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**TENNIS**

Draper, Medvedev advance as champ Gauff humbled at US Open

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**ARSHAD FINISHES SIXTH IN 100M T34 FINAL AT PARIS PARALYMPICS**



Qatar's wheelchair racer Ali Arshad finished sixth in the men's 100m T34 final at the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games at Stade de France yesterday. Arshad, who clocked a personal best of 15.20 secs in the qualifying round on Sunday, finished the final in 15.42 secs with Thailand's Chaiwat Rattana clinching the gold medal with a time of 14.76 secs - his personal best mark and area record. Tunisia's world record holder Walid Ktila claimed silver medal in 15.14 secs while Canada's Austin Smeenk took the bronze after clocking 15.19 secs. Australia's Rheed Mccracken (15.31 secs) and UAE's Mohamed Othman (15.40 secs) respectively completed the top five in yesterday's final. Arshad's time was better than Finland's Henry Manni (15.64 secs) and China's Wenhao Gong (15.67 secs), who finished in seventh and eighth positions respectively. The Qatar athlete will now look for his maiden Paralympic medal in the 800m T34 event which will start on Friday. "I am overall satisfied with my performance in the 100m because it was a tough field," Ali said after the event. "I am hoping to be better in the 800m event as I have gained good experience now."

**SPOTLIGHT**

**Qatar QTerminals Classic attracts top squash stars again**

This year's event will feature both men's and women's draw

By Sports Reporter  
Doha

The 21st edition of the highly-anticipated Qatar QTerminals Classic is set to showcase top-quality professional squash action in Doha at the Khalifa International Tennis & Squash Complex from September 30th to October 5th.

This year's event will feature both men's and women's draw, building on the success of the previous year, with reigning champions Ali Farag and Hania El Hammamy returning to defend their titles.

Farag, the men's top seed and a three-time winner of the Qatar Classic, will be aiming to continue his dominance on the Khalifa Complex glass court. Farag's triumph in the 2023 event was part of his exceptional season, where he secured seven victories, making it his best season ever on the PSA Squash Tour. In his opening round, Farag will face the talented Indian player Ramit Tandon.

New Zealand's Paul Coll, the world No 2, had an outstanding 23/24 campaign, clinching four titles, including two Platinum level events and one Gold level event. Coll was one of only two players who managed to defeat world No 1 Ali Farag multiple times last season. With adjustments made to his game during the summer, Coll will be eager to surpass his previous achievements and challenge for the top spot in the world rankings.

Diego Elias, the newly crowned world champion, and Mostafa Asal, the recent British Open champion, are the No 3 and No 4 seeds respectively. Both players will be aiming to close the gap on Farag and Coll in the rankings. Elias, who claimed his first Platinum event title in the Qatar Classic in 2021, will look to carry his World Championships form into this tournament. Asal, featuring in his third Qatar Classic, will be determined to surpass his previous semi-final exits and add more major titles to his name after his recent British Open success.

Local favourite Abdulla Al Tamimi, Qatar's No 1, will rely on home advantage as he competes in his ninth Qatar Classic. Al-Tamimi's best finish came in 2022 when he reached the quarter-finals. In this year's edition, he faces a tough challenge in the first round against No 3 seed Mostafa Asal and will need all the support



Ali Farag, the men's top seed and a three-time winner of the Qatar Classic, will be aiming to continue his dominance at the Khalifa International Tennis and Squash Complex.

available to score a win over the world No 3.

On the women's side, defending champion Hania El Hammamy will be looking to regain her top form after a challenging second half of the previous season. El Hammamy, currently ranked world No 3, claimed two Platinum event titles last season, including the prestigious British Open. She will face USA's Sabrina Sobhy in her opening fixture as she looks to re-join the race for world No 1.

Nour ElSherbini, the top seed, aims to go one step further this year and secure the title after finishing as the runner-up in the last two women's events held in Qatar. ElSherbini, who tops the draw for the second consecutive year, will face former world No 3 Joelle King in the first round.

Nouran Gohar, the No 2 seed, ended the 23/24 season in exceptional form, winning five consecutive events, including her first World

Championships title. Gohar has closed the gap between herself and ElSherbini at the top of the world rankings and is determined to dethrone her compatriot. With her powerful and relentless style of play, Gohar will be a formidable force throughout the season.

Meanwhile, the Organising Committee of QTerminals Qatar Classic Squash Championship 2024 has announced that tickets for the event will be on sale online starting September 1, while tickets will be available at the sales outlet at the Khalifa International Tennis and Squash Complex soon.

On the occasion, Tariq Zainal, Secretary-General of the Qatar Tennis, Squash, Padel and Badminton Federation and Tournament Director, stated: "We are pleased to announce the hosting of a new edition of the QTerminals Qatar Classic Squash, and we are eagerly looking forward to welcoming all the players."

**PARIS PARALYMPICS**

**Guity wins battle of amputee sprinters**

AFP  
Paris

Sherman Guity of Costa Rica was a clear winner of the eagerly awaited men's T64 100m at the Paralympics yesterday, leaving the world's fastest amputee sprinters in his wake.

Guity crossed the line in a Paralympic record of 10.65sec ahead of world champion Maxcel Amo Manu from Italy who clocked 10.76sec. Reigning Paralympic champion Felix Streg of Germany picked up the bronze medal one hundredth of a second further back.

"I am very happy with this result. I didn't expect it. I ran against very strong athletes. It was a Paralympic final and I had to give it my all," 27-year-old Guity said.

Two-time champion Jonnie Peacock of Great Britain had to settle for fifth place in 10.91sec and US sprinter Hunter Woodhall, whose wife is newly crowned women's Olympic long jump champion Tara Davis-Woodhall, was sixth in 10.96sec.

Earlier, 19-year-old American Ezra Frech won the first Paralympic title of his career by taking a closely-fought T63 100m in a personal best time of 12.06sec. The Californian, an above-the-knee amputee, ran into the arms of his family in the front row at the Stade de France after crossing the line.

Frech revealed he had only been using the 100m as preparation for his favourite event, the high jump, today. "I was treating this as like a warm-up for high jump. Go out there, get the blood flowing, have a good race, and then come back tomorrow and win high jump,"

he said. "But at about 50 metres, I was like, whoa, I'm in this, I got a good start, I've done everything right... I felt like everybody (else in the race) was sleeping on me. I'm happy with the gold, but I'm definitely not satisfied. I'm still hungry. Tomorrow night, I'll get the gold in the high jump." Frech was also fifth in the long jump earlier in these Games.

**GABRIELZINHO WINS THIRD SWIMMING GOLD**

Brazilian swimmer Gabrielzinho said he felt like "a rocketman" after he won his third gold medal of the Paris Paralympics when he raced to victory in the 200 metres freestyle S2 final with another remarkable performance.

The 22-year-old, who has no arms or hands and whose legs are atrophied, clocked 3min 58.92sec in the La Defense Arena, with neutral athlete Vladimir Danilenko and Chile's Alberto Abarza Diaz finishing second and third respectively. The third gold for the Brazilian, whose full name is Gabriel Geraldo dos Santos Araujo, follows his successes in the 100m backstroke and 50m backstroke.

"It's a feeling of a mission accomplished, a duty accomplished. Because I came to Paris to get the three golds," said Gabrielzinho. "So I'm really happy!"

At Tokyo 2020, the Brazilian picked up two golds and one silver. Now he has achieved his goal of going one better. Speaking after the race, silver medallist Danilenko described Gabrielzinho as "the rocketman".

It was a statement the Brazilian later agreed with, adding with a chuckle.



Hunter Woodhall of United States, Sherman Guity of Costa Rica and Felix Streg of Germany in action during the men's 100m T64 Final at Paris Paralympics yesterday. (Reuters)

CRICKET

# Bold Bangladesh eye historic Test series sweep in Pakistan

PACERS HASAN MAHMUD AND NAHID RANA SHARE NINE WICKETS AS BANGLADESH SCENT WIN

AFP  
Rawalpindi

**P**acemen Hasan Mahmud and Nahid Rana shared nine wickets yesterday to set Bangladesh on course for victory over Pakistan before rain stopped play on the fourth day of the second Test.

Hasan took 5-43 while Nahid added 4-44 - both career-best figures - in dismissing Pakistan for 172 in their second innings and giving the visitors a target of 185 to secure a 2-0 series win in Rawalpindi.

Openers Zakir Hasan and Shadman Islam raced to 42 without loss, with Zakir hitting two sixes and two boundaries, before rain clouds gathered and bad light suspended play one over after the tea break.

Bangladesh lead the two-match series 1-0 after a surprise win in Rawalpindi last month, their first in 14 Tests against Pakistan.

They have won only two series away from home - against the West Indies in 2009 and Zimbabwe in 2021 - and need another 143 runs on the final day yesterday to secure victory.

Pakistan head coach Jason Gillespie acknowledged that Bangladesh were favourites.

"The odds are probably in favour of Bangladesh and we don't



Bangladesh's Nahid Rana bowls during the fourth day of the second and last Test against Pakistan at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium in Rawalpindi yesterday. (AFP)

shy away from that," said Gillespie, who is coaching Pakistan for his first series. "We know what can happen, but we took six for 26 in the first innings so we know that we can have an impact with the ball."

Pakistan had been 117-6 at lunch, with Mohamed Rizwan and Salman Agha fighting to save the hosts before Hasan ended their 55-run stand.

Hasan had Rizwan caught behind for 43 and had Mohamed Ali caught in the slips on the next ball for a golden duck to leave Pakistan

teetering on 136-8. Salman, who top-scored with 47, added 27 for the last wicket with Mir Hamza before Hasan wrapped up the innings with his fifth wicket, getting Hamza caught in the slip.

"It's very joyful," Hasan said of his first five-wicket haul. "We're very happy to win the first game and now have a chance to win another one."

"We tried to bowl according to our plans and kept taking wickets," he said.

"I am delighted that I contrib-



Bangladesh's Hasan Mahmud (second left) celebrates with teammates after taking the wicket of Pakistan's Mohamed Rizwan at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium yesterday. (AFP)

uted to my team's good position." The morning session belonged to 21-year-old Nahid, who dismissed Shan Masood (28), Babar Azam (11) and Saud Shakeel (two).

Pakistan took their overnight score of 9-2 to 47-2 in 10 overs on Monday before Bangladesh broke through with three wickets for 18 runs.

Saim Ayub fell for 20 to a bril-

liant catch by Najmul Hossain at mid-off as the opener failed to keep down a drive off fast bowler Taskin Ahmed.

Nahid then had Pakistan skipper Masood caught behind by Liton off a wild shot before getting the prized wicket of Azam, caught at slip off a sharp delivery in his next over.

Nahid grabbed his third by dis-

missing Shakeel and went to lunch with figures of 3-22 off five overs.

**BRIEF SCORES**  
**Bangladesh 262 and 42 for 0** (Zakir 31\*) need another 143 runs to beat **Pakistan 274 and 172** (Agha 47, Rizwan 43, Mahmud 5-43, Nahid 4-44)  
**First Test:** Bangladesh won by 10 wickets

## SMALL FOURTH-DAY CROWD AT LORD'S A WORRY FOR ENGLAND CAPTAIN POPE

**LONDON:** England stand-in captain Ollie Pope said he had been surprised by the meagre attendance at Lord's on Sunday as his side wrapped up a convincing series victory over Sri Lanka.

While the opening three days of the match saw the ground close to its 31,000 capacity, only some 9,000 spectators were present as England completed a 190-run win after tea on the fourth day of the second Test to take an unassailable 2-0 lead in a three-match contest.

Large crowds for Tests have long been taken for granted at Lord's, which styles itself as the 'Home of Cricket'.

The cost of tickets may have been an issue, however, with the cheapest price for adults on Sunday morning starting at £95 (\$125) - although Under-16s were admitted for £15. England's encounter with the West Indies at Lord's in July, part of a 3-0 whitewash of the Caribbean side, was all over inside three days and that may have had an impact on advance

fourth-day sales as well. The lack of spectators was certainly noticed by Pope. "It was kind of weird," he said. "I think a few of us have been strolling in each day and it was just like 'jeez, it seems quiet today'. I'm not sure if people expected the game to be done by day four or not."

**'Smashed it'**  
On the field, Gus Atkinson extended his Lord's love affair with a five-wicket haul on Sunday after the fast bowler scored his maiden first-class hundred in England's first innings. The 26-year-old also took 12 wickets on his Test debut, against the West Indies at Lord's in July.

"He's smashed it so far in his Test career," said Pope of Surrey teammate Atkinson. "I'm sure he's just going to keep developing and get better and better as a Test bowler." Joe Root's twin hundreds in this match meant he set a new England record of 34 centuries in a Test career, but Pope has yet to reach 20

in four innings since taking charge this series in the absence of the injured Ben Stokes.

"I'm not going to put down my average shots to the fact that I was captain this week," said Pope ahead of a third Test at his Oval home ground starting on Friday.

Sri Lanka skipper Dhananjanaya de Silva, who made one of three fifties for the tourists on Sunday along with Dinesh Chandimal and Dimuth Karunaratne, admitted he had erred in opting to field first after winning the toss. De Silva's decision was compounded by Sri Lanka only managing 196 in reply to England's first-innings 427.

"We need to do well in the first innings - a minimum of 320 is a must," he said. But with England 216-6 in their first innings, Sri Lanka were in the game only for Root and Atkinson to regain the initiative for the hosts. "Once the ball had got soft, Joe Root smartly started rotating the strike and put the loose ball away to the boundary," said De Silva. "We lost the grip of the game after that."



Empty seats are pictured in the stands at Lord's Cricket Ground in London on Sunday. (Reuters)

## AGCFF REFEREES SEMINAR HELD IN DOHA



A referees assessors seminar involving the member countries of the Arab Gulf Cup Football Federation (AGCFF), which lasted for three days, concluded yesterday at the InterContinental Doha. The closing ceremony was attended by Hani Taleb Ballan, Chairman of the Referees Committee at Qatar Football Association (QFA), who distributed certificates among the participants in the seminar. International lecturers Ali al-Turaifi and Ismail al-Hafi headlined the seminar with their speeches. Ballan conveyed to them the greetings of President of AGCFF HE Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa bin Ahmed al-Thani and thanked the lecturers for their presence to help develop the refereeing system in the Gulf region. Ballan underlined the support of AGCFF president and urged referees to deliver their best on the field of play during Gulf Clubs Championship, AGCFF League Champions (which will be launched for the first time this year) and the 26th Arabian Gulf Cup, which is scheduled to be held in December this year in the State of Kuwait. Secretary-General of AGCFF Jassim al-Rumaihi was also present.



## MOTORSPORT

# Horner says Red Bull are caught in a vicious circle

Reuters  
Monza, Italy

**R**ed Bull's loss of form after dominating last season stems from car balance issues creating a vicious circle for the Formula One champions, according to team boss Christian Horner.

The team won 21 of 22 races in 2023, the most one-sided campaign ever, with triple champion Max Verstappen taking 19 of those victories.

Sunday's Italian Grand Prix stretched Red Bull and Verstappen's losing streak to six races and left the Dutch driver 62 points clear of McLaren's Lando Norris with eight rounds remaining.

Verstappen told reporters at Monza after finishing sixth that his car had become a monster, and felt both titles were now at risk.

"I think this circuit has exposed the deficiencies that we have in the car versus last year," said Horner, speaking to media in the team hospitality.

"You can see that we have a disconnection in balance that just isn't working.

"As soon as you end up in that situation, you're harder on tyres. You end up compensating, you move the balance around, you secure one problem and you create another. So you just end up in a vicious circle.

"I think it's been there for some



Red Bull's Sergio Perez and team principal Christian Horner (right) before practice at the Italian Grand Prix inside Autodromo Nazionale Monza on Saturday. (Reuters)

time. I think actually really going through the data, there were issues there at the beginning of the year in the characteristic.

"I think others have obviously made a step and as we've pushed the package harder it's exposed the issue."

Some of that, he added, had been seen as far back as Austin last year when Red Bull were three races into a seven-race winning run.

The Briton said Verstappen and team mate Sergio Perez had tried to compensate by calming the rear of the car but that had consequences for the front, resulting in understeer and excessive

tyre wear. He said Ferrari winning rather than McLaren was a help but Red Bull needed to find a quick solution or suffer the consequences.

"Based on today's performance, you'd say both (titles) are under absolute pressure," he added. "We were the fourth fastest car today and that's the reality. We've got to turn it around."

Horner recognised there was a discrepancy between the data emerging from the wind tunnel and that seen at the track but said the McLaren appeared to be simpler and more effective.

"Perhaps we've gone a little too complex and perhaps we need to

simplify a few things," he added. "When the car is in the (performance) window, it works as predicted or closer to prediction. But that window is so small, that's what we have to work on. We have to broaden its operating window."

Despite Verstappen's concern, Horner said the champion was showing no sign of panic.

"He's working with the engineers, he's explaining very clearly where the issues are, he's putting the time and effort in," he said.

"He was in early this morning, he was on Zoom calls last week, he'll be on the simulator before the next race and he's really working hard at this."

TENNIS / US OPEN

# Draper, Medvedev, Pegula in quarters, Gauff humbled

SABALENKA BEATS MERTENS TO SET UP CLASH AGAINST OLYMPIC CHAMP ZHENG

Reuters/AFP  
New York

Jack Draper became the first British man since Andy Murray in 2016 to reach the US Open quarter-finals by seeing off Tomas Machac of the Czech Republic yesterday.

The 22-year-old left-hander came through 6-3, 6-1, 6-2 and has yet to drop a set at the tournament where he made his breakthrough in 2023 by reaching the fourth round.

Also yesterday, American sixth seed Jessica Pegula reached the US Open quarter-finals for a second time after securing a 6-4 6-2 win over 20-year-old Russian 18th seed Diana Shnaider while unseeded Czech Karolina Muchova knocked out Italian fifth seed Jasmine Paolini, beating the French Open and Wimbledon finalist 6-3 6-3 to reach the quarter-finals.

Muchova, 28, had reached the US Open semis last year.

Former champion Daniil Medvedev of Russia crushed Portuguese outsider Nuno Borges in straight sets. 2021 New York champion Medvedev won 6-0, 6-1, 6-3 in 1 hour and 51 minutes to reach the quarter-finals.

Medvedev, 28, fired 9 aces in his resounding win.

Earlier, Coco Gauff's US Open title defence ended in a 6-3 4-6 6-3 loss to fellow American Emma Navarro in the fourth round, the reigning women's champion becoming the latest big name to make an early exit at Flushing Meadows this year.

Gauff had been looking to avenge her fourth-round loss at this year's Wimbledon but Navarro stunned the crowd at Arthur Ashe Stadium with an aggressive all-round display to reach the quarter-finals for the first time.



Jack Draper of Great Britain returns a shot against Tomas Machac of Czech Republic during their fourth-round match on Day 8 of the 2024 US Open at USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center in New York yesterday. **Centre:** Jessica Pegula celebrates after beating Diana Shnaider. **Right:** Daniil Medvedev of Russia returns a shot against Nuno Borges of Portugal. (AFP)



Third seed Gauff fought her way back into the match after going a set down but ultimately 19 doubles faults and 60 unforced errors meant her first defence of a Grand Slam title was destined to end in disappointment.

"Mentally and emotionally, I gave it my all," said 20-year-old Gauff, who will now drop out of the top five in the world rankings.

Navarro moves on to play Spain's Paula Badosa, who thrashed Wang Yafan of China 6-1 6-2 in the first match of the day at Louis Armstrong Stadium to reach the last eight in New York for the first time.

**Draper on fire**

Draper has only dropped serve once over his four matches, winning 47 of 48 service games and saving 20 of 21 break points.

"I lost on Louis Armstrong Stadium in the same round last year

so it was nice to come back and do better this year," said Draper.

The British player hailed Murray, the former world number one and 2012 US Open champion, who retired from the sport following the Paris Olympics.

"He's a legend and an icon and if I have half the career that he had I will be a happy man," he said.

The 25th seed goes on to face either Alex de Minaur or Jordan Thompson. Draper, who models when he is not playing tennis and featured in a *Vogue* photo-shoot on the eve of Wimbledon this year, was supported from his player's box by the magazine's editor-in-chief Anna Wintour.

"Every player has his own style. It's important to show your tennis style and style in general," added Draper.

In men's action, Alexander Zverev, Grigor Dimitrov, Tay-

lor Fritz and Frances Tiafoe all marched into the quarter-finals in the bottom half of the draw which was left wide open after the third-round exit of four-times champion Novak Djokovic. Zverev, still searching for his first Grand Slam title at the age of 27, reached the quarter-finals at a major for the 13th time after coming from a set down to beat American Brandon Nakashima 3-6 6-1 6-2 6-2.

"I'm still very motivated," said the German, who lost to Dominic Thiem on a deciding set tiebreak in the 2020 final. "I still want to achieve some of my dreams. I still want to achieve some of my goals that I have. I'm happy with the level of tennis I'm playing. We'll see how this week goes."

The fourth seed will next face another American in Fritz, who overcame a sluggish start to beat Norwegian Casper Ruud, the los-

ing finalist in 2022, 3-6 6-4 6-3 6-2. Fritz was later joined in the quarter-finals by Tiafoe, another player hoping to take advantage of the early exits of Djokovic and Carlos Alcaraz to end America's 21-year wait for a homegrown men's champion.

Alexei Popyrin ousted Djokovic in a huge shock on Friday but was unable to progress any further as Tiafoe, roared on by a noisy evening crowd on Arthur Ashe, ran out a 6-4 7-6(3) 2-6 6-3 winner.

Women's second seed Aryna Sabalenka, the runner-up to Gauff last year, continued her impressive form to move into the last eight with a 6-2 6-4 victory over her former doubles partner Elise Mertens.

"I really enjoy playing here," said Sabalenka. "The crowd are amazing. I just don't want to leave early here, you know. I just want to

stay as long as I can and enjoy this beautiful court, beautiful atmosphere."

Sabalenka will next face Olympic champion Zheng Qinwen, who beat Donna Vekic 7-6(2) 4-6 6-2 in a rematch of the Paris gold medal final.

Zheng finally secured victory at 2.15am yesterday - the latest finish to a women's match at the Grand Slam. It beat the previous record finish of 2.13am set in 2021 when Maria Sakkari beat Bianca Andreescu in the fourth round.

Former men's world number one Andy Murray said matches should not finish so late.

"The tennis scheduling situation is a total mess," Murray wrote on social media platform X.

"It looks so amateurish having matches going on at 2, 3, 4 a.m. Sort it out," the Scot added, tagging the governing bodies of the sport.

## TURKISH OLYMPIC SHOOTER AIMS TO TRADEMARK STANCE

**ANKARA:** Turkey's Olympic pistol sharpshooter **Yusuf Dikec** has filed to trademark his nonchalant stance at the Paris Games that went viral around the world, his coach told AFP yesterday. His coach Erdinc Bilgili said that the move to protect the commercial use of his pose with the Turkish Patent and Trademark Office came in response to others trying to trademark it without Dikec's say-so. "After being informed of numerous trademark registration initiatives carried out without Yusuf Dikec's knowledge, we submitted an application about a week ago," Bilgili told AFP, adding that the "other applications have been rejected".

Dikec's apparent sangfroid inspired a flood of memes online, some comparing him to fictional spy James Bond, while billionaire Tesla founder Elon Musk shared a video of himself striking the stance. His pose also became widely imitated among his fellow athletes since he won silver, Turkey's first medal in the mixed-team 10m air pistol, with teammate Sevalay Tarhan. Chelsea striker Nicolas Jackson also copied it on Sunday as he celebrated scoring against Crystal Palace in the English Premier League. Various bits of memorabilia bearing his likeness have gone on sale, T-shirts, mugs and mobile phone covers among them, Turkish



news channel TRT Haber reported. The Turkish trademark office did not immediately respond to AFP's requests for comment. In an interview with AFP at the beginning of August, Dikec said there was a natural explanation for his hand-in-pocket technique. "I only do it to keep my body more stable, to keep my balance. There's nothing more to it," he said.

GOLF

## Scheffler crowns dominant season with FedEx Cup title



Scottie Scheffler of the US celebrates with his son Bennett after winning the FedEx Cup and the Tour Championship at East Lake Golf Club in Atlanta, Georgia. (AFP)

AFP  
Washington

World number one Scottie Scheffler crowned his remarkable season by winning the PGA Tour's season-ending Tour Championship and with it the \$25m FedEx Cup title with a four-stroke win at East Lake Golf Club in Atlanta.

Scheffler began the final round with a five-stroke lead over Collin Morikawa but saw that advantage cut to just two after back-to-back bogeys on the 7th and 8th but he recovered to secure his seventh win on the PGA Tour this season.

He is the first player to win seven PGA Tour events in a year since Tiger Woods in 2007 and his remarkable season has also included a Masters win and an Olympic gold.

For the past two years, Scheffler had entered the Tour Championship as number one in the rankings but had failed to close out and clinch the FedEx Cup and having led the standings for most of this year he was delighted to get his reward.

"I try not to think too much about the past or think too much about the future," he said.

"But I think two years ago was pretty tough, having a good lead going into the last round and not playing my best and then losing. And then last year I just had a pretty off week so was fairly disappointing.

"So to come in with a lead for the third time and be able to finish it off is definitely pretty sweet," he added.

Scheffler began the week on 10 under-par under the staggered scoring system used for

the season finale and he ended the week on 30 under after closing with a 67.

Morikawa would have beaten Scheffler by two strokes in a regular format and for a moment he put his rival under real pressure.

Scheffler shanked a bunker shot on the eighth making his second straight bogey as Morikawa made a birdie to reduce the gap to two. But as so often Scheffler did not let the setbacks turn into a real momentum shift as he proceeded to make three straight birdies from the ninth and then his eagle on the par-5 15th put Morikawa out of sight.

Scheffler praised his caddie Ted Scott for helping him recover and make sure of the win.

"Nine was a huge turnaround. Teddy gave me a nice pep talk there on the back of the 8 green because I kind of looked at him like, 'man, I don't know about this, this isn't looking so hot right now! He kind of gave me a little pep talk and then I was able to hit a really nice iron shot in there and got things rolling," he said. "He really is a huge part of the team. I don't know if I'd be able to do any of this without him on my bag."

Morikawa, who collected \$12.5m for his second place, was pleased with his effort but said Scheffler provided the perfect example of how to close out a golf tournament.

"Nothing fazes him. Whether I was close in gaining some ground or he was gaining ground, it didn't change how he walked or how he played or how he went through every shot," he said.

Sahith Theegala finished third for a \$7.5m reward, six shots off the lead while Xander Schauffele, Russell Henley and Australian Adam Scott ended tied for fourth on 19-under.

ANNOUNCEMENT

## McIlroy to cut 'as many as 9 events' in 2025

Reuters  
Dublin

Rory McIlroy admitted that a busy schedule had him crawling to the finish line in 2024 and said he might reduce his commitments in 2025 by as many as nine tournaments.

"I feel like the tournaments came thick and fast, and obviously with the Olympics thrown in there, as well, this year, it sort of condensed everything a bit," said McIlroy, who finished in a tie for ninth at the season-ending Tour Championship on Sunday at Atlanta.

Despite the admittedly exhausting season, McIlroy still closed with a flourish, shooting a 5-under-par 66 in the final round Sunday. The Northern Ireland native and fan favourite finished at 16 under for the tournament, tied with Japan's Hideki Matsuyama and Ireland's Shane Lowry.

"It's been a long season, and I'm going to just have to think about trying to build in a few extra breaks here and there next year and going forward because I felt like I hit a bit of a wall sort of post-US Open, and still feel a little bit of that hangover," McIlroy said.

McIlroy has won the Tour Championship three times, most recently in 2022 when he held off Scottie Scheffler and South Korea's Sungjae Im by a stroke. Scheffler finished off the Tour Championship victory Sunday at East Lake Golf Club, winning by four strokes over Collin Morikawa.



Rory McIlroy of Northern Ireland plays a shot on the seventh hole during the final round of the Tour Championship at East Lake Golf Club in Atlanta, Georgia. (AFP)

McIlroy said he still has five events planned for the fall and will look toward eliminating events for the 2025 season that begins Jan 2 with The Sentry at Kapalua, Maui, Hawaii.

A 26-time winner on the PGA Tour, McIlroy won two PGA events this past season, the Zurich Classic of New Orleans with Lowry as his partner in April and the Wells Fargo Championship in Charlotte, North Carolina, by five strokes over Xander Schauffele the following month. He also had one victory on the European Tour, taking the Dubai Desert Classic by a stroke in January.

McIlroy said he had 27 events scheduled in 2024, with 19 of those on the on the official PGA Tour schedule. He also

had a runner-up finish on the PGA Tour this season and seven top-10 finishes, while earning \$10.9m in official prize money.

After finishing a disappointing second at the US Open in June, McIlroy did have three top-10 finishes to close out the season but also missed the cut at The Open Championship in July and finished tied for 68th at the St Jude Championship in August.

"I'm usually sort of like a 22 (tournament) sort of person," McIlroy said. "But again, that was when I was sort of in my 20s and didn't have the responsibilities that I do now. I'm going to try to cut it back to like 18 or 20 a year going forward, I think."

## SPOTLIGHT

## Salah belongs at highest level: Ex-Liverpool defender Carragher

AFP  
London

Former Liverpool defender Jamie Carragher believes Mohamed Salah will want to play at the highest level until his late 30s and is targeting Premier League and club records despite uncertainty over his future.

The Egypt international put the ball firmly in the club's court after scoring and setting up two goals in Liverpool's 3-0 victory at Manchester United on Sunday. 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. "Nobody in the club talked to me yet about contracts so I was just like, 'OK, I play my last season and see at the end of the season,'" he said.

Salah is 32 but Carragher does not believe that will be a barrier to the forward and therefore should not be for Liverpool. "I'm not sure it will be his last year. I think Mo Salah is a little bit like (Cristiano) Ronaldo," he said.

"Most footballers think 35 is the time to finish. I think Mo Salah will be looking at

his late 30s and winding down then in his head. He will be looking at breaking every record he possibly can, either in the Premier League or Liverpool.

"I think he is aware of his status and I find it very difficult to see Mo Salah in the Saudi league, for instance, next season. He is playing that well at one of the biggest clubs in the world."

In July 2022 Salah signed a new three-year deal, reportedly making him the highest-paid player in the club's history on around £350,000 (\$460,000) a week. Liverpool reportedly rejected a £150mn offer from Saudi's Al Ittihad for Salah last year.

The Egyptian has scored 214 goals for Liverpool since joining in 2017, putting him fifth on the club's all-time scoring charts. "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."

New Liverpool boss Arne Slot refused to be drawn on the issue of Salah's future after the win against United. Asked about the player's comments, Slot said: "It's a lot

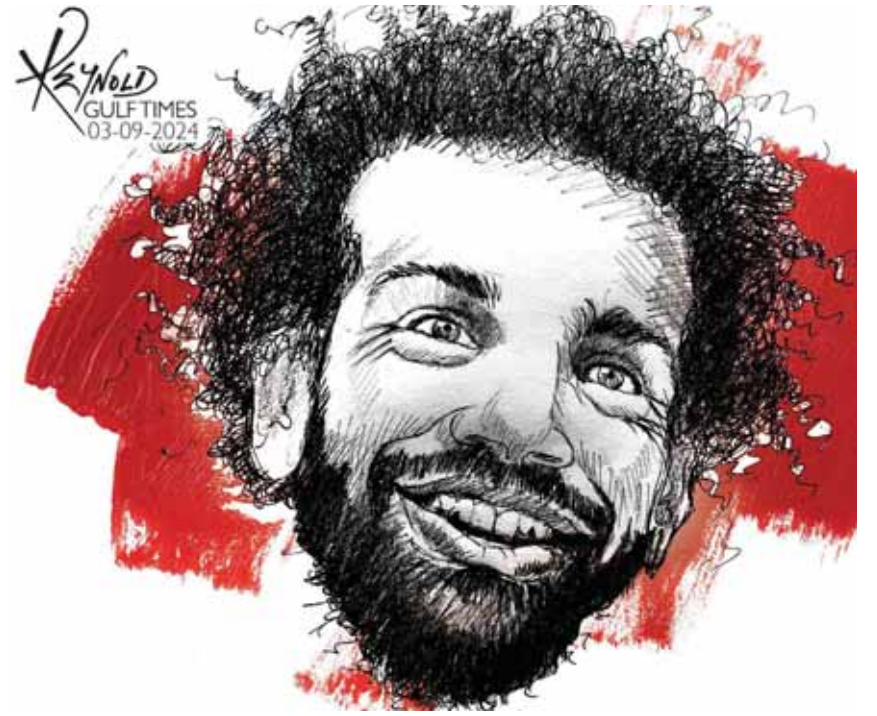
of 'if'. At this moment he is one of ours and I am really happy with him being one of ours and he played really well. I don't talk about contracts from players but I can talk for hours about how Mo played today."

Salah 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.

"We're so happy for the result. If you want to fight for the league this is the sort of game you need to win. I'm glad we managed to win it. The manager likes us to press high. We scored from all those situations. There's not a big difference from Jurgen at the start and in time we've changed the system a little with the way we play. We're adapting."



## Retirement won't be a 'difficult decision', says Ronaldo

Lisbon: Cristiano Ronaldo has ruled out any immediate thought of retirement from international football as he believes he still has plenty to give Portugal, he told a press conference yesterday.

"When the time comes, I'll move on. It won't be a difficult decision to make," the 39-year-old said ahead of Thursday's Nations League clash with Croatia in Lisbon. "If I feel like I'm no longer contributing anything, I'll be the first to leave," he added, citing the example of his former team-mate Pepe, "who left through the front door" after announcing his retirement from the game last August at the age of 41. The five-time Ballon d'Or

winner, who has been playing for Al Nassr in Saudi Arabia for almost two years now, failed to score as he appeared at a record sixth European Championship this year, with Portugal exiting in the quarter-finals. In spite of the criticism he received in the press Ronaldo said he "never considered leaving the national team" and he has retained the backing of coach Roberto Martinez. "People's expectations of the national team were too high," said Ronaldo, adding that the bad times in a footballer's life "allow you to evolve". After Thursday's meeting with Croatia, Portugal remain in Lisbon to face Scotland on Sunday.

## PREMIER LEAGUE

## United's Ten Hag under pressure after reality check

'It is just third game in the season, we have to build a new team'

AFP  
London

Erik ten Hag is already back under extreme pressure at Manchester United after flunking his first big test since the club decided to keep faith with their Dutch manager.

United's chastening 3-0 home defeat at the hands of Liverpool on Sunday left them languishing 14th in the Premier League table just three games into the season. Co-owner Jim Ratcliffe, seated alongside the new Old Trafford hierarchy, had his head in his hands as United showed all their old failings against their bitter rivals.

Ten Hag's side went toe to toe with Arne Slot's men for the first half an hour but costly errors from Casemiro and clinical finishing from Luis Diaz put the visitors in total command at half-time. Mohamed Salah scored his customary goal against United in the 56th minute and Liverpool saw out the game with relative ease in a rapidly emptying stadium.

For long-suffering United fans, it appears to be a case of rinse and repeat. The club, who have not won the Premier League since Alex Ferguson's final season in charge in 2013, appear to be stuck in a seemingly endless cycle of mediocrity despite multiple changes of personnel on and off the pitch.

Ten Hag was handed a contract extension in July but only after United had considered alternatives following a season in which they finished a lowly eighth in the Premier League. United's 2-1 victory against Manchester City in the FA Cup final in May proved vital after it seemed likely the Dutchman would be sacked.

The embattled Ten Hag was forced to defend himself after Sunday's defeat, which followed a last-gasp win against Fulham and a defeat at Brighton. "It is just the third game in the season, we have to build a new team," said the 54-year-old. "I explained this so many times, we will build this new team, we have young players and players to build in. It is clear we have to improve but at the end of the season I am confident we will have a big chance to lift another trophy."

The former Ajax boss can point to mitigating circumstances – Manuel Ugarte, United's



Manchester United's chastening 3-0 home defeat at the hands of Liverpool left Erik ten Hag's men languishing 14th in the Premier League table just three games into the season. (AFP)

new midfield recruit from Paris Saint-Germain, was not available while another recent arrival, defender Leny Yoro, is injured along with Mason Mount, Luke Shaw and Rasmus Hojlund.

But United looked short of ideas and quality against Liverpool, who have won all three of their Premier League games under new boss Slot. Former Real Madrid midfielder Casemiro was at fault for both of Diaz's goals and was hauled off at half-time while forward Marcus Rashford looked desperately short of form and confidence.

United's paucity of options was laid bare by the fact that Ten Hag was forced to turn to 20-year-old Toby Collyer, making his Premier League debut. Ten Hag pleaded for patience over Ugarte. "We have to build him in the team, it will take time," he said. "It is not

like I'm Harry Potter, that is what you have to acknowledge. If you see Manuel Ugarte, he didn't play so far in the season, not one match minute."

Whether or not United now regret their decision to stick with Ten Hag, former Manchester United captain Gary Neville believes he will be given until Christmas to turn things around. "It is a time for a bit of calm," he said. "It's the international break, which is probably well-needed for United. But Erik ten Hag is going to have to get the club into a position challenging for the Champions League towards Christmas or else he is going to be in trouble."

September's international break has come at the right time for Ten Hag – United are next in action at Southampton on September 14. But the United manager faces some sleepless nights as he tries to figure out a way to stop the rot.

## LIGUE 1

## PSG's win at Lille good test for the Champions League, says Enrique

Reuters  
Paris

Paris St Germain's 3-1 win at Lille in Ligue 1 on Sunday was a good test ahead the Champions League, coach Luis Enrique said, as their opponents will also feature in Europe's elite club competition starting later this month.

Goals from Vitinha, Bradley Barcola and Randal Kolo Muani earned French champions PSG their third win in three league games this season against feisty Lille. However, they are already looking ahead to their Champions League opener on September 18 against Spanish side Girona.

Lille face Portugal's Sporting a day earlier in their first Champions League game since the 2021-22 season as they secured their spot in the competition through last month's playoffs.

"It was an away game against a team who play in the Champions League, who already played several games and have a very different rhythm to us," Enrique told reporters. "It was a very good test for us, it was a Champions League match for us. I'm pretty happy with the team's performance."

PSG and Lille are among the clubs preparing for a revamped Champions League format extended to 36 teams playing eight fixtures in the first round or league phase. Enrique's side will have another test in Ligue 1 after the international break when they host Brest, also playing in the Champions League, four days before they

begin their quest for a long-awaited maiden European title.

"There's the match against Brest after the break and that will have nothing to do with the Champions League and its new format. I can't know what that will be like," the Spanish manager said. "My team is showing signs of confidence but we still lack physical rhythm in several of our players. The Champions League is very different and full of new things."

PSG's win on Sunday took them two points clear at the top of Ligue 1. Vitinha put PSG ahead on a stiffling hot night in northern France with a penalty and Bradley Barcola doubled their lead.

Edon Zhegrovca pulled one back in the second half to give the home side hope at the Stade Pierre-Mauroy, but Randal Kolo Muani's stoppage-time header wrapped up the win for the defending French champions.

Luis Enrique's side appear to be coping just fine since the departure of their all-time leading scorer Kylian Mbappe, with PSG having won all three games so far this season, scoring 13 goals in the process.

They head into the September international break with a two-point lead at the top of the table from Marseille, Nantes, Monaco and Lens, and on this form it will take something special to knock them off the summit.

Meanwhile, Lille coach Bruno Genesio was left to regret the decision to deny his side a late equaliser, when Tiago Santos scored but the goal was disallowed by VAR for an extremely tight offside.



Paris Saint-Germain's Randal Kolo Muani (right) celebrates with Desire Doue after scoring against Lille during the French Ligue 1 match at the Stade Pierre-Mauroy in Villeneuve-d'Ascq, northern France. (AFP)

## FOCUS

## Mbappe relieved to score first La Liga goals

Reuters  
Madrid

Real Madrid forward Kylian Mbappe said scoring his first La Liga goals for his new club on Sunday was a relief after drawing a blank in their first three league games of the season. The France captain netted a second-half double to give the defending champions a hard-fought 2-0 win over Real Betis, earning them their second league win of the new campaign.

"I've been happy ever since I arrived here," Mbappe said. "People have given me a lot of affection here, even when I didn't score, which was for three games. For some that doesn't seem much but for me it was a lot! However, during the process, the club,

the teammates, the fans ... they have always been with me. Giving me confidence to score goals for this club."

Coming off a disappointing 1-1 draw at lowly Las Palmas on Thursday, and still without midfielder Jude Bellingham due to a leg injury, the home side made another slow start against Betis. But they finally got on the scoresheet with Mbappe's brace – the first close-range effort in the 67th and the second eight minutes later with a penalty after Vinicius Jr was brought down.

"It's a great moment. I was really looking forward to scoring in this mythical stadium, the best in the world," Mbappe said. "But the most important thing is the victory. We had to win after Las Palmas, even though we faced a difficult game, as they all are against rivals here. But we are Real Madrid. And we won at last."

