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GULF TIMES SPORT



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FOOTBALL

Preparations for Qatar Cup begin: Qatar Stars League

A number of valuable prizes on offer for the fans during the matches

The Qatar Stars League (QSL) announced preparations for Qatar Cup 2025 during a media interactive session held by QSL, attended by Hassan Rabiah al-Kuwari, Executive Director of Sales, Marketing and Communication at QSL.

Al-Kuwari said: “First, I would like to extend my thanks and appreciation for your presence with us today as part of our constant commitment to communicate with the media, being an important partner. I also take this opportunity to congratulate the clubs competing in this edition of Qatar Cup, the glorious cup, and commend Al Sadd on winning the Ooredoo Stars League. I wish everyone the very best.

He continued: “With the aim of staging this esteemed tournament in a distinguished organisational and technical manner, we at QSL attach great importance to it through arrangements and co-operation with all relevant entities, partners and clubs.

With the announcement of official tournament schedule, the promotional and marketing campaign was launched in addition to the official Trophy Tour through visits to the headquarters of sponsoring companies and a number of other locations, with the aim of engaging with fans.

Tickets were made available on April 19, 2025, on QSL's official website – tickets.qsl.qa – where fans can obtain them to attend matches. Tickets are available only online. Besides, a diverse event area has been designated for fans, featuring various activities and facilities that will enhance the match atmosphere.

QSL is also offering fans a number of valuable prizes during the matches, including three cars and numerous other raffle draw prizes at the stadium.

He said: “The cup is prestigious and bears a name dear to all of us, the name of our beloved country, Qatar. Everyone is competing and has ambitions to win the title. We hope to succeed in presenting a

distinguished tournament at all levels. I also extend my thanks and appreciation to the sponsors, partners, supporters and media outlets, and all partners are working hand-in-hand to ensure the tournament's outstanding success.”

A technical meeting for the Qatar Cup semi-finals was held at the QSL headquarters in Al Bidda Tower yesterday. The meeting was attended by representatives of QSL (Ahmed Salman al-Adsani, Director of Competitions; Nasser Yaqoub, Director of Sales and Marketing; Ahmed Abdullah al-Sayed, Head of Football Operations), Abdulrahman Abdou, Representative of Referees Department at Qatar Football Association; Captain Saad al-Badr, Representative of Sports Security Department; and representatives of competing clubs.

Al-Adsani welcomed the attendees, congratulated the clubs competing in this edition of Qatar Cup, the prestigious cup, and wished them success in the competition and a distinguished performance.



Executive Director of Sales, Marketing and Communication at QSL Hassan Rabiah al-Kuwari addressing the media persons yesterday.

THE HIGHER ORGANIZING COMMITTEE OF Ooredoo' QATAR MAJOR 2025



is pleased to express its gratitude and appreciation to ooredoo (the title sponsor) all other sponsors, media outlets, working committees and volunteers for their contribution in the success of the world-class event Ooredoo Qatar Major which was held from 14th to 19th April 2025 at Khalifa International Tennis and Squash Complex We look forward to your participation in our upcoming events.

MOTORSPORT

Piastri wins Jeddah battle to grab Formula One lead

VERSTAPPEN FINISHES SECOND WHILE LECLERC IS THIRD; NORRIS GOES FROM 10TH TO FOURTH

Reuters
Jeddah

Oscar Piastri won the Saudi Arabian Grand Prix yesterday to seize the lead in the Formula One world championship from McLaren teammate Lando Norris with his third win in five races.

Red Bull's four-times champion Max Verstappen was runner-up, 2.843 seconds behind the Australian, after starting from pole at Jeddah's Corniche circuit but collecting a five-second penalty for a first corner clash with Piastri.

Charles Leclerc was third for Ferrari's first podium of the campaign and Norris clawed his way from 10th on the grid to fourth.

Victory made Piastri, triumphant in Bahrain last weekend and China last month, the first Australian to lead the championship since his manager Mark Webber in 2010 and also the first back-to-back winner this season.

He now leads Norris, whose race was heavily compromised by a crash in qualifying, by 10 points after starting the night three behind. Piastri has 99 points to Norris's 89 and Verstappen's 87.

Champions McLaren stretched their lead over Mercedes in the constructors' standings to 77 points.

"It was a pretty tough race. I'm



McLaren's Oscar Piastri (also inset) passes fireworks after winning the Saudi Arabian Grand Prix at Jeddah Corniche Circuit yesterday. (Reuters)

very, very happy to have won. Made the difference at the start. Made my case into Turn One, and that was enough," said the

happy winner. "Definitely one of the toughest races I've had in my career," he added after 50 laps in 30 degree temperatures around a

super-fast track. George Russell was fifth for Mercedes with Italian teammate Kimi Antonelli sixth and seven-times world champion

Lewis Hamilton seventh for Ferrari.

Williams had Carlos Sainz and Alex Albon eighth and ninth with

Racing Bulls' French rookie Isack Hadjar the final points scorer in 10th. There was immediate controversy at the start as Verstappen and Piastri went side-by-side into the first corner, with the Red Bull emerging ahead after cutting across the runoff.

"He needs to give that back, I was ahead," Piastri told McLaren over the team radio.

"He was never going to make that corner regardless of whether he was there or not."

Verstappen gave his version in similar fashion to Red Bull: "He just forced me off, there was no intention of him to make that corner."

Stewards decided the champion was at fault and handed him the penalty, with Verstappen reacting by saying sarcastically "Oh, that is lovely! Red Bull boss Christian Horner did not let it lie after the chequered flag either, complimenting Verstappen and adding: "That first corner we've all got our opinions on!"

The safety car continued a sequence of appearing at all five races in Saudi Arabia so far with an appearance at the end of the opening lap after Verstappen's teammate Yuki Tsunoda and Alpine's Pierre Gasly collided and crashed in the thrilling race.

Both drivers retired, Tsunoda after getting his car back to the pits.

INDIAN PREMIER LEAGUE

Rohit and Suryakumar on song as MI hammer CSK

AFP
Mumbai

India captains Rohit Sharma and Suryakumar Yadav struck unbeaten half-centuries to power Mumbai Indians to a nine-wicket thrashing of Chennai Super Kings in a battle of IPL heavyweights yesterday.

India's Test and ODI skipper Rohit struck form in this edition of the T20 tournament with 76 and national T20 leader Suryakumar smashed 68 off 30 balls at Mumbai's Wankhede Stadium.

The two put on 114 runs to steer the five-time champions to chase down 177 with 26 balls to spare in a dominant performance.

Rohit, 37, came in as impact substitute in the chase and put on 63 runs with Ryan Rickleton, who fell for 24 off Ravindra Jadeja, to lay the foundations of Mumbai's third straight win.

Five-time winners Chennai, led by M S Dhoni after regular skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad pulled out injured mid-season, crashed to their sixth defeat in eight matches to stay bottom of the 10-team table.

Rohit struggled for form until this knock with just 82 runs in his previous six innings but found his groove with trademark flicks and pulls.

He reached his fifty in 33 balls but Suryakumar was in a hurry and his knock included some audacious shots behind the wicket raised his half-ton in 26 deliveries.

Rohit and Suryakumar smashed 11 sixes between them.

Chennai reached 176-5 after attacking half-centuries from Shivam Dube, who made 50, and Jadeja, who hit an unbeaten 53.

Invited to bat first, Chennai lost opener Rachin Ravindra for five off left-arm medium-pace bowler Ashwani Kumar before 17-year-old Ayush Mhatre took to the crease as the youngest to play for the five-time winners.



Mumbai Indians' Rohit Sharma plays a shot during the IPL match against Chennai Super Kings at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai yesterday. (AFP)

Mhatre smashed Ashwani for a four and two sixes and kept up his batting blitz till his departure on 32 off 15 balls.

Jadeja was promoted to number four and after opener Shaik Rasheed departed for 19, put on 79 with fellow left-hander Dube as the two rebuilt the innings and then hit back.

Dube took on New Zealand quick Trent Boult in one over and then combined with Jadeja to smash 24 runs from the 16th over.

Pace bowler Jasprit Bumrah pulled things back for Mumbai with two wickets in one over

including Dube and then Dhoni for four and returned figures of 2-25 in his four.

Jadeja kept up the pace and finished strongly in a 16-run 20th over where he raised his first 50-plus score in his last 14 IPL innings, but the effort went in vain.

BRIEF SCORES
Mumbai Indians 177 for 1 (Rohit 76*, Suryakumar 68*, Jadeja 1-28) **beat Chennai Super Kings 176 for 5** (Jadeja 53*, Dube 50, Bumrah 2-25) **by nine wickets**

CRICKET

Zimbabwe on top in first Test against Bangladesh

AFP
Sylhet, Bangladesh

Zimbabwe finished the first day of the first Test in a commanding position at 67-0 after an inspired bowling performance dismissed Bangladesh for 191 runs yesterday.

The visitors' opening pair of Brian Bennett, unbeaten on 40 off 37 balls, and Ben Curran (17) took the attack to Bangladesh's bowlers in the 14.1 overs they faced before bad light stopped play.

Bangladesh skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto, who scored 40, earlier won the toss and opted to bat first on a pace-friendly wicket. But his batters failed to capitalise on the decision and none of them, including top-scorer Mominul Haque (56) or Jakir Ali, who made 28, were able to turn good starts into decent Test scores.

The Zimbabwe attack bowled aggressive and disciplined lines, with paceman Blessing Muzarabani and left-arm orthodox Wellington Masakadza both taking three wickets.

They were assisted by Victor Nyauchi and Wesley Madhevere, who shared the other four wickets. Nyauchi set the tone for the visitors, sending back Bangladesh's openers early in the first session with only 32 runs on the board.

Shadman Islam was the first to fall for 12 in the ninth over, with Nyauchi also removing Mahmudul Hasan Joy (14) in his next over.

A third-wicket partnership of 66 runs between Haque and Shanto gave the home team's score some respectability. Bangladesh's relatively inexperienced pace attack of Hasan Mahmud, Nahid



Zimbabwe's Blessing Muzarabani celebrates during the first day of the first Test in Sylhet yesterday. (AFP)

Rana and Khalid Rana couldn't find their lines against Bennett, who hit six fours. Trailing only by 124 runs, Zimbabwe have a rare opportunity to set a formidable first innings total with the pitch expected to be better for the batters on the second day.

Bangladesh are ranked ninth and Zimbabwe are at the bottom of the 12-team ICC Test rankings after a disappointing year and both teams are hoping for a better start to the long season ahead.

The hosts have been formidable on the slow and spin-friendly home pitches but have several veterans missing. The second and final Test of the series will be played in Chattogram from April 28.

BRIEF SCORES, Day 1:
Bangladesh: 191 all out (Mominul Haque 56, Najmul Hossain Shanto 40; Blessing Muzarabani 3-50, Wellington Masakadza 3-21) **Zimbabwe: 67-0** Brian Bennett 40, Ben Curran 17; Hasan Mahmud 0-16
Toss: Bangladesh won the toss and decided to bat first.

FOCUS

Kohli, Padikkal shine as Bengaluru get revenge win over Punjab

AFP
Chandigarh, India

Virat Kohli and Devdutt Padikkal hit half-centuries to steer Royal Challengers Bengaluru to a seven-wicket win over Punjab Kings in the Indian Premier League yesterday.

Chasing 158 for victory, Bengaluru were propelled by a 103-run second-wicket stand between Kohli, who made an unbeaten 73, and Padikkal to reach their target with seven balls to spare at Mullanpur, near Chandigarh.

Bengaluru avenged their loss to

Punjab at home on Friday and the two teams, both seeking their first IPL title, are level on points.

The in-form Kohli, 36, struck his fourth half-ton of the season and surpassed Australia's David Warner for the most 50-plus scores in the popular T20 tournament.

Kohli has now made it past the 50-mark 67 times, including eight centuries. Left-handed Padikkal made 61 off 35 balls, his first fifty of the season, after Bengaluru lost opener Phil Salt in the first over to Arshdeep Singh.

Padikkal fell to Harpreet Brar, leaving Kohli to play the anchor in a 54-ball knock laced with seven fours and a six. Bengaluru spinners

Krunal Pandya and Suyash Sharma took two wickets each to set up victory as they helped restrict Punjab to 157-6.

Priyansh Arya and Prabhsimran Singh started aggressively in an opening stand of 42 before Pandya was introduced in the fifth over.

The left-arm spinner struck with his second ball to send back Arya for 22. Pandya struck again in his next over to dismiss Prabhsimran, who hit 33 off 17 balls, and finished with figures of 2-25.

West Indies fast bowler Romario Shepherd, in his first Bengaluru outing this season, had skipper Shreyas Iyer out for six and Nehal Wadhwa was run out soon after.

England's Josh Inglis attempted to hit back, smashing 29 off 17 balls, but was bowled by leg-spinner Suyash. Suyash hit the stumps again three balls later to remove Marcus Stoinis as Punjab slipped to 114-6. Shashank Singh, who made 31, and Marco Jansen, who hit 25, put on an unbeaten stand of 43 to boost the total but it was not enough to challenge Bengaluru.

BRIEF SCORES
Royal Challengers Bengaluru 159 for 3 (Kohli 73*, Padikkal 61) **beat Punjab Kings 157 for 6** (Prabhsimran 33, Shashank 31*, Krunal 2-25, Suyash 2-26) **by 7 wickets**



RCB's Virat Kohli (right) is congratulated by PK's captain Shreyas Iyer after their IPL win in Chandigarh yesterday. (AFP)

TENNIS

Gutsy Rune stuns Alcaraz to win Barcelona Open final

The Dane reveals he had taken notes from how Djokovic beat Alcaraz in Olympic final at Roland Garros



Denmark's Holger Rune is seen jumping into a swimming pool with ball kids after winning the final against Spain's Carlos Alcaraz at the Barcelona Open yesterday. Rune won 7-6, 6-2. (Reuters)

Reuters
Barcelona

Holger Rune denied red-hot favourite Carlos Alcaraz a third Barcelona Open trophy when he stunned the Spaniard 7-6(6) 6-2 in the final yesterday to lift his first title in two years.

Alcaraz had won the tournament in 2022 and 2023 but the top seed seemed to be struggling with an injury midway through the match, allowing Rune to capitalise and win his first trophy since the Bavarian Open in April 2023.

But the title was well deserved for Rune, who had also beaten second seed Casper Ruud in the quarter-finals, while Alcaraz dropped to third in the ATP rank-

ings, below Alexander Zverev who won the Munich Open earlier yesterday.

"It means the world, it was such a great match. In the beginning I was a bit stressed because Carlos obviously played big-time tennis and I had to breathe a lot and find my rhythm," Rune said after the match.

Alcaraz was out of the blocks early in the opening set and he put on a show with his powerful baseline returns and the occasional drop shot that had Rune scrambling as the Spaniard broke to go 3-2 up.

But in a span of a few minutes, Rune broke right back to go level before going up 4-3 to stun the fans watching on at Spain's oldest tennis club. Alcaraz then found himself serving to stay in the set

twice before forcing a tiebreak. Alcaraz saved two more set points in the tiebreak as Rune began to dictate points once again and the Dane finally converted his fifth set point when the top seed's return went long.

"When he broke me, I think I got more into the match and I played more of my tennis. It was a big battle in the first set," Rune added.

"I know how it feels to lose this kind of first set, it was super important to win it and gain the momentum. So I'm so proud of myself."

Alcaraz took a 2-1 lead in the second set before he took a medical timeout to deal with what seemed like an issue with his thigh muscle or groin.

He did not fare any better on his

return as Rune elevated his game. The Dane was very effective at the net, winning 12 of 16 points, while Alcaraz's unforced error count began to climb as the home fans groaned in frustration when Rune went 5-2 up.

Rune eventually served to love as Alcaraz's return hit the net on championship point to give Rune the title.

The Dane then revealed he had taken notes from how Novak Djokovic beat Alcaraz in the Olympic final at Roland Garros.

"I thought to myself, 'OK, let's try to play that kind of style; really make him play a lot of balls,'" Rune said.

"I'm very happy with how I stayed composed when it really mattered. I was also very brave when it mattered."

SABALENKA, OSTAPENKO REACH STUTTGART FINAL

Stuttgart, Germany: World number one Aryna Sabalenka will face Latvia's Jelena Ostapenko in the final of the Stuttgart Open WTA event today after beating Jasmine Paolini in straight sets yesterday. The top seed did not drop a set in the 7-5, 6-4 victory, but was forced to fight against the Italian as she reached the final at Stuttgart for the fourth time. After winning the first set, Sabalenka found herself three games down in the second, but dragged herself back to 3-3. She only dropped one more game in the set as she overcame Paolini, ranked sixth in the world and seeded fifth in Stuttgart, to reach the final. Winners of the Stuttgart Open also receive a Porsche from the event sponsors. Sabalenka said her opponent in the final was "playing great tennis", but added "I'm going to fight for this beautiful car behind me. "Please, please, I beg you - I need this car." Sabalenka will be hoping to finally break through in Stuttgart, where she lost three consecutive finals between 2021 and 2023. The Belarusian can take inspiration that Swiatek, who twice beat her in the final, has already

been sent packing from the tournament. Asked if this was the year she could break through, Sabalenka was confident, saying in her previous final appearances "I played the world number one. "So I became the world number one. Hopefully this helps me somehow." The 26-year-old, a three-time Grand Slam winner, will take on Ostapenko after the latter cruised through her semi-final against Ekaterina Alexandrova in straight sets earlier yesterday. World number 24 Ostapenko won 6-4, 6-4 to make her first final since she won the French Open in 2017. "I always knew my game was there", Ostapenko said after making the 24th final of her career. "I always believed in myself and that's the most important thing. I believe I can beat everyone". Ostapenko made the semi-finals after an impressive, three-set win over world number two Iga Swiatek, who boasted an 11-1 record on the Stuttgart clay before her elimination on Saturday. Now considered more of a doubles specialist, this is Ostapenko's second singles final of the season after the Qatar Open in February, where she lost to American Amanda Anisimova.



Italy's Jasmine Paolini (right) congratulates Belarus' Aryna Sabalenka after their semi-final at the WTA tournament in Stuttgart, southwestern Germany, yesterday. (Reuters)

SPOTLIGHT



Alexander Zverev poses with the trophy and his new car after winning the final against USA's Ben Shelton at the ATP Munich Open yesterday. (AFP)

Birthday boy Zverev roars back to form with title win in Munich

Munich: Germany's world number three Alexander Zverev celebrated his 28th birthday in style yesterday easing to the ATP Munich title with a 6-2, 6-4 win over American Ben Shelton. The top-seeded Zverev, appearing in his first final since losing to Jannik Sinner in the Australian Open title decider in January, had little trouble dealing with Shelton, ranked 15 in the world.

For Zverev it was the third time he had won in Munich - equalling compatriot Philipp Kohlschreiber's record - and his 24th ATP title overall. Unlike in his quarter-final win over the Netherlands' Tallon Griekspoor, where Zverev needed to come from a set down to win, the German was in

control from the outset against the 22-year-old second-seeded American. Zverev forced Shelton into several mistakes, before converting his first match point after just 71 minutes. "It's been a difficult few months," Zverev said, while thanking the home fans: "without you, I would already be out. "On Friday, I was already almost out, but now I'm standing here with the trophy." Yesterday's match was the first time the top two seeds met in the Munich showpiece since 2010. Shelton congratulated Zverev on the win in his "home tournament", adding "congrats to your team, you guys are doing great work and are playing really well. "I would have liked to have said this is a birthday present, but I had no clue it was your birthday. "I feel blessed to play in front of you guys on Easter Sunday, it's

really special for me." Zverev returned the praise, saying Shelton was "becoming one of the most dangerous players on every surface and it's great to see." Shelton was bidding to become the first American to win a final on clay above ATP 500 level since Andre Agassi in 2002. Zverev's win yesterday represents a welcome return to form for him. After losing to Sinner in Melbourne, Zverev failed to make it past the quarters at six successive tournaments, before coming to Munich. The German, most comfortable on clay, repeatedly said he was not concerned about his form and was focused on the French Open, which begins in late May. Winners of the tournament pocket almost half a million euros (\$570,000), along with a luxury car from the sponsors and a pair of lederhosen, traditional Bavarian leather pants.

CYCLING

Rank outsider Skjelmose in Amstel Gold heist

AFP
Valkenburg, Netherlands

Up-and-coming Danish Lidl-Trek rider Mattias Skjelmose edged cycling giants Tadej Pogacar and Remco Evenepoel in a pulsating three-way struggle at the Dutch classic Amstel Gold race yesterday. Tour de France winner and world champion Pogacar made a solo attack 50km from home before the 24-year-old Skjelmose broke after him.

He was then joined by double Olympic champion Evenepoel in the closing stages of the 255km run in the hilly Limburg region and

the pair caught the fading Pogacar. "I was riding into a headwind and once Remco had joined the chase I decided to wait for them," Pogacar explained.

Climb specialist Skjelmose allowed the other two to do most of the work on the final ascents and was an unexpected winner at the line following an intense 3km cat-and-mouse waiting game that culminated in photo-finish at the line.

"The finish line was five metres too far," said Pogacar, who was second and gamely tapped Skjelmose on the shoulder in recognition.

"I really paid the price for all my efforts in the headwind over the last 15km," said Pogacar. Evenepoel had done most of the donkey work

in the late and unlikely chase, and was left hugely disappointed after almost 5hr 50min in the saddle. Another Belgian, Wout van Aert, was fourth 34sec adrift while Australian Michael Matthews rounded out the top five.

Defending champion Tom Pidcock, who won in 2024 in a similar manner, also ended with the Van Aert group. An exhausted Skjelmose appeared stunned after his feat.

"I was riding for a podium spot," said Skjelmose, who won the best young rider at the Vuelta in 2024 and won the Tour of Switzerland in 2023. This Ardennes classic over 34 hills is the only major one-day race in the Netherlands and Easter weekend crowds were packed along the course.

Martin leaves hospital a week after Qatar MotoGP crash

Paris: Reigning MotoGP world champion Jorge Martin has left hospital a week after a brutal crash in the Qatar Grand Prix, his Aprilia team said yesterday. The 27-year-old, who was making his first appearance of the season, slid out shortly after the halfway mark at Lusail and was clipped by the Italian Fabio Di Giannantonio who was just behind him. His team said during the week that Martin had "suffered a hemopneumothorax" - broken ribs, and blood and air in the space around his lungs.

"Jorge (Martin) has been discharged from Hamad Hospital and will remain in Qatar for a few more days until his condition is stabilised," Aprilia said in a statement yesterday. Martin, who now has next to no chance of defending his title, was first injured during pre-season testing in Sepang and had to undergo surgery at the beginning of February. He then suffered another crash which necessitated another operation on his left hand at the end of February, just before the opening round of the season in Thailand.

PREMIER LEAGUE

Leicester relegated as Liverpool close in on title

AFP
London

Trent Alexander-Arnold fired Liverpool to the brink of the Premier League title as his late strike sealed a 1-0 win that relegated Leicester after Arsenal's 4-0 rout of Ipswich delayed the leaders' coronation yesterday.

Arne Slot's side could have clinched a record-equalling 20th English title with a combination of an Arsenal loss and a victory at the King Power Stadium.

Liverpool fulfilled their half of the equation, but second-placed Arsenal were not so obliging earlier in the afternoon. The Gunners' stroll at Portman Road meant Liverpool kicked off still needing six points from their last six games to seal a first title since 2020.

Thanks to Alexander-Arnold's match-winning contribution after coming off the bench, Liverpool are 13 points clear of Arsenal with five games left for both teams.

The Reds will seal the title if Arsenal lose at home to Crystal Palace on Wednesday or if they beat Tottenham at Anfield on April 27.

It looked like being a frustrating day for Liverpool as second-bottom Leicester kept them at bay despite a host of chances for the visitors.

Slot's men finally made the breakthrough in the 76th minute when Alexander-Arnold lashed home the rebound from close-range after Mohamed Salah and Diogo Jota both hit the crossbar.

With speculation mounting that Alexander-Arnold will join Real Madrid when his contract expires at the end of the season, it was notable that the England right-back embarked on a wild celebration of his winner.

Alexander-Arnold earned a booking for ripping off his shirt and planting it on the corner flag after he sprinted to 3,000 jubilant Liverpool fans in one corner of the King Power.



Liverpool manager Arne Slot embraces goal-scorer Trent Alexander-Arnold on the pitch after the English Premier League match against Leicester City at King Power Stadium in Leicester yesterday. (AFP)

"It took us a long time and, of course, a great moment for Trent after working so hard to come back. To score the goal that makes a lot of difference is very special," Slot said.

"It's never hard to dream (of the title) but you see we are really focused on playing Tottenham."

Liverpool's title celebration is only a matter of time but Leicester will spend next season in the Championship after their woeful one-year stay in the top tier came to an end with a 23rd defeat in 33 league games.

Fresh from a famous victory over Real Madrid on Wednesday to reach the Champions League semi-finals for the first time since 2009, Arsenal ensured Liverpool would not be able to start their party this weekend.

Mikel Arteta made only three changes from the 2-1 win in the Spanish capital and was rewarded with a dominant display to kill the game off inside half an hour.

Leandro Trossard was one of those recalled by Arteta and produced in his eighth goal of the season to open the scoring. A flowing move saw Bukayo Saka's cross flicked by Mikel Merino into the path of Gabriel Martinelli to finish to double the Gunners lead.

Moments later, Saka was chopped down by Arteta and produced in his eighth goal of the season to open the scoring. A flowing move saw Bukayo Saka's cross flicked by Mikel Merino into the path of Gabriel Martinelli to finish to double the Gunners lead.

Trossard fired in his second after a well-worked corner before Ethan Nwaneri's deflected effort rounded off the scoring. Defeat realistically ends third-bottom Ipswich's hope of maintaining their Premier League status as they are 15 points adrift of safety with five games remaining and have a significantly poorer goal difference than West Ham.

Chelsea needed two late goals at Fulham to revive their chances of Champions League football next season with a dramatic 2-1 victory.

Alex Iwobi opened the scoring on 20 minutes and Chelsea were meandering towards a damaging defeat until 19-year-old substitute Tyrrique George fired in a snap shot from the edge of the box on 83 minutes.

Pedro Neto then completed the comeback with a stunning strike in stoppage-time to secure Chelsea's sixth win in their last 17 league games.

Fifth-placed Chelsea moved above Nottingham Forest, who travel to Tottenham today.

Manchester United succumbed to an eighth home league defeat of the season as Wolves won 1-0 at Old Trafford.

Pablo Sarabia curled in a brilliant free-kick 13 minutes from time to hand United a club record 15th league loss this term.

Wolves' fifth consecutive Premier League win lifts Vitor Pereira's side up to 15th and level on points with United, who stay 14th on goal difference.

FOCUS

Amir Cup football preliminary round matches from today

QNA
Doha

The preliminary round matches of the 53rd Amir Cup will kick off today. The matches of this stage will be held between second division clubs, based on their standings in the current season (2024-2025), according to the single-match knockout system.

Al Sailiya, who recently won the Second Division title and were officially promoted to the First Division (Qatar Stars League), are preparing to face Muaithar at the Abdullah Bin Khalifa Stadium.

The team hopes to overcome its rivals and reach the round of 16, relying on a number of experienced players, most notably Algerian striker Mohamed Benyettou and Portuguese professional Ruben Lameiras.

Al Sailiya reached the final of the 42nd edition of the tournament in 2014, but lost to Al Sadd 3-0.

Meanwhile, Muaithar are seeking to make up for their failure in the league after finishing last, and will attempt to perform as hoped, relying on the efforts of a number of its players, most notably professionals Milan Obradovic and Ansiti Ora.

In another match, Al Markhiya, the runner-up in the Second Division League, will face Mesaimeer on the same day at the Thani Bin Jassim Stadium.

Al Markhiya are looking for-

ward to making a strong start to their campaign in the most prestigious tournament, avoiding an early exit, and receiving a significant morale boost ahead of their clash with Umm Salal, who are ranked 11th in the Ooredoo Stars League, on April 28 at Al Bayt Stadium in the play-off match to determine which team will complete the first division next season. Mesaimeer face an extremely difficult task, especially as it is going through a difficult period, after being in 7th and penultimate place in the Second Division League this season.

Al Kharaitiyat, third in the second division, will also play Al Bidda, sixth, at the Suhaim Bin Hamad Stadium, while Al Waab, fourth, will meet Lusail, fifth, at the Grand Hamad Stadium.

Four teams will qualify from this stage via a knockout system to participate in the Round of 16, which will include the First

Division clubs in a draw held on April 24.

According to tournament regulations, if the match ends in a draw, the two teams will play 30 minutes of extra time divided into two halves. If the score remains tied, a penalty shootout will be used. It is noteworthy that the Amir Cup is witnessing, for the second consecutive time in its history, the participation of 20 teams, after participation was previously limited to only 17 clubs. Al Sadd won the last edition after defeating Qatar SC 1-0.



Al-Mutawa shines in FIM MiniGP Qatar Round 2



Qatar Motorsport Academy rider **Mohammed Adel al-Mutawa** delivered a dominant performance to win both races of the 2025 FIM MiniGP Qatar Round 2 at the Lusail Track on Saturday. Al-Mutawa won Race 1 in 14:20.308 before improving his time significantly in Race 2 with a 14:12.256 finish. Jake Franklin and Andrea Giacchero completed the podium in Race 1, while Giacchero secured second place in Race 2 ahead of Franklin. Al-Mutawa now leads the Championship standings with a perfect 100 points after four consecutive wins. Andrea Giacchero is in second place with 76 points, followed by Jake Franklin in third with 68 points. The third round of the Championship will take place on May 9-10.



Leaders Inter level with Napoli after falling to Orsolini stunner

Inter Milan are level with Napoli at the top of Serie A after Riccardo Orsolini fired Bologna to a last-gasp 1-0 win over the reigning champions yesterday. Orsolini flashed home a stunning scissor-kick in the fourth minute of stoppage time to bring the house down at the Stadio Renato Dall'Ara and move Bologna into fourth.

Inter's tight battle for the Scudetto with Napoli looks likely to go down to the wire after a tired-looking Inter were punished with a low-key display which came in stark contrast to their thrilling Champions League win over Bayern Munich on Wednesday night.

Simone Inzaghi's team barely created a chance with nine of the 11 players who started against Bayern on Wednesday night on the Stadio Renato Dall'Ara pitch at kick-off.

Inter have only won one of their last six Serie A matches away from home and Sunday's defeat has given Napoli a clear window of opportunity to claim their second league crown in two seasons.

Napoli's final five matches are all against the division's also-rans while next weekend Inter take on Roma, a match which comes after the second leg of their Italian Cup semi-final with AC Milan and before their trip to Barcelona in the last four of the Champions League. Orsolini's 14th goal of a superb season boosted Bologna's hopes of returning to the Champions League with fifth-place Juventus a point behind ahead of their clash with Parma on Monday night. Atalanta, in third, are a point ahead of Bologna and can continue their push for a spot in Europe's elite club competition

with a win at AC Milan later. Milan sit ninth and are six points away from the European spots following sixth-placed Roma's 1-0 win over Verona on Saturday night.

Dortmund keep top-four hopes alive

Borussia Dortmund came from a goal down to beat Borussia Moenchengladbach 3-2 yesterday, keeping their slim hopes of reaching the top four alive. Serhou Guirassy, who scored a hat-trick in Tuesday's 3-1 win over Barcelona, was again key, scoring one and setting up another for Dortmund. After a testy opening, Ko Itakura put Gladbach ahead after 24 minutes, playing a simple one-two with Kevin Stoeger to unlock the Dortmund defence. Dortmund hit back with three goals in nine minutes before half-time.

QATAR DRIFT CHAMPIONSHIP

Makhsid emerges overall champion, al-Shater wins final round

By Sports Reporter
Doha

The fifth and final round of the 2024-2025 Qatar Drift Championship (QDC) wrapped up at Qatar Racing Club (QRC) after two thrilling days of action.

Sponsored by QRC Chairman HE Sheikh Khalid bin Hamad al-Thani and attended by QRC Director General Sheikh Jabor bin Khalid al-Thani, the event drew top drifting talent from across the Gulf and beyond. There was also official representation from Kuwait's Basil Salem Al-Sabah Motor Sports Club, with Club Director Saif Awadh al-Mutairi and Drag Racing Committee Head Khaled al-Ajeel in attendance.

Based on the qualifying results, drivers were placed into the tandem battle bracket, featuring intense head-to-head showdowns. In the first round, top qualifier Ahmed al-Aamri advanced after defeating Mohammed al-Jaber. The round also saw Yazan al-Jabsha outperform Khalifa al-Sham-



QRC Director General Sheikh Jabor bin Khalid al-Thani poses with the winners of the Qatar Drift Championship.

si, while Salem al-Sarraf overcame competitor Ahmed Jaber. Yasser al-Shater claimed victory over Saud al-Attiah. On the other side of the bracket, Ali Makhsid triumphed over Hamad al-Hajri, and Abdullah al-Muhtaseb defeated Ihab Falah. Riyadh al-Mabsali and Mohammed Khourshid completed the list of second-round

qualifiers by winning their battles against Mohammed al-Mansoori and Mazen Nasser, respectively. With both drivers from the Brothers Team exiting the competition in the second round, Yasser al-Shater was crowned winner of the final round in the local category, marking his first win of the season and his third podium finish. As for

the overall season championship in this category, the title was secured by Ali al-Jabsha, who clinched the season crown after winning all four of the first rounds. One of the first surprises of the second round came with the exit of the overall championship leader, Salem al-Sarraf, who lost his battle against Yasser al-Shater. Mean-



Action from the final round of the Qatar Drift Championship.

while, Ahmed al-Aamri continued his dominance, defeating Yazan al-Jabsha in this round. Both Ali Makhsid and Riyadh al-Mabsali advanced to the semi-finals, with Makhsid overcoming Abdullah al-Muhtaseb and al-Mabsli defeating Mohammed Khourshid.

The excitement reached its peak as the semi-final battles unfolded. The first semi-final match saw Ahmed al-Aamri face Yasser al-Shater, with al-Aamri emerging victorious, securing his place in the final for the second consecutive round, facing Ali Makhsid, who triumphed over Riyadh al-

Mabsali in the second semi-final.

The grand finale promised a thrilling contest between Ahmed al-Aamri and Ali Makhsid. The latter needed to win to overtake the overall championship standings, and he did just that - securing victory in the final round and claiming the season championship title. Al-Amri finished in second place for the round. Sheikh Jabor presented the awards to the top three finishers on the podium.

The top three in the local category were also honoured, followed by the season champions receiving their trophies.