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**PREVIEW**

# Duhail to take on Shamal in Amir Cup opener today

DEFENDING CHAMPIONS AL ARABI WILL MEET AL SAILIYA IN THE SECOND MATCH

By Sports Reporter  
Doha

**A**l Duhail will kick off the prestigious Amir Cup 2024 against Al Shamal at the Al Janoub Stadium today at 5.15pm while defending champions Al Arabi will take on Al Sailiya in the second match at the Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium at 8pm.

The winners of these two matches will meet in the quarter-finals. The matches of the Round of 16 are scheduled to be held from May 6 to May 9.

Speaking ahead of his team's match, Al Duhail's coach Christophe Galtier said that the Amir Cup is an opportunity for his team to compensate for their performance during the Expo Stars League.

Al Duhail finished sixth in the recently-concluded Expo Stars League.

"Each member of the squad is aware of the importance of Amir Cup. There are no second chances in this tournament and our match against Al Shamal is very important," said Galtier.

"There is disappointment among the entire Al Duhail team members and fans but this Amir Cup is an opportunity for us to make amends. It will not be an easy match and I have told my players to focus on Al Shamal match as they are an organised team. A victory means we stay in the tournament," he added.



Al Duhail coach Christophe Galtier (right) and captain Almoez Ali address the media yesterday, on the eve of their Amir Cup 2024 Round of 16 match against Al Shamal.

Al Duhail captain Almoez Ali, said, "This tournament is very dear to us and currently all our focus is on the first match. We are not satisfied with our performance this season and we are aware that Amir Cup is our last chance to qualify for the Asian Champions League. We will give our best to reach the final with Al Shamal being the first obstacles. We must play the match with full focus and determination as a lot of hardwork is required to win the title."

Al Shamal coach Poya Asbaghi said, his side was confident of taking on Al Duhail. "We are aware of the challenge we face in Al Duhail, who are looking to bounce back after losing the league title. They are very strong but we are also confident and all the players are determined for a win against them to advance in this prestigious tournament, he said.

Al Shamal forward Ricardo Gomes, said, "We have great ambitions and we are ready for the

match against Al Duhail. It's a match that requires complete focus from start to finish."

Defending champions Al Arabi also do not want to take any chances in their match against Al Sailiya. Al Arabi coach Younes Ali, said, Al Sailiya are not going to be easy opponents and we expect a tough match. We are aiming to advance with a win as we are eyeing second straight Amir Cup title.

"The atmosphere in the team is great and all the players are looking



Al Shamal coach Poya Asbaghi speaks to the media yesterday.

ing to give their best. "All the players are keen to give a better show than they gave in the Expo Stars League. Al Arabi is the club which has a rich history and we always compete for titles. We are happy to have clinched the Qatar-UAE Super Cup (with win over Sharjah) this season."

Al Sailiya coach Mirghani al-Zain, said, "The Amir Cup matches are played with a different system than league matches and we are aiming for a place in the quarter-finals.

For his part, Al Sailiya player Saad al-Sawan: "We are looking

to reach the quarter-finals but we will have to work hard for it. It is going to be a tough match for both the teams.

**AMIR CUP SCHEDULE**

**May 6:** Al Duhail vs Al Shamal (5.15pm); Al Arabi vs Al Sailiya (8pm)

**May 7:** Qatar SC vs Al Waab (5.15pm); Umm Salal vs Al Bidda (8pm)

**May 8:** Al Gharafa vs Al Ahli (5.15pm)

**May 9:** Al Sadd vs Al Markhiya (5.15pm); Al Wakrah vs Muaitheer (8pm); Al Rayyan vs Al Khor (8pm).

**FOOTBALL**

# Al Shahania promoted to QSL

By Sports Reporter  
Doha

**A**l Shahania came up with a spirited display as they beat a strong Al Markhiya 3-1 in the relegation play-off at the Al Thumama Stadium yesterday and were promoted to the First Division - Qatar Stars League 2024-2025 season - in style.

While Al Markhiya did rally to bounce back from being a goal down and equalise, Al Shahania hit back with two more late goals to ensure their first division berth.

The goal-scorers for Al Shahania were Jaime Rubio (17th minute), Mohamed Abu Shanab (83rd minute) and Mohamed Ibrahim (90+6 minute). Al Markhiya's only goal came in the 75th minute from an own goal of Niall Mason.

Al Shahania began the match with intent and at a fast pace looking to attack at every given opportunity and succeeded soon as their 19-year-old left-winger Rubio struck off a rebound.

The move was initiated by Al-hassan Koroma who passed the ball to his right to Franceso Antonucci to deliver the strike but his kick saw the ball hit the left post and rebound, and an alert Rubio pounced on the chance to score.

The very next minute, Al Markhiya tried to make amends but Yusupha Nije's kick went just off the left post. A co-ordinated Al Shahania move in the 23rd minute saw Rubio shape up for another big attempt from just outside the box but his kick sailed well over the crossbar. The opening half also saw Al Shahania's goalkeeper Bautista Burke stave off two po-



Al Shahania players celebrate with Spanish coach Alvaro Mejia after their 2023-2024 season relegation play-off win against Al Markhiya at Al Thumama Stadium in Doha yesterday.

tential and powerful strikes from Al Markhiya as well. Post the half time break, Al Markhiya aimed at stepping up the ante and in the 50th minute Mouhamadou Naby Sarr did succeed in scoring while driving left from inside the box but a foul was ruled as the player had brought down defender Marc Martinez while being man-marked.

Eight minutes later, Al Markhiya in a close action saw Yusupha rise high to make a header connect but couldn't reach as the goalkeeper grappled to catch the ball.

Al Markhiya repeated attempts eventually bore fruit in the 75th minute when a defensive lapse saw Nije grab the ball and pass it

to Driss Fettouhi whose left-foot strike was headed into own goal by an evasive Mason.

With parity drawn, the match gained more excitement but just when it seemed that Al Markhiya may try and gain an upper hand, Al Shahania picked up more pace and challenged their rivals.

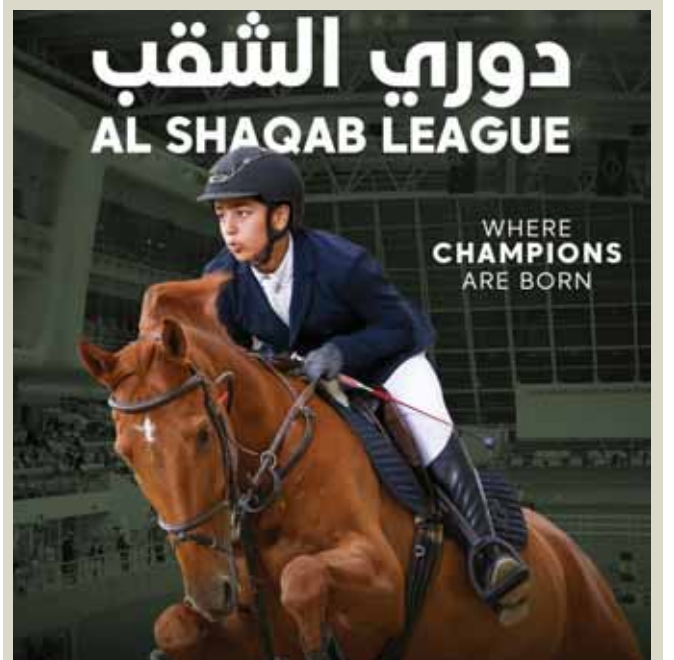
Soon, Al Shahania surprised their opponents as Mohamed Abu Shanab made a fine diagonal strike to score in the far left corner while beating a diving keeper. Abu Shanab was assisted with the ball by Koroma. Having conceded the lead again, Al Markhiya now had more worries and close battles for the ball had some of their players throwing up their arms in frus-

tration. With ten more minutes of added time, the tussle became thrilling and in fast counter-attack Al Shahania struck one more time as Koroma's long ball was intercepted by Al Markhiya's Abdelghani Laallam but he couldn't hold on and Ibrahim ran in to get to the ball and move into the danger zone to score a wonderful and finest goal of the match - keeping a chasing Laallam at bay and making a right foot flick for the ball to go over an onrushing goalkeeper's head into the empty goal.

The goal delighted Al Shahania's many fans at the stadium and left Al Markhiya's hopes dashed as they now go back to Second Division.

## Al Shaqab Showjumping League from Friday

**DOHA:** Riders from various age categories will vie for top honours in the two-day Al Shaqab Showjumping League which will begin on Friday at the Longines Indoor Arena. The event is poised to be a spectacular sporting extravaganza, spotlighting the remarkable skills of riders in the league of show jumping competitions. With an emphasis on establishing a distinguished league that provides a prominent platform for riders, this championship also aims to offer opportunities to young riders, aspiring female participants, juniors, future champions and all equestrian enthusiasts. Registration for the competition is open to all members of the Al Shaqab Equestrian Education Academy and riders from all the clubs. The FEI Group 7 qualifying class held in earlier leagues saw all riders qualified for the FEI Group 7 final. Furthermore, the Al Shaqab League is dedicated to providing riders at Al Shaqab with opportunities to qualify for prestigious events such as the FEI group 7 final, Youth Olympic Games and FEI international events. Among the notable achievements, Saad Al Saad stands as the sole rider from Al Shaqab to have qualified for the youth Olympics, a testament to the calibre of talent nurtured within the Al Shaqab community. The main classes of Al Shaqab League includes Future Champions - Ages 14 years old and below (Height 90cm), and Junior Champions - Ages 18 years old and below (Height 100cm).



دوري الشقب  
**AL SHAQAB LEAGUE**

WHERE CHAMPIONS ARE BORN

BADMINTON

# China dominate Thomas and Uber Cups

AFP  
Chengdu

Zhao China completed a Thomas and Uber Cup double yesterday as both men's and women's teams beat Indonesia to win their respective world team championship finals in Chengdu.

The men, who won 3-1, lifted China's first Thomas Cup since they beat Japan in 2018 - and their 11th in all. But it meant agony again for 14-time winners Indonesia, who lost their second successive final after falling to India two years ago in Bangkok.

In the women's event, Indonesia had earlier been powerless to prevent a flawless China lifting the Uber Cup for a record-extending 16th time with a 3-0 victory.

The next most successful women's nation are Japan, who have

won the Uber Cup six times.

He Bingjiao's 10-21, 21-15, 21-17 victory against Ester Nurumi Tri Wardoyo completed a perfect 24-0 tournament match record for China's women. They regained the title they lost to South Korea two years ago in Thailand.

In the night session, world number two Shi Yuqi got China's men off to a fast start by destroying seventh-ranked Anthony Ginting 21-17, 21-6 in 43 hugely impressive minutes. The pivotal moments came in the first doubles as Liang Weikeng and Wang Chang edged an epic to beat Fajar Alfian and Mohamed Rian Ardianto 21-18, 17-21, 21-17 in a 64-minute thriller.

The Chinese pair fought back time and again after trailing 10-4 in the opening game, 6-3 in the second and 8-4 in the third in a gutsy display. World number three Jonatan Christie gave Indonesia some hope when he beat sixth-ranked



Members of Chinese men's badminton team pose with the trophy after their victory over Indonesia in the finals of the Thomas and Uber Cup badminton tournament in Chengdu, China. (AFP)

Li Shifeng 21-16, 15-21, 21-17 in 1hr 17min of see-saw action to extend the final. But Indonesia's chances were snuffed out when He Jiting and Ren Xiangyu ran away with the second doubles 21-11, 21-15 in just

37 minutes to beat Mohamed Shohibul Fikri and Bagas Maulana and seal the trophy.

**Women's slim chances**  
Earlier the outranked Indonesian women's slim chances had

hinged on Gregoria Mariska Tunjung breaking through in the opening singles against Chen Yufei. But Chen never allowed her opponent into the contest in a comprehensive

21-7, 21-16 win in just 38 minutes. "I didn't feel that comfortable although I have played such matches before," said Chen. "I still feel stressed, and maybe my opponent was. I always feel pressured in finals.

"I have lost to her before. What I did was watch a lot of matches that I'd lost to her. It's not going to help if I only watch matches that I won." Chen Qingchen and Jia Yifan did not give Siti Fadia Silva Ramadhanti and Ribka Sugiarto a sniff in a 39-minute doubles demolition.

"The scariest thing is when people think you should win," said Chen Qingchen. "Things become different when you assume you can win. The only thing we need to do is prepare and be humble."

Their 21-11, 21-8 canter set up He for the Cup-winning victory in the second singles. "During the last three years we experienced failures, and I'm happy that we could regain the title," said He.

CRICKET

# Bangladesh post six-wicket win over Zimbabwe

THE HOSTS TAKE A 2-0 LEAD IN THE FIVE-MATCH SERIES

AFP  
Chittagong, Bangladesh

Towhid Hridoy top-scored with 37 as Bangladesh cruised to a six-wicket win over Zimbabwe in the second Twenty20 international in Chittagong yesterday, taking a 2-0 lead in the five-match series.

The hosts eased their way to 142-4 in 18.3 overs, defying rain and some inspirational bowling from Zimbabwe after restricting the visitors to 138-7.

Bangladesh seemed to be coasting when opener Liton Das (23) and skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto (16) took them to 56-1 before rain intervened for the second time in their innings to halt the momentum.

Luke Jongwe (2-35) dismissed Najmul and Liton in the next over after the rain break to put Bangladesh under some pressure, which increased following Jaker Ali's dismissal by Richard Ngarava for 13.

But Hridoy and 38-year-old Mahmudullah Riyad, 26 not out, put on 49 runs for the fifth wicket to prevent a further slide and deny Zimbabwe.

Debutant Johnathan Campbell earlier top scored for Zimbabwe with 45 off 24 balls after the visitors were asked to bat first - the



Bangladesh's Towhid Hridoy plays a shot as Zimbabwe's wicketkeeper Joylord Gumbie looks on during the second Twenty20 international in Chittagong yesterday. (AFP)

highest ever score by a Zimbabwean appearing for the first time in a T20 international.

**Son of Alistair Campbell**

Campbell, the son of former Zimbabwean captain Alistair Campbell, put on 73 runs with Brian Bennett to help Zimbabwe recover from a precarious 42-5 after they were asked to bat first.

Bennett stayed unbeaten on 44, facing 29 balls and hitting three sixes alongside two fours.

Bangladesh wicketkeeper Jaker Ali dropped Campbell on just one off Mahedi Hasan. Campbell used his luck to hit four fours and three sixes before Shoriful Islam removed him. Taskin Ahmed was the most successful bowler for Bangladesh 2-18 while leg-spinner Rishad Hossain claimed 2-33.

Bangladesh won Friday's opening match by eight wickets. The third match of the series will be held at the same ground tomorrow.

**BRIEF SCORES**  
**Zimbabwe 138-7 in 20 overs** (J. Campbell 45, B. Bennett 44 not out, Taskin Ahmed 2-18, Rishad Hossain 2-33) **v Bangladesh 142-4 in 18.3 overs** (Towhid Hridoy 37 not out, Mahmudullah Riyad 26 not out; Luke Jongwe 2-35)  
**Toss:** Bangladesh  
**Result:** Bangladesh win by six wickets  
**Series:** Bangladesh lead five-match series 2-0  
**Next Match:** Tuesday

## Pogacar powers into Maglia Rosa with Giro stage win



Team UAE's Slovenian rider Tadej Pogacar celebrates as he crosses the finish line to win the 2nd stage of the 107th Giro d'Italia cycling race, 161km between San Francesco al Campo and Sanctuary of Oropa (Biella), in Biella yesterday. (AFP)

**Turin:** Race favourite Tadej Pogacar made light of a mechanical problem to blast into the lead of the Giro d'Italia with victory on the summit finish to the 161km second stage yesterday. The Slovenian suffered a puncture at the foot of the steep 11km climb to Santuario di Oropa but he was helped back into the group by his team mates before launching a devastating solo attack. No one could stay with the UAE Team Emirates rider who poured on the power to win by 27 seconds and take possession of the Maglia Rosa two days into his maiden Giro. Dani Martinez (BORA-Hansgrohe) was second just ahead of Ineos Grenadiers leader Geraint Thomas. Pogacar had already gained time on his GC rivals in Saturday's opening stage when he was out-sprinted to the line by Jhonatan Narvaez who wore the Maglia Rosa yesterday. But by the end of stage two he already has a 45-second advantage over Britain's Thomas, who is regarded as the most likely

challenger to Pogacar over the next three weeks. Thomas and Martinez are second and third in the standings with only two other riders within a minute of Pogacar. "I was only missing a Giro stage and this was one of my dreams," Pogacar, who now has stage wins in all three Grand Tours, told *Eurosport*. "It's a big thing in cycling so I'm super happy," said a beaming Pogacar. Pogacar had stayed out of trouble during the stage which was led by young Italian rider Andrea Piccolo (EF Education-EasyPost) until six kilometres from the finish. But there was a moment of alarm at the foot of the final climb as his front tyre deflated and he then slid to the floor and was narrowly avoided by a following car. There was no damage, however, and he was quickly back into his rhythm and when he hit the accelerator on a 9% gradient there was only going to be one outcome. "There is still all to play for but obviously Tadej...well he's Tadej," Thomas, who was runner-up last year, said.

## EX-SKIPPER ELGAR 'STABBED IN THE BACK' BY CRICKET SOUTH AFRICA

**Johannesburg:** Former Test captain Dean Elgar described a toxic environment of politics and poor administration in South African cricket and said he felt he had been "stabbed in the back" when he was summarily axed from the leadership role last year. Elgar, 36, is now playing for English county Essex after retiring from international cricket. He said in a wide-ranging interview with the *Report* newspaper that he had held back from criticising his former employers before his contract with Cricket South Africa expired at the end of April. He said he was exposed to an unhealthy culture after he was appointed captain in March 2021.



"I became a part-time cricketer and full-time politician, something that I never want to go through again. "I am a sportsman, not a politician or a cricket administrator, but I was thrown into a cauldron in which I had to be all three. If I had known that before, I would never have accepted the captaincy." He said the resignation of former captain Graeme Smith as director of cricket in March 2022 had put a heavy burden on him, coach Mark Boucher and the team management. Elgar said it was difficult to balance the interests of the team with those of CSA's management. "I tried to make the best of a bad job, to control the things I could control. But my own form took a dive." He said that with hindsight he wished he had been more selfish and focused more on his own game. It was a shock nevertheless when he was summoned to a meeting with director of cricket Enoch

Nkwe and new coach Shukri Conrad in February last year and told that he had been replaced as captain by Temba Bavuma. "It felt as though they did not recognise all my hard work over the previous year-and-a-half, that they didn't realise how much we had improved as a team," said Elgar. "From being sixth or seventh in the world we became a team with the potential to play in the World Test championship final."

Elgar led South Africa in 18 of his 86 Tests. They climbed the Test rankings with series wins against West Indies, India and Bangladesh before losing away series in England and Australia in his last two series in charge. Conrad was appointed as head coach of the Test team in January 2023 and appointing Bavuma was one of his first moves.

According to Elgar, the only reason Conrad gave for the change was that he felt "better aligned" with Bavuma. Elgar said he had good relationships with his former teammates, including Bavuma, and played under the new captain in series against West Indies and India, captaining the side in his final Test against the latter team after Bavuma was injured. But he said he realised after the meeting with Nkwe and Conrad that he had to make a decision about his future. "Shukri Conrad is the reason why my Test career was cut short," said Elgar. He said he was enjoying the healthy cricket environment at Essex, where he has a three-year contract. "I think I don't fit into the South African situation as it is now and probably into the future," he said. Cricket South Africa has been approached for comment.

INDIAN PREMIER LEAGUE

## All-round Jadeja shines for Chennai; Narine the batting hero in KKR's win

AFP  
Dharamsala

All-rounder Ravindra Jadeja starred with bat and ball as defending champions Chennai Super Kings thrashed Punjab Kings by 28 runs to boost their IPL play-off hopes yesterday.

Left-hander Jadeja top-scored with 43 off 26 balls to guide Chennai to 167-9 after being invited to bat first in Punjab's adopted home ground of Dharamsala.

Jadeja then returned figures of 3-20 from his four overs of left-arm spin to help restrict Punjab to 139-9 for Chennai's sixth win in 11 matches as they climbed to third in the table.

The top four teams will make the play-offs with the final on May 26 in Chennai.

Earlier Chennai suffered from a lack of partnerships despite a second-wicket stand between skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad, who hit 32, and Daryl Mitchell, who struck 30.

Also yesterday, ted-hot Sunil Narine smashed 81 off 39 balls to help Kolkata Knight Riders thrash Lucknow Super Giants by 98 runs and take top spot in IPL table.



Chennai Super Kings' Ravindra Jadeja (right) celebrates after the dismissal of Punjab Kings' Prabhsimran Singh in Dharamsala yesterday. (AFP)



Kolkata Knight Riders' Sunil Narine plays a shot against Lucknow Super Giants yesterday. (AFP)

**BRIEF SCORES**  
**Chennai Super Kings 167 for 9** (Jadeja 43, Chahar 3-23, Harshal 3-24) **beat Punjab Kings 139 for 9** (Prabhsimran 30, Jadeja 3-20, Deshpande 2-35) **by 28 runs**  
**Kolkata Knight Riders 235 for 6** (Narine 81, Salt 32, Raghuvanshi 32, Naveen 3-49) **beat Lucknow Super Giants 137** (Stoinis 36, Rana 3-24, Varun 3-30, Russell 2-17) **by 98 runs**



## Britain's Jake shines in third round of FIM MiniGP Qatar



Young British rider Jake Franklin secured victories in both races during third round of the 2024 FIM MiniGP Qatar, narrowing the gap on the championship leader Marton Bellelli, late on Saturday night. At the Lusail International Circuit Karting Track, Franklin, who missed out on the championship points in the second round due to absence, won Race 1 with a 0.226-second lead over Italy's Andrea Giacchero. Riley Robinson secured third place in Race 1, while points leader Bellelli of Hungary failed to finish. In Race 2, Robinson claimed the second spot, finishing 0.397 secs behind the winner, while Bellelli secured the third place. After three rounds, Bellelli leads the standings with 98 points, followed by Robinson with 83 points. Franklin is in third place with 74 points.



## Leverkusen extend unbeaten run with win 5-1 at Frankfurt

Bundesliga champions Bayer Leverkusen extended their season-long unbeaten run to 48 games with a 5-1 win at Eintracht Frankfurt yesterday. With Xabi Alonso forced to watch from the stands due to a yellow card suspension, Leverkusen turned on the style, winning with goals from Granit Xhaka, Patrik Schick, Jeremie Frimpong and penalties from Exequiel Palacios and Victor Boniface. Alonso left midfield lynchpin Florian Wirtz, who turned 21 on Friday, out of the squad with Thursday's second Champions League semi-final against Roma in mind, but Leverkusen had no problems in attack. Xhaka opened the scoring with a long-range effort, before Frankfurt equalised through Hugo Ekitike, who scored for the third game in succession. Schick headed Leverkusen back in front just before half-time and World Cup winner Palacios scored a third from the penalty spot on the 58-minute mark. The floodgates opened in the final stages, with Frimpong scoring just five minutes after coming on and then won a penalty with three minutes remaining. Boniface converted the spot kick for Leverkusen's first win in Frankfurt for six years. Leverkusen, who are unbeaten in 48 across all competitions, need to avoid defeat in two remaining league matches to become the first team to go unbeaten through a Bundesliga season. Alonso's side have a 2-0 advantage ahead of Thursday's second Europa League semi-final leg at home and are through to the final of the German Cup, keeping their dreams of an incredible unbeaten treble alive. Earlier yesterday, Bochum won 4-3 at Union Berlin, pushing the hosts closer to the drop just months after they were playing in the Champions League. (AFP)

## PREMIER LEAGUE

# Liverpool shatter Spurs' top four bid as Villa eye CL

Chelsea beat West Ham to keep alive hopes of European qualification

AFP  
London

Liverpool shattered Tottenham's hopes of finishing in the Premier League's top four with a 4-2 win that left Aston Villa on the brink of Champions League qualification despite their 1-0 defeat at Brighton yesterday.

Needing a win at Anfield to close the gap on fourth-placed Villa, Tottenham slumped to a fourth successive loss to leave their Champions League hopes in tatters. Villa are seven points ahead of fifth-placed Tottenham, who have a game in hand but will miss out on the top four if Unai Emery's men win one of their remaining two matches.

Mohamed Salah was back in the Liverpool team after being dropped for last weekend's draw at West Ham. The Egypt forward had argued with Klopp before being introduced as a substitute at the London Stadium and fanned the flames afterwards when he said there would be "fire" if he spoke about the clash.

Klopp, in the final weeks of his nine-year reign, was celebrating in the 16th minute when Salah notched his 25th goal in all competitions this term with a clinical header from Cody Gakpo's cross.

Andrew Robertson scored Liverpool's second on the stroke of half-time as the Scotland left-back finished from close-range after Salah's shot was saved by Guglielmo Vicario.

There was worse to come for woeful Tottenham as Gakpo headed in a 50th-minute cross from Harvey Elliott, who netted the fourth in the 59th minute with a superb curler from 20 yards.

It was little consolation for Tot-



Liverpool's Cody Gakpo (centre) celebrates with teammate Mohamed Salah (second from left) after scoring a goal during the Premier League match against Tottenham Hotspur at Anfield in Liverpool yesterday. (AFP)

tenham that Richarlison reduced the deficit in the 72nd minute before setting up Son Heung-min's goal five minutes later.

Liverpool's first victory in three league games kept them in mathematical contention to win the title, but in truth they have little chance, with leaders Arsenal five points ahead with only two games left. A Villa win combined with a Tottenham loss would have sealed a Champions League place for Emery's side. But Villa were unable to fulfil their part of that equation as Joao Pedro's 87th-minute goal condemned them to a second painful defeat in four days. Ending Brighton's six-match winless run, Pedro headed in the rebound after Robin Olsen saved his penalty, which had been awarded for Ezri Konsa's foul

on Simon Adingra. Surprisingly beaten 4-2 by Olympiakos in the Europa Conference League semi-final first leg on Thursday, Villa were well below their best once again.

Emery's men host Liverpool and travel to Crystal Palace in their last two games as they fight to return to the Champions League for the first time since 1982-83. "We competed but we didn't get a good result and we didn't deserve more. I don't want to know anything about Tottenham because it's in our hands," Emery said.

At Stamford Bridge, seventh-placed Chelsea thrashed West Ham 5-0 to keep alive their hopes of European qualification. Chelsea boss Mauricio Pochettino is fighting to convince the club's co-owner Todd Boehly to give him a

second season in charge after his troubled debut campaign. Pochettino admits it is "not his decision" if he stays, but securing a place in Europe could be enough to avoid the sack. Cole Palmer put Chelsea ahead in the 15th minute with his 21st league goal of the season, the forward firing home after West Ham failed to clear.

Conor Gallagher doubled Chelsea's advantage after 30 minutes with a blistering volley after West Ham's Kurt Zouma deflected the ball towards the midfielder. Noni Madueke bagged Chelsea's third as the winger turned in Thiago Silva's header from close-range. Nicolas Jackson piled on the misery for woeful West Ham in the 48th minute and the Senegal striker bagged his second.

areas. An additional 148 young people took part in the LOC's Youth Programme as flag bearers and members of the ball crew.

## COMMENT

## PSG will come back and reach CL final, says Mbappe

AFP  
Paris

Paris Saint-Germain star Kylian Mbappe said yesterday that his team will come back from their 1-0 defeat in the Champions League semi-final first leg to Borussia Dortmund and qualify for the final.

"We're confident that we'll come back from that score and reach the final," Mbappe said to reporters in Paris during an event with 2,000 children organised by his "Inspired by KM" association.

PSG will host Dortmund in the tie's second leg tomorrow, with Niclas Füllkrug's goal in Germany last week meaning Mbappe and his team need to win in order to have a chance of reaching the final at Wembley on June 1.

"There's a lot of pressure, which is normal because there's a place in the Champions League final at stake, which is very important. Especially when you consider the club's record in the competition," said 25-year-old

Mbappe. "We're aware of the pressure, but the group is extremely calm."

"We're confident that we'll come back from that score and reach the final," he said, adding that "taking part" in this event with the children helped him to "prepare".

"I've often had the same warning from the children. I've heard a lot of 'You've got to win!' And they're right, we have to win."

"In any case, a day like this is good for the development of the man I am. And I'm sure I'll arrive at the match in a good mood, ready to defend my team's colours and help us qualify for the final."

It will in all likelihood be Mbappe's last chance to win European football's biggest prize with hometown side PSG after the France captain told the club he would be leaving this summer at the end of his contract.

The 2018 World Cup winner has not yet announced where he will play his football next season, but Spanish giants Real Madrid are the favourites to secure Mbappe's signature.

## Milan held by Genoa in front of protesting fans

AC Milan were held to a thrilling 3-3 draw by Genoa yesterday in front of a San Siro crowd which voiced its frustration as a disappointing season crawls to its conclusion.

Malick Thiaw gave Genoa a point with an 87th-minute own goal, which came after Olivier Giroud appeared to have won the match for Milan. Matteo Gabbia pulled second-placed Milan level at two apiece in the 72nd minute and a precision volley from Giroud three minutes later looked to have turned the match in Milan's favour. But after Mateo Retegui's early penalty and Caleb Ekuban's header just after half-time, Thiaw's slip-up gave Genoa a deserved draw. Milan fans had earlier unfurled banners demanding improvements to the team, while the hardcore ultras stayed silent in protest throughout the match.

The Curva Sud section of the San Siro, where the ultras stand, abandoned the stadium shortly after Giroud's winner, leaving behind a banner which read "the sound of silence".

Fan discontent stems from the 18 points which separate Milan from champions and local rivals Inter Milan, who secured their 20th league title by winning their local derby a fortnight ago. Earlier, Verona boosted their hopes of safety with a 2-1 home win over Fiorentina which moved them five points clear of the relegation zone. Darko Lazovic's early penalty and a Tijjani Noslin strike just before the hour mark were enough for Verona to beat Fiorentina and move up to 14th. Udinese, who sit just inside the bottom three, can escape the drop zone if they beat Napoli on Monday. Fabio Cannavaro's Udinese are three points behind Empoli and Frosinone, who held each other to a goalless draw, but have superior goal difference.

## FOCUS

# AFC U23 Cup Qatar 2024 comes to a successful end in Doha

The AFC U23 Asian Cup Qatar 2024 has come to a successful end in Doha. A total of 12,276 spectators made their way to Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium to watch Japan edge Uzbekistan 1-0 in a tightly contested match.

This was the second time that Qatar hosts the tournament, having previously organised it in 2016. It was the first time that the AFC U23 Asian Cup was played on FIFA World Cup stadiums.

"Once again, Qatar has proven its ability to host tournaments to the highest standards," said Jassim al-Jassim, CEO of the AFC U23 Asian Cup Qatar 2024 Local Organising Committee (LOC).

"It was a true pleasure to see Asia's young stars and future Olympians make use of our world-class sporting infrastructure. This edition of the biennial tournament acted as Asia's qualifiers to the

Men's Olympic football tournament in Paris. Champions Japan were joined by runners-up Uzbekistan and third-place finishers Iraq in qualifying to the 2024 Summer Olympics, while fourth-place Indonesia will vie for a final spot at the summer games in a play-off match against Africa's representative Guinea.

"We are truly committed to the ideals of the Olympic movement, and strongly believe in the power of football to unite people and promote peace," said al-Jassim.

"The under-23 Asian Cup embodied those ideals, and created an exciting platform for up-and-coming stars to make a name for themselves here in Qatar."

A total of 32 matches were played by 16 teams in four stadiums over a span of 18 days during the AFC U23 Asian Cup Qatar 2024.

Al Janoub and Khalifa Inter-



Japan players celebrate with the trophy after winning the AFC U23 Asian Cup Stadium in Doha on Friday.

national stadiums, which previously hosted matches during the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, were joined by Abdullah Bin Khalifa and

Jassim Bin Hamad stadiums. Approximately 500 volunteers supported with the delivery of the tournament across 10 functional

areas. An additional 148 young people took part in the LOC's Youth Programme as flag bearers and members of the ball crew.

"This tournament showcased the tremendous human legacy we have created in Qatar from hosting many successful mega-sporting events over the years," said al-Jassim.

"We now possess the talent and volunteer culture to deliver any tournament, in any sport, and that is in line with the national vision set out by the country's leadership."

The AFC U23 Asian Cup Qatar 2024 comes only months after the AFC Asian Cup Qatar 2023 which saw record-breaking attendance.

In 2022, Qatar hosted the first FIFA World Cup in the Arab world and Middle East, a tournament widely recognized as the best edition of the competition in its history.

Most recently, FIFA announced that Qatar will host the next five editions of the FIFA U17 World Cup.