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SPORT



GOLF

Uihlein embraces wind to take lead at International Series Qatar

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F1 QATAR GRAND PRIX

Qatar's motorsport legacy showcased at LIC



FROM LEFT: Executive Director of Qatar Motor and Motorcycle Federation (QMMF) and CEO of Lusail International Circuit (LIC) Amro al-Hamad, former rally champion Saeed al-Hajri, QMMF and LIC President Abdulrahman al-Mannai and QMMF General-Secretary Abdulrazaq al-Kuwari during the presentation of Qatar's Motorsport Legacy at the Lusail International Circuit yesterday.



Qatar drivers and riders pose at the Lusail International Circuit.

Lusail International Circuit opened its doors yesterday for the Formula 1 Qatar Airways Qatar Grand Prix 2024, marking the beginning of an action-packed race weekend with a special celebration of Qatar's motorsport heritage.

The highlight of the evening featured a spectacular motorsport showcase on the Lusail International Circuit grid, in the presence of Saeed al-Hajri, former rally champion and Abdulrazaq al-Kuwari, General Secretary of Qatar Motor and Motorcycle Federation, along with President Abdulrahman bin Abdullatif al-Mannai and Executive Director Amro al-Hamad, where the Qatar Motorsports Academy demonstrated the nation's comprehensive motorsport development programme.

Ten distinctive racing vehicles were displayed, including a kart, Formula 4 car, two GT cars participating in Porsche Cup, Off-Road Rally car, Cross car, and three motorcycles – a Moto2 bike, Honda NSF250, and Ohvale 160.

This diverse lineup represented the full spectrum of racing disciplines available through Qatar's motorsport development initiatives, underlining the country's commitment to nurturing local talent from grassroots to professional levels.

Earlier in the day, fans enjoyed unprecedented access to the world of Formula 1 through various activities, including the traditional pit lane walk, allowing fans to get up close to the teams' garages. The F1 in Schools programme continued the excitement with their own pit lane activities,

Abdulrahman bin Abdullatif al-Mannai, the President of QMMF and Lusail International Circuit said: "As we approach the Formula 1 Qatar Airways Qatar Grand Prix 2024, I extend a warm welcome to all teams, drivers, and fans joining us at Lusail International Circuit."

He added: "This evening's presentation perfectly exemplifies our vision of being a comprehensive hub for motorsports development in the region. By showcasing the complete spectrum of racing disciplines available through Qatar Motor and Motorcycle Federation and Qatar Motorsports Academy, we are demonstrating Qatar's commitment to nurturing the next generation of motorsport talent. We are honoured to host this prestigious event and look forward to an exciting weekend of competition. Best wishes to the drivers and teams for a successful and safe race."

Saeed al-Hajri, former rally champion, stated: "It is a wonderful occasion to meet our motorsports champions today, whom we hope will represent the State of Qatar honourably on the international stage. I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation to Abdulrahman bin Abdulatif al-Mannai for his significant efforts and dedication to the future of motorsports in Qatar, which reflects a clear vision for developing this sport and supporting national talents to achieve excellence."

The race weekend kicks off today with the first practice sessions and qualifying, leading up to Sunday's main race under the spectacular Lusail lights.

PREVIEW

McLaren's resurgence puts title within reach in Qatar

McLaren can wrap things up this weekend in Qatar if they outscore Ferrari by 21 points

By Sahan Bidappa
Doha





FROM LEFT: McLaren's Lando Norris, Ferrari's Carlos Sainz Jr and Charles Leclerc arrive at the Lusail International Circuit yesterday. *(Reuters)*

It was here at the Lusail International Circuit last year that Max Verstappen wrapped up his third successive World Championship title by winning the Sprint race. This time, the Red Bull driver has gone one race better, securing his fourth title in Las Vegas with two Grand Prix still to go in the season.

However, there remains one championship battle still alive. The Qatar Grand Prix, which begins today, will serve as a crucial indicator of who might claim the Constructors' title heading into the final race of the season in Abu Dhabi.

Despite Verstappen's dominance this season, reigning world champions Red Bull are rank outsiders for the team title this year. A resurgent McLaren lead the table with 608 points — 24 clear of Ferrari, with Red Bull a further 53 behind.

The form of Sergio Perez has been Red Bull's undoing this year. The Mexican has had a dreadful season compared to his teammate Verstappen. Perez is eighth in the driver's standings — a mammoth 251 points adrift of his teammate.

He has scored just nine points in the last six Grands Prix weekends, while Verstappen managed more than that tally alone in Las Vegas. These stats do little to inspire confidence in the Red Bull garage, with Team Principal Christian Horner admitting yesterday, "We have a mountain to climb. But we'll never give up. Max (Verstappen) has obviously been brilliant so far this year. We need Checo (Sergio Perez) to get on the scoreboard a little more in these next couple of races to have any chance," said Horner.

This leaves McLaren and Ferrari as the frontrunners with the chance to end respective long waits for the title. Ferrari last won the Constructors' Championship in 2008, while McLaren's last came a decade earlier, in 1998. After falling behind in the drivers' title fight in Las Vegas, Lando Norris and his McLaren teammate Oscar Piastri will be hoping to end the season on a high with a team title. But they face a formidable challenge from Ferrari's duo, Charles Leclerc and Carlos Sainz.

The Lusail International Circuit's medium and high-speed long-radius corners, linked with long flat-out stretches, should, in theory at least, suit McLaren. Last year, Piastri took his first F1 pole position and went on to win the Sprint. The Australian and Norris also showed their pace in the corners, finishing second and third respectively behind Verstappen in the main race.

McLaren will hope to edge closer to winning their first Constructors' Championship in 26 years — perhaps with some help from Mercedes, who pulled off a rare one-two in Las Vegas, where George Russell won ahead of seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton. While Piastri and Norris admitted they were strong in Qatar last year, they do not believe they will be the ones to beat again this year. "Last year we were incredibly quick in all the high-speed corners," said Piastri. "This year, we're still quick, but it's not as clear-cut as it was last year, probably."

At the start of the 2023 season, it seemed almost impossible to imagine any team — least of all McLaren — challenging Red Bull for the title before the next major regulation changes in 2026. Struggles in preseason testing set the tone as both Norris and Piastri failed to score points in the opening two races, with the car far off the pace of Red Bull, Aston Martin, Ferrari and Mercedes.

Norris reflected on the challenges and his long-term commitment to the team: "I've been part of McLaren for eight years now, six years in Formula 1. There have been a lot of ups and downs, a lot of great moments, and some tough ones too," he said. "I think for me, [the Constructors' title is] worth more. Some people have come into Formula 1 and won in their first year— there's not as much of a story. For me, there's been a lot more that's gone into it, a lot more chapters in my story, and I think that makes everything feel a little bit more special," the Brit added.

Leclerc and Sainz, meanwhile, feel it will be a tricky weekend — but they retain hope that they can end a 16-year wait for a world title for Ferrari. "It's going to be until the very end," said Leclerc. "McLaren are going to be very strong in Qatar, so we've got to have a good weekend. I would be very surprised if we recover points from them, but we've got to, so we'll do our best."



French driver Pierre Gasly is all smiles at the Alpine garage yesterday.

Sainz added: "Over the last few weekends, we've done a good job. [In Qatar] the maximum might be a P5 or P6. I expect to struggle and I expect McLaren and Mercedes to be very strong, probably also even Red Bull, given that they were strong in qualifying in Austin."

McLaren can wrap things up this weekend in Qatar if they outscore Ferrari by 21 points (or 20 if they win the race, as they could not be beaten on countback results if it's a tie) and do not lose more than 14 points to Red Bull.

SPORT

CRICKET

Jansen shines as Sri Lanka all out for 42 in Durban

'THE BALL WAS MOVING NICE AND QUICKLY OFF THE PITCH'



South Africa's Marco Jansen (third left) celebrates with teammates after the dismissal of Sri Lanka's Prabath Jayasuriya (unseen) during the second day of the first Test at the Kingsmead stadium in Durban yesterday. *(AFP)*

AFP
Durban, South Africa

Marco Jansen bowled South Africa into a dominant position as Sri Lanka crashed to 42 all out, their lowest total in Test cricket, on the second day of the first Test against South Africa at Kingsmead yesterday.

The left-arm fast bowler took seven for 13 as Sri Lanka were bowled out in 13.5 overs – the second-shortest completed Test innings in history. It gave South Africa a first innings lead of 149 after they had been dismissed for a modest 191 in their first innings. The hosts stretched their lead to 281 runs when they scored 132 for three in their second innings.

Yet the 2.06-metre Jansen, one of the tallest players in international cricket, admitted that he struggled to control the ball at the start of his spell with a strong wind blowing across the ground being a "massive factor".

Having played only in eight T20 matches since returning from a three-month "conditioning break", the 24-year-old Jansen sent down a wide and a no-ball before opening batsman Pathum Nissanka had to put bat on ball. "I struggled to get my wrist behind the ball. It felt like I was battling something but I just tried to make it work," he said. Kagiso Rabada made the breakthrough for South Africa when he had Dimuth Karunaratne caught at first slip before Jansen, in his second over, bowled a delivery close enough to Nissanka to induce an edge to third slip. It sparked an inspired spell. Jansen's pace and bounce, allied with the ability to make the ball swing in as a variation to his natural angle across right-handed batsmen, proved devastating.

But he still bowled another two no-balls. After at least two of his wickets he looked back anxiously at the umpire to make sure he hadn't over-stepped again.

He said, though, that once he found his rhythm, "the ball was moving nice and quickly off the pitch. We knew if we put the ball in the right areas we would always be in the game."

He said his break from cricket, ordered by Cricket South Africa, had refreshed him mentally. "I feel I can go for longer periods of time, concentrating at a high level," said Jansen.

Good work undone by collapse

Sri Lanka's collapse negated the efforts of their bowlers, who dismissed South Africa in an extended morning's play. Captain Temba Bavuma top-scored with 70 for South Africa.

Opening bowlers Asitha Fernando and Vishwa Fernando took three and two wickets respectively but the major damage was done by fast bowler Lahiru Kumara, whose figures of three for 70 did not do justice to an aggressive performance.

Apart from his wickets, Kumara forced all-rounder Wiaan Mulder to retire hurt with a fractured right middle finger.

Mulder was ruled out of bowling or fielding for the rest of the match – although he returned at the fall of the ninth wicket to help Kagiso Rabada add 26 runs for the last wicket.

Surprisingly, he batted at number three in the second innings, scoring 15 in what seems certain to be his last involvement in the match.

Left-arm spinner Prabath Jayasuriya provided a highlight for Sri Lanka when he dismissed Tony de Zorzi for 17 in the second innings. It was his 100th wicket in his 17th Test, the joint second-fewest matches in history to reach the milestone.

"I am really pleased with the effort," said Jayasuriya. "There's been a lot of support from the team and the coaching staff."

Jayasuriya said the team were disappointed with their batting effort but were determined to fight back.

BRIEF SCORES (Durban, Day 2)
South Africa 191 (Bavuma 70, Maharaj 24, Asitha 3-44) **and 132 for 3** (Markram 47, Bavuma 24*, Jayasuriya 2-48) **lead Sri Lanka 42** (Kamindu 13, Jansen 7-13, Coetzee 2-18) **by 281 runs.**

MATCH REPORT

Ghulam ton steers Pakistan to Zimbabwe ODI series victory



Pakistan players after beating Zimbabwe in the third and final ODI in Bulawayo yesterday. Pakistan won the three-match series 2-1. *(@TheRealPCB)*

AFP
Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

Kamran Ghulam struck a maiden one-day international century as Pakistan beat Zimbabwe by 99 runs in Bulawayo yesterday to seal a 2-1 series victory.

His 103 helped Pakistan reach 303-6 in 50 overs at Queens Sports Club – a total Zimbabwe never look like bettering and the hosts were all out for 204 in 40.1 overs.

It was Pakistan's 56th victory in 65 ODIs against Zimbabwe.

After losing a rain-shortened first match in the southern city by 80 runs last Sunday, the tourists bounced back to wallop the home team by 10 wickets two days later.

Pakistan captain Mohammad Rizwan said: "I am proud because we lost the first game and expectations from the country were high.

"We came back to win the series and that has given us confidence. Away matches are always difficult, always different from home."

Pakistan won the toss, opted to bat and after the loss of opener Saim Ayub with 58 on the scoreboard, Ghulam took centre stage.

Initially cautious, the No. 3 batter gradually accelerated the run rate and put on 54 for the second wicket with opener Abdullah Shafique.

Having posted a half century, Shafique fluffed an attempted sweep and was trapped leg before by Pakistan-born all-rounder Sikandar Raza. His 68-ball knock included a six and five fours.

Ghulam continued to torment the Zimbabwe bowlers with various partners, striking four sixes and 10 fours off 99 deliveries before becoming the fourth Pakistani wicket to fall, caught at deep cover by Clive Madande off Richard Ngarava.

Raza and Ngarava took two wickets each for Zimbabwe, but at a heavy cost, conceding 102 runs between them. The last five overs were particularly expensive as Pakistan added 69.

Zimbabwe began disastrously in response to the formidable Pakistan total with opener Joylord Gumbie and Dion Myers out and just 10 runs on the board.

Veteran captain Craig Ervine made 51 in a 63-ball stand that included six boundaries, one a six before dragging an Aamer Jamal bouncer on to the leg stump.

Raza, often the Zimbabwe saviour, was also fell to Jamal for 16, caught at deep square leg after mistiming a short delivery from the fast medium pacer.

Zimbabwe and Pakistan begin a three-match Twenty20 international series in Bulawayo on Sunday.

The tourists then head to South Africa for an eight-match all-formats tour, including two Test matches.

BRIEF SCORES
Pakistan 303-6 in 50 overs (K. Ghulam 103, A. Shafique 50; M. Rizwan 37, S. Ayub 31, A. Salman 30; S. Raza 2-47, R. Ngarava 2-55) **v Zimbabwe 204 in 40.1 overs** (C. Ervine 51, B. Bennett 37, S. Williams 24, T. Marumani 24; A. Jamal 2-19, Ayub 2-29, H. Rauf 2-34, A. Ahmed 2-45)
Result: Pakistan won by 99 runs
Series: Pakistan won 2-1
Toss: Pakistan



Pakistan's Kamran Ghulam receives the Player of the Match award yesterday.

SPOTLIGHT

Defender: Official Dakar car partner from 2025 and competing from 2026



British adventure brand Defender will be the official car partner of the Dakar Rally from 2025 and from 2026, a Defender works team will compete in what is the world's toughest rally raid event.

Starting with the 2025 Dakar Rally (3-17 January) and set to continue to 2028, the partnership will provide a fleet of Defenders to support the event, transporting rally officials and VIP media for the duration of the competition. Along with Defender branding across Dakar, a fleet of six specialised Defender recce vehicles will also be supplied to support officials of the Dakar organisation, to test routes for future Dakar events.

In addition to its role as official car partner from 2025, Defender has confirmed its intention to enter a works team, beginning in 2026. Defender's commitment will prove its extreme durability and capability in the world's most demanding off-road competition. Details about the future Defender rally raid competition programme will be announced during Dakar 2025.

Mark Cameron, Defender Managing Director, said: "Adventure is in the very DNA of the Defender brand, so we are inspired to partner with Dakar – the ultimate motorsport adventure – where competitors truly embrace the impossible.

"Our partnership begins in 2025 when Defender will showcase its capability and durability as the official car of the event, but we are already looking to the future and entering a Defender Dakar works team from 2026. That Defender Dakar works programme will be led by James Barclay, JLR Motorsport Managing Director, and I know James and his team are inspired by the challenge that lays ahead."

James Barclay, JLR Motorsport Managing Director, said: "Anyone who loves motorsport will have a passion for Dakar. It's the Everest of motorsport and an event where success is dependent as much on human determination in the toughest of conditions as it is ultimate test for vehicle and engineering capability. Bringing the world's most capable and iconic 4x4 to the world's most iconic rally-raid is a perfect fit.

"Our first time ever with a factory entry into the Dakar means we are right at the beginning of our journey. We are conscious of how much we have to learn and achieve before taking the start in 2026, but we are already well under way and looking forward to the adventure. We will share more details of this exciting programme at the Dakar rally in 2025."

David Castera, Director of the Dakar: "We are thrilled to welcome Defender as the new official car partner of the Dakar. It is an iconic brand, present on all continents, that shares our passion for adventure, performance, and innovation. We are also excited that Defender will accompany us throughout the year, providing vehicles for the organising teams and for the route reconnaissance. Their reliability and robustness will help us improve our daily efficiency. Furthermore, starting in 2026, Defender will enter the competition as an official team. Together, we will shine a spotlight on Dakar on the international stage and offer a unique experience to all."

The fleet of Defender support vehicles will follow competitors in the 2025 Dakar – the 47 th edition of the event, and the sixth in Saudi Arabia – as they take on a course stretching from Bisha to Shubaytah. The epic route includes a demanding three-day adventure through the Empty Quarter, where the race will reach its conclusion.

FOCUS

Williamson denied in century bid as England stay in the fight

Reuters
Christchurch



New Zealand's Kane Williamson avoids a bouncer during the first day of the first Test against England at Hagley Oval in Christchurch yesterday. *(AFP)*

Spinner Shoaib Bashir took four for 69 as England recovered from a poor start to reduce New Zealand to 319 for eight at the close of play on the opening day of an evenly poised first Test yesterday.

Seamers Gus Atkinson and Brydon Carse also grabbed a couple of wickets apiece as the tourists dragged New Zealand back every time they looked like pulling away at Christchurch's Hagley Oval. Kane Williamson was dismissed seven runs short of a hundred, Black Caps skipper Tom Latham three shy of a quick-fire half-century, and four wickets were taken at the cost of 59 runs immediately after tea. Glenn Phillips and Matt Henry put together a stand of 46 for the eighth wicket to steady the innings but the latter holed out for 18 to give Bashir his fourth wicket.

Phillips will resume on 41 not out alongside Tim Southee, who had made 10, with the late runs having probably nudged New Zealand back ahead in an intriguing contest.

"I think both teams worked really hard, and I think from our perspective, we were pleased with the partnerships throughout," said Williamson.

England skipper Ben Stokes won the toss and elected to bowl on a wicket with a green tinge but New Zealand denied him the early inroads into their batting order he would have liked. He did get an almost immediate return when Atkinson dismissed Devon Conway for two in the second over, while Carse also struck before lunch to halt Latham with an edge at 47.

Williamson and Rachin Ravindra put on 68 for the third wicket, however, before Stokes brought on youngster Bashir, who separated them with a full toss.

Ravindra took on the delivery but only managed to punch it straight to Zak Crawley at mid-wicket, leaving the New Zealand all-rounder shaking his head as he trudged off the field with 34 runs to his name. Williamson, recalled after a groin strain ruled him out of the recent series triumph in India, hit successive boundaries off Bashir to bring up a half-century off 90 balls and set about building towards his 33rd Test century. New Zealand headed to tea at 193-3 but England changed things up with a short-ball barrage after the second break and it had an almost immediate impact. Some injudicious shot-making from the home batters helped as Daryl Mitchell (19) holed out in the deep off Carse, while Tom Blundell (17) and new cap Nathan Smith (3) both fell to catches off the bowling of Bashir.

Bashir, who can become the first spinner to bag five wickets in an innings at Hagley Oval, said the encouragement he received from Stokes and head coach Brendon McCullum gave him confidence.

BRIEF SCORES
(First Test, Day 1)
New Zealand 319 for 8
(Williamson 93, Latham 47, Phillips 41*, Bashir 4-69)
vs England (yet to bat)

CRICKET

Victorious Qatar advance to Regional Final

By Sports Reporter
Doha





Hosts Qatar scored a comfortable six-wicket win over Saudi Arabia in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup Asia Qualifier B match at the University of Doha for Science & Technology ground yesterday.

Qatar finished with a tally of 10 points from their six games to join Nepal, Oman, and Papua New Guinea in the Regional Final.

Also advancing were UAE with 12 points and Bahrain with 6 points.

Saudi Arabia and Thailand also finished on 6 points each but were missed out on net run rate.

Cambodia ended with 2 points while Bhutan had 0.

Chasing a target of 166 for victory, Qatar were guided by Mohammad Ahnaff, who scored a fifty, while Saqlain Arshad and Muhammad Tanveer made 45 and 36 runs respectively, reaching home in 17.5 overs.

The tournament, held at the West End International Cricket Stadium and the Doha University of Science and Technology Stadium, featured three matches daily.

A total of 12 local referees and 21 international referees oversaw the competitions. The top two teams from the sub-qualifiers advanced to the second round of the World Cup qualifiers, with the venue yet to be determined.

Khalid al-Suwaidi praises team

Khalid al-Suwaidi, Executive Director of the Qatar Cricket Committee, expressed satisfaction with the successful organisation and technical execution of the tournament.

He praised the strong performance of the Qatari team, which qualified for the second round for the first time.

Al-Suwaidi also acknowledged the positive feedback from participating delegations and guests, highlighting the high-quality facilities and comfortable accommodations provided. He expressed hope that the Qatari team would continue its strong performance and secure a top spot in the second round of the qualifiers.

TENNIS

Swiatek accepts short ban after failed dope test

The player was provisionally suspended from Sept 12 until Oct 4

Reuters
London



World number two and five-times Grand Slam champion **Iga Swiatek** has accepted a one-month suspension after testing positive for banned substance trimetazidine (TMZ), the International Tennis Integrity Agency said yesterday.

Swiatek tested positive in an out-of-competition sample in August but the ITIA, which runs tennis's anti-doping programme, accepted that it was caused by contamination of her medication melatonin, which was manufactured and sold over the counter in her native Poland.

Swiatek said she had been taking it for jet lag and sleep issues and as there was no significant fault or negligence, the ITIA ruled it was "the lowest end of the range" and offered the reigning French Open champion a one-month suspension which the 23-year-old accepted.

"The player was provisionally suspended from Sept. 12 until Oct. 4, missing three tournaments, which counts towards the sanction, leaving eight days remaining," the ITIA said in a statement."

She also forfeited prize money from the Cincinnati Open, the tournament directly following the test.

Swiatek, who had pulled out of tournaments in Asia in September citing personal matters and fatigue, described the ordeal of testing positive as the "worst experience of my life".

She was world number one when she failed the test and having skipped the Asian swing, Aryna Sabalenka leapfrogged her in the world rankings to eventually end the year as number one.

"In the last 2.5 months I was subject to strict ITIA proceedings, which confirmed my innocence," Swiatek said on Instagram.

"The only positive doping test in my career, showing unbelievably low level of a banned substance I've never heard about before, put everything I've worked so hard for my entire life into question.

"Both me and my team had to deal with tremendous stress and anxiety. Now everything has been carefully explained, and with a clean slate I can go back to what I love most."

Swiatek, whose anti-doping violation was not made public at the time, had her provisional suspension lifted after providing samples of her melatonin product to the WADA-accredited SMRTL laboratory in Salt Lake City which confirmed detecting low doses of TMZ in both opened and sealed containers of the product.

The provisional suspension was lifted on Oct. 4 and the case forwarded to an Independent Tribunal.

Swiatek is not the first world number one to fail a doping test this year after Italy's Jannik Sinner, the men's top-ranked player, also tested positive for anabolic agent clostebol.

However, Sinner was cleared of wrongdoing by an independent tribunal ahead of the US Open, which he went on to win. The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) has appealed to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) against the tribunal's finding of "no fault or negligence".

With two of the biggest names in tennis escaping lengthy bans for anti-doping violations, questions are being raised about the sport's reputation.

Addressing the media yesterday, ITIA chief executive Karen Moorhouse said: "These are not cases of intentional doping. We're dealing with inadvertent breaches of the rules.

"So I don't think this is a cause for concern for tennis fans. I think the fact that we're being clearly open, transparent, and it shows the breadth and depth of our anti-doping programme."

Swiatek played in Cincinnati, where she was the top seed and reached the semi-finals. The WTA said she won nearly $159,000 in prize money at the tournament won by Sabalenka.

Swiatek then took part in the US Open where she was knocked out in the quarter-finals before the WTA Finals in Riyadh where she failed to advance from the group stage.

She also represented Poland at the Billie Jean King Cup where they lost in the semi-finals to eventual champions Italy.

The women's tour (WTA) said they acknowledged the ITIA's decision and that they "fully support" Swiatek.

"Iga has consistently demonstrated a strong commitment to fair play and upholding the principles of clean sport, and this unfortunate incident highlights the challenges athletes face in navigating the use of medications and supplements," the WTA said.

HORSE RACING

Toromona gallops to win Al Ghashamiah Cup



Jockey Bauyrzhan Murzabayev guides Toromona to Al Ghashamiah Cup victory at the Al Uqda Racecourse yesterday. **PICTURE:** *Juhaim*

By Sports Reporter
Doha

The Rashid Awajan KA al-Khayarin-owned and Hamad al-Jehani-trained Toromona recorded a pillar-to-post victory to annex the Al Ghashamiah Cup at the QREC's Al Uqda Racecourse yesterday.

Jockey Bauyrzhan Murzabayev took the six-year-old son of Shamardal to the front from the word 'go' and stretched away well to win the Thoroughbred Conditions over 2100m contest, the day's feature, by two lengths. Sharq Stud's El Chaco came second, while Al Wasmiyah Farm's Maraseem finished third. Abdulla Rashid al-Kubaisi, QREC Racing Manager, crowned the winners.

In the penultimate race of the day, jockey Szczepan Mazur, trained MHK al-Attiyah and Al Jeryan Stud completed a double on the card when the Polish rider guided Al Buraq, in the colours of Al Jeryan Stud, to half a length victory in the 2100m race for the Local Thoroughbred Conditions for three-year-old+.

The owner-jockey-trainer pair was in the winners' enclosure earlier in the day when Mazur rode AJS Haizum to win in the 1400m race for the Purebred Arabian Handicap (65-85) for three-year-old+.

Wathnan Racing-owned and Alban de Mieulle-trained Farida won the 2100m contest for the Purebred Arabian Handicap (70-90) for four-year-old+ by a neck under a confident ride by Youssef Lachhab. In the card opener, Al Shaqab Racing-owned and Jean de Mieulle-trained Mawhob won the 1400m Thoroughbred Maiden Plate for three-six-year-olds by two lengths.

RESULTS

8th Al Rayyan Race Meeting - WINNERS: (Horse, owner, trainer, jockey)

Al Ghashamiah Cup, Thoroughbred Conditions, 3-year-old+, 2100m
Toromona (IRE), Rashid Awajan KA al-Khayarin, Hamad al-Jehani, Bauyrzhan Murzabayev

Local Thoroughbred Conditions, 3-year-old+, 2100m
Al Buraq (QA), Al Jeryan Stud, MHK al-Attiyah, Szczepan Mazur

Purebred Arabian Handicap (80-100), 3-year-old+, 1400m
Ginkeau (FR), Osama Omer E al-Dafea, Osama Omer E al-Dafea, Xavier Ziani

Local Purebred Arabian Handicap (70-90), 3-year-old+, 1400m
Habes (QA), Abdulaziz Saleh al-Jaber, Hadi al-Ramzani, Soufiane Saadi

Purebred Arabian Handicap (70-90), 4YO+, 2100m
Farida (FR), Wathnan Racing, Alban de Mieulle, Youssef Lachhab

ocal Thoroughbred Handicap (40-60), 3-year-old+, 1300m
Irtiqaa (QA), Meshaal bin Ali M A al-Attiyah, Mohamed Khaled Elahmed, Fayos Martin Borja

Purebred Arabian Handicap (65-85), 3-year-old+, 1400m
AJS Haizum (QA), Al Jeryan Stud, MHK al-Attiyah, Szczepan Mazur

Thoroughbred Maiden Plate, 3-6-year-olds, 1400m
Mawhob (FR), Al Shaqab Racing, Jean de Mieulle, Faleh Bughanaim

SPOTLIGHT

Oman's al-Yusfi wins on day 2 of World Military Equestrian Championship

At the 24th CISM World Military Equestrian Championship held at the Longines Arena at Al Shaqab, Oman's Sergeant Madian Said Hamad al-Yusfi, riding Hurry Up, claimed first place in Competition 2, a 1.20/1.25m Accumulator with Joker event.

UAE's First Lieutenant Saeed Almaazmi on Baccarat d'Azur secured second place, while Italy's OR4 Primo Graduato Emanuele Addis, aboard Eddie, finished third.

Qatar's First Lieutenant Hamad Ali al-Attiyah came seventh on Kimberly, with First Lieutenant Salman Mohammed al-Emadi taking 12th place on Dino Bb Z. Major Ali bin Khalid al-Thani and Sidney 184 ended in 29th place.

Today serves as a rest day for the competitors, with final events and closing ceremony slated for tomorrow.





INTERNATIONAL SERIES QATAR

Uihlein embraces wind to take halfway lead at DGC

'With me it's always rhythm. I get all quick, just tried to keep it smooth today and did a good job of it'

By Sports Reporter
Doha

On a windy day in Doha yesterday, Peter Uihlein held things together well enough to sign for an eight-under-par 64 in the second round of the US$2.5mn International Series Qatar.

An eagle on the short par-4 16th, seven birdies, and a solitary bogey helped him take the halfway lead at the Doha Golf Club (DGC).

Uihlein shot a brilliant eight-under-par 64 to take the halfway lead – embracing the windy conditions that replaced the calmness of the opening day.

The American is 12-under leads by two from compatriot Zach Bauchou, who carded 68. First-round leader Ian Snyman from South Africa is in third, a shot further back, following a 70.

"It was hard," said the 35-year-old, about the conditions.

"I mean, when it gets windy. It's fun though. I enjoy it. Kind of shapes the shots for you a little bit. I enjoy it.

"I definitely prefer when the wind picks up."

Former Masters champion South African Charl Schwartzel (65), Spain's Luis Masaveu (69) and David Puig (70) plus Miguel Tabuena (68) from the Philippines sit tied fourth, four behind the leader.

Louis Oosthuizen, 2010 Open Championship, is five back, while last week's Hong Kong Open winner Patrick Reed is six back heading into the final two rounds alongside Dean Burmester, Brendan Steele and Eugenio Chacarra, who last week said he is hoping to find a new team after being dropped from Sergio Garcia's Fireballs GC.



Peter Uihlein in action during the round two of the International Series Qatar at the Doha Golf Club yesterday. **PICTURES:** *Asian Tour*

American Uihlein won the International Series England in August for his maiden victory on the Asian Tour and The International Series. He nearly followed that up with a win at the International Series Thailand but finished second after letting a two-shot lead slip on the last, and has unfinished business this week.

The race to win the Asian Tour Order of Merit continues to gain momentum. LIV Golf reserve player John Catlin remains in the pole position, but at one point in Round 2 he looked like he would miss the cut for the second week in a row. But Catlin shot 73 to put himself into the weekend. His nearest challenger, Richard T. Lee from Canada, is 3-under after a 72.

Lee or Ben Campbell, also a LIV Golf reserve player who is 4-under through two rounds this week, need to win this week to have a chance of surpassing Catlin's 3,030.06 points on the Merit list and also need to finish solo second next week. That scenario also needs Catlin to finish at the bottom of the leaderboard both weeks, so the American remains on course to win the title for the first time.

Catlin also leads The International Series Rankings, but that battle is wide open.

Schwartzel, whose most recent victory was the LIV Golf Invitational in 2022 – LIV Golf's first-ever event – began on the back nine and made a brilliant start by making birdie on the first hole before holing out for an eagle on the par-4 11th.


South Africa's Charl Schwartzel with his caddie during the round two of the International Series Qatar at the Doha Golf Club yesterday.

He dropped his only shot of the day on the 14th but made a jump on the leaderboard with five more birdies. "Yeah, that was quite a surprise," said the 2011 Masters champion.

"Struggled with my driver a bit yesterday and with this wind I was a bit worried. I actually drove it well and got off to that fantastic start and played solid from there, all the way in."

Schwartzel has registered some strong performances on the LIV Golf League this season, tying for second in Jeddah and finishing tied for third in Adelaide, and would no doubt love to finish the year with a win.

"With me it's always rhythm," Schwartzel said. "I get all quick, just tried to keep it smooth today and did a good job of it."

South African Snyman was unable to repeat his brilliant first-round 65 but was delighted with his round in much more difficult conditions that he felt played four shots harder.

"This is probably one of my best rounds I would say, on the Asian Tour. Hit it really good, hit lots of fairways, which is great in these conditions. Hit lots of greens, made some great putts. One bogey, I mean, I think that basically says it, it was a solid round of golf," Snyman said.

"Shot wise compared to yesterday, probably about four shots I would say, that would be my guess. It was just a guessing game out there, and yeah, I managed to guess most of them correctly. Even putting you had to take the wind into account."

The International Series Rankings, which will see the champion earn a place on next year's LIV Golf League, will go down to the wire at next week's $5mn PIF Saudi International.

MOROCCAN AMATEUR BRESNU FLIES THE FLAG FOR MENA REGION AFTER MAKING CUT

Doha: Moroccan amateur **Adam Bresnu** is the sole representative flying the flag for Arabian golf after holding his nerve to make the halfway cut at International Series Qatar yesterday.

Bresnu, the recent gold medal winner at the 43rd Pan Arab Golf Championship, followed up his two-under first round of 70 with a battling one-over 73 in windy conditions to comfortably make the cut at the Doha Golf Club (DGC).

The ninth of 10 elevated Asian Tour tournaments this season offered a number of regional golfers the chance to mix it with some of the biggest names in world golf and experience elite-level competition at



Doha Golf Club.

Local Qatari amateurs Daniil Sokolov, just 13, and Saleh al-Kaabi fell short along with Bresnu's compatriot Othman Raouzi, but all three gained invaluable experience along the way. The 20-year-old Texas State student had to battle hard to make the cut. After trading two birdies and two bogeys on the front nine, he dropped three shots in six and was in real danger of missing the cut before roaring back with two birdies and par in his final three holes.

He said: "It was really different over the two rounds. Yesterday I didn't think I played well, but it was fairway – greens and making two putts every time. I thought I played bad but it is called boring golf and I am glad I did that now.

"Today was different, really difficult and I had to change my plan as the wind made it very difficult to find fairway.

"So I was like 'you are on the cut so try to keep it simple'. I did but golf is tough and I had a run of bogeys and I lost momentum. I knew I had to wake up. I made birdie 16 and 17 and spoke to myself about making par on 18 and I'm glad I did."

Bresnu is not just playing for personal pride this weekend. He knows a good performance will help his WAGR (World Amateur Golf Rankings) position – something that will help him and also his country in the long run. He explained: "I'm really excited, it is going to be way different on moving day. I don't get any money as an amateur but it will be really good for my WAGR, my rankings, and I'm going to play for that tomorrow. "Morocco are trying to qualify for Eisenhower Trophy (World Amateur Team Championship) and I know if I can play good it can make a big difference. I am playing for me and my country and I felt that on 16, that I needed a birdie-birdie finish, and I did."

On the improving standards of golf across the region, he added: "Every federation is doing a great job now so it is making it harder to win. I know I can compete when my game is good, and I know I can win when my game is great. It is a question of confidence for sure."

FOOTBALL

Guardiola's ingenuity will solve Man City crisis: Slot

AFP
Liverpool

Liverpool manager Arne Slot believes Pep Guardiola will come up with the solution to Manchester City's problems, but is hoping to inflict more pain on the English champions on Sunday.

Slot's incredible start to life at Anfield continued with a 2-0 win over Real Madrid on Wednesday to move back to the top of the Champions League table.

Liverpool are also streaking clear at the top of the Premier League, eight points ahead of City, who are suffering the worst run of form in Guardiola's managerial career.

After five consecutive defeats, City collapsed from 3-0 up in the final 15 minutes to draw 3-3 against Feyenoord in midweek.

The loss of Ballon d'Or winner Rodri to a season-ending knee injury has been a colossal blow to City's chances of defending their title.

Slot is confident Guardiola will turn their fortunes around, but is hoping it will not come in time for the top-of-the-table clash.

"One of the reasons why I think Guardiola is the best manager in the world is that he always comes up with solutions for his problems," Slot said at his pre-match press conference yesterday.


Liverpool manager Arne Slot and defender Conor Bradley celebrate after the UEFA Champions League match against Real Madrid at Anfield in Liverpool. Liverpool won 2-0. *(AFP)*

"His problem now might be that Rodrigo is out, but we all know, I think, that he will come up with a solution and the run of form will go again. Hopefully after Sunday.

"I think he was the one who started playing the inverted full-back, then he was the one that started to play the centre-back as a number six.

"So I don't think it's a surprise for anyone if he again comes up with something no-one has ever thought about before to make his team even stronger."

Liverpool's latest statement win, to defeat Madrid for the first time in nine meetings, came at a cost.

Defenders Conor Bradley and Ibrahima Konate are doubtful for the weekend after suffering injuries late in the game.

"It's never a good sign if, in Conor's case, we had to take him off and Ibou couldn't walk off the pitch as he should after such a fantastic game that he played," added Slot. However, the Dutchman confirmed Trent Alexander-Arnold would be fit enough to replace Bradley if necessary.

All three previous sides to enjoy at least an eight-point lead after 12 Premier League matches went on to win the title.

Liverpool have won the league just once since 1990 and have missed out twice in recent seasons to City by a single point as Guardiola's men have racked up six of the last seven titles.

Barcelona beat Real in legends El Clasico


Barcelona Legends upstaged Real Madrid Legends 4-2 via shootout after an exciting 2-2 draw in Legends El Clasico match, by Visit Qatar, at the Khalifa International Stadium yesterday. Organisers said the match was a "celebration of the rich history, passion, and rivalry that have defined these two clubs for decades." Retired football stars Ronaldinho, Luis Figo, Rivaldo, Clarence Seedorf, Iker Casillas and Patrick Kluivert were among others seen in action.

