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FIFA U17 WORLD CUP QATAR 2025

FOOTBALL

Portugal and Austria reach historic U-17 World Cup final

European champions Portugal edge Brazil on penalties, while Moser brace powers Austria past Italy

By Sports Reporter
Doha



Portugal players celebrate after edging Brazil in a penalty shootout at the Aspire Zone.



Johannes Moser scored a brilliant double to help Austria beat Italy in the semi-finals.

Portugal held their nerve in a tense penalty shootout to overcome Brazil and secure a place in the U-17 World Cup final, where they will face Austria, who earned a composed 2-0 win over Italy in yesterday's semi-finals at the Aspire Zone in Doha.

It is the first time both Portugal and Austria have reached an U-17 World Cup final, and for Austria, it also marks their maiden appearance in a FIFA World Cup final across all age groups.

An electric atmosphere greeted Portugal and Brazil at the Aspire Zone and both teams delivered an opening half that matched it. Both sides created chances, including Portugal's Anisio Cabral seeing a shot blocked from inside the area and a Dell chance for Brazil that was cleared off the line.

The second half saw the contest become much cagier, with neither defence willing to yield an inch as a spot was at the fingertips of each. A goal could not be found, so matters had to be settled from the spot.

Each team converted their first four kicks before Portugal goalkeeper Romario Cunha skied his attempt. Brazil's Ruan Pablo had the chance to win it, but hit the post. The teams then exchanged successful attempts before Jose Neto converted for Portugal and Angelo of Brazil sent his over the crossbar to give Portugal the win.

Earlier, Johannes Moser scored a brilliant double as Austria beat Italy. The attacking midfielder netted his seventh and eighth goals of the tournament to earn his team a famous victory.

In a tense first half where both sides struggled to find their fluency, Italy's Dauda Iddrisa came closest when his rising drive went just over the bar. Austria would strike the first blow 12 minutes after half-time, and in some style.

Moser tricked his way into space before playing a pass into Jakob Werner. He brilliantly turned his man and then slipped an inch-perfect return ball into Moser's path, who fired an unerring finish beyond goalkeeper Alessandro Longoni. Substitute Valerio Maccaroni almost levelled for Italy but Moser's stunning free-kick – after Italy defender Benit Borasio was sent off – put the result beyond doubt.

Moser, who was adjudged as player of the match, was ecstatic to take his side to the final. "I'm so happy. We can't believe it yet!" he said. "It was a very physical game, now we have to analyse it and look forward to the final. We are a very small country and it means a lot to all of us. But the job is not finished, and we want to win the World Cup."

Austria coach Hermann Stadler was equally elated: "It's great, it's amazing, it's outstanding. It's a dream for the Austrian football association and especially for all young Austrian footballers. It's the first time the Austrian team is in the final. It's incredible, it's fantastic. The boys worked for each other, and now we are in the final! It's a dream come true."

Meanwhile Italy captain Luca Reggiani lamented missed opportunities but praised his side's campaign.

"We missed some chances in the beginning and we could not get the win. This is football. We have to be proud because I think we have had a good tournament. We lost one game, but we can keep our heads up. We are a good team, and I think we can do a lot together in the future," Reggiani said.

PREVIEW

Arab Cup returns as qualifiers kick off in Qatar today

By Sports Reporter
Doha



Palestine, who take on Libya in the Arab Cup qualifiers, are fresh off a camp in Spain, where they lost narrowly to a pair of very strong, selective regional teams from Catalonia and the Basque Country last week. *(AFP)*



Four years after Algeria captain Rais M'Bolhi thrust the trophy into the night air at Qatar's iconic Al Bayt Stadium, the FIFA Arab Cup is back. The four week-long football festival gets underway with the qualification phase to be held today and tomorrow before the 16-nation group stage swings into action on December 1.

Lusail Stadium, the site of the FIFA World Cup Qatar final in 2022, will then reprise that role for the Arab Cup decider on December 18. With nine nations seeded directly through to the tournament proper, the remaining seven slots at the regional showpiece will be settled through a series of one-off qualifiers in Qatar.

Three matches kick off today, with Mauritania facing Kuwait, Syria meeting South Sudan and Palestine taking on Libya. The remaining four fixtures — Oman vs Somalia, Bahrain vs Djibouti, Sudan vs Lebanon and Comoros vs Yemen — will be played tomorrow. Here is a preview of today's matches of what is set to be a tense couple of days of action in Al Rayyan and Doha.

MAURITANIA V KUWAIT (KICK-OFF AT 4PM)

Mauritania boss Aritz Garai has been able to call on the services of experienced European pair Lamine Ba and Bakari Camara as they look to reach the group stage for the second straight edition. Young Egypt-based attacking midfielder Maata Magassa is also a name to watch for the Northwest African nation. Garai said: "We have a very good generation of young players and this is an incredible opportunity to keep developing the national team and test ourselves against a strong opponent."

New Kuwait coach Helio Sousa faces his first competitive match at the helm of the Blues and does so off the back of a productive Cairo camp where they downed Tanzania and drew with Gambia.

Fahad al-Hajeri, Kuwait defender, said: "Everyone probably knows that the Kuwaiti team has been in a state of flux recently and we haven't won a title in many years. But we're always a force, and we enter every tournament aiming to compete for the title."

SYRIA V SOUTH SUDAN (KICK-OFF AT 7PM)

Syria have been in sparkling form since the mid-2024 arrival of head coach Jose Lana and a thumping 5-0 win in Pakistan last week in an Asian Cup qualifier means that they have still only lost once this calendar year. Several of their European-based stars may be absent but in the likes of deadly marksman Omar Khrbin and electric winger Mohammad al-Salkhadi they still have plenty of quality.

Jose Lana, Syria head coach, said: "We know it is going to be very difficult for us as we have some players who will not be able to come, others who are injured or have just recovered. As we always do though we will remain focused on the next match, being aware of how important it is."

By contrast, South Sudan remain winless in 2025 but they did pick up a credible draw at home to Togo last month in their final World Cup 2026 qualifier. Having been forced to withdraw on the eve of the qualifiers four years ago due to a Covid outbreak, the planet's youngest nation are determined to reach the group stage at Qatar 2025. Majak Mawith, South Sudan goalkeeper, said: "The Arab Cup is a really important tournament for us, one that we've been targeting and a chance to show what South Sudan is all about. We've been together for the last three months, constantly playing matches and we feel that we're ready."

PALESTINE V LIBYA (KICK-OFF AT 7PM)

Palestine are fresh off a camp in Spain, where they lost narrowly to a pair of very strong, selective regional teams from Catalonia and the Basque Country last week. That followed on from an eye-catching 1-0 win against the defending Arab Cup champions Algeria last month that continued a strong run of form under coach Ehab Abu Jazar.

Palestine goalkeeper Rami Hamada said: "My family, my city, my people, all of them are so proud of us and we want to say to the world that we have a dream, and we're dreaming like everyone else and that is to now play football, especially after how difficult things have been over the past years."

Likewise Libya have also had an impressive preparation, seeing off Mauritania 1-0 last week and drawing with World Cup-bound Cabo Verde last month. Forward Ezzeddin El Maremi looms as a major threat, having struck in four of the nation's past six outings. Defender Ali Yousef said: "We respect every team, of course, but we fear no one. Right now we're focused on the play-off, and only after that will we look at the group opponents."

CRICKET

SECOND TEST

Jansen hurts India again, South Africa sense victory

INDIA 201 ALL OUT REPLYING TO SOUTH AFRICA'S 489 AS VISITORS BID FOR A 2-0 SERIES SWEEP

Guwahati
Reuters

Marco Jansen continued to torment India in the second and final test in Guwahati as the lanky quick claimed 6-48 to help South Africa grab a potentially decisive first-innings lead of 288 on day three yesterday.

A day after smashing a career-best 93 in South Africa's first-innings total of 489, Jansen helped dismantle India for 201 at the first ever Test at Barsapara Cricket Stadium.

Aiden Markram produced a catching masterclass with five of them, including a one-handed stunner to remove Nitish Kumar Reddy.

South Africa, pushing for a 2-0 series sweep, did not enforce the follow-on and finished the day on 26 for no loss and an overall lead of 314.

Ryan Rickelton (13) and Markram (12) will return today hoping to bat India out of the match.

"There's obviously nice pace and bounce in the wicket," Jansen said.

"Not a lot of nip or swing, a little bit here at the end. Once we saw there was a bit of bounce and better pace in the wicket, we tried to utilise that." "Obviously, a good day for the chaps and for myself in particular. I feel the spinners did a really good job when the ball wasn't moving as much and there was a dead period at some stage."


South Africa's Marco Jansen (right) celebrates with teammates after taking the wicket of Nitish Kumar Reddy during the third day of the second Test at the Barsapara Cricket Stadium in Guwahati yesterday. (AFP)

PITCH LIKE A ROAD, SAYS YADAV

Earlier, India resumed on nine for no loss on a wicket described as a "road" by spinner Kuldeep Yadav because of its lack of assistance for the bowlers.

KL Rahul (22) looked compact in defence while his opening partner Yashasvi Jaiswal (58) was more fluent, often employing the sweep shot to counter the spinners.

Keshav Maharaj broke the 65-run opening stand an hour into play when Rahul lunged forward to defend a ball but was done for by the extra bounce.

The ball hit the shoulder of his bat before nestling into Markram's hands at slip.

Jaiswal took two off Simon Harmer's bowling to bring up the first fifty by an India batter in the series but his knock did not last much longer.

The left-hander was surprised by the slowness of the track and spooned a Harmer delivery towards backward point where it would have landed short of most players but not the 2.06m tall Jansen, who dived forward to pouch the ball.

Harmer claimed a second victim when Sai Sudharsan pulled the ball to Rickelton at mid-wicket.

Jansen then hit India with a bouncer barrage that paid off handsomely on an otherwise docile track and left the hosts reeling at 122-7. A 72-run stand between Washington Sundar (48) and Kuldeep proved the wicket was far from unplayable but the hosts were let down by their frontline batters. Number nine Kuldeep faced 134 balls, the most by any Indian batter, for his 19.

BRIEF SCORES
South Africa 489 and 26 for 0 (Rickelton 13*, Markram 12*) **lead India 201** (Jaiswal 58, Washington 48, Jansen 6-48, Harmer 3-64) **by 314 runs**

South Africa's Jansen relishes 6-48 with bouncer plan

Guwahati, India: South Africa's towering pace bowler Marco Jansen said yesterday his plan to bounce out India worked wonders after his figures of 6-48 put the visitors in sight of a historic Test series win.

The 6-foot 8-inch (2.03 metres) tall Jansen, a left-arm quick, helped bundle out India for 201 in response to South Africa's 489 on day three in Guwahati.

After winning the first Test in the two-match series in Kolkata, South Africa are closing on a first series win in India since Hansie Cronje's team triumphed in 2000.

South African spinners dismissed India's top three before Jansen took charge to get key wickets with the bouncer and reduce India to 122-7.

"To be honest, we just said we're going to try it," Jansen told reporters.

"The ball wasn't nipping as much like in Kolkata, the ball wasn't squatting as much so we had to figure out a plan and I think when I got my first wicket with a bouncer we said, okay cool, let's see how long this is going to work for and it just came off."

Jansen, who claimed his fourth five-wicket haul across 21 Tests, said, "It's a good wicket, there's good pace, good bounce. If you play the short ball well, you'll score runs. If you bowl well, you'll get wickets."

Jansen sent back Dhruv Jurel who fell to a pull shot on the short ball for an 11-ball duck.

Jansen then bowled a rising delivery to Nitish Kumar Reddy who attempted to fend it away, but Aiden Markram took a stunning diving catch from second slip.

Ravindra Jadeja fell to another bumper from Jansen as India slumped further, and later the lanky quick wrapped up the opposition innings in 83.5 overs.

Jansen, who played for Sunrisers Hyderabad in the Indian Premier League T20 tournament, said his latest performance is a coming of age on how to bowl on Indian pitches.

"I've always struggled bowling in India, whether it was white ball or red ball," Jansen said with a grin.

"I'm still jealous of people that get the ball to squat and nip back, and bowlers who are shorter than me like KG," he added, referring to Kagiso Rabada.

"Today was just one of those days I got the pace and the bounce out of the wicket, and where everything clicks and everything works and as a player. Those days you take it and you run."

Jansen stepped up to the challenge of being the team's pace spearhead after Rabada missed the two matches due to a rib injury he suffered ahead of the opener.

He said, "Not having KG there definitely adds a bit of responsibility and pressure".

"But we know we have the bowlers. We know we have the players in the squad to help the team win."

PREVIEW

Australia hope Cummins can return for second Test

Reuters
Sydney

Australia coach Andrew McDonald is hopeful skipper **Pat Cummins** will be able to play in the second Ashes test and thinks it highly unlikely that quick Josh Hazlewood will miss the whole series.

Paceman Cummins on Saturday rated himself a "half chance" to play the day-nighter against England in Brisbane from December 4 but McDonald was a little more positive than that when he spoke to reporters yesterday in Perth.

The coach said the 32-year-old had been scheduled to turn his arm in the nets on day four of the Perth Test yesterday but Australia's stunning victory inside two days had forced him to put those plans back by a day.

"That hasn't eventuated the way that we would have liked for Patty," McDonald said.

"Once we see him there again, we'll be able to then join the dots



as to what (a return) potentially looks like. It will be a genuine discussion leading into this Test match and that may be one that eventuates late for us.

"A little bit to work through but it's nearing completion, which is really, really positive."

Hazlewood, another member of the three-man pace cartel that has served Australia for a decade, suffered a hamstring injury that ruled him out of the first Test.

"He's working through first week of his rehab," said McDonald.

"Once he gets further down the track, then we'll be in a position to communicate.

"He'll be available at some point in the series."

The third member of the trio, Mitchell Starc, stepped up with match figures of 10 for 113 in the first test, a match dominated by pace bowling until Travis Head's spectacular 123 won the day for the home side.

McDonald said opener Usman Khawaja, who suffered back spasms in Perth that prevented him from coming out at the top of the order for the second innings, had returned home for checks but was not guaranteed to start in Brisbane even if he was fit.

"It's a long way out, a lot of information to gather between now and then, and hopefully Usman is fit and available for selection," he said.

"I think anytime you spasm, it's a result of something going on in your back. So I think that further investigation is just due diligence around that."

Head scored his match-winning century as a second-innings opener in his place and McDonald suggested it was a role the South Australian might reprise in future matches.

"I think it gave us a little bit of a lens potentially to the future in terms of adjusting batting orders in second innings," he said.

"You do it in one-day cricket, you front-end some of your innings if you know the back end is going to be difficult to chase down the runs.

"It's a conversation that we have had. We've had a conversation around Travis opening the batting for a long period of time, and Trav has been on the record this week around that also."

Pink ball Tests, particularly the evening sessions, are often dominated by pace bowling but McDonald said spinner Nathan Lyon would not be lightly discarded for the Gabba.

"It's not something that we like doing," the coach said. "If you look at Australian pink ball cricket in general terms, the middle sessions have been quite benign, and Nathan's done a lot of work there."

ANNOUNCEMENT

NZ's Williamson returns for Windies Test series

Reuters
Auckland

Kane Williamson was included in the New Zealand squad for December's three-Test series against West Indies yesterday along with experienced seamer Blair Tickner and young gun Zak Foulkes.

Former captain Williamson has retired from international Twenty20 cricket and skipped the one-day international series against the West Indies which concluded on Saturday with a 3-0 sweep for the Black Caps. "Kane's ability on the field speaks for itself and it will be great to have his skills as well as his leadership back in the test group," coach Rob Walter said of the 35-year-old batter.

"He's had a bit of time off to get himself ready for red-ball cricket."

Daryl Mitchell, eighth on the ICC Test batting rankings, also returns after missing the last two ODI matches with a groin strain he picked up while scoring a century in the series opener.

Seamers Will O'Rourke and Ben Sears were unavailable due to injury and Kyle Jamieson will miss the series opener at least, offering Tickner an opportunity to win his fourth Test cap more than two years after his third.

Tickner, 32, was twice named Man of the Match in the ODI series against England in late October and early November. Jacob Duffy, 31, was included as another pace option. Foulkes, 23, took a nine-wicket haul when he and Duffy made their Test debuts against Zimbabwe in Bulawayo in August.

"Both Jacob and Blair have been around a while and know what it takes to perform at the highest level," Walter added. "Zak couldn't have performed much better in his first Test against Zimbabwe. That, along with his recent form across the white-ball tours, has rightfully earned him selection."

West Indies have recalled veteran paceman Kemar Roach to their squad for the series, which kicks off in Christchurch on December 2 and also includes tests in Wellington and Tauranga.

New Zealand squad: Tom Latham (captain), Tom Blundell, Michael Bracewell, Devon Conway, Jacob Duffy, Zak Foulkes, Matt Henry, Daryl Mitchell, Rachin Ravindra, Mitchell Santner, Nathan Smith, Blair Tickner, Kane Williamson, Will Young

ASHES

'Keep the faith,' McCullum urges fans as England plot comeback

Reuters
Perth

England coach **Brendon McCullum** has urged fans to keep faith despite a disastrous start to their Ashes campaign, with hosts Australia clinching an eight-wicket win in Perth on the second day of the first test.

"Bazball", an attacking batting strategy backed by McCullum and captain Ben Stokes, has faced stinging criticism after England batters fared poorly in the shortest Ashes Test by overs bowled to deliver a result since 1888.

"Keep the faith. Sometimes we get beaten and it looks pretty ugly, but there are times when having that type of mentality allows us to still believe in our abilities when we step out to play," McCullum told British media.

"There are times we don't get it right, but we have to believe in what we believe in because it gives us the best chance. Just because we are one down in the series doesn't change what we believe in. We have to stay calm, stay together, and plot our way back into this series, as we have done before," McCullum added.

"The last few years we've built a setup which is really connected, it's tight, and it plays a style of cricket that we believe gives us our best chance. If we go away from that, then we're in trouble. If we're able to seize the key moments that separate the wins and the losses, then I have complete confidence that we'll be a live chance in this series," said McCullum in Perth, according to *The Guardian*.

"This is the fun stuff, right? When you're under the bat and things haven't quite worked out, that's when your methods are tested, and that's when you've got to stay calm as a leader, you've got to keep plotting the path and the way forward, and keep the boys' eyes on the prize," he added.

"We know how big this series is. We know how many eyeballs are on it, we know how disappointed all the fans will be, and we're incredibly disappointed ourselves. We're better than what we showed in the last four hours of Saturday, and we look forward to the next opportunity," said McCullum. The second Test takes place in Brisbane from December 4.

England's Bethell, Potts and Tongue to play warmup game ahead of second Test

England's Jacob Bethell, Matthew Potts and Josh Tongue were picked to play a day-night warmup match against the Australian Prime Minister's XI in Canberra, the country's cricket board (ECB) said yesterday.

The three players did not feature in England's crushing eight-wicket defeat in Perth last week.

"The England Men's Ashes Test squad have released three players – Jacob Bethell, Matthew Potts and Josh Tongue – to join the England Lions for their forthcoming two-day fixture against the Australian Prime Minister's XI in Canberra," ECB said in a statement.



SOLE CANDIDATE GOLOVKIN CONFIRMED AS WORLD BOXING PRESIDENT



Qatar Boxing Federation President Sheikh Fahad bin Khalid al-Thani is seen with new president of World Boxing Gennady Golovkin at the governing body's annual Congress in Rome.

Rome: Former middleweight champion Gennady Golovkin was confirmed as the new president of World Boxing at the governing body's annual Congress in Rome.
Kazakh Golovkin, once considered the best pound-for-pound boxer in the world and the winner of a silver medal at the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens, was elected as the sole candidate.
He replaced former president Boris van der Vorst, who had said in September that he would not seek re-election.
"It is a privilege to be elected... but this is just the beginning," Golovkin said in a statement shared by World Boxing.
"On the road to (Los Angeles 2028), we will restore trust in Olympic boxing to secure our place in Brisbane and beyond."
World Boxing will oversee the boxing competitions at the 2028 Olympics after the body was provisionally recognised by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in February.
World Boxing replaced the International Boxing Association (IBA), which was expelled by the IOC in June 2023.

Moshrif battles bravely to take Gr.2 PA Grand Prix de Sa Majesté le Roi Mohammed VI



CASABLANCA: Moshrif showed all his class to capture the Gr.2 (PA) Grand Prix de Sa Majesté le Roi Mohammed VI at Casablanca, a race for Purebred Arabians aged four and up run over 2100m on dirt on Sunday evening. The contest brought together a field of proven older horses, and the seven-year-old returned to winning ways.
Trained by Xavier Thomas-Demeaulte, ridden by Guillaume Guedj-Gay, and owned by Khalifa bin Sheail al-Kuwari, the son of Dahess bounced back after a respectable but below-par run in the Gr.1 (PA) Qatar Arabian World Cup at the ParisLongchamp.
Already a dual Gr.1 (PA) winner, this victory marked his second Gr.2 (PA) triumph, confirming his enduring class and competitive spirit.
Breaking well from stall one, Moshrif soon settled in third behind Casbar Ymir, in a race led by Al Zeer. Approaching the first bend, Guillaume Guedj-Gay allowed his mount to move closer, slipping onto the inside of Casbar Ymir to dispute second, with Mamouni Fal tracking in fourth.
Around the final bend, Moshrif moved clearly into second as Casbar Ymir came under pressure, while Al Zeer continued to lead. Straightening for home, Moshrif came on the leader's outside, the pair quickly drawing clear of the rest. Locked in a prolonged duel through the final 400 metres, Moshrif gradually gained the upper hand, showing great determination to edge ahead and win by a short neck to beat his rival. Mugheer (Mahabb) stayed on well to take third. Bred by Shadwell France, Moshrif is out of Tashreefat. He is a half-brother to Muraaqib, a seven-time Gr.1 (PA) winner over 1600m and 2000m between the ages of three and six, and to Barnamaj, a dual winner over 1400m and 2000m, as well as runner-up in a Gr.1 (PA) over 1200m and a Gr.2 (PA) over 1400m at four.

TENNIS

'Sincaraz' in full swing, but ITF sees challengers

ITF CEO Ross Hutchins says a new wave of challengers will emerge

Reuters
Madrid

Carlos Alcaraz and Jannik Sinner may have turned men's tennis into a duopoly over the last two years by sweeping the Grand Slams, but International Tennis Federation CEO Ross Hutchins is convinced a new wave of challengers will emerge.

The early 20-somethings, dubbed 'Sincaraz', split the majors again this year and clashed in six finals overall, reinforcing their grip on the men's game and signalling a power shift after the retirements of Roger Federer, Rafa Nadal and Andy Murray.

While 38-year-old Novak Djokovic remains a huge threat as the only active member of the "Big Four" that amassed 69 Grand Slam trophies over two decades, it is the "Sincaraz" rivalry that is defining a new era for the sport.

"It's exciting, isn't it?" Hutchins told Reuters. "I mean, what a story. Every time that we see amazing players come to the end of their careers, it seems like two, four, six, eight new players pop up and take the level forward to another dimension.

"What historic champions we've had, what amazing players we've had in the past. Now these two continue to push each other to new levels. Their serves improve, their forehands improve, their movement improves and their mentality improves.



Italy's Jannik Sinner celebrates with the trophy after winning the final as Spain's Carlos Alcaraz poses with the runners-up trophy in Turin, Italy, on November 16, 2025. *(Reuters)*

"They keep taking the sport to another level, which is just embracing the world with such excitement every time they get on court. But the sport has a strong contingency of groups behind them as well."

Although Spaniard Alcaraz and Italian Sinner have pulled away with a combined 10 majors, Hutchins pointed to emerging talents like Brazilian Joao Fonseca as evidence that the next generation are knocking on the door.

Fonseca won his second tour-level title in Basel last month and the 19-year-old has burst into the top 25 in the world after starting the year ranked number 145.

American teenager Learner Tien impressed by capturing his maiden title in Metz this month, as did Czech 20-year-old Jakub Mensik, who defeated his mentor and 24-times major champion Djokovic to claim the Miami Open crown in March. "Alcaraz and Sinner have created a gap in terms of their successes, but there are other young players, like Fonseca. I wouldn't be surprised if there's someone that pushes through," Hutchins added. "Murray and Djokovic really pushed through once Nadal and Federer took the mantle. Previously, there's always been people that come through. So we can't predict what's going to happen next year, but those two (Alcaraz and Sinner) have been red-hot this year and it's been breathtaking to watch."

ANNOUNCEMENT

QIIB is tournament supporter for FIFA Arab Cup 2025, FIFA Intercontinental Cup



The Local Organising Committee (LOC) for the FIFA Arab Cup Qatar 2025 and FIFA Intercontinental Cup Qatar 2025 unveiled Qatar International Islamic Bank (QIIB) as the new tournament supporter at a signing ceremony held in Doha.

QIIB, a leading Islamic bank in Qatar, was announced as the tournament supporter for both competitions, joining a number of esteemed brands who will be playing a critical role in the delivery of these prestigious tournaments.

The signing ceremony was attended by Eng Yasir bin Abdullah bin Ahmed al-Jamal, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Sports and Youth, and Dr Abdulbasit Ahmed al-Shaibei, CEO, Qatar International Islamic Bank.

"QIIB's sponsorship aligns with our national role in supporting major events hosted by Qatar, which reinforce its position as the capital of regional and international sports. We are proud of the sponsorship we are announcing today, which comes as part of our close co-operation and continuous support for Qatari sports. As always, we are confident that the tournaments will achieve great success at all levels," said al-Shaibei. The FIFA Arab Cup Qatar 2025 will be held from Dec 1-18 across six stadiums that previously hosted matches during the historic FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022.

Tickets for the FIFA Arab Cup Qatar 2025 are available starting from QR25. Supporters can also purchase a Follow My Team ticket, which will enable them to attend all matches of their team of choice during the group stage. Throughout the competition, fans will also be treated to a variety of entertainment and cultural activities.

During the rest days of the FIFA Arab Cup, Qatar will host the final three matches of the FIFA Intercontinental Cup Qatar 2025 presented by Aramco on 10, 13 and 17 December at the Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium, one of the venues used to host matches of the historic FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022. The prestigious competition will crown the best club in world football for 2025, with teams vying for the FIFA Derby of the Americas Qatar 2025, FIFA Challenger Cup Qatar 2025 and FIFA Intercontinental Cup Qatar 2025 trophies.

Tickets for both tournaments will be digital and will include accessible seating options for disabled fans.

They are available exclusively at: www.roadtoqatar.qa

SPOTLIGHT

Alkass unveiled as new tournament supporter for FIFA Arab Cup Qatar 2025



The FIFA Arab Cup Qatar 2025 Local Organising Committee (LOC) unveiled Alkass Sports Channels as the new tournament sponsor today at a signing ceremony held in Doha.

Alkass Sports Channels, a Qatari-based sports broadcaster, will join a number of esteemed brands who will be playing a critical role in the delivery of this prestigious Arab tournament.

The signing ceremony was attended by Eng Yasir bin Abdullah bin Ahmed al-Jamal, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Sports and Youth, and Essa bin Abdullah al-Hitmi, General Manager of Alkass Sports Channels.

"Alkass is proud to be part of the Arab Cup that holds a special significance for both players and fans across the region. Qatar will, once again, provide a global stage for our football stars to showcase their talents, and will bring Arab fans together to celebrate our culture and passion for the game," al-Hitmi said.

"We are excited to capture incredible stories from the pitch and beyond, and showcase Qatar's ability to host world-class tournaments. We are confident that the second edition of the Arab Cup will be a great success," he added.

The FIFA Arab Cup Qatar 2025 will be held from Dec 1-18 across six stadiums that previously hosted matches during the historic FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022.

Tickets are available at: www.roadtoqatar.qa, with prices starting from QR25, organisers said.

Supporters can also purchase a Follow My Team ticket, which will enable them to attend all matches of their team of choice during the group stage.

Throughout the competition, fans will also be treated to a variety of entertainment and cultural activities.

All tickets will be digital and will include accessible seating options for disabled fans.

For tournament updates, follow @roadtoqatar on all major social media platforms.

AFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE ELITE

Boulbina nets hat-trick as Duhail thrash Ittihad

By Sports Reporter
Doha


Al Duhail's Adil Boulbina scored in the fifth, 33rd and 53rd minutes against Al Ittihad in the AFC Champions League Elite yesterday.

Adil Boulbina scored a blistering hat-trick as Qatar's Al Duhail handed Saudi Pro League champions Al Ittihad a thumping 4-2 defeat in the AFC Champions League Elite clash yesterday to boost the club's hopes of a place in the knockout rounds.

A virtuoso performance saw the 22-year-old score in the fifth, 33rd and 53rd minutes before Krzysztof Piatek's 74th minute goal ensured that a late brace from Karim Benzema was in vain for Sergio Conceicao's side. Victory moves Al Duhail onto seven points from five matches in the West Zone league phase while Al Ittihad remain on six points going into the final three games of the opening round of the competition.

It was a thunderbolt of a strike that gave Al Duhail the lead when Boulbina unleashed a drive from 25 yards, the Algerian's left foot shot flying past Pedrag Rajkovic's despairing dive to his left.

With 12 minutes left in the half Al Duhail doubled their lead, and it was Boulbina again who punished the Saudi side. Captain Marco Verratti's inch-perfect through pass from inside his own half released Boulbina, who beat Danilo Pereira to the ball before bearing down on goal and, after a clever feint caused Rajkovic to hesitate, the ball was thumped home.

Boulbina got his third in the 53rd minute after Luis Alberto released him into the penalty area and, after wrong-footing Jan Carlo Simic, Boulbina worked the ball onto his left to fire a low shot under the body of Rajkovic. Burke pushed Fabinho's header over the bar as Al Ittihad sought a way back into the game but, with 16 minutes left, Piatek hit the fourth with Rajkovic unable to keep out a powerful right-foot shot. Benzema headed in two minutes later for Al Ittihad and then hit his side's second with seven minutes remaining with a high quality right foot finish but it was not enough to spark a late comeback for the visitors.

Shabab stroll past Gharafa

Meanwhile, Al Gharafa went down to Shabab Al Ahli 0-2 at the Rashid Stadium in Dubai. The win gave the side from the United Arab Emirates their third win and took them to 10 points.

The loss was Al Gharafa's fourth, leaving the Qatar side on three points. Kauan Santos gave the home side the lead in the ninth minute when he threaded his way past three Al Gharafa defenders and drilled a low shot that struck defender Aron Gunnarsson's boot and went past a lunging Khalifa Ababacar into the bottom right corner.

An unmarked Guilherme Bala doubled his side's lead in the 28th minute by coolly bending the ball from outside the area, again past a diving Ababacar and again into the bottom right.

Shabab Al Ahli will look to continue their winning ways when they face Qatari champions Al Sadd while Al Gharafa play UAE's Al Wahda FC, with both matches scheduled for December 23.

PREVIEW

Chelsea's Maresca braced for big week, Palmer out of Barca clash


Chelsea's Reece James with Wesley Fofana during a training session in Cobham, Britain, yesterday. *(Reuters)*

Reuters
London

Chelsea forward Cole Palmer is close to returning but will miss the Champions League clash with Barcelona before the top-of-the-table Premier League showdown against Arsenal, manager Enzo Maresca said yesterday.

Palmer, who suffered a groin injury in August before returning with back-to-back goals against Brentford and Bayern Munich, was nearing his comeback, but an accident at home delayed his return. The 23-year-old England international stubbed his toe on a door during the night, resulting in a fracture. "Cole is wearing a (protective) boot," Maresca told reporters. "We don't know when he will be back but for sure it will be soon. He's already on the pitch, he's already touching the ball and the feeling (for him) is good. I don't think he will be available for these two games (Barca and Arsenal), but he is doing well."

Chelsea sit six points behind leaders Arsenal in the league, with 23 points from 12 matches. The sides meet in a London derby at Stamford Bridge on Sunday. Maresca, however, was not looking too far ahead, with five-times Champions League winners Barcelona up next.

"It's a big week, but at the end of this week. We have Leeds away, Bournemouth away, Atalanta away," the Italian said. "Every game is three points. Barcelona tomorrow and Arsenal on Sunday are important for different reasons, but it's important for us to go game by game."

Barca, second in La Liga, bring firepower in abundance to Stamford Bridge, with Robert Lewandowski leading the line. The 37-year-old Polish striker has netted eight goals in La Liga this season, second only to Real Madrid's Kylian Mbappe, who has 13.

Barca teenager Lamine Yamal, second in the La Liga assist charts with six, also poses a significant threat. "For sure he (Lewandowski) is a fantastic player. He has shown all his life that he does the most important thing in football, score goals. We are going to try and defend as a team, be aggressive, like we always defend," Maresca said. "But they have so many players; Yamal, Fermin Lopez, Frenkie de Jong."

FOOTBALL

Eze earned spotlight in Arsenal rout of Spurs, says Arteta

'I'M SO HAPPY FOR HIM. IT IS A DAY HE DESERVES'

AFP
London


Arsenal's Eberechi Eze and manager Mikel Arteta celebrate after their Premier League victory over Tottenham Hotspur in London. *(Reuters)*

Mikel Arteta said Eberechi Eze's brilliant hat-trick in Arsenal's 4-1 demolition of Tottenham on Sunday was just reward for the midfielder's "exceptional" commitment to improve.

Eze became only the fourth player to score a north London derby treble and the first to hit three in the bitter rivalry since Alan Sunderland in 1978. The 27-year-old midfielder tore Tottenham to shreds with clinical finishes in the 41st, 46th and 76th minutes at the Emirates Stadium.

Leandro Trossard netted in the 36th minute to open the floodgates before Eze stole the show with the first treble of his professional career. Richarlison's incredible 35-yard chip over Gunners keeper David Raya in the 55th minute was no consolation for toothless Tottenham.

While Eze had made a relatively slow start to his Arsenal career since his £60mn ($78mn) move from Crystal Palace in August, Arteta has been impressed with the England star's dedication. That desire to improve was on show when he reported back early from the recent international break.

"I'm so happy for him. It is a day he deserves. At any minute he can win us a game," Arteta said.

"Things happen for a reason. After the international duty he had two days off, but after one day he went to training. Because he wants to improve. He was asking me questions. He can score from the right, the left, in the ground, with the ball bouncing, he has such a capacity to take these chances. He is exceptional. We need to play to his qualities."

Eze had snubbed Tottenham's interest in favour of joining Arsenal and his eye-catching performance underlined just what their rivals missed out on. "When I picked up the phone to him in the summer I remember he said he wanted to play for us and be part of this team. You can really sense that. Hopefully he enjoys this day," Arteta said.

It was a memorable afternoon for Arsenal, whose biggest win over Tottenham since 2012 extended their lead at the top of the Premier League to six points. "A great day. We enjoyed every minute of it. Since the players came back from international duty I sensed they were ready for a big week. Their preparation was top," Arteta said.

"It is the application, the energy and the desire to win. It is without a question the biggest attribute for this team. We were exceptional from minute one. We were super dominant. A day to remember. You don't always win a derby 4-1."

With champions Liverpool in turmoil and Manchester City also spluttering after Saturday's loss at Newcastle, Arteta's side are in pole position in the title race. After three successive runners-up finishes in the Premier League, this season is a golden opportunity to finally end their wait for a first title since 2004.

Although Arsenal are unbeaten in 15 matches in all competitions, Arteta refused to get carried away ahead of a big week featuring a Champions League visit from Bayern Munich and a trip to second-placed Chelsea in the Premier League next weekend.

Asked how much confidence he took from the manner Arsenal's victory, Arteta said: "In this league? Not much. It means we are doing well and winning games." Tottenham boss Thomas Frank was forced to apologise after his first taste of the north London derby raised fresh questions about his cautious tactics. "Where do I start? It was hugely disappointing that we don't perform better against our biggest rival. I can only apologise to the fans for that," he said.

Frank had already been criticised for his pragmatic game plans and Tottenham's latest tepid display forced him to defend his philosophy.

"Very emotional and frustrated right now. I take full responsibility. But what I will say is we needed to be more aggressive no matter the system," he said.

I'm a big believer that no matter what system you play you can be successful. We didn't win enough of those duels, whether that was a lack of fight or whatever it is."

MOTORSPORT

Qatari drivers shine as Dubai International Baja wraps up season

By Sports Reporter
Doha

The Dubai International Baja concluded on Sunday, bringing the curtain down on both the 2025 FIA World Baja Championship and the FIA Middle East Baja Championship.

The final round produced a weekend of intense competition, with Qatari drivers once again proving their strength across the field.

The QMMF Team finished the season as the FIA Middle East Baja Championship winner for teams, cementing a dominant campaign.

Khalifa al-Attiyah produced one of the standout performances of the year by winning the Challenger category title and finishing second overall in the championship standings.

Abdulaziz al-Kuwari completed the season as runner-up in the Challenger class, while Abdullah al-Rabban celebrated a remarkable double, securing both the Stock and Masters category championships. In the SSV ranks, Mohammad al-Attiyah rounded off a strong season by taking second overall in the FIA Middle East SSV Championship.

The Dubai round itself delivered tight battles and impressive performances. Rising talent Mohammad al-Marri put in a composed drive to claim fifth place in the SSV category, while al-Rabban maintained his excellent season form with a second-place finish in the Stock class.

There was early drama in the Challenger category. Rashed al-Muhannadi ended the opening day in an excellent second place before a mechanical issue on day two forced him to retire. Meanwhile, both Abdulaziz al-Kuwari and Khalifa al-Attiyah were sidelined on day one but returned to action the following day, with Khalifa fighting back to finish fifth and Abdulaziz taking sixth.

The strong showing in Dubai capped a successful season for Qatar's teams and drivers, reinforcing their growing prominence on the regional off-road rallying stage.



