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TENNIS

Djokovic again stunned by a lucky loser at Indian Wells as Alcaraz advances

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CHAMPIONS LEAGUE ELITE 2024-25

Al Sadd to take on Al Wasl in return leg today

By Sports Reporter
Doha

After two draws already this season between them, Al Sadd and Al Wasl know there has to be a winner when they square off in the return leg of their AFC Champions League Elite 2024-25 Round of 16 match-up today.

Qatar champions Al Sadd are experiencing a blip on the continental stage after easily securing a round of 16 spot, having drawn two and lost one of their last three matches.

"This is our fourth match against Al Wasl and all those matches were difficult. They are good team but we are ready for the match. We expect it to be a strong and good match," Al Sadd coach Felix Sanchez said yesterday.

Seeking to reach the quarter-finals for the sixth time in their history, Al Sadd will head into the tie

on a high after defeating Al Shahraniya 5-0 on Friday to keep the pressure on Al Duhail SC in the race for the Qatar Stars League title.

The 2011 AFC Champions League winners will be confident of scoring at the Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium, having netted in 11 consecutive matches on the continent and having not lost their last nine home matches against sides from the UAE.

Al Wasl, on the other hand, need to tighten up at the back with the UAE champions having not been able to keep a clean sheet in their last eight AFC Champions League Elite matches, conceding 13 goals.

They have, however, multiple sources for goals with nine different players having found the back of the net although Fabio Lima is the only one to have scored twice this season.

Al Nassr Club vs Esteghlal

Cristiano Ronaldo is expected to be back powering Al Nassr when



Al Sadd coach Felix Sanchez addresses a press conference in Doha on the eve of the AFC Champions League Elite Round of 16 return leg match against Al Wasl of the UAE at Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium.

they host Esteghlal in the return leg tie today in Riyadh. The match at Riyadh's King Saud University Stadium promises to be a thriller,

with last week's first leg having ended in a goalless stalemate.

An injury kept Ronaldo out of the first leg - which saw the Riyadh-

based club squander six clear chances - but the Portuguese star scored in Al Nassr's 2-2 draw with Al Shabab in a Saudi Pro League

tie on Friday. The goal took Ronaldo's domestic tally to 18 and the Al Nassr skipper has also been in fine form on the continental stage, having already found the back of the net six times.

He has yet to, however, score against a side from the Islamic Republic of Iran but Al Nassr - aiming to make the last eight stage for the fifth time - will head into the tie with confidence, having not lost to teams from the Central Asia nation in their last 12 meetings.

Esteghlal, however, will take on Al Nassr on the back of a five-match unbeaten run in the AFC Champions League Elite.

A resolute defensive performance helped the Iranian side keep Al Nassr at bay last week but they will need to adopt a more attacking outlook if they are to reach the quarter-finals for the third time in their history. They will also draw confidence from the form of Hossein Hosseini, whose 39 saves has him top of the goalkeepers' chart.

CRICKET

Captain Rohit, spin attack lead India to Champions Trophy win

'We played some good cricket through the tournament. To have the result our way is a great feeling'

AFP
Dubai

Rohit Sharma made a combative 76 to back up a potent spin bowling display as India beat New Zealand by four wickets to win a record third Champions Trophy title yesterday.

Chasing 252 to win, India got off to a fast start through their captain's first half-century of the tournament before KL Rahul hit an unbeaten 34 to help seal victory with six balls to spare in the final in Dubai. India added to their trophies in 2002 and 2013 to go past Australia, who have two titles.

The world number one ODI team, India finished unbeaten in the eight-nation tournament played in Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates.

"It is very nice," Rohit said. "We played some good cricket through the tournament. To have the result our way is a great feeling."

Star batsman Virat Kohli said: "It's been amazing, we wanted to bounce back after a tough Australia tour. Lovely playing with a bunch of amazing youngsters. They're stepping up and taking India in the right direction."

"When you leave, you want to leave in a better position. So many impactful knocks (Shubman) Gill, Shreyas Iyer, Rahul have played. The team is in good hands," he added.

Both Kohli and Rohit had a lean run of form in India's 3-1 Test defeat in Australia earlier this year and the pair came into the tournament with speculation swirling over their ODI retirements.

In a battle of spin on a sluggish Dubai pitch, New Zealand's bowlers put India in trouble at 203-5 with Rohit and Shreyas Iyer, who hit 48, back in the pavilion.

But Rahul kept calm and along with Hardik Pandya (18) and Ravindra Jadeja, who hit the winning boundary, steered the team home to loud cheers from a largely Indian crowd in a sea of blue.

India played all their matches at the Dubai International Stadium after they refused to tour hosts Pakistan due to political tensions.



India's players celebrate with the trophy after winning the ICC Champions Trophy final against New Zealand at the Dubai International Stadium in Dubai yesterday. (AFP)

Phillips takes another stunner India played four spinners in their last three matches, which proved telling in deciding the outcome.

Varun Chakravarty and Kuldeep Yadav took two wickets each to help restrict New Zealand to 251-7 after the Black Caps elected to bat first.

In reply, Rohit came out firing as he took on the pace bowlers with regular boundaries including a six and two fours in one over off Nathan Smith. The captain reached his fifty in 41 balls to put

the pressure on the opposition. New Zealand's spinners attempted to pull things back and a stunning catch from Glenn Phillips secured a key breakthrough.

Phillips went airborne to pluck a flying ball at extra cover to dismiss Shubman Gill for 31 off skipper Mitchell Santner.

Kohli fell in the next over, trapped lbw for one off Michael Bracewell's off spin and the momentum shifted as runs dried up for India. Rohit, after a maiden over from Bracewell, jumped out of

his crease against Rachin Ravindra only to be stumped by Tom Latham as India slipped from 105 without loss to 122-3. Iyer controlled the chase aided by a dropped catch by Kyle Jamieson but soon fell to Santner. India lost Axar Patel and Pandya but Rahul stood strong to drag his team over the line.

"It's been a good tournament," said New Zealand's Santner. "We have been challenged along the way and the way we have grown as a group. We lost to a better side today."

New Zealand missed their pace spearhead Matt Henry after he was forced out of the final due to a shoulder injury.

Kane Williamson also could not come out to field after his batting effort of 11 due to a quad strain.

Daryl Mitchell hit 63 and Bracewell made a quickfire 53 not out for New Zealand, but it was not enough against an Indian side with considerable batting depth.

Left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep's two wickets in the space of two overs to dismiss Ravindra, for

37, and then Williamson proved crucial as India followed up their group-stage win over New Zealand with another triumph.

BRIEF SCORES

New Zealand 251-7 in 50 overs (D. Mitchell 63, M. Bracewell 53 not out, R. Ravindra 37; K. Yadav 2-40, V Chakravarty 2-45) **lost to India 254-6 in 49 overs** (R. Sharma 76, S. Iyer 48, KL Rahul 34 not out; M. Bracewell 2-28, M. Santner 2-46)

Result: India won by 4 wickets.

CRICKET

Captain Rohit hails India's brilliant spinners, Santner says NZ fell short by 20 runs

'WE PLAYED SOME VERY GOOD CRICKET AND OUR BOWLING WAS VERY CONSISTENT'

Reuters
Dubai

Skipper Rohit Sharma paid rich tributes to India's spin attack yesterday saying they played a key role in the team's successful Champions Trophy campaign in Dubai.

India refused to travel to host nation Pakistan because of strained political relations between the bitter neighbours, who play each other only in global tournaments.

Allowed to play all their matches in Dubai, a spin-friendly venue which typically produced low-scoring contests, India restricted New Zealand to a modest 251-7 in the final and chased down the target with one over to spare.

Their spin quartet of Varun Chakravarthi, Kuldeep Yadav, Axar Patel and Ravindra Jadeja bowled a combined 38 overs conceding only 144 runs and sharing five wickets among themselves.

"Not just this game but from the beginning (of the tournament), I thought our spinners in particular (excelled)," Rohit said.

"There is so much expectation when you play on a pitch like this but they never disappointed.

"We used that to our advantage, we played some very good cricket and our bowling was very consistent."

Rohit was particularly pleased with Chakravarthi, who took five wickets in a group match against New Zealand and claimed two in the final against the same opponents.

"He's got something different about him," Rohit said of the 'mystery spinner' whose variations include off-break, leg-break, googly and the 'carrom ball' that he pushes with his knuckle.

"He didn't start in the tournament for us but he got five wickets against New Zealand and we saw the ability he possesses with the ball. We wanted to maximise that."

Mitchell Santner, in his first global tournament as New Zealand skipper, was not too unhappy how they fared in the eight-team competition.

"It's been a good tournament...



India's Kuldeep Yadav (right) celebrates with teammate Varun Chakravarthi after taking the wicket of New Zealand's Rachin Ravindra during the ICC Champions Trophy final at the Dubai International Stadium in Dubai yesterday. (AFP)

"We played some good cricket today but we fell short to a better team," the spinner said.

Santner felt they could not dominate the Indian spinners in the middle overs.

"We lost a few wickets after the powerplay and they really got the squeeze on.

"Credit to how they played,

they're world class spin bowlers. We were probably about 20 runs under what we wanted but we just went out looking to restrict them."

New Zealand suffered a blow before the final after pace spearhead Matt Henry was ruled out with a shoulder injury he picked up during the semi-final against South Africa.

Rohit says 'not retiring' from ODIs



India's captain Rohit Sharma plays a shot during the ICC Champions Trophy final against New Zealand in Dubai yesterday. (AFP)

DUBAI: India skipper Rohit Sharma yesterday said he is "not retiring" from one-day international cricket after leading his team to a record third Champions Trophy title in Dubai.

India beat New Zealand by four wickets in the final of the 50-over tournament after Rohit handed the team a quick start with his 76 as they chased down their target of 252 with six balls to spare.

Indian stalwarts Rohit, 37, and Virat Kohli, 36, had a lean run of form in India's 3-1 Test defeat in Australia earlier this year and the pair came into the tournament with speculation swirling over their ODI retirements.

"I want to clarify that I am not going anywhere, I am not retiring from this format," Rohit told reporters at the end of a long post-match press conference at the Dubai International Stadium. He said a lot of rumours have been doing the rounds around his retirement, but he will stay on.

Rohit has led India to their second successive ICC title after the team lifted the T20 World Cup in Barbados last year. Rohit, Kohli and Ravindra Jadeja all retired from the shorter format after the triumph.

India, under Rohit, ended runners-up in the 2023 ODI World Cup after they lost the final to Australia in Ahmedabad.

His 83-ball knock laced with seven fours and three sixes was Rohit's first half-century in this tournament where India, who played all their matches in Dubai, were unbeaten in the five games they played.

India have dropped just one match in three ICC tournaments since the ODI World Cup where the home team came unbeaten into the final.

Rohit's team remained unbeaten in the 2024 T20 World Cup in the United States and the West Indies and extended the run in this Champions Trophy.

"It is a great milestone to have, honestly speaking," Rohit said of

the achievement. "And that speaks about the kind of team this is.

"So, it shows a lot of quality in the team, a lot of depth, a lot of understanding within the group, a lot of enjoyment, a lot of excitement. And that is how we want to play our cricket."

India came into the eight-nation tournament with a 3-0 ODI sweep of England at home and have been the team to beat in white-ball cricket.

They top the world team rankings in ODI and T20 listings of the International Cricket Council.

"One game India loses, or it goes here and there, and there is so much speculation," said Rohit. "But the boys and the team have actually managed to put that aside and just focus on how to win games and how to enjoy the game.

"Representing India is not a joke. Everyone wants to represent India with a lot of integrity and a lot of pride as well." **AFP**

ATHLETICS

Seventh heaven for Norway's Ingebrigtsen as Mahuchikh and Bol also shine at Euro indoors

AFP
Apeldoorn, Netherlands

Norway's Jakob Ingebrigtsen defended his European indoor 3000m title yesterday to become a double gold medalist at three consecutive editions of the continental championships.

Ingebrigtsen was one of three top names in the final session at the Omnisport Arena in Apeldoorn along with Ukraine's high jump queen Yaroslava Mahuchikh and home track favourite Femke Bol.

Mahuchikh dominated to win a third title, while Bol wrapped up proceedings by anchoring the Dutch to gold in the women's 4x400m relay.

Italian Zainab Dosso clocked a world-leading 7.01sec to win the women's 60m.

Ingebrigtsen was in record-equalling form. The Norwegian, who won the 1500m on Friday, clocked 7min 48.37sec for what was a 16th European senior title across all surfaces and championships.

Still just 24, he matched the record of seven European indoor gold medals held by Soviet-Ukrainian Valeriy Borzov, who won 50m and 60m titles in the 1970s when the event was held annually.

"It's about showing up and it's about competing," said Ingebrigtsen of his appearance in Apeldoorn ahead of a season that moves on to the world indoor championships in Nanjing later this month and culminates in the outdoor world championships in Tokyo in September.

"I like to compete and I think that's what it's all about. I wouldn't be much motivated to jump on the treadmill if it wasn't for a race coming up. That's how it is!"

Ingebrigtsen, a double Olympic champion and two-time world champion over 5,000m, was content to sit at the back of the pack early in the 15-lap race. He soon took the pace up, moving into the lead with Britain's George Mills, Dutch teenager Niels Laros and Sweden's Andreas Almgren on his shoulder.



Norway's Jakob Ingebrigtsen celebrates after winning the men's 3000m final with second placed Britain's George Mills and third placed France's Azeddine Habz at European Athletics Indoor Championships in Apeldoorn, Netherlands, yesterday. (AFP)

The race started to wind up with five laps to run, before Ingebrigtsen let rip with two-and-a-half laps to go.

Mills stuck with the Norwegian, but the Briton faded in the last 100 metres.

Ingebrigtsen coasted across the line, one wagging finger raised as he matched Borzov's record, in a time far from the 7:17.55 world record he set over the distance outdoors last year.

Mills took silver in 7:49.41m with France's Azeddine Habz outstripping Almgren for his second medal of these champs after a silver in the 1500m.

Ukraine's reigning Olympic, world and European outdoor champion Mahuchikh clinched her third continental indoor title with a best of 1.99m, opting out of an attempt at the championship record of 2.06m in just her second competition of the year.

A late Dutch flourish gave world 400m indoor champ Bol - a four-time Olympic and eight-time world medallist - another gold by leading home the Dutch women's quartet, minutes after their male teammates had

won gold. Bol, Lieke Klaver, Nina Franke and Cathelijn Peeters timed a championship record of 3min 24.35sec in a fitting end to four days of action.

There was a thrilling finish in the women's 3,000m, Ireland's Sarah Healy outstripping Britain's Melissa Courtney-Bryant for gold in 8:52.86, a first-ever Euro indoor title for an Irishwoman.

Samuel Chapple produced a stunning final 50 metres to nail a Dutch national record of 1:44.88 and win the men's 800m, just four-hundredths of a second ahead of Belgian favourite Elliot Crestan. Ireland's Mark English took bronze.

Poland's Anna Wielgosz earlier won the women's 800m record in 2:02.09 ahead of France's Clara Liberman and Slovenia's Anita Horvat.

Saga Vanninen of Finland took pentathlon gold with 4,922 points. Dutchman Menno Vloon and Greek Olympic bronze medallist Emmanouil Karalis shared pole vault gold (5.90m), in the absence of all-conquering Swede Mondo Duplantis.

FOCUS

LIC announces public track and cycling days

Lusail International Circuit (LIC), Qatar's iconic motorsport and entertainment venue, yesterday announced its upcoming community activities. The Ramadan schedule for track and cycling day is live. Motorsport enthusiasts can now experience the thrill of driving on the same iconic 5.38km circuit that hosts Formula 1, MotoGP, and World Endurance Championship.

Car Track Days: Steer the Circuit

Lusail International Circuit invites driving enthusiasts to experience the professional racing environment on Thursday, March 20th. Participants will have the opportunity to drive on the same circuit that hosts Formula 1 and WEC events, with expert supervision in a controlled setting.

The event will run from 7:30pm to 11:45pm, with check-in at Pit Box 50. For safety purposes, participants will be divided into two groups, each receiving three 20-minute sessions totalling one hour of track time.

Entry fees for night time track access are set at QR900 per vehicle, with an additional QR250 for passengers, stay tuned for pricing information for day time access.

Advanced registration is required through the official portal at <https://members.lcsc.qa/>

Motorcycle Track Days: Learn the 16

LIC will host a motorcycle track event on Friday, March 21, offering riders the opportunity to navigate all 16 turns of the circuit that is a regular fixture on the MotoGP calendar.

Having been home to MotoGP since 2004, the circuit provides an exceptional environment for riders to refine their technique on the same track used by the world's best riders.

The event will operate from 7:30pm to 11:45pm, with check-in procedures at Pit Box 50. Participants will benefit from professional guidance which will see them being divided into two groups, each receiving three 20-minute sessions totalling one hour of track time. Entry is priced at QR900 per motorcycle for night time sessions.

Prior registration through <https://members.lcsc.qa/> is mandatory for participation.

Cycling Days

In partnership with the Qatar Cycle Federation, Lusail International circuit will be opening its doors to cycling enthusiasts. The circuit will host:

Mixed Cycling Day: Friday, 15 March 2025 from 6:00pm-8:30pm
QCF-LIC Ramadan Cycling Individual Time Trial, Friday, 15 March 2025 from 9:00pm

Ladies Cycling Day: Monday, 25 March 2025 from 6:00pm-8:30pm

Participants must present their Qatar ID for on-site registration. Following the Mixed Training Day activities on March 15th, participants are invited to stay for the QCF-LIC Ramadan Cycling Individual Time Trial competition beginning at 9:00pm. For more information or updates, please contact us on any of the following:
+974 4445 9555
+974 4472 9246
info@lcsc.qa

TENNIS

Djokovic again stunned by a lucky loser at Indian Wells

The Grand Slam king from Serbia joins Zverev and Rublev with early exit at 'Tennis Paradise'

Reuters
Indian Wells, California

Novak Djokovic was shocked by Botic van de Zandschulp 6-2 3-6 6-1 in the second round of Indian Wells on Saturday as the Serbian suffered an early exit at the hands of a tournament lucky loser for a second consecutive year.

Djokovic fell to lucky loser Luca Nardi of Italy in the California desert last year and history repeated itself on Stadium One court a day after top seed Alexander Zverev also went out.

The twenty-four time Grand Slam champion got off to a horrid start, hitting 14 unforced errors and being broken twice in the opening set.

He regrouped to race out to a 3-0 lead in the second, levelling the contest with a mighty forehand winner and pumping his fist in front of the packed, sun-soaked crowd.

But giant killer van de Zandschulp ran away with the decider, breaking Djokovic for a fourth time with a perfectly executed lob for a 3-1 lead and sealing the stunning upset when Djokovic's shot went wide on match point.

"I started really well and then of course Novak came back," said van de Zandschulp, who secured a berth to the tournament upon the withdrawal of 47th ranked Facundo Diaz Acosta.

"In the end I was happy to get my level back."

Van de Zandschulp was up a set and 3-0 on Nick Kyrgios in his first-round match on Stadium One on Thursday before the Australian withdrew with wrist pain.

Djokovic, 37, retired from his Australian Open semi-final against Alexander Zverev with a hamstring injury and lost in the Qatar Open first round last month.



Botic Van De Zandschulp of the Netherlands shakes hands with Novak Djokovic of Serbia after winning his second round match of the BNP Paribas Open at the Indian Well Tennis Garden.

He said the leg injury was behind him coming into the tournament and did not look hampered by it in his match of Saturday, where he was accompanied by coach Andy Murray. "No excuses for a poor performance," Djokovic said.

"It doesn't feel great when you play this way on the court, but congratulations to my opponent. "Just a bad day in the office!"

Djokovic's loss led a day of upsets that included seventh seed Andrey Rublev losing 6-4 7-5 to Italy's Matteo Arnaldi and 17th seed Felix Auger Aliassime falling to American Jenson Brooksby 6-4 6-2. World number one Jannik Sinner is not playing at the tournament as he serves a doping suspension.

KEYS AND ALCARAZ CRUISE

Earlier, Australian Open champion Madison Keys crushed Anastasia Potapova 6-3 6-0 in her first match as a Grand Slam champion, while Carlos Alcaraz began his bid for an Indian Wells three-peat with a 6-4 6-2 win over Quentin Halys.

Alcaraz is looking to join tennis greats Djokovic and Roger Federer as the only players to have triumphed three successive times in "Tennis Paradise".

"I couldn't wait to start the tournament, to get here again," the Spaniard said after dispatching his French opponent.

"Outside my country, this is my favourite tournament by far. It's a privilege."

Alcaraz will play Canadian Denis

Shapovalov in the third round.

Twelve months ago, a swarm of bees on Stadium One court stung Alcaraz and suspended play for nearly two hours during his quarter-final.

Lance Davis of Killer Bee Live Removal played the hero that day, removing the bees from a moving camera over the court without harming them, and Alcaraz and Davis met at the net before Saturday's match where they shook hands and shared a laugh.

While Alcaraz is already a four-time major champion at the age of 21, Keys had to wait a few weeks shy of her 30th birthday before finally joining that exclusive club in Melbourne and that success seems to have energised her.



Aryna Sabalenka of Belarus hits a shot against McCartney Kessler (not pictured) during their second-round match of the BNP Paribas Open.

Keys broke Russian Potapova's serve for a third time to clinch the first set and rolled through the one-sided second set to extend her winning streak to 13 matches.

"I'm so happy to be here," Keys said in an interview on centre court.

"Australia was obviously an amazing moment so it's really nice to be playing at home for my first tournament back at a place I've played at so many times in front of some amazing people."

Next up for world number five Keys is a third-round meeting with either 28th seed Elise Mertens or Kimberly Birrell of Australia, who play later on Saturday.

SABALENKA POWERS THROUGH

Top seed Aryna Sabalenka was tested but ultimately prevailed over young American McCartney Kessler 6-7(4) 6-3 under the lights.

The Belarusian was in full command of her formidable serve and never faced a break point while crushing six aces and winning 90% of her first serve points.

She sealed the win with a pair

of deft backhand volleys on match point to set up a meeting with Italian Lucia Bronzetti.

American Taylor Fritz, who lifted the trophy here three years ago, struggled to close out Italian Matteo Gigante but ultimately prevailed 6-3 7-5 in front of a full house on Stadium Two court.

Fritz was unable to serve out the match at 5-4 in the second set but broke back in the next game en route to the finish.

The third seed said he was being patient with himself as he was coming off an abdominal injury he suffered right after the Australian Open that kept him out of the tournament in Acapulco last month.

"There's definitely things I could have done better in the match but overall it was a pretty solid match," he said.

"I can't expect to come back and play perfect tennis. I've been injured, so I didn't have ideal prep coming into the tournament."

Fritz will face 30th-seeded Chilean Alejandro Tabilo for a spot in the round of 16.

AL ADAAM BEAT AL YARMOUK TO EXTEND LEAD

DOHA: The Al Adaam team continued to dominate the Al Thumama Ramadan Championship, securing a 2-0 victory over Al Yarmouk.

The win puts Al Adaam in first place with 12 points, maintaining their lead in the second edition of the tournament, held at Al-Furjan Stadium in cooperation with the Qatar Sports for All Federation. Faisal Al Langawi from Al Adaam was named the best player of the match.

In the second match, a thrilling 1-1 draw between Al Janoub and Palestine team saw Majd Bou Hamad of the Palestine team earn the best player award. With this result, Al Adaam remains at the top, while the Eagles team sits in second with 6 points, followed closely by Palestine in third with 5 points.

Today, two exciting matches are scheduled. The highly anticipated summit between Al Adaam and Al Nusoor promises intense competition. Al Adaam, with 12 points from four matches, will aim to maintain its lead, while Al Nusoor, with 6 points from two matches, is determined to challenge them. In the second match, the Southern team will face Tariq bin Ziyad.



FOCUS

Musheireb emerge champions of the Amateur Union Cup



Musheireb team have been crowned champions of the Amateur Union Cup, which was held with the participation of 6 teams: Msheireb, Al Matar, Al Aziziyah, Al Wakra, Al Shaqab and Al Riffa.

The tournament that was held at the Qatar University stadiums with evening kick-off times.

Msheireb beat Riffa on penalty kicks with a score of 8-7. In regulation time, both teams were locked at two goals each.

For his part, Khaled Rashid al-Nuaimi, President of Musheireb

Club, expressed his great happiness after the team was crowned winners.

Al-Nuaimi said: "I congratulate the technical staff and players on the well-deserved title after great efforts throughout the tournament, and at the expense of a good competitor like Al-Riffa team, which includes competent players in its ranks. I would like to thank and congratulate Sheikh Eid bin Thamer al-Thani, President of Al-Riffa Club, for the level that his team presented during the tournament."

MOTORSPORT

Al Abdulghani Motors supports Toyota Gazoo Racing Team at popular Qatar 1812km event

Al Abdulghani Motors, the authorised distributor of Toyota in Qatar, proudly supported the Toyota Gazoo Racing (TGR) team at the Qatar 1812km, the opening race of the 2025 FIA World Endurance Championship (WEC). Further cementing its role in growing Qatar's motorsports culture, Al Abdulghani Motors unveiled a series of activities at the Toyota GR Lounge at Lusail International Circuit, bringing fans, media, and industry leaders closer to the excitement of endurance racing.

Ahead of the championship, Al Abdulghani Motors also hosted an exclusive Prologue Event at Qatar Racing Club offering key stakeholders, media and sponsors an up-close experience with the TGR drivers and Toyota GR Yaris Cup racers.

The event featured a dynamic showcase of Toyota's motorsports heritage, a meet-and-greet with the teams, and a thrilling demonstration on the racetrack.

Kazuki Nakajima, Team Director of Toyota Gazoo Racing and a former champion driver, shared insights on Toyota's pioneering hybrid technology and its role in shaping the future of motorsports.

During the Qatar 1812km WEC, Al Abdulghani Motors hosted executives, key partners, and media members at the Toyota GR Lounge, where they engaged with TGR's world-class drivers and enjoyed an exclusive Toyota GR garage tour.

The TGR team competed at the Qatar 1812km WEC with the #7 and #8 GR010 HYBRID race cars, which operate on 100% renewable energy from biofuels.



After an intense battle on the track, the team secured a hard-fought top-six finish with both cars, reinforcing Toyota's commitment to sustainability and cutting-edge automotive engineering.

Al Abdulghani Motors showcased the ten high-performance Toyota GR Yaris race vehicles at the Toyota GR Stand in the Fan Zone. Visitors experienced the thrill of racing

firsthand through state-of-the-art GR driving simulators and interactive activations, highlighting the brand's commitment to fostering grassroots motorsports in the region.

Abdulghani Nasser al-Abdulghani, CEO of Al Abdulghani Motors, said: "Toyota Gazoo Racing's participation in the Qatar 1812km WEC exemplifies the brands dedication to making 'ever-better cars'."

"Through motorsports, we strive to create an arena where our customers' smiles can be realised."

With a strong presence at the opening round of WEC 2025, Al Abdulghani Motors continues to be a driving force in Qatar's motorsports scene, championing high-performance racing, innovation, and sustainability.

Through its ongoing collaboration with Toyota Motor Corporation, the company remains committed to advancing the future of motorsports and delivering thrilling experiences for racing enthusiasts.

Ekitike misses stoppage time penalty as Frankfurt lose to Union

Hugo Ekitike had a stoppage time penalty saved as Eintracht Frankfurt's recent slide continued in a surprise 2-1 home loss against lowly Union Berlin yesterday. Frankfurt gave up a one-goal lead to trail 2-1 against the relegation-threatened visitors, but VAR spotted a handball from Danilo Doekhi late in stoppage time, bringing Ekitike to the spot. Union goalie Frederik Rønnow got his hand to the low shot however, his third penalty save this season, to give his side a crucial victory in their bid to avoid relegation. The loss continued Frankfurt's slide since selling Omar Marmoush to Manchester City in January. Frankfurt have lost their past three in a row in the league and have won just two of eight league games since the Egyptian's departure. Frankfurt took the lead after just 13 minutes through former Chelsea and Borussia Dortmund forward Michy Batshuayi, his first goal since arriving in February. Batshuayi was on the spot to knock in a deflected shot from defender Rasmus Kristensen. Frankfurt dominated the first half but were unable to add to their lead and were punished in the 62nd minute when Union's Leopold Querfeld headed in a corner to level the scores.

(AFP)

HORSE RACING

Al-Hajri's Maysara lands Al Mamoura Cup

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Maysara continued her winning streak in the Al Mamoura Cup as the mare under jockey Pierre Charles Boudot delivered another commanding performance, securing her second straight victory at Al Rayyan Racecourse on Saturday night.

Boudot bided his time before unleashing Maysara's impressive turn of foot in the final straight. The five-year-old mare, owned by Mohammed Abdulhadi S al-Hajri and trained by Hamad al-Jehani, powered past the leaders, winning comfortably by over two lengths.

Qatar Racing and Equestrian Club (QREC) Chairman and President of Asian Equestrian Federation Hamad bin Abdulrahman al-Attiya crowned the winners.

The victory marked second win for Boudot, who earlier guided Al Mutaghatris to win in the Local Purebred Arabian Handicap 45-70. The meeting featured eight races with Youssef Lachhab piloting Dukhan (Local Thorough-



Connections of Maysara celebrate after the mare won the Al Mamoura Cup at Al Rayyan Racecourse.

bred Handicap 55-80), and Faleh Bughanaim steering Millions (Thoroughbred Handicap 65-85) to victories.

In the Purebred Arabian Handicap 65-85, Sakher won victories with Ivan Rossi in the saddle, while Ishraaqat topped the Local Thoroughbred Novice Plate under jockey Abdulla Rashid al-Hajri.

The meeting kicked off with a

win for See All Match, ridden by Saleh Faraj al-Otaibi, in the Thoroughbred Maiden Plate followed by the Purebred Arabian Maiden Plate title for Lattam Al Shajah under the guidance of jockey Fayos Martin Borja.

RESULTS
33rd Al Rayyan Race Meeting - Al Mamoura Cup

- 1 - Al Mamoura Cup - Local Thoroughbred Handicap 60-80 (Class 2)**
Maysara, Hamad al-Jehani, Pierre Charles Boudot
- 2 - Local Thoroughbred Handicap 55-80 (Class 2)**
Dukhan, Eng Mohamed Rashid Seif al-Kuwari, Youssef Lachhab
- 3 - Thoroughbred Handicap 65-85 (Class 4)**



Jockey Pierre Charles Boudot guided Maysara to victory. PICTURES: Juhaime

- Millions, Abdulaziz Ali al-Kathiri, Faleh Bughanaim
- 4 - Purebred Arabian Handicap 65-85 (Class 4)**
Sakher, Wasim al-Sahn, Ivan Rossi
- 5 - Local Thoroughbred Novice Plate (Fillies) (3yo Only) Class 5**
Ishraaqat, Zuhair Mohsen, Abdulla Rashid al-Hajri
- 6 - Local Purebred Arabian Handicap 45-70 (Class 5)**

- Al Mutaghatris, Julian Colin Smart, Pierre Charles Boudot
- 7 - Purebred Arabian Maiden Plate (Class 6)**
Lattam Al Shajah, Mohammed Hassan al-Matwi, Fayos Martin Borja
- 8 - Thoroughbred Maiden Plate (Class 6)**
See All Match, Abdulaziz Ali al-Kathiri, Saleh Faraj al-Otaibi

PREMIER LEAGUE

Arsenal title bid fades after Man Utd draw, Chelsea go 4th

Bournemouth squander two-goal lead to draw at Tottenham

AFP
London

Arsenal's fading hopes of winning the Premier League suffered a fresh blow as Manchester United held the Gunners to a 1-1 draw, while Chelsea boosted their bid to qualify for the Champions League with a 1-0 win over Leicester yesterday.

After Liverpool's 3-1 win against Southampton moved the leaders 16 points clear at the top on Saturday, there was no margin for error when Arsenal arrived at Old Trafford 24 hours later.

But United captain Bruno Fernandes put the hosts ahead with a superb free-kick in first half stoppage-time. Declan Rice's clinical finish from just inside the United area hauled Arsenal level in the 74th minute. But Mikel Arteta's second-placed side couldn't find a winner and now sit 15 points adrift of Liverpool.

Despite holding a game in hand on Liverpool, Arsenal look certain to miss out on the title yet again after finishing as runners-up for the last two seasons.

Liverpool are bidding to win a record-equalling 20th English title and their first since 2020 in Arne Slot's first season in charge.

The Anfield club need a maximum of 16 more points from their last nine matches to ensure they clinch the silverware.

Not for the first time, Arsenal have faded as the title pressure mounts, with a run of three league games without a win effectively gifting the trophy to Liverpool.

Troubled Manchester United are down in 14th place, with just one win in their last six games in all competitions. Adding to the gloom around Old Trafford, thousands of United fans staged a pre-match protest against co-owners the Glazer family and Jim Ratcliffe.

Marc Cucurella struck with a long-range rocket in the second half to lift Chelsea above Manchester City into fourth place. The Blues are two points ahead of City in the race for the top four



Arsenal's Declan Rice controls the ball during the Premier League match against Manchester United at Old Trafford in Manchester yesterday. (AFP)



Manchester United's Bruno Fernandes celebrates after scoring the goal against Arsenal yesterday. (AFP)

finish that guarantees a Champions League berth. It was only Chelsea's fourth victory in their last 12 league games as they responded to boss Enzo Maresca's challenge to win all their remaining home matches. Maresca believes that should be enough to ensure Champions League action, but Chelsea will have to improve on a spluttering performance against second-bottom Leicester.

Chelsea's Cole Palmer missed the first penalty of his career and was later substituted, making it seven league games without a goal or assist for the England forward.

Second-bottom Leicester have lost five successive league games and sit six points from safety as they slide towards relegation. Victor Kristiansen's clumsy challenge pole-axed Jadon Sancho, earning Chelsea a first half spot-kick.

Usually such a ruthless penalty taker, Palmer seized the ball, only for Mads Hermansen to deny him with a superb save. Chelsea finally took the lead in spectacular fashion on the hour when Spanish defender Cucurella drilled into the bottom corner from 25 yards.

Tottenham fought back from two goals down to draw 2-2 with Bournemouth in north London, saving boss Ange Postecoglou from another embarrassing defeat. That competition represents Tottenham's last chance of fulfilling Postecoglou's boast that he always win a trophy in his second season. Languishing in 13th in the Premier League, Postecoglou's side have gone three games without a win in all competitions.

Tottenham conceded in the 42nd minute when Marcus Tavernier applied the finishing touch to Milos Kerkez's pin-point cross after Pedro Porro carelessly conceded possession. Bournemouth struck again in the 65th minute as Evanilson raced onto Justin Kluijvert's pass and lifted a composed finish over Guglielmo Vicario.

LA LIGA

Mbappe, Vinicius help Real Madrid shade Rayo Vallecano

AFP
Madrid

Kylian Mbappe and Vinicius Junior were both on target for Real Madrid as they beat Rayo Vallecano 2-1 yesterday to pull level with La Liga leaders Barcelona.

Real Madrid rose one point above Atletico Madrid who suffered a surprise 2-1 defeat to Getafe earlier, while Barca's match on Saturday against Osasuna was postponed because of the death of one of the Catalan club's doctors.

Carlo Ancelotti's Madrid produced a solid, if not spectacular, performance to get the better of their local rivals, ahead of the huge Champions League derby clash against Atletico beckoning on Wednesday.

The Italian coach brought Jude Bellingham back into the starting line-up after suspension, but left Thibaut Courtois and Antonio Rudiger out entirely because of a knee issue and illness respectively.

The duo are expected to return to face Atletico in the last 16 second leg, where they hold a 2-1 lead.

Rayo Vallecano, seventh, were without several key players, including Jorge de Frutos and Isi Palazon, but still gave a strong account of themselves.

Vinicius hit the post early on and Rayo threatened through Andrei Ratiu and Gerard Gumbau before Madrid took the lead.

French superstar Mbappe, who had failed to score in his two previous appearances, causing concern in the Spanish capital, received Vinicius' pass and took on Florian Lejeune before firing home.

Four minutes later Madrid doubled their advantage through Vinicius, who also fired blanks against Atletico in midweek. The winger produced two stopovers to keep Ratiu guessing before finishing lethally.

Mbappe should have netted the third or passed to the open Vinicius to score, but his shot was well saved by Augusto Batalla. Rayo pulled back a goal in first-half stoppage time, with Diaz netting his first for the club from the edge of the box.

The midfielder's shot crashed

beyond Lunin down off the crossbar, over the line, then back up against the bar and out, with the goal given after a VAR review. Madrid threatened in the second half, with both Mbappe and Vinicius guilty of some dubious decision-making in the final third.

Ancelotti took off Rodrygo, Mbappe and Bellingham as Madrid banked only their second win from their last six league matches.

Atletico, now third, seemed on course for a narrow win against Getafe until Angel Correa's red card left them exposed in the final stages.

Diego Simeone's side, second, would have gone top with a victory and Alexander Sorloth struck from the penalty spot after 75 minutes.

However, Atletico forward Correa was sent off and Getafe midfielder Mauro Arambarri scored two late goals to snatch victory for the hosts.

Getafe set out to frustrate the visitors and neither team was able to trouble the other significantly in the first half.

Atletico midfielder Rodrigo de Paul suffered a knock in the first half and was taken off at half-time with the Champions League in mind.

Clement Lenglet also suffered a problem in the warm-up and was switched for Jose Gimenez in the starting line-up.

Sorloth opened the scoring with a penalty after Omar Alderete handled the ball, for his 10th league goal.

Getafe's comeback was sparked when Correa, another substitute, was sent off for a high tackle on Djene Dakonam in the 87th minute.

Moments later, Atletico levelled through Arambarri, who collected a flicked-on free kick and rammed home.

With 10 minutes of stoppage time added on and the wind in their sails, Getafe went for a winner and found one.

Diego Rico's effort from distance was cleverly diverted home by Uruguay international Arambarri to claim the three points.

Athletic Bilbao, fourth, were held to a 1-1 draw by Mallorca and are seven points behind Atletico.



Rayo Vallecano's Alfonso Espino (right) and Real Madrid's Kylian Mbappe vying for the ball during the La Liga match at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium in Madrid yesterday. (AFP)

NAPOLI REFRESH TITLE HOPES WITH WIN OVER FIORENTINA

Napoli breathed fresh life into their Serie A title hopes yesterday with a 2-1 victory over Fiorentina that ended a five-match winless run. Romelu Lukaku gave Napoli the lead on 26 minutes and Giacomo Raspadori doubled it on the hour before Albert Gudmundsson pulled a goal back for Fiorentina. Antonio Conte's Napoli climbed back to within a point of leaders Inter Milan, who came from two goals down to beat bottom side Monza 3-2 on Saturday. Napoli, who won the title two years ago, were

top at the end of January but have been playing catch-up with Inter after picking up just four points in five matches before beating Fiorentina at the Stadio Diego Armando Maradona. Juventus host Atalanta later on Sunday with both teams looking to stay in touch with the top two. Atalanta are six points off the pace in third, while fourth-placed Juventus are nine points adrift of Inter. Roma continued their resurgence under Claudio Ranieri as Matias Soule's goal after only 22 seconds was enough

to secure a 1-0 win at Empoli for their fifth successive league victory. The 73-year-old Ranieri has brought stability to a club that sacked Daniele De Rossi in September and then moved on from his successor Ivan Juric less than two months later. Roma are unbeaten in 12 games in Serie A since mid-December, rising from just outside the relegation places and into contention for Europe next season. They are four points back of Bologna in sixth, which offers a spot in the UEFA Conference League.