

To subscribe
GULF TIMES
Newspaper
Please call
444 666 35



PSL | Page 2

Faisal, Sahibzada and Philippe shine in Sultans fourth win



TENNIS | Page 3

Wawrinka falls in first round on Monte Carlo farewell

To advertise here,
PLEASE CALL
444 666 21

Tuesday, April 7, 2026
Shawwal 19, 1447 AH

GULF TIMES SPORT



FOOTBALL

Juventus beat Genoa to close in on Serie A top four

Page 4

Police SC beat Al Arabi to clinch Qatar Volleyball Cup

Doha: Police SC were crowned champions of the Qatar Volleyball Cup after defeating Al Arabi 3-1 in the final, securing their third title in the competition's history.

First Vice-President of the Qatar Olympic Committee Mohammed bin Yousef al-Mana, alongside Qatar Volleyball Association President Ali Ghanim al-Kuwari and Vice President of the Qatar Police Sports Federation, Col. Ahmed bin Hamad Al-Thani, presented the trophy, gold medals, and a prize of QR600,000 to the champions. Al Arabi, who finished runners-up, received silver medals and QR400,000.

Police SC made a strong start, claiming the opening set (25-18) with an impressive display that combined powerful attacking play and solid blocking at the net. They maintained their momentum in the second set, overcoming Al Arabi's attempts

to respond and securing it (25-21). Al Arabi bounced back in the third set, showing improved organization and effective blocking to reduce their opponents' scoring opportunities, taking the set (25-21). However, Police SC regained control in the fourth set, delivering a composed performance to close out the match (25-21) and seal the title.

DRAW HELD FOR AMIR CUP

The draw for the quarter-finals of the Amir Cup Volleyball Championship for the 2025-2026 season was held at the Qatar Olympic Committee headquarters yesterday. The draw produced evenly balanced matchups. Al Rayyan will face Qatar SC, while Al Wakrah take on Al Ahli. Police SC meet Al Sadd, and Al Arabi will play Al Gharafa. Matches will be held from April 8 to 15 at the Aspire Ladies Sports Hall under a knockout format.



CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Mbappe ready for Real's clash against Bayern: Arbeloa

Forward did not start either game in the last 16 tie against City

AFP
Madrid

Real Madrid coach Alvaro Arbeloa said Kylian Mbappe joined the club to star in key matches like today's Champions League clash against German giants Bayern Munich.

Arbeloa said Mbappe was a vital part of the team, although questions remain over whether record 15-time winners Madrid can strike the right balance with all their biggest names on the pitch at the same time.

French superstar Mbappe, the club's top goalscorer, did not start either game in the last 16 tie against Manchester City which Madrid won impressively, because of a long struggle with a knee sprain.

Fit once more, Arbeloa indicated Mbappe was likely to feature along with Vinicius Junior in attack at the Santiago Bernabeu against Bayern in the quarter-final first leg.

"I'm delighted to have that kind of problem, to have outstanding players at my disposal and to have a player like Kylian Mbappe, who came to Real Madrid for matches like tomorrow's and for knockout ties like this one," Arbeloa told reporters. "I'm sure we're going to see Kylian at his best, leading the team the way he's always known how to do, and I have a great deal of confidence in all the players."

England international Jude Bellingham is also finding his way back to fitness after injury and Arbeloa said he would keep betting on the squad's stars when they are available. Against City young midfielder Thiago Pitarch and attacking midfielder Brahim Diaz played important roles, but they may get less time on the pitch in the Bayern tie.

"It's clear Mbappe has different characteristics and conditions to those Brahim has, so we have to play in a different way, but I'm delighted to have this problem," said Arbeloa. "Just as you mention Bellingham and other great players I have available, for me it's a blessing to be able to count on everyone..." he continued.

"Having a player like Mbappe in the team is an extraordinary stroke of luck. I don't know if there's a coach in the world who wouldn't want to have him. I put myself in the shoes of the defenders who play against Real Madrid and have to face Mbappe, Vinicius, Valverde, Bellingham... I think they're some of the best players on the planet."

Brazilian winger Vinicius Junior said he worked well together with Mbappe, despite some believing the fit is not right for Madrid.



Real Madrid's forward Kylian Mbappe attends a training session in Valdebebas, in the outskirts of Madrid. (AFP)

"People talk a lot... 'Kyli' is here to help us, he's always given us confidence, he scores the goals for us, we have to be connected tomorrow, above all with the fans and all the players," he told reporters. "It's a difficult game where the best players make the difference, and Kyli is one of those. I have an incredible connection with him, not just on the pitch but off it too."

Vinicius pledged Madrid will be at their best against Bayern Munich after a poor showing in La Liga on Saturday, when they lost 2-1 against Mallorca, leaving them seven points adrift of leaders Barcelona. "There are days where we are more connected or less connected, and that happened against Mallorca," explained the forward.

"We had come from the international break and today, as the coach said, if we're not at 200 percent, we're not going to win games. I hope

we are tomorrow, because it's an important day for us."

The winger, who has become a leading figure in the fight against racism, also spoke about the Islamophobic chanting at Spain's friendly against Egypt last week, which Barcelona's teenage star Lamine Yamal criticised. "It's important that Lamine speaks and that can help people," said Vinicius, who claimed he was racially abused by Benfica's Gianluca Prestianni in a Champions League match in February, which the Argentine denies.

"I'm not saying Spain, Germany or Portugal are racist countries, but there are racists in these countries, especially in Brazil too, in a lot of countries there are racists. But if we continue this fight together, I think that in the future new players don't have to suffer these things and above all, people in general too."

CHESS

FIDE praises Qatar's successful hosting of World Championships

By Sports Reporter
Doha

The International Chess Federation (FIDE) praised Qatar's successful hosting of the World Rapid and Blitz Chess Championships during its recent meetings held in Cyprus on the sidelines of the Candidates Championship.

The Candidates Championship features eight players competing in a double round-robin format, with the winner earning the right to challenge reigning world champion. The meetings in Cyprus were attended by Mohammed al-Mudahka, President of the Qatar Chess Federation, in his capacity as Director of International Relations for FIDE. The FIDE Council commended the strong organisation and success of the World Rapid and Blitz Chess Championships for men and women, which were hosted by Qatar last December.

During the meetings, several important decisions were taken to support the continued growth of chess worldwide. Among the most notable was the decision to award hosting rights for the World Chess Olympiad to Africa in 2032 - marking the first time the continent will stage the prestigious global event. The host nation will be announced at a later stage. The 2034 edition of the Olympiad will be held in the Americas, which last hosted the tournament in 1978 in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Earlier this year, FIDE appointed al-Mudahka to oversee the next

edition of the World Chess Olympiad, scheduled to take place in September in Samarkand, Uzbekistan. The appointment reflects recognition of al-Mudahka's continued contributions to the development of chess internationally, as well as the successful organisation of the World Championship hosted by Qatar last December, which received widespread praise from FIDE officials and participants.

Al-Mudahka, who made the ceremonial first move during the seventh round of the Candidates Championship, praised the efforts of FIDE under the leadership of President Arkady Dvorkovich in advancing the game at all levels, developing competitions, and expanding chess participation in developing countries.

He noted that the federation's upcoming strategy aims to continue strengthening chess development across Asia, adding that Uzbekistan's hosting of the Olympiad reflects the region's growing role in supporting the global chess movement.

Al-Mudahka also confirmed that the Qatar national team will participate in the Olympiad, describing the event as an important platform for raising players' standards and gaining valuable international experience. He concluded by reaffirming the Qatar Chess Federation's commitment to supporting the development of chess locally in cooperation with FIDE, and to continuing efforts to promote and expand the game in Qatar, across Asia, and worldwide.



Mohammed al-Mudahka, President of the Qatar Chess Federation, makes a ceremonial first move before the seventh round of the Candidates Championship match between Javokhir Sindarov and Anish Giri in Cyprus on Sunday.

CRICKET

Faisal, Sahibzada and Philippe shine in Sultans 4th win

Philippe and Farhan changed the course of the game with 110-run stand

Agencies
Lahore

Multan Sultans romped to their fourth win in the Pakistan Super League (PSL) and second consecutive across two days as they beat Rawalpindiz by seven wickets chasing the 183-run target in 16.2 overs in Lahore last night.

Rawalpindiz have now lost their first four matches in the tournament and will be looking for their first victory as they are set to play their remaining six league matches in Karachi.

Multan Sultans completed their fourth successful chase in the tournament with aplomb as Sahibzada Farhan and Josh Philippe scored aggressive fifties and also combined for a thumping century partnership. Shan Masood and Ashton Turner's unbeaten 20s added the finishing touch.

With the ball, Faisal Akram shone bright dismissing Abdullah Fazal, Kamran Ghulam, Daryl Mitchell and Asif Afridi to collect figures of 4-31 - his best return across 26 T20s so far.

In the chase, Mohammad Amir struck in the second over of innings to remove the in-form Steven Smith for a run-a-ball five with Abdullah taking a brilliant catch at deep square. At this juncture Sahibzada and Philippe took it upon themselves to change the course of the game with a 58-ball 110-run stand. Sahibzada struck 68 off 38 balls striking four fours and five sixes, while Philippe's



Multan Sultans players celebrate after taking a wicket during their PSL match against Rawalpindiz in Lahore yesterday.

30-ball 56 stood on the back of six fours and three sixes. The duo helped their team collect 58 runs by the end of powerplay.

Later a four sixes laden 10th over, which also included Sahibzada's hat-trick of sixes against Rishad produced 26 runs taking them to 110-1. With 73 needed off last 10 overs, the Sultans lost Sahibzada and Philippe in a space of 13 balls to right-arm pacer Mohammad Amir Khan and left-arm pacer Mohammad Amir, respectively. Shan and Turner hurried their team to victory with the skipper finishing the game with a four and six in the 17th over.

Earlier, Rawalpindiz were lifted to a competitive total by Sam Billings, who notched his fifth PSL fifty in his 400th T20 match, and was the only batter from his side to face more than 24 balls and cross the 35-run mark.

Billings' 56 not out off 34 balls came after he entered the fray with Rawalpindiz 79-4 in 9.3 overs and were soon reduced to 94-5 in 12 overs with the wicket of Mitchell (17, 12b, 2x4s), who was caught and bowled by Faisal. From this point onwards, Billings struck seven fours and one six and stitched a brisk 17-ball 33-run stand with Dian Forrester for sixth wicket, a

13-ball 23-run stand with Asif Afridi (7, 6b, 1x6) and the most valuable ninth-wicket stand of 31 from 15 balls with Mohammad Amir Khan, who remained unbeaten on naught off two. Forrester showed off his big hitting skills by clubbing Mohammad Nawaz for three consecutive sixes in the latter half of the 13th over and then hit Mohammad Wasim Jnr for four in a 11-ball 24-run knock.

At the beginning of the Rawalpindiz innings, Mohammad Ismail castled Yasir Khan for a seven-ball five, while Arafat Minhas accounted for Mohammad Rizwan by trapping him leg-before for a 13-ball 19 comprising four fours. Ghulam injected the much-needed impetus to the innings albeit for a short time by striking three fours and two sixes in his 24-ball 35 after walking in at 15-1.

No.4 Abdullah struck a four and a six and looked threatening before his stay at the crease was cut short for an eight-ball 14 with Rawalpindiz 66-3 in 7.3 overs.

Faisal's regular strikes in eighth, 10th and 12th over hamstrung the Rawalpindiz innings reducing them to 94-5 in 12 overs. Arafat returned another miserly spell of four overs giving away 22 runs and taking two wickets. Ismail and Peter Siddle picked up one wicket each.

BRIEF SCORES: Multan Sultans 186 for 3 (Farhan 68, Philippe 56, Amir 2-32) **beat Rawalpindiz 182 for 8** (Billings 56*, Ghulam 35, Faisal Akram 4-31) **by seven wickets**

SPOTLIGHT

Al Arabi triumph in U-16 3x3 Basketball Clubs League

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Al Arabi were crowned as Under-16 3x3 Basketball Clubs League champions for 2025-26 season after they topped the overall standings at the conclusion of four rounds.

The team achieved a perfect record with 400 points out of a possible 400, reflecting its clear dominance and technical consistency throughout the competition.

Al Arabi delivered an exceptional season, securing 12 wins from 12 matches without a single loss, for a 100% winning rate. The team also recorded a total of 243 points, giving it a decisive edge over its rivals from the opening rounds until the end of the league.

Al Rayyan finished second with 310 points, winning 9 out of 12 matches (75% win rate). The team showcased strong competitive performances that kept it in contention until the final stages of the season.

Al Sadd claimed third place with 290 points, registering 8 victories from 12 matches (66.67% win rate), thus maintaining its presence among the leading teams and completing the podium at the close of the championship.

The league witnessed steadily rising technical levels across its four rounds, with matches marked by intensity and excitement. The competition also highlighted the notable progress of young players in the 3x3 format, which is gaining increasing attention as part of Qatar's basketball development plans at the youth level.



Richardson claims Australia's Stawell Gift in record time

US sprint star Sha'Carri Richardson surged through the field yesterday to win Australia's prestigious Stawell Gift race, clocking the fastest time in its history. Held on grass over 120m at a slight gradient in a small rural town outside Melbourne, athletes are handicapped according to form and start off varying marks. Richardson, who won the 2023 100m world title and was second in the blue-riband sprint at the 2024 Paris Olympics, reined in runners who had up to a nine-metre head start. She crossed the line in 13.15 seconds to become only the third woman to win the race from scratch - starting at the back of the field. "The race was phenomenal," Richardson told reporters. "(I've been) focusing in on the race execution me and my coach Dennis (Mitchell) have been working on and using this as a race to utilise those new gears and show them off." Richardson said she did not know what to expect running on grass, but the experience boded well for a big season ahead. "I don't see it as any less than a regular race, the worlds, Olympics... every single time you have the chance to touch the track, you use that chance," she said. Her boyfriend Christian Coleman, who holds the 60m indoor world record and also started from scratch, 5.25m behind his closest rival, failed to make it past the semi-finals. "Giving up that much of a margin over 120, it is what it is, but I had fun," he said. Australian Olufemi Komolafe won the men's final in 12.03 seconds. The Stawell Gift is Australia's oldest sprint race, dating back to the gold rush days in the area.

RAIN WASHES OUT IPL CLASH BETWEEN KOLKATA AND PUNJAB

Kolkata Knight Riders picked up their first point of the IPL following the first no-result of the 2026 tournament after their match against Punjab Kings was abandoned after just 22 deliveries yesterday. Following defeats to Mumbai Indians and Sunrisers Hyderabad in their two opening fixtures, Kolkata were in trouble at 25-2 after 3.4 overs at their Eden Gardens home ground when the rain arrived at 7:48 pm local time.

The rain finally relented 40 minutes before the 11:14 pm cut-off, but there wasn't enough time to get the ground ready for a five-overs-a-side shootout.

Unbeaten Punjab reclaimed the top position in the league table with five points from three matches while Kolkata opened their account fortuitously after going into the match without their lead spinners. Varun Chakravarty was injured while West Indian Sunil Narine

was ruled out because of illness. Despite the threat of rain, Ajinkya Rahane surprisingly opted to bat first but watched in consternation as opening partner Finn Allen of New Zealand and Australian Cameron Green were both caught behind off Aussie swing exponent Xavier Bartlett in the space of three deliveries in the second over. It started raining not long afterwards, forcing the sides to split the points.

AL ARABI BEAT AL DUHAIL TO WIN QATAR HANDBALL CUP



Al Arabi secured the Qatar Handball Cup for the 2025-2026 season with a hard-fought 31-29 victory over Al Duhail in the final at Al Duhail Sports Hall yesterday. Trailing 13-15 at halftime, Al Arabi staged a second-half comeback to overturn the deficit and claim the two-goal win. Second Vice President of the Qatar Olympic Committee Dr. Thani bin Abdulrahman Al Kuwari and President of the Qatar Handball Federation (QHF) Ahmed Mohammed Al-Shaabi presented the championship trophy and medals to the players. The triumph marks Al Arabi's third Qatar Handball Cup title, following successes in 2020-2021 and 2023-2024. The club also secured the league and Federation Cup this season, completing a historic treble. Al Arabi now aim to add a fourth domestic trophy by winning the Amir Cup.

"Achieving three titles in a single season is an exceptional accomplishment that reflects the hard work of both our technical and administrative staff," Al-Shaabi said. "The final against Al Duhail was a sporting spectacle that kept everyone on the edge of their seats." QHF Secretary General Mohammed Jaber Al-Mulla added: "Al Arabi deserved the title after a challenging season. Their consistent performance reinforces their position as one of Qatari handball's powerhouses. We call on all clubs to maintain this level of competition for the Amir Cup, the grand finale of our sporting season." Al Duhail, runners-up in the Qatar Cup, will seek redemption in the Amir Cup after finishing second in the league, Federation Cup, and Qatar Cup this season.

CYCLING

Seixas wins Basque Tour time-trial

AFP
Bilbao, Spain

French teenager Paul Seixas won the Tour of the Basque Country opening stage time trial around Bilbao yesterday over a tricky 13.9km route with steep climbs, sharp turns and a talented field.

The six-day race embarked in bright sunshine from the landmark Guggenheim Museum in downtown Bilbao and will rack

up 809km of hilly and mountainous terrain this week. The 19-year-old Seixas was an early starter in the individual race against the clock, timing 17min 09sec with compatriot Kevin Vauquelin second at 23sec.

Austrian rider Felix Grossschartner was third at 27sec.

"These seconds are precious, a win is already perfect but the gap is a bonus," said the emerging Seixas, who French cycling fans hope can end their wait for a Tour de France title one day.

Of the contenders for the overall title on this climb-filled tour, Red Bull riders Primoz Roglic (0:29) and Florian Lipowitz (0:33) are well placed.

Spain's Juan Ayuso of Lidl was 1min 26sec down, but Mexican Isaac del Toro and other climb specialists can fight back in the mountains as soon as today's stage two. The contenders will set off from the famous bull-running town of Pamplona and head to the Mendukilo caves in the Picos mountains.



Stage winner Team Decathlon CMA CGM's rider Paul Seixas celebrates on the podium wearing the Overall Ranking Leader's yellow jersey after the first stage of the Basque Country's Itzulia cycling tour, a 13.8 km time trial in Bilbao yesterday. (AFP)

Tour of Flanders cyclists face fines for running red light at railway

Up to 20 cyclists from the Tour of Flanders, including race winner Tadej Pogacar, could face action from Belgian authorities after running a red light at a railway crossing on Sunday. While the main peloton stopped as required, Pogacar and a bunch of chasers slipped across the tracks in pursuit of a leading group, despite the warning signals and the risk of an oncoming train. Pogacar said he and several others were alerted to the red light too late. "Suddenly, three guys jumped in the middle of the road and started waving to stop. How can you stop in one second," he said. Pogacar also said he at first

thought he might be dealing with some kind of protest, which is common at bike races held on public roads. "I was thinking maybe it's some protesters or something crazy is going on." The East Flanders public prosecutor's office announced it would pursue the riders for breaching road safety rules. "The offenders will be identified and a report will be filed," the local prosecutor's office said. Race organisers forced the group that went through to slow down and wait for the rest of the peloton to catch up once the train had passed, but the breakaway was allowed to keep racing.

TENNIS

Wawrinka falls in first round of Monte Carlo adieu

'It was a long time ago, but of course I remember it, it was exceptional'

AFP
Monte Carlo

Stan Wawrinka bid farewell to the Monte Carlo Masters as the 2014 champion fell 7-5, 7-5 to Sebastian Baez in the first round yesterday.

The 41-year-old three-time Grand Slam winner will retire from tennis at the end of the season and entered the main draw in Monaco as a wild card 20 years on from his debut at the tournament.

The Swiss won his sole 1000-level title 12 years ago in the principality when he defeated his compatriot Roger Federer.

"It was a long time ago, but of course I remember it, it was exceptional," Wawrinka said on-court of his 2014 victory after tournament organisers showed a video homage to him.

"To have the chance to play this final here, with this exceptional tournament, and to win it in addition, will always be one of my best memories of my career."

Heading into his meeting with 65th-ranked Argentine Baez, Wawrinka's only match since losing to eventual winner Daniil Medvedev in the last 16 at February's Dubai Open was a three-set defeat to then-world number 348 Matteo Martineau at a challenger event on clay in Naples late last month.

Despite that, Wawrinka raced out of the blocks on Court Rainier III as he took a 4-1 lead in the opening set. Baez hit back to level scores at 5-5 before pouncing on Wawrinka's serve in the 11th game to get ahead.

Wawrinka then lost his opening service game of the second frame



Switzerland's Stanislas Wawrinka applauds spectators after losing his first round match against Argentina's Sebastian Baez at the Monte Carlo Masters yesterday. (Reuters)

as Baez took control of the match, eventually closing out victory in one hour and 47 minutes after weathering a stirring late comeback by the former world number three.

As reward for his win, Baez will next face world number one and reigning Monte Carlo champion Carlos Alcaraz in the second round.

Elsewhere, three-time former

winner Stefanos Tsitsipas lost in straight sets to 16th seed to Francisco Cerundolo. Tsitsipas has not beaten a top-20 player on clay since August 2024.

Andrey Rublev, the 2023 champion, navigated his way through a topsy-turvy opener as the 13th seed beat Nuno Borges 6-4, 1-6, 6-1 to set up a round of 32 meeting with Zizou Bergs.

World number 47 Bergs booked

his spot thanks to a 6-4, 6-3 victory against 37-year-old Adrian Mannarino.

Arthur Rinderknech eased past 12th seed Karen Khachanov 7-5, 6-2 and will next play Joao Fonseca after the Brazilian teenager eased past Gabriel Diallo in two sets.

Czech 11th seed Jiri Lehecka needed three sets to see off US qualifier Emilio Nava.

FOCUS

Coughlin captures 3rd LPGA title at Aramco Championship

AFP
Los Angeles

Lauren Coughlin carded an even-par 72 on Sunday to complete a wire-to-wire victory in the Aramco Championship, capturing her third LPGA title by five strokes.

Coughlin punctuated her week on the challenging Shadow Creek course in Las Vegas, Nevada, with her third birdie of the day at the 18th. Her seven-under par total of 281 put her five clear of world number two Nelly Korda and Northern Ireland's Leona Maguire.

Korda, who started the day two strokes adrift, closed with a three-over 75, her only birdie of the day coming at the final hole.

Maguire, meanwhile, moved up the leaderboard with a one-under 71 to join Korda on two-under.

Japan's Miyu Yamashita, who shared the first-round lead with Coughlin, posted a two-over 74 for a one-under total of 287.

The leading four were the only players to finish the week under par after a day of swirling, gusting winds and high scores.

"I just know I played really, really great all week," said Coughlin, whose two prior titles came at the 2024 Canadian Women's Open and Scottish Women's Open.

Ranked 32nd in the world coming into the week, the American is projected to rise to 12th in the rankings after the victory in a star-studded event that featured all of the top 20 ranked players.

The tournament co-sanctioned by the LPGA and the Ladies European Tour is part of the Saudi-backed Global series and featured a total purse of \$4mn with a \$600,000 winner's prize.

More important to Coughlin, it gave her another chance to tackle Shadow Creek, where she finished runner-up in last year's LPGA Match Play.

"It definitely left a sour taste in my mouth last year, not getting the W given how well I played all week," she said. "So it makes it extra special this week."

After sharing the first-round lead Coughlin had led by five after the second round before Korda cut the gap on Saturday.

But Korda said her game just wasn't sharp enough on Sunday.

"I just didn't play good golf today," the American said. "I was hitting it pretty poorly off the tee, and I was just finding myself in really tough positions going into the greens and then hitting it in places where I shouldn't be around the greens."

"This golf course is brutal, especially if you're on the wrong side of the green."

Maguire, whose five birdies included one at the par-five 18th, said she enjoyed the challenge, and liked what it showed about her game.

"Any time you can shoot three rounds under par at Shadow Creek you're pretty happy," she said. "I've always said it's one of my favorite venues of the year."

"I felt like my game had been a lot better lately than some of the scores I shot, and it was nice to see that sort of come to fruition this week on really the hardest course I played all year."



Lauren Coughlin poses with the trophy after winning the Aramco Championship at Shadow Creek Golf Course in Las Vegas. (AFP)

SPOTLIGHT

Paul battles past Burruchaga to win ATP Houston title

AFP
Houston

American fourth seed Tommy Paul saved three match points before scoring a battling three-set victory over unseeded Argentine Roman Burruchaga to win the ATP Houston US Men's Clay Court Championship on Sunday.

Paul, 28, held his nerve in a nail-biting third set to dig out a 6-1, 3-6, 7-5 triumph in 2hr 40min to claim the fifth ATP title of his career.

The American had looked to be heading for defeat after the 77th-ranked Burruchaga engineered a trio of match points while leading 5-3 on Paul's serve in the decisive third set.

But Paul showed tremendous resilience to put out that fire and hold, and then broke Burruchaga in the next game to square the match at 5-5.

Buoyed by that narrow escape, Paul then held to love to go 6-5 up, and suddenly the pressure was all on the 24-year-old from Buenos Aires, playing in his first ATP final. Burruchaga, the son of 1986 World Cup-winning footballer Jorge Burruchaga, appeared equal to the challenge after going 40-0 up. Yet once again Paul dug deep and clawed his way back to deuce.

The American moved to match point when Burruchaga drilled a backhand wide down the line, and then clinched victory when the South American yanked a wild forehand long on the next point.



Tommy Paul of the United States celebrates with the trophy after defeating Roman Andres Burruchaga of Argentina in the Houston Open final at River Oaks Country Club. (AFP)

GOLF

Eagle-eyed Spaun snatches Texas Open victory

AFP
Houston

JJ Spaun bagged a sensational eagle on the penultimate hole to warm up for the Masters with a dramatic one-shot victory at the PGA Tour's Valero Texas Open on Sunday.

Spaun carded a five-under-par closing 67 at the TPC San Antonio Oaks Course to finish the tournament with a 17-under aggregate 271. That was enough to vault the 2025 US Open champion, who had started the final round tied for fourth, to the top of the leaderboard ahead of England's Matt Wallace, Scotland's Robert MacIntyre and Michael Kim, who finished on 16 under.

The signature moment for Spaun came on the par-four 306-yard 17th, when his tee shot landed on the green and rolled to within 10 feet of the flag.

He duly made the putt for eagle to move to five under for the day, and then held his nerve to make a crucial up-and-down par on the par-five 18th.

The victory couldn't have been better timed for Spaun, who won his first PGA Tour victory at San Antonio in 2022, but who has endured a rough start to 2026.

"This game is so crazy," Spaun said afterwards. "I haven't been feeling at the form that I wanted to be based off of last season. Just trying to take each day as it comes and accepting what I have."



JJ Spaun of the United States poses with the trophy after winning the Texas Open. (AFP)

"Just means a lot to come back and win here at a place that's been so good to me."

Spaun had missed the cut in four of his seven outings so far this season, with his highest finish before this week a tie for 24th place at The Players Championship last month. But now the 35-year-old will head to Augusta for next week's Masters in fine fettle as he hunts a second major championship. Spaun said adopting a more relaxed approach had been behind this week's improved form.

"I put a lot of pressure on myself this year to start the year, and a lot of expectations," he said.

"It's the complete opposite of the mantra I had all year last year that really helped me, so I tried to get back to that. Went into the last few weeks starting at The Players just trying to be freed up and put less pressure on myself."

LEADING FINAL SCORES

(par-72, USA unless noted):
271 - JJ Spaun 69-69-66-67
272 - Michael Kim 72-65-66-69,

Robert MacIntyre (SCO) 66-64-72-70, Matt Wallace (ENG) 71-69-64-68

273 - Ludvig Aberg (SWE) 67-67-69-70, Andrew Putnam 66-70-67-70

274 - Kevin Yu (TPE) 69-70-66-69

275 - Ryo Hisatsune (JPN) 68-68-67-72, Chandler Phillips 72-66-66-71

277 - Austin Eckroat 68-70-69-70,

Tommy Fleetwood (ENG) 67-70-71-69, Kim Si Woo (KOR) 70-70-70-67, Kristoffer Reitan (NOR) 70-68-69-70

FORMER WADA CHIEF CRAIG REEDIE DEAD AT 84

Veteran British sports administrator Craig Reddie, a former head of the World Anti-Doping Agency and a key figure in London's successful bid to stage the 2012 Olympic Games, has died aged 84 it was announced yesterday. Reddie was an international badminton player, representing Great Britain and in 1981 he was elected president of the International Badminton Federation, where he succeeded in having the sport included at the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona.

Reddie chaired the BOA between 1992 and 2005, before going on to become the president of WADA, from 2014 to 2019, as well as a vice-president of the International Olympic Committee. In his WADA role he was widely criticised by athlete groups and national athlete bodies for the organisation's 2018 decision to lift a three-year suspension on Russian athletes for "state-sponsored" doping imposed following the 2014 Sochi Winter Games.

A defiant Reddie, however, responded by saying: "I have a question for the athletes and that is: 'What, in practice, is the alternative option?'" By that time, however, he had already played a central role in bringing the 2012 Olympics to London, when Paris were thought to be the favourites to host the multi-sport event.

London 2012 bid chief Sebastian Coe, now the president of World Athletics, paid tribute to "my mentor wise counsel, passionate advisor, and great friend" in an X post. Coe, a two-time 1500 metres Olympic champion, added: "Without Craig and his leadership of the British Olympic Association, we may never have won the right to host London 2012."

SERIE A

Juventus beat Genoa to close in on top four

Bremer and McKennie score a goal each for Spalletti's side

AFP
Milan

Juventus moved to within a point of Serie A's Champions League places with a 2-0 win over Genoa, as the top four battle in Italy's top flight heats up.

Taking advantage of fourth-placed Como's goalless draw at Udinese earlier in the day, Juve notched the three points in Turin thanks to Gleison Bremer's fourth-minute header and a 17th-minute strike from the ever-reliable Weston McKennie.

American McKennie's fine finish took his Serie A tally to five, equalling his best-ever haul in a single league season back in his first campaign with Juve in 2020/21. But he showed no interest in that personal statistic when speaking after the match, saying "the important thing is getting into the Champions League".

Luciano Spalletti was hired to get Juve back into the Champions League and the former Italy coach could yet do that after a fifth straight match without defeat. But the home fans had to thank goalkeeper Michele Di Gregorio for a superb double save which stopped spirited Genoa from getting back in the game, first pawing away Aaron Martin's penalty and then keeping out Vitorino's volley.

Di Gregorio has had a tough second season at Juve, dropped from the first team in February following a series of clangers and only in goal yesterday due to Mattia Perin being substituted at half-time with a calf injury. "He has some good moments and some tough moments, but we always knew that he was a quality goalkeeper. He knew that his moment would come," said Bremer.

Those stops helped put some distance between fifth-placed Juve and Roma, who trail Spalletti's team by three points in sixth after being thumped 5-2 at Inter Milan on Sunday.

Juve are also four points ahead of Atalanta, 3-0 winners at Lecce, ahead of Saturday's clash between the pair in Bergamo, with Como hosting league leaders Inter the following day. Bremer's deflected effort was his third of the season and came after he netted his first Brazil goal, in a 2-1 defeat to France, with just over two months to go until the World Cup.

McKennie also scored for his country during the international break, and his give and go with Francisco Conceicao ended with the



Genoa's Leo Skiri Ostigard (left) vies for the ball with Juventus' Weston McKennie during the Serie A match at the Allianz stadium in Turin. (AFP)

midfielder's ninth goal in all competitions for Juve this season.

Genoa suffered no real damage to their bid to avoid relegation as Daniele De Rossi's team sit six points above Lecce, who are in the bottom three after a heavy defeat. Goals from Giorgio Scalvini, Lecce old boy Nikola Krstovic and Giacomo Raspadori gave seventh-placed Atalanta a straightforward win at the Stadio Via del mare.

Lecce were booed off by disgruntled fans after a defeat which left their team level on 27 points with Cremonese, who sit just outside the drop zone thanks to their superior head-to-head record.

On Sunday, Inter Milan took a big step towards winning the Serie A title by thrashing sorry Roma 5-2, ending a late-season wobble and moving nine points clear at the top of the table. Closest challengers AC Milan were

playing champions Napoli late last night with both bidding to see who might stop Inter from securing a 21st league crown.

But the return of Lautaro Martinez, who scored twice after nearly two months out injured, and a first club goal since early February from Marcus Thuram helped Inter emphatically end a mini-slump. Inter had collected eight points from their five league matches played since Martinez suffered a calf injury against Bodo/Glimt in the Champions League.

"Tonight was a big match for us... we had to come out with the right attitude and personality," said Martinez. "I'm happy for my teammates, because it was the win we deserved."

At the other end of the table Cremonese slipped into the relegation zone after being beaten 2-1 by Bologna while Pisa slid closer to the drop with a 1-0 home defeat against Torino.

QSL Cup final on April 16

Doha: The QSL Cup final between Al Rayyan and Muaiter will now be played on April 16 at Stadium 974, with kick-off set for 7pm, the Qatar Stars League announced yesterday. The title clash was originally scheduled for April 17.

Al Rayyan, who topped the league stage of the competition, booked their place in the final

after defeating Umm Salal 17-16 in a marathon penalty shootout, following a dramatic 3-3 draw in the semi-final.

Meanwhile, Second Division side Muaiter SC reached their maiden final in stunning fashion, overcoming Al Arabi SC 3-2 in a penalty shootout after another thrilling 3-3 draw.

SPOTLIGHT

Silva to exit Man City at end of season

Reuters
Manchester

Manchester City captain **Bernardo Silva** will leave the club at the end of the season, assistant manager Pep Lijnders confirmed on Sunday.

The 31-year-old Portugal international, who has won six Premier League titles and the Champions League during a nine-year spell at the Etihad Stadium, will depart as a free agent when his contract expires after the campaign concludes. "Every good story comes to an end," Lijnders said after City's 4-0 FA Cup quarter-final win over Liverpool. "I hope he enjoys the last months - there are only six weeks left - and has a good farewell. He deserves all that attention."

Pep Guardiola, who was serving a touchline suspension during the match, has previously described Silva as "irreplaceable".

Silva joined City from AS Monaco in 2017 for a reported fee of about 43.5m pounds and has since made 450 appearances for the club. Known for his tactical versatility, superb technique and tireless work rate, the midfielder has been a cornerstone of City's side under Guardiola.

After winning the League Cup last month, City remain in conten-

tion for a domestic treble as the 2025-26 campaign enters its final weeks, despite trailing Premier League leaders Arsenal by nine points. The Manchester club have a game in hand and eight matches remaining to bridge the deficit.

LA LIGA CONDEMN THREATS, INTIMIDATION BY SEVILLA FANS OF OWN TEAM

La Liga condemned threats and intimidation by Sevilla fans aimed at their own players and directors after they fell to a third straight league defeat. Sevilla, 17th in the Spanish top flight, lost 1-0 away at bottom side Real Oviedo on Sunday and some supporters met the team at the airport on their return to insult them, while others wearing masks were at the club training ground.

La Liga said in a statement this behaviour "unacceptably crosses the line of legitimate criticism and sporting expression".

Earlier this season, some Sevilla fans tried to force their way into the training ground to remonstrate with the players. La Liga said they would report the incident to Spanish authorities and continue to take action in the future against similar incidents.

Sevilla, winless in five matches, are two points above the relegation zone with eight games remaining in the season.



CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Arsenal's Arteta says players need to channel frustration into motivation



Arsenal players try to transport the ball without dropping it as they take part in a training session at London Colney, on the eve of their Champions League quarter-final first leg against Sporting. (AFP)

Reuters
Lisbon

Arsenal boss Mikel Arteta said the pain of back-to-back cup defeats must be used as motivation as his team turn their focus to the first leg of their Champions League quarter-final against Sporting today.

The London club arrived in Lisbon on the heels of their first back-to-back losses this season, a 2-0 defeat by Manchester City in the League Cup final and a 2-1 upset by Championship side Southampton in the FA Cup quarter-finals.

"We have to have some perspective on how difficult what we have done up until now has been," Arteta told reporters. "Feel the pain, use it to improve. We are very clear what happened and why it

happened. This is football."

With Arsenal reduced from four competitions to two, Arteta said calm thinking rather than panic was key as his players look to respond on the European stage. "I think what you have to be is clear, understand why it happened," he said. "And when you understand that, be better, and that is what we have to do."

Neither Bukayo Saka, Eberechi Eze nor Jurrien Timber will be available for the first leg after the trio did not travel to Portugal due to injuries, although Arteta said he was hopeful they could return at the weekend.

There was better news elsewhere, with Gabriel Magalhaes, Declan Rice and Leandro Trossard all available after being spotted in training. Arsenal face a Sporting side unbeaten at home in Europe

this season, with the Portuguese champions looking to seize the initiative in the two-legged tie.

Sporting midfielder Maxi Araujo shrugged off suggestions Arsenal are favourites today. "There are no favourites in this play-off," he told reporters. "They are playing well, we are too."

Sporting manager Rui Borges said the fact Arsenal have lost successive games means little. "No, I don't believe in that and great teams always want to win," Borges told reporters. "They will be more focused, willing to show their collective individual capacity and so I think it will make it more difficult for us."

The second leg is April 15 at the Emirates Stadium. In between the two legs, Arsenal return to their Premier League title quest when the league leaders host Bournemouth on Saturday.

FOCUS

Bayern's Kompany waiting on Kane for 'toughest' game at Real

AFP
Madrid

Bayern Munich coach Vincent Kompany said he would wait until matchday to make a final call on Harry Kane's fitness to start the Champions League visit to face Real Madrid, which he labelled the "toughest" trip in the competition.

The England striker missed Bayern's win at Freiburg on Saturday with an ankle issue but the German side are hopeful he will be ready to play at the Santiago Bernabeu in the quarter-final first leg today.

Kane trained with his teammates early yesterday before Bayern flew to the Spanish capital on the eve of the match. "(Kane) had his second practice session today and was also (training) when he didn't play, so I don't really think that he lost his rhythm," Kompany told reporters.

"We have to wait for tomorrow to get the final information and then we make the decision accordingly. But he's part of our team and that's positive to us."

Kompany admitted Kane, who has scored 48 goals in 40 games this season for Bundesliga leaders Bayern, viewed the game as vital for the club's season when asked if the forward would push himself to the limit to start.

"Everybody in the club, including myself and especially Harry Kane, knows how important this game is," Kompany said.

"I think it's still always the right thing to have a discussion with each player to make sure that you get the thumbs up. Then when we decide it's a go, it's a go with no more extra thinking about it, just performing and



Harry Kane trained with his team-mates yesterday before Bayern Munich flew to Madrid on the eve of the match. (AFP)

winning the game?"

Record 15-time winners Real Madrid have a strong record against Bayern, eliminating the German side in each of the last four ties in which they have met in the competition. Most recently Madrid netted two last-gasp goals to oust Bayern at the Bernabeu in the 2024 semi-finals.

"I think you have to respect that this game is partially played by tactics, but mainly played by details, because of the quality of the 11 players from both teams that are starting the game," said Kompany. "The version of Real Madrid that we have to prepare for is the best Real Madrid, the one that we saw against Man City (in the last 16), if you base (your gameplan) against that Real Madrid, they're still one of the best teams in Europe. It's still maybe

the toughest game you can play away from home in this competition."

Inter Milan knocked out Bayern in the quarter-finals last season, which Kompany said was largely because of a long list of injured players the German club had at the time. The Belgian coach was happy that this season his squad is virtually all available to take on Real Madrid.

"We had a lot of players not there (against Inter)," explained Kompany. "If I look at the players on the plane today, I would say that we're in a good position to start this game. It doesn't mean we're going to win. Maybe there will be different lessons, but I feel like we have our best players there, and we have to believe and we have to do everything we can to try and win the game."