

To subscribe
GULF TIMES
Newspaper
Please call
444 666 35



TENNIS | Page 2

Djokovic beats Sinner to win record seventh ATP Finals title



FORMULA 1 | Page 3

Verstappen is King of Las Vegas with 18th win of season

To advertise here,
PLEASE CALL
444 666 21

Monday, November 20, 2023
Jumada I 6, 1445 AH

GULF TIMES

SPORT

CRICKET

Australia win sixth World Cup title after Head hundred sinks India

Page 4

MOTORCYCLING

Di Giannantonio clinches Qatar GP, Bagnaia extends championship lead

‘MAN, WHAT DO I SAY. IT’S BEEN AN INCREDIBLE WEEKEND. THE RACE WAS UNBELIEVABLE’

Agencies
Lusail, Qatar

Gresini Racing’s Fabio Di Giannantonio stormed to a maiden MotoGP victory at the Qatar Grand Prix yesterday, denying championship leader Francesco Bagnaia in the dying stages, while title contender Jorge Martin finished a lowly 10th.

Di Giannantonio, who does not have a MotoGP ride next season, threw caution to the wind at the floodlit Lusail International Circuit and took on Bagnaia to claim his first win while pole-sitter Luca Marini of VR46 Racing finished third. Victory marked a special weekend for Di Giannantonio, who also finished second in Saturday’s sprint.

“Man, what do I say. It’s been an incredible weekend, the race was unbelievable. I was struggling with the front (tyre) but I saw Pecco (Bagnaia) making little mistakes so I thought ‘Maybe there is my opportunity’. I’m speechless,” a grinning Di Giannantonio said in a post-race interview. “This was revenge, first for myself and others with me. Now we did it, now I’m a MotoGP winner.”

Bagnaia lost the lead with four laps to go but the Ducati rider has still put one hand on the rider’s championship after extending his lead over Martin to 21 points. The Italian can even secure back-to-back world titles in next Saturday’s sprint at the season-ending Valencia Grand Prix next weekend. Bagnaia and Martin started fourth and fifth on the grid – separated by seven points – but it was the Ducati rider who had the perfect launch as he shot off the line to take the lead from Marini going into turn one.

On the other hand, Martin nearly lost control of his Pramac bike due to wheel-spin, dropping to eighth in the opening lap, and he was forced to pick his way through the pack as Bagnaia surged ahead. While Bagnaia kept Di Giannantonio at arm’s length, Martin was falling further behind and he lost so much pace that even the slower Honda of Marc Marquez, Yamaha’s Fabio Quartararo and KTM’s Jack Miller managed to get past the Pramac rider.

Up front, Di Giannantonio did not let up. With four laps to go he ignored team warnings and made his move to get past Bagnaia. The Ducati rider nearly threw it away on the next lap with a risky move to retake the lead at turn one where he ran wide and then backed off while shaking his head, knowing second place was better than nothing.

“We managed to do a perfect start, I tried to create a gap but Diggia (Di Giannantonio) was incredible. I got sucked into his slipstream at the first braking (zone) and I went wide,” Bagnaia said. “But we’ve managed to open a gap on Jorge.”

Once Bagnaia saw Martin had finished 10th, there were no hard feelings as he and several other riders stopped their bikes by the side of the track to congratulate an emotional Di Giannantonio.



Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive, Engineer Badr Mohamed al-Meer, and Qatar Motor & Motorcycle Federation and Lusail International Circuit president Abdulrahman bin Abdul Latif al-Mannai pose with the podium finishers of the MotoGP Qatar Grand Prix at the Lusail International Circuit yesterday. **PICTURES:** Noushad Thekkayil



Italian rider Fabio Di Giannantonio of Gresini Racing celebrates after winning the Grand Prix.

Di Giannantonio is being replaced by six-time world champion Marc Marquez at Gresini and does not have a ride for next season, with few saddles still available.

MARTIN POINTS BLAME AT ‘BAD TYRE’

Martin has pointed the finger firmly at a ‘bad tyre’ for leaving his title hopes on the ropes. The Pramac rider weaved hopelessly



Ducati Lenovo Team’s Francesco Bagnaia (right) and Gresini Racing’s Fabio Di Giannantonio battle for the lead.

away from the grid with his rear wheel spinning at the start of the Grand Prix.

“For sure I wasn’t comfortable. You saw already at the start that I had a big spin and you can understand what happened; the rear tyre wasn’t working okay,” Martin said.

“I’m really disappointed that the championship is decided by a bad tyre. But this happened to me. It’s a pity. But it is what it is. I struggled a lot. I didn’t have rear grip. I couldn’t stop the bike. I couldn’t turn. I couldn’t open the throttle. It was like wet conditions. I think with my experience, I

was able to at least make some points [to-night] which wasn’t easy. Now we move on and hopefully we can do it in Valencia.”

Martin added: “Everything can happen in Valencia. Pecco can make a mistake. I can win for sure both races – but I can win if I don’t have a tyre like today! For sure [the title is] not decided yet but it’s not the same arriving in Valencia close, than in this condition just because of a [bad] tyre. A bit frustrated, but I feel like they didn’t beat us on the track. They beat us outside. So I’m quite relaxed and I feel like we deserve this championship.”

ALDEGUER CLAIMS THIRD CONSECUTIVE MOTO2 WIN

Fermin Aldeguer, the 18-year-old Spaniard who is expected to take one of the few available seats in MotoGP next season, won his third successive Moto2 race with compatriot Pedro Acosta, who had already clinched the title, eighth.

Jaume Masia won in Moto3 to take the title but the victory was cloaked in controversy for the way Masia and his Leopard Honda team-mate Adrian Fernandez repeatedly bumped the Husqvarna of his title rival Ayumu Sasaki, who finished sixth.

SECOND BATCH OF AFC ASIAN CUP 2023 TICKETS TO GO ON SALE TODAY

Doha: A second batch of tickets for the AFC Asian Cup Qatar 2023 will be available to the public from today. The announcement was made by the tournament’s Local Organising Committee (LOC) with just under two months to go until the tournament kicks off at the iconic Lusail Stadium.

Fans can purchase tickets online through the tournament’s official ticketing website (<http://asiancup2023.qa>). Prices for group stage match tickets start at QR25. Ticket sales from Qatar, Saudi Arabia and India led the way during the first batch of tickets. A total of 51 matches are set to be played across stadiums between January 12 and February 10, 2024.

The overwhelming response to tickets in the first batch is reflective of Qatar’s standing in the world of football, as fans from across the world look forward to enjoying the beautiful game in Qatar’s state-of-the-art stadiums. Excitement in Qatar, across the region and beyond is building amongst fans. Twenty-four of Asia’s best teams will compete for glory in FIFA World Cup stadiums, in what will surely be a wonderful display of football. Beyond the pitch, fans will enjoy a festive like atmosphere where they will be treated to a memorable cultural experience.

The AFC Asian Cup Qatar 2023 will be the first time where the competition will be played on FIFA World Cup stadiums. Seven of the nine stadiums selected for the tournament previously hosted matches during Qatar 2022. This includes the iconic Lusail Stadium, which will host both the opening and final matches. Qatar’s compact tournament means that the farthest distance between stadiums is 75km. This means that fans and players alike can stay in one place of accommodation throughout the tournament.

All stadiums will be equipped with accessible seating options to ensure that disabled fans can enjoy a barrier-free experience. This includes wheelchair accessible seating as well as seats for people with limited mobility. The LOC has also recruited a total of 6,000 volunteers to provide support across 20 functional areas.

All match tickets for the AFC Asian Cup Qatar 2023 are digital and can be downloaded and presented on any mobile device. Hayya will not be a mandatory prerequisite to enter stadiums. For more information about the AFC Asian Cup Qatar 2023, visit <http://asiancup2023.qa> and follow @Qatar2023 on X, formerly known as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

WORLD CUP AND ASIAN CUP QUALIFIERS

A positive result against Qatar not unfeasible: India coach

Four years ago, on a warm September night, in a 2022 World Cup Qualifiers outing against Qatar, a gritty India survived a wave of attacks to hold the powerhouse of Asian football to a goalless draw in Doha. The man who guided India from the sidelines was Head Coach Igor Stimac.

The Croatian would once again sit on the bench when India will cross swords tomorrow with Qatar again in another World Cup qualifying match, this time for the 2026 edition in the US, Canada and Mexico.

No doubt, Stimac and his wards would take the pitch at the Kalinga Stadium here a far more confident lot than they were at the start of the campaign. The win against Kuwait in the tie brought a magical change to the entire scenario. Now there are serious expectations surrounding Sunil Chhetri and his men; a positive result against Qatar would definitely not leave anyone bewildered.

Stimac agreed that India are now perfectly capable of pulling off a surprise or two, but is not ready to lower his guard. "We have analysed Qatar from every angle and position and know very well what they are capable of in terms of speed and strength. Their defensive and offensive positions are immaculate, which they demonstrated against Afghanistan by



India's coach Igor Stimac talks to his players during a training session in Bhubaneswar yesterday.

scoring eight goals. They could well have scored eight more. It is going to be very difficult and I just want the boys to enjoy their game in the next match. The first and

bigger part was accomplished by winning against Kuwait, now I want the boys not to take any pressure and show their quality against Qatar," he said.

"It is very motivating as we defeated the best opponents for the second position. We have to be in the top two positions to go to the next round of the qualifiers so,

this helps in our goal of reaching the next round. Qatar are one of the pre-tournament favourites from the group. We do not have high expectations but we know we have a chance and we have to grab that with both hands," said Stimac.

The head coach, whose boys had a good day of training yesterday, said there was no new-found confidence in the team. "I would say that we were never short of self-confidence. But each win boosts your self-confidence. We showed that we had high self-confidence in the King's Cup and Merdeka Cup.

"We have worked on the change of the mindset over the last few years. Now our boys believe that they can beat anyone," he pointed out. Coming back home from Kuwait with three points in the pocket is, according to Stimac, a matter of huge relief and a creditable achievement.

"Our main worry was the impact on the quality of the starting XI owing to the injuries. Losing the likes of Anwar (Ali), Ashique (Kuruniyan) and Jeakson (Singh) was a big blow for us as they were the young players who brought energy and quality to this side. But we were able to get over that crisis against Kuwait by sheer hard work and also by having a good pool of players for the national team that helped us find the right replacements," he said. (www.the-aiff.com)

TENNIS

Djokovic wins record seventh ATP Finals

Djokovic moves clear of Federer in wins at season-ending event

AFP
Turin, Italy

Novak Djokovic won a record-breaking seventh ATP Finals title yesterday after beating local hero Jannik Sinner 6-3, 6-3 in Turin. World number one Djokovic moves clear of retired great Roger Federer in victories at the season-ending tournament after denying Italian Sinner a triumph on home soil.

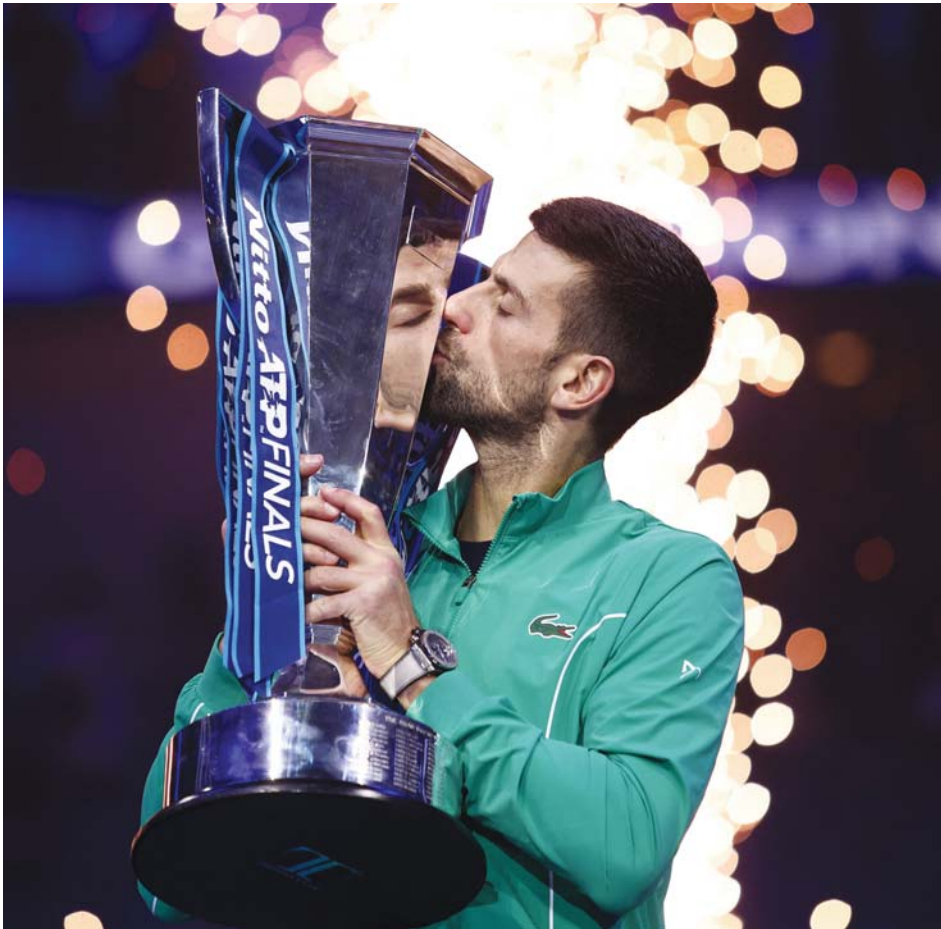
Djokovic came into the Finals at the end of a year which has brought three Grand Slams, taking his total to an all-time best of 24, and a 40th Masters 1000 title. And he has crowned an incredible season – in which he also reached the Wimbledon final – with yet another record, comfortably seeing off two of the game's best young players in the process.

Sinner was bidding to become the first ever Italian to claim a Finals crown and looked like the right man to do it after his impressive group stage win over Djokovic. But the 22-year-old, like Carlos Alcaraz in Saturday's semi-final, simply could not handle Djokovic, a man on a mission who hit his best form at exactly the right time in the tournament.

It is a testament however to how far Sinner has come in the past year that he had Djokovic's tournament fate in his hands at the end of the group stage, when defeat by Holger Rune would have sent the Serb home early. Sinner saved Djokovic's skin and in the end paid for it in the final, but the quality of his performances at the Pala Alpitour has been a cause for much optimism in Italy and suggests that he should be a Grand Slam contender next season.

Djokovic took control early in the match, breaking Sinner at the first opportunity in game four and then comfortably serving out the opening set. Such was his dominance that Djokovic silenced a partisan crowd which has been rambunctious for all of Sinner's matches, and he immediately broke serve again at the start of the second set.

He reeled off 14 straight points from the start of the final game of the first set into the third game of the second, which was eventually won by Sinner to just hold his serve. Sinner looked like he was going to be walked over but



Serbia's Novak Djokovic celebrates with the trophy after winning ATP Finals in Turin. (Reuters)

he showed huge heart and brought the crowd to its feet when he held his serve in game seven, a 15-minute mini-epic in which Djokovic had two break points, to stay at 4-3. However in the end he couldn't stay with Djokovic and in the end surrendered the match in disappointing fashion with a double fault.

Earlier, Rajeev Ram and Joe Salisbury retained their ATP Finals doubles title on Sunday as they cruised to a 6-3, 6-4 victory over Marcel Granollers and Horacio Zeballos. The

US Open champions kept hold of their crown with a near-perfect campaign in Turin, going unbeaten in their five matches.

American Ram and Briton Salisbury took their winning streak at the season-ending tournament to 10 matches after also sweeping to last year's title undefeated. Granollers and Zeballos missed out on the year-end top spot in the world rankings following the straight-sets defeat, with their eliminated Green Group opponents Ivan Dodig and Austin Krajicek remaining in first.

BADMINTON

Axelsen wins first title since September

AFP
Kumamoto, Japan

Badminton world number one Viktor Axelsen won his first title since September yesterday in Japan but said he was "not feeling great" heading into the season's final stretch.

The dominant Dane, who is set to celebrate two unbroken years atop the world rankings on December 1, beat China's Shi Yuqi 22-20, 21-17 to capture the inaugural Kumamoto Masters title. Axelsen said he was determined to celebrate his first success on the tour since the China Open and was putting the upcoming China Masters to the back of his mind for the moment. "Going into the China Masters, I'm not feeling great, I'm very tired, I don't want to think about it," he told the Badminton World Federation. "I have a rule that when you play a final and you're done, you have to enjoy it so I'm not thinking about next week at all."

Axelsen said he would "enjoy an extra piece" of sushi after beating number four seed Shi. The Dane was also appearing in his first final since the China Open and he said he was happy with



his performance in a match "played at a really high level". "Shi is a very strong opponent and I think if he had managed to win the first game, it could have gone either way today," he said. "I

was really happy with how composed I stayed, especially at the end of both games."

Indonesia's Gregoria Mariska Tunjung beat China's Chen Yufei 21-12, 21-12 in the women's final. The win gave the number six seed her second title on the world tour, following her triumph at the Spain Masters in April.

Number three seed Chen, the Tokyo Olympics champion, had ended South Korean top seed An Se-young's 31-match unbeaten streak in the semi-finals. But Tunjung said she "just tried my best to win every single point". "The key to the win today was my patience," said the 24-year-old, ranked number seven in the world. "Chen Yufei also made a few mistakes and that helped me believe in myself more and believe that I could counter anything she threw at me."

The three doubles finals were all contested by Chinese players. Top mixed doubles seeds Zheng Siwei and Huang Yaqiong beat number three pair Feng Yanzhe and Huang Dongping 25-23, 21-9.

In women's doubles, number 3 seeds Zhang Shuxian and Zheng Yu beat Liu Shengshu and Tan Ning 12-21, 21-12, 21-17. And in men's doubles, He Jiting and Ren Xiangyu got the better of Liu Yuchen and Ou Xuanqi 21-14, 15-21, 21-15.

FOOTBALL

Serbia draw with Bulgaria to qualify for Euro 2024

AFP
Paris

Serbia had to come from behind to secure a 2-2 draw against Bulgaria at the Dubocica Stadium in Leskovac yesterday which booked their qualification for next year's European Championships in Germany.

The Serbs finish second in Group G behind Hungary who snuffed out any hopes Montenegro had of progressing by beating them 3-1 in Budapest. Centre-back Milos Veljkovic put Serbia ahead in the 17th minute before substitute Georgi Rusev levelled for Bulgaria in the 59th.

Ten minutes later Kiril Despodov put the visitors ahead but Srđjan Babic equalised eight minutes from time to ensure Serbia would become the 17th team to qualify for Euro 2024. Montenegro needed Serbia to lose to have any hope of taking their place in Germany but also needed to win against the Hungarians who have eased impressively through qualifying.

Slobodan Rubezic put Montenegro ahead after 36 minutes but Hungary hit back in the second half with two goals in three minutes from Dominik Szoboszlai before Zsolt Nagy rounded off the win in added time.

FRANCE SMASH RECORDS IN 14-0 WIN, DUTCH, SWISS AND ROMANIA QUALIFY

Kylian Mbappe scored a hat-trick in France's record-breaking 14-0 thrashing of 10-man Gibraltar as the Netherlands, Switzerland and Romania booked their places at Euro 2024 on Saturday. Les Bleus set a new record margin of victory in European qualifying and a national record in Nice.

Ethan Santos' own goal and Marcus Thuram had already opened the floodgates before 17-year-old Warren Zaire-Emery scored. That was Zaire-Emery's last contribution as the PSG midfielder was forced off with an ankle injury but a red card for Santos after just 18 minutes allowed the World Cup finalists to run amok. Mbappe's penalty made it 4-0 and Jonathan Clauss, Kingsley

Coman and Youssouf Fofana all scored before half-time. Adrien Rabiot, Coman again and Ousmane Dembele kept the score ticking over before Mbappe struck twice to seal his hat-trick in style.

The France captain lobbed Dayle Coleing from just inside the Gibraltar half to register his 300th career goal aged just 24. Olivier Giroud then came off the bench to grab the final two goals and ensure the history books were re-written. But the scoreline will raise fresh questions over the need for such clashes between giants and minnows in a congested fixture calendar.

Just one goal was enough to ensure the Dutch joined France in qualifying from Group B with a 1-0 victory over the Republic of Ireland. Wout Weghorst's powerful drive separated the sides in Amsterdam in what is likely to be Irish boss Stephen Kenny's final competitive game in charge.

Romania reached just a second major tournament since 2008 by ending Israel's chances of automatic qualification with a 2-1 win. Despite being forced to play what should have been a home fixture in Hungary due to the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas, Israel went in front after just two minutes through Eran Zahavi.

But Romania hit back quickly to level through George Puscas and secured their place in Germany thanks to Ianis Hagi, son of Gheorghe Hagi who inspired the Romanians famous run to the 1994 World Cup quarter-finals.

Switzerland also qualified despite being held 1-1 at home by Kosovo. Romania are now in pole position to win Group I with a draw at home to the Swiss on Tuesday enough to secure top spot. Wales' hopes of reaching a third consecutive European Championship were dealt a huge blow by a 1-1 draw away to Armenia. Croatia moved into second place in Group D thanks to a 2-0 win in Latvia as Lovro Majer and Andrej Kramaric struck inside the first 16 minutes. Wales must beat already-qualified Turkey in Cardiff on Tuesday and hope Croatia fail to beat Armenia at home.



Bulgaria's forward Kiril Despodov (left) scores during the UEFA Euro qualifying Group G match against Serbia at Gradski Dubocica stadium in Leskovac, Serbia, yesterday. (AFP)

MOTORSPORT

Verstappen is F1's King of Las Vegas with 18th win

VERSTAPPEN LEVEL WITH VETTEL ON ALL-TIME LIST AS RED BULL RECORD 20TH WIN IN 21 RACES

Reuters
Las Vegas

Red Bull's Max Verstappen sang "Viva Las Vegas" after racing to a record-extending 18th victory of the season and joining Sebastian Vettel in third place on Formula One's all-time winners' list.

The triumph on a spectacular night in Sin City was the 53rd of the triple champion's career, and sixth in a row, and came after a five-second penalty for forcing Ferrari's Charles Leclerc off track at the start and then a collision with Mercedes' George Russell.

Leclerc finished second after starting on pole position, losing and regaining the lead and then losing it again before passing Sergio Perez on the final lap to deny Red Bull a seventh one-two of the season.

The win was Red Bull's 20th in 21 races, another record for a single season, and delivered the racing that had risked being swamped in a wave of hype as Vegas hosted a grand prix for the first time since the 1980s.

It also completed a sweep of three US wins in 2023 for their 26-year-old Dutch driver, who was also dominant in Miami and

Austin. "It was a tough one," said Verstappen, whose race suit paid homage to the signature jumpsuit of the late "King of Rock and Roll", Elvis Presley.

"I tried to go for it at the start, I think we both braked quite late and then I just ran out of grip and we ended up a bit wide so the stewards gave me a penalty for that.

"That put us a little bit on the back foot, I had to pass quite a few cars...It was definitely a lot of fun."

Red Bull played the timeless Elvis song over the team radio, after pop star Justin Bieber waved the chequered flag, and Verstappen showed he is a far better driver than singer by joining in.

Leclerc, whose team are the only ones to beat Red Bull this season, showed all his fighting spirit after the initial setback.

"I wanted that win so bad but what a race," he gasped over the radio after finishing 2.070 seconds behind Verstappen.

It was the second race in a row that Perez had lost out on the last lap, with the Mexican passed by Aston Martin's Fernando Alonso at the line in Brazil.

Perez at least had the consolation of securing second in a championship won long ago by his teammate - another first for Red Bull who have never previously



Race winner Max Verstappen of the Netherlands and Oracle Red Bull Racing celebrates on the podium during the F1 Grand Prix of Las Vegas at Las Vegas Strip Circuit. (AFP)

ended a season with their drivers one-two.

SAFETY CARS

Esteban Ocon was fourth for Alpine with Lance Stroll fifth for Aston Martin and Ferrari's Carlos

Sainz sixth. Mercedes seven times world champion Lewis Hamilton was seventh, ahead of a demoted Russell, Alonso and McLaren's Australian rookie Oscar Piastri, who took a bonus point for fastest lap.

While Red Bull won both titles long ago, Ferrari closed the gap to second-placed Mercedes to four points with one race remaining in Abu Dhabi.

The lack of grip was evident from the start as cars accelerated

past the floodlit casinos and hotels and down the Strip.

As Verstappen forced Leclerc wide to take the lead, without giving the place back, Alonso spun and was hit twice by Alfa Romeo's Valtteri Bottas with Perez also involved. The Mexican pitted for a new front wing as the virtual safety car was deployed but McLaren's Lando Norris then brought out the full safety car when he crashed on lap three.

Norris was taken to the University Medical Centre for further precautionary investigations.

When racing resumed on lap seven, stewards handed Verstappen a five second penalty but he shrugged off the decision. "Yeah, that's fine, send them my regards," he told race engineer Gianpiero Lambiase.

Leclerc retook the lead on lap 16, with Verstappen pitting and serving the penalty with a 7.7 second stop that dropped him to ninth.

Perez took over at the front on lap 22 when Leclerc pitted, with the Mexican also helped by the safety car being deployed again on lap 27 to recover debris from the clash between Verstappen and Russell, who was given a five second penalty.

The 10:00pm (0600GMT) start was the latest in F1 history.

Evans cruises to victory at season-ending Rally Japan

Aichi, Japan: Britain's Elfyn Evans won the season-ending Rally Japan yesterday after leading for almost the entire race, while newly crowned world champion Kalle Rovanpera finished third.

Evans took control after the second stage and stayed in front for the rest of a rally held in wild weather conditions in central Aichi Prefecture.

The course dried out slightly for the final day as Evans crossed the line 1min 17.7sec ahead of France's Sebastien Ogier and 1:46.5 in front of Rovanpera to give Toyota a 1-2-3 finish. It was Evans's third win of the season and consolidated his runner-up finish behind Rovanpera in the overall standings.

"It was not easy with the conditions we had this week, even though we had a massive gap already after Friday night," said the Welshman.

"A massive thanks to the team, the car's been great and a 1-2-3 for Toyota is a fantastic result."

Rovanpera had already wrapped up his

second straight title at last month's Central European rally. He was never really in contention after coming unstuck in heavy rain and fog early in the race.

But he played his part in a triumphant homecoming for Toyota, who had already clinched their third straight manufacturers' title.

"It should be a really great result in our home rally," the Finn said after the final stage. Belgium's Thierry Neuville, who finished third in the overall championship standings, retired after crashing on stage 6 before rejoining the action a day later.

Estonian Ott Tanak finished sixth in his final race for Ford before joining Hyundai next season. "I get frustrated very easily when I am not on the pace and this year, more or less, we haven't been anywhere near on the pace," said Tanak, the 2019 world champion.

"It's been a tough year but at least we gave it a go. Let's see what the future brings next."

RESULTS

1. Elfyn Evans-Scott Martin (GBR/Toyota) 3hr

32min 8.8sec, 2. Sebastien Ogier-Vincent Landais (FRA/Toyota) at 1min 17.7sec, 3. Kalle Rovanpera-Jonne Halttunen (FIN/Toyota) 1:46.5, 4. Esapekka Lappi-Janne Ferm (FIN/Hyundai) 2:50.3, 5. Takamoto Katsuta-Aaron Johnston (JPN-IRE/Toyota) 3:10.3, 6. Ott Tanak-Martin Jarveoja (EST/Ford) 3:28.3
Leading retirements: Dani Sordo-Candido Carrera (ESP/Hyundai), Adrien Fourmaux-Alexandre Coria (FRA/Ford)
Stage winners: Katsuta (SS5, SS6, SS7, SS9, SS10, SS13, SS14, SS15, SS19, SS21), Neuville (SS1, SS17, SS18, SS20, SS22), Evans (SS2, SS3, SS11, SS12), Lappi (SS8, SS16)
Final drivers championship standings:

1. Kalle Rovanpera (FIN/Toyota) 250 points, 2. Elfyn Evans (GBR/Toyota) 216, 3. Thierry Neuville (BEL/Hyundai) 189, 4. Ott Tanak (EST/Ford) 174, 5. Sebastien Ogier (FRA/Toyota) 133, 6. Esapekka Lappi (FIN/Hyundai) 113, 7. Takamoto Katsuta (JPN/Toyota) 101, 8. Dani Sordo (ESP/Hyundai) 63, 9. Teemu Suninen (FIN/Hyundai) 42, 10. Oliver Solberg (SWE/Skoda) 33.



Elfyn Evans and his co-driver Scott Martin of Great Britain wave on the podium following their victory in Rally Japan, the 13th round of the FIA World Rally Championship, at Toyota stadium in Toyota city, Aichi prefecture, yesterday. (AFP)

GOLF

Hojgaard wins DP World Tour Championship

Reuters
Dubai

Nicolai Hojgaard carded a 64 in a dramatic final-round to win the DP World Tour Championship in Dubai yesterday by two-strokes and take home the winner's cheque of \$3mn and finish second in the Race to Dubai.

The Dane finished 21-under-par overall, two-strokes ahead of Viktor Hovland, Tommy Fleetwood and Matt Wallace, and will climb to a career-high 50th in the world rankings.

"This is a great way to finish the season," Hojgaard said.

"It's hard to put into words right now after what just happened, it feels amazing."

Hojgaard had led after the first two days in Dubai, but entered the final round three shots off the lead, but managed to pull himself back up the leaderboard with a front nine score of 33.

Wallace began the final day with a one-stroke lead over Fleetwood and Hovland, but was unable to maintain the form which had seen him hit nine back birdies on Saturday.

This left the Ryder Cup trio of Hojgaard, Fleetwood and Hovland to set the pace and after the opening nine holes, the Dane sat one-stroke off the leading pair after hitting three birdies.

The opening three holes on the back nine saw Fleetwood take control, hitting two birdies to Hojgaard's one birdie and one bogey, which left him three-strokes adrift of Fleetwood.

After that, it was Hojgaard who clawed back the deficit and hit the front with five consecutive birdies, but the 22-year-old was left to



Denmark's Nicolai Hojgaard (left) lifts the winner's trophy as Northern Ireland's Rory McIlroy lifts the world championship trophy on the last day of the DP World Tour Championship European Tour golf tournament 2023 at Jumeirah Golf Estates in Dubai yesterday. (AFP)

sweat in the clubhouse after missing what looked like an easy putt for a birdie on the final hole.

"To bogey the 12th was a bit annoying but we managed to bounce back with five in a row and had a good chance to make it six on the 18th," Hojgaard said.

"Having a putt to close it out and it slips by, I thought it was quite a tough moment for me actually, I was like, did it just slip away now and do we have to go into a play-

off." Hovland hit the water with his second shot on the final hole but the Norwegian managed to salvage a par to finish on 19-under, which left Fleetwood out on the course as the man who could steal Hojgaard's win.

The Englishman, however, hit a bogey on the 17th and a par on the final hole, with Wallace hitting three birdies on the final five holes to join Fleetwood and Hovland on 19-under-par for the tournament,

and Hojgaard could finally celebrate.

"I've got family here, this one is for the family," an emotional Hojgaard said.

"Everything they've put in over the years, there's just so much hard work going into this and for it to happen like this is unbelievable," he said.

World number two Rory McIlroy carded a 70 on the final day to finish on 10-under-par overall.

BHULLAR STROLLS TO INDONESIAN MASTERS FOR 11TH ASIAN WIN

Jakarta: Gaganjeet Bhullar shot a final-round 67 to stroll to a five-stroke victory at the Indonesian Masters yesterday, his fifth tournament victory in the country.

The 35-year-old Bhullar finished at 24-under par 260, well clear of compatriot Karandeep Kochhar who carded a 63 to finish on 19-under par.

New Zealand's Ben Campbell, who won the Hong Kong Open a week ago, was a stroke further back in a tie for third with Spain's David Puig.

Bhullar's win was set up by Saturday's third-round of eight-under-par 63 that left him at 20-under with a commanding seven-shot for the final day at Royale Jakarta Golf Club. Bhullar's bid for an 11th Asian Tour victory - the most by any player from his nation - never looked in doubt as he led all four rounds. He sealed the Asian Tour's International Series finale in style with an eagle

three at the 18th hole. "Today I played pretty well actually," said Bhullar who also had a chip-in at the 16th for a birdie three.

"I struggled a bit in the middle of the round, there was a stretch when I was trying my level best but I was not making the birdies, but the chip-in turned around everything.

"And, of course the eagle on the last was the icing on the cake." Bhullar had three previous wire-to-wire wins on the Asian Tour -- at the Macau Open in 2012 and 2017, and the 2013 Indonesia Open.

Andy Ogletree had already wrapped up the International Series order of merit before this week's final event in Jakarta where he finished tied 41st on six-under par.

The American has booked his place on the LIV Golf circuit for next year as a result. Bhullar's win lifted him from 46th place to eighth on the final International Series order of merit.



India's Gaganjeet Bhullar celebrates with the winner's trophy after clinching the BNI Indonesia Masters held at the Royale Jakarta Golf Club in Jakarta yesterday. (AFP)

MATCH REPORT

Australia win sixth World Cup after Head smashes 137

OPENER HEAD SMASHES 137 AS AUSTRALIA STUN HOSTS INDIA IN AHMEDBABAD FINAL

Reuters
Ahmedabad

Australia won a record-extending sixth 50-overs World Cup title after opener Travis Head smashed a magnificent century to fashion their six-wicket victory in yesterday's final against the tournament's form team India.

Put into bat, India rode battling half-centuries by K L Rahul and Virat Kohli to post a below-par 240 all out in exactly 50 overs at a packed Narendra Modi Stadium.

Australia suffered a top order wobble of their own but Head's 137 off 120 balls saw them romp home with seven overs to spare in match that never reached great heights.

The majority of those present in the 132,000 capacity ground sat in deathly silence as the home team, who had won 10 matches in a row to make the final, succumbed to their first loss of the tournament in the all-important summit clash.

"What we've achieved today is unbelievable," a teary-eyed Marnus Labuschagne, who combined with Head in a match-winning partnership of 192, said.

"It's the best achievement I've ever been part of. India have been the team of the tournament, but you knew if you play your best cricket, you have a chance."

Earlier, Pat Cummins's decision to field, primarily to avoid operating with a dewy ball in the night, bemused many but Australian bowlers, aided by some superb fielding, stifled their opposition.

India captain Rohit Sharma had been playing tone-setting knocks in their batting template in the tournament and it was no different in the final despite the early loss of Shubman Gill.

Rohit smashed three sixes in his entertaining 47 but fell just before the end of powerplay.

The opener stepped out against Glenn Maxwell but miscued his shot on the offside.

Head ran backwards from cover to take a tumbling catch to get rid of the India captain. Kohli (54) hit Mitchell Starc (3-55) for three boundaries in a row but India slumped to 81-3 in the 11th over when Cummins dismissed Shreyas Iyer caught behind.

Kohli and Rahul (66) then combined in a dour rebuilding job even



Australia players celebrate with the trophy after winning the ICC World Cup in Ahmedabad yesterday. (Reuters)

if it meant going 16.1 overs without a boundary.

DIFFICULT PITCH

Kohli brought up his ninth 50-plus knock in 11 innings but soon departed after chopping a Cummins delivery on to his stumps.

Rahul hit just one four in his half-century illustrating how difficult the pitch was for shot-makers like him.

Australia wicketkeeper Josh Inglis took five catches, which is a

record in a World Cup final. Australia, when they came out to bat, slumped to 47-3 seven overs into what had looked like a straight-forward chase for them.

Mohamed Shami dismissed David Warner in his first over and Jasprit Bumrah removed Mitchell Marsh and Steve Smith in his successive overs to inject some excitement into the match.

Player-of-the-match Head then combined with Labuschagne, who made 58 not out, to kill off the

contest. "What an amazing day! Just thrilled to be a part of it," said the opener who missed first half of the tournament with a broken hand. "It was a great decision to bowl first and the wicket got better as the game went on."

After a stellar knock that included 15 fours and four sixes, Head missed out on hitting the winning runs when he holed out to Gill with just two runs required for victory. That honour went to Glenn Maxwell, who ran two

to seal their victory in front of a crestfallen Indian crowd, which had already seen the writing on the wall and started thinning out.

The Australian cricketers stormed the field, rushing past their disconsolate Indian opponents. Rahul sank to his knees, while Mohamed Siraj was in tears after the sad end to their remarkable run in the tournament.

Kohli, who was adjudged player-of-the-tournament for leading the run charts, sported a vacant

look like most of his team mates.

"The result hasn't gone our way and we know that we were not good enough on the day, but I'm proud of the team," Rohit said. "I thought when KL and Virat were batting, we were looking at 270-280 at that point but we kept losing wickets. With 240 on the board, we wanted early wickets but credit to Travis Head and Marnus. They put us completely out of the game and I thought the wicket got better to bat under lights."

SCOREBOARD	
India	
R. Sharma c Head b Maxwell	47
S. Gill c Zampa b Starc	4
V. Kohli b Cummins	54
S. Iyer c Inglis b Cummins	4
KL Rahul c Inglis b Starc	66
R. Jadeja c Inglis b Hazlewood	9
S. Yadav c Inglis b Hazlewood	18
M. Shami c Inglis b Starc	6
J. Bumrah lbw b Zampa	1
K. Yadav run out	10
M. Siraj not out	9
Extras (lb3, w9)	12
Total (all out, 50 overs)	240
Fall of wickets: 1-30 (Gill), 2-76 (Rohit), 3-81 (Iyer), 4-148 (Kohli), 5-178 (Jadeja), 6-203 (Rahul), 7-211 (Shami), 8-214 (Bumrah), 9-226 (S Yadav), 10-240 (Kuldeep)	
Bowling: Starc 10-0-55-3 (3w); Hazlewood 10-0-60-2 (1w); Maxwell 6-0-35-1; Cummins 10-0-34-2 (2w); Zampa 10-0-44-1 (1w); Marsh 2-0-5-0; Head 2-0-4-0;	
Australia	
D. Warner c Kohli b Shami	7
T. Head c Gill b Siraj	137
M. Marsh c Rahul b Bumrah	15
S. Smith lbw b Bumrah	4
M. Labuschagne not out	58
G. Maxwell not out	2
Extras (b5, lb2, w11)	18
Total (4 wkts, 43 overs)	241
Did not bat: J Inglis, P Cummins, M Starc, A Zampa, J Hazlewood	
Fall of wickets: 1-16 (Warner), 2-41 (Marsh), 3-47 (Smith), 4-239 (Head)	
Bowling: Bumrah 9-2-43-2; Shami 7-1-47-1 (3w); Jadeja 10-0-43-0 (1w); Kuldeep 10-0-56-0; Siraj 7-0-45-1	
Result: Australia won by six wickets	
Player of the match: Travis Head (AUS)	
Player of the Tournament: Virat Kohli (IND)	



India's Virat Kohli acknowledges fans after the presentation ceremony. Kohli was named Player of the Tournament. (Reuters)

SPOTLIGHT

'Phenomenal' captain Cummins secures World Cup moment of glory with brave tactics

AFF
Ahmedabad

Pat Cummins may be an unusual captain, but yesterday he played a role described as "phenomenal" as he led Australia to their sixth World Cup triumph in a victory over India.

Cricket teams are often reluctant to appoint fast bowlers such as Cummins as their skipper because of concerns the extra workload will distract them from taking wickets. But Cummins, thrust into the captaincy just days before the start of the 2021/22 Ashes after Tim Paine's shock resignation after a 'sexting' scandal, still led Australia to a 4-0 series win over England.

Then in June this year, Cummins oversaw Australia's 209-run thrashing of India in the World Test Championship final at The Oval.

Cummins, 30, also doesn't fit the 'macho' image of an Australia captain established by abrasive skippers such as Ian Chappell, Allan Border and Steve Waugh, although the paceman was accused of plotting the downfall of the similarly gritty former coach Justin Langer. Following a defeat by India in the second Test in Delhi this year, Border said: "I'd be playing with a harder edge...The Kiwis (New Zealand), they are the ones that play the goodie two shoes."

Cummins' membership of the 'Cricket for Climate' group, meanwhile, led to suggestions he had influenced Cricket Australia to abandon a sponsorship deal with energy company Alinta - an accusation both he and his bosses denied. He has been labelled "woke" by some critics. "I don't even know what 'woke' means," Cummins told the Sydney Morning Herald in January. "It's a label, it means nothing."

But few opponents would call Cummins,



Australia's captain Pat Cummins (left), Travis Head (centre) and Marnus Labuschagne pose with the trophy after winning the ICC World Cup final. (AFP)

an outstanding bowler with 239 wickets in 55 Tests at 22.94 apiece and 141 in 88 one-day internationals at 28.66, a soft touch.

His steel was evident when he refused to withdraw an appeal after Jonny Bairstow was controversially given out stumped during an Ashes Test at Lord's in July, despite the England batsman thinking the ball was dead.

Australia won that match and retained the Ashes in a series drawn 2-2.

Cummins knows about resilience given injuries meant he endured a six-year wait for a second Test appearance after a debut as an 18-year-old.

And Cummins, a shining light following the 2018 ball-tampering scandal in South Africa that cost Steve Smith the captaincy, has

now led his country to a record-extending sixth World Cup title - despite defeats in their opening two matches.

"Pat Cummins was phenomenal, I think he's been phenomenal all tournament with his decision making," said teammate Mitchell Starc yesterday. Cummins has also demonstrated calmness when required.

That was evident when, with Australia having collapsed to 91-7, he held up an end as Glenn Maxwell's spectacular double century sealed a remarkable three-wicket pool victory over Afghanistan in Mumbai.

He also then held his nerve with the bat in a tense semi-final run-chase against South Africa. "We've had to fight for every win, but we've found a way to win," he said.