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Son has played captain's role perfectly, says Postecoglou

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# GULF TIMES SPORT



TENNIS

Sinner wins ATP Miami Open title with victory over Dimitrov

Page 3

## Sheikh Joaan crowns winners of Nishan Ooredoo Tournament and Shooting League



The Qatar Olympic Committee (QOC) President HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani crowned the winners of Nishan Ooredoo Ramadan Shooting Tournament and first edition of Shooting League 2024 on Sunday. In Nishan Tournament, Rashid Hamad al-Athba claimed the first place in men's trap event ahead of Saeed Bushareb and Mohamed al-Rumaihi in the second and third places respectively. Rashed Saleh al-Athba took the gold medal of men's skeet event while Meteab al-Marri finished second ahead of Masoud Saleh al-Athba in the third place. Sheikh Joaan also crowned the winners of shotgun events at the 2024 Shooting League where Mohamed al-Rumaihi took the first place in men's trap event while Masoud Saleh al-Athba took the top spot in the men's skeet event. The medal ceremony was attended by the QOC First Vice-President Mohamed bin Yousef al-Mana, the QOC Second Vice-President Dr Thani bin Abdulrahman al-Kuwari, the QOC Secretary-General Jassim bin Rashid al-Buenain, the Qatar Shooting and Archery Association President Dr Meshaal Ibrahim al-Nasr, Chief Executive Officer of the Social & Sport Contribution Fund Abdulrahman Abdulatif al-Mannai and Executive Director of Business at Ooredoo Qatar Thani al-Malki.

FOCUS

# F1 owners Liberty Media purchase MotoGP for \$4.5bn

The acquisition is expected to be completed by the end of 2024

AFP  
Paris

Formula One owners Liberty Media have agreed to buy MotoGP yesterday in a deal valued at around \$4.5bn, the American company said. MotoGP said in a statement that Liberty Media would acquire "approximately 86 percent" stake from Spain-based owners Dorna in a deal valued at 4.2bn euros (\$4.5bn).

The acquisition is expected to be completed by the end of 2024 subject to clearances and approvals by competition and foreign investment law authorities in various jurisdictions. Liberty will not be the first company to own both Formula One and MotoGP.

Private equity firm CVC Capital Partners had owned both F1 and MotoGP but was forced to sell the motorcycle series to buy F1 after EU competition regulators raised objections. "Liberty Media Corporation has announced an agreement to acquire MotoGP. MotoGP is the pinnacle of two wheels," read a statement issued by MotoGP.

"Liberty Media will acquire approximately 86 percent of Dorna, with Dorna management retaining approximately 14 percent of their equity in the business. The transaction reflects an enterprise value for Dorna/MotoGP of EUR4.2bn and an equity value of EUR3.5bn, with MotoGP's existing debt balance expected to remain in place after close."

Liberty were not the only company interested in acquiring Dorna. However, it was Liberty who emerged the winners.

"We are thrilled to expand our portfolio of leading live sports and entertainment assets with the acquisition of MotoGP," said Greg Maffei, Liberty Media President and CEO. "MotoGP is a global league with a loyal, enthusiastic fan base, captivating racing and a highly cash flow generative financial profile. Carmelo and his management team have built a great sporting spectacle that we can expand to a wider global audience."

Long serving CEO Carmelo Ezpeleta will remain in the post he has occupied since 1994 with the business headquarters remaining in Madrid. Ezpeleta said he was looking forward to the 21-race global championship evolving even further.

"This is the perfect next step in the evolution of MotoGP, and we are excited for what this milestone brings to Dorna, the MotoGP paddock and racing fans," said Ezpeleta.

"We are proud of the global sport we've



MotoGP said that Liberty Media would acquire 'approximately 86 percent' stake from Dorna.

grown, and this transaction is a testament to the value of the sport today and its growth potential. Liberty has an incredible track record in developing sports assets and we could not wish for a better partner to expand MotoGP's fanbase around the world."

Since Liberty paid CVC 8bn dollars for F1 in 2017 the sport has enjoyed a spike in popularity and Maffei suggested last year that while F1 was not for sale it was worth now "a hell of a lot more" than \$20 billion.

Maffei was asked if MotoGP would undergo major changes in order to prioritise revenue for the new owner. It was made clear that MotoGP would not - and could not - use street circuits, in the way that F1 sometimes does.

Maffei then added: "What we really saw in F1 was as we grew the fanbase your monetisation became easier. Because your partners, whether they be broadcast partners, promoter partners or sponsor partners and whether they are looking at branding or activation, and more and more at activation, it's all part and parcel."

"As that excitement grows, as that demand

grows, as that audience grows, everything kind of flows together. That's what we felt in Formula 1, those all came together. And I like to believe that is the potential here. MotoGP is an unbelievable product, we are not planning to change this sport. Our goal is to open that up to a broader audience. Open it up to a broader set of commercial partners of all flavours. Those go hand in hand."

MotoGP returns in two weeks, for the third round of the 2024 season, at the Circuit of the Americas in Texas - the perfect time for US-based Liberty Media to make their presence felt. Liberty Media, who took over F1 in 2016, have received huge credit for increasing the sport's popularity.

Netflix show 'Drive To Survive' was such a massive success that it has been replicated by multiple other sports, too.

F1 has expanded into America over the past few years too. Las Vegas and Miami are eye-catching additions to the calendar. MotoGP could now expect to see Liberty Media get their teeth into how to grow the sport.

FOOTBALL

# Klopp keen to enjoy title chase in final Liverpool season

AFP  
London

Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp is determined to enjoy the closing stages of the Premier League title race, for all its twists and turns, in what will be his final season at Anfield. The Reds came back from conceding an early goal against Brighton on Sunday to win 2-1, thanks to goals from Luis Diaz and Mohamed Salah.

With Manchester City and Arsenal playing out a goalless draw, Liverpool are now two points clear at the top of the table with nine matches left to play. Liverpool's run-in includes games against Manchester United, Tottenham and Aston Villa - sixth, fifth and fourth respectively.

Klopp's men and their title rivals could all well drop points between now and the end of the season but the German boss is relishing a tense time in the campaign. "We have to get through this (and) we decide if we enjoy it or not, pretty much," he said.

"It will be tough and yes, it is sometimes nerve-wracking and the heart rate will be at 180 or 200 or whatever from time to time if you watch it or if you play in it. But if we all together enjoy this, then we have a chance. If we don't, we still have a chance, it's just really more difficult and that's why we try to stay positive in all these moments."

Klopp added: "It is a great situation where the boys brought us in, we are there with two other teams fighting for the biggest prize in English football and we will see how it will end up. But I decided I will really try hard to enjoy it."

Liverpool's victory over Brighton owed much to Alexis Mac Allister, who was outstanding against his former club with the Argentina international's pass setting up Salah for the winning goal.

"Mac Allister was incredible - absolutely incredible - but when you have that kind of talent, when you have that kind of character, then you should show it," added Klopp. "It's Mac Allister, he can do that - so do it. The boys are good, so show it. Yes, I am the biggest fan of these boys but I stopped being surprised if they really perform on the highest level because it is just what I want them to do and then when they do it it's fine."

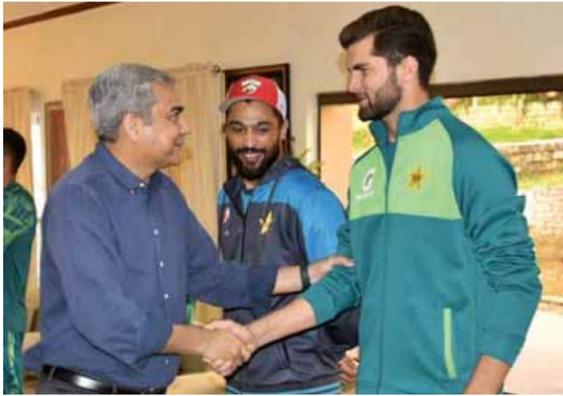
Liverpool have now won seven league games this season after conceding first, and Klopp said his side have come a long way in developing their collective mental strength. "When I talk about being nervous as a whole unit, we were more nervous years ago," the German said.

"That's long ago but it is something we had to develop together ... If we all together enjoy this, then we have a chance. If we don't, we still have a chance, it's just really more difficult and that's why we try to stay positive in all these moments."



FOCUS

# PCB mends captaincy crisis after Afridi row



Pakistan Cricket Board chairman Mohsin Naqvi shakes hands with Shaheen Afridi at Kakul Military Academy, Abbottabad, Pakistan, yesterday. (@TheRealPCB)

AFP  
Karachi

**P**akistan Cricket Board chairman Mohsin Naqvi yesterday held crisis talks to resolve the row after sacked captain Shaheen Shah Afridi denied quotes backing his successor.

Afridi, replaced by Babar Azam as skipper on Sunday, insisted he had not made comments backing his replacement that were quoted in a PCB statement.

Yesterday, the PCB said Naqvi "held a meeting with the selection committee to talk about the team's selection ahead of the New Zealand T20I series".

"The meeting was also attended by captain Babar," the PCB added

without mentioning any separate meeting with left-arm pacer Afridi.

However sources confirmed to AFP any confusion after Afridi's statement denial had been removed and the former captain was shown shaking hands with Naqvi in a picture released by the PCB.

Twenty-nine Pakistan players are attending a training camp at army base Kakul in the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province ahead of a five-match T20I home series against New Zealand starting from April 18.

The row developed following a PCB statement saying Afridi had "nothing but respect" for returning skipper Azam.

"As a team player, it is my duty to back our captain, Babar Azam. I have played under his captaincy

and have nothing but respect for him," he was reported to have said.

"I will try to help him both on and off the field. We are all one. Our aim is the same, to help Pakistan become the best team in the world."

Azam stepped down in November last year after Pakistan crashed out of the 50 over World Cup in the first round in India.

"I will try to help him on and off the field. We are all one," Afridi was quoted as saying on the PCB's website on Sunday.

But a source close to Afridi denied he had signed off on the statement that implied a harmonious transfer of the top job.

The source added Afridi resented being replaced after being in charge for just one Twenty20 series.

"This is not Shaheen's statement and he has contacted PCB to clarify this," the source told AFP.

Fast bowler Afridi was in charge for Pakistan's 4-1 loss in a Twenty20 Series in New Zealand in January.

Afridi also captained Lahore Qalandars as they finished last in the T20 Pakistan Super League that ended two weeks ago.

Naqvi, also Pakistan's interior minister, has re-organised the selection committee in a bid to improve results in the forthcoming World Cup, also aiming to hire foreign coaches for the team.

Following the New Zealand series, Pakistan will play three T20Is in Ireland and four in England.

The T20 World Cup takes place in the United States and West Indies in June.

CRICKET

# Sri Lanka on top after bowlers grab quick wickets

THE HOME SIDE IS DISMISSED FOR ONLY 178 ON DAY THREE

AFP  
Chittagong

**A**sitha Fernando claimed 4-34 as Sri Lanka bowled out Bangladesh for 178 to take a massive 353-run lead in the first innings of the second Test in Chittagong yesterday.

The visitors - who had won the first Test - decided against enforcing a follow-on but were left struggling with their batting in the second innings, reaching 102-6 at stumps on the third day to extend their lead to 455 runs.

Debutant pacer Hasan Mahmud gave Bangladesh something to smile about with 4-51, while fellow pacer Khaled Ahmed also troubled the Sri Lankan batsmen with 2-29.

But Angelo Mathews remained unbeaten on 39 alongside Prabath Jayasuriya, three not out, with the pair looking to extend Sri Lanka's lead with the help of the tail-enders.

Lahiru Kumara, Vishwa Fernando and Jayasuriya earlier chipped in with two each as Sri Lanka claimed nine wickets in two sessions to leave the hosts flattened.

Sri Lanka fast bowling coach Dharshana Gamage praised both sides.

"Both teams' bowlers, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, bowled really well," Gamage said.

"We need to score another 50-60 runs, then we will be in a good position. I am pretty sure our bowlers will fight back."

Zakir Hasan made the highest score for Bangladesh with 54, while Mominul Haque offered some resistance with 33.

"We totally failed with the bat," Zakir said. "We couldn't perform our roles, we didn't play as we were supposed to play."



Sri Lanka's Asitha Fernando celebrates after the dismissal of the Bangladesh's Shakib Al Hasan during the third day of the second Test in Chittagong yesterday. (AFP)

Resuming on 55-1 with night-watchman Taijul Islam, Zakir survived for more than an hour before Bangladesh lost their first wicket of the day.

Sri Lanka ended Bangladesh's dogged early resistance when Vishwa Fernando, a left-arm quick, swung one in to uproot the leg stump of Zakir.

Skipper Najmul Hossain Shan-to looked edgy from the start and faced 11 balls before being dismissed by Jayasuriya for one.

Najmul departed after attempting an on-drive, which was caught at short midwicket by Dimuth Karunaratne.

Vishwa Fernando bowled Taijul for 22 with another in-swinging

delivery to reduce Bangladesh to 105-4.

Asitha Fernando trapped Shakib Al Hasan leg-before for 15 and then induced an edge from Liton Das (four) in the same over.

Bangladesh kept losing wickets in clusters.

Shahadat Hossain (eight) was caught by Kamindu Mendis at slip off Kumara and Jayasuriya hit Mehidy Hasan (seven) in front.

Asitha Fernando ended Mominul's defiant innings before he bowled Khaled for one to wrap up the innings.

Sri Lanka dominated Bangladesh in the first two days to amass 531, the highest Test total without any batsman scoring a century.

Sri Lanka, who have never lost a Test series to Bangladesh, won the first Test in Sylhet by 328 runs.

SCOREBOARD

<b>Sri Lanka first innings</b>	<b>531</b>
<b>Bangladesh first innings</b>	
M. Hasan Joy b Kumara	21
Z. Hasan b V. Fernando	54
T. Islam b V. Fernando	22
N. Shanto c Karunaratne b Jayasuriya	1
M. Haque lbw b A. Fernando	33
S. Al Hasan lbw A. Fernando	15
L. Das c Kusal b A. Fernando	4
S. Hossain c Kamindu b Kumara	8
M. Miraz lbw b Jayasuriya	7
K. Ahmed b A. Fernando	1
H. Mahmud not out	2
<b>Extras (b4, lb4, nb1, w1)</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Total (all out; 68.4 overs)</b>	<b>178</b>
<b>Fall of wickets:</b> 1-47 (Mahmudul), 2-96 (Zakir), 3-101 (Najmul), 4-105 (Taijul), 5-126 (Shakib), 6-130 (Liton), 7-148 (Shahadat), 8-165 (Mehidy), 9-175 (Mominul), 10-178 (Khaled)	
<b>Bowling:</b> V. Fernando 16-5-38-2, A. Fernando 10-4-1-34-4 (wt), Lahiru 11-5-19-2, Jayasuriya 24-4-65-2 (nb1), De Silva 7-2-14-0	
<b>Sri Lanka second innings</b>	
D. Karunaratne b Hasan	4
Madushka c Mehidy b Hasan	34
Kusal Mendis b Khaled	2
A. Mathews not out	39
Chandimal c Shahadat b Hasan	9
D. de Silva c Liton b Hasan	9
Kamindu M c Liton b Khaled	1
P. Jayasuriya not out	3
<b>Extras (lb1)</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Total (6 wickets; 25 overs)</b>	<b>102</b>
<b>To bat:</b> A. Fernando, L. Kumara, V. Fernando	
<b>Fall of wickets:</b> 1-12 (Karunaratne), 2-15 (Kusal), 3-60 (Madushka), 4-72 (Chandimal), 5-78 (Dhananjaya), 6-89 (Kamindu)	
<b>Bowling:</b> Khaled 9-2-29-2, Hasan 11-1-51-4, Shakib 4-0-20, Taijul 1-0-1-0	
<b>Toss:</b> Sri Lanka	

CYCLING

# Roglic wins Tour of Basque Country first stage despite wrong turn

AFP  
Barcelona

**P**rimoz Roglic started the Tour of the Basque Country in blistering fashion with a strong individual time trial performance yesterday to claim stage one victory, despite taking a wrong turn that cost him eight seconds.

The Bora-Hansgrohe rider beat out general classification contenders Remco Evenepoel, fourth, and Jonas Vingegaard, fifth, by 11 and 15 seconds respectively.

UAE Team Emirates' Jay Vine came in second, seven seconds behind Roglic, while Mattias Skjelmose of Lidl-Trek was third, 10 seconds off the Slovenian veteran.

Roglic eased concerns over his form after a below par showing in Paris-Nice in March by setting a time of 12 minutes 34 seconds on the 10-kilometre run starting and finishing in Irun.

Roglic claimed his first win with his new team despite failing to take the right turn late on and needing to go back, losing time but still prevailing.

"It's great, great to be here and (my) legs obviously were good, I felt strong, I made a bit of a mistake at the end and then I corrected it, luckily (it was) still enough," he said.

Evenepoel also had a mishap on an eventful day, crashing on a corner early on but quickly got back on his bike and on his way.



"Everything went well until 200 metres but then I went on the ground, so a bit of a silly moment, my own mistake maybe," said the Belgian. "Of course, I was hoping to be a bit ahead today, but my crash was unlucky and this caused me to be a bit behind."

Briton Tom Pidcock (Ineos Grenadiers) withdrew from the race before the time trial began after crashing during a recon run and was taken to hospital for examination. Many of the favourites chose to compete in the first hour because of rain forecast later in the day, with the last departure scheduled for 1517 GMT.

Today's stage two takes riders 160km from Irun to Kanbo in France, with an elevation gain of 2,300 metres.

The race should reveal the form of the top general classification cyclists ahead of the grand tours, except for Tadej Pogacar, who won the Tour of Catalonia in March and is not competing.

## Pant bides his time to help Delhi get first win of the season

**Vishakapatnam:** Rishabh Pant took some time to find his feet again in the Indian Premier League after returning from a near-fatal car crash but the Delhi Capitals skipper showed he is ready to take the brakes off by helping his side to their first win of the season on Sunday. Pant scored 51 off 32 balls to help Delhi secure a 20-run win over reigning champions Chennai Super Kings. The 26-year-old returned to action in the IPL last month after recovering from a car accident in December 2022. Pant had notched scores of 18 and 28 as Delhi lost their first two games of the season but his

half-century was key to their win on Sunday.

"Yes, that one-and-a-half years was a wait but at the same time you've got to keep doing what you can as a cricketer and keep learning from it," said Pant, who is also eyeing a place in the India squad for the Twenty20 World Cup in June.

"I think I always had self-belief that whatever happens in life, I need to be back on the ground. That was the thought process and I never thought about anything else. I thought I have to give myself enough time (to recover). At the same time I kept believing that I could change the match at the end."

IPL

# Boult stars with 3 key wickets for Rajasthan as Mumbai slip to third loss



Rajasthan Royals' Trent Boult (centre) celebrates with teammates after taking the wicket of Mumbai Indians' Rohit Sharma during the Indian Premier League match at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai yesterday. (AFP)

AFP  
Mumbai

**P**ace bowler Trent Boult returned figures of 3-22 to set up a crushing six-wicket victory for Rajasthan Royals in the IPL match against winless Mumbai Indians yesterday.

Boult's sensational spell of left-arm pace helped restrict hosts Mumbai to 125-9, a total Rajasthan overhauled with 27 balls to spare for their third win of the season in three matches.

Five-time winners Mumbai, who named Hardik Pandya as captain in place of veteran Rohit Sharma, fell to their third loss to stay bottom of the 10-team table.

Pandya had another unforgettable evening after he met with boos at the toss by the home fans, prompting presenter Sanjay Manjrekar to say "behave".

"Yes, a tough night, we didn't start the way we wanted to start," Pandya said af-

ter the loss yesterday. Pandya top-scored with 34 for Mumbai but admitted his wicket made them slip.

"I wanted to counter, we were in a decent position to get us around 150-160," said Pandya.

"But my wicket allowed them to get back more into the game, I needed to do a lot more."

In-form Rajasthan batter Riyan Parag hammered an unbeaten 54 off 39 balls for his second successive fifty as he steered the team to victory with two sixes and a four.

But Rajasthan bowlers ruled with Boult's lethal opening burst giving way to Yuzvendra Chahal's 3-11 with his leg-spin.

Boult claimed three wickets including Rohit in the space of four deliveries across his first two overs to silence the home crowd at Mumbai's Wankhede Stadium.

Rohit, Naman Dhir and Brevis, all three got out for a first ball duck and another

wicket by left-arm quick Nandre Burger made Mumbai slip to 20-4 inside four overs.

Boult got Rohit out caught behind on the fifth ball of his opening over and then trapped Dhir lbw before a hat-trick was avoided in the next over but the Kiwi sent back Dewald Brevis soon after.

Brevis was sent as impact substitute in place of Dhir but the move flopped.

Burger had the left-handed Ishan Kishan caught behind with a nasty seaming delivery as the bowler leapt in the air in celebration.

Left-handed Tilak Varma and Pandya counter-attacked in their 56-run stand as the left-right duo raised their fifty in 32 balls.

Chahal broke the stand as he got Pandya to go for a big one only to be caught in the deep by substitute Rovman Powell and Mumbai lost their fifth on 76.

Tim David made 17 and Mumbai hung on to play out their 20 overs.

TENNIS

# Sinner shows who is the boss with Miami win

THE ITALIAN BAGS HIS THIRD TITLE VICTORY OF THE YEAR

AFP  
Miami

Italy's Jannik Sinner won the ATP Miami Open Masters 1000 title with a dominant 6-3, 6-1 victory over Bulgarian Grigor Dimitrov in the final at Hard Rock Stadium.

Sinner's third title of the season means he will move to a career-high second in the ATP world rankings yesterday ahead of Spain's Carlos Alcaraz.

And the manner of his performance, ice-cool throughout with errors at a minimum and winners struck with sure-fire confidence, suggests that when Novak Djokovic finally surrenders the top spot, Sinner and Alcaraz are set to battle for supremacy for years to come.

Sinner finishes the hard court season in electric form, having won 25 of his last 26 matches - the only defeat coming to Alcaraz in the semi-final of Indian Wells.

He added the Miami title to his crowns this year at the Australian Open and the Rotterdam Indoors after taking care of business in 72 minutes.

Sinner never looked in danger after he broke in the fifth game of the first set, facing just one break point in the entire match.

"As this tournament went on, I felt better and better. Today's performance was really good. I'm just proud of how I handled the situation," Sinner said.

"I started the season really, really well. I never thought (I would) start like this. Being number two is an amazing feeling."

Sinner clinched the first set with his second break, a brilliant backhand down the line that brought spectators to their feet.

Dimitrov, with his trademark



Jannik Sinner of Italy poses with the Miami Open trophy at Hard Rock Stadium in Miami Gardens, Florida, after beating Gregory Dimitrov of Bulgaria in the final. (AFP)

one-handed backhand strokes and willingness to go to the net, was enjoying plenty of support from the home crowd but Sinner's calm approach and pristine technique was too much for him.

The Italian broke in the second set to go 3-1 up and with his serve strong and returns rock solid, it was a procession to victory from that point.

Sinner's Australian co-coach

Darren Cahill, whose past pupils include Andre Agassi and Simona Halep, was hugely impressed with the way his player approached the match.

"I thought he was incredible today, barely any unforced errors, kept a great depth and kept it difficult for Grigor to win points. If Grigor did win points, he did so with spectacular tennis," Cahill said.

"He made Grigor force a lot

and take a lot of risks and when he's doing that I know Jannik is playing the right way. Tactically, I thought he was great today."

Dimitrov had no doubt he had lost to a man in supreme form.

"I think at the moment clearly Jannik is playing outstanding tennis. There is nothing to say to that. You see how focused he is, how determined he is, the way he's hitting his shots, there is zero doubt," said Dimitrov.

"Can he play any better? I don't know. He's the one to show that. But at the moment he has been able to really put so many matches back to back with the same level, so all credit goes to him.

"And he's the best player right now in the world."

The Italian's title came in his third appearance in a Miami final - he lost to Poland's Hubert Hurkacz in 2021 and Daniil Medvedev last year.

Sinner's previous Masters 1000 title came in Toronto in 2023.

Dimitrov yesterday returned to the top 10 in the rankings for the first time since October 2018.

The 32-year-old's run to the Miami final included a quarter-final win over Alcaraz and a semi-final victory over world number five Alexander Zverev.

"I just want to focus on the positives this week," he said. "I was extremely determined throughout the whole week.

"Clearly it's Jannik's week. He has been playing amazing tennis. It's really impressive how he's been able to keep that way of playing. I don't think I have much time to be down on myself. I just want to embrace this moment as well. Just as you win, you need to be able to handle (losing) matches like that, I think, even better than winning those type of matches."

COMMENT

## Tennis is in great hands: Sinner's coach Cahill



Miami Open champion Jannik Sinner of Italy and runner up Grigor Dimitrov of Bulgaria pose after the Miami Open. Sinner defeated Dimitrov 6-3, 6-1 in the final. (AFP)

AFP  
Miami

Jannik Sinner's third victory of the year, at the Miami Open on Sunday, will lift the Italian to number two in the world and has convinced his coach, Darren Cahill, that tennis is set for years of exciting battles at the top.

Roger Federer has retired, Rafael Nadal is battling with injuries and 36-year-old Novak Djokovic is entering the twilight of his career but Cahill, the Australian former coach of Andre Agassi, believes 22-year-old Sinner's rivalry with Spain's Carlos Alcaraz ensures a bright future for the sport.

"He's getting to play a sport that he loves and do it at the highest order - and he's loving every piece of his life at the moment. So he appreciates every single moment that is happening to him," Cahill told reporters after Sinner's straight sets win over Bulgarian Grigor Dimitrov in the final at Hard Rock Stadium.

"But he has also got his feet on the ground, knowing it's just a sport. It's just a tennis match. And beyond this, whilst he's professional in everything he does, he enjoys his life. He's a normal 22-year-old kid.

"So there's a lot to learn from him, a lot of good to learn from both him and Carlos. I think they're very similar in many meaningful ways and that's why I think tennis is in great hands at the moment with the likes of those two and many other players coming through that are going to carry the torch through a generation that we've been so fortunate to sit through the last 20 years.

"It is important to have these types of sports people coming through."

Cahill, who coached Australian former world number one Lleyton Hewitt and worked with Andy Murray, says that while the future looks bright, it would be wrong to make comparisons between Sinner and Alcaraz and the previous generation. But he believes the new wave of talent are benefitting from the methods used by Federer, Nadal and Djokovic.

"What they were able to achieve for so many years is remarkable and I don't think we'll ever see that domination again, no matter what," said the Australian.

"It has been remarkable how they've pushed the frontier of the game and made everyone more professional and made everybody play better. What you're seeing with the players coming through now is a direct result of their professionalism, of the teams they put together, the way they've tried to inch out every piece of improvement in each of their games."

Cahill works alongside Sinner's Italian coach, Simone Vagnozzi, as part of a large support team and those structures flow directly from the approaches taken by the 'Big Three' of tennis.

"They've got big teams, they go from the physio to the mental coach, to a couple of tennis coaches now, to a fitness trainer," Cahill said. "But I wouldn't start comparing what Carlos or Jannik or Holger (Rune) or these types of players are doing just yet to the generation prior. Because I think that's unfair. They need time to establish themselves but the level is right up there and it's a good level. But they need to win a lot more before you start comparing it to those boys."

GOLF

# Germany's Jaeger claims Houston Open

Reuters  
Houston, Texas

Stephan Jaeger made nine consecutive pars on the back nine and held off a crowded field of contenders to win the Texas Children's Houston Open for his first career PGA Tour victory at Memorial Park Golf Course.

The 34-year-old from Germany had won on the Korn Ferry Tour six times, but he earned his breakthrough PGA victory by shooting a final-round, 3-under 67 to card a 12-under 268 for the week.

"I felt like I was hitting good shots, hitting good putts, they just weren't dropping," Jaeger told reporters.

"I didn't feel like I was playing defence at all, it just - this game's very hard," he said.

"It's hard to win on the PGA Tour and I'm super glad that I made it," Jaeger added.

Jaeger missed a birdie try at the par-4 18th and tapped in for par to put the pressure on World No 1 Scottie Scheffler, who was vy-



Stephan Jaeger of Germany poses with the trophy and his child after winning the Texas Children's Houston Open at Memorial Park Golf Course in Houston. (AFP)

ing for his third victory in as many starts. Scheffler had stuck his ap-

proach shot to 5 1/2 feet and would have forced a playoff with Jaeger

with a birdie. But his putt trickled just to the left of the cup. "Obvi-

ously playing Scottie last couple days, he's been on a tear, so to kind of slay the dragon a little bit this week was amazing," Jaeger said.

"He's such a good dude, such a good player, I was just happy to play with him a couple days," Jaeger added.

Jaeger was tied for the lead through 54 holes with Scheffler, England's David Skins, Belgium's Thomas Detry and rookie Alejandro Tosti of Argentina.

Jaeger had four birdies and one bogey on his front nine before the steady finish.

"I'm super excited to get it done," he said. "I couldn't have dreamt a better way to finishing and beating (the) No 1 player in the world."

Scheffler finished the day with four birdies and two bogeys; he had gotten back to 11 under with a two-putt birdie at the par-5 16th but failed to tie it up after that.

"I put up a good fight, felt like I had some weird breaks this week," said Scheffler, who was likely ruing a three-putt double bogey on his final hole Friday.

"That's kind of the thing, like it's

tough to describe, but obviously I'm a bit disappointed."

Regarding his attempt to force a playoff on Sunday: "I didn't think it was going to move very much and I tried to hit it straight and I feel like I started right in the middle and looked like it broke off pretty hard, so just a misread," Scheffler said.

Scheffler posted a 68 and finished in a five-way tie for second with defending champion Tony Finau (66 on Sunday), Taylor Moore (67), Detry (68) and Tosti (68).

Tosti was in a tie for the lead after birdieing the 16th, but a bad drive and a long chip on the 18th left him a tough 19-footer for par that he could not make to stay at 12 under.

"It was just a terrible lie. I had to almost grind the club by the shaft," Tosti said.

"Yeah, I thought it was going to come out a little bit slow because also the ball was seating and it took off.

"Just really sad that the ball didn't hole on the second shot. I was out of position and tried to play smart, but I had a great day."

## KORDA WINS FORD CHAMPIONSHIP



Nelly Korda of the US poses with the trophy after the winning the Ford Championship at Seville Golf and Country Club in Phoenix, Arizona. (AFP)

BOTTOMLINE

## Goosen wins Galleri Classic for first title in 2 years

Reuters  
Rancho Mirage, California

A championship dry spell came to an end Sunday as South Africa's Retief Goosen shot a final-round, 3-under 69 to win the Galleri Classic at Mission Hills Country Club in Rancho Mirage, Calif.

Goosen, a World Golf Hall of Famer, has just two victories to his name on the PGA Tour Champions and none since March 2022 at the Hoag Classic. Before that, Goosen won at the Bridgestone Senior Players Championship in

2019. Beyond that, it had been five runner-up finishes and 21 top-five honours, but no other hardware.

Goosen, who finished the tournament at 13-under 203 amid rough, rainy conditions, said he "was just hanging in."

His drought was in danger of continuing as Goosen went into the final hole tied atop the leaderboard with New Zealand's Steven Alker, and on his second shot he sent it into the water.

But Alker proceeded to do the same, and Goosen rallied for par while Alker carded a bogey, giving Goosen the win.

Goosen's day included three

birdies and no bogeys, including his par save on No. 18.

"I'm glad it flipped my way," Goosen said. "Yeah, it was a really bad second shot, the ball a little bit above my feet and the ball was sitting up so nicely. I was in between a 5 (iron) and a 4 and I thought I'll just hit a smooth 4."

Ricardo Gonzalez of Argentina grabbed the headlines on Saturday with a course-record, 9-under 63 to take a one-stroke lead, but his final-round 1-under 71 left him a stroke shy of a tie-breaker.

He finished in a tie for second with Alker and Germany's Alex Cejka (4-under 68).



Retief Goosen celebrates with the trophy after winning Galleri Classic at Mission Hills Country Club. (AFP)

**PREMIER LEAGUE**

# 'Son has hit new level since becoming captain'

Spurs coach Postecoglou says Son has consistently delivered fine performances

Reuters  
London

**T**ottenham Hotspur captain Son Heung-min has emerged as a natural leader after high-profile departures at the Premier League club and consistently delivered fine performances this season, manager Ange Postecoglou said yesterday.

Son, Spurs' top scorer this campaign with 15 goals and eight assists, took the captain's armband after Tottenham's record goalscorer Harry Kane moved to Bayern Munich last year. Spurs also lost France's World Cup-winning goalkeeper Hugo Lloris, who joined Major League Soccer club Los Angeles FC after an 11-year stay in north London. "It wasn't a big decision (on making Son the skipper)," Postecoglou told reporters before today's trip to West Ham United.

"With Hugo being a huge influence and Harry as well, Eric Dier too - there are others who have been at the club a long time. Part of it all along was that I felt like we needed to make a change to show we are going in a new decision. I felt Son was a natural and he has been a leader within his national team. I had no hesitation putting him in that position. Sometimes when you get the official title it can be a burden, but his performances have been outstanding."

The Australian coach's attacking philosophy has won much praise since he took the Spurs job in June and his team led the standings after going unbeaten in their first 10 matches. Spurs are now fifth and three points behind fourth-placed Aston Villa, who have played a game more.

"We want to finish the season strong and keep building on the foundation of being a team that hopefully in 12 months' time people are looking at us differently and talking about us differently," Postecoglou said.

"To do that it can't just be about where you finish and how many points you get, it's got to be more than that. Obviously, if we finish strong, then we'll finish in a decent position, and we'll see where that takes us."

Postecoglou said he would keep working hard with his young squad. "(Dejan) Kulu-



Tottenham Hotspur's Son Heung-Min greets a young pitch invader after the end of the Premier League match against Luton Town. (AFP)

sevski or Brennan (Johnson), Micky van de Ven or Destiny Udogie, or Pape Matar Sarr. All these guys are in their early 20s, in their first or second year in the Premier League. Our job is to improve all of them," he added.

Postecoglou hailed Johnson's increasing influence in what is the forward's debut season at Tottenham. Johnson joined Spurs on transfer deadline day in September for £47.5m (\$59.6m, 55.5m euros) from Nottingham Forest and initially struggled to make his mark, with only one goal during the first half of the campaign.

But the 22-year-old Welshman has come into his own since December, scoring in wins over Brentford and Brighton as well as making important contributions off the

bench against Crystal Palace and Luton in recent weeks.

"Brennan was super on the weekend," said Spurs manager Postecoglou as he reflected on Johnson's performance in a 2-1 win at home to Luton ahead of Tuesday's trip to London rivals West Ham. "He's still young, he's developing. He's moved to a big club where there's big expectations when you have a big transfer fee, but for the most part I think he's handled it really well."

The Australian added: "He started the two games before he came off the bench, he did really well against Villa. He wasn't great against Fulham but most of the team wasn't great against Fulham. (Against Luton) he came again off the bench and made an im-

pact. He's another one understanding more and more how we want to play and he's adjusting to it. Like I said, for the most part he's handled himself really well this year.

"It was always going to be a tough introduction for a young player, moving to a big club for a transfer fee, and it's always harder for attacking players because they are usually measured on goals and assists but I think he's contributing in more than just that."

Fifth-placed Spurs remain without Fraser Forster (foot), Ryan Sessegnon (hamstring) and Manor Solomon (knee), but Micky van de Ven could start in defence against West Ham after he was an unused substitute against Luton upon his return from a muscle injury.

**Leicester beat Norwich to revive Premier League promotion bid**

**London:** Leicester reignited their bid for automatic promotion to the Premier League with a 3-1 win at home to Norwich yesterday. Victory at the King Power Stadium meant the Foxes returned to the top of English football's second-tier Championship, if merely for a few hours before promotion rivals Ipswich and Leeds are in action later in the day.

Goals from Kiernan Dewsbury-Hall, Stephy Mavididi and Jamie Vardy enabled Leicester to complete a comeback after Gabriel Sara's fourth goal in as many games gave Norwich the lead.

Leicester have topped the table for much of the season, but yesterday's success was just their third win in eight Championship games. Only the top two clubs at the end of the regular season are guaranteed automatic promotion to the Premier League, with Leicester now a point ahead of second-placed Ipswich and two clear of Leeds, currently in third place.

Defeat left Norwich in sixth position - still in contention to reach the post-season play-offs that will decide which club gets the third and final promotion spot.

Liam Kitching scored two own goals as Coventry lost ground in the race for a play-off place following a 2-1 home defeat by Cardiff. West Brom extended their unbeaten run to eight games by coming from two goals down to draw 2-2 with Watford.

The Hornets led through goals from Edo Kayembe and substitute Mileta Rajovic, but Brandon Thomas-Asante brought the Baggies back into the game before Darnell Furlong snatched a point at the death. Ellis Simms' 17th goal of the season gave the Sky Blues a 22nd-minute lead but Kitching twice put through his own net, the first of them in stunning style.

Rotherham staved off relegation for at least another week with a 2-1 win over Millwall. This was just Rotherham's fourth league win of the season, with the Millers scoring twice in the last 20 minutes. Birmingham moved two points clear of the relegation zone with a 1-0 win over play-off hopefuls Preston.

**SERIE A**

## Bologna win to stay in Champions League contention



Bologna's Charalampos Lykogiannis (right) celebrates after scoring against Salernitana in the Serie A yesterday. (Reuters)

AFP  
Milan

**B**ologna cruised past Serie A's bottom side Salernitana 3-0 yesterday to continue their charge towards a first-ever appearance in the Champions League.

Stunning first-half strikes from Riccardo Orsolini and Alexis Saelemaekers and Charalampos Lykogiannis' fine finish in stoppage time ensured that Bologna would stay in fourth place, six points above Roma who were facing Lecce late last night.

Thiago Motta's side have won eight of their last nine matches and not only look a good bet to reach Europe's top club competition, but also have Juventus in their sights.

Juve are just two points ahead of Bologna following their last-gasp defeat at Lazio on Saturday and have been dragged back into a battle for the Champions League.

Bologna currently sit in the final spot but Serie A is firmly in the running for an extra place in next year's revamped tournament, meaning fifth may well be good enough.

Both Bologna and Roma host Juve before the end of the season. "We're doing really well at the minute, with the way that we're playing and the results we're getting," said.

Although the seven-time Italian champions played one round in the old European Cup in 1964, the same year that they most recently won the Scudetto, they have never participated in the modern Champions League. Last season's ninth place was the highest Bologna had finished in Serie A for over a decade and they are well on course for their best placing in years.

"Obviously we're looking at the table but that's not what matters to us, what's important is putting in the work in training and the performances on the pitch," said Saelemaekers.

Stefano Colantuono could not turn around Salernitana's fortunes in his first match in charge, his team falling to their third straight defeat as they sink towards Serie B. Salernitana have not won a single game since the turn of the year and are 12 points from safety with Empoli, who are just outside the relegation zone, at runaway league leaders Inter Milan late last night.

**LIGUE 1**

## PSG overcome red card to beat Marseille

AFP  
Paris

**P**aris Saint-Germain overcame a controversial first-half sending-off to win 2-0 away to bitter rivals Marseille in Ligue 1 on Sunday, with Portuguese duo Vitorino and Goncalo Ramos scoring their goals. Marseille's hopes of a first home league win against PSG since November 2011 were raised when the away side had Lucas Beraldo sent off five minutes before the interval.

But the Qatar-owned club still came out on top, with Vitorino exchanging passes with Ousmane Dembele before firing home a superb opening goal in the 53rd minute on a wet night at the Velodrome. Marseille, who had been unbeaten at home this season, went looking for an equaliser and Jordan Veretout had a goal disallowed for an offside against teammate Luis Henrique.

PSG coach Luis Enrique then withdrew captain Kylian Mbappe just after the hour mark and it was his replacement Ramos who made sure of the win five minutes from time. The goal came on the breakaway, with the visitors clearing a corner before Achraf Hakimi found Marco Asensio and he picked out Ramos, who finished coolly for his 10th goal of the season.

Only Mbappe, with 38 in all competitions, has found the net more often for PSG this season. The result means PSG end the weekend as they started it, 12 points clear of second-placed Brest, who won 1-0 at Lorient earlier on Sunday.

"I am very proud of our second-half performance, of the solidarity and the attitude of the players," said Luis Enrique. "We had to play



French referee Benoit Bastien (left) gives a red card to PSG defender Lucas Beraldo during the French Ligue 1 match against Marseille. (AFP)

in a different style to what we usually do, but we did it very well. I am pleased with the result, because it was a 'Classique' and it counts for the supporters."

There are just seven games of the campaign remaining, and PSG need only 10 more points to claim a 10th title in 12 seasons. The biggest talking point on the night was the red card for Beraldo, the young Brazilian defender signed in January.

He went shoulder-to-shoulder with Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang, knocking the attacker over

just past halfway near the right touchline. Already on a booking, he escaped a second caution but then referee Benoit Bastien came across to check the VAR monitor and, following the review, surprisingly chose to show Beraldo a straight red card, judging him to have been the last defender.

"I don't usually judge refereeing decisions, especially when there is VAR," said Luis Enrique. "The action happened right in front of me, and I didn't think there was a foul. But I don't come here to talk about the referee, to comment on

his decisions or to demand explanations."

Marseille could not take advantage of the extra man and a second straight league loss means they remain seventh, three points away from the European places. PSG face Rennes at home in the French Cup semi-finals on Wednesday, and host Barcelona in the first leg of their Champions League quarter-final a week later.

Brest remain on course for Champions League qualification after beating Brittany rivals Lorient thanks to a late Romain Del Castillo goal. They held on for the victory despite having Bilal Brahimi sent off in stoppage time, and the result lifted them back up into second place above Monaco, who won 5-2 at Metz on Saturday.

Brest, who have never qualified for Europe, are four points better off than fourth-placed Lille, who beat Lens 2-1 on Friday. The top three in Ligue 1 will qualify automatically for next season's expanded Champions League, with fourth place entering in the preliminary rounds.

Nice remain fifth despite losing 2-1 at home to struggling Nantes, whose winner came from a late penalty by Egypt striker Mostafa Mohamed. Second in the table at the season's halfway stage, Nice have now won just once in their last eight league games.

The result takes Nantes, in their first game since Antoine Kombouare returned for a second spell as coach, out of the relegation play-off place, with Lorient replacing them. Rennes saw their prospects of European qualification dealt a blow in a 2-0 defeat away to Patrick Vieira's Strasbourg, while there were also wins for Montpellier and Toulouse.

## Rodrygo brace leads Real to victory over Bilbao

**Madrid:** Rodrygo netted a goal in each half as Real Madrid secured a 2-0 home win against Athletic Bilbao on Sunday, cementing their position at the top of the La Liga table.

Real have 75 points, eight ahead of Barcelona in second and 10 clear of third-placed Girona with eight matches left. The result hit fourth-placed Bilbao's hopes of securing a place in next season's Champions League as they are only

one point ahead of Atletico Madrid, who play at Villarreal. Rodrygo broke the deadlock after eight minutes, calmly curling the ball into the far corner after a composed run to the edge of the box, as the Bilbao defence failed to close down the Brazilian winger.

Aurelien Tchouameni almost found the net with a powerful header from a corner just before halftime, but the ball narrowly missed the

target, denying Real another goal.

In the 73rd minute, Rodrygo was played free on the wing by Jude Bellingham on a counter-attack, giving him time and space to run into the box and guide the ball into the bottom corner. Bellingham returned from a two-match suspension to replace Vinicius Jr, who was suspended for this match after picking up five yellow cards.