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Drange, Reiterer and Hawair earn Moto 2 victories in Qatar



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SPORT

CRICKET

India spooked by Hazlewood as Australia claim T20 win at MCG

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QATAR STARS LEAGUE

Gomez strikes as Wakrah inflict first loss on Qatar SC



Al Wakrah's substitute Raul Gomez celebrates after scoring against Qatar SC at the Saoud Bin Abdulrahman Stadium yesterday.

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Al Wakrah struck late to edge Qatar SC 1-0 in the Qatar Stars League at the Saoud Bin Abdulrahman Stadium yesterday.

Both teams battled hard for a breakthrough and it was only in the 86th minute that substitute Raul Gomez managed to connect a corner kick with his outstretched leg to score for The Blue Wave.

The goal left their fancied rivals a bit frustrated. In 90+3 minute, Qatar SC's Serigne Fallou Diouf was sent off after a second yellow for a foul against Al Wakrah's Hamdi Fathi.

It was Qatar SC's first loss of the league championship and saw them move a rung down from the top position with their tally remaining on 17 points while Al Wakrah moved to fourth with a total of 14 points after their fourth win.

AL-NAIMAT, OLUNGA FIRE ARABI PAST SHAHANIYA

At Al Thumama Stadium, Al Arabi secured their second straight victory after defeating Al Shahaniya 2-0.

The 'Dream Team' dominated possession for most of the match but had to wait until the closing stages to make their superiority count. Jordanian striker Yazan al-Naimat broke the deadlock in the 84th minute, before Kenyan forward Michael Olunga doubled the lead just three minutes later to seal Arabi's third win of the season.

The result lifted Al Arabi to eighth place



Yazan al-Naimat broke the deadlock in the 84th minute for Al Arabi against Shahaniya.

in the standings with 10 points, while Al Shahaniya remain bottom with four points, facing increasing danger of relegation. After being named player of the match, al-Naimat expressed his delight at contributing to the win. "I dedicate this victory to Al Arabi fans and hope for a bigger turnout in the coming matches," he said. "The team has changed a lot un-

der coach Cosmin Contra, who is doing an incredible job. I came in and did my duty – scoring a goal and providing an assist. I dedicate this award to all my teammates and to our fans."

In today's matches, Al Saliya will face Al Ahli at 5.30pm at the Grand Hamad Stadium while Umm Salal meet Al Shamal at 7.30pm at Al Khor Stadium.

FOOTBALL

Qatar's world-class venues take centre stage at FIFA U-17 World Cup

Aspire Zone will transform into a pulsing football hub throughout for 25 days

By Sports Reporter
Doha

The FIFA U17 World Cup Qatar 2025 is set to take place at the state-of-the-art Competition Complex in Aspire Zone from November 3-27, promising a spectacular football festival-like atmosphere for families and fans at one of the world's most celebrated sporting venues. Renowned as a global centre of sporting excellence since hosting the 2006 Asian Games, Aspire Zone will transform into a pulsing football hub throughout the 25 days of the tournament.

A total of 104 matches will be played across eight pitches, with up to eight matches a day during the group stage through to the Round of 16. This will be the first FIFA World Cup to feature 48 teams.

The final will take place at Khalifa International Stadium, also located in the Aspire Zone, and one of eight venues that hosted matches during the historic FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022.

"We are excited to welcome the best young talent from around the world to train and play at Qatar's world-class sporting facilities. The pitches at Aspire Zone and Khalifa International Stadium will offer players optimal conditions to showcase their talent to the rest of the world," said Rashid al-Khater, LOC Operations Executive Director.

"Fans attending the tournament are set to experience an unforgettable football-festival like atmosphere. The compact nature of the venue will allow spectators to attend multiple matches a day, while enjoying a specially curated fan zone offering cultural and entertainment activities for everyone. We are excited to bring the world together once again to celebrate a shared passion for football," he added.

Operating daily on match days from



The U-17 World Cup final will take place at Khalifa International Stadium, also located in the Aspire Zone.

1:30pm until the final whistle, the fan zone will offer a family-friendly celebration of football and culture. Young fans can indulge in a variety of gaming activities, including e-sports challenges and a mini football arena.

Families will also be regaled by various folkloric and cultural performances, while enjoying food and beverage stations from around the world. A dedicated sensory room will provide an inclusive space for fans with neurodivergent needs.

Regarded as the world's most unique sports city, Aspire Zone also features Aspetar, a leading orthopaedic and sports med-

icine hospital and Official Medical Partner of the tournament. The Zone is also home to the renowned Aspire Academy that has produced world and Olympic champions across multiple disciplines, since opening its doors in 2004, most notably track and field athlete Mutaz Barsham, regarded as one of the best high jumpers of all time.

Aspire Zone is located within close proximity to Al Aziziyah (Gold line) metro station, allowing fans to easily access the venue using Qatar's modern public transportation network. More information on how to reach the venue is available through the official tournament mobility guide: ht-

tps://qr1.be/1A6U

Tickets can be purchased exclusively from www.roadtoqatar.qa Fans must also download the RoadtoQatar mobile app to present purchased tickets and access tournament venues. Tickets are available as a Day Pass, enabling fans to attend multiple matches a day as well fan zone activities. Fans can also purchase a Prime Pass, which will enable them to reserve seats for high demand matches. Supporters of the Qatar national team can avail the Follow My Team ticket, which will enable them to attend all matches of the Qatari U-17 team during the group stage.

FIFA teams up with Nour and Yarden for U-17 World Cup Qatar official song

Doha: FIFA has partnered with a pair of viral emerging artists – Egypt's Nour and Nigeria's Yarden – to create TMRW'S GOAT, the Official Song of the FIFA U17 World Cup Qatar 2025.

The multi-lingual anthem provides an inspirational soundtrack for the highly anticipated football festival that will take over Qatar's Aspire Zone from 3-27 November. The track is now live across all major streaming services.

Hailing from Cairo, Nour is an alt-pop artist whose bilingual lyrics and introspective writing build an intimate world that feels both personal and cinematic. Following the success of her breakout single Meen Ysadak, she stands on the verge of a bold new chapter, continuing to evolve her distinct voice and vision.

Following the release of the track, Nour said: "Being part of TMRW'S GOAT was such a special experience. The FIFA U-17 World Cup is all about giving young players a stage to dream big – an opportunity to create something new and inspiring. Working with Yarden showed how powerful it can be when different worlds come together. The song carries that same anthemic spirit, and I hope the young players – and everyone listening – feel that energy and make it their own."

Lagos-raised artist Yarden is shaping the future of Afrobeats with a sound that fuses soul, rhythm, and global energy. Having burst onto the scene in 2023 with his viral hit Wetin, he is considered one of Nigeria's most exciting up-and-coming voices, with music that embodies the fearless and borderless spirit of a generation of African artists shaping global sound.

This year's edition of the tournament is the first ever 48-team FIFA competition and will once again provide a priceless opportunity for the next generation of world football's superstars to announce themselves on the global stage.

With all 104 matches taking place at the state-of-the-art Aspire Zone, fans can attend multiple games in a single day.

FIRST T20I

India spooked by Hazlewood as Australia win

Hazlewood took 3-13 and racked up 15 dot balls in devastating spell

Reuters
Melbourne

A Josh Hazlewood masterclass with the ball and a batting blitz by Mitchell Marsh carried Australia to a dominant four-wicket win in the second T20I against India at the Melbourne Cricket Ground yesterday.

Fast bowler Hazlewood took 3-13 and racked up 15 dot balls in a devastating opening spell as Australia bowled out India for 125 in front of a crowd of 82,438 at the sporting colosseum.

Captain Marsh smashed 46 off 26 balls and shared in a 51-run opening partnership with Travis Head before the hosts reeled in the modest total with 40 balls to spare.

With the series-opener in Canberra washed out by rain on Wednesday, Australia will take a 1-0 lead in the five-match series into the third game in Hobart tomorrow.

India opener Abhishek Sharma top-scored with 68 off 37 balls, further enhancing his burgeoning reputation with a fine first fifty on Australian soil.

However, he was one of only two India batters to reach double figures on a lively pitch that offered pace and movement off the seam.

With Marsh winning the toss and electing to field, Hazlewood had Shubman Gill given out lbw on the first ball.

While the decision was overturned on review, Hazlewood



Australia's Josh Hazlewood (second right) celebrates with teammates after dismissing India's Suryakumar Yadav during the second T20 international at the Melbourne Cricket Ground yesterday. (AFP)

followed up with a short ball that crashed into the crest of Gill's helmet.

A shook-up Gill slogged Hazlewood to be caught for five, triggering a top order collapse.

Hazlewood removed Suryakumar Yadav for one, the skipper's fourth single-digit score in six matches, before dismissing Tilak Varma for a duck two balls later with a top-edge caught by wicketkeeper Inglis.

By the end of Hazlewood's four-over spell, India were in huge trouble at 32 for four.

"The ball feels like it's coming

out really nicely at the moment in whatever format I'm turning up and playing," said man-of-the-match Hazlewood.

"It was just put the ball in the right areas, don't try too much and see what happens."

Sharma made a bright start amid the Hazlewood onslaught, smashing 14 runs off paceman Xavier Bartlett (2-39) in the first over he faced.

He and Harshit Rana (35) combined in a 56-run stand for the sixth wicket to save India from embarrassment.

But Bartlett recovered well

from his bruising early spell, dismissing Rana and Shivam Dube (4) in quick succession, the latter brilliantly pounced by a diving Inglis.

Another sharp catch in close by Sean Abbott saw Kuldeep Yadav depart for nought before Nathan Ellis (2-21) dismissed Abhishek lbw, ending India's hopes of a decent total.

BRIEF SCORES
Australia 126 for 6 (Marsh 46, Varun 2-23) **beat India 125** (Abhishek 68, Hazlewood 3-13) **by four wickets**

SPOTLIGHT

Pakistan hammer Proteas

Reuters
Lahore

Openers Saim Ayub scored a quickfire 71 from 38 balls and seamer Faheem Ashraf took 4-23 as Pakistan cruised to a nine wicket win over South Africa in the second Twenty20 International in Lahore yesterday to level the three-match series at 1-1.

Pakistan won the toss and chose to field first, making light work of their visitors' top order as they bowled them out for 110 in 19.2 overs.

It never looked enough and the home side romped to victory with 41 balls to spare ahead of Saturday's third and final fixture at the same venue.

Babar Azam was not out with 11 from 18 deliveries and became the highest run-scorer in T20 Internationals with 4,234, going beyond India's Rohit Sharma.

Six of the South African batters were bowled as Pakistan found prodigious seam off the wicket, with only Dewald Brevis managing an innings of any substance with 25 from 16 deliveries.

There was a cavalier nature to the batting too with no-one in the



Pakistan's Salman Mirza (centre) celebrates with teammate Babar Azam after taking the wicket of South Africa's Matthew Breetzke (right) during the second T20I in Lahore yesterday. (AFP)

visitors' line-up able to dig in and lay a platform.

Fast bowler Salman Mirza took 3-14 in his four overs.

South Africa could not find the same assistance from the wicket and Pakistan raced to victory on

the back of Saim's fine knock under lights.

Sahibzada Farhan, 28 from 23 balls, was the only Pakistan batsman who was dismissed after he was trapped leg before wicket by Corbin Bosch. After his dismissal,

Pakistan eased to their win.

BRIEF SCORES
Pakistan 112 for 1 (Ayub 71*, Farhan 28*) **beat South Africa 110** (Brevis 25, Ashraf 4-23, Mirza 3-14) **by nine wickets**

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Hundred to hold first player auction in UK sport with improved salary pot

Reuters
London

The Hundred will introduce its first-ever player auction in March, England's cricket board (ECB) said yesterday, with an improved salary pot of more than £2mn (\$2.68mn) per team in the men's competition.

The tournament's sixth edition will ditch its current player selection model in favour of the format inspired by the Indian Premier League (IPL) - an auction system with teams bidding for talent, including four overseas players.

Squads will be made up of between 16 and 18 players while there is a salary cap along with a salary collar, a minimum amount teams must spend.

The steep rise in salaries makes the

THE KEY POINTS

- The Hundred introduces player auction inspired by IPL
- Men's salary pot increases 45% to £2.05mn
- Women's salary pot doubles to £880,000
- Squads will be made up of between 16 and 18 players

competition one of the most lucrative franchise tournaments for players behind the IPL and the Indian Women's Premier League.

SALARY POT OF £2.05MN PER TEAM

"The overall salary pot in The Hundred men's competition will increase 45% for the 2026 season, rising to 2.05 mil-



lion pounds per team," the ECB said in a statement. "The overall salary pot in The Hundred women's competition will increase 100% for the 2026 season, rising to 880,000 pounds per team. "The increase to the salary pot in The Hundred women's competition will also see the base price salaries for the lowest-paid player increase considerably to 15,000 pounds, up by 50%." The changes came through The Hundred Playing Working Group, featur-

ing representatives from all eight teams, the Professional Cricketers' Association (PCA) and the ECB, before they were agreed by The Hundred's board.

Teams are allowed up to four pre-auction signings from mid-November to the end of January.

The Wildcard Draft will also remain in place so teams can reward strong domestic form by finalising their squads with two final selections in June, before the competi-

tion gets underway in the English summer.

FIRST AUCTION IN MAJOR UK SPORT

"These changes will help us make the competition even better, ensuring we get the best players in the world and improving the standard of cricket and level of entertainment further again," said Vikram Banerjee, managing director of The Hundred. "Working alongside our new partners we've been exploring how we can take The Hundred forward and we've decided that moving to an auction will allow us to improve the competition."

Banerjee said the salary pot for the women's competition in the first year of The Hundred was only £120,000, with the top-earning players earning £15,000.

But the pot has since risen for the third year in a row and at £880,000, top-earning players can earn in the region of £130,000.

Afghanistan beat Zimbabwe



Afghanistan's Rashid Khan (second right) celebrates with teammates after taking a wicket against Zimbabwe during their second T20I in Harare yesterday. Rashid took 3 for 9 as Afghanistan won the match by 7 wickets. (@ACBofficials)

COMMENT

Rodrigues opens up on mental health battle after WC semi heroics

Reuters
Mumbai

India's **Jemimah Rodrigues** said she has struggled with anxiety at the Women's World Cup but her determination to contribute helped her overcome being dropped earlier in the tournament to score a match-winning century in their semi-final against Australia.

Fuelled by Rodrigues' unbeaten 127, India pulled off a record chase of 339 runs at the DY Patil Stadium in Navi Mumbai on Thursday to seal a five-wicket win over the defending champions and book their place in tomorrow's final against South Africa.

The 25-year-old all-rounder missed the 2022 edition due to a dip in form before fighting her way back into the side.

Facing the pressure of playing in a World Cup on home soil, Rodrigues struggled for consistency, posting two ducks and a pair of 30s before being dropped for India's group-stage match against England.

She said she often broke down in calls to her parents as she tried to cope with the pressure.

"I am so blessed to have friends, I can call family, I didn't have to go through it alone. And it's okay to ask for help," Rodrigues said.

"I will be very vulnerable here because I know if someone is watching, this might be going through the same thing. Nobody likes to talk about their weakness," she added, holding back tears.

"I was going through a lot of anxiety and when you are go-



ing through anxiety, you just feel numb. You don't know what to do. You are trying to be yourself. And in this time, my mum and dad supported me a lot. When you are dropped, you have a lot of doubts because I always want to contribute to the team. That really hit me... But sometimes all you need to do is, just hang in there and, things fall into place."

A composed 76 not out against New Zealand helped restore her confidence and set the stage for her semi-final heroics against seven-times champions Australia.

Rodrigues said she had only one thought in mind when she went out to bat.

"All I would say was I didn't play for my 100. I didn't play to prove a point at number three," she said. "I just played to make sure India win. I wanted to see India win at the end and that was my motivation."

Both India and South Africa will be vying for their first Women's World Cup title in tomorrow's final, as no team outside Australia, England or New Zealand have ever won the tournament since the inaugural edition in 1973.

Roston Chase leads WI to win



West Indies' captain Roston Chase (left) celebrates with Akeem Auguste after scoring a half-century during the third Twenty20 international against Bangladesh in Chittagong yesterday. West Indies won by 5 wickets. (AFP)

2025 UIM-ABP WORLD AQUABIKE CHAMPIONSHIP

Drange, Reiterer and Hawair earn Moto2 victories in Qatar

MOTO 1 RUNABOUT GP1 GLORY FOR PEREZ AS TOUGH WEATHER CONDITIONS GREET PARTICIPANTS

By Sports Reporter
Doha

The second of the Ski Ladies GP1, Ski Division GP1 and Runabout GP2 Asian Continental Championship Motos and the first of the Runabout GP1 Motos for the Old Doha Port Grand Prix of Qatar were held in punishing heat yesterday afternoon.

A flying Benedicte Drange stormed through the Ski Ladies GP1 field to snatch a vital victory in the second of the Motos. But second-placed Estelle Poret heads into the final heat today with a 15-point lead in the World Championship over defending champion Jasmiin Ypraus.

Drange said: "In Moto 1, I had the lead and then my fuel pump broke. I was full speed on the stretch and it broke. I did not finish and it was a heartbreak because I was going for a title. I thought to myself, I will start as nine or 10 in Moto 2 and the championship is not on the line anymore. I needed to bring back my joy of racing. When I had a championship, it was too much pressure. I don't enjoy it. I went out had fun, did the best I could and had a brilliant start. I swept past half the field and passed Jasmiin on the first lap. Then I took Estelle and Jessica (Chavanne). It was probably the best race I have done in my career. I am super happy and dedicate this victory to my team and my mechanics."

Veteran Kevin Reiterer stormed through to earn Moto 2 success in Ski GP1 after pole-sitter and Moto 1 winner Quinten Bossche shut down on the opening lap and was later disqualified for a course infringement. Third place for Denmark's Oliver Koch Hansen gave him an 18-point lead over Jérémy Poret to take into the final Moto-today.

Reiterer said: "This morning I thought it was going to be easier than yesterday but it was up and down like crazy. We had rollers coming in from boats that we



Quinten Bossche

weren't expecting on the straights. We were just taking off. It was really rough, one of the roughest and hardest Motos I have ever done. I got off to an okay start and then Quinten's boat shut off and he fell back. I tried to pace myself, save some energy and put in some good laps if there was a fight later. Five to seven seconds was a good gap so that you don't have to worry in the splits."

François Medori headed into the opening Runabout GP1 Moto with a 16-point World Championship advantage over Jeremy Perez but engine issues sidelined the Corsican after he had passed Yousef al-Abdulrazzaq to take the Moto lead. The Kuwaiti regained the advantage to win the Moto only to lose out to Perez near the finish. The Frenchman now takes a nine-point lead over Medori into the final Moto.

Triumphant Perez said: "I feel really good. It was a really difficult race. I push and push and György passed me and I passed him again on the last corner. I am happy to win. François was faster than me but we will see. The strategy now will be to get a good start in Moto 2 and try to push and not to lose places. I know that I need to finish four or five so I will manage my race."

Emirati Amer Hawair clinched a lights-to flag second victory in the

Runabout GP2 category to put him in a strong position to seal the title at the final race today.

Drange flies to Ski Ladies GP1 Moto 2 success

Moto 1 winner Estelle Poret knew that a top finish would put her in a superb position to claim the world title on Saturday. She lined up on pole ahead of Naomi Benini, Jasmiin Ypraus, Jessica Chavanne, River Varner and Virginie Morlaes. The cruel engine problem in Moto 1 had pushed title contender Benedicte Drange to the rear of the 10-boat field.

Chavanne stormed through to get the hole shot and took the outside split ahead of Poret, Varner, Drange, Ypraus, Benini, Morlaes, Sofie Borgström, Emy Garcia and Janina Johansson. Chavanne maintained her lead through the opening lap but Drange managed to pass Poret and take second position, although, as long as Poret finished the two remaining Motos, Drange was helpless in her quest for the title.

Drange then overhauled Chavanne on the second lap and began to edge clear, as Varner managed to overhaul a subdued Ypraus to take fifth. Garcia climbed to seventh at the expense of a struggling Morlaes. Ypraus regained fifth and Garcia moved into sixth with Varner dropping back to seventh



Estelle Poret

heading into lap four. Drange held on to nail the Moto win by 2.398 seconds and picked up 25 invaluable championship points. Poret passed Chavanne to finish second and a resurgent Ypraus snatched third from Chavanne to finish ahead of Benini, Garcia, Varner, Morlaes and Borgström. Varner then incurred a two-lap penalty for course cutting and Benini was docked 40 seconds for lane indiscipline. Benini finished fifth ahead of Morlaes, Borgström and Varner.

Moto 2 success in Ski GP1 for Reiterer

World champion Quinten Bossche had controlled Moto 1 in the morning and his rewards was pole for Moto 2. He lined up on the start pontoon ahead of championship leader Oliver Koch Hansen, Jérémy Poret, Kevin Reiterer, Toshi O'Hara, Valentin Dardillat, Morgan Poret, Anthony Beernaut, Alex Barret and Matteo Benini.

Poret snatched the hole shot from Reiterer, O'Hara, Koch Hansen and Beernaut after Bossche took a tumble and lost valuable ground on his rivals. He found himself down in 17th of the 19th riders and was faced with another fight back from the rest of the field. Morgan Poret was a non-starter.

Reiterer then snatched the lead from Poret and O'Hara but Bossche made another mistake and lost

all his momentum. By lap three, Reiterer led from O'Hara, Poret, Koch Hansen and young Yoni Hamelin. Bossche was disqualified for rising in the wrong direction to cap another disastrous Moto for the current champion.

Reiterer held on to take the victory by 14.999 seconds from O'Hara and Koch Hansen, who closed in on the world title with 20 precious championship points. His closest title rival Jérémy Poret eventually finished sixth behind Dardillat and the impressive Benjamin Scharff. Beernaut, Matteo Benini, Alex Barret and Ander-Hubert Lauri rounded off the top 10.

Perez takes opening Runabout GP1 Moto win after Medori and al-Abdulrazzaq retire

Only six of the 23 Runabout GP1 entrants had turned out for the morning's second free practice with the remaining riders persevering their skis for the opening Moto.

Multiple former champion Yousef al-Abdulrazzaq lined up on pole position ahead of series leader François Medori, Jérémy Perez, György Kasza and the high-flying Khalifa Belselah. The Kuwaiti earned the hole shot to stay ahead of Medori, Belselah, Perez, Kasza, Andrzej Wisniewski and Ruben Jimenez Riquelme.

Egidijus Kirilevicius and Robin Laforge were non-starters.

Al-Abdulrazzaq continued to fend off Medori and actually increased his advantage to over three seconds heading into lap three. Medori was also watchful of his title push. With 15 minutes of the race to run, al-Abdulrazzaq led Medori by just over two seconds with Belselah, Kasza and Perez in the top five. Kasza and Perez then passed the Emirati, who plummeted out of contention and retired on lap five.

Linus Lindberg climbed to fifth ahead of Qatar's Waleed al-Sharshani and Wisniewski with 11 minutes on the clock. Medori snatched the lead on lap eight but then the Frenchman stuttered to a halt with engine issues and al-Abdulrazzaq regained the lead. The Corsican's demise threw the title race wide open with Kasza and new virtual championship leader Perez in third.

Second successive Asian Runabout GP2 victory for Amer Hawair

Emirati Amer Hawair took full advantage of pole position for winning Moto 1. He claimed the hole shot from Qatar's Mahmoud and Mohamed Abumaali with Saudi Arabia's Daoud Kaloti holding fourth ahead of Khalaf al-Kuwari and Khalid al-Maazmi at the start of the second Runabout GP2 Asian Continental Moto.

Hawair began to pull clear of his rivals and was over six seconds to the good through lap two with the pursuing quintet holding their positions. Kaloti managed to pass Mohamed Abumaali and snatch third place, as Mahmoud Abumaali began to apply the pressure on the leading Emirati.

Kaloti managed to pass Mahmoud Abumaali in the closing minutes as well to seal second place, albeit 3.837 seconds behind the triumphant Emirati.

Mahmoud Abumaali rounded off the podium positions from al-Maazmi, al-Kuwari and Mohamed Abumaali.

TENNIS

Sinner soars past Shelton, Bublik beats De Minaur

ATP/Reuters
Paris

Jannik Sinner powered past Ben Shelton yesterday at the Rolex Paris Masters to reach the semi-finals of the French ATP Masters 1000 event for the first time and continue his chase to reclaim World No. 1 honours.

The second seed delivered a statement in his 400th tour-level match, ousting the American 6-3, 6-3 to extend his indoor winning streak to 24, dating back to November 2023.

Should Sinner claim his fifth trophy this season — and first ATP Masters 1000 title of 2025 — he would return to No. 1 in the PIF ATP Rankings on Monday.

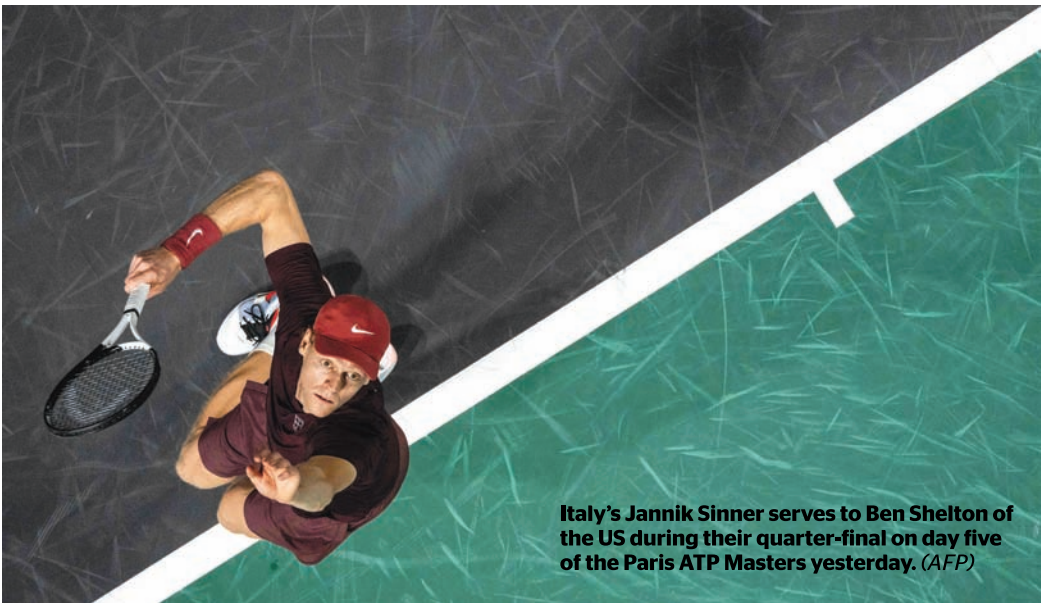
Up next for Sinner will be third seed Alexander Zverev or 11th seed Daniil Medvedev. Sinner leads Medvedev 8-7 in their Lexus ATP Head2Head series and is tied with Zverev at 4-4, including a win last week against the German in the Vienna final.

With his victory yesterday, Sinner became the first Italian man to reach 43 tour-level semi-finals, breaking his tie with Fabio Fognini and Adriano Panatta.

Sinner is also the first Italian to reach the Rolex Paris Masters semi-finals. Sinner entered the week with just one win across his previous three appearances at the indoor event.

Since falling to Shelton in their first Lexus ATP Head2Head meeting two years ago in Shanghai, Sinner has won seven consecutive matches against the 23-year-old.

The Italian is 22-0 against Americans since that defeat and 14-0 against left-handers in that time.



Italy's Jannik Sinner serves to Ben Shelton of the US during their quarter-final on day five of the Paris ATP Masters yesterday. (AFP)

Alexander Bublik battled back to defeat Alex de Minaur yesterday and reach the first Masters 1000 semi-final of his career.

The Kazakh, enjoying his best-ever year, edged a dramatic contest 6-7 (5/7), 6-4, 7-5 to set up a last-four meeting with Felix Auger-Aliassime, who earlier saw off Valentin Vacherot in his quarter-final.

Bublik is still in the race to qualify for next month's ATP Finals in Turin, competing for the eighth and last berth with Lorenzo Musetti, Auger-Aliassime and Daniil Medvedev.

The 28-year-old, who has won four ATP titles this season, also staged a comeback from two sets down against De Minaur at Roland Garros earlier this year en route to the French Open quarter-finals.

He pulled off a similar trick in the French capital yesterday and

will be full of confidence before facing Auger-Aliassime today.

Australian sixth seed De Minaur edged a tight first set which stayed on serve by reeling off four straight points to recover from 5-3 down in the tie-break. Bublik hit back, though, grabbing the first break of the match in the third game of the second set to help force a decider. He saw two break points come and go in the ninth game of the third set, but managed to seal the crucial break in De Minaur's next service game and calmly closed out victory.

Earlier, Auger-Aliassime cruised past Vacherot to keep his hopes of qualifying for the Finals alive.

The Canadian had come from a set down in all three of his previous matches at the La Defense Arena but eased past surprise Shanghai Masters champion Vacherot 6-2, 6-2.

Auger-Aliassime, targeting his second Masters 1000 final appearance, holds a 3-2 winning head-to-head record over Bublik.

"He (Vacherot) is so confident and you are kind of scared to be honest," Auger-Aliassime said.

"You are not sure if he has got some magic right now that nobody else has but he is playing unbelievably.

"I had to be so focused from the start and this level of intensity from the first game I brought helped ease me into the match and I played some good tennis."

Vacherot's remarkable run of 10 successive wins in Masters events came to an end. He won the Shanghai tournament earlier this month as a 204th-ranked qualifier.

The Monegasque is still set to break into the world's top 30 after another impressive performance in Paris as a wildcard.

BOXING

Cameron vacates WBC title in protest against men's and women's rules

Reuters
London

Chantelle Cameron relinquished her WBC Super Lightweight title yesterday in a bold protest over women's boxing rules, with the British fighter demanding the right to fight three-minute rounds like her male counterparts.

Cameron's decision to vacate her championship belt stems from her opposition to the World Boxing Council's mandate that women compete in two-minute rounds, which the 34-year-old views as unequal treatment.

"Women's boxing has come a long way, but there's still progress to be made," Cameron said in a statement. "I've always believed in equality and that includes the choice to fight equal rounds, equal opportunities, and equal respect."

Cameron was upgraded to WBC super-lightweight world champion when Katie Taylor was designated 'Champion in Recess' as she stepped away from boxing.

The WBC was set to have a purse bid yesterday for a fight between Cameron and fellow British boxer Sandy Ryan. Reuters has contacted the WBC for comment.

In December 2023, Amanda Serrano also relinquished her WBC title after they refused to al-

low her to compete in bouts under the same rule-set as men's boxing, with 12 three-minute rounds.

WBC president Mauricio Sulaiman had said earlier in 2023 that they would not sanction 12 three-minute rounds in women's bouts.

"(In) tennis - women play 3 sets, (in) basketball the basket is shorter and the ball smaller and those are not contact sports. We stand by safety and well-being of the fighters," he wrote on X.

Most women's title fights have 10 rounds of two minutes each and Cameron was one of more than two dozen boxers - including Serrano - who launched a campaign in 2023 to have the choice to compete under the same rules as men.

Cameron, who holds a 21-1 professional boxing record, made clear her protest goes beyond personal preference, framing it as a fight for future generations of female boxers.

"I'm proud of my accomplishment in becoming a WBC champion, but it's time to take a stand for what's right and for the future of the sport," she added.

Cameron is not stepping away from boxing entirely, however, with her promoters MVP saying she plans to pursue other championship opportunities and marquee bouts while maintaining her insistence on competing in three-minute rounds.



SPOTLIGHT

Lusail Circuit marks 30 days for F1 Qatar Grand Prix

By Sports Reporter
Doha

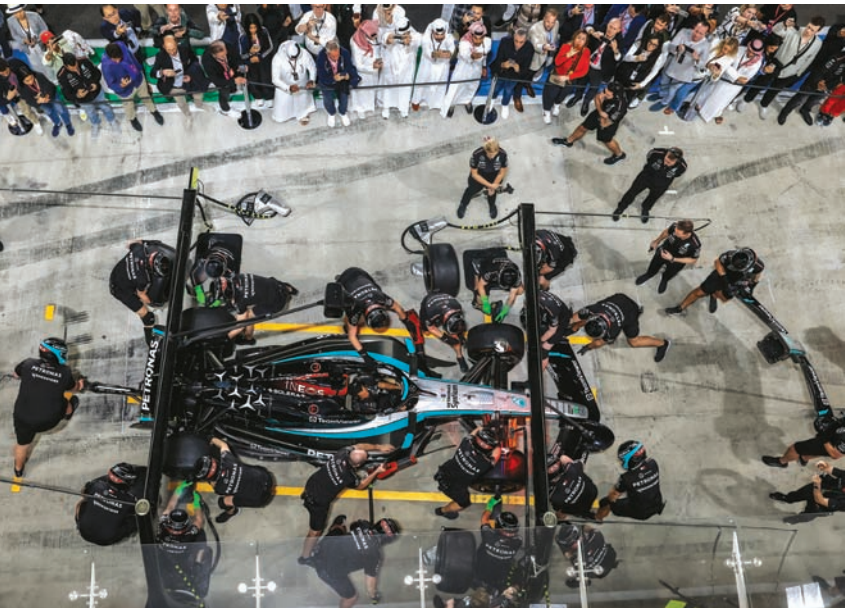
With just one month to go until the Formula 1 Qatar Airways Qatar Grand Prix 2025, Lusail International Circuit (LIC) has unveiled new details of its reimagined Fan Zone and the daily on-site entertainment programme, marking another milestone in the countdown to one of the most anticipated weekends in Qatar's sporting calendar. From November 28-30, LIC will welcome fans for a weekend that blends world class racing, family entertainment, culture, and innovation, creating a festival atmosphere that celebrates both Qatar's spirit and the thrill of Formula 1.

A WEEKEND OF RACING AND ENTERTAINMENT

The 2025 edition promises non-stop on track action with the Formula 1 Sprint Race, FIA Formula 2 Championship, and Porsche Carrera Cup Middle East. Off the track, the excitement continues with performances by global icons like Seal on Family Friday and Metallica headlining Race Day Sunday.

A REIMAGINED FAN ZONE EXPERIENCE

At the heart of the event, the Fan Zone will feature a dynamic lineup of experiences designed to delight visitors of all



The Qatar Grand Prix promises non-stop on track action with the Formula 1 Sprint Race, FIA Formula 2 Championship, and Porsche Carrera Cup Middle East.

ages. From immersive activities to educational installations and family entertainment, every corner of the Fan Zone offers something new to discover.

HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE

LEGO "Build The Thrill" Experience:

Making its Middle East debut, LEGO brings its celebrated Formula 1 activation to Qatar as part of the Project Alicia global tour. Fans can build their own mini LEGO F1 cars, explore a LEGO themed pitlane and garage, and take home their creation in exclusive Qatar Grand Prix packaging.

PREMIER LEAGUE

Liverpool must snap losing 'habit', says Slot

Liverpool languish at seventh spot as Arsenal enjoy a four-point lead at the top

AFP
Liverpool

Liverpool manager Arne Slot said his side must not make a habit of losing games they should win after six defeats in their last seven games plunged the Premier League champions into crisis.

The Reds have lost their last four league games ahead of Aston Villa's trip to Anfield today and also crashed out of the League Cup to Crystal Palace in midweek. Slot's decision to name an inexperienced side for the 3-0 defeat to the Eagles drew criticism, but he again defended the need to give his key players a rest after a series of injury problems in the early part of the season.

Alisson Becker, Alexander Isak and Jeremie Frimpong are all still sidelined, while Ryan Gravenberch is only just back in training after an ankle injury. Slot had an eye not only on the visit of in-form Villa, but Real Madrid's trip to Anfield in the Champions League on Tuesday and Liverpool's clash with Manchester City next Sunday.

"It is nothing to do with the squad depth, it is how we've gone throughout the season in terms of injuries and availability," said Slot. "It's just the situation as it is. We have still more than enough good players available to play the game on Saturday, to play the game on Tuesday, and to play the game on Sunday, but I have to take care of a few of them, and that's why I made the decision not to play."

Five games into the Premier League campaign, Villa trailed Liverpool by 12 points. But the two meet this weekend separated only by goal difference as Unai Emery's men have hit form just as Liverpool's losing streak began. Slot cited Villa as an example to his side of how quickly things can change and the overall strength of the Premier League.

Arsenal enjoy a four-point lead at the top of the table, but only three points separate second-placed Bournemouth from Villa in eighth. "Apart from Arsenal, I think many teams are in and around the same points, so



Liverpool have lost their last four league games ahead of Aston Villa's trip to Anfield today and also crashed out of the League Cup to Crystal Palace in midweek. (Reuters)

again it tells you also how hard the the Premier League is," added Slot.

"Normally, although with us the run is already quite long, you don't every time lose a game of football where you create more chances than the other team. They (Villa) decided not to make a habit out of that, and let's hope we decide not to make a habit out of having more chances than the opponent but not winning it."

MARTINELLI RULED OUT, SALIBA DOUBTFUL FOR ARSENAL'S GAME AGAINST BURNLEY

Arsenal winger Gabriel Martinelli will miss today's Premier League trip to Burnley due to injury, while centre back William Saliba

remains doubtful, manager Mikel Arteta said as his side look to extend their remarkable run of form.

Brazil international Martinelli limped off the pitch following Arsenal's 1-0 Premier League victory over Crystal Palace on Sunday, while Frenchman Saliba was substituted at halftime at the Emirates. Both players were absent from Wednesday's League Cup fourth-round 2-0 win over Brighton & Hove Albion.

"I think we have the same ones. Martinelli still out, Saliba we have to wait and see. The rest are getting closer, but not ready yet," Arteta told reporters. "We don't know yet (Martinelli's timeline for return), but this game comes too early for him."

Arteta expects long-term absentees including Martin Odegaard, Kai Havertz and Noni Madueke to make a return soon.

Arsenal have been in impressive form, becoming the first English top-flight team to play at least six times in a month without conceding a goal. Their flawless October included Premier League wins over West Ham United, Fulham and Crystal Palace, alongside triumphs against Olympiacos and Atletico Madrid in the Champions League, and a League Cup win against Brighton. Arteta's men currently sit atop the Premier League standings with 22 points from nine matches, four clear of second-placed Bournemouth. Burnley are 16th in the league table with 10 points.

Turkish football suspends 149 referees accused of betting

Istanbul: The Turkish Football Federation (TFF) suspended 149 referees accused of betting on matches. The TFF said in a statement that its disciplinary committee had handed out suspensions ranging from eight to 12 months, the TFF said, adding that investigations are continuing into three other referees.

An investigation by the federation into 571 referees in the Turkish professional leagues revealed that 371 of them had sports betting accounts and 152 were actively betting. "Refereeing is a profession of honour," said TFF president Ibrahim Haciosmanoglu on Thursday. "Anyone who tarnishes that honour... will never again be involved in Turkish football."

The TFF said that 22 of the officials (seven match referees and 15 assistants) work in the top league. Ten of the referees listed by the TFF placed more than 10,000 bets, with one of them alone placing 18,227 bets. Forty-two referees each bet on more than 1,000 football matches, the head of Turkish football said. However, he did not specify whether any of them were suspected of betting on matches they had officiated. An investigation has also been launched by the Istanbul public prosecutor's office.

MUNICH'S ALLIANZ ARENA TO HOST 2028 CHAMPIONS LEAGUE FINAL

Bayern Munich's Allianz Arena is the sole candidate for the 2028 Champions League final while Wembley and the renovated Camp Nou are both vying for the 2029 final, UEFA said. Munich was the only city that stepped forward for the 2028 final after hosting it in 2025 when Paris Saint-Germain thrashed Inter Milan 5-0.

Munich also hosted the elite European club final in 1979, 1993 and 1997 in the Olympic Stadium and 2012 and 2025 at the Allianz Arena. This season the final is scheduled for the Puskas Arena in Budapest while the Metropolitan in Madrid hosts in 2027.

SERIE A

New Juve manager Spalletti eyes Scudetto

AFP
Rome

New Juventus manager **Luciano Spalletti** said that his seventh-placed team are capable of challenging for the Sere A title. "Of course, I hope this team can still get involved in the title race," he said yesterday, on the eve of Juve's game at Cremonese.

Spalletti, who succeeds the sacked Igor Tudor, added: "As we discussed with the players on Thursday, we must aim for the highest. And the highest is the Scudetto. Only nine matches have been played; there are still 29 left to play. That's a lot of matches, and I've seen many things during my 30-plus years of career."

Juventus have given Spalletti until the end of the season in the hope that the 66-year-old can secure qualification for next season's Champions League. His contract runs until June 30. Should he achieve that Spalletti will be given

more time to help put Juve back at the top in Italy after being overtaken by Inter Milan and Napoli in recent seasons.

Spalletti was the man behind Napoli's historic Serie A title in 2023 and has been one of the country's most influential coaches over the past two decades, also performing above expectations at Roma and Inter Milan. He added at his unveiling: "If I didn't believe in this team, in its potential despite the difficult moments, why would I have agreed to sign an eight-month contract? I believe we can do good work, which requires availability, willpower, and self-discipline."

Five months after his dismissal as Italy coach Spalletti is relishing being back in the Serie A limelight. "In a club like this, ambitions are obviously high. We must compete in the Champions League."

He had kind words for the man he placed, Tudor, who was sacked on Monday. "I'm sure I will be taking over a team that is mentally strong and well-trained," he said.



Vinicius Junior in the clear over Clasico outburst

Madrid: Vinicius Junior will face no disciplinary action for his Clasico substitution outburst, Real Madrid coach Xabi Alonso revealed. The Brazilian remonstrated with Alonso and marched off down the tunnel after he was hauled off in the 72nd minute in last weekend's tense 2-1 win over Madrid's arch-rivals Barcelona.

The 25-year-old player issued an apology to Real fans, his teammates, the club and president Florentino Perez - but pointedly not to Alonso - in midweek. But the Real manager assured Vinicius the affair was "over".

He told a press conference on the eve of Valencia's visit in La Liga: "On Wednesday, we had a meeting with all the staff,

players, and Vinicius gave an impeccable speech. He spoke sincerely, from the heart. For me, this matter has been closed since Wednesday."

Alonso said there would be no "reprisals" against the Brazilian. He added: "We are all in the same boat and rowing in the same direction. I think the whole team is focused on the field, which is the most important thing. We are competitors, all players want to be on the pitch, and that's a good thing. Now, we want to keep moving forward towards our goals, one match at a time."

The Vinicius flashback comes with negotiations ongoing over a new contract, although his current deal does not expire until 2027.