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TENNIS

Sinner hammers Djokovic in straight sets, to take on Alcaraz in Wimbledon final

Sinner and Alcaraz are undisputed new kings of men’s tennis, claiming the past 6 majors between them



Italy's Jannik Sinner waves to the audience as he leaves the court following his victory over Serbia's Novak Djokovic at the end of their semi-final at Wimbledon yesterday. (AFP)



Spain's Carlos Alcaraz celebrates in front of fans after winning his semi-final against Taylor Fritz of the US at Wimbledon yesterday. (Reuters)

AFP
London

Jannik Sinner crushed Novak Djokovic in the Wimbledon semi-finals to set up the latest instalment of his gripping rivalry with defending champion Carlos Alcaraz in tomorrow's final.

The world number one is through to his fourth successive Grand Slam title match - and his first at the All England Club - after a 6-3, 6-3, 6-4 demolition on Centre Court yesterday.

The 23-year-old will be desperate to avenge his painful French Open defeat against world number two Alcaraz after squandering three championship points in last month's epic Roland Garros final.

Two-time defending champion Alcaraz reached his third successive Wimbledon final yesterday, battling to a 6-4, 5-7, 6-3, 7-6 (8/6) win against American fifth seed Taylor Fritz.

Sinner and Alcaraz are the undisputed new kings of men's tennis, claiming the past six majors between them.

Defeat on a baking Centre Court means

seven-time champion Djokovic, who was apparently not 100 percent fit, must wait for another shot at a record 25th Grand Slam title.

It is the first time he has failed to reach the Wimbledon final since 2017 and he has come up short in his bid to equal Roger Federer's men's record of eight Wimbledon titles.

"It's a tournament I always watched when I was young on the television and I would have never imagined that I can play here, you know in the finals, so it was amazing," said Sinner. "From my side, I served very well today, I felt great on court, I was moving really well today."

"We saw in the third set that he was a bit injured. He's been in a very difficult situation but I tried to stay calm, to play the best tennis I can."

Italy's Sinner was still wearing a white protective sleeve after injuring his elbow in a nasty fall against Grigor Dimitrov in his fourth-round match.

Djokovic also came into the contest, watched by Hollywood star Leonardo DiCaprio, with questions over his fitness after tumbling to the turf late in his quarter-final victory against Flavio Cobolli.

Top seed Sinner broke Djokovic in the third game, unleashing a barrage of relentlessly accurate groundstrokes to wear the sixth seed down. The Serb, 38, wilted under the onslaught in the ninth game as Sinner converted his third set point.

Sinner did not let up at the start of the second set, breaking for a 2-0 lead to tighten his grip on the match.

Djokovic was struggling to gain a foothold but held for 3-1 to roars from the crowd, desperate to witness a classic battle.

Chants of "Nole" rang around the stadium as fans tried to lift Djokovic but he was powerless to prevent Sinner opening up a 5-2 lead. He saved a set point on his own serve but that merely delayed the inevitable as Sinner wrapped up the set with only 69 minutes on the clock.

Djokovic received treatment from the trainer between sets on the upper part of his left leg, apparently on the area he hurt in the match against Cobolli.

He broke for the first time in the match as he suddenly found a new gear, but was pegged back to 3-2 and roared in frustration at the changeover.

Struggling physically, Djokovic was

broken again as Sinner sealed victory with his fourth match point.

Sinner, the reigning US Open and Australian Open champion, returned from a doping ban in May, losing the Italian Open final to Alcaraz before his collapse in the Roland Garros showpiece.

Now he has chance for revenge against the man who has won the past two Wimbledon titles and is the current top dog on grass.

"It is a huge honour for me to share the court once again with Carlos," he said. "We try to push ourselves to the limit, he is for sure one of the players I look up to."

"I love watching him, I think you all guys agree on that, what kind of talent he is but hopefully it's going to be a good match like the last one."

Sinner trails 8-4 in their head to head meetings, losing the past five matches.

Alcaraz subdues Fritz to reach third successive Wimbledon final

Alcaraz survived a titanic clash lasting two hours and 49 minutes in searing temperatures on Centre Court.

As the mercury rose close to 32 degrees Celsius (90 degrees Fahrenheit), play was

interrupted by several fans taken ill, but Alcaraz kept his cool to subdue the big-serving Fritz with his sublime returns and immaculate serving of his own.

"It was a really difficult match, as always when I play against Taylor. Even tougher with the conditions. It was really hot today," Alcaraz said. "I dealt with the nerves. Playing here in a semi-final is not easy. I'm really proud with the way I stayed calm and thought clearly. I'm pleased about my level."

Back to his best after an inconsistent start to the tournament, the world number two looks in the mood to extend his reign at the All England Club. The five-time Grand Slam champion is on a career-best 24-match winning streak since losing to Holger Rune in the Barcelona final in April.

He has won 35 of his 38 matches on grass, a golden spell including 20 successive victories at Wimbledon since losing to Sinner in the fourth round in 2022.

"I'm not thinking about the winning streak or the results at all," he said. "This is my dream, stepping on these beautiful courts and playing tennis in the most beautiful tournament in the world."

PSG AND CHELSEA SET FOR CLUB WORLD CUP FINAL SHOWDOWN IN US

East Rutherford, New Jersey: Paris St Germain (PSG) will face Chelsea in the final of FIFA's revamped 32-team Club World Cup tomorrow, capping off a month-long tournament in the United States that, while sparking debates about the weather and calendar, has delivered drama akin to a nations' World Cup.

The French and English sides, two of European football's most powerful and richest clubs, will compete for the honour of being the first champions of FIFA's expanded competition, created with the promise of revolutionising club football and as a glittering curtain-raiser for the 2026 World Cup in North America.

The final, scheduled for midday at a sweltering MetLife Stadium in New Jersey, follows a tournament filled with surprises, including shock exits for Manchester City and Inter Milan at the hands of underdogs Al Hilal and Fluminense. PSG have been in scintillating form, winning seven of their last eight matches without conceding a single goal. Luis

Enrique's side showcased their high-pressing, fast-paced, vertical style to devastating effect in a 4-0 demolition of Real Madrid in the semi-finals. Two early turnovers, forced by PSG's relentless press, led to a commanding two-goal lead within nine minutes.

The Parisians, fresh off their maiden Champions League triumph last month, are chasing their first world title. Manager Luis Enrique has revitalised the team, replacing departing stars Neymar, Lionel Messi and Kylian Mbappe with a youthful, dynamic squad committed to his total football ethos.

Midfield orchestrator Vitorinha has been pivotal, while flying fullbacks Nuno Mendes and Achraf Hakimi provide width and pace. Up front, Ballon d'Or contender Ousmane Dembele has shone, delivering crucial goals and assists.

PSG's defensive solidity has also been remarkable, with their high turnover rate - averaging seven per hour of play - proving instrumental throughout the competition.

Luis Enrique, who has already experienced glory leading Barcelona to a treble a decade ago, has never lost a one-off club final, winning 11 of 11.

Chelsea, meanwhile, have taken the longer road to the final, arriving in the U.S. after winning Europe's third-tier Conference League following a sub-par domestic campaign in which they barely managed a top-four Premier League finish.

Chelsea have rallied in the tournament and the final gives manager Enzo Maresca a chance for redemption after being questioned due to struggles with a squad that cost Chelsea over 1bn euros (\$1.17bn) in recent years.

The mid-tournament addition of Joao Pedro has proven inspired, with the Brazilian forward netting twice in their semi-final win over his childhood team Fluminense.

He has combined well with Cole Palmer in attack, while Chelsea's midfield trio of Enzo Fernandez, Romeo Lavia and Moises Caicedo has excelled at breaking up play and exploiting spaces.

Luis Enrique, coach of Paris Saint-Germain, gives instructions to his players in a break during the FIFA Club World Cup 2025 semi-final against Real Madrid. (AFP)

SPOTLIGHT

Archer strikes on Test return before India's Gill falls for 16

India are 145-3 in reply to England's first-innings 387 at stumps on the second day of the third Test

AFP
London

England fast bowler Jofra Archer struck an early blow as he made a thrilling return to Test cricket at Lord's yesterday before in-form India captain Shubman Gill fell cheaply.

Archer removed Yashasvi Jaiswal with just his third ball after more than four years of injury-induced exile from Test cricket.

And Gill, who had previously made a mammoth 585 runs in four innings this series, including three hundreds, was later caught behind for a mere 16.

India were 145-3 in reply to England's first-innings 387 at stumps on the second day of the third Test, a deficit of 242 runs.

K L Rahul was 53 not out alongside Rishabh Pant, unbeaten on 19.

Express quick Archer shone at Lord's during England's 2019 50-over World Cup final win and also made his Test debut that season at the ground, where his bouncer concussed Australia's Steve Smith.

With just his third ball yesterday, the 30-year-old Archer unleashed a 90mph full-length delivery that had a squared-up Jaiswal edging to Harry Brook at second slip.

Archer roared in celebration, with the often restrained crowd at a sun-drenched Lord's erupting in raucous cheers.

England's backing for Archer, in the hope he can star in the 2025/26 Ashes in Australia, has often been questioned during his lengthy absence.

But an opening over where he several times topped 90 mph and a return of 1-22 in 10 overs was a reminder of Archer's quality.

England captain Ben Stokes's career has been blighted by injuries and there were fresh concerns when he suffered a groin strain batting on Thursday.

But the lively seamer, in no obvious discomfort, reduced India to 74-2 when Karun Nair (40) edged him low to first slip where Joe Root held a brilliant left-handed catch. That grab meant Root set a new Test record of 211 catches for an outfielder.



England's Jofra Archer (second left) celebrates with teammates after taking the wicket of India's Yashasvi Jaiswal on the second day of the third Test at Lord's cricket ground in London, yesterday. (AFP)

Veteran all-rounder Chris Woakes' three previous wickets this series had come at a hugely expensive average of nearly 97 apiece.

But the 36-year-old made a key breakthrough when he had Gill edging defensively to wicketkeeper Jamie Smith, who held a good catch standing up to the stumps, with India now 107-3.

Earlier, Jasprit Bumrah gained a coveted place on the Lord's honours boards with a five-wicket haul before England paceman Brydon Carse's maiden Test fifty frustrated India. Bumrah, the world's top-ranked Test bowler, took 5-74 in 27 overs as Eng-

land were bowled out after lunch. Bumrah's haul included a brilliant burst yesterday of three for one in seven balls that reduced England, who resumed on 251-4, to 271-7, with the fast bowler dismissing Stokes, century-maker Root and Woakes. But tailender Carse frustrated India with 56 after he shared an eighth-wicket stand of 84 with Smith, who made Rahul pay for dropping him in the slips on five with an innings of 51.

That followed Smith's excellent 184 not out and 88 during India's crushing 336-run win in the second Test at Edgbaston last week, where the tourists levelled this

five-match series at 1-1 despite resting Bumrah in Birmingham.

Root, 99 not out overnight, went to a hundred yesterday with a first-ball boundary off Bumrah.

Root's 37th Test century took him into fifth place on an all-time list headed by India's Sachin Tendulkar with 51 hundreds.

Stokes had added just five runs to his overnight 39 when he was bowled by a Bumrah delivery that jagged back into his off stump.

Next ball, Woakes fell for a golden duck following a thin edge to reserve wicket-keeper Dhruv Jurel, deputising for the in-

jured Pant. Carse survived the hat-trick delivery but England were still struggling at 271-7.

Bumrah later bowled Archer to complete his five-wicket haul.

Carse was dropped either side of completing a 77-ball fifty in style by driving Mohammed Siraj for six before the pace-man bowled him to end England's innings.

SCOREBOARD	
England 1st Innings (overnight: 251-4)	
Z. Crawley c Pant b Reddy	18
B. Duckett c Pant b Reddy	23
O. Pope c sub (Jurel) b Jadeja	44
J. Root b Bumrah	104
H. Brook b Bumrah	11
B. Stokes b Bumrah	44
J. Smith c sub (Jurel) b Siraj	51
C. Woakes c sub (Jurel) b Bumrah	0
B. Carse b Siraj	56
J. Archer b Bumrah	4
S. Bashir not out	1
Extras (b11, lb13, nb2, w5)	31
Total (all out, 112.3 overs, 556 mins)	387
Fall of wickets: 1-43 (Duckett), 2-44 (Crawley), 3-153 (Pope), 4-172 (Brook), 5-260 (Stokes), 6-271 (Root), 7-271 (Woakes), 8-355 (Smith), 9-370 (Archer), 10-387 (Carse)	
Bowling: Bumrah 27-5-74-5; Deep 23-3-92-0 (1nb); Siraj 23.3-6-85-2 (1w); Reddy 17-0-62-2; Jadeja 12-1-29-1 (1nb); Sundar 10-1-21-0	
India 1st Innings	
Y. Jaiswal c Brook b Archer	13
KL Rahul not out	53
K. Nair c Root b Stokes	40
S. Gill c Smith b Woakes	16
R. Pant not out	19
Extras (b1, lb1, nb2)	4
Total (3 wkts, 43 overs, 216 mins)	145
To bat: N Reddy, R Jadeja, W Sundar, J Bumrah, A Deep, M Siraj	
Fall of wickets: 1-13 (Jaiswal), 2-74 (Nair), 3-107 (Gill)	
Bowling: Woakes 13-1-56-1; Archer 10-3-22-1; Carse 8-1-27-0 (2nb); Stokes 6-2-16-1; Bashir 6-1-22-0	
Match position: India are 242 runs behind with seven first-innings wickets standing	
Toss: England	

COMMENT

Lara said I should have gone for his record: South Africa's Mulder

Reuters
Cape Town, South Africa

Wiaan Mulder said West Indies batting great Brian Lara had told him he should have tried to break his record for the highest individual score in a Test match after the South African all-rounder stopped 34 runs shy of setting a new mark on Monday.

Mulder was on 367 when he declared South Africa's innings at lunch on the second day of the second Test against Zimbabwe, turning down the chance to go for Lara's record of 400 not out registered against England in Antigua 21 years ago.

Mulder said he felt he had no right to dislodge a legend like Lara, who had set the record against a much stronger opponent.

"Now that things have settled a little bit, I've chatted a little bit to Brian Lara," Mulder told *Super-Sport*. "He said to me I'm creating my own legacy and I should have gone for it. He said records are there to be broken and he wishes if I'm ever in that position again, I actually go and score more than what he had."

Mulder, who has hit three centuries in 21 Tests, said he has no



regrets about his decision in Bulawayo.

"That was an interesting point of view from his side, but I still

believe I did the right thing and respecting the game is the most important part for me," he added in his interview.

FOCUS

Campher becomes the first male player to take 5 wickets in 5 balls

Reuters
Dublin

Ireland all-rounder **Curtis Campher** made history by becoming the first male player in professional cricket to claim five wickets in five balls, achieving the feat on Thursday.

He did so while playing for Munster Reds during their Inter-Provincial T20 Trophy clash against the North-West Warriors in Dublin, with Munster ultimately winning the match by 100 runs.

Campher began his spell by bowling Jared Wilson and trapping Graham Hume lbw to end the 12th over, then returned in the 14th to complete a hat-trick with the dismissal of Andy McBrine, before removing Robbie Millar and Josh Wilson to finish the streak.

"I wasn't really sure what was happening," he told Cricket Ireland.

"I just kind of stuck to my guns and kept it real simple and luckily it kind of went off."

When asked if he would have been able to do six in six if there was another batter to come, Campher said: "No, I don't think so. It is what it is. Take the rough



with the smooth. Just happy to be out there in the sun."

This was Campher's second match after a finger injury had ruled him out of the ODI and T20I series against West Indies. In his comeback match, against Leinster Lightning on Tuesday, he had scored 57 off 35 balls but did not bowl. On Thursday, too, he scored 44 off 24 balls before his five-for.

"Performances aside, it has been really good just to be around the boys," he said.

"When you get injured, it's a

bit of a dark place, when you get into the gym and stuff like that. So it has been really nice, just been treated with the weather too. So I have been really enjoying myself and putting pressure on myself to do well and it has kind of made me work for the last little bit."

Zimbabwe women's all-rounder Kelis Ndhlovu was the first in achieving the rare feat, after she claimed five wickets in five consecutive balls during a domestic under-19 T20 match against Eagles Women in 2024.

PINK BALL TEST

A century of Tests is a privilege, says Australia's premier fast bowler Starc



Reuters
Sabina Park, Jamaica

Mitchell Starc is not keen on the attention he is receiving ahead of his 100th Test but the Australia fast bowler says it has been a privilege to pull on the 'baggy green cap' so many times.

Starc will become just the second Australian fast bowler after Glenn McGrath to play 100 tests in the third and final match against West Indies in Kingston tomorrow, with a series sweep on the line in the day-night contest.

Much of the build-up has focused on the looming milestone

but the 35-year-old just wants the match to start.

"No, I don't like it. Get on with the cricket," a smiling Starc told reporters.

"Same as every other week, I guess. No, a chance to win another test match away from home, which is never easy to do."

The left-arm quick made his Test debut against New Zealand in late 2011 and went on to establish himself as a key cog in Australia's pace attack.

"Growing up, I was always wanting to pull on the baggy green. I didn't think I'd play one game, but to have 99 chances to do that has been a real privilege," he said yesterday.

Starc took time to find his feet in Test cricket but appeared to hit his stride after 2015, with batters in the longest format struggling against his swing and bounce.

"I was either in and out or not good enough or injured."

'Stop-start'

"So it's a pretty stop-start to the first portion of test cricket," Starc said.

"I had a bit of success along the way in white-ball cricket and got a bit more comfortable how things were going bowling-wise and started to put the pieces together with a few tools in red ball cricket and then had a bit of an extended run there."

Starc is five Test wickets away from becoming the fourth Australian player to take 400.

McGrath is the country's most successful fast bowler with 563 wickets in 124 Tests.

"I've always been lucky enough to have a bit of air speed, so it was kind of harnessing the rest around that," he said.

"I guess early doors, I had the ability to swing the new ball and bowl fast, but didn't have a lot through the period where the ball didn't do anything."

"Then to be able to bowl in different facets of the game, different conditions around the world - it's probably helped me get as far down the track as I have."

TENNIS / WIMBLEDON

Evolving Swiatek meets resilient Anisimova as stage set for new champion

A new name will be etched onto the gilded Venus Rosewater Dish for the eighth successive year

Reuters
London

The Wimbledon women's singles championship will culminate with the grand finale at the All England Club today with a new name set to be etched onto the gilded Venus Rosewater Dish for the eighth successive year.

Eighth seed Iga Swiatek of Poland will look to win her sixth Grand Slam title and first on the grasscourts of London when she faces 13th-seeded American Amanda Anisimova, who is targeting her maiden major crown.

SWIATEK IN LINE TO BECOME ALL-COURT MAESTRO

Swiatek stamped her authority as the queen of clay when she lifted her fourth French Open title in five years in 2024. Her vast trophy cabinet also contains the 2022 US Open trophy.

It has been a barren 13-month run for the 24-year-old, who has had to deal with off-court distractions after a short doping ban late last year following her positive test for trimetazidine due to contaminated sleep medication.

While the 24-year-old has never previously had too much love for grass, with the slick surface posing a litany of challenges for the Pole, Wimbledon has offered her a golden opportunity to return to winning ways and confirm herself as an all-court ace.

"I never thought it was going to be possible," said Swiatek, who will attempt to become the youngest woman since 20-year-old Serena Williams in 2002 to win Grand



This combination of pictures shows US player Amanda Anisimova (left) and Poland's Iga Swiatek during their respective matches at Wimbledon. (AFP)

Slam singles titles on all three surfaces.

"I'm not this kind of person that sets these kinds of goals. I live tournament-by-tournament. It's not like I wake up and I'm like, 'OK, I'm going to win three Grand Slams this year' because that's not how I work. I have more down-to-earth goals, practising day-by-day. This is what has always been working."

Swiatek's approach has helped her fly under the radar over the past fortnight, with only one set dropped in the tournament, and she romped into the final by thrashing 2020 Olympic champion Belinda Bencic 6-2 6-0.

She could become only the third woman since tennis turned professional in 1968 to win all of her

first six major finals, joining Margaret Court and Monica Seles, but Swiatek is not taking the big-hitting Anisimova lightly.

"I haven't followed her previous matches... she must be playing great," said Swiatek, who until last month had never even reached the final of a grasscourt event.

"She had a great tournament before Wimbledon. She knows how to play on grass. With her game style, the surface fits her, so it's going to be a challenge."

ANISIMOVA CAN KEEP US FLAG FLYING AT MAJORS

Drawing inspiration from Williams, Anisimova will look to become the first American woman to claim the Wimbledon title since

her compatriot in 2016 and keep her country's flag flying at the majors. After Madison Keys won the Australian Open at the start of the year and Coco Gauff triumphed at Roland Garros, victory for Anisimova will keep alive hopes of US women completing an "American Slam" of the four majors.

Having dabbled in art while taking a mental health break from the sport in 2023 over burnout fears, the 23-year-old Anisimova will look to pick up her racket and paint a masterpiece on Centre Court with the world watching.

There have been strokes of brilliance during her run this year, highlighted by her semi-final win over top seed Aryna Sabalenka, but Anisimova said reaching the level

she has after her eight-month sabatical felt even more special.

"It goes to show that it's possible," Anisimova said.

"That's a really special message I've been able to show because when I took my break, a lot of people told me I'd never make it to the top again if I take so much time away from the game. That was a little hard to digest.

"I did want to come back and still achieve a lot and win a Grand Slam one day.

"Just me being able to prove that you can get back to the top if you prioritise yourself... that's incredibly special to me. It means a lot," Anisimova said.

Although the pair met as juniors, this will be their first clash at the

elite level and Anisimova is up for the challenge as she pits her powerful, aggressive style against the court craft of Swiatek.

"Iga's such an unbelievable player," Anisimova said.

"She's also been an inspiration to me. Her work ethic and all of her achievements have been really inspiring. I'm sure it will be an amazing match.

"I'm going to go out and enjoy every moment and try to not think about what's on the line there."

WIMBLEDON ORDER OF PLAY TODAY (prefix number denotes seeding)

Not before 1500 GMT
8-Iga Swiatek v 13-Amanda Anisimova (US)

CYCLING

Pogacar back in yellow after winning stage seven of Tour de France

Reuters
Paris

Defending champion Tadej Pogacar (UAE Team Emirates) is back in the yellow jersey after the Slovenian fought off Dane Jonas Vingegaard (Visma-Lease a Bike) to win stage seven of the Tour de France yesterday.

Pogacar, three-times winner, claimed his second stage of this year's Tour at the end of a 197km ride from Saint-Malo to Mur-de-Bretagne, outspurring Vingegaard at the summit finish, with Britain's Oscar Onley taking third place.

Mathieu van der Poel began the day with a one-second lead over Pogacar but the Dutchman finished 22nd on the stage and slipped to fifth overall, with Belgian Remco Evenepoel now in second place and 54 seconds behind the Slovenian.

Van der Poel won his first Tour de France stage, and claimed his first yellow jersey, at the Mur-de-Bretagne finish in 2021, but there was no repeat for the Alpecin-Deceuninck rider, after he was dropped on the steep climb to the line.

"I was quite sure I would lose the jersey today so I tried to enjoy it as much as possible," Van der Poel said. "Coming back here to Mur-de-Bretagne is quite special wearing the yellow jersey after four years."

After several early attacks, a five-man group - containing 2018 winner Geraint Thomas, with the 39-year-old Welshman riding his last Tour - got away with over 140km still to race.

With the peloton upping the pace, the leading group began to crack, leaving Ewen Costiou



UAE Team Emirates-XRG's Slovenian rider Tadej Pogacar sprints to the finish line ahead of Team Visma-Lease a Bike's Danish rider Jonas Vingegaard (second left) placing second during the 7th stage of the 112th edition of the Tour de France cycling race, 197km between Saint-Malo and Mur-de-Bretagne Guerledan, in Brittany, western France, yesterday. (AFP)

(Arkea-B&B Hotels) out alone as the race reached the Mur-de-Bretagne for the first time with the peloton just 20 seconds behind as they crossed the summit.

Costiou was soon swallowed up by the bunch, but the 22-year-old Breton had his moment of glory, the local rider greeted with loud cheers from the huge crowd gathered at what would also be the finish line.

With six kilometres remaining, a crash at the back of the peloton brought down several riders, including Pogacar's teammate Joao Almeida, who was seventh overall in the standings, and stage six winner Ben Healy.

The action was always going to come in the finishing circuit, where the riders faced the Mur-de-Bretagne twice, and Pogacar tried to get away from the reduced bunch in the final two kilometres to the finish.

Pogacar was followed by Evenepoel and Vingegaard, and eventually eight riders were left battling for the stage win in the last kilometre, but Van der Poel was not among them, dropped on that final climb.

That left Pogacar certain of taking back the yellow jersey which he had narrowly lost on Thursday and, after teammate Jhonatan Narvaez led him out,

Pogacar stole a march on his rivals by pouncing first.

Vingegaard, twice winner, was the only rider able to go with Pogacar but the Slovenian punched the air in delight as he crossed the line ahead of the Dane.

"I'm super happy with the win today, we did almost perfect, unfortunately Joao crashed and I hope he's okay," Pogacar told reporters.

"If he is okay then it's a perfect day, if not then this victory is for him."

Today's stage eight is a mostly flat 171.4km ride from Saint-Meen-le-Grand to Laval.

Sports legends meet in London



Retired cricket star Sachin Tendulkar of India is seen with tennis legends Roger Federer of Switzerland and Bjorn Borg of Sweden at Wimbledon in London yesterday. (@sachin_rt)

LIV Golf takes another swing at world ranking points

New York: LIV Golf is making a fresh bid to crack the Official World Golf Ranking (OWGR) after striking out two years ago, setting up another potential showdown over the Saudi Arabia-backed circuit's place in professional golf's pecking order. LIV Golf's request two years ago was unanimously rejected by OWGR due to concerns about the unconventional 54-hole format with no cuts while the events featured the same 48 players all season. They formally withdrew an application to have players receive world ranking points from its tournaments in March last year but OWGR said they received a new application on June 30 and had commenced a review process. "The OWGR Board is committed to a thorough evaluation process of all applications," Trevor

Immelman, the chairman of the OWGR board of directors, said in a statement yesterday. "LIV's application will be reviewed in accordance with OWGR's criteria to ensure fairness, integrity and consistency," Immelman said. The stakes are high for LIV's star-studded roster as world rankings play a key role in determining entry into golf's four majors. The lack of ranking points has seen LIV Golf players tumble down the rankings, with former world number one Dustin Johnson now ranked number 957 in the OWGR. "We appreciate the interest of LIV Golf - and all Tours - in contributing to the global landscape of men's professional golf through OWGR," Immelman added. "Further updates will be provided as the review progresses."

QATAR FOOTBALL TEAM BEGINS TRAINING CAMP IN AUSTRIA

Vienna: The Qatar national football team has kicked off its overseas training camp yesterday in the Austrian town of Going am Wilden Kaiser, as part of preparations for the fourth round of the Asian qualifiers, the intercontinental playoff, for the FIFA World Cup 2026, set to take place in the United States, Canada, and Mexico. The preparatory camp will run until July 27, during which the reigning two-time AFC Asian Cup champions are scheduled to play two friendly matches, as they gear up for the decisive qualification stage. Head coach Julien Lopetegui is aiming to make the most of the training camp by fine-tuning his squad, optimising physical and tactical readiness, and identifying his best starting XI. The team is hoping to secure a place at the World Cup for a second consecutive time, this time through the qualification route, after appearing as hosts in the 2022 edition. Lopetegui's squad for the camp includes a mix of fresh faces and returning veterans. Notably, Al Sadd midfielder Guilherme Torres has earned his first national team call-up, while seasoned

forward and former captain Hassan al-Haydos returns to the fold. Goalkeeper Saad al-Sheeb has been left out, with Marwan Sharif and Shehab al-Laithi brought in to reinforce the position. New defensive additions include Youssef Ayman (Al Duhail) and Abdullah al-Yazidi (Al Sadd). The current 30-man squad includes four goalkeepers: Meshaal Barsham, Salah Zakaria, Marwan Sharif, and Shehab al-Laithi. The full squad is as follows: Ahmed al-Janahi, Ahmed al-Rawi, Ahmed Suhail, Ahmed Fathy, Akram Afif, Ismaeel Mohammed, Edmilson Junior, Almoez Ali, Bassam al-Rawi, Boualem Khoukhi, Pedro Miguel, Jassem Gaber, Hazem Ahmed, Tarek Salman, Assim Madibo, Abdulaziz Hatem, Abdullah Youssef, Mohammed Muntari, Mostafa Tarek, Homam al-Amin, Karim Boudiaf, Mohammed Manee, Youssef Abdurisag, Youssef Ayman, Abdullah al-Yazidi, and Guilherme Torres. In June, the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) announced that Qatar and Saudi Arabia would co-host the fourth-round playoff matches, which will take place from October 8 to 14, 2025.

The draw for the playoff stage is set to be held next Thursday in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Six teams will compete in the playoff stage: Qatar, Iraq, Oman, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE, those that finished third and fourth in their respective groups during the third round of qualification. The teams will be split into two groups of three, with matches played in a single-round robin format. The winner of each group will automatically qualify for the 2026 World Cup. The runners-up from both groups will face each other in a two-legged playoff on November 13 and 18, 2025, with the winner progressing to the intercontinental playoff for a final chance to reach the World Cup. Ranked 53rd in the world, Qatar reached this playoff stage after finishing fourth in Group A of the third round with 13 points from 10 matches, behind Iran (23 points), Uzbekistan (21 points), and the UAE (15 points). Kyrgyzstan finished fifth with 8 points, while North Korea came sixth with 3 points.

(QNA)



Qatar player Akram Afif.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Crystal Palace dropped to UEFA's Conference League

Lyon retain Europa League place at Palace's expense; Nottingham Forest in line for Europa League spot

Reuters
London

Premier League side Crystal Palace have been dropped in European competition to the third-tier Conference League in a multi-club ownership case, while Olympique Lyonnais will be allowed to play in the Europa League, UEFA said yesterday. Palace had qualified for the Europa League by winning the FA Cup last season, while Lyon reached the competition by finishing sixth in Ligue 1. A move to relegate them to France's domestic second-tier Ligue 2 over their poor finances was overturned on Wednesday, a decision UEFA's Club Financial Control Body (CFCB) had been waiting for before ruling on the multi-club ownership case. "Consequently, the CFCB First Chamber pursued the assessment

of the documentation submitted by Olympique Lyonnais and Crystal Palace and concluded that the clubs breached, as at 1 March 2025, the multi-club ownership criteria," UEFA said in a statement. As both Lyon and Palace had qualified for the Europa League, the French club were allowed to keep their place as they finished higher in their respective league, with Palace finishing 12th in the Premier League. The Eagle Football Group are majority owners of Lyon while its chairman John Textor also owns a controlling stake in Palace. Textor later resigned from Lyon's board of directors with Michele Kang appointed chairwoman and president. Palace said last month that New York Jets co-owner Robert Wood "Woody" Johnson had signed a legally binding agreement to buy Eagle Football Holding's stake in the Premier League club, subject to approval from the Premier League.

However, Palace had missed the March deadline to comply with the multi-club ownership rules. **TEXTOR 'STUNNED'** "Honestly, I am stunned. We did everything possible to separate from the club, as UEFA would ask, with a sale process that began before the deadline, and a sale that will occur well before the draw," Textor told Reuters. "Now we have sold out of a club that I love, to help Palace fans continue this dream year, only to have another off-the-pitch decision lay waste to an historic sporting victory." Lyon had been demoted by the DNCG, French football's financial watchdog, in November due to the poor state of their finances but their relegation to Ligue 2 was overturned by its appeals committee. Palace can still appeal the decision at the Court of Arbitration for Sport but if UEFA's decision stands, the rules could allow



Nottingham Forest to play in the Europa League if they fulfil the admission criteria. Forest had finished seventh last season and originally qualified for the Conference League while fifth-placed Aston Villa and Palace had

qualified for the Europa League. The rules say no club may hold or deal in securities or shares of any other club participating in UEFA's competitions and that no club can be a member of any other club participating in UEFA competitions.

Furthermore, no one person has the power to be simultaneously involved in management, administration and/or sporting performance of any club and they must not have any control or decisive influence over more than one club.

MATCH REPORT

Messi brace buoys Miami in 2-1 MLS victory over New England Revolution

AFP
Foxborough, United States

Lionel Messi scored twice in the first half of Inter Miami's 2-1 victory over the New England Revolution, continuing a run of form unprecedented in Major League Soccer. The 38-year-old Argentine star has scored two goals in each of his last four MLS games to become the first MLS player to score multiple goals in four straight games. He launched the streak in late May with two goals in a 4-2 win over Montreal, followed by two in a 5-1 victory over Columbus. Miami then paused their MLS campaign to compete in the Club World Cup - where Messi scored one goal in four matches and Miami were eliminated in the round of 16 by Paris Saint-Germain. Javier Mascherano's team returned to MLS action on Saturday with a 4-1 victory at Montreal - also fuelled by a brace from eight-time Ballon d'Or winner Messi. In all Messi has 14 goals in 15 MLS games, putting him two behind leading scorer Sam Surridge, who has appeared in six more games for Nashville than Messi has played this season. "Obviously, Leo is a special player," Mascherano said. "For me he's the best player that has played this sport in history. It's unbelievable how he continues doing things that maybe many years ago we thought that we cannot see at this moment." Messi put Miami up 1-0 in the



Inter Miami forward Lionel Messi (10) scores a goal during the first half against the New England Revolution at Gillette Stadium in Foxborough, Massachusetts, USA. (Reuters)

27th minute at Gillette Stadium, taking advantage of a Revolution miscue and firing a left-footed shot from the heart of the area. The Argentinian star doubled the score 11 minutes later, charging onto a long through ball from Sergio Busquets and curling a left-footed shot beyond the reach of Slovenian goalkeeper Aljaz Ivacic. "They have played for many years so just when they see each other they connect and they know what they think," Mascher-

ano said of the Busquets-Messi connection. "In the second goal, Busquets understands when and where Leo wants the ball. It's fantastic for us." Veteran goalkeeper Oscar Us-tari also starred for Miami, coming up with six saves before Spaniard Carles Gil managed to put one by him, picking off Tadeo Allende in the 79th minute and rifling in a shot from outside the box. With the victory Miami climbed from sixth to fifth in the Eastern Conference stand-

ings. On 35 points, they are seven points behind leaders FC Cincinnati but with three fewer matches played after their Club World Cup break. Their jam-packed July schedule continues today against Nashville, one of three matches in the next 10 days. Mascherano said New England's late goal meant he couldn't afford to take Messi out. "We know that at some point we have to find the moment to rest him," he said.

BASKETBALL

Qatar beat India in friendly game

The Qatar national basketball team beat India 84-58 in a friendly game at the Federation Hall of the Al Gharafa Club yesterday. This game is part of the preparations for both teams ahead of the 2025 FIBA Asia Cup Finals. Mohammed bin Saad al-Mugheiseeb, the President of the Qatar Basketball Federation (QBF), and Ahmed Youssef Mohammed Mubarak al-Darwish, Assistant Secretary-General, along with a notable audience of sports enthusiasts, were present at the game. Throughout the game, the national team exhibited a remarkable technical performance, asserting dominance from the outset and concluding the four quarters with leading scores of 26-6, 38-23, 59-36, and 84-58. The technical staff, under the guidance of Turkish coach Hakan Demir, ensured that all players participated in the game, provid-

ing them with valuable experience. This approach was part of the execution of carefully crafted tactical strategies in preparation for the forthcoming continental competitions. The Qatari national team is set to engage in a second friendly game against the Indian national team at 7:00pm tomorrow at the Federation Hall in Al Gharafa, marking the conclusion of the second phase of their internal training camp. Following this, the Qatari national team will travel to South Korea for the third phase of the Asian Cup qualifiers, scheduled from July 16-21. During this period, they will compete against prominent Asian teams in friendly games as part of their final preparations for the tournament, which will take place in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, from August 5-17, 2025, featuring 16 participating teams.



Action from Qatar's friendly against India at the Federation Hall of Al Gharafa Club yesterday. Qatar won at 84-58.