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MOTOGP | Page 2

Martin wins Indian GP sprint after Bezzecchi crashes



EXPOSTARS LEAGUE | Page 3

Moreno strike keeps Rayyan top after win over Arabi

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

SPOTLIGHT

Qatar eyes best medal haul at biggest-ever Asian Games

Led by flag bearers al-Kuwari and al-Buainain, Qatar's contingent walked out at opening ceremony



Qatar's flag bearers Tamim Jamal al-Kuwari and dressage rider Maryam al-Buainain walk into the Hangzhou Olympic stadium, during the opening ceremony of the Asian Games in Zhejiang, China, yesterday. (AFP)



Qatar's women athletes dressed in traditional abaya before opening ceremony.

By Sports Reporter
Hangzhou, China

The 19th Asian Games was declared open by Chinese President Xi Jinping after a colourful ceremony in Hangzhou yesterday, launching a two-week sporting extravaganza that boasts more athletes than the Olympics.

After being delayed by a year because of China's now-abandoned zero-Covid policy, more than 12,000 competitors from 45 nations and territories will battle it out in 40 sports.

Led by their flag bearers in triathlete Tamim Jamal al-Kuwari and dressage rider Maryam al-Buainain, Qatar's contingent walked out into the 80,000-capacity Hangzhou Olympic stadium, with Qatar Olympic Committee (QOC) President HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani watching from the stands.

The opening ceremony was also attended by Second Vice-President of the QOC Dr Thani bin Abdul Rahman al-Kuwari, Secretary-General Jassim bin Rashid al-Buainain and other officials.

Qatar has sent a strong 185-athlete contingent, who will compete in 27 events: 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.

Qatar - which won 13 medals, including 6 gold, 4 silver and 3 bronze at 2018 Asiad in Jakarta and Palembang - is hoping for its best medal haul ever. The nation's strongest gold medal hope is from Olympic champions - Muzatq Barshim in high jump and Fares Ibrahim in weightlifting. The handball and volleyball team and beach volleyball pair Cherif Younousse and Ahmed Tijan are also strong contenders for gold.

Today, the spikers face Pakistan in the quarter-finals, while the 2018 gold medalists Younousse and Tijan take on Oman's Haitham al-Shereiqi and Ahmed al-Hosni in the round of 16 at the Ningbo Banbianshan Court. Qatar's second beach volleyball duo Mahmoud Essam and Abdullah Naseem are also up against a Chinese pair in the last 16. The handball team will play their first Group B match against Hong Kong at the Zhejiang Gongshang University Sports Centre, as they gear up to defend the gold they have won in the last two editions. Qatar athletes will also be in action today in swimming, tennis, fencing, Esports and taekwondo.



Qatar's shooter Nasser Saleh al-Attiyah (centre), Qatar Shooting & Archery Association President Mishaal Ibrahim al-Nasr (second left) and other officials pose in Hangzhou.



19th Asian Games
Hangzhou 2022

HIGH-TECH OPENING CEREMONY

Meanwhile, the opening ceremony in the Eastern city of Hangzhou was spectacular and at times raucous, which organisers hope will lift the mood in a nation struggling with an economic slump.

Spectators in the city's 80,000-capacity stadium let out a huge roar as Xi was introduced and walked in to sit with visiting dignitaries including International Olymp-

pic Committee President Thomas Bach. "Finally we can gather for the 19th Asian Games," Raja Randhir Singh, acting president of the Olympic Council of Asia, told the crowd to more cheers. "The one-year postponement was unprecedented in OCA history," he added.

After the Chinese flag was brought out, the first team out was Afghanistan, whose female athletes, based abroad due to sport for women being banned by the Taliban, walked together with their male counterparts. Their flagbearers carried the tricolour flag for Afghanistan which is used by international resistance movements and shunned by the Taliban.

Several teams including Chinese Taipei were vocally welcomed by the spectators, but none more than the home team, whose athletes are expected to dominate the medals table once again.

They also mark a stark contrast to the cheerless Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics which took place under China's strict zero-Covid conditions which lasted for nearly three years from January 2020 until late 2022. In an often spell-binding ceremony intended to burnish Hangzhou's status as

one of China's centres of technology and creativity, dozens of balletic dancers hovered above a digitally-projected lake in the wake of a flotilla of sail-boards.

In a modern take on the traditional lighting of the cauldron, a huge, digitally animated torchbearer "ran" the length of the stadium before settling to loom above the actual torch-bearer, China's Olympic champion swimmer Wang Shun.

In synch, the pair lit a huge, multi-pronged cauldron, prompting another bout of cheering and soon after, a digital firework display. But many of those not lucky enough to get a ticket grumbled about disruption.

A sizeable "traffic control area" around the city's Olympic stadium were blocked off, at least one metro station was shut and other Games centres were closed and deliveries were disrupted yesterday.

Organisers have not disclosed spending on the Games, though the Hangzhou government has said it spent more than 200bn yuan (\$30bn) in the five years through 2020 on transport infrastructure, stadiums, accommodation and other facilities.

Organisers hoped a high-tech opening ceremony yesterday will help drum up excitement for the Games. Interest at home has been muted as the economy sputters and some question the cost of hosting the mega-event.

Dozens of smiling volunteers greeted arriving journalists in Hangzhou this week, with some expressing relief that the event was finally getting started. The official slogan of the event, "Heart to Heart, @

Future", represents the goal of uniting the people and countries of Asia through these games, officials have said, but geopolitical tensions and rivalries threatened to overshadow that effort this week.

ESPORTS TO MAKE ASIAD DEBUT

ESports will make its debut as a medal event at the Games, in what is seen as a step towards inclusion in the Olympics. There will also be regional specialties including dragon boat racing, the Chinese martial art wushu and kabaddi.

Nine sports - among them boxing, break dancing and tennis - will serve as Asia qualifiers for next year's Paris Olympics. A sprinkling of world and Olympic champions adds some stardust, including India's javelin king Neeraj Chopra, Qatari high jumper Muzatq Essa Barshim and Chinese swimming royalty Qin Haiyang and Zhang Yufei.

Olympic Council of Asia honorary life vice-president Wei Jizhong said having so many sporting disciplines was about giving opportunity to as many athletes as possible. "We are open to all. This means our Games are not concentrated only for elite sportspeople," he said.

Although the Games officially opened on Saturday, sports such as football, cricket, volleyball and table tennis had already begun.

The Games will be staged at 54 venues - 14 newly constructed - mostly in Hangzhou but also extending to cities as far afield as Wenzhou, 300 kilometres (180 miles) south.

FOCUS

Martin wins sprint race at Indian MotoGP

AFP
Greater Noida, India

Jorge Martin held the lead from the start to win the sprint race at India's debut MotoGP yesterday and close the gap on championship leader Francesco Bagnaia.

Ducati-Pramac rider Martin started second on the grid and jumped into the lead, while a crash on the first corner saw Marco Bezzecchi slip back from pole position.

World champion Bagnaia came second and Marc Marquez completed the podium at the Buddh International Circuit on the outskirts of New Delhi.

Bezzecchi's Ducati-VR46 got hit from the rear by teammate Luca Marini, who crashed out along with Stefan Bradl and Pol Espargaro.

Marini fractured his left collarbone and will miss today's main race.

The sprint belonged to Martin, who won the previous MotoGP at Misano, with the Spaniard remaining in control as others slipped away.

"The moments before the race were difficult because of a lot of time in the box and it was difficult to concentrate," Martin said about a rain delay.

"But finally everything went well. I did a great start and that was my plan. I got half a second in the first lap and then I tried to push more to increase the gap."

The race was trimmed by a lap after riders complained about the heat in Friday's practice sessions, but he said the conditions for the sprint had been good.

"With low temperature it was nice to ride," he added. "I am the best so far in my career but hope to keep improving."

Bagnaia, sitting on the next chair, quickly responded: "Hope not."

Bezzecchi, who scorched the track in the second qualifying



Prima Pramac Racing's Spanish rider Jorge Martin celebrates after winning the sprint race of the Indian MotoGP Grand Prix at the Buddh International Circuit in Greater Noida, New Delhi, yesterday. (AFP)

session, climbed back up several places over the course of the sprint to finish fifth in a race watched by hundreds in the stands.

- Alex Marquez injury - Bezzecchi said the result was not what

he was looking for despite being very "strong at braking".

Italy's Bagnaia kept his composure to finish second.

"It was a good race. It's never frustrating when you finish on the

podium for sure," said Bagnaia, who now leads the championship on 292 points, 33 points clear of Martin.

"Following Jorge was too much. He has the best advantage while breaking"

On the heat, Bagnaia said: "For me the temperature is not a problem honestly... I don't suffer too much in the hot conditions."

The sprint was pushed back to accommodate a 15-minute wet session following heavy afternoon rain.

With a few wet patches on the course, three more riders including Aleix Espargaro, Johann Zarco and Joan Mir failed to finish.

Alex Marquez - ninth in the standings - was ruled out of both the sprint and today's Grand Prix race when the Spaniard crashed on his Ducati-Gresini and fractured two ribs in the first qualifying session.

Marquez, younger brother to six-time world champion Marc Marquez, was in pain when he was

helped out by the medics and later taken to hospital for scans.

REVISED GRID FOR THE INDIA MOTOGP

- Front row:** 1. Marco Bezzecchi (ITA/Ducati-VR46), 2. Jorge Martin (ESP/Ducati-Pramac), 3. Francesco Bagnaia (ITA/Ducati)
2nd row: 4. Joan Mir (ESP/Honda), 5. Marc Marquez (ESP/Honda), 6. Johann Zarco (FRA/Ducati-Pramac)
3rd row: 7. Fabio Quartararo (FRA/Yamaha), 8. Maverick Vinales (ESP/Aprilia), 9. Aleix Espargaro (ESP/Aprilia)
4th row: 10. Raul Fernandez (ESP/Aprilia-RNF), 11. Fabio de Giannantonio (FRA/Ducati), 12. Brad Binder (RSA/KTM)
5th row: 13. Takaaki Nakagami (JPN/Honda), 14. Jack Miller (AUS/KTM), 15. Franco Morbidelli (FRA/Yamaha)
6th row: 16. Augusto Fernandez (ESP/KTM), 17. Miguel Oliveira (POR/Aprilia), 18. Pol Espargaro (ESP/KTM).

FORMULA 1

Verstappen takes Japanese GP pole

'These high-speed corners are well-balanced, you can push it to the limit'

AFP
Suzuka, Japan

"fired up" Max Verstappen took pole position yesterday for the Japanese Grand Prix, as he looks to take a giant stride towards a third-straight world title this weekend. The Red Bull driver bounced back from a fifth-place finish at last week's Singapore Grand Prix to top the timesheets ahead of McLaren pair Oscar Piastri and Lando Norris.

Verstappen said "Singapore didn't happen" after he roared round the Suzuka circuit in a fastest time of 1min 28.877sec - 0.581sec quicker than Piastri.

The runaway championship leader warned there was more to come in today's race, saying he was "very fired up to have a good weekend here".

"As soon as we put the car on the track it's been very enjoyable to drive, very predictable, which I think is the most important," said Verstappen. "Lap after lap in qualifying was getting better."

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

He has won 12 of 15 races so far this season, including a record streak of 10 in a row that ended in Singapore. He and Perez can help Red Bull clinch the constructors' championship in Japan.

"That was the aim, especially coming from Singapore, I wanted to have a really strong weekend," said Verstappen, who finished fastest in all three Suzuka practices. "Of course, we know that this is the first proper opportunity to win it"

Verstappen said he was enjoying cutting loose on the sweeping high-speed curves of Suzuka after the tight street circuit of Singapore.

"These high-speed corners are really well-balanced and you can



Red Bull Racing's Dutch driver Max Verstappen celebrates after taking pole position in the qualifying session for the Formula One Japanese Grand Prix at the Suzuka circuit, Mie prefecture, yesterday. (AFP)

push it to the limit," he said. "It's just really enjoyable to do."

Piastri claimed second place on the grid with a time of 1min 29.458sec. The Australian rookie had the third-fastest time in Saturday's final practice before qualifying and said he thought he "could be in for a solid weekend".

"This morning we made some good changes and the car looked quick in FP3, I was getting more used to the track too," said the 22-year-old.

"Very happy to be on the front row. Of course, the gap is a lot bigger than I would prefer but I'm happy to be in second."

McLaren teammate Norris was third fastest, 0.035sec behind Piastri. Norris, who finished second behind Ferrari's Carlos Sainz in Singapore, said it had been "a good day".

"I think we've been strong all weekend," he said.

"We're hoping for an easy race but it's never going to be an easy race around here."

Ferrari's Charles Leclerc quali-

fied fourth ahead of Perez and Sainz. Mercedes pair Lewis Hamilton and George Russell were seventh and eighth, respectively.

"The car has generally felt nice to drive today - that was a relief as yesterday was a bad day," said Hamilton. "We typically have at least one suboptimal day each weekend, so Friday was likely that."

Japan's Yuki Tsunoda, who signed a new deal to race for AlphaTauri again next season, qualified ninth in his home grand prix, ahead of Aston Martin's Fernando Alonso. Liam Lawson, Pierre Gasly, Alex Albon, Esteban Ocon and Kevin Magnussen were all eliminated in Q2.

The first qualifying session was red-flagged when Logan Sargeant crashed his Williams at the final corner. The American escaped unscathed but his car sustained serious damage after hitting the grass and slamming into the barriers.

Sargeant was eliminated in Q1 along with Zhou Guanyu, Valtteri Bottas, Nico Hulkenberg and Lance Stroll.

THE STARTING GRID

- Front row:** Max Verstappen (NED/Red Bull), Oscar Piastri (AUS/McLaren)
2nd row: Lando Norris (GBR/McLaren), Charles Leclerc (MON/Ferrari)
3rd row: Sergio Perez (MEX/Red Bull), Carlos Sainz Jr (ESP/Ferrari)
4th row: Lewis Hamilton (GBR/Mercedes), George Russell (GBR/Mercedes)
5th row: Yuki Tsunoda (JPN/AlphaTauri), Fernando Alonso (ESP/Aston Martin)
6th row: Liam Lawson (NZL/AlphaTauri), Pierre Gasly (FRA/Alpine)
7th row: Alexander Albon (THA/Williams), Esteban Ocon (FRA/Alpine)
8th row: Kevin Magnussen (DEN/Haas), Valtteri Bottas (FIN/Alfa Romeo)
9th row: Lance Stroll (CAN/Aston Martin), Nico Hulkenberg (GER/Haas)
10th row: Guanyu Zhou (CHN/Alfa Romeo), Logan Sargeant (USA/Williams).

CRICKET

Sodhi recovers from 'Mankad' to end New Zealand's long wait for Bangladesh victory

AFP
Dhaka

Ish Sodhi claimed a career-best 6-39 as New Zealand claimed a first victory in Bangladesh in nearly 15 years yesterday in a dramatic ODI where he was also relieved from a 'Mankad' dismissal.

Sodhi's maiden five-wicket haul helped New Zealand clinch an 86-run win, bowling out Bangladesh for 168 in 41.1 overs after Tom Blundell's 68 had guided the visitors to 254 in the second ODI of the three-match series. The Kiwis last beat Bangladesh in their own backyard in October 2008. They then lost the next two series in 2010 and 2013, respectively, by 4-0 and 3-0.

Sodhi also played his part with the bat, scoring a vital 35 before he was the last man out after New Zealand won the toss and opted to bat. Sodhi was earlier run-out at the non-striker's end by Hasan Mahmud when he had made 17, but Bangladesh captain Liton Das sportingly withdrew the 'Mankad' appeal as the Kiwi was walking back to the pavilion.

The leg-spinner showed no intention of returning the favour, dismissing Tanzid Hasan (16), Soumya Sarkar (0), Towhid Hridoy (4) after Kyle Jamieson removed Liton for six to give New Zealand the first breakthrough.

"It's a really good day. Historically, we haven't done well and nice to get the win. It was nice of Liton for calling me back after the Mankad," said man-of-the-match Sodhi.

Tamim Iqbal tried to rescue the side amid a free fall of wickets before he too fell to Sodhi for 44, leaving Bangladesh stuttering at 92-5.

Sodhi also ended a fledgling partnership between Mahmudullah Riyad and Mahedi Hasan, bowling out the latter for 17 to complete his five-wicket haul. Mahmudullah made 49 before he was removed by Cole

McConchie. Sodhi went one better, bowling Hasan Mahmud out for duck and could have claimed his seventh wicket if Finn Allen hadn't dropped Nasum Ahmed at slip off his final delivery.

Blundell earlier smashed six fours and a six in his second ODI half-century, helping New Zealand recover from 36-3 after stand-in captain Henry Nicholls chipped in with 49 as the pair added 95 for the fourth wicket to steady the New Zealand innings.

Bangladesh seized the early momentum in overcast conditions thanks to left-arm pacer Mustafizur Rahman, who dismissed openers Will Young for a duck and Allen for 12.

Debutant Khaled Ahmed forced Chad Bowes (14) to edge a catch at square leg to Hridoy for his maiden wicket.

Khaled also broke the partnership between Blundell and Nicholls by dismissing the latter and Hasan soon uprooted the off-stump of Blundell to put New Zealand in danger.

But Sodhi, McConchie (20) and Jamieson (20) all made decent scores down the order to take New Zealand's tally past the 250-run mark before they were all out in 49.2 overs.

"Their lower order did really well. The wicket was not bad to bat on. Probably [we were] not up to the mark in batting," said Bangladesh captain Liton.

Off-spinner Mahedi and pacer Khaled claimed 3-45 and 3-60 for Bangladesh respectively.

The first of the series was washed out by rain on Thursday.

The third and final match of the series will be held at the same ground on Tuesday before both sides head for the World Cup in India which gets underway on October 5.

BRIEF SCORES: New Zealand 254 (Blundell 68, Nicholls 49, Sodhi 35, Mahedi 3-45, Khaled 3-60) beat Bangladesh 168 (Mahmudullah 49, Tamim 44, Sodhi 6-39) by 86 runs.



New Zealand's Ish Sodhi celebrates after taking the wicket of Bangladesh's Soumya Sarkar during the 2nd ODI at Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Dhaka yesterday. (AFP)

England beat Ireland in 2nd ODI



England's Will Jacks plays a shot during the second ODI against Ireland at Trent Bridge in Nottingham yesterday. England cantered to a 48-run victory thanks to 94 from Jacks and 89 from Sam Hain, before Rehan Ahmed took four for 54. (AFP)

Federer 'won't be stranger' to tennis

VANCOUVER: Swiss tennis great Roger Federer was feted Friday at the Laver Cup, where he said his final career match at the event last year was the perfect conclusion to his career. Federer drew roars from the crowd at Rogers Arena, home of the NHL's Vancouver Canucks, where Team World, captained by Patrick McEnroe, swept Bjorn Borg's Team Europe on day one to take a 4-0 lead in the competition Federer helped create in 2017. The night closed with an on-court question and answer session with the 20-time Grand Slam champion, who said it had been a "great year" since he and longtime rival Rafael Nadal were beaten in doubles in Federer's farewell match. "I thought the farewell was beautiful, it was perfect, it was emotional," the 42-year-old said. "I was always dreading the moment for years... I was worried my end was going to somehow be not nice, and it was the opposite." He said he missed the excitement of the game - break points, match points, raising trophies and crowds of fans. "I still have those moments time to time," he said, noting his appearance in the royal box this year at Wimbledon - the scene of some of his greatest triumphs - and at the grass-court tournament in Halle, Germany. "I made myself a promise I will be no stranger to the tour," Federer said. He didn't specify what form his involvement in the game might take, although he reiterated - in response to a question from Borg - that it could be as a Laver Cup Team Europe captain. (AFP)

PREMIER LEAGUE

Man City show silk and steel to extend lead

AFP
Manchester, United Kingdom

Manchester City moved five points clear at the top of the Premier League despite having Rodri sent-off in a fiery 2-0 win over Nottingham Forest yesterday. Phil Foden and Erling Haaland struck inside the first 15 minutes as City extended their perfect start in the Premier League to six games. Pep Guardiola's men have now won 20 consecutive home matches in all competitions, but were made to work much harder by Rodri's moment of madness. The Spaniard grabbed Morgan Gibbs-White around the neck less than 60 seconds into the second-half and could face a costly suspension as a three-game ban would see him miss the Premier League visit to Arsenal next

month. City were at their ruthless best early on to seemingly put the game to bed. Foden smashed home a sweet volley from Kyle Walker's cushioned cross to open the scoring. Guardiola said after losing Bernardo Silva to injury in a 3-1 win over Red Star Belgrade that his squad was "in trouble" due to a number of injuries. Mateo Kovacic and John Stones remain sidelined, while Jack Grealish was only fit enough for a place on the bench. But the absences gave Matheus Nunes a chance to make his first league start since joining from Wolves and he made a positive impact by setting up the second goal. The Portuguese played a neat one-two with Foden before chipping the ball across for Haaland to power home his ninth goal of the season. Julian Alvarez could have added to City's lead when his ef-

fort from point-blank range was blocked behind. But the European champions did not appear in any danger until Rodri lost his cool. Taiwo Awoniyi had Forest's best chance to get back into the game when the informal Nigerian lifted over under pressure from Ederson. Awoniyi and the Brazilian goalkeeper were then lucky not to also see red as they went head-to-head in a fiery confrontation. City, though, restored order as Guardiola switched to a back five to withstand an aerial bombardment from the visitors. Haaland should have had his second when he spooned over with the goal gaping from Nathan Ake's cross late on. Elsewhere, struggling Everton beat Brentford 3-1 to earn their first league win this term and climb out of the relegation zone. Sean Dyche's side took the lead

through Abdoulaye Doucoure's sixth minute strike. Mathias Jensen equalised for Brentford against the run of play after 28 minutes, but James Tarkowski restored Everton's advantage with a header from Dwight McNeil's corner in the 67th minute. Substitute Dominic Calvert-Lewin wrapped up Everton's long-awaited three points with a cool finish four minutes later. Luton picked up their first ever Premier League point but let a huge opportunity slip in a 1-1 draw at home to Wolves. The visitors at Kenilworth Road were reduced to 10 men when Jean-Ricner Bellegarde saw red on 39 minutes. Pedro Neto still fired Wolves in front early in the second-half, but Carlton Morris' penalty salvaged a point for Luton. Crystal Palace and Fulham remain in the top half after a 0-0 draw at Selhurst Park.



Manchester City's Erling Haaland in action during the Premier League match against Nottingham Forest in Manchester yesterday. (AFP)

EXPOSTARS LEAGUE

Moreno's late strike keeps Rayyan top

AL SADD BEAT QATAR SC 3-1 TO RETAIN THEIR SECOND PLACE

Agencies
Doha

With the help of Rodrigo Moreno's last-gasp goal Al Rayyan moved two points clear at the top of Expo Stars League despite having captain Abdulaziz Hatem sent-off in a thrilling 1-0 win over Al Arabi yesterday. The league resumed after a 20-day break in front of a record crowd of 28,397 at the Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium yesterday. With the fans of both sides cheering for their teams, The Lions continued from where they stopped as former Leeds United forward Rodrigo snatched a 90+7 minute goal for his team, off an assist from Achraf Bencharki, to maintain their perfect start to the season. The two sides have enjoyed different fortunes since the beginning of the season. While Al Rayyan have won all three matches so far and are comfortably sitting on top of the rankings with the maximum nine points, The Dream Team, on the other hand, have only managed draws in all of theirs. The ex-PSG midfielder, a newly-signed Al Arabi player Marco Verratti, did not disappoint as he enthralled fans with his control of the midfield. Al Arabi gave their statement of intent as early as the second minute, when Abdullah Marafee tried a through ball that cut through Al Rayyan's defence, but Abdou Diallo was subsequently caught offside. Omar al-Somah and Rafinha subsequently missed at least three attempts within the next five minutes. Al Arabi had a penalty call overturned by VAR in the 15th minute after Al Rayyan's Bassam al-Rawi seemed to have brought down Abdou Diallo in the 18-yard box. Yousef Msakni was the tormentor in chief for Al Arabi for most of the first half, as his overlapping runs and impressive footwork of-



Al Rayyan's Rodrigo Moreno (left) vies for the ball with Al Arabi's Rafinha during the Expo Stars League match at the Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium yesterday.

ten proved too much for the Al Rayyan sides to handle as the Tunisian forward kept drawing fouls that resulted in free kicks for his side. Despite many close calls, the first half ended goalless, with both teams guilty of considerable profligacy in front of goal. With tension boiling on both sides, Hatem got the red card in the 73rd minute after a dangerous high-heel tackle on Al Arabi's Rafinha. Reduced to 10 men, Al Rayyan rejigged their formation with extra focus on the defence while not reducing their intensity going forward. Rodrigo Tabata

was brought in to replace Brazilian Gabriel Pereira in the 79th minute. Msakni almost broke the deadlock in the 87th minute, but his 20-yard thunderbolt of a shot, off a Verratti assist, grazed the upright with goalkeeper Fahad Baker already beaten. Al Rayyan got their own "almost there" moment when Tabata's goal-bound header from the centre of the box in the third minute of injury time was surprisingly saved in the centre of the goal. Their wait was not for too long as Rodrigo made the difference four minutes later to give the teeming fans in red mufflers much to cheer about

as the match ended with smiles on their faces. Meanwhile Al Sadd defeated Qatar SC 3-1 to return to winning ways at the Khalifa International Stadium yesterday. Gonzalo Plata (16th minute), Akram Afif (64th minute (Penalty)) and Paulo Otavio Silva (80th minute) got the goals for the winners while Ben Malango scored Qatar SC's only goal in the 20th minute. The victory saw Al Sadd retain their second place in the standings with 10 points from four games while Qatar SC are in tenth spot with two points to their credit having suffered a second defeat.

BUNDESLIGA

Record-setting Kane hits hat-trick as Bayern Munich rout Bochum

AFP
Berlin

Harry Kane yesterday bettered a record first set by legendary German striker Gerd Mueller when he hit a hat-trick in Bayern Munich's 7-0 rout of Bochum which took the champions back to the top of the Bundesliga. Kane fired in Bayern's second just 13 minutes in, before scoring a penalty in the second half. He added a third with two minutes remaining when he tapped in a low cross from Leroy Sane.



Bayern Munich's Harry Kane celebrates after scoring during Bundesliga match against VfL Bochum in Munich yesterday.

With six goals in five games, the England captain now has more goals in his first five league matches than any other player in Bayern's history, beating the mark of Mueller (1965), Miroslav Klose (2007) and Mario Mandzukic (2012) who all scored five times in their first five games for the club. "I'm happy to play my part and I hope there will be many more to come. So far so good," said Kane. Kane said he would toast the win with a first-ever visit to Munich's Oktoberfest festival later yesterday. "When I came here I said I wanted to get to know the culture and the city - what better place than that?" Bayern have now beaten Bochum 7-0 in three of their past five fixtures. Bayern manager Thomas Tuchel praised his side's "very deserved win" saying it was "a fantastic day at the office." Eric Maxim Choupo-Moting, Matthijs de Ligt, Leroy Sane and Mathys Tel - again from the bench - also got on the scoresheet. Thomas Tuchel's Bayern, who conceded two goals late in Wednesday's 4-3 home win over Manchester United in the Champions League, kept a clean sheet for just the second time this season from seven matches. Bochum remain winless.

part of six changes after Tuesday's poor performance in a 2-0 loss away at Paris Saint-Germain, with Reus celebrating victory on his first start of the season while captain Emre Can was pushed to the bench. Reus continued his habit of being the first to score in a match, with 62 of his 116 Bundesliga goals for Dortmund being the opener. Reus called the win "a step forward" but admitted "it was OK today, but of course not our benchmark". RB Leipzig continued their winning ways this season, a late Timo Werner goal giving them a 1-0 victory at Borussia Muenchengladbach. The win, Leipzig's sixth from seven matches in all competitions, helped them climb back into the top four. Union Berlin's midweek exertions at Real Madrid, their debut Champions League fixture, took their toll as they went down 2-0 to Hoffenheim in the German capital. Union fought hard in Madrid, the score 0-0 until an injury-time strike from former Dortmund midfielder Jude Bellingham saw Real snatch the three points in the Champions League clash. Union fell behind early yesterday, Italy captain Leonardo Bonucci giving away a penalty which Andrej Kramaric converted, before Hoffenheim's Maximilian Beier added another in the first half. Elsewhere, 10-man Augsburg picked up their first league victory the season, coming from behind to beat Mainz 2-1 at home.

BARCELONA PRODUCE STUNNING COMEBACK TO BEAT CELTA VIGO

Robert Lewandowski's brace and Joao Cancelo's winner earned Barcelona a sensational 3-2 comeback victory over Celta Vigo yesterday to take them top of La Liga. The Catalans entered the final 10 minutes two goals down after Jorgen Strand Larsen and Anastasios Douvikas struck for the visitors, who seemed on course for a surprise win against the champions. However veteran striker Lewandowski netted twice within five minutes to pull Barcelona level and Cancelo sprinted into the box to fire home decisively in the 89th minute. Wily Celta coach Rafa Benitez set up in his typically defensive fashion, unlike Barcelona's recent visitors Real Betis and Royal Antwerp, whose attacking intent made them lambs to the slaughter. Barcelona hit 10 goals in their previous two matches, with their coach Xavi saying it was the best they had played in his reign, but this performance was largely at the other end of the spectrum. The hosts controlled the opening stages, albeit without creating much danger, but Celta Vigo pushed ahead against the run of play after 19 minutes. Andreas Christensen played Strand Larsen onside after a corner was only partially cleared, and the Norwegian forward finished clinically past Marc-Andre ter Stegen. Joao Felix could not control a nicely scooped Frenkie de Jong through pass, before the Dutch midfielder sustained a knock and was replaced by tenacious teenager Gavi. Celta had a fine chance to score the second but Ter Stegen palmed away Strand Larsen's header and Lucas de la Torre slashed the rebound over with the goal gaping. (AFP)

SERIE A

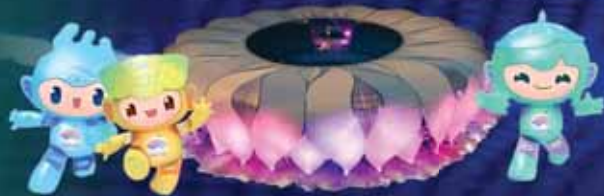
Leao fires Milan level with leaders Inter, Juve fall

AFP
Milan

Rafael Leao ended a difficult week with the only goal in yesterday's 1-0 win over Verona which drew AC Milan level with Serie A leaders Inter Milan, while Juventus fell to their first defeat of the season, 4-2 at Sassuolo. Portugal winger Leao netted his third goal in as many league matches in the eighth minute at a sodden San Siro to move Milan up to second on 12 points from five games. Leao's winner was one of the few highlights of a largely uninspiring performance from a much-changed Milan side missing injured captain Davide Calabria and France pair Mike Maignan and Theo Hernandez. But it was a welcome three points after being destroyed by local rivals Inter last weekend and failing to capitalise on their dominance in Tuesday's Champions League stalemate with Newcastle United. Milan's star man Leao, wearing the skipper's

armband in Calabria's absence, answered some of his critics following poor displays in both of those matches, even becoming a figure of fun for falling over his own feet while trying to backheel in a goal against Newcastle. Kick-off was delayed by nearly half an hour due to a sudden hailstorm which battered Milan, and the away fans then ruined the pre-match minute's silence in honour of former Italian president Giorgio Napolitano, who died aged 98 on Friday. Napolitano, who was head of state between 2006 and 2015, was a leading member of Italy's Communist Party from the 1970s until its dissolution in 1991, while Verona's hardcore support is among the most right-wing in a country where fascist fan groups are widespread. Milan supporters drowned out the Verona supporters with an enthusiastic applause, started by both sets of players, as they were also remembering former Italy midfielder Giovanni Lodetti. Lodetti, who also died on Friday aged 81, won two Serie A titles and two European Cups in the 1960s in a Milan side led by icon Gianni Rivera, and was also part of the Azzurri

team which claimed the 1968 European Championship on home soil. Juventus are two points behind the Milan clubs in fourth after falling to an awful defeat at Sassuolo marked by individual errors. Andrea Pinamonti's third goal in as many games in the 82nd minute, after Wojciech Szczesny patted out Armand Lauriente's shot to the Italy international, and a stoppage time Federico Gatti own goal made sure of the points for Sassuolo just as Juve looked set for a grandstand finish. It was a bad day for Poland goalkeeper Szczesny as he was at fault for Lauriente's 12th-minute opener and shown up by a Domenico Berardi strike which restored the hosts' lead four minutes from the break after Matias Vina's own goal put the away side level. Szczesny also gave Gatti the pass which the young defender inexplicably volleyed back into his own goal. Berardi was a summer target for Juve but failed to present a bid which could tempt Sassuolo to sell the Italy winger, who crowned his 300th Serie A appearance with his 116th goal in the division.



PREVIEW

Breaststroke star Qin leads China swimming charge

Olympic champ Yufei will also spearhead hosts' challenge

AFP

Hangzhou, China

Hosts China will look to top the Asian Games swimming medals table for the first time since 2014 with confidence sky-high after the world championships. New breaststroke king Qin Haiyang and two-time Olympic gold medalist Zhang Yufei will spearhead the home nation when the action begins in the pool in Hangzhou today.

In the ongoing absence of three-time Olympic gold medalist Sun Yang, whose doping ban does not expire until next summer, Chinese swimmers claimed five gold, three silver and eight bronze medals at the world championships in Fukuoka in July.

The 24-year-old Qin dominated the men's breaststroke, sweeping all three events and setting a new world record in the 200m. He was competing in his first international event but he blew the competition away, setting new Asian records in each of his three races. Britain's Adam Peaty skipped the world championships to concentrate on his mental health and Qin will be favourite to depose him as 100m Olympic champion in Paris next year.

"When I finished the race, that was the end of it - now everything starts again with a new beginning," Qin said after his Fukuoka heroics. "I will hang the medals on the wall and start a new challenge."

Teammate Zhang will also be confident after winning the women's 100m butterfly world title in Japan. Zhang beat a packed field that included Canada's Olympic champion Maggie Mac Neil and American Torri Huske, and she also picked up a world silver in the 50m butterfly. Pan Zhanle will be another big medal hope for China in the men's freestyle events.

It is not all about the Chinese team. South Korea's Hwang Sun-woo will be a threat in the men's freestyle, after following up his 200m silver from last year's world championships in Budapest with a bronze in Fukuoka. Compatriot Lee Ho-joon finished sixth in the final, and with Pan and Japan's Katsuhiko Matsumoto also likely to compete in the 200m freestyle in Hangzhou, it could be one of the races of the championship.

Hong Kong's Siobhan Haughey is a double Olympic freestyle silver medalist and in red-hot form heading into the Asian Games.



China's flag bearers Qin Haiyang (right) and Yang Liwei during the opening ceremony of the 19th Asian Games in Hangzhou, China, yesterday. (Reuters)

She smashed her own Hong Kong national record in the 50m freestyle just weeks before the competition and is set to compete in four events in Hangzhou. The 25-year-old said she was "trying not to think too much" about what she can achieve at the Games. "Both the 100m and 200m free are definitely my favourite events but you can never know who will suddenly swim really fast, or predict how other people will do," she said.

Japan, who edged China to finish top of the swimming medals table at the 2018 Asian Games in Jakarta, head into this year's competition in disarray. Long-time head coach Norimasa Hirai bowed out after the world

championships and was then suspended for six months by the Japanese federation after launching a tirade on social media.

The row exposed the cracks in Japanese swimming after a disappointing world championships that brought the team only two bronze medals. One of those came from Daiya Seto, who finished third in the men's 400m individual medley. The 16-year-old Mio Narita is another to watch, in the women's medley events. Rikako Ikee should also be a force to be reckoned with, four years on from being diagnosed with leukaemia. In 2018, before her illness, Ikee became the first swimmer to win six golds at a single Asian Games.

Hi, Robot: Machines take over at China's Asian Games

Hangzhou, China: From autonomous bug zappers to android pianists and driverless ice-cream trucks, machines rule the world - at least at China's Asian Games. The Games opened yesterday after a one-year delay because of Covid with about 12,000 athletes and thousands of journalists, technical officials and spectators descending on Hangzhou.

The city is the unofficial home of China's tech industry and robots and other mind-boggling gadgets are set to serve, amuse and police visitors. An automated mosquito trapper roams the vast Games Village, zapping the pests after luring them in by mimicking

a human's body temperature and breathing.

Robot "dogs" that can run, jump and flip over patrol power-supply facilities. Smaller versions dance while a bright-yellow android plays the piano. Driverless minibuses are set to shuttle visitors through the nearby city of Shaoxing, where baseball and softball venues are located. Athletes can put their reflexes to the test against a table-tennis playing "Pongbot".

At the massive media centre, a blushing plastic-and-metal receptionist with a number pad and card slots built into its torso greets customers at a makeshift

bank. Even venues were built with the help of construction robots which organisers say are "very cute, with unique skills".

Summing up how keen China is to push the theme at the Games, the mascots are three humanoid robots - Congcong, Lianlian and Chenchen, whose smiling faces adorn massive signs across Hangzhou and other nearby host cities. Hangzhou, a city of 12 million people in China's east, has built up a reputation as a home for tech startups.

That includes a thriving robotics sector eager to close the gap on industry-leading rivals in countries such as the United

States and Japan. At a business park, staff from DEEP Robotics put some of their most advanced models through their paces, commanding one four-legged bot to walk through construction rubble and sending another up a nearby pedestrian bridge slick with rain.

At one point, a real dog turns up and sniffs its robotic equivalent curiously. Elsewhere, office workers pick up lunch from vending machines that can steam the food and, according to maker Kuaie Fresh, check the temperature so the meal is just right. The machine also collects data on customer preferences.

Sheikh Joaan meets Kuwait Olympic Committee president



Qatar Olympic Committee (QOC) President HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani met Kuwait Olympic Committee chief Sheikh Fahad Nasser al-Sabah on the sidelines of the Hangzhou Asian Games yesterday. The meeting reviewed aspects of sports co-operation between two countries and ways to support and develop them.

SPOTLIGHT

IOC's Bach sees 'shift in sport towards Asia'

AFP

Hangzhou

IOC president Thomas Bach forecast a "shift in the world towards Asia in sport", after yesterday's Asian Games opening ceremony. The International Olympic Committee chief visited athletes in Hangzhou after meeting Chinese leader Xi Jinping, who vowed to work with the IOC on upholding the "non-politicisation" of sport. That meeting came as a diplomatic row erupted between Beijing and New Delhi over three Indian athletes who have not made the Games because of visa issues. Bach said the biggest-ever Asiad, which was officially opened yesterday by Xi, would "set new standards in many different respects".

"We have here a great number of new sports, we see an organisation which is making use of all the digital expertise which China and Hangzhou has to offer," he said.

More than 12,000 athletes from 45 countries and territories are taking part in Hangzhou, making it bigger than the Olympics. Bach acknowledged China's growing importance to the Olympic movement. Beijing hosted 2008 Summer Games and 2022 Winter Olympics, albeit in a Covid-secure "bubble".

"The cooperation with the Chinese Olympic Committee is going very well and in many international federations China is playing an ever growing and more important role," he said. "This is greatly appreciated because we see an overall shift in the world towards Asia in sport."

STIMAC BACKS INDIA TO OVERCOME 'BIG PROBLEM'

India's football coach Igor Stimac has had to change his squad list seven times since first announcing it for the Hangzhou Asian Games, with a lack of available players also proving an issue for other nations. The multi-sport event is outside FIFA's international window so clubs are not compelled to release players, with Afghanistan and Syria pulling out before the Games even started.

That left Hong Kong and Uzbekistan as the only two teams re-



IOC president Thomas Bach (left) poses with India's hockey goalkeeper Sreejesh P R in Hangzhou yesterday.

maining in Group C, so both qualified for the next round without kicking a ball. Croatian former international defender Stimac, who enjoyed spells with Derby County and West Ham as a player, said it was a "big problem".

"Twenty-one out of 22 players from my (initial) list are not here today," he said after they crashed 5-1 to China to start their campaign. They recovered to beat Bangladesh 1-0 and keep alive their hopes of qualifying for the knockout rounds, despite several players only arriving for that game just before kick-off.

"This (squad) is my seventh list that has been changed and prepared to bring a team over here," said Stimac, who was part of the Croatian team that finished third at the 1998 World Cup.

"I understand perfectly well how difficult it is because (Indian) clubs are not under pressure to release their players. But I'm happy because I see that some teams pulled out at the last minute (as) they couldn't get enough players, like Afghanistan, like Syria and it's a big problem for the whole tournament now."

Despite the disrupted preparation Stimac urged his team to keep their "chins up". "Once we are all together with a full squad we're going to make problems to anyone in Asia. Believe me," he said. They face Myanmar today.

COLOURFUL OPENING CEREMONY MARKS THE START OF HANGZHOU GAMES



The 19th Asian Games began in a colourful ceremony in Hangzhou yesterday. The theme of the ceremony was water and it also celebrated Hangzhou's ancient history and landscape, while giving a nod to the city's reputation as the unofficial home of China's tech industry. A "digital torch bearer" strode into the stadium and was projected onto a large screen behind the Games cauldron at the climax.