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Dominant Bezzecchi wins Portuguese MotoGP



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Four-star Guedes lifts Al Rayyan to 5-1 win over Shahania

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FIFA U17 WORLD CUP QATAR 2025

FOOTBALL

Morocco beat New Caledonia 16-0 as Qatar play draw

Belgium, Japan, Senegal, Croatia and South Africa in knockout stage

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Belgium, Japan, Senegal, Croatia and South Africa booked their places in the knockout stage of the FIFA U-17 World Cup Qatar 2025 at the Aspire Zone yesterday, as Groups A, B, C and D came to a close.

There remains hope for the hosts Qatar, Morocco and Tunisia, but they must wait and see if they progress as one of the eight best third-placed teams. Results also ensured Egypt, Venezuela, Switzerland, Korea Republic and Korea DPR will feature in the Round of 32.

Despite a host of chances, hosts Qatar couldn't break through a stubborn Bolivia backline. The result leaves the hosts' last-32 hopes hanging by a thread, while the South Americans are out.

Yazan Mohamed came close in the first half, as he tested Geronimo Govea with a fierce low drive. Captain Zaid Ktit then hit the bar in the second half, before sending a chip over Govea but just past the post. Mohamed came even closer in added time, as he powered an effort off the upright from five yards out.



Qatar and Bolivia players are vying for the ball during their FIFA U-17 World Cup Group A match at the Aspire Zone in Doha yesterday.

Italy 3-1 South Africa

Samuele Inacio hit a double as Italy beat South Africa to confirm top spot. Bafana Bafana, while beaten, have also qualified for the knockout phase, with their four points enough to seal second spot. Inacio's slick finish opened the scoring, before Shaun Els bundled in a leveller. Antonio Arena's header restored Italy's advantage, before Inacio scored his second of the game and fourth of the tournament to wrap up victory.

Morocco 16-0 New Caledonia

Morocco racked up the biggest victory in U-17 World Cup history to keep their hopes alive of progressing to the knockout phase. Spain's 13-0 win over New Zealand was the previous biggest win, but the Atlas Cubs surpassed that with a relentless performance. Morocco captain Hamza Bouhaddi, said, "We're delighted with this win and the spirit we showed today. This is our true level. We lost the first two matches, but we tried to put that behind us and we approached today's game as if it were our first in the tournament." New Caledonia had two players sent off during the first half, with Typhan Dreuko and Jean Canehmez given red cards. They were made to pay, with Oualid Ibn Salah, Abdelali Eddaoudi, Ziyad Baha, Nahel Haddani, Ismail El Aoud and Abdellah Ouazane all completing braces as Morocco steadfastly hunted the goals which could give them a better chance to progressing to the Round of 32. They finished behind Japan and Portugal in Group B, and will now have to wait to see if they qualify as one of the best third-placed sides.



Abdelali Eddaoudi celebrates after scoring a goal against New Caledonia yesterday.

Portugal 1-2 Japan

Japan recovered from a disappointing draw with New Caledonia by downing Portugal to top the standings. Takeshi Wada opened the scoring with a neat touch and finish. Mateus Mide thought he'd levelled just moments later, but his long-range effort went through two Portuguese players who had strayed offside. They were then stung by a Japanese sucker-punch, as Taiga Seguchi lasered in from distance.

UAE 0-5 Senegal

A Bakary Sonko treble saw Senegal sink United Arab Emirates and advance as group winners. Malick Cisse got the ball rolling with an ice-cool stuttered penalty after Saad Mubarak had wiped out Alwaly Camara. It was the Sonko show from then on. First, he nodded home from beneath the crossbar, before lashing in his second. Mame Sow then crossed for the No8 to tap in for the match ball. Victor Mendy completed the scoring when he fired into the roof of the the net from close range.

Croatia 3-1 Costa Rica

Croatia also secured a last-32 berth with victory over Costa Rica. The Europeans broke the deadlock when Kresimir Rados got on the end of a devilish Karlo Pajsar cross to net for a second straight match. Raul Kumar doubled the lead with a back-post header from a corner. Costa Rica quickly got back into the match with Thiago Cordero firing in a low drive from outside the box, but Tino Kusanovic nodded in late from another Pajsar cross to seal victory.

Fiji 0-7 Argentina

Argentina continued their 100-per-cent start to Qatar 2025 with a thumping win over Fiji. Uriel Ojeda looked to give the South Americans an early lead, but his penalty was repelled by Melvin Prakash. It was only a temporary reprieve, however, as Ojeda netted, before a fine brace from Mateo Martinez. Ojeda then netted a free-kick in the second half, and side-footed home from inside the box for the match ball. Santiago Silveira and Simon Escobar tacked on two late goals to complete the scoring.

Belgium 2-0 Tunisia

Noah Fernandez set Belgium on their way to victory over ten-player Tunisia and a spot in the last 32. The mercurial midfielder picked up a slack pass from goalkeeper Slim Bouaskar, skipped inside and netted inside 52 seconds. Tunisia's task was then made doubly difficult on 17 minutes as Saifedin Haj Abdallah was sent off for a high tackle. Ali Camara made the game safe in the second period with a stunning drive from the edge of the box.

Islamic Solidarity Games: Impressive show by Qatar swimmers





Qatar's swimmers continued their strong form at the Islamic Solidarity Games Riyadh 2025, with Mohammed Mahmoud narrowly missing a podium finish in the men's 200m individual medley, placing fourth in 2:05.69, just 0.62 seconds behind third. Mahmoud also finished seventh in the 100m breaststroke while teammate Ali Tamer clocked 22.72s to claim fourth in the 50m freestyle, only 0.15s off the bronze. The Al Annabi swimmers remain in action today, with Tamer contesting the 100m freestyle, Hamza Shaalan in the 200m breaststroke and Aziz al-Jilani in the 200m butterfly. Elsewhere, Qatar's men's table tennis team exited in the quarter-finals after a loss to Kazakhstan, while judoka Haya al-Kuwari bowed out in the repechage round of the under-70kg category. The men's volleyball team faces hosts Saudi Arabia today before wrapping up their group stage against Bahrain on Wednesday. More than 3,000 athletes from 57 nations are competing across 23 sports in Riyadh. Qatar has sent 82 athletes participating in 16 disciplines.

Secretary-General of the Qatar Olympic Committee (QOC), Jassim bin Rashid al-Buenain, visited the Qatari delegation's headquarters at the athletes' village yesterday. During his visit, al-Buenain met with Qatari athletes, encouraging them to give their best and deliver performances that reflect Qatar's growing sporting stature on the international stage.





COMMENT

Qatar's U-17 World Cup is a win-win for everyone: Silvestre

Football legend **Mikael Silvestre** has lauded the exceptional football experience and operational excellence at the FIFA U-17 World Cup Qatar 2025.

Silvestre, a decorated former French international defender with more than 400 career appearances for Manchester United, Arsenal, Inter Milan and other elite clubs, was in Qatar to attend the historic first-ever 48-team youth tournament.

"The quality of the football is quite intense. There's a lot of aggressiveness, the players are going for it. The group stage brings real pressure, and the quality is exceptional because you're watching the crème de la crème on the pitch"

Yet it was the tournament's seamless organisation that captured Silvestre's particular admiration: "From the venue to the infrastructure, especially for guests like me, the standard of organisation is fantastic. The players have everything in their favour to concentrate on football and shine on the global stage."

Drawing on his experience witnessing the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, Silvestre reflected on how Qatar's hosting capabilities have proven consistent: "During the World Cup in 2022, we were able to watch multiple games at different venues in a single day. The commute between stadiums, the quality of the pitches, the infrastructure, everything was seamless.

"When the U-17 World Cup was awarded to Qatar, I was genuinely pleased. For me, it's a win-win for everyone."

The tournament, hosted across eight state-of-the-art pitches at the Competition Complex in Aspire Zone, underscores Qatar's ongoing commitment to youth development and its growing legacy as a premier international sports destination.

As the first FIFA World Cup to feature 48 teams, this is 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.

A total of 104 matches will be contested, culminating in the Final on 27 November at Khalifa International Stadium.

This marks the first of five consecutive youth tournaments that Qatar will host through 2029.



SPORT

CYCLING

Vingegaard 'back to his best' after Japan win

AFP
Saitama, Japan

Former Tour de France champion Jonas Vingegaard said he was finally back to his best following last year's horrific crash, after finishing his season yesterday with victory at Japan's Saitama Criterium.

The Dane was a two-time defending Tour de France champion when a high-speed fall in the Tour of the Basque Country in April last year left him hospitalised with a punctured lung and several broken bones.

The accident shook him mentally and physically but he began to pick up the pieces this year.

The 28-year-old finished as runner-up at the Tour de France before claiming a third career Grand Tour win at the Vuelta a Espana in September.

Vingegaard finished his season with another victory in Saitama, and said his return to the top had taken "a bit longer than I thought it would".

"You never really know when you have a bad crash like that if you will get back to the same level you had before," he said.

"It's only by the end of this year that I can see that I'm able to push in the same way that I was before my crash."

Vingegaard missed last year's Paris Olympics and finished far behind his rival Tadej Pogacar in the Tour de France in the months following his crash.

Vingegaard said he hoped he has put the accident behind him as he looks towards next season.

"It's taken me quite a long time before coming back to the same level," he said.

"Slowly you come back to it and hopefully now I can get back to improving rather than trying to get back to the same level."

Vingegaard kicked for home on the final lap to win the Saitama Criterium ahead of Italy's Jonathan Milan and Australian Kaden Groves.

He had to do it the hard way after crashing three-quarters of the way through the 60km course, before getting back on his bike and resuming the race.

"Luckily I didn't hurt myself and I just slipped," said Vingegaard, who was helped back onto his bike by Davide Stella of the UAE team.

"I just lost the wheel and luckily nothing happened and then I could come back and win."

Vingegaard was side by side with Slovenia's Primoz Roglic before making his final attack on the last lap of the circuit.

The Dane said his fall disrupted his race plan but he was able to think on his feet and stay in contention.

"At first you only think about getting back to the bunch," he said.

"Then there was an attack that I could follow, and then luckily I could go solo from there."



Team Visma-Lease a Bike rider Jonas Vingegaard of Denmark takes a corner on the way to winning the Saitama Criterium cycling race in Saitama yesterday. *(AFP)*

CRICKET

New Zealand edge West Indies by nine runs

NEW ZEALAND TAKE A 2-1 LEAD IN THE FIVE-MATCH SERIES

AFP
New Zealand

Seamer Kyle Jamieson held his nerve in the final over for a second straight game to seal a nine-run victory for New Zealand over the West Indies in a tense finale to the third T20 international yesterday.

The visitors threatened to surpass New Zealand's 177-9 in Nelson but were dismissed for 168 when Romario Shepherd was caught in the deep off the penultimate ball for a career-best 49.

New Zealand took a 2-1 lead in the five-game series, following a match that emulated the pattern of the first two, with the chasing team falling just short.

West Indies' hopes appeared dashed at 88-8 in the 13th over before Shepherd and fellow seamer Shamar Springer began striking the ball cleanly to the boundary.

The pair combined for 78 off just 6.3 overs before Springer was splendidly caught and bowled by Jacob Duffy for 39 with an over remaining.

Needing 12 to win, the final pair could only score two off Jamieson's first four deliveries before the towering pace bowler removed Shepherd to spark victory celebrations.

Jamieson had also been effective when New Zealand levelled the series in Auckland on Thursday, conceding 12 in the final over of a nerve-jangling three-run victory.

New Zealand lost their way after opener Devon Conway was run out for 56 off 34 balls, with Daryl Mitchell the most effective of the middle order with a lively 41.

Alick Athanaze with 31 and Ackeem Auguste, who scored 24, provided a steady start to the West Indies chase but the loss of six wickets for 35 runs stunted their hopes.



New Zealand's Ish Sodhi appeals during the third Twenty20 international against West Indies at Saxton Oval in Nelson yesterday. *(AFP)*

Duffy took 3-36 and Ish Sodhi 3-34, which moved the leg-spinner to third on the all-time list of T20 international wicket-takers with 156.

Sodhi is behind only the 182 victims of Afghanistan's Rashid Khan and the 164 of fellow New Zealander Tim Southee.

"The heart rate was pumping there again. Those death bowlers are doing a great job," Sodhi said yesterday.

"The West Indies have such power through that lower to middle order.

"It's on show at the moment and the series has been a great spectacle so far."

The fourth T20 is in also in Nelson today

BRIEF SCORES
New Zealand 177 for 9 (Conway 56, Mitchell 41, Forde 2-20, Holder 2-31) **beat West Indies 168** (Shepherd 49, Springer 39, Sodhi 3-34, Duffy 3-36) **by nine runs**

QCSF cricket tournament kicks off at Qatar Foundation



Action from a match during the University Cricket Tournament for the 2025-2026 season (Men's) that kicked off on Friday evening at the Qatar Foundation playgrounds. Organised by the Qatar Collegiate Sports Federation (QCSF) in co-operation with the Qatar Cricket Association and Qatar Foundation, the tournament features top universities and higher education institutions and will run until November 22, 2025.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Al Shaqab League's 2nd season from Nov 14

Al Shaqab, a member of Qatar Foundation, has announced the launch of the second edition of the Al Shaqab League, the premier showjumping competition that aims to develop young equestrian talent, refine the skills of Qatar's riders, and strengthen the nation's position on the international equestrian stage.

The Al Shaqab League serves as a unique platform that combines sporting development with world-class competition, providing riders of all levels — from juniors and amateurs to professionals — with the opportunity to gain experience and grow within a professional and inspiring environment.

Mohammed Jaber al-Khayareen, Director of the Equine Education Department, said: "The Al Shaqab League reflects our commitment to supporting emerging riders and empowering them to achieve their dreams in the world



of equestrian sport. This championship serves as a true bridge between local development and global ambition, embodying Al Shaqab's vision of building a new generation of champions."

The League will take place at the Longines Arena at Al Shaqab:Round 1 (powered by Dreama) – November 14–15, Round 2 – December 26–27, Round 3 – April 17–18, and the Final Round – May 21–23, 2026.

The Al Shaqab League continues to uphold the values of excellence, empowerment, and progress — from Doha to the world — embodying the spirit of equestrianism as an integral part of Qatar's cultural and sporting identity.

SPOTLIGHT

Bezzecchi dominates Portuguese GP for second win of the season

Reuters
Portimao, Portugal

Aprilia's Marco Bezzecchi delivered a commanding lights-to-flag victory at the Portuguese Grand Prix yesterday, claiming his second win of the season and strengthening his grip on third place in the championship with just one round remaining.

The polesitter made amends for a lacklustre Saturday sprint performance, where he could only manage third, by controlling the race from start to finish ahead of Gresini Racing's Alex Marquez and KTM's Pedro Acosta.

Bezzecchi's dominance was emphatic, as he finished more than 2.5 seconds clear of Marquez to become the sixth different winner in the last six MotoGP races, while Acosta's late race pace had him close in on his compatriot but settled for third.

Ducati's Francesco Bagnaia, who is battling with Bezzecchi for third in the championship behind champion Marc Marquez and runner-up Alex, crashed out of fourth place and finds himself 35 points behind before the final round in Valencia.

'FANTASTIC RACE' FOR BEZZECCHI

"It was a fantastic race for me. This morning I felt better and yesterday evening we worked a lot in the box to try to find that last step that we missed," Bezzecchi said.

"I was super afraid of Pedro and Alex because yesterday they were super quick, but I was also very motivated to try to get a win... I'm very happy, super important to be back on the top of the podium."



Aprilia Racing's Marco Bezzecchi celebrates on the podium after winning the race MotoGP at the Portuguese Grand Prix in Algarve International Circuit, Portimao, Portugal, yesterday. (Reuters)

Just as in the sprint, Bezzecchi took the lead into turn one ahead of Acosta while Marquez moved up from fifth to third again, before the Gresini Racing rider then used the KTM's slipstream at the start of lap two to move up to second.

But unlike the sprint, there was no wheel-to-wheel battle this time as Bezzecchi and Marquez peeled away. Before long, the three riders were split by nearly two seconds at the halfway mark.

FOURTH STRAIGHT RETIREMENT FOR BAGNAIA

Bagnaia was running in fourth when the Ducati rider suddenly crashed out, marking his fourth straight Sunday retirement - the first time it has happened to the two-time champion since his rookie year in MotoGP in 2019.

With five laps left, Marquez showed no signs of being able to catch up with Bezzecchi, who was nearly four seconds clear in the lead before the Italian eased off the throttle to conserve his tyres until the chequered flag.

Acosta then found a second wind in the dying stages of the race but Marquez responded to his younger compatriot's charge to defend his second place.

"We are missing a lot of pace and a lot of traction at the beginning of the race," Acosta said.

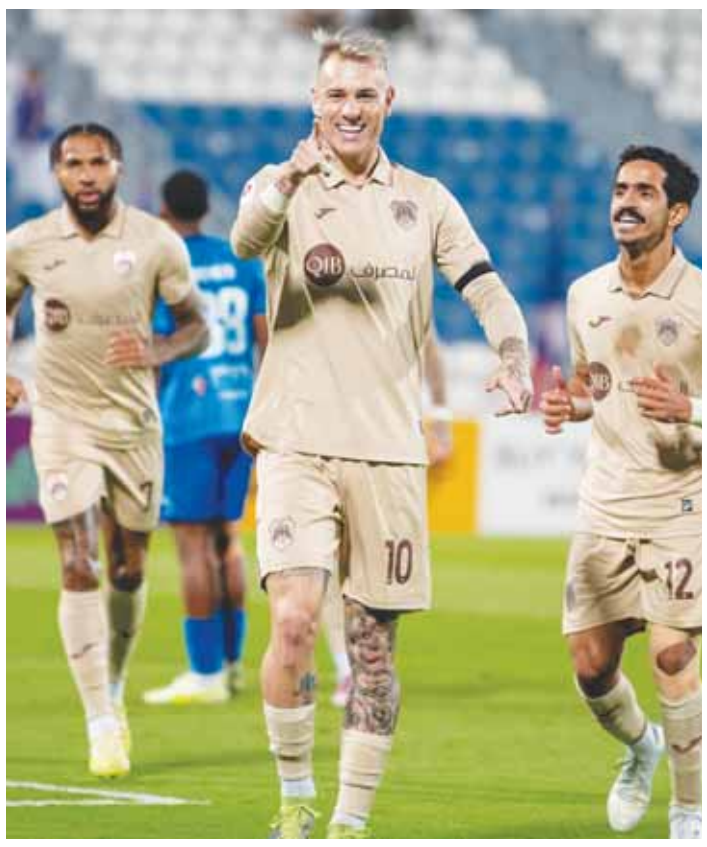
"It doesn't matter how much we manage the tyre. At the end, if we are missing it at the beginning, we lose anyway," Acosta said yesterday.

The race was also a chance for an emotional Miguel Oliveira to say farewell on home turf, with the Portuguese rider making the switch to World Superbikes after 15 years in Moto3, Moto2 and MotoGP.

The final round of the season is the Valencia Grand Prix next weekend.

QATAR STARS LEAGUE

Four-star Guedes powers Rayyan to 5-1 win


Roger Guedes celebrates one of his four goals against Al Shahania during their Qatar Stars League match yesterday. Al Rayyan won 5-1.

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Roger Guedes bagged a super hat-trick as Al Rayyan handed Al Shahania a 5-1 thrashing in a Week 7 match of the Qatar Stars League at the Al Khor Stadium yesterday.

Brazilian Guedes opened the floodgate of goals for The Lions with a fantastic header from the centre of the box following a precise cross by Ahmed Alaa in the 6th minute, before completing an hat-trick in the 39th and 45th minutes, respectively, to give the visitors a 3-0 lead going into halftime.

He completed the "task" in the 80th minute from the spot, after Al Shahania's Shehab Ellethy bad foul inside the box. Wesley Ribeiro was also on target for Al Rayyan in the 65th minute. Al Shahania's consolatory goal was scored by Mohammed Maged in the 56th minute. The win took Al Rayyan's tally to 16 points to be in fourth in the standings. Al Shahania with a seventh loss remain bottom-placed in 12th with 4 points.

Al Arabi edge Al Ahli 1-0

At the Al Thumama Stadium, Al Arabi yesterday posted a 1-0 win over Al Ahli in the concluding Week 7 match.

Isaac Lihadj scored the winner for The Dream Team making a superb header to a long cross from Rodriguez Sanchez Rodrigo in the 8th minute of the match.

Al Ahli ensued a long battle till the very end in search of an equaliser but they could not find a finish despite several attempts.

In the dying minutes of the stoppage time, The Brigadiers came close with a Driss Fettouhi header off a corner kick but the Al Arabi goalkeeper Jassim al-Hail made a good save in the right corner to defy the rivals' hopes.

Yesterday's positive result saw Al Arabi gain the valuable three points and increase their tally to 13 points to be 7th in the standings while Al Ahli with 9 points remain in 9th place.


Action from Al Arabi's Qatar Stars League match against Al Ahli yesterday. Al Arabi won 1-0.

TENNIS

Positive start for Alcaraz at ATP Finals in Turin

ALCARAZ ON COURSE FOR YEAR-END NUMBER ONE SPOT

Reuters,
Turin, Italy

Top seed Carlos Alcaraz began his bid for a first ATP Finals trophy with a 7-6(5) 6-2 win over Australian Alex de Minaur in their round-robin clash at the season-ending championships in Turin yesterday.

Alcaraz won his opening ATP Finals match for the first time despite De Minaur's battling display where the Australian recovered from 4-1 down to force a tiebreak in the opening set before the Spaniard came out on top.

The pair traded breaks of serve at the start of the second set, but Alcaraz broke twice more to again lead 4-1 and this time there was no comeback despite De Minaur's valiant effort in the opening match of the Jimmy Connors Group.

Both players were looking to improve on last year's showing, where Alcaraz lost two of his three round-robin matches in straight sets while De Minaur lost all three group matches.

Alcaraz had lost the opening match at his previous two appearances.

"It was a really difficult match," said Alcaraz.

"On this surface, Alex makes the most of the speed of the ball, he's super fast and really difficult on return. I'm just really happy to get through this really difficult challenge."


Spain's Carlos Alcaraz celebrates after winning his group stage match against Australia's Alex de Minaur at the ATP Finals in Turin, Italy, yesterday. *(Reuters)*

After winning the tiebreak, Alcaraz began to enjoy himself a little more, holding his hand to his ear to milk the applause that greeted him winning a long, entertaining rally to hold serve and lead 5-1 and there was no way back for De Minaur.

Alcaraz is also on course to end the year as world number one, and in Turin he must reach the final with at least one round-robin win or sweep his round-robin matches to guarantee himself the award for the second time.

Italian Jannik Sinner needs to retain his title to have any chance of finishing the year in top spot.

One of the loudest cheers in the arena came when Sinner was shown in an advertisement on the large screens, but the crowd will need to wait until today to see their favourite in action.

In another clash, German two-time champion Alexander Zverev takes on American Ben Shelton, making his first ATP Finals appearance, in the Bjorn Borg Group. The ATP Finals, which features the top eight singles players and doubles teams in the world, has a record prize pool of $15.5mn and offers 1,500 points. The tournament culminates with the final at the Inalpi Arena in Turin on November 16.

ANNOUNCEMENT

2025 Qatar ExxonMobil Open named Best ATP 500 Tournament



Qatar ExxonMobil Open's Tournament Director Karim Alami holds the Best ATP 500 Tournament trophy.

QNA
Doha

The Qatar ExxonMobil Open men's tennis tournament has won the Best ATP 500 Tournament award, according to the 2025 ATP Players' Choice Awards.

This award adds to the tournament's impressive record, having previously won the Best ATP 250 Tournament award six times before its upgrade to the 500-point level this season.

Tournament Director Karim Alami said: "We are proud to have won the Best ATP 500 Tournament award, after the Qatar ExxonMobil Open had already won the same award six times in the 250-point category."

Alami added that this achievement confirms that success is not a matter of chance, but rather the fruit of a clear vision, unwavering passion, and integrated teamwork.

He emphasised that the award is a testament to the players' own confidence, reflecting Qatar's image as a global sports destination thanks to its state-of-the-art facilities and high-level organisation.

He continued: "We dedicate this achievement to everyone who contributed to this success, including players, fans, and sponsors, especially Qatar ExxonMobil, the title sponsor, as well as the dedicated team from the various committees who consistently strive to deliver an exceptional tournament. This award serves as an incentive to continue our journey of development and innovation year after year."

This year's tournament featured a stellar lineup of the game's top players, including Carlos Alcaraz and Novak Djokovic.

Andrey Rublev of Russia won the title this year after defeating Jack Draper of Great Britain, while the British duo of Julian Cash and Lloyd Glasspole claimed the doubles trophy.

FOCUS

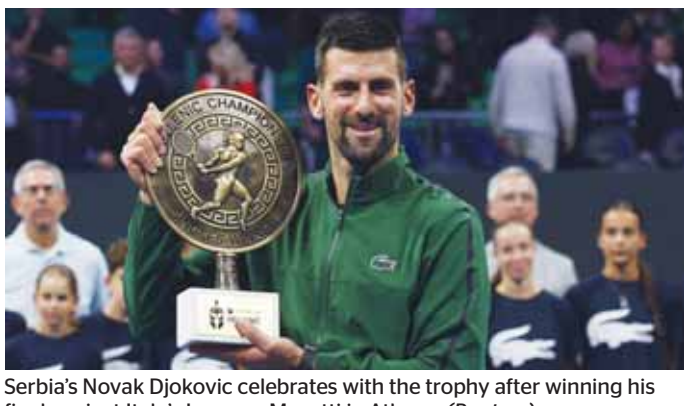
Djokovic withdraws from ATP Finals after win

Reuters
Turin, Italy

Seven-times ATP Finals champion Novak Djokovic has withdrawn from the season-ending tournament due to a shoulder injury, hours after winning his 101st title at the Hellenic Championship.

Finalist Lorenzo Musetti will take his place in Turin, where the ATP Finals began yesterday, after Djokovic took almost three hours to beat the Italian 4-6 6-3 7-5.

"I was really looking forward to competing in Turin and giving my best," Djokovic posted on social media. "But after today's final in Athens, I'm sad to share that I need to withdraw due to an ongoing injury."


Serbia's Novak Djokovic celebrates with the trophy after winning his final against Italy's Lorenzo Musetti in Athens. *(Reuters)*

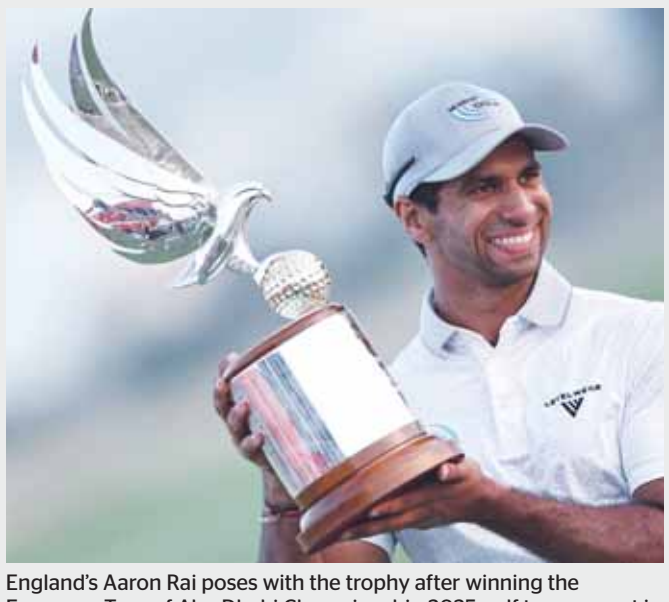
Djokovic also missed last year's season-ender with injury, having won his seventh title in 2023.

The 38-year-old said he had been dealing with the injury throughout the tournament in Athens. "That's the reason why I decided not to make a call would I go to Turin or not earlier because I wanted to see how the matches go, how I react," he said. "After yesterday's match, I was hoping that it was not going to flare up. But then today, even before the match, it was not great. I had to take all the strong medications to be able to play the match.

"I felt there's no chance for me to go through the entire tournament in Turin with the required level of tennis when you're playing the best eight in the world."

Musetti, who needed to beat Djokovic to overtake Canadian Felix Auger-Aliassime to qualify for the tournament, will replace Djokovic in the Jimmy Connors Group, with Alexander Bublik now the first alternate. This marks the first time that two Italian singles players have qualified for the same edition of the ATP Finals, and is Musetti's first appearance.

Aaron Rai tops Abu Dhabi field


England's Aaron Rai poses with the trophy after winning the European Tour of Abu Dhabi Championship 2025 golf tournament in Abu Dhabi yesterday. *(AFP)*

PREMIER LEAGUE

Guardiola's 1,000th game in charge gets Man City 3-0 win

Forest boost survival bid, Newcastle's miserable away form continues

AFP
London

Manchester City celebrated Pep Guardiola's 1,000th game as a manager with a 3-0 win against Liverpool that lifted them back into the Premier League title race, while Nottingham Forest beat Leeds 3-1 to bolster their survival bid yesterday.

Erling Haaland missed an early penalty at the Etihad Stadium, but the City striker recovered to give Guardiola's side the lead.

Nico Gonzalez increased their advantage before half-time and Jeremy Doku capped his man of the match performance with City's third in the second half.

It was the perfect way for former Barcelona and Bayern Munich boss Guardiola to mark the latest milestone in a glittering 17-year career, including 716 victories.

Second-placed City are just four points behind leaders Arsenal, who conceded a last-gasp equaliser in their 2-2 draw at Sunderland on Saturday.

City's seventh win in their last eight games in all competitions was a major blow to Liverpool's hopes of retaining the title. The troubled champions have lost seven of their last 10 matches in all competitions and trail Arsenal by eight points. They are marooned in eighth place after the momentum from successive wins over Aston Villa and Real Madrid dissipated into the rainy Manchester air.

Haaland squandered a golden opportunity to put City ahead in the 12th minute when VAR ruled Doku was tripped by Liverpool goalkeeper Giorgi Mamardashvili just inside the penalty area. Mamardashvili made amends as he dived to his left to save Haaland's spot-kick. But Haaland was unfazed by his miss and the Norwegian put City in front in the 29th minute.

At the climax of a flowing 20-pass move that carried City from deep inside their own half, Matheus Nunes crossed towards Haaland, who rose above Ibrahima Konate to head home from 10 yards. It was Haaland's 99th Premier League goal since signing from Borussia Dortmund in 2022.

Haaland has scored 19 times in 15 games in all competitions for City this season, netting in all but two matches. Virgil van Dijk's headed equaliser late in the first half was controversially disallowed by VAR for offside against Andrew Robertson. Liverpool boss Arne Slot was furious with that decision, and Gonzalez rubbed salt into their wounds in first half stoppage-time. Given time and space by Liverpool's flat-footed defence, Gonzalez unloaded a long-range drive that deflected in off Van Dijk. Doku delivered the knockout blow when he curled a superb strike past Mamardashvili from 25 yards in the 63rd minute.

At the City Ground, Forest trailed to Lukas Nmecha's 13th-minute opener. But Ibrahim Sangare equalised two minutes later and Morgan Gibbs-White headed home after 68 minutes before Elliot Anderson scored a stoppage-time penalty. It was Forest's first league victory since beating Brentford on the opening weekend of the season in August. Nuno Espirito Santo was in charge of Forest then, before being sacked to make way for Ange Postecoglou, whose brief reign also ended with his dismissal before Sean Dyche took charge. Second-bottom Forest's maiden top-flight victory under Dyche's management ended their nine-match winless run in the competition and lifted them to within one point of safety.

Aston Villa thrashed Bournemouth 4-0 to make it five wins from their last six league games.

Emiliano Buendia and Amadou Onana scored in the first half at Villa Park before Bournemouth's Antoine Semenyo had a penalty saved by Emiliano Martinez after the break. Second-half goals from Ross Barkley and Donyell Malen put the seal on Villa's victory.

Newcastle's miserable away form continued with a dismal 3-1 defeat at Brentford. Magpies forward Harvey Barnes was on target three minutes before the half-hour, but Kevin Schade equalised in the 56th minute. Newcastle defender Dan Burn was sent off in the 73rd minute after conceding a penalty with a foul on Dango Ouattara. Igor Thiago converted from the spot and the Brazilian forward struck again in stoppage-time. Newcastle are languishing in 14th place and have failed to win an away league match in nine attempts since April. Crystal Palace and Brighton shared a 0-0 draw at Selhurst Park to leave both teams in mid-table.


Manchester City's Erling Haaland, Liverpool's Ibrahima Konate and Ryan Gravenberch in action during their Premier League match in Manchester yesterday. *(Reuters)*


Manchester City's manager Pep Guardiola acknowledges the crowd at the end of the match against Liverpool at the Etihad Stadium in Manchester yesterday. *(AFP)*

LA LIGA

Leaders Real Madrid drop points in Rayo Vallecano draw

AFP
Madrid

La Liga leaders Real Madrid were left frustrated in a 0-0 draw at Rayo Vallecano yesterday, giving champions Barcelona a chance to close in on them.

Xabi Alonso's side moved five points clear of Villarreal in second and six ahead of the third-placed Catalans, who visit Celta Vigo later on.

Rayo battled strongly in the derby clash and although Real Madrid had the better chances, the hosts also had opportunities to win a scrappy game.

They managed to limit La Liga top scorer Kylian Mbappe's influence, while keeping Vinicius Junior and Jude Bellingham safely at arm's length as well.

Madrid were hoping to bounce back from their Champions League defeat by Liverpool at Anfield on Tuesday but Alonso's team dropped points for only the second time this season in the league.

"I want to keep growing, improving, with positive and constructive self-criticism - this is Real Madrid, we all know where we are and what we want," Alonso told reporters.

"We're in November, there's a long way to go, we need to be demanding of ourselves (but) also be measured."

Inigo Perez's Rayo came out fired up and threatened first, when Andrei Ratiu fired straight at Madrid goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois.

After that Madrid began to take control but the hosts, in mid-table, held firm at their Vallecas stadium.

Raul Asencio headed wide when well-placed and Batalla made a fine instinctive save to push away a Vinicius effort.

Rayo starved Madrid superstar Mbappe of the ball, with the Frenchman unable to threaten in his usual manner.

Madrid coach Alonso sent on Eder Militao for the booked Dean Huijsen at half-time, wary of Isi Palazon and Jorge de Frutos' threat.

De Frutos came close early in the second half when he nipped in at the near post between two defenders to reach Pacha Espino's cross and hit the side netting.

Bellingham forced Batalla into a good save at his near post after a lovely touch to bring the ball down as he tried to continue his recent strong goalscoring form.

Mbappe had his first effort on the hour mark as Rayo let him loose for the first time, whipping a shot wide of the far post.

Batalla beat away a Fede Valverde drive from distance, while Alvaro Garcia fired over at the other end as Rayo looked to snatch victory.

Alonso sent on Trent Alexander-Arnold in the final stages as the England international continues finding fitness after injury.

Madrid midfielder Arda Guler came close to breaking the deadlock in stoppage time as his effort was deflected behind, but Rayo survived to claim a point.

"I'm happy with the team's work, and we had chances too to take all three points," Rayo Vallecano goalkeeper Augusto Batalla told DAZN.

"To balance the (difference in quality) between us (and Madrid), we have to push harder, but I saw a Madrid trying hard too, with a lot of intensity."


Real Madrid's Jude Bellingham (centre) heads the ball during the La Liga match against Rayo Vallecano at Vallecas Stadium in Madrid yesterday. *(AFP)*

FOCUS

Napoli beaten at Bologna, lose lead

AFP
Milan

Italian champions Napoli came unstuck at Bolgona yesterday, losing 2-0 to cede the Serie A summit to AC Milan on goal difference.

AC Milan's collapse against Parma on Saturday when they were held 2-2 after leading by two goals but Antonio Conte's Napoli failed to exploit their chance.

After a goalless first half ended goalless, Napoli were caught off guard five minutes after the break, with a precise shot by Thijs Dallinga following a magnificent cross from the left by Nicolo Cambiaghi, who had come on after half-time.

In the 66th minute, Bologna wrapped up the win. This time the danger came from the right: a cross and a header by Jhon Lucumi into Napoli's top right corner. Bologna moved to fifth, a point off the leading pair.

Inter Milan and Roma, also both only one point behind the top two, can finish Sunday as Serie A leaders after their later games against Lazio and Udinese respectively.

In other action, Sassuolo downed Atalanta 3-0 and struggling Genoa were held 2-2 by last-placed Fiorentina.

Celtic close on stumbling leaders Hearts

Reigning champions Celtic reduced the gap to Scottish Premiership leaders Hearts to seven points with a 4-0 victory over Kilmarnock yesterday. After Hearts dropped points earlier in the day, goals from Johnny Kenny, Kieran Tierney - Daizen Maeda and Arne Engels, with an added-time penalty, condemned Kilmarnock to a fifth consecutive defeat as they dropped to 10th. Hearts were held 1-1 at home by Dundee United, their second draw in three matches. Alexandros Kyziridis' shot rebounded off a post and deflected into the net off United goalkeeper Yevhen Kucherenko only for Luca Stephenson to equalise just before half-time.

FORMULA 1

Norris extends title lead in Sao Paulo

AFP
Sao Paulo

Lando Norris extended his lead in the drivers' world championship to 24 points ahead of McLaren teammate Oscar Piastri with a well-judged victory in yesterday's dramatic Sao Paulo Grand Prix - but Red Bull's Max Verstappen stole the show by racing from a pit-lane start to finish third.

In a tense and incident-filled contest, Norris won by 10.388 seconds ahead of Mercedes' teenage Italian rookie Kimi Antonelli with the four-time champion Verstappen just 0.362 seconds behind after a charging drive, including a puncture, to a podium finish.

George Russell came fourth in the second Mercedes ahead of the luckless Piastri and three remarkable rookies in Haas's Oliver Bearman and the Racing Bulls of Liam Lawson and Isack Hadjar. Nico Hulkenberg was ninth for Sauber and Pierre Gasly 10th for Alpine.

It was Norris's seventh win of the season and the 11th of his career, moving him within sight of a first world title with a comfortable advantage ahead of Piastri, who fought hard and collected a 10-second penalty, with three rounds remaining.

"I was pushing and it was an amazing race," said Norris, who dedicated his win to the late Gil de Feran, a former driver who nurtured his early career.

Asked about the title race, he said: "I'm not thinking about it, not yet, not at all. It's a great win, but to see Max and how quick he was today. That's where my mind is at. And there is a long way to go."

Norris now has 390 points in the title race ahead of Piastri on 366 and Verstappen on 341.

Verstappen said: "The race was full of action and I didn't expect to finish on the podium after starting from the pit-lane and having a puncture. An incredible result to be proud of. We never give up."

Antonelli, who resisted intense pressure, said: "It was very stressful in the last few laps with Max on fresh tyres but I stayed cool to take P2."

Norris made a clean start from his 15th career pole to lead Antonelli. Behind him, Gabriel Bortoleto rammed his Sauber into the barriers after being clipped by Lance Stroll. A safety car was deployed while the luckless local hero was rescued unharmed, just a day after an airborne crash in Saturday's sprint race. Lewis Hamilton, who lost his front wing in the mayhem, pitted, but worse followed for Ferrari when, on the re-start, Piastri attacked Antonelli for second and the Mercedes bounced into Leclerc's Ferrari. He lost his front wing. Further back Verstappen was 13th, but he had a puncture and pitted for mediums. He rejoined 18th - and charged.

A brief virtual safety car (VSC) period followed before racing resumed as Piastri's move was investigated. He was given a 10-second penalty. Ferrari called Hamilton in on lap 15 as Verstappen rose to ninth by lap 18 and then seventh when others pitted.

His pure pace, 24 hours after saying his car was undriveable, was astonishing. By lap 25, he was fourth. Norris pitted from the lead on lap 31 for softs, giving Piastri the lead, and re-joined behind Verstappen in fourth.



McLaren's driver Lando Norris holds the trophy on the podium after winning the Sao Paulo Formula One Grand Prix at the Jose Carlos Pace racetrack yesterday. *(AFP)*