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GULF TIMES SPORT



TENNIS

Defending champion Medvedev out as Swiatek cruises in Rome Open

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SHEIKH JOAAN ATTENDS SCHOOLS OLYMPIC PROGRAM CLOSING DAY



The Qatar Olympic Committee (QOC) President HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani attended the closing ceremony of the 17th edition of Schools Olympic Program (SOP) at the Aspire Dome yesterday. The SOP closing ceremony was also attended by Mohamed bin Yusuf al-Mana, the First Vice-President of the QOC, Dr Ibrahim bin Saleh al-Naimi, the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, Sheikh Khalifa bin Khalid al-Thani, Chairman of SOP Organising Committee and Mohamed Khalifa al-Suwaidi, CEO of Aspire Zone Foundation. This SOP's 17th edition saw participation of more than 4,000 students competing in nine team and individual sport disciplines - volleyball, basketball, handball, shooting, hockey, table tennis, gymnastics, taekwondo and wrestling.

AMIR CUP

Gharafa, Qatar SC set up semis clash after thrilling victories

Brahimi's brace helps Gharafa beat Umm Salal, Qatar SC edge Rayyan on penalties

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Al Gharafa secured their place in the semi-finals of the Amir Cup after an exhilarating 4-2 victory over Umm Salal at the Abdullah Bin Khalifa Stadium.

Yacine Brahimi starred with a brace for Gharafa, while Farid Boulaya and Lyanco found the net once each. Lucas Joao and Abdullah al-Yafei were on the score sheet for Umm Salal, who had to play with 10 men for more than 20 minutes after Ali Afif was shown a red card.

In the semi-finals, Gharafa will face Qatar SC, who secured their passage after a penalty shootout win over Al Rayyan at the Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium. The match ended 3-3 at regulation time, and it finished 4-4 in the extra time after both teams scored a goal each. In the shootout, Rayyan's Roger Guedes missed the first penalty and it proved decisive in the end as none of the Qatar SC players were off target.

Earlier, Rayyan had fought back from a two-goal deficit. Qatar SC were sitting pretty at half time after Ibrahim Majid's 15th-minute strike and Yohan Boli's 38th-minute goal had given them a two-goal lead.

But Rayyan were right back in the game after the restart through Guedes, while Rodrigo Moreno equalised in the 66th minute.

Bruno Tabata then seemed to have scored the winner for Qatar SC, when he converted a penalty in the fifth minute of stoppage time but five minutes later Sofiane Boufal equalised again for Rayyan.

In the extra time, Rayyan went ahead after Qatar SC's defender Javi Martinez inadvertently scored an own goal, but the game went to penalties after Tabata scored in the 117th minute.

Earlier, Gharafa had wasted no time in opening the scoring, as Boulaya found the back of the net in the third minute with a powerful strike from the edge of the penalty area that rebounded off the left post and into the goal.

Umm Salal thought they had a chance to equalise just four minutes later when referee Nayef al-Qadiri awarded them a penalty after goalkeeper Khalifa Ababacar's challenge on striker Lucas Eduardo. However, after consulting the Video Assistant Referee (VAR), the decision was overturned, much to Umm Salal's frustration.



Qatar SC players celebrate after their penalty shootout win over Al Rayyan in the quarter-finals of the Amir Cup at the Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium yesterday. PICTURES: Noushad Thekkayil



Al Gharafa's Yacine Brahimi (left) celebrates after scoring against Umm Salal at the Abdullah Bin Khalifa Stadium.

Despite Umm Salal's attempts to regain control of the game, they struggled to penetrate Gharafa's solid defence. Meanwhile, Gharafa continued to press forward, with captain Brahimi coming close to doubling their lead with a powerful shot that struck the crossbar.

Just before halftime, Gharafa extended their lead when Brahimi's corner was met by Lyanco, who rose above the Umm Salal defence to head the ball into the back of the net. Initially, the referee disallowed the goal, citing a foul by Lyanco on Umm Salal defender Marwan Loudani. However, after

a VAR review, the decision was overturned, and the goal stood.

In the 52nd minute, VAR once again played a crucial role in the match, this time overturning the referee's decision to award Umm Salal a penalty. Gharafa capitalised on their momentum and added a third goal in the 68th minute, with Brahimi finding the back of the net after a well-executed pass from Ahmed Alaa.

Despite being three goals down, Umm Salal refused to give up and managed to pull one back in the 74th minute through Lucas Eduardo, who capitalised on a mistake by goalkeeper Ababacar. VAR intervened once again in the 80th minute, awarding Umm Salal a goal scored by Joel Kenji.

Umm Salal's hopes were further dampened when they were reduced to ten men following the expulsion of substitute Ali Afif. However, they continued to fight until the final whistle and managed to score a second goal in stoppage time through Abdullah Khaled. But it was too little, too late for Umm Salal, as Brahimi sealed Gharafa's victory in the 14th minute of stoppage time with a clinical finish inside the penalty area.

PSG already preparing for Coupe de France final, says Enrique

Paris: Paris St Germain have already secured the Ligue 1 title, and will take advantage by using their last two league games as preparation for the Coupe de France final, manager Luis Enrique said yesterday.

PSG were beaten at home by Nice early in the season, and are away to the same opposition today for their penultimate league game, but the manager is more concerned with the cup final against Olympique Lyonnais than with revenge.

"No, not at all to be honest, it is not about revenge, they played very well," Luis Enrique told said. "I congratulated them at the time, there is no desire for revenge. They are fully motivated because they are trying to play in Europe next season. For us, the situation is linked to the Coupe de France final. Everyone here should be motivated. Every game at this club matters, there are no friendly games."

PSG lost their second league game of the season on Sunday at home to Toulouse, but are still unbeaten away from home in Ligue 1 this season. Again, Luis Enrique is unconcerned with this statistic. "I am not bothered about that," he said. "What is important is that the players who play do so and represent the French capital and the fans in the best way."

PSG will face Lyon in the Coupe de France final on May 25.

MBAPPE WINS AWARD FOR FRANCE'S PLAYER OF THE YEAR

Meanwhile, Kylian Mbappe was named France's player of the year on Monday at an awards ceremony in Paris, as he comes to the end of his seven-season stay with PSG. Mbappe, 25, picked up the prize for the best player in Ligue 1 at the UNFP (French players' union) Trophies gala for the fifth time in a row after a season in which he has scored 44 goals in all competitions for PSG.

"It is a page that is turning, a chapter of my life that is going to close," Mbappe said. "Ligue 1 will always have an important place in my life. It is the only league I have known in my career up to now. I have always tried to be an honourable representative of this league," he added. "I will miss it for sure. It is a part of my life that is coming to an end. What is coming next is very exciting but that is something else."

PSG's teenage midfielder Warren Zaire-Emery was named young player of the season and Gianluigi Donnarumma the best goalkeeper.

GIRO D'ITALIA

Paret-Peintre wins stage, Pogacar holds lead

AFP
Bocca della Selva, Italy

Valentin Paret-Peintre won the 10th stage of the Giro d'Italia yesterday, claiming the honours on the Bocca della Selva summit finish while Tadej Pogacar maintained his overall lead.

Decathlon-AG2R La Mondiale rider Paret-Peintre earned on the Italian Grand Tour his first ever professional win, finishing the 142 kilometre stage from Pompei ahead of fellow Frenchman Romain Bardet and Visma rider Jan Tratnik.

The 23-year-old follows in the footsteps of his elder brother Aurelien, who won a stage on the Giro last year and finished fifth yesterday, one minute and 25 seconds behind his sibling.

The pair shared a brotherly hug after the stage before the younger

Paret-Peintre spoke to media. "I can't describe what I feel now, it's just amazing. I was there to get a good result in the stage and why not win?" he said.

Paret-Peintre finished 29 seconds ahead of Bardet who has jumped up the general classification after gaining nearly three minutes on the day.

Bardet now stands in seventh at 4min 57sec, which is two minutes adrift of Geraint Thomas in third.

Bardet, who is 10 years Paret-Peintre's senior, is just under five minutes behind pink jersey wearer Pogacar, who had a relatively quiet day and maintained his healthy lead over main rivals Dani Martinez and Thomas.

'I watched him when I was young'

"I watched him (Bardet) when I was young, when he finished on the podium of the Tour de France," added Paret-Peintre.

"I dreamed of seeing him one day, and today I battled with him and I beat him."

Paret-Peintre won the stage after being part of the day's big breakaway which at its height was some 30 riders strong.

He worked with Bardet on the final climb before attacking 3km from the finish to blaze past Visma-Lease a Bike rider Tratnik, who had tried to go it alone some time before but run out of legs just as the race came to its climax.

"I think 4km to go, 3km to go, I started to feel a bit of weakness in my legs," said Tratnik. "I look behind and they pass me with double speed and then for me it was just a battle to the finish line. In the end, third place we can be happy."

Today's 11th stage takes the peloton 207km from Foiano di Val Fortore to Francavilla al Mare on the Adriatic coast, where the sprinters should have a chance to shine.



Team Decathlon AG2R's French rider Valentin Paret-Peintre celebrates as he crosses the finish line to win the 10th stage of the 107th Giro d'Italia cycling race, 142km between Pompei and Cusano Mutri (Bocca della Selva), yesterday. (AFP)

CRICKET

Shaheen, Babar guide Pakistan to T20I series win

The visitors beat Ireland in the third and final T20I by 6 wickets



Pakistan team celebrate beating Ireland in the third and final T20I in Dublin yesterday. Pakistan won the three-match series 2-1. (@TheRealPCB)

AFP
Dublin

Pakistan dominated Ireland to claim a six-wicket win in their T20 series decider in Dublin yesterday.

Pakistan eased to their victory target of 179 with 18 balls remaining as a second-wicket partnership of 139 between Mohamed Rizwan and Babar Azam proved decisive.

Rizwan's 56 from 38 balls was his 28th T20 fifty on the international stage, while skipper Babar smashed five sixes - including four from a Ben White over - and six fours in his 42-ball 75.

Ireland's total of 178 for seven was built around a second-wicket partnership of 85 from 49 balls between Andy Balbirnie and Lorcan Tucker.

Tucker hit 13 fours and a six in a 41-ball 73, but Ireland failed to

take full advantage of being 95 for one at the halfway stage.

Shaheen Shah Afridi produced a superb spell of three for 14 from four overs, removing Ross Adair, Neil Rock and Mark Adair.

Harry Tector's 30 produced late defiance, but the target proved well within Pakistan's reach, who responded from losing the opening match of the series to take it 2-1.

Shaheen, the Player of the Match, said after the match: "We tried to hit our lines and lengths and that was the reason for our success. Last two matches, we bowled too full at the start. We have a strong bowling attack and have seniors to guide each other so we just needed partnerships in bowling. For us, before World Cup, it's important to have these games to ready ourselves and there are a few areas to improve. They're both world class players (Babar and Rizwan) and they



Pakistan's Shaheen Shah Afridi celebrates one of his three wickets in the third and final T20I against Ireland in Dublin yesterday. (@TheRealPCB)

know how to play their role and they have done really well on this pitch."

Babar, the Pakistan captain, said yesterday: "I think all the credit to Ireland batters. They played first (half), but Amir Abbas Shaheen, Hassan Ali bowled well. They were 110 at end of 11th but we took a few wickets and put pressure on them. We were good at the death. We enjoyed crowd presence and we tried to entertain them. We had good communication in the middle because we have played a lot of cricket together; we were trying to play on our strengths with belief and aim was to match with the run rate."

BRIEF SCORES
Pakistan 181 for 4 (Babar 75, Rizwan 56, Mark Adair 3-28) **beat Ireland 178 for 7** (Tucker 73, Balbirnie 35, Tector 30*, Shaheen 3-14, Abbas 2-43) **by 6 wickets.**

TYSON GIVES WARNING TO PAUL AHEAD OF JULY FIGHT

New York: Former heavyweight champion Mike Tyson, preparing for his first professional fight since 2005, warned YouTuber-turned-boxer Jake Paul yesterday that his life will be on the line during their July 20 bout.

The 57-year-old Tyson, speaking at New York City's Apollo Theater during a press conference to promote a fight against an opponent who is 30 years his junior, said he wants to show the world he is still a great fighter.

"I really like Jake a lot but once he's in that ring he has to fight like his life depends on it, because it will be," said Tyson. The heavyweight bout at the Arlington, Texas home of the NFL's Dallas Cowboys will be contested over eight two-minute rounds with each fighter using 14-ounce gloves. The outcome will be included in both fighters' professional boxing records. Tyson, who said he requested the shorter rounds because he feels it will lead to greater action and a more entertaining fight, shot back at critics who suggested he is making a big mistake by returning to boxing.

'Who else can do this?'

"The people who said that wish they were up here," said Tyson. "Because no one else can do it. Who else can do this? Who else can shut the sporting world down, no one else can do it. So you got the both of us. We're friends, but in that ring we're not going to be friends."

Tyson also said he did not hesi-

tate at the chance to fight Paul. "It was a no-brainer," said Tyson. "He was the new up and coming guy on the scene and I like shaking the sports world to its core and I'm doing it now. It's just something I want to do."

Paul, a 27-year-old YouTube influencer-turned-boxer, has won nine of 10 boxing matches with six knockouts against a mix of celebrities and middling fighters. He suffered his sole career boxing loss in February 2023 when he lost a split decision to Tommy Fury, the half brother of World Boxing Council heavyweight champion Tyson Fury.

Paul said people should not overlook Tyson. "Age doesn't matter, age is just a number. He's a killer, he's a warrior, he's been doing this his whole entire life. So it's second nature to him. I've been doing this for four years," Paul said. Paul suggested he is being underestimated by Tyson and boasted that he has more power than the man once considered one of the most feared men in the world.

"I know it's going to be tough, I know I'm going to have to fight through adversity, I know I might even go to the canvas," said Paul yesterday.

"I'm scared, don't get me wrong, but it's not about the fear stopping me, it's about going into it even though I am scared and that's what true bravery is." Tyson and Paul will participate in another press conference tomorrow in Arlington.



Boxers Mike Tyson (second left), Jake Paul (second right), Katie Taylor (left), and Amanda Serrano attend a news conference in New York City yesterday, ahead of their sanctioned professional fight set to take place in Arlington, Texas, on July 20. (Reuters)

Shakib named in Bangladesh T20 World Cup squad, Shanto captain

Dhaka: Bangladesh included experienced all-rounder **Shakib Al Hasan** in their 15-man squad for the Twenty20 World Cup in the West Indies and United States in June.

The team will be led by batsman Najmul Hossain Shanto, who was named skipper in all three formats of the game this year amid uncertainty over the availability of Shakib who was dealing with an eye problem.

The former captain made his comeback to T20 international cricket after a gap of nearly a year this month in the home series against Zimbabwe, claiming five wickets in two matches. Pace bowler Tanzim Hasan Sakib was also called up after his two

appearances in the 4-1 series win, and Shoriful Islam was recalled after being rested for the final two matches.

Bangladesh are in World Cup Group D with Sri Lanka, South Africa, the Netherlands and Nepal in the June 1-29 event. They open their campaign against Sri Lanka in Dallas on June 7.



Bangladesh squad: Najmul Hossain Shanto (captain), Taskin Ahmed, Litton Das, Soumya Sarkar, Tanzid Hasan Tamim, Shakib Al Hasan, Tawhid Hridoy, Mahmudullah Riyad, Jaker Ali Anik, Tanvir Islam, Shak Mahedi Hasan, Rishad Hossain, Mustafizur Rahman, Shoriful Islam, Tanzim Hasan Sakib.

INDIAN PREMIER LEAGUE

Stubbs gives Delhi play-off hope with win over LSG

AFP
New Delhi

F fiery fifties from Abhishek Porel and Tristan Stubbs helped Delhi Capitals sign off their IPL league phase on a high as they beat Lucknow Super Giants by 19 runs yesterday.

The win took Delhi, led by Rishabh Pant, to 14 points in 14 matches and they remain technically in the mix to reach the play-offs of the T20 tournament, but a run-rate in the negative keeps their chances slim.

K L Rahul-led Lucknow have 12 points with one more match to play and have their hopes hanging by a thread.

The result confirmed a play-off spot for Rajasthan Royals, who became the second team to enter the final four alongside ta-



Tristan Stubbs of Delhi Capitals plays a shot during the IPL match against Lucknow Super Giants in New Delhi yesterday. (AFP)

ble-toppers Kolkata Knight Riders. The top four teams make the play-offs. The final is on May 26 in Chennai.

The left-handed Porel hit 58 before Stubbs smashed an unbeaten 57 off 25 balls to steer Delhi to 208-4 after being invited to bat first at their high-scoring home

venue, Arun Jaitley Stadium. Ishant Sharma led the bowling charge with three early wickets as Delhi restricted Lucknow to 189-9 despite valiant knocks from Nicholas Pooran, who smashed 61, and Arshad Khan, who hit an unbeaten 58.

Delhi lost attacking opener Jake Fraser-McGurk for a duck but Porel and Shai Hope, who struck 38, put on 92 runs to lay the foundations of the big total.

Delhi stuttered in the middle after they lost Porel, Hope and then Pant, who made 33 after he returned from a one-match ban due to slow over-rate, at regular intervals and Lucknow bowlers checked the flow of runs.

But Stubbs had other ideas and he hit back with a flurry of fours and sixes to fire Delhi past the 200 as the last three overs cost Lucknow 45 runs.

Lucknow suffered early blows

after pace spearhead Ishant took down Rahul, for five, and Quinton de Kock, for 12, inside three overs.

Marcus Stoinis was stumped by Pant off spinner Axar Patel and Ishant struck again to make Lucknow slip to 44-4.

Stubbs made it count with his off-spin as he sent back impact substitute Ayush Badoni out for six to end a 27-run partnership with Pooran.

The left-handed Pooran attempted to drive the chase in his 27-ball knock laced with six fours and four sixes but he left a lot to be done when he departed in the 12th over.

BRIEF SCORES
Delhi Capitals 208 for 4 (Porel 58, Stubbs 57, Naveen-ul-Haq 2-51) **beat Lucknow Super Giants 189 for 9** (Pooran 61, Arshad 58*, Ishant 3-34) **by 19 runs.**

TENNIS

Swiatek cruises into Rome last four, Tabilo advances

'I'm really proud of myself because I feel like I'm playing better and for sure this was the best day for me'

AFP
Rome

Iga Swiatek strolled into the Rome Open semi-finals with a straight-sets 6-1, 6-3 win over Madison Keys yesterday as Alejandro Tabilo followed up his shock elimination of Novak Djokovic by reaching the men's last eight.

World number one Swiatek continued her bid for a third Rome title in imperious style, dealing with American Keys in little more than an hour on a baking centre court.

"Today I'm really proud of myself because I feel like I'm playing better and for sure this was the best day for me in Rome," said Swiatek.

In the last four, Swiatek will take on Zheng Qinwen or third seed Coco Gauff, who face off in the day's final match on centre court.

Swiatek maintained her red-hot form at the Foro Italico, where she has not yet dropped a set, ahead of her French Open title defence later this month.

The three-time Roland Garros champion arrived in Rome off the back of winning a third WTA 1000 title of the season in Madrid.

And she could yet become the first woman since Serena Williams in 2013 to win in the Spanish and Italian capitals in the same season.

Chile's Tabilo stunned 24-time Grand Slam champion Djokovic in straight sets on Sunday and made the quarter-finals yesterday after winning a hugely entertaining



Poland's Iga Swiatek celebrates after winning her quarter-final against Madison Keys of the US at the Italian Open in Rome yesterday. (Reuters)



Right: Tommy Paul (right) of the US shakes hands with Russia's Daniil Medvedev after winning their round of 16 match at the Italian Open in Rome yesterday. (Reuters)

battle with Khachanov, 7-6 (7/5), 7-6 (12/10). Tabilo reached the last eight of a Masters 1000 event for the first time and will next play China's Zhang Zhizhen.

"Just being in my first quarter-final is an unreal feeling, just trying to soak it all in right now. It's a crazy feeling," said Tabilo.

The 26-year-old had a much harder time of it against 18th-ranked Khachanov, whose six tour titles have all come on hard courts, than against Djokovic.

Tabilo came through a thrilling second-set tie-break which featured 11 service breaks, two set points for Khachanov and five match points, exploding with joy after the winning volley.

"There was just so much nerves there, like feeling that arm really heavy and in the last few service points I was like 'I just gotta risk it all'" added Tabilo.

"With the win two days ago it's been crazy. I just had to turn off the phone and just kind of be with the

team, be with the people close to me and I'm just happy that I was able to refresh the mind."

World number five Alexander Zverev swept past unseeded Nuno Borges 6-2, 7-5 to set up a quarter-final clash with Taylor Fritz.

American Fritz beat eighth seed Grigor Dimitrov after losing a 20-minute tie-break in the second set before eventually coming through 6-2, 6-7 (11/13), 6-1.

"It's easy to go back and I guess dwell on that the whole third set

but I did a really good job in just putting it behind me," said Fritz.

Medvedev's Rome Open title defence ended by USA's Paul

Daniil Medvedev's Rome Open title defence came to an end at the last-16 stage yesterday after the world number four was knocked out in straight sets by Tommy Paul, 6-1, 6-4. Second seed Medvedev has never successfully defended an ATP Tour crown and was well below his best, stunned by Ameri-

can Paul who claimed his first win against the former US Open champion. Paul will play Hubert Hurkacz, who knocked out Rafael Nadal earlier in the tournament, in the quarter-finals.

Medvedev, 28, had a great chance at the Foro Italico after a raft of stars either withdrew or were eliminated early, but instead he became the latest big name to be dumped out of the last major tournament before this month's French Open.

GOLF

Woods 'talking' about 2025 US Ryder Cup captain's job

AFP
Louisville, United States

Tiger Woods remains in talks with PGA of America about being captain of the 2025 US Ryder Cup team, but wonders if he has time for the job's responsibilities.

The 48-year-old American, a 15-time major winner, still struggles to walk 72 holes at tournaments after suffering severe leg injuries in a 2021 car crash.

But Woods was 60th at last month's Masters and is playing this week at the PGA Championship at Valhalla, so it's still a possibility he would guide the Americans next year at Bethpage Black against holders Europe.

Woods said last month at the Masters that he and PGA of America chief executive officer Seth Waugh were in talks about the captaincy.

"We're still talking. There's nothing that has been confirmed yet," Woods said yesterday. "We're still working on what that might look like. Also whether or not I have the time to do it."

Among the things taking up time now for Woods is his role on the PGA Tour Policy Board negotiating a subcommittee on a possible merger deal with Saudi Arabia's Public Information Fund (PIF), financial



Tiger Woods of the US looks on during a practice round prior to the 2024 PGA Championship at Valhalla Golf Club in Louisville, Kentucky. (AFP)

backers of rival LIV Golf. "I'm dedicating so much time to what we're doing with the PGA Tour, I don't want to not fulfil the role of the captaincy if I can't do it," Woods said. "I need to feel that I can give the amount of time that it deserves."

Woods said that he is able to make many of the shots that electrified fans in his younger days, but still struggles to walk a full 72 holes at a tournament.

"My body is OK. I wish my game was a little bit sharper," Woods

said. "I don't have a lot of competitive reps so I'm having to rely on my practice sessions and getting stuff done either at home or here on-site."

"I need to be ready mentally and physically come Thursday."

Woods is battling back issues he lacked when the event was last at Valhalla a decade ago.

"Back is now fused," Woods said. "I'm always going to feel soreness and stiffness in my back, but that's OK. Just need other body parts to start feeling better."

"I can still hit shots. Getting around is more of the difficulty that I face day-to-day and the recovery of pushing myself either in practice or in competition days."

Woods, who shares the all-time PGA Tour record of 82 career wins with Sam Snead, still feels like he has more titles in him.

"I still feel that I can win golf tournaments. I still feel I can hit the shots and still feel like I still have my hand around the greens and I can putt," Woods said. "I just need to do it for all four days, not like I did at Augusta for only two."

Playing alongside him those first two days at the Masters last month was ninth-ranked Max Homa, who was enthralled at the form Woods displayed.

"His golf game was incredible. He hit it great," Homa said yesterday.

"His skill level, his talent is still just mesmerising. It always would be crazy to think he would win another one, but watching him play those two days at Augusta, I very much thought he could win another golf tournament."

"I don't know tank-wise, but he works his (rear) off and he's really good at golf so I would put nothing past him at this point."

"Tiger feels like a mythological creature, especially when you look back on some of those seasons he had... I mean just absurd golf."

FOCUS

2024 Paris Olympics economic impact estimated at €6.7-11.1bn

AFP
Paris

The Paris Olympics this year will generate an economic gain of €6.7-11.1bn (\$7.2-11.9bn) for the capital region, according to a study commissioned by the organising committee and released yesterday.

The research by the France-based Center for Law and Economics of Sport (CDES), an independent institute, modelled the impact of construction work, extra tourism and organising the event itself.

In their low-case scenario, the authors calculated a gain of €6.7bn for the Paris region, rising to €11.1bn in their highest projection.

Measuring the economic gains of so-called "mega-events" such as the football World Cup and the Olympics is notoriously difficult, and the authors urged caution about interpreting the results.

They stressed that the overall impact would be seen over a 17-year period beginning from the start of work in 2018 and until the end of the so-called "legacy period" in 2034.

The results are also to be compared against the overall size of the Paris economy, which was estimated at around €765bn euros in 2021 by the French national statistics agency.

Measuring the impact of the Olympics is always difficult because some infrastructure spending and other building

work might have been completed without the Games.

And the event can also have negative secondary effects at a national level, such as depressing consumer spending - which occurred in Britain during the 2012 Olympics - or deterring some tourists.

"The authors of this study would like to point out that an economic impact study alone cannot legitimise the hosting of an event and the expenditure involved," the CDES study said.

The governor of the French central bank, Francois Villeroy de Galhau, said in March that the biggest impact from the Games would be "psychological" rather than economic.

Organisers of the Paris Games and the International Olympic Committee see the July 26-August 11 event in the French capital as the star of a new low-impact and less extravagant model.

Only two new permanent sporting venues have been built in a bid to reduce the financial cost and carbon emissions.

The budget is also on track to be smaller than previous editions, with the latest estimate for €9bn, including €2.4bn in public funds.

Some costs for the state, such as providing security and bonuses for public-sector staff, have not been finalised, however.

The CDES carried out a previous economic impact study for the Paris Games in 2016 in support of the city's bid for the event.

At the time, it estimated the economic gain at €5.3-10.7bn.



Damien Casanova runs with the flame near the Parata Genovese Tour (background), as the flame crosses the French Mediterranean island of Corsica yesterday. The Olympic torch will travel 12,000-kilometre (7,500-mile) in a relay across mainland France and the country's far-flung overseas territories, before arriving in Paris for Olympics set to take place from July 26 to August 11. (AFP)

'PROGRESS MADE BUT LONG WAY TO GO' IN PGA-SAUDI TALKS

Louisville, United States: Tiger Woods, among the negotiators in PGA Tour merger talks with Saudi backers of LIV Golf, said yesterday there has been progress but a deal remains a long way off. Speaking after a practice session at Valhalla for the 106th PGA Championship, which starts on May 16, Woods detailed the state of talks nearly a year after a framework merger deal was announced between Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund (PIF) and the PGA Tour. "Fans are probably as tired as we are of the talk not being about the game of golf and about not being about the players," Woods said. "The fans just want to see us play together. How do we get there is to be determined. "We've made some progress, yes,

for sure, but there's a long way to go still."

Woods, a 15-time major winner, is a member of the PGA Tour Policy Board transaction subcommittee charged with hammering out a deal.

"We're working on negotiations with PIF. It's ongoing. It's fluid. It changes day-to-day," Woods said.

"Has there been progress? Yes. But it's an ongoing negotiation so a lot of work ahead for all of us with this process. We're making steps. It may not be giant steps, but we're making steps."

His update came a day after Jimmy Dunne resigned from the PGA Policy Board, multiple reports saying the businessman was unhappy at the slow pace of talks, which have gone well past last De-



Jon Rahm of Spain speaks to the media prior to the 2024 PGA Championship at Valhalla Golf Club in Louisville, Kentucky. (AFP)

ember's deadline. Dunne helped create a controversial framework merger agreement unveiled

last June 6 between PIF and the PGA Tour, an announcement blindsiding most players and a sudden reversal by PGA commissioner Jay Monahan, who had pushed them to reject LIV only to seemingly wave a surrender flag less than three weeks after LIV's Brooks Koepka won the 2023 PGA Championship.

"Jimmy and the amount of work and dedication he put into the board and the PGA Tour, has been incredible," Woods said. "It was a bit surprising that he resigned."

Dunne, in a resignation letter obtained by Sports Illustrated, said since players are a board majority and "no meaningful progress has been made toward a transaction with PIF, I feel like my vote and my role is utterly superfluous".

PREMIER LEAGUE

Pochettino sees positive future for Chelsea

Chelsea are level on points with sixth-placed Newcastle and three ahead of United

AFP
Brighton, United Kingdom

Chelsea manager Mauricio Pochettino said European qualification "would be amazing" for the Blues after turning around a difficult first season in charge at Stamford Bridge.

Pochettino's men have won their last three Premier League games to rise to seventh in the table and put themselves in a good position to return to Europe next season. Chelsea are level on points with sixth-placed Newcastle and three ahead of Manchester United, plus a significantly better goal difference than the Red Devils, with two games to play.

A top-six finish will guarantee a place in either the Europa League or Conference League next season, while seventh would also be enough as long as United fail to win the FA Cup later this month against Manchester City. Chelsea won just three of their opening 10 league games as Pochettino wrestled with injuries and gelling together a series of inexperienced players.

But the Argentine believes his side's curve is clearly on the up as they have lost just once in their last 13 top-flight matches. "The most important thing is to believe and I think the team is doing really well. In the last 26 games we have been doing really well and we need to keep doing it in this way. It is going to be tough but I really believe we can compete in the next two games, and having the possibility of playing in Europe would be amazing for us."

Pochettino's future as manager for next season had even been in doubt until recent weeks. But convincing home wins over London rivals Tottenham and West Ham was followed by a come-from-behind 3-2 victory at Nottingham Forest on Saturday.

"We are thankful because of the first 10 games. If you start to count after our 10th game I think we are in the top four," added Pochettino. "I want to be positive and I don't want to talk anymore (about a lack of experience). From next season I don't want to say that we are young, I want to talk about a different issue."

There is further good news for Pochettino as a number of key players are returning from injury in time for Wednesday's trip to Brighton and a visit of Bournemouth to finish the campaign on Sunday. Captain Reece James came off the bench to set up Nicolas Jackson's winner at Forest, while forward Christopher Nkunku has made his return as a substitute in the last two games.

However, Pochettino does not expect ei-



Mauricio Pochettino's Chelsea have won their last three Premier League games to rise to seventh in the table and put themselves in a good position to return to Europe next season.

ther to start at Brighton. "The players that have arrived from injury need time and we don't have time. We need to play and start games with players who can cope for 90 minutes," he added. "We will see if the injured players can cope with some minutes (on Wednesday). We have the names and bodies, but they are not 100 percent to play and cope with the demands of the Premier League for 90 minutes at the moment."

EUROPEAN FOOTBALL A 'DRIVING FORCE' FOR NEWCASTLE: HOWE

Eddie Howe said qualifying for Europe was a "driving force" for Newcastle as he prepares for today's pivotal Premier League match against Manchester United. Howe's men are sixth in the table, two places and

three points better off than their hosts with two games to go for each team.

Chelsea are in seventh place on 57 points – the same as Newcastle. As it stands, the team in sixth place at the end of the season will earn a spot in the UEFA Conference League, the third-tier European competition. But if Manchester City beat Manchester United in the FA Cup final, the sixth-placed team would qualify for the Europa League and the side in seventh would enter the Conference League.

"Massive fixture for both teams," Howe said. "It's coming to the end of a long season for both clubs. We're desperate to do well in the game, we're desperate to finish as high as we can. We know European competition is there but it can also be a long way

away if we don't get the results we need."

The Newcastle boss said his team were embracing the pressure after recovering from a poor start to the season and a damaging run of losses in December and January. Howe, whose team flopped in this season's Champions League, said it was vital for Saudi-backed Newcastle to be in Europe.

Howe said he was anxious not to underestimate misfiring United despite their poor form as Newcastle seek their first league double against the 20-time English champions since the 1930/31 season.

Forwards Alexander Isak and Callum Wilson are doubts for the match at Old Trafford after suffering from illness and neither trained on Monday.

Rashid to head Sports Committee of the Qatar Press Center

Doha: Qatar Press Center has decided to create a Sports Press Committee at the center and accordingly appointed **Ali Issa Rashid** as head of this committee. The creation of the new committee is part of the center's keenness to enhance its activities and expand the fields of interest for journalists, media persons and those interested in the media affairs.

The new committee specialises in enhancing the role of sports in the lives of journalists and media professionals, as well as initiating sports and intellectual discussions with colleagues in specialised sports newspapers, whether in Qatar, the GCC countries, or the world. It will also follow up on championships and sports events organised by the country. Further, the committee will organise tournaments of football, basketball, and other games for journalists and media professionals.

Ali Issa has a long-standing career in sports journalism and has made several contributions to specialised television programmes in sports analysis. The center wishes him all the best and success in his new role, Qatar Press Center has posted on its X official account.



Varane to leave Man United

Manchester: Central defender Raphael Varane will leave Manchester United at the end of the season after three years at the Premier League club, the France international said.

Varane, 31, joined United in 2021 after 10 years at Real Madrid. He has made 67 league appearances for the English side and helped them win the League Cup in 2023.

"It's been an amazing few years to play for this special club and wearing that shirt," Varane said in a video on social media. A muscle injury has kept Varane out of action since April but he hopes to be available again before United end their season in the FA Cup final against Manchester City on May 25.

"Everybody at United thanks Rapha for his service and wishes him well for the future," the club said in a statement.

Eighth-placed United play their last home game of the season today against Newcastle United. "I'll see you at Old Trafford to say goodbye for the last game at home this season and it's going to be an emotional day for me for sure," Varane added.

United manager Erik ten Hag is hopeful Varane can go out by playing a part in winning another trophy in the FA Cup final later this month.

SPOTLIGHT

Duran double salvages draw for Villa against Liverpool

AFP
Birmingham, United Kingdom

John Duran struck twice in the final five minutes to salvage a 3-3 draw for Aston Villa against Liverpool but they fell short of guaranteeing a place in next season's Champions League on Monday. Villa looked set for a fourth consecutive defeat in all competitions as an Emiliano Martinez own goal and strikes from Cody Gakpo and Jarrell Quansah put the visitors on course for victory in Jurgen Klopp's final away game in charge. But substitute Duran's double edged Unai Emery's men closer to Europe's top table for the first time since 1983.

Victory for title-chasing Manchester City at Spurs would secure Villa's place in



the top four. But they are stumbling over the finish line as the strain of combining a challenge for the Champions League alongside a run to the Europa Conference League semi-finals has taken its toll.

"Just a brilliant effort towards the end,"

said Villa captain John McGinn. "It's been a tough couple of weeks. The manager won't admit it but the boys are out on their feet, giving absolutely everything. We'll have our Man City tops on tomorrow night."

Martinez's return to fitness after he missed last weekend's 1-0 defeat at Brighton should have been a major boost for the home side. But the Argentine World Cup winner's howler handed Liverpool the opening goal after just two minutes as he fumbled Harvey Elliott's deflected cross into his own net. Villa did respond positively as Ollie Watkins burned Quansah for pace and pulled back a cross for Youri Tielemans to equalise.

However, momentum swung back in Liverpool's favour in an end-to-end encounter when Gakpo tapped in after Martinez could only parry Joe Gomez's effort. Villa should

have been level again before half-time when Diego Carlos somehow turned wide with the goal gaping after nudging Watkins out of the way. Instead, they were 3-1 down just three minutes into the second half as Quansah rose highest to head in Elliott's free-kick.

There was still time for Villa to mount a memorable comeback as Liverpool's own defensive weaknesses were laid bare. "It got away from us tonight, there's no doubt about that," said Klopp. "We make a mistake for the 3-2 and in that moment we open the door for them, the atmosphere was there and they score the equaliser."

A point for Liverpool may be meaningless in their quest to win the title as wins for Manchester City and Arsenal over the weekend mathematically ended the chance of Klopp departing as a league winner.

ROUND-UP

Giroud joins MLS side LAFC after three years at AC Milan

France forward **Olivier Giroud** will join American Major League Soccer (MLS) side Los Angeles FC in the close season, after three years at AC Milan. Giroud, 37, has signed on for LAFC until 2025, with an option to extend it through to 2026, the MLS club said.

The former Arsenal and Chelsea striker helped Milan win the Serie A title in his first season at the club, scoring 11 league goals. He has 131 caps for France, scoring 57 goals and was part of their World Cup winning squad in 2018.

"His championship ambition and his qualities as a man and as a player directly align with ours as a club," Los Angeles co-president and general manager John Thornington said in a statement. Giroud has made 33 appearances for second-placed Milan this season and scored 14 goals. Milan visit Torino on Saturday and finish the campaign hosting Salernitana on May 26.

MARSCH NAMED AS NEW CANADA COACH

Former Leeds United manager Jesse Marsch was named as Canada's new head coach on Monday as the team prepares for



next month's Copa America in the United States. The 50-year-old American has been without a job since being fired by Leeds in February last year with the club struggling near the foot of the English Premier League.

Marsch had been touted as a possible United States head coach last year with World Cup coach Gregg Berhalter's status in limbo. Berhalter was eventually

re-appointed to the role, while Marsch would go on to be linked with other jobs including the vacant South Korea coaching position.

However Marsch, who also coached New York Red Bulls, Red Bull Salzburg and RB Leipzig earlier in his career, will now aim to build on the steady improvement shown by Canada under predecessor John Herdman. Herdman, who led Canada to

the 2022 World Cup, departed last year to take over as coach of Toronto FC.

Canada Soccer said in a statement on Monday that Marsch would now take the helm immediately on a contract that runs through to the end of the 2026 World Cup, which will be hosted by Canada, Mexico and the United States.

Marsch's first games in charge will be friendlies against the Netherlands on June 6 and France on June 9.

BARCELONA RECLAIM SECOND SPOT WITH 2-0 WIN OVER REAL SOCIEDAD

Barcelona reclaimed second place in LaLiga with a 2-0 home win over Real Sociedad on Monday courtesy of a Lamine Yamal first-half strike and a late Raphinha penalty.

Xavi Hernandez's side leapfrogged Girona to move on to 76 points, one clear of their Catalan rivals who dropped points in Friday's 2-2 draw at Alaves. Real Madrid have already secured the league title, sitting on 90 points with three games left.

Yamal put Barcelona ahead in the 40th minute when he coolly slotted home from Ilkay Gundogan's pass after a quick breakaway for his fifth LaLiga goal this

season. Raphinha's penalty in stoppage time sealed victory for the hosts after a VAR review for handball, leaving the Basque side in seventh place with 54 points, one behind Real Betis in the last Europa League spot.

EMIRATES STADIUM TO BECOME HOME FOR ARSENAL'S WOMEN

Arsenal's Emirates Stadium will become the main home for the women's team from next season as a result of an "extraordinary" explosion of interest, the club said. Arsenal announced plans for 11 games to be played at the ground in the 2024/25 campaign – eight Women's Super League (WSL) and three Champions League games, if qualification for the group stages is secured.

Home legs in any Champions League knockout ties would also be staged at the Emirates. Remaining fixtures, including all domestic cup matches, will take place at Arsenal's Meadow Park ground, in London's commuter belt. Six WSL games played at the Emirates this season were watched by an average crowd of just over 52,000, which included two sell-outs and three WSL attendance records.