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SPOTLIGHT

Arshad qualifies for final at Paris Paralympic Games

Arshad, who finished third in the heat with a personal best of 15.20 seconds, will take part in final today



Qatar's Ali Arshad (left) in action during the 100m wheelchair race (T34 category) at the Paris Paralympic Games yesterday.

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Qatar's Ali Arshad entered the final of the 100m wheelchair race (T34 category) at the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games yesterday. At the packed Stade de France, Arshad finished third in the second heat with a personal best time of 15.20 seconds, finishing behind Thailand's Chaiwat Rattana (14.81 secs) and Tunisia's Walid Ktilla (15.09).

Arshad will compete in the final at 12 noon today, hoping to win his first Paralympic medal, following in the footsteps of other Qatar stars who have previously achieved this, including his teammate

in Paris, Sara Masoud, who won a silver medal in the shot put at the Rio 2016 Paralympic Games, and Abdulrahman al-Qader, who won silver in the shot put at Rio 2016 and bronze at Tokyo 2020 in the same event. Arshad expressed his happiness at qualifying for final in his maiden Paralympic Games, while also affirming his confidence in his ability to win a medal, especially after recording his personal best and achieving the third-best time in the preliminary round.

Dr Hassan al-Ansari, Secretary-General of the Qatar Paralympic Committee and head of the Qatari delegation, congratulated Arshad on reaching the final and wished him all the best in the final.

Dr al-Ansari emphasised that Arshad not only qualified for the final but also



Ali Arshad poses with Qatar Olympic Committee first vice-president Mohamed bin Yousef al-Mana, head of the delegation Dr Hassan al-Ansari and other officials at the Stade de France in Paris yesterday.

achieved a personal best and the third-best time in the first round, which indicates his strong chance of winning a medal today. These results reflect the significant efforts made by the coaching staff of Qatar during the preparation periods for the Paralympics and their commitment to getting the athletes ready to the highest level possible.

Meanwhile, Sara is continuing her prep-

arations to compete in the shot put competition (T33 category), which will take place on Thursday evening at Stade de France. Sara has had a distinguished career filled with achievements, having won the silver medal in shot put at the Rio 2016 Paralympic Games and the silver medal at the 2017 World Para Athletics Championships held in London.

She also secured gold medals in shot

put and discus throw at the 2014 Incheon Asian Para Games, a silver medal in shot put at the 2018 Jakarta Asian Games, and silver medals in discus throw and javelin throw, as well as a bronze medal in shot put at the 2022 West Asian Para Games in Bahrain. Additionally, she won silver medals in discus throw and shot put and a bronze in javelin throw at the 2024 West Asian Para Games in Sharjah.

PARIS PARALYMPICS

Cockcroft wins fourth successive gold

AFP
Paris

The stars of the Paralympic sprint world entered the fray at the Paris Games yesterday after organisers were forced to delay the triathlon events by 24 hours due to concerns about the water quality of the River Seine after heavy rain.

British wheelchair racer Hannah Cockcroft made it four gold medals in four Paralympics stretching back to London 2012 in the women's T34 100 metres and said she had been boosted by the roars of the crowd at the Stade de France, declaring: "My wheels were vibrating!"

China were piling up the medals again, reaching 30 golds midway through the evening session but Britain were chasing hard on 23 golds as Cockcroft led the way on the track and British swimmers scooped four golds.

But the water quality of the Seine, an issue that has dogged both Olympic and Paralympic organisers this summer, caused fresh problems. The 11 triathlon races were to take place early yesterday but after heavy rain on Saturday which can stir up pollution in the river, organisers and governing body World Triathlon decided to postpone by a day.

"The latest analysis shows a deterioration in the water quality of the Seine following heavy rainfall over the past two days," the organisers said. "It was decided to schedule the 11 medal sessions of the Para triathlon on September 2," they added.

The water quality issue also caused disruption to the Olympics triathlon and open-water swimming events earlier this summer, with several practice sessions cancelled. Despite 1.4bn euros (\$1.5bn) spent on improving the Paris sewerage and water treatment systems, the Seine has been beset by pollution concerns, notably for its levels of enterococci and E.coli bacteria.

On the track, the 32-year-old Cockcroft, one of Team GB's biggest stars, pushed away at the start of the women's T34 100m to leave



Hannah Cockcroft of Britain celebrates after winning gold in the women's 100m T34 race. (Reuters)

her rivals far behind for an easy win in 16.80sec with her British teammate Kare Adenegan taking silver with Chinese teenager Lan Hanyu winning bronze.

Cockcroft said the roar from the estimated 50,000 spectators at the Stade de France had taken her by surprise. "They said 'On your marks' and it didn't go quiet," she told reporters. "My wheels were vibrating. I was afraid I wasn't going to hear the gun. But this is what we want, it's fantastic. "I means so much to get a fourth gold," she added - and pledged to keep competing until the 2028 Los Angeles Paralympics - but her immediate priority is her wedding to fellow British Paralympian Nathan Maguire later this year.

The scene was set for the entry into the

competition of the amputee sprinters. The heats of the men's T64 100m event features arguably the deepest field in any event on the Paralympics track and field programme. Reigning champion Felix Streg of Germany has a fight to defend his title in the face of the challenge from two-time champion Jonnie Peacock of Britain and US athlete Hunter Woodhall.

The blind football competition kicked off at the foot of the Eiffel Tower with the players guided by a rattle in the ball.

Brazil, who have not lost a single match since the event was introduced in 2004, breezed past Turkiye 3-0 in their opening game and face host nation France today. In other games, Colombia beat Japan 1-0 and Morocco and Argentina drew 0-0.

FOOTBALL

Qatar rolls out fan initiative ahead of World Cup qualifiers

QNA
Doha

Qatar rolled out an initiative targeting further fan support ahead of the national team's opener of the third stage of the World Cup 2026 qualifiers against the UAE at home on Thursday. Themed fans are the source of strength, the campaign with the journey to the 2026 World Cup hashtag seeks heavy fan attendance rooting for the AFC Asian Cup 2023 champions in the Group A encounter at the Ahmed bin Ali stadium.

Qatar were drawn alongside the UAE, North Korea, Uzbekistan, Iran and Kyrgyzstan - in a seemingly tough mission for the 2022 World Cup hosts

to mark a second world cup appearance in the US, Canada and Mexico. Officials said the campaign would enhance the roles of the fans in cheering for the world's most prestigious football event. Qatari football fans have shown a distinguished presence in the team's all regional and continental appearances.

The Qatari fans have a culture of cheering through forming waves in the stadium stands and organised chanting, in addition to continuous support for the players to win. With great experiences gained after the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 and the Asian Cup Qatar 2023, the fans' support for players continue throughout the course of the matches and won't stop until the final whistle.



Qatar's Almoez Ali (left) and Bassem al-Rawi pose sporting team's new kit unveiled by the Qatar Football Association yesterday, ahead of the FIFA World Cup 2026 qualifier against UAE.

CRICKET

Ton-up Das helps Bangladesh thwart Pakistan

AFP
Rawalpindi, Pakistan

Liton Das hit a fighting hundred to lift Bangladesh from a precarious 26-6 to 262 all out yesterday, in a remarkable turnaround that left the second Test in Rawalpindi within either team's grasp.

The 29-year-old hit 138 over the course of a marathon 333 minutes and brought Bangladesh back into the match with a fighting 165-run seventh-wicket stand alongside Mehidy Hasan Miraz, who scored a pugnacious 78.

At close on the third day, Bangladesh struck back to leave Pakistan on a sluggish 9-2, with opener Abdullah Shafique dismissed for three and nightwatchman Khurram Shahzad falling without scoring - both to pacer Hasan Mahmud.

Saim Ayub was not out on six as the home team lead by 21 runs, and Pakistan will need to bat smartly to clinch a series-levelling win after losing the first Test, also in Rawalpindi, by 10 wickets.

Bangladesh's win last week was their first in 14 attempts against Pakistan. The highlight of the day was Das and Mehidy's match-turning stand.

On top of that, Das added 69 with tail-ender Mahmud (13 not out) in a 24.5-over ninth wicket stand, equalling the partnership record against Pakistan and leaving the home team frustrated.

Das, dropped on 90 by spinner Abrar Ahmed off his own bowling, hit a late cut off the same bowler to reach his fourth Test hundred. He finally holed out to Agha Salman at long-on.

Das, who came to the crease with Bangladesh tottering at 26-5, cracked 13 boundaries and four sixes, adding a big 236 for the last four wickets. Das admitted he was a little nervous at the start but happy by the end.

"I took it positively and took responsibility," he said, adding that batting was not easy on the pitch.

Still, Shahzad praised Bangladesh's batting. "Such phases do come in Tests as we had one good session but then unfortunately they built a good partnership and

we struggled," said Shahzad.

"We believe in our batting and I think we can set a challenging target for them," he added.

Earlier, Pakistan were put in a strong position by pacer Shahzad's career-best 6-90 and Mir Hamza (2-50) in the morning session, but they were left wanting thereafter. Das and Mehidy's solid stand took advantage of an eased-out Rawalpindi stadium pitch in the second session of the rain-affected Test, which saw Friday's first day washed out.

Shahzad, who had taken 4-15 in his first spell, had Mehidy caught and bowled off a miscued drive two overs before tea to end Pakistan's long and frustrating wait for the seventh wicket. Das and Mehidy are the first pair in Tests to add 150 or more runs for the seventh or lower wicket from a team total under 50 runs.

Mehidy, who took 5-61 on Saturday, hit 12 boundaries and a six as he passed 50 for the eighth time in Tests. Bangladesh resumed at the start of the day on 10-0, but Shahzad soon had opener Zakir Hasan caught by Abrar Ahmed

at short midwicket for one in the fourth over. Shahzad then bowled Shadman Islam (10) and skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto (four) in the space of four deliveries to reduce Bangladesh to 20-3.

At the other end, Hamza had Mominul Haque caught by Mohamed Ali at mid-on for one and then removed first Test centurion Mushfiqur Rahim for three, caught behind by Mohamed Rizwan from a beautiful outswinger.

Shahzad made it 26-6 by trapping Shakib Al Hasan lbw for two before Mehidy and Das dug in.

Shahzad's previous best figures were 3-45 in his debut Test against Australia at Perth last year.



Bangladesh's Liton Das hit 138 over the course of a marathon 333 minutes and brought Bangladesh back into the match with a fighting 165-run seventh-wicket stand alongside Mehidy Hasan Miraz in Rawalpindi yesterday. (AFP)

BRIEF SCORES: Pakistan first innings 274 (Saim Ayub 58, Shan Masood 57, Salman Agha 54; Mehidy Hasan Miraz 5-61, Taskin Ahmed 3-57)

Bangladesh first innings 262 (Liton Das 138, Mehidy Hasan Miraz 78; Khurram Shahzad 6-90, Mir Hamza 2-50)

Pakistan 2nd innings 9-2. Series: Bangladesh lead the two-match series 1-0.

FOCUS

Atkinson strikes as England wrap up series victory

Hosts beat Sri Lanka by 190 runs at Lord's to take an unassailable lead

AFP
London

Gus Atkinson completed a memorable match by taking five wickets as England thrashed Sri Lanka by 190 runs in the second Test at Lord's yesterday to take an unassailable 2-0 lead in a three-match series.

Sri Lanka, set what would have been a new Test record fourth-innings winning total of 483, were dismissed for 292 after tea on the fourth day despite fifties from Dinesh Chandimal (58), Dimuth Karunaratne (55) and captain Dhananjaya de Silva (50).

Fast bowler Gus Atkinson, who scored his maiden first-class hundred in England's first innings 427, led the attack with 5-62.

That meant player-of-the-match Atkinson secured a fifth mention on the dressing room honours boards in just his second Test at the 'Home of Cricket' after taking 12 wickets on England debut against the West Indies at Lord's last month.

He also became just the third Englishman after Tony Greig and Ian Botham to score a century and take five wickets in an innings of the same Test. The Surrey pacer's latest impressive return helped England seal a seventh successive win over Sri Lanka following their five-wicket success in last week's first Test at Old Trafford.

"I couldn't have asked for much more, to get on both honours boards is incredible and it'll take a bit of time to sink in," Atkinson said. This game was also a personal triumph for Joe Root.

For the first time in 145 matches at this level, Root made hundreds in both innings - 143 and 103 - to set a new record of 34 Test centuries by an England batsman.

Sri Lanka now have little time to regroup before the third Test at the Oval, Atkinson's home ground, starts on Friday.

They resumed yesterday 53-2 in front of a sparse if sun-drenched



England's Gus Atkinson celebrates after taking the wicket of Sri Lanka's Milan Rathnayake during the second Test at Lord's Cricket Ground in London yesterday. (Reuters)

crowd. The odds were stacked against them given the highest winning fourth-innings total in any Test is the West Indies' 418-7 against Australia at St John's in 2002/03, with the equivalent Lord's record the West Indies' 344-1 against England in 1984.

But early on Sunday, Root reprimed Karunaratne, who had added just two to his overnight 23, when failing to hold a fast-traveling one-handed slip chance from the opener's edged cut off Atkinson.

England did strike when Prabath Jayasuriya nicked Chris Woakes to second slip as the nightwatchman's gutsy 41-ball stay came to an end.

Karunaratne, 36, drove and pulled Atkinson for fours off successive deliveries on his way to a 98-ball fifty including seven boundaries.

The left-hander, however, was out for 55 shortly before lunch.

Chandimal counter-attacked early in the afternoon session with three fours in an over against off-

spinner Shoib Bashir on his way to a dashing 42-ball fifty including 40 runs in boundaries. But Angelo Mathews, tempted into a big shot by Bashir, fell for 36 when he drove the 20-year-old to mid-off.

Chandimal followed soon afterwards when caught at short leg off bat and pad after Atkinson nipped one back off the pitch.

Kamindu Mendis, boasting a staggeringly high Test average of 92 after scoring his third hundred in four Tests at Old Trafford, had made a defiant 74 in Sri Lanka's meagre first-innings 196.

But the 25-year-old left-hander, again batting curiously low down the order, fell for just for four on Sunday when he edged Atkinson, bowling from around the wicket, to Ben Duckett in the slips.

Mendis's exit left Sri Lanka, who have not won any of their eight previous Tests at Lord's, eyeing defeat at 200-7. De Silva kept England waiting but, three balls after completing his fifty, he played on to Atkinson, who then had Milan Rathnayake caught behind to

complete his 5-wicket haul.

SCOREBOARD
England 1st innings 427
Sri Lanka 1st innings 196
England 2nd innings 251
Sri Lanka 2nd innings (overnight 53-2, target 483)
N. Jayasuriya c Root b Atkinson 13
D. Karunaratne c Smith b Stone 55
P. Nissanka c Root b Stone 14
P. Jayasuriya c Brook b Woakes 4
A. Mathews c Woakes b Bashir 36
D. Chandimal c Lawrence b Atkinson 58
D. de Silva b Atkinson 50
K. Mendis c Duckett b Atkinson 4
M. Rathnayake c Smith b Atkinson 43
L. Kumara c Stone b Woakes 10
A. Fernando not out 0
Extras (b4, lb1) 5
Total (all out, 86.4 overs) 292
Fall of wickets: 1-19, 2-43, 3-60, 4-115, 5-174, 6-192, 7-200, 8-273, 9-288, 10-292.
Bowling: Woakes 19.4-8-46-2; Atkinson 16-4-62-5; Bashir 23-1-78-1; Root 4-1-9-0; Potts 11-2-34-0; Stone 12-0-56-2; Lawrence 1-0-2-0.

SPOTLIGHT

Four decades on, Lord's heroics still vivid for Sri Lanka's Wettimuny

AFP
London

Sri Lanka may be struggling in the ongoing second Test against England at Lord's but things were very different when they made their debut at the 'Home of Cricket' in 1984.

The tourists, still a fledgling Test nation, defied expectations to dominate a drawn one-off game, piling up 491-7 declared in their first innings, with Sidath Wettimuny making a superb 190. It was a landmark moment for both the then 28-year-old opener and his country as he recalled while returning to the scene of his triumph 40 years on.

"England is the home of cricket," Wettimuny told AFP in an interview at Lord's. "We were very keen to show up and do something decent so that the world took notice of us."

There was a seemingly unsettling incident when, even before a ball had been bowled, the Test was held up when Tamil protesters invaded the playing area.

Wettimuny, however, insisted: "That helped me tremendously. Not knowing what it was at first, I gradually moved towards the slip cordon because I was scared to be alone in the middle."

"They (the demonstrators) were shouting and the (England) players asked me what this was all about and in that two or three minutes of conversation with them, I think it was like the fizz in a soda bottle going out."

"I just forgot about cricket, forgot about batting and I was relaxed for a few minutes and then when I betted I just felt nice and relaxed."

Wettimuny repeatedly punished an England attack featuring Ian Botham with a series of textbook square-drives. Sri Lankan cricketers had long been schooled in traditional English methods, none more so than Wettimuny and his brothers.

"I'll tell you, my father has to be given all the credit," said Wettimuny. "He was a huge cricket enthusiast -- in fact he built the first indoor net in Sri Lanka."

"And he was a fan of CB Fry (the 19th/20th century England batsman). He made us read CB Fry's 'On the Art of Batting'. My goodness, he used to grill us on that."

"And he wanted us to play correct cricket."

Yet for all the current England team's dynamic Baseball approach, the Sri Lanka side of

1984 had a truly aggressive batsman of their own in captain Duleep Mendis.

Diminutive but powerful, Mendis several times hooked Botham bouncers for soaring sixes as he made 111 and the Sri Lanka skipper was within sight of another hundred in the second innings when he fell for 94.

"He was a phenomenal player when he got going," said Wettimuny of Mendis.

"The instruction I got from him at the start of play was 'you bat through, you just hold your end! It was very nice just to sit back and watch Duleep take the attack apart.'

Wettimuny obeyed his captain's orders to such an extent he batted for just short of 11 hours before, suffering with cramp, he was out 10 runs shy of a double century.

"People say, weren't you unhappy about what you didn't get? I just say I was happy with what I got," explained Wettimuny.

For many members of an England side 'blackwashed' 5-0 in a Test series by a West Indies side featuring fast bowlers such as Malcolm Marshall, Michael Holding and Joel Garner earlier in the 1984 season, a one-off encounter against Sri Lanka was not something to relish.

But for England quick Jonathan Agnew, though, it was an opportunity. "I was very excited because it was just my second Test," Agnew told AFP.

"But I was aware my teammates were absolutely beaten up, they had had a very torrid time, there'd been a lot of injuries, nasty injuries, and they'd just been bombed, they were just out of it really."

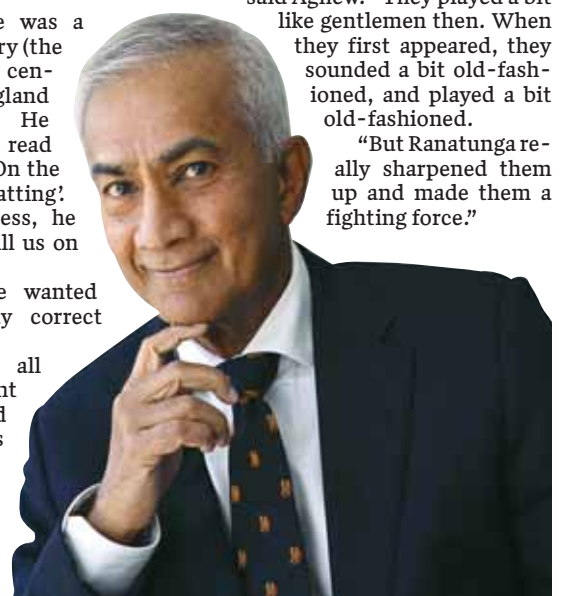
Agnew, now the BBC's long-serving cricket correspondent, added: "Sidath played really, really well, and he's become a good friend since. He batted immaculately and Duleep Mendis murdered 'Beefy' (Botham)."

The match was also notable for Arjuna Ranatunga making an impressive 84 aged just 20.

Ranatunga would go on to lead Sri Lanka to World Cup glory in 1996, having changed their approach to the game.

"They've hardened up a lot," said Agnew. "They played a bit like gentlemen then. When they first appeared, they sounded a bit old-fashioned, and played a bit old-fashioned."

"But Ranatunga really sharpened them up and made them a fighting force."



Castrillo climbs to Vuelta stage 15 win, Roglic closes in on red jersey

Spain's Pablo Castrillo pushed through the pain barrier to take stage 15 of the Vuelta a Espana yesterday, his second stage win, while Primoz Roglic took more time off race leader Ben O'Connor. Castrillo (Kern-Pharma) was part of a leading trio on the gruelling Cuitu Negru climb to the finish and made his move with three kilometres to the end of the 143km ride from Infiesto to Valgrane-Pajares. In the final kilometre he glanced

over his shoulder to see Aleksandr Vlasov (Red Bull-Bora-Hansgrohe) appear through the fog, but Castrillo found another burst of energy to hold off the Russian, with Pavel Sivakov of France coming in third.

Three-times former champion Primoz Roglic finished fifth, coming in 38 seconds ahead of the red jersey, Australia's Ben O'Connor, who now holds a slender 43-second lead going into the final week. (Reuters)



Team Kern-Pharma's Pablo Castrillo Zapater celebrates crossing the finish line in the mist to win the stage 15 of the Vuelta a Espana, a 143km race between Infiesto and Valgrane-Pajares, yesterday. (AFP)

FORMULA 1

Leclerc wins Italian GP, Verstappen falters

AFP
Monza, Italy

Charles Leclerc won the Italian Grand Prix yesterday to delight Ferrari's massed ranks of fans as Lando Norris again chipped away at struggling champion Max Verstappen's lead in the Formula One drivers' standings.

Monegasque Leclerc claimed victory at Monza for the second time after winning in 2019, holding off McLaren pair Oscar Piastri and Norris in a thrilling race in which Verstappen finished nearly 38 seconds off the pace in sixth.

Huge roars engulfed the stands as Leclerc took the chequered flag for his second win over the season, after his own home Monaco GP, after holding out on a set of hard tyres he had changed during his one and only pit stop on the 16th lap.

"I thought that the first time would feel like this and the second

time wouldn't feel as special," said Leclerc as he basked in the cheers of fans who made the track a joyous, noisy sea of red after the race.

"But my god the emotions in the last few laps; Monaco and Monza are the two races I want to win every year and I've managed to win them this year. It is so, so special."

All of Leclerc's major rivals, apart from teammate Carlos Sainz who ended up finishing fourth ahead of his Ferrari replacement Lewis Hamilton, pitted twice and McLaren were hoping that the Ferrari pair would do the same.

Instead Leclerc managed to keep his tyres in good enough condition to stay ahead and in the end finish the race comfortably in front of Piastri, who had taken the race lead early on after an overtake manoeuvre on Norris which was as daring as it was tactically questionable. "Not going to lie it hurts a lot. I did a lot of things right today," said Australian

Piastri. "Happy with the race, the pace I achieved but when you finish second it hurts."

Briton Norris – who clocked the fastest lap right at the end – will be disappointed by his finish after starting on pole but he managed to chop Verstappen's championship lead to 62 points with eight races remaining as his Dutch rival's barren run continued.

"We considered (pitting once) the whole race but it was impossible with our graining. Just disappointed. Ferrari did a better job, so hats off to them," said Norris.

Verstappen has now failed to win any of the last six GPs after claiming the honours in seven of the first 10, and his and Red Bull's dominance of F1 looks increasingly in question. A fourth straight world title looked a near certainty when Verstappen won in Spain back in June, but since then he has only finished on the podium twice.

And his teammate Sergio Perez finishing in eighth meant that

McLaren are now only eight points behind Red Bull in the constructor's standings and look favourites to win it for the first time since 1998.

Argentine rookie Franco Colapinto, who replaced axed Logan Sargeant for Williams following his disastrous showing at the Dutch Grand Prix last weekend, finish in 12th in his F1 debut.

Earlier Leonardo Fomoro became the first Italian to win the F3 title, the 19-year-old doing so without winning a single race in this year's championship.

Trident driver Fomoro overtook Australian Christian Mansell on the final corner of the 10-race season to grab third place and snatch the title from Gabriele Mini by two points. Gabriel Bortoletto won the F2 race in dramatic fashion after starting last on the grid, cutting Isack Hadjar's lead at the top of the stands to just 10.5 points with three races remaining in the season.



Ferrari's Monegasque driver Charles Leclerc celebrates on the podium after winning the Italian Formula One Grand Prix race at Autodromo Nazionale Monza circuit yesterday. (AFP)

TENNIS

Dimitrov back in US Open last-eight after five years

Badosa beats Wang Yafan to enter second major quarter-final

AFP
New York

Grigor Dimitrov returned to the US Open quarter-finals for the first time since 2019 with a five-set triumph over Andrey Rublev yesterday.

Ninth seed Dimitrov came through 6-3, 7-6 (7/3), 1-6, 3-6, 6-3 to set up a clash with either Frances Tiafoe of the United States or Alexei Popyrin, the conqueror of Novak Djokovic, for a place in the semi-finals. The 33-year-old Dimitrov made the semi-finals in 2019 where he was defeated by Daniil Medvedev having stunned five-time champion Roger Federer in the quarter-finals.

"I was playing fairly good," said Dimitrov, the oldest player left in the men's draw.

"But for some reason my body got tired a little bit and he wasn't going to give up the match. I had stay patient. I think the biggest thing today was my experience."

Dimitrov saved 13 of 18 break points in the match and credited long-time friend and six-time women's champion Serena Williams for a helping hand.

"She gave me a good pep talk yesterday," he said of the US tennis legend who was watching the match in Arthur Ashe Stadium.

Earlier, Paula Badosa reached the quarter-finals for the first time by conquering Wang Yafan as well as New York's suffocating humidity before hailing her battling return from a potentially career-ending injury.

The 26th-seeded Spaniard came through 6-1, 6-2 for her best Grand Slam result since she considered quitting the sport earlier this year. Despite the one-sided scoreline, the first two games took 17 minutes to complete while Badosa saved all eight break points she faced.

"It was so humid I thought I was going to die," said the 26-year-old New York-born player of the humidity which hit 85 percent at noon. "I knew she was tough but



Grigor Dimitrov of Bulgaria celebrates his victory over Andrey Rublev of Russia in the US Open fourth round match yesterday. (AFP)

I'm tougher." Badosa is the first Spanish woman to make the quarter-finals since Carla Suarez Navarro in 2018 while it has been 28 years since a Spaniard last reached the semi-finals.

That honour fell to Conchita Martinez in 1996.

Badosa, who played Roland Garros quarter-finals in 2021, will take on either defending champion Coco Gauff or Emma Navarro for a place in the semi-finals. Her progress to the quarter-finals marks a substantial turnaround in Badosa's fortunes.

She suffered a stress fracture to her back at Wimbledon last year which sidelined her for the rest of the season. The former world

number two returned in January but was forced to retire from three events as the issues with her back continued to be a burden on her confidence as well as her body. At the end of the clay court season, when her ranking had plummeted to 139, she pondered retirement.

"I was feeling pain every day I was waking up. So for me, it didn't make sense. Also tennis doesn't make sense if I'm not on the top," she said. "I want to play big stages. I want to play the last rounds of every tournament. I want to be one of the best players in the world."

"Then is when I feel motivated and excited every day. If not, for me being in the ranking I was two months ago, didn't make any

sense and I struggle a lot mentally being in that position."

A career-best run to the fourth round at Wimbledon in July reignited the spark before a title triumph on the hard courts of Washington took her back to the top 40. A semi-final appearance in Cincinnati restored her top 30 status. "I always had faith in myself, I had this belief that I could come back," she said.

"I knew it was going to be a process that I had to trust, that I had to be patient, but I remember saying to my coach, look, I'm going to give myself this year, and let's see if this can work out. "Well, it's working, so I cannot complain. I'm happy with that."

MOTOGP

Marquez ends long title drought in Aragon

AFP
Alcañiz, Spain

Marc Marquez conjured a magical performance in front of his home fans at the Aragon MotoGP yesterday to end a three-year winless run. He took the chequered flag by almost five seconds from Jorge Martin with rookie Pedro Acosta in third.

The six-time MotoGP champion, whose last grand prix win was back in 2021, completed a dream weekend after claiming Saturday's sprint by an equally wide margin on his Ducati satellite Gresini bike.

Marquez soaked up the moment with a victory lap, hopping off his bike to kiss the ground and perform an impromptu dance in front of his ecstatic supporters.

"Amazing race" he beamed. "It's incredible to win in front of the fans. With all the pace, it was difficult to focus riding the last 10 laps."

Martin now leads the riders standings by 23 points after double world champion Francesco Bagnaia crashed out, five laps from the line.

Marquez had been knocking at the door all season, with eight runner-up finishes in sprints and races combined.

At Aragon, in front of massed ranks of adoring supporters, the Spaniard blasted that door wide open.

The master of Motorland had seized pole with a peerless qualifying display, claiming the front row by 0.84 sec, a margin of supremacy not seen in over a decade.

He then turned the sprint into a procession, leading across the line almost three seconds clear of Jorge Martin.

Having tucked away Saturday's appetiser, he proceeded to wolf down Sunday's main course with the appetite of a rider much younger than his 31 years.

Marquez enjoyed a trouble-free getaway, leading Acosta into the first corner as Bagnaia slipped from third to sixth.

He quickly pulled more than two seconds clear of the chasing pack.

With 10 laps to go the only thing standing between Marquez and a memorable victory was one of his infamous tumbles.

– 1,043 days of hurt – But he wasn't about to let this opportunity slip through his fingers. He took the chequered flag a yawning 4.789sec from Martin who said: "I'm happy for Marc, so happy for him after such a long three years".

The only drama came late on when brother Alex Marquez and Bagnaia collided, both crashing out.

The dream double for Marc Marquez, not only dissipated 1,043 days of hurt since his last Grand Prix win on October 24, 2021, at Emilia Romagna.

It also moved him up to third in the standings on 229pts, and vindicated the decision by Ducati to pick him over Jorge Martin as Bagnaia's teammate on the factory bike next season.

It should be quite a ride in 2025, the two motorbike titans, with 10 world title between them, going toe-to-toe under the same garage roof.

Bagnaia last month forecast, with a hefty dose of humour, that their relationship would be either "super good or a disaster".

Yesterday's success kept Marquez firmly in the hunt for a seventh title in the top category and a ninth in all.

That is a scenario that must have seemed a forlorn prospect during the dark days of injuries and crashes that derailed his last few tortuous seasons.

That rotten luck began 26 laps into the 2020 season at Jerez.

A crash fractured his right arm, ruling Marquez out for the rest of that year and then the first two races of 2021.

Four surgeries, multiple crashes, and a diagnosis of diplopia, or double vision, followed as Marquez took a battering both physically and mentally.

But yesterday that was all swept aside as he notched up his first win for his new team since jumping bike from Honda.

Celebrating in front of supporters wildly waving flags bearing his race number 93 – the year of his birth – he gave the impression this meant as much as any of his previous 59 MotoGP wins.

Given all he has endured, Marquez had considered retiring by the end of last season if things didn't improve.

As he left Aragon, hanging up his motorbike leathers was the last thing on his mind.



Spanish rider Marc Marquez celebrates on the podium after winning the MotoGP Aragon Grand Prix at the Motorland circuit in Alcañiz, northeastern Spain, yesterday. (AFP)

DENMARK'S NORGAARD WINS BRITISH MASTERS

London: Niklas Norgaard won his first European Tour title as the Dane survived a tense final round at the British Masters yesterday. Norgaard hit 72 at The Belfry to finish on 16 under par, just two shots clear of South Africa's Thriston Lawrence.

The 32-year-old's four-shot overnight lead was cut to a single stroke after he struggled to the turn in 37 while Lawrence birdied the 10th and 11th. Norgaard responded superbly by making a birdie on the par-three

12th, where Lawrence missed the green and a par putt from inside three feet.

The two-shot swing left Norgaard three ahead and another long-range birdie on the 14th restored his overnight cushion.

But from just right of the green on the next hole, Norgaard miscued three straight chips before two-putting from the fringe for a double-bogey seven. That cut his lead in half and Lawrence looked set to get within a shot after leaving a long eagle putt on the 17th just

two feet from the hole. Norgaard holed from 10 feet for birdie to remain two clear and a par on the 18th made him the third Danish player to win the British Masters after Thomas Bjorn in 2005 and Thorbjorn Olesen in 2022.

"You have no idea how much it means," Norgaard said. "I've been dreaming of this since I was 10 years old."

"I've had kind of a long career, just moving slowly ahead and every year getting a little bit better. I've never won on the Challenge Tour,

nothing like that, so to win here for a first win I feel very good. "I was trying not to think about it too much but this morning I almost threw up at breakfast, I was just so nervous. "I'm just really bad at chipping sometimes, but luckily I made a few putts coming in and the way I bounced back I'm really proud."

Asked about winning the first Ryder Cup qualifying event ahead of the 2025 edition, Norgaard added: "I didn't even know. That's a good start!" (AFP)

PREMIER LEAGUE

Liverpool rout woeful United, Chelsea held

Isak's strike secures Newcastle United a 2-1 victory over Tottenham Hotspur

AFP
London

Luis Diaz starred as Liverpool routed arch rivals Manchester United 3-0 to extend their perfect start under new boss Arne Slot, while Chelsea suffered fresh frustration in a 1-1 draw against Crystal Palace yesterday.

Hired from Feyenoord to succeed Jurgen Klopp in the close-season, Slot has overseen three successive wins in a flying start to the new era at Liverpool. The Reds sit second in the Premier League, behind champions Manchester City on goals scored, after handing United an embarrassing loss that finished with thousands of empty seats at Old Trafford.

Diaz and Mohamed Salah were United's chief tormentors as the Liverpool forwards tore Erik ten Hag's side to pieces with their pace and predatory finishing. Diaz put Liverpool ahead with a 35th-minute header from Salah's cross after United midfielder Casemiro carelessly conceded possession.

Casemiro was guilty of surrendering the ball too easily again when Diaz converted another Salah assist with a cool finish seven minutes later. Salah put the result beyond doubt in the 52nd minute, netting for the third time this season with a fierce strike from Dominik Szoboszlai's pass.

Slot is the first permanent Liverpool manager to win his first league game against United since Bob Paisley in 1975. The Dutchman is also the first manager to win each of his first three Premier League games without conceding a single goal since Sven-Goran Eriksson at Manchester City in 2007. "If you go to Old Trafford we know there will be tough moments. After scoring a great goal which was disallowed we kept on playing as we were before. A deserved win I think," Slot said.

The only potential issue for Slot was Salah's post-match revelation that this could be his last season at Anfield. "I had a good summer, I had a long time just to stay with myself and try to think positive because as you know it's my last year in the club," he said. "I don't want to think about it but I just feel I'm free to play football and we'll see what can happen next year."

United boss Ten Hag is under pressure after a woeful display that came hot on the heels of their 2-1 defeat at Brighton last weekend. Ten Hag survived a close-season



Liverpool's Luis Diaz (right) is fouled by Manchester United's Matthijs de Ligt during the Premier League match in Manchester. (Reuters)

review into his job, which including United speaking to former Bayern Munich boss Thomas Tuchel about potentially replacing him.

But while last season's surprise FA Cup final win over Manchester City saved his job, he cannot afford another poor league campaign after finishing eighth in 2023/24. "It's quite simple. It was equal after half an hour then we made two big mistakes and Liverpool took them really well," Ten Hag said. "We will be fine. We have to improve, we know that. Today we have to take this but we will bounce back."

Enzo Maresca's Chelsea have won only once in the first three league games of the Italian's reign after a chaotic close-season.

Beaten by Manchester City on the opening weekend, Chelsea powered to a 6-2 win at Wolves last weekend before scraping into the Conference League group stage after a 2-1 loss at Servette on Thursday.

Chelsea failed to kill off Palace after Noni Madueke picked out Cole Palmer and his pass was slotted home by Nicolas Jackson in the 25th minute. Maresca was furious after Palace midfielder Will Hughes avoided a second yellow card for a foul on Palmer. Palace made the most of that escape to draw level in the 53rd minute when England midfielder Eberechi Eze unfurled a superb curling finish from 20 yards.

"If they had been with 10 I think the game would have completely changed," Maresca

said of the Hughes incident. "It was clear for all of us it was a second yellow card. The only one that thinks in a different way is the referee."

At St James' Park, Newcastle punished profligate Tottenham with a 2-1 victory. Harvey Barnes put Newcastle ahead and Dan Burn's own goal drew Tottenham level before Alexander Isak's 78th-minute winner. Unbeaten Newcastle's second win in three league games condemned Tottenham to a first defeat this term. "It's massive, isn't it?" Newcastle boss Eddie Howe said. "You need to win at any stage but I think when there's difficult moments – and this transfer window has been tough for us – then it's even more important."

Salah hints at Liverpool exit

Manchester: Mohamed Salah hinted this will be his final season at Liverpool after scoring his 15th goal against Manchester United in a resounding 3-0 win for the visitors at Old Trafford yesterday. Salah has less than a year left to run on his contract at Anfield and said no discussions have taken place with the club on extending his deal. The Egyptian has written himself into the record books of the English giants, scoring 214 goals since joining in 2017.

"I had a good summer and had a long time to myself to try to stay positive because as you know it's my last year at the club," Salah said. "I just want to enjoy it and I don't want to think about it. I feel like I'm free to play football and then we'll see what happens next year."

Salah set up two goals for Luis Diaz before extending his record as the top goalscorer in meetings between United and Liverpool by scoring for the seventh consecutive game at Old Trafford. "To be fair I was coming to the game, it could be the last time (playing at Old Trafford)," he said. "Nobody in the club has talked to me about contracts. It is not up to me, it is up to the club."

Salah signed a three-year deal in 2022 that reportedly made him the highest paid player in the club's history, worth more than £18mn a year. But he has been consistently linked with a lucrative move to the Saudi Pro League. A year ago Liverpool reportedly rejected a bid of £150mn from Al Ittihad.

The 32-year-old is just one of three major Liverpool players out of contract at the end of the season, along with captain Virgil van Dijk and Trent Alexander-Arnold. However, on the field all is well for the Reds as new manager Arne Slot has made a serene start to the daunting task of replacing Jurgen Klopp.

Liverpool have won their first three Premier League games without conceding to sit behind Manchester City at the top of the table on goals scored. "It's a great result. Everyone knows it's very important for the city and for the fans – and for the manager with his first game in here," added Salah.

Slot refused to be drawn on whether this will definitely be Salah's farewell season and how the Reds can possibly go around replacing him. "It's a lot of it, but for the moment he is one of ours," said Slot.

Wathnan Racing's Aesterius triumphs



Runner-up of the Group 3 Jaeger-Lecoultré Molecomb Stakes at Goodwood on last outing, the two-year-old Aesterius confirmed previous good runs by landing the Group 3 Prix d'Arenberg at Parislongchamp in Paris. Aesterius is owned by Wathnan Racing and trained by Archie Watson. Ridden by James Doyle, the British-trained colt was fast away from the stalls and made all. With Treasure Isle on the girth of the leader, Aesterius was quickly on top of his rivals. Kaadi was a good second while Treasure Isle came third.

Monaco held by Lens

Paris: Monaco's perfect start to the Ligue 1 season ended yesterday as Przemyslaw Frankowski's stoppage-time penalty earned Lens a 1-1 draw in searing heat in the principality.

It looked as if Monaco were going to claim a third win in as many matches this season when Denis Zakaria deflected a shot with his hand in his own area, and the referee gave Lens a spot-kick after a VAR check. Polish international Frankowski stepped up to convert the penalty four minutes into stoppage time, and both sides are level on seven points in the fledgling table, behind leaders

Marseille on goal difference. The final result was a boost for Lens after they were knocked out of the UEFA Conference League during the week, losing to Panathinaikos in Greece in their play-off tie to miss out on a place in the league stage.

Monaco will be in the Champions League after finishing last season as runners-up in Ligue 1, and the principality side will begin their campaign at home to Barcelona on September 19.

Marseille are top after Mason Greenwood scored twice in Saturday's 3-1 win at Toulouse. Reigning champions PSG were playing Lille late last night, with both sides knowing a win will allow them to go clear at the summit.

Elsewhere yesterday, Nice claimed their first win of the season as Evann Guessand scored twice in a 4-1 victory at Angers, who have lost all three matches since returning to the top flight. Le Havre came from behind to beat Auxerre 3-1 in Normandy.

BUNDESLIGA

Record-breaker Mueller scores in Bayern's win

AFP
Munich

Bayern Munich veteran Thomas Mueller scored on the day he became the German giants' all-time record appearance maker in a 2-0 Bundesliga home win over Freiburg yesterday.

Mueller, in his 710th match for Bayern, came off the bench in the 59th minute with the hosts leading 1-0 thanks to a first-half penalty from Harry Kane. With 12 minutes remaining, Mueller collected a Serge Gnabry pass on the turn and blasted in, the ball skipping off the ground and past Freiburg goalkeeper Florian Mueller.

Mueller, who played his first game for the club in 2008, moved past former goalkeeper Sepp Maier to outright first on the appearance list in all competitions. "Records don't matter that much to me... more important is that today I could score a pretty nice goal – one which was technically outstanding," the veteran said with a smile.

Kane had converted a 38th-minute penalty to give Bayern the lead after a VAR review showed the ball hit the arm of an unsighted Freiburg captain Christian Guenter.

Guenter said his side were brought down by "an insane penalty, really an insane penalty." "When you jump, of course your arms go up – if that's handball, I'll stop playing because it's nonsense. Maybe the German FA can start teaching us to jump without our arms."

Kane's goal was his first so far this league season, with the England captain receiving an award for topping the Bundesliga goalscoring charts with 36 last season. In the fifth minute of stoppage time, Joao Palhinha gave away a penalty for handball on his Bundesliga debut for Bayern, but Freiburg's Lucas Hoeler fired the spot-kick over the crossbar.

After the match, Mueller climbed into the stands to celebrate with the club's ultras, giving away both his boots. "I told them they need to work hard this year because they'll need extra vacation days – we've got a lot ahead of us



Bayern Munich's Thomas Mueller celebrates after scoring against Freiburg during the Bundesliga match in Munich yesterday. (AFP)

this year," Mueller said.

The win continued Vincent Kompany's perfect record in charge of Bayern, having won three from three in all competitions to start the season. Kompany, who was on the opposite side playing for Hamburg when Mueller made his Bundesliga debut in 2008, praised the "incredible" Mueller.

"I experienced his first match – I was on the pitch with Hamburg at the time. 710 later, it's unbelievable," said the Belgian. "He gave 100 percent in every one of those games but also does so in training, which is what makes Thomas so special." Freiburg have never won at Bayern in the league, a run of 25 games dating back to 1993.

Teenage Bayern loanee Paul Wanner scored a penalty and set up a goal as Heidenheim thrashed Augsburg 4-0. The 18-year-old forward, who has three goals in three games in all competitions this season, stepped up to score

a penalty after nine minutes, becoming the youngest player to convert a spot-kick in Bundesliga history.

Wanner created a goal for Adrian Beck, while Leo Scienza and Maximilian Breunig also got on the scoresheet in the dominant home win. Heidenheim, promoted to the top division for the first time ahead of last season, will host Premier League side Chelsea in the Conference League in November as part of their debut European campaign.

Wanner played a key role in Thursday's Conference League play-off win over Swedish side Hacken, scoring a goal and laying on an assist. The victory sent Heidenheim, who won their opener at promoted St Pauli, to the top of the table at the end of the round for the first time in their history. Heidenheim are ahead of RB Leipzig and Bayern on goal difference, making the trio the only clubs to have won their two opening fixtures.

DOMINANT GIRONA EASE TO 2-0 VICTORY AT SEVILLA

Madrid: Goals by Ivan Martin and Abel Ruiz in each half gave Girona a comfortable 2-0 win at Sevilla in a La Liga clash yesterday. Last season's surprise package Girona dominated proceedings from early on against a tame Sevilla, who are winless in

four games to start the season. Martin opened the scoring in the 41st minute with a tap in to the empty net from a Miguel Gutierrez cross to the six-yard-box and Ruiz secured the points in the 73rd minute from the penalty spot following a

handball inside the box by Sevilla forward Isaac Romero.

Girona moved to fourth in the La Liga standings on seven points, five behind leaders Barcelona who they face next. Sevilla are second from bottom on two points.