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GULF TIMES

SPORT



FIFA U17 WORLD CUP QATAR 2025

Sheikh Joaan attends ANOC Executive Council Meeting



HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani, Senior Vice-President of the Association of National Olympic Committees (ANOC) and President of the Qatar Olympic Committee (QOC), attended the 92nd ANOC Executive Council Meeting in Lausanne, Switzerland. IOC President Kirsty Coventry also attended the meeting, underscoring the continued co-operation between the International Olympic Committee and ANOC in promoting the Olympic values worldwide. Through his participation, HE Sheikh Joaan reaffirmed Qatar's active role within the global Olympic community and its commitment to fostering closer collaboration among NOCs in support of athletes and the advancement of the Olympic Movement.

Qatar's Volleyball team loses to Iran in Islamic Solidarity Games



The Qatar volleyball team lost to Iran 3-0 in their second match of the Islamic Solidarity Games yesterday. The Games, which officially open today in Riyadh, began on Tuesday and will continue until November 21. The Qatari team will next face Chad tomorrow in their third match of the group stage. The sixth edition of the features more than 3,000 athletes from 57 countries competing across 23 sports, including athletics, volleyball, camel racing and judo. Qatar is represented by 82 athletes competing in 16 disciplines, among them athletics, wrestling, volleyball, handball, taekwondo, table tennis, weightlifting, swimming, fencing, and para-athletics.

FOOTBALL

Qatar keep hopes alive after draw with South Africa

Argentina, Italy and Portugal secure passage to the knockout stages, while Belgium thrash Fiji



Qatar's Yazan Mohamed (left) celebrates after scoring against South Africa at the FIFA U-17 World Cup at Aspire Zone yesterday.

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Hosts Qatar kept their qualification hopes alive with a draw 1-1 against South Africa at the FIFA U-17 World Cup Qatar yesterday, while Argentina, Italy and Portugal secured their passage to the knockout stage.

At the Mansour Muftah pitch in Aspire Zone, Qatar and South Africa battled out a tense draw which moved Bafana Bafana into a strong position and kept the hosts' hopes of progression well and truly alive.

Qatar got off to a dream start when Yazan Mohamed arrowed a low shot into the bottom corner. Emile Witbooi, outstanding throughout, soon pulled South Africa level with a fine header. Clear chances then proved hard to come by and the sides were forced to settle for a share of the points.

This draw gives Qatar, who lost 1-0 to Italy in their opening match, one point

and keeps their hopes of advancing to the Round of 32 alive. South Africa, who defeated Bolivia 3-1 in their first match, now have four points.

Qatar will face Bolivia in their final group stage match on Sunday.

BOLIVIA 0-4 ITALY

Italy swept aside Bolivia to make it back-to-back Group A victories and progress to the knockout stages. Simone Lontani's smart finish put them in front, before Samuele Inacio's unstoppable strike doubled their advantage. Substitute Destiny Elimoghale burst clear to score the Italians' third. Inacio and Bolivia's Jesus Marauda then failed to convert penalties, before Fabio Pandolfi slotted a late fourth.

Destiny Elimoghale, Italy goalscorer, said: "I cannot describe how it feels to score! I am just so glad to be here with my teammates. I am the youngest one and they make me feel good in the team. That gives me a lot of confidence."

PORTUGAL 6-0 MOROCCO

Portugal stayed perfect and booked their spot in the knockouts with a routine win. Joao Aragao got the ball rolling with a low drive, before Anisio Cabral rifled in a second. Mateus Mide helped himself to a brace, including a penalty, before the interval. Jose Neto quickly added another after the break, and duly headed in for his second on the hour to complete the scoring.

Bino Macaes, Portugal coach, said: "This was a different game, against a good team. We started strong, created a little anxiety on their team, because they knew that losing could cost their qualification, and we played with that."

JAPAN 0-0 NEW CALEDONIA

Nicolas Kutran's astounding reflexes earned the Pacific Islanders an unforeseen point. With Jelani Ren McGhee and Minato Yoshida sparkling, Nozomi Hiroyama's Young Samurai Blue had 18 shots in the first half, but the New Caledonia goal-



Argentina players celebrate after their win over Tunisia.

keeper made excellent saves with both legs. After the break, Kutran exasperated McGhee with his fingertips, while Yoshida's overhead kick skimmed the crossbar as Japan ran out of time.

UAE 0-3 CROATIA

Croatia dominated from start to finish as they cruised past United Arab Emirates. A high line of pressure resulted in the first goal, with Gabrijel Sivalec blocking a pass and the ball deflecting into the path of Tino Kusanovic, who swept home for the opener. Sivalec then doubled the advantage by cutting off an attempted clearance and curling a right-footed shot into net.

UAE played with more purpose in the second stanza, but the night belonged to Croatia, and a header from Kresimir Rados in the final minutes served as the exclamation point.

SENEGAL 1-0 COSTA RICA

Senegal continued their unbeaten start thanks to Alwaly Camara's early strike. In the eighth minute, Etienne Mendy picked up the ball on the left wing and squared it neatly to Camara who powered home his effort. Costa Rica, for their part, struggled to make any impact to leave their qualification hopes in the balance.

ARGENTINA 1-0 TUNISIA

For the second game in a row, Facundo Jainikoski emerged from the bench to inspire Argentina to victory. The South Americans have now secured their passage to the knockout stages.

After an even opening period, Diego Placente turned to his No18 to change the

game. Just as he did against Belgium, he scored within ten minutes of entering the fray. Bearing down on the Tunisia goal, the Argentinos Juniors forward let fly and found the bottom corner. He almost doubled his money soon after, only to see a rasping drive cannon off the crossbar.

Diego Placente, Argentina coach, said: "We're happy because sometimes it's not easy, and even less so to qualify in the second match. And happy because we've beaten the two toughest opponents. We played better today and we're satisfied."

FIIJI 0-7 BELGIUM

Rene Mitongo scored a fantastic four as Belgium got their campaign up and running with a comprehensive victory over Fiji, who are now eliminated. The Europeans took control of the game from the outset, scoring twice in the opening nine minutes through a Noah Fernandez free-kick and Pablo Capilla Rivera strike.

Fernandez then turned provider as he set up Mitongo, who tapped the ball into the empty net. Loic Alvarez made it four thanks to a brilliant individual effort before Mitongo scored his second just before the break. Both sides were then reduced to ten men with Belgium's August de Wannenacker and Teimana Goundar given their marching orders. Mitongo scored two late goals to seal the rout and stake his early claim for the Golden Boot.

"Everyone says it was only Fiji. But you still have to play the match and always respect your opponents, who really played with heart. I'm very pleased with what the players showed on the pitch," said Belgium coach Bob Browaeys.

ONE-DAY INTERNATIONAL

De Kock's comeback ton helps SA level series

AFP
Faisalabad

Quinton de Kock hit a brilliant century and Nandre Burger grabbed four wickets as South Africa thumped Pakistan by eight wickets in their second one-day international yesterday.

Playing his second ODI after reversing his 2023 decision to retire from the format, the dashing De Kock smashed an unbeaten 123 to anchor a 270-run chase with 9.5 overs in spare at Iqbal Stadium in Faisalabad. South African victory levelled the three-match series at 1-1 after Pakistan won the first match by two wickets. The third and final match is on Saturday, all in Faisalabad.

De Kock put on a solid 81 for the opening wicket with Lhuan-dre Pretorius (46), before compiling a 153-run stand for the second wicket with Tony de Zorzi, who scored an attractive 63-ball 76.

The left-handed trio took the attack to Pakistan's pace quartet, with De Kock knocking eight fours and seven sixes while Pretorius had seven boundaries and one maximum.

De Kock reached his 22nd ODI hundred with a couple off a luckless Mohammad Wasim, who saw Mohammad Nawaz drop the wicketkeeper-batter on 15. De Zorzi sped up the scoring rate with three sixes and nine boundaries before he was caught off Faheem Ashraf with 36 needed. Skipper Matthew Breetzke took the winning single, making 17 not out.

"I set myself high goals so I am happy to bat well today," said De Kock. "I think Nandre set us well with early wickets and then we batted well to chase that down."

Earlier, South African fast bowler Burger registered his best ODI figures of 4-46 to keep the home team down to 269-9.

The 30-year-old ripped out Pakistan's first three wickets in his opening three overs after the hosts won the toss and batted.

From 22-3, however, the hosts rebuilt the innings and half-centuries from opener Saim Ayub and Salman Agha, who added 92 for the fourth wicket, and later from Nawaz helped them to a fighting total. Burger struck with his third delivery, having opener Fakhar Zaman caught behind by De Kock for a duck.

He then struck twice in his third

over: crowd favourite Babar Azam was caught in the slips for 11 from the first ball and four balls later Mohammad Rizwan chopped on to his stumps for four. Ayub hit 53 off 66 balls with a six and five fours, while Agha made a more docile 69 from 106 deliveries with five boundaries as the pair revived the innings. Ayub hit his second ODI fifty before giving Corbin Bosch a return catch in the 25th over, while Agha was bowled by Bosch in the 41st.

Down the order, Nawaz blasted a run-a-ball 59 with four sixes and three fours while all-rounder Faheem made 28 as Pakistan plundered 90 runs in the final 10 overs.

"I think we put up a good total but did not bowl and field well," said Shaheen. "We will come back strongly."

BRIEF SCORES: South Africa 270 for 2 (de Kock 123*, de Zorzi 76, Ashreef 1-40) **beat Pakistan 269 for 9** (Agha 69, Nawaz 59, Burger 4-46) **by eight wickets.**

South Africa's Quinton de Kock plays a shot during the ODI against Pakistan in Faisalabad yesterday. (AFP)



FOCUS

India thump hosts Australia to take 2-1 lead in T20 series

INDIA SPIN WAY TO DOMINANT WIN ON GOLD COAST

AFP
Gold Coast, Australia

India took a 2-1 lead in their T20 series against Australia with a 48-run demolition of the home side on Queensland's Gold Coast yesterday.

After losing the toss and being sent in to bat, India reached 167-8 thanks to a well-made 46 from Shubman Gill and useful contributions from Abhishek Sharma (28) and Shivam Dube (22).

India's bowlers then took centre stage, bundling Australia out for 119, with off-spinner Washington Sundar taking 3-3 in just eight balls to finish off the match.

"I thought 167 was par on that wicket," Australian captain Mitchell Marsh said.

"But batting was pretty hard - we had a few partnerships but we just couldn't get the big one that would give us momentum going into the back end of the innings."

India would have gone into the innings break hoping for a bigger score than 167 but the total proved too much for the Australians, who started brightly but fell away alarmingly after reaching 67-1 in the ninth over.

The visitors will now head to Brisbane on Sunday hoping to clinch the five-match series after the opening game in Canberra was washed out.

"I think the bowlers did really well," India captain Suryakumar Yadav said.

"There was a little bit of dew but they adapted really quickly."

"I think the combination (of our bowlers) suits us really well and bowling a side out is what we want from them," he said.

India had looked like reaching



India's Axar Patel (second from left) celebrates with teammates after taking the wicket of Australia's Josh Inglis during the fourth Twenty20I at the Carrara Stadium in Gold Coast yesterday. (AFP)

an imposing score when openers Abhishek and Gill took to the Australian attack in the early overs.

The pair put on 56 off just 6.4 overs with little trouble before Abhishek, who had smashed a huge six off leg-spinner Adam Zampa two balls earlier, tried a second time only to be caught by Tim David on the long-on boundary. Dube joined Gill and continued to

score freely against Zampa, but he found the pace bowling harder to handle and was bowled by Nathan Ellis to leave India 88-2.

Ellis claimed his second when he bowled Gill with India 121-3.

Any chance of a really big score disappeared four runs later when Yadav was caught on the boundary for 20 and the rest of the batting fell away.

Australian openers Marsh (30) and Matthew Short (25) made a bright start but India's bowlers kept chipping away, snaring wickets at key moments to take control.

BRIEF SCORES: India 167 for 8 (Gill 46, Ellis 3-21, Zampa 3-45) **beat Australia 119** (Marsh 30, Washington 3-3, Axar 2-20, Dube 2-20) **by 48 runs.**

SPOTLIGHT

Chapman blitz leads Black Caps to tight T20 victory over WI

AFP
Auckland

Powerful batting by Black Cap Mark Chapman carried New Zealand to a three-run victory in the second T20 against West Indies in Auckland yesterday night.

Chapman blitzed 78 from just 28 balls as New Zealand made 207-5 batting first at Eden Park, but brilliant power hitting from Romario Shepherd, Rovman Powell and Matthew Forde almost brought West Indies home.

Forde needed a boundary from the final ball to secure at least a tie, but could only manage a single. The five-match series is level at 1-1.

West Indies captain Shai Hope won the toss and chose to field on the same pitch that tested the batters in Wednesday's first match.

The pitch played much the same for the majority of New Zealand's innings as they struggled to 81-2 after 12 overs.

Chapman was 12 from nine balls at the time, struggling for

timing on a pitch that was two-paced and tricky when bowlers pitched short.

But then the timing fell into place and Chapman scored 66 runs from his next 19 balls.

He blasted seven sixes and six fours, with three of the next four overs hit for more than 20 runs.

West Indies conceded 126 runs from the last eight overs of the innings, Daryl Mitchell making 28 from 14 and captain Mitchell Santner 18 from 8.

Jacob Duffy then struck in the first over of the West Indies' innings, removing Brandon King for a three-ball duck.

Ish Sodhi, back in the New Zealand side in place of James Neesham, took two wickets in his first two overs, leaving West Indies on 71-3 at the halfway stage. Powell and Shepherd then put the visitors back on track, Shepherd hammering 34 from 16 balls and Powell blasting 45 from the same number of deliveries.

Forde also belted 29 from 13 balls in the closing overs.

Sodhi ended with 3-39 and Santner took 3-31. The third game of the five-match series is in Nelson on Sunday.



New Zealand's Mark Chapman bats during the second T20I against West Indies played at Eden Park in Auckland yesterday. (AFP)

ASHES

Cummins hints at return for 2nd Test

AFP
Sydney

Injured Australia captain Pat Cummins hinted yesterday at a comeback for the second Ashes Test, a day after the side unveiled its squad ahead of this month's opener.

The 32-year-old pace spearhead has not played since picking up a lower back injury against the West Indies more than three months ago. "It's all feeling really good. On track and yeah, probably better than I expected,"

Cummins told journalists. "Each session is incremental. Once I get over to Perth, I should be pretty close to a full run-up and getting some overs in."

"It's probably not until you get a bit closer that you can really know where you're at," Cummins said.

"It's trying to keep that second Test as a real live option," he said of the day-night contest in Brisbane on December 4.

Late last month, Cummins' tentative return was rumoured after he was spotted in a brief net session in Sydney captured by

local television cameras, bowling off a five-step run-up.

Cummins will travel with the Australian side for the first Test against Ben Stokes' England in Perth from November 21.

Steve Smith will step up as Australian captain, with the ever-reliable Scott Boland to replace Cummins in the seam attack alongside quick bowlers Mitchell Starc and Josh Hazlewood.

England drew 2-2 on home turf in the most recent Ashes series in 2023 but have not won in Australia since 2010-2011.

IPL CHAMPIONS BENGALURU COULD BE SOLD FOR 'AS MUCH AS \$2BN'

The owner of India Premier League cricket champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru is considering selling the team, which could be worth "as much as \$2bn". United Spirits Ltd, the Indian arm of global drinks giant Diageo, told the Mumbai Stock Exchange that it had begun a "strategic review of the investment" in Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB). Praveen Someshwar, United Spirits CEO, said it "has been a valuable and strategic asset" but that it was "non-core to our alcobev business" in a letter dated Wednesday. "This step reinforces USL's and Diageo's commitment to continue reviewing its India enterprise portfolio," he added, while keeping RCB's "best interest in mind". The review, expected to conclude in March next year, is of Royal Challengers Sports Pvt, the owner of both the men's and women's teams.

RCB lifted the Indian Premier League title in June for the first time in the money-spinning annual men's T20 cricket tournament which was founded in 2008. Bloomberg News reported soon after that the owners were "weighing possibilities including a sale of part or all of the club and may seek a valuation of as much as \$2bn". A day after the final triumph in Ahmedabad, disaster struck RCB's homecoming trophy parade when 11 fans were crushed to death and more than 50 others injured in a stampede outside the Chinnaswamy stadium in Bengaluru. Hundreds of thousands had gathered on the streets of the city to welcome home their hero Virat Kohli and his victorious teammates. Prime Minister Narendra Modi called it "absolutely heartrending" and Kohli said he was "at a loss for words" after the tragedy.

TENNIS

Sabalenka beats holder Gauff to reach semi-finals

SABALENKA TO PLAY ANISIMOVA NEXT; PEGULA MEETS RYBAKINA

Reuters
Riyadh

Aryna Sabalenka roared back from a slow start to beat Coco Gauff 7-6(5) 6-2 and clinch a semi-final spot at the season-ending WTA Finals yesterday, sending the defending champion packing and assuring Jessica Pegula of a place in the last four.

The world number one, who is seeking a maiden trophy in the event since a run to the final three years ago, finished top of the Steffi Graf Group and next takes on Amanda Anisimova in a rematch of their U.S. Open title clash.

"She always makes me work hard, always great battles against her," Sabalenka said about Friday's showdown.

"I enjoy playing against her and I enjoy the fights so I'm excited to play her. I hope it's going to be a great match."

American Pegula meets the in-form Kazakh Elena Rybakina, who qualified for the semi-finals as the best player from the Serena Williams Group to continue her own bid for a maiden trophy in the season finale in Saudi Arabia.

Gauff's erratic serve had been a concern after her opening defeat by Pegula, but it was the 21-year-old's aggressive return game that stood out against Sabalenka as she broke to start the match and went 4-2 up at the King Saud University Sports Arena.

Sabalenka let out a scream after she saved break points and held for 3-4 in the rematch of the French Open title clash that she lost, and the fired-up Belarusian soon broke to draw level at 5-5 with a neat forehand winner. "I probably wouldn't put myself in that situation (again)," Sabalenka said about being 4-5 and 0-30 down.

"I was just trying to stay aggressive and trying to find my rhythm. I was working for the second set



Belarus' Aryna Sabalenka in action during her WTA Finals group stage match against Coco Gauff of the US in Riyadh yesterday. (Reuters)

already, but magically I was able to turn things around.

"I'm super happy with the performance and super happy to get this win in straight sets."

Sabalenka showed more fight in the tiebreak to come from behind and take the first set, and there was no stopping the 27-year-old when she eased to a 4-0 lead in the second set.

Earlier, Pegula secured a breezy 6-2 6-3 victory over the already-eliminated Jasmine Paolini and said she would work out a strategy for her next opponent despite

knowing there was a slim chance of an exit if Gauff prevailed in three sets.

"We're going to be really happy with today, for the rest of the day and maybe for most of the night, and then we're going to have to switch strategies a little bit because it's a quick turnaround now," said Pegula. "We'll be ready for the next opponent."

Pegula gained the upper hand, winning five out of the first six games after Paolini faltered on her serve early, before the 2023 runner-up took the first set, giving

her Italian opponent no chance. Paolini withstood some powerful baseline hitting in the next set to hold in the opening game but Pegula continued to heap on the pressure and broke for the third time in the contest, paving the way for a comprehensive victory.

"Today I finally got a straight-sets win for the first time in like a few months," Pegula said.

"That always feels really good. I thought I served well, just played solid and was aggressive when I needed to be. There weren't any negative notes today."

DJOKOVIC TO FACE ALCARAZ IN ATP FINALS GROUPS

Novak Djokovic will take on Carlos Alcaraz in the group stage of the upcoming ATP Finals while Jannik Sinner could face a derby with Lorenzo Musetti during his title defence at the season-ending tournament. Tennis icon Djokovic, a seven-time Finals champion, was confirmed on Monday as being among the eight contenders in Turin and has been drawn in the Jimmy Connors Group alongside top seed Alcaraz, Taylor Fritz and Alex de Minaur. The winner of a record 24 Grand Slams, 38-year-old Djokovic is currently hunting his second title of the year in Athens, where he beat Alejandro Tabilo in straight sets in the second round on

Tuesday. World number five Djokovic has made the semi-finals at all four Slams this season and in May he became the third player in the Open era to lift his 100th ATP title by winning in Geneva. Alcaraz is bidding to win the Finals for the first time after another bumper year for the Spaniard which has included triumphs at the US Open and Roland Garros, the latter coming after an epic final victory against his arch-rival Sinner. Sinner swept to the Finals title unbeaten last year and the world number one is aiming to retain his crown in front of his home fans in Turin after winning the Australian Open, Wimbledon and three other titles this season.

The 24-year-old could face Musetti in the Bjorn Borg Group although Sinner's compatriot needs to win the current tournament in Athens if he is to snatch the eighth and final slot from Felix Auger-Aliassime. Alexander Zverev and Ben Shelton will be Sinner's other opponents in the group stage, which kicks off on Sunday. The top two players in each four-man group will qualify for the semi-finals.

THE DRAW: Jimmy Connors Group: Carlos Alcaraz, Novak Djokovic, Taylor Fritz, Alex de Minaur. **Bjorn Borg Group:** Jannik Sinner, Alexander Zverev, Ben Shelton, Felix Auger-Aliassime or Lorenzo Musetti.

FOOTBALL

Amorim urges United to 'focus on future' after Ronaldo criticism

AFP
London

Ruben Amorim has told Manchester United to "focus on the future" following former Old Trafford star Cristiano Ronaldo's withering assessment of his old club.

United are looking to rebuild following a woeful 2024/25 season, which saw them finish a lowly 15th in the Premier League and lose in the Europa League final to Tottenham Hotspur.

Ronaldo insisted this week United manager Amorim cannot do "miracles" at a club that is "not on a good path", saying "they need to change and it's not only about the coach and players".

But when Ronaldo's comments were put to his former Portugal team-mate ahead of this weekend's trip to Spurs, the United boss said: "Of course he knows and he has a huge impact in everything he said. "What we need to focus (on) is in the future. We know that we as a club made a lot



of mistakes in the past, but we are trying to change that. So, let's not focus on what happened. Let's focus on what we are doing now, and we are doing that."

Amorim said the changes being put in place were having positive results.

"We are changing a lot of things in the structure, the way we do things, the way we want the players to behave," said the 40-year-old coach.

"We are doing that and we are improving, so let's focus on the way we are doing things. We are

improving, let's continue and forget a little bit the past."

United have lost their last four games against Spurs. However, they head into Saturday's match unbeaten in their last four Premier League matches, a sequence that includes a 2-1 win over champions and arch-rivals Liverpool.

Amorim, asked how United had changed since being beaten by Spurs in the Europa League final in May, replied: "First of all, the characteristics of the players. So, we are a better team, we play better, we understand the game better. I think we are more confident."

"We reached that final confidence that we could win because we were doing well in Europe, but in this moment we play with a different confidence."

"We manage the moments of the game better. But if you remember that game, they have that shot on the goal, they won the game."

"So, I expect a different game, that we can play better, but also to have a little bit luck to help us to win the game."

HORSE RACING

Al Shaqab Racing's Al Wakrah lands Umm Bab Cup

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Al Shaqab Racing's Al Wakrah yesterday produced a trademark turn of foot to win the Umm Bab Cup, a Purebred Arabian Open Race for four-year-old+ over 1600m.

At the Al Rayyan Racecourse, The seven-year-old mare, expertly guided by Olivier d'Andigne, settled patiently behind the early leaders before unleashing a blistering run in the home straight to secure victory.

Trained by Jean de Mieuille, Al Wakrah notched her third consecutive win and the 11th of her career, delivering a third triumph of the day for her connections. The winners were presented with their awards by Head of Qatar Racing and Equestrian Club's (QREC) Racing Operations Section Rashid Saed Adiba.

RESULTS
8th Al Rayyan Race Meeting -

Umm Bab Cup WINNERS: (Horse, Trainer, Jockey)
1 - Umm Bab Cup, Purebred Arabian Open Race
Al Wakrah, Jean de Mieuille, Olivier d'Andigne
2 - Thoroughbred Handicap (80-100)
Thor's Hammer, Jassim al-Ghazali, Marco Casamento
3 - Purebred Arabian Handicap
Sejjel, Jean de Mieuille, Faleh Bughenaim
4 - Local Purebred Arabian Graduation Plate, 3YOs, 1400m
Masaad, Alban de Mieuille, Soufiane Saadi
5 - Purebred Arabian Handicap
Duke Of Monlau, Mohammed al-Ghazali, Soufiane Saadi
6 - Local Thoroughbred Handicap
Barq Al Atam, Ibrahim Saeed al-Malki, Tomas Lukasek
7 - Thoroughbred Maiden Plate
Brandywine Falls, Abdulla al-Mulla, Jefferson Smith
8 - Purebred Arabian Maiden Plate
Shayeg, Jean de Mieuille, Faleh Bughenaim



Jockey Olivier d'Andigne rode Al Shaqab Racing's Al Wakrah to the Umm Bab Cup victory yesterday. **PICTURES: Juhaïm**

QATAR STARS LEAGUE

Gharafa face Qatar SC in high-stakes clash

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Al Gharafa will meet Qatar SC today at Thani Bin Jassim Stadium in a match that promises to be a high-stakes battle for the Qatar Stars League lead.

Al Gharafa top the standings with 19 points following a crucial victory over Al Duhail, while Qatar SC sit third with 17 points, hoping to bounce back from a 0-1 defeat to Al Wakrah.

Al Gharafa coach Pedro Martins said, "The team is highly motivated and focused ahead of our postponed match against Qatar SC. We are excited for this match, which is one of the most important of the season... we must be at our best to achieve victory."

Qatar SC are equally deter-

mined. Coach Marquez Lopez acknowledged the challenge: "Al Gharafa are a great team... we are currently suffering from several absences, but we are looking forward to giving our best and achieving the desired result."

QSL FIXTURES

Today
Al Shamal vs Al Wakrah at Al Shamal SC (5:30pm)
Al Gharafa vs Qatar SC at Thani Bin Jassim Stadium (7:30pm)
Tomorrow
Umm Salal vs Al Sadd at Al Khor Stadium (5:30pm)
Al Duhail vs Al Saliya at Abdulla Bin Khalifa Stadium (7:30pm)
On Sunday
Al Shahania vs Al Rayyan at Al Khor Stadium (5:30pm)
Al Arabi vs Al Ahli at Al Thumama Stadium (7:30pm)

MOTORSPORT

MotoGP legend Agostini admires Marc Marquez's 'desire to win'

AFP
Paris

MotoGP legend Giacomo Agostini has praised the "desire to win" displayed by freshly-minted world champion Marc Marquez.

In an interview with AFP ahead of this weekend's race in Portugal Agostini had warm praise for Marquez, who wrapped up his seventh MotoGP crown in Japan in September with five rounds to go. "I admire him because he evokes emotions," said the 83-year-old Italian, whose record of eight premier class crowns has stood for half a century.

Agostini, who retired in 1977 with 15 titles across all categories, has been impressed with how Marquez has responded after several seasons in the doldrums with injuries and an under-performing Honda.

The Spaniard's fortunes picked up dramatically when he moved to Ducati's Gresini satellite team in 2024, and he has swept away his rivals this term



since graduating to Ducati's factory bike for his first championship since 2019.

"He never thought it was over, and it's very important to have the strength to continue and the desire to win," Agostini said.

Asked if he was surprised to still hold the premier class record of eight titles 50 years on he replied: "I'm happy, but well, records are made to be broken after all. Valentino (Rossi) came close (he won seven) but didn't make it. Marquez is still young (32), maybe he'll achieve it, or maybe not."

After sealing title number seven Marquez required shoulder surgery following a crash in Indonesia, ruling him out of the rest of the season. He has a long

history of injuries, including breaking his right arm at the start of the 2020 season, an injury that almost forced him to retire.

"After an accident, it's difficult (to come back), but he worked hard, he never thought it was over, and it's very important to have the strength to continue and the desire to win," Agostini told AFP. "He has the drive, (the thirst) for victories; he wants to win like all great riders."

"I admire him because he evokes emotions on the track. Everyone loves this kind of person who does things that many don't, no matter the sport."

Agostini reflected on Marquez's momentous move in leaving Honda after a 10-year spell that harvested six world crowns to join the Ducati stable. "He had the strength to leave Honda, which is the biggest brand in the world. "It's not easy to leave a brand like Honda to go to Ducati. But he told himself, 'I want to win' - and to win, you need a bike that gives you the possibility. "He broke a millionaire contract to join a private team (Gresini), it's admirable."

MOTORSPORT

Al-Kuwari, Dabrowski top Prologue times at Qatar Baja

‘We were the first car on the road. It was a tricky Prologue between the flags. We made it properly’

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Qatar’s Abdulaziz al-Kuwari and Polish rider Konrad Dabrowski topped the times in the car and motorcycle categories on the afternoon’s Prologue stage before the 2025 Qatar International Baja was officially flagged away at the ‘Way to the World Cup’ landmark on Doha Corniche in the evening.

Forty-three cars, 53 motorcycles and four quads graced the official start lists for the penultimate rounds of the FIA World and Middle East Cups and the FIM Bajas World Cup. While the afternoon’s Prologue to the north-west of Lusail sorted the starting order for today’s opening desert stage, the highlight of the day was the ceremonial start at the ‘Way to the World Cup’ landmark with the stunning backdrop of Doha’s spectacular hi-rise West Bay skyline.

Cars were flagged away by Abdulrahman al-Mannai, President of the Qatar Motor and Motorcycle Federation (QMMF), and the QMMF’s general secretary Abdulrazzaq al-Kuwari in the presence of distinguished guests and senior officials from both the FIA and FIM.

Czech duo of Martin Prokop and Viktor Chytka were initially fastest in the FIA category with a run of 6min 46.0sec. That enabled the Ford Raptor driver to win the Prologue by just four-tenths of a second from last year’s event winners Denis Krotov and Konstantin Zhiltsov (X-Raid Mini). But both drivers were later handed time penalties that dropped them down to 18th and sixth positions, respectively.

The QMMF Team’s Abdulaziz



Cars were flagged away by Abdulrahman al-Mannai, President of the Qatar Motor and Motorcycle Federation (QMMF), and general secretary Abdulrazzaq al-Kuwari.

al-Kuwari and Khalifa Saleh al-Attiyah eventually finished first and second in the car category after numerous time penalties were imposed on their rivals. Sweden’s Mattias Ekstrom was third in a Can-Am and the current FIA World Baja Cup leader Juan Cruz Yacopini finished fourth in his Toyota Hilux with his championship rival Miroslav Zapletal in fifth.

Yacopini said: “We were the first car on the road. It was a tricky Prologue between the flags. We made it properly. We have the chance of a good starting position for this race. We will have a clear road and some lines (to follow). Let’s see what happens.”

Nasser Saleh al-Attiyah had been the fastest driver at the mid-stage split before losing time late on with a fuel pump issue on his Taurus T3 Max. The Qatari fin-

ished the Prologue down in 25th position. Al-Attiyah said: “We had a good run and then we had a small issue with the fuel pump and we stopped for one minute. We will try to do our best tomorrow. It will be a long day.”

A dominant Dabrowski clocked a time of 7min 02.8sec on the Prologue on his KTM 450 Rally to beat British Husqvarna rider Alex McInnes to the win by 39.3 seconds in the motorcycle category. Frenchman Jean Loup Lapan (KTM), Slovenian Simon Marcic (Kove) and regular Indian factory Sherco rider Harith Noah rounded off the top five.

The FIM Bajas World Cup’s front-running Mohammed al-Balooshi and Rafic Eid were classified in sixth and ninth. Emirati Abdulaziz al-Ahli was the quickest of the quad riders and faster than all

but four of the bikers. Al-Balooshi said: “Not a good result for us. This is not the way we wanted to start the race. Tomorrow is a new day. I am happy that we are here safe. Hopefully we make the most of tomorrow.”

Title rival Eid added: “It was super hot and super rocky. It was a tricky ride with tight corners. Now I am position 10 (including leading quad) and that means I will open the road for everybody. With Qatar’s difficult navigation this will be a good training for me for Dakar 2026!”

Qatar’s Mohammed al-Kubaisi and Abdulrahman al-Sheeb finished the Prologue in 43rd and 49th positions in the two-wheel contingent, the latter suffering niggling electrical issues on his Fantic XEF. Jordan’s Eyad Salmirza (Yamaha) was a non-starter



Khalifa Saleh al-Attiyah finished second on the Prologue after incurring a five-second penalty.

and received a 30-minute penalty. Today, competitors face a revised opening stage of 220.31km. This will be split into three shorter timed sections. The first bike is scheduled to get the action underway at 07.45hrs.

PROLOGUE RESULT:
Cars (top 20 only)

1. Abdulaziz al-Kuwari (QAT)/ Stéphane Duplé (FRA) Taurus T3 Max 6min 50.3sec+
2. Khalifa Saleh al-Attiyah (QAT)/ Bruno Jacomy (ARG) Taurus T3 Max 6min 51.8sec+
3. Mattias Ekström (SWE)/Emil Bergkvist (SWE) Can-Am Maverick R 6min 53.6sec
4. Juan Cruz Yacopini (ARG)/Dani Oliveras (ESP) Toyota Hilux IMT Evo 6min 58.7sec*
5. Miroslav Zapletal (CZE)/Marek Sykora (SVK) Ford F-150 Evo

6min 59.8sec*

Bikes (Top 20 only)

1. Konrad Dabrowski (POL) KTM 450 Rally 7min 02.8sec
2. Alex McInnes (GBR) Husqvarna Rally Replica 7min 42.1sec
3. Jean Loup Lapan (FRA) KTM 450 Rally 7min 50.6sec
4. Simon Marcic (SLO) Kove Rally EX 7min 53.0sec
5. Harith Noah (IND) Sherco 450 SEF 7min 55.2sec

QUADS

1. Abdulaziz Ahli (UAE) Yamaha Raptor 700R 7min 50.9sec
2. Hani al-Nourmes (KSA) Yamaha Raptor 8min 52.8sec
3. Yaghoob Azadi (QAT) Yamaha Raptor 700R 45min 00.0sec
4. Abdulaziz al-Atawi (KSA) Yamaha Raptor 700 45min 00.0sec

HORSE RACING

Impressive performances at Al Shaqab International Arabian Horse Show

By Sports Reporter
Doha

The second day of the Al Shaqab International Arabian Horse Show witnessed another round of impressive performances at the Longines Outdoor Arena, as young fillies and colts competed in the qualifying classes for two- and three-year-old categories.

Supported by the Social and Sport Contribution Fund (Daam), day two event featured over 90 horses, including notable participation from studs across Qatar and the region.

In the Yearling Colts 4A category, Dandon KL, owned by Kaheel Stud, secured first place. DStoor Al Sraiya, owned by Al Sraiya Stud, placed second, while Shakhat Al Shahania of Al Shahania Stud finished third.

Meanwhile, in the Yearling Colts 4B category, first place went to Yazeed Mudhar, owned by Sheikh Hamad bin Ali al-Thani, while Nahar Abher took second and Thayir Al Thamer placed third.

In the Junior Fillies 5A category, Shaella Al Wajba, owned by Al Wajba Stud, took first place, followed by Tulan Al Shahania of Al Shahania Stud in second, and ES Dalma, owned by Sons of Mubark Bin Hindi al-Khaldi, in third.

In the Junior Fillies 5B category, Sawzan Al Shaqab of Al Shaqab Stud, secured first place. FH Sophia Lorhan, owned by Nayif Nasser M A al-Dosari, finished



second, while T A Ndawi, owned by Sons of Mubark Bin Hindi al-Khaldi, placed third.

The Junior Fillies 5C category saw Durra Al Khor, owned by Al Khor Stud, claim first place, followed by Roma in second, and Aryana HA in third.

The Junior Colts 6A category concluded with Yulib Al Shahania, owned by HE Sheikhha Iman Mohamed KH al-Thani, in first place, Santorini in second, and KH Habs in third.

The championship, which runs until November 8, is held under the patronage of HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani, President of the Qatar Olympic Committee and Chairman of Al Shaqab; and under the supervision of the European Conference of Arabian Horse Organisations (ECAHO) as a B-Inter-

national Show, giving winners the opportunity to advance to major international title shows.

Khalid al-Jehani, Director of Breeding and of Al Shaqab International Arabian Horse Show, said: Qatar has become a global voice in shaping the future of Arabian horse championships. At Al Shaqab, we remain committed to preserving the authentic heritage of the Arabian horse, while elevating international standards in event organisation and horse welfare. The model established here is now recognised worldwide, reinforcing Qatar’s position as a leading reference in the world of equine beauty and tradition.”

The final show will take place today, where Gold, Silver, and Bronze winners will be announced across all divisions.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Guardiola backs Foden for England recall after double against Dortmund

Reuters
Manchester

Phil Foden’s brilliant double in Manchester City’s dominant 4-1 victory over Borussia Dortmund on Wednesday was not just a statement for his club but may well have been a timely reminder to England manager Thomas Tuchel.

City boss Pep Guardiola praised the 25-year-old Foden, who struggled through a difficult campaign last season but now looks revitalised, and backed the midfielder, who has not played for England since March, for a return to Tuchel’s squad.

Tuchel will name his squad next week for World Cup qualifying games against Serbia and Albania. Asked whether Foden’s performance could boost his chances of a return to the England squad, Guardiola was diplomatic, but pointed.

“Thomas is so smart and wise, and knows exactly what national team needs,” he said. “Thomas knows perfectly well how good Phil is. (But) the national team is different, it is a short time, create a team when you are not a team, because you are not there all together every day. But come on, Phil – there’s no person in this country and all around the world who doesn’t know his quality and ability. But England is so lucky to have many good players. That’s why Phil has to push himself to



Manchester City’s Phil Foden scores in the UEFA Champions League match against Borussia Dortmund in Manchester. (Reuters)

be better and better and better, because when he is called, he can say ‘Okay, I’m going to show how good I am.’”

Asked if Foden was on his way back to top form, Guardiola said: “He is already there. He does not need to get closer,” he added.

“It is true we have missed goals and he got two incredible goals. How many times have we seen that from Phil? The generosity with the effort but also with the quality in the final third. We missed it a lot. When Phil is in the level, when playing between the lines, in the pockets, and it doesn’t matter, his first touch, his turn, and after his generosity, running and fighting, as much as Phil is happy and (feeling) love and joy, the rest, you don’t have to say much, because he’s a special player,” Guardiola said. “But we need his goals definitely and

today, hopefully, the first step.” Foden said he was loving playing again. “I just need to play with a smile on my face, which I’m doing,” he said.

“Last year was tough, not just for myself but for everyone. There is a new togetherness this season and you can tell. You learn a lot from it when you go through a tough patch. We have great captains in our team and we speak about how we can get back on track. And we’ve added great players to the squad as well and that’s brought real hunger and togetherness. It was just about trying to be the team we used to be and this season we are seeing glimpses of that.”

Guardiola said Foden’s stand-out performance on Wednesday was perfect timing with reigning Premier League champions Liverpool visiting on Sunday.

KANTE RETURNS AS FRANCE SEEK TO CLINCH WORLD CUP BERTH

Paris: Saudi Arabia-based veteran N’Golo Kante returned to the France squad to reinforce the injury-hit midfield for the World Cup qualifiers against Ukraine and Azerbaijan. Victory over Ukraine on November 13 at the Parc des Princes would ensure France’s qualification for the tournament in North America. If they fail, Les Bleus will have another opportunity against Azerbaijan in Baku on November 16. With Real Madrid’s Aurelien Tchouameni and AC Milan’s Adrien Rabiot both injured,

coach Didier Deschamps recalled the 34-year-old Kante, who plays for Al-Ittihad, as a midfield option.

The former Premier League winner with Chelsea and Leicester has 64 caps, but his last France appearance was against Israel in a Nations League group game on November 14, 2024. Warren Zaire-Emery of Paris Saint-Germain has also been recalled in midfield. The 19-year-old was demoted to the Paris Saint-Germain under-21s after a poor start to the season but with injuries

to Ousmane Dembele and Desire Doue, he returned to the first team and has rediscovered his form.

In the absence of Doue and Dembele, Deschamps has also made changes in more attacking positions, recalling Manchester City’s Rayan Cherki and Tottenham’s Randal Kolo Muani. Cherki scored on his debut in a Nations League semi-final loss to Spain in June but missed the first set of autumn internationals due to injury. Kolo Muani is recalled after his promo-

tion to the starting lineup at Spurs. He is the second-highest international scorer in the squad with nine France goals behind Real Madrid’s Kylian Mbappe, who has hit 53 in his 93 appearances.

GERMANY RECALL SANE, HAND EL MALA DEBUT

Leroy Sane has been recalled and Said El Mala received a first call-up to Germany’s 25-man squad for the November World Cup qualifiers, coach Julian Nagelsmann

announced. El Mala, 19, was named despite playing just nine Bundesliga games. Promoted with Cologne in the summer, El Mala has four goals in the Bundesliga this season.

Newcastle defender Malick Thiaw was also recalled after a two-year absence, while Brentford forward Kevin Schade was named for the first time since 2024.

Four players – Robert Andrich, Robin Koch, Angelo Stiller and Maximilian Beier – were dropped from the October squad.