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TENNIS

Defending Rome  
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AMIR CUP

## Sadd rally to beat Kharaitiyat, set up quarters with Gharafa

By Sports Reporter  
Doha

Defending champions Al Sadd rallied from an early deficit to claim a convincing 3-1 victory over second-division side Al Kharaitiyat in the Round of 16 clash of the Amir Cup at Al Thumama Stadium yesterday. The win secures Sadd a place in the quarter-finals, where they will face Al Gharafa, who advanced after eliminating Al Khor.

Kharaitiyat stunned the reigning champions early when Sulaiman An opened the scoring in the 13th minute. However, Sadd responded through Giovanni Henrique, who netted the equaliser in the 23rd minute to restore parity before the break.

In the second half, Sadd took control. Spanish forward Rafael Mujica gave them the lead in the 54th minute, and just two minutes later, Giovanni bagged his second of the night to put the result beyond doubt. Akram Afif delivered a standout performance, providing two key assists and tormenting the Al Kharaitiyat defence throughout.

Sadd defender Ahmed Suhail said they were below par in the first half. "Thankfully we qualified, even though our performance in the first half wasn't up to standard," Suhail said post-match. "We faced a strong opponent in Al Kharaitiyat — they were by no means an easy team."

Suhail added that Al Sadd improved notably after the break: "In the second half, we corrected our mistakes and the players responded well. We pushed forward more aggressively and managed to score. Again, credit to Al Kharaitiyat — they gave us a tough match and I wish them all the best."

Earlier, Al Gharafa sealed their place in



Giovanni scored twice in Al Sadd's win over Al Kharaitiyat at Al Thumama Stadium.

the quarters with a 2-1 win over Al Khor at Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium.

The Cheetahs took the lead through Spanish striker Joselu in the 20th minute after a precise cross from Rodrigo Mourinho found him inside the box. Joselu made no mistake, slotting the ball into the net to give Al Gharafa a deserved advantage following early pressure.

Despite dominating possession and creating several chances, Gharafa were unable to extend their lead before half-time. Al Khor nearly equalised in the 35th minute when Sofiane Hanni's curling effort went narrowly wide. Al Khor continued their pursuit of an equaliser after the break, with Ricardo Gomez firing just wide in the 52nd minute. But it was Gharafa who



Joselu (left) celebrates with Ahmed al-Janahi after scoring against Al Khor.

struck again. In the 63rd minute, Yacine Brahimi delivered a pinpoint cross into the area, which Ahmed al-Janahi finished clinically to double the lead.

Al Khor responded with a wave of attacks and managed to pull one back in the 75th minute. Abdulaziz Hazaa fired a powerful strike from the edge of the area that beat goalkeeper Claude Amin, making it

2-1 and setting up a tense final 15 minutes. Gharafa, however, held firm to secure the victory. Following the match, Iceland midfielder Aron Gunnarsson was pleased with the result, saying: "The match wasn't as easy as we expected. Al Khor kept pushing until the end. We gave everything to win and advance, and we're determined to fight for the title and make our fans proud."

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

# Frattesi shoots Inter into final after Barcelona epic

Frattesi lashes home in the 99th minute, sending a packed and rocking San Siro wild with joy

AFP  
Milan, Italy

Davide Frattesi fired Inter Milan into the Champions League final last night with an extra-time winner which gave the Italians a stunning 4-3 triumph over Barcelona, 7-6 on aggregate. Italy midfielder Frattesi won a tie for the ages under a downpour in Milan when he lashed home in the 99th minute, sending a packed and rocking San Siro wild with joy.

Simone Inzaghi's team will face either Arsenal or Paris Saint-Germain at the end of this month in Munich, where they will feel they have a great chance to be crowned kings of Europe for a fourth time after coming out on top in an epic contest. Last night's triumph saved Inter's season as their bid for the treble went up in smoke after getting past Bayern Munich in the quarter-finals.

Inter conceded top spot in Serie A to Napoli, who are favourites to claim the domestic league title, after getting past Bayern while AC Milan dumped them out of the Italian Cup a fortnight ago. But Inter ended Barca's hopes for the quadruple and now head into the final weeks of the season buoyant with a second Champions League final in three seasons to look forward to.

Frattesi's winning goal, his seventh of the season and probably the most important of his career, was all the more incredible for the fact that Inter should by rights have already been eliminated. The hosts were heading out with two minutes remaining of regular time when Raphinha completed a comeback from two goals down at half-time and gave Barca a 3-2 lead on the night.

But Francesco Acerbi stunned everyone in the stadium, not least the already-celebrating Barca supporters, when he forced home Denzel Dumfries' cross in the second minute of added time. That goal came as a bolt from the blue as Barca had been



Inter Milan's Davide Frattesi (second left) celebrates with teammates after scoring against Barcelona in the Champions League semi-final at San Siro in Milan. (Reuters)

by far the better team in the second half of normal time after going in at the break behind to a brilliant Lautaro Martinez goal and Hakan Calhanoglu's penalty in first half stoppage-time.

Eric Garcia and Dani Olmo pulled Barca

level with goals in the 54th and 60th minutes, both from sumptuous Gerard Martin deliveries, and Yann Sommer had to be at his best to keep Inter within touching distance. Sommer made possibly the save of the season between Barca's first two goals,

somehow stopping Eric Garcia from finishing off a lightning Barca counter-attack.

And the Swiss ended up being crucial again in the 113th minute when he pulled off another miraculous save from Lamine

Yamal, who hit the post just before Acerbi's equaliser.

Inter then held off Barca as the home fans held their breath before unleashing a mighty roar at the final whistle of the match of the season.

INDIAN PREMIER LEAGUE

# Gujarat cross line in rain-hit thriller against Mumbai

Former champions Titans pick up key points in playoff race

AFP  
Mumbai

Hardik Pandya missed a shy at the stumps to force a Super Over as Gujarat Titans edged out Mumbai Indians by three wickets from the final ball in a rain-hit IPL clash yesterday to top the table.

Gujarat started strongly in their initial chase of 156 with a second-wicket stand of 72 between skipper Shubman Gill, who fell to an inspired Jasprit Bumrah after a rain break, and Jos Buttler at Mumbai's Wankhede Stadium.

Bad weather interrupted play twice and after the second delay the victory target was revised to 147 from 19 overs, leaving Gujarat needing 15 from the final six balls.

Rahul Tewatia began with a four off Deepak Chahar and Gerald Coetzee smashed a six on the third ball before holing out on the fifth with only one run required to win. But number nine Arshad Khan stole a single off the final ball after hitting it to Pandya at mid-off, as the former Gujarat skipper, now Mumbai captain, missed the wicket with his throw from close range.

Gujarat jumped to the top of the 10-team table and pushed Mumbai, whose winning streak of six matches came to an end, to fourth. The top four teams after the league phase will make the playoffs, with the final on May 25 in Kolkata.

Gujarat were cruising at 113-2 after the first rain break when Bumrah, who returned figures

of 2-19, bowled Gill for a 46-ball 43 and fellow quick Trent Boult trapped impact substitute Sherrane Rutherford lbw for 28.

Bumrah rattled the stumps of the big-hitting Shahrukh Khan and Gujarat slipped to 126-6 when Rashid Khan was out for two.

Tewatia and Coetzee were batting when rain stopped play for the second time with Gujarat behind the DLS par score at 132-6, but after a long wait achieved a nail-biting victory.

Mumbai were restricted to 155-8 despite Will Jacks' 53 and a late cameo of 27 by Corbin Bosch.

Pace spearhead Mohammed Siraj claimed a wicket from just the second ball when he got Mumbai's South African opener Ryan Rickelton caught out for two.

Gujarat's fielders then dropped three catches, including two re-prieves to Jacks who counter-attacked after the fall of Rohit Sharma, for seven. England batter Jacks, along with Suryakumar Yadav, who made 35, put on 71 runs for the third wicket.

Sai Kishore broke the stand with his left-arm spin to cut short Suryakumar's 24-ball knock and trigger a collapse.

Afghanistan leg-spinner Rashid sent back Jacks after the batsman's first half-century for Mumbai.

**BRIEF SCORES**

**Gujarat Titans 147 for 7** (Gill 43, Bumrah 2-19) **beat Mumbai Indians 155 for 8** (Jacks 53, Sai Kishore 2-34) **by three wickets (DLS method)**



Gujarat Titans' captain Shubman Gill plays a shot during the IPL match against Mumbai Indians at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai yesterday. Titans won by three wickets. (AFP)

CRICKET

## UAE win ACC Men's U-16 Asia Cup in Doha



Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Saud al-Thani, Chairman of the Qatar Cricket Association; and Mohsin Naqvi, President of the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) at the prize distribution ceremony of the ACC Men's Under-16 Asia Cup (West Zone) tournament in Doha.

The ACC Men's Under-16 Asia Cup (West Zone) concluded at the West End International Cricket Stadium, culminating in a decisive victory for the United Arab Emirates (UAE) over Kuwait.

The final match, held at one of the tournament's two venues alongside the Doha University of Science and Technology Stadium, saw the UAE beating Kuwait in the final to secure the coveted championship title.

The 13-day tournament, hosted by Qatar, featured the participation of six nations: the host country, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the UAE and Bahrain.

The final day's action was graced by the presence of Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Saud al-Thani, Chairman of the Qatar Cricket Committee (QCA); and Mohsin Naqvi, President of the Asian Cricket Council (ACC); alongside other notable figures.

Naqvi is also the chairman of Pakistan Cricket Board.

This edition of the Under-16 Asia Cup (West Zone) marked a significant milestone as the first 50-over cricket tournament ever held in Qatar, with each match spanning between five and seven hours.

The UAE's victory secures their qualification for the upcoming U-19 tournament, the details of which are yet to be announced.

Khaled al-Suwaidi, the tournament director, conveyed his satisfaction with the technical execution and organisational success of the event, particularly the final match.

Speaking to the Qatar News Agency (QNA), he expressed delight in hosting the first 50-over category tournament in Qatar and voiced aspirations for organising larger international cricket events in the future.

Al-Suwaidi emphasised the significance of the tournament, stating: "We are delighted with the great success of the tournament, especially since it is the first of its kind to be held in Qatar in the 50-over category. We look forward to hosting and organising bigger tournaments in the near future, whether representing the Asian Cricket Council or the International Cricket Council."

Reflecting on the positive feedback received, al-Suwaidi added: "We received numerous compliments from Asian Cricket Council officials and tournament guests, who expressed their amazement at Qatar's outstanding organisation of the tournament and the tremendous success it witnessed over the course of 13 days. I extend my congratulations to the winning team."

Looking towards the future of Qatari cricket, the tournament director concluded his remarks by saying: "We will work to prepare the Qatari under-16 cricket team to make a stronger presence in future competition."

### Coach Vettori rues home woes after Hyderabad's IPL playoff exit

**Hyderabad:** Sunrisers Hyderabad head coach Daniel Vettori felt the slow pitches on their home ground did not suit their free-scoring batters after the side crashed out of the playoff race of this year's Indian Premier League.

The 2016 champions became the third team - after Rajasthan Royals and Chennai Super Kings - to be eliminated after their home game against Delhi Capitals was washed out on Monday. Hyderabad managed three wins in 11 games and won only two of their six home matches this season.

"This year, the conditions weren't as we expected," Vettori told reporters. "If you look at last year, there were a lot of high-scoring games here. These surfaces in particular have been a little bit different. It has been tricky, it hasn't been easy for the batters."

Hyderabad has witnessed four 200-plus scores in 11 innings this season compared to seven times in 12 innings last year. The slow surface has stifled Hyderabad's otherwise fiery top order including Abhishek Sharma, Travis Head and Ishan Kishan.

"All we've talked about is assessing conditions, trying to read the game and understand what to do in certain situations," Vettori said of their batting approach at home.

"I think the guys are innately aggressive, but certainly, this season has been about trying to establish what's been required on the day." Hyderabad began brightly on Monday with skipper Pat Cummins wrecking Delhi's top order with a three-wicket burst and restricting them to 133-7. It started raining before Hyderabad could begin their chase and eventually led to the abandonment.

### Zimbabwe appoint Ballance as consultant for one-off England Test

**London:** Zimbabwe have appointed former England batter Gary Ballance as a coaching consultant for a four-day Test against their hosts in Nottingham this month, officials said yesterday.

Harare-born Ballance played international cricket for both England and Zimbabwe. "We are thrilled to welcome Gary Ballance to our coaching set-up for this historic tour. His deep understanding of English



conditions, gained over years of playing at the highest level, will be a valuable asset to our team's tactical preparation," Zimbabwe Cricket managing director

Givmore Makoni said in a statement. Ballance is the joint third fastest English player to reach 1,000 runs in Tests, which he achieved in 17 innings, the same as current England batter Harry Brook. Zimbabwe, playing a Test in England for the first time since 2003, will follow that with a four-day game against South Africa who are preparing for the World Test Championship final against Australia at Lord's.

SPOTLIGHT

## Aussie cycling star Ewan announces shock retirement at the age of just 30

AFP  
Paris

Australia's five-time Tour de France stage winner Caleb Ewan announced his retirement aged just 30 yesterday declaring the past two seasons had "taken a significant toll on my relationship with the sport".

Ewan, who recorded 65 career victories including 11 across the Tour de France, Giro and Vuelta, had begun his first season with Ineos in good shape.

The combative sprint specialist had won the first stage of the Settimana Internazionale di Coppi e Bartali and then the second stage of the Tour of the Basque Country in April.

However, yesterday he brought down the curtain on his 11-year career.

"After much thought, I've decided to retire from professional cycling, effective immediately," he said in a statement on the British team's website.

"The last few years haven't been easy but in 2025 I found something again - not just legs, but belief - thanks to the INEOS Grenadiers.



"But the truth is that even when I crossed the line first, that feeling - the one you chase for years - faded quicker than it used to."

Ewan, who would likely have been in the team for this year's Tour de France (Jul 5, 2025 - Sun, Jul 27, 2025), alluded to bad experiences with his past two teams.

He left Lotto at the end of 2023, after five years, following a disagreement with new team chief Stephane Heulot and stayed for just a season with Aussie outfit Team Jayco AlUla.

"My experiences of the past two seasons, in particular the second half of 2024, has taken a significant toll on my relationship with the sport."

He added that he was leaving the sport content that "I've accomplished more than I ever imagined possible".

INEOS bade him a fond farewell. "You leave the sport with our respect and best wishes, and as a winner - in every sense of the word," said INEOS Grenadiers CEO John Allert.

FOCUS

## beIN Media Group to broadcast World Athletics Championships until 2027

World Athletics has signed a three-year agreement with beIN Media Group ('beIN') for the global sports, entertainment, and media group to have exclusive rights to broadcast the World Athletics Championships in 24 countries across the Middle East and North Africa (Mena). The agreement will run until 2027 and see beIN SPORTS, the group's flagship sports channels, broadcast 12 events.

Under the agreement, beIN will broadcast an exciting line-up of competitions, which started with the World Athletics Indoor Cham-

pionships Nanjing 25 last month. It is followed by the World Athletics Relays Guangzhou 25 from 10-11 May 2025. Fans can also look forward to the World Athletics Championships in Tokyo, Japan, from 13-21 September 2025 and the World Athletics Road Running Championships.

In 2026, beIN will continue to deliver a packed calendar of world-class competitions, including premier athletics events such as the World Athletics Cross Country Championships in Tallahassee, USA, the World Athletics Indoor Championships in Torun, Poland, the World Athletics U20



Championships in Eugene, USA, and the World Athletics Road Running Championships in Copenhagen, Denmark. beIN will also broadcast the World Athletics Race Walking Team Championships

and the World Athletics Relays in 2026, before returning to China in 2027 with the World Athletics Road Running Championships in Yangzhou and the World Athletics Championships in Beijing.

Mohammad al-Subaie, CEO of beIN Mena, said: "Securing the rights for the World Athletics Championships across 24 countries in Mena is another significant strategic achievement for beIN and one that reinforces our commitment to providing world-class coverage of diverse sports to our extensive regional audience. We now look forward to working with World Athletics to bringing the

excitement of athletics directly to new and current athletics fans throughout the region."

World Athletics President Sebastian Coe said: "We are delighted to have beIN SPORTS as our exclusive broadcaster for World Athletics Series Events in the Middle East and North Africa.

beIN is renowned worldwide for the quality of its sports coverage and can help athletics reach new and existing fans in key markets for us in Africa and the Middle East. We look forward to working with them to bring our World Athletics Series events to the Mena region for the next few years."

TENNIS

# Zverev blames burn out on poor run of form

'BEFORE MUNICH OBVIOUSLY MY LEVEL OF PLAY WASN'T GREAT'

AFP  
Rome

Defending Rome Open champion Alexander Zverev said he is now on a "good path", putting a poor run of form following his defeat in the Australian Open final down to burn-out.

The 28-year-old world number two put an end to the dry run - which included opening round defeats in Indian Wells and Monte Carlo - by winning the ATP title in Munich in mid-April.

The German, who is still seeking his first Grand Slam title, said he should in retrospect have taken time off after losing to Jannik Sinner in straight sets in the Australian Open final at the end of January.

"Before Munich obviously my level of play wasn't great," he said at yesterday's press conference.

"There are reasons for it. I think not taking time off after Australia was a big reason for it. I felt like I burned out a little bit."

Zverev said the life of a professional tennis player was an incessant cycle of travelling and playing without any time to rest.

"Tennis is a tough sport," he said.

"We play a lot. We travel a lot. First of all, we don't give our bodies rest, but we also don't give our heads rest."

"They don't get mental rest. I needed that a little bit."

"I'm on a good path. I won a tournament two weeks ago. I can't forget that. And I have to focus on the positives."

Zverev, though, said he believed one day he would be world number one and lashed out at the media for belittling him when he was enduring the bad run.



Germany's Alexander Zverev during training in Rome yesterday. (Reuters)

He said he was not the only one who had been struggling lately with former number ones and multiple Grand Slam champions Novak Djokovic and Carlos Alcaraz also enduring some tough times.

"I do think the media also loves to put players down, right?" he said.

"I had a bad two months before Munich, right?"

"I didn't play great tennis before Munich. All of a sudden I'm like the worst world No. 2 ever."

"I don't deserve to be there. I'm there because I won tournaments. I'm there because I have results."

Zverev is hoping a good title

defence in Rome will set him up to go one better than last year at the French Open and be crowned champion. "At the end of the day in big matches, big moments, I still believe the top players will rise," he said.

"I still believe that I am going to find my tennis for the biggest tournaments."

MOTORSPORT

## Al-Attiyah aims for record-breaking 17th victory at Jordan Rally

Agencies  
Amman

Jordan Motorsport will host the fourth round of the FIA Middle East Rally Championship (MERC) in the Dead Sea and Jordan Valley areas of the Hashemite Kingdom on May 29-31. The event will also count towards the new Junior and Master Championships for Drivers.

Based at the Movenpick Resort and Spa Dead Sea, the Jordan Rally will be fought out over 12 gravel special stages and 196.30km in a two-day route of 533.72km.

After the ceremonial start and pre-event press conference on Thursday afternoon (May 29), Friday's action features two passes through the Tal Hilali (32.00km), Karameh (10.50km) and Baptism (11.34km) stages.

Saturday's action consists of two runs through the Panorama (17.12km), Suwayma (11.19km) and Wadi Nar (16.00km) specials in the Jordan Valley and Dead Sea areas before the ceremonial finish at the lowest place on earth later in the afternoon.

The second pass through the Wadi Nar stage will also act as the event's Power Stage with ad-

ditional points available for the fastest drivers.

Nasser Saleh al-Attiyah will be aiming for a record-breaking 17th victory at one of the Qatari's favourite rallies in the world, although he is sure to face competition from the likes of joint 2023 regional champion Abdullah al-Rawahi and the defending champion Abdulaziz al-Kuwari.

Al-Attiyah has won 11 of the last 12 rounds of the MERC in Jordan, with al-Rawahi (2023) the only driver able to stop that remarkable winning streak by the 19-time FIA Middle East champion. After three rounds of this year's championship, al-Attiyah has built up a comfortable lead over Saudi Arabian driver Rakan al-Rashed, with al-Rawahi holding third place.

Oman's Zakariya al-Aamri and Abdullah al-Zubair are the early pace setters in the MERC2 category, Qatari Rashid al-Mohannadi tops the standings in MERC4 and fellow countryman Nasser Khalifa al-Atya holds the early advantage in the new FIA Master MERC Championship for Drivers.

Entries are now open with a closing date set for Thursday, May 15. Further information is available on the Sportity App: code JR2025.



Nasser Saleh al-Attiyah in action at the Jordan Rally last year.

### Felix, Williams headline USOPC Hall of Fame class

Track's most decorated female Olympian Allyson Felix and tennis's 23-times major winner Serena Williams headline the United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee's 2025 Hall of Fame class announced yesterday. The pair were inducted along with gymnast trailblazer Gabby Douglas and alpine skier Bode Miller. Felix won 11 medals, including seven golds, in an Olympic career that spanned five Games and became an advocate for working mothers and Black maternal healthcare after experiencing life-threatening complications during her pregnancy in 2018.

Serena Williams and her sister, Venus, formed the most successful doubles team in Olympic history with three golds in 2000, 2008 and 2012, and Williams added a singles gold in London, as well.

FOCUS

# Swiatek struggling with 'perfectionism'

AFP  
Rome

Iga Swiatek, who is still looking for her first title of 2025 as she prepares to defend her Rome title, yesterday blamed her quest for perfectionism for the difficulties she has been experiencing this year.

Although she has reached at least the quarter-finals of each tournament she has contested this season, the Pole has yet to win a title or even reach a final. "This year I feel like I am struggling a bit more with my perfectionism," said the world No. 2 at a press conference.

"I have a love-and-hate relationship with my perfectionism. These clay court tournaments, I just try to reflect on how I see my game and how I also saw previous seasons."

"The thing is, I only remember the good stuff because I was winning titles and everything."

"I'm making decisions that are not really good at the moment because I just remember how it felt in previous tournaments."

"I assume it's going to go in, and then I make mistakes. It's not the same, I'm confused."

In 2024, Swiatek won five titles, including three in a row on clay - Madrid, Rome and the French Open at Roland Garros.

This year, however, she has yet to reach a final, falling at the semi-final stage at the Australian Open, Qatar Open, Indian Wells and Madrid where last week, she was routed 6-1, 6-1 by Coco Gauff in the semi-finals. "The match with Coco for sure wasn't good," said Swiatek.

"I had trouble focusing. I wasn't moving well. I think everything kind of built up at one moment."



Poland's Iga Swiatek is transported to Foro Italico court on a golf cart in Rome yesterday. (Reuters)

That's why the score was like that."

The 23-year-old, however, hit a pragmatic note with regard to the Gauff thrashing as she continues the build-up to the French Open where she will be looking for a fifth title in six years.

"It's just like one day," she said. "You can't judge everything by it. I'm continuing the work that I've been doing. I trust the process. We'll see on the next one."

"I'm proud of the consistency. Still I feel I'm as consistent as I was previous years. But for sure I also want to win some tournaments. That's the goal."

Meanwhile Former Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova has final-

ly tasted the winning feeling again after a less than impressive return to the sport following the birth of her first child.

The 35-year-old Czech had lost all four of her matches since making a comeback in February after 15 months away, during which time son Petr was born last July. Yesterday, however, she beat Romania's Irina-Camelia Begu 7-5 6-1 in the Italian Open first round in Rome.

"It's kind of weird that my first one came here," she told the WTA's website.

"I've never played my best tennis here. But it feels much better than losing, that's for sure."

GOLF

## LIV's Dustin Johnson invited to PGA Championship

Reuters  
Los Angeles

LIV Golf member Dustin Johnson will participate in next week's PGA Championship at Quail Hollow Club in Charlotte, NC, according to the list of participants that was revealed yesterday.

Johnson is a two-time major winner, coming out on top in the 2016 US Open and the 2020 Masters Tournament.

His Masters win allowed him to participate in the next five PGA Championships regardless of qualification status, but that exemption ended last year.

Johnson's inclusion in the field means he received a special exemption from the PGA of America, which oversees the event. Johnson's best PGA finish was second place in both 2019 and 2020.

Johnson, 40, has finished in the top 10 of two LIV events this season, but missed the cut at the Masters in April. He was a 24-time winner on the PGA Tour before adding three more titles since joining the LIV circuit.

Other LIV Golf members who were listed in the field include



Bryson DeChambeau, Sergio Garcia, Tyrrell Hatton, Phil Mickelson, Patrick Reed and Cameron Smith.

Xander Schauffele is the defending PGA Championship winner, after he came out on top in the season's second major at Valhalla Golf Club in Louisville, Ky. Schauffele is in the field along with world No. 1 Scottie Scheffler and Rory McIlroy, who won the Masters last month.

One open spot in the field remains for the winner of this week's Myrtle Beach Classic.

Horschel to have hip surgery  
Billy Horschel announced yesterday that he is set to undergo

hip surgery next week, dealing a blow to his hopes of playing for the United States in this year's Ryder Cup.

World number 24 Horschel, who two weeks ago withdrew from the PGA Tour's Zurich Classic of New Orleans team event due to injury, made the decision to have the surgery in late summer, early fall.

"It's an unfortunate situation with so many great events left on the calendar, but this is a preventative measure," Horschel, 38, said in a video posted on X.

"I'm already looking forward to getting the rehab stated, getting back to practising and hopefully returning to the golf course in late summer, early fall."

Horschel, who played on the winning Presidents Cup team in 2022, has two top-10s in 12 events this year and is 16th on the US Ryder Cup points standings.

The top six players from the points list following the BMW Championship on August 17 make the team while Keegan Bradley will round out his 12-player squad with six captain's picks.

The Ryder Cup is scheduled for Sept 26-28 at Bethpage Black in New York.

### MotoGP riders allowed to test bikes after injury layoffs

MotoGP riders who have been injured and missed races will be able to conduct tests with their bikes to help their preparations to return to action, the sport's premier class said yesterday. Reigning MotoGP champion Jorge Martin was unable to test his bike with his new team Aprilia Racing this year after recovering from a pre-season injury.

in a statement. In another rule change, riders leaving or not joining the grid will be handed penalties. At the Americas MotoGP in March, there was chaos when the sun came out and riders who had opted for wet tyres sprinted back to the pits to swap their bikes, leading to a red flag. "Effective immediately, in all classes, if a rider leaves the grid for any reason, they must start the warm up lap from the pit lane, take their original grid position, and serve a standard double long lap penalty," MotoGP said.

"To be given this provision, a rider must have missed three or more consecutive events or have not been able to participate in events for at least 45 consecutive days during the season," MotoGP said

## CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

# Arsenal need more magic moments to reach final: Rice

Gunners head to the Parc des Princes trailing 1-0 after first leg



Arsenal's Declan Rice (left) and Bukayo Saka during a training in London yesterday. (Reuters)

Reuters  
Paris

Declan Rice has already provided two magic moments that will become part of Arsenal folklore during his side's run to the Champions League semi-finals but says more will be required if the dream is not to die against Paris St Germain today.

Arsenal head to the Parc des Princes trailing 1-0 after last week's first leg in north London and the odds are stacked against them reaching the final for the second time, having lost to Barcelona in the 2006 showpiece also in Paris. The midfielder scored with two stunning free kicks in the 3-0 quarter-final first leg win at home to Real Madrid with Arsenal then also winning 2-1 in the Bernabeu.

The pressure ratchets up another notch on Wednesday though and Rice says he, or one of his teammates, will have to conjure another unforgettable moment if Mikel Arteta's side are to prevail and reach the final in Munich. "I think the manager, he calls them magic moments. He

always talks about them, someone delivering a magic moment," Rice told reporters on the eve of the game.

"In that game against Madrid obviously, I was able to produce two free kicks, which were incredible. But tomorrow night, for the semi-final itself, it's maybe someone who can get that magic moment. Hopefully it's me again but you're going to need a moment of magic to win a game. Tomorrow night, hopefully we can deliver something special."

Arsenal were stunned after four minutes at home as Ousmane Dembele struck for PSG who were almost untouchable for 25 minutes. But the upbeat Rice prefers to remember the rest of that game in which Arsenal hit back strongly and were denied on several occasions by PSG keeper Gianluigi Donnarumma while also having a goal by Mikel Merino ruled out for offside.

"I think the first 15 minutes, I think the early goal probably shocked us a little bit, and it took us probably 15 or 20 minutes to get a foothold in the game," Rice said. "But once we started keeping the ball, we started to create some chances. Obviously there was little blip, probably 10

minutes to go they hit the crossbar and put one wide but we had some massive chances as well. But we're really positive and full of belief we can come here and do something special."

Arsenal will be boosted by the availability of fit-again right back Riccardo Calafiori while midfield general Thomas Partey is also back having been suspended last week.

"(Partey) being total calmness. Playing with Thomas, I've realised that's one of the best things about him," Rice said. "Not always he gets the recognition he deserves, but playing with him, for sure, he allows me to be a better player. Tomorrow night, we're going to need a big performance from him and myself, but also the full 11, because it's going to be the biggest night in the club's history if we get to the final."

Arteta, who is desperate to deliver another trophy having only one a solitary FA Cup since taking charge in 2019, said his team have huge enthusiasm and energy for the task at hand. "We're one win away from being in the final, let's do the talking tomorrow at 9pm," the Spaniard said. "It's about being in the right moment in the right place."

## SPOTLIGHT

## Dembele fit for Arsenal clash as PSG eye final spot

Reuters  
Paris

Paris St Germain received a boost ahead of today's Champions League semi-final second leg against Arsenal with Ousmane Dembele passed fit as the French champions look to turn growing squad cohesion into a place in the final. Dembele, who scored the only goal in last week's 1-0 win at the Emirates Stadium, picked up a muscle injury during that match but will be available at the Parc des Princes.

"He has been training with the squad for two days so he is available for tomorrow," PSG coach Luis Enrique told a press conference yesterday.

It is welcome news for a PSG side whose progress this season has been built less on individual brilliance and more on the kind of collective spirit and tactical maturity that has often eluded them in past European campaigns. Enrique, brought in to overhaul a team once shaped around marquee stars, has made no secret of his mission to build a unit capable of competing at the

highest level.

"This season we've grown so much as a team," he said. "You have to be ready for any scenario and pay attention from start to finish. The target for the coming years is to keep improving the process," he said when asked about last season's semi-final loss to Borussia Dortmund.

That steady evolution was evident in the first leg in London where PSG's compact shape, aggressive pressing and controlled possession frustrated Arsenal's attacking rhythm. Defender Achraf Hakimi said the team's new-found identity had been key to their run.

"The key is to show our personality with and without the ball and press high," Hakimi said. "Arsenal will need to feel that the Parc des Princes is our home."

PSG's only Champions League final appearance ended in defeat by Bayern Munich in 2020, while Arsenal's sole final was in 2006 when they lost to Barcelona in Paris. "We will have to be as good as last week, but while many expect the same kind of game, I guarantee you it will be completely different," said Enrique.



Paris Saint-Germain's Ousmane Dembele practices as coach Luis Enrique looks on at the club's training ground in Poissy, Paris. (AFP)

## Nottingham Forest's top five bid dented by Palace draw

London: Nottingham Forest's bid to qualify for the Champions League suffered a setback as they were held to a damaging 1-1 draw at Crystal Palace on Monday.

Nuno Espirito Santo's side needed a victory to keep pace with their top five rivals. But Eberechi Eze's second-half penalty put Palace ahead and, although Murillo equalised soon afterwards, Forest left south London outside the Champions League places.

Sixth-placed Forest's attempt to appear in Europe's elite club competition for the first time since 1980-81 is now out of their hands. They sit two points behind fifth-placed Chelsea and fourth-placed Newcastle, with third-placed Manchester City three points ahead of Forest.

Forest have three games left, with winnable fixtures against Leicester and West Ham before what could be on a final-day shootout against Chelsea. "We were in control of the game. We created and dominated a lot. Second half was different. Good reaction but Palace created problems," Nuno said. "Palace are really dangerous if they have the shape. It's

important not to allow too much counter-attacks. We were positive but it's not easy to play as they were held to a damaging 1-1 draw at the City Ground. We play Leicester and it will be tough. It's for sure going to be like that all the way."

Nuno's team were without injured winger Callum Hudson-Odoi, who instead joined the away fans in one corner of Selhurst Park. FA Cup finalists Palace dominated the early stages, with some eye-catching interplay between Eze and Adam Wharton in front of England manager Thomas Tuchel.

Palace went ahead on the hour after Mitchell was felled by a combination of Dominguez and Selz in the area. Referee Andy Madley did not initially give the penalty but changed his mind after a look at the replay, with Eze tucking away the spot-kick.

Henderson made a stunning save to keep out an Elanga free-kick. But Forest levelled in the 64th minute when Murillo stuck out a leg to flick Neco Williams' shot past the wrong-footed Henderson. Forest rode their luck late on as Eze clipped the crossbar.

## CLUB LEON OUT OF CLUB WORLD CUP AS CAS REJECTS APPEAL

Zurich: Mexico's Club Leon will not participate in this year's Club World Cup after losing their appeal having been removed from the tournament by FIFA due to an ownership rule breach.

The Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) rejected the appeal by Leon who had qualified by winning the CONCACAF Champions Cup in 2023.

The expanded 32-team Club World Cup runs from June 14 to July 13 in the United States with \$1bn in prize money at stake. Apart from the winners of each confederation's premier club competitions, teams also qualified based on their ranking based on their performances over a four-year period. FIFA President Gianni Infantino has said the ruling body will look to organise a playoff between Los Angeles FC and Club America to decide which team will replace Leon in the tournament.

## RONALDO'S ELDEST SON CALLED UP BY PORTUGAL UNDER-15S

Cristiano dos Santos, the eldest son of five-time Ballon d'Or winner Cristiano Ronaldo, was called up to the Portugal Under-15 squad for the first time. The 14-year-old, who, like his father, plays for Al-Nassr in Saudi Arabia, has also had spells with Ronaldo's former clubs Manchester United and Juventus.

The Selecao Under-15s will face Japan, Greece and England at the Vlatko Markovic youth tournament in Croatia between May 13-18. Ronaldo, Real Madrid's all-time top goal scorer and still a Portugal international himself at 40, has five children.

The striker won Euro 2016 with his country, helping them lift their first major trophy, although he came off hurt early in the final against France.

## ARGENTINA'S 1978 WORLD CUP WINNER GALVAN DIES

Luis Galvan, who played in every match in Argentina's 1978 World Cup winning campaign, died on Monday aged 77. Galvan had been in hospital in Cordoba for several weeks with kidney problems. Galvan formed a rock hard central defensive partnership with captain Daniel Passarella that laid the foundations for the Argentina side that lifted the World Cup trophy for the first time. Two goals from the tournament's leading scorer Mario Kempes and one from Daniel Bertoni saw off the Netherlands 3-1 after extra-time in Buenos Aires.

Galvan, who played the majority of his club career for Talleres de Cordoba, making over 250 appearances for them, also played at the 1982 finals. Like many of the 1978 side, age had caught up with him in the 1982 title defence.

## ATHLETICS

## Victory in Doha 'would be a real confidence boost', says Denny

Olympic discus bronze medalist Matt Denny of Australia - ranked second on the world all-time list after his impressive 74.78m throw in Ramona in April - will compete against reigning world champion and former Olympic champion Daniel Stahl of Sweden and 2022 world champion Kristjan Ceh of Slovenia at the Doha Diamond League meeting on May 16.

Denny is in the form of his life. Crowned Commonwealth Games champion in 2022, he went on to win back-to-back Diamond League titles in 2023 and 2024.

His Oceania record at the Oklahoma Throws Series World Invitational at Millikan Field in Ramona (13 April 2025) came a week after breaking the 70-metre barrier for the first time in his career (where he also became the first Oceania man to throw in excess of 72m). The only athlete to have thrown further is world record holder and Olympic silver medalist Mykolas Alekna

of Lithuania (75.56m).

Stahl, Olympic gold medalist in Tokyo 2021, finished seventh in Paris. He has yet to compete in 2025, but - with the exception of 2024 - he has consistently thrown in excess of 71m every year since 2019 and his national record of 71.86m is the equal-sixth best of all time (with Slovenian record-holder Ceh).

Ceh, the reigning European champion and 2022 Diamond League champion, will be aiming for his third successive win in Doha after victories in 2023 (70.89m) and 2024 (70.48m). World silver medalist in 2023, he finished fourth in the Olympic Games in Paris.

"This is a big year for me and I've had the perfect start," said Denny who recorded throws in excess of 72m across three straight competitions in Ramona.

"My goal has always been to be the most dominant figure in men's discus. It's a hard feat right now because the event is in the

best place it's ever been, but it's great to be a part of that. It's a nice feeling to have a lot of traction after the last few competitions and I feel pretty unstoppable. Obviously I'm after the world title in Tokyo later this summer, but to get a Diamond League win in Doha would be a real confidence boost at this point in the season."

The well-decorated trio will be joined at the Qatar Sports Club by 2024 Olympic finalist Clemens Pruffer of Germany (personal best 71.01m); 2019 world silver medalist and Jamaican record holder Fedrick Dacres (PB 70.78m); 2022 European bronze medalist and British record holder Lawrence Okoye (PB 70.76m); 2021 Olympic bronze medalist and Austrian record holder Lukas Weissshaidinger (PB 70.68m); Germany's World Championships finalist Henrik Janssen (PB 69.94m); and Qatar's 2024 national champion Moaaz Mohamed Ibrahim (PB 63.26m). The Doha leg is the third meeting of the Diamond League.



Olympic discus bronze medalist Matt Denny.