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SPOTLIGHT | Page 2

Zhao becomes
China's first
world snooker
champion



FORMULA 1 | Page 3

Three in a row
Piastri wins in
Miami to lead
McLaren 1-2

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GULF TIMES SPORT



FOOTBALL

Coach Enrique's
quiet revolution
reshapes Paris
St Germain

Page 4

AMIR CUP

Duhail sail past Sailiyya as Rayyan survive Lusail scare

Rayyan come from behind to defeat second-division side Lusail 4-2 in an entertaining last 16 clash

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Al Duhail advanced to the quarter-finals of the Amir Cup after a dominant 4-2 victory over Al Sailiyya in their round of 16 clash at Khalifa International Stadium yesterday. In the last four, the Red Knights will take on Al Rayyan, who avoided a major upset yesterday, coming from behind to defeat second-division side Lusail 4-2 in an entertaining clash at Abdullah bin Khalifa Stadium.

Duhail established early control, with French midfielder Benjamin Bourigeaud opening the scoring from the penalty spot in the 27th minute after a VAR review. Just three minutes later, Karim Boudiaf doubled the lead with a fierce strike from the edge of the box.

Michael Olunga then struck twice in quick succession – first with a towering header in the 37th minute, then a close-range finish off a Hammam al-Amin cross in the 42nd – to give Duhail a commanding 4-0 lead by halftime.

Sailiyya showed more fight in the second half. Algerian striker Mohamed Benyetou pulled one back in the 58th minute and added a second from the penalty spot in the 79th. But it was too little, too late, as Duhail comfortably saw out the match.

In another match, Lusail defied expectations with a spirited display, showing no signs of intimidation against one of Qatar's most decorated clubs.

While Rayyan struck early through Mohamed Siraj in just the second minute, Lusail hit back with purpose. Balla Sangare converted a penalty in the 11th minute to draw level, then stunned the crowd with a superb second goal in the 19th, putting the underdogs 2-1 ahead.

Despite being reduced to ten men in stoppage time after Sangare received a red card, Lusail held firm for much of the second half. But Al Rayyan eventually broke



Michael Olunga struck twice in Al Duhail's win over Al Sailiyya yesterday.

through. Brazilian forward Roger Guedes levelled the score in the 53rd minute, before Belgian midfielder Julien De Sart put them

ahead in the 79th minute. Adam Bareiro sealed the comeback in added time (90+1) to send Rayyan into the quarter-finals.



Al Rayyan players celebrate after their hard-fought win over Lusail at Abdullah bin Khalifa Stadium yesterday.

AL SADD, AL GHARAFYA EYE
QUARTERS SPOTS

Today, reigning Amir Cup champions Al Sadd begin their title defence with a round of 16 encounter against second-division side Al Kharaitiyat at Al Thumama Stadium, while Al Gharafya take on Al Khor at Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium.

Sadd head into the match as overwhelming favourites, having enjoyed a strong season under coach Felix Sanchez. But the former Qatar national team boss insists his side will not take the challenge lightly.

"We've had a great season, but our motivation remains high," Sanchez said. "Our players are ready, and we must give our best to advance. We're the reigning champions and we aim to prove we can win it again."

Al Kharaitiyat, recently promoted to the top flight, are viewing the match as a valuable test and an opportunity to show-

case their credentials. "Facing Al Sadd is a special and difficult challenge," said coach Rachid Tiberkanine. "Despite recent setbacks, our players are eager to perform and show their quality. This match is a great opportunity to prove we deserved promotion."

After securing third place in the league, Al Gharafya are looking to end their long wait for silverware with a deep run in the Amir Cup. "This is a fresh opportunity for us," said head coach Pedro Martins. "The players are focused, motivated, and optimistic. It's been years since Al Gharafya lifted a trophy – we're ready to change that."

Al Khor, meanwhile, are hoping the cup provides a platform to turn the page on a difficult league campaign.

"It's a tough match, but I believe in our players," said coach Salam Shaker. "We'll fight to prove ourselves and aim for a strong performance."

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Barcelona's Lewandowski fit but to start on bench against Inter Milan, says Flick

Reuters
Milan

Barcelona striker Robert Lewandowski has been declared fit to return from a hamstring injury but is set to start on the bench in their Champions League semi-final second leg at Inter Milan today, manager Hansi Flick confirmed.

The 36-year-old Polish striker, who has netted 40 goals for Barcelona in all competitions this season, had been sidelined for his club's last four games. After sustaining the injury during Barca's 4-3 victory against Celta Vigo on April 19, he missed their Copa del Rey final victory over rivals Real Madrid and the first leg of the Champions League semi against Inter.

"We've spoke yesterday and everything is going the right way, and (Lewandowski) is good. Much better than we expected, and he's ready for the bench. So when we need him, maybe he can come in," Flick said yesterday.

Barcelona's hopes of reaching their first Champions League final in a decade are buoyed by Lewandowski's return, especially after an exhilarating 3-3 draw in the first leg. However, the team will be without key fullbacks Jules Kounde and Alejandro Balde, both sidelined with injuries. Flick did not reveal his plans to replace the injured duo, but he hinted at deploying centrebacks Ronald Araujo and Eric Garcia or relying on youngsters Hector Fort or Gerard Martin in their natural positions.

Kounde and Balde absences will pose a massive challenge for Flick with Barca struggling to stop Inter's counter-attacks in the first leg, mainly with Denzel Dumfries who was a constant menace from the right, scoring two goals and handing one assist. "As a coaching staff, we analyse



Barcelona's Lamine Yamal (left) and Robert Lewandowski train yesterday, on the eve of the Champions League semi-final second leg against Inter Milan. (AFP)

everything. We see how a player performed in each situation and after Wednesday maybe we will have to make some changes because we need to defend much better," Flick added.

"Football is really complex, so it has to do with everything. It has to do with the player but we have to find the right idea of how we want to play, the match plan. Of course, the changes have to be good, but also the players have to

show on the pitch who they are and what they are made of."

Despite these challenges, Barcelona are chasing a treble, unbeaten domestically since late December and leading La Liga with 79 points, four ahead of Real Madrid. After today's Champions League tie against Inter, they host Real in a crucial La Liga clash that could effectively decide the league title on Sunday.

Martinez rushing to be ready for Barca showdown, says Inter's Inzaghi

Milan: Simone Inzaghi said that Lautaro Martinez is in a race against time to be fit to play in Inter Milan's Champions League showdown with Barcelona at the San Siro.

Inter captain Martinez hasn't played since being forced off with a hamstring injury in last week's thrilling first leg, which left the semi-final beautifully poised at 3-3. The 27-year-old and France defender Benjamin Pavard are the two major injury doubts for Inter, with Martinez crucial to Inter's run to the last four. Striker Martinez has scored seven times in the Champions League since the turn of the year, including in both quarter-final matches against Bayern Munich.

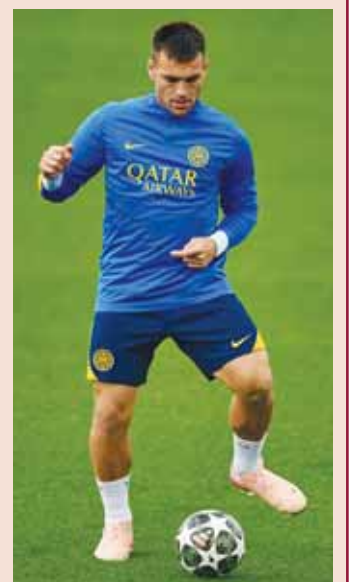
"We'll decide with the medical staff and the players because it will be them who need to tell me how they're feeling," said Inzaghi. "Yesterday Pavard took part in the first part of training and he felt OK, so we'll see. Lautaro hasn't trained since the last match with Barca so let's see how he is today and then we'll decide."

Inzaghi said that Martinez will only be selected if he can start, suggesting that he won't be available for the clash which could determine Inter's season with the Serie A title likely heading to Napoli. "It's unlikely that a player who can't start the match would be able to help us out in the last 25 minutes," added Inzaghi.

Inzaghi admitted that stopping Lamine Yamal will be a priority after the teenage Spain star ran

Inter's defence ragged in Catalonia, scoring a wonderful goal and twice striking the woodwork. "It's going to be really hard, we have to try to stop him getting the ball but that's almost impossible in today's football," said Inzaghi.

"He'll be getting special attention from us. We'll obviously double up on him, we'll try to give him as much attention as possible but like we said after the first match he is a great talent. He is really dangerous when he has the ball. When the team is in trouble they all give him the ball. But what really struck me is how quickly he thinks. When he gets the ball he already knows within a fraction of a second what he wants to do."



INDIAN PREMIER LEAGUE

Cummins grabs 3-19 but rain is bad news for edgy SRH

Hyderabad out of play-offs race after tie against DC is abandoned

AFP
Hyderabad, India

Pat Cummins' figures of 3-19 went in vain after rain ended his and Sunrisers Hyderabad's chances of reaching the playoffs as their clash against Delhi Capitals was called off yesterday.

Hyderabad restricted Delhi to 133-7 in 20 overs, but rain fell ahead of the chase and after about one hour and 45 minutes the officials decided to share one point each between the two teams.

Rain stopped after more than 70 minutes but the ground remained covered with puddles of water and Cummins and Delhi skipper Axar Patel shook hands.

Last year's runners-up Hyderabad with seven defeats, three wins and one no result fell out of the playoffs contention along with Chennai Super Kings and Rajasthan Royals.

Delhi in fifth place keep their dream alive of winning their first-ever IPL title. The top four teams at the end of the league stage will move into the play-offs.

Australia's Cummins struck on the first ball of the match and had the opposition reeling at 62-6, before Ashutosh Sharma and Tristan Stubbs put on 66 runs



Sunrisers Hyderabad's captain Pat Cummins celebrates after taking the wicket of Delhi Capitals' Karun Nair during the IPL match in Hyderabad yesterday. (AFP)

for the seventh wicket. Cummins elected to field first and took a wicket in each of his first three overs to send back Karun Nair for a first-ball duck, Faf du Plessis (three) and Abishek Porel (eight).

Harshal Patel dismissed Axar, and KL Rahul fell to Jaydev Unadkat in a dominant bowling performance by Hyderabad.

Stubbs and impact substitute Ashutosh both scored 41 each to check Delhi's slide.

Ashutosh took on the attack in his 26-ball knock, laced with two fours and three sixes, before falling to Sri Lankan Eshan Malinga in the final over.

South Africa's Stubbs finished off the innings with his fourth

boundary but rain had the final say. It was the second match of the current IPL season to be called off due to rain.

BRIEF SCORES
Match abandoned Delhi Capitals 133 for 7 (Stubbs 41*, Ashutosh 41, Cummins 3-19) **vs Sunrisers Hyderabad**

South Africa's Rabada back in IPL after serving drug ban



New Delhi: South Africa pace bowler **Kagiso Rabada** has returned to India for selection in his IPL team Gujarat Titans after serving a ban for recreational drug use, the franchise said yesterday. Rabada, 29, left the Indian Premier League to return home last month after a positive drug test resulted in him serving a provisional suspension. "Kagiso Rabada has accepted responsibility and regrets his mistake," Gujarat said in a statement. "South African Institute for Drug-Free Sport (SAIDS) has completed the investigation. Rabada has honoured his provisional suspension and has also completed a programme. He is now fully available for selection in the remaining matches of the IPL." The statement did not specify the length of the suspension. Rabada, who played just two matches for Gujarat in this season of the T20 tournament, was "deeply sorry" for his actions. "As has been reported, I recently returned to South Africa from participating in the IPL for personal reasons," Rabada said in a

statement. "This was due to my returning an adverse analytical finding for the use of a recreational drug. "I am deeply sorry to all those that I have let down. I will never take the privilege of playing cricket for granted. This privilege is much larger than me. It goes beyond my personal aspirations." Rabada said. "Moving forward, this moment will not define me. I will keep doing what I have always done, continuously working hard and playing with passion and devotion to my craft," Rabada said. Gujarat are placed fourth in the 10-team table with four league matches left for the 2022 champions, who won the IPL in their debut season. Top four teams at the end of the league phase will move into the play-offs. Rabada is South Africa's leading fast bowler. He has taken 327 wickets in 70 Tests and is expected to play a key role for South Africa in the World Test Championship final against Australia starting at Lord's in London on June 11.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Ooredoo named exclusive telecom partner of the Wanda DL Doha Meeting



Sabah al-Kuwari, Senior Director Marketing Communications at Ooredoo, and Mohammed Issa al-Fadala, President of the Qatar Athletics Federation, after a sponsorship signing ceremony.

Ooredoo, Qatar's leading telecommunications operator, has officially announced its role as the exclusive telecom partner of the prestigious Wanda Diamond League Doha Meeting, further strengthening its commitment to promoting international sporting excellence and fostering community well-being through the power of sport.

The partnership agreement was officially signed during a ceremony at Ooredoo's Headquarters 1, with Sabah al-Kuwari, Senior Director Marketing Communications at Ooredoo, and Mohammed Issa al-Fadala, President of the Qatar Athletics Federation, representing their respective organisations.

The Wanda Diamond League Doha Meeting, a premier event that gathers the world's finest athletes, enjoys global recognition with broadcasts in more than 150 countries, thereby offering unparalleled exposure and reinforcing Ooredoo's position on the international stage.

Sabah al-Kuwari, Senior Director Marketing Communications at Ooredoo, commented: "Our partnership with the Wanda Diamond League Doha Meeting embod-

ies Ooredoo's steadfast mission to support major global sporting events that inspire and unite communities. We are proud to contribute to an event that showcases extraordinary athletic talent while aligning with our commitment to empowerment and well-being on both local and international fronts."

Mohammed Issa al-Fadala, President of the Qatar Athletics Federation, added: "We are delighted to welcome Ooredoo as the telecom partner of the Wanda Diamond League Doha Meeting. This collaboration highlights our shared vision of promoting sports, health, and youth development throughout Qatar. The event is set to attract the world's top athletes and thousands of fans, making it a key highlight in Qatar's sports calendar and a valuable platform for Ooredoo to connect with audiences locally and globally."

This partnership marks another milestone in Ooredoo's journey to champion international sports, community development, and national pride, while further strengthening Qatar's position as a leading global destination for world-class sporting events.

FOCUS

Zhao becomes China's first world snooker champion

Reuters
Sheffield, UK

Zhao Xintong became the first Chinese player to win the World Snooker Championship with a victory over Welshman and three-times winner Mark Williams at the Crucible Theatre yesterday, the latest chapter in Zhao's remarkable rise and fall story.

The 28-year-old won by 18 frames to 12, despite a spirited comeback attempt from Williams. Zhao, who is touted as the sport's next superstar, received a 20-month ban in January 2023 after a match-fixing scandal that rocked the sport, the repercussions of which meant he was classed as an amateur at this event and needed to get through four rounds of qualifying to reach the Crucible.

The Chinese player, who lives just a 10-minute walk from the Crucible venue, took an 11-6 overnight lead into yesterday's third session.

While Zhao looked completely unflappable and kept smiling throughout the afternoon session, Williams struggled for accuracy. Williams appeared powerless to stop his opponent from taking a seemingly unassailable 17-8 lead, meaning Zhao need-



China's Xintong Zhao celebrates with the trophy after winning his final match against Wales' Mark Williams at the World Snooker Championship at The Crucible Theatre, Sheffield, Britain, yesterday. (Reuters)

ed to win just one frame in the evening final to claim the world title. But a free-wheeling Williams made things interesting by winning the evening's first four frames with a flurry of excellent shots before the younger player answered in the fifth to secure victory.

The final was already historic no matter the result, as the 50-year-old Williams became

the oldest player to reach the final with his semi-final win over world number one Judd Trump.

Zhao had swept aside seven-time winner Ronnie O'Sullivan in the semi-finals to set up what had been billed as the coronation of a new snooker king. The Chinese player, nicknamed "the Cyclone", raced out to an early 7-1 advantage in the best-of-35-frame contest but Williams staged a mini revival

in Sunday's second session to keep alive his hopes of a fourth title. No player, however, had overcome such a large overnight deficit since the tournament moved to the Crucible in 1977. Zhao joined Terry Griffiths and Shaun Murphy as the only qualifiers to capture snooker's most prestigious trophy. He banked a cheque for £500,000 (\$664,000.00) with Monday's victory.

SPOTLIGHT

Olympic 100m medallist Kerley denies battery

AFP
Miami

Former world 100m champion Fred Kerley has denied he was arrested as claimed for battery but because he exercised his right to remain silent until his lawyer was present after a "physical altercation".

Kerley, who won 100m gold at the 2022 World Championships and took bronze in the event at the Paris Olympics, said in a statement the arrest was down to a "misunderstanding".

He missed the Grand Slam track meet in Miami after he was detained last Thursday by police in Broward County, Florida.

Arrest records showed Kerley, who turns 30

tomorrow, had been arrested on a charge of touch or strike battery and remained in jail as of early Friday.

Reports said the American had been arrested following an incident at the official hotel for the Grand Slam Track event, the second stop on Michael Johnson's new circuit.

"While there was a physical altercation, my arrest was not due to any criminal act," Kerley wrote on Instagram.

"Rather, it resulted from my decision to exercise right remain silent until legal counsel was present. I chose not to speak to law enforcement without my attorney, and for that reason alone I was booked."

Kerley, who also won a 100m silver medal at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, apologised to his fans and Grand Slam, adding the "experience had "caught (him) off guard".

"I remain fully committed to clearing my name," he said. "I take full accountability for placing myself in a situation that allowed for this misunderstanding."

"I am taking active steps to ensure nothing like this happens again."

Kerley, a member of two world title-winning relay teams (4x400m in 2019 and 4x100m in 2023), has had several brushes with the law in recent months.

In January he was arrested by police in Miami Beach following a confrontation with officers that led to him being tasered.

He was subsequently charged with battery against a police officer, resisting arrest and disorderly conduct.

Separately in January, Kerley was also charged with domestic violence by strangulation following an incident in May 2024.

13th Qatar National Arabian Horse Show for Individual Owners concludes



Areeb Al Nasser, owned by Rashid Faraj KA al-Marri, was crowned with the gold medal as champion in the Senior Stallions Championship class on the final day of the 13th Qatar National Arabian Horse Show for Individual Owners which concluded at the Qatar Equestrian Federation's indoor arena on Sunday. Admiraal of Al Amer Stud claimed silver while Arkan Al Sraiya of Al Sraiya Stud won bronze. The Senior Mares Championship gold went to the champion Berlianty Al Mai of Al Amer Stud. The silver was clinched by Alkaydah Al Sraiya of Al Sraiya Stud while DA Magic Moment, owned by Nasser Mohammed MA al-Hajri, won the bronze. Champions of the other classes included: Faris Al Nasiat, owned by Al Dana Stud - Junior Colts C'ship Class gold; Aysha EV, owned by AF Stud - Junior Fillies C'ship Class gold; Dstoor Al Sraiya of Al Sraiya Stud - Yearling Colts C'ship Class gold; Samaa Al Jazeel of Al Jazeel Stud - Yearling Fillies C'ship Class gold; D Daffer of Al Salem Stud - Stallions 11+ Years Old Class gold; Admiraal of Amer Stud - Stallions 7-10YO C'ship Class gold. Meanwhile, the 10th Qatar National Peninsula Arabian Horse Show for Individual Owners began on Monday and the finals of which will be held on Wednesday (May 7). **PICTURES: Juhaim**

FORMULA 1

Piastri wins Miami Grand Prix to lead McLaren one-two

AUSTRALIAN TAKES 4TH WIN OF SEASON, RUSSELL THIRD FOR MERCEDES

AFP
Miami

Oscar Piastri made it a hat-trick of wins with victory in the Miami Grand Prix yesterday as McLaren enjoyed a one-two on the podium to continue their dominant Formula One season.

Australian Piastri finished 4.6 seconds ahead of British team-mate Lando Norris with George Russell of Mercedes finishing third but 37.6 seconds behind.

The victory was the third in a row for Piastri after his wins in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia and his fourth in the six races so far this season. With Norris pipping Piastri in Saturday's sprint race, McLaren picked up maximum points from the weekend and Piastri heads out of Miami with a 16 point lead over his teammate.

Four-time world champion Max Verstappen, who started on pole, finished in fourth place with Alex Albon of Williams fifth and 18-year-old Italian Kimi Antonelli of Mercedes in sixth. "I was aware enough to avoid Max in turn one, and from then I knew I had a good pace advantage," Piastri said. "The car was incredible today."

"The hard stint I was struggling a little bit, so there are some things to work on. Got to keep learning, but very happy to be leaving Miami on top."

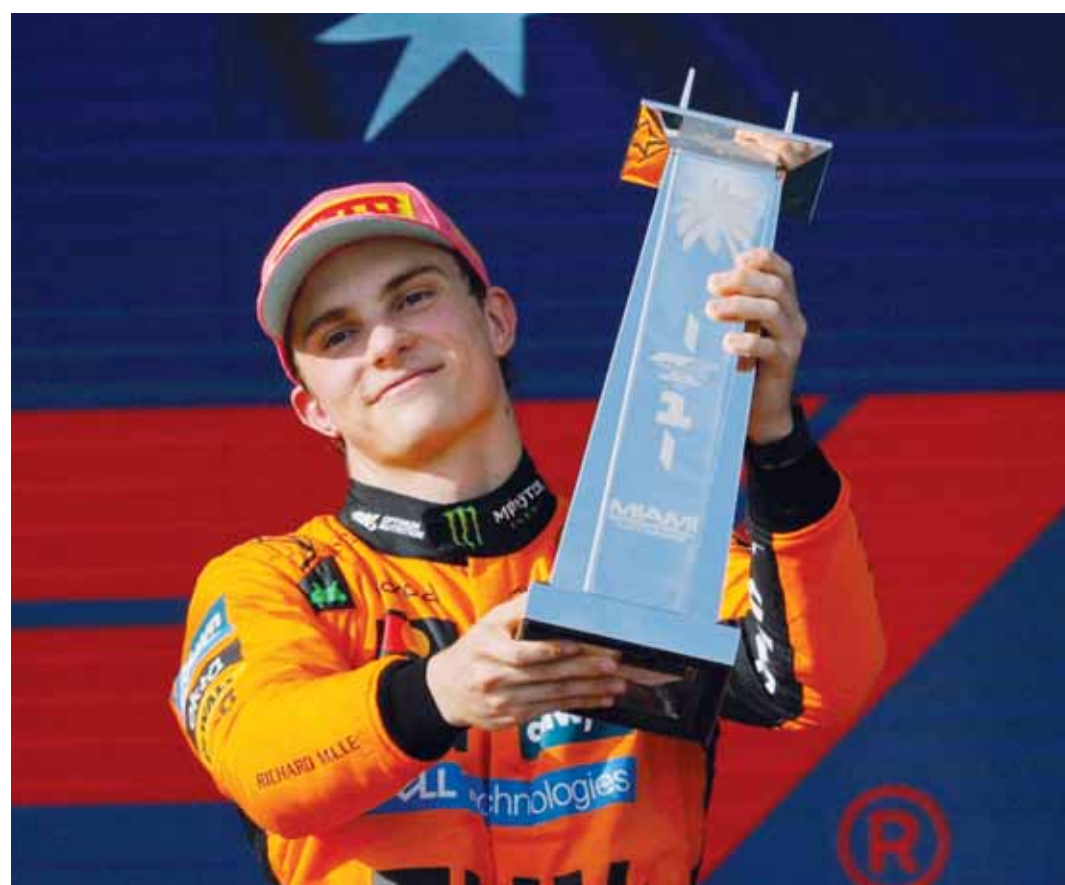
"Two years ago here we were the slowest team, I think we got lapped twice. Here, we just won the race by 35 seconds," he added.

Piastri, who started at fourth on the grid, grabbed the lead on lap 14 when Verstappen took the inside line but was too late on the brakes and went wide.

"Brakes man, honestly, useless," the Dutchman told his team radio and the Red Bull driver, a two-time winner at Miami, was not to get a sniff of the lead again.

Norris went on the hunt for Verstappen but by the time he got ahead, after some jousting on lap 17, Piastri had opened up a nine-second lead.

"It's never the best feeling (to be



McLaren's Oscar Piastri celebrates with the trophy on the podium after winning the Miami GP. (Reuters)

second) but the team has done an amazing job, so I can't fault them at all," said Norris.

"We were up the road so it is a good feeling. Oscar drove well, Max put up a good fight as always so it is what it is. I paid the price for not doing a good enough job today, but still happy to be second," he said.

Norris had overtaken Verstappen while heading off piste himself and he had to then give back the spot to the Dutchman before finally getting ahead and into second place.

It was a spell which cost Norris crucial time which he was unable to recover but he had no regrets about his approach.

"What can I say? If I don't go for it, people will complain. If I go for it, people complain. So you can't

win. It is the way it is with Max, it's crash or don't pass," he said.

Russell had finished behind his team-mate Antonelli in qualifying but after some frustration in the sprint race as well, he was glad to be on the podium. "Really happy to come away with P3 as I have been struggling this weekend personally. Well done to the McLaren, they were just too far down the road," he said.

It was another disappointing day for Ferrari, with Charles Leclerc finishing seventh and Lewis Hamilton a place behind.

Hamilton, in his first season with the Italian team, expressed frustration with his team's tactics several times during the race, especially after he was instructed to let Leclerc pass him.

The Briton had himself been al-

lowed in front of Leclerc but was unable to take advantage of that position with his teammate closing the gap.

Some of Hamilton's comments to his team were cutting, but he played down the exchanges.

"I lost a lot of time behind Charles and in that moment I was thinking let's make a concise decision and not waste time. I'm sure people didn't like certain topics but you've got to understand it's frustrating, people say worse things than I say, it was more sarcastic than anything."

"I'm not frustrated now but we will work internally and we keep pushing," he said. Carlos Sainz faced a steward investigation after his aggressive attempt to overtake Hamilton on the final corner resulted in a clash of wheels.

TENNIS

Sinner happy to return after doping ban but keeping expectations low for Italian Open

Reuters
Rome

World number one Jannik Sinner said yesterday that he was heading into the Italian Open with low expectations as he makes his comeback after serving a three-month doping ban.

Sinner agreed a settlement with the World Anti-Doping Agency in February and began an immediate three-month suspension after authorities accepted that the anabolic agent clostebol had entered his system via massages from his physiotherapist.

The three-times Grand Slam champion, who has not played since winning the Australian Open in January, will now hope to leave the doping saga behind him and build momentum for the French Open, which runs from May 25 to June 8. The Italian was cleared to return to training from April 13, with his suspension ending on May 4.

"It's a very, very low expectation tournament in general for me, it's talking also results wise," Sinner told reporters ahead of the Italian Open.

"What's missing is the complete feedback of where my level is. That's going to come then slowly with the time of playing, after the first round match I'm going to have a good picture of myself - where I am at."

Despite missing out on three months' action, the 23-year-old was assured of retaining the top ranking for his home tournament after his closest challenger Alexander Zverev crashed to an early defeat in Monte-Carlo Masters. "For me personally good news that the Grand Slams

were not included ... This kind of agreement, I didn't want to do it in the beginning. It was not easy for me to accept it because I know what really happened, but sometimes we have to choose the best in a very bad moment," Sinner said. "It's all over now, so I'm happy to play tennis again."

Sinner said last year was very difficult for him. "I was in a tough situation and in the beginning of the Australian Open I struggled a lot. So, it was nice also to take a small break..." he added.

"But I could feel that I'm not playing for quite a long time. The body still has to adjust the times ... the blisters in hands they come again because you're not used to it anymore."

Meanwhile Casper Ruud said winning the biggest title of his career in Madrid is a timely boost ahead of the French Open, where the world number seven will look to reach a third final in four years and claim his maiden Grand Slam trophy.

Ruud overcame both a rib injury sustained in the semi-final and a resilient Jack Draper to seal a 7-5 3-6 6-4 victory in the Spanish capital on Sunday. It ended a run of six successive losses in big finals for the 26-year-old, including the 2022 French Open and US Open title clashes and the Roland Garros final two years ago.

"With this win, I put myself back in a good position when it comes to ranking and seeding," said Ruud, who jumped eight spots in the rankings and returned to the top 10 ahead of the year's second Grand Slam starting on May 25. "If you want to win a tournament it doesn't really matter what your ranking is because you have to beat every player you play anyways."



Italy's Jannik Sinner (right) and Matteo Berrettini attend a celebration ceremony for Italy's Davis Cup and Billie Jean King Cup victories at Foro Italico sports complex, ahead of the Italian Open, in Rome yesterday. (AFP)

FOOTBALL

Tudor unshaken as Juventus stay in the eye of the top-four storm



Juventus' Renato Veiga shakes hands with coach Igor Tudor after their Serie A match against Bologna yesterday. (Reuters)

Reuters
Milan

Juventus manager Igor Tudor remained upbeat even though his side missed a chance to strengthen their grip on fourth place in Serie A after being held to a draw at Bologna on Sunday, saying that the battle for Champions League football was still firmly in his side's hands.

The 1-1 draw left Juve level on 63 points with Roma and Lazio in fifth and sixth respectively, with Bologna just one point behind in seventh. However Tudor denied that anything was decided at Renato Dall'Ara Stadium. "There are three games left and we are still fourth, albeit

level on points. We go to Lazio with confidence, then there's Udinese and Venezia," Tudor told DAZN.

"I said before kick-off that whatever the result, nothing will be decided tonight. I am saying the same against Lazio, one game cannot decide everything when there are so many teams crammed together in a few points."

Although the hosts controlled possession throughout, Juve created multiple significant opportunities to secure a win, including two goals ruled out for offside, but Tudor insisted the result was fair.

"The players gave their all... We created opportunities, but we are content with the point, all things considered."

Bologna coach Vincenzo Italiano shared the same outlook.

"There are still nine points up for grabs and that's an enormous amount at that level of the table," he said.

"It will be a real battle, there are many head-to-head clashes still to be played, so whoever has the most consistent mentality and intensity will reach their objective."

Bologna are set for an exciting end to the season, starting with an away match against AC Milan, followed by a Coppa Italia final clash with the same opponents, before facing Fiorentina and Genoa.

"Clearly, the first meeting with Milan is in Serie A, we must go there to pick up points. I think we'll be very concentrated and it won't distract us ahead of the Coppa Italia," Italiano said.

Arabi and Gharafa register victories at Amir Cup Basketball



Defending champions Al Arabi and Al Gharafa registered victories in the Amir Cup basketball Group A matches at the Al Gharafa Indoor Hall yesterday. With the help of Elmedin Kikanovic's match-high 23 points (12 rebounds and 3 assists), Al Arabi defeated Al Ahli 82-74, while Al Gharafa edged past Al Sadd 99-92. Makye Richards scored 29 points with 11 rebounds and 9 assists for the winners. Raslan al-Abdulla also chipped in with 28 points.

FOOTBALL

Coach Enrique's quiet revolution reshapes PSG

PSG find themselves on the verge of a place in the Champions League final

Reuters

Paris

In a sport sometimes defined by individual brilliance and star power, Paris Saint-Germain manager Luis Enrique is quietly reshaping the narrative as his side gear up for their Champions League semi-final return leg against Arsenal.

The Spanish coach, whose career has already seen success at Barcelona and with the Spanish national team, has introduced a distinct philosophy in the French capital, one where no individual rises above the collective.

The results have been telling. PSG find themselves on the verge of a place in the Champions League final, with a decisive clash against Arsenal at the Parc des Princes tomorrow after prevailing 1-0 at the Emirates stadium last week following an impressive display of collective discipline.

Enrique arrived at PSG last season with a simple but firm mantra - No one head sticking out. At a club historically synonymous with star players - from Zlatan Ibrahimovic and Neymar to Lionel Messi and Kylian Mbappe - his refusal to build a side around individual talent raised eyebrows, particularly as the team struggled in the early stages of their Champions League campaign.

"You cannot understand," he quipped as an interviewer asked about his tactics during the league phase. A string of unconvincing performances in the opening phase had indeed led critics to question whether Enrique's philosophy could succeed at a club where star power has so often overshadowed tactical cohesion.

Yet, months later, his approach appears vindicated. PSG have evolved into one of the most cohesive and tactically disciplined sides in Europe this season. Central to their resurgence has been an emphasis on pressing as a unit and maintaining balance be-



Luis Enrique has introduced a distinct philosophy in the French capital, one where no individual rises above the collective. (Reuters)

tween attack and defence. The transformation is most evident in the midfield, once seen as a relative weakness, now operating with precision and control against some of the continent's elite.

A key figure in this evolution has been Khvicha Kvaratskhelia. The Georgian in-

ternational, whose versatility has seen him deployed in both attacking and defensive roles, embodies the flexibility Enrique demands from his squad. Kvara's ability to shift seamlessly between positions and responsibilities has added an element of unpredictability to PSG's game, contribut-

ing decisively to their progress in Europe's premier competition.

Enrique's commitment to the collective has also signalled a broader cultural shift within PSG. The club's previous reliance on individual stardom, a hallmark of the Qatar Sports Investments era, has been replaced by a system in which every player's role is clearly defined within a wider tactical framework. The likes of Ibrahimovic, Neymar, and Messi may have delivered memorable moments in Paris, but under Enrique's stewardship, the days of tailoring a team around a single superstar appear to be over.

Notably, Enrique foreshadowed this evolution last year, revealing in post-match interviews that his focus was already on building a side for the following season. That long-term vision is now bearing fruit. Ironically, from this resolutely collective approach, PSG may yet produce the next Ballon d'Or winner.

Ousmane Dembele, rejuvenated under Enrique and thriving in a system built on teamwork and tactical discipline, has emerged as an outside contender for football's most coveted individual honour, the Ballon d'Or, a fitting paradox for a club undergoing its quiet revolution.

DEMBELE BACK TO TRAINING AHEAD OF ARSENAL CLASH

Meanwhile, PSG received a timely boost ahead of their Champions League semi-final second leg against Arsenal as forward Ousmane Dembele returned to full training yesterday. The France international, who scored the decisive goal in PSG's 1-0 first-leg win at the Emirates Stadium, had been a concern after picking up a muscle injury against Arsenal.

Dembele, however, took part in a squad session at the club's training ground and is expected to be available for the return fixture at the Parc des Princes. PSG are bidding to reach their first Champions League final since 2020.

Kane savours sweet taste of success at last

Munich: England striker Harry Kane said it feels sweet to finally end his career-long trophy drought on Sunday, after securing the Bundesliga title with Bayern Munich in his second season at the German club.

The England captain broke a league record two weeks ago with his 60th goal in his first 60 league games for Bayern, and the 31-year-old looks set to become the first player in Bundesliga history to be crowned top scorer in both his first two seasons. "What a night last night, what a celebration with the players, with the staff. I'm sure everyone's feeling it a little bit this morning, but we're here," Kane said in a video yesterday.

"I feel amazing, it's been a long time coming, obviously a lot of hard work, a lot of dedication, and it just feels sweet to win the title, the first one of my career. I appreciate all the support, as always, it never goes unnoticed, and I can't wait to enjoy these next couple of weeks. I can't wait to be at the Allianz Arena on Saturday and celebrate in front of the fans. "And then, as always, we look forward to the next one, and we go again and try and get number two."

Former Tottenham Hotspur forward Kane has netted over 400 goals for club and country to become England's record scorer and sit second on the Premier League's all-time list.

MAN UNITED HAVE 'BIG RESPONSIBILITY' TO WIN EUROPA LEAGUE: AMORIM

Ruben Amorim has warned his Manchester United players that they have a "big responsibility" to salvage a dismal season by winning the Europa League. United warmed up for their Europa League semi-final second leg against Athletic Bilbao by suffering yet another Premier League defeat at Brentford on Sunday.

Amorim's side slumped to a 4-3 loss that left them languishing in 15th place and in danger of their worst final position since they were relegated in 1973-74. United's winless run in the league extended to six matches as they trailed 4-1 against Brentford before late goals from Alejandro Garnacho and Amad Diallo restored a little pride for the lacklustre visitors.

Amorim has suffered 12 defeat in his 24 league games with United, winning just six times. But, after their 3-0 first leg win over Bilbao last Thursday, United know they have the chance to qualify for the Champions League by winning the Europa League.

"I think it's stressful to lose games. When we're fighting for a title it's not stressful," Amorim said. "I have no doubts that we are playing better and we are understanding the way we play, even in this context."

"So we have to take all the hits in this moment. We are losing games in the Premier League, but we are fighting for the Europa League so we need to accept that and to think about now Thursday which is the most important game for us."

SPOTLIGHT

Alexander-Arnold to leave Liverpool

AFP

Liverpool

Trent Alexander-Arnold will leave Liverpool when his contract expires at the end of the season, saying it was the "hardest decision" of his life ahead of a widely expected move to Real Madrid. Alexander-Arnold is out of contract at the end of June and the England right-back's future had been the subject of intense debate throughout Liverpool's charge to the Premier League title this season.

"After 20 years at Liverpool Football Club, now is the time for me to confirm that I will be leaving at the end of the season," the 26-year-old posted on X. "This is easily the hardest decision I've ever made in my life."

Alexander-Arnold's contract talks over a free transfer switch to Real are reported to be at an advanced stage. He will depart as a Premier League champion after the Reds moved level with rivals Manchester United on a joint-record 20 English top-flight titles. "I know many of you have wondered why or been frustrated that I haven't spoken about this yet, but it was always my intention to keep my full focus on the team's best

interests, which was securing No. 20," Alexander-Arnold said.

"This club has been my whole life - my whole world - for 20 years. From the academy right through until now, the support and love I have felt from everyone inside and outside of the club will stay with me forever. I will forever be in debt to you all. My love for this club will never die."

Liverpool-born Alexander-Arnold was one of three high-profile Reds players whose deals were due to run out at the end of the season - a contract saga that provided a continuous backdrop to Arne Slot's first campaign in charge. Top-scorer Mohamed Salah and captain Virgil van Dijk signed new deals in recent weeks but Alexander-Arnold has opted to leave.

The defender made his senior debut in 2016 and has made 352 appearances for the Reds to date, scoring 23 goals and lifting multiple trophies including the 2019 Champions League and two Premier League crowns. Liverpool were reportedly willing to make Alexander-Arnold one of the highest-paid defenders in Premier League history in a bid to keep him.

But the lure of playing for Real alongside close friend and England team-mate Jude Bellingham proved impossible to resist. Despite

the snub, Liverpool paid tribute to Alexander-Arnold, who joined the club as a six-year-old. "Alexander-Arnold will depart with our gratitude and appreciation for his contribution during a sustained period of success," the club said in a statement. In the same statement, Alexander-Arnold said he had "loved every single minute of it, achieved all my dreams".

But he said he wanted a fresh challenge. "Giving everything day in, day out for 20 years, I've got to a point now where I feel like I need a new change, a new challenge for me as a player and as a person. And I think now is the right time for me to do that," he said.

Liverpool midfielder Curtis Jones, another Merseysider who graduated from the club's youth academy, was the first Reds player to react to the news on social media. "Thank you for everything brother. Legend. Good luck," he wrote on Instagram.

But Alexander-Arnold's mooted move to Real has split Liverpool fans and pundits, with some believing he should have stayed to become a one-club legend. Michael Owen and Steve McManaman both endured difficult relationships with Liverpool supporters after leaving for Madrid in 2004 and 1999, respectively.

Samba, El-Seify win gold as Qatar finishes with 7 medals at Arab Athletics Championships



Qatar finished with seven medals - including two on the final day - at the 24th Arab Athletics Championships in Oran, Algeria, on Sunday. The reigning Asian record-holder Abderrahman Samba stormed to the 400m hurdles title in 48.77 seconds. Ashraf El-Seify also claimed gold in hammer throw clearing a distance of 72.98m. Hamdi Ali (high jump, 2.14m) and Seifeldin Abdelsalam (pole vault, 5.62m) won a gold medal each, sprint hurdler Omar Doudai Abakar (110m hurdles, 13.78 sec) and Ahmad Jibrine Adoum (shot put 17.88m) earned silvers, while discus thrower Mohamed Ibrahim Moaz secured bronze with a 58.67m effort.

