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Friday, October 12, 2018
 Safar 3, 1440 AH

GULF TIMES SPORT



FOOTBALL

PSG star Mbappe is *Time* magazine's 'Future of Soccer'

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FOOTBALL

Qatar face Ecuador in international friendly today

By Sports Reporter
 Doha

Coach Felix Sanchez will hope Qatar can continue its good run in international friendlies as they host Ecuador at the Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium today. In the two friendlies held in September at home, Qatar had defeated China and Palestine.

Ecuador will pose a bigger challenge to Qatar but Sanchez is hoping they can snatch another morale-boosting win in the build-up to the prestigious Asian Cup early next year. After Ecuador's match, Qatar will travel to Tashkent to face Uzbekistan in Tashkent on October 16.

Sanchez has announced a balanced team combining youth and experience for the friendlies. The



Spaniard has said Qatar's preparations for the Asian Cup were continuing apace and the friendlies would give him a clearer picture as to the make-up of the squad for the continental event.

"The Asian Cup is a very important tournament for us. We want to be competitive in the

tournament and show our rivals what we are capable of," Sanchez had said last week. "Obviously we want to have our best players in the squad for the Asian Cup and the friendlies are a great opportunity for us to test ourselves," he added.

Ecuador, who missed out on qualifying for Russia World Cup earlier this year, are physically strong, which will pose a challenge to Qatar players. But Sanchez is hoping his men can raise their level against the South Americans.

Qatar are also scheduled to meet Switzerland and Iceland in friendlies in November, and possibly also Brazil and Iran in March in the build-up to the Copa America in which Al Anabi would be participating for the first time.

Meanwhile, Ecuador's head

coach Hernan Dario Gomez has recalled Carlos Gruezo but there is no place on the roster for Manchester United captain Antonio Valencia. After facing Qatar today, Ecuador head to Oman for another friendly.

Gruezo played in the 2014 FIFA World Cup as a 19-year-old, having only debuted for his nation a month before the tournament in Brazil. Gruezo's time with La Tri has not been as productive recently. This will be his first call-up in a year, since a 2-0 defeat to Brazil in September 2017 that saw the 23-year-old fail to make it off the bench. His last appearance came in September 2016 in a 1-2 loss to Peru.

Gomez returned to the Ecuador side he coached between 1999 and 2004, having led Panama to this year's World Cup in Russia.



Qatar players take part in a training session at Al Sadd Sports Club on the eve of the international friendly against Ecuador yesterday.

CRICKET / PAK VS AUS, DAY 5, 1ST TEST

Khawaja shines as Aussies draw Pakistan in thriller

Left-hander hits solid 141 for his seventh Test ton

Yasir scalps four but Paine and his men hang on

AFP
 Dubai

Opener Usman Khawaja hit a fighting hundred to foil Pakistan and help Australia escape with a draw in the first Test in Dubai yesterday.

The left-hander hit a solid 141 for his seventh Test hundred, while skipper Tim Paine (61 not out) and Travis Head (72) also hit half centuries as Australia finished at 362-8 late in the day with lights coming on at Dubai stadium.

After Khawaja was dismissed with 14.3 overs left and Yasir Shah quickly removed Mitchell Starc (one) and Peter Siddle (nought), Paine and number ten Nathan Lyon (five not out) survived 12.1 overs.

Both had some anxious moments before players shook hands with one ball to go in leg-spinner Yasir's final over.

Yasir had shaken the Australian innings with 4-114 but Australia clung on. They have now won two and drawn two of their 16 Tests in Asia since 2012.

Pakistan captain Sarfraz Ahmed was full of praise for Khawaja.

"We hoped to roll them out but we have to give credit to Khawaja," said Sarfraz. "We had an idea that he would understand our tactics but it wasn't easy to bat and despite that he soldiered on, we must give him credit."

Paine admitted it was hard work to save the Test.

"It was an extremely tough Test match," said Paine, after his second Test as captain.

"Pakistan played very well but I am proud of our comeback. There was a bit of a collapse but the guys have been working hard over the last few months and I'm happy everything's gone to plan."

Australia's hero was Khawaja, who started the day on 50 not out as Australia resumed on 136-3.

Khawaja and Head added 79 before lunch as Pakistan failed to

take a wicket in the first session. The pair eventually put on an invaluable 132 runs for the fourth wicket.

Khawaja, who was born in Pakistan but moved to Australia as a child, batted for eight hours 44 minutes and faced 302 balls before he was sixth man out in the final session. He was trapped leg-before sweeping Yasir.

Khawaja, who hit 11 boundaries, had a top score of 26 in five previous Tests in Asia.

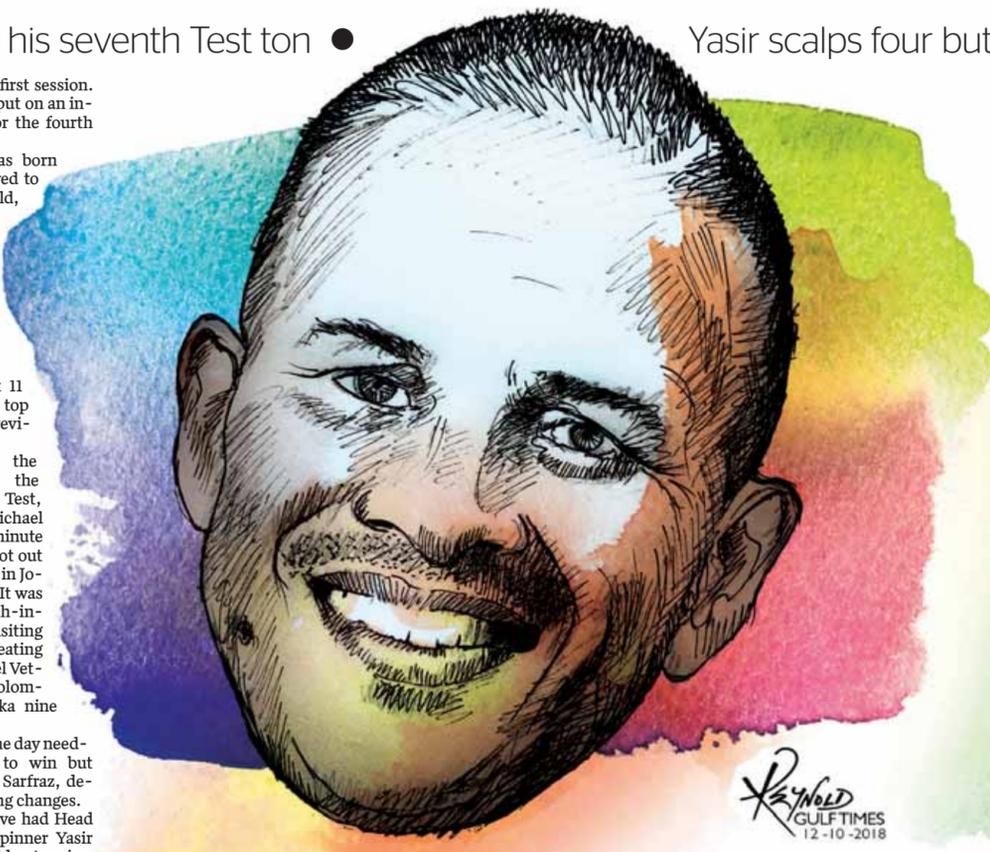
His innings was the second longest in the fourth innings of a Test, behind England's Michael Atherton's 645 minute vigil in scoring 185 not out against South Africa in Johannesburg in 1995. It was the highest fourth-innings score by any visiting batsman in Asia, beating New Zealand's Daniel Vettori's 140 made at Colombo against Sri Lanka nine years ago.

Pakistan started the day needing seven wickets to win but nothing worked for Sarfraz, despite multiple bowling changes.

Pakistan could have had Head leg-before off leg-spinner Yasir on 44, but Sarfraz did not review umpire Richard Kettleborough's not out decision. Replays showed the ball was hitting the stumps. Pakistan were only rewarded when they took the second new ball as soon as it was due and Hafeez trapped Head leg-before with the first ball. Australia wobbled but Khawaja and Paine, who batted for 3 hours and 39 minutes, ensured a draw.

The second Test starts in Abu Dhabi from October 16.

Pakistan opener Imam-ul-Haq will miss the match after he suffered a fractured finger fielding yesterday.



REYNOLD
 GULF TIMES
 12-10-2018



Australia's Usman Khawaja.



Pakistan's Yasir Shah (right) had shaken the Aussie innings with the figures of 4-114. (AFP)

Scorecard

PAKISTAN 1st inn	482 all out	M. Starc c Azam b Yasir	1
AUSTRALIA 1st inn	202 all out	P. Siddle lbw b Yasir	0
PAKISTAN 2nd inn	181/6 decl.	N. Lyon not out	5
AUSTRALIA 2nd inn (overnight: 136/3)		Extras (b 13, lb 4, nb 3) 20	
A. Finch lbw b Abbas	49	Total (for 8 wks; 139.5 overs)	362
U. Khawaja lbw b Yasir	141	Fall of wickets: 1-87 (Finch), 2-87 (S. Marsh), 3-87 (M. Marsh), 4-219 (Head), 5-252 (Labuschagne), 6-331 (Khawaja), 7-333 (Starc), 8-333 (Siddle)	
S. Marsh c Sarfraz b Abbas	0	Bowling: Abbas 27-7-56-3, Hafeez 6-0-29-1, Yasir 43.5-9-114-4, Rizaz 16-3-42-0 (3nb), Asif 37-8-87-0, Sohail 9-1-16-0, Shafiq 1-0-1-0	
M. Marsh lbw b Abbas	0		
T. Head lbw b Hafeez	72		
M. Labuschagne lbw b Yasir	13		
T. Paine not out	61		



PREVIEW

Kohli shields Shaw from Tendulkar shadow

Another century in the second match against the WI would see 'boy wonder' join a group of greats who all hit tons in their first two Tests

AFP
Hyderabad

Virat Kohli sought to protect prolific teenager Prithvi Shaw yesterday from the weight of comparisons with India legend Sachin Tendulkar after the young batsman's Test debut century last week.

Another century in the second match against the West Indies which begins today in Hyderabad would see Shaw join a small group of greats including Mohamed Azharuddin, Sourav Ganguly and Rohit Sharma who all hit tons in their first two Tests.

The 18-year-old became India's youngest player to score a debut century and his country's second youngest in all Tests after Tendulkar — who was 17 when he made an unbeaten 119 against England in his ninth Test.

Shaw's sparkling 134 in the first Test rout in Rajkot had some commentators dubbing him India's "boy wonder" ahead of the tour of Australia next month.

But captain Kohli warned India's notoriously demanding fans not to expect too much too soon from Shaw, who was earmarked as a future star when as a 14-year-old he hit a record 546 off 330 balls in a Mumbai school game in 2013.

"We are all very happy for him but I don't think we should compare him to anyone yet or we should put him in a space where he starts feeling pressure," Kohli told reporters.

"He should be left to enjoy his cricket and slowly grow into the cricketer that we all believe he can be," said Kohli who hailed the diminutive right hander as "supremely talented".

"He has shown that in the first Test already and we believe he can keep repeating that because he is a very keen learner, he is a very sharp guy and he understands situations really well."

Kohli said Shaw, 21-year-old wicketkeeper batsman Rishabh Pant and batsman Hanuma Vihari, 24, had learned to handle the stress of top competition by playing in the Indian Pre-



India's Prithvi Shaw (second from right) takes part in a training session ahead of the second Test against West Indies in Hyderabad, India, on Wednesday. (AFP)

Kohli comes out swinging over Test balls

Captain Virat Kohli said India should ditch the SG ball for their home games, complaining that it scuffs up too easily and that he would prefer to see Dukes balls used for all Tests worldwide. India thrashed the West Indies by a record innings and 272 runs last week but spinner Ravichandran Ashwin said the SG ball was "disappointing", and that he preferred Australia's Kookaburra or Dukes. "The quality of the (SG) balls

mier League.

BIG STAGE VETERANS

"One always feels that pressure when you wear your country's cap on the morning of the match but yes, I think it's not as intense as say 10-15 years back when you didn't have any

used to be quite high before and I don't understand the reason why it has gone down because Dukes ball is still good quality, Kookaburra is still good quality," Kohli said. He said the "quality of the ball has to be maintained otherwise you have too many dead sessions in a Test match. You want to see exciting cricket and guys working hard for runs being in the battle all day". Kohli added: "I totally agree with him (Ashwin). To have a

exposure to this kind of cricket," said Kohli.

"They have played in situations like the IPL where they have played in front of so many people that they are not nervous any more of the big stage," he added.

"They are not overawed by

ball that is scuffed up in five overs is not something that we have seen before." The SG has always been used by India in Tests and domestic games, while England use Dukes for Test cricket and Australia, South Africa, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka prefer the Kookaburra. Kohli said: "The Dukes ball is the most suited ball according to me in Test match cricket, and if there is a situation I'd vouch for it to be used all over the world because of the consistency."

the scenario and I think that's always going to be an advantage because the guys can be fearless and they can start doing the job from game one."

Shaw's 2013 schoolboy exploits had already caused comparisons to be made with Tendulkar, who rose to prominence

in the same Harris Shield competition more than two decades earlier.

Shaw went on to make more headlines in India with debut centuries in both the domestic Ranji Trophy and Duleep Trophy and he was awarded the captaincy of country's Under-19 team.

He led them to success in the Under-19 World Cup in New Zealand this year where they beat Australia in the final.

He has featured for Delhi Daredevils in the 2018 IPL but it was his debut Test ton, with 19 boundaries, that saw the rest of the cricket world take notice.

"Wow, carry on young man good luck," wrote former Pakistan fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar on Twitter.

Former England captain Michael Vaughan tweeted: "Wow... 18 yrs old @PrithviShaw. 100 on Test debut.. Looks like #India have another superstar".

FOCUS

Chase says Windies ready to 'fight back' against India

AFP
Hyderabad

West Indies all-rounder **Roston Chase** said yesterday the West Indies were looking to come back fighting in the second Test against India after their crushing defeat in Rajkot.

"We didn't play well in the first game but are looking to fight back in the second," Chase said a day ahead of the game in Hyderabad.

"Had a bit of nervous energy in the first one but guys are good to go in the second," said Chase, top scorer with 53 in his side's 181 all out in the first innings in Rajkot.

A hapless Caribbean side, led by opening batsman Kraigg Brathwaite, went down to hosts India by an innings and 272 runs in Rajkot to trail the two-match series 1-0.

Prithvi Shaw, 18, became India's youngest player to score a debut century and his country's second youngest in all Tests after the legendary Sachin Tendulkar, notching up a sparkling 134.

"That youngster Shaw took us apart early in the first game, so hope we can learn from our mistakes and move on smartly in the second game," Chase said.

A boost in the second Test for the West Indies will likely come from the return of fast bowler Kemar Roach after he missed the first



Test to return home for a funeral. Skipper Jason Holder, recovering from an ankle injury, might also be back. India have retained the 12 they had announced for the first Test.

"It is always good to have the captain back, but I am not sure what the line-up will be for the next match," Chase said.

"I can't say who's playing but it's good to have Kemar back as well, he is a senior player and brings a lot of experience to the team," he added.

Both Holder and Roach have played 82 matches between them and remain the team's most experienced players.

Holder has captained West Indies in 26 of his 34 Tests. Roach has taken 163 wickets in 48 matches.

SELECTION

Pant gets ODI call-up against West Indies

Reuters
Bengaluru

Wicketkeeper-batsman **Rishabh Pant** could make his one-day international debut for India after he was picked in their 14-man squad for the first two matches against West Indies, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) said yesterday.

Pant, who has impressed with 114 and 92 in his previous two Test appearances, has replaced an inconsistent Dinesh Karthik as cover for first-choice keeper Mahendra Singh Dhoni.

Karthik could not convert starts into big scores at the Asia Cup and finished with a total of 146 in six matches, missing the opportunity to secure the number four spot India have been looking to fill ahead of the 50-over World Cup next year.

Captain Virat Kohli has returned to the squad after missing the Asia Cup, but quick bowlers Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Jasprit Bumrah were rested.

After proving his fitness in Test matches against England and West Indies, fast bowler Mohamed Shami was added to the one-day squad to bolster the pace attack.

Fast bowlers Deepak Chahar and Siddarth Kaul, who featured in one match each at the Asia Cup, were left out while left-arm quick Khaleel Ahmed kept his place in the squad.

The five-match ODI series kicks off in Guwahati on Oct. 21 before moving to Visakhapatnam on October 24. Pune, Mumbai and Thiruvananthapuram will host the other three matches.

India lead the Test series 1-0 ahead of the second and final match in Hyderabad, which begins today.

SQUAD: Virat Kohli (captain), Rohit Sharma (vice-captain), Shikhar Dhawan, KL Rahul, Ambati Rayudu, Manish Pandey, Mahendra Singh Dhoni (wicketkeeper), Rishabh Pant, Ravindra Jadeja, Yuzvendra Chahal, Kuldeep Yadav, Mohamed Shami, Khaleel Ahmed, Shardul Thakur.

BOTTOMLINE

China crash to 26 all out — again

AFP
Kuala Lumpur

China may have the world's biggest population and the second largest economy, but they are yet to impress in one area: the cricket field, where they have been humbled by minnows Nepal.

China's latest foray on the international stage ended in a huge defeat on Wednesday as they scored only 26 all out in a World Twenty20 qualifier, a total which Nepal surpassed in just 11 balls.

It wasn't even their worst innings of the tournament: China were 26 all out in their loss to Singapore, and they had scores of 35 for nine, 45, and 48 in defeats to Thailand, Bhutan and Myanmar.

Given that the highest score in top-tier T20 internationals is Australia's 263 for three against Sri Lanka in 2016, China still have some way to go.

Against Nepal, opening batsman Yan Hongjiang top-scored for China with 11 runs. The next biggest contribution was the nine extras, and IPL bowler Sandeep Lamichhane picked up three wickets for four runs.

Qun Tiansen, one of eight Chinese players out for a duck, then went for 21 runs in his first

and only over as Binod Bhandari smashed 24 in Nepal's quickfire reply of 29-0.

Cricket in China has a short history with its national team making its first international appearance at the 2010 Asian Games.

The giant nation is known for ploughing huge sums into sports, especially football and the Olympic disciplines. But cricket does not enjoy a similar status in China.

"The size of country and its power do not matter (in cricket)," former Nepal captain Binod Das told AFP in Kathmandu.

"We shouldn't undermine them because they may take over in future as they have capacity to invest in infrastructure and skill development."

Nepal, meanwhile, gained ODI status in March and have now set their sights on joining the world's elite by achieving Test status.

A former official with Nepal's cricket association, Chhumbi Lama, said the victory over China was always a formality for the small, Himalayan nation.

"China might be stronger in terms of power and economy than Nepal, but Nepal is stronger than China when it comes to cricket. Beating China is not a big achievement for Nepal," he told AFP.

COMMENT

Root could be world's best if freed from captaincy: Warne

AFP
London

Shane Warne believes England should seriously consider replacing **Joe Root** with Jos Buttler as Test captain to allow Root to focus on becoming the world's best batsman.

Australia spin great Warne says the Yorkshire star could dominate the global game with the bat and feels Buttler would make a "very, very good" Test skipper.

Warne worked with Buttler in his role as mentor for Indian Premier League team Rajasthan Royals and is convinced the Lancashire player has credible Test leadership skills.

"I've worked with Jos a bit this year, and I think he's someone who would make an excellent captain," said Warne. "I really enjoyed working with him, I'd like to think I helped him out a little bit."

Warne, who is promoting his autobiography, said Root is England's best player but would be disappointed with his conversion rate when it came to hundreds.

"He'd love to have more hundreds to be able to be spoken about in the same sentences as Virat Kohli and Steve Smith," he said.

"Maybe England could



think about their best player having the shackles off, not having the responsibility of captaincy, and give it to someone like Jos Buttler," he added.

"If he (Root) totally 100 per-

cent concentrates on his cricket, his batting and nothing else, then maybe we might see Joe Root become the best batsman in the world," Warne said. "He's got the talent to do it."

SPOTLIGHT

Bangladesh call up Rabbi and Saifuddin for Zimbabwe series

AFP
Dhaka

Bangladesh have called up batsman Fazole Rabbi and recalled allrounder Mohamed Saifuddin to cover for the injured Shakib Al Hasan and Tamim Iqbal in three one day internationals against Zimbabwe starting October 21.

Rabbi, 30, has never played for the full international side but has been rewarded for strong performances in Bangladesh A's tour of Ireland this year. Saifuddin last played for the national side in January.

Hasan has a finger injury expected to sideline him for three months, while Tamim has a wrist injury suffered at the Asia Cup last month.

The series starts in Dhaka before the final two matches are held in Chittagong on October 24 and October 26.

SQUAD: Mashrafe Bin Mortaza (Capt), Liton Kumar Das, Imrul Kayes, Nazmul Hossain Shanto, Mushfiqur Rahim, Mohamed Mithun, Mahmud Ullah, Ariful Haque, Mehidy Hasan Miraz, Mustafizur Rahman, Nazmul Islam Apu, Rubel Hossain, Abu Haider Rony, Mohamed Saifuddin, Fazole Rabbi

SPOTLIGHT

PSG star Mbappe is *Time* magazine's 'Future of Soccer'

AFP
Paris

Paris Saint-Germain striker **Kylian Mbappe's** rapid rise to global fame has earned the teenaged World Cup winner an appearance on the cover of *Time* magazine's international edition, to appear today. *Time* said Mbappe was a global superstar who "is the future of soccer."

Mbappe made headlines in September 2017 when he moved from Ligue 1 side Monaco to Paris Saint-Germain for a staggering 180mn euros (\$207mn), a deal that saw the then 18-year-old player handed a reported monthly salary of 1.5mn euros (\$1.8mn).

But the 19-year-old's stock skyrocketed during this year's World Cup, where a series of phenomenal displays drew compliments from Brazil legend Pele on his way to helping France end their 20-year wait to win another World Cup trophy.

Mbappe became the youngest French goals-

corer in World Cup history when he struck in a 1-0 win over Peru in the group stages.

The teenager from the gritty Parisian suburb of Bondy then tore apart Lionel Messi-captained Argentina, scoring twice and earning a penalty as Les Blues eliminated the highly-fancied South Americans 4-3 in the last 16 knock-out round.

In doing so, Mbappe became only the second teenager, after Pele in 1958, to score two goals in a World Cup match. When Mbappe scored with a five-yard strike in the final, a 4-2 win over Croatia, he became only the second teenager to do so, after Pele, in 1958.

With a total of four goals in the tournament, Mbappe received Fi Fa's award for Best Young Player of the World Cup. Arguably better still were the plaudits from Pele himself, who said: "If Kylian keeps on equalling my records, I'm going to have to dust off my boots."

Mbappe's teenage days will end when he celebrates his 20th birthday on December 20. He is expected to spearhead France's attack when France host Iceland in a friendly in Guingamp.



NATIONS LEAGUE

England turn to next generation for Croatia match

'There's a lot of great young players out there. They're so determined to play'

AFP
Rijeka, Croatia

Just three months on from the bitter disappointment of losing a first World Cup semi-final for 28 years, England visit Croatia today in the Nations League seeking not only revenge, but also a long-term solution to a familiar shortcoming.

For all the progress made by the Three Lions in a glorious Russian summer, a familiar lack of midfield authority ultimately undid England as Croatia's Luka Modric and Ivan Rakitic took control of their semi-final to come from a goal down in Moscow. It was a similar story when Spain came to Wembley last month to puncture England's feel-good factor by dominating the ball in a 2-1 Nations League win. A run to the last four with the third youngest squad at the World Cup raised expectations of what is to come from a richly talented generation under Gareth Southgate's tutelage.

However, Southgate has gone even younger in his search for the midfield maestro he believes England have lacked since the days of Paul Gascoigne. Jadon Sancho, 18, and Mason Mount, 19, who made moves to get more first team football, and James Maddison, who jumped to the Premier League, are all rewarded with a first call-up.

Sancho has lit up the Bundesliga since making the brave decision to turn down Pep Guardiola's pleas to keep him at Manchester City and join Borussia Dortmund last year. Compared to Neymar by his former England under-16 coach Dan Micciche, Sancho has more assists than any player in Europe's top five leagues with nine this season, including one in the Champions League.

"I believe in myself, so moving to Germany didn't faze me," said Sancho as he faced the media glare for the first time in an England shirt. "I'm a bit tricky, direct, confident obviously. I believe in myself in one versus one situations."



Croatian players Luka Modric (left), Ivan Rakitic (right) with coach Zlatko Dalic during a training session in Rijeka, Croatia, yesterday. (Reuters)

Maddison and Mount aren't yet playing at that level, but they too have shunned the glamour of the top six sides in the Premier League to ensure more minutes on the field. Wanted by Liverpool as a teenager, Maddison instead moved to Norwich before joining Leicester this summer to join two members of the World Cup squad, Harry Maguire and Jamie Vardy.

"I looked at the Leicester squad and saw Harry and Jamie as regulars in the England set up. I thought that is where I want to be, that is where I want to get to," said Maddison, who has scored three goals and provided two assists in eight Premier League appearances.

Mount is still a Chelsea player, but after scoring 13 goals on loan at Vitesse Arnhem last season, is enjoying another fruitful loan spell with Derby under former England and Chelsea midfielder Frank Lampard. "He can be top, top level because he's 19 and plays with ability and quality. Technically he's brilliant," said Lampard.

Mount has already shown his ability in an England shirt as he was named player of the tournament in winning the 2017 Under-19 European Championships. Sancho got the same award at the European Under-17 championships last year, as well as being part of the squad that won the Under-17 World Cup, although

his participation was limited after being recalled by Dortmund halfway through the tournament to play for the first team.

"The growth in England at the moment is crazy," added Sancho. "There's a lot of great young players out there. They're so determined to play. The Champions League is the greatest stage, so I hope the young players reach their potential and enjoy it too."

England have also won the 2017 Under-20 World Cup and the prestigious Under-21 Toulon tournament for the past three years. The trick for Southgate, having recently signed a new contract until 2022, is to harness that potential into a future Modric.

FOCUS

Monaco sack coach Jardim after poor Ligue 1 start

AFP
Monaco

Monaco, languishing 18th in Ligue 1, said yesterday that they have sacked **Leonardo Jardim**, who led them to a French title in 2017. Monaco wished Jardim, who also led the club to a Champions League semi-final in 2017, and his staff "the best for the future."

The club from the principality would not comment on a replacement, but their former player Thierry Henry has been linked to the job. Henry was youth player with the club and scored seven goals in the 1997-8 Champions League as another talented Monaco team, this one coached by Arsene Wenger, reached the semi-finals, where they lost to Juventus.

He was then sold to the Turin club and went on to a successful spell with Arsenal in England and World Cup and Euro-2000 winners medals with France. Henry is an assistant coach with Belgium, which finished third in the summer's World Cup.

He has recently been linked with jobs at Aston Villa and Bordeaux, but in both cases negotiations broke down after initial meetings. Jardim was at Monaco since 2014 and was under contract until 2020.

The 44-year-old Portuguese

coach had to cope with the sale of many of the stars of his title-winning squad over the last two seasons.

This summer Thomas Lemar, Joao Moutinho and Fabinho followed earlier departures Kylian Mbappe, Benjamin Mendy, Bernardo Silva, Tiemoue Bakayoko and Valere Germain out of the club in lucrative transfers.

Monaco lost their last game 1-0 at home to humble Angers and have not won in Ligue 1 since their opening match and have lost both their Champions League group games. Against Angers, the only key members of the title-winning team to feature were skipper Radamel Falcao and the defensive trio of Jemerson, Kamil Glik and Djibril Sidibe.

Meanwhile, a summer spending spree headed by the signing of Russian World Cup star Aleksandr Golovin has not yet produced positive results for a club owned by Russian billionaire Dmitry Rybolovlev. "I would like to salute Leonardo with the utmost respect for all the work done," AS Monaco Vice-President Vadim Vasilyev said in a statement. "His brief time will remain as one of the most beautiful pages in the history of the club. Leonardo will always be part of the family of AS Monaco."

Monaco's next match, after the international break, is on October 20 away to Strasbourg in Ligue 1.



INTERNATIONAL FRIENDLY

Italy draw against Ukraine as Genoa bridge victims remembered



Ukraine's midfielder Ruslan Malinovskyi (right) celebrates after scoring against Italy in the friendly match at the Luigi-Ferraris stadium in Genoa. (AFP)

AFP
Genoa, Italy

Ruslan Malinovskyi cancelled out Federico Bernardeschi's second half strike as Italy were held 1-1 by Ukraine in an international friendly in Genoa on Wednesday during which the victims of the bridge collapse in the city were remembered.

Bernardeschi's low strike beat Ukraine goalkeeper Andriy Pyatov after 55 minutes, but seven minutes later Malinovskyi volleyed in for the visitors. Italy coach Roberto Mancini spent most of his playing career in Genoa, at Sampdoria, and the friendly at the Stadio Luigi Ferraris was organised to raise money for those affected by the collapse of the Morandi bridge on August 14.

Mancini, 53, was the most capped player in Sampdoria's history and

also the Genoa club's top scorer winning a Serie A, four Italian Cup and a European Cup Winners Cup with the club. Play was halted at the 43rd minute to remember the 43 people who died in last August's bridge disaster, with the words "Genova nel cuore" (Genoa in the heart) flashing up on the stadium's big screens with players and supporters carrying out a minute's applause for the victims.

With 12,000 fans in attendance, around 105,000 euros was raised for the disaster fund. For Mancini it was "a strong moment of emotion" having lived years in Genoa and crossed the bridge many times. "It was a touching moment and an important one for the victims of this horrible accident. Being the Italy coach in my old stadium was particularly moving for me."

Mancini took over four-time world champions Italy after their failure to qualify for the World Cup

in Russia, but has just one win in six games since May, against Saudi Arabia. "We regret not having made the fans happy up until the end, even if we did good things," added the Italy coach of whistles which accompanied the players off the pitch.

"I'm fed up of not winning and so is everyone. The positive thing is that today the team played good football for long periods. It was a friendly, so hopefully we can start winning on Sunday."

For Italy the game was a warm-up ahead of the weekend's Nations League game against Poland, with the Ukraine playing the Czech Republic on Tuesday. Paris St Germain midfielder Marco Veratti returned after a long lay-off with Cagliari midfielder Nicolò Barella, 21, making his senior Italy debut.

Pyatov has made a number of fine saves, clearing a low Bernardeschi curling shot after five minutes and a

Leonardo Bonucci volley. There was a double chance just before half-time, as Lorenzo Insigne's effort was beaten away by Pyatov and a Barella volley deflected over.

But Bernardeschi finally got the better of Pyatov after 55 minutes before being replaced by Lazio's Ciro Immobile. Federico Chiesa missed a chance to close down the game for the Italians, and moments later Mykyta Burda headed down for Malinovskyi to volley in.

"We deserved to score at least a couple of goals tonight," said Mancini. "Now we have four days to prepare for Poland and will try to give our best."

In the Nations League, Italy play Poland in Chorzow, after drawing 1-1 against the Poles in Bologna and losing 1-0 to European champions Portugal. The Ukraine play the Czech Republic at home in Kharkiv on Tuesday.

SPOTLIGHT

Mamaev, Kokorin to be detained for two months

Both players apologise for their behaviour at a court hearing in Moscow



Russian footballer Pavel Mamaev, detained as a suspect in a probe over hooliganism following an unprovoked attack on two government officials, attends a court hearing in Moscow yesterday. (AFP)

AFP
Moscow

Disgraced Russian footballers Pavel Mamaev and Alexander Kokorin were yesterday ordered to be detained for two months following an unprovoked attack on two government officials, prosecutors said. Krasnodar midfielder Mamaev and Zenit Saint Petersburg forward Kokorin will remain behind bars until December 8 pending their trial for “hooliganism”, a crime for which they face up to five years in prison, Russian agencies reported.

Both players apologised at the court hearing for their behaviour. “I am ashamed for the fans and the club, and I apologise for my outrageous actions,” Kokorin was quoted by TASS as saying. Mamaev added: “I want to apologise once again publicly to the victims of my scandalous acts. I am ready to make amends for the moral and material damage suffered. I should not have done it.” Video footage caught the two men attacking two Russian trade ministry officials in an upscale Moscow cafe at the weekend. One of the officials, Denis Pak, an ethnic Korean, was hit with a chair while eating a meal. Russian Premier League chiefs have requested a lifetime ban for the pair. Krasnodar has pledged to terminate

Mamaev’s contract while Zenit has condemned Kokorin’s role as “disgusting”. The Saint Petersburg club removed all shirts bearing his name following reports of the attack. Pak’s lawyer Gennadiy Udunyan told Russian state television on Wednesday: “They started to mock (Pak’s) ethnicity”. The players then allegedly assaulted Pak when he made a critical comment. He added: “He has a concussion.” Before the cafe assault the footballers attacked the driver of a television host and damaged her Mercedes in a separate incident on Monday. The driver was hospitalised with injuries and a criminal probe was opened.

On Tuesday, Russian President Vladimir Putin’s spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the Kremlin – “just like the whole country” – was aware of the incident and described the video as “rather unpleasant”. Commentators, meanwhile, were keen to underline the players were not part of the Russia team that punched above its weight to reach the quarter-finals as hosts of the World Cup this summer. “We should specify that those two...are not currently members of the national squad,” Igor Rabiner, a columnist for the Russian daily newspaper *Sport Express*, said. Kokorin last played for the national side in late 2017, while Mamaev was

last selected in 2016. It is not the first time the players’ behaviour has raised eyebrows. The Russian Football Union (RFU) suspended the pair in July 2016 after a video emerged from a Monte Carlo nightclub in which Mamaev and Kokorin allegedly spent \$296,000 on a champagne-fuelled party following Euro 2016, where Russia flopped. Kokorin, who sat out this year’s World Cup with a knee injury, later apologised for his behaviour and was welcomed back into the national team. “Now they’re just lowlives who went berserk,” Rabiner added. “Just ill-bred people who went crazy on the huge money that they receive from their clubs.”

Turan probed over fight with singer

Istanbul prosecutors have opened an investigation after Turkish football star Arda Turan, currently on Barcelona’s books, was reportedly involved in a fight with a Turkish pop star in which he broke the singer’s nose. Turan, who is this season playing for Istanbul side Basaksehir while on loan from Barcelona, was summoned to give a statement to Istanbul police over the fight with singer Berkay Sahin. The *Hurriyet daily* said he was released after giving a statement to police in questioning. Turkish media said that Turan became involved in the fight earlier this week with Sahin outside a nightclub that ended with the singer’s nose broken.

Vidal lacked respect for teammates: Barca director

Barcelona midfielder Arturo Vidal “lacked respect” for his teammates by complaining on social media about not playing enough, the club’s sporting director Pep Segura said. Vidal has started only two games for the Catalan giants since his summer move to the Nou Camp from Bayern Munich. He Croatia’s Ivan Rakitic and Brazilian trio Philippe Coutinho, Arthur and Rafinha for places in a quality-packed Barca midfield. He recently took his frustration out by posting messages on his Instagram account featuring angry or frustrated emojis.

AC Milan confirm Paqueta deal, Ibra a possibility

AC Milan have reached agreement to sign rising Brazilian star Lucas Paqueta with Swedish veteran Zlatan Ibrahimovic a possibility to return to Italy, club sporting director Leonardo said. The Serie A giants are reported to have agreed a 35mn euro deal with Flamengo – the club Paqueta joined as a ten-year-old – in what would be the most expensive signing of a Brazilian player by an Italian club. The 21-year-old completed his medical in Rio, and should arrive in Milan in January. Leonardo confirmed that the club have also “thought about” signing Ibrahimovic, who joined LA Galaxy this season and has a contract through the 2019 season.

Aston Villa appoint Smith and Terry as new coaches

Former England captain John Terry took his first steps into coaching on Wednesday when he was named as right-hand man to new Aston Villa boss Dean Smith. The second-tier English club also appointed Jesus Garcia Pitarch as sporting director as the former European champions moved to replace Steve Bruce who was sacked last week. Terry, 37, who spent the bulk of his career with Chelsea, captained second-tier Aston Villa last season. Capped 78 times by England, the central defender recently rejected a chance to play for Spartak Moscow, saying a move to Russia was not right for his family. His last game as a professional was Villa’s 1-0 Championship play-off final defeat by Fulham in May.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Coach Miguel names Qatar squad for U-19 Asian Cup



Qatar under-19 players train yesterday.

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Qatar coach Bruno Miguel yesterday named the national squad for this month’s AFC U-19 Asian Cup, the Qatar Football Association (QFA) has confirmed. Qatar, who topped a testing qualification group above Iraq and Lebanon, are ready for the October 18-November 4. Qatar will leave for Indonesia on Wednesday morning and will resume training for their Group A matches the same day. The teams in Group A are hosts Indonesia, Chinese Taipei and UAE besides Qatar. Miguel’s boys face UAE on October 18, Indonesia on October 21 and UAE on October 24

in the preliminary stages of the tournament. Qatar won the 2014 edition in Myanmar by beating North Korea in the final. The champions in 2014 later qualified to play the 2015 FIFA U-20 World Cup held in New Zealand.

QATAR SQUAD: Humam Amin, Abdullah Saie, Abdulrashid Ibrahim, Yousif Ayman, Nasser Abdelsalam, Ali Mal, Mohamed Waad, Khalid Mohamed, Hashim Ali, Khalid Waleed, Mohamed Khalid, Shihab, Mamdooh, Nasser Saleh, Ahmed Yassir, Baha Mamdooh, Yousif Razaq, Ahmed Suhail, Nasser Ber, Issa Ahmed, Adam Hamdi, Abdullah Nasser, Ahmed Janhi, Salah Zakariya, Marwan Sharif, Ahmed Minhali and Mahmoud Ibrahim

FOCUS

Real Madrid to sue over Ronaldo ‘rape’ saga report

AFP
Madrid

Real Madrid said yesterday it had filed a lawsuit against a Portuguese newspaper that wrote the Spanish giants pushed Cristiano Ronaldo to hush up an alleged rape case. Real said it had taken legal action against *Correio da Manha* after the paper reported on Wednesday that “Real Madrid pressured him to sign” a non-disclosure accord and pay compensation to his accuser, Kathryn Mayorga. “Real Madrid has absolutely no knowledge of any of the information that the newspaper published with regard to the player Cristiano Ronaldo, and therefore the club could not have taken action on a matter of which it had no knowledge,” the club said in a statement. Ronaldo, 33, who left Real Madrid over the summer to join Italian champions Juventus in deal worth 100mn euros, has been in turmoil since a case involving rape allegations against him, dating back to 2009, was reopened by Las Vegas po-



lice last week.

The case was originally closed after Ronaldo signed a confidentiality agreement in 2010 with Mayorga, a former model now aged 34, who received a payoff in return for her silence. Mayorga alleged that she had been raped on June 13, 2009, just days after Ronaldo had signed

a contract with Real Madrid in a mega transfer deal from Manchester United. The Portuguese newspaper reported that Real, wishing to avoid scandal, pressed Ronaldo to pay compensation to Mayorga to hush up the affair. Ronaldo’s lawyer insisted on Wednesday the player did not rape the woman in a Las Vegas

hotel and that their sexual encounter was “completely consensual.”

“Once again, for the avoidance of doubt, Cristiano Ronaldo’s position has always been, and continues to be, that what happened in 2009 in Las Vegas was completely consensual,” lawyer Peter Christiansen said in a statement.

Ronaldo freely admits signing the non-disclosure accord but his lawyer insisted he simply wished to put an end to the allegations.

Christiansen also said that documents reproduced by media outlets in recent days purportedly quoting the player and including details of the non-disclosure accord involving a payment of 375,000 dollars to his accuser were false.

He said “documents that allegedly contain statements by Cristiano Ronaldo and were reproduced in the media are pure invention.”

Der Spiegel, the German magazine which published the story released a statement which said, in part: “Our story is carefully researched. We have hundreds of documents from different sources that substantiate our reporting.”

HAZARD RULES OUT JANUARY MOVE TO REAL MADRID

London: Chelsea forward Eden Hazard appeared to dismiss the possibility of a January move to Real Madrid yesterday despite casting fresh doubt over his future in recent days. The 27-year-old was speaking at a press conference on national team duty with Belgium. It was put to Hazard that to win the Ballon d’Or – as the world’s best player – he would have to play in Spain. “That’s why I want to go, maybe,” said Hazard, smiling. Asked if that move might happen in January, he added: “No.” Barcelona’s Lionel Messi and former Real Madrid forward Cristiano Ronaldo have won the Ballon d’Or for the last

nine years while playing for Spanish clubs. Ronaldo was the last player when he was at Manchester United in 2008. Hazard has been instrumental in Chelsea’s unbeaten start under Maurizio Sarri, scoring eight goals in all competitions. The Belgian was selected the second best player at the World Cup and, after leading his country to third place in Russia, said it “might be time” for a fresh challenge, with Madrid his preferred destination. Speaking after Chelsea’s 3-0 victory at Southampton on Sunday, he said: “Real Madrid is the best club in the world. I

don’t want to lie today. It is my dream since I was a kid. I was dreaming about this club. We will see. I don’t want to talk about this every day. I don’t have time but we will talk about my future soon.” Hazard, whose Chelsea contract runs until June 2020, was asked whether he is the world’s best player on form and he answered with an unequivocal “yes.” “The team is helping me a lot also,” he said. “I can improve for sure. We can always improve in football. We can score more goals, more assists.” Belgium play Switzerland in the UEFA Nations League today, before hosting the Netherlands in a friendly on Tuesday.



NFL

Patriots invest extra prep on recipe to slow Chiefs

Reuters
New York

Bill Belichick did his patented best to downplay any excitement generated by a matchup his New England Patriots face Sunday night against the undefeated Kansas City Chiefs in Foxborough, Mass.

Asked if the AFC showdown had a special feel to it, the Patriots coach deadpanned: "Feels like we're playing Kansas City."

With that, however, Belichick recognised the Chiefs' potent offensive strengths, focusing on the entire ensemble rather than just the dazzling presence of Patrick Mahomes, Kansas City's first-year starting quarterback.

"It's really fortunate that we've had a couple of extra days to work on Kansas City," said Belichick, whose Pats (3-2) are coming off a Thursday night victory over Indianapolis. "They give you a lot of problems with their scheme and the way they're coached."

Throw it all together, especially with the way Mahomes can throw it, and the Chiefs (5-0) are capable of burning opponents from just about anywhere on the field.

"You don't want to give it all to 'em in one play," Belichick said.

With an extra day to spend on Mahomes, Belichick did come away impressed.

"He can throw it out of the stadium," he said.

Added safety Devin McCourty: "It's a team that doesn't even need to get to second down a lot of times. You've got to force them to move the ball (gradually) downfield, but they can do that too."

The last 10 quarterbacks with 10 career starts or fewer when pitted against New England went 0-10.

Such historic trends seem to have little bearing on Mahomes.

Kansas City became the first visitor at Denver in 56 games to rally from a deficit of 10 points or more and beat the Broncos, doing so in Week 4 on a Monday night. Also, during their torrid start, the Chiefs won in Pittsburgh for the first time since 1986. Last week, Mahomes ended a streak of 15 games in which Jacksonville had not allowed a 300-yard passer.

As good as Mahomes has been getting the Chiefs off to a fast start, his counterpart has a much more extensive list of achievements.

That happens to be Tom Brady, who will oppose a Kansas City defense ranked last in

the NFL in yards allowed (461.8).

"He is one of the greatest quarterbacks, if not the greatest, to ever play," Mahomes said. "I am going against their defense, but as a team we are going to go in and try to compete."

Each team has allowed just six sacks, which is tied for first in the league.

Mahomes had not thrown an interception until last week, when he was picked twice by Jacksonville. The Patriots have an interception in all five games using schemes Belichick readily changes.

"He is the best at that," said Chiefs coach Andy Reid. "He mixes and matches."

The Chiefs will be without starting right guard Laurent Duvernay-Tardif, who fractured his fibula and suffered torn ankle ligaments in the Jacksonville win. The secondary also remains thin, prompting Kansas City to work out wide receiver Marcus Kemp as an emergency safety, a position where veteran Eric Berry has yet to play because of an injured heel. Linebacker Justin Houston is also doubtful.

Running back Sony Michel (knee) and wide receiver Chris Hogan (thigh) were new additions this week to the Patriots list of nine who were limited in practice on Wednesday.



NBA

Once an underdog, Butler has turned into an egomaniac star

Butler's game stopped growing three, four years ago, as his head grew ever larger

By Patrick Reusse
Star Tribune (Minneapolis)

Mark Wahlberg starred in and was a producer of the movie 'Broken City' that was released in 2013.

That was the same year Wahlberg was filming a 'Transformers' movie in Chicago, and met Jimmy Butler playing pickup basketball at the Bulls practice facility.

Wahlberg and Butler started a friendship that both the blue-collar juvenile delinquent from the Dorchester neighbourhood of Boston and the abandoned kid from the dusty streets of Tomball, Texas have made public with great pride.

I'm not saying that Wahlberg was the adviser for the dramatic short featuring Butler that was played out on Wednesday at Mayo Clinic Square, but it was done well enough to be a Marky Mark Production.

Heck, ESPN could even use the tape of Rachel Nichols' on-the-spot interview with Butler to weave into an E:60 on his feud with the Timberwolves. And we already have the title: 'Broken Franchise.'

The Timberwolves have confirmed the organisation had no idea Nichols and ESPN were in town until they saw the network airing snippets of the interview as a set up for NBA shows and Sports Centers that would follow.

The fact Butler showed up for practice for the first time Wednesday, went bonkers on everybody, stormed out and was sitting with Nichols for a prearranged interview soon thereafter is not a conspiracy theory.

That's one plus one being two - that's a conspiracy, period.

Some people are throwing around a third part of the conspiracy and it's all preposterous theory: That basketball boss and coach Tom Thibodeau was in on it, figuring Butler's antics would lead to being fired by owner Glen Taylor, thus allowing Thibs to walk away with \$24 million owed for three more seasons.

There's nothing more important in Thibodeau's life than coaching basketball, including money. If he left with a huge check and a monumental mess, Thibodeau would be done as a head basketball coach - in the NBA or at a top 200 college program. The odds are improving by the moment that Taylor will fire Thibodeau, but it won't be something that fulfils a hope for Thibs.

The reports from Wednesday's practice described a cha-



otic scene during which Butler charged onto a practice court, checked himself into a 5-on-5 session with third-teamers, and screamed profanely at various parties - coaches, teammates, and GM Scott Layden.

The greatest embarrassment in all of this is that Thibodeau apparently did not confront Butler in any manner. The coach might have seen more practice energy than in the entire pre-season, but he also lost this roster forever if he would not challenge Butler.

There was insight sought from a Chicago media person who had watched Butler from the start of his career. The sug-

gestion was that Jimmy came into the league driven by his underdog status, and that changed a few years later when he started hanging out with Wahlberg and seeing himself as a star.

The feeling in Chicago was that Butler's game stopped growing three, four years ago, as his head grew ever larger.

Thibodeau was the Bulls coach when Butler arrived in 2011. The pair probably was joined at the hip in the early years, as Butler was writing that terrific underdog story.

Thibs was fired after the 2014-15 season. He was out of the picture as Jimmy's head - meaning, ego - grew larger, to the point

the Bulls decided to trade him before the Butler distraction grew into something more serious.

The legend was that Thibodeau was getting back his No 1 guy, Butler, when the Wolves traded what are now three players for Butler in June 2017.

We now know Thibodeau was wrong. He wasn't getting hard-nosed, underdog Jimmy Butler, the player he had coached in Chicago. He was getting big-headed Jimmy, a star with no interest in having a co-star, an egomaniac the Bulls were delighted to trade.

Repeatedly last season, I wondered why Thibodeau's

play call for a last possession in a tight game was to have someone toss the ball to Butler, so he could yo-yo with the ball 23 feet from the basket until there were four seconds left, and then throw up a game-losing rock.

"Why not get the ball to KAT and see if you can actually get a good shot?" you would mumble.

And now we know: Butler was the star who had to be the hero, and Thibs didn't have the guts to take the ball away from him. And it's now reported the coach didn't have the guts to take practice away from Butler on Wednesday. Embarrassing.

LOSS

Triangle pioneer Winter dead at 96

Reuters
New York

Fred 'Tex' Winter, the pioneer of the triangle offence, died Wednesday at the age of 96, the Chicago Bulls confirmed.

Winter spent 14 years with the Bulls as an assistant coach from 1985-99. Chicago, led by head coach Phil Jackson and star player Michael Jordan, won the NBA Finals six times during his tenure.

"Tex Winter was a basketball legend and perhaps the finest fundamental teacher in the history of our game," Bulls executive vice president John Paxson said in a statement.

"He was an innovator who had high standards for how basketball should be played and approached everyday. Those of us who were lucky enough to play for him will always respect his devotion to the game of basketball. His contributions to the Bulls organization will always be remembered."

Winter followed Jackson to Los Angeles, where Winter spent five years as an assistant with the Lakers from 1999-2004. The Lakers won three titles in that time, and Winter was a consultant when the team won it all again in 2009.

"On behalf of the entire Lakers organisation, I'd like to express our sadness at the passing of Tex Winter," said Lakers CEO and controlling owner Jeanie Buss in a statement. "Tex helped lead the team to four NBA Championships and was a mentor to many



of our coaches and players. In addition to his numerous contributions to the game of basketball, Tex was a wonderful man and he will be dearly missed. Our thoughts and prayers go out to the Winter family."

Prior to his success as an NBA assistant, Winter spent two seasons as head coach of the Houston Rockets from 1971-73 and posted a 51-78 record. Winter's collegiate coaching career included a successful 15-year run at Kansas State from 1953-68. The Wildcats made the NCAA Tournament six times in that span, including two Final Four appearances.

"We are saddened by the passing of such a legendary coach in Tex Winter, who touched nearly every level of basketball," K-State men's basketball coach Bruce Weber said in a tweet. "He left a tremendous mark of achievement at K-State. Our thoughts and prayers are with his wife, Nancy, their children and grandchildren."

Winter also coached at Marquette, Washington, Northwestern and Long Beach State. His career record was 451-336.

Winter was inducted into the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame in 2011.

Cubs star Bryant reportedly turned down \$200mn extension

Kris Bryant has rejected a long-term contract extension offer from the Chicago Cubs worth at least \$200 million, according to multiple reports. An MLB.com report on Wednesday said Bryant, in the last few months, turned down an offer "in the neighbourhood of \$200 million." ESPN's Dave Kaplan said on Wednesday in Chicago that the Cubs reached out to Bryant with an offer for a larger contract extension. "Whispers are telling me that the Cubs approached (agent) Scott Boras to do a massive extension with Kris Bryant in the last several months," Kaplan said. "And it was turned down by Bryant and Boras. 'I was told that the Cubs' offer was more than fair, well north of \$200 million. Not enough.'"

Bryant, a 26-year-old third baseman and outfielder, won the National League Rookie of the Year in 2015 and the league's Most Valuable Player award the following season, when the Cubs won the World Series. He is under club control through 2021. He earned \$10.85 million in 2018, the most ever awarded to a first-year, arbitration-eligible player. He is eligible for arbitration for three more years and won't hit the free agent market until 2022 and age 30. Because of a lingering shoulder injury, he appeared in just 102 games in the 2018 season. He had 13 home runs and 52 RBIs and

hit .272, all career lows. In his MVP season, he hit 39 home runs with 102 RBIs and a .292 average. This is not the first time that Bryant and the Cubs' front office have disagreed. In 2015, the Cubs kept him in the minor leagues longer than he wanted to have an extra year of control on his contract. Had they not, he could have been eligible for free agency a year earlier.

D'BACKS RELIEVER ZIEGLER ANNOUNCES RETIREMENT

Veteran relief pitcher Brad Ziegler announced his retirement on his 39th birthday Wednesday, tweeting thanks to his family, friends and fans and saying it is "time to move on." The right-hander pitched for four organisations in 11 seasons in the majors, finishing his career with the Arizona Diamondbacks. He posted a 2.75 ERA in 739 career appearances, going 37-38 with 105 saves in 142 chances and 479 strikeouts in 717 1/3 innings. Ziegler released a lengthy statement on Twitter. "For the last 11 years, I've been living out the dream of almost every little boy that grows up in this great country and many other countries around the world. It's been an absolute privilege to wear the uniforms of the 4 teams for which I played. But it's time for me to move on to the next chapter in my life, whatever that may be."



FOCUS

'Angry' Svitolina tees up Wang clash in Hong Kong

AFP
Hong Kong

World number five Elina Svitolina said she was playing "mean" and "angry" at the Hong Kong Open Thursday as she targets a place at the WTA Finals Singapore.

The top seed breezed through her second round tie to set up a crunch quarter final clash Friday with China's number one Wang Qiang.

The match will be a repeat of August's US Open third round contest, which the Ukrainian won in straight sets.

"I was really angry today," said the Rome champion, who is battling four other players, including Karolina Pliskova, for the final three places in Singapore.

"We're in the race for Singapore - I want really bad to be there."

The 24-year-old added she knew what to expect from Wang,

who she said was helping spearhead the development of Chinese tennis.

"I'm just going to try and bring my best game tomorrow and try and play as mean as I played today."

Svitolina looked in ominous form Thursday as she brushed aside Japan's Nao Hibino for the loss of just three games.

Her Friday opponent is also coming off the back of a hot streak which has seen her win two WTA titles in just four months.

Sixth seed Wang also only needed two sets to get past American Christina McHale 7-5, 6-1.

"I think I played really well tonight, so I have nothing to lose tomorrow," she said.

Now ranked 24, Wang is chasing more WTA titles to go with the two she picked up in July and September in Nanchang and Guangzhou.

She added: "I think next year the target is top 20."

Earlier, last year's runner-up Daria Gavrilova admitted she had lost her concentration as she made hard work of dispatching unseeded Monica Niculescu over almost three gruelling hours.

The Australian needed a third set tiebreaker - which she closed out with an emphatic smash - to finally break her resilient Romanian opponent, whose forehand slice and confident net play unnerved the seventh seed.

Gavrilova started the match in cruise control but her game started to unravel towards the end of the first set as unforced errors crept in, and Niculescu fought back with an armoury that also included a powerful double-handed backhand.

"I probably was getting a bit too emotional and frustrated because I felt like I was dictating, but I was making too many errors," Gavrilova said.

"I stepped up my game but I wasn't really happy with the way I was going from super good to not great."

The 24-year-old described Niculescu as a "fighter" but added she had not made it easy for herself as she ground out the 6-3, 4-6, 7-6 (7/3) win.

"I was losing concentration - I was really more mentally tired than physically and that is probably where the errors came from."

Gavrilova, the world number 34, has enjoyed an impressive run of recent form in Asia, beating world number 18 Jelena Ostapenko in Wuhan and stunning world number seven Petra Kvitová in Beijing.

But after two three-set matches so far this week, she now faces China's number two Zhang Shuai, who wrapped up a 6-1, 6-7 (4/7), 6-1 victory against the Netherlands' Lesley Kerkhove.

Speaking after the win, Zhang said she felt "everything is coming together".

She added: "I like playing Asia, I like playing China, Hong Kong - I'm feeling happy here."



Elina Svitolina of Ukraine hits a return during her second round match against Nao Hibino of Japan at the Hong Kong Open tennis tournament yesterday. (AFP)

SHANGHAI MASTERS

Federer does family proud to battle into quarter-finals

'I hope it's going to help me that I played against Medvedev and also Bautista Agut, two really good baseliners. From that standpoint, I feel like I found a rhythm'

AFP
Shanghai

Roger Federer said that he did not want to lose in front of his young family as he was pushed all the way for the second match in a row at the Shanghai Masters yesterday.

The reigning champion squeezed into the quarter-finals after eventually defeating the 28th-ranked Spaniard Roberto Bautista Agut 6-3, 2-6, 6-4.

The top seed will play Japan's eighth seed Kei Nishikori, while Novak Djokovic and Alexander Zverev are also through, albeit with far less hassle.

The 37-year-old Swiss great was forced to fight in his opening match on Wednesday against Russia's Daniil Medvedev.

Normal order appeared to have been restored when the 20-time Grand Slam champion comfortably claimed the first set against Bautista Agut.

But the Spaniard earned a piece of personal history after that, winning the second set - the first time he had taken a set against the Swiss maestro.

The 30-year-old Bautista Agut had the whiff of an upset in his nostrils and the prospect of a first victory over the Swiss at the eighth attempt.

But in the ninth game of the deciding set, Federer made the breakthrough on his opponent's serve, pumping his fist as another hard-won victory loomed into view.

Federer's wife Mirka and their four children were in the arena and he said afterwards: "I'm not sure if they give me more courage fighting on court, but they were here today."

"I was telling myself, particularly tonight I cannot do this (lose) because they were there, but I don't know how much I draw from that, quite honestly."

Federer said that two stern encounters had set him up nicely for Nishikori on Friday.

"I hope it's going to help me that I played against Medvedev and also Bautista Agut, two really good baseliners."

"From that standpoint, I feel like I found a rhythm."

DELPO INJURY WOE

One player who will not be in the quarter-finals is Juan Martin del Potro after he hobbled out of the tournament.

The Argentine world number



Switzerland's Roger Federer celebrates after winning against Spain's Roberto Bautista Agut during their third round match at the Shanghai Masters yesterday. (AFP)

Federer says new Davis Cup 'not designed for me'

Roger Federer added his heft to the growing debate around the controversial new-format Davis Cup, saying yesterday that "this was not designed for me".

The inaugural Davis Cup finals are slated for a week in Madrid in November 2019 as part of a revamp to the competition, but it has been contentious with players. Alexander Zverev, the world number five, said at the Shanghai Masters that he will not compete in the men's team event because it comes at the end of a long season.

Third-ranked Novak Djokovic agreed yesterday that the timing was "really bad" and he also looks unlikely to feature.

And then Federer, the 20-time Grand Slam champion, added his voice to the debate when quizzed after beating Roberto Bautista Agut to reach the Shanghai quarter-finals.

"No, I highly doubt it, of course. We'll see what happens," said the 37-year-old, who has been carefully managing his schedule since 2017 to wring the most out of his ageing body.

"I don't think this was designed for me, anyhow."

"This was designed for the future generation of players."

Djokovic said that he is backing the rival ATP World Team Cup, set to take place weeks after the Davis Cup finals, at the start of the 2020 season. The 31-year-old said there was "confusion" with the two competing events coming so close together and being so similar.

"I just feel like the date of the Davis Cup is really bad, especially for the top players," said Djokovic, echoing the strong sentiments of Zverev a day earlier.

"Between the two, I will prioritise the World Team Cup because that's a competition of ATP. "But also I think and I hope that there will be a larger discussion between the players to understand how we are going to approach these two competitions."

"Or hopefully we can make it to the point where we can have one big 'Super World Cup', if you want to call it (that), or whatever it is, because that's the best thing for our sport."

"But the way it seems right now, we are going to have two at the moment."

four, who had already been suffering with a virus, lost his footing at 5-5 in the first set against Croatia's Borna Coric.

The 30-year-old Del Potro had lengthy treatment and

strapping put on his knee, but conceded the match after losing the first set 7-5. Coric, the 13th seed, faces Australia's unseeded Matthew Ebden next.

Second seed Djokovic en-

joyed a measure of revenge as he booked his spot in the quarter-finals with a 6-4, 6-0 demolition of Marco Cecchinato.

The Serbian was stunned by the Italian - ranked 72 in

the world at the time - in the French Open quarter-finals earlier this year.

It was part of a wretched run of form Djokovic suffered after elbow surgery in February.

But he exploded back to life mid-season, winning Wimbledon, the Cincinnati Masters and US Open.

The 31-year-old says he is back close to the kind of blistering form that has brought him 14 Grand Slams.

Djokovic will play South Africa's seventh seed Kevin Anderson and said he was arrowing in on Rafael Nadal's top ranking. The Spaniard is not in Shanghai due to injury.

"Obviously, I'm going to try to do everything I can to get to number one," said Djokovic.

"That's one of the - probably the - biggest goal of the end of the season."

Rising star Zverev was similarly emphatic as he brushed aside Australian teenager Alex de Minaur, 6-1, 6-4.

The German fourth seed will next play 11th seed Kyle Edmund.

SPOTLIGHT

Wimbledon expansion one step closer

Reuters
London

A huge expansion of the Wimbledon tennis championships which would transform the tournament and bring qualifying on-site moved a big step closer yesterday after a local golf club decided all members would benefit equally from a proposed buyout.

Wimbledon Park Golf Club members voted by more than the necessary 75 per cent to amend their constitution. Now all members would benefit from the 65 million pound (\$85.83 million) windfall, not just those of more than 10 years standing.

Under the All England tennis club's buyout offer, the golfers will receive a reported 85,000 pounds (\$112,285) each to sell the declining asset - the tennis club already owns the freehold to the land which would revert to the All England club in 2041 in any case. The golfers are expected to vote on the offer before the end of the year.

Wimbledon wants to use the land - landscaped in the 18th Century by English landscape architect Capability Brown - to move qualifying on-site from its current location some three miles (5km) away in Roehampton.

"The whole experience of being at Wimbledon we think

could be transformed," All England Club chairman Philip Brook said recently.

EYES WIDE OPEN

"And this isn't about building new big stadia, it's about a wonderful opportunity...tennis in an English garden."

"We are not planning to build hotels, multi-storey car parks, a helipad, a shopping centre."

The aim was to move the qualifying event on-site, he said.

"Most of the people who play qualifying lose and don't ever make it inside of the gates of SW19, and we think that's a shame, and we're the only grand slam where that is the case. Bringing that event on-site would be fantastic."

Should the golfers accept the offer, then part of the land will become available to the tennis club at the end of 2021, and other parts available at a year's notice.

The heritage of the land means it comes with numerous constraints, including some 40 trees which could never be moved, Brook said, adding that the club had already done initial work with external consultants who are familiar with Capability Brown land.

"We're going into this eyes wide open in terms of that aspect of it. We are very interested in building grass tennis courts over there."

Federer hails 'super-inspiring' Nadal for Majorca flood help



Spanish tennis player Rafael Nadal (centre) observes a minute of silence yesterday, with students and workers of the 'Rafa Nadal Academy' in Manacor to honour the victims of the flash flood that affected the Spanish Balearic island of Majorca. (AFP)

Roger Federer hailed old rival Rafael Nadal as "super-inspiring" after the world number one joined in the clean-up operation after flash floods killed 12 people on the Spanish holiday island of Majorca.

Spanish star Nadal, 32, was pictured wearing boots and white gloves, mopping up the floor of a warehouse on Wednesday on the island where he lives.

The 17-time Grand Slam champion, currently sidelined through injury, has also offered to open up his sports centre and tennis academy to people made homeless by the floods.

"I know how important Majorca is to Rafa and I have been in touch with him to see if I can help with anything," Federer said in a video message recorded in Shanghai where he is currently competing.

"I have seen him helping in the village where he comes from and to see that is super-inspiring. Rafa, you have our support. "We are thinking of all the people in Majorca. We wish you strength in these difficult times and I hope to be back on Majorca soon."

Fellow rival Novak Djokovic, also taking part in Shanghai, said he hoped Nadal's efforts would inspire others.

"A big hug and friendly regards to Rafa and well done amigo for helping out," said the reigning Wimbledon and US Open champion.

"I invite anyone to give their support in anyway they can. Gracias."

SPOTLIGHT

Generation Amazing reaches 250,000 beneficiaries globally

Generation Amazing – Qatar’s innovative football for development programme – has benefited more than 250,000 people since being launched during the country’s successful bid to host the 2022 FIFA World Cup.

The programme is currently operational in Nepal, Pakistan, Jordan, Lebanon, the Philippines and India, and is set to expand to further countries over the next four years. It has boosted 26 under-privileged communities, including refugee camps, by building football pitches and implementing bespoke social programmes.

In addition, since 2016, Generation Amazing has been supporting workers and schoolchildren in Qatar through inspirational and educational training sessions. To-date, more than 180 coaches have been trained to deliver Generation Amazing programmes in the country.

Hassan al-Thawadi, Secretary General of the Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy, praised the programme during a recent speech in New York.

“Generation Amazing utilises the power of football to help under-privileged people develop their leadership,



Legendary midfielder Xavi – a World Cup winner with Spain in 2010 – was announced as a Generation Amazing ambassador two years ago.

communication and organisational skills. It has been a great success. Our goal is to reach a million people by 2022; so far we have benefited 250,000 people.”

Al-Thawadi expects Generation Amazing to continue growing over the next four years.

“The great thing is we are seeing the results develop organically,” added al-Thawadi. “During the recent flooding in Kerala, for example, two Generation Amazing ambassadors, who are workers in Qatar and became part of the programme, utilised the skills they had

learned to help with the crisis their community faced.”

In addition to building football pitches and implementing social programmes, Generation Amazing has selected participants to attend successive FIFA World Cup tournaments in South Africa, Brazil and Russia. During the trips, participants have attended matches, along with social development workshops, such as leadership courses.

Legendary midfielder Xavi Hernandez – a FIFA World Cup winner with Spain in 2010 – was announced as a Generation Amazing ambassador two years ago. He said it was an honour to be involved with the programme.

“Generation Amazing really inspires me through the fantastic work they are doing with different groups within society. Joining the Generation Amazing programme, and helping children, migrant workers, refugees and the people who need it most, is a real privilege for me.”

Further milestones are in the pipeline for Generation Amazing over the coming year, with the programme set to rapidly expand both locally and internationally. (SC.qa)

EQUESTRIAN

Tickets for LGCT Finals in Qatar on sale now



By Sports Reporter
Doha

Qatar will host the thrilling finals of the 2018 Longines Global Champions Tour (LGCT) show jumping series and tickets for this prestigious event at Al Shaqab are on sale now.

From November 8-10, the spectacular venue in Doha will see the best athletes in the world pull out all the stops to win their place in the prestigious LGCT individual Rankings and teams battle for the Global Champions League (GCL) title in a knife-edge climax to 2018.

The electrifying finale to the season will be hosted at Al Shaqab, a world-class equestrian facility and part of the Qatar Foundation. The circuit has consistently seen the highest calibre show jumping in spectacular destinations including Mexico City, Miami Beach, Paris, London, Berlin and Shanghai, and the event will see the biggest stars in the sport ensure thrilling competition for spectators to witness in Doha.

Families and friends flocked to the venue last year filling the main grandstand and enjoying fun activities including pony riders for children at the impressive Kids Academy as well as watching top sport from the chic cafes with dramatic views of the

main arena. Al Shaqab was established as part of His Highness the Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani’s vision and passion to preserve and perpetuate the Arabian horse in Qatar. It has since developed into a major international equestrian facility encompassing multiple equine disciplines.

In collaboration with the Tour since 2008, Qatar has continued to build on its reputation as a global sports destination and a hub for major international sporting occasions.

Local fans will be able to support home city GCL team Doha Fursan Qatar, as well as watch 2017 LGCT Grand Prix of Doha winner Bassem Hassan Mohammed fight to take a second consecutive win on home turf.

Last year, Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, together with children from the Al Shaqab Riding Academy, presented both the coveted LGCT Championship trophy to Harrie Smolders and also the winning medal to Qatari rider Bassem Hassan Mohammed. HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani was also in attendance along with diplomats from around the world.

The impressive, cutting edge venue of Al Shaqab will be a fitting stage for the final adrenaline-fuelled individual and team series battles of 2018.

ATHLETICS

‘Probably December’: Coe ready for IAAF to rule on Russia return

‘It’s important athletes get answers to an important question: do you trust the system?’

AFP
Buenos Aires

World athletics chief Sebastian Coe told AFP Wednesday that a decision on whether or not Russia will have their ban from international competition lifted “will probably” be made in December.

However Coe, the president of the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF), admitted that “we will have to wait and see” if WADA, the global anti-doping body, was right to lift its three-year ban on Russia’s own anti-doping agency.

The ban was introduced in 2015 after Russia’s ministry of sport and secret service were found guilty of masterminding institutional doping.

Now, the spotlight is on Coe to allow Russia back into international track and field competition when the IAAF Council meets in Monaco on December 4.

When asked if there will be a decision on reinstatement, 62-year-old Coe told AFP: “Yes there will be”.

“There’ll be a meet in the



coming weeks with the Russian Athletics Federation, as we have always done in the past, we will wait for the recommendations of the working group and the Council will deliberate according to my recommendation. “But yes, there will probably

be some decision at the Council meeting in December in Monaco.”

Coe had said following WADA’s controversial decision to lift the ban that Russia needed to meet two pre-conditions to be allowed to return to international athletics competition.

Firstly, Russian authorities must acknowledge the findings of reports that sports ministry officials were implicated in the doping of Russian athletes.

And secondly Russian authorities must provide access to

the data from testing of samples at the Moscow laboratory from 2011-2015, so that the Athletics Integrity Unit can determine whether the suspicious findings reported in the Moscow lab’s database should be pursued.

Coe said time will tell if WADA – who were accused of betraying clean athletes by their decision to lift their Russia ban – were right.

“We’ll have to see. It is very important that athletes can get answers to a very important question and that it is simple: do you trust the system?” said Coe.

“The athletes ask that question, so the IAAF, WADA, the International Olympic Committee – all those organisations have to give evidence to the clean athletes that the system is a clean system.”

“The philosophy of the IAAF was very clear. It was to try to separate the clean athletes from a contaminated system, and that is why we have a neutral status for Russian athletes.

“But, of course, it has to be our ambition to have Russian athletes again representing their country. That has to be the final goal.”

BOTTOMLINE

Golf back in Pakistan after 11-year hitch

AFP
Karachi

Birds were released over fairways and ceremonial drives were struck as international golf returned to Pakistan yesterday after an 11-year absence.

A full field of 132 players from around the globe were teeing up in the Asian Tour’s UMA CNS Open Championship at Karachi Golf Club, the latest thawing of relations with the country that has spent years in the sporting wilderness.

“Coming back to Pakistan is a fantastic opportunity for us,” Robert Andrew, event director of the Asian Tour told AFP, brushing off any security concerns.

“This is the starting point for future years after the success of this event.”

No major golf tour has visited Pakistan since 2007. The last scheduled tournament, in 2008, was cancelled after a wave of in-



Former Asian Tour winner and Indian golfer Digvijay Singh speaks to media ahead of the Asian Tour’s UMA CNS Open Championship at Karachi Golf Club on Wednesday. (AFP)

surgent attacks.

“It is always good to be here as people are very lovely and friendly,” said Australian golfer Marcus Both. “I came here 10 years ago. The perception is bad

but in reality it is very different.”

The 2009 attack on Sri Lanka’s bus in Lahore, in which eight people were killed, caused all sporting visits to be suspended.

But successful military operations in the country’s north-west near the Afghan border and crackdowns in urban centres, including the restive port city of Karachi, have improved the situation.

The country has twice hosted the Pakistan Super League cricket finals featuring international stars plus successful limited-over series against Zimbabwe, a World XI and Sri Lanka in the past 18 months.

They cleared the way for more sports with squash, tennis and now golf having returned.

WALLS COME DOWN

Former Asian Tour winner and Indian national Digvijay Singh said arriving in Pakistan felt like home, suggesting sport could pave the road for better relations between Islamabad and Delhi.

“I am really feeling home here and we are so overwhelmingly welcomed here. We are seeing the same faces not different to us,” Singh told reporters.

“Sports should bring the invisible walls down between the two countries,” he added.

India-Pakistan ties, including sports and cultural contacts, plummeted after deadly 2008 attacks in Mumbai.

While cricket remains the undisputed number one sport in Pakistan, golf is popular with the country’s powerful army, with military areas where the top brass reside frequently home to some of Pakistan’s best courses.

Pakistan’s Navy are hosting this week’s Asian Tour event, which has a \$300,000 prize fund. “There is a very overwhelming response by foreign players and that surprised us,” said Naval Commodore Mush-taq Ahmed.

Pakistan hosted its first Asian Tour event in 1989, which was won by Filipino Frankie Minoza.

The country’s only Asian Tour winner remains Taimur Hussain who triumphed at an event in Myanmar in 1998.

GOLF

‘Boring’ Burgoon leads CIMB as Thomas, Casey lurk



AFP
Kuala Lumpur

American Bronson Burgoon outshone Ryder Cup stars Justin Thomas and Paul Casey as he shot nine-under par 63 to lead the \$7m CIMB Classic yesterday – and then played down his round as “boring”.

At the revamped TPC Kuala Lumpur, the 31-year-old Burgoon chipped in for an eagle on the 18th hole, his ninth after starting from the 10 tee, and then added five birdies on his back nine.

That gave him a one-shot lead over compatriot Austin Cook on a low-scoring first day, with the red-hot Billy Horschel in a three-way tie for the third place at seven-under par.

Thomas, the two-time CIMB champion and former world one, shot four birdies in his last five holes to move to three shots behind the leader, tied sixth at six-under par along with seven other players including England’s Casey.

“I drove it well and I putted pretty good, so it was kind of

boring golf, but that’s always a good thing,” said the Texan.

“I chipped in for eagle from the bunker on my ninth hole, which kind of boosted me, then I just kept going.”

World number four Thomas, winner of the event in 2015 and 2016, was happy with his start, especially the finish to his round.

“It was a good day. Kind of up and down. I got off to a good start and then kind of stalled out a little bit there in the middle,” said the man with eight PGA Tour wins in the last two seasons.

“I hung in there and just really didn’t hit my irons very well. I just didn’t take advantage of a couple opportunities, but kind of found something there those last five holes and was able to at least make a good round of it today.”

Horschel continued from where he left off in the FedEx Cup playoffs, where he finished inside the top-three in four starts and withdrew from the fourth.

Defending champion Pat Perez opened with a two-under-par 70 in the tournament jointly sanctioned by the PGA and the Asian Tours.

EQUESTRIAN

Second Hathab season from today

'It was a challenging season with many ups and downs. The competition level was very tough. I am looking forward to coming back stronger this season'

By Sports Reporter
Doha

The second season of the Hathab equestrian series will kick off today, with the first of the 12 legs to be held at Qatar Equestrian Federation's Indoor Arena. A brainchild of HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani, President of the Qatar Olympic Committee, Hathab was a runaway success in its inaugural season.

The series – worth QR1mn in overall prize money – provides an opportunity for young riders from Qatar to gain experience and test themselves against other best talents in the country over a gruelling 12 legs, which is spread over six months.

Nasser al-Ghazali, who clinched the Big Tour class last season, was effusive in his praise of Hathab and its benefits for young riders.

"It was a great season for me. I got to learn so much," said al-Ghazali, who had secured 177 points to emerge as overall winner. "It was a challenging season with many ups and downs. The competition level was very tough. I am looking forward to coming back stronger this season."

Hamad Nasser al-Qadi, who had finished behind al-Ghazali, was also impressed by the series and called it a stepping stone to Qatar national team. "I got to learn so much. I may have finished second but it has been a great result. I went about doing well in a step-by-step fashion. I intend to keep up the good work next season also. This is a great series for riders like us who want to be part of the Qatar national squad in the future," al-Qadi said.

Like last year, the results of each leg will be used in the selection process of riders to represent Qatar in future international competitions. Hathab will be held either at Al Shaqab or Qatar Equestrian Federation, the joint organisers of the series.

The 12-leg equestrian series has also added a new concept to the popular event. To engage community and businesses, a team system has been added to Hathab, where each team will consist of three riders, and each team will present one of the following sponsors: Al Salam (main sponsor), Exxon Mobil, Al Kass, Al Shaqab, QNB, Lusail and Power Steel.

The veterinarian check for horses was held yesterday, followed by a technical meeting for the riders.

The competition will begin today at 3pm with Small Tour and Medium Tour events. Tomorrow, the Future riders, Beginner Riders, Open Class and Big Tour events will be held.

Each rider and horse needs to have a valid license from Qatar Equestrian Federation to be eligible to participate. A maximum of two horses are allowed per rider in each competition.



Qatar Equestrian Federation's Indoor Arena is all decked up for the first leg of the Hathab equestrian series today. PICTURE: Lotfi Garsi

The series is also aimed at encouraging the involvement of private stables and individual horse owners to grow awareness of horsemanship as part of Qatar's history and tradition. FEI rules and regulations will be applied during all the competitions, and the series will be broadcast on Al Kass Sports Channel.

COMPETITION SCHEDULE

Today
3:30pm: Small Tour Table A, One round against the clock 100/115cm. Prize money: QR10,000
Medium Tour Table A, Special two phases 120/130cm: Prize money: QR20,000
Tomorrow
9am: Future riders class (for under-12) Optimum Time 70/85cm.
10:30am: Beginner Riders: Table A, One round against the clock 85/100cm
3pm: Open Class Table A, One round against the clock 115/125cm. Prize money: QR15,000
5:30pm: Big Tour Table A, One round against the clock 130/145cm. (6-12 years); QR35,000.



A rider trains with his horse at the Qatar Equestrian Federation arena yesterday.

FOOTBALL/QSL CUP

Gharafa earn last-gasp equaliser vs Duhail

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Al Gharafa secured a last-gasp (90+4) equaliser against defending champions Al Duhail in the second round QSL Cup match yesterday.

A 17th-minute Al Duhail goal settled the nerves at the Qatar SC Stadium, thanks to Fahad al-Buyati's early contribution. Having won possession in mid-field, Yousef El Arabi raced clear of the defence before unselfishly squaring the ball for the Qatar Under-23 attacker to finish with composure.

Al-Buyati then had a chance to double the lead early in the second half, but was denied, thanks to fantastic goalkeeping by Qasem Burhan between the opposition posts.

Al Gharafa were unfortunate in the second half when first Burhan denied Abdulghani Muneer, before Muath al-Salemi's shot across the goal was marginally wide, but they were not finished.

Right at the end, Diogo Amado's header ricocheted off the bar and onto the head of Abdulghani to rescue a point from close range.

QSC O UMM SALAL O

The encounter between Qatar SC and Umm Salal failed to produce any goal across the 90 minutes, so both teams had to be satisfied with a point each.

The chances were few and far between, with perhaps the closest either side came to scoring was Yannick Sagbo's thunderous free-kick from the right that was well kept out by the goalkeeper. Qatar SC pushed late on, but it was not enough to grab a victory.

KHARAITIYAT 2 ARABI O

Al Kharaitiyat were able to put their league form to one side with an impressive cameo from Valentin Lazar.

The Romanian was instrumental in much of the home side's attacking play and was in prime position to watch Majid Salmeen score the 37th-minute opener.

The Qatari midfielder received the ball far out before advancing and launching a powerful drive past the helpless goalkeeper.

The points were secured in the 40th minute as Salmeen supplied the vital pass to Valentin who snuck in front of goal and finished in clinical fashion.



Action from Al Duhail-Al Gharafa QSL Cup second round match.

MOTORSPORT

QMMF ready to host 3rd round of Qatar National Baja

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Qatar Motor and Motorcycle Federation (QMMF) will host the third round of the Qatar National Baja Championship tomorrow.

The ceremonial start is scheduled for today, after the scrutineering and pre-event briefing. Tomorrow, the first leg will begin at 8:45 in the morning as the cars will run over challenging desert terrain, which will consist of a number of marked courses.

Qatar Baja has attracted 11 entries as the drivers will battle it out in the sandy countryside for off-road honours. QMMF President Abdulrahman al-Mannai was excited for the start of new season and said a number of activities have been lined up ahead. "We are looking forward to this week's round. We are very excited at this point in time. We have planned a series of activities right throughout the season, like we always do. We shall give more details in the coming days," al-Mannai said.

It will be busy season at the QMMF as beehive of activities has been planned. The Manateq International Rally of Qatar, the finale to the 2018 FIA Middle East Rally Championship is the marquee event to be looked forward to and it will be held from November 15-17.

"It's going to be a busy season. Next month we will have the hugely popular Manateq



QMMF President Abdulrahman al-Mannai (left) lavished praise on Nasser Saleh al-Attiyah (right) for winning the Rally of Morocco last week.

Qatar International Rally. That will host the big names in motor racing. We will special activities during that week," QMMF President said.

Formerly the opening round of the prestigious regional rallying series, this year's revised three-day event will decide the outcome of the championship with

Qatar's Nasser Saleh al-Attiyah – a winner of the Qatar International Rally on 13 occasions – bidding for a 14th regional title in 16 years and trying to prevent Czech driver Vojtech Staff from snatching a first ever series win. The duo are separated by 32 points before the fourth round in Kuwait at the start of November.

Al-Mannai lavished praise on al-Attiyah after Qatar's ace driver really well for him. I think he is getting good preparation for the Manateq Qatar International Rally and eventually the Dakar Rally next year," he said.

"The best news was the way he fought hard in trying conditions," al-Mannai said. "He's had a tough time recently but



Qatar Baja has attracted 11 entries.

we know he doesn't give up. His team and car have been working really well for him. I think he is getting good preparation for the Manateq Qatar International Rally and eventually the Dakar Rally next year," he said.

Al-Mannai said Adel Abdulla, Qatar's big hope in T2 class in this year's championship, has been a revelation this year. Ab-

dulla driving a Nissan Patrol Y62 as part of the QX Rally Team with French navigator Jean-Michel Polato, finished the event in third place behind the Russian driver Andrey Titov.

After the tough fight in Morocco, Abdulla had the consolation of finishing as runner-up in this year's T2 World Championship after a campaign that was

marred on more than one occasion by cruel luck.

"Adel showed a great fight despite the setbacks in Morocco. He did not give up until the end. The great achievement is that he drove three different cars this season. It is just unbelievable. Hopefully he will come back strong next season," al-Mannai said.