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Pakistan's Sajid, Abrar demolish West Indies in first Test win



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Mbappe shines as Real thrash Las Palmas to claim lead

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GULF TIMES SPORT



TENNIS

Djokovic sets up Alcaraz clash, Sabalenka surges into Melbourne quarters

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PREMIER LEAGUE

Man Utd, Spurs sink again as Man City hit Ipswich for six

HIGH-FLYING NOTTINGHAM FOREST SURVIVE LATE DRAMA IN 3-2 WIN OVER SOUTHAMPTON



Manchester City's Erling Haaland celebrates scoring their fifth goal with teammates Kevin De Bruyne and Phil Foden during their Premier League match against Ipswich Town yesterday. (Reuters)



Brighton & Hove Albion's Georginio Rutter and Kaoru Mitoma celebrate after the match against Man United yesterday. (Reuters)

AFP
London

Manchester United slumped to a 3-1 defeat at home to Brighton as Old Trafford remembered the legendary Denis Law yesterday, while Tottenham's troubles also persisted as they lost 3-2 at Everton.

Manchester City roared back into form with a 6-0 thrashing of Ipswich, while Nottingham Forest's unlikely title challenge goes on after a 3-2 victory over Southampton took Nuno Espirito Santo's men level with second-placed Arsenal.

On an emotional day as United paid tribute to one of the club's greatest ever players in Law, Ru-

ben Amorim conceded this version of the Red Devils is the "worst team maybe in the history of Manchester United."

A thrilling 2-2 draw at Liverpool and FA Cup victory over Arsenal earlier this month look like another false dawn for United fans.

After Amad Diallo's late hat-trick papered over the cracks in a 3-1 win over bottom-of-the-table Southampton in midweek, Brighton exposed the glaring holes in the foundations of Amorim's United project.

Yankuba Minteh, Kaoru Mitoma and Georginio Rutter struck for the Seagulls, who won for the third consecutive season at Old Trafford. United remain 13th but enjoy a 10-point cushion over the bottom three.

"We can't be comfortable in

thinking that this is ok, because it is not," said United captain Bruno Fernandes.

"I'm not here to lose games and be in the position we are in at the moment."

Before kick-off, tributes were paid to Law, who is the third top scorer in United's history, with 237 goals in 404 appearances.

A piper played Scottish anthem "Flower of Scotland" as the teams walked out, with United legends Alex Ferguson, Brian Kidd, Paddy Crerand and Alex Stepney on the pitch as a eulogy was read out over the tannoy.

Tottenham are now winless in six league games after Everton boosted their survival chances with the first victory of David Moyes' second spell in charge.

The goal-shy Toffees had failed

to score in nine of their previous 11 league games but struck three times before the break.

Dominic Calvert Lewin's first goal since September opened the scoring before a brilliant individual run and finish from Iliman Ndiaye. Archie Gray's own goal compounded Tottenham's misery. Late goals from Dejan Kulusevski and Richarlison reduced Spurs' deficit but could not prevent a 12th defeat in 22 games.

"It is a challenging situation for sure, when you are losing players the amount we are at the moment," said under-fire Tottenham boss Ange Postecoglou, who was without 10 first-team regulars.

"It's up to me to get us out of it and I've got to be good enough to do that."

Everton pull four points clear of

the bottom three and within four points of 15th-placed Tottenham.

City began the day in eighth, but looked much more like their old selves in smashing Ipswich to climb back into the top four.

Phil Foden continued his fine form with two first half goals, either side of Mateo Kovacic's strike.

Erling Haaland celebrated his nine-year contract extension by scoring in the second half, while Jeremy Doku and James McAtee were also on target for the defending champions.

Forest were equally rampant in the first 45 minutes to cut the gap on leaders Liverpool to six points and consolidate their lead in the race for a place in the Champions League next season.

Elliot Anderson, Callum Hudson-Odoi and Chris Wood netted

before the break. Southampton salvaged some pride in the second period through Jan Bednarek and Paul Onuachu but they remain on course for an immediate return to the Championship, 10 points adrift of safety.

RESULTS

Everton 3 (Calvert-Lewin 13, Ndiaye 30, Gray 45+7-og)

Tottenham 2 (Kulusevski 77, Richarlison 90+2)

Ipswich 0 Manchester City 6 (Foden 27, 42, Kovacic 30, Doku 49, Haaland 57, McAtee 69)

Manchester United 1 (Fernandes 23-pen) Brighton 3 (Minteh 5, Mitoma 60, Rutter 76)

Nottingham Forest 3 (Anderson 11, Hudson-Odoi 28, Wood 41)

Southampton 2 (Bednarek 60, Onuachu 90+1)

QATAR-UAE SUPER CUP

Al Wahda prevail on penalties to claim Challenge Cup

Agencies
Abu Dhabi

UAE's Al Wahda edged Al Wakrah 5-4 on penalties after a 1-1 draw in full time to claim Challenge Cup of Qatar-UAE Super Cup at the Al Nahyan Stadium in Abu Dhabi yesterday.

Al Wakrah aiming to secure the title for the first time seemed on course earlier having taken early lead in the match but hosts Al Wahda hit back to first equalise and later got the better of Al Wakrah in the shootout to lay their hands on the Challenge Cup.

Lucas Pimenta, Ahmad Nourollahi, Omar Khrbin, Bernardo Folha and Leonel Wamba scored for Al Wahda in the shootout while Khozhimat Erkinov missed the target; for Al Wakrah - Ricardo Gomes, Alexander Scholz, Farid Boulaya, and Hamdi Fathi scored but Aissa Laidouni hit the crossbar and Al Mahdi Ali missed the crucial last kick.

Earlier, Assa Laidouni had scored for Al Wakrah in the 26th



Al Wahda players celebrate with the Challenge Cup of the Qatar-UAE Super Cup at the Al Nahyan Stadium in Abu Dhabi yesterday.

minute while Omar Khrbin fetched Al Wahda the equaliser in the 62nd minute. Watched by a large crowd, the clash had many exciting moments as both teams kept pushing to gain advantage.

In the 14th minute, Farid Bou-

laya's strike from the left was blocked by Al Wahda goalkeeper Mohamed Hasan al-Shamsi. Minutes later, a Fathi kick sailed over and landed on the net.

Al Wakrah soon found success as Laidouni scored after the ball

fell to him while being far left, neatly putting it across into the net following an Abdelkarim Hassan corner kick from the right.

The Blue Wave looked to gain from the momentum immediately but following an offensive a Fathi



Al Wakrah players celebrate a goal against Al Wahda in Abu Dhabi yesterday.

long ranger just missed the left post. Al Wahda looked to retaliate and in the 38th minute, a Khrbin threatening strike was kept away by a flying Al Wakrah goalkeeper Saoud Mubarak. Two minutes later, Mubarak again made a leaping save with his fingertips as he pushed over a Khrbin free-kick strike. Midway through the second half, Al Wahda succeeded as Khrbin latched on to the ball af-

ter a defensive header slotting it into the net. Moments later, Al Wahda tried to hit back again but Mubarak and Hassan combined to keep the attack at bay. In the 90th minute, an Al Mahdi Ali's kick was saved by Al Wahda goalkeeper al-Shamsi who flew to his right. With the teams locked 1-1, it was time for the penalty kicks and in the end the home team and their fans had more to rejoice.

CRICKET

Khan, Ahmed help Pakistan to crush Windies

Multan Test was the shortest completed match in Pakistan

Reuters
Multan

Sajid Khan and Abrar Ahmed led the charge for Pakistan, bundling out West Indies for 123 to win the first Test in Multan by 127 runs on the third day as spinners ruled the roost.

It was the shortest completed men's Test match in Pakistan with 40 wickets falling in 1,064 balls.

Spinners took 16 wickets yesterday as Jomel Warrican's seven-wicket haul restricted Pakistan's second innings to 157, setting a target of 251 for West Indies, who failed to get a partnership going on the turn-heavy track.

"It's hard out there. Batting was hard," Pakistan captain Shan Masood said.

"In the second innings, we folded cheaply. There are improvements to be made. When you win, you can go on a happy ride and be happy. But we can't do that."

Pakistan, who had a 93-run lead after the first innings, started from an overnight score of 109-3, but Warrican struck early, dismissing Saud Shakeel and Mohammad Rizwan in his successive overs. Warrican's destructive spell continued with Kamran Ghulam (27) getting caught behind soon after and, with Salman Agha (14) becoming Gudakesh Motie's solitary wicket of the innings, the hosts collapsed, having lost seven wickets in 48 runs.

"We'll take a look at how Warrican bowled. As spinners we should take a look at that. He was bringing the batters for-



Pakistan's Mohammad Rizwan (left) and Sajid Khan (second right) with teammates walk back to pavilion after winning the first Test against West Indies at the Multan Cricket Stadium in Multan yesterday. (AFP)

ward," West Indies captain Kraig Braithwaite said.

Braithwaite (12) was the first to fall when the visitors began the chase as he tried to hit Khan for a six but ended up finding Khurram Shahzad at deep mid-wicket.

Keacy Carty (6) tried to sweep Khan, but the ball nicked his glove and was caught by wicketkeeper Rizwan. Khan bamboozled Kavem Hodge (0) and Mikyle Louis (13) soon after, bowling them out with sharp turns as West Indies fell to 37-4.

Alick Athanaze (55) put up a fight, scoring quick runs to put the pressure back on the bowlers. But Ahmed kept knocking batters down at the other end, as Tevin Imlach (14) and Kevin Sinclair (10)

fell before they could fully settle down.

Athanaze was finally trapped leg before wicket by Khan, and a defiant Warrican was the last to fall as he was bowled out for a duck trying to reverse sweep Ahmed.

"The wicket had a lot of turn and bounce... it was our strategy to throttle the runs. If we could do that, wickets would come automatically," said Khan.

He took nine wickets in the Test, including five in the second innings in a player-of-the-match performance.

Pakistan have now won three home Tests in a row, having beaten England twice to win their three-match series 2-1 in October.

Braithwaite said the visitors needed to be brave going into the second and final Test of the series, which begins at the same venue on Jan. 25.

"It's important to be positive on these types of pitches," Braithwaite said.

"We should show intent ... if we can bring it together batting and bowling-wise we can come out on top."

BRIEF SCORES (First Test, Day 3)
Pakistan 230 (Shakeel 84, Rizwan 71, Seales 3-27) **and 157** (Masood 52, Warrican 7-32) **beat West Indies 137** (Warrican 31*, Norman 5-39, Sajid 4-65) **and 123** (Athanaze 55, Sajid 5-50, Abrar 4-27) **by 127 runs**

BADMINTON

Olympic champion Axelsen wins third India Open crown



Gold medallist Denmark's Viktor Axelsen poses during the award ceremony after his win against Hong Kong's Lee Cheuk Yiu in the final at the India Open 2025 in New Delhi yesterday. (AFP)

AFP
New Delhi

Two-time Olympic champion Viktor Axelsen thrashed Lee Cheuk-yiu of Hong Kong to win a record-equalling third India Open badminton title yesterday.

The Dane, who crashed out of this month's Malaysia Open in the first round, beat Lee 21-16, 21-8 in 41 minutes to add to his 2017 and 2019 crowns in New Delhi.

Axelsen equals the record of Malaysian great Lee Chong Wei, who won the India Open in 2011, 2013 and 2014.

Axelsen jumped with joy on the winning point and urged the crowd to raise the noise after the Indian fans had kept up chants of "Viktor for victory".

"After this week, I feel my motivation is coming back," he said.

"Since the Olympics I had been struggling with injuries.

"This week has been very inconsistent for me mentally and game-wise but I am happy that I fought hard and won the title."

In the women's singles, South Korea's An Se-young clinched her second successive crown this year in style after the world number one hammered Thailand's Pornpawee Chochuwong 21-12, 21-9.

The Paris Olympics gold medalist was dominant in her victory as she dismantled her opponent in 40 minutes for her 29th career title.

The 22-year-old hasn't dropped a single game in her 10 matches this year.

Igarashi and Sakuramoto win women's doubles title

In the paired events, the unseeded Japanese combination of Arisa Igarashi and Ayaka Sakuramoto capped off their giant-killing run with a clinical 21-15, 21-13 victory over South Korea's Kim Hye-jeong and Kong Hee-yong in the women's doubles final.

This is only the third tournament for the Japanese combination with Igarashi, nee Arisa Higashino, making a successful shift to women's doubles from mixed doubles.

However, the People's Republic of China's second seeds Jiang Zhenbang and Wei Yaxin ended the run of the unseeded French combination of Thom Gicquel and Delphine Delrue with a 21-18, 21-17 win in the mixed doubles final.

The Malaysian men's doubles combination of Goh Sze Fei and Nur Izzuddin found a way past South Korea's Kim Won-ho and Seo Seung-jae 21-15, 13-21, 21-16 to clinch the title in the only match that went to the decider.

Bangladesh seeks arrest of MP cricketer over bounced cheques

Dhaka: A Bangladeshi court issued an arrest warrant yesterday for cricket star Shakib Al Hasan for bounced cheques totalling more than \$300,000, in the latest blow for the ousted lawmaker.

"The court has previously summoned Shakib but he did not appear at the court", said Mohammed Shahibur Rahman from the IFIC Bank, which filed the case. "Now, the court has issued the warrant," he said. Shakib is a former lawmaker from the party of autocratic ex-leader Sheikh Hasina, who was overthrown by revolution and fled by helicopter to India in August 2024.

His links to Hasina made him a target of public anger and he was among dozens facing murder investigations for a deadly

police crackdown on protesters during the uprising. He has not been charged over those allegations. Shakib was playing in a domestic Twenty20 cricket competition in Canada when Hasina's government collapsed and has not returned to Bangladesh since.

The left-arm allrounder has played 71 Tests, 247 one-day internationals and 129 Twenty20s for Bangladesh, taking a combined 712 wickets. However, he was left out of the 15-man squad for the one-day international tournament in the Champions Trophy in Pakistan and Dubai next month. Najmul Hossain Shanto will captain the side, with Bangladesh placed in Group A alongside India, Pakistan and New Zealand.

STAGE SET FOR ENGLAND-INDIA WHITE-BALL SERIES



England all-rounder Gus Atkinson is presented with a cake on his 27th birthday at the team hotel in Kolkata yesterday. England are in India for a white-ball series involving five T20Is and three ODIs. **Right:** India's Mohammed Shami bowls in the nets during a practice session ahead of their first Twenty20 international against England at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata yesterday. (@englandcricket/AFP)



CYCLING

Ruegg wins opening UCI World Tour women's event in Australia



EF Education-Oatly rider Noemi Ruegg from Switzerland celebrates with her trophy after being crowned overall winner of the Tour Down Under cycling race in Adelaide yesterday. (AFP)

AFP
Adelaide, Australia

Switzerland's Noemi Ruegg protected her lead to win Australia's Tour Down Under as American Olympic team pursuit champion Chloe Dygert surged to victory in the final stage yesterday.

Ruegg (EF Education-Oatly) kept pace with the leaders heading into the final sprint in hot conditions to cross the finish line in third place behind Dygert but enough to claim the opening race of the UCI World Tour season.

She became only the second non-Australian winner in eight editions of the women's Tour Down Under.

Ruegg, 23, set up her overall victory with a powerful win in Saturday's second stage to hold a 15-second buffer over Dutch rider Silke Smulders (Liv Jayco AlUla) heading into the decisive 105.9km final stage in the Adelaide Hills.

The Swiss rider claimed the overall ochre leader's jersey by

13 seconds in 8hr 49min from Smulders with Norway's Mie Bjorndal Ottestad (Uno-X Mobility) third, 37 seconds behind the winner.

"It was quite a challenge today, they didn't make it easy for us, they tried a lot of moves, especially in the last two laps," Ruegg told reporters.

"I was super nervous the whole day, I really wanted to bring it home, my team were amazing, I could save all my energy early and focus on the last two laps of the stage."

Dygert (Canyon-SRAM), who was part of the American gold medal-winning pursuit team at the Paris Olympics last year, swept to the front and held on to her advantage to win the final stage by one second from Smulders and Ruegg.

"We came here trying to get the GC (general classification) and a stage win, we worked really hard today to get that win," Dygert said yesterday.

Alyssa Polites (ARA Australian Cycling Team) took the Queen of the Mountain title from Poland's

Dominika Wlodarczyk (UAE Team ADQ).

The six-stage men's Tour Down Under, in its 25th year, gets underway in Adelaide tomorrow.

Fan hospitalised after 'awful' crash at Tour Down Under

A fan was hospitalised with serious injuries after an "awful, freak" high-speed pile-up during Australia's Tour Down Under cycling race, organisers said yesterday.

Video on social media showed a group of cyclists hitting the barricades on the last corner of the men's classic sprint race around the Adelaide streets on Saturday.

One rider went over the top and into the crowd, with several spectators appearing to be thrown to the ground.

"Sadly, as a result of the collision, a female spectator suffered injuries and was taken to hospital, where she is currently being treated," organisers said in a statement.

"We are in contact with the spectator's family and have offered our support."

South Australia state Premier Peter Malinauskas told local media it was an "awful, freak accident".

"Tragically last night we did see a significant accident occur at the TDU, where cyclists went into spectators," he said.

"It's saddening to report a woman has suffered multiple serious injuries."

Australian race winner Sam Welsford (Red Bull-Bora-Hansgrohe) said it was a "super-fast corner" with Italy's Manlio Moro from the Movistar team among the riders that crashed.

Britain's Matthew Brennan (Team Visma) saw the pile-up, which happened in front of him.

"It was quite chaotic," he said. "A lot of people were keen, it was the first race of the season and my team did a lot of work to keep me out of trouble and keep me safe."

The sprint race was a prelude to the main men's six-stage event, which starts tomorrow in the UCI World Tour season-opener.

The three-stage women's race was won yesterday by Switzerland's Noemi Ruegg.

SPOTLIGHT

QOC gets ready for 2025 Half Marathon

The Qatar Olympic Committee (QOC) is ramping up preparations for the inaugural QOC Half Marathon, scheduled for Tuesday, February 11, 2025. Organised as part of National Sport Day, this milestone event aims to encourage a passion for physical activity and promote a healthier, more active lifestyle within the community.

The Half Marathon will feature four race categories to ensure inclusivity for participants of all ages and fitness levels. The 21-kilometre Half Marathon and the 10-kilometre race are open to participants born in 2007 or earlier. For younger runners, there's a 5-kilometre race for those born in 2010 or earlier and a 1-kilometre fun run for children born between 2011 and 2019.

This exciting event underscores QOC's mission to promote sports



as a cornerstone of a thriving and healthy society, aligning seamlessly with Qatar National Vision 2030.

The Half Marathon offers a vibrant platform for people of all ages to come together and celebrate the spirit of National Sport

Day. The race will take place at Lusail Boulevard, a venue that has hosted some of Qatar's most iconic events, including the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 and the AFC Asian Cup 2023.

With its world-class facilities and dynamic setting, Lusail Boule-



vard provides the perfect backdrop for this inaugural race and other festivities marking the occasion.

Salah al-Saadi, Assistant Director of Sports Events at QOC, shared his enthusiasm about the upcoming event.

"Preparations are well underway

to ensure the QOC Half Marathon is a world-class experience. Our team is committed to upholding the high standards of quality and professionalism that Qatar is known for, focusing on every detail to provide participants with a seamless and memorable experience."

He highlighted Lusail Boulevard's unique appeal as a venue, stating: "We chose this location for its stunning setting and its reflection of Qatar's modern infrastructure. It's an ideal space to bring people together, foster community spirit, and celebrate the transformative power of sports."

Al-Saadi also emphasised that the Half Marathon is more than just a race. "We're creating an event that's not only about running but about making it a day for everyone. From support zones

along the course to fun activities for families and spectators, this event is designed to be a celebration of sports and community."

He concluded with an invitation to all: "Whether you're an experienced runner or a first-timer, we encourage everyone to join us. This is your chance to be part of something truly special, and it's a reflection of QOC's commitment to making sports an essential part of daily life. Registration is open, and you can find all the details on our social media channels."

By organising the Half Marathon, the QOC reaffirms its dedication to fostering an active and engaged society.

This one-day event highlights the transformative role of sports in uniting communities and driving sustainable development and growth.

TENNIS

Djokovic advances, says AO broadcaster must apologise

The Serb snubs the Grand Slam's official broadcaster and slammed them for mocking him and his fans

Reuters
Melbourne

Novak Djokovic charged into the Australian Open quarter-finals and booked a mouth-watering encounter with Carlos Alcaraz before the Serb shifted the focus by snubbing the Grand Slam's official broadcaster and slamming them for mocking him and his fans.

Defending champion Aryna Sabalenka dismissed teenager Mirra Andreeva while Coco Gauff overcame Belinda Bencic to go through to the last eight and extend their winning streaks as Melbourne Park stifled in the summer heat earlier in the day.

A red-hot Djokovic then thumped Jiri Lehecka 6-3 6-4 7-6(4) to stay on course for a record 25th Grand Slam title and 11th in Melbourne but the Serb was in no mood to discuss his chances as he declined an on-court interview and curtly thanked the crowd.

He then took aim at official broadcaster Channel Nine, whose reporter Tony Jones had mocked him and his fans when they were out in force cheering the Serb two days earlier.

"Novak he's over-rated, Novak's a has-been. Novak kick him out. Oh, I'm glad they can't hear me," Jones had said.

Jones had already been taken to task by American Danielle Collins,

who he called a "brat" for her on-court behaviour.

Djokovic said he had not received a public apology from the broadcaster and would continue boycotting them until he does.

"Since they're official broadcasters, I chose not to give interviews for Channel Nine," Djokovic told reporters, adding he had made his feelings clear to tournament director Craig Tiley.

"I told him, 'If you guys want to fine me for not giving an on-court interview, that's okay! I'll accept that, because this is something that needs to be done. That's all there is to it.'"

In a comment to *news.com.au*, Jones said: "It was good natured banter with the Serbian fans. We've been doing it all tournament and it's all in good fun. This is the happy Slam."

Reuters has contacted Channel Nine for comment.

Second seed Alexander Zverev continued his sizzling form by beating Ugo Humbert 6-1 2-6 6-3 6-2 before Alcaraz eased into his second Australian Open quarter-final after injury-hampered opponent Jack Draper threw in the towel while trailing 7-5 6-1.

Djokovic said of Alcaraz: "He's a very dynamic, explosive player. Incredibly talented. Charismatic player. Great to watch, not great to play against."

"I look forward to it. I think when the draw was out, a lot of



Serbia's Novak Djokovic reacts during his fourth round match against Czech Republic's Jiri Lehecka at the Australian Open in Melbourne yesterday. (Reuters)

people were looking forward to (it). So here we are."

Double defending champion Sabalenka's 6-1 6-2 demolition of Andreeva took her run of consecutive victories at Melbourne Park to 18, while Gauff made it nine wins in a row in 2025 by seeing off Bencic, the Swiss scourge of major champions, 5-7 6-2 6-1.

Tommy Paul was the first man

to book his place in the last eight with a 6-1 6-1 6-1 win over Spain's Alejandro Davidovich Fokina, who appeared beaten up after back-to-back five-setters in the last two rounds.

Sabalenka was taken the distance and defeated by 17-year-old Andreeva in the French Open quarter-finals last year but it was not even close yesterday as the

world number one wrapped up the victory in 62 minutes.

"I'm super happy to get this win," Sabalenka said. "Mirra is so young, so mature, such a great player. She can play really great tennis."

Sabalenka faces Russian veteran Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova, who ran away with a 7-6(0) 6-0 win over Donna Vekic after the

Croatian 18th seed injured her knee midway through the match.

Third seed Gauff lost her first set of the year to open her clash with Bencic, who had won seven of her last eight meetings with major champions.

The 27-year-old Swiss, ranked a lowly 294th on her return to the tour after having a daughter, was put on the back foot when the 2023 U.S. Open champion came out firing in the second set.

Gauff, a semi-finalist last year, continued to apply pressure and Bencic crumbled after two net cords conspired against her at 2-1 down in the third.

The American could face Sabalenka in the semi-finals like last year if she can beat Spain's 11th seed Paula Badosa, who made the quarter-finals for the first time in Melbourne by beating Olga Danilovic 6-1 7-6(2) on Margaret Court Arena.

Badosa had to rally from 5-2 down in the second to get past the Serbian and reach her second straight major quarter-final.

"It wasn't like a real 5-2 because I was playing well," said the 27-year-old.

Badosa added that she was looking forward to taking on Gauff after losing to the American in Beijing and Rome last year.

"I love Coco," she said. "We always have tough matches. The last one was really tough... I hope I can have my revenge."

GOLF

In-form Hatton holds nerve to clinch 'dream' Dubai Desert Classic title

AFP
Dubai

England's Tyrrell Hatton said it was "a dream come true" after the LIV Golf player continued his remarkable form on the European Tour yesterday claiming the Dubai Desert Classic as Rory McIlroy's gallant effort to secure the title three years in a row came up short.

At the Majlis course of Emirates Golf Club, the 33-year-old Englishman holed a nerve-racking five-footer par putt on the 18th to stay one ahead of overnight leader New Zealand's Daniel Hillier (71), who had closed the gap to one shot with a birdie of his own on the par-5 finishing hole.

Despite starting the day with a bogey, Hatton closed with a solid three-under-par 69 for a 15-under-par total. His fifth Rolex Series win ties him with his LIV Golf captain Jon Rahm for the most wins in the DP World-backed European Tour's version of elevated events.

England's Laurie Canter (68) was in sole third at 13-under.

McIlroy shot a 66, with five birdies on the back nine, to get up to tied fourth place alongside Danish sensation Niklas Norgaard (66).

Hatton, who is playing on the DP World Tour because he has appealed against his fines (for playing



on LIV Golf) and has not resigned from his membership, is expected to rise from 17 to eighth in the world golf rankings when it is updated today.

He started the day one shot behind Hillier, and moved ahead decisively on the fifth hole when he made a birdie, while the Kiwi duffed his chip for a bogey.

Three-time Ryder Cup star Hatton had an anxious moment on the par-3 seventh hole, where his tee shot stopped perilously close to the water, but he went on to make a par three.

"I'm not going to lie, I was pretty nervous on the back nine, to be honest. I guess I just maybe wanted it a bit too much. I knew the position I was in, and a little bit scruffy down the last. But to see that putt go in, felt amazing," said Hatton.

"I said earlier in the week, this is one of the events that you would

like to have on your CV. It's such an iconic event for the DP World Tour. To add my name to the list of the amazing champions that have been before me, it's a dream come true."

Hatton was recording his second win in four starts following his Alfred Dunhill Links Championship triumph last October. McIlroy said he was delighted with the way he played over the weekend in his first start of the year.

"I probably just left myself a bit too much to do after three days. I had chances, and I was burning the edges," said McIlroy.

"Felt like I putted pretty well without anything going in and then today, didn't really feel like I played that differently the way I played the last few days."

"I just holed a couple of putts and made a couple of good ups-and-downs when I had to. I feel like I got progressively better as the week went on, which bodes well for obviously the next few weeks."

Despite missing out on the title this was still a 12th straight top-10 finish in the tournament for the Northern Irishman.

The last time he did not crack the top-10 was way back in 2008 when he missed the cut.

Japan's Keita Nakajima made the first albatross of the season when he holed his second shot from 244 yards on the par-5 18th. It catapulted him to a share of 21st place.

FOCUS

Qatar and UAE rugby ruling bodies sign co-operation agreement

QNA
Doha

The Qatar Rugby and Hockey Committee (QRHC) and the UAE Rugby Federation have signed a joint co-operation agreement to enhance partnership in areas such as management, training, refereeing, and player exchange.

The agreement was signed by Yousef Jeham al-Kuwari, Chairman of QRHC, and Mohammed Sultan al-Zaabi, Secretary-General of the UAE Rugby Federation.

Al-Kuwari stated that the agreement aims to strengthen relations, exchange expertise, and improve sports medicine for both coun-



tries' national teams. Al-Zaabi emphasised that the agreement will encourage co-operation in areas such as refereeing courses,

friendly tournaments, and enhancing the performance of both nations in Asian and international competitions.

AL RAYYAN SPORTS CLUB BAG ATHLETICS CROWN



Al Rayyan Sports Club won the Qatar Athletics Federation (QAF) Shield for the junior and cadet categories at the Al Rayyan SC track. A total of nine clubs featured in the championships: Al Rayyan, Al Sadd, Al Ahli, Qatar SC, Al Gharafa, Al Khor, Al Shamal, Al Wakrah and Al Arabi. The competitions continued for three days. Al Ahli Sports Club finished second behind Al Rayyan.

QMMF HRT TEAM SECURES IMPRESSIVE VICTORY IN 6H ABU DHABI 2025



The QMMF HRT team secured an impressive victory in the 992 AM category at the 6H Abu Dhabi 2025, held yesterday at the iconic Yas Marina Circuit. With Qatar's Abdullah al-Khelaifi, Ghanem al-Ali, Ibrahim al-Abdulghani, and Germany's Julian Hanes sharing driving duties, the team clinched first place in the 992 AM category and an impressive second place overall in the 992 class, driving their Porsche 911 GT3 Cup (992). This triumph comes just a week after their remarkable win in the 992 AM category at the 24 Hours Dubai 2025 at the Dubai Autodrome. With consecutive victories in the season's opening rounds, the QMMF team has made an emphatic statement of their dominance. The back-to-back wins underscore the team's meticulous preparation and unwavering dedication, serving as a powerful morale boost. The success aligns with the ambitious objectives set by the Qatar Motor and Motorcycle Federation, setting the stage for continued achievements in the upcoming races.

LA LIGA

Mbappe shines as Real fight back to beat Las Palmas 4-1

FRENCH FORWARD BECOMES THE LEAGUE'S SECOND TOP-SCORER

AFP
Madrid

Kilian Mbappe struck twice and produced a brilliant performance to power Real Madrid to a 4-1 win over Las Palmas and take the reigning champions top of La Liga yesterday.

Los Blancos enjoyed a perfect weekend, overtaking Atletico Madrid by two points after their neighbours slipped up with a shock defeat at Leganes on Saturday, while Barcelona, third, could only draw at Getafe.

Mbappe has hit top form in recent weeks after an inconsistent start to life at Real Madrid following his dream switch from Paris Saint-Germain last summer.

The 26-year-old reached 12 league goals with his brace, becoming the Spanish league's second top-scorer behind Barcelona's Robert Lewandowski.

Mbappe now has 18 goals for the season in 30 appearances across all competitions, and is looking increasingly crucial for his side in attack. With Vinicius Junior suspended, the spotlight was entirely on the French forward at the Santiago Bernabeu and he delivered with a sparkling performance.

Las Palmas took a surprise early lead in just over 30 seconds when a rapid move sliced open Madrid's defence. Sandro Ramirez crossed for Fabio Silva to apply the finish-



Real Madrid's forward Kylian Mbappe celebrates scoring his team's third goal with teammate Lucas Vazquez during La Liga match against Las Palmas at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium in Madrid yesterday. (AFP)

ing touch from close range. Madrid hit back strongly, with Brahim Diaz shooting wide when he should have scored, and Mbappe's fierce effort tipped away by Jasper Cillessen.

Mbappe, who came in for heavy criticism after missing two penalties towards the end of 2024, levelled from the spot after Sandro clumsily felled Rodrigo.

The striker was involved in Madrid's second goal, with the re-

bound from his saved shot falling to Lucas Vazquez, who squared for Diaz to convert.

Mbappe netted his second with a fine finish which arced into the top corner after Rodrigo cut the ball back to him. The forward thought he had completed his hat-trick before the break but the goal was ruled offside for a position Mbappe took up in the build-up.

Jude Bellingham hit the side-netting early in the second half

when he should have scored, but Madrid's fourth goal did not take long to arrive.

Rodrigo stroked home from Fran Garcia's low cross after Mbappe played the left-back in.

Bellingham and Fede Valverde had goals ruled out for offside as Madrid continued to dominate, and they were able to welcome David Alaba back as a substitute after more than a year out with a serious knee injury.

SERIE A

Lazio hold onto top-four spot with win at Verona

AFP
Milan

Lazio stayed in Serie A's Champions League places after thumping struggling Verona 3-0 yesterday, as Inter Milan host Empoli trying to stay in touch with league leaders Napoli.

Marco Baroni's Lazio went ahead with just a minute on the clock through Samuel Gigot in Verona, and further strikes from Boulaye Dia and captain Mattia Zaccagni put them fourth, two points above Juventus who beat AC Milan on Saturday.

Yesterday's success ended a three-match winless streak for Lazio, which included derby defeat to rivals Roma, and left Verona in the relegation zone.

Verona slumped to their 14th defeat in 21 league fixtures in front of new chairman Italo Zanzi following the club's acquisition by American private equity firm Presidio Investors on Wednesday.

The new owners have a job on their hands at the Stadio Marcantonio Bentegodi as Verona are deep in the fight against the drop, sitting in 18th place and

separated by goal difference from Como who are just outside the bottom three and host Udinese today.

Verona are in the drop zone due to Cagliari's 4-1 thumping of fellow strugglers Lecce which moved the Sardinian outfit up to 13th.

Just two points separate Cagliari and Verona, with Lecce, Parma - who drew 1-1 with second-from-bottom Venezia - and Empoli all on 20 points.

Verona, who finished the match with 10 men following Ondrej Duda's late sending off, make the short trip to regional rivals Venezia next week.

Empoli are expected to get nothing from yesterday's late fixture at the San Siro where second-placed Inter hope to halve the six-point gap between the champions and Napoli.

Antonio Conte's Napoli have become the team to beat thanks to Saturday's thrilling 3-2 win at Atalanta but Inter also have a game in hand.

However Inter have a packed schedule due to their Champions League commitments while Napoli have no European football after their disastrous title defence last season.

Hollerbach helps Union to first win since Oct

Benedict Hollerbach scored a first-minute goal and won a penalty as Union Berlin beat Mainz 2-1 yesterday to pick up crucial points in their battle against Bundesliga relegation.

Union, who were playing Champions League football last season, had not won since October. The victory was the first for coach and former Union player Steffen Baumgart, who replaced Bo Svensson in December.

"We were really angry," Hollerbach told DAZN of the club's losing streak. "I can't remember how it feels to win - I don't know when our last win was. It'll do us extremely good."

"We need to keep going to make sure we don't get stuck in a negative spiral again, or this (win) will just be a drop in the ocean." Having narrowly escaped a relegation tussle last season, Mainz have impressed this campaign under manager Bo Henriksen, having beaten Bayern Munich, Borussia Dortmund and Eintracht Frankfurt in the league.

MOTORSPORT

10 new champions in second round of ADRL

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Amid a large crowd filling the stands of Qatar Racing Club (QRC) and with intense races that kept everyone on the edge of their seats until the very last moment, the second round of the 2025 Arabian Drag Racing League (ADRL) came to a close.

The event was held under the patronage of QRC Chairman HE Sheikh Khalid bin Hamad al-Thani and in the presence of QRC General Director Sheikh Jabor bin Khalid al-Thani, who crowned the podium winners.

The second round witnessed the crowning of new champions in ten of the thirteen categories of the championship. Only the 4.50 Index, Pro Bike, and Super Street Outlaw categories saw the first-round champions retaining their titles.

Shawn Langdon triumphed in the 4.50 Index category, defeating Abdullah al-Yassin in the final, who secured his first podium finish by placing second. Rashid al-Blooshi came in third. Addi-



QRC General Director Sheikh Jabor bin Khalid al-Thani poses with winners of the second round of the ADRL.

tionally, David Reyes claimed his second victory, this time defeating Khalid al-Sultan, while the third-place finish went to last round's runner-up, Faisal al-Shihi.

The last category to crown its champion for the second consecutive round was the Pro Bike category, where Mohammed al-Awad emerged victorious after beating Mishaal al-Sabr, who took second place in his first appearance on the podium this season. Bradley Mc-

Coy maintained third place, the same position he secured in the previous round.

In the Index categories, which are contested over a quarter-mile distance, the podiums were completely different from those in the opening round. In the 9.00 Index category for cars, Saleh al-Misbah claimed the victory in the final, defeating Salem al-Yamani, who took second place.

The third position went to Ali

Yusuf Rabi'a. As for the second-round title in the 8.50 Index category for cars, it went to Khalid al-Omairi, while Mike Paradise finished second and Hamdan al-Kaabi came in third.

In the same category, but for motorcycles, Abdul Wahab Bouqmaz took first place, with Hassan Alouh securing his second podium finish by taking second, after finishing third in the previous round. The third-place position in this

category went to Mohammed Ali. The Super Street Pro category, saw a repeat of the final showdown between Jaber al-Maghribi and Turki al-Dhafri. While al-Maghribi won in the opening round, this time, al-Dhafri got his revenge by winning the final of the second round, claiming his first title.

In the Street Bike category, Fahaad al-Harbi claimed the title for this round by defeating Misfer al-Misfer in the final.

The final motorcycle category, the Super Street Bike, saw a dramatic final between last round's third-place finisher Badr bin Aidan and Yaqout al-Awad. Bin Aidan emerged victorious, securing his first championship title.

Finally, Badr Khorsheed, who finished third in the previous round in the 4.00 Index category, triumphed in the final of the second round by defeating last round's champion, Muslim al-Qalaf.

In the 4.80 Index category for cars, driver Mohammed al-Furaih reached the final of this round and defeated his competitor Abdullah al-Kandari, securing his first championship title after finishing fourth in the opening round.

Additionally, Ali Abbas Ibrahim claimed the second-round title in the Pro NA category, earning a spot on the podium alongside both Said al-Haddad and Mohammed al-Faraj.

In the 6-Cylinder Import category, the title went to Faisal al-Arab, who had finished second in the opening round after reaching the final against Youssef al-Zayani.

The third round will take place from January 21 to January 24.