland to come. Oman can still reach the Super Six with a win over Scotland in their next game.

Scotland backed up their thrilling one-wicket win over Ireland by beating the UAE by 111 runs, with a captain's knock from Richie Berrington. His 127 with nine

fours and three sixes fired them to 282 for eight before Chris Sole and Safyaan Sharif finished the job with the ball.

Michael Leask with 41 also shone with the bat.

"It was really important today after the win against Ireland to turn up and adapt to the conditions. Pleading that we put in such a clinical performance with the ball and make it pretty comfortable," said Berrington.

Plenty of UAE batters got in, including skipper Mohamed Waseem (36), but none were able to turn starts into big scores as

wickets fell at regular intervals. With two wins apiece, the West Indies and Zimbabwe meet in Harare today and are both well-placed to make the Super Sixes from Group A.

The other match between the Netherlands and Nepal could end up being decisive in the race for third place.

For Nepal, only a win will do but if they can get the better of the Dutch, they will be on the brink of qualifying.

Netherlands will clinch a top three spot in the group with a win, ahead of a final match against the West Indies.

## FOCUS

## India drop Pujara for Windies tour as Jaiswal, Gaikwad get Test call-ups

Reuters  
New Delhi

**I**ndia have dropped top order batter Cheteshwar Pujara for the upcoming two-Test tour of West Indies in July while Rituraj Gaikwad and Yashasvi Jaiswal made the cut after stellar campaigns in the Indian Premier League (IPL).

Pujara, a veteran of over 100 Tests, was dropped following a poor run of form after the 35-year-old scored only 211 runs in his last six matches with one half-century to his name.

His absence leaves a spot vacant for the likes of Gaikwad or Jaiswal to step into should Shubman Gill continue to open the batting.

Jaiswal, who scored the fastest IPL fifty in 13 balls this season, scored 625 runs during the two-month tournament to finish among the top five run getters while Gaikwad finished with 590 runs.

Gaikwad also made headlines in November when he hammered seven sixes in an over in a first class match for his team Maharashtra.

Ajinkya Rahane, India's top scorer in the World Test Championship final loss to Australia, has also retained his place af-

ter he returned to the squad for the one-off match at The Oval in London and will be the vice-captain.

The Caribbean tour commences with the first test from July 12-16 in Dominica.

The second Test will be played in Trinidad from July 20-24.

India also announced its one-day international squad for a three-match series in Barbados and Trinidad while the squad for five Twenty20 matches will be announced at a later date.

**Test squad:** Rohit Sharma (captain), Shubman Gill, Rituraj Gaikwad, Virat Kohli, Suryakumar Yadav, Sanju Samson (wicket-keeper), Ishan Kishan (wicket-keeper), Ravichandran Ashwin, Ravindra Jadeja, Shardul Thakur, Axar Patel, Mohamed Siraj, Mukesh Kumar, Jaydev Unadkat, Navdeep Saini.

**ODI squad:** Rohit Sharma (captain), Shubman Gill, Rituraj Gaikwad, Virat Kohli, Suryakumar Yadav, Sanju Samson (wicket-keeper), Ishan Kishan (wicket-keeper), Hardik Pandya (vice-captain), Shardul Thakur, Ravindra Jadeja, Axar Patel, Yuzvendra Chahal, Kuldeep Yadav, Jaydev Unadkat, Mohamed Siraj, Umran Malik, Mukesh Kumar.

## CYCLING

## Froome out of team for next month's Tour de France

AFP  
Paris

**F**our-time Tour de France winner Chris Froome was yesterday left out of Israel Premier Tech's eight-rider roster for this year's race.

The 38-year-old, who won the Tour in 2013, 2015, 2016 and 2017, insisted this was not the end of his Tour de France career.

"I'm obviously disappointed with the decision. The Tour de France holds an incredibly special place in my heart," he told cycling web site GCN.

"I respect the team's decision and will take some time before refocusing on objectives later in the season and returning to the Tour de France in 2024."

Froome has not won a race since he joined the team, then known as Israel Start-Up Nation in 2021 although he finished third in the Tour de France stage up the iconic Alpe d'Huez in 2022.

"It was a tough decision to select our Tour de France team this year but we feel we selected eight riders best suited to fulfilling our performance objectives," said team boss Kjell Carlstrom in a statement. "Unfortunately we could not select everyone."

IPT, a second-tier Pro Tour



team, kept itself in the spotlight at last year's Tour with two stage victories and at the recent Giro d'Italia with relentless daily attacks led by Canadian Derek Gee, who won the combativity award.

The IPT team will be led by Canadian Michael Woods, who won the Route d'Occitanie last week. "Last year, we won two rather spectacular stages at the Tour de France, so the bar is high for us to exceed that result," said IPT investor Sylvan Adams.

"The team we are sending this year is a strong one, and certainly can compete for stage wins."

**The squad:** Michael Woods (CAN), Guillaume Boivin (CAN), Simon Clarke (AUS), Hugo Houle (CAN), Kristian Neilands (LAT), Nick Schultz (AUS), Corbin Strong (NZL), Dylan Teuns (BEL).

## BOTTOMLINE

## Australia's Sutherland sparkles with unbeaten 137

Reuters  
Nottingham

**A**ustralia's Annabel Sutherland went into the record books with the highest score for a women's batter at number eight or lower with an unbeaten 137 before picking up a wicket in her first over yesterday as England trail by 255 runs in the Ashes Test.

After dismissing Australia for 473, the hosts were 218-2 at stumps with Tammy Beaumont leading the charge on an unbeaten hundred, becoming only the second Englishwoman to score a century in all three formats.

Australia all-rounder Ellyse Perry missed out on her own Test century by one run on a rain-hit first day but Sutherland, who was unbeaten on 39 on Thursday, picked up where she left off to guide her team to a commanding total at Trent Bridge.

After losing overnight partner Alana King, who was bowled by an inswinger from Lauren Bell, Sutherland was joined in the middle by Kim Garth before she brought up



Australia's Annabel Sutherland celebrates reaching her century yesterday. (Reuters)

her century with a flick to the deep midwicket boundary.

Her 148-ball hundred was also the fastest by an Australian woman, breaking a 39-year-old record held by Jill Kennare with a 156-ball century versus England.

"I hope to get up the order. I've been telling the coach that for a little while. I'm just happy playing my part in this team ... it's just about slotting in," Sutherland told *Sky Sports* at lunch.

However, she ran out of partners when England spinner Sophie Ecclestone cleaned up the tail to finish with a five-wicket haul (5-129) after bowling nearly 47 overs.

Sutherland was not done yet and struck in her first over to dismiss Emma Lamb, luring the England opener into a stroke to edge the ball to Jess Jonassen in the slips for a low catch.

Australia struggled to make a breakthrough after the first wicket as Beaumont and captain Heather Knight chipped away at the mammoth total and stitched together a 115-run stand.

But as daylight faded and the stadium lights were switched on, Ashleigh Gardner dismissed Knight for 57 when the England skipper was caught behind.

Nat Sciver-Brunton joined Beaumont and, as if inspired by the men's fearless 'Bazball' approach, scored at almost a run a ball, smashing seven boundaries to finish day two on 41 not out.

FOCUS

# Paris Olympics chief hails 'crazy' torch relay route

'THIS IS THE CULMINATION OF AN ENORMOUS TEAM EFFORT OVER THE PAST YEAR AND A HALF'

AFP  
Paris

**T**ony Estanguet, the chief organiser of the 2024 Paris Olympics, said the route of the torch relay unveiled yesterday was "crazy" and "unbelievable".

From Mont Saint Michel to the French Caribbean to the Chateau de Versailles, the 80-day relay will be a French tourism chief's dream.

"This is the culmination of an enormous team effort over the past year and a half," said Estanguet, a three-time Olympic canoeing champion, at the unveiling of the route.

"The route I find crazy, I find it unbelievable."

Estanguet's remarks came at the end of a difficult week when police raided the organisers' offices in a probe focusing on the awarding of contracts.

Indeed the announcement of the route had been preceded by news that police had searched the homes of two high-ranking officials in the organising committee - Etienne Thobois, the Chief Executive Officer of Paris 2024, and Edouard Donnelly, the executive director of operations. French Sports Minister Amelie Oudea-Castera said it had not been "an easy moment for the (organising committee's) teams, obviously".

The torch will be lit in Olympia in Greece, then brought by boat to the southern French port of Marseille on May 8 and will pass through 400 towns before arriving in Paris on July 26 for the opening ceremony. The organisers have suffered a fraught few days after police raided the headquarters of the organising committee and the offices of Solideo, the body in charge of the Olympic construction sites.

They followed that up with another search on Wednesday, this time of Keneo, a Paris-based consulting firm specialising in sport that was founded by Thobois and Donnelly.

Estanguet said he was confident there were robust enough measures in place to ensure "transparency". "We continue

to move forward calmly, we are cooperating with all the authorities, notably with the magistrates from the Auditors' Court, who have audited our accounts five times in the past five years," he said.

**Disruption possible**

The torch will be lit as is traditional in Olympia on April 16 then brought to Marseille on the three-masted ship Belem.

Mindful of the chaos surrounding the last time the torch relay took place in France in 2008 for the Beijing Summer Games - due to protests denouncing China's treatment of Tibet - security will be tight.

"We know that certain groups and activists will try something," a source close to the organisers told AFP. "(Ecology activists) Extinction Rebellion or who knows what organisation are going to throw things on the torch, or block the route."

Protesters may have more trouble disrupting the relay on the sea as it faces a second boat trip on a trimaran skippered by

most notably during the run-up to Beijing 2008 as demonstrators took China to task over its Tibet policy. Protests started as soon as the flame was lit in ancient Olympia and dogged the relay throughout its journey to China, notably as it passed through London, Paris and San Francisco. In Japan, monks at an ancient Buddhist temple pulled out of hosting a torch ceremony because of the Chinese crackdown in Tibet.

**No cheering, please:** Overseas fans were barred from Tokyo 2020 to limit



A view of branding at the 2024 Olympic Games torch relay ceremony in Paris yesterday. (Reuters)

2016/2017 Vendee Globe winner Arnel Le Cleac'h. The 46-year-old - nicknamed The Jackal - will captain a crew that will take the torch from Brest in Brittany on a week-long voyage to Guadeloupe and then on to Martinique.

"For me it is a moment of great pride, an honour and a huge responsibility," Le Cleac'h said. "We are making history in transporting the torch in a boat."

On the French mainland it will be accompanied by a huge caravan - the Game sponsors taking advantage of the publicity - resembling that which follows the Tour de France cycling race.

It will also pass through cities such as Toulon, Toulouse and Montpellier as well as picturesque tourist draws such as Versailles and another famous Chateau, Chambord in the Loire Valley. The torch bearers are chosen by the organisers and the sporting community and will also come from the relay's sponsors and from other Olympic partners. Residents of the areas that the torch passes through could also be chosen.

## Fire and fury: the Olympic torch relay has been into water, space and scaled Mount Everest

**Paris:** The Olympic torch has been into space, deep underwater and even scaled Mount Everest. Along the way it has had its fair share of mishaps. As Paris prepares to unveil the route for the 2024 torch relay, AFP looks back at some of the headline moments of the event, first run ahead of the Berlin Olympics in 1936.

**Flaming underpants:** One of the most memorable stunts during the torch relay came in 1956 ahead of the Melbourne Games when an Australian

student named Barry Larkin fooled crowds with a homemade torch topped by burning underpants. Larkin managed to get his torch - a wooden chair leg crowned with a metal pudding container holding the fiery underwear - up the stairs of Sydney's Town Hall and deliver it to city mayor Pat Hills, cheered on by tens of thousands. The university student even arranged his own fake motorcycle escort but genuine police outriders soon caught up with him.

**Runaway jaguar:** A 17-year-old jaguar named Juma was paraded in chains for photos as the torch passed through the Amazon in northern Brazil ahead of the Rio Games in 2016. But Juma escaped its handlers and four tranquilliser darts failed to slow it down. After it threatened a vet, soldiers opened fire on the jaguar and shot dead the animal, a symbol of the Amazon.

**Cauldron calamity:** The climax of the relay - the lighting of the Olympic cauldron - has provided some memo-

orable moments such as Mohamed Ali trembling due to suffering from Parkinson's disease, and an archer's blazing arrow in Barcelona. But things have not always gone smoothly. The most grisly blunder came in Seoul in 1988 when dozens of doves released earlier in the opening ceremony alighted on the cauldron. When the flame was lit, several of the birds were incinerated, to the horror of watching spectators.

**Heated protests:** The torch relay has been the target of several protests,

most notably during the run-up to Beijing 2008 as demonstrators took China to task over its Tibet policy. Protests started as soon as the flame was lit in ancient Olympia and dogged the relay throughout its journey to China, notably as it passed through London, Paris and San Francisco. In Japan, monks at an ancient Buddhist temple pulled out of hosting a torch ceremony because of the Chinese crackdown in Tibet.

the risk of Covid-19 infection when the Games finally got underway in 2021 after a year's delay. The torch relay set the tone for the subdued Games, with public sections of the relay scrapped in areas where virus cases were spiking. In areas where masked spectators were allowed to gather, they were under strict instructions not to shout or cheer, for fear of spreading the virus through their saliva. The honour of lighting the cauldron in an eerily empty Tokyo stadium fell to tennis star Naomi Osaka.

TENNIS

# Medvedev crashes out as Zverev beats Jarry

AFP  
Berlin

**N**umber one seed Daniil Medvedev has crashed out of the Halle Open, a traditional Wimbledon warm-up, beaten in straight sets by Roberto Bautista Agut yesterday.

Medvedev lost 7-5, 7-6 (7-3) against the 35-year-old Spaniard. Eighth seed Bautista Agut now boasts a 5-2 career record against the 2021 US Open winner.

Medvedev, the former world number one, was runner-up on the Halle grass in 2022, losing to Poland's Hubert Hurkacz in straight sets in the final.

With a poor record on grass, Medvedev has never reached the quarter-finals at Wimbledon, missing last year's tournament due to a ban on Russian athletes due to the war in Ukraine.

Olympic gold medallist Alexander Zverev also progressed into the semi-finals after defeating Chilean Nicolas Jarry.

The 26-year-old German, who made it to the semi-finals of this year's French Open, defeated Jarry in straight sets 7-5, 6-3.

"It's fantastic that I've been able to keep playing like I did in Paris, but there's still a few things to improve on" Zverev said.

Zverev will play in the semis for the third time. The German previously made it to the final of the Halle tournament in 2016 and 2017, losing to 10-time winner Roger Federer on both occasions.

Zverev will meet Kazakh Alexander Bublik in the last four after Bublik advanced when Italian fourth seed Jannik Sinner withdrew hurt in the second set of their quarter final tie.

Bublik won the first set 7-5 and was up 2-0 in the second when Sinner pulled out with a right leg injury.

The Italian had taken a medical timeout at the end of the first set. He received treatment from a physiotherapist and played, and lost, two more games before pulling out.

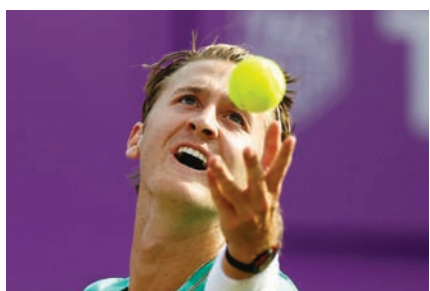
Sinner, the 21-year-old world number nine, now faces a race against time to be fit for Wimbledon which starts in early July.

**Rune downs Musetti, reaches Queen's Club semi-finals**

Holger Rune overcame a stern test from Lorenzo Musetti yesterday to reach his sixth



Spain's Roberto Bautista Agut returns the ball to Russia's Daniil Medvedev (not pictured) during the singles quarter-final of the ATP 500 Halle Open. (AFP)



Sebastian Korda of the US in action during his quarter-final against Britain's Cameron Norrie. Korda won 6-4, 7-6 (1). (Reuters)

able to come from a break behind and stay in the moment.

"Grass is also tough for the body. First few matches, every part of your body has to get used to it, the movement, the upper body, everything. So I was struggling a bit but I'm happy that I could finish and win a match."

Rune, who received treatment on his right wrist during the opening set, won five consecutive games after trailing 1-4. In the second set, the Dane saved two set points on serve at 4-5.

"I had, since I woke up this morning, some pain in the wrist," Rune said. "I think grass is so much faster than clay, so if you become a bit late on the ball, or on the serve [return], it's a lot of pressure on your wrist. That was the case. I took some treatment. It was painful a couple of games after but I feel okay now."

The 20-year-old Rune, who is yet to drop a set this week, will face Alex de Minaur today after the Australian defeated Frenchman Adrian Mannarino 6-4, 4-6, 6-4 to reach the last four. De Minaur, seeded seventh, is aiming for his second grass-court title (Eastbourne, 2021).

Should Rune triumph at the Queen's Club, he would rise to a career-high World No 5 in the Pepperstone ATP Rankings.

## OGIER TAKES SAFARI RALLY LEAD AS TANAK HALTED BY ZEBRAS CROSSING

**Paris:** Sebastien Ogier dominated yesterday's stages in the Safari Rally as some of his rivals lost horsepower when zebras wandered onto the course.

"We had a group of zebras so we had to stop for them a few times," said Ott Tanak, who won Thursday's opening stage but was then held up by the wildlife on the opening stage yesterday.

Ogier, 39, who isn't driving a full season, pounced to win the opening stage and take the overall lead. Eight-time world champion Ogier's hybrid unit cut out on the day's third stage which championship leader Kalle Rovanpera won to cut the lead to 2.5sec.

The French driver responded by taking the last three stages of the day.

"It's been a good day. Except for the hybrid issue this morning we had a perfect day, so we can be happy," said Ogier at the finish.

After yesterday's six stages, Toyotas occupied the top three places.

Ogier was 22.8 seconds ahead of Finn Rovanpera with Welshman Elfyn Evans at 43.5. There are six more stages on both today and tomorrow.

"It was quite okay. Quite soft in places with really

big holes and stones and stuff, proper Safari-spec," said Rovanpera.

Evans went off course on the day's final stage and drove into some local flora.

"I think it was more of a bush than a tree, which we can probably be happy about!" he said. "I got crossed up in these tricky ruts."

Rovanpera was well positioned to increase his advantage in this year's championships after the rocky, sandy and merciless Kenyan roads took their toll on his rivals.

Belgian Thierry Neuville, who started the race second in the standings, retired during the day's fifth stage with a broken suspension.

In addition to his zebra trouble, 2019 world champion Tanak, who started third in the overall standings, suffered a puncture later. He finished the day seventh more than 3 minutes behind Ogier.

Ogier knows momentum can change in Kenya. He fought back from two-and-a-half minutes down to win in 2021 when the rally returned to the world championships.

But in 2022 Ogier was slowed by a puncture and then sand in his engine and finished fourth as Rovanpera won.

GOLF

# Pace takes one-shot lead at Women's PGA Championship

AFP  
New York

**S**outh African veteran Lee-Anne Pace fired four of her five birdies on the back nine at Baltusrol on Thursday to grab a one-shot lead in the Women's PGA Championship.

Pace's strong finish on the demanding layout in Springfield, New Jersey, put her one in front of Chinese duo Lin Xiyu and Yin Ruoning and Canadian Brooke Henderson, who shared second place a stroke ahead of Thailand's Wichanee Meechai.

"I played very well today," said the 42-year-old Pace, who claimed her lone LPGA tour title in 2014.

"Obviously I'm very happy. No bogeys, which is awesome. Puttered really well, very happy with the round," added Pace, whose best finish in a major was a tie for sixth in the Evian Championship in 2015. Pace was concentrating this season on the Ladies European Tour - where she's an 11-time winner - before heading stateside for the ShopRite Classic earlier this month. She took a conservative approach and it paid off on a course where only 16 players broke par.

"We kept it pretty simple," she said. "Most of the greens we went for the middle, didn't really attack too many pins. The putter worked, which was awe-



Lee-Anne Pace of South Africa during the first round of the PGA Championship in Springfield, New Jersey. (AFP)

## FOCUS

## US to host expanded 32-team Club World Cup in 2025

AFP  
Miami

The United States will host a new-look expanded 32-team Club World Cup in 2025, governing body FIFA announced yesterday. The move means the US will host major tournaments for three successive summers, culminating in the 2026 World Cup which will be co-hosted with Mexico and Canada.

In 2024, an expanded Copa America, featuring national teams from South America and the CONCACAF region, will be held in the United States.

The existing Club World Cup, which began in 2000, has struggled to capture global attention and FIFA president Gianni Infantino has long targeted an expansion to bring the top clubs from Europe, South America and the rest of the world into a tournament format. The most recent edition was held in Morocco in February.

"The Club World Cup 2025

will be the pinnacle of elite professional men's club football, and with the required infrastructure in place together with a massive local interest, the United States is the ideal host to kick off this new, global tournament," said Infantino.

While many of the qualification slots remain to be decided, the tournament will feature the likes of Real Madrid, Manchester City, Chelsea, Brazilian clubs Flamengo and Palmeiras, Mexican team Leon and Seattle Sounders from Major League Soccer. The dates, host cities and match schedule for the tournament will be established at a later date, FIFA said.

FIFA decided in February that the new competition will feature 12 teams from Europe, six from South America and four representatives each from Asia, Africa and CONCACAF, which includes North and Central America and the Caribbean. The Oceania region will also be given one slot and the host nation is guaranteed a place in the tournament. The European partici-

pants will include the winners of last five Champions Leagues. The new tournament will, like the national team World Cup, be held every four years.

The last edition in the smaller format is scheduled to be played in Saudi Arabia in December.

Teams from South America will qualify through the Copa Libertadores and CONMEBOL's rankings. FIFA is setting up operations in the United States with offices in Miami and recently signed an agreement to work jointly with CONCACAF on regional tournaments such as the Gold Cup and Nations League. FIFA also announced on Friday it was pushing back the decision on the host of the 2030 World Cup from September or October to the second half of next year "to ensure additional consultation with all key stakeholders."

Real Madrid's players celebrate with the trophy after winning FIFA Club World Cup in Rabat on February 11, 2023. (AFP)



## FOOTBALL / GOLD CUP

## Jamaica plotting unlikely upset of hosts United States

'I SINCERELY HOPE THAT WE WILL STOP NOT WINNING AND GET GOOD RESULTS'

AFP  
Los Angeles

Jamaica coach Heimir Hallgrímsson is plotting an unlikely upset as the Reggae Boyz prepare to kick off their CONCACAF Gold Cup campaign against the United States Saturday.

The 16-team biennial championship for North America, Central America and the Caribbean gets under way at Soldier Field this weekend, with the defending champion US taking on Jamaica in Group A.

Hallgrímsson, who was part of the Icelandic coaching set-up that masterminded a stunning defeat of England at Euro 2016, took over as Jamaica coach last September.

But so far the 56-year-old qualified dentist has struggled to reverse Jamaica's dismal international form, with the Reggae Boyz winless in seven games since Hallgrímsson took over.

The Icelandic coach though is bullish that the Gold Cup can mark the beginning of an upturn in Jamaica's footballing fortunes. "We don't fear them, we know they have a good squad and they are playing at home in front of their own fans," Hallgrímsson said of the United States.

"The most important thing in a tournament like this is not to lose the first game. A draw is always a good point from the first game so you are alive until the end of the group phase."

Jamaica has a solid record in the Gold Cup but has struggled



Jamaican players pose during a training session yesterday, ahead of their CONCACAF Gold Cup match in Chicago on Saturday.

in games against the US in the tournament. The US beat Jamaica in the knockout rounds in 2021 and 2019, and also defeated the Reggae Boyz in the 2017 final. Jamaica though upset the US en route to the 2015 final, where they lost to Mexico.

However with a team bolstered by Premier League attacking talent in the shape of Leon Bailey (Aston Villa), Michail Antonio (West Ham) and Demarai Gray (Everton), Hallgrímsson says Ja-

maica are ready to end their long winless streak.

## A 'LOSING HABIT'?

"It's often said that winning is a habit," Hallgrímsson said. "But sadly losing can be that as well. It's something that we don't want to carry on doing."

"But I think the mindset for the Gold Cup will be a lot more different. The set up is going to be different."

"I sincerely hope that we will

stop not winning and get good results in the Gold Cup. We're not happy with losing."

Jamaica's chances of ambushing the Americans on Saturday have been improved by the fact that the Gold Cup takes place outside of FIFA's international windows. It means that the US will embark on the defense of their title with virtually a second-string team stripped of most of their Europe-based players.

Only one member of the US starting XI that defeated Canada in last Sunday's CONCACAF Nations League final in Las Vegas - goalkeeper Matt Turner - is in the squad for the Gold Cup.

The Gold Cup is also the last under US interim coach B.J. Callaghan, whose brief tenure will come to an end when former coach Gregg Berhalter retakes control of the team following the tournament.

With so many first choice players absent, Callaghan said the US is using the tournament to deepen the player pool as the country builds towards the 2026 World Cup.

"We're trying to expose as many players as possible to tournament competition," Callaghan said earlier this month.

"Some have a lot of experiences that we continue to build on, while others are just starting out. In all cases it will be valuable for the group moving forward."

Trinidad and Tobago and St. Kitts & Nevis complete Group A.

In Group B, Mexico take on Haiti, Honduras and guest team Qatar, hoping to bounce back after their poor Nations League showing last week that led to the sacking of coach Diego Cocca.

Costa Rica, El Salvador, Martinique and Panama make up Group C while World Cup qualifiers Canada head a Group D that also contains Cuba, Guadeloupe and Guatemala.

The top two teams in each group advance to the quarter-finals with the final taking place at the SoFi Stadium in Los Angeles on July 16.

## MOTORSPORT

## Bezzecchi dominates practice as Marquez crashes again

AFP  
Assen, Netherlands

Marco Bezzecchi dominated opening practice for the Dutch Grand Prix with Jorge Martin, fresh from victory in Germany, finishing second fastest in Assen yesterday.

Bezzecchi, an Italian on a Ducati run by Valentino Rossi's VR46 satellite team, was fastest in the morning and then sped up in the afternoon to record a best lap time of 1min 32.063sec.

In the afternoon, he was 0.130sec ahead of the man who pushed him out of second place in the standings last Sunday, Spaniard Martin on a Pramac Ducati.

Australian Jack Miller was third on a KTM with world champion and series leader Francesco Bagnaia on a factory Ducati improving after a sluggish morning to post the fourth-best time.

Spaniard Maverick Vinales was fifth on an Aprilia.

Former world champion Fabio Quartararo, who has been lagging on his Yamaha this season, was an encouraging sixth, despite riding with a broken toe. Six-time world champion Marc Marquez was on the floor again after crashing five times last weekend

and his boss at Honda, Alberto Puig, acknowledged "the bike is not performing the way he needs".

Marquez was only 19th in a field of 23 after a fall in the second session scuppered his chances of finishing in the top ten and going straight to Saturday's second qualifying session which decides the front grid positions.

Marquez broke his thumb at the Sachsenring and missed last Sunday's race. The Spaniard is also the subject of speculation that he might leave struggling Honda for dominant Ducati. His Honda boss acknowledged in an interview on the MotoGP website that Marquez and the team had problems.

"He understands clearly that the bike is not performing the way he needs and on the other hand he is a champion and he is pushing that's why he's crashing," said Puig.

"We understand Marc's not happy, but we respect him."

"There is not one rider on the planet that is happy crashing."

Puig said Marquez was "bruised and battered".

"Here in Assen he is a little affected in the ribs and the ankles."

The two qualifying sessions on Saturday will decide the grids for both the sprint race on Saturday afternoon and the Grand Prix tomorrow.



RW Racing GP Dutch rider Zonta van den Goorbergh steers his bike during the first free practice session for the MotoGP Dutch Grand Prix at the Assen TT circuit yesterday. (AFP)

## SPOTLIGHT

## Neymar faces possible \$1mn fine over property work

AFP  
Rio de Janeiro

A "major construction" project at Brazilian football star Neymar's mansion in Rio de Janeiro state was halted yesterday for "environmental infractions" which could result in a fine of some \$1mn, authorities said.

The project was underway "without environmental authorization" on the Paris Saint-Germain and Brazil national team player's luxury property in Mangaratiba, some 130 kilometers (80 miles) from Rio de Janeiro, the mayor's office said in a statement.

The authorities, alerted by complaints posted on social media, discovered "various environmental infractions," including the diversion of a waterway, and the unauthorized extraction of water from a river.

They also discovered unauthorized excavation and movement of earth, stones and rocks, as well as the use of beach sand without a permit.

"The next step will be to make an assessment of the irregularities found and issue a fine which, according to estimates and in view of the environmental damage caused, will not be less than five million reais (about \$1mn)," the mayor's office said.

Neymar's representatives in Brazil

have not responded to AFP's request for comment.

The footballer's father, Neymar da Silva Santos, was on site during the inspection and can be heard arguing with officials in a video published by authorities and carried by local media.

Neymar bought the property in 2016. According to local media, it sits on 10,000 square meters (2.5 acres) of land and includes a helipad, spa and gym.

The 31-year-old striker is currently recovering from an operation on his right ankle, which he underwent in Doha, Qatar, in March.

He has not played since February, and doubts have arisen as to whether he will remain at PSG.



## Marcelino named as Marseille coach

MARSEILLE: French giants Marseille yesterday unveiled Marcelino as their new coach to replace Igor Tudor who quit after just one season in charge. Former Athletic Bilbao coach Marcelino will take charge of training for the first time next month with a Champions League preliminary round tie to play on August 8/9. "The arrival of Marcelino is part of the desire to give continuity to the club's project," said Javier Ribalta, Marseille's director of football. "His experience will also be a considerable asset to strengthen the work undertaken last season." Marcelino had been out of work since leaving Bilbao in June 2022. He has also worked with Sevilla, Villarreal and Valencia where he won the Spanish Cup in 2019.

## GETAFE EXTEND BORDALAS DEAL

Getafe extended coach Jose Bordalas' contract by two years yesterday after he helped them earn La Liga survival. The 59-year-old was appointed for the second time at the club in late April on a short-term contract until the end of the season, after Quique Sanchez Flores was sacked with the team battling relegation. Getafe stayed up on the final day of the season, finishing 15th, two points above the relegation zone. (AFP)