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SPORT

FIFA WORLD CUP 2026

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DAYS TO GO

TRIVIA
Which player has won the most World Cups in a career?
Pele (Brazil) with three.

FOCUS

Qatar team soar to show jumping gold at GCC Games Doha

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Qatar's equestrian team clinched the gold medal in the team show jumping competition at the 4th GCC Games Doha 2026, delivering a commanding performance on home soil at the Qatar Equestrian Federation's indoor arena. The quartet of Faleh Suwaid al-Ajmi, Salman Mohammed al-Emadi, Khalid Mohammed al-Emadi and Bassem Mohammed dominated the 145cm event, which featured two rounds and a jump-off, to secure the top podium place.

The UAE team claimed the silver medal through riders Mohammed Ahmed al-Owais, Abdullah Humaid al-Muhairi, Saeed Mohammed al-Mazrouei and Sheikh Ali Jassim al-Nuaimi while Kuwait secured the bronze medal with riders Yara al-Hunaidi, Annaz al-Annaz, Hussein al-Kharafi and Ali al-Kharafi.

HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani, President of the Olympic Council of Asia and Qatar Olympic Committee, and Chairman of the Organising Committee of the 4th GCC Games, crowned the podium winners.

The individual show jumping competition will be held today, with riders competing at a height of 140cm in a two-round format with a jump-off.



HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani, President of the Olympic Council of Asia and Qatar Olympic Committee, and Chairman of the Organising Committee of the 4th GCC Games, crowned the podium winners of the show jumping team event at the indoor arena of the Qatar Equestrian Federation.

SPOTLIGHT

Hosts Qatar sweep swimming golds

Swimmers continue to make a splash with five gold and two silver

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Qatar's swimmers continued their dominant run at the 4th GCC Games Doha 2026, winning five gold medals and adding another silver and bronze at the Hamad Aquatics Centre yesterday.

Saadeddin led another strong outing for the hosts after claiming gold in the men's 400m freestyle with a Games record time of 3:50.80 secs. Team-mate Emile Fouzai completed a Qatar one-two after taking silver in 3:56.05, while Bahrain's Robert Bonsall settled for bronze.

Mohamed Mahmoud added to Qatar's medal tally by winning the men's 50m breaststroke in another Games record time of 28.38 seconds. Saudi Arabia's Mohammed Alotaibi took silver ahead of Qatar's Hamza Shalan, who secured bronze. Ali Tamer Hassan also struck gold for the hosts after winning the men's 100m freestyle in a Games record time of 49.78 seconds. Saudi Arabia's Emad Addin Zaben finished second, while UAE swimmer Hussein Abdelsalam claimed bronze.

Qatar's fourth individual gold of the day came through Abdalla Elghamry, who topped the men's 200m backstroke in 2:05.91, setting yet another Games record. Saudi Arabia's Ali Alessa took silver, while Kuwait's Abdullah Sultan finished third.

The hosts then capped another successful day in the pool by winning the men's 4x100m freestyle relay final ahead of Saudi Arabia and Bahrain to secure their fifth gold medal of the session. The latest victories followed Qatar swimmers strong opening-day performance, where the hosts collected three gold medals and two silvers.

OWAIDA BAG GOLD IN FOIL FENCING

At the Aspire Dome, Ali Owaida defeated compatriot Khaled Hussein in the men's foil final as Qatar secured both gold and silver in the event. The UAE's Faris Alblooshi claimed bronze.

In the men's 10-ball singles billiards, Qatar's Ali al-Obaidali settled for silver after losing 5-7 to Saudi Arabia's Mohammed Baabad in the final at the Qatar Billiards and Snooker Federation Hall. Al-Obaidali had booked his place in the final with an impressive 7-2 victory over UAE's Mahmoud Charif in the semi-finals. In the other last-four clash, Baabad edged Kuwait's Sulaiman Ghouloum 5-4 to set up the title showdown against the Qatari player.

TAEKWONDO TEAM IMPRESS

Taekwondo team added more medals to the hosts' tally, with two silver and three bronze at Aspire Dome. Ali Alarimi claiming silver in the men's +80kg category. He had reached the final after defeating Kuwait's Ali Hamid Ghuloum 2-0 in the semi-finals. However, the Qatari fighter fell to Saudi Arabia's Ali Alkhaibari by the same score in the gold medal contest. Oman's Mohammed al-Hajri and Kuwait's Ali Hamid Ghuloom shared bronze medals in the category. In the women's +67kg competition, Qatar's Noor Mohammed secured a bronze medal after earlier defeating Kuwait's Fatmah Aljeemaz 2-0 in the semi-finals. Saudi Arabia's Dunya Saber went on to win gold, while UAE's Salma Alketbi finished with silver.



Qatar's 4x100m freestyle relay team pose with their gold medals at the 4th GCC Games Doha at Hamad Aquatics Centre yesterday.



Ali Owaida defeated compatriot Khaled Hussein in the men's foil final as Qatar secured both gold and silver in the event.



In the 10-ball singles billiards, Qatar's Ali al-Obaidali settled for silver after losing 5-7 to Saudi Arabia's Mohammed Baabad in the final.

Barwani defeated UAE's Maha Rabayya in the final to take gold.

BOWLING PAIR WIN SILVER

Qatar's bowling duo of Talal al-Marri and Bader al-Sada claimed the silver medal in the doubles event. The home pair finished second overall after collecting 2,481 points across six games. The gold medal went to the Saudi Arabian duo of Prince Mohammed bin Sultan al-Saud and Abdulmajid al-Aslani, who topped the standings with 2,652 points, while Kuwait's Mustafa al-Mousawi and Faisal Salim secured bronze with 2,467 points.

Meanwhile, Qatar's table tennis team won bronze in the team competition. The hosts finished third with four points, beating Oman 3-0 while suffering 3-1 defeats against both Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. Saudi Arabia claimed the gold medal with six points, while Bahrain took silver with five points. Oman finished fourth.

3X3 BASKETBALL

Golden run for Qatar men as women secure historic bronze



Qatar men's team sealed the gold medal with a commanding 20-11 victory over Bahrain in the final at the Al Gharafa Sports Hall.

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Qatar's national 3x3 basketball teams impressed at the 4th GCC Games Doha 2026, with the men's team winning gold and the women claiming a historic first-ever bronze medal in the tournament.

At Al Gharafa Hall, the men's team produced a dominant run to the title, sealing the gold medal with a commanding 20-11 victory over Bahrain in the final. The hosts impressed throughout the tournament attacking play.

Qatar opened their campaign with victories over the UAE (22-9), Bahrain (21-15), Kuwait (21-7) and Saudi Arabia (19-12) in the group stage before defeating Saudi Arabia again 21-11 in the semi-finals. Saudi Arabia later secured bronze after beating the UAE 13-9.

The triumph follows Qatar's recent success at the Asian Beach Games Sanya 2026, where the men's side also captured gold.

Qatar's women's team also celebrated a landmark achievement after defeating Kuwait 11-9 in the bronze medal match to secure their first podium finish in GCC Games history. The team had earlier registered group-stage wins against Oman (15-10),

Bahrain (21-15) and Kuwait (14-13), before losing 18-11 to Saudi Arabia in the semi-finals.

The medal ceremony was attended by Dr. Thani bin Abdulrahman al-Kuwari, Second Vice-President of the Qatar Olympic Committee, and Mohammed bin Saad al-Mughaseeb, President of the Qatar Basketball Federation (QBF) and Chairman of the Gulf Basketball Coordinating Committee. Al-Mughaseeb described the medals as a historic achievement for Qatari basketball, saying the results reflected the steady progress of the national programme.



The women's team beat Kuwait 11-9 in the bronze medal match.

CRICKET

England drop Crawley for first Test against NZ

Paceman Ollie Robinson is recalled after two-year international exile

AFP
London

England have dropped struggling opening batsman Zak Crawley from their squad for next month's first Test against New Zealand at Lord's as they look to rebuild following a woeful 4-1 Ashes loss.

Durham's Emilio Gay, one of three uncapped players in a 15-man squad including Hampshire fast bowler Sonny Baker and Somerset wicketkeeper-batsman James Rew, is set to replace Crawley as he is a specialist opener.

Meanwhile paceman Ollie Robinson, following a two-year exile from England duty, is back and leg-spinner Rehan Ahmed has also been recalled.

Crawley managed a mere 273 runs in 10 innings at 27.30 during England's dire 2025/26 tour of Australia and the 28-year-old has found runs hard to come by for Kent this season.

This is the first time since captain Ben Stokes and coach Brendon McCullum took charge of the Test team in 2022 that Crawley has been left out of a squad when available. England could field three debutants in their XI for the first of a three-Test series against New Zealand at Lord's starting on June 4.

England's new-ball spearhead? But just as intriguing is the prospect of a recall for Robinson after a long spell in the international wilderness.

The 32-year-old has a superb Test record, with 76 wickets at a miserly average of 22.92 in just 20 appearances.

Robinson, however, has not



England's Zak Crawley reacts after losing his wicket on Day 3 of the first Test against South Africa at the Lord's in London on August 19, 2022. England have dropped struggling Crawley from their squad for their first Test against New Zealand at Lord's. (AFP)



England's paceman Ollie Robinson is back in the squad following a two-year exile. (AFP)

played for England since February 2024, with doubts raised over the Sussex seamer's fitness and attitude. But with England in dire need of a new-ball spearhead following the various retirements

of James Anderson, Stuart Broad and Chris Woakes, he now has a chance to revive his Test career.

The in-form Gay, 26, is a county colleague of Stokes at Durham - whose departing director of

cricket Marcus North, the former Australia batsman, was named as England's new national selector on Wednesday.

Gay, batting at number three but with long experience as an opener behind him, has scored 522 runs, including three centuries, at a huge average of 92 for his county this season.

Rising star Rew, 22, looks set to be the reserve batsman and a back-up wicketkeeper to Jamie Smith.

Ahmed, who became England's youngest men's Test cricketer aged 18 in Pakistan in 2022, is one of two specialist slow bowlers in a 15-man squad alongside Shoaib Bashir, unused during the Ashes.

Occasional off-spinner Will Jacks, who featured in Australia, has been dropped along with Ollie Pope, who lost his place during the Ashes following a run of low scores. England managing director Rob Key said the squad was an "exciting blend" of proven international performers and strong county form.

"Emilio, James and Sonny have all earned their opportunities through consistent performances and have impressed us not only with their talent, but with the way they've gone about their cricket in high-pressure situations," added former England batsman Key.

"It's also great to welcome back players like Rehan, Matt and Ollie, who all bring different qualities and experience to the group."

SQUAD: Ben Stokes (capt), Rehan Ahmed, Gus Atkinson, Sonny Baker, Shoaib Bashir, Jacob Bethell, Harry Brook, Ben Duckett, Matthew Fisher, Emilio Gay, James Rew (wkt), Ollie Robinson, Joe Root, Jamie Smith (wkt), Josh Tongue

FOCUS

Australia's North savours 'tremendous honour' of England role

AFP
London

Former Australia batsman Marcus North said yesterday it was "a tremendous honour" to be appointed as England's national selector.

North, the outgoing director of cricket at English county Durham, now has a larger brief and potentially greater influence than Luke Wright, who stepped down from the role earlier this year.

The 46-year-old North, also an occasional off-spinner in his playing days, saw off competition for the post from former England internationals Steven Finn, Darren Gough and Nick Knight. His close links to the county game undoubtedly bolstered his case, with North in post at Durham - the club of England captain Ben Stokes - for eight years.

He now joins a panel that includes Stokes, white-ball skipper Harry Brook and managing director Rob Key as well as England performance chiefs.

"It is a tremendous honour to be entrusted with a role of such responsibility and I am excited to contribute to the continued development of the Eng-

land men's teams," said North. "Having spent the past several years working closely within the county game, I have seen first-hand the strength and depth of talent across the domestic system."

"I'm looking forward to working closely with the counties in identifying, supporting and selecting players who can thrive at international level."

North, now in line to help select a side to play his native Australia during next year's Ashes series in England, added: "The opportunity to help shape the future of England men's teams is one I'm incredibly passionate about."

North's appointment was announced on the same day England named their squad for next month's first Test against New Zealand at Lord's, with Key saying: "Marcus stood out through his knowledge of the domestic game, his experience across different environments and the relationships he has built throughout county cricket over a long period of time."

"Marcus also brings international pedigree from his time playing for Australia, and we believe his experience and understanding of the player pathway and high performance environment will be a real asset."



The England and Wales Cricket Board has announced that former Australian player Marcus North is their new national selector.

INDIAN PREMIER LEAGUE

Kohli century powers Bengaluru past Kolkata, to top of the table

AFP
Raipur

Virat Kohli struck an unbeaten 105 to lead defending champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru to the top of the IPL table with a six-wicket win over Kolkata Knight Riders yesterday.

Kohli returned to form after back-to-back ducks as he steered his team home in a chase of 193 in Raipur with an excellent 60-ball innings. The 37-year-old scored his ninth IPL hundred, hitting 11 fours and three sixes.

Bengaluru notched their eighth victory in 12 matches this season to usurp Gujarat Titans at the top of the 10-team table on net run-rate, moving closer to securing a playoff spot. Three-time champions Kolkata suffered their sixth defeat in 11 matches as their slim chances of making the playoffs suffered a blow.

The top four will make the playoffs, with the final to be played in Ahmedabad on May 31.

Kohli got off the mark with a single in the first over of the chase, punching the air in mock celebration after his successive ducks.

He lost his opening partner Jacob Bethell for 15 but put on 92 runs with Devdutt Padikkal, who made 39, for the second wicket.

Kohli was dropped on 21 and made Kolkata pay, bringing up his fifty in 32 balls.

Bengaluru lost Padikkal, skipper Rituraj Gaikwad and then Tim David to a stunning one-handed diving catch at backward point by Manish Pandey. But Kohli kept calm to reach his first hundred of the season, soaking in the applause before wicketkeeper-batter Jitesh Sharma hitting the winning runs.

Earlier, Kolkata posted 192-4 after a 46-ball 71 by Angkrish Raghuvanshi. Raghuvanshi put on strong partnerships including with Cameron Green, who scored



Royal Challengers Bengaluru's Virat Kohli plays a shot during the Indian Premier League match against Kolkata Knight Riders at the Shaheed Veer Narayan Singh International Stadium in Raipur yesterday. (AFP)

32, and Rinku Singh, who finished with a flourish in his unbeaten, 29-ball 49. Pace bowlers Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Josh Hazlewood and Rasikh Salam took one wicket each.

"The celebration was not a big one because we know the importance of the points. It is a conscious effort to contribute more to

the team. The fact I did not score runs, it eats me up because I have been playing well," said Kohli.

BRIEF SCORES: Royal Challengers Bengaluru 194 for 4 (Kohli 105*, Padikkal 39, Tyagi 3-32) beat Kolkata Knight Riders 192 for 4 (Raghuvanshi 71, Rinku 49*, Green 32) by six wickets.

Molineux fit to lead Australia at T20 World Cup after injury return

All-rounder Sophie Molineux has been declared fit to lead Australia in the women's Twenty20 World Cup in England after struggling with a back injury, Cricket Australia said yesterday. The 28-year-old was forced to play as a specialist batter in the recent T20 series against West Indies, her first full tour as captain after being named the team's all-format skipper in January.

"I've had a good little block of training and everything, and now back bowling and feeling really good, so, (I'm) ready to go," Molineux told reporters. After defeat in the semi-finals by South Africa in 2024, Australia will eye a record-extending seventh World Cup title at the tournament beginning on June 12 in England and Wales. "I'm really excited. I think this World Cup has been on our minds for a long time now, and it feels like it's just around the corner, and

we've all got together this week and starting to build some really good momentum," Molineux added. "Leading a World Cup for the first time, there's going to be some nerves to it, but I think the overall emotion is just pure excitement." Fast bowler Darcie Brown has been left out of the squad but 19-year-old all-rounder Lucy Hamilton was included. Australia begin their Group A campaign against South Africa on June 13 in Manchester.

SQUAD: Sophie Molineux (captain), Nicola Carey, Ash Gardner, Kim Garth, Lucy Hamilton, Grace Harris, Alana King, Phoebe Litchfield, Tahlia McGrath, Beth Mooney, Ellyse Perry, Megan Schutt, Annabel Sutherland, Georgia Voll, Georgia Wareham.
Travelling reserve: Tahlia Wilson.

ATHLETICS

History-maker Sawe to compete at Berlin Marathon in September

AFP
Berlin

Sebastian Sawe, who became the first person run a marathon in under two hours, will compete at the Berlin Marathon in September, race organisers announced yesterday.

The 31-year-old Kenyan smashed the previous world record when he ran the London Marathon in 1hr 59min 30sec in April wearing a new model of super shoes. Now he will doubtless set his eyes on further lowering his historic time on September 27 at the Berlin Marathon, which is known for producing world records due to its flat course with relatively few corners.

Sawe won the last edition of the Berlin Marathon with a time of 2:02:16 despite heat and humidity in the German capital.

"I am very happy to return to (the Berlin Marathon) this year and to defend my title," Sawe, who won the race last year, said in a statement released by organisers.

"Many people may be won-



dering what my goals are this time round.

"After coming off my win in London and sub-2 performance, I can only say that, like always, I plan to prepare myself to the best

of my ability and to come to Berlin to honor this great event and organization which have invited me, and to run as well and fast as possible. Then on the day we will see what will happen."

SPOTLIGHT

Players to strike over Grand Slam pay if 'necessary'

AFP
Paris, France

Former Australian Open champion **Madison Keys** told AFP that "many players" are united on the question of Grand Slam prize money and that they will boycott a major tournament if their voices are not heard.

Last year almost all the leading players signed two letters to the four Grand Slam bosses demanding an increase in prize money, payments into a player welfare fund to improve retirement and maternity benefits, as well as involvement in decisions that affected them.

The letters set a target of a 22-percent share in tournament revenue, which would bring the majors in line with the nine combined 1000-level events run by the ATP

men's tour and the women's WTA tour. However, some players feel their demands are not being taken into serious consideration.

"I think it's incredibly important that the players have more of a voice when it comes to the big decisions that are being made," world number 19 Keys told AFP in Paris, where she is warming up for Roland Garros by playing in the WTA 125 Trophee Clarins event.

"And I think that it has been many, many years where players have tried to come to the table and have the discussion and it hasn't really gotten anywhere."

The American added that seeing "so many players... unified" on the matter was "very inspiring".

This strength of feeling has led to talk of a potential boycott of a Grand Slam tournament. "We have kind of come together

and agreed that if that's what's necessary, then we'll do it," Keys said.

"Hopefully it would never get to that point, but I think it's great to see how many, especially so many of the younger players are so willing to stand up for all players."

'Many are willing'

The 31-year-old is the latest top player to address the matter, after men's world number one Jannik Sinner last week called for Grand Slam tournaments to show tennis players "respect".

Two days prior to Sinner's comments, women's top-ranked player Aryna Sabalenka said that she was ready to boycott the Grand Slams in order for the players to force organisers' hands.

Those comments came after players said in a statement that last month's announcement by the French Open of a 9.5-percent

prize money rise was not good enough.

It said that a 14-percent increase in revenue last year only led to the total prize purse going up by 5.4 percent, reducing the players' share to 14.3 percent.

Former world number five Keys said if there was a movement to boycott upcoming majors this year, such as Roland Garros, which starts on May 24, or Wimbledon, then she would heed the call.

"I think it's one of those things where it's just something that you talk about until it actually happens," she said. "So I'm as prepared (to boycott) as I need to be," she added.

"It's something that it seems as though many players are willing to do. So again, hopefully it doesn't actually get to that point, but to see so many people that are willing to get to that point for all players, I think is inspiring."



TENNIS

Swiatek cruises past Pegula, to meet Svitolina

The three-time Rome champion crushes Pegula in just one hour

AFP
Rome

Iga Swiatek gave another indication that she might be back to her brilliant best after destroying Jessica Pegula 6-1, 6-2 at the Foro Italico yesterday and breezing into the Italian Open semi-finals.

A three-time champion in Rome, Swiatek took little more than an hour to take care of fifth seed Pegula on centre court, without facing a single break point.

It was a show of force on her preferred surface not seen since she last won the French Open two years ago, and gave Swiatek her first semi-final appearance of the season.

"I've been playing a bit differently, I would say. More similar to how I played couple years ago, more like a clay court player," Swiatek told reporters after her commanding performance.

"I guess all the things that we practiced really clicked during last few matches."

Swiatek has set up a clash with Elina Svitolina who yesterday beat either second seed Elena Rybakina 2-6, 6-4, 6-4.

Svitolina faced 20 break points against Rybakina, saving 16 of them to guide her to an upset win over the World No. 2 yesterday night and send her through to the Rome semi-finals for the first time in eight years.



Poland's Iga Swiatek in action during her quarter-final match against Jessica Pegula of the US at the Italian Open in Rome yesterday. (Reuters)

A potential decider with reigning Roland Garros champion Coco Gauff awaits for the winner of that last-four match-up in Saturday's final.

Ruud in last four

In the men's tournament Casper Ruud reached his first Masters 1000 semi-final since winning in Madrid last year after beating Karen Khachanov 6-1, 1-6, 6-2

in a match interrupted by a long rain delay. Norwegian Ruud was one game down in the second set when a downpour fell on Rome, forcing the match to be paused for over two hours, and when play resumed Khachanov quickly levelled the match.

But Ruud claimed his tour-leading 139th win on clay since the start of the 2020 season and will face one of Rafael Nadal, who

was knocked out in the Madrid last eight by Jannik Sinner, or Luciano Darderi.

"A little bit of a, you know, down period in the second (set) when we came back after the rain," said Ruud on court.

"But very proud of the first and the third sets... the quality that I played in the first and third sets is probably some of the best I felt on court recently."

GOLF

McIlroy back on course despite blister on toe



Rory McIlroy of Northern Ireland during a practice round prior to the PGA Championship at Aronimink Golf Club in Newtown, Pennsylvania. (AFP)

AFP
Newtown Square, United States

Rory McIlroy was back on course at Aronimink yesterday, a day after a blister on his toe caused him to cut short a practice round for the PGA Championship.

The world number two from Northern Ireland, among the favorites this week after winning his second consecutive Masters last month, had raised concerns yesterday.

McIlroy limped through three holes and took off his right sock and shoe to treat the issue before halting his round and taking a cart back to the clubhouse.

After his final round on Sunday at a PGA Tour event in Quail Hollow, McIlroy said a blister under his smallest right toenail had been annoying since Friday but would not be an issue for the PGA Championship.

McIlroy told the *Golf Channel* he had removed the right toenail on Monday to better treat the blister.

While the issue raised concerns, McIlroy was back at Aronimink yesterday morning, first for a session at the practice area.

He then joined Ireland's Pdraig Harrington and Shane Lowry on the 10th tee for a practice round, showing no sign of foot pain.

McIlroy tried on several pairs of shoes at the clubhouse on Tuesday to try and ease the discomfort.

He will face long walks across the 7,394-yard, par-70 layout over the next four days as he tries to capture his seventh career major title.

McIlroy is set for an 8:40 a.m. (1240 GMT) start in today's opening round alongside Spain's Jon Rahm and American Jordan Spieth.

Americans have won the past 10 PGA Championships and taken 10 of the past 12 majors, only McIlroy's two Masters titles breaking that run.

No player has won the Masters and PGA Championship in the same year since Jack Nicklaus in 1975.

Top-ranked defending champion Scottie Scheffler and McIlroy have combined to win four of the past five majors.

Scheffler has finished in the top 10 in each of his past six majors - the longest run since Fijian Vijay Singh's seven in a row ended in 2006.

Rahm, on pace for a third consecutive LIV Golf season crown, hopes to become the first Spaniard to win the PGA Championship and give his homeland titles in all four majors - a Spanish Grand Slam.

"It would be wonderful to close that fourth leg of the Grand Slam," Rahm said.

"Even though every major is extremely special, to tie it all together with the greats of the past of Spain would be quite unique," Rahm added.

Italian Musetti withdraws from French Open due to thigh injury

PARIS: Italian **Lorenzo Musetti** has withdrawn from the French Open with a thigh injury, the world number 10 said yesterday, describing the decision as extremely difficult. Last year's Roland Garros semi-finalist struggled physically during his round-of-16 defeat by Norway's Casper Ruud at the Italian Open in Rome on Tuesday. "After yesterday's match, I underwent medical examinations which revealed a rectus femoris injury, requiring several weeks of

rest and recovery," Musetti wrote on *Instagram*. Unfortunately, this means I won't be able to compete in Hamburg and Roland Garros - news that is incredibly hard to take. A huge thank you to the Rome crowd for your incredible support. That's exactly why, despite not being 100%, I chose to step on court and give everything I had in my home tournament. I'll keep you updated." The 24-year-old, who reached a career-high ranking of world number five in January, had been



expected to mount a strong challenge at Roland Garros, where the main draw begins on May 24. Musetti has shown steady progress at the Grand Slams, reaching the Australian Open quarter-finals this year, the Wimbledon semi-finals in 2024 and the US Open quarter-finals in 2025. His withdrawal added to a growing list of high-profile injury absentees at Roland Garros. Carlos Alcaraz pulled out with a wrist issue along with Dane Holger Rune and Briton Jack Draper.

CYCLING

Portugal's Eulalio takes over Giro lead, but Arrieta snatches stage five win

Reuters
Potenza, Italy

Portugal's Afonso Eulalio grabbed the overall lead in the Giro d'Italia despite having victory snatched away by Spaniard Igor Arrieta in the final meters of a rain-drenched and chaotic stage five yesterday.

The Bahrain Victorious rider joined solo leader Arrieta (UAE Team Emirates-XRG) at the front near the summit of the Montagna Grande di Viggiano climb and when Arrieta took a wrong turn on the entry to Potenza he looked

certain to take the win. But Arrieta, banging his handlebars in anger, had other ideas and put down the power to reel in Eulalio along the finishing straight and win his first Grand Tour stage.

"I was completely empty after the hard stage but so was Eulalio," Arrieta said. "I kept pushing and when I got his wheel I knew he couldn't go faster than me and thought I could win the stage."

Eulalio had looked in control but slid to the tarmac with around 7 of the 203-km remaining, allowing Arrieta to catch him.

He then appeared to have been gifted the stage when Arrieta went

the wrong side of a junction and had to turn around.

But Eulalio had nothing left in the legs on the final uphill drag and had to settle for second place, although taking the race lead was some consolation.

Arrieta had also crashed 13.5 km from the end of a cold and wet day that tested the resilience of the peloton.

Italian Giulio Ciccone, who had begun the 203-km stage in the pink jersey, finished seven minutes back in the main group and slipped down to sixth overall.

Eulalio now leads the GC standings by two minutes 51 seconds

from Arrieta. Christian Scaroni is in third place, 3:34 back.

Arrieta's victory was a welcome boost for his team who lost GC contender Adam Yates and Australian Jay Vine and Spaniard Marc Soler, following a huge pile-up during the second stage in Bulgaria.

"I'm really, really happy to achieve this victory, it means a lot for me, because of the crash (on stage two) and all the team mates who went home," Arrieta said yesterday.

Today's sixth stage is a 142-km ride from Paestum to Napoli passing near Mount Vesuvius.



Afonso Eulalio celebrates wearing the maglia rosa jersey on the podium after stage 5 - from Praia a Mare to Potenza - Italy yesterday. (Reuters)

LIGUE 1

PSG see off Lens to be crowned champions again

Kvaratskhelia and substitute Mbaye score for the winners



Paris Saint-Germain's Ibrahim Mbaye (left) is congratulated by teammates after scoring a goal during the Ligue 1 match against Lens at the Stade Bollaert-Delelis stadium in Lens yesterday. (AFP)

AFP

Lens, France

Paris Saint-Germain secured their fifth straight French Ligue 1 title yesterday as Khvicha Kvaratskhelia's strike set up a decisive 2-0 win away to nearest rivals Lens.

The Georgian netted his 19th goal of the season just before the half-hour mark and substitute Ibrahim Mbaye added a late second as PSG took an unassailable nine-point lead at the top with one match of the season remaining.

Luis Enrique's team had all but clinched another league triumph last weekend when they beat Brest 1-0 to go six points clear of Lens with two games left while also

boasting a far superior goal difference.

That meant even a Lens victory here could not realistically have prevented the Parisians from extending their domestic dominance.

PSG have now won a record 14 French titles overall with 12 of them coming in the last 14 years, a period in which they have been transformed under Qatari ownership. The league title adds to their trophy haul for the season, in which they had already won the UEFA Super Cup, FIFA Intercontinental Cup and French Champions Trophy.

There might yet be more to come, as the defending European champions face Arsenal in the Champions League final in Bu-

dapest on May 30 - they will become just the second team in the modern era to win back-to-back European Cups if they defeat the Gunners.

Lens, meanwhile, are now guaranteed to finish second, securing a spot in the league phase of next season's Champions League as they prepare to return to that competition for the first time since 2023/24.

The northern side will also face Nice in the French Cup final on Friday, May 22.

This game could have taken on far greater significance had it been played on its scheduled date in April. But it was postponed to allow PSG to rest in between the two legs of their Champions League quarter-final against Liverpool.

That ultimately took the sting out of the occasion, and the visitors came into the contest without key players including Achraf Hakimi, Nuno Mendes, captain Marquinhos, Willian Pacheco, Vitinha, Fabian Ruiz and Warren Zaire-Emery in their starting line-up.

Despite the changes, PSG went ahead at the Stade Bollaert-Delelis when Ousmane Dembele intercepted a Malang Sarr clearance and this week's winner of the Ligue 1 player of the year prize released Kvaratskhelia to control and score.

Abdallah Sima hit the post for Lens on 74 minutes and Florian Thauvin had a goal disallowed for offside late on, before Senegal international Mbaye made it 2-0 in stoppage time.

PREMIER LEAGUE

City see off Palace to keep pressure on leaders Arsenal

AFP

Manchester

Manchester City's second string eased past Crystal Palace 3-0 yesterday to climb just two points behind Premier League leaders Arsenal with two games remaining of a captivating title race.

Pep Guardiola made six changes from the side that beat Brentford 3-0 at the weekend, with Erling Haaland and Jeremy Doku among those on the bench, while Palace boss Oliver Glasner also made tweaks. First-half goals from Antoine Semenyo and Omar Marmoush put City in control at a damp Etihad and a late strike from Savinho added gloss to the scoreline.

The tide appeared to have turned in City's favour in the title race over recent weeks but last week's costly 3-3 draw at Everton put Arsenal firmly back in the box seat. The City players experienced the agony of seeing a stoppage-time equaliser for West Ham against Arsenal ruled out following a VAR check on Sunday as the Gunners battled to a 1-0 win.

Guardiola's men dominated the ball in the early minutes on Wednesday but Palace, with Ismaila Sarr and Adam Wharton on the bench, posed a threat on the break. City opened the scoring in style in the 32nd minute after Foden produced an exquisite back pass to set up Semenyo, who finished coolly past Dean Henderson into the far corner of the goal.

They doubled their lead eight minutes later, with Foden again

the provider, touching the ball to Marmoush, who celebrated his third Premier League goal of the season.

John Stones, departing at the end of the season, came on as a substitute towards the end of a forgettable second period to a rousing reception from the City fans. Minutes later Rayan Cherki ran with the ball from his own half before setting up Savinho, who swept the ball past Henderson.

The three-goal win takes City to 77 points, two behind Arsenal. City now have a superior goal difference of plus one and have scored seven more goals.

City take on Chelsea in the FA Cup final at Wembley on Saturday, gunning for a domestic cup double after lifting the League Cup earlier this season. Before kick-off yesterday, Guardiola explained his multiple changes, saying: "When the schedule is so tight, everybody is fit, everybody needs to help."

Despite the narrow gap, Mikel Arteta's Arsenal remain overwhelming favourites to win their first Premier League title since 2004. City next face a tricky match at Bournemouth, who are chasing Champions League qualification, and finish their campaign against Aston Villa.

Arsenal host relegated Burnley next week before travelling to Palace for the final day of the season. Palace, who beat City in last season's FA Cup final, are 15th in the table.

But their focus now is on the UEFA Conference League final against Rayo Vallecano in Leipzig on May 27 - Glasner's final match in charge of the south London club.



Manchester City's Antoine Semenyo (second from left) celebrates scoring the opening goal with teammates during the Premier League match against Crystal Palace in Manchester yesterday. (AFP)

LA LIGA

'Mbappe can show commitment to Real'

AFP

Madrid

Real Madrid coach Alvaro Arbeloa called on French striker Kylian Mbappe yesterday to show "his commitment" to the team in the last three matches of the season.

Mbappe has faced criticism from the club's own fans in recent weeks, in part for going on holiday to Sardinia during his recovery from a thigh injury.

The forward missed Madrid's Clasico defeat by Barcelona on Sunday which confirmed the Catalan giants as La Liga champions for a second season running and ensured Los Blancos finish the season empty-handed.

"If he's there and can complete the training session and is available, then he'll definitely get some minutes... and the chance in these three games to keep showing the commitment he has to the club," Arbeloa told reporters.

The Spanish coach said he hopes top scorer Mbappe can play and keep "scoring goals, showing, as I've said, the commitment he has to Real Madrid and that, as a coach but above all

as a Madridista, is what I'd like to see".

Arbeloa said he believes France captain Mbappe has given 100 percent to the team, ahead of today's La Liga match against relegated Real Oviedo.

Sevilla make stunning Villarreal comeback

Sevilla produced a sensational comeback from two goals down to beat Villarreal 3-2 yesterday and climb towards safety in La Liga.

The Andalusian side have been struggling towards the bottom in recent months but secured their third consecutive victory to rise up to 10th provisionally, four points clear of the drop zone.

Gerard Moreno and Georges Mikautadze fired hosts Villarreal, third, into a two-goal lead inside 20 minutes.

However Oso and Kike Salas pulled Sevilla level before the break and Akor Adams struck in the 72nd minute to seal Sevilla's win. Espanyol defeated Athletic Bilbao 2-0 at home to win their first match in 2026, ending an 18-game run without a victory.

Pere Milla and Kike Garcia's second-half goals helped the Catalan side, 14th, move three points clear of the bottom three.

CARRICK ON BRINK OF PERMANENT MAN UTD JOB: REPORTS

Michael Carrick is expected to be recommended as Manchester United's permanent manager by club chiefs after overseeing a dramatic improvement in the club's fortunes, it was widely reported yesterday.

The 44-year-old took over for the rest of the campaign in January following an acrimonious end to

Ruben Amorim's rocky Red Devils reign.

United clinched Champions League qualification with three matches to spare after being out of the competition for two seasons. Carrick, appointed on January 13, has won 10 of his 15 matches in charge in all competitions, losing just twice, to guide

United from seventh to third in the Premier League table.

The Athletic reported that chief executive Omar Berrada and director of football Jason Wilcox would recommend to co-owner Jim Ratcliffe that Carrick be offered the role at an executive meeting this week.

United have explored other op-

tions but Carrick has long been considered the frontrunner for a job that he has been publicly backed for by a number of players. Some bookmakers have suspended betting on his appointment. Carrick is set to face the media on Friday ahead of Sunday's final home game of the season against Nottingham Forest.

Quereshi shines at round two 2026 Qatar Karting Championship



Danish Quereshi claimed victory in the Last Chance Race (Group 1) of Round 2 of the 2026 Qatar Karting Championship at the 1.124km Lusail Track. Quereshi completed the 12-lap race in a total time of 14:02.802 secs to finish narrowly ahead of Gabriel al-Badawi, who crossed the line just 0.290 secs behind. Liam Landy secured third place, finishing 2.581 seconds off the lead, while Maxence Boudard took fourth after ending 3.323 seconds adrift of the winner. Abdulaziz al-Mohannadi completed the top five, clocking a total time of 14:09.274, 6.472 seconds behind Quereshi.