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Bengaluru beat Gujarat to clinch second straight IPL title



TENNIS | Page 3

Kostyuk beats Swiatek at French Open, Zverev cruises

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TRIVIA

Which nation has the most World Cup final appearances without ever having won?

Netherlands with three final appearances (1974, 1978, 2010).

FOCUS

# PSG celebrate Champions League triumph in Paris

Dembele vows Paris Saint-Germain will chase the title hat-trick; Kvaratskhelia named player of the season

AFP  
Paris

The French capital laid on a hero's welcome yesterday for Paris Saint-Germain players to mark their second straight Champions League title, amid bitter recriminations after hundreds of people were arrested and dozens of police hurt in a night of unrest across the country.

Tens of thousands of flag-waving fans took to the streets again to see the team parade from Paris Charles de Gaulle airport to the Champ de Mars plaza in the shadow of the Eiffel Tower.

The team flew back from Budapest where they beat English Premier League champions Arsenal on Saturday night 4-3 in a penalty shoot-out. They were also received by President Emmanuel Macron before returning to their Parc des Princes stadium for a final encounter with fans.

A night of celebrations was blighted however by clashes between youths and police in Paris and other cities, cars set on fire and shops looted. The town hall for the Paris district that includes the Champs-Elysee, where tens of thousands went after the football victory, called for a ban on such gatherings.

"Paris, Paris" chanted supporters, as they filtered through security checkpoints to get spots near a stage where the players appeared. The "We Are the Champions" pop song blared out on speakers.

The streets were so packed that the team arrived more than an hour late at the Champs-de-Mars where they paraded on a red, white and blue tricolour carpet to the stage.

Giant screens showed replays of the penalty shootout that brought the trophy back to Paris.

"It was great, there was the stress of the penalty shootout but it was good stress in the end," said Mirna Makima, a 39-year-old physiotherapist who travelled from Belgium for the celebrations.

PSG forward Ousmane Dembele promised fans gathered at the foot of the Eiffel Tower that the club would chase a third consecutive

Champions League title next season, as supporters celebrated the city's back-to-back European triumphs.

"Thanks to all of you for your support. We'll be back next year with the third one," Dembele addressed the crowd as they danced to Daft Punk's "One More Time", while the players showed off the trophy secured against Arsenal on Saturday.

The mood was relaxed after light showers gave way to sunshine, in contrast to scenes overnight when post-game violence across the capital left over 200 people injured and killed one.

Qatari club president Nasser al-Khelaifi urged fans to keep up the positive atmosphere.

"Celebrate calmly tonight. Protect our city, that's very important," he said.

Fan Mathias Oumraou told Reuters he had to be at the parade after what he called the best night of his life in Paris. Another supporter, Cheyenne Barbachou, said she could hardly believe the back-to-back win. "It's incredible," she said.

PSG's winger Khvicha Kvaratskhelia was named Champions League player of the season on Sunday by a UEFA panel of judges.

Kvaratskhelia was a constant menace in PSG's defence of the title with ten goals and six assists from his 16 games.



PSG's Ousmane Dembele celebrates with the Champions League Trophy in Paris yesterday. (Reuters)



France's President Emmanuel Macron delivers a speech during an event with Paris Saint-Germain's players to celebrate their Champions League triumph at the Elysee Palace in Paris yesterday. (AFP)



PSG's Marquinhos and teammates celebrate with the trophy in Paris yesterday, after winning the Champions League on Saturday in Budapest. (Reuters)

## BACK-TO-BACK-TO BACK? ENRIQUE'S PSG HAVE DYNASTY MENTALITY

If a rock-solid Arsenal could not stop Luis Enrique and Paris Saint-Germain, one steward clutching a rope stood no chance.

The Spanish manager hurdled the obstacle and sprinted onto the pitch to celebrate the "back-to-back" that cemented the French side in football history, only the second team to retain the trophy in the Champions League era.

This time, PSG truly earned it. Last season they cruised to a 5-0 win against an underwhelming Inter Milan, but in Budapest they battled over 120 minutes in a 1-1 draw and edged Arsenal on penalties.

That followed the semi-final classic 6-5 win over Bayern, highlighting all the qualities of PSG's game over the two legs.

"The coach said it's even harder to win twice," said PSG captain Marquinhos. "We had the whole team (fighting) and the mental strength."

It did not take long for the Brazilian defender to set the next target.

"We have a very young squad - we can win it a third time in a row,"

said the skipper.

At 32, Marquinhos is an elder statesman of the team. His centre-back partner William Pacheco is 24, Nuno Mendes 23, Joao Neves 21, Vitinha 26, Khvicha Kvaratskhelia 25, Bradley Barcola 23, many still to hit their peak.

French winger Desire Doue, only 20, also had his eyes on the next prize, before he had even lifted this one.

"The first one was incredible, but more than anything we had that desire to get the second, to make history once again and become legends," he told broadcaster M6. "I love this club so much, and it's not over! We've got the second, we'll keep working and go get the third."

Record 15-time winners Real Madrid won the Champions League three times between 2016-2018. Before that the last teams to complete a hat-trick were Bayern Munich and Ajax in the 1970s. Real Madrid also won it five years running back at the competition's inception.



PSG president Nasser al-Khelaifi and coach Luis Enrique during a celebration event at the Champ-de-Mars in Paris yesterday. (Reuters)

"We can talk about the back-to-back-to-back. We can talk about these type of objectives, our club is worthy of it, our supporters," said Luis Enrique.

Although the coach was reticent to proclaim his side would clinch the trophy again, it was clear he enjoyed the sound of the phrase. In many ways Luis Enrique is the

defining figure of this PSG project, with the commercial superstars departed, Lionel Messi, Neymar, Kylian Mbappe and many more. After Mbappe left in 2024, Lucho, as he is nicknamed, said his team would become even stronger.

"Having a player who moved wherever he wanted meant there were parts of the game I couldn't

control... next year, I'll control everything. Everything," he said. And he did. And it made PSG stronger. The club still invested heavily in players, but player tailored to Luis Enrique's plans, willing to run endlessly for the collective, and keep egos in check.

Doue, Kvaratskhelia, Pacheco, Neves, arrived, among others. Luis Enrique converted Ousmane Dembele into a brilliant central attacker, who presses impressively, after several flaky seasons at Barcelona beset by injuries. Dembele won the Ballon d'Or last season. The coach said the team would strengthen to help achieve a potential three-peat, but it was tricky to find ones who would not upset the balance and culture he has created.

"It's very difficult to find the right ones to play in our team," Luis Enrique told reporters. "We do need new players to refresh certain positions, but we've been champions of Europe for two years... piano piano (slowly, slowly)."

The coach said he was "not interested" in whether he was becoming a legend or not, after winning the competition for a third time, a feat achieved by just four other managers.

Yet it is clear from inside and outside, the effect the Asturian has had on a club built in his image, capable of creating a modern football dynasty.

"His fingerprints are all over this team," said Arsenal coach Mikel Arteta, admitting he was inspired by Luis Enrique. Dembele, who netted PSG's goal from the penalty spot, summed up Luis Enrique's status by posting a photo of the coach on his Instagram feed after the triumph, along with the phrase "You can't understand it," the name of a documentary about the coach. Everyone does understand it now. Two straight Champions League trophies are explanation enough. Luis Enrique is an endurance racer, who ran an ultra-marathon in the Sahara desert. So this might just be the beginning.

## Qatar quartet wins silver at Asian Youth Championships



Qatar athletes Youssef Abdulaziz, Mohammed Abdullah, Mohammed Mousa and Samir Mousa celebrate winning the silver medal in the 4x400m relay race at the Asian Youth Championships in Hong Kong. The quartet clocked a new Qatari time of 3:05.06. In other key performances, Qatar's Faisal Abdullah won silver medal in the 400m hurdles, Hamad Daawi al-Sultan bagged a bronze medal in the discus throw while Abdullah al-Ibadullah clinched a bronze in the pole vault competition. Ibadullah recorded a new personal best and secured a qualification for the World Youth Championships to be held in Oregon in the US from August 5-9, 2026.

## Injury halts Qatar's charge at Ostrava Elite 16 event



Qatar's beach volleyball stars Cherif Younousse and Ahmed Tijan saw their impressive run at the Ostrava Elite16 come to an unfortunate end after they were forced to withdraw during their semi-final against Sweden's Olympic champions David Ahman and Jonatan Hellvig yesterday. The Qatari duo had split the opening two sets, losing the first 18-21 before responding with a 21-19 victory in the second, when Younousse was unable to continue due to injury.

### CRICKET

# Kohli, bowlers lead RCB to second straight IPL crown

BENGALURU RESTRICTED GUJARAT TO 155-8, A TOTAL THEY CHASED DOWN WITH 12 BALLS TO SPARE

AFP  
Ahmedabad, India

**V**irat Kohli's unbeaten 75 and inspired bowling led Royal Challengers Bengaluru to their second straight Indian Premier League title with a five-wicket win over Gujarat Titans yesterday.

Bengaluru restricted Gujarat to 155-8, a total they chased down with 12 balls to spare after Kohli reached his fifth half-century of the season in a lopsided final in Ahmedabad.

Kohli sealed victory with a six to cap a magnificent 42-ball innings featuring nine fours and three sixes, then pointed to the stands as Bengaluru players sprinted out to celebrate.

Bengaluru, led by Rajat Patidar, and Kohli have been on a roll since they won their first IPL crown at the 18th attempt last year. They finished top of the 10-team table after this season's league stage.

"Stuff you dream of. Thought of this moment many times, wanting to hit the winning run," said the 37-year-old Kohli, who was named player of the match.

"Felt really relaxed coming in. The team we have gives confidence to see any kind of situation through. Knew exactly what to do in the chase. Such is the demand (with) super young players pushing you to up the ante."

Kohli added: "We knew what kind of ability we have in the group. And we just said one thing, 'If we stick to our cricket, if we execute our plans, we are the best team in the competition!'"

Kohli's iconic number 18 jersey dominated the stands at the Narendra Modi Stadium, the world's biggest cricket ground which recorded an official attendance of over 90,000 spectators on Sunday.

Kohli and fellow opener Venkatesh Iyer, who hit 32 off 16



Royal Challengers Bengaluru's Rajat Patidar lifts the trophy as he celebrates with teammates after winning the Indian Premier League title in Ahmedabad, India, yesterday. Bengaluru beat Gujarat Titans in the final. (Reuters)

balls, got Bengaluru off to a flying start in a 62-run partnership.

Mohammed Siraj broke the stand as he dismissed Iyer and Kagiso Rabada removed Devdutt Padikkal from the other end.

Rashid Khan struck twice in one over to send back Patidar for 15 and Krunal Pandya to raise Gujarat's hopes. But Tim David and Kohli put on 41 runs to steady the chase. David fell for 24 but Kohli saw the team through with Jitesh Sharma

for company. Patidar joined an elite group of IPL captains to win back-to-back titles. MS Dhoni achieved the feat with Chennai Super Kings in 2010 and 2011, while Rohit Sharma led Mumbai Indians to glory in 2019 and 2020.

Bengaluru's quicks set up the victory as Rasikh Salam stood out with 3-27 in a disciplined attack alongside Josh Hazlewood and Bhuvneshwar Kumar, who both took two wickets.

The trio justified the decision to put Gujarat in to bat, striking early and regularly. Only Washington Sundar offered much resistance as he scored a defiant 50 not out.

Hazlewood landed the first blow as he dismissed skipper Shubman Gill for 10 with Bengaluru captain Rajat Patidar taking a fine running catch. Kumar dislodged the other opener, Sai Sudharsan, for 12 in the next over. Both Gill and Sudharsan were in the race for the Orange Cap

awarded to the top scorer in the IPL season, but Rajasthan Royals' 15-year-old Vaibhav Sooryavanshi ended top of the list with 776 runs.

Gill (732) and Sudharsan (722) finished second and third. Kohli was fourth with 675 runs, including one century. Nishant Sindhu, who made 20, and Jos Buttler attempted to steady the Gujarat innings but struggled against a miserly attack and soon Salam removed Sindhu.

"We have apex predators but couldn't get going in the power-play," said Gujarat batting coach Matthew Hayden. "I thought it was an incredible bowling performance by RCB."

**BRIEF SCORES**  
**Royal Challengers Bengaluru 161 for 5** (Kohli 75\*, Jitesh 11\*, Rashid 2-25) **beat Gujarat Titans 155 for 8** (Washington 50\*, Salam 3-27, Bhuvneshwar 2-29) **by 5 wickets**

### CYCLING

## Sublime Vingegaard wins Giro d'Italia to capture his fourth Grand Tour title

Reuters  
Rome, Italy

**D**enmark's Jonas Vingegaard won the 2026 Giro d'Italia yesterday to clinch his fourth Grand Tour title, having also won the Tour de France twice before his triumph at the Vuelta a Espana last year.

The Visma-Lease a Bike rider, competing at the Giro for the first time, effectively secured the pink jersey on Saturday when he launched a decisive attack during the climb to Piancavallo on stage 20, extending his overall lead to more than five minutes ahead of second-placed Felix Gall.

Frenchman Paul Magnier (Soudal Quick-step), who won three stages, prevailed in the points classification.

The final stage in Rome concluded with a sprint as Italian Jonathan Milan (Lidl-Trek) thrilled his home crowd with a spectacular attack to win the stage.

Vingegaard, 29, finished the race soon after, surrounded by his teammates, as he became the eighth man to win all three Grand Tours, and the first from Denmark.

#### LIFELONG DREAM

"It's amazing. It's something I dreamed of my whole life," an emotional Vingegaard said.

"It's a special day for me... I am lost for words."

The race, a 3,459-km journey that started in Nessebar, Bulgaria, on May 8, ended with a 131-km final stage in Rome, including eight laps of a 9.5-km circuit.

Vingegaard and his teammates celebrated as they began the final

stage in Rome, posing for pictures, distributing sweets among race staff and ceremonially riding in the front along with local favourite Giulio Ciccone of Lidl-Trek, who won the mountains classification.

Afonso Eulalio, in the white jersey for the best young rider of the race, also celebrated with his Bahrain Victorious teammates, as the Portuguese 24-year-old finished sixth after holding the overall lead for nine stages until Vingegaard overtook him in the 14th stage.

#### MILAN WINS IN ROME

As the peloton entered the circuit, early attacks from Nico Denz, Remy Rochas and Tobias Bayer proved to be ineffective as the peloton remained just over 10 seconds behind them.

Going into the final lap, it was two Italians, Filippo Ganna and

Matteo Sobrero, charging down the front with Belgian Jasper Stuyven close behind, with a 19-second lead over the peloton.

But with three kilometres left, Lukas Kubis led the way as the peloton caught up with the breakaway group. Then, in the final kilometre, Milan scampered to the front to clinch his only stage win of the race.

Vingegaard, who had to celebrate his Vuelta a Espana win in a car park after the final stage was cut short by anti-Israel protests, was met by his family at the finish.

"It gives me tears in my eyes. They are always there for me," Vingegaard said, as his voice broke.

Vingegaard, who has earned five straight top-two finishes in the Tour de France, will challenge for his third title in the race when it begins on July 4.



Team Visma Lease a Bike Danish rider Jonas Vingegaard wearing the overall leader's pink jersey holds the trophy as he celebrates on the podium after winning the Giro d'Italia in Rome yesterday. (AFP)

FRENCH OPEN

# Swiatek exits, Zverev eases into quarters

Polish third seed endures a miserable 25th birthday as she went down to Kostyuk

AFP  
Paris

**F**our-time French Open champion Iga Swiatek exited Roland Garros on Sunday as the top seeds continued to fall at the start of the second week, while Alexander Zverev booked his spot in the quarter-finals.

The Polish third seed endured a miserable 25th birthday as she went down 7-5, 6-1 to Madrid Open winner Marta Kostyuk.

Since winning Roland Garros in her second appearance at the tournament in 2020, Swiatek had never gone more than two years without hoisting aloft the Coupe Suzanne Lenglen, but after Aryna Sabalenka ended her bid to win a fourth consecutive French Open in the semi-finals last year, she has lost her unbeatable status on clay.

Indeed since last winning in Paris in 2024, Swiatek has only lifted three titles in the two subsequent seasons.

"I feel, like, for sure I lost today because Marta used the opportunity, and I was super tense," she said.

"It is harder a bit to handle stress for me in, like, (the) last year. So I feel like today I felt off, you know, and I did mistakes that I didn't want to do, and I wanted to play safe, but the ball flew everywhere. Suddenly these feelings came back, and I tried to work on it with my dialogue inside, but it was tough today. Yeah, so it all kind of went drastically down, and I played worse and worse."

After breaking Kostyuk in the first set to edge 4-3 ahead, Swiatek's serve totally deserted her and she failed to hold again as the Ukrainian hit back to claim the opener and then raced through the second frame.

For Kostyuk, reaching a first quarter-final at Roland Garros was just the latest high mark in a fine clay-court season, in which she claimed the 250-level event in Rouen, as well as a first WTA 1000 title in the Spanish capital.

Elina Svitolina next stands between her compatriot and the last four after she fought back to beat Swiss 11th seed Belinda Bencic 4-6, 6-4, 6-0. The seventh seed has reached the quarter-finals at the French Open on five previous occasions but has failed to ever go beyond that mark.

After winning a first WTA 1000 title in eight years earlier in May at the Italian Open, Svitolina's last-eight encounter with Kostyuk will pit against each other the two winners of the main warm-up events to Roland Garros. "It's exciting. Definitely she's been playing really well," Svitolina said of Kostyuk, who is on a 15-match win streak on the red dirt. "I feel like it's going to be an exciting battle for Ukraine, as well, you know, that there will be one Ukrainian in the semis. Yeah, I think it's really cool!"



Germany's Alexander Zverev plays a forehand return to Netherlands' Jesper de Jong during the French Open in Paris. (AFP)



Ukraine's Marta Kostyuk celebrates after her win over Poland's Iga Swiatek. (AFP)

**'HANDLING THE SITUATIONS'**

Sorana Cirstea continued her remarkable renaissance during her farewell season on tour as the 36-year-old bested Chinese world number 148 Wang Xiyu 6-3, 7-6 (7/4). The Romanian will face Russian eighth seed Mirra Andreeva in what will be her first quarter-final appearance at the French Open in 17 years.

Teenager Andreeva, who defeated 170th-ranked Swiss Jil Teichmann in straight sets,

will be targeting a second semi-final in three years at Roland Garros.

Rising Spanish star Rafael Nadal has been no stranger to lengthy matches in his debut Roland Garros campaign but the 19-year-old's five-set win over fellow countryman Pablo Carreno Busta was even longer drawn out than it would otherwise have been as the heatwave that defined the first week subsided to rain, which caused brief delays in play.

Jodar battled back from two sets down to beat the 34-year-old 4-6, 4-6, 6-1, 6-2, 6-2 and progress to the last eight.

His next opponent is the highest-ranked man left in the draw and the prime contender to claim a maiden Grand Slam crown, German second seed Zverev. The 29-year-old three-time major finalist eased through the fourth round with a 7-6 (7/3), 6-4, 6-1 win over 106th-ranked Dutch lucky loser Jesper de Jong.

Despite only dropping a set so far en route to an eighth quarter-final appearance at Roland Garros, Zverev refused to be drawn on the question of finally breaking his Grand Slam duck.

"I will focus on the matches that are ahead of me. This is the only thing that I can control," he insisted.

"I focused on De Jong, I played a good match. I won. I'm going to focus on Jordan next and hopefully play a good match. That's the only thing that is in my concern. I feel like I'm handling the situations quite well, and I will do everything possible to continue doing that."

Later, two-time French Open finalist Casper Ruud will face Novak Djokovic's teenage conqueror, Joao Fonseca, in the night session and Jakub Mensik takes on Andrey Rublev.

**Sabalenka vs Osaka first women's French Open night match since 2023**

Paris: World number one Aryna Sabalenka will take on fellow four-time Grand Slam champion Naomi Osaka in the first women's French Open night-session match since 2023 today.

Tournament organisers have been subject to repeated criticism from some women's players and fans for scheduling 30 successive men's matches in the primetime night slot since Sabalenka played Sloane Stephens in the last 16 on June 4, 2023. But two of the sport's biggest stars will end that run on Court Philippe Chatrier in the fourth round. "I'm so used to not playing night matches here and playing night matches in, like, US Open or something like that that I don't even associate this tournament with night matches," Osaka said after her third-round win over Iva Jovic.

Sabalenka has previously criticised the lack of women's matches under the lights, saying last year that the WTA stars "deserve equal treatment" to the men. "I definitely agree that we deserve to be put on a bigger stage, better timing, more people watching," she said.

Tournament director Amelie Mauresmo, a former women's world number one, has previously insisted that the preference for men's matches has only ever been to avoid a shorter session.

Tickets for today's night session retail for between 85 euros (\$99) and 210 euros (\$245). "The message has never been that the girls are not worthy to play at night," said Mauresmo last year. "I'm talking, and we are talking about potential match lengths. Since men's tennis is played at the best-of-five sets, three sets will be played at a minimum."

Mauresmo has also in the past ruled out extending the night session to two matches to avoid finishes well into the early hours of the morning.

Sabalenka and Osaka are two of three Grand Slam champions remaining in the Roland Garros draw, alongside Madison Keys.

Former world number three Elina Svitolina was pleased to see the schedule. "I think it's exciting for the tournament, for the people to witness the women's match," said the Ukrainian after reaching the Roland Garros quarter-finals for a sixth time.

"I think of course it's (an) important step for women's tennis. Yeah, it's, I think, a good move forward."

The men's event is already guaranteed to produce a new major champion, after early exits for Jannik Sinner and Novak Djokovic.

MOTOGP

## Bezzecchi spoils Ducati's centenary party with Italian Grand Prix victory

Reuters  
Scarperia e San Piero, Italy

**M**arco Bezzecchi beat teammate Jorge Martin to win the Italian Grand Prix as manufacturers Aprilia ruined rivals Ducati's centenary celebrations on home turf in Mugello after Francesco Bagnaia briefly led the MotoGP race.

Ducati's Bagnaia, a three-time winner in Mugello from 2022 to 2024, led the race until there were 10 laps left when Bezzecchi made his move before Spaniard Martin also moved past the Italian to drop him down to third. There was no stopping Bezzecchi after he moved into the lead as the Italian rider fulfilled a childhood dream by taking the chequered flag over three seconds ahead of Martin for his first win at the famous circuit.

"It was a dream I wanted to achieve since I was a kid," Bezzecchi said after the Aprilia team threw him into the air during wild celebrations in the paddock. "Thank you from the bottom of my heart. Today we went there, we had fun. Thank you all guys, you are fantastic," he added in a message to the fans who streamed on to the circuit.

Bezzecchi now leads Martin by 17 points in the championship after seven rounds.

Meanwhile, Bagnaia's late heroics denied Aprilia a podium lockout when Trackhouse rider Ai Ogura briefly took third on the final lap before the Italian took the place back just before the finish line.

As the red lights went out, it was the two factory Aprilia riders that battled for the lead while the two Ducatis slotted in behind them af-



Team Aprilia Racing's Marco Bezzecchi now leads teammate Jorge Martin by 17 points in the championship after seven rounds. (AFP)

ter sprint winner Raul Fernandez went very wide on turn one and fell from second to 17th. It was pole sitter Bezzecchi who led the pack of riders while Bagnaia moved up four places to slot in behind his Italian compatriot on home turf, with Martin and Marc Marquez chasing them down in third and fourth, respectively.

Bezzecchi could not hold on to the lead for long, however, as Bagnaia used the Aprilia's slipstream to surge ahead on the start-finish straight. Marquez, making his return from double surgery on his foot and shoulder, was involved in a tense battle for fourth with KTM's Pedro Acosta as the two Spaniards constantly swapped positions.

Up front, Bezzecchi stayed on Bagnaia's rear wheel and he finally made his move with 10 laps left, using the slipstream again to take

the lead. That was all the Aprilia rider needed as he peeled away and built a commanding lead while Bagnaia turned his attention to Martin closing in behind him.

The inevitable overtake came on lap 16 when Martin pounced to move up to second, with Bagnaia aware the Aprilia was faster as he was overtaken on the inside of turn one. "It was really tough because in the last laps I was struggling a lot with the rear grip," Bagnaia said. "I saw that the Aprilias were doing a fantastic job. I just tried to leave no space for Ai. But thanks to everyone, thanks to my team that did a fantastic job. We really deserve this kind of results."

Ogura finished less than a tenth of a second behind Bagnaia while VR46 Racing's Fabio Di Giannantonio rounded out the top five. Acosta finished sixth ahead of Marquez in seventh.

FOOTBALL

## Spain star Yamal admits he feared missing World Cup due to injury

AFP  
Madrid

**S**panish national team star Lamine Yamal admitted he had been "afraid" of missing the World Cup because of the hamstring injury he is still recovering from.

The 18-year-old suffered the injury as he scored a penalty for Barcelona against Celta Vigo on April 22. "Internally I was praying it was nothing, that it was just cramp or something like that, because the World Cup was very close and I knew that a hamstring injury is never a short-term thing," said the winger.

"I was afraid it might be serious and, above all, that even if it wasn't serious, I could suffer a setback and end up missing the



World Cup." Spain coach Luis de la Fuente is hopeful he will have him available for La Roja's opening game at the

World Cup against Cape Verde on June 15. Yesterday, the player warmed up with his team-mates in Spain's first training session before heading to work in the gym. "It's also true that it helps knowing you're going to play a World Cup, so mentally it's like you haven't played a single game all season, and I'm really eager to make my debut (at the tournament)," he added.

Yamal, who starred as Spain won Euro 2024 in Germany, said the World Cup is the "biggest thing" in football and he has dreamt "a thousand times" about lifting the trophy.

If Yamal does not make the first match he is expected to play some part against Saudi Arabia in the second on June 21, and Uruguay on June 27 in the other Group H fixtures.

**Niemann beats Gooch in playoff to win LIV Golf Korea**

**Busan, South Korea:** Chile's Joaquin Niemann outlasted American Talor Gooch in a playoff to win LIV Golf Korea, as Bryson DeChambeau fell just short with a final-day charge.

Niemann birdied the par-4 first extra hole at Asiad Country Club in Busan after a sublime approach shot to claim his first win of the season on the troubled breakaway circuit.

Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund (PIF) announced last month that it would cease bankrolling LIV after the 2026 season.

PIF had reportedly ploughed more than \$5bn dollars into the breakaway circuit since it was

founded in 2021.

Niemann claimed his eighth career victory on the circuit and admitted he was "pretty nervous" going into the playoff. "I think my heart rate is a little bit up," the 27-year-old said. "I feel like it's just part of it. I just love this game. I love being in these moments."

Two-time major champion DeChambeau finished one stroke behind Niemann and Gooch after a 5-under-par final round. DeChambeau, last season's LIV Golf Korea champion, had six birdies and a bogey after starting the day three shots off the pace.

"There was times where it felt

amazing and times where it just leaked on me a little bit," the American said. "I gave myself some chances, just wasn't my day today."

Spain's Jon Rahm finished eight shots behind the leaders. DeChambeau told reporters this week that he was "surprised" that LIV's Saudi backers had pulled their funding.

PIF's abrupt withdrawal, announced on April 30, plunged LIV into uncertainty, with executives scrambling to create a new business plan to attract investors and sponsors. CEO Scott O'Neil is reportedly seeking \$250mn to keep the league afloat.

## SPOTLIGHT

## Qatar arrive in US as World Cup countdown enters final stretch

By Sports Reporter  
Santa Barbara, California

**Q**atar's FIFA World Cup campaign moved a step closer as Al Annabi arrived in Santa Barbara, California, in the United States ahead of the global football showpiece, which kicks off on June 11.

The delegation was welcomed by Qatar's Ambassador to the United States, HE Sheikh Mishaal bin Hamad al-Thani, who extended his best wishes to the squad.

The tournament will mark Qatar's second consecutive appearance at the World Cup following their historic participation as hosts in 2022.

Drawn in Group B, Julen Lopetegui's side will face Switzerland, Canada and Bosnia and Herzegovina as they aim to reach the knockout stage for the first time.

Qatar open their campaign against Switzerland at Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara on June 13 before meeting co-hosts Canada in Vancouver on June 18. Al Annabi will conclude the group stage against Bosnia and Herzegovina in Seattle on June 24.

The arrival in the United States came shortly after Qatar suffered a narrow 1-0 defeat to Ireland in an international friendly at the Aviva Stadium in Dublin on Thursday.

Lopetegui, who recently trimmed his squad to 28 players, must now exclude two more members before FIFA's June 1 dead-



Qatar's squad and support staff pose with Qatar's Ambassador to the United States, HE Sheikh Mishaal bin Hamad al-Thani after their arrival in the United States.

line for the submission of the final 26-man World Cup roster.

Qatar will complete their preparations with a final warm-up match against El Salvador in Los Angeles on June 6 before

turning their full attention to the World Cup.

The Qatar team will set up camp in Santa Barbara, California, during the group stage, having chosen Westmont College

as its official training site. Nestled in the foothills of Montecito, the campus was selected from FIFA's approved venues and will serve as Al Annabi's base between matches in the opening round.

Training sessions are expected to take place at Westmont's Thorrington Field throughout the group stage, with relocation only if the team advances to the knockout rounds.

## FOOTBALL

## Arsenal paint London red with victory parade

Arteta's side set aside loss to PSG with bus parade celebrating Premier League crown

Reuters  
London

**H**undreds of thousands of Arsenal fans from far and wide lined the streets of north London yesterday chanting and lighting red flares as they celebrated their club's first Premier League title in 22 years.

The players celebrated in an open-top bus along with the gleaming Premier League trophy that the club had finally got their hands on after Arsene Wenger's 'Invincibles' last won it in the 2003-04 season. Arsenal had clinched the Premier League title prior to the final game of the season when they had an unassailable lead over second-placed Manchester City, who eventually finished seven points behind Mikel Arteta's side.

It was Arsenal's first trophy since Arteta won the FA Cup in his debut season as manager in 2020 as a dream was finally fulfilled for the club after finishing second three years in a row prior to this season.

Even Saturday's Champions League final loss to Paris St Germain on penalties in Budapest could not dampen the enthusiasm of the fans, with fireworks and vuvuzelas adding to the noise.

Some climbed trees, roofs and traffic lights in the hope of catching a glimpse of Mikel Arteta's side. The good-natured celebrations were in stark contrast to scenes of violence witnessed in France overnight where revelry following Paris St Germain's Champions League win was marred by unrest. Hundreds of people were arrested across France following clashes with police, burglary, and vandalism.

The Arsenal women's team joined in the celebrations following their FIFA Champions Cup triumph this season.

Declan Rice, who was signed for a club-record fee of 105m pounds (\$141.32m) in 2023, said the men's side had sent a message to those who mocked Arsenal in the past. "They're pointing and they're laughing,



Reams of Arsenal supporters lined streets in the north London to watch their heroes show off the Premier League trophy from the upper deck of an open-top bus. (Reuters)

And what happened? They're not laughing anymore. I love this team. I love this manager," Rice said. "To see the joy we can give people is crazy. Next year, we're coming back for more."

Theo Grant, a 22-year-old Arsenal fan was confident the club would return to the Champions League final again next season. "Honestly, it's going to give the players more motivation for next year. It's going to

be the best part," Grant said. "We're going to be in the final in Madrid next year. I'm going to get my tickets!"

Julien Guillenat, a French Arsenal fan, said: "We're not European champions but we are champions of England, which is what matters. So we're happy to celebrate with everyone."

"I feel that we're going to be fine next season. I feel like a weight has been lifted

off the shoulders and this season was like on a knife edge," Mathieu Garnier, a 44-year-old Arsenal fan, said. "Three years in a row second and finally this pressure is behind us and these boys are going to be flying. I believe that."

The parade started shortly after 2pm and took more than two hours to complete a nine-kilometre route close to the club's Emirates stadium in the area of Islington.

## South Africa to depart for World Cup today after visa 'debacle'

**Cape Town:** South Africa will depart for the World Cup today, a day later than planned, after all the players received their visas to travel through the United States, sports minister Gayton McKenzie confirmed.

The team had been due to leave on a charter flight for their training base in the Mexican city of Pachuca yesterday but that was postponed while the South African Football Association (SAFA) tried to sort out the paperwork.

"All Bafana Bafana players received their visas to travel to the USA. Outstanding is assistant coach, team doctor, head of security and one analyst. The charter will leave tomorrow (Monday)," McKenzie said on X.

He had earlier issued a furious rebuke to SAFA over the paperwork issues, calling them "embarrassing and grossly unfair towards the players and coaching staff", adding "we are being made to look like fools".

The football association confirmed in a statement that the team had been unable to fly in the morning as planned due to "challenges regarding visas" for some players and officials.

South Africa kick off the World Cup in Mexico City on June 11, and are appearing at the global finals for the first time since they were hosts themselves in 2010.

Coach Hugo Broos had previously spoken of wanting to be in Mexico by June 1 at the latest to allow his players to recover from jetlag and acclimatise to the altitude, though they will now arrive a day later. Pachuca is around 680 metres (2,200 feet) further above sea level than Johannesburg at 2,432m.

South Africa are due to play Jamaica in Mexico on Friday in a final warm-up fixture. An administrative bungle in qualifying almost cost them their place at the finals when their 2-0 victory over Lesotho was overturned after they fielded an ineligible player in Teboho Mokoena, who was suspended for the clash.

## Constitution River claims Qatar Prix du Jockey Club Group 1 contest



The QREC-sponsored Qatar Prix du Jockey Club, one of France's premier Classic races for three-year-olds, was won by Constitution River yesterday. Hamad bin Abdulrahman al-Attiyah, QREC Chairman, presented the trophies following the Group 1 contest, also known as the French Derby, which attracted a high-class field and produced a memorable one-two-three for trainer Aidan O'Brien. Constitution River confirmed his class with a determined success, becoming a Group 1 winner and taking his record to four wins from five career starts. Trained by O'Brien, ridden by Ryan Moore, and carrying the colours of M. Tabor, D. Smith, Mrs J. Magnier and Westerberg, Constitution River came into the race with a progressive profile and proved his growing credentials. Hawk Mountain finished second, with Montreal taking third.



## Suarez, Nandez miss out as Bielsa names Uruguay's World Cup squad

Uruguay's Luis Suarez and Nahitan Nandez were the big names who missed out on selection for the World Cup as coach Marcelo Bielsa named his final 26-man squad.

Suarez, 39, had left the door open for an international return, saying he would reverse his retirement if needed in the national side after a 20-month absence. Nandez, 30, played for Uruguay in several World Cup qualifiers but Bielsa has phased out veterans in favour of a squad with players in their prime. The team is built around the defensive spine led by Ronald Araujo, Jose Maria Gimenez and Mathias Olivera. The presence of Federico Valverde, Rodrigo Bentancur, Manuel Ugarte and Nicolas de la Cruz offers Bielsa the energy and pressing intensity he craves in midfield while the forward line

is led by Darwin Nunez.

Uruguay are in Group H and play their first match against Saudi Arabia on June 15, followed by games against Cape Verde and Spain.

**Squad: Goalkeepers:** Sergio Rochet, Fernando Muslera, Santiago Mele

**Defenders:** Guillermo Varela, Ronald Araujo, Jose Maria Gimenez, Santiago Bueno, Sebastian Caceres, Mathias Olivera, Joaquin Piquerez, Matias Vina

**Midfielders:** Manuel Ugarte, Emiliano Martinez, Rodrigo Bentancur, Federico Valverde, Agustin Canobbio, Juan Manuel Sanabria, Giorgian De Arrascaeta, Nicolas De La Cruz, Rodrigo Zalazar, Facundo Pellistri, Maximiliano Araujo, Brian Rodriguez

**Forwards:** Rodrigo Aguirre, Federico Vinas, Darwin Nunez