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FIP WORLD PADEL CHAMPIONSHIPS

Draw places Qatar in Group 'C' with France, Chile and Uruguay

By Sports Reporter
Doha

The draw for the 2024 FIP World Padel Championships, held at the Khalifa International Tennis & Squash Complex in Doha yesterday, saw holders Spain and 11-time champions Argentina start as favourites in their respective groups in the men's category. As many as 32 of the world's top men's and women's teams will be in action at the event being hosted by the Qatar Tennis, Squash and Badminton Federation (QTSBF), for a second time since a highly successful edition in 2021. The draw took place in the presence of International Padel Federation President Luigi Carraro, and QTSBF Secretary-General and Tournament Director Tariq Darwish Zainal among other key officials. The teams were drawn into four groups each in men's and women's divisions.

Argentina, who have featured in all but two finals of the World Championship since its inception in 1992, will be aiming for their 12th men's title as they start their journey in Group A, along with Belgium, Italy and USA. Group B is led by the four-time champions Spain, along with Paraguay, Mexico and the UAE. France, the bronze winners in 2022, are placed in Group C, with hosts Qatar along with Chile and Uruguay look to challenge the European giants. 'Group of Death' Group D features heavyweights in Portugal, Brazil, the Netherlands, and Sweden, and promises to feature intense clashes. Meanwhile, following the huge gain in popularity for Padel in the country, Group C contenders Qatar are ready to showcase their growing talent on the international stage. Led by the seasoned coaching duo, Pablo Nicolas Sisti and Martin Luciano Bogarin, the team consists of a mix of seasoned



President of International Padel Federation Luigi Carraro (centre), secretary-general of the Qatar Tennis, Squash and Badminton Federation and the tournament director Tariq Darwish Zainal pose during the draw ceremony for 2024 edition of the FIP World Padel Championships in Doha yesterday.

players and emerging talent. The Qatar squad includes Abdulla Al-hijji, Amr Hassan, Rayyan Aljufairi, Mohammed Abdulla, as well as experienced players like Jabor

al-Mutawa, Hassan Adel Waly and Mohammed Saadon al-Kuwari. Qatar's group stage starts today when they face Chile at the centre court. In their second match

they will face tough opponents France, before wrapping up the group stage with another crucial encounter against Uruguay on October 30.

"We are in for a fantastic tournament with 32 teams that will keep us thrilled," commented FIP President Luigi Carraro after the draw. "It's true that Spain and Argentina are still the favourites, but it's also true that over the last two years, the other national teams have grown tremendously, and now they're all at an amazing level. This will be an incredible edition," he added. The women's draw opens with Spain, champions in 2022 and European champions in 2024, leading Group A with Germany, Brazil, and Chile. After a second-place finish in Dubai, Argentina is the top seed in Group B, joined by Portugal, the United States, and Egypt. Italy, aiming once more for a podium finish, is in Group C with Sweden, Uruguay, and Japan; Group D is also highly anticipated, as four European teams – Belgium, France, Netherlands and Denmark – will compete to pass to the next stage.

QATAR STARS LEAGUE

Sadd beat Wakrah 3-0; Duhail held to 1-1 draw by Gharafa

AL SADD'S RAFA MUJICA SCORED A BRACE; AL ARABI THRASH QATAR SC 4-1 AT AL THUMAMA STADIUM

By Sports Reporter
Doha

On an action-packed round eight evening of the Ooredoo Stars League, defending champions Al Sadd blanked Al Wakrah 3-0 in a dominating show at the Al Janoub Stadium while table toppers Al Duhail were held to a 1-1 draw by Al Gharafa at the Abdullah Bin Khalifa Stadium yesterday. The other match of the day saw Al Arabi thrash Qatar SC 4-1 at Al Thumama Stadium. Al Sadd continued with their winning ways as the defending champions rode on a brace from Rafa Mujica (24th & 86th minutes) while Akram Afif scored one goal in the 59th minute. The fifth win of the league season saw Al Sadd take their tally to 15 points (ahead of Al Ahli on goal difference) to move closer to Al Duhail at the top with 19 points. Al Wakrah, suffering their third loss of the league championship, slipped to sixth spot with 11 points. Al Gharafa are 4th with 12 points. Al Sadd would have added more to the score-line but for some close finishes and some good saves from Al Wakrah goalkeeper Mohammed al-Bakri. The Wolves were expected to come hard on their rivals but they put on a fierce and attacking show that put the Cheetahs off their tracks. Al Wakrah initially tried to cut down on Al Sadd's fast pace and seemed to hold on well with the smart defence but it didn't take Al Sadd long to draw the first blood. And the strike came in spectacular fashion after Moustafa Tarek set Mujica up with a fine short pass at the top-centre just outside the box. The Spaniard made a half turn on pivot before unleashing a drive that beat three defenders and a flying goalkeeper to his left. A shaken Al Wakrah tried to make amends but their attempts were met with constant spoils from Al Sadd. Jacinto Dala did come close on one occasion but



Al Sadd's Rafa Mujica celebrates after scoring a goal against Al Wakrah during their Qatar Stars League match at the Al Janoub Stadium yesterday.

his kick at the goal from a short distance was well cut off by alert Al Sadd custodian Meshaal Barsham. Al Sadd resumed the second session more forcefully and nearly doubled their lead in the 50th minute as Mujica moved a through ball down and a sprinting Afif made a fine attempt trying to beat stretched goalkeeper to his left but the ball got deflected by his fingertips. Afif eventually has his way minutes later as Cristo Gonzalez provided the assist from the right and Afif burst in to flip it over the goalkeeper this time (2-0). Firing on all cylinders Al Sadd kept coming hard at their rivals with some chances ending in kicks either going over the target or wide. They delighted their fans one more time towards the end as Moustafa again flipped the over a defender and into the striking

zone for Mujica to rush in and kick it in on the volley. Al Sadd almost added a fourth in dying moments of stoppage time as substitute Yusuf Abdurisag came face-to-face with Al Wakrah goalkeeper but failed to beat him, the ball on rebound going to Mujica who this time hit it wide to the right. Meanwhile the Red Knights saw their first draw of the league season being held 1-1 by Al Gharafa. While Michael Olunga provided them with the lead in the 55th minute, slotting in an Almoez Ali cross neatly, Mohammed Muntari neutralised the advantage as he scored for Gharafa in the 87th minute. Substitute Rabhia Boussafi send in a long ball which first was headed by Ferjani Sassi before the ball hit a defender to fall for a waiting Muntari to strike. With the points

shared, table-topping Al Duhail now have 19 points, while fourth-placed Al Gharafa are on 12. **MSAKNI DOUBLE FOR AL ARABI** Youssef Msakni scored a brace as Al Arabi thrashed Qatar SC 4-1. While Al Arabi's Tunisian star struck in the 15th and 68th minutes of the match, Rodriguez Sanchez (36th minute) and Yazan al-Naimat (43rd minute) also scored a goal each. Qatar SC were beneficiary of an own goal from Al Arabi's Jassem Gaber Abdulsallam (63rd minute). The only second win of the league championship for Al Arabi saw their tally move to 10 points while being in 9th place in the rankings. Qatar SC with 7 points moved down a rung to 11th place. It was strong comeback after a loss in the



Al Arabi's Youssef Msakni scored a brace against Qatar SC yesterday.

previous round for Al Arabi. The Dream Team smarting from a 2-5 defeat to Al Shamal, played like a team possessed against Qatar SC, who despite all their hard work could not stop the rivals from scoring big. They made a rollicking start as al-Naimat cut across a pass for Msakni to beat defenders and go through the goalkeeper's legs. The Qatar SC goalkeeper Mota-sem Majed Albustami, however stood out making some superb saves in the match. The first of which came in the 21st minute where he came down halfway ahead in the danger area to keep away a Rodri strike. Later in the second session, he cut off a Msakni attempt before staving off an al-Naimat kick. Despite Abustami heroics, Al Arabi were on a rampage. Rodriguez's second strike, a long

left-footed long ranger, was spectacularly successful and beat the goalkeeper to his right this time (2-0). Their third goal in the opening half was produced through Rodri-Naimat combine with the latter scoring coolly. In the 55th minute, Al Arabi had thrilling action in the 'D' but after Msakni turned around to strike, Albustami was at hand to keep the shot away. Qatar SC pulled one back when Attaa Mohamed Jaber struck from outside the box and the ball hit two defenders on its way into the net. Soon, Rodri was back into the rival box and provided Msakni with a neat cross to score again (4-1). Towards the end, Qatar SC's Ben Malango seemed to have been fouled inside the box but a VAR check ruled out a penalty.

SPOTLIGHT

Santner unstoppable despite sore side

Reuters
Pune

Mitchell Santner played through the pain barrier as New Zealand secured their maiden series win in India going back to 1955 and the left-arm spinner said picking up wickets regularly in the second Test had helped him persevere. After an eight-wicket success in Bengaluru, New Zealand won the second match in Pune by 113 runs on Saturday and ended their opponents' proud home streak of 18 successive series victories against any country stretching back to 2012. Santner spearheaded New Zealand's effort, going unchanged for 29 overs during India's second innings despite a sore side and claimed 6-104 to finish with a stellar match total of 13 wickets after his 7-53 in the first innings. "My side's a little sore. Must be the spike in my workloads, 20-odd overs there," Santner said.

"I felt it a little bit early on in my spell but I guess in that kind of situation you just want to keep going for the team and every time I'd get a wicket, it felt a little better." Santner's effort was the third-best haul in a match by a visiting bowler in India, behind only teammate Ajaz Patel, who bagged 14-225 at Mumbai in 2021, and England's Ian Botham, who picked up 13-106 at the same venue in 1980. "I've been in and out (of the Test side) and to get these conditions and put in a shift like that is pleasing," Santner



added to New Zealand media on Sunday. "To do it against India, beat them at their own game. That was the most pleasing thing for us in that second test. "... In Bengaluru we got the best of conditions, especially at the start. After that it was a grind. Over here, we out-spun them, outplayed them in their home conditions."

'ABSOLUTELY CRUCIAL' Glenn Phillips said he was delighted that his fellow spinner was getting the recognition he deserves. "For him to be able to take 13 wickets in a really crucial, tight game... the way that he went about in both the first and second innings was absolutely crucial," Phillips said.

"He bowled in some seriously good areas, the control he had went such a long way. It's tough being a spinner in New Zealand and he's had a lot of naysayers in the past. To be able to show them what he can actually do and to be able to show from a team first perspective what is needed in Indian conditions is fantastic. I'm super stoked for him." Skipper Tom Latham heaped praise on Santner, whose previous best in an innings was 3-34. "He did a fantastic job. Obviously the wickets he got ... But what will go unnoticed is the amount of overs he bowled back-to-back," Latham said. "I kept trying to take him off but he kept taking a wicket. So I said 'you can keep going'. Look, I can't praise him enough for what he's done. He was simply fantastic." The final test begins in Mumbai on Friday.

New Zealand's Mitchell Santner celebrates after taking the wicket of India's Yashasvi Jaiswal during the third day of the second Test at the Maharashtra Cricket Association Stadium in Pune on Saturday. (Reuters)

ANNOUNCEMENT

Rizwan named Pakistan captain, big names back

Babar Azam, Shaheen Afridi and Naseem Shah win recalls

Reuters
Lahore

Pakistan appointed Mohammad Rizwan as captain of their white-ball teams yesterday, and Babar Azam, Shaheen Afridi and Naseem Shah were all named in their one-day international and Twenty20 squads for next month's tour of Australia.

All-rounder Salman Ali Agha will serve as Rizwan's deputy, the Pakistan Cricket Board said.

"I'm deeply honoured to be appointed as Pakistan's white-ball captain," Rizwan said in a statement.

"Representing Pakistan on the global stage is the greatest privilege and to now be entrusted with leading such a talented and exciting group of players is a tremendous honour.

"I'm committed to giving my absolute best in this role and look forward to working closely with the selectors, coaches and my immensely talented teammates. Together, we aim to meet and exceed the expectations of our fans and supporters."

The 32-year-old Rizwan has played 74 ODIs and 102 T20Is since making his white-ball debut in 2015, scoring a combined 5,401 runs.

Babar stepped down as skipper in all three formats last year after Pakistan failed to make the knock-out stage of the 50-overs World Cup, before returning as white-ball captain in March for the T20 World Cup where the team did not make the Super Eight.

He quit the role again this month, saying he needed to reduce his workload.

The batting mainstay as well as pace bowlers Afridi and Naseem



Newly appointed white-ball skipper Mohammad Rizwan addresses a press conference in Lahore yesterday. Pakistan appointed Rizwan as skipper for the white-ball tours of Australia and Zimbabwe, replacing Babar Azam who stepped down this month. (AFP)

were dropped by Pakistan for the last two Tests against England due to patchy form and the team secured a 2-1 series win on Saturday.

The trio will not feature in the matches against Zimbabwe which follow the Australian series.

Wicketkeeper-batsman Rizwan will be available for the Australia games and the Zimbabwe ODIs, but will be rested for the T20Is, with Agha stepping in for him.

Pakistan will play three ODIs and three T20Is against both Australia and Zimbabwe. The Australia tour runs from Nov 4-18, and the games in Bulawayo will be played from Nov 24-Dec 5.

Pakistan squads:

Australia tour:

ODIs: Aamir Jamal, Abdullah Shafique, Arafat Minhas, Babar Azam, Faisal Akram, Haris Rauf, Haseebullah, Kamran Ghulam, Mohammad Hasnain, Mohammad Rizwan, Muhammad Irfan Khan, Naseem Shah, Saim Ayub, Salman Ali Agha, Shaheen Afridi.

T20Is: Arafat Minhas, Babar Azam, Haris Rauf, Haseebullah, Jahandad Khan, Mohammad Abbas Afridi, Mohammad Rizwan, Muhammad Irfan Khan, Naseem Shah, Omair Bin Yousuf, Sahibzada Farhan, Salman Ali Agha, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Sufyan Moqim, Usman Khan.

Zimbabwe tour:

ODIs: Aamir Jamal, Abdullah Shafique, Abrar Ahmed, Ahmed Daniyal, Faisal Akram, Haris Rauf, Haseebullah, Kamran Ghulam, Mohammad Hasnain, Mohammad Rizwan, Muhammad Irfan Khan, Saim Ayub, Salman Ali Agha, Shah Nawaz Dhanani and Tayyab Tahir.

T20Is: Ahmed Daniyal, Arafat Minhas, Haris Rauf, Haseebullah, Jahandad Khan, Mohammad Abbas Afridi, Mohammad Hasnain, Muhammad Irfan Khan, Omair bin Yousuf, Qasim Akram, Sahibzada Farhan, Salman Ali Agha, Sufyan Moqim, Tayyab Tahir, Usman Khan.
Coach: Gary Kirsten

COMMENT

Too much pressure on Ashwin, Jadeja, says India skipper Rohit



New Zealand's captain Tom Latham (left) is congratulated by his Indian counterpart Rohit Sharma at the end of the third day of the second Test in Pune on Saturday. (AFP)

Pune
Reuters

After a surprising series defeat by New Zealand, India's skipper Rohit Sharma said undue expectation was being put on front-line spinners Ravichandran Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja, as he called for more collective bowling efforts to win Test matches.

Rohit's side lost the opening match in Bengaluru by eight wickets and fell to a 113-run defeat in Pune on Saturday as the Black Caps celebrated their maiden test series win in India.

Ashwin and Jadeja had played key roles in helping India win 18 successive home series since 2012 but could not prevent the tourists from snapping that record, claiming only eight wickets together in the second game where the pitched assisted spin.

"There's too much expectation on those two guys. Every game they play, they are expected to take wickets, they are expected to run through the team and they are expected to win tests," Rohit told reporters.

"I don't think that's fair, it's the responsibility of all of us to make sure we get test wins, not just the two guys."

"Of course, by their standards, they know where they stand and what they haven't been able to do or what they haven't done really well."

Rohit said the duo were allowed to have bad games from time to time and he was not worried about their recent form.

"Both of them have played so much cricket here and have such huge contributions to our success of having that home streak of 18 series wins. These two have played a major role in that," Rohit added.

"A couple of series, I'm not going to look into too much, especially with those two guys... Sometimes they're allowed to have bad games here and there, and not go by that expectation that this is the opportunity to run through the opposition. That's not going to happen every time. So you've got to be ready with the other guys to step in."

The series finale takes place in Mumbai from Friday, before India head to Australia for a five-match series.

ANALYSIS

Left-field thought and patio heaters: How Pakistan turned series on its head

AFP
Rawalpindi, Pakistan

When Pakistan slumped to a sixth Test defeat in a row, by an innings as England piled up 823-7 in Multan just over two weeks ago, it sparked some soul-searching and a radical rethink.

A revamped Pakistan selection committee dropped out-of-form batsman Babar Azam, pace spearheads Shaheen Shah Afridi and Naseem Shah and instead turned to spin with instructions to ground-staff to produce pitches to match.

The feathered batsmen's paradise of the first Test at Multan was recycled, with the help of a dowsing by water and industrial fans, into a turning pitch for the second. Azam's replacement Kamran



Pakistan's Sajid Khan (right) and Noman Ali (second right) celebrate along with teammates as they walk off the field at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium in Rawalpindi on Saturday. (AFP)

Ghulam, prolific in the domestic game but hitherto ignored, rewarded the new selectors with a century on debut. But it was the recalled Noman Ali and Sajid Khan

who ripped England apart with spin, guile and a flourish as they took all 20 wickets on their way to a 152-run victory. More of the same was ordered for the series-

deciding third Test in Rawalpindi and Pakistan completed a remarkable turnaround by nine wickets on Saturday. The 2-1 triumph over England was their first home series win since February 2021.

"We were losing matches after matches, series after series because there was no plan," former Pakistan wicketkeeper batsman Kamran Akmal told AFP. "It's thanks to the PCB for thinking out of the box and selectors for picking the discarded spinners that this win was forced," said Akmal.

Pakistan took a punt using the same pitch for two Tests in a row in Multan.

But they pulled out all the stops in Rawalpindi, which had a reputation in the past of favouring seam bowlers, employing patio heaters and rakes to set up a spinning track. Noman and Sajid this time shared

19 wickets as England crumbled to 112 all out and Pakistan cruised to victory by nine wickets.

Former England captain Michael Atherton gave credit to Pakistan for finally finding a way to win after a dire spell in all formats of the game. "Pakistan now have a template to win at home," said Atherton, who was a TV commentator for the series. "You have got to be strong at home. Then you search for ways to adapt your game to win abroad." His TV colleague, another former England captain Nasser Hussain, said Pakistan "switched a plan mid-series and it's paid dividends". Pakistan has had five PCB chairmen in as many years, with 26 different selectors and six head coaches over that same period.

Hussain said as a result, their previous tactics "would last a week" before being chopped and

changed, ruling out an overarching strategy like the one that yielded two Test victories in a row.

"We met some fans who told us that they are happy that Pakistan at least have a plan now, even if it is an unorthodox one," said Hussain. "The win with a new plan has given them new joy."

The series victory is the first Shan Masood since he was appointed captain last year and has given him respite from calls for his resignation. But Pakistan will next play a two-match Test series in South Africa in December, where they have never won.

"We will need to plan and work hard for further progress and just not sit on this one win," warned Akmal. "A win will motivate everyone," he said. "I am sure this will lift our cricket and we will regain our glory of the past."

MOTOGP

Bagnaia wins wet Thai race to close gap on rival Martin

Japan's Ai Ogura gets crowned Moto2 world champion as he finishes second in a race won by Aron Canet

AFP
Buriram, Thailand

Francesco Bagnaia won the Thai MotoGP ahead of Jorge Martin in wet conditions yesterday to close the gap on the championship leader with two race weekends left.

Spaniard Martin's lead over Italian defending champion Bagnaia was cut from 22 points to 17 ahead of another chapter in their title tussle at Sepang in Malaysia next week.

Pedro Acosta was third at a rainy Buriram but this was all about Martin and Bagnaia, with the title now a two-horse race and likely to go right down to the wire.

After Malaysia, the season finale is at Valencia on November 15-17.

Pramac Ducati's Martin, who is trying to win the world crown for the first time, said he was happy to settle for second, coming home nearly three seconds behind.

"The level we are demonstrating - not a lot of people can understand how fast we are going even in these conditions," he said.

Bagnaia thanked his Ducati team for keeping his hopes of a third world title in a row alive.

The 27-year-old said he had never won in the rain before.



Prima Pramac Racing's Jorge Martin, Ducati Lenovo Team's Francesco Bagnaia, Pertamina Enduro VR46 Racing Team's Marco Bezzecchi and riders in action during the Thailand Grand Prix at Chang International Circuit, Buriram, Thailand, yesterday. **Right:** Francesco Bagnaia celebrates on the podium after winning the race. (Reuters/AFP)



"It was a day to make the difference and luckily we did it," he said.

"Wasn't an easy race, it was very long and stressful but as soon as I started my feeling was good.

"I knew it was important to make up points in the championship.

"It's a good day for us and 17 (gap in points) is a good number for me." Martin began the race on the

front row in third and made a lightning start to grab the lead from his pole-sitting rival.

But the 26-year-old did not stay there long, running wide to fall to third as Bagnaia took the lead with six-time MotoGP world champion Marc Marquez in hot pursuit.

It had developed into a duel between Bagnaia and Marquez at the halfway point of the 26-lap race,

with Martin struggling to keep up.

But Marquez pushed too hard in trying to take the lead and slid off on his Ducati.

That left the title rivals to battle it out for victory, but Bagnaia held his nerve and handled the demanding conditions to see out a crucial ninth win of the campaign.

"Was a really challenging race today," said Martin, who had a

couple of hairy moments but is still in the driving seat for the world crown.

"I don't want anybody to feel what I felt before the race," he said of the pressure to keep Bagnaia at bay, admitting he "felt the tension six or seven races ago".

"Being me and Pecco (Bagnaia) at this stage of the championship, with these conditions, is not good."

Bagnaia also started Saturday's sprint race on pole but ended up third, just behind Martin. Bagnaia's Ducati teammate Enea Bastianini won the sprint.

Earlier, Japan's Ai Ogura was crowned Moto2 world champion as he came second in a red-flagged race won by Spain's Aron Canet.

The 23-year-old Ogura will move up to MotoGP next season.

TENNIS

Olympic champion Zheng hails consistency after Pan Pacific win

AFP
Tokyo

Olympic champion Zheng Qinwen hailed her newfound consistency after capturing her third title of the year yesterday, beating Sofia Kenin in the Pan Pacific Open final in Tokyo.

China's Zheng beat American Kenin 7-6 (7/5), 6-3 to extend an impressive run of form this year for the world number seven.

The 22-year-old became the first Chinese player to win an Olympic singles tennis gold when she triumphed in Paris.

She also won in Palermo and finished runner-up in Wuhan and at the Australian Open.

Zheng struggled for consistency after losing to Aryna Sabalenka in Melbourne at the start of the year and she said it had forced her to re-evaluate her mindset.

"When I made the final at the Australian Open, everybody said it was really good but after I had ups and downs at the other tournaments," she said.

"I started to repair myself and start thinking again what kind of mentality I need."

Zheng, the top seed in Tokyo, kept her cool to edge a tight first set despite two rain delays, before pressing home her advantage to take the second comfortably.

She hit a total of 16 aces to finally lift the trophy having lost to Russia's Liudmila Samsonova in the final two years ago.

"I did some good preparation here," she said. "In all the matches I played there is only one with three sets, so I would say it's a quite successful tournament for me."



China's Zheng Qinwen kisses the winner's trophy after her victory over Sofia Kenin of the US in their singles final match at the Pan Pacific Open in Tokyo yesterday. (AFP)

Kenin injury scare
Kenin, the 2020 Australian Open champion, had an injury scare when she retired from her doubles semi-final on Saturday.

She played the final with heavy strapping on her upper leg and said she "felt it" but "Qinwen played well and deserved to win".

It was the world number 155's first final of 2024, and she was looking to end a title drought that stretches back more than four years.

"I expected nothing but the best from her because she's been having an amazing year and she's a top-10 player," said Kenin.

"I just wanted to see where I stand. I feel like overall it was a great match."

Neither player was allowed to get into a rhythm early in the match as rain twice brought play to a halt.

The roof was eventually closed and Zheng edged ahead with the slimmest of margins to take the first set in a tiebreak.

Backed by a large contingent of Chinese fans, the 22-year-old took control of the second set early.

She closed it out when Kenin hit a return that was called in but overturned when Zheng successfully appealed.

"I was pretty sure the ball was out because I saw the mark," said Zheng. "In my eyes it was far away but when the challenge came out it was really close, only a tiny bit."

Zheng had already qualified for next month's season-ending WTA Tour Finals in Saudi Arabia.

"It's tough to say if it's going to help me in Riyadh because every tournament is different," she said.

"The conditions change a lot. Of course it's going to help with my confidence."

SPOTLIGHT

Danilovic claims Guangzhou title

Reuters
Guangzhou

Serbian Olga Danilovic powered past American qualifier Caroline Dolehide 6-3 6-1 in the Guangzhou Open final yesterday to seal her first trophy of the season and second of her career.

World number 86 Danilovic, whose previous triumph came on clay in Moscow six years ago, grabbed a break in the fifth game of the first set in her maiden hardcourt final and overcame a late fightback from Dolehide to pull away.

"I'm so happy with the way I played during the tournament," said Danilovic.

"I'm so proud of myself and my team. I really showed what I can do. I'm very excited to be finishing the season this way."

After wrapping up the opener with a second break, the 23-year-old appeared distracted by movement in the stands and surrendered her serve early in the sec-



Serbia's Olga Danilovic kisses the trophy after winning against USA's Caroline Dolehide in the final match of Guangzhou Open. (AFP)

ond set, but responded strongly to build a 4-1 lead. Danilovic peppered her fatigued opponent with powerful shots for a double break and closed out the match on serve, finishing with a blistering forehand winner before a huge serve on her third match point.

QOC engages with World Taekwondo president on strategic collaboration initiatives

DOHA: Sheikh Khalifa bin Khalid al-Thani, Director of Sports Sector at the Qatar Olympic Committee (QOC), met with Dr Chungwon Choue, President of World Taekwondo and Chair of the Taekwondo Humanitarian Foundation (THF), on Saturday, in Doha. The meeting focused on exploring collaborative opportunities to leverage sport for social impact, with an emphasis on initiatives that support underserved communities. This dialogue builds on the ongoing engagement between QOC and the Olympic Refugee Foundation, where both QOC President HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani and Dr Choue serve as members. Discussions were rooted in a shared commitment to expanding opportunities for refugees through sport, reflecting the QOC's broader mission to use athletic programs as a vehicle for empowerment and positive change. "We were honoured to welcome Dr Choue to Doha and to deepen our discussions around



initiatives that align with Qatar's vision of sport as a powerful tool for social and cultural development," said Sheikh Khalifa bin Khalid al-Thani. "These conversations reaffirm our commitment to fostering inclusivity and opportunity through sport, both within Qatar and internationally." The QOC's engagement with World Taekwondo underscores its strategic approach to

building meaningful international partnerships that uphold Olympic values and contribute to global community development. Through such collaborations, the QOC aims to champion initiatives that offer hope and tangible opportunities for those in need, reinforcing Qatar's role as a key contributor to the Olympic Movement's humanitarian mission.

4th Qatar Arabian Horse Show For Local Bred: Bilal Al Jassimya triumphs



Bilal Al Jassimya was winner in the Yearling Colts (Class 4B) among the various categories on the opening day of the 4th Qatar Arabian Horse Show For Local Bred at the indoor arena of Al Shaqab yesterday. Saeed Hamad al-Rashidi, Deputy Stable Manager at QREC, crowned winners of this class. The two-day show will conclude today with the championships in all categories.

Pictures: Juhaim

