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FOOTBALL

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AFC U20 ASIAN CUP QUALIFIERS

Victorious Qatar, Jordan set for showdown

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Hosts Qatar and Jordan are ready for a top-of-the-table clash after both teams registered their second wins in Group J of the AFC U20 Asian Cup China 2025 Qualifiers yesterday.

Jordan will head into tomorrow's showdown only needing a draw after defeating Singapore 2-0 while Qatar, who have an inferior goal difference, also beat Hong Kong by the same score at Abdullah Bin Khalifa Stadium.

Qatar beat Hong Kong 2-0

With Hong Kong having suffered a huge defeat to Jordan in their opener, Qatar would have gone into the tie at the Abdullah Bin Khalifa Stadium with high hopes.

Hong Kong however, were a different side from Wednesday as they defended resolutely with the teams heading into the break on level terms.

Qatar increased their tempo after the break and were rewarded almost instantly, with Mohamed Khaled Gouda breaking the deadlock in the 47th minute.

Their resistance broken, Hong Kong conceded again in the 61st minute, with captain Ibrahim Mohammad providing Qatar with a much needed healthier advantage to allow them to calmly see out the remaining minutes.

Jordan down Singapore 2-0

Jordan, 7-0 victors against Hong Kong, China in their opening match, didn't take long to settle down as they imposed themselves on the tie at the Grand Hamad Stadium. Singapore, having lost

THE RESULTS

Group A (Hai Phong, Vietnam)
Syria 10-1 Guam
Bangladesh 1-4 Vietnam

Group B (New Taipei, Chinese Taipei)
Bahrain 4-0 Nepal
Chinese Taipei 1-3 Uzbekistan

Group C (Mishref, Kuwait)
Lebanon 8-0 N. Mariana Islands

Group D (Abha, Saudi Arabia)
Palestine 1-2 Australia
Saudi Arabia 5-0 Macau

Group E (Dushanbe, Tajikistan)
Oman 0-1 DPR Korea
Malaysia 0-1 Tajikistan

Group F (Jakarta, Indonesia)
Maldives 0-3 Yemen
Timor-Leste 1-3 Indonesia

Group G (Vientiane, Laos)
India 0-1 IR Iran
Laos 6-0 Mongolia

Group H (Buriram, Thailand)
Philippines 0-2 Iraq
Brunei Darussalam 0-13 Thailand

Group I (Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic)
Myanmar 0-6 Japan
Turkmenistan 0-1 Kyrgyz Republic

Group J (Doha, Qatar)
Hong Kong 0-2 Qatar
Singapore 0-2 Jordan

3-0 to Qatar, needed the points but soon had to concede to Jordan's superiority with the West



Qatar players celebrate a goal against Hong Kong in their AFC U20 Asian Cup qualifying match at Abdullah Bin Khalifa Stadium yesterday. Qatar won 2-0 for their second successive victory in the qualifiers. **Right:** Action from the Qatar vs Hong Kong match.

Asian side taking the lead through forward Odeh Burhan Fakhoury in the 26th minute.

They were 2-0 up four minutes later, with striker Ibrahim Mohammad Sabra finding the net as Singapore were left staring at early elimination heading into the break.

Jordan took their foot off the pedal in the second half but suffered a blow as captain Ezz Aldin Abualsoud will not play a part in

the showdown against Qatar after the midfielder was red-carded in the 66th minute.

In other results across Asia, Japan defeated Myanmar 6-0 while Kyrgyz Republic had to work hard for their 1-0 victory against Turkmenistan, Iraq secured their second win after beating Philippines 2-0 while Thailand posted a 13-0 win over Brunei Darussalam.

In Vientiane, Islamic Republic of Iran needed a late strike to earn



a hard-fought 1-0 win against India in their AFC U20 Asian Cup China 2025 Qualifiers Group G match yesterday.

In the group's other fixture, Laos revived their campaign after scoring six unanswered goals past Mongolia.

Both teams enjoyed opening day wins with India sealing a 4-1 victory over Mongolia, while Iran scored eight unanswered goals against Laos.

India yesterday came close in the 25th minute but Man-glenhang Kipgen shot his free-kick over the bar as neither side was able to break the stalemate in the opening 45 minutes at the Lao National Stadium.

The South Asian side wasted another opportunity in the 60th minute after Kelvin Singh Taorem set up Korou Singh Thingujam nicely, only for the forward to pull his effort just wide.

OOREDOO STARS LEAGUE

Shahania stun Duhail as Ahli ease past Shamal

The star for Al Shahania in round 6 was Dutch midfielder Pelle van Amersfoort who scored both goals

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Al Shahania yesterday shocked points leaders Al Duhail 2-1 to register their first win of Ooredoo Stars League 2024-25 season at the Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium.

The star for Al Shahania in round 6 was Dutch midfielder Pelle van Amersfoort who struck in the 21st and 32nd minutes of the match.

For Al Duhail, Kenyan striker Michael Olunga pulled one back in the 75th minute but the Red Knights could not find the elusive equaliser despite raising much heat on the rivals.

It was Al Duhail's first loss of the season. For Al Shahania it was a great morale-boosting maiden win during which they showed superb capabilities both in attack and defence.

Van Amersfoort exposed frailties in Al Duhail's defence as he first moved from the left making foray before striking a long ranger that beat a diving goalkeeper into the left corner.

The Dutchman returned to haunt Al Duhail a second time when he found a Francesco Antonucci long ball inside right of the danger area. Left much unmarked, Amersfoort volleyed the ball into the net.

A 2-0 hill then appeared quite a

task for Al Duhail as Al Shahania kept breaking down their attacks.

While at the start, in the 10th minute Al Duhail were a bit unlucky when an Olunga header skimmed over the crossbar, but in the 34th minute and 42nd minutes an Ismail Mohamed and Junior Edmilson header were cut off by Al Shahania goalkeeper Shehab Mamdouh Ellethy.

Al Duhail kept attacking but failed to find the target as in the 53rd minute Olunga shot wide left.

In the 58th minute, Al Shahania's Alhassan Korma missed a powerful hit to the left of the post.

Olunga eventually succeeded for Al Duhail when he connected an Edmilson Junior's long kick into the right corner of the goal.

An Al Duhail comeback now seemed on the cards but Al Shahania sandbagged in defence superbly, giving no space for the Red Knights to force their way.

Al Shahania intermittently also kept making counter-attacks as the match continued at a fast pace till the end of seven minutes of stoppage time.

In the end, it was a well-deserved victory for Al Shahania, who now have 5 points in their kitty to be in 10th place. Al Duhail, despite the loss, stay on top with 15 points.

The league now goes into an international break with Week

7 matches resuming on October 18th.

Al Ahli beat Al Shamal 4-2
Al Ahli yesterday came from a goal down to beat Al Shamal 4-2 at the Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium.

Goals from Idrissa Doumbia (40th minute), Oumar Sekou (53rd minute penalty) and Abdulrahman Mohammed (69th minute) plus an own goal from Mohammed Musa in the 61st minute gave 'The Brigadiers' the win, while Al Shamal got the first goal of the match through Jeison Murillo in the 15th minute before captain Baghdad Bounedjah scored from the spot in the 78th minute.

Al Ahli have now extended their points tally to 14, while Al Shamal remained on seven points with the result.

Al Shamal, who had clearly been the better side in the opening minutes of the game, eventually got their goal in the 15th minute after Jeison Murillo's header from the centre of the box bounced off the crossbar before hitting the back of goalkeeper Badreddin on its way in.

Just when it seems the pendulum of the game was swinging in favour of Al Shamal, a defensive error resulted in The Brigadiers getting their equalizer in the 40th minute through Idrissa Doumbia, whose right-footed shot from the centre of the box found the top corner of the net after being put through by Julian Draxler to en-

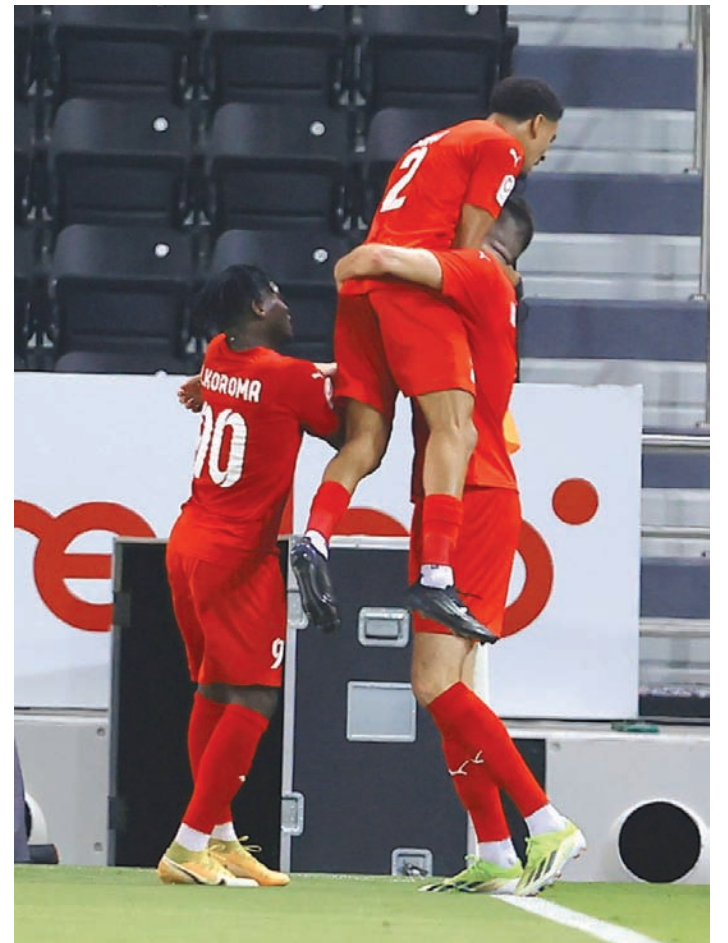
sure the match stayed even going into the half-time break.

Sekou got the lead for Al Ahli from the spot in the 53rd minute after they were awarded a penalty kick and that was ratified by a lengthy VAR check following a foul by Al Shamal's Mohammed Musa in the 47th minute.

Eight minutes later, things turned from bad to worse for Musa, who caused the penalty a few minutes earlier, as he turned the ball into his own net while attempting to clear Abdulrahman Mohammed's cross to give Al Ahli a comfortable 3-1 lead.

Abdulrahman Mohammed, who had been a thorn in the flesh of Al Shamal for most part of the second half, eventually got his name on the scorers' sheet and made it 4-1 for Al Ahli in the 69th minute after finishing a fast break with a left-footed shot that landed in the bottom left-hand corner of Al Shamal's goal. Bounedjah's well-taken penalty helped reduce the deficit for Al Shamal in the 78th minute after the VAR confirmed that the former Al Sadd player and now Al Shamal captain was fouled by Al Ahli's Amin Tihi in the 75th minute.

Qatar SC draw with Umm Salal
A brace from Ben Malango, including a last-gasp equaliser, saw Qatar SC make a fighting comeback to hold Umm Salal to a 2-2 draw at the Al Janoub Stadium yesterday.



Al Shahania players celebrate a goal against Al Duhail at Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium in Doha yesterday. Al Shahania won 2-1.

GALLE TEST

Kiwis in trouble after Kamindu hits fine century

The 25-year-old reaches 1,000-run milestone in just 13 innings

AFP
Galle, Sri Lanka

New Zealand were flailing at 22-2 and trailing by 580 yesterday against a dominant Sri Lankan batting attack that saw middle-order maestro Kamindu Mendis reach 1,000 runs from just eight Test appearances.

Sri Lanka declared at 602-5 shortly before stumps on day two in Galle after a 200-run partnership between Kamindu and Kusal Mendis - the third century-plus stand of the innings.

The tourists then lost their openers inside nine overs, with Tom Latham caught on the fifth ball of the innings for two and Devon Conway dismissed for nine.

Kane Williamson (six) and Ajaz Patel (nought) will resume today.

Kamindu reached the 1,000-run milestone in 13 innings played since his debut at the same ground two years ago, equalling the record of Australian great Don Bradman.

Only two others - England's Herbert Sutcliffe and Everton Weekes of the West Indies - have surpassed him, both reaching the landmark in 12 innings.

"Kamindu Mendis, obviously he has just taken off," all-rounder and former captain Angelo Mathews told reporters.

"He doesn't get rattled and plays one ball at a time," he added. "He is quite amazing."

Kamindu, a 25-year-old Galle native, made an unbeaten 182 before the declaration alongside Kusal on 106.



Sri Lanka's Kamindu Mendis (left) and Kusal Mendis run between the wickets during the second day of the second Test against New Zealand at the Galle International Cricket Stadium in Galle yesterday. (AFP)

His five centuries from 13 innings also made him third-fastest to that record, tied with Bradman and the West Indies' George Headley.

The left-hander has been in excellent form this year and was also Sri Lanka's highest run-scorer in their last two series they played against Bangladesh and England.

Kamindu's overnight partner Mathews departed for 88 when Glen Phillips got him caught at square leg by rookie quick Will O'Rourke.

Phillips then sent back Dhananjaya de Silva for 44 when the skipper swept a delivery into

the gloves of wicketkeeper Tom Blundell.

It was Phillips's third wicket for the innings after he bowled Dinesh Chandimal for 116 in the last session of the opening day.

O'Rourke had impressed in the first Test with his second five-wicket haul in three matches, but toiled without result in Sri Lanka's innings, conceding 81 runs without reward.

"The surface is different to first Test," New Zealand batting coach Luke Ronchi said.

"We missed some chances as well...in the subcontinent it's difficult if you give the batters a chance."

Sri Lanka won the opening match of the two-Test series by 63 runs and are eyeing their first Test series win against the Kiwis since 2009.

Yesterday was the first time Sri Lanka surpassed 500 against New Zealand from 40 matches. New Zealand have not won any of their five previous Tests at Galle.

BRIEF SCORES (Day 2)
New Zealand 22 for 2 (Williamson 6*, Ajaz 0*, Jayasuriya 1-3) **trail Sri Lanka 602 for 5 dec** (Kamindu 182*, Chandimal 116, Kusal 106*, Mathews 88, Phillips 3-141) **by 580 runs**

FOCUS

England beat Australia to level ODI series at 2-2

Reuters
London

England annihilated Australia by 186 runs in a rain-shortened ODI at Lord's with Harry Brook and Liam Livingstone laying waste to the visitors attack before Matthew Potts took four wickets as the hosts tied the series at 2-2 yesterday.

Captain Brook scored a dazzling 87 before Livingstone wrought havoc by smashing 62 in 27 balls to fire England to a daunting 312-5 from their 39 overs.

World champions Australia, whose run of 14 successive ODI victories was ended in Durham earlier this week, began their reply in menacing fashion but capitulated in the evening chill under the floodlights to 126 all out.

They were 68 without loss in the ninth over but after Travis Head was bowled by Brydon Carse for 34, the Australian innings fell apart as they slumped to 96-6 in the 16th over.

Adil Rashid put the Australians out of their misery in the 25th over after Potts took a career-

best four for 38. Brook, the Player of the Match, said yesterday: "We've taken all positives from the first two games and brought them to the last two. Duckett, we know how good he is. He cuts and pulls lengths that many others couldn't."

He added: "Livingstone showed what he is capable of at the back end. We identified times where we could put more pressure - getting early boundaries in the over for example. It's about picking and choosing your moments and then executing. Bowlers did beautifully on an interesting wicket. We got a few too many but bowlers smashed a length beautifully and got the rewards. (Jofra) Archer was bowling quick with swing and seam movement. Hope to see more. It's always nice to be scoring runs, it helps think clearly."

The five-match series will now be decided in tomorrow's finale in Bristol.

BRIEF SCORES
England 312 for 5 (Brook 87, Duckett 63, Livingstone 62*) **beat Australia 126** (Potts 4-38, Carse 3-36) **by 186 runs**

T20I

Bold South Africa beat Ireland by eight wickets

Reuters
Abu Dhabi

A 136-run opening wicket partnership led South Africa to an eight-wicket win over Ireland in the first of their two-match Twenty20 series at the Zayed Cricket Stadium yesterday.

Ryan Rickleton and Reeza Hendricks put on the highest opening wicket partnership for South Africa in a T20 international on foreign soil, setting the foundation as the team successfully chased down a target of 171-8 set by Ireland, who were put into bat first.

Rickleton made a career best 76 and Hendricks 51 with South Africa reaching 174 with 14 balls to

spare. South Africa-born Curtis Campher top scored for the Irish with 49 while Patrick Kruger took three wickets for South Africa in Ireland's last over to finish with the game's best bowling figures of 4-27. Aiden Markram, South Africa captain, said: "It feels nice to win. It has been testing times for us. You never take wins for granted and the boys played really well tonight."

The two teams meet again in Abu Dhabi tomorrow and then next week start a three-match One Day International series at the same venue.

BRIEF SCORES
South Africa 174 for 2 (Rickleton 76, Hendricks 51) **beat Ireland 171 for 8** (Campher 49, Kruger 4-27) **by eight wickets**

SECOND TEST

Bad weather stalls proceedings in Kanpur

AFP
Kanpur, India

Bad light followed by heavy rain ended play before tea on day one of the second Test between India and Bangladesh in Kanpur with the visitors 107-3 yesterday.

Mominul Haque, on 40, and Mushfiqur Rahim, on six, were batting when dark clouds made visibility tough and umpires took the players off the ground after lunch.

The match could be the last Test outing for former Bangladesh skipper Shakib Al Hasan, who announced his impending international retirement on Thursday.

Dim light turned into heavy rain and officials called off play after the covers were laid out, with more downpours forecast for Saturday in the northern Indian city.

India, who lead the two-match series 1-0 after their convincing win in Chennai last week, elected to field in overcast conditions and fast bowler Akash Deep vindicated captain Rohit Sharma's decision with two wickets in the first hour of play.

He removed openers Zakir Hasan, caught out for a duck, and Shadman Islam, trapped lbw on 24, with his seaming deliveries to the left-handers.

Captain Najmul Hossain Shanto, who made 31, put on 51 runs with Mominul to play out the remainder of the first session, but first-match hero Ravichandran Ashwin broke the stand after lunch.

Off-spinner Ashwin, who hit a century and took six wickets in India's opening win, took down Najmul lbw with a turning delivery from around the wicket.

The hosts have come in unchanged with three seamers, who

have regularly troubled the opposition batsmen with plenty of deliveries beating the bat.

Bangladesh ex-captain Shakib, 37, announced his international retirement on Thursday and could be playing his last Test match if he is unable to return home for a slated South Africa series.

Shakib is a former lawmaker for the party of ousted premier Sheikh Hasina and has stayed away from Bangladesh due to the threat of criminal charges levelled against him and dozens of her former allies. India are favoured to sweep the two-match series after winning the opener in Chennai by 280 runs and extend their advantage at the top of the World Test Championship rankings.

BRIEF SCORES (Day 1)
Bangladesh 107 for 3 (Mominul 40 not out, Shanto 31, Akash Deep 2-34) **vs India (yet to bat)**



India's Akash Deep (right) appeals for a leg before wicket decision against Bangladesh's Mominul Haque during the first day of the second Test at the Green Park Cricket Stadium in Kanpur yesterday. (AFP)

LALIT MODI BLASTS HUNDRED AS 'BIG FAT PONZI SCHEME'

London: Indian Premier League founder Lalit Modi has labelled the Hundred competition a "big fat Ponzi scheme", accusing English cricket chiefs of unrealistic financial projections. The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) is seeking private investment in the 100-ball-per-side competition, which was launched in 2021. The Hundred, which involves men's and women's teams, has been controversial as it is not mapped onto the traditional county structure, but authorities say it brings much-needed TV revenue into the sport. A document distributed to investors and seen by Britain's Daily Telegraph newspaper says domestic TV rights would rise from a projected £54mn (\$72mn) in 2025 to £85mn from 2029. The Telegraph said it is understood that Indian TV rights are projected to climb from £1.3mn to £1.8mn per year from 2026 to 2029, and then rocket to £15mn per year from 2030. This is despite the fact that Indian players are currently barred from franchise leagues outside of their own country.

Modi, whose IPL has transformed the global cricket economy and spawned other Twenty20 competitions, said projections for the Hundred were far-fetched. "The ECB's financial projections for The Hundred, particularly beyond 2026, appear overly optimistic and disconnected from reality," Modi said on X. "The international TV rights figures make little sense, given the global competition from other cricket leagues like the IPL." The Indian businessman previously offered to buy the Hundred. "Want to clarify about my billion dollar offer," he said on X. "It was to buy out the tournament in perpetuity and the idea was to redo it as a T20 tournament. Not another new format the global audience have ZERO idea about." He added: "My concern now is that they are trying to lure current @iplT20 owners into this non-starter league and building a hype around it that has no justification or guarantees on numbers. Basically a big fat #ponzischeme."

SPOTLIGHT

Zimbabwe all-rounder Raza hails impact of franchise cricket on lower-ranked nations

Reuters
Harare

Players from lower-ranked nations have limited opportunities to learn from competing with top-tier teams but franchise cricket has helped them develop their skills by rubbing shoulders with elite cricketers, Zimbabwe's T20 skipper **Sikandar Raza** has said.

Zimbabwe received full ICC membership in 1992 but Ireland and Afghanistan, who joined the fold in 2017, have surged ahead in the white ball rankings.

Once a mainstay at World Cups, Zimbabwe have not qualified for the last two 50-

over editions while their suspension from ICC tournaments due to government interference in its cricket board denied them the chance of playing in the 2021 T20 World Cup.

But in the last two years, Zimbabwe's performances have seen a significant improvement and Raza said their rise has coincided with their players participating in franchise leagues around the world - including their own Zim Afro T10 league.

"We don't get a lot of chances to play against some of those higher-ranked nations as much. So our development, our growth, is pretty much within ourselves," Raza, who has played in franchise leagues in over 10 countries, told Reuters. "But because of these leagues,



the confidence level, the learning we get when we play abroad in overseas leagues is sometimes a lot more than what we do on the park.

"The overseas cricketers, the legends of the game that we get to spend time with and to learn from and to ask them questions and try and get a better understanding of the game.

"I do think franchise cricket has brought international cricket a lot closer. The skill level of the lower-ranked nations is a lot better because of franchise cricket," Raza said Zimbabwe are making gradual improvements in both white-ball formats but the scarcity of talented cricketers is a concern.

"In a population of around 14 million people, there are hardly 2,000 actively playing cricketers," he said. "But I still believe with the little pool of players we have, we have shown the world some very good glimpses of how good Zimbabwe can be on their day."

Raza currently leads the Joburg Bangla Tigers in the Zim Afro T10 but the 38-year-old says Test cricket remains the true Test of a player's mettle.

TENNIS

Alcaraz, Medvedev cruise in Beijing

595th-ranked Zhang stuns US Open semi-finalist Navarro

AFP
Beijing

Carlos Alcaraz and Daniil Medvedev both won in straight sets to launch their China Open title bids yesterday while 595th-ranked Zhang Shuai pulled off a big shock in the women's draw.

Four-time major champion Alcaraz defeated fellow 21-year-old Giovanni Mpetshi Perricard 6-4, 6-4 and faces Tallon Griekspoor of the Netherlands in round two in Beijing.

Alcaraz, who went out in the second round of the US Open last month, made a blistering start against the 51st-ranked Frenchman by breaking serve in the first game.

The Spanish second seed then faced three break points as he served for the first set, but he saved them all on the way to wrapping up the set in style. "Saving three break points and being able to close the first set, it was really important for me," he said.

Alcaraz started the second set in exactly the same way, breaking his opponent, and sealed a comfortable victory on his first match point. The only sour point for the Spaniard was when he was given a second time violation as he served for the first set. "I was a little bit mad about it," he said.

Russian third seed Medvedev, who lost last year's final to current number one Jannik Sinner, eased past veteran Gael Monfils. The 2021 US Open champion defeated the 38-year-old 6-3, 6-4 and faces another Frenchman in Adrian Panatta in round two today.

The Italian Sinner, fresh from winning the US Open, plays 69th-ranked Russian Roman Safiullin on the same day.

Chinese wildcard entry Zhang, who on Wednesday won her first singles match in more than 600 days, stunned US Open semi-finalist Emma Navarro 6-4, 6-2. The 35-year-old Zhang is into round three despite being the lowest-ranked player to ever compete in the main draw of the WTA 1000 event.

Zhang, who has won two Grand Slam doubles titles, made it successive victories by dismantling the American sixth seed Navarro in front of her joyous home crowd. Zhang, a former top 25 player who has been plagued by injury, faces Belgium's Greet Minnen next. "Another great win for my career because eve-



Spain's Carlos Alcaraz takes photos with fans after winning against France's Giovanni Mpetshi Perricard at the China Open in Beijing yesterday. (AFP)

rybody knows I have gone a long time not winning a singles match," said Zhang.

She seemed as stunned as anybody that she had beaten Navarro, who was a hot favourite having reached the last four in New York just a few weeks ago. "I like to give everybody a surprise," Zhang said with a smile.

Also into the third round is US Open finalist Jessica Pegula after the world number three from the United States beat Diane Parry of France 6-1, 7-6 (7/4).

Naomi Osaka joined her as the four-time Grand Slam champion and former number one fought back to defeat 21st seed Yulia Putintseva 3-6, 6-4, 6-2.

"I wanted to show myself or tell myself that I can fight and win a match without playing as perfect as I wanted to," said Osaka, now ranked 73 and yet to win a tournament since returning to tennis in January following the birth of her daughter Shai.

The 26-year-old Japanese is playing her first tournament under Serena Williams' renowned former coach Patrick Mouratoglou. "He's very confident in my abilities and that in turn makes me very confident," she said, adding: "He's surprisingly very strict, and it works for me."

Osaka next plays 60th-ranked American Katie Volynets.

FORMULA 1

Ricciardo thanks fans for 'wild' ride after RB axing

AFP
Sydney

Daniel Ricciardo thanked fans yesterday for a "wild and wonderful" Formula One journey after being axed by the RB team and replaced by New Zealand prodigy Liam Lawson for the rest of the 2024 season.

The 35-year-old's contract expired after the Singapore Grand Prix and he was dropped with six races to go, likely spelling the end of his long career in the sport. "I've loved this sport my whole life. It's wild and wonderful and been a journey," he said following the team's announcement.

"To the teams and individuals that have played their part, thank you. To the fans who love the sport sometimes more than me, thank you. It'll always have its highs and lows but it's been fun and truth be told I wouldn't change it."

Lewis Hamilton and Max Verstappen led tributes to the Australian, who was one of the leading stars of the hit Netflix series *Drive to Survive*. "It's been an honour to compete with you over the years," seven-time world champion Hamilton said on Instagram. "I'll never forget the battles, the laughs, and drinking out of your shoe. It was gross, but glad I got to do it with you bud. There is so much more for you up ahead and I can't wait to see what you do next," he added. "Always here for you, man."

Hamilton's Mercedes teammate George Russell praised Ricciardo for his impact on F1. "F1 won't be the same without you, mate. All the best on the next adventure."

Current world champion Verstappen added: "Head up mate! Many more beautiful moments to come," with tributes also coming from Charles Leclerc, Fernando Alonso, Oscar Piastri and Pierre Gasly, among others.

Red Bull chief Christian Horner said he had left "an indelible leg-



acy" on the team. "Thank you for the wins, smiles, songs (and I wish I could say the shoeys), you will always be a special part of the Red Bull Family," added Horner.

Ricciardo was one of the most popular drivers in the paddock, with an infectious smile and wicked sense of humour. He spent 13 years on the grid, earning 32 podiums and eight victories from stints with Toro Rosso (later AlphaTauri and now RB), Red Bull, Renault and McLaren, scoring 1,329 points. The self-styled "Honey Badger", he introduced Aussie culture, in the form of the "shoey", to the podium as he guzzled champagne from his sweaty racing boot after each of his wins.

After McLaren sacked him in 2022 in favour of Piastri, he made a return to the grid in the middle of last season with RB, with the rumour mill at one point suggesting he could rejoin Red Bull Racing as Verstappen's teammate. But the results did not go his way.

Instead RB have opted for 22-year-old Lawson, who came in for five races last season when Ricciardo broke his wrist in a crash at the Dutch Grand Prix. The New Zealander, who came through Red Bull's young driver programme, will suit up alongside Yuki Tsunoda, starting at the United States Grand Prix at the Circuit of the Americas next month.

FOCUS

Draper ousts second seed Hurkacz in Japan



Britain's Jack Draper reacts after winning a point against Poland's Hubert Hurkacz at the Japan Open in Tokyo. (AFP)

AFP
Tokyo

Britain's US Open semi-finalist Jack Draper said he felt "really strong" after knocking out number two seed Hubert Hurkacz 6-4, 6-4 to reach the Japan Open quarter-finals yesterday.

The 22-year-old Draper earlier this month became the first British man to make the US Open last four since Andy Murray won the title 12 years ago, but found his path to the final blocked by eventual champion Jannik Sinner.

Draper has picked up where he left off in Tokyo, beating Poland's Hurkacz in 1hr, 24min to set up a quarter-final against France's Ugo Humbert.

"I'm very happy with my performance in general, the way I'm moving, the way I'm serving," said world number 20 Draper, who is unseeded in Tokyo. "I feel really strong here in Tokyo and I look forward to carrying on for the rest of the tournament."

Draper has come back from multiple shoulder injuries and was ranked outside the top 100 when he played at the Japan Open last year. He has yet to have his serve broken in two matches so far at this year's tournament.

"I've always had a high win percentage on my first serve but my consistency, my percentage of first serve has always been a bit down," he said. "I think I'm starting to feel my rhythm better, I'm starting to land more first serves in."

Hurkacz's exit means only three of the eight seeded players remain at the Japan Open. Number one Taylor Fritz, number three Casper Ruud, number four Stefanos Tsitsipas and number seven Frances Tiafoe all lost in the first round.

Defending champion Ben Shelton, the number eight seed, moved into the quarter-finals with a 6-4, 6-3 win over Argentina's Mariano Navone. Shelton will play France's Arthur Fils, who went through when his Italian opponent Matteo Berrettini retired injured.

Berrettini won the first set in a tiebreak but needed medical treatment on his back afterwards and retired in the first game of the second set. Fils eliminated Fritz in the first round and warned that upsets can come from anywhere.

"Half of the seeds are already out of the tournament - that means that the other players are playing incredible," said the 20-year-old. "On Sunday I've got Ben, and Ben is still a seed. I'm just focused on Sunday, and then we'll see."

Humbert beat American Brandon Nakashima 6-3, 6-2.

SPOTLIGHT

Bastianini sets record time in Indonesia MotoGP practice

AFP
Lombok, Indonesia

Enea Bastianini marked himself down as the man to beat at the Indonesia MotoGP with a sparkling record lap in practice yesterday, raising his hopes of closing the gap on championship leader Jorge Martin.

In humid conditions at the Mandalika track on Lombok island, Pramac's Martin had set an all-time lap record before the Italian Ducati rider nicknamed "The Beast" quickly smashed it with his own record lap of one minute 29.630 seconds. Reigning champion Francesco Bagnaia was 0.082sec off the pace in fourth, as he plots his bid to overtake Martin in the riders' standings - he trails by 24 points with six race weekends left.

Bastianini and Gresini's Marc Marquez are 59

and 60 points behind Martin. Marquez finished seventh in the final practice session. Red Bull Gas Gas rider Pedro Acosta slid off the track but came back to place in the top 10 to make the second round of qualifying today.

Aprilia's Miguel Oliveira however was ruled out of the race weekend and left in doubt for next week's Japan MotoGP after fracturing his right wrist in Friday morning's free practice session. That session was topped by Italian rider Franco Morbidelli, who finished third in the final practice.

The top 10 fastest practice times book their tickets for today's second qualifying session, which shapes the first four rows of the grid. This group are then joined by the two fastest riders from the first qualifying session. Qualifying shapes the grid for both the sprint race today and the main event GP tomorrow afternoon, with a maximum of 37 points available.



Ducati's Italian rider Enea Bastianini during the practice session in Mandalika, Indonesia. (AFP)

Wimbledon given green light for controversial expansion plan

London: Wimbledon have been given the green light to go ahead with their controversial plans to expand the historic venue for the grass-court Grand Slam.

The All England Club's proposal to build 39 new courts, including an 8,000-seat show court, on the adjacent former Wimbledon Park Golf Club was passed yesterday by London's deputy mayor for planning Jules Pipe.

Wimbledon will nearly triple the size of its current site once the project is completed. Plans were first submitted in 2021, but there had been strong local opposition from groups such as 'Save Wimbledon Park' and environmental protesters who claimed the harm caused to open land was not justified.

The issue had become increasingly acrimonious, but yesterday's decision was expected after Greater London Authority planning offic-

ers recommended permission be granted due to the financial and community benefits.

"In summary, the proposed development would facilitate very significant benefits," Pipe said. "I agree with my officers that these benefits clearly outweigh the harm."

Central to Wimbledon's case has been the desire to hold its qualifying competition, which is currently staged over three miles away in Roehampton, on its own land.

All England Club chair Debbie Jevans said: "We are delighted that the Greater London Authority has resolved to approve our applications to transform the former Wimbledon Park golf course."

"Our proposals will deliver 27 acres of newly accessible parkland for the community and enable us to bring the qualifying competition for The Championships onsite, with all of the

substantial economic and employment opportunities this presents."

The Mayor of London's office took charge of the application in January after Merton Council approved the plans and Wandsworth Council rejected them late last year.

Mayor Sadiq Khan recused himself from the process having previously expressed public support for the development, leaving the matter in Pipe's hands.

Fleur Anderson, the MP for Putney, claimed allowing the scheme would set "a dangerous London-wide and national precedent".

But Jevans said: "We look forward to working with all parties to bring this vision to life, delivering one of London's greatest sporting transformations since the 2012 Games and securing Wimbledon's future at the pinnacle of world sport."

Olympic champ Thomas beaten in new meeting for women

New York: Olympic 200m champion Gabby Thomas of the United States was dominated by Paris bronze medalist Brittany Brown on Thursday in a rematch at the new all-women Athlos athletics meeting in New York.

Brown surged past Thomas in the final meters to win in 22.18sec, with Thomas settling for second in 22.21. Thomas was one of four Paris Olympics gold medalists to take part in the meeting, which was organized by entrepreneur Alexis Ohanian, the husband of retired US tennis great Serena Williams.

The event features 36 women competing in six events with the winners taking home \$60,000 each from a total purse of \$663,000. That doubles the prize money awarded in the Diamond League final two weeks ago.

Puerto Rico's 2021 Olympic gold medalist Jasmine Camacho-Quinn clocked 12.36sec to win the 100m hurdles ahead of Aleysha Johnson (12.43) and Paris gold medalist Masai Russell (12.44). Dominican Marileidy Paulino won the 400m in 49.59sec, Kenyan Faith Kipyegon won the 1500m in 4min 04.79sec and Ivorian Marie-Josée Ta Lou-Smith won the 100m in 10.98sec.

EQUESTRIAN

Al-Ghazali and al-Marri emerge triumphant at Hathab



Medium Class team and individual winners pose with Jaber al-Mulla, Qatar Equestrian Federation's (QEF) Board Member, at its Indoor Arena yesterday.



Ahmed Khaled al-Humaidi, Al Shaqab's Horse Programs Advisor, crowned the winners of the amateur class during the opening round of the Hathab yesterday.

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Nasser al-Ghazali won the Medium Tour class, while Mohammed Faisal al-Marri clinched the Amateur Class during the first round of the eighth Longines Hathab -

Qatar Equestrian Tour yesterday. At the Qatar Equestrian Federation's Indoor Arena, al-Ghazali emerged the fastest astride Dexter in 31.42 seconds. Cyrine Cherif came second on Van Galatina in 31.68 seconds, while Hamad Tuwaim al-Marri took third spot on Baron with 31.87 seconds.

In the team competitions of the Medium

Class, Doha Bank emerged victorious ahead of Lekhwiya and Mqanes. Ahmed Jaber al-Mulla, Qatar Equestrian Federation Board Member, presented the trophies to Medium Class winners.

Earlier, in the amateur round al-Marri with veteran horse Dusty for company took the top honours with a blazing round in 20.57 seconds. Abdulaziz Saud al-Fakhro

came in second placed in 22.06 seconds on the Valo, while Maryam Abdul Karim Abdul was in a time of 30.96 seconds on Wadi Rum. Ahmed Khaled al-Humaidi, Al Shaqab's Horse Programs Advisor, crowned the winners of the round.

The first leg of the hugely popular equestrian competition concludes today with three Dressage events in the morning

session. The showjumping events Open Class and Big Tour will begin from 4pm and 7pm respectively.

The annual domestic equestrian series comprises a total of 14 rounds and shall continue till May 2025. The best seven results of the series are taken into account in deciding overall champions in various categories of showjumping and dressage.

PREMIER LEAGUE

Injured Son in race to recover for clash against Man United

Postecoglou was uncertain about extent of his captain's injury

AFP
London

Tottenham boss Ange Postecoglou has revealed Son Heung-min is fighting to prove his fitness for tomorrow's clash with Manchester United. Son limped off with a hamstring injury in the 71st minute of Thursday's 3-0 win against Qarabag in the Europa League.

Postecoglou was uncertain about the extent of his captain's injury immediately after the Qarabag tie. But he said that the South Korea forward wants to train on Saturday to show he is ready to feature in the Premier League showdown at Old Trafford.

"Fair to say the boys are fairly tired, the ones who put in a shift. Apart from Sonny, everybody is okay," Postecoglou told reporters. "Sonny, I don't think is too bad. He wants to train tomorrow and we will see how it goes and make a decision from there. We have another day up our sleeve to give him every chance."

If Son is unable to recover in time, Postecoglou has several options on the left wing, including Sweden international Dejan Kulusevski. Germany's Timo Werner replaced Son on Thursday, while 17-year-old attacker Mikey Moore could be handed a full debut.

Son's long-term future in north London was thrown into the spotlight earlier this week after he said no talks over a new contract had taken place with the Tottenham hierarchy. Son's current deal expires next year but Tottenham hold the option to extend his contract by a further year and reportedly plan to activate that clause.

Postecoglou made it clear he wants the 32-year-old to stay, with Son into his 10th season at the club he joined from Bayer Leverkusen in 2015. "I don't always have the final say but certainly I like to think my input is significant on it," he said. "I think it is part of a broader discussion around Sonny but the way he is performing and leading the club at the moment, I certainly want him to stick around for a while."



Tottenham Hotspur's Son Heung-min limped off with a hamstring injury in the 71st minute of Thursday's 3-0 win against Qarabag in the Europa League. (AFP)

ALISSON READY TO RETURN FOR LIVERPOOL, SAYS SLOT

Alisson Becker is ready to return from injury for Liverpool's trip to Premier League strugglers Wolves, manager Arne Slot said. The first-choice goalkeeper has missed the past two games, with Caoimhin Kelleher deputising, but Slot said the Brazilian was in line to play today. "He trained yesterday a part of our session with the group, so we're expecting him to do the whole session today," Slot said. "So we think he is available but of course we have to train today. And of course we're really happy with Alisson being back but I want to emphasise the fact that Caoimhin did really well in the two games he was in goal for us, so another

example of me having two, and I think even three, good options in certain positions."

Liverpool are second, just one point behind champions Manchester City, with four wins from their first five matches.

FIXTURES

Today (1400 GMT unless stated): Newcastle v Manchester City (1130), Arsenal v Leicester, Brentford v West Ham, Chelsea v Brighton, Everton v Crystal Palace, Nottingham Forest v Fulham, Wolves v Liverpool (1630)
Tomorrow: Ipswich v Aston Villa (1300), Manchester United v Tottenham (1530)
Monday: Bournemouth v Southampton (1900)

SPOTLIGHT

Arsenal boss Arteta still 'loves' City's Guardiola despite fiery clash



AFP
London

Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta said he still "loves" Manchester City boss Pep Guardiola despite last weekend's bad-tempered top-of-the-table clash.

The champions needed a John Stones equaliser deep into stoppage-time to escape with a 2-2 draw against 10-man Arsenal at the Etihad Stadium. Arteta's side, runners-up to City in the Premier League for the past two seasons, had Leandro Trossard sent off

just before the interval. The Gunners did their best to deliberately disrupt their rivals with time-wasting and cynical fouls in the second half. City struggled to break down Arsenal despite dominating possession, leading Stones and team-mate Bernardo Silva to accuse the north Londoners of resorting to football's "dark arts".

Arteta, who worked as Guardiola's assistant at City before becoming Arsenal boss, said the controversy would not get in the way of his personal relationship with his fellow Spaniard.

"I love him, I respect him and I admire him, his team and everything that he does,"

he said yesterday, on the eve of his side's match against Leicester.

"This is a sport - one thing is our profession and the other is our personal relationship. If my relationship has to be damaged because we play against each other and one draws or the one wins, or the amount of times that we have lost then I wouldn't talk to him any more."

Arteta was asked by reporters whether it was harder to maintain a friendship when games between title contenders are so ferocious. "It's quite simple - don't take it personally, it's part of our job," he said. "The things that you really care about, make sure

you handle them in the right way. That relationship, I really care about. It's the same with a lot of people in their staff and players that I spent some very important years of my life with."

Unbeaten Arsenal are fourth in the table, two points behind City, who are top of the pile after five games.

Arteta, whose team meet Paris Saint-Germain in the Champions League next week, said he was unsure whether goalkeeper David Raya would be fit to face Leicester after picking up an injury against City. "We have to wait 24 hours to see if he's looking good or not that good," he said.

Man City's Rodri to miss rest of the season with ACL injury

London: Manchester City midfielder Rodri will miss the rest of the season with a serious knee injury, dealing a huge blow to their hopes of winning a fifth straight Premier League title.

City manager Pep Guardiola said the Spain international, who suffered an anterior cruciate ligament injury in last week's 2-2 draw with Arsenal, had gone under the knife yesterday. "He had surgery this morning, ACL and some meniscus" he said. "So, next season he will be here. This season is over."

Rodri is one of City's most important players and his loss will be keenly felt by Guardiola, who is also seeking to regain the Champions League crown. The City boss, speaking on the eve of his team's Premier League match against Newcastle, said it was the worst news possible, underlining the importance of the defensive midfielder he has called "irreplaceable".

"We have to do it as a team and find a way to play during a lot of months without an important player for us," he said. "Everybody knows it. Speedy recovery and next season he will compete against them. We are stronger with Nathan Ake, we are strong with Oscar Bobb. All the injuries we did not want it, but football happens."

Rodri played a key role as City held off Arsenal to win a fourth straight Premier League title last season and was named player of the tournament at Euro 2024 as Spain emerged triumphant. Each of City's past four Premier League defeats have all come when the former Atletico Madrid player has not featured in the side.

The 28-year-old, touted as a potential Ballon d'Or winner, is unbeaten in his past 52 Premier League appearances, a run stretching back to February 2023.

City will also be without Kevin De Bruyne for their trip to Newcastle today as he continues to recover from injury.

NO FANS AT GENOA'S CLASH WITH JUVENTUS AFTER CUP DERBY DISORDER

Genoa will host Juventus behind closed doors this weekend after Italy's security authorities decided yesterday to punish the Serie A club for serious fan trouble during their Italian Cup defeat to local

rivals Sampdoria. The prefecture of Genoa made the decision following widespread clashes between the two clubs' hardcore ultras before and after Wednesday's derby, won 6-5 on penalties by Sampdoria.

Samp could also have supporters barred from their next home match, against Juve Stabia in Serie B on October 4, after dozens of injuries to fans and police on a day of tension in the Italian port city. Genoa head into today's home clash with Juventus one point above the relegation zone.

Wednesday's violence was followed by more disorder between Napoli and Palermo fans on Thursday. Supporters caused a seven-minute delay to the start of the second half of the match, won 5-0 by Napoli, by throwing flares and firecrackers at each other. Napoli fans were also involved in clashes with Cagliari fans in Sardinia earlier this month.

FIFA TO REVEAL CLUB WORLD CUP VENUES TODAY

FIFA will today announce the venues and stadiums for next year's Club World Cup in the United States, football's governing body said. The new, expanded 32-club tournament, featuring leading clubs from around the world, will take place from 15 June to 13 July 2025.

Gianni Infantino, president of FIFA, will make the announcement in Central Park during the Global Citizen Festival, a music event aimed at defeating poverty. Real Madrid, Manchester City and Bayern Munich are among the 12 European teams who have qualified for the tournament while Argentina's River Plate and Boca Juniors and Brazil's Flamengo are among six South American teams.

FIFA has yet to announce any broadcast partners for the tournament which has faced opposition from the global players' union FIFPro. FIFPro and the European Leagues body filed a joint complaint to the European Commission against FIFA over the introduction of the tournament into the international match calendar.

The tournament will take place during the same window as the regional national team Concacaf Gold Cup tournament which will be held mainly on the West Coast.