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GULF TIMES SPORT



TENNIS

Sabalenka fights rust to reach third round of Madrid Open

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FOOTBALL

Rayyan beat Shabab to clinch Gulf Club Champions League

The triumph marks Al Rayyan's second trophy of the season



Al Rayyan players celebrate clinching the Gulf Club Champions League after a 3-0 win over Saudi Arabia's Al Shabab in the final at Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium yesterday. **PICTURE:**Noushad Thekkayil

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Al Rayyan produced a dominant second-half performance to defeat Saudi Arabia's Al Shabab 3-0 and lift the Gulf Club Champions League trophy at Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium.

The final remained finely balanced for an hour before the match turned decisively in Al Rayyan's favour after Al Shabab were reduced to ten men when Belgian winger Yannick Carrasco was sent off for a second booking in the 59th minute.

David Garcia broke the deadlock two minutes later, while Aleksandar Mitrovic and Roger Guedes added further goals late on to seal an emphatic victory for The Lions and cap a memorable night in front of their supporters.

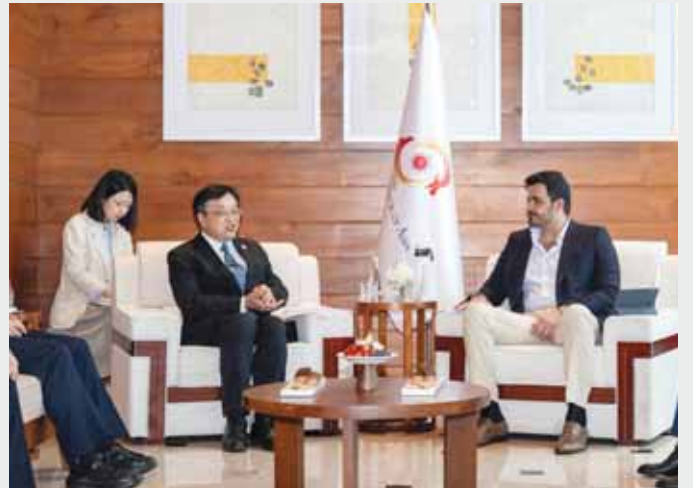
Both teams created promising openings in a competitive first half marked by physical challenges, with Al Shabab coming closest to scoring just before the break when Hammam al-Hammami found himself one-on-one with Al Rayyan goalkeeper Mahmud Abunada, but failed to convert. Al Rayyan seized control shortly after the hour mark as Garcia rose high to meet a precise delivery from Thiago Silva on the right and powered home a well-placed

header to give his side the lead.

The advantage was doubled in the 79th minute when Mitrovic climbed above the defence to head in a quality corner from Rodrigo Moreno, leaving Al Shabab struggling to respond. Al Rayyan's dominance was underlined just two minutes later as they struck again. Ahmed al-Minhali delivered a ball from the left inside the penalty area, and Mitrovic cleverly set it up for Guedes, who calmly finished to complete the scoring.

The triumph marked Al Rayyan's second trophy of the season following their QSL Cup success, and their second title since coach Vicente Moreno took charge last month.

Sheikh Joaan meets Chinese officials



Olympic Council of Asia and Qatar Olympic Committee President HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani met with Secretary of the Hainan Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of China Feng Fei, Governor of Hainan Province Liu Xiaoming, and Secretary of the Sanya Municipal Committee of the Communist Party of China Wang Qiyang in Sanya, China, on the sidelines of the Asian Beach Games, yesterday. The QOC president expressed his sincere thanks and appreciation for the warm welcome and generous hospitality, praising the pivotal role played by China in supporting Asian sports.



More than 4mn tickets bought for LA28

Los Angeles: More than four million tickets were sold worldwide for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics during this month's first window for purchases, organizers announced yesterday.

Ticket buyers were from 85 nations, with top global sales beyond the United States coming from the United Kingdom, Canada, Mexico and Japan. "The response to our initial on-sale was nothing short of historic," LA28

chief executive officer Reynold Hoover said. "Fans from near and far have spoken: the world wants to be part of the LA28 Games."

The next opportunity for 2028 Olympic ticket purchases will be in August, with people able to register through July 22.

Fans will be able to buy up to 12 tickets for Olympic events and up to 12 tickets for Olympic football matches that don't count toward the 12-ticket Olympic maximum.

ASIAN BEACH GAMES

Qatar handball team extend winning streak in Sanya

By Sports Reporter
Sanya, China

Qatar's beach handball team continued its strong run at the Asian Beach Games - Sanya 2026, securing two convincing victories yesterday against Bangladesh and Mongolia, both with identical 2-0 scorelines in the group stage.

The team delivered dominant performances in both matches, defeating Bangladesh 16-6 (24-12) before overcoming Mongolia 26-13 (24-9). With these results, Qatar now have eight points from four consecutive victories, maintaining a perfect record that reflects their consistency and ability to impose their rhythm on opponents in the opening round.

Having already beaten Pakistan and Oman on Tuesday, Qatar will face Jordan today before taking on Thailand on Sunday. Al Annabi will conclude their group stage campaign next Monday against the Maldives, aiming to retain top spot and secure qualification to the semi-finals.

PROMISING START FOR BEACH VOLLEYBALL TEAMS

Qatar's beach volleyball teams also made an impressive start, with both men's pairs securing victories in their opening group stage matches.

The first team of Cherif Younousse and Ahmed Tijan registered a comfortable 2-0 (21-6, 21-10) win over the Maldives, while the second pair of Mohamed Ehab and Moussa Al-Khair defeated Saudi Arabia 2-0 (21-17, 21-15).

Meanwhile, the women's second team of Malak Hashem and Nelly Shalaby opened their campaign with a 0-2 defeat to Ja-



Qatar's beach handball team beat Bangladesh and Mongolia, both with identical 2-0 scoreline to stay top of the group stage at the Asian Beach Games in Sanya, China.

pan in a challenging match against one of Asia's strongest sides.

Younousse and Tijan will continue their campaign against Uzbekistan today before facing Iran tomorrow. The second men's team will meet Macau before concluding their group stage matches against China.

Younousse and Tijan are among the world's leading beach volleyball players, highlighted by their bronze medal at the Tokyo Olympics, along with consistent performances on the international circuit.

On the women's side, the first team of Haya Abu Issa and Laila Mohammed will begin their campaign today against Sri Lanka, followed by a match against China in Group A. Hashem and Shalaby will next

face South Korea in Group B.

Qatar have also enjoyed notable success at the Asian Beach Games, winning bronze at the 2014 Phuket Games before securing both gold and silver medals at the 2016 Da Nang edition, underlining the steady development of the sport in the country.

AL-KAABI FINISHES 24TH IN AQUATHLON

Shaheen al-Kaabi concluded his participation in the aquathlon competition with a 24th-place finish among 33 athletes from across Asia. Al-Kaabi was the youngest participant in the event, gaining valuable experience at an early stage of his career that is expected to support his future de-



Qatar's beach volleyball teams also made an impressive start, with both men's pairs securing victories in their opening group stage matches.

velopment. Elsewhere, Qatari sailors will compete today, with Tamim Shams taking part in the second race of the Optimist class, while Thani Shams will contest the second race of the ILCA 4 class. In jiu-jitsu, Ahmed Al-Qardaghi will compete in the men's 77kg category. Meanwhile, Qatar's men's 3x3 basketball team will open their campaign against Bahrain tomorrow before facing Kazakhstan later the same day. They will conclude the group stage on Monday against India in what could prove a decisive encounter. The women's team will begin their campaign against China before meeting Kazakhstan in their second group match.

The Qatari men's squad includes Mohammed Bashir, Dejan Janic, Nadim Muslic and Osman Deng, while the women's team features Sama Jasser, Tania al-Taweel, Mona al-Sayed and Alaa Suleiman.



Shaheen al-Kaabi finished 24th among 33 athletes in aquathlon.

CRICKET

Shanto, Mustafizur star as Bangladesh down New Zealand

'It wasn't easy. Boys bowled really well... we knew the conditions'

AFP
Chattogram, Bangladesh

Najmul Hossain Shanto scored a century and Mustafizur Rahman claimed five wickets as Bangladesh secured a 55-run victory over New Zealand in the third one-day international in Chattogram on Thursday to complete a 2-1 series triumph.

Bangladesh set New Zealand 266 for victory after Shanto's patient 105 and Litton Das's fluent 76, and while the Black Caps overcame some initial turbulence to get into a strong position in their chase, they were bowled out for 210 in 44.5 overs.

"It wasn't easy. Boys bowled really well... we knew the conditions, that it would spin and fast bowling would have uneven bounce. We knew early wickets would bring us momentum," said Bangladesh captain Mehidy Hasan Miraz.

Nick Kelly gave the tourists hope scoring 59 but perished chasing a slow, wide ball from Rahman (5-43), and the Bangladesh seamer ran riot from there to ensure his team's victory despite late fireworks from Dean Foxcroft (75).

New Zealand struck early after winning the toss and asking Bangladesh to bat, as Will O'Rourke (3-32) sent back opener Saif Hassan for a two-ball duck and got Tanzid Hasan to play one onto his stumps in the third over.

The paceman similarly bowled out Soumya Sarkar for 18 to leave

Bangladesh in trouble at 32-3, but the hosts fought back through a 160-run partnership between Shanto and Das when New Zealand's bowlers went off the boil slightly.

That fourth-wicket stand was broken by Jayden Lennox (2-50) when he bowled Das, before Shanto scored his first ODI century since 2024 and then departed while looking to raise the scoring rate with seven overs remaining.

"The way Litton played, really outstanding. He held one side and I tried to score some runs. It wasn't an easy wicket to bat on," player of the match Shanto said at the post-match presentation.

Bangladesh finished on 265-8 after handy knocks from Towhid Hridoy (33) and Mehidy Hasan Miraz (22), while Ben Lister (2-62) claimed late wickets to keep things in check. New Zealand won the series opener by 26 runs in Mirpur and the hosts levelled at 1-1 with a six-wicket victory at the same venue on Monday.

The teams play three Twenty20 Internationals starting in Chattogram next week.

BRIEF SCORES: Bangladesh 265 for 8 (Shanto 105, Litton 76, O'Rourke 3-32) **beat New Zealand 210** (Foxcroft 75, Kelly 59, Mustafizur 5-43) **by 55 runs.**

Bangladesh's Najmul Hossain Shanto celebrates after scoring a century during the ODI against New Zealand in Chittagong yesterday. (AFP)



FOCUS

Pietersen backs Bethell to remain in India despite Cook's criticism

Reuters
London

Kevin Pietersen urged England batter Jacob Bethell to remain in India and wait for opportunities in the Indian Premier League, backing the youngster after criticism from former England captain Alastair Cook.

Bethell, 22, has not yet featured for Royal Challengers Bengaluru during the current IPL season, prompting Cook to suggest the batter would be better served returning to England to play county cricket for Warwickshire.

Pietersen, who has previously played for the Bengaluru franchise, dismissed that view on Thursday, arguing that exposure to the IPL environment remains valuable even without immediate game time.

"Alastair Cook has absolutely NO IDEA what it's like to be in the IPL, What it's like to always be around the best players in the world," former England captain Pietersen said in an X post.

"So his opinion on Jacob Bethell doesn't matter at all. Stay in India, Jacob. I know, even though you're not playing, you're learning and will be a way better player."

Bethell responded to Cook's comments on Wednesday, de-

fending his decision to stay with Bengaluru and describing the benefits of being available in the tournament.

"It's something that not many people will understand how cool it is until actually being around a team or the tournament itself when you're here," Bethell told Sky Sports.

"It just has a completely different feel. It feels like everyone almost ups their game subconsciously without even really knowing because of the calibre of the tournament.

"I feel like that even happens when you're not on the starting XI or even starting XII as it might be now with the impact player."

Bethell has emerged as one of England's brightest young batsman and is increasingly viewed as a long-term option in the test top three.

His knock of 154 in the final Ashes test in Sydney in January was one of the few positives in England's 4-1 series defeat in Australia and strengthened his credentials as a player capable of batting early against high-quality bowling attacks.

"For that top-order batting, the way he played at Sydney, against that attack, in those conditions, I've looked at a player there and I'm certain this bloke can open. If he can bat three, he can open," Cook said.

STARC CLEARED TO PLAY IN IPL BY CA

Pace bowler Mitchell Starc has been cleared to play in the Indian Premier League after missing the first half of the season because of fitness concerns, Cricket Australia said yesterday. The left-arm quick had been recovering from elbow and shoulder injuries but will now belatedly join his Delhi Capitals team. The date of Starc's arrival was not revealed, but CA said he was expected to take the field for Delhi's match at Rajasthan Royals on May 1. He would then be available for the Capitals' remaining regular season matches through to the final on May 31, should they get that far. Delhi, led by Axar Patel, are fifth in the 10-team table. Australia stars such as Starc, Pat Cummins (Sunrisers Hyderabad) and Josh Hazlewood (Royal Challengers Bengaluru) missed the start of the IPL because of injury rehabilitation and workload management. Hazlewood has already returned to action for Bengaluru. Cummins is expected to be back to lead Hyderabad at the weekend.

IPL

Samson, Hosein star as Chennai hammer Mumbai by 103 runs



Chennai Super Kings' Sanju Samson in action during the Indian Premier League match against Mumbai Indians at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai yesterday. (AFP)

AFP
Mumbai

Opener Sanju Samson struck his second IPL century of the season to set up a thumping 103-run win for Chennai Super Kings in a battle of heavyweights against Mumbai Indians yesterday.

Put in to bat first, five-time champions Chennai rode on Samson's unbeaten 101 off 54 balls to post 207-6 at Mumbai's Wankhede Stadium.

Chennai's West Indies spinner Akeal Hosein then returned impressive figures of 4-17 to bundle out Mumbai, who have also won the IPL five times, for 104 in 19 overs. The colossal winning margin boosted Chennai's net run-rate and took them to fifth spot in the 10-team table.

Mumbai slipped to eighth with five defeats from seven outings.

Chennai started their innings briskly, courtesy of skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad's 14-ball 22 before he fell to Afghanistan spinner

A.M. Ghazanfar in the third over. Samson then teed off with three fours and one six off Mumbai skipper Hardik Pandya but kept losing partners at the other end, including Dewald Brevis for 21. Undeterred, the 31-year-old took on the opposition attack, hitting 10 fours and six maximums across his well-crafted knock.

Mumbai bowlers struck regular blows as Ghazanfar and left-arm quick Ashwani Kumar took two wickets each before Samson's final assault took Chennai past 200. Samson reached his fifth hundred in the T20 tournament with a four on the final ball of the innings and raised his bat to acknowledge the applause from the fans and the dugout.

"Really feels great to score a century at the Wankhede against MI. Definitely a special moment for me and the team. Today the wicket wasn't a normal Wankhede wicket. The ball was holding," Samson said.

In reply, Mumbai lost three wickets, including South African Quinton de Kock for seven, in the

first three overs and slipped to 11-3. Impact substitute Hosein, a left-arm spinner, took two of the three. Suryakumar Yadav, who made 35, and Tilak Varma attempted to rebuild in a partnership of 73 but the asking rate kept rising with some tidy bowling by Chennai. The wily Hosein returned to break the stand as he got Varma to drag a delivery onto his stumps and out for 37. Wickets kept tumbling as Noor Ahmad struck on successive balls to send back Pandya, for one, and Sherfane Rutherford for a duck, before Shardul Thakur avoided the hat-trick.

Hosein dismissed Suryakumar for his fourth and, with that, the batting fizzled out.

"They batted well," said Mumbai skipper Hardik Pandya. "It was the same track, it is the same soil. We should have just batted well."

BRIEF SCORES: Chennai Super Kings 207 for 6 (Samson 101*, Ghazanfar 2-25, Ashwani 2-37) **beat Mumbai Indians 104** (Tilak 37, Suryakumar 35, Akeal 4-17, Noor 2-23) **by 103 runs.**

PSL

Rawalpindiz beat Islamabad by six wickets for maiden win

Agencies
Karachi

Rawalpindiz chose the occasion of the Twin Cities Derby to claim their maiden Pakistan Super League (PSL) win after they chased down the modest 138-run target set by Islamabad United, with six wickets in hand and 11 balls to spare at the National Bank Stadium in Karachi yesterday.

With this win, Rawalpindiz have thrown a spanner in the works for Islamabad United, who now have to win their remaining two league matches after currently occupying the third spot on the back of nine points.

Rawalpindiz elected to field after winning the toss and made early inroads as Mohammad Amir removed Sameer Minhas (6, 11b, 1x4) with a slower ball dragged to Abdullah Fazal at cow corner at 20-1 in the fifth over.

Naseem Shah, on return from injury, had Mohammad Faiq (5, 6b, 1x4) caught at fine leg off a slower bouncer to leave Islamabad 29 for two. Saad Masood struck with his first delivery when Shadab Khan cut a short ball straight to Dian Forrester at point for one off two balls, leaving United 30 for three inside the powerplay. Devon Conway and Mark Chapman steadied the innings with a 49-run stand for the fourth wicket.

Chapman dragged Saad Masood for a four through mid-wicket and pulled Cole McCoinchie for six over the same region as the pair pushed United past the halfway mark.

Conway mixed reverse sweeps

against the spinners with a six launched over cover off Mitchell's slower ball.

Mitchell broke the partnership in the 12th over, having Conway (40, 33b, 3x4s, 2x6s) caught by Abdullah Fazal at cover off a slower delivery. Chapman fell in the next over, trapped leg before wicket by Asif Afridi for 23 off 18 balls, and United slipped to 79 for five.

Haider Ali laboured to six off 13 balls before top-edging Saad Masood to Abdullah Fazal at mid-wicket - his third catch of the innings.

Faheem Ashraf, who reached 1,000 PSL runs during his knock of 11 off 12 balls, edged a slower bouncer from Amir behind to Mohammad Rizwan, leaving United reeling at 99 for seven in the 17th over.

Chris Green launched a late counter-attack of 29 off 16 balls with two fours and two sixes, including a six launched over cover off Mitchell, before Forrester wrapped up the innings in the final over, removing Mohammad Hasnain and Richard Gleeson for naught off consecutive deliveries. Green was run out off Mitchell's throw to Rizwan attempting to retain strike as United were bowled out for 137.

In turn, Abdullah fell first on the first ball to Imad Wasim. Mohammad Rizwan and Kamran Ghulam then put on 78 runs for the second wicket to take the sting out of the chase.

Rizwan, who became only the third Pakistan batter after Shoaib Malik and Babar Azam to reach 9,000 T20 runs during the stand, struck Shadab for four with a one-handed sweep in the seventh over and launched Imad

for six over long off.

Kamran smoked Faheem for four over cover and danced down the track to loft Imad over long off for six as the pair took the required rate below seven an over.

Chris Green broke the stand in the 10th over when Kamran (42, 30b, 5x4s, 1x6) pulled a length ball into the hands of Sameer at deep mid-wicket.

Rizwan fell shortly after for 45 off 38 balls, top-edging a slog sweep off Shadab to Gleeson at fine leg as the scoreboard read 92 for three in 12.5 overs.

Shadab then ran Sam Billings (2, 4b) out backing up at the non-striker's end and United briefly sensed an opening as Rawalpindiz managed just eight runs across three overs.

Mitchell and Forrester settled the nerves with an unbroken 41-run stand.

BRIEF SCORES: Rawalpindiz 140 for 4 (Rizwan 45, Ghulam 42, Mitchell 32*, Shadab 1-18) **beat Islamabad United 137** (Conway 40, Forrester 2-9, Amir 2-21, Masood 2-27) **by six wickets.**

KARACHI KINGS WIN

Karachi Kings outclassed Lahore Qalandars by five wickets, as Khushdil Shah's stunning cameo in the end sealed the chase. He played a superb knock of 44 runs that shifted the match in the Kings favor, keeping their playoff hopes alive in the tournament.

BRIEF SCORES: Karachi Kings 203 for 5 (Warner 63*, Khushdil 44*, Ubaid 3-41) **beat Lahore Qalandars 199 for 6** (Shafique 62, Fakhar 61, Moeen 2-26) **by five wickets.**

Construction begins on cricket stadium for 2028 LA Games

Construction has started on the cricket stadium to be used at the 2028 Los Angeles Games, where the sport will make its Olympic return after 128 years, the International Cricket Council said on Wednesday.

The temporary venue at the Fairgrounds in Pomona, Southern California will host the competitions featuring six teams each in the men's and women's

events in the 20-overs format. "Our focus has been on expanding the footprint of cricket and being part of the Olympic movement is something that brings both pride and dreams with it," ICC Chairman Jay Shah said in a statement.

The venue will also host three Major League Cricket (MLC) matches between July 1 to 5 this year, the ICC said.

TENNIS

Sabalenka fights rust to reach third round of Madrid

Fourth seed Swiatek breezes past Snigur of Ukraine 6-1, 6-2

AFP
Madrid

Aryna Sabalenka shook off some rust to post her first victory of the season on clay and extend her winning streak to 13 matches yesterday in Madrid.

The world number one, who was playing her first match since she completed the Sunshine Double by winning Indian Wells and Miami last month, committed 26 unforced errors in her 7-5, 6-3 win over American Peyton Stearns in the second round in the Spanish capital.

The defending champion, in search of a fourth career title at the Caja Magica, converted four of 12 break points against Stearns, double-faulted five times, and dropped serve twice, before she made it over the finish line to set up a third-round meeting with Romanian Jaqueline Cristian.

"I'm super happy to start with a win, even though maybe the tennis wasn't that good, but I felt like with every game I was playing, the better I was playing, so I really hope in the next one I bring a better performance," said Sabalenka, who has won a remarkable 24 of her 25 matches so far in 2026.

Earlier on Manolo Santana Stadium, Iga Swiatek made quick work of her opening test in Madrid, breezing past Daria Snigur 6-1, 6-2.

The Polish fourth seed needed just 61 minutes to move past Snigur, who was coming off the first tour-level main draw victory of her career on clay over Daria Kasatkina. The Ukrainian qualifier saved four match points



Belarus' Aryna Sabalenka in action during Madrid Open match against USA's Peyton Stearns yesterday. (Reuters)

against Kasatkina on Wednesday, and secured the win by clinching the longest first-to-seven tiebreak at tour-level in eight years with a 15-13 scoreline. Snigur had little fight left in her for her clash with Swiatek, who barring a brief blip early in the second set was in fierce form as she continues her quest for a first clay-court title since she claimed a fourth Roland Garros crown nearly two years ago.

"I'm very happy. Madrid is a special place to play, because of how special the tournament is, but also because of the conditions, so

I'm happy that I adjusted well to them and was solid and just playing my game," said Swiatek, who is contesting her second tournament under the guidance of her new coach Francis Roig.

Swiatek, a champion in Madrid in 2024, swatted away three break points to open up a 5-0 lead inside 23 minutes and closed out the set eight minutes later after Snigur finally got on the board.

Snigur enjoyed a much stronger start to the second set, finding the rhythm on her backhand to put pressure on Swiatek, who got bro-

ken for the first time in the contest to fall behind 0-2. The Ukrainian's advantage was short-lived though as Swiatek struck right back and swept the next six games to book a third-round meeting with Ann Li or Alycia Parks.

Meanwhile, Hungarian world number 63 Anna Bondar upset seventh-seeded Elina Svitolina 6-3, 6-4 to claim the first top-10 victory of her career. Swiss 11th seed Belinda Bencic eased past Petra Marcinko 6-4, 6-2 and will next take on Russian 18th seed Diana Shnaider in round three.

HATHAB

Al-Suwaidi clinches Amateur title; al-Fard tops Silver Round



Sultan Jassim al-Suwaidi won the Amateur Round title with a time of 23.11 seconds on Cat Blue at Hathab yesterday.

By Sports Reporter
Doha

The 11th round of the 9th edition of Qatar Equestrian Tour - Longines Hathab kicked off at the main arena of the Qatar Equestrian Federation (QEF) on Thursday. Organized by QEF in partnership with Al Shaqab, Hathab comprises 14 rounds through the season.

Sultan Jassim al-Suwaidi won the Amateur Round title with a time of 23.11 seconds on Cat Blue. Mariam Abdulkarim Abdul finished second and third with times of 24.94 seconds and 25.03 seconds, respectively, on Sandro and Miss Serena. Saeed al-Rashdi, Deputy Director of the Championship, crowned the

podium winners. The Silver Round witnessed exciting competition with Bader al-Fard claiming the top position clocking 41.66 seconds on Murdock. Hamad Nasser al-Qadi came in second with a time of 43.53 seconds on Happy Tina, while Rami Younes finished third with a time of 44.67 seconds on Mauran. The winners were crowned by Mohammed Saleh al-Marri, Head of the Facilities and Logistics Committee for the Championship.

Hathab is one of the most prominent local equestrian championships and aims to develop equestrianism in Qatar through a high-level competitive platform that contributes to honing riders' skills and strengthening partnerships between stakeholders.



Mohammed Saleh al-Marri, Head of the Facilities and Logistics Committee for the Championship, with the podium winners of the Silver Round. Bader al-Fard claimed the top position, ahead of Hamad Nasser al-Qadi and Rami Younes.

SPOTLIGHT

Lusail Circuit hosts enhanced edition of Mixed Training Day



Open to runners, walkers and cyclists alike, participants took to the same asphalt that hosts Formula 1 and MotoGP races.

Lusail International Circuit (LIC) concluded a standout edition of its Mixed Training Day, drawing more than 1200 participants onto its iconic 5.38 km track in a fully enhanced and integrated sports and wellness experience. The event represents a significant evolution of the community initiative, and a clear validation of LIC's commitment to making the circuit a destination for active living, not just world class motorsport.

Open to runners, walkers, and cyclists alike, participants took to the same asphalt that hosts Formula 1, MotoGP and the Qatar 1812 KM - FIA World Endurance Championship (WEC), an experience that delivered a rare and engaging perspective on one of the world's most celebrated motorsport venues.

Track access ran from 6pm to 9pm, offering a vibrant evening setting that drew individuals and families from across the community.

The enhanced edition introduced a range of new features that elevated the on-ground atmosphere. A curated selection of food and beverage vendors offered

healthy, performance-focused options to fuel participants before and after their sessions.

Dedicated sports recovery stations were available throughout the evening, catering to participants of all fitness levels. Fitness activations and entertainment zones added further energy to the experience, ensuring the event was engaging for all ages.

Beyond the physical activities, Mixed Training Day served as a vibrant gathering point, a space where sport, wellness, and social connection converged on one of the most iconic tracks in the world. The strong turnout reflected a growing community appetite for meaningful, active experiences that go beyond the ordinary.

A regular on the circuit's community events roster, Mixed Training Day, is free of charge and is open to all ages and fitness levels. Participants under 15 must be registered by a parent or guardian, and those under 18 must be accompanied by an adult on the day. Advance registration is mandatory and can be completed via the official portal at members.lcsc.qa. Upcoming dates are published on the LIC website at www.lcsc.qa.

MOTORSPORT

'Big loss' for F1 if Verstappen quits: McLaren rivals

AFP
Woking, United Kingdom

If four-time world champion Max Verstappen were to quit Formula One, as he has hinted on numerous occasions, it would be a "big loss" for the sport, his McLaren rivals Lando Norris and Oscar Piastri said on Wednesday.

The 28-year-old Dutchman, who won four consecutive titles from 2021 to 2024 and narrowly missed a fifth last season, has struggled at the start of this campaign with Red Bull against Mercedes, Ferrari and McLaren.

Verstappen has repeatedly voiced his frustration at the sport's sweeping 2026 rules overhaul, which places greater emphasis on electric energy management in qualifying and races, as well as limiting car speeds.

"I think it would be a big loss for the sport as a whole. I think for us as drivers we want to race against the best and try and prove



ourselves against the best," said Piastri. The 25-year-old Australian said Verstappen had "shown his calibre in the last 10 years" and added that the Dutchman had been the benchmark "for the last five or six".

Norris, the 2025 world champion, believes Verstappen's exit would leave F1 a poorer place. "It would be a shame for the sport, it would be a miss for the sport if that does happen, because he probably is one of the best drivers you'll see in Formula One ever," said Norris. "He's always been

Miami Grand Prix practice extended after rule changes, race cancellations

Formula One drivers will get an extra half hour of practice for next week's Miami Grand Prix after the cancellation of races in the Middle East and recent rule changes, the governing FIA said yesterday.

The May 3 race, round four of the season, gets the championship going again after a month without racing due to grands prix in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia being called off due to the Iran war.

Tweaks to the technical rules have been made during the break to address concerns from the first three races about driver safety and the racing. The International Automobile Federation said that after consultation with all stakeholders, the hour-long Friday practice session would be increased to 90 minutes from 1200 to 1330 local time. It said this was due to the gap since the last grand prix, the tweaks and the Miami weekend being run under the sprint format, with only one practice before sprint qualifying on Friday and then a 100km sprint race on Saturday before qualifying for Sunday's main event. Mercedes have won all three races so far with Italian teenager Kimi Antonelli leading the standings.

very open to say what he thinks, whether you agree or not."

Verstappen has openly criticised his Red Bull car and likened the direction of F1 to "Formula E on steroids" or the video game

"Mario Kart!". At last month's Japanese Grand Prix, he spoke of wanting to spend more time with his family and has increasingly turned his attention to endurance racing.

GOLF

Fitzpatrick popular PGA Championship pick

Reuters
Los Angeles

Matt Fitzpatrick's recent run up to a career-best No. 3 in the Official World Golf Ranking has drawn significant attention from the public ahead of next month's PGA Championship.

Fitzpatrick outlasted World No. 1 Scottie Scheffler in a playoff to claim a signature event title at the RBC Heritage on Sunday. It was an exclamation point on a run that began with a runner-up at The Players Championship, a win at the Valspar Championship and a tie for 18th at the Masters.

After a bogey on the 72nd hole on Sunday that dropped him into a playoff with Scheffler, Fitzgerald rebounded to knock his approach with a 4-iron into a stiff wind to 13 feet and drained the birdie putt on the first playoff hole.

Following the effort Fitzgerald, 31, went from 35/1 to 20/1 to win the second major of the year at the PGA Championship by Odds-

checker. The 2022 U.S. Open champion has also been the most-backed player this week with 23% of the total bets placed on the PGA Championship winner since his victory at Harbor Town.

The second-most bet player this week has been Cameron Young, who tracked down and beat Fitzpatrick at The Players. Young has been backed by 6% of the total bets this week along with Ludvig Aberg, Sam Burns and Justin Rose. Scheffler is still the PGA Championship favorite at 7/2, giving him a 22% implied probability to win. He has been backed by 5% of the total bets this week along with LIV Golf's Jon Rahm.

The second shortest pre-tournament odds belong to Masters champion Rory McIlroy at 7/1. Rahm is 12/1, followed by Xander Schauffele and Bryson DeChambeau at 16/1 and Fitzpatrick and Young at 20/1.

Fitzpatrick and his brother, Alex, are also the co-favorites ahead of this week's Zurich Classic, the only team event on the PGA Tour. They are 11/1 along with the team of Brooks Koepka and Shane Lowry.



FOOTBALL

Spain's Yamal injured, but expected to be fit for World Cup

AFP
Barcelona

Spain's Lamine Yamal has picked up a hamstring injury, but is expected to be fit for the upcoming World Cup, his club Barcelona announced yesterday.

"Tests have confirmed that first-team player Lamine Yamal has a hamstring injury in his left leg," Barca said.

"The player will undergo conservative treatment. Lamine Yamal will miss the rest of the season and is expected to be available for the World Cup," which runs from June 11-July 19 this year.

Spain open their campaign in Group H against Cape Verde on June 15 before taking on Saudi Arabia on June 21 and finishing

their pool play against Uruguay six days later.

Yamal picked up the injury in Barcelona's 1-0 victory over Celta Vigo in La Liga action on Wednesday.

"This injury is going to keep me off the pitch just when I wanted to be there the most, and that hurts even more than I can put into words," Yamal wrote on social media.

"This isn't the end, it's just a break. I'll come back stronger, with even more determination than ever, and next season will be better."

The teenage Spain star, who has scored six goals in 25 appearances for the national side since making his debut in 2023, won and converted a penalty to clinch a narrow home triumph over Celta.

But after beating Ionut Radu

with a low penalty, Yamal pulled up hurt immediately, calling for treatment and lying on the turf as his team-mates came over to celebrate.

The right winger was replaced by Roony Bardghji.

"He wouldn't leave the pitch without reason," said Barcelona coach Hansi Flick. "As a coach you have to manage it, you have to live with it. It's a pity that Lamine is injured now."

Barcelona's win moved them nine points clear of Real Madrid at the top of the table with six matches remaining, including a Clasico on May 10.

Yamal is the club's leading scorer with 24 goals this season despite missing games in September and October with a groin issue.

He was an integral part of Spain's winning side at Euro 2024,

and earlier this week spoke of his excitement about the World Cup.

"Ever since I was a little boy, I've dreamed of playing in a World Cup, of seeing my mum in the stands, of representing the national team," Yamal said at the Laureus World Sports Awards.

"These two months will seem very short to me and I hope we'll finish as champions."

There is little doubt that he will feature in manager Luis de la Fuente's final squad, even if he is not yet fully fit.

Yamal joins a list of several key Spain internationals sidelined or edging their way back to full fitness, including Rodri, Fabian Ruiz, Mikel Merino and Nico Williams.

However, the 18-year-old could be rested at the start of the tournament given the significant risk of aggravating the injury.



Barcelona's Lamine Yamal receives medical attention after sustaining an injury during the La Liga match against Celta de Vigo at Camp Nou stadium in Barcelona on Wednesday. (AFP)

HORSE RACING

Wathnan Racing's Chdia lands Qatar Gold Sword

Al-Afoo Racing Stable's Sovereign Spirit claims Qatar Gold Trophy

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Chdia delivered a dominant performance in the Gr 1 Purebred Arabian contest over 2000m, surging clear to secure a decisive victory for Wathnan Racing and capture the Qatar Gold Sword at Al Rayyan Racecourse yesterday.

The five-year-old bay mare settled comfortably in midfield, always within striking distance, before unleashing a devastating turn of foot inside the final 300m. She swept past her rivals with ease and powered away with every stride to score by an emphatic three-and-a-half lengths. Trained by Alban de Mieulle, who celebrated a treble on the card, the mare was expertly partnered by Soufiane Saadi.

HE Sheikh Thani bin Hamad al-Thani awarded the Qatar Gold Sword which was received by HE Sheikh Jassim bin Tamim al-Thani following Chdia's victory.

Earlier on the Qatar Gold Sword and Trophy Day that featured nine races, Sovereign Spirit made a striking Qatar debut to land the Gr 1 contest for Thoroughbreds over 2200m for Al-Afoo Racing Stable and secure the Gold Trophy.

The six-year-old bay gelding, trained in Bahrain, recorded a fourth win from just six career starts, tracking the long-time leader throughout before quickening clear in the home straight and drawing away to score by an impressive 4½ lengths. Trained by Jaber Ramadhan, he was ridden by Alberto Sanna, who completed a treble in the evening.

Meanwhile, QREC Chairman Hamad bin Abdulrahman al-Attiyah awarded the Qatar Silver Sword after Taftan made back-to-back wins in the 2000m contest for four-year-old Purebred Arabians for Ahmed Hassan al-Malki al-Jehani. The bay gelding set the pace from the outset and maintained his advantage throughout, digging deeper in the straight to draw clear as a decisive 3-length winner. Saddled by Hamad al-Jehani, he was ridden by Pierre-Charles Boudot.

Razy made all to land the 1600m contest for Local Purebred Arabians for Wathnan Racing, claiming the Qatar Silver Sword. The seven-year-old grey gelding recorded a pillar-to-post success, maintaining control throughout to score by 1½ lengths. Under the care of Alban de Mieulle, he was ridden by Faleh Bughenaim, who completed a treble.

After the Finale of the Purebred Arabian Show Horse Series, Sham Alghania was crowned champion of the inaugural series in the 1200m contest for Ali Nasser al-Nuaimi, maintaining an unbeaten record in two starts.

Victorious One secured victory for Al Wasmiyah Farm in the Al Wajba Trophy over 2000m for 3yo Thoroughbreds. Trained by Ibrahim Saeed al-Malki and ridden by Faleh Bughenaim, the 3yo produced a strong performance



HE Sheikh Thani bin Hamad al-Thani awarded the Qatar Gold Sword to HE Sheikh Jassim bin Tamim al-Thani after Chdia's victory at Al Rayyan Racecourse yesterday. PICTURES: Juhaim



Jockey Soufiane Saadi guides Chdia to the Qatar Gold Sword win yesterday.



Connections of Sovereign Spirit celebrate after the bay gelding won the Qatar Gold Trophy yesterday.

to score by 2 lengths after settling behind the early leader before asserting in the closing stages.

Equinoxe won the Local Thoroughbred Cup over 2000m for 4yo+ for Wathnan Racing. Trained by Alban de Mieulle and ridden by Faleh Bughenaim, the nine-year-old veteran delivered another trademark late run, timing his challenge perfectly to take control in the final stages and win by 1½ lengths.

Taxiwala won the Sealine Sprint Cup over 1200m in the Thoroughbred Open Race for Eng. Osama Omer al-Dafea. Ridden by San-

na, the 9yo bay gelding travelled prominently before improving strongly inside the final 300m and drawing clear to score by 1½ lengths in a determined finish. Kendah Al Shahanah opened the meet with a win in the Local Purebred Arabian Handicap (65-85) under Alberto Sanna.

RESULTS
Qatar Gold Sword and Trophy Day
WINNERS: (Horse, Trainer, Jockey)
1 - Qatar Gold Sword, Purebred Arabians

Chdia, Alban de Mieulle, Soufiane Saadi

2 - Qatar Gold Trophy, Thoroughbreds

Sovereign Spirit, Jaber Ramadhan, Alberto Sanna

3 - Qatar Silver Sword, Purebred Arabians

Taftan, Hamad al-Jehani, Pierre Charles Boudot

4 - Qatar Silver Trophy, Local Purebred Arabians

Razy, Alban de Mieulle, Faleh Bughenaim

5 - Finale of Purebred Arabian Show Horse Series

Sham Alghania, Abdulrahman Abdulwahed, Youssef Lachhab

6 - Al Wajba Trophy, Thoroughbreds

Victorious One, Ibrahim Saeed al-Malki, Faleh Bughenaim

7 - Local Thoroughbred Cup

Equinoxe, Alban de Mieulle, Faleh Bughenaim

8 - Sealine Sprint Cup, Thoroughbred Open Race

Taxiwala, Eng. Osama Omer al-Dafea, Alberto Sanna

9 - Local Purebred Arabian Handicap (65-85)

Kendah Al Shahanah, Rudy Nerbonne, Alberto Sanna

FOCUS

Man City go top of Premier League as Burnley relegated

AFP
Burnley, United Kingdom

Manchester City edged ahead of Arsenal at the top of the Premier League as a 1-0 victory at Turf Moor condemned Burnley to relegation on Wednesday.

The defeat confirmed the Claret's third Premier League relegation in five seasons, consigning them to the Championship alongside Wolves next season.

Erling Haaland scored the only goal as Pep Guardiola's men ended the day top of the table for the first time since August, but the City boss was frustrated at his side's inability to win by a greater margin.

City go ahead of the Gunners only on goals scored, with five games left for both the title contenders.

"The chances were there. We created a lot. We made a fantastic game," said Guardiola. "We did everything after a demanding game three days ago."

However, City have on paper the tougher run-in as they aim to snatch a seventh league title in nine years.

Fresh from beating Arsenal 2-1 in what was billed as a title decider on Sunday, the visitors roared out of the blocks.

A stunning save by Martin Dubravka turned Rayan Cherki's shot onto the woodwork. Haaland was then set free by Jeremy Doku and coolly chipped over the advancing Dubravka with just five minutes on the clock.

City continued to pepper Dubravka with efforts from distance, but Guardiola grew visibly angry as they let the tempo drop in their pursuit of more goals. Burnley could even have been level by half-time as Zian Flemming dragged a glorious chance wide.

Haaland hit the post after the break, but City's failure to rack up a more convincing scoreline leaves the title race tantalisingly poised.

At the other end of the table, Burnley have to rebuild once more in the second tier.

A return of just 20 points from 34 games has left Scott Parker's men 13 adrift of safety with only four games remaining.

"We've fallen a bit short. The



Manchester City's Erling Haaland celebrates scoring against Burnley. (AFP)

facts are we had to overachieve this year and we've not managed to do that," said Parker.

"In certain moments we've lacked a certain quality about us and not managed to get enough points."

It is the fifth consecutive season that Burnley have either been relegated or promoted as they oscillate between the riches of the Premier League and the Championship.

Three wins from their opening nine games offered hope that they could join Sunderland and Leeds in bucking the trend of promoted sides being immediately relegated back to the second tier.

However, just one win in their 25 matches since has sealed their fate. Parker has become a Championship specialist, also winning promotion in the past with Fulham and Bournemouth.

But the former Tottenham and Chelsea midfielder has consistently struggled at all three clubs to make an impact in the Premier League.

Bournemouth's challenge to qualify for Europe for the first time was dented by Sean Longstaff's 97th-minute equaliser for Leeds in a 2-2 draw.

Junior Kroupi's opener for Bournemouth was quickly cancelled out by a James Hill own goal. Rayan's strike had the Cherries on course for the top six until Longstaff's volleyed leveller.

A point edges Bournemouth above Chelsea, who sacked Liam Rosenior on Wednesday, into seventh. Leeds are now nine points clear of the relegation zone.

QATAR TO PLAY FRIENDLY WITH EL SALVADOR IN LA ON JUNE 6

Qatar will take on El Salvador in an international friendly at BMO Stadium in Los Angeles on June 6, the Qatar Football Association announced yesterday, as Al Annabi continue their build-up to the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

The match forms part of a crucial overseas training camp designed to fine-tune preparations for the global showpiece, which will be hosted across the United States, Canada and Mexico.

Qatar's schedule has undergone some changes in recent weeks. High-profile friendlies against Serbia and Argentina, initially planned under the Qatar Football Festival, were cancelled due to regional tensions, prompting adjustments to the team's pre-tournament programme.

Before facing El Salvador, Qatar are also set to meet Ireland at the Aviva Stadium on May 28 in what is expected to provide a strong competitive test for Julien Lopetegui's side.

The national team began preparations last month under Lopetegui, focusing on tactical cohesion and squad readiness.

Their final training phase is expected to resume following the conclusion of the domestic season, which wraps up with the Amir Cup final on May 9.

At the World Cup, Qatar have been drawn in Group B alongside hosts Canada, Switzerland, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the European play-off winners.