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Finals last four



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QATAR 2025

SHEIKH JOAAN ATTENDS IOC OLYMPISM365 COMMISSION MEETING



HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani, President of the Qatar Olympic Committee (QOC), attended the IOC Olympism365 Commission meeting yesterday in Lausanne, Switzerland. This year’s meetings form part of the broader “Fit for the Future” consultations launched by the IOC President, bringing together voices from across the Olympic Movement to explore opportunities and challenges through five main themes: Athletes, Olympic Games, Olympic Movement, Better World Through Sport, and Reach, Engagement and Revenue Generation. On Tuesday, HE Sheikha Hind bint Hamad al-Thani, Vice-Chairperson of Qatar Foundation, attended the Olympic Education Commission, while Jassim Rashid al-Buenain, Secretary-General of the QOC, took part in the Olympic Programme Commission. Their participation reflected Qatar’s continued engagement across various areas of the Olympic Movement. Qatar’s presence throughout the IOC Commissions Week reflects its commitment to supporting the Olympic Movement’s vision and advancing the role of sport as a catalyst for development, inclusion, and positive social change.

U-17 WORLD CUP

France, Mali march on as Canada break Uganda hearts

Austria, Czech Republic, Ireland, USA and Uzbekistan posted wins

By Sports Reporter
Doha

The FIFA U-17 World Cup Qatar 2025 continued yesterday with some impressive team performances, including Czech Republic putting six past Tajikistan and Ireland defeating Panama in style. There were also late winners for USA and Canada, the latter denying Uganda victory in their first World Cup match at any level. Meanwhile, Austria, France, Mali and Uzbekistan began their campaigns in fine fashion.

TAJIKISTAN 1-6 CZECH REPUBLIC
A Vit Skrkon hat-trick helped Czech Republic ease past Tajikistan. The forward netted his first with an excellent diving header, before tapping in his second from close range. He secured the third with a neat left-footed finish from inside the box. Petr Potmesil then got in on the act, bundling home an inviting Adam Novak centre. Tajikistan, to their credit, didn’t give up and netted when Muhammad Nazriev spun and shot from just inside the area. Czech Republic then added two more goals late on, as both Dominik Zajac and Potmesil found the net from close range.

USA 1-0 BURKINA FASO
Cavan Sullivan came off the bench to earn USA a hard-fought win over Burkina Faso. A fiercely-competitive contest was ultimately settled by a fine finish from the Philadelphia Union midfielder late in the game. He alighted on a cross into the box, took a sublime first touch and then slotted in from close range. The Americans then saw out the game with little alarm to clinch three valuable points.

PANAMA 1-4 IRELAND
Ireland marked their U-17 World Cup debut with a dominant victory over Panama. Jaden Umeh headed them in front, before Kian McMahon-Brown doubled their advantage. A second-half Michael Noonan header made it 3-0, before Max Kovalevskis hit their fourth. Moises Richards scored a late consolation for Panama.

PARAGUAY 1-2 UZBEKISTAN
Azizbek Abdumuminov grabbed a first-half brace as Uzbekistan held on for victory over Paraguay in a strongly-contested encounter. The attacking midfielder opened his account with a rasping long-range strike after being played in by Abubakir Shukurullaev, and doubled the tally in added time with a neat half-



Austria’s Johannes Moser celebrates after scoring against Saudi Arabia.

volley from near the penalty spot. Paraguay threatened a comeback but could not level after Alan Ledesma’s late penalty.

AUSTRIA 1-0 SAUDI ARABIA
Three red cards and a pair of penalties punctuated a drama-drenched contest between Austria and Saudi Arabia. Luca Weinhandl was first to see red for the Europeans in the 40th minute after receiving two bookings. Despite that man disadvantage, Austria took the lead as Johannes Moser tucked away a penalty after Dominik Dobis was sent tumbling. Numerical parity was restored two minutes later when Nasser Alfihani was sent off for last-player foul on Dobis. Saeed Aldossari joined him in an early bath in stoppage time for a second booking after bringing down Vasilije Markovic in the area. The Austria No10 stepped up to take the resulting penalty, but saw it repelled by Abdulrahman Alotaibi.

MALI 3-0 NEW ZEALAND
Mali’s quest to reach the semi-finals for a second successive tournament began with a comfortable victory over New Zealand. The Africans opened the scoring after just 17 minutes when Seydou Dembele broke clear of the New Zealand defence and slotted home after a one-two with Zoumana Ballo. The duo then teamed up again in the second half when

Dembele played an exquisite through-ball to Ballo, who struck home with precision. Raymond Bomba sealed the three points 12 minutes from time after he broke the offside trap following a clever pass from Ibrahim Diakite and guided the ball into the bottom corner.

FRANCE 2-0 CHILE
France began their campaign in comfortable fashion as they cruised past Chile. The UEFA U-17 EURO runners-up opened the scoring early in the second half thanks to a brilliant 25-yard free-kick from Christ Batola that flew into the net. They sealed the victory eight minutes later when Remi Himbert headed in an Emmanuel Mbemba free-kick at the near post.

CANADA 2-1 UGANDA
Uganda were denied victory in their first World Cup match at any level after conceding two late goals to Canada. The Africans appeared on course for a historic triumph thanks to a brilliant individual effort from James Bogere. The forward broke clear of the Canada defence, cut inside a defender and then found the net with a precision strike. Elijah Roche climbed high to head in an Aguilas Sadek header with just two minutes remaining to level the scores for Canada. Uganda then gave away a penalty in stoppage time after a foul by John Asiimwe on Marius Aiyenero, who converted the spot kick.

SPOTLIGHT

Qatar face upbeat South Africa in a must-win tie

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Hosts Qatar will take on South Africa in their second Group A match looking to bounce back in the FIFA U-17 World Cup at Aspire Zone Competition Complex’s Mansour Muftah Pitch today. Qatar went down fighting against Italy 0-1 in their opening match. The home team could take solace from their spirit and determination in their narrow defeat. However, they will face an upbeat South African side – currently leading the group – who sunk Bolivia 3-1 despite playing with 10-man.

Qatar coach Alvaro Mejia praised his team’s performance despite the defeat to Italy. “It was a difficult match against one of the top sides in the tournament. We will look to make amends in our next match against South Africa,” said Qatar coach Mejia. Mejia declared the squad’s collective hunger to reward their vibrant support when they return to action against South Africa. “Here in Qatar, everyone loves football,” he said. “They love to be part of it. The atmosphere was beautiful. It was colourful all around. For the people to watch players at this age – who very soon are going to be on TV and will be stars – it’s something amazing.



Qatar went down fighting against Italy 0-1 in their opening match.

“I am happy with how we performed against one of the strongest teams. The idea was to go out and compete. We competed. I am proud of the players and now we are going to come back against another strong team in South Africa. Let’s try to give the best of ourselves for all the people who are coming here to support. We have to push ourselves to the limits.”

Meanwhile, Italy will meet Bolivia in other Group A match. Bolivia will be determined to record a first tournament point since 1987 after losing their opening match while Italy will be out to sustain their momentum after a fine team display against Qatar.

Qatar lose to Turkiye in volleyball opener at Islamic Solidarity Games



The Qatari men’s volleyball team began its campaign in the 6th Islamic Solidarity Games – Riyadh 2025 – with a 3-1 loss to Turkiye. Turkiye won the first set 25-20, before Qatar levelled the match by taking the second set 25-18. The Turkish team then claimed the next two sets 25-16 and 25-20 to seal victory. Qatar will play its second match against Iran today at 7pm.

Stage set for CISM 47th World Military Parachuting Championships

DOHA: Qatar is set to welcome the world's elite military parachutists from Nov 13 to 23 for the CISM 47th World Military Parachuting Championships. This was announced at a press conference yesterday at Umm Al-Shokhot Airfield. The 10-day event will be a gathering of skill and spirit, featuring 320 parachutists hailing from some 30 countries. The event, to be organised by the Qatar Air Sports Committee (QASC), promises spectacular displays of aerial precision. This championship marks a proud return for Qatar, which previously hosted the 44th edition in 2021 – an event that earned widespread praise from the International Military Sports Council (CISM) for its impeccable organisation and high calibre of competition. Lieutenant Colonel Abdulla Saeed al-Mansoori, Vice-Chairman of QASC, yesterday said Qatar is ready to stage what will be a global event. "This championship represents a vital opportunity for exchanging expertise and actively strengthening human and cultural ties between nations," al-Mansoori said. He noted that preparations for the massive undertaking had been extensive, with the QASC putting "considerable efforts" into ensuring Umm Shakhout Airport was perfectly ready. Every technical and organisational detail has been finalised to the highest standards. The focus then turned to the home team. Lieutenant Colonel



al-Mansoori confirmed that the country would be represented by the Qatari Target Team, expressing his deep confidence in their ability to deliver a performance "befitting the reputation of Qatari sports." "We promise you an exceptional championship," he said. He attributed the foundation for this success to the nation's leadership, the gracious patronage of HE the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defence Affairs, and the dedicated efforts of everyone involved, from the Chief of Staff to the organising committees and supporting entities. "Everyone's co-operation is the guarantee for the tournament's success and its presentation in a manner befitting Qatar's global

reputation," he said. The countdown has officially begun for a spectacular showcase of military precision and global camaraderie in the skies over Qatar. Captain Hazza Hamad al-Attiya, Secretary-General of the QASC, said that a Local Organising Committee chaired by the Commander of the Joint Special Forces was overseeing all stages to meet the highest international standards. The 320 parachutists will test their mettle across three thrilling disciplines: the aerial ballet of Formation Skydive (FS-4Way), the rapid, focused manoeuvres of the Style Competition, and the ultimate test of canopy control in the Accuracy Competition. These events, open to men, women, and juniors, will

strictly follow CISM and international rules, with full adherence to WADA regulations, ensuring absolute integrity in the skies. Captain al-Attiyah emphasised that hosting this global gathering represents a significant addition to Qatar's military and sporting journey, embodying the national vision to become a premier destination for international championships. The event wasn't solely about the competition, however; it also celebrated legacy. A cultural cornerstone of the opening ceremony will be the inauguration of the Air Sports Museum, a first for the State of Qatar. This museum is intended to document the rich history and achievements of national



Abdulla Saeed al-Mansoori



Hazza Hamad al-Attiya



air sports, preserving the legacy for generations to come. Salem al-Fahida, Head of Media Affairs and Chairman of the Tournament's Media Committee, described the CISM World Military Games as a "global sporting epic that combines skill, courage, and a spirit of challenge." Al-Fahida stressed that the profes-

sional Qatari media would be an active partner in conveying the honourable image of the global event. Meanwhile, Lieutenant Abdulaziz al-Hajjaji, captain of Qatari Target Team, confirmed the squad's "complete readiness" to take part in the the world's most prominent military sporting event.

CRICKET

Konstas dropped, Weatherald gets Ashes call-up

Top-order batter Marnus Labuschagne recalled in 15-man squad

Reuters
Melbourne

Young opener Sam Konstas has been dropped from Australia's squad for the Ashes, opening the door for uncapped Jake Weatherald to make a Test debut in the five-match series against England.

Konstas, 20, misses out after a poor tour with the bat in the West Indies, while Weatherald has been included after topping the Sheffield Shield runs list in 2024/25 and starting the new season with three half-centuries.

Top-order batter Marnus Labuschagne was recalled in the 15-man squad after starting the domestic season with five centuries in a major return to form.

Finding a long-term replacement for opener David Warner has been a vexed question for selectors, and chairman George Bailey said yesterday they wanted more data from domestic matches before settling on a starting 11 and a batting order.

Much will depend on whether all-rounder Cameron Green can prove his fitness to bowl by delivering a decent spell in the next Shield round.

Green has barely bowled since coming back from spinal surgery and was selected solely as a batting number three during the West Indies tour.

Selectors would prefer a bowling Green at number six in the order, which would likely push out all-rounder Beau Webster.

"It'd be great to see (him bowl-



Jake Weatherald

ing), because that's his skill set, isn't it? So if someone's an all-rounder, you want them to be able to, in an ideal world, be capable of performing their skills," Bailey told reporters on the Gold Coast.

If Green is unable to bowl he may stay at number three, which could push Labuschagne up the order to open with Usman Khawaja and deny Tasmania opener Weatherald a spot.

There was no place for Mitchell Marsh despite the all-rounder's

good form in white-ball cricket and a recent endorsement from coach and selector Andrew McDonald.

Veteran Steve Smith will captain the side for at least the first Test in Perth, starting on November 21, due to Pat Cummins's back injury.

Bailey said Cummins would "hopefully" be available for the second Test, which starts on December 4 in Brisbane, and would travel to Perth to Perth to provide

another leadership figure for the squad.

"It's a calmness, it's an ability to keep the group together, for Steve to bounce ideas off and I guess to have that golden thread, or that continuity, through the series you're after," he added.

Regular stand-in man Scott Boland is in line to bowl in Perth along with stalwart quicks Mitchell Starc and Josh Hazlewood, while Sean Abbott and Brendan Doggett are the reserve pacers.

Bailey said he felt for Konstas, who has been in the spotlight since scoring 60 on his debut against India in the Boxing Day Test in Melbourne last year.

However, he was on shaky ground after managing only 163 runs in his first five Tests at an average of 16.30, and was unable to mount a convincing case for his retention in domestic cricket.

Weatherald, a 31-year-old opener with a modest first-class average of 37.63, had been seen in a two-way race with 14-Test opener Matt Renshaw to replace Konstas.

Renshaw started the domestic season with a century and earned a one-day international debut against India but Weatherald's weight of runs over the last two seasons ultimately told.

AUSTRALIA SQUAD

Steve Smith (capt), Usman Khawaja, Marnus Labuschagne, Cameron Green, Travis Head, Beau Webster, Josh Inglis, Alex Carey, Jake Weatherald, Mitchell Starc, Scott Boland, Nathan Lyon, Josh Hazlewood, Sean Abbott, Brendan Doggett.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Pant returns to India squad for Test series against South Africa

Reuters
Bengaluru

Rishabh Pant will make his return to India's squad for the two-Test series against South Africa, the country's cricket board announced yesterday, marking his comeback from a foot fracture that sidelined him from the series against West Indies.

Pant missed the 2-0 series drubbing of West Indies last month after fracturing his foot during a Test match against England in September, with Dhruv Jurel stepping in to keep wickets.

Pant proved his match fitness in style last week in a game between India A and South Africa A in Bengaluru, where the 28-year-old scored 90 in the second innings to guide his team to a three-wicket victory.

Fast bowler Akash Deep also returns to the squad after missing the West Indies series.

Several players such as skipper Shubman Gill and pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah will join the team after the ongoing Twenty20 series in Australia.

The first Test of the series against South Africa begins on November 14 in Kolkata before they move to Guwahati for the



second Test from November 22. South Africa have skipper Temba Bavuma back in the squad after a calf injury kept him out of the series in Pakistan last month.

India are third in the World Test Championship while reigning champions South Africa are fourth.

INDIA SQUAD

Shubman Gill (captain), Rishabh Pant (wicketkeeper, vice-captain), Yashasvi Jaiswal, KL Rahul, Sai Sudharsan, Devdutt Padikkal, Dhruv Jurel, Ravindra Jadeja, Washington Sundar, Jasprit Bumrah, Axar Patel, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Mohammed Siraj, Kuldeep Yadav, Akash Deep.

FOCUS

West Indies edge New Zealand in first T20

AFP
Auckland

A brilliant bowling performance secured the West Indies an unlikely seven-run victory in the first T20 against New Zealand yesterday, despite a stunning solo effort from Mitchell Santner.

The West Indies, who landed in New Zealand only two days ago, struggled on the Eden Park drop-in wicket that offered some seam and turn to the home bowlers, making 164-6 from their 20 overs.

The visitors then delivered a precise bowling performance to restrict the Black Caps, who needed a brilliant 28-ball 55 from captain Santner to keep the game interesting.

Santner won the toss and elected to field at an initially sun-bathed Eden Park.

The Black Caps struck twice in the powerplay, Brandon King and Alick Athanaze falling to Jacob Duffy and Kyle Jamieson respectively to leave West Indies 32-2 after six overs.

Captain Shai Hope looked to anchor the innings for the visi-



West Indies' Shai Hope in action against New Zealand. (AFP)

tors, cautiously approaching his opening overs before ramping up the risk as he attacked the straight boundaries. The West Indies were 66-3 halfway through their innings, but then plundered 34 runs in the next three overs as Hope brought up a 38-ball 50.

BRIEF SCORES

West Indies 164 for 6 (Hope 53, Powell 33, Duffy 2-19) **beat New Zealand 157 for 9** (Santner 55*, Chase 3-26, Seales 3-32) **by seven runs**

BAILEY DEFENDS AGE PROFILE OF ASHES SQUAD AFTER WAUGH CRITICISM

Melbourne: Australia's selectors chairman George Bailey defended sticking with the Test side's veteran core for the Ashes yesterday following criticism from former captain Steve Waugh about the team's ageing profile. Waugh said on Tuesday that Bailey needed to make tough calls to regenerate the side and had failed to do so in the past, putting Australia's future at risk. "He's going to have to step up to the plate with the other selectors," Waugh had told reporters at the Sydney Cricket Ground. "The bowlers are in their 30s and some of the batsmen are getting on as well."

After announcing Australia's 15-man Ashes squad yesterday, which includes only one player under 30 in all-rounder Cameron Green, Bailey dismissed Waugh's comments, saying the squad was picked on performance. "We're aware of the age profile of the team," Bailey told reporters on the Gold Coast. "I'm interested when people have that view as to who they would like us to leave (out). Is that Nathan Lyon and Mitch Starc out, is that just because of their age? "You've got to give due respect that the guys are performing very well and they have the right to be selected."

Australia's bowling has been dominated by the thirty-something quartet of Starc, Lyon, Josh Hazlewood and Pat Cummins for the better part of a decade. Bailey also confirmed that all-rounder Mitchell Marsh had been discussed as an option but did not make the cut, leaving the 34-year-old T20 skipper free to fulfil his pledge to watch the first Test in his hometown Perth with his family. "We went to the ICC (International Cricket Council) and the issue there was they wouldn't let the umpires take breathalysers out onto the field," joked Bailey.

HORSE RACING

The Dunkirk Lads claims Rowdat Rashid Cup

By Sports Reporter
Doha

The Dunkirk Lads produced a stunning late burst to land the Rowdat Rashid Cup at the Al Rayyan Racecourse yesterday.

The six-year-old gelding, owned by Mohammed Hamad al-Hajri & Sons and trained by Hadi al-Ramzani, was settled towards the rear before unleashing a dazzling surge down the outside in the home straight.

Under a perfectly timed ride from Jefferson Smith, he swept past his rivals in the closing strides to clinch a thrilling victory in the thoroughbred handicap (85-105) for three-year-olds over 1200m, the day's feature.

Settled towards the rear for much of the race, The Dunkirk Lads travelled comfortably as Weissmuller made the early running before Jungle Mate, trained and owned by Ibrahim Saeed Ibrahim al-Malki under Tomas Lukasek, took over in the home straight. Jungle Mate opened up what looked like a decisive advantage, but The Dunkirk Lads unleashed a powerful surge down the outside in the closing stages, sweeping past his rivals to seal



Jockey Jefferson Smith guided The Dunkirk Lads to Rowdat Rashid Cup win yesterday. PICTURES: Juhaime

victory in the day's feature race. Return To Senders, representing Al Eida Racing and trained by Jassim al-Ghazali with Louis Nomis aboard, finished strongly to claim third spot, a length and three-quarters behind the runner-up, Jungle Mate.

Connections of The Dunkirk Lads celebrate after the gelding won the Rowdat Rashid Cup.



TENNIS

Anisimova beats Swiatek to reach WTA Finals semis

Rybakina stays perfect with win over alternate Alexandrova

AFP
Riyadh

Amanda Anisimova pulled off a stellar comeback yesterday to get the better of Iga Swiatek 6-7 (3/7), 6-4, 6-2 and book her spot in the last four of the WTA Finals in Riyadh.

Making her tournament debut this week, the fourth-seeded Anisimova secured the runner-up spot in the Serena Williams Group behind Elena Rybakina, who completed round-robin play with a perfect 3-0 mark, thanks to a 6-4, 6-4 success against Russian alternate Ekaterina Alexandrova.

Anisimova improved her three-set record this season to an impressive 15-3 by posting her 10th top-10 win of the year. "It's so funny, my mom keeps telling me: 'You know you've won like so many three-set matches this year? You're so strong?' I was actually thinking about that. Against Iga today it was so, so tough, but honestly, I enjoyed it," said Anisimova, who reached the finals at Wimbledon and the US Open this year.

"I think I was just going for my game more today, compared to the previous days. I think I was holding back a little bit in my last few matches. I just gave it my best shot today."

Swiatek and Anisimova split their two previous meetings, with the former triumphing in the Wimbledon final and the latter avenging that loss in the US Open quarter-finals.

Yesterday at King Saud University Indoor Arena, the Pole saved all four break points she faced before she clinched the tiebreak to bag the opening set in 65 minutes. The quality was incredibly high throughout and little separated the pair until Anisimova finally converted a break point in game 10 of the second set to draw level and force a decider. The American made the first move in the final set, breaking in the fourth game on a Swiatek double-fault. Another break sealed the deal for Anisimova over the six-time Grand Slam champion in two hours and 36 minutes. This is the first time in Swiatek's entire career that she has suffered two successive losses after winning the opening set.

In a rematch of the Ningbo final from three weeks ago, won by Rybakina, the Kazakh fired eight aces and saved five of six break points en route to a 73-minute victory.

The world number six extended her current winning streak to nine consecutive matches - a run that began in Ningbo on October 16



Amanda Anisimova of the US celebrates winning her WTA Finals group stage match against Poland's Iga Swiatek in Riyadh yesterday. (AFP)

Djokovic in tears after tribute to late coach Pilic

Novak Djokovic fought back tears after his second-round win at the Hellenic Championship in Athens after tournament organisers played a tribute video to his former coach Nikola Pilic, who died in September aged 86. In his playing days, Croatian Pilic was runner-up at the French Open in 1973 and after turning to coaching captained Germany to three Davis Cup titles between 1988 and 1993. Djokovic, who joined Pilic's academy in Germany when he was 12, was visibly moved during the video, which played after the 24-times Grand Slam champion defeated Alejandro Tabilo 7-6(3) 6-1. "It was an emotional moment," the 38-year-old told the ATP website. "Considering what he meant to me and my family - privately, also professionally - he was my tennis father as I like to call him, someone who has played a fundamental, integral role in my development as a tennis player and as a human being. "It was really sad news when I heard that he passed away." Djokovic, who has won 100 ATP titles, said he would keep Pilic's legacy alive. "As long as I play tennis and as long as I live, I'll celebrate his name," he added.

and has continued through Tokyo, from which she withdrew at the semi-final stage, and now Riyadh.

"Ekaterina is always a tough opponent and has a big serve. I'm happy I was able to win in straight

sets. Each win gives you confidence and I'm pretty happy that for now my last matches have been great," said Rybakina, who was playing with taping on her shoulder. Rybakina entered the match

with Alexandrova having already secured her place in the semi-finals as the winner of the group.

Alexandrova was brought in as a replacement for American Madison Keys, who withdrew ahead of the match due to a viral illness.

The Australian Open champion suffered two defeats in round-robin play this week in Riyadh, to Swiatek and Anisimova, and had no chance of advancing to the knockout stage. Alexandrova is the second alternate in Riyadh. The first alternate, Russia's Mirra Andreeva, who is already competing in the doubles at this year's WTA Finals, elected not to sign in due to not being fit to play on Wednesday. Andreeva has a doubles match today, alongside her partner and compatriot Diana Shnaider, and might still be called in for duty as an alternate if any of the four singles players is unable to play.

PSG's al-Khelaifi named best president of the year at Golden Boy Awards



Paris Saint-Germain President Nasser al-Khelaifi has been named Best President of the Year at the 2025 Golden Boy Awards held in Italy on Tuesday. The awards saw PSG's Desire Doue win the 2025 Golden Boy Award after an outstanding season.

The annual awards, organised by Italian newspaper *Tuttosport* since 2003, recognise excellence across European football and are voted for by a panel of 50 sports journalists from across the continent. PSG's achievements during the 2024/25 season were a major factor in the recognition. Under al-Khelaifi's leadership, the club completed a quadruple that included the Ligue 1 title, Coupe de France, Trophée des Champions and their first-ever UEFA Champions League trophy. Doué, the 20-year-old forward, scored 16 goals and provided 16 assists in 61 appearances, including two goals in PSG's Champions League final win over Inter Milan. The club's sporting advisor, Luis Campos, was also named best executive for his role in shaping PSG's football strategy and building a balanced and competitive squad.

SPOTLIGHT

Young fans find inspiration at the FIFA U-17 World Cup



With the FIFA U-17 World Cup Qatar 2025 now in full swing, young fans from around the world shared their excitement about what the tournament means to them.

For Croatian aspiring footballer Viktor Karlo, 13, the FIFA U-17 World Cup Qatar 2025 makes his dreams feel real and within reach: "My passion is to become a professional footballer and compete on the world's biggest stage. Being here shows me what the real standards are, because these players demonstrate the commitment and competitive level you need to succeed."

Attending matches with her family, Bruna Bohrt Lijeron, 11, said that she enjoys being a part of something with the people she cares about most: "The atmosphere is exceptional. There's continuous cheering throughout and just when I think I can sit down, we stand up again to cheer."

Claudio Conte, 11, who trains with both Juventus Academy in Qatar and Al Rayyan Club, watched the opening match cheering for both sides: "I live in Qatar but I'm from Italy, so I support both. Coming here and watching these players, seeing how good they are, it makes me believe I can do it. I really hope I can make it like these players one day. Whether it's for Italy or Qatar," said Conte. Gabriel Aguiar, 14, from Portugal, shared his excitement to be watching the future of football unfold in Qatar: "These players will be the future stars. When older players retire, they will be the fresh ones ready



to give new hope and aspirations to their countries," he explained.

The FIFA U-17 World Cup Qatar 2025 is the first of five consecutive editions that Qatar will be hosting. As the first FIFA World Cup to feature 48 teams, this will be the biggest-ever edition of the youth tournament that saw the likes of Gianluigi Buffon, Luis Figo, Xavi Hernandez, Eden Hazard, Andres Iniesta, Neymar, Ronaldinho, Son Heung-min and Francesco Totti appear on the world stage for the first time.

Tickets can be purchased exclusively from www.roadtoqatar.qa. Tickets are available as a Day Pass, enabling fans to attend multiple matches a day, as well as fan zone activities. Fans can also purchase a Prime Pass, which enables them to reserve seats for high demand matches.

Supporters of the Qatar national team can avail the Follow My Team ticket, which enables them to attend all matches of the Qatari U-17 team during the group stage. All tickets are digital and include wheelchair accessible seating options for disabled fans.

LIV Golf switching to 72-hole format in 2026: official

LIV Golf will abandon its abbreviated 54-hole format in favour of 72-hole tournaments in 2026, officials said. The Saudi-backed circuit, whose name is derived from the Roman numeral for '54', had previously touted its three-round tournaments as a core distinction from traditional golf events. However the 54-hole format prevented LIV events from earning Official Golf World Rankings points, making it harder for LIV players to qualify for golf's majors. A statement from LIV on Tuesday said the circuit's events will now be played over four days, with most starting on a Thursday. "As we enter our fourth season as a League, the move to 72 holes marks a pivotal new chapter for LIV Golf that strengthens our League, challenges our elite field of players," LIV Golf chief executive Scott O'Neil said. "The most successful leagues around the world ...continue to innovate and evolve their product, and as an emerging league, we are no different," O'Neil added. "LIV Golf will always have an eye towards progress that acts in the best interest of LIV Golf and in the best interest of the sport."

The decision to adopt the 72-hole format also boosts the chances of LIV reaching an agreement with the PGA Tour over unifying golf. The two circuit's different formats had reportedly been a key stumbling block in ongoing negotiations.

MOTORSPORT

Qatar Baja to begin today with ceremonial start

COMPETITORS WILL TACKLE A PROLOGUE OF 10.59KM TODAY AFTERNOON

By Sports Reporter
Lusail

The Qatar International Baja will be officially flagged away from the iconic 'Way to the World Cup' landmark on Doha Corniche today evening from 6.20pm.

Competitors taking part in the penultimate rounds of the FIA World and Middle East Baja Cups and the FIM Bajas World Cup will also tackle a Prologue stage today afternoon to determine the starting order for the opening desert selective section, which will be held tomorrow.

Several leading drivers and riders attended the official pre-event press conference at the Lusail International Circuit yesterday in the presence of Amro al-Hamad, Executive Director of the Qatar Motor and Motorcycle (QMMF).

FIA World Cup Baja leader Juan Cruz Yacopini will be competing in Qatar for the second time in a Toyota Hilux and trying to defend his 22-point advantage in the Drivers' Championship.

The Argentine said: "First of all, I am super happy to be here in Qatar. It is my second time. The strategy is to make a good race. I think navigation is going to be difficult. This is normally a key point in this Baja but I have a really good navigator (Dani Oliveras). We have a good feeling inside the car. We are racing a lot.



Several leading drivers and riders attended the official pre-event press conference at the Lusail International Circuit yesterday in the presence of Abdulrahman bin Abdullatif al-Mannai, President of Qatar Motor and Motorcycle Federation (QMMF) and Lusail International Circuit (LIC) and Amro al-Hamad, Executive Director of QMMF.

"It is going to be a nice race. A key point also is to make a good Prologue and decide the starting position. Maybe not at the front so we have some lines (to follow) but not that bad that it's a problem. We had a shakedown today to get the correct set-up on the car. It's a different terrain to Morocco and is super stony and very fast and we need to get the car in perfect condition for this race."

Dania Akeel is chasing victory in the FIA Middle East Baja Cup against local adversary Khalifa

Saleh al-Attiyah. The Saudi is up-beat about her chances this weekend. "Me and Khalifa," joked Dania. "It was unfortunate in Jordan. I lost some points there that I really wanted. This race I will try to make up the gap. That's the target. Qatar is a great race, very technical and a lot of variety. Khalifa is a local driver, so it's going to be a nice challenge. I have a faster car but there are some rougher parts and dunes, some advantages for the lighter cars as well.

"Last year, here, was my first

stage win overall in the Ultimate class. It was my first stage win in any rally. The team had changed the part (steering arm failure) after the shakedown. It was a lesson but not a lesson we love. Let's hope it comes back full circle this year."

Abdulaziz al-Kuwari won the last stage of the event in 2024 and is representing the QMMF Team in a Taurus T3 Max. The former FIA Middle East rally champion is fourth in the FIA Middle East Baja Cup's Drivers' Championship and second in the Challenger section.



Juan Cruz Yacopini in a shakedown test near Lusail.

Al-Kuwari said: "I think we go as fast as we can and try and enjoy the weekend. It's my home rally. I did the last two Bajas here. Good memories from last year. I think we will go for the win to be honest. A quality entry in all the categories, a lot of top drivers. We lost a lot of points in Ha'il and finished fourth there and then we did well in Jordan and won (Challenger). Still two rallies to go, so we have time."

Mohammed al-Balooshi won the event on two-wheels in 2021 and 2024 and will defend a nine-point advantage over his MX Ride Dubai teammate Rafic Eid in the overall FIM 450cc riders' championship.

The Emirati said: "We are leading the championship with two

more rounds. It is important to secure the lead and then go to the last round in Dubai to, hopefully, win it for the fourth time and the third time in a row. Qatar is one of the most difficult events because of the navigation and the terrain. Our strategy is to take it easy, not to rush things and let the race come to us – like we did last year!"

Today, motorcycles and quads will start the 10.59km Prologue to determine the starting order from 12.25pm with the first cars following from 13.45pm.

Competitors will then transfer to the iconic 'Way to the World Cup' landmark on Doha Corniche for the ceremonial start. This starts with motorcycles in reverse seeding order over the start podium.

SPOTLIGHT

Mena's first Mini Basketball World Cup kicks off in Doha



A total of 32 secondary schools from across Qatar are taking part in the championship.

The Qatari capital witnessed a unique sporting milestone with the launch of the Mini World Cup for the 2025-2026 season yesterday, held at the Qatar Basketball Federation courts.

The tournament marks the first-ever edition of its kind in the Middle East and North Africa, organised under the supervision of the International Basketball Federation (FIBA), in collaboration with the Qatar Basketball Federation and the Qatar School Sports Association.

Designed as a unique competitive and educational experience, the event mirrors the excitement and energy of the highly anticipated FIBA Basketball World Cup Qatar 2027, offering young players a platform to engage with the sport at a global standard.

The opening ceremony was attended by Qatar Olympic Committee Sports Sector Director and President of the Qatar School Sports Association Sheikh Khalifa bin Khalid al-Thani, FIBA Basketball World Cup Qatar 2027 Organising Committee Director General and President of the

Qatar Basketball Federation Mohammed Saad al-Meghaiseeb, Qatar Olympic Academy Executive Director Khalil Ibrahim al-Jaber, Executive Director of the Sports Department at the Organising Committee of the FIBA Basketball World Cup Qatar 2027 Saadoun Sabah al-Kuwari and School Olympic Program Executive Director Abdulrahman al-Muftah.

Also present were senior officials from both organising bodies and a large student audience who brought enthusiasm and vibrant energy to the launch. A total of 32 secondary schools from across Qatar are taking part in the championship

The first phase of the tournament runs from November to March as part of the preliminary stage, followed by knockout rounds in April and the final match in May, coinciding with the Qatar Olympic School Program activities. Across 11 weeks, the competition will feature 92 matches.

Commenting on the initiative, FIBA Secretary-General Andreas Zagklis said: "We're excited to

bring together 32 secondary schools in a unique format that mirrors our flagship event, giving young players a unique opportunity to experience competitive basketball at its best."

Al-Meghaiseeb said: "Hosting the first-ever Mini World Cup in the Middle East and North Africa represents a pioneering step that reflects Qatar's commitment to empowering youth and strengthening their presence in the global sports arena. This initiative opens new horizons for young players to gain valuable experience, combining athletic excitement with educational purpose, helping to refine their skills and nurture a spirit of excellence and teamwork."

Sheikh Khalifa emphasised: "The goals of the Mini World Cup align perfectly with the mission of the Olympic School Program promoting physical activity and well-being, instilling Olympic values, discovering sporting talents, fostering comprehensive education, expanding community participation, and strengthening ties with the global Olympic movement."

FOOTBALL

PSG paying the price for long season as Enrique urges calm

Reuters
Paris

More than a first Champions League defeat of the season, Paris Saint Germain's 2-1 loss to Bayern Munich deepened the club's mounting injury concerns, extending a pattern that has hindered the European champions since the start of the campaign.

Ousmane Dembele and Achraf Hakimi both limped off during the match, continuing a run of fitness problems that has prevented Luis Enrique from having a full squad at any point this season.

PSG confirmed that Hakimi severely sprained his left ankle while Dembele suffered an injury to his left calf. Nuno Mendes, who played 90 minutes, also sprained his left knee, with all three expected to be sidelined for several weeks. "I can't remember a single match with the whole squad fit. It's a different kind of season, and we have to manage that. I'm calm and confident we'll recover our players and our level," the Spaniard said.

The latest setbacks came just as the squad was beginning to stabilise. Dembele, who missed seven games earlier this season with a hamstring injury, was making his first Champions League start of the campaign but was forced off after 25 minutes with what appeared to be a calf problem. "The injury has nothing to do with the



Paris Saint-Germain's Achraf Hakimi is injured after a rough tackle from Bayern Munich's Luis Diaz during the Champions League match. (AFP)

previous one," Luis Enrique told reporters. "He played the time you saw – it's not a relapse."

Shortly before halftime, Hakimi also had to leave the field after a dangerous tackle from Bayern's Luis Diaz, who was sent off for the challenge. The Moroccan full back, one of the few PSG regulars to have avoided injury this season, left the pitch in tears and was later seen exiting the Parc des Princes on crutches with a protective boot on his left foot. "For Hakimi, that's football – it's a contact sport," Enrique said. "It's unfortunate, but these are actions that happen with a bit of bad luck."

The injuries add to a long list of absentees that has already included Marquinhos, Joao Neves, Bradley Barcola, Desire Doue and Fabian Ruiz – all sidelined at various points since August. Doue is cur-

rently out with a right thigh muscle injury that will keep him unavailable for several more weeks.

After an exceptional 2024-25 season that stretched across 65 matches and yielded four trophies – the Champions League, Ligue 1, French Cup and Trophée des Champions – PSG now appear to be paying the physical price. Their extended campaign ended only in mid-July after the Club World Cup, leaving little time for rest before the new season began.

"When you recover injured players, they're not at 100%. That's something I need to manage better," Enrique conceded. "It's a long season, and it's about how you handle these moments."

Despite the disruptions, PSG remain top of Ligue 1 and third in the Champions League's league phase with nine points from four games.

Garnacho earns Chelsea point in draw at Qarabag

Baku: Alejandro Garnacho ensured Chelsea returned from Azerbaijan with a point as he came off the bench to equalise in their 2-2 draw away to Qarabag in the Champions League. The former Manchester United forward fired a sweetly-struck left-foot effort into the net after 53 minutes of an enthralling contest which had slipped from Chelsea's grasp.

Brazilian teenager Estevao put the visitors ahead with a neat finish in the 16th minute but after a slow start Qarabag came alive in the Tofiq Bahramov Republican Stadium. Leandro Andrade steered home a rebound in the 29th minute to cancel out Chelsea's lead and things went from bad to worse for the London side before half-time as Marko Jankovic converted a penalty awarded for a handball by

Jorrel Hato. Garnacho levelled with Chelsea's first attack of the second period and both sides came close to a winner as the action swung from end to end. Both teams have seven points after four games.

VILLARREAL STUNNED IN 1-0 LOSS TO PAFOS

Villarreal fell to a humbling 1-0 defeat away to Pafos, as their dismal Champions League campaign continued after Derrick Luckassen scored to give the Cypriot side their first win of the competition. The Spanish club may be riding high in third place in La Liga, but remain on one point in Europe, while Pafos move on to five points.

Given both clubs' campaigns so far, a goal fest was never likely. Villarreal scored twice in three games, both coming in a 2-2 draw

with Juventus, while Pafos had netted only once, which came in a 5-1 loss to Bayern Munich.

The hosts created an early chance with Quina making a mazy run into the area and curling a shot just over the bar before Villarreal wasted a couple of opportunities to take the lead. Georges Mikautadze completely missed the ball when Ayoze Perez squared a headed pass to him all alone in front of goal and Pape Gueye put his effort straight at the keeper when sent through on goal.

The visitors were rocked in the opening minute after the break when Pafos won a corner and unmarked defender Luckassen powered a header into the net. Villarreal's search for an equaliser lacked any real conviction to leave the home fans celebrating a famous win.