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SPOTLIGHT

Arabi clinch Qatar Volleyball League for the 26th time



Qatar and West Asian Volleyball Federations president Ali Ghanem al-Kuwari presents the Qatar Volleyball League shield to AI Arabi captain Mohamed Ibrahim after the final round match on Friday night.

By Sports Reporter
Doha

AI Arabi were crowned champions of the Qatar Volleyball League for the 26th time, despite losing their final round match to AI Rayyan on Friday night. Arabi needed to pocket just two sets

and they did that with ease even as Rayyan won the match 25-12, 23-25, 25-22, 18-25, 12-15. Arabi topped the leaderboard with 51 points, while Rayyan had to settle for second place with 49 points. Qatar SC claimed the third spot. The match, which doubled as the season's grand finale, saw Arabi revamp their lineup by bringing in Cuban star Jose Miguel Gutierrez from Italy, replacing

Russian outside hitter Aleksei Spiridonov. Gutierrez, alongside Brazilian powerhouse Gabriel Candido, propelled AI Arabi to triumph, winning the essential sets early in the match. Oliver Venno of AI Rayyan emerged as the top scorer with 23 points, but it was Candido and Gutierrez who led Arabi to victory with 19 and 17 points respectively. After a somewhat disappointing third



Action from the match between AI Arabi and AI Rayyan.

place finish at the West Asian Club Championship, Arabi's league victory marks a significant turnaround, showcasing their resilience. This title further extends their record to 26, leaving Rayyan SC with 11 titles and marking their 14th runner-up position. Arabi players received gold medals and the league shield, in addition QR250,000 in prize money. Rayyan took home QR150,000, while

Qatar SC were richer by QR100,000. Following the victory ceremony, Ali Ghanem al-Kuwari, President of the Qatar and West Asian Volleyball Federations, praised the technical level of the tournament, and said that the teams presented a high level performance during the league competitions this season. He praised the performance of all the teams and congratulated the Arabi team for winning the title.

MOTOGP

Vinales wins Portuguese GP sprint after Bagnaia error

APRILIA RIDER TAKES THE CHEQUERED FLAG AHEAD OF MARC MARQUEZ AND JORGE MARTIN

Reuters
Portimao, Portugal

Aprilia's Maverick Vinales claimed the first sprint victory of his career at the Portuguese Grand Prix, taking the chequered flag ahead of Marc Marquez and Jorge Martin at the Algarve International Circuit yesterday. Championship leader and Francesco Bagnaia looked well set for a comfortable victory when he was in the lead but the Italian went wide with four laps left, allowing the three Spaniards behind him to move ahead. Marquez had started eighth on the grid but rode his Gresini Racing bike with purpose to claim his first podium on a Ducati machine, overtaking Martin on the final lap with a well-timed lunge to take second place in an all-Spanish podium. "Honestly, I'm happy to be back on the top. We need to concentrate for (the race) tomorrow, but we will enjoy today. My first win for Aprilia," said Vinales, who has now won in MotoGP on three different bikes - Aprilia, Suzuki and Yamaha. "Coming here, I don't know if I was going to ride," said Vinales "And now my first victory with Aprilia. Today it feels good," he said. "It's been a long time. It feels amazing. I never doubted that I would be back. We are showing we are finding the way. Today, I had a lot of fun fighting with the others." Red Bull KTM's Jack Miller had qualified fifth fastest but he shot off the line when the lights went out to take the lead on the opening lap. However, he was quickly reeled in by the chasing pack, with Bagnaia moving into lead with 10 laps to go. Behind them, Marquez was fired up as well after starting eighth on the grid following a crash in qualifying and the six-times champion set the fastest lap, quickly cut-



ting his way through the pack before slotting in behind Bagnaia. But Vinales, who had overcome a bout of illness on Friday, had qualified second-fastest and the Aprilia rider moved up and sandwiched himself in between the two Ducati machines, pushing Marquez down to third. Marquez lost one more position when sprint king Martin slipped through with seven laps left as the Pramac Racing rider set his sights on Vinales. But all their eyes lit up when Bagnaia went wide allowing Vinales, Martin and Marquez to move into the top three. Vinal-

es had free air in front of him and raced into the lead without anyone to challenge him while Marquez waited for the perfect opportunity to pounce on the final lap as he overtook Martin and finished second. The six-time world champion recorded his best finish since he was second in the main race in Australia in October 2022. "To be back overtaking and having the speed is surely a good feeling," said Marquez. "I didn't expect that podium. Tomorrow, the race will be even more difficult. I made a mistake in qualifying that I was able to avoid. I engaged the rear device too

early and I crashed," Marquez added. "The team did a great job to repair the bike and in the race I was super lucky in the first lap to have a good start. This weekend we have the speed. When you have the speed you have more confidence you are able to overtake better." Bagnaia finished fourth, which allowed him to hold on to a slim lead in the championship, two points ahead of last year's title challenger and runner-up Martin. "I messed up!" said Bagnaia. "I had a really good feeling on the bike, I got off to a good start, I opened up a gap and I was manag-



Aprilia's Maverick Vinales celebrates on the podium after winning the sprint race.

ing it well, so everything was going well," explained the Italian. "I missed a braking point and I lost everything."

- SPRINT RESULTS
1. Maverick Vinales (ESP/Aprilia) 19min 49.636sec, 2. Marc Marquez (ESP/Ducati-Gresini) at 1.039, 3. Jorge Martin (ESP/Ducati-Pramac) 1.122, 4. Francesco Bagnaia (ITA/Ducati) 1.155, 5. Jack Miller (AUS/KTM) 4.329, 6. Enea Bastianini (ITA/Ducati) 4.384, 7. Pedro Acosta (ESP/GasGas-Tech3) 5.088, 8. Aleix Espargaro (ESP/Aprilia) 6.161, 9. Fabio Quartararo (FRA/Yamaha) 7.501, 10. Raul Fernandez (ESP/Aprilia-Trackhouse) 8.484, 11. Marco Bezzecchi (ITA/Ducati-VR46) 9.529, 12. Miguel Oliveira (POR/Aprilia-Trackhouse) 10.519, 13. Alex Marquez (ESP/Ducati-Gresini) 11.458, 14. Joan Mir (ESP/Honda) 14.035, 15. Augusto Fernandez (ESP/GasGas-Tech3) 14.853, 16. Franco Morbidelli (ITA/Ducati-Pramac) (16.049), 17. Takaaki Nakagami (JPN/Honda-LCR) 16.398 18. Luca Marini (ITA/Honda) 24.907
DNF: Brad Binder (RSA/KTM), Johann Zarco (FRA/Honda-LCR), Alex Rins (ESP/Yamaha), Fabio Di Giannantonio (ITA/Ducati-VR46)

CRICKET

Karunaratne keeps Sri Lanka in control against Bangladesh

‘We are obviously disappointed not to have batted for more than 51 overs’

AFP
Sylhet, Bangladesh

Dimuth Karunaratne scored a patient half-century to guide Sri Lanka to 119-5 in the second innings yesterday, building a 211-run lead against Bangladesh at stumps on the second day of the first Test.

Bangladesh finished the first innings 92 runs behind in Sylhet but made some early strikes to keep the match alive. Karunaratne held firm to score 52 off 101 balls before his dismissal off Shoriful Islam in the day's final session.

Skipper Dhananjoya de Silva, who scored 102 runs in the first innings, was batting on 23 alongside Vishwa Fernando on two.

Debutant Nahid Rana dismissed Nishan Madushka (10) and Kusal Mendis (three).

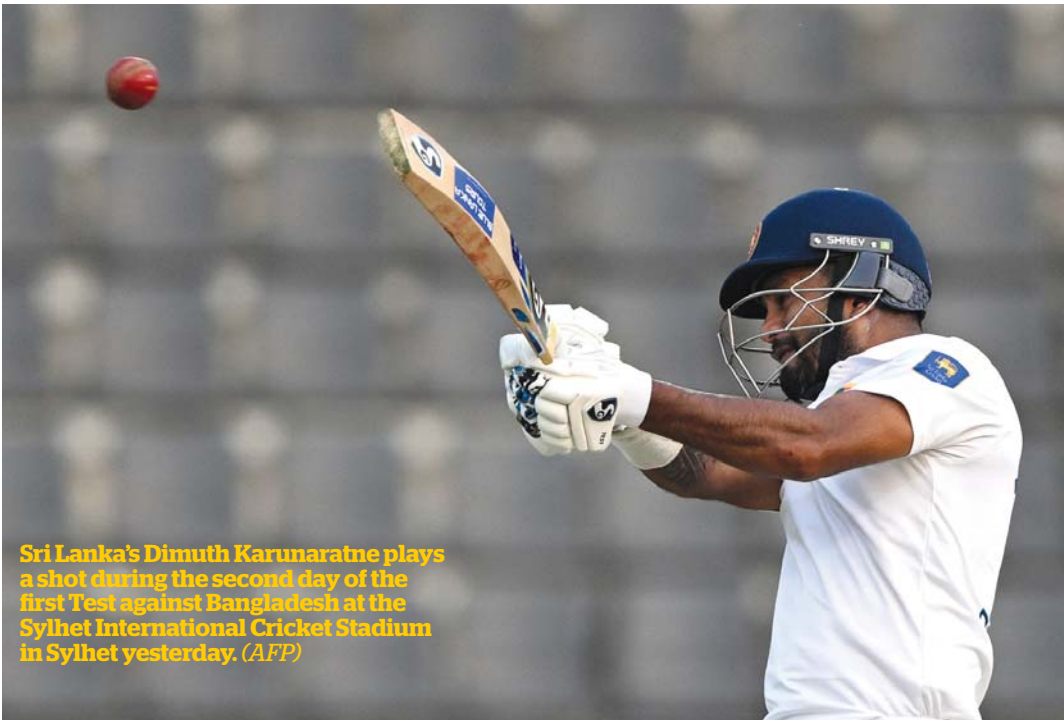
Spinners Taijul Islam and Mehidy Hasan Miraz removed Angelo Mathews (22) and Dinesh Chandimal (0) respectively to give Bangladesh some hope, with the tourists teetering on 64-4 before Karunaratne's rally.

Vishwa claimed four wickets in Bangladesh's first innings of 188 while Lahiru Kumara and Kasun Rajitha each took three.

"Fast bowlers did so well, they kept bowling right outside off throughout the day, they got lot of edges," Sri Lankan bowling coach Darushena Gamage told reporters. Gamage added that the wicket had a "lot of grass layers and uneven bounce".

Nightwatchman Taijul Islam top-scored with a career-best 47 for the hosts, who resumed on 32-3. Kumara struck with his first ball of the innings when he forced overnight batsman Mahmudul Hasan (12) to edge to de Silva at second slip.

Shahadat Hossain played a few attacking shots before he fell to Kumara in the same manner for 18. Taijul and Liton Das added 41



Sri Lanka's Dimuth Karunaratne plays a shot during the second day of the first Test against Bangladesh at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium in Sylhet yesterday. (AFP)

runs for the sixth wicket before Kumara struck again.

A late swinger knocked back Liton's middle stump, sending him to the pavilion for 25 after a brief spell at the crease punctuated by four boundaries.

Taijul was out off Rajitha after nicking the ball behind the stumps to wicketkeeper Kusal Mendis.

Rajitha also removed the last recognised batsman Mehidy Hasan for 11 but Khaled Ahmed and Shoriful Islam managed a 40-run partnership to close out the innings.

"We are obviously disappointed not to have batted for more than 51 overs," Bangladesh batting coach David Hemp told reporters.

"It is a little bit frustrating but it is what it is... If we can get early wickets tomorrow morning, we could be looking at a 250 chase."

Sri Lanka made 280 runs in their first innings on the first day thanks to centuries from de Silva

and Kamindu Mendis, who both scored 102.

Sri Lanka have never lost a Test series to Bangladesh.

The second and final match of the series will be played in Chittagong from March 30.

SCOREBOARD

Sri Lanka first innings 280

Bangladesh first innings (overnight 32-3)

M. Hasan Joy c de Silva b Kumara	12
Z. Hasan lbw b Fernando	9
N. Hossain lbw b Fernando	5
M. Haque c Kamindu b Rajitha	5
T. Islam c Mendis b Rajitha	47
S. Hossain c de Silva b Kumara	18
L. Das b Kumara	25
M. Hasan Miraz c Madushka b Rajitha	11
S. Islam c&b Fernando	15
K. Ahmed c Mendis b Fernando	22
N. Rana not out	0
Extras (b9, lb7, nb2, w1)	19
Total (all out; 51.3 overs)	188

Fall of wickets: 1-11 (Zakir), 2-17 (Najmul), 3-31 (Mominul), 4-53 (Mahmudul), 5-83 (Shahadat), 6-124 (Liton), 7-140 (Taijul), 8-147 (Mehidy), 9-187 (Shoriful), 10-188 (Khaled)

Bowling: V. Fernando 15.3-2-48-4 (nb1, w1), K. Rajitha 16-3-56-3 (nb1), L. Kumara 12-1-31-3, P. Jayasuriya 7-1-33-0, D. de Silva 1-0-4-0

Sri Lanka second innings N. Madushka c Liton b Rana 10 D. Karunaratne c Rana b Shoriful 52

K. Mendis c Liton b Rana 3 A. Mathews c Liton b Taijul 22 D. Chandimal lbw b Mehidy 0 D. de Silva not out 23 V. Fernando not out 2

Extras (b4, lb2, nb1) 7 Total (five wickets; 36 overs) 119

Fall of wickets: 1-19 (Madushka), 2-32 (Kusal), 3-60 (Mathews), 4-64 (Chandimal), 5-113 (Karunaratne)

Bowling: Shoriful 11-1-27-1, Khaled 7-1-27-0, Rana 10-0-42-2 (nb1), Taijul 6-2-12-1, Mehidy 2-1-5-1.

Pakistan's Imad reverses retirement to play World Cup

Pakistan's spinning all-rounder Imad Wasim yesterday announced the would come out of retirement for this year's Twenty20 World Cup, four months after ending his international career.

The 35-year-old left-handed batter and spinner anchored Islamabad United's title triumph in the Pakistan Super League with both bat and ball in the final on Monday.

Wasim said he wanted to play for Pakistan. "I am happy to announce that pursuant to

meeting PCB (Pakistan Cricket Board) officials, I have reconsidered my retirement and am delighted to declare my availability for Pakistan leading up to ICC T20I World Cup," he wrote on social media.

The 20-team World Cup will start in the United States and the West Indies from June 1 this year.

Wasim played 55 one-day internationals and 66 Twenty20Is for Pakistan and was a key all-rounder but his fitness and attitude were

described as hindrance in his career by the previous selection committee. He was part of Pakistan's Twenty20 squad in the series against New Zealand in April last year but his axing from ODI World Cup in November prompted him to retire. Pakistan are due to play a five-match home T20I series against New Zealand next month before touring Ireland and England for six more matches, all build-up to the World Cup. (AFP)

INDIAN PREMIER LEAGUE

Pant's 'emotional' return ends in loss, Russell shines for KKR

AFP
Mohali, India

Rishabh Pant's "emotional" return to elite cricket yesterday after a horror car crash was clouded by Delhi Capitals' loss to Punjab Kings in the Indian Premier League.

Chasing 175 for victory, Punjab rode on England all-rounder Sam Curran's 47-ball 63 to achieve their target with four wickets and four balls to spare at IPL's newest venue at Mullanpur in the northern Indian state of Punjab.

In the second match of the day, Australia's Pat Cummins lost on his IPL debut as captain as Kolkata Knight Riders edged out Sunrisers Hyderabad by four runs in a thriller at Eden Gardens. In match one, Punjab skipper Shikhar Dhawan began the chase with his brisk 22 before being bowled by fast bowler Ishant Sharma.

England's Jonny Bairstow had an unlucky dismissal when he was run out at the non-striker's end after the ball grazed bowler Ishant's finger and hit the stumps with the batsman short of his crease. But the left-handed Curran went to his half-century and



Delhi Capitals' captain Rishabh Pant in action during the IPL match against Punjab Kings at the Maharaja Yadavindra Singh Stadium in Mohali yesterday. (AFP)

put on a key 67-run fifth-wicket stand with fellow Englishman Liam Livingstone, who hit the winning six in his 21-ball 38, to steer the team home.

Curran, who was dropped on 33 by Tristan Stubbs, fell in the 19th over as Khaleel Ahmed struck on successive balls but Livingstone

kept calm to bring up victory. The spotlight remained on India's Pant, 26, after the wicketkeeper-batsman took the field as captain of Delhi after 14 months away from top level cricket. "Really emotional time for me," Pant said at the toss after Delhi were invited to bat first. "Just want to enjoy the moment."



Kolkata Knight Riders' Andre Russell plays a shot against Sunrisers Hyderabad at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata yesterday. (AFP)

Pant, an attacking left-handed batsman, got a standing ovation from the fans as he strode out to the middle after the fall of David Warner for 29. Pant hit a flowing cover drive for a boundary in his brief stay before a slower delivery from Harshal Patel had him caught at backward point while attempting a ramp shot.

"Personally I was pretty nervous but you have to go through this when you enter the field," Pant said after the loss. "This isn't the first time being nervous, but happy about that (return)."

Pant crashed his Mercedes north of New Delhi before dawn in

CYCLING

Pogacar soars in Pyrenees, Bernal climbs to podium

AFP
Queralt, Spain

Tadej Pogacar won his third stage on this year's Tour of Catalonia in the Pyrenees yesterday to extend his lead in the overall standings after a virtuoso solo run from 30km out.

The Slovenian is targeting a Giro d'Italia and Tour de France double in 2024 and rivals will have taken notice at the ease with which he left opponents trailing on the toughest of climbs.

Another notable performance yesterday saw Colombian Egan Bernal finish second on the day, climbing from ninth to third overall.

Fifteen riders broke off from the main peloton on the day's major challenge, the Coll de Pradell, a 16km climb at an average gradient of 6.5 percent.

Climbing through pine forests Pogacar and the others passed a 20% steepness road sign, but they remained together until the penultimate climb.

Pogacar's sherpa Marc Soler

cracked but the two-time Tour de France champion barely flinched as he turned on his trademark acceleration and dropped everyone at 28km from home.

He finished over a minute ahead of Bernal and Spain's Mikel Landa.

"The final climb was lovely with all those people, but today was really hard," said Pogacar.

Bernal, a former Tour and Giro winner, said he was delighted with his performance in his fight to regain full fitness after a collision with a bus two years ago.

"This is another step forward," said the 27-year-old. "I need to keep my feet on the ground."

"But I'm so happy for my family and all the people who have been around me. I didn't expect this really, I'm so motivated to keep working."

Today's final stage is a run around Barcelona where the top three places are unlikely to change with Pogacar leading Landa by 3min 31sec while third-placed Bernal is at 4min 53sec.



Slovenian's Tadej Pogacar celebrates after winning the third stage of Tour of Catalonia in the Pyrenees yesterday.

Former Kenya cricket captain Obuya retires

Kenyan cricket allrounder and former captain Collins Obuya announced his retirement yesterday, he notably led his country to an historic semi-final spot at the 2003 World Cup. Obuya's final match was a 106-run defeat to Uganda in the third-place play-off at the African Games, where the Kenyan opener was clean bowled for a duck by Cosmas Kyewuta. "I have decided to retire from the game after 23 years. It's been a big honour playing for Kenya," said Obuya, 42, who scored 184 runs in the competition in Ghana.

He is best remembered for his 13 wickets, and a career best 5 for 24 in a 53-run against Sri Lanka, in the 2003 World Cup where he led Kenya to the semi-finals for the first time. His exploits led him to be signed by English county side Warwickshire on a one-year contract and become the first Kenyan international cricketer to play for a county team. During his career, Obuya - who relinquished the Kenya captaincy in 2013 - scored 2,044 runs in 104 one-day international matches and took 35 wickets. (AFP)

FORMULA 1

Verstappen on pole ahead of Sainz at Australian GP

‘OBVIOUSLY THINGS CAN IMPROVE, BUT OVERALL VERY SATISFIED WITH THE PERFORMANCE’

AFP
Melbourne

A “very satisfied” three-time world champion Max Verstappen clinched a third straight pole of the season yesterday at the Australian Grand Prix as the flying Dutchman targets a record 10th consecutive win.

Under hazy skies at Albert Park, Ferrari’s Carlos Sainz, back in the car barely two weeks after appendicitis surgery, came second in tense qualifying and will keep the Red Bull ace company on the front row. Sergio Perez in the other Red Bull came third but will start from sixth after being slapped with a three-place grid penalty for impeding Nico Hulkenberg, bumping up McLaren’s Lando Norris.

Charles Leclerc in the second Ferrari - who won in 2022 - moves up to fourth with McLaren’s Oscar Piastri fifth.

“Very happy with that because so far this weekend it has been a bit tough to find a good balance in the car,” said Verstappen, who is looking to repeat his feat from last year when he started first and won a chaotic race in Melbourne.

“And even throughout qualifying in Q1 and Q2 I didn’t really feel I could be fighting for pole. But then we made some little tickles on the car and that seemed to help me in Q3 to really push it to the limit.

“Obviously things can improve, but overall very satisfied with the performance.”

The 26-year-old knocked out his rivals to earn a 35th career pole with a flying lap of one minute 15.915, 0.270 secs ahead of Sainz, who missed the last race in Jeddah.

“I don’t feel 100 percent, it’s



Red Bull Racing’s Dutch driver Max Verstappen celebrates after winning the pole position in the qualifying session of the Formula One Australian Grand Prix at the Albert Park Circuit in Melbourne yesterday. (AFP)

impossible after spending a lot of days in bed like I did to try and recover,” said the Spaniard after his remarkable comeback in front of 130,000 fans.

“But the good thing is that I have no pain, I just have discomfort and everything feels a bit weird.

“Today, when the adrenaline came out I could close the visor and go for it which is a good thing.”

Mercedes’ George Russell came seventh ahead of RB’s Yuki Tsunoda and the Aston Martin pair of Lance Stroll and Fernando Alonso.

But there was disappointment for Mercedes’ seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton who missed Q3 and will start from 11th. “It’s not a great feeling for anyone in the team at the moment but we will keep working away,”

said Hamilton, a two-time Melbourne winner. I’ll be focused on coming back tomorrow and trying to do a better job.”

He will need something special to stop Verstappen, who won the opening two races of the season in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, both from pole. The Dutchman is chasing a 10th straight victory to match his own record set last year,

while Red Bull are attempting to score a third straight 1-2 finish for the first time in the team’s history.

Sainz topped Q2 from Verstappen and Leclerc with Hamilton - an eight-time Australian pole-sitter - a key casualty.

His loss was Tsunoda’s gain as the only interloper outside of the big five teams joining the Q3 ranks. Haas’ Kevin Magnussen

also missed out in Q2, along with Valtteri Bottas in the Sauber, Esteban Ocon in his Alpine and Alex Albon in the sole Williams.

Sainz was also fastest in Q1 ahead of Perez and Verstappen.

Sauber’s Zhou Guanyu came last with RB’s Daniel Ricciardo, Pierre Gasly in the other Alpine and Haas’ Hulkenberg also failing to progress. Logan Sargeant was absent after his Williams was given to teammate Albon. Albon crashed on Saturday and with no spare chassis Williams was left with just one car and opted for the Anglo-Thai driver over the American.

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

TENNIS

Sabalenka keeps emotion in check as she beats Badosa

AFP
Miami

World number two Aryna Sabalenka returned to the court for the first time since the death of her former boyfriend earlier this week and kept her emotions in check as she beat Spain’s Paula Badosa 6-4 6-3 on Friday.

After six hours of rain delays, Sabalenka walked onto the court wearing an all-black outfit, a choice matched by her close friend Badosa.

Two-times Australian Open winner Sabalenka on Wednesday said she was “heartbroken” by the death of former boyfriend Konstantin Koltsov in a statement on Wednesday, where she revealed they had not been a couple at the time of his death.

Koltsov died on Monday with Miami police saying he had jumped from the balcony of a room at an resort in an “apparent suicide.”

The former NHL ice hockey player and coach, was 42-years-old. Sabalenka made a slow start to the match but broke to go 4-3 up in the first set and never looked back from that point on.

The Belarusian then broke in the third game of the second set with a superb cross court forehand winner and showed too much power for her Spanish opponent as she wrapped up the win in one hour 22 minutes.

The two players embraced at the net before leaving the court



Aryna Sabalenka serves against Paula Badosa of Spain during their Miami Open match at Hard Rock Stadium in Miami. (AFP)

without an on-court interview. Sabalenka has asked the WTA to be excused media duties at the tournament.

Badosa said she was not surprised by the way Sabalenka was able to maintain her focus and deliver a solid performance.

“She is a very, very strong woman, strong personality. You can see it on the court...I know her off court so it doesn’t surprise me at all,” she said.

“I knew she was going to play very well or like normal. I told her I wish her the best and let’s see if she can go deep in this tournament,” added the Spaniard.

Badosa had said before the match that she expected it to be “uncomfortable” playing against Sabalenka given her friendship with the Belarusian. But she said their professionalism and mental strength had shown itself.

“Honestly, both of us are pret-

ty strong mentally. We’re strong women and she proved it and I proved it,” she said.

“We knew how to disconnect in that two hours for the match. She played really well and I played really well given from where I am coming from (with injuries),” she added.

“All that comes from knowing that we’ve been through a lot in our lives and we’re strong women. We knew how to separate (things) in that moment,” she said.

American Coco Gauff, the third seed, had little trouble in her test against Argentine Nadia Podoroska winning 6-1 6-2 in one hour 16.

In the ATP event, 60th ranked Czech Tomas Machac came out after the long delay to claim his first Top 10 victim, upsetting fifth seeded Russian Andrey Rublev 6-4, 6-4. The rain returned later in the evening and play was suspended for the day.

FOCUS

Al Janoubia claims Al Thumama Ramadan Football Championship

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Al Janoubia emerged champions of the first edition of the Al Thumama Ramadan Football Championship at Al Furjan Stadium on Friday.

The U10-14 championship held under the aegis umbrella of Qatar Sports for All Federation was played on a round robin league and Al Janoubia topped with 13 points and ahead on goal difference from Al Yarmouk. The Al Fuhood team finished third.

Hassan Ali al-Ishaq, member of the Municipal Council and Chairman of the Organizing Committee, Youssef bin Ali Abdelnour, director of the tournament, and Abdullah al-Husari applauded the success of the championship.

The final day of the event was also attended by Farouk Nabina, executive director of Nabina, and Muhammad Abdel Aziz al-

Ishaq, general manager of the office, Al Aqari, Kamal al-Sahih, Assistant General Manager of Bansir Exhibition, and a number of residents of the Al Thumama area, in addition to distributing various media outlets.

The winners Al Janoubia were awarded the Cup and QR7,000 while the Yarmouk team received silver medals and the second place prize of QR5,000. Al Fuhood team won the bronze medals and QR3,000.

Faisal Ali Brik al-Marri of Al Sadd team was awarded the best player award (QR500) while Ziad Mohamed Morsi of Al Fuhood won the best goalkeeper award (QR500).

The tournament’s top-scorer award was bagged by Mubarak Ahmed al-Dosari of Al Janoubia (QR500), and the exemplary team award went to Al Sadd (QR1,500).

Hassan Ali al-Ishaq expressed his happiness with the resounding success achieved by the first edition of the tournament and he

congratulated Al Janoubia and all the participating teams.

He said: “The idea of the tournament came through many meetings and consultations with the people of the Al Thumama area and for the benefit of the society.

He also took the opportunity to extend sincere thanks to His Excellency Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa bin Ahmed al-Thani, Minister of Sports and Youth, and the Qatar Sports for All Federation, represented by Abdullah al-Dosari, Head of Activities and Events.

Youssef bin Ali Abdel Nour, tournament director, said that the tournament came out wonderfully and the organizers are keen to continue it in the coming years.

He said: “We are happy with the distinguished success of the first edition. Through my monitoring of the tournament, there are some players who have great talents and they will be the future of Qatari football.”



CELTICS TAKE DOWN PISTONS FOR EIGHTH STRAIGHT WIN, LAKERS CLAW PAST 76ERS

The league-leading Boston Celtics, fueled by 33 points from Jaylen Brown, beat the depleted Detroit Pistons 129-102 to push their NBA winning streak to eight games on Friday.

With teammates Jayson Tatum, Al Horford and Jrue Holiday all out, Brown ably filled the void connecting on 13 of 19 shots from the field. “(I) just tried to be aggressive com-

ing out,” Brown -- who notched his sixth game since the All-Star break of 30 or more points -- told NBC Sports Boston. “I know we had some guys out.”

Brown said he tried to keep his teammates involved, and even though he ended up with zero assists Celtics coach Joe Mazzulla said he was doing all the right things.

“He’s getting the shots he wants, both for himself and his teammates,” Mazzulla said. “He’s playing very well-rounded basketball and it has been fun to watch.”

Payton Pritchard added 20 points and Derrick White and Kristaps Porzingis scored 19 apiece for Boston, who improved their league-best record to 56-14.

Tatum sat out the first game of

a six-game road trip to rest a troublesome ankle. Horford was sidelined by a toe injury and Holiday by an arm injury. But against last-placed Detroit - who were without half a dozen players after Jalen Duren was ruled out shortly before tipoff with back spasms - the Celtics were still too strong.

James Wiseman got his first start of the season for the Pistons and

scored a team-high 24 points.

The Celtics held Detroit scoring leader Cade Cunningham to 15 points on six of 17 shooting as they extended the league’s longest active winning streak. The Oklahoma City Thunder edged back ahead of the defending champion Denver Nuggets for the Western Conference lead with a 123-103 victory over the Raptors in Toronto.

Oklahoma City’s Canadian point guard Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 23 points, grabbed seven rebounds and handed out eight assists, and rookie center Chet Holmgren scored 18 points with 10 rebounds, two steals and a blocked shot. In Los Angeles, the Lakers clamped down defensively in the second half to beat the Philadelphia 76ers 101-94.

QATAR'S AL-SAHOUTI MAKES MOTO3 DEBUT IN PORTUGAL



Qatar's Hamad al-Sahouti made his Moto3 World Championship debut with the Rivacold Snipers Team, finishing 24th in the qualifying for the MotoGP Portuguese Grand Prix at the Portimao Circuit in Algarve yesterday. The 19-year-old al-Sahouti, the latest addition to the Italian team, filling in for injured David Almansa, had a best lap-time of 1:48.498 secs, with a top speed of 240kmph. Earlier, after the free practice session was cancelled due to poor track conditions, Al-Sahouti's debut appearance saw him failing to excel in the first practice session, but the young Qatari improved his time in second practice. The qualifying was topped by Spaniard Jose Antonio Rueda of the Red Bull KTM Ajo team (1:42.379 secs), followed by Australia's Joel Kelso of Boe Motorsports (1:47.175 secs) in second place. Title favourite David Alonso of Colombia (CFMOTO Gaviota Aspar Team) clocked 1:46.497 secs to book the remaining slot on the front row of today's race.

FOOTBALL

Easy win over Scotland offers Dutch no pleasure

Coach Koeman said his players were careless in possession of the ball

Reuters
Amsterdam

A 4-0 triumph for the Netherlands in Friday's friendly against Scotland might seem a convincing scoreline but coach Ronald Koeman and captain Virgil van Dijk were far from pleased with their team's performance three months away from the European Championship.

Koeman said they were careless in possession of the ball while Van Dijk said the winning margin flattered them. The Dutch started slowly and scored with their first shot on goal, a long-range effort in the 40th minute from Tijjani Reijnders at the Johan Cruyff Arena. They had to weather many Scottish attacks before netting a second from Georginio Wijnaldum in the 72nd minute and then grabbing two more late goals from substitutes Wout Weghorst and Donyell Malen. "It is, of course, strange that if you win 4-0 you are not satisfied, but that is the reality now. With the exception of the last phase, we were not good with the ball," said Koeman. "We won't win the European Championship playing like that," was his cold assessment.

"The start was very restless and sloppy, against a team that kept causing us problems. When you make these kinds of mistakes in your build-up, give away so much possession, you will never grow in a match. That really needs to be much improved."

The Dutch were hit by injury and the match offered a chance for fringe players, like the Bundesliga-based Jeremie Frimpong and Xavi Simons to make a mark, but Koeman was not impressed. "That could be due to a bit of pressure or wanting to do well and not having the confidence you play with every weekend," the coach added. "Ultimately, the Dutch national team demands a certain level, regardless of your position or how often you are called up. They have that, but they have to play better."

Van Dijk thought it was a tough encounter. "There are plenty of things that need to be improved if we want to do something



Netherlands' Wout Weghorst scores against Scotland during the friendly match in Amsterdam on Friday. (Reuters)

at the European Championship," said the Dutch captain. "If you look at the match, this is not really a 4-0 scoreline."

The Dutch continue their preparations with a friendly against Euro-2024 hosts Germany in Frankfurt on Tuesday.

SCOTLAND EMBARRASSED BY DUTCH THRASHING, SAYS MCGINN

Scotland midfielder John McGinn said their 4-0 defeat by the Netherlands was embarrassing and they must learn to be more "streetwise" when they fall behind. Scotland trailed to a 40th minute goal from Tij-

jani Reijnders but should have found the net themselves, twice hitting the woodwork and missing a number of chances.

"Overall, I think we will look back on it with so much to take from the game but obviously the scoreline is an embarrassing one for us," McGinn said after the defeat. "When you get good spells in the game, which we did we had good chances, one of them has got to go in. You can say you've played well and had chances but we've got to be more streetwise when it goes to 2-0 and shut up shop a little bit more."

Scotland have qualified for their second

successive Euros after missing five editions between 2000 and 2016 but captain Andy Robertson said getting there is not enough. "We do not want to be the team that just qualifies for tournaments, we want to be competing. We have to get back to winning ways," Robertson added.

"Today we tried to treat it like a rehearsal for the Euros and for large parts we did well but the game is over 90 minutes. We have got the energy, it is not as if we tired, we kept the ball really well and we just switched off. In a game we played well we could have walked off at 6-0."

Eriksson fulfils lifelong dream by managing Liverpool in charity game



Liverpool: Sven-Goran Eriksson said he had fulfilled a life-long dream by managing Liverpool Legends in a charity match against Ajax Legends at Anfield yesterday.

The 76-year-old former England boss revealed in January he had "best case a year" to live after being diagnosed with pancreatic cancer.

At the time the Swede, whose long career in club management included spells in charge of Manchester City and Lazio, revealed his lifelong love for Liverpool and how he had always wished to be manager of the club one day.

His dream became a reality yesterday as Eriksson, alongside former Liverpool favourites Ian Rush, John Barnes and John Aldridge in the home dug-out, helped oversee a 4-2 win.

Eriksson said afterwards he had shed tears before kick-off, when he received a standing ovation from the crowd as he walked out onto the pitch, with fans singing the Liverpool anthem of 'You'll Never Walk Alone'. "That will be a huge memory in life," said Eriksson. "Absolutely beautiful. To sit on the bench for Liverpool, that's been my dream my whole life. Now it happened, and it was a beautiful day in all meanings."

The crowd, the game, the players, everything, fantastic, and thank you to Liverpool for giving me this opportunity, to invite me for such an important game - it's not points but the importance of the game is incredible. It was full of emotions, tears coming. It's been my dream club all my life - even when I had England, I also supported Liverpool, but I couldn't say it at that time. It's a good finish, to finish with Liverpool, it can't be much better than that," added Eriksson, who guided England to the quarter-finals of the 2002 and 2006 World Cups.

Liverpool were 2-0 down at half-time yesterday before Kop-end goals from Gregory Vignall, Djibril Cisse, Nabil El Zhar and Fernando Torres turned the match in their favour.

The Reds were captained by Steven Gerrard, who played under Eriksson for England. "He (Gerrard) is the boss out there - of course (he still has it!)," said Eriksson.

Gerrard said: "Sven being here was very special. As soon as I knew he was going to be the gaffer today, I couldn't wait to come and play for him one more time."

Eriksson and the players were also applauded when they walked around the pitch following the final whistle.

Colombia defeat Spain in friendly

London: Colombia inflicted Spain's first defeat in almost a year with a 1-0 friendly victory in London on Friday. Crystal Palace defender Daniel Munoz struck in the second half after a superb run by Luis Diaz to capitalise on a disappointing display from La Roja ahead of this summer's European Championship in Germany.

Spain, who won the Nations League last year to end an 11-year run without silverware after triumphing at Euro 2012, underwhelmed in their second loss under coach Luis de la Fuente. The first came in March 2023 in a defeat by Scotland in Euro 2024 qualifying which cast early doubt over the coach's credentials for the job, with concerns easing over the subsequent months.

De la Fuente picked an experimental line-up against Colombia, handing Athletic Bilbao defender Dani Vivian his debut in the heart of defence.

H Aidan tops medium tour class at 10th round of Hathab



Hussain Saeed Haidan won the Medium Tour class during the 10th round of the Qatar Equestrian Tour - Hathab on Friday night. Saeed Hamad Jumaa and Faleh Suwaid al-Ajmi finished second and third respectively at the outdoor arena of the Qatar Equestrian Federation (QEF). The Medium Tour team event was bagged by ExxonMobil, ahead of Alfardan and NK Cafe. Omar al-Buainain, Director of the Support Services Sector at QEF, presented the trophies to the winners.



The Amateur 100cm class was clinched by Amer Hamad al-Mansouri. Suhaim Hamad al-Yafei followed in second place, while Hadi Nasser al-Shahwani came third. Nouf al-Mansouri, Chairman of the Supreme Sports Committee for Hathab, honoured the winners of the round.