

To subscribe  
**GULF TIMES**  
Newspaper  
Please call  
**444 666 35**



CRICKET | Page 2

Bethell upstages  
Sooryavanshi  
as England beat  
India in 2nd T20



TENNIS | Page 3

Swiatek's  
Wimbledon title  
defence ended by  
Philippines' Eala

To advertise here,  
PLEASE CALL  
**444 666 21**

Sunday, July 5, 2026  
Muharram 20, 1448 AH

# GULF TIMES SPORT



## MATCH REPORT

# Morocco end Canada World Cup dream to reach quarters

OUNAHI SCORED TWICE AS THE ATLAS LIONS BEAT THE CO-HOSTS 3-0 TO ENTER THE LAST-EIGHT STAGE



Morocco's forward Brahim Diaz and teammates celebrate after winning the World Cup round of 16 match against Canada at the Houston Stadium in Houston yesterday. (AFP)



Morocco's Azzedine Ounahi scores his team's second goal past Canada's goalkeeper in Houston yesterday. (AFP)

Reuters  
Houston

**A**zzedine Ounahi's second-half brace helped Morocco overcome a tepid start for a 3-0 victory over Canada in Houston yesterday to advance to the quarter-finals for a second straight World Cup.

Morocco, unbeaten in 34 matches, plays June 9 in Boston against the winner of the France-Paraguay match from later.

Ounahi gave Morocco the lead in the 50th minute and added another in the 82nd minute on a breakout before Soufiane Rahimi scored against a pressing Canada in the eighth minute of stoppage time.

Canada's dream run ended after failing to take advantage of early domination.

They had never before this year advanced out of the group stage, but did so and won their first knockout match, 1-0 against South Africa in the round of 32.

Morocco is No. 6 in the FIFA

world rankings; Canada 30th.

There were four yellow cards apiece and Canada had 24 fouls to 14 for Morocco.

After a listless first half, Morocco stunned Canada with a goal from nowhere on only their second shot of the match.

Achraf Hakimi lined up for a free kick to the right of the goal after a yellow card, the seventh of the match, to Canada's Luc de Fougerolles for a sloppy foul on Soufiane Rahimi.

Hakimi put the ball on the ground to Ounahi on the edge of

the box and he one-timed a shot to the right corner with the Canadians caught a step behind.

In the 77th minute, Canada's Jonathan David sent a free kick from outside the box over the bar and a minute later, teammate Tajon Buchanan's long strike forced a diving stop at the left post by Moroccan goalkeeper Yassine Bounou.

That proved crucial when Ounahi took a layoff pass from Brahim Diaz to make it 2-0.

Morocco suffered a major blow in the 22nd minute when lead-

ing scorer Ismael Saibari had to leave with a possible hamstring injury.

The 25-year-old attacking midfielder scored in all three group matches and on Wednesday it was announced he was joining Germany's Bayern Munich from Dutch side PSV Eindhoven.

Canada looked nothing like a nervous team in their first round of 16 going against a 2022 World Cup semifinalist.

As is the style of American-born coach Jesse Marsch, the Canadians were on the attack from

the start.

Within five minutes, Bounou made a close-range save on David and followed soon after with a punch of a Stephen Eustaquio corner, but he made his best stop in the 12th after Canada's pressure resulted in a giveaway.

Tani Oluwaseyi got the ball at the top of the box, made a sharp turn then fired a low shot that required Bounou to make the save with his outstretched left leg.

By the hydration break, Canada had all four shots, two on target, in the match.

## PREVIEW

# Norway pin hopes on Haaland against Brazil

AFP  
East Rutherford, United States

**E**rling Haaland has feasted on defences throughout the World Cup, and Norway will need their talismanic striker at his ruthless best if they are to topple Brazil in Sunday's last-16 clash.

Haaland's late winner against Ivory Coast -- his fifth goal at the tournament -- secured Norway's first victory in a World Cup knockout game, marking a memorable return to the global stage after a 28-year absence.

Now they are hoping to repeat their famous 1998 group-stage victory over five-time world champions Brazil and earn a place in the quarter-finals. Haaland may have rated Norway's chances of defeating Brazil as "very small" but history offers encouragement.

The Norwegians have never lost to the Selecao, with two wins and two draws from their four previous meetings.

Coach Stale Solbakken was a midfielder in the squad when Norway beat Brazil 2-1 to reach the knockout phase almost three decades ago before exiting in the last 16.

"Brazil are favourites, of course they are, but we are hopeful that we will give them a match, and we are not playing the game for fun - we are playing to win the game and to reach the quarter-finals," said Solbakken.

"It's possible, but it's very difficult."

But Solbakken believes he has "the greatest goalscorer in the world" at his disposal in Haaland. The Manchester City star has scored in each of his last 13 competitive internationals, netting 25 times during that run.

"It's amazing to have him in the team, we're lucky to have him and it's just about giving him as many opportunities as possible," said Norway captain Martin Odegaard.

Brazil have a trump card of their own in Vinicius Junior, whose four goals at the tournament have made him the team's leading scorer and most influential player.

- "We can stop anyone" -

He became the first Brazilian since Ronaldo and Rivaldo in 2002 to score in all three group stage matches at a World Cup. That was the last time Brazil lifted the trophy.

"I think every team needs to set up the team right and try to stop him," said Solbakken, who joked his team would set up in a "7-3-0" formation.

"It's not easy. You have seen that so far in the World Cup. We will try to do our best."

Norway goalkeeper Orjan Nyland is well aware of the damage Vinicius can inflict, having spent the past three seasons in La Liga with Sevilla. He pointed to a strong qualifying campaign as evidence though that the team has every reason to believe they can knock out Brazil.

"Because of what we've done over the last two or three years and what we've achieved so far... we know we can stop anyone," said



Norway's Erling Haaland with teammates during a training session yesterday. (Reuters)

35-year-old Nyland. Brazil are hoping Carlo Ancelotti's proven winning pedigree can return them to the top.

They needed a stoppage-time winner from Gabriel Martinelli to see off Japan in the last 32, Brazil's first comeback win in a World Cup knockout game since their 2-1 victory over England in 2002.

"Ancelotti is a surreal guy," said

Martinelli. "At half-time, he gave us confidence, he told us that we would score and come back. It didn't matter when the goal would be scored. We sensed his calmness. It relaxed us."

Brazil must overcome another recent stumbling block, having failed to beat a European opponent in the knockout stage in each of the last five World Cups.

They lost on penalties to Croatia in the 2022 quarter-finals.

Matheus Cunha said Brazil had dedicated "a good part" of their training preparing to counter Norway's aerial threat, but warned it would be a mistake to focus solely on Haaland.

"I think we have to concentrate not only on him, but on several Norway players," said the Man-

chester United forward. "They have a very strong physical presence throughout the team."

Lucas Paqueta is ruled out with a hamstring injury, but Raphinha could be available after returning to training on Friday.

The Barcelona winger has missed the past two games with a thigh injury picked up in Brazil's second match.



## CRICKET

# Bethell powers England to first win over India

The English power-hitter smashes unbeaten 76 with five sixes

Reuters  
Manchester

Jacob Bethell guided England to an impressive four-wicket victory in the second T20 against India yesterday as 15-year-old Vaibhav Sooryavanshi made his eagerly-awaited India debut at Old Trafford.

Sooryavanshi, the leading run scorer in the IPL this season, hit two sixes in a 10-ball 14 but it was Bethell who stole the show as England chased down a victory target of 191 with an over to spare.

The 22-year-old Bethell hit a thunderous unbeaten 76 from 46 balls, including five sixes, after Sam Curran had restricted India with 3-33 - his best figures in England in a T20 international.

Old Trafford was chosen as the stage for Sooryavanshi's unveiling in place of Sanju Samson as he became India's youngest cricketer at 15 years 99 days, breaking the record of Sachin Tendulkar.

His first two balls from Josh Tongue, making his T20 debut for England, beat him outside the off stump and the third went for four wides down the leg side. His first run in international cricket came off the next ball via a thick inside edge. Next up came the challenge of facing the recalled Jofra Archer on a quick, bouncy surface. He met it by getting down on one knee and helping Archer over fine leg for six.

There was another six from the first ball of Tongue's next over as he hoisted a length ball into the crowd on the leg side with a terrific pick-up.

England captain Harry Brook turned to the spin of Will Jacks and that proved to be Sooryavan-



England's Jacob Bethell celebrates as England hit the winning runs during the second Twenty20 against India at Old Trafford in Manchester yesterday. (AFP)

shi's undoing. Advancing down the wicket to try to put Jacks over the off side, he was beaten and England wicketkeeper Jos Buttler whipped off the bails to stump him as he fell to the ground attempting to get back into his crease.

The left-hander had at least played his part in an opening stand of 50 in 4.5 overs with Abhishek Sharma who went on to make 43 from 24 balls.

Kishan Ishan top-scored with 49 for India with captain Shreyas Iyer making 37 while Tilak Varma provided a late kick to the innings with 24 off 11 balls, including successive sixes off Archer. India reached 190-7 in their 20 overs.

Arshdeep Singh got India away

to a dream start with the ball, removing both England's openers for ducks in the first over. Phil Salt edged the first ball of the innings to wicketkeeper Ishan Kishan and Buttler clipped a delivery to mid-wicket where Varun Chakravathy clung on to a sharp catch.

Brook took the attack to India, hitting Arshdeep for three sixes in his next over but was caught behind down the leg side off his glove sweeping Axar Patel on review for 39 off 15 balls. It was Axar's 100th T20 wicket for India and he went on to post impressive figures of 1-20 off his four overs.

Arshdeep returned later to break a dangerous partnership between Tom Banton and Bethell

with Banton holing out at deep extra cover.

But Bethell turned the game by hitting Ravi Bishnoi with sixes off free hits from two back-foot no balls from the leg spinner. The 17th over went for 29 and from there England made it home despite the loss of Curran to a catch in the deep by Sooryavanshi.

The third game of the five-match T20 series takes place at Trent Bridge on Tuesday.

## BRIEF SCORES

**England 191 for 6** (Bethell 76\*, Brook 39, Arshdeep 3-40) **beat India 190 for 7** (Kishan 49, Abhishek 43, Curran 3-33) **by 4 wickets**

## SPOTLIGHT

## Sooryavanshi becomes youngest cricketer to debut for India



India's Vaibhav Sooryavanshi leaves the field after the second Twenty20 against England at Old Trafford in Manchester yesterday. (AFP)

Reuters  
Manchester

Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, aged 15, became the youngest male cricketer to debut for India after being named in the team for their Twenty20 International match against England yesterday, surpassing Sachin Tendulkar.

The teenager has been billed as one of the most exciting prospects in cricket since he made his Indian Premier League (IPL) debut for Rajasthan Royals in 2025 at just 14 years old.

He enhanced his reputation in this year's IPL, finishing as the leading run-scorer for Rajasthan with 776 runs in 16 matches, and breaking Chris Gayle's record for most sixes in a season.

He was named both the Most Valuable Player (MVP) and the Best Emerging Player in the competition, earning him a call-up to

the T20I series against Ireland and England.

Sooryavanshi was not given his debut against Ireland as India were dealt a shock 2-0 series defeat.

Sooryavanshi gave a glimpse of his remarkable ball-striking ability before falling to Will Jacks for 14 on his international debut against England yesterday.

Opening the batting in place of Sanju Samson, the schoolboy made 14 in 10 balls before being stumped by Jos Buttler off Jacks, with Sooryavanshi charging down the pitch and losing his balance attempting to make his ground.

But by then he had played two shots to demonstrate his extraordinary talent.

He cut a forlorn figure as he made his way back to the pavilion but, speaking at toss, India captain Shreyas Iyer said yesterday: "How he takes on bowlers shows his confidence. He doesn't take pressure at all. He's unflinching, it's good to have him around."

### LIST OF THE YOUNGEST MALE CRICKETERS TO HAVE MADE THEIR DEBUT FOR INDIA ACROSS FORMATS

Player	Age	Debut	Format	Against
Vaibhav Sooryavanshi	15 years, 99 days	4/7/2026	T20I	England
Sachin Tendulkar	16 years, 205 days	15/11/1989	Test	Pakistan
Parthiv Patel	17 years, 152 days	8/8/2002	Test	England
Maninder Singh	17 years, 193 days	23/12/1982	Test	Pakistan
Harbhajan Singh	17 years, 265 days	25/3/1998	Test	Australia

## England bid to emulate Lionesses and Red Roses in World Cup final

**London:** Nat Sciver-Brunt is adamant her side are ready for the "battle" as they bid to join football's Lionesses and rugby union's Red Roses by becoming the latest England women's team to win a major tournament on home soil.

The Lionesses' triumph at Euro 2022, winning the final at Wembley, was a break through moment for the side and it was a similar story when the Red Roses won the Women's Rugby World Cup at a packed Twickenham last year. England's cricketers will now look to complete a hat-trick of women's sporting successes in front of their own fans when they face arch-rivals Australia in the T20 World Cup final at a sold-out Lord's today.

Sciver-Brunt, the England women's cricket captain, was reminded of what is at stake when talking to wife and former international team-mate Katherine.

"We were talking about the Lionesses and the Red Roses and things like that before the tournament," Sciver-Brunt told reporters yesterday.

"As a side we've got the chance to be part of

that movement of women's sport in the country." Katherine said to me, "it's bigger than you think it is", so I guess we've been living in our bubble as a team together and not letting anyone stray out of that."

Sciver-Brunt is one of only three players - together with Heather Knight and Danni Wyatt-Hodge - who were in England's side when they last won a global trophy at the 2017 50-over World Cup, also at home. "Being part of the 2017 final, we spoke in a similar way about how special a day it was going to be, trying to be really present during the day," Sciver-Brunt said.

"That is what I've been trying to instil in everybody."

## 'COME A LONG WAY SINCE ASHES'

England have lost all six of their white-ball World Cup finals against Australia, who also sealed claimed a 16-0 whitewash win in the last multi-format Ashes 18 months ago. But Sciver-Brunt insisted England were no longer carrying any mental scars.

"Our team has come a long way since that

Ashes tour and I think everyone knows what tomorrow is about, a World Cup final at home at Lord's," she added with both England and Australia unbeaten at this tournament heading into the showpiece match. Australia have surrendered both white-ball World Cups in the past couple of years, but are now one win away from a record-extending seventh T20 crown.

"We know it's going to be an incredible challenge, but it's also going to be a really special day just to be involved in," said Australia captain Sophie Molineux.

"We match up well against them. We don't look too far into the past, but we should be very confident heading into this," Molineux added.

Veteran all-rounder Ellyse Perry is set to retain her spot, despite retiring during Australia's semi-final win over the West Indies with "quad awareness" on Tuesday.

"She's trained really well," added Molineux. "She's had a good bat and a good bowl. We'll assess tomorrow and see how she pulls up before we make any decisions."

## GOLF

## Glover builds 2-shot lead at John Deere Classic

Reuters  
Silvis, Illinois

Lucas Glover has compiled 14 birdies and no bogeys over the first two rounds to take a two-stroke lead midway through the John Deere Classic.

Glover, who had not shot a round on the PGA Tour lower than 67 this year, put together his two best rounds of the season to take the sole lead after 36 holes. He followed an opening 63 with a 6-under 65 on Friday to get to 14-under 128.

He leads Lee Hodges (66) by two and Zac Blair (68) by three.

"It's just golf, so rest up and get ready for tomorrow," Glover said. "It's going to be more of the same. Scores are going to be low. A lot of hungry kids out there wanting to play well, so we'll do our best."

Glover, 46, enjoyed a resurgence in the second half of his career when he won the 2021 John Deere and back-to-back tournaments in 2023, including a playoff event. Those titles accounted for half of his six PGA Tour victories.

"I mean, this is my 23rd year. There's nothing I hadn't been there, done that, to be fair," Glover said. "I've played in the last groups and



Lucas Glover hits a shot out of a bunker on the 9th hole during the second round of the John Deere Classic. (Reuters)

played great, and I've played in the last groups and played terrible.

"There's no formula other than hydrate and rest and keep the pedal down this week, because it's not going to be able to hang on. There's going to be birdies and eagles. It's going to be fun."

Hodges spaced six birdies and one bogey across his card after opening with a 64. The 31-year-old is three years removed from his lone PGA Tour triumph and counts among those "hungry kids" aiming to catch Glover.

"I putted super, super well. Probably the

best single day of putting I've had on tour," said Hodges, who made birdie putts from 40 and 27 feet before a 16-footer on his penultimate hole. "I can't remember a better one. It bailed me out a couple of times."

Blair might be able to relate. After consecutive birdie putts from 14 and 13 feet at Nos. 5-6, he holed a 22-footer at No. 14 for his third birdie and then finished even stronger with the flatstick. He bombed in a right-to-left 57-footer for birdie at the par-3 16th, added a 10 1/2-foot birdie at the par-5 17th and saved par from 16 feet to hold onto third place.

The 35-year-old is hunting for his first PGA Tour victory and said his mindset on the weekend will be more of the same.

"Just get a bunch of looks and hopefully the putter stays kind of hot, and you make a few and you make it pretty easy on yourself," he said.

Tied for fourth at 10 under are Jackson Suber (64), Tyler Duncan (66), Troy Merritt (66), David Lipsky (65), Ben Kohles (67) and Japan's Ryo Hisatsune (65). Max Homa posted a 66 and is alone in 10th place at 9 under.

The low round of the day belonged to Eric Cole, who shot an 8-under 63 - 13 shots better than his first round - to get to 3 under. That was enough for him to rally and make the cut on the number.

## ATHLETICS

## Katzberg delivers world-leading throw of 83.33m to win in Eugene



Canada's Ethan Katzberg wins the hammer throw at 83.33m during the 51st Prefontaine Classic at Hayward Field. (Reuters)

Agencies  
Los Angeles

Olympic and world hammer champion Ethan Katzberg kicked off the Prefontaine Classic Diamond League athletics meeting with a world-leading throw of 83.33m in Eugene, Oregon, on Friday.

Canada's Katzberg eclipsed the previous Diamond League record of 81.92 set by Poland's Wojciech Nowicki in Oslo in 2023, and improved on this season's world-leading performance of 82.44 set by France's Yann Chausinand in California on June 13. American Rudy Winkler was second with an impressive throw of 81.12 while Merlin Hummel of Germany secured the third spot at 79.01.

Brandon Miller pipped 17-year-old sensation Cooper Lutkenhaus in the men's 800m, winning in 1min 43.68sec.

Lutkenhaus, the indoor world champion coming off a victory in Oslo in June, was powerless when fellow American Miller, a 2024 Olympian, powered past him late,

holding on to finish second in 1:44.62. Back-to-back Olympic women's discus champion Valarie Sion won her event with a best throw of 68.64 metres.

Sion, who was previously known as Valarie Allman before marrying this year, has been on a tear since her 30-meet winning streak came to a shock end in March.

American Brandon Miller (1:43.68) held on to upset 17-year-old Cooper Lutkenhaus by almost a second in the 800m, while 2019 world champion Donovan Brazier was third in 1:44.86.

Sandi Morris cleared 4.85m to get the better of American compatriot and longstanding rival Katie Moon in the women's pole vault.

Jamaica's Dejanee Oakley (49.64) won the women's 400m, beating American Aaliyah Butler by more than three tenths of a second. Sweden's Wilma Nielsen outlasted the United States' Juliette Whittaker down the final straight to win the 1,500m in 4:05.60.

The Prefontaine Classic, one of the highlights of the annual U.S. athletics calendar, continues on Saturday.

TENNIS

# Young Eala stuns Swiatek as Mertens beats Rybakina

Serena Williams withdraws from doubles with injury while Fery keeps alive British hopes with thrilling win

Reuters  
London

Two gaping holes were blasted into the women's draw at Wimbledon yesterday as defending champion Iga Swiatek was outplayed by Filipino crowd-pleaser Alexandra Eala and second seed Elena Rybakina was sent packing by Belgian Elise Mertens.

Disgruntled Polish third seed Swiatek lost a titanic first-set battle that lasted almost 90 minutes and had no answer to a fearless Eala after that as she lost 7-6(9) 6-2.

Rybakina, the 2022 champion who doubled her Grand Slam tally this year by winning the Australian Open, also fell away badly after a close first set, going down 7-6(4) 6-1 to Mertens who has reached the last 16 for the fourth time.

"Definitely I need to analyse and change something because it's not working," said Rybakina, for whom a run to the quarter-finals here could have seen her become world number one.

There was American disappointment on the day of the nation's 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence as Serena Williams, one of its greatest ever athletes, withdrew from her eagerly-awaited doubles with sister Venus because of injury.

In an Instagram post Williams, who returned to the tournament after a four-year absence but lost to Maya Joint in the singles, said she was "heartbroken to have to



Philippines' Alexandra Eala celebrates beating Poland's Iga Swiatek during their third-round match on the sixth day of the 2026 Wimbledon Championships yesterday. (AFP)

withdraw". But there were July 4 fireworks on Centre Court as 26th seed Madison Keys upset last year's runner-up Amanda Anisimova 3-6 6-3 6-2 in an all-American blockbuster.

Keys, on a roll on the grass after her title run in Eastbourne last week, was one of eight American singles players in action on the nation's big day.

There was further US success as qualifier Ashlyn Krueger enjoyed a comprehensive 6-3 6-2 victory over Ukraine's Daria Snigur but 23rd seed Emma Navarro went out to Ukraine's Marta Kostyuk

in three sets. The shocks did not continue to the men's draw where second seed and newly-crowned French Open champion Alexander Zverev maintained his impressive start with a 6-2 7-6(4) 6-4 victory over American Marcos Giron.

Italy's French Open runner-up Flavio Cobolli lost the opening set 6-0 against Russia's Karen Khachanov but rallied to win in five 0-6 7-6(4) 6-7(5) 6-2 6-2.

Eala, seeded 29, had already become the first player from the Philippines to reach the third round of a Grand Slam this week and has a message in Tagalog etched on her

cap which translates as "once it grows, it cannot be stopped".

That motto will be tested by 13th seed Jasmine Paolini after the 2024 runner-up thrashed Greece's Maria Sakkari 6-1 6-2.

"For someone who grew up in the Philippines... I went to training with my brother and my grandfather every day after school with my ruffled socks and my light-up shoes and chubby cheeks, so... to her, this is everything," Eala told an enchanted Centre Court crowd.

"But because I'm emotional does not mean I'm satisfied, so yeah, okay, next round. Let's go."



Belgium's Elise Mertens celebrates after winning her third-round match against Kazakhstan's Elena Rybakina. (Reuters)

She went toe-to-toe with Swiatek in a gripping first set and saved a set point in the tiebreak as her opponent netted a forehand - the Pole laughing sarcastically and shouting at her entourage in the stands.

Eala remained composed in the second set as she sprinted clear and held her nerve to claim a famous win. While Eala's joy was uncontained, six-times Grand Slam champion Swiatek slumped off, trying to digest another disappointing loss.

"Honestly, I don't care anymore about the results. I've been

so focused on them that it's hard to continue like that," she told reporters later. "So I'm really trying to let it go."

The biggest roars around the grounds yesterday were reserved for British battler Arthur Fery who kept the home flag flying with a thrilling comeback victory against Belgium's Zizou Bergs on a raucous Court 18.

Fery, trailed by two sets to one and a double break at 1-4 but refused to roll over and came back to win the longest match of the tournament in a deciding-set tie-breaker.

MOTORSPORT

# Antonelli follows up sprint win with British GP pole

Reuters  
Silverstone

Formula One leader Kimi Antonelli was too fast for Ferrari, and dealt another stinging blow to Mercedes teammate George Russell, as the Italian seized pole position for the British Grand Prix yesterday after winning an earlier sprint race.

His closest title rival Russell qualified only fourth at a windy Silverstone, behind Ferrari's Charles Leclerc and seven-times world champion Lewis Hamilton.

Leclerc was 0.175 of a second slower than the 19-year-old, whose fifth pole of the season extended Mercedes's record of securing the top slot at all nine grands prix so far in the campaign, but ahead of Hamilton for the first time since Miami in May.

"It was a very tidy lap, a lap where I put everything together," said Antonelli, of his best time of one minute 28.111 seconds set af-

ter going out first for the final run on the fast, sweeping circuit.

"It was very tricky with the wind because it was very gusty and unpredictable."

## LECLERC BACK AHEAD OF HAMILTON

Antonelli won the 17-lap sprint ahead of Hamilton, a record nine-times winner at Silverstone in a career that started in 2007, to go 43 points clear of Briton Russell in the standings.

Winner of five races in a row until Hamilton ended the streak in Spain last month, Antonelli has taken the sport by storm in his second season and appeared to have the measure of the experienced Russell in front of what is sure to be the biggest crowd of the year.

"It's not going to be easy because I have two Ferraris behind me and, for sure, they will work together," Antonelli said of the challenge he will face yesterday.

"Their pace is good but ours

was strong in the Sprint. Hopefully we can keep that for tomorrow and do a good race."

Leclerc said it was good to get back to speed on a Saturday.

"It has been a few tough races when the feeling was not quite right, struggling to put everything together," he said.

"There has been so much work behind the scenes to get that feeling."

"This was the first time I had it back, I have struggled to be consistent but it is a good start."

Isack Hadjar qualified fifth for Red Bull, ahead of McLaren's reigning world champion and last year's winner Lando Norris.

Red Bull's four-times world champion Max Verstappen will line up seventh, with McLaren's Oscar Piastri eighth and the Racing Bulls pair of rookie Arvid Lindblad -- on his home debut -- and Liam Lawson completing the top 10 places.

Russell, who started the season as title favourite, had a torrid

afternoon - smashing his car's front wing when he speared wide across the gravel on the entry to Luffield and into the barriers in the first phase of qualifying.

He returned to the pits for a front wing change and managed to salvage the session, which saw Hadjar go fastest.

"That was very weird. I've never locked up there in my whole career," said Russell of the incident.

The Briton was a provisional second after the first round of flying laps in the final session but could not improve his time as the Ferraris went faster, his hopes of a first home Formula One win now looking more distant.

Alpine's Franco Colapinto also lost control in the first phase, the Argentine's car bouncing backwards across the grass after a high-speed spin at Becketts.

There was then a 15-minute delay between Q1 and Q2 as marshals cleared up the track and scattered gravel.

BASKETBALL

# Philippines crowned champions of eFIBA World Finals Qatar 2026



By Sports Reporter  
Doha

In an exciting atmosphere that reflected the growing passion for esports, the eFIBA World Finals Qatar 2026 - Season 4 concluded on Saturday evening at Mall of Qatar, following two days of intense competition featuring some of the world's top national teams. The tournament was organized by the Local Organizing Committee of the FIBA Basketball World Cup Qatar 2027, in cooperation with the International Basketball Federation (FIBA), the Qatar Basketball Federation, and the Qatar Esports Federation.

The Grand Final delivered an exciting contest that remained closely contested until the final moments, with Philippines defeating Türkiye by 3-0 to claim the title of the eFIBA World Finals Qatar 2026 - Season 4. France occupied the third place and Algeria finished fourth in the tournament.

The accompanying fan engagement activities also drew large crowds of visitors and shoppers at Mall of Qatar, who had the opportunity to take commemorative photos with the official trophy.

phy of the FIBA Basketball World Cup Qatar 2027, in an interactive atmosphere that reflected the growing excitement ahead of Qatar's hosting of the global basketball showpiece. The activities also contributed to strengthening community engagement and raising awareness of the tournament among visitors of all ages.

The closing day was attended by Dr. Ahmad Abdulla al-Buenain, Director General of the Local Organizing Committee of the FIBA Basketball World Cup Qatar 2027, Mrs. Fatima Sultan al-Kuwari, Chief Executive Officer of Qatar's Olympic and Paralympic Games 2036 bid, HE Dr. Mustafa Göksu, Ambassador of the Republic of Türkiye to the State of Qatar; HE Mardomel Celso D. Melicor, Ambassador of the Republic of the Philippines to the State of Qatar; Predrag Bogosavljev, Director of the FIBA Basketball World Cup Qatar 2027, along with members of the Local Organizing Committee.

During the awards ceremony, Dr. Ahmad Abdulla al-Buenain and Predrag Bogosavljev presented the championship trophy to the winners and runners-up, while also honoring the third and fourth-placed teams.



CYCLING

# Vingegaard has yellow as Tour de France begins

Reuters  
Barcelona

Jonas Vingegaard took an early lead in his quest for a third Tour de France title as the Visma-Lease a Bike rider recorded the fastest time in stage one - a 19.6-km team time trial in Barcelona yesterday.

Last year's runner-up Vingegaard, who won the race in 2022 and 2023, finished 12 seconds ahead of Slovenian rival Tadej Pogacar, who has won the Tour de France four times, including the last two editions.

Dane Vingegaard, 29, was expertly led out to the final hill by his teammates and led them to the finish line to take the yellow jersey for the first time in three years.

Pogacar was the third fastest on the day, with Italian Filippo Ganna finishing second as he took over the final charge of Netcompany-Ineos after teammate Kevin Vauquelin suffered a slow punc-



Team Visma | Lease a Bike's Danish rider Jonas Vingegaard shows his overall leader's yellow jersey to fans after the 1st stage of the 113th edition of the Tour de France cycling race yesterday. (AFP)

ture. "I would say it's the perfect start. It's still a long tour, obviously, but it's the perfect start," said Vingegaard, who also won the Vuelta a Espana last year and the Giro d'Italia in May.

"(My teammates) just drove me all the way to the finish. And to take the stage win for us and to take the yellow jersey, also for me

personally, after a few years without it, a few hard years, it's nice for me to experience it again."

With teams starting at five-minute intervals, Alex Molenaar (Caja Rural-Seguros RGA) was the first to cross the finish line. Jordan Jegat (TotalEnergies) improved the benchmark soon after, finishing 10 seconds faster.

French national road champion Romain Gregoire (Groupama-FDJ United) was the next to push the threshold, flying up the final hill to cross the finish line in 22 minutes and 28 seconds.

Mathieu van der Poel (Alpecin-Premier Tech) came in two seconds quicker than Gregoire in a solo finish but he was soon surpassed by Netcompany-Ineos, as Ganna sped to the finish in 21 minutes and 55 seconds.

Juan Ayuso tried to put Lidl-Trek in the lead, collapsing after crossing the finish line, but could only secure fourth place, 16 seconds behind the leader.

French prodigy Paul Seixas, making his Tour de France debut at 19 years old, finished in 10th place, 39 seconds behind Vingegaard.

"We expected to see time gaps like that, I think we put in a good performance today," Seixas said.

The race continues in Spain on Sunday with a 169-km hilly ride from Tarragona to Barcelona.



## MATCH REPORT

# Argentina need extra-time own goal to get past Cape Verde

Reigning champions to play Egypt in last 16, Cape Verde's fairytale debut campaign ends with first defeat



Argentina's Cristian Romero gets his header off the arm of Cape Verde's Diney Borges in extra time to force an own goal from unlucky Cape Verde in Miami. (IMAGN IMAGES/REUTERS)

Reuters  
Miami

Reigning champions Argentina were pushed to the brink by a Cape Verde side with incredible levels of resilience and needed an extra-time own goal to clinch a dramatic 3-2 victory on Friday and a place in the last 16 at the World Cup.

Cape Verde, playing in their first global finals, thrived came from a goal behind in a thrilling contest that went down to the wire in front of a noisy crowd of 64,478 packed into a hot and humid Miami Stadium.

Six minutes into the second period of extra time, however, Lionel Messi swung a corner into the box and Cristian Romero rose to head home off the arm of Cape Verde's Diney Borges and secure Argen-

tina a date with Egypt in Atlanta next Tuesday.

Messi had, almost inevitably, given Argentina the lead in the 29th minute with his seventh goal of the tournament but Deroy Duarte equalised just before the hour mark.

In the second minute of the first period of extra time, Argentina's Lisandro Martinez thought he had won the match when he lashed a sumptuous shot into the roof of the net.

Cape Verde were not done yet, however, and left back Sidney Lopes Cabral curled a beautiful shot into the top corner of the net to put the scores back on level terms at 2-2.

Lopes Cabral could have equalised again after the decisive own goal but his finely struck free kick was saved by Argentina goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez, who had to be

at his best to deny Cape Verde in the dying minutes.

"The match was incredibly tough. You always have to take the positive, and it's that this team never gives up," said Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni, who was overseeing his 100th match in charge of the Albiceleste.

"I want to congratulate our opponents. Today they showed they are a great team. When it is said there are no easy matches in the World Cup, it's true."

Cape Verde were beaten but far from outclassed by the three-times world champions as they put in a fourth magnificent display of teamwork and grit in their debut World Cup.

"I'm proud of my team, the work they've put in," said coach Bubiستا.

"We must take pride in what we've done for our country. To be



Sidny Lopes Cabral of Cabo Verde celebrates with teammates after scoring the team's second goal against Argentina in Miami. (AFP)

able to play the way we did against the world champions, and to draw level twice, is something incredible."

#### OBDRATE DEFENCE

The only one of the four World Cup debutants to make it to the last 32 and ranked 67th in the world coming into the tournament, Cape Verde had hoped to frustrate Argentina as they did Spain, Uruguay and Saudi Arabia in group-stage draws.

They succeeded for much of the game with their never-say-die attitude, while showing no shortage of quality of their own in a neat pass-and-move game.

Messi aside, Argentina were largely bereft of ideas against an obdurate defence and Cape Verde libero Kevin Pina was the most impressive player on the park for long periods.

It was Argentina who made the breakthrough in the 29th minute, however, when Martinez lofted a long ball over the top of the defence to the feet of Messi.

The 39-year-old maestro took a touch with the outside of his left boot and buried it in the roof of Vozinha's net for his 20th goal over six editions of soccer's global showpiece.

Cape Verde knew they would need to score to keep their World Cup campaign alive and Duarte fired a shot at goal soon after half-time that drew a diving save out of Martinez.

#### DRILLED PAST MARTINEZ

Just before the hour mark, though, Cape Verde captain Ryan Mendes was freed down the right and his pass into the box found Dutch-born midfielder Duarte, who controlled the ball with his left foot

before drilling it past Martinez with his right.

Messi had a chance to put Argentina back in front four minutes later when he was played through on goal, but Vozinha stood up well to keep his shot out of the net.

One of Messi's trademark free kicks was tipped away by Vozinha in the 72nd minute and Cape Verde defender Pico Lopes had to intervene to prevent Enzo Fernandez scoring 10 minutes later.

Cape Verde held on to force the dramatic period of extra time and they will now return home heroes having put their tiny island-nation firmly on the footballing map.

"More than anything, we must be proud of what we've achieved," Bubiستا added.

"This World Cup has done justice to our efforts. It has shown our character. It's a shame to lose, but it was incredible."

## FOCUS

## Colombia edge Ghana 1-0 to set up Switzerland showdown

Reuters  
Kansas City, Missouri

Jhon Arias scored the only goal as Colombia beat Ghana 1-0 in sweltering conditions in Kansas City on Friday to reach the World Cup last 16, continuing a quietly impressive campaign that has established them as dangerous outsiders.

Arias struck in the 14th minute, guiding home a cross from substitute Luis Suarez, and Colombia's disciplined defence did the rest as Nestor Lorenzo's side extended their unbeaten run and booked a meeting with Switzerland in the next round.

Colombia had largely flown under the radar at the tournament, despite going undefeated against Portugal, Uzbekistan and DR Congo to top Group K. Their breakthrough on Friday came from two players who had not been expected to combine, as Suarez, thrust into action after Jhon Cordoba was forced off with an apparent groin injury in the eighth minute, delivered a pinpoint cross to the back post where Arias had somehow drifted unmarked.

With time and space to pick his spot, Arias calmly guided the ball into the bottom corner to hand his side a deserved lead.

The stadium felt more like Barranquilla than Kansas City as tens of thousands of Colombia supporters turned the clash with Ghana - a team ranked 60 places behind them - into a de facto home game, giving the South Americans a level of support rarely seen so far from home. The stands were a writhing, dancing sea of yellow jerseys, twirling scarves and black-and-white sombrero vueltiao hats that many used to fan their faces in the oppressive 30 degrees Celsius (86 F) heat.

#### 'DREAM COME TRUE'

They bounced in unison, roared their team forward with every



Colombia's Jhon Arias (left) celebrates with Daniel Munoz after scoring a goal during the World Cup Round of 32 match against Ghana in Kansas City, Missouri. (AFP)

attack, and regularly broke into chants of "Vamos Colombia! Esta noche tenemos que ganar!" (Let's go Colombia, tonight we have to win). They need not have worried. Colombia were the better team by some distance.

"I don't have the words to describe this moment," said Colombia midfielder Gustavo Puerta. "It's a dream come true."

"I think we've shown it game after game. This is a team that plays with its heart, that plays with its soul. We go after every ball as if it were the last!"

Luis Diaz had numerous scoring chances. He fired into the side netting in the first half, then celebrated what he thought was the game's second goal early in the second half when he slotted home Arias's cross, but it was disallowed for offside. "We need to stay grounded, take it step by step, remain calm and keep improving," Diaz said. "That's what football - and life is all about. So, I'm very relaxed, focused on working for what's ahead, and getting some rest, which is going to be extremely important."

Lorenzo's men continued to push for a second goal, and Ghana goalkeeper Lawrence Ati-Zigi, who was excellent all night, made one terrific save after another in the dying minutes as Colombia's

fans cheered every one of their team's touches of the ball.

#### 'THE BEST TEAM WON'

Antoine Semenyo was Ghana's biggest attacking threat, yet Colombia's disciplined defence denied him a clear sight of goal. "They controlled much better the game," said Ghana coach Carlos Queiroz. "The passing, the movements, and doing that, they damaged our fitness and our ability to recover the ball and try to go forward."

"We tried to go forward, tried to create opportunities, but for any reason, the last pass, the last service, was not with the quality that was necessary in this case. So, I think the best team won."

Los Cafeteros became the fourth South American team to reach the last 16, joining surprise package Paraguay, who stunned Germany, along with Brazil and Argentina, both of whom survived scares of their own. Colombia play the Swiss on Tuesday in Vancouver. The match also marked the first time in tournament history that both teams were forced to make a substitution before the 15-minute mark due to injuries, as Ghana right back Marvin Senaya limped off with a hamstring injury in the 13th minute.

## PREVIEW

## Mexico chase another slice of history as England return to Azteca

Reuters  
Mexico City

Mexico will bid to continue their remarkable World Cup run when they face England in the last 16 on Sunday, with Javier Aguirre's side standing one victory away from a first quarter-final appearance in 40 years.

The co-hosts have emerged as one of the tournament's surprise packages, winning all four matches without conceding a goal - a feat achieved previously by only two teams at a World Cup after four games, Brazil in 1986 and Italy in 1990.

A commanding 2-0 win over Ecuador at the Azteca Stadium delivered Mexico's first World Cup knockout triumph since 1986, with a scintillating first-half display many local observers hailed as one of the finest in the national team's history.

Standing in Mexico's way are

England, who survived a scare against DR Congo thanks to Harry Kane's late double in a 2-1 comeback victory after Thomas Tuchel's side fell behind. They head to the Azteca with little time to prepare for Mexico City's 2,200-metre (7,220-foot) altitude, a factor Tuchel has acknowledged gives the co-hosts a significant advantage.

Mexico, by contrast, have been based in the capital throughout the tournament and have played three of their four matches at the Azteca, where a raucous home crowd transformed the stadium into a cauldron during the victory over Ecuador.

Sunday's match will also be the last World Cup fixture at the iconic venue before the tournament moves to the United States.

England have not played a competitive match at the Azteca since their 2-1 quarter-final defeat by eventual champions Argentina in 1986, when Diego Maradona produced both the infamous goals and his dazzling

solo effort later dubbed the "Goal of the Century".

If England must overcome the Azteca, Mexico face the daunting task of containing England talisman Harry Kane. The Bayern Munich striker's two goals against DR Congo took his tournament tally to five and his World Cup total to 13, surpassing Pele and extending his record as England's leading scorer in the tournament.

Kane has scored 72 goals for club and country this season, a tally bettered only by Lionel Messi's 82 in the 2011-12 campaign for Barcelona and Argentina.

For Aguirre, who played in Mexico's 1-0 friendly victory over England at the Azteca in 1985, the stakes are equally high.

Forty years after Mexico last reached the World Cup quarter-finals on home soil, he now has the chance to guide a new generation back to the last eight, with Brazil or Norway awaiting the winners in Miami.



Mexico's Gilberto Mora and Brian Gutierrez take part in a training session at the Centro de Alto Rendimiento in Mexico City on July 4, 2026, on the eve of the World Cup round of 16 match against England. (AFP)