

To subscribe
GULF TIMES
Newspaper
Please call
444 666 35



CRICKET | Page 2

Kirsten resigns as Pakistan coach before Australia tour



FORMULA 1 | Page 3

Sainz wins as Norris makes most of Verstappen penalty

To advertise here,
PLEASE CALL
444 666 21

Tuesday, October 29, 2024
Rabia II 26, 1446 AH

GULF TIMES

SPORT

FOOTBALL

Man United sack Ten Hag, Van Nistelrooy appointed interim manager

Page 4

FIM BAJAS WORLD CUP

Al-Balooshi, Megre and Prata locked in three-way battle for title

By Sports Reporter
Doha

MX Ride Dubai's Mohammed al-Balooshi and his Portuguese rivals David Megre and Pedro Bianchi Prata are locked in a three-way battle for supremacy in the FIM Bajas World Cup as the eight-round series heads to Qatar this week.

The Qatar Motor and Motorcycle Federation (QMMF) is hosting the fifth round of the series from October 30th to November 2nd and the event has attracted 62 motorcycle riders and five quads competing under the auspices of the FIM.

Al-Balooshi (KTM) and Megre (Kawasaki) are currently tied on 47 points apiece with four rounds still to run in Qatar, Portugal, Jordan and Dubai. Prata is a mere four points behind in third place in the 450cc standings on his Honda CRF 450RX.

Martin Ventura and Bruno Santos have not made the trip to Qatar and their absence has opened the door for Kuwait's Abdullah al-Shatti, Saudi rider Abdulhalim al-Mogheera and Lebanon's Rafic Eid to close in on the top three from their current positions of sixth, seventh and 10th in the championship standings.

Poland's Filip Grot has a 16-point lead in the Junior category on his Gas Gas 450



Mohammed al-Balooshi in action at last weekend's Qassim Rally in Saudi.

Rally and has the perfect opportunity to extend that advantage in the absence of Ventura and Edgar Canet.

Prata is the clear favourite to win the

Veteran category as well as challenging for the overall FIM Bajas World Cup. Eid will also be chasing Veteran honours and both the Duust Rally Team's Slawomir Sypie

and Australian Andrew Houlihan will be present in Doha.

Sypien's Duust Rally Team colleague Joanna Modrzewska will be looking for valuable points in the Women's category on her Husqvarna FE450.

Saudi Arabian riders have dominated the quad section of the FIM Bajas World Cup this season and Haitham al-Tuwaijri takes a four-point cushion over Abdulaziz al-Shayban into the Qatar event. Hani al-Noumesi and Abdulaziz al-Atawi are third and sixth in the points' standings and are also entered in Qatar. Al-Shayban got the better of al-Tuwaijri to win last weekend's Qassim Rally in Saudi Arabia.

The remainder of the world-class motorcycle field is made up of riders from the UAE, Poland, Lebanon, Qatar, Great Britain, Saudi Arabia, India, Slovenia, Portugal, Germany, Ireland, South Africa, France, Croatia, Italy, China, Canada, Mexico and the USA all chasing honours at the Qatar International Baja.

Isle of Man TT legend James Hillier is present on a Husqvarna 450 and the vast list of names also includes talented Slovenian Simon Marcic, Gulf-based Australian Martin Chalmers and the Irish trio of Oran and Tiarnan O'Kelly and Michael Stafford.

Saudi Arabia's Mishal al-Ghuneim is a regular face on desert rallies and he is joined by fellow countrymen Badr al-

Hamdan, Abdulrahman al-Medaihesh and Ibrahim al-Jarallah in a strong GGC field that also features Qatar's Abdulattif Mojadam, Abdulrahman al-Sheeb and Mohammed al-Thani.

There has been massive interest shown from Great Britain and a list of 13 riders includes Jason Joslin, Robert Wallace, Motozone Racing's Alex McInnes, Chris Hamer, Makis Rees-Stavros, Neil Worsley, Carl and Chris Searles and Patrick Heffron.

The Qatar International Baja event is being organised by the QMMF under the chairmanship of QMMF President Abdulrahman al-Mannai, QMMF's Executive Director Amro al-Hamad and board member Abdulrazaq al-Kuwari.

Motorcycle action gets underway with a timed Prologue stage of 9.9km starting at 13.45hrs on Thursday (October 31st).

FIM Bajas World Cup - latest positions: 450

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------|
| 1. Mohammed Al-Balooshi (ARE) | 47pts |
| 2. David Megre (PRT) | 47pts |
| 3. Pedro Bianchi Prata (PRT) | 43pts |
| 4. Martin Ventura (PRT) | 36pts |
| 5. Bruno Santos (PRT) | 35pts |
| 6. Abdullah al-Shatti (KWT) | 30pts |
| 7. Abdulhalim al-Mogheera (SAU) | 27pts |
| 8. Tosha Schareina (ESP) | 25pts |
| 9. Edgar Canet (ESP) | 20pts |
| 10. Rafic Eid (LBN) | 20pts |

FOOTBALL

Rodri, Bonmati win Ballon d'Or awards

'A VERY SPECIAL DAY, FOR ME, MY FAMILY AND MY COUNTRY'

AFP
Paris

Manchester City and Spain midfielder Rodri yesterday won the men's Ballon d'Or award after winning a fourth consecutive Premier League title and Euro 2024.

Rodri, 28, played a key role as City held off Arsenal to win the Premier League title last season and was named player of the tournament at Euro 2024 as unfancied Spain emerged triumphant in Germany. The Madrid native is the first defensive midfielder to win the Ballon d'Or since Lothar Matthaues in 1990 and the third Spaniard to claim the prize after Alfredo Di Stefano (1957 and 1959) and Luis Suarez (1960).

"A very special day, for me, my family and my country," Rodri said in acceptance speech. He thanked his partner Laura, saying today is their eighth anniversary.

Meanwhile, Barcelona and Spain star Aitana Bonmati won her second successive women's Ballon d'Or, after leading her club to a historic continental quadruple of titles and claiming the Nations League with her country. The 26-year-old playmaker joins teammate Alexia Putellas as the only women to win the Ballon d'Or twice, since the award's inauguration in 2018.

"This cannot be achieved alone, I am very lucky to be surrounded by players who make me better every day," Bonmati said after receiving the award. "Thanks to the staff, to the club workers, without you we would not achieve so much success."

Already considered an all-time great of the women's game, Bonmati was the stand-out performer as Barcelona romped to a trophy-laden 2023/24 season. The Catalans won every trophy available to them last term - the Spanish league, the Copa de la Reina, the Supercopa de Espana and a second-successive Women's Champions League.

Bonmati scored a goal and put in a player-of-the-match performance as Barcelona beat Lyon 2-0 in the final of the Champions League to claim their third title in four seasons.

REAL MADRID BOYCOTT BALLON D'OR AFTER VINICIUS SNUB

Meanwhile, Real Madrid boycotted the Ballon d'Or ceremony after they were convinced that their striker Vinicius, the bookmakers' favourite to win the men's award, was snubbed. The club said it questioned the methods behind the selection of the Ballon d'Or winner, saying that their defender Dani Carvajal, another of the 30 players nominated, had also been unfairly overlooked.

Carvajal scored the opening goal in the 2024



Rodri played a key role as Manchester City held off Arsenal to win the Premier League title last season and was named player of the tournament at Euro 2024 as unfancied Spain triumphed. (AFP)



Barcelona and Spain's Aitana Bonmati won her second successive women's Ballon d'Or. (AFP)

Champions League final against Borussia Dortmund and Brazilian Vinicius rounded off the 2-0 win at Wembley with the second goal. The Ballon d'Or is awarded by a jury of journalists representing the top 100 nations in the FIFA rankings.

"If the award criteria doesn't give it to Vinicius as the winner, then those same criteria should point to Carvajal as the winner," Real Madrid said. "As this was not the case, it is clear that Ballon d'Or-UEFA does not respect Real Madrid. And Real Madrid does not go where it is not respected."

The Ballon d'Or organisers decided to innovate this year by keeping the winner's identity a secret until the very end, to avoid any leaks to the press and all the nominees were invited to ceremony in the French capital. In previous years, the winner was revealed a few days before the awards ceremony.

In response to Real Madrid's boycott - which was announced as the nominees were gathering for the glitzy ceremony at a Paris theatre - the organisers insisted that "no player or club" knew in advance who has won the award.

"All the clubs and players are in the same boat," a Ballon d'Or source said.

BALLON D'OR 2024 AWARD WINNERS

- Men's Player of the Year:** Rodri
- Women's Player of the Year:** Aitana Bonmati
- Men's Coach of the Year:** Carlo Ancelotti
- Women's Coach of the Year:** Emma Hayes
- Men's Club of the Year:** Real Madrid
- Women's Club of the Year:** Barcelona Femini
- Gerd Muller Trophy:** Harry Kane and Kylian Mbappe (Both with 52 goals)
- Kopa Trophy for the men's young player:** Lamine Yamal
- Socrates Award:** Jennifer Hermoso

SPOTLIGHT

Qatar star Afif eyes second AFC Player of the Year award

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Qatar talisman Akram Afif could become the first player from his nation to win the AFC Player of the Year accolade twice, following a sensational 2023/24 campaign.

Nominated for a second occasion, the 2019 recipient will fancy his chances of a repeat triumph at the AFC Annual Awards, which will be held today in Seoul.

Afif spearheaded Qatar's stunning defence of the AFC Asian Cup earlier this year, claiming the Most Valuable Player and YiLi Top Scorer prizes, while he was named Best Player in the Qatar Stars League after helping Al Sadd SC to a record 17th league title.

The mercurial forward could also become only the third man to win the award more than once after Japan's Hidetoshi Nakata (1997, 1998) and Uzbekistan's Server Djeparov (2008, 2011) - an achievement he will cherish.

"I am very happy to be nominated again and it is something very special, there are no words to describe how grateful and happy I am," Afif told *the-AFC.com*.

"I hope that I can be the third player to win it twice and also the first Qatari to do so; it would

mean a lot to me and I could make history in Qatar."

The 27-year-old will face stiff competition though from first-time nominees Yazan al-Naimat and Seol Young-woo.

Al-Naimat was part of Jordan side that reached their maiden AFC Asian Cup Final and also scored their sole goal there.

For Seol, 2023/24 was a breakout season as the dynamic full-back made his Taeguk Warriors debut and starred at the Asian Cup, having helped hometown club Ulsan HD win a second straight K League 1 crown and reach the last four of the AFC Champions League 2023/24. Seol has since embraced a new journey by joining Serbian giants Crvena Zvezda in July.

Seol, the first South Korean nominee since Ha Dae-sung in 2013, said: "There are many more outstanding players than me in the Korea Republic and the fact that I have been nominated is such a privilege. I am not sure if I deserve this award yet; however, if I do receive it, I would like to think that it is not because I am an outstanding player, but rather a reminder that I should contribute even more to the development of Korean football in the future."

The trio were all quick to pay tribute to their support system for spurring them on.



Akram Afif spearheaded Qatar's stunning defence of the AFC Asian Cup earlier this year, claiming the Most Valuable Player award.

2032 OLYMPICS

Brisbane stadium U-turn likely after election

Reuters
Brisbane

The impassioned debate over the main stadium for the 2032 Brisbane Olympics looks set to be reignited in the wake of a change of government in the state of Queensland at the weekend.

David Crisafulli was sworn in as the new Premier of the state yesterday after the victory of his Liberal National Party at the polls and he has already promised a new plan for the showpiece arena by early February.

"I spent a considerable amount of time talking to the prime minister about that ... and I reckon we can get a good outcome," Crisafulli told reporters after a phone call with Prime Minister Anthony Albanese on Sunday.

"Within 100 days, Queenslanders will see a plan that they are proud of and, in doing so, we can restore faith in that process."

The issue of a main Olympic stadium has been the very definition of a political football in northeastern Australian state since Brisbane was awarded the Games in 2021.

Local politicians have been looking to balance the price of a stadium suitable to host the opening ceremony and athletics at Australia's third Olympics with the cost-of-living crisis many in the state have been enduring.

The original plan was a A\$2.7bn (\$1.78bn) revamp of Brisbane's Gabba cricket stadium but Crisafulli's predecessor as premier, Steven Miles, blanched at the cost and ordered a review of plans last December.

Proposed a new purpose-built 55,000-seat Olympic stadium

The review reported in March and proposed a new purpose-built 55,000-seat Olympic stadium be constructed in an inner city park at a cost of A\$3.4bn.

Miles rejected the recommendation, again on the grounds of



A view of the Brisbane Cricket Ground, a potential location for athletics competitions and the opening and closing ceremonies for the 2032 Olympic Games bid for Brisbane on June 30, 2021. (Reuters)

cost, and instead decided rugby stadium Lang Park would host the ceremonies with the track and field

shunted out to the QSAC athletics ground in southern suburbs of the city. Australian athletics great

Raelene Boyle responded by saying Brisbane was planning a "cheap-skate" Games and a group of local

Olympic champions said in a letter to the government that using the QSAC site would be an "embarrassment" for the state.

Crisafulli agreed but is on the record as opposing a new stadium being built so it may be that a modified form of the original plan to refurbish the Gabba is the most likely option.

That would also meet with the approval of Olympic chiefs, who awarded Brisbane the Games under the International Olympic Committee's (IOC) "New Norms" process.

The process is a more targeted procedure aimed at saving hundreds of millions of dollars for host cities and increasing long-term sustainability.

Eight years out from the Games, some 80% of the venues are already in place with the main stadium and a federal government-funded A\$2.5 billion arena in Brisbane to host the swimming the only two major construction projects planned.

FOCUS

Pakistan cricket rocked as coach Kirsten resigns

The former South Africa Test star replaced by Test coach Gillespie

AFP
Lahore, Pakistan

Pakistan's white-ball head coach Gary Kirsten resigned yesterday after just six months in the job and a week before a tour of Australia begins.

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) said the former South Africa Test player would be replaced by Test coach Jason Gillespie for the tour, in a statement offering no reason for Kirsten's departure.

Media reports said both coaches had been unhappy after a recent PCB decision to shut them out of the squad selection process. Kirsten has made no public statement about his resignation.

In the past two years, Pakistan cricket has cycled through several coaches, three board heads, four captains and numerous formats of its domestic competition.

Analysts say the instability has sabotaged chances of success on the field.

Last week's 2-1 Test triumph over England was Pakistan's first home series win since February 2021.

On Sunday, Pakistan appointed Mohammad Rizwan as skipper for the white-ball tour of Australia and Zimbabwe, replacing Babar Azam who stepped down this month.

Pakistan open the Australia tour with three one-day internationals in Melbourne (November 4), Adelaide (November 8) and Perth (November 10) followed by three Twenty20s. Kirsten played



101 Tests and 185 one-day internationals for South Africa before coaching India to win the 50-over World Cup in 2011.

Meanwhile newly appointed Pakistan captain, Mohammad Rizwan yesterday expressed optimism about his team's chances of success in the upcoming white-ball tour of Australia.

Despite a recent 0-3 Test series loss to the Aussies in January this year, Rizwan believes that Paki-

stan can turn the tables.

He highlighted the team's competitive performances in the Test series against England, suggesting that crucial mistakes at key moments led to their defeat.

Rizwan is determined to address these recurring issues and ensure a stronger showing in the limited-overs matches.

"There's no doubt that we've faced difficulties in Australia because when you look at the past results, they show that we had

some trouble there. But I believe the team going now will meet the nation's expectations," Rizwan said in a PCB podcast.

"In the last series we played in Australia, every match was almost ours to win, but we lost very closely. We have noticed a few things and will work on them when we go there, taking positives from it. Inshallah, Australia ko Australia mein haraenge (God willing, we'll defeat Australia in Australia)," he further added.

CRICKET

Skipper Marsh and Test regulars to skip Pakistan T20 series



Mitch Marsh



Josh Inglis

Reuters
Sydney

Australia's Twenty20 captain Mitchell Marsh and his Test teammates will skip the three-match series against Pakistan in November as they prepare for the blockbuster clash against India in the longest format of the game.

None of Australia's Test regulars were included in the squad for the matches in Brisbane, Sydney and Hobart when it was announced yesterday, leaving them free to prepare for the start of the first Test against India in Perth on Nov. 22.

Cricket Australia said some T20 players could join the test squad after the final T20 at Bellerive Oval on Nov. 18, but head selector George Bailey later said that was just a contingency plan in case of injuries.

"We've been really clear that we are prioritising the preparation for individuals around the test summer," Bailey said.

"We were just being clear that if (something) does shift, that we can get someone across to Perth."

That will be a blow for the likes of Josh Inglis and Glenn Maxwell, who might have held out some hope of a Test call-up to fill the batting spot left open by the season-ending injury to Cameron Green.

Steve Smith will drop down the

order to replace the all-rounder at number four in the test side, leaving a vacancy in the opening partnership alongside Usman Khawaja. Bailey, however, said the selectors did not see Inglis as a potential Test opener.

"I don't think that he's someone that we'd be looking to place at the top of the order, but there's no doubt that his form is really fantastic at the moment," he said.

"He would firmly come into the mix purely as a batter ... and I think if the right opportunity opened up throughout the summer ... in the spots where we think he's most capable of performing, then I think he'd be firmly in that conversation."

Seamers Xavier Bartlett, Nathan Ellis and Spencer Johnson all return to the T20 squad after injuries sustained before or during the white-ball tour of England and Scotland in September.

Bailey said the captain of the team would be announced closer to the opening match of the series at the Gabba on November 14. "I think there's a number of players with the ability to captain, and some that have had some captaincy experience as well," he added.

Australia squad: Sean Abbott, Xavier Bartlett, Cooper Connolly, Tim David, Nathan Ellis, Jake Fraser-McGurk, Aaron Hardie, Josh Inglis, Spencer Johnson, Glenn Maxwell, Matthew Short, Marcus Stoinis, Adam Zampa.

BOTTOMLINE

'Olympus has fallen': India media fears end of an era after New Zealand loss



India's Yashasvi Jaiswal and teammate Shubman Gill during the third day of the second Test against New Zealand in Pune on Saturday. (@BCCI)

AFP
Pune, India

Indian media feared on Sunday that the cricketing powerhouse's first home Test series defeat in 12 years might herald the end of a golden era of players such as Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma.

India went down to New Zealand by 113 runs inside three days in the second Test in Pune on Saturday as the Black Caps took an unbeatable 2-0 lead in the three-match series.

It was New Zealand's first Test series win on Indian soil since they began touring there in 1955.

Tom Latham's men ended India's record of 18 consecutive bilateral home series wins, the home team's previous series loss coming against England in December 2012.

"End of a golden era for Rohit Sharma's India as Tom Latham does an Edmund Hillary," a headline in the *Indian*

Express newspaper said, likening the visitors' achievement to their countryman's ascent of Mount Everest in 1953.

"Beyond the group that miserably lost the Test series against New Zealand, does India have worthy replacements?" an opinion piece in the same paper said.

"Not really, this is all we have and that is a real cause of concern for Indian cricket."

"... Rohit and Virat were woefully out of touch, their best years behind them." Others expressed similar fears.

"Olympus Has Fallen," *The Times of India* declared on its front page.

Skipper Rohit and Kohli were among India's batting failures against a New Zealand spin attack led by Mitchell Santner.

India's batting collapses in the series included 46 all out in the first innings of the opening Test and then 156 in the second.

Rohit fell for a duck and eight in the second Test while Kohli made one and 17, falling both times to Santner's left-

arm spin. Rohit played down the losses against New Zealand.

"We are allowed one such performance in 12 years," he said.

"I don't want to do too much of a post-mortem."

However, the series defeat "has cast a spotlight on the futures of Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma, and their careers," the *Hindustan Times* said.

"Watching him (Kohli) bat has become more frustrating than anything else. It's hard to believe this is the same player who, not long ago, seemed nearly indestructible."

"King Kohli" has hit just one half-century and has three single-digit scores in five Tests this year.

New Zealand in contrast played spin with aplomb, with Devon Conway scoring 76 and Rachin Ravindra 65 in the first innings in Pune.

India's disappointing show has left them grappling for quick answers ahead of a five-Test tour of Australia starting next month.

SPOTLIGHT

Hayya, Doha Marathon by Ooredoo sign deal



Ooredoo, Qatar's leading telecommunications and ICT services provider, has formed a strategic partnership with Hayya to manage international visitors attending Ooredoo's major events.

In addition to streamlining the visa process, Ooredoo will offer its eSIM activation service with every tourist visa issued through the Hayya platform, ensuring that international visitors can stay connected from the moment they arrive.

This collaboration aims to offer a seamless entry experience to the State of Qatar, allowing attendees to focus on enjoying their experience in Qatar at upcoming events such as M360 and the Doha Marathon by Ooredoo.

The partnership was officially signed at Ooredoo's headquarters on Sunday, 27 October 2024, by Sabah Rabiah al-Kuwari, Director of Public Relations, CSR & Sponsorship at Ooredoo Qatar, and Saeed al-Kuwari, Director of Hayya. Through this agreement, Hayya will serve as the central hub for managing international participants, ensuring a streamlined and user-friendly process that aligns with Ooredoo's commitment to enhancing our guest experiences.

"We are thrilled to be partnering with Hayya to ease the visa process for our international guests," said Sabah Rabiah al-Kuwari. "With this partnership, not only will visitors benefit from a smooth and efficient visa application process, but they will also enjoy im-

mediate access to Ooredoo's eSIM services, allowing them to stay connected throughout their time in Qatar.

"As we prepare for exciting events like M360 and the Ooredoo Doha Marathon, we are proud to make every aspect of our visitors' journey as simple and enjoyable as possible."

Hayya, renowned for its comprehensive digital platform that simplifies travel and event management, will support Ooredoo by streamlining the application process through its mobile app and platform.

Saeed al-Kuwari highlighted the significance of this partnership: "Our collaboration with Ooredoo represents a step forward in facilitating international participation

at Qatar's premier events. By simplifying visa procedures, Hayya is helping make Qatar's events more accessible and welcoming to visitors from all over the world."

This partnership comes at a crucial time, as Ooredoo prepares to host two of its most anticipated events —M360 MENA, a global telecommunications and digital innovation conference taking place in November and the Ooredoo Doha Marathon, a signature sporting event that attracts participants worldwide in January. These events are expected to draw significant international attention, and the new partnership will ensure that visa processing is one less worry for attendees, allowing them to focus on their participation and enjoyment.

FORMULA ONE

Sainz wins in Mexico, Norris closes gap on Verstappen

Ferrari now second in the championship as Verstappen finishes sixth after slapped with two penalties

Reuters
Mexico

Ferrari's Carlos Sainz took an emotional win in the Mexico City Grand Prix on Sunday after Red Bull's Formula One leader Max Verstappen was twice penalised for clashes with title rival Lando Norris and finished sixth. McLaren's Norris, who called Verstappen 'dangerous' during the race, finished second to slash the triple world champion's overall advantage from 57 points to 47 with four rounds remaining.

Charles Leclerc, caught and passed by Norris with nine laps to go to deny Ferrari a second successive one-two, was third and took a bonus point for fastest lap.

The win was a first for Ferrari in Mexico since 1990 and fourth of Sainz's career.

"I really wanted to win this one. I needed it for myself. I said I wanted one more win for Ferrari and to do it here with this mega crowd is incredible," said the Spaniard, who is leaving for Williams at the end of the season.

Verstappen, who pitted from third place to serve two 10-second penalties on lap 27, had to fight back from 15th after starting on the front row with Sainz on pole position.

The Dutch driver had won five of the last six races in Mexico, including the last three editions, but has now not won for 10 races in a row.

Still the clear title favourite, he sounded unconcerned and un-



Ferrari's Spanish driver Carlos Sainz gets the chequered flag to clinch the Mexico City Grand Prix at the Hermanos Rodriguez racetrack, in Mexico City. (AFP)

repentant. "The biggest problem that I have is that today was a bad day in terms of race pace," said Verstappen.

Mercedes pair Lewis Hamilton and George Russell finished fourth and fifth respectively after a lively battle in the closing stages.

Haas had another good weekend with Kevin Magnussen seventh and Nico Hulkenberg ninth, with McLaren's Oscar Piastri sandwiched between in eighth.

Alpine's Pierre Gasly took the final point, moving the Renault-owned team closer to seventh-placed Williams.

McLaren stayed top of the constructors' standings, but only 29 clear of Ferrari.

TWO PENALTIES

Verstappen was again the talk of the afternoon, with stewards taking a hard line against him for forcing Norris off the track after a

controversial previous weekend in Texas where it paid off.

In Mexico as in Austin, it was the battle with Norris that provided the sparks.

"I was ahead the whole way through the corner," said Norris over the team radio after being forced off at turn four on lap 10. "This guy is dangerous. It's the same as last time. I'll be in the wall in a minute."

They clashed again at turn seven



Ferrari's Carlos Sainz Jr celebrates on the podium after winning the Mexico City Grand Prix. (Reuters)

on the same lap and Verstappen was ruled to have gained an advantage by leaving the track. "I respect Max as a driver but I was ready to expect something like this and this is not very clean driving in my opinion," Norris said later.

The safety car was deployed when RB's Yuki Tsunoda and Williams Alex Albon collided at the start, with the Japanese careering off with his rear right tyre bouncing down the track.

Red Bull's home posterboy Sergio Perez was handed a five-second penalty for a false start after the Mexican, who swept from 18th to 13th, lined up beyond the front of the marked box on the grid.

That was just the start of a scrappy afternoon for Perez, who fought a series of battles to try and

recover places but ended up 17th and last car running in front of a crowd of 154,142.

A clash with RB's Liam Lawson also left a large hole in the side of the Red Bull.

Verstappen had seized the lead from Sainz down the long opening straight but his advantage did not last long once the safety car came in on lap six, with the Spaniard taking back the lead three laps later with the help of drag reduction (DRS). Sainz finished 4.705 seconds clear of Norris, with Leclerc 34.387 behind his teammate after a late stop for fresh tyres to set the fastest lap. Aston Martin's Fernando Alonso retired with a cooling and brake issue on the 15th lap of his record 400th Formula One race.

TENNIS

Prize money attracted Alcaraz to Six Kings Slam

Reuters
Madrid

Spain's Carlos Alcaraz said yesterday the record prize money on offer at the Six Kings Slam in Saudi Arabia earlier this month was a motivation for playing in the tournament as the world number two prepares for the Paris Masters.

Italian rival Jannik Sinner dismissed earlier claims that he joined the exhibition event for financial rewards, emphasising that he went to Riyadh for the sporting challenge.

However, Alcaraz acknowledged the financial aspect played a role as he earned \$1.5mn over four days in mid-October.

"I love playing tennis. You know, most of the time I don't think about the money. I just play for love or for fun. But you have to be realistic. You have to think that you want to earn money, you know, and that's it," Alcaraz told reporters yesterday.

"...in Arabia is the most highest prize money ever in the history, so that was a good motivation, at least for me."

The Spaniard has not experienced much success at the Paris Masters in recent years, with a quarter-final appearance being his best result. Alcaraz captured the French Open and Wimbledon titles this year but said that the season has taken its toll.

"I haven't played good tennis



Tennis stars Rafa Nadal, Novak Djokovic, Carlos Alcaraz, Jannik Sinner, Holger Rune and Daniil Medvedev at the Kings Slam tournament with the Chairman of the General Entertainment Authority, Turki al-Sheikh.

here in this tournament. Probably at the end of the year, I have been tired, or yeah, as I said last year, I had to understand that the season is still going after September," he said. "The calendar is super tight, super demanding, as well. So coming to the last tournament of the year, probably I have been tired the last year, didn't play as well as I wanted, but coming to

this year, I think I'm feeling different," Alcaraz admitted Sinner has had the better year.

"For sure. I mean, (it) doesn't matter that I have beaten Jannik three times. Probably I didn't play good tennis in some tournaments. My percentage of wins this year is really, really high, but Jannik is another level this year," Alcaraz said. "(He has earned) over 91 per

cent of wins this year. So just (a) few players have done this before.

"But yeah, I think [all] players are looking for being more consistent during the year. In every tournament that you're going to play, you want to go far or as far as you can. That's my goal the next year. In the tournaments that I didn't play well or I didn't go as far as I wanted, just try to do it."

Fowler bags critical rankings points with best finish of '24

Florida: Rickie Fowler began the lengthy trip back to Florida from Japan yesterday, likely spending some of the time in the air contemplating whether to add further events to his fall schedule.

Fowler was 111th in the FedEx Cup Fall standings two weeks ago but vaulted up to No. 92 with a solo fourth place finish at the Zozo Championship on Sunday. That came on the heels of a T23 at the Shriners Children's Open and a T16 at the Sanderson Farms Championship.

The former United States Ryder Cup star committed to three fall events following an extended layoff in an attempt to improve his playing status for the 2025 season. Only three events remain in the eight-tournament FedEx Cup Fall schedule, and Fowler is not in the field at this week's World Wide Technology Championship in Mexico.

That would leave only the Butterfield Bermuda Championship and/or season-ending The RSM Classic for Fowler to improve his standing. He is planning to play in the Grant Thornton Invitational in mid-December, a mixed-team event co-sanctioned with the LPGA Tour that does not provide FedEx Cup points. The top 125 players in the standings will remain fully exempt for the 2025 season. Fowler is likely safely within the top 125, but those who finish the fall Nos. 51-60 will serve as the Aon Next 10



and gain entry into the first two signature events of 2025 at the AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am and The Genesis Invitational. While in Japan, Fowler was not specifically asked about whether he intends to add another event or two before the end of the year, but he was pleased with carding four rounds of 68 or better at the Zozo. That also helped him post at least one top-10 finish for the 16th consecutive year on the PGA Tour.

"Excited about the way I've been able to play the few events that I've played this fall," Fowler said after his 64 tied for the low round on Sunday. Not necessarily having my best, but being a lot of positives." The effort in Japan helped Fowler rise seven spots to No. 66 in the Official World Golf Ranking, but he still has work to do in order to qualify for marquee events outside of The Players next year. "This one was great being back kind of in contention," Fowler said Sunday.

FOCUS

Zainal named president of Padel Asia



Qatar Tennis, Squash and Badminton Federation's secretary-general Tariq Darwish Zainal (second left) with International Padel Federation's president Luigi Carraro (second right) and other officials at the 34th FIP General Assembly in Doha.

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Qatar Tennis, Squash and Badminton Federation (QTSBF)'s secretary-general Tariq Darwish Zainal was named as President of the newly-created Padel Asia yesterday.

The announcement was made at the International Padel Federation's 34th FIP General Assembly in Doha by Luigi Carraro, who was unanimously re-elected as President of the world governing body yesterday.

The meeting was held on the sidelines of the FIP World Padel Championships, which began in Doha yesterday.

Carraro after being endorsed by 85% of the assembly members for the president's post expressed his gratitude to QTSBF President Nasser al-Khelaiifi for his support for padel.

"Every time padel hosts a major event in Qatar, it marks a turning point for our sport, and for that, I thank him", Carraro said as he highlighted the sensational growth of padel.

On Qatar hosting the World Championships, Carraro said: "The FIP World Padel

Championships represent another leap forward; Qatar and its federation have been instrumental in transforming padel from a sport played in a few countries to a truly global one. Every major event here opens exciting new horizons for our discipline, and I have no doubt it will do so again this time."

The assembly also elected a new Board, while the 'Olympics Project' Advisor will be Santiago Brito, President of the Argentine Federation. French player Benjamin Tison will lead the Athletes' Commission.

Meanwhile, al-Khelaiifi stressed that Qatar's hosting of the World Padel Champion-

ship reflects its great commitment to supporting and developing padel sport at the local and international levels.

Al-Khelaiifi said that the Padel Championship, hosted by Qatar for a second time, witnesses the participation of the most prominent teams and padel players from different continents of the world, in a true embodiment of the great and increasing popularity that this sport enjoys in all parts of the world.

He added that Qatar seeks, through hosting such tournaments, to become the capital of sports and a model for hosting major sports tournaments in the world, especially in light of its possession of an advanced sports infrastructure and the extensive experience of its cadres in organizing various tournaments.

He continued: "Through this tournament, we celebrate the achievements of Qatari sports and the role that sports play in bringing together the different cultures of the world."

QATAR LOSE TO CHILE

Qatar were blanked 0-3 in a Group C fixture on the opening day of the FIP World Padel Championships at the Khalifa International Tennis and Squash Complex yesterday.

J Valdes and G Valdivieso Comesana gave Chile an early lead as they beat Mohammed Saadon al-Kuwari and Mohammed al-Khanji with a 6-2, 6-2 scoreline in 53 minutes. Later, S Munoz Campos and I A Lehyt Sances overcame Jabor al-Mutawa and Hassan Adel Waly 6-3, 6-2 in a match that stretched to 1 hour and 25 minutes. C Molina and C Martinez sealed Chile's victory by beating Abdulla Alhijji and Rayyan Aljufairi 6-2, 6-1 in 46 minutes.

Spain swept past Mexico in their men's Group B opening tie while the reigning champions Argentina beat Italy in Group A.

Kuwait to host Arabian Gulf Cup draw on Nov 9

Doha: The draw for the 26th Arabian Gulf Cup will take place on November 9. The competition will be held in Kuwait from December 21-January 3, 2025.

The draw ceremony will be attended by HE the Minister of Sports and Youth Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa bin Ahmed al-Thani - who is also the President of the Arabian Gulf Cup Football Federation (AGCFF), along with federation officials, delegations from the eight participating teams, and Gulf football stars.

Preparations are underway in Kuwait, with coordination meetings ongoing between the Arabian Gulf Cup Football Federation and the Supreme Organising Committee. Tournament committees will also convene on the sidelines of the draw to finalise their leadership and work programs. The 26th Arabian Gulf Cup will feature eight teams: Asian champions Qatar, Yemen, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the UAE, Kuwait, and Iraq.

The tournament will follow a two-stage format: a group stage followed by knockout rounds. The eight teams will be divided into two groups, with Kuwait and defending champions Iraq heading each group. The top two teams from each group will advance to the semi-finals, where the first-placed team in one group will face the second-placed team from the other. The semi-final winners will meet in the final match, where the champion will be crowned.

FOOTBALL

Man United sack manager Ten Hag

Former Red Devils striker van Nistelrooy named interim boss

AFP
Manchester

Manchester United sacked manager Erik ten Hag yesterday after a disastrous start to the season with former Red Devils striker Ruud van Nistelrooy named interim boss.

United dropped to a lowly 14th in the table after suffering their fourth defeat in nine league games at West Ham on Sunday and have won only one of their last eight games in all competitions. They are also 21st of 36 teams in the Europa League table, having drawn their three opening fixtures.

"Erik ten Hag has left his role as Manchester United men's first-team manager," said a club statement. "Erik was appointed in April 2022 and led the club to two domestic trophies, winning the Carabao (League) Cup in 2023 and the FA Cup in 2024. We are grateful to Erik for everything he has done during his time with us and wish him well for the future."

United added Van Nistelrooy, who returned to the club as Ten Hag's assistant in July, would now serve as interim manager while they went in search of a new full-time boss. Ten Hag's position had been repeatedly called into question after United co-owner Jim Ratcliffe kept him on board after an internal review at the end of last season when the club finished eighth in the Premier League.

The 54-year-old was even rewarded with a one-year extension of his contract to June 2026 after a shock FA Cup final victory over rivals Manchester City in May. Former Ajax boss Ten Hag, who joined United in May 2022, had fiercely defended his record in recent weeks after winning two trophies in his two full seasons in charge. United ended a six-year wait for silverware by beating Newcastle in the 2023 League Cup final.

The Red Devils also reached the FA Cup final and finished third in the Premier League in an encouraging debut season for Ten Hag. However, the wheels came off in his second season as injuries to key players, the lack of a meaningful impact from big money signings and Ten Hag's failure to implement a clear style of play led to a number of embarrassing results.

United crashed out of the Champions League at the group stage after defeats by Galatasaray and FC Copenhagen, while Bournemouth,



Ruud van Nistelrooy (left), who became Erik ten Hag's assistant in July at Manchester United, would now serve as club's interim manager. (Reuters)

Brighton and Fulham were among the other sides to win at Old Trafford in the 2023/2024 campaign. The implementation of a new sporting structure at United, spearheaded by Ratcliffe, saw widespread change over recent months off the field with the appointment of a new chief executive, sporting director and technical director.

But Ten Hag's surprise victory over Pep Guardiola's all-conquering City side at Wembley in the FA Cup final, saw him handed a stay of execution. He was further backed in the transfer market with the signings of Joshua Zirkzee, Manuel Ugarte, Matthijs de Ligt and Noussair Mazraoui taking the total spent in his reign to over £600mn (\$778mn), nearly half of which went on former Ajax players.

Yet, there was no improvement in United's fortunes as Liverpool and Tottenham coasted to 3-0 wins at Old Trafford in September. Former United captain Gary Neville said Ten

Hag had paid the price for an "unacceptable" league position. "The big shock for me is how bad they've been with the new signings that have come in," Neville said.

He added: "The fact that they are 14th is unacceptable. You can't be in 14th after nine or 10 games with the level of spend that's occurred without being under significant pressure - and that's what's happened."

Former England manager Gareth Southgate and ex-Barcelona coach Xavi are among the leading contenders to take charge at Old Trafford. For all Ten Hag's faults, he oversaw just a small period of United's more general decline since legendary former manager Alex Ferguson retired in 2013.

Since the Scot's departure, five permanent managers have now been dismissed without United even challenging for the Premier League title - a trophy they won 13 times under Ferguson.

SPOTLIGHT

Qatar is 'more than capable' of hosting 2036 Olympics: World Taekwondo president

By Sports Reporter
Doha

President of World Taekwondo Dr Chungwon Choue expressed confidence in Qatar's capability to host the 2036 Olympic Games, citing its "success and distinction in hosting major sporting events". "Qatar has great expertise in hosting major events, especially the Asian Games, which it hosted in 2006, and the FIFA World Cup 2022," Dr Choue told *Qatar News Agency*.

He reflected on his first visit to Qatar in 2006, during the Asian Games, and noted: "I was impressed by the excellent organisation. The games were highly successful by all standards."

Dr Choue, who is also the chairman of Taekwondo Humanitarian Foundation, praised Qatar's "outstanding and exceptional" organisation of the 2022 FIFA World Cup. "It was the event that was widely praised. Qatar has demonstrated it is more than capable of hosting an event of the Olympic Games' scale," he said.

He emphasised that "most of the tournaments organised by Qatar were exceptional and achieved

tremendous success on all levels."

Dr Choue expressed a belief that Qatar's taekwondo infrastructure and experience make it well-prepared to host international taekwondo competitions, saying: "Hosting one of the World Taekwondo Championships or the World Taekwondo Grand-Prix would not be difficult for Qatar."

He also noted the "significant development of taekwondo in the Middle East and GCC countries" and highlighted the regional importance of tournaments like the Fujairah International Open Taekwondo Championship, which will hold its 11th edition next year and is "one of the major open tournaments globally". He also pointed to Saudi Arabia's recent organisation of the first-ever World Taekwondo Women's Open Championships, saying: "All these tournaments will encourage the development of taekwondo in the Middle East."

The World Taekwondo chief also expressed pride in his collaboration with President of the Qatar Olympic Committee HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani, working to "make sports a tool for positive social impact," especially in supporting vulnerable communities and refugees.



President of World Taekwondo Dr Chungwon Choue with Qatar Paralympic Committee's Secretary-General Dr Hassan al-Ansari.

PEERLESS PSG BASK IN JOY OF VICTORY AFTER MARSEILLE MAULING



Paris Saint-Germain's Joao Neves (left) celebrates with Ousmane Dembele after scoring against Marseille. (AFP)

Marseille: Paris St Germain enjoyed every second of a ruthless 3-0 Ligue 1 away win over bitter rivals Olympique de Marseille on Sunday after a first-half performance featuring three goals and a red card for their hosts tilted the game in their favour.

The win puts the Parisians three points clear of AS Monaco at the top of the standings and six ahead of Marseille, who slumped to their sixth straight league defeat against the side from the French capital. "We started very well from the

first minute against an opponent who played well, we kept up the pressure, we had several clear chances," PSG coach Luis Enrique said.

With Marseille struggling and PSG having taken the lead through Joao Neves in the seventh minute, the game was ended as a contest when the home side's Amine Harit was shown a straight red card in the 20th minute. "With the sending-off, the game changed - it was more closed and also harder for our opponents, but we

continued to work," Luis Enrique said, and two more goals duly arrived before the break.

"In the second half, it was calmer, we could have scored even more. We dedicate this victory to the fans, we know that it is important for them, it is for us too," he added.

Previous incidents of crowd trouble between the two sets of fans meant the visitors were barred from bringing their supporters with them, but it made

little difference as PSG dominated from the off. "It's a good feeling, the joy. We always want to win here. To do that in this stadium is a special favour," midfielder Vitinha said.

"They got the red card early, we scored two goals in a row, it killed the game for them. We could have scored more goals, we'll have to keep creating chances, we need to convert," he continued. "We're happy, we won this game that has a special flavour."