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**GCC GAMES - DOHA 2026**

# Sheikh Joaan celebrates Qatar's historic gold rush

Hosts bagged largest medal haul in the history of the Games - 134 medals, including 48 gold, 50 silver and 36 bronze



President of the Qatar Olympic Committee HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani honoured Team Qatar athletes and officials following their historic achievement at the 4th GCC Games - Doha 2026.



**By Sports Reporter**  
Doha

**T**eam Qatar did not simply win medals. They wrote one of the brightest chapters in Gulf sports history.

At Doha 2026, Qatar was not merely hosting a sporting event, but presenting the image of a nation that has transformed sport into a project of ambition, excellence, and achievement.

In an evening filled with pride and celebration, HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani honoured Team Qatar athletes and national teams following the historic achievement they accomplished at the 4th GCC Games - Doha 2026.

HE Sheikh Joaan, President of the Olympic Council of Asia, President of the Qatar Olympic Committee (QOC), and President of the Organising Committee of the Games, celebrated a new generation of champions who led Qatar to the largest medal haul in the history of the tournament, securing 134 medals, including 48 gold, 50 silver, and 36 bronze medals.

Speaking during the ceremony honouring Team Qatar medalists at the Games, HE said: "Everyone is proud and delighted with what Team Qatar athletes have achieved - from the highest levels of the sporting leadership to the youngest Qatari citizen - after our national teams succeeded in winning 134 medals, including 48 gold and 50 silver medals. This is a significant achievement that reflects the tremendous effort and hard work invested, especially in light of the strong participation and fierce competition from our fellow GCC teams."

The ceremony was attended by HE Mohammed bin Yousuf al-Mana, First Vice President of the Qatar Olympic Committee, HE Dr Thani bin Abdulrahman al-Kuwari, Second Vice Presi-

dent of the Qatar Olympic Committee, and HE Jassim bin Rashid al-Buenain, Secretary-General of the Qatar Olympic Committee and Vice Chairman of the Organising Committee of the Games, alongside several senior sports officials, federation presidents, and GCC delegations, in addition to Team Qatar athletes and technical and administrative staff, in an atmosphere that reflected the scale of the sporting and organisational success achieved during this exceptional edition of the Games.

During the ceremony, outstanding athletes across various sports were honoured amid widespread praise for the strong performances and competitive spirit displayed by Qatari athletes throughout the tournament, which helped Team Qatar dominate the Games from the opening day until the conclusion.

Saudi Arabia finished second with 82 medals, including 32 gold, 27 silver, and 23 bronze medals, while Bahrain placed third with 63 medals, followed by Kuwait, the UAE, and Oman, in an edition characterised by strong competition and a genuine Gulf spirit reflecting the close ties among the peoples of the region.

Doha 2026 also marked another milestone confirming Qatar's capability to organise major sporting events according to the highest international standards, benefiting from advanced sports infrastructure and extensive organisational expertise that have strengthened its position as one of the world's leading sports capitals.

The Games, held from 11 to 22 May, featured the participation of more than 1,400 athletes and officials competing in 17 sports, including athletics, swimming, shooting, volleyball, handball, karate, padel, table tennis, boxing, and archery, alongside several other disciplines, in a highly professional sporting environment that reflected the remarkable development of Gulf sport.

**Team Qatar's achievement is the result of strong support and an ambitious sporting vision: Al-Fadala**



Mohammed Issa al-Fadala, President of the Qatar Athletics Federation, expressed his pride in the outstanding achievement accomplished by Team Qatar athletics at the 4th GCC Games - Doha 2026, after topping the athletics standings with 34 medals, including 12 gold, 13 silver, and 9 bronze medals, confirming that these results reflect the remarkable development of Qatari athletics at all levels.

Speaking on the sidelines of the dinner banquet hosted by the Organising Committee in honour of Team Qatar medalists, al-Fadala said: "What was achieved in this edition represents a major accomplishment and a source of pride for everyone involved in Qatari athletics, especially as our athletes delivered outstanding technical performances and showed great competitive spirit throughout the competitions, which was clearly reflected in the results and medals achieved."

He added: "We extend our sincere thanks and appreciation to HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani, President of the Olympic Council of Asia, President of the Qatar Olympic Committee, and President of the Organising Committee of the Games, for his continuous support for Qatari sport and his constant commitment to provid-

ing all the necessary factors for athletes to succeed and develop. This support played a major role in achieving these honourable accomplishments and raising Qatar's flag high at various sporting events."

Al-Fadala also expressed his appreciation for the efforts of Secretary-General of QOC and Vice Chairman of the Organising Committee of the Games, praising his continuous follow-up of all aspects of the tournament and his important role in supporting the national teams and providing the ideal organisational and technical environment that contributed to the success of the event.

He also commended the tremendous efforts made by Sheikh Khalifa bin Khalid al-Thani, Director General of the Organising Committee of the Games, stressing that the close follow-up and continuous work carried out by the various organising committees played a major role in delivering the Games in an outstanding manner that reflects Qatar's leading organisational stature.

**Winning gold was special, but my father's silver made it more memorable: Barshim**

Olympic and world champion Mutaz Essa Barshim expressed his happiness after winning the high jump gold medal at the GCC Games, describing the event as one of the most memorable editions for him personally.

Barshim said that while winning gold in the high jump always carries special meaning, seeing his father Essa Barshim win silver in the 5000m walk made the occasion even more emotional and memorable.

He also praised the exceptional atmosphere of the Games, noting that the competitions reflected the strong unity and brotherhood among Gulf athletes while providing valuable preparation for future continental and international events.

**Team Qatar's achievements reflect continuous work and strong support for Qatari shooting: Al-Sulaiti**



Jassim Shaheen al-Sulaiti, Secretary-General of the Qatar Shooting and Archery Association, affirmed that the major achievement accomplished by Team Qatar shooting and archery at the 4th GCC Games - Doha 2026 reflects the significant development of the sport in Qatar, after the national team topped the overall standings with 26 medals, including 12 gold, 6 silver, and 8 bronze medals.

Speaking on the sidelines of the dinner banquet hosted by the Organising Committee in honour of Team Qatar medalists, al-Sulaiti said: "The medal haul achieved by Team Qatar's male and female athletes in this edition is a source of pride, especially given the strength of the competition and the high technical standards witnessed during the tournament, with the participation of some of the GCC's top shooters."

He added: "What was achieved did not come by coincidence, but rather as a result of continuous technical and administrative work, carefully designed preparation programmes, and intensive training camps that helped prepare our athletes in the best possible way to compete for titles."

MOTORSPORT

# Impresssive Russell grabs pole at Canadian Grand Prix

Sprint winner Russell crosses the line 0.068 of a second faster than Antonelli right at the end of session

AFP  
Montreal

**B**ritain's George Russell powered to pole position yesterday for the Canadian Grand Prix ahead of Mercedes teammate Kimi Antonelli.

The two McLarens of British reigning world champion Lando Norris and Australian Oscar Piastri will start from the second row today.

Pre-season title favourite Russell had earlier delivered a consummate lights-to-flag drive to win the sprint race and trim his angry Italian team-mate Antonelli's championship lead.

It was the first sprint race held at the Circuit Gilles Villeneuve and was a memorable one, with the scrap between Russell and Antonelli requiring an intervention from Mercedes team boss Toto Wolff, telling the precocious Italian to cool off and stop talking on the team radio.

The incident came on lap six when Antonelli, 19, tried a move around the outside of Turn One, but Russell defended stoutly, forcing the Italian to run off with a muscular defence of his leading position.

"That was very naughty," said Antonelli, who accused Russell of pushing him off. "That should be a penalty. I was alongside the mirror."

His experienced race engineer Peter Bonnington told him to calm



Mercedes' George Russell in action during qualifying for the Canadian Grand Prix at Circuit Gilles Villeneuve, Montreal, yesterday. (Reuters)

down and concentrate, but Antonelli was still fuming after the race.

"If we race like that, it is good to know," said the teenager before Wolff told him: "Kimi, we don't talk about this on the radio - we do it internally."

"I need to review on that because I was quite well alongside him at turn one," said Antonelli. "But it was a good battle," Antonelli added.

Russell, 28, who won last year's Canadian Grand Prix, re-established his seniority in the team with his drive and result.

## Wolff gives opinion on Mercedes intra-team clash

Mercedes Team Principal Toto Wolff has given his verdict on the clash between Kimi Antonelli and George Russell in the Canadian Grand Prix Sprint.

Russell and Antonelli locked out the front row for yesterday's 23-lap Sprint in Montreal, with Russell eventually taking victory as Antonelli dropped to third behind McLaren's Lando Norris.

The major talking point came at the start of Lap 6, as Antonelli made a move around the outside of Russell into Turn 1 before the pair

made contact and Antonelli cut across the grass at Turn 2.

"Drivers have emotions, obviously, you are so upset about being pushed off or not having left the space," Wolff told *F1 TV* in Montreal yesterday.

"All of the media wants to come out now with Star Wars and that's going to be headlines everywhere," he added.

"So having the message once is okay, a second time I can kind of get but if you come a third and fourth time (complaining over the radio) that's not good to have that out there."



Mercedes' Italian driver Kimi Antonelli races during the qualifying session for the Canadian Grand Prix yesterday. (AFP)



Lewis Hamilton of Great Britain driving the Scuderia Ferrari SF-26 leads Oscar Piastri of Australia driving the McLaren MCL40 Mercedes and Charles Leclerc of Monaco yesterday. (AFP)

CRICKET

# Shreyas smashes first IPL century as Punjab win



Punjab Kings' captain Shreyas Iyer celebrates after reaching his century during an IPL match against Lucknow Super Giants in Lucknow yesterday. (Reuters)

AFP  
Lucknow, India

**S**hreyas Iyer scored a maiden Indian Premier League (IPL) hundred to keep Punjab Kings' hopes alive with a seven-wicket victory over Lucknow Super Giants yesterday.

Iyer scored 101 not out off 51 balls, hitting five sixes and 11 fours, as Punjab finished with 200-3 in 18 overs to end a six-match losing streak. Prabhsimran Singh also hit 69 off 39 balls in a must-win game for Punjab.

"I am ecstatic to be honest," said Iyer. "It is my first (IPL) hundred and it came at the right time when the team needed it. We won eventually after six consecutive losses."

"Our bowlers did brilliantly, especially Yuzi (Chahal) the way he restricted runs in the middle. It is a great positive and we will be supporting Mumbai Indians (against Rajasthan) tomorrow (today)."

Earlier, Josh Inglis's 72 off 44 balls helped hosts Lucknow put on 196-6. Yuzvendra Chahal took 2-25 in four overs.

Punjab got the much needed two points from this win, and moved to fourth spot in the points table.

They are still not assured of top-four qualification, with Rajasthan Royals and Kolkata Knight Riders playing their final league games today.

However, Delhi Capitals are knocked out of contention owing to Punjab's win. Lucknow finished the IPL season with 10 losses in 14 games and placed 10th and last.

"It was a tough season," lamented Lucknow captain Rishabh Pant.

"We knew batting second gets easier here, so we were a few runs short. We want to look at the positives from this season and build on them. We need to take accountability and will come back stronger next season."

## Marsh blow

Put in to bat, Lucknow made a bad start, missing in-form Australian opener Mitchell Marsh.

Azmatullah Omarzai and Marco Jansen struck the initial blows for the Kings. Nicholas Pooran was out for just two.

Inglis and Ayush Badoni added 49 off 23 balls for the third wicket. Wrist spinner Chahal broke through in the middle, removing both Badoni and later on skipper Pant (26).

For Inglis, it was a third half-century in five matches this season, coming off 28 balls.

Overall, he hit nine fours and two sixes. Lucknow kept losing wickets regularly, but Abdul Samed's 37 not out off 20 balls helped them past 190.

Samed hit three sixes, and added 35 off 19 balls with Inglis for the fifth wicket.

Punjab's reply did not take off well with Mohammed Shami picking two wickets.

Shami's absence in the previous game had raised eyebrows for Lucknow, but he returned to dismiss opener Priyansh Arya for a golden duck. He also bowled Cooper Connolly (18) as Punjab were 22-2.

Iyer and Singh then came together, adding 140 off 76 balls, and it was Punjab's fifth-highest ever stand.

Singh hit his sixth half-century of the season at a crucial juncture, off 28 balls.

Singh hit two sixes and seven fours, out lbw to Arjun Tendulkar before the finish line.

Skipper Iyer, though, finished the job for his team, getting his maiden century with a celebratory six.

## BRIEF SCORES

**Punjab Kings 200 for 3** (Iyer 101\*, Prabhsimran 69) **beat Lucknow Super Giants 196 for 6** (Inglis 72, Badoni 43, Chahal 2-25, Jansen 2-33) **by seven wickets**

FOCUS

# 'Captain's dream': Hyderabad's Cummins hails fellow quicks

Reuters  
Bengaluru

**C**aptain Pat Cummins heaped praise on fast bowlers Eshan Malinga and Sakib Hussain as Sunrisers Hyderabad claimed a 55-run win over Royal Challengers Bengaluru in the Indian Premier League (IPL).

On Friday, Hyderabad racked up a total of 255-4 thanks to Ishan Kishan's knock of 79 (46) before Hussain and Malinga took three key wickets to slow down Bengaluru's chase.

Hussain and Malinga have bagged a combined 34 wickets in the IPL this season, while Cummins, who missed part of the campaign due to a lumbar bone stress injury, has eight wickets in seven matches.

"They've been fantastic. I've actually learned a lot of from those guys as well," Australia's Cummins said.

"Eshan Malinga has been the form bowler and he's mixing up different things. And of course, you know, Sakib there as well. So a captain's dream."

Hyderabad head coach Daniel Vettori said the performance of their bowling unit was a key factor in helping them overcome a poor start to the season.

"Those three fast bowlers have been exceptional," he added.

"We have had contributions from Harsh Dubey, from Shivang (Kumar), from Nitish (Kumar Reddy), from (Praful) Hinge, that have allowed us to come back from losing three of our first four games," he said.

"And then to win eight out of the next 12 is a real credit to them. We anticipated our batting unit doing what they did, and then for the bowlers to compliment them is the reason we're in the position we are now."

Despite the heavy defeat, Bengaluru finished the league stage atop the standings and will take on second-placed Gujarat Titans in the first playoff match on Tuesday, while Hyderabad play in the eliminator on Wednesday.

## England's Bethell leaves IPL after finger injury

England batsman Jacob Bethell has ended his season with Indian Premier League side Royal Chal-



Sunrisers Hyderabad's captain Pat Cummins during the warm up before the match on Friday. (Reuters)

lengers Bengaluru after suffering a finger injury.

Bethell was absent from the Bengaluru line-up for their defeat against Sunrisers Hyderabad on Friday, with captain Rajat Patidar confirming the 22-year-old had damaged his finger.

Bengaluru topped IPL standings and face Gujarat Titans in the first qualifier on Tuesday. Bethell had appeared in seven matches scoring 96 runs.

His injury comes less than two weeks before England's first Test against New Zealand at Lord's, starting on June 4.

Bethell was expected to bat at number three for England after hitting a superb century against Australia in the Ashes in January.

Now he faces an anxious wait to see if he is fit to feature against New Zealand.

The England and Wales Cricket Board confirmed yesterday that Bethell would have further checks once he had returns home.

"The England and Wales Cricket Board has agreed with Royal Challengers Bangalore that top-order batter Jacob Bethell will return to the UK after sustaining a left ring finger injury while playing in the Indian Premier League," a statement said.

"He will be fully assessed and monitored by the England Men's medical team on his return to determine his availability for selection for the Rothesay first Test against New Zealand at Lord's, starting on Thursday June 4."

TENNIS

# No. 1 Sinner stands between Djokovic and 25th major

SINNER IS ON A 29-MATCH WINNING STREAK AND HAS WON THE LAST 6 MASTERS EVENTS

AFP  
Paris

**N**ovak Djokovic has admitted world number one Jannik Sinner was the man to beat at Roland Garros as the imperious Italian stands on the brink of completing his career Grand Slam.

Djokovic, 39, is chasing a 25th major title, which would put him outright first for the most Grand Slam victories in the history of the sport.

However, Sinner, who is on a 29-match winning streak and has won the last six Masters events, casts a long shadow over the sole remaining Grand Slam tournament he has not yet won.

"It's an incredible feat for him and his team. We've talked a lot about how impressive he is on all surfaces," Djokovic said of Sinner, who with victory at the three clay-court Masters this season became just the second man after the Serb to win all nine 1000-level titles.

"Being one of the two guys that have managed in the history to be the only ones to win the Golden Masters, I know how challenging that is and how difficult it is.

"So I want to congratulate him for that because it's quite an achievement and he's really young, he still has a lot of time ahead of him."

After falling on opposite sides of the draw, third-seeded Djokovic and Sinner, 24, cannot meet until the final on June 7.

In the absence through injury of double-defending champion Carlos Alcaraz, Djokovic, who has reached at least the semi-finals at



Serbia's Novak Djokovic during practice ahead of the French Open in Paris yesterday. (Reuters)

each of the past five Grand Slams, appears the most likely man to be able to put a stop to Sinner's run.

"He's going for his Golden Slam as well here if I'm not mistaken. He's maybe in the form of his life, and without Carlos being here also increases his chances even more of claiming more Grand Slam titles," Djokovic said. "So we're all here to try to win against him and prevent him from taking more titles."

**'Always have that belief'**  
Djokovic, who lost the Australian Open final to Alcaraz in January, added the Spaniard's withdrawal

is a "big blow for the tournament", but that it did not change his approach.

"I don't think it does significantly change, to be honest, because I have been through challenging times with my body in the last, you know, six to eight months," he said.

"If I'm able to somehow maintain that level of freshness and progress, then I feel like I have always a very good chance. I have proven that in Australia this year where I was close to winning another Slam... I always have that belief in me when I'm on the court"

But the three-time champion enters his 22nd Roland Garros with very little clay-court playing time under his belt this season.

After exiting Indian Wells at the round-of-16 stage to Jack Draper in March, Djokovic has only played one warm-up match on the red dirt - crashing out in his opening match in Rome to Croatian qualifier Dino Prizmic.

Djokovic admitted his reduced time on court was not of his own choosing.

"I wanted to play more, but my body was not allowing me," he said. "I was going through reha-



Jannik Sinner, the world No. 1 from Italy, strikes a casual pose.

bilitation process for my (shoulder) injury. So after Indian Wells, it was just not possible for me to compete for several months."

He added that he entered the Italian Open just to get some match experience before his latest tilt at a 25th major crown.

"Really wanted to go to Rome to give it a shot and try and, you know, see how I feel," he explained.

"I was far from being ready to

compete, but still, I needed at least that one match just to have the score called by a chair umpire and have experience of the nerves before I eventually come to Roland Garros, which at that point I didn't know if I was going to be able to play or not."

Djokovic will begin his Roland Garros campaign against big-serving Frenchman Giovanni Mpetshi Perricard.

COMMENT

## Roland Garros organisers and players have 'positive' meeting over dispute



Ground staff spray water on the court ahead of the French Open.

AFP  
Paris, France

**R**epresentatives of the world's top tennis players, who are campaigning to receive a larger share of Grand Slam prize money, and the organisers of the French Open have engaged in a constructive meeting over the issue, the French Tennis Federation (FFT) said yesterday.

The FFT, represented among others by Roland Garros director and former women's world number one Amelie Mauresmo, met with the player representatives on Friday at the end of the boycott-impacted media day ahead of the

start of the French Open. "(The meeting) has allowed the FFT and the players' representatives to engage in a positive and transparent exchange on a number of issues," the federation said in a press release sent to AFP.

"As these discussions require more time, all parties have agreed to continue the dialogue and to meet again in the coming weeks."

A source close to the discussions told AFP earlier yesterday that the FFT "has agreed to negotiate directly with the players" involved in the protest, which include world No. 1s Jannik Sinner and Aryna Sabalenka.

As the organiser of the Paris Grand Slam, the FFT "has com-

mitted to responding to the players' proposals in the coming weeks", the source added.

Since March 2025, a group of around 20 of the highest-ranked players on the ATP and WTA tours have been trying to secure a larger share of the revenue generated by Grand Slam tournaments.

The players involved are calling for a 22 percent share of these revenues by 2030, compared with around 15 percent at present.

To demonstrate their dissatisfaction, 20 players have been limiting their media commitments to 15 minutes on Friday and yesterday, during the two days set aside for pre-tournament press conferences and interviews at Roland Garros.

Representatives of the world's top players, mainly agents, have now planned talks with the organisers of Wimbledon and the US Open at two separate meetings scheduled to take place towards the end of Roland Garros. However, no meeting is currently planned with the organisers of the Australian Open.

In addition to a fairer distribution of revenue at Grand Slam tournaments, the stars of the tour are also calling for greater involvement in key decisions regarding the four flagship tournaments of the global tennis calendar. They also want the Grand Slam tournaments to invest more in players' "well-being", for example healthcare, maternity leave and pensions.

ATHLETICS

## Russell gets closer to 100m hurdles record, China's Yan shines in javelin

Reuters  
Xiamen, China

**A**merican Olympic champion Masai Russell got closer to the women's 100m hurdles world record when she clocked 12.14 seconds at the Xiamen Diamond League yesterday, while China's Yan Ziyi recorded the second longest javelin throw by a woman at 71.74m.

Brazil's Alison dos Santos prevailed over Karsten Warholm in a duel between Paris Olympics medallists in the men's 400m hurdles, while Kenya's Ferdinand Omanyala pipped Gift Leotlela to win the men's 100. Russell, who became the world's second-fastest woman in 100m hurdles when she clocked 12.17 seconds last year, made good on Friday's promise to consistently build towards the world record this season, retaining a steady lead throughout the race.

Nigeria's Tobi Amusan, who clocked 12.12 seconds to set the world record in 2022, finished second, 0.14 seconds behind Russell.

"I don't know when (the world record) is going to come but I keep getting closer and closer. I'm blessed, I'm ecstatic and all the hard work is truly showing," said Russell.

Earlier in the day, 18-year-old



US' Masai Russell (left) celebrates after winning in the women's 100m hurdles final event during the Xiamen Diamond League athletics meeting at Egret Stadium in Xiamen yesterday. (AFP)

Yan drew a wild cheer from the home crowd when she set the under-20 world record in her very first throw, falling just short of the 72.28m thrown by Czech Barbora Spotakova for the current world record in 2008.

Yan did not throw again, and easily won the competition, as Norway's Sigrid Borge finished second with a 65.00-metre throw.

"I came to this race with the goal for 65m, so it really blew my mind to see that result coming," said Yan. "A flash in the pan is not what I want, I don't want this 71.74 to be just a one-time thing... I think I can push harder. I'll see how it will go for the next couple of years

and prepare for breaking the world record."

**OMANYALA EDGES LEOTLELA IN MEN'S 100M**

In the men's 100m, Omanyala picked up the pace halfway through. Last week's winner Gift Leotlela got closer in the final moments but the South African had to settle for second place as the Kenyan pushed to victory with high knees in 9.94 seconds.

Jamaica's Shericka Jackson cruised to victory in the women's 200m. In the men's 400m hurdles, two-time Olympic bronze medalist Dos Santos won in 46.72 seconds.

## VINGEGAARD IN THE PINK AFTER CLIMBING TO THIRD GIRO STAGE WIN

**Aosta, Italy:** Giro d'Italia favourite Jonas Vingegaard took the leader's pink jersey for the first time yesterday by completing a hat-trick of stage wins with a solo ride to the Alpine summit of stage 14. Vingegaard, aiming to become the eighth rider to win all three Grand Tours, looked comfortable on the gruelling 133-km ride from Aosta to Pila, complete with five climbs.

The Dane's Visma-Lease a Bike teammates did all the work to set him up for the win on the final climb to Pila consisting of 20 hairpins, where race leader Afonso Eulalio and many others struggled.

"Today we made a plan from the start with the team, and we wanted to control the race, and that's what my teammates did," Vingegaard said. "It was really impressive how they rode, and I'm so proud of my teammates, and I'm proud that I can pay them back, it's a super nice win."

Vingegaard, already successful on the summit finishes on stages seven and nine, attacked with less than 5 km left and now looks set to win the Giro at his first attempt.

Austrian Felix Gall (Decathlon CMA CGM) was second, 49 seconds behind, with Australian former winner Jai Hindley (Red Bull-Bora-Hansgrohe) taking third.

Portugal's Eulalio (Bahrain Victorious), who had hung onto the pink jersey since taking the overall lead on stage five, trailed in almost three minutes behind Vingegaard, and dropped to second place, 2 minutes 26 seconds off the new leader.

**LONG AND GRUELLING ROAD TO PILA SUMMIT**

The riders were climbing from the off and a large breakaway group formed on the ascent of Saint-Barthelemy, while Visma controlled the peloton. Visma's Tim Rex put in a stellar shift to drag the bunch along, grimacing in pain as they neared the top of Lin Noir, with Victor Campenaerts pouring water over his teammate's head as the sun blazed on the mountains.

There was little respite, with the Verrogne climb



Team Visma Lease a Bike Danish rider Jonas Vingegaard celebrates on the podium after winning the 14th stage of the Giro d'Italia 2026 - Tour of Italy cycling race between Aosta and Pila (Gressan), Italy, yesterday. (AFP)

beginning after a brief descent, and Rex swung off the front, his work done for the day. Vingegaard still had four Visma men to lead the way, with Eulalio tucked in behind.

Italian Giulio Ciccone, still seeking a stage win in this year's race, pushed the breakaway group, but a lead of just over two minutes as they began the final 16.6-km climb to the finish was never going to be enough.

The vastly reduced peloton containing the overall race contenders reeled in the leaders one by one, with Eulalio trying in vain to hang on at the back, and his time in the pink jersey ended as expected on the winding road to Pila.

Eulalio battled bravely to the top, and has a 24-second gap over Gall, in third place overall. Today's stage 15 takes the riders 157 km from Voghera to Milan.

## QATAR EQUESTRIAN TOUR - LONGINES HATHAB

# Haidan crowned overall Diamond Tour champion

AL-EMADI EMERGES AS GOLD TOUR WINNER, TEAM WATHNAN ALSO BAGGED THE TOP HONOURS



Sheikh Ahmad bin Nooh al-Thani, Secretary-General of the Qatar Equestrian Federation and Chairman of the Championship Organizing Committee, with overall champions of various categories of Qatar Equestrian Tour - Longines Hathab at QEF's indoor arena yesterday.



Diamond Tour champion Mohammed Saeed Haidan receives the trophy from Sheikh Ahmad bin Nooh al-Thani

By Sports Reporter  
Doha

An exciting and highly competitive final round held at the indoor arena of the Qatar Equestrian Federation marked the finale of the ninth edition of the Qatar Equestrian Tour - Longines Hathab yesterday evening.

Organised by the Qatar Equestrian and Modern Pentathlon Federation in partnership with Al Shaqab, the championship spanned 14 rounds throughout the 2024-2025 season.

The closing competitions, staged over three consecutive days, drew a distinguished audience and showcased strong performances across all categories, reaffirming the championship's growing stature as one of the region's premier equestrian events.

At the conclusion of the event, Sheikh Ahmad bin Nooh al-Thani, Secretary-General of the Qatar Equestrian Federation and Chairman of the Championship Organizing Committee, crowned the winners across all categories.

The sponsors for the 2025-2026 season were also honoured: Doha Bank (represented by Sheikh Fahad bin Jassim al-Thani, Head of Business Development); Al Shaqab (represented by Khalid al-Hitmi, Deputy CEO); Al Salam International (represented by Abdul Salam Issa Abu Issa, CEO); Al Kass Sports Channels (represented by Salem al-Nabet, Director of Legal Affairs); and Sahil Media Production (represented by Faisal Fallah al-Marri, CEO).

Mohammed Saeed Haidan claimed the overall Diamond Tour title for 2025-26 season with a tally of 261 points. The Gold Tour individual title went to Salman Mohammed al-Emadi, who finished atop the standings with 254 points, while the Wathnan team claimed first place in the team standings with 270 points.

In the Silver Tour, Hussein Saeed Haidan emerged as champion with a total of 260 points.

Khalid al-Hadi claimed the Bronze Tour individual title after accumulating 270 points.

In the amateur category, Mariam Abdulkarim Abed finished first overall with 236 points.

Among the Future Riders, Hissa Ali al-Jaber topped Level 1 with 245 points, while Fahad Talal al-Naimi led Level 2 with 259 points.

In dressage, Aisha Abdullah al-Naemi won the Level 1 standings with 177 points, while Moza Hamza al-Kuwari topped Level 2 with 183 points.

The final day of Hathab saw Sheikha Hamad al-Yafei win the Future Riders 90cm class with a time of 16.89 seconds riding Violet Van Het Koetsius.

She was followed in second place by Alqaqaa bin Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani with a time of 17.07 seconds astride Bon Suela, while Alanoud Rashid al-Hajri was third on 18.15 seconds on Beyonce. Ahmed al-Badawi, Head of the Championship's Judging Committee awarded the winners.

In the Bronze Tour, Ahmed Jassim al-Suwaidi topped the 120cm class clocking 45.76 seconds on Power Girl Jmg, followed by Khalid al-Hadi in second place with a time of 48.25 seconds on Doremi du Flot Z, while Khalid Jassim al-Suwaidi came in third in 48.65 seconds on E.T's Queeny Z.

In the Bronze Tour team competition,

Team Al Shaqab stood first place with a total time of 104.42 seconds, followed by Team Ajwad in second place (111.41 seconds), and Team Marwan Al Shaqab in third place (119.74 seconds). Saeed al-Rashdi, Deputy Director of the championship, honoured the winners.

The championship concluded with a celebratory closing ceremony featuring a special performance by members of the Future Riders' Academy. The showcase highlighted the academy's progress in developing young riders, as participants demonstrated impressive horsemanship skills, precision, and harmony with their horses, drawing enthusiastic applause from spectators.

**'An exceptional edition'**  
Speaking at the presentation ceremony, Sheikh Ahmad bin Nooh Al Thani described the 9th edition of Longines Hathab as "exceptional by all standards," praising the advanced technical levels displayed throughout the championship.

He noted that the riders' performances during the season were reflected positively in interna-

tional competitions where they represented Qatar, emphasizing that participation in the Doha International Equestrian Tour 2026 had contributed significantly to improving riders' readiness and experience.

He added competing alongside internationally ranked riders helped elevate performance standards and intensified competition among participants.

Sheikh Ahmad further stressed that the Longines Hathab championship has grown into one of the region's leading showjumping and dressage events, thanks to its high organizational standards and competitive quality.

"The championship continues to witness remarkable growth in participation year after year, whether from Qatari riders or competitors from across the region, reflecting the prestigious status it has achieved at both the regional and technical levels," he said.

He also highlighted the increasing presence of riders from GCC and neighbouring countries, noting that each edition demonstrates clear progress in both technical and organizational aspects.

"The championship has become an exceptional platform for developing riders' skills and supporting the continued advancement of Qatar equestrian sport toward greater excellence," Sheikh Ahmad remarked.

Ali bin Yousef al-Rumaihi, Assistant Secretary of Qatar Equestrian Federation and Vice Chairman of the championship's Organizing Committee, said that preparations for the new season of Qatar Equestrian Tour have already commenced according to a strategic vision aimed at building upon the accumulated successes achieved by the Tour in previous seasons. These successes have contributed to solidifying its position as one of the most prominent platforms for equestrian sports in the region, whether in showjumping or dressage competitions.

He added that the championship has become a fundamental pillar in developing equestrianism at the regional level, given its continuous growth in participation and the level of competition, as well as its attraction of riders from Qatar and various countries in the region.

## FOOTBALL

## Man United's Fernandes named Premier League player of season

Reuters  
London

Manchester United midfielder Bruno Fernandes was named the Premier League player of the season yesterday after guiding his club to third place in the standings while equalling the league's assists record with a game to spare.

Fernandes tied the league record of 20 assists jointly held by former Arsenal striker Thierry Henry and ex-Manchester City playmaker Kevin De Bruyne.

The Portugal international also scored eight goals as United secured a third-place finish to qualify for the Champions League.

The 31-year-old was nominated alongside Arsenal's title-winning trio of Gabriel, David Raya and Declan Rice, Manchester City duo Erling Haaland and Antoine Semenyo, Nottingham Forest mid-

fielder Morgan Gibbs-White and Brentford striker Igor Thiago.

Fernandes emerged as the Premier League's best playmaker this season when he created a league-high 132 chances. The next best player was Liverpool's Dominik Szoboszlai, who created 89 chances. Fernandes was named the Football Writers' Association men's player of the year earlier this month while he also picked up the club's Sir Matt Busby Player of the Year honour for the fifth time.

He has the opportunity to make the Premier League assists record his own on Sunday when United travel to Brighton & Hove Albion for the final game of the season.

### O'REILLY NAMED BEST YOUNG PLAYER

Manchester City's Nico O'Reilly was named the Premier League young player of the season after the 21-year-old had a breakthrough campaign which has earned him a spot in England's

World Cup squad. O'Reilly, who came through City's academy, broke into Pep Guardiola's starting line-up this season, predominantly playing as a left back while also making appearances in midfield, scoring five goals and providing three assists in the league.

He has made 34 league appearances this season, with 29 starts, while he has scored crucial goals in big games, including a brace in City's 2-0 win over Arsenal in the League Cup final.

"I'm very proud to have won this award. After my first appearances in senior football last season, I knew this year I could have the opportunity to play more and help the team as much as possible if I worked hard," he said. "To get so many minutes and earn the trust of the manager and my team mates has been the greatest achievement in my career so far. I am so grateful to my family and everyone at City because this wouldn't have been possible without them."

## FOCUS

## Hull back in Premier League after McBurnie last-gasp playoff winner

AFP  
London

Hull City were promoted to the Premier League in dramatic fashion as Oli McBurnie's last-gasp strike sealed a 1-0 win over Middlesbrough in yesterday's Championship play-off final, bringing an end to the 'spygate' controversy that overshadowed world football's richest match.

McBurnie punished a mistake from Middlesbrough goalkeeper Sol Brynne to bag the lucrative winner in the final moments of the second half at Wembley.

Hull will return to the Premier League for the first time since 2016-17, completing an incredible revival just 12 months after they avoided relegation to the third tier on goal difference.

McBurnie's late goal hit the jackpot for Hull, with football finance experts Deloitte estimating the play-off final winners will earn at least £205 million (\$275 million) over the next three seasons due to increased match-day, broadcast and commercial revenues. That could rise to around £365 million if the club survives their first season in the Premier League.

Football League chiefs will hope Hull's victory brings an end to the scandal that marred the second tier play-offs after Southampton were kicked out for filing a Middlesbrough training session prior to their semi-final first leg. Southampton had beaten Middlesbrough 2-1 on aggregate to earn a final showdown with Hull. But the Saints were expelled on Tuesday, with an independent commission



Hull City's Lewie Coyle (left) lifts the trophy beside Oli McBurnie after the English Championship play-off final against Middlesbrough at Wembley Stadium in London yesterday. (AFP)

ruling their boss Tonda Eckert had "specifically authorised" the spying. The English Football League said Southampton admitted to "multiple breaches of EFL regulations related to the unauthorised filming of other clubs' training".

Southampton chief executive Phil Parsons said the sanctions imposed were "manifestly disproportionate".

The row had presented Middlesbrough with a second chance to win promotion, but they were unable to seize the lifeline as Hull ground out a hard-fought victory in scorching heat. That will be a relief to many at Football League headquarters after Hull owner Acun Ilıcali vowed to take

legal action if the Tigers did not beat Middlesbrough. Sergej Jakirovic's side are the first sixth-placed team to win promotion via the second tier play-offs since Blackpool in 2010. The Tigers, who beat third-placed Millwall to secure their place in the final, have been the division's surprise package all season. They were hit with a three-window transfer embargo last year, later reduced to two after a successful appeal, but confounded expectations to snatch a play-off place on the last day of the season.

In keeping with their unexpected renaissance under Bosnian boss Jakirovic, Hull were perfectly suited to the underdog role at Wembley.

### Champs Inter finish Serie A season with thrilling draw at Bologna

Italian double winners Inter Milan finished a triumphant Serie A season by coming back from two goals down to secure an entertaining 3-3 at Bologna 3-3. A 10th match without defeat left champions Inter 14 points clear at the top of the division, with second-placed Napoli hosting Udinese today.

Andy Diouf was Inter's saviour in the 87th minute when he smashed home his first league goal for the club. The former France under-21 international had been key to Pio Esposito pulling Inter back into the game when he wriggled between two defenders and hit the post in the 64th minute. Esposito tapped in on the rebound to halve the deficit for Inter, who had been trailing by two just after half-time after Federico Bernardeschi, Tommaso Pobega and a Piotr Zielinski own goal cancelled out Federico Dimarco's brilliant

free-kick. Bologna finish the season in eighth and outside the European qualification spots.

### Celtic win Scottish Cup to clinch double triumph

Celtic won the Scottish Cup with a 3-1 victory over Dunfermline on Saturday, sealing the double seven days after their dramatic title triumph. Martin O'Neill's side swept into a two-goal lead before half-time thanks to goals from Daizen Maeda and Arne Engels at Hampden Park. Kelechi Iheanacho struck after the interval to put the result beyond doubt, making Josh Cooper's late reply little consolation for out-classed Dunfermline. It was a ninth consecutive win in all competitions for Celtic, who have timed their best run of form perfectly after being galvanised by interim boss O'Neill.