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QATAR GOODWOOD FESTIVAL

Al Ghadeer storms to Qatar International Stakes victory

Al Shaqab Racing's Al Ghadeer now boasts an incredible record of six consecutive group victories

By Sports Reporter
Doha

The second day of the Qatar Goodwood Festival started with a massive Qatari victory when the Al Shaqab Racing-owned Al Ghadeer (Al Mourtajez x Gharraa) landed the title of the Group 1 PA Qatar International Stakes yesterday, while Paddington won his 4th Group 1 in the Qatar Sussex Stakes.

HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani, President of Qatar Olympic Committee, attended the event yesterday at the Goodwood Racecourse in UK, and crowned the winners of both the events.

The five-day Festival will continue up to Saturday. Also present on the day were ambassador of Qatar to the United Kingdom Fahad bin Mohamed al-Attiyah, Chairman of Qatar Racing & Equestrian Club (QREC) Issa bin Mohamed al-Mohannadi, QREC Acting CEO Bader Mohamed al-Darwish, QREC Racing Manager Abdulla Rashid al-Kubaisi, QREC Director of Marketing Salem Khejaim al-Adbi, QREC Director of Public Relations and External Communications Dr Nasser Ahmed al-Hamar and Director of the QREC CEO Office Saoud Hamad al-Hababi.

The richest Arabian race on the British racing calendar, the Group 1 (PA) Qatar International Stakes worth £400,000 in prize money produced yet another thrilling finish and went the way of Al Ghadeer in the colours of Al Shaqab Racing.

Al Ghadeer now boasts an incredible record of six consecutive group victories, including four Group 1s and two Group 3s in only seven career starts so far. He also managed to keep the title in Qatar's kitty for the fifth year in a row.

As was announced by his trainer Francois Rohaut following his Group 1 (PA) success on Prix De Diane day at Chantilly, the four-year-old Arabian Al Ghadeer not only turned up on Day two of the Qatar Goodwood Festival, but also dominated the proceedings to land the Qatar International Stakes.

Partnered by Christophe Soumillon in a select field of eight, of which three quarters were French trained, Al Ghadeer vied for favouritism with his stablemate Moshrif (Dahess) before the off, of the 1600m Group 1 (PA) contest. The only four-year-old in the field and already seeking a fourth success at the highest level, Al Ghadeer travelled strongly in mid-peloton, in a race taken along by Moshrif.

Showing his class on the decent towards home, Soumillon allowed the colt to take closer order and the pair duly put the race to bed in a matter of strides. Al Ghadeer cruised into the lead, passing stablemate Moshrif and passing the post with three and a half lengths to spare over the game, but never-nearer First Classs (Dahess), who finished second for owner Noora Racing, trainer Jean de Mieulle and jockey Ronan Thomas.

The HE Sheikha Reem bint Mohamed bin Khalifa al-Thani-owned Samlla (Assy) ran his usual courageous race and like in the 2022 edition, seized the third place, for the winning trainer Francois Rohaut, late on as he was a further half length behind under jockey Maxime Guyon.

Bred by Mohamed al-Najafi, Al Ghadeer was the leading French three-year-old colt (PA) in 2022 and landed both the Group 1 (PA) Al Rayyan Cup at Deauville and the Group 1 (PA) Qatar Arabian Trophy des Poulains at Saint-Cloud.

The Al Shaqab Racing-owned four-year-old is out of Gharraa (Matador 12), a Group 2 (PA) winner. Al Ghadeer is a brother of Ghurat Al Zaman (Hilal Al Zaman), who was also a winner of the Gr.3 (PA) Prix Damas. The second dam, Wadha Al Thania (Asad Saif), has produced multiple winners, notably Al Harith, who was third in the Gr.1 (PA) Zabeel Stakes at Newbury.

PADDINGTON WINS FROM PILLAR TO POST IN QATAR SUSSEX STAKES

The superstar three-year-old Paddington won his 4th Group 1 in the Qatar Sussex Stakes (Group 1). Trained by Aidan O'Brien for the Coolmore associates, Westerberg and Peter Brant, Paddington was very much the best and won from pillar to post on testing conditions which were a bit of an unknown at this level. However, his jockey, Ryan Moore, just said on that matter: "With him, I wouldn't care if it was snowing."

Trained by Jerome Reynier, the French raider Facteur Cheval had proven form on very soft ground and relished the conditions. The 4yo is a very good second one length and a half behind Paddington, despite not having a clear run at the beginning of the home straight. Charyn, the other 3yo in the race, is third three lengths behind.

Paddington has now won four Groups 1 in the space of ten weeks, after the Irish 2,000 Guineas, the St James's Palace Stakes and the Eclipse Stakes. He had already beaten his elders in the Eclipse but over 10 furlongs. At the Qatar Sussex Stakes, he was coming back on the mile.

Aidan O'Brien, before the race, had already drew some comparisons with the iron horse Giant's Causeway and said after the race: "He's much quicker than the Giant was. He's tactically quick but he can quicken as well. The Giant was tactically quick but he was dour after that. This horse can really turn it on when you have to, in all types of ground – very unique. He can go anywhere, really. He can go any trip, I'd imagine – a mile, a mile and a quarter, he could even go further, I don't know. He's handled everything that we've put in front of him, whether it's a mile or ten furlongs, soft ground or quick. He's a straightforward horse who thrives on his racing and really wants to do it for you. We weren't expecting the ground to be as tough as it is today but, knowing the horse, he could take it with a smile on his face."

Ryan Moore was also very impressed: "It's a hard thing to say but he gives you the feel that he's as good a horse as I've rode, I think he's exceptional."

Bred in France at the Ecurie des Monceaux for Dayton Investments, Paddington is a son of Siyouni and was a €420,000 yearling at Arqana in August 2021. He is out of Modern Eagle, a daughter of Montjeu who showed some stamina on the track, winning the Prix Belle de Nuit (L). She had already produced a black type performer in the multiple Listed placed Masterpiece. The second dam, Millionaia, was second in the Prix de Diane (Gr.1) and the third dam, Moonlight Dance, won the Prix Saint-Alary (Gr.1).

QATAR NASSAU STAKES ON DAY 3

The racing action and thrill continues on the third day of the Festival today, with an eight-race card and the feature is the Group 1 Qatar Nassau Stakes for three-year-old+ fillies and mares.

Six runners will take on each other for the coveted title.

The leading 3-year-old filly in Europe, dual French Classic winner Blue Rose Cen has made the trip from Chantilly to the Sussex Downs where she will look to extend her unbeaten record in her last five outings.

In what is undoubtedly going to be a thrilling showdown, she will be facing last year's victrix, the 4-year-old Nashwa – also a French Classic winner, having taken the Prix De Diane on route to the Qatar Nassau Stakes in 2022.

Nashwa arrives at the race off a five-length victory on her return to competition. Four rivals take on these two top classes fillies; Al Husn, Above The Curve, Caernarfon and Never Ending Story.



HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani, President of Qatar Olympic Committee, presented the trophy to connections of Paddington, which won the Group 1 Qatar Sussex Stakes on the second day of the Qatar Goodwood Festival at the Goodwood Racecourse in UK yesterday. **PICTURES**: *Dominic James*



Christophe Soumillon rides Al Shaqab Racing's Al Ghadeer to Group 1 (PA) Qatar International Stakes victory at the Qatar Goodwood Festival yesterday.



Paddington, ridden by Ryan Moore, eases to Qatar Sussex Stakes win.

SPORT

CRICKET

India flaunt bench strength with ODI series win in WI

The visitors clinch the third match by a massive 200-run margin



India players pose after winning the third and final ODI match against hosts West Indies at the Brian Lara Cricket Academy in Tarouba, Trinidad and Tobago, on Tuesday. *(AFP)*

Reuters
Trinidad and Tobago

A second-string India thrashed West Indies by 200 runs in the third one-day international on Tuesday to seal a 2-1 series victory in a timely boost ahead of their Asia Cup campaign next month.

India entered the three-match series with their eyes on the bigger picture, which includes the Asia Cup and the home World Cup in October-November.

Skipper Rohit Sharma and stalwart Virat Kohli were rested for the second ODI as part of their experiment with team combination and were not recalled for the decider even after West Indies levelled the series in Bridgetown.

It did not really matter at the Brian Lara Stadium in Trinidad where India racked up 351-5 after being put into bat.

Ishan Kishan (77) smashed his third successive fifty of the series and Shubman Gill struck 85 as they forged a 143-run opening stand to lay the foundation for a mammoth total.

Sanju Samson made a breezy 51 and stand-in skipper Hardik Pandya provided the late flourish with an unbeaten 70 off 52 balls to take India past the 350-mark.

They then returned to bundle out West Indies for 151 in 35.3 overs with only Alick Athanaze (32) and Gudakesh Motie, who made 39 not out, offering some resistance. After Mukesh Kumar (3-30) wrecked the West Indies top order, Shardul Thakur (4-37) hollowed out the bottom half as India registered their 13th consecutive ODI series win against West Indies. "As a captain I look forward to these kind of games where something is on the line," a beaming Pandya said afterwards.



Hardik Pandya of India poses with the trophy at Brian Lara Cricket Academy in Tarouba, Trinidad and Tobago, on Tuesday. *(AFP)*

"We knew that if we failed, there would be some disappointment.

"The way the boys came out and showed their character and, at the same time, enjoyed it, that's something I want this team to have.

"In pressure situations, they have to absorb it but also enjoy it. Without pressure you can't be heroes."

West Indies captain Shai Hope said the target was not beyond their reach but they lacked consistency.

"They got 350, you have to believe 'we can too'. Just trying to keep stressing on that attitude," he said.

"We are not consistent enough with that attitude. Some days we wake up and play like the best team in the world and some days we just get steamrolled."

The teams will clash in a five-match T20 series beginning today.

BRIEF SCORES
India 351-5 in 50 overs (S. Gill 85, I. Kishan 77, H. Pandya 70 n.o., S. Samson 51; R. Shepherd 2-73) **v West Indies 151 all out off 35.3 overs** (S. Thakur 4-37, M. Kumar 3-30)
Toss: West Indies
Result: India won by 200 runs to win series 2-1

REVIEW

Ashes star Woakes grateful for Broad and Anderson input



England's Chris Woakes celebrates with teammates after taking the wicket of Australia's Usman Khawaja on day five of the fifth Ashes Test at the Oval in London on Tuesday. *(AFP)*

AFP
London

Chris Woakes believes his England career has benefitted from the knowledge he has gained from Stuart Broad and James Anderson rather than been hampered by the presence of the veteran pacemen.

Despite his outstanding Test record on home soil, double World Cup-winner Woakes has often found himself on the outside looking in when it comes to red-ball cricket given the enduring careers of Anderson and the now retired Broad, who bowed out after the Ashes finale at The Oval.

Injuries too, including a knee problem in the Caribbean in March 2022, have also restricted 34-year-old seamer Woakes to 48 Tests.

But after more than a year out of the side, he made a huge impact in the Ashes, taking 19 wickets at a stunningly low average of 18.14 in the final three Tests against Australia.

The all-rounder also made a valuable 32 not out in the third Test at Headingley to see England to a three-wicket win before taking 4-50 with the ball at The Oval on Monday in a 49-run victory as the hosts ended the series all square at 2-2.

Such was Woakes's impact he received the prestigious Compton-Miller medal for players of the series even though he did not feature in the first two Tests.

"The last three weeks have been a bit of a whirlwind and it's just amazing to be a part of," Woakes said. "I think I'm just proud of myself to be able to keep going.

"I feel very lucky to have played with Stuart. Jimmy's the same. The stuff that I've learned from them has had a huge impact on how I've bowled about over the years. It's been an honour."

He added: "It's extended my international career, if anything. We won't know what would have been if they hadn't been around, but I only have good things to say in terms of the knowledge they've passed on."

Woakes could now have become a more established member of the side in England at least, given he averages 21.88 in home conditions.

But that bowing average rockets to a far more expensive 51.88 from 20 Tests overseas, leaving Woakes uncertain about his involvement when England next play Test cricket on a tour of India in the new year.

"I think that's a question for another day," he said. "Let's let this sink in. I have no idea. We all know my record away from home, so I think we'll come to that if it happens.

"I want to play for England for as long as possible. Still, for me, playing international cricket is the pinnacle. You want to be a part of days like (the last day of the fifth Ashes Test).

"You don't get it anywhere else, so you want this to last for as long as possible whilst you're still performing."

England, Australia docked WTC points and fined

London: England and Australia have been penalised 19 and 10 World Test Championship (WTC) points, respectively and fined a percent of their match fees after they were found guilty of maintaining slow over-rate during the Ashes, the International Cricket Council (ICC) said yesterday.
Australia were fined 50% of their match fee for 10 overs in the fourth test at Manchester, while England received a "10% for the first Test, 45% for the second, 15% for the fourth and 25% for the fifth."
Australia opener Usman Khawaja last month revealed he had approached the ICC about reducing penalties for slow over-rates in Test matches after the governing body announced it had decided to soften sanctions.
Khawaja said it was "really frustrating" for players to lose their match fees despite delivering entertaining matches.
"I was pretty frustrated with what was happening," Khawaja said in Manchester ahead of the fourth Ashes Test.
"I'm an ACA (Australian Cricketers' Association) Board member ... and just thought someone has to find a way to speak to the ICC about it.
"We had played three games and they'd been three really good games with results, entertainment, the WTC (final) was the highest-watched Test match ever or something like that.
"Just really good stuff - and we were getting fined 80 per cent of our match fee. It's a lot of money.
"Just really frustrating as a player. You are giving it your all out there, providing entertainment, then you are getting stung for it. Just felt like I needed to speak and Wasim was really good."
Australia are third in the WTC standings, while England are placed fifth.

SPOTLIGHT

Opener Khawaja laments 'frustrating' ball change

AFP
London

Australia batsman **Usman Khawaja** was left to rue a "frustrating" ball change which he believed played a key role in England's fightback to win the fifth Ashes Test at The Oval.

The tourists started Monday's last day on 135-0, needing just 249 more runs to reach an imposing victory target of 384.

But England's Chris Woakes struck twice early on, taking two wickets in seven balls as he removed both David Warner (60) and Khawaja (72) following their impressive opening stand.

The ball appeared to be moving significantly more in the air and off the pitch than it had on the fourth day. And while overhead conditions and a rain-freshened pitch may have played their part in making batting conditions more difficult, a change of ball, brought about when England fast bowler Mark Wood hit Khawaja on the helmet late on Sunday, may have been a factor as well.

In these circumstances, the on-field umpires are supposed to select a replacement ball in similar condition to the one being discarded.

But television pictures suggested the replacement ball was significantly newer than the old ball and that there did not appear to be one of equal wear and tear for the umpires to select from a box of replacement balls.

"I walked straight up to Kumar (Dharmasena, the umpire) and said straightaway, 'That ball looks nothing like the one we were playing with. I can see writing on it'," Khawaja told *cricket.com.au* after Australia had been bowled out for 334 to give England a 49-run victory.

"It felt harder than any ball I've faced in this Ashes series – and I've opened the batting against the new ball every single time," added Khawaja, the leading run-scorer on either side in the five-Test campaign with 496.

"I said, 'I don't know what's going on – you've gone from an old, reverse (swinging) ball to a brand-new ball.

"Personally, I think if there's nothing else in the box that can match the ball you have, you can't really change it.

"It's a bit frustrating as a batting unit because we worked our backsides off for 36 overs and then they changed the ball," Khawaja said.

"As an opener you work so hard to get through to there and then you're facing a new ball again."

Khawaja added he hoped the International Cricket Council would take note of what had happened.



FOCUS

Track, BMX, road, mountain all rub shoulders at cycling Worlds in Scotland

AFP
Glasgow

Remco Evenepoel is among the stars assembling for the world cycling championships in Scotland with 13 disciplines including road races, BMX, mountain biking and track racing on the menu from today.

Over 200 of the eye-catching rainbow jerseys will be handed out over the 11 days of action to the various world champions.

The men's world road race champion Evenepoel arrives in good shape after landing his third San Sebastian classic.

"It's super-good for the head and for the motivation to start the second part of the season and to go to Glasgow next week," he said after Saturday's win. The 23-year-old Belgian is unlikely to have to contend with swooping parrots in Scotland as he did at the 2022 championships in Wollongong.

He forms part of a powerful Belgian cycling team aided by Wout Van Aert.

Van Aert was last in action as 'sherpa' to Tour de France winner Jonas Vingegaard but left the race in the final week to attend the birth of his second child.

The epic 271km course from Edinburgh to Glasgow will weed out any bluffers and Evenepoel's endurance will lend him an edge.

Another to consider is Mathieu van der Poel, who is targeting the men's road race before switching to cyclo-cross.

Vingegaard himself is absent having chosen to race the Vuelta a Espana in late August, but Denmark can call upon 2019 champion Mads Pedersen, who won in a deluge in Yorkshire.



France's Christine Ribault takes part in a women's c2 individual pursuit qualification race at the Sir Chris Hoy velodrome during day one of the Cycling World Championships in Glasgow, Scotland, yesterday. *(AFP)*

France's Julian Alaphilippe, who won the 2020 and 2021 titles, is also there but somewhat struggling for form since a bad fall a year ago.

Van Vleuten to retire

The elite women's road race takes top billing on the closing day on Sunday week with 40-year-old Annemiek van Vleuten ending her career in the 154km race from the banks of Loch Lomond into downtown Glasgow.

Standing in her way are a new generation of cyclists including Lotte Kopecky, Marianne Voss and Demi Vollering, who succeeded Van Vleuten as winner of the women's Tour de France in Pau last Sunday – this trio are all capable of their own tilt at the title in the fast-growing women's sport.

The two elite time trials both run to Stirling and culminate with a sharp climb to the city's landmark castle.

There are also events for the juniors and the under-23s for the men and women plus a mixed team time trial. Three women and three men race a 20.15km road circuit in turn with the men first down the ramp in central Glasgow.

Ben Nevis, the highest peak in the British Isles, provides the backdrop for the mountain biking while the BMX events all take place in Glasgow.

The Sir Chris Hoy Velodrome stages the track racing with British riders bent on garnering 2024 Paris Olympic Games spots by doing well here.

The velodrome will be one of the hubs of the entire carnival – built for the 2014 Commonwealth Games it is doted with a 250m Siberian timber track and is named after 11-time world champion Hoy, the greatest Scottish cyclist of all time.

FOCUS

Coe sees future for troubled C'wealth Games

AFP
Sydney

World Athletics president **Sebastian Coe** says the Commonwealth Games is a strong enough brand to survive its latest crisis, but it must innovate to do so.

The multi-sport event suffered a major setback last month when the Australian state of Victoria pulled out of hosting the 2026 edition, citing escalating costs.

It left the Commonwealth Games Federation searching for a viable replacement at short notice amid an apparent lack of interest in a spectacle seen as losing relevance.

The last Games in 2022 were held in Birmingham, but only after the English city stepped in to replace Durban in South Africa, which was stripped of hosting rights after a series of missed deadlines and financial problems. Victoria was the exclusive bidder for 2026.

Despite this, Coe said he saw a future for an event which typically attracts more than 4,000 athletes from the 54 nations of the Commonwealth, almost all of them former territories of the British Empire.



"The Commonwealth Games will survive this, it's a strong product, it is about innovating and the Commonwealth Games has opportunity to do that," he told *The Australian* newspaper late Tuesday, without detailing the innovations.

"It has less branding (restrictions) than the Olympics and sometimes the World Championships, so it has potential," he added.

"I don't see the Commonwealth Games disappearing, it has a problem at the moment, and I am hoping others are prepared to step in." Coe, a former middle-distance world record holder, said the event remained a vital stepping stone for the Olympics, particularly track and field.

"The Commonwealth Games track and field is a strong event: to win a sprint you have to beat Jamaicans; in endurance you have to beat the Kenyans and there are very strong powerful nations there," he said.

"Just under a quarter of those nations in world athletics are Commonwealth nations. It is important for track and field that the Commonwealth Games is seen as successful."

Victoria – which was due to hold the Games across five regional hubs – pulled out after claiming the initial cost of Aus$2bn ($1.36bn) would more likely spiral to around Aus$7bn.

While answering questions about the world championships, Coe defended the choice of Hungary's capital Budapest to host this month's big event and also said the sport's latest doping case was actually a reason to celebrate.

Coe, speaking to selected reporters on a conference call ahead of the August 19-27 championships, said: "The world is a complex place, it's becoming more complex by the year and that isn't going to change.

"So one thing that does need to adapt here is sport and sport is ultimately probably the most adaptable organism that is out there and in an uncertain world sport is the only anchor point."

"One thing I can tell you is that I have never, ever been involved in sport that has gone anywhere, particularly into challenging environments, where it has left that society politically, culturally, socially worse off for being there."

Athletics was dealt a blow in July when women's 100m hurdles world record holder Tobi Amusan of Nigeria, the reigning world champion from last year, was charged with an alleged anti-doping whereabouts rule violation. Amusan is accused of missing three tests in 12 months.

Coe argued that far from tarnishing the sport's reputation, such cases "lend confidence".

"Our sport has improved its reputation more than any other sport in the last two years by a distance because we have been prepared to tackle the issues around doping," he said.

"I would much prefer to have the occasional headline which none of us actually want than the knowledge that we were gently declining into a landscape where we didn't have the systems in place to weed out the people we don't want in the sport," he said.

TENNIS

Tiafoe battles to beat Karatsev in Washington

'UNBELIEVABLE MATCH TONIGHT. IT WAS SO TIGHT ALL THE WAY'

www.atptour.com
Washington

Cheered on by NBA legend Kevin Durant, American Frances Tiafoe opened his Mubadala Citi DC Open campaign with a tight 7-6(5), 7-6(5) win against Aslan Karatsev on Tuesday.

The second seed Tiafoe, who has claimed titles in Houston and Stuttgart this year, thrilled the home crowd with his shotmaking ability throughout the two-hour, nine-minute contest and absorbed Karatsev's firepower to advance at the ATP 500 event.

Playing in his first match since Wimbledon, the 25-year-old Tiafoe fought off a set point on serve at 5-4 in the second set to avoid going the distance and later in the tie-break, he won four consecutive points after falling behind 3/5.

"Unbelievable match tonight. It was so tight all the way through, he really made me earn it," Tiafoe said in his on-court interview.

"I'm just happy to get through. He's a tough player, he's made the semis of a Grand Slam and he's very, very dangerous. Very tough first round," he added.

With Durant sitting courtside, Tiafoe earned his second Lexus ATPHead2Head win against Karatsev to set a first-time meeting against 18-year-old Chinese star Shang Juncheng in the second round.

In his seventh appearance in Washington, World No. 10 Tiafoe's best result at the hard-court tournament came last year, when he made the quarter-finals before falling to eventual champion Nick Kyrgios.



NBA legend Kevin Durant meets American player Frances Tiafoe at the Mubadala Citi DC Open in Washington. Tiafoe beat Aslan Karatsev of Russia in straight sets in his opening match *(@mubadalacitidc)*

Earlier in the day, Michael Mmoh saved three match points to upset fourth seed Hubert Hurkacz 6-3, 6-7(4), 7-6(4).

Despite having a match point of his own on return at 6-5 in the second set, Mmoh was pushed to a decider before closing the exciting two-hour, 55-minute battle.

The American traded blows from the baseline with the World No. 17 and produced a highlight reel of winners to earn his third Top 20 win of the season.

Hurkacz will rue letting slip three match points, one of which came after winning a gruelling 38-shot rally at deuce.

All three of the Pole's match points came on return at 5-4 in the third set, but Mmoh held his nerve and continued to play aggressive to escape. Australian Jordan Thompson ousted wild card Kevin Anderson 6-4, 6-7(1), 6-1 after winning 56 per cent of points behind his second serve, compared to the South African's 40 per cent. Anderson, 37, was playing just his second tournament since returning from retirement in July.

Emil Ruusuvuori produced a clean-hitting performance to rally past last year's finalist Yoshihito Nishioka 6-7(5), 6-4, 6-2 after two hours, seven minutes.

Alexander Shevchenko upset eighth seed Sebastian Korda 5-7, 7-6(4), 6-4 to close the day. Shevchenko, 22, saved 19 of 24 of break-points faced to survive the World No. 26.

Raducanu back on the practice court after surgery

Former US Open champion Emma Raducanu made her return to the practice court yesterday for the first time since she underwent wrist and ankle surgery in May.

In a video posted on Instagram, the 20-year-old Briton could be seen training with compatriot Kyle Edmund.

"August 2nd, the fun part. First time back on court," she wrote.

Since her fairy-tale run to the US Open title as an 18-year-old qualifier in 2021, Raducanu has faced challenges with her form and fitness.

She missed the French Open and Wimbledon tournaments this year while she recovered from surgery and is unlikely to be fit for this year's US Open which begins on August 28. Raducanu was beaten in straight sets by American Coco Gauff in the second round of the Australian Open in January and has not played a tournament since April.

GOLF

Big names chase playoff spots in Greensboro

Reuters
Greensboro, North Carolina

Justin Thomas, Irishman Shane Lowry, Australia's Adam Scott and other desperate golf dignitaries are making their last push toward the FedEx Cup playoffs when the Wyndham Championship tees off today in Greensboro, North Carolina.

The PGA Tour's regular-season finale at Sedgefield Country Club serves as the last opportunity to qualify for next week's FedEx St Jude Championship, the first of three legs of the playoffs.

Only the top 70 in FedEx Cup points will be in the field for the initial leg of the playoffs, which is pared down further before the annual Tour championship at East Lake Golf Club in Atlanta.

Thomas, a two-time winner of the PGA Championship, has been fighting through a slump all summer. He missed the cut in five of his last seven events and has just one top-10 finish since February. Thomas enters the Wyndham No. 79 in the FedEx Cup standings, and making the United States Ryder Cup team looks like a longshot.

"That is the reality of golf, like it's all on you," Thomas said yesterday. "You're not relying on any teammates to bail you out, to hinder you, it's all on you. There's just guys that have played better than me this season whether they're ranked first in the world or 101st in the world. But now I have an opportunity to play well this week, get into the playoffs and to go to three courses that I love." Thomas is far from alone in his last-minute quest to make the playoffs.

Lowry, the 2019 Open Championship winner, is 76th in the standings after a quiet season with just one top-10. Scott, another major champion, had a run of good results in May but has played just 16 PGA Tour events this season, leaving him No. 81 in points.

Scott and Matt Kuchar are the only two players who have qualified for every FedEx Cup Playoffs since its creation in 2007.

"I'm really thinking about winning the tournament, not just trying to squeak in next week," Scott said. "I probably have to have a pretty high result to get in anyway, so I may as well think about winning. That's what I would like to do the most this week."

The player currently "last man in" at No. 70 is Austin Eckroat. Other notable names fighting for their playoff lives include KH Lee of South Korea (No. 73), Matt Wallace of England (No. 80) and Joel Dahmen (No. 82).

Hideki Matsuyama of Japan is comfortably on the right side of the line at No. 56, but he'll tee it up in Greensboro aiming to improve that standing. This year, the playoff fields will be trimmed from 70 to 50 to the traditional 30 for the Tour Championship.

Past champions who are in the field include Jim Herman (2020), JT Poston (2019), Brandt Snedeker (2018, 2007) and Si Woo Kim of South Korea (2016).



A view of the Sedgefield Country Club which will host the Wyndham Championship starting today. *(@Sedgefield1926)*

FORMULA ONE: ALPINE FACING MORE UPHEAVAL A YEAR ON FROM PIASTRI SAGA

London: A year on from the summer shock of Fernando Alonso announcing his departure and Oscar Piastri ruling out replacing him, Renault-owned Alpine go into Formula One's August break in a state of upheaval again.

In the space of two weeks, an entire top tier has left the Enstone factory – chief executive Laurent Rossi, team principal Otmar Szafnauer, sporting director Alan Permane and chief technical officer Pat Fry.

On track they have slumped from fourth last season to a distant sixth and suffered more retirements than any team.

Interim principal Bruno Famin said the changes were made "in order to go faster in reaching the level of performance we are aiming for".

Szafnauer, who lasted only 18 months in the job, hinted at corporate impatience in saying his exit stemmed from disagreement over how quickly the team could become regular winners.



The departure of Permane, after 34 years of service at the Enstone factory, came as a particular shock inside the tightly-knit paddock.

It is no coincidence that dominant Red Bull have the longest-serving boss in the paddock while Toto Wolff, who led Mercedes to a record eight constructors' titles in a row, is second on the list.

"To win in Formula One you've got to have the right culture and that has to come from the top down," Red Bull principal Christian Horner told reporters.

It takes time for changes to take effect, with the culture at Enstone forged by the success of title-winning predecessors Renault, with Alonso, and Benetton with Michael Schumacher under the leadership of Flavio Briatore.

Briatore left in 2009 after one of the sport's biggest scandals involving a deliberate crash at the 2008 Singapore Grand Prix and the team went through tough times as Lotus before Renault returned in 2016 and then rebranded as Alpine.

Former boss Cyril Abiteboul was replaced by Rossi in 2021, when the team came up with a 100-race plan to return to the top that has also come under fire this week.

"Why not 120, why not 80? I don't understand it," Abiteboul told *France Info* this week.

"When you start putting forward a plan like that, you're sure to get it wrong because you don't know what others are doing in Formula One."

Four-times world champion Alain Prost, a special adviser until last year, was even more scathing in an interview with *L'Equipe* in which he spoke of incompetence and corporate interference.

"I love this team and seeing it in this state today saddens and distresses me," he said.

The Piastri saga was the talk of Formula One last August, with the Australian issuing a statement on social media that went viral after Alpine announced he would be racing for them. "I understand that, without my agreement, Alpine F1 have put out a press release late this afternoon that I am driving for them next year," he said. "This is wrong and I have not signed a contract with Alpine for 2023. I will not be driving for Alpine next year."

KING SALMAN CLUB CUP

Al Sadd enter quarter-finals after late strike from Otavio

The Wolves top Group 'B' with seven points from two wins and a draw

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Paulo Otavio's late strike helped Al Sadd to a 1-0 win over Al Ahli Tripoli and storm into the quarter-finals of the King Salman Club Cup 2023 yesterday.

In an absorbing clash at the Damac Stadium in Abha, Saudi Arabia, Al Sadd prevailed after dominating their final Group B match for the most part.

New signing Brazilian Otavio scored in the 89th minute off an Abdulwahab Waad assist after he was put through by Akram Afif.

In the other simultaneously played match of the group, Saudi Arabia's Al Hilal upstaged Wydad of Morocco 2-1 at the Prince Sultan bin Abdulaziz Sports City Stadium in Abha to also qualify for the knockout stage.

While Al Sadd topped the group with seven points from two wins and a draw, Al Hilal garnered four points from one win, a draw and a loss.

Al Sadd broke through late but had a few chances earlier where they lacked a good finish.

The goal was a fine display of Al Sadd's combination play in the match where they relied more on long range through passes keeping their Tripoli rivals pegged back in defence.

The opening half was an even keel tussle with either side pushing hard.


Al Sadd's Paulo Otavio (centre) celebrates with Baghdad Bounejah after scoring against Al Ahli Tripoli during the group stage match of the King Salman Club Cup at the Damac Stadium in Abha, Saudi Arabia, yesterday.

Al Sadd's mercurial striker Afif was also at the receiving end on a few occasions including one in the 29th minute and had to be attended to. Post break, in the 55th minute Al Sadd came close to scoring but Baghdad Bounejah's lethal header was flicked over the bar by a leaping Al Ahli Tripoli goalkeeper Mohamed Nashnoush.


Al Sadd's Akram Afif in action yesterday.

In the 64th minute, Afif put through a fine pass inside the D but a running in Pedro Miguel couldn't control and hit the ball wide.

In the 78th minute, Nashnoush again foiled an Al Sadd attempt deflecting a dangerous left-foot kick of Gonzalo Plata in front of the goal.

There was gripping action in the added injury time as Al Ahli Tripoli made frantic attempts. In 90+2 minute, Al Sadd goalkeeper Meshaal Barsham made a great save, leaping off a long range strike. Al Sadd and Al Hilal Saudi FC are the first two teams to make it to the knockout stage. A total of eight teams from four groups make the grade.

Al Sadd will meet the runner-up of Group A in the last eight clash at the Prince Sultan bin Abdulaziz Sports City Stadium in Abha on Saturday.

FOCUS

Italy legend Buffon hangs up his gloves

AFP
Milan

Gianluigi Buffon announced his retirement from football yesterday, bringing down the curtain on a glorious career as one of the world's greatest ever goalkeepers. "That's all folks! You gave me everything. I gave you everything. We did it together," he posted in English on social media.

Buffon, 45, hangs up his gloves after two final years at Parma, the club where it all began nearly three decades ago when Italian football was Europe's gold standard. He had a contract which ran until next summer with Parma but he will no longer be a part of the Serie B club's bid to return to the top flight after two years away.

Buffon is a symbol of a halcyon age when the best footballers went to play in Serie A and Italy developed dozens of world class players. The former Italy captain has a record 176 caps for his country while also holding the record for Serie A matches played – 657, stretching back to 1995.

After bursting onto the scene as a 17-year-old, keeping out the likes of George Weah and Roberto Baggio in his Parma debut against AC Milan, Buffon won 27 major trophies. The majority came over 19 seasons at Juventus, where he won 10 Serie A titles, five Italian Cups, while he also won the UEFA Cup in 1999 for Parma as part of possibly the best team in the club's history.

He also won Ligue 1 with Paris Saint-Germain in 2019 before returning to Juve, but he will be most fondly remembered for Italy's victory at the 2006 World Cup. Buffon was one of the stars as an Azzurri team battered by the 'Calciopoli' match-fixing scandal – which would cost him as Juve keeper two league titles – beat France on penalties after knocking out hosts Germany in the semi-finals.

That was the last hurrah for a generation which



had made Italy one of the world's dominant football nations, and as their fortunes slowly declined he suffered the ignominy of two straight group stage exits before bowing out not long after failure to qualify for the 2018 tournament. Buffon won his last trophy in his final season with Juve two years ago, lifting the Italian Cup alongside Federico Chiesa, 22 years after he triumphed with Parma alongside his teammate's father Enrico.

However Buffon's career has also been plagued by scandal, not least consistent rumours that is, or at least once was, a sympathiser of the far-right. He drew fierce criticism for choosing the number 88, a neo-Nazi code for 'Heil Hitler', on his jersey for the 2000-01 season. Two years before he wore a T-shirt with the neo-fascist slogan 'Boia chi molla', which loosely translated means death before surrender, under his kit for a match against Lazio, who have some of Europe's most hard-right supporters.

SPOTLIGHT

Jamaica, South Africa roar into women's World Cup last 16

AFP
Sydney

Jamaica dumped out Brazil and South Africa sent Italy home yesterday as the supposed minnows roared into the last 16 of an increasingly open Women's World Cup. The Reggae Girlz' coach Lorne Donaldson declared it "job done" after his dogged Jamaica side strangled the life out of eighth-ranked Brazil in Melbourne for a 0-0 draw.

It was the point Jamaica needed to progress into the knockout rounds for the first time in history and meant a crushing end to the World Cup career of Brazilian legend Marta. The 37-year-old, arguably the greatest player in the history of women's football, was as shell-shocked as she was upset afterwards. Brazil's meek group-phase exit at the hands of a team ranked 43 was their earliest departure from the tournament since being turfed out at the same stage in 1995. "It's hard to talk at a time like this. Not even in my worst nightmares was it the World Cup I dreamed of," said Marta, once nicknamed "Pele in a skirt" by the late football icon.

Jamaica finished second in Group F and will meet the team that comes top when Group H concludes today. That is currently Colombia. France topped Group F as Kadidiatou Diani hit a hat-trick in a 6-3 win over Panama and a possible meeting next with Germany. Marta Cox's wonder strike on 67 seconds had left the French reeling, swerving a free-kick into the corner from 30 yards for Panama's first-ever World Cup goal. She spun away in celebration and was mobbed by teammates as the tears flowed at a sold-out Sydney Football Stadium.

There were also tears – of joy and devastation – after 54th-ranked South Africa showed Jamaica the way in a wet Wellington. The African champions won a Women's World Cup match for the first time with a stunning 3-2 victory over 16th-ranked Italy in a thriller. Captain Thembi Kgatlana scored the winner in the 92nd minute to make history for South Africa and set up a meeting with the Netherlands – sending Italy home. Arianna Caruso scored twice for Italy and thought she had salvaged the draw they needed to go through with 16 minutes left, before Kgatlana's stunning late intervention. "Over the last two weeks, I've lost three family members. I could have gone home but I chose to stay with my girls," said Kgatlana, who plays for Racing Louisville in the United States. "Because that's how much it means."

Sweden topped Group G with the maximum nine points to set up a clash with holders the United States. It will be the teams' first meeting since Sweden beat the USA 3-0 at the Tokyo Olympics two years ago on their way to taking the silver medal. "We have played really good group-stage games, we have won all three of them, and we also beat them in the Olympics," said Sofia Jakobsson, who came into Sweden's line-up against Argentina and set up the opening goal in a 2-0 win.

The Americans came into the tournament in Australia and New Zealand as favourites to win an unprecedented third World Cup in a row. But they have looked nothing like the team that has for so long dominated women's international football and only scraped out of the group phase with a shaky 0-0 draw against debutants Portugal on Tuesday.

Group action concludes today with Colombia needing only a draw against Morocco to top Group H. Germany, stunned by Colombia and 18-year-old attacker Linda Caicedo in their previous match, are through with a win over a South Korea side who are more or less already out. Caicedo underwent X-rays after health scares at the tournament but is "100 percent" fit for the Morocco game, coach Nelson Abadia said. The teenage Real Madrid attacker, who was diagnosed with ovarian cancer at 15 but made a full recovery, has lit up the World Cup with goals in wins against South Korea and Germany. In the upset over two-time champions Germany Caicedo scored one of the goals of the tournament, days after going down in training clutching her chest. She also appeared to suffer breathing difficulties in that 2-1 win - which took Colombia to the brink of the last 16 – but carried on playing.


Jamaica's Deneisha Blackwood celebrates with teammates after Jamaica qualify for the knockout stages of the FIFA Women's World Cup in Melbourne yesterday. *(Reuters)*

BAYERN EDGE LIVERPOOL 4-3 IN PRE-SEASON FRIENDLY

A stunning stoppage-time strike by Frans Kratzig sealed victory for Bayern Munich in a pre-season friendly against Liverpool in Singapore yesterday as the German league champions came from behind twice to win 4-3.

The 20-year-old fired past Alisson as the game entered stoppage time to settle a thrilling encounter in front of a crowd of nearly 50,000 fans at the National Stadium.

A goal inside two minutes by Cody Gakpo and a header by Virgil van Dijk had put the English side two goals up in the opening half-hour but Bayern hit back through Serge Gnabry and Leroy Sane to level the score before half-time. Luis Diaz regained the lead for Liverpool midway through the second half before Josip Stanisic drew level at 3-3 in the 80th minute and Kratzig secured the win for Bayern at the death.

'Dembele poised to leave Barca after PSG offer'

Barcelona boss Xavi Hernandez confirmed yesterday that Ousmane Dembele is poised to leave the Spanish giants after receiving an offer from Paris Saint-Germain. Dembele, 26, was left on the bench on Tuesday as Barcelona wrapped up their North American pre-season tour with a 1-0 win over AC Milan in Las Vegas.

Afterward, Xavi said that French international Dembele – who scored in last weekend's victory over Real Madrid in Dallas – had been left out after informing Barcelona he wanted to leave.

"I will be very clear," Xavi said. "He has asked us that he wants to leave, he has been very direct, that he has a proposal from Paris Saint-Germain, that they have called him from there and here we cannot do anything. It is his personal decision.

"To me, it hurts me because I think we have taken great care of him here so that he is happy and content and continues to make a difference for us. But he says that he has this proposal and that he has decided to leave. That is why he has not played today."