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TENNIS

Swiatek crushes Anisimova 6-0, 6-0 to win maiden Wimbledon crown

First 'double bagel' scored in a major title clash since 1988

Reuters
London

Iga Swiatek took another stride towards tennis greatness as an all-court maestro after ruthlessly tearing apart American 13th seed Amanda Anisimova 6-0, 6-0 and lifting her first Wimbledon trophy yesterday.

The big occasion turned into a nightmare for Anisimova who became the first woman to lose a Wimbledon final by that painful scoreline since 1911 and the first to do so at any major since Steffi Graf routed Natasha Zvereva at the 1988 French Open.

Already a US Open champion and a four-times French Open winner, Swiatek's demolition job at the All England Club meant that she became the youngest woman since a 20-year-old Serena Williams in 2002 to lift major titles on all three surfaces.

Her superb display on the sun-drenched lawns of London also ensured she emerged as the first player since Monica Seles in 1992 to win all her first six major finals.

"It seems super surreal," said Swiatek.

"I didn't even dream (about this) because for me it was just like way too far. I feel like I'm already an experienced player, but I never really expected this one.

"I want to congratulate Amanda for an amazing two weeks. No matter what happened today, you should be proud of the work that you're doing. I hope we're going to play many more finals here and other tournaments, you have a game for that."

Swiatek's triumph ended a barren 13-month run for the Polish



Poland's Iga Swiatek celebrates with the trophy, the Venus Rosewater Dish, after winning against US player Amanda Anisimova during the Wimbledon final yesterday. (AFP)

24-year-old, who served a short suspension late last year after an inadvertent doping violation linked to contaminated sleep medication melatonin.

"I want to thank my coach (Wim Fissette). With the ups and downs right now, we showed everybody that it's working," Swiatek added.

SCORCHING START
On another warm afternoon on

Centre Court, Swiatek got off to a scorching start breaking a nervous Anisimova three times en route to dishing out the first bagel, prompting some spectators to get behind the American in a bid to help prolong the clash.

A frustrated Anisimova shrieked and desperately looked to her team in the stands for any kind of guidance after conceding yet another break point early in the second set

and it was not long before her machine-like opponent pulled away further.

Anisimova continued to disappointingly crack under pressure, before Swiatek completed the brutal mauling in 57 minutes with a backhand winner on her second match point to become the first Wimbledon champion from Poland.

Victory took Swiatek to 100



Amanda Anisimova of the US looks dejected as she gives a speech after losing the singles final against Poland's Iga Swiatek. (AFP)

LIST OF WIMBLEDON WOMEN'S SINGLES CHAMPIONS SINCE 2021

2025 Iga Swiatek (Poland) beat Amanda Anisimova (US) 6-0 6-0
2024 Barbora Krejcikova (Czech Republic) beat Jasmine Paolini (Italy) 6-2 2-6 6-4
2023 Marketa Vondrousova (Czech Republic) beat Ons Jabeur (Tunisia) 6-4 6-4
2022 Elena Rybakina (Kazakhstan) beat Jabeur (Tunisia) 3-6 6-2 6-2
2021 Ash Barty (Australia) beat Karolina Pliskova (Czech Republic) 6-3 6-7(4) 6-3

wins from 120 matches at the majors, making her the quickest to get to there since Williams in 2004, and denied Anisimova the chance to become the first American to win the title since her compatriot in 2016.

Swiatek jumped for joy on court before running towards her team in the stands, leaving Anisimova to wonder what could have been as she sat in her seat, before the tears began to flow during her on-court interview.

"I didn't have enough today,"

said Anisimova, who began the tournament with a 6-0, 6-0 win over Yulia Putintseva but admitted to running out of gas in the final.

"I'm going to keep putting in the work, and I always believe in myself. I hope to be back again one day"

It was bitter disappointment for US fans hoping for an "American Slam" this year after Madison Keys won the Australian Open at the start of the year and Coco Gauff triumphed at the French Open last month.

FOOTBALL

PSG coach Luis Enrique warns against complacency in Club World Cup final

AFP
East Rutherford, United States

Paris Saint-Germain coach Luis Enrique yesterday urged his team to round off the best season in the club's history by winning the Club World Cup, but warned not to expect today's final against Chelsea to be a "simple formality".

"This is absolutely not going to be a simple formality," the Spanish coach insisted, refusing to accept that PSG are necessarily overwhelming favourites to lift the trophy at MetLife Stadium despite their fearsome form.

"I have analysed Chelsea. They have a great squad. Enzo Maresca is doing a great job and I really like what he is doing," Luis Enrique said. "They are a very complete team."

PSG can complete a remarkable clean sweep of trophies with victory, having won a French league and cup double before claiming the UEFA Champions League for the first time in their history at the end of May.

"We want to finish this historic season in the best possible way," said the former Barcelona coach.

"Now we must open the next chapter, win more major trophies. We want to make more history by winning on Sunday."

PSG were spellbinding at times in their 4-0 victory against Real Madrid in the semi-finals and also put four goals past Atletico Madrid and Lionel Messi's Inter Miami during the competition.

"But we have to win this game to round things off. However, in a final there is always a winner and a loser, and that doesn't mean the loser has necessarily done anything wrong," Luis Enrique added.

"We will lose again at some point, because that is what happens in top-level football, but I think the path is clear for everyone."

This is the first edition of the 32-team Club World Cup, and whoever wins today will be world champions for four years, with the next tournament scheduled to take place in 2029.

"We are aware of the importance of this match, that it is a



PSG's Spanish head coach Luis Enrique looks on during a press conference at the MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, New Jersey, ahead of the FIFA Club World Cup final against England's Chelsea. (AFP)

golden opportunity to be in a World Cup final," said captain Marquinhos.

"This only happens every four years, and we don't know where we will be in four years."

Chelsea eyeing upset of PSG in Club World Cup final

Chelsea are a more familiar sight on the international stage, and they've had a strong tournament themselves, but they will be the

underdogs when they go toe to toe with PSG in the Club World Cup final today.

Riding high off their 5-0 Champions League final victory over Inter Milan, which completed a continental treble, PSG have torn through the Club World Cup with 16 goals scored and only one conceded. Their knockout-stage victories over Inter Miami, Bayern Munich and Real Madrid came by a combined 10-0.

"For sure, they are the top team in Europe, in the world, probably in this moment the best team in the world," Chelsea coach Enzo Maresca said in the pre-match press conference. "But I think that every game is different, every game can be different and we're going to try our best to do a good game."

PSG have played a tremendous possession game during the tournament and lead all teams in turnovers forced (272). Defender Achraf Hakimi has forced a CWC-high 44, and the Parisians were quick to convert Real Madrid giveaways into three goals in the first 24 minutes of Wednesday's

semi-final. If there's any team that can stay patient in the face of that style of play, it may be Chelsea, led by the midfield duo of Enzo Fernandez and Moises Caicedo. Fernandez leads all players in the Club World Cup with three assists, and he's helped coordinate a balanced attack in which 10 different players have scored at least one goal.

"They are up there with the best midfielders in the world. I think that will be clear on Sunday," Chelsea captain Reece James said of his teammates.

Caicedo is less than 100 percent healthy and Maresca hopes he can play today, as he took part in training but not fully.

Chelsea, who won this tournament in 2021, made it to the final by defeating Benfica 4-1, Palmeiras 2-1 and Fluminense 2-0. PSG coach Luis Enrique praised Maresca and Chelsea's playing style at his pre-match press conference.

"This is elite competition and if you think this game is just going to be a walk in the park, that's because you don't really know what Chelsea are about," Enrique said.

CRICKET

England and India set for second-innings shoot-out

THE THIRD TEST HANGING IN THE BALANCE AFTER THE VISITORS BOWLED OUT FOR 387



India's K L Rahul celebrates after completing his century on the third day of the third Test against England at Lord's Cricket Ground, London, Britain, yesterday. (Reuters)

AFP
London

KL Rahul made 100 and Ravindra Jadeja a third successive fifty as India exactly equalled England's 387 in the third Test at Lord's yesterday before tempers flared as the match headed towards a second-innings shoot-out.

India were in command while opener Rahul and the dynamic Rishabh Pant (74) shared a fourth-wicket stand of 141.

But both batsmen fell either side of lunch on the third day to leave India's first innings in the balance at 254-5.

Jadeja and fellow all-rounder Nitish Kumar Reddy, however, kept England at bay with a stand of 72 in 27 overs.

But India were unable to surpass England's first-innings total in the latest sign of just how evenly matched the teams are in a five-match series currently level at 1-1.

England should have had two overs to bat before stumps.

But after India spearhead Jasprit Bumrah had bowled five balls, Zak Crawley called for the physio in what appeared to

be an attempt at time-wasting, although there would have been time for only one more delivery as the clock had already ticked round to the close time of 6:30pm (1730 GMT).

India players swarmed around Crawley, with captain Shubman Gill exchanging words with the England opener.

The incident had been something of an accident waiting to happen given the umpires had previously allowed several unscheduled drinks breaks and other delays during India's innings.

The upshot was that England only faced one over before they reached stumps narrowly ahead at 2-0. India were poised to bat through the morning session without losing a wicket. But, in the last over before lunch, Pant was needlessly run-out by England captain Ben Stokes' direct hit from cover-point as he tried to get Rahul, 98 not out at the interval, back on strike to complete his century before the break. Rahul did get to a hundred but was out edging off-spinner Shoaib Bashir to slip off the next ball he faced.

On another hot and energy-sapping day at Lord's, India resumed on 145-3.

Rahul was 53 not out with wicketkeeper

Pant, off the field for much of England's innings following a finger injury, unbeaten on 19. There had been joyous scenes at Lord's on Friday when Jofra Archer marked his return to Test cricket following more than four years of injury-induced exile with a third-ball dismissal of Yashasvi Jaiswal. But Archer's first ball yesterday was glanced fine for four by left-hander Pant as the express fast bowler strayed in line.

Three balls later, Pant carved Archer over the infield as he played an 87mph delivery on a good length in front of square for four. Rahul then drove Brydon Carse for four and later glanced, square-cut and clipped the fast bowler for three more elegant boundaries in successive deliveries.

Pant who scored twin hundreds in India's defeat in the first Test at Headingley and a quickfire 65 in a series-levelling win at Edgbaston, completed a 55-ball fifty in style by hooking all-rounder Stokes for six.

After lunch, Rahul's quick single saw him to a 176-ball hundred, including 13 fours - his 10th century in 61 Tests and second at Lord's after the 33-year-old's 129 in 2021.

But Rahul's next ball proved his undoing

when, pushing forward to a well-flighted Bashir delivery, he edged to Harry Brook at slip.

After tea, Reddy (30) gloved a near-unplayable, sharply-rising ball from Stokes to wicketkeeper Jamie Smith, with India now 326-6.

Jadeja went to his half-century by driving part-time off-spinner Joe Root for four - the newly-promoted number six's third consecutive 50-plus score after innings of 89 and 69 not out at Edgbaston.

Soon afterwards, Jadeja lofted Root for six before he was 'strangled' down the leg-side by Chris Woakes.

Tailender Akash Deep, who narrowly avoided twice being lbw in three balls to Woakes, whipped the first ball of Archer's new spell for a six over long leg in the manner of a top-order batsman.

Deep then fell as Brook took a blinding catch at slip off Carse, before Woakes saw off Bumrah immediately after India tied the scores and Washington Sundar (23) skied Archer to Brook at long stop.

SCOREBOARD
England 1st Innings (387)
India 1st Innings

Y. Jaiswal c Brook b Archer 13
KL Rahul c Brook b Bashir 100
K. Nair c Root b Stokes 40
S. Gill c Smith b Woakes 16
R. Pant run out (Stokes) 74
R. Jadeja c Smith b Woakes 72
N. Reddy c Smith b Stokes 30
W. Sundar c Brook b Archer 23
A. Deep c Brook b Carse 7
J. Bumrah c Smith b Woakes 0
M. Siraj not out 0
Extras (3b 3lb 5nb 1w) 12
Total (119.2 overs) 387 all out
Fall of Wickets: 1-13 (Jaiswal), 2-74 (Nair), 3-107 (Gill), 4-248 (Pant), 5-254 (Rahul), 6-326 (Reddy), 7-376 (Jadeja), 8-385 (Deep), 9-387 (Bumrah), 10-387 (Washington)
Bowling: Chris Woakes 27-5-84-3; Jofra Archer 23.2-6-52-2; Brydon Carse 24-5-88-1; Ben Stokes 20-4-63-2; Shoaib Bashir 14.5-2-59-1; Joe Root 10.1-0-35-0
England 2nd Innings
Bowling: Jasprit Bumrah 1-0-2-0
Toss: England

SPOTLIGHT

Italy qualify for T20 World Cup for the first time

AFP
Paris

Italy qualified for the men's T20 cricket World Cup for the first time on Friday, securing a place at next year's tournament to be played in Sri Lanka and India.

Led by former Australia Test batsman Joe Burns, Italy finished second behind the Netherlands in the European qualifiers to clinch their spot.

The Italians edged out Jersey on net run-rate to take the second qualifying spot despite losing their final match to the Dutch by nine wickets.

"It's still very surreal," Burns, Italy's captain, told *ESPNcricinfo* yesterday morning.

"We'll probably take a few



Captain Joe Burns, a former Australian Test player, receives a medal after guiding his new team Italy who have qualified for the T20 Cricket World Cup next year. (Pic: ICC)

weeks to get home and decompress a bit to fully realise the impact that the occasion will have on so many people. It was an

emotional moment that we're going to try and reflect on as a group as much as we can over the next few months," Burns said.

"This has all come together on the back of a lot of planning. People ask me what the goal for the World Cup is and I say, 'Look, we're planning and preparing to win every game - so we're planning to win the World Cup!'

"I want the guys to enjoy the experience and play with freedom - but you have to earn the right to play with freedom on the back of really solid preparation," Burns added.

Scotland's hopes of appearing at a fifth straight T20 World Cup were ended by a loss to Jersey earlier in the day.

Fifteen of 20 spaces at the 2026 T20 World Cup have now been filled.

COMMENT

Starc is a modern-day great, says Akram



Wasim Akram (right) seen with Mitchell Starc in this file photo.

AFP
Karachi

Pakistan fast bowling legend Wasim Akram yesterday hailed Australia's Mitchell Starc as a "modern-day great" for reaching 100 Test appearances.

Starc, who draws comparisons with fellow left-arm quick Akram, will reach the milestone later Saturday when the third Test against the West Indies begins in Jamaica.

"It is a big deal in this day and age to reach 100 Tests, congratulations to Starc," Akram told AFP.

"That shows the quality and resolve of the man."

The 35-year-old becomes the 83rd player and 16th Australian to play 100 Tests, and only the second Australian fast bowler after Glenn McGrath.

"To play 100 Tests shows how consistent Starc has been and also shows where his priorities lie - that is to play red-ball cricket," said Akram.

"He has also played Twenty20 and league cricket but his career in Test cricket is way ahead and to me he is a modern-day great."

Starc stands on 395 Test wickets, so has the tantalising prospect of taking his landmark 400th wicket during his 100th Test.

His strike rate is remarkably similar to Akram, who retired in 2002 after taking 414 wickets in 104 Tests.

Both players, said Akram, had suffered injuries to "every joint, every part of the body" during their careers.

"People often compare us but we have played in different eras," said Akram.

"He's got the pace, he's got the swing and he's bowling very intelligently to the new batsman, especially with the new ball."

Australian coach McDonald applauds star pacer

"It's an incredible achievement," coach Andrew McDonald said a day before the third Test.

"You think of the surfaces we play on in Australia, they're firm, they're hard, they take their toll. There's a reason why there's only two that have ever done it for Australia. His resilience, his planning, his preparation... and he's sacrificed a fair bit along the way as well.

"You look to some of the IPLs that he's missed to get his body right to play for Australia. He's put a lot of work into it. I'm really proud of him and he's getting his great reward for what he's given up and the way he's gone about it. All the plaudits that are coming his way this week he deserves," McDonald said.

"As a younger bowler, it was all about speed and swing and getting the ball full," McDonald said. "If you look at the evolution of Mitchell Starc, it's his ability to hold line and length now. He can do any role you want."

BOXING

Taylor holds off Serrano to retain crown at MSG

Reuters
New York

Katie Taylor retained her undisputed super lightweight championship yesterday, completing a trilogy sweep against Amanda Serrano on a history-making night atop the first all-women's boxing card at Madison Square Garden.

The two fighters brought women's boxing to new heights through their fierce rivalry, and their fight drew a sell-out crowd at the world's most famous arena watched the Irishwoman just edge out her opponent.

The judges scored the fight 95-95, 97-93.

"What an amazing fighter," Taylor said of her opponent after the bout. "We're history makers forever!"

The pride of Puerto Rico, Serrano came out to plenty of support from her adopted hometown, with the New York Knicks dancers lining the walkway as she entered the arena.

Taylor, a 39-year-old Olympic gold medalist, walked to the ring expressionless, soaking in what many fans speculated could be her final professional fight.

Both fighters took a cautious approach at



Katie Taylor celebrates after defeating Amanda Serrano for the undisputed Super Lightweight Title at Madison Square Garden (MSG) in New York City. (AFP)

the start, with only three punches connecting in the first round - a marked contrast to the eager attacks of their earlier meetings.

The bout opened up in the third round, with Serrano unleashing a series of frantic blows, but she struggled to connect with the Irishwoman as the fight wore on.

The pair hugged immediately after the 10th

round, neither knowing the outcome. "I needed a lot of help down the home stretch today," said Taylor. "I just have a ton of respect for Amanda. She's just - what a warrior!"

Their first meeting at Madison Square Garden three years ago was billed as the biggest fight in women's boxing, as they were the first women to headline a fight at the arena.

TENNIS

Clash of the titans: Sinner's redemption bid against Alcaraz in Wimbledon final

THIS IS THE SECOND CONSECUTIVE GRAND SLAM FINAL FOR THE WORLD'S TOP TWO PLAYERS

Reuters
London

For Jannik Sinner, today's Wimbledon final offers a chance of redemption; for Carlos Alcaraz it is an opportunity to join an elite club of men who have won the title three years in succession.

There are many other plot lines but above all the showdown will help to cement a rivalry that could dominate tennis for a decade.

Fears of a void in the wake of the golden era of Roger Federer, Rafa Nadal and Novak Djokovic were real - surely nothing would ever be the same again after an age in which they took the sport to unimaginable heights.

From 2003-2023, the trio accumulated 66 Grand Slam titles between them and their rivalries were complex and compelling in equal measure. Djokovic is not done yet but a new era has begun and it promises to be just as spectacular as the previous one.

Between them, Alcaraz and Sinner have shared the last six Grand Slam titles and their mesmeric clash last month in the longest-ever French Open final is being touted as one of the greatest of all time.

The Spaniard came back from two sets down and saved three match points on his way to a fifth Grand Slam title, in the process taking his head-to-head record over Sinner to 8-4, including winning all of the last four.

It was a painful defeat for world number



A combination picture shows Italy's Jannik Sinner (left) and Spain's Carlos Alcaraz ahead of the Wimbledon singles final. (Reuters)

one Sinner but he has not had to wait long to try to set the record straight.

"He is the favourite. He won here two times in a row. He's again in the final. It's very tough to beat him on grass but I like these challenges," the 23-year-old Sinner said of Alcaraz after beating Djokovic to

reach his first Wimbledon final. "This is the second consecutive Grand Slam that we are in the final and playing each other, which is great from my side. I believe it's good for the sport."

Sinner's three Grand Slam titles have all come on hard courts, two in Melbourne

and one in New York. Alcaraz's major titles have come on all the sport's surfaces, suggesting a more complete game, but Sinner's performance against Ben Shelton in the quarters and Djokovic in the semis, show just how suited his game is to grass.

His laser-like ground strokes, powerful

serve and his ability to turn defence into attack in the blink of an eye were all on show and Alcaraz knows he faces a challenge every bit as tough as Roland Garros on Centre Court today.

The only other time they have met on grass was at Wimbledon in 2022 when Sinner won their last-16 clash in four sets.

"I expect that on Sunday, just to be on the limit, to be on the line," the 22-year-old Alcaraz, who is on a 24-match winning streak, said. "I just hope not to be five hours and a half on court again. But if have to, I will."

Should Alcaraz prevail he would join Bjorn Borg, Pete Sampras, Roger Federer and Djokovic as the only men to win the Wimbledon title three years in a row and he would also surpass Nadal's two Wimbledon crowns. Both players have shown vulnerability during the fortnight.

Alcaraz flirted with a shock first-round defeat against Italian Fabio Fognini, needing five sets. Sinner trailed by two sets against Grigor Dimitrov in the fourth-round after hurting his elbow, but was reprieved when the Bulgarian retired hurt.

Sinner, the third Italian to reach a Wimbledon singles final after Matteo Berrettini in 2021 and Jasmine Paolini last year, has looked unhindered by his elbow despite wearing a compression sleeve on his right arm in his last two matches.

"I think we are handling this small problem at the moment very well," he said.

So the stage is set for a fitting end to a sun-filled Wimbledon fortnight and if Sunday's duel is even remotely as compelling as the one in Paris, we are in for a treat.

CYCLING

Milan wins baking Tour de France mass sprint as French denied again

AFP
Laval, France

Jonathan Milan won stage eight of the Tour de France in a mass bunch sprint yesterday ahead of Wout van Aert and Kaden Groves.

On a day for pure sprinters and with no change at the top of the overall rankings, Lidl-Trek's Milan was the first Italian to win a stage on the Tour since Vincenzo Nibali in the Alps in 2019.

Milan, 24, took over the top of the sprint points rankings and had been wearing the green tunic in place of Tadej Pogacar, who had earned the sprint and the overall leader's yellow jersey by winning stage seven.

"It means a lot for me and also my country," Milan said.

"I was placed in a perfect position to take this victory.

"And I'll try and win again tomorrow," he said of today's flat stage also billed as one for the sprinters.

Pogacar retained the overall lead with Remco Evenepoel and Kevin Vauquelin rounding out the top three, with no change in the top 10 as the peloton kept its powder dry.

"It's nice to have a day like this," said 2020, 2021 and 2024 Tour winner Pogacar.

"It was a bit more relaxed and not necessary to push too hard in the sun all day.

"Especially as Monday is a brutal stage," the Slovenian added of the eight classified climbs and many more besides in a stage loaded with opportunities on France's national holiday in the Massif Central.

Pogacar, 26, also spoke of his teammate Joao Almeida who was hurt in a late fall Friday.

"It was good to see Joao finish the stage okay," he said.

"As I said, Monday is a brutal stage but nobody is expecting Joao to kill himself for a bike race," said Pogacar.

A day after complaining of the heat and fatigue Pogacar also re-



Lidl-Trek team's Italian rider Jonathan Milan wearing the best sprinter's green jersey cycles to the finish line to win the 8th stage of the 112th edition of the Tour de France cycling race, 171.4km between Saint-Meen-le-Grand and Laval Espace Mayenne, western France, yesterday. (AFP)



UAE Team Emirates-XRG's Slovenian rider Tadej Pogacar on the podium with the overall leader's yellow jersey. (AFP)

fused to be drawn on his participation at the Vuelta a Espana, the third and final Grand Tour of the season.

"I have to think about if I want to spend another month away from home," he said.

French hopes dashed again
Best young rider and Olympic champion Evenepoel hit a top speed of over 82kph (51mph).

"It was a nervy finale and I just wanted to stay up front in case of a fall," said Evenepoel

"It was a shame for Tim (Merlier, his team's sprinter) but he punctured in the run in," the 25-year-old Belgian added.

The remaining 177 riders from the original 184 rolled through the Brittany countryside with the harvest ongoing a month early and colossal crowds on the roadside.

Under clear blue skies and 31 degrees Celsius (88 degrees Fahrenheit) heat there was little in-

spiration in the peloton to break away until late in the day.

French duo Mathieu Burgaud-eau and Matteo Vercher attacked from 70km and the pair were only reeled in on the edge of finish town Laval after enthusiastic support on this Tour, which is based entirely on French soil but with no home winner yet.

The pair were awarded jointly the day's combativity award for their efforts.

The French Groupama-FDJ team is based in this region but their sprinter Paul Penhoet punctured 7km from home and failed to get back into the action in time for the finale.

Stage nine today heads south from Chinon to Chateauroux and is another flat affair with the focus on keeping hydrated in the heat and staying in the saddle.

Qatar beat UAE in first match of William Jones International Tournament

Beijing: Qatar basketball team beat UAE 80-74 in the opening match of the William Jones International Tournament, which is being held in Taipei, China, and will continue until July 20. The Qatari team excelled in an exciting match, with the UAE leading 16-11 in the first half before Qatar turned the tables and won the second and third sets, 27-16 and 24-15, respectively. Despite the UAE's lead in the fourth set, 27-18, the Qatari team maintained their lead and won the match 80-74. The team are participating in the tournament at the official invitation of the Chinese Taipei Basketball Association, reflecting the growing stature of Qatari basketball in Asia. The Qatari national team will

face Japan today, Australia tomorrow, the Philippines on July 15, Chinese Taipei (B) on July 16, Bahrain on July 17, and Chinese Taipei (A) on July 19, before concluding their matches against Malaysia on July 20. The William Jones Tournament is one of the most prestigious international tournaments in Asia, attracting a number of strong teams from different continents in its current edition, including Japan, Australia, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Bahrain, in addition to the Chinese Taipei A and B teams, along with the Qatari and Emirati teams. This gives the tournament a highly competitive nature and represents an important opportunity for interaction and experience. QNA

GOLF

Another eagle helps Chan Kim expand ISCO Championship lead to 5

Reuters
Louisville, Kentucky

Chan Kim used a late eagle to right the ship and finish the second round with a five-shot lead at the ISCO Championship on Friday in Louisville, Ky.

Kim opened the PGA Tour alternate event at its new venue, Hurstbourne Country Club, with a terrific round of 61 Thursday for a four-stroke advantage. After opening Friday with a birdie at the par-5 10th hole, he gave away his cushion with bogeys at Nos 11, 16 and 1.

Kim trailed Beau Hossler by a shot when he reached No 4, where his pitch from 36 yards away came in hot and banged into the hole. He added birdies at Nos. 7-8 to climb to 11-under 129. Kim, 35, eagled the par-4 fourth hole for the second straight round. "I don't know what the odds are of doing that, but boy, if I could make four 2s on that hole I'd be very happy," he quipped.

Kim - a journeyman who has won 10 titles between the Japan Golf Tour and the Korn Ferry Tour - is halfway to his first PGA Tour triumph.

"I know that, like I said, these guys are so good, somebody's going to catch up," Kim said. "I already know that. The best I can do is handle myself the way I did when I won all those events and that's just to stay patient and play my game, work on sticking to our game plan and I think that should get the job done."

The closest competitors are Kris Ventura of Norway (64 Friday), Vince Whaley (67) and Thomas Rosenmueller of Germany (69), tied for second at 6 under. Hossler settled for a 68 and a share of fifth, tied with Kevin Kisner (69), Englishman David Skins (64) and several others. Ventura had a winding path to his 64, tied with Skins for the round of the day. He had a double bogey and a bogey among four birdies on the front nine, but he kept the pedal down and birdied five more coming in.

"I think the highlight would have been just turning it around after the double bogey on 4," Ventura said. "I think the old Kris would have been really pissed off and maybe let that affect me a little too much. I just knew that it's playing tough so if you just shoot a couple under par, you're going to be right there."

FOOTBALL

Infantino hails Club World Cup as ‘world’s most successful competition’

‘I CAN SAY WE GENERATED ALMOST 2.1 BILLION DOLLARS IN REVENUES, FOR 63 MATCHES’

AFP

New York

FIFA President Gianni Infantino triumphantly declared the Club World Cup to be “the most successful club competition in the world” yesterday ahead of this weekend’s final between Paris Saint-Germain and Chelsea.

The first 32-team edition of the tournament faced criticism in the build-up for stretching demands on elite players and has been played out in baking temperatures in the United States that have raised concerns for the health of those involved.

There were also doubts about the level of interest the competition would generate among fans but Infantino said he was satisfied with the attendances at matches - despite many games being far from sold out - and claimed it had been a major success financially.

“The golden age of club football

has started. We can definitely say this FIFA Club World Cup has been a huge success,” Infantino told reporters at Trump Tower on New York City’s Fifth Avenue, where FIFA has just opened an office.

“We heard that financially it would not work, that nobody is interested, but I can say we generated almost 2.1 billion dollars in revenues, for 63 matches,” he said yesterday.

“That makes an average of \$33 million per match - no other club competition in the world comes close.

“It is already the most successful club competition in the world.”

Former Liverpool coach Jurgen Klopp has been one of the leading voices against the tournament, calling it “the worst idea ever implemented in football” in a recent interview.

But the head of world football’s governing body dismissed suggestions that Klopp might be speaking for most observers in Europe.

“We shouldn’t say that the

opinion of Europe on this is very bad because it is not true,” said Infantino, who was appearing on a stage alongside numerous footballing greats including the Brazilian Ronaldo.

“All the teams who have come here have been happy - some teams who didn’t come here because they didn’t qualify were calling us to see how they could qualify,” Infantino said.

“Of course I would have liked to have Liverpool here, Arsenal, Manchester United, Barcelona, Tottenham, AC Milan, Napoli... but you have to qualify and there are different criteria.”

The next Club World Cup is due to take place in 2029, with Infantino refusing to commit when asked whether the tournament could be played every two years or be expanded to feature more teams.

“We created something new, something which is here to stay, something which is changing the landscape of club football,” he added.



FIFA President Gianni Infantino speaks during a press conference as former Bulgarian player Hristo Stoichkov listens at the Trump Tower in New York on the eve of the FIFA Club World Cup 2025 final between France’s Paris Saint-Germain and England’s Chelsea. (AFP)

SPOTLIGHT

Marquez wins German GP sprint despite bad start

Reuters

Berlin

Ducati’s Marc Marquez overcame a nightmare start to snatch a dramatic last-lap victory in treacherous, wet conditions to claim a record-breaking 10th sprint win of the MotoGP season at the German Grand Prix yesterday.

The Ducati rider had plummeted to fourth after going wide at turn one despite securing a seventh pole position of the season, but he mounted a masterful comeback before overtaking Aprilia’s Marco Bezzecchi on the final lap.

Yamaha’s Fabio Quartararo finished third to complete the podium while VR46 Racing’s Fabio Di Giannantonio and Pramac Racing’s Jack Miller rounded out the top five.

The victory saw Marquez become the first rider to win 10 sprints in a season as he extended his championship lead to 78 points over his brother Alex, who finished eighth.

“In the beginning of the race, I was struggling. I did a mistake



Ducati Lenovo Team’s Spanish rider Marc Marquez (right) and second-placed Italian rider Marco Bezzecchi celebrate at the end of the sprint race at the Sachsenring racing circuit yesterday. (AFP)

on turn one, the exit on the start. And then I lost some positions,” Marquez said.

“But then, step-by-step I got the rhythm, like in the practice... I’m happy because we take 12 points again in the sprint,” he said. “But if tomorrow is wet (during the race), we need to brake a bit more before overtaking somebody.”

Marquez shot off the line with what seemed like a dream getaway, only to surrender the lead immediately as he went wide on

turn one and fell to fourth while Bezzecchi seized control. As Marquez looked to move up the pack, he had Di Giannantonio to contend with as the VR46 Racing rider overtook him twice in a dogged battle for fourth place.

Di Giannantonio’s teammate Franco Morbidelli had moved up to second but he crashed heavily on lap four and the Italian rider was thrown off his bike and sent tumbling across the gravel.

Morbidelli was diagnosed with a severe contusion to the left col-

larbone and was taken to hospital for further checks. As Marquez picked up the pace, he battled past Di Giannantonio and then set his sights on Quartararo, who had made a brilliant start despite being seventh on the grid.

But Marquez was soon setting fastest laps and he quickly found his way past Quartararo on lap nine, nearly losing control of his rear tyre before recovering his balance to stay in second.

Bezzecchi still held a lead of more than a second to Marquez but the Ducati rider was determined to reel in the Aprilia as he piled the pressure on the Italian sprint leader.

Like a hunter stalking his prey, Marquez closed in and waited for the right moment to pounce - on the start-finish straight on the final lap.

He used the Aprilia’s slipstream to surge ahead before retaining his lead on the following turns to take the chequered flag.

“Very happy to lead the race after such a long time,” Bezzecchi said.

“Of course, it’s always difficult to lose the battle at the end but I have to say that was a very positive day for me.”

FOCUS

Team Redline make history, become the first champions of Esports WC 2025

Team Redline has made history at the Esports World Cup 2025 (EWC 2025) in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, becoming the first tournament champions of 2025 edition and the first team to win back-to-back tournaments, defending the trophy won at the inaugural edition in 2024.

The tournament, which is the biggest international LAN event in the Rennsport R1 calendar, witnessed nine of the best sim racing teams in the world battle it out for their share of a \$500,000 prize pool.

As second seed in the competition, Team Redline entered directly into the group stage, winning three of four races.

As they progressed into the upper bracket, Redline won two of the three races to book their spot in the grand final.

Team Redline’s Jeffrey Rietveld, said: “It’s been absolutely incredible. We’ve felt truly welcome from the moment we arrived, and the hospitality in Riyadh is exceptional. Everything has been so well organised and comfortable, which really helped us focus and race our best.

“It’s also amazing to see how much the Esports World Cup has grown. The tournament has expanded massively, the arenas are even bigger, and there’s so much more space for fans. It’s great to see spectators from all over the world coming together to be part of it,” Rietveld added.

After becoming the first champions of the Esports World Cup 2025, Team Redline have claimed 1,000 Club Championship points, placing them at the top of the current standings.

As part of EWC 2025’s unique

trophy system, Team Redline had the opportunity to select three of the defeated team’s keys to be crushed and embedded in the base of their trophy.

Wasting no time to reassert their dominance, Team Redline claimed the tokens of fierce rivals Virtus. Pro, Team Vitality and Porsche Coanda, to be kept forever as part of their prize.

Discussing the history made and the enduring legacy of Team Redline’s successive victories at the Esports World Cup, Team Redline’s Luke Bennett said: “It’s a massive honour, we are trying to build a legacy for our team. To cement ourselves and our legacy, winning the EWC title twice in a row is an amazing feeling and I’m so proud of myself and everyone else involved.”

Team Redline’s Luke Bennett claimed the MVP award and the \$10,000 prize that comes with it, after taking four podiums on the final day and impressively placing in the top three in all three races of the upper bracket.

“It’s incredible, I’ve never won any kind of driver’s or solo championship, so to win the MVP award is almost a different way of winning that kind of thing. I’m super happy to win the MVP award, but also all my teammates deserve it too. They’ve all been incredible, it’s not a one-man team, there’s four of us.”

The first week of EWC 2025 continues today with finals across competitions in Apex Legends, Fatal Fury: City of the Wolves and VALORANT.

For more information and tickets, including access to all tournament days and festival experiences, are available now at esportsworldcup.com



HORSE RACING

Al-Shahwani’s Lacaro Du Croate lands Gr 1 PA Criterium des Pouliches



Lacaro Du Croate (No Risk Al Maury) delivered a career-best performance to win the Gr 1 (PA) Criterium des Pouliches - Wathba Stallions at La Teste yesterday.

The 1,900m contest, restricted to fillies and mares aged four and older, brought together a field of 11 Purebred Arabians. Ridden confidently by Cristian Demuro, the four-year-old filly is trained by Xavier Thomas-Demeaulte and carries the colours of Man-

soor bin Khalil bin Mansoor al-Shahwani.

Quickest away from the gates, Lacaro Du Croate was soon steadied and settled into a midfield position, racing three wide behind Geneva (Azadi) in a race led by Al Rasha (Munjiz). The pace remained steady until the final bend when it began to lift. Turning for home, Lacaro Du Croate was immediately angled to the outside for a clear run.

She loomed up to challenge the



well-fancied Intisar De Monlau (Al Mamun Monlau) and the favourite Nour Al Maury (Azadi). Once asked for more, Lacaro Du Croate responded with authority.

Taking control inside the final 200 metres, she quickly asserted and drew clear to win by one and three-quarter lengths.

Nour Al Maury, owned by Al Shaqab Racing and trained by Thomas Fourcy, ran on to take second under Christophe Soumillion while Bianca De Ghazal (Al

Mourtajezi), representing owner Nasser Abdulla al-Mesned and the winning trainer, stayed on well for third, only a further short head behind, with Maxime Guyon in the saddle.

Bred by JF Boudet, Lacaro Du Croate is out of Beanie Du Croate (Dahess), a winner over 1,850m at three. She is also a half-sister to Image Du Croate (Munjiz), a Gr 1 (PA) winner over 2,000m at three and a Gr 3 (PA) winner over 1,600m in the same season.