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QATAR STARS LEAGUE

Al Sadd back on track with 4-2 victory over Al Gharafa

Al Arabi fight back from being a goal and a man down to beat Al Rayyan 2-1; Wakrah down Al Khor



Pedo Miguel opened the scoring for Al Sadd in the fourth minute during their Qatar Stars League match against Al Gharafa.

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Al Sadd got back to winning ways as they handed Al Gharafa a 4-2 defeat in the Qatar Stars League at the Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium yesterday.

The defending champions, who were hammered 1-5 by Al Duhail in the previous round, hit the ground running from the word go with Pedro Miguel (fourth minute), Cristo Gonzalez (7th), Akram Afif (27th) and Hassan al-Haydos (90+9th) doing the scoring for them.

In reply, Al Gharafa got their goals through Joselu (42th) and Yacine Brahimi (59th) but The Cheetahs could not force their way through despite a 3-2 scoreline for a major part of the game. It was Al Sadd's third win of the season and came after two back-to-back defeats, taking their tally to nine points to be fourth in the standings while Al Gharafa are now six after a second loss with eight points. Al Duhail are the leaders with 15 points.

Al Sadd celebrated their win with a dying moment goal created by the mercurial Afif breaking through a string of defenders before al-Haydos rattled the net much to the delight of the home team fans.

Earlier, Al Arabi came from being a goal and a man down to beat Al Rayyan 2-1 at the Al Thumama Stadium. Substitute Yousef Msakni restored parity for The Dream Team in the 61st minute after Achraf Bencharki had given Al Rayyan the lead in the 16th minute before Marco Verratti put the icing on the cake in the 85th minute as Al Arabi recorded their first win of the season.

With the win, Al Arabi now have seven points, while Al Rayyan remained on six points. The Dream Team, now under American-English coach Anthony Hudson, got what seemed to be a dream start in the seventh minute after they were initially awarded a penalty, after a VAR check, with Ahmed Alaeldin adjudged to



Al Arabi's Marco Verratti (right) celebrates with Yousef Msakni after scoring the winner against Al Rayyan at the Al Thumama Stadium yesterday.

have been fouled by Al Rayyan goalkeeper Sammy Beldi. Seven minutes later, Al Rayyan drew first blood as Bencharki nodded the ball home from an unmarked position. Al Arabi were reduced to 10-man in the 24th minute after Alaeldin was giving the marching orders for a hard tackle on Hazem Shehata, which necessitated the player being helped off the field for further treatment. Al Arabi got the equaliser in the 61st minute with a Msakni header after goalkeeper Beldi mishandled a set-piece by Rodrigo. Al Arabi got the winner five minutes before regulation time through Verratti, who fired home a low-driven shot from the edge of the box to the left-hand corner of Al Rayyan goal.

Meanwhile, Al Wakrah made their way into the top four with a 3-1 victory over Al Khor at the Al Janoub Stadium.

Ricardo Gomes scored a brace for the winners, striking in 21st & 62nd minutes while Ayoub Assal found the net in 45+2 minute. For Al Khor, their only goal came from Sofiane Hanni in the 50th minute.

This was The Blue Wave's second successive win and the third of the league this season, leapfrogging them to second place (from being fifth before the match) in the standings with a tally of 11 points. Al Khor in contrast are 10th in the rankings with 3 points having suffered their third defeat.

EQUESTRIAN

Al-Jaber clinches Small Tour as Hathab kicks off

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Mohammed Yousef al-Jaber bagged victory in the Small Tour on the opening day of the 8th edition of the Longines Hathab Qatar Equestrian Tour, which kicked off with thrilling action at Qatar Equestrian & Modern Pentathlon Federation's indoor arena yesterday.

The annual domestic equestrian series comprises a total of 14 rounds and shall continue till May 2025. The best seven results of the series are taken into account in deciding overall champions in various categories of showjumping and dressage.

Al-Jaber and Al Shaqab's Serendipity looked in fine touch as the pair clocked a perfect 45.14 secs to prevail in the closely-contested 110cm event. Abdulla Hassan al-Emadi and his 14-year-old bay Dino BB Z were also impressive but they had to settle for a second place with a time of 46.64 secs. Saeed Hamad Jumaa astride Ambre De Beaufour came third with a time of 46.68 secs.

In the junior category of the same round, Fahad bin Jassim al-Thani won first place with 25 points in a time of 49.24 seconds. Faisal al-Kahla, Tournament Director, honoured the winners of the Small Tour.

Earlier, Abdulla Khalifa al-Suwaidi teamed up with Fiero to bag the Future Riders 80cm (for 12 to 16 years old). Ahmed Mahmoud Alarroqui rode Janne to second place while Mohammed Salem al-Naemi secured third place with Cascade Sammy.

The opening day's action started with Fahad bin Nasser al-Thani winning the Future Riders 60cm (for 6 to 12) opening round astride Sita in 42.46 secs. Nasser Hamad al-Thani rode Coco Chanel SB to second place in 45.90 secs with the pair comprising Hissa Ali Jaber and Al Shaqab's



Faisal al-Kahla, Tournament Director of the Longines Hathab Qatar Equestrian Tour, honoured the winners of the Small Tour. Mohammed Yousef al-Jaber finished first, followed by Abdulla Hassan al-Emadi and Saeed Hamad Jumaa.

Tinkerbelle claiming third place in 46.22 seconds. Badr al-Darwish, President of Qatar Equestrian Federation, crowned the Future Riders class winners.

Today, the riders in Amateur and Medium Tour categories will begin their campaign in the 14-leg series. Dressage competitions will get underway tomorrow along with the first rounds of Open Class and Big Tour.

Commenting on the start of Hathab new season, Sheikh Ahmed bin Nooh al-Thani, Chairman of the Supreme Organising Committee of the tournament, said

that the intensive programme of the tournament this year reflects the keenness of the Qatar Equestrian & Modern Pentathlon Federation to raise the performance of riders at various age groups, develop their skills and provide them with the necessary support to prepare them to participate in a number of important international tournaments that the country will host this year or in which Qatar riders will participate in international tournaments, stressing that this year's edition of Hathab will witness an increase in the number of participants in the various rounds.



Badr al-Darwish, President of Qatar Equestrian Federation, crowned the Future Riders class winners at the federation's indoor arena yesterday.

He said, "The launch of the eighth season comes after the strenuous work of the various tournament committees throughout the past period and in co-operation with various parties, in addition to the intensive preparations made by our riders to enter this season's competitions according to the levels they aspire to achieve."

He added, "We look forward to exciting competitions in this season's competitions, and we hope that these steps will motivate every rider to do their best and provide the best."

RESULTS

Small Tour | Accumulator with Joker, FEI art 269.5 | 110cm | Prize-money QR20,000

(Rank. Rider Horse Points Time Prize)
1. Mohammed Yousef al-Jaber; Serendipity; 65; 45.14secs; QR5,000
2. Abdulla Hassan al-Emadi; Dino BB Z; 65; 46.64secs; QR4,000
3. Saeed Hamad Jumaa; Ambre De Beau-

four; 65; 46.68secs; QR3,000

Future Riders | Optimum Time | 80cm

(Rank. Rider Horse Faults Time Difference)
1. Abdulla Khalifa al-Suwaidi; Fiero; 0; 45.98secs; 0.02
2. Ahmed Mahmoud al-Arrouqi; Janne; 0; 45.82secs; 0.18
3. Mohammed Salem al-Naemi; Cascade Sammy; 0; 45.70secs; 0.30

Future Riders | Optimum Time | 60cm

1. Fahad bin Nasser al-Thani; Sita; 0; 42.46secs; 1.54
2. Nasser Hamad al-Thani; Coco Chanel SB; 0; 45.90secs; 1.90
3. Hissa Ali al-Jaber; Tinkerbelle; 0; 46.22secs; 2.22

Today's Schedule

4pm: Amateur (Table A, One round against the Clock-100cm)
7pm: Medium Tour (Individual & Teams)*
Table A, Two Phases (130cm)

SECOND TEST

Lanka eye big total after Chandimal hundred

Hosts were 306 for 3 at stumps on day one against New Zealand

AFP
Galle, Sri Lanka

Dinesh Chandimal's century in Galle powered Sri Lanka to 306-3 at stumps at yesterday's opening day of the second Test against New Zealand. The right-hander was bowled by Glenn Phillips in the final session after hitting 15 boundaries in his knock of 116 – his sixth Test century at the picturesque venue and his 16th overall.

"The pitch is very good for batting compared to the one in the first game, but it was hot and humid and challenging," Chandimal said. "I was given the new role at number three... I'm glad I have started off well."

Angelo Mathews (78) and Kamindu Mendis (51) will resume for the hosts on the second day. It was a world record eighth consecutive fifty for Kamindu since the 25-year-old's debut against Australia at the same venue two years ago. Mathews reached his own milestone by becoming only the sixth cricketer to make 2,000 Test runs at a single venue, in his case on the notoriously bowler-friendly Galle pitch, joining a select group that includes the likes of Joe Root and Graham Gooch.

Chandimal made his ton with a single off Kiwi spinner Mitchell Santner in a knock that capitalised on loose deliveries. He powered forward after the end of his 122-

run stand with Dimuth Karunaratne, who was run out on 46 and walked back to the pavilion fuming after a miscommunication between the pair.

"It was a quick single and I wasn't prepared for it," Chandimal said. "My fault totally. I accept the blame. I feel sorry for him because he was batting so well."

New Zealand missed two opportunities to break the partnership earlier and failed to halt Sri Lanka's momentum throughout the day. Daryl Mitchell, fielding at slip, dropped two catches including a chance to get Chandimal out on five in the fourth over.

Wicketkeeper Tom Blundell missed a stumping opportunity off Karunaratne. "Obviously no one intends to drop catches and we were at the receiving end today," Phillips said. "We wanted to bat first as well. We saw how tough it is to bat last on this wicket. But we don't have a good toss record sadly."

Sri Lanka won the opening match of the two-Test series by 63 runs. New Zealand have not won any of their five previous Tests at Galle. New Zealand players wore black armbands to honour the late Ian Taylor, who was the manager of the Black Caps from 1980 to 1990.

BRIEF SCORES

Sri Lanka 306 for 3 (Chandimal 116, Mathews 78 batting, Kamindu 51 batting, Phillips 1-33) **vs New Zealand**



Sri Lanka's Dinesh Chandimal plays a shot during the first day of the second Test against New Zealand in Galle yesterday. (AFP)

India back Rahul to hit top gear in Bangladesh Test



Kanpur, India: India are backing senior batsman **KL Rahul** to find his run-scoring touch ahead of a busy schedule of nine Tests in four months, starting with Bangladesh in Kanpur today.

India won the first Test against Bangladesh in Chennai by 280 runs to lead the two-match series 1-0, with Rahul scoring 16 and 22 not out on his return to the side for the first time since January's opening Test against England. He made 86 and 22 against England, but sat out the remaining four matches because of a thigh injury.

But the 32-year-old's last century came in December 2023 and that was his first for almost three years. "I feel KL is someone who understands his game very well," assistant coach Abhishek Nayar told reporters. "Yes, there are times where a player is finding his feet," he added. "Hopefully we can have a turnaround in KL as well."

India will play three Tests at home against New Zealand starting October 16. They then head off on a five-Test tour to Australia, with the opening match in Perth starting November 22.

Nayar noted that Rahul had shown glimpses of form during the first Test win against Bangladesh, when his 22 off 19 balls helped to set up a declaration. "The way he was batting in the second innings is the kind of cricket we are expecting and hoping for," he said.

"I am pretty sure going forward you will see the expectations and the performances that you have from him."

Nayar said India remain undecided on playing three spinners in second Test against Bangladesh as the nature of the pitch and overhead conditions on the morning of the match will influence the decision-making.

If India opts to play three spinners in Kanpur, the extra spinner could be either Axar Patel or Kuldeep Yadav. "To be honest, I don't know which surface we are going to play on yet. Both the pitches look pretty good. Kanpur is often known to have good pitches. I am not sure about the bounce yet," Nayar said. "With the conditions and the forecast, it is going to be interesting, when we turn up in the morning, how the conditions are. A lot will depend on that because as you know in Test wicket, conditions can be a huge factor in how the pitch plays."

SPOTLIGHT

Under-fire Shakib announces retirement

AFP
Kanpur, India

Bangladesh ex-captain **Shakib Al Hasan**, facing prosecution for his relationship with the country's former leader, said yesterday he would soon retire from international cricket but hoped to play at least one more match back home first.

Shakib is facing murder charges along with dozens of other members of ex-premier Sheikh Hasina's party who have been accused of culpability in a deadly police crackdown on protesters. The 37-year-old, who briefly served as a lawmaker under Hasina this year, has not returned to Bangladesh since the toppling of her government last month in a student-led revolution.

Shakib said that next year's Champions Trophy in Pakistan would be his last international outing. But he added that he wanted to return home for a slated two-Test series against South Africa, and had asked the Bangladesh Cricket Board if he could come back.

"It's my desire, I have said this to BCB and the selectors," Shakib told reporters ahead of today's second Test against India in Kanpur. "They agreed with me, that they are trying to organise everything if possible, so that I can go back to Bangladesh, play those two Test matches in Mirpur and finish my Test career there."

He added: "If that doesn't happen maybe this is my last one."



The South Africa tour due to start on October 21 is still under a cloud, with the Proteas assessing whether Bangladesh is safe enough after last month's revolution. Shakib told reporters ahead of today's second Test against India in Kanpur that he did

not "want to talk much" about the criminal proceedings against him. "You all know what type of case it is, and where I was and what I was doing at that time," he said.

Shakib was playing in a domestic Twenty20 cricket competition in Canada during

the unrest that ousted Hasina. He said he hoped to return home to play the swan song of his Test career against South Africa if the series went ahead.

"I am a citizen of Bangladesh, so I shouldn't have any problem going back to Bangladesh," he said. "My concern is my safety and security in Bangladesh. My close friends and family members are concerned. I hope things are getting better."

Shakib said he had already called time on his T20 career following the World Cup in June. "I played my last match during my last game of the World Cup. We have discussed this with selectors and board," he said. "This is the right time for me to move on and BCB will look into some new players."

Shakib said that he would play his final 50-over matches at the Champions Trophy, which will be hosted by Pakistan in February. "I have eight games to go in ODIs and the Champions Trophy will be last," he said. Shakib was the driving force of the Bangladesh team's rise to become serious international contenders, enthralled fans through both star turns and scandals.

He remains the only player to have topped the International Cricket Council all-rounder rankings in all three formats simultaneously.

Shakib played a key role in his team's historic Test series sweep in Pakistan earlier this month, and went to England to play county cricket for Surrey before heading to India. He has represented Bangladesh in 70 Tests, 247 ODIs and 129 T20 matches since his international debut in 2006.

FOCUS

Potts glad to learn from England great Anderson

AFP
London

James Anderson may have retired from Test cricket but his influence within the England set-up remains strong, according to **Matthew Potts**. Anderson brought the curtain down on an extraordinary Test career that yielded 704 wickets after appearing in his 188th match against the West Indies at Lord's in July.

The 42-year-old, top of the all-time charts for fast bowlers, immediately moved into a role mentoring England's quicks and Potts is glad to be able to mine his experience. "It's an awesome experience to have so much knowledge in the dressing room," Potts, 25, told a press conference at Lord's ahead of the fourth one-day international against Australia. "Being able to tap into that knowledge whenever you want, he (Anderson) gives it freely."

Anderson gave up white-ball cricket to prolong his Test career but Potts is a multi-format England player. The Durham seamer is playing in the current five-match ODI series against the world champions, with the home side trailing 2-1, and has also been included in the squad for next month's three-Test tour of Pakistan.

Together with several England team-mates including Harry Brook and Ben Duckett, Potts will have a short turnaround between the end of the Australia series on Sunday and flying out to Multan on Tuesday.

"That's the beauty of being a multi-format cricketer," said Potts, whose eight Tests have yielded 28 wickets at a shade under 30 apiece. "You've got to be ready for every eventuality but at the same time be able to compartmentalise for different things. I've got all the stuff packed



but I'm focused on this white-ball series first."

With a growing cohort of England quicks competing for places in the Test and white-ball teams, Potts would like to up his speed without compromising his accuracy. "I think one of my key assets is control, but it's about exploring the boundaries in which I can keep control and try and find my peak speed," he said. "As you push your average speed up, your peak speed should generally go up as well. I'll try to keep up at 84-85 miles per hour (135-137kmh) consistently throughout the day."

HULL OUT OF PAKISTAN TOUR

Meanwhile, England paceman Josh Hull has been ruled out of next month's Test tour of Pakistan with a quad injury, team management said. The 20-year-old Leicestershire left-arm quick has missed the current white-ball series against

Australia due to the injury, which he suffered during his Test debut against Sri Lanka at the Oval earlier this month. An England spokesman said Hull would continue his recovery, with no replacement called up into what is now a 16-man squad for a three-Test series starting in Multan on October 7. The 6 feet, 7 inches (2 metres) tall Hull was a surprise selection for the third Test against Sri Lanka, given that he had then taken just two wickets in the second division of this season's County Championship at the hugely expensive average of 182.50.

Nevertheless, he had respectable match figures of 3-91 against Sri Lanka, whose eight-wicket victory at the Oval meant England won a three-Test series 2-1. But the thigh problem he suffered in south London sidelined Hull from England's subsequent T20 and one-day international series with Australia.

Hull's focus will now switch to being fit for England's white-ball tour of the Caribbean in late October and November, which precedes a Test series against New Zealand in December.

His absence leaves Chris Woakes, Matthew Potts, Olly Stone, Gus Atkinson and Brydon Carse vying for places in England's pace attack in Pakistan. Ben Stokes is unlikely to bowl at the start of the series but an England and Wales Cricket Board statement issued Wednesday said he "remains on track" to captain the team in Pakistan after tearing his hamstring in The Hundred last month.

Revised England squad for three-Test tour of Pakistan:

Ben Stokes (capt), Rehan Ahmed, Gus Atkinson, Shoaib Bashir, Harry Brook, Brydon Carse, Jordan Cox, Zak Crawley, Ben Duckett, Jack Leach, Ollie Pope, Matthew Potts, Joe Root, Jamie Smith (wkt), Olly Stone, Chris Woakes

Marsh adamant Australia have 'moved on' from Lord's row

London: Australia will return to Lord's today for the first time since last year's Ashes row, with captain Mitchell Marsh confident a controversial incident involving wicketkeeper Alex Carey is firmly in the past.

Carey's stumping of Jonny Bairstow, when the England batsman walked out of his ground thinking the ball was dead, led to angry exchanges between the teams.

And there were also ugly scenes in the Lord's pavilion too as spectators clashed with Australia players.

Carey's form fell away in the final three Tests of what became a drawn series but the 33-year-old has been a thorn in England's side during the ongoing ODI campaign, making a match-winning 74 at Headingley on Saturday and an unbeaten 77 in defeat at Chester-le-Street on Tuesday.

Victory at Lord's would mean 50-over world champions Australia take an unassailable 3-1 lead in a five-match series, with Marsh adamant the tourists have drawn a line under last year's flare-up.

"We've really moved on from that," the skipper told a pre-match press conference. "These things happen in Ashes Test matches, there's not a series that goes by that doesn't

have some sort of drama. Alex loves playing in England, we all do. The fans are always incredible and it's always a tough challenge playing against England. I think he's just rapt to be back here, playing for Australia."

Marsh, asked if last year's incident had given Carey additional motivation, replied: "I don't think that's in his character."

Such has been Carey's form with bat and gloves, he could well keep his place for the fourth ODI even though World Cup-winning wicketkeeper Josh Inglis is now fit again after injury. Australia are likely to be at full strength following a tour beset by illness, which ruled out leg-spinner Adam Zampa at Durham in a match where in-form opener Travis Head was rested following soreness.

Both key players are set to return at Lord's, with Marsh saying: "It would be massive (to have them back). We obviously know the last couple of years they've both had and just what they bring to our team from an experience point of view."

After the illness issues that dogged the start of the tour, Australia have reported a clean bill of health, which includes Adam Zampa.

TENNIS

Sinner fights back to launch China Open title defence

Sinner's main rivals in Beijing are Alcaraz, Medvedev and Rublev



Italy's Jannik Sinner plays a backhand return against Chile's Nicolas Jarry during the round of 32 match at the China Open in Beijing. (AFP)

AFP
Beijing

World number one Jannik Sinner fought back to launch the defence of his China Open title with a 4-6, 6-3, 6-1 win over 28th-ranked Chilean Nicolas Jarry yesterday.

The US Open champion next faces veteran three-time Grand Slam winner Stan Wawrinka, who is a wildcard entry in Beijing, or Russia's Roman Safiullin. The 23-year-old Sinner arrived in the Chinese capital fresh from winning in New York for his second major title, having triumphed at the Australian Open at the start of the year.

With victory also at the Cincinnati Masters before the US Open, Sinner faced Jarry in red-hot form and on an 11-match winning streak. Sinner made that 12, but not before suffering a scare. "In the first set I was struggling to return his serve and he broke me," Sinner said. "I just tried to stay there mentally. The first round at any tournament is never easy and playing against him is very tough. But I am happy about the performance and how I ended the match."

The two went toe-to-toe in the first set but

it was the Chilean who got in front when he broke for a 4-3 lead when the world number one fired long. The 28-year-old Jarry consolidated without losing a point in the eighth game and, after double-faulting on his first set point, sealed the set with his fifth ace of the match.

Going behind seemed to sting a re-energised Sinner into action. The top seed raced to a 3-0 lead in the second set, eventually wrapping the set up after briefly threatening to blow his advantage.

Sinner tamed Jarry's big serve to start the deciding set and grab an early break, winning the game with a terrific crosscourt backhand. Sinner broke again for 4-1 and was well on the way to an ultimately comfortable win. His main rivals in the Chinese capital will be four-time major champion Carlos Alcaraz and the Russian duo of Daniil Medvedev and Andrey Rublev, the third and fourth seeds.

Novak Djokovic is not in Beijing, where a WTA 1000 event is also taking place at the same time.

GAUFF LOOKS TO 'RESET, REFRESH' AFTER NAMING NEW COACH

Coco Gauff hopes to "reset" and "refresh" after bringing in a new coach following the end

of her 14-month partnership with Brad Gilbert. The 2023 US Open champion told the WTA website that she has added Matt Daly to work alongside her longtime coach, Jean-Christophe Faurel.

Daly, 45, most recently coached Canadian Denis Shapovalov. Daly and the 20-year-old American Gauff teamed up ahead of the China Open, where she faces France's Clara Burel in her opening match today.

"I'm really excited," Gauff, ranked sixth in the world, told the WTA in Beijing. "I think this is probably what it will look like next year too. I'm super-excited for a new change and hopefully to improve other parts of my game."

Gauff and Gilbert announced their split last week after her title defence in New York ended in the last 16. Gauff also went out at the same stage at Wimbledon, the Paris Olympics and the WTA Toronto event.

"Working with Brad was really great and obviously we had a great partnership," she said. "I think it was just time to do a reset, a refresh, and add some things in my game that I felt like I need to do to have a better season next year."

Four-time major champion Naomi Osaka on Wednesday said that she was now working with Patrick Mouratoglou, who coached Serena Williams.

SPOTLIGHT

Lawson to replace Ricciardo at RB for rest of F1 season

Reuters
London

Red Bull-owned RB dropped Daniel Ricciardo yesterday and drafted in New Zealander Liam Lawson as the Australian's replacement to the end of the Formula One season.

Lawson, 22, has been Red Bull reserve since 2022 and filled in for 35-year-old Ricciardo at five races last year when the eight-times grand prix winner was injured. The move was widely expected following mounting speculation that the Australian's Formula One career had reached the end of the road.

Ricciardo made a mid-season comeback with the team last year hoping to show he still had what it takes, with the prospect of possibly replacing Sergio Perez at the main Red Bull team, but has instead been outperformed at RB by Japan's Yuki Tsunoda.

"Daniel has been a true gentleman both on and off the track and never without that smile. He will be missed, but will always hold a special place within the Red Bull family," said team boss Laurent Mekies in a statement. "I'd also like to take this opportunity to welcome Liam. He already knows the team well. He drove for us last season, and coped well under difficult circumstances, so it'll be a natural transition."

Italy-based RB had initially posted a 'thank you' message on social media. "I've loved this sport my whole life. It's wild and wonderful and been a journey," Ricciardo said separately on Instagram. "To the teams and individuals that have played their

part, thank you. To the fans who love the sport sometimes more than me haha thank you. It'll always have its highs and lows but it's been fun and truth be told I wouldn't change it. Until the next adventure."

Ricciardo's departure was taken as written at last weekend's Singapore Grand Prix, with the Australian finishing last but pitting for a third time at the end of the race to put on fresh tyres and set the fastest lap. Mekies explained afterwards that the team had given him the chance "given this may have been Daniel's last race".

Ricciardo, an ever-smiling fan favourite whose departure will be mourned by many, took seven of his victories with Red Bull and the final one during an ill-fated stint with McLaren in 2021. He finished third in the championship in 2014 and 2016, the latter time as teammate to now-triple world champion Max Verstappen. Singapore was his 258th race in a career with 32 podiums and 1,329 points.

Lawson has been bidding his time since his stand-in performance, with Red Bull clear that he would be in Formula One eventually. RB have announced Tsunoda will stay in 2025 but the second seat remains unconfirmed, although Lawson is the clear favourite to fill it. "I'm extremely grateful to be given the opportunity to drive for VCARB (RB), it's been my dream to drive in Formula One since I was a kid. I'll be doing everything I can to be ready for Austin," he said.

The next race is a sprint weekend in Texas on Oct. 20, the first of a triple header that includes Mexico and Brazil. The season ends with another triple header in Las Vegas, Qatar and Abu Dhabi.



Liam Lawson has been Red Bull reserve since 2022 and filled in for Daniel Ricciardo at five races last year when the Australian was injured.

JAPAN OPEN

Fritz loses on day of shocks

AFP
Tokyo

US Open finalist Taylor Fritz crashed out of the Japan Open in the first round yesterday and Frances Tiafoe, Casper Ruud and Stefanos Tsitsipas joined him on a day of shocks in Tokyo.

Top seed Fritz, who this month became the first American man to reach a Grand Slam final since 2009, was bundled out 6-4, 3-6, 6-3 by France's Arthur Fils. It came just hours after number seven seed Tiafoe, who lost to Fritz in the US Open semi-finals, was eliminated with a 7-5, 6-3 loss to fellow American Brandon Nakashima.

Norway's Ruud, the number three seed, lost 7-6 (7/5), 6-1 to Australia's Jordan Thompson. Greece's Tsitsipas, the fourth seed, went out with a 4-6, 6-1, 6-2 defeat by American qualifier Alex Michelsen.

World number seven Fritz won the Japan Open title in 2022 but met his match in the energetic 20-year-old Fils. Fritz needed a medical time-out to deal with a back issue during the second set. He could not recover as world number 24 Fils closed out the match in just over two hours to set up a second-round match with Italy's Matteo Berrettini.

Fritz played at the Laver Cup in Berlin after the US Open and said his schedule had been "a lot lately". "I obviously would have liked more time to prepare but that being said, I actually feel like I played a pretty good match and a pretty good level," he said. "Some things I wish I could have done better but, all in all, I don't think I played bad by any means. It was mostly too good from Arthur."

Tsitsipas's woes deepened after losing to world number 49 Michelsen. The Greek world number 12 took the first set but had no answer to his 49th-ranked opponent for the rest of the match. A two-time Grand Slam finalist, Tsitsipas was bundled out in the first round at the US Open last month after ending his long-time coaching collaboration with his father, Apostolos.

Tsitsipas said after losing to Australian Thanasi Kokkinakis at the final Grand Slam of the year that



France's Arthur Fils stunned Taylor Fritz of the US at the Japan Open in Tokyo. (AFP)

he was "nothing compared to the player I was before" and spoke of "long-term burnout". The former world number three has slipped out of the top 10 and has won just two titles in two seasons.

Defending Japan Open champion Ben Shelton went through with a 3-6, 6-1, 6-4 win over fellow American Reilly Opelka. Eighth seed Shelton, who will play Argentina's Mariano Navone in the second round, said "this is a part of the year where I play very, very well". "I don't feel pressure as the defending champion," said Shelton, the world number 17. "It makes me feel more confident and comfortable playing this tournament."

Britain's US Open semi-finalist Jack Draper also advanced in Tokyo after beating Italian qualifier Mattia Bellucci 6-4, 6-2. American Tommy Paul beat Italy's Matteo Arnaldi 6-3, 6-2. Holger Rune of Denmark outlasted Chile's Alejandro Tabilo 6-2, 5-7, 6-4. Japan's Kei Nishikori, a two-time former champion at the tournament, beat Croatia's Marin Cilic 6-4, 3-6, 6-3.

FOCUS

Bagnaia plots 'aggressive' bid to close MotoGP lead in Indonesia

AFP
Lombok, Indonesia

Francesco Bagnaia said yesterday he plans to challenge MotoGP championship leader Jorge Martin with an aggressive strategy at this weekend's Indonesia Grand Prix as he tries to chip away at the Spaniard's 24-point lead.

Defending champion Bagnaia will be gunning for a repeat performance at the Mandalika International Circuit after winning the race last year to storm further ahead of his Pramac rival in the title race. But the roles have been reversed this year with Martin racing ahead after Ducati's Bagnaia crashed out at Emilia-Romagna last weekend.

"I think I still need to approach in an aggressive way this part of the season, then after these two races I will maybe change my strategy. But at the moment I have to push a lot," he told reporters. "I will approach like always, pushing, trying to be competitive and trying to win races. I am now 24 points behind so they are not a lot, but they are also not a few."

Martin was looking to put Emilia-Romagna behind him after he was pipped by Enea Bastianini on the final lap, failing to capitalise more on Bagnaia's dreadful end to the weekend. "The more pressure I have, the more difficult things become. I try to be more focused on riding, on my feelings," Martin said. "If I start thinking too much, then I start making mistakes."

Bastianini's second GP win of

the season, and seventh of his career, at Misano Adriatico last weekend allowed Bagnaia's Ducati teammate to move to within 59 points of Martin in third.

Gresini rider Marc Marquez, who will ride alongside Bagnaia with Ducati's factory team next season, trails his fellow Spaniard Martin by 60 points and slipped behind Bastianini into fourth in the overall standings last weekend.

Marquez had pulled himself back into the title hunt after winning the two GPs before Emilia-Romagna and the sprint in Aragon.

But he crashed in qualifying in Italy and couldn't gain any points on Martin in the standings. MotoGP returned to Indonesia in 2022 for the first time since 1997, at a new venue on the resort island of Lombok.



FROM LEFT: Gresini Racing's Marc Marquez, Ducati's Francesco Bagnaia, Prima Pramac Racing's Jorge Martin, and Ducati's Enea Bastianini attend a press conference in Mandalika, Indonesia, yesterday. (AFP)

LIGUE 1

PSG not struggling to regain momentum, says Enrique

Reuters
Paris

Luis Enrique is not overly concerned about Paris St Germain's slump in form following the international break, with the Ligue 1 club's manager praising his side for navigating their way through difficult fixtures.

PSG began their league campaign in emphatic fashion, scoring 13 goals to win their first three matches. That momentum has since fizzled out, with the French heavyweights struggling to break down Girona in a 1-0 Champions League win before being held to a 1-1 draw at Reims in their last league fixture.

Asked if there had been a decline in performances after the international break earlier this month, Enrique told reporters: "I feel things differently. Over the course of a season there's an evolution, there are good moments and not so good moments, it's part of the logical process of the team growing," added the Spaniard, speaking ahead of his side's home match against Stade Rennais today. "I find the opposite situation, I think the team has managed

to solve the problems that the opponents cause us."

Enrique added that he expects a tough outing against Rennes, who have won two out of their last four league matches against PSG. "They're a team that plays at the top of the table, they caused us quite a few problems last season. They take points against us, and they'll vary their behaviour as the game goes on," Enrique said.

"They did it last season. There are no easy games, there will be problems, but I'm an optimistic person when it comes to games like this. We're playing at the Parc and that spurs us on too. "Rennes are used to high pressing but I don't think they'll do that tomorrow because they're an adaptable team. My job is to cope and find solutions. It's very difficult to fight a low block."

PSG top the Ligue 1 standings after five games, level on 13 points with second-placed Olympique de Marseille and AS Monaco in third but leading on goal difference. After their home match against Rennes, they travel to face English club Arsenal in a Champions League clash.

Meanwhile, Enrique described the expanded Club World Cup, set to feature 32

teams next year, as an "exciting competition" while acknowledging the need to limit player workloads. "Once every four years there's this new, extremely exciting competition. Everyone wants to go to the Club World Cup," he said, amid growing concern from players and coaches alike over the increasing number of fixtures.

The 2025 Club World Cup will be held in the United States from June 15-July 13, with 12 European clubs set to take part in a tournament that has only traditionally involved the six continental champions and host nation.

Manchester City midfielder Rodri warned earlier this month that leading players could go on strike over the number of games they're being asked to play. The Spain international is set to miss the rest of the season after suffering ligament damage to his right knee at the weekend.

"Of course those involved must speak," said Luis Enrique. "I understand and I agree that the calendar is very busy, particularly that of Manchester City. Ours is less so because we have two fewer teams in our league and therefore four fewer matches. A less hectic calendar would favour everyone," he added.



EUROPA LEAGUE

Ten Hag frustrated as United held by Twente

Porto, the 2003 and 2011 winners, lost at Norwegian champions Bodo/Glimt

AFP
Manchester

Erik ten Hag slammed his Manchester United flops after a costly mistake from Christian Eriksen condemned them to a 1-1 draw against FC Twente in their Europa League opener on Wednesday. Eriksen's 35th-minute blast put United ahead, but the Danish midfielder gifted Twente their second-half equaliser at Old Trafford. Sam Lammers dispossessed Eriksen, who had made a risky turn under pressure, and fired past Andre Onana in the 68th minute.

United manager Ten Hag refused to single out Eriksen, instead insisting the whole team had to take responsibility for their failure to hold onto the lead. "We kept them alive, 1-0 up, controlling the game you have to be consistent and keep going. In the second half we dropped the level, gave the goal away," Ten Hag said. "We didn't finish it off, we had to go for the second goal and so they stay alive and we get punished with a mistake from ourselves."

Pressed on Eriksen's blunder, Ten Hag added: "The goal it's (a) team (mistake), a player of Twente can dribble through the pitch without stopping. We can't give a goal away like this. We have seen again you have to keep going for the whole game, once 1-0 up you have to keep going, go for the second. It's the first game, it's very important you get a win."

Ten Hag spent a combined 23 years at Twente across three stints as a player and then in different coaching capacities, saying on the eve of the game: "It's not nice to have to hurt something you love."

Instead it was the Eredivisie side who inflicted the discomfort, with a helping hand from another inconsistent United performance hot on the heels of their disappointing goalless draw at Crystal Palace last Saturday. Eriksen questioned whether United played with enough desire after their poor run in European competitions extended to



FC Twente's Sam Lammers celebrates after scoring against Manchester United in the Europa League. (Reuters)

one win in nine games. "I think mostly disappointed as a team, we wanted more in the end, far from good enough. They looked like they wanted it more, that can't be right," Eriksen said. "I think everyone is looking at themselves, everyone is a professional footballer, they know what to do, what can't happen. We don't lose but it feels like a loss."

After finishing bottom of their Champions League group with only one win last season, it was another dispiriting start to European action for United. Ten Hag's spluttering team are back in action against Tottenham at Old Trafford on Sunday.

In the revamped Europa League first stage they next face Porto before a clash with Fenerbahce, managed by their former boss Jose Mourinho.

Porto, the 2003 and 2011 winners of the second-tier European competition, lost 3-2 away to Norwegian champions Bodo/Glimt, who played most of the second half with 10 men. Ruben van Bommel, the son of former Netherlands international Mark, scored twice for AZ Alkmaar in a 3-2 victory over Swedish side Elfsborg, with ex-Tottenham forward Troy Parrott netting the winner from the spot.

Mauro Icardi's last-gasp goal sealed a 3-1 win for Galatasaray over PAOK in Istanbul, while Nice were left to rue a missed penalty in their 1-1 draw against Real Sociedad. Ander Barrenetxea gave La Real the lead before Pablo Rosario equalised on the stroke of half-time, but Evann Guessand saw his second-half spot-kick saved for the hosts.

Slavia Prague won 2-0 away to Bulgaria's Ludogorets, while Danish champions Midtjylland drew 1-1 with Hoffenheim and Anderlecht overcame Hungarian side Ferencvaros 2-1. Boulaye Dia scored twice in Lazio's 3-0 win over Dynamo Kyiv.

Lewandowski helps Liga leaders Barca past Getafe



Barcelona: Robert Lewandowski continued his fine form and earned La Liga leaders Barcelona a 1-0 win over Getafe on Wednesday.

The Polish forward struck from close range in the first half to maintain Barca's 100 percent record in the league so far this season with their seventh victory. Barcelona dominated despite not being able to add to their lead and restored a four-point advantage on Real Madrid, who beat Alaves on Tuesday.

Coach Hansi Flick started Inaki Pena in goal for the stricken Marc-Andre ter Stegen, out for months with a severe knee injury, and brought Marc Casado and Alejandro Balde back into the side. The reserve goalkeeper, who conceded 32 times in 17 matches across all competitions last season, heard his name chanted supportively by fans behind his goal and saved an early header from Carles Perez.

By contrast his opposite number David Soria's weak touch on Koude's cross led to Barcelona's opener on 19 minutes, the ball falling perfectly for Lewandowski to finish from close range. The 36-year-old striker has seven goals in La Liga this season and leads the scoring charts, seemingly rejuvenated under Flick after struggling at times last season.

Teen starlet Lamine Yamal might have doubled the lead moments later when Raphinha played him in, but he nudged inches past the post. Soria made a good save from Raphinha, who collected the August player of the month award before kick-off, and soon sent another effort skidding wide.

Yamal almost bent home a delicious curling strike from distance before the hour, but Soria tipped it over the crossbar. The Getafe goalkeeper also palmed a dangerous Raphinha free-kick around the post as Barcelona pushed for a second to put the match to bed.

Spain's Euro 2024 hero Yamal clipped the top of the crossbar with a vicious effort from distance, as Barca started to grumble about Getafe's persistently heavy challenges.

Raphinha missed a golden chance in the final stages, heading wide after a clever dart into the box but Barcelona were not punished for their profligacy.

Getafe, 19th, are still winless and wasted a fine chance of their own at the death when Borja Mayoral failed to get a shot away when well placed and free inside the box. The Madrid club have found the net on just three occasions so far this season.

The leaders next travel to face Osasuna tomorrow, before second-placed Real Madrid face rivals Atletico Madrid in a derby clash on Sunday. Even with various star names out injured, Flick's side have continued to improve since he arrived.

FOCUS

Sterling nets first Arsenal goal in League Cup romp

AFP
London

Raheem Sterling scored his first Arsenal goal and Jack Porter became the club's youngest ever starter in a 5-1 rout of Bolton in the League Cup on Wednesday, while Liverpool reached the last 16 with a 5-1 win against troubled West Ham.

Sterling marked his maiden Arsenal start following his transfer deadline day move from Chelsea with a second-half strike in the third-round tie at the Emirates Stadium. The 29-year-old will hope his goal marks the start of a career revival after a disappointing two-year spell at Chelsea.

Gunners boss Mikel Arteta seven changes from Sunday's stormy 2-2 draw at Premier League champions Manchester City, including giving goalkeeper Porter his record-breaking debut in place of the injured David Raya.

Aged 16 years and 72 days old, Porter was the youngest player ever to start for Arsenal, surpassing the previous record holder Cesc Fabregas, who was 16 years and 177 days when he played against Rotherham in 2003. Porter was Arsenal's second youngest ever player overall after Ethan Nwaneri, who was 15 years and 181 days, when he made his debut in 2022.



Raheem Sterling celebrates with his Arsenal's teammates after scoring. (Reuters)

Arsenal will travel to Championship side Preston in the last 16, with the tie of the fourth round pitting Tottenham against Manchester City. Liverpool's bid to retain the trophy will continue at Brighton, while Manchester United face Leicester. AFC Wimbledon or Newcastle, whose tie was rearranged due to flooding at the League Two side's stadium, will host Chelsea.

Declan Rice put Arsenal ahead after 16 minutes with a clinical finish from the edge of the area for his first goal this season.

Nwaneri, 17, doubled Arsenal's lead in the 37th minute with his first goal for the club and struck again from 12 yards four minutes after half-time. Porter had to pick the ball out of the net in the 53rd minute when Aaron Collins jinked around him and slotted home.

Sterling netted in the 64th minute, tapping in after Saka's cross was spilled by Bolton keeper Luke Southwood, and Kai Havertz grabbed the fifth from close range in the 78th minute.

At Anfield, Diogo Jota and Cody Gakpo scored twice as Liverpool's understud-

ies demolished West Ham to increase the scrutiny on Julen Lopetegui. Under pressure after winning only one of his first five league games since replacing David Moyes, Lopetegui made eight changes from the 3-0 defeat against Chelsea last weekend.

That loss had made Lopetegui the first West Ham manager to suffer three consecutive defeats at home to start a season. The Hammers took a surprise lead in the 21st minute as Kostas Tsimikas's miscued clearance deflected in off Liverpool defender Jarell Quansah for a farcical own goal.

And Jota equalised four minutes later, the Portugal forward out-jumping West Ham keeper Lukasz Fabianski to nod in Federico Chiesa's volley. Jota struck again in the 49th minute as he exchanged passes with Curtis Jones and drilled past Fabianski.

Mohamed Salah came off the bench to score in the 74th minute with a simple finish after Alexis Mac Allister's shot was pushed into his path. West Ham were in disarray and Edson Alvarez was sent off in the 76th minute for a second booking after chopping down Salah.

Capping another torrid day for Lopetegui, Gakpo smashed home from 18 yards in the 90th minute and then guided a deflected effort beyond Fabianski moments later.