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FOOTBALL

## Portugese star Ronaldo accuses Manchester United of betrayal

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SPOTLIGHT

# Qatar arrive home ahead of their World Cup opener

**By Sports Reporter**
Doha

The Qatar squad reached Doha yesterday early morning after a training camp in Spain, where they were preparing for their World Cup debut at home. The Asian Champions checked into Al Aziziyah Boutique Hotel at Aspire Zone before taking a well-earned rest yesterday.

Felix Sanchez's men, however, will be back on the training pitches today as they gear up to face Ecuador at the Al Bayt Stadium in Al Khor on November 20. The Al Annabi then take on Senegal on November 25 at the Al Thumama Stadium and the Netherlands on November 29 at Al Bayt in their other Group A matches.

Today, the Qatar players will meet with tournament volunteers to show their appreciation for their contribution towards organising Qatar 2022 at an event in Aspire Zone Training Facilities 3 at 4pm. Players will lead the volunteers through football drills, providing fun, fitness, and a once-in-a-lifetime experience for the participants.

In Marbella, Spain – where they were based for more than a month – Qatar besides closed door training sessions also played friendly matches against lower ranked nations. They beat Honduras 1-0, Nicaragua 2-1, Guatemala 2-0, and Panama 2-1.

The team was also based in the Austrian capital Vienna and Marbella in Spain since June. On Friday, head coach Sanchez had announced the final 26-man squad. There were no surprises in the final list of squad with Abdelrahman Mustafa unfortunate to miss out as FIFA allows only a 26-man roster. The teams can only make changes before the first game of the tournament, and only in the case of serious injury or illness.



Qatar defenders Bassam al-Rawi (left) and Boualem Khoukhi arrive in Doha.



Abdelkarim Hassan is all smiles as he takes a selfie upon arrival. **Below**: Hassan al-Haydos



QATAR 2022

# Injured Azmoun in Iran's squad

## AZMOUN, WHO PLAYS FOR GERMAN CLUB BAYER LEVERKUSEN, TORE A CALF MUSCLE IN EARLY OCTOBER

**AFP**
Doha

Iran named Sardar Azmoun, their star player who has expressed support on several occasions for the demonstrations in Iran, in their final 25-man World Cup squad yesterday.

Azmoun, who plays for German club Bayer Leverkusen, tore a calf muscle in early October and faces a fight to be fit for Iran's first match of the tournament against England in Qatar on November 21. The 27-year-old forward has posted several messages of support on social media for the anti-government protests in Iran that were sparked by the death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini.

Azmoun's Instagram account, which has five million followers, was at one point blocked for several days before coming back online. Iran also face Wales on November 25 and the United States on November 29 in the group phase of the World Cup.

### GHANA NAME UNCAPPED PAIR

Kamal Sowah's form for Club Brugge in the Champions League has won him a World Cup call-up for Ghana after the uncapped striker was yesterday included in the country's squad for Qatar.

The 22-year-old was a surprise selection as coach Otto Addo named his 26-man squad for the tournament, where the Black Stars face Portugal, South Korea and Uruguay in Group H. Sowah has impressed as the Belgian club reached the last 16 of the Champions League, knocking out Atletico Madrid and Bayer Leverkusen in the process.

There was also a first call up for midfielder Salis Abdul Samed, 22, who has been a regular for Racing Lens this season as they have moved to second in the French Ligue 1 standings.

Former Spain international Inaki Williams and England under-21 international Tariq Lamptey, who threw in their lot with Ghana two months ago, were both included but Ghana failed to persuade England international Callum Hudson Odoi to switch his allegiance


Iran's Morteza Pouraliganji trains in Tehran yesterday. *(Reuters)*

Ghana have been forced to name three inexperienced goalkeepers after their first two choices - Jojo Wollacott from Charlton Athletic and South Africa-based Richard Ofori - were both injured in club action. The squad will be captained by Dede Ayew, who was part of the team that reached the quarter-finals in South Africa in 2010 - only the third time an African nation has reached the last eight of a World Cup.

### KHAZRI, MSAKNI TO LEAD TUNISIA SQUAD

Tunisia coach Jalel Kadri named his World Cup squad, with attackers Wahbi Khazri and Youssef Msakni leading the charge to reach the knock-out stages for the first time. The North African nation, which is preparing for its sixth ever World Cup, will face France, Denmark and Australia in Group D.

The 26-strong squad, named in a statement by the Tunisia Football Federation (FTF), features two stars of France's Ligue 1 – Khazri of Montpellier and Montassar Talbi of FC Lorient – as well as Ali Abdi of Ligue 2's Caen. Two other Ligue 1 players, Saif-Eddine Khaoui of Clermont and Yoann Touzghar of AC Ajaccio, have been dropped.

### SQUADS

**IRAN**

**Goalkeepers**: Amir Abedzadeh (Ponferradina/ESP), Alireza Beiranvand (Persepolis), Hossein Hosseini (Esteghlal), Payam Niazmand (Sepahan)
**Defenders**: Sadegh Moharrami (Dinamo Zagreb/CRO), Ehsan Hajsafi (AEK Athens/GRE), Shoja Khalilzadeh (Al Ahli/QAT), Milad Mohammadi (AEK Athens/GRE), Morteza Pouraliganji (Persepolis), Hossein Kanaani (Al Ahli/QAT), Majid Hosseini (Kayserispor/TUR), Ramin Rezaian (Sepahan), Abolfazl Jalali (Esteghlal)
**Midfielders**: Saeid Ezatolahi (Vejle BK/DEN), Saman Ghoddos (Brentford/ENG), Ahmad Nourollahi (Shabab Al Ahli/UAE), Roozbeh Chechmi (Esteghlal), Ali Karimi (Kayserispor/TUR)
**Forwards**: Alireza Jahanbakhsh (Feyenoord/NED), Mehdi Taremi (Porto/POR), Karim Ansarifard (Omonia Nicosia/CYP), Vahid Amiri (Persepolis), Mehdi Torabi (Persepolis), Ali Gholizadeh (Charleroi/BEL), Sardar Azmoun (Bayer Leverkusen/GER)
**Coach**: Carlos Queiroz (POR)

**GHANA**

**Goalkeepers**: Abdul Nurudeen (Eupen/BEL), Ibrahim Danlad (Asante Kotoko), Lawrence Ati Zigi (St Gallen/SUI)
**Defenders**: Denis Odoi (Bruges/BEL), Tariq Lamptey (Brighton/ENG), Alidu Seidu (Clermont/FRA), Daniel Amartey (Leicester/ENG), Joseph Aidoo (Celta Vigo/ESP), Alexander Djiku (Strasbourg/FRA), Mohammed Salisu (Southampton/ENG), Abdul Rahman Baba (Reading/ENG), Gideon Mensah (Auxerre/FRA)
**Midfielders**: Andre Ayew (Al Sadd/QAT), Thomas Partey (Arsenal/ENG), Elisha Owusu (Gent/BEL), Salis Abdul Samed (Lens/FRA), Mohammed Kudus (Ajax/NED), Daniel Kofi Kyereh (Freiburg/GER)
**Forwards**: Daniel Afriyie Barnieh (Hearts of Oak/GHA), Kamal Sowah (Club Brugge/BEL), Issahaku Abdul Fatawu (Sporting/POR), Osman Bukari (Red Star Belgrade/SRB), Inaki Williams (Athletic Bilbao/ESP), Antoine Semenyo (Bristol City/ENG), Jordan Ayew (Crystal Palace/ENG), Kamaldeen Sulemana (Rennes/FRA).

**TUNISIA**

**Goalkeepers**: Aymen Dahmen (Club Sportif Sfaxien), Mouez Hassan (Club Africain), Bechir Ben Said (US Monastir), Aymen Mathlouthi (Etoile du Sahel).
**Defenders**: Ali Abdi (Caen/FRA), Mohamed Drager (FC Luzern/SUI), Ali Maaloul (Al-Ahly/EGY), Wajdi Kechrida (Atromitos/GRE), Nader Ghandri (Club Africain), Yassine Meriah (Esperance), Bilel Ifa (Kuwait FC/KUW), Dylan Bronn (Salernitana/ITA), Montassar Talbi (Lorient/FRA).
**Midfielders**: Ellyes Skhiri (FC Cologne/GER), Ghaylen Chaalali (Esperance), Aissa Laidouni (Ferencvaros/HUN), Mohamed Ali Ben Romdhane (Esperance), Ferjani Sassi (Al-Duhail/QAT), Hannibal Mejbri (Birmingham/ENG).
**Forwards**: Youssef Msakni (Al Arabi SC/QAT), Seifeddine Jaziri (Zamalek/EGY), Naim Sliti (Ettifaq/KSA), Issam Jebali (Odense Boldklub/DEN), Taha Yassine Khenissi (Kuwait SC/KUW), Anis Ben Slimane (Brondby/DEN), Wahbi Khazri (Montpellier/FRA).

CRICKET

REVIEW

# World champs England can go from 'strength to strength'

'I think our bowling has improved no end, and I think that's why we're sat here as champions to be honest'

**AFP**
Melbourne

Jos Buttler is reticent to call England one of the best white-ball teams ever, but the captain is confident there is more to come to cement their status as all-time greats.

England's five-wicket win over Pakistan at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on Sunday made them the first team in history to hold both one-day and T20 World Cups at the same time, following their 50-over triumph in 2019.

Their efforts were all the more impressive given they were without five first-choice players due to injury - Jofra Archer, Jonny Bairstow, Dawid Malan, Reece Topley and Mark Wood.

"It's not for us to judge, but we certainly enjoy that," Buttler said when asked if England could be now considered one of the greatest teams in limited-overs cricket.

"To have won in 2019 and now win this T20 World Cup as well, it just shows the vision at the start that people had where we could get to as an England white-ball team. "There's no reason why we shouldn't go on from strength to strength."

Buttler, who was part of both the 2019 and 2022 winning teams, as was Sunday's hero Ben Stokes, was only appointed skipper in July after Eoin Morgan announced his retirement from international cricket. Morgan oversaw England's white-ball revival following their embarrassing first-round exit at the 2015 World Cup, a resurgence capped when he steered them to the 2019 title.

He believes they can now be regarded as one of the great limited-overs sides.

"It is such an incredible feeling - pure joy, relief, happiness," Morgan told *Sky Sports*.

"This team deserves it. Jos Buttler said. 'We don't want to be known as a team just for our style of play'. We were known like that in 50 overs then won the 50-over World Cup in 2019.

"In T20 they've now won something tangible to be regarded as one of the great sides. They were excellent."

England came into the World Cup on the back of a 4-3 T20 series win in Pakistan, which Buttler admitted was a key bonding experience for him as new captain with the team, setting them up for the World Cup.

**FULL OF CONFIDENCE**

"I think relationships take time. As you get to know people better and better, you build trust. I'd say the Pakistan tour for the group, not just myself and the coach, but for everyone involved, it just seemed like a really good tour," he said.

"A lot of bonds built. I thought we got back to playing some really good cricket there. We turned up in Australia full of confidence.

"Sometimes it takes a little bit of time to get to know people well and get to feel comfortable, and there's so much talent in the group that as soon as we feel comfortable, we're a dangerous team."

While Stokes's unbeaten 52 stole the thunder against Pakistan, it was England's bowlers who put them in a position to win with Sam Curran taking 3-12 and Adil Rashid 2-22 to restrict Pakistan to 137-8. Curran took 13 wickets overall to be named not just man-of-the-match, but player-of-the tournament, with Buttler praising the influence of Australian bowling coach David Saker since he came on board.

"I think our bowling has improved no end, and I think that's why we're sat here as champions to be honest," he said.

"Sam Curran has stepped up and been an absolute revelation. He's a brilliant cricketer. He loves those crunch moments.

"I think you can't underestimate the hard work that people have put in, Mark Wood and Chris Woakes coming back from injuries to get to this point, Chris Jordan being injured, as well, to get to this point. Just such an amazing effort from everyone."



England's Jos Buttler celebrates with the trophy in the ICC Twenty20 World Cup 2022 final against Pakistan at the Melbourne Cricket Ground in Melbourne on Sunday. *(AFP)*

England's next assignment is a one-day series against Australia starting Thursday in Adelaide before moving to Sydney then back to the scene of Sunday's triumph at the MCG.

FOCUS

# Curran - a clinical closer from a cricketing dynasty

**AFP**
Melbourne

In player of the tournament Sam Curran, and his bowling at the 'death', England found the final piece of the jigsaw to turn Jos Buttler's side into Twenty20 world champions.

The quietly spoken Curran bookended England's triumphant tournament in Australia with two of the finest spells seen in a T20 World Cup.

He took 5-10 in 3.4 overs to bowl out Afghanistan for 112 in the opening Super 12 match and then 3-12 from four overs in the final at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, including the key wickets of Mohamed Rizwan and Shan Masood, to keep Pakistan down to 137-8.

The latter saw him awarded player of the match in the final, a year after he had been a spectator as England's Adil Rashid, Chris Jordan and Chris Woakes were smashed for 57 runs in the last three overs of a T20 World Cup semi-final to hand New Zealand victory.

And in 2016, he had been a teenager watching on TV when Ben Stokes failed to shackle Carlos Brathwaite, who bludgeoned four successive sixes in the final over in Kolkata to give West Indies their second T20 World Cup triumph.

Now his laser-accurate left-arm swing, together with a deceptively quick shorter ball, cutters and clever changes of pace, has been the answer to England's bowling prayers.

"To be honest, I am a little bit lost for words, it has been a great tournament," Curran said as he picked up his awards after taking 13 wickets overall.

"First time for me in a World Cup and we have won it. I wanted to be adaptable coming into the tournament.

"I haven't bowled much at the death before and that is one area I want to keep improving."

Curran comes from a family of cricketers. His late father Kevin was a Zimbabwean international allrounder in the 1980s who played for Northampton and Gloucestershire in English county cricket. He went on to coach Zimbabwe.

His grandfather Kevin P. Curran played for Rhodesia, as Zimbabwe was formerly known, seven times in the 1940s and 1950s.

Older brothers Tom, 27, and Ben, 26, are also talented cricketers, with Tom having represented England also in all three formats and Ben making his first-class debut for Northamptonshire in 2018.

Sadly, father Kevin never lived to see his sons follow in his international footsteps as he collapsed and died while exercising in 2012. He was aged just 53.



England's Sam Curran displays his trophies after the ICC Twenty20 World Cup 2022 final against Pakistan at Melbourne Cricket Ground on Sunday. *(AFP)*

Now Sam, who is also a powerful lower-order batter with a Test highest score of 78 and an ODI best of 95 not out, wants to emulate his father by becoming a genuine allrounder, like his teammate and hero Stokes.

"I want to improve my batting though it is tough to get to bat in this line-up," Curran smiled.

"I don't think I should be getting this (player of the match award). I think the way Ben Stokes played there, to get a fifty in a final - and he does it so many times for us - he should get this.

"He is someone I look up to and always turns up when the team needs him, people question him but there's no questioning him, he's the man."

SPOTLIGHT

# South Africa recall De Bruyn for Test series against Aussies

**AFP**
Johannesburg

Batsman Theunis de Bruyn has been recalled to the South African squad for a three-Test tour of Australia in December and January, Cricket South Africa announced yesterday.

The 30-year-old played in 12 Test matches between 2017 and 2019. He scored a century against Sri Lanka in Colombo in 2018 but failed to reach fifty in 22 other innings.

His recall and the inclusion of wicketkeeper-batsman Heinrich Klaasen, 31, add maturity to a fragile batting order.

Klaasen has only played in one Test but has an average of 45.30 in 80 first-class matches and has played in 30 one-day internationals and 38 Twenty20 internationals.

Rassie van der Dussen, 33, also returns to add stability to the batting after recovering from a broken finger.

That kept him out of the recent T20 World Cup in Australia, where South Africa were eliminated after losing their last group match against the Netherlands.

National Convenor of Selectors Victor Mpitsang said: "We are pleased with the group of players that have been assembled for this tour. I think the selectors now have a core group of Proteas that has been built and it is just about building on what we have.

"There is a welcome return for our vice-captain Temba after his injury and we are also happy to have Rassie back too following his finger injury in England. I am especially excited about our pace attack, which is no doubt growing in stature and strength.

"Overall, all the players selected undoubtedly have the ability to play at the highest level, and evidence of that is our standing on the ICC World Test Championship table. We are confident that if they play to their ability, we can challenge Australia in their conditions.

"We would like to wish the players well for the tour and look forward to an exciting and competitive series."

Captain Dean Elgar, vice-captain Temba Bavuma, fast bowler Kagiso Rabada and left-arm spinner Keshav Maharaj are the only survivors from the squad that gained a 2-1 victory on South Africa's previous Test tour of Australia in 2016/17.

Australia and South Africa are currently first and second on the International Cricket Council World Test championship table and will be seeking to secure a place in the final in England next year.

Only two South Africans, Sarel Erwee and wicketkeeper Kyle Verreynne, have made centuries in 10 Test matches since the start of the 2021/22 season.

They both came in the same match against New Zealand in Christchurch in February.

Bavuma is the only batsman to have averaged more than 40 runs an innings during that period. The promising Keegan Petersen, with a Test average of 35.40, was ruled out of the tour because of a torn hamstring, while Ryan Rickelton, who batted without success in South Africa's most recent Test, in England in September, has an ankle injury.

South Africa have a strong fast bowling attack, led by Rabada, who will be backed up by Anrich Nortje, Lungi Ngidi and tall left-armer Marco Jansen.

Also included is uncapped fast bowler Gerald Coetzee.

South Africa's coaching staff also lacks experience following the resignation of former Test wicketkeeper Mark Boucher.

Malibongwe Maketa, who was assistant to former head coach Ottis Gibson between 2017 and 2019, has been appointed as interim coach.

**SA SQUAD AND TOUR ITINERARY**

Dean Elgar (captain), Temba Bavuma, Gerald Coetzee, Theunis de Bruyn, Sarel Erwee, Simon Harmer, Marco Jansen, Heinrich Klaasen (wkt), Keshav Maharaj, Lungi Ngidi, Anrich Nortje, Kagiso Rabada, Glenton Stuurman, Rassie van der Dussen, Kyle Verreynne (wkt), Khaya Zondo.
**Four-day Tour Match:** December 9 - 12; Cricket Australia XI vs South Africa at The Allan Border Field in Brisbane
**First Test:** December 17 - 21 at The Gabba, Brisbane
**Second Test** December 26 - 30 at MCG, Melbourne
**Third Test** January 04 - 08 January at SCG, Sydney

BOTTOMLINE

# Australia's Warner considers Test retirement after next year's Ashes series



**Reuters**
Melbourne

Australia opener **David Warner** has hinted he will quit test cricket after next year's Ashes series in England but plans to continue playing white-ball cricket at least until the 2024 Twenty20 World Cup.

Defending champions Australia could not make the last four in the home T20 World Cup, which England won on Sunday, and it was a particularly subdued tournament for left-handed Warner.

"Test cricket will probably be the first one to fall off," Warner said on Triple M's Deadset Legends show.

"Because that's how it will pan out. The T20 World Cup is in 2024, (one-day) World Cup next year.

"Potentially it could be my last 12 months in Test cricket.

"But I love the white-ball game; it's amazing."

Australia's busy 2023 schedule involves a Border-Gavaskar Trophy in India and Ashes in England, before the ODI World Cup in India later in the year. West Indies and the United States co-host the 20-overs World Cup in 2024.

Australia's first real changing of the guard since the 2015 Ashes is looming, with several players considered likely to retire in the next 18 months.

Warner and Usman Khawaja will be 36 at the end of next year's Ashes, Nathan Lyon 35, Mitchell Starc and Josh Hazlewood 32.

Steve Smith will also be 33, but would be tipped to continue far longer.

Warner endured a horrid run in the home T20 World Cup with three single digit scores followed by 25 against Afghanistan though he remains a sought-after name in franchise cricket.

"T20 cricket - I love the game. I will be looking to get to 2024," the left-handed batter said.

"For all those people saying I am past it and a lot of those old people are past it, look out. Be careful what you wish for."

Australia will engage with West Indies in a two-Test home series beginning on Nov. 30, before hosting South Africa for three Tests and an equal number of one-day internationals.

Warner is expecting a hearing with cricket's integrity unit later this month on his leadership ban imposed by Cricket Australia since 2018.

"It's about my knowledge of the game and passing it down to younger kids (as a captain)," Warner said.

"When I am playing in the Big Bash (for Sydney Thunder) ... That can help someone like Jason Sangha. And other guys around me.

"If they're willing to learn and I get the opportunity to actually captain again, I think it would be great for them."

FOOTBALL

# Angry Ronaldo accuses Man United of betrayal

**Reuters**
London

Manchester United's **Cristiano Ronaldo** says that the club have betrayed him and that he is being forced out, while he has no respect for manager Erik ten Hag.

Ronaldo rejoined United from Juventus for a second spell at Old Trafford in August 2021 on a two-year deal, returning to the club where he won eight major trophies from 2003-2009.

In an interview with Piers Morgan for *TalkTV*, released on Sunday, Ronaldo was asked whether United's hierarchy were trying to push him out of the club.

"Yes, not only the coach (Ten Hag), but another two or three guys around the club. I felt betrayed," he said.

"Yes I feel betrayed, and I felt some people don't want me here, not just this year, but last year too."

Last month, Ten Hag said Ronaldo refused to come on as a substitute against Tottenham Hotspur when the forward walked down the tunnel with a few minutes of the match remaining after being left on the bench.

He was then not part of the squad that faced Chelsea the following Saturday.

The 37-year-old forward, who will captain Portugal at the World Cup in Qatar, said of Ten Hag: "I don't have respect for him because he doesn't show respect for me. If you don't respect me, I'm never gonna have respect for you."

United did not immediately respond when contacted by Reuters for comment. After the Tottenham game, Ten Hag said that Ronaldo remained "an important player in the squad".

Ronaldo said Manchester United did not support him when his daughter was taken to hospital in July. He said the club doubted him and showed a lack of empathy when he did not arrive on time for pre-season training.

"I think the fans should know the truth," he said.

"I want the best for the club. This is why I came to Manchester United.

"But you have some things inside that don't help (us) reach the top level as City, Liverpool and even now Arsenal... a club with this dimension should be top of the tree in my opinion and they are not, unfortunately."




Ronaldo's first spell was under former United manager Alex Ferguson, who retired in 2013. The Portuguese said his view of the club is shared by Ferguson.

"The progress was zero since Sir Alex (Ferguson) left, I saw no evolution in the club. Nothing had changed," Ronaldo said.

"He knows better than anybody that the club is not on the path they deserve to be.

"He knows. Everyone knows. The people who don't see that... it's because they don't want to see, they are blind."

Ronaldo was also critical of the club's decision last season to replace manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer, a former teammate of the Portuguese, with Ralf Rangnick.

Rangnick had left his role as head of sport and development at Russian side Lokomotiv Moscow to take over at Old Trafford.

"After the club sacked Ole, they bring sporting director Ralf Rangnick, which is something nobody understands," Ronaldo said.

"This guy, he is not even a coach. A big club like Manchester United brings a sporting director surprised not only me but all the world."

### PL GIANTS AWAIT FACTS BEFORE RESPONDING TO SITUATION

Manchester United said they would address forward Cristiano Ronaldo's comments that he felt betrayed by the club and was being forced out only after establishing the full facts.

Ronaldo, who rejoined United from Juventus for a second spell at Old Trafford in 2021 on a two-year deal, said in an interview with Piers Morgan for TalkTV aired on Sunday that he had no respect for manager Erik ten Hag.

"Manchester United notes the media coverage regarding an interview by Cristiano Ronaldo. The club will consider its response after the full facts have been established," United said in a statement yesterday.

"Our focus remains on preparing for the second half of the season and continuing the momentum, belief and togetherness being built among the players, manager, staff, and fans."

The five-times Ballon D'Or winner was not part of the squad that faced Chelsea the following Saturday and missed United's 2-1 win over Fulham on Sunday due to illness.

United are fifth in the league table on 26 points from 14 games with the season pausing for the Nov. 20-Dec. 18 World Cup in Qatar.

Ronaldo will captain Portugal in the tournament.

TENNIS

# Rublev stretched to three sets to beat Medvedev

'I did a good job, protecting my serve, holding my serve and I did very well in tie-breaker'

**Reuters**
Turin, Italy

Andrey Rublev squandered seven set points early in his meeting with fellow Russian Daniil Medvedev before roaring back to seal a 6-7(7) 6-3 7-6(7) opening victory at the ATP Finals in Turin yesterday.

Rublev said his sixth career meeting with Medvedev reminded him of his encounter with the world number five at the 2020 US Open quarter-finals, where he lost in straight sets, and the 25-year-old was determined to overcome his poor start.

But having shaken off the disappointment of squandering several chances to take the opening set, Rublev hit back with 25 winners in the next two and held his nerve in the deciding tie-break to seal the victory on his fifth match point.

"I was thinking about the US Open, because when we played in the quarter-finals in 2020, I think I was 5-1 in a tie-break, also something like 6-2, but I was leading something similar in a tie-break," Rublev said.

"But when I lost that set, I couldn't play anymore, and I was thinking it can't happen (again) I have to change something. I have to keep playing, because if I win one set, even if I lose in three sets, it's still good, because here you have a group.

"So you have to fight for every point, every game, and I was able to win. The final tie-break, the rallies that we had there were crazy. The last rally, we had I don't know, 30 shots." Rublev said he was cramping towards the end of the contest before winning with a 37-shot rally on match-point, after which he dropped to the floor in delight.

"I was thinking 'one more, one more. You have to keep playing'," Rublev, who also beat Medvedev in the Cincinnati semi-finals last year, said.

"For sure, he felt the same, 'so just keep playing if you have the chance, go for it'. In the end I was able to win."


Russia's Andrey Rublev celebrates after winning his first round-robin match against Russia's Daniil Medvedev at the ATP Finals in Turin yesterday. *(AFP)*

Stefanos Tsitsipas and Novak Djokovic face off in the other Red Group match.

### NADAL FALLS TO FRITZ IN ATP FINALS OPENER

Rafael Nadal suffered a disastrous start to his bid to win the ATP Finals for the first time after crashing to a 7-6 (7/3), 6-1 defeat to Taylor Fritz on Sunday.

The year-ending Finals is the only major trophy missing from Tennis icon Nadal's list of honours but his straight-sets loss means he will struggle to escape the round-robin stage.

The 36-year-old realistically needs to win both his remaining matches against Green Group opponents Casper Ruud and Felix Auger-Alissime if he is to make the semi-finals. Fritz is at the Finals for the first time in his career after replacing injured world number one Carlos Alcaraz and gave Nadal a torrid time with some aggressive tennis.

"I did a good job, protecting my serve, holding my serve and I did very well in tie-breaker," said Fritz on court. "Once I got through that I just wanted to do the same thing I was doing in the second set, protecting my serve and capitalise on break points when I got them." Ruud was also a straight-sets winner over Auger-Alissime, 7-6 (7/4), 6-4, in the day's other singles contest. the Norwegian sits behind Fritz in the standings with the top two from each group progressing to the semis.

The world number four came through an uninspiring encounter in one hour and 51 minutes after claiming his one and only chance to break Canadian Auger-Alissime's serve in game seven of the second set. This season's Roland Garros and US Open finalist then served out the rest of the set to claim the win.

## EMOTIONAL RUSSELL PAYS TRIBUTE TO FAMILY, TEAM AND HAMILTON

**Sao Paulo:** George Russell paid emotional tribute to the generosity and support of his family, the Mercedes team and teammate Lewis Hamilton on Sunday after a flawless drive to his maiden full victory at the Brazilian Grand Prix.

The 24-year-old Briton, who had won Saturday's sprint race to secure pole position for Sunday's classic contest, dominated from lights to flag to finish 1.5 seconds clear of seven-time world champion Hamilton.

It was the first one-two of the season for the 'silver arrows' and a great triumph for the team after a challenging and disappointing start to the year when they struggled to cope with the new 'ground effect' era in Formula One.

Mercedes are now just 19 points behind Ferrari in their bid to finish second in the constructors' championship, a position they felt was unlikely after struggling so badly in the first half of the season.

A tearful Russell admitted he had been through an emotional rollercoaster as he and the team battled to recover their competitive form, having been team champions for the previous eight seasons.

"That was a really tough race," he said.

"I felt in control, but Lewis was super-fast and, when I saw the Safety Car towards the end of the race, I thought 'Oh, gosh – this is going to be a really difficult end.

"He put me under so much pressure and I am so happy now to have come away from that with the victory."

Asked to reflect on his journey to the top and his first win at his 81st Grand Prix, he thanked his parents, his family, his girlfriend and members of Mercedes, the team he joined as a junior driver in 2017.

"I'm speechless," he said. "On the in-lap all of these memories came flooding back. Starting off with my mum and dad in go-karts and going through all the support I've had from the rest of my family, my girlfriend, my trainer, my manager...

"Then obviously the likes of Gwen Lagrue who gave me the opportunity to get on the programme with Mercedes and James Vowles and Toto Wolff.

"The list is endless. I can't thank them enough. I am super-proud today. What we have done is unbelievable this season – it's been such an emotional rollercoaster.

### 'EXCEPTIONAL' HAMILTON

Having Lewis Hamilton as a teammate is something exceptional too. He is on it every day, he works so hard and he never misses anything. And he has been so great to work with – I have learned so much."

Hamilton, who was hoping for a win himself to extend his record of winning at least once in every season since he entered Formula One in 2007, was delighted for Russell and the team.

"Firstly, huge congratulations to George. What an amazing drive today – he truly deserves it. We have all worked so hard for a win, but a 1-2 is incredible. Hugely deserved. A big thank-you."

Hamilton, who was granted Brazilian citizenship last week, also thanked the vociferous Brazilian crowd for their support.

"I really had one of the best weeks of my life, with how everyone accepted me here and the warm welcome I had. I'm excited to come back here again. Hopefully some holidays in the future!"

Mercedes team chief Toto Wolff, who was absent, told *Sky Sports F1* that Russell and Hamilton worked well as a pairing.

"It's been back and forth but both drivers push each other which is very good," he said.

"They work well together and that's how it should be."

He notably praised Vowles, the team's chief strategist, for his work with the young driver programme and Russell's progress.

"I remember that George's win in F3 was the only time that Niki Lauda ever visited the junior series and he told me 'he's going to become a good one'.



Mercedes' British driver Lewis Hamilton (left) and teammate Mercedes' George Russell, also of Great Britain, celebrate on the podium of the Brazilian Grand Prix, at the Autodromo Jose Carlos Pace racetrack, also known as Interlagos in Sao Paulo, Brazil, on Sunday. *(AFP)*

FOCUS

# Australia to host LIV Golf event next April in Adelaide

**Reuters**
London

LIV Golf announced yesterday a multi-year commitment to bring league events to Australia starting next April at The Grange Golf Club in Adelaide.

The April 21-23 tournament at The Grange will be one of 14 events on LIV Golf League's 2023 schedule and will give fans a chance to see reigning British Open champion Cameron Smith and fellow Australians Marc Leishman and Matt Jones in action. "This is an opportunity to grow the game with generations of Australians while connecting them with star players like Cameron Smith," LIV Golf CEO Greg Norman said in a news release.

"There is massive potential for Australia to play a bigger role in this great sport, and I couldn't be more excited to showcase Adelaide for our league's debut year." The Grange was the site of former world number one Norman's first professional victory in 1976 and, among other events, hosted the Women's Australian Open in 2019 and 2016.

### UNPRECEDENTED $405MN IN PRIZE PURSES ANNOUNCED FOR 2023

Consistent with the 2022 LIV Golf Invitational Series, which launched in June, LIV Golf League will feature simultaneous team and individual play, with golfers competing for an unprecedented $405mn in prize purses.

The full 2023 league schedule, to be released in coming weeks, will run from February to September and will not compete with golf's four majors, international team events or heritage events.

The Saudi Arabia-backed LIV Golf series has lured players with the promise of guaranteed, big-money paydays and a reduced schedule, while the US-based PGA Tour has suspended members who opted to join the rival circuit.

Among the more high-profile players to join LIV are World Golf Hall of Fame member Phil Mickelson, twice major champion Dustin Johnson and 2020 US Open winner Bryson DeChambeau.

Critics during the 2022 season have constantly said LIV Golf, which is bankrolled by Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund, could lead the followers of the sport into confusion.

SPOTLIGHT

# Hazard keen to prove doubters wrong at World Cup in Qatar

## 'I've had a difficult few months where I haven't been able to gain much rhythm'

**Reuters**
Tubize, Belgium

Eden Hazard believes he has a lot to offer Belgium at the World Cup and is confident he can prove his detractors wrong as the midfielder ruled out an imminent departure from Real Madrid. Hazard, going to the global showpiece tournament for the third time, is Belgium captain but has barely played for Real this season after falling out of favour under coach Carlo Ancelotti.

The 31-year-old, however, is comparing the situation to the European Championship in 2020 when he also went into the competition lacking game time. "I'm keeping my smile," he said yesterday.

"I've had a difficult few months where I haven't been able to gain much rhythm. I now have to show that I can still do it. I don't doubt it myself, but I understand that the outside world does. Just like at the last Euros. I gained minutes in the first matches and was there in the quarter-final against Portugal. Our medical and technical staff will help me (be ready). I feel good physically. Of course, I miss rhythm, that's why the last practice match against Egypt (is important). Then I want to be there for the first match (in Qatar)."

Hazard played for more than an hour against Wales and Netherlands in September and, while there was some rustiness, there were also flashes of the player who was such a key man for Chelsea in the Premier League before his 2019 switch to Madrid.

He remains an important figure in the Belgium dressing room, having featured in all but one of their 12 games at the 2014 and 2018 World Cups. He captained the side to their best-ever finish four years ago, their third place helping him to win the Silver Ball as the second-best player at the tournament. Experience and guile are perhaps now his biggest attributes


Belgium captain Eden Hazard attends a press conference in Tubize, Belgium, yesterday. *(AFP)*

and his coach will know that when it gets to the latter rounds in Qatar, he needs players with cool heads and leadership on the pitch.

Belgium play Egypt in Kuwait in a warm-up on Friday and a fit and firing Hazard is key for coach Roberto Martinez as leader of their so-called "Golden Generation". "I have not suddenly lost my qualities. This will be my third World Cup and I want to show that Belgium can still count on its captain and that I want to give everything (for the team). "Together with a few other boys, I have reached an age where you can drop out (of the team). But not before going all out in Qatar first."

Belgium, who finished third at the 2018 World Cup, have been drawn in Group F and open their campaign against Canada on Nov. 23, before taking on Morocco and Croatia. "Our first focus should be on surviving the group stage," Hazard said. "Then anything is possible if we give the maximum. Quarter-final, semi-final or even the final."

He also reiterated he has no plans to leave Madrid in January. "I don't want to leave Real. Maybe things will look different (for me there) after the World Cup," Hazard said.

PREDICTION

# Cahill tips Brazil for title, backs Australia to make quarters


Qatar Legacy Ambassador Cahill also expects the Middle East and Arab world to be represented in the knockout stages by host nation Qatar and Saudi Arabia. Cahill is backing the Maroons to claim a surprise victory over England in the last 16.

Former Everton star Cahill said: "I played in England, but I live in Qatar and I work at Aspire Academy, so this is an emotional pick to go with the underdog."

Cahill anticipates a mouthwatering final between Brazil and Belgium at the Lusail Stadium on December 18. "I'm a big fan of Belgium, both the squad and the management, but when you come up against Brazil, they're probably one of the strongest teams in the world and have the biggest chance of winning this World Cup," said Cahill.

Australia legend **Tim Cahill** is expecting Brazil to claim a record sixth title at this year's FIFA World Cup in Qatar. Cahill recently gave his World Cup predictions to the Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy.

As well as backing Brazil to beat Belgium in the final, Cahill believes Australia will enjoy their most successful tournament in history by reaching the quarter-finals after an upset win over Argentina in the last 16.

"I hope Australia can make it because you want your country to do well," said Cahill, who appeared in four World Cups. "If we stop Lionel Messi, we can beat Argentina and go through."

Cahill, Australia's record goal scorer, sees African teams performing well at Qatar 2022, with African Cup of Nations holders Senegal reaching the semi-finals before falling to Brazil.

"When you look at Cameroon, Senegal and Ghana, they've got a lot of world-class players playing in some of the biggest leagues in the world and they're constantly producing talent. For African teams to break the mould and battle it out to win a World Cup would be pretty special."

## Mexico name injured Jimenez

**Mexico City:** Mexico coach Gerardo Martino named striker Raul Jimenez in his squad travelling to the World Cup in Qatar as he continues his recovery from injury problems. Jimenez, 31, has only played four matches this season for Premier League Wolverhampton Wanderers after sustaining knee and groin injuries.

Mexico play Sweden in their last warm-up match tomorrow before heading to Qatar where they are in Group C along with Poland, Argentina and Saudi Arabia.

**SQUAD**

**Goalkeepers**: Guillermo Ochoa (America), Alfredo Talavera (Juarez), Rodolfo Cota (Leon)
**Defenders**: Jorge Sanchez (Ajax Amsterdam), Kevin Alvarez (Pachuca), Nestor Araujo (America), Johan Vasquez (US Cremonese), Gerardo Arteaga (KRC Genk), Hector Moreno, Cesar Montes, Jesus Gallardo (all Monterrey)
**Midfielders**: Erick Gutierrez (PSV), Orbelin Pineda (AEK Athens), Hector Herrera (Houston Dynamo), Andres Guardado (Real Betis), Roberto Alvarado (Guadalajara), Edson Alvarez (Ajax Amsterdam), Luis Chavez (Pachuca), Luis Romo (Monterrey), Carlos Rodriguez, Uriel Antuna (both Cruz Azul)
**Forwards**: Hirving Lozano (Napoli), Rogelio Funes Mori (Monterrey), Henry Martin (America), Raul Jimenez (Wolverhampton Wanderers), Alexis Vega (Guadalajara)

ROUND-UP

# Neymar arrives late in Turin for Brazil training due to flight delay

Neymar and Marquinhos arrived late for the first day of World Cup training yesterday due to problems with their flight from Paris to Turin where Brazil are holding a five-day camp before flying to Doha.

All 26 players in the squad were due to report yesterday morning to the Juventus training facility but Neymar and Marquinhos, who play for Paris St Germain, were delayed because the aircraft had to be changed due to mechanical problems.

The pair arrived in the afternoon as coach Tite was running the first practice with light drills involving the 14 players in the squad who did not play for their clubs over the weekend. Neymar and Marquinhos joined the other players in the gym at the end of the session.

According to Brazil's technical staff, the plan is to use the first two days in Turin to evaluate the physical condition of the players, managing the activity load. They intend to hold the first full practice on the field tomorrow. Brazil open their World Cup Group G campaign against Serbia on Nov. 24 before facing Switzerland and Cameroon.


Brazil players attend a training session in Turin, Italy, yesterday. *(Reuters)*

### THURAM, DISASI COMPLETE FRANCE'S SQUAD AS KIMPEMBE RULED OUT

Borussia Moenchengladbach striker Marcus Thuram and Monaco defender Axel Disasi were called up to play the World Cup with France, the French federation (FFF) said. The 25-year-old Thuram is the 26th player who will make the trip to Qatar, where France will be looking to retain their title. Disasi made the squad after Paris St Germain centre back Presnel Kimpembe ruled himself out because of a hamstring injury, the FFF said.

### SERBIA COACH HOPES VLAHOVIC, MITROVIC WILL BE FIT FOR WORLD CUP

Serbia coach Dragan Stojkovic said he hoped his two injured strikers Dusan Vlahovic and Aleksandar Mitrovic would be fully fit to take part in the World Cup. "I believe that they will be ready and we've been working in that direction," Stojkovic told a press conference as the team prepared to leave for Qatar today. The two players were named in Serbia's 26-man squad on Friday. Stojkovic could not say whether Mitrovic and Vlahovic would be ready to take part in Serbia's opening match against Brazil on November 24. "I hope that all will get on well and if that's not the case, we will find the solutions, that's why I'm here. No coach likes to see his player not playing. Anyway, they have been out of their teams for a while," he said.

Vlahovic has not played for Juventus because of a groin injury since the 4-3 defeat to Benfica which knocked the Italians out of the Champions League at the end of last month. Fulham striker Mitrovic, 28, who is Serbia's record goalscorer, suffered a foot injury during a Nations League match against Sweden in September which has kept him out of Premier League action. Serbia face a tough task in Group G, which also includes Cameroon and Switzerland.

### POULSEN ADDED TO DENMARK SQUAD AS HJULMAND COMPLETES LINE-UP

RB Leipzig striker Yussuf Poulsen and Brentford's Christian Norgaard have been named in Denmark's squad for the World Cup as coach Kasper Hjulmand added the final five players to his line-up for the finals in Qatar. Union Berlin goalkeeper Frederik Ronnow, Alexander Bah of Benfica and Hoffenheim midfielder Robert Skov have also been picked to complete Hjulmand's selection after he revealed 21 of his 26 players last week.

"I am happy that the World Cup squad is now complete," said Hjulmand. "When there are options, there are also opt-outs, and it has been difficult to have to inform other players that they are not in the squad. Now we are looking forward to getting together and going for a week's training before the first match."

Captain Simon Kjaer and playmaker Christian Eriksen, who has recovered fully from the heart attack he suffered in Copenhagen during Euro 2020, were among the players included in the initial squad announcement. The Danes, who are appearing at their sixth World Cup finals, begin their campaign against Tunisia on Nov. 22 before taking on defending champions France four days later. They complete their group phase commitments on Nov. 30 when they meet Australia.

# Messi trains in Abu Dhabi ahead of World Cup warm-up game


Argentina's captain Lionel Messi (left) controls a ball during a training camp in Abu Dhabi, ahead of the FIFA World Cup Qatar, at the Nahyan Stadium yesterday. Argentina will play a friendly match against the UAE tomorrow at the Mohamed bin Zayed Stadium in Abu Dhabi before they move to Qatar for the tournament. Argentina, the current South American champions, are one of the favourites to win the tournament. They are unbeaten in 35 matches and will begin their campaign for a third global crown against Saudi Arabia on November 22. Then they will take on Mexico four days later before rounding off Group C on November 30 against Poland. *(AFP)*

FOCUS

# Ramos disappointed by omission

**Reuters**
Madrid

Spain defender Sergio Ramos said he was disappointed to be excluded from their World Cup squad after returning to full fitness following a calf injury that limited his playing time with Paris St Germain last season.

Spain manager Luis Enrique announced his 26-man squad for the tournament in Qatar, opting to leave out experienced players like Ramos, midfielder Thiago Alcantara, defender Marcos Alonso and goalkeeper David de Gea. Ramos, 36, who joined PSG last year after 16 trophy-laden years at Real Madrid, wrote an emotional letter to fans after missing out on the chance to feature in his fifth World Cup.

"I devoted myself, body and soul, to recovering and getting back to feeling the way I always have... Fortunately, I can say that this season I feel like myself again and am back enjoying football," Ramos wrote on Instagram.

"The World Cup? Of course, it was one of those big dreams I wanted to realise. It would have been my fifth but unfortunately I'll have to watch it at home," Ramos said.

Ramos won the 2010 World Cup with Spain. "It's tough, but the sun will still rise in the morning," he said. "I wouldn't change anything about myself. Not my mentality. Not my passion. Not my commitment, effort, and dedication."

Spain play Jordan in a friendly on Thursday ahead of their World Cup opener against Costa Rica. They also face Germany and Japan in Group E in Qatar.