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Big shoes for me to fill, says Gill as Virat, Rohit make ODI return



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Barcelona claim lead after Araujo's late derby winner



Sunday, October 19, 2025
Rabia II 27, 1447 AH

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Bezzecchi fights off Fernandez challenge to win Australian GP sprint

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QSL CUP

Al-Muhannadi strikes winner as Al Shahania edge Al Khor

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Al Shahania secured a thrilling 3-2 win over Al Khor in their Round 5 clash of the QSL Cup at the Abdullah Bin Khalifa Stadium yesterday. Ali al-Muhannadi scored the winner for Shahania in the 77th minute after both sides were locked 2-2 at half time.

Shahania had opening the scoring in the 19th minute through Jawad El Jemili while Pelle van Amersfoort put the side 2-0 ahead scoring off a penalty kick in the 27th minute. Al Khor hit back through Abdulrahman al-Harazi in the 42nd minute, and a minute later Sofiane Hanni got the equaliser. But al-Muhannadi struck to help Al Shahania gain the three valuable points. The second win of the tournament took Al Shahania's tally to 7 points while Al Khor also remain at 7 points.



AL SHAMAL THRASH MARKHIYA

Al Shamal thumped Al Markhiya 5-0 at the Hamad Bin Khalifa Stadium. Shamal got their opening goal in the eighth minute through Naim Sliti. They doubled their lead in the 23rd minute as Younes El Hannach scored. Alex Collado added a third in the 45th minute.

An own goal from Markhiya's Ahmad Ismal (75th minute) added to Shamal's scoreline. Mohamad Omar hit one home in added time (90+1 minute) to make it 5-0 for the winners. This was Al Shamal's first win of the tournament and took their tally to 5 points while Al Markhiya remain on 4 points.

MESAIMEER, LUSAIL DRAW

Mesaimeer and Lusail played out a 1-1 draw at the Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium. Mesaimeer's Abdulkader Zoukh scored in the 12th minute, capitalising on some defensive errors by Lusail. The goal was the only difference between the sides for quite a while until Tamim al-Jabri secured the equaliser for Lusail in the 72nd minute to push them to four points in the standings, while Mesaimeer advanced to five points.



AL RAYYAN, AL WAAB SHARE POINTS

Al Rayyan and Al Waab played out a 2-2 draw at the Thani Bin Jassim Stadium. Al Waab took an early lead through Abdulrahman Sheikh Khan, who struck in the fifth minute to give his side a 1-0 advantage at halftime. Al Rayyan turned the game around early in the second half, with Brazilian forward Wesley Da Silva scoring twice in quick succession — in the 54th and 58th minutes — to put the Lions ahead.

However, Al Waab snatched a dramatic equaliser deep into stoppage time when Mohammed Abu Shanab capitalised on a goalkeeping error to make it 2-2. With the result, Al Rayyan moved to 10 points, while Al Waab reached 6 points in the group standings.

PREMIER LEAGUE

Postecoglou sacked after Forest lose, Arsenal stay top

Man City move up to second thanks to another double from Haaland as they beat Everton

AFP
London

Ange Postecoglou's reign as Nottingham Forest manager was ended after a 3-0 defeat to Chelsea yesterday as Arsenal remained on top thanks to Leandro Trossard's winner at Fulham.

Postecoglou was sacked after just eight games and 40 days in charge at the City Ground, making his the shortest ever managerial stint in Premier League history. Forest picked up just one point from the Australian's five league games and were also dumped out of the League Cup by second-tier Swansea.

Club owner Evangelos Marinakis left his seat during the match as Chelsea took control in the second half and Postecoglou's fate was confirmed shortly after full-time. Forest are already looking for their third manager of the season after Nuno Espirito Santo was dismissed last month.

"Nottingham Forest Football Club can confirm that after a series of disappointing results and performances, Ange Postecoglou has been relieved of his duties as head coach with immediate effect," the club posted on X. "The club will make no further comment at this time."

Forest finished seventh in the Premier League last season under Nuno, having looked likely for a long spell to seal a Champions League spot. Fulham manager Marco Silva has been linked with the job at the two-time European champions while former Burnley and Everton boss Sean Dyche is also reportedly a candidate.

Postecoglou, sacked by Tottenham in June, was defiant at his pre-match press conference on Friday, saying if he is given time at a club it always ends "with me and a trophy". Last season he won the Europa League with Tottenham, in his second season in charge, though a terrible league campaign cost him his job.

Former England captain Alan Shearer believes Marinakis must take his share of the blame for Postecoglou's demise. "Ultimately the results haven't been good enough and that is on Ange. But the owner has to take some responsibility too. He chose Ange, it was his appointment," Shearer told *BBC Sport*. "How can you go from a manager in Nuno with one style of play to someone like Ange who everyone knows wants his teams to play in a completely different way?"



Arsenal's Leandro Trossard (right) celebrates with William Saliba after scoring against Fulham at Craven Cottage in London. *(Reuters)*



Ange Postecoglou was only appointed as Forest managers on September 9 but has failed to win a single match in his eight games in charge in all competitions. *(AFP)*

Chelsea had to survive an early onslaught before two goals in three minutes early in the second period swung the game in the Blues' favour. Teenager Josh Acheampong headed in his first senior goal from Pedro Neto's corner. Neto curled in a free-kick to double Chelsea's lead before Reece James added a third late on to lift the visitors up to sixth in the table. Defeat saw Forest fall into the relegation zone.

Arsenal retook top spot from Manchester City thanks to another set-piece goal to edge out Fulham 1-0 at Craven Cottage. Trossard flicked in from a corner just before the hour mark and the Gunners' rock solid defence did the rest with an eighth clean sheet in all competitions already this season. "It was a tough game for us, especially first half the quality on our side wasn't there," said Trossard. "We picked it up in the second half."

Arsenal were installed as the bookmakers' favourites to win the Premier League after Liverpool's two successive defeats knocked the champions out of pole position. "It is a really tough place to come. We have experienced that in the last few years. We put a lot into it. We had some giveaways in the first half, but we became more dominant throughout the game," Arteta said. "They have been together for many years, so they know how to adapt."

Arsenal have won six of their eight league matches this season as they chase a first English title since 2004.

City remain three points behind the leaders but moved up to second thanks to another double from Erling Haaland to beat Everton 2-0. After two defeats in their opening three Premier League matches, Pep Guardiola's men are now unbeaten in eight games in all competitions. Haaland proved the match-winner once more with two clinical finishes in five minutes either side of the hour at the Etihad.

He used all of his 1.95-metre (6ft 5in) frame to power in a header from Nico O'Riley's cross to break the deadlock. Haaland then had a helping hand from Jordan Pickford for his second as the England goalkeeper failed to keep out a low shot to his left.

Bournemouth missed out on going top for a few hours after Jean-Philippe Mateta's 97th-minute penalty to complete his hat-trick salvaged a 3-3 draw for Crystal Palace. Two goals from Eli Junior Kroupi put the Cherries 2-0 up at Selhurst Park at half-time.

Palace lost for the first time in 20 matches in their last outing at Everton. The Eagles avoided another defeat thanks to the in-form Mateta, who was fresh from scoring his first international goal for France. Mateta struck twice to level before Ryan Christie turned in Marcus Tavernier's cross in the 89th minute to restore Bournemouth's lead.

However, Andoni Iraola's men were denied another huge win when Mateta stroked home from the spot after wantaway Palace captain Marc Guehi was fouled inside the box.

Newcastle's struggles on the road continued with a 2-1 defeat at Brighton as Danny Welbeck struck twice.

The Magpies have yet to win away in the Premier League this season and slipped to 12th, behind local rivals Sunderland. The Black Cats climbed up to seventh with a 2-0 victory over Wolves, which left the visitors five points off safety at the bottom of the table. Burnley climbed out of the bottom three thanks to goals from Lesley Ugochukwu and Loum Tchaouna to beat Leeds 2-0.

SPORT

CRICKET

Big shoes for me to fill, says Gill as Virat, Rohit return

'A LOT OF PEOPLE ARE GOING TO COME AND WATCH THEM'

Reuters
Perth

All eyes in Perth are on Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma as the two India stalwarts prepare for the opening one-day international against Australia today, marking the first national team outing for the pair since winning the Champions Trophy in March.

India's new ODI skipper, Shubman Gill, told journalists yesterday that he had had numerous conversations with his predecessors who had retired from the shortest and longest forms of the game, about how to take the team forward.

"Definitely very exciting – big shoes for me to fill carrying over the legacy (Virat and Rohit) left for us," the 26-year-old said.

"These are the kind of players when I was a kid, I used to idolise them. The kind of game that they used to play, the kind of hunger that they had is something that inspired me. It's a big honour to lead such legends of the game and learn from them."

Gill has already captained at T20I and Test level, but the upcoming three-match series will be the first time he has led in ODIs, where he averages nearly 60 with the bat.

"I think in front of a difficult situation, I wouldn't shy away from getting any suggestions or advice from them," he said.

"How they converse and what kind of communication or messaging they had with the players is something that helped me get the best out of myself. That's the kind of captain I would want to be, where all my players feel very secure in the job they have to do."


Australia's captain Mitchell Marsh (left) and India's captain Shubman Gill pose for pictures with the trophy on the eve of their first ODI in Perth yesterday. *(AFP)*

Australia captain Mitch Marsh acknowledged that India's two returning batsmen are partly responsible for an expected bumper crowd at the 60,000-seat Perth Stadium, which is nearing a sell-out despite a forecast of rain.

"A lot of people are going to come and watch them. If it is their last time on Australian soil, I hope they enjoy it," the 33-year-old said, before cheekily adding that he would prefer "not too much good cricket from them".

The Perth local, who struck two hundreds and averaged 70 across white-ball formats against South Africa and New Zealand in recent months, dead-batted any suggestion that continued good form might prompt a Test recall ahead of the Ashes series this summer.

"I've got tickets for day one and two, I haven't asked the wife yet, but that's about as much thought as I've given it."

ODI SERIES

Rishad's six-for wrecks WI as Bangladesh take lead

Agencies
Christchurch

Leg spinner Rishad Hossain's 6 for 35, which included the first five West Indies wickets in a chase of 208, paved the way for a Bangladesh win in the series opener in Dhaka yesterday.

After being on 51 for 0, West Indies were dismissed for 133 in 39 overs.

Rishad also became only the second legspinner to take the first five wickets in an ODI innings. Sri Lanka's Jeffrey Vandersay is the only other legspinner to this feat, when he took the first six wickets against India last year in Colombo.

West Indies openers Brandon King and Alick Athanaze had started, putting on a half-century opening stand.

Rishad struck in his very first over, the 12th over of the chase, when he trapped Athanaze lbw for 27 off 36 balls. Then, in his fifth over, Rishad had No. 3 Keacy Carty caught at slip for nine off 30 balls. Saif Hassan took a straightforward catch at slip after dropping Carty on three off Islam. Rishad struck the big blow when he had King caught behind for 44. Sherfane Rutherford fell for a duck in the same over, also caught behind off a beautiful legbreak.

Rishad completed his five-wicket in the 24th over when he had Roston Chase caught behind for six. He became the first legspinner from Bangladesh to take a five-wicket haul in ODIs.

West Indies had earlier controlled Bangladesh's run-rate for most of the first innings. The home side lost their openers Saif and Soumya Sarkar within the first three overs, before Towhid Hridoy and Najmul Hossain Shanto added 71 runs for the third wicket.

BRIEF SCORES: Bangladesh 207 (Hridoy 51, Mahidul 46, Seales 3-48) **beat West Indies 133** (King 44, Athanaze 27, Rishad 6-35) by 74 runs.



Bangladesh's Rishad Hossain (left) celebrates with teammate after taking the wicket of West Indies' Brandon King during their ODI in Dhaka yesterday. *(AFP)*

GOLF

Japan's Nakajima shoots 65 to seize India lead from Fleetwood, Lowry

AFP
New Delhi

Japan's **Keita Nakajima** shot his second 65 of the week yesterday to leapfrog Tommy Fleetwood and Shane Lowry and take a two-shot cushion into the final round of the DP World India Championship.

Nakajima carded a third round of seven birdies and no bogeys to finish at 17-under-par 199 after earlier rounds of 65 and 69 at Delhi Golf Club.

The world number 134 will play in the final pairing with FedEx Cup champion Fleetwood, after partnering Lowry yesterday, and is clearly thriving alongside golf's finest exponents.

"I love his swing tempo and his golf style, so I learned from Shane a lot," said Nakajima.

"I'm looking forward to playing with the top players in the world tomorrow. Same mindset, same swing. Yeah, just play golf."

Overnight leader Fleetwood was frustrated after a three-under 69 left him two shots back on 15-under par, while Lowry also had a 69 to be 14-under.

"When I did give myself a chance to score, I missed a couple," lamented Fleetwood, who



dropped a shot at the 17th, but birdied 18.

"I'm glad that I finished with a birdie there. I thought I might have actually chipped it in," the Englishman said.

"I had a five-hole stretch where I didn't putt very well. I'll try and fix it now and then we'll go again tomorrow."

Five-time major champion Rory McIlroy rescued his day with three birdies in his last six holes to get to 10-under with a 68.

But the Northern Irishman is seven strokes behind and will need something special on Sunday to get into contention on his debut in India.

"I'd imagine that if I shoot a low one tomorrow I could post a score and see what happens," said McIlroy. "But I'd say I'm probably two shots too far behind to have a realistic chance."

Lowry berated himself for a sloppy round that began to unravel with a dropped shot at the 10th and another at the 16th.

"I got very frustrated on the back nine today," admitted the Irishman.

"I started to hit very loose shots, made some silly mistakes. I just missed a short putt on 10 and then it kind of snowballed from there."

The inaugural $4mn tournament has attracted a stellar field that includes McIlroy's Ryder Cup teammate Viktor Hovland, who is tied eighth on 12-under after a 66.

The 2023 British Open champion Brian Harman was out in the final pairing with Fleetwood.

But a wayward drive led to a bogey six at the first and the American stuttered to a 70, which dropped him into four-way tie for fourth on 13-under.

"One of those days, two really good days to start, then a day where the marginal shots ended up in a bad spot and the good shots aren't close enough for birdie," said Harman.

"Proud of the way I hung in there. To get a couple under out of my form today was pretty good."

Zimbabwe to replace Afghanistan in Pakistan tri-series

Zimbabwe will feature in next month's Twenty20 international tri-series in Pakistan after Afghanistan withdrew over political tension with the host country, officials said yesterday.

Afghanistan Cricket Board announced Friday it had decided not to send its national team for the tri-series after three local cricketers were killed in Paktika province in attacks blamed on Pakistan.

The International Cricket Council and the Board of Control for Cricket in India condemned the attacks and showed solidarity with Afghanistan.

Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) said Zimbabwe has agreed to replace Afghanistan for the series to be played from November 17 to 29, with Sri Lanka as the third side.

"Zimbabwe Cricket has accepted our invitation to participate in a T20I tri-series which will be played as per schedule," said a PCB release. The tri-series will commence with hosts Pakistan taking on Zimbabwe in Rawalpindi while the second fixture will also be played at the same venue two days later as Sri Lanka take on Zimbabwe. Following the two matches in Rawalpindi, the action will shift to Lahore, which will stage the remaining five matches, including the final, said the PCB.

TRI-SERIES SCHEDULE:
November 17 - Pakistan v Zimbabwe, Rawalpindi
November 19 - Sri Lanka v Zimbabwe, Rawalpindi
November 22 - Pakistan v Sri Lanka, Lahore
November 23 - Pakistan v Zimbabwe, Lahore
November 25 - Sri Lanka v Zimbabwe, Lahore
November 27 - Pakistan v Sri Lanka, Lahore
November 29 - Final, Lahore

New Zealand-England T20 series opener abandoned due to rain

Christchurch: The opening game of New Zealand's three-match Twenty20 series with England was abandoned due to heavy rain in Christchurch yesterday with the hosts denied the opportunity to chase down a modest total for victory.

Play was called off following a long delay after England's innings, in which the tourists scored 153-6 in 20 overs on a difficult wicket, with Sam Curran (49 not out) finishing well after Jos Buttler (29) failed to build on a good start.

The second match takes place at the same venue on Monday before the finale in Auckland on Thursday, as both teams step up their preparations for next year's T20 World Cup in India and Sri Lanka, likely to be held in February-March. New Zealand fast bowlers Matt Henry (1-26) and Jacob Duffy (1-45) made full use of early swing and bounce at Hagley Oval to restrict England to only 44-2 in the opening six powerplay overs before Harry Brook (20) looked to cut loose.

Jimmy Neesham (1-20) conceded a couple of huge sixes to the England skipper in the eighth over but gained revenge by getting through his defence, and the tourists' momentum ground to a halt again when Mitch Santner (1-20) removed Tom Banton for nine.

The dangerous Buttler also fell to spin shortly afterwards, holing out in the deep while looking to attack Michael Bracewell (1-10), before rain halted play in the 17th over with England on 110-5 and seeking a late charge to boost their total.

Kyle Jamieson (1-27) removed Jordan Cox for 16 after the break but Curran persevered, benefiting from a dropped catch and surviving a loud appeal for lbw to take England to a respectable total with 19 runs in the final over.

FOCUS

Rains continue as Pakistan-NZ World Cup clash washed out

AFP
Colombo

Colombo's wet spell showed no signs of letting up as the Women's World Cup fixture between Pakistan and New Zealand was washed out at R. Premadasa Stadium yesterday.

It was deja vu in the Sri Lankan capital as a fourth game in the tournament had to be abandoned due to rain, while several others have been stop-start affairs thanks to the fickle Colombo skies.

The previous day's contest between Sri Lanka and South Africa was reduced to 20 overs and, despite the tireless work of the ground staff, only 25 overs were possible in the Pakistan-New Zealand encounter.

Put in to bat, Pakistan never found their rhythm and limped to 92-5 when the heavens opened once again. The players dashed indoors as lightning flashed across the skyline and match officials advised the ground staff to steer clear of the field.

Earlier, Pakistan had been 52-3 when the first interruption arrived and play resumed with the game trimmed to 46 overs. But there was to be no resumption


Pakistan's captain Fatima Sana (centre) reacts after her dismissal as New Zealand's players celebrate during the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup 2025 in Colombo yesterday. *(AFP)*

after the second rain break. "We were in a decent position and we were waiting for the rain to stop. This is disappointing as you wait for four years to play a World Cup. It's a real shame. Now we have to win both our remaining games," New Zealand captain Sophie Devine said. F

or New Zealand, both their Colombo games were abandoned due to rain with their earlier encounter against Sri Lanka also being affected.

The White Ferns now have four points, level with India, though the latter occupy fourth spot courtesy of a superior Net Run Rate and have a game in hand. Pakistan, meanwhile, remain winless, three defeats and two no-results tell the sorry tale of their campaign.

New Zealand's attack made early inroads, with seamers Jess Kerr and Lea Tahuhu hitting the right areas to deliver the initial breakthroughs. The spinners then tightened the screws, with Amelia Kerr and Eden Carson sharing the spoils.

The White Ferns were razor-sharp in the field too. Veteran Suzie Bates plucked a stunner at mid-wicket to send back opener Muneeba Ali (22), while Carson threw herself full length at point to pouch Sidra Amin (nine).

MOTOGP

Bezzecchi fights off Fernandez challenge to win Australian Grand Prix sprint

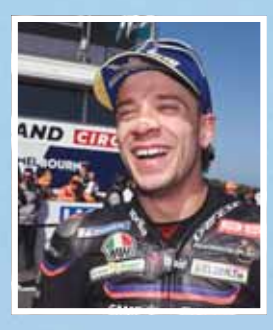
Phillip Island, Australia: Marco Bezzecchi claimed his third sprint victory in four Grand Prix races yesterday, as the Aprilia rider overcame a dramatic start to beat Trackhouse's Raul Fernandez at the Australian Grand Prix.

Bezzecchi, who narrowly missed out on pole position to Yamaha's Fabio Quartararo, hit a seagull as he left the grid for the warm-up lap at Phillip Island. But the 26-year-old Italian kept his composure and overtook Fernandez with three laps remaining in the 13-lap sprint to seal back-to-back sprint wins.

"It was pretty hard because at the beginning. I hit a big bird, unfortunately for him, especially. But also, for me, as I got a scare. But luckily nothing was broken on the bike, and I am very sorry for this, of course," Bezzecchi said.

"When we started the sprint, I had a lot of fun as Raul was impressive at the beginning, he was super quick. I couldn't catch him and once I did, I made a mistake, so I had to put myself through some difficult laps again.

"But it was a fantastic job, I am very happy to win today. This is for my team, my guys and all my fans!"



Bezzecchi, who faces a double long lap penalty in today's race due to his collision with MotoGP champion Marc Marquez at the Indonesian Grand Prix, continued his strong form after a stunning comeback to win the Indonesia sprint earlier this month.

FERNANDEZ'S FLYING START

Fernandez, who started fourth on the grid, made a flying start and led for much of the race but ultimately had to settle for second place.

"I was just very relaxed on the bike and just tried not to make any mistakes," the Spaniard said after securing his second successive sprint podium finish. "I saw that Marco came with a strong pace and I tried my maximum. And when I saw that I wasn't able to follow Marco, I just tried to survive because on this kind of track, you need to keep the rear tyre.

"But anyway, I'm really happy, thanks to my team and my family. I think this is very important to a lot of us, and let's try to keep it this way, as also in Mandalika, we got some good results, so let's try to enjoy the moment."

Home favourite Jack Miller of Prima Pramac, the first Australian rider since Casey Stoner in 2012 to start on the front row at Phillip Island, missed out on a podium finish, as KTM's Pedro Acosta overtook him to claim third place.

VR46 Racing's Fabio Di Giannantonio secured fifth place, while Alex Marquez, second in the riders' championship, finished sixth.

Quartararo's hopes of converting his record-breaking lap in qualifying into a strong sprint performance fell short, as the Frenchman finished in seventh place.

Meanwhile, twice MotoGP champion Francesco Bagnaia's season woes continued, as the Italian finished a lowly 19th.



2025 Australian MotoGP, Phillip Island - Sprint Race Results

Pos	Rider	Nat	Team	Time/Diff
1	Marco Bezzecchi	ITA	Aprilia Racing (RS-GP25)	19m 3.971s
2	Raul Fernandez	SPA	Trackhouse Aprilia (RS-GP25)	+3.149s
3	Pedro Acosta	SPA	Red Bull KTM (RC16)	+5.310s
4	Jack Miller	AUS	Pramac Yamaha (YZR-M1)	+5.376s
5	Fabio Di Giannantonio	ITA	Pertamina VR46 Ducati (GP25)	+5.416s
6	Alex Marquez	SPA	BK8 Gresini Ducati (GP24)	+6.109s
7	Fabio Quartararo	FRA	Monster Yamaha (YZR-M1)	+8.706s
8	Luca Marini	ITA	Honda HRC Castrol (RC213V)	+8.938s
9	Pol Espargaro	SPA	Red Bull KTM Tech3 (RC16)	+9.252s
10	Enea Bastianini	ITA	Red Bull KTM Tech3 (RC16)	+9.752s
11	Joan Mir	SPA	Honda HRC Castrol (RC213V)	+10.231s
12	Johann Zarco	FRA	Castrol Honda LCR (RC213V)	+12.104s
13	Alex Rins	SPA	Monster Yamaha (YZR-M1)	+12.132s
14	Miguel Oliveira	POR	Pramac Yamaha (YZR-M1)	+17.494s
15	Franco Morbidelli	ITA	Pertamina VR46 Ducati (GP24)	+18.967s
16	Lorenzo Savadori	ITA	Aprilia Factory (RS-GP25)	+25.185s
17	Ai Ogura	JPN	Trackhouse Aprilia (RS-GP25)*	+27.784s
18	Somkiat Chantra	THA	Idemitsu Honda LCR (RC213V)*	+28.945s
19	Francesco Bagnaia	ITA	Ducati Lenovo (GP25)	+32.408s
20	Michele Pirro	ITA	Ducati Test Rider (GP25)	+35.523s
	Fermin Aldeguer	SPA	BK8 Gresini Ducati (GP24)*	DNF
	Brad Binder	RSA	Red Bull KTM (RC16)	DNF

Aprilia Racing team's Italian MotoGP rider Marco Bezzecchi (also on top) in action during the sprint race at the Australian Grand Prix on Philip Island yesterday. *(AFP)*

TENNIS

Rybakina beats Paolini to reach final in Ningbo

RYBAKINA WILL TAKE ON ALEXANDROVA IN THE TITLE CLASH

AFP
Ningbo, China



Kazakhstan's Elena Rybakina in action during the semi-final match against Italy's Jasmine Paolini at the Ningbo Open yesterday. *(Reuters)*

Elena Rybakina powered into the Ningbo Open final with a 6-3, 6-2 victory over Jasmine Paolini yesterday that keeps her chances alive of qualifying for the WTA Finals.

Paolini could have secured her ticket to next month's season finale in Riyadh with success yesterday. But the Italian's defeat means the battle for the last two spots will be settled at next week's Pan-Pacific Open in Tokyo, with Mirra Andreeva also still in contention.

"I knew the match was going to be very tough," said Rybakina, who improved her head-to-head record against Paolini to 3-3.

"Jasmine has played really well this season and she's a really tough opponent, so I knew I would need to bring my best. I'm happy I stayed focused until the end and won it in straight sets."

Former Wimbledon champion Rybakina entered the semi-finals having lost her last two meetings with Paolini but utilised her big serve and powerful groundstrokes to win in 90 minutes.

Rybakina fired 30 winners, including 10 aces, and saved all seven break points she faced to reach her second final of the season, where she will face fourth seed Ekaterina Alexandrova.

Alexandrova is celebrating her top-10 debut this week and moved into her fourth final of the year with a 6-3, 6-4 victory over fellow Russian Diana Shnaider.

In a rematch of the Monterrey final won by Shnaider earlier this season, Alexandrova benefited from 40 unforced errors from her opponent throughout the 92-minute showdown.

"I'm really happy with the result, being here in the final. I think it was a super difficult match today," said Alexandrova, who is through to the 13th WTA final of her career.

"I have no expectations. I will go on the court tomorrow and enjoy the atmosphere and the match. I will try to do my best because she is a great player and has a really tough serve, so it will be super difficult against her."

Chess event ends in Doha



Winners at the prize distribution of the first Qatar Rapid Chess Championship 2025, which was organised by Qatar Chess Association (QCA) at the Qatar Chess Training Centre, with the participation of 96 players representing 24 teams. QCA president Mohammed al-Mudahka gave away the prizes.

FOCUS

Verstappen takes US sprint win in fine style

Reuters
Austin, Texas

Formula One champion Max Verstappen won the US Grand Prix sprint for the third year in a row yesterday after McLaren's title contenders Oscar Piastri and Lando Norris collided at the start and retired.

The Red Bull driver, starting from pole position at Austin's Circuit of the Americas with Norris alongside, finished 0.395 seconds clear of Mercedes' George Russell with Carlos Sainz third for Williams and Lewis Hamilton fourth for Ferrari.

The eight points for victory left four times world champion Verstappen 55 adrift of championship leader Piastri with the main grand prix to come today and five further rounds after that including two more sprints.

"The start was good, then of course there was the safety car because of the turn one incident," said Verstappen after just the sort of perfect outcome he needs to have a chance of a fifth successive title.

"Then it took a few laps after the safety car to have a decent pace.

"I do think we need to be a bit better in race trim to be able to fight the McLarens because we haven't seen anything of them."

Norris and Piastri's race was over in a matter of metres, the Australian's car hit by Sauber's Nico Hulkenberg at the first corner and pitched onto his teammate's. The safety car was deployed, with debris strewn across the track.

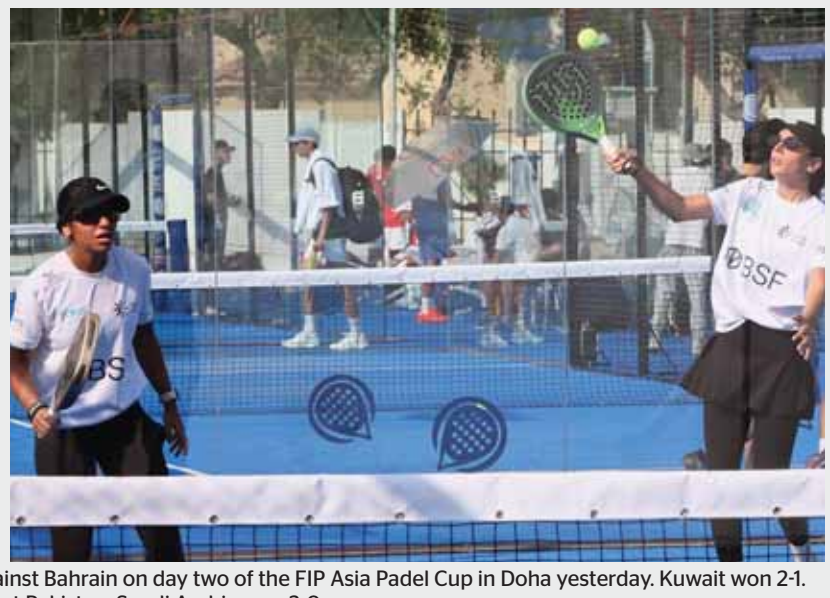
"Someone just wiped me out, I'm out," said Norris, a blameless victim who tried to continue but stopped on track.

Piastri, 22 points clear of his teammate at the top of the standings, made it back to the pit lane but retired with a broken suspension.

"I had a pretty good start, we both went pretty deep into Turn 1 and I tried to cut back, and got a hit, so obviously not a great way to start the day," said the Australian.

WINS FOR KUWAIT, SAUDI ARABIA AT FIP ASIA PADEL CUP





Kuwait players celebrate a point during their win against Bahrain on day two of the FIP Asia Padel Cup in Doha yesterday. Kuwait won 2-1. **RIGHT:** Saudi Arabia's women players in action against Pakistan. Saudi Arabia won 3-0.



Pakistan players in action in their 2-1 win over China on the second day of the FIP Asia Padel Cup in Doha yesterday.

EQUESTRIAN

Lambre, Haidan and al-Suwaidi secure victories at Hathab

By Sports Reporter
Doha


Hussain Saeed Haidan won the Silver Round.


Brazilian Santiago Lambre won the Diamond Tour, with Hussein Saeed Haidan coming second and Khaled Mohammed al-Emadi third.


In the Future Riders Round, Sultan Jassim al-Suwaidi took first place, ahead of Khalifa bin Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani and Al Qaqaa bin Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani.

Brazilian Santiago Lambre, Qatar's Hussein Saeed Haidan and Khalid Jassim al-Suwaidi claimed the Diamond and Silver Tour, and Future Riders' titles respectively as the fourth round of the 9th edition of Qatar Equestrian Tour – Longines Hathab concluded at Qatar Equestrian Federation's (QEF) outdoor arena. The annual domestic equestrian series is jointly organised by QEF and Al Shaqab, a member of Qatar Foundation.

The Diamond Tour 150cm class event's top place was claimed by Lambre, who rode bay stallion Db Gi Citsun with aplomb for a best clear round in 35.71secs. His powerful and precise performance outpaced a competitive field. Haidan secured second place with 40.61 seconds on Quick Nick, while Khaled Mohammed al-Emadi claimed third aboard Thor Ter Wilgen Z in 42.4 seconds.

The Silver Tour 130cm class also brought intense competition, with Haidan emerging victorious after a swift and clean round of 53.56 seconds on Viahipi d'Auzay. Khaled al-Hadi followed closely in second place with 56.33 seconds on Carlton de Sauvageonn, and Rondoux Jean Francois secured third with 56.34 seconds aboard Get Lucky Wallie, just a fraction behind.

In the Future Riders Round, held at a height of 90cm, young talents showcased their potential. Sultan Jassim al-Suwaidi took first place with an impressive time of 16.26 seconds riding Violet Van Het Koetshuis. He was closely followed by Khalifa bin Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani, who recorded 16.32 seconds on Zion II Vdk and Al Qaqaa bin Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, who completed his round in 18.03 seconds on Bon Suela, securing third.

LA LIGA

Barca claim lead after Araujo's late derby winner

'At the moment we're leading the table so it's a good situation'

AFP
Barcelona


Barcelona's Uruguayan defender Ronald Federico Araujo da Silva scores his team's second goal during the La Liga match against Girona at Estadi Olimpic Lluis Companys in Barcelona yesterday. *(AFP)*

Barcelona moved top of La Liga yesterday after Ronald Araujo struck deep in stoppage time to snatch the champions a 2-1 win over Girona. The defender, sent on as an emergency forward, netted in the 93rd minute to give Barca a one-point lead on Real Madrid, who visit Getafe today.

Elsewhere, Antony struck twice for Real Betis, fourth, to secure them a 2-2 comeback draw at third-place Villarreal.

Following two consecutive defeats Hansi Flick's Barca were only just able to edge Girona, 19th, thanks to Araujo's late goal. Pedri Gonzalez slotted Barcelona ahead early on but Axel Witsel equalised with a superb overhead kick for a Girona side who came close to securing a deserved point.

"We didn't play our best match but we fought to the end and we scored that goal – it will give us confidence for the next matches, at least this is what I hope," said Barca coach Flick.

Flick brought Lamine Yamal back into the starting line-up after he recovered from the groin injury which kept him out of Spain's recent World Cup qualifiers. The teenage winger also missed the 4-1 thrashing by Sevilla in Barcelona's last La Liga outing, which the Catalans were only just able to bounce back from.

With several players, including striker Robert Lewandowski out injured, Flick handed a league debut to 17-year-old forward Toni Fernandez. In line with the protest organised by the Spanish football-ers' association against Barca's match against Villarreal in December which has been moved to Miami, both sets of players stood still for 15 seconds after the whistle blew for kick-off.

Barca took the initiative and earned a 13th-minute lead after Jules Kounde and Yamal combined well, allowing midfielder Pedri to casually pass into the bottom right corner. Girona, who finished in the top four two seasons ago but have struggled ever since, soon found a way back level. Witsel produced a stunning overhead kick to equalise in the 20th minute and shock the hosts.

The visitors broke behind Barcelona's high line several times to create danger. Cristian Portu struck the post after getting in behind Barca's defence and Girona spurned two more one-on-ones. Marcus Rashford struck the crossbar with a free-kick at the other end as a warning to the minnows.

Flick made a surprising double change, withdrawing star players Yamal and Pedri despite chasing the game, with Tuesday's Champions League clash against Olympiakos in mind, as well as next weekend's Clasico. Paulo Gazzaniga made an excellent save at his near post to thwart Rashford, who also had a penalty appeal waved away.

Flick sent on centre-back Araujo as a striker in the final stages in desperation and the Uruguayan delivered deep in stoppage time, finishing off Frenkie de Jong's cross to snatch three points. Araujo ripped off his shirt in celebration as Barca claimed a victory which seemed improbable after a flat second-half display.

"At the moment we're leading the table so it's a good situation, Real Madrid have to win tomorrow," said Flick. "We are missing the dynamic we normally have... I miss this a little bit... we needed this goal and this victory today."

Flick was sent off in the final stages for dissent and is set for a touchline ban at the Santiago Bernabeu next weekend, and perhaps beyond after he made a gesture viewed as uncouth in Spain as he celebrated Araujo's goal. Girona were left licking their wounds after a fifth defeat of the campaign.

"We feel that we played a great game... (but) we had four or five clear chances and should have scored more to kill the game," Witsel said. "It's hard mentally to let in a goal like that, but we have to think about the first half (we played)... and keep that in mind for our next match."

Atletico Madrid host Osasuna later Saturday aiming to pull level on points with Betis. Former Manchester United winger Antony's brace helped the Andalusians peg back Villarreal from two goals down, leaving the Yellow Submarine five points behind Barca and one ahead of Betis.

BUNDESLIGA

Kane strikes again as Bayern Munich beat Dortmund to stay clear

AFP
Munich

Harry Kane scored for the seventh straight game as Bayern Munich beat Borussia Dortmund 2-1 at home yesterday, their 11th win from 11 games in all competitions this season.

The win kept Bayern five points clear atop the Bundesliga table as they maintained their perfect record with 21 points from seven outings this term. Dortmund sit fourth, seven points adrift of their opponents.

For Kane, his 104th goal for Bayern, was his 400th at club level in his career. He has 19 goals in 11 games in all competitions this season for Bayern, including 12 in the league. Bayern coach Vincent Kompany named Kane in the number 10 role, behind Chelsea loanee Nicolas Jackson, who made his third start for his new club.

Kane took no time to show his creative chops, threading passes for wingers Luis Diaz and Michael Olise, who both had great chances inside the opening 10 minutes. The England captain then nodded Bayern in front with a typical poacher's goal from a corner on 21 minutes.

After one-way traffic in the opening period, Dortmund were better in the second half and should have drawn level when Serhou Guirassy pounced on a Bayern error and laid on Karim Adeyemi, who slipped while trying to shoot. Jobe Bellingham came off the bench late and hesitated in possession in the box, allowing Olise to slide in and score with 11 minutes left. Dortmund pulled one back through Julian Brandt, who got a boot to a dangerous Julian Ryerson cross in the 84th minute, but the visitors could not make their late pressure count.

Alex Grimaldo scored twice as Bayer Leverkusen won 4-3 at Mainz, extending their unbeaten streak to eight games as they prepare for a European clash with reigning champions Paris Saint-Germain. The win sent Leverkusen to fifth in the table, level on points with Dortmund.

Grimaldo's spot-kick put Leverkusen in front on 11 minutes and Christian Kofane doubled the visitors' lead midway through the first half, finishing off a clever team move with a low shot into the bottom right corner. Leverkusen gave away an easy goal on the 34th-minute mark when Loic Bade's clearance hit his own player, allowing Lee Jae-sung to score.

Just before half-time, Leverkusen pressed Mainz into an error and Jonas Hofmann, who won the penalty, found Grimaldo in the box for a tap-in, his sixth goal in 10 games in all competitions. Martin Terrier's strike three minutes from time had put Leverkusen 4-2 up but Mainz's Armindo Sieb scored shortly afterwards to set up a nervy ending.

Leverkusen, who have dropped seven points this season despite scoring first in each of their seven matches, eventually hung on. Dane Hjulmand replaced the sacked Erik ten Hag in early September. RB Leipzig won 2-1 at home against promoted Hamburg, with Christoph Baumgartner scoring goals for the hosts either side of a strike from Albert Sambi Lokonga.


Bayern Munich's Harry Kane vying for the ball with Borussia Dortmund's Marcel Sabitzer and Ramy Bensebaini during their Bundesliga match in Munich yesterday. *(Reuters)*

SERIE A

Napoli fall at Torino without injured McTominay and Hojlund


Torino's Cristiano Biraghi (left) and Napoli's Frank Anguissa vie for the ball during the Serie A match in Turin. *(Reuters)*

AFP
Torino, Italy

Napoli were sunk 1-0 at Torino by old boy Giovanni Simeone yesterday as they struggled without the injured Rasmus Hojlund and Scott McTominay, who may also both miss out on a Champions League clash at PSV Eindhoven.

Simeone, who helped Napoli win Serie A in 2023 and last season, netted the only goal in the 32nd minute of a tense game in Turin which gives Roma the chance to go out on their own at the top of the league.

The 30-year-old also scored the winner in Torino's 1-0 home victory over Roma in September and he took his third goal of the season brilliantly, capitalising on a fortunate ricochet to skip past Giovanni Di Lorenzo and Napoli goalkeeper Vanja Milinkovic-Savic and shoot home.

"It a was a special night for me, to give Torino three points from such a difficult match makes me very happy," said Simeone said. "They're a very good team and it was an emotional night for me, but the most important thing is making happy the Torino fans by showing them we're a team that fights to the end."

Noa Lang thought he had snatched a point for champions Napoli in the third minute of stoppage time, wheeling away in delight after tapping home before his strike was ruled out for offside.

Roma host Inter Milan in late match and are level on 15 points with Napoli, who drop down to second by virtue of having played a game more. Inter sit three points behind Roma and Napoli, meaning that Cristian Chivu's team will be first on goal difference with a win in the Italian capital.

Napoli coach Antonio Conte had to do without in-form striker Hojlund and McTominay who were left out of the squad with respective thigh and ankle injuries suffered in training ahead of today's defeat. Both are doubts for Tuesday's clash at PSV, creating more injury problems for Conte who has already had to deal with a series of physical problems for his squad this season.

"We conceded a goal which we basically created ourselves," said Conte. "We have to play every three days and we don't have time, all we can do is play and and improve every time we do."

Hojlund, who has scored three times for Napoli and netted for Denmark last weekend, was only signed from Manchester United after Romelu Lukaku suffered a thigh injury which could keep the Belgium striker out until the new year. Alessandro Buongiorno and Matteo Politano were only fit for a place on the bench while Stanislav Lobotka and Amir Rrahmani are still sidelined.

Hojlund would be a big absence for PSV as he scored both goals in Napoli's 2-1 win over Sporting Lisbon earlier this month and Lorenzo Lucca did little up front.