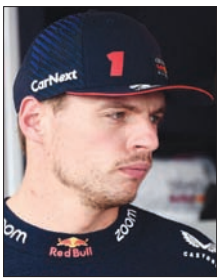


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Shami and batters set up India's clinical win over Australia



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Verstappen back on track ahead of Japanese GP qualifying

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SPORT

19th Asian Games
Hangzhou 2022
September 23 - October 8, 2023

Sheikh Joaan attends Qatar's match against Palestine at Asian Games



HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani, President of the Qatar Olympic Committee, yesterday attended Qatar football team's match against Palestine at the 19th Asian Games in Hangzhou, China. Mohamed bin Abdullah al-Dahimi, ambassador of Qatar to China, HE Jassim bin Rashid al-Buainain, Secretary-General of the Qatar Olympic Committee and members of the Qatari delegation also witnessed the match. Qatar were held to a goalless draw by Palestine at the Xiaoshan Sports Centre Stadium.

SPOTLIGHT

Qatar spikers shine as Asian Games officially kicks off today

Al-Attiyah and al-Buainain to carry Qatar's flag today at the opening ceremony in Hangzhou

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Qatar's volleyball team entered the quarter-finals, while the beach volleyball pair Cherif Younousse and Ahmed Tijan reached the last 16 at the Hangzhou Asian Games in China yesterday.

Qatar's volleyball team secured a convincing 3-1 (25-23, 18-25, 25-19, 25-17) win over Bahrain in the pre-quarters at the China Textile City Sports Centre Gymnasium. The spikers, who had earlier defeated Thailand and Hong Kong, will face Pakistan in the quarter-finals tomorrow. Pakistan beat fancied South Korea in the pre-quarters earlier yesterday.

Meanwhile, 2018 gold medallists Younousse and Tijan crushed the Philippines Alnakran Abdilla and Jaron Requisition 21-9, 21-7 in their last Group B match yesterday and sealed their place in the last 16.

The top seeds had little trouble in getting past their opponents and look in fine form to defend their gold. Qatar's second pair Mahmood Essam and Abdullah Naseem had on Thursday booked their place in the round of 16.

Meanwhile, Qatar U-23 football squad were held to a goalless draw by Palestine at the Xiaoshan Sports Centre Stadium in Hangzhou yesterday. Qatar, who were outclassed by Japan 1-3 in their opening match, failed to breach the defence of Palestine. After yesterday's draw, Qatar are third place in three-team Group D.

The top two teams from the six groups qualify for the round of 16, along with four best third-placed teams. Qatari hopes of qualifying for the next round depends on the result between Palestine and Japan. If Japan, who have already sealed their place in the last 16, beat Palestine by more than two goals then Qatar will qualify as the second best team. A draw or loss by one goal will be sufficient for Palestine to progress. Yesterday, Qatar was the better side for most of the match and created many opportunities but did not succeed in translating any of them into goals.

AL-ATTIYAH AND AL-BUAINAIN TO CARRY QATAR'S FLAG AT OPENING CEREMONY

Meanwhile, rally champion and shooter Nasser Saleh al-Attiyah and women's dressage star Maryam al-Buainain will carry Qatar's flag today at the opening ceremony, which will officially open the Asian Games in Hangzhou.

Al-Attiyah is undoubtedly a legend in Qatar sport. Besides his exploits in rallying, he has also won bronze at the skeet competition at the Olympic Games in



Qatar's volleyball team celebrate after their win over Bahrain during the Hangzhou Asian Games in China yesterday. Qatar will take on Pakistan in the quarters tomorrow.

London in 2012. Al-Buainain has proved her talent in dressage, having competed in international events and secured commendable results.

Qatar has sent 185 male and female athletes, who will compete in 27 sports: archery, athletics, basketball, boxing, chess, cycling, electronic sports, equestrian, football, fencing, gymnastics, golf, handball, jiu-jitsu, karate, windsurfing, squash, swimming, tennis, taekwondo, triathlon, table tennis, volleyball, 3x3 basketball, beach volleyball and weightlifting.

With more than 12,000 athletes from 45 nations competing across a whopping programme of 40 sports, the Games will be China's first mega-event since last year's Beijing Winter Olympics, which were held under strict Covid protocols.

Following the scrapping of China's "zero-Covid" policy in late-2022, Hangzhou promises to be a more festive event and a welcome diversion from the property market woes and high youth unemployment that have dogged the domestic economy.

Fans, athletes and officials will move freely between shiny, new stadiums in Hangzhou and five other Yangtze River Delta cities in one of the country's most prosperous regions.

Like the 2008 Beijing Olympics and 2010 Asian Games in Guangzhou, local organisers will hope Hangzhou can showcase the nation's strength and that home athletes will put China top of the medals table as they have done at the last 10 editions.

Given the quality throughout China's 886-strong delegation, there should be little doubt of the latter, at least. The Games' novelty factor will instead lie in new competitions, even if some stretch the definition of sport to its limits.

Organisers have jumped aboard the Olympics' youth push, adding breakdancing - or 'breaking' - to the programme a year out from its Olympic debut at Paris. Esports will be a medal event for the first time after being a demonstration event at the 2018 Asian Games in Jakarta.

Celebrity gamers like South Korea's Lee



Qatar's beach volleyball pair Cherif Younousse and Ahmed Tijan in action during their match against Alnakran Abdilla and Jaron Requisition of the Philippines.



Qatar and Palestine players battle for the ball yesterday.

Sang-hyeok, better known as 'Faker', will compete for seven esports golds across seven titles, including 'League of Legends' and 'FIFA Online 4'.

After being dropped from the 2018 programme, cricket returns at Hangzhou in the Twenty20 format to give the sport another push before its expected addition to the Olympics for the 2028 Los Angeles Games. Cricket powerhouse India will be busy preparing for the 50-overs World Cup starting in October but will send men's and women's squads to the Asian Games for the first time in a coup for Hangzhou.

Nine of the sports in Hangzhou come with the additional prize of qualification for the Olympics including archery, boxing, breaking, hockey, sailing, tennis and

water polo. Some of the events lack big names due to scheduling clashes but there is a sprinkling of stardust in swimming, athletics and gymnastics, and heaps of it in the table tennis, badminton and weightlifting competitions, Asia's traditional strengths.

China's butterfly queen Zhang Yufei will bid for a fourth gold in the pool at her third Asian Games to add to her two Olympic and two world titles. The hosts' newly crowned women's world number one golfer Yin Ruoning will tee off in the individual and team events, five years after taking a team bronze for China at Jakarta. Indian fans will cheer on their first Olympic athletics champion when Neeraj Chopra throws in the javelin.

MOTOGP

Marini fastest after second India practice



Mooney VR46 Racing's Italian rider Luca Marini steers his bike during the first free practice session ahead of the Indian MotoGP Grand Prix at the Buddh International Circuit in Greater Noida on the outskirts of New Delhi yesterday. (AFP)

AFP
Greater Noida, India

Luca Marini topped yesterday's second practice session at India's MotoGP debut at the Buddh International Circuit.

The Italian, who rides a Ducati for VR46 Racing, lapped the Buddh circuit in one minute, 44.782 seconds, which was 0.008sec ahead of Jorge Martin on a Pramac Ducati and 0.051sec in front of Aprilia Racing's Aleix Espargaro.

Marini, who claimed his first MotoGP podium at the Americas GP in April, stands seventh in the 2023 overall championship standings led by fellow Italian Francesco Bagnaia.

Reigning world champion Bagnaia, on a factory Ducati, was 15th after the morning practice but put in a better run in the second session to come in seventh. In MotoGP, the

10 quickest riders in practice take part in the final qualifying session today for the first 12 places on the grid.

They are joined by the two fastest riders from the first qualifying session, which sets spots 13 to 22.

Marco Bezzecchi topped the morning practice but finished fifth after the second session on one minute, 45.202sec.

Tony Arbolino (ELF Marc VDS Racing Team) clocked one minute, 52.1050 seconds on his final lap to top Moto 2.

The competition for the top spot was fiercely contested between Somkiat Chandra (Idemitsu Honda Team Asia), his teammate Ai Ogura and Pedro Acosta (Red Bull KTM). Throughout the practice sessions, they kept dethroning each other to rein at the top.

However, it was Arbolino who had the last laugh. Finally, Acosta finished second clocking one minute, 52.1700 seconds, while

Ogura and Chandra settled at third and fourth with one minute, 52.1880 and one minute, 52.3190 seconds

Collin Veijer of Netherlands riding Liqui Moly Husqvarna topped the Moto3 standing in Practice 2 with a timing of one minute, 59.5660 seconds.

He was the only rider fastest in the category with timing under two minutes for most part of the second Practice Session, until Spanish rider Jaume Masia astride Leopard Racing clocked sub-two-minute with one minute, 59.7520 seconds in the last few minutes of the session to challenge Veijer.

Stefano Nepa, currently at the 9th position in overstanding, clocked two minutes, 00.1220 seconds for his third position.

India's Kadai Yaseen Ahamed, wildcard entry representing Petronas, found himself out of time with his timing of two minutes, 06.0820 seconds.

India is hosting the 13th of the 20 MotoGP races scheduled for this season.

The Buddh track on the outskirts of capital New Delhi hosted Formula One for three seasons until 2013.

Riders have raised concerns about some corners and walls too close to the asphalt.

Top 10 times from the second practice session at the India MotoGP:

1. Luca Marini (ITA/Ducati-VR46) 1 min, 44.782sec.
2. Jorge Martin (ESP/Pramac Ducati) at 0.008sec.
3. Aleix Espargaro (ESP/Aprilia) 0.051.
4. Marc Marquez (ESP/Honda) 0.335.
5. Marco Bezzecchi (ITA/Ducati-VR46) 0.420.
6. Maverick Vinales (ESP/Aprilia) 0.431.
7. Francesco Bagnaia (ITA/Ducati) 0.498.
8. Fabio Quartararo (FRA/Yamaha) 0.509.
9. Johann Zarco (FRA/Pramac Ducati) 0.523.
10. Joan Mir (ESP/Honda) 0.550

CRICKET

Shami, batters set up India's clinical win over Australia

Four half centuries help India complete the run-chase easily

Reuters
Mohali

Seamer Mohamed Shami claimed career-best figures of 5-51 and India's frontline batters gave a good account themselves to secure their five-wicket victory against Australia in the opening one-day international yesterday.

Put into bat, Australia were all out for 276 in exactly 50 overs even though 300 looked within their reach before Shami polished off their tail.

In reply, four of India's top six batters smashed half-centuries as the home side led, who have rested several frontline players, romped home with eight balls to spare.

Shami removed Mitchell Marsh in the first over to give India a strong start after home captain K L Rahul won the toss and elected to field.

Nearly all of Australia's frontline batters got the starts in the match but only David Warner (52) managed a half-century.

The left-hander combined in a 94-run stand with Steve Smith, who made 41 in his return to action from a wrist injury.

Marnus Labuschagne (39) and Cameron Green (31) chipped in with useful runs in the middle order but could not soldier on.

Australia still looked poised for a bigger total with Josh Inglis (45) and Marcus Stoinis (29) scoring freely.

Shami returned to claim three lower-order wickets to hasten



Australia's Steven Smith (right) congratulates India's K L Rahul (centre) after India won the first one-day international in Mohali yesterday. (AFP)

their collapse. India began their chase brightly, aided by Shubman Gill's (74) silken batting and a reprieve to Ruturaj Gaikwad (71) when Jos Inglis dropped the batter, then on 17, off Sean Abbott's bowling.

Gaikwad opened the innings
Gaikwad opened the innings in place of regular skipper Rohit Sharma, who is among several frontline players rested for the first two matches of the series to keep them fresh for the home

World Cup beginning on October 5.

After Adam Zampa removed both the openers and Shreyas Iyer ran himself out in between, Australia looked back in the contest.

Suryakumar Yadav, who made a cheeky 50, and Rahul batted sensibly to frustrate Australia. Rahul made 58 not out, staying put till the end to secure India's victory by hitting Abbott for a four and a six.

The teams move to Indore for the second match tomorrow and

the three-match series concludes in Rajkot on Wednesday.

BRIEF SCORES

Australia: 276 all out in 50 overs (David Warner 52, Josh Inglis 45, Steven Smith 41; Mohamed Shami 5-51, Jasprit Bumrah 1-43)

India: 281-5 in 48.4 overs (Ruturaj Gaikwad 71, Shubman Gill 74, KL Rahul 58; Adam Zampa 2-57, Pat Cummins 1-44)

Result: India win by 5 wickets
Toss: India Series: India lead Australia 1-0 in 3-match ODI series

FOCUS

Pakistan call pacer Ali in place of injured Shah

Reuters
Lahore

Pakistan will play without injured pace bowler Naseem Shah at the World Cup starting next month in India, with Hasan Ali taking his place in the 15-man squad announced yesterday.

The 20-year-old injured his right shoulder during Pakistan's Asia Cup Super Four defeat by arch-rivals India in Colombo last week and was forced to leave the pitch as he was unable to finish his 10th over.

Naseem is set to spend up to four months on the sidelines after being advised to undergo surgery.

"Naseem Shah is a key bowler for us, but he's injured," former captain and chief selector Inzamam-ul-Haq told reporters. "I did not make too many changes in the team. It's more or less the same team you have seen play in the last one year maybe."

"Unfortunately, the report we have from our doctors, we hear Naseem will be out for a longer time than just the World Cup. At this time, he was the world's best bowler in my view. It's a loss for Pakistan. We hope he's fit soon."

Pakistan's pace attack will be

led by Shaheen Shah Afridi and he will be supported by Haris Rauf, Mohamed Waseem and Ali in a largely unchanged side led by Babar Azam.

Inzamam said the world's top-ranked ODI team may have paid the price for allowing too many players to compete in a hot and humid nation like Sri Lanka in the buildup to the World Cup.

"They played a Test series there, then the Lankan Premier League, a series against Afghanistan and also Asia Cup matches. We wonder if spending such a long time in such conditions led to injuries to our bowlers as well as some batters," Inzamam said.

"Pakistan was the number one ODI team before the World Cup. We have to keep our trust on these players."

Pakistan, 1992 World Cup champions, will begin their campaign against the Netherlands on Oct. 6 in Hyderabad.

Pakistan squad: Babar Azam (captain), Shadab Khan, Abdullah Shafique, Fakhar Zaman, Haris Rauf, Hasan Ali, Iftikhar Ahmed, Imam-ul-Haq, Mohaead Nawaz, Mohamed Rizwan, Mohaead Wasim Jnr, Salman Ali Agha, Saud Shakeel, Shaheen Shah Afridi and Usama Mir.

SL and Bangladesh into cricket semis as rain plays a hand

Hangzhou, China: Sri Lanka swept aside Thailand yesterday in a rain-affected women's cricket quarter-final at the Asian Games and Bangladesh joined them in the last four after their clash with Hong Kong was washed out. Sri Lanka easily chased down their target of 79 in 15 overs of a rain-affected match at the Zhejiang University of Technology Pingfeng Cricket Field in Hangzhou.

Thailand had earlier fought back from 37-6 to post 78-7 in their 15 overs, largely due to a battling 31 off 24 balls from Chanida Sutthiruang batting at number

seven. The Sri Lankans cruised past their target with 25 balls to spare, Harshitha Samarawickrama hitting a six to end the contest as they finished on 84-2. Sri Lanka will face Pakistan tomorrow in the second semi-final with India playing Bangladesh, who progressed on higher world ranking after their quarter-final with Hong Kong was washed out yesterday.

The final will take place on Monday. The 19th Asian Games officially open on Saturday. The men's cricket will begin on September 27.

PREVIEW/EXPO STARS LEAGUE

Facing Qatar SC difficult, says Al Sadd coach Miguel ahead of Round 4 clash

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Al Sadd coach Bruno Miguel spoke to the media ahead of their 2023-2024 season Expo Stars League Week 4 match against Qatar SC.

"The next match will be difficult because Qatar SC play in a different style and all competitors are different and have different playing styles. We must know and how to understand these styles and how to support players who can make a difference, advance as a team and score goals," Miguel said.

"The challenge for us is to be in the best preparation not to concede goals and try to score at the same time.

"We are coming after two draws and I believe that we were better than the competitors in both matches. We created opportunities to score goals, but unfortunately we were not able to score. As



Al Sadd coach Bruno Miguel during a press conference ahead of his team's Expo Stars League match against Qatar SC. **Right:** Qatar SC coach Youssef Safri (centre) and player Sebastian Soria (left) during a press conference yesterday.

I mentioned, the challenge is not conceding goals at the same time.

"Regarding the joining of new player Ilyes Housni, "I would say another player joined the team to help us. We welcome him to the club and we hope that he will have a positive impact on the team in the upcoming matches," said Miguel.

Al Sadd player Abdullah al-



Yazidi said: "Certainly, facing Qatar SC will be very difficult. We at Al Sadd club are very focused and confident in order to be back on the winning path after the last draw against Al Wakrah in the league championship.

"We always play for the three points and we have the power to continue working and correct the

mistakes that occurred to achieve victory against Qatar SC."

Focusing on the strengths of our team, we're ready to face Al Sadd: Qatar SC coach Safri

"During training, we were keen to strengthen the tactical aspects in addition to our efforts during the past days to correct the mistakes

that happened in our previous match," Qatar SC coach Youssef Safri said.

"We worked with great focus in training on some technical conditions and the psychological factor, and our matches against Al Sadd are always in an enthusiastic atmosphere and witness strong performances. Al Sadd are a distinguished team with high-level players. It is important for us to focus on our players and exploit their strengths with great determination to achieve victory, especially against a big team like Al Sadd. It is important that we develop step by step.

"I am always keen to remind the players to think about having fun and dedication to the club's shirt and to always appear in a way befitting the level of Qatar SC and its history. I am confident that the players will provide their best. He also thanked the loyal fans who always stand behind the team," said Safri.

Qatar SC player Sebastian Soria said: "We always strive to provide

the best in the league championship and all competitions, especially since we are always keen to maintain teamwork and take advantage of the opportunities presented to us in an effort to score the largest possible number of points and compete for the lead.

"All games are important and our matches against Al Sadd are always very close. We must make a great effort to achieve our goals and we hope to win."

EXPO STARS LEAGUE FIXTURES: Today

6:00pm Al Rayyan vs Al Arabi at Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium

8:00pm Umm Salal vs Al Ahli at Al Bayt Stadium

8:00pm Qatar SC vs Al Sadd at Khalifa International Stadium

Tomorrow
6:00pm Al Gharafa vs Al Duhail at Al Bayt Stadium

8:00pm Al Markhiya vs Al Wakrah at Al Janoub Stadium

8:00pm: Muaitheer vs Al Shamal at Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium

FIBA U16 CHAMPIONSHIP

China, NZ, Australia and the Philippines reach semis

All four winning teams also qualify for FIBA U17 Basketball World Cup 2024 to be played in Turkiye

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Australia, China, New Zealand and the Philippines all won in the quarter-finals of the FIBA U16 Asian Championship 2023 to claim the remaining spots at the FIBA U17 Basketball World Cup 2024 to be played in Turkiye from 29 June to 7 July.

Australia's winning streak continued yesterday as they beat Jordan in dominating fashion, 117-50.

The Crocs have now scored at least 100 points in four straight games, extending their winning streak in the competition to 15.

Seven players scored in double-digits in this game for Australia led by Henry Sewell who had 18 points and 13 rebounds. Every player recorded at least 1 assist for the team, combining for 34 assists in total - their third game of at least 30 assists this year in the competition.

Huan, China block Iran from making history

In an exciting clash between the Asian basketball powerhouses, China defeated Iran 62-56 to reach the semi-finals.

Even though Iran had beaten China in their two latest encounters at the youth level (U18 Asian Championship 2016 and U19 World Cup 2015), they had yet to beat China in the U16 Asian Championship after two previous clashes.

That losing streak was extended to three games, despite a valiant effort by Iran, in a tightly contested



China vs Iran



New Zealand vs Qatar

game. Neither team went up ahead by double-digits and saw the lead change hands 11 times, but in the end, it was China who remained composed to the end to stay on top at the buzzer. Iran had the gap trimmed down to two points with less than 4 minutes left in the game, but Ziheng Wang stole the ball on two straight possessions to swing momentum back China's way.

Sinan Huan blocked an attempt

by Iran in the final seconds that potentially could have turned it to a one-possession game, shutting down all hope for good. Huan recorded a total of 6 blocks in this game, the most in U16 Asian Championship since Kai Sotto in 2017. Leading the way for China once again was Boyuan Zhang who had 22 points including an off-balanced three-point shot in the final minutes that silenced the Iran bench.



Australia vs Jordan



The Philippines vs Japan

The win keeps China's streak going of making it to every semi-final of the U16 Asian Championship they play in.

They are aiming for fifth trip to the Final and a fourth U16 title to add to their resume.

New Zealand power past Qatar with dominating show

New Zealand, meanwhile, ran away with a 110-33 victory over Qatar to secure a third consecutive semi-fi-

nals bid in as many appearances in the U16 Asian Championship. The Junior Tall Blacks dominated on all ends, holding Qatar to only 19.0 percent shooting from the field.

The points scored by Qatar are the least amount of points ever allowed by New Zealand in the competition.

They also grabbed 67 rebounds, the most by a New Zealand team in the competition.

This is also the most points

scored by New Zealand in the competition ever since their first game when they scored 124 points, resulting in their largest victory.

Five players scored in double-digits for New Zealand, with two surpassing the 20-point mark in Lachlan Crate (20 points) and Oscar Goodman (23 points).

Meanwhile, Troy Plumtree had a big double-double of 15 points and 17 rebounds.

New Zealand are also headed back to the FIBA U17 Basketball World Cup with the victory.

The Philippines prove too good for Japan

Fired up by the play of their rising star, the Philippines came from behind to beat Japan 64-59.

The game started out in favour of the Philippines as they blasted off to a 7-0 run.

However, that lead didn't last long as Japan ran back with a run of their own to overtake the lead.

Japan continued to play to their form, and build up a lead as big as 10 points at half time.

Then, Kiefer Alas was welcomed to the stage.

The Philippines leading scorer was coming off a subpar scoring effort against Korea and had 7 points in the first half against Japan.

In the third quarter, he completely took over the show, scoring 14 of the Philippines' 21 points - outscoring Japan all by himself.

QUARTER-FINALS RESULTS

Australia vs Jordan - 117-50

China vs Iran - 62-56

New Zealand vs Qatar- 110-33

Japan vs Philippines - 64-59

FORMULA ONE

Verstappen dominates Suzuka practice

AFP
Suzuka, Japan

Max Verstappen laid down a marker with the fastest times in both practice sessions for the Japanese Grand Prix yesterday, as he looks to put one hand on his third-straight Formula One title. Red Bull's Verstappen put down a lap of 1min 30.688sec to finish 0.320sec quicker than second-placed Charles Leclerc of Ferrari in the second practice.

Verstappen, who leads teammate and nearest rival Sergio Perez by 151 points in the championship standings, cannot clinch the title tomorrow but a favourable result can set him up to seal the deal at the Qatar Grand Prix next month.

The Dutchman is looking to bounce back from a disappointing fifth-place finish at last weekend's

Singapore Grand Prix that ended his record streak of 10-straight wins. He said his car was "enjoyable to drive again".

"We had a strong day on short runs, long runs," said Verstappen.

"There's a lot of degradation on this track so it will be quite tough on tyres in the race, but so far it's a good start to the weekend."

Verstappen made his intentions clear from the start of the day, finishing the first practice quickest ahead of Ferrari's Carlos Sainz and McLaren's Lando Norris.

And there was no let-up in the second session. He briefly ceded top spot to Leclerc before switching to fresh tyres and reclaiming first place. Norris had the third-fastest time with 1min 31.152sec.

Verstappen said his rivals were "all a bit tight behind me".

"We'll have a look but at the end of the day we focus on ourselves and try to optimise our perform-



Red Bull's Max Verstappen in action during practice at the Japanese Grand Prix yesterday. (Reuters)

ance," he said. "If we do that then I'm confident we fight for pole."

Red Bull chief Christian Horner was happy to see Verstappen back in form after his Singapore woes.

"It's still early days but Max laid down a statement of intent with his first flying lap of the weekend, which was truly impressive," he

said.

Perez did not enjoy such a successful day, finishing ninth in the second session. He was more than a second behind Verstappen but said his team had a "pretty good understanding of the direction that we need to take".

"Things are certainly look-

ing much better than they did last weekend, which is positive," he said. Alpine's Pierre Gasly crashed with just minutes of the second session remaining. Gasly was unhurt but his front wing was badly damaged after catching the barriers. "Locked up, sorry for that," he said over the team radio. Sainz,

who won last week in Singapore, finished fourth, followed by Mercedes's George Russell and Aston Martin's Fernando Alonso.

Seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton was 14th in a tough outing for Mercedes.

Hamilton said he had "a lack of confidence in the car".

"We know we've got a lot of work to do tonight to pick up the performance," said Hamilton, who finished third in Singapore. "I do believe we can make improvements though."

Haas's Kevin Magnussen had a near miss with Sainz at turn two, giving the Spanish driver a sarcastic thumbs-up in response. Alfa Romeo's Zhou Guanyu suffered a hydraulic leak late in the session.

Lance Stroll was back in action after missing the Singapore race, following a huge crash in qualifying that destroyed his Aston Martin.

GOLF

Europe fight back in style after USA sweep Solheim Cup foursomes

AFP
Casares, Spain

The European team started to fight back yesterday afternoon as they edged fourballs to trail the USA 5-3 at the end of the first day of the Solheim Cup.

The USA swept the morning foursomes 4-0 at Finca Cortesin in Spain, but Europe collected two wins and two halves in taking the afternoon fourballs 3-1 to revive their hopes of an unprecedented third win in a row.

Europe received a huge fillip from Leona Maguire in the second match. All square and with American Lexi Thompson on the fringe of the green in two at the par five 18th, the Irish star chipped in for birdie.

Clearly rattled, Thompson half shanked her chip and could only manage a par and the Europeans, Maguire and Georgia Hall, claimed a first full point.

"it was a great win," said Maguire, who won four and half points out of five on her debut two years ago.

"Georgia kept it together on the



Team Europe golfer Maja Stark hits her tee shot during 2023 Solheim Cup at Finca Cortesin in Casares, Spain, yesterday. (AFP)

front nine and then I made some birdies on the back nine. It's been a long, tiring day but it was a good comeback in the afternoon."

Spaniard Carlota Ciganda, who had sat out foursomes, carried on the home charge in the afternoon, joining rookie Linn Grant in a 4 and 2 victory over Ally Ewing and Angel Yin in the final foursome.

The other matches swung back and forth.

In the top tie, rookie Gemma Dryburgh and Madelene Sagstrom shared the spoils with US rookie

Rose Zhang and Megan Khang. A highlight was Dryburgh's chip in for birdie at the 16th - but Zhang followed her in with a 20-foot putt to keep the match all square.

The third match was also a well-earned half. US Open Champion Allisen Corpuz holed a long putt for birdie at the 18th, but rookie Maja Stark followed her in from around the same range.

In the same match, Emily Pedersen claimed the shot of the day with a hole in one at the 178 yard 12th.

Murray targets Paris Olympics after Tokyo disappointment

Zhuhai, China: Briton **Andy Murray** said he hopes to play in his fifth and likely final Olympic Games in Paris next year, after the two-times gold medalist endured disappointment in Tokyo due to injury.

The 36-year-old Scot claimed his first gold at the London Games in 2012 and backed it up with another at Rio 2016, but he pulled out of the singles competition in Tokyo two years ago with a thigh strain.

Murray continued to compete in the doubles tournament with Joe Salisbury in Japan, where the pair reached the quarter-finals.

"I'd love to play another Olympics. I've had thrilling experiences throughout my career at the Olympics. I've loved every single one I've been involved in," Murray said at the Zhuhai Championships. "I was really disappointed last time. I'd gotten an injury before the tournament and I promised my partner I'd prioritise the doubles over singles if there was a problem.

"And we were very close to getting a medal in the doubles.

"We were up a set and 4-3, serving with game points in the quarter-finals and we had a really good chance and didn't quite do it. I'd love another opportunity to play next year in Paris.

"It would be my fifth Olympics and most likely the last one."

Three-times Grand Slam champion and former world number one Murray has fought his way up the world rankings since having hip resurfacing surgery in 2019 and is currently 41st.

Last week, he helped guide Britain into the quarter-finals of the Davis Cup where they will take on Serbia in November.



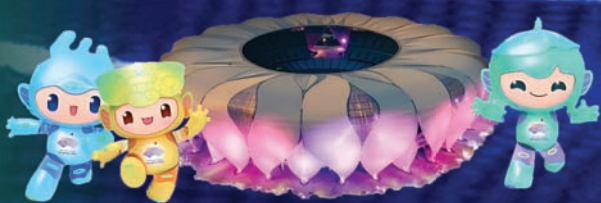
Confident Kenin continues resurgence by reaching Guadalajara semis

Former Australian Open champion Sofia Kenin reached back-to-back semi-finals for the first time since 2019 as the American downed unseeded Canadian Leylah Fernandez 6-4 6-7(6) 6-1 in the Guadalajara Open in Mexico.

Kenin had reached a career-high number four in the world rankings after her 2020 Melbourne triumph and finished runner-up at the French Open later that season, before injuries, illness and off-court issues saw her drop to 235 last year. "I'm very happy, very proud of myself," said Kenin, who is bidding to make her first WTA 1000 final. "Obviously it means a lot to me. I've been putting in some hard work and it's paying off, so I'm super proud." In the semi-finals, Kenin will take on American world number 111 Caroline Dolehide who saved four match points to beat Martina Trevisan 3-6 7-6(9) 6-3. Earlier, third seed Caroline Garcia powered past two-times Grand Slam champion Victoria Azarenka 6-3 6-4. The Frenchwoman meets second seed and last year's runner-up Maria Sakkari, who eased past Emiliana Arango 6-3 6-4.

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SPORT



19th Asian Games
Hangzhou 2022



From Barshim to Chopra: athletes to watch at Asian Games

Top athletes looking to lay down a marker a year out from the Paris Olympics

Reuters

Hangzhou, China

The Asian Games officially kick off today in the eastern Chinese city of Hangzhou, a year later than planned due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Here are some of the top athletes looking to lay down a marker a year out from the Paris Olympics:

MUTAZ BARSHIM Athletics, high jump

Well before Barshim claimed Qatar's first Olympic track and field gold medal at the Tokyo Games - famously shared with Italian Gianmarco Tamberi - the rangy son of Sudanese parents was dominating the Asian Games as a teenager.

Hangzhou will be his second Asian Games in China, having won the event at Guangzhou in 2010 as a 19-year-old and then defending the title four years later at Incheon.

Owner of the second highest jump in history (2.43m), the 32-year-old claimed the world titles at London (2017), Doha (2019) and Eugene (2022). He took bronze in his recent title defence at Budapest despite having an off-night by his lofty standards.

NEERAJ CHOPRA Athletics, javelin



Hangzhou will be Barshim's second Asian Games in China, having won gold at Guangzhou in 2010 as a 19-year-old and then defending the title four years later at Incheon.

Chopra ended India's long wait for an Olympic champion in track and field when he threw 87.58m at the Tokyo Games. He also became India's second individual Olympic gold medalist, 13 years after Abhinav Bindra won shooting gold at Beijing in 2008.

He proved Tokyo was no fluke by throwing 88.17m in Budapest in August to become India's first athletics world champion, pipping Pakistan's Arshad Nadeem for the gold.

An officer in the Indian army, 25-year-old Chopra is the reigning Asian Games champion and will battle Nadeem again in his title defence.



QIN HAIYANG Swimming

China's Qin stormed to an unprecedented treble in the men's 50, 100 and 200m breaststroke at July's world championships in Fukuoka and also set the 200m world record (2:05.48),



smashing the previous mark set by Australia's Olympic champion Zac Stubblety-Cooke.

The 24-year-old is now gunning for British great Adam Peaty's 100m world record (56.88 seconds) as he gears up for the Paris Olympics. Qin will look to repeat the Fukuoka treble in front of home fans in Hangzhou and also win the 200m individual medley, having taken bronze in the event at the 2018 Asian Games in Jakarta.

YIN RUONING Golf

Even at just 20, Yin is no stranger to the Asian Games, the recently crowned women's world number one having won team bronze as a teenage schoolgirl at Jakarta in 2018.

China's second world number one,



'FAKER' Esports

South Korea's Lee Sang-hyeok, better known by his gaming handle 'Faker', will be one of the biggest drawcards at Hangzhou as esports makes its Asian Games debut as a medal event, having been a demonstration sport at Jakarta.

Dubbed the 'Michael Jordan of esports', the 27-year-old's pursuit is 'League of Legends', a multi-player



online battle arena game which he has dominated in competition for much of the past decade. A long-serving member of South Korean professional gaming team T1, high school drop-out Faker will anchor his nation's bid for gold in League's team event at Hangzhou.

BAKHODIR JALOLOV Boxing



Towering southpaw Jalolov won the super-heavyweight gold at the Tokyo Olympics, beating American Richard Torrez Jr with an unanimous points decision in the final, to continue Uzbekistan's history of punching above its weight in global boxing.

Jalolov, who carried Uzbekistan's flag at the last two Summer Olympics, has built an unbeaten 13-0 record as a professional. He will be strongly favoured to win gold in the super-heavyweight (+92kg) division in Hangzhou on the way to defending his Olympic gold at Paris next year.

SPOTLIGHT

Nagelsmann named coach of Euro 2024 hosts Germany

AFP

Munich

Julian Nagelsmann has been given nine months to revive flailing Germany ahead of hosting Euro 2024 after being named as the sacked Hansi Flick's successor as national team coach yesterday. Germany fired Flick with the national team struggling, the German football association (DFB) fearing another embarrassing performance in a major tournament, this time as hosts at next year's European championships.

Former Bayern Munich boss Nagelsmann has signed a deal until the end of next July, allowing the 36-year-old to leave after Euro 2024. "We have a European Championship in our own country - that's something special," Nagelsmann said in a statement. "I have a great desire to take on this challenge."

Nagelsmann said he signed the short-term deal "to keep the Euros in focus" but insisted he "would not rule out" an extension. Flick, who became the first coach in German history to be sacked, had won just four of 17 matches leading up to his dismissal and took the team to a disappointing group-stage exit at the 2022 World Cup in Qatar.

The four-time world champions were also knocked out in the group stage at the 2018 World Cup in Russia under previous boss Joachim Loew. Flick was sacked after a humiliating 4-1 friendly loss to Japan in Wolfsburg in early September. Nagelsmann, who also succeeded Flick as Bayern coach, has been jobless since he was sacked by the German champions in March.

Benjamin Glueck and Sandro



Wagner have been appointed as Nagelsmann's assistants. Current Bayern manager Thomas Tuchel, who replaced Nagelsmann in the job, congratulated the new Germany boss. "It goes without saying that Julian is a top coach," Tuchel said, predicting Germany will have "a good home Euros" under the manager.

Nagelsmann was seen as a rising star after impressive spells at Hoffenheim and RB Leipzig, before getting the top job at Bayern. Nagelsmann was mentioned as a possible candidate for a number of top club vacancies over the summer, being linked with English sides Chelsea and Tottenham Hotspur, as well as Paris Saint-Germain.

Nagelsmann also confirmed Barcelona midfielder Ilkay Gundogan, who Flick named as captain to replace the injured Manuel Neuer, would keep the top job. "I'm extremely convinced of Ilkay as a person and as a player."

Germany's next assignment is a tour to the United States in October, playing friendlies against the USA and Mexico.

PREMIER LEAGUE

United 'fighting' to turn season around: Ten Hag

AFP

London

Erik ten Hag said yesterday that Manchester United are fighting together to try and turn their fortunes around after a calamitous start to the season.

The Red Devils have lost four of their first six matches in all competitions, leaving the Dutch manager with a major task on his hands just over a month into the new campaign. United travel to face struggling Burnley today languishing in 13th place in the Premier League - they have lost 18 of their past 35 away matches in all competitions.

"It's my second year," said Ten Hag, whose team last season finished third in the table and ended a six-year trophy drought. "I know it's not always only going up - you will have your gaps and you get stronger from it as long as you stay together, and that's what we're doing. "The dressing room, staff, all the staff, coaches, medical, everyone is united and at United you fight."

Stories of disgruntlement in the dressing room have begun to emerge while the attitude of players has also been questioned.

Ten Hag tried to paint a positive picture at his pre-match press conference, saying: "I don't know if it's a leak but I know the opinion(s), I know my players. Everyone can make suggestions, we are OK with it."

United's poor form has made the trip to Burnley a high-pressure occasion, and they will again be without Jadon Sancho, who remains absent from the squad after a spat with the manager. It is unclear whether the former Borussia Dortmund winger will play for the club again. "It depends on him," said Ten Hag. "For the rest, we are preparing for Burnley and that's our focus. He will not be in the squad."

United have been badly hit by injuries. Raphael Varane, Mason Mount, Sofyan Amrabat and Harry Maguire were set to train ahead of the match at Turf Moor but Ten Hag was cautious when asked if they would be available.

Central to United's problems has been a lack of defensive solidity, with 14 goals conceded in

their past five games.

Goalkeeper Andre Onana held his hands up after making a mistake for Bayern's first goal in the 4-3 Champions League defeat this week, but Ten Hag believes the problems are collective. "It's about the team and, as a team, we don't have the results in this moment so then also individuals don't bring the performance you expect, not only one player, there are more, including the manager," he said. "I always tell my players we attack with 11 and we defend with 11. When one or two are not doing their job, it's like a pack of cards, so that is not only one or two players."

FIXTURES

Today (1400 GMT unless stated): Crystal Palace v Fulham, Luton v Wolves, Manchester City v Nottingham Forest, Brentford v Everton (1630), Burnley v Manchester United (1900)
Tomorrow (1300 unless stated): Arsenal v Tottenham, Brighton v Bournemouth, Chelsea v Aston Villa, Liverpool v West Ham, Sheffield United v Newcastle (1530)

Arab Gulf Cup Football Federation renamed as Gulf Football Association



The Executive Office of the regional football governing body, led by its President Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa bin Ahmed al-Thani, yesterday made the decision to change the name of the federation from Arab Gulf Cup Football Federation to Gulf Football Association, during a meeting held in Kuwait. During the meeting, members of the Executive Office discussed various items in the agenda, including the approval of the date for hosting the 26th Gulf Championship in Kuwait in December 2024. Additionally, amendments to the federation's statutes and organisational structure were also discussed, while the possibility of creating new championships for different age groups was also raised.