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SPORT



MOTORSPORT

Marquez wins titanic duel with Martin at Australian MotoGP

Page 3

MOTORSPORT

Al-Kuwari clinches maiden MERC title, al-Attiyah emerges champion in Cyprus

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Abdulaziz al-Kuwari yesterday became the fifth Qatar driver to win FIA Middle East Rally Championship (MERC) as he and his co-driver Nasser al-Kuwari finished third at the Cyprus Rally in their Skoda Fabia RS to seal the maiden title.

However, Qatar's five-time Dakar Rally winner Nasser al-Attiyah with Italian co-driver Giovanni Bernacchini won the rally in his Skoda Fabia R5.

"We have won the FIA Middle East Rally Championship for the first time. For me, the result is a great victory because the race here in Cyprus is difficult. You cannot close your eyes for a moment; you're always on alert. Only in the last special stage, we were more relaxed and enjoyed it. We didn't push hard, but the most important thing is that we won the title," Abdulaziz al-Kuwari said.

With the win, the 45-year-old Abdulaziz al-Kuwari ended al-Attiyah's winning streak of 13 consecutive championship titles. Al-Kuwari headed to Cyprus with a considerable lead, just needing to finish the rally to achieve the historic milestone. The al-Kuwari brothers settled for third place, which secured them the necessary points for the championship title. This was Abdulaziz's seventh participation in the Cyprus Rally, and it is certainly one he will never forget.

Al-Muhammadi al-Hamoud finished



Abdulaziz al-Kuwari and his co-driver Nasser al-Kuwari celebrate after winning the FIA Middle East Rally Championship at the Cyprus Rally yesterday.

fifth with another Skoda Fabia R5 in the colours of Qatar, also prepared by the Latvian SRT team.

Saeed al-Hajri, Hamad bin Eid al-Thani, Misfer al-Marri and the 19-time champion Nasser al-Attiyah are the other Qatari drivers to win the title.

Al-Attiyah took the lead one special stage before the finish due to the retirement of Simos Galatariotis-Antonis Ioannou, who had been leading the race since the second special stage. Ultimately, their ageing Volkswagen Polo GTi gave out with a steering system issue (link arm broken)

one stage before the end, in a repeat of last year's scenario where the crew had been leading but retired, clearing the way for al-Attiyah to win.

The top Cypriot crew, Panagiotis Yiangou-Aristos Nicolaou, finished in second place with a Hyundai i20 R5, ahead of the brothers Abdulaziz and Nasser al-Kuwari from Qatar, who finished third with a Skoda Fabia R5 and were crowned FIA Middle East Rally Champions for the first time. The ceremonial finish and awards ceremony took place at Makariou Avenue, in the heart of Nicosia.



Qatar's Nasser al-Attiyah and his Italian co-driver Giovanni Bernacchini celebrate after winning the Cyprus Rally yesterday.

Al-Attiyah and Galatariotis had a fierce battle, with the Cypriot leading by 49.9 seconds after the first loop on Saturday. The gap was reduced to 38 seconds in the afternoon, to 6.9 seconds by yesterday midday, and finally to 1.5 seconds two special stages before the finish, as Nasser was going flat out – winning all of yesterday's stages and half of Saturday's (three).

Al-Attiyah won the Cyprus Rally for the first time with a Skoda Fabia – it was only his second rally with his new car – having previously secured three wins with a Volkswagen Polo and five with a Ford Fies-

ta. For Bernacchini, this marks his fourth victory and his first since 2014, as al-Attiyah had won the Cyprus Rally five times in the interim with Mathieu Baumel as his co-driver. Panagiotis Yiangou-Aristos Nicolaou had a great battle with Petros Panteli-Pampos Laos (Renault Clio), who were forced to change a tyre in the second stage yesterday, losing three minutes and their spot on the podium. They ultimately finished fourth, one position higher than last year, having delivered a strong performance with six Top 3 finishes in the special stages.

FOOTBALL / AFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE ELITE

Al Sadd aim to continue fine start against Persepolis

QATAR'S AL RAYYAN HOPE TO END THEIR LOSING RUN AGAINST SAUDI ARABIA CLUBS



Al Sadd players during a practice session yesterday, on the eve of their AFC Champions League Elite tie against Iran's Persepolis at Hamad Stadium in Doha. **PICTURE: Noushad Thekkayil**

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Qatar's Al Sadd will aim to continue their fine start when they host Iran's Persepolis to the Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium for their AFC Champions League Elite tie today.

The Felix Sanchez team is on four points after two matches with Iran's Persepolis needing victory after having opened their campaign with a draw and a defeat.

"All the matches of the continental championship and tomorrow's match are very tough, and we will try to maintain our upward path and achieve the desired result," said Sanchez.

Although The Wolves did not appear in the knockout stage at the continental level in the last three editions of the AFC Champions League, they will head into the tie against Persepolis not having lost at the group stage in their past four matches.

A 2-0 defeat of Persepolis' domestic rivals Esteghlal earlier has boosted confidence and AFC Champions 2011 winners Al Sadd will be aiming for a second suc-

cessive win to stay in the race for a spot in the Round of 16.

Persepolis are in desperate need of a win, with the two-time AFC Champions League runners-up having had to settle for a 1-1 draw with Uzbekistan's Pakhtakor after an opening match 1-0 defeat to Al Ahli Saudi FC. The Iranian champions, however, have won four of their seven previous encounters against Al Sadd and will be hopeful of extending their record.

Al Sadd showed good form by scoring a 4-2 win over Al Shahania in Qatar Stars League match and it is certain that coach Sanchez is

working to prepare the team for the strong match against Persepolis.

Qatar goalkeeper Meshaal Barsham also hoping for a good result against Iran side.

"A very difficult match awaits us, and we will do our best in order to appear strong," said Barsham.

Meanwhile, Qatar's Al Rayyan SC will be desperate to end their losing run against clubs from Saudi Arabia when they play Al Ahli Saudi in the Group B match today.

Al Rayyan are still in search of their first points after suffering defeats to Al Hilal SFC and Al



Al Rayyan players during a training session yesterday. Al Rayyan hosts Saudi Arabia's Al Ahli in an AFC Champions League Elite clash at Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium today.

Nassr Club while Al Ahli have a perfect six points.

Al Rayyan will go into the tie on a high after registering the third win of their Qatar Stars League 2024-25 season with a 2-1 victory over Al Khor on Friday.

They have, however, a poor record in home matches against teams from Saudi Arabia, having won only once in seven games, with their only win being a 2-1 victory against Al-Hilal in March 2018.

Al Ahli Saudi FC are just one of two teams still with a perfect record in the West zone of the AFC

Champions League Elite 2024/25 and cruised to a 3-0 win over Al Khaleej in a Saudi Pro League tie on Friday.

A win against Al Rayyan on Monday will only be their second in away matches against Qatari teams in the AFC Champions League (W1 D3 L5) and they have not kept a clean sheet in any of these games, conceding 15 goals.

The best eight clubs from each group (of 12 teams) will qualify for Round of 16, ahead of the knock-outs, starting from the quarter-finals in Saudi Arabia from April 25 to May 4, 2025.

SPOTLIGHT

New Zealand win Women's T20 World Cup

AFP
Dubai

An outstanding all-round performance by Amelia Kerr led New Zealand to their first ever Women's T20 World Cup title as they beat South Africa by a commanding 32 runs in yesterday's final in Dubai.

Player of the Match Kerr top-scored with 43 as New Zealand posted an imposing 158-5 in their 20 overs before taking 3-24, and crucially picking up the key wickets of Laura Wolvaardt and Anneke Bosch, to restrict South Africa to 126-9 in their 20 overs.

It marked a sweet finish to skipper Sophie Devine's career.

Devine said: "I started to dream last night about what it feels to hold the trophy with this team, didn't want to get ahead of us. This group, Suze and Lea and for New Zealand cricket, it has been a long time."

She added: "The great thing about this group is we know what we have been trying to achieve in the last 15, 18, 24 months. We kept taking steps in right directions, you want momentum and we came to the World Cup on the back of

10 successive losses. But everyone starts on zero. Speaks to the volume of who Suze is as a player. Most capped player in history of women's game, to think she can go out and play with such aggression and fearlessness. To have her in the side, it is just special, to lift it for her."

The victory came 14 years after the White Ferns lost to Australia by just three runs in the 2010 final. They also lost to England in the 2009 championship match.

For South Africa it made for a double disappointment having lost last year's final to Australia in Cape Town.

After being put in to bat by South Africa captain Wolvaardt, the New Zealand openers began aggressively with Georgia Plimmer smashing two fours in the first over from Marizanne Kapp.

Plimmer fell for nine but Suzie Bates, playing in her 334th international, kept the scoreboard ticking over until she was bowled by Nonkululeko Mlaba for 32 from 31 balls.

When Devine was leg before to Nadine de Klerk on review, the innings appeared to be faltering but the arrival of Brooke Halliday lifted the tempo as she added 57 in sev-



New Zealand's players celebrate with the trophy at the end of the ICC Women's T20 World Cup final match against South Africa at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium yesterday. (AFP)

en overs with Kerr for the fourth wicket.

Halliday hit three boundaries in her 38 but was dismissed when she picked out Bosch on the midwicket boundary.

Kerr slammed back-to-back

boundaries off Mlaba before finding Tazmin Brits to fall for 43 from 38 balls.

Maddy Green, however, maintained the momentum with 12 off six balls including the only six of the innings.

Wolvaardt (33) and Brits (17) got South Africa off to a roaring start bringing up the 50 in the seventh over before Brits attempted to hit Fran Jonas over long-on only to find the safe hands of Green lying in wait.

With Bosch struggling to get going, Wolvaardt showed her frustration by lashing the first ball of Kerr's second over to Bates at wide mid-off.

When a review concluded that Bosch had edged the last ball of the over to Isabella Gaze, South Africa had slumped to 64-3 and New Zealand were in command.

With the required run rate rising, South Africa's middle and lower order, who have barely batted in this tournament, struggled to get going with wickets tumbling at regular intervals.

Kerr took a catch to remove Nadine de Klerk and then claimed a third wicket when Bates, arguably the outstanding fielder at the tournament, took her third catch of the innings to remove Annerie Dercksen. She finished with a tournament-leading 15 wickets.

The last pair held out for the final over but could not prevent New Zealand from celebrating their first title.

BRIEF SCORES
Toss New Zealand 158 for 5 (Kerr 43, Halliday 38, Bates 32, Mlaba 2-31) **beat South Africa 126 for 9** (Wolvaardt 33, Mair 3-25, Kerr 3-24) **by 32 runs**

MATCH REPORT

New Zealand beat India, end 36-year wait for Test win

BLACK CAPS POST FIRST VICTORY ON INDIAN SOIL SINCE 1988

Reuters
Bengaluru

New Zealand sealed their first test win in India since 1988 after chasing down a tricky target in hostile conditions to overcome the hosts by eight wickets on the final day of the first Test yesterday.

After dismissing India for their lowest home total of 46 and making 402 in reply, New Zealand bowled out Rohit Sharma's side for 462 in the second innings to lay the platform for a 1-0 lead in the three-match series.

Will Young (48 not out) and Rachin Ravindra (39 not out) remained calm in the pressure storm after the loss of two early wickets to help New Zealand score the 107 needed, earning their team only a third win on Indian soil in 69 years.

That New Zealand achieved the famous result in the absence of injured batting mainstay Kane Williamson was credit to their belief, as they became only the third team after England and Australia to beat India at home since 2013.

Pace bowlers Matt Henry and Will O'Rourke claimed a combined 15 wickets in the match.

"It was extremely difficult," said new captain Tom Latham, who took the role permanently after Tim Southee stepped down following their 2-0 defeat in Sri Lanka last month.

"There have been a lot of teams that have come here over a long period of time. It was 36 years ago that we last won here so it's a really special feeling to be in this position."

"The work we did in the first and second innings with the ball and bat really set the game up for us. It's a proud moment for this group and one we'll celebrate."



New Zealand's Rachin Ravindra (left) and Will Young (second left) are congratulated by Indian players after their team's win at the end of the first Test at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium of Bengaluru yesterday. (AFP)

New Zealand got off to a bad start when play began after a rain delay when Latham fell lbw to Jasprit Bumrah to the second ball of the day for a duck.

Bumrah and fellow pace bowler Mohammed Siraj made life difficult for the New Zealand batsmen, as India looked to do what no team have done in test history and win a match after conceding a first-innings lead of more than 350 runs.

Devon Conway endured painful body blows, balls that whizzed past the blade and unfriendly glares from the bowlers amid jeers from partisan fans at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium before falling lbw to Bumrah for 17.

The wicket appeared to turn placid after the arrival of first-innings centurion Ravindra, and

the Wellington-born left-hander with roots in Bengaluru superbly steered New Zealand out of rough waters before Young hit the winning runs.

Rohit rued India's batting effort in the first innings but took the positives from their second, where Sarfaraz Khan made 150 and Rishabh Pant hit 99 to give them a fighting chance to avoid only a fifth home loss in 11 years.

"It was brilliant"
"It was brilliant, especially being behind in the game. It's easy to let the game drift away but that's not what this team is about. This team wants to fight back, stay in the game as long as possible and not give in to the opposition," Rohit said. "I thought except the first couple of hours, three hours

(on day one), we played very good Test cricket."

The series, which also features matches in Pune and Mumbai, is part of the World Test Championship.

India arrived in Bengaluru seeking a big win over the 2021 champions to improve their chances of making a third successive final in June 2025, but will now need to battle to keep alive their run of 18 straight home series victories since 2012.

BRIEF SCORES (Day 5)
New Zealand 402 (Ravindra 134, Conway 91, Jadeja 3-72) **and 110 for 2** (Young 48*, Ravindra 39*, Bumrah 2-29) **beat India 46** (Pant 20, Henry 5-15, O'Rourke 4-22) **and 462** (Sarfaraz 150, Pant 99, O'Rourke 3-92) **by eight wickets**

SA expect tough challenge from Bangladesh without Shakib



Bangladesh's captain Najmul Hossain Shanto addresses a press conference on the eve of their first Test against South Africa at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Dhaka yesterday. (AFP)

Dhaka: The absence of Shakib Al Hasan has come as a relief to South Africa as they embark on a two-test series in Bangladesh but stand-in captain Aiden Markram does not expect the challenge to be any easier. Bangladesh's best-known cricketer was due to bow out in the tests in Dhaka, starting today, and Chittagong, but has not returned home following public anger over his silence during deadly protests in the country. Shakib, 37, was a member of parliament for the Awami League led by Sheikh Hasina, whose 15-year rule as prime minister ended in August with her fleeing to India.

Last month he announced his intention to retire from international cricket, expressing the hope he could have a farewell test at home, but he was replaced in the test squad by left-arm spinner Hasan Murad on Friday. "Shakib is a world-class player and he's proved it over many years. So it's a bit of relief that we don't have to come across him," Markram told a press conference yesterday ahead of the opening test at the Sher-e-Bangla National

Stadium. "But we haven't put too much focus on the fact. Ultimately, they've still got a really strong squad, and are really strong in their home conditions as well," he added.

South Africa were more focused on the expected spin challenge as they look to end a run of 14 tests without a win in Indian sub-continental countries.

"For sure, spin obviously is a big talking point especially being from South Africa. We don't get such conditions like this at home," Markram added.

He has taken over from the injured Temba Bavuma as captain for the first Test.

"It's an exciting challenge for us to face, especially as a team that's relatively young and doesn't play too many test matches," Markram said yesterday.

"We have no doubt it's going to be tough and it's going to be different for us as a team. You always want to be quietly confident, positive and upbeat that you can win games of cricket regardless where you are in the world."

India adds Washington Sundar for New Zealand Tests

New Delhi: Indian all-rounder Washington Sundar was added to the squad for the final two Tests against New Zealand, team chiefs said yesterday. Skipper Rohit Sharma has said he was proud of his team for battling back from their lowest home total of 46 to make a match of the first Test against New Zealand, despite going down to an eight-wicket defeat on Sunday.

Left-hander Sundar, 25, last played Test cricket in 2021 when

he covered for spin champion Ravindra Jadeja who was injured. The second Test begins on Thursday in Pune. The third is on November 1 in Mumbai.

India squad: Rohit Sharma (capt), Jasprit Bumrah, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Shubman Gill, Virat Kohli, K L Rahul, Sarfaraz Khan, Rishabh Pant (wk), Dhruv Jurel (wk), Ravichandran Ashwin, Ravindra Jadeja, Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav, Mohammed Siraj, Akash Deep, Washington Sundar.

BOTTOMLINE

Sri Lanka triumph in rain-affected first ODI against West Indies in Pallekele

AFP
Pallekele, Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka cruised to a comprehensive five-wicket win in the rain-shortened first one-day international against the West Indies in Pallekele yesterday, with half-centuries from captain Charith Asalanka and debutant Nishan Madushka.

Chasing a revised target of 232 in 37 overs, the hosts raced to victory with 5.3

overs to spare. After a shaky start that saw Sri Lanka slump to 45 for three in the seventh over, Asalanka's arrival at the crease turned the tide.

His partnership with Madushka, worth 137 runs for the fourth wicket, came in rapid time. Both Asalanka and Madushka reached their half-centuries in just 44 balls. Madushka, who has played 10 Test matches, was brought in to replace injured opener Pathum Nissanka, the leading run scorer in ODIs in 2024.

"I am glad that he has grabbed the op-

portunity with both hands," Asalanka said. "It is good to have healthy competition in the side." The West Indies had posted 183 for four in 38.3 overs before rain intervened. Their spinners then found it hard to grip the wet ball.

"We were really tested by the conditions," West Indies skipper Shai Hope said. "Particularly for the spinners, the wet ball was quite challenging."

Gudakesh Motie eventually broke the Asalanka-Madushka stand, when Brandon King took a sharp catch at slip. But by

then, the damage had been done. Sri Lanka needed just 50 runs off 74 balls when Madushka fell for 69 off 54 balls, which included seven fours and a six.

Motie also trapped Asalanka lbw after a brilliant 77 off 71 balls, studded with eight fours and three sixes.

Motie finished with three wickets, although he could have had a greater impact if not for the challenging conditions, with the ball having to be changed twice.

Kamindu Mendis and Janith Liyanage saw Sri Lanka home comfortably. Earlier,

the West Indies had struggled against Sri Lanka's spinners, but Sherrane Rutherford's career-best 74 not out helped the visitors post a decent score.

The remaining two ODIs will be held on Wednesday and Saturday.

BRIEF SCORES
Sri Lanka 234 for 5 (Asalanka 77, Madushka 69, Motie 3-47) **beat West Indies 185 for 4** (Rutherford 74*, Carty 37, Chase 33*, Hasaranga 2-18) **by 5 wickets (DLS method)**

SPOTLIGHT

British cyclist Hoy has terminal cancer

AFP
London

Six-time Olympic cycling champion Chris Hoy revealed that he has terminal cancer and has been told by doctors he has "two to four years" to live.

The 48-year-old former track racer announced in February that he had been diagnosed with the disease and was undergoing chemotherapy but insisted the treatment was "going really well".

However, the Scottish sporting legend has now told *The Sunday Times* that he knew at the time his illness was terminal.

When asking doctors how long he had left, he said he was told: "Two to four years".

"We were all born and we all die, and this is just part of the process," Hoy told *The Sunday Times*. "You remind yourself, aren't I lucky that

there is medicine I can take that will fend this off for as long as possible. But most of the battle for me with cancer hasn't been physical. For me, it has been in my head."

Hoy explained he had initially shrugged off pain in his shoulder as an injury caused by exertions in the gym.

When he was referred for a scan, he was told by a doctor: "I'm really sorry. There's a tumour in your shoulder."

Another scan revealed primary cancer in his prostate which metastasised to his shoulder, pelvis, hip, spine and ribs.

"And just like that," said Hoy. "I learn how I will die."

In a double blow, Hoy also revealed that his wife Sarra has been diagnosed with multiple sclerosis.

"It's the closest I've come to, like, you know, why me? Just, what? What's going on here? It didn't seem real. It was such a huge blow, when you're already reeling.



British cyclist Chris Hoy takes part in a parade during the Platinum Jubilee Pageant, marking the end of the celebrations for the Platinum Jubilee of Britain's Queen Elizabeth II in London on June 5, 2022. (Reuters)

You think nothing could possibly get worse. You literally feel like you're at rock bottom, and you find out, oh no, you've got further to fall. It was brutal!" British Prime Minister Keir

Starmer was among those to offer their support to Hoy.

"Such sad news. Chris is a British sporting legend. To face his diagnosis with such positivity is inspiring. The whole country is behind him and his family," Starmer posted on X.

Fellow cycling titan Mark Cavendish described Hoy as a "hero of a human being", while former Scotland striker turned commentator Ally McCoist said: "You, my friend are a superstar in every sense of the word."

Olympic athletics champion Kelly Holmes and Britain's most successful Paralympian Sarah Storey also replied to his post with messages of support.

Olympic rowing champion Matthew Pinsent said his thoughts were with Hoy and his family, describing him as "one of the finest to ever represent our country".

Scottish First Minister John Swinney praised Hoy's "incredible

courage". "I send every good wish to Sir Chris Hoy and his family," he said. "He has always inspired us by all that he has done. He is a person of incredible courage and that shines through today."

Edinburgh-born Hoy took up track cycling as a teenager and won his first Olympic medal, a team sprint silver, at the 2000 Games in Sydney. Four years later, he became an Olympic champion by winning the one kilometre time-trial in Athens. He increased his Olympic medal haul with three more golds at the 2008 Games in Beijing and another two at London 2012.

Hoy also won 11 world titles before retiring from competitive cycling in 2013.

"As unnatural as it feels, this is nature," Hoy, a father of two, added in his interview with *The Sunday Times*. "A lot of deaths are sudden, leaving no chance to say goodbyes or make peace with everything. But I've been given enough time."

MOTOGP

Marquez wins in Australia after intense battle

'IN LAP FIVE OR SIX I STARTED TO GET THE RHYTHM'

Reuters
Phillip Island, Australia

Six-times MotoGP champion Marc Marquez put on a master class to win the Australian Motorcycle Grand Prix ahead of world championship leader Jorge Martin at Phillip Island yesterday.

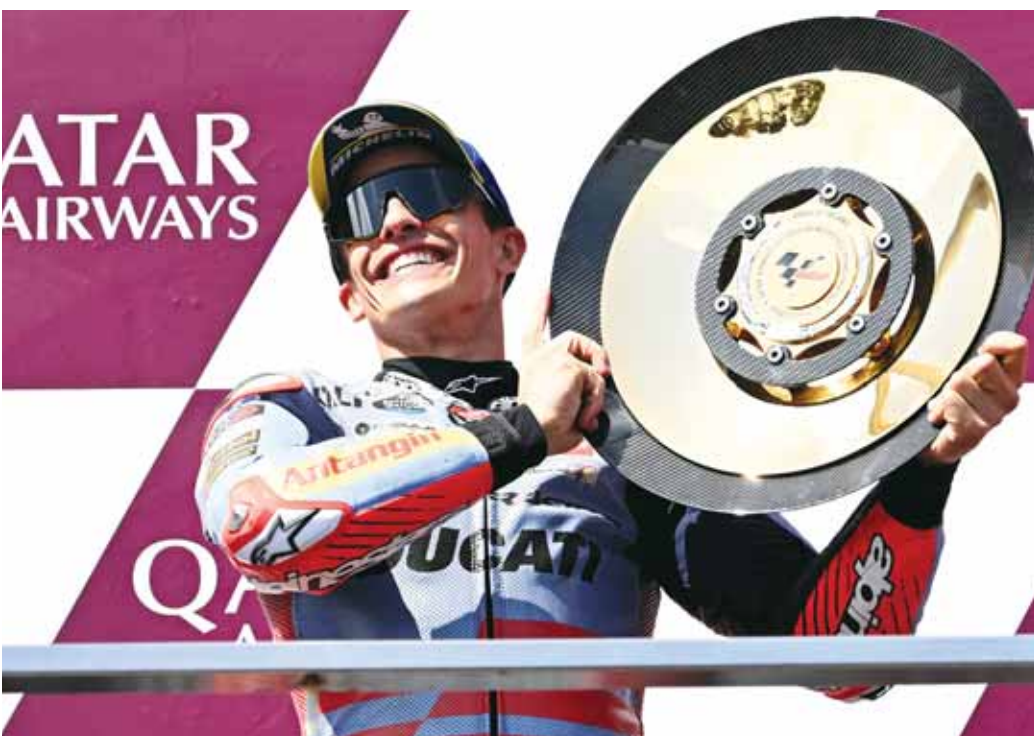
Polesitter and sprint winner Martin of Prima Pramac Racing rocketed off the line while fellow Spaniard Marquez endured yet another disastrous launch, falling rapidly down the order before ruthlessly finding his way back to seal his third win of the season.

Marquez qualified second on the grid, but dropped outside the top-10 at the start when his own tear-off got stuck under his rear tyre. He had also recovered from a poor start to come second in the sprint on Saturday.

The 31-year-old, third in the championship standings, has now won the Australian MotoGP four times in the premier class.

"It was always something happening, but I've never pulled the tear-off in the start before," Marquez said. "This time when I was putting the front device on, I saw something was super big here and I didn't have a chance so I took it off ... and when I released the clutch I began to spin.

"I don't know where I was in the first corner but I overtook many riders and I thought that one time was impossible to catch Martin. Then in lap five or six I started to get the rhythm and it



Gresini Racing MotoGP team rider Marc Marquez of Spain celebrates on the podium after winning the MotoGP Australian Grand Prix on Phillip Island yesterday. (AFP)

was more calm, it was a bit stressful but I'm super happy..."

"It's true that Martin pushed through all the race and I was saving the tyre to have the last lap."

While Martin led most of the 27-lap race, he and Marquez swapped places in the final moments before Marquez came out on top. Martin's second-place finish extended his lead over twice MotoGP champion Francesco

Bagnaia at the top of the world championship by 20 points.

Having qualified fifth, Bagnaia came third to complete an all-Ducati podium. With three races left in the campaign, Bagnaia, who struggled to match Marquez and Martin's pace all weekend, will set his sights on next week's Thailand Grand Prix.

"It was a difficult race for sure," Martin said. "I had a strong pace

but the feeling wasn't the same as yesterday, the wind was really strong so I started to lose the front..."

Italian duo Fabio Di Giannantonio and Enea Bastianini were the other two riders in the top-five in Australia.

Red Bull GasGas Tech3's 20-year-old rookie Pedro Acosta missed the race after suffering a crash in the sprint.

GOLF

Maguire pips Asian Tour leader Catlin for first pro golf victory



American golfer Michael Maguire celebrates winning his maiden professional title at the Black Mountain Championship at Black Mountain Golf Club in Hua Hin, Thailand. (@asiantourgolf)

AFP
Hua Hin, Thailand

American Michael Maguire won his maiden professional title at the Black Mountain Championship yesterday after a playoff to deny compatriot John Catlin a third Asian Tour victory of 2024.

Maguire, 31, who is in just his second season on the Asian Tour, made a winning par on the second play-off hole after order of merit leader Catlin missed a 15-footer to extend the contest.

Both players had finished on 23-under 265 at the Black Mountain Golf Club in Hua Hin, Thailand, after Maguire shot a seven-under-par 65 and Catlin carded a 66 in the Asian Tour International Series event.

Taiwan's Lee Chieh-po shot a 65 to be solo third on 22-under par.

New Zealand's Ben Campbell (64), Suteepat Prateepthienchai (66) from Thailand, and Italian Stefano Mazzoli (66), tied for fourth, a further two strokes back.

"Big weight off my shoulders," said Maguire.

"I'm kind of a journeyman, played on every tour you can think of, and finally to get a win on a big, big tour like this is huge."

Catlin was attempting to win three titles in a season on the Asian

Tour for the second time in his career.

He achieved the feat in 2018. "I mean, I gave it everything I had, I went bogey free," said Catlin, who won the Asian Series Macau and the Saudi Open back-to-back this year.

Leading scores after the final round of the Black Mountain Championship in Hua Hin, Thailand, on Sunday (par 72):

- 265 - Michael Maguire (USA) 68-64-68-65, wins after playoff
- 265 - John Catlin (USA) 69-65-65-66
- 266 - Lee Chieh-po (TPE) 68-69-64-65
- 268 - Ben Campbell (NZL) 68-70-66-64, Suteepat Prateepthienchai (THA) 65-66-71-66, Stefano Mazzoli (ITA) 67-65-70-66
- 269 - Nick Voke (NZL) 68-67-69-65, Gaganjeet Bhullar (IND) 65-66-66-72
- 270 - Sihwan Kim (USA) 69-68-70-63, Richard T. Lee (CAN) 66-66-72-66, Sadom Kaewkanjana (THA) 67-66-71-66, Bjorn Helligren (SWE) 69-67-68-66, Suradit Yongcharoenchai (THA) 68-66-69-67
- 271 - Jonathan Wijono (INA) 65-70-71-65, Gunn Charoenkul (THA) 69-67-73-62, Kieran Vincent (ZIM) 68-69-68-66, Ian Snyman (RSA) 68-67-69-67, David Boriboonsub (THA) 65-69-67-70

FORMULA 1

Leclerc wins US Grand Prix

AFP
Austin

Ferrari's Charles Leclerc won the United States Grand Prix yesterday ahead of teammate Carlos Sainz yesterday as title rivals Lando Norris and Max Verstappen were locked in a controversial finish.

Norris passed world championship leader Verstappen in the closing stages but had his third place taken away in favour of the Dutchman after a late five-second time penalty.

Norris, in a McLaren, had started from pole, but he and Red Bull's three-time world champion Verstappen clashed on the opening lap with the angry Briton accusing his rival of pushing him off the circuit.

Verstappen has now extended his lead over Norris to 57 points in the drivers' championship with five races left this season.



Charles Leclerc of Monaco driving the Ferrari SF-24 on track during the Formula One Grand Prix of United States at Circuit of The Americas in Austin, Texas. (AFP)

Marchand ends Shanghai World Cup event with three titles

Shanghai: Leon Marchand yesterday emphatically won a third title at swimming's short-course World Cup in Shanghai, in his first meet since taking the Paris Olympics by storm.

The 22-year-old Frenchman, the poster boy of the Olympics with four golds, blitzed the 400m individual medley final on the last day in China to go with victories in the 100m and 200m medley. He triumphed in 4:00.03, beating out Italy's Alberto Razzetti by 1.48sec.

There was to be no fourth title however as he came fourth in the 200m breaststroke, 1.32sec behind winner Joshua Yong of Australia.

Marchand was thrust into the global spotlight at the Paris Olympics when he won all four of his individual races - the 200m butterfly, 200m breaststroke and 200m-400m medley double.



That put him in elite company alongside American legend Michael Phelps. "Right now I'm just trying to get back to old training," Marchand told AFP on Friday. "I don't really expect a lot of results, I'm just trying to have fun and go back to my standards," he said. Marchand is next set to compete in South Korea in the coming week on the next stop of the World Cup.

PREMIER LEAGUE

Liverpool pass Chelsea test to reclaim top spot

STONES LATE SHOW EARNS MAN CITY WIN AT WOLVES

Reuters
Liverpool

Liverpool passed their biggest test of the season so far as Curtis Jones struck the winner in a 2-1 home victory over Chelsea to keep them top of the Premier League yesterday.

The 23-year-old's first goal since January proved the difference in a tight battle as Liverpool won for the 10th time in 11 matches in all competitions under new boss Arne Slot.

Mohamed Salah's 29th-minute penalty put the hosts in front against the run of play but Chelsea levelled after the break as Nicolas Jackson was played through to score. Chelsea were not level for long though as midfielder Jones got on the end of Salah's low cross to beat visiting keeper Robert Sanchez from close range.

It was never comfortable for Liverpool against a Chelsea side who came close to an equaliser several times in a strong finish and ended up with more attempts at goal. But Slot's side dug deep to pass their sternest test in the Premier League so far this season.

They have 21 points from eight games, one more than second-placed Manchester City who beat Wolverhampton Wanderers 2-1 earlier. Chelsea stayed in sixth place with 14 points.

"Many other games were hard but this might have been the hardest because of the amount of quality players they have and the structure they have," Slot, whose side have conceded only three league goals, said.

"We had to fight really hard to get this one over the line."

Liverpool's transition to a new era under Juergen Klopp's successor Slot has apparently been seamless but a visit from Enzo Maresca's buoyant Chelsea side was the first in a devilish run of fixtures that continues at Arsenal next weekend.

They were under the cosh for long periods and Chelsea will feel aggrieved not to have taken a point back to London although Slot argued that Chelsea could have been down to 10 men in the opening minutes when a charging Diogo Jota was dragged down on the halfway line by Tosin Adarabioyo.

Maresca's side showed their intent from the start with some ambitious football and Jones did superbly to charge down Cole Palmer's shot when he looked favourite to score.

But Liverpool took the lead when Jones was tripped in the area by Levi Colwill and Salah smashed away the penalty.

Liverpool were awarded another penalty on the stroke of half-



Liverpool's Curtis Jones celebrates scoring their second goal against Chelsea at Anfield yesterday. (Reuters)



Manchester City's John Stones celebrates after scoring against Wolverhampton Wanderers yesterday. (Reuters)

time after Sanchez clumsily took down Jones although a VAR check showed the keeper had made slight contact with the ball before clattering Jones and referee John Brooks changed his mind.

Palmer shot over for Chelsea in first-half stoppage time but the visitors were rewarded three minutes after the break when Moises Caicedo's pass sent Jackson away and he slotted the ball past Caoimhin Kelleher only to be flagged offside.

Again VAR intervened to Chelsea's benefit with Ibrahim Konate's outstretched leg shown to have played Jackson onside.

Chelsea were guilty of switch-

ing off though as three minutes later the outstanding Jones restored Liverpool's lead.

Liverpool had to withstand seven minutes of Chelsea pressure in stoppage time in which Christopher Nkunku was agonisingly close to equalising as he stretched to reach Pedro Neto's pass.

"We controlled most of the game. We had chances, we had possession," Maresca said after his side's first league defeat since the opening day of the season.

"We don't like to lose, but if we have to choose this is the way. The team was brave on and off the ball."

Meanwhile Manchester City defender John Stones headed a controversial stoppage-time winner in a 2-1 victory at Wolverhampton Wanderers yesterday that took them top of the Premier League and set a club record of 31 league games unbeaten.

Champions City dominated possession from start to finish at Molineux, but were shocked in the seventh minute when a perfect cross from Nelson Semedo was met with a composed close-range finish by Wolves striker Jorgen Strand Larsen.

Semedo missed a glorious chance to put Wolves further ahead in a one-on-one that Ederson saved, before City defender Josko Gvardiol picked up the ball in space and curled a beautiful shot past Jose Sa for a deserved 33rd-minute equaliser.

Stones' late goal from a cor-

ner went to a Video Assistant Referee (VAR) check for a possible offside by Bernardo Silva in front of the goalkeeper, but it was allowed, to the delight of their manager Pep Guardiola and travelling fans.

"I'm really pleased to win in that fashion and get on the scoresheet again," said Stones, who also scored a late equaliser against Arsenal last month.

"It was a tough game. I've got to give credit to Wolves, how they stopped us creating chances, made it difficult for us in the final third," he added.

City moved top of the league on goal difference with 20 points, two above Liverpool who face Chelsea later on Sunday and could retake top spot with a win.

Bottom on one point and without a win this season, Wolves are staring at a battle against relegation unless they can start picking up wins.

Their manager Gary O'Neil was furious at the end of the game, after his team had defended valiantly against City who enjoyed three quarters of possession.

Referee Chris Kavanagh initially disallowed Stones' goal, believing Silva had blocked goalkeeper Sa's line of vision, but VAR deemed that was not the case.

When Kavanagh saw footage at the side of the pitch, he overturned the decision, bringing boos ringing round the ground from the home fans.

LA LIGA

Sorloth brace helps Atletico Madrid beat Leganes 3-1

AFP
Madrid

Alexander Sorloth's double helped Atletico Madrid come from behind to beat Leganes 3-1 in La Liga yesterday.

Diego Simeone's team struggled against the minnows from the south of Madrid but after Yvan Neyou blasted the visitors ahead Sorloth levelled with a fine finish and Antoine Griezmann slid home the second.

Norwegian target man Sorloth wrapped up the victory late in stoppage time with a poacher's finish. Victory took Atletico third, cutting the gap on leaders Barcelona to four points before the Catalans host Sevilla later.

Atletico came into the game with just one victory in their last five matches across all competitions. They shared 1-1 draws with Rayo Vallecano, rivals Real Madrid and Real Sociedad, as well as suffering a 4-0 thrashing at Benfica in the Champions League. No supporters filled the lower part of the Metropolitan stadium's south stand, closed by the Spanish football federation after some Atletico fans threw objects at Real Madrid players during the derby in September.

Leganes took a deserved first half lead when Neyou hammered into the top corner past the helpless Jan Oblak.

Simeone took action in the second half with a slate of changes, including replacing Rodrigo Riquelme with his son Giuliano Simeone.

The 21-year-old midfielder



Atletico Madrid's Alexander Sorloth celebrates scoring an equaliser during the La Liga match against Leganes in Madrid yesterday. (AFP)

played his part in Atletico's triumph, after Sorloth's clever flicked finish from Axel Witsel's cut-back helped the hosts pull level in the 69th minute.

Giuliano did brilliantly to keep the ball in on the right flank and his cross to the near post was turned home by Griezmann, sliding in before goalkeeper Marko Dmitrovic.

Griezmann was later shown a red card for a high tackle on Neyou, but the referee downgraded it to a yellow after a VAR review showed the former France international had slipped. Giuliano survived a late Leganes appeal for a penalty when he tangled with Munir El Haddadi, who fell under his challenge in Atletico's area.

Sorloth confirmed the Rojiblancos' win with a close range finish late on for his third league goal since joining this summer from Villarreal. "We did good work and didn't get the reward for it, so it hurts," said Neyou, with Leganes sitting 17th.

NAPOLI KEEP SERIE A LEAD WITH WIN AT EMPOLI

Napoli will stay top of Serie A for at least another week after winning 1-0 at bogey team Empoli yesterday and moving three points clear of Juventus. Khvicha Kvaratskhelia struck the only goal of the game, and his fourth of the season, from the penalty spot in the 63rd minute to give Napoli their fourth straight win in all competitions. Yesterday's hard-fought victory means that Napoli cannot be overtaken this weekend, although Inter Milan can move back to within two points of Antonio Conte's team with a win at troubled Roma in the day's late game.

"We're trying to create a solid base from which we can become a team with serious ambitions," said Conte to DAZN. "Every win should be celebrated because they're hard won. We just need to keep doing what we're doing."

"We're trying to build something here, something that isn't just a flash in the pan but lasts long-term." Empoli beat Napoli home and away last season and their victory in Naples last November cost Rudi Garcia his job as coach, as a disastrous league title defence ended with southern Italy's biggest club in 10th. And the hosts were the better team for large portions of the match, with Kvaratskhelia's winning spot-kick Napoli's only shot on target in front of thousands of enthusiastic travelling supporters.

"I don't know if it's our history here but I wasn't happy with how we played in the first half. If they had scored we couldn't have said anything," said Conte.

Napoli don't have European football as a result of their collapse following a first Scudetto since 1990 and the days of Diego Maradona. And under Conte Napoli have quickly re-established themselves as title challengers, with the advantage of not having the expanded Champions League jamming up their schedule.

Kvaratskhelia is key to Conte's plans but the Georgia winger is yet to sign a contract extension, with his current deal expiring in 2027. Italian media report that Kvaratskhelia is aiming for eight million euros (\$8.7 million) a season, significantly more than Napoli are willing to offer the breakout star of their historic 2023 title triumph.

Fiorentina hammered 10-man Lecce 6-0 to move up to fifth and six points behind Napoli with their best performance since Raffaele Palladino took over in the summer.

Braces from both Danilo Cataldi and Andrea Colpani, the latter's first goals since following Palladino from Monza, drove Fiorentina to a thumping away win which also featured strikes from Lucas Beltran and Fabiano Parisi.

LIGUE 1

PSG beat Strasbourg to reclaim top spot

AFP
Paris

Paris Saint-Germain went back on top of the Ligue 1 table on Saturday as a 4-2 victory at home to Strasbourg saw them climb above Monaco on goal difference.

Youngster Senny Mayulu's first Ligue 1 goal set PSG on their way before Marco Asensio, Bradley Barcola and Lee Kang-in also found the net in the rain at the Parc des Princes. Sekou Mara and Pape Diong were on target for Liam Rosenior's Strasbourg, but the defeat means the side from Alsace have still never won away to PSG in 34 attempts.

Monaco's 0-0 draw at home to Lille on Friday had given PSG the opportunity to go back to the summit and they seized the chance despite coach Luis Enrique rotating his squad with an eye on Tuesday's Champions League clash with PSV Eindhoven.

"I think it is the same for all coaches who lose players during international breaks," said Luis Enrique, whose team also go to Marseille next weekend in French football's biggest fixture.

"The first game back is always especially complicated but we fulfilled our objectives, which were to get three points against very difficult opponents, and to conserve players so they could recover from games with their national teams and their journeys."

Ousmane Dembele, Achraf Hakimi, Fabian Ruiz and captain Marquinhos were among the players left on the bench with Mayulu one of five players aged 20 or under in PSG's starting XI.

The 18-year-old hit the post before he opened the scoring on 18 minutes after a one-two with Barcola, and Mayulu then missed a great chance to add another before half-time, blazing over when clean through.

"Senny is a player who last year could have left but chose to stay.

He is a player with lots of quality and has the ability to score goals," said Luis Enrique.

"Today he scored one but could have scored three. He is one for the future of the club."

Asensio bundled in PSG's second goal just after the restart, following in to score after Desire Doue's shot had been saved, but Mara pulled one back with his first goal since joining Strasbourg from Southampton.

PSG had a penalty awarded for a foul on Barcola overturned by the referee following a VAR review, but France winger Barcola then prodded in his team's third goal, and a seventh of the season for the division's top scorer.

A Saidou Sow own goal that would have made it 4-1 was disallowed for offside but South Korean star Lee swept in a Joao Neves assist for PSG's fourth late on, before Diong made the final score 4-2 from close range.

It was just a second defeat so far this season for Strasbourg, who

are owned by the same BlueCo consortium which controls Chelsea.

"I feel we lost in the right way, if there is such a thing," said Englishman Rosenior, who said the defeat was entirely down to the quality of the opposition.

"It was 100 percent the quality of Paris, one of the best teams in Europe," insisted the Englishman. "I think Paris are building something very special here and I am very proud of my players for playing in a style that I don't think anyone has tried."

"You have to be prepared to lose big in order to win big."

Earlier, Brest warmed up for their Champions League clash with Bayer Leverkusen by drawing 1-1 with Rennes in a Brittany derby, while Lens won 2-0 at Saint-Etienne to maintain their unbeaten record this season.

Marseille go to Montpellier on Sunday, when other matches include Lyon at Le Havre and high-flying Reims at Auxerre.



PSG forward Marco Asensio celebrates after scoring his team's second goal during the French L1 match against RC Strasbourg Alsace at the Parc des Princes Stadium in Paris yesterday. (AFP)