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HORSE RACING

A week of high-stakes drama set to begin at Qatar Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe

Qatari owners well represented in PA Colt and Filly Trophies as trainers and jockeys eye title wins

Only a few days to go before the Qatar Racing and Equestrian Club (QREC)-sponsored Qatar Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe weekend kicks off at ParisLongchamp as part of the partnership between QREC and France Galop, which has been extending since 2008 and will continue until 2027.

This sponsorship has contributed to enhancing the standing of the prestigious event and to rating the Gr 1 Qatar Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe the world's best horse race on five occasions.

The weekend meeting will take place next Saturday and Sunday.

A day earlier, a race meeting will be held at Saint Cloud.

The two feature races on Friday are the Qatar Arabian Trophy des Poulaches, a Gr 1 for three-year-old fillies, and the Qatar Arabian Trophy des Poulains, a Gr 1 for three-year-old colts and geldings.

Horses of Qatari owners have had the upper hand in these two races over the years.

The entries of the two races have published recently, reflecting the good representation of Qatari owners, who look forward to winning the two trophies and then continue excellence at ParisLongchamp, especially the Gr 1 Qatar Arabian World Cup.

The Group one Arabian event has been a major outcome of the Qatari sponsorship of the weekend and has contributed to fostering Qatar's role in promoting Arabian racing worldwide and at Europe's top racecourses.

The Qatar Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe is Europe's most prestigious race with total prize money of €55m on offer, which is the highest in the French racing programme.

Held annually, it attracts the best thoroughbreds from around the world.

Some of the most famous winners of the Qatar Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe include Sea-Bird II, Dancing Brave, Enable, Treve and Zarkava.

The only horse who has won the Qatar Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe for a Qatari owner was Treve in 2014 and 2015.

In 2016, the wonderful mare was



not successful in her bid to register a legendary record by winning the same title for the third time in a row and retired to stud.

Qatar Arabian Trophy des Poulaches

There are 20 fillies entered in the Gr 1 PA Qatar Arabian Trophy des Poulaches, race for 3-year-olds fillies over 2,000m. They include Chdia, a winner on debut for Wathnan Racing and Alban de Mieulle. Al Shaqab Racing is well armed in this race with the Jean de Mieulle-trained Al Jori, third in Al Rayyan Cup Gr 1 PA last time out, and the Thomas Fourcy-trained Hajmah who scored on debut. Ihtijaj and Salmah have also been entered by Jean de Mieulle for Al Shaqab Racing.

Amongst the high-class entries are the dual winners the Khalifa Hassan al-Jehani-owned and Francois Rohaut-trained Lambada du Croate and the Mubarak Ali a-Nuaimi-owned and Mrs Jean-Francois Bernard-trained Intisar de



Monlau. The list also includes the Sheikh Nasser Abdulla al-Thani-owned and Thomas Fourcy-trained Serena Du Loup, the Al Wasmayah Racing-owned and Xavier Thomas-Demeaulte-trained Ghara, the Abdulghani al-Abdulghani-owned and Xavier Thomas-Demeaulte-trained HM Al Zalmaa, the Abdulla

bin Fahad Ah Aal-Attayah-owned and Francois Rohaut-trained Geneva, the Mansoor Khalil al-Shahwani-owned and Xavier Thomas-Demeaulte-trained Lacaro Du Croate and the Dhafi Rashid Al Ardhi al-Marri-owned and Charles Gourdain-trained Labwa De Carriere.

Qatar Arabian Trophy des Poulains

On the same day and over the same distance of 2,000m at the same racecourse, three-year-old colts and geldings contesting in the other feature of the day. A total of 13 colts and geldings have been entered in the Gr 1 Qatar Arabian Trophy des Poulains including the Qatar Coupe de France des Chevaux Arabes winner Mureb, who now runs for Wathnan Racing. Francois Rohaut also presents Mukatel Al Shahania, owned by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Khalifa al-Thani, winner of the Sheikh Mansoor Festival - Prix Tljidani, while trainer Thomas Fourcy fields three colts, Maarek, Mohtaram and Moujaz for owner Al Shaqab Racing as well as Lanvin De Faust for owner Abdulatif al-Emadi.

The list also includes the Abdulghani al-Abdulghani-owned and Xavier Thomas-Demeaulte-trained Mouzaffar De Monlau.

The forfeits of the two races will

close on Monday and Tuesday and the declarations will be published on Wednesday.

Following the races at Saint Cloud, all eyes will be on Paris-Longchamp for the top-class contests on Saturday and Sunday, especially the Gr 1 PA Qatar Arabian World Cup and the Gr 1 Qatar Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe.

The Qatar Racing and Equestrian Club (QREC) was established in the early 1960s and was officially made public in 1975. QREC is mandated with representing, promoting and advancing equine and equestrian initiatives from grassroots programmes to the international arena. Focused on equestrian sport and horse welfare, QREC is dedicated on promoting Qatar as a world-class hub for horse racing and a leader in the pure Arabian breed. QREC works in collaboration with local bodies dedicated to achieving excellence in planning, regulating and developing Qatar's racing industry to reflect the world's best practices.

MOTOGP

Qatar Grand Prix at LIC on April 13, 2025

Qatar's Lusail International Circuit (LIC) will host the fourth round of next year's FIM MotoGP World Championship on April 13, 2025, just after Ramadan.

The provisional 2025 Championship calendar features 22 Grand Prix across 18 countries.

After next year's pre-season testing at Sepang and Buriram, the Thai Grand Prix at Chang International Circuit will mark history by becoming first Southeast Asian season opener in 25 years, on March 3.

The action will then return to Termas de Rio Hondo in Argentina and the Circuit of the Americas in Austin, Texas, before heading to

Qatar. Lusail's state-of-the-art racetrack will come to life with top-class action just after Ramadan, when it hosts the prestigious race gala for the 22nd occasion.

Positioned before the European leg of the championship, the Qatar Grand Prix will be one of the stand-out events of the season.

The European stint is set to begin at Jerez, before moving to Le Mans.

Then there will be two events in new timeslots: the British GP at Silverstone at the end of May and the Aragon GP two weeks later.

With four long-haul events to begin the year and four to round it off, 2025 will be a balanced and well-paced season of competition

for riders and teams, promising a global spectacle of racing action for millions of fans worldwide. Action shifts Autodromo Internazionale del Mugello in Italy on June 22, and the TT Circuit Assen in the Netherlands a week later, before Sachsenring in Germany gets set to test competitors on July 13.

Czech Republic's Automotodrom Brno (July 13), Austria's Red Bull Ring (August 17), Balaton Park Circuit in Hungary (August 24), Circuit de Barcelona-Catalunya in Spain (September 7) and Misano World Circuit Marco Simoncelli in San Marino (September 14) are also part of the long European spell. The Championship then travels to Japan's Mobility Resort

Motegi (September 28), Pertamina Mandalika International Circuit in Indonesia (October 5), the iconic Phillip Island in Australia (October 19) and the Petronas Sepang International Circuit in Malaysia (October 26).

Finally, the season wraps up at the Autodromo Internacional do Algarve in Portugal on November 9, before concluding at Circuit Ricardo Tormo in Comunitat Valenciana on November 16.

With four long-haul events to begin the year and four to round it off, 2025 will be a balanced and well-paced season of competition for riders, teams and paddock personnel, promising a spectacle of racing action around the world.



SECOND TEST

Sri Lanka scent series win as New Zealand collapse

'Things were happening very quick. Sri Lanka are a very good team and their spinners bowled really well'

AFP
Galle, Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka were just five wickets away from a crushing second Test and series victory over New Zealand yesterday, with the tourists 199-5 at stumps on the third day, having followed on after collapsing to 88 all out in their first innings.

Tom Blundell was not out on 47 and Glenn Phillips on 32 when bad light forced an early end to play in Galle after debutant off-spinner Nishan Peiris took three top-order wickets.

"Obviously the first innings wasn't ideal. It was a bitter pill to swallow," said Blundell after the day's play.

"Things were happening very quick. Sri Lanka are a very good team and their spinners bowled really well."

Devon Conway, battling to save both his team and his place in the side, joined forces with former captain Kane Williamson in a dogged 97-run partnership for the second wicket.

De Silva lured Conway, who had made 61 off 62 balls, into a drive towards the vacant deep cover boundary that was caught by Dinesh Chandimal in a spectacular backward running catch.

Williamson, the world's second-ranked batsman behind Eng-



Sri Lanka's Prabhath Jayasuriya celebrates after taking a five-wicket haul during the third day of the second Test against New Zealand at the Galle International Cricket Stadium in Galle yesterday. (AFP)

land's Joe Root, departed when he misjudged a shot off Peiris, with Ramesh Mendis grabbing a tumbling catch at long-on.

Tom Latham had been the first wicket to fall after the follow-on was enforced just before lunch, caught by Pathum Nissanka for

a duck at short leg off Peiris, who earlier had taken three first-innings wickets.

Sri Lanka declared Friday on a mammoth 602-5 for their first innings, then spinner Prabhath Jayasuriya took 6-42 for his ninth five-wicket haul as the visitors failed to

get to three figures. Jayasuriya will need to dismiss all five remaining New Zealand batsmen to equal the record for fastest bowler to 100 Test wickets, held since 1896 by England's George Lohmann who reached the milestone in his 16th Test.



New Zealand's Devon Conway plays a shot during the third day of the second Test in Galle yesterday. (AFP)

"I love bowling in Galle," he said. "But that milestone looks out of reach now."

"Obviously when you have runs on the board you can dictate terms like we did today," he added.

"We will be delighted with a series win."

Resuming at a precarious 22-2 in their first innings, New Zealand's batsmen yesterday barely put up a fight and their highest partnership was the 20 added by last pair Mitchell Santner, who top scored

with 29, and William O'Rourke (two).

Captain de Silva took five catches at first slip to tie the record for most in a Test innings by a non-wicketkeeper, a milestone shared with 15 others.

BRIEF SCORES (Day 3)
New Zealand 88 (Santner 29, Jayasuriya 6-42, Peiris 3-33) and **199 for 5** (Conway 61, Blundell 47*, Phillips 32*, Peiris 3-91) trail Sri Lanka **602 for 5 dec by 315 runs**

REVIEW

Archer taking it series by series after strong show

AFP
London

England fast bowler Jofra Archer is in upbeat mood after coming through successive one-day internationals against Australia, although the express quick remains wary after years of injury turmoil.

Archer, 29, has been plagued by persistent elbow trouble since starring in England's victorious 2019 50-over World Cup campaign and that year's ensuing Ashes series.

But such is the Barbados-born paceman's talent that England have kept faith with Archer while devising a carefully managed plan for his return as an all-format international.

While the gruelling demands of Test cricket remain off the agenda for the time being, Archer did feature at the T20 World Cup in the Caribbean in June and is now back in England's 50-over squad as well.

This week marked an important staging post, with Archer featuring in back-to-back ODIs for the first time since 2020 as England drew level at 2-2 in a five-match series against world champions Australia ahead of today's finale in Bristol.

He showed he had lost none of his pace or skill during a return of 2-33 in seven overs when troubling Australia's top-order at Lord's on Friday as England



England's Jofra Archer (centre) celebrates taking the wicket of Australia's Glenn Maxwell during the fourth One Day International against Australia at Lord's in London. (AFP)

thrashed their arch-rivals by the colossal margin of 186 runs.

He bowled Australia captain Mitchell Marsh and dismissed Glenn Maxwell, with Archer also landing a painful blow on the arm of Marnus Labuschagne with a sharply rising delivery in between those wickets.

But for Archer, just being back playing again is an achievement in itself.

"I'm still on the park and we're almost approaching the end of the summer, so for me, that's a take," Archer told reporters.

"I wanted to play a summer, and then I want to play a year, and then I want to play a few years. So everything is going to plan."

England would dearly love to have Archer available as one of a cohort of fast bowlers for a 2025/26 Ashes tour of Australia, even though it is now more than three years since he played the last of his 13 Tests.

'Go series by series'
Archer, however, refuses to look too far ahead, with a return to the West Indies for ODI and T20 se-

ries in October and November his immediate target

"The T20 World Cup was a good check mark, this (white-ball series against Australia) was a good check mark, the Caribbean will be another good check mark - hopefully I play more games there," Archer said.

"None of us have next year planned, so let's just go series by series...I know I've been out, it's been a while but I'm playing cricket again and I'm just happy."

Archer was a key figure when England won the World Cup five years ago, crucially holding his nerve while bowling the Super Over that sealed victory over New Zealand in a thrilling final at Lord's.

Yet Archer and leg-spinner Adil Rashid were the only members from that team on show at Lord's on Friday, with Harry Brook standing in as captain of a youthful ODI side this series in the absence of the injured Jos Buttler.

"It's weird seeing the team change - just the other day I was playing warm-up football on the young side and a couple of weeks later I'm on the old team," said Archer. "It's been a bit of a shock."

"But a lot of the guys who are in and around, they didn't play in 2019, but a lot played just after. They have played big roles for their countries. It's not like you are babysitting anyone here."

"Everybody looks after themselves, and Brooky looks after everyone."

BROOK SAYS RETURN TO FORM 'A MATTER OF TIME' AS ENGLAND BEAT AUSTRALIA

London: England captain Harry Brook insisted he was always confident of coming good after starring in a 186-run rout of Australia at Lord's on Friday that set up a one-day international series decider with the world champions.

Brook, leading England in the absence of the injured Jos Buttler, followed his match-winning and maiden ODI hundred at Chester-le-Street on Tuesday with a superb 87 from 58 balls at Lord's. In a match reduced by rain to 39 overs per side, the big-hitting Liam Livingstone added late impetus with a whirlwind 62 not out from just 27 balls as England posted an imposing total of 312-5. Australia, following a promising start to their reply, collapsed to 126 all out inside 25 overs as England levelled the five-match series at 2-2 ahead of Sunday's finale at Bristol.

Brook came under fire from former England captains Michael Vaughan and Alastair Cook for the way he succumbed to frustration while being dismissed in this month's third Test loss to Sri Lanka at the Oval. But in an ODI format which is unfamiliar to many members of a new-look England side, the 25-year-old produced his second superbly-paced innings of the week.

"It felt like only a matter of time for me," Brook told reporters. "I feel like I've been playing well all summer, everything just needed to click. The last couple of games for me have been really special."

England opener Ben Duckett survived an awkward opening spell from Mitchell Starc to make

63 before Livingstone smashed seven sixes, including four in an astounding last over from the left-arm fast bowler that cost a staggering 28 runs.

"He was striking it unbelievably well," Brook said of Livingstone. "We all know what he's capable of doing at the back end (of an innings)."

Travis Head and Mitchell Marsh put on 68 in the first nine overs of Australia's reply before the innings subsided as Brydon Carse (3-36) and Jofra Archer (2-33) did the bulk of the early damage in helpful conditions under the floodlights.

Archer, plagued by injury since starring in England's triumphant 2019 World Cup campaign, touched speeds of 93 mph (150 km/h), with fellow paceman Matthew Potts rounding off the home side's fine all-round display with an ODI best 4-38.

And express quick Archer also struck Marnus Labuschagne a nasty blow on the elbow.

"It was phenomenal to watch," Brook said. "We knew the seamers were getting the most out of the pitch so I just tried to bowl them as many overs as possible."

Australia, without Cameron Green after the all-rounder suffered a tour-ending back injury, had few answers as skipper Marsh admitted.

"Fair play to England, they put us under a lot of pressure with the bat," Marsh told *Sky Sports*.

"We couldn't get early wickets and they thoroughly out-played us today. Liam Livingstone played a gem of an innings."

He added: "England bowled really well. We lost wickets continually and that's cricket."

KANPUR TEST

Rain washes out Day Two of India vs Bangladesh

Reuters
Kanpur

The second day's play was called off in India's weather-plagued second Test against Bangladesh without a ball being bowled, following intermittent rain in Kanpur yesterday.

Rain and a wet outfield had allowed only 35 overs of play on Friday and the start of the second day's play was also delayed by inclement weather.

The on-again, off-again

rainfall kept the covers on and the umpires decided to call off play with Bangladesh, bidding for a series-leveling victory, stuck on 107-3 in their first innings after India won the toss on Friday.

While the weather is likely to improve slightly today, a draw looms over the contest in view of the time lost to rain.

India, who won the opening Test match in Chennai by 280 runs, need a draw to register their record-extending 18th consecutive Test series victory on home soil.



Groundstaff inspect the field as rain delays the start of the second day play of the second Test between India and Bangladesh at the Green Park Cricket Stadium in Kanpur yesterday. (AFP)



England's Harry Brook plays a shot for four runs during the fourth One Day International against Australia at Lord's in London on Friday. England won by 186 runs. (AFP)

SPOTLIGHT

Tennis world rocked again as WADA seeks Sinner ban

WORLD ANTI-DOPING AGENCY WANTS AN INELIGIBILITY OF BETWEEN ONE AND TWO YEARS

AFP
Beijing

Jannik Sinner's steroid case reignited yesterday when the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) said it had appealed the decision to clear him and was seeking a ban of up to two years.

The Italian world number one twice tested positive for traces of the banned substance clostebol in March but was exonerated and allowed to carry on playing.

The 23-year-old went on to win the US Open earlier this month for his second major crown, after the International Tennis Integrity Agency (ITIA) found he "bears no fault or negligence".

The ITIA accepted his explanation that the drug entered his system when his physiotherapist used a spray containing it to treat a cut, then provided massage and sports therapy to the player.

WADA on Thursday appealed the high-profile case to the Court of Arbitration for Sport.

"It is WADA's view that the finding of 'no fault or negligence' was not correct under the applicable rules," it said in a statement.

WADA made the appeal announcement just as Sinner was playing at the China Open, where the defending champion fought back to beat 69th-ranked Russian Roman Safiullin 3-6, 6-2, 6-3 in Beijing.

"WADA is seeking a period of ineligibility of between one and two years," it added.

Sinner has consistently denied knowingly doping.

Clostebol is an anabolic agent



Italy's Jannik Sinner looks on after winning against Russia's Roman Safiullin during their singles match at the China Open in Beijing yesterday. (AFP)

prohibited at all times by WADA.

After winning the US Open, Sinner said that the controversy over his failed tests was still on his mind.

He defeated Taylor Fritz in straight sets to add the New York title to his Australia Open triumph in January.

"It was and it's still on my mind. It's not that it's gone, but when I'm on court, I try to focus about the game, I try to handle the situation the best possible way, communication with the team, in the practice courts," said the world number one.

"It was not easy, that's for sure, but I tried to stay focused, with which I guess I've done a great job."

The decision to clear the Italian was met with scepticism by some players in the locker room who suggested that Sinner had benefited from preferential treatment due to his status in the sport.

Australia's Nick Kyrgios said in a post on X that the lack of a suspension was "ridiculous".

Canadian player Denis Shapovalov said the decision proved that there are "different rules for different players" suggesting that Sinner was saved by his ranking.

Back on the tennis court, the title-holder dropped the first set in defeating Chile's Nicolas Jarry in his opening match in China and similarly fell behind against the "lucky loser" Safiullin yesterday.

The second set went with serve until the sixth game when Sinner finally broke to go up 4-2, celebrating with a subtle pump of the fists.

Sinner took control early on in the deciding set on the way to an ultimately comfortable victory to reach the last eight. The in-form Sinner has reached at least the quarter-final of every tournament he has played this year.

SINNER 'VERY DISAPPOINTED' WITH WADA APPEAL

Beijing: Jannik Sinner said yesterday he was "very disappointed" but confident after the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) appealed the decision to clear him in his steroid case, seeking a ban of up to two years.

The Italian world number one twice tested positive for traces of the banned substance clostebol in March but was exonerated and allowed to carry on playing.

The 23-year-old went on to win the US Open earlier this month for his second major crown,

weeks after the International Tennis Integrity Agency (ITIA) found he "bears no fault or negligence".

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WADA on Thursday appealed the high-profile case to the Court of Arbitration for Sport.

Sinner has consistently denied knowingly doping and said after his win: "Obviously I'm very disappointed and also surprised."

"We had three hearings. All three hearings came out very positively for me."

He added: "Maybe they just want to make sure that everything is in the right position."

Separately, speaking in Italian, Sinner added: "I'm convinced that I will be found innocent."

Clostebol is an anabolic agent prohibited at all times by WADA.

Sabalenka wins opener to launch Beijing title bid

A frustrated Aryna Sabalenka began her China Open title charge with a 6-4, 6-1 win over tricky Thai qualifier Mananchaya Sawangkaew yesterday.

The top seed and world number two will face the 29th-seeded New Zealander Lulu Sun or Ashlyn Krueger of the United States in the third round in Beijing.

Fresh from winning the US Open, the Belarusian made hard work of an opponent ranked 187 in the world and playing the biggest match of her young career.

The 22-year-old Mananchaya may have been inexperienced at this level but the athletic Thai refused to give up seemingly lost causes. Mananchaya struggled though on serve and three-time major champion Sabalenka broke for a 4-2 first-set lead.

The Thai refused to be overwhelmed by Sabalenka's far greater power and she broke back immediately, to roars of approval from the Beijing crowd. An error-prone Sabalenka could not get into her groove but created a first set point on the Thai's serve, only to put a straightforward volley wide.

Also into the third round of the WTA 1000 tournament is third seed Jasmine Paolini.

But the Italian did it the hard way yesterday, fighting back to beat Denmark's Clara Tauson 1-6, 7-5, 6-4.

MOTOGP

Bagnaia halves Martin's lead with win in Indonesia

AFP
Lombok, Indonesia

Francesco Bagnaia won a dramatic Indonesia MotoGP sprint race yesterday, capitalising on an early crash by championship leader Jorge Martin to halve the Spaniard's lead to 12 points at the top of the standings.

Pramac rider Martin slid off on the first lap to gift reigning champion Bagnaia the race lead in a blow to his championship hopes with today's Grand Prix and five race weekends to go.

"Everybody knows how important it was to gain points, we gained 12 (points). So thanks to the mistake of Jorge, we are close again," Bagnaia told reporters.

Bagnaia's teammate Enea Bastianini finished second, while six-time MotoGP champion Marc Marquez of Gresini completed the podium in third.

Martin had secured pole position at the sweltering Mandalika track on Lombok island with a lap record in qualifying but could only claw his way back to 10th place after the costly incident.

A win in the sprint would have guaranteed Martin the championship lead heading into next week's Japan MotoGP, the first of five remaining race weekends in the 2024 season.

Bagnaia can now overtake Martin in the championship depending on results in today's GP.

Bastianini battled with Marquez for second place but held



FROM LEFT: Second-placed Ducati Lenovo Team's Italian rider Enea Bastianini, first-placed Ducati Lenovo Team's Italian rider Francesco Bagnaia, and third-placed Gresini Racing MotoGP's Spanish rider Marc Marquez pose with a schoolgirl on the podium following the MotoGP sprint race of the Indonesian Grand Prix at the Mandalika International Circuit in Mandalika, West Nusa Tenggara, yesterday. (AFP)

on to finish behind his teammate. The Italian rider, who will be replaced by Marquez at Ducati's factory team next season, is 50 points behind Martin ahead of today's GP.

"I am happy. After I bring my pace and levelled up, I was a bit faster. In the last lap I tried to catch Pecco (Bagnaia) but the gap was important. The second position is okay," Bastianini told reporters.

Marquez, who has pulled himself back into the title picture in

recent weeks, made an incredible early surge from 12th to finish third after crashing twice in final qualifying earlier in the day and failing to register a lap time.

He is now 53 points behind Martin in the championship standings.

"The Q2 is a nightmare for me at the moment. But still we keep working and try to understand what is going on," the Spaniard told reporters.

Marco Bezzecchi, who survived a crash in qualifying to secure a

front-row place on the grid, finished fourth. Red Bull GasGas rider Pedro Acosta completed the front-row line-up but could only finish sixth.

Aprilia's Miguel Oliveira however was ruled out of the race weekend and left a doubt for next week's Japan MotoGP after fracturing his right wrist in Friday morning's free practice session.

MotoGP returned to Indonesia in 2022 for the first time since 1997, at a new venue on the resort island of Lombok.

GOLF

Suwannapura grabs LPGA Arkansas lead

AFP
Los Angeles

Jasmine Suwannapura bagged five of her eight birdies on the back nine to surge to a one-stroke lead in the first round of the US LPGA NW Arkansas Championship in Rogers, Arkansas.

The 31-year-old from Thailand's birdie at Pinnacle Country Club's par-five 18th capped an eight-under-par 63 and saw her edge ahead of a group of four players sharing second on seven-under.

Another three players were tied on six-under 65 and a dozen were within three shots of Jasmine's lead after a day in which gusty winds made the going difficult, especially for late starters.

"I think it's starting from last week, everything's getting better with my irons, I have more confidence," said Jasmine, adding that she's motivated as the season winds down to secure a place in the 60-player CME Tour Championship and to make sure she's qualified to play in Thailand early next season so her parents can watch her play in person.

She came into the week ranked 75th in the Race to the CME Globe standings, but she's not feeling much pressure.

"I think at this point, you can only do your best right now," she said, noting that with no cut in this 54-hole event. "You go out there and just fire at the pin and try to climb up the CME (tour champi-

onship standings)." It doesn't hurt that the week in Arkansas offers plenty of congenial support, from the local family that she's billeted with to the chance to have a fun gathering with her pro-am playing partners.

"It's been pretty fun week so far," said Jasmine, who launched her round with a birdie at the first and picked up two more strokes at the fifth and seventh.

Coming in she birdied the 10th before back-to-back birdies at 13 and 14 and another brace at 17 and 18.

Spain's Carlota Ciganda, South African Ashleigh Buhai and Mexico's Maria Fassi were already in the clubhouse on seven-under when Jasmine finished and 18-year-old Chinese rookie Zeng Liqi joined them in the afternoon.

Fassi, who played collegiate golf at the University of Arkansas, shook off two early bogeys and had nine birdies. Ciganda had seven birdies without a bogey and Buhai birdied her last four holes to seize her share of second.

Zeng teed off on the 10th and her seven birdies included five in a row from the 14th through the 18th. Her two birdies coming in included one at the par-four ninth to match her lowest round on tour.

"I'm feeling really lucky after today," she said. "There were a lot of chances on the front nine that I got a hold of. Also a few minor mistakes that happened, but I was able to save them."

"A bogey-free round is always a reason to be happy"



Jasmine Suwannapura of Thailand plays a shot on the fifth hole during the first round of the Walmart NW Arkansas Championship at Pinnacle Country Club in Rogers, Arkansas. (AFP)

KOPECKY DEFENDS WORLD ROAD TITLE IN THRILLING BATTLE

Zurich: Belgium's Lotte Kopecky won a thrilling women's road race as she held off a high-calibre lead group to retain her title on a rain-drenched Zurich course yesterday.

The 154km battle was whittled down to all the main contenders on the final city circuit and it was impossible to predict the outcome as the riders entered the final kilometre.

But it was Kopecky who

emerged from the bunch sprint to cross the line to make it back-to-back victories after she triumphed in Glasgow last year. American Chloe Dygert took the silver medal with Italian Elisa Longo-Borghini finishing in third place.

It continued a stunning year for the 28-year-old who won the UAE Tour and Tour of Britain, was second in the Giro and also triumphed in Paris-Roubaix and

Strade Bianche. She missed out on gold in the Olympics road race, finishing third, but would not be denied in Zurich.

Three-time world champion Marianne Vos looked in contention for victory as they started the final circuit before compatriot Demi Vollering began to wind up the pace on the climbs.

With 3km remaining it appeared to be between Kopecky, her SD Worx-Protime team mate

Vollering, Longo-Borghini and Germany's Liane Lippert. But Dygert and Australia's Ruby Roseman-Gannon powered back into contention.

Vollering, who was runner-up to Kopecky last year, made the first move before Longo-Borghini took it on. But Kopecky simply had too much power as she roared to victory. She is the first rider to win back-to-back women's titles since Vos in 2012-2013.

GRAND DOUBLE FOR GHANIM NASSER AL-QADI

Doha: Seasoned rider Ghanim Nasser al-Qadi displayed both cohesion and form as he excelled on different horses to claim the Open Class and Big Tour titles on the concluding day of the first round of Longines-Hathab Qatar Equestrian Tours - Season 8 at the indoor arena of Qatar Equestrian Federation yesterday. Organised by the Qatar Equestrian Federation (QEF) in partnership with Al Shaqab, the annual domestic equestrian series is a 14-leg competition which in the eighth edition of the championship extends till May 2025. Al-Qadi made an impressive start as he first excelled in the Open Class (Table A, One round against the clock, Art 238.2.1| 120cm) event riding bay mare Chanel D'Altenbach registering flawless and fastest time of 47.53secs to take top podium place. Hamad Towaim al-Marri astride bay stud Famous was second (49.90secs) while Hamad Nasser al-Qadi on brown mare Happy Tina came in third (50.56secs). The Open Class winners were honoured by Waleed al-Jassim, Technical Director of the Kuwait Equestrian Federation. The Big Tour competition (Table A, Special two phases, Art. 274.2.5 | 145cm) was also topped by Ghanim Nasser al-Qadi as he this time excelled on his mount Morocco - a chestnut stud - as he flawlessly completed the two routines clocking the fastest 30.98secs. He was followed by Hamad Nasser al-Qadi (riding bay mare Stella) with a best time of



Sheikh Ahmed bin Noah al-Thani, Chairman of the Supreme Organising Committee of Longines Hathab - Qatar Equestrian Tour, honoured the winners of the Big Tour.



The Open Class winners were awarded by Waleed al-Jassim, Technical Director of the Kuwait Equestrian Federation.

31.92secs, while Cyrine Cherif on chestnut mare Van Gallettana Z finished with a time of 32.5secs. Sheikh Ahmed bin Noah al-Thani, Chairman of the Supreme Organising Committee of Longines Hathab - Qatar Equestrian Tour, honoured the winners of the Big Tour. Commenting on the conclusion of the first round competitions, Faisal al-Kahla, Tournament Director, confirmed that the performance levels shown by the riders

in the various rounds over the three days have been high, which is what the Qatar Equestrian Federation is looking forward to. He also noted that the correct readings of the course and the successful completion of the rounds, in addition to adapting to the heights of the barriers, were important factors in the first round coming out as expected.

THE 1ST LONGINES HATHAB TOUR 2024-25 DAY 3 RESULTS

Big Tour | Table A, Special two phases, Art. 274.2.5 | 145cm | Prize-Money QR100,000

- (Rank; Rider; Horse; 1st Phase Faults; Time; 2nd Phase Faults; Time; Total Faults; Prize)**
1. Ghanim Nasser al-Qadi; Morocco; 0; 29.66secs; 0; 30.98secs; 0; QR29,000
 2. Hamad Nasser al-Qadi; Stella; 0; 30.01secs; 0; 31.92secs; 0; QR23,000
 3. Cyrine Cherif; Van Gallettana Z; 0;

29.93secs; 0; 32.50secs; 0; QR18,000

Open Class | Table A, One round against the clock, Art 238.2.1| 120cm | Prize-money QR25,000

- (Rank; Rider; Horse; Faults; Time; Prize)**
1. Ghanim Nasser al-Qadi; Chanel D'Altenbach; 0; 47.53secs; QR6,250
 2. Hamad Towaim al-Marri; Famous; 0; 49.90secs; QR5,000
 3. Hamad Nasser al-Qadi; Happy Tina; 0; 50.56secs; QR3,750

FOOTBALL / PREMIER LEAGUE

Liverpool go top with 2-1 win over hapless Wolves

Man City drop points as Arsenal leave it late after Leicester scare

Reuters
Wolverhampton, England

Ibrahima Konate headed home his first ever Premier League goal and Mohamed Salah converted a penalty as Liverpool climbed to the top of the Premier League table with a 2-1 victory over struggling Wolverhampton Wanderers yesterday.

Arne Slot's men have 15 points after six games, one more than both Manchester City and Arsenal, while Wolves are bottom with a single point.

Konate scored in first-half injury time after Diogo Jota beat his man down the left then served up a pinpoint cross that the 25-year-old centre back leapt to head home.

Wolves capitalised on some sloppy defending by Konate, however, to level in the 56th minute. The French centre back appeared to be leaving the ball to run out for a goal kick but Jorgen Strand Larsen kept it in, and Rayan Ait-Nouri scored from close range.

Yet Salah silenced the celebratory home crowd at Molineux five minutes later when Liverpool were awarded a penalty for Nelson Semedo's foul on Jota, Salah sending keeper Sam Johnstone the wrong way.

"I think a team like Liverpool has to be in the top four for sure; we keep pushing, we keep pushing, but it's really early," Liverpool midfielder Ryan Gravenberch told Sky Sports after another impressive display from the Dutch midfielder.

"This season I wanted to show myself again and I am really happy. He (Slot) put me in the starting 11 and gave me a lot of confidence."

Dominik Szoboszlai had squandered a brilliant chance to get Liverpool on the scoreboard when he connected with a cross from Andy Robertson, but Johnstone stopped the Hungarian's point-blank shot.

The Reds had a few more chances in the dying minutes including a corner that Konate headed over the bar and a shot to the bottom corner by Curtis Jones after a one-two with Salah that Johnstone saved.

Liverpool's victory comes amid a busy schedule, with Slot's side crushing West Ham United 5-1 in a League Cup third-round tie on Wednesday, while they host Bologna in a Champions League match in four days' time.



Arsenal's Leandro Trossard celebrates scoring their third goal with Riccardo Calafiori during their Premier League match against Leicester City at Emirates Stadium, London, Britain, yesterday. (Reuters)



Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola reacts after his team's match against Newcastle United at St James' Park yesterday. (Reuters)

Aston Villa could draw level on points with Liverpool at the top of the table today with a win at Ipswich Town, although Unai Emery's side trail 10-3 on goal difference.

Man City draw as Arsenal get tested by Leicester

Reigning Premier League champions Manchester City dropped points for the second week in a row as they were held at Newcastle United and were joined at the top of the table by Arsenal who left it late to beat Leicester City 4-2 yesterday.

City led through Josko Gvardiol's opener at St James' Park but had to be content with a 1-1 draw as Anthony Gordon levelled from the penalty spot after the break.

Arsenal, who drew 2-2 at City last weekend after conceding a last-gasp equaliser, joined Pep

Guardiola's side on 14 points from six games with City ahead on goal difference.

Chelsea have 13 points after they came from a goal down to beat Brighton & Hove Albion 4-2 yesterday with Cole Palmer scoring all of his side's goals in a stunning first half.

Palmer is the first player in Premier League history to score four goals before halftime.

Brighton led early on at Stamford Bridge through French forward Georginio Rutter but the 22-year-old Palmer struck an 11-minute hat-trick, including a penalty and a superb 30-metre free kick into the top corner.

Carlos Baleba pulled a goal back for Brighton almost immediately but Palmer struck again shortly before halftime from an assist by Jadon Sancho.

"I just said to Cole, he scored

four but he could have scored two or three more," Chelsea boss Enzo Maresca said. "It is important he continues to be hungry and ambitious. The best thing for me is that he enjoys, he loves football, he's always in the same way and it is something fantastic."

City appeared to be coping well without midfield lynchpin Rodri, who this week was ruled out for the season with a knee injury sustained last week against Arsenal. But they failed to build on the lead given to them by Gvardiol in the 35th minute and paid the price.

Gordon went down under challenge from City goalkeeper Ederon just before the hour mark. The forward picked himself up to dispatch the penalty, sending Ederon the wrong way.

"We had chances to score, but this is their stadium and they had chances to score, so I'm happy (with a point)," Guardiola, whose side remain unbeaten, said.

Arsenal were cruising as Gabriel Martinelli scored his first goal since March and then set up Leandro Trossard to make it 2-0 on the stroke of halftime against Leicester.

But two goals by James Justin early in the second half drew Leicester level against the odds. Arsenal sealed the win though as Trossard's close-range shot deflected in off Wilfred Ndidi in the fourth minute of stoppage time before Kai Havertz made absolutely sure with virtually the last kick of the game.

Qatar shooters shine at Asian Shotgun Cup



The Qatari shooting team continued to excel at the Asian Shotgun Cup, securing three more medals in Almaty, Kazakhstan. Prominent female shooter Reem al-Sharshani claimed the bronze medal in the individual skeet event, while the men's team, consisting of Rashid Saleh al-Athba, Nasser al-Attiyah, and A Aziz al-Attiyah, also earned a bronze in the team skeet competition. In the women's team skeet, the trio of Al Sharshani, Hajar Ghulam Mohammed and Sarah Ghulam Mohammed clinched another bronze medal, taking Qatar's total medals tally to six, following their earlier success of one silver and two bronze in the trap competition of the championship.

