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GULF TIMES SPORT

TENNIS

Kostyuk defeats Andreeva to claim first Madrid Open title

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FOOTBALL

Arsenal breeze past Fulham to open 6-point gap over City

West Ham loss at Brentford offers Tottenham a lifeline in the battle for Premier League survival

AFP
London

Arsenal threw down the gauntlet to Manchester City in the Premier League title race with a 3-0 home cruise against Fulham yesterday putting them six points clear at the top.

Viktor Gyokeres scored twice in the first half at The Emirates to put his side in control, with Bukayo Saka also on target as Arsenal ramped up the pressure on City.

It was the perfect day for Arsenal who will now be firmly back in control of their destiny if City fail to win the first of their two games in hand away at Everton tomorrow.

West Ham United's survival hopes suffered a blow when they went down 3-0 at Brentford for whom the win raised the possibility of playing European football for the first time.

Newcastle United emerged from their slump with a 3-1 home victory over European hopefuls Brighton & Hove Albion coming as a timely boost for manager Eddie Howe.

"It's been a horrible feeling for us for a number of weeks. We have been looking to change our fortunes," said Howe, whose side snapped a four-game losing run.

Sunderland drew 1-1 at relegated Wolverhampton Wanderers - a match most notable for Sunderland's Dan Ballard being sent off in the 24th minute for pulling the hair of home forward Tolu Arokodare - the same offence that Everton's Michael Keane saw red for against Wolves in January.

Having seen a 10-point lead evaporate and City knocking them off top spot with victory over Burnley on April 23, Arsenal's hopes of a first title since 2004 had appeared to be receding.

But they have responded in stirring fashion with back-to-back



Arsenal's Bukayo Saka celebrates scoring their second goal against Fulham during the Premier League match in London yesterday. (Reuters)

wins and, while City have two games in hand, Arsenal have regained the momentum in the nick of time.

Last weekend's 1-0 home win over Newcastle was a grind, but they blew away 10th-placed Fulham in a dominant first half.

"We showed a lot of authority, determination and composure. We brought a lot of energy to the stadium," said manager Mikel Arteta, who orchestrated the cheers of the fans at fulltime.

"It was a great performance."

Gyokeres tapped in a low cross from Saka in the ninth minute before the hosts struck twice more with halftime approaching.

Saka whipped in a shot that beat former Arsenal keeper Bernd Leno at his near post and Swedish striker Gyokeres then headed his second in first-half stoppage time.

Arteta's side stepped off the gas after the break with one eye on Tuesday's Champions League semi-final second leg at home against Atletico Madrid but Fulham, who have now never won

away at Arsenal in 33 league visits, offered little.

West Ham had the opportunity to really put the squeeze on Tottenham Hotspur in the relegation battle. Victory at Brentford would have given them a five-point cushion but it was not their day as they hit the woodwork three times in a potentially damaging defeat.

They remained in 17th place, two points above the relegation zone with three games left, but Nuno Espirito Santo's side will drop into it if Tottenham win at

Aston Villa on Sunday.

An own goal by Konstantinos Mavropanos after 15 minutes gave Brentford the lead but West Ham responded strongly with Valentin Castellanos twice hitting the woodwork and the unlucky Mavropanos having an equaliser ruled out for offside by VAR.

Brazilian forward Thiago converted from the penalty spot early in the second half - his 22nd league goal of the season - to double Brentford's lead and Mikkel Damsgaard rubbed salt into West

Ham's wounds after the visitors had again been denied by the woodwork when Crysencio Summerville's shot hit the bar.

Brentford moved into sixth spot - a position that would lead to Champions League qualification in the event of Aston Villa winning the Europa League and finishing fifth.

"A lot was made of the magnitude of the game for (West Ham) but this was a huge game for us," Brentford manager Keith Andrews said. His side have 51 points from 35 games with Brighton on 50 and Bournemouth, who have a game in hand, on 49.

Ipswich promoted

Ipswich secured an immediate return to the Premier League as they beat QPR 3-0 yesterday to hold off the challenge of Millwall.

The Tractor Boys had the destiny of second place in the Championship in their own hands and two goals in the opening 10 minutes from George Hirst and Jaden Philogene allowed the party to start early at Portman Road.

Kasey McAteer rounded off victory five minutes from time as Ipswich join Coventry in the top flight next season.

RESULTS

Newcastle 3 (Osula 12, Burn 24, Barnes 90+5) Brighton 1 (Hinshelwood 61)

Brentford 3 (Mavropanos 15-og, Thiago 54-pen, Damsgaard 82)

West Ham 0

Wolves 1 (Bueno 54) Sunderland 1 (Mukiele 17)

Arsenal 3 (Gyokeres 9, 45+4, Saka 40) Fulham 0

Playing Today (all times GMT)

Bournemouth v Crystal Palace (1300), Manchester United v Liverpool (1430), Aston Villa v Tottenham (1800)

Tomorrow

Chelsea v Nottingham Forest (1400), Everton v Manchester City (1900)

FORMULA 1

Norris leads Piastri home in sprint 1-2 triumph for McLaren

AFP
Miami

World champion Lando Norris won yesterday's sprint race at the Miami Grand Prix, leading home team-mate Oscar Piastri in a convincing 1-2 triumph that confirmed McLaren were back in top form.

The 26-year-old Briton finished the 19-lap race at Miami International Autodrome 3.766 seconds clear of Piastri with Ferrari's Charles Leclerc finishing third ahead of George Russell of Mercedes and four-time champion Max Verstappen of Red Bull.

Championship-leading Italian teenager Kimi Antonelli, the youngest man to lead the title race in F1 history, finished sixth after being given a five-second penalty that cost him a place for exceeding track limits excessively.

Seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton was seventh for Ferrari ahead of Alpine's Pierre Gasly, who took the final single point in eighth. It was Norris's fourth sprint win and McLaren's second consecutive 1-2 in Miami, a triumph that team chief Andrea Stella dedicated to the memory of

former F1 driver Alex Zanardi. The win also marked the first race this year not won by Mercedes.

"Let's do it all again," said a confident Norris on team radio, adding, "It was a good race - and nice to be back on the top step," after climbing from his car. "A massive job by the team in bringing the upgrades - I know everyone is saying the same thing, but ours have really helped. It was hot and sweaty out there and I tried to balance between pushing and not making mistakes." Piastri said: "It was a good morning. Now let's see what we can do in qualifying."

Added Leclerc: "The upgrades worked well. I'm satisfied with that, but unfortunately not with P3. I wish we were a bit higher."

On a day of sizzling heat, the race was preceded by a minute's silence in memory of Italian former F1 driver and Paralympic handcycling champion Alex Zanardi, who died Friday at 59.

Only 18 drivers formed the grid with Arvid Lindblad starting from the pit lane for Racing Bulls and Nico Hulkenberg absent after his Audi suffered a blazing engine failure on a pre-grid lap. Norris made a clean start from pole, but Antonelli once again made a poor start and was passed by Piastri

with Leclerc squeezing into third ahead of the Italian teenager, Russell and Hamilton, who fought past Verstappen for sixth. The champion looked dominant in the early laps and eased 1.9 seconds clear of McLaren team-mate Piastri by lap five with Leclerc a further 1.6 adrift for Ferrari.

In a classic skirmish, Verstappen then lunged at Hamilton on Turn 11 and went off track as he took sixth place before being ordered to give the place back. He responded with a more routine pass at Turn 17 as Hamilton, like Leclerc, began to lose grip due to overheating tyres.

For Ferrari, it was proving to be a disappointing race despite their extensive upgrades, as the high temperatures took a toll, while McLaren appeared to have gained decisively with their new package.

Mercedes, expecting to take their upgrades package to Canada at the end of May, were unable to match Norris and Piastri's pace, or match Leclerc, and the race settled into a high-speed procession with few real incidents. One did break the sequence on the penultimate lap when Hadjar surged past Colapinto to take ninth and then defended stoutly, but he needed another pass to score a point.



McLaren's British driver Lando Norris celebrates after winning the Miami Formula One Sprint at Miami International Autodrome in Miami Gardens, Florida, yesterday. (AFP)

CRICKET

Zalmi, Kingsmen eye glory in PSL finale

Agencies
Lahore

The 2026 Pakistan Super League (PSL) final is set for a historic showdown today at the iconic Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore where Peshawar Zalmi will face Hyderabad Kingsmen.

After a 44-match season played across only two cities due to broader economic and regional impacts, the tournament culminates in a battle between the consistent powerhouse Zalmi and the season's "fairytale" debutants, Kingsmen.

Zalmi, led by Babar Azam, has been the team to beat throughout the campaign. Dominating the round-robin stage with eight wins in 10 matches - including a remarkable seven-match winning streak - they secured their spot in the final early by dismantling Islamabad United by 70 runs in the Qualifier.

In contrast, the Kingsmen's journey has been a classic underdog story. In their maiden PSL appearance, they suffered four consecutive losses to start the season

but staged a monumental turnaround, winning seven of their last eight matches.

To reach today's final, they had to survive the grueling Eliminator path, knocking out Multan Sultans before edging past Islamabad United in a two-run thriller on Friday night.

KEY PLAYERS AND TACTICS

The spotlight will undoubtedly be on Babar, who enters the final with a record-breaking 588 runs this season. Supporting him is wicket-keeper-batter Kusal Mendis, who has amassed 541 runs, making Peshawar's top order one of the most formidable in the league's history.

Their bowling is spearheaded by the emerging Sufiyan Mugeem, the tournament's leading wicket-taker with 21 scalps, and the return of express pacer Nahid Rana.

Babar, the Zalmi captain, said yesterday: "We have played really good cricket in the tournament. Our focus has been on assessing the conditions first and then executing the plans. The performance of our team this season has been a combined effort of the local and overseas players. We hope to win the trophy by giving our best.



Peshawar Zalmi captain Babar Azam (right) and Hyderabad Kingsmen skipper Marnus Labuschagne pose with the Pakistan Super League trophy in Lahore yesterday. The final will be played today.

It will also be great to play in front of a jam-packed stadium."

Hyderabad, captained by Marnus Labuschagne, relies on a bal-

anced and aggressive middle order featuring Glenn Maxwell and Usman Khan.

Their bowling attack is led by

the young sensation Hunain Shah, whose clutch performances in the final overs were instrumental in their Eliminator victories.

After their win against United on Friday, Labuschagne said: "The story of what we have been able to create as a team has been so special. Nothing good comes easy. The squad that we put together probably looked a little bit interesting on paper and then we had (first) four games (which Kingsmen lost) where we were trying to get to know the team and understand how to construct our line-up. We found that balance and momentum five games in. We had players coming into form and some losing theirs a little bit. It has been a journey."

The Gaddafi Stadium pitch has favoured batters throughout 2026, with an average first-innings total of 188 in recent matches. While much of the league phase was held behind closed doors, the PCB has allowed a packed crowd for the playoffs, ensuring an electric atmosphere for today's finale.

For the first time in the history of the PSL, a separate reward has been set for the franchises with the winning franchise getting \$500,000, runners up will get \$300,000, while the franchise with the best player development efforts will bag \$200,000.

INDIAN PREMIER LEAGUE

Chennai hammer Mumbai, remain in playoffs battle

'I wanted to make sure to take the team to the end if I got a start'

AFP
Chennai, India

Ruturaj Gaikwad led from the front with an unbeaten 67 as Chennai Super Kings hammered fellow IPL giants Mumbai Indians by eight wickets yesterday to stay in the hunt for the playoffs.

In a clash of two teams sharing 10 titles between them, Chennai kept Mumbai, who elected to bat first, down to 159-7 at the MA Chidambaram Stadium.

Captain Gaikwad and Kartik Sharma then put on an unbeaten stand of 98 to steer the team home with 11 balls to spare and bounce back from a big defeat in their previous outing.

Gaikwad anchored the chase and Sharma hit the winning four in his 54 as five-time champions Chennai moved to sixth place in the 10-team table.

"It was about getting a good start and then one of the batters had to go deep," said Gaikwad.

"Feels good to bat till the end. I wanted to make sure to take the team to the end if I got a start."

Mumbai, who have also won the IPL five times and lost their second match to Chennai this season, languish in the ninth spot with seven defeats in nine matches.

"Not the season," said Mumbai skipper Hardik Pandya. "They played better, they bowled better,



Chennai Super Kings' Ruturaj Gaikwad plays a shot during the IPL match against Mumbai Indians in Chennai yesterday. (AFP)

they fielded better and they batted better."

Chennai lost an early wicket but Gaikwad struck his second successive half-century to keep his side on track. Pace bowler Jasprit Bumrah took down Sanju Samson, caught behind for 11, in his first over before Urvil Patel counter-attacked in his 12-ball 24.

Afghanistan spinner AM Ghazanfar bowled Patel to raise some hopes for Mumbai, but Gaikwad stood firm to raise his fifty from 34 balls to put Chennai on course.

Opener Gaikwad hit five fours and two sixes in his 48-ball knock and was named player of the match. The bowlers set up victory as left-arm wrist spinner Noor Ahmad struck two key blows in-

cluding Ryan Rickelton, for 37, and Tilak Varma, for five, before medium-pace bowler Anshul Kamboj took 3-32.

BRIEF SCORES

Chennai Super Kings 160 for 2 (Gaikwad 67*, Kartik 54*, Bumrah 1-20) **beat Mumbai Indians 159 for 7** (Dhir 57, Rickelton 37, Kamboj 3-32, Noor 2-26) **by eight wickets**

ANNOUNCEMENT

Veteran batter Kaur named to captain India in women's T20 WC

AFP
Mumbai, India

Star batter Harmanpreet Kaur will lead India for the fifth time in the women's T20 World Cup, selectors said in announcing the squad yesterday as they seek their first title.

Wicketkeeper-batter Yastika Bhatia and left-arm spinner Radha Yadav make their T20 international returns in the 15-member squad for the tournament in England and Wales from June 12.

Uncapped pace bowler Nandani Sharma was included after taking 17 wickets for Delhi Capitals in the 2026 Women's Premier League.

Kaur, 37, is the only Indian player to have played in every women's T20 World Cup since 2009.

Smriti Mandhana will be her deputy.

"I will definitely rate this team as favourites and the team we picked today, they have the calibre to become champions," Kaur said.

"No pressure, no overconfidence. T20 is all about playing good cricket."

Kaur led India to their first ODI World Cup title last year but the cricketing powerhouse's best T20 performance so far was runners-

up in 2020. India begin their campaign against arch-rivals Pakistan in Birmingham on June 14.

They are both in group 1 with Australia, South Africa, Bangladesh and the Netherlands.

The same Indian squad will play a three-match warm-up tournament against England, after recently losing a T20 series to hosts South Africa 4-1.

The final is scheduled for July 5 at Lord's.

Kaur's India will also host England in a one-off Test from July 10, with the 15-member squad also announced yesterday.

T20 squad: Harmanpreet Kaur (capt), Smriti Mandhana (vice-capt), Shafali Verma, Jemimah Rodrigues, Bharti Fulmali, Deepti Sharma, Richa Ghosh (wk), Shree Charani, Yastika Bhatia (wk), Nandani Sharma, Arundhati Reddy, Renuka Singh, Kranti Gaud, Shreyanka Patil, Radha Yadav.

Test squad: Harmanpreet Kaur (capt), Smriti Mandhana (vice-capt), Shafali Verma, Jemimah Rodrigues, Pratika Rawal, Deepti Sharma, Richa Ghosh (wk), Shree Charani, Yastika Bhatia (wk), Nandani Sharma, Harleen Deol, Renuka Singh, Kranti Gaud, Sayali Satghare, Sneha Rana.

Rahul savours runs as Delhi snap losing streak in IPL



DELHI: KL Rahul topped the Indian Premier League run-scoring charts with a match-winning knock in Delhi Capitals' seven-wicket win over Rajasthan Royals on Friday, saying individual milestones mean more when they help the team win. Rahul has been Delhi's most consistent performer this season, registering three half-centuries and one century despite the team's mixed results. The 34-year-old struck 75 off 40 balls, with six fours and five sixes, as Delhi snapped a three-match losing streak and completed their highest successful run chase of 226 in the IPL.

Rahul had earlier hit an unbeaten 152 in a defeat against Punjab Kings, a knock that drew praise but did not bring the desired result for the team. "After playing for so many years, numbers do matter," Rahul said at the post-match presentation. "You're happy that you score runs and you score these big runs and break records."

"But if you don't get the win after the game, it's not as much fun," he said. Rahul has been in strong form this season and he credited it to work on maintaining a higher strike rate to suit the demands of modern day Twenty20 cricket. While he is enjoying a good run in the tournament, he acknowledged that Delhi had slipped up in key moments despite pushing hard in earlier games.

"This competition and T20 cricket doesn't allow you a second chance," he said. "So it was important that we take our chances and when we're ahead, really press hard and finish the game, which we weren't doing." Delhi were also boosted by the return of Australia fast bowler Mitchell Starc, who took three wickets in his first match of the season after months on the sidelines with elbow and shoulder injuries. Sixth-placed Delhi next face Chennai Super Kings on Tuesday.

CYCLING

Pogacar wins to pull clear in Tour of Romandie

AFP
Charmey, Switzerland

Tadej Pogacar soared away from his rivals yesterday on the final climb to win for the third time in four days on the Tour of Romandie.

At the end of the mountainous 'queen stage' of the week-long race, Pogacar attacked twice on the 8.3km final climb the Jaunpass.

The first time he went he shook off every other member of a group of more than 20 except second-placed Florian Lipowitz. But the Slovenian kicked again a kilometre from the top and dropped his German rival.

After two sprint victories earlier in the six-day race, followed by a defeat at the finish on Friday by French sprinter Dorian Godon, the four-time Tour de France winner this time battled a headwind on the final descent and run to the line before raising his arms in solo victory.

Facing the microphone once more as winner at the finish line, Pogacar dismissed the sug-



UAE Team Emirates-XRG's Slovenian rider Tadej Pogacar wearing the overall leader's yellow jersey is escorted to the podium after winning the fourth stage of the Tour of Romandie UCI cycling World tour. (AFP)

gestion that his display again suggested his rivals have no chance when he attacks.

"I disagree," said the World Champion, after praising his UAE team-mates. "The competitors today were really good, strong, and it was really hard to drop Florian. He was really

strong," said Pogacar. "He gave me really hard time keeping the gap the same all the time. It was definitely not easy. It was super hard, and hey, I'm happy with the performance today."

Lipowitz chased doggedly and, after Pogacar relaxed near the line, finished 14 seconds back.

The German, who rides for Red Bull-Bora, said that Pogacar had known what he was doing when he attacked at the end of the final climb.

"I'm not the fastest guy," he said. "I like a steady pace, and I think he was right on the last kilometre when he tried to drop me and it worked for him quite well."

Lipowitz trails by 35 seconds, which gives him a chance of springing a surprise in Sunday's final stage a hilly 178.2km ride from Lucens that ends with a long climb to finish at Leysin. "I'm super happy with today," Lipowitz said. "One more day!"

Pablo Castrillo a Spaniard from Movistar was a distant third at 1 minute 42 seconds.

Lenny Martinez, a Frenchman with Bahrain Victorious, is third but trails Pogacar by 2 min 30sec.

BLUE FALCONS, DOHA LADIES WIN QATAR RUGBY LEAGUE TITLES

DOHA: The 2025-2026 Qatar Rugby League season concluded in a vibrant and celebratory atmosphere, reflecting the rapid development of the sport in Qatar. The closing stages witnessed strong competition between participating teams, all of whom delivered impressive performances, with a notable crowd turnout that enjoyed the season finale matches.

The tournament featured six men's teams in Rugby XV: Doha Rugby, Blue Falcons, Camels, Fites, Doha Titles, and Oryx, alongside three women's teams in Rugby Sevens: Oryx, Doha Ladies, and Camels.

The men's final was highly competitive and full of intensity, as Blue Falcons secured the title with a commanding 44-0 victory over Camels, earning a well-deserved place on the podium. In the women's competition, Doha



Ladies were crowned Rugby Sevens champions after defeating Oryx 19-12 in a closely contested match that remained competitive until the final moments. At the conclusion of the tournament, Abdullah Aman al-Khater,

Secretary-General of the Qatar Rugby Federation, and Saad Badr al-Abdullah, Board Member, presented the trophies to the winning teams. Talal Mujalli, Head of Rugby at the Federation, expressed his satisfac-



tion with the successful conclusion of the season, praising the high standards shown by players and highlighting the continued development of rugby in Qatar, particularly the growing participation at youth level. For his part, Abbas

Kharfani, Technical Director of the Federation, praised the high competitive level of the final, stressing the importance of such events in identifying national team players ahead of their upcoming fixture against Saudi Arabia on May 15 in

Doha as part of the world rankings structure. He also announced that the season-ending festival will take place on May 21, featuring an exhibition match with top players from Qatari clubs, celebrating the success and growth of the season.

TENNIS

Kostyuk downs Andreeva to win Madrid Open title

'IT FEELS UNBELIEVABLE TO BE STANDING HERE RIGHT NOW'

Reuters
Madrid

Marta Kostyuk overpowered Mirra Andreeva 6-3 7-5 in a commanding one hour and 20 minutes to win the Madrid Open title yesterday, sealing only the third singles crown of her career.

The Ukrainian, whose only previous triumphs came in Austin in 2023 and Rouen last month, arrived in the Spanish capital on a mission and left with silverware after a display brimming with intent and nerve.

Kostyuk began with relentless intensity, stepping into the court and striking as if every blow might be the last. She brought raw power and will, while Andreeva countered with a more polished, patient approach, mixing up her shots in a way that at times frustrated her opponent.

But it was Kostyuk who seized control. In the sixth game of the opening set she piled on the pressure, drawing a string of unforced errors from the Russian before breaking for a 4-2 lead. Another commanding hold stretched her advantage to 5-2.

Serving for the set, however, Kostyuk wobbled. She offered up two break points, which she saved to reach deuce, only to double fault on set point and level the contest once more. Regaining her composure, she closed it out 6-3 after 34 minutes for her first WTA 1000 title.



Ukraine's Marta Kostyuk celebrates with the trophy after winning her final match against Russia's Mirra Andreeva at the Madrid Open yesterday. (Reuters)

"It feels unbelievable to be standing here right now," Kostyuk said. "I can only thank my team for supporting me throughout the years. If you look at the stats, I was way down the line and never thought I would be standing here where I am right now, playing the way I'm playing."

Andreeva, who turned 19 this week and is eighth in the world rankings, has long been regarded as one of the game's most gifted young players. Yet in Madrid she again seemed to be struggling when cast in the role of favourite.

The second set swung wildly. Andreeva donated an early break with successive unforced errors, then immediately hit back, earning two break points after a Kostyuk double fault and leveling at 1-1. She surged to 3-1 when Kostyuk missed a routine smash, the Ukrainian staring in disbelief as momentum appeared to shift.

It did not last. Kostyuk struck back for 3-3, capitalising on triple break point, and the match turned into a test of nerve.

Leading 5-4 with Kostyuk serving to stay in the match, An-

dreeva conjured up three superb rallies to reach deuce but squandered a set point with an unforced error. She earned another with a dazzling winner, only for Kostyuk to hammer down two successive aces and level at 5-5.

The Russian's rollercoaster afternoon ended with a double fault that gave Kostyuk the decisive break at 6-5. This time there was no hesitation. Kostyuk served out the match in commanding fashion to secure a title that underlined both her firepower and resilience.

ATHLETICS

Coe will be 'tough' on athletes seeking nationality switch

AFP
Gaborone, Botswana

World Athletics president **Sebastian Coe** has told AFP he will remain "tough" on the issue of athletes switching nationality after his federation blocked a bid by top Jamaicans and Kenyans to move to Turkey.

The 2024 Olympic men's discus champion Roje Stona from Jamaica, and a quintet of Kenyans including former women's marathon world record-holder Brigid Kosgei, were among the 11 targeted by lucrative offers from Turkey.

"The concept is very simple, there should be a very clear understanding and philosophy that the country an athlete starts their career in is the country that they finish their career in," Coe said in an interview ahead of the World Athletics Relays event in Botswana.

"And for global championships to have meaning and to have understanding, people need to witness championships where you have national-based competitions," he added.

Coe said a World Athletics panel examined every request to switch nationality and he accepted in some cases there would be circumstances in which it was acceptable, such as marriage or "political intolerance".

But he said Turkey's bid to recruit elite athletes from other countries by offering them financial packages in a bid to boost its medal count at the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics was the kind of move that would always be rejected. "If it is simply about wanting to move from one federation to another, that doesn't fall into that criteria. We will remain tough," Coe said.

"It's very important, most federations rely very heavily on government investment and government investment will dry up if those governments think that they are investing in talent programmes for other countries."

Letsile Tebogo, the 2024 Ol-



ympic 200m champion and the leading light of a talented crop of Botswanan sprinters, revealed in December that he has rebuffed offers to switch to the United Arab Emirates and Tunisia.

Botswana, a country of 2.5 million inhabitants which is largely desert, has experienced economic turbulence with the downturn of the global diamond market, which represents 30 percent of its GDP, but continues to inject funds into its successful athletics programme.

Jamaica smash mixed 4x100 metres relay world record

Jamaica blazed into the record books at the World Athletics Relays yesterday, becoming the first quartet to crack the 40-second barrier in the mixed 4x100 metres relay. The team of Ackeem Blake, Tina Clayton, Kadrian Goldson and Tia Clayton scorched around the track in 39.99 seconds, breaking the world record in Gaborone, Botswana, the first time the event has been held in Africa.

Their lightning-fast run came just after Canada had set a new benchmark of 40.07 seconds in the first heat, only to see their record last mere minutes before Jamaica's history-making run.

Using the event's new man-woman-man-woman running order, Blake started for Jamaica before handing the baton to Tina Clayton. Goldson took the third leg, setting up Tia Clayton for a blistering anchor run that carried the team under the 40-second mark.

NO.1 KORDA CHARGES INTO SHARE OF LPGA MEXICO LEAD

MEXICO CITY: Top-ranked Nelly Korda, coming off her third major title, closed with a birdie to seize a share of the lead after Friday's second round of the LPGA Riviera Maya Open.

The 27-year-old American fired a bogey-free five-under par 67 to stand on nine-under 135 after 36 holes at El Camaleon Golf Course in Playa del Carmen, Mexico.

"It was a good day," Korda said. "Drove it really well. Hit it to the right spots on the green and capitalized on some good shots."

She finished level with compatriot Brianna Do, who fired a 69 in quest of her first LPGA title, with American Melanie Green one stroke back on 136 after shooting 70 and Japan's Minami Katsu fourth on 137 after a 68. Korda captured the Chevron Championship last week for her third career major and also won the LPGA season-opening Tournament of Champions.

She finished second in her other three starts so far this year.

Korda, who began the day two strokes behind co-leader Do, birdied the second, par-five fifth and par-three eighth, then birdied 14 and the par-five 18th to grab a share of the lead.

"Overall just a solid day," Korda said. "Didn't make any mistakes really. If I did, I bounced back really well."

Do began on the back nine with back-to-back birdies then added birdies at the



par-three 15th and par-four second before a closing bogey. "I started with two birdies on 10, 11, my first two holes, and that really got things going," Do said. "Kind of a lull in the middle on the back nine, but kept it together and shot three-under, so good round. Solid."

Spain's Carlota Ciganda and China's Liu Yu, who shot 66, shared fifth on 138 with Germany's Olivia Cowan, Mexico's Gabby Lopez, Paraguay's Sofia Garcia and Thailand's Arpichaya Yubol sharing seventh on 139.

GOLF

Young in driver's seat with five-shot lead halfway through Cadillac Championship

Reuters
Miami

Cameron Young built a five-shot advantage at the Cadillac Championship by posting a 5-under-par 67 on Friday at Trump National Doral outside Miami.

Young rocketed up to 13-under 131 while Alex Smalley found the water on No. 18 for a bogey that dropped him into a tie at 8 under with Canada's Nick Taylor and Jordan Spieth. Taylor posted a 70 in the second round while Spieth and Smalley, one back of Young to start the day, settled for 71s.

After capturing the biggest title of his career six weeks ago at The Players Championship, Young finds himself halfway to a Florida double at the PGA Tour's newest \$20mn, no-cut signature event.

The PGA Tour returned to Trump National Doral and the famed "Blue Monster" for the first time since 2016.

Young birdied Nos. 1, 3, 5 and 7 to start his day, but he said he was more impressed with how he avoided trouble.

"I think I just managed misses really



well," Young said. "I putted really well. I feel like I just took advantage of the opportunities I had. I didn't hit it terrible but I just wasn't consistently in position all day, I didn't drive it amazing. I think that's kind of what I would like to do better (Saturday)."

Young birdied the par-3 13th and the par-4 16th to mitigate his only bogey of the day at No. 14. The 16-foot birdie at No. 13 seemed to come as a surprise for Young, who walked after his ball assuming it would miss before it took a second break back toward the cup.

"I was absolutely disgusted about

halfway there," Young said. "I think my read netted out to be okay, but I just thought it was going to go a little bit left and then a little bit right and it ended up going six inches left and six inches right."

Spieth, seeking his first win since the 2022 RBC Heritage, remains in contention after a ho-hum round. He was 1 over through 15 holes before salvaging the round with birdies at Nos. 16 and 18. The tour vet called the latter "one of the harder holes I've played on the PGA Tour."

"Getting a birdie there felt like a huge steal. Just wanted to hit the putt hard enough," Spieth said of the 25 1/2-footer.

Smalley admitted he did not picture himself at Doral this week before he and teammate Hayden Springer tied for second at last week's Zurich Classic of New Orleans, enabling Smalley to get into the signature field via the "Aon Swing 5."

"I certainly think momentum is a factor," Smalley said. "Good golf carries a long way. But even though I played decently well last week, this week was a new week and I had to prepare just like it was any other tournament."

LIGUE 1

PSG held by Lorient ahead of Bayern Munich return leg

The result means the outcome of the title race remains a live issue

AFP
Paris

Paris Saint-Germain warmed up for the second leg of their Champions League semi-final against Bayern Munich by fielding a second-string line-up and throwing away the lead twice in a 2-2 draw with Lorient in Ligue 1 yesterday.

Ibrahim Mbaye's fortuitous early goal to put PSG ahead at the Parc des Princes was cancelled out by Pablo Pagis for mid-table Lorient, but Warren Zaire-Emery gave the hosts the lead for the second time, moments after coming on as a second-half substitute.

However, a mistake by teenage debutant Pierre Mounguengue allowed Aiyegun Tosin to run through and score a second for Lorient, and PSG could not find a winner - even being awarded a penalty in stoppage time for a non-existent handball which was overturned by VAR.

The result means the Ligue 1 title race remains alive, with PSG seven points clear of Lens who have four games remaining including at Nice later Saturday.

Lens also still have to host PSG, and Luis Enrique's side are focused principally on the defence of their European title as they face Bayern away on Wednesday after winning 5-4 at home in the first leg.

"We needed the three points. This has opened up the title race a little bit," admitted Luis Enrique.

"It is very difficult in terms of motivation after playing a Champions League semi-final in an incredible atmosphere, but I expect more from my players," said the PSG coach, who made nine changes here, with only William Pachon and Desire Doue retained from midfield.

Ousmane Dembele and Khvicha Kvaratskhelia were unused substitutes against Lorient while Vitinha was rested entirely.

Renato Marin, 19, made just his



Paris Saint-Germain's Warren Zaire-Emery (left) scores his side's second goal during the Ligue 1 match against Lorient at Parc des Princes stadium in Paris yesterday. (AFP)

second top-team appearance in goal, and fellow teenager Mbaye made a first start in three months.

Mounguengue, an 18-year-old forward, came on in the second half as PSG were held to a draw by Lorient for the second time this season.

PSG went ahead on six minutes when Lorient goalkeeper Yvon Mvogo attempted to clear a Doue cross but instead played the ball off Mbaye before it rebounded in.

Pagis converted the first equaliser for Lorient, the club owned by American businessman Bill Foley, also the owner of Premier League Bournemouth.

It was 2-1 to the hosts just after the hour. Zaire-Emery had just come on for Fabian Ruiz when he controlled a Doue pass for his first touch, and then fired in with the aid of a deflection.

But Mounguengue cost the home side two points when his

loose ball inside was pounced upon by Tosin and the Benin forward went on to score.

PSG, chasing a fifth straight Ligue 1 title, hit the post late on through Senny Mayulu as they dropped points for the third time in five home Ligue 1 games.

Meanwhile, Marseille's troubled season continued with a 3-0 defeat at Nantes which is a further blow to their prospects of Champions League qualification but gives their opponents' renewed hope of avoiding relegation.

Ignatius Ganago, Remy Cabella and Matthis Abline all scored in the space of nine minutes early in the second half as Nantes claimed a first win in nine matches and just a fifth victory all season.

Eight-time champions Nantes remain in the automatic relegation places with two games left but are now just two points behind Auxerre in the play-off spot before

their rivals play on Sunday. Marseille are on a run of four defeats in their last six outings and have slipped to seventh below Monaco, who won 2-1 at Metz.

OM are four points away from a Champions League berth with two games left, and at this rate are running the risk of not qualifying for Europe at all.

"We got what we deserved," said coach Habib Beye, who insisted he will not walk away.

"When you take on a challenge like this you don't just give up. I will never quit."

Monaco revived their own European hopes by coming from behind against Metz, with USA star Folarin Balogun scoring a ninth goal in 10 league games to equalise before Ansu Fati's stoppage-time winner.

Metz have now gone 20 league matches without winning and the result confirmed their relegation.

FOCUS

Stage set for thrilling Amir Cup Basketball semis tomorrow

By Sports Reporter
Doha

The stage is set for the HH the Amir Basketball Cup semi-finals, scheduled to take place at Al Gharafa Indoor Sports Hall tomorrow. In the opening semi-final, Al Ahli will take on last year's runners-up Al Arabi at 6:00pm. The second semi-final will see defending champions Al Rayyan face Al Sadd at 8:00pm.

Al Rayyan booked their place in the semi-finals with a series of strong performances, including a commanding 104-82 victory over Al Gharafa in the quarter-finals. Al Arabi also impressed, cruising past Qatar SC with a 104-73 win.

Al Ahli and Al Sadd secured their spots in the last four after defeating Al Wakrah (85-72) and Al Shamal (107-96), respectively.

Meanwhile, the Qatar Basketball Federation (QBF) has announced the release of tickets for the final, set to be held on May 6. Prices start from QR15, while children under the age of five can enter free of charge.



This initiative reflects the federation's commitment to encouraging family attendance and enhancing the fan experience at one of Qatar's premier basketball competitions.

With the tournament's growing popularity and the closely matched teams competing for the title, the final is expected to attract a large crowd and deliver an exciting conclusion to the championship.

Scan the QR code to purchase tickets via the Snoonu mobile application



SERIE A

Napoli frustrate Como in costly draw

AFP
Como, Italy

Napoli and Como drew 0-0 in Serie A yesterday in a result that did little to further either of their ambitions for this season.

The draw will likely disappoint hosts Como the more as they now trail Juventus in the final Champions League spot by two points and the Old Lady can grow that advantage when they host Verona today.

Second-placed Napoli know their Serie A title defence is over with leaders Inter Milan, now nine points clear, needing just a draw from their remaining four fixtures to win the league. Inter can claim the Scudetto on Sunday with three games to spare when they play mid-table Parma at the San Siro.

Napoli coach Antonio Conte admitted Como had given them quite a challenge.

"It was certainly a good performance, as without that you don't emerge unscathed from a game where both Napoli and Como had a lot at stake," Conte told DAZN.

"Como probably had more at stake with Champions League qualification."

But after the stalemate, third-placed AC Milan can draw level with Napoli on 70 points should they win at Sassuolo today.

The first big chance came to Como inside the opening 10 minutes as Anastasios Douvikas managed to round Napoli goalkeeper Vanja Milinkovic-Savic, only for two defenders to scramble back and block his effort on the goal-line.

At the other end Scott Mc-



Como's Assane Diao vies for the ball with Napoli's Alessandro Buongiorno during the Serie A match in Como yesterday.

Tominay responded for Napoli with a towering leap at a corner on 18 minutes but his header went over with the Como 'keeper Jean Butez lost in a melee. Como's Martin Baturina bent wide four mins later and then Milinkovic-Savic came out well to deny Assane Diao on a swift counter and the match went into half-time goalless. Napoli appealed vainly for a penalty early in the second period, however, the referee adjudged Rasmus Hojlund had manufactured the contact close to the byline and chose not to point to the spot.

A deflected effort from just inside the box from Baturina then required a desperate claw away from the goal by a wrong-footed Milinkovic-Savic.

McTominay passed up the best chance of the second period on 80 minutes after galloping onto a lofted through-ball but his steered finish nestled in the side netting.

Matteo Politano nearly won the match five minutes later with a spectacular curling effort from distance, which came back off the post with Butez well-beaten.

Earlier, Udinese climbed to 10th following a 2-0 win at home to Torino. Genoa's trip to Atalanta will round out the day's action in Serie A.

Second-string Bayern held by Heidenheim before PSG clash

A heavily-rotated Bayern Munich were held to a 3-3 draw at home by last-placed Heidenheim yesterday, days out from their return Champions League semi-final against Paris Saint-Germain.

Bayern made seven changes to the side who lost 5-4 in a wild first leg in the French capital on Tuesday and were down 2-0 in the first half to goals from Budu Zivizvadze and Eren Dinkci.

Bayern roared back from a 3-0 deficit to win 4-3 last week at Mainz and this time around Leon Goretzka scored twice to level things up with half an hour remaining. Zivizvadze scored

again to put Heidenheim back in front but substitute Michael Olise scored in the 10th minute of stoppage time to snatch a point for the hosts. Goalscorer Goretzka admitted Bayern's thoughts were already on Wednesday's clash with defending champions PSG, telling DAZN: "You can see how fired up everyone is. We're looking forward to the game and we want to reach the final."

Coach Vincent Kompany once again named a heavily changed line-up, leaving seven starters from Tuesday's match including Harry Kane, Olise, Joshua Kimmich and Luis Diaz on the bench.

With Heidenheim needing a win to have any chance of beating the drop, the visitors started frantically, pinning Bayern back with a series of corners. Heidenheim broke through after 22 minutes when Zivizvadze turned the ball off the post and in from a corner. Dinkci added another nine minutes later, storming into the box and taking a touch on a Marnon Busch pass to round Bayern goalkeeper Jonas Urbig and tap home. Bayern were below their best but pulled a goal back before half-time from a set-piece. With dead-ball specialists Kimmich and Olise cooling their heels on the bench,

Goretzka unleashed a dipping shot into the top right corner. The goal was Goretzka's first from a free-kick since 2017 when he played for Schalke. Goretzka scored from a corner to have Bayern level but Zivizvadze's goal with 14 minutes remaining put the visitors back in front. Olise had the last word, however, his shot bouncing off the post and in off goalkeeper Diant Ramaj's back to make sure Bayern avoided a second league defeat of the season. Elsewhere, Tiago Tomas scored deep into stoppage time to snatch 10-man Stuttgart a 3-3 draw at top-four rivals Hoffenheim.

LONGINES HATHAB - QATAR EQUESTRIAN TOUR

Al-Eid claims Diamond Tour, team honours for Marwan Al Shaqab

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Khalid al-Eid stole the spotlight in the Diamond Tour as the twelfth round of the Longines Hathab - Qatar Equestrian Tour wrapped up at the Qatar Equestrian Federation's main arena yesterday.

Riding Raker, al-Eid clinched the 150cm class with a sharp round in 40.68 seconds, edging out Cyrine Cherif, who clocked 41.26 seconds on Easy Boy.

Mohammed Saeed Haidan settled for third after posting 42.55 seconds aboard Wathnan Stand, as the top riders delivered a tight contest at the highest level.

In the Bronze Tour (120cm), Anaz al-Anaz claimed top honours with a winning time of 56.45 seconds on Be Bop de Lyons.

Faris Saad al-Qahtani followed in 57.86 seconds on Foudre du Banney, while Hussein Saeed Haidan placed third in 60.87 sec-

onds on Gringo. The team event saw Marwan Al Shaqab take first place with a combined time of 144.78 seconds.

Al Adeed Al Shaqab finished second, while Al Shaqab team secured third.

Earlier, Salha Khalid al-Obaidli impressed in the Future Riders Tour (90cm), winning in 24.79 seconds on Violet Van Het Koetshuis.

Alqaqaa bin Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani finished second on Bon Suela, with Salman Faisal al-Marri third on Suol Rebel.

Speaking after the round, Ali Yousef al-Rumaihi, Vice Chairman of the Organising Committee, said the tour continues to grow in stature and quality.

"We saw strong competition, which highlights the riders' readiness and determination to perform at their best. With only two rounds remaining, attention now turns to the race for points and the overall standings as riders push to secure the title. The intensity



Winners of the Diamond Tour celebrate on the podium after the 12th round of the Longines Hathab - Qatar Equestrian Tour yesterday.

also reflects the championship's success in attracting elite international riders while continuing to

support and develop local talent, strengthening Qatar's presence on the showjumping stage."



Salha Khalid al-Obaidli (centre) won the Future Riders Tour, followed by Alqaqaa bin Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani (left) and Salman Faisal al-Marri in second and third places respectively.