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Bezzecchi wins Indian MotoGP, champ Bagnaia crashes out



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Son double holds Arsenal, Liverpool cut Man City's lead

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SPORT

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

ASIAN GAMES

Qatar handball team begin title defence in style

Qatar's Younousse, Tijan in beach volleyball quarters

By Sports Reporter
Hangzhou, China

Two-time champions Qatar handball team started its campaign on a winning note as Qatar volleyball team entered the Asian Games semi-finals in Hangzhou, China, yesterday.

Defending champions Qatar beat Hong Kong 36-18 in their handball Group B match at the Zhejiang Gongshang University Sports Centre. Qatar dominated the match from the very start and Ahmad Madadi scored 8 points from nine shots at the goal while pivot Rafael Capote slammed in six out of his six attempts. Qatar was leading 20-11 at the half-time.

For Hong Kong, Sze Ming Kuo, Kin Wong and Man Yik Kan scored 4 points each. Qatar will next play the Republic of Korea on September 27 (Wednesday) at 4pm Hangzhou time.

Qatar defeated Bahrain in Jakarta Games in 2018 to win the gold, while four years ago, Team Qatar found their way to the final and won the Asian Games 2014 title after defeating South Korea in Incheon 2014.

In the men's volleyball, Qatar qualified for the semi-finals beating Pakistan 3-1 (26-24, 25-19, 23-25, 25-18) in an hour and 50 minutes at the China Textile City



Qatar Olympic Committee President HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani attended Qatar handball team's match against Hong Kong at the Asian Games in Hangzhou yesterday.

Sports Centre Gymnasium yesterday.

Youssef Oughlaf and Raimi Waddie were the highest scorers for Qatar with 16 points each while Belal Abunabot and Mohamed Ibrahim scored 12 points each. Renan Rebeiro fetched 10 points. Qatar will now meet Iran in the semi-final at the Linping Sports Centre Gymnasium hall today.

In the men's beach volleyball, Qatar's ace pair of Cherif Younousse and Tijan Ahmed con-

tinued their dominant show as they beat Oman's Ahmed al-Housni and Haitham al-Shereiqi in straight sets 21-13, 21-14 in 31 minutes in the Round of 16.

In the quarter-final today, the 2018 gold medallist Cherif and Ahmed will play Iran's Shoukati and Salemmiinjeheboroun at the Ningbi Banbianshan Beach Volleyball Centre at 8pm Hangzhou time.

In the other men's round of 16 beach volleyball match, Qatar's

Abdallah Nassim and Ahmed Mahmoud lost to China's Jie Li and Yanwei Wang 12-21, 15-21.

In tennis, Qatar's Mubarak Shannon prevailed over Thailand's Palaphoom Kovapitukted in the men's singles opening round at the Hangzhou Olympic Sports Centre courts. Mubarak led 7-5 when his opponent retired.

Qatar is participating in the tournament with a delegation of 185 male and female athletes competing in 27 sports.



Action from Qatar-Hong Kong handball Group 'B' match yesterday.

FORMULA 1

Verstappen wins Japanese GP, Red Bull clinch title

AFP
Suzuka, Japan

Max Verstappen helped Red Bull clinch the Formula One constructors' championship and took a giant step towards his third straight drivers' title by winning the Japanese Grand Prix yesterday.

Runaway championship leader Verstappen finished ahead of McLaren pair Lando Norris and Oscar Piastri and can lift the title at next month's Qatar Grand Prix.

He holds a 177-point lead over teammate and nearest challenger Sergio Perez. Verstappen's win helped Red Bull clinch their second straight constructors' title even though Perez retired from the

race. "You have built a rocket ship of a car," he told his team over the radio after crossing the line.

Nearest challengers Mercedes were unable to stay in contention, with Lewis Hamilton finishing fifth and George Russell placing seventh. Ferrari's Charles Leclerc was fourth, while teammate Carlos Sainz was sixth.

Verstappen was back to his breathtaking best after a disappointing fifth-place finish at last week's Singapore Grand Prix.

"Unbelievable weekend, to win here is great," said Verstappen.

"The car was working very well on every compound but the most important thing was to win the constructors. We are having an incredible year and I'm very proud of everyone."

Verstappen held off a double

challenge from McLaren to take the lead ahead of Norris at the first turn.

First the Dutchman veered right to squeeze out Piastri, who was starting from second on the grid, then moved left to stop Norris from darting through the gap.

"The start had too much wheel-spin but after that it was quite a straightforward race," said Verstappen. Australian rookie Piastri took his first podium finish behind teammate Norris.

"It feels pretty special, definitely - I will remember it for a very long time," said the 22-year-old.

The safety car came out after a chaotic first lap, with Alfa Romeo's Valtteri Bottas and Zhou Guanyu taking damage at the start of the race.

Perez got into trouble when he

picked up a five-second penalty for a safety car infringement.

The Mexican retired from the race a few laps later, telling his team "the car doesn't feel right".

He later came back out, ensuring that he would not have to serve his time penalty at the next race.

Red Bull chief Christian Horner said, Perez "got knocked about a bit" in the race.

"It wasn't his day but he'll bounce back," said Horner. "He's been a big part of this success as well."

Red Bull were still able to clinch the constructors' title without Perez picking up any points in Japan.

"It's been the most amazing year for us," said Horner.

"Max is on another level at the moment - another incredible performance."



Red Bull Racing's Dutch driver Max Verstappen celebrates on the podium after winning the Formula One Japanese Grand Prix at the Suzuka circuit, Mie prefecture, yesterday. (AFP)

Congratulations Max We extend our best wishes to Oracle Red Bull Racing team for their next race in Qatar

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MOTORSPORT

Plucky Bezzecchi wins Indian MotoGP

AFP
Greater Noida, India

Pole-starter Marco Bezzecchi won India's inaugural MotoGP in a near-flawless race yesterday, but world champion Francesco Bagnaia crashed out after slipping on a turn.

Jorge Martin, who won Saturday's sprint race, just held on for second spot with Fabio Quartararo a close third at the Buddh International Circuit.

Italy's Bezzecchi, on a Ducati-VR46, won his third race of the season in 36 minutes, 59.157 seconds and punched the air in celebration in front of a raucous grandstand.

But it was heartbreak for Bagnaia, who lost control of his Ducati and the bike went for a somersault on the track.

The Italian still leads the world championship with 292 points but saw his lead cut in the 13th race of the 20-race season. Martin is on 279 points followed by Bezzecchi on 248.

"Wasn't easy for sure because of the heat and everything. But I felt

good on the bike," Bezzecchi told reporters. Bezzecchi crashed out in the first lap of Saturday's sprint race before finishing fifth and said the incident motivated him to come up trumps.

"After yesterday I was really motivated to bounce back because I think, yesterday also I could have done a bit better than fifth," he said.

Bezzecchi said winning the first MotoGP in India was "fantastic" because he "liked the place and people" and the track from the moment he landed.

The track hosted Formula One for three years from 2011. Fairstreet Sports now has a seven-year deal with MotoGP's commercial rights holder Dorna Sports to hold a race in India for seven years.

Spain's Martin, Bagnaia's nearest challenger in the title tussle, was given a scare by Quartararo in a dramatic last lap that had the number two and three fighting hard.

Martin, who had some problems with his jacket's zipper during the final few laps, was left exhausted after the duel with Quartararo and did not turn up for the post-race conference.

"Really difficult to be honest, especially the last lap," Quartararo, a Yamaha rider, said.

"During the race I was always a 1 or 1.5 second gap from the front guys... Last lap I could clearly see our weak point. We have to work on that part as we can hold the pace but not fight with them."

Martin had a strong start to the race, jumping into the lead from his second position on the grid, with Bagnaia second and Bezzecchi third.

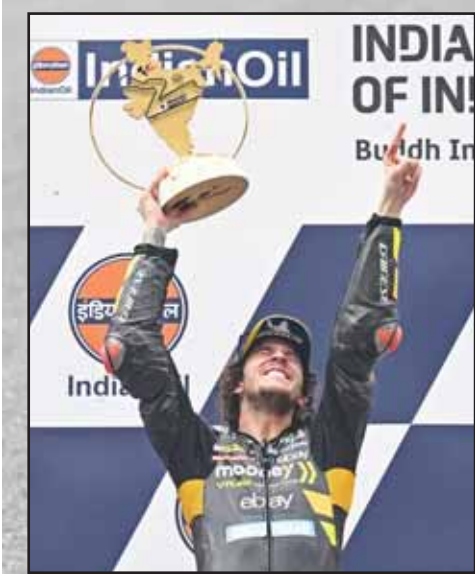
Bezzecchi soon went past Bagnaia with a clean overtake at a corner and kept up the pace to increase the gap to more than three seconds in the first five laps.

Martin edged out Bagnaia as the competition for second and third spot remained tight, while fourth-placed Marc Marquez slipped on turn one of the sixth lap to slide down the order.

Bagnaia found space on lap 13 and squeezed past Martin, before his race met a premature and painful end.

But by then the race belonged to Bezzecchi, who came in as one of the favourites after he scorched the track in qualifying.

The race was trimmed by three



Mooney VR46 Racing Team's Italian rider Marco Bezzecchi (also inset) steers his bike during the Indian MotoGP Grand Prix at Buddh International Circuit in Greater Noida, outskirts of New Delhi, yesterday. (AFP)



laps to 21 after riders complained about heat and humidity in Friday's practice sessions. Jaume Masia earlier got the perfect start from pole position to win the Mo-

toGP3 race and go level with title rival Daniel Holgado on 174 points.

Kaito Toba came in second for his first podium since 2022 and Ayumu Sasaki was third in a last-lap

scrap. Spain's Pedro Acosta won the Moto2 race to extend his lead at the top of the overall standings with 236 points.

CRICKET

Iyer, Gill power to centuries as India crush Australia

The visitors crumble after given revised target of 317 off 33 overs

AFP
Indore

Shreyas Iyer and Shubman Gill hit attacking centuries to help India thrash Australia by 99 runs in a rain-hit one-day international yesterday to clinch the series 2-0.

Iyer (105) Gill (104) put on a dominant second-wicket stand of 200 to lay the foundations for India's 399-5 after being invited to bat in Indore.

K L Rahul's 52 and an unbeaten 72 by T20 sensation Suryakumar Yadav contributed to the mammoth total and the bowlers then combined to hand India an unbeatable lead in the three-match series.

The matches are a tune-up for the World Cup in India starting October 5.

Chasing a DLS revised target of 317 in 33 overs after rain interrupted play in the chase, Australia were bowled out for 217 in 28.2 overs.

Spinners Ravichandran Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja took three wickets each. But the batsmen set up victory after a flying start and Iyer, 28, put doubts over his fitness to rest, hitting his third one-day century before being caught.

Iyer hit 11 fours and three sixes in his 90-ball knock.

The 24-year-old Gill, who hit 74 off 63 balls at Mohali in the first game, raced to his sixth ODI century and fifth this year with a single off Sean Abbott.



India's Shubman Gill (left) and Shreyas Iyer during the second one-day international against Australia at the Holkar Cricket Stadium in Indore yesterday. (AFP)

Gill's knock ended when he was caught by wicketkeeper Alex Carey off Cameron Green. He hit six fours and four sixes in his 97-ball innings.

Ishan Kishan was dismissed for 31 before Rahul and Yadav propped up the innings with fluent knocks.

Green took two wickets but gave away 103 runs off his 10 overs.

In reply, Australia lost two wickets for just nine runs and were 56-2 when rain interrupted play for over an hour and the tourists resumed with a new target.

David Warner and Marnus Labuschagne attempted to rebuild in their stand of 80 but the wheels came off the chase after their departure.

Ashwin broke the stand and then struck twice in one over to send back the left-handed Warner and Josh Inglis.

Green attempted to hit back but was run out, before Abbott led an unexpected charge with his 36-ball 54.

Number eight Abbott put on a ninth-wicket stand of 77 with Josh Hazlewood, who made 23.

The final ODI is on Wednesday in Rajkot.

BRIEF SCORES
India 399-5 in 50 overs (S. Iyer 105, S. Gill 104, S. Yadav 72 not out, KL Rahul 52) v Australia (chasing revised DLS target of 317 in 33 overs) **217 all out in 28.2 overs** (S. Abbott 54, D. Warner 53; R. Ashwin 3-41, R. Jadeja 3-42)
Result: India won by 99 runs via DLS method
Toss: Australia
Series: India lead the three-match series 2-0

2023 FIM Mini GP Qatar Round 4



Tristan Carbo stood out in the Mini GP 160 class to win the 2023 FIM Mini GP Qatar Round 4 at the new karting track of Losail Circuit Sports Club. Carbo, riding bike No 2, finished with a total time of 14:05.688secs over 15 laps, and a best speed of 69.143 to claim the top podium place. Finishing second and 1.266secs adrift was Ivan Mayarov on bike No 44. Mayarov's total time was 14:06.954secs and a top speed of 69.132. The third podium spot was claimed by Nolan Macary (bike No 25) with a total time of 14:10.567secs and a time difference of 4.879secs. A total of 10 riders were in action in the final with one DNF result.

Fritz, Tiafoe take Team World closer to Laver Cup title

Vancouver: Team World took a big step towards retaining their Laver Cup title as they extended their advantage over Team Europe to 10-2 on Saturday, with Americans Taylor Fritz and Frances Tiafoe leading the charge. John McEnroe's team now require one win from their four matches to reach the 13-point mark and claim their second crown, but with each victory worth three points on the final day Team Europe still have some hope. Team World arrived at Vancouver's Rogers Arena with a 4-0 lead after four wins on the first day of the competition. With each victory worth two points on the second day, world number eight Fritz put Team World in a commanding position after a thrilling 6-2 7-6(3) win over Russian Andrey Rublev. "Any type of team environment, I feel it always elevates my game," said Fritz, who avenged his Monte Carlo semi-final defeat by Rublev earlier this year.

"I feel like my record in team events is strong because I have a team cheering for me. I get pumped up. I'm excited to play for them. It just adds more pressure and fire to it." Casper Ruud pulled a win back for Bjorn Borg's Team Europe with a 7-6(6) 6-2 victory over American Tommy Paul, but Tiafoe defeated Poland's Hubert Hurkacz 7-5 6-3 to give his team an 8-2 lead. Tiafoe pulled off one of the shots of the tournament with a volley behind his back and followed it up with a winner at the net in the second set to delight the crowd. "I came out here wanting to have fun," Tiafoe said. "Being in the team environment is so foreign to us. Tennis is such an individual sport. I wanted to play well for the guys, for the fans." Local hero Felix Auger-Aliassime teamed up with American Ben Shelton for a 7-5 6-4 victory over Hurkacz and Gael Monfils to cap off another good day for the defending champions.

FOCUS

Sri Lanka beat Pakistan to set up India cricket final at Asian Games

AFP
Hangzhou, China

In-form Sri Lanka, fresh from a stunning Twenty20 series victory in England, beat Pakistan by six wickets yesterday to reach the women's cricket final at the Asian Games and set up a clash with India.

Pakistan never got going on a difficult batting surface affected by days of rain at the Zhejiang University of Technology ground in Hangzhou, and could only muster a below-par 75-9 in their 20 overs.

Left-arm medium pace bowler Udeshika Prabodhani led the Sri Lankan attack with three wick-

ets and Kavisha Dilhari took two with her offspin.

Sri Lanka sauntered to their target with 21 balls to spare to spark wild celebrations as their players ran on to the field to high-five and hug each other.

Earlier, the Indians routed Bangladesh for 51 on the same ground with all-rounder Pooja Vastrakar, only drafted into the squad as a last-minute replacement, taking four wickets.

They wasted no time in racing to an eight-wicket victory with more than 11 overs remaining as Jemimah Rodrigues top-scored with an unbeaten 20.

Rodrigues is yet to be dismissed in the on-going Asian Games, scoring 47 not out in the

quarter-final against Malaysia, which was later abandoned because of rain.

It was the second time in just over a week that Sri Lankan cricketers had proven party-poopers by preventing a Pakistan-India major cricket final.

The country's men's team beat Pakistan in the semi-final of the 50-over Asia Cup in Colombo to prevent a final showdown against their fierce rivals India.

Earlier this month, Sri Lanka's women secured a historic first-ever white-ball series triumph over England, winning 2-1.

Pakistan and Bangladesh will face off for bronze today before India take on Sri Lanka in the gold-medal match.

Oman win Gulf T20I Cricket Championship



Oman players and officials celebrate winning the inaugural Gulf T20I Cricket Championship which concluded in Doha on Saturday night. In the final, Oman defeated UAE by five wickets with four balls to spare. Chasing a victory target of 164 after restricting UAE to 163/5, Oman rode on Ilyas' knock of 67 and an unbeaten 53 from Ayaan to reach the target.

AUSTRALIA BEAT NEW ZEALAND TO LIFT FIBA U16 TITLE IN QATAR



Australian players celebrate winning the FIBA U16 Basketball Championship title at Al Gharafa Hall yesterday. Australia beat New Zealand in the final 79-76. **Right:** The best players with their trophies at the prize distribution ceremony following the final.



FOOTBALL

Tottenham hold Arsenal as Newcastle find net 8 times

SON SCORES TWICE FOR SPURS AT ARSENAL AS LIVERPOOL BEAT WEST HAM WITH NUNEZ GOAL

Reuters
London

Arsenal and Tottenham Hotspur slugged each other to a standstill in an absorbing 2-2 draw in yesterday's big Premier League derby and Liverpool maintained their resurgence to move into second place after a victory over West Ham United.

Brighton and Hove Albion shrugged off the midweek disappointment of losing their first-ever European game to move into third place with victory over Bournemouth.

Chelsea's woes continued as they lost at home to Aston Villa and Sheffield United slumped to the bottom of the table as they suffered a humiliating 8-0 home thrashing by Newcastle United in which eight different Newcastle players scored.

The first north London Premier League derby since 2014 not to feature Harry Kane produced an enthralling contest at The Emirates where the two unbeaten sides went toe-to-toe.

Arsenal twice led, first through Cristian Romero's 26th-minute own goal, and again thanks to Bukayo Saka's penalty early in the second half. But Ange Postecoglou's Tottenham earned a deserved point thanks to Son Heung-min's brace.

"We conceded an unlucky own goal, then a VAR penalty, so it's not like everything was falling in our favour," Postecoglou, whose side remain unbeaten after six league



Tottenham Hotspur's Son Heung-min scores their second goal past Arsenal's David Raya during their Premier League match at Emirates Stadium, London, yesterday. **Right:** Newcastle United players celebrate in front of their fans after the PL League match against Sheffield United at Bramall Lane in Sheffield, England yesterday. Newcastle won 8-0. (AFP)

games, told reporters. "Just a real character and resilience the boys showed, a real belief in the kind of team we want to be."

Arsenal, who are also unbeaten, slipped to fifth with 14 points, below fourth-placed Tottenham on goal difference and have an injury concern after record signing Declan Rice went off with a back issue at halftime.

"Today we lacked a certain composure on the ball to be more dominant, get set and get a structure in the game that we needed against a really good Spurs side," manager Mikel Arteta said.

Liverpool moved into second place, two points behind leaders Manchester City, who have a 100%

record, after beating West Ham 3-1 – their fifth successive league win.

West Ham started well but were left to rue some early misses when Mohamed Salah was felled by Nayef Aguerd in the 15th minute and the Egyptian tucked away the penalty.

Jarrod Bowen levelled but Darwin Nunez steered home a superb volley from Alexis Mac Allister's pass midway through the second half and substitute Diogo Jota sealed the points late on.

After last season's slump, Jurgen Klopp's side are looking much more like their old selves.

"When we are not playing well we are solid, when we are playing well we are really good," Klopp

said. "That's how you can get kind of consistency and that's what we obviously need."

Chelsea were booed off at Stamford Bridge as they lost 1-0 to Aston Villa having been reduced to 10 men when defender Malo Gusto was sent off in the 58th minute.

Ollie Watkins then grabbed the points for Villa with an angled shot – leaving big-spending Chelsea to face the jeers after their worst start since 1978.

"We are a young team that is in process needing to learn altogether. It is difficult to talk about positives because when you lose it is difficult," manager Mauricio Pochettino, whose side have five points from six games, said.

Villa are up to sixth with 12 points.

Brighton substitute Kaoru Mitoma made an instant impact off the bench as his side came from behind to beat Bournemouth 3-1 in spectacular fashion.

Bournemouth led through Dominic Solanke's lob after a defensive mistake but Brighton levelled before the break when Billy Gilmour's cross bounced off defender Milos Kerkez's head and looped past goalkeeper Neto for an own goal.

Manager Roberto de Zerbi sent on Mitoma and Ansu Fati for the second period and was immediately rewarded as both were involved in a sweeping move which

Mitoma converted 17 seconds after the restart. Mitoma then wrapped up the points as Brighton moved above Tottenham and Arsenal with 15 points.

Newcastle ran riot at Sheffield United in the weekend's final action as they put eight past the hapless Blades – their biggest win in the Premier League since they put eight past Sheffield Wednesday in 1999.

What is more they became the first team in Premier League history to have eight different scorers in a game – Sean Longstaff, Dan Burn, Sven Botman, Callum Wilson, Anthony Gordon, Miguel Almiron, Bruno Guimaraes and Alexander Isak.



EXPOSTARS LEAGUE

Al Gharafa stun Al Duhail in 3-2 thriller

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Al Gharafa scored a thrilling 3-2 win over Al Duhail, rallying from a goal down, in a high-voltage clash in Week 4 of 2023-2024 season Expo Stars League at the Al Bayt Stadium yesterday.

The architect of the hard-fought victory for The Cheetahs was their captain Yacine Brahimi, who was instrumental in all three goals – striking in two from dead ball strikes – and scoring a last-gasp winner with a precision kick.

While Mohamed Muntari (41st minute) and Almoez Ali (90+3 minute) scored for Al Duhail, Yacine Brahimi (47th minute and 90+8 minute) and Yohan Boli (75th minute) got the goals for Al Gharafa.

Al Gharafa seemed headed for a win at full time before the added time saw more frenetic action as The Red Knights skipper Almoez Ali found the equaliser. But playing with a man down in the final 30 minutes seemed to have taken a toll on Al Duhail, who lost Ruben Semedo in the 65th minute after he fouled a rival player and was given the marching orders.

The high intensity match saw some heated moments as the players clashed while going for hard tackles.

Al Gharafa had begun in earnest



Al Gharafa players celebrate their win over Al Duhail in Round 4 of the Expo Stars League at Al Bayt Stadium yesterday.

and threatened Al Duhail's goal several times in the first half hour.

In the very fourth minute of play, Al Gharafa showed good formation and cohesion, and Brahimi moved in dangerously to strike, but hit the outside of the left net.

In the 20th minute, Al Gharafa's Farid Boulaya made a powerful kick from the centre, but Al Duhail goalkeeper Salah Hassan dived in time to parry the ball away. Five minutes later, there was another

scare for Al Duhail as Boli's curling kick went on to hit the left post. The chance was produced after Boulaya had latched on to a defensive lapse of Al Duhail.

Boli made another attempt in the 31st minute, but he had moved too deep and the angle was acute and he shot wide.

Al Duhail then took control as Almoez initiated a move sending the ball down the left for a swift Sultan al-Breik to run in and send

in a perfect cross for a waiting Muntari in front of the goal to do the needful.

The holders, however, could not hold on to the lead for long as six minutes later Brahimi unveiled his first magic of the match with a free kick. His perfect execution saw the ball move over the 'wall' and into the far left corner of the goal leaving the goalkeeper bamboozled (1-1).

Brahimi almost repeated his act late in the second session



Action from Al Shamal's Expo Stars League clash against Muaither yesterday.

and with a dead ball kick but this time he shot to the left of the Al Duhail goalkeeper Salah Zakaria who dived to make a stop but the bouncing ball was pounced on by an onrushing Boli to score (2-1).

It was excitement galore for the fans as the added time brought out more intense action as a possessed Almoez Ali, given a fine ball from near the centre line by Ismail Mohamed, dashed in from the left dribbling past a defender and to shoot between the legs of Al Gharafa goalkeeper Yousef Hassan (2-2).

All of Al Gharafa's good work seemed to have been spoiled by Almoez, but there was more to come. Making the most of tired legs, and a valuable diagonal pass from Lyanco Vojnovic, an unmarked Brahimi

shot from the left leaning into the ball and past the rival goalkeeper to send his team's coach, support staff and the fans into a frenzy.

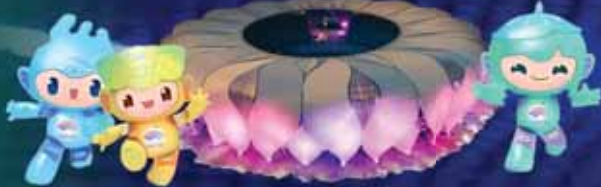
It was Brahimi's seventh goal of the new season and brought up Al Gharafa's third win. They have 10 points to their credit, while Al Duhail stood on seven points.

In other matches, Al Wakrah beat Al Markhiya 3-0 after goals from Hamdi Fathy (10), Jacinto Dala (55) and Yousef Al Khatib (88) at Al Janoub Stadium while Muaither and Al Shamal played out a 2-2 draw. The goals for Muaither were scored by Guy Mbenza (59) and Andri Syahputra (84).

The scorers for Al Shamal were Mohamed Omar (69) and Ricardo Gomes (90+3) at Ahmed Bin Ali Stadium.

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19th Asian Games
Hangzhou 2022



QATAR SPIKERS BEAT PAKISTAN 3-1 TO ENTER ASIAN GAMES SEMI-FINALS



Qatar volleyball players blocked a shot from Pakistan players during the Asian Games match yesterday in Hangzhou, China. Qatar won 3-1 (26-24, 25-19, 23-25, 25-18) to enter semi-finals.



Qatar's Abdalla Khalifa (above right and inset) competes against South Korea's Lee Kwang-hyun in the men's foil individual round of fencing during the Asian Games in Hangzhou yesterday. Khalifa lost to Kwang-hyun 3-5 in the Pool round. Khalifa was also beaten by Japan's Takahiro Shikine 4-15 in the Table of 16-2. The Qatari fencer impressed in the Pool stage, defeating Kuwait's Ali Abbas 5-2, Thailand's Notethakod Wangpaisit 5-3 and Sammuel Tranquilar of the Philippines 5-1. In the Round of 16, Qatar's Khaled Hussein also lost to Hong Kong's Ka Long Cheung 8-15. He had reached the top 16 after defeating Macau's Chong Him Wu 15-12 in the Table of 32-6. Earlier in the Pool stage, Hussein had defeated Uzbekistan's Doniyor Sadullaev 5-3, Singapore's Tian Wei Jonathan Au Eong 5-3, Macau's Pak Kio Lam 5-3 and lost to Japan's Kyosuke Matsuyama 1-5 and Chinese Taipei's Yi-Tung Chen 2-5. Qatar's Ghada al-Khulaifi (left) lost to Vietnam's IM Nguyen Pham Le Thao in women's chess competition yesterday.

HORSE RACING

Countdown begins for Qatar Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe

QREC-sponsored event will be held at ParisLongchamp from Sept 28 to Oct 1

By Sports Reporter
Doha

The countdown for Qatar Racing and Equestrian Club (QREC)-sponsored Qatar Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe has begun with thrilling races on the cards at the weekend.

The annual event, held at Paris-Longchamp racecourse, is one of the most important and prestigious horse racing events in the world given the tradition it enjoys and the distinction that is unique to it, whether in terms of its history or the level of competition among the world's major owners, trainers and jockeys known in the world.

The Qatari sponsorship of the meeting has represented an added value as reflected in the intensive media coverage, the huge presence of racegoers and top racing since the beginning of the sponsorship in 2008.

The partnership between QREC and France Galop, the authority responsible for organising this event, continues, which has resulted in the partnership being extended more than once.

Last year, it was announced that the partnership would be extended with effect from the current year until 2027. In addition, five million Euros as prize money are on offer in the weekend's main event, the Qatar Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe.

This event will be held from September 28 to October 1, with a large number of international runners. As usual, dozens of TV sports and horseracing channels will have live coverage of the event and dozens of thousands of racegoers will be at ParisLongchamp for the world's horseracing extravaganza, especially on the final day of the meeting. The QREC management are prepared for the upcoming event through continuous co-ordination with France Galop and ensuring that all arrangements have been completed, including agreements with the sponsors, including Qatar Airways and Longines, who are among the most important partners of success with QREC in recent years, given their valuable ongoing co-operation in supporting and sponsoring QREC's events both at home and overseas.

Speaking on the occasion, QREC Chairman Issa bin Mohamed al-Mohannadi, said: "We are ready for an ideal start for this distinguished race meeting, which we all



QREC Chairman Issa bin Mohamed al-Mohannadi



Khalifa bin Sheail al-Kuwari-owned Lady Princess



await every year. We seek a strong Qatari presence through Qatari owners' vying for the titles of several races, especially with the expected strong Qatari participation of horse owners who seek to confirm their merit with their eyes set on winning the races where they will be represented. The Qatar Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe has become a milestone in the world's horseracing scene at this time every year thanks to its top international reputation and elevated level of organisation. This, in fact, increases the scale of challenge in every edition of the meeting and we look forward to continuing to achieve the goals we aspire to."

Al-Mohannadi added: "The Qatar Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe weekend represents a remarkable opportunity to market the HH The Amir Sword Festival as one of the most important racing events organised by QREC, which is held annually and attracts international runners and connections, especially after increasing its prize money and with the dedicated efforts for the continuous develop-

ment of the festival. In addition, it promotes Qatar's horseracing worldwide and contributes to activating the sponsorship goals of promoting Qatar in general and Qatar's horseracing in particular and focusing attention on the HH The Amir Sword Festival as the most prestigious event in QREC's racing calendar."

It is worth noting that the Qatar Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe will be held over four days through several events. The beginning will be next Thursday with the Arqana Purebred Horse sale where a distinguished group of horses will be on display in the presence of major owners and breeders around the world.

The next day, a race meeting will be held at the Saint-Cloud racecourse with nine races, including the two feature races of the day, the Gr1/PA Qatar Arabian Trophy Des Poulains and the Gr1/PA Qatar Arabian Trophy Des Poulaches. There will a strong Qatari representation in both races with hopes to continue Qatari-owned horses' dominance on both races. Saturday will mark

the kick off racing at ParisLongchamp with nine races, including six group races with three of them on the highest level: namely, the Gr1/PA Qatar Arabian Trophy Des Juments (4-year-old fillies), the Gr1 Qatar Prix De Royallieu and the Gr1 Qatar Prix Du Cadrant.

On Sunday, the finale will have a nine race-card, featuring seven group one races, including the Qatar Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe, which carries a purse of five million Euros, and the Qatar Arabian World Cup.

The 2022 renewal of Qatar Arabian World Cup saw 16 runners, including nine for Qatari owners and the winner was Lady Princess (General x Nacree Al Maury) in the colours of Khalifa bin Sheail al-Kuwari for trainer Thomas Fourcy and jockey Jim Crowley.

Runners from France, UK, Ireland, Germany, Japan and Qatar were in contention in last year's Qatar Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe and the winner was the Kirsten Rausing-owned Alpinista (Frankel x Alwilda) for trainer Sir Mark Prescott and jockey Luke Morris.

FOCUS

China rule in pool and beyond on first day of Asian Games

AFP
Hangzhou

China won the first gold medal of the Hangzhou Asian Games and then cleaned up in the swimming events yesterday, breaking several records in the process.

By the end of a highly successful day one for the hosts, they had pocketed 20 of 31 golds, with South Korea their nearest challengers with five.

China's medal rush began when Zou Jiaqi and Qiu Xiuping dominated the women's lightweight double sculls rowing for the first gold of the Games, finishing almost 10 seconds ahead of Uzbekistan.

It was especially satisfying for Zou, who hails from Hangzhou.

"I am very excited as it's my first Asian Games," she said, clutching her gold medal.

The home nation won six of the seven golds at the Fuyang Water Sports Centre rowing venue with only Hong Kong's Lam San-tung and Wong Wai-chun getting in on the party by winning the men's pairs.

More golds rolled in for China in shooting, modern pentathlon, wushu and artistic gymnastics, in which they triumphed in the men's team event.

But they saved the best for last, in swimming, in what is always one of the most prestigious events at the Games and has extra significance with the Paris Olympics less than a year away.

Olympic champion Zhang Yufei was among the winners as China romped home in all seven races on the opening night in the pool, smashing a slew of Asian records.

Zhang successfully defended her 200m butterfly crown, cruising to victory ahead of teammate Yu Liyan in a new Games-record time of 2min 05.57sec.

That has been bettered this year only by Canadian star Summer McIntosh and Australia's Lizzie Dekkers, as Zhang builds towards defending her Olympic title in Paris.

"I felt I could have gone even faster," she warned.

"My first mission was to take the gold for China. Next was to beat Jiao Liuyang's Games record, and I also did that.

"I actually felt the pool was a little slow for me and I told my coach that I wasn't feeling in good form."

The first official day of the 19th Asian Games also saw medals handed out in fencing, judo and taekwondo.

Hong Kong's Edgar Cheung, already a hero to many in the southern Chinese city, added Asian Games gold to the one he won at the Tokyo Olympics two years ago in the men's foil.

Two of South Korea's five golds came in taekwondo, with Kang Wan-jin winning the men's individual poomsae and Cha Yea-eun doing likewise in the women's event.

Other sports beginning on Sunday included boxing, rugby sevens, hockey and eSports - where superstars such as South Korea's "Faker" are expected to draw huge crowds for its debut as a full Asian Games medal event.

President Xi Jinping opened the Games on Saturday night after a delay of a year because of China's now-abandoned zero-Covid policy. With more than 12,000 competitors from 45 nations and territories, the Asian Games has more participants than the Olympics.

They will battle for medals in 40 sports across 54 venues.

Most events take place in Hangzhou, a city of 12mn people near Shanghai, but some sports are being staged in cities as far afield as Wenzhou, 300 kilometres (186 miles) to the south.



Silver-medallist China's Yu Liyan (left), gold-medallist China's Zhang Yufei (centre) and bronze-medallist Japan's Hiroko Makino celebrate during women's 200m butterfly medals ceremony at the Asian Games in Hangzhou yesterday. (AFP)