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Show at Al Shaqab  
from October 24

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**2026 FIFA WORLD CUP QUALIFIERS**

# Impressive Iran hit back for 4-1 victory over Qatar

Iran, points leaders Uzbekistan share top spot in Group A where Qatar remain at 4 points



Qatar's Almoez Ali celebrates scoring their first goal with teammate Abdelkarim Hassan during their 2026 FIFA World Cup, Group A qualifier against Iran at Rashid Stadium in Dubai yesterday. **Right:** Iran's Mohammad Mohebbi celebrates scoring their fourth goal with teammates.

**S**ardar Azmoun scored twice and set up a third as the Islamic Republic of Iran came from a goal behind to hand Qatar a 4-1 defeat and keep pace with Uzbekistan at the summit of Group A in the AFC Asian Qualifiers - Road to 26 in Dubai yesterday.

Almoez Ali had given the Qataris the lead with a spectacular strike in the 17th minute but Azmoun scored twice - in the 42nd and 48th minutes - before laying on a third for Mohammad Mohebbi in the 65th minute to ensure the Iranians took all three points.

Mohebbi added the fourth eight minutes into stoppage time with a deflected header.

The win moves Amir Ghalenoi's side onto 10 points and keeps them level with Uzbekistan, who notched up a 1-0 win over the United Arab Emirates earlier in the evening. Qatar, meanwhile, remain stuck on four points from their opening four games.

"Iran performed better than us. They were the best, and I want to congratulate them," Qatar coach Marquez Lopez said yesterday.

"Our goal of qualifying for the World Cup has not changed after this loss. The opportunity is still there, despite having the strong teams like Uzbekistan and Iran in the group.

"We have to fight for our chances until the end. There are still

points to be earned from the six matches available, and we must work hard to obtain them," he added.

The Iranians made a lively start but, while Mehdi Taremi's effort inside the opening minute was called back for an offside decision, Mohebbi should have done better when he dragged his second minute attempt across the face of Meshaal Barsham's goal.

But it was the AFC Asian Cup holders who were to take the lead in spectacular fashion. Lucas Mendes' long ball over the top from deep released Ali behind the defence and the striker smashed a devastating first-time strike into the roof of Alireza Beiranvand's

net. Omid Noorafkan tested Barsham from 20 yards soon after the half hour mark but the attempt was too weak to truly trouble the Qatar goalkeeper, while moments later Azmoun clipped the top of the bar with a thunderous shot from distance as the pace picked up.

The Shabab Al Ahli striker did not have to wait much longer to equalise, however, rising unmarked in the penalty area to spear his header from Noorafkan's cross into the top of Barsham's goal with three minutes left in the half.

Two minutes into first half injury time the Qataris almost restored their lead, Boualem Khoukhi rattling the crossbar from

Akram Afif's searching cross from the right with a header that had Beiranvand beaten.

The woodwork was hit again at the other end when Mehdi Ghayedi unleashed a powerful right-foot shot to bring the half to a thrilling conclusion.

The drama continued into the early exchanges of the second half as the Iranians took the lead for the first time.

Ghayedi's cross was headed into the air by Mendes but, as Barsham came to collect, he tripped over his teammate and Azmoun smashed into the empty net. Azmoun then went from scorer to provider as the Iranians added a third, the forward bursting through the Qatar

defence before unselfishly rolling the ball across goal for Mohebbi to pass the ball into an empty net with Barsham well beaten.

Mohebbi completed the rout when he glanced Noorafkan's corner across Barsham and into the bottom corner to put the seal on an emphatic win.

"It was a tough game but we know the Iranians are very strong, they have very good players (who are) at a high level," said Brazil-born defender Mendes, who set up Ali for the opener in the 17th minute.

"It's a bad start from us but still we have six games. We need to change our level. Many mistakes, we need to improve."

**SPOTLIGHT**

# Palestine fight for 2-2 draw with Kuwait

**T**en-man Palestine fought back to force a 2-2 draw with Kuwait in their AFC Asian Qualifiers - Road to 26 Group B match at Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium yesterday.

Yousef al-Sulaiman's double looked to have secured Kuwait the points but Zeid Qunbar equalised in time added on at the end of the second half for Palestine to take a share of the points.

Head coach Juan Antonio Pizzi's plans for Kuwait suffered an early setback as defender Fahad al-Hajeri suffered an injury after only eight minutes and had to be replaced by Hamad al-Harbi.

With Kuwait still adjusting to the change, Palestine nearly capitalised with Wessam Abouli's quick turn and fierce shot two minutes later needing a stop from goalkeeper Sulaiman Abdulghafoor.

Kuwait regained their composure and nearly went ahead in the 19th minute after great work from Yosef al-Shammari on the right created the opportunity for Salman Mohammed to backheel towards goal but Musab Battat got in the way of the attempt.

Kuwait kept pressing and were awarded a spot-kick in the 31st minute after Ameer Mahajneh was brought down by Moaath al-Enezi, with Yousef al-Sulaiman



Wessam Abouli (left) of Palestine celebrates with teammate Amid Mahajna after scoring a goal during the FIFA 2026 World Cup Group B match against Kuwait at Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium in Doha yesterday. **Right:** Fans cheer Palestine team yesterday. **PICTURES:** Noushad Thekkayil

coolly tucking home.

Palestine, however, were awarded a penalty of their own for Ahmad al-Dhefiri's challenge on Abouli, with the forward dusting

himself off to put away the spot-kick in the 41st minute. Head coach Makram Daboub made changes to his Palestine side for the second half, sending on Oday

Dabbagh and Tamer Seyam only to then see his side go down to 10 men in the 55th minute after Camilio Saldana was shown a second yellow card.

Kuwait capitalised on their numerical advantage to go ahead with 10 minutes left to play when al-Sulaiman nudged home past Palestine custodian Rami Hamada

from a delightful Sami al-Sanea cross. But Palestine fought back to snatch a draw when Qunbar nodded in from close range in the third minute of added time.

PREVIEW

# India look to continue red-hot form against NZ

Reuters  
Bengaluru

India will look to continue an unprecedented run of Test success on home soil when they face an injury-hit New Zealand in the opener of a three-match series beginning today. Since losing 2-1 to a touring England side in 2012, India have won 18 consecutive series at home, with only four defeats and seven draws in 53 Tests. Rohit Sharma's side head into the series on the back of a 2-0 sweep against Bangladesh but coach Gautam Gambhir believes their next opponents represent a completely different challenge. "We know that they're a very good team. They've got some really high-quality players. They've got players who can hurt us. They've got players who can do the job for them as well," Gambhir said. "They keep fighting and we

expect them to fight as well. We respect them, but we don't fear anyone." The Bengaluru game, which is followed by matches in Pune and Mumbai, faces the prospect of frustrating weather interruptions with rain predicted throughout the week. The Black Caps, who began their Asian tour with a washout against Afghanistan in Greater Noida, face India on the back of a 2-0 defeat in Sri Lanka, with Tim Southee handing over the captaincy to Tom Latham after the embarrassing loss. The tourists will be without batsman Kane Williamson in Bengaluru after the former skipper opted out of the opener due to a groin injury, while paceman Ben Sears was ruled out of the series with a knee injury and replaced by Jacob Duffy. "We're obviously disappointed for Ben, who made a strong start to his test career during the home summer and offers a genuine pace

option," said New Zealand coach Gary Stead. "It remains to be seen how long we'll be without him for, but we're hopeful his road to a full recovery will be a short one. It's an exciting opportunity for Jacob. With three tests ahead of us, he has every chance of making his debut." India top the World Test Championship table, five places above 2021 champions New Zealand, and are eager to lift a title that has slipped from their grasp twice but Gambhir is not looking too far ahead with a tour of Australia looming. "The World Test Championship is in June 2025 and the Test matches in Australia begin on Nov. 22. Right now, only New Zealand is on our mind and nothing else," he said. "When you play international cricket, you don't think about how to prepare for the five test matches in the Australia series or how to prepare for the World Test Championship final."



India head coach Gautam Gambhir (third left) and captain Rohit Sharma (third right) inspect the pitch during a practice session ahead of their first Test against New Zealand at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru. (AFP)

FOCUS

# Pakistan debutant Ghulam slams ton to defy England

'It is delightful to score a hundred and that too as a replacement for Babar'

AFP  
Multan, Pakistan

Kamran Ghulam hit a superb century on his debut to guide Pakistan to 259-5 on the opening day of the second Test against England in Multan yesterday. The 29-year-old replaced out-of-form Babar Azam at number four and foiled England's aggressive bowling and fielding to score 118. At close of an even day's play, Mohammad Rizwan and Salman Agha were unbeaten with 37 and five respectively. The day ended Ghulam's frustrating long wait for a place in the Pakistan team after he smashed a national record 1,249 runs in the 2020 domestic season. Ghulam led a fightback after the hosts, who won the toss, were struggling at 19-2 with England spinner Jack Leach striking twice in the first hour. Ghulam added 149 for the defiant third wicket with Saim Ayub, who hit a career-best 77, and another 65 for the fifth wicket with Rizwan. He reached three figures with a boundary off spinner Joe Root, taking 280 minutes and becoming Pakistan's 12th batter to score a century in his first Test. With just half an hour before stumps, Ghulam was bowled by spinner Shoaib Bashir, ending a resolute 323-minute knock spiced with 11 fours and a six. Ghulam said his century was a reward for his wait. "It is delightful to score a hundred and that too as a replacement for Babar Azam, who has been a great player for Pakistan," said Ghulam, who had a big letoff on 79 when Ben Duckett failed to get a difficult chance off Leach.



Pakistan's Kamran Ghulam celebrates after scoring a century during the first day of the second Test against England at the Multan Cricket Stadium in Multan yesterday. (AFP)

"I saw that with a bated breath but Almighty was so kind on me," said Ghulam. "I just took it as a normal first-class match and never took the

pressure of a bad start to the team's innings." One of a dozen brothers, Ghulam said his century will be celebrated among his big family in the

northwestern city of Peshawar. One brother was there in person. "It is a family occasion now with my younger brother watching in the stadium, so I am proud of the feat," he said. England too will be satisfied after an absorbing day's play. They employed a short mid-off and two mid-wicket fielders to get wickets after lunch but the Multan pitch – the same used for the first Test – gave very little help to the spinners after some early promise. Skipper Ben Stokes, one of two changes from England's thumping innings win in the first Test, bowled five overs and showed no signs of the hamstring injury that forced him to miss the first Test. Matthew Potts ended Ayub's knock when the batsman patted to Stokes at short mid-off while Brydon Carse removed Saud Shakeel for four, the dismissals coming either side of the tea interval. Leach has figures of 2-92 while Bashir, Carse and Potts have a wicket each. Abdullah Shafique was bowled by Leach for seven in the eighth over of the morning with the score on 15. In his next over, the left-arm spinner had skipper Shan Masood caught low at short midwicket by Zak Crawley for three. England lead the three-match series 1-0. Pakistan's heavy defeat last week – their sixth in as many Tests – prompted the selectors to make wholesale changes, with Azam, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Naseem Shah and Abrar Ahmed dropped. Other than Ghulam, Pakistan also brought in the spin trio of Sajid Khan, Zahid Mahmood and Noman Ali, leaving them with only one fast bowler in Aamer Jamal. **BRIEF SCORES:** Pakistan 259 for 5 (Ghulam 118, Ayub 77).

SPOTLIGHT

# Sri Lanka level series with record-breaking West Indies victory

AFP  
Dambulla, Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka stormed back to level the three-match T20 series with an emphatic 73-run win over the West Indies yesterday, marking their largest ever margin of victory against the Caribbean side. The dominant performance at Dambulla was Sri Lanka's sixth-largest T20 win against any team, surpassing their previous best over West Indies – a 57-run triumph in London in 2009. Sri Lanka, after setting a competitive target of 163, unleashed a relentless assault from their spinners, skittling the visitors for just 89 runs in 16.1 overs. This score marked the West Indies' lowest total against Sri Lanka in T20 internationals, and their sixth lowest ever. The spin-dominated attack claimed nine wickets, with only three overs of pace bowled, capitalising on a worn pitch that deteriorated quickly, leaving West Indies with no foothold in the chase. Sri Lanka's spin magic struck early, removing both openers within the first four overs. Evin Lewis and Brandon King, who had been the architects of West Indies' explosive start in the first match with a 107-run partnership, were neutralised by Sri Lanka's bowlers. Debutant all-rounder Dunith Wellalage made an immediate impact, dismissing King with a sharp stumping in his first over, while almost sending Lewis packing on his first ball – though a missed review kept Lewis briefly in play. Wellalage struck again, claiming Roston Chase at slip, as the West Indies stumbled to 17-3, and struggled to 21-3 by the end of the power play. Wellalage's stunning debut saw him finish with figures of 3-9 in four overs. Sri Lankan captain Charith Asalanka called it a "very pleasing win", and hailed Wellalage's performance as "sensational". Maheesh Theekshana, Charith Asalanka and Wanindu Hasaranga supported Wellalage's efforts with two wickets each, cementing Sri Lanka's grip on the game. Sri Lanka's

total of 162 was built on the solid foundation set by openers Kusal Mendis and Pathum Nissanka, who combined for a 72-run stand. Nissanka top-scored with 54 off 49 balls, peppering the boundary with nine fours and a six. "It was a tough wicket to bat on," Nissanka said. "I took some calculated risks – we had a target of 160 and were glad we got there." Contributions from Kusal Perera (24) and Kamindu Mendis (19) helped push the total past 160, setting up a challenging chase for the West Indies. On the visitors' side, spinners Chase and Gudakesh Motie were economical, giving away only 37 runs in their combined eight overs, raising questions about the West Indies' decision not to include an additional spinner. The stage is now set for a thrilling series decider on Thursday, also at Dambulla, with eighth-ranked Sri Lanka eyeing an upset series victory over the third-ranked West Indies. West Indies skipper Rovman Powell credited Sri Lanka for using "the conditions well" and acknowledged that his men "didn't bat well". But he said the team would look ahead to the series decider. "We will look back at things and reassess things and bounce back", he said. The West Indies won the first match after a commanding five-wicket victory on Sunday. The T20 series will be followed by a three-match ODI series. **BRIEF SCORES:** Sri Lanka 162 for 5 (Nissanka 54, Kusal Mendis 26, Shepherd 2-23) beat West Indies 89 (Powell 20, Wellalage 3-9, Asalanka 2-6, Theekshana 2-7) by 73 runs.



Sri Lanka's Pathum Nissanka plays a shot during the second T20I against West Indies in Dambulla yesterday. (AFP)

T20 WORLD CUP

# West Indies thrash England to reach semi-finals

AFP  
Dubai

An opening blitz by Qiana Joseph and Hayley Matthews helped West Indies thrash England by six wickets and storm into the semi-finals of the Women's T20 World Cup yesterday. Joseph smashed 52 for her first T20 international half-century and skipper Matthews hit a 38-ball 50 as West Indies overhauled England's 141-7 with 12 balls to spare. South Africa also made it to the last four from Group B while England were eliminated from the competition. "Incredibly proud of the group.

Up against the odds tonight but to put up a performance like that with the bat, with Joseph scoring her first T20I fifty – what a time to do that," said Matthews. "We have been chasing (before in this tournament) and we back ourselves to knock off whatever runs are put on the board." Matthews launched the West Indies chase with aplomb, hitting a six and two boundaries in the first over by Lauren Bell. Joseph too joined the party, smashing left-arm spinner Sophie Ecclestone for two fours in a row as West Indies raced to 55-0 in five overs. Matthews picked Charlie Dean for some special treatment, dispatching the ball over the square leg fence for three bounda-

ries in the sixth over. England were sloppy in the field, dropping as many as five regulation catches. Joseph, named player of the match, was dismissed in the 13th over after hitting two sixes and six fours in her 38-ball innings. Matthews also departed soon after but Deandra Dottin made 27 to give West Indies their first win against England in 14 matches and the first away from home in 10 years. "Credit to them, they came at us hard, played the conditions well and put us under the pump. Tough to take but credit to Hayley and her team," said England skipper Heather Knight. "We bowled too short and they played it well." Put in to bat, England lost Danni

Wyatt-Hodge (16) early with the opener being caught brilliantly just inches off the ground by Dottin (1-16) off Matthews (2-35). Dottin was in the thick of action soon again when she ran out Alice Capsey for one with a sharp one-handed throw to wicketkeeper Shemaine Campbelle. England suffered another blow as opener Maia Bouchier (14) was caught off leg-spinner Afy Fletcher (3-21) at extra cover, reducing the side to 34-3 by the seventh over. Knight and Nat Sciver-Brunt (57) helped rebuild the innings, sharing 46 runs for the fourth wicket. After Knight retired hurt on 21 with a calf strain, Fletcher removed Amy Jones (7) and Charlie Dean (5) in successive overs.

# Bangladesh suspend Hathurusingha as coach after alleged assault

**DHAKA:** The Bangladesh Cricket Board said yesterday it had suspended head coach Chandika Hathurusingha for misconduct including an alleged assault of a player. Trinidadian former all-rounder Phil Simmons has been appointed stand-in coach and will take the team up until the ICC Champions Trophy, set for Pakistan in February 2025. "You can't assault a national player physically," BCB president Faruque Ahmed said in announcing Hathurusingha's suspension, without giving details of the alleged incident. There was no immediate response from Hathurusingha. The 56-year-old former Sri Lanka batsman was hired in 2023 for a second time as head coach, after a largely successful tenure with the side between 2014 and 2017. The suspension follows Bangladesh's tour of India, where they lost both Tests and all three T20s. Bangladesh next play South Africa at home, with the first of two Tests starting on October 21. They travel to the United Arab Emirates for three ODIs against Afghanistan starting November 6. Simmons, who was in charge when West Indies became T20 world champions in 2016, started his international coaching career with Zimbabwe in 2004 and coached several other teams such as Ireland and Afghanistan. (AFP)

HORSE SHOW

# Al Shaqab to host QREC's Breeders Cup and Local Bred Show



The Arabian horse show season, both national and international, will kick off with the 4th Qatar Arabian Breeders Cup at the indoor arena of Al Shaqab from October 24 and shall continue till the 26th.

The three-day season-opening show is for Qatari Breeders and the owner must be the breeder of the horse.

It is recognised by European Conference of Arab Horse Organisations (ECAHO) and is a Breeders Show in category. It will showcase more than 150 horses, promising a delightful show.

Divided into classes, horses awarded first to fifth place will receive medals and horses placed first, second and third will qualify for the championships for colts, fillies, mares and stallions.

Over three days, nine judges, four disciplinary committee members and two ringmasters from around the globe will officiate in the show. As per the rules of the show, horses participating in Breeders

shows do not qualify for the World Championship, Title shows, A shows or Global Champions Arabians Tour (GCAT) shows.

After the conclusion of the 4th Qatar Arabian Breeders Cup, the following two days will see the Qatar Arabian Horse Show for Local Bred on October 27 and 28 at the same venue.

The Local Bred Show is focused on horses bred and born in Qatar only, giving individuals and the horses of Qatar the opportunity to compete. It is a C National category and recognised by ECAHO.

As may as 100 horses are expected to participate and, similar to the Breeders Cup, horses awarded first to fifth places will receive medals and horses placed first, second and third will qualify for the championships. Any horse awarded first place will be qualified to enter Title and GCAT Shows and horses awarded first to third place can enter an A show.

Over two days, eight judges, disciplinary committee members and two ringmasters

will officiate in the show. World Championship, Title Show, A Show or GCAT Show Champion Gold and Silver winners are not allowed to take part in a C National show for the rest of that calendar year and the following two calendar years unless the horse has passed from a yearling to a junior or from a junior to a senior category.

12 SHOWS IN THE SEASON

QREC recently announced the programme for the show season. A total of 12 national and international shows will be organised throughout the season. QREC aims to maximise the benefits of these shows, leveraging Qatar's leadership in horse shows, both in terms of organisation and the impressive results achieved in recent years.

These successes have positioned Qatar at the forefront of global horse show discipline, particularly in major events, including the annual World Championship, as well as other prestigious tournaments in the US, European and Arab countries.

WORLD CUP QUALIFIERS

# Australia end Japan's winning run as South Korea down Iraq

China picked up their first win in Group C as Ivankovic's side defeated Indonesia

Reuters  
Hong Kong

Australia halted Japan's rampant start to Asia's World Cup preliminaries yesterday as Tony Popovic's side eked out a 1-1 draw with the Group C leaders while South Korea continued their winning run with a 3-2 victory over Iraq.

The Japanese had won nine consecutive World Cup qualifiers without conceding but Shogo Taniguchi put Lewis Miller's low cross into his own goal in the 58th minute to give the Socceroos an unexpected lead. Popovic, in his second game in charge since replacing Graham Arnold last month, had set his side up in an ultra-defensive formation and looked to hold on to their advantage.

But substitute Keito Nakamura eventually unlocked the Socceroos' defence with 14 minutes remaining, dancing through the backline before powering the ball across the face of goal for Cameron Burgess to strike into his own net. The result moves Japan, looking for an eighth successive World Cup qualification, onto 10 points from four games with the Australians five points behind in second place, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, who played a goalless draw in Jeddah, are also on five points.

Popovic later told his Australia team they must "improve all over the park" as he challenged them to become the best side in Asia. Popovic was appointed last month when Graham Arnold stepped down after starting the campaign with a home loss to Bahrain and an away draw with Indonesia.

Popovic began his reign with a 3-1 home win over China last week and said he was "very happy" with four points from his first two games. But he also urged his players to "improve in all areas" and cited group leaders Japan as a role model.

"It's not just creativity, we have to improve all over the park because we are aspiring to challenge Japan," said the 51-year-old. "Challenging them regularly as the best team in Asia. To do that we know we have to



Japan's Shogo Taniguchi (second right) scores an own goal during the World Cup Qualifiers against Australia in Saitama, Japan. (Reuters)

improve."

Japan had not conceded in eight previous games in World Cup qualifying. "Hopefully that gives the players confidence moving forward that we're building a foundation," said Popovic. "Hopefully next camp in November we can add some more layers to it."

Australia's next World Cup qualifier is home to Saudi Arabia on November 14, before they travel to face Bahrain five days later. "It's positive," said Popovic. "Every game is difficult, every game is important and Saudi Arabia will be the same. It's our home game, we want everyone to get behind us, and to create this type of atmosphere in Melbourne would be special."

Meanwhile, China picked up their first win in Group C as Branko Ivankovic's side defeated Indonesia 2-1 in Qingdao with first-half goals from Behram Abduweli and

Zhang Yuning securing the three points.

South Korea, who have appeared at every World Cup since 1986, secured a 3-2 win over Iraq in Seoul as Hong Myung-bo's side registered a second victory in a row to move three points clear at the top of Group B.

Oh Se-hun put the Koreans ahead in the top-of-the-table clash four minutes before halftime but Aymen Hussein's overhead kick five minutes into the second half levelled the score. Oh Hyeon-gyu restored Korea's lead with 16 minutes remaining and Lee Jae-sung scored his side's third nine minutes later to leave Ibrahim Bayesh's 95th minute goal as nothing more than a consolation for Jesus Casas' team.

Jordan jumped ahead of the Iraqis and into second place on goal-difference in the group with a 4-0 trouncing of Oman as Yazan al-Naimat and Ali Olwan each scored

twice in Amman while Palestine picked up a point with a 2-2 draw against Kuwait.

Uzbekistan needed a 76th-minute penalty from Otabek Shukurov to beat the 10-man United Arab Emirates 1-0 in Group A in Tashkent and Iran kept pace with a 4-1 come-from-behind thrashing of Qatar.

Almoez Ali put the Asian Cup holders in front with a first-time strike in the 17th minute but Sardar Azmoun scored either side of the interval to put Iran ahead. Mohammed Mohebi added the third in the 65th minute and put the seal on the win deep into injury time.

Kyrgyzstan, meanwhile, notched up their first-ever win in this phase of qualifying with Khristiyan Brauzman scoring the only goal in their 1-0 victory over North Korea in Bishkek.

## Musiala and Upamecano return to Bayern training

Berlin: Bayern Munich welcomed back Jamal Musiala and Dayot Upamecano to training yesterday, after the duo missed their international commitments with injury.

Bayern issued a statement saying the two were "closing in on a comeback" after returning to individual training. Musiala missed Germany's Nations League wins against Bosnia and the Netherlands along with a 3-3 draw at Eintracht Frankfurt with a hip issue, while Upamecano was ruled out for France's away wins over Israel and Belgium with a muscle injury.

Forward Harry Kane, who missed England's loss to Greece at Wembley, returned to full team training with Bayern yesterday. Bayern sit atop the Bundesliga table, ahead of RB Leipzig on goal difference, after six games before Saturday's home clash with Stuttgart. The German giants are winless in three matches after successive Bundesliga draws against Bayer Leverkusen and Eintracht Frankfurt along with a 1-0 Champions League loss at Aston Villa.

## EIDEVALL QUILTS AS ARSENAL WOMEN HEAD COACH

Arsenal head coach Jonas Eidevall has resigned, the Women's Super League club announced. The club are sixth in the WSL table after winning just one of their opening four league matches and suffered a 5-2 loss against Bayern Munich in the Champions League last week.

Arsenal sporting director Edu said: "We thank Jonas for his commitment to the club and achievements here since joining us in 2021. "We have great respect for the dedication and commitment he showed to our women's first team and recognise the role he has played in the growth and development of Arsenal Women."

Frustration from the Bayern loss was compounded by a 2-1 home defeat against Chelsea in the WSL at the weekend.

The Swede, 41, joined the Gunners from FC Rosengard in June 2021 and led them to two League Cup titles and the semi-finals of the Champions League in 2023. Assistant coach Renee Slegers will take charge of the team on an interim basis.

FOCUS

# Ferguson to leave ambassador role at United

Reuters  
Manchester

Manchester United's most successful manager Alex Ferguson will step down as a global ambassador after the club's part-owners INEOS ended his multi-million pound contract.

Ferguson, a familiar sight in the Old Trafford director's box for years, signed an agreement with United in 2013 to be a club ambassador, receiving 2.16m pounds (\$2.82m) a year. The split was amicable, according to a team source, who said it was one of a number of time-consuming responsibilities from which the 82-year-old Ferguson was stepping back and that he was always welcome at Old Trafford.

There have been job cuts virtually across the board at United as part of cost-saving measures at the club, which has been incurring losses for some time. Over 250 staff members have been made redundant already in a move the club expect to save around £10m a year.

Last month, United announced a £113m net loss. It is known to be close to the Premier League's £115m three-year loss limit, although the club has said they are committed to abiding by the rules.

Ferguson, who will step down from his am-



bassadorial duties at the end of the season, led United to 38 trophies, including 13 Premier League and two Champions League titles, before he retired from management in 2013.

United are currently in 14th place after finishing a worst-ever eighth in the Premier League last season, despite spending just over 200m

pounds on players in the close season. They have splashed out about 600m pounds on new players since their under-fire Dutch manager Erik ten Hag took charge ahead of the 2022-23 season. Erik ten Hag remains in his job before Saturday's game against Brentford despite intense speculation over his future.

It is not known whether the cost cutting will affect other United ambassadors including former players Andy Cole, Park Ji-sung, Dwight Yorke, Denis Irwin and Bryan Robson. Former United forward Eric Cantona called the decision scandalous and ex-United defender and pundit Rio Ferdinand said "no one is safe" at the club.

"Sir Alex Ferguson should be able to do anything he wants at the club until the day he dies. Such a lack of respect. It's totally scandalous," Cantona wrote on Instagram yesterday. "Sir Alex Ferguson will be my boss forever!" he added before ending his message with an expletive.

Ferdinand wrote on X: "If Sir Alex can be taken out, then NO ONE IS SAFE at Man United - anyone can get it now. Ineos sending a message to ANYONE at the club!?"

Both Cantona and Ferdinand played under Ferguson during their time at the Old Trafford club. Cantona helped the club secure four Premier League titles in five years, while Ferdinand won the Champions League and six Premier League titles.

## Kyrgios vows to silence doubters with December comeback

Sydney: Fiery Australian Nick Kyrgios plans to make a comeback at Abu Dhabi in December with his goal to win a Grand Slam and "shut up" those who doubt him. The one-time world number 13 has played just one ATP Tour singles match in two years after suffering knee, foot and wrist injuries. The 29-year-old has hinted at retirement several times, but said he would return for the World Tennis League event in December before a tilt at the Australian Open in January.

"I am coming back because something is keeping me around the game," he said. "I have beaten pretty much every person that has been put in front of me, made a final of a Grand Slam, won a doubles title in a Grand Slam, won multiple titles and made money. But I think the one thing that is now on my target is a Grand Slam. I think that will be the only thing that will shut people up at the end of the day. That'll be my

deep motivation."

Kyrgios, who has worked as a commentator during his absence, reached his maiden singles Grand Slam final at Wimbledon in 2022, losing in four sets to Novak Djokovic. He was never able to go further in an era dominated by Djokovic, Rafael Nadal and Roger Federer, coupled with his sometimes fragile temperament that saw some pundits write him off as a wasted talent.

But with Nadal announcing his retirement last week and Djokovic now 37, Kyrgios believes the game is "the most open it has ever been". Kyrgios has always been combustible and earned a reputation for outbursts and meltdowns on court early in his career, but he denied he was "a bad boy".

"I guess I was branded that just because I was a bit outside the circle of what a normal tennis player is," he said. "I don't think I carry that perception with the Aussie public anymore."

## SPOTLIGHT

# Tuchel set to be unveiled as new England manager

German has been out of work since leaving Bayern last season

AFP  
London

Thomas Tuchel is set to be named England's new manager after agreeing a deal with the Football Association (FA), multiple British and German media outlets reported yesterday. Tuchel, 51, will be named as the permanent successor to Gareth Southgate.

The FA declined to comment on the reports but said that CEO Mark Bullingham will provide an update today at Wembley Stadium when the appointment is expected to be confirmed. The German, who has been out of work since leaving Bayern at the end of last season, would become just the third foreign manager of the Three Lions after Sven-Goran Eriksson and Fabio Capello.

A former coach of Borussia Dortmund, Paris Saint-Germain, Chelsea and Bayern Munich, Tuchel has the trophy-winning pedigree that the FA is seeking to help end a 58-year wait to win a major tournament. He won league titles at PSG and Bayern and the German Cup with Dortmund, but his greatest success came during his time in English football at Chelsea.

Tuchel led the Blues to Champions League glory just months after taking charge in 2021 and also won the UEFA Super Cup and Club World Cup with the London club.

Tuchel was sacked in September 2022 in a bold early move by Chelsea's new ownership group that did not pay off.

Just six months later he was appointed Bayern boss and led them to an 11th consecutive Bundesliga title. However, Tuchel also oversaw the demise of Bayern's dominance of German football in a first trophyless campaign last season for 12 years.

Lee Carsley was put in temporary charge of England in August following Southgate's resignation shortly after reaching the final of Euro 2024. However, the 50-year-old, who stepped up from his role as under-21s manager, has since given mixed messages about whether he wanted the job on a permanent basis.

Despite winning three of his four games in charge, Carsley's case was further damaged by a 2-1 Nations League defeat to Greece last week and he backed the idea of appointing a foreign coach if they are the right candidate.

"We've seen in the past that we've had different nationalities coach the team. The best candidate should get the job," said Carsley. "I think we'd be putting ourselves in a corner if



Thomas Tuchel would become just the third foreign manager of England after Sven-Goran Eriksson and Fabio Capello. (Reuters)

we didn't, and we didn't open our minds a bit"

Tuchel will inherit a richly talented generation of players, including Harry Kane, Jude Bellingham, Bukayo Saka and Cole Palmer, that will be among the favourites for World Cup glory in 2026. Kane was signed by Tuchel for Bayern last year and scored 44 goals in 45 matches under his tutelage.

Southgate led the Three Lions to back-to-back Euros finals, plus a World Cup semi-final and quarter-final in his four major tournaments in charge. Taking over the England national team represents a new challenge for

Tuchel, who will be tasked with delivering a first major trophy since England won the World Cup on home soil in 1966.

The job is also among the most intensely scrutinised in football, with Southgate opening up during the European Championship on the difficulties of dealing with the personal nature of much of the criticism.

According to British media reports, the FA informally reached out to Manchester City boss Pep Guardiola at the start of the season. Guardiola's contract expires at the end of the current campaign.

## FOCUS

## Mbappe 'shocked' to see name linked to rape investigation

AFP  
Paris

Kylian Mbappe was "shocked" to see his name linked to a Swedish rape investigation and the Real Madrid and France star will take legal action for libel, his lawyer said yesterday.

Mbappe's lawyer, Marie-Alix Canu-Bernard, insisted that the captain of the French national team was "at ease" because "he has done nothing wrong", after media reports in Sweden said the player was a suspect following a visit with friends to Stockholm.

A Swedish prosecutor said earlier that a rape investigation had been opened without mentioning Mbappe.

Swedish newspapers *Aftonbladet* and *Expressen*, as well as public broadcaster SVT, reported that Mbappe was the target of the investigation, following his two-day visit to the city last week. Canu-Bernard said Mbappe had "asked my office not to leave things as they are because it is impossible to allow yourself to be slandered and defamed in this way. This is why we are going to file a complaint for libel."

Sweden's Prosecution Authority said that the alleged rape had occurred at a hotel on October 10 but did not name a suspect and said no further information could be shared for the moment. "In response to media reports about a suspected rape in Stockholm, the prosecutor can confirm that a criminal report has been submitted to the police," a statement said.

According to a filing with the Stockholm district court, the alleged offence took place at the upscale Bank Hotel in the centre of Sweden's capital. The names of the plaintiff and the suspect were both redacted in the document. *Expressen* on Monday identified Mbappe as the suspect, citing anonymous sources, while *Aftonbladet* and SVT said they had also obtained information confirming Mbappe was the suspect.

*Expressen* said Mbappe was "reasonably suspected" of rape and sexual assault, the lower of two degrees of suspicion in the Swedish legal system. According to the Prosecution Authority, the higher degree of suspicion, "probable cause," is usually a prerequisite for a suspect to be remanded in custody prior to a formal charge. Lawyer Petra Lund, who repre-



sents the plaintiff, said that she "could not give any comment at this stage".

The French star was not selected for his country's latest round of UEFA Nations League matches, and so visited the Swedish capital with a group of people from last Wednesday. According to *Aftonbladet*, they dined at a restaurant before going to a nightclub. Mbappe and the group left Sweden on Friday.

*Aftonbladet* said the complaint was filed on Saturday after the alleged victim had sought medical attention. *Expressen* reported Tuesday that police had seized some clothing as evidence, saying it consisted of women's underwear, a pair of black trousers and a black top. Photographs showed police officers leaving the Bank Hotel with brown bags on Monday.

Mbappe's entourage said in a statement that the accusations were "completely false and irresponsible" and added that "all necessary legal action will be taken to re-establish the truth".

Mbappe signed for Madrid in June after seven years at PSG and has up until now stayed clear of scandal in his private life.

The forward, who is known for carefully managing his image through a close network of family, lawyers and spokespeople, has become one of the world's highest-paid players after a stellar career that saw him break through as a teenager at Monaco.

A 19-year-old Mbappe joined Pele as the only teenager to score in a World Cup final when France beat Croatia 4-2 to win the 2018 edition and he was voted Best Young Player of the tournament. Four years later in Qatar, he scored a hat-trick in the final against Argentina but finished on the losing team as Lionel Messi's side won in a penalty shoot-out.

## MATCH REPORT

## Mane seals Senegal's place in Africa Cup of Nations finals

Reuters  
Cape Town

A 96th-minute winner from **Sadio Mane** earned Senegal a 1-0 win over Malawi and a place at the Africa Cup of Nations finals in Morocco next year, but Ghana are in serious danger of missing out after a surprise loss to Sudan yesterday.

Senegal had 30 attempts at goal against their hosts but it took until the final seconds for Mane to seal victory with a 25-yard free-kick that curled around the wall and into the bottom corner of the net.

The 2021 winners, who recently parted ways with long-time coach Aliou Cisse, join Burkina Faso as the qualified nations from Group L in the 24-team finals with two more matches to play in the November international window.

Ghana slumped to a 2-0 loss against Sudan in neutral Libya as Ahmed al-Tash and Mohamed Abdel Rahman scored within three minutes of each other in the sec-

ond half. Ghana look set to miss a first continental finals since 2004 having managed a paltry two points from their four games, five adrift of the qualification positions with a difficult trip to pool leaders Angola next up.

Democratic Republic of Congo qualified following a 2-0 victory in Tanzania as Meschack Elia scored a brace, his first in the 88th minute and the second deep into stoppage time. They have a full haul of 12 points from their four games.

Coach Avram Grant's Zambia claimed an important 1-0 win over Chad to take a big step towards qualification thanks to Kennedy Musonda's goal 20 minutes from the end. Gabon are also on course after a 2-0 win over Lesotho in neutral Durban, with Shavy Babicka and Rody Effaghe grabbing goals in the second half.

Uganda beat South Sudan 2-1 in Juba and their qualification will be confirmed later on Tuesday if South Africa win in the Congo. Hosts Morocco, Cameroon and Algeria are the other teams already in the finals line-up.



## NATIONS LEAGUE

## Germany into quarters, France and Italy win

AFP  
Paris

Germany secured a place in the UEFA Nations League quarter-finals with a 1-0 win over old rivals the Netherlands on Monday, while France won in Belgium and Italy continued their recent revival.

Jamie Leweling of Stuttgart scored on his debut to give Germany victory over the Netherlands in Munich and guarantee them one of the top two spots in Group 3 of League A. It was the eighth meeting of the teams in the last six years but, for the Dutch, there was nothing familiar about Leweling.

The 23-year-old was an addition to the Germany squad for this month's games following an injury to Jamal Musiala. He was then called off the bench to start the game after an injury to club teammate Deniz Undav in the warm-up. wLeweling found the net after just two minutes only for that effort to be ruled out for an offside in the build-up, but he then blasted in the winner on 64 minutes. "Jamie had an outstanding debut - it's not often the Allianz Arena gives you a reception like that - he did well," said captain Joshua Kimmich.

Germany have 10 points from four games and will definitely take part in the quarter-finals next March. The Netherlands, who were without the suspended Virgil van Dijk, are level on five points with Hungary.

The Hungarians won 2-0 on Monday away in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with captain Dominik Szoboszlai, of Liverpool, opening the scoring late in the first half and adding a penalty after the break. Italy remain top of Group A2 after easing to a 4-1 win at home to Israel in Udine.

Mateo Retegui opened the scoring with a penalty shortly before half-time and captain Giovanni Di Lorenzo netted twice in the second half. Davide Frattesi also scored for Italy, with Mohammad Abu Fani pulling one back for Israel.

France are a point behind Italy after they again won in the absence of Kylian Mbappe, a double by Randal Kolo Muani securing a 2-1 victory in Belgium. Kolo Muani's opener from the penalty spot in the 35th minute at the King Baudouin Stadium in Brussels was cancelled out by Lois Openda in first-half stoppage time.



Germany's Jamie Leweling (second right) celebrates with teammates after scoring against the Netherlands during the UEFA Nations League match in Munich. (AFP)

But Kolo Muani, who has had a difficult start to the season with his club, then headed in the winner just after the hour mark. France, who saw Belgium's Youri Tielemans squander an early spot-kick, held on with 10 men after stand-in captain Aurelien Tchouameni was sent off late on.

The result was France's second win in as many games in this international break, despite them being minus skipper Mbappe, who was allowed to sit out the matches following a recent thigh injury. As Les Bleus took to the field in the Belgian capital, a newspaper report in Sweden emerged claiming that Mbappe was being investigated for rape following a visit to Stockholm last week.

Mbappe claimed in a post on X, formerly known as Twitter, that there was a link with his hearing before a French league committee on Tuesday in his bitter dispute over unpaid wages with his former club Paris Saint-Germain. "FAKE NEWS!!!!. It's becoming so predictable, on the eve of the hearing, as if by chance," Mbappe posted.

It remains to be seen if the Real Madrid star will be back for the last Nations League group games next month, when France can secure a place in the quarter-finals, but Kolo Muani staked a claim to keep his place.

"I am happy for him," coach Didier Deschamps said. "Randal is performing very well for us. He is full of confidence and the first game (against Israel) did him a lot of good too."

Elsewhere on Monday, Turkiye won 4-2 in Iceland to stay top of Group B4, with all their goals in Reykjavik coming in the final half-hour. Irfan Can Kahveci, Hakan Calhanoglu of Inter Milan, Real Madrid's Arda Guler and Kerem Akturkoglu all scored for Turkiye.

With 10 points, they are two ahead of Wales in the race for promotion to League A. Crag Bellamy's team beat Montenegro 1-0 in Cardiff thanks to a Harry Wilson penalty.

The Czech Republic are top of Group B1 after a 1-1 draw against Ukraine, while Albania defeated Georgia 1-0. In Group C1, Sweden won 3-0 in Estonia and Slovakia beat Azerbaijan 3-1 away.