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King leads West Indies to T20 series victory over India



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Sinner sets up Canadian Open final clash with De Minaur



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FOOTBALL

French star Mbappe reinstated by PSG but Neymar 'probably leaving'

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PREMIER LEAGUE

Chelsea fight back to draw 1-1 with Liverpool

Tottenham held by Brentford in first taste of life after Kane

AFP
London

Chelsea and Liverpool had to settle for a 1-1 draw to start their Premier League season yesterday as Tottenham also drew 2-2 at Brentford as they began life without Harry Kane.

After a week of battling to land the signing of Brighton midfielder Moises Caicedo for a Premier League record transfer fee, both Chelsea and Liverpool's need for the Ecuadorian was exposed in an explosive encounter.

Liverpool's bright start was rewarded when Luis Diaz prodded home the opening goal, but debutant Axel Disasi earned Chelsea boss Mauricio Pochettino a point on his first game in charge.

The American executives of both clubs were in attendance at Stamford Bridge ahead of an intense few days of negotiations after Liverpool had a £110 million offer accepted for Caicedo, only for the player to remain keen on a move to Chelsea instead.

After his defensive midfield options were gutted by the departures of Jordan Henderson and Fabinho to Saudi Arabia, Jurgen Klopp named an offensive front six with new signings Alexis Mac Allister and Dominik Szoboszlai alongside Cody Gakpo in midfield.

Liverpool settled the better and Mohamed Salah was inches away from opening the scoring when he rattled the crossbar on 12 minutes.

Salah was involved when the Reds did take the lead six minutes later with a brilliant cross that Diaz prodded home at the back post. The Egyptian's record of scoring on the opening weekend every year of his Liverpool career came to an end, but only due to a VAR review that ruled out a slick finish that would have made it 2-0.

However, the momentum of the game swung after Disasi bundled home Chelsea's equaliser.

Seconds later Ben Chilwell thought he had turned the game on its head, only for VAR to this time ride to Liverpool's rescue for offside. Chances continued to come and go at both ends, but a seventh consecutive clash between the sides ended in a draw.

Tottenham boss Ange Postecoglou said his side had shown there is life after Kane despite failing to get the Australian's reign off to a winning start. Spurs settled the better despite a disruptive weekend dominated by the club's record goalscorer departing for Bayern Munich on Saturday.



Chelsea's French defender Axel Disasi (third from left)) celebrates after scoring the equalising goal during the English Premier League match against Liverpool at Stamford Bridge in London yesterday. *(AFP)*

Cristian Romero headed Spurs ahead on 11 minutes from James Maddison's wicked delivery.

Brentford were also without their talismanic number nine as Ivan Toney began an eight-month ban for breaking betting on football rules. Bryan Mbeumo took over penalty duties in his absence to slot home the equaliser after a VAR review spotted a trip by Son Heung-min on Mathias Jensen inside the box. Tottenham's debutant goalkeeper Guglielmo Vicario was beaten again moments later as Yoane Wissa's shot deflected in off another Spurs new boy Micky van de Ven.

Emerson Royal was the unlikely scorer of Tottenham's equaliser four minutes into 10 added at the end of the first half when he blasted home a loose ball from outside the box.

Yet, Brentford should still have gone in ahead at the break as Mbeumo somehow turned Rico Henry's inviting cross over from point-blank range.

Tottenham dominated the second half in terms of possession but struggled to make it count as they already felt the absence of Kane.

But Postecoglou remained positive that Spurs sent their supporters home still with some hope for the season ahead.

"Harry Kane was massive figure for this club for a long time and will continue to be whether he is in the building or not," said the former Celtic manager.

"We wanted to go out and give our supporters some hope and belief in the team. I thought they did that today."



Tottenham Hotspur's Brazilian defender Emerson Royal celebrates after scoring their second goal during the Premier League match against Brentford in London yesterday. *(AFP)*

AFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE PRELIMINARY/PLAYOFF STAGES

Al Arabi, Al Wakrah begin campaign on Aug 22



Al Arabi players during a training session yesterday.

Agencies
Kuala Lumpur

Qatar clubs - Al Arabi and Al Wakrah will begin their journey in the West Zone Preliminary Round and Playoff stages to reserve a place in the group stage of the 2023-2024 AFC Champions League on August 22.

Al Arabi, returning to the continental competition after a long absence, will face the winner of the AGMK from Uzbekistan with Oman's Al Seeb (2022 AFC Cup champion) at the Al Thumama Stadium in Doha at 8.30pm.

Al Wakrah, twice former Qatar Stars League champions, will face Uzbekistan Super League runners-up Navbahor on August 22 at the Al Janoub Stadium in Al Wakrah, with kick-off at 6.30pm, for a coveted place in the AFC Champions League Group Stage. The race to book a place in the Group Stage of the AFC Champions League 2023/24 will kick off on August 15 when 21 teams from the East and West Zones of the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) begin their Preliminary and Playoff Stage journeys.

In the West Zone, the Preliminary Stage will ensue on August 15 when eight-time UAE Pro League champions Shabab Al Ahli cross paths with Jordanian heavyweights Al Wehdat at 7.35pm at the Rashid Stadium in Dubai; awaiting the winner of the enticing clash will be Saudi Arabia's Al Nassr in the Playoff Stage on August 22 at 8.20pm at the Alawwal Park in Riyadh.

The other two Preliminary Stage matches also kick off on August 15. First, Sharjah FC from the United Arab Emirates will lock horns with Bangladesh's Bashundhara Kings at 7.35pm at the Sharjah Stadium, with the victorious side pitted against the Islamic Republic of Iran's Tractor FC in the Playoff Stage at 7.30pm at the Yadegar Imam Stadium in Tabriz on August 22.

The 2023/24 edition of the AFC Champions League will mark the first instance of Asia's premier club competition shifting from its erstwhile Spring-Autumn calendar to that of an Autumn-Spring season.

In the East Zone, action in the Preliminary Stage will commence when Hong Kong Rangers take on Vietnamese giants Haiphong FC on August 15 at 7.30pm at the Mongkok Stadium, whose winners will face off against Incheon United FC from the Korea Republic in the Playoff Stage on August 22 at 7.30pm at the Incheon Football Stadium.

Meanwhile, Lee Man, also from Hong Kong, China, will open their Preliminary Stage campaign at 8pm at the Hong Kong Stadium against Indonesia's Bali United FC, the victors of which will square off against defending champions Urawa Red Diamonds from Japan in the Playoff Stage, which is scheduled to take place on August 22 as well, for a spot in the Group Stage. This will kick off at 7.30pm at the Saitama Stadium 2002 in Tokyo.

Also taking place on August 22 are the remaining two matches in the Playoff Stage in this Zone which will see China PR's Zhejiang FC and Shanghai Port FC battle Thailand's Port FC and BG Pathum United, respectively. The matches begin at 7.30pm at the Huzhou Olympic Sports Center and Shanghai's SAIC Motor Pudong Arena respectively.

The draw for the AFC Champions League 2023/24 Group Stage takes place on August 24, 2023.

SPORT

BOXING

Joshua beats Helenius in 7th round KO

Reuters
London

Former heavyweight world champion Anthony Joshua beat Finnish stand-in Robert Helenius with a seventh round single-punch knockout on Saturday to keep himself on track for a lucrative payday against American Deontay Wilder next year.

Helenius, stepping in after Britain's Dillian Whyte was ruled out of the non-title fight by a dope test a week ago, lasted longer than expected but crashed to the canvas one minute and 27 seconds into the round.

Some of the crowd at London's O2, who had grown restless with some booing already in the third round, were heading for the exit by then as Joshua failed to deliver immediate fireworks.

The big Briton looked nervous and stiff at the start and strangely tentative when Helenius, who fought in Finland only a week ago, appeared to be out on his legs and ready for the taking.

Joshua climbed straight out of the ring without saying a word after referee Victor Loughlin stopped the contest.

He then fist-bumped fans, stopping to share a swig of a drink with watching former UFC champion Conor McGregor, before stepping back inside the ropes.

Helenius meanwhile received medical attention and some oxygen before getting back on his feet.

"I knew this would happen, everyone's talking about the new AJ and the old AJ and after two or three rounds the crowd starts to get a little bit impatient," Joshua's promoter Eddie Hearn told the *BBC*.

"He finds the measure of his right hand and he delivers one of the knockouts of the year on Robert Helenius... this is just the AJ you're going to see now.

"He's still got to be more aggressive than we saw tonight but there's a lot on the line." The knockout was the 23rd of Joshua's career, taking his record to 26 wins and three defeats, but his first since December 2020 when he beat Bulgarian Kubrat Pulev in a WBA, IBO, IBF and WBO title defence in London.

Joshua lost those belts to Ukraine's Oleksandr Usyk in September 2021.

There has been talk of Joshua fighting Wilder, the former WBC champion, next year but the Briton needs to keep winning to be talked about in the same breath as the American and reigning champion Tyson Fury.

"It's hard for him to get up for fights like this," said Hearn. "The Wilder fights, the Fury fights, that's what he wants."



Antonhy Joshua knocks out Robert Helenius during their fight at O2 Arena, London, Britain, yesterday. This was Joshua's 23rd win of his career. *(Reuters)*

CRICKET

Majestic King leads West Indies to T20 series win

'IT'S A VERY BIG SERIES FOR US TO BEAT INDIA AT HOME'

AFP
Lauderhill, US

Brandon King's superb unbeaten 85 led West Indies to an eight-wicket win over India yesterday to secure a 3-2 victory in their T20 series.

Set a target of 166 to win the fifth and deciding contest, in Lauderhill, Florida, West Indies reached their target with two overs to spare with Nicholas Pooran scoring 47 in a partnership of 107 with King.

The win was a morale-booster for West Indies cricket after the one-day team failed, last month, to qualify for the World Cup for the first time in their history.

King's highest T20 international score came from 55 balls with six sixes and five fours and he kept his focus despite a delay to the game following a lightning warning.

Shai Hope, who steadied the ship after Pooran was removed by Tilak Varma, with the spinners second ever ball in international cricket, clinched the victory with a straight six off Yashasvi Jaiswal.

Star batter Suryakumar Yadav struck 61 as India made 165 for nine while Romario Shepherd took 4-31 in his four overs as West Indies' bowling attack delivered a much better performance than in their emphatic defeat on Saturday which left the five-match series at 2-2.

West Indies made two changes with off-spinner Roston Chase and pace bowler Alzarri Joseph coming in for Odean Smith and Obed McCoy and there was a better balance and performance from that line-up.

Opening pair Jaiswal and Shubman Gill, who put on a match-winning 165 run partnership on Saturday, were both dismissed cheaply by left-arm spinner Akeal Hosein.

Tilak Varma looked dangerous before he went for 27 off 18, caught and bowled by Chase but Yadav's innings kept India's hopes alive.

Medium pacer Shepherd took care of the lower middle order as West Indies were set a target of 166 to win the series.

West Indies had led the series 2-0 before India fought back to set up yesterday's clincher.



Brandon King of West Indies hits a shot during the fifth and final T20I match against India at the Central Broward Regional Park in Lauderhill, Florida, yesterday. *(AFP)*

Rovman Powell, the West Indies skipper, said yesterday: "It's difficult to put words to (describe the feeling). Adjectives are inadequate for our feelings. It's a big series. It's a very big series for us to beat India at home with everything going on. Last night after we got defeated badly we sat down and talked. We are not just playing to put smiles on our faces but for the people."

He added: "A lot of credit to the coaching staff and also the chairman. Yesterday we could have easily panicked but they sat me down and we talked about where we could go. I am big on individual performances and when individuals do well it helps the teams. Pooran is a big performer. We asked him to stand up for three out of fives games. Credit has to be given to the bowling unit as well for trying to control such a powerful Indian team."

BRIEF SCORES
India 165 for 9 in 20 overs (Suryakumar Yadav 61, Tilak Varma 27; Akeal Hosein 2-24, Jason Holder 2-36) **lost to West Indies 171 for 2 in 18 overs** (Brandon King 85 not out, Nicholas Pooran 47, Shai Hope 22 out out; Arshdeep Singh 1-20) **by 8 wickets**
Series: West Indies won 3-2

Wade and Nowitzki among those inducted to Hall of Fame

Springfield: After going head-to-head in the NBA Finals in 2006 and 2011, Dwyane Wade and Dirk Nowitzki found themselves on the same side for once on Saturday night.

Wade and Nowitzki were among those enshrined in the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame in Springfield, Massachusetts, part of a loaded 2023 class that featured a total of 12 new inductees.

Wade led the Heat to a title in 2006, being named Finals MVP after averaging 34.7 points, 7.8 rebounds and 3.8 assists as Miami toppled the Mavericks in six games.

Dallas got its revenge five years later, though, beating the Heat in six games for its only championship in franchise history. This time it was Nowitzki's turn to secure Finals MVP honours, as he went for 26.0 points, 9.7 rebounds and 2.0 assists per game.

Twelve years removed from their latest clash on the NBA's biggest stage, the two have gotten to know each other as people as opposed to competitors.

"For Dirk and me, it's been therapy," Wade said about his post-career journey with Nowitzki and some of the other inductees. "Who would have thought that we would be on the same team after all of our battles, but here we are, and it's one of the greatest teams I've ever been on."

Wade, 41, went on to win two more titles by the time his 16-year NBA career was all said and done. He was a 13-time All-Star and posted career averages of 22.0 points, 4.7 rebounds and 5.4 assists, spending most of his time with Miami, where he spent 15 seasons.

After coming up short in the Finals in 2006, Nowitzki, 45, was named league MVP following the 2006-07 campaign. A 14-time All-Star, Nowitzki was a beacon of loyalty for over two decades, spending his entire 21-year career with the Mavericks. He averaged 20.7 points, 7.5 rebounds and 2.4 assists across 1,522 games (1,460 starts).

If Wade and Nowitzki weren't battling each other, they were often trying to fend off the Spurs. San Antonio was well-represented on Saturday night, as guard Tony Parker and long-time coach Gregg Popovich were also part of the Class of 2023.

Parker, 41, won four titles during his 17 seasons with the Spurs. Popovich, 74, was at the helm for all four of those championships, plus a fifth in 1999. Next season will be his 29th as San Antonio's coach, and he heads into it with 1,366 regular-season wins along with 170 in the playoffs.

One of Popovich's disciples, Becky Hammon, was also inducted to the Hall of Fame on Saturday. Following a successful playing career in the WNBA and overseas, the 46-year-old Hammon worked as an assistant on the Spurs' staff from 2014-22. She is now head coach of the Las Vegas Aces, who currently own the best record in the WNBA at 26-3.

Longtime Los Angeles Lakers center Pau Gasol also made his way into the Hall of Fame. Gasol, 43, was a two-time NBA champion, six-time All-Star, four-time All-NBA selection and was the 2002 Rookie of the Year.



2023 inductees Dirk Nowitzki and Dwyane Wade react on stage during the 2023 Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame Induction at Symphony Hall in Springfield, Massachusetts. *(AFP)*

CYCLING

Belgium's Kopecky wins women's road race with stunning late attack



Belgium's Lotte Kopecky (centre) celebrates with teammates after winning gold in the women's elite road race during the UCI Cycling World Championships in Glasgow, Scotland, yesterday. *(AFP)*

Reuters
Glasgow

Belgium's Lotte Kopecky crowned a magnificent UCI World Championships with a blistering late attack to win the women's elite road race on the streets of Glasgow yesterday.

Kopecky, who won two golds on the track during the championships, burst from a small group of leaders on the final lap of the city circuit and powered to victory.

Denmark's Cecilie Uttrup Ludwig initially managed to go with Kopecky but she could not cope with the Belgian's speed.

Kopecky cruised over the line at the end of the 150km trek, celebrating her first world road title.

Dutchwoman Demi Vollering, who won the recent Tour de France Femmes, pipped Uttrup Ludwig to the line to take silver.

Kopecky's hat-trick of golds from the Glasgow world championships included her titles in the elimination and points races at the Chris Hoy Velodrome where she also won a bronze medal in the omnium.

The final action from the 11 day championships that included virtually every cycling discipline and 46 world titles up for grabs, proved a fitting climax to a two-wheeled festival with thousands lining the streets of Glasgow.

Beginning near Loch Lomond, the race was always likely to really ignite once the riders arrived for the six 14.3km circuits of the city alongside the River Clyde.

Swiss rider Elise Chabbey was the first to show her hand with an attack that caught out the bunch and she extended her advantage to more than a minute as the laps ticked down.

Kopecky was frustrated at times at being forced to lead the chasers, gesticulating at one point and slamming on her brakes.

But they gradually reeled in Chabbey and at the start of the final lap her time at the front was over.

Britain's Lizzie Deignan, world champion eight years ago, hit the front with Christina Schweinberger but that was shortlived as Uttrup Ludwig and Kopecky with Vollering also in the mix despite shaking off her leg with cramp.

Kopecky's next attack proved decisive as she went clear with six kilometres remaining.

It seemed audacious but there was no stopping her as she crested the last climb and soloed to victory.

"An amazing year and a hard year," an emotional Kopecky told Eurosport. "I don't know what makes me keep me pushing, I don't know what I was thinking, but this is a dream that came true.

"To win three gold medals here is too crazy for words."

Kopecky's win followed compatriot Remco Evenepoel's gold medal in the men's road individual pursuit.

The final day's other action took place on the BMX racing circuit where Britain's Olympic champion Bethany Shriever took gold ahead of Laura Smulders of the Netherlands.

The men's podium was filled with French riders as Mahieu Romain won gold ahead of Arthur Pilard and Joris Daudet.

TENNIS

Sinner beats Paul to set up final clash with De Minaur

Italian wins slugfest that was a showcase of power from both sides

Reuters
Toronto

Italian seventh seed Jannik Sinner beat Tommy Paul 6-4 6-4 on Saturday to set up a Canadian Open final clash with Australia's Alex De Minaur, who was a 6-1 6-3 winner over Spain's Alejandro Davidovich Fokina.

Sinner outlasted Paul in a slugfest that was a showcase of power from both sides and at one point saw the duo engage in a 46-shot rally that marked the longest of the week in Toronto.

"It was a fight obviously," said Sinner, who saved eight of 11 break points in the win. "He was playing great as I do and at the end, you know match point, when I got there I was praying please. But thank God I won in two (sets)."

Sinner and Paul twice exchanged breaks in the opening set but it was the Italian who held serve when it mattered most as he took a 5-4 lead before clinching the set with another break.

Sinner led 2-1 in the second set when Paul called for the tour physio who worked on his right hip while he lay sprawled on his left side in discomfort.

Paul was unable to hold serve in the next game, handing over the break with a double fault, before a determined Sinner went on to consolidate for a commanding 4-1 lead. From there, the Italian continued to display great length and pace on his ground strokes and turned aside three break points, including one during a 46-shot rally, for a 5-2 lead that sent him on his way.

"I tried so hard to win that point," Sinner said. "Just tried to play one more ball in the court than him and that was I guess the solution."



Jannik Sinner of Italy serves against Tommy Paul of the US in semi-final play at Sobeys Stadium in Toronto. Sinner won 6-4, 6-4. *(USA TODAY Sports)*

De Minaur overcame blustery conditions to secure a breakthrough victory over Davidovich Fokina and reach the first Masters 1000 final of his career.

De Minaur, who was fresh off an upset over second seed Daniil Medvedev, delivered a simple gameplan in rather tricky conditions, while Davidovich Fokina struggled to find any sort of rhythm throughout the 78-minute match.

"First thing I knew once I stepped out on court it wasn't going to be pretty, so I didn't expect perfect tennis from my side of the court today," said De Minaur, who wrote "so windy" on an on-court camera lens after the match.

"I just told myself to stay positive, keep competing no matter what and you never know what's going to happen.

"So I thought I had a great mindset today ... Didn't play the best of tennis, but I did what needed to be done today in these conditions."

De Minaur wasted no time setting the tone against Davidovich Fokina as he broke the Spaniard twice en route to a 5-1 lead before serving out the opening set on his first opportunity.

The 24-year-old Australian maintained the pressure as he broke Davidovich Fokina four times to build a 5-2 lead in the second before sealing the match with his seventh break.

"I've had a hell of a week," De Minaur said.

"It's been the breakthrough that I always knew I had inside of me so it's great to show it and play for a final," he added.

SPOTLIGHT

Pegula edges past Swiatek to reach final in Montreal

Reuters
Montreal

Jessica Pegula beat world number one Iga Swiatek 6-2 6-7(4) 6-4 on Saturday to reach the Canadian Open final in Montreal, where ongoing rain delayed the start of the other semi-final between Elena Rybakina and Liudmila Samsonova.

American world number three Pegula, playing in her third consecutive Canadian Open semi-final, broke Swiatek's serve 11 times and managed her way through the big moments of the match better than the four-times Grand Slam winner.

"She always makes it tough but of course it's incredibly rewarding to beat the number one player in the world and I am sure that will give me a lot of confidence going into tomorrow and the next couple weeks," Pegula said securing a spot in her first Canadian Open final.

Neither player was able to defend their serve until Pegula held to love for a 4-2 lead and the American followed that by going up a double break before producing a pair of aces to close out the first set on her next service game.

Swiatek looked to have settled into a groove as she opened the second set with her first service hold of the day followed by a pair of breaks for a 3-1 lead.

Pegula, however, clawed back and opened up a 5-4 lead after breaking Swiatek for the eighth time but was unable to serve out the match as the Pole levelled the frame before going on to force the decider.

Swiatek won the first eight points of the third set to build a 2-0 lead but Pegula kept cool and twice came back from a break down en route to securing one of the biggest wins of her career.

Rybakina reached the semis with a win over Daria Kasatkina in a match that lasted nearly three and a half hours and ended just before 3 a.m. on Saturday.

Samsonova booked her place in the final four with a win over Belinda Bencic during Friday's night session after beating Aryna Sabalenka in the day session.

Samsonova has won both her previous meetings with Rybakina, including a first-round clash in Montreal two years ago.



Jessica Pegula of the US returns the ball against Iga Swiatek of Poland during semi-final play at IGA Stadium. *(USA TODAY Sports)*

Cincinnati draw breakdown: Wozniacki to face Svitolina in first round

The stage is set for the second straight WTA 1000 hardcourt event of the summer, as the main draw for the Western & Southern Open in Cincinnati, Ohio, was released yesterday evening. Main-draw play begins today (August 14).

An enticing first-round clash was set when Caroline Wozniacki and Elina Svitolina, both making comebacks in 2023 after maternity leave, were drawn against each other in the opening round.

The Top 8 seeds all have first-round byes in the 56-player draw.

World No 1 Iga Swiatek tops the draw, and she could possibly have a quick rematch with Danielle Collins in the second round, if Collins can get past Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova in the first round.

Seven-time Grand Slam champion Venus Williams is in the same section, where she will meet No 16 seed Veronika Kudermetova in the first round.

Also in the first quarter is defending champion Caroline Garcia. No 6 Garcia's title defence will start against either 2017 US Open champion Sloane Stephens or Elisabetta Cocciaretto in the second round, and she could meet No 10 Marketa Vondrousova, the Wimbledon champion, in the third round.

No 4 seed Elena Rybakina heads up the second quarter, where she will face either Jelena Ostapenko or Karolina Pliskova in the second round. Rybakina could potentially meet No 13 seed Belinda Bencic in the Round of 16.

beIN's al-Raisi recognised in the 'Leaders Under 40 Class of 2023'



Doha: beIN MEDIA GROUP's ('beIN') **Faisal al-Raisi**, Director of Digital for the Mena region, has been named in the list of 'Leaders Under 40 Class of 2023' by the Leaders Sports Awards.

The 'Leaders Under 40' celebrate outstanding professionals globally who have displayed exemplary skills and vision in their respective fields, leaving a significant impact on the industry. The highly competitive category received hundreds of nominations and came with an extensive judging process, which serves as a testament to al-Raisi's exceptional leadership, innovation, and influential contributions to the industry.

Al-Raisi joined beIN in 2013 and under his leadership, beIN's digital offering has grown exponentially. Al Raisi leads a team of 33 digital experts and is responsible for the extensive digital broadcast and publishing strategy of beIN productions, which encompasses a total of 32 sport and 11 entertainment channels.

He has been instrumental in beIN's digital transformation journey that has included the introduction of online services and sales channels, on top of the fact that beIN SPORTS is now one of the most-followed brands in the Mena region with 70mn followers across the company's social media channels.

Commenting on his recognition, al-Raisi said: "It is an immense honour to be recognised among such a talented group of young leaders. I am grateful for the unwavering support of my exceptional team and beIN's management, which has facilitated a platform for innovation and growth. This recognition is a testament to our shared commitment to providing our followers and subscribers with an unmatched digital media experience."

One of al-Raisi's largest undertakings was strategising coverage of the highly anticipated FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 – a tournament that further showcased beIN SPORTS' ability to deliver world-class content to the region. Throughout the 28 days of the world's biggest football event last year, beIN's social media channels recorded 5.5bn impressions, 1.1bn video views, 400m million engagements, 33m watched hours and thousands of videos and articles were posted. Moreover, al-Raisi oversaw the launch of the region's first 4K OTT channel to ensure all 64 matches were streamed in the highest possible quality. The "Leaders Under 40 Class of 2023" will be recognised at the Leaders in Sports Awards ceremony set to be held at the iconic Natural History Museum in London this October.

GOLF

American Lilia Vu wins second major at the Women's British Open



US golfer Lilia Vu celebrates winning the 2023 Women's British Open at Walton Heath Golf Club in Walton-on-the-Hill, south-west of London, yesterday. *(@AIGWomensOpen)*

AFP
Walton-on-the-Hill, UK

American Lilia Vu sealed her second major title of the year with a dominant six-shot victory over Charley Hull at the Women's British Open yesterday.

The 25-year-old, who lifted her maiden major trophy at the Chevron Championship in April, started the day tied with England's Hull but pulled away with a five-under-par final round of 67.

Vu produced a masterclass yesterday, finishing with a birdie.

Even a demonstration by climate activists Just Stop Oil at the short 17th - powder was thrown onto the green - could not spoil Vu's march to victory and on her way to the world. No.1 ranking.

Vu started the final day tied with home favourite Hull and made the perfect start with a ten foot birdie putt at the first.

By the time she had added more birdies at the fourth and tenth her lead had been extended to a comfortable five shots.

Hull, who dropped shots at three and four, raised hopes of mounting a comeback when she holed out of a bunker for an eagle three at the 11th. But Vu immediately hit back with an unanswered tap-in birdie at the 12th.

The 25-year-old Californian made her only bogey after driving into heather at the 15th, but Hull also dropped a shot and it was all but over.

Vu has not had an easy road to the top.

She turned professional in 2019 but made only one cut in nine starts on her first season on the LPGA Tour, She then stepped back to the Epson Tour and won three events in 2021 to regain her LPGA card.

She finally made her LPGA winning debut at a tournament in Thailand at the start of this year before making her major breakthrough at the Chevron Championship in April.

She won the Chevron via a playoff - major number two was more straightforward.

Hull, who also finished tied second in the US Women's Open last month, again had to settle again for the runner-up spot after a 73, while Korea's Jiyai Shin, the two-time former champion, closed with a 70 for third place on seven under

England's Charlotte Heath won the Smyth Salver for the leading amateur. She closed with a 76 for seven over par.

Ames takes lead at Boeing Classic

Snoqualmie, Washington: Canadian Stephen Ames carded a 5-under-par 67 to jump into the lead after two rounds at the Boeing Classic in Snoqualmie, Washington.

Ames sits at 10-under 134, one stroke ahead of New Zealand's Steven Alker and Miguel Angel Jimenez of Spain. Alker posted a second-round 66, while Jimenez had a 67.

After sinking birdies on three of the first five holes, Ames had his first and only blemish of the day at the par-4 seventh, where he settled for bogey. But he followed with another birdie at the par-5 eighth before adding two more by the end of his round to take the lead. "There are times, especially on this golf course, you tend to get a couple bounces that land by the flag and the first bounce is over," Ames said.

First-round co-leader Kevin Sutherland shot a 2-under 70 to drop into a tie for fourth with Tim O'Neal, whose 66 included seven birdies against one bogey. Tim Herron owns sole possession of sixth thanks to his 68.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Mancini in shock resignation as Italy coach

AFP
Rome

Roberto Mancini announced his shock resignation as coach of European champions Italy yesterday less than a month before Euro 2024 qualifying resumes, having failed to qualify for last year's World Cup.

The Italian Football Federation (FIGC) said in a statement it had "received late yesterday evening" Mancini's surprise decision to step down after five years in charge.

"Because of important and close commitments for the team with Euro 2024 qualifiers against North Macedonia and Ukraine, the FIGC will announce the name of the new national coach in the next few days," the federation added.

"Thus concludes a significant page in the history of the Azzurri," the FIGC added, recalling a memorable "Euro 2020 triumph in which a group of individuals became a team."

Italy was Mancini's first international coaching job when he was appointed in May 2018 after the four-time world champions' failure to qualify for the 2018 World Cup.

A former international, Mancini won Euro 2020 with Italy but the country again missed out on a place at the 2022 World Cup in Qatar.

Mancini's resignation comes as a major shock with no warning signs.

Earlier this month the 58-year-old had also been handed responsibility for the country's Under-21 and Under-20 teams.

His departure comes following recent appointments to the national coaching setup including former Italy defender Andrea Barzagli and goalkeeping great Gianluigi Buffon.

The Italian press has speculated that Luciano Spalletti could be lined up as his successor after ending Napoli's 33-year wait for the Serie A title last season, before leaving his post.

Former Italy coach Antonio Conte, sacked in March by Premier League club Tottenham Hotspur, and ex-world champion Fabio Cannavaro, who has coached in China and Saudi Arabia, have also been suggested.

A former Manchester City and Inter Milan manager Mancini had won 13 trophies in club football before taking charge of Italy.

He led Manchester City to their first English league title in 44 years in 2012, and won three Serie A crowns with Inter. He also won the Italian Cup with Inter, Fiorentina and Lazio.

WEMBLEY HEROICS

Despite the high point of leading Italy to a second European title, 53 years after the first, with a dramatic penalty shootout over England at Wembley, Mancini's reign was marked by equally resounding failure.

The European champions were not in Qatar for the World Cup after a disastrous qualifying campaign, drawing four of eight games before losing at home to North Macedonia in the play-offs.

His record with Italy was 37 wins, 15 draws and nine defeats, and a third place finish at the Nations League Finals in June.

The World Cup failure was followed by a mixed start to the Euro 2024 campaign.

Italy are third in Group C with three points after a 2-0 win over Malta and a 2-1 loss to England, who are top with 12 points from four games.

It is up to Mancini's successor, who will only have a few days to prepare for the matches in early September, to put Italy back on track.

They play in North Macedonia on September 9 and Ukraine at home three days later.



FOCUS

Mbappe reinstated by PSG but Neymar 'probably leaving'

'After very constructive and positive discussions the player was reinstated'

AFP
Paris

French superstar **Kylian Mbappe** was reinstated in Paris Saint-Germain's first team yesterday just as Neymar was said to be negotiating a move to join the cash-rich Saudi league.

It has been a rocky build-up to the new Ligue 1 season for champions PSG with both Mbappe and Neymar left out of new coach Luis Enrique's team for Saturday's underwhelming opening goalless draw against Lorient.

After being sidelined for several weeks amid an ongoing contract dispute Mbappe watched from the Parc des Princes stands.

But the club's prize asset is now back in the fold, for the time being at least.

"After very constructive and positive discussions between Paris Saint-Germain and Kylian Mbappe before the PSG-Lorient match, the player was reinstated in first team training this morning," PSG said in a statement.

Brazilian star Neymar was in contrast conspicuous by his absence on Saturday, the official line being he was suffering from a "viral syndrome".

A source told AFP yesterday that the 31-year-old Brazilian forward "no longer figures in the club or manager's plans".

Neymar, who joined PSG for a record 220mn euros ($241m) from Barcelona in 2017, is "probably leaving", the same source added.

Neymar was said to be in talks with a club from the Saudi Pro League. French sports daily *L'Equipe* reported that Al Hilal is the club that has tabled the offer.



Last month Al Hilal made a 300mn-euro ($328mn) bid for Mbappe, though the striker reportedly refused to meet with officials from the team.

Neymar underwent surgery on his right ankle in early March, only returning to join PSG on their pre-season tour of Asia.

His time at PSG has been blighted by a catalogue of injuries.

Although he helped the club to the 2020 Champions League final he has often been sidelined for key games.

If Neymar does end up moving to Saudi Arabia he will join a growing list of top players lured to the oil-rich kingdom since Cristiano Ronaldo moved to Al Nassr in January.

After a summer of flux at the Parc des Princes filled with new arrivals, doubts over Neymar's future and Lionel Messi's departure, it is the Mbappe stand-off that dominates the headlines.

The France captain has refused to sign an extension to his PSG deal, meaning he can leave for free next year, with Real Madrid long seen as his preferred destination.

Qatari-owned PSG want to sell him now and bring in a significant transfer fee for a player who cost 180mn euros ($198mn) from Monaco in 2017.

"The position is very clear. If Kylian wants to stay, he must sign a new contract. We can't let the best player in the world today leave for free. It's impossible," PSG president Nasser al-Khelaifi said last month.

Mbappe had not been allowed train with the first team and played only one of PSG's five warm-up games and was not invited to the pre-season tour in Japan and South Korea.

He sat alongside fellow 2018 World Cup winner Ousmane Dembele, who completed his transfer from Barcelona earlier Saturday, as Luis Enrique handed debuts to six players against Lorient.

Meanwhile Last year's runners-up Lens blew a two-goal lead to lose their opener 3-2 at Brest yesterday. In spite of losing their influential captain Seko Fofana and striker Lois Openda during the summer break, Lens made a dazzling start to the new season with Florian Sotoca and Deiver Machado putting them two up after just 22 minutes.

Brest, however, hit back just before half-time when Romain del Castillo netted the first of his two penalties. Brest took the reins in the second half and equalised through Kenny Lala in the 56th minute.

The game appeared to be heading for a draw before Lens substitute Adrien Thomasson was sent off in the 82nd minute and five minutes later Mahdi Camara gave away another penalty.

Up stepped Del Castillo to bury his second spot-kick and snatch the points for Brest.

SPOTLIGHT

Kane's thirst for trophies behind Bayern move

AFP
Munich, Germany

Harry Kane said yesterday his desire to end a personal quest for silverware was behind the decision to join German giants Bayern Munich from Tottenham.

Kane left Spurs in a deal worth an initial 100mn euros ($110mn, £86mn) on Saturday after spending his whole career with his boyhood club.

The 30-year-old leaves as Tottenham's record goalscorer with 280 goals and is also England's all-time top scorer at international level. However, he is yet to win a single trophy for club or country.

Tottenham's eighth-placed finish in the Premier League last season meant Kane was also facing a season without European football had he stayed in north London.

"I think I've always said in my career I've wanted to keep improving, keep pushing myself to you know my limits and see how far that can take me," said Kane at a press conference at Bayern's Allianz Arena.

"Ultimately I wanted to be playing at the highest level, I wanted to be playing in the Champions league, I wanted to be fighting for titles every year.

"So to come to Bayern Munich, one of the biggest clubs in the world, goes with that opportunity so I'm looking forward to that challenge."

Bayern have won the Bundesliga for the past 11 years. But they were seeking a world class striker to compete once more for Champions League glory.

And Kane is eyeing a dream return to England for next season's Champions League final at Wembley.

"Joining this club was to try and win the Champions league," added Kane. "The prospect of trying to win it at Wembley would be amazing for me personally of course.

"I'm not going to lie, so we'll have to see how the season goes first and hopefully we can we can manage to achieve that."

Previous attempts at trying to lure him away from Tottenham have been rebuffed by the club's chairman, Daniel Levy, who is a notoriously tough negotiator in transfer deals.

However, Levy's hand was weakened by the fact that Kane had only one year left on his contract, meaning he could have left next year on a free transfer.

"This is kind of my first real of my first transfer that I've been involved in so yeah it was an up and down experience for sure," said Kane on the weeks of negotiations between the clubs.

"But I'm happy to be here now. I said yesterday and on my social media posting I wish Tottenham all the best, I wish Daniel Levy all the best but my focus is here now and trying to help this team."

Kane's Bayern career got off to an inauspicious start as he was a second-half substitute in a 3-0 German Super Cup defeat to Leipzig on Saturday.



Bayern Munich's CEO Jan-Christian Dreesen (right) and Bayern Munich's English forward Harry Kane pose with Kane's new jersey during a press conference in Munich yesterday. *(AFP)*

LA LIGA

Bellingham strikes on debut as Real Madrid beat Athletic Bilbao

AFP
Bilbao, Spain

Jude Bellingham scored on his triumphant Real Madrid debut in a 2-0 win at Athletic Bilbao yesterday in their opening La Liga match.

Despite concerns at both ends of the pitch, Carlo Ancelotti's side earned a convincing victory at the San Mames to kick off their title bid, with Rodrygo Goes opening the scoring.

Madrid, who lost Ballon d'Or holder Karim Benzema to big-money Saudi football in the summer, are still heavily linked to Paris Saint-Germain forward Kylian Mbappe as a replacement, as the transfer saga drags on. Brazilian duo Vinicius Junior and Rodrygo worked well as a strike duo, with Bellingham in the No 10 role at the tip of a diamond midfield offering ample support.

Los Blancos goalkeeper Andriy Lunin started in place of regular stopper Thibaut Courtois, who is set to miss the majority of the season with a cruciate ligament injury.

The Ukrainian was solid, although he may soon be behind Chelsea goalkeeper Kepa Arrizabalaga in the pecking order, with the Spaniard set to join on loan according to various reports.

Ancelotti, who will take over the Brazilian national team at the end of this campaign, handed defender Fran Garcia his second Madrid debut after his return from Rayo Vallecano.

However it was Bellingham's name that stood out and the 20-year-old demonstrated why Madrid paid over 100m euros ($110mn) for him.

Madrid took the lead before the half-hour mark when Dani Carvajal hooked the ball back to Rodrygo, who slotted past Unai Simon at his near post.

The goalkeeper managed to force David Alaba's header onto the post and thwarted Vinicius after he burst into the box, but Bellingham soon added Madrid's second.

The England international netted in unorthodox fashion, volleying Alaba's corner into the ground and over Simon.

Bellingham stood still, facing the home fans with arms wide in celebration, as if announcing his arrival to La Liga - drawing a rebuke from Athletic captain Iker Muniain.

The midfielder nearly carved out another for Rodrygo with an inviting cross, but the Brazilian narrowly failed to make contact with an attempted bicycle kick.

Former Barcelona coach Ernesto Valverde made a triple change at half-time to try and pull Athletic back into the game.

Madrid were forced into a change themselves early in the second half when Eder Militao hurt his knee and was replaced by Antonio Rudiger. Bellingham continued to impress in the second half, bursting forward from deep into dangerous territory, but the move eventually broke down.

Wearing former Madrid midfielder Zinedine Zidane's number five, the former Birmingham City man started as he means to go on.

Vinicius, making his first away appearance in La Liga since being racially abused by Valencia fans in May, was occasionally whistled by Athletic supporters.

The forward made way in the final stages for another debutant, Joselu, whom Madrid loaned from relegated Espanyol, as Los Blancos saw out their opening weekend win with ease.



Real Madrid's Jude Bellingham celebrates scoring their second goal against Athletic Bilbao in Bilbao, Spain. *(Reuters)*