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ATHLETICS

Felix chooses Aspire Academy for LA Olympic comeback



Allyson Felix, 42, announced her return to competitive athletics in April after a four-year retirement.

By Sports Reporter
Doha

American sprint legend Allyson Felix has chosen Aspire Academy in Doha as a key training base as she prepares for a return to competition with the goal of racing at the 2028 Olympic Games in her hometown of Los Angeles.

Felix, 42, announced her return to competitive athletics in April after a four-year retirement and has set her sights on earning a place on the United States team for the Los Angeles Olympics.

The seven-time Olympic gold medalist selected Aspire Academy

as one of her training destinations, citing its world-class facilities and athlete development programs.

“I have been visiting Qatar for many years, and each time I have received a very warm welcome,” Felix said in a statement. “I know very well the amazing sports facilities at Aspire Academy, and it is truly the best place in the world to train.”

She added: “It was important for Aspire Academy to be part of my journey as I work on regaining my full physical fitness in this new phase of my life, and I knew I could trust that I would find everything I needed here.”

The American sprinter, who has competed in the 100m, 200m and 400m events, said her return is

driven by a desire to see what she can still achieve, with the 2028 Olympics providing added motivation.

“It’s really about curiosity,” she said. “I’m not trying to be the athlete I was in the past, but I’m curious to see what’s still possible, especially since my city, Los Angeles, is hosting the Olympics. My goal is to be part of the national team, and I hope to be part of the relay team.”

By hosting Felix during her preparations, Aspire Academy further reinforces its reputation as a leading destination for elite athlete training while giving its student-athletes the opportunity to learn from and be inspired by one of the greatest sprinters in athletics history.

SPOTLIGHT

Qatar’s Jarbi bags gold, bronze at Arab Junior Chess Championship

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Mohammed Jarbi led Qatar’s national junior chess team with a gold and a bronze medal at the Arab Junior and Youth Chess Championship in Egypt, which concluded yesterday with the participation of 350 players from 16 Arab countries.

Jarbi claimed gold in the under-10 rapid event after scoring 7.5 points from nine rounds. He also added a bronze medal in the under-10 classical competition with seven points, highlighting the continued progress of Qatar’s emerging chess talent. Khalid al-Jumaat added a silver medal in the under-12 rapid event after finishing with seven points from nine rounds, completing a successful campaign for Qatar.

Organised by the Egyptian Chess Federation under the auspices of the Arab Chess Federation, the championship brought together young players from across the Arab world.

Mohammed al-Mudahka, President of the Qatar Chess Association (QCA), expressed his satisfaction with the team’s performance, saying the tournament gave players valuable experience against strong opposition while helping improve their international ratings.

He noted that the record participation from across the region added further significance to the achievement and would motivate the association to continue developing young players ahead of future competitions. Al-Mudahka also praised the Egyptian



Mohammed Jarbi (left) won gold and bronze, while Khalid al-Jumaat claimed silver as Qatar secured three medals at the Arab Junior and Youth Chess Championship in Egypt.

Chess Federation and the organising committee for delivering a successful championship.

Hamad al-Tamimi, Executive Director of the QCA, said the results reflected the association’s long-term strategy of investing in youth development and expanding regional and international participation.

On the sidelines of the cham-

pionship, FIDE-accredited courses for referees and school teachers were held as part of efforts to strengthen the technical and educational development of chess. The tournament featured teams from Qatar, Kuwait, the UAE, Bahrain, Iraq, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Yemen, Oman, Palestine, Syria and hosts Egypt.

FOOTBALL

Infantino in emergency talks, Figo says FIFA chief ‘must go’

Infantino was reported to have sought support from former great players known as ‘FIFA Legends’

AFP
Rabat

FIFA president Gianni Infantino held emergency talks with directors of world football’s governing body in Morocco, a source told AFP, amid a wave of criticism over his now shelved plan to open the World Cup to private investment.

Infantino has come under increasing pressure, even from within his organisation, over his handling of the proposal, and calls for him to step down have grown since he abandoned it last Saturday.

The meeting began in the morning at FIFA’s Africa headquarters in the Mohammed VI complex in Sale, near Rabat, a source close to the talks told AFP, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The meeting was not open to the press, but AFP saw several vehicles with tinted windows enter and then later leave the complex. The source confirmed the meeting was over, but no further information was immediately released.

Infantino was also reported to have sought support from former great players known as ‘FIFA Legends’.

However his plea fell on deaf ears with one of them, former Barcelona and Real Madrid star Luis Figo sending him a clear message -- “Go”.

“I could write 10,000 words on the problems at FIFA. But the solution needs only three: Infantino must go,” Figo wrote in UK newspaper The Daily Mail.

“Believe me, I have met some rogues in my time in the game. But what I have seen exposed in the last 10 days is the lowest,



most deceitful and cravenly self-interested behaviour I have ever witnessed. The man who would do that – the man who would try to force through such major changes just to enrich himself and his friends -- is a relic of the game’s past and should have no part in its future.”

One of those believed to be at the meeting was FIFA’s secretary-general Mattias Grafstrom, whose internal email to staff criticising the plan was leaked on Tuesday. Infantino, a 56-year-old Swiss lawyer -- who is holding the meeting in FIFA’s Africa

regional office in Sale close to Rabat – was in Morocco to celebrate last week’s Feast of the Enthronement.

Morocco is to co-host the 2030 World Cup and Moroccan Football chief Fouzi Lekjaa is one of the few to have publicly supported Infantino since the humiliating climbdown. Lekjaa last Saturday had praised his “wise” move to scrap the plan in the interests of “unity and cohesion”.

He reiterated his backing for Infantino for “all the initiatives aimed at the development of world football” during his 10

years in charge. Infantino had been basking in the warm afterglow of a highly successful World Cup – the largest ever with 48 teams and co-hosted by three countries, Canada, Mexico and the US.

His wish to serve a fourth and final term looked likely to be rubber-stamped in Rabat next March – no other candidate had come forward to challenge him. However, Tuesday last week all that faded.

FIFA floated the plan, saying it could raise up to \$4.2bn based on a valuation of \$20bn for a new commercial subsidiary,

called the FIFA Forward Enterprise (FFE), which it proposed would run events such as the World Cup and Club World Cup.

It said that, if approved, the project could provide each of FIFA’s 211 member associations with a one-off payment of \$20mn in early 2027, and increase their funding allocation for the 2027-2030 cycle from \$8mn to \$20mn.

Instead of acting as a sweetener it produced a furious backlash, with European football’s governing body UEFA resorting on Thursday to the nuclear option of boycotting the sport’s jewel in the crown, the World Cup. By Saturday, Infantino held his hands up and withdrew the plan. “Our purpose has always been – and will always be – to unite and improve,” said Infantino. If he had hoped for that to be sufficient to shore up his authority he was to be swiftly disabused.

UEFA termed the proposal a “shabby, back room, opaque deal” hatched by Infantino. “The current FIFA leadership has not only lost UEFA’s confidence but also that of many other members of the football family,” UEFA said in a statement.

North and Central American football’s governing body CONCACAF went further still and called for “a comprehensive reckoning with this presidency” while slamming Infantino’s “poor governance and leadership”.

Grafstrom’s leaked email only added fuel to the fire. He described the fiasco surrounding the proposal as “a sad and reproachable series of events”.

He added: “Individuals, unstable moments and unfortunate episodes come and go. The institution, its mission and its responsibility towards world football continue.”

CRICKET

Pakistan beat WI by eight wickets to level series

The win ended Pakistan's eight-match losing streak away from home

AFP
Port of Spain

Pakistan levelled the brief series against the West Indies yesterday, completing an eight-wicket win just after lunch on the fourth day of the second and final Test at Queen's Park Oval in Trinidad.

Beaten by 90 runs in the first Test the previous week at the Brian Lara Stadium in the south of the island, the visitors were left with a target of only 75 runs after the home side -- already in deep trouble overnight at 103 for six in the second innings -- were dismissed for 117 half-an-hour into the start of the day's play.

Abdullah Shafique and captain Babar Azam guided their team to victory after openers Imam-ul-Haq and Azan Awaiss fell cheaply to pacers Jayden Seales and Shamar Joseph with Babar hoisting consecutive sixes off spinner Jomel Warrican to seal the result.

It gave Pakistan a share of the series in the same manner of their last campaign in the Caribbean in 2021, when they rebounded similarly from losing the first Test to take the second, both matches played then at Sabina Park in Kingston, Jamaica.

Their last meeting in Pakistan, for two Tests in Multan in January of 2025, also finished 1-1.

This match was a personal triumph for Shafique. Not included in the original touring party and only flown in last week as replacement for the injured Shan Masood, his unbeaten 160 was the cornerstone of Pakistan's first innings total of 387.

"This felt like a debut match for me, it was really unexpected," said Shafique on receiving the Player of the Match award and reflecting on his own stop-start international career. "I haven't been able to get the opportunities recently, but as a professional you have to work towards a comeback and give of your best."

This was also Pakistan's first Test victory at Queen's Park Oval since 1977, when captain Mushtaq Mohammad's all-round performance took his team to a series-levelling win in the fourth Test of a five-match series. West Indies however won the decider in Kingston to take that rubber 2-1. "Obviously you are satisfied when you win, but most impor-



Babar Azam (left) of Pakistan and Roston Chase of West Indies share the trophy for the drawn series at the end of the second Test at Queen's Park Oval in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, yesterday. (AFP)



Sajid Khan of Pakistan celebrates the dismissal of Tagenarine Chanderpaul (left) of West Indies. (AFP)

tant for us was the way we executed our plans," said Barbar, who has now won nine of his 12 Test matches as captain away from home. "The way Abdullah (Shafique) played in the first innings and the way the spinners bowled in the second innings really made the difference."

Pushing aside the hotly-debated omission of senior seamer Mohammad Abbas on the first morning of this Test, Pakistan prevailed with their two frontline spinners starring in the victory.

Off-spinner Sajid Khan, who was omitted for the first Test, made the most of his recall with a match haul of eight for 117, although he was not required on the final morning as the other spinner, left-arm orthodox Ali

Usman, took two of the last three wickets to fall to claim four for 39 in the innings and match figures of six for 119.

West Indies were hampered by the absence of regular opening batsman Brandon King who was unable to bat because of back spasms suffered in effecting the run out of Pakistan captain Babar Azam for 88 the day before.

Khan had taken four for 32 to engineer the West Indies second innings collapse late on day three, yet Babar opted for the combination of Usman and seamer Mohammad Ali to complete the job on the fourth morning.

They were aided though by poor shot selection from the hosts' lower order.

Kemar Roach, noted for his

tailender's defiance as displayed in the first innings, swung hope-fully at the second delivery he faced from Usman to be bowled for a "duck".

Justin Greaves, the last real hope for any meaningful West Indian resistance, dragged an attempted pull at Mohammad Ali onto his middle stump, and the innings was wrapped up when Shamar Joseph, having already struck two boundaries, essayed another big swing at Usman only for a skied leading edge to be easily pouched by wicketkeeper Mohammad Rizwan.

"We should probably have gone into the match with an extra spinner as I underestimated the extent of my finger injury," West Indies captain Roston Chase admitted. "As for the batting, I thought we should have made a better effort of coping with the spin in the second innings so as to give our bowlers something reasonable to defend."

Pakistan's win also broke a streak of eight consecutive Test match defeats away from home, which started with a 360-run annihilation at the hands of Australia in Perth in December 2023.

BRIEF SCORES: Pakistan 387 (Shafique 160*, Babar 88, Warrican 6-112) **and 77 for 2** (Babar 24*, Shafique 24*) **beat West Indies 344** (Greaves 73, Chase 70, Sajid 4-85) **and 117** (Sajid 4-32, Usman 4-39) **by eight wickets.**

FOCUS

Australia not planning tour match before India Test series, says coach

Reuters
Melbourne

Australia will again opt for a training camp ahead of the five-Test tour of India rather than play a traditional warmup match before attempting to end a 22-year wait for a Test series victory on the subcontinent.

Australia also chose not to play a tour match before the 2023 series, instead training on specially-prepared, spin-friendly pitches in Bengaluru before the opening test.

The decision drew scrutiny after India won the Nagpur opener by an innings and 132 runs, setting the tone for a 2-1 series victory that allowed the hosts to retain the Border-Gavaskar Trophy.

Head coach Andrew McDonald said Australia would scout a location to immerse themselves in conditions similar to India before the series opener in Nagpur starting January, 21.

"We've got a couple of options there," he told Cricket Australia website Cricket.com.au yesterday. "We have gone to the UAE previously and we have also gone into India last time into Bengaluru, so we're just working through what that would look like in terms of how we then manage the individuals."

Australia has not won a Test series in India since 2004, when Adam Gilchrist's side triumphed 2-1. Australia have a gruelling schedule before they arrive in India, with a two-test home series starting against Bangladesh in Darwin next week followed by a three-Test tour of South Africa in October and another four-test home series against New Zealand from December 9.

Fast bowler Michael Neser has been ruled out of the Bengaluru series with a calf strain suffered at training in Brisbane but McDonald said wicketkeeper-batter Josh Inglis is expected to be available after recovering from a back spasm.



A file photo shows Australia head coach Andrew McDonald and captain Pat Cummins during a practice session ahead of the Ashes fifth Test at The Oval in London on July 25, 2023. (Reuters)

Qatar rally past Iraq for beach volleyball win in Amman



Qatar's Musa al-Khair and Mohammed Ehab secured their second consecutive victory at the inaugural West Asia Beach Volleyball Tour after defeating Iraq 2-1 on Wednesday in Amman. The Qatari duo recovered from a first-set loss (15-21) to take the second set 21-11 before dominating the decider 15-5, maintaining their unbeaten start to the tournament. Qatar had opened its campaign with a straight-sets victory over Saudi Arabia, winning 25-13, 21-10.

CYCLING

Vollering wins sprint to take stage five, Reusser stays in yellow

Reuters
Paris

Dutch rider Demi Vollering won a sprint finish against her two main rivals to take stage five of the Tour de France Femmes yesterday, with Switzerland's Marlen Reusser coming in second to hold on to the overall lead.

Poland's Katarzyna Niewiadoma-Phinney (Canyon-SRAM) looked to have stolen a march with 300 metres remaining, but Vollering (FDJ United-Suez) took off in pursuit and hit the front close to the line. "I knew Kasia would go early, because she always does," Vollering said.

"I knew Marlen would gamble, so I let her gamble a bit to try and make her work, but she didn't. I gave it everything until the final sprint and I needed every single metre in the last finish straight."

A gruelling up-and-down 140-km ride from Macon to Belleville-en-Beaujolais with eight categorised climbs brought the expected shake-up in the general classification, but the top two remained the same.

Reusser, who won Tuesday's individual time trial to move into yellow, holds a 12-second lead over 2023 winner Vollering, with Niewiadoma-Phinney moving up to third overall, one minute 17 sec-



Demi Vollering celebrates as she crosses the finish line to win the 5th stage of the fifth edition of the Women's Tour de France in Belleville-en-Beaujolais, central France, yesterday. (AFP)

onds behind the leader. Last year's winner Pauline Ferrand-Prevot struggled on the final climbs, and the French rider is now five minutes behind Reusser.

Mountains classification leader Puck Pieterse took maximum points on the first six climbs, and was part of a 19-rider breakaway with over 75 km remaining, but they were reeled in by the yellow-jersey group after the penultimate climb. Niewiadoma-Phinney, the 2024 winner, appeared set to win her first Tour de France stage, but Vollering had other ideas and put

in a blistering finish. Vollering and Niewiadoma-Phinney have always finished on the final podium since the race began in 2022, and are well on course to do so again, with Reusser defending a slender lead with four stages left.

"Marlen has not won a Tour yet, and she will have to work for it as well. I'm sure it will be a hard battle, because she is not the rider who you can beat easily, because she is very strong," Vollering said.

Today's stage six is a 153.4-km hilly ride from Montbrison to Tournon-sur-Rhone.

BOXING

Britain's Chapman recovering after emergency surgery for brain bleed

Reuters
London

British boxer Raven Chapman is recovering after undergoing emergency surgery for a brain bleed following a collapse during a sparring session in Denmark, her management team Vote Boxing said yesterday.

The 32-year-old collapsed during training on July 24 and was rushed to hospital, where doctors diagnosed a brain haematoma and cerebral oedema, conditions involving bleeding and swelling of the brain.

"Raven underwent emergency surgery immediately. The procedure successfully stopped the bleeding and helped stabilise the

swelling. She was then placed in a medically induced coma," Vote Boxing said in a statement posted on Instagram.

"Over the past day, she has been taken off the sedatives and is continuing to receive treatment while awaiting medically supervised repatriation to a hospital in the UK, where her rehabilitation is expected to take some time," the statement added.

Vote Boxing said that Chapman's family are with her in Denmark. A GoFundMe page has been launched to help cover costs, while messages of support have come from across the boxing community, including former promoter Frank Warren.

Chapman challenged Australia's Skye Nicolson for the WBC featherweight title in 2024 in the

first women's world title fight staged in Saudi Arabia, losing by unanimous decision. She has a professional record of 10 wins and two defeats.

Meanwhile, former heavyweight world champion Joseph Parker said he had been cleared to fight again after failing a dope test last October. The 34-year-old New Zealander, who held the WBO title from 2016 to 2018, had denied taking a prohibited substance but risked a two-year ban. He failed the voluntary test on the day he fought and lost to Britain's Fabio Wardley. British media reported at the time that he had tested positive for traces of cocaine. "I'm pleased to confirm my provisional suspension is lifted and I'll be back in the ring soon," Parker said.

Record funding package announced for Britain's winter athletes

Britain's Olympic and Paralympic winter sports athletes will receive a record £33mn funding package in the cycle leading up to the 2030 Winter Games, funding body UK Sport said on Tuesday. The three gold medals at this year's Milano-Cortina Olympic Games was the best total for Britain, who had never returned from any previous Games with more than one.

"Milano-Cortina showed what British winter sport is capable of, with incredible performances across

more sports than ever before, our best-ever Winter Olympic medal haul and a nation gripped by the amazing feats of our athletes," Kate Baker, Director of Performance and People at UK Sport, said. "With another Winter Games on European soil and an incredibly talented crop of athletes, we're excited by what's possible over the next four years." Britain's five medals at the Milano-Cortina Games equalled a national record, while there were also a record number of top 10 finishes across a range of events.

GOLF

Smith wants LIV to live on but would return to PGA Tour

Reuters
New York

Cameron Smith wants LIV Golf to survive but if it doesn't, he would "100 percent" return to the PGA Tour.

"I mean, if it was the only option, I think that's where everyone would want to be for sure, 100 percent," the Australian and former World No. 2 told reporters Tuesday in Bedminster, N.J., ahead of this week's LIV Golf New York event.

"It would go back to old times." But Smith made it clear he would strongly prefer that the current times with LIV Golf can continue.

"I want it to work, really, to be honest. It's great fun out here. The team that we've got, I feel like we make each other better, better people and better golfers as well," Smith said.

"Yeah, I'd hate to see it go away. We'll see what happens."

Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund announced in April that it will not continue its financial support of the league beyond this season. Smith signed with the breakaway league in 2022, receiv-

ing a contract reportedly worth \$140mn.

Smith is the captain of the all-Australian team Ripper GC.

"What we've been able to do for golf in Australia is really quite important to me, junior golf, the Little Rippers, the event that we have down there, the people it brings out to showcase our great league," Smith said.

"It would be a shame for all that to go away, and I feel like we've worked really hard over the last three or four years to kind of make that all happen."

LIV Golf's Adelaide event in February was among the league's most popular stops this season and set records for golf in Australia. More than 115,000 fans attended across the week in Adelaide, making it the highest-attended golf event in the country's history.

"Australian golf is important to me. I think it (LIV) improves it," Smith said.

"I think all the numbers are up. The memberships are up. Social play is up. I think that's in part because of us. So I think it would be a shame for Australian golf if it did go away."

Though multiple reports say the LIV Golf Team Championship scheduled for late August in

Michigan will be canceled amid the league's financial troubles, the players have reportedly been told to prepare as if it's on schedule, and Smith said he's doing just that. "We had a great year there last year in Detroit, and we're hoping we get back there," he said of the season-ending event set for August 27-30 at The Cardinal at Saint John's Resort in Plymouth, Mich., a Detroit suburb.

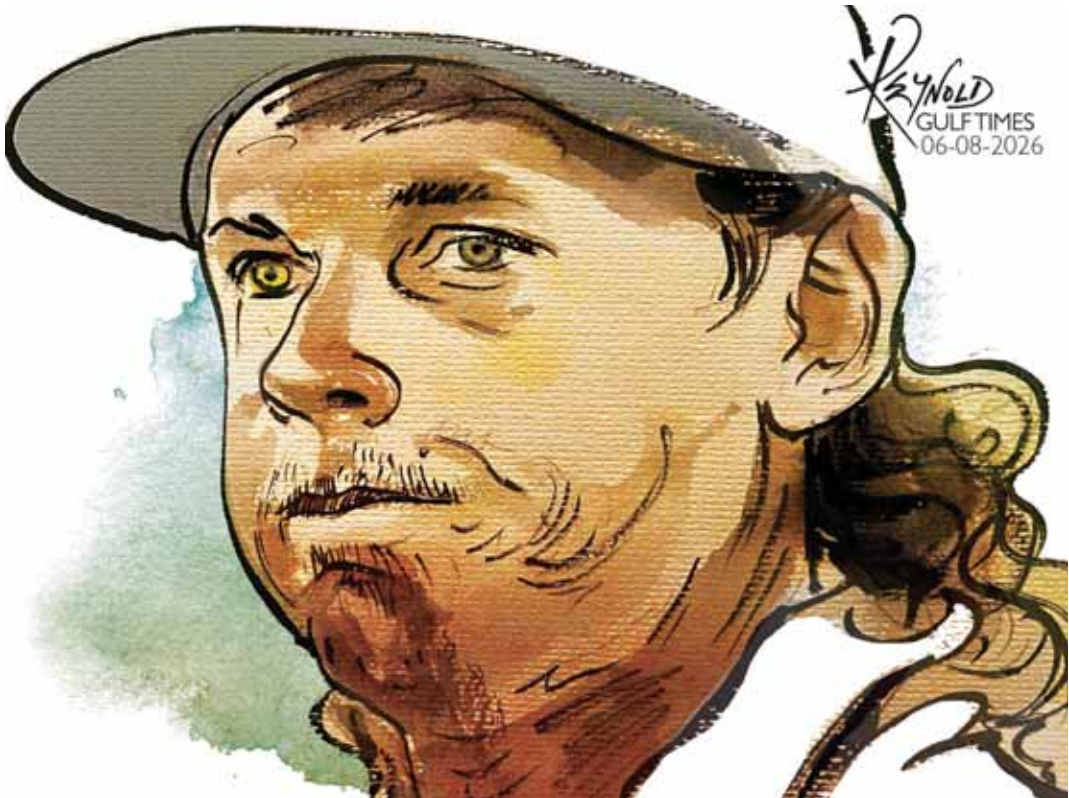
"It's a great golf course, a great venue, and the crowds really turned up as well. Yeah, would be disappointed if it wasn't."

LIV Golf has been mum on the status of the \$40mn event, which has \$11.2mn going to the winning team. However, The Cardinal, which hosted the 2025 LIV team championship, has no tournament infrastructure or fan hospitality built out yet, Front Office Sports reported last week.

Smith said the LIV team is working hard "behind the scenes" to get them playing next year and he hopes to learn more at an upcoming players' meeting.

"I don't really understand what is going to happen. I think it's all up in the air," he said.

"I feel like we're well-informed, but I feel like a lot of it is still up in the air. We don't know."



When asked about his future plans if LIV Golf folds, he said he hasn't made any. "I'm contracted

to the end of next year, so I was expecting to play until the end of next year and renegotiate and

hopefully go on," Smith said. "I'm a positive guy, so I've made no effort to go seek anything else."

TENNIS

Sabalenka tops Uchijima in WTA Toronto opener

De Minaur fights past Duckworth in all-Aussie Montreal battle

AFP
Toronto

World number one Aryna Sabalenka returned to her hard court comfort zone with a 6-3, 6-3 victory over Japanese qualifier Moyuka Uchijima in the WTA 1000 in Toronto on Tuesday.

It was a solid start for Sabalenka in her bid to bounce back after falling in the quarter-finals at Roland Garros and in the round of 16 at Wimbledon.

The Belarusian star has dominated on hard courts this year and on Tuesday notched her 24th win in 25 matches on the surface. The lone defeat was her loss to Elena Rybakina in the Australian Open final.

Now she's eyeing a North American hard court run that could include a three-peat at the US Open, the final Grand Slam of the year that starts on August 30 in New York.

"I'm happy with the performance, I'm happy with the fight," Sabalenka said after her second-round opener. "I knew going into this match I might struggle a little bit after a little break, but I was ready for that."

"I'm happy that mentally and physically I was ready to go."

Sabalenka didn't have it all her own way against the 111th-ranked Uchijima. But she emerged from an exchange of five breaks of serve that opened the second set with a 3-2 lead and made the advantage stand up.

She held for 4-2, and when she had her first chance to serve it out she pounced, sealing the match on her second match point with an overhead winner.

Uchijima had surprised the Belarusian in the opening game of the match, clawing back from 40-15 down to break on the way to a



Aryna Sabalenka returns a shot to Moyuka Uchijima of Japan during day three of the WTA 1000 in Toronto. (AFP)

quick 2-0 lead. But Sabalenka won the next five games and polished off the opening set with a confident hold of serve.

In the third round she'll face China's Zhang Shuai, who was leading Jelena Ostapenko 6-0, 4-0 when the Latvian retired from their match.

Meanwhile, Alex de Minaur blew through the opening set but needed some good luck in the second to emerge with a 6-2, 7-6 (8/6) opening win over James Duckworth at the Montreal Masters.

De Minaur, seeded third, hasn't lost to a fellow Aussie in four years, but he was made to work hard by his 86th-ranked compatriot to

keep that streak alive.

The second-round match turned in an instant in the second-set tiebreaker when a return which rolled off the top of the net handed de Minaur a match point after he saved six set points for his opponent.

"A little bit of luck went my way in the tiebreaker," de Minaur said.

"He was hitting me off the court in the second set, but I got lucky and managed to sneak away with the tiebreaker."

"Ultimately it was a lot of fighting and competing," added de Minaur, the 2023 runner-up in Canada who married British WTA player Katie Boulter last month.

De Minaur said he hasn't given much thought to his solid recent record against fellow Aussies.

"We're doing our best to make Australia proud," he said.

"We have strength in numbers."

In other second-round action China's Shang Juncheng - only just returned from months away because of injury - scored the first notable upset of the week with 7-5, 4-6, 7-6 (7/5) defeat of 10th seed Andrey Rublev.

Shang saved five match points, on his way to the third round, breaking Rublev as he served for the match at 5-3 in the third and hanging on to win a seven-deuce service game.

FOCUS

LIV Golf CEO says funding secured to play beyond 2026

AFP
New York

LIV Golf has reached a deal with a lead investor to keep the series playing beyond the end of the 2026 season, LIV chief executive officer Scott O'Neil said yesterday.

Speaking at this week's LIV Golf New York event at Trump National in Bedminster, New Jersey, O'Neil provided the first glimpse of what LIV might resume after the pullout of financial support by Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund.

"LIV Golf has an agreement in place with a lead investor, signed by the investor and approved by the board, to anchor the transaction and play a key role in supporting the path forward for the league's next era, driven by and for the players," O'Neil said in a statement.

"We're also seeing strong interest from more than a dozen additional parties to potentially serve as minority investors, creating a multi-partner model

built for long-term stability and growth."

LIV began in 2022 and lured some of golf's top names from the PGA Tour, which banned LIV golfers from its events.

Saudi officials withdrew their backing of the series, however, after promising to keep LIV afloat through the 2026 campaign, which is set to conclude later this month.

O'Neil has sought up to \$300 million in backing from new sponsors to produce a season in 2027 and beyond.

"Notably, our next chapter will make the players the majority equity holders in LIV Golf, a first for a major global sports league, and gives the league the foundation to keep growing the game worldwide," the statement said.

"We anticipate finalizing terms in the coming weeks with the goal of entering a transaction in September."

"In the meantime, our focus is on delivering a great week for fans and players at Bedminster and finishing the 2026 season strong."

SPOTLIGHT

Alcaraz withdraws from Cincinnati Masters with injury



AFP
Los Angeles

World number two Carlos Alcaraz has withdrawn from the ATP Cincinnati Masters with the wrist injury that has sidelined him since April, organizers said.

The Spaniard will not defend his title at the tournament that starts on August 13 because of "an ongoing wrist injury."

"We know Carlos is doing everything he can to get back to playing tournaments as soon as possible," tournament director Bob Moran said in a statement.

"We wish him the best with his recovery and look forward to welcoming him back to Cincinnati in the future."

The move will spark concerns over Alcaraz's upcoming title defense at the US Open, the final Grand Slam of the year, which starts on August 30 in New York.

The elite hard court tournament in Cincy is the last major tune-up for the Open.

The 23-year-old Alcaraz has already opted out of the French Open and Wimbledon this year as he recovers from the injury suffered in the first round of the Barcelona Open in April.

The seven-time Grand Slam champion pulled out of tournaments in Madrid and Rome before withdrawing from Roland Garros in a move he said he and his team had decided was "the most prudent thing to do."

He then missed Wimbledon, where his rival Jannik Sinner prevailed for the second year in a row, this time against Germany's French Open winner Alexander Zverev. In opting out of Wimbledon, Alcaraz said his recovery was going well but that he was still not ready to play.

It marked the third Grand Slam that Alcaraz has missed since he made his main draw debut at the 2021 Australian Open.

He became the youngest man to complete the career Grand Slam in January with his triumph at the Australian Open. He also won the ATP title in Doha in February.

SOUTH AFRICAN LE CLOS LOSES HOME IN FATAL FIRE

South Africa's Chad le Clos said on Tuesday that his Cape Town apartment was destroyed in a fire that also killed one of his neighbours a day after the swimmer became the most decorated athlete in Commonwealth Games history. The 34-year-old won his 21st Commonwealth Games medal when South Africa took bronze in the men's 4x100m medley relay in Glasgow last week, moving past Australian Emma McKeon at the top of the all-time standings. However, the milestone was overshadowed when a fire ripped through his apartment block in the Sea Point suburb of Cape Town.

"It has taken me a while to process this heart-breaking tragedy," Le Clos posted on Instagram. "On the evening of July 30, amid breaking the all-time Commonwealth record, a fire started in my apartment block, which quickly spread to my home. Sadly my home, where I've lived for more than a decade, burnt down and there is nothing left to salvage." Le Clos also paid tribute to a neighbour who died in the blaze and expressed condolences to the victim's family and friends. He said the Chad le Clos Foundation had launched a fundraising campaign to support residents

affected by the fire. The South African's relay bronze was his third medal of the 2026 Games, following a silver in the mixed 4x100m medley and bronze in the men's 4x100m freestyle relay. His Commonwealth tally now stands at seven gold, five silver and nine bronze medals across five Games, dating back to his debut in Delhi in 2010. Le Clos made his breakthrough at the 2012 London Olympics, where he beat American Michael Phelps to win gold in the 200m butterfly. He has won four Olympic medals and four world championships titles in his career.

FOOTBALL

Salah arrives in Turkey to complete Trabzonspor move

Egyptian joins on free transfer after nine years at Liverpool



Egyptian forward Mohamed Salah gestures as he arrives at Istanbul Atatürk Airport to complete his transfer to Trabzonspor. (AFP)

Reuters
Istanbul

Mohamed Salah arrived smiling at an Istanbul airport wearing Trabzonspor’s burgundy and blue kit ahead of his expected move to the Turkish top-tier side from Liverpool, as hundreds of fans jostled to get a glimpse of the Egyptian forward. wwTrabzonspor announced a day earlier they were in negotiations with Salah and club chairman Ertugrul Dogan said they expected to sign the 34-year-old on a free transfer at a ceremony in the Black Sea city today.

“Trabzon, are you ready? I can hear you. See you very soon,” Salah said in a video posted by the club on X. “Everywhere is Trabzon to us,” he added while wearing a Trabzonspor kit, referring to the club’s motto.

Upon arriving at Atatürk Airport, Salah was met by hundreds of fans. He waved at supporters and initiated a traditional chant with them, before departing for a medical check and a later planned flight east to Trabzon.

“I am really happy... and looking forward to training with the team. Everywhere I go I always

win or try to win something. Hopefully we can do something within the league and in Europe as well,” the Egyptian said on his arrival in Trabzon, while the club posted “Welcome, Egyptian King” on X.

Salah left Liverpool this summer after nine years, having scored 257 goals in 442 appearances and having won the Premier League twice and the Champions League once. He also scored 193 Premier League goals, 191 of them for the Reds, putting him fourth in the all-time list behind English trio Alan Shearer, Harry Kane and Wayne Rooney.

In the 2024–25 season, Salah scored 29 Premier League goals and provided 18 assists, equalling the league record for most goal involvements in a single season and setting the record for a 38-game campaign.

He was named Premier League Player of the Season and won the Golden Boot and the Playmaker Award, becoming the first player to take all three in one campaign.

His output waned last season, with seven goals and seven assists in 27 league matches and he was left on the bench in Champions League games, leading to a public spat with Liverpool’s then-manager Arne Slot.

Salah started his career in Europe at Swiss side Basel in 2012 and later joined Chelsea. He also had brief stints at Fiorentina and AS Roma between 2015 and 2017 before joining Liverpool.

He last played at the World Cup, helping Egypt reach the last 16 for the first time since 1934 before they blew a two-goal lead to suffer an agonising loss to eventual runners-up Argentina. Salah has scored 66 goals in 119 international appearances for Egypt and is one of the most successful African players in history.

Trabzonspor - generally considered to be the fourth biggest team in Turkey after Istanbul sides Fenerbahce, Galatasaray, and Besiktas - finished third in the Super Lig last season and will enter the Europa League playoff round. The club’s last league championship was in the 2021-22 season.

Salah had been close to joining Besiktas, but negotiations had stalled over financial and image-rights demands, according to local media.

Details of the contract Salah is expected to sign have not been disclosed yet. But according to several Turkish media outlets, the right winger is set to sign a two-season contract with an option for a third and will earn 17mn euros (\$19.6mn) a year,

SPOTLIGHT

Newcastle appoint Jaissle as new head coach after Howe exit

AFP
London

Newcastle have appointed **Matthias Jaissle** as their new head coach following Eddie Howe's departure, the English Premier League club announced.

The 38-year-old Jaissle, a former Germany Under-21 international, was previously in charge of Saudi side Al-Ahli but has no prior experience of managing a top-flight club.

“It is an incredible honour to become head coach of Newcastle United,” said Jaissle. “This is one of the biggest clubs in European football, with a unique history, identity and supporter base, and I am excited to experience that passion and connection first-hand. When Newcastle United comes your way, you take notice. The ambition of the club, the vision for the future and the opportunity ahead made this an incredibly compelling place to be. I have followed the club’s journey closely in recent years and the progress that has been made is clear for everyone to see.”

Jaissle was forced to end his playing career due to injury at the age of 25. His first managerial job came with Austrian side Liefering, whom he led to a second-placed finish in the second tier, the club’s joint best-ever position.

Jaissle took charge at Red Bull Salzburg in 2021, winning successive Austrian titles as well as the



Austrian Cup. Jaissle joined Al-Ahli in 2023 and led them to AFC Champions League titles in 2025 and 2026.

Although not a high-profile manager, he is well-known to Newcastle’s majority owner, the Saudi Arabia Public Investment Fund, which bought a controlling share in four Pro League clubs, including Al Ahli, in 2023.

Newcastle chief executive David Hopkinson said: “Matthias is one of the most exciting and highly regarded young coaches in football and I’m thrilled to welcome him to Newcastle United. We have conducted a thorough process, and he has emerged as the clear candidate for the role. He possesses all the qualities we were looking for.”

Jaissle has a tough task ahead of him given the way Howe, in his five years at Newcastle, revitalised a club that had struggled for decades. Howe replaced Steve Bruce in November 2021 and won the League Cup in March 2025 -- beating Liverpool in the final

to clinch the northeast side’s first major trophy since 1969.

The former Bournemouth boss also led Newcastle to Champions League qualification in 2023 and 2025. But hampered by star striker Alexander Isak’s protracted move to Liverpool, the Englishman came under pressure as the Magpies finished 12th in the Premier League last season, with 17 defeats in their 38 games.

Newcastle reached the Champions League last 16 but were hammered 8-3 on aggregate by Barcelona. The club have since been depleted by the close-season departures of Italy midfielder Sandro Tonali to Tottenham and England forward Anthony Gordon to Barcelona, with Howe reportedly frustrated at losing several of his best players in order that Newcastle could comply with Premier League profit and sustainability rules.

Newcastle captain Bruno Guimaraes is also set to leave St James’ Park after reports earlier Wednesday that Premier League champions Arsenal had agreed a £75mn (\$101mn) deal to sign the Brazil midfielder.

The Magpies begin the 2026/27 Premier League season at home to Liverpool on August 23, with an upbeat Jaissle insisting: “I am incredibly excited about the future. I fully and unreservedly believe in this project, the ambition and the direction the club is taking. There is a clear vision, strong leadership and an exceptional platform to build on.”

FOCUS

Mudryk’s long wait ends with emotional Chelsea comeback

Reuters
Hong Kong

Ukraine winger Mykhailo Mudryk re-launched his career with an emotional return to the Chelsea team, days after learning that his anti-doping ban had been reduced.

The 25-year-old came off the bench in Chelsea’s pre-season Tour clash with Juventus in Hong Kong, his first action since being told of an adverse analytical finding in December 2024.

“I’m really pleased for him,” Chelsea manager Xavi Alonso said after the 1-0 defeat. “It was emotional for everyone from the club to see him back. “When I told him before the game he could play 10 or 15 minutes, he was thrilled for sure. It was after such a long period (that he couldn’t play with the team), so it was a great feeling for him and for everyone else.”

Mudryk joined Chelsea from Shakhtar Donetsk in 2023 for an initial fee of 62mn pounds (\$78.72mn) but his career looked in peril when hit with a four-year ban by the English Football Association for testing positive for the banned substance meldonium.

He always insisted he had never knowingly or intentionally taken a banned substance and was cleared to resume playing on Friday after the FA concluded disciplinary proceedings in agreement with the World

Harrison soars to victory as Barshim finishes ninth in Monaco

Monaco: American JuVaughn Harrison produced a world-leading 2.34m clearance to win the inaugural Monaco Athletics Festival yesterday, while Qatar’s former Olympic champion Mutaz Barshim finished ninth in the elite high jump competition held at Quai Albert I at Port Hercule.

The event was part of the What Gravity Tour, the international high jump circuit founded by Barshim in 2025 to showcase the discipline through standalone competitions.

Harrison was the only athlete to clear 2.34m, delivering a dominant performance against a field of nine world-class jumpers. His compatriot Tyus Wilson finished second with a personal best of 2.30m, while Italy’s Christian Falocchi secured third place on countback after clearing 2.27m.

Barshim cleared 2.10m before exiting the competition.



The Qatari entered the event with a season’s best of 2.27m but was unable to challenge for a podium finish. Unlike traditional athletics meetings, the one-evening festival was dedicated exclusively to the high jump, bringing together some of the world’s leading specialists, including Harrison, Wilson, Romaine Beckford and Barshim.



Inter Milan and AC Milan battle to 1-1 draw in Perth friendly

Perth: Frenchman Christopher Nkunku converted a late penalty as AC Milan drew 1-1 with rivals Inter Milan in a lacklustre pre-season derby in Perth.

In front of 52,310 fans, Serie A champions Inter Milan appeared to be claiming the bragging rights after Federico Dimarco’s strike from close range in the 52nd minute. But Nkunku was brought down by Carlos Augusto in the 83rd minute before squaring the contest with a superbly taken penalty.

The result ensured that new AC Milan coach Ruben Amorim is still seeking a maiden victory after his reign began with a 2-2 draw in a friendly against Celtic in Glasgow last month.

Amorim, fired as Manchester United coach in January, has been tasked with turning around ailing AC Milan, who missed out on the Champions League last season.

He will have some concerns his new side were fortunate to escape with a draw following an

error-strewn performance.

They will be encouraged by veteran midfield maestro Luka Modric playing the last 30 minutes having recently signed a one-year extension.

“It was nice to get some minutes under the belt and I felt good,” Modric said. “It’s good to have these kinds of games to prepare for the season. I think we did a lot of good things and hopefully we can just improve.”

The match was the first for AC Milan since the death of Franco Baresi, who captained the club during a golden era in the 1980s and 1990s.

There was a minute’s silence before the match with players from both teams linking arms.

Modric started on the bench much to the disappointment of the crowd, with the Croatian receiving loud applause in the warm-up. AC Milan will continue their pre-season against Chelsea in Jakarta on Saturday. Inter Milan will remain in Perth to play Juventus on the same day.



Mykhailo Mudryk came off the bench in Chelsea’s pre-season Tour clash with Juventus in Hong Kong, his first action since being told of an adverse analytical finding in December 2024.

Anti-Doping Agency (WADA). Before the game, Alonso said ‘no decision’ had been made about Mudryk’s future at Chelsea. Following the match he said it had been important to get Mudryk back on the pitch.

“It was more than a football decision. It was a human decision and emotional decision to give him this boost, to feel the great support that he got and the great reception when he came on the

pitch,” the Spaniard said. After last week’s hearing the FA noted that Mudryk would not have returned an adverse finding under WADA’s current technical document, due to changes made after he had tested positive.

“If Mr Mudryk’s sample was collected today, the concentration of meldonium in the sample would not have been reported and no ADRVs would have resulted,” the FA said.