



Pakistan appoint Rizwan white-ball skipper, Azam recalled



Salah's late equaliser earns Liverpool 2-2 draw at Arsenal

FOOTBALL | Page 4



Monday, October 28, 2024 Rabia II 25, 1446 AH

GULF®TIMES SPORT



MOTORSPORT

Bagnaia wins wet Thai MotoGP to close gap on title rival Martin

Page 3

FIP WORLD PADEL CHAMPIONSHIPS

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

By Sports Reporter

Doha

he draw for the 2024 FIP
World Padel Championships, held at the Khalifa International Tennis
& Squash Complex in Doha yesterday, saw holders Spain and 11time 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 Alhijji, 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

"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 secondplace 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

n 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 fourthplaced 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.

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 Motasem 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

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

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.





ANNOUNCEMENT

Rizwan named Pakistan captain, big names back

Babar Azam, Shaheen Afridi and Naseem Shah win recalls

Reuters Lahore

akistan 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 state-

"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

Babar stepped down as skipper in all three formats last year after Pakistan failed to make the knockout stage of the 50-overs World Cup, before returning as whiteball 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 re-

duce 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 Satur-

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

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

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 Danival, Faisal Akram, Haris Rauf, Haseebullah, Kamran Ghulam, Mohammad Hasnain, Mohammad Rizwan, Muhammad Irfan Khan, Saim Ayub, Salman Ali Agha, Shahnawaz Dahani 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 Mogim, 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

fter a surprising series defeat by New Zealand, India's skipper Rohit Sharma said undue expectation was being put on frontline 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 sponsibility 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

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

ANALYSIS

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

Rawalpindi, Pakistan

hen 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 soulsearching 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 groundstaff to produce pitches to match.

The featherbed 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

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

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)

> 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

Buriram, Thailand

■rancesco 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 champion-

"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

"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 Bas-

tianini 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

lympic 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

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 sever

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 reevaluate 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 155s first final of 2024, and she was

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.

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."

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 (OOC), 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 OOC and the Olympic Refuge Foundation, where both OOC President HF Sheikh Joaan 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



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

4th Qatar Arabian Horse Show For Local Bred:

Bilal Al Jassimya triumphs

tional partnerships that uphold Olympic values and contribute to global community develop-

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.

"I was pretty sure the ball was looking to end a title drought that stretches back more than four out because I saw the mark," said Zheng. "In my eyes it was far away "I expected nothing but the best





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

SPOTLIGHT

Danilovic claims Guangzhou title

Reuters Guangzhou

erbian 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

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.

PREMIER LEAGUE

Salah strikes late as Liverpool snatch draw at Arsenal

West Ham pile more pressure on Ten Hag, Palmer fires Chelsea to victory

AFP London

ohamed Salah's equaliser salvaged Liverpool a 2-2 draw at Premier League title rivals Arsenal yesterday, while Manchester United boss Erik ten Hag suffered another damaging defeat at West

Cole Palmer inspired Chelsea to a 2-1 victory over Newcastle and Tottenham were beaten 1-0 at Crystal Palace.

Liverpool began the weekend on top after winning 11 of their opening 12 games in all competitions under Arne Slot.

But a draw sees the Reds fall one point behind Manchester City at the top of the table, with Arsenal now five points adrift of the leaders in third. Bukayo Saka recovered from

a hamstring injury to start for Arsenal and gave the home side the perfect start with a stunning touch and finish from Ben White's pass on nine minutes

Virgil van Dijk quickly levelled from a corner, but Arsenal led again before half-time through Mikel Merino's header.

Liverpool improved after the break and got their reward when Darwin Nunez teed up Salah for his eighth goal of the season.

- Wasteful Man Utd - Ten Hag was left to rue a familiar lack of ruthlessness as a 2-1 defeat at the London Stadium will spark further speculation on how long he will be given to turn the Red Devils' fortunes around.

The visitors should have been out of sight by half-time.

Alejandro Garnacho hit the woodwork inside two minutes and Edson Alvarez also headed off his own crossbar. But it was Diogo Dalot who missed the biggest chance when the Portuguese international somehow fired over with the goal gaping after rounding Lukasz Fabianski.

Under-fire West Ham boss Julen Lopetegui showed his disgust with



Liverpool's Mohamed Salah celebrates scoring the team's second goal during the English Premier League match against Arsenal at the Emirates Stadium in London yesterday. (AFP)

the Hammers' first-half display by making three substitutions at the break. Crysencio Summerville was one of those introduced and he slid in to open the scoring against the run of play on 74 minutes.

Casemiro brought United level nine minutes from time with a header from point-blank range. But there was late drama when

VAR intervened for a foul on Danny Ings by Matthijs de Ligt. Jarrod Bowen smashed in the

resulting spot-kick to take West Ham above United, who sink to 14th in the table.

"We created so many chances, played so good football especially in the first half," said Ten Hag.

"Overall I had not so many criticisms of my team, apart from not

Chelsea moved up to fifth thanks to another match-winning display from Palmer.

The England international was the creator for the opening goal, despite not being credited with the assist, as his sumptuous ball over the top freed Pedro Neto, who picked out Nicolas Jackson to slot in his sixth goal of the season.

Newcastle are now winless in five league games as the pressure mounts on Eddie Howe ahead of a rematch against Chelsea in the League Cup on Wednesday.

The Magpies did get back on level terms before half-time as Alexander Isak tapped in Lewis Hall's cross at the end of a wellworked move. But Palmer took just two minutes into the second period to make the decisive impact with a driving run forward and powerful finish that beat Nick Pope at his near post.

Palace began the day in the relegation zone but were good value for the three points at Selhurst Park as Tottenham's struggles on the road continue.

Eberechi Eze's deft flick teed up Jean-Philippe Mateta to fire home the only goal. Eze had a second ruled out for offside in the second half, but Tottenham, without injured captain Son Heung-min, were toothless in attack.

"I'd be very surprised if they (Spurs supporters) were happy right now," said Tottenham bos Ange Postecoglou after his side slipped to eighth. "Why would I be happy? If I'm unhappy then they'll be unhappy."

LA LIGA

Mbappe and Real Madrid shaken by Clasico thrashing

espite Barcelona's rapid revival under Hansi Flick, Real Madrid were confident heading into Saturday's La Liga Clasico at the Santiago Bernabeu.

They had every reason to be. The reigning Spanish and European champions had gone 42 matches unbeaten in the league, one short of the all-time record held by their arch-rivals.

They flexed their muscles in midweek, thrashing Borussia Dortmund 5-2 in the Champions League with a sensational second-half display in which Vinicius Junior - who is tipped to win the Ballon d'Or today scored a hat-trick.

And this summer Madrid finally signed the player they craved for years, French superstar Kylian Mbappe, a devastating attacking threat seemingly destined to elevate them to an even higher plane.

That was president Florentino Perez's dream. Mbappe's too. The hotly anticipated Clasico, Mbappe's first, was the perfect stage for him and Madrid to put Barcelona in their place.

Flick's tactical approach, featuring an extremely high defensive line, also seemed ripe for Mbappe and Vinicius to pillage with their pace.

However Los Blancos were caught out time and time again by Barcelona's supremely welldrilled offside trap and were ultimately dismantled in the same way they had anticipated beating their opponent.

Robert Lewandowski's brace early in the second half stunned the Bernabeu and Lamine Yamal and Raphinha's strikes on the counter-attack helped Barcelona to a sensational 4-0 triumph to move six points clear at the top of La Liga.

The victory sent shockwaves through the capital and caused Madrid fans and media to launch an inquisition of their team.

Mbappe, who had two goals disallowed for offside, cut an extremely frustrated figure and is yet to settle at the club. The forward has six league goals this season in contrast to Lewandowski's 14.

"The star a cataclysm - a failure, stumbling eight times in Flick's offside trap. Shrunken and without venom, he's a worry," wrote Madrid newspaper AS. "Kylian Mbappe will not keep fond memories of his first Clasico with Real Madrid, instead he will try to turn the page as quickly as possible," added Marca.

"The goal was getting smaller and smaller for Kylian, and he could not find a way of beating (Barca goalkeeper) Inaki Pena."

Despite Ancelotti insisting Mbappe was "calm" ahead of the game, recent events may have taken a toll.

He is wrangling with former club Paris Saint-Germain over millions in back pay and was criticised in his homeland after not playing for France in recent Nations League fixtures.

Swedish media reported he is being investigated over an alleged rape in Stockholm following a trip there during the international break. Mbappe has dismissed the reports as "fake

Ancelotti insisted his team had not been sent back to square one. "I liked the first half, we have to follow that line," said the coach. "We don't have to throw everything in the bin, we just have to forget the last 30 minutes - we can't give up, we just have to learn. We came out of the last defeat well and we have to do the same, I am certain we will do better."

Madrid last lost in La Liga over a year ago, against Atletico Madrid, and Ancelotti tinkered his set-up afterwards, giving Jude Bellingham a hybrid role.

The England international had started the season up front and scored 10 goals in his first 10 games, but later helped shield the team defensively on the left.

This season Ancelotti has moved Bellingham out of attack to accommodate Mbappe, but has not yet found a permanent home for the midfielder.

Without the creativity and wisdom of Toni Kroos, who retired this summer, Madrid have been wildly inconsistent.

Fede Valverde has inherited Kroos's number eight shirt but despite taking a central role this season is struggling to set the tempo of matches. Mbappe might be more comfortable playing off the left flank, where he thrived at PSG, but that is also Vinicius's favourite position. Ancelotti has plen chew over in the weeks ahead while trying to ensure Barcelona do not race out of sight.



Real Madrid's Kylian Mbappe gestures during the La Liga match against Barcelona in Madrid on Saturday. (AFP)

BAYERN THUMP BOCHUM TO RETAKE TOP SPOT

Bayern Munich bounced back from Wednesday's Champions League drubbing in Barcelona, thumping rock-bottom Bochum 5-0 away to return to the league summit yesterday. Leipzig's 3-1 comeback win over Freiburg on Saturday sent them three clear atop the table overnight, but Bayern reclaimed the lead as five different players got on the scoresheet. Bayern may have

looked impressive going forward under coach Vincent Kompany but stumbled into the game having won just one of their last six in all competitions. Just days after former Munich coach Hansi Flick picked apart the high Bayarian line in Barcelona, Bayern were almost caught out again early. Oritz Broschinski sped past Minjae Kim and beat Manuel Neuer to the ball, but his shot was too soft, allowing

the Korean to clear the ball off the line. Olise gave Bayern the lead in simple fashion, curling a free kick over the Bochum wall and beyond the reach of goalie Patrick Drewes. who was well out of position. Bayern doubled up 10 minutes later again from a set piece, with Musiala getting his head to a Kimmich free kick. Bayern then cut loose in the second half, with Kane, Sane and Coman all scoring.

Yildiz drags Juve back from brink Kenan Yildiz fired Juve back from two goals down to draw 4-4 in an incredible clash at Inter Milan yesterday which allowed Napoli to extend their Serie A lead to four points. Yildiz came off the bench with around half an hour left at a packed and pulsating San Siro and brought third-placed Juve back from the dead with two superb finishes in the final 20 minutes.

QATAR DRIFT CHAMPIONSHIP

Makhseed, Jabsheh emerge as champions

By Sports Reporter

ith the participation of a strong line-up from the Gulf and the surrounding regions, the first round of the Qatar Drift Championship for the 2024/2025 season comes to a thrilling end at the weekend.

Spectators packed the stands at the dedicated drift track of Qatar Racing Club (QRC) marking a successful start to the season. The event, held under the patronage of QRC Chairman HE Sheikh Khalid bin Hamad al-Thani, spanned two days. The first day was allocated for qualifying trials, divided into two sessions where each competitor was given a single run to complete the track based on points set by the judging panel before the round began. Each run was evaluated, and the best attempt for each competitor was taken into account.

At the end of the first round, Kuwaiti driver Ali Makhseed led the standings with an impressive score of 88.67 points, only to later fall to second place as last season's champion, Ahmed al-Amri from Oman, took the lead with 93 points on his second attempt. This secured him the top spot in the qualifying round, earning him



Director of Organisers at Qatar Racing Club Khalifa al-Khayareen poses with the winners.

five points, while Makhseed received three points for second place. Kuwaiti driver Mohammed Khorshid took third place with two points, and the Omani driver Riyadh al-Mabsali claimed one point for finishing fourth. As for the standings in the local category, Qatari driver Saud al-Attiyah led, followed by his fellow countryman Mohammed al-Jaber, while Jordanians Yazan Jabsheh and Abdullah al-Muhtaseb finished in third and fourth places, respectively.

Based on the results of the qualifying

trials, drivers were placed in a tandem battle bracket held on Friday. The first round saw intense head-to-head matches, with Ahmed al-Amri, the qualifying leader, advancing after his opponent Fahad al-Jadai faced issues. Nasser al-Mutairi managed to defeat al-Jaber, and Salem al-Sarraf overcame al-Muhtaseb. Khalid al-Shafai, who placed 13th in the qualifying, succeeded in eliminating the 4th-placed Riyadh al-Mabsali.

On the other side of the bracket, Makhseed won against Mazen Nasser, while



Action from the first round of the Qatar Drift Championship.

Jabsheh outperformed Louay Abu Ayyash. Completing the lineup for the second round were Mohammed Khorshid and Hamza al-Naamnah, who defeated Mohammed al-Azmi and Saud al-Attiyah, respectively.

As a result, Jabsheh was crowned champion of the local category, with al-Shafai taking second place while the third spot on the podium went to the local qualifying leader al-Attiyah. Last season's champion for this category, Ali Jabsheh, did not participate in this round.

In the second-round battles of this round, both al-Amri and al-Sarraf secured their spots in the first semi-final. Al-Amri advanced by defeating Nasser al-Mutairi,

while al-Sarraf moved forward by overcoming Khalid al-Shafai. Makhseed also advanced to the last four stage defeating Ali Jabsheh, with Khorshid completing the semi-final lineup by winning his battle against Hamza al-Naamnah.

Salem al-Sarraf defeated last season's champion Ahmed al-Amri in the first semi-final, while Makhseed defeated Mohammed Khorshid in the second semifinal. The much-anticipated final showdown between Makhseed and al-Sarraf, however, was cut short due to issues faced by al-Sarraf, who settled for second place, while Makhseed claimed victory in the first round after years of absence from competition.