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WORLD INDOOR ATHLETICS CHAMPIONSHIPS

Ingebrigtsen at the double as Charlton defends title

The Norwegian wins 1,500m-3,000m titles in Nanjing, Tsegay sets championship mark in women’s 1,500m



Norway’s Jakob Ingebrigtsen reacts as he crosses the finish line in the men’s 1,500m final during the World Athletics Indoor Championships in Nanjing, China, yesterday. (AFP)

AFP
Nanjing, China

Jakob Ingebrigtsen claimed a rare track double to light up the world indoor championships yesterday, as Devynne Charlton defended her 60m hurdles title in style. Ingebrigtsen, who had won the 3,000m on Saturday for his first world indoor title, clocked 3min 38.79sec to win the 1,500m and

emulate the double claimed by Ethiopian legend Haile Gebrselassie in Maebashi in 1999. The Norwegian, however, insisted that he had not been motivated by history, saying Gebrselassie’s feat had been achieved “a long time ago.” “Following in the footsteps? Can we say that? Probably not,” he said. “It would be difficult to follow in the footsteps. I think they’re probably not that visible anymore.

“It’s very difficult to compare history.” The victory also meant Ingebrigtsen finally bagged a world title over the 1,500m, having already won three silvers (two outdoor, one indoor). Charlton later stormed to a brilliant defence of her short hurdles title, the world record holder from the Bahamas timing 7.72sec for the win in a close finish. “It was a big deal for me to come here and show up, defend

my title. It was a big goal for me,” said Charlton, with the next five finishers all streaming across the line within four-hundredths of a second. “The women always show up in track and field,” she added. “To come away with a win against these ladies, it’s really cool.” Charlton, who set a world record of 7.65sec when winning in Glasgow last year, was followed home by Switzerland’s Ditaji Kambundji, whose sister



Bahamas’s Devynne Charlton celebrates after winning the women’s 60m hurdles yesterday. (AFP)

Mujinga won the 60m flat in the Chinese city. Ethiopia’s Gudaf Tsegay defended her 1,500m title with some brio, a solo run seeing her come home in a championship record of 3:54.86, not off her own world record. Tsegay’s teammate Diribe Welteji claimed silver with Britain’s Georgia Hunter Bell in bronze. American Josh Hoey, second in the all-time list behind Wilson Kipketer, blasted to victory in the men’s 800m in 1:44.77 to underline his promise in a season that culminates at the world outdoor championships in Tokyo in September. Hoey was pushed all the way and won just four-hundredths ahead of Belgium’s Eliott Crestan, with Spain’s Elvin Josue Canales taking third place. The four-lap race for the women was won in a world lead of 1:58.40 by surprise South African package Prudence Sekgodiso ahead of Ethiopian Nigist Getachew and Portugal’s Patricia Silva. The field events saw Italian Mattia Furlani upgrade his Glasgow long jump silver to gold with a best effort of 8.30m, just 2cm separating him from Jamaican silver medallist Wayne Pinnock and Australian Liam Adcock.

Defending champion Miltiadis Tentoglou of Greece, the double Olympic gold medallist and world outdoor champion, finished fifth with 8.14m in his thus far unusually faltering season. New Zealand’s Tom Walsh will take the men’s shot put gold home after winning with a best of 21.65m ahead of the US pair of Roger Skeen and Adrian Piperi. Norway’s Sander Skotheim claimed gold in the men’s heptathlon, having accumulated 6,475 points to finish 38pts ahead of Estonia’s Johannes Erm, with Germany’s Till Steinforth taking bronze. Skotheim opened with 6.97sec in the 60m before managing bests of 8m in the long jump, 14.68m in the shot put and 2.13m in the high jump. The Norwegian then clocked 7.93sec in the 60m hurdles, went over 5m in the pole vault and timed 2:36.08 in the thigh-busting 1km finale. The US men and women’s 4x400m relay teams wrapped up the three days of action in Nanjing’s Cube with double gold to leave the Americans atop the medal table with 16 (six gold, four silver, six bronze) as a total of 32 nations medalled.

2026 FIFA WORLD CUP QUALIFER

Qatar’s Muntari, Hassan to miss Kyrgyzstan tie

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Mohammed Muntari and Abdelkarim Hassan will be sidelined for tomorrow’s crucial 2026 FIFA World Cup Qualifier against Kyrgyzstan in Bishkek due to injuries, the Qatar Football Association (QFA) announced. In an official statement, the QFA confirmed that both players will miss the upcoming match. Forward Muntari sustained a hamstring injury during recent training, while defender Abdelkarim Hassan suffered an ankle injury during Qatar’s dominant 5-1 victory over North Korea on Thursday. Medical examinations revealed that both injuries will require approximately three to four weeks of recovery, ruling them out of the vital qualifier against Kyrgyzstan. With both players unavailable, Qatar will look to other squad members to step up as they continue their pursuit of a spot in the 2026 World Cup. Under the guidance of coach Luis Garcia, Qatar currently hold 10 points, tied with third-placed United Arab Emirates, who lost to Iran in Tehran on Thursday. Iran remain atop Group A with 19 points, while Uzbekistan strengthened their second-place position with 16 points following a win over Kyrgyzstan. North Korea sit at the bottom of the six-team group with just 2 points, while Kyrgyzstan occupy fifth place, leading by just one point.



Qatar coach Luis Garcia addresses players ahead of a team training session in Doha yesterday. Qatar is set to fly to Kyrgyzstan for their next 2026 FIFA World Cup Asian Zone qualifying match to be played tomorrow. (@QFA)



Qatar goalkeeper Meshaal Barsham smiles during a training session in Doha yesterday.

CRICKET

New Zealand hand Pakistan biggest defeat

AFP
Mount Maunganui:

New Zealand's ruthless pace attack carved up Pakistan to deliver a crushing 115-run win in the fourth Twenty20 yesterday and clinch the five-match series.

The home side moved 3-1 ahead after defending 220-6 in Mount Maunganui and then dismissing a ragged Pakistan for just 105 in the 17th over.

Jacob Duffy claimed 4-20 and fellow seamer Zak Foulkes 3-25 as Pakistan suffered their biggest T20 loss by runs against all nations, eclipsing a 95-run defeat against New Zealand in Wellington nine years ago.

The tourists were reduced to 9-3 after two overs with Duffy bagging two scalps in his first over, both caught by wicketkeeper Mitch Hay.

Duffy's first victim was Hasan Nawaz for one, two days after the Pakistan opener blasted a maiden century in game three in

Auckland to keep the series alive. Teetering at 56-8, Pakistan's innings had some credibility restored thanks to 44 off 30 balls from all-rounder Abdul Samad.

The only other batsman to score in double figures was Irfan Khan with 24.

Pakistan captain Salman Agha said New Zealand's bowlers exploited some helpful conditions under lights.

"They bowled really well and they outplayed us," Salman said.

"I mean, the ball talked. It was swinging and it was turning as well. But we are international cricketers, so we have to adapt that and we have to be better.

"We need to regroup and we need to win the last game."

It was New Zealand's second biggest T20 win by runs, nearly surpassing their 119-run drubbing of the West Indies in 2018 at the same Bay Oval venue.

Earlier, Finn Allen raced to 50 off just 20 balls, putting on 59 for New Zealand's opening stand with Tim Seifert, whose 44 took 22 deliveries.

Seifert was the first of three batsmen

dismissed by seamer Haris Rauf, who claimed 3-27.

Allen struck six fours and three sixes while captain Michael Bracewell was nearly as effective at the death, blasting 46 not out off 26 balls.

Bracewell was delighted with his team's all-round response to the loss at Auckland.

"Bouncing back only a day or so after the performance at Eden Park was outstanding," he said.

"It shows the benefit of those guys batting so well at the top, they got us well ahead of the game. All the seamers bowled brilliantly tonight. It's nice when you give bowlers a go, like Zak Foulkes coming into the match. Three wickets for him was a brilliant performance."

Game five is in Wellington on Wednesday.

BRIEF SCORES

New Zealand 220 for 6 (Allen 50, Bracewell 46*, Seifert 44, Rauf 3-27) **beat Pakistan 105 all out** (Samad 44, Duffy 4-20, Foulkes 3-25) **by 115 runs**



New Zealand's Jacob Duffy appeals for the wicket of Pakistan's Salman Agha during the fourth Twenty20 match at Bay Oval in Mount Maunganui yesterday. (AFP)

IPL

Kishan powers Sunrisers to big win over Royals

The Hyderabad total included a remarkable 34 fours and 12 sixes



Sunrisers Hyderabad's batsman Ishan Kishan is a picture of absolute joy after reaching his century against Rajasthan Royals during an IPL match in Hyderabad yesterday. (Reuters)

AFP
Hyderabad, India

Top-order batter Ishan Kishan hammered his first century in the Indian Premier League (IPL) yesterday as he powered Sunrisers Hyderabad to a mammoth 286-6 and a 44-run win over Rajasthan Royals.

Hyderabad were invited to bat first and fell just one short of their best of 287, which remains the T20 tournament's highest ever total, with England and Rajasthan bowler Jofra Archer in particular having a day to forget.

The left-handed Kishan stood out as he hammered a ton in 45 balls to pummel the opposition attack after Travis Head smashed 67 off 31 deliveries in the second match of the league that began on Saturday.

Rajasthan finished on 242-6 after half-centuries from Sanju Samson and Dhruv Jurel. Shimron Hetmyer hit 42 off 23 balls.

Batting first, Hyderabad's Australian im-

port Head came out roaring with opening partner Abhishek Sharma and the two handed the team a blazing start. The left-handed Head hammered fast bowler Archer for 23 runs in one over to set the pace for the onslaught.

Archer went on to concede 76 runs in four overs for the most expensive spell in the IPL.

Head and Kishan, playing his first match for Hyderabad, put on 85 runs off 39 balls for the second wicket to lay the foundations for the total.

Nitish Kumar Reddy, who hit 30 off 15 balls, and Heinrich Klaasen, who hit a 14-ball 34, boosted the total with their explosive cameos.

Rajasthan medium-pace bowler Tushar Deshpande claimed three wickets, including Head, but the batting storm continued right up to the end of Hyderabad's 20 overs.

The Hyderabad total included a remarkable 34 fours and 12 sixes.

Last year, runners-up Hyderabad posted the highest-ever innings total of 287-3 against Royal Challengers Bengaluru.

In reply, Rajasthan lost two wickets in the

second over – opener Yashasvi Jaiswal and skipper Riyan Parag – and were never in the chase.

Samson, Rajasthan's regular captain who did not make the XI due to an injury and came in as an impact player, smashed 66 and put on 111 runs with Jurel, who top-scored with 70.

But the partnership could only add a little polish to the defeat for the inaugural IPL champions.

The IPL will end with the final on May 25 with 74 matches to be played by ten teams across 13 venues.

The cash-rich league has generated billions in revenue since its inception in 2008, turning the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) into one of the richest governing bodies in sport.

BRIEF SCORES

Sunrisers Hyderabad 286 for 6 (Kishan 106*, Head 67, Deshpande 3-44) **beat Rajasthan Royals 242 for 6** (Jurel 70, Samson 66, Simarjeet 2-46) **by 44 runs**

SPOTLIGHT

Ravindra, Noor help Chennai down Mumbai in IPL blockbuster



Chennai Super Kings' batsman Rachin Ravindra in action during an IPL match against Mumbai Indians at MA Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai yesterday. (Reuters)

AFP
Chennai, India

New Zealand's Rachin Ravindra hit an unbeaten 65 as Chennai Super Kings began their IPL season with a four-wicket win over Mumbai Indians yesterday.

Afghanistan spinner Noor Ahmad returned figures of 4-18 to help Chennai restrict Mumbai to 155-9 at the Chepauk Stadium.

Ravindra anchored the chase, after skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad smashed 53 off 26 deliveries, and hit the winning six as Chennai won with five balls to spare.

Former India captain and Chennai icon MS Dhoni remained the crowd favourite in his 18th straight IPL season, as the 43-year-old wicketkeeper walked out to bat for the final few balls.

Chennai and Mumbai share an old rivalry, with both teams winning five titles each in the T20 tournament that began in 2008.

The hosts fielded first and their bowlers justified Gaikwad's decision as fast bowler Khaleel Ahmed rattled the Mumbai top-order, including getting former skipper Rohit Sharma out for a duck in the first over.

Left-arm quick Khaleel bowled South African Ryan Rickelton for 13 as he under-edged a delivery onto his stumps.

Ahmad took over from Khaleel

and turned on the heat with his left-arm wrist spin as he struck twice in one over and removed the dangerous Tilak Varma for 31.

Wickets kept tumbling but Deepak Chahar hit a late cameo of 28 to give Chennai something to think about.

Opener Ravindra put on 67 runs for the second wicket with Gaikwad as Chennai appeared set to cruise to their target.

But left-arm wrist spinner Vignesh Puthur took three wickets on his IPL debut, despite never having even played state cricket before, making his presence felt by dismissing Gaikwad, Shivam Dube and Deepak Hooda – all India internationals.

Chennai wobbled when spinner Will Jacks bowled fellow Englishman Sam Curran for four, but Ravindra kept calm and with Ravindra Jadeja, who was run out for 17 in the penultimate over, helped the team get over the line.

Dhoni failed to get off the mark from the two balls he faced, but watched from the non-striker's end as Ravindra smashed his New Zealand teammate Mitchell Santner into the stands to complete the win.

BRIEF SCORES

Chennai Super Kings 158 for 6 (Ravindra 65*, Gaikwad 53, Puthur 3-32) **beat Mumbai Indians 155 for 9** (Tilak 31, Noor 4-18, Khaleel, 3-29) **by four wickets**

FOCUS



Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT's British driver Elfyn Evans and co-driver Scott Martin celebrate after winning the World Rally Championship (WRC) Safari Rally Kenya in Naivasha. (AFP)

Evans roars to victory at Safari Rally Kenya

AFP
Naivasha, Kenya

Welshman Elfyn Evans extended his lead at the top of the World Rally Championship with victory at the demanding Safari Rally Kenya yesterday.

The Toyota driver made it back-to-back wins having won the last round in Sweden and now, after three of the 14 rounds, holds a 36-point lead over defending champion Thierry Neuville in the title race.

Two-time champion Kalle Rovanpera is 57 points adrift, after being forced to

retire yesterday morning with an electrical issue on his Toyota.

Evans, who has finished runner-up in the championship on four occasions, drove a controlled race, avoiding the many pitfalls of the Safari Rally, as he completed the 21st and final special stage with a 1 minute 9 second lead over Hyundai's Ott Tanak.

The Estonian's Belgian teammate Neuville finished third at 3min 32sec.

"A huge well done to the team," said Evans.

"They did a great job and I'm proud to be a very small part of Toyota's history at this special rally"

Finland's Sami Pajari (Toyota) took

fourth place, ahead of his Japanese teammate Takamoto Katsuta, who rolled his Toyota on the final stage as he pressed for bonus points.

Nearby spectators helped him get the car back on its wheels but the Japanese driver still wasn't able to get to the finish, allowing Luxembourg's Gregoire Munster in his M-Sport Ford to sneak into fifth spot.

"I don't know what happened," said Katsuta who had been heading for fourth. "Just sorry for the team, nothing else."

The next stage of the WRC World Championship will take place at the end of April with the Rally of the Canary Islands.

FORMULA ONE

Piastri hails McLaren as both Ferraris disqualified

It is a disastrous end to a weekend that had started so brilliantly for Ferrari and Lewis Hamilton

AFP
Shanghai

Oscar Piastri hailed his “mega” McLaren after winning a Chinese Grand Prix yesterday later overshadowed by the disqualifications of Ferrari’s Lewis Hamilton and Charles Leclerc for technical infringements.

Alpine’s Pierre Gasly was also kicked out after Piastri led a McLaren one-two from pole position with Lando Norris second.

Almost three hours after the chequered flag, stewards ruled that Leclerc and Gasly had cars that weighed less than the 800 kilogram minimum, while Hamilton was found to have excessive plank wear underneath his car.

Leclerc had finished fifth and Hamilton sixth. Their points have been stripped with all the drivers below them gaining places. Gasly finished 11th so was already out of the points. It means that Esteban Ocon moves up to fifth, Kimi Antonelli to sixth, Alex Albon to seventh and Oliver Bearman to eighth.

Lance Stroll and Carlos Sainz were promoted to score points for ninth and 10th respectively.

It was a disastrous end to a weekend that had started so brilliantly for Ferrari when Hamilton took his maiden win for his new team in Saturday’s sprint.

The plank assembly is a skid plate which is designed to wear away when the floor strikes against bumps on the track or kerbs.

If it is too worn it can improve performance as cars can run closer to track, increasing “ground effect” down force.

Ferrari said later they had “no intention to gain any advantage”.

The Italian team issued a statement saying Leclerc’s one-stop race strategy had caused high tyre wear accounting for the weight breach. They added they had misjudged Hamilton’s plank wear “by



McLaren’s Australian driver Oscar Piastri drives during the Chinese Grand Prix at the Shanghai International Circuit in Shanghai yesterday. (AFP)



McLaren’s British driver Lando Norris (left) and teammate Australia’s Oscar Piastri attend a press conference after the Chinese Grand Prix at the Shanghai International Circuit yesterday. (AFP)

a small margin”.

“We will learn from what happened today and make sure we don’t make the same mistakes again.”

During the race Piastri kept a cool head to bounce back from the disappointment of his spin in the closing laps of the season-opener in Melbourne a week ago.

From the moment he fended off George Russell’s Mercedes at

the first bend, Piastri was in total control for all 56 laps around the 5.451km Shanghai International Circuit as he took his third grand prix win.

Norris darted past from third on the grid at the same turn and the two McLarens then sped away, leaving Russell to take his second third-place finish of the season.

It was McLaren’s 50th one-two finish in their long history.



Ferrari’s Lewis Hamilton is interviewed after finishing sixth place in the Chinese Grand Prix yesterday. (Reuters)

“It’s been an incredible weekend, the car has been pretty mega,” said Piastri, 23, after McLaren made a one-stop strategy work to perfection.

“Very, very happy. The hard was a much better tyre than everyone expected so to go all the way to the end was a bit of a surprise, but a happy surprise.”

Red Bull’s world champion Max Verstappen snatched fourth place after a thrilling late pass on Leclerc.

Norris had to cope with a late brake issue which forced him to settle for second rather than launch a challenge on his teammate.

“I was lucky. Lucky to finish the race today and that’s not something you want to be saying,” said a relieved Norris, for whom the finish line came just in time.

“Brakes are something you hate but something you really do need and it can save your life,” he added.

Norris leads the championship after two race weekends on 44 points from Verstappen on 36. Russell is on 35 with Piastri closing in on 34.

Russell was delighted with third place.

“The car has been great this weekend and probably one of my best weekends in Formula One in terms of performance, so really pleased with that,” said the Englishman.

Four-time world champion Verstappen showed all his race craft and experience to nurse his tyres to perfection, biding his time to make his move on Leclerc.

“I suddenly picked up tyre grip... where others maybe plateaued a bit more,” he said. “The first half of the race was quite tough but we set out to do our own pace.”

Haas were much improved from Melbourne, where they ran 13th and 14th, finishing with two cars in the points with Ocon and rookie Bearman.

The third round of the season is the Japanese Grand Prix at Suzuka on April 4-6.

GOLF

Plucky Mansell, on his 104th attempt, wins maiden DP World Tour title at Singapore Classic

Reuters
Singapore

Richard Mansell sank a birdie at the final hole to win the Singapore Classic yesterday and claim his first DP World Tour title on his 104th attempt, beating Keita Nakajima by one stroke.

Englishman Mansell carded a six-under 66 in the third and final round to finish 16 under overall in a tight contest, with Frenchman Adrien Saddier and England’s Tom McKibbin finishing two strokes behind to jointly place third.

“God, I wish it had come earlier,” an emotional Mansell said when asked about his long wait for a title. “What a feeling... it makes those near misses and when I’ve got ahead of myself in the past just kind of worth it and it just means that much more.”

American Dan Erickson had a one-shot lead going into the final day after the tournament

was reduced to 54 holes following a washout on Thursday. Erickson hit two birdies and a bogey in the third round as he dropped to joint sixth, while Japan’s Nakajima put in an unblemished performance with seven birdies to finish 15 under par.

Mansell, 29, hit five birdies in a row before a bogey on the 10th but offset that with another birdie on the 13th. He was level with Nakajima going into the 18th hole, where he finished with a spectacular two-putt birdie from more than 100 feet.

“So many people have supported me and believed in me when I stopped doing it myself,” said Mansell, whose wife Ellie was in tears when he won.

“One thing I’d say to people trying to do it as a career, that moment is the most fulfilling thing in the world and it’s worth it.

“So stick in and hopefully you’ll get rewarded one day like I have today.”

Mansell will walk away with nearly 400,000 euros (\$432,560) in prize money.



England’s Richard Mansell poses with the trophy after winning the DP World Tour Singapore Classic at Laguna National Golf Resort Club in Singapore yesterday. (AFP)

ATHLETICS

Unsuccessful Olympic bid water under the bridge, insists Coe

AFP
Nanjing, China

World Athletics president **Sebastian Coe** insisted yesterday that his unsuccessful challenge to succeed Thomas Bach as head of the International Olympic Committee was water under the bridge.

Coe had to be content with third place in the vote for the new IOC president in Greece this week.

Kirsty Coventry, a former Olympic gold medal-winning swimmer for Zimbabwe, won in the first round of voting with 49 of the 97 votes cast from IOC members to become the first African and the first woman to hold the post.

IOC veteran Juan Antonio Samaranch Jr received 28 votes, while Coe, twice Olympic 1500m champion for Britain, received just eight.

Asked whether he categorised his defeat as humiliating, Coe was adamant that that was not the case and that he was very much back to the day job.

“No, I mean, I don’t think like that,” he told AFP on the sidelines of the world indoor championships in Nanjing.

“I’m here. This is the centre-piece of Olympic sport and I’ve got a job to do.

“The world goes on. I offered a vision, which I stand by, I’m very happy to have done.

“I thought I could make a contribution, but that’s not going to be the way.”

Coe said it was now a question of bouncing back from the disappointment of the vote in the Greek coastal resort of Costa Navarino and into the final two years of his mandate as World Athletics president.

“That’s exactly what I’ve done. I flew from Greece last night and I’m here, and I’ve got a big job,” he said.



“All the candidates presented very different views and visions and, you know, I’m not going to go back through all that again, that’s done. But it’s on the record.”

Coe added: “The broader point is I’m here as president of the centrepiece Olympic sport. I remain an IOC member by virtue of my status here, which, to me, is very important.

“We will continue to be really good partners of the movement and, by implication, supportive of whoever is president, which we will be.”

Coe, 68, vowed to use his remaining two years as head of track and field’s governing body “to continue to do what we’re absolutely committed to”.

“Growing the sport, maintaining good governance, maintaining the really important democratic mandate of all our member federations and a council that will remain challenging and engaged.

“We continue to do that. Commercial programmes are going extremely well and we are committed to all the things that we’re doing,” Coe told AFP.

World Athletics’ presence in Nanjing for the world indoors was “huge”, Coe added in reference to the start of the body’s Asian swing over the coming seasons.

TENNIS

Swiatek, Dimitrov move into Miami Open last 16

Reuters
Miami

Former champion Iga Swiatek earned a 7-6(2) 6-1 win over Elise Mertens yesterday that put the Polish second seed into the last 16 at the Miami Open while 2024 finalist Grigor Dimitrov beat Karen Khachanov to reach the fourth round.

With the win over Belgian 27th seed Mertens, Swiatek became the first player to reach the last 16 of a WTA 1000 event in 25 consecutive appearances.

Swiatek built a seemingly comfortable 5-2 lead in the first set but Mertens managed to claw back to 5-5 before the Pole ran away with the tiebreaker and breezed through the second frame.

Up next for Swiatek will be a clash with Ukrainian 22nd seed Elina Svitolina, a 6-2 3-6 6-2 winner over Czech 15th seed



Iga Swiatek of Poland returns a shot against Elise Mertens of Belgium during Day 6 of the Miami Open in Miami, Florida, yesterday. (AFP)

Karolina Muchova. Svitolina, who arrived in Miami fresh off a quarter-final run at Indian Wells where she lost to eventual cham-

pion Mirra Andreeva, is now into the last 16 in Miami for the fifth time in her career.

In other early action, Austral-

ian Open champion Madison Keys, the American fifth seed, is facing Filipino wildcard Alexandra Eala on Grandstand with the winner due to face Spanish 10th seed Paula Badosa, a 6-3 7-6(3) winner over Dane Clara Tauson.

On the men’s side, Bulgarian 14th seed Dimitrov, who lost to Italy’s Jannik Sinner in last year’s final, came back from one set down to secure a 6-7(3) 6-4 7-5 victory over Russian Khachanov and set up a clash against either Belgian David Goffin or American Brandon Nakashima.

Six-times champion Novak Djokovic will cap the day session on Stadium Court when the Serbian fourth seed faces Argentine lucky loser Camilo Ugo Carabelli in a third round match.

A win for Djokovic from Serbia would give him 411 ATP Masters 1000 match wins, which would move him ahead of Rafa Nadal and into top spot on the all-time list.

HORSE RACING

Injaaz Stud's Mutamarrid claims Ras Al Noof Cup



Connections of Mutamarrid celebrate after the grey horse won the Ras Al Noof Cup at the Al Rayyan Racecourse.

By Sports Reporter

Doha

Mutamarrid delivered a breath-taking performance to claim his second straight victory in the Ras Al Noof Cup at the Qatar Racing and Equestrian Club's (QREC) Al Rayyan Racecourse.

Under jockey Pierre Charles Boudot, the eight-year-old grey horse, owned by Injaaz Stud and

trained by Jihad El Ahmad, battled for the lead throughout before unleashing a stunning turn of foot in the home straight to win impressively by commanding five-and-a-half lengths.

Mohammed Abdulhadi S al-Hajri - owned and Hamad al-Jehani Maysara came second and Neshan under Maxim Bozzio finished third in the 1200m race. Abdulla Rashid al-Kubaisi, QREC Racing Manager, crowned the winners.

In the penultimate race of the

day, jockey Salman Fahad al-Hajri guided Jassim Ghazali-trained Sha'alan to win the Purebred Arabian Handicap 75-95 (Class 3) contest and in the process completed a double on the card.

Earlier, al-Hajri was in the winners' enclosure when he rode Mukabr to an impressive win in the Local Purebred Arabian Handicap 60-80 (Class 4).

Ali bin Saeed Aljafali al-Nuaimi-owned and Ahmed Kobeissi-trained Elaaf emerged as winner

Jockey Pierre Charles Boudot guided Mutamarrid to the victory. **PICTURES:** Juhaim

Ras Al Noof Cup - Local Thoroughbred Open Race (Class 2)
Mutamarrid, Jihad El Ahmad, Pierre Charles Boudot
Purebred Arabian Handicap 75-95 (Class 3)
Sha'alan, Jassim Ghazali, Salman Fahad al-Hajri
Local Purebred Arabian Handicap 60-80 (Class 4)
Mukabr, Dr Fahad Salman FS al-Hajri, Salman Fahad al-Hajri
Local Thoroughbred Handicap

30-55 (Class 5)
Elaaf, Ahmed Kobeissi, Ivan Rossi
Purebred Arabian Maiden Plate (Class 6)
Thouab Al Shahania, Ahmed al-Jehani, Saleh Faraj al-Otaibi
Thoroughbred Maiden Plate (Class 6)
Wathbah, Hadi al-Ramzani, Faleh Bughanaim
Local Thoroughbred Maiden Plate (Class 6)
Holwah, Zuhair Mohsen, Soufiane Saadi

RESULTS
Ras Al Noof Cup
WINNERS: (Horse, Trainer, Jockey)

FOOTBALL

Motta sacked as coach of Juventus, replaced by Tudor

AXE FOLLOWS HEAVY DEFEATS BY ATALANTA AND FIORENTINA

AFP

Milan

Thiago Motta was sacked as Juventus coach yesterday after less than one season in charge with former player Igor Tudor replacing him, the Italian giants announced.

"Juventus FC announce that Thiago Motta has been relieved of his duties as men's first team coach," said a statement by Juventus.

"The club would like to thank Thiago Motta and all of his staff for their professionalism and for the work they have carried out in recent months with passion and dedication.

"Juventus also announce that the team will now be led by Igor Tudor, who will take charge of his first training session tomorrow, Monday, March 24."

The decision to dump Motta followed a 4-0 defeat by Atalanta - their heaviest home defeat since 1967 - and a 3-0 loss at Fiorentina in the team's last two games, leaving Juve a disappointing fifth in the Italian top flight.

On the back of these results, the club's directors used the current international break to have discussions with Motta, which led them to the decision that he was no longer the best fit for the role.

But the seeds of doubt in the club's mind go back to well before March.

After leading Bologna to the Champions League last season, Motta, 42, arrived to much fanfare in Turin back in July of last year. But the honeymoon period did not last long. His team rarely thrilled and collected 13 draws in the league, while expensive sum-



mer recruits like Douglas Luiz and Teun Koopmeiners failed to live up to expectations.

A situation which was exacerbated by Motta's frequent tinkering to his starting XI - he deployed 39 different formations over the course of his 42 matches in charge.

And the Italian-Brazilian coach also made some odd choices, notably by relegating Serbian striker Dusan Vlahovic and Turkish phenomenon Kenan Yildiz to the bench. Last month, Juventus were knocked out of the Champions League by PSV Eindhoven in the play-off for a place in the last 16 and the Italian Cup, of which they were the defending champions, when they lost to Empoli in the quarter-finals.

In addition to poor results, a big hit to Motta has doubtless been the perception of many of the club's faithful that, under his

leadership, Juve have lost part of their DNA.

The team no longer live up to their motto of 'Fino alla fine' (Until the end) - having drawn or lost 87.5 percent of the matches in which they have fallen behind.

All of this had led to Juventus being in a dogfight to secure vital Champions League football next season.

With only nine matches remaining this term, just six points separate Bologna in fourth from ninth-placed AC Milan in the Serie A race for Europe's top club competition.

Motta's replacement Tudor will be tasked with securing fourth place, the last qualifying spot for the Champions League, which is crucial for Juventus' fragile finances. Croatian Tudor made 174 appearances for Juve as a player, before going into coaching. His



past managerial experiences include Verona, Marseille and Lazio.

He was also Andrea Pirlo's assistant when the former Italian midfield maestro was the man in charge of Juventus for the 2020-21 season. According to the Italian press, 46-year-old Tudor has only signed a deal to stay in the Juventus hot seat until the end of the current season.

In this case, the club's directors will likely be hoping to attract a big-name coach such as Antonio Conte or Stefano Pioli - in charge of Napoli and Saudi side Al Nassr respectively - to join them in June before the start of the new-format Club World Cup.

Another possible candidate is Roberto Mancini, former coach of Inter Milan and Manchester City, who has been without a job since stepping down as Saudi Arabia coach last October.

FOCUS

Aubameyang World Cup brace boosts Gabon, sinks Kenya

AFP

Johannesburg

Former Arsenal and Barcelona striker Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang scored twice to give Gabon a crucial 2-1 win over Kenya in an African 2026 World Cup qualifier yesterday.

The 35-year-old, who now plays in the Saudi Pro League, struck after 16 and 52 minutes in front of a sell-out 15,000 crowd in Nairobi before Michael Olunga reduced arrears on 62 minutes.

Securing maximum points took Gabon to 15 in Group F. Reigning African champions Ivory Coast have 13, Burundi seven, Kenya six, Gambia four and Seychelles none.

Ivory Coast host Gambia on Monday and Burundi have home advantage over Seychelles on Tuesday in other matchday six fixtures.

Barring a dramatic collapse by either team, Gabon and Ivory Coast, who meet in September, look set to battle for first place.

The nine group winners automatically qualify for the expanded 48-nation World Cup in the United States, Canada and Mexico.

There could be a 10th African qualifier as the four best-ranked runners-up enter a mini-tournament. The winners advance to inter-continental play-offs offering two finals slots.

Trailing Gabon by nine points with just four matches to play, Kenya are all but out of contention for a first appearance at the global showpiece.

New coach Benni McCarthy, the former Manchester United assistant coach and star South Africa forward, can now concentrate on the African Nations Championship, which Kenya co-hosts in August.

A couple of veterans combined to put Gabon ahead with Serbia-based 34-year-old Guelor Kanga crossing for unmarked Aubameyang to fire across goalkeeper Ian Otieno and into the net.

Kenya captain Olunga was a constant threat and hit the post and headed another attempt wide before half-time in the first international hosted by Kenya since 2021.

The Nyayo National Stadium did not meet FIFA standards, leaving the Harambee Stars to stage home fixtures in various countries, including neighbours Uganda.

When Eric Ouma handled an Aubameyang shot, Gabon were awarded a penalty that the 2015 African Footballer of the Year calmly converted.

Olunga scored his fourth goal of the World Cup campaign to bring Kenya back into contention. The Qatar-based forward tapped a low cross past goalkeeper Loyce Mbaba from close range.

Both teams had chances in a lively finish, but there were no further goals and Gabon completed a double over Kenya, having won 2-1 in the first round.

Elsewhere, Eswatini and Mauritius drew 3-3 in a clash of the lowest placed teams in Group D, which Cape Verde tops followed by Cameroon, Libya and Angola. Having scored only once in five qualifiers, Eswatini netted twice within 18 minutes of the kick-off, with Philani Mkhonto claiming both.

Mauritius struck twice early in the second half through Lindsay Rose and Yannick Aristide, only for Mayibongwe Mabuza to put Eswatini ahead again.

Emmanuel Vincent salvaged a point for Mauritius with an added-time equaliser in Mbombela. Eswatini played in the South African city because they lack a FIFA-approved venue.



Gabon's Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang celebrates after scoring a goal during the FIFA World Cup 2026 Africa qualifiers group F match against Kenya at the Nyayo National Stadium in Nairobi yesterday. (AFP)

PSG's Lee Kang-in misses key World Cup qualifier with injury

Paris Saint-Germain's Lee Kang-in will miss South Korea's vital home World Cup qualifier against Jordan tomorrow after picking up an ankle injury, his national coach said. The 24-year-old attacking midfielder provided the through ball for Wolves' Hwang Hee-chan to score in a 1-1 home draw with Oman on Thursday. Lee, who has 35 caps and nine goals for his country, was substituted off five minutes from the end of the stalemate at Goyang Stadium.

Lee, who had come on as a first-half substitute, rolled his left ankle, Yonhap News agency said. Coach Hong Myung-bo told reporters that Lee, together with Paik Seung-ho of Birmingham City and Jung Seung-hyun of Al Wasl in the UAE, were all out. "With Lee Kang-in, tests showed that his injury isn't as serious as we once feared," Hong said on Saturday, according to Yonhap. "I just had a talk with him and I was able to reaffirm his commitment to the national team.

"However, he is just as important to his club as he is to the national team." South Korea top Asian qualifying Group B with four wins and three draws from seven games and are on course for the 2026 World Cup in North America. But they were pegged back late on by Oman, and are now only three points ahead of Jordan and Iraq with three rounds of games to go. The top two go straight to the World Cup.

(AFP)