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CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

PSG coach Enrique urges 'calm' in must-win match against Dortmund

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AL ARABI SET UP AMIR CUP QUARTER-FINAL SHOWDOWN WITH AL DUHAIL



Defending champions Al Arabi will face Al Duhail in the Amir Cup quarter-finals after both teams won their respective last 16 matches yesterday. Arabi defeated Al Saliya 2-1 at Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium, while Duhail eased past Al Shamal 3-1 at Al Janoub Stadium. Arabi had to come from a goal behind to defeat Saliya, who took the lead after Abdullah Mohamed struck in the 49th minute. Arabi hit back just three minutes later through Abdou Diallo before Rafinha Alcantara's 65th minute strike turned out to be the winner. Duhail too had to fight back from a one-goal deficit to beat Shamal. Ricardo Gomez put Shamal ahead in the 39th minute, but Philippe Coutinho equalised for Duhail late in the first half. The Red Knights took the lead after Ismail Mohamed scored in the 52nd minute, before Michael Olunga put the game to bed three minutes before full time whistle.

ATHLETICS

Chopra, Tentoglou to lead star cast at Doha Diamond League

Qatar's 400m hurdles record holder Abderrahman Samba has withdrawn due to injury

By Sports Reporter
Doha

The Doha Diamond League – the third leg of the calendar – takes place this Friday, May 10. A host of Olympic and world medallists will again be welcomed to the Qatar Sports Club where organisers aim to provide the perfect stage for top quality performances. In a packed programme, event highlights are expected to include the men's javelin, men's long jump, women's 800m, men's 400m, men's 1500m and women's pole vault.

MEN'S JAVELIN

The Doha javelin competition has built a reputation for its high quality in recent years and conditions permitting, much will be expected of the key protagonists at the Qatar Sports Club. Reigning Olympic, world and Asian Games javelin champion Neeraj Chopra – India's record holder with a best of 89.94m – will make a welcome return to action alongside former world champion Anderson Peters (Grenada) and Olympic and world medallist Jakub Vadlejch (Czech Republic).

Inspirational Chopra set the tone for his gold medal-winning summer with victory in the opening meeting of the 2023 Diamond League in Doha. Peters, who finished third 12 months ago with 85.88m, had delivered a national record and the fifth-longest throw in history in 2022 (93.07m), while 2023 Diamond League champion Vadlejch, who was runner-up to Chopra in 2023 with 88.63m, recorded a personal best in the memorable 2022 meeting with his first ever throw over 90m (90.88m).

Chopra's goal for the summer is to defend his Olympic title, but to break the elusive 90m barrier would also mean a lot. European champion Julian Weber (Germany), fourth in the Olympic Games and World Championships, will also compete.

MEN'S LONG JUMP

Olympic, world and European long jump champion Miltiadis Tentoglou will compete in Doha for the first time. The 26-year-old Greek athlete – who retained his world indoor title with victory in Glasgow on 2 March – boasts a personal best of 8.60m from 2021.

He won Olympic gold on his last attempt at the Tokyo Games in 2021 (8.41m) and impressively repeated that feat at the 2023 World Athletics Championships in Buda-



Reigning Olympic, world and Asian Games javelin champion Neeraj Chopra.

pest with a jump of 8.52m.

In the interim period, he was crowned 2022 world indoor champion in Belgrade and backed that up with a silver medal at the World Athletics Championships in Oregon later that summer. He has seven continental titles to his name dating back to 2017. Jamaica's Tajay Gayle (8.69m) – world champion in Doha 2019 and bronze medallist in Budapest 2023 – will provide tough competition, although Switzerland's Simon Ehammer, 2023 Diamond League champion, is also one to watch.

WOMEN'S 800M

World champion Mary Moraa (Kenya) and World Indoor Championships silver medallist Jemma Reekie (Britain) are the standout names in the 800m. Moraa's become a dominant force, lowering her personal best from 2:03.27 in 2020 to 1:56.03 with victory at the World Championships in Budapest. In 2022, she was crowned Diamond League champion. Reekie, the British indoor mile record holder (4:17.88) – finished runner-up at the 2024 World Indoors in Glasgow and reached the final of the Tokyo Olympics (2021) and in Bu-

dapest, finishing fourth and fifth respectively. The field also includes World Indoor bronze medallist Noelle Yarigo (Benin); Olympic finalist Natoya Goule-Toppin (Jamaica); and 2019 world champion Halimah Nakaayi (Uganda).

MEN'S 400M

Olympic 400m champion and former world champion Steven Gardiner (Bahamas) will return to Qatar. Gardiner clocked a national record of 43.48 with victory at the World Athletics Championships in Doha 2019. It was an impressive upgrade to the silver he'd won in London two years earlier and a performance that made him the sixth-fastest man in the history of the event. Vernon Norwood and Quincy Hall – members of the USA's gold medal winning 4x400m relay quartet at the 2023 World Athletics Championships – will also compete.

MEN'S 1500M

In a men's 1500m field bursting with youth and experience, Olympic silver medallist Timothy Cheruiyot (Kenya) – the world champion in Doha 2019 – will line up against world bronze medallist Narve Gilje Nordas (Norway) and teenage record-



Long jump star Miltiadis Tentoglou will compete in Doha for the first time.

breaker Reynold Cheruiyot (Kenya) at the Seashore Group Doha Meeting.

Timothy was a 1500m silver medallist at the World Championships in London 2017 before upgrading to gold in Doha. He ran a 3000m personal best of 7:36.72 in Doha last year. Nordas excelled in 2023 with lifetime bests across a range of distances from 1500m (3:29.47) to 5000m (13:05.38). His World Championships bronze came in a memorable race in Budapest which saw him finish just three one-hundredths of a second behind countryman Jakob Ingebrigtsen. In March 2024 he finished fifth at the World Indoors in Glasgow.

WOMEN'S POLE VAULT

World and Commonwealth champion Nina Kennedy (Australia) and newly-crowned world indoor champion Molly Caudery (Britain) will go head to head in Doha. Unfortunately, Olympic and world champion Katie Moon – ranked fifth all-time with a best height of 4.95m – has withdrawn after her recovery from an Achilles injury has taken longer than expected.

Kennedy and Caudery will be joined by the USA's 2016 Olympic silver medallist

Sandi Morris (PB 5.00m), a three-time world silver medallist and double world indoor champion; Slovenia's national record holder Tina Sutej and USA's Bridget Williams.

Elsewhere in the programme, stars include 3000m steeplechase world record holder Lamecha Girma (Ethiopia), the Olympic and world silver medallist (3000m SC); Kenya's cross country and road running world champion and World Championships 5000m medallist Beatrice Chebet (5000m); world indoor champion Freweni Hailu (Ethiopia), fourth-place finisher at the Olympic Games and World Championships (1500m); USA's Olympic silver medallist Kenneth Bednarek (200m); and 2022 world high jump champion Eleanor Patterson (Australia), runner-up in Budapest 2023 (high jump). 2022 world champion Kristjan Ceh will compete in the pre-programme non-Diamond League discus.

Of those previously announced, Qatar's 400m hurdles record holder Abderrahman Samba has also withdrawn due to injury, in addition Olympic and world 3000m steeplechase champion Soufiane El Bakkali (Morocco).

CYCLING

Merlier pips Milan to win Giro third stage



Team Soudal-Quick Step's Belgian rider Tim Merlier celebrates as he crosses the finish line of the 3rd stage of the 107th Giro d'Italia cycling race, 166km between Novara and Fossano, in Fossano. (AFP)

AFP
Fossano, Italy

Tim Merlier won the third stage of the Giro d'Italia yesterday, pipping Jonathan Milan to the line in a bunch sprint after race leader Tadej Pogacar made a bold attempt to steal victory.

UAE rider Pogacar tried to take his second stage in as many days in the final two kilometres of the 166km run from Novara to Fossano with a surprising burst.

But Merlier claimed his second stage win in the Giro after one in 2021, the same year he took his sole Tour de France stage.

"It was the hardest victory so

far. It was a really hard final. I got to 300 metres and I said 'you need to go,' said Soudal-Quick-Step's Merlier.

"I saw Milan was starting his sprint on the left side and I knew I was going to be first or second and I'm happy I won this one," Merlier added.

Pogacar is red-hot favourite to win the Giro at his first attempt and was once again in the thick of the action after storming to victory in Sunday's second stage and only just missing out on Saturday's opener.

The two-time Tour de France champion made his move after following an attack by EF Education-EasyPost's Mikkel Honore.

For a moment it looked like

Pogacar and his pink jersey rival Geraint Thomas would battle it out for the win.

But the pair were caught by the peloton near the line before Merlier claimed the tightest of victories over Milan and Intermarche-Wanty rider Biniam Girmay.

"We tried to keep on going but I never believed we could make it to the finish," said Pogacar.

"In the end, I tried but 400 metres to the finish is still a long way to go, way too long."

Britain's Thomas, a former Tour de France winner, is 46 seconds off the pace in the general classification. The Ineos rider is the only one looking capable of challenging Pogacar for overall victory.

"We just wanted to stay out of

trouble," said an exhausted Thomas.

"Then I saw Honore and Pogacar and then I was like 'might as well just go' but jeppers man that was solid, he was kicking my head in. I was just trying to hold his wheel."

"I looked back and I was surprised that there was such a big gap but I knew they were going to come. It was a bit different."

"Good start, I'm feeling all right, hopefully I can continue to build."

Today the peloton take on a 190km slog from Acqui Terme to Andora on the Italian Riviera. The sprinters should have another chance to shine in a stage which takes on the Capo Mele climb made famous by the Monument race Milan-San Remo.

CRICKET

Suryakumar to the rescue as MI post win over SRH

'SKY was unbelievable. Lucky to have him in my team'

AFP
Mumbai

Suryakumar Yadav hit an unbeaten 102 to lead Mumbai Indians to a crushing seven-wicket win over Sunrisers Hyderabad yesterday as teams jostle for a play-off berth in the IPL.

Chasing 174 for victory, Mumbai slipped to 31-3 before Suryakumar put on an unbeaten stand of 143 with Tilak Varma to achieve the target with 16 balls to spare at their home Wankhede Stadium.

Suryakumar hit the winning six, which also raised his second IPL ton in 51 balls and comes as a welcome sign for India ahead of the T20 World Cup in June in the West Indies and the United States.

"SKY was unbelievable," skipper Hardik Pandya said of his player of the match.

"More than him getting runs, him putting so much pressure on bowlers that even other batters get loose balls. He breaks you. Lucky to have him in my team."

However the win for five-time winners Mumbai, placed ninth in the 10-team table, could be late in a tournament fast moving towards its business end.

Hyderabad, led by Pat Cummins, stay fourth in the table but their fifth loss and a big one could hurt their play-off chances.

Hyderabad need to win two of their remaining three matches to make the play-offs as they remain locked at 12 points with third-placed Chennai Super Kings and Lucknow Super Giants at fifth.

The top four teams will make



Mumbai Indians' Suryakumar Yadav plays a shot during the Indian Premier League match against Sunrisers Hyderabad at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai yesterday. (AFP)

the play-offs with the final on May 26 in Chennai.

Hyderabad, who have posted record IPL totals of 277 and 287 this season, next host Lucknow and Cummins said: "We like playing at home, done well there so far. Looking forward to what's ahead of us. Hopefully a few more fireworks."

Former champions Hyderabad posted 173-8 courtesy of Travis Head's 48 and an unbeaten 17-ball 35 by lower-order batter Cummins after being invited to bat first.

The left-handed Head gave the team a brisk start with his 30-ball

knock before his departure in the 11th over and Hyderabad lost their way with regular wickets.

Pandya and spinner Piyush Chawla took three wickets each to rattle the opposition middle and lower-order as Hyderabad slipped to 136-8 in 17 overs.

But number nine Cummins had other ideas as the Australian Test and ODI captain hit back in the final three overs and put on an unbeaten stand of 37 off 19 balls with Sanvir Singh.

The batting effort inspired the team and fast bowlers came roaring to reduce Mumbai to 31-3 including the key wicket of Rohit

Sharma, out caught behind for four off Cummins. Suryakumar soon took charge with his attacking batting as he raised his 50 in 30 balls and hammered the opposition bowling with 12 fours and six sixes.

The left-handed Varma made 37 and enjoyed Suryakumar's blitz from the other end.

BRIEF SCORES

Mumbai Indians 174 for 3 (Suryakumar 102*, Tilak 37, Bhuvneshwar 1-22) **beat Sunrisers Hyderabad 173 for 8** (Head 48, Cummins 35*, Pandya 3-31, Chawla 3-33) **by 7 wickets.**

Hayat Plaza Chess Tournament from May 17-18



Doha: The Qatar Chess Association (QCA) yesterday announced that the Hayat Plaza Chess Tournament will be held from May 17-18 at the Hayat Plaza Shopping Mall with the participation of around 100 players. The tournament will feature a rapid chess tournament following the Swiss system consisting of nine rounds. In addition, over 100 players will compete in the under-16 category, playing seven rounds under the rapid chess system.

Yousef al-Mutawa, Secretary-General of QCA, expressed his happiness head of the tournament, saying more players are taking up the sport, in both rapid and blitz chess. He pointed out collaboration with the Hayat Plaza Mall will continue to expand the chess culture within the community. Al-Mutawa appreciated the fruitful co-operation with the

management of Hayat Plaza, indicating the association's efforts to implement its strategy through hosting numerous tournaments. Further, QCA aims to promote chess across Doha and beyond, emphasizing that organising the tournament within a commercial complex enhances chess culture through the participation and attendance of the public. He stressed that these tournaments agree with the QCA's strategy, aiming to build a generation that enriches national teams and leads the game in related international event. In the meantime, Fayroz Muhi al-Din, CEO of Hayat Plaza, expressed his great pleasure in continuing the cooperation with QCA, stressing the significant interest of participants and the audience during the previous edition of the tournament two years ago.

FOCUS

England, Wales county players voice concern over intense schedule

Reuters
London

An overwhelming majority of professional cricketers in England and Wales have expressed concern about the demanding county cricket schedule, research published yesterday by the Professional Cricketers Association (PCA) has shown.

This year's County Championship will run from April to September, with breaks to accommodate the T20 Blast competition and One-Day Cup.

Counties play at least 14 Championship matches, as well as a minimum of 14 T20 Blast fixtures and eight games in the One-Day Cup.

The PCA, which said the men's domestic schedule was unsustainable in November, added that its research was conducted during pre-season meetings with all 18 first-class counties.

In a statement, the PCA said the research "reiterated the issues current players face, with 81% admitting the current schedule causes them concern from a physical perspective while two-thirds believe the current structure is not conducive to high-performance."

"76% confirmed the fixture list causes them safety concerns regarding travelling to and from fixtures during the season," the PCA said the survey found.

"While over eight in 10 worry about their physical health due to the unrelenting schedule, 62% of the same players noted concern from a mental well-being perspective, with many citing the inability to get away from the game during

periods of the season." The PCA added that players wanted a minimum of three days of rest between four-day games and at least one rest day between T20s.

Former England men's captain Joe Root, who plays for Yorkshire, said the schedule needed to change to see "long-lasting benefits" for cricket in England.

"I am fortunate to play a significant part of the season for Yorkshire this year and looking at the fixture list from a physical, well-being and high-performance angle does cause me concern," Root added.

"Having space to recover, prepare and improve your game during the season is crucial, and the creation of minimum standards to protect travel windows and player welfare is non-negotiable."

ICC say 'robust security plan' for World Cup amid threat reports

A robust security plan has been put in place for the T20 World Cup in June, the organisers of the competition said yesterday after reports of a possible threat to the global showpiece surfaced in the Caribbean media.

Trinidad & Tobago Prime Minister Keith Rowley told the *'Sunday Express'* about a possible security threat to the 20-team event to be co-hosted by West Indies and the United States.

"Given the fact that bad actors can choose to misbehave in any way possible it makes it virtually impossible to completely seal off all opportunities," he said.

Cricket West Indies and the game's global governing body, International Cricket Council, sought to allay any such fears in a joint statement.

SPOTLIGHT

Wilson closes in on maiden world snooker title

AFP
London

Kyrren Wilson was left in sight of winning his first World Snooker Championship title after establishing a 15-10 lead over qualifier Jak Jones.

England's 12th-ranked Wilson will now look to claim the three further frames he needs to reach the winning mark of 18 when the best of 35 match at Sheffield's Crucible Theatre is played to a finish later on Monday.

Jones, ranked 44 in the world, had been 7-1 down after the first session and was 11-6 down when play resumed yesterday.

He is only the ninth qualifier in 47 years at the Crucible to reach the final, with Jones seeking to follow his fellow Welshman, Terry Griffiths, in 1979 and Shaun Murphy in 2005 by going all the way to win the title.

Jones twice reduced his overnight deficit to three frames and that might still have been the gap had he not blown a chance to win the final frame of yesterday's



England's Kyren Wilson plays a shot on day two of his World Championship Snooker final against Wales' Jak Jones at The Crucible in Sheffield, northern England, yesterday. (AFP)

opening session after Wilson had missed a simple red when 52 points ahead.

But Jones, having played a fine shot to flick a difficult red off the cushion to put all the balls in play for a clearance, he missed a yellow to the middle.

Having come through two qualifying rounds, Jones - in his

first ranking final - said he felt "knackered" at the end of Sunday's opening day.

Nevertheless, he made a fine start yesterday with breaks of 64 and 59 that cut Wilson's lead to 11-8.

But Wilson, having been below his best, managed breaks of 50 and 83 to restore his five-frame

lead to 13-8 at the mid-session interval. Jones responded with a break of 90, his highest of the final so far, before closing the gap still further with a contribution of 67. Yet it was Jones's missed long red in the 25th frame that paved the way for a break of 87 from Wilson as he re-established a four-frame lead.

TENNIS

Sinner still not certain for French Open

Agencies
Madrid

Jannik Sinner has cast doubt on his French Open participation, with the world number two saying he will only compete at Roland Garros later this month if he fully recovers from a hip issue that forced him out of Madrid and Rome.

Sinner sustained the injury at Madrid and pulled out of his quarter-final against Canada's Felix Auger-Aliassime last week, before the Italian decided to skip the Rome tournament which runs from May 8-19.

The 22-year-old, who claimed his maiden Grand Slam title at the Australian Open in January, said the injury was more serious than initially suspected.

"At Roland Garros, I'll only play if I'm 100%, if there's any doubt we have to see," Sinner told reporters. "Some injuries can be prevented, some can't. So far we've done a great job, last year I played a whole season without injuries and also in this season so far."

Sinner said he could prioritise his health over the year's second Grand Slam, which begins on May

26. "Now I'll have a period without playing... we need to see how to work from next week onwards," Sinner added.

"Preparation for Roland Garros will clearly not be optimal. We'll give our best to get there in the best possible conditions to compete, but playing a Grand Slam without matches in Rome isn't easy.

"With the MRI we saw that something isn't 100% OK. However, we have everything under control. If it doesn't get 100% cured, I'll stop a little longer. Taking care of the body is more important than everything else."

Rublev to return to hospital after taking Madrid title

Andrey Rublev battled through a suspected virus and an anaesthetised foot to beat Felix Auger-Aliassime 4-6 7-5 7-5 to claim the Madrid Open title on Sunday, but revealed that he will now have to return to hospital to make a full recovery.

The 26-year-old Russian, who has struggled with health issues throughout the tournament, recovered from the illness and an opening set wobble to clinch his second Masters 1000 title in just



under three hours. "I'm still sick and tomorrow I think I'll go back to the hospital for a full check-up

to know exactly what's going on," Rublev told a news conference. "I've been sick for eight or nine

days now, it's not normal, I'm not really getting better, which is strange because usually I get sick

for two or three days at the most and maybe a fever, but nothing special. This is the first time in my life that I feel this bad."

The seventh seed added that he needed an anaesthetic to play the final.

"They put an anaesthetic in the finger on my foot because somehow it got inflamed and started to get bigger and the pressure started to be on the bone and I can't even put my shoe.

"The feeling was similar to when you broke it, so they put an anaesthetic so I me to don't feel it and at least I could play without thinking."

Rublev, who came into the Madrid tournament in poor form having lost his previous four matches on the tour, eliminated second seed and home favourite Carlos Alcaraz and also beat American Taylor Fritz to reach the final.

"I think it is normal to have ups and downs, but my focus now is to keep working and trying to improve. I think I showed a great level of tennis from the first match and in the end I was able to win the title," he said.

"Now I think the most important thing is to try and recover and be ready for Rome," he added.

ATHLETICS

Lyles and Thomas sparkle as the US dominate relays

'BUSINESS IS EASY! IT SMELLS LIKE PARIS. WE WERE FASTER'

AFP
Nassau, Bahamas

Noah Lyles anchored the US 4x100m men to World Athletics Relays glory and Gabby Thomas bagged a quickfire double as the American team won four of the five golds on offer in Nassau on Sunday.

Lyles took the baton from Kyree King and accelerated through the line in 37.40 seconds after slick early handovers by Courtney Lindsey and Kenneth Bednarek.

"Business is easy!" beamed Lyles, who won treble gold at last year's world championships in Budapest. "It smells like Paris! We were faster today," Lyles said.

Canada took silver in 37.89sec thanks to a late charge by Olympic 200m champion Andre de Grasse.

Reigning Olympic 100m gold medalist Marcell Jacobs ran the second leg for the Italians, the defending world relay and Olympic champions, but was powerless after a devastating first leg by Lindsey gave the Americans a huge gap.

Italy were initially credited with bronze, but were later disqualified, third place instead going to France.

Olympic 200m bronze medalist Thomas then claimed two golds in 20 heady minutes, first as part of the women's 4x100m relay-winning team including Tamari Davis, Celera Barnes and Melissa Jefferson.

They scoured home in a championship record of 41.85sec, with France taking silver in 42.75 and Britain claiming bronze in 42.80.

Thomas was almost immediately back on track, helping a US



Gold medalists Noah Lyles, Courtney Lindsey, Kenneth Bednarek and Kyree King of the US celebrate winning the 4x100 metres relay final during the World Athletics Relays at Thomas A Robinson National Stadium in Nassau, Bahamas. (Reuters)

quartet also comprising Quanera Hayes, Bailey Lear and Alexis Holmes to victory in the women's 4x400m relay in 3:21.70. Poland and Canada rounded out the podium. "It's been a great preparation," said Thomas. "At the end of the day I knew the girls would have it regardless because they have a great 4x400m relay squad.

"It's a testament to how we came to World Relays, we came prepared with the mentality to get the job done and we were committed to that."

Not to be outdone, the US team of Matthew Boling, Lynna Irby-Jackson, Willington Wright and Kendall Ellis also set a championship record when winning the mixed 4x400m relay in 3:10.73.

Netherlands' Femke Bol, the

recently crowned world indoor 400m champion and reigning world 400m hurdles gold medalist, ran a superb last lap of 49.63sec, but the deficit proved just too much and the Dutch had to settle for silver in 3:11.45. Ireland took bronze.

Botswana claim gold

The sole event not to be won by the Americans was the men's 4x400m relay, star Letsile Tebogo running a sensational 43.72sec split to help Botswana to victory in 2:59.11.

South Africa finished second in 3:00.75 with Belgium taking bronze in 3:01.16.

The evening got off to an electrifying start as the Bahamas secured their place in the Olympics

by winning their repechage heat in the mixed 4x400m relay in 3:12.81 ahead of Jamaica.

Olympic 400m champions and local heroes Shaunae Miller-Uibo and Steven Gardiner basked in the glory of a raucous carnival atmosphere at the Thomas A Robinson National Stadium.

"It was a bit rocky but we got it together and qualified for Paris and got a national record," said Gardiner.

Jamaica's women's 4x100m relay team, without world and Olympic gold medalists Shelly-Ann Fraser Pryce, Shericka Jackson and Elaine Thompson-Herah, also secured their place in Paris, having struggled in their opening heat and needing a second bite of the cherry through repechage.

Nadal up against qualifier in Rome

Rome: Rafael Nadal was drawn yesterday with a qualifier in the first round of the Italian Open as the 22-time Grand Slam winner continues his comeback from injury on clay in Rome. Should Nadal get through to the second round in the Italian capital, where he has won the title a record 10 times, he could face world number nine Hubert Hurkacz.

Also on Nadal's side of the draw are last year's winner, world number four Daniil Medvedev, and the beaten finalist Holger Rune.

The 37-year-old last won in Rome in 2021 and dropped out last year with injury ahead of the tournament.

Since making his comeback in April after three months on the sidelines, Nadal, who sits at 305 in the men's ATP tour rankings after hardly playing in 2023, has been knocked out in the second round in Barcelona and reached the last 16 in Madrid.

This season is expected to be Nadal's last, even though he has not decided exactly when he will be hanging up his racquet. He remains one of the game's greats.

MOTORSPORT

Al-Marri wins final round of the Qatar Freestyle Drifting Championship



QRC Director Sheikh Jabor bin Khalid al-Thani poses with the winners of the final round of Qatar Freestyle Drifting Championship.

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Saud al-Marri claimed victory in the final round of the Qatar Freestyle Drifting Championship which concluded at the Qatar Racing Club (QRC).

The fifth and last round of the championship, held under the patronage of QRC Chairman HE Sheikh Khalid bin Hamad al-Thani, saw 55 competitors battling to end the season on a winning note.

While al-Marri won the last round - his second consecutive win, Rashid al-Banna secured runners-up place with Saud al-Kuwari clinching the third spot on the podium.

The opening day of the last

round at the weekend was dedicated to registration and technical inspection of the participating cars.

The competitions for the final round kicked off on Friday and witnessed strong excitement that held the audiences' breath until the last moments.

Mohamed al-Farhan secured fourth place in the round while Abdulrahman al-Kubaisi completed the top five.

QRC Director Sheikh Jabor bin Khalid al-Thani crowned the podium winners drawing the curtain on the club's last tournaments.

However, the events will continue as the club announced the opening of the motocross track for the racers next Friday in the morning session, followed by the opening of the showground on the same day in the evening session.

'NOWINS' NO MORE AS NORRIS DELIVERS MUCH-NEEDED F1 PLOT TWIST



McLaren's British driver Lando Norris is congratulated by former US President and 2024 presidential candidate Donald Trump after winning the 2024 Miami Grand Prix at Miami International Autodrome. (AFP)

Miami Gardens, United States: Formula One has built much of its recent success in the United States on the Netflix reality documentary series *Drive to Survive* but with Max Verstappen utterly dominating there was an acute need for a plot twist. That arrived in Miami on Sunday, when Lando Norris, the 24-year-old McLaren driver, pulled off a surprise win over the Dutchman.

Verstappen has won four of the six races so far this season and it would be unwise for anyone to see Norris's win as the sign of an imminent change in fortunes for the three-times world champion, but to maintain interest, F1 needed some rotation on the top of the podium.

It was certainly a feel-good story, Norris came into Miami having had a record 15 podium finishes without a win - with eight of those second-place finishes. Near-misses, such as at Sochi in 2021 when he led

late but paid the price for failing to switch tyres in time during heavy rain, led to some taunting of Norris including the online nickname 'Lando NoWins' While he was all smiles after his victory, he was not going to miss the chance for a defiant reply to his critics.

"I am happy to put that to bed and prove a lot of these people wrong," he told his post-race press conference. "I love it to go on Instagram and like all the comments from people abusing me, I freaking love it, makes me smile more than anything, especially 'Lando NoWins', that's become the thing." he added. "For me to prove those people wrong and prove (to) the people who didn't think I could go out and do it, it's going to be an even bigger smile on my face today, so I thank all of them," he said.

McLaren had been without a Grand Prix win since Monza in 2021 and team principal Andrea Stella said

they had finally given Norris the chance to win. "The victory for Lando, he deserved it so much and we always said as soon as we give him the right material he's going to make it and he made it. "I know what kind of work is behind it, it's so deserved for the McLaren team, I hope everyone enjoys this moment," he said.

Norris insisted that he had always had faith in his ability to win a Grand Prix and asked if it was a weight of his shoulders to finally clinch one, couldn't deny the reality.

"As much as I want to say no, it's a yes! To get that first victory is always incredible. I've of course had my moments where I've been close, and I've never been able to convert it into the win," he said. "But I wasn't worried. As much as a lot of people doubted that I was going to be able to put it together and win a race, I wasn't worried."

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Coach Enrique urges 'calm' in must-win tie for PSG

French giants need to overturn a 1-0 deficit from last week's first leg defeat to Dortmund in Germany

AFP
Paris

Paris Saint-Germain coach Luis Enrique sought to take the pressure off his side going into today's Champions League semi-final second leg against Borussia Dortmund, telling them not to worry about having to win by two goals to reach the final.

PSG must overturn a 1-0 deficit from last week's first leg after a Niclas Füllkrug goal gave Dortmund a narrow victory in Germany. "The objective is not to play to win by two goals, it is just to win. You can't afford to think about having to win by two goals," Enrique said, weighing up the possibility of the tie being decided in extra time and even penalties. "We need to score one first of all, and win the match."

PSG are looking to repeat their heroics in the quarter-finals, when they lost 3-2 at home to Barcelona in the first leg but qualified with a 4-1 win in the return - despite conceding the opening goal in Spain. "It doesn't matter if we concede - it happened against Barcelona - we'll just need to stay calm," the Spaniard added.

He also said the key to getting top scorer Kylian Mbappe more involved in the game was not necessarily to make him drop deeper to get on the ball. Mbappe has scored 43 goals for PSG this season, including two in the second leg against Real Sociedad in the last 16, and two more away in Barcelona, but struggled to make a major impact in Dortmund last week.

"Our objective is that our best players participate. The more they take part in the game the better it is," he said. "But I want my strikers to be touching the ball in the areas where they can make a difference. I want him to get on the ball where he can be dangerous."

PSG are aiming to reach their second final, after they lost 1-0 to Bayern Munich in Lisbon in 2020. They have never won the trophy, but Luis Enrique said he was prepared for the possibility of a disappointing defeat. "Life will continue and when the sun shines in Paris it is always marvelous. If we lose we will congratulate them



Paris Saint-Germain's forward Kylian Mbappe (centre) reacts next to head coach Luis Enrique (left) and defender Achraf Hakimi during a training session yesterday, on the eve of the Champions League semi-final second match against Borussia Dortmund. (AFP)

and we will wake up again the next day. We might be disgusted, but we will be proud and will say to ourselves that we will get up again and try to get to the final next year."

Dortmund warmed up for the second leg by beating Augsburg 5-1 in the Bundesliga with a starting line-up that showed 10 changes from that which faced PSG a few days earlier. PSG, in contrast, enjoyed a weekend off, with the French league postponing their game away at Nice until May 15 in order to aid their preparations.

DORTMUND'S TERZIC CALLS ON SANCHO TO STAR ONCE MORE
Meanwhile, Dortmund coach Edin Terzic admitted he did not know if Jadon Sancho

might remain with the club beyond the end of this season but called on the England winger to once again play a starring role against PSG, Sancho was outstanding as Dortmund beat PSG 1-0 at home last week.

"We have talked about the short-term future. This is tomorrow, with a very important game, maybe also the biggest game in his career so far," Terzic told reporters at the Parc des Princes on the eve of the match when asked if discussions had been had with Sancho.

The 24-year-old returned to Dortmund in January on loan from Manchester United until the end of the season. The Bundesliga side's sporting director, Sebastian Kehl, said on Sunday that they "will try

everything" to keep him at the club where he previously starred for four years before being sold to United in 2021.

"We are really happy with him. From all sides we are happy to have him in our team. I think you can feel that he is happy to be with us," Terzic added. "We don't know how long the story will continue. This is part of the deal, that he is not our player from July 1, but until then we are going to make this time that we have as special as possible. We are really feeling that he is in a good way. I think that big games are decided by big players and tomorrow he will have the opportunity to decide it."

Dortmund are currently fifth in the Bundesliga, but they have upset the odds

LIVE WATCH PARTY FOR PSG FANS IN DOHA

PSG Doha have organised an "Epic Watch Party" for Paris Saint-Germain supporters around Qatar to rally together for the team's second leg match of UEFA Champions League semi-final against Borussia Dortmund today at Beach House in Doha at 10pm with free entry for all.

"From 9pm onwards, fans will have the opportunity to get into the "Folie" and ambiance of a live match while soaking up beach vibes and indulging in delicious bites and drinks," said a release. "It's time for all fans of les "Les Rouges et Bleu" to come together and paint the Beach House blue and red!," it added.

The les Parisiens are looking to pull back from a 1-0 loss in the first leg of the semi-finals.



in the Champions League, notably topping their group ahead of PSG on the way to a first semi-final in the competition since they reached the final in 2013. Eleven years ago they lost the final to Bayern Munich at Wembley, and there is the possibility that the two German giants could meet again, in the same stadium, this time.

"What we did last week might not be enough this week so we still need to improve," warned Terzic. "What we didn't like last week was that we had four players defending against Mbappe. We also know they will do better, so we need to find the balance that we didn't really have last week. If we have come this far we want to do better still and go all the way to win the title."

Atalanta climb into Serie A top five ahead of Marseille decider

Milan: Atalanta took a big step towards Champions League football yesterday after coming from behind to win 2-1 at relegated Salernitana and move up to fifth in Serie A.

Gian Piero Gasperini's side moved above Roma on goal difference with a game in hand thanks to goals in six second-half minutes from in-form striker Gianluca Scamacca and Teun Koopmeiners. Atalanta host Roma on Sunday in a match that could well decide which of that pair claim a spot in Europe's top club competition next season, with five available to Serie A.

"A match like that (Roma) is obviously crucial, but before that we have another which we think is rather important," joked Gasperini said. Gasperini was referring to Atalanta's Europa League semi-final decider with Marseille on Thursday night, a tie which is level at 1-1 following last week's first leg in southern France.

"I've not often seen a stadium like theirs which is so big but also transmits so much passion, so it doesn't surprise me that they're not the same team away from home, but I expect a tough game nonetheless," added Gasperini.

It wasn't all plain sailing for Atalanta yesterday as Gasperini made three changes at half-time with his team trailing to Loum Tchaoua's fine curling opener for the hosts in the 18th minute. Koopmeiners was one of those substitutes and he gave Atalanta the points in the 63rd minute with a brilliant strike after Scamacca prodded home his 10th goal in 12 matches. Later Udinese host mid-table Napoli hoping for a win which would lift them out of the relegation zone.

PREMIER LEAGUE

Manager Moyes to leave West Ham

AFP
London

West Ham manager **David Moyes** will leave "by mutual consent" when his contract expires at the end of the season, the Premier League club said yesterday. The announcement of Moyes's impending exit came just a day after the Hammers suffered an embarrassing 5-0 loss to London rivals Chelsea.

"West Ham United can confirm David Moyes will leave the club by mutual consent at the end of the 2023/24 season, when his contract expires," said a club statement. The announcement came amid media speculation that former Real Madrid, Wolves and Spain manager Julen Lopetegui had agreed a deal to replace Moyes, in his second spell as West Ham manager, after the end of the current campaign.

The Chelsea defeat was the second successive away game where West Ham conceded five goals following their loss at Crystal Palace, another London club. And it added to the pres-



sure on Moyes that had been mounting all season, with West Ham fans criticising him throughout the campaign for perceived negative tactics.

West Ham are currently ninth in the table, a huge 18 points adrift of the top four. Moyes, however, guided West Ham to the Europa Conference League title last season - the club's first major honour since they won the 1980 FA Cup. But they were knocked out of the Europa League last month following a quarter-final loss to Bayer Leverkusen.

"I have enjoyed four-and-a-half brilliant years at West Ham, and the club is in a stronger position than when I returned back in 2019," Moyes told the club's website. "When I joined West Ham for a second time, the club was one place above the relegation zone, and it has been a terrific journey to have achieved three consecutive seasons in Europe."

The 61-year-old Scot, a former manager of both Everton and Manchester United, added: "After leading the club (West Ham) to safety, we guided the team to finishes of sixth and seventh in the Premier League, and I was delighted when we won the Europa Conference League title last June - the club's first major trophy in 43 years."

Lopetegui could now be set to succeed Moyes at the London Stadium. The Spaniard guided Wolves to Premier League safety last season, but left the Midlands club after nine months on the eve of the new campaign in August. The former Porto and Sevilla manager helped lift Wolves from the bottom of the table to a 13th-placed finish during his time in charge at Molineux.

Van Dijk plans to stay on to aid Liverpool's 'big transition'

Liverpool: Liverpool captain Virgil van Dijk expects to be part of the "big transition" that will take place when manager Jurgen Klopp leaves Anfield at the end of the season.

Netherlands defender Van Dijk has a year left on his contract and there could well be plenty of upheaval following Klopp's nine years at the helm of the English giants.

Liverpool have reportedly reached an agreement with Feyenoord head coach Arne Slot to replace Klopp and van Dijk is happy to be involved in a new era under his compatriot.

"The focus is now on the last two games and then the club will focus on who the new manager is and there will be a big transition and I am part of that," said Van Dijk after Sunday's dominating 4-2 win at home to Tottenham.

"There is nothing for me to discuss because there is no news, I think the club is very much busy with who is going to be the new manager and that is the main focus. Like I said I am very happy here, I love the club and you can see that as well. It's a big part of my life already, and that is all I can say."

Klopp has been denied a fairytale farewell, with Liverpool's bid for a second Premier League title under his leadership fading away in a season where the Merseysiders won the League Cup.

Liverpool are currently third in the table, five points behind leaders Arsenal. "He is quite a manager, very impressive in my opinion, he is the whole package," said Van Dijk.

"He is a fantastic manager, a great human being and we have a great relationship. I am really proud I played for him, fought for the badge and him and count the success we had over the years as well. It will be emotional on the last day but it is a part of life sometimes. Many things are happening behind the scenes but we focus on match days and that is our duty, our job and we want to perform for the last six points."

HENRIQUES AND SHALAL SHINE IN 'WINGS FOR LIFE' WORLD RUN



The 11th edition of the 'Wings for Life' World Run (Qatar leg) held at the Khalifa International Stadium on Sunday turned out to be a roaring success with 480 participants showcasing their skills at the iconic venue. Portuguese Antonio Henriques emerged winner in the men's category with a 42.1km run, while Iman Nayit Shalal topped the women's category after clearing 13.54km. Japan's Tomoya Watanabe emerged the global winner in the men's category as he became the first runner in the event's history to break 70km in Fukuoka, Japan. Poland's Dominika Stelmach (55.02km) won the women's global event held in Pozna, Poland. The 'Wings for Life' World Run is a global initiative to find a cure for spinal cord injury - with 100% of entry fees going directly to the Wings for Life Spinal Cord Research Foundation.

