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SHOWJUMPING

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HH THE AMIR SWORD FESTIVAL

Doha Bu Thaila, Al Faisal share Al Rayyan Breeders Cup after dead heat

THE EIGHT-RACE PROGRAMME FEATURED A HIGH-CLASS SEQUENCE ON DAY THREE OF THE FESTIVAL



Connections of the joint winners of the Al Rayyan Breeders Cup celebrate with Chairman of the Qatar Racing and Equestrian Club Hamad bin Abdulrahman al-Attiyah on the third day of the HH The Amir Sword Festival at the Al Rayyan Racecourse yesterday. **PICTURES: Juhaim**



Al Faisal and Doha Bu Thaila ridden by Jockeys Maxime Guyon and Soufiane Saadi respectively were declared joint winners of the Al Rayyan Breeders Cup after a dead heat yesterday.

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Doha Bu Thaila and Al Faisal were declared joint winners of the Al Rayyan Breeders Cup on the third day of the HH The Amir Sword Festival at the Qatar Racing and Equestrian Club's Al Rayyan Racecourse turf yesterday.

Representing Wathnan Racing and Al Emadi Racing respectively, the two contenders could not be separated in the feature event, the eighth race on the card, as a thrilling finish culminated in a dramatic dead heat. A photo finish confirmed that both horses crossed the line simultaneously, bringing the curtain down on one of the most gripping contests of the day.

In the early stages of the contest, Al Faisal briefly took up the running before being eased back into midfield as the tempo settled while Doha Bu Thaila tracked the leaders throughout, always travelling strongly within striking distance.

The field remained closely grouped through the middle sec-

tion as positions tightened approaching the home turn. Entering the home straight, Doha Bu Thaila pressed forward sharply and struck the front, looking the likely winner as she edged clear.

However, Al Faisal unleashed a powerful late surge from behind, rapidly closing the gap in the final strides and lunging at the line to join her exactly on the post, producing a dramatic dead heat.

Equinoxe, representing Wathnan Racing and trained by Alban de Mieulle as well, stayed on under James Doyle to take second, finishing 1¼ lengths ahead of Rayyan Bu Thaila. The latter, owned by Injaaz Stud and prepared by Jihad El Ahmad, kept on under Christophe Soumillon to secure third.

Hamad bin Abdulrahman al-Attiyah, Chairman of Qatar Racing and Equestrian Club, awarded the winners.

In the penultimate race of the day, Zah'ran Al Shahania was awarded the seventh race on the card, the Al Zubara Cup for Local Purebred Arabians aged four and upwards over 2000m, Class 1, contested by six runners, after

the Stewards upheld an objection for interference against Aneed Al Shahania, who had passed the post first.

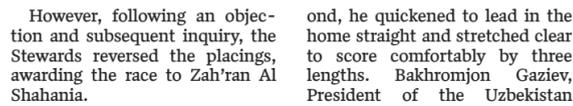
The five-year-old dark bay gelding, carrying the colours of North Racing and trained by Hamad al-Jehani, preserved his unbeaten record with a fourth win from as many starts, closing strongly from off the pace to be promoted to victory by the revised margin under Pierre-Charles Boudot, who completed a treble on the day, while his trainer registered a fourth success on the card.

Aneed Al Shahania broke sharply and dictated throughout, setting a controlled tempo and appearing on course for a pillar-to-post success, in a bid to defend his title as last year's winner, as the field turned for home.

Zah'ran Al Shahania, settled fourth in the small field, tracked the leader's every move and began to close steadily in the straight, reducing the deficit with each stride as the line approached.

At the finish, Aneed Al Shahania was first past the post after making all, with Zah'ran Al Shahania closing rapidly in the final strides.

Connections of Fatack Al Shahania celebrate after the five-year-old grey won the Gulf Cup yesterday.



However, following an objection and subsequent inquiry, the Stewards reversed the placings, awarding the race to Zah'ran Al Shahania.

Aneed Al Shahania, owned by HE Sheikha Reem bint Mohammed bin Khalifa al-Thani and trained by Rudy Nerbonne, set the pace throughout and, after the amendment, was placed second under Lukas Delozier. Razy, representing Wathnan Racing and prepared by Alban de Mieulle, took third under Soufiane Saadi.

Rasasi, in the colours of Al Rahmani Racing and trained by Ahmed al-Mehairbi, won the Purebred Arabian Sprint Cup. The Listed PA contest over 1200m gave the five-year-old grey horse his third win from five career starts and a double on the card to jockey Christophe Soumillon.

ond, he quickened to lead in the home straight and stretched clear to score comfortably by three lengths. Bakhromjon Gaziev, President of the Uzbekistan Equestrian Federation, presented the Purebred Arabian Sprint Cup.

HE Sheikha Yasmeen bint Mohammed bin Khalifa al-Thani-owned Fatack Al Shahania won the Gulf Cup for the four-year-old+ Purebred Arabians bred in the GCC.

Five-year-old grey horse, who confirmed himself a rising local star, recording a third win from six career starts and maintaining his record of never finishing outside the first two.

Held up at the rear early, he quickened sharply in the home straight, sweeping past the long-time leading group in the concluding stages of the 1600m race to prevail by a ¼ length under jockey Lukas Delozier.

RESULTS
The Amir Sword Festival - Day 3
WINNERS: (Horse, Trainer, Jockey)

Al Rayyan Breeders Cup
1. Local Thoroughbred, 4yo+, 2000m
Dead Heat

Al Faisal, Khalifa Hamed Nasser al-Sawai, Maxime Guyon
Doha Bu Thaila, Alban de Mieulle, Soufiane Saadi

2. Al Zubara Cup, Local Purebred Arabians, 4yo+, 2000m

Zah'ran Al Shahania, Hamad al-Jehani, Pierre Charles Boudot
3. Purebred Arabian Sprint Cup, Listed, 4yo+, 1200m
Rasasi, Ahmed al-Mehairbi, Christophe Soumillon

4. Gulf Cup, Purebred Arabians bred in GCC, 4yo+, 1600m
Fatack Al Shahania, Rudy Nerbonne, Lukas Delozier

5. Thoroughbred Filly & Mare Oryx Cup, 3yo+, 1750m
Warming, Hamad al-Jehani, Christophe Soumillon

6. Purebred Arabian Filly & Mare Seada Cup, 4yo+, 1750m
Ghara, Hamad al-Jehani, Pierre Charles Boudot

7. Purebred Arabian 4yo Cup, 1750m
Khaddah, Alban de Mieulle, James Doyle

8. Thoroughbred Sprint Cup (80-100), 4yo+, 1200m
Thunder Flow, Hamad al-Jehani, Pierre Charles Boudot

FOOTBALL

Al Shamal, Al Arabi enter Amir Cup quarter-finals



Al Shamal and Qatar SC players battle for possession during their Amir Cup match at Hamad Bin Khalifa Stadium yesterday. Al Shamal won 2-1.

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Al Shamal booked their place in the Amir Cup quarter-finals with a hard-fought 2-1 victory over Qatar SC at Hamad bin Khalifa Stadium yesterday.

The breakthrough came early, as Algerian striker Baghdad Boundedjah fired Al Shamal ahead in the 12th minute. Qatar SC responded swiftly, drawing level in the 21st minute through Brazilian forward Yan Matheus.

With the contest finely balanced, Al Shamal regained the advantage in first-half stoppage time when a defensive mishap saw Ali Saoudi turn the ball into his own net in the 45+2 minute, sealing what proved to be the decisive goal of the match.

Al Shamal will now await the winner of the

clash between Al Sadd and Al Markhiya, who meet today for a place in the quarter-finals.

In the second match of the day, Al Arabi defeated Al Shahania 2-0 at the Abdullah bin Khalifa Stadium to enter the last eight stage of the tournament. Al Arabi beat Al Shahania after first-half goals. The first goal for Al Arabi was scored by Rodriguez Sanchez Rodrigo in the 27th minute followed by a strike in injury time by U-23 player Mohialdin al-Hashmi. By virtue of their commanding performance, Al Arabi have reached the quarter-finals of Qatar's biggest and most followed football tournament.

TODAY'S ROUND OF 16 FIXTURES

Al Gharafa vs Al Kharaitiyat at Hamad Bin Khalifa Stadium (4:30pm); Al Rayyan vs Al Khor at Suhaim Bin Hamad Stadium (7:15pm); Al Sadd vs Al Markhiya at Grand Hamad Stadium (7:15pm)



Rodri Sanchez of Al Arabi celebrates a goal during his team's Amir Cup match against Al Shahaniya yesterday. Al Arabi won 2-0.

MATCH REPORT

Zimbabwe pull off stunning win over Australia

The minnows post 23-run win against former world champions

AFF
Colombo

Zimbabwe beat a depleted Australia by 23 runs yesterday in Colombo to pull off the biggest shock of the T20 World Cup so far.

After posting 169-2 in their 20 overs, thanks mainly to Brian Bennett's classy 64 not out, Zimbabwe had Australia 29-4 before dismissing them for 146 in 19.3 overs.

The Zimbabweans, ranked 11th were always in control against their second-ranked opponents in the Group B game at R Premadasa Stadium after opening bowlers Blessing Muzarabani and Brad Evans ripped out Australia's top order.

There were sensational scenes at the venue as a group of Zimbabwe fans dressed in their team jerseys celebrated the win with a traditional dance.

"It is a huge win for us," said Bennett. "There are fans who have come all the way from Zimbabwe and they have enjoyed the game and it is a special feeling today to get a win here."

Muzarabani was the pick of the bowlers finishing with 4-17.

"I was really happy that today really came off," said Muzarabani, who was named player of the match. "I also believe that everyone really bowled well. We missed Richi (Ngarava), but Brad (Evans) really bowled well."

"It's really good to beat Australia, but it will also be nice to qualify for the Super Eights. So we'll be thinking about the next step."

Australia retained hope of a rearguard victory when Glenn Maxwell and Matt Renshaw put on 77 for the fifth wicket.

But once part-time leg-spinner Ryan Burl induced one of the short game's great players, Maxwell, to drag on to his stumps for



Zimbabwe's Blessing Muzarabani (centre) celebrates with teammates after taking the wicket of Australia's Matt Renshaw during the 2026 ICC T20 World Cup group stage match in Colombo yesterday. (AFP)

31, they were never in the hunt and tumbled from 106-4 to 146 all out.

Opening batsman Bennett's unbeaten 64 off 56 balls was an exercise in controlled aggression as he rarely went the aerial route and found the boundary seven times. It was the 22-year-old's 10th half-century in T20 internationals.

"It was the type of wicket you have to do the hard yards," said Bennett.

Zimbabwe thrashed Oman in their opener and their last two group games will be against Ireland and Sri Lanka.

Co-hosts Sri Lanka have also won both their matches so far.

"We are in a good position to go to the next round having won two out of two," said Bennett.

Ryan Burl and Bennett put on 70 for the second wicket, a record stand for Zimbabwe in T20 World

Cups after an opening partnership of 61 with Tadiwanashe Marumani.

Australia beat Ireland on Wednesday, but with matches to come against Sri Lanka and Oman, another defeat could see them on the plane home after the group stage.

Without their captain Mitchell Marsh for the second match, and the previously ruled out pace spearheads Pat Cummins and Josh Hazlewood, Australia's campaign in the 20-nation tournament is in danger of falling apart at the first hurdle.

The former champions were left with more to worry as Marcus Stoinis was struck on his left palm attempting a return catch halfway through his third over.

The all-rounder was accompanied off the field in pain. He did come out to bat but scored only six. "Stoinis was going to bat

higher and him not being able to bat higher was a blow," said Renshaw, who top scored with 65.

"Medical staff will examine how bad is his injury. We weren't good enough today. There is time for flair in T20 cricket.

"We had to rebuild," he added. "But we kept losing wickets at regular intervals. It wasn't our day and we are bitterly disappointed."

The only bright spot was power batter Tim David being named in the team after missing the Ireland win. But he made a two-ball duck in his first game since suffering a hamstring injury in the Big Bash League on December 26.

BRIEF SCORES
Zimbabwe 169 for 2 (Bennett 64*, Marumani 35, Burl 35, Green 1-6) **beat Australia 146** (Renshaw 65, Muzarabani 4-17, Evans 3-23) **by 23 runs**

FOCUS

Driven by Dhoni biopic, Pakistan's X-factor tweaker targets India

AFF
Colombo

Pakistan's Usman Tariq left his cricket ambitions back home to start a salesman's job in Dubai, before a biopic about India great Mahendra Singh Dhoni changed his life.

The unusual bowling action of the double-jointed spinner has created plenty of chatter in his first T20 World Cup, and now he goes into tomorrow's revived clash against India as one of Pakistan's main weapons.

His inspiration was born in India and Tariq admits if he had not watched the 2016 Bollywood movie "M.S. Dhoni: The Untold Story" he might not be playing cricket today.

Based on the life of India's World Cup-winning captain, the movie told a tale of grit, rejection and eventual glory - and made Tariq believe it was never too late to chase his ambition.

Tariq, now 30, left Dubai and roamed around the world to mature as a mystery spinner.

Pakistan skipper Salman Agha insisted Tariq will be a special weapon when his side face their arch-rivals, after being cleared to play after an Islamabad government U-turn after initially ordering a boycott of the India match.

"Tariq is our X-factor and a key weapon," Agha said ahead of the tournament after Pakistan had used him sparingly to protect his unique action.

Since making his international debut just three months ago, Tariq has taken 11 wickets in four T20 internationals including a hat-trick against Zimbabwe in Rawalpindi.

He grabbed a match-defining 3-27 against USA in Colombo on his World Cup debut this week.

The 28-year-old's bizarre bowling action was reported as illegal twice in the last two years, but was cleared by the International Cricket Council laboratory.

His action carries an element of mystery as he pauses exaggeratedly before releasing the ball in a sling-shot manner.

England's Tom Banton questioned Tariq's action in the United Arab Emirates T20 League last year.

Australia all-rounder Cameron Green mimicked Tariq's round-arm during the T20 series before the World Cup in Lahore, raising renewed doubts.

But India player Ravichandran Ashwin, himself a great spinner,



and umpire Anil Chaudhary declared Tariq's bowling action to be within the rules.

"I believe that it is entirely legal," Ashwin wrote on X, by explaining several factors of the action. Tariq is unperturbed by the doubters.

"I have two corners of my bowling arm elbow, which is rare," Tariq told AFP.

"I have been cleared twice so I am confident that it's legal. I have struggled this far and am not worried about such baseless questions."

After Tariq left Dubai a friend introduced him to Pakistan opener Fakhar Zaman who took him to a local coach in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, his hometown.

"Zaman brought this young and determined boy to me," Wajahatullah Wasti, a former Pakistan player, told AFP. "I watched him bowl with amazement as he looked very unique and I advised him to bowl a little quicker. Today he has made a name for himself."

Tariq talked about the Dhoni biopic that changed everything.

"I had left behind thinking of making a name in cricket, but one day I watched this film and it convinced me that I can also do the same," Tariq told AFP.

Tariq progressed by leaps and bounds. He finished with 20 wickets in the Caribbean Premier League last year, forcing his way into the Pakistan team.

"My coach informed me about my selection in the Pakistan team while I was busy with my wedding last year and initially I thought it was a prank," said Tariq. "But it was true so I think my wife brought luck for me."

From a salesman in Dubai to Pakistan's potential trump card against India, Tariq's script is still being written.

INDIA AND PAKISTAN FANS FLOCK TO COLOMBO, WINDFALL FOR TOURISM



A spectacular sunset captured in the background of R Premadasa Stadium in Colombo, the venue of the India-Pakistan T20 World Cup match tomorrow.

COLOMBO: Prices of flights and hotel bookings to Colombo, Sri Lanka, have soared as thousands of fans flock to the city to watch India play Pakistan tomorrow in cricket's Twenty20 World Cup. The neighbouring countries and cricket rivals are due to meet during the group stage of the tournament, which is being co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka, after Pakistan reversed a decision to boycott the match earlier in the week.

The game at Sri Lanka's largest stadium is sold out with roughly 35,000 tickets sold and ahead of the match most hotels in Colombo have doubled their prices - the cost of a room has climbed as high as \$660 a night from a typical price tag of about \$100-\$150 per night, multiple booking sites showed. After the match was finalised this week, last-minute bookings led to fuller flights from major cities like Chennai and Delhi, according to three Colombo travel agencies.

Flights from Chennai, which is about one and a half hours away, have more than tripled to around \$623-\$756 while flights from Delhi are up more than 50% to roughly \$666.

Nalin Jayasundera, President of Sri Lanka Inbound Tour Operators (SLAITO) said hotels were booked out.

"Most fans are coming on all-inclusive packages that could be \$1,500-\$2,000 or even higher depending on

ticket, hotel, and flight prices," Jayasundera said. Tourism is the third largest foreign exchange earner for Sri Lanka, famous for its ancient temples, pristine beaches, and lush tea plantations.

It is hoped that hosting more sporting events could boost Sri Lanka's economic growth, which is recovering from a severe financial crisis and a recent cyclone, which killed 650 people.

Buddhika Hewawasam, chairman of the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority, told Reuters that in the first 10 days of February, roughly 20% of the 100,000 visitors to Sri Lanka were there for the India-Pakistan cricket match.

The island nation is hoping to position itself as a neutral venue for matches between political rivals.

"This is clearly showing confidence in Sri Lanka as a neutral cricket venue. Whether it's India, Pakistan or Bangladesh, this is a welcome message to all South Asian countries that they can play cricket in Sri Lanka," he said.

Lahore local Mian Sultan is looking forward to his trip to Sri Lanka to watch the game.

"I think it's going to be a great experience," said Sultan, who spent \$800 on a front-row seat to watch the game alongside a friend, who is flying in from New Zealand. "I'm really excited about this match."

Sultan added he thought Pakistan "absolutely" could come out on top tomorrow.

SPOTLIGHT

Mukkamalla smashes 79 as USA beat Netherlands by 93 runs

Reuters
Colombo

The United States thrashed Netherlands by 93 runs in their Group A encounter yesterday to claim their first victory at the 2026 Twenty20 World Cup, thanks to Saiteja Mukkamalla's knock of 79 and Harmeet Singh's devastating four-wicket haul.

With the victory, the US moved up to third in the group behind India and Pakistan having played a game more, while the Netherlands are fourth, also with two points but behind the Americans on net run rate.

Put into bat after losing the toss, the US smashed an imposing 196-6 in 20 overs before dismissing the Netherlands for 103 as Harmeet (4-21) produced

the best figures for an American in the World Cup to pick up the player of the match award.

"When I first saw the wicket in the first innings, the ball was holding quite a bit, even when I went into bat. So the plan was to spin the ball and in the powerplay when I bowled, it did grip from ball one," Harmeet said.

"That's the chat we had in the middle innings, that there is assistance if we look to spin. So I think the plan was whenever under pressure, look to spin the ball."

In the first innings, American skipper Monank Patel set the tone with a quickfire 36 before Mukkamalla provided the fireworks, unleashing five boundaries and four sixes in his knock of 79 off 51 balls.

Shubham Ranjane capped the innings with an unbeaten 48 off

24 to guide the US to a competitive total while all-rounder Bas de Leede (3-37) emerged as the pick of the bowlers, claiming the crucial wickets of both Patel and Mukkamalla.

In response, the Netherlands' chase never got off the ground as they failed to build partnerships and lost wickets at regular intervals, crumbling to 66-5 in eight overs.

Harmeet proved the architect of their downfall, extracting turn from the surface as he ripped through the Netherlands' batting lineup just as the chase threatened to flicker.

BRIEF SCORES
USA 196 for 6 (Mukkamalla 79, Ranjane 48*, de Leede 3-37) **beat Netherlands 103** (de Leede 23, Harmeet 4-21, van Schalkwyk 3-21) **by 93 runs**

Five-for Siddique fashions UAE win over Canada



UAE's Junaid Siddique celebrates after taking the wicket of Canada's Saad Bin Zafar during the 2026 ICC T20 World Cup group stage match against Canada in New Delhi yesterday. (AFP)

NEW DELHI: United Arab Emirates registered their first win of the Twenty20 World Cup after half-centuries by Aryansh Sharma and Sohaib Khan secured a five-wicket victory over Canada in a Group D match yesterday.

Chasing 151 for victory, UAE slumped to 66-4 in the 13th over before a rapid 84-run stand between Aryansh and Sohaib set up their win with two balls to spare.

UAE seamer Junaid Siddique claimed five of Canada's seven wickets, conceding 35 runs in his four overs.

BRIEF SCORES
United Arab Emirates 154 for 5 (Aryansh 74*, Sohaib 51, Zafar 3-14) **beat Canada 150 for 7** (Thaker 50, Dhaliwal 34, Siddique 5-35) **by five wickets**

TENNIS

Teenager Mboko, Muchova set up Qatar Open final

The 19-year-old Canadian is ready to break into the world top-10



Canada's Victoria Mboko celebrates winning her Qatar TotalEnergies Open semi-final against Jelena Ostapenko of Latvia in Doha yesterday. PICTURES: Noushad Thekkayil

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Canada's Victoria Mboko yesterday sealed her Top 10 debut next week, along with her second WTA 1000 final, with a 6-3, 6-2 defeat of Jelena Ostapenko at the Qatar TotalEnergies Open.

In the final today, Mboko, 19, will meet Latvia's Karolina Muchova who beat Maria Sakkari in the other semi-final. Muchova won 3-6, 6-4, 6-1.

This time last year, Mboko was ranked No. 211, and on the way to collecting her fourth ITF title of 2025 at the Manchester W35 in

England. She had played just one WTA main draw in her career, and had yet to win a match at that level, a report on www.wtatennis.com added.

Just 12 months later, she has two titles on the WTA Tour Driven by Mercedes-Benz under her belt - Montreal and Hong Kong last year - and has already reached two finals this season, having been runner-up to Mirra Andreeva in Adelaide.

Next week, she will be ranked either No. 9 (if she wins the title) or No. 10 (if she loses to Muchova in the final) - becoming just the fourth Canadian woman to be ranked inside the Top 10, following Carling Bassett-Seguso,



Czech Republic's Karolina Muchova reacts after winning her semi-final against Greece's Maria Sakkari. Muchova won the match 3-6, 6-4, 6-1 to reach the final.

Eugenie Bouchard and Bianca Andreescu.

"It's kind of crazy," Mboko said after the match on Friday.

"I never expected something to happen so fast for me. I just have been taking it day by day, tournament by tournament. Every tournament I enter, I want to do well. I don't really hold that much expectation of myself. It's not like when I enter a tournament I'm going to say I'm going to win it, but you always want to try your best.

"I think this came relatively fast, but it's a nice feeling. It's nice to see that, to have that milestone, to see that number. So, yeah, I'm pretty happy with that,"

she added. As for continuing a rise that currently seems unstoppable, Mboko is keeping a level head - after all, it's worked so far.

"I don't really set goals for myself," Mboko said. "Just because I just like to surprise myself along the way. You never know what's going to happen in tennis. You can have high moments, you can have also low moments. I think just being positive with myself with whatever happens, it's all a part of the process.

"As long as I'm having fun doing what I love, it's going to pay off at the end of the day and, who knows, maybe good things may come my way in the future," she said.

GOLF

Hisatsune leads pack at Pebble Beach Pro-Am

Reuters
Pebble Beach, California

Ryo Hisatsune of Japan made 158 feet of putts on his way to a 10-under-par 62 to take the first-round lead at the AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am, the first signature event of 2026, on Thursday in Pebble Beach, California.

Compared to the field, Hisatsune lost strokes both off the tee and on approach. But his short game allowed him to make 10 birdies without a bogey at Pebble Beach Golf Links and finish his round with three birdies in a row. He carries a one-shot lead into Friday over Sam Burns (63, Pebble Beach) and Keegan Bradley (63, Spyglass Hill).

The field is playing one round apiece at Pebble Beach Golf Links and Spyglass Hill Golf Course before spending the weekend rounds at Pebble Beach. There is no 36-hole cut at the \$20mn signature event.

Hisatsune's early highlights with the flatstick included a 28 1/2-foot birdie putt at No. 3 followed by a 39-foot birdie roll at No. 4. He chipped in from the greenside rough at No. 16 for the first of his closing trio of birdies.

"I like these greens. I like a poa (annua) green, like much easier," Hisatsune said. "Feeling like more comfortable to playing these greens. Yeah, feeling like yeah, that's why I can feeling more comfortable. Very lucky."

Hisatsune, 23, qualified for the tournament via the Aon Swing 5 rankings, having earned enough FedEx Cup points in the first few weeks of the season to play his way in. Hisatsune tied for second at the Farmers Insurance Open and tied for 10th at last week's WM Phoenix Open. Bradley's 11-foot putt for eagle at the par-5 seventh hole anchored his bogey-free round, the best of the day at Spyglass.

"(At No. 6) I hit a 9-iron to about two, three feet, which is never easy out here, then made that," Bradley said. "And then hit a 5-wood to about 15 feet, made that for eagle. And then made a long one from the fringe on 8 and off to the races."

Back at Pebble Beach, Burns shot a 7-under 29 on the back nine to surge up the leaderboard. He made 158 feet, 9 inches of putts on his round - beating Hisatsune's mark by 9 inches.

"It was nice, I made a significant amount of putts and feel like



Ryo Hisatsune of Japan takes a shot on the 18th green during the first round of the AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am 2026. (AFP)

I was hitting it pretty nice," Burns said. "It was a good combination for today."

Tony Finau and Patrick Rodgers shot 8-under 64s at Spyglass Hill and Chris Gotterup opened with the same score at Pebble Beach. Gotterup, who birdied his first six holes of the day, is the surprising early leader of the FedEx Cup race as he already has notched two victories this year, the Sony Open in Hawaii and the Phoenix Open.

"I was kind of just coasting along," Gotterup said. "You don't really realize it in the moment and then when you look up, you're like, 'Wow, I'm 6 under through six, that's nice!'"

Akshay Bhatia, Andrew Novak and Tom Hoge (Pebble Beach) are tied at 7-under 65 along with Canada's Nick Taylor (Spyglass Hill). Jordan Spieth shot a 66 at Spyglass Hill, featuring a hole-out eagle at the par-4 18th. In his first start in the US this year, Northern Ireland's Rory McIlroy posted a 4-under 68 at Spyglass Hill. The defending champion's roller-coaster card featured one eagle and two double bogeys at the par-3 third and fifth holes.

World No. 1 Scottie Scheffler got off to a slow start, birdieing the final hole to salvage an even-par 72. He rallied from an opening-round 73 last week in Phoenix to finish in a tie for third, so Scheffler has something recent to draw from.

"Around these places you never know what the weather's going to turn out to be like," he said. "I'll need a little bit of help up there from the weather. If we get a few more days like this, it's going to be pretty tough for me to be able to catch up."

MOTORSPORT

Father-daughter duo leads at Jordan Baja

By Sports Reporter
Aqaba, Jordan

The French father and daughter duo of Lionel and Lucie Baud delivered the best performance of their careers to hold a slender lead after a punishing 225.71km special stage at the Jordan Baja yesterday.

Young British rider Alex McInnes was the class of the motorcycle field from the start on his KTM and took an advantage of 13min 28.3sec over Saudi rider Abdulhalim Al-Mogheera into the night halt in Aqaba.

Demanding navigation and rocky mountainous terrain gave way to faster open sections of desert as the day's stage meandered its way through stunning Wadi Rum. Baud gradually climbed through the field over the closing kilometres in the solitary diesel-engined X-Raid Mini JCW Rally Plus to lead the Baja by just 1.8 seconds.

The delighted Frenchman said: "We make a very good result. My daughter made beautiful navigation. I feel comfortable with the car and I tried to go as fast as possible. It was nice."

His daughter Lucie added: "It's our first win in the World Championship and in the World Baja Cup. It was amazing, the navigation and the stage was very tough. You have to be very focused, more than the Dakar, for example. Tomorrow, we will open the stage. I like to open because you don't have many tracks and you have to find the good direction."

Nasser in second spot

Nasser Saleh al-Attayah and his French navigator Max Delfino narrowly missed out on the stage win and hold second place.

They enjoyed their first ever taste of the southern Jordan region, although the Qatari trailed the likes of Dania Akeel and Saood Variawa through the opening kilometres in the mountains.

He took full advantage of the lightweight nature of his two-wheel drive MD Optimus Buggy in the faster open desert later in the stage and led the special before being pegged back by an impressive Baud near the finish.

Al-Attayah said: "It was not easy. It was good to manage. With the rear-wheel drive, it was difficult in the climb but we are happy."

Defending FIA Middle East Baja Cup champion Dania Akeel and her navigator Sébastien Delaunay led through the opening checkpoints and eventually finished in third position in an Overdrive Racing Toyota Hilux Evo.

Akeel said: "It was very challenging and technical. The terrain was tricky. I kept my mind more on the conservative side with a lot of caution. I didn't rely too much on the dangers in the road book. It's really tricky terrain here. It was very challenging in a good way."

Toyota Gazoo Racing's Saood Variawa and François Cazalet were fourth in another Hilux. Variawa



Qatar's Nasser Saleh al-Attayah and French co-driver Max Delfino are seen in action at the Jordan Baja yesterday.

said: "To be honest, it is my first time in this country and my first time racing here with the terrain. Some places were really tricky and dangerous for me, especially opening the road. We passed all the bikes and there was literally no bike line. I had to get the nerves of

opening the road out of the way. We lost some time in the dust and then Nasser caught and passed us and then we passed him 13km from the finish. Good points for the championship but we have to push tomorrow."

Yasir Seaidan was given road-

opening duties but the Saudi maintained control of the Challenger category after Hamed Al-Wahaibi's 10-minute time penalty on Thursday. Seaidan is fifth in his Taurus Evo Max.

Seaidan said: "It was very difficult. We opened and the first part was crazy hard navigation in mountains and rocks. It was like Dakar. I thought Jordan Baja would be easy. After 70km, Saood overtook us and the terrain was better and open. After 150km, Nasser also overtook us and the navigation became much easier. We pushed more and we finished without any problems."

Czech privateer Miroslav Zapletal was sixth in a Ford F-150 Evo and Abdulaziz Al-Kuwari teamed up with Stéphane Duplé to hold seventh and second in the Challenger class in his Taurus T3 Max.

Today, the second stage through Wadi Rum runs for 195.38km before the ceremonial finish formalities take place on the marina at the Ayla resort in Aqaba in the afternoon.

CZECH TEENAGER JILEK OUTCLASSES STRONG FIELD TO TAKE 10,000M GOLD

MILAN: Czech teenager Metodej Jilek produced the race of his life to beat a powerful field and seize 10,000 metres gold yesterday, delivering the Czech Republic their first speed skating title of these Winter Olympics.

Jilek was joined on the podium by Poland's Vladimir Semirunniy, who claimed silver, while Dutchman Jorrit Bergsma took bronze. Nineteen-year-old Jilek, who won bronze in the 10,000m at the 2025 ISU World Speed Skating Single Distances Championships, clocked 12 minutes 33.43 seconds to finish 5.65 seconds clear of Semirunniy, underlining his emergence as one of the sport's most exciting prospects.

"I feel incredible," Jilek said. "This gold medal represents all the

training I've been doing for years - everything I've been working towards. It's amazing.

"I knew even before I came to the Olympics that I could do really well in the 10,000m, that I could win it. It was just a matter of doing the lap times. I've done thousands of these lap times throughout the summer so I knew what it feels like, what I have to do. It was just about dialling it in."

His victory made him the Czech Republic's second Olympic champion of these Games, following Zuzana Maderova's triumph in the women's parallel giant slalom tomorrow. It also marked the nation's second speed skating medal in Milano Cortina, after Jilek claimed silver in the 5,000m on Sunday.

Competing in his first Olympics, Jilek faced a stacked field that included newly crowned 5,000m Olympic champion Sander Eitrem, France's Timothy Loubineaud, Semirunniy, and 10,000m world record holder Davide Ghiotto of Italy - all considered strong contenders after standout World Cup campaigns.

"Honestly, I wasn't even that nervous before the race," Jilek added yesterday.

"The only thing I was a bit nervous about is that I woke up a bit sick - I didn't feel that good. I didn't know how my body would react.

"Other than that, I knew I could do it. I was pretty confident." Drawn in the penultimate pair of the six-pair programme, Jilek started in the inner lane alongside

2018 Pyeongchang 10,000 champion Ted-Jan Bloemen of Canada and quickly settled into a smooth, controlled rhythm.

He never looked in doubt and ultimately lapped Bloemen, who is two decades his senior. Jilek had been forced to settle for silver behind Eitrem in the 5,000m, but there was no repeat of that heartbreak yesterday.

Russian-born long-distance specialist Semirunniy was congratulated by Poland's Prime Minister Donald Tusk. "Poland welcomed me like its own child," said Vladimir Semirunniy recently, who won a silver Olympic medal for his new homeland today. A beautiful story. Bravo Wladek!" Tusk posted on social media platform X.



Czech Republic's Metodej Jilek celebrates after winning gold in the speed skating men's 10,000m during the Milano Cortina 2026 Winter Olympic Games at Milano Speed Skating Stadium in Milan yesterday. (AFP)

SHOWJUMPING

Alsharbatly seals Amir's Sword glory in thrilling Grand Prix win

Saudi rider, who was last to go in the jump-off, secured the prestigious title aboard Diriyah



Saudi Arabia's Abdullah Alsharbatly aboard 13-year-old mare Diriyah clears a rail en route to winning the CS15* 160cm Grand Prix at the HH The Amir's Sword Showjumping Championship at Al Shaqab.

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Saudi Arabia's Abdullah Alsharbatly produced a thrilling round with his 13-year-old mare Diriyah to win the CS15* 160cm Grand Prix at the HH The Amir's Sword Showjumping Championship at Al Shaqab, topping a world-class field in a dramatic jump-off.

The blue-riband class, carrying a total prize money of €1.5mn, brought together 44 combinations in a demanding two-round contest, with 13 advancing to the jump-off where victory was decided against the clock.

Alsharbatly, last to go in the jump-off, secured the prestigious Amir's Sword aboard Diriyah after a flawless round in 36.29 seconds. Fellow Saudi rider Khaled Almoby had set the bar high with a clear effort in 37.45 seconds on Diana du Plevau Z, but Alsharbatly's blemish-free round denied him victory. Belgium's Pieter Devos completed the podium with Casual DV Z in 39.20 seconds.

Germany's Christian Ahlmann finished fourth on Untouched LB in 39.24 seconds without penalties, while Anastasia Nielsen rounded out the top five aboard Esi Rocky with a clear round in 42.59 seconds.

The Grand Prix showcased elite horses and riders, with nine other combinations producing clear rounds over the first two phases. Devos looked set for victory after another flawless effort on a horse he bred himself, but the final two Saudi riders delivered spectacular finishes.



Qatar's Jassim al-Kuwari claimed the HH The Amir's Sword Dressage title aboard Jack Sparrow with a score of 74.242 points in the CDI* Intermediate I Freestyle to Music.

Almoby took every risk to surpass Devos' time before Alsharbatly produced an electrifying round to finish more than a second faster and claim the €450,000 winner's prize. Almoby earned €300,000, while Devos collected €225,000.

Alsharbatly said he was delighted to finally secure the title after coming close in previous editions. "I really wanted to win this - I had been close a few times, so I am pleased to finally do it. Being quickest in the first round relaxed me a bit. In the jump-off I started quickly and that helped," he said, adding that Qatar feels like a second home because of the warm welcome and strong support from the

equestrian community. He also noted that careful planning will be key for the horses with several more weeks of competition remaining at Al Shaqab.

Almoby reflected on another strong finish, saying: "I finished second last year too - hopefully I can be first next year."

In dressage action at the Indoor Arena, Qatari rider Jassim al-Kuwari claimed the HH The Amir's Sword Dressage title aboard Jack Sparrow with a winning score of 74.242 points in the CDI* Intermediate I Freestyle to Music. Qatari riders completed a podium sweep, with Wejdan Majed al-Malki finishing on Faisao with 73.125 points, while Maryam Ahmad al-Boinin



Amir's Sword winner Saudi Arabia's Abdullah Alsharbatly (centre) celebrates with compatriot and runner-up Khaled Almoby (left) and Belgium's Pieter Devos, who finished third at Al Shaqab yesterday.

placed third on Blue Horse Touch Of Olympic L with 66.200.

Elsewhere, Saudi's Abdulrahman Alrajhi delivered two flawless rounds aboard Lorenzo ES to secure victory in 44.44 seconds in a closely contested World Cup qualifier. Italy's Emanuele Gaudiano pushed hard with a clear effort on Nikolaj de Music but settled for second just fractions behind in 44.63 seconds, while Devos completed the podium with another double-clear ride on Jarina J in 45.83 seconds.

In the CS13-W 140cm Immediate Jump-Off, home rider Sultan Salem al-Naemi produced a sharp round with Energika des Neyes to claim top honours in 36.41 seconds. France's Megane Moissonnier followed closely on Chacarja PS after a clear effort in 36.93 seconds, with compatriot Lara Tryba taking third aboard Chageorge after another faultless performance in 37.79 seconds.

Egypt's Seif Eldin Essam Abbas executed a fast and accurate two-phase round with Heathcliff Blue to win in 25.91 seconds in the CS13-W 135cm class. American Kristen Vanderveen finished second aboard Bull Run's Lioness after a smooth clear effort in 27.75 seconds, while Ismail Osama El Borai of Egypt secured third with Incredible Z in 28.42 seconds.

The CSI1 Faults and Time 125cm class was topped by Egypt's Seif Yasser Fekry, who produced a composed clear round on Mambria in 57.13 seconds. His compatriot Omar Mohamed Ahmed followed in second aboard Kamelia DS with another faultless effort in 59.06 seconds, while Saudi's Bader Alfard completed the

top three on Murdock after a steady clear round in 59.25 seconds.

Saudi's Khalid al-Hadi delivered the quickest clear jump-off with Hurry UP in 35.25 seconds to take the win in the CSI1 Immediate Jump-Off 115cm. Abdulla Ahmed al-Khulaifi of Qatar finished a close second on Quenta van de Corsendonksehoeve in 35.42 seconds, while Saudi's Halah Alrasheed secured third aboard Energy after a clear round in 37.58 seconds.

In the CSIY-B Special Two-Phase 125cm, Bahrain's Sultan Abdulaziz Mayoof Alromaihi produced a confident performance with Estoril Un Prince to claim victory in 30.10 seconds. Home rider Sultan Salem al-Naemi followed in second aboard Gannan de La Luce with a clear effort in 31.99 seconds, while Mohammed Yousef Al Jaber finished third on Christa 27 in 32.23 seconds.

Bahrain's Seeman Ebrahim Aljahrami secured the CSIJ-B Special Two-Phase 115cm win with a swift and accurate round on Enjoy de La Proz in 28.75 seconds. Home rider Mohammed Eisa al-Bukhari finished second aboard Lisa Perina F in 29.00 seconds, while Qatar's Ahmad Ali al-Jaber completed the podium with Riane TB after a clear effort in 29.74 seconds.

On the final day today, the programme features the three-star Grand Prix at 150cm qualifying for the World Cup, the one-star Grand Prix at 130cm, additional five-star and one-star competitions, junior and youth classes qualifying for the FEI Group VII Final, two three-star classes between 140cm and 145cm qualifying for the World Cup, and a local class at 100cm.

LIGUE 1

Rennes stun leaders PSG



Rennes' Esteban Lepaul and Paris Saint-Germain's Joao Neves (right) fight for the ball during the Ligue 1 match at the Roazhon Park stadium in Rennes, western France. (AFP)

Reuters
Paris

Rennes overcame the sacking of coach Habib Beye this week to end a four-game losing streak with a surprise 3-1 victory over Ligue 1 leaders Paris St Germain at Roazhon Park, a third defeat of the campaign for the champions.

PSG stay on 51 points from 22 games and could be overtaken at the top of the table by Lens tonight when the latter travel to Paris FC. Rennes move up to fifth with 34 points from 22 games.

Mousa Tamari and Esteban Lepaul gave the home side a 2-0 lead before Ousmane Dembele pulled a goal back for PSG. The visitors pushed forward for the equaliser, but were caught out as Brel Embolo added a third for Rennes.

It is a positive result towards the end of a turbulent week that had Beye sacked on Monday and reserve team coach Sebastien

Tambouret put in temporary charge. After Lepaul struck the post early on for Rennes, they took the lead in the 34th minute as they hit the champions on the break, with Tamari twisting and turning PSG defender William Pacho before unleashing a curling shot into the bottom left corner of the net from the edge of the box.

Rennes got their second goal on 69 minutes as Lepaul's powerful header from Sebastian Szymanski's corner arched into the net. But PSG hit back three minutes later as former Rennes forward Dembele guided his header past home goalkeeper Brice Samba.

PSG piled on the pressure after that and Samba made a fine low stop from substitute Goncalo Ramos, before the hosts got a third in the 81st minute to seal the three points, Embolo turning in Ludovic Blas' cross.

PSG boss Luis Enrique hauled off Doue and Khvicha Kvaratskhelia for Bradley Barcola and Lee Kang-in, possibly with the midweek Champions League play-off round first leg at Monaco in mind.

PREMIER LEAGUE

Arsenal must block out noise in 'rollercoaster' title race: Rice

AFP
London

Arsenal midfielder Declan Rice said his side cannot be distracted by talk of Manchester City closing in at the top of the Premier League after the Gunners were held 1-1 at Brentford on Thursday.

City are now just four points behind Mikel Arteta's men and have home advantage when the sides meet in April. Arsenal are aiming to end a 22-year wait to win the title and appeared to be cruising towards success when they moved nine points clear last Saturday.

However, City's late fightback to snatch a 2-1 victory at Liverpool on Sunday could prove a turning point in the title race. Pep Guardiola's men maintained their momentum by beating Fulham 3-0 in midweek and Arsenal failed to respond.

Noni Madueke gave the visitors the lead in west London, but Brentford hit back through Keane Lewis-Potter and were unfortunate not to claim all three points in the final 20 minutes. "This is a rollercoaster of a season. You can't be naive to think this is going to be easy," said England international Rice. "We are playing against the best teams week in, week out. We have to keep pushing and believing in ourselves, controlling the controllable. We have to block out the outside noise. We have done that really well. People are going to talk up the title race, but we have a really calm group. I'm not naive to think Brentford are a pushover. They are one of the best teams in the league and their recent form shows that. It's a point gained in our journey, but we wanted to win the game."



Arteta was frustrated at how his side let control of the game get away from them after a positive start to the second half. "We lacked composure to maintain the ball better, to play in the right areas. We started to give a lot of unnecessary free-kicks away," said Arteta.

Arsenal's strength from set-pieces has played a huge role in putting them into pole position for the title. But they struggled to cope with Brentford's own prowess from dead balls. The equaliser arrived from one of Michael Kayode's long-throws, propelled into the box, that Sepp van den Berg flicked on for Lewis Potter to head in.

"They are really good at it, so credit to them as well," Arteta said. "They drag you into a game where it's like

a casino. Anything can happen and something really bad can happen!"

SPURS SET TO HIRE TUDOR AS INTERIM BOSS

Tottenham are set to hire Igor Tudor as interim manager until the end of the season after Thomas Frank's dismissal, according to reports.

Tudor is reported to have reached a verbal agreement with Tottenham, who are expected to finalise the deal imminently. The 47-year-old was sacked by Juventus in October after an eight-match winless run left the Italian club struggling in eighth place in Serie A.

He has also had spells in charge of Lazio, Marseille, Verona, Hajduk Split, Galatasaray and Udinese. At Juventus, Tudor inherited a team that sat outside the Champions League places late in the 2024-25 campaign, but he guided them to a fourth place finish after losing just one of his first 11 games in charge.

When his appointment is confirmed, the former Croatia defender will be tasked with cleaning up the mess left by Frank, who was axed on Wednesday after a 2-1 defeat against Newcastle 24 hours earlier. Tottenham are languishing just five points above the Premier League relegation zone.

Tottenham had also been linked with former Borussia Dortmund manager Edin Terzic and ex-Leipzig boss Marco Rose prior to reports of their agreement with Tudor.

Candidates for the permanent Tottenham job are likely to include their former manager Mauricio Pochettino after his United States commitments at the World Cup in June and July.

Tottenham's next match is the north London derby at home to Premier League leaders Arsenal on February 22.