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Fritz fires on final day as Team World land third Laver Cup title



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Arsenal rescue point, but fail to make title statement

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CRICKET

Bavuma out of Test series in Pakistan as De Kock back for ODIs and T20s

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FOCUS

Paris St Germain forward Dembele wins Ballon d'Or

PSG WIN THE MEN'S CLUB OF THE YEAR AWARD, COACH ENRIQUE WINS THE JOHAN CRUYFF TROPHY



PSG's French forward Ousmane Dembele receives the Ballon d'Or award from Brazilian former football player Ronaldinho (left) during the award ceremony at the Theatre du Chatelet in Paris yesterday. *(AFP)*



Barcelona's Spanish midfielder Aitana Bonmati reacts after receiving the woman Ballon d'Or award. *(AFP)*

AFP
Paris

France forward Ousmane Dembele yesterday won the men's Ballon d'Or, the most prestigious individual prize in football, rewarding his starring role in the Paris Saint-Germain side that lifted the Champions League trophy last season.

Dembele, 28, pipped Barcelona and Spain teenage sensation Lamine Yamal to the prize at a ceremony in Paris and succeeds Manchester City and Spain midfielder Rodri, who won the trophy in 2024.

The former Borussia Dortmund and Barcelona winger, who was part of the France team that won the World Cup in 2018, scored 35 goals in all competitions as PSG won a French league and cup double as well as the Champions League for the first time in their history.

"I really don't have the words. It was an incredible season with PSG," said an emotional Dembele, who said his club coach Luis Enrique had been "like a father".

"It is an individual trophy but it was really the collective that won it," added Dembele, who was one of nine members of the triumphant PSG team from last season nominated for the prize.

"The Ballon d'Or has not really been an objective for me in my career but I worked hard for the team to win the Champions League."

The 18-year-old Yamal, who was a teammate of Dembele's at Barcelona when he first broke through in 2023, earlier won the Kopa Trophy for the best player aged under 21 – the second year running he has taken that award.

Luis Enrique and Sarina Wiegman landed the top coaching accolades following their sensational seasons in charge of Paris St-Germain and England's Lionesses. Enrique achieved the remarkable Treble with a European club for the second time in his career, previously doing so with Barcelona in the 2014-15 season. He joins Pep Guardiola, who has also done this twice.

And Wiegman became the first manager in either the men's or women's game to lead a team to five consecutive major international tournament finals: two with Netherlands, three with England.

Enrique after winning the Johan Cruyff Trophy for best coach, said in a statement: "Thank you to my family, thank you to PSG. I also want to thank two special people: Nasser al-Khelaifi (PSG chairman) and Luís Campos (PSG sporting director). We have a special relationship. A message to my players who are there: it's nice to win individual awards but I think the most important thing is the recognition of the fans."

Spain's Bonmati wins women's Ballon d'Or

Barcelona and Spain star Aitana Bonmati won the Women's Ballon d'Or, the third consecutive year she has taken the prize.

Bonmati edged out Mariona Caldentey, her teammate in the Spain side beaten on penalties by England in the Women's Euro 2025 final in July.

The 27-year-old midfielder also lost the Women's Champions League final with her club last season, at the hands of Caldentey's Arsenal. Bonmati was named player of the tournament at the Euros, despite not starting either of Spain's first two matches as she recovered from a bout of viral meningitis.

Alessia Russo, one of the nominees from the triumphant England European Championship team, came in third place.

The Ballon d'Or is the most prestigious individual prize in both men's and women's football, and Bonmati's run of three in a row follows back-to-back victories for her Barcelona and Spain teammate Alexia Putellas.

Norway's Ada Hegerberg and USA star Megan Rapinoe are the only other players to have won the Women's Ballon d'Or since it was introduced in 2018.

LIST OF WINNERS

Men's Ballon d'Or: Ousmane Dembele (Paris Saint-Germain and France)
Women's Ballon d'Or: Aitana Bonmatí (Barcelona and Spain)
Men's Kopa Trophy (best male player under 21): Lamine Yamal (Barcelona and Spain)
Men's Yashin Trophy (best male goalkeeper): Gianluigi Donnarumma (PSG and Italy)
Women's Yashin Trophy (best female goalkeeper): Hannah Hampton
Men's Gerd Muller Trophy (top male goalscorer): Viktor Gyokeres
Women's Gerd Muller Trophy (top female goalscorer): Ewa Pajor
Men's Club of the Year: Paris Saint-Germain
Women's Club of the Year: Arsenal
Socrates Award (for humanitarian work): Xana Foundation – Created by PSG coach Luis Enrique in memory of his daughter Xana, supporting children with life-threatening illnesses.

QSL CUP

Nouri hat-trick helps Al Bidda stun Al Sadd 3-1

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Abdallah Nouri bagged a hat-trick as Al Bidda registered its first win of the QSL Cup defeating Al Sadd 3-1 in the second round match at Stadium 974 yesterday.

The 21-year-old right-winger from Algeria was in sensational form throughout the match as the Second Division team put it across giants Al Sadd, scoring first in the 7th minute before securing his second with a sensational finish in the 74th minute of the entertaining encounter. He then capped the night off with another beautiful goal in four minutes of added time to ensure an emphatic win and a night to remember for his team. Yaman Jarrar got Al Sadd's lone goal in the 52nd minute, but his effort proved to be of no effect as Al Bidda recorded their first win of the tournament in style.

Muaither beat Al Gharafa 5-2

Spaniard Albert Ramis Luque scored a brace as Muaither drubbed Al Gharafa 5-2 in their second round match at the Saoud Bin Abdulrahman Stadium.

This was Muaither's first win of the tournament following their goalless draw against Al Markhiya in the opening round against. Muaither now have four points to their credit while Al Gharafa, who had a 3-3 draw in the first round against Al Sadd, are on one point.

Muaither led 3-1 at half time. The goals for Muaither were scored by Albert Ramis (16th & 59th minutes), Youssef al-Yahri (31st minute), Ivan Morales (45+2 minute), and Abdulrahman al-Salahi (67th minute).

For Al Gharafa, Florinel Coman scored in the 27th minute (Penalty) and in the 53rd minute.

Al Duhail beat Mesaimeer 2-1

Al Duhail scored a 2-1 win over Mesaimeer at the Al Shamal Stadium. It was a young Al Duhail team's first win of the tournament following a goalless draw against Al Ahli in the opening round.

It took Al Duhail's points tally to four points while Mesaimeer have one point. Mesaimeer were put ahead in the 23rd minute by Youssef Dhaflaoui, who had also scored for his side in their previous match against Al Waab.

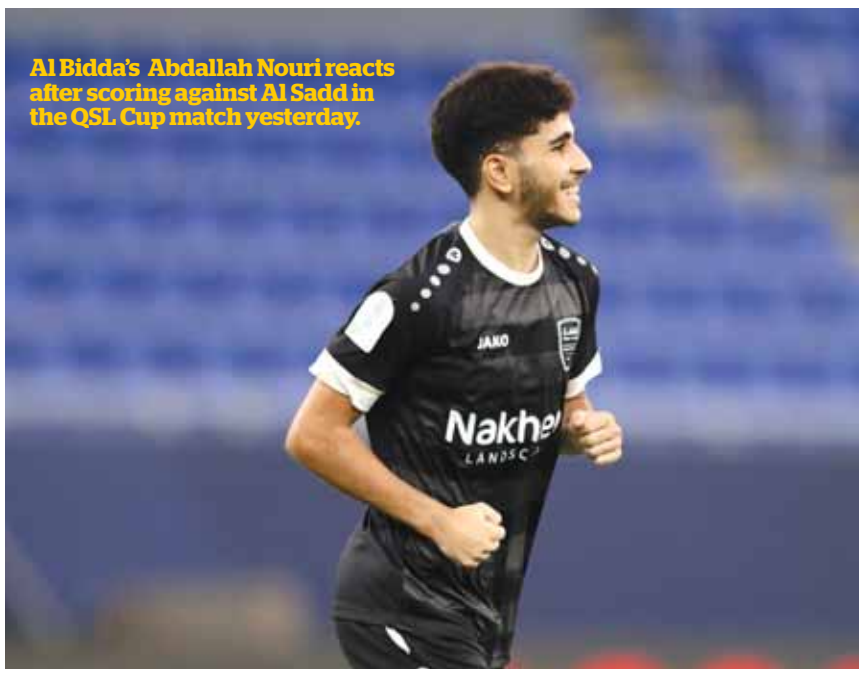
Al Duhail, however, equalised a minute later through Tahsin Mohammed Jamshid (24th minute). Hamada Misbah Ghazy scored Al Duhail's second goal in the 70th minute of the match.

Al Arabi-Al Waab in 1-1 draw

Al Arabi and Al Waab settled for a 1-1 draw at the Al Khor Stadium yesterday. Ahmed Moeen scored for Al Arabi, while Baha Faisal equalised for Al Waab. Al Arabi thus raised their score to four points, following their 3-1 victory over Al Wakrah in the first round.

Al Waab, meanwhile, have two points following a 1-1 draw with Mesaimeer in the first round.

Today, Al Shahania will play Al Shamal at the Abdullah Bin Khalifa Stadium at 6pm while Al Rayyan will meet Al Wakrah in the 8pm clash at Hamad Bin Khalifa Stadium.



Al Bidda's Abdallah Nouri reacts after scoring against Al Sadd in the QSL Cup match yesterday.

SPORT

CRICKET

India-Pakistan tensions spill onto the pitch

AFP
New Delhi

India and Pakistan's refusal to shake hands during their Asia Cup cricket matches bent the code of the so-called "gentleman's game", as sport once again served as a proxy battlefield.

The tournament marks the first meeting between the nuclear-armed neighbours since their armies clashed in May - a four-day exchange of artillery, drones and missiles that killed more than 70 people.

The sporting rivals do not play bilateral matches, meeting only at neutral venues during international tournaments.

The handshake snub is the latest example of how cricket mirrors politics between the two neighbouring countries.

Eyes down

The cricket-mad neighbours have already met twice in the Asia Cup T20 tournament this month, played in the United Arab Emirates as a neutral venue.

On September 14, India captain Suryakumar Yadav said his refusal to shake hands with his Pakistani counterpart was "aligned with the government" - a move Pakistan said had "disappointed" them.

When they met again on September 21, neither side offered the traditional handshake. Both skippers kept their eyes and hands down after the toss.

The hostility did not stop there. Pakistan's Sahibzada Farhan celebrated his half-century by using his bat like a gun, while his teammate Haris Rauf taunted the crowd by seemingly mimicking a plane crashing, an apparent reference to the Indian fighter jets that Pakistan said they shot down in May.

India won both games.

If both sides progress, they may meet in the September 28 final - and again in October when India co-hosts the Women's World Cup, with that game played in Sri Lanka.


Pakistan's Haris Rauf (third right) speaks with India's Abhishek Sharma (left) as Shubman Gill (second right) watches during the Asia Cup 2025 Super Four Twenty20 international at the Dubai International Stadium in Dubai on Sunday. *(AFP)*

'Cricket for peace'

A love of cricket is one thing the two sides can agree on.

In 1987, Pakistan's then military ruler Ziaul Haq stunned India with a surprise visit to a Test match in Jaipur.

The hastily arranged trip, dubbed "cricket for peace", helped defuse a tense border standoff and saw Zia charm both fans and Indian prime minister Rajiv Gandhi.

In 2005, a match in New Delhi brought Pakistan's then president Pervez Musharraf face-to-face with Indian leader Manmohan Singh.

Pitch gardening

In 1991, spade-wielding activists from India's Hindu right-wing Shiv Sena party dug up the pitch at Mumbai's Wankhede Stadium to prevent Pakistan's cricket tour.

The scheduled one day series was cancelled.

Security fears forced Pakistan to call off two more tours in 1993 and 1994 before returning for the 1996 World Cup.

In 1999, Shiv Sena struck again, damaging the pitch at New Delhi's Feroz Shah Kotla stadium ahead of a Test match, but authorities repaired it in time.

Fans evicted

A 1999 Test in Kolkata's Eden Gardens descended into chaos after India's Sachin Tendulkar was controversially run out following a collision with Pakistan's Shoaib Akhtar.

Crowds erupted, chanting "cheat, cheat" and hurled water bottles at Akhtar, forcing officials to halt play.

Tendulkar's pleas failed to calm the stands, thousands of fans were evicted, and Pakistan sealed victory in front of empty stands.

Pakistan ban

Pakistani stars were a major draw in the Indian Premier League's 2008 debut season, with left-arm pacer Sohail Tanvir topping the wicket charts.

But after the Mumbai terror attacks that same year, carried out allegedly by Pakistan-based militants, Indian authorities barred players from across the border on its soil.

The ban remains in place, depriving Pakistan cricketers of the chance to play in the world's most lucrative T20 league.

ANNOUNCEMENT

De Kock back for Proteas as injured Bavuma ruled out

'Quinton's return to the white-ball space is a major boost for us'

AFP
Johannesburg

Captain Temba Bavuma has been ruled out of South Africa's Test series against Pakistan next month, but Quinton de Kock has made himself available again for the one-day internationals.

Cricket South Africa announced yesterday that a calf injury will prevent Bavuma, who led the Proteas to the World Test championship at Lord's in London in June, from playing the first series in defence of their title.

Aiden Markram will captain the team in the two-Test series which starts in Lahore on October 12.

Selection convener Patrick Moroney said Bavuma's calf strain, suffered in a recent one-day series in England, would keep him out of action for six to eight weeks. "The focus is on giving him the best chance to be fully ready for a tour of India in November," said Moroney.

South Africa will also be without leading spin bowler Keshav Maharaj for the first Test but it is hoped he will have recovered from a groin strain in time to play in the second Test, which starts in Rawalpindi on October 20.

Off-spinner Simon Harmer has been recalled to the Test squad for the first time in two years.

Prenelan Subrayen, recently cleared after being reported for a suspect bowling action, and left-armer Senuran Muthusamy are the other spinners in the squad.

The Test series will be followed by three Twenty20 internationals and three one-day internationals.


Quinton de Kock comes out of retirement.

Wicketkeeper-batsman De Kock, 32, was selected for both white-ball series. He retired from one-day internationals in 2023 and has not played in the T20 team since he was South Africa's leading run-scorer in the 2024 T20 World Cup in the West Indies and United States.

His return is a signal that he is likely to be a part of South Africa's campaign for the T20 World Cup in India and Sri Lanka in February and March next year.

"Quinton's return to the white-ball space is a major boost for us," said head coach Shukri Conrad. "When we spoke last month about his future it was clear that he still has a strong ambition to represent his country."

Most of the all-format players in the Test squad will be rested for the white-ball games. Veteran David Miller will captain the T20 team and Matthew Breetzke will lead the one-day side for the first time.

Big-hitting Donovan Ferreira will captain South Africa in a one-off T20 international against Namibia in Windhoek on October 11.

SQUADS

Tests: Aiden Markram (captain), David Bedingham, Corbin Bosch, Dewald Brevis, Tony de Zorzi, Zubayr Hamza, Simon Harmer, Marco Jansen, Keshav Maharaj (second Test only), Wiaan Mulder, Senuran Muthusamy, Kagiso Rabada, Ryan Rickleton, Tristan Stubbs, Prenelan Subrayen, Kyle Verreynne (wkt)

T20Is: David Miller (captain), Bosch, Brevis, Nandre Burger, Gerald Coetzee, Quinton de Kock (wkt), Donovan Ferreira, Reeza Hendricks, George Linde, Kwena Maphaka, Lungi Ngidi, Nqaba Peter, Lhuan-dre Pretorius, Andile Simelane, Lizaad Williams

ODIs: Matthew Breetzke (captain), Bosch, Brevis, Burger, Coetzee, De Kock (wkt), De Zorzi, Ferreira, Bjorn Fortuin, Linde, Maphaka, Ngidi, Peter, Pretorius, Sinethemba Qeshile (wkt)

T20I v Namibia: Ferreira (captain), Burger, Coetzee, De Kock (wkt), Fortuin, Hendricks, Rubin Hermann, Maphaka, Rivaldo Moonsamy, Peter, Pretorius, Simelane, Jason Smith, Williams

PAKISTAN FIXTURES:

October 12-16, first Test, Lahore
October 20-24, second Test, Rawalpindi
October 28, first T20 international, Rawalpindi
October 31, second T20 international, Lahore
November 1, third T20 international, Lahore
November 4, first one-day international, Faisalabad
November 6, second one-day international, Faisalabad
November 8, third one-day international, Faisalabad

COMMENT

Not a rivalry anymore, captain Suryakumar says after beating Pakistan



AFP
Dubai

India captain **Suryakumar Yadav** played down the hype around the cricket rivalry with Pakistan after beating their bitter rivals by six wickets in the Asia Cup in Dubai on Sunday.

India rode on a blazing 74 from opener Abhishek Sharma as they chased down a target of 172 in 18.5 overs in the Super Four clash, where they again refused to shake hands with their opponents.

It was India's second win in the Twenty20 tournament over Pakistan in a week after their group stage clash.

It was also their 12th in 15 T20 internationals.

Asked if this dominance showed that the rivalry was waning, Suryakumar replied: "You guys should stop asking questions about the rivalry between India-Pakistan.

"According to me, if two teams play 15-20 matches, and if it is even, then it is a rivalry. 13-0, 10-1, I don't know what the stat is, but this is not a rivalry anymore."

Pakistan's last of three T20 wins over India came in the Asia Cup in Dubai in 2022.

India and Pakistan only play in multinational tournaments as their bilateral ties have been stalled since 2012 over political tension.

Pakistan rode on a brilliant 45-ball 58 from opener Sahibzada Farhan but managed 171-5 after romping to 93-1 in 9.3 overs.

Suryakumar said that India played better cricket as Abishek and Shubman Gill put on a rapid 105 for the opening stand in 9.5 overs.

"I think we were better than them (Pakistan), and also from a bowling point of view," said Suryakumar. "The catch drop percentage at this venue is so high and that is part and parcel of the game."

Suryakumar praised Sharma's talent.

"He knows what is required of him, what bowlers are going to bowl, that's a plus point for him. He is learning with every game," said Suryakumar of the 25-year-old left-hander.

Pakistan captain Salman Agha said that his team had come up 15-20 runs short.

"We have yet to play a perfect game in this event," said Agha, whose team next faces Sri Lanka in Abu Dhabi today.

"After being 91 in 10 overs we lost way but still feel 171 was a challenging total."

Agha acknowledged that his bowlers could not control the Indian openers.

"We need to play a perfect game, do well in all three departments," said Agha. "We look forward to playing Sri Lanka in the next game."

Bangladesh beat Sri Lanka by four wickets in their Super Four match in Dubai on Saturday.

The top two teams from Super Four will play the final in Dubai on September 28.

SPOTLIGHT

Ex-player and administrator set to win India's top cricket job

AFP
Mumbai

Nominations for the next president of the powerful Board of Control for Cricket in India closed on Sunday with only one nomination, former Delhi captain **Mithun Manhas**. Manhas, a former batsman, never won an Indian cap but turned to the game's administration after his first-class playing career.



"A panel is ready, with Mithun Manhas for the post of president," BCCI vice-president Rajeev Shukla said. The 45-year-old Manhas is set to be elected unopposed when the BCCI's elections are held on September 28. He will replace former World Cup-winner Roger Binny, who quit in August after reaching the mandatory retirement age of 70 years. Manhas was chosen for the role at a key meeting in New Delhi on Saturday that was attended by senior members of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party and BCCI officials, Indian media reported.

They said the meeting was held at the residence of India's Home Minister Amit Shah, who is the father of International Cricket Council chief Jay Shah.

Manhas has most recently worked as director of the cricket association in Indian-administered Kashmir. Devajit Saikia is set to continue as BCCI secretary. Shukla, who served as interim president, will remain as vice-president.

FOCUS

Former Italian gymnastics chief Macarabni to face trial for abuse

AFP
Rome

Emanuela Maccarani, the former coach of Italy's rhythmic gymnastics team, will go on trial next year accused of bullying athletes, her lawyer told news agency AGI yesterday.

A former national team gymnast herself, Maccarani will face charges of abuse of minors at a court in Monza, in northern Italy, on February 10.

The trial is the result of explosive claims made public nearly three years ago by two promising Italian gymnasts, Nina Corradini and double world champion Anna Basta, who both quit the sport while still teenagers as a result, they say, of the treatment dished out by Maccarani.

During Maccarani's near three-decade reign at the Italian team's National Training Centre in Desio, not far from Monza, days began with gymnasts being weighed in front of one another. Giulia Galtarossa, now 34 and world champion in 2009 and 2010, said she was berated by a coaching assistant for eating a pear, and handed her diet sheet with the message "we have a little piggy in the squad".

Maccarani, 59, led Italy to the top of a sport traditionally dominated by countries from the former Soviet bloc. The affair appeared to be over in September 2023 when Maccarani was given a simple warning by the disciplinary tribunal of the country's gymnastics federation (FGI) and handed back the reins of the national team, nicknamed the "Butterflies".

But in March the FGI, under new president Andrea Facci, sacked Maccarani. The FGI's official explanation to AFP at the time of her dismissal was that the organisation wanted to "open a new cycle in preparation for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics". Among those to win world and Olympic medals under Maccarani's charge is Sofia Raffaeli, who took bronze in the all-around discipline at the 2024 Games in Paris.

TENNIS

Fritz fires as Team World land third Laver Cup title

FRITZ BATTLES PAST ZVEREV IN FINAL MATCH TO SEAL 15-9 WIN



Team Europe captain Andre Agassi, vice-captain Patrick Rafter and players Alex de Minaur, Jenson Brooksby, Reilly Opelka, Taylor Fritz, Alex Michelsen, Joao Fonseca, Francisco Cerundulo celebrate with the Laver Cup trophy after defeating Team Europe at the Laver Cup at Chase Center in San Francisco. *(Reuters)*

AFP
San Francisco, United States

Taylor Fritz held off Alexander Zverev 6-3, 7-6 (7/4) to seal Team World's triumph in the Laver Cup yesterday as two wins for Carlos Alcaraz on the final day proved too little for Team Europe.

Fritz fired a backhand volley winner on his first match point to give Team World a 15-9 victory over Europe in the global tennis event, sparking jubilant celebrations from his teammates and World captain Andre Agassi at Chase Center – home of the NBA's Golden State Warriors.

"The energy from the team, it just feels the moments of winning feel so much better, the moments of losing feel so much worse because you're doing it for all these guys," Fritz said.

"It just fires me up so much," added the fifth-ranked American, who had beaten Alcaraz on Saturday when Team World swept all four matches to seize a 9-3 lead.

Fritz had raced through the opening set against a weary-looking Zverev.

The German stepped it up in the second set, but he was down a break and trailing 4-3 before he finally mustered his first break points of the night.

He converted his third to level the set at 4-4 to the delight of his Europe teammates and captain Yannick Noah.

A quick hold from Zverev left Fritz serving to stay in the set. He held to love and they battled to the tiebreaker, where Fritz took a 3-0 lead only for Zverev to win three straight points before Fritz won four of the final five.

Alcaraz, fresh off his sixth Grand Slam title at the US Open, had kept Europe's title defence alive with a blistering 6-2, 6-1 victory over Argentina's Francisco Cerundolo.

Alcaraz and Casper Ruud had sliced Europe's deficit with a 7-6 (7/4), 6-1 doubles victory over Reilly Opelka and Alex Michelsen to open Sunday's action. But Australian world number eight Alex De Minaur then beat Czech Jakub Mensik 6-3, 6-4 to push Team World's lead to 12-6, with 13 points needed to claim the Cup and each match on Sunday worth three points.

De Minaur, a late replacement on Team World for Frances Tiafoe, had nabbed two wins on Saturday – beating Zverev in singles and coming through again in doubles.

Team World regained the title they surrendered to Europe last year in Berlin.

Europe have won five of eight editions of the event co-created by Swiss great Roger Federer, which will be held in London next year.

CYCLING

Pogacar turns focus to road race after time trial disappointment

Reuters
Kigali

A rare setback for Tadej Pogacar in Sunday's individual time trial at the Cycling Road World Championships in Rwanda has served only to ramp up his determination to win the road race at the weekend.

The four-times Tour de France winner was chasing a time trial-road race double but was soundly beaten by Belgium's Remco Evenepoel in the time trial at the start of the week-long championships in Kigali.

Pogacar was the second-last trialist to set off on the 40.6km course followed by Evenepoel, who passed the Slovenian with some 2km remaining and went on to take a third successive world title. "When he caught me, I just said 'wow'. Gaining two and a half minutes like that is really phenomenal. So hats off to Remco," said Pogacar, who finished fourth.

"Of course, it's not the best feeling when a cyclist catches you, but he is the best in this discipline. He dedicates a lot of time to it and I can only hope to get closer to him in the coming years.

"I wanted to ride much better and have a chance for the double crown this week, but unfortunately I didn't find a rhythm. Maybe I missed a little training on the bike for the time trial due to my illness (last month).

"I still came here with high morale, but I should have had really top legs, which I didn't have," he added.

There is a week's recovery before the road race on Sunday, which will bring down the curtain on the first championships in Africa. The 267.5km long course includes over 5,500m of climbing – the second-highest amount in Road World Championships history.

"This will be one of the most exhausting races of my career. At least that's what I expect," said defending champion Pogacar.

"In the time trial we were on the bike for an hour; next Sunday it will be well over six hours, six and a half hours of suffering with a lot of altitude. I trained well for something like this."



Slovenian rider Tadej Pogacar competes in the men's Elite Individual Time Trial event during the UCI 2025 Road World Championships in Kigali on Sunday. *(AFP)*

MOTORSPORT

Horner leaves Red Bull after reported 80 million-pound payoff

Reuters
London

Former Formula One team boss Christian Horner officially left Red Bull yesterday after being ousted in July, with British media reporting an 80mn-pound ($108mn) settlement.

A Red Bull statement on the team website announced the 51-year-old's formal departure but did not mention any financial terms.

Horner, one of the sport's most successful team principals, was removed from his position at Milton Keynes by the Austrian energy drink company on July 9 after 20 years at the helm.

The Briton, who was replaced by Laurent Mekies, had remained an employee technically despite being released from his operational duties with the team. The *Daily Mail* and *Times* newspapers both reported he had left with an 80 million-pound package – less than he would have received had he served out his contract to 2030 – and would be in a position to return to Formula One next year.

Media reports have said that Horner, who had been cleared of allegations of misconduct by a female employee at Red Bull, could take a stake in another team if he does make a comeback.

"I'm incredibly proud of what we achieved as a team breaking records and reaching heights no-one would ever believe were possible and I will forever carry that with me," Horner said in the statement.

There was no immediate comment about his future plans.

Red Bull have won the last two races, including Sunday's in Azerbaijan, with four-times world champion Max Verstappen dominant from pole position.

A van and a plan: Sainz and Leclerc become road trip buddies

Former Ferrari teammates Charles Leclerc and Carlos Sainz rented a van and went on a road trip home to Monaco after their flight from the Azerbaijan Grand Prix landed in Italy due to bad weather.
Leclerc, who finished a disappointing ninth in Sunday's race in Baku while Sainz was third in Williams' first proper Formula One podium since 2017, posted a viral video of the impromptu trip on Instagram.
"So after a very difficult weekend in Baku I thought it couldn't get any worse but...," Leclerc intoned in darkness before the camera panned around to show his vehicle entering a tunnel.
Sainz, at the wheel, picked up the story: "We were diverted for a storm, we couldn't land in Nice. So we landed in the middle of Italy, we rented a van and now we are on our way to Monaco. "A two-hour drive, we will make it in one hour and a half," joked the Spaniard, who lost his seat at Ferrari to seven-times world champion Lewis Hamilton at the end of last year. Hamilton has yet to stand on the podium with his new team in 17 races.

GOLF

Ryder Cup fever grips Long Island as fans flock to Bethpage Black

Reuters
New York

Long Island has long played second fiddle to glittering New York City but this week will bask in sporting spotlight as America's best golfers seek redemption against Europe's elite in the biennial Ryder Cup spectacle at Bethpage Black course.

More than a quarter-million fans from some 40 countries are expected to turn up at Nassau County, with travellers booking hotel rooms two years in advance at double, triple – or even quadruple – the normal rate, according to local tourism experts.

"There's a tremendous amount of pride in the county, in the community," said Jaime Hollander, managing director at RRDA, the official tourism agency for Nassau County. "It's kind of a dreamy project, especially for somebody who lives here."

The competition lands a year after Nassau County hosted matches for cricket's T20 World Cup at Eisenhower Park, where a 34,000-seat venue was built from scratch to showcase one of the greatest rivalries in global sports, India v Pakistan. "With the cricket World Cup, I think people were surprised to see just how much is happening here and it's so exciting for us as residents and certainly the tourism agency and for the whole county to welcome the world," said Hollander.

"Cricket really opened the door to a lot of new things."

Perhaps best known among sports fans for its New York Islanders NHL team – and as the host of the third leg of the famed Triple Crown thoroughbred racing series in Belmont, New York – the event is expected to build on Long Island's reputation as a golf haven.



A general view as Ben Griffin of Team United States tees off on the first hole during a practice round prior to the Ryder Cup 2025 at Black Course at Bethpage State Park Golf Course in Farmingdale, New York, yesterday. *(AFP)*

Last week, New York Governor Kathy Hochul and the PGA of America announced Bethpage Black would host the 2028 Women's PGA Championship and the 2033 PGA Championship. Next Year's US Open is set for Shinnecock Hills in the ritzy Hamptons.

"We've had lots of tournaments here, lots of different sporting events," said Nassau County Executive Bruce Blakeman.

"Of all of them, this is probably the most prestigious event that we've had because the rivalry between Europe and the United States in the world of golf is very, very intense."

Blakeman believes the economic impact to the region will be in the "tens of millions" of dollars.

Local fans will have a New Yorker to cheer for as Ryder Cup rookie – and nearby Westchester County native – Cameron Young joins a US team hungry for revenge after their 2023 flop in Rome.

Bethpage Black's iconic sign won't be seen at Ryder Cup

Bethpage Black's iconic sign warning amateur players of the course's difficulty will not be seen at this week's Ryder Cup. The sign reading: "- WARNING - The Black Course Is An Extremely Difficult Course Which We Recommend Only For Highly Skilled Golfers," is arguably the most famous in golf.
However, it has been removed from the grounds for this week's competition due to the 5,000-seat grandstand that wraps around the first tee and the 18th green.
"The sign is gone," Ryder Cup director Bryan Karns told *The New York Post*. "The Ryder Cup will use a brand new (first) tee that's 40 yards in front of the existing tee. If we had built that grandstand with the existing tee, it would almost go into the clubhouse. (The sign) would've been underneath the grandstands. It just wouldn't have worked out."
Fried Egg Golf posted a photo Saturday of the black railing, which is still visible outside of the grandstand entrance. The Golf Channel reported that the sign was removed primarily to avoid people among the estimated 200,000 crowd from congregating around it to take photos. For fans wanting to see the sign, it has been relocated to the Ryder Cup Live Fan Zone inside Rockefeller Center in Manhattan that will be open Sept 25-28, per The Post. Massive replicas of the sign have also been placed around the Bethpage property in Farmingdale, NY. "People can take photos with it," Karns said. "It just won't be the original one at the original location."

LIGUE 1

Marseille inflict first defeat of season on PSG

AFP
Marseille

An early goal by defender Nayef Aguerd gave Marseille a 1-0 win over reigning champions Paris Saint-Germain yesterday, a rare success against their great rivals in a game delayed 24 hours by storms in southern France.

Moroccan defender Aguerd, signed just before the recent transfer deadline from West Ham United, scored his second goal in as many Ligue 1 appearances for his new club with five minutes gone at the Velodrome. PSG goalkeeper Lucas Chevalier came for a deflected Mason Greenwood cross but got nothing on the ball, allowing Aguerd to head into the unguarded net and score the only goal of the game.

"We are not used to losing games," said PSG coach Luis Enrique, whose side were undefeated in Ligue 1 last season until the end of April. "I thought we played well and deserved a bit more. It is always difficult to lose a game like this but we are a team of champions and we need to carry on and prepare as well as possible for the next match."

The fixture, the biggest in French football, was scheduled to go ahead on Sunday but was called off because local authorities feared forecast heavy rainfall would be a significant risk for both players and spectators. With little space in a packed calendar and both clubs involved in the Champions League, the match was put back just a day.

That proved awkward for PSG as it meant a clash with the Ballon d'Or awards ceremony in Paris, at which a host of their squad were nominated for the men's player of the year prize. Among them was Ousmane Dembele, the top scorer for the Champions League winners last season who was able to attend the ceremony having been ruled out of the Marseille clash due to injury.

Luis Enrique could have done with Dembele in the game, as well as his fellow injury absentees Desire Doue and Joao Neves. Achraf Hakimi was pushed forward from his usual right-back position to the wing, but it was still a strong Paris team. Nevertheless, Marseille held onto the lead following the early goal to claim a first home league victory against PSG since November 2011.

Aguerd's goal was the first time they had even found the net at home to PSG in Ligue 1 since 2017. Amine Gouiri hit the bar soon after as Marseille sought to add to their advantage. The home side also had a goal disallowed for offside in the first half, before goalkeeper Geronimo Rulli made a couple of key saves to deny the visitors after the break.

Marseille saw the game out, although not before fiery coach Roberto De Zerbi was shown a late red card on the touchline. It is a first loss of the season for PSG, who had won their first four matches in Ligue 1. They fall off the top of the table, behind Monaco on goals scored. Both teams have 12 points, as do Lyon and Strasbourg who complete the top four. Marseille are up to sixth, three points adrift of the leading quartet.


Marseille's Nayef Aguerd celebrates scoring against Paris St Germain. *(Reuters)*

PREMIER LEAGUE

Arsenal fall short of title statement in City draw

Arteta is now the first manager to go five games unbeaten against Guardiola

Reuters
London

Arsenal's second big test of their title credentials this season ended inconclusively with a late Gabriel Martinelli goal sparing them a damaging defeat at home to Manchester City, yet they also failed to make a telling statement in a 1-1 draw on Sunday.

After losing 1-0 at Premier League champions Liverpool last month – their first defeat in 23 league games against the so-called big six – victory over City felt like a requirement. Trailing to Erling Haaland's well-taken early goal, Arsenal lacked a real goal threat with big-money summer signing Viktor Gyokeres again struggling without quality service.

It looked like City, content to sit deep and defend their area, would hold out until Martinelli's deft lob from a precision pass by fellow substitute Eberechi Eze allowed Arsenal to avoid a second league defeat of the season.

Summer signing Eze, and Bukayo Saka, were both introduced at halftime and while that underlined the attacking tools Mikel Arteta has at his disposal, it also fuelled suggestions that he is yet to find the best way to utilise them.

While Arsenal's record against the big six – Liverpool, City, Chelsea, Manchester United and Tottenham Hotspur – under Arteta looks decent, his side have only won one of their last five against Liverpool in the league and two against City.

Those clashes have generally proved pivotal in recent Premier League title races and the fear for Arsenal fans after Sunday's draw is that they will rue the defeat at Anfield and these points dropped against a City side still in flux.

On the positive side, Arteta is now the first manager to go five games unbeaten against Pep Guardiola in league games (winning two and drawing three). But once the dust settles he will feel as though an opportunity to damage City was missed. "That doesn't make me happy, the thing I wanted today was to win the game," he said.

The Spaniard argued that his side played better than they did when beating City 5-1 at home last season, but second-placed Arsenal are already five points behind a clinical Liverpool. "We cannot control that. They win every match. It's going to be very difficult but if we play at this level, like we did against Manchester City, we will be fine," he said.

Such was the impact of Arsenal's substitutes, questions might be raised about Arteta's starting line-up. "They are all going to play. They will all have opportunity. We're going to need them at that level. There is no question," Arteta, whose side have finished runner-up three seasons in succession, said. "I'm so proud of my players, the way we played, the way we dominated almost every aspect of the game. Very disappointed not to win the game."


Arsenal's Gabriel Martinelli (second right) chips the ball into the Manchester City net during the English Premier League match at the Emirates Stadium in London on Sunday. *(AFP)*

Arsenal are away at Newcastle United next weekend before London derbies against West Ham United, Fulham and Crystal Palace – and the target will be 12 points if they are to keep on the heels of Liverpool.

GUARDIOLA WELCOMES UNLIKELY POSSESSION RECORD

Pep Guardiola's side can scarcely have played more defensively during his tenure than they did in 1-1 draw at Arsenal, parking the bus in an ultimately fruitless attempt to defend an early lead. City's highly unusual tactics – finishing in a 5-4-1 with all 10 outfield players sitting deep – were also a major talking point. City finished the game with 32.8% possession, according to Opta the lowest recorded in a top-flight league match by any of Guardiola's teams in his glittering career, built largely on controlling possession and suffocating opponents.

Guardiola pointed to the short turnaround from Thursday night's Champions League clash with Napoli and fairly compared City's display to Arsenal's rearguard action with 10 men in a 2-2 draw at the Etihad last season.

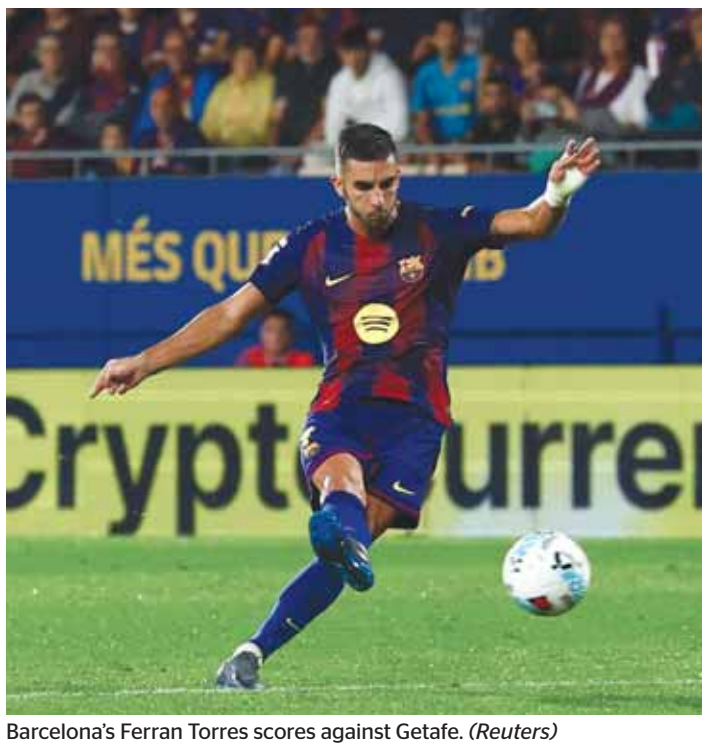
But he also frankly accepted that Arsenal's quality pushed him towards pragmatism, while he made light of yet another milestone.

"I cannot live in this country with another record, you know," Guardiola told reporters. "I'm so proud of that."

He added: "We don't want it, but sometimes it happens. One time in 10 years is not bad, right?"

LA LIGA

Torres double helps Barca cruise to victory over Getafe


Barcelona's Ferran Torres scores against Getafe. *(Reuters)*

Reuters
Barcelona

Ferran Torres scored twice as Barcelona cruised to a comfortable 3-0 victory over Getafe in La Liga on Sunday, with Dani Olmo adding the third goal and an assist in another impressive display by Hansi Flick's side at their makeshift home venue.

The win keeps the unbeaten Catalans second in the standings with 13 points, trailing leaders Real Madrid by two points after Los Blancos maintained their flawless record with five wins from five matches by beating Espanyol on Saturday. Playing in front of 6,000 rain-soaked fans at their Sant Joan Despi training ground, Barcelona controlled proceedings from the outset, showcasing their depth and resilience despite missing Lamine Yamal for the third consecutive game due to injury.

Torres, who got another chance to start in place of Robert Lewandowski in Flick's rotation policy, opened the scoring after 15 minutes with a brilliant team move, firing past David Soria after Olmo's clever backheel set him up perfectly. The Spanish forward doubled the advantage in the 34th minute, beating the offside trap from Raphinha's through ball before delivering a tidy finish just inside the left post.

The 25-year-old Spanish international nearly completed his hat-trick before half-time but ended up striking the crossbar with the goal at his mercy after rounding the keeper. The double takes him to four goals in five games this season, placing him second in the La Liga scoring charts, just one goal behind Real Madrid's Kylian Mbappe.

"I know I can be a starter at Barcelona and I need to take advantage of every opportunity I get. I'm confident many more goals will come," Torres said. "We have quality players who can find space, and we've done well in that regard and I'm glad that we won another one in decisive fashion."

Barcelona continued to dominate after the break, and Marcus Rashford, who was rested following his midweek Champions League heroics against Newcastle, came off the bench to make an immediate impact.

The England international surged down the right flank in the 63rd minute and crossed to Olmo, who scored from inside the box to seal the victory.

The result continued Barca's strong start to the campaign as they adapt to life at their cramped training ground venue as the renovations of their iconic Camp Nou have fallen nine months behind schedule.

The Lluis Companys Olympic stadium, which has been Barca's base for the last three years, was not available on Sunday. Barca's next test will be an away trip to face Real Oviedo on Thursday, while eighth-placed Getafe will host Alaves.

Alonso defends rotation policy as Vinicius tensions simmer

Madrid: Vinicius Jr has yet to complete a full 90 minutes for Real Madrid this season under new manager Xabi Alonso, leaving the him visibly frustrated and making headlines in Spanish media despite the team's perfect start to the campaign.

The 25-year-old Brazilian, who scored in Champions League finals during Real's triumphs in 2022 and 2024, has been substituted in 10 of the 12 matches since Alonso took charge in June following Carlo Ancelotti's departure. He started on the bench in the other two games, including last week's Champions League opener against Olympique de Marseille.

Saturday's match against Espanyol highlighted the puzzling situation. Vinicius was a constant threat down the left flank and assisted Mbappe's goal and hit the post from close range in one of his best games this season – yet Alonso still substituted him, with the Brazilian leaving the pitch fuming at his coach.

The statistics fuel the controversy because despite being the Real player second most involved in goals, Vinicius ranks only 10th in minutes played. When pressed about his rotation policy on Monday, Alonso remained diplomatically vague while acknowledging his star player's displeasure.

"I was a player myself and when I was substituted, I didn't like it either. I don't think it's a big deal that the players show their frustration," Alonso told a brief press conference ahead of La Liga match against Levante.

"I'm happy with what Vinicius is doing, it is still early in the season. We need everyone, I'm happy and we can do better in the last third," the manager added. The tension has not affected Real Madrid's results as they top the La Liga standings on 15 points after five matches, two clear of champions Barcelona.

CHELSEA'S PALMER LIKELY TO AVOID SURGERY: MARESCA

Chelsea boss Enzo Maresca believes Cole Palmer will avoid groin surgery after the England forward was forced off during Saturday's defeat at Manchester United. Palmer has made just two Premier League starts this season and lasted only 21 minutes at Old Trafford before limping to the sidelines in a game Chelsea lost 2-1.

Asked whether the 23-year-old will need an operation on an injury that has been troubling him for a while, Maresca told reporters: "The medical staff, they didn't mention to me about surgery. I don't know if in the next days or the next weeks, but I don't think so, to be honest. He made a huge effort on Saturday to try to play the game. He did the test, he was OK but not 100 percent. But he wanted to be there to help his teammates and to be there in that kind of game. Unfortunately, it was painful so we decided to change it. And it's more day-by-day, week-by-week, game-by-game to see how it is and then decide what we do."

Palmer is likely to miss Chelsea's League Cup third-round tie at third-tier Lincoln, with Romeo Lavia and Benoit Badiashile also ruled out. Maresca is likely to select several youth academy players but the Italian conceded it was a risky strategy given the potential for a cup upset against a team flying high in League One.