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Arshdeep helps India edge past Australia to win T20I series 4-1



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Mbappe, Vitinha give 10-men PSG hard fought win at Le Havre

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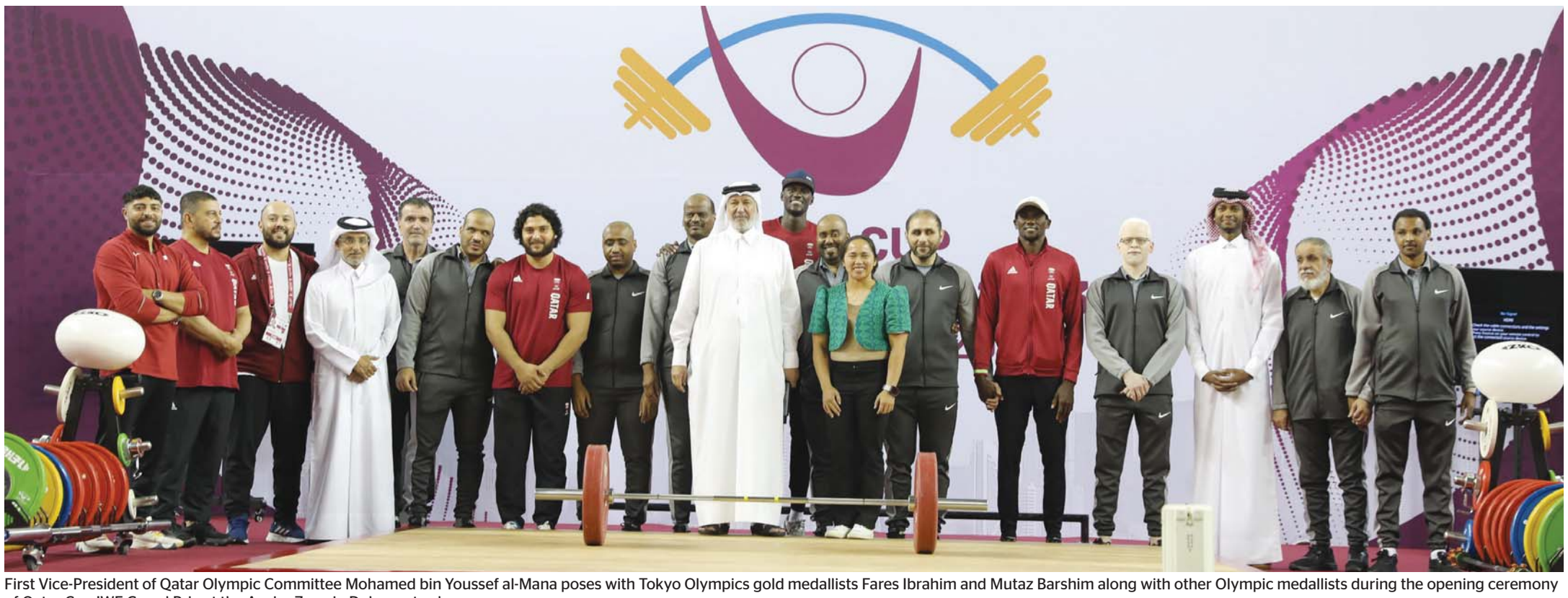
Tottenham fight back to hold Man City in six-goal thriller

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FOCUS

Lifters eye Olympics berths as Qatar Cup IWF GP opens

QATAR'S TOKYO OLYMPIC GOLD MEDALLIST FARES IBRAHIM TO PARTICIPATE IN THE 102KG CLASS



First Vice-President of Qatar Olympic Committee Mohamed bin Youssef al-Mana poses with Tokyo Olympics gold medallists Fares Ibrahim and Mutaz Barshim along with other Olympic medallists during the opening ceremony of Qatar Cup IWF Grand Prix at the Aspire Zone in Doha yesterday.

By Rizwan Rehmat
Doha

The second edition of the Qatar Cup IWF Grand Prix opened yesterday at the Women's Indoor Hall at the iconic Aspire Zone.

The championship – which will take place from December 4 to 14 – is an Olympic Games Paris 2024 qualifying event.

According to the competition schedule released by the organisers, a total of nine Olympic gold medallists along with nine current world champions will feture in the Doha event.

Another 13 world record holders will also aim for the top in various weight categories over the course of the next 10 days.

The opening ceremony yesterday was headlined by Mohamed bin Youssef al-Mana, First Vice-President of the Qatar Olympic Committee (QOC), President of the Qatar, Arab and Asian Weightlifting Federations.

Mohamed Hasan Jalood, President of the International Federation (IWF), and heads of the national federations were also present.

"We announce the opening of Qatar Cup IWF Grand Prix and wish all participants good luck," al-Mana said at a low-key ceremony yesterday.

"We are honoured to have the presence of the Minister of Youth and Sports of the Republic of Iraq, Ahmed al-Mubarqa, and Taha bin Sulaiman al-Kishry, Secretary-General of the Oman Olympic Committee, and many other guests here," he added.

Al-Mana announced that the Local Organising Committee



(LOC) decided to stage a simple ceremony and cancel what would have been a glittering opening ceremony in solidarity with the Palestinian people, who are facing a brutal assault as a result of the Israeli bombing of Gaza.

In his speech, President of IWF Jalood yesterday extended his thanks and appreciation to the Qatar Weightlifting Federation and to the staffers in the LOC 'for putting things together in brilliant fashion ahead of the start of the popular competition'. This is the fifth of seven qualifying competitions for weightlifters hoping to compete at the Olympic Games in Paris in 2024.

The male lifters will compete in the following weight categories: (61kg - qualifies for the Olympics, 73kg - qualifies for the Olympics, 89kg - qualifies for the Olympics, 102kg - qualifies for the Olympics, 55kg, 67kg, 81kg, 96kg, 109kg, +109kg).

The female lifters will compete in the following weights (49kg Olympic qualifier, 59kg Olympic qualifier, 71kg Olympic qualifier, 81kg Olympic qualifier, +81kg Olympic qualifier, 45kg, 55kg, 64kg, 76kg, 87kg and + 87kg).

The IWF has named 35 of the best referees in the world who will officiate in the Doha competitions in which more than 400 male and female lifters are representing 108 countries, organisers said yesterday. The Grand Prix is expected to set new records with the participation of champions from around the world as Doha becomes a transit station for those eyeing the 2024 Paris Olympics.

Qatar's Olympic gold medallist at the Tokyo Olympics Fares Ibrahim is scheduled to participate in the 102kg class.

Ibrahim has already qualified for the 2024 Paris Olympics. Ibrahim qualified for the 2024 Summer Games when he featured in the World Weightlifting Championships held in Saudi Arabia in September.

A meeting of the Executive Office of the IWF was held yesterday morning when important decisions that were put on the agenda were approved.

More meetings will also be held in the coming days

AFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Al Sadd face tough Nasaf in do-or-die round

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Al Sadd will take on Uzbekistan's club FC Nasaf in a no-holds 'do-or-die' round six Group B contest of the AFC Champions League 2023-24 season at the Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium in Doha today at 4pm.

Both teams will be eyeing a win to keep their chances of progressing into the Round of 16. While a win will seal Nasaf's top spot into the knockouts, Al Sadd will need the three winning points to keep their hopes alive.

Al Sadd are third in Group B with seven points (two wins, a draw and two losses). FC Nasaf are leading the group with 10 points, followed by Sharjah FC with eight points.

Al Faisaly of Jordan are last with three points and are out of contention for a Round of 16 spot.

Top teams from each of the ten AFC Champions League groups advance to the Round of 16, along with the best three second-placed teams from among the five West Asian groups.

Al Sadd have endured another difficult AFC Champions League season but their convincing victory over UAE's Sharjah FC has kept them in contention.

The Wolves have also shown good form with their recent Expo Stars League 4-0 win against Al Shamal on Saturday.

Although, having already defeated Al Sadd once this season, the Uzbekistan side will be confident of their chances. Al Sadd will regain the services of defender Paulo Otavio, who was missing in action in their previous AFC Champions League game against Sharjah FC due to suspension.

Speaking at the pre-match conference, Al Sadd head coach Wesam Rizk stressed that his team was ready for the crucial clash and hopeful of securing a spot in the last 16. "It's our last chance in the group stage, and we are playing for the win. We know that Nasaf are



Al Sadd head coach Wesam Rizk (right) and captain Hassan al-Haydos addressing the media yesterday.

currently leading, and our goal is to get all three points," he said.

He added, "The team is fully prepared, and we aim to show ourselves in the best light to secure qualification. We have only one opportunity and we will wait for the results of the other matches. We will play with the last remaining hope to secure a spot in the Round of 16.

"We will focus on the small details to achieve victory. Our players have a professional mentality, and I appreciate their performance in the recent period, especially the team captain Hassan Al Haydos, who has had a significant role with the team lately."

The coach concluded, "Nasaf are leading the group and has outstanding players. We are ready for them, relying on ourselves to achieve the win and cling on to the hope of qualification." Al-Sadd captain Hassan al-Haydos has characterised the upcoming match against Nasaf in the AFC Champions League as a challenging clash that will require that team to play at their best.

Al-Haydos hoped that the home game would help Al Sadd gain advantage of the fan support.

"We are ready for the Nasaf match, and we will try to enter the encounter with full strength. The game will be tough as all teams have equal chances, and I hope we will be up to the task to qualify for the Round of 16.

"The match is at our home ground and in front of the Al Sadd fans, which is the most crucial element for us in tomorrow's match. Their support is the fuel that will propel us to give our best," he said.

Regarding the guidance of coach Rizk, al-Haydos said, "I am honoured to work with Captain Wesam. He is a national coach who understands the players' mentality. We are moving with him step by step on the right path."

SPORT

CRICKET

Arshdeep holds his nerves as India seal T20I series 4-1

Left-arm quick Arshdeep Singh defends nine in the last over that included the wicket of Matthew Wade

AFP
Bengaluru, India



Indian players pose with the series trophy after winning the fifth and final T20I against Australia at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru yesterday. *(AFP)*

Shreyas Iyer smashed 53 and fast bowler Arshdeep Singh kept calm in a tense final over as India edged Australia by six runs to seal the Twenty20 series 4-1 yesterday.

India posted 160-8 in the fifth match after Iyer propelled the total with his 37-ball knock despite losing regular wickets after the tourists elected to field first in Bengaluru.

Fast bowler Mukesh Kumar (3-32) and leg-spinner Ravi Bishnoi (2-29) stood out as the hosts, who took an unbeatable 3-1 lead in the fourth T20, restricted Australia to 154-8.

But it was left-arm quick Arshdeep who defended nine in the last over when he began with two dot balls and then the wicket of skipper Matthew Wade for 22 to dim Australia's hopes.

The next three balls got the batting team just three runs as India celebrated victory.

It was a second-string Indian team which gave some consolation to the fans who witnessed hosts India lose the ODI World Cup final to Australia on November 19 in Ahmedabad.

Ben McDermott smashed 54 off 36 deliveries but the batting wobbled after his departure and Mukesh struck twice on two deliveries to dent the chase.

He took down Matthew Short, for 16, Ben Dwarshuis, on a duck, to be on a hat-trick averted by Nathan Ellis. The left-handed Wade smashed four boundaries and looked set to get the team home but a rising delivery from Arshdeep at the start of the final over made him angry as he signalled to the umpires for a no-ball.

Wade protested and got out two balls later to take back his team's hopes, still dejected and waving his bat.

Earlier India lost regular wickets but Iyer set up victory after he put on fighting partnerships of 42 with Jitesh Sharma, who made 24, and 46 with Axar Patel, who hit back with 31 from 21 balls.

Iyer, who returned in the previous match after resting following the team's World Cup defeat, raised his fifty with a four and six before be was bowled by Nathan Ellis. Both sides will feature in the T20 World Cup in June next year.

BRIEF SCORES
India 160-8 in 20 overs (S. Iyer, 53, A. Patel 31, J. Sharma 24; B. Dwarshuis 2-30, J. Behrendorff 2-38) v **Australia 154-8 in 20 overs** (B. McDermott 54, T. Head 28; M. Wade 22; M. Kumar 3-32, R. Bishnoi 2-29, A. Singh 2-40)

Result: India won by 6 runs
Series: India won the 5-match series 4-1

Previous results in the 5-match series:
First T20I, Nov 23: India won by 2 wickets (with 1 ball remaining)
Second T20I, Nov 26: India won by 44 runs
Third T20I, Nov 28: Australia won by 5 wickets
Fourth T20I, Dec 1: India won by 20 runs

ANNOUNCEMENT

Australia keep faith with Warner for Pakistan Test

AFP
Sydney


Australia's David Warner in action during the fourth Ashes Test against England at Old Trafford Cricket Ground, Manchester, Britain, on July 19, 2023. *(Reuters)*

Veteran opener David Warner kept his spot in Australia's squad announced yesterday to face Pakistan in the first Test this month for what is expected to be his farewell series.

Warner was in scintillating white ball form at the recent World Cup, but he has scored just one Test century since early 2020 and averages only 28 since the 2019-2020 summer.

It has sparked questions about whether he should retain his place at the top of the order alongside Usman Khawaja, with the likes of Cameron Bancroft, Marcus Harris and Matt Renshaw knocking on the door.

That trio will all play for the Prime Minister's XI against Pakistan in a four-day red ball warm-up this week in Canberra, widely seen as an audition for Warner's job.

"This group, led by Pat Cummins, has built a strong resume over an extended period," chairman of selectors George Bailey said of the squad, which was named only for the Perth Test.

"We believe they have earned the opportunity to start in our first home Test match at the beginning of the new World Test Championship cycle."

Australia open the three-Test series in Perth on December 14, before the traditional Boxing Day Test at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, then Sydney, beginning January 3.

Warner, 37, has indicated he plans to quit the five-day game after the Test at his home Sydney Cricket Ground, but continue in white ball cricket.

Spinner Nathan Lyon targets 500

Australia also have Tests against the West Indies later in January at Adelaide and Brisbane.

"As ever, there will be opportunities in the short- to medium-term to break into this squad," said Bailey.

"We look forward to seeing the continued strong performances from players who have been performing domestically, many of whom will get a tremendous opportunity in the PM's XI fixture against Pakistan later this week," he said.

The only change for Perth from the team that started Australia's last Test againstEngland at the Oval in July is likely to be the return of fit-again spinner Nathan Lyon in place of Todd Murphy, who did not make the squad.

Lyon has 496 Test wickets and is on the verge of joining just seven other Test bowlers to breach the 500-mark, including fellow spin kings Muttiah Muralitharan, Shane Warne and Anil Kumble.

Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc and Josh Hazlewood are again set to spearhead the pace attack with Scott Boland and firebrand Lance Morris - on the comeback from a back stress injury - waiting in the wings.

All-rounder Mitchell Marsh and Cameron Green were both included in the 14-man squad, but Marsh has moved ahead in the pecking order.

Australia squad for first Test: David Warner, Usman Khawaja, Marnus Labuschagne, Steve Smith, Travis Head, Mitchell Marsh, Alex Carey, Pat Cummins (capt), Mitchell Starc, Nathan Lyon, Josh Hazlewood, Scott Boland, Cameron Green, Lance Morris.

Australia must avoid post-Warne errors when Warner retires, says Bailey

Australia's chief selector George Bailey has cautioned against repeating the mistakes made in the aftermath of leg-spinner Shane Warne's retirement when long-standing opener David Warner finally calls time on his Test career.

Warner was named yesterday in Australia's 14-man squad for the first test in Perth from Dec. 14-18 of the three-match series against Pakistan as he aims to bring the curtain down on his career in Sydney against Shan Masood's team in January.

While attention has been trained on whether Warner should be granted the opportunity to end his 12-year Test career on his own terms, Bailey stressed the need to ensure there was no hangover from the departure of such an influential individual.

"I think when you've had someone who's had that longevity and been so dominating in the role, it's just to temper the expectations of whoever is going to be the replacement there," Bailey said.

"Think back to Warney finishing up as a spinner and how many spinners got brought in and shuffled out in the quest to replicate Warney.

"I don't think you ever try and replicate someone who's played a role as someone has, and done it as well as someone has, and I'd put David in that category in the way he's opened the batting for Australia for such a long period of time.

"That's something we're conscious of and making sure that fit post-David is the right one."

Warner's selection for the opening test comes as his former teammate Mitchell Johnson launched a withering critique of the 37-year-old's recent form and questioned whether he deserved to continue to be selected.

Over the last two years Warner has managed to average fewer than 30 runs with only one century, while his involvement in the "Sandpapergate" scandal in South Africa that rocked Australian cricket in 2018 still tarnishes the Sydneysider's reputation.

"It's been five years and David Warner has still never really owned the ball-tampering scandal," Johnson wrote in *The West Australian* yesterday, referring to Warner's year-long ban for involvement in sandpapering the ball to affect flight.

"As we prepare for David Warner's farewell series, can somebody please tell me why?

"Why a struggling test opener gets to nominate his own retirement date. And why a player at the centre of one of the biggest scandals in Australian cricket history warrants a hero's send-off?"

Bailey refused to be drawn in detail on Johnson's comments but stressed Warner's ability meant he warranted his place in the squad for the opening meeting with Pakistan.

"Ultimately we still think he's in our best 11 players to win the first Test," Bailey said yesterday.

New doubts over coral, safety at planned Olympic surf venue



Papeete: The president of French Polynesia has questioned whether 2024 Olympic surfing can go ahead at the planned site in Tahiti, saying he was concerned about safety and damage to coral from a planned judging tower.

A construction barge slated to install a new judging tower broke more of the beach's corals in a new test in the French Pacific territory on Friday, which was filmed by environmental groups.

That could leave an old wooden tower as the only space for the judges.

"Today we're breaking coral, and tomorrow we may be endangering people's lives if we use this old equipment," Moetai Brotherson told local broadcaster *TNTV* on Saturday.

"If there's no solution in the end... we must call into question the survival of the surf contests at Teahupoo," he added.

Brotherson cancelled tests he was supposed to observe as well as the start of construction work today.

And he said that "there's no way we will be able to re-use the old foundations... or the old tower".

Brotherson told AFP that it would not be possible to move the competition to another beach in Tahiti, as Teahupoo was the site originally filed with Olympic authorities as part of France's candidacy.

And it would cost €7mn to move the surfing events to a site in metropolitan France.

But Barbara Martins-Nio, the Tahiti Olympics site director, said she was "confident a technical solution exists".

"A new tower and new foundations are the only way," she added - while acknowledging that "it's true that it's difficult to access the site".

"If we don't manage it, all of us together will have to ask ourselves what happens next," Martins-Nio said.

More than 168,000 people have signed an online petition against the planned aluminium judges' tower, supposed to reach a height of 14 metres (46 feet), while hundreds have protested at the Teahupoo site itself.

It "doesn't make any sense to need such a giant tower for a 2 days event," American surfing legend Kelly Slater posted online last week, calling to "give the money to local infrastructure" instead.

Vai ara o Teahupoo, the main association opposing the new tower, has stopped speaking to the media about the case.

SWIMMING

Haughey wins 100m free in US Open meet

AFP
Washington

Siobhan Haughey won the 100m freestyle in a meet record 52.94sec to claim her third title at the US Open swimming championships as Katie Ledecky closed the meeting with a dominant 1,500m free win.

Hong Kong's Haughey, the 100m free silver medallist at the Tokyo Olympics and at the World Championships this year, powered to the win over Americans Torri Huske and Abbey Weitzeil, Huske finishing in 53.17 and Weitzeil in 53.53. The victory at the meet in Greensboro, North Carolina, followed Haughey's two triumphs on Friday, when she beat Ledecky in the 200m free and returned less than half an hour later to upset Tokyo Olympic gold medallist Lydia Jacoby in the 100m breaststroke.

Ledecky, who had also settled for second in the 400m free behind Canadian teenager Summer McIntosh, closed with a characteristically dominant 1,500m win in 15min 46.38sec.

The seven-time Olympic champion was almost 25 seconds faster than runner-up Paige Madden.

GOLF

Niemann and Buhai win Australian Open trophies

'I wanted to play more golf. It was huge to come up here and play good golf and get a result'

Sydney
Reuters

Joaquin Niemann mastered the Sydney winds to become the first Chilean winner in 119 years of the Australian Open when he beat Japan's Rikuya Hoshino in a playoff to lift the Stonehaven Cup yesterday.

Niemann lipped out with a four-foot eagle putt on the first re-run of the 18th but made no mistake on the second playoff hole, draining a slightly longer eagle attempt to add a first DP World Tour title to the two he has won on the PGA circuit.

"It means a lot," Niemann, who also qualified for British Open, told reporters.

"This season wasn't the best for me. I wanted to play more golf. It was huge to come up here and play good golf and get a result."

South Africa's Ashleigh Buhai retained the title in the women's Australian Open, being played in parallel on the same course. She held off Australia's Minjee Lee to win by a single stroke on nine-under despite shooting a three-over-par 75.

Earlier in a wild final round, Niemann had shot a five-under-par 66 to take the clubhouse lead with Hoshino joining him on 14-under when he completed a round of 70 some 90 minutes later.

Min Woo Lee, who beat Hoshino in a Sunday duel to win the Australian PGA Championship last week, came up short in his bid to go back-to-back after a 71 and had to settle for third place on 12-under.

Spectacular overnight storms cleared to make way for a bright, sunny morning at The Australian Golf Club but the wind had already started building and it increased in speed until it wreaked havoc with the local contenders.

Min Woo Lee, younger brother of Minjee, and Hoshino shared the overnight lead and were expected to reprise their duel but Adam Scott and Lucas Herbert made early charges to share the lead. Former Masters champion Scott edged ahead of the leading pack with his eighth birdie at his 16th hole but calamity struck at the next when his tee shot landed in an unplayable lie hard up against a fence and he took a triple bogey.

Herbert also had a triple bogey at the eighth to tumble out of contention, leaving Niemann and Englishman Alex Fitzpatrick, brother of 2022 US Open champion Matt, top of the leaderboard on 13-under.

Niemann had flirted with disaster on his first go at the 18th when his tee shot went into the crowd and he had to nip into a marquee to get a look at the green before firing an iron shot over the diners and walking away with a sixth birdie.

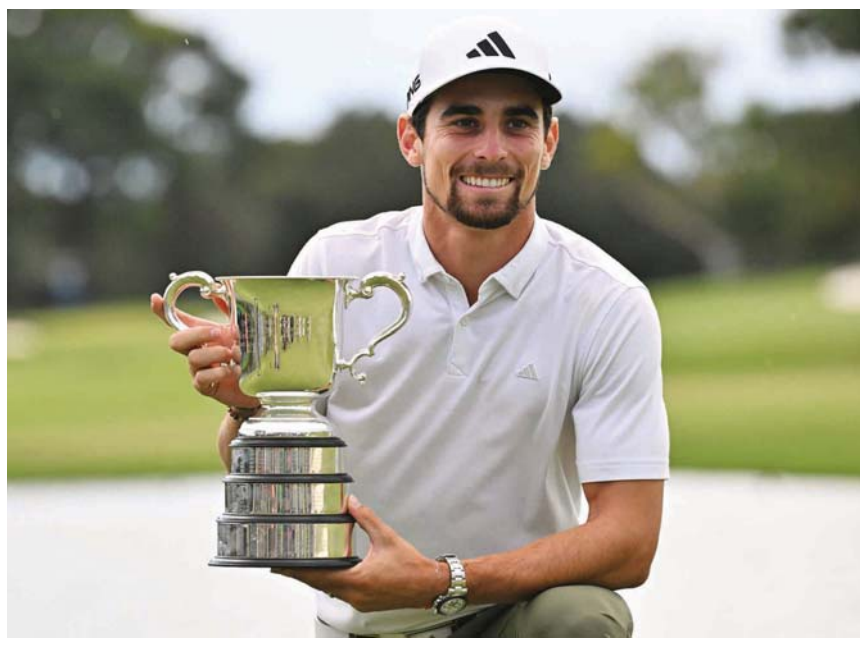
"I didn't know where I was hitting, I didn't know where the water was, I didn't know where the bunker was," Niemann added.

"As soon as I hit it, I just listened for the crowd's reaction. Fortunately it was good."

Buhai started the day with a three-stroke lead over former world number one Shin Ji-yai but none of her rivals was able to close the gap even after the South African dropped three shots on the back nine.

Minjee Lee, seven strokes back at the start of the day, got within a shot after Buhai went into the water at the 17th but the 2022 Women's British Open champion held her nerve to claim the title with a par putt at the last.

"I'm so proud to defend my title," said Buhai. "I knew they had to come catch me so I just played smart golf. Most of the crowd were supporting Minjee but it was a lot of fun out there."

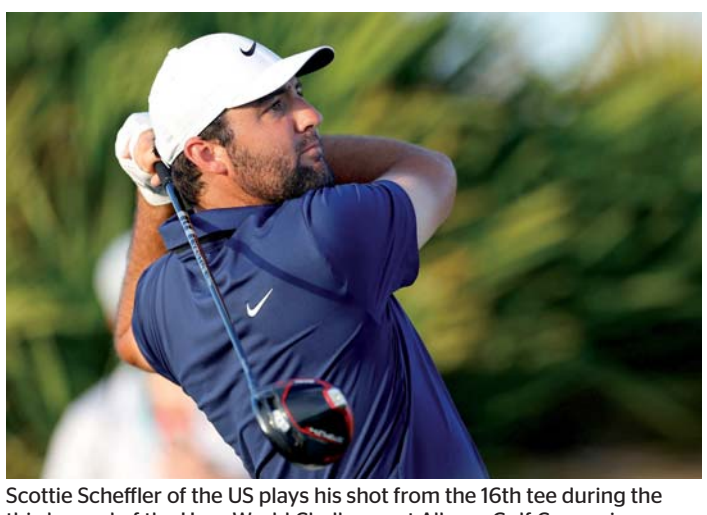




Chile's Joaquin Niemann poses with the men's trophy after he won the Australian Open at The Australian Golf Club in Sydney yesterday. **Right:** South Africa's Ashleigh Buhai poses with the women's trophy after the Australian Open yesterday. *(AFP)*

SPOTLIGHT

Scheffler builds lead, mixed day for Woods



Scottie Scheffler of the US plays his shot from the 16th tee during the third round of the Hero World Challenge at Albany Golf Course in Nassau. *(AFP)*

AFP
Miami

World number one Scottie Scheffler fired two eagles in his seven-under par 65 to build a three-shot lead at the Hero World Challenge on Saturday as Tiger Woods continued his comeback with a one-under 71.

Fifteen-time Major winner Woods, playing his first tournament since ankle surgery in April that followed his withdrawal from the Masters, shook off a bogey-bogey start to card a one-under par 71 that left him at even par, 16 strokes behind Scheffler and tied for 16th in the 20-player event he hosts at the Albany Golf Course in the Bahamas. Woods said he'd been "pleasantly surprised" at how his body has held up, which was more of a concern than the state of his game.

"I still have game," he said. "It's whether or not the body can do it."

Woods, who turns 48 on December 30, had ankle surgery in April on the same leg that was severely injured in a 2021 car crash. While his leg pain is gone, he said he still contends with chronic back pain, but said before the tournament he could play as much as once a month in 2024.

On Saturday he started 10 off the pace and got off to an inauspicious start with bogeys at the first and second. He clawed back with birdies at the third, sixth eighth and ninth - where he got up and down from a greenside bunker - before two bogeys and a birdie coming in. That included a seven-foot par putt miss at the 18th. "It could have been a little better than the score indicates," Woods said. "I think I could have shot something in the high 60s. I think it was cleaner than it was yesterday."

Most importantly, Woods said, he was "very excited" at how he has responded physically to the pace of competition.

"To be able to knock off some of the rust as I have this week, showed myself that I can recover each and every day, that was kind of an unknown," he said. "I'm very excited how the week's turned out."

Scheffler, meanwhile, was in cruise control, starting the day tied for the lead with Jordan Spieth and seizing control with a 15-foot eagle at the third. He added four birdies before he rolled in a 14-foot eagle at 15 to push his lead to four strokes over England's Matt Fitzpatrick, who also signed for a 65.

A bogey at 18, where Scheffler's drive was in the right rough, cut that by one, giving him a 16-under par total of 200. "I played really well today, really solid the whole day," said Scheffler, the 2022 Masters champion who has finished runner-up in this event the past two years."

Spieth, who was playing catch-up after his bogey at the third dropped him three off the pace, finished with four birdies and three bogeys in his 71 for 206, tied for fourth with Australian Jason Day and Americans Tony Finau and Collin Morikawa.

FOOTBALL

Mbappe and Vitinha give 10-men PSG hard fought win at Le Havre; Monaco pick up points

AFP
Paris

Paris Saint-Germain ground out a tense 2-0 victory away to Le Havre on Sunday courtesy of strikes by Kylian Mbappe and Vitinha, after 'keeper Gianluigi Donnarumma saw red early on.

Despite the two-goal win, PSG had to shown great resilience to keep the hosts at bay and move four points clear of second-placed Nice in the table.

After going down to 10 men in the 10th minute, a fine Mbappe goal, his 15th in the league this season, gave the embattled visitors the lead, but the points were only wrapped up right at the end when Portuguese midfielder Vitinha doubled the score with one minute remaining of normal time.

The 22-year-old reserve goalkeeper, who joined PSG in the summer on a free transfer from Barcelon, made a surprise professional debut when he was unexpectedly called on with 12 minutes on the clock.

"He (Tenas) is evidently a top pro, he trains every day like it is his last," said Enrique.

Le Havre started brightly and won a series of early corners, one of which forced the visitors into a change when Fabian Ruiz injured his right shoulder defending a set-piece.

However, it was a long ball that finally broke down the Parisian defence as a clearance was not dealt with by Nordi Mukiele, allowing Josue Casimir to nip in before being abruptly halted by Donnarumma. The Italian's desperate attempt to clear the ball resulted in him catching the Le Havre man very high on the shoulder outside the box and the referee was left with little choice but to brandish a red card.

Despite their numerical disadvantage and the loss of attacker Bradley Barcola, sacrificed for 'keeper Tenas, it was PSG who opened the scoring. Ousmane Dembele drilled a pass into his captain's feet and Mbappe's first touch took him inside the defender and with a yard of space he wrong-footed the goalie from inside the D, scoring via the post.

Chances came at both ends just prior to the hour mark with Mohamed Bayo shooting tamely at Tenas from a promising position, before Dembele fired across goal with the ball brushing against the far post.

The hosts began to press and only a fine save by Tenas in the 64th minute and a vital sliding interception by Danilo Pereira three minutes later kept PSG's lead intact.

But it was Dembele and PSG that had the best chance to score the second goal of the match in the 70th minute, however a retreating Christopher Operi managed to foil the winger.

Tenas then came to the league leaders rescue again with an excellent double save at his near post from Nabil Alioui with 12 minutes remaining.

Victory was finally assured in the 89th minute when a PSG foray into Le Havre territory led to Vitinha trying his luck from distance, with a large deflection causing the ball to loop over the helpless goalkeeper.

In yesterday's afternoon kick-offs, Monaco profited from Nice's slip-up on Saturday to close the gap to two points with a 2-0 win at home to Montpellier.



Paris Saint-Germain's French forward Kylian Mbappe runs with the ball during the French L1 match against Le Havre AC at The Stade Oceane in Le Havre, north-western France, yesterday. *(AFP)*

Djokovic protege Medjedovic tops Fils for Next Gen crown

Jeddah, Saudi Arabia: **Hamad Medjedovic** upset top-seeded Arthur Fils 3-4 (6/8), 4-1, 4-2, 3-4 (9/11), 4-1 to win the Next Gen ATP Finals in Jeddah on Saturday.

At No 110 in the world, Medjedovic became the lowest-ranked champion in the six-year history of the 21-and-under tournament as well as the first Serbian to lift the Next Gen Finals trophy.

Having gone undefeated through the group stage before storming to the title, Medjedovic has received $514,000 for winning the event, which is nearly $100,000 higher than his entire career prize money earnings.

His triumph comes just two weeks after his mentor and compatriot Novak Djokovic lifted a record seventh ATP Finals trophy in Turin.

"It's a nice thing obviously. The two of us from Serbia, he's winning the big Masters I would say, the real one, and I'm winning the Next Gen, obviously it's a huge thing and I'm really happy to follow his footsteps in some way," said Medjedovic, who threw himself to the ground in disbelief after converting his third championship point.

"It was a very special feeling. I couldn't believe it, I still don't believe it. It's going to give me for sure a lot of confidence for 2024. Obviously Arthur is an amazing player.

Rankings-wise he's much better than me, he's top-40 for a reason, he's very good. I'm just really happy."

Fils, a leading candidate for the ATP Newcomer of the Year award, has enjoyed a banner 2023, which saw the French teenager rise from 251 in the world at the start of the year to a current career-high of 36.



There was no Cristiano Ronaldo 'Siu' celebration for the 19-year-old on Saturday - as he had done after every victory in Jeddah - but Fils has plenty to be excited about, especially as he heads to Kuwait next week for a training block with 22-time Grand Slam champion Rafael Nadal, who is plotting his return to the tour following a year-long injury hiatus.

"It's amazing. I will practise during one week or two with Rafael Nadal so I'm very happy. I will enjoy every time on the court with him and I will try my best to play with him and to learn from him," said Fils.

Medjedovic entered the final with a tournament-leading 50 aces struck through four matches.

The Next Gen Finals is the first ATP-sanctioned tournament to be held in Saudi Arabia, with Jeddah set to host the event through 2027.

PREMIER LEAGUE

Spurs snatch point at Man City after Liverpool drama

Fernandez double helps 10-man Chelsea to 3-2 win over Brighton

AFP
London

Dejan Kulusevski headed a dramatic late goal as Tottenham held Manchester City in a six-goal thriller yesterday after Liverpool staged a sensational comeback on a breathless afternoon in the Premier League.

High-flying Aston Villa scored in the 90th minute to draw 2-2 at Bournemouth while 10-man Chelsea shrugged off a red card for captain Conor Gallagher to edge Brighton 3-2 on a day when 24 goals were scored in five matches.

Champions City looked set to move to within one point of leaders Arsenal when they led Spurs 3-2 in the dying minutes at the Etihad. But Kulusevski headed home from Brennan Johnson's cross in the 90th minute to leave City ruing dropped points for the third match running.

Son Heung-min put the away side ahead in the sixth minute but three minutes later the South Korean forward turned villain, putting the ball into his own net.

Phil Foden put City in front just after the half hour following a sweeping move but Giovani Lo Celso levelled about 20 minutes from time.

Jack Grealish restored the home side's lead once more, only for Kulusevski to stun the Etihad late on.

"Of course that's why we love football," Tottenham captain Son told Sky Sports. "That's what I told the lads.

"Obviously Man City are a huge, huge team and one of the best teams in the world but that's why we love football, it happens sometimes. We kept believing until 90 minutes so I'm very very proud of the team."

Earlier, Liverpool appeared set for their first home defeat in the Premier League since October 2022 when they went 3-2 down to Bobby De Cordova-Reid's goal in the 80th minute.

But they turned the tables in dramatic fashion through Wataru Endo and Trent Alexander-Arnold, who struck in the 87th and 88th minutes for a 4-3 win.

It was the latest Liverpool have ever fallen behind in a Premier League match that they went on to win. "We played an incredible game until we didn't anymore," Liverpool boss Jurgen Klopp told the BBC.

"All credit to Fulham, they did really well. Today we scored four worldies and were lucky in the end to win the game, and that tells you everything."

Alexander-Arnold set Liverpool on their way in the 20th minute when his brilliant free-kick clipped the underside of the crossbar and went in off Fulham keeper Bernd Leno for an own goal.

Harry Wilson levelled before Alexis Mac Allister produced a moment of magic to restore the home side's lead, unleashing a rising drive that found the top corner for his first Liverpool goal.


Tottenham Hotspur's Dejan Kulusevski celebrates with teammates Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg and Oliver Skipp after scoring their third goal against Manchester City yesterday. *(Reuters)*

But Fulham equalised through Kenny Tete before half time and the London side looked set for a sensational victory when substitute De Cordova-Reid nodded home their third with 10 minutes of normal time to go.

However, Liverpool were not finished. Mohamed Salah set up Endo, who found the net from the edge of the box and Alexander-Arnold drove the ball home a minute later, sparking wild scenes at Anfield.

Chelsea recorded just their second Premier League home win of the season against Brighton, despite being reduced to 10 men before half-time.

Mauricio Pochettino's men were cruising midway through the first half after goals from Enzo Fernandez and Levi Colwill.

Facundo Buonanotte halved the deficit for the visitors shortly before half-time and there was still time for Gallagher to pick up a second yellow card before the break, changing the complexion of the match.

Fernandez restored Chelsea's two-goal cushion from the penalty spot, but Joao Pedro struck in stoppage time to heap the pressure on the home side but they held on.

Aston Villa striker Ollie Watkins headed home a cross from Moussa Diaby in the 90th minute to rescue a point Unai Emery's team, which kept them in fourth place.

At the London Stadium, Mohammed Kudus put West Ham ahead in the first half, before Odsonne Edouard equalised in the second period to earn a point for Crystal Palace.

SERIE A

Roma eye Champions League spots with Sassuolo victory

AFP
Milan

Roma closed in on Serie's A top four after coming from behind to win 2-1 at Sassuolo and move level on points with champions Napoli, who host Inter Milan in a huge title clash.

Paulo Dybala's 76th-minute penalty and a wildly deflected strike from Rasmus Kristensen shortly afterwards earned Roma the points from a scrappy match which Sassuolo finished with 10 men after Daniel Boloca was sent off in the 63rd minute.

Roma are fifth, trailing by goal difference to Napoli who sit in the last Champions League spot and need to win the weekend's headline match to reignite their title defence.

Inter will reclaim top spot from Juventus as long as they do not lose, while a win in Naples could also push Roma above Napoli and into fourth. Jose Mourinho's team looked unlikely to get a result until Dybala squeezed in his third goal of the season from the penalty spot.

Romelu Lukaku had missed the best chance of the game for Roma 10 minutes before Boloca's red card when he shot straight at Andrea Consigli when all alone in front of the Sassuolo goalkeeper.

And the away side had a huge slice of good fortune with eight minutes remaining when Kristensen's effort clipped Ruan Tressoldi and looped over the despairing Consilgi the delight of the massed ranks of Roma fans behind that goal.

The draw at the Mapei Stadium came as Mourinho is reportedly being investigated by the Italian Football Federation (FIGC) for saying that referee Matteo Marcenaro didn't "have the emotional stability to referee at this level" ahead of the match.

The Portuguese blasted both Marcenaro, 31, in a pre-match outburst on Saturday which the country's refereeing association said "could lead to violence" against officials.

However, Mourinho was backed by Roma on Sunday, General Manager Tiago Pinto saying that the coach "didn't insult anyone" and that the club hadn't been informed of any FIGC probe.

"We've never had him as a referee but we have had him as a fourth official in the past and he has always sent off someone from our bench," said Pinto.

"If a manager can't use the term 'emotional stability' then I don't know what it is we can say."

Fiorentina are a point behind Roma in sixth thanks to a simple 3-0 win over the division's bottom team Salernitana.

Meanwhile Bologna are a further point and place back after Roberto Piccoli's penalty in the 10th minute of added time cost Thiago Motta's team a 1-1 draw for Lecce.

Thomas Henry scored his first goal for Verona since August last year to snatch a 3-3 draw in the seventh minute of stoppage at fellow strugglers Udinese.

Frenchman Henry has been restricted to short appearances off the bench this season after tearing knee ligaments in January.

But after coming on with six minutes remaining and his team trailing he glanced home a perfect header to move his side one point from safety and two behind Udinese, who sit 16th.

Leverkusen need late Boniface goal to earn 1-1 draw against Dortmund

Bundesliga leaders Bayer Leverkusen scored a 79th minute equaliser through Victor Boniface to snatch a 1-1 draw against visitors Borussia Dortmund yesterday but saw their eight-game winning run in the league come to an end.

Undefeated Leverkusen are still in top spot on 35 points. Second-placed Bayern Munich, on 32, were not in action this weekend after heavy snowfall in the Bavarian capital forced the postponement of Sunday's match against Union Berlin.

Dortmund, who are in fifth place 10 points off the top, took a fifth minute lead with Julian Ryerson's third goal of the season as the Norwegian finished off a fine passing move.

It was the first time this season Leverkusen, who had scored at least twice in each of their previous matches this season for a league record, had failed to score in the first half.

The hosts kept up the pressure after the break and boxed Dortmund in their own half but despite overwhelming dominance could not score until the introduction of Patrik Schick in the 79th.

The Czech forward had an instant impact, setting up Nigeria international Boniface for the equaliser seconds after coming on as Leverkusen rescued a point.

SPOTLIGHT

Qatar Drag Racing 2nd round sees eight new champs

By Sports Reporter
Doha

After intense competitions that lasted until the early hours of Saturday, the second round of the Qatar Drag Racing Championship concluded.

The event, held under the generous sponsorship of His Excellency Sheikh Khalid bin Hamad al-Thani, the Chairman of Qatar Racing Club, witnessed thrilling moments and dual struggles that kept spectators on the edge of their seats until the last moments.

The second round was filled with excitement and enthusiasm, featuring intense battles and dual struggles that unfolded until the final moments. The round saw the participation of over 130 racers across the fifteen championship categories. The leaders in the qualification trials in nine categories continued their journey towards the final races, aiming to clinch the title of the second round.

Additionally, eight racers secured their first championship title in this round, adding a new dimension to the overall competition standings. Seven racers successfully defended their titles from the previous round. This trend was evident in the strongest categories, namely Super Street and Super Stock. The final showdown in the first category was a repeat of the last round, with Khalid al-Sultan and Bader al-Sharshani facing off, resulting in al-Sultan's victory and Mohammed Kafoud securing the third position. In the Super Stock category, the podium mirrored the first round, with Ahmed al-Emadi claiming the first position, Nawaf al-Ansari securing second place and Mohamed al-Nabit finished third.



All the winners with His Excellency Sheikh Jabor bin Khalid al-Thani Chairman of Qatar Racing Club at the conclusion of the second round of Qatar Drag Racing Championship.

The new category for this season, the 8 Cylinder Pro, witnessed racer Yahya al-Ajeel clinching the title after defeating the top qualifier Abdullah Ali in the final match. Ahmed al-Emadi came third.

The 8 Cylinder Modified category saw a stunning upset, as the champion from the previous round faced mechanical issues, allowing racer Tariq al-Balushi to seize his first title by defeating Ahmed al-Asiri.

Badr al-Khalaf secured the third position after finishing second in the previous round. The final match in the 8 Cylinder Stock category featured a strong competition between racers Akram al-Rashidi and Sheikh Jabor al-Thani. Al-Rashidi emerged victorious, avenging his loss in the last round, while Abdullah al-Emadi claimed the third position.

In the 6 Cylinder Modified category, a new champion emerged in racer Rashid al-Juhani, who won the final match against competitor Mansour Amin. Hassan al-Hamar secured the third position. Hamad al-Mansour was the sole racer to retain his title for the second consecutive round, with a final identical to the previous round against Mohamed Saeed, while Omar Mustafa claimed the third spot.

The competitions in the 4 Cylinder categories witnessed defending champions retaining their titles for the second consecutive round. Waseem Agha secured the title in the modified category, defeating Abdullah Kridly, while Eduardo Tobig finished third.

In the Stock category, Mark Frederick Sighi maintained his title by overcoming Armando Austria, with Christian Saramento claiming the third position.

In the second round of Light Truck categories, Badr al-Shersheni won the Modified category by defeating the top qualifier and last round's champion Khalifa al-Khalaf, while Saeed al-Madahka, the runner-up from the previous round, secured the third position. Abdullah al-Hamadi secured the Stock category title for the second time in a row, surpassing Mahmoud Diab, while Faisal Mohamed claimed the third position.

Championship battle heats up in bike and ET categories

In the ET categories for cars and motorcycles held on Thursday, Sherwin Izguerra claimed his first title in the car category by defeating Nabil Barkatullah. Mohamed al-Hafiz secured the third position. Ozer Ismail won the motorcycle title defeating Youssef al-Darwish in the final. Fahd Haji came third.

The remaining motorcycle categories witnessed fierce competitions, starting with a heavy surprise as the reigning Real Street Bike champion Dawood al-Sharshani suffered an injury to his hand in an accident, preventing him from continuing the competition. The Kuwaiti racer Fahd al-Harbi emerged as the winner of this round, defeating the Saudi racer Khalid al-Dosari in the final match, while Youssef al-Darwish claimed the third position. In the Stock Bike category, Shahid Muneer retained his title, winning the final against Khalid al-Dosari, with Hamad al-Muhannadi securing the third position.