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FOOTBALL

Saudi edge Palestine to reach semis as Morocco sink Syria

Palestine's spirited run from the qualifiers came to an end as Kanno struck an extra-time winner

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Saudi Arabia halted Palestine's dream run, while Morocco took down a resilient Syria to reach the semi-finals of the FIFA Arab Cup in Qatar yesterday. At the packed Lusail Stadium, Palestine's spirited run from the qualifiers came to an end, as Mohamed Kanno's extra-time winner catapulted Saudi Arabia into the final four.

The first half was controlled by Saudi Arabia, with Herve Renard's men patiently poking and prodding their opponents, but the pegged-back Palestinians showed the same defensive solidity they possessed in the group stage, when they recorded two clean sheets.

It wasn't until the final stages of the first 45 minutes that the Lions of Canaan's back line was pulled out of position, as a deep cross left them scrambling, and only a last-gasp Hamed Hamdan clearance prevented Feras al-Brikan from scoring.

It took Saudi Arabia's magic man, Salem al-Dawsari, to break things open, as a brilliant first touch from the No. 10 forced a rash challenge from Mohammed Saleh and a point to the spot. Al-Brikan then confidently stroked home the penalty to hand the Green Falcons the lead.

Palestine were unfazed and promptly answered through Oday Dabbagh, who showcased an exquisite first touch of his own to collect Hassan Altambakti's cross and score.

A late penalty in favour of Saudi Arabia was overturned by VAR, sending the two sides to extra time. Just when it looked like matters would have to be settled in penalties, Kanno struck for his late winner by thumping home a header off a cross from al-Dawsari to propel the Saudis to the final four.



Saudi Arabia's Mohamed Kanno scores past Palestine's Ikram Rami Hamadeh. *(Reuters)*

Earlier, Syria's fantastic run at the Arab Cup came to an end as they fell 0-1 against Morocco at the Khalifa International Stadium. Having progressed from the qualifiers all the way to the quarters, Syria were undone by a late goal from Morocco.

It was a pair of substitutes that combined to conjure the late goal, with Walid Azaro tucking home after a Mounir Chouiar effort was parried to him six yards out from the Syrian goal.

A Syrian side that had to advance from the qualifiers to reach the tournament proper was looking to keep their impressive run going and just about matched a more fancied Moroccan outfit over the opening half.



Palestine's Mohammed Saleh reacts after sustaining an injury as teammates Oday Kharoub and Ikram Rami Hamadeh remonstrate with referee Amin Mohamed Omar during the Arab Cup quarter-final against Saudi Arabia at the Lusail Stadium. *(Reuters)*

The best of the limited chances saw an early effort from the Atlas Lions' Amin Zahzouh tipped over the bar by Elias Hadaya before they suffered a blow, as the influential Tarik Tissoudali was forced off.

The African giants came closest to breaking the deadlock shortly after the break, as a save from Hadaya, a frantic Zakaria Hannan block, and a scrambled clearance managed to quell a dangerous Moroccan attacking sequence.

The longer that things went on, the more Morocco started to control the game, as Oussama Tannane, Karim El Berkaoui, and then Marwane Saddane all came close. Eventually, that rising pressure told, as the excellent Hadaya parried a long-range strike from Chouiar into the path of fellow substitute Azaro, who swept home to seal the late win.



Morocco's Walid Azarou celebrates after scoring against Syria at the Khalifa International Stadium. *(Reuters)*



The Lusail stadium was packed with 77,197 fans yesterday for the quarter-final between Palestine and Saudi Arabia.



Morocco fans in the stands at the Khalifa International Stadium.

PREVIEW

Semi-final spots on the line as Jordan face Iraq, Algeria battle UAE

By Sports Reporter
Doha

The battle for a place in the FIFA Arab Cup semi-finals intensifies today, with two high-pressure quarter-final encounters. At Education City Stadium, Jordan take on Iraq, while Algeria and the UAE face off at Al Bayt Stadium.

Jordan coach Jamal Sellami said his side are fully prepared for the meeting with Iraq, while warning that the challenge would be considerably tougher than anything faced in the group stage.

World Cup-bound Jordan arrive with maximum points after wins over the UAE, Kuwait and Egypt, but Sellami stressed that past results offer no guarantees in the knockout rounds.

"Our ambition has grown after three strong performances, but facing Iraq will require technical and mental readiness at the highest level," he said, noting that the weight of recent meetings between the two nations adds an extra dimension to the tie.



Iraq players train yesterday, on the eve of their Arab Cup quarter-final against Jordan.

Goalkeeper Nour Bani Attia echoed the sentiment, saying the squad is carrying strong momentum into the quarter-finals but must match Iraq's intensity. "We know the game won't be easy. We're ready as a group to take on the challenge," he said, praising the Jordanian fans for their influential support.

Iraq, meanwhile, approach the match after finishing runners-up in Group D. Coach Graham Arnold acknowledged Jordan's impressive form and labelled them one of the contenders for the title.

He revealed that the team has focused heavily on recovery following a demanding group stage and confirmed that striker Mohanad Ali could return, though goalkeeper Jalal Hassan and the suspended Hussein Ali will be unavailable.

Arnold said the Arab Cup also serves as a key part of Iraq's build-up to the World Cup qualifying playoff in March. Defender Saad Natiq added that despite the absences, the team retains depth and confidence. "The match will be tough for both sides, but we trust our ability to reach the semi-finals," he said.

In the day's other quarter-final, Algeria head into their clash with the UAE aiming to maintain the strong form that took them to the top of Group D with seven points. Coach Majid Bougherra described the match as "a final" in terms of intensity and importance, stressing that knockout football leaves no margin for error.

"We've recovered well and prepared specifically for a match that requires high concentration and effectiveness," he said, highlighting the need for balance in both attack and defence. Algeria will also make changes due to several absences, which Bougherra said open opportunities for other players.

Midfielder Victor Lekhal said the team is fully focused on extending their campaign. "It will be different from the group stage. We cannot afford mistakes," he said.

The UAE, who finished second in Group C, approach the match under no illusions about the challenge of facing the defending champions. Coach Cosmin Olaroiu said playing in front of a large crowd would serve as motivation rather than pressure.

"Reaching the quarter-finals is an important step, but now we face a strong and experienced opponent," he said. "We must find balance in defence and attack and remain fully focused."

UAE midfielder Hamad al-Muqbali said the team's improved performances give them confidence heading into what he described as a "different stage of the tournament", one that requires heightened discipline and execution.

SPORT

WELLINGTON TEST

Hay fifty on debut helps put NZ on top

AFP
Wellington

Mitch Hay scored an aggressive half-century on his Test debut to help New Zealand to a 41-run lead over the West Indies at the close of play on day two of the second Test in Wellington yesterday.

The Black Caps were 278 all out with about an hour to play in the final session, after the West Indies scored 205 at the Basin Reserve.

At stumps the visitors were 32-2 in their second innings, with Brandon King (15) and Kavem Hodge (3) at the crease.

Michael Rae and Jacob Duffy took a wicket each as New Zealand got through 10 overs in fading light. Hay top-scored with 61 from 93 deliveries, playing with poise in his first taste of Test cricket. He hit nine fours and a six.

Anderson Phillip was the pick of the visiting bowlers, taking 3-70 in 13 overs. Kemar Roach had figures of 2-43.

The 25-year-old Hay came to the crease at 117-4 after Rachin Ravindra, for five, and Devon Conway, who made 60, fell in back-to-back overs immediately after lunch.

He quickly found his feet at Test level, at ease with the pace and movement of the Basin Reserve wicket.

Hay and Daryl Mitchell combined for a 73-run partnership for the fifth wicket, with Hay the aggressor, leaving Mitchell in the unusual position of playing anchor.

"It was awesome to see Mitch do what he does," Mitchell said of his Canterbury teammate.

"He's obviously done that for Canterbury for a number of years. He's good fun out in the middle, and he showcased the talent he's got.

"Debut's always nervy, and it's always nice to get that first run, so very proud of him."

Mitchell fell just before tea for 25 and Hay eventually hooked a ball to Roach in the deep.

Zak Foulkes added 23 unbeaten runs but ran out of partners.

'ONE OF MY BEST'

Earlier, Conway scored eight fours and faced 108 balls before feathering one down the leg side to wicketkeeper Tevin Imlach just after lunch. Conway and Kane Williamson, who was out near the end of the morning session for 37, had steadied the New Zealand innings after captain Tom Latham was bowled by Roach for 11.

After the hosts resumed on their overnight 24-0, Williamson came to the crease at 36-1 and New Zealand's record run-scorer punished some erratic bowling as he hit seven fours in a 46-ball stay.

Conway was given a life when dropped by Shai Hope at leg slip on 28.

He took advantage and had put on 67 for the second wicket when Phillip bowled Williamson with an unplayable swinging delivery that took the top of off-stump.

"That was definitely one of my best," Phillip said. "And it was Kane Williamson as well.

"I've been bowling well, so glad to see that it's coming together when it matters."

Seam bowler Blair Tickner dislocated his shoulder on day one and will not bowl or field for the rest of the match, the hosts said.

Tickner, who took 4-32 in a career-best effort on Tuesday, was taken to hospital after being injured while fielding and will only bat if necessary.

The first Test ended in a draw.

BRIEF SCORES: West Indies 205 and 32 for 2 (King 15*, Rae 1-4, Duffy 1-8) **trail New Zealand 278 for 9 dec** (Hay 61, Conway 60, Phillip 3-70) **by 41 runs.**



New Zealand's Mitchell Hay plays a shot during day two of the 2nd Test against West Indies at Basin Reserve in Wellington yesterday. *(AFP)*

CRICKET

De Kock stars as South Africa win to level India series

'WE WILL SEE WHAT'S UP FOR US GOING ON IN THE NEXT GAME'

AFP
India

Opener Quinton de Kock hit a 46-ball 90 to set up South Africa's convincing 51-run win over India in the second T20 international and level the series yesterday.

De Kock's knock laced with five fours and seven sixes powered South Africa to 213-4 after being invited to bat first on the outskirts of Chandigarh.

South Africa bowled out India for 162 in 19.1 overs despite Tilak Varma's valiant 62 off 34 balls as the visitors pulled one back after they lost the opener of the five-match series. The series is part of the build-up for the T20 World Cup in India and Sri Lanka in February-March. Medium-pace bowler Ottneil Baartman stood out with figures of 4-24.

The left-handed de Kock set the tone for the big win after he put on 83 runs for the second wicket with skipper Aiden Markram, who made 29. South Africa bounced back from their crushing defeat in the first match when the tourists crashed out to their lowest T20 total of 74 all out.

"Much better tonight," said Markram. "Obviously we started off with a special knock from Quinny (de Kock) and some really good contributions at the end that got us to a really good total."

Indian spinner Varun Chakravarthy bowled opener Reezea Hendricks for eight on his first ball and later dismissed Markram after being hit for two sixes by the captain. De Kock, who turns 33 on Wednesday, looked in control from the start as he hit left-arm quick Arshdeep Singh for two sixes in the bowlers' first two overs.

The wicketkeeper-batter raised his 17th T20 half-century with a four off Hardik Pandya but missed out on his ton after being run out by his opposite number Jitesh Sharma. Axar Patel removed Dewald Brevis for 14 before David Miller unleashed his fury with four boundaries off Jasprit Bumrah in a 15-run over and made an unbeaten 20.

Donovan Ferreira finished with a flourish in his unbeaten 30 as he hit Bumrah for two sixes in the 20th over. In reply, Shubman Gill fell for a first-ball duck off Lungi Ngidi. Left-arm quick Marco Jansen took down Abhishek Sharma caught behind for 17 and India were in trouble when he had skipper Suryakumar Yadav out for five.

"Me, Shubman and few other batters should have taken it," said Yadav. "I think it would have been a smart chase. But we will see what's up for us going on in the next game."

Varma and Axar Patel attempted to hit back with a string of boundaries but Baartman broke through as India slumped to 67-4 inside eight overs.

Baartman cut short Axar's knock on 21 off 21 balls with Hendricks taking a low catch at cover.

Varma kept up the charge and found support from Pandya and then Sharma but South Africa struck regular blows. Lutho Sipamla sent back Pandya for 20 and Sharma for 27 as India's chase fizzled out and Varma was the last man out off Ngidi. The third match is on Sunday in the Himalayan town of Dharamsala.

BRIEF SCORES: South Africa 213 for 4 (de Kock 90, Ferreira 30*, Varun 2-29) **beat India 162** (Tilak 62, Baartman 4-24, Jaansen 2-25, Ngidi 2-26, Sipamla 2-46) **by 51 runs.**



South Africa's Quinton de Kock plays a shot during the second Twenty20 match against India at the Maharaja Yadavindra Singh International Cricket Stadium on the outskirts of Chandigarh yesterday. *(AFP)*

Johnson's Grand Slam Track files for bankruptcy after troubled debut season

Grand Slam Track, the start-up track and field league launched by former Olympic champion Michael Johnson, has filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection in Delaware as it seeks to stabilise its finances after a turbulent inaugural season, the organisation said yesterday.

The announcement comes after a troubled debut season in which GST cancelled its final in Los Angeles, cut its Philadelphia event from three to two days and struggled to pay athletes when committed funding fell through.

Attendance was poor at the opening leg in Kingston, Jamaica, and Johnson acknowledged in August that the league was unable to meet promised payment timelines. GST said the court-supervised process would allow it to stabilise operations, reduce costs and address outstanding liabilities while pursuing long-term growth. The league, which had offered unusually high prize money to attract top talent, said it was finalising debtor-in-possession financing. "Grand Slam Track was founded to create a professional platform that reflects the talent and dedication of this sport's athletes," Johnson said in the league statement. "While GST has faced significant challenges that have caused frustrations for many – myself included – I refuse to give up on the mission."

Chief restructuring officer Nicholas Rubin said the move would support ongoing discussions with potential investors and help to rebuild relationships with athletes and partners.

GST has said it intends to return with a 2026 season once financial obligations are resolved.

Jacobs looking for 'spark'

Marcell Jacobs, the surprise Tokyo Olympics 100m champion, said he could prolong his career until the 2028 Los Angeles Games if he manages to rediscover "that spark".

"If I were ever to find that spark again – the one I'm trying at all costs to re-light– I'd like to have a clear situation that would allow me to train at 100%," Jacobs, 31, told Sky Sport Italia.

"And in that case, it wouldn't be for just one year, but at least three. The goal would become Los Angeles 2028," the Italian added.

Since his Olympic triumph in 2021, Jacobs has suffered a series of injuries and slipped down the world rankings, although he did qualify for the 100m Olympic final in Paris last year, finishing fifth in a time of 9.85sec.

CYCLING

Roglic to skip Tour de France, sets sights on record fifth Vuelta title

Reuters
London

Slovenian Primoz Roglic says he is being realistic about his chances of winning the Tour de France and will not compete in cycling's biggest race next year, instead focusing on winning a record fifth Vuelta a Espana title.

Red Bull-BORA-hansgrohe's Roglic won his fourth Vuelta title in 2024 to move level with Spaniard Roberto Heras, but the 36-year-old has not seen the same level of success at the Tour de France, coming closest in 2020 when he finished runner-up behind compatriot Tadej Pogacar. He finished eighth overall this year, well behind Pogacar, who lifted his fourth Tour de France title in July.

Yesterday, Red Bull-BORA-hansgrohe confirmed their Tour de France campaign would be spearheaded by Belgian Remco Evenepoel and German Florian Lipowitz.

Asked about the decision, Roglic told reporters: "(If) I can choose one race to win, I would sign the Tour de France.

"I mean, it's not a secret, but as I said, the reality is different. The level that I was finishing was different, and the first point to consider about myself is how to find the way to be competitive and compete for victories and focus my energy and everything only on that – the rest will follow.

"If you ask me straight, for results, if I'm second in the general classification of the Tour or winning the Vuelta, what will I choose? I (would) win the Vuelta, it's simple."

Roglic, the Tokyo 2020 Olympic time trial champion, also won the Giro d'Italia in 2023.

Evenepoel to share Red Bull lead with Lipowitz at Tour

Remco Evenepoel will share the leadership role with Florian Lipowitz at the 2026 Tour de France, he said at Red Bull Bora's training camp in Mallorca yesterday. Double Olympic and multiple world champion Evenepoel has joined Lipowitz at Red Bull after a move from Belgian outfit Quick Step.

"This will be the first time I share leadership in the Tour de France. That's a good thing, it's always better to have several options.

"We are both aiming for the ultimate goal: victory," said the soon to be 26-year-old sporting a new goatee beard.

Evenepoel came third at the Tour de France in 2024, but had to abandon this year on the slopes of the Tourmalet during the 14th stage. He then went to Rwanda and won the world time trial title in sensational style.

But at the Tour, Lipowitz took third in what was a breakout season for him. The German said Wednesday that it would be an "advantage" to start with two leaders to try to compete with Tadej Pogacar and Jonas Vingegaard, winners between them of the last six editions.

Evenepoel will concentrate on the Tour de France (July 4-26) and will therefore not compete in the Giro d'Italia in May where Red Bull Bora will line up the Italian Giulio Pellizzari as leader, accompanied by Jai Hindley and Aleksandr Vlasov.

British cycling great Hoy recovers from 'worst' crash

British six-time Olympic cycling champion Chris Hoy said he recently suffered the "worst" crash of his life as he receives treatment for cancer.

The former track star revealed last year that his cancer was terminal but the 49-year-old has continued to ride his mountain bike.

Hoy said earlier this year that he had entered "a bit of a stability stage" in his treatment.

In an interview with Sky Sports published yesterday, the Scotsman said he had "smashed his leg up" while riding. "That's the worst thing that's happened recently," he said. "You just don't bounce like you do when you're younger.

"It was a big one. I'm doing better now, I'm still on crutches, hobbling about."

He added: "Worse things happen. I've been riding bikes for 43 years and it's the worst crash I've ever had."

Only fellow track cyclist Jason Kenny, with seven Olympic golds, is above Hoy in the all-time list of British Olympians. Hoy also claimed 11 world championship golds during his glittering career.

He announced in February 2024 that he was undergoing treatment for prostate cancer and later that year said the diagnosis was terminal after the cancer spread.

He said he had been told by doctors that he had between two and four years to live.

Hoy said he was "not a massive risk-taker" but wanted to make the most of his life.

"None of us is here forever so you want to make the most of the time you have and do the things you enjoy," he added.

"I've just had an unfortunate spill and it's the way the cookie crumbles. I'm doing all right now. I wasn't doing so well in the immediate aftermath of it, but looking forward to Christmas."

SPORT

FOCUS

Ben Sulayem to stand unopposed as FIA election goes ahead

AFP
Paris

Mohammed Ben Sulayem, the only candidate to succeed himself as president of the International Automobile Federation (FIA), is expected to be re-elected today in Tashkent following a contested election process.

Swiss national Laura Villars wanted to run in the election, as did American former FIA steward Tim Mayer.

However, election regulations require candidates to appoint vice-presidents from each of the six global regions, chosen from a list approved by the FIA. But there is only one person listed from South America, Brazilian Fabiana Ecclestone – the wife of ex-Formula One supremo Bernie Ecclestone. She has already agreed to be part of Ben Sulayem's team.

A Paris court last week decided not to suspend the election but ordered a trial to examine the electoral process after hearing an urgent application from Villars, who had been unable to stand as a candidate.

"The judge hearing the summary proceedings ruled that this dispute was a matter for the trial court, and we will therefore continue this lawsuit against the FIA before the trial judges.



A first hearing is scheduled for February 16, 2026," Villars' lawyer Robin Binsard, said in a statement last Wednesday.

"The election on December 12, 2025, organised with a single candidate, will be held as planned. Its validity, given the challenges raised, may be examined, questioned or annulled by the court," added the 28-year-old Swiss driver's counsel.

As a result, Ben Sulayem will be uncontested when the election takes place as initially scheduled today in Uzbekistan, where this year's general assembly of the FIA is being held.

The Paris-based FIA is responsible for organising the Formula One and rally world championships, as well as promoting road safety. It has more than 240 clubs across 146 countries, representing around 80 million members.

A former rally driver, Ben Sulayem succeeded Frenchman Jean Todt as FIA president at the end of 2021. His time at the helm of motorsport has been dogged by controversy.

The 64-year-old Emirati was taken to task by seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton for using stereotypical language when discussing the use of foul outbursts by drivers on team radios.

Drivers fell out with the FIA over its crackdown on swearing. The guidelines were strengthened in January, triggering an indignant response from drivers. Controversial fines were later reduced after a backlash from the grid.

In April, the FIA's deputy president Robert Reid resigned with a damning parting shot at Ben Sulayem, criticising his governance and a lack of transparency.

Ben Sulayem, nonetheless, defended his record in no uncertain terms last weekend as he looked towards another four years at the helm of motorsport.

"I would say I am looking forward for the next four years," he said.

"Cleaning the house was not easy, getting the right people in the FIA was a challenge. Now I can tell you, it was worth the four years of investment.

"And if you tell me now 'OK, if you have the power to rewind the four years, what would you do differently?'. Nothing."

FOOTBALL

Alonso faces Real turning point test at Alaves

'All of us here support the coach and by winning on Sunday we will change this dynamic'

AFP
Madrid

Real Madrid ran, and running was enough. Not to earn three points, or even one, but to keep the wolf from Xabi Alonso's door – for now.

However the groundwork for the Basque coach's dismissal has been laid and the feeling that he is fighting for his position in every match, starting with Sunday's visit to face Alaves in La Liga, pervades.

Alonso, whom Spanish media reported was set for the sack if Madrid lost against Manchester City in the Champions League on Wednesday, remains at the helm despite a 2-1 defeat at a frustrated, whistling Bernabeu.

The hope is this match, despite the outcome, can be a turning point for a team with just two wins in their last eight games across all competitions. Madrid trail La Liga leaders Barcelona by four points, which could become seven if the champions defeat Osasuna on Saturday.

Alonso's players rallied around him, offering public messages of support after the game and even during it, as goalscorer Rodrygo ran over to hug his manager.

"The only thing we can do is change our attitude... and today we saw a change," said defender Raul Asencio. After Madrid's improved display against City, it did not make sense for president Florentino Perez to let the axe fall.

It would be easy to make that call the next time the team stumbles – and if it really is a turning point, and that doesn't happen, that would work for him too. Particularly given the lack of an obvious replacement.

Goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois was another Madrid player who backed the coach, and believes the situation will be eased when results turn.



Real Madrid's coach Xabi Alonso reacts during the UEFA Champions League league phase match against Manchester City at Santiago Bernabeu Stadium in Madrid. *(AFP)*

"All of us here support the coach with all our heart, and by winning on Sunday we will change this dynamic," said Courtois.

Madrid will be without several players for the clash in Vitoria, after their meltdown last weekend during the 2-0 defeat by Celta Vigo at home, which put Alonso on the brink.

Alvaro Carreras and Fran Garcia were sent off and are suspended, while Madrid have many injuries to contend with, including Trent Alexander-Arnold, Eder Militao and doubts over Dean Huijsen and Eduardo Camavinga.

Most crucially, they do not yet know if top goalscorer Kylian Mbappe will be fit to play. The French superstar was on the bench against City after knee discomfort and Alonso said it would have been a "risk" to play him.

One player they seem to have recovered is winger Rodrygo. Not from injury, but his dismal run of form finally ended against City.

After 32 games without finding the net, the Brazilian finished superbly to send his team ahead.

Beyond that, he was back to his electric best, transformed from the diminished figure seen in recent months. "It's one of today's good pieces of news to see him with that individual quality, that flair, and he also scored, which was important for him," said Alonso.

On the other flank, Rodrygo's compatriot Vinicius Junior offered a less convincing display. The winger's anger at Alonso when withdrawn in the Clasico in October was a flashpoint which played its part in Madrid's season flying off the rails. Since that moment, Spanish media have reported a growing rift between the players and the coach, suggesting various complaints about his selection decisions and the tactical work they have to do.

It appears to be healing, with the support Alonso was offered, although whether Madrid's stars retain the work-ethic they displayed in a glamorous European tie on a wintry Sunday night at Alaves' Mendizorroza stadium will be a good barometer.

Layan, al-Hadi shine in Hathab round 9



Layan Sultan al-Thani won the Amateur Tour title, while Khalid al-Hadi claimed the Silver Tour honours on the opening day of the ninth round of the Longines Hathab – Qatar Equestrian Tour at Al Shaqab yesterday.

Layan topped the 100cm class in 16.35 seconds on her horse Dino Bb Z. Mariam Abdulkarim Abdul finished second in 17.43 seconds aboard Beyonce, with Adel Khalil Abdulrazaq taking third place in 17.51 seconds on Phoenix. Saeed Hamad al-Rashdi, Deputy Director of the Hathab , presented the awards to the top three riders. The Silver Tour (130cm) produced an exciting contest, with al-Hadi clinching the title after clocking 28.84 seconds on Carlton de Sauvageonn. Mohammed Abdullah Jumaa placed second in 28.89 seconds on Viahipi d'Auzay, while Hussein Saeed Haidan secured third with a time of 29.89 seconds on D Saucedo. The winners received their awards from Ali bin Yousef al-Rumaihi, a member of the Qatar Equestrian Federation's Board of Directors.



HORSE RACING

Tiding powers home late to claim Al Shaqab Cup

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Tiding produced a dazzling late surge to claim the Al Shaqab Cup, a Thoroughbred Handicap (70–90) over 2200m, at the Al Rayyan Racecourse yesterday.

The four-year-old chestnut colt, representing Sheikh Abdul Rahman Rashid al-Thani, trained by Jassim al-Ghazali and ridden by Alberto Sanna, came from last to win by 3½ lengths in a field of 14.

Held up at the rear for most of the race, Tiding waited patiently as Sussex set the early pace, chased by Warming and Blazing Sunset. Entering the home straight, he unleashed a devastating turn of foot, sweeping past the field with ease.

Leopards Park under Louis Nomis finished second, 3½ lengths ahead of Mia Man in third. Rashid Saed Adiba, Head of Qatar Racing and Equestrian Club Racing Operations Section, awarded the winners.

Earlier in the day, Aktolgali with Jefferson Smith won Purebred Arabian Handicap (45-65), Al Jaish under Faleh Bughenaim claimed the Local Thoroughbred Maiden Plate, and Chakib with Salman Fahad al-Hajri took the Local Purebred Arabian Handicap. Jeb'ran Al Shahania prevailed in the Purebred Arabian Maiden Rated Plate, Mai Dubai with Maikon De Souza edged a thrilling 1400m Thoroughbred Handicap, and Aneed Al Shahania under Lukas Delozier dominated the Local Purebred Arabian Conditions over 2200m.



Connections of Tiding celebrate after the four-year-old chestnut colt claimed the Al Shaqab Cup at the Al Rayyan Racecourse yesterday. **PICTURES:** *Juhaim*



Jockey Alberto Sanna guided Tiding to the Al Shaqab Cup win yesterday.

QOC President attends Olympic Summit, meets FIBA Secretary-General





HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani, President of the Qatar Olympic Committee and Senior Vice-President of ANOC, participated in the 14th Olympic Summit, held at the Olympic House in Lausanne, Switzerland, alongside leaders of the Olympic Movement. Chaired by IOC President Kirsty Coventry, the Summit gathered IOC Vice-Presidents, Executive Board members, and representatives from national and continental Olympic committees, international federations, and global sports organisations.

Discussions centred on final preparations for the Milano Cortina 2026 Winter Games, Dakar 2026 Youth Olympic Games and Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games as well as opportunities and challenges identified through the IOC's "Fit for the Future" consultation process. Participants reaffirmed the importance of collaboration among all stakeholders to advance the Olympic Movement. HE Sheikh Joaan's participation in this key event reflects the active role played by the Qatar Olympic Committee in supporting the goals of the Olympic Movement and contributing to shaping future initiatives that promote global sport development.

SHEIKH JOAAN MEETS WITH FIBA SECRETARY-GENERAL

HE Sheikh Joaan also met with Andreas Zagklis, Secretary-General of the International Basketball Federation (FIBA), at the federation's headquarters in Mies, Switzerland. During the meeting, the two sides reviewed the latest preparations for the FIBA Basketball World Cup 2027 and discussed areas of co-operation to ensure the delivery of an exceptional edition that meets FIBA's ambitions and reflects Qatar's readiness to host major global sporting events.

Prior to the meeting, HE Sheikh Joaan toured the FIBA Museum, where he explored its historical collections and learned about its role as a source of inspiration for basketball fans and athletes around the world. This meeting comes as part of a series of regular engagements between the Qatar Olympic Committee and world basketball governing body aimed at strengthening co-ordination and ensuring the successful delivery of a World Cup edition that Doha aspires to make the best in the tournament's history.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Arsenal coach Arteta hails Madueke's 'magic moments' after double

Winger impressed in Gunners' 3-0 victory at Belgium's Club Brugge

Reuters
Brugge, Belgium

Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta showered praise on Noni Madueke, highlighting his dribbling prowess and willingness to take on players after the winger scored twice in a 3-0 Champions League victory at Belgium's Club Brugge.

Madueke opened the scoring in Wednesday's match with a thunderous strike in the 25th minute. "Unbelievable goal. When you talk about individual quality and individual action and magic moments, that's it," Arteta told reporters. "A player that is able to pick the ball that far, dribble past people and finish with the quality and the power that he's done."

The 23-year-old then extended Arsenal's lead in the second half with a header from close range. Madueke, who joined the club from Chelsea in July, has netted three times in two Champions League matches – the first in a 3-1 win over Bayern Munich last month following his return from a knee injury.

Madueke started on the right flank against Brugge, a position usually occupied by England international Bukayo Saka, and Arteta said some healthy competition between the two would help both players maintain a high level. "They both have different qualities as well, and it's great because we're going to need them," the Spanish manager added.

"We are playing every three days, and players with that freshness and with that bite in the teeth as well. Understanding that they have to perform at their level, and this is the standard that we set. It's something really good... It's about consistency. It's not a game, it's two games, three games. It's when you do ten games in a row every three days and that's the level that we have to hit." Premier League leaders Arsenal next host Wolverhampton Wanderers tomorrow.



Arsenal's Noni Madueke scores against Club Brugge during the Champions League match in Bruges, Belgium. *(Reuters)*

GUARDIOLA HAILS CITY'S RESILIENCE AFTER BATTLING WIN

Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola praised his players' resilience and determination after they fought back to secure a 2-1 victory over Real Madrid in their Champions League encounter at the Santiago Bernabeu on Wednesday.

Despite a lacklustre opening 30 minutes in which City looked vulnerable to Real Madrid's relentless forward play, Nico O'Reilly's equaliser and Erling Haaland's penalty overturned Rodrygo's early opener to hand the visitors three vital points in group-stage action. Guardiola admitted his side had been second best in the opening phases of the game but lauded the character that allowed them to recover from a sluggish start. "We've been here several times and played much, much better than today and didn't win," Guardiola said of City's previous visits to the Bernabeu.

"In the first 25 minutes, until the goal from Nico, they were much better than us. I will take the result but I know we need to be better. I know that in February and March, if we go through, the level we require is higher than today." With City now fourth in the group standings on 13 points, Guardiola will be hoping his side carry this resilience into the final two league-phase matches to secure a top-eight finish and direct qualification to the round of 16.

Fan group calls for 'immediate halt' to 2026 World Cup tickets

Paris: Fans' group Football Supporters Europe (FSE) called yesterday for FIFA to stop the sale of tickets for next year's World Cup due to their "extortionate" cost.

According to FSE, the tickets for the competition in the United States, Canada and Mexico, running between June 11 and July 19, will cost almost five times more than the 2022 edition in Qatar.

"Football Supporters Europe is astonished by the extortionate ticket prices imposed by FIFA on the most dedicated supporters for next year's FIFA World Cup," umbrella lobby group FSE said.

It said that tickets allocated to national associations – typically distributed through official supporters' groups or loyalty programmes to their most dedicated fans – were reaching "astronomical" levels.

"Based on the information currently available to FSE, if a supporter were to follow their team from the first match to the final... it would cost them a minimum of $6,900. We call on FIFA to immediately halt ticket sales, engage in a consultation with all impacted parties, and review ticket prices and category distribution until a solution that respects the tradition, universality, and cultural significance of the World Cup is found."

FSE claimed World Cup organisers had promised much cheaper costs for the tournament, pointing to tickets priced from $21 in a bid document released in 2018.

"Where are these tickets now?" it asked. "The full way to the final, according to the same bid book, was supposed to cost $2,242 in the cheapest category. This promise is long gone."

And, in a departure from recent tournaments, group stage games are priced based on the perceived popularity of the teams involved, rather than at a flat rate. This means, for example, England fans face paying more than Scotland. FIFA has not provided details yet on how this "popularity" has been determined.

In Qatar, group stage fixtures had set prices of £68.50, £164.50 and £219.

INTERCONTINENTAL CUP

Flamengo's De Arrascaeta dedicates his brace to new-born son

Giorgian de Arrascaeta is living some of the most memorable days of his life. Since lifting the CONMEBOL Libertadores trophy just over a week ago, the Uruguayan playmaker has continued to make history in a Flamengo shirt. Following the Brazilian league triumph, he struck twice to secure Flamengo's 2-1 victory over Cruz Azul from Mexico in their FIFA Intercontinental Cup opener at the Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium

Beyond securing qualification and winning the FIFA Derby of the Americas, the No. 10's masterclass had a deeper significance that went far beyond the boundaries of the pitch. Last Saturday, his wife, Camila, gave birth to their first child, Milano, just hours before the midfielder boarded a flight to Qatar. She even brought the delivery forward so that they could share the moment.

"These goals are for them, for my wife and Milano," de Arrascaeta said. "No doubt, it's very special. My first goals since he was born. I'm over the moon, and I'm sure they're celebrating just as much back home."

The arrival of his first child marks one of the peaks of what has been the greatest year of de Arrascaeta's career. Voted the best player in both the League and the Libertadores – both competitions he won – he also added the Brazilian Super Cup, the Rio state championship and the Derby of the Americas to his 2025 trophy haul.

With his brace against Cruz Azul, the Uruguayan ace reached 25 goals for the year, by far the most prolific season of his career.

"It's a great moment for me and for the team. I'm thrilled to be sharing this season with all my teammates in what has been such a special year for me", said de Arrascaeta, whose performance also drew praise from Everton 'Cebolinha'.

"He's a magician, a top-class player. We're privileged to have him on our side", said Everton. "He just became a father, and we're all delighted for him. He's a player who helps us so much. When the game gets tough, the plan is just to give him the ball and he'll find the solution. Today he scored twice, and fully deserved it."

Flamengo head coach Filipe Luis believes that beyond de Arrascaeta's technical brilliance, it's his hunger and desire that keeps him at such a high level. Filipe Luis was still a player when the Uruguayan lifted his first major titles at the club; today, the playmaker is the most decorated player in Flamengo's history.

"He's an incredibly focused and ambitious guy. He's always been like that; it's not just this year. This season the whole team has matched his ambition. He might be the most ambitious player I have in the squad", commented Filipe Luis.

"He always wants more. More triumphs, more trophies, more history. He pushes everyone – the club, the staff and his teammates. The credit is his alone. I'm just lucky to have enjoyed the best year of his career."



Flamengo's Giorgian de Arrascaeta scores against Cruz Azul during the FIFA Intercontinental Cup – Derby of the Americas clash against Cruz Azul. *(Reuters)*