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South Africa thump India to assert title credentials



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SPORT



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SPOTLIGHT

Zanotelli tops CHI Al Shaqab Grand Prix with Charly Heart

'I couldn't be happier to win this week. My mare is naturally a quick horse, and that helped a lot'



HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani, President of the Olympic Council of Asia and the Qatar Olympic Committee; and Chairman of the Organising Committee for the Doha Equestrian Tour 2026 crowned the podium winners of the CHI Al Shaqab Grand Prix.

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Brazil's Marlon Modolo Zanotelli topped a competitive field to clinch the CSI5* CHI Al Shaqab Grand Prix, bringing four days of thrilling action at Al Shaqab to a close on Saturday night.

Zanotelli and his 10-year-old mare Charly Heart stood out in the 160cm class feature event. The pair cleared the first round in 77.51 seconds before delivering a superb performance in the jump-off, where 11 of the 42 starters advanced. They stopped the clock at 36.65 seconds in the decisive round to secure the title, with Zanotelli claiming the winner's purse of €172,500.

Belgium's Pieter Devos finished second aboard Casual DV, clocking 37.84 seconds in the jump-off to earn €115,000. Lebanon's Roger Chammas took third place with Glondon Di San Giovanni in 39.64 seconds, receiving €86,250.

"I couldn't be happier to win this week," Zanotelli said. "My mare is naturally a quick horse, and that helped a lot. We

brought her here with the goal of building up to this Grand Prix, and throughout the Tour she was consistent in the top five in the big classes she jumped. She learned a lot here and gained confidence. The arena and the facilities really help with that."

Devos said: "I'm very happy with my horse again. Last week she jumped three clear rounds in the Grand Prix, and today she was double-clear once more. I'm really pleased with how well my mare jumped, it's the beginning of the season, and she has learned so much here.

"This venue gives you so much support for good horse to develop week by week. She jumped even better than last week. The fences and the arena here push horses to progress step by step."

The CHI Al Shaqab was the sixth leg of the 10-round Doha Equestrian Tour 2026 with prize money exceeding €1.3mn.

Meanwhile, Switzerland's Nadja Peter Steiner emerged winner in the CSI3* 150cm Grand Prix Jump-Off after clocking 35.54 seconds in the jump off. Germany's Philipp Weishaupt partnered with Mastermind RL to take second place in 36.14 seconds while Britain's Sienna Charles finished third with Stardust, clocking 36.95

seconds in the jump off.

The CSI2* 1.30 Grand Prix Jump-Off at 2nd Outdoor Arena witnessed the all-Qatari podium with Khalid Jassim al-Suwaidi (E.T.'s Queeny Z) winning the title, clearing the jump-off in 33.20 seconds. Mohammed Eisa al-Bukhari (Lisa Perina F) and Hamad Nasser al-Qadi (Happy Tina) came in second and third places respectively with times of 33.71 seconds and 34.02 seconds.

Egypt's Fatima Mohanad Alkishawi (Ipocampo de Maor) won the CSI2* 1.20m Faults & Time at the same venue followed by Bahrain's Hussain Mohamed Dadalla (Golden Eyes du Bavrou) and Saudi Arabia's Khalid Al Hadi (DSP Cessy).

HESTER CLAIMS CDI5* GRAND PRIX FREESTYLE

In the CDI5* CHI Al Shaqab Grand Prix Freestyle, Britain's Carl Hester delivered a commanding performance aboard Fame to claim top honours with a score of 82.975. Denmark's Nadja Aaboe Sloth secured second place riding Favour Gersdorf with 80.915, while Poland's Sandra Sysjojeva completed the podium on Maxima Bella, earning 79.345.

In the CDI5* Grand Prix Special, Ger-



Marlon Modolo Zanotelli in action onboard 10-year-old mare Charly Heart at Al Shaqab.



In the CDI5* CHI Al Shaqab Grand Prix Freestyle, Britain's Carl Hester delivered a commanding performance aboard Fame to claim top honours.

many's Leonie Laugks claimed first place with Sternenwanderer after posting a score of 64.383. Thailand's Suphakamol Vuntanadit followed closely in second aboard Dreamboat Bcn with 64.128, while Germany's Evelyn Eger secured third place riding Dancing Darkness.

Among the winners, USA's Kate Shoemaker aboard Jagger claimed the CPEDI3* Grand Prix Freestyle Grade IV title, while Sweden's Lena Malmstrom topped Grade V with Fabulous Fidelie.

In Grade II, USA's Fiona Howard secured victory riding Ferguston, and Italy's Francesca Salvade' triumphed in Grade III with Escari.

Meanwhile, in the CSI3* 1.45m Table C, Italy's Emanuele Gaudiano clinched top honours riding Diarouge Blue PS with a time of 62.01 seconds. Qatar's Sultan Salem al-Naemi secured second place aboard

Energika des Neyes in 65.66 seconds, and Saad Ahmed al-Saad completed the podium for Qatar with Craquante de Mazin in 65.89 seconds.

Also at the Indoor Arena, USA's Kristen Vanderveen guided Bull Run's Lioness to victory with a clear round in 59.24 seconds in the CSI3* 1.35m Faults & Time class. Saudi Arabia's Mohammed Alasaker finished second aboard Scoobylenky Theys in 60.50 seconds, while Bahrain's Hussain Mohamed Dadalla took third with Jacadil-ou GP du Bois Madame in 60.86 seconds.

Khalifa al-Attayah, Executive Director of the Doha Equestrian Tour, praised the success of the 13th edition of CHI Al Shaqab, highlighting the high level of skill, exceptional public turnout, and the championship's diverse competitions, including show jumping, dressage, and para-dressage.

QATAR STARS LEAGUE

Al Sadd extend lead as Al Gharafa stumble in title race



Al Sadd's Roberto Firmino (right) celebrates with Akram Afif after scoring against Al Wakrah at the Saoud Bin Abdulrahman Stadium. **PICTURE: Noushad Thekkayil**

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Al Sadd moved four points clear at the top of the Qatar Stars League after a comfortable 3-1 win over Al Wakrah, while title rivals Al Gharafa slipped to a 0-1 defeat against Al Shamal yesterday.

With six matches remaining in the season, defending champions Sadd are on 35 points, with Shamal leapfrogging Gharafa into second place on goal difference as both teams sit on 31 points.

At the Saoud Bin Abdulrahman Stadium, Sadd went ahead in the ninth minute through Pedro Miguel, before former Liverpool forward Roberto Firmino doubled the lead at the stroke of half-time. Rafa Mujica secured Sadd's third in

the 57th minute, while Amin Zahzouh added a consolation goal for Wakrah, who remain seventh in the table with 22 points.

Wakrah were resolute early on but failed to capitalise on several promising chances.

Sadd opened the scoring as Miguel nodded in from close range following a Tarek Salman header during a goalmouth scramble.

Just before the break, the lead was doubled when an overlapping Firmino latched onto a fine Giovani Henrique pass to score from the right.

Mujica added the third goal, flicking in Henrique's assist as the ball struck the crossbar before crossing the line. Moroccan forward Zahzouh pulled one back for Wakrah, beating Al Sadd goalkeeper Meshaal Barsham with a header at the left post.

At the Thani Bin Jassim Stadium, Mohamed Rafik Omar's 68th-minute strike proved decisive for Shamal against Gharafa, whose title hopes appear to be fading after a third consecutive league defeat.

Shamal held on for victory despite finishing with ten players after striker and captain Baghdad Bounedjah was sent off in the 73rd minute following a second yellow card.

Meanwhile at the Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium, Al Rayyan edged past Al Ahli thanks to Rodrigo's 91st-minute winner.

Rayyan had fought back from a goal down, with Aleksandar Mitrovic cancelling out Erik Exposito's 29th-minute strike for Ahli in the 82nd minute. The result lifted Al Rayyan to 28 points in fourth place, while Al Ahli remained on 15 points in tenth position.

SPOTLIGHT

Deflated Australia face tough questions

AFP
Sydney

Australia coach Andrew McDonald is adamant the players he took to the Twenty20 World Cup were good enough, but the evidence suggests otherwise with a rebuild looming before they co-host the next tournament with New Zealand in 2028.

The 2021 champions were seen as title contenders again at the showpiece in India and Sri Lanka, but the former white ball heavyweights instead suffered a calamitous exit in the group stage for the first time since 2009.

They head home to a significant pile-on from former Australian greats and an acerbic media who expected more.

They have been quick to lob sharp criticism at the underperforming players and perceived selection blunders.

"We said at the start of this World Cup that we were concerned about Australia," pace great Glenn McGrath told reporters, pointing to the absence of fast bowlers Pat Cummins, Josh Hazlewood and Mitchell Starc as exposing a soft underbelly.

"All of a sudden, the aura of that Australian team is no longer there when other teams play it ... unfortunately, not surprising."

The warning lights were flashing before the event even started when they capitulated heavily to Pakistan in a three-game warm-up, outplayed with bat and ball.

In those matches they lost by 22, 90 and 111 runs - the final two Australia's largest in terms of runs in T20 internationals.

At the time, skipper Mitchell Marsh said: "Absolutely no stress from our end."

That soon became: "It's a devastated group" as their T20 campaign unravelled with defeats to Zimbabwe and Sri Lanka.

Australia's three selectors - George Bailey, McDonald and Tony Dodemaide - have come in for particular criticism, notably their continued faith in under-performing all-rounders Cameron Green and Cooper Connolly.

They were also blasted for their head-scratching failure to play Steve Smith and to drop in-form Matt Renshaw for the Sri Lanka clash when they were still mathematically alive.

"Look at the selections, look at (Glenn) Maxwell, Connolly, Green and (Josh) Inglis, these guys are all out of form," lamented Mark



Australia's players stand for the national anthem before the start of the ICC T20 World Cup group stage match against Oman at Pallekele International Cricket Stadium in Kandy on Friday. (AFP)

Waugh, himself a former selector.

"The selectors have their plans in place, but you've got to be smart enough to see which players are in form and which players are out of form."

"And you've got to play the percentages a lot better than what our selectors have played," he said.

OWN THE FACT

A defiant McDonald said there was "always going to be differing opinions from the outside", suggesting they "don't understand what the moving parts are and the conversations are on the inside".

"The build into this tournament and the style of cricket, the balance

of our batting unit and the balance of our bowling attack, we felt really confident coming into this tournament," McDonald added.

"I think the decisions that we made and the squad that we picked, we've got a room full of players that are incredibly disappointed knowing that they were good enough to

progress, and we've just got to own the fact that we haven't."

A forensic review of their disastrous performance is set to kick in once they return home ahead of planning for the next T20 World Cup when only three in the current squad - Green, Connolly and quick Xavier Bartlett - will be aged under 30.

What becomes of some of their ageing champions like Maxwell, Marcis Stoinis, Hazlewood and Cummins remains to be seen. Starc has already bowed out of the game's shortest format.

McDonald noted that with a heavy Test load ahead and a one-day World Cup in 2027, Australia's T20 schedule was light going forward, giving them limited opportunities to fine-tune the team in the immediate future.

"In the next 12 months, we'll have a lack of T20 cricket, as is the way of the schedule," he said. "We go to Bangladesh and we've got a series against England."

"They won't really ramp up until pretty much that World Cup year, which is similar to what happened in this cycle."

"That's probably not enough to start to build out what your direction is."

"I think that'll come a little bit closer"

MATCH REPORT

Miller, Jansen the heroes as Proteas ease past India

South Africa produce superb all-round performance in Ahmedabad

Reuters
Ahmedabad

South Africa bulldozed defending champions India by 76 runs yesterday in their Super Eight Group One clash in the Twenty20 World Cup, underlining their title credentials and sending a strong signal to their rivals.

Choosing to bat in a rematch of the 2024 World Cup final, South Africa surged to a commanding 187-7 following a remarkable recovery from a precarious 20-3.

In reply, tournament co-hosts India's timid top-order faltered swiftly, and their innings never quite escaped the grip of scoreboard pressure. They were bundled out for 111 in 18.5 overs, slipping to their first defeat of the World Cup. "We played against them a lot as well," David Miller, whose breezy 63 earned him player-of-the-match award, said of the Indian bowlers.

"So it was just matching the intensity, if not raising the intensity, against their bowlers, and putting them under the pump. They are good bowlers, but they do bowl bad balls. So it's making sure you're in that position to do that."

Earlier, India quickly took the sting out of South Africa's top-order following Aiden Markram's decision to bat first.

Jasprit Bumrah bowled Quinton de Kock, while Arshdeep Singh had Markram snared at mid-off to leave South Africa without any of their openers inside three overs.



South Africa's David Miller (right) and Dewald Brevis run between the wickets during the World Cup Super Eight match against India in Ahmedabad yesterday. (AFP)

Bumrah's control (3-15) shone again when he, with a deft change of pace, deceived Ryan Rickelton, who chipped tamely to Shivam Dube at mid-off.

From there, a blistering 97-run partnership between Miller and Dewald Brevis (45) not only halted the slide but also turned the heat back on India.

In their reply, India suffered poor starts. Markram dismissed the in-form Ishan Kishan in the first over and Marco Jansen dismissed number three Tilak Varma in the second.

Opener Abhishek Sharma (15) avoided a fourth successive duck but neither he nor Washington Sundar (11) could provide the sta-

bility that India needed at that stage. India captain Suryakumar Yadav (18) departed in the 10th over, leaving India reeling at 51-5

BRIEF SCORES
South Africa 187 for 7 (Miller 63, Brevis 45, Bumrah 3-15) **beat India 111** (Dube 42, Jansen 4-22, Maharaj 3-24) **by 76 runs**

FOCUS

Jacks impresses with bat and ball as England crush Sri Lanka



England's Will Jacks celebrates with teammates after taking the wicket of Sri Lanka's Pavan Rathnayake, caught by Tom Banton, during their World Cup Super Eight match in Kandy yesterday. (Reuters)

Reuters
Colombo

Will Jacks impressed with bat and ball to rescue England from a poor start and help them to a 51-run victory over Sri Lanka in a low-scoring Super Eight match at the Twenty20 World Cup yesterday.

Tournament co-hosts Sri Lanka appeared to be well set after restricting England to a below-par 146-9 in the Group 2 match at the Pallekele International Cricket Stadium. Jacks, who made 21 useful runs down the order, returned to claim 3-22 as England bowled out Sri Lanka for 95 inside 17 overs to prevail. "It encourages me to get into the game and perform better," player of the match Jacks said.

"Bowling in the powerplay is something I've done a lot of. So it's not foreign to me."

Sri Lanka captain Dasun Shanaka elected to field after winning the toss and had reasons to feel vindicated as England slumped to 68-4 at the halfway mark of their innings. Jos Buttler's 14-ball struggle ended when he was trapped lbw for seven after attempting a reverse shot against spinner Duniya Wellalage only to miss a ball that rapped him on the pad.

Spinner Maheesh Theekshana dismissed the in-form Jacob Bethell for three and Tom Banton

perished in his pursuit of a risky single, beaten by Shanaka's direct throw from mid-off. Harry Brook made 14 before Wellalage dismissed him lbw, a decision the England captain challenged but could not overturn.

Phil Salt (62) raced to a 36-ball fifty but holed out in the 15th over to give Wellalage his third wicket of the match. Jacks added late runs but England fell short of the 150-mark. They needed a lion-hearted bowling effort and produced one to reduce Sri Lanka to 22-4 inside five overs.

Jacks dismissed Kusal Mendis and Pavan Rathnayake off successive deliveries after Jofra Archer had sent back Sri Lanka's in-form opener Pathum Nissanka. Archer removed Kamil Mishara and Sri Lanka slumped to 34-5 after Wellalage became Jacks' third victim.

The hosts could never really recover and several frontline batters fell to soft dismissals. Dushan Hemantha's bizarre hit-wicket dismissal for five summed up Sri Lanka's batting. Shanaka made a defiant 30 but Jacks relayed a catch in the deep to remove the Sri Lanka captain and effectively seal England's victory.

BRIEF SCORES
England 146 for 9 (Salt 62, Wellalage 3-26) **beat Sri Lanka 95** (Shanaka 30, Jacks 3-22) **by 51 runs**



England's Phil Salt plays a shot during the T20 World Cup Super Eight match against Sri Lanka in Kandy. (AFP)

ICC selects Doha as host for board and committee meetings

DUBAI: The International Cricket Council has confirmed that Doha, Qatar, will host the next round of ICC Board and Committee meetings from March 25-27 2026. The meetings will bring together ICC Board Directors, Chief Executives, Committee Members and senior leadership as part of the organisation's ongoing governance calendar, providing an important opportunity to deliberate over key matters pertaining to the present and future of the global game.

The decision to stage the meetings in Doha reflects the ICC's growing engagement with cricket in Qatar and the country's



wider sporting ecosystem. The ICC's support of and collaboration with the Qatar Cricket Association and Olympic Committee, Cricket in Qatar has fuelled remarkable progress for the sport in recent years.

Since 2020, overall participation in cricket in Qatar has grown by an impressive 447%, driven largely by initiatives aimed at introducing the sport to new and younger audiences. Central to this growth has been cricket's inclusion in the Qatar Olympic Committee's School Olympic Programme, which has helped embed the game within schools across the country.

More recently, the launch of ICC's Cricrio Cricket Festivals has further expanded cricket's reach, with 287 school teams taking part in the previous edition and nearly 90% of participants experiencing

cricket for the first time. The ICC sees this sustained progress as a strong example of how strategic partnerships and grassroots investment can accelerate the growth of the game in emerging markets, while also aligning with cricket's growing global significance. Hosting the ICC's Board and Committee meetings in Doha underlines Qatar's increasing role within the international cricket community and provides a valuable opportunity to further strengthen the collaboration between the ICC, the Qatar Cricket Association and key national sporting stakeholders.

GOLF

Bridgeman powers to six-shot lead over McIlroy at Riviera

AFP
Los Angeles

Jacob Bridgeman closed in on a first US PGA Tour title on Saturday, firing an impressive seven-under par 64 to take a six-stroke lead over world number two Rory McIlroy heading into the final round of the Genesis Invitational.

Bridgeman, who played the iconic Riviera Country Club course for the first time on Wednesday, made his way around like an old hand, matching the tournament's 54-hole record with a 19-under par total of 194.

"It was fun and easy," Bridgeman said. "Kind of the best that the golf world ever gets."

The 26-year-old American, who is chasing his first PGA Tour title, shared a one-shot overnight lead and was up by three after three birdies in his first four holes.

He picked up four strokes in the space of three holes to pull away for good. After rolling in a 12-foot birdie at the 10th he eagled the par-five 11th - where he landed his 259-yard approach a foot from the pin. He drilled an 11-foot birdie putt at the 12th.

"I had to make an adjustment mid-round," he said. "At the beginning I kind of got off to a nice start, had a bunch of short putts and didn't really have any 15-footers where the speed matters."

"Then kind of in the middle of my round I hit a few (putts) way too hard and told my caddie, I've got to hit those a little softer, they're not taking a break. After that I feel like I hit a lot of good putts."

McIlroy, meanwhile, could never find the right touch on Riviera's tricky greens, finishing with just three birdies and a bogey in his two-under 69 for 200. The

Northern Ireland star, who completed his career Grand Slam at the Masters last year, admitted to some frustration as he found himself unable to put pressure on Bridgeman.

"The greens got really fast there at the end of the day," McIlroy said. "You're grinding over three-footers and all of a sudden you get one that you think you can have a bit of a run at and if you hit it a little bit too hard..."

"I found the greens really, really difficult today," added McIlroy, whose difficulties were epitomized at the par-five 17th, where he was on the green in two but ultimately missed a four and a half-foot birdie putt. McIlroy said he'd aim for a fast start on Sunday.

"I'm hitting the ball well. If I can keep driving it like that, putting the ball in the fairway, just giving myself chances and go from there - that's all I can really do," said McIlroy, who was one stroke

in front of South African Aldrich Potgieter.

The 21-year-old Potgieter, who claimed his lone PGA Tour title to date at the Rocket Classic in Detroit last year, had an eagle and six birdies in his six-under 65 and at 12-under was one clear of England's Aaron Rai, who shot a 66.

World number one Scottie Scheffler, who pushed his streak of PGA Tour cuts made to 68 without a stroke to spare after an erratic two days, climbed the leaderboard with a five-under 66 for five-under 208.

Scheffler, who said this week he has a "weird" relationship with Riviera, made four of his six birdies on the back nine, shaking off his lone bogey with the help of solid putting.

"At times it still felt weird," he said. "The golf course is getting in the morning, the greens are fresher. So I was able to hole a few putts, which is key?"



Jacob Bridgeman of lines up a putt on the 16th green during the third round of The Genesis Invitational at Riviera Country Club in Pacific Palisades, California. (AFP)

HORSE RACING

Saida clinches Al Waab Cup with late surge

Five-year-old mare registers her third win from five starts this season

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Saida, owned by Time Form Syndicate and trained by Hamad al-Jehani, produced a thrilling late charge to capture the Al Waab Cup in the Local Thoroughbred Handicap (50-70) over 1400m for horses aged three years and older at Al Rayyan Racecourse on Saturday night.

The five-year-old mare, racing on turf, was seventh at the halfway stage before accelerating powerfully under jockey Saleh Faraj al-Otaibi to snatch victory by a head, registering her third win from five starts this season. With her success in the feature race at the 54th Al Uqda meeting, with Saida, trainer al-Jehani also completed a double for on the card.

Al Deebil, racing for Al Wasmiyah Farm and trained by Mohammed al-Ghazali, finished second under Arnaud de Lepine, while Toyota, representing Al Ezz Stud and trained by Saeed al-Shafi, came third under Lukas Delozier. QREC Registration and Studbook Department's Deputy Director Saad Ali al-Kubaisi presented the Al Waab Cup to the winners.

Earlier, RB Hot Mess sealed the victory in the sixth and penultimate race, a Purebred Arabian Handicap 65-85 over 2200m.

The seven-year-old grey, owned by Yusuf Ahmad Telfat and trained by Bader al-Balushi, unleashed a strong late surge to win by two and a half lengths under Pierre-Charles Boudot. Meanwhile, Manjam, owned by Khalifa bin Sheail Al Kuwari and trained by Zuhair Mohsen, was ridden to success in the Purebred Arabian Handicap 65-85 over 1400m by Abdulla Rashid al-Hajri.

Injaaz Stud's Rayyan Bu Thaila captured the Local Thoroughbred Graduation Plate title under Boudot, while Mister Linsou was



Connections of Saida celebrate after the five-year-old mare won the Al Waab Cup at Al Rayyan Racecourse. PICTURES: Juhaim

the fastest in the Purebred Arabian Maiden Plate over 1400m for four-year-olds, giving trainer Hamad al-Jehani another success.

Just A City Boy claimed the Thoroughbred Handicap 0-60 over 2200m for owner Alghazali Motors Racing and trainer Mohammed al-Ghazali, while Hardan set the tone in the opening Local Purebred Arabian Handicap 0-65 over 2200m, delivering for owner Maryam Abdulrahman al-Jaber and trainer Hadi al-Ramzani.

RESULTS
54th Al Uqda Race Meeting - Al Waab Cup
 (Horse, trainer, Jockey)
Al Waab Cup - Local Thoroughbred Handicap 50-70 (Class 3)
 Saida, Hamad al-Jehani, Saleh Faraj al-Otaibi
Purebred Arabian Handicap 65-85 (Class 4)
 RB Hot Mess, Bader al-Balushi, Pierre Charles Boudot
Purebred Arabian Handicap 65-85 (Class 4)



Jockey Saleh Faraj al-Otaibi guided Saida to the Al Waab Cup victory.

Manjam, Zuhair Mohsen, Abdulla Rashid al-Hajri
Local Thoroughbred Graduation Plate (Class 4)
 Rayyan Bu Thaila, Jihad El Ahmad, Pierre Charles Boudot
Purebred Arabian Maiden Plate (4yo Only) (Class 6)
 Mister Linsou, Hamad al-Jehani,

Pierre Charles Boudot
Thoroughbred Handicap 0-60 (Class 6)
 Just A City Boy, Mohammed al-Ghazali, Jefferson Smith
Local Purebred Arabian Handicap 0-65 (Class 6)
 Hardan, Hadi al-Ramzani, Pierre Charles Boudot

FOOTBALL

Al Shaab secure win in Al Thumama Ramadan Tournament

By Sports Reporter
Doha

The excitement continued in the third edition of the Al Thumama Ramadan Tournament, held at Al Furjan Stadium in the Al Thumama area in cooperation with the Qatar Sports for All Federation for the 10-14 age group (born between 2012 and 2016).

Al Shaab secured a 3-1 victory over Medical Care. Saif Abdulaziz al-Darwish of Al Shaab was named Best Player of the Match after delivering an impressive performance.

Palestine recorded a 3-0 win over Al Shaqab to continue their strong showing in the competition. A Palestine player was also honoured after the match in recognition of his outstanding performance and contribution to the team's victory.

The match between Al Waab and Al Dafna ended in a 1-1 draw.

Ali Talal al-Mawlawi of Al Waab received the Best Player of the Match award.

The Palestine-Al Shaqab match witnessed a touching humanitarian gesture, as Hassan al-Ishaq, Chairman of the Organising Committee and member of the Municipal Council, honoured a Palestine team supporter who was injured during the recent war on Gaza.

The gesture reflected appreciation for resilience and loyalty, underscoring the community values promoted by the tournament.

The third edition features 13 teams divided into two groups. Group One includes Doha, Turki Bin Abdullah, Al Wajba, Al Za'eem, Al Rayyan and Al Thumama. Group Two comprises Al Dafna, Al Shaab, Al Waab, Medical Care, Palestine, Al Shaqab and Al Shahaniya.

Three matches are held daily on the neighborhood fields as the tournament progresses.



Action from Al Thumama Ramadan Tournament at Al Furjan Stadium.



Hassan al-Ishaq, Chairman of the Organising Committee and member of the Municipal Council, honoured a Palestine team supporter who was injured during the recent war on Gaza.

Korda to face Paul in Delray Beach final

Sebastian Korda reached his first ATP final in more than a year on Saturday, topping third-seeded Italian Flavio Cobolli 7-6 (7/1), 6-1 to book a title showdown with Tommy Paul in Delray Beach, Florida.

"I think it was a great match," said Korda. "I think I served pretty well. I didn't have too many pressure situations on my serve, and that opens up the returns. I think I played a great tie-breaker, and then after that, I just started feeling the ball a little bit better, returning a little better and put some pressure on him." Korda didn't face a break point as he produced a strong service performance that included a dozen aces. He will play in the Delray Beach final for the second time, having finished runner-up to Hubert Hurkacz in 2021. This time he will be up against fifth-seeded fellow American Paul, who rallied to beat fourth-seeded compatriot Learner Tien 4-6, 6-4, 6-3. Paul is in his first final since he lifted the trophy in Stockholm in 2024. He had been 0-5 in semi-finals since then. "He obviously was playing amazing tennis in the first (set)," said Paul, who was hindered last sea-

son by injuries including a ruptured foot ligament and an abdominal strain. "I felt like I was really struggling to stay with him. I felt like he was doing everything a little bit better than me. I knew I had to mix things up and try to change the rhythm... I thought I did a great job mixing it up."



Sebastian Korda of the United States returns a shot against Flavio Cobolli of Italy during their Delray Beach semi-final in Florida. (AFP)

USA beat Canada to bag Olympic ice hockey gold

The United States won men's ice hockey gold at the Winter Olympics for the first time in 46 years as Jack Hughes' overtime goal gave them a 2-1 win over Canada yesterday.

Hughes' strike 1min 41sec into overtime handed the US men their first Olympic triumph since the 1980 'Miracle on Ice' win over the Soviet Union in Lake Placid. US President Donald Trump was quick to congratulate the gold medalists.

"Congratulations to our great U.S.A. Ice Hockey team. THEY WON THE GOLD. WOW!" he said on Truth Social, adding: "WHAT A GAME!"

The tone for the high-stakes clash was set early on when the Americans were booed when they came out for the warm-up at the Santagiulia Arena by a crowd that appeared to be two-thirds Canadian. But chants of "USA, USA" soon rang out and they got louder when Matt Boldy gave the Americans a 1-0 lead in the first period.

Boldy skillfully evaded the challenge of a pair of Canadian defenders and scored past goaltender

Jordan Binnington. Having stopped the first 24 shots he faced, USA goaltender Connor Hellebuyck was finally beaten in the second period by Cale Makar's wrist shot that squeezed over his pad and into the back of the net.

The Americans came close to re-taking the lead at the end of the second period when Brock Faber's slap shot deflected off both posts but somehow didn't go in.

Once the game went into the three-on-three overtime, Hughes applied the golden touch to send his teammates and the US supporters into raptures. After they won, the American players skated around the rink holding up a jersey with the name Gaudreau and the number 13 on the back in memory of former NHL player Johnny Gaudreau, who was killed in August 2024 along with his brother Matthew by a drunk driver while cycling in New Jersey.

Finland, the champions in Beijing four years ago, won the bronze medal on Saturday by thrashing Slovakia 6-1.

PREMIER LEAGUE

Eze's derby double gets Arsenal title bid back on track

LIVERPOOL'S LATE SHOW FLOORS NOTTINGHAM FOREST

AFP
London

Eberechi Eze was the scourge of Tottenham again as his double restored Arsenal's five-point lead at the top of the Premier League in a 4-1 win yesterday, while Liverpool needed Alexis Mac Allister's 97th-minute goal to beat Nottingham Forest 1-0.

Eze, who nearly joined Spurs prior to moving to Arsenal from Crystal Palace in August, scored his first goals since netting a hat-trick in the first north London derby of the season in November.

The pressure was on Arsenal to respond after back-to-back draws at Brentford and Wolves had allowed Manchester City to close in at the top. Mikel Arteta's men rose to the challenge to inflict more pain on their local rivals in Igor Tudor's first match as interim Tottenham boss. Eze has even struggled for minutes in recent weeks as Arteta has favoured other options.

But restored to the starting lineup, he repaid his manager's faith.

The England international hooked in the opening goal from close range just after the half-hour mark, but Tottenham levelled almost immediately through Randal Kolo Muani. Viktor Gyokeres restored Arsenal's lead early in the second half with his most significant goal so far for the Gunners.

Eze was on hand to roll in his second goal after Guglielmo Vicario denied Bukayo Saka. Gyokeres then rounded off the scoring in stoppage time. City have a game in hand in the title race and home advantage when the top two meet in April. But a much-needed victory gives Arsenal some breathing space in their quest for a first league title in 22 years.

Tottenham remain just four points above the relegation zone.

Mac Allister admitted "nothing was good" about much of Liverpool's performance despite snatching a crucial win in their battle for Champions League qualification.

Forest's fourth manager of the season, Vitor Pereira, was taking charge for the first time in the league and his side looked set to earn a deserved point until a dramatic finale.

Mac Allister had a goal ruled out when he charged down Ola Aina's clearance in the closing stages. The ball was deemed to have struck the Argentine midfielder on the arm. However, to Pereira's fury, Forest did not heed the warning as they slipped to within two points of the



Arsenal's Eberechi Eze (left) celebrates after scoring the team's third goal during the Premier League match against Tottenham Hotspur in London yesterday. (AFP)



Liverpool's Alexis Mac Allister (centre) scores a goal in extra time against Nottingham Forest in Nottingham yesterday. (AFP)

bottom three. Mac Allister swept home a rebound after Virgil van Dijk's header was saved.

Liverpool remain in sixth but climb level on points with Chelsea and Manchester United and within six points of Aston Villa.

"I love scoring, I love winning, so in that sense I think it's a really good day," said Mac Allister.

"But on the other hand, I don't think we played very well. There's

plenty of things we need to improve."

Fullham climbed above Sunderland into the top half of the table after becoming just the second visiting side to win at the Stadium of Light this season. Raul Jimenez's double secured a 3-1 victory for Marco Silva's men.

Crystal Palace eased the rising discontent at Selhurst Park with just a second win in 16 games.

Evann Guessand's first Palace goal in the 90th minute beat 10-man Wolves 1-0. Tolu Arokodare's first-half penalty was saved by Dean Henderson.

Ladislav Krejci was then sent off for kicking the ball away on the hour mark as bottom-of-the-table Wolves missed the chance to move above Derby's unwanted record low of 11 points in a Premier League season.

MOTORSPORT

Lusail International Circuit hosts final round of F4 Middle East Championship

Lusail International Circuit (LIC) hosted the final round of the 2026 F4 Middle East and Formula Regional Middle East championships earlier this month. The 5.419km circuit welcomed an international field as both titles were decided at the conclusion of the winter season.

The F4 Middle East Championship, launched in 2025 as the successor to the Formula 4 UAE Championship, is organised by the Emirates Motorsport Organisation (EMSO) and Top Speed.

The FIA-certified series runs across the winter months and uses the Tatuus F4-T421 chassis powered by Abarth engines.

The 2026 season included events in the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, reinforcing its position as a regional development platform for young drivers.

In Formula Regional Middle East (FRME), Mumbai Falcons Racing's Kean Nakamura-Berta secured the title after entering the weekend at LIC 24 points behind Mercedes F1 junior Rashid al-Dhaheeri.

Nakamura-Berta took two pole positions and two race victories, while al-Dhaheeri finished sixth and seventh in the decisive races. Nakamura-Berta claimed the championship by 12 points, with Alexander Abkhazava third overall. He also sealed the Rookie title, and Mumbai Falcons Racing Limited won the Teams' championship.



In the UAE4 Series, Oleksandr Bondarev secured the title for Mumbai Falcons Racing after a close battle with R-ace GP's Andy Consani. A red-flag result in race two left Bondarev just short of confirming the title, but a fifth-place finish in the final race ensured he secured the championship by eight points over Consani. Kenzo Craigie finished third overall and won the Rookie classification. R-ace GP claimed the Teams' title.

The round at LIC concluded the 2026 winter season, with both championships decided in the final round at Lusail.

The event further underlined Lusail International Circuit's continued growth as a global motorsport venue, hosting a diverse range of international and regional championships across two- and four-wheel competition, and strengthening its role in the international racing calendar.



PSG return to top as Lens lose to Monaco

Desire Doue and Bradley Barcola scored in the first half as Paris St Germain (PSG) returned to the top of Ligue 1 with a 3-0 home victory over bottom side Metz following a slip-up by title rivals Lens at home to Monaco on Saturday.

PSG have 54 points from 23 games, two more than second-placed Lens, who let a two-goal lead slip as they lost 3-2 to Monaco. PSG took the lead inside three minutes against Metz and it was far too easy. Warren Zaire-Emery played Doue in on goal as the visitors held a high defensive line and the latter finished unopposed for his ninth goal of the season. The Parisian club added a second in first half added time when Metz failed to clear a corner and Goncalo Ramos steered the ball back across goal, allowing Barcola to head into the net. PSG had to wait until the 77th minute for their third goal as they won possession on the edge of the Metz box and Goncalo Ramos rifled in a shot from a tight angle.

Ansu Fati scored the winner as Monaco came from behind to defeat Lens at the Stade Bollaert-Delelis. Lens were ahead thanks to a spectacular volley from Ousmane Edouard inside three minutes and extended their advantage after 56 minutes as Florian Thauvin reacted quickest to a rebound to score. But Monaco hit back six minutes later when Folarin Balogun took a pass from Mamadou Coulibaly and fired low into the net.

Milan beaten by Parma, Napoli rage at officials

AC Milan slumped to a surprise 1-0 home loss to Parma yesterday to leave city rivals Inter 10 points clear at the top of Serie A, after Napoli lashed out at the refereeing following defeat at Atalanta. Parma defender Mariano Troilo's late header condemned second-placed Milan to a damaging loss in the title race, capping a week in which they also dropped points in a draw with Como.

Massimiliano Allegri's side had seen Inter stretch their lead with a 2-0 win over Lecce on Saturday, but could not respond as they suffered just a second league defeat of the season.

Milan, who lost Matteo Gabbia to a muscle problem in the warm-up, suffered another blow early on at the San Siro when Ruben Loftus-Cheek had to be stretchered off with a head injury. The England midfielder was carried from the field wearing a neck brace after colliding with Parma goalkeeper Edoardo Corvi. Italian media reported that Loftus-Cheek would need dental treatment and undergo tests in hospital for possible head trauma. Milan almost found a breakthrough in the 36th minute when Alexis Saelemaekers picked out Christian Pulisic, but the American winger's shot was kept out by Corvi. Pulisic fired a better chance narrowly wide on the stroke of half-time. Milan pushed for a winner in the second period but struggled to create clear-cut chances. Parma caught them cold in the 80th minute as Troilo headed in, although the goal was initially disallowed for a foul by Lautaro Valenti on goalkeeper Mike Maignan.

But after a lengthy VAR review, the referee overturned his decision to leave Milan's title hopes hanging by a thread. Napoli hit out at "shameful" refereeing after slipping to a 2-1 loss at top-four rivals Atalanta. Raffaele Palladino's side extended their unbeaten run in the league to nine matches with an impressive second-half fightback. Atalanta remain seventh in the table, but only two points behind fourth-placed Roma, who host Cremonese later on Sunday, in the race for next season's Champions League. Injury-hit reigning champions Napoli sit third, but only five points above Atalanta and now 14 adrift of Inter.

Napoli were incensed after having a penalty award overturned and then a goal disallowed in the first half. "Where is the foul? The VAR called him on the penalty, why not on this? It's embarrassing," Napoli sporting director Giovanni Manna told DAZN.

SPOTLIGHT

Barcelona on top of La Liga with Levante win

AFP
Barcelona

Barcelona cruised to a 3-0 victory over Levante to reclaim pole position in La Liga yesterday.

After Real Madrid fell to a 2-1 defeat at Osasuna on Saturday, Hansi Flick's side moved a point clear of their bitter rivals with a comfortable victory at Camp Nou against the team in 19th.

Marc Bernal and Frenkie de Jong gave Barca a commanding first-half lead and Fermin Lopez wrapped up the win with a sensational drive late on.

Barcelona were glad to get back to winning ways after a 4-0 thrashing by Atletico Madrid in the Copa del Rey semi-final first leg last week and then a 2-1 defeat by Girona on Monday in La Liga.

"It was a really bad moment for us but in the end today we gave a good response," Flick told reporters. "It's important now to be on top of the table but in the end there's a long way to go."

Despite Flick's calls for improvement in defence, Barca were as open as ever, although Levante's poor finishing meant they could not capitalise.

Bernal sent Barca ahead after



Barcelona's Fermin Lopez celebrates scoring his team's third goal during the La Liga match against Levante in Barcelona yesterday. (AFP)

good work by Joao Cancelo, who impressed on a rare start after his arrival on loan in January, and Eric Garcia.

It was Bernal's second goal since returning from a long-term knee injury, which kept the 18-year-old out of action for over a year.

"I thought of my father (in my celebration) and my physio - he told me I would score and he has helped me a lot in this process,"

Bernal told Movistar. Veteran Polish forward Robert Lewandowski could have doubled Barca's advantage but fired into the ground and over the bar when well placed.

Cancelo hit the post with a cross aimed at Lewandowski, before the Portuguese defender carved out the second for De Jong with a similar ball in from the left.

De Jong delivered the finishing

touch to give Barca a two-goal lead at the break.

"Joao today he showed his strength, his positive things, he gave us a lot of moments, great chances, for me it was a really good game from him and this is what I want to see," said Flick.

Garcia should have expanded Barcelona's advantage early in the second half but nodded wide from Jules Kounde's tempting cross.

Eventually substitute Lopez got a spectacular third, rattling home a long-range effort in off the post.

The midfielder might have added a fourth late on but Levante goalkeeper Mathew Ryan denied him with an excellent reflex save, after first thwarting Raphinha.

Flick was able to bring back midfielder Pedri as a substitute after a month out with a hamstring injury, with the Spaniard likely to be key in the testing weeks ahead.

Defeat leaves Levante seven points from safety.

"In the first half we had some chances that, if we put them away, could have got them to doubt themselves," said Levante midfielder Carlos Alvarez. "If we'd have gone in front, who knows what could have happened."

Earlier Sevilla earned a 1-0 win at Getafe, while third-placed Villarreal host Valencia later on.