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GULF TIMES SPORT



FOOTBALL

Kane scores as Bayern sink Stuttgart to claim Bundesliga title

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Qatar drivers secure landmark victory at Spa



Team Qatar claimed a landmark result at the Michelin 12H Spa-Francorchamps, topping the 992-AM class and finishing second overall in the 992 category during the latest round of the 24H Series at Spa-Francorchamps in Belgium yesterday. The result was delivered by drivers Abdullah al-Khelaifi, Ahmed al-Emadi and Faisal al-Yafei, who combined consistency and pace across the 12-hour endurance race to secure class victory and a podium finish overall. Team Qatar began the weekend strongly, qualifying second in the 992-AM class on Friday to position themselves early in the fight for top honours. Over the course of the race, the trio maintained a steady rhythm built on clean stints, strategic execution and reliable performance from their car, allowing them to convert their qualifying position into a class win. The



team ultimately secured first place in the 992-AM category while also finishing second in the overall 992 standings, marking a double podium and a strong statement performance on the European endurance stage. The latest achievement reflects the

continuous progress of motorsport in Qatar and highlights the team's commitment to delivering outstanding results in international competitions, paving the way for further success in the upcoming rounds of the championship.

QATAR STARS LEAGUE

Shamal awarded win against Qatar SC as title race revived

By Sports Reporter
Doha

The Qatar Football Association Disciplinary Committee has reshaped the Qatar Stars League title race, ruling in favour of Al Shamal after confirming a player eligibility violation by Qatar SC in their April 13 clash. In its official decision, issued after reviewing Al Shamal's protest, the committee stated: "The protest submitted by Al Shamal Club is accepted in form and substance." It added: "Qatar Club lost the match with a score of 3-0, and a financial penalty of (10,000) Qatari riyals only."

The ruling overturns the original 2-0 result and instead awards Al Shamal a 3-0 victory, significantly altering the standings at the top of the QSL. The case centred on a second-half substitution made by Qatar SC after they were reduced to ten men just before half-time following the dismissal of Ali Saoudi for a dangerous challenge on Baghdad Bounedjah. Despite the red card involving a foreign player, Qatar SC later introduced Argentine defender Franco Russo in place of Ahmed al-Rawi, a local player - a move deemed a direct

violation of squad regulations. The committee cited Article 15 of the player status rules, which states that if one of six foreign players is sent off, the team must continue with five foreign professionals and cannot replace a local player with another foreigner. It also referenced Article 61/1/b, noting: "The club shall be penalised as having lost if it commits in any match a violation of the participation system - B: Participation of foreign players." Al Shamal lodged their protest within 24 hours of the match, arguing that the substitution involving a foreign player after the red card breached the competition rules. Before the decision, the defeat had left Al Shamal trailing leaders Al Sadd by five points, a gap that placed the title out of reach with one round remaining. The revised outcome restores three points to Al Shamal, bringing them back into direct contention and dramatically tightening the race. Defending champions Al Sadd, on 42 points, now lead Al Shamal by just two points. Attention now turns to the final round on April 27, where Al Shamal face Al Sadd in a decisive clash that will determine the QSL champion on the pitch.

FOOTBALL

Advantage Man City after crucial win over Arsenal

City will go top on goal difference if they beat Burnley in midweek

AFP
London

Manchester City beat stumbling Arsenal 2-1 to take charge of the Premier League title race as Liverpool strengthened their push for a Champions League place. Mikel Arteta's Gunners have been in pole position for months but are wobbling at the worst time as they seek to win the English title for the first time in 22 years. Erling Haaland was City's matchwinner, netting in the 65th minute after Rayan Cherki's superb opener was cancelled out by Kai Havertz, who took advantage of a huge mistake by City goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma. Arteta was on his knees in the closing minutes as Havertz headed over the bar when presented with a golden chance to equalise. The result in front of City's jubilant fans means that if Pep Guardiola's City win their match at Burnley in midweek, they would be top of the table. The are now in pole position to win their seventh Premier League title in nine seasons, while Arsenal face the agony of finishing second for the fourth straight season. Earlier, Virgil van Dijk scored a last-gasp winner in the Merseyside derby. Just a few weeks ago the battle for the top five, which guarantees entry into the Champions League, looked as though it might be tight. But fifth-placed Liverpool's 2-1 victory in their first match at Everton's new Hill Dickinson Stadium took them seven points clear of stumbling Chelsea, in sixth spot. Captain Van Dijk was the hero for Arne Slot's Liverpool, heading Dominik Szoboszlai's corner past a helpless Jordan Pickford in the 100th minute. Mohamed Salah had opened the scoring for last season's champions, slotting home in the first half following a superbly-weighted pass from Cody Gakpo. The goal took the wind out of the sails



Manchester City's Erling Haaland (right) heads the ball during the Premier League match against Arsenal at the Etihad Stadium in Manchester. (AFP)

of David Moyes's team but they were level through Beto within 10 minutes of the restart. Kiernan Dewsbury-Hall, on the left of Everton's forward line, fired across goal for Beto to attack and he poked home ahead of an on-rushing Giorgi Mamardashvili, who was immediately stretchered off to be replaced by Freddie Woodman. The game looked destined to end in a draw but the officials signalled 11 added minutes and Van Dijk had the last laugh. Fourth-placed Aston Villa squandered a two-goal lead against Sunderland but scored in stoppage time to win 4-3. Ollie Watkins scored twice for Villa, who moved level on 58 points with third-placed Manchester United, three clear of Liverpool.

Villa were in total control at 3-1 ahead but nearly threw it away as first Trai Hume and then Wilson Isidor scored within a minute of each other for Sunderland. But there was still time for Tammy Abraham to grab a dramatic late winner. At the other end of the table, Morgan Gibbs-White netted a hat-trick as struggling Nottingham Forest came from behind against Burnley to win 4-1 and heap the pressure on troubled Tottenham. Forest, involved in a relegation scrap with West Ham and Tottenham, are now five points clear of 18th-placed Spurs, with Wolves and Burnley almost certainly doomed. West Ham, a point above Spurs, travel to face Crystal Palace today.

GULF CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Rayyan set up final against Saudi's Shabab

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Al Rayyan booked their place in the final of the Gulf Champions League for Clubs after defeating Kuwait's Al Qadsia 2-0 at Ahmed bin Ali Stadium in the semi-final yesterday. Goals from Roger Guedes in the 17th minute and Aleksandar Mitrovic in the 50th sealed a deserved victory as Al Rayyan produced a controlled and confident performance to advance to the title decider.

Al Rayyan asserted their dominance early through high pressing and sustained attacking pressure, opening the scoring when Abdulaziz Hatem delivered a precise pass to Guedes, who drove into the penalty area before unleashing

a powerful shot into the net. The home side continued to threaten and created several chances, but the first half ended with Al Rayyan holding a narrow one-goal advantage. After the break, Al Rayyan maintained their momentum and doubled their lead from a corner taken by Khalid Ali. The ball rebounded off the goalkeeper and Mitrovic reacted quickest to finish from close range in the 50th minute. Al Rayyan then managed the game effectively, preserving their lead for the remainder of the match to secure progression to the final. They will now face Saudi Arabia's Al Shabab, who advanced to the final after defeating Iraq's Zakhro SC 4-3 on penalties following a 1-1 draw in regular and extra time in the other semi-final at Khalifa International Stadium.



Al Rayyan beat Kuwait's Al Qadsia 2-0 at Ahmed Bin Ali Stadium in the semi-final yesterday.

CRICKET

Arya, Connolly help Punjab beat Lucknow in IPL

Punjab consolidate top spot in the 10-team table with five wins

AFP
New Chandigarh, India

Explosive knocks from opener Priyansh Arya and Cooper Connolly helped top of the table Punjab Kings hammer Lucknow Super Giants by 54 runs to stay unbeaten in the season yesterday.

Arya struck 93 off 37 balls and fellow left-hander Connolly hit 87 to power Punjab to this season's highest total of 254-7 after being invited to bat first in New Chandigarh.

In reply, Lucknow managed just 200-5 as Punjab consolidated their top spot in the 10-team table with five wins and one no result in six matches.

An early reprieve for Connolly proved costly for Lucknow after skipper Rishabh Pant decided not to review an lbw call in the second over from Mohsin Khan and replays suggested the ball would have hit the stumps.

Australia's Connolly was on four at the time and put on 182 runs for the second wicket with Arya as the two bludgeoned the opposition attack with sixes.

Arya reached his second fifty of the season in 19 balls and soon the Lucknow attack had no answers for the batting blitz.

Connolly went after Aiden Markram with three straight sixes



Punjab Kings' Priyansh Arya bats while Lucknow Super Giants' Rishabh Pant tries to keep wickets during their IPL match in New Chandigarh, India, yesterday. (Reuters)

and Arya finished the over with two more in a 32-run 13th over and Punjab looked at 300.

But pace bowler Prince Yadav took down Connolly and Arya fell three balls later in the next over to miss out on a century.

Mohsin dismissed skipper Shreyas Iyer for five but Australia's Marcus Stoinis steered the

team to a mammoth total with his 16-ball 29. Mitchell Marsh, who hit 40, and Ayush Badoni (35) handed Lucknow a brisk start and Pant hit 43 but regular wickets and the ever-increasing run rate kept the team behind the chase.

Markram hit a valiant 22-ball 42 and despite a few dropped catches from Punjab fielders

Lucknow lost their third straight match.

BRIEF SCORES
Punjab Kings 254 for 7 (Arya 93, Connolly 87, Prince 2-25, Siddharth 2-35) **beat Lucknow Super Giants 200 for 5** (Pant 43, Markram 42*, Marsh 40, Jansen 2-37) **by 54 runs**

SPOTLIGHT

Rinku leads Kolkata to first win of the season

AFP
Kolkata

Rinku Singh hit an unbeaten 53 to lead Kolkata Knight Riders to their first win of the IPL season as they beat Rajasthan Royals by four wickets in a low-scoring contest yesterday.

Rajasthan posted 155-9 as their batting faltered after 15-year-old Vaibhav Sooryavanshi top-scored with 46 at Kolkata's Eden Gardens.

Kolkata, who had five defeats and one point from a rained-off game coming into the match, slipped to 5-2 and 85-6 before the left-handed Rinku steered the team home with two balls to spare.

Rinku smacked five fours and two sixes in his 34-ball knock and put on an unbeaten 76-run stand with number eight Anukul Roy, who made 29, to steer the team home.

The left-handed Roy kept calm with his senior partner as he hit a six off Jofra Archer in the 19th over and Kolkata needed nine from the final six balls.

Rinku, who was dropped on eight by Nandre Burger, hit two fours and a winning six as he raised his fifty to bring cheer to the dug-out and home crowd.

England pace bowler Archer had Tim Seifert bowled for a duck on

the first ball of the chase and South Africa's Burger dismissed skipper Ajinkya Rahane for nought to make it two down.

Kolkata's big-buy Cameron Green looked fluent in his 27 off 13 balls but fell stumped off Ravi Bishnoi with wicketkeeper Dhruv Jurel making a wide collection and a back flip onto the stumps.

Wickets kept tumbling with Ravindra Jadeja claiming two but Rinku made the most of his early reprieve to get three-time champions Kolkata over the line.

Earlier, Rajasthan started strongly with openers Yashasvi Jaiswal, who made 39, and T20 sensation Sooryavanshi, who bounced back from a golden duck in the previous game to hammer six fours and two sixes in his 28-ball knock, putting on 81 for the first wicket.

Spinner Varun Chakravarthy took down the left-handed Sooryavanshi and returned figures of 3-14 to trigger a collapse.

Fast bowler Kartik Tyagi took three key wickets and Sunil Narine claimed 2-26.

BRIEF SCORES
Kolkata Knight Riders 161 for 6 (Rinku 53*, 29*, Jadeja 2-8, **beat Rajasthan Royals 155 for 9** (Sooryavanshi 46, Jaiswal 39, Varun 3-14, Tyagi 3-22) **by four wickets**



Kolkata Knight Riders' Rinku Singh (right) is congratulated by Rajasthan Royals' captain India's Riyan Parag for his innings at the end of their IPL match in the Eden Gardens of Kolkata yesterday. (AFP)

PAKISTAN SUPER LEAGUE

Brilliant Babar leads Zalmi to commanding win over Gladiators

Agencies
Karachi

Babar Azam's superb hundred yesterday was the centerpiece of a historic night at the National Stadium in Karachi, as Peshawar Zalmi dismantled Quetta Gladiators by 118 runs in their PSL match.

In a breathtaking display of modern T20 batting, the Zalmi skipper silenced any lingering debates over his strike rate, smashing an unbeaten 100 off just 52 deliveries.

His masterclass featured six crisp boundaries and four towering sixes, remarkably including only a single dot ball throughout the entire innings, a testament to his flawless rotation of strike and surgical precision.

Opting to field first, Quetta Gladiators quickly found themselves at the mercy of a "Yellow Storm."

After the early departure of Mohammad Harris, Babar joined forces with Sri Lankan star Kusal Mendis to forge a devastating 135-run partnership.

While Babar anchored with elegance, Mendis acted as the primary aggressor, blistering 83 runs off 44 balls.

A late flourish from Aaron Hardie (26* off 10) propelled Peshawar to a mammoth 255/3, the highest-ever PSL total recorded at this venue.

Quetta's pursuit of the 256-run target never truly left the blocks. Facing an astronomical required rate of 12.8 from the outset, their top order crumbled under the



Peshawar Zalmi's captain Babar Azam celebrates his century against Quetta Gladiators during a PSL match in Karachi yesterday.

pressure of Peshawar's clinical bowling attack. Ali Raza was the pick of the bowlers, finishing with remarkable figures of 3/9 in just 3.1 overs, while Mohammad Basit Ali's three-wicket burst further gutted the Gladiators' middle order.

Despite minor resistance from Bevon Jacobs (34) and Dinesh Chandimal (19), Quetta was bundled out for 137 in 18.1 overs.

This dominant victory further

cements Peshawar Zalmi's position at the top of the table, fueled by a captain who continues to rewrite PSL record books.

BRIEF SCORES
Peshawar Zalmi 255/3 in 20 overs (Babar 100*, Mendis 83; Abrar 1/44) **beat Quetta Gladiators 137 all out in 18.1 overs** (Jacobs 34; Raza 3/9, Basit Ali 3/26) **by 118 runs**

MHATRE'S HAMSTRING BLOW DEEPENS IPL CRISIS FOR CHENNAI SUPERKINGS

CHENNAI: Chennai Super Kings' patchy Indian Premier League (IPL) campaign suffered a fresh blow after their teenaged batter Ayush Mhatre tore his hamstring, an injury that could put him on the sidelines for a long spell.

The 18-year-old has been the most prolific batter for five-time champions Chennai, who dropped to seventh place in the 10-team league after Saturday's defeat by Sunrisers Hyderabad. The top-order batter milked 30 off 12 balls but was seen clutching his hamstring and required lengthy on-field treatment before being dismissed.

"Obviously a hamstring tear. I don't know how bad it is," Chennai batting coach Mike Hussey told reporters after the match.

"I'm sure we'll scan him probably tomorrow or the next day. "It looks pretty bad, unfortunately. And he's going to be a big, big loss because he's been in really nice touch for us."

Mhatre has scored 201 runs across six innings at a healthy 177-plus strike rate.

"He's an exciting young talent, but it's going to give someone else an opportunity. So that's exciting as well," Hussey said. "We've got some really good players that haven't been able to get an opportunity. And so it's going to be exciting for one of those guys."

"So, as much as we're really disappointed to lose Ayush - I don't know how long for - it's exciting for a new player to come in and get a chance."

Chennai face Mumbai Indians in their next match on Thursday.



Chennai Super Kings' Ayush Mhatre plays a shot during the IPL match against Sunrisers Hyderabad on Saturday. (AFP)

Meanwhile bowling breakthroughs for Sunrisers Hyderabad delivered edge-of-the-seat thriller on Saturday, lifting the mood for skipper Ishan Kishan. Hyderabad edged past Chennai Super Kings by 10 runs, uncovering depth in their bowling resources as a group of unheralded names dismantled what appeared a manageable chase for the five-time champions.

Chasing 195, Chennai were well placed at the halfway stage with 84 needed off 60 balls and seven wickets in hand, but Hyderabad's young bowlers seized control.

Eshan Malinga (3-29) led the charge, backed by Nitish Kumar

Reddy (2-31), Shivang Kumar (1-18) and Sakib Hussain (1-32), all conceding at eight runs or fewer in an over.

"Lovely when you have a bunch of young bowlers coming up with their plans," Hyderabad captain Kishan said at the post-match presentation.

"Looking at them getting better day by day at training, you have to trust them."

Bowlers' effort eclipsed half-centuries from Abhishek Sharma (15-ball fifty) and Heinrich Klaasen (33-ball fifty), underlining Hyderabad's growing reliance on young bowling talent, while Australia quick Pat Cummins remains unavailable.

CYCLING

Evenepoel outsprints Skjelmose to win Amstel Gold Race

AFP
Valkenburg, Netherlands

Remco Evenepoel made up for his disappointment a year ago by outsprinting reigning champion Matthias Skjelmose to win the Amstel Gold one-day classic yesterday.

A year after Skjelmose had outwitted Olympic champion Evenepoel and world champion Tadej Pogacar to win a three-man

sprint, the Belgian gained his revenge for his first major one-day victory in almost two years.

"It means a lot. I mean, I've had a pretty good last month of April with (fifth in) Catalonia, (third) in Flanders, but to take a win is always a bit different," said Evenepoel. "I was really confident. I felt much better than I did last year in the final. I think it was also shown in the sprint that my sprint was much better, that I had something left," the 26-year-old added.

Evenepoel had not tasted victory in a major one-day race since claiming the Olympic crown in Paris in August 2024, finishing second to Pogacar at the world championships, European championships, and Tour of Lombardy last year, while he finished third at Amstel.

Skjelmose admitted "Remco was for sure the strongest, like last year. "Last year I was lucky and this year he just beat me with legs."

They were part of a small group

that went clear of the peloton when Frenchman Romain Gregoire launched an attack with around 40km left of the 257km race that included 33 short, steep climbs.

American Matteo Jorgenson and Frenchman Kevin Vauquelin crashed, leaving Evenepoel, Skjelmose and Gregoire out front on their own. They caught and passed the last remnant of the day's breakaway, Italian Marco Frigo, before an attack by Evenepoel dropped Gregoire.

The Red Bull-Bora-Hansgrohe racer and Skjelmose then collaborated to the finish, with Evenepoel launching his dash for the line first and easily holding off the Dane for his 74th professional victory.

It was a timely return to winning ways with tougher tests ahead, including next weekend when Pogacar and teenage French sensation Paul Seixas will be on the start-line for the year's fourth Monument race, Liege-Bastogne-Liege.



FOCUS

Shelton lifts fifth ATP title with victory in Munich

AFP
Munich

Second seed Ben Shelton won the ATP 500 clay-court tournament in Munich for the first time with a 6-2, 7-5 victory over the Italian Flavio Cobolli who had such an impressive win over Alexander Zverev in the semis.

One year after losing in the final to Zverev, world No. 6 Shelton claimed the fifth ATP title of his career and his second of the season after Dallas, on hard court.

"I came out at a really high level and have done that before against him," said Shelton after the match.

"The toughest thing is maintaining it as he raises his level. I managed to do that in the second set and played some great tennis.

"I am happy with my performance this week. I got better and better as the week went on and I am happy with the work me and the team put in."

Shelton, who won an ATP 250-level clay-court tournament in Houston in 2024, also became the first American man since Andre Agassi at the Rome Masters 1000 in 2002 to win a tournament on the surface at a higher level.

"I have big ambitions for the clay courts," Shelton added.

"It is a surface I want to get better on each year. It is slowly becoming one of my favourite surfaces to play on."

Shelton had a comfortable ride against opponents outside the world's top 30 until the final although world no. 16 Cobolli was unable to reproduce the performance which did for Zverev.

The American cruised through the first

set, breaking his opponent's first two service games, even though Cobolli saved eight set points - six of them on his own serve - before finally yielding on the ninth.

The second set was much more tightly contested as it went with serve up to 5-5.

But a double fault from Cobolli handed Shelton a break at the perfect moment, and he made no mistake in closing it out after 1 hour 31 minutes.

Shelton earned three-set wins against Emilio Nava and Joao Fonseca in Munich, while he overcame Alexander Blockx and Alex Molcan in straight sets.

The 23-year-old is No. 6 in the PIF ATP Live Rankings, just 30 points behind World No. 5 Felix Auger-Aliassime.

Ben Shelton kisses the trophy after winning the Munich Open yesterday. (AFP)



TENNIS

Rybakina claims Stuttgart crown, and Porsche again

RYBAKINA WINS HER 25TH MATCH OF THE SEASON, MOST ON TOUR

Reuters
Stuttgart

Top seed Elena Rybakina had her eyes on the prize, literally, as she overpowered Karolina Muchova 7-5 6-1 to win the Stuttgart Open on Sunday and drive away with a Porsche car for the second time in her career.

While the Kazakh claimed her second title of the season, it was the tournament's traditional Porsche award that truly captured Rybakina's attention more than the silverware itself.

The first Porsche she won in 2024 had given her a push to get a driver's licence last year and she was all smiles when she drove her newly won second sports car down the ramp before parking it on the red clay of the arena.

Victory elevated Rybakina into exclusive company, making her just the fourth active player to win at least five WTA-level titles on multiple surfaces, joining an elite group that includes Venus Williams, Elina Svitolina and Iga Swiatek.

"It's an amazing tournament, we love coming back here... It really feels like home and you just want to come back every year," Rybakina said.

"Super happy for the second win here in Stuttgart and this beautiful car."

Rybakina surged to a swift 3-0 lead in the opening set with a flurry of aggressive shot-making



Kazakhstan's Elena Rybakina celebrates with Porsche CEO Michael Leiters and the winners car after winning the Stuttgart Open final against Czech Republic's Karolina Muchova yesterday. (Reuters)

against a largely defensive Muchova.

She was nearly untouchable behind her first serve, consistently pushing Muchova onto the back foot, while the Australian Open champion also mixed in confident net play, forcing her Czech opponent to cover every inch of the court.

However, Muchova showed resilience, clawing her way back

from 5-2 down to level at 5-5. But as she served to force a tiebreak, untimely errors crept in and Rybakina pounced to clinch the opening set when Muchova's return sailed long.

That proved to be the spark Rybakina needed as she shifted gears decisively in the second set, reeling off five consecutive games - echoing her dominant win over Mirra Andreeva in the semi-final -

before Muchova got on the board.

Serving for the title, Rybakina closed it out in style, serving to love and wrapping up a Tour-leading 25th victory of the season in 78 minutes. "Elena, honestly, too good. You played really well," Muchova said. "I tried to stop you, but you clearly wanted a Porsche for the second time really bad. So, (you) made it very tough for me. Congrats!"

GOLF

Fitzpatrick extends lead as Scheffler charges

AFP
Los Angeles

Matt Fitzpatrick extended his lead with an erratic three-under par 68 Saturday at the US PGA Tour RBC Heritage as world number one Scottie Scheffler stormed up the leaderboard into second place.

Overnight leader Fitzpatrick bounced back from a shaky start, holing out from off the greens on 14 and 15 for birdie and eagle respectively, to finish three strokes clear on 17-under-par at Hilton Head Island in South Carolina.

Having bogeyed the first and third holes, the 2023 RBC Heritage champion clicked into gear around the turn, becoming the only player this week to drive his ball onto the ninth green, with a 338-yarder that he converted for birdie.

Fitzpatrick reclaimed the solo lead with a confident 10-foot putt on the 12th.

The Englishman putted in a bobbling left-to-right effort from 26 feet off the green for another birdie on 14 -the same hole on which he had bounced off a tree on the way to an improbable birdie a day earlier.

And he then executed a perfect



USA's Matt Fitzpatrick looks over his line on 18 green during the third round of the RBC Heritage Tournament at Hilton Head, South Carolina. PICTURE: Jim Dedmon-Imagn Images

chip into the hole from 30 feet on 15 to open a three-shot lead.

"It's always satisfying when you can turn it around, particularly if you have not played that well," said Fitzpatrick.

Fitzpatrick is seeking his fourth PGA Tour title, adding to last month's Valspar Championship and the 2022 US Open, as well as his 2023 RBC Heritage title.

"Obviously it would have been

nicer to go out with nine birdies... and be plenty clear," he said. "But to be in the position I am tonight, obviously it's something that you'd snatch your hand off" for.

Scheffler - having begun Moving Day seven strokes off the lead - made five birdies in his first six holes to soar into contention.

"You can't ask for much of a better start than that. Came out, nice birdie on the first, good birdie

on the second. Kind of stole one on four, and two good birdies there on five and six," he said after. From a stunning front-nine 31 that shot Scheffler briefly up to tied-first, the four-time major winner's momentum slowed slightly with a string of frustrating pars.

But he birdied the 16th and final holes for a seven-under round of 64, to finish 14-under-par for the tournament with one day to play.

"As you start kind of getting back into contention, I think that's always fun. It's never as fun being on the outside looking in," said Scheffler.

Meanwhile fellow American Brian Harman hit the day's best round with a career-low 63 at windy Harbour Town Golf Links featuring nine birdies.

The Savannah-born golfer thrived in familiar local conditions, finishing with three straight birdies after holing a bunker chip from 30 feet on 17.

"Just tried to keep the pedal down. It's going to take a low number to win," said Harman.

Norway's Victor Hovland, who had started the day one stroke off the lead, had a disastrous start, including a bogey on the first and a double bogey on 3.

He finished a disappointing day six strokes back with a round of 73.

Al Rayyan, Al Arabi enter Amir Cup Basketball semis



Al Rayyan and Al Arabi booked their places in the Amir Cup Basketball semi-finals with convincing wins yesterday at Al Gharafa Arena. Al Rayyan produced an impressive offensive performance to defeat Al Gharafa 104-82 in a high-tempo clash that saw momentum shift across all four quarters. Malik Carey led the charge with a remarkable 44 points, while Devin Morris Ebanks responded with 41 for Al Gharafa in a game defined by standout individual efforts. Al Arabi maintained their strong form with a commanding 104-73 victory over Qatar SC to complete the semi-final lineup. Despite Joshua Nicholas leading all scorers with 31 points for Qatar SC, Abdulrahman Yahya paced Al Arabi with 20 points in a balanced team display. Al Ahli will meet Al Arabi and Al Sadd will face Al Rayyan. Both games are scheduled for May 4.



Fils powers past Rublev to win Barcelona Open

Frenchman Arthur Fils overpowered Russia's higher-ranked Andrey Rublev 6-2 7-6(2) to win the Barcelona Open yesterday, clinching his first title since 2024. It was the fourth ATP title and third on clay for 21-year-old Fils, who returned from a nearly eight-month injury layoff in February. In the first game, he missed the baseline with a couple of shots, handing Rublev a break.

But Fils dug deep to get even, breaking back in the fourth game to make it 2-2. Rublev struggled to keep up as Fils, now more precise with his forehand returns, picked out the edges of the sideline and sent powerful forehand past the frustrated fifth seed to win the first set in just 31 minutes.

Fils won seven games straight before Rublev managed to hold his own serve to make it 1-1 in the second set. The 28-year-old fended off seven break points to prevail in a 13-minute battle to stay even at 2-2. Fils outwitted Rublev with a backhand drop shot to get a decisive break and go 4-2 up. But when he was 5-3 up serving for the tournament, the world number 30 made three straight errors to hand Rublev a break.

Rublev then saved three match points to hold his serve and make it 5-5, and broke Fils to go 6-5 up. But Fils broke back in the very next game to force a tiebreak, which he won 7-2.

Kostyuk wins all-Ukrainian WTA duel for Rouen title

Top seed Marta Kostyuk won an all-Ukrainian duel for the WTA title in Rouen yesterday with a straight sets win over Veronika Podrez. The 23-year-old Kostyuk won 6-3, 6-4 in the first WTA final between two Ukrainian players. She succeeded countrywoman Elina Svitolina, who won in Rouen last year as the top seed.

For 19-year-old qualifier Podrez, ranked 209th in the world, it was a first final in her main draw debut at a tour level event.

Both Kostyuk and Podrez struggled on their serve in the indoor clay final, hitting 12 double faults between them.

But Kostyuk converted six of her nine break point opportunities compared to Podrez, who converted four of seven in the tie which lasted 1hr 12min.

Kostyuk claimed her second WTA singles title and first in more than three years since her victory in Austin, Texas in 2023.

FOCUS

Bayern sink Stuttgart to claim Bundesliga title

The Bavarian giants have now won 13 of the past 14 Bundesliga titles



Bayern Munich players celebrate in Munich yesterday, after winning the Bundesliga for a record-extending 35th time. (AFP)

AFP
Munich

Harry Kane scored his 32nd goal of the campaign as Bayern Munich cruised to a 4-2 home win over Stuttgart to claim a record-extending 35th Bundesliga title.

Raphael Guerreiro, Nicolas Jackson and Alphonso Davies joined Kane on the scoresheet, while Chris Fuehrich and Chema Andres scored for the visitors. Borussia Dortmund's limp 2-1 defeat at Hoffenheim on Saturday, their second in two matches, left the door open for Bayern, who only needed a point at home to secure the title with four games to spare.

"It's been a fantastic season for us," said Bundesliga leading scorer Kane. "To finish the league off in the way we have with the goals we scored... credit to the lads... we still have a lot to play for... but all the hard work, this makes it all worth it."

Coach Vincent Kompany left regular starters Kane, Michael Olise, Manuel Neuer, Aleksandar Pavlovic, Dayot Upamecano and Jonathan Tah on the bench with Wednesday's German Cup semi-final at Bayer Leverkusen in mind. Bayern fell behind when Chris Fuehrich scored with 21 minutes gone but roared back, scoring three goals in seven minutes.

Jamal Musiala created Guerreiro's opener before Luis Diaz laid on two goals in four minutes for Jackson and Davies to grab control of the match by the break. Kane grabbed another early in the second-half to ensure another Bundesliga crown was quickly added to his burgeoning team trophy collection.

With victory secure, Bayern took their foot off the pedal as an assistant brought bags full of '2026 Champions' t-shirts to the sideline. Andres added a late goal for Stuttgart with two minutes remaining but Bayern were on cruise control with title celebrations in mind.

The title victory once again illustrated Bayern's modern and historical dominance of German football. The Bavarian giants have now won 13 of the past 14 Bundesliga titles. Bayern have 35 league titles, with no other team reaching double figures.

Bayern's wealth and influence outshines all of their domestic rivals and this season has been truly remarkable. Bayern have scored 109 goals, the most in Bundesliga history and eight more than the previous record set back in 1971-72, with four games remaining.

Free-scoring Bayern have 79 points and a goal difference of 80. If the season ended today, Bayern would become the first team to have a greater goal difference than points tally in Bundesliga history. With four wins in their remaining four games, Bayern could bring up 91 points, equalling the best mark set by their treble-bound side in 2012-13.

Then there are the individual records. Kane, who became the first Englishman since 1930-31 to reach a half-century of

goals in a season in all competitions on Wednesday, can still reach Robert Lewandowski's single-season goals record of 41. The England captain has 32 goals from his 27 games this campaign and is in with an outside chance of catching Lewandowski. Michael Olise has 18 assists, three shy of the all-time mark set by Thomas Mueller in 2019-20.

Earlier, Freiburg pushed last-placed Heidenheim closer to the drop with a 2-1 home win. Johan Manzambi put the Europa League semi-finalists ahead after 24 minutes but Heidenheim's Budu Zivzivadze levelled things up just before the hour mark.

Freiburg's Maximilian Eggestein scored the winner with seven minutes remaining to help his side leapfrog Eintracht Frankfurt into seventh spot.

The defeat leaves Heidenheim, who hosted Chelsea in the Europa Conference League last season, seven points behind the relegation play-off spot and 11 from safety with four games to play.

Season far from over for treble-chasing Bayern, warns Kompany

Munich: The season for treble-chasing Bayern Munich is far from over, coach Vincent Kompany said after his team secured the Bundesliga title with four matches to go. The Bavarians opened up a 15-point gap at the top of the league with a 4-2 victory over VfB Stuttgart but there were no usual beer showers or lengthy celebrations, with the team still in the running for two more trophies.

Bayern face Bayer Leverkusen on Wednesday in the German Cup semi-final before travelling to Paris St Germain on April 28 for their Champions League semi-final first leg.

"The season is not over yet. There are still things to be won," said Kompany, who earned his second straight league title on Sunday. "PSG in the Champions League, the defending champions, it's probably the toughest challenge. But before that we have Leverkusen. I don't want to stop here. Now come the decisive weeks. We're looking forward to them, but we also know how difficult it will be. Our belief is there, and that's worth a lot in football."

Bayern last won the Champions League in 2020, the same year they reached their last German Cup final in Berlin.

With back-to-back German league titles in his two seasons in charge, Kompany, who took over from Thomas Tuchel in 2024, has quickly succeeded in reestablishing Bayern's domestic dominance after Leverkusen broke their stranglehold with an unbeaten domestic double in 2024.

Under Kompany they have set a number of records this season in the Bundesliga, including for the most goals scored in a campaign, but they are eager to taste European success once more, and add a seventh European Cup to their collection. "We will have enough time to celebrate what we have achieved but now it is about what we can still achieve so we need that full focus," Kompany said. "The players have to recover and prepare the game for Leverkusen," he added.

SERIE A

Rabiot fires AC Milan to verge of return to Champions League



AC Milan's Adrien Rabiot (right) fights for the ball with Hellas Verona's Moatasem al-Musrati during the Serie A match in Verona. (AFP)

AFP
Milan

Adrien Rabiot boosted AC Milan's bid to return to the Champions League with the only goal in yesterday's 1-0 win at Verona, which moved his team back up to second in Serie A.

France midfielder Rabiot swept home the only goal in the 41st minute at the Stadio Marcantonio Bentegodi to give Milan an eight-point cushion on Como and Roma in fifth and sixth.

The 31-year-old calmly netted his sixth league goal of the season after snatching possession in midfield and exchanging passes with Rafael Leao, for the only real highlight of a largely drab encounter.

"The important thing is winning and getting the points we need to achieve our objectives, but we made a lot of mistakes today. We could have played a lot better," said Rabiot. "We need to stay focussed on qualifying for the Champions League."

Milan took advantage of Como falling to a surprise defeat at Sassuolo on Friday and Roma drawing

with Atalanta on Saturday night, and with five matches remaining in the season, the Rossoneri are all-but sure of a top four finish.

The seven-time European champions have had no continental football this season after a disastrous previous campaign which led to Massimiliano Allegri retaking the reins as coach last summer.

Allegri said on Friday that he has already started planning for next season with Milan's management, and after Saturday's win the 58-year-old again ruled himself out of the vacant Italy job.

"No-one has contacted me (from the Italian Football Federation), and all my thoughts are on Milan: we've started something together and we'll continue it together," said Allegri.

Verona's fifth straight defeat means almost certain relegation, as Paolo Sammarco's team are bottom of the division and 10 points behind Cremonese, who sit just outside the drop zone and drew 0-0 at Torino in the day's early fixture.

Juventus sit in the final Champions League spot and can move five points ahead of Como and Roma with a home win over Bologna.

LIGUE 1

Monaco's Balogun continues scoring streak

AFP
Paris

USA star Folarin Balogun scored in an eighth consecutive Ligue 1 game for Monaco but could not stop his side dropping more points in their quest for European qualification, while Rennes won 3-0 at Strasbourg to boost their chances of playing in next season's Champions League.

Former Arsenal striker Balogun, who is set to lead the United States attack for the co-hosts at the World Cup, scored from the penalty spot just before the hour mark but that goal was only enough for Monaco to draw 2-2 with relegation-threatened Auxerre.

The visitors had been two goals ahead at the break in the principality thanks to strikes by Kevin Danois and Lassine Sinayoko, but on-loan Barcelona star Ansu Fati pulled a goal back on 56 minutes for Monaco and Balogun equalised a few minutes later.

Monaco had roared back into contention to qualify for the Champions League on a run of seven straight wins, but that streak ended in a 4-1 loss at Paris FC last weekend and this latest slip-up leaves them out of the European slots altogether in seventh, currently three points adrift of the top four.

Balogun has now scored 18 goals in total this season including 10 in his last 10 games between league and Champions League -- he is now gunning for former Brazil star Sonny Anderson's 21st-century Ligue 1 record of scoring in 11 consecutive matches.

Champions League or bust for Atletico after Copa del Rey agony

Seville, Spain: Diego Simeone tried to convey hope but his body language spoke for itself.

The Argentine coach left Seville crumpled, wounded, by his team's Copa del Rey final defeat on Saturday by Real Sociedad, decided by the cruelty of penalties.

Simeone led Atletico to the Spanish cup back in 2013, an eternity ago, and winning it again would have been the perfect springboard to send the club flying into the Champions League semi-finals clash with Arsenal.

Atletico have never won that trophy and they had real belief they could do it this year, belief which was badly dented this weekend.

The last time they won silverware of any kind was La Liga in 2021, with Luis Suarez leading the charge in attack. Winning the Copa would have ensured French star Antoine Griezmann could depart with a trophy under his arm, and end the club's drought.

During the Simeone era, the club have



Monaco's Folarin Balogun scores from the penalty spot against Auxerre in Monaco. (AFP)

Rennes are provisionally up to fourth after a 3-0 win at a Strasbourg side clearly fatigued after winning through to the UEFA Conference League semi-finals on Thursday.

Esteban Lepaul is now Ligue 1's outright leading scorer after putting Rennes in front with his 17th of the season, before Breel Embolo and Mousa Al-Tamari also netted for the away side in Alsace.

Rennes have won seven out of nine games since sacking coach Habib Beye in February, and are just a point behind third-placed Lille who drew 0-0 with Nice on Saturday. The top three in Ligue 1 qualify directly for the Champions League, with the team finishing fourth

entering in the third qualifying round. Marseille are fifth after losing 2-0 at Lorient on Saturday, while Lyon are a point behind them in sixth.

Leaders Paris Saint-Germain were in action later at home to Lyon, who can climb into the top four with a win at the Parc des Princes. European champions PSG are top, one point ahead of second-placed Lens with two games in hand. Lens came from two goals down to beat Toulouse 3-2 on Friday.

At the bottom of the table, Metz and Nantes edged closer to relegation with a 3-1 home loss to Paris FC and a 1-1 draw against Brest respectively.

Barcelona earlier in the week but they failed the litmus test against La Real.

In the immediate aftermath of the shoot-out, decided by two saves by Real Sociedad stopper Unai Marrero and Pablo Marin's winning spot kick, Koke wiped away tears before issuing a similar message. The veteran midfielder is one of the wisest heads at Atletico and he told his team-mates to focus on what lies ahead. "We tried everything, we left our souls out there and it wasn't to be," said the 34-year-old. "That's life... it hurts, and we have to continue."

Atletico are a club that have bounced back from many blows to keep on moving forwards, including defeats by rivals Real Madrid in the 2014 and 2016 Champions League finals.

The Copa final loss stings but pales in contrast to those bitter blows. If Atletico can recover to find a way past Arsenal, that cannot happen a third time.