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WTA FINALS

Swiatek eliminated as Krejcikova beats Gauff to enter semis

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HORSE RACING

# Casamento rides al-Kaabi's Fuwayrit to Sealine Cup triumph

**By Sports Reporter**
Doha



Connections of Fuwayrit celebrate with the trophy after the seven-year-old won Sealine Cup at the Al Rayyan Racecourse yesterday. **PICTURES:** *Juhaim*



Jockey Marco Casamento guides Fuwayrit to Sealine Cup victory yesterday.

Sharida bin Nasser bin Sharida al-Kaabi's Fuwayrit made his return to action a winning one as he landed yesterday's feature race Sealine Cup at QREC's Al Rayyan Racecourse.

In the hands of Marco Casamento, the Gassim Ghazali-trained seven-year-old grey horse showed a fine attitude to get his head in front close home, winning the 1400m race with a neck to spare at the line. Mohammed Abdulhadi S al-Hajri-owned and Ibrahim Saeed al-Malki-trained General Panic came second.

Fuwayrit's last winning race was the Thoroughbred Handicap 80-100 (Class 2) (Far Bend) on February 29 last year, where he also won against the same horse – General Panic – by the same margin.

Abdulla Rashid al-Kubaisi, QREC Racing Manager, presented the trophies to the winners.

In the penultimate race of the day, Al Jeryan Stud-owned and M.H.K al-Attiyah-trained AJS Jamran won the 1400m race Purebred Arabian Conditions for five-year-old+ with a victory margin of three quarters of a length.

Jockey Soufiane Saadi completed a double when he guided Wathnan Racing's Rothstein to victory in the 1400m race for the Thoroughbred Handicap (0-95) for three-year-old. Alban de Mieulle' grey colt won the race by a length and a quarter.

Earlier in the day's opener Saadi rode Dhouha, in the silks of Khamis Ali Khamis al-Sulaiti, to victory in the Purebred Arabian Maiden Plate for the four-year-olds. The Hadi al-Ramzani trained four-year-old grey filly won the 1400m race ahead of Al Shahania Stud's AA Trunk Monkey.

**RESULTS 2ND AL RAYYAN RACE MEETING - SEALINE CUP (DIV1)**

**WINNERS (Horse, Owner, Trainer, Jockey)**

**Purebred Arabian Maiden Plate, 4YOs, 1400m**
Dhouha (QA), Khamis Ali Khamis al-Sulaiti, Hadi al-Ramzani, Soufiane Saadi

**Thoroughbred Handicap (0-95), 3YOs, 1400m**
Rothstein (IRE), Wathnan Racing, Alban de Mieulle, Soufiane Saadi

**Purebred Arabian Conditions, 4YOs, 1400m**
Al Khbaib (FR), Al Shaqab Racing, Jean de Mieulle, Olivier d'Andigne

**Purebred Arabian Conditions, 5YO+, 1400m**
AJS Jamran (BE), Al Jeryan Stud, M.H.K al-Attiyah, Szczepan Mazur

**Sealine Cup - Thoroughbred Conditions, 4YO+, 1400m**
Fuwayrit (IRE), Sharida bin Nasser bin Sharida al-Kaabi, Gassim Ghazali, Marco Casamento

FOOTBALL

# Mbappe left out of France squad

## Coach Deschamps insists the absence of Mbappe 'is for the best'

**AFP**
Paris



**Kylian Mbappe** has been left out of the France squad for their upcoming UEFA Nations League matches against Israel and Italy, with coach Didier Deschamps insisting the absence of the Real Madrid superstar "is for the best".

It is the second successive France squad from which the national team captain has been absent after he also missed the October double-header against Israel and Belgium. "I have spoken with him and I have made the decision for this get-together because I think it is for the best," Deschamps told reporters at a press conference in Paris.

The 25-year-old Mbappe was rested for last month's matches in order to help him recover from a minor thigh injury suffered playing for Real. However, that quickly became a source of controversy when he returned to action for Real days later, before France had even played.

Mbappe was absent for France's 4-1 win over Israel in a game played in Budapest and a 2-1 win in Belgium, and instead travelled to Stockholm for a short break with members of his entourage. It was following that trip that Swedish media reported he was being investigated for an alleged rape. Mbappe himself said those reports were "fake news" while his lawyer said the player would take action for libel.

A Swedish prosecutor confirmed that an investigation had been opened, without naming Mbappe. "I am not going to set out my argument, but I can say two things. The first is that Kylian wanted to come," Deschamps added. "The second is that it is not to do with the off-field problems because the presumption of innocence exists."

Since last month's controversy, the ex-Paris Saint-Germain forward has made four appearances for his club, scoring one goal. However, he remains short of his explosive best form. "I don't want to say any more about it. I stand by my decision," Deschamps added.

France are second in Group A2 of the Nations League, one point behind leaders Italy, ahead of their final two fixtures.

They host Israel at the Stade de France next Thursday, November 14, and then play Italy in Milan three days later. France are five points clear of Belgium in third place and the top two teams will qualify for the quarter-finals, which will take place over two legs next March.

The semi-finals and final will be played next June.

Veteran midfielder N'Golo Kante, of Al Ittihad in Saudi Arabia, returns to the squad along with Adrien Rabiot of Marseille. Meanwhile, there is a first call-up for highly-rated Lille goalkeeper Lucas Chevalier, who takes the place of West Ham United's Alphonse Areola in the squad.

**FRANCE SQUAD**

**Goalkeepers:** Lucas Chevalier (Lille), Mike Maignan (AC Milan/ITA), Brice Samba (Lens)

**Defenders**: Jonathan Clauss (Nice), Lucas Digne (Aston Villa/ENG), Wesley Fofana (Chelsea/ENG), Theo Hernandez (AC Milan/ITA), Ibrahima Konate (Liverpool/ENG), Jules Kounde (Barcelona/ESP), William Saliba (Arsenal/ENG), Dayot Upamecano (Bayern Munich/GER)

**Midfielders**: Eduardo Camavinga (Real Madrid/ESP), Matteo Guendouzi (Lazio/ITA), N'Golo Kante (Al Ittihad/KSA), Manu Kone (Roma/ITA), Adrien Rabiot (Marseille), Warren Zaire-Emery (Paris Saint-Germain)

**Forwards**: Bradley Barcola, Ousmane Dembele, Randal Kolo Muani (Paris Saint-Germain), Christopher Nkunku (Chelsea/ENG), Michael Olise (Bayern Munich/GER), Marcus Thuram (Inter Milan/ITA)

SPOTLIGHT

# Al-Mughaseeb re-elected as President of QBF

**By Sports Reporter**
Doha

The General Assembly of the Qatar Basketball Federation (QBF) has re-elected Mohammed bin Saad al-Mughaseeb as President for a new term that will last until 2028. This decision was made during the electoral General Assembly meeting convened yesterday at the federation's headquarters in Al Gharafa. In the meeting, Saadoun Sabah al-Kuwari was appointed as Secretary-General, while Ahmed Youssef Mohammed Mubarak al-Darwish was designated as Assistant Secretary-General.

Additionally, Abdullah Sultan al-Jaber, Abdulrahman Hamad Mohammed al-Manea, Mishaal Abdullah Youssef al-Malki and Ahmed Youssef Mohammed Mubarak al-Darwish were elected to the QBF's Board of Directors, with Zahra Majed Burhan al-Zaidan nominated as a female member of the Board.

The meeting was presided over by al-Mughaiseeb, the federation's President, and attended by al-Kuwari, the Secretary-General, along with Ishaq al-Hashemi, a representative from the Qatar Olympic Committee's Sports Affairs Department, who confirmed that the meeting met the legal quorum required by the nine clubs.

In his opening remarks, al-Mughaiseeb emphasised the QBF's dedication to improving communication with Qatari clubs to foster the development of the sport and enhance the quality of local competitions. He reiterated that the ongoing initiatives are aimed at fulfilling the federation's objectives and enriching both local and international competitions.

The meeting addressed several significant topics, including the QBF's forthcoming strategy and the national teams' preparations for the 2027 World Cup, which will be hosted by Qatar, marking the first time this event takes place in the Middle East.

The future strategy of the QBF was also deliberated, along with preparations for upcoming events such as the 2030 Asian Games and initiatives aimed at developing women's teams, all contributing to the realisation of Qatar Vision 2030 in the realm of sports.

Al-Mughaiseeb expressed appreciation for the support extended by HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani, President of the Qatar Olympic Committee, Jassim bin Rashid al-Buainain, Secretary-General of the QOC, and Sheikh Saud bin Abdulrahman al-Thani the Honorary President of the QBF.



Qatar Basketball Federation president Mohammed bin Saad al-Mughaseeb and Secretary-General Saadoun Sabah al-Kuwari with federation's Board of Directors.

# Qatar to face hosts China, Australia and Kyrgyzstan in next year's U-20 Asian Cup

**Doha:** Qatar were placed in Group A with hosts China, Australia, Kyrgyzstan for the AFC U-20 Asian Cup 2025 following the conclusion of the official draw in Shenzhen yesterday. The 42nd edition of the tournament will take place from February 12 to March 1, 2025.

The 16 teams were drawn into four groups with not just continental glory at stake but also four tickets to the FIFA U-20 World Cup 2025 in Chile.

Qatar won the title in 2014, while China were champions in 1985. Australia were runners-up in 2010 while Kyrgyzstan will be making their third appearance at the tournament.

Five-time winners Iraq head the Group B cast with Jordan, Saudi Arabia and North Korea also vying for the two quarter-final spots. North Korea and Saudi Arabia are three-time champions while Jordan were fourth in 2006.

Group C will see defending champions Uzbekistan facing four-time winners Iran, Indonesia and Yemen slugging it out. Indonesia won the title in 1961 while Yemen will be making their seventh appearance at the Finals

Leading the Group D challenge will be 2016 champions Japan with 12-time winners South Korea, Syria (1994 winners) and Thailand (champions in 1962, 1969) also hoping to advance to the quarter-finals.

**DRAW**

**Group A:** China, Australia, Kyrgyzstan, Qatar; **Group B:** Iraq, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, North Korea; **Group C:** Uzbekistan, Iran, Indonesia, Yemen; **Group D:** Japan, South Korea, Syria, Thailand

# CRICKET

FOCUS

## Carty, King tons help Windies clinch series

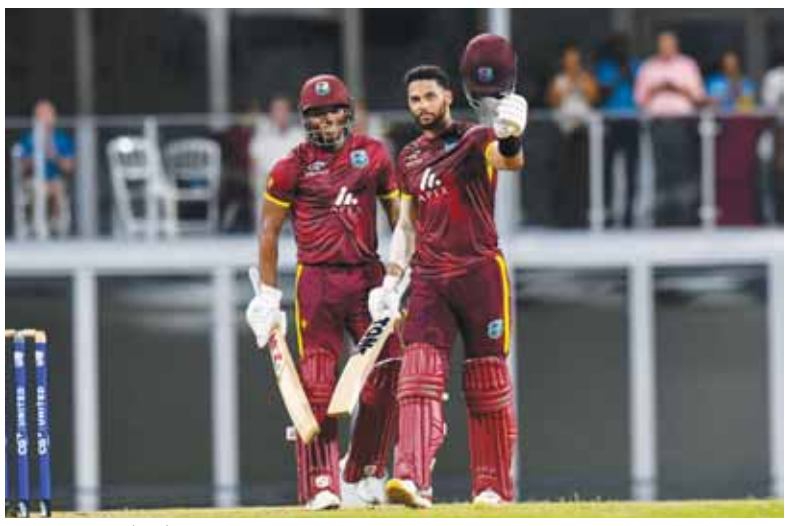
**Reuters**
Bridgetown

Stunning centuries from Keacy Carty and Brandon King steered West Indies to an eight-wicket victory over England in the third and final One-Day International in Barbados on Wednesday as the hosts sealed the series 2-1.

England batted first, with a fine 74 from opener Phil Salt helping the tourists recover from 24-4 to post a respectable 263-8, a late flurry of runs from the bat of fast bowler Jofra Archer (38 not out) helping their cause.

Archer struggled with the ball, however, as Keacy (128 not out) posted his first international ton and King (102) made his third ODI century in a second-wicket partnership of 209 to guide West Indies to victory.

England take on West Indies again in the first of five Twenty20 Internationals at Barbados' Kensington Oval on Saturday, with white-ball captain Jos Buttler in line for a potential return from injury. Liam Livingstone had notched a maiden ODI century to help England square the series 1-1 on Saturday, but the stand-in skipper's wicket was one of four to fall inside the first 10 overs at Kensington Oval, with only 24 runs on the board. Salt's 70-run stand with all-rounder Sam Curran helped England recover, while Dan Mousley's maiden ODI half-century dragged the tourists back into the contest.


Keacy Carty (left) smiles as Brandon King of West Indies celebrates his century during the 3rd and final ODI against England at Kensington Oval, Bridgetown, Barbados. *(AFP)*

A mid-spell injury to the hosts' Romario Shepherd provided England with a further boost, with Sherfane Rutherford forced to come into the bowling attack.

England plundered 57 runs off Rutherford's 3.5 overs, with Archer's big-hitting 38 from 17 balls, including three sixes, doing the damage.

"We battled back really well (with the bat)," Livingstone told TNT Sports. "The boys in the middle put on a decent partnership and ended really well. Ultimately we didn't get enough runs.

"Disappointed with the end to the series but there have been a lot of good parts." West Indies captain Shai Hope said his side's dominance had pleased him most.

"We asked for consistency and discipline, and that's exactly what the guys did. The main thing if you want to be an elite team is that you've got to do things consistently," he added.

"It's a big plus for us, the work is really showing. The guys are putting a lot of work in off the field. It's a great confidence booster, especially for the batting unit and going forwards I'm sure we'll have a lot more runs to come."

England struck early when Jamie Overton removed opener Evin Lewis for 19 but the partnership between King and Carty ended the tourists' hopes. It was only the third time a West Indies ODI partnership accumulated more than 200 on home soil.

King was clean bowled by Reece Topley as the hosts closed in on victory, with Carty, who finished the series as the highest run scorer, hammering one final boundary to seal the win.

It was England's third successive ODI series defeat since their disappointing World Cup in India last year.

**BRIEF SCORES**
**West Indies 267 for 2** (Carty 128*, King 102) **beat England 263 for 8** (Salt 79, Mousley 57, Forde 3-35) **by eight wickets.**


Shai Hope of West Indies poses with the series trophy at Kensington Oval, Bridgetown, Barbados. *(AFP)*

PREVIEW

# Playing India gives South Africa T20 squad IPL window

### 'In the camp, I don't think there's been many discussions along those lines'

**Reuters**
Durban

A four-match Twenty20 series against India comes at an opportune time for South Africa's cricketers as it provides an additional stage to highlight their skills before the Indian Premier League auction later this month, said captain Aiden Markram.

South African cricketers have been dotted around IPL franchises over the years but those who have not secured contracts can enhance their chances of being hired for next year's competition if they impress when the two countries meet in their week-long series, starting in Durban today.

"As we all know, a lot of things can fall into place for players and we're fortunate that we play in a series against (India) pretty much just before the auction happens," Markram told a press conference yesterday.

"So that would pretty much be the bonus of doing well, firstly, collectively and for the individuals that put their hands up.

"I don't think it's your motivation to do well when you play for your country but it's the bonus that potentially could follow."

The IPL and other T20 competitions worldwide have proven a lucrative revenue source for cricketers.

"In the camp, I don't think there's been many discussions along those lines. But again, if guys put the hands up, do well, and it leads to more, I would certainly be really chuffed for them," Markram added.



South Africa captain Aiden Markram and his Indian counterpart Suryakumar Yadav (right) pose with the trophy yesterday, on the eve of first match of the four-match T20I series.

South Africans already retained for next year's IPL, expected to be played from late March to late May, are Heinrich Klaasen at Sunrisers Hyderabad and Tristan Stubbs at Delhi Capitals, while 91 South Africans have registered for the IPL 2025 mega auction in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia on November 24 and 25. With each franchise able to fill a maximum squad of 25 players, 204 slots will be up for grabs at the auction.

This is the first time India will be facing South Africa in T20Is since the dramatic T20 World Cup final. India won that match despite South Africa needing just 30 runs to win in the last five overs at one point.

Since then, India have gone on a 10-match winning streak, all of which have come under Suryakumar Yadav.

He said that he tries to get players to feel that the dressing room is their comfort zone.

"As a leader, my batting style is completely different. I can't be as aggressive as a captain. But, yeah, you have to understand what's happening around you, I have to understand what my players are thinking. Giving them a comfort zone is very important. Everybody has their skills. They also want to come out and express themselves," the Suryakumar explained.

"Off the field, I try and spend a lot of time with them. I try and assess their strengths and see when they can come of use for the team in pressure and crunch situations. That's how I am on the field. This format is such that you keep playing and keep learning. It's so fast. By the time, you blink, this game is over. So freedom and clarity of thought are very important," he said.

India are likely to hand batting allrounder Ramandeep Singh his T20I cap. Axar Patel should also get a chance after warming the bench during the New Zealand Test series.

SPOTLIGHT

## Rahul and Easwaran miss out, Jurel shines against Australia A

**Reuters**
Melbourne

India continued to fret over the composition of their opening pair for the series opener against Australia later this month after KL Rahul and Abhimanyu Easwaran failed to impress in the second unofficial Test yesterday.

Yashasvi Jaiswal will need a new opening partner for the series opener as India captain Rohit Sharma is likely to miss the Perth test for personal reasons.

An uncapped Easwaran and a 53-Test veteran Rahul, who is known for his ability to bat anywhere in the order, are the leading contenders to partner Jaiswal in Perth, but both fell cheaply against Australia A.

Easwaran made a three-ball duck falling to Michael Neser, while Rahul made four before Scott Boland dismissed him caught behind.

On a bouncy pitch at the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG), India A slumped to 65-5, before Dhruv Jurel struck a gritty 80 to help them post 161 all out.

Neser claimed 4-27, but left the field with a hamstring injury in a major blow to his hopes of a test recall in the five-match series against India.

Australian opener Nathan McSweeney, who is tipped to fill the void created by David Warner's retirement, failed to impress as he fell for 14.

Sam Konstas, another name being touted as a possible opening partner for Usman Khawaja, was batting on one as Australia A reached stumps on 53-2.

**BRIEF SCORES**
**Australia A 54 for 2 trail India A 162** (Jurel 80, Neser 4-27, Webster 3-19) **by 108 runs**.


Indian A batsman Dhruv Jurel plays a shot during a match against Australia A at the MCG in Melbourne yesterday. *(AFP)*

BOTTOMLINE

## New Zealand captain Latham expects England to stick to attacking ways

**Reuters**
London

New Zealand expect England to stick to their attacking brand of cricket when they face the Black Caps in the upcoming home Test series despite Ben Stokes's team crashing to defeat in Pakistan.

New Zealand, rejuvenated after a 3-0 whitewash of India, face England in three Tests starting on November 28 in Christchurch.

England lost 2-1 in Pakistan, putting their aggressive test batting approach, which has been dubbed 'Bazball', under the microscope.

Former England captains Nasser Hussain and Michael Vaughan said 'Bazball' had met its match against Pakistan but New Zealand skipper Tom Latham was not convinced the tourists would change their game in New Zealand.

"They've got an attacking brand that they like to play and I'm sure it will be no different in terms of how they like to approach it," Latham told reporters yesterday after arriving back from India.

"We're looking forward to it. It'll be a great challenge."

New Zealand's 3-0 sweep of India has revived their hopes of reaching the World Test Championship final, three years after they claimed the inaugural title. The Black Caps lie fourth in the race behind Australia, India and Sri Lanka. England are sixth.

Latham said it was a "big carrot" for New Zealand to perform against England but they were not focusing on the future implications.

"If we're able to play some good cricket then those sort of things take care of themselves," he said.

"But for us it's just about enjoying our cricket as much as we can.

"(It's) completely different conditions, we're against a completely different team. We're going to have to, again, be at our best, so yeah, it's another exciting opportunity."


New Zealand's Mitchell Santner celebrates with his captain Tom Latham (right) after taking the wicket of India's Virat Kohli during the second day of the second Test at the Maharashtra Cricket Association Stadium in Pune on October 25. *(AFP)*

GOLF / ABU DHABI CHAMPIONSHIP

# Fleetwood ties course record to grab lead

**AFP**
Abu Dhabi

**Tommy Fleetwood** equalled the course record with a 10-under-par 62 to take a one-stroke lead at the Abu Dhabi Championship while Rory McIlroy started strongly yesterday as he bids to seal another Race to Dubai title.

Englishman Fleetwood made a flying start at Yas Links with birdies at the first and third holes either side of an eagle, and maintained his form throughout the round to finish ahead of Denmark's Thorbjorn Olesen and American Johannes Veerman.

Fleetwood picked up another shot on the seventh before making four birdies in five holes after the turn, closing out with his eighth birdie of the day at the last as he got up and down from the bunker.

"I got off to a great start, I actually didn't feel like I swung it perfectly early on and I felt like I swung it better as we got into the back nine," said Fleetwood.

"It was a lovely round of golf to play. Putted amazing, felt like I read the greens so well, beautiful pace control and hit a lot of perfect putts and started holing them.

"I'm just happy to have got off to a very good start."

Olesen also produced a bogey-free round that included eagles on the par-5 seventh and 11th holes, and a 43-foot putt for birdie on the 13th.

The Dane won on his last visit to the United Arab Emirates at the start of the year, claiming the Ras Al Khaimah Championship for his eighth and most recent European Tour title.

Veerman matched Olesen with a nine-under 63, his only blemish coming when he made bogey at the 12th after requiring three putts.

Tyrrell Hatton is among four players another stroke behind,



while McIlroy is five shots off the pace as he chases a sixth Order of Merit title.

A win in Abu Dhabi would see McIlroy match the achievement of the legendary Spaniard Seve Ballesteros, before next week's Tour Championship.

Only Scotland's Colin Montgomerie (eight) has won more than Ballesteros.

McIlroy is currently leading the Race to Dubai standings, more than 1,500 points ahead of second-placed Thriston Lawrence of South Africa.

"I know that if I have a really good week this week, it makes my job a lot easier next week," said McIlroy.

**Leading scores after 1st round (par 72, GBR/IRL unless stated):**
62 - Tommy Fleetwood
63 - Thorbjorn Olesen (DEN), Johannes Veerman (USA)
64 - Tyrrell Hatton, Laurie Canter, Paul Waring, Francesco Laporta (ITA)
65 - Niklas Norgaard (DEN), Robert MacIntyre, Marcel Siem (GER)
66 - Rasmus Hojgaard (DEN), Sebastian Soderberg (SWE), Joaquin Niemann (CHI), Adrian Otaegui (ESP), Alex Fitzpatrick, Matthew Jordan, Brandon Stone (RSA)
67 - Rory McIlroy, Thriston Lawrence (RSA), Romain Langasque (FRA), Matt Wallace, Angel Hidalgo (ESP), Yannik Paul (GER), Keita Nakajima (JPN), Alfredo Garcia-Heredia (ESP), Joost Luiten (NED), Adrien Saddier (FRA)

WTA FINALS

# Swiatek eliminated as Krejcikova beats Gauff to enter semis

'Definitely this is a big win for me. I'm really happy with how I played'



Czech Republic's Barbora Krejcikova celebrates after winning against US' Coco Gauff during their WTA Finals Championship match in Riyadh yesterday. *(AFP)*



Poland's Iga Swiatek hits a return against Russia's Daria Kasatkina during their match at the WTA Finals Championship in Riyadh yesterday. *(AFP)*

**AFP**
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

World number two Iga Swiatek was eliminated from the WTA Finals yesterday after Barbora Krejcikova defeated Coco Gauff to secure her spot in the semi-finals at the expense of the Pole.

The Czech Wimbledon champion claimed a 7-5, 6-4 victory over Gauff to end the title defence of Swiatek, who needed Krejcikova to lose in order to progress from the group stage.

With one win and one loss under her belt entering the last day of round-robin play, Swiatek's 6-1, 6-0 victory over alternate Daria Kasatkina did not have any bearing on her qualification chances.

The only scenario that would have led to Swiatek's advancement to the semi-finals would have been a Gauff win over Krejcikova.

That result did not materialise though and Krejcikova punched her ticket to the semi-finals of the WTA Finals for the first time – on her second singles appearance.

Krejcikova moves forward as the winner of the Orange Group, and will face Zheng Qinwen in Friday's last-four stage, with Gauff of the USA advancing as the runner-up to set up a semi-final showdown with world number one Aryna Sabalenka.

"Definitely this is a big win for me. I'm really happy with how I played and with my performance today. It was a really big match," said Krejcikova, who saved a remarkable 11 of 12 break points against Gauff.

"Playing tomorrow again is something unimaginable before this tournament and I'm really proud of myself and I'm looking forward to the new challenges.

"I was just fighting for every ball and I knew it's going to be difficult because I know Coco is on a roll and she's one of the best players this season. That was a huge challenge but also the big prize, the semis was on the table. I am super excited to be here."

Gauff saved two match points in a 10-minute final game and had three opportunities to break Krejcikova but the eighth seed would not fold, and she scooped the victory with a service winner after one hour and 42 minutes of play.

Krejcikova, who has won just 21 matches this season, earned her place in the WTA Finals field due to a new rule introduced by the Tour in 2024, which gives priority to a reigning Grand Slam champion over the eighth-ranked player in the race.

As the Wimbledon champion, Krejcikova grabbed the last spot in Riyadh over world number eight Emma Navarro, who chose not to come to Saudi Arabia as an alternate.

Kasatkina, who made $200,000 as an alternate called in to replace an injured Jessica Pegula in yesterday's schedule, does not think the new rule should have been implemented, and believes the top eight in the year-to-end WTA Race should be the ones competing in the WTA Finals.

"In my opinion, the WTA Race is the WTA Race. So it's about the how many points you earn during the year. If you win a Grand Slam, you already got what you achieved. You won the Grand Slam, points, money, glory, everything," explained Kasatkina, who noted that she would have still been the first alternate had the rule not been introduced.

Earlier in the day, Swiatek crushed Kasatkina in a mere 51 minutes and later admitted she had no idea her qualification chances solely depended on the result of the evening match.

"Honestly, I don't think it matters, like we go out on court to win every match anyway. So I wasn't thinking about that. I didn't know that this is the case," said the Pole.

"If I'm not going to play semis, then I'll have a couple of days off, and I can't take back time and play better in the match that I played against Coco. I won two matches in the group, so I guess I did everything I could to be there."

Swiatek's season is not over yet as she plans on leading Poland in the Billie Jean King Cup Finals, which kick off in Malaga on November 13.

TENNIS

# World No 1 Sinner avoids rival Alcaraz in ATP Finals groups

**AFP**
Rome

Jannik Sinner avoided his key rival Carlos Alcaraz in the ATP Finals group draw yesterday, as the Italian aims for his first title at the season-ending event on home soil.

World number one Sinner was drawn in the Ilie Nastase Group with Daniil Medvedev, Taylor Fritz and Alex de Minaur at the tournament in Turin, which starts on Sunday. Reigning French Open and Wimbledon champion Alcaraz, ranked three in the world, was drawn in the John Newcombe Group with Alexander Zverev, Casper Ruud and Andrey Rublev.

The top two players in each group will qualify for the semi-finals. Sinner will face tournament debutant De Minaur on Sunday night after 2020 champion Medvedev kicks off the singles against American Fritz.

Alcaraz will open his bid for a first Finals title on Monday, against Casper Ruud before Alexander Zverev faces Andrey Rublev.

Sinner, who lost last year's final to Novak Djokovic, tops the world rankings after a stunning season in which he claimed the Australian and US Opens – his first Grand Slam victories – and won five more ATP titles.

However he has been dogged by controversy after twice testing positive for traces of the steroid clostebol in March.

He was initially cleared by the International Tennis Integrity Agency but at the end of September the World Anti-Doping Agency appealed, seeking a ban of up to two years.

**GROUP STAGE DRAW:**
**Ilie Nastase Group:** Jannik Sinner, Daniil Medvedev, Taylor Fritz, Alex de Minaur

**John Newcombe Group:** Alexander Zverev, Carlos Alcaraz, Casper Ruud, Andrey Rublev.



Tennis fans hold a poster of Italy's Jannik Sinner before the arrival of players at the ATP Finals blue carpet event at Piazza Carlo Alberto in Turin yesterday. *(AFP)*

## British boxer Benn cleared of doping offences

Conor Benn said he was eager to resume boxing in Britain after the National Anti-Doping Panel (NADP) cleared him of wrongdoing regarding two failed drug tests in 2022. Benn twice tested positive for the fertility drug clomifene – which elevates testosterone levels in men. Those findings led to his scheduled grudge contest with British rival Chris Eubank Jr at London's O2 Arena on October 8 2022 to be called off. Benn had his licence removed by the British Boxing Board of Control, and although his provisional suspension was lifted by the NADP in July 2023, it was subsequently reinstated after a successful appeal by the Board and the UK Anti-Doping Agency (UKAD). But the NADP has now reversed that decision saying it was "not comfortably satisfied" UKAD had proved Benn had committed a doping offence.

FOCUS

# Tsitsipas criticises 'drag' longer format of Masters events

**Reuters**
Paris

**Stefanos Tsitsipas** said two-week ATP Masters 1000 events result in a drop in quality as players do not get enough time off for recovery or the intense training needed to stay in shape over a long season.

Five Masters tournaments currently stretch over two weeks but earlier this year the ATP said that from 2025, seven of the nine events would now be held across 12 days each. That decision, however, did not go down well with players.

Tsitsipas was responding to former player Andy Roddick who said on his podcast that two-week Masters events are "so stupid" as more players seem to get injured when a week-long event would have allowed them to build their bodies up during off-weeks.

"The two-week Masters 1000s have turned into a drag. The quality has definitely dropped. Players aren't getting the recovery or training time they need with constant matches and no space for the intense work off the court," Tsitsipas said on X.

"It's ironic that the ATP Tour committed to this format without knowing if it could actually improve the schedule, but the quality



likewise. Paris got it right, done in a week. Exciting and easy to follow. Just how it's supposed to be.

"If the goal was to ease the calendar, extending every 1000 (Masters) to two weeks is a backwards move. Sometimes, it feels like they're fixing what wasn't broken."

Reuters has contacted the ATP for comment. Tsitsipas is not the first player to criticise the ATP, with four-times Grand Slam winner Carlos Alcaraz saying that the tight tennis calendar makes it difficult to stay motivated throughout the year and increases the risk of injuries. "It is difficult. Sometimes I didn't feel motivated at all," Alcaraz said. "The calendar's so tight. A lot of tournaments ... not as (many) days off as I want."

Alexander Zverev said earlier this year that the two-week Masters events were great for players ranked between 50 and 100 in the world because they get a chance to play in a main-draw event, but the schedule was not ideal for top-10 players.

"Yes, you do get told you have a day in between (matches), you don't have to play every day. At the end of the day that's not resting," Zverev said ahead of the Rome Masters, which was a two-week event.

"Resting is when you're spending time at home, when you're sleeping in your own bed, maybe with your family, maybe with your dogs, maybe with your kids... That's what resting is.

"If you're at a different place, that's not resting. If you're going deep in events... if you're trying to make semi-finals or finals of every event, you're just away a lot longer and you have to work a lot more. It's as simple as that."

FOOTBALL

# Arsenal will recover from bad spell: Arteta

## The Gunners crashed to a 1-0 controversial defeat to Inter Milan at San Siro

**AFP**
London


Mikel Arteta's Arsenal have won just two of their last six games in all competitions, with those victories hardly impressive against Shakhtar Donetsk in Champions League and second-tier Preston in the League Cup. *(AFP)*

Mikel Arteta surveyed the wreckage of Arsenal's controversial Champions League defeat at Inter Milan and insisted his spluttering side will emerge from the rubble to salvage their troubled season.

The Gunners crashed to a 1-0 loss in the San Siro on Wednesday, adding to the growing sense of turmoil around a team that was expected to mount a strong challenge for European and domestic silverware. Arsenal dominated for large periods against Inter, but were left to rue a controversial penalty in first-half stoppage time when Mikel Merino was adjudged to have handled.

Hakan Calhanoglu converted the spot-kick and Arsenal were unable to muster an equaliser as they fell to a second successive 1-0 defeat after Saturday's Premier League loss at Newcastle.

The Gunners have won just two of their last six games in all competitions, with those victories hardly impressive against Shakhtar Donetsk in Europe and second-tier Preston in the League Cup.

Arteta's team are languishing in fifth place in the Premier League, already seven points behind leaders Liverpool ahead of Sunday's crucial London derby at Chelsea. Hampered for weeks by the absence of captain Martin Odegaard – who finally returned from injury as a late substitute against Inter – Arsenal have looked a shadow of the vibrant team that took last season's title race to the final day of the season.

Odegaard's creativity and tenacious pressing has been sorely missed, while Arteta has also had to deal with injuries to Bukayo Saka and Jurrien Timber, as well as a rash of red cards that cost him the services of Declan Rice, William Saliba and Leandro Trossard. As if their on-pitch travails weren't concerning enough, Arteta has seen his trusted sporting director Edu make a shock exit from the Emirates Stadium.

Edu, who has a agreed a deal in principle to accept a similar role at Nottingham Forest, resigned at the start of this week after overseeing a major revamp of Arsenal's squad since joining in 2019. The 46-year-old shared a strong bond with Arteta, with whom he has transformed Arsenal into title contenders.

"We have been together on this journey since day one. He was instrumental for me to be where I am and I loved working with him. I enjoyed the journey to have him next to me," Arteta said of Edu just before kick-off in the San Siro.

Edu scored in Arsenal's famous 5-1 win at Inter in the Champions League group stage 21 years ago. But history did not repeat itself on Wednesday as Arsenal attempted 20 shots, their most without scoring in a Champions League game since 2006 against CSKA Moscow.

Arteta launched a staunch defence of his players, claiming they were denied by refereeing mistakes rather than their own failings against Inter. "The worst thing is the result, because of the performance and attitude we showed against one of the best teams in Europe in their stadium," he said.

"It's extremely frustrating because there were two decisions against us. If their one is a penalty then we should have one when Mikel Merino is punched in the head. Of all the big games we have played in Europe, this was the best I have seen from my team in the last two years."

Arsenal cannot afford another setback against Chelsea this weekend if they are to remain in the hunt for a first English title since 2004 after successive runners-up finishes. Arteta stuck to his upbeat assessment of Arsenal's unexpected plight, saying: "If we play the way we played tonight, the team has a big chance to win at Chelsea.

"That is the way we have to go. I have told them I am proud of them. We are disappointed because we didn't get what we wanted out of the game that is for sure."

Despite Arteta's optimism, there are worrying signs that Arsenal's hopes of finally dethroning Manchester City might be destined to end in disappointment.

## Germany give City keeper Ortega first call-up at age 32

**Berlin:** Germany handed Manchester City goalkeeper Stefan Ortega, who fills in for Ederson at the Premier League champions, his first call-up ahead of their Nations League matches against Bosnia and Hungary later in November.

The 32-year-old, who joined City in 2022, plays a back-up role for his club with more appearances in the Champions League and domestic cup competitions than in the Premier League where Brazilian Ederson is first choice. But Ortega has performed with distinction when he has deputised for Ederson, including late last season when City coach Pep Guardiola called him "a world-class goalkeeper, an exceptional, exceptional goalkeeper."

Ortega is likely to be third choice for Germany behind Alexander Nuebel and Oliver Baumann. Group A3 leaders Germany, who have already qualified for the last eight in the Nations League, host Bosnia on Nov. 16 before travelling to Hungary three days later.

**CRESPO OUT AS AL AIN COACH, MONTHS AFTER AFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE GLORY**

Hernan Crespo has been sacked as coach of Al Ain, the club from the United Arab Emirates said, six months after he guided them to glory in the AFC Champions League. The former Argentina striker's exit came a day after a 5-1 hammering by Cristiano Ronaldo's Al Nassr in Asia's top club competition, which left the defending champions bottom of the standings halfway through the group phase.

Recent results were "not up to expectations", a club statement said, adding they would appoint a replacement within hours. The 49-year-old Crespo took over in November last year and in May led Al Ain to victory over Japan's Yokohama F. Marinos in the two-legged final of the Champions League.

But the former Chelsea and Inter Milan star's side have been on a poor run of form since late September.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

# Enrique blames PSG's loss on bad luck

**Reuters**
Paris



Paris St Germain coach **Luis Enrique** blamed his team's 2-1 defeat at home to Atletico Madrid on bad luck, admitting the Ligue 1 leaders' qualification chances were in danger as they plunged into the red zone of the Champions League group phase on Wednesday.

PSG applied their usual possession pattern but were again pretty much toothless in attack, owing Warren Zaire Emery's opener to a defensive blunder. Nahuel Molina equalised quickly and Atletico's resilience paid off three minutes into injury time thanks to second-half substitute Angel Correa's goal at the end of a counter attack – a scenario that Enrique labelled a 'bad joke.'

PSG had a handful of clear chances through Achraf Hakimi, Bradley Barcola and Ousmane Dembele but, with no pure lone forward, were unable to convert. "There are no words. I think that in our three home games, we were highly superior to our opponents but we did not have any luck," Enrique said. "As long as there are matches, we will fight," he added, before PSG travel to Bayern Munich on Nov. 26.

PSG are 25th in the 36-team league, just in the elimination zone, midway through the group phase. "I've been in the game for over 30 years and I can't explain it. It's just bad luck. We were infinitely superior to our opponents," said Enrique. "We would have deserved to win our three home games. Comfortably."

Asked if PSG's chances to go through the league phase were in danger, he said: "Undoubtedly. We created 50 chances in three games and we failed to convert so many of them... we need 20 clear chances to score and our opponents sneeze and they score... it sounds like a bad joke."

"Creating chances is the team's responsibility and I'm responsible for the team, so I'm responsible for the results. If I fail, I will fail with my ideas. We're on the right path."

His Atletico counterpart Diego Simeone praised his team for their performance despite injuries in defence. "Today we were missing five players in defence," he said after a result that put them on six points, above the elimination zone. "Despite these absences, the team were strong; we conceded the goal on a mistake but we continued to play."

Having lost back-to-back matches against Benfica and then Lille, the win puts Atletico back on track to at least make the play-off round of this new-look Champions League, with the league phase now at the halfway stage. "Today PSG played better but we had the extra force that we lacked against Lille," said Simeone.

The evening was also notable for the pre-match unfurling by PSG fans at one end of the stadium of an enormous banner in support of Palestinians in Gaza. "War on the pitch but peace in the world," said the banner, which also featured a Lebanese flag.

That may lead to disciplinary action from UEFA, but that will probably be the least of PSG's worries now.

## England hand first call-ups to Hall and Harwood-Bellis

**London:** England interim manager Lee Carsley called up Newcastle left-back Lewis Hall and Southampton defender Taylor Harwood-Bellis for the first time yesterday as he named his final squad. Carsley will return to his role as Under-21s manager after Nations League games against Greece and Ireland, with Thomas Tuchel starting as the new boss in January. Hall, 20, has impressed for Newcastle this season, playing in all 10 Premier League games and could provide an answer to England's left-back problems.

Harwood-Bellis, 22, has also been an ever-present for Southampton and has impressed during a difficult start to life back in the Premier League for his club.

Manchester City defender John Stones and Manchester United midfielder Kobbie Mainoo are ruled out with injuries, but Declan Rice, Jack Grealish and Cole Palmer are included in the 26-man squad despite fitness issues of their own.

Uncapped Liverpool midfielder Curtis Jones is also back in the squad after his maiden call-up for last month's games against Greece and Finland.

England head to the Olympic Stadium in Athens next Thursday to face Greece, who have a three-point cushion over them at the top of Group B2, before hosting Ireland three days later.

Defeat in Athens would end England's chances of automatic promotion from the second tier of the Nations League. Tuchel has signed an 18-month deal that begins on January 1, so will only be an interested observer during this month's games.

"He hasn't had any influence on the squad selection," said Carsley. "I've spoken to him by text, but it's literally congratulations. "I think he's highly respectful of the job that not only myself, but the staff are doing."

**ENGLAND SQUAD**

**Goalkeepers:** Dean Henderson, Jordan Pickford, Aaron Ramsdale
**Defenders**: Trent Alexander-Arnold, Levi Colwill, Marc Guehi, Lewis Hall, Taylor Harwood-Bellis, Ezri Konsa, Rico Lewis, Kyle Walker
**Midfielders:** Jude Bellingham, Phil Foden, Conor Gallagher, Morgan Gibbs-White, Angel Gomes, Curtis Jones, Cole Palmer, Declan Rice
**Forwards**: Anthony Gordon, Jack Grealish, Harry Kane, Noni Madueke, Bukayo Saka, Dominic Solanke, Ollie Watkins

SPOTLIGHT

# Farida Mudhar shines at Al Shaqab International Arabian Horse Show

**By Sports Reporter**
Doha

Farida Mudhar, owned by Sheikh Hamad bin Ali al-Thani, was adjudged best in the Yearling Fillies (2 Years Old) 4A category on the second day of the 2nd edition of Al Shaqab International Arabian Horse Show at the Longines Arena in Al Shaqab yesterday.

Shamikhat Al Hawajer of Al Thamer Stud was second and Fadwa Mudar, owned by Sheikh Hamad bin Ali al-Thani, was third. In the Yearling Fillies (2 Years Old) 4B class qualifiers, Harriya Al Nasser, owned by Al Nasser Stud was first, Sheikha Mudhar, owned by Sheikh Hamad bin Ali al-Thani, second, and KH Mazyouna, owned by sons of Mubarak al-Khalidi, third.

The Al Shaqab International Arabian Horse Show will continue until tomorrow. The championship, supported by the Social and Sports Activities Support Fund (Daam), has the participation of 285 horses, including 63 from the Gulf Arab countries, and under the supervision of a prestigious jury with judges from various countries.

Yesterday, the qualifying rounds for the finals of two-year-old fillies (4A and 4B), three-year-old fillies, one-year-old colts (A6 and B6), and two- and three-year-old colts were held.

Today, the qualifiers for mares aged (4-6), mares aged 7-10, and mares over 11 years old, followed by the rounds for stallions aged 4-6 years old, then stallions over 7 years old will be held.

Dr Fahad al-Hajri, Director of Protocol and Public Relations at Al Shaqab, said that the championship is witnessing strong competitions and praised the large participation from owners within and outside Qatar with high quality of the horses.

He stressed that the show is considered as one of the best in the region. It is also one of the internationally accredited championships and qualifies for major championship held in Qatar at the (A) level and Title Show. Al-Hajri pointed out that Al Shaqab is keen to organise such shows in accordance with its goals aimed at preserving the Qatari heritage by promoting Arabian horses and reaching the highest levels in horse welfare, production and equestrian education.

He added that Al Shaqab's vision is to become the world's leading equestrian centre with a major focus on the Arabian horse breed, which is one of the oldest breeds and an important part of Qatar's culture and heritage.


Sheikh Hamad bin Ali al-Thani's Farida Mudhar took the top honours in the Yearling Fillies (2 Years Old) 4A category at the Al Shaqab International Arabian Horse Show.