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Pant woes continue as Lucknow lose to Punjab in IPL



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TENNIS

Ruud beats Draper to win Madrid Open and claim maiden Masters title

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FOOTBALL

Al Shahania and Al Ahli enter Amir Cup quarters

Antonucci excels in Shahania's win over Mesaimmer, Al Ahli's Umaru nets winner in extra time against Qatar SC

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Midfielder Francesco Antonucci scored one goal and assisted in another as Al Shahania beat Mesaimmer 2-0 in the Amir Cup Round of 16 match at the Al Thumama Stadium yesterday.

In the late clash of the day, Al Ahli needed a late extra-time goal to overcome Qatar SC 1-0 at the Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium in an absorbing contest. Al Shahania and Al Ahli will clash in the quarter-finals.

Substitute Abdulrasheed Umaru smartly chipped in a ball in the 116th minute of the second half of extra time after Oumar Sekou superbly stopped the ball from crossing the goal line and setting it up for the former.

For Al Shahania, Antonucci first struck in the 41st minute, from ten yards from centre of the box and his kick took a defender's boot to balloon over the goalkeeper and into the goal. Then in 45+3 minute of the game, Antonucci took an angular free kick from outside the box which was put into the net by Petrus Amersfoort.

Earlier in the 13th minute, an Antonucci goal was disallowed as Amersfoort was found to have handled the ball on VAR. Mesaimmer had a good chance in the 18th minute to score but Abdelhalim Sharif Mahmoud's kick was saved off by the rival goalkeeper.

Today, Al Duhail will meet Al Saliya at Khalifa International



Al Shahania players celebrate after their victory over Mesaimmer in the Amir Cup Round of 16 match at the Al Thumama Stadium yesterday.

Stadium at 5.15pm while Al Rayyan will play Lusail at the Abdullah Bin Khalifa Stadium at 8.15pm.

Al Duhail coach Christophe Galtier said his team respects the opposition. "This is a high-stakes match against a team that's earned promotion and respect. Al Saliya are dangerous, and the Amir Cup doesn't allow for mistakes. We must be sharp, focused, and ready to deliver," he said.

"We're entering the Amir Cup

knowing it's a knockout —no second chances. Al Saliya are on a winning run and play with confidence. We've studied Al Saliya well. Our focus is total, because one slip and we're out. The team understands what's at stake," he added.

Al Saliya coach Mirghani al-Zain said it was chance for his young team to prove themselves. "We know Al Duhail's quality, but this is an opportunity for

our young squad to gain experience and prove themselves. We'll give everything to compete at the level expected and represent our progress.

"Our team is still developing, and we have the youngest average age in the league. But our ambitions are big. Competing in the Amir Cup is our right, and we'll approach the Al Duhail match with full belief in our abilities."

Al Rayyan are also eyeing the



Al Ahli's Abdulrasheed Umaru (second right) celebrates with teammates after scoring against Qatar SC at the Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium yesterday.

prestigious title and their coach Artur Jorge said the tournament was a chance for the club to make up. "We weren't up to expectations this season, but we want to add a new title. We've won it six times — this is our chance to make up for the past and show what this club stands for," he said.

"We're facing Lusail from the second division, but in the Amir Cup, anything can happen. There's no room for complacency.

We must treat this like a final — stay focused, play with intensity, and ensure we advance."

Lusail coach Jacobo Ramallo said his side was ambitious. "We come from the second division, but we're ambitious and prepared. Facing Al Rayyan is a challenge, no doubt — but it's a cup match, and there's only one acceptable result: winning. The Amir Cup is a prestigious competition, and we're here to compete, not just participate."

BUNDESLIGA

Leverkusen draw hands Kane's Bayern title



Bayern Munich's forward Harry Kane hugs teammate Joshua Kimmich after the Bundesliga match against Leipzig in Leipzig on Saturday. (AFP)

AFP
Berlin

Bayern Munich were crowned German champions for the 34th time yesterday, giving striker Harry Kane his first major trophy, after second-placed Bayer Leverkusen drew 2-2 at Freiburg.

Bayern's 3-3 draw at RB Leipzig on Saturday, when the Bavarians came from two goals down to take the lead before conceding a stoppage-time equaliser, meant defending Bundesliga champions Leverkusen needed to win at Freiburg to delay the title party.

Leverkusen were two goals

down before scoring twice in the last 10 minutes.

But Xabi Alonso's side could not find a third, as Bayern reclaimed the title at the first attempt after Leverkusen ended their 11-year reign last season.

Alonso, who won three Bundesliga titles as a player with Bayern, congratulated his former club.

"Congratulations to Bayern. It's a deserved championship. They were more consistent team over the season and they deserve the shield," Alonso said to DAZN.

Kane, who had never previously won silverware, was among a group of Bayern players who gathered to watch the Leverkusen game in Munich yesterday.

The England captain was suspended for the match at Leipzig but will return this Saturday against Borussia Moenchengladbach at home, where Bayern will be presented with the Bundesliga shield at full-time.

Given Bayern's far superior goal difference, Leverkusen's chances of defending their title were already all but impossible.

Freiburg's Maximilian Eggestein hit a stunning goal from outside the box before half-time and Piero Hincapie was pressured into scoring an own goal just after the break.

Florian Wirtz netted a spectacular solo goal with eight minutes remaining, carving through the



Leverkusen's Jonathan Tah (left) celebrates with a teammate after scoring his team's second goal against Freiburg during their Bundesliga match at Europa Park Stadion yesterday. (@bayer04_eri)

middle of the field before firing the ball in off the post.

Jonathan Tah headed Leverkusen level in stoppage time, but the visitors were unable to find the third goal which would have extended their spell as champions.

The result left Leverkusen, who became the first team in history to win the title unbeaten last season, eight points behind Bayern with two games remaining. With the faint title hopes gone, Leverkusen's focus will turn to keeping hold of Alonso and Wirtz, who could both be headed for the exit in summer.

Alonso has a contract at Leverkusen until 2026 but has been heavily linked with Real Ma-

drid, where he spent five seasons as a player. Wirtz's deal expires in 2027 but the Germany midfielder is reportedly considering a big-money move to Bayern.

Tah, who has already confirmed he will leave the club on a free transfer after a decade in Leverkusen, said his side had "too little intensity, we had too few runs in behind. It didn't work today."

The Germany centre-back has been linked with moves to Barcelona and Bayern, but said "we'll see" where he plays next season.

The late goal meant Leverkusen extended their unbeaten streak away from home to 33 games, equalling a Bundesliga record

set by Bayern. The draw keeps Freiburg in fourth, one point clear of Borussia Dortmund, in the final Champions League spot. Freiburg have never played in Europe's top competition.

Earlier yesterday, Holstein Kiel won 3-1 at Augsburg, keeping their hopes of beating the drop alive.

Kiel won thanks to a double from Alexander Bernhardsson and a Shuto Machino penalty and are now one point behind Heidenheim in the relegation play-off spot.

In Sunday's late game, Eintracht Frankfurt can take a major step towards a top-four spot and Champions League qualification with a win at local rivals Mainz.

INDIAN PREMIER LEAGUE

No end to Pant's woes as Lucknow go down to Punjab

Prabhsimran Singh struck 91 off 48 balls to guide Punjab to win

AFP
Dharamsala, India

Rishabh Pant again struggled to a low score as his Lucknow Super Giants team slumped to a fourth defeat in five IPL games, losing by 37 runs to the Punjab Kings yesterday.

Opener Prabhsimran Singh struck 91 off 48 balls to steer Punjab to 236-5, helped by several impressive cameos at the Kings' second home in Dharamsala.

Arshdeep Singh then returned brilliant figures of 3-16 as Lucknow could only make 199-7 in reply. Pant fell for a 17-ball 18 in another failure for the India star.

Pant, who was snapped up by LSG for a record price of \$3.21mn in the November auction, could not find any fluency during his stay despite hitting two fours and one six.

The wicketkeeper-batsman has mustered only 128 runs from 10 innings this season.

Lucknow sit seventh in the table, four points outside the fourth and final play-off spot with three games remaining.

Punjab climbed to second behind leaders Royal Challengers Bengaluru after their seventh win of the campaign.

Lucknow were never in their chase after left-arm seamer Arshdeep struck twice in the space of four balls in his second over to send back Mitchell Marsh, for a duck, and then Aiden Markram,



Punjab Kings' Prabhsimran Singh in action during the IPL match against Lucknow Super Giants at Himachal Pradesh Cricket Association Stadium, Dharamsala, India, yesterday. (Reuters)

for 13. He dismissed the dangerous Nicholas Pooran for six before Pant attempted to rebuild in a scratchy innings that was ended by Afghanistan all-rounder Azmatullah Omarzai.

Omarzai soon sent back David Miller for 11 to put Lucknow in further trouble at 73-5. Ayush Badoni, who top-scored with 74, and Abdul Samad, who hit 45, put on a valiant stand of 81 but could only reduce the margin of defeat.

Earlier in the day, Australia's Josh Inglis, who hammered a quick 30, and Prabhsimran lay the foundations for Punjab's imposing total with a second-wicket partnership of 48.

Skipper Shreyas Iyer took charge after Inglis' departure and made 45 in a partnership of 78 with Prabhsimran, who survived a dropped catch by Pooran when on 21.

Leg-spinner Digvesh Rathi de-

nied Prabhsimran a century, but Shashank Singh, who struck an unbeaten 33, and Marcus Stoinis, who made 15 not out off five balls, ensured Punjab finished strongly.

BRIEF SCORES

Punjab Kings 236 for 5 (Prabhsimran 91, Shreyas 45, Akash 2-30) **beat Lucknow Super Giants 199 for 7** (Badoni 74, Samad 45, Arshdeep 3-16) **by 37 runs**

BADMINTON

Hosts China down South Korea to clinch 14th Sudirman Cup title



Members of the Chinese team celebrate after compatriots Liu Shengshu and Tan Ning defeated South Korea's Baek Ha-na and Lee So-hee in their women's doubles final match at the Sudirman Cup badminton championship in Xiamen, China's southeastern Fujian province, yesterday. (AFP)

Reuters
Xiamen, China

China beat South Korea 3-1 in the Sudirman Cup final to capture a record-extending 14th title at the biennial mixed team competition in the Chinese city of Xiamen yesterday.

Having won the last three Sudirman Cup editions, China were favourites against four-times winners South Korea and got off to a winning start from world number two mixed doubles pair Feng Yanzhe and Huang Dongping.

Feng and Huang recovered from a second game blip to beat South Korean duo Seo Seung-jae and Chae Yu-jung 21-16 17-21 21-15 in one hour and 24 minutes.

However, that lead did not last long as women's top-ranked player and Paris Olympic champion An Se-young levelled the tie by defeating world number two Wang Zhiyi 21-17 21-16.

An shifted gears when they were tied at 17-17 in the opening game to race away, and while the second game was once again a close affair, the 23-year-old maintained her composure to take the win in 57 minutes.

Roared on by the home crowd

Roared on by the home crowd as they played their 16th straight Sudirman Cup final, China went 2-1 up after men's world number one Shi Yuqi crushed 42nd-ranked Jeon Hyeok-jin 21-5 21-5 in just 33 minutes.

All the pressure was on world number three women's doubles pair Baek Ha-na and Lee So-hee to keep the tie alive for the South Koreans, who last won the competition in 2017.

But top-ranked women's double duo Liu Shengshu and Tan Ning had other plans, sealing the tie 3-1 with a 21-14 21-17 victory, throwing their rackets on the ground in celebration in front of the adoring home support at the arena.

SPOTLIGHT

Kolkata survive Parag's six-hitting blitz

AFP
Kolkata

Defending champions Kolkata Knight Riders survived a batting blitz including six sixes in a row from Rajasthan Royals skipper Riyan Parag to win a high-scoring IPL thriller by one run yesterday.

Chasing 207 for victory, Rajasthan slipped to 71-5 in the eighth over when Parag hit 95 off 45 balls and hit six sixes in six successive legal balls - a first in IPL - across two overs at Kolkata's Eden Gardens.

The 23-year-old's blitz, which included a wide in between the fourth and fifth six, began with him smacking England spinner Moeen Ali for five sixes in an over. Then, after his partner Shimron Hetmyer took a single, he hit one over the fence off Varun Chakravarthy.

Parag joined an elite list of batsmen to have hit five sixes in an over

in the IPL after Chris Gayle (2012), Rahul Tewatia (2020), Ravindra Jadeja (2021) and Rinku Singh (2023) achieved the feat in earlier editions.

Parag, who is leading the team in the absence of regular skipper Sanju Samson, added 92 with Hetmyer but after their departures Rajasthan finished on 205-8 after a tense last over.

Needing 22 to win in the final over, impact substitute Shubham Dubey, a left-hand batter, hit two sixes and a four off Vaibhav Arora who defended three on the final ball with a run out of Jofra Archer as KKR celebrated.

Kolkata remain in the hunt for the play-offs with their fifth victory in 11 matches. Rajasthan are already out of the final-four race.

The top four teams from the league phase will move into the play-offs.

Andre Russell set up victory for three-time champions Kolkata as he struck form with his unbeaten

57 off 25 balls to steer Kolkata to 206-4.

In reply, Moeen and fellow spinner Chakravarthy took two wickets each to dent the opposition chase as Rajasthan lost half their side in the eighth over.

Fourteen-year-old IPL sensation Vaibhav Suryavanshi was the first to go on four for his second successive flop after he became an overnight hero with his 35-ball ton earlier this week.

Moeen struck on his fifth ball in the second over of the chase and soon got the left-handed Yashasvi Jaiswal to dent the chase.

Chakravarthy further rattled the opposition batting with two wickets in three balls including wicketkeeper-batsman Dhruv Jurel and Wamindu Hasaranga - both out for a duck.

Parag and Hetmyer, who hit 29, then brought Rajasthan back into the contest, but fast bowler Harsheet Rana removed both the players in two overs.

Earlier Kolkata's Afghanistan opener Rahmanaullah Gurbaz and Rahane set the pace in their second-wicket partnership of 56 after Sunil Narine's early departure.

Gurbaz, a wicketkeeper-batsman, made 35, and Rahane scored 30 before Angkrish Raghuvanshi, who hit 44, and Russell took stock and then took the attack to the opposition.

Russell, who turned 37 on Tuesday, took his time to get going before he launched an attack as he hit the ball to all parts of the ground.

Player of the match Russell, Raghuvanshi and the left-handed Rinku Singh, who made 19 off six balls, fired as Kolkata managed 85 runs from the last five overs.

BRIEF SCORES

Kolkata Knight Riders 206 for 4 (Russell 57*, Raghuvanshi 44, Parag 1-21) **beat Rajasthan Royals 205 for 8** (Parag 95, Jaiswal 34, Vaun 2-32, Harshit 2-41, Moeen 2-43) **by one run**



Rajasthan Royals' captain Riyan Parag watches the ball after playing a shot during the IPL match against Kolkata Knight Riders at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata yesterday. (AFP)

Open Chess Championship concludes in Doha



India's Pravin Adwiti won the overall title of the 'Sports for All' Open Chess Championship, jointly staged by the Qatar Sports Federation For All (QSFA) and the Qatar Chess Association (QCA) which was concluded at the association's training centre after six intense rounds of rapid-play action. Adwiti defeated Algeria's Nasreddine Moea for the title as Morocco's Jamal Farhi completed the podium. Among the domestic honours, Hamad al-Kuwari was named Best Qatari Player and Lian a-Kubaisi Best Qatari Female Player. Fahad al-Mansouri topped the men's U-20 division, Ibrahim al-Janahi claimed a special award in the U-16 category, and Mohammed Jarbi emerged as the leading Qatari U-12 participant. The closing ceremony saw Abdullah al-Dosari, Executive Director of QSFA, and Muhammad al-Mudahka, President of QCA, present medals and monetary awards to the top three finishers. Players reaching the finals were also recognised with valuable prizes, an initiative intended to encourage continued involvement and broaden community participation in sporting events. Al-Mudahka lauded the successful collaboration with the QSFA in organising the Open Chess Championship. Expressing his satisfaction, the QCA president emphasised the tournament's significant role in promoting chess and expanding its reach within the Qatari community, particularly among young people.

CYCLING

Almeida wins Tour de Romandie as Evenepoel claims closing time trial

AFP
Geneva

Joao Almeida grabbed overall victory in the Tour de Romandie yesterday when he finished second to Remco Evenepoel in the closing time trial in Geneva.

"The goal was to win the race," Almeida said. "What counts is the last day, right?"

The day before, Almeida lost a mountain-top duel to Frenchman Lenny Martinez, a specialist climber, in an Alpine stage.

Entering yesterday's time trial, Martinez led Italian Lorenzo Fortunato by two seconds and Portuguese rider Almeida by three seconds.

Evenepoel, the Olympic and world time trial champion, powered away to win the flat 17.1km stage in 20mins 33secs.

Almeida was next fastest, 12 second behind. The diminutive Martinez was 13th, 41sec behind the winner to secure second overall. Fortunato was another 40 places and 55sec behind.

Australian Jay Vine jumped to third overall.

Evenepoel, who returned last month after four months out injured and recorded some promising results in the one-day classics, was testing himself



Wearing the overall leader's yellow jersey winner Portugal's Joao Pedro Almeida (centre) poses with second placed France's Lenny Martinez (left) and third placed Australia's Jay Vine, during the fifth and last stage of the Tour of Romandie UCI Cycling World Tour in Geneva yesterday. (AFP)

in a stage race as he prepared for the Tour de France. He finished eighth overall.

"I knew I was coming to this race with some up and down form, so I didn't have big ambitions. I was mainly focusing on today's stage," said the Belgian.

"I still have more than two months before the Tour de France, so I have to be patient and work day by day."

TOULOUSE WIN FIBA 3X3 LUSAIL CHALLENGER 2025



Top seed Toulouse of France produced an eye-catching performance to claim the FIBA 3x3 Lusail Challenger 2025 and win their first-ever title. Toulouse - the artists formerly known as Paris - once again were in the fight for their lives in the final against Serbian side Liman but MVP Franck Seguela proved too good when it mattered most as the Frenchmen lived up to the hype in Lusail. After reaching the semis at the Utsunomiya Opener, Toulouse were determined to go further in a tournament they entered as the favourite. Toulouse won \$20,000 while Liman took home \$15,000 for their efforts. Mohammed bin Saad al-Mughaiseb, president of Qatar Basketball Federation, and Fahad Abdullatif al-Jahrami, Chief Development and Asset Management Officer of Qatari Diar, were present at the prize distribution ceremony.



TENNIS / MADRID OPEN

Ruud prevails in tough battle with Draper in final

THE NORWEGIAN STAR WINS HIS 13TH CAREER TROPHY

AFP
Madrid

Casper Ruud beat Jack Draper 7-5, 3-6, 6-4 yesterday to clinch Madrid Open victory and the first Masters 1000 triumph of his career.

The Norwegian, a three-time Grand Slam runner-up, got the better of his British opponent in a two-and-a-half hour tussle at the Manolo Santana stadium.

Rising star Draper, who will move fifth in the world rankings today above Serbia's Novak Djokovic, was hoping to add to his Indian Wells title in March but Ruud outlasted him in his third Masters final.

"It feels great, of course, it's been a long time coming, it's one really big goal that I have dreamt about since I was young," said Ruud.

Draper had been looking for the first clay court title of his career.

"Congratulations to Casper on this win, you really deserve it - you were braver than me in the key moments," said Draper. "This sport is brutal but I will keep trying, I think this loss will make me better."

The 26-year-old, ranked 15th, blinked first with back-to-back double faults to give Draper a break for 2-1 in the first set.

However in a seventh game hold the Norwegian upped his power and showed his quality, hinting at the fightback which was to follow.

Serving for the set Draper was



Norway's Casper Ruud poses with his trophy after defeating Britain's Jack Draper in the Madrid Open final yesterday. Ruud won 7-5, 3-6-6-4. (AFP)

unable to polish off his opponent, who broke to tie the set at 5-5.

Ruud held and then broke to claim the first set as Draper mishit a forehand.

It was the first set Draper had dropped at the tournament and he ranted aloud to his team to release his frustration.

His tactic seemed to work as he produced his best tennis in a brilliant second set in which he made just one unforced error and let his rasping forehand shine.

Draper broke in the seventh

game for a 4-3 lead, saved two break points in the eighth and then broke again himself to claim the second set, with his third set point.

In the decider Draper saved three break points to hold in the hard-fought third game, which lasted over 10 minutes.

Ruud broke in the fifth game and consolidated for a 4-2 lead, with his first title of this stature in sight after 12 ATP titles at 250 and 500 level.

The tiring Draper saved a break

point in the seventh game despite being docked a first serve for a time violation, and Ruud held for 5-3 to leave Draper serving to stay in the match. Looking for the first clay court title of his career the 23-year-old found a second wind and held to love to make Ruud serve it out.

Despite never triumphing at this level Ruud powered through his final service game, opening up three break points and taking the first, with Draper sending a reply into the stands to end it.

ATHLETICS

McLaughlin-Levrone sets world's fastest of year in 400m hurdles

AFP
Miami Beach, United States

Two-time reigning Olympic champion Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone won the 400m hurdles with the fastest time in the world this year at the Grand Slam Track series Miami meet on Saturday.

The 25-year-old American won in 52.07 seconds with Jamaica's Andrenette Knight second in 54.08 in a wind of 1.3 m/sec.

"There's some stuff to clean up but I'm happy with where my fitness is," McLaughlin-Levrone said. "For my second race of the year, I'm happy."

McLaughlin-Levrone, who added a 2022 world title to her Olympic gold medals from Tokyo and Paris, broke her own world record last August in capturing the title in France with a run of 50.37.

American Jacory Patterson won the men's 400m in a 2025 world-best time of 43.98 seconds with Jerem Richards from Trinidad and Tobago second in 44.32 with a 1.3 m/sec wind. Patterson, third in the event at world indoors at Nanjing in March, set a personal best in the victory from lane eight.

"Lane helped me a lot because I didn't feel anything," Patterson said. "I was just able to run my own race."

Patterson, who loads trucks on the overnight shift for a delivery service, achieved his main desire.

"The goal was to come out here and make some money so I could just focus on training and quit that job," he said.

Winning, Patterson said, gives him "confidence, momentum. We're going to keep working, keep that ball rolling."

American Kenny Bednarek, the 200m runner-up at the Tokyo and Paris Olympics and 2022 world championships, captured the men's 100 in a wind-aided 9.79 seconds with Jamaica's Oblique Seville second in 9.84, both with a +2.4 m/sec wind assist meaning the time cannot be counted for record purposes.

"Emotions are high. I knew I was capable of winning times like this," Bednarek said. "This was a pretty good race. I'm dangerous."

Jamaica's Ackera Nugent won the women's 100 in 11.09, matching her personal best to defeat compatriot Megan Tapper by 0.24 of a second with a +0.9 m/sec wind.

Jefferson-Wooden notches second Grand Slam Track win

Melissa Jefferson-Wooden won her second Grand Slam Track title on Saturday, clinching the women's short sprints group in Miami, while Briton Josh Kerr took the men's short distance group after a rocky start to the season.

The novel circuit continued its second of four meets in its inaugural season at the Ansin Sports Complex, as it bids to upend business-as-usual in track with super-sized purses and an enviable roster of decorated talent.

Athletes in 12 groups - men's and women's short sprints, long sprints, short hurdles, long hurdles, short distance and long distance - compete over two races per meet with the point totals from those runs determining the champion of each group.

The American Jefferson-Wooden won Friday's 100m and took third in Saturday's 200m in a personal best 22.15 seconds for 18 total points, edging out her Paris relay teammate Gabby Thomas (17), who finished second in the standings.

The 1500m world champion Kerr won his signature event on Friday and finished fifth in Saturday's 800m in a personal best time of 1:45.01 for 16 points, two points clear of Canadian Marco Arop.

"These are going to be awesome shows that we're doing," said Kerr, who leaves Miami \$100,000 richer after finishing a dismal seventh in Kingston last month.

"If I keep progressing the way I am, then I can come away with two more slams this year and be really proud."

The Michael Johnson-fronted startup saw plenty of empty seats in its Kingston debut but an enthusiastic Miami crowd showed up on Saturday, as world record holder Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone breezed to a 52.07 win in the 400m hurdles.

Olympic gold medallist Masai Russell, who ran the second-fastest time ever in the 100m hurdles on Friday, an astonishing 12.17, finished second overall in the group standings after finishing fourth (11.40) in the flat event.

Jerem Richards from Trinidad and Tobago clinched the men's long sprints group with 20 points as he followed up Friday's speedy 19.86 win in the 200m with a second-place finish in the 400m in 44.32.

SWIMMING

Ledecky, Walsh cap Pro Swim meet with records

AFP
Miami

Katie Ledecky broke her longstanding world record in the 800m freestyle and Gretchen Walsh lowered her 100m butterfly world mark twice in one day at the Tyr Pro Swim meeting in Fort Lauderdale, Florida concluded on Saturday.

Nine-time Olympic gold medallist Ledecky clocked 8min 4.12sec to win the 800m freestyle - the event that catapulted her to stardom when she won it at the 2012 London Olympics when she was 15.

Ledecky, 28, improved on the previous record of 8:04.79 that she set at the Rio de Janeiro Olympics on August 12, 2016.

The performance capped a stellar week for Ledecky, who hadn't broken a long-course world record since 2018.

"I can't stop smiling," she said. "It has been so many years in the making to do it tonight... I flipped at the 750 and it was loud in here and

I just told myself I'm not letting this opportunity go to waste and started sprinting."

Ledecky posted the second-fastest 1,500m free in history on Wednesday and swam the second-fastest 400m free of her career a day later - all signalling that she remains a force with the World Championships in Singapore approaching on July 27-August 3.

Jillian Cox was second, 19.46sec back on 8:23.58. Claire Weinstein was third in 8:26.06.

Ledecky said she was "fired up" after her 1,500m free triumph, which launched her first elite competition since the Paris Olympics last year.

In Paris, she won the 1,500m free and also claimed a fourth straight 800m free gold as she equalled the record for most gold medals won by a woman athlete in any sport.

She owns the 10 fastest 800m free times in history, with Canadian Summer McIntosh the second-fastest performer with her career-best time of 8:09.86.

She credited Walsh with "starting a world record party".

Walsh became the first woman to break 55

seconds in the 100m butterfly, winning Saturday's final in a jaw-dropping world record of 54.60sec.

That came hours after she lowered her own world record with a swim of 55.09sec in the preliminaries, improving on the 55.18 she set at the US Olympic trials in Indianapolis last June.

The American settled for silver in the event at the Paris Olympics behind teammate Torri Huske, who was a distant second in Saturday's final in 56.59.

Walsh's 100m fly exploits came a day after the two-time Olympic relay gold medallist joined Sweden's Sarah Sjöström as the only women to break 25 seconds for the 50m butterfly, clocking 24.93 to win the final.

France's Leon Marchand, who starred at the Paris Olympics with four individual gold medals, departed Fort Lauderdale without a victory.

The 22-year-old closed his campaign with a runner-up finish to Shaine Casas in the 200m individual medley - one of his gold medal events in Paris.



American sprinter Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone on way to winning the women's 400m hurdles in 52.07 seconds during the Grand Slam Track Miami at Ansin Sports Complex. (Reuters)

PREMIER LEAGUE

Chelsea sink champs Liverpool, Man Utd crash at Brentford

WEST HAM AND SPURS DRAW, ISAK RESCUES NEWCASTLE

AFP
London

Chelsea improved their chances of qualifying for the Champions League with a vital 3-1 victory as Liverpool suffered a Premier League title hangover, while United's winless run in the Premier League reached six games after a 4-3 defeat at Brentford yesterday.

Enzo Maresca's Chelsea took the lead through Enzo Fernandez's early strike at Stamford Bridge.

Jarell Quansah's second half own goal was followed by Virgil van Dijk's late reply for Liverpool.

Cole Palmer's stoppage-time penalty condemned the champions to only their third league defeat this season.

While lacklustre Liverpool had little to play for after winning a record-equalling 20th English crown with a 5-1 rout of Tottenham last weekend, Chelsea had every incentive to secure a price-less three points.

Hoping to return to the Champions League via a top five finish, the Blues sit in fifth place, level on points with fourth-placed Newcastle salvaged a point thanks to a last-gasp Alexander Isak penalty at Brighton earlier yesterday.

Sixth-placed Nottingham Forest will join Chelsea and Newcastle on 63 points if they beat Crystal Palace today.

Third-placed Manchester City are only one point clear of Chelsea and, with three games left, the top five battle is set for a thrilling finale. Liverpool's only other league losses in a triumphant campaign came against Nottingham Forest in September and at Fulham in April.

Manchester United are languishing in 15th place following the latest setback in their wretched top-flight campaign.

Ruben Amorim's side are focused on salvaging their forgettable season by winning the Europa League.

They will host Athletic Bil-



Chelsea's Cole Palmer celebrates with teammate Moises Caicedo on the pitch after the Premier League match against Liverpool at Stamford Bridge in London yesterday. (AFP)

bao in the semi-final second leg next Thursday protecting a 3-0 lead and Amorim made a host of changes, resting Harry Maguire, Bruno Fernandes and Casemiro.

In the 14th minute, Mason Mount scored only his second league goal for United since joining from Chelsea in 2023 as he took Alejandro Garnacho's pass and slotted home from eight yards.

But Brentford hit back in the 27th minute when United defend-

er Luke Shaw deflected Michael Kayode's effort into his own net. United's leaky defence were punished in the 33rd minute as Kevin Schade headed Christian Norgaard's cross past Altay Bayindir.

United conceded again when Schade struck with a 70th minute header. Yoane Wissa completed the rout four minutes later, poking home for his 18th league goal this season.

Garnacho's 82nd minute blast from the edge of the area was fol-

lowed by Amad Diallo's stoppage-time effort for the visitors.

But it was little consolation for United, who have lost 12 of Amorim's 24 league games, winning only six times.

"The players have to understand we cannot do this anymore, we know the context of the season and we need to change that," Amorim said.

Tottenham are also looking to win the Europa League to paper over the cracks in a miserable campaign.

Ange Postecoglou's side warmed up for their semi-final second leg against Bodo/Glimt with a 1-1 draw at West Ham.

Tottenham have only one win in their last nine league matches and sit a lowly 16th in the table, leaving them facing their lowest finish since 1976-77.

They are aiming to end their 17-year trophy drought by winning a first European prize since the 1984 UEFA Cup. But Postecoglou could still be sacked regardless of the Europa League run.

The Australian made eight changes from the 3-1 win in the first leg against Bodo/Glimt to rest his stars for Thursday's second leg in Norway.

Tottenham took the lead in the 15th minute when Wilson Odobert punished West Ham's sloppy marking to drill home from Mathys Tel's pass.

It was Odobert's first league goal for Tottenham since arriving from Burnley in August.

But Jarrod Bowen levelled for West Ham in the 28th minute, taking Aaron Wan-Bissaka's pass in stride and shooting through the legs of Tottenham keeper Guglielmo Vicario.

Yankuba Minteh gave Brighton the lead against his former club with a fine finish, curling into the top corner in the 28th minute.

Alexander Isak dragged Newcastle level in the 89th minute, the Sweden striker netting with a penalty for his 23rd league goal this season after Yasin Ayari handled Kieran Trippier's free-kick.

FOCUS

Mbappe maintains Real's Liga dream in Celta thriller

AFP
Madrid

Kylian Mbappe struck twice as Real Madrid held off Celta Vigo with a thrilling 3-2 win to stay within sight of La Liga leaders Barcelona.

After the Catalans scraped a comeback win at Valladolid on Saturday, Madrid survived a late Celta fightback to maintain the four-point gap ahead of next Sunday's Clasico. Defending champions Madrid, second, took a three-goal lead but were left clinging on at the Santiago Bernabeu against a Celta side seventh and hoping to qualify for European football next season.

"The game seemed finished... you have to remember we're not always capable of solving these things," said Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti.

"Yes it could have been dealt with better, we suffered a bit, but it's a nice victory."

Madrid's Champions League defence crumbled and Los Blancos were also beaten in the Copa del Rey final against Barcelona last week, but Los Blancos are still hopeful of overhauling Hansi Flick's side in La Liga.

Ancelotti's side came into the game with a spate of defensive injuries but after riding out an early wave of Celta chances took control, with Turkish 20-year-old Arda Guler pulling the strings. With Rodrygo out with illness the youngster started in his stead and took full advantage. Guler directed a spectacular overhead effort wide of goal in the opening stages, showing his ambition has no limits.

Former Barcelona defender Marcos Alonso headed just over and then forced a fine save

from Thibaut Courtois, as Celta threatened. Aurelien Tchouameni headed over when well-placed at the other end, as Madrid stifled the visitors.

Madrid opened the scoring through Guler after 33 minutes, when the playmaker cleverly worked some space in the box and then brilliantly curled a strike past the reach of Vicente Guaita. Mbappe doubled Madrid's lead after 39 minutes at the sharp end of a rapid breakaway. Courtois saved well from Borja Iglesias and immediately Madrid thrust forward, with Bellingham setting Mbappe free down the right.

The French superstar ruthlessly lashed past Guaita from just inside the area. Just three minutes into the second half, Mbappe struck again for his 24th league goal of the season, putting him one behind the top scorer, Barcelona's Robert Lewandowski. Guler was the creator, playing in the striker with a perfectly-weighted ball and Mbappe finished low with a stroke of his left boot. It seemed the game was won for Madrid but Javier Rodriguez pulled Celta back into it with a finish from close range after a corner was wrongly awarded to Celta.

Lucas Vazquez blocked Pablo Duran's backheeled effort on the line but Rodriguez was on hand to pounce. Iago Aspas' introduction off the bench for the Galicians immediately gave them more attacking impetus and he produced a superb pass for Williot Swedberg to slot a second past Courtois. The Belgian goalkeeper had his heart in his mouth a few minutes later as Duran's shot slipped out of his hands and could have squirmed across the line behind him if it had not slowed to a stop on the grass.



Real Madrid's Kylian Mbappe celebrates scoring his team's third goal during the La Liga match against Celta de Vigo at Santiago Bernabeu Stadium in Madrid yesterday. (AFP)

LIGUE 1

Lyon's Champions League hopes hit by loss to Lens



Lens' goalkeeper Mathew Ryan catches the ball in the air ahead of Lyon's Corentin Tolisso (centre) during the Ligue 1 match at Parc Olympique Lyonnais in Decines-Charpieu, central-eastern France, yesterday. (AFP)

AFP
Paris

Lyon suffered a blow in their bid to qualify for next season's Champions League as they slumped to a 2-1 home defeat against Lens in Ligue 1 yesterday.

Paulo Fonseca's men remained seventh, outside the European places, after failing to respond to wins earlier in the weekend for top-four rivals Monaco, Nice and Strasbourg. Runaway leaders Paris Saint-Germain are already assured of the title.

Just four points separate second-placed Monaco from Lyon, although third-placed Marseille host sixth-placed Lille later.

The top three will qualify for next season's Champions League, with fourth securing a spot in the qualifying rounds.

Goduine Koyalipou fired Lens into the lead midway through the first half after Lyon failed to clear a corner.

Lyon pressed for an equaliser but struggled to create any clear-cut chances until Georges Mikautadze met Clinton Mata's deep cross with an excellent header into the far corner with 11 minutes re-

maining.

The Georgia striker has 17 goals and 11 assists in all competitions for Lyon this season despite not always being first-choice.

The visitors snatched all three points when substitute Anass Zaroury hammered a spectacular strike into the top corner from long range in the 85th minute.

Elsewhere, Le Havre gave their hopes of survival a boost with a 2-1 win at Auxerre. Le Havre, who occupy the relegation play-off spot, are now just one point behind both Angers and Nantes. Gabon forward Jim Allevinah gave Angers a vital 1-0 victory over Nantes.

SERIE A

Atalanta send down Monza and close in on Champions League

AFP
Milan

Atalanta took a step towards Champions League qualification with yesterday's 4-0 win at Monza whose long-expected relegation from Serie A was confirmed with the convincing defeat.

Charles De Ketelaere netted his first league goals since before Christmas in the first half as third-placed Atalanta moved five points ahead of Lazio who are fifth and beat Empoli 1-0 earlier in the day.

Ademola Lookman and Marco Brescianini completed the rout for Atalanta with well-taken strikes after the break.

With three matches remaining Atalanta are not sure of a spot in Europe's elite club competition with fourth-placed Roma, 1-0 winners over Fiorentina, visiting Bergamo next weekend.

Sunday's match was played after the killing of an Atalanta fan in a fight with a group of Inter Milan supporters in Bergamo late on Saturday night.

Riccardo Claris was stabbed to death, and his fellow fans paid tribute to the 26-year-old with a ban-

ner which read "Claris everywhere with us".

Monza will play in Serie B next season, ending a three-season run in the top flight for the team owned by the Berlusconi family.

Alessandro Nesta's side are 12 points behind Lecce, who sit just above the drop zone and lost to league leaders Napoli on Saturday, and will be one of three teams to drop to the second tier.

Assured of promotion are Sassuolo and Pisa, the latter club securing promotion on Sunday even though they lost 1-0 to Bari as their closest rivals Spezia were beaten 2-1 at Reggiana.

Roma took fourth place from Lazio by beating Fiorentina, Artem Dovbyk nodding home the only goal of the game in stoppage time at the end of the first half as Roma extended their unbeaten league run to 19 matches.

Claudio Ranieri's Roma, who also won thanks to a series of fine saves from goalkeeper Mile Svilar, are level on 63 points with Lazio but ahead of their local rivals due to a superior head-to-head record.

Roma will be replaced in fourth by either Juventus, who are a point behind the Rome clubs in sixth, or seventh-placed Bologna with that pair facing off in Sunday's late match.



Atalanta's Charles De Ketelaere celebrates scoring their second goal with teammates during their Serie A match against Monza yesterday. (Reuters)