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QATAR STARS LEAGUE

Wakrah stun Duhail as Umm Salal win

By Sports Reporter
Doha

A lacklustre 10-man Al Duhail suffered a 0-1 loss to Al Wakrah in their second round match of the Qatar Stars League (QSL) at the Khalifa International Stadium yesterday.

Earlier, Umm Salal logged their first points beating Al Shahania 2-0 at the Al Bayt Stadium.

In what turned to be a late evening of woes, Al Duhail first conceded a penalty in the 10th minute and then saw the expulsion of their goalkeeper Salah Zakaria Hassan to a red card after he handled the ball while rushing well outside the penalty box area.

Al Wakrah had gone up the lead with El Amine Zouhzouh converting the spot kick which was gained when he himself was felled by Al Duhail's Ibrahim Kader during a tackle while being in the striking zone.

But it was the red card to Zakaria which seemed to have put the Red Knights out of sorts. The goalkeeper was caught by surprise when Al Duhail's Jean Charles Victor Castelletto headed a back-pass at him. Zakaria had thrown his left hand at a flying ball in a reflex action.

In the 43rd minute, the Blue Wave scored again from a free-kick taken from just outside the edge of the box. The ball bounced off an Al Wakrah player's back and who was a part of the de-



Al Wakrah's El Amine Zouhzouh celebrates after scoring against Al Duhail during their QSL match at Khalifa International Stadium yesterday.

fence wall and Redounae Berkane lunged ahead to grab the chance and score. A VAR check, however,

found the marginal offside and the goal was disallowed.

In the second session, Al Wak-



Umm Salal's Oussama Tannane celebrates with a teammate after scoring against Al Shahania in the QSL match at Al Bayt Stadium yesterday.

rah had another gasping moment when in the 58th minute Aissa Laidouni's long ranger thudded

into the centre of the crossbar but only to bounce back.

Al Duhail pushed more into de-

fence with a man down and had a fleeting chance in the 80th minute in front of the goal but it didn't materialise and in continuing action Adel Boulbina attempted an overhead kick but it sailed high over the target.

At the Al Bayt Stadium, Umm Salal scored their opening win of the new season beating Al Shahania 2-0.

Al Shahania were reduced to ten players after Mohamed Bader Sayyar was sent off following a second yellow card in the 61st minute but both of Umm Salal's goals had come prior to this.

Umm Salal captain and Oussama Tannane scored their first goal (43rd minute), slamming the top of the net from left inside the box. He had received a fine assist from Adil Tahif who dug the ball out before it could cross the goalline.

The Orange Fortress doubled the lead early in the second session (47th minute) with Jean Evrard Kouassi going on and beat the rival goalkeeper after he received a super pass from Antonio Mance.

Later, Mance himself came close to scoring at least twice, but once he shot just wide of the goal and the second time his header was blocked by Al Shahania goalkeeper Shehab Mamdouh Ellethy.

Al Shamal are now on top of the standings with 6 points with Al Gharafa and Qatar SC at two and three (also with 6 points each). Al Wakrah are fourth with 4 points while Al Sadd (5th), Al Rayyan (6th) and Umm Salal (7th) have 3 points each.

PREMIER LEAGUE

Man City revamp rocked by Spurs, Arsenal thrash Leeds

Gyokeres double helps Arsenal to 5-0 win over Leeds, Villa lose at Brentford, remain goalless in two games

AFP
London

A new-look Manchester City showed familiar frailties as Tottenham strolled to a 2-0 win at the Etihad yesterday, while Viktor Gyokeres scored his first Arsenal goals in a 5-0 hammering of Leeds.

Brennan Johnson and Joao Palhinha struck for the Europa League winners just before half-time as Spurs continued a perfect start for Thomas Frank after two league games in charge.

City's run of four consecutive Premier League titles came to a spectacular end last season as they finished a distant third behind Liverpool and Arsenal.

A 4-0 thrashing of Wolves on the opening weekend of the campaign showed glimpses of a revamped City back to their best.

However, they were again easily exposed on the counter-attack, while manager Pep Guardiola must decide who will be his number one goalkeeper after a day to forget for James Trafford.

Ederson was left on the bench amid rumours the Brazilian could join Galatasaray before the transfer window closes. City have been linked with a move for out-of-favour Paris Saint-Germain 'keeper Gianluigi Donnarumma. Tottenham took the lead on 35 minutes when Richarlison squared for Brennan Johnson to power past Trafford.

The England goalkeeper then had a moment of madness when he



Arsenal's striker Viktor Gyokeres celebrates scoring the team's fifth goal from the penalty spot during the Premier League match against Leeds United at the Emirates Stadium in London yesterday. (AFP)

attempted a pass to Nico Gonzalez inside his own box. Pape Matar Sarr intercepted and, even though the goalkeeper recovered to deny Richarlison, Palhinha smashed home the rebound.

Spurs let a two-goal lead slip late on against PSG to lose the

UEFA Super Cup in Frank's first game in charge earlier this month, but rarely looked in danger of suffering a similar fate.

"From every game you learn and games where you don't get the result you learn even more," said Frank. "Defensive principles and



Tottenham Hotspur's midfielder Joao Palhinha celebrates scoring the team's second goal during the Premier League match against Manchester City in Manchester yesterday. (AFP)

the mentality is the key thing. We need this mentality to win games like this."

ARSENAL VICTORY AT A COST
Arsenal moved ahead of their north London rivals at the top of the table on goal difference, but a routine victory over Leeds came at a cost as Martin Odegaard and Bukayo Saka hobbled off injured.

Jurrien Timber doubled his Arsenal goal tally by scoring twice from corners.

But the Gunners showed they have more attacking weapons on top of their set-piece threat in a dominant performance.

Saka blasted in from a narrow angle to double the home side's lead just before half-time.

Gyokeres has been signed to fill

Arsenal's need for a prolific striker after finishing second in the Premier League for the past three years. The Swede showed his poise in front of goal with a cool finish after latching onto Riccardo Calafiori's pass.

And Gyokeres was lethal from the penalty spot deep into stoppage time after 15-year-old Max Dowman had been felled on his Premier League debut.

Aston Villa have failed to score in their opening two games after losing 1-0 at Brentford.

The Bees spent a reported £42 million (\$58mn) on Dango Ouattara to replace the departed Bryan Mbeumo and the club record signing delivered with the only goal on 12 minutes.

The Burkina Faso international sprinted clear of Pau Torres before firing in at the second attempt after Emi Martinez saved his first effort. Marcus Tavernier scored the only goal as Bournemouth beat 10-man Wolves 1-0.

Burnley secured their first points back in the top flight with a 2-0 win over Sunderland.

The Black Cats beat West Ham 3-0 last weekend on their return to the Premier League after an eight-year absence. But goals from Josh Cullen and Jaidon Anthony brought Sunderland back to earth. Champions Liverpool travel to Newcastle on Monday with the clubs at a stand-off over Magpies striker Alexander Isak.

The Swede will miss the game as he attempts to force through a move to Liverpool before the end of the transfer window.

MOTORSPORT

Marquez sweeps to sprint win in Hungary to bolster title lead

It was seventh straight sprint victory for the Spanish rider who has also won the last six Grands Prix



Ducati Lenovo Team's Spanish rider Marc Marquez competes during the qualifying session of the motorcycle Hungarian MotoGP Grand Prix at the Balaton Park circuit in Balatonfokajar, Hungary, yesterday. (AFP)

AFP
Balatonfokajar, Hungary

Marc Marquez continued his winning streak as he cruised to victory in the Hungarian Sprint race by almost three seconds yesterday to pad his championship lead. It was a seventh straight Sprint victory for the Spanish rider who has also won the last six longer Sunday Grand Prix races on his factory Ducati. Fabio Di Giannantonio, an Italian with the VR46 Ducati satellite team was a distant second at Balaton Park, followed by his teammate and compatriot Franco Morbidelli third. Marquez, a six-time world champion, started the race from pole position. "I felt someone really close on the first corner, from there I quickly found a fast rhythm," Mar-

quez said. "I'm very happy with this victory." He extended his lead in the world championship to 152 points over his younger brother Alex Marquez, who finished eighth on his Ducati Gresini. Italian Francesco Bagnaia, the second rider on the official Ducati team, failed to score any points after finishing 13th. The double world champion had struggled in qualifying at the end of the morning, setting only the 15th fastest time. The race lost three riders in the first few seconds. "Today has been chaotic," said Di Giannantonio. Frenchman Fabio Quartararo started on the second row, was the rider who gave Marc Marquez a first corner scare, braking late on his Yamaha and then colliding with Italian Enea Bastianini. Quartararo crashed, Bastianini managed to keep his KTM on the track but a few corners

later, he ran into the back of the second French rider Johann Zarco's Honda, ending the race for both of them. Both Quartararo and Bastianini were penalised by the stewards. The Frenchman, who starts sixth on the grid in today's main event, was hit with a long lap penalty for "causing a dangerous situation and contact" with Bastianini. The Italian, who was able to continue after the collision, will have to serve two long laps – his penalty was doubled as this is his second of the season – for his collision with Zarco. Bastianini, who will start in fourth place today, was found guilty of "irresponsible riding causing a crash".

Spanish rider Marc Marquez celebrates his victory after the sprint race ahead of Hungarian MotoGP Grand Prix. (AFP)



ATHLETICS

Practice makes perfect, says Jefferson-Wooden

AFP
Brussels, Belgium

In-form US sprinter **Melissa Jefferson-Wooden** will return home to fine-tune final touches before heading to the world championships in Tokyo as the big favourite for a sprint double. The 24-year-old wrapped up her European swing of the Diamond League circuit with a 100m victory in Brussels in 10.76 seconds over a loaded field including reigning world champion Sha'Carri Richardson and Jamaican legend Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce. That win came hot on the heels of an impressive victory at last week's Silesia meet in 10.66sec. It was just one-hundredth of a second off her personal best that makes her the joint fifth-fastest woman in history. "I feel great," she said after her Brussels triumph, taking her to eight straight wins this season in the blue riband event. "It was a little cool out there, but I was able to still come out here and compete and run a fast time. "It's always a blessing to come out to new places and be able to gain the crowd's respect – and I was just able, I was happy, to come out here and perform the way that I did." Jefferson-Wooden's run of form comes at a perfect time given the world championships kick off in the Japanese capital in just three weeks. Next up is a training camp for the South Carolina native who sealed prestigious NCAA titles in the 100m outdoors and 60m indoors while attending the little-known Coastal Carolina University.



"At this point, it's just about consistency and practice making perfect," Jefferson-Wooden said. "I feel like I've done a very good job of being disciplined in who I am this year and who I want to be as an athlete. "And I feel like that discipline is getting me the times that I want to see, the results that I want to get. "So now it's just about closing out the regular season for me, and then going back home and getting a little bit more training in before it's time to go to Tokyo." Jefferson-Wooden maintained, however, that there would not be wholesale changes to her approach to racing. "It's just about keeping the main thing be the main thing, looking at the smaller parts of the race and fine tuning those things and critiquing those," she said.

"The race in Tokyo is going to be about the person who makes the least amount of mistakes. "Obviously I want to be that person because I want the gold. "That's what the mission is, going back home and getting these last training sessions in." Jefferson-Wooden, who became the first woman since 2003 to win the 100-200m double at the US trials earlier this month, added that jetting over to Europe to race had allowed her an invaluable insight into how to cope with jetlag as a professional athlete. "I could get used to what I need to do, as far as getting acclimatised and adjusted to the time difference," she said. "I feel like it was a really good starter for where I need to be when it comes time to travel over to Asia."

South Africa include Rabada in white-ball squads to play England

Cape Town: South Africa have included Kagiso Rabada in their one-day international and Twenty20 squads to tour England next month, but the fast bowler will continue to be monitored for an ankle injury. South Africa will play three ODIs between September 2-7 and three T20 matches, and will travel to England direct from Australia, where they are leading a 50-over series against their hosts 2-0 with a final game to come today. "We'll reassess Kagiso in England," South Africa coach Shukri Conrad said. "We are hopeful he will be available

for part of the ODI series, but we're prioritising T20 cricket and will take a conservative approach." Key all-rounder Marco Jansen is fit again after a thumb injury and has been included for the T20s, while teenage fast bowler Kwena Maphaka will act as cover for Rabada in both formats. "It's great to have Marco back," Conrad said. "He's a fantastic all-format player who balances our side, he bowls up front and at the death, and hits the ball a long way." Hard-hitting left-handed batter David Miller also returns to the T20 squad.

South Africa ODI squad: Temba Bavuma (captain), Corbin Bosch, Matthew Breetzke, Dewald Brevis, Nandre Burger, Tony de Zorzi, Keshav Maharaj, Kwena Maphaka, Aiden Markram, Wiaan Mulder, Senuran Muthusamy, Lungi Ngidi, Lhuan-dre Pretorius, Kagiso Rabada, Ryan Rickelton, Tristan Stubbs
South Africa T20 squad: Aiden Markram (captain), Corbin Bosch, Dewald Brevis, Donovan Ferreira, Marco Jansen, Keshav Maharaj, Kwena Maphaka, D Miller, Senuran Muthusamy, L Ngidi, Lhuan-dre Pretorius, K Rabada, R Rickelton, T Stubbs, L Williams.

COMMENT

Samuelson sees LA28 lifting next generation of American runners

Reuters
Los Angeles

Joan Benoit Samuelson, the first women's Olympic marathon champion, hopes the return of the Summer Games to Los Angeles in 2028 will propel a new generation of American distance runners to the podium, even if they are not the favourites. Samuelson, who won gold on the streets of Los Angeles in the inaugural women's Olympic marathon, recalled approaching that race as an underdog, unburdened by expectation. "I was in the right place at the right time and if the day had been different, the result could have been totally different," she said in an interview at Nike Victory Relay, an event that brought 500 runners from across Los Angeles to LA Memorial Coliseum last weekend. "I wasn't the favourite, and it's always easier being the underdog. I just said, 'Go out and run my own race,' and that's exactly what I did," she said. "I broke from the pack a little and I just kept running." Looking ahead to 2028, she said the city's Olympic legacy – particularly the organisational model of 1984 led by Peter Ueberroth – can shape an inclusive and energising experience for athletes and fans. "They made an Olympics for everyone," she said. "I felt so welcome in the city with different families that welcomed me into their homes. "Every time I come to LA it's a homecoming. To see the city start gearing up with the LA 2028 Olympic team in place, it's exciting." She pointed to the enthusiasm at the Nike Victory Relay – which brought together youth athletes, high school students, and local run crews – as evidence of momentum. "It just shows that the youth are exuberant about what's going to come down the track in the next of couple years," she said. Samuelson, 68, said women's distance running has undergone a



profound transformation since the 1980s, when she trained largely alone on Maine roads and faced cultural scepticism about women competing over longer distances. "Now, I really see more women out there than men," she said, crediting expanded school and community opportunities. "It's amazing that I was able to come here and run a marathon when the longest acceptable distance in the previous marathons was 1,500 meters." She added that fears once voiced about women's health have been disproven by decades of participation. "Well 150,000 miles, two children and two grandchildren later, I'm still at it. It's a sport for all ages, it's accessible and affordable," she said. Samuelson added that the performances of American women in 1984 such as sprinter Evelyn Ashford and middle-distance runner Mary Decker Slaney, helped catalyse the women's running movement. In 2028, she hopes that spirit is reignited. For athletes with Olympic ambitions, Samuelson's advice is straightforward: trust the work. "Believe in your training," she said. "If you believe in yourself and you do the training you're capable of doing, I think you're going to see more Americans on the victory stand here in 2028."

Djokovic narrows focus in pursuit of 25th Grand Slam

Former tennis world number one Novak Djokovic says the expansion of most ATP Masters 1000 events to 12 days makes them "just way too long for me" as he focuses on his pursuit of a record 25th Grand Slam title.

"To be quite frank with you, I don't enjoy the two-week Masters events anymore," Djokovic said as he spoke to reporters before the Sunday start of the US Open - the last Grand Slam of 2025.

"It's just way too long for me. My focus is mostly on the Slams, and I have said that before.

"But I also like other tournaments. I'd like to play more of the other tournaments, but I just, we have currently informally, unofficially, 12 Grand Slams a year when you think about it.

"Grand Slam is two weeks and the other Masters events are almost two weeks, as well."

At 38, the former world number one says his priorities have changed in the latter stages of his career.

"I'm not chasing the rankings or building up my points or defending, et cetera," Djokovic said. "I just don't think about it anymore.

"For me, it's really about where do I find motivation and joy? Where will I be inspired to play the best tennis? And where do I care to be, really, and play?"

With family now at the forefront of his life, Djokovic said, he is less willing to miss out on major personal milestones.

He noted that his daughter's birthday falls on September 2, when he could find himself playing in the US Open quarter-finals.

"But those are types of things that I really don't want to be missing anymore," he said.

Djokovic, long an advocate for player input in matters such as scheduling and player compensation, said he does not see how the Masters 1000s - which shifted this year from one-week to 12-days - could go back to the previous format.

Canada and Cincinnati in the run-up to the US Open became 12-day events this year.

"In the end of the day, when the players needed to be active and when there was a time of negotiations and decision-making, players weren't participating enough," he said.

Djokovic himself has not played since a comprehensive semi-final loss to currently world number one Jannik Sinner at Wimbledon in July.

He acknowledged that he is coming in "cold" in terms of match play, but said he had been training hard as he eyes a return to the later stages of the US Open.

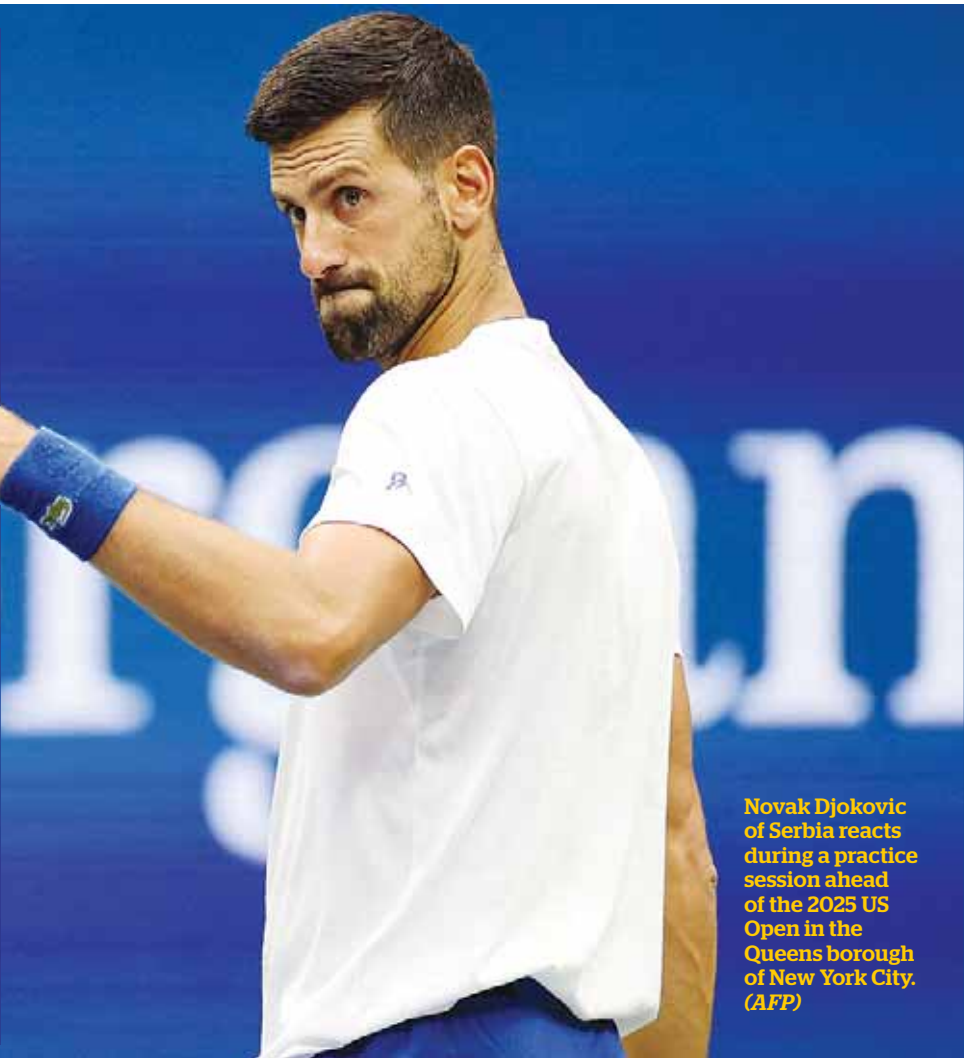
A four-time winner in Flushing Meadows, Djokovic suffered his earliest Grand Slam exit since 2017 when he lost to Australia's Alexei Popyrin in the third round of last year's tournament.

But this week Djokovic has taken some time to explore New York as well, notably throwing out the ceremonial first pitch at a New York Yankees baseball game.

"It was a great experience," said Djokovic, adding that he met Yankees slugger Aaron Judge.

He also thought he acquitted himself well with his pitch.

"I didn't throw that accurate, but it still wasn't as embarrassing I think as some of the other guys I saw in the past."



Novak Djokovic of Serbia reacts during a practice session ahead of the 2025 US Open in the Queens borough of New York City. (AFP)

TENNIS

Sinner in race for fitness with US Open battle looms

‘JUST SLEEPING AND RECOVERING. NOTHING CRAZY’

AFP
New York

World number one Jannik Sinner said yesterday he is "not 100% yet" but expects to be at full strength for the launch of his US Open title defense when the final Grand Slam of 2025 gets underway.

The Italian retired because of illness while trailing Carlos Alcaraz 5-0 in the first set of the Cincinnati Open final on Monday and pulled out of the Open's new-look mixed doubles competition on Tuesday and Wednesday.

Speaking to reporters at the Billie Jean King National Tennis Center at Flushing Meadows, Sinner said he was highly motivated and on the mend two days before singles action was slated to start.

"So physically, I feel good," said Sinner, who is expected to play his first match against Czech Vit Kopriva tomorrow.

"You know, I have recovered mostly, not 100% yet, but we are aiming to be there in a couple of days. So should be all fine for the tournament.

"It was a virus, also some other players had," Sinner added. "Just sleeping and recovering. Nothing crazy."

Sinner's growing rivalry with Alcaraz is in the spotlight at the Open. Their five meetings in Grand Slams include two finals this year, with Alcaraz triumphing at Roland Garros and Sinner



Jannik Sinner of Italy reacts during a practice session ahead of the 2025 US Open in New York City. (AFP)

turning the tables at Wimbledon.

Sinner said the differences in their games and personalities make the rivalry more compelling, but one main trait they share is a laser-like focus on the game.

"We make choices for tennis," Sinner said. "It's now our first priority at the moment, which it has to be because it's very small, small details make the difference."

Sinner's US Open title last year came amid a doping scandal in which he first escaped a ban before eventually agreeing to a

three-month suspension - even though doping authorities accepted that his exposure to the anabolic steroid clostebol was accidental.

"Last year was a much more stressful situation," Sinner said. "It was difficult to handle everything. You know, I'm still young, so it was not easy."

Since serving his ban following his victory in the Australian Open in January, Sinner has rehired fitness coach Umberto Ferrara, who had been sacked along with physiotherapist Giacomo Naldi after

the revelation of Sinner's positive tests.

Now the Italian is ready to move on as he tries to become the first man to repeat as US Open champion since Roger Federer won five in a row from 2004-2008.

"I feel like it's over," he said. "We are focusing on hard work again and trying to get better as an athlete."

"I'm very happy to be back here," Sinner said. "It's obviously the last Grand Slam we have for this season so the motivations are very high."

Gauff looks to future with bold coaching change before US Open

New York: Coco Gauff says she didn't hesitate to shake up her team just days before the US Open, hoping a new specialist coach can help shore up the serve that has been letting her down.

"It was a very sudden decision" to hire biomechanics expert Gavin MacMillan, Gauff acknowledged yesterday as she spoke to reporters ahead of the final Grand Slam of the year.

"Gavin became available. I just felt this was the best decision for my game at least and I had to go with what I was feeling."

She had kind parting words for former coach Matt Daly, but clearly thinks that MacMillan - who helped world number one Aryna Sabalenka sort out a slumping serve - has the expertise she needs.

"I'm just looking at long term," said the world number three, who won her first Grand Slam title at Flushing Meadows in 2023.

She added a second at the French Open this year, but has been inconsistent since, with her serve a major culprit.

Gauff hit 42 double faults in just three matches at the Canadian Open in Montreal this month - including 23 in a single encounter.

She coughed up 16 double faults in her Cincinnati exit against Italy's Jasmine Paolini.

"I know Gavin has had experience with this before, so hoping I can just take on his knowledge and see what can happen," Gauff said.

The timing, right before a major, wasn't a factor in the decision.

"A tournament is a tournament," Gauff said. "I hate losing regardless of where I am.

"I hope I can get it all together - I

think I'll play either Monday or Tuesday - by then. If not, I have the rest of this year to work on it. But I do know I needed to make a change, technical change to it, and I don't want to waste time continuing doing the wrong things."

Defending US Open champion Sabalenka, whose serving woes threatened to derail her rise in 2022, credited MacMillan with putting her back on a path that has carried her to number one on the world.

Like Gauff, she was at her wit's end when she went to MacMillan.

"I tried literally everything, and nothing would help me to fix my serve," Sabalenka recalled yesterday. "It was the last step before I would say, OK, bye-bye, tennis."

"I was so desperate, so I wasn't really doubting my decision. The moment we start working, I felt like, 'OK, there is something. I definitely have a better feeling on my serve.'

"And I just trusted the process, trusted myself ... So for me, it was about repetitions, a little bit of time and full commitment to whatever he was saying."

For Gauff, the move that surprised so many is about much more than one Grand Slam.

"I know where I want to see my game in the future," she said. "I'm not going to waste time playing the way I don't want to play."

"I'm obsessed with the process of getting better. Sometimes maybe it hurts because I get obsessed with it too much. I feel like I have a clear future where I see myself and I feel like I'm really close. I think this aspect of the game will bring everything together for me."



Coco Gauff and Andre Agassi react during the Stars of the Open exhibition match ahead of the 2025 US Open. (AFP)

IWAI LEADS IN CANADA



Akie Iwai of Japan plays her tee shot during second round play at the CPKC Women's Open golf tournament in Mississauga, Ontario, Canada. Akie Iwai is halfway home to her second victory in as many weeks as she built a three-shot lead. Tied for second at 6 under are World No. 1 Jeeno Thitikul of Thailand, three-time major champ Minjee Lee of Australia and Ireland's Leona Maguire. (AFP)

GOLF

Fleetwood ties Henley for Championship lead

AFP
Washington

Tommy Fleetwood fired a seven-under par 63 on Friday to tie Russell Henley for the halfway lead in the Tour Championship and position himself for another run at a coveted first US PGA Tour title.

Three adrift to start the day at East Lake Country Club in Atlanta, Georgia, Fleetwood nabbed four birdies in six holes on the back nine and bounced back from a bogey at 16 with back-to-back birdies for a 13-under par total of 127.

Henley, who led by two after the first round, closed with back-to-back birdies in a four-under 66 to claim his share of the lead.

The top duo were two strokes clear of Cameron Young, who charged up the leaderboard with an eight-under 62 that saw Young make six of his nine birdies on the back nine.

Scotland's Robert MacIntyre and Patrick Cantlay shared fourth on 10-under and world number one Scottie Scheffler was alone in sixth on eight-under.

MacIntyre and Cantlay both shot 66 - Cantlay rebounding after a bogey-bogey start to pick up four strokes in his last three holes thanks to birdies at 16 and 17 and an eagle at 18.

England's Fleetwood said rain-softened East Lake offered plenty of scoring chances - but still demanded accuracy off the tee.

"I think if you start losing it a little bit off the tee and you're in the rough, it obviously becomes a lot more difficult to score," said Fleetwood, who hit 12 of 14 fairways and 13 of 18 greens in regulation.

The seven-time DP World Tour winner suffered his latest PGA Tour near miss at the St Jude Championship this month, and was tied for fourth at the BMW Championship last week.

"I think I'm playing really good golf," he

said. "Best possible scenario, put yourself in contention. Play well, put yourself in contention, and go from there."

"I love the buzz when I am in contention," added Fleetwood, who now finds himself in the hunt for a first title in a tournament that carries a \$10mn first prize. "I'm just excited for the opportunity again."

Henley had rolled in 207 feet of putts as he sizzled on the greens in an opening 61. But after a hole-out birdie at the first he had three birdie putts of about five feet before rolling in his longest birdie of the day, a 14-footer, at the last.

"I hit my driver awesome," Henley said. "I hit a lot of shots today that were really good shots that maybe didn't end up quite close enough or maybe gave myself a little bit of an awkward birdie putt. But still feel like I putted it well, hit my lines really well, and just hit a bunch of fairways. That's what you've got to do around here."

LIGUE 1

Ruiz goal gives PSG narrow win over Angers

AFP
Paris

Fabian Ruiz scored the only goal of the game while Ousmane Dembele missed a penalty as a rusty Paris Saint-Germain beat Angers 1-0 on Friday to make it two wins out of two at the start of the Ligue 1 season.

Spain midfielder Ruiz drilled home from inside the box five minutes into the second half at the Parc des Princes, handing European champions PSG the win in a game in which they dominated but lacked sharpness.

Luis Enrique's side, who showed off their trophy haul from last season at the end of this game, edged Nantes 1-0 away last weekend to begin the defence of their 11th French title in the last 13 years.

That was off the back of a penalty shoot-out victory over Tottenham Hotspur in the UEFA Super Cup as PSG returned to action following just one week of pre-season training and without having played any warm-up friendly matches.

The Super Cup was PSG's fifth trophy of 2025 to go with their triumphs in the Champions League, Ligue 1, French Cup and the French Champions Trophy. They displayed their collection of silverware on the pitch at full-time in front of a Parc des Princes packed despite August being a time Parisians escape the city on holiday.

"We need to quickly forget about these five trophies because that is the past and we need to think about the future," Luis Enrique said.

"I thought we were really good physically and technically," he

said of his team's performance in a game played on a poor surface.

"It is difficult against a team that defends deep and it was even harder because of the state of the pitch."

The PSG coach made seven changes to his starting line-up, but this was arguably just about PSG's strongest possible team with Lucas Chevalier making a home debut in goal following his recent arrival from Lille.

ACCLAIM FOR DONNARUMMA

Chevalier has taken over as number one from Gianluigi Donnarumma, with the Italian – a hero of last season's Champions League campaign – now expected to leave the club but still appearing on the pitch after the game to take the acclaim of the crowd.

"It is always lovely to see the support of the fans. I understand

that it was a special moment for 'Gigio'," Luis Enrique said of Donnarumma's reception.

The Parisians had chances but their finishing was wayward against opponents who beat newly-promoted Paris FC 1-0 on the opening weekend of the season.

PSG won a penalty in the 25th minute when Joao Neves was tripped just inside the area by Marius Courcoul. Dembele, who scored 35 goals in all competitions last season, blazed the kick high over the bar.

Desire Doue, playing against his hometown team, then saw a magnificent strike narrowly miss the top corner.

The only goal arrived five minutes after the restart as a low ball into the middle by Doue was blocked but broke for Ruiz to score.

Angers never looked like finding an equaliser.



Paris Saint-Germain's Fabian Ruiz heads the ball and attempts to score during the Ligue 1 match against Angers SCO at the Parc des Princes Stadium in Paris. (AFP)

SERIE A

De Bruyne strikes in Napoli's strong start to title defence

'I THINK I STILL HAVE TO ADJUST A BIT AND DO BETTER'

AFP
Reggio Emilia, Italy

Kevin De Bruyne scored on his Napoli debut yesterday as the Serie A champions kicked off their title defence with a straightforward 2-0 win at promoted Sassuolo.

The headline signing of the summer transfer window in Italy, De Bruyne opened his account for Napoli in the 57th minute when his free-kick swept in from the left flank and evaded everyone before nestling in the far corner.

"Of course it's a nice moment, I just tried to put the ball in the right space you know and I think I put it in a dangerous space so if anyone touched it... now in this case nobody, it just went in. It's nice to start this way," said De Bruyne to DAZN.

De Bruyne, 34, is in Italy after a decade at Manchester City during which he won six Premier League titles and in 2023 the Champions League.

"It's a different way of working, a different way of playing and I saw that today. I think I still have to adjust a bit and do better," added De Bruyne.

"It was a good start as a team but I think we can play better, individually and collectively."

De Bruyne made sure Napoli would get off to a winning start to the new season in Reggio Emilia after Scott McTominay continued where he left off from last season with a bullet header in the 17th minute.

McTominay was the star of Napoli's second Scudetto triumph in three years with 12 goals and again looked in fine form for Antonio Conte's team.

The Scotland midfielder was



Napoli's midfielder Kevin De Bruyne vying for the ball with Sassuolo's defender Tarik Muharemovic during the Serie A match at the Mapei - Città del Tricolore stadium in Reggio Emilia, yesterday. (AFP)

unlucky not to double his tally for the evening on the stroke of half-time when his rasping first-time effort crashed onto the crossbar.

"That was the message all pre-season, we need to take off from where we finished last season. For us it's obviously very important to start with a win... we're hungry this year," said McTominay.

Napoli have never retained a league title, not even when Diego Maradona strutted his stuff in southern Italy back in the 1980s, and their attempt to do so after the historic success of 2023 ended with a 10th-place finish.

However unlike Luciano Spalletti, whose exit straight after winning the league destabilised Napoli, Conte has decided to stay put and that has given fans hopes of another big season.

The current team will have to play the first few months of Napoli's bid for a fifth league crown without Romelu Lukaku.

De Bruyne's Belgium teammate could be out of action until the end of the year with a thigh muscle tear and his understudy Lorenzo Lucca struggled to get into the game on his Napoli debut.

Sassuolo romped to the Serie B

title last term but were outclassed on their return to the top flight, and finished the match with 10 men after debutant Ismael Kone was sent off in the 79th minute for two bookable offences.

Later, Luka Modric will start AC Milan's first fixture of the campaign against promoted Cremonese as the veteran star begins a new chapter in northern Italy after 13 trophy-laden years at Real Madrid.

Roma face an old foe in their first official fixture under new coach Gian Piero Gasperini, with former Lazio striker Ciro Immobile making his Bologna debut.

BUNDESLIGA

Leverkusen slump at home, Dortmund collapse late

AFP
Berlin

Bayer Leverkusen let a one-goal lead slip to lose 2-1 at home to Hoffenheim in new coach Erik ten Hag's Bundesliga debut yesterday.

Taking over from Xabi Alonso in the summer and overseeing a radically restructured side after several high-profile exits, the former Manchester United boss cut a frustrated figure on the sideline.

Leverkusen hit the lead after six minutes when Jarell Quansah, who arrived from Liverpool this summer, headed in an Alex Grimaldo free-kick.

Hoffenheim, who finished just one spot above the relegation placings last season, levelled with 25 minutes played, Fisnik Asllani taking advantage of a defensive error from Quansah.

Tim Lempere put the visitors ahead after 52 minutes. He was given too much time by Leverkusen's defence and skidded a low shot into the corner of the goal.

Leverkusen lost just three league games in the past two seasons, often saving points with the clock winding down, but there would be no late heroics. The defeat showed the scale of the rebuild Ten Hag has on his hands.

"Of course we're disappointed, that's clear... We've still got a lot of work to do. That's not unexpected," Ten Hag told reporters.

"I know from my experience the harder you work, the faster it goes, but we need to stay calm."

Borussia Dortmund gave away a two-goal lead with five minutes remaining to collapse to a 3-3 draw at St Paul, losing debutant centre-back Filippo Mane to a red card.

In the box seat for an opening-day win at 3-1 after goals from Serhou Guirassy, Waldemar Anton and Julian Brandt, Mane gave away a penalty and was sent off in the 85th minute for holding Abdoulie Ceesay in the box.

After Daniel Sinani converted from the spot, St Pauli went immediately on the attack and lev-

elled things up just three minutes later, Eric Smith drilling a long-range effort into the top corner.

With 10 minutes of stoppage time awarded, the hosts looked the most likely to score, but Dortmund just held on, for a point.

"Last year we dropped a lot of points at the end due to red cards. It seems we've carried that into the new season," Brandt told Sky.

"It hurts. At some point, you have to stop explaining it to people afterwards and learn how to play with a man down in the important moments."

A first-half penalty miss from Guirassy with Dortmund a goal up also proved costly as Dortmund dropped points in a season opener for the first time in a decade.

Mane will miss Dortmund's next match and his absence is likely to hurt a side that has only one fit centre-back remaining in their squad.

Eintracht Frankfurt proved they still know their way to goal without departed striker Hugo Ekitike as they thumped Werder Bremen 4-1 at home, Jean-Mattheo Bahoya scoring a brace in either half.

Now at Liverpool, Ekitike scored 15 and added eight assists in the league last season, but youngsters Bahoya, Can Uzun and Ansgar Knauff all scored for the home side in a dominant victory.

Bremen pulled one back through Justin Njinmah in the second half but rarely troubled the hosts.

German Cup holders Stuttgart were beaten by Union Berlin, who won 2-1 thanks to a first-half double from debutant Ilyas Ansah.

Back in Berlin for the first time since winning the cup final in May, Stuttgart hit the woodwork twice and had a stoppage-time equaliser for Nick Woltemade ruled out for offside.

Elsewhere, Augsburg won 3-1 at Freiburg and Wolfsburg won by the same scoreline at Heidenheim.

On Friday, defending champions Bayern Munich exploded in their season opener, beating RB Leipzig 6-0 at home, with Harry Kane scoring a second-half hat-trick.



Hoffenheim's German forward Tim Lempere celebrates his goal against Bayer Leverkusen in the Bundesliga match in Leverkusen yesterday. (AFP)

ATLETICO STILL WITHOUT LIGA WIN AFTER ELCHE DRAW

Atletico Madrid dropped more points from a winning position in La Liga as their opening home match of the season ended in a 1-1 draw with newly-promoted Elche yesterday.

Diego Simeone's side lost 2-1 to start the new campaign last weekend and sit on one point after two outings. Just like in their season-opener against Espanyol, Atletico went ahead in the first period.

Alexander Sorloth raced onto David Hancko's perfectly-weighted ball into the left channel, before slotting past the advancing goalkeeper on eight minutes.

But Rafa Mir got the visitors back on level terms on the quarter-hour with a crisp right-footed finish at the end of a lightning counter-attack by Elche.

Giuliano Simeone came within a whisker of restoring Atletico's lead shortly before the interval only for his arrowed shot to glance off the front of the post, however a goal would have been disallowed after Sorloth was flagged off-side in the build-up.

Atletico pressed forward in the second half in search of their first win of the season as Diego Simeone rang the changes from the bench.

Antoine Griezmann worked Matias Ditu in the Elche goal shortly after his introduction, but the

Frenchman's effort from outside the box was easily held by the 'keeper.

Conor Gallagher, also recently off the bench, had a half-chance to grab Atletico's second in the 79th minute when he intercepted Ditu's errant clearance near the halfway line, only for his long-range half-volley to bounce wide of the unguarded goal.

The best chance then fell to Marcos Llorente moments afterwards as he poked a snap-shot inches wide of the far post, although the midfielder may have been in an offside position before the ball came to him.

A cross then narrowly avoided the heads of two attackers at the near post before the ball was recycled to Griezmann who could again only find the goalkeeper's arms from the edge of the box.

Diego Simeone was booked deep in stoppage time for his frustrated reaction to a penalty not being given following a tussle in the box as Atletico endured another frustrating outing.

Earlier, Mallorca and Celta Vigo shared the spoils on the Balearic island when Mateu Morey's late leveller for the home side cancelled out Javi Rueda's first-half opener.

Barcelona round out the day's action when they make the trip to newly-promoted Levante.

Meanwhile, after winning without convincing against Osasuna in their opening match of the season in La Liga, Xabi Alonso's Real Madrid head to Real Oviedo today for what will be a gala occasion for the newly-promoted side.

Oviedo returned to Spain's top flight after an absence of almost quarter of a century by beating Mirandes in the second-tier play-off final in June.

The club from the northern region of Asturias, coached by Serbian former player Veljko Paunovic, were therefore left facing a quick turnaround before tackling life back in La Liga.

With a 40-year-old Santi Cazorla coming off the bench and Venezuela veteran Salomon Rondon leading the attack, Oviedo lost 2-0 away at Villarreal in their first game back in the elite.

Now they host the 15-time European champions in front of what will be a sell-out 30,000 crowd at the Estadio Carlos Tartiere.

Alonso took charge of Madrid ahead of the Club World Cup, in which his new charges reached the semi-finals before suffering a humiliating defeat at the hands of Paris Saint-Germain.

After a short close-season break, Real returned to training before edging Osasuna 1-0 on Tuesday thanks to a Kylian Mbappe penalty.