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Pakistan rout Sri Lanka to victory T20I tri-series



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Foden double helps Man City secure thrilling win over Leeds

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Over 700,000 tickets sold as excitement builds for FIFA Arab Cup

**Page 4**

**QATAR GRAND PRIX**

# Piastri takes pole, wins sprint to ramp up pressure on Norris

If Norris finishes ahead of Piastri and Verstappen, the Briton will seal his maiden Formula 1 title



Oscar Piastri leads the field at the start of the sprint race at Lusail International Circuit. **PICTURE:** Noushad Thekkayil

**By Sahar Bidappa**  
Doha

Oscar Piastri may have left it late in his title bid, but he is certainly not going out without a fight. The McLaren driver took pole position for the Qatar Grand Prix yesterday, just hours after winning the sprint to cut teammate Lando Norris's lead to 22 points at the floodlit Lusail International Circuit.

Four-time defending champion Max Verstappen, the only other driver still in title contention and 25 points adrift of Norris, qualified third for Red Bull.

Norris had initially topped the leaderboard after the first Q3 laps, but a brief delay to clear debris, a strip of tyre compound that had peeled off Carlos Sainz's Williams, halted proceedings. When the session resumed, the championship leader ran wide at Turn 2 on his final push lap after appearing slightly unsettled while negotiating George Russell's Mercedes on the out-lap. The error forced him to abandon the lap, opening the door for Piastri.

The Australian made it count as he delivered a superb 1m 19.387s on his second flying lap, securing his sixth career pole by 0.108s. The 24-year-old Piastri was delighted with his day's effort.

"We left the car pretty much the same, very minor tweaks here and there, but everything has been feeling great all weekend, so if it ain't broke, don't fix it," Piastri said. "It was really good. We had a question mark on which tyres to use because I did a quick lap on a used set in Q2, but Q3 was really good on the new tyres."

1	PIASTRI	2	NORRIS
3	VERSTAPPEN	4	RUSSELL
5	ANTONELLI	6	HADJAR
7	SAINZ	8	ALONSO
9	GASLY	10	LECLEERC
11	HULKENBERG	12	LAWSON
13	BEARMAN	14	ALBON
15	TSUNODA	16	OCOON
17	HAMILTON	18	STROLL
19	BORTOLETO	20	COLAPINTO

The starting grid for today's Qatar Grand Prix.

Looking ahead to today's race at the physically demanding, high-grip Lusail circuit, he added: "Pretty tough. With the two stops, we're probably going to be pushing hard the whole time. It won't be as hot as a couple of years ago, but I'm expecting it to be a tough race. You're pulling G forces at multiple points on the lap, so it's hard work but incredible fun."

Norris, who knows victory today will seal his maiden Formula 1 title ahead of next weekend's Abu Dhabi finale, was left frustrated but offered no excuses as he praised his teammate. "I just got a bit of understeer and was going to go off, so I had to abort. Which is a shame, but that's the way it is. Oscar did a good lap and has driven very well all weekend, so nothing to complain about," he said.

"The first couple of laps are opportunities for everyone, but after that it should probably be straightforward," he added.

Verstappen ended the session just over a tenth further back. The Dutchman must finish ahead of Norris today to keep his title hopes alive and take the fight to Abu Dhabi. "This qualifying was a little bit better. We are still quite far off, but at least I felt a little bit happier," Verstappen said. "Some limitations prevent us from pushing harder around the lap, but we are P3 and starting on the second row, and that creates better opportunities because it's hard to pass around here. We will see what we can do tomorrow."

Behind the top three, Russell and Kimi Antonelli locked out the third row for Mercedes, with Sainz seventh. Fernando Alon-



Qatar sprint race winner Oscar Piastri of McLaren, runner-up George Russell of Mercedes and third-placed Lando Norris of McLaren pose with Serbian tennis legend Novak Djokovic at the Lusail International Circuit. (AFP)



Metallica's lead vocalist James Hatfield, who will perform today after the Qatar Grand Prix, walks on the grid before the sprint race at the Lusail International Circuit. (AFP)

so (Aston Martin), Pierre Gasly (Alpine) and Charles Leclerc (Ferrari) completed the top ten.

Earlier in the evening, Piastri had returned to winning ways with a dominant lights-to-flag victory in the sprint. He controlled the 19-lap dash to claim his first win since the Dutch Grand Prix in August, collecting eight points to further erode Norris's lead. Norris finished where he started in third behind Russell.

Verstappen gained two places with a brilliant launch to take fourth. Yuki Tsunoda and Antonelli were fifth and sixth, despite both serving five-second penalties for repeated track-limits infringements. Alonso secured seventh, with Sainz taking the final point.

Ferrari endured a miserable evening, with

Leclerc slipping back at the start and finishing 13th. Lewis Hamilton fared even worse, crossing the line 17th on what is turning into another deeply frustrating weekend for the seven-time world champion.

The frustration deepened in qualifying later, where Hamilton suffered a second straight Q1 elimination - becoming part of an unwanted Ferrari record. His lap was only good enough for 18th on today's grid, matching his sprint starting position.

"I was generally feeling better. We made changes. The car was feeling better. Just wasn't great," the 40-year-old said. Asked for a message to his fans, he added: "I don't really have a message right now. I'm sorry. But I'm incredibly grateful for the support I've had all year. I wouldn't have made it through this year without them."

## QMMF and LIC president al-Mannai meets motorsport officials at Qatar Grand Prix

President of the Qatar Motor & Motorcycle Federation (QMMF) and Lusail International Circuit (LIC) Abdulrahman bin Abdullatif al-Mannai, along with LIC CEO Abdulaziz Ali al-Mohannadi, yesterday met with Alexander Wurz, Chairperson of the Grand Prix Drivers' Association (GPDA), Georges-Louis Bouchez, Chairman of the Spa-Francorchamps Circuit, and Toto Wolff, Team Principal of the Mercedes team, on the sidelines of the ongoing Formula 1 Qatar Grand Prix. The discussions centred on strengthening collaboration and sharing insights to advance motorsport and enhance support for drivers at both regional and international levels.





FOCUS

# Pakistan hammer Sri Lanka to win T20I tri-series

SPINNER NAWAZ, PACER SHAHEEN SPARKLE IN THE FINAL



Pakistan's players and team officials pose with trophy at the end of the Twenty20 tri-series final against Sri Lanka at Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium yesterday. (AFP)

AFP  
Rawalpindi, Pakistan

**M**ohammad Nawaz and Shaheen Shah Afridi starred with the ball as Pakistan won the T20I tri-series with a thumping six-wicket victory over Sri Lanka in the final yesterday. Nawaz took 3-17 and Shaheen 3-18 as Sri Lanka were dismissed for a paltry 114 in 19.1 overs, before Pakistan romped home with eight balls to spare at Rawalpindi Stadium. Zimbabwe were the third team in the tri-series but lost three of their four matches to finish bottom. Sri Lanka were never in the hunt in the decider after posting a below-par total as Saim Ayub (36) and Sahibzada Farhan (23) gave Pakistan a solid 46-run opening partnership in-

side the first eight overs. Babar Azam hit 37 not out to ensure Pakistan did not derail despite losing skipper Salman Agha (14) and Fakhar Zaman (three) in quick succession. "It was a great performance from us," said Agha. "This has been a very good two months for us, we won against South Africa and now against Sri Lanka." Earlier, Sri Lanka, sent in to bat, lost nine wickets for a mere 30 runs after being well set on 84-1 in the 11th over. Opener Kamil Mishara hit a robust 47-ball 59, with the help of four sixes and two boundaries, to set a platform for a good total for the visitors. Mishara added 64 runs for the second wicket with Kusal Mendis, who scored 14, but once both departed in the space of three overs the innings fell apart. Nawaz dismissed Mendis, while Mishara holed out off Ayub, as the Pakistan bowlers relentlessly cranked up the pressure. None of the later Sri Lankan batters could reach double figures as Nawaz and Shaheen tore through the middle and lower order. "We couldn't build on a good platform because Pakistan bowled very well," said Sri Lankan skipper Dasun Shanaka. "We need to fine-tune our game ahead of the next series and the World Cup," Shanaka added. India and Sri Lanka co-host the Twenty20 World Cup in February-March next year.

**BRIEF SCORES**  
**Pakistan 118 for 4** (Babar 37\*, Ayub 36, Rathnayake 2-11) **beat Sri Lanka 114** (Mishara 59, Nawaz 3-17, Shaheen 3-18, Abrar 2-18) **by six wickets**

COMMENT

## England captain Stokes dismisses 'arrogant' claims in lead-up to second Ashes Test



Reuters  
Brisbane

**E**ngland captain **Ben Stokes** dismissed claims his team were "arrogant" following their capitulation in the first Ashes Test against Australia in Perth last week as preparations for the second game in the five-match series continued yesterday. Stokes' team will face the Australians in Brisbane from Thursday, having suffered an eight-wicket defeat inside two days in the highly anticipated opener to the series, with the manner of the defeat prompting widespread criticism. "Call us rubbish, call us whatever you want," said Stokes yesterday. "We didn't have the Test match that we wanted but we were great in passages of that game. "I think arrogant might be a little bit too far but that's OK. We'll take the rough with the smooth. (I'm) OK with words like rubbish but arrogant? Sometimes you're like, 'I'm not so sure about that one'" England have not won an Ashes series in Australia after losing the first Test since the 1950s and will go into the day-night Test in Brisbane with Stokes insisting the team will stick to their attacking

principles despite the result in Perth. "We did some amazing things throughout that Test match," said Stokes. "There were moments in that game where we could've been a lot better to help us gain even more of an advantage than we did have. And we know that and we understand that. "Could we have been better executing what we wanted to do? Definitely. "But again, we've got a mindset of playing the game which is looking to put the opposition under pressure but also trying to absorb that. "That's what the key for the rest of the tour is, making sure we stay true to our belief of how we play our cricket, but also we do know that we could have been a lot better in certain areas." Stokes and his teammates arrived in Brisbane on Wednesday and the all-rounder is expecting a different challenge in the hot and humid conditions in Queensland for the pink-ball test. "I feel like it's going to be much harder physically than the conditions in Perth," he said. "We've got an understanding of what it's going to be like in Brisbane. "It's going to be tough, it's going to be hard but that's why it's called Test cricket."

**Bangladesh beat Ireland in second T20I by 4 wickets**

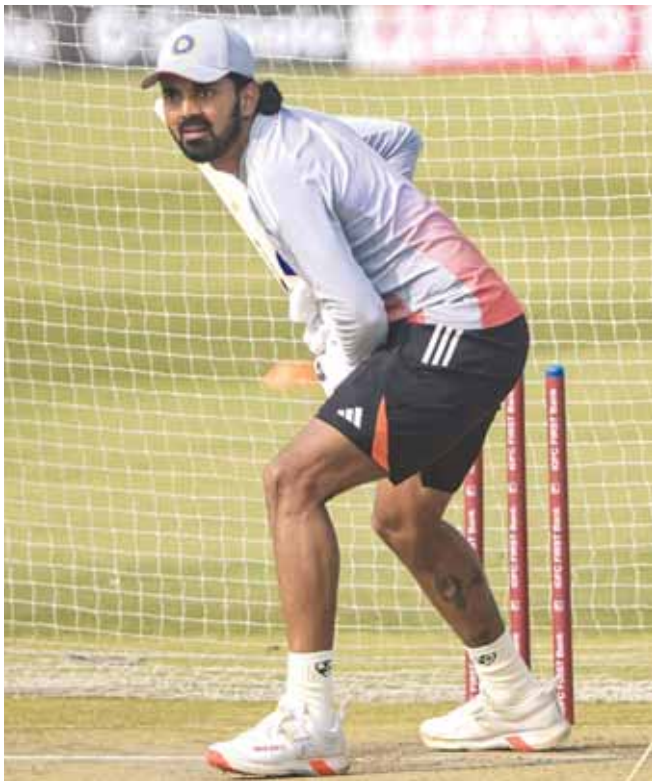
Bangladesh's Litton Das sweeps during his Man of the Match performance in the second T20I against Ireland in Chattogram yesterday. Bangladesh won by four wickets with two deliveries to spare while chasing 171. Ireland scored 170 for 6 in their 20 overs.

## Rahul says India's focus on winning ODI series

Reuters  
Ranchi

**K**L Rahul said India will put their humbling Test series defeat by South Africa behind them as he leads the team into a three-match one day international series against the same opponents starting today in Ranchi. India lost the opening Test against the Proteas in Kolkata by 30 runs before suffering a 408-run hammering in Guwahati that left them licking their wounds after a fifth defeat in the last seven Tests at home. Rahul, 33, was named captain for the start of the three-match ODI series as regular India skipper Shubman Gill nurses a neck issue. The wicketkeeper-batter said winning was the most important thing for them. "That's what we will focus on, and forget what happened a week ago," Rahul told reporters in Ranchi yesterday. "We're focusing on the game tomorrow and we'll see how we can put in a collective performance which helps us win. Then we move to the second venue and try to win

the series. That's the most important thing." India will be bolstered by the return of former captains Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma - both of whom have retired from Test cricket - adding more depth and experience to the side. "Their importance at any point is huge, to have senior players in the team. It makes the dressing room feel a lot more confident," Rahul said. "Just having their presence and experience helps out the team. We are really happy they're here." India's bowling coach Morne Morkel said a day earlier that the switch to white-ball cricket would inject fresh energy into the home side and help them regroup. "It's a change of colour by clothing and it's a change of ball, which always brings a different energy," said the South African Morkel. "It'll be important to start well, to play good cricket over the next week or two, because South Africa are here to win," Morkel told reporters. "Luckily, we have got some good experience ahead now in the team." India will play three ODIs against South Africa between today and December 6 before the teams face off again in five T20 Internationals.



India's captain KL Rahul attends a practice session at the JSCA International Stadium in Ranchi on the eve of the first ODI against South Africa. (AFP)

ASHES

## Retired pacer Broad says winning toss a crucial factor in pink-ball Test

Reuters  
Brisbane

**F**ormer England fast bowler Stuart Broad said the second Ashes Test starting Thursday next week will be a lottery and the toss is a key factor in Brisbane with the pink ball. Australia have won 13 of their 14 day-night Tests with their only loss coming at

the Gabba last year against the West Indies. England have won just two out of their seven pink-ball matches. They have lost all three in Australia, with a 120-run defeat in Adelaide in 2017, before 275-run and 146-run defeats in Adelaide and Hobart in 2021. "We know the pink-ball Test, having played a few ourselves, is a bit of a lottery," Broad, who has played in all of England's

pink-ball Tests so far, said on For The Love of Cricket podcast. "It is all about timing a little bit of when you bowl with the brand new ball. "Winning the toss and batting is pretty crucial in the pink-ball Test in my opinion." Australia won the first Test by eight wickets after England batting collapsed twice in Perth, with Mitchell Starc taking 10 wickets in the match.

The fast-bowler is also the leading wicket-taker in the pink-ball Tests with 81 wickets, and could pose a threat once again for the visitors' batting unit. "That's why I think it is quite important to bat first because even if you are bowled out by tea when it's starting to go dark, you have a brand new ball under lights," Broad said. "And if you bat well you can control when you bowl in the game and in the day." Prior to the series, Broad had labelled

the current Australian cricket team as their weakest since 2010. He cited concerns over Australia's unsettled top-order batting and captain Pat Cummins' availability, directly countering David Warner's prediction of a dominant home victory. Australia, 1-0 up in the series, will again be captained by stand-in skipper Steve Smith as Pat Cummins and fellow pacerman Josh Hazlewood are again ruled out due to injuries.



FOOTBALL

# Foden emerges hero as Man City post thrilling win

CITY END TWO-GAME LOSING STREAK, STAY IN TITLE RACE AS LEEDS REMAIN IN RELEGATION ZONE

Reuters  
Manchester

Manchester City's Phil Foden delivered in dramatic fashion by scoring in the first and 91st minutes for a dramatic 3-2 win over Leeds United yesterday in a breathless finish that kept Pep Guardiola's side firmly in the Premier League title race.

The game seemed headed for a draw after second-half goals by Leeds substitute Dominic Calvert-Lewin and Lukas Nmecha brought the visitors level but seconds into added time Foden found some space in the box and fired home to send the fans into raptures.

The victory left City second on 25 points, four behind Arsenal, who visit third-placed Chelsea (23 points) today. Leeds remain in the relegation zone in 18th with 11 points.

Guardiola's men were keen to put things right after two straight losses, including a 2-0 home defeat by Bayer Leverkusen in the Champions League on Tuesday, and wasted little time.

Before the game was a minute old, Matheus Nunes worked the ball down the wing and crossed to Foden, whose first-time shot

glanced off the underside of the bar and went in past goalkeeper Lucas Perri.

City continued to dominate and Josko Gvardiol doubled their lead in the 25th when he poked home a point-blank effort from a corner when Nico O'Reilly's header fell at the Croat's feet. There was a lengthy VAR check for offside but the goal stood.

City were lackadaisical after the break though and Leeds' Ao Tana-ka pounced on a casual attempted clearance to slide the ball to substitute Calvert-Lewin who pulled one back in the 50th minute. The former Everton striker appeared to briefly lose possession in the box but Nunes touched it into his path.

Nmecha equalised in the 68th minute. A penalty was awarded to the visitors for Gvardiol's tackle on Calvert-Lewin and although Gianluigi Donnarumma saved Nmecha's initial effort, the forward rushed in to fire the rebound into the empty net.

Foden's late goal came amid a flurry of chances for City at the death.

"I was so hungry today to play and prove to myself I could still score goals," Foden said. "I missed a few chances against Newcastle and wanted to put it right.

"The title race is never straight-



Manchester City's English midfielder Phil Foden celebrates scoring his team's third goal during the English Premier League match against Leeds United at the Etihad Stadium in Manchester, north west England, yesterday. (AFP)

forward," he added. "There's always ups and downs and periods where you can't seem to get going and we've had that.

"The belief and togetherness came through at the end. Hopefully that's the case today that we can kick on from here."

The victory ended a spell of

two consecutive losses for City in all competitions and answered some questions about their attacking options. Recent defeats by Newcastle United in the Premier League and Leverkusen in Europe had raised questions about Guardiola's reliance on Erling Haaland, who is one goal away from becom-

ing the quickest to reach 100 Premier League goals.

However, Guardiola's other players stepped up yesterday, with O'Reilly, Tijjani Reijnders and Omar Marmoush among those narrowly missing chances as City had 18 shots to Leeds' nine.

"All season he (Foden) has been

so brilliant," Guardiola told *beIN Sports*.

"I remember some players that I train at Barcelona, he arrives in the penalty spot, shooting from outside... He's the closest one I've ever seen."

Leeds had their chances, particularly in a second half sparked by Daniel Farke's changes in what looked like it might be a turning point in their season. Instead, they are stuck in the drop zone with three wins from 13 games.

## NEWCASTLE'S THUMP EVERTON 4-1

Malick Thiaw scored the fastest goal of the Premier League season after 55 seconds as Newcastle United recorded a first away win of the campaign with a 4-1 success over Everton at the Hill Dickinson Stadium yesterday.

Lewis Miley and Nick Woltemade added two more in the first half as Newcastle led 3-0 at the break, before Thiaw bagged his second as the visitors took advantage of more poor defending from their hosts. Newcastle move into 11th in the table with 18 points from 13 games, while Everton also have 18 points but are in 14th place having conceded four goals for the first time at their new stadium on the banks of the River Mersey.

HORSE RACING

# Medan captures Lekhraib Cup with superb late surge



Connections of Medan celebrate after the grey mare won the Lekhraib Cup at the Uqda Racecourse yesterday. PICTURES: Juhaim

By Sports Reporter  
Doha

Lekhraib Cup Day at Al Uqda Racecourse yesterday delivered an exciting evening of racing, with seven competitive events unfolding on the turf. The feature race belonged to Medan, who closed the meeting in style.

Medan produced a powerful late run to capture the Lekhraib Cup, a 2200m Purebred Arabian Handicap for older horses. Carrying top weight and making her seasonal return, the seven-year-old grey mare, trained by Mohammed Hassan al-Matwi and ridden confidently by Szczepan Mazur, surged home to win by three-quarters of a length. After settling behind the leaders, she unleashed her best stride in the final furlong to run down Jenkille-

Hipolyte, who held second, while Raed closed late for third.

The afternoon opened with a sharp performance from Crest Of Esteem, who broke his maiden in the 1400m Thoroughbred opener. Held off the pace early, he finished strongly under Alberto Sanna to win by 1½ lengths, with Waajidd and The Hrse Horse filling the places in a tight finish.

Serengeti Sunset returned to winning form in the 2200m Thoroughbred Handicap for Qatari and apprentice jockeys, sweeping past Loaded Gun in the final strides for a two-length victory. Achika then claimed the Local Thoroughbred Handicap in a dramatic short-head finish, outlasting Ghafan in a stirring battle to the line.

Glory Of The Stars followed with another photo-finish win, edging September Leaves by a nose in the 1400m fillies and mares handicap. Tambor-



Jockey Szczepan Mazur guided Medan to the Lekhraib Cup win.

rada showed stamina to land the 2200m handicap for older horses, finishing strongest to overtake the long-time leader See All Match.

Razy completed the card with a commanding front-running victory in the Local Purebred Arabian Handicap, making all the running to seal a confident seasonal return. The six-years-old grey geldin, carrying the Wathnan Racing colours, presented in peak order by Alban de Mieulle and confidently handled by Soufiane Saadi, shouldered the top weight of 60kg yet still made a successful seasonal debut, adding a fourth career win with a determined 1¼-length victory.

**RESULTS**  
**17th Al Uqda Race Meeting - Lekhraib Cup**  
**WINNERS:** (Horse, Trainer, Jockey)  
**1 - Lekhraib Cup - Purebred**

**Arabian Handicap 85-105**  
Medan, Mohammed Hassan al-Matwi, Szczepan Mazur  
**2 - Local Purebred Arabian Handicap (75-95)**

Razy, Alban de Mieulle, Soufiane Saadi  
**3 - Thoroughbred Handicap (65-85)**

Tamborrada, Mohammed Hassan al-Matwi, Salman Fahad al-Hajri  
**4 - Thoroughbred Handicap (65-85)**

Glory Of The Stars, Debbie Mountain, Jefferson Smith  
**5 - Local Thoroughbred Handicap (0-55)**

Achika, Yousef al-Jumailly, Jefferson Smith  
**6 - Thoroughbred Handicap (0-75)**

Serengeti Sunset, Hamad al-Jehani, Saleh Faraj al-Otaibi  
**7 - Thoroughbred Maiden Plate**

Crest Of Esteem, Jassim Hamad al-Atteya, Alberto Sanna

## MONACO SHOCK PSG AS MINAMINO SCORES WINNER

**Monaco:** Japan's Takumi Minamino scored the only goal of the game as Monaco shocked reigning champions Paris Saint-Germain in Ligue 1 yesterday, winning 1-0 in the principality. The 30-year-old Japanese international star, once of Liverpool, struck just past the midway point in the second half at the Stade Louis II to inflict a second domestic defeat of the campaign on PSG. Monaco held on through the closing stages, including seven minutes of stoppage time, after having former Paris defender Thilo Kehrer sent off in the 80th minute. It is a surprise result with Monaco ending a run of three consecutive Ligue 1 losses which had seen them lose ground on PSG and the other sides at the top of the table. They are now provisionally up to sixth, seven points behind the capital side whose only other reverse in Ligue 1 so far this season came away to Marseille in September. PSG remain top of the standings for now with 30 points from 14 games, but last season's Champions League winners are just two points clear of nearest rivals Marseille and Lens and could lose

their place at the summit later on Saturday. "Usually I prefer to watch matches again and analyse them, but today it is easier. We were not precise enough and we made too many individual and collective mistakes," said PSG coach Luis Enrique. "Neither team played at a very high level, but they played better than us. It was without any doubt our worst match of the season." Marseille, fresh from winning 2-1 at home to Newcastle United in the Champions League in midweek, can go first with a win against Toulouse later at the Velodrome. Lens will also have the opportunity to leapfrog PSG by taking three points at Angers on Sunday. Minamino controlled an Aleksandr Golovin cross before finishing past Lucas Chevalier to open the scoring and Monaco maintained their advantage even after German centre-back Kehrer saw red following a VAR check for a foul on Ibrahim Mbaye. Paul Pogba made another brief cameo appearance off the bench for the hosts, a week after coming on for his first competitive appearance in over two years following a doping ban.

## Three-way tie for lead at Australian PGA as Scott stays in hunt

Spain's David Puig, Portugal's Ricardo Gouveia and Anthony Quayle shared a one-shot lead at the Australian PGA Championship yesterday with local heroes Min Woo Lee and Adam Scott within striking distance. LIV Golf's Puig hit six birdies in an unblemished round of 65 at the Royal Queensland Golf Club to be 13-under for the tournament. Gouveia sprinkled seven birdies with two bogeys in his 66 with both men bidding for a maiden DP World Tour win at the season-opening tournament. "I was very consistent off the tee, and then I kept hitting greens which is really important on this course, and holed a few putts, which was great," said Gouveia. "I've never been in the lead on a Saturday going into Sunday, so it's going to be a new experience. I'm happy and looking forward to the day." They were joined at the top by Australia's Quayle, who is exuding confidence with Tiger Woods' former caddie Steve Williams on the bag, snagging birdies at 15 and 17 to stay in the hunt after dropping a shot at the 14th.

BUNDESLIGA

# Diaz late show helps Bayern rebound from Arsenal loss

AFP  
Munich

Luis Diaz scored in stoppage time to help Bayern Munich bounce back from Wednesday's Champions League loss to Arsenal in a 3-1 comeback victory at home to St Pauli yesterday.

RB Leipzig's scoreless draw at Borussia Moenchengladbach on Friday meant that Bayern will finish the weekend eight points clear at the top of the table.

Diaz, who was suspended for the Arsenal defeat - Bayern's first

in any competition this season - headed in a Harry Kane cross in the third minute of injury time to give Bayern the lead for the first time in the match.

Nicolas Jackson then scored four minutes later to add gloss to the victory as Bayern avoided dropping points for just the second time this season in the Bundesliga.

Earlier, Diaz created Bayern's first-half equaliser for Raphael Guerreiro after Andreas Houn-tondji had given lowly Pauli a surprise lead six minutes in.

Veteran Bayern goalkeeper and captain Manuel Neuer credited his side's "belief"

"We kept going after we went behind and were unlucky to hit the post three times. The late goals were a relief," Neuer said.

Arriving in Munich after a club-record eight straight Bundesliga defeats, Pauli stunned the champions early on. The visitors forced Bayern's Joshua Kimmich into a mistake in midfield and Hountondji outmuscled Kim Min-jae to claim the ball before shooting past Neuer at the near post.

Bayern youngsters Lennart Karl and Tom Bischof both hit the post before Diaz acrobatically created the leveller.

Kim chipped a long pass to Diaz

in the box but while the Colombian fell, he somehow squeezed the ball to Guerreiro, who blasted in from close range.

Kane hit the woodwork with 10 minutes remaining but was crucial in Diaz's late strike, lofting a ball goalwards for the former Liverpool forward to head home, before Chelsea loanee Jackson added a third with the final kick of the match.

Borussia Dortmund won 2-1 at Bayer Leverkusen to leapfrog their opponents into third in the table, thanks to goals from Aaron Anselmino and Karim Adeyemi.

Leverkusen looked leggy after

their shock 2-0 win at Manchester City in the Champions League on Wednesday, allowing Dortmund to take the lead just before half-time in simple fashion. Despite the attentions of two Leverkusen defenders, Chelsea loanee Anselmino rose high to head a Daniel Svensson cross in off the post.

Dortmund doubled up after 65 minutes when former Wolves striker Fabio Silva, on as a substitute, found Adeyemi in the box with a pinpoint cross which the Germany forward headed in.

Leverkusen gave their fans late hope when Christian Kofane scored with seven minutes left, but

Dortmund held on. The two sides will meet each other again, this time in Dortmund, on Tuesday in the last 16 of the German Cup.

"It was an important match against a good competitor, but it was only one of two" Dortmund midfielder Julian Brandt told Sky Germany.

"Playing at home will of course be different," Brandt said of Dortmund's 82,000-strong Westfalenstadion.

Elsewhere, Heidenheim scored twice after the 90th minute to snatch a 2-1 win away to Union Berlin and climb off the foot of the table.



SPOTLIGHT

# Over 700,000 tickets sold as excitement builds for Arab Cup

The opening match will take place tomorrow between hosts Qatar and Palestine at the Al Bayt Stadium



Jassim al-Jassim, LOC CEO; Roberto Grassi, FIFA Representative; Saeed al-Kuwari, Hayya Director at Qatar Tourism; Colonel Dr Jabr H J al-Naimi, Spokesperson of Ministry of Interior; and Fatma al-Nuaimi, LOC Executive Director of Communications and Media; during FIFA Arab Cup Qatar 2025 launch press conference yesterday.

By Sports Reporter  
Doha

**F**IFA Arab Cup Qatar Local Organising Committee (LOC) announced Qatar's preparedness to host the second edition of the prestigious regional competition from December 1-18.

A total of 16 teams will have a chance to lift the coveted trophy. Speaking at the press conference were Jassim al-Jassim, LOC CEO; Roberto Grassi, FIFA Representative; Saeed al-Kuwari, Hayya Director at Qatar Tourism; Colonel Dr Jabr H J al-Naimi, Spokesperson of Ministry of Interior; and Fatma al-Nuaimi, LOC Executive Director of Communications and Media. The tournament has

garnered wide attention with 700,699 tickets sold so far.

In particular, 210,209 of these tickets were purchased by supporters outside of Qatar, reaffirming the competition's regional appeal. Supporters of Qatar, Jordan and Saudi Arabia led ticket sales for group stage matches. Tournament organisers also announced that the use of Doha Metro will be free of charge for all ticket holders on match days, allowing fans to make use of Qatar's compact nature.

All six venues hosting matches during the tournament are connected seamlessly by Qatar's modern rail network.

The opening match will take place tomorrow at Al Bayt Stadium between hosts Qatar and Palestine. Gates will open at 2:30pm, with the tournament opening

ceremony taking place at 5:30pm. The final will be held on December 18 at the Lusail Stadium.

Other stadiums that will host matches during the tournament are Ahmad Bin Ali, Education City, Khalifa International and Stadium 974. Throughout the competition, fans will also be treated to a variety of entertainment and cultural activities at fan zones located across all six venues.

The tournament has also attracted massive interest from regional media, with 3,861 media personnel having submitted applications for accreditation to cover the competition in Qatar. From these, 2,085 of them are from outside of Qatar.

A total of 15 regional and international broadcasters will make use of the host country's studios in



Qatar players train yesterday, ahead of their tomorrow's opening match of FIFA Arab Cup match against Palestine.

Doha, while many other channels have acquired the rights to broadcast matches.

The tournament will provide a platform to celebrate the region's rich and diverse culture, unity and shared passion for football. Recently, the LOC unveiled the official tournament mascot Juha – a popular character from the history of Arab literature. Earlier this week, tournament organisers announced the release of the FIFA Arab Cup Qatar 2025 official soundtrack, consisting of two songs, titled 'Zamani' and 'Makani', both produced by Doha-

based Katara Studios. The upbeat soundtrack is an ode to the passion and camaraderie that Arab fans share as they come together, once again, to celebrate the beautiful game.

In the same week, the LOC, in collaboration with FIFA, also launched the FIFA Arab Cup Qatar 2025 Daily Fantasy Game that allows fans across the region and beyond to step into the role of football managers and compete in a daily fantasy challenge throughout the tournament. The game is available in the Play Zone tab of the FIFA app and can also be accessed

on play.fifa.com. Arab Cup tickets are available at: [www.roadtoqatar.qa](http://www.roadtoqatar.qa), with prices 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.

All tickets will be digital and will include accessible seating options for disabled fans. Disabled fans wishing to request accessible seats can do so by sending an e-mail to [accessibility.tickets@sc.qa](mailto:accessibility.tickets@sc.qa)

FOCUS

## Visit Qatar announces principal partnership with future Audi Team ahead of its F1 entry

**V**isit Qatar announced that it will become a principal partner of the future Audi F1 Team upon the team's official entry into the FIA Formula 1 World Championship in 2026.

The partnership strengthens Qatar's connection to the global Formula 1 community and introduces millions of fans to the country's distinctive hospitality, rich culture and contemporary spirit. As the team competes around the world, the Visit Qatar brand will feature well beyond any single Grand Prix, strengthening the nation's visibility among international audiences and inspiring fans to experience Qatar first-hand.

Throughout the 2026 season, the collaboration will deliver a series of fan-focused initiatives, from immersive paddock activations and hospitality experiences inspired by Qatari traditions to curated digital touchpoints that bring the essence of Qatar to Formula 1 fans worldwide.

His Excellency Saad bin Ali al-Kharji, Chairman of Qatar Tourism and Board of Directors of Visit Qatar, said: "Qatar's principal partnership with the future Audi F1 Team represents a strategic investment in the nation's long-term tourism vision. Formula 1 is one of the world's most influential global platforms, and this collaboration allows us to showcase Qatar's culture, hospitality, and pro-

gressive development to millions of fans worldwide. As the team enters the championship in 2026, this partnership will create new opportunities to deepen engagement with international audiences, strengthen Qatar's position as a premier global destination, and support the continued growth of our economy."

Eng. Abdulaziz Ali al-Mawlawi, CEO of Visit Qatar, said: "Partnering with the future Audi F1 Team opens the door to new and diverse audiences, introducing millions of fans to Qatar's dynamic tourism offering.

Formula 1's global reach allows us to showcase our culture, hospitality and family-friendly experiences in a way that resonates across generations. As the team makes its debut in 2026, we look forward to creating meaningful moments that inspire fans from around the world to discover Qatar's vibrant traditions, modern attractions and welcoming spirit for themselves."

Qatar continues to strengthen its position as a global tourism and sporting hub, having successfully hosted the Formula 1 Qatar Grand Prix, the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, and a growing roster of major international events.

The partnership with the future Audi F1 Team builds on this momentum by creating new pathways to showcase the country's distinctive tourism offering to audiences around the world.



## Qatari drivers impress at World Rally Championship



Qatari drivers delivered an impressive performance at FIA World Rally Championship in Saudi Arabia. Nasser al-Attiyah matched the leading times on several stages and maintained strong rhythm despite multiple punctures that cost minutes. He kept pushing and finished 11th in RC1. In WRC2, Abdulaziz al-Kuwari produced a steady run in a competitive field. He placed 4th in the WRC2 Challenger class and finished as the top Arab driver in WRC2, showing clean execution through the stages. Mohammad al-Marri drove with control and confidence to win RC4. Rashed al-Muhannadi backed him up with a solid run to take 2nd place, giving Qatar a 1-2 finish in the category.



FOOTBALL

## Olmo double helps Barcelona take Liga lead with Alaves win



Barcelona's Spanish Daniel Olmo scores against Alaves during the La Liga match. (AFP)

AFF  
Barcelona

**D**ani Olmo struck twice for Barcelona to take the Catalans provisionally top of La Liga with a 3-1 win over Alaves. After Pablo Ibanez fired the visitors into a surprise lead in the first minute, Barca hit back through teenage star Lamine Yamal, set up by the returning Raphinha.

Olmo gave Barca the advantage midway through the first half and then netted late on to seal their victory in the second match back at their partially rebuilt Camp Nou home. Barca lead Real Madrid, second, by two points before Xabi Alonso's side visit Girona today.

After a 3-0 Champions League thrashing by Chelsea in midweek Barca's 126th anniversary celebrations were a little subdued, but they were able to win a fourth consecutive league game. "They caught us a bit by surprise in the first minute, but the team came back well from that situation, keeping our idea (of how to play), we got the first,

then the second, we dominated and got the win," Olmo said. "It's a dream come true to be able to play here, to score and help the team to win."

They were without Ronald Araujo and Frenkie de Jong, while Jules Kounde was dropped to the bench after his own goal at Stamford Bridge. Flick started Brazilian winger Raphinha for the first time after injury and also brought Marc Bernal back into midfield for his first Barca start since August 2024 following a long-term lay-off after knee surgery. Barcelona romped to a 4-0 win over Athletic Bilbao in their first match back home last weekend but Alaves offered far more spirited opposition. The visitors took the lead inside the first minute, with Ibanez firing home after Marc Casado failed to clear a corner and Victor Parada turned the ball back towards goal.

Flick's side responded quickly with Yamal blasting into the roof of the net when Raphinha found him with a low cross which Dani Olmo swiped at and missed the ball. Barca goalkeeper Joan Garcia made a superb save to deny Calebe a few minutes before the hosts took the lead.

For the goal, Raphinha was involved again, cutting the ball back for Olmo to drill home inside the near post. Yamal almost extended Barca's lead, but after rounding Antonio Sivera could only squeeze a shot against the upright.

Lucas Boye almost made the teenager pay at the other end, firing narrowly wide before half-time. Barca playmaker Pedri Gonzalez also returned from injury in the second half as a substitute, greeted rapturously by the 45,000 fans who filled the three open stands.

Yamal curled narrowly wide of the top corner from the edge of the box and an Olmo effort trickled past the post as Barca struggled to put the game to bed.

Alaves almost levelled through Boye but Barca defender Pau Cubarsi produced a vital block to keep the Basque side at bay.

Eventually Olmo found the third goal the hosts craved in stoppage time, beating Sivera after the effervescent Yamal set him up. "We couldn't keep our lead but after that we had our chances," Alaves defender Jonny Otto said. "It's not easy to make Barca end up asking for the final whistle."