

To subscribe
GULF TIMES
Newspaper
Please call
444 666 35



TENNIS | Page 3

Medvedev tops Paul to reach quarters at rainy Indian Wells



FOOTBALL | Page 4

Amorim eager to change Ratcliffe's mind about Man United

To advertise here,
PLEASE CALL
444 666 21

Thursday, March 13, 2025
Ramadan 13, 1446 AH

GULF TIMES SPORT

FORMULA 1

Hamilton to make Ferrari debut, McLaren's Piastri eyes home win

Page 2



QOC receives international certification in Knowledge Management System ISO 30401

Doha: In a new achievement that reflects its leadership and excellence, the Qatar Olympic Committee (QOC) has received international certification in the Knowledge Management System ISO 30401. This milestone makes QOC the first institution in Qatar and the first sports organisation in the Middle East to receive this prestigious international recognition.

The achievement underscores QOC's commitment to global quality standards in knowledge management and its pioneering role in fostering innovation and promoting sustainability.

The QOC obtained this distinguished certification following a comprehensive external audit conducted by the granting body, Bureau Veritas International, which confirmed that all procedures and standards adopted by the QOC align with the highest international knowledge

management standards.

Knowledge management is a fundamental pillar for enhancing institutional efficiency and innovation. It facilitates the transformation of data and experiences into strategic assets that enable organisations to make informed decisions and drive sustainable development.

By implementing global best practices in this field, QOC has strengthened its sustainability framework across its activities and operations, positioning itself as a role model both locally and regionally.

On this occasion, Jassim bin Rashid al-Buenain, Secretary-General of the Qatar Olympic Committee, stated: "The QOC's achievement of international accreditation in the Knowledge Management System ISO 30401 is a significant milestone that

reflects our commitment to excellence and innovation. For us, knowledge management is not just an organisational tool; it is a strategic approach that enables us to leverage expertise and information in a way that ensures sustainability and enhances our ability to respond to future challenges.

"We take great pride in being the first institution in Qatar to attain this recognition, and we look forward to continuing our leadership role in supporting Qatar National Vision 2030."

As the first institution in Qatar to receive this certification, QOC strengthens the country's position as a leader in implementing global best practices across various fields. This achievement adds further value to QOC's institutional excellence journey, reinforcing its role as a strategic partner in driving sustainable development.

تم تسليم الاعتماد الدولي لإدارة المعرفة
ISO 30401



Secretary-General of the Qatar Olympic Committee Jassim bin Rashid al-Buenain receives international certification in the Knowledge Management System ISO 30401.

FOOTBALL

PSG make statement by ousting Liverpool from Champions League

After the tie had finished 1-1 on aggregate, PSG's Donnarumma saves two spot kicks



Paris Saint-Germain's players celebrate after winning the last 16 second leg Champions League match against Liverpool at Anfield in Liverpool, north west England. (AFP)

AFP
Paris

Paris Saint-Germain's penalty shoot-out triumph over Liverpool on Tuesday in an epic Champions League tie is a statement win for the French club's new project in the post-Kylian Mbappe era and confirms that they are serious contenders to win the trophy.

PSG were formerly almost a laughing stock around Europe for their ability to lose big Champions League knockout ties in improbable circumstances. Yet this heavy-weight last-16 showdown against the English Premier League leaders could not have contrasted more sharply with past implosions against the likes of Barcelona, Manchester United and Real Madrid.

The Parisians were superb in last week's first leg and yet still contrived to lose 1-0, leaving them up against it before going to Anfield, where Liverpool had been beaten just once this season. But Luis Enrique's PSG went ahead early on the night through Ousmane Dembele, the forward's 29th goal this season in all competitions levelling the tie on aggregate.

That was the only goal of the 90 minutes, as PSG withstood pressure, helped by some key interventions from goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma, but also maintained a threat at the other end with Khvicha Kvaratskhelia outstanding and Desire Doue excellent off the bench.

They were also the better team in a goal-less extra time, and held their nerve superbly in the shoot-out, scoring all four of their kicks while Donnarumma saved from Darwin Nunez and Curtis Jones.

Over the last decade, Qatar-backed PSG made a habit of accumulating superstar forwards but maintaining a fragility that left them susceptible to collapsing in big European matches. The epochal meltdown in Barcelona in 2017, when a 4-0 first-leg advantage was wiped out in a 6-1 second-leg loss, directly led to them signing Mbappe and Neymar in the two biggest transfers in football history.

There was a run to the final in the truncated, Covid-era Champions League in 2020, and a semi-final against Manchester City in 2021. Lionel Messi then arrived, but PSG seemed to be getting further and further away from their dream of winning the competition until Luis Enrique arrived in

2023. They got to the semi-finals last season with Mbappe leading the attack, but losing to Borussia Dortmund left an inevitable feeling of what might have been.

Meanwhile Enrique kept insisting that PSG would be better once Mbappe had gone. It turns out he was right. "We showed we are a real team," the Spaniard said on Tuesday. PSG had a slow start in this season's Champions League, which featured defeats against Arsenal, Atletico Madrid and Bayern Munich while Luis Enrique was criticised for refusing to play with an orthodox centre-forward.

That is all now a distant memory given how impressive PSG have been in the last three months, including 21 goals scored over a run of five straight wins in Europe before facing Liverpool. Dembele has become one of the world's most lethal forwards, scoring 24 times in 19 appearances since mid-December.

Kvaratskhelia, the Georgian winger signed in January from Napoli, was so impressive against Liverpool that he was applauded off by the Anfield crowd when being substituted in extra time. Doue is a fabulous talent, while pocket-sized midfielders Vitinha and Joao Neves combine

technique with boundless energy. The addition of Ecuador international Willian Pacho completes a formidable back line along with Marquinhos and full-backs Achraf Hakimi and Nuno Mendes.

"We have no limits, but we still need to improve," captain Marquinhos, the sole survivor now from the 2017 Barcelona nightmare, said on Tuesday.

Aston Villa - managed by Unai Emery, PSG's coach that night at the Camp Nou - or Club Brugge await in the last eight, with Mbappe's Madrid among the possible semi-final opponents. "Good luck to whoever comes up against PSG," said Samir Nasri, the ex-France midfielder now working as a pundit, as he weighed up the possible winners of the competition. "Barcelona can be magic in spells, but today in terms of collective, as a team, for me it is PSG who have the best team."

It is also a young team - the average age of their starting line-up on Tuesday was under 25, compared to almost 28 for Liverpool. Five of their starters were aged 24 or below, while substitutes Doue and Warren Zaire-Emery are just 19. "This is just the beginning," Enrique replied when asked if his side were now at their best.

Dortmund beat Lille to reach Champions League quarters

LILLE, FRANCE: Borussia Dortmund recovered from losing an early goal to fight back and beat Lille 2-1 in France in the second leg of their Champions League last-16 tie on yesterday, sealing a 3-2 aggregate victory and a place in the quarter-finals.

Jonathan David gave Lille an early lead on the night, putting the French club ahead in the tie after last week's 1-1 first-leg draw. However, Emre Can squared things by converting a penalty for Dortmund on 54 minutes, and Maximilian Beier then fired in a fine winner for last season's runners-up.

Dortmund will now face Barcelona in the quarter-finals next month, having already lost 3-2 at home to the Catalans during the league phase in December. The result is a huge boost for Dortmund and their recently-appointed coach Niko Kovac, coming as the club languishes in 10th place in the Bundesliga. It is a massive disappointment for Lille, who were hoping to reach the quarter-finals of the Champions League for the first time in their history after an outstanding performance during the league phase.

They finished seventh out of 36 teams, beating both Real Madrid and Atletico Madrid on the way, while also holding Juventus and putting six past Feyenoord.

Lille appeared to be in a strong position after coming from behind to draw in Dortmund last week, and they went in front in the tie when Canada forward David scored in the fifth minute. Ismaily's low ball in from the left was swept towards goal by David, somehow going in through the legs of Dortmund goalkeeper Gregor Kobel. It was David's seventh goal in this season's Champions League, but it seemed to galvanise the visitors.

They were denied an equaliser by a remarkable double save from Lille 'keeper Lucas Chevalier in the midst of a goalmouth scramble on 20 minutes. Dortmund applied pressure and were rewarded when they won a penalty shortly after half-time as Serhou Guirassy went down under contact from Thomas Meunier. Can fired in the spot-kick, and Karim Adeyemi then hit the bar for Dortmund before they found what proved to be the winner on 65 minutes.

Guirassy, who has 10 goals in the Champions League this season, was the provider but Beier still had work to do as he controlled the ball in the box before firing a lethal shot high into the net. Lille could not recover from that blow as they went out in the last 16, just like in their two previous appearances at this stage of the competition, in 2007 and 2022. (AFP)

FORMULA ONE

Hamilton to make Ferrari debut as Piastri eyes win

Max Verstappen says: 'We learnt a lot from testing but there is still a lot more work to be done'

Reuters
Melbourne

Lewis Hamilton will launch his bid to win the drivers' championship at a third Formula One team when he makes his much-anticipated debut for Ferrari in the season-opening Australian Grand Prix on Sunday.

Formula One's most successful team have not won a championship since the 2008 constructors' title and Hamilton, moving from Mercedes to Maranello, arrives chasing a record eighth.

Hamilton's switch has already sent fans into a frenzy in Italy and Melbourne's big Italian community will be out in force at Albert Park as the lakeside circuit hosts the opener for the first time since 2019.

Ferrari, runners-up to McLaren in the 2024 constructors' championship, celebrated a 1-2 in Melbourne last year when Carlos Sainz, who has since moved to Williams, won the race ahead of teammate Charles Leclerc.

McLaren, however, may be set to steal Hamilton's thunder after encouraging performances in winter testing with F1 data showing they were quickest on low fuel in Bahrain and had an advantage over Ferrari on race pace.

That would have been music to



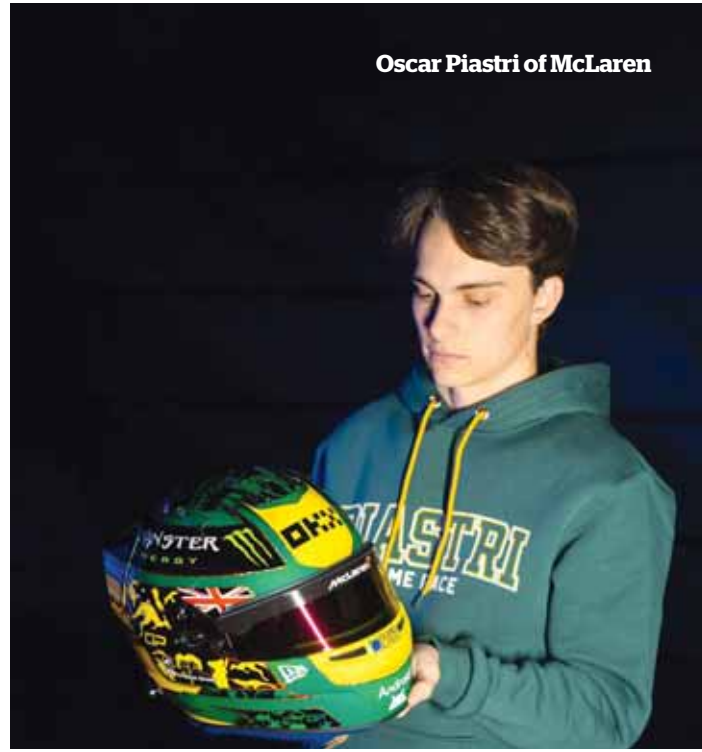
Lewis Hamilton of Ferrari

the ears of Australian fans cheering for McLaren's Oscar Piastri as he looks to become the first home driver to win the race since it was added to the F1 world championship calendar in 1985.

The Melbourne native finished fourth last year at Albert Park behind third-placed teammate Lan-

do Norris. Briton Norris, the bookmakers' pre-season favourite for the championship, may well be Piastri's biggest obstacle to a drought-breaking win for Australia.

Though Hamilton's Ferrari debut and McLaren's pre-season form have dominated the buildup,



Oscar Piastri of McLaren

Red Bull's defending champion Max Verstappen will launch his bid to become the second man to win five drivers' titles in a row following Michael Schumacher.

Red Bull finished only third in the constructors' championship last season and after doing the least amount of laps at winter

testing the pace of the car remains to be seen. "We learnt a lot from testing but there is still a lot more work to be done," Verstappen said in a race preview issued by Red Bull yesterday.

"We have ideas about what we can do and how we can take on what we learnt at testing, so we

will see how we go when we start driving on the track."

Verstappen has a new teammate in New Zealander Liam Lawson, who Red Bull hope will offer better support for the Dutch driver than the discarded Sergio Perez.

Lawson is among six drivers at Albert Park who will race in an F1 season-opener for the first time.

There will be plenty of interest in how 18-year-old Italian Andrea Kimi Antonelli fares in his F1 debut for Mercedes, having stepped into Hamilton's huge shoes at the Brackley-based team.

British teen rival Oliver Bearman will drive for Haas after being a reserve for the US team last year, while young Frenchman Isack Hadjar, the F2 runner-up, will debut at Racing Bulls.

Brazilian F2 champion Gabriel Bortoleto will step up for struggling Sauber while Australia's Jack Doohan will hope to make an instant impression in his home race amid speculation he may only be warming the seat at Alpine for Argentine reserve driver Franco Colapinto.

While Albert Park will give an early indication of how the teams stack up, it offers different conditions to Bahrain and usually throws up a surprise or two.

Rain forecast for race-day could add another twist following the scorching heat expected at qualifying on Saturday.

Statistics for Australian Grand Prix

Lap distance: 5.278km. Total distance: 306.124km (58 laps)

2024 pole position: Max Verstappen (Netherlands) Red Bull one minute 15.915 seconds.

2024 winner: Carlos Sainz (Spain) Ferrari

Race lap record: Sergio Perez (Mexico) Red Bull, 1:20.235, 2023.

NOTE: The circuit was shortened by 28 metres, with two turns taken out and seven corners modified, in 2022.

Start time: 0400 GMT (1500 local)

AUSTRALIA

There are two Australian drivers in Sunday's race, McLaren's Oscar Piastri and Alpine rookie Jack Doohan. No Australian driver has won a home grand prix. This year's race will be the 28th at Albert Park, and 39th in Australia. The Australian round was held in Adelaide, as the season-ender, between 1985 and

1995. It starts the season for the first time since 2019. Five current drivers have won in Melbourne: Fernando Alonso (2006), Lewis Hamilton (2008, 2015), Charles Leclerc (2022), Verstappen (2023) and Sainz (2024). Ferrari great Michael Schumacher won a record four times in Australia.

Hamilton has been on pole in Melbourne a record eight times (2008, 2012, 2014-2019). He made his F1 debut in Australia with McLaren in 2007.

McLaren and Ferrari have both won 11 times in Australia, more than any other team.

The lowest-placed starter to win was Britain's Eddie Irvine from 11th in 1999 for Ferrari.

Eighteen of the 28 races in Melbourne have been won from the front row but only one of the 28 has seen the

top three on the starting grid finish in the same order. The track is similar to a street circuit, with turn three a good overtaking point, and drivers make 35 gear changes a lap with 71% of the time at full throttle. It has the shortest pit lane at 281 metres.

CHAMPIONSHIP

Four-times world champion Verstappen has led since the Spanish Grand Prix of May 2022, a span of 1,029 days. Verstappen has won the last two season-openers, both in Bahrain.

RACE WINS

Hamilton has a record 105 career victories from 356 starts. Verstappen has won 63 grands prix and is third on the all-time list after Schumacher on 91.

POLE POSITION

Hamilton has a record 104 career poles, his most recent in Hungary in 2023.

ROOKIES

Six drivers are starting a season for the first time: Andrea Kimi Antonelli (Mercedes), Oliver Bearman (Haas), Gabriel Bortoleto (Sauber), Doohan, Isack Hadjar (Racing Bulls) and Liam Lawson (Red Bull).

MILESTONE

Sunday's race marks the 20th anniversary of Red Bull's Formula One debut, and 10 years since Verstappen's debut with Toro Rosso. Hamilton will be the 98th driver to race a Ferrari in Formula One, and the 78th factory driver. Antonelli - at 18 years, six months and 18 days - will be the third youngest driver to start a Formula One race this week.

SPOTLIGHT

Bad boy Eubank Jr pays heavy price: £100,000 fine for hitting boxing rival Benn with an egg

AFP
London

Chris Eubank Jr has been fined £100,000 (\$129,000) after hitting fellow British boxer Conor Benn in the face with an egg during a heated exchange in the build-up to next month's grudge match.

Eubank had already made a reference at last month's Manchester press conference to two drugs tests Benn failed in 2022, which led to a two-year battle with anti-doping authorities.

The World Boxing Council cleared Benn in 2023 of a doping offence after it ruled a "highly elevated consumption of eggs" constituted a "reasonable explanation" for his positive finding. As the fighters faced off on stage in Manchester in February, Eubank pulled an egg from his pocket and smashed it against Benn's face, sparking a brawl as promoter Ed-

die Hearn and Benn's father Nigel tried to get at Eubank and his team.

The British Boxing Board of Control said in a statement: "Following a hearing before the stewards of the British Boxing Board of Control, Chris Eubank Jr was found to be in breach of regulation 25 (misconduct) for his conduct at the press conference in Manchester for the Chris Eubank Jr v Conor Benn contest on 26th April, 2025.

"As such, the stewards of the board fined Chris Eubank Jr the sum of £100,000."

Eubank and Benn will fight at London's Tottenham Hotspur Stadium on April 26, having originally been due to face off in October 2022 before Benn's failed tests.

Benn originally tested positive for the female fertility drug clomifene.

The 28-year-old, who has a 23-0 record, was cleared to fight in Britain in November last year after the UK Anti-Doping Agency announced it would not appeal against a deci-

sion from the National Anti-Doping Panel to lift his ban, with the British Boxing Board of Control also declining to appeal.

Eubank, 35, who has a 34-3 record, defended his actions two days later at a second media event.

He said: "Did I cross the line? During this whole process I think many lines have been crossed. So me throwing an egg at somebody who absurdly claims that was the reason why he failed two drugs tests, I think that's light, I think he deserved the embarrassment of what happened. If I had an opportunity to do it again then I would. Unfortunately I come unarmed today, I've been searched multiple times and I couldn't sneak any in."

The middleweight bout is a battle of second-generation contenders, reviving the Benn v Eubank feud in which the rivals' fathers - Nigel Benn and Chris Eubank Sr - battled it out in two ferocious contests in the early 1990s.

FOCUS

Elite referees take part in Negdar initiative at Qatar University



By Sports Reporter
Doha

The Negdar (We Can) initiative, launched by the Qatar Stars League (QSL) in cooperation and partnership with Generation Amazing and Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya) and with the support of Ministry of Public Health, continues with training sessions for participating children according to the specified plan and programme.

The training, which took place on Tuesday evening at Qatar University Stadium No.1, saw the participation of a number of football referees. Hani Taleb Ballan, CEO of QSL and Chairman of Referees Committee of Qatar Football Association, and representatives of QSL and Generation Amazing, attended the fourth week of 15-week initiative.

Children received ball training under the supervision of specialised trainers. Following the training, a match was played with the participation of a number of elite and first-class referees who were training at Qatar University's sta-

diums. They were keen to participate in the initiative and encourage the children to adopt a healthy lifestyle.

Hani said: "We're keen to support the Negdar initiative, which aims to inspire and motivate children to adopt healthier and more active lifestyles using football as a motivating factor, and to contribute towards reducing the risk of diseases associated with obesity. The initiative promotes a culture of sports and its role in adopting a healthy lifestyle. We've witnessed a great turnout and thank all our partners in the initiative. We believe that Negdar can change the lifestyle and attitude of this age group, contributing to build a stronger, healthier and more active generation."

Regarding the referees' participation in the initiative, he said: "We seek to harness the power and influence of football and connect participants through this initiative with their favourite stars to encourage and support them. Refereeing is an important part of football and the presence of referees is essential in such wonderful initiatives."

COMMENT

'T20 leagues a game-changer for women's cricket'

Reuters
Bengaluru

Twenty20 leagues have transformed women's cricket from a sport that once relied on public support for survival into an appealing spectacle, according to West Indies white-ball captain Hayley Matthews.

The all-rounder, who shot to fame in the West Indies' 2016 T20 World Cup triumph, said T20 leagues like the Women's Premier League (WPL) in India have fostered global exposure and helped develop the women's game.

"I feel like once upon a time, women's cricket was probably like, 'Come and watch the game to



support the women,' whereas now I feel like we have a product that's entertaining and we have these skills that people want to see us play cricket," Matthews said.

"I think just getting the oppor-

tunity to play these leagues and have all the games televised and have people watching and supporting is naturally going to help the game to grow.

"There's plenty of opportunities for women to grow in cricket and I think competitions like the WPL give a platform for the game to grow. It introduces people to the game... shows the level of skill that we have in women's cricket."

Matthews has claimed the joint most wickets (14) in the ongoing WPL season alongside Mumbai Indians teammate Amelia Kerr.

Mumbai will compete in the WPL eliminator against Gujarat Giants today after they were denied top spot in the table following their 11-run defeat by Royal Challengers Bengaluru on Mon-

day. "I feel like ourselves along with DC (Delhi) are ready to look at these setups (playoffs). We have a really good balance of international players as well as the local Indian players too," Matthews said.

"We get contributions from so many different participants in the team like Nat (Sciver-Brunt), Melie (Amelia Kerr), Shab (Shabnim Ismail), myself, being able to step up as internationals. When you look at a captain like Harmanpreet (Kaur), even the young players, like Sanskriti Gupta that have come in this year, have been able to make massive impacts."

Matthews said she also harbours ambitions of leading the West Indies to a World Cup triumph.

TENNIS

Medvedev tops Paul to reach quarters at rainy Indian Wells

Defending champion Swiatek of Poland swipes aside Czech Republic's Muchova

AFP
Indian Wells, United States

Russia's Daniil Medvedev shook off a day of rain delays to beat Tommy Paul 6-4, 6-0 on Tuesday and reach the quarter-finals at Indian Wells, where he's vying to improve on runner-up finishes the past two years.

Taking the court around 10:00pm, four hours after he was slated to open the night session on Stadium Court, Medvedev took full advantage of Paul's 31 unforced errors.

"It wasn't an easy preparation," Medvedev said. "We both were here early and then rain, rain, rain. I think we both went in rusty, he a little bit more than I did."

Paul had his opportunities, rallying after Medvedev jumped to a 4-0 lead to win four straight games.

But Medvedev won the next eight - pocketing the first set on a pair of Paul forehand errors then racing through the second to seal it with one final break of the American's serve.

"Pretty strange score," Medvedev said. "Whoever won some games won them in a row."

Medvedev, who fell to Carlos Alcaraz in each of the last two finals, next faces France's Arthur Fils, a 6-2, 2-6, 6-3 winner over American Marcos Giron in a match halted for more than three hours by rain in the first set.

Women's defending champion Iga Swiatek had to wait out a near-hour delay before getting started, but once she did she produced another brutally efficient 6-1, 6-1 victory over Karolina Muchova, beating the worst of the weather.

The world number two from Poland needed just 57 minutes to put away Muchova, who took her to three sets in the 2023 French Open final.



Daniil Medvedev plays a backhand against Tommy Paul of the United States in their fourth round match during the BNP Paribas Open in Indian Wells, California. (AFP)

Swiatek, the 2022 and 2024 winner, didn't face a break point as she continued her bid to become the first woman to win three titles in the California desert.

She said the weather was an extra spur to finish it quickly, especially after the rain came again near the end of the contest.

"On last two games it was a bit slippery already, but I really wanted to finish. So I kind of played more risky, but the shots were still in," said Swiatek, who will face China's Zheng Qinwen for a place in the semi-finals.

Zheng rolled past Ukraine's Marta Kostyuk 6-3, 6-2.

The off-and-on showers caused multiple delays.

Ukraine's Elina Svitolina, ranked 23rd, shrugged off the three-hour stoppage at the start of her third set to upset world number four Jessica Pegula 5-7, 6-1, 6-2.

"Definitely was not easy with all the conditions and the rain, stop and start," Svitolina said. "Warmed up maybe like 10 times today."

Svitolina booked a meeting with 17-year-old Russian Mirra Andreeva, who beat 2023 Indian Wells champion Elena Rybakina of Kazakhstan 6-1, 6-2.

Andreeva has now won two matches in three weeks against world number seven Rybakina - a former Wimbledon champion.

She beat Rybakina in the semi-finals in Dubai on the way to becoming the youngest ever WTA 1000 champion.

In other men's matches, Denmark's Holger Rune beat in-form Stefanos Tsitsipas 6-4, 6-4.

Greece's Tsitsipas was coming off his first title in nearly a year in Dubai last month, but Rune, ranked 13th, snapped the world number nine's seven-match ATP win streak with an aggressive game that included 22 winners.

Up 4-3 in the second set, Rune saved a break point with a dazzling between-the-legs shot, racing back to the baseline after a Tsitsipas lob and battling the twener that dropped perfectly to deny the



Iga Swiatek of Poland serves against Karolina Muchova of Czechia in their fourth round match. (AFP)

Greek.

"Mentally, I was very, very good," Rune said. "I think that's what made the difference - how composed I was able to stay."

Rune next faces 43rd-ranked Tallon Griekspoor, who upset top

seed Alexander Zverev in the second round.

Griekspoor also made a belated start and waited out a second-set delay in his 7-6 (7/4) 6-1 victory over Japanese qualifier Yosuke Watanuki.

GOLF

McIlroy doubts injured Woods will play in 2026

AFP
Miami

Rory McIlroy believes Tiger Woods is unlikely to play any golf this year but is backing the 15-time major champion to attempt a comeback after his latest injury woe.

Woods stunned the world of golf on Tuesday after revealing he had suffered a ruptured Achilles tendon as he prepared to make his return to competitive golf, potentially at next month's Masters in Augusta.

However his injury, which typically requires several months of recovery and rehabilitation, torpedoed his planned comeback, and cast a shadow over the remainder of the season.

Speaking on Wednesday on the eve of the opening round of The Players Championship in Florida, Northern Ireland star McIlroy expressed his sympathy for Woods' plight. "It sucks," McIlroy said of Woods injury.

"He doesn't have much luck when it comes to injuries and his body. Obviously he was trying to ramp up to get ready for Augusta, and Achilles surgeries obviously aren't fun.

"We obviously won't see him play golf this year, and hopefully we see him maybe play in 2026."

McIlroy, though, believes the fiercely driven Woods will do all he can to be competitive when he does eventually return to fitness.



Rory McIlroy of Northern Ireland plays from a bunker on the 11th prior to The Players Championship on the Stadium Course at TPC Sawgrass in Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida. (AFP)

"He'll try. I know he'll try," McIlroy said. "But that's a question for him, not for me. I obviously don't know what's in his head. But judging by prior behaviour, he'll definitely try."

McIlroy meanwhile reflected on his own career as he gears up for his latest tilt at next month's Masters - the only major championship missing from his collection of US Open, British Open

and two PGA Championships. The 35-year-old star said he would know when the time was right to retire - and would rather walk away from the sport before his form starts to decline.

"Whenever I feel like the time is right, I'll have no problem moving aside and letting the next generation do their thing," McIlroy said. "When I've achieved everything I want to achieve in

the game and I get to the point where I don't think I can maybe do that anymore. I'd also like to walk away with a little bit left in the tank. I don't want to be out there embarrassing myself. I'd like to walk away maybe a little before I should."

"I think if you can come to terms with that and walk away on your own terms, then that's a good thing."

FOOTBALL

Al Yarmouk secure 7-0 win over Tariq Bin Ziyad

By Sports Reporter
Doha

The second edition of the Al Thumama Ramadan Championship continued at Al Furjan Stadium in Al Thumama with two exciting matches for the 10 to 14-year-old age group.

In the first match, Al Yarmouk delivered an outstanding performance, securing a commanding 7-0 victory over Tariq Bin Ziyad.

The game was dominated by Al Yarmouk from the outset, with their attacking force overwhelming Tariq Bin Ziyad's defence. Abdul Rahim Mohammed al-Boush from Al Yarmouk was named best

player of the match for his exceptional contribution to the team's dominant victory.

The second match ended in a goalless draw between Palestine and Al Nusoor. Despite both teams creating several chances, neither side could find the back of the net, and the match ended without goals. Adam Fadi al-Dahoun of Palestine was awarded best player of the match for his impressive performance in midfield, where he played a key role in orchestrating his team's attacking moves.

The tournament, held in co-operation with the Qatar Sports for All Federation, continues to showcase young talent and provide a competitive platform for these emerging football stars.



BEIN EXTENDS F1 ACADEMY RIGHTS DEAL TO BROADCAST ALL-FEMALE MOTORSPORTS SERIES THROUGH 2033 ACROSS MENA AND TURKIYE

DOHA: beIN Media Group (beIN), the global sports, entertainment and media group, has extended its deal to broadcast Formula 1's F1 Academy across the Middle East, North Africa (MENA), and Turkiye until 2033. The third season of the all-female driver category, which invests in developing young, female drivers to progress to the highest levels of motorsport, starts later this month. This year's F1 Academy circuit will welcome ten new full-time drivers as well as seven

drivers returning for their second season. A total of 17 full time drivers will compete in 14 races across seven rounds. At each round, one Wild Card entry will also have the opportunity to join the F1 Academy grid. The 2025 season will open in Shanghai on 21-23 March, followed by Jeddah the following month, then Miami, a first F1 Academy race in Montreal, a return to the sand dunes of the Netherlands' Circuit Zandvoort and the streets of Singapore, before a first season-

ending race weekend in Las Vegas on November 20-22. All seven rounds will be broadcast live on beIN SPORTS in English, Arabic and Turkish, and available to stream on beIN's leading OTT platform, TOD, with beIN's renowned F1 reporter Stephany Saad on the grid to bring viewers exclusive interviews with the drivers and team personnel. beIN's eight-year partnership extension with F1 Academy, which comes the week of International Women's Day 2025, highlights

the race series' pivotal role in the women's sports portfolio at beIN, as well as beINSPIRED, the media group's global initiative launched in 2019, that gives a bigger platform to historically under-represented sports and talent, with a particular focus on women's sport. Richard Verow, Chief Sports Officer at beIN MEDIA GROUP said: "The extension of our partnership with F1 Academy for the next eight seasons in MENA and Turkiye is fully aligned with our beINSPIRED corporate commit-

ment that drives a broader mission of elevating female athletes, enhancing their visibility, and ensuring they receive the media recognition they deserve. We take immense pride in not only being the home of F1 in the region, but also in advancing diversity and inclusion within motorsport - the continuation of our commitment to the F1 Academy is evidence of that." F1 Academy is just one of many women's sports that beIN holds broadcast rights, which falls

within its beINSPIRED corporate commitment. The Group's portfolio also includes the UEFA Women's EURO, UEFA Women's Champions League, UEFA European Women's U17 Championship, UEFA European Women's U19 Championship, FIFA Women's World Cup, and the FIFA U-17 and U-20 Women's World Cup. In 2025, in different markets, beIN SPORTS will showcase female talent in the remaining three tennis grand slams, Premier Padel, and much more.

SPOTLIGHT

Amorim eager to change Ratcliffe's mind about United

'I think everybody – me, all the players – are underperforming'

AFP
London

Ruben Amorim says it is down to him and Manchester United's "under-performing" players to change co-owner Jim Ratcliffe's damning verdict on the squad, starting with today's Europa League last 16 second leg against Real Sociedad.

United are languishing in 14th place in the Premier League, having already been knocked out of both domestic cup competitions. Ratcliffe responded to United's struggles with a scathing assessment this week, the British billionaire claiming some players are "not good enough" and "probably are overpaid".

The 72-year-old slammed Hojlund and Andre Onana in the interview, as well as the loaned-out duo Jadon Sancho and Antony, in blunt remarks about "inherited" players that the club are still paying for.

Asked yesterday about Ratcliffe's comments, United boss Amorim said: "I think if we are being honest in this moment everybody – me, all the players – are underperforming this season so we can always change that."

"So, I include myself in that part of underperforming. You are talking about players like Casemiro, for example, that won everything, and we know that these kind of players can play so much better, so that is the focus. He (Ratcliffe) was honest in that, so the focus is to change his mind and to change all the people's minds."

Amorim said there had been no complaints about Ratcliffe's remarks from within his squad. "If you are a top player and you play in this football club and even me – a lot of people say I am not good enough for the club and my feeling is you can change that with results," he said. "In training I feel they want that really bad, especially tomorrow."

The Europa League offers United's only realistic route to continental qualification for next season, increasing the pressure on Amorim to deliver against Sociedad. United look set to be without 11 players for the match as they attempt to reach the quarter-finals in a tie currently level at 1-1.

Amorim acknowledged the significance of the Sociedad clash as he urged his side to play with more energy. "In that context it's also important to give us more energy to continue the season," he said. "We know that it's not going to change a lot of the idea for the next season, but it gives us more energy to finish the season in a different way. Tomorrow, again, is going to be really important game for us."



Manchester United manager Ruben Amorim during a training session in Carrington, Britain. (Reuters)

Despite United's results, Amorim, hired from Sporting Lisbon in November, retains the backing of Ratcliffe since succeeding the sacked Erik ten Hag. "It's really good since day one," said Amorim, who also hailed United's "amazing" plans for a new 100,000-seater stadium. "I think we are really blunt and honest with each other. It's a little bit our characters, we are quite similar in that. I always felt the support of the board and especially from Sir Jim."

Mason Mount returned to training after recovering from a muscle injury which has kept him sidelined since December, but Amorim said today's game comes too soon for the midfielder. Manuel Ugarte is also back after missing United's last two games but centre backs Harry Maguire and Leny Yoro will not play today. However, Amorim is optimistic that Maguire will return for Sunday's league match away at Leicester City.

FOCUS

Van Dijk says he has 'no idea' over his Liverpool future

AFP
London

Liverpool captain Virgil van Dijk has admitted he has "no idea" if he will remain at Anfield after this season. Van Dijk is out of contract at the end of the current campaign and is yet to agree a new deal with the Premier League leaders.

Talks have been ongoing for some time and the Netherlands centre-back is keen to extend his stay on Merseyside. But until a new deal is finally agreed, the 33-year-old conceded he cannot guarantee being in a Liverpool shirt when next season starts.

"I still have no idea at the moment. Genuinely," Van Dijk said after Champions League exit against Paris Saint-Germain. "At the moment I don't even know what will happen next year. If anyone says they do know, they are lying to your face. Everyone knows there are some conversations behind the scenes but that is about it."

With Liverpool 15 points clear at the top of the Premier League and facing Newcastle in the League Cup final on Sunday, Van

Dijk is focused on ensuring his team enjoy a memorable end to the season, rather than worrying about the future. "It is not on hold. Nothing on hold," he added. "Listen, there are 10 games to go and that is my full focus. If there is news, you guys will know it. I don't even know myself."

Losing 4-1 on penalties against PSG after the Ligue 1 leaders won 1-0 in the Champions League last 16 second leg at Anfield was a major blow to Van Dijk and company. It means Reds boss Arne Slot must lift his team for Sunday's Wembley showdown against an injury-hit Newcastle.

Van Dijk is confident Liverpool will be able to move on quickly from the PSG disappointment.

"You always have to learn from difficult moments. That's life. That's life of any human being, but us footballers as well," he said. "There were things we could have done better, but overall I am proud of the performance we put in. We have to feel the disappointment, but if we bring this intensity in Wembley with our fans, then I am positive. There are not many games left and there are two big prizes we can still get. We are going to give it everything."



Paris Saint-Germain's goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma (left) vies for the ball with Liverpool's defender Virgil van Dijk during the last 16 second leg Champions League match at Anfield in Liverpool. (AFP)

Egypt asks to host some 2034 World Cup matches

Cairo: Egypt has requested the right to host a set of group-stage matches for the 2034 World Cup which will be held in Saudi Arabia, the African country's football federation president said yesterday. "Saudi Arabia will stand up and organise a historic edition of the World Cup, and we wish our Saudi brothers every success," Hany Abo Rida said during the 14th CAF extraordinary general assembly in Cairo. "But at the same time we hope that (FIFA president) Mr. (Gianni) Infantino will grant us, as Africans and Egyptians, the honour of hosting and organising one of the World Cup groups in 2034."

The tournament will mark the centenary of Egypt being the first African nation to take part in a World Cup, after their appearance in the 1934 edition held in Italy. As the only candidate, Saudi Arabia was officially designated by the FIFA Congress on December 11 as the host of the 2034 World Cup.

Saudi Arabia will become the third Arab country to host the World Cup, after Qatar in 2022 and Morocco in 2030, when it is co-hosting with Spain and Portugal.

Egyptian officials had previously expressed their desire to host the World Cup in 2034 and also launched an unsuccessful bid to co-host the 2030

edition alongside Saudi Arabia and Greece.

ATLETICO'S CORREA BANNED FOR FIVE MATCHES

Atletico Madrid striker Angel Correa was banned for five matches after insulting the referee during his team's La Liga defeat by Getafe. The forward was sent off for a high tackle and then abused referee Guillermo Cuadra Fernandez, with Atletico going on to lose 2-1 in the derby clash on Sunday.

Correa will miss one game for his dismissal and four more for what he said to the official afterwards. The Spanish football federation's disciplinary committee said Atletico's attempted mitigation of Correa's behaviour, including that the player was "extremely nervous" and under high pressure "can never justify the series of severe expressions directed at the referee".

Correa apologised for his behaviour after the game with a post on social media platform X. Atletico were leading when Correa was dismissed in the 88th minute but defeat left them third, one point behind Real Madrid and Barcelona. Correa will miss the second leg of his team's Copa del Rey semi-final against Barca, as well as league matches against Hansi Flick's side, Espanyol, Sevilla and Valladolid.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Kane tells Bayern Munich to 'keep learning'

AFP
Leverkusen, Germany

Bayern Munich striker Harry Kane urged his team not to get carried away by their 5-0 aggregate win over Bayer Leverkusen in the Champions League and insisted they "keep learning".

Kane scored once and set up Alphonso Davies for the other goal as Bayern eased to a 2-0 win in the second leg in Leverkusen on Tuesday to reach the quarter-finals in convincing fashion. "I think we showed what type of team we are. We want to grow in the competition. We've had some results in this competition that haven't been great and I feel like we've learned from that," Kane said. "I feel like we're going to have to keep learning as we go further but, you know, we're in the quarter-final now where Bayern Munich should be and we want to keep pushing."



Bayern Munich's Harry Kane scores during the UEFA Champions League last 16 second leg match against Bayer Leverkusen. (AFP)

Bayern will play three-time European champions Inter Milan in the last eight after Kane became the first English player to score 10 goals in a season in the history of the European Cup or the Champions League. "The San Siro is a tough place to go but any team we

play, we can cause them problems," he said. "We will prepare well. And try and find areas we can hurt them but it's a chance to get into a semi-final over Champions League so we'll be ready."

Kane also earned praise from coach Vincent Kompany. Kane

also leads the Bundesliga scorers' list with 21 goals. The 31-year-old England captain is the first English player to score 10 times in a single European Cup season.

"It helps when you have a top player who wants to run and fight for the team like a youth player," Kompany said of Kane at the post-match press conference. "I played against him as an opponent and he has become better with age. He has a way to work towards his performances. I trust his consistency and how he works towards his game and with that quality you always get your moments."

Prior to last week's first-leg win, Bayern had failed to beat reigning Bundesliga champions Leverkusen in their previous six matches across all competitions. Leverkusen also eliminated Bayern in the German Cup this season.

"These two wins, they don't decide the season but we have a lot of respect for Leverkusen. We did our work," Kompany said.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Ronaldo withdraws from Brazilian FA presidential race

Reuters
Sao Paulo

Brazilian football great Ronaldo said that he was pulling out of the race to be president of his country's football association (CBF) yesterday after failing to gather enough support from regional federations to present a candidacy.

The 48-year-old, a former Ballon d'Or winner and two-time World Cup champion, announced his intention to run for the presidency in December in an attempt to "recover the prestige and

respect that Brazil always had" following years of controversies involving CBF chiefs.

However, the former Barcelona, Inter Milan and Real Madrid forward came to the conclusion that he would not be able to challenge current president Ednaldo Rodrigues who has the support of almost all the electorate.

"On my first contact with the 27 regional federations, I found 23 closed doors. If the majority of decision-makers believe that Brazilian football is in good hands, it doesn't matter what I think," Ronaldo said in a statement published via his social media channels.

"The federations refused to receive me in their homes, on the grounds of their satisfaction with the current administration and support for (Rodrigues') re-election. I was unable to present my project, put forward my ideas and listen to them as I would have liked. There was no openness to dialogue. The statute gives the federations the strongest vote, so it's clear that there's no way I can run. Most of the local leaders support the incumbent president, that's their right and I respect it, regardless of my convictions."

The electoral college is made up of the 27 regional federations, allocated

three votes each, while the 20 top-flight Serie A clubs are given two votes each and the 20 second-tier Serie B sides, one vote each.

Rodrigues is expected to be the lone candidate in next year's election.

Rodrigues has been criticised for turning to interim coaches for the national team after Tite's departure following Brazil's quarter-final exit at the 2022 World Cup while waiting for Carlo Ancelotti to arrive.

That never materialised as Ancelotti decided to stay with Real Madrid, with Dorival Junior eventually being appointed at the start of last year.

