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**FIFA ARAB CUP  
QATAR 2025**



SPOTLIGHT

# Historic debut marks opening of Polo AlMarsa Qatar



Sheikh Nawaf bin Nasser al-Thani and Ashraf Abu Issa, Chairman of the Qatar Polo Club, presented the trophies to winning teams Buenos Aires and Lusail on the opening day of Al Marsa Polo Qatar at the Doha Old Port yesterday.



Buenos Aires team – comprising Saleh al-Marri, Milo Mac Donough and polo legend Pablo Mac Donough – clinched the Cultural Years Cup.

By Sports Reporter  
Doha

In an unforgettable opening to the inaugural Polo Al Marsa Qatar 2025, the first trophies – the Al Marsa Ladies Cup and the Cultural Years Championship Cup – were awarded to the winning teams at Doha’s Old Port yesterday, marking a significant milestone for this first-of-its-kind polo event in Qatar.

The opening ceremony capped a day filled with excitement, competitive spirit, cultural authenticity and vibrant community engagement.

Hosted by the Qatar Polo Club, supported by the Social and Sports Activities Support Fund (Daam), and presented by Qatar Calendar, the event integrates sport, heritage, modern life and culture in an environment that reflects the elegance and traditions of polo.

It forms part of the strategic cultural partnership with the Years of Culture initiative, which this year celebrates Argentina and Chile. A vibrant atmosphere filled the Doha Corniche yesterday as guests, partners, celebrities, and polo enthusiasts



A spectacular overview of the inaugural Polo Al Marsa Qatar at Old Doha Port.

gathered to witness a day where sport, culture, entertainment and community converged.

The tournament delivered a series of thrilling results, with the Buenos Aires team – comprising Saleh al-Marri, Milo Mac Donough and polo legend Pablo Mac Donough – clinching the Cultural Years Cup. Sheikh Nawaf bin Nasser al-Thani presented the trophy to the winning team. Meanwhile, Ashraf Abu Issa, Chairman of the Qatar Polo Club, presented the Ladies’ Marina Cup to the Lusail team, represented by Elizabeth Clarkin, Lucia Mir Portillo, and world champion Nina Clarkin.

A standout moment of the day was the debut of Qatar’s first-ever polo players, marking the beginning of a new chapter for the country’s equestrian ambitions. Their appearance resonated deeply with the audience, underscoring a milestone in Qatar’s sporting history and inspiring a new generation of local polo talent.

The heritage show emerged as a particular favourite, celebrating Qatar’s equestrian legacy and strengthening the connection between modern polo and the nation’s deep-rooted traditions.

FOOTBALL

# Jordan edge Iraq as UAE stun Algeria to reach semis

Olwan’s goal made the difference for Jordan, while holders Algeria lost to UAE on penalties

By Sports Reporter  
Doha

Jordan booked a berth in the FIFA Arab Cup semi-finals as they edged Iraq 1-0 at the Education City Stadium. Ali Olwan’s first-half penalty proved the difference in front of 40,000 fans in Al Rayyan, as he maintained a remarkable record of scoring from the spot in each of Jordan’s four matches at the tournament.

Later at the Al Bayt Stadium, the United Arab Emirates dumped defending champions Algeria 7-6 on penalties, after the match had ended 1-1 in both regulation and extra time.

Two years ago, Jordan and Iraq clashed at the start of the knockout stage at a major tournament in Qatar, as the Nashama edged the Lions of Mesopotamia in the round of 16 at the Asian Cup.

This time, also at the Education City, it was Jordan once again who won by a single goal, with Olwan scoring for the fourth straight match. His goal came late in an opening half that produced almost no other chances of note, despite Jordan having the better of the play. They did, however, lose star forward Yazan al-Naimat to an early knee injury.

After the break, Iraq’s talisman Ali Jasim began to see much more of the ball and his team looked far better for it. Twice the dazzling winger came close midway



Jordan’s Ali Olwan (left) celebrates after scoring against Iraq during the FIFA Arab Cup quarter-final at the Education City Stadium in Al Rayyan yesterday. (Reuters)

through the half – first with a rasping effort from distance, then with a driven shot – both producing smart saves from Yazeed Abulaila.

Jordan’s Mohammad Abu Taha, who has already scored one spectacular long-range effort at the tournament, came close to producing another late on as Jordan saw out the narrow win to book a last-four date with Saudi Arabia.

Meanwhile, the UAE qualified for the semi-finals after a thrilling win over Algeria. Neither team showed much desire in the first half to assert dominance, with a cagey, low-quality opening 45 minutes producing few chances. The UAE focused on tightening their defensive line and maintaining discipline, while the referee



United Arab Emirates’ players celebrate after their win over Algeria at the Al Bayt Stadium in Al Khor. (Reuters)

disallowed a second Algerian goal for off-side in the 44th minute.

The second half brought signs of change as Adel Boulbina put Algeria ahead early, following up a shot from Youssef Brahimi that rebounded off the UAE goalkeeper’s hands and slotting it home to the right of the keeper.

The UAE pushed forward, increasing their pressure on the Algerian defence in search of an equaliser, and they succeeded in restoring parity through Bruno in the 64th minute. He converted a pass from Caio, finishing with his left foot into the Algerian net.

Neither side managed to break the deadlock in extra time, despite Algeria’s advantage, sending the match to penalties, where the UAE prevailed to set up a semi-final meeting with Morocco.



MOTORSPORT

# Ben Sulayem re-elected FIA president

AFP  
Paris, France

Mohammed Ben Sulayem was re-elected as president of motorsport's governing body the International Automobile Federation (FIA) yesterday in an election in which he faced no challengers.

The Dubai-born 64-year-old was the only candidate in the vote held in Tashkent in an election that has been contested in the courts.

Two would-be candidates, Swiss national Laura Villars and American former FIA steward Tim Mayer, were denied the chance to run against Ben Sulayem due to FIA rules.

Under the Paris-based FIA election regulations, candidates are required to appoint vice-presidents from each of the six global regions, chosen from a list approved by the Paris-based FIA.

But there is only one vice-president listed from South America, Brazilian Fabiana Ecclestone - the wife of ex-Formula One supremo Bernie Ecclestone - and she gave her backing to Ben Sulayem.

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, a 28-year-old Swiss driver.

"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 week.

The lawyer said that "given the challenges raised, (the election result) may be examined, questioned or annulled by the court".

As a result Ben Sulayem, who succeeded Jean Todt at the head of the FIA in 2021, was confirmed in

the post - subject to the upcoming court verdict.

"Thank you to all our FIA Members for voting in remarkable numbers and placing your trust in me once again. We have overcome many obstacles but here today, together, we are stronger than ever," Ben Sulayem said in a statement.

## 'CLEANING THE HOUSE'

The FIA said in a statement that yesterday's election was "conducted in line with the FIA's statutes through a robust and transparent voting process, reflecting the democratic foundations of the federation and the collective voice of its global membership".

The 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's time at the helm of mot-



Mohammed Ben Sulayem addresses the FIA members after being re-elected as FIA president in Tashkent.

orsport has been dogged by controversy.

The Emirati was taken to task by seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton for using stereotypical language when discussing the

dignant response from drivers. Controversial fines were later reduced after a backlash from the grid.

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

Ben Sulayem, nonetheless, defended his record last weekend as he ahead of another four years at the helm of motorsport.

"I would say I am looking forward for the next four years," said Ben Sulayem, who has helped the FIA overturn a 24 million deficit in 2021 into a 4.7 million profit last year.

"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."

CRICKET

# Bold New Zealand romp to victory over West Indies

The hosts lead the three-Test series 1-0 after nine-wicket win

Reuters  
Wellington

Jacob Duffy took five for 38 as New Zealand's make-shift bowling attack skittled West Indies for 128 on the third day of the second Test at Basin Reserve yesterday to set up a nine-wicket victory for a 1-0 lead in the three-match series.

Missing several frontline seamers and without Blair Tinkner, who dislocated his shoulder fielding on day one, the Black Caps still ripped through the West Indies line-up to give their batters a modest victory target of 56 runs.

Devon Conway, who was unbeaten on 28, and Kane Williamson, who was 16 not out, got the home side across the line before tea at the cost of one wicket to ensure New Zealand cannot lose the series with just next week's Tauranga Test remaining.

It was Duffy's second consecutive five-wicket haul in the series and he was ably assisted by fellow seamer Michael Rae, who took 3-45 for a six-wicket match haul on his test debut at the age of 30.

"The way the guys bowled today was awesome. I thought it was just a great team performance. And we got the job done day three. How good?" said Duffy, who was playing his third Test.

"I'm so stoked for (Michael Rae), he's been pushing for that for a long time and... six wickets on debut is nothing to scoff at.

"He did the hard yards today into the wind so I could come down it, so I'm very appreciative for that," he added.



New Zealand's Jacob Duffy walks from the field with a five-wicket bag at the end of the West Indies second innings during day three of the second Test at the Basin reserve in Wellington yesterday. (AFP)

West Indies had fashioned a great escape to get away with a draw in the first Test in Christchurch last week and, trailing by 73 runs after the first innings, needed another Herculean effort to stay alive in the New Zealand capital.

It never materialised, with Kavem Hodge their highest scorer on 35 and only two of his teammates able to get past the 20-run mark.

Resuming on 32 for two, the West Indies batted solidly for the first half an hour before calamity struck when Hodge ran out Bran-

dson King for 22 and Rae removed Shai Hope caught and bowled for five in the same over.

With Duffy to the fore, the wickets continued to fall at regular intervals until the last man Ojay Shields had a wild swing at a delivery from the seamer that sent it high to Rae at fine leg for a comfortable catch.

"I think the batting is a bit of a concern," said West Indies skipper Roston Chase.

"We got some starts in the first innings, but no one really went big, and then in the second innings, no one really got a start.

So I think that's where we went wrong.

"There's still one test match left and we can still level the series, so it's all still to play for," Chase said.

The third Test starts at Bay Oval next Thursday.

## BRIEF SCORES

**New Zealand 278 for 9 dec** (Hay 61, Conway 60, Phillip 3-70) **and 57 for 1** (Conway 28\*, Williamson 16\*, Phillip 1-17) **beat West Indies 205** (Hope 47, Tickner 4-32) and 128 (Hodge 35, Duffy 5-38, Rae 3-45) **by nine wickets**

THE ASHES

# Australia depth shows up England's 'failures'

AFP  
Sydney

Well-drilled Australia are on the cusp of retaining the Ashes after just six days of cricket - not bad for a team lambasted by England great Stuart Broad before the series began as its weakest since 2010.

The hosts take a 2-0 lead into the third Test at Adelaide on December 17 needing only a draw to keep the famous urn and pile more humiliation on Ben Stokes's tourists.

Australia have put themselves on the brink despite missing injured pace spearheads Pat Cummins and Josh Hazlewood, with the performances of stand-ins Michael Neser and Brendan Doggett a reflection of their depth.

"The great and the healthiest thing for Australian cricket right now is that they've got almost a second XI or an Australia 'A' side that could come in and play some outstanding cricket too," said former Australia Test quick Brett Lee. "The guys who have had their opportunity, the Doggetts and the Nesers, have stood up. They've taken their opportunity and taken it with both hands, which is brilliant."

The strength of the country's talent pool was driven home by Australia 'A' crushing England's second-tier side by an innings and 127 runs at Allan Border Field while Stokes' men were being thrashed down the road in the second Test at the Gabba.

It is a far cry from the pre-Ashes war-of-words where England were hyped as having their best chance in a generation to win a series in Australia, with seamer Broad's comments coming back to haunt him.

"It's probably the worst Australian team since 2010 when England last won and it's the best English team since 2010," said Broad, who retired in 2023 and is now working as a pundit. "It's actually not an opinion, it's fact."

At the time, he pointed to questions over the make-up of Australia's batting line-up and a perceived lack of bowling depth.

Both have been blown out of the water.

Australia went into the first Test in Perth dogged by uncertainty, with the uncapped Jake Weatherald as Usman Khawaja's sixth opening partner since David Warner retired nearly two years ago. In a quirk of fate, Khawaja was unable to bat in the first innings because of back spasms with Marnus Labuschagne replacing him. But it was when he pulled out again in the second innings and Travis Head stepped up that the tide turned on England with his stunning 69-ball match-winning century.

Labuschagne said Head and Weatherald's confidence trickled down to the lower order in Brisbane, where himself, Steve Smith and Alex Carey all blasted quick-fire half centuries.

It leaves selectors with a dilemma for the third Test: recall now-fit 85-Test veteran Khawaja or persist with Weatherald and Head, whose home ground is Adelaide.

Smith, who stood in for Cummins as skipper in the first two Tests, attributed Australia's success so far to being able to adapt "in real time".

"We play 'live! We adapt on the go, instead of getting back in the sheds and going, 'We should have done this' he said. "Sometimes it's just playing the long game. I think we've just adapted so well the last couple of years, and played in real time, I suppose."

For former Australia captain Greg Chappell, Australia's success has been as much about England's failures. While their aggressive "Bazball" approach might be suited to flat English pitches and small grounds, it has been brutally exposed by the bigger boundaries and demanding conditions in Australia.

"The failure that has ensued across the first two Tests is a whole-of-system one, a catastrophic breakdown of both the game plan and its execution," he wrote in a column. "While the players have been the immediate culprits, the off-field leaders - (coach) Brendon McCullum and Ben Stokes - are equally responsible for not recognising the different challenges presented by Test cricket in Australia."

## England bowling great Anderson named as Lancashire captain

London: England Test great **James Anderson** has been named as Lancashire's captain for next season's County Championship at the age of 43. The country's all-time leading Test wicket-taker made his first-class debut for Lancashire in 2002 and has continued to play for the county since his international retirement in 2024. He stepped in as skipper on an interim basis last season and will now lead the red-ball side in Division Two permanently, having signed a new one-year contract in November. "Captaining Lancashire for the first time last season was a huge privilege and I'm honoured to take on the role full-time heading into the new season," Anderson said. "We've got a fantastic group of players, a great blend of youth and experience and I'm excited about what we can achieve together, with promotion back to Division One our number one priority." Anderson took 704 wickets in 188



Tests, the highest number for a pace bowler in cricket history. Head coach Steven Croft hailed the bowler as an example to the rest of his squad. "Jimmy is an outstanding leader whose influence on the squad is immense," he said. "His experience in cricket is second to none, and the way he stepped into the captaincy during the second half of last season showed exactly why he's the right person for the job." Anderson's first match at the helm will be away at Northamptonshire on April 3, 2026.

FOCUS

# India back Suryakumar and Gill to regain mojo

Reuters  
New Delhi

India Twenty20 captain Suryakumar Yadav and his deputy Shubman Gill continued their run drought but the team management has backed the duo to regain their form ahead of the home World Cup early next year.

Returning from a neck injury, opener Gill managed four and zero in the first two T20 matches of the ongoing home series against South Africa. The right-hander has now gone 17 innings in this format since his last half-century.

"I thought he got (dismissed by) a good ball today, which can happen when you are short on form," assistant coach Ryan ten Doeschate said after Gill, who has an impressive record in the Indian Premier League (IPL), fell for a first-ball duck against South



India's captain Suryakumar Yadav tosses the ball during the second Twenty20 international against South Africa on the outskirts of Chandigarh on Thursday. (AFP)

Africa on Thursday. "But we also know the class. If you look at his IPL record, where he stacks up 700 runs, 600 runs, 800 runs, 600 runs. We believe in his class and we believe he will come

good." T20 specialist Suryakumar has endured worse. Across his last 20 innings in this format, he has compiled 227 runs at 13.35 with no fifties.

"It's exactly the same with

Surya," ten Doeschate said. "Personally, I think you back quality players and quality leaders like that and they will come good.

"I can understand from the outside it looks like a concern, but I have got absolute faith in both of them coming good at the right time for us."

Former India all-rounder Irfan Pathan said the duo's recent run of poor form was "a real cause of concern for India".

"Surya will be under pressure because he's the captain and as a captain, your slot in the playing 11 is secured automatically," Pathan told *JioHotstar*.

"As a player, if you haven't scored runs in a year, you are under pressure. His form has to come back before the World Cup. He needs the right batting position and better shot selection."

India will be defending their title at the T20 World Cup that the country will host jointly with Sri Lanka from February 7.



SPOTLIGHT

# Salah included in Liverpool squad for PL match against Brighton, reports say

Reuters  
Liverpool

Liverpool forward **Mohamed Salah** has been included in their squad for today's Premier League (PL) match at home to Brighton & Hove Albion, British media have reported.

Manager Arne Slot earlier said he had no reason to want Salah to leave Liverpool as the Dutchman prepared for a face-to-face meeting with the Egypt international yesterday.

Slot moved to calm speculation over Salah's future after the 33-year-old's criticism of the club following last weekend's 3-3 draw at Leeds United.

The Egyptian said he had been made a scapegoat for Liverpool's poor form and that his relationship with Slot had deteriorated.

His outburst sparked questions about Salah's future at the Merseyside outfit, who are languishing in 10th place with 23 points from 15 matches, a stark contrast to last year's title-winning campaign.

Salah was left out of the team that travelled to Italy for their 1-0 Champions League victory over Inter Milan on Tuesday.

"I will have a conversation with Mo this morning, the outcome of that conversation determines how things will look tomorrow," Slot told reporters yesterday.

When asked if he wanted Salah to stay at the club, Slot said: "I have no reasons to not want him to stay"



Liverpool manager Arne Slot reacts during a UEFA Champions League match against Inter Milan at San Siro, Milan, Italy, on Tuesday. (Reuters)

Pressed on Salah's status, Slot declined to offer any guarantees. "I think the next time I speak about Mo should be with him and not in here. You can keep on trying but there is not much more to say about it," he said.

"After the Sunderland game there were a lot of conversations between his representatives and ours, between him and me."

The decision to leave Salah at home for the trip to Milan was a club decision, Slot said.

"I am always in contact with them (Sporting Di-

rector Richard Hughes and Chief Executive of Football Michael Edwards) but when it comes to the decision making of the lineup or the squad, they leave that open to me. That's not to say I don't talk to them. Mainly Richard, not Michael. The decision to play a player or have them in the squad is entirely up to me."

There is a question mark over Alexander Isak's status for today with Slot saying the striker picked up a knock in the first half against Inter, and that he will be evaluated before they decide whether or not he can start.

Slot is pleased with how Isak and Hugo Ekitike have linked up, saying their partnership will continue to improve.

"The more they play together, the more they will adapt to each other and the better they will cooperate," Slot said.

"I saw promising things from the both of them, it's only the second time they've played together. We will see more of them playing together in the future."

Slot will have forward Federico Chiesa available today after he recovered from illness, while Wataru Endo and Cody Gakpo are expected to be out for a "few weeks".

Salah, nicknamed "The Egyptian King", has endured a turbulent campaign following an extraordinary 2024-25 season.

He is set to depart for the Africa Cup of Nations on Monday, leaving Liverpool to attempt to extend their four-game unbeaten run in all competitions while silencing the off-field turmoil.



FOOTBALL

# FIFA urged to halt ticket sales over expensive pricing

Fan group FSE says costs risk shutting out ordinary fans

Reuters  
London

Football Supporters Europe (FSE) has called on FIFA to immediately halt sales of national team allocations for next year's World Cup, accusing football's governing body of imposing "extortionate" ticket prices that risk shutting ordinary fans out of the tournament.

In a statement yesterday, the European fan umbrella group said prices for tickets allocated to Participating Member Associations (PMA) - typically distributed via official supporters' clubs or loyalty schemes - had reached "astronomical" levels.

FIFA did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

FSE said, based on price tables quietly circulated to national associations, a supporter following their team from the first group match through to the final via the PMA route would pay at least \$6,900, almost five times the equivalent cost at the 2022 World Cup in Qatar.

FSE said national team supporters were being asked to pay the full amount in early 2026 in order to secure the right to buy tickets all the way to the final.

Adding to fans' frustration, FSE said the lowest price category - Category 4 - would not be made available to the most loyal supporters through their associations, with FIFA reserving those tickets for general public sales and subjecting them to dynamic pricing.

The group called that decision a "monumental betrayal" of World Cup tradition and of the contribution of travelling supporters to the tournament's atmosphere.



Jordan's Malek Shalabiya and teammates celebrate after the FIFA Arab Cup Qatar 2025 quarter-final against Iraq at the Education City Stadium in Doha on Thursday. (Reuters)

"For the prices that have been put up by FIFA, we're a bit stunned," FSE Executive Director Ronan Evain told Reuters.

"This is a handful of people who are trying to make as much money as possible from the tournament."

"And we believe this approach is putting the very nature of the tournament at risk."

"For the final, tickets are going up to about \$4,000. You need fans, you need the life in the stands, you need the colour, you need the atmosphere. With these prices, none of this will happen," he said.

The Football Supporters Asso-

ciation, a representative body for fans in England and Wales, said it had asked England's Football Association to lobby FIFA.

"Prices for England's matches have been set as some of the highest, priced at \$7,020 if you want to follow the team from start through to the final," a statement read.

"We back Football Supporters Europe in calling for a halt in ticket sales and we are calling on the FA to work with fellow FAs to directly challenge these disgraceful prices."

For the first time at a World Cup, FSE said, there will be no consistent prices across all

group-stage games, with FIFA instead introducing variable pricing based on opaque notions such as the "attractiveness" of a fixture.

That means fans of different teams could pay different amounts for the same category of ticket at the same stage, with little transparency on how prices are set.

Evain said the new structure would push many ordinary fans beyond what they can afford, particularly families.

"A lot of people that were hesitating in travelling to the US are now saying they need to take an extraordinary financial risk, especially if you're a family," he said.

## Al-Ajami wins in Gold Tour, double podium for al-Hadi at Hathab



**Doha:** Faleh Suwaid al-Ajami stole the spotlight in the 140cm Gold Tour as he clinched first place with a time of 64.55 seconds on Quality Street during the ninth round of the Longines Hathab - Qatar Equestrian Tour in Al Shaqab. Khalid al-Hadi completed the podium twice, finishing second and third with times of 64.81 and 66.01 seconds aboard Doremi du Flot Z and Capoen.

In the team competition, Team Wathnan secured top spot with a combined time of 135.88 seconds. Team Lekhwiyia followed in 141.69 seconds, while Team Al Shaqab edged into third place with 141.75 seconds.

In the Open round, Abdullah bin Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani topped the field in 38.97 seconds on Cassandra 352. Mohammed al-Dalan placed second in 39.66 seconds on Sarina Del Valle, while Khalid al-Hadi finished third on DSP Cessy in 40.78 seconds.

In the Junior category of the same class, Abdullah bin Tamim



bin Hamad al-Thani completed a double victory, again winning on Cassandra with his identical time of 38.97 seconds. Ali Omar al-Ansari came second on Nikita in 41.24 seconds, with Abdulaziz bin Jassim al-Thani third on Proud in 44.83 seconds.

In the Future Riders round, Noura bint Jassim al-Thani won first place after posting 16.93 seconds on Sandor. Nasser bin Hamad al-Thani claimed second and third with rides of 17.29 and 17.95 seconds on Whistler and Coco Chanel.

## FEDERER TO HEADLINE LAUNCH OF 2026 AUSTRALIAN OPEN

**Melbourne:** Roger Federer will return to the scene of some of his greatest triumphs in January when he headlines a "Battle of the World No.1s" to officially launch the 2026 Australian Open, organisers said yesterday.

The Swiss great will be back on Rod Laver Arena for the first time since he retired in 2022 as the Grand Slam at Melbourne Park introduces an inaugural "opening ceremony".

Held on the evening before the tournament starts on January 18, it will include a tribute to Federer, who won the Norman Brookes trophy six times among his 20 major titles. He will also join

four-time Australian Open winner Andre Agassi and Australians Pat Rafter and Lleyton Hewitt for a star-studded match. "It feels like a lifetime ago that I coined the phrase 'The Happy Slam' for the Australian Open, and it still makes me smile when I think about all the moments I've had there," Federer said. "I've experienced so many emotions on Rod Laver Arena - the joy of lifting 'Norman' six times, the honour of playing in front of Rod Laver himself. Coming back to win the AO in 2017 is one of my most treasured Grand Slam memories and backing it up to win in 2018 was another dream come true in Melbourne."

COMMENT

## Gabriel can be Arsenal's No. 1 striker: Arteta

AFP  
London

**Mikel Arteta** said yesterday that Gabriel Jesus has the qualities to be Arsenal's first-choice striker following the return of the Brazil international after 11 months on the sidelines.

The 28-year-old on Wednesday played his first minutes for

the club since suffering a knee injury in January, coming on as a substitute in the Gunners' 3-0 win against Club Brugge in the Champions League. Jesus will have to compete with Viktor Gyokeres and Kai Havertz, currently sidelined with a knee injury, to be the focal point of Arsenal's attack.

Arsenal boss Arteta also has a host of other options in attacking positions including Bukayo Saka, Eberechi Eze, Gabriel Mar-

tinelli, Noni Madueke and Leandro Trossard. The Spanish manager, whose team host bottom side Wolves today, was asked at his pre-match press conference whether Jesus could push to be the club's number one striker.

"Yes, a player of his quality, a player that has given us so much and he comes with the energy that he came with the other day," he said. "He's certainly a player that has to be pushing and aiming for

that, that's for sure." Arteta was also asked if he would think about selling the former Manchester City star, given his wealth of attacking options, but quashed the idea.

"Gabriel has a lot to offer to the team and he's proven that straight away in the first minute that he was available to play," he said. "He's put so much to be in this position again and now the focus is to be with us."



## FOCUS

## QOC president crowns winners of T100 Triathlon World Championship

**H**E Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani, President of the Qatar Olympic Committee (QOC), crowned the winners of the professional races at the T100 Triathlon World Championship, as Doha hosted the final weekend of the series yesterday, with the participation of a select group of the world's top triathlon athletes.

In the Men's Pro T100 race, New Zealand's Hayden Wilde claimed first place with a time of 3:06:08, ahead of USA's Morgan Pearson, who finished second in 3:07:23, while Belgium's Marten Van Riel secured third place with a time of 3:08:14, following a highly competitive race marked by strong performances and intense competition through to the final stages.

With this result, Hayden Wilde was crowned champion of the 2025 T100 Triathlon World Championship season, accumulating 195 points, while Germany's Mika Noodt finished second overall with 150 points, and Belgium's Jelle Geens secured third place with 149 points.

In the Women's Pro T100 race, Britain's Kate Waugh claimed first place with a time of 3:31:30, followed by her compatriot Georgia Taylor-Brown in 3:31:50, while Switzerland's Julie Derron secured third place with a time of 3:32:31. In the wom-



In the Men's Pro T100 race at the final round, New Zealand's Hayden Wilde claimed first place, ahead of USA's Morgan Pearson and Belgium's Marten Van Riel.

en's overall standings, Kate Waugh was crowned champion after she tallied 183 in the season, followed by Julie Derron in second place with 163 points, while Britain's Lucy Charles-Barclay finished third with

152 points.

The medal ceremony was attended by HE Saad bin Ali al-Kharji, Chairman of Qatar Tourism; Antonio Arimany, President of World Triathlon; Engineer Yasser



HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani, President of the Qatar Olympic Committee, with Qatar's high jump icon Mutaz Barshim.

bin Abdullah al-Jamal, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Sports and Youth; and Qatar's high jump icon Mutaz Barshim.

Hosting the final round of the championship in Doha reflects ongoing efforts to

further strengthen Qatar's position as a global sports and tourism destination, in line with the country's vision of leveraging sport as a driver of development and promoting sports tourism.

## FOOTBALL

## Flamengo and Pyramids duel for Challenger Cup

Winner to play against PSG in the FIFA Intercontinental Cup final

By Sports Reporter

Doha

**T**hree days after they saw off Cruz Azul in the FIFA Derby of the Americas, Flamengo now meet Pyramids at Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium today to determine who will be the FIFA Challenger Cup champions. In addition to the standalone silverware, there's also another major prize on offer for the winner: a date with Paris Saint-Germain in the final of the FIFA Intercontinental Cup, to be held in Qatar on Wednesday.

Having been in Qatar now for close to a week, Flamengo should be in high spirits after they saw off Cruz Azul 2-1 to win the Derby of the Americas.

That continued an extraordinary month of title-gathering for the Rio giants, who won both the CONMEBOL Copa Libertadores and domestic Serie A crowns before their departure to Qatar.

Georgian De Arrescaeta, Flamengo midfielder, said on the eve of the match: "Each team has its identity and its players. This is a team that works and fights incredibly hard on the pitch. We're finishing off a season full of major achievements and still fighting for the dream of becoming world champions. I still haven't won a title here in Qatar. I'm happy to be back here, but the focus is first on reaching the final, and then on trying to become champions."

African champions Pyramids also arrive in a good spell of form, sitting second in the Egyptian Premier League with just the one loss through their first dozen fixtures.

Head coach Krunoslav Jurcic has named a strong travelling squad, headlined by Pharoahs stars Ahmed El Shenawy, Mohamed Hamdy, Mohamad Lasheen and Mostafa Fathi. Off the back of a wonderful showing in a 3-1 win in Jeddah against Al Ahli in the FIFA African-Asian-Pacific Cup, they also know that they can compete at this level.

Krunoslav Jurcic, Pyramids coach, said: "First of all, I'm so proud to be part of such a big competition, an elite competition with the biggest clubs in the world. We had an excellent season in Africa, winning the Champions



Flamengo players train in Doha yesterday.

League and now we came to Qatar to play the semi-final and hopefully the final. It's a big reward for us and I want to enjoy it and for the players to enjoy all the moments of the competition because this is the top level of football."

The Intercontinental Cup brings together the six winners from each confederation's top-tier club tournament in a condensed format. It is designed not to be a competitor to the 32-team Club World Cup, launched last year by FIFA and organised every four years.

## Qatar secures hosting rights for 2027 FIA General Assembly; al-Mannai elected to FIA World Motor Sport Council

**Doha:** Qatar has secured the hosting rights for the 2027 FIA General Assembly after receiving an impressive 95.4% of the votes, further reinforcing the country's strong global standing and its ongoing commitment to advancing motorsport on the international stage.

In a parallel achievement, **Abdulrahman bin Abdullatif al-Mannai**, President of the Qatar Motor & Motorcycle Federation and Lusail International Circuit, has been elected to the FIA World Motor Sport Council, the highest regulatory body within the FIA. These milestones highlight Qatar's expanding influence



in global motorsport and its continued efforts to shape the development of the sport worldwide.

## SPOTLIGHT

## Messi to unveil 21m statue of himself on India 'GOAT' tour

AFP  
Kolkata

**L**ionel Messi will unveil a 21m (70-foot) statue of himself in India today as he embarks on a three-day tour of the country that has sparked a fan frenzy.

The iron sculpture in Kolkata, which shows Messi holding aloft the World Cup, is part of a so-called GOAT Tour that will take in four Indian cities and a possible meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The 38-year-old Argentina and Inter Miami superstar will unveil the monument virtually rather than in person for security reasons. A "Hola Messi" fan zone has also been set up in Kolkata where on display is a life-sized replica of Messi sat on a throne. The hall also recreates his Miami home, complete with mannequins of his family members. Monti Paul, the statue's main sculptor, said the structure was built inside 40 days.

The eight-time Ballon d'Or winner will also meet Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan and former India cricket captain Sourav Ganguly during his whirlwind trip to Kolkata. Ahead of his ar-



rival, Messi said it was an honour to visit India and interact with the fans. "India is a very special country and I have good memories from my time there 14 years ago - the fans were fantastic," Messi said in a statement. "India is a passionate football nation and I look forward to meeting a new generation of fans while sharing the love I have for this beautiful game."

After Kolkata, where Messi will play a short friendly match, he will head to Hyderabad, Mumbai and New Delhi. In Hyderabad he will attend a concert in his honour and play another friendly. He is reportedly scheduled to meet Modi in the capital.

## HORSE RACING

## National Day &amp; Late Sheikh Jassim Bin Mohammed Bin Thani trophies meet today

By Sports Reporter

Doha

**T**he Qatar Racing & Equestrian Club (QREC), chaired by Hamad bin Abdulrahman al-Attiyah, will stage a major race meeting today, featuring racing for the Qatar National Day Trophy and the Late Sheikh Jassim Bin Mohammed Bin Thani Trophy.

The nine-race card will be run on the turf track at Al Rayyan Racecourse, with leading owners, trainers and jockeys all set to take part as they compete for total prize money of QR2mm.

Prize money includes QR500,000 for each of these two feature races, Races 8 and 9 on the card.

In addition to the two feature contests - the Qatar National Day Trophy a Gr2 international race for Purebred Arabians,

and the Late Sheikh Jassim Bin Mohammed Bin Thani Trophy, a Class 1 for Local Purebred Arabians - the programme also includes a number of cup races.

These include the Al Safliya Cup, a QA Gr3for Thoroughbreds, which serves as a qualifier for the Shalfa Race to be held during the HH The Amir Sword Festival next February; the Halul Island Cup, an open race for Local Thoroughbreds; the Al Busayyir Cup, a Thoroughbred Conditions; and the Falcon Cup, an open race for Thoroughbreds.

Winners of the cup races will be crowned after each contest while the winners of the two feature trophies will be honoured at the conclusion of the meeting.

QREC has made full preparations for the occasion, which ranks among the QREC's major fixtures each season and is staged annually in conjunction with the Qatar National Day celebrations.

## AL SIJ AL SAKAB AND JABALAH: LAST YEAR'S TROPHY WINNERS

In last year's renewal, the ninth race, the Late Sheikh Jassim Bin Mohammed Bin Thani Trophy for three-year-old and older LocalPurebred Arabians over 1,400m, was won by Al Sij Al Sakb, owned by Khalid Hamad al-Atteya. The then six-year-old delivered a powerful performance under the care of trainer Jassim Hamad al-Atteya, with Alberto Sanna producing a fine ride.

Meanwhile, the eighth race, the Gr 2 Qatar National Day Trophy for four-year-old and older Purebred Arabians over 2,100m, was claimed by Jabalah, in the colours of Wathnan Racing.

The then eight-year-old finally secured the title after finishing runner-up in the same race in both 2022 and 2023. The victory came under the supervision of trainer Alban de Mieuille, with James Doyle in the saddle.



Last year, the Late Sheikh Jassim Bin Mohammed Bin Thani Trophy was won by Al Sij Al Sakb.