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TENNIS | Page 3

Djokovic takes Serbia into Davis Cup quarter-finals

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Page 4

SQUASH

Hania El Hammamy wins QTerminals Qatar Classic

THE 23-YEAR-OLD BEATS NOUR EL SHERBINI IN 5 PULSATING GAMES TO LIFT THE TITLE IN DOHA

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Third seed Hania El Hammamy of Egypt yesterday beat compatriot Nour El Sherbini in five pulsating games to win the QTerminals Qatar Classic women's title.

Cairo-born El Hammamy rallied back in fine style - after losing two games out of the first three - to complete her 9-11, 11-9, 9-11, 11-9, 11-6 win in 84 minutes.

It was the 23-year-old's third win in five matches against El Sherbini - also known as 'The Warrior Princess'. The two have now played three finals out of their five head-to-head meetings in the last one year alone.

"It's definitely unbelievable for me. Last week I lost in the third round in Paris. I'm definitely proud of the way I'm fighting everyday and the way I bounce back after each loss," El Hammamy said yesterday.

"Playing against Nour is very hard. She's the classy image of being a World No.1 and a World Champion. She's the one I look up to and I try to learn from her to carry that image when it's my time to be on top.

"I've always enjoyed it, it's always a pleasure playing against her," she added.

"I couldn't have done it this week without my team, the people who supported me throughout all the difficult times. It's been very difficult these last couple of weeks, without them it couldn't happen.

"Having Karim Darwish with me this week is absolutely amazing, special thanks to him.

"Lastly I want to thank the crowd for being here, it's been amazing. I want to thank the Qatar Squash Federation and everyone who was able to help us have this tournament for women as well because it's absolutely amazing.

"Now we're able to be here and we're very grateful for you to have us," El Hammamy said in reference to the women's event returning to Doha for the first time since 2015.

El Hammamy concluded with thanks to her sponsors.

In her speech, El Sherbini said yesterday: "Of course I'm disappointed that I lost this match, but I'm really proud that I did two finals back-to-back. It's just



Hania El Hammamy of Egypt and compatriot Nour El Sherbini during the prize distribution ceremony following the final of the QTerminals Qatar Classic 2023 at the Khalifa Tennis and Squash Complex in Doha yesterday. Qatar Squash Federation officials and other dignitaries also attended the ceremony.



Fans watch the QTerminals Qatar Classic final between Hania El Hammamy of Egypt and compatriot Nour El Sherbini at the Khalifa Tennis and Squash Complex in Doha yesterday. Right: Hania El Hammamy celebrates winning the QTerminals Qatar Classic 2023 title.



RESULTS
Women's QTerminals Qatar Classic final:
(3) Hania El Hammamy (EGY) bt (2) Nour El Sherbini (EGY) 3-2: 9-11, 11-9, 9-11, 11-9, 11-6 (84m)
Men's QTerminals Qatar Classic semi-finals:
(2) Diego Elias (PER) 3-0 (6) Mazen Hesham (EGY) 11-9, 11-8 (49m)
(1) Ali Farag (EGY) 3-0 (9/16) Joel Makin (WAL) 11-7, 11-8, 11-8 (48m)

Hesham, the sixth seed, was playing the semi-final after beating world No 4 and defending champion Mohamed ElShorbagy of England on Thursday.

However, Elias also arrived for the last-four clash prepared and knowing he was up against a feisty character.

"I was very edgy. Mazen is so talented and can hit winners from anywhere," Elias, winner in Doha in 2021, said.

"I thought I knew him a little but I was still going the wrong way every shot! He comes up with many different shots from anywhere," the 26-year-old added. "We're good friends but it's a tournament and that's very different. On court, we hate each other but off court we're very good friends.

"(After the match) I told him he's so talented and makes me go the wrong way and I hate that," Elias said.

"Lastly I want to thank the crowd for being here, it's been amazing. I want to thank the Qatar Squash Federation and everyone who was able to help us have this tournament for women as well because it's absolutely amazing. Now we're able to be here and we're very grateful for you to have us."

Hania El Hammamy

the start of the season. Everyone knows how physical Hania is, and how much of a fighter she is. She's still young, she's still hungry. I really love playing against her," she added.

"She's an amazing player, hopefully we're going to have a lot of battles this season."

Both the players now turn their attention to the US Open, which takes place between 7-14 October.

FARAG AND ELIAS SET TO CLASH IN DOHA FINAL

A week ago, top seed Ali Farag of Egypt and second seed Deigo Elias were expected to clash in the final of the Qterminals Qatar Classic given their recent form and higher rankings. Fast forward to today, Farag and Elias will clash in the title clash of the \$187,500 tournament after resounding semi-final wins yesterday.

Harvard-read Farag yesterday beat Doha giant-killer Joel Makin of Wales in straight games to reach the final. Faraj, 30, won 11-7, 11-8, 11-8 in just 48 minutes.

"The court conditions are very different here. One bad shot and you're in a lot of trouble," Farag said after the match.

"Diego is on fire so far this week, he has been for the last couple of years, but especially this week he's

been playing very well. I'll have to be at 100 percent again tomorrow, it's very easy to be 100 percent in front an amazing crowd here in Qatar," he added.

In the second semi-final, Elias from Peru beat Egypt's Mazen Hesham in straight games to make it to the title clash on Glass Court at the Khalifa International Tennis and Squash Complex. Elias won 11-9, 11-7, 11-8 in 49 minutes.

FOCUS

Kuwait ease to win over Saudi Arabia as Gulf T20I Cricket Championship begins

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Kuwait beat Saudi Arabia by five wickets to get off to a winning start at the Gulf T20I Cricket Championship, which began at the West End International Cricket Stadium yesterday.

Kuwait chased down 143 set by Saudi in 18.3 overs, thanks to opener **Ravija Sandaruwan's** 41-ball 58 (3x4, 3x6).

Adnan Anees, who made 31 opening the batting with Sandaruwan, picked up the man of the match award as he also picked two wickets with his off spin.

Earlier, Saudi electing to bat first made 142 for in 20 overs, mainly due to 42-ball 62 from opener Faisal Khan.

Hosts Qatar were playing Bahrain in a late match last night.

Qatar is the hosting the inaugural edition of the T20I Gulf Cricket Championship with the tournament held in round robin format. The top two teams after the group stage will play the final on September 23.



Klopp 'not worried' about possible Saudi move for Salah in January

London: Liverpool boss Jurgen Klopp insists he is not worried about the potential for renewed Saudi Arabian interest in Mohamed Salah when the January transfer window opens. Salah was reportedly the subject of a £150mn (\$185mn) bid from Saudi Pro League side Al Ittihad before the Premier League transfer deadline on September 1. Liverpool rejected the offer but Saudi Pro League director of football Michael Emenalo has claimed the door is not closed on a future move for the Egypt forward. Klopp is determined to keep Salah but an Al Ittihad bid of around £200mn has been mooted for January as the Saudi league eyes another marquee signing to join the likes of Neymar, Karim Benzema and N'Golo Kante. It is a delicate situation that Klopp clearly hoped would be put to bed by the closing of the Saudi transfer

window on September 7. Salah has appeared unaffected by the speculation, scoring twice and assisting twice this season, but Klopp bristled when asked if he anticipated more approaches for the 31-year-old in the new year. "You are kidding me. A week after we close the transfer window, you ask about the January transfer window?" Klopp told reporters yesterday. "Obviously, you can't wait until December to ask these questions. We will see what happens. Until then, I'm not worried in this moment. I didn't even think about it until you opened that wound again. No, I'm not worried." Klopp has already seen England midfielder Jordan Henderson leave Anfield for the lucrative wages on offer in the Gulf State. Henderson, 33, recently claimed he did not feel wanted by Liverpool when he returned from his summer break and decided to join Al Ettifaq.

FOURTH ODI

Klaassen slams 174 as S Africa level series

AFP
Centurion, South Africa

Heinrich Klaassen slammed 174 off 83 balls to lead South Africa to a 164-run win in the fourth one-day international against Australia at SuperSport Park yesterday. Klaassen shared an extraordinary fifth wicket partnership of 222 off only 94 balls with David Miller (82 not out) as South Africa piled up 416 for five, their fifth-highest total in one-day internationals, before bowling out Australia for 252. "To be honest I can't remember the last part of the innings. I'll have to go back and watch it tonight," Klaassen said. He smashed 13 fours and 13 sixes before being caught on the boundary off the last ball of the innings. "Some days guys have a day out," said Australian captain Mitchell Marsh, who for the second game in a row was on the losing side after sending in the opposition.

"Klaassen was amazing. We got outplayed. Sometimes in international cricket you have to take your hat off."

Alex Carey hit 99 off 77 balls for Australia and was last man out. Lungi Ngidi took four for 51 and Kagiso Rabada three for 41 for South Africa.

South Africa's win tied the series at two matches apiece, setting up a decider in Johannesburg tomorrow.

With the World Cup only three weeks away, Australia had a potentially serious injury concern when in-form opening batsman Travis Head had to retire hurt after being struck on the left hand by fast bowler Gerald Coetzee.

Australian team management announced that Head was due to go for a scan with results not expected until today.

A run spree of such magnitude did not seem likely as accurate Australian bowling and a slower than usual Centurion pitch saw South Africa make relatively slow



South Africa's Heinrich Klaassen celebrates after scoring a century during the fourth one-day international against Australia at Supersport Park in Centurion yesterday. (AFP)

progress on a ground known for high scoring. At the second drinks break, the total was 157 for three off

32 overs. The acceleration started during a stand of 74 off 57 balls between Rassie van der Dussen (62)

and Klaassen. It went into overdrive when the left-handed Miller joined Klaassen and hit the second

ball he faced, from leg-spinner Adam Zampa, for six.

Zampa was hammered for 113 runs off his 10 overs, equalling the record for most runs conceded in a one-day international set by fellow Australian Mick Lewis, also against South Africa, in Johannesburg in 2006.

Marcus Stoinis conceded 81 runs and Josh Hazlewood and Nathan Ellis went for 79 apiece. Michael Nesar, playing his first match of the series, was the least expensive Australian bowler, taking one for 59.

BRIEF SCORES
South Africa 416-5 in 50 overs (H. Klaassen 174, D. Miller 82 not out, H. van der Dussen 62; J. Hazlewood 2-79) **bt Australia 252 in 34.5 overs** (A. Carey 99; L. Ngidi 4-51, K. Rabada 3-41) by 164 runs
Series: The five-match series is level at 2-2
Toss: Australia
Remaining match: September 17, Johannesburg

FOCUS

England wrap up New Zealand ODI series at Lord's

THE HOSTS COMFORTABLY WIN THE 4-MATCH ODI SERIES 3-1

AFP
London

England crushed New Zealand by 100 runs in the fourth one-day international at Lord's yesterday to seal a morale-boosting 3-1 series victory as they fine-tune preparations for their World Cup defence. Jos Buttler's power-packed team were indebted to opener Dawid Malan, who made a sparkling 127 off 114 balls in a total of 311-9 at a sun-drenched Lord's. New Zealand, dramatically beaten by England in the 2019 final on the same ground, made a solid start but early wickets slowed their momentum and they were dismissed for 211 in 38.2 overs.

Off-spinner Moeen Ali was the pick of the England bowlers, taking 4-50 in his 10 overs. Both teams were missing a clutch of first-choice players for what served as a dress rehearsal for the opening match of the World Cup in the Indian city of Ahmedabad on October 5.

England's total appeared within range but Buttler brilliantly ran out Devon Conway with a direct hit before David Willey had Will Young caught behind for 24. The visitors were reduced to 52-3 when Daryl Mitchell was bowled by paceman Brydon Carse with his third ball. Tom Latham joined Henry Nicholls at the crease and the pair took the score to 88 before Latham was bowled by Moeen.

Moeen struck again, trapping Nicholls lbw for 41 to reduce the visitors to 122-5, with their task looking increasingly difficult



England's Jos Buttler holds the trophy as he poses with teammates after England won the fourth One Day International against New Zealand at Lord's in London yesterday. England crushed New Zealand by 100 runs to seal a morale-boosting 3-1 series victory. (AFP)

under the floodlights. The spinner dismissed Kyle Jamieson and Matt Henry in successive balls to reduce New Zealand to 169-8. All-rounder Rachin Ravindra entertained the crowd with some lusty blows, but his dismissal for 61 off 48 balls, bowled by Sam Curran, signalled the end of the innings, with the injured Tim Southee unable to bat.

Earlier, Malan anchored England's innings after they won the toss, making the most of his opportunity at the top of the order in the continuing absence of the injured Jason Roy.

Fellow opener Jonny Bairstow (13) departed early, bringing

former Test captain Joe Root to the crease.

Root, in scratchy form, was dropped twice early, with New Zealand paceman Southee injuring his thumb in putting down the second chance, before running out of luck when he was bowled by Ravindra. A New Zealand team spokesman later confirmed that Southee had dislocated and fractured a bone in his right thumb, putting his World Cup participation in doubt.

Harry Brook, not in England's provisional World Cup squad, failed to make the most of his chance to fill in for the rested Ben Stokes, departing for 10 to give

Ravindra a second wicket. Malan, who scored 96 in the third ODI, reached his three figures in the 32nd over with a whipped shot for two on the leg side. But Buttler soon departed in tame fashion, caught at mid-off for 36, reducing England to 195-4 and slowing their momentum. Malan eventually fell for 127.

BRIEF SCORES
England 311 for 9 (Malan 127, Ravindra 4-60) **beat New Zealand 211** (Ravindra 61, Nicholls 41, Moeen 4-50)
Result: England won by 100 runs
Series: England win 3-1
Toss: England

SPOTLIGHT

New Zealand's Southee fractures bone to put World Cup in doubt

AFP
London

New Zealand paceman **Tim Southee** dislocated and fractured a bone in his right thumb yesterday – less than three weeks before the start of the World Cup in India. Southee suffered the injury while dropping a catch off Joe Root during England's innings at Lord's in the final one-day international of the four-match series.

The former England captain, who was on eight at the time, edged Ben Lister to Southee in the slips. He immediately looked to be in pain and left the field to go for a scan, failing to return.

"An X-ray has confirmed that Tim Southee dislocated and fractured a bone in his right thumb while attempting to take a catch in the 14th over of the first innings," said a New Zealand team spokesman. "A timeline for his recovery will be established tomorrow when he undergoes further assessment."

New Zealand begin their World Cup campaign against defending champions England in Ahmedabad in the opening game of the tournament on October 5.

Southee, 34, named this week in an experienced New Zealand squad for the tournament, had taken 214 wickets in 156 ODIs before the Lord's match.

He bowled four overs for 29 runs yesterday as England scored 311-9 in their 50 overs.

INJURED PAKISTAN QUICKS HARIS, NASEEM STILL IN WORLD CUP CONTENTION

Pakistan captain Babar Azam said yesterday that injured quicks Haris Rauf and Naseem Shah remained central to his team's World Cup plans, after their absence saw the team crash out of the Asia Cup. Azam's men went down to fellow co-hosts Sri Lanka by two wickets Thursday in a last-ball thriller of a rain-shortened Super Four knock-out game in Colombo.

Both Naseem and Rauf were injured in the Super Four loss to India in the 50-over tournament, a tune-up for the ODI World Cup in

India starting next month.

"Haris Rauf is not bad, he has a little bit side strain but will recover before the World Cup," said Azam. "Naseem Shah has missed a couple of matches but I don't know about his recovery. But in my opinion he will be in the World Cup."

The pace duo's absence was felt when Pakistan failed to defend 252 in their 42-over-a-side match against Sri Lanka. Charith Asalanka steered his side home in that game, hitting a four and a double off the last two balls, bowled by debutant Zaman Khan.

"Definitely when you lose your best bowlers, that costs you and your team," Azam said after the match. "We were not short of effort but didn't finish well."

Azam said the team would learn from their mistakes to put on a better show in India next month, where they will meet the hosts in a hotly anticipated October 14 clash in Ahmedabad.

"In fielding we lacked the kind of response that we should have got. In the bowling, there is an issue in the middle overs," said Azam. "We will try to learn from them and will clear them before going into the World Cup."



ASIA CUP

Shakib says Bangladesh 'dangerous' for World Cup after win over India

AFP
Colombo

Skipper Shakib Al Hasan yesterday said Bangladesh will be a "dangerous side" in the World Cup after they edged India by six runs for a consolation Asia Cup victory. India, who had already booked a meeting with Sri Lanka in tomorrow's final in Colombo, faltered in their chase of 266 despite a valiant 121 by opener Shubman Gill.

Mustafizur Rahman took three wickets while debutant Tanzim Hasan Sakib and Mahedi Hasan claimed two each as Bangladesh bowled out India for 259 to end their tournament on a high ahead of the upcoming ODI World Cup.

"I think we have got a very good team (for the World Cup)," man of the Shakib, who scored 80 in Bangladesh's 265-8, said after the

win. "Lot of injuries, and players coming in and going out didn't help during this Asia Cup. I think we will be a dangerous side in the World Cup."

India rested their key players including Virat Kohli and pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah in the inconsequential clash.

"We wanted to give some game time to the guys, keeping the bigger picture in mind. Not compromising on how we wanted to play this game," India skipper Rohit Sharma said after his first loss in the tournament. "Get in some players who are likely to play the World Cup. Axar batted brilliantly, but couldn't finish. He showed a lot of character. Not to forget, Gill's hundred was brilliant."

Rohit elected to bowl first to test their batting under lights, which has been difficult in the Sri Lanka leg of the tournament hosted by Pakistan. Bangladesh slipped to

59-4 before a 101-run stand between Shakib and Towhid Hridoy, who made 54, rebuild the innings and with lower-order contribution posted a total which ultimately proved winning.

Hridoy and Shakib hit back with regular boundaries before pace bowler Shardul Thakur returned for a second spell and bowled Shakib. Ravindra Jadeja collected his 200th ODI wicket but Hridoy kept up the charge and reached his fifty with a boundary before falling to Shami. Nasum Ahmed, a left-arm spinner who is known to slog with the bat, also contributed with 44 while Mahedi added 29. Thakur took three wickets while Shami returned figures of 2-32.

In reply, India lost Rohit in the first over as he got caught out off their batting under lights, which has been difficult in the Sri Lanka leg of the tournament hosted by Pakistan. Bangladesh slipped to

(19) and then Suryakumar Yadav (26) but Bangladesh bowlers kept chipping away with wickets. Gill, who hit eight fours and five sixes in his 133-ball knock, reached his hundred off Tanzim and bowed to the dressing room. He kept up the charge as he hit Mahedi for a huge six over mid-wicket but the bowler had his revenge on the next ball to get the batsman caught out.

Patel attempted to pull off the chase in his 34-ball 42 but fell to Mustafizur and the innings soon ended in 49.5 overs.

BRIEF SCORES
Bangladesh 265-8 in 50 overs (S Al Hasan 80; Towhid Hridoy 54, Nasum Ahmed 44; M. Shami 2-32, S. Thakur 3-65) **bt India 259 all out in 49.5 overs** (S. Gill 122, A. Patel 42; Tanzim Hasan Sakib 2-32, Mustafizur Rahman 3-50, Mehedi Hasan 2-50) **by 6 runs**
Toss: India



Bangladesh's cricketers celebrate their win against India at the Asia Cup at R Premadasa Stadium in Colombo yesterday. (AFP)

TENNIS

Djokovic propels Serbia into Davis Cup quarter-finals

'Playing for my country a huge responsibility and pressure'



Serbia's Novak Djokovic in action during his Davis Cup match against Spain's Alejandro Davidovich Fokina in Valencia, Spain, yesterday. (Reuters)

Reuters
Valencia, Spain

Novak Djokovic made a winning return to action following his US Open triumph, as the world number one helped Serbia book their place in the quarter-finals of the Davis Cup yesterday with a group stage victory over hosts Spain.

Playing just five days after lifting his 24th Grand Slam title overall in New York, Djokovic overcame the hot and humid conditions early on and recovered from 4-1 down in the second set to beat Alejandro Davidovich Fokina 6-3, 6-4 in Valencia. The result secured an unassailable 2-0 lead for Serbia after Laslo Djere beat Albert Ramos-Vinolas 6-4, 6-4 in the first match of the Group C tie and secured a tie in the last eight in Malaga, which will take place in November.

"I'm on cloud nine, as you can

see with everything that's been happening lately on the tennis court," Djokovic said following his 13th straight match victory.

"Playing for Serbia, for my country, is something completely different. It's a huge responsibility and pressure but also an incredible privilege and honour, so I'm really glad that I was able to contribute with a crucial point to qualify for Malaga. Obviously unfortunate for the Spanish crowd, they wanted Spain to win but I think we did really well ... and now we'll try against the Czech Republic tomorrow to clinch top spot in the group to hopefully get a better draw."

Djokovic said he was fully committed to helping the 2010 Davis Cup champions in their quest for a second title in the premier men's team competition.

"It was all happening really quickly within a few days and I was on a high with the US Open win and the celebration at home and leaving my family is never

easy but coming to another family - my Serbian squad - gives me the greatest of joy," he added.

"At the beginning of the season I said the Grand Slams and playing for my country were my priorities. I want to contribute as much as I can. Here we are, the goal is reached, we're in the last eight. Hopefully we can keep going in the right direction."

EMOTIONAL MURRAY MISSES GRANDMOTHER'S FUNERAL TO GIVE BRITAIN LEAD

Meanwhile, Britain's Andy Murray delivered a Davis Cup victory for his team against Switzerland yesterday before revealing that he had missed his grandmother's funeral to play. "Today is a tough day for me, it's my Gran's funeral today," an emotional Murray said after his epic 6-7 (7/9), 6-4, 6-4, win over Leandro Riedi at the Manchester Arena. "I'm sorry to my family that I'm not able to be there but Gran, this one's for you."

Murray then returned to his bench where he sat sobbing into his towel. The 36-year-old had only lost three of his previous 35 singles matches in the competition but needed every ounce of skill and competitiveness to see his way past 21-year-old Riedi, who was making his Davis Cup debut.

Riedi took the first set on a tie-break before the former world number one clawed his way back to win after three hours and 10 minutes on court. "Incredible to get through that one, easily could've gone the other way," said Murray. "He (Riedi) was returning, it was ridiculous the shots he was pulling off. He made it really tough for me but I just kept fighting and tried to stay focused and managed to turn it around."

Victory gave Britain a 1-0 lead over Switzerland. Cameron Norrie can seal the tie if he beats Stan Wawrinka in the second singles match. If not it will be decided by the doubles.

Russia says will not boycott 2024 Paris Olympics

Moscow: Russia's Olympic Committee has said Moscow would not be boycotting the 2024 Olympics in Paris and every Russian athlete was free to choose whether or not to take part under a neutral banner. "Boycotting the Games leads to nowhere," Russian Olympic Committee President Stanislav Pozdnyakov said in a briefing Thursday.

Athletes from Russia and Belarus have faced sanctions from a multitude of sports since Russia launched its assault on Ukraine in February of 2022. Despite the ongoing conflict, the International Olympic Committee has recommended allowing athletes from Russia and Moscow's ally Belarus to compete as individual neutrals in international competitions.

"We live together in a free state. Every person can, if they so wish, take the path" of competing under a neutral banner, Pozdnyakov said.

"Vladimir Vladimirovich (Putin) again said very clearly that this is everyone's moral choice," he added. The head of the Russian Olympic Committee however said "the current recommendations are... prohibitive in nature and will not allow a large number of our athletes to take part in the Olympic Games."

US ENDORSES UTAH'S WINTER OLYMPICS BID WITH EYE TOWARD 2034

Leadership of the United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee (USOPC) has endorsed Salt Lake City's bid to host another Winter Olympics, with a preference for 2034, officials

said on Thursday. USOPC said 2034 is a more desirable date than 2030 due to the 2028 Summer Olympics being held in Los Angeles. Utah's scenic capital city previously hosted the Winter Games in 2002.

"There are not likely to be bids that look more attractive than the Salt Lake City, Utah bid for 2030 or 2034, but 2034 is the optimal time for the US to host a Winter Games," USOPC Chair Gene Sykes told reporters on a call. "So that's what we've suggested to the IOC (International Olympic Committee) is definitely our preference. We're in a position to work with them in 2030 if they need us but they are also working very hard to develop an alternative bid for 2030."

Sweden, Switzerland and France are among those vying to host in 2030. "This is a significant milestone for us," Fraser Bullock, CEO of the Salt Lake City's bid committee, said on the call. "We have a fantastic bid to offer the Olympic and Paralympic community. We have incredible venues in place, federal guarantees and strong community support including 82% of the public and 100% of our political leadership."

Bullock said he hoped the IOC would be prepared to discuss the offer when officials meet in Mumbai next month. The IOC has said it might award the 2030 and 2034 host cities simultaneously to create stability in the Winter Games, and that hosting rights may rotate "between a certain pool of cities and regions," as it faces a shrinking pool of potential bidders.

SAN DIEGO OPEN

Qualifier Navarro stuns Sakkari to reach semis

AFP
Los Angeles

Qualifier Emma Navarro of the United States upset world number nine Maria Sakkari of Greece, winning in a third-set tie-break, to reach the semi-finals of the WTA's San Diego Open on Thursday. On a strong day for Americans, former Australian Open champion Sofia Kenin and Danielle Collins also advanced to the last four.

Kenin will meet 61st-ranked Navarro while Collins will be up against fourth-seeded Barbora Krejickova of the Czech Republic, who triumphed against Brazil's Beatriz Haddad Maia. The 22-year-old Navarro won 6-4, 0-6, 7-6 (7-4) against Sakkari in two hours and 13 minutes.

It was the New Yorker's first win against a top-10 player

and continued a good tournament for the 2021 NCAA singles champion, who went into the match having not lost a set in qualifying or the main draw.

Kenin, who captured her first Grand Slam title in 2020 at Melbourne, dispatched 27th-ranked Anastasia Potapova 6-2, 6-3. Potapova made 15 double faults. World number 93 Kenin reached her first WTA semi-final since Hobart in January.

Collins, who lost to Ash Barty in the 2022 Australian Open final, eliminated France's 10th-ranked Caroline Garcia 6-2, 6-3, in only 67 minutes. Collins, ranked 43rd, will have a tough task against Krejickova after she defeated seventh seed Haddad Maia 6-4, 6-3. Krejickova, the French Open winner in 2021, hit 24 winners to the Brazilian's eight and conceded she had little idea of what kind of opponent Collins will be.

CYCLING

Dainese escapes final kilometre crash to win Vuelta stage 19



Team DSM's Italian rider Alberto Dainese (centre) celebrates after winning stage 19 of the La Vuelta cycling tour of Spain, a 177.5km race between La Baneza and Iscar. (AFP)

Reuters
Madrid

Alberto Dainese of Team DSM-Firmenich narrowly avoided a massive crash in the final kilometre to sprint to victory in stage 19 of the Vuelta a Espana yesterday while American Sepp Kuss of Jumbo-Visma finished safely in the peloton to retain the overall lead.

As the Vuelta enters its home stretch, riders left the mountains behind in a flat 177.5km ride from La Baneza to Iscar, speeding through countryside at 80kph at one point. A breakaway group of four were caught with 20km to go before the teams set themselves up for the sprint with Ineos Grenadiers, Movistar and

Bahrain Victorious driving the bunch.

Once the riders rode through a final right-hand bend, they had a straight 2.2km run to the finish line where Kaden Groves, who has won two stages, was involved in a crash where several riders fell after a touch of wheels. Filippo Ganna was in the ideal position at the front and opened up the final sprint but Dainese timed his sprint to perfection to edge out his fellow Italian by milliseconds.

Kuss, two stages away from winning his first Grand Tour, was all smiles as he retained the red jersey. He leads fellow Jumbo-Visma riders Dane Jonas Vingegaard (17 seconds) and Slovenian Primoz Roglic (68 seconds). "These stages are more stressful now because normally I sit at the back and go to the finish line, but now there's a bit more to lose," Kuss said.

F1

Sainz, Leclerc set pace in Singapore

AFP
Singapore

Carlos Sainz was quickest and Charles Leclerc completed a Ferrari one-two yesterday as championship leader Max Verstappen struggled in the second practice session for the Singapore Grand Prix.

Sainz was timed under lights at 1min 32.120sec, 0.018sec ahead of Leclerc, as Ferrari dominated in conditions expected to be most similar to those for qualifying today and for tomorrow's night race. "The car seemed to be in the right window from the very first lap, so we kept focused on fine tuning the set-up," said Sainz. "I expect the track to improve for tomorrow, so we should have higher grip and then we'll see how much our competitors and ourselves can improve for qualifying."

The Red Bulls have been unstoppable so far in 2023, winning all 14 grands prix, with flying Dutchman Verstappen taking the chequered flag 12 times, including the last 10 races in a row. Sergio Perez has won the other two. But Verstappen could only finish in eighth place 0.732sec adrift of Sainz with Perez just 0.040sec quicker in seventh. "Our performance today was unexpected. We never really got the car together," said Verstappen, who is seeking a first victory in Singapore and a record-extending 11th in a row.

Perez had similar woes, at one point snarling at his race engineer on team radio: "It's just not happening, mate. Every braking zone I feel like I'm going to crash. The rear is stepping out massively!"



Sparks fly from Carlos Sainz's Ferrari's during a practice session in Singapore.

After the session Perez was still complaining. "We did expect the Ferrari to be good around here, but we are just too far away," said Perez. "The main thing is to improve the balance because right now we are too far off."

Leclerc said he would not get "carried away" after a perfect practice when Ferraris topped the timing sheets in both sessions. "The car looks a bit more competitive than we had expected on a track like this," said Leclerc. "But we shouldn't get carried away because I think that our competitors are not showing their true pace yet."

George Russell was third in the Mercedes, 0.235sec behind Sainz.

Fernando Alonso was fourth in the Aston Martin ahead of Lewis Hamilton's Mercedes with Lando Norris sixth fastest in his McLaren. Hamilton was buzzing after finishing ahead of the Red Bulls.

Singapore had been tipped to repre-

sent the biggest challenge to Red Bull's unprecedented quest to sweep all 22 races this season, and so it proved in the early running.

The lap times were more than 10 seconds quicker than a year ago after the removal of four 90-degree corners towards the end of the lap because of construction work.

In first practice, Leclerc had led Sainz for another Ferrari one-two, with Verstappen third in a session where hot laps were interrupted three times by large monitor lizards crossing the city-centre track.

Yuki Tsunoda was one of the drivers taken completely by surprise as yellow warning flags were waved. "Oh there's a lizard! Oh my god!" exclaimed the Japanese AlphaTauri driver on team radio. Apart from the reptilian invasion, both sessions were remarkably incident-free with red flags absent.

PREMIER LEAGUE

Man United manager Ten Hag defends his disciplinary measures

'There was no good culture before last season. I had to set good standards'

AFP
Manchester

Manchester United manager Erik ten Hag said he inherited a bad culture at Old Trafford as he refused to offer more details on Jadon Sancho's future at the club yesterday.

Sancho has been ordered to train away from his teammates after taking to social media to complain he has been made "a scapegoat" under Ten Hag, who dropped the winger for a 3-1 defeat at Arsenal earlier this month due to poor performances in training. United are also without another wide forward in Antony for today's visit of Brighton after he was given a leave of absence to fight allegations of domestic abuse. Ten Hag has earned the reputation of a strict disciplinarian during his time at United after also leaving out Cristiano Ronaldo and Marcus Rashford last season for breaches of team discipline.

But the Dutch boss said he had been brought to the club to change the culture at the Red Devils. "Strict lines is what the club asked me (to bring), because there was no good culture before last season. I had to set good standards," said Ten Hag. "It is never someone makes one mistake, it is a whole process before you come to a certain outcome about strict lines."

The former Ajax boss added he had "no idea" how long Antony will be unavailable for selection. "Of course he is disappointed, but he is okay," added Ten Hag on the Brazilian's state of mind. Injuries have compounded those absences with Raphael Varane, Luke Shaw and Mason Mount still sidelined. Sofyan Amrabat will also have to wait for his United debut. But centre-backs Lisandro Martinez and Victor Lindelof are fit despite being forced off through injury and illness respectively against Arsenal.

Their return means Harry Maguire will likely be denied his first start at club level this season. England manager Gareth Southgate launched an impassioned defence of the centre-back after he was taunted by Scotland fans in the Three Lions' 3-1 friendly win at Hampden Park on Tuesday. Maguire's mum then took to social media to hit out at the "totally unacceptable" abuse she claimed her son had been subject to by fans and pundits.

Ten Hag stripped Maguire of the United captaincy earlier this season due to his lack of minutes on the field, but also came out to defend his player. "He does not deserve it,



Jaden Sancho (centre) has been ordered to train away from his Manchester United teammates after saying he has been made "a scapegoat" under manager Erik ten Hag, who dropped the winger for a 3-1 defeat at Arsenal earlier this month.

he is a great player and given great performances," he added. "It's crazy but it's how it works and Harry has to block this (out) by (his) performances."

GUARDIOLA HAPPY TO HOLD ONTO 'UNIQUE' WALKER

Meanwhile, Manchester City boss Pep Guardiola believes it would have been impossible to replace Kyle Walker if the England right-back had left the Premier League champions instead of extending his contract till 2026. Walker, 33, had been closely linked with a move to Bayern Munich during the transfer window after being left out of Guardiola's starting line-up for the Champions League final in June.

But Walker has been a key figure in the City side that has won five Premier League titles since he joined from Tottenham six

years ago. "Kyle is an important figure for us. Not just the club, the players demanded he could not leave," said Guardiola yesterday. "I spoke with mates and lots of people and they told me Kyle cannot leave. He has qualities you can't find across the world. He can control the best wingers on the planet, who can do better than him? His mind is there and here in the pitch. In terms of genetics, few players I've seen are like him. They are unique."

City are the only Premier League side with a perfect record four games into the season. But Guardiola's men face arguably their toughest test so far this campaign when they visit high-flying West Ham today. The City boss will return to the bench after missing the victories over Sheffield United and Fulham as he recovered from back surgery in his native Catalonia.

Jack Grealish, John Stones and Mateo Kovacic will miss the trip to the London Stadium due to injury. And with the return of the Champions League around the corner, Guardiola said City's season now starts for real with two games a week to cope with. "The season always starts right now, after the first international break, when the transfer window is over," he added.

FIXTURES

Today (1400 GMT unless stated): Wolves v Liverpool (1130), Aston Villa v Crystal Palace, Fulham v Luton, Manchester United v Brighton, Tottenham v Sheffield United, West Ham v Manchester City, Newcastle v Brentford (1630)
Tomorrow: Bournemouth v Chelsea (1300), Everton v Arsenal (1530)
Monday: Nottingham v Burnley (1845)

Arteta urges Arsenal to embrace 'battle' to end Everton curse

London: Mikel Arteta has warned his Arsenal stars they will only end their Everton curse if they are willing to put their bodies on the line at Goodison Park tomorrow.

The Gunners are without an away win against Everton since 2017 and Arteta knows they will only banish that bitter streak if they match the aggression of Sean Dyche's team. Without a league win this season, Everton are already desperate for points, while Arsenal have made an unconvincing start despite their unbeaten record.

"I'm really excited about it, the last six years we have not won there so we are going to have to earn it," Arteta told reporters yesterday. "We know we are going to have to be at our best to beat them there and that's something we haven't managed to do so that's where we are going to start. We've been to grounds before where we haven't won and we've done it. It's about understanding the importance and knowing what we lacked in those games and putting it right."

Former Burnley boss Dyche has a well-earned reputation for building bruising teams capable of bullying opponents into submission. But Arteta is confident Arsenal will be able to stand up to the physical test. "Sometimes you cannot avoid a battle (with Everton), the style of play they have is very clear and they're very good at that," Arteta said. "It's about trying to impose your way of playing and the tactic is just to make sure your opponent's strengths are hiding and that ours are coming out every single time."

Arsenal's Champions League opener against PSV Eindhoven next week is their first time back in the competition since the 2016-17 season. But Arteta is trying to ensure his players are not distracted by their long-awaited return to Europe's elite club competition. "We played three games a week last year, but the Champions League is obviously different with the expectations and that we've been away from it," he said. "This is where we want to be when you look at the fixtures and the games we are going to have to play."

Arteta has praised Declan Rice for quickly finding his feet at the Emirates following his club record 105mm pounds (\$130.12 million) transfer from West Ham United in July.

The 24-year-old has been an instant hit and won Arsenal's Player of the Month award for August, while his first goal for the club was a late winner against old rivals Manchester United earlier this month.

Derby day puts Milan giants in Serie A title spotlight

Milan: Italy's Milan giants face off in today's local derby which pits Serie A's form teams against one another in a match which will give an early indication of their title credentials. The San Siro will host a rematch of last season's Champions League semi-final, a fixture that promises similar fireworks to the two blockbuster clashes in May which went Inter Milan's way.

Inter and AC Milan are locked on nine points at the top of the table after perfect starts from both in which summer signings have made an immediate impact. Simone Inzaghi's Inter have scored eight times without conceding in their opening three matches thanks to a strike partnership between Lautaro Martinez and new arrival Marcus Thuram which has brought seven goals.

Milan meanwhile have a trio of new signings thrilling fans alongside their established stars, with Tijjani Reijnders and Chelsea old boys Ruben Loftus-Cheek and Cristian Pulisic hitting the ground running. Stefano Pioli has Milan playing an entertaining, fluid style of football boosted by Pulisic's presence on the right wing, which has freed up star man Rafael Leao and given increased service to four-goal Olivier Giroud who should start despite picking up an ankle knock on international duty.

Inter have, Thuram aside, a similar starting XI to the one which lost to Manchester City in Istanbul in June but have quality back up in the likes of Juan Cuadrado and Davide Frattesi. Midfielder Frattesi hasn't started since arriving from Sassuolo but impressed for Italy with a brace

against Ukraine on Tuesday night, putting pressure on Inzaghi to pick the 22-year-old.

Juventus, two points behind the Milan duo, kick off the weekend's action at home to Lazio rocked by Paul Pogba's provisional suspension for a doping violation. Pogba has a potential four-year ban hanging over his head for elevated levels of testosterone after being tested following a match in which he didn't even play.

Pogba has requested examination of the 'B' sample taken during the doping test, and a positive result would reportedly put the 30-year-old at risk of having his contract terminated by Juve.

It is yet another destabilising scandal for Juve, who were docked 10 points last season for alleged illicit transfer activity and await a potential, related criminal trial for fraud.

A tough week for Juve, who are not accused of any wrongdoing in Pogba's doping violation, got worse with reports that next week's board meeting will confirm a 115 million-euro loss for last season. Juve are also being sued by Italy defender Leonardo Bonucci is taking legal action over how he was frozen out by Juve, in a manner he considers "humiliating".

FIXTURES (TIMES GMT)

Today: Juventus v Lazio (1300), Inter Milan v AC Milan (1600), Genoa v Napoli (1845)
Tomorrow: Cagliari v Udinese (1030), Monza v Lecce, Frosinone v Sassuolo (1300), Fiorentina v Atalanta (1600), Roma v Empoli (1845)
Monday: Salernitana v Torino (1830), Verona v Bologna

SPOTLIGHT

Spain women's World Cup players demand more heads roll as Rubiales in court

AFP
Madrid

The crisis within Spanish football deepened yesterday as the women's World Cup winners demanded more heads roll at its scandal-hit RFEF federation whose disgraced ex-boss appeared in court on sexual assault charges. Just hours after Luis Rubiales was quizzed by a judge for kissing midfielder Jenni Hermoso, all but two of Spain's 23 World Cup players said they would not don the national shirt without deeper changes within the RFEF, demanding its current interim head also resign.

The statement came as the squad's new coach Montse Tome was to announce the lineup for two upcoming UEFA Women's Nations League matches against Sweden and Switzerland, which was promptly postponed, federation sources said. "The changes put in place are not enough," said a statement signed by 39 players, among them 21 of the 23 World Cup winners.

Demanding "fundamental changes to the RFEF's leadership", they called for the "resignation of the RFEF president" Pedro Rocha, who took over as interim leader when FIFA suspended Rubiales on August 26. Despite a string of recent changes, the federation remains in the hands of officials appointed by Rubiales, with the players insisting on structural changes "within the office of the president and the secretary general".

The bombshell came after days of optimism within the RFEF that the players would come round after it sacked controversial coach Jorge Vilda, appointed Tome in his stead and pledged further changes, not to mention Rubiales' long-awaited resignation on Sunday. On August 25, 81 Spain players, including the 23 world champions, had started a mass strike saying they would not play for the national team without significant changes at the head of the federation.

Earlier yesterday, Rubiales appeared in court where he was quizzed by Judge Francisco de Jorge who is heading up the investigation into the kiss, which sparked international out-



Former president of the Spanish football federation Luis Rubiales is pictured after leaving the high court in Madrid yesterday. (Reuters)

rage and saw him brought up on sexual assault charges. At the end of the closed-door hearing, in which Rubiales repeated his claim that the kiss was consensual, the judge ordered him not to come within 200 metres (yards) of Hermoso and barred him from any contact with the player.

At the weekend, the 46-year-old had described the kiss as "a spontaneous act, a mutual act, an act that both consented to, which was... 100 percent non-sexual" in an interview with British broadcaster Piers Morgan. Hermoso, 33, has insisted it was not, describing it as "an impulsive, macho act, out of place and with no type of consent on my part".

Speaking to reporters outside court, Hermoso's lawyer Carla Vall said they were "very satisfied" with the hearing. "Thanks to this video, everyone can see there was no consent whatsoever and that is what we will demonstrate in court."

Hermoso herself will also testify before the judge at some stage, who will then have to decide whether or not to push ahead with the prosecution. No date has been given for her testimony. The complaint against Rubiales, which was filed by the public prosecutors' office, cited alleged offences of sexual assault and coercion.

Under a recent reform of the Spanish penal code, a non-consensual kiss can be considered sexual assault, a category which groups all types of sexual violence. If found guilty, Rubiales could face anything from a fine to four years in prison, sources at the public prosecutors' office have said.

In their complaint, prosecutors explained the offence of coercion related to Hermoso's statement saying she "and those close to her had suffered constant ongoing pressure by Luis Rubiales and his professional entourage to justify and condone" his actions. At the hearing, Rubiales also denied coercion.