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TENNIS

Sinner gains Alcaraz revenge to win maiden Wimbledon

Alcaraz misses out on Wimbledon three-peat as Sinner avenges heart-breaking French Open loss



Italy's Jannik Sinner kisses his trophy after winning the Wimbledon title at The All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club. (AFP)

AFP
London

Jannik Sinner downed defending champion Carlos Alcaraz 4-6, 6-4, 6-4, 6-4 yesterday to win his first Wimbledon title, gaining sweet revenge for his painful defeat in the French Open final. The world number one is the first Italian to win at the All England Club and now has four Grand Slams to his name at the age of 23.

Sinner stayed ice cool after losing the first set, with the momentum quickly shifting, and wrapped up victory in a shade

over three hours. He had squandered three championship points in the final at Roland Garros five weeks ago but this time made no mistake as he served out for victory.

Sinner said he was living his "dream", prompting an eruption of cheers from the Centre Court crowd.

"An amazing tournament, but mostly thank you for the player you are," Sinner said, referring to his defeated opponent. "It's so difficult to play against you, but we have an amazing relationship off the court and on the court... Keep going, keep pushing and you are going to hold this (trophy) many times. You already have two!"

The tennis world has been captivated by

the developing rivalry between the players to follow the storied "Big Three" era of Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal and Novak Djokovic. Sinner and two-time defending Wimbledon champion Alcaraz have now shared the past seven Grand Slam titles between them, with the Italian winning four of those.

Defeat in Paris last month was a bitter blow for the top seed, who led by two sets and had a clutch of championship points. Sinner said he had tried to learn from his "tough loss" on clay. "We tried to accept the loss and just kept working," he said. "This is for sure one of the reasons I am holding this trophy here. I am just so



Italy's Jannik Sinner and Spain's Carlos Alcaraz embrace after the final. (Reuters)

grateful that I am healthy and have great people around me, and holding this trophy means a lot."

Prior to yesterday's victory, Sinner had lost five consecutive times against Alcaraz, including the final of the Italian Open in the first tournament he played after returning from a three-month doping ban. But this time he turned the tables in impressive fashion, denying world number two Alcaraz a sixth major.

Alcaraz, 22, sprayed a forehand long to hand Sinner the first break of the match but the Spaniard levelled at 4-4 to the delight of the spectators, who included Prince William and his wife Catherine, Princess of Wales. Sinner double-faulted to hand Alcaraz a second set point and the Spaniard produced a magical backhand winner, pointing his finger to his ear as the crowd rose to their feet.

Sinner, still wearing a protective white sleeve after his nasty fall in his fourth-round match against Grigor Dimitrov, broke in the first game of the second set. He led 3-1 after play was briefly halted by a flying champagne cork and went on to level the match with a whipped forehand.

The third set was a tense affair that went with serve until the ninth game when Sinner broke as Alcaraz slipped over on the

baseline and he took a two-sets-to-one lead.

The force was now with Sinner and he broke again early in the fourth set to take the match by the scruff of the neck. The chance was always there that Alcaraz would produce the magic he found at Roland Garros but Sinner stayed focused and snuffed out his chances. The Italian stepped up to serve for the championship amid a cacophony of noise, sealing the deal on his second championship point.

Sinner cruised through the first three rounds at Wimbledon, losing just 17 games - equalling an Open era record set in 1972. But he got lucky in the fourth round against inspired Bulgarian 19th seed Dimitrov, who was leading by two sets when he suffered an injury that forced him to quit. Sinner got back into the groove against 10th seed Ben Shelton in the quarter-finals before demolishing seven-time champion Djokovic in the last four.

Alcaraz had been aiming to become just the fifth man in the Open era to win three consecutive Wimbledon after Bjorn Borg, Pete Sampras, Federer and Djokovic.

"It is a really well-deserved trophy after an unbelievable two weeks here in London for you, playing great tennis," he said to Sinner.

FOOTBALL

Palmer stars as Chelsea stun PSG to win Club World Cup

AFP
East Rutherford, United States

Cole Palmer scored two goals and made another as Chelsea stunned Paris Saint-Germain in the final of the Club World Cup yesterday, beating the European champions 3-0 at the MetLife Stadium to win the first edition of FIFA's new competition.

PSG were the favourites for a game attended by Donald Trump after coming to the United States fresh from winning the UEFA Champions League and having destroyed Real Madrid 4-0 in the semi-finals. But having been three goals ahead midway through the first half in the semis, this time the roles were reversed as PSG found themselves 3-0 down by the break.

Palmer opened the scoring midway through the first half and struck again to make it two on the half-hour mark, before taking advantage of passive defending to set up Joao Pedro for the third on 43 minutes. A bad day for PSG was summed up when Joao Neves was shown red following a VAR review four minutes from the end for pulling Marc Cucurella by the hair off the ball.

It was a scoreline that few could have predicted as Chelsea capped what has been a long but memorable season - they are the first ever winners of the 32-team Club World Cup having also won the UEFA

Conference League and finished fourth in the Premier League. They will also take away around \$125 million in prize money, meaning the prospect of a drastically curtailed summer break before returning for next season will surely feel worth it.

For PSG, meanwhile, the financial rewards are similar but there will be genuine disappointment at falling short of adding this title to their Champions League triumph and French league and cup double. Nevertheless, conquering Europe was always the main aim this season for Luis Enrique's team, who now have exactly a month to digest this and take a holiday before returning to action in the UEFA Super Cup against Tottenham Hotspur.

There was a real sense of occasion at the MetLife Stadium, with the backdrop of the Manhattan skyline and with President Trump in attendance along with First Lady Melania Trump in a crowd of 81,118. There was even the first-ever half-time show at a FIFA tournament, adding a Super Bowl feel to a final played at the home of NFL sides the New York Giants and New York Jets.

As for the football, for the second time in six weeks PSG found themselves involved in a final that quickly turned into a one-sided affair. The club claimed a historic 5-0 win over Inter Milan in the Champions League final, but here they were ripped apart by Chelsea on another hot afternoon.

Palmer almost put Chelsea ahead inside the opening 10 minutes, before PSG should



Chelsea's Cole Palmer celebrates with Tosin Adarabioyo after winning the FIFA Club World Cup in East Rutherford, New Jersey. (Reuters)

have scored at the other end only for Desire Doue to try to pass to Achraf Hakimi rather than shoot inside the box, allowing Cucurella to block. It was Chelsea who struck in the 22nd minute as Malo Gusto got the better of Nuno Mendes down the right before seeing his shot blocked by Lucas Beraldo. The ball came back to Gusto and he teed up Palmer to finish into the bottom-left corner. Palmer has been the face of Chelsea on billboards in the United

States during the tournament and he lived up to his star billing by scoring again on the half-hour. Released on the right with PSG left-back Mendes out of position, Palmer advanced towards the box before stroking a low shot into the same corner.

Joao Pedro played a part in the build-up to that goal and the Brazilian, signed during the tournament from Brighton, then got his name on the scoresheet to make it 3-0. Scorer of both goals against Flumin-

ense in the semi-finals, he clipped a shot past Gianluigi Donnarumma after being supplied by Palmer. PSG had conceded a single goal in their previous eight matches and they never really looked like producing a comeback, even if Neves headed just wide in first-half stoppage time. Substitute Liam Delap almost got a fourth for Chelsea midway through the second half, before Neves was shown red to complete a bad day for PSG.

THIRD TEST

England roar back to set up thrilling finale at Lord's

INDIA CLOSE ON 58-4 CHASING 193 FOR VICTORY AFTER ENGLAND BOWLED OUT ON FOURTH DAY



England's captain Ben Stokes (centre) celebrates with teammates at the end of play on the fourth day of the third Test against India at Lord's Cricket Ground in London yesterday. (AFP)

Reuters
London

Fired-up England reduced India to 58-4 chasing 193 for victory in a highly-charged final session on day four yesterday as a gripping third Test at Lord's headed for a tense finale.

England fast bowler Jofra Archer dismissed Yashasvi Jaiswal for nought, Brydon Carse removed Karun Nair and Shubman Gill, and captain Ben Stokes bowled nightwatchman Akash Deep in the final over to set up a thrilling last day.

Indian opener KL Rahul remained unbeaten on 33 and the touring side need another 135 runs to go 2-1 up in the series after they had dominated the morning session at the home of cricket to move into a strong position.

"The last hour's viewing, our guys running in really well, there was an edge out there and it shows how important Test cricket is and creates a great spectacle for everyone to be involved in," England batting coach Marcus Trescothick said yesterday.

With the pitch offering more assistance to the bowlers and variable bounce, England tried to bat positively but Ben Duckett, Zak Crawley, Ollie Pope and Harry Brook all fell cheaply.

Duckett played an audacious ramp shot to the boundary but two balls later he attempted to pull Mohammed Siraj through the leg side and was easily caught by Jasprit Bumrah at mid-on to depart for 12.

Siraj roared at Duckett as he walked back to the pavilion as the tension between the teams that flared up late on Saturday continued to simmer.

Pope never looked comfortable and was trapped lbw by Siraj for four after India successfully reviewed the umpire's initial decision of not out.

Crawley, on 22, played a loose drive at Nitish Kumar Reddy and the ball flew straight to gully where Jaiswal took a simple catch to put England in trouble at 50-3.

Brook ramped Deep for consecutive fours before driving him over long-off for six, but the fast bowler quickly exacted revenge when he bowled the right-hander for 23 as he attempted a rash sweep to a straight full-pitched delivery.

Joe Root, who scored 104 in the first in-

nings, batted calmly, picking up mainly ones and twos as he and Stokes shared a patient partnership of 67 to revive England hopes.

But Root, on 40, was bowled behind his legs by Washington Sundar and the spinner bowled in-form Jamie Smith for eight to reduce the hosts to 175-6 at tea.

India wrapped up the innings early in the final session.

Stokes was bowled by Washington for 33 attempting a big hit, and Bumrah bowled Carse with a rapid yorker for one before clipping the top of Chris Woakes's off stump to dismiss him for 10.

Washington completed excellent figures of 4-22 when he took the final wicket of Shoaib Bashir to dismiss England for 192.

"India will win, probably just after lunch," Washington said.

"The position we're in we'd have definitely taken. The fast bowlers kept the pressure on throughout the day, it was amazing."

Jaiswal skied Archer to wicketkeeper Smith with a wild swipe to give England early hope before Woakes dropped a simple chance to catch Rahul, on five, off his own bowling, and the opener responded

by crashing the next two deliveries to the boundary.

Carse trapped Nair lbw for 14 with the batsman offering no stroke to a straight delivery, and Gill fell the same way for six after failing to get the umpire's decision overturned.

Deep survived two huge appeals before he was bowled by Stokes for one to the delight of the majority of the Lord's crowd.

"I think it will be a brilliant final day for both teams," Trescothick said. "There's been great support for both sides and it's fantastic to have."

SCOREBOARD
England 1st Innings 387 (J Root 104, B Carse 56, J Smith 51; J Bumrah 5-74)
India 1st Innings 387 (KL Rahul 100, R Pant 74, R Jadeja 72; C Woakes 3-84)
England 2nd Innings (overnight: 2-0)
Z. Crawley c Jaiswal b Reddy 22
B. Duckett c Bumrah b Siraj 12
O. Pope lbw b Siraj 4
J. Root b Sundar 40
H. Brook b Deep 23
B. Stokes b Sundar 33
J. Smith b Sundar 8
C. Woakes b Bumrah 10

B. Carse b Bumrah 1
J. Archer not out 5
S. Bashir b Sundar 2
Extras (b25, lb6, nb1) 32
Total (all out, 62.1 overs, 295 mins) 192
Fall of wickets: 1-22 (Duckett), 2-42 (Pope), 3-50 (Crawley), 4-87 (Brook), 5-154 (Root), 6-164 (Smith), 7-181 (Stokes), 8-182 (Carse), 9-185 (Woakes), 10-192 (Bashir)
Bowling: Bumrah 16-3-38-2; Siraj 13-2-31-2; Reddy 5-1-20-1; Deep 8-2-30-1 (Inb); Jadeja 8-1-20-0; Sundar 12-1-2-22-4
India 2nd Innings (target 193)
Y. Jaiswal c Smith b Archer 0
KL Rahul not out 33
K. Nair lbw b Carse 14
S. Gill lbw b Carse 6
A. Deep b Stokes 1
Extras (lb3, nb1) 4
Total (4 wkts, 17.4 overs, 94 mins) 58
To bat: R Pant, N Reddy, R Jadeja, W Sundar, J Bumrah, M Siraj
Fall of wickets: 1-5 (Jaiswal), 2-41 (Nair), 3-53 (Gill), 4-58 (Deep)
Bowling: Woakes 5-2-11-0; Archer 4-0-18-1; Stokes 4-4-0-15-1 (Inb); Carse 4-1-11-2
Match position: India need a further 135 runs to win with six wickets standing
Toss: England

PINK BALL TEST

West Indies bowl out Australia for 225 after dramatic collapse on day 1

Reuters
Sabina Park, Jamaica

Australia lost seven wickets for 68 runs in a dramatic collapse to be all out for 225 on day one of the third and final test against West Indies at Sabina Park in Kingston, Jamaica.

West Indies finished the day on 16 for one - 209 runs behind - after Australia's Mitchell Starc bowled Kevlon Anderson off the inside edge in the pacer's 100th Test.

Starc, 35, is just the second Australian fast bowler after Glenn McGrath to play 100 Tests.

Australia won the toss and opted to bat first for the day-night Test but crumbled despite being 157-3 at one stage as the West Indies bowlers ripped through their middle order before being dismissed in 70.3 overs.

Australia's Usman Khawaja and Sam Konstas shared a 28-run opening partnership before Justin Greaves provided the breakthrough for West Indies by removing Konstas. Steve Smith top-scored for Australia with 48, and shared a 61-run stand with Cameron Green, the visitors' highest partnership of the day.

West Indies quick Shamar Joseph finished with 4-33, the pick of the home bowlers, while Jayden Seales and Justin Greaves took three wickets each.

For West Indies, opener Brandon King was batting on eight with skipper Roston Chase on three at the other end after losing Anderson for three runs. West Indies fielded a makeshift opening pair of Anderson and King after Mikyle Louis and John Campbell sustained injuries while fielding and were sent to hospital for scans.

"Every pitch has been tough. The more balls you spend in the middle you hope it gets better but



Shamar Joseph of West Indies celebrates the dismissal of Beau Webster of Australia during the 1st day of the 3rd Test at Sabina Park, Kingston, Jamaica, on Saturday. (AFP)

it just hasn't been the case," Green told broadcasters.

"It's a bit of a grind first time with these balls, but a lot of learnings. Time in the middle is key - just trying to get used to their bowlers, their conditions. Very happy with our position (in this

test). We wanted to give them a tricky last 45 minutes. To get them one down is crucial, and we'll wait and see what happens tomorrow."

Australia won the first Test by 159 runs and second by 133 runs to take an unassailable 2-0 lead in the series.

FOCUS

Conway replaces injured Allen in NZ squad for T20 tri-series

Reuters
Auckland

Wicketkeeper-batter Devon Conway will replace the injured Finn Allen in the New Zealand squad for the 20-overs tri-series in Zimbabwe, New Zealand Cricket said yesterday.

Allen has been ruled out of the tournament after suffering a foot injury while representing the San Francisco Unicorns in the Major

League Cricket in the United States.

"We're really gutted for Finn," New Zealand head coach Rob Walter said in a statement issued by the New Zealand association.

"I was looking forward to working with him and to see him continue his form from the MLC but unfortunately injuries happen."

"We're lucky to be able to call on someone of Devon's quality to replace Finn."

Mitch Hay, Jimmy Neesham and Tim Robinson will also join

the squad as cover for Michael Bracewell, Mark Chapman, Glenn Phillips and Rachin Ravindra, who are involved in the MLC final today.

"We knew there'd be a possibility that a handful of players could be involved in the MLC final on Monday, so we're bringing in Mitch, Jimmy and Tim as possible replacements," Walter said.

Hosts Zimbabwe face South Africa in the tournament opener on Sunday. New Zealand begin their campaign against South Africa on Wednesday.

MATCH REPORT

Bangladesh level T20 series with thumping win over Sri Lanka

AFP
Dambulla, Sri Lanka

Bangladesh bounced back in emphatic fashion to level the three-match T20I series against Sri Lanka, cruising to an 83-run win in the second encounter at Dambulla yesterday.

After being outclassed in the opening game atallekele, the visitors rang in three changes and produced a performance that ticked all the boxes.

Asked to bat first, they posted a competitive 177 before rolling over the hosts for a paltry 94 - Sri Lanka's lowest T20I total against Bangladesh and their heaviest defeat to the Tigers in the format.

It was also the lowest T20I total ever recorded by Sri Lanka at home.

The hosts, chasing what seemed a gettable target on a decent surface, never got out of the blocks. The innings unravelled in a flash, lasting just 15.2 overs as wickets tumbled like a house of cards.

The slide began when the in-form Kusal Mendis, guilty of complacency, tapped one to cover and set off for a single without urgency.

Shamim Hossain swooped in and with a rocket arm nailed a direct hit, the turning point that

opened the floodgates. Sri Lanka were reeling at 30 for four inside the Power Play, with the top order back in the hut.

Leg-spinner Rishad Hossain turned the screws, claiming three wickets to stop a faltering Sri Lankan chase in its tracks.

Only two Sri Lankan batters reached double digits as the middle order folded under pressure and Bangladesh's fielders threw themselves around like men possessed.

Earlier, Bangladesh had themselves stumbled at the start, losing both openers inside the first two overs.

But skipper Litton Das stood tall, anchoring the innings with his 12th T20I half-century - a classy 76 off 50 balls studded with one four and five sixes.

He rode his luck, surviving twice, on 30 and 56, both off the bowling of Jeffrey Vandersay and made Sri Lanka pay dearly.

A full house watched the game at Dambulla and the teams now move to Colombo for the series decider on Wednesday.

BRIEF SCORES
Bangladesh 177 for 7 (Litton 76, Shamim 48, Binura 3-31) **beat Sri Lanka 94** (Nissanka 32, Rishad 3-18, Shoriful 2-12) **by 83 runs**

TENNIS

Swiatek hits back at critics after Wimbledon triumph

‘I’ve got to say unfortunately Polish media, how they treated me and my team, it wasn’t really pleasant’

AFP
London

Iga Swiatek pleaded with the Polish media to “leave me alone,” saying she knows what she is doing after crushing Amanda Anisimova 6-0, 6-0 to win her first Wimbledon title on Saturday.

The 24-year-old was seeded eighth at the All England Club after a disappointing first half of the season, though she is fourth in the rankings after a run to the Bad Homburg final two weeks ago.

Swiatek was asked at her post-match press conference whether winning Wimbledon so convincingly was a fitting riposte to those who have criticised her over her performances.

“For sure the past months, how the media sometimes describe me, and I’ve got to say unfortunately Polish media, how they treated me and my team, it wasn’t really pleasant,” she said.

“I hope they will just leave me alone and let me do my job because obviously you can see that we know what we are doing, and I have the best people around me.

“I have already proved a lot. I know people want more and more, but it’s my own process and my own life and my own career.

“Hopefully I’m going to have a freedom from them, as well, to let me do my job the way I want it.”

Swiatek will climb to third in the rankings today after winning her sixth Grand Slam title on a blazing day on Centre Court. The former world number one destroyed the hapless US 13th seed in just 57 minutes and the American admitted she was “frozen by nerves.”



Poland’s Iga Swiatek celebrates with the trophy after winning the women’s singles final at Wimbledon against Amanda Anisimova of the US. (Reuters)

Swiatek, who had not previously gone beyond the quarter-finals at Wimbledon, said she was shocked to have won the grass-court Grand Slam, where she was a junior champion in 2018.

She is better known for her prowess on clay, winning four French Open titles as well as the 2022 US Open, played on hard courts.

“Who would have expected that?” she said.

“It’s something that is just surreal.

“I feel like tennis keeps surpris-

ing me, and I keep surprising myself.

“I’m really happy with the whole process, how it looked like from the first day we stepped on a grass court. I feel like we did everything for it to go in that direction without expecting it, just working really hard.”

Swiatek said it was difficult to rank her Grand Slam triumphs but that winning on grass made it more “special and unexpected.”

“For sure, it feels like the emotions are bigger because at Roland Garros I know I can play well, and I

know I can show it every year,” she said. “Here, I wasn’t sure of that. I also needed to prove that to myself.”

Swiatek said it had been special to be presented with the Venus Rosewater Dish by Catherine, Princess of Wales.

“Overall the process of getting the trophy from her royal highness was something surreal,” she said.

“Since I’m a kid, honestly I’m a big fan of the royal family. It was amazing. I really appreciate that. I’m really grateful that it was her royal highness giving the trophy.”

Anisimova ‘frozen by nerves’ in historic Wimbledon final rout

London: Amanda Anisimova said she was “frozen by nerves” as her Wimbledon dream turned into a nightmare as Iga Swiatek romped to a historic 6-0, 6-0 victory in Saturday’s final. Anisimova had enjoyed a fairytale run to her first Grand Slam final just 18 months after returning to the game from a break to help her mental health. However, she admitted the occasion and the draining nature of a two-week slam played in blistering conditions during a London heatwave had taken its toll in the most one-sided final for 114 years.

“I was a bit frozen there with my nerves. Maybe the last two weeks I got a bit tired or something,” said Anisimova who will climb to a career-high seventh in the world thanks to her run at the All England Club. “It’s not how I would have wanted my first Grand Slam final to go. “I think I was a little bit in shock after, as well. But I told myself, ‘I’ll definitely come out stronger after this’.

“That’s not an easy thing to go through, losing 6-0, 6-0 in a Grand Slam final. “If anything, I can look at it as a positive and something I can look at as motivation going forward. Obviously there’s a lot of things I need to do to progress.” Anisimova returned to action

in January 2024 and has since fought her way back from well outside the world’s top 400. This season has been the best of her career so far – winning the Qatar Open in February. The high point of her year came in beating world number one Aryna Sabalenka in a bruising semi-final on Thursday. But the 23-year-old said that match had left her so physically

exhausted she had been unable to even practice on the eve of the final. “I didn’t practice yesterday. I think that I was just really fatigued,” she added.

“I could feel it also in my warm-up this morning. I mean, I had to take a break after every single rally out there in my warm-up.

“I think, if anything, it’s my physicality that I need to work on.” Anisimova, though, is determined to use Saturday’s scaring experience as a driver to spur her on to her dream of one day becoming a Grand Slam champion. “It’s honestly, like, a fork in the road.

“It’s whatever direction you want to go in,” she added.

“I’m going to choose the path of working towards my goals and to try and keep improving, hopefully put myself in more positions and opportunities like today.

“I think that’s going to help me reach my goals.”



CYCLING / TOUR DE FRANCE

Merlier doubles up as Van der Poel denied epic win

AFP
Châteauroux, France

Tim Merlier won stage nine of the Tour de France at Châteauroux yesterday after a heroic long-range escape from Mathieu van der Poel was caught in the final kilometre.

There was no change atop the overall standings with Tadej Pogacar now holding a 54sec advantage over Remco Evenepoel in second with French starlet Kevin Vauquelin third.

This was a second Tour win for Soudal Quick-Step sprinter Merlier this year, who was first across the line on stage three at Dunkirk.

Merlier was led in by team leader Evenepoel.

“It’s mad, we are supposed to be helping him (Evenepoel) but he’s helping us,” Merlier said.

“I need to make it through the mountains now, I won’t be any use to Remco there, but I want to help him in the other ones,” said the 32-year-old.

On a sun drenched slog from the Chinon vineyards, Van der Poel and a teammate broke early and built up a lead of 5min 30sec on the flat roads to Châteauroux.

‘Nearly made it’ Jonas Ricksaert won the combativity award for accompanying Van der Poel to within 10km of the line before slumping over his handlebars.

“I’m really happy. That was one of his (Ricksaert) dreams, to win the combativity award and that’s why we went,” Van der Poel explained.

“In the end we nearly made it but we hadn’t expected to get that far,” he said of his 173km breakaway at an average speed on 49.9kph.

As with many heroic exploits, their epic escape was ultimately doomed to a gut wrenching narrow failure. But with his gung-ho all-in style Van der Poel grew his Tour de France legend here despite being caught with 700m to go, the plaudits will be both his and Merlier’s.



Soudal Quick-Step’s Tim Merlier celebrates winning stage 9 of the Tour de France – from Chinon to Châteauroux – Chinon, France, yesterday. (Reuters)

“It’s hard to not be able to finish it off, but we put on a good show,” said the Dutch rider.

As Van der Poel was reeled in, it looked as though Jonathan Milan would win a second consecutive stage but Merlier got ahead with 30m remaining as Milan finished second with Arnaud De Lie completing the podium.

Road signs in honour of British cycling great Mark Cavendish had been placed at entry points to Châteauroux – reading Cavendish City – in homage to the now-retired 40-year-old, after he won three stages there in 2008, 2011 and 2021.

Pogacar’s Tour de France defence took a hit yesterday as his key teammate Joao Almeida threw in the towel two days after his nasty fall at the Mur de Bretagne, where he fractured a rib.

“It’s a big loss he was in good

shape. He’s our hero. I was suffering today so I understand how he must have felt. Every respect to him,” the Slovenian said.

Stage 10 should shake up the race with eight classified climbs in the Massif Central on the July 14 French national holiday.

After finishing in the peloton yesterday, Pogacar was already looking ahead to Monday’s mountainous 165.3km slog.

“Visma have a strong team for tomorrow and I think Jonas (Vingegaard) will be ready,” Pogacar said of his great Danish rival.

“There will be attacks from the main contenders, it’s up and down all day.

“I’m pretty confident in my team though. I’m looking forward to the hard stages,” added the 26-year-old three-time champion.



UAE Team Emirates-XRG team’s Slovenian rider Tadej Pogacar wearing the overall leader’s yellow jersey. (AFP)

GOLF

Gotterup earns second career win with victory at Scottish Open

Reuters
North Berwick, Scotland

Chris Gotterup shot a 4-under par 66 to out-duel Northern Ireland’s Rory McIlroy and win the Genesis Scottish Open yesterday at North Berwick, Scotland.

Gotterup’s 15-under 265 total was two strokes better than McIlroy and England’s Marco Penge at The Renaissance Club.

Gotterup won for the second time on the PGA Tour. Yesterday’s outcome guaranteed him a spot during the coming week in The Open Championship.

Penge shot 66 in the final round and McIlroy posted 68.

McIlroy, aiming to win the tournament for the second time in three years, led after back-to-back birdies on the fourth and fifth holes. But after a birdie on No. 8, he had pars across each of the last 10 holes.

Denmark’s Nicolai Hojgaard (64) and England’s Matt Fitz-

patrick (67) shared fourth place at 12 under.

Gotterup used four birdies on a six-hole stretch ending at No. 12 to move to the top. He held a two-shot edge until his bogey on No. 15, where he hit his tee shot in the rough.

But on the next hole, Gotterup rolled in a 10-foot birdie for a two-shot advantage again.

The best round of the day belonged to England’s Justin Rose, who shot 63 and moved to sixth place at 11 under, which was one shot better than Austria’s Sepp Straka (67).

World No. 1 Scottie Scheffler finished tied for eighth at 9 under after his second 67 of the tournament.

Defending champion Robert MacIntyre of Scotland had a 71 for the second time in the tournament and finished at 2 over and tied for 65th.

Because of weather concerns mostly related to fog, tee times were moved up and golfers were placed in threesomes.



Chris Gotterup of the US celebrates after winning the Scottish Open at the Renaissance Club, North Berwick, Scotland, Britain, yesterday. (Reuters)

TRANSFER

Former Liverpool forward Firmino set to join Al Sadd

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Former Liverpool star Roberto Firmino has sealed a move to Qatari giants Al Sadd, marking a fresh chapter in his storied career. According to multiple reports, the Brazilian forward will join the Qatar Stars League side from Al Ahli, where he recently helped the Saudi club win the AFC Champions League title. The re-

ported fee is around \$7mn.

Reports also said Firmino has waived \$7mn in outstanding dues owed to him by the Saudi club, along with an additional \$1mn in bonuses tied to Al Ahli's Asian Champions League triumph.

Transfer specialist Fabrizio Romano confirmed the deal on social media, declaring, "Roberto Firmino to Al Sadd, here we go!"

Firmino leaves Al Ahli after two seasons, during which he tallied six goals and seven assists in the club's triumphant continental

campaign — two of those assists coming in the final against Japan's Kawasaki Frontale.

Although he had a year remaining on his contract, Firmino's departure had long been anticipated.

Earlier this year, Al Ahli president Khaled al-Ghamdi revealed that there was a mutual agreement in place allowing the 33-year-old to leave after two seasons. Uncertainty around his future grew when Al Ahli opted not to register him for the second half of the Saudi Pro League season.

Despite being linked with a return to homeland at top Brazil club side Flamengo and even a potential move to Turkish side Fenerbahce, Firmino has opted to stay in the Middle East. His arrival is a major boost for Al Sadd, who continue to build a formidable squad in their pursuit of domestic and continental success.

Firmino remains a beloved figure at Liverpool, where he won the Premier League and Champions League under Jurgen Klopp before moving to Saudi in 2023.



SPOTLIGHT

Marc Marquez wins bruising German MotoGP

The race became a test of survival after only 10 riders finished

Reuters
Hohenstein-Ernstthal, Germany

Marc Marquez proved once again why he is known as the 'King of Sachsenring' when the Ducati rider marked his 200th MotoGP start by winning the German Grand Prix yesterday in a race that became a test of survival after only 10 riders finished.

Marquez's ninth MotoGP victory at the Sachsenring stretched his championship lead over brother Alex, who finished second, to 83 points while Marc's teammate Francesco Bagnaia finished third to sit 147 points behind.

Alex had started fifth on the grid and took second in his 100th MotoGP start despite still recovering from a fractured hand he suffered at the Dutch Grand Prix two weeks ago which required surgery. Several riders crashed over the course of the race, especially at turn one — including VR46 Racing's Fabio Di Giannantonio and Aprilia's Marco Bezzecchi when they were in second place.

But the day belonged to Marc as he marked his latest triumph at his favourite hunting ground by standing on his bike and doing a jig as he passed the chequered flag — a fourth straight weekend where he had won both the sprint and the race.

"One more (win at the Sachsenring) was super special. From the beginning, I felt good, the confidence when I started the weekend was super high because we were coming from three victories in a row," Marc said. "We are in an incredible moment. Now we can say that half the season is done. Now (the second) half we still need to be super concentrated."

Marc had clinched his seventh pole position of the season on Saturday before winning a wet sprint despite a mistake at the first turn, but this time he had the dream start to take the lead into turn one ahead of Bezzecchi and Di Giannantonio. As Marc slowly but surely started to stretch his lead, he was unaware of the battles for position behind him as Bezzecchi and Di Giannantonio swapped places while Alex and Pedro Acosta fought for fourth place on the sweeping corners.

Acosta became the third rider to crash early on after Lorenzo Savadori and Miguel Oliveira, with the young Spaniard gesturing at his fallen machine in frustration.

Di Giannantonio had broken the lap record in Friday's practice and given Marc a tough



Ducati's Spanish Marc Marquez celebrates on the podium with his trophy after winning German Grand Prix at the Sachsenring racing circuit, in Hohenstein-Ernstthal near Chemnitz. (AFP)

time early in the sprint.

But the Italian was unable to push any harder to catch up to Marc, who found a comfortable rhythm and pace to surge more than two seconds ahead despite easing off the throttle on two laps to conserve his tyres.

As Marc's lead stretched to more than three seconds, Di Giannantonio's challenge came to an end on the downhill braking zone on turn one when he lost control and crashed, with his bike tumbling across the gravel while he escaped unhurt. LCR Honda's Johann Zarco, who started second on the grid before getting pushed down the order, crashed at the same turn seconds later.

Bezzecchi had moved up to second but the Aprilia rider also bit the dust on the very next

lap at turn one, moving Alex up to second while Bagnaia suddenly found himself in the podium positions.

"I tried to give my 100%. Also, I was a little bit lucky because (riders) sliding in front of me crashed. But this is racing, so you need to be there," said Alex, holding an ice pack on his left hand. "Today, it was important to survive... So I'm really, really happy. It's unbelievable to be here (after surgery)."

The crashes did not end there as Trackhouse Racing's Ai Ogura lost his balance on turn one and ended up taking out Honda's Joan Mir in the process, leaving only 10 of the 18 starters.

Yamaha's Fabio Quartararo finished fourth ahead of Alex's Gresini Racing teammate Ferrn Aldeguer.

Abakar secures World Athletics Championships spot



Qatari hurdler Ismael Doudai Abakar has secured his spot at the World Athletics Championships after a brilliant victory at the Meeting International de Marseille in France. Abakar won the 400m hurdles in a new meet record time of 48.49 seconds, dipping just inside the 48.50s entry standard required for the global event. The performance highlights his excellent form, improving upon his 48.75s run in Ostrava last month. Joining Abakar in Tokyo at the September 13-21 Worlds is the nation's 4x400m relay squad, featuring Abderrahman Samba, Bassem Hemeida, Ashraf Hussen Osman, and Ammar Ismail Yahia Ibrahim. Hemeida (400m hurdles) and Ibrahim (400m) are also set to compete in the individual events following their qualification as reigning Asian Champions.

FOOTBALL

Arsenal agree deal for Gyokeres from Sporting

Arsenal are close to finalising the signing of Viktor Gyokeres after reaching an agreement in principle with Sporting CP for the Swedish striker, according to multiple reports. The deal is understood to be worth €73.5mn, comprising a €63.5mn (£54.8mn) guaranteed fee and a further €10mn (£8.6mn) in performance-related add-ons. Notably, Gyokeres agent has waived his fee to help facilitate the move. Negotiations had stalled due to Sporting president Frederico Varandas resisting what Gyokeres believed was a prior agreement allowing him to leave this summer for €60mn plus €10mn in add-ons. Arsenal's current proposal surpasses that figure, and the club has now taken formal steps to finalise terms.

Gyokeres has not reported for pre-season training with Sporting as he pushes for the move. A five-year contract is in place, and the 27-year-old has made Arsenal his priority despite interest from other clubs.

The Sweden international joined Sporting from Coventry



City in 2023 and has since become one of Europe's most sought-after forwards. He scored an astonishing 54 goals in 52 appearances last season, helping the Portuguese side secure a domestic league and cup double.

CAZORLA SIGNS NEW OVIEDO DEAL AGED 40

Former Arsenal playmaker Santi Cazorla has signed a one-year contract extension with newly-promoted La Liga side Real Oviedo, the Spanish club announced. Cazorla, who turns 41 in December, joined Oviedo in August 2023 and last season guided his boyhood club back to the top flight for the first time in 24 years.

During his 81 appearances for Spain he won the European Championship in 2008 and 2012.

TRIBUTE

Liverpool honour 'champion' Jota in return to action at Preston

AFP
Liverpool

Diogo Jota was hailed "a champion" yesterday by Liverpool manager Arne Slot as the Reds returned to the field for the first time since the Portuguese's death, defeating Preston 3-1 in a pre-season friendly.

Father of three Jota died alongside his brother Andre Silva on July 3, 11 days after marrying his long-term partner Rute Cardoso, after their car came off the road and burst into flames in northern Spain. A rendition of Liverpool's anthem "You'll Never Walk Alone" was played before kick-off at Deepdale and Preston captain Ben Whiteman laid a wreath in front of the away supporters.

A minute's silence was then observed and both teams wore black armbands. Jota was part of the Liverpool side that won the Premier League last season and in his final match won the Nations League with Portugal against Spain in June.

"I think what I take comfort in is that in the last month of his life he was a champion in everything," Slot said in an interview ahead of the match. "A champion for his family, which is the main and most important thing, because he got married. A champion for his country because he won the Nations League with a country that he



Fans remember Liverpool's late Portuguese striker Diogo Jota during the pre-season friendly match between Preston North End and Liverpool at Deepdale stadium in Preston, north-west England yesterday. (AFP)

cared about so much, because he also wore the flag when we had celebrations. And of course a champion for us by winning the Premier League."

Slot said the 28-year-old, who played a key role in Liverpool winning the Premier League title this past season, was one player he could always count on in diffi-

cult moments. "I always looked at him and said, 'now we need something special from you'" Slot said.

"And he delivered so many times. I can come up with all of these moments. So we are in a very difficult time, so let's try to do what Diogo did so many times. If it's so difficult then try a little bit harder or just keep on going and try to make it work."

Slot, who said the team would always carry Jota in their hearts, added that it was a challenge to see anything, including football, as "important if we think of what has happened". "But we are a football club and we need to train and we need to play again, if we want it or not."

Mohamed Salah was among the Liverpool starting line-up and captain for the day as Virgil van Dijk was left out of the playing squad but was still in attendance. Three of the players who travelled to Gouda, just outside Porto, for Jota's funeral last weekend, Conor Bradley, Darwin Nunez and Cody Gakpo, scored the goals in Liverpool's first steps back towards normality.

Multiple renditions of Jota's song, proclaiming him to be better than Portugal legend Figo, were belted out by the Liverpool support before a ball was even kicked. In the crowd, flags emblazoned with "forever our number 20" paid tribute to the man who died aged just 28. Liverpool announced on Friday that the club will retire

Jota's number 20 in his memory.

Jota's song was then sung on a loop at full-time as the Liverpool squad stood in front of their fans and applauded. "It's just hit the city hard," said Liverpool fan and security officer Thomas McAllister, 48. "Once a Liverpool player you become part of the family and we take you to our hearts. It's like someone in the family has died."

Earlier this week, Slot and his wife joined several players in attending the tributes that have appeared to Jota and his brother outside Anfield. "We will always carry him with us in our hearts, in our thoughts, wherever we go," added Slot.

Georgian goalkeeper Giorgi Mamardashvili and defenders Jeremie Frimpong and Milos Kerkez made their Liverpool debuts as Slot named two entirely different sides for each half. Liverpool had spent big in the transfer market prior to Jota's passing, breaking the club's record fee for Florian Wirtz as well as recruiting Frimpong and Kerkez in a bid to retain the Premier League title.

"It must be devastating for his family, his teammates but I think it will really unite and galvanise them to try and win the league for him," said another supporter Diggy Anderson, 60. Liverpool are next in action on an Asian tour, playing AC Milan in Hong Kong on July 26 and then away to Japanese side Yokohama F. Marinos four days later.