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Di Giannantonio wins Catalan GP, Alex Marquez hurt in horror crash

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FIFA WORLD CUP 2026

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GCC GAMES - DOHA 2026

Qatar excels in athletics with 34-medal finish

Qatar now has an overall tally of 109 medals including 39 gold, 38 silver and 32 bronze



Team Qatar athlete Mubarak Saeed (centre) celebrates winning the gold in the GCC Games men's 1500m race at Suhaim Bin Hamad Stadium. Qatar's Zakaria al-Alami secured silver and Kuwait's Badr al-Suwaid took bronze. Qatar Athletics Federation president Mohammed al-Fadala is also present.



Team Qatar's quartet of Shahad Mohammed, Sara Ali, Dana Salem and Awatif Sabah celebrate winning the silver in the women's 4x400m relay. Bahrain won gold. **PICTURES: Noushad Thekkayil**

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Team Qatar athletics concluded their participation at the 4th GCC Games Doha 2026 with an impressive medal haul that strengthened their lead in the overall standings, after raising their tally to 34 medals, including 12 gold, 13 silver, and 9 bronze medals, in an achievement that reflected the outstanding performances of Qatar's athletes.

Qatar now has an overall tally of 109 medals (39 gold, 38 silver, 32 bronze). In second place is Kingdom of Saudi Arabia with 61 medals (24 gold, 19 silver, 18 bronze) while Bahrain with 54 medals (22 gold, 20 silver, 12 bronze).

Team Qatar's success continued after adding nine medals on the final day of competition – including two gold, five silver, and two bronze medals – to secure top spot in GCC athletics. Bahrain finished second with 22 medals (11 gold, 8 silver, and 3 bronze), while Oman came third with 11 medals (7 gold, 2 silver, and 2 bronze).

The men's 1500m race witnessed a strong performance from Team Qatar, as Mubarak Saeed

won the gold medal after claiming victory in a highly competitive race, while Zakaria al-Alami secured silver and Kuwait's Badr al-Suwaid took bronze. The race confirmed the dominance of Qatari runners in middle-distance events and their ability to control the pace from start to finish.

In the men's 4x400m relay, Team Qatar continued their dominance in team events after winning gold through the quartet of Mohammed Abdulrahman, Mubarak Mousa, Samir Hassan, and Bassem Humaida.

In the women's competitions, Alaa Suleiman won silver in the high jump, while Salma Hamid secured bronze. Oman's Alia Al Mughairi claimed gold in a closely contested event. In the men's discus throw, Moaz Ibrahim won silver and Mohammed Mohammed secured bronze, while Kuwait's Issa Al Zankawi claimed gold following a strong performance.

In the women's 4x400m relay, Team Qatar's quartet of Shahad Mohammed, Sara Ali, Dana Salem, and Awatif Sabah secured silver after a strong contest with Bahrain, who won gold through Zainab Mohammed, Aisha Abdullah, Soufiane Abdulgani, and Oluwakemi Adekoya. Dana Salem also added



Qatar's Badr al-Sada, Jassim al-Marri and Talal al-Marri after winning the top three positions in the men's overall team bowling competition.

a bronze medal in the women's 200m race, which saw Bahrain dominate the top two positions through Raihana Qarouba and Aisha Abdullah. This final medal haul confirmed Qatar athletics' dominance at GCC level in both individual and team events, while also highlighting the emergence of new talents capable of strengthening Team Qatar's competitiveness across various categories.

Bronze for Qatar in bowling masters event
Team Qatar bowler Jassim al-Ma-



Qatar's bowling player Jassim al-Marikhi won the bronze medal. Kuwait's Faisal Saleem won the gold while compatriot Mustafa al-Mousawi secured silver.

riki won the bronze medal in the Masters category on the final day of the bowling competitions at the 4th GCC Games Doha 2026.

Kuwait's Faisal Saleem won the gold medal, while compatriot Mustafa Al Mousawi secured silver.

The medal ceremony was attended by Abdullah Sultan al-Qattan, President of the Qatar Bowling Federation, and Ahmed Shaheen al-Marikhi, Board Member of the federation.

With this result, Team Qatar bowling raised their overall tally to

to winning gold in the Masters category through our outstanding player Jassim al-Marikhi, who delivered excellent performances throughout the tournament, but he suffered a muscle strain in his hand during the decisive matches, which clearly affected his performance in the semi-finals, forcing him to settle for bronze."

He stressed that the bowling competitions were extremely competitive and reflected the significant development of the sport across the GCC countries.

"What makes us proud is that 90 percent of our players are youth athletes aged between 16 and 17 years old. Despite their young age, they managed to challenge experienced Gulf champions and reach the podium with merit," he added.

Al-Hajri noted that Team Qatar's tally of nine medals reflected the federation's hard work in developing a promising generation.

Meanwhile, Kuwait's Faisal Saleem said: "The competition today was never easy. All players delivered outstanding performances, but I managed to maintain my focus until the end and secure the gold medal, which makes me very happy, especially as it came at the conclusion of the tournament."

SPOTLIGHT

Aya, Mariam bring medals glory for Qatar in table tennis competition

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Team Qatar secured gold and silver in the women's singles competition through Aya Mohammed and Mariam Ali respectively, after Aya defeated Mariam 3-1 in the final.

Qatar also won silver in the men's doubles event through Mohammed Abdulwahab and Abdullah Abdulwahab after they lost 3-0 in the final to Saudi Arabia's Ali Al Khudrawi and Abdulaziz Boushalibi.

On Saturday, Team Qatar had already won gold and bronze in the mixed doubles event. Mohammed Abdulwahab and Aya Mohammed captured gold after defeating the UAE pair Ali Al Hawai and Noura Al Mazmi 3-0 in the final, while Abdullah Abdulwahab and Mariam Ali secured bronze after defeating Bahrain's Rashid Khalid Sanad and Rayan Emad 3-0 in the third-place playoff.

In the men's team competition, Team



Qatar Table Tennis Association president Hamad Ahmed al-Hammadi with players with medals after the mixed doubles competitions.

Qatar secured bronze to raise their overall tally in the tournament to six medals – including two gold, two silver, and two bronze medals.

The winners were crowned by Hamad Ahmed al-Hammadi, President of the Qatar Table Tennis Association (QTTA),

Prince Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Saud, President of the Saudi Table Tennis Federation, Ibrahim Al Aasam, Vice President of the UAE Table Tennis Federation, Ahmed Khalil al-Muhannadi, Secretary General of the Qatar Federation, and Jaber Saeed Afifa, Assistant Secretary General



Mohamed Abdulwahab and Abdullah Abdulwahab celebrate after winning the silver in the men's doubles.



Aya Muhammad celebrates after winning the women's singles table tennis competitions gold.

of the Qatar Federation. QTTA president al-Hammadi expressed his satisfaction with the technical and organisational success of the table tennis competitions, stressing that the tournament reflected Qatar's growing status as a host of major regional, continental, and international

sporting events. Al-Hammadi said: "We congratulate our players, who lived up to expectations and delivered performances worthy of Qatari sport. They proved their ability to compete strongly and reach the podium despite the participation of some of the best players in the GCC."

CRICKET

Bowlers, Joy put Bangladesh on top in Pakistan Test

'We have a lot of time. We will try to bat the full day tomorrow'

AFP
Sylhet, Bangladesh

Opener Mahmudul Hasan Joy struck a fluent half-century after the bowlers dominated to put Bangladesh firmly in command of the second Test against Pakistan yesterday.

Bangladesh, who lead the two-match series 1-0, closed day two on 110-3 in their second innings, leading by 156 runs in Sylhet.

Joy, who fell for a duck in the first innings, responded with 52 off 64 balls before falling to pace bowler Mohammad Abbas.

Tanzid Hasan fell cheaply for four off quick bowler Khurram Shahzad, who later took down Mominul Haque for 30 in the final over of the day, while captain Najmul Hossain Shanto remained unbeaten on 13.

Earlier, left-arm spinner Taijul Islam and speedster Nahid Rana took three wickets each to bowl Pakistan out for 232, giving Bangladesh a 46-run first innings lead.

Babar Azam's 68, which included 10 fours, was the only significant resistance from the visitors.

Pace spearhead Taskin Ahmed removed overnight openers Abdullah Fazal and Azan Awaiz early and spinner Mehidy Hasan Miraz dismissed skipper Shan Masood and Saud Shakeel before lunch.

Rana and Taijul shared the remaining six wickets in the afternoon session.

Pakistan's Azam acknowledged the damage done by his dismissal.

"The turning point is my wicket and Salman Ali Agha's wicket - after that we did not build any partnerships. These two dismissals changed the momentum," said Azam.

Rana, who has now dismissed Azam three times in three Test matches, said any opposition hostility at him would be at their own peril.

"I don't know if they will think twice about bowling bouncers at me but I can say this much - if



Bangladesh's Taijul Islam (left) celebrates with teammates after taking the wicket of Pakistan's Salman Agha during the second day of the second Test at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium in Sylhet yesterday. (AFP)



Pakistan's Babar Azam plays a shot during the second day of the Test in Sylhet yesterday. (AFP)

anyone bounces me, I will not let them off easily," the 23-year-old Rana said.

Rana was also bullish about Bangladesh's prospects heading into day three.

"There is no specific target like 200, 250 or 300. We have a lot of time - three days still remain. We

will try to bat the full day tomorrow," he said.

Bangladesh's dominant position was built on Litton Das's extraordinary rescue act on Saturday.

Walking in at 106-4 - a position that deteriorated to 116-6, Litton struck 16 fours and two sixes in

his 126 to steer Bangladesh to 278 all out.

BRIEF SCORES: Bangladesh 278 and 110 for 3 (Mahmudul 51, Mominul 30, Shahzad 2-19) **lead Pakistan 232** (Babar 68, Sajid 38, Rana 3-60, Taijul 3-67) **by 156 runs.**

CYCLING

Vingegaard doubles down to win stage nine of Giro d'Italia

AFP
Corno alle Scale, Italy

Jonas Vingegaard (Visma-lease a Bike) triumphed for the second time in three days to win stage nine of the Giro d'Italia yesterday, with the Dane going solo at the end of the climb to the finish, while Afonso Eulalio remains in the overall lead.

Vingegaard tracked race rival Felix Gall (Decathlon CMA CGM) when the Austrian attacked near the end of the 184 km from Cervia to Corno alle Scale, but the Dane powered away in the closing kilometre, with his Visma teammate Davide Piganzoli coming in third.

Eulalio (Bahrain Victorious) put in another brave ride to limit the damage and crossed the line fifth, 41 seconds behind the winner to maintain his grip on the pink jersey, with a lead of two minutes and 24 seconds over Vingegaard, with Gall a further 35 seconds behind.

Italian Giulio Ciccone's calculated ride failed to pay off, with the Lidl-Trek rider caught by Vingegaard and Gall in the final two kilometres after he looked set for the stage win.

The early part of the race saw several riders trying to get away,

and an eight-rider group eventually settled at the front of the race.

With 74 km to race, Ciccone made a break from the peloton, accompanied by Belgian Toon Aerts and fellow-Italian Diego Ulissi, and the trio quickly caught the leaders. On the Querciola climb, Ciccone upped the pace and the leading group began to splinter leaving five out in front, and the Italian and Colombian Einer Rubio went on their own at the start of the 10.8 km climb to the finish.

Ciccone deliberately lost time on Saturday, dropping out of the race for the overall win in search of stage success, and he shook Rubio off and went for broke, but once Vingegaard and Gall got going, the Italian's race was run. "Again, they don't want me up there from the start," Ciccone said. "I spent quite a lot to try. It was annoying the tempo in the bunch and I had nothing the lose so on the small kick I tried to jump because the breakaway was close. I was feeling quite good on the last climb, but it wasn't enough."

Vingegaard, who won stage seven at Blockhaus, proved strongest on the summit finish again, but once more, Gall has proven that he won't be dismissed easily.



Jonas Vingegaard, wearing the best climber's blue jersey, crosses the finish line to win the 9th stage of the Giro d'Italia near Doganaccia, central Italy, yesterday. (AFP)

IPL

Kohli, Venkatesh dazzle as RCB qualify for play-offs

AFP
Dharamsala, India

Virat Kohli and Venkatesh Iyer struck half-centuries to help defending champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru become the first team to qualify for the IPL play-offs with a 23-run win over Punjab Kings yesterday.

In-form Kohli struck 58 off 37 balls before Venkatesh hit an unbeaten 73 to steer the team to 222-4 after being invited to bat first in the Himalayan hill town of Dharamsala. The bowlers, led by Bhuvneshwar Kumar, then restricted Punjab to 199-8 despite a late batting charge by Marcus Stoinis, who hit 37, and Shashank Singh, who made 56. Bengaluru, who won their first IPL title in 18 attempts last year, consolidated top spot in the points table and secured their place in the play-offs.

Runners-up last year, Punjab, who started the season with six victories and one no-result, suffered their sixth successive defeat and are no longer in control of their fate. The top four teams at the end of the league stage will make the playoffs in the 10-team tournament.

Kohli, who blasted an unbeaten 105 in his team's previous win, kept up his form as he hit four fours and three sixes to lay the foundation for Bengaluru's total after losing his opening partner Jacob Bethell for 11. He then put on 78 with the left-handed Devdutt Padikkal, who made 45, to rebuild the innings and hit back.

Kohli raised his fourth fifty of the season and 67th in the IPL be-



Royal Challengers Bengaluru's Virat Kohli bumps fists with Venkatesh Iyer during their IPL match against Punjab Kings in Dharamsala. (Reuters)

fore he finally fell to leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal. Venkatesh kept up the pace to reach his fifty as he clobbered the bowlers and put on an attacking fourth-wicket stand with Tim David, who made 28.

In reply, Punjab lost openers Priyansh Arya, for a duck, and Prabhsimran Singh, for two - both falling to Kumar's seam bowling.

Punjab slipped further to 93-5 after skipper Shreyas Iyer (1), Cooper Connolly (37) and Suryansh Shedge (37) departed. Impact

substitute Stoinis and Shashank attempted to raise Punjab's hopes in their partnership of 67 but disciplined bowling ensured a ninth win in 13 matches for Bengaluru. Rasikh Salam took two wickets in the final over to return figures of 3-36.

BRIEF SCORES: RCB 222 for 4 (Venkatesh 73*, Kohli 58, Padikkal 45, Brar 2-35) **beat Punjab Kings 199 for 8** (Shashank 56, Connolly 37, Rasikh 3-36, Bhuvneshwar 2-38) **by 23 runs.**

FOCUS

Starc takes four to keep Delhi alive

AFP
New Delhi

Australia's Mitchell Starc returned figures of 4-40 as Delhi Capitals kept their playoff hopes alive in the IPL with a five-wicket win over Rajasthan Royals yesterday.

Left-arm quick Starc took three wickets in four balls, including skipper Riyan Parag for 51, to restrict Rajasthan to 193-8 at Delhi's home Arun Jaitley Stadium.

Fifteen-year-old Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, with his 21-ball 46, and wicketkeeper Dhruv Jurel, who top-scored with 53, contributed to Rajasthan's total.

Openers KL Rahul, who made 56, and Abishek Porel (51) then put on a stand of 105 to lay the foundation for the chase as Delhi won with four balls to spare for their sixth win in 13 matches.

Delhi wobbled in their chase after Jofra Archer and Brijesh Sharma took two wickets each to keep Rajasthan in the hunt before skipper Axar Patel, who made 34, and impact sub Ashutosh Sharma, who hit 18 including the winning six, steered the team home.

Rajasthan slipped from fifth to sixth as their playoff hopes took a hit with their sixth defeat in 12 matches.

"Coming from a break, skill-wise, energy-wise, execution-wise we weren't there and if we play like this, we shouldn't be in the top four," said Parag.

"We had the opportunity, we didn't take it. If we don't qualify, it's our fault, nobody else's."

Delhi jumped to seventh spot in the 10-team table with seven teams jostling for three remaining playoff berths.



Delhi Capitals' Mitchell Starc celebrates after taking the wicket of Rajasthan Royals' Dasun Shanaka during the IPL match in New Delhi. (AFP)

The top four teams after the league stage will qualify.

Earlier in the day, defending champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru became the first team to qualify for the playoffs with a 23-run win over Punjab Kings.

In Delhi, Lungi Ngidi struck early as he sent back Yashasvi Jaiswal for 12, but teenage wonder Sooryavanshi hit back with five fours and three sixes.

Sooryavanshi, a left-handed opener who has hit one ton and two half-centuries this season, put on 70 runs with Jurel before medium-pace bowler Madhav Tiwari denied the rising star his fifty.

Jurel and Parag kept up the pace but Starc rattled the Rajasthan middle-order with two in two balls, including Parag and Donovan Ferreira, and a third in the same over.

Jurel stood anchor before his departure in the 20th but Delhi's bowlers produced miserly spells to allow Rajasthan just 33 runs from the last six overs, in which time they took six wickets.

"We didn't bowl too badly in the powerplay but they batted well, but we brought things back later," said player-of-the-match Starc.

"And KL batted fantastically, and to finish at home with a win is always nice."

In reply, Porel and Rahul responded with a commanding century stand before they departed as Rajasthan hit back.

Rahul went back in the 15th over with Delhi on 133-3, needing 61 off 33 balls.

Archer took down Tristan Stubbs, for four, and Brijesh had another South African, David Miller, for nine to raise Rajasthan's hopes.

But Ashutosh kept calm and struck a four and two sixes in his five-ball knock to allow Delhi to win in their last home game.

BRIEF SCORES: Delhi Capitals 197 for 5 (Rahul 56, Porel 51, Archer 2-35) **beat Rajasthan Royals 193 for 8** (Jurel 53, Parag 51, Sooryavanshi 46, Starc 4-40) **by five wickets.**

TENNIS

Sinner wins Italian Open, extends Masters tournament streak

AFP
Rome

Jannik Sinner won the Italian Open after beating Casper Ruud 6-4, 6-4 to claim a record-extending sixth consecutive Masters 1000 tournament victory. World number one Sinner has now completed the 'Golden Masters' by winning all of the ATP's top-ranked events after becoming the first Italian champion at the Foro Italico since Adriano Panatta 50 years ago.

Only Novak Djokovic had previously won all nine Masters 1000 events before, but there was little doubt about Sinner triumphing over the last 10 days. Sinner heads into Roland Garros, which starts next weekend, on a 29-match winning streak after beating Ruud for a fifth time in as many meetings.

"There was a lot of tension you know, on both sides and (it) was not perfect, perfect

tennis from both of us," said Sinner. "But I'm really, really happy, it's been an incredible last two-and-a-half months."

And his run of match wins is even longer - 34 in Masters 1000 tournaments - another record he has established in a season in which he has dominated the men's tour. Sinner can complete his collection of Grand Slams at Roland Garros and, with his great rival Carlos Alcaraz out of action, few would bet against him securing a first title on Paris clay.

Ruud has won more matches and tournaments on clay than anyone else on the men's tour since the start of 2020 - last winning a Masters 1000 event at Madrid last year - but he couldn't beat Sinner for the first time. Norwegian Ruud had never won a set against Sinner in any of their previous four meetings, but immediately improved on the fearful hammering he received here from the Italian last year by winning the first two games.

But Sinner broke straight back and took

the lead in the match after an opening set in which the world number 25 held his own against a player he'd previously said "cannot lose".

Sinner then broke Ruud again at the start of the second set and from there it was just a matter of time before he won the championship, even though Ruud performed with credit in front of a packed centre court crowd. "I know that in football it's a different story," joked Ruud, whose country will play in a World Cup for the first time since 1998.

Norway reached this summer's World Cup in the United States, Canada and Mexico at the expense of Italy, who in March failed for a third consecutive time to qualify for the global showpiece.

However, it was a doubly-good day for Italian tennis as Simone Bolelli and Andrea Vavassori also won the men's doubles title, beating second seeds Marcel Granollers and Horacio Zeballos 7-6 (10/8), 6-7 (3/7), 10-3.



Jannik Sinner heads into Roland Garros, which starts next weekend, on a 29-match winning streak after beating Casper Ruud for a fifth time in as many meetings. (AFP)

CATALUNYA MOTOGP

Di Giannantonio wins, Alex Marquez hurt in horror crash

Marquez suffers fractures to a cervical vertebra and his right clavicle

AFP
Barcelona

Ducati rider Fabio Di Giannantonio triumphed in a crash-hit Catalunya MotoGP, during which Alex Marquez was taken to hospital injured after being flipped off his bike.

The race was red-flagged twice, the first time after Pedro Acosta's bike cut out and Marquez made contact with him, with his Ducati-Gresini destroyed in a horrific crash. On the first corner after the restart, French rider Johann Zarco crashed and the race was red-flagged again, and restarted with 12 laps remaining.

Marquez's team Gresini later confirmed he had suffered fractures to a cervical vertebra and his right clavicle. "He will undergo surgery today by the team at Hospital General de Catalunya," said Gresini in a statement on social media.

Acosta started on pole and was out in front until Di Giannantonio snatched the lead with two laps remaining. Joan Mir and Fermin Aldeguer also edged ahead of Acosta, who then came to grief shortly before the end after being wiped out by Ai Ogura, who was hit with a time penalty and dropped to ninth.

Mir, who came in second, was later demoted to 13th with a 16-second penalty for low tyre pressure - one of five riders to be penalised long after the race finished. As a result, Fermin Aldeguer moved from third to second, and Francesco Bagnaia climbed onto the podium. Overall leader Marco Bezzecchi struggled but was able to extend his advantage after his closest contender Jorge Martin suffered his fifth crash of the weekend.

Raul Fernandez took out Martin after trying an aggressive move down the inside while they were challenging for the lead, leaving Bezzecchi, who finished fourth after the results were adjusted for penalties, 15 points ahead.

Di Giannantonio hurt his hand in the first terrifying crash when the Italian was hit by a wheel from Marquez's ruined bike, but the VR46 man recovered to claim his first MotoGP win in three years.

"I'm so happy. But first of all I was really worried about all the riders who crashed," said Di Giannantonio. "Today has not been an easy day for everybody. I really hope that Alex (Mar-



Gresini Racing's Alex Marquez was taken to hospital injured after being flipped off his bike in a horrific crash during the Catalunya Grand Prix in Montmelo, near Barcelona, yesterday. (AFP)



VR46 Racing Team's Fabio Di Giannantonio celebrates after winning the Catalunya MotoGP. (AFP)

quez) is fine. We've been really lucky. We know that our sport is amazing. We try to give an amazing show, we are humans, we are in danger."

Di Giannantonio's victory moved him up to third overall on 116 points, followed by Acosta on 92. Marquez, who triumphed at last year's Catalan Grand Prix and also won the sprint on Saturday, was pushing leader Acosta when the accident happened.

Acosta lost speed because of a technical issue and Marquez hit his bike, veering off the track into a terrible crash before being taken to hospital, conscious. Last weekend, Alex Marquez's older brother Marc, the reigning champion, was injured after another violent crash at Le Mans.

The second major incident was a collision involving Zarco, Luca Marini and Bagnaia. Zarco was taken by ambulance to hospital for checks after he was caught up with Bagnaia's bike. LCR MotoGP team boss Lucio Cecchinello said Zarco had pain in "the femur area", his left leg and knee.

RESULTS

1. Fabio Di Giannantonio (ITA) Ducati-VR46 20 minutes 06.243sec.
2. Joan Mir (ESP) Honda at 1.250sec.
3. Fermin Aldeguer (ESP) Ducati-Gresini 1.466.
4. Francesco Bagnaia (ITA) Ducati 4.320.
5. Marco Bezzecchi (ITA) Aprilia 4.679.
6. Fabio Quartararo (FRA) Yamaha 4.876.
7. Luca Marini (ITA) Honda 4.971.
8. Brad Binder (RSA) KTM 5.137.
9. Ai Ogura (JPN) Aprilia-Trackhouse 5.377.
10. Diogo Moreira (BRA) Honda 6.839.
11. Alex Rins (ESP) Yamaha 6.916.
12. Franco Morbidelli (ITA) Ducati-VR46

13. Maverick Vinales (ESP) GAS-GAS-KTM 10.147.
14. Jack Miller (AUS) Yamaha-Pramac 10.452.
15. Toprak Razgatlioglu (TUR) Yamaha-Pramac 11.808.
16. Raul Fernandez (ESP) Aprilia-Trackhouse 15.066.
17. Augusto Fernandez (ESP) Yamaha 16.245
- Not classified: Jorge Martin (ESP) Aprilia, Pedro Acosta (ESP) KTM
- Did not finish: Alex Marquez (ESP) Ducati-Gresini, Johann Zarco (FRA) Honda, Enea Bastianini (ITA) KTM

OVERALL DRIVERS' STANDINGS

1. Marco Bezzecchi (ITA) 140 pts.
2. Jorge Martin (ESP) 127.
3. Fabio Di Giannantonio (ITA) 116.
4. Pedro Acosta (ESP) 92.
5. Ai Ogura (JPN) 76.
6. Raul Fernandez (ESP) 68.
7. Alex Marquez (ESP) 67.
8. Francesco Bagnaia (ITA) 60.
9. Marc Marquez (ESP) 57.
10. Fermin Aldeguer (ESP) 43.
11. Luca Marini (ITA) 42.
12. Enea Bastianini (ITA) 39.
13. Fabio Quartararo (FRA) 36.
14. Brad Binder (RSA) 36.
15. Johann Zarco (FRA) 34.
16. Franco Morbidelli (ITA) 34.
17. Joan Mir (ESP) 28.
18. Diogo Moreira (BRA) 16.
19. Alex Rins (ESP) 12.
20. Toprak Razgatlioglu (TUR) 5.
21. Maverick Vinales (ESP) 3.
22. Jack Miller (AUS) 3

Gulf Cup draw ceremony in Jeddah on May 19

Doha: Arabian Gulf Cup Football Federation has announced that the draw ceremony for the 27th edition of the Arabian Gulf Cup will take place on May 19, 2026, ahead of the tournament scheduled to be hosted by Saudi Arabia from September 23 to October 6.

The event will be attended by HE Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa bin Ahmed Al-Thani, President of the Arabian Gulf Cup Football Federation, Yasser al-Mishal, President of the Saudi Arabian Football Federation. The tournament will be staged at King Abdullah Sports City Stadium and Prince Abdullah Al Faisal Stadium. Gulf Cup 27 will mark the fifth edition of the competition organised under the umbrella of the Arabian Gulf Cup Football Federation. Eight teams will compete in the tournament.

According to tournament regulations, teams will be placed into four pots based on the latest FIFA rankings released on April 1. The first pot includes Qatar (55th globally) and defending champions Iraq (57th), while the second pot features Saudi Arabia (61st) and the UAE (68th). Oman (79th) and Bahrain (91st) occupy the third pot, with Kuwait (134th) and Yemen (149th) in the fourth pot.

Under the draw mechanism, one team from each pot will be placed into each group, ensuring that teams from the same ranking level do not face each other in the group stage.

Host nation Saudi Arabia will head Group A and play the tournament's opening match, while the UAE will lead Group B. The competition format divides the teams into two groups of four, with each side playing the others once in a round-robin system. The top two teams from each group will qualify for the semi-finals. The winner of Group A will face the runner-up of Group B, while the winner of Group B will meet the runner-up of Group A. The two semi-final winners will advance to the final to compete for the championship title.

Denmark's Antonsen wins badminton Thailand Open title

Bangkok: Denmark's Anders Antonsen won the badminton men's singles final of the Thailand Open, getting his revenge against hometown Kunlavut Vitidsarn who defeated the Dane last year.

World-ranked No. 3 Antonsen won 9-21, 24-22, 21-18 in 1 hour 37 minutes in Bangkok on Sunday. The 29-year-old Dane entered the finals after a walkover win in the semi-finals when world No. 1 Shi Yuqi of China withdrew.

Shi exited the Malaysia Open early in January due to a back injury. Antonsen admitted he got a "little bit lucky" with Shi pulling out, calling the Chinese athlete "a very difficult opponent".

The noise of the crowd and trying to find his grip powder in his bag during the match also hurt his focus. "My mind was everywhere else but on the match. But suddenly I was leading 5-0 and I was like, 'oh wow, OK, I have a chance now,'" he said.

World No. 2 Kunlavut, 25, won last year's Thailand Open, beating Antonsen in the final.

In the women's singles final, world-ranked No. 3 Akane Yamaguchi of Japan defeated China's Chen Yufei, who is ranked fourth. Yamaguchi won 21-14, 21-18 in 39 minutes. "This year I did not make another final so this result is very important for me," she said after her victory. "As the game progressed, I felt that Chen Yufei was attacking more so rather than being nervous, I tried to stay calm and play my own game," Yamaguchi said, adding she was "happy to play a good, attacking game".

In the women's doubles final, China's Bao Lijing and Cao Zihan came out on top over Rin Iwanaga and Kie Nakanishi of Japan.

Indonesians Leo Rolly Carnando and Daniel Marthin triumphed in the men's doubles over Indians Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty after back-and-forth match points.

SPOTLIGHT

Verstappen's Nuerburgring charge ends with a bang and a rattle



AFP
Paris

Max Verstappen's luckless pursuit of an endurance racing victory again ended in disappointment as his Mercedes broke down when leading the 24 Hours of Nuerburgring.

The 28-year-old Dutchman, who is having another difficult season with his Red Bull Formula One team and has threatened to leave the discipline, is competing in a growing number of endurance races in GT3 cars, a category derived from production cars.

He was eagerly awaited by tens of thousands of fans at the legendary German cir-

cuit. The car he shared with Spaniard Daniel Juncadella, Frenchman Jules Gounon and Austrian Lucas Auer was ahead with three hours to go when it pulled into the pits due to noises and vibrations.

Following a lengthy check, mechanics replaced a section of the driveshaft. It returned to the track in 38th place handing victory to a rival Mercedes driven by Maro Engel, Maxime Martin, Fabian Schiller and Luca Stolz.

It was the first time in ten years that the German marque had won the 24 Hours of the Nuerburgring.

In March, Verstappen crossed the line first in a four-hour race at the track, but was disqualified because his car had used too many sets of tyres.

Verstappen said morning on his web site that he enjoyed the event. "The competition, endurance style racing with team-mates. A 24-hour race, especially here, is incredibly challenging. That whole combination" but he added that he could not promise to be back next year. "I will for sure try, but it also depends on my calendar."

The Dutchman is seventh in the F1 driver standings after four Grands Prix. He has constantly criticised new technical regulations on electric and combustion engines and even threatened on several occasions to leave F1 to devote himself to his family and endurance racing, even though his contract with Red Bull in F1 does not expire until the end of 2028.

PREMIER LEAGUE

West Ham on brink of relegation after loss to Newcastle

Spurs can avoid the drop with victory at Chelsea tomorrow

AFP
London

West Ham's 3-1 defeat at Newcastle left Tottenham realistically only needing one more point to win the battle for Premier League survival, while Bruno Fernandes made history in Manchester United's 3-2 win over Nottingham Forest.

Spurs can avoid dropping out of the English top flight for the first time in nearly 50 years with victory at Chelsea on Tuesday, but a draw would also likely suffice thanks to their much superior goal difference over West Ham.

A third consecutive defeat left the Hammers needing favours and they were well beaten at St. James' Park against a Newcastle side who had little to play for. Nick Woltemade turned in Harvey Barnes' cross for his first league goal since December.

William Osula then finished off a flowing Newcastle move to double the lead inside 20 minutes. Osula struck again with his fifth goal in six games and even a stunning strike from Taty Castellanos was little consolation for the visitors.

West Ham's only hope of survival is if they beat Leeds on the final day and Tottenham lose to both Chelsea and Everton.

Fernandes equalled the Premier League record of 20 assists in a season as United secured third place at Old Trafford. The Portuguese international moved alongside Thierry Henry and Kevin De Bruyne in the single-season assist list when his cross was turned in by Bryan Mbeumo for United's third goal at Old Trafford.

Luke Shaw volleyed United in front after just five minutes, but Forest levelled a wide open encounter early in the second half when Elliot Anderson's cross was headed in by Morato. United raced down the other end and Matheus Cunha's goal was allowed to stand despite a VAR check for handball by Mbeumo in the build-up.

Fernandes' record-equalling moment arrived 14 minutes from full-time when Mbeumo prodded in his drilled cross for his first goal since February. Morgan Gibbs-White reduced the deficit in the 78th minute.

But United held on to add another victory



West Ham's only hope of survival in the Premier League is if they beat Leeds on the final day and Tottenham lose to both Chelsea and Everton. (Reuters)

to their impressive run since interim boss Michael Carrick arrived in January. Carrick is expected to sign a two-year contract to remain in charge on a permanent basis. "Over the coming days there'll be clarity in the situation," the former United midfielder said of his future.

Dominic Calvert-Lewin scored the only goal in stoppage-time at Elland Road as Leeds beat Brighton 1-0 to damage the Seagulls' hopes of European qualification.

Brentford, in eighth place, also suffered a blow to their European ambitions in a 2-2 draw against Crystal Palace. Ismaila Sarr's sixth-minute penalty put Palace ahead before Dango Ouattara hauled Brentford level in the 40th minute. Adam Wharton restored Palace's ad-

vantage with his first goal for the club in the 52nd minute, but Ouattara struck again in the 88th minute.

Sunderland are also in contention for European qualification after a 3-1 win at Everton lifted the Black Cats up to ninth. Fulham slipped to 13th after a 1-1 draw at relegated Wolves hampered their chances of Europe next season.

Earlier, troubled Chelsea hired Xabi Alonso as their new manager, less than 24 hours after losing 1-0 against Manchester City in the FA Cup final. Alonso, who agreed a four-year contract with 10th-placed Chelsea, led Bayer Leverkusen to the Bundesliga title in 2024 but was sacked by Real Madrid in January after just seven months in charge.

LA LIGA

Sevilla safe despite defeat to Real Madrid

AFP
Barcelona

Vinicius Junior earned Real Madrid a 1-0 win at Sevilla in La Liga in the penultimate round of fixtures, but results elsewhere mean the hosts have secured safety from relegation.

Levante earned a vital 2-0 win over Mallorca, who are 19th and in grave danger, along with Girona, 18th after a 1-0 defeat at Atletico Madrid.

Real Madrid will finish the season without a major trophy for the second year running, but produced a focussed display to beat Sevilla.

After Kylian Mbappe complained midweek he had been told by coach Alvaro Arbeloa he was Madrid's "fourth forward" after he came on as a substitute against Real Oviedo, the French superstar started against Sevilla.

Mbappe teed up his strike partner Vinicius to send Madrid ahead in Andalusia, bringing down a cross which the Brazilian powered home. Vinicius returned the favour in the second half but Mbappe blazed over the bar when well placed.

Franco Mastantuono hit the post for the visitors from outside the box as Madrid sought a second goal. Mbappe rounded the goalkeeper and slid home but was offside and the goal was disallowed.

In the capital, Atletico's Antoine Griezmann started against Girona in his final match at the Metropolitan stadium before joining MLS side Orlando City. The French forward, Atletico's all-time top goalscorer, arrived for the match visibly emotional. Playing for the 500th time in Atletico colours, Griezmann set up Ademola Lookman for the game's only goal.

Espanyol ensured their safety by beating Osasuna 2-1 to record a second consecutive victory, after an astonishing 18-match run



Real Madrid's Kylian Mbappe attempts to score against Sevilla in La Liga. (Reuters)

without a win. Alaves also secured their top-flight status with a 1-0 win over already-relegated Real Oviedo.

Levante's crucial victory over Mallorca allowed them to rise up to 15th and leave the islanders in the drop zone. Carlos Espi's first-half goal divided the teams, who were both reduced to 10 men after Johan Mojica pulled Roger Brugue's hair and he lashed out in response.

Kervin Arriaga headed home Levante's second from a corner to secure the points and give his side a good chance of beating the drop. Mallorca face Oviedo in their final match but, even with a win, will be left relying on results elsewhere going their way to survive.

Elche, 17th, defeated Getafe 1-0 to boost their hopes of avoiding relegation. They will face Girona on the final day of the season in a potentially decisive clash.

Valencia edged Real Sociedad 4-3 in a thrilling battle to rise up to ninth, while Celta Vigo guaranteed they will play in Europe next season with a 1-1 draw at Athletic Bilbao.

Rayo Vallecano fans gave veteran midfielder Oscar Trejo a fond farewell in his final appearance at their Vallecas stadium as they beat third-place Villarreal 2-0.

In the weekend's final match, newly-crowned champions Barcelona were hosting Real Betis, who have already qualified for next season's Champions League.

Qatar's Ikhlef bags silver at Asian Weightlifting Championships



Qatar's Ousail Ikhlef delivered an impressive performance at the Asian Weightlifting Championships in Gandhinagar, India, claiming silver in the women's +86kg category against a high-quality field featuring Olympic and world-level competitors. Ikhlef finished ahead of world No. 2-ranked South Korean lifter Park Hye-jeong to mark a notable achievement for Qatari women on the continental stage. She lifted 130kg in the snatch to take bronze, produced 169kg in the clean & jerk for silver, and secured 299kg in the total to clinch overall silver in an outstanding campaign.



SERIE A

Roma near Champions League return with derby triumph at Lazio

AFP
Rome

Roma took a huge step towards returning to the Champions League by beating local rivals Lazio 2-0 in a feisty derby which finished with both teams down to 10 men, while Napoli won 3-0 at Pisa to secure a top-four spot.

Gianluca Mancini smashed home two headers from corners, one in each half, at the Stadio Olimpico to move Roma up to fourth thanks also to Juventus' shock 2-0 home defeat to Fiorentina.

Roma haven't played in the Champions League since being knocked out in the last 16 by Porto in 2019, an absence which has left the capital club lagging behind their rivals.

But a win next weekend at relegated Verona will guarantee Roma a spot in Europe's elite club competition thanks to a two-point gap separating them from both fifth-placed Como, 1-0 winners against Parma, and Juve who are now sixth.

The derby and all four other fixtures were pushed forward by half an hour to avoid a clash with the men's final at the Italian Open tennis tournament, which will take place a stone's throw from the Olimpico later this afternoon.

A massive security presence was on show all around the stadium but the atmosphere in the ground was one-sided with the Lazio fans continuing their months-long boycott of matches in protest against owner Claudio Lotito.

Roma's loud home support



Inter Milan were officially awarded their 21st Serie A title at the San Siro after drawing 1-1 against Verona yesterday. (Reuters)

belated out song after song after a potentially massive win which on Sunday meant much more than just local pride. The volatile nature of the derby was highlighted by Nicolò Rovella and Wesley both being sent off in a scrap shortly after Mancini bulleted home the decisive second goal from Paulo Dybala's corner in the 66th minute.

AC Milan are third, level on 70 points with Roma after a hard-fought 2-1 win at Genoa which came thanks to a Christopher Nkunku penalty five minutes after half-time and Zachary Athekame's drilled strike eight minutes from the end.

The seven-time European champions' form has fallen off a cliff in recent weeks but a win at home over Cagliari next weekend will guarantee Massimiliano Allegri's team a spot in the top four.

Juventus, who looked like the one team who would easily stay in the top four, now need a helping hand after a dismal performance against Fiorentina team which had nothing to play for other than to give a bloody nose to their fierce rivals.

Luciano Spalletti's team, who face local rivals Torino next weekend, are not out of the picture yet as they have a better head-to-head record than Roma and a significantly better goal difference than Milan, so dropped points from both those teams or Como would leave an opening. Inter Milan were officially awarded their 21st league title at the San Siro after drawing 1-1 against Verona, with the trophy presentation on the pitch before a parade around Milan for the rest of the day.

CARRICK EXPECTS CLARITY ON MANCHESTER UNITED FUTURE IN 'COMING DAYS'

Manchester: Michael Carrick said he expects his future as Manchester United manager to be clarified this week amid reports he will sign a two-year deal to remain at the club. A 3-2 victory over Nottingham Forest secured third place in the Premier League for the Red Devils.

Carrick is set to be rewarded for his impact since taking over in January by

being handed the job permanently. "Over the coming days there will be clarity in the situation. Today what was important was the game and getting the right result, and about some individuals as well," said the former United and England midfielder.

In an address to the fans after United's final home game of the season, Carrick hinted he will remain in charge. Carrick

has won 11 of his 16 matches in charge to ensure United return to the Champions League next season after a two-year absence.

MOURINHO SAYS 'CONTACT' BETWEEN HIS AGENT AND REAL MADRID
Benfica coach Jose Mourinho confirmed his agent Jorge Mendes has been in con-

tact with Spanish giants Real Madrid. The veteran Portuguese coach, 63, has been strongly linked with a sensational return to the Santiago Bernabeu 13 years after he left Los Blancos.

"There is contact between the club and Jorge," said Mourinho late Saturday after Benfica completed an unbeaten season in the Portuguese top flight, finishing third.

However Mourinho said he personally has not had any contact with Madrid president Florentino Perez, or anyone else at the club, and that his future will be decided in the coming week. Madrid will finish a second straight season without a major trophy, and coach Alvaro Arbeloa said Saturday he would be "happy" for Mourinho to replace him.