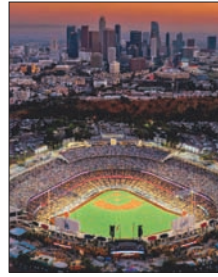


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Chahal stars as Punjab defend IPL's lowest total of 111 in 'best win'



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CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Bellingham says everyone thinks Real Madrid comeback 'nailed-on'

Page 4

PUREBRED ARABIAN CAMEL RACING FESTIVAL

Al Hayba, Mubashara win the gold and silver swords

The prestigious event was organised by the Camel Racing Committee over 15 consecutive days

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Al Hayba and Mubashara won the gold and silver sword titles respectively at the grand finale of the annual Purebred Arabian Camel Racing Festival for the sword of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani at the Al Shahaniya Camel Racetrack yesterday.

HE the Minister of Interior and Commander of the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya), Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani crowned the winners. The prestigious event was organised by the Camel Racing Committee over 15 consecutive days, with wide participation from various racecourses across the Gulf Cooperation Council countries.

In the open races for the golden symbols of the camels of Their Excellencies the Sheikhs, Al Hayba, owned by Al Shahaniya Camels, won the Golden Sword title and QR2mn in prize money after winning the main race for open camels. Al Hayba finished in first place with a time of 12:02:66 minutes, 0.45 seconds ahead of Jazla, owned by the Presidential Camels, who came in second place and received a cash prize of QR800,000 after recording a time of 12:03:01 minutes. Meanwhile, Fajajah, owned by Al Shahaniya Camels, won third place and received a cash prize of QR600,000 after recording a time of 12:04:83 minutes.

Muba'dah, owned by Al Shahaniya Camels, won the title of the main round for Omani camels and the Golden Shalfa prize and QR1mn after coming in first place with a time of 12:32:91 minutes. Al Qahidiyah, owned by Al Shahaniya Camels, came in second place and won a prize of QR500,000 riyals after recording a time of 12:34:74 minutes, while Al Gham, owned



HE the Minister of Interior and Commander of the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya), Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani crowned the winners at the grand finale of the annual Purebred Arabian Camel Racing Festival for the sword of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani at the Al Shahaniya Camel Racetrack yesterday

by Al Shahaniya Camels, came third and won a cash prize of QR300,000 riyals after recording a time of 12:35:22 minutes.

Al Shababi, King of the Presidential Camels, won the main open round and won the golden dagger and QR1mn riyals after coming in first place with a time of 12:26:11 minutes, 0.18 seconds ahead of Nihab, King of the Presidential Camels, who came in second place and won a prize of QR500,000 after recording a time of 12:26:29 minutes. Meanwhile, Madhkhur, King of the Al Shahaniya Camels, came in third place and won a cash prize of QR300,000 after recording a time of 12:31:24 minutes.

Manadi, the owner of Al Shahaniya Camels, won the main round for Omani

female camels and won the golden dagger and QR800,000 after coming in first place with a time of 12:43:53 minutes, 0.89 seconds ahead of Majookh, also owner of Al Shahaniya Camels, who came in second place and won a cash prize of QR400,000 riyals after recording a time of 12:44:42 minutes, while Mughri, also owner of Al Shahaniya Camels, came in third place and won a cash prize of QR300,000 riyals after recording a time of 12:44:88 minutes.

In the Al Hail and Al Zamoul competitions, general rounds for the Silver Sword for the camels of the tribes, Mubashara, owned by Mani Ali Hamad al-Shamsi, won the Silver Sword title and QR5mn riyals after winning the title of the main round for open Al Hail after coming in first place

with a time of 12:24:01 minutes. Najah, owned by Ahmed Matar Majed al-Khaili, came in second place and won a cash prize of QR2.5mn riyals after recording a time of 12:26:50 minutes, while Icon, owned by Nasser Abdullah Ahmed al-Misnad, won third place and a cash prize of QR1.5mn with a time of 12:27:36 minutes.

In the rest of the general rounds for the silver symbols that were held yesterday, the first round for the production of Al-Zamoul witnessed the crowning of Mublash, owned by Hamad Jarallah al-Baridi, with the silver dagger and a cash prize of QR1mn, after he came first in the round with a time of 12:17:63 minutes, Dhari, owned by Mohammed Sultan al-Ketbi, won the silver dagger and a cash prize of

QR1mn, after he came first in the second round for the Omani Al-Zamoul with a time of 12:29:58 minutes.

In the third round of the open competition, Al Qassam, owned by Hamad Rashid al-Ketbi, won the silver dagger and a cash prize of QR1.5mn after recording a time of 12:34:53 minutes, while Nouda, owned by Mubarak Saeed Salem Al Zar'i, won the fourth round of the production purebred Arabian camels and received the silver shalfa prize and a cash prize of QR1.5mn riyals. In the fifth round of the Omani purebred Arabian camels, Sasco, owned by Nasser Abdullah al-Misnad, won the silver shalfa and a cash prize of QR2mn riyals after coming in first with a time of 12:15:62 minutes.



FOOTBALL

PSG survive Aston Villa scare to reach Champions League semis

AFP
Birmingham, United Kingdom

Paris Saint-Germain survived a second half onslaught to beat Aston Villa 5-4 on aggregate and reach the Champions League semi-finals despite a 3-2 defeat last night.

The French champions were cruising towards the last four when full-backs Achrif Hakimi and Nuno Mendes struck in the first 27 minutes to add to their 3-1 first leg lead.

Youri Tielemans pulled a goal back for the English side before half-time and two goals in two minutes from John McGinn and Ezri Konsa transformed the tie early in the second period.

PSG were thankful to goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma for keeping Unai Emery's men at bay and preventing another famous collapse in the Champions League knockout stages. Villa boss Emery was in charge of PSG when Luis Enrique's Barcelona overturned a 4-0 first leg deficit with a dramatic 6-1 win in 2017.

Enrique again emerged victorious over his compatriot but was the one this time

given a scare of blowing a seemingly unassailable lead. Villa had not experienced a European night like this since 1983.

Desire Doue's stunning strike to begin PSG's fightback from 1-0 down in last week's first leg was not enough for him to retain his place in the side. But Luis Enrique's decision to start Bradley Barcola was justified when he sprinted down the left and Emiliano Martinez spilled his cross into the path of Hakimi, who fired home the opener on 11 minutes.

Another blistering break from the visitors cut Villa open as Ousmane Dembele squared for left-back Mendes to stroke in his fourth Champions League goal of the season and second of the tie. Villa's refusal to give up the fight was rewarded when Tielemans' deflected effort pulled a goal back before half-time.

McGinn's deflected effort flew into the top corner to restore parity on the night at 2-2. Emery's decision to start with Marcus Rashford up front ahead of top scorer Ollie Watkins was a controversial one before kick-off. The England international was denied a goal by a stunning save from Donnarumma. But from the resulting corner, Rashford nutmegged Fabian Ruiz, skipped



Paris Saint-Germain's Desire Doue (left) and Marquinhos celebrate after their UEFA Champions League quarter-final second-leg match against Aston Villa in Birmingham.

past Vitorinha and cut the ball back for Konsa to slot in at the near post.

A PSG side that looked imperious in the first 45 minutes were suddenly all at sea as Villa missed a series of chances to

take the game to extra time. Donnarumma produced another brilliant save to prevent Tielemans' header finding the top corner. Marco Asensio then had the chance to net against his parent club only for Don-

narumma to fly out from his goal to block.

Konsa should have headed in another enticing Rashford delivery. But Rashford's removal for Watkins proved a turning point as PSG restored control and should have added to their lead in the closing stages as Martinez saved from Hakimi and Doue. Willian Pacheco blocked Ian Maatzen's goalbound effort in stoppage time to deny Villa at the death.

Arsenal are their likely semi-final opponents as the Gunners take a 3-0 quarter-final, first leg advantage away to holders Real Madrid today.

BARCELONA REACH SEMIS DESPITE DEFEAT AT DORTMUND

In Germany, Barcelona qualified for the Champions League semi-finals 5-3 on aggregate, despite losing second leg tie 3-1 at Borussia Dortmund. Serhou Guirassy scored a hat-trick at the Westfalenstadion to give the Germans hope after they lost the first leg 4-0 in Catalonia. However, a second-half own goal by Ramy Bensebaini gave Barca breathing space as they navigated their way into the last four. Barcelona will face either Inter Milan or Bayern Munich in a heavyweight clash.

CURTAIN-RAISER

17th Artistic Gymnastics WC starts today

The 17th edition of the Artistic Gymnastics World Cup (Taishan) kicks off today in Doha and runs until April 19, with participation from a distinguished group of the world's top male and female gymnasts.

The Organising Committee has allocated a total prize pool of \$50,000, distributed at a rate of \$5,000 per apparatus.

Athletes will compete across 10 apparatus events – 6 for men and 4 for women – with prizes awarded to the top eight athletes in each.

The competition features 95 male gymnasts and 55 female gymnasts, and the contests will be officiated by 35 international judges. The qualifying rounds will take place over the first two days, followed by the finals on the last two days, all at Aspire Dome.

The championship is expected to deliver an exceptional level of performance, given the calibre of the participants. Among the stand-out names are:

Karbanov (Armenia): Silver medalist on pommel horse at the Paris Olympics

Star gymnast from Kazakhstan: Olympic silver medalist on vault

Tong Hong (Chinese Taipei): Bronze medalist on high bar at the Paris Olympics

Ashaw Yaqian (China): National champion and Olympic silver medalist on balance beam

The Organising Committee, chaired by Ali al-Hitmi, has completed all preparations, with eve-



rything now in place for the competition to begin and for fans to enjoy top-level action.

Al-Hitmi: We are ready to deliver another outstanding edition

Speaking to the media yesterday, al-Hitmi confirmed that everyone is fully prepared for the start of this important championship.

"We are proud to host this major event for the 17th consecutive time. All organising committees have worked tirelessly to ensure this edition is delivered to the highest standards. We began our preparations early by forming all working committees and meticulously planning every organisational aspect to ensure smooth operations and avoid leaving anything to chance. We have full con-

fidence in the capabilities of every team member across all committees to fulfil their duties and help deliver a world-class event."

Al-Hitmi concluded: "Through this event and other championships previously hosted by Qatar, we aim to promote the culture of gymnastics. This has been a core mission of the Federation since its establishment in 2001."

Yesterday, the Men's Judges Committee, headed by Ando Tumbas, Chair of the FIG Technical Committee, held its meeting and conducted the draw for apparatus assignments.

A similar draw was conducted by the Women's Judges Committee, chaired by Donatella Sacchi, who also serves as Chair of the FIG Women's Technical Committee.



Aber al-Buainain, Secretary-General of the Qatar Gymnastics Federation.

All judges confirmed their readiness to officiate the event.

Aber al-Buainain, Secretary-General of the Qatar Gymnastics Federation and Championship Director, also confirmed that everything is in place for the start of the 17th Artistic Gymnastics World Cup (Taishan).

"The Federation has worked intensively over the past months. All committee members have gone above and beyond to finalise every detail ahead of this big moment – the official launch of the championship," Aber said.

"We are proud of the preparations we've achieved and have great confidence in all our teams to deliver a world-class event that meets expectations."

Al-Buainain also highlighted the importance of having Qatari gym-



nasts Rakan al-Hareth and Salma Nasser compete in this championship:

"It's a great opportunity for them, as they'll be competing alongside some of the world's best gymnasts. This level of exposure is rare and will help significantly in developing their technical skills. We hope they can achieve something special here, especially after their strong performance at the DOBRO Artistic Gymnastics World Cup held in Osijek, Croatia from April 10-13."

Top-class media services

The Organising Committee has ensured a full suite of media services to support local and international journalists covering the event.

A dedicated website has been

launched, offering updated information such as athlete lists, schedules, and rankings, with real-time updates. A Facebook page has also been created to publish live results after each competition.

Additionally, the event will be broadcast on Al Kass Sports Channels.

The competition venue has been decorated and fully equipped to host the World Cup. The main arena will host the official competitions, while a separate training hall under the same roof will serve as the warm-up area – offering great convenience for athletes and coaching staff alike.

Yesterday, the participating teams conducted their final training sessions in preparation for today's start.

CRICKET

Chahal shines as Punjab defend IPL's lowest total

THE INDIAN SPINNER BAGS FIGURES OF 4-28 IN HIS 4 OVERS

AFP
Chandigarh, India

Spinner Yuzvendra Chahal returned figures of 4-28 as Punjab Kings defended IPL's lowest ever total of 111 to down holders Kolkata Knight Riders by 16 runs in a thriller yesterday.

Kolkata looked to be cruising at 62-2 before Chahal cut through the chase with his leg-spin, and the side collapsed to 95 all out in 15.1 overs at Mullanpur, near Chandigarh.

Punjab were earlier bowled out for 111 in 15.3 overs but Chahal and company turned the match on its head to better Chennai Super Kings' record - they defended 116 against them (formerly Kings XI Punjab) in 2009.

Kolkata's Andre Russell attempted to pull off the chase from 79-8 when he hit two sixes and a four off Chahal but Punjab held their nerve. Arshdeep Singh sent back Vaibhav Arora and then fellow left-arm quick Marco Jansen bowled Russell to trigger wild celebrations in Punjab's home ground.

"I have coached a lot of games in the IPL and that might just be about the best win I ever had," head coach Ricky Ponting said after the close contest.

Kolkata skipper Ajinkya Rahane and impact substitute Angkrish Raghuvanshi put on an impressive 55 runs for the third wicket when Chahal broke through to get the captain back in the pavilion lbw.

Ball tracker suggested the ball was outside the off stump, but Rahane did not take the review.

Rahane takes blame

"Pretty disappointed with the effort," said Rahane. "I'll take the blame, played the wrong shot, although it was missing."

Chahal, with his tail now up, got Raghuvanshi caught out in the next over for 37 and the Punjab were in the game when Glenn Maxwell had Venkatesh Iyer lbw for seven.

Chahal then got two in two - Rinku Singh stumped and Ramandeep Singh out for a golden duck - before Harshit Rana avoided the hat-trick ball.

But the day belonged Chahal and Punjab who moved into the



Punjab Kings' Xavier Bartlett (right) celebrates with teammate Yuzvendra Chahal (centre) after taking the wicket of KKR's Quinton de Kock during the IPL match on the outskirts of Chandigarh yesterday. (AFP)



Kolkata Knight Riders' Andre Russell reacts after getting clean bowled at the end of the IPL match against Punjab Kings yesterday. (AFP)

top four of the 10-team table with their fourth win in six matches. Ponting said Chahal, who was named player of the match, had a fitness test before the game for a shoulder injury he picked in his previous outing.

Earlier, Rana rattled the Punjab top-order after a brisk start by the openers and returned figures of 3-25 from his three overs.

New batting sensation Priyansh Arya and Prabhsimran Singh made the hosts race to 39 in 3.1 overs, before Rana struck to send

back the left-handed Arya caught at fine leg for 22. Rana got one more wicket two balls later when Ramandeep pulled off a stunning catch in the deep to dismiss skipper Shreyas Iyer, for a duck.

Spinner Varun Chakravarthy joined forces in the next over to have Punjab's England import Josh Inglis bowled for two.

Prabhsimran hits quickfire 30
Prabhsimran, who made 30, attempted to hit back with two sixes off Rana but the bowler had the

last laugh with Ramandeep once again taking a catch at point.

Chakravarthy and fellow spinner Sunil Narine kept striking regular blows as Punjab's batting faltered only for their bowlers to ultimately save the day.

BRIEF SCORES
Punjab Kings 111 (Prabhsimran 30, Arya 22, Rana 3-25, Narine 2-14, Varun 2-21) **beat Kolkata Knight Riders 95** (Raghuvanshi 37, Chahal 4-28, Jansen 3-17) **by 16 runs**

BEACH VOLLEYBALL

Younousse and Tijan continue unbeaten run



Qatar's beach volleyball duo, Cherif Younousse and Ahmed Tijan, continued their unbeaten run at the Asian Volleyball Confederation (AVC) Beach Tour Samaila Open in Thailand, advancing to the semi-finals with a thrilling victory over their Australian counterparts yesterday.

The top-ranked Asian duo, Younousse and Tijan swept past Paul Burnett and Luke Ryan, securing the win with a 21-18, 21-16 scoreline in a 36-minute clash.

Earlier, the former Olympic bronze medalists, Younousse and Tijan overcame Indonesian team of Danangsyah Pribadi and Yosi Firnanda by 21-15, 21-14 in their

final group stage match which lasted 39 minutes.

Their campaign began with a commanding victory over Hong Kong's SH Kan and C Wong (21-8, 21-6) in 24 minutes. They then outlasted Kazakhstan's Sergey Bogatu and Kirill Gurin 21-11, 26-24 in a tightly contested 47-minute encounter, before dispatching Iran's Salemi and Ghalehnovi (21-13, 21-9) in 33 minutes to secure a place among the top eight contenders.

Younousse and Tijan, currently ranked 12th in the world, will next face Iran's top pair, Abbas Pourasgari and Alireza Aghajanihasab, in today's semi-final. The final is scheduled to take place later today.

FAKHAR ZAMAN SPARKLES AS LAHORE BEAT KARACHI



Lahore Qalandars' Pakistani batsman Fakhar Zaman plays a shot during the PSL match against Karachi Kings at the National Stadium in Karachi yesterday. Batting first, Lahore Qalandars scored 201/6 in 20 overs. Opener Zaman hit 76 off 47 deliveries (six 4s and five 6s). In reply, Karachi Kings were bowled out for 136 in 19.1 overs. Lahore Qalandars won by 65 runs. (AFP)

ANNOUNCEMENT

Iconic venues: Universal Studios, Venice Beach to host LA 2028 Olympic events



Baseball will take place at Dodger Stadium, the home of the Los Angeles Dodgers, which also hosted the sport at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics.

AFP
Los Angeles, United States

An iconic Hollywood studio lot and the golden sands of Venice Beach are among an array of Los Angeles landmarks that will stage events for the 2028 Olympic Games, organisers said yesterday.

In an updated list of venues for the Games, LA28 confirmed venues for surfing, triathlon, baseball, cricket and squash amongst other sports.

Universal Studios will play host to squash's Olympic debut, with the sport taking place on Court-house Square – the mock-up town square featured prominently in Oscar-winning movies such as Back to the Future and To Kill a Mockingbird.

Venice Beach meanwhile will host the triathlon – relocating from its initial venue in Long Beach – and will also be the starting point for the men's and women's mara-

thon, as well as the cycling road races.

LA28 organisers also confirmed that cricket – which is making its return to the Olympics for the first time in more than a century – will be held at a purpose-built venue at Pomona, just east of Los Angeles.

Earlier reports had suggested cricket could have been staged thousands of miles from Los Angeles in New York.

The venue for surfing was also confirmed, with the competition taking place at Trestles Beach in the coastal town of San Clemente, roughly 61 miles (98 kilometres) from Los Angeles.

Trestles is widely considered to be one of the best surfing locations in California, known for consistent waves and a classic point break.

Baseball will take place at Dodger Stadium, the home of the Los Angeles Dodgers, which also hosted the sport at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics.

"We've promised the world an incredible Olympic Games and to-

day we're proud to share the plan that will make it happen." LA28 chief executive Reynold Hoover said in a statement.

"The 2028 Olympic venue plan invites communities from across the region to celebrate the Games coming to their backyard with the most exciting sports staged at some of the world's top-tier existing stadiums and arenas, famous beaches and purpose-built temporary structures." Los Angeles mayor Karen Bass said the venue plan announced yesterday would "bring the Games to all corners of our city like never before."

"From the Sepulveda Basin to the iconic shores of Venice Beach, our world-famous neighbourhoods as well as our hidden gems will be on full display for all to experience and enjoy," Bass said.

Other event venues announced yesterday include horse racing's Santa Anita Park, which will host the equestrian events and Anaheim's Honda Center, which will host volleyball.

TENNIS

Alcaraz follows Ruud into last 16; big win for Diego

'I am happy to have solved the problems that came in the second set'

AFP
Barcelona

World number two Carlos Alcaraz came back from a break down in the second set to defeat Ethan Quinn 6-2, 7-6 (8/6) and reach the Barcelona Open last 16 yesterday.

The home favourite, who triumphed at the Monte Carlo Masters last week, stormed through the first set but Quinn, ranked 126th, battled valiantly in the second.

Alcaraz has endured an inconsistent start to the year, crashing out of the Miami Open at the first hurdle in March, as he prepares for his French Open title defence.

The 23-year-old is aiming for a third triumph on the clay in Barcelona, after lifting the trophy in 2022 and 2023. He was unable to participate in the last edition because of injury. "Last year it was very painful not to be here, so I am very happy to be able to come back and play here again, and more so to win," Alcaraz told TVE.

"I made some mistakes, I found it hard to maintain (the right) level, but I am happy to have solved the problems that came in the second set, and to end up winning in two sets."

Alcaraz saved all five break points he faced in the first set, breaking Quinn in the third and fifth games for a 5-1 lead.

The Spaniard failed to convert a set point in the seventh game but did so at the third time of asking on his serve after opening up a triple set point.

The second set was topsy-turvy, with both players exchanging breaks on three occasions, forcing a tie-break.

Alcaraz saved a set point before dispatching Quinn with a drop shot to claim victory.

Earlier, defending Barcelona Open champion Casper Ruud sailed into the last 16 with a 6-4, 6-3 win over Daniel Elahi Galan.

The world number 10, targeting his first trophy of the season, blew away his Colombian opponent hitting 25 winners and without facing a break point.

Norwegian Ruud put heavy pressure on Galan's serve before securing the only break of the first set in the 10th game.

In the second set Ruud broke for a 4-2 lead and served it out.

"I'm happy to be back in Barcelona and get a straight-sets win," said Ruud. "One year ago, I had one of the best weeks of my life, so the memories come back."



World number two Carlos Alcaraz celebrates a point against Ethan Quinn during their Barcelona Open match yesterday. Alcaraz won 6-2, 7-6 (8/6) to reach last 16. (@bcnopenbs)



Germany's Diego Dedura-Palmero celebrates qualifying to the next round after Canada's Denis Shapovalov retired from his round of 32 match at the Munich Open yesterday. (AFP)

France's Arthur Fils beat Spaniard Pablo Carreno Busta 7-6 (8/6), 6-3, while last year's runner-up Stefanos Tsitsipas crushed giant American Reilly Opelka 6-2, 6-2.

First ATP player born in 2008 marks debut with win in Munich
Diego Dedura-Palmero became the first player born in 2008 or later to take part in an ATP tour match yesterday when he overcame eighth seed Denis Shapo-

valov to reach the last 16 at the Munich Open.

Born on March 12, 2008, Dedura-Palmero is ranked 549th in the world.

Added to the main draw as a lucky loser after the withdrawal of French veteran Gael Monfils, the 17-year-old was leading 7-6 (7/2), 3-0 up when his opponent retired hurt.

"I can't believe it and can't put it into words. I'm so happy," Dedura-Palmero said on court af-

ter the match. "I told myself: Just have fun, enjoy the atmosphere. This is crazy. I want to thank my mum, who's watching at home, and my brother."

Dedura-Palmero's elation was in stark contrast to the emotions of last year's winner Jan-Lennard Struff, who was thumped 6-0, 6-2 by Argentinian Francisco Cerundolo earlier yesterday.

"The confidence isn't there, zero," Struff said after the match, adding: "As soon as I get out on the court I feel like the power has been cut."

On Monday, number one seed and 2025 Australian Open finalist Alexander Zverev won to set up a last-16 clash against fellow German Daniel Altmaier today.

Game, set... finally! Ireland gets its first indoor court

Better late than never, as they say, some 135 years after Willoughby Hamilton and Lena Rice pulled off an historic men's and women's singles sweep for Ireland at Wimbledon, Tennis Ireland has announced plans to open the country's first indoor tennis arena.

The long-abandoned Dundalk Ice Dome – once home to the Dundalk Bulls ice hockey team – will be reborn as a year-round tennis hub under a 20-year tenancy agreement.

Set to open in summer 2025, the arena will boast four state-of-the-art courts, built-in spectator seating and elite-level training facilities aimed at transforming the fortunes of Irish tennis.

The facility will leave Europe's seventh-wettest country with one indoor tennis court per 1.33 million people – a start, but far fewer than their neighbours.

The United Kingdom has approximately 2,000 indoor tennis courts, equating to one indoor court for every 33,500 people, while France boasts 9,741 indoor courts (one per 6,500 people).

While Ireland's glory days on the tennis court date back to the era of flowing skirts, long white trousers and catgut-strung wooden rackets, the sport's governing body is hopeful the new facility can breathe fresh life into the sport on the Emerald Isle.

"This is a landmark moment," Tennis Ireland CEO Kevin Quinn told the Irish Independent.

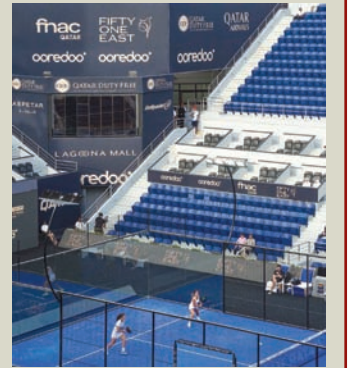
"By revitalising the former Dundalk Ice Dome, we are not only preserving a vital community space but also creating a world-class tennis facility that will serve players and enthusiasts across the island."

Fifty One East and Fnac Qatar Official Sponsors of Qatar Major Premier Padel

Doha: Fifty One East, Qatar's favorite department store, along with Fnac Qatar, the leading destination for all things tech, culture and leisure, proudly announces their return as Official Sponsors of the Ooredoo Qatar Major Premier Padel 2025, one of the most prestigious tournaments on the Qatar Airways Premier Padel Tour. This marks the second consecutive year of their participation as part of a three-year sponsorship agreement, further reinforcing their shared commitment to community support and the advancement of sports in Qatar.

The championship takes place from April 14 to 19, 2025, at the Khalifa International Tennis & Squash Complex in Doha, gathering the world's elite players, including Arturo Coello, Agustin Tapia, Ariana Sanchez Fallada, Paula Josemaria Martin, among others. As one of the four Major events on the global tour, the tournament continues to grow in scale and prestige, enhancing Qatar's reputation as a premier destination for international sporting events.

Bader Al-Darwish, Chairman and Managing Director of Fifty One East, commented: "We are proud to continue supporting the Ooredoo Qatar Major Premier Padel 2025 for the second year in a row. This sponsorship reflects our long-standing dedication to social responsibility and fostering a culture of wellness and sportsmanship in line with Qatar's National Vision 2030. We look forward to an exciting tournament that brings people together through the shared spirit of



competition and community." He thanked the Qatar Tennis, Squash, Padel and Badminton Federation and its executive board, for their outstanding efforts in delivering an ever-evolving, world-class tournament. "Their vision and dedication have not only raised the profile of padel in Qatar but have also set new standards for excellence in the sport. We are delighted to be part of this journey and remain committed to such exceptional initiatives," he said.

This year, Decode, the upscale streetwear concept store by Fifty One East, will join the Public Village with a unique showcase of the latest in urban fashion, bringing a fresh and modern edge to the tournament atmosphere. The presence of Decode further enhances the holistic experience for attendees, appealing to the young and style-savvy audience of the growing Padel community. Fifty One East and Fnac Qatar remain steadfast in their commitment to supporting Qatar's flourishing sports scene and enriching the wider audience.

COMMENT

It is hard to keep two F1 races in Italy: Domenicali

Reuters
Rome

Formula One boss **Stefano Domenicali** has indicated his home race of Imola could drop off the calendar with Italy unlikely to retain two Grands Prix on a bulging 24-round schedule with plenty of candidates.

"Italy has always been and will be an important part of Formula One," the Italian told RAI radio.

"It will be increasingly difficult to have two races in the same country because interest in F1 is growing and it's a situation we will have to deal with in the coming months," he added.

"It's hard for this situation with Imola and Monza to continue together on the calendar for long."

A native of Imola, whose race is designated the Emilia Romagna Grand Prix, the former Ferrari boss said it would not be an easy decision from a personal point of view but he had to take a global approach.

Imola returned to the F1 calendar during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 and has kept its place, although the 2023 race was cancelled due to flooding that devastated the region.

Monza, home of the Italian



Grand Prix, has been on the calendar every year since the first championship in 1950, with the sole exception of 1980, and is the spiritual home of Ferrari. It has a contract to 2031.

No other country in Europe has two races, although Spain is due to have an overlap next season with Madrid coming in as the new Spanish Grand Prix venue when Barcelona will be in the final year of its contract.

The Dutch Grand Prix at Zandvoort has already announced it will not continue after 2026.

The United States has three races and there has been talk of China having a second.

Thailand is also in talks for a round from 2028 and the sport wants to return to Africa.

FOOTBALL

Bellingham says everyone thinks Real comeback 'nailed-on'

Spanish giants face uphill task after Arsenal won first leg of the quarter-final 3-0

AFP
Madrid

Real Madrid midfielder Jude Bellingham said everyone at the club believes the Champions League holders can mount an historic comeback against Arsenal today. The Gunners won the quarter-final first leg clash in London 3-0 last week, leaving Real facing an uphill struggle at the Santiago Bernabeu.

However Bellingham said Real Madrid's belief, history and quality can help the record 15-time winners triumph to reach the semi-finals, despite never previously overturning a first leg defeat of this magnitude in the Champions League era.

"It's a weird environment, the last few days, it was one of the worst (first leg) results we could possibly imagine, and for some reason everyone thinks it's nailed-on we'll come back, and it's a nice feeling I have to say," the England international told a press conference.

"It means there's a lot of trust in the talent, it means that you're at a club that's like no other, the best in the world, and that's what it represents and signifies to me. There's a pressure that comes along with that for sure, we want to deliver on what everyone thinks, that we can come back and that's obviously the goal for us."

Bellingham said the word 'remontada' - comeback in Spanish - has been flying around since Madrid's capitulation at the Emirates. "Remontada... I've heard it about a million times this week, I've seen a million videos online," continued Bellingham. "(It's) really motivating stuff, it's a night that's made for Real Madrid, a night that people are familiar with in this part of the world, hopefully we can add another special night."

Bellingham said Madrid players had to use the fans' energy at the Bernabeu to help fuel them as they bid to add another spectacular European night to an ever-growing



Real Madrid's Jude Bellingham, Antonio Rudiger, Kylian Mbappe, Luka Modric and Thibaut Courtois during a training session in Madrid yesterday, on the eve of the Champions League second leg quarter-final against Arsenal. (Reuters)

collection. "They are huge in creating an atmosphere and an energy inside the stadium that's infectious and the players really thrive off that... it brings a better level from us," said the 21-year-old, who helped drive Madrid to Champions League glory in his debut season after joining in 2023.

"We have to match their desire to win, their energy and produce a performance they can be proud of," continued Bellingham. "There's an expectation from Real Madrid that when we get into these kind of holes we can come back, even if it's a really

tough one, a really difficult one. Just because the club has done it so many times, that's what's so impressive about the size of this club, and the expectations are obviously huge."

Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti, who has won the competition five times as a manager, more than anyone else, said he was calm ahead of the game.

"I'm focussed, with a very cool head, it's not my first night like this and I hope it will not be the last," he said. "More than worried, I am excited to be able to take part in

games like this from the bench, that excitement allows me to keep a cool head."

Ancelotti called on his players to play with "head, heart and balls" against Arsenal, and said he needs striker Kylian Mbappe to deliver. The French superstar was sent off against Alaves on Sunday as his team scraped a tight La Liga win.

"He's hurt, disappointed about what happened, yesterday he trained very well, very motivated," added the coach. "We need him... he has to score goals, more than ever, we need his goals tomorrow."

SPOTLIGHT

Arsenal need to be brave and determined: Arteta



Arsenal's players take part in a training session at the club's training centre. (AFP)

AFP
Madrid

Arsenal coach Mikel Arteta said he has spent three days filling his players' heads with messages of strength ahead of their Champions League showdown against Real Madrid today.

The Gunners hold a 3-0 lead on record 15-time winners and current holders Madrid going in to the return at the Santiago Bernabeu. Carlo Ancelotti's side are famed for their ability to forge stunning comebacks, particularly at home, but Arteta said he had tried to keep that narrative away from his squad.

"We have tried to repeat the opposite message," Arteta told a news conference. "In the brain of the players, what they have done in the last 72 hours is something completely different. And we are very close to them, and hopefully that's more powerful than anything else. But you have to be there, you have to speak, you have to feel it, and you have to go through it."

Arteta said Arsenal's mindset would be key as they bid to reach the semi-finals for the first time since 2009. The coach said he would not use the word 'fear' going into

the second leg, but that he had a healthy respect for Madrid's achievements in Europe.

"I wouldn't use that word... I think (we have) respect and admiration for what they've done in the competition, as a club over the years, said Arteta. "(They've been) unbelievable, amazing, and (it's) inspiration for the coach and the manager and the team."

Arteta said Arsenal, who were defeated in their only Champions League final appearance against Barcelona in 2006, can stand up to the atmosphere in the Bernabeu. "(We have) to be convinced that we can handle any situation, and we're going to enjoy actually playing any kind of game that (comes) tomorrow," he added.

Arsenal goalkeeper David Raya said his team has come to the Spanish capital to make their mark, rather than falling victim to the same old Madrid comeback story. "We are here to write our own history," he said. "That is what we want to do and that is what we want to achieve tomorrow."

Both Arteta and Raya said Arsenal would be trying to win the match, despite already holding a three-goal lead. "The intention is to win the game," explained Raya.

Arteta confirmed Thomas Partey and Ben White are fit to play, but Jorginho will miss the game through injury.

Mbappe receives one-match ban

Madrid: Real Madrid forward Kylian Mbappe will serve a one-match suspension following his tackle on Alaves' Antonio Blanco, the Spanish Football Federation (RFEF) said.

The Frenchman was shown a straight red card in Sunday's game against Alaves for a violent challenge on midfielder Blanco, with the referee overturning his initial decision to give him a yellow after a VAR review.

The Disciplinary Committee ruled the dismissal warranted the minimum one-match sanction under article 130 of its regulations. Following the incident, Mbappe apologised to Blanco and his Real Madrid teammates. He will miss Real's next game against Athletic on Sunday. Alaves' Manu Sanchez, who was sent off for a similar challenge.

HORSE RACING

Smith rides Alshanfara to comfortable Athbah Cup win

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Ghazwan Racing's Alshanfara clinched top honours in the Athbah Cup (Div 1) race day, winning the Purebred Arabian Graduation Plate (Class 4) at Al Uqda Racecourse yesterday. Ridden by Jefferson Smith and trained by Hadi al-Ramzani, Alshanfara edged out Mared Al Jasra by half a length in the 1,400m contest.

In the penultimate race, Pranil Arvind Kharat rode Al Ghashem to victory in the Purebred Arabian Maiden Plate (Class 6), securing a two-length win in the 1,200m run. Pearl Path, trained by Ibrahim Saeed al-Malki and ridden by Trevor Patel, triumphed in the Thoroughbred Handicap 75-95 (Class 3). Jockey Szczepan Mazur also entered the winner's circle, guiding Al Ghaith, trained by Zuhair Mohsen, to a one-

and-a-half-length win in the Local Thoroughbred Handicap 30-50 (Class 5).

20TH AL UQDA RACE MEETING - ATHBAH CUP (DIV 1)

- WINNERS: (Horse, Trainer, Jockey)**
- 1 - Purebred Arabian Graduation Plate (Class 4)
Alshanfara, Hadi al-Ramzani, Jefferson Smith
 - 2 - Purebred Arabian Maiden Plate (3yo Only) (Class 6)
Al Ghashem, Mansoor al-Shahwani, Pranil Arvind Kharat
 - 3 - Thoroughbred Handicap 75-95 (Class 3)
Pearling Path, Ibrahim Saeed al-Malki, Trevor Patel
 - 4 - Local Thoroughbred Handicap (Class 5)
Al Ghaith, Zuhair Mohsen, Szczepan Mazur
 - 5 - Local Purebred Arabian Maiden Plate (Fillies & Mares) (Class 6)
Kohinoor, Mohamed Khaled Elahmed, Fayos Martin Borja



Jefferson Smith guides Ghazwan Racing's Alshanfara to Athbah Cup win at Al Uqda Racecourse yesterday. **PICTURE:** Juhaim

Kane urges Bayern to hit the mark against Inter



Milan: Harry Kane said that he hoped he and his Bayern Munich teammates will be clinical in front of goal in their Champions League showdown with Inter Milan, after wasteful finishing in recent matches.

Bayern trail Inter 2-1 ahead of today's decisive second leg at the San Siro after failing to capitalise on their opportunities in Bavaria last week and allowing Davide Frattesi to hit the Germans with a late sucker punch. Kane and company were also wasteful in their 2-2 draw with Borussia Dortmund at the weekend which however did not lead to their six-point lead at the top of the Bundesliga being cut.

"It's more worrying if we weren't creating chances... The keepers in the last couple of games have made some really good saves. We've hit the post, we've hit the crossbar. That's just the way football is sometimes," Kane told reporters. "But I think that gives us belief, the fact that we're having those chances. The last two games, even though the results haven't been what we wanted, we still played at a really high level. If we want to qualify, we're going to have to take some big ones tomorrow."

Kane criticised Inter for celebrating "like they won the tie" after defeat in the first leg, the first for Bayern at home in the Champions League since 2021. But the England captain said that was down to emotions running high after conceding a late winner and wasn't a motivating factor for Bayern.

"We have enough motivation anyway," said Kane. "I think we believe that we can turn the tide around first and foremost... So we have that belief."

"I don't think Inter will take it for granted... They know it will be a tough battle for 90 minutes or 120 minutes, whatever it may be. So I don't expect them to be complacent."

Bayern coach Vincent Kompany has been boosted by the return of winger Kingsley Coman and midfielder Aleksandar Pavlovic. Kompany has had to deal with a raft of injuries in recent weeks including a hamstring tear for Germany star Jamal Musiala, but Thomas Mueller is expected to start after scoring Bayern's goal in the first leg and performing well against Dortmund at the weekend.

Mueller, who will leave Bayern at the end of the season, will join Lionel Messi with 163 appearances in the Champions League if the 35-year-old is picked by Kompany. "We know what kind of team Bayern are... they're a team full of talent. They're young and aggressive, and we'll need to make sure we put in a great performance," said Inter coach Simone Inzaghi.

Inter are trying to beat Bayern at the San Siro for the first time after losing all three of their previous Champions League encounters in Milan. Bayern were the victims in the 2010 final when Inter, three-time kings of Europe, won the Serie A, Champions League and Italian Cup treble under Jose Mourinho.

Inzaghi, who has all his first choice players available apart from wing-back Denzel Dumfries, said that his team need to forget the aggregate score and focus on replicating their dogged and clinical display at the Allianz Arena.