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FOOTBALL

Qatar beat Jordan 3-2 in feisty clash, qualify for 2025 AFC U20 Asian Cup

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Playing an attacking game throughout the 90 minutes, Qatar yesterday emerged Group J winners of the AFC U20 Asian Cup China 2025 Qualifiers after a thrilling 3-2 win over Jordan.

The result meant Qatar finished with a perfect nine points while Jordan, despite the defeat, also advanced to the Finals as one of the best five second-placed teams.

In another match yesterday, Hong Kong, China finished third after a 2-0 win over Singapore.

Qatar 3 Jordan 2

With both teams tied on six points and Jordan - thanks to a superior goal difference - only needing a draw, the stage was set for a thriller at the Abdullah Bin Khalifa Stadium.

Qatar got off to a dream start, taking the lead in the fifth minute through Mohamed Khaled Gouda.

Jordan, however, responded by upping their tempo and their hard work paid off in the 39th minute with Odeh Burhan Fa-



Qatar players celebrate beating Jordan 3-2 in their Group J match of the AFC U20 Asian Cup qualifying tournament at Abdullah Bin Khalifa Stadium yesterday. Qatar, unbeaten in Group J, have qualified for next year's AFC U20 Asian Cup to be played in China.

khoury drawing them level. Both the teams exhibited great quality football for most parts of the Group J clash.

Needing victory to be absolutely sure of advancing, Qatar started the second half in aggressive mode

and were rewarded in the 51st minute through Bassam Adel Eid's strike. Captain Ibrahim Mohamadali made it 3-1 five minutes later but an own goal from Eid in the 69th minute made it nervy for Qatar. The hosts, however, de-

fended resolutely in the remaining minutes to see out the win.

Singapore 0-2 Hong Kong, China

Only pride was at stake for both teams after having suffered losses



to Jordan and Qatar and it was Hong Kong, China who showed more desire with defender Anthony Pinto opening the scoring in the 26th minute.

Forward Ho Tung Lam struck their second three minutes into the second half as Singapore's

hopes of a comeback were dashed. The AFC U20 Asian Cup will be held in China from February 6-23, 2025.

The top four teams in China will qualify for the FIFA U20 World Cup finals to be held in Chile next year.

PREVIEW / AFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE ELITE

Al Sadd get set for 'tough' battle against Esteghlal

'A difficult match awaits us against Esteghlal team. This will be the first match for us in our stadium'

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Qatar football giants Al Sadd know they can't afford to hold back when they host Esteghlal at the Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium for their AFC Champions League Elite 2024/25 Matchday Two tie today.

Al Sadd, the 2011 AFC Champions League winners, opened their continental campaign with a 1-1 draw against Al Ain of the UAE while Islamic Republic of Iran's Esteghlal impressed in their 3-0 win against another Qatar side, Al Gharafa.

Having endured a difficult start to their domestic season, Al Sadd will go into the tie on a high after beating Al Gharafa 4-2 in their Qatar Stars League tie on Thursday.

"A difficult match awaits us against Esteghlal team. This will be the first match for us in our stadium, which we want to win," Al Sadd coach Felix Sanchez said yesterday during a press conference.

"Al Sadd fans will be important and their presence in large



Football superstar Cristiano Ronaldo of Al Nassr.



Al Sadd striker Akram Afif during a team training session in Doha yesterday. Al Sadd host Iranian side Esteghlal at the Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium today.

numbers will be hugely beneficial in our favour," the former Qatar coach said. "Their support will give us more strength," he added.

Al Sadd player Youcef Atal said yesterday: "I am happy to participate in my first match in front of Al Sadd fans. We will strive to play a good match and get the three points we want."

He added: "In the Asian Champions League, every team is difficult but we have prepared well. We hope to get the win."

Seeking to advance to the knockout stage for the first time since 2020, Al Sadd know victory against an Esteghlal side they are familiar with - having met them

five times previously - will be a tremendous boost to their hopes.

While Esteghlal played some of their best football against Al Gharafa two weeks ago, they have been struggling domestically and will head to Doha having lost 1-0 to Persepolis FC in their Iran Pro League clash on Wednesday.

History is also against them as Esteghlal have not won in their last six matches against Qatari teams and neither have they previously won their first two matches on the continental stage.

Qatar's Al Rayyan, Al Nassr of Saudi lock horns in Riyadh
Al Rayyan will brace themselves

for a tough test when they take on hosts Al Nassr at the Prince Faisal Bin Fahd Stadium for their AFC Champions League Elite 2024/25 tie today.

Saudi Arabia's Al Nassr kicked off their League Stage campaign with a 1-1 draw against Iraq's Al Shorta while Al Rayyan suffered a 3-1 home defeat to Al Hilal SFC.

Stefano Pioli will make his AFC Champions League Elite debut with the Italian, appointed Al Nassr head coach two weeks ago, expected to build his gameplan around Cristiano Ronaldo.

The Portuguese star missed the opening match due to illness but is back at his best with Al Nassr



Al Sadd coach Felix Sanchez (right) and player Youcef Atal attend the press conference ahead of the AFC Champions League Elite match against Iran's Esteghlal at Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium in Doha.



Esteghlal coach Javad Nekounam (right) and player Roozbeh Cheshmi attend the press conference. PICTURES: Noushad Thekkayil

heading into the tie on the back of three consecutive wins.

They will expect a fourth victory, given their recent track record against Qatari teams with the Riyadh-based side undefeated in their last six outings, including four consecutive wins.

This will, however, be the first meeting between the sides on the continental stage with all their previous five encounters having come in Arab and Gulf Cup tournaments with Al Nassr having won twice and Al Rayyan once.

One of Qatar's more popular sides, Al Rayyan should expect a tough challenge as they bid to advance to the knockout stage for just the second time, after having done so in 2022.

Their season has not started smoothly, with Thursday's defeat to Al Arabi their fourth in six Qatar Stars League matches and with Al Nassr determined to go all the way for a win today, Al Rayyan - under a new coach - will have to be fully focused if they are to make their mark on the game.

CRICKET

Peiris sparkles on debut as Sri Lanka beat New Zealand

The tall off-spinner takes six wickets as the visitors lose the second Test by an innings and 154 runs

AFP
Galle

Debutant off-spinner Nishan Peiris took six wickets yesterday to seal Sri Lanka's first series win against New Zealand in 15 years with a crushing victory by an innings and 154 runs in the second Test in Galle.

New Zealand were all out for 360 in their second innings before tea on day four after being asked to follow-on.

Peiris, 27, and fellow spinner Prabath Jayasuriya shared 18 wickets in the match, the latter taking 6-42 in the first innings to bundle out the tourists for just 88 after the hosts had amassed a mammoth 602-5 declared.

"Amazing how the batting unit rose to the occasion," Sri Lanka captain Dhananjanaya de Silva told reporters.

"Then the spinners were too good... Once we bowled them out for less than 100 runs in the first innings, it was very difficult for them to come back into the game," he added.

New Zealand's lower order did put up some fight after resuming at 199-5 on Sunday, with Tom Blundell, Glenn Phillips and Mitchell Santner all making half-centuries.



Sri Lanka players pose with the trophy as they celebrate after winning the second and last Test against New Zealand at the Galle International Cricket Stadium in Galle yesterday. Right: Sri Lanka's Nishan Peiris celebrates after taking a five-wicket haul against New Zealand. (AFP)



Peiris, who had taken three second-innings wickets on Saturday, trapped Blundell lbw for 60 early in the first session, ending a 95-run stand with Phillips.

Santner helped craft a 64-run partnership for the seventh wicket before the gutsy Phillips fell on 78 when he mistimed a shot to long-on, giving Peiris his maiden five-wicket haul.

Santner put together a stubborn

ninth-wicket stand of 53 with Ajaz Patel before the latter was sent back, bowled by Jayasuriya, on 22.

Sri Lanka sealed the victory when Santner's gritty resistance was finally broken, stumped by Kusal Mendis for 67 off Peiris.

'Tough place'

"Galle is a tough place to come and play cricket and Sri Lanka are a strong team here," said New Zealand

captain Tim Southee at the prize distribution ceremony.

"We were on the wrong side of the toss and we struggled to make the breakthroughs. We really struggled to come back from there," he added.

Sri Lanka could have wrapped up the match and series in the morning session but for a succession of dropped catches.

Kamindu Mendis spilled Patel

on two at second slip and let Santner off on 36 in the covers. Peiris shelled another chance from Santner not long after.

Sri Lanka won the opening match by 63 runs and the series win is their first against New Zealand since a 2-0 win at home in 2009.

The result leaves New Zealand winless from six Test appearances at Galle, with yesterday's 360 their

highest innings total at the iconic venue.

BRIEF SCORES (Day 4)
Sri Lanka 602 for 5 dec (Kamindu 182, Chandimal 116, Kusal 106*, Mathews 88, Phillips 3-141) **beat New Zealand 88** (Jayasuriya 6-42, Peiris 3-33) **and 360** (Phillips 78, Santner 67, Conway 61, Blundell 60, Peiris 6-170, Jayasuriya 3-139) **by an innings and 154 runs**

MATCH REPORT

Australia beat England in last ODI, clinch series 3-2

Reuters
Bristol

Travis Head took 4-28 as Australia strangled England with spin before launching a rapid pursuit of their target with rain in the air to clinch the One-Day International series 3-2 following a 49-run win via Duckworth-Lewis-Stern in Bristol yesterday.

Australia were cruising at 165 for two after 20.4 overs in reply to England's 309 all out when the rain that had been expected all day washed out the prospect of any more play four balls past the threshold for constituting a match.

After being sent in to bat, England made a fast start as Ben Duckett smashed his way to 107 but they were stifled by Australia's spinners and fell well short of a par score having been 202 for two midway through their innings.

Australia made haste with the bat and cleared the boundary nine times to win a fascinating series they had led 2-0 until they allowed England to set up a decider with victories in the third and fourth matches.

"They (England) were on track for a big total but the way the bowling attack assessed the conditions as the day went on was fantastic," Australia's captain for the tour Mitch Marsh said.

"The more bowling options and changes you can throw at batters to not let them settle works well for us. This was a really good series for us."



Australia's Matthew Short (left) and Steven Smith wait for a review decision during the 5th One Day International against England in Bristol, south-west England, yesterday. (AFP)

England's innings was a tale of two halves as they motored to 202 for two one ball shy of the 25th over but managed only 107 for eight in the next 24.3 overs as

Australia used eight bowlers and turned to spin to slow England's progress.

Duckett scored his second ODI century, matching his previ-

ous highest score of 107 not out against Ireland at the same venue in September last year.

He put on 132 for the third wicket with captain Harry Brook (72 from 52 balls) while Phil Salt got the innings off to a bright start with 45 from 27 balls.

At that stage scoring looked easy but once the ball got softer and Australia turned to spin, the tourists were able to exert more control as they bowled 31.2 overs of spin in the innings.

They made sure they got ahead in the DLS equation as Matthew Short hit 58 in 30 balls and Steve Smith a more measured 36 from 48 balls as he ensured they did not lose wickets to bring England back into the game.

"It is not just the present, we are looking long-term and we are trying to build towards bigger competitions that are coming up," Brook said.

"We are trying a new brand of cricket and want to go out there and be entertaining.

"We have done that perfectly (in the series)."

BRIEF SCORES
Australia 165 for 2 (Short 58) **beat England 309** (Duckett 107, Brook 72, Head 4-28) **by 49 runs** (DLS method)

Previous Results
Sep 19, 1st ODI, Trent Bridge: Australia won by seven wickets
Sep 21, 2nd ODI, Headingley: Australia won by 68 runs
Sep 24, 3rd ODI, Chester-le-Street: England won by 46 runs (DLS method)
Sep 27, 4th ODI, Lord's: England won by 186 runs

FOCUS

Al Shaqab Training Show on Friday

Al Shaqab is thrilled to announce the upcoming Al Shaqab Training Show, taking place on Friday, October 4, from 3:00pm to 9:00pm at the Longines Indoor Arena. This event promises to be a celebration of talent, dedication, and the spirit of equestrian sports.

As a leading institution in equestrian excellence, Al Shaqab is committed to elevating its riders to the highest levels of performance. The Training Show serves as a crucial stepping stone for riders to showcase their skills and prepare for this season's competitions, including Al Shaqab League.

"This competition represents a golden opportunity for our riders to gain valuable experience in a competitive environment," said Mohammed al-Khayarin, Equine Education Manager at Al Shaqab.

"It's an essential part of our equestrian education programme, aimed at nurturing aspiring riders who dream of reaching the top."

The support and encouragement from the audience play a vital role in motivating the riders to



excel and represent their country on the global stage. The presence of fans at the event will inspire them to face challenges head-on, making a significant impact on their journey to success.

Attendees will have the chance to witness the hard work and dedication that the riders have put into their training, as they display their refined skills across various categories, including training categories of Intro 40cm, Intro 60cm, Intro 80cm, Intro 100cm, and Intro 110cm.

SECOND TEST

Wet outfield scuttles day three in Kanpur

AFP
Kanpur, India

Overnight rain and a wet outfield forced officials to call off the third day's play without a ball being bowled in the weather-hit second Test between India and Bangladesh yesterday.

It was the second successive day without any action despite no rain since morning and sunshine during the final inspection at 2pm

(0830 GMT). Umpires made three inspections and were concerned with some soggy patches on the outfield.

Bangladesh are 107-3 after being asked to bat, with only 35 overs possible on the opening day.

When bad light took the players off the ground nine overs after lunch on Friday, Mominul Haque was unbeaten on 40 and Mushfiqur Rahim was on six.

India lead the two-match series 1-0 after they won the opener in Chennai by 280 runs.



Match officials inspect the field before the start of the third day play of the second Test between India and Bangladesh at the Green Park Cricket Stadium in Kanpur yesterday. (AFP)

Mengesha, Ketema complete Ethiopian double at Berlin Marathon

Berlin: Ethiopian duo Milkesa Mengesha and Tigist Ketema won the men's and women's races respectively in the 50th running of the Berlin Marathon yesterday.

Mengesha finished just five seconds ahead of Kenyan Cibrian Kotut in a time of 2hr 03min 17sec with both recording personal bests. The times were outside the late Kelvin Kiptum's world record time of 2:00.35 and five-time Berlin winner Eliud Kipchoge's course record of 2:01.09, set in 2022.

"It was wonderful," said 24-year-old Mengesha. "I am totally happy. It was good that I wasn't among the favourites, because I had no pressure at all. I was totally relaxed and achieved exactly what I wanted in the end. I'm not the most experienced runner and I've had bad experiences, but it was perfectly organised and the spectators were wonderful too. It was hard and but I enjoyed it - I prepared for it extremely well."

Ketema, 26 and who only competed in her



Winners Ethiopia's Milkesa Mengesha (left) and compatriot Tigist Ketema celebrate on the podium after the Berlin Marathon yesterday. (AFP)

first marathon in January, won in a time of 2:16.42. "I worked very hard with my trainer and I would like to thank my coaches from the bottom of my heart," she said. Ketema's time was just under five minutes slower than training partner Tigist Assefa's

world record of 2:11.53 but is the third-best women's winning time in Berlin Marathon history.

Many of the big names - including Kipchoge - gave Berlin a miss having run in July's Paris Olympics. Despite the lack of world records, the combined first-place finishing times of the men and women made yesterday's race the 12th fastest marathon of all time, and the fourth quickest in Berlin history.

The leading men's group broke away early, setting a strong pace over the first 10 kilometres of 28:42, just outside world record time, but slowed gradually in sunny conditions. Just before the 40-kilometre mark, four men pulled away from the pack: Mengesha, Kotut, Haymanot Alew and Stephen Kiproop. With the Brandenburg Gate in sight, Mengesha and Kotut distanced themselves from the chasers and were neck and neck until the Ethiopian managed to edge ahead in the final metres.

TENNIS

Alcaraz wins in 56 minutes; 'China's Nadal' advances

'WHEN I AM ON THE COURT I FEEL SO LIKE RAFA NADAL ON COURT PHILIPPE-CHATRIER'

AFP
Beijing

Carlos Alcaraz barreled into the China Open quarter-finals yesterday in just 56 minutes as 595th-ranked Zhang Shuai extended her historic run.

Rain in Beijing played havoc with the schedule but four-time Grand Slam champion Alcaraz made rapid progress under the roof of the Diamond Court with a 6-1, 6-2 demolition of Tallon Griekspoor.

The 39th-ranked Dutchman looked shellshocked.

"I just want to keep going, to keep getting more and more wins," said Alcaraz after racking up his 200th tour-level victory.

Alcaraz, the second seed behind Jannik Sinner, faces seventh-seeded Karen Khachanov next after an ominous warning of intent from the 21-year-old Spaniard.

Alcaraz, beaten in the second round of the recent US Open, conceded that the "last couple of tournaments didn't feel as good as I wanted".

"Right now I feel ready, I feel good. I feel like my tennis came again," he said.

The Russian Khachanov booked his place with a hard-fought 7-6 (7/4), 7-6 (11/9) victory over Argentina's Francisco Cerundolo.

In the only other match completed on the day in the men's draw, Chinese wildcard Bu Yunchaokete pulled off a shock 6-2, 6-4 win over Italian sixth seed Lorenzo Musetti.

Zhang's fairytale

There was home joy too in the women's draw as another Chinese



Spain's Carlos Alcaraz (centre) leaves after winning the singles match against Netherlands's Tallon Griekspoor at the China Open in Beijing yesterday. (AFP)

wildcard, Zhang Shuai, reached the last 16 to add another chapter to her fairytale tournament.

The 35-year-old player had not won a singles match in more than 600 days when she arrived at the prestigious WTA 1000 event last week.

The two-time Grand Slam singles quarter-finalist, who has been plagued by injuries, has now won three matches in a row after a 6-2, 6-3 defeat of Belgium's Greet Minnen.

Zhang, who faced Minnen as the lowest-ranked player to reach the China Open third round in the tournament's history, faces Poland's 23rd seed Magdalena Frech

next. Zhang hails from Tianjin, near Beijing, and said she felt very much at home on the hard courts of the Chinese capital.

So at home in fact that she compared herself jokingly to the Spanish tennis great Rafael Nadal on his favourite surface of the French Open.

"When I am on the court I feel so like Rafa Nadal on Court Philippe-Chatrier," she laughed.

Pegula survives a scare

US Open runner-up Jessica Pegula survived a scare to set up a meeting with Spain's Paula Badosa.

The second seed from the United States fought back to beat Rus-

sia's Veronika Kudermetova 6-7 (9/11), 6-1, 6-2. The 30-year-old Pegula is chasing a seventh WTA Tour title.

The 19th-ranked Badosa booked her place with a straight-sets win over Slovakian qualifier Rebecca Sramkova.

Also through is fourth seed Coco Gauff after she beat Britain's Katie Boulter 7-5, 6-2.

The top women's seed in Beijing is Aryna Sabalenka, who defeated Pegula in New York earlier this month for her third Grand Slam crown.

World number one Iga Swiatek is not in Beijing because of "personal matters".

Alcaraz sympathises with rival Sinner over steroid case



Beijing: Four-time Grand Slam champion Carlos Alcaraz said yesterday that the steroid case involving Jannik Sinner was "not good" for tennis but sympathised with the world number one.

The World Anti-Doping Agency on Saturday said it had appealed to the Court of Arbitration for Sport after Sinner was cleared of wrongdoing last month. WADA is seeking a ban of up to two years after the Italian twice tested positive for traces of the banned substance clostebol in March.

The International Tennis Integrity Agency subsequently accepted Sinner's explanation that the drug entered his system when his physiotherapist used a spray containing it to treat a cut, then provided massage and sports therapy to the player.

Alcaraz, the Spanish world number three, said at the China Open: "I think for tennis it's not really good, not really a good

sign for tennis in general." There has been scepticism among some players about Sinner's explanation for why he failed the two tests, but Alcaraz took a more sympathetic stance. "It is difficult for him. I know everyone is talking about it, the news is talking about it," he said, having reached the last eight in Beijing. "Probably as he said before New York (US Open), people started to look at him in a different way. I don't know how it can be, but for sure I understand the position. I feel (for) him.

"But anyway, the game and the level that he's playing with everything he's been through right now, it's insane."

Alcaraz added: "I hope that this thing... will be aside soon and he's able to stay focused on what he loves, and that is playing tennis, trying to keep going."

Sinner is also playing in Beijing, where he faces Jiri Lehecka of the Czech Republic today.

QCF officials at UCI General Assembly



The Qatar Cycling Federation, led by President Dr Mohammed bin Jaham al-Kuwari and Secretary-General Eng. Thani Khalifa al-Zaraa, attended the General Assembly of the International Cycling Union (UCI) in Zurich, Switzerland. The meeting focused on the key achievements and efforts made in the world of cycling and the successful hosting of the World Road Cycling Championships by Zurich. Dr al-Kuwari emphasised the significance of the Qatar cycling team's participation in this global event, highlighting its contribution to the development of Qatari cyclists on the international stage. Meanwhile, Qatari cyclists Fadl al-Khater, Tamim al-Kuwari and Saeed al-Mohannadi concluded their participation in the World Road Cycling Championships in Switzerland, competing in the Individual General and Individual Time Trial races. Tamim competed in the under-23 category, while Saeed participated in the junior category.

GOLF

Buhai closes strong to take LPGA NW Arkansas Championship lead

AFP
Los Angeles, United States

Ashleigh Buhai shook off a "silly" double bogey and surged home with four birdies in the last five holes to take a one-shot lead in the US LPGA NW Arkansas Championship.

"I felt I played just as well as yesterday. Obviously the winds were a little trickier than yesterday morning for us, so kind of faded out for everybody," said Buhai, who posted a four-under par 67 for an 11-under par 36-hole total of 131 at Pinnacle Country Club in Rogers, Arkansas.

One back to start the day, South Africa's Buhai birdied the first hole. But a double bogey at the eighth left her needing to gain ground.



She birdied nine and 11, and after a bogey at 13 she birdied 14, 15, 17 and 18 to power past Dottie Ardina of the Philippines, who carded a 67 for 10-under 132.

"I did start to get a little frustrated, but I was hitting a lot of good shots," Buhai said. "Made a silly double bogey, but at least I kept calm and just reminded myself to keep doing what I was doing, and finally got rewarded down the last few holes."

Buhai, whose two LPGA victories include a major title at the 2022 Women's British Open, is battling to claim a spot in the 60-player Tour Championship field after a season disrupted by injury. She battled back injuries and a broken toe - playing at the Paris Olympics with a piece of one shoe cut away because of her toe trouble. The 35-year-old led after the first round of the Queen City Championship this month on the way to a tie for 14th and said she'd try not to think about holding the lead going into the final round of the 54-hole event.

Ardina, chasing a first LPGA title, was 11-under after a blistering start that saw her birdie the first then pick up four strokes in three holes with birdies at the fourth and sixth sandwiched around a hole out eagle at the fifth.

MOTORSPORT

Martin wins Indonesia Grand Prix to extend points lead over Bagnaia

AFP
Lombok, Indonesia

Jorge Martin won a crash-filled Indonesia MotoGP yesterday to extend his championship lead, while closest rival Francesco Bagnaia limited the damage by claiming the final podium place.

The win leaves the Pramac rider 21 points ahead of his Italian Ducati rival, who finished third behind Spaniard Pedro Acosta in sweltering conditions at the Mandalika track on Lombok island.

In front of a crowd of 60,000 in motorbike-mad Indonesia, the 26-year-old put his tumble in Saturday's sprint behind him, cancelling out the gains his title rival Bagnaia made after securing victory in that race.

"Thank you Indonesia. I am very happy. This is not just a victory. After what happened last season, after yesterday's crash, to perform this way was quite difficult," Martin said.

"I trust in myself but I thought I would crash at every corner. There was a lot of pressure from Pedro so I am really happy."

There was an intense all-Italian battle for the final podium place between Bagnaia, Enea Bastianini, Franco Morbidelli and Marco Bezzecchi.

But Bagnaia, who won at Mandalika last year, nabbed it after his teammate Bastianini crashed with six laps remaining and he overtook Morbidelli.

"A very, very tough race. I struggled a lot at the start. It's the fifth start in a row that we struggle. We have to improve that area," Bagnaia told reporters.



Prima Pramac Racing's Jorge Martin celebrates on the podium after winning the Indonesian Grand Prix at Mandalika International Street Circuit, Mandalika, Indonesia, yesterday. (Reuters)

"As soon as I was back at the front I was able to push, but it was too late."

Acosta escapes penalty

As riders crossed the finish line, it was announced Acosta was being investigated for low front tyre pressure, but no further action was taken in a boost to Martin.

Acosta could have faced a potential penalty of 16 seconds, which would have put him down to eighth and elevated Bagnaia to second and four more points.

The stewards determined that, after post-race technical checks, Acosta's tyre pressure had been correct at the start of the race and had reduced due to a leaking wheel rim.

"The technical director, together with the official tyre supplier, determined that no infraction of the regulations occurred," said the stewards' report.

More than half a dozen riders crashed out of the race. Marc Marquez's outside title chances potentially went up in smoke after he drove off the track with flames flickering from his bike.

He is now 78 points behind Martin, while Bastianini is still third at 75 points behind the title leader.

Aleix Espargaro, Alex Marquez, Jack Miller and Luca Marini all retired after a pile-up on the first lap. Fabio Di Giannantonio and Joan Mir also crashed out.

Aprilia's Miguel Oliveira was ruled out of the race weekend and left a doubt for next week's Japan MotoGP after fracturing his right wrist in Friday morning's free practice session.

Ducati have already sealed the constructors' championship.

MotoGP returned to Indonesia in 2022 for the first time since 1997, at a new venue on the resort island of Lombok.

Gresini Racing MotoGP's Spanish rider Marc Marquez retires during the MotoGP race of the Indonesian Grand Prix at the Mandalika International Circuit in Mandalika, West Nusa Tenggara yesterday. (AFP)



SPOTLIGHT

QREC delegation to attend opening of Salon du Cheval

Around 300,000 visitors will attend the Salon throughout the week-long competitions and shows

The official opening ceremony of the Salon du Cheval El Jadida, Morocco, will be held today.

The Qatar Racing and Equestrian Club (QREC) as well as delegations from 40 Arab and European countries will participate in the Salon, which is held under the patronage of King Mohammed VI of Morocco.

QREC's participation in the Salon this year comes at the invitation of the Morocco side and QREC accepted the invitation and included it under the framework of the Qatar-Morocco 2024 Year of Culture.

The Salon, which will continue until 6th October, will involve many equestrian events and championships.

The QREC delegation to the Salon includes Issa bin Mohammed al-Mohannadi, QREC Chairman, Bader bin Mohammed al-Darwish, QREC Acting CEO, Khalid bin Mohammed al-Ali, QREC Board Member, Salem bin Khejaim al-Adbi, Director of PR, Communication and Marketing Department, Saad bin Ali al-Kubaisi, Deputy Director of the Registration and Studbook Department and Saeed bin Hamad al-Rashdi, Deputy Head of the Stabling Section.

QREC pavilion

The Salon will be held in the International Village in El Jadida city. Through QREC pavilion at the Sa-



lon, the events organised by QREC, including Arabian horse shows and race meetings at Al Rayyan and Al Uqda racecourses, as well as the major international racing events sponsored by QREC such as the Qatar Goodwood Festival in the UK and the Qatar Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe in France, will be promoted. Videos of the highlights of these events will be shown to the visitors and guests throughout the days of the Salon.

The visitors of the Salon learn about the remarkable development of Qatar's equestrian sport and the

tremendous successes in enhancing Arabian racing worldwide. The pavilion also highlights the Qatar's leading role in the Arabian horse show discipline in terms of both winning the world's biggest titles and excellence in organising Arabian horse shows for many years in the Arab region.

The Salon du Cheval has gained a distinguished international status, becoming one of the most famous horse and equestrian salons in the world and one of the strongest events in the international equestrian programme.

This year's edition is held under the theme "Horse Farming in Morocco: Innovation and Challenge".

During the Salon's activities, all professions related to horses will be represented, including modern and traditional saddle making, modern farriery and "Tbourida" rifle making.

"Tbourida" is one of the most famous and popular equestrian activities in Morocco.

The Salon du Cheval d'El Jadida celebrates the equestrian heritage in its cultural, historical and scientific dimensions through the



Issa bin Mohammed al-Mohannadi, QREC Chairman



Bader bin Mohammed al-Darwish, QREC Acting CEO

display of paintings, artworks and manuscripts, as well as through cultural and scientific lectures, which are conducted in presence of senior equestrian experts.

The salon aims to contribute to the development of the equestrian sector in the participating countries, to promote and protect the cultural heritage associated with the equestrian sport and to celebrate the equestrian heritage in the Arab region in general.

Horse Show and Jumping Competition

The programme of the Salon includes the International Arabian Horse show (A), which will see exhibits from the major Arab and

European farms and studs and the Grand Prix of His Majesty the King Mohammed VI of jumping competition with the participation of a large number of Arab and international riders.

In addition, the Grand Prize of His Majesty King Mohammed VI of Tbourida will take centre stage and its contests will be held every day during the Salon, being very popular among the visitors.

According to estimates released by the local organising committee of the Salon this year, it is expected that approximately 300,000 visitors - including those from around the world - will attend the Salon throughout the week-long competitions and shows.

SQUASH

Q-Terminals Qatar Classic begins today

The 21st edition of the Q-Terminals Qatar Classic gets underway today, with 64 of the world's best players looking to come away victorious from the second Platinum event of the 2024/25 PSA Squash Tour season.

The event will take place between Sep 30 to Oct 5 and will be held at the iconic Khalifa International Tennis & Squash Complex. Day one of action will be split across an all-glass court and three side courts in Doha, with play getting underway at 12:00pm.

This year will once again see both a men's and women's taking place, with reigning champions Ali Farag and Hania El Hammamy returning in an attempt to defend their titles.

Home hopes will hang on Qatari duo Abdulla al-Tamimi and Wildcard Salem al-Malki, who will both be taking part in the men's event. World No.19 al-Tamimi will start his tournament against Adrian Waller, while al-Malki takes on Sebastian Bonmalais.

Farag, the men's top seed and three-time winner of the Qatar Classic, will be looking to bounce back from defeats in the finals of the Egyptian Open and Paris Squash to Mostafa Asal. The World No.1 starts his campaign against the dangerous Yousef Ibrahim. Behind Farag in the seedings lie Paul Coll, Mostafa Asal and Diego Elias - all of whom were multiple event winners on the PSA Tour last season. Asal has started the new campaign in scintillating form, capturing back-to-back titles, and now sits within almost 500 points of Farag at the top of the men's world rankings.

Coll and Elias, meanwhile, will be looking for revenge against Asal and Farag, respectively, after being edged out in tense semi-final matches at Paris Squash last week.

In particular, Elias will likely arrive in Qatar quietly confident of a strong run after delivering potentially his best week of squash since winning the PSA World Championships earlier this year.

The men's event will also see a number of heavyweight first-round matches, with World No.3 Coll facing World No.9 Joel Makin, and World No.7 Tarek Momen taking on World No.10



Doha ready for another world-class event



Tariq Zainal, the Secretary-General of the Qatar Tennis, Squash and Badminton Federation and Tournament Director, emphasised that hosting the Q-Terminals Qatar Classic Squash Championship annually demonstrates the Federation's dedication to promoting squash in Qatar and around the region.

He lauded the committees' thorough preparations for the tournament. He also commended the efforts of his teams involved in ensuring its success. Zainal expressed confidence in Qatar's ability to maintain its reputation in hosting world-class international events and solidify its position in the global squash community.

Marwan ElShorbagy. Other dangers to the top four seeds include the likes of Mazen Hesham, Karim Abdel Gawad and Mohamed ElShorbagy.

In the women's draw, World No.1 Nour El Sherbini will be the player to beat, after recording ten straight victories to start off the 2024/25 campaign. "The Warrior Princess", who was defeated by El Hammamy in the Qatar Classic final last year, has clinched title victories over fierce rival Nouran Gohar in the first two finals of the season, and will look to continue this form when she begins her tournament against Sarah-Jane Perry.

Defending champion El Hammamy sits in the same half of the draw as El Sherbini and could prove a potential semi-final op-

ponent if the event were to go to seeding. The 24-year-old will be looking to return to the winner's circle after nine months without a title on the PSA Squash Tour. El Hammamy will get her campaign underway against Japanese No.1 Satomi Watanabe.

World No.2 Nouran Gohar will be another major title contender in the women's event and be hoping a strong performance in Qatar will help to close the gap to El Sherbini in the World Rankings. "The Terminator" is the highest-seeded player in the bottom half of the draw, with the likes of No.8 seed Rowan Elaraby, No.5 seed Olivia Weaver and No.4 seed Nele Coll potential opponents in the latter stages of the event.

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ANNOUNCEMENT

QF and PSG Academy launch girls' football programme



Qatar Foundation (QF) and PSG Academy are proud to announce the launch of an exciting new girls' football programme that will take place inside the iconic Education City Stadium, a landmark venue from the FIFA 2022 World Cup.

The programme, designed to foster athletic skills, leadership, and empowerment among young girls, will kick off tomorrow (October 1) and is set to revolutionise opportunities for female athletes in the region.

The initiative will be held within the state-of-the-art Education City Stadium, known for hosting some of the most thrilling matches during the 2022 FIFA World Cup. Located in the heart of Education City - a global hub for education, innovation, and community - the stadium serves as a symbol of aspiration, offering young girls the rare opportunity to play on a world-class field where international legends competed.

The football programme aims to provide girls ages 6 and over with professional-level coaching, and personal development. The curriculum is designed to focus on more than just athletic excellence, emphasising teamwork, leadership, and confidence-building, making it a comprehensive platform for young female athletes to grow both on and off the field.

"Our mission is to create a supportive and inspiring environment for girls to develop their soccer abilities while also nurturing their personal growth," said Fabien Dilem, Paris Saint-Germain General Manager of Middle East and India. "By giving these girls access to a venue like Education City Sta-



dium, we aim to show them that the sky's the limit for what they can achieve - whether in football or life."

Education City Stadium, one of the eight FIFA 2022 World Cup stadiums, is an architectural marvel that seats 40,000 spectators. Its location within Education City, which hosts leading international universities and research centres, symbolises the fusion of sport, education, and innovation.

Kholoud al-Ali, Communication Initiatives and Outreach Director at Qatar Foundation, said: "We are excited to strengthen our collaboration with PSG and proud to support the launch of the QF Girls' Football Program at Education City Stadium."

"At QF, we are committed to promoting the participation of women in sports, and this initiative reflects our dedication to providing opportunities for girls to develop their athletic abilities while enhancing their mental, physical, and social well-being."

"We encourage girls, aged 6 and up, from across the community to join this exciting programme, where they will benefit from

world-class facilities and guidance from experienced coaches in a safe and welcoming environment."

The programme will be led by a team of experienced coaches, many of whom have professional football backgrounds. Training sessions will focus on improving core skills such as dribbling, passing, shooting, and tactical understanding, while also incorporating lessons on sportsmanship and the importance of mental and physical well-being.

In addition to soccer training, the programme will feature workshops aimed at building leadership qualities, confidence, and resilience. By emphasising these values, QF and PSG Academy hopes to not only produce future soccer stars but also strong, empowered young women who can succeed in all areas of life.

Registration for the girls' football programme is now open, and interested participants can sign up via psgacademy.qa or by contacting 33062115. The programme is open to girls of all skill levels, from beginners to advanced players. Sessions will be held weekly, with flexible scheduling options.