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McCollum's 40 points power Blazers past Bucks

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GULF TIMES SPORT



CRICKET

Foakes, spinners put England on top in Galle Test

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SPOTLIGHT

Tight battle expected for GCT runner-up position

Doha will also provide the last chance for individual riders to qualify for the GCT Super Grand Prix at the Playoffs in Prague

By Sahar Bidappa
Doha

With British rider Ben Maher having already sealed the title, the Global Champions Tour finals at Al Shaqab will see intense battle for the runner-up position. Seven riders are still in contention to finish behind Maher, who, with 284 points from 15 rounds, has taken an unassailable lead and will be crowned as new champion on Saturday.

Alberto Zorzi is currently second with 237 points, but the Italian has just a four-point lead over last year's overall champion Harrie Smolders of the Netherlands. But what makes it interesting is the fact that just 28 points separate Zorzi and eighth-placed Christian Ahlmann of Germany. And with 40 points for a win at Al Shaqab, the battle for second place can swing many ways.

Germany's Daniel Deusser at fourth place has 233 points, while Briton Scott Brash holds fifth spot with a tally of 225. Two-time GCT Grand Prix winner Nicola Philippaerts of Belgium sits in sixth with 219 and two-time GCT title holder Edwina Tops-Alexander of Australia is on 212 overall.

Smolders said he was eager to finish on the podium this weekend, with the Dutchman needing to finish in the top 15. He will partner 14-year-old Stallion Don VHP Z.N.O.P., and the two have history of producing top performance together.

The pair won in Hamburg and finished third in Paris. "It all comes down to Doha. If I look at the scores at the moment, it is very, very close from second to eighth place, with any of those riders able to finish on the podium. I definitely want to take my chances," Smolders said.

Tops-Alexander is facing a



Qatar's Sheikh Ali bin Khalid al-Thani (L) and Bassem Mohamed will be hoping for a home win at the Global Champions Tour at Al Shaqab. PICTURE: Lotfi Garsi

must-win situation to finish third in the overall championship. The Australian, is a regular to Doha, and will fancy her chances. Tops-Alexander will be astride California and Inca Boy van T'Vianahof as she goes all out for a win.

Doha will also provide the last chance for individual riders to qualify for the GCT Super Grand Prix at the Playoffs in Prague in December. And the top 16 teams in the final overall ranking after Doha will go also through to the Global

Champions League Super Cup at the Playoffs.

For local fans, they will be eager to see another home rider emerge triumphant. Last year, Bassem Hassan Mohamed thrilled the crowd by becoming the first Qatar rider to taste a GCT Grand Prix win at Al Shaqab. While Bassem will be going for an encore, there are hopes that his compatriot Sheikh Ali bin Khalid al-Thani will stand on top of the podium of this time.

Sheikh Ali, who earlier this year

won silver at the Asian Games in Jakarta, said it will be a big test for him as he pairs up with an inexperienced horse. "I will be riding a young horse, which does not have much experience. But it has lot of potential, and we won the bronze at the Asian Games. I hope that I can produce a top quality performance here. We have been working hard with it in the last few weeks, so we will see how it goes. It will be a big test for us," he said.

Doha Fursan Qatar has quali-



The vet check for the horses was held at Al Shaqab yesterday.

fied for the GCL Super Cup at the Playoffs and Sheikh Ali was proud of the achievement and was hoping for a podium finish at his home event. "We did our best and we could also do better but in another way we are happy that we have at least qualified for the final in Prague which was the ambition for us this year and we are looking to have a podium in Doha this year," he said.

Al Shaqab will also play host to the finals of the team competition - Global Champions League, which is set for a fascinating climax to the season.

Only 16 out of 19 teams can qualify for the new GC Playoffs in Prague in December and the top four teams will be fast-tracked to the semi-finals of the GC Playoffs. There are two teams in contention to win the trophy - London Knights on 323 points and Valkenswaard United on 300 points. Both teams have been locked in thrilling combat at 15 events this season and the battle is set to go down the wire in Doha.

Another great contest will un-

fold between the teams currently in 3rd, 4th and 5th places on the ranking. Miami Celtics on 244 points are only nine points ahead of Rome Gladiators and they are only one point in front of Shanghai Swans. These highly competitive teams are fielding their star performers to ensure they finish in the top 4 to go into the GC Playoffs.

Further down the ranking 6th place Montreal Diamonds, 7th place Scandinavian Vikings and 8th place St Tropez Pirates will be aiming for a podium spot to have a last chance to move up into the top 4.

Meanwhile, the third leg of the Hathab National Equestrian series will also be held simultaneously with the GCT tomorrow and on Saturday. 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.

Global Champions Tour schedule

Today: 2:45pm: CSI 5* Two phases 1.45m (€25,000); 5:45pm: CSI 5* GCL of Doha Round 1 - 1.50/1.55m (€60,000 to individual class winners)

Tomorrow: 4:30pm: CSI 5* Against-the-clock 1.45m (€50,000); 6:30pm: CSI 5* Against-the-clock with jump-off 1.50/1.55m (€145,000)

On Saturday: 2:30pm: CSI 5* GCL of Doha Round 2 - 1.55/1.60m (€95,000 to individual class winners); 5:45pm: CSI 5* Longines Global Champions Tour Grand Prix of Doha - 1.60m (€375,000)

Hathab schedule

Tomorrow: 9am: Against the clock NO Jump Off 1.00/1.15m; 2pm: Against the clock WITH Jump Off 1.20/1.30m

Saturday: 9am: Against the clock NO Jump Off 1.15/1.25m; 11:50am: Against the clock with Jump Off 1.30/1.45m

FOOTBALL

Infantino: only 'slim chance' of 48-team World Cup in 2022

DPA Zurich

A decision on a possible expansion of the 2022 World Cup from 32 to 48 teams will be made in March at the latest, and the chances of it happening are slim, FIFA president Gianni Infantino has said. Infantino confirmed to DPA that the FIFA Council will decide on the issue at its March 14-15 meeting in Miami, and he also expects a decision there on the introduction of an expanded Club World Cup and global Nations League.

Football's ruling body FIFA has already approved the expansion to 48 teams for the 2026 tournament in the United States, Mexico and Canada, and FIFA is now looking into a South American proposal to have 48 teams in 2022 in Qatar as well.

But Infantino is skeptical that this will become reality, saying: "The chance is slim. We are trying it."



This picture taken on February 29, 2016 shows FIFA president Gianni Infantino (L) and Swiss prosecutor Rinaldo Arnold during a football match organised after Infantino's election in Zurich.

"It would be great if it works out but it is also great if it doesn't work out. We will have a great tournament, no matter what." By the time of the Miami meeting a FIFA task force, headed by Infantino, will have completed its look into the controversial Club World Cup and Nations League issue which is backed by 25bn dollars from so far unnamed investors, the FIFA boss said.

The task force was set up recently owing to pressure from critics within the FIFA Council, mainly from Europe, who want more information on the investors and possible tournament formats.

Infantino dismissed the criticism on a new-look Club World Cup and at the same time criticised alleged plans of a breakaway Super League, insisting that the Club World Cup "is the better Super League" because it would take place within existing federation structures. Infantino also threatened players from clubs who would perform in such a breakaway league with World Cup exclusion.

CRICKET

Boult hat-trick fuels New Zealand's win over Pakistan in Abu Dhabi ODI

AFP Abu Dhabi

Trent Boult became the third New Zealand bowler to claim a one-day international hat-trick as his side defeated Pakistan by 47 runs in the first match in Abu Dhabi yesterday.

Pace spearhead Boult reduced Pakistan to 8 for 3 in their chase of 267 after he dismissed Fakhar Zaman (one), Babbar Azam (nought) and Mohamed Hafeez (nought) in the third over.

He finished with figures of 3 for 54 as Pakistan were bowled out for 219 in 47.2 overs.

"It's nice to be back out there and get the win for the boys," said Boult, who missed the 3-0 loss in the preceding Twenty20 series due to the birth of his child.

"The hat-trick ball I was just trying to make him play and to slide one onto the pads is a great feeling!"



Trent Boult celebrates his hat-trick against Pakistan in Abu Dhabi.

Veteran batsman Ross Taylor top-scored with 80 while wicketkeeper Tom Latham struck 68 off 64 balls to lead New Zealand to 266-9 after they won the toss and batted at Sheikh Zayed Stadium.

In response Pakistan crumbled to 85-6, before Sarfraz Ahmed (64) and Imad Wasim (50) added 103 for the

seventh wicket.

Boult exposed Pakistan's batting woes early on, bowling Zaman off his pads before having Azam caught at slip and then trapping Hafeez leg-before with a sharp inswinging delivery.

He joined fast bowlers Danny Morrison (v India at Napier in 1999) and Shane Bond (v Australia at Hobart in 2007) as the only New Zealanders to take an ODI hat-trick.

Imam-ul-Haq (34) and Shoaib Malik (30) added 63 for the fourth wicket but both fell in successive overs before the Sarfraz-Wasim stand briefly reignited hopes.

BRIEF SCORES

New Zealand: 266 for 9 in 50 overs (Ross Taylor 80, T. Latham 68, Shaheen 4-46, Shadab 4-38)

Pakistan: 219 all out in 47.2 overs (Sarfraz Ahmed 64, Imad Wasim 50, Boult 3-54, Ferguson 3-36)

Result: New Zealand won by 47 runs

SL VS ENG, DAY 2, 1ST TEST

Foakes, spinners put England on top in Galle Test

Bangladesh dismiss Zimbabwe for 181 in their second innings but face record chase



England's wicketkeeper Ben Foakes (right) celebrates after taking a catch to dismiss Sri Lanka's Akila Dananjaya on second day of the first Test at Galle, Sri Lanka, yesterday. (Reuters)

AFP
Galle, Sri Lanka

England spinners led by Moeen Ali helped dismiss Sri Lanka for 203 and build on their advantage after wicketkeeper-batsman Ben Foakes' debut ton in the first Test yesterday. The islanders conceded a 139-run lead in response to England's 342 after being bowled out in the final session of play on day two on a turning Galle pitch notorious for its low scores. Ali claimed four wickets and was ably supported by fellow spinners Jack Leach and Adil Rashid who took two each. England were 38 for no loss at stumps in their second innings, stretching their lead to 177 runs. Debutant Rory Burns, on 11, and Keaton Jennings, on 26, were batting at close of play. "It's great to be back out

there with the boys. A great day for us. It was always nice for a spinner to get some purchase on a wicket like this, I got into things quite early on," said Leach, who made an impact with his left-arm spin in just his second Test for England. "Massive influence Moeen has been great to be around and good banter when he's around in the change room. "We are enjoying it... Jimmy (Anderson) and (Sam) Curran bowled really well at the top and took the pressure off us," Leach said of England's bowling attack. But it was Foakes who stood out with his patient yet effective batting in England's first essay to give the team a challenging total after electing to bat first. The 25-year-old Foakes, who replaced injured Jonny Bairstow converted his overnight 87 to 107 in the morning session to become only the fifth wicketkeeper-batsman to score

a hundred in his first Test.

MATHEWS' GRIT
For Sri Lanka, Angelo Mathews top-scored with 52 and put on a crucial 75-run stand for the fifth wicket with skipper Dinesh Chandimal, who made 33, to frustrate the opposition bowlers. Rashid broke the key stand after getting Chandimal stumped on a classic leg-spinner but Mathews went on to register his 30th Test 50. He did not trouble the scorers after the tea break as Ali got the dangerous trudging back to the pavilion in the first over of the final session. Dilruwan Perera, who picked up five wickets in the England innings, crossed 1000 Test runs on his way to 21. He became the fastest Sri Lankan to claim a double of 100 wickets and 1,000 runs. England were troubled by a nasty hit to Burns while fielding at forward short leg, prompting the umpires to call

for early tea. Burns, who injured his shoulder blades at the base of his neck after trying to duck under a sweep shot from Dickwella, came back to field, much to the delight of the English fans. The biggest cheer though was reserved for the retiring Rangana Herath who walked in amid a rousing reception as the English team lined up to receive the spin legend in the middle. He remained unbeaten on 14 after Rashid got the final wicket Suranga Lakmal for 15. Herath, 40, bids farewell to his international career at the start of the three-match series at his favourite hunting ground that accounts for 100 – he got to the mark in England's innings after getting skipper Joe Root out for 35 – of his 431 Test victims. "I have watched Herath over the years, he's been a legend for Sri Lankan cricket," Leach said in praise of the veteran left-arm spinner.

Scorecard

ENGLAND 1st inn (o/n 321-8)	
R. Burns c Dickwella b Lakmal	9
K. Jennings b Perera	46
M. Ali b Lakmal	0
J. Root b Herath	35
B. Stokes b Perera	7
J. Buttler c Dickwella b Perera	38
B. Foakes c De Silva b Lakmal	107
S. Curran c Chandimal b De Silva	48
A. Rashid c De Silva b Perera	35
J. Leach c De Silva b Perera	15
J. Anderson not out	0
Extras (b1, lb1)	2
Total (all out, 97 overs)	342

Fall of wickets: 1-10 (Burns), 2-10 (Ali), 3-72 (Root), 4-98 (Jennings), 5-103 (Stokes), 6-164 (Buttler), 7-252 (Curran), 8-306 (Rashid), 9-330 (Leach), 10-342 (Foakes)

Bowling: Lakmal 18-5-73-3, Perera 31-6-75-5, Dananjaya 20-2-96-1, Herath 25-4-78-1, De Silva 3-0-18-0

SRI LANKA 1st inn

D. Karunaratne c Foakes b Anderson	4
K. Silva lbw b Curran	1
K. Mendis b Ali	14
D. de Silva c Stokes b Leach	19
A. Mathews c Jennings b Ali	52
D. Chandimal st Foakes b Rashid	33
N. Dickwella c Buttler b Ali	28
D. Perera c Buttler b Leach	21
A. Dananjaya c Foakes b Ali	0
S. Lakmal c Anderson b Rashid	15
R. Herath not out	14
Extras (lb2)	2
Total (all out, 68 overs)	203

Fall of wickets: 1-4 (Karunaratne), 2-10 (Silva), 3-34 (Mendis), 4-40 (De Silva), 5-115 (Chandimal), 6-136 (Mathews), 7-171 (Dickwella), 8-173 (Dananjaya), 9-175 (Perera), 10-203 (Lakmal)

Bowling: Anderson 10-0-26-1, Curran 6-1-16-1, Leach 18-2-41-2, Ali 21-4-66-4, Rashid 9-1-30-2, Stokes 4-0-22-0

ENGLAND 2nd inn

R. Burns not out	11
K. Jennings not out	26
Extras (lb1)	1
Total (no loss, 12 overs)	38

Bowling: Perera 5-0-12-0, Lakmal 3-0-14-0, Herath 3-0-10-0, Dananjaya 1-0-1-0

SOUTH AFRICA'S TOUR OF AUSTRALIA

Marsh hopeful abscess problem behind him: Carey

Reuters
Melbourne

Australia batsman Shaun Marsh is hopeful of playing in the second one-day international against South Africa tomorrow after having surgery on an abscess on his buttock, teammate Alex Carey said yesterday. Marsh missed the six-wicket thrashing by South Africa in the series-opener in Perth on Sunday due to the problem, with Ben McDermott brought into the squad as cover. "He is pretty positive that he'll be right for Friday," vice-captain Carey told reporters in Adelaide. "Shaun obviously (in the) last series over in England was sensational, he scored two hundreds for us. "So for SOS (Marsh) to come in at three and probably play a bit of an anchor role around some of those top order explosive players... it's a little bit of stability up the top, hopefully." Australia were skittled for 152 by South Africa's formidable attack and slumped to their 17th defeat in 19 matches, raising alarm bells only seven months out from their World Cup defence in England. The team has also had to battle distractions caused by a scathing cultural review into Cricket Australia commissioned in the wake of the Cape Town ball-tampering scandal. Cricket pundits have lined up to put the boot into Aaron Finch's team and their brittle batting order, but Carey said the side were primed to turn a corner.



"We're really confident still, obviously the conditions were quite tough over there (in Perth) but that's no excuse," said the wicketkeeper-batsman. "The work we're doing off the field with JL (coach Justin Langer) and the players coming in, we're doing so much good stuff and it's going to start to show." Australia went with a four-pronged pace attack in Perth but it was unable to do much to halt South Africa's charge to victory, and the hosts are likely to bring in a spinner for Adelaide. South Australia legspinner Adam Zampa will be a chance to bowl on his home wicket if selectors overlook left-arm spinner Ashton Agar. "If it's Zampa, if it's Agar, if it's the same four quicks, I definitely think we have got the bowling attack to go through South Africa," said Carey. "Obviously the batters, hopefully, get a few more runs on the board. "But Adam Zampa (on his) home deck, I'm sure he's really excited and hopeful to be in the side."

AFTERMATH

Bangladesh coach vows to bounce back from Zimbabwe loss

AFP
Sylhet, Bangladesh

Bangladesh coach Steve Rhodes yesterday promised his team would bounce back from their opening Test defeat against Zimbabwe to square the two-Test series in Dhaka. Zimbabwe thrashed Bangladesh by 151 runs in the first Test in the northeastern city of Sylhet, posting their first Test win in five years since they defeated Pakistan at Harare in 2013. Bangladesh were heavily criticised for their poor show in the game, in which the team was dismissed for 143 and 169 runs in two innings – making eight consecutive Test innings where Bangladesh failed to cross the 200-run mark. But Rhodes said he is hoping the team will make a strong comeback in the next match. "These guys are really determined to put things right

and that's what I love about the Bangladeshi dressing room. They keep surprising me and they keep bouncing back," Rhodes told reporters in Sylhet. "Certainly the only thing that went wrong in this game was our batting in the first innings. We lost the toss when there was not much happening and we did a great job in bowling them out for 282," he said. "Then we needed 350 or 400 and if we didn't get that score then it was always going to be difficult batting last. "So we missed an opportunity in our first innings batting and there was nothing wrong with our plans or tactics, we just made a mess of it in our first innings. "To get rolled for 140 (143) and be a 140 (139) behind, going into the third innings of the game, was quite disastrous for us." He said the team would put things right in the second and last Test match at Dhaka's Mirpur ground beginning on Sunday.

FOCUS

CA boss Roberts says board considering lifting player bans

Reuters
Melbourne

Cricket Australia (CA) is considering a demand by the players' union that ball-tampering bans on former captain Steve Smith, David Warner and Cameron Bancroft be lifted immediately, the governing body's CEO Kevin Roberts said yesterday. CA has come under pressure from the Australian Cricketers' Association (ACA) to end the bans following the release of the Longstaff review, which laid some of the blame for the Cape Town scandal at the door of the board. Earlier yesterday, team performance boss Pat Howard, who was due to leave next year, brought forward his departure to next week, while broadcasting chief Ben Amarfo left, Cricket Australia said. The latest departures come after chairman David Peever was



forced out last week and former Test captain Mark Taylor quit as a director. Former CEO James Sutherland stepped down last month.

Cricket Australia said the latest changes signalled a "new chapter" under the leadership of incoming chief executive Kevin Roberts.

"The ACA submission around the players' sanctions was received by the board a few days ago," Roberts told reporters. "It was addressed to the board rather than to me or all management. So not for me to comment on a board matter other than to say that the board will be respecting that submission and giving it due consideration." Smith and vice-captain Warner were each suspended for 12 months after the ball-tampering scandal broke in March, while opening batsman Bancroft was banned for nine months. The bans extend to the domestic Sheffield Shield and the Big Bash Twenty20 competition. A depleted Australia have struggled to recover from the crisis, with the test team losing two of their last three matches since Tim Paine took over the captaincy in South Africa. The one-day team, now led by Aaron Finch, have lost their last seven including a 5-0 whitewash

by England and a stinging defeat in Sunday's series-opener against South Africa in Perth. Amid the teams' struggles, a number of prominent cricket pundits and former players have said the ball-tampering bans were overly harsh and offered various suggestions as to how the three should be rehabilitated. Roberts, who was at the centre of an acrimonious pay dispute with players last year, said repairing relations with the players' union remained a top priority. "I think what's really important is that we at Cricket Australia need to embrace the players and we need to make sure that the players feel a really valued part of Cricket Australia," he said. "There's no doubt that we need to face up to the review and the fact that it acknowledged that the organisation hasn't been united enough across the playing and long-playing sides."

'See ball, hit ball', New Zealand duo belt 43 runs off single over

Reuters
Wellington

Central Districts medium pacer Willem Ludick earned an unwanted place in the record books yesterday when Northern Districts took 43 runs off one of his overs in a domestic one-day cricket match in New Zealand. Northern Districts batsmen Joe Carter and Brett Hampton belted six sixes – two of which were hit off no balls – a four and a single during the first class match at Hamilton's Seddon Park. Carter finished on 102 not out, while Hampton was dismissed for 95 as Northern Districts scored 313 for seven in their 50 overs in the game that they eventually won by 25 runs. Ludick finished with figures of 85 for one off 10 overs. "It was right at the end and I suppose it was a 'see ball, hit ball' scenario," said Hampton. "We got a couple of free no balls which helped us to get

going. "We came together (at the end of the over) and said 'how many did we get on that?' I think we said it was 39. We missed a four there." Although batting greats Ravi Shastri and Garry Sobers famously smashed six sixes off the overs of Tilak Raj and Malcolm Nash respectively in first class matches, the world record is by no means clear. South Africa's Herschelle Gibbs also hit six sixes for a tally of 36 off Netherlands legspinner Daan van Bunge during a 2007 World Cup match in St. Kitts, the most in an international one-dayer. Website Cricinfo, in what it allows is a potentially incomplete list, awards the first class one-day record to Zimbabwe international Elton Chigumbura, who belted 39 off Alaudin Babu during one over in Bangladesh in 2013. They discounted the 77 runs that former New Zealand batsman Robert Vance conceded during a first-class match against Canterbury in 1990.

FORMULA 1

Mercedes ready to wrap up fifth successive title

'Target was to win both championships, so our mindset is one of unfinished business'



Mercedes driver Lewis Hamilton celebrates winning the 2018 drivers' title with his fans after the Mexican Grand Prix on October 28, 2018. (AFP)

Reuters
London

Lewis Hamilton is celebrating his fifth Formula One world championship already and Sunday should see Mercedes catch up with their driver by securing a fifth successive constructors' title in Brazil.

Only Ferrari have enjoyed such a previous run, with six in succession between 1999 and 2004, and Sebastian Vettel and teammate Kimi Raikkonen are the only ones who can delay the seemingly inevitable.

For Mercedes to be denied at Sao Paulo's atmospheric Interlagos circuit, Ferrari will have to score 13 points more than Mercedes — a feat they have managed only twice in 19 races so far

this year.

Mercedes are 55 points clear of the Italians, with 43 still to be won after Brazil.

Despite that, Mercedes are sticking to their time-worn mantra of taking one race at a time and nothing for granted, even if nobody will be surprised to see celebratory T-shirts appear on Sunday.

"Our target for this season was to win both championships, not one title or the other, so our mindset is one of unfinished business as we head to Sao Paulo," said team boss Toto Wolff.

"We have a big battle on our hands for the constructors' title and we have lost ground to Ferrari in each of the past (two) race weekends — even though we had the base performance to do better.

"This is the moment to keep our feet on the ground, focus

clearly on the objective and trust in our processes and people to deliver."

BIG BONUS

In 2015 and 2017, Hamilton did not win again after taking the title with races to spare and it would also be no surprise for that to happen again.

The constructors' championship is still a very big deal for everyone at the 900-strong team, and not just because staff bonuses are paid on it rather than the drivers' one.

With no Brazilian driver in the race, Felipe Massa's departure at the end of last year ending an unbroken line extending over four decades, the carnival atmosphere may be slightly more muted.

But there will still be no shortage of drivers keen to put on a

show, particularly if — as often happens — the heavens open.

Red Bull's exciting overtakers Max Verstappen and Daniel Ricciardo, who has retired from his last two races, will hope to do that as will Hamilton's team mate Valtteri Bottas now freed from team orders and seeking his first win of 2018.

"In general Interlagos doesn't suit our car that well, but after finishing on the podium there in 2016 and winning last week in Mexico, anything can happen in the race," said Verstappen.

"I've had some great battles and overtakes there and I'm hoping for another exciting race."

Vettel won last year, after Bottas took pole, and the championship runner-up has the best record of anyone on the current grid with three past wins in Brazil.

The race will also be a fare-

well for McLaren's Fernando Alonso, who won his two world titles with Renault at the Brazilian track in 2005 and 2006 and is leaving Formula One after Abu Dhabi.

"I haven't had the chance to fight for a couple of grands prix now, so I hope we can have a clean battle and show what's possible," said the Spaniard.

All teams will approach Interlagos with some trepidation after Mercedes mechanics and others were targeted by armed robbers outside the circuit last time, with tighter security measures promised.

"We have worked with the promoters and with the local authorities (and) the police," Force India team boss Otmar Szafnauer told racefans.net.

"Apparently they're going to have a much bigger presence."

ADDITION

Vietnam to host Formula One race in Hanoi from 2020



Models in traditional dresses walk in front of a Red Bull F1 car on stage during a ceremony in Hanoi, Vietnam, yesterday. (AFP)

Reuters
Hanoi

Vietnam will host a Formula One grand prix for the first time in 2020 with a street race in the capital Hanoi, organisers said yesterday.

The Vietnamese Grand Prix is the first entirely new addition to the calendar since US-based Liberty Media took over as commercial rights holders last year and replaced former dealmaker and supreme Bernie Ecclestone.

"We are delighted to announce that Hanoi will host a Formula One Grand Prix," the sport's chairman Chase Carey said in a statement.

"Since we became involved in this sport in 2017, we have talked about developing new destination cities to broaden the appeal of Formula One and the Vietnamese Grand Prix is a realisation of that ambition.

"We are thrilled to be here in Hanoi, one of the most exciting cities in the world right now with such a rich history and an incredible future ahead of it."

The South-East Asian country is a growing market for sponsors such as brewer Heineken and will give the region four races on the calendar again after the departure of Malaysia last year.

The others are China, Singapore and Japan.

Ecclestone told Reuters last year that he had talks with the Vietnamese about a race while he was in charge but had decided, despite the money on offer, against it because he felt there were enough in that part of the world already.

Yesterday's announcement was marked with a launch party held inside the centuries-old walls of central Hanoi's Thang

Long Citadel and featuring electronic music and traditional dance and drumming.

Retired British F1 driver David Coulthard also attended with a Red Bull demonstration car.

Vietnamese prime minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc had met Carey earlier.

"This is an important event not only in the field of sport but also in culture and society, contributing to the development of Vietnam," Phuc said in a government statement.

Vietnam's largest conglomerate, Vingroup JSC, has signed a "multi-year deal" to host the event, the Formula One press release said, without elaborating.

VinFast, a unit of Vingroup, is set to become Vietnam's first fully-fledged domestic car manufacturer when its first production models built under its own badge hit the streets next August.

The Hanoi race will be run on a 5.565-km layout in the west of the city, adding another street race to the existing ones in Monaco, Singapore, Azerbaijan and Melbourne's Albert Park in Australia.

Chairman of the Hanoi People's Committee Nguyen Duc Chung said the race would reflect Vietnam's ability to hold global events.

"It provides an opportunity for inward investment to Vietnam and importantly to bring the exciting wheel-to-wheel racing of Formula One to the people of Vietnam," he said.

While the country does not have much of a tradition of motorsports, sporting events or competitions in which the national team does even marginally well are widely watched and passionately celebrated.

There will again be 21 races on the 2019 calendar, with the same races as this year retaining their places.

CHESS

Carlsen to defend crown against great American hope

AFP
London

Norway's Magnus Carlsen will seek to cement his reputation as history's greatest chess player tomorrow when he launches a defence of his crown against the first US title contender since Bobby Fischer in 1972.

Both Carlsen — a 27-year-old superstar at home who is also a part-time model — and 26-year-old Fabiano Caruana are prodigies returning mass appeal to their highbrow game.

The world title will go up for grabs in a former London school of art and design whose sweeping glass dome and imposing columns have featured in a recent series of fashion shows.

It is a fitting venue for Carlsen. The champion since 2013 has also been one of the faces of a street-smart Dutch apparel brand since 2010.

But the chess world is more enthralled with Carlsen's intuition and prodigious memory than his rugged looks.

"There is no doubt that Carlsen is one of the best chess

players ever," British Chess Magazine editor Milan Dinic told AFP.

'NOT NERDY LOOKING'

The Norwegian won his third world title in a series of rapid play tiebreakers against Russia's Sergey Karjakin in 2016 in New York.

His first came when he topped Viswanathan Anand on the former champion's home turf in India. Carlsen defended his crown in a rematch played the subsequent year in Russia.

But he really began making a name for himself when he managed to draw Garry Kasparov — the Soviet and Russian legend whose record ranking Carlsen eventually broke — at the tender age of 13.

Carlsen actually beat Kasparov's compatriot and nemesis Anatoly Karpov at the same event.

He has spent a good part of his time since then making chess fun again.

Carlsen took time off preparations for the London series to play an exhibition game against the Liverpool football team's chess-loving right-back Trent Alexander-Arnold.

The 20-year-old rising star



US chess player Fabiano Caruana.

lost, but can console himself with the knowledge that he held out against Carlsen for nearly twice as many moves as Microsoft's Bill Gates.

Carlsen has succeeded in "removing the stigma associated with chess," championship organizer Ilya Merenzon told AFP.

"He's not a nerdy looking male and he's not just another Russian chess player," said Merenzon.

"Carlsen has galvanising mainstream interest in chess and (is) bringing new people to it."

IN FISCHER'S SHADOW

What Carlsen has done for the global game, Caruana is achieving in the United States.

Americans have not had a chess hero since Fischer stunned Soviet champion Boris Spassky in an epic series in 1972 that epitomised the Cold War rivalry between the two superpowers.

Now, US media is fascinated with the possibility of the chess title coming home nearly 50 years later.

Caruana has the credentials to

become another chess sensation in the 12-match series that plays out over the coming weeks in London.

The Italian-American from Miami has played for both countries and became a grandmaster at 14.

He earned his shot against Carlsen by winning this year's Candidates Tournament in Berlin.

And his climb up the FIDE chess federation's rankings to the number two spot has taken him within just three points of Carlsen's total of 2,835.

"Caruana had an amazing 2018 which gives him a lot of vigour ahead of the match," said British Chess Magazine's Dinic.

"Also, I think Caruana is psychologically stronger than Karjakin was in 2016, while Carlsen is a bit weaker on that front compared to two years ago."

Chess has its own unique scoring system that awards the winner of each game one point.

A draw sees the contenders share half a point.

The title goes to the first person to reach 6.5 points.

A rapid series of tiebreakers are played in case the two are level on points after the first 12 games.



In this December 1, 2016, picture, Magnus Carlsen of Norway holds up his trophy after defeating Russia's Sergey Karjakin at the World Chess Championship in New York. (AFP)

FOOTBALL

Mighty Al Sadd challenge for bottom side Kharaitiyat

Al Duhail will take on Al Shahania, while Qatar SC and Al Gharafa lock horns today

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Al Kharaitiyat face an uphill task when they run into Al Sadd in the QNB Stars League today at the Al Sadd Stadium. The teams go into the match with totally different missions. Al Sadd, who have played only nine matches (due to their AFC Champions League commitments), are currently third in the table with 20 points and need to collect as many points as possible if they are to be in contention for the title.

Al Duhail, who have played 10 games, are the table toppers with 28 points, whereas second-placed Al Rayyan have 21 points. Al Sadd's matches against Al Khor from Week 5 and Al Duhail from Week 9 are pending owing to their AFC Champions League commitments. They have been scheduled for 28th November and 11th December respectively. The Wolves possess the best attack and have scored 38 goals, conceding nine to have a goal difference of +29 (the most by any team). They have won six games, drawn two and lost one (to Al Ahli).

Al Kharaitiyat, who lost 0-5 to Al Saliya in Week 11, are placed at the bottom with only three points and face relegation. They have dismissed Moroccan coach Abdelaziz El Amri and handed over the reins to Wesam Rizk. Their only victory came against Al Gharafa. They have a goal difference of -23, having scored eight goals and conceded 31. Ahead of the game, Al Sadd coach Jesualdo Ferreira dismissed the suggestion that it will be an easy match for his team. "Some may think that facing Al Kharaitiyat will be easy as they are the bottom-placed team in the league table. In fact, the clash will be difficult. We have already had similar experiences. We will put up our best to win," Ferreira

The Portuguese manager said he was not ready to underestimate any team if his team wants to win the title. "Al Sadd have lost the league title twice before when we failed to win against teams from the middle of the league or the last



Al Sadd coach Jesualdo Ferreira (right) and midfielder Pedro Miguel address a press conference ahead of their match against Al Kharaitiyat

places. This has made me learn an important lesson — not to underestimate any team in the Qatar league. We are expecting a strong reaction from the Al Kharaitiyat team after they changed the coach. We only think about providing our best regardless of the conditions," said Ferreira.

Al Kharaitiyat's fitness coach Ahmed Badarudeen said his team need to improve their mental approach and play without fear. "We have focused on the

psychological aspects of players and the team is preparing hard for the Al Sadd game. We have noticed that the players are doing a great deal of training, but in the games they show fear, not because of the opponents, but because of the defeats," said Badarudeen.

"When we look at the rankings, the teams that concede many goals are in a bad situation. The problem may be that some clubs focus more on attackers when they attract players and ignore

the line of defence. The management has contracted with good players, both overseas and Qataris. There are still 11 matches. We have to make up for the setbacks in the first leg and put in more efforts. Then, we will have a great opportunity to stay in the league," said Badarudeen.

In another match today, Al Duhail will take on Al Shahania at the Al Duhail Stadium. Duhail are the leaders after the first leg with 28 points. The Red

Knights are the only unbeaten team in the tournament. They have nine wins and one draw, with one game in hand against Al Sadd.

Al Duhail have the best defence that has conceded only six goals from 10 games. They scored 27 goals to have a goal difference of +21. Only Sadd (58) have scored more goals than Al Duhail and have better goal difference (+29).

Al Duhail coach Nabil Maaloul underlined the importance of the game

when he spoke at the pre-match Press conference. "This is an important match for us because it is the first game of the second leg. We want to continue at the same pace and we know that we are having a difficult game against a team that faced a number of difficulties. In the first leg, they managed to present themselves well in many matches," said Maaloul whose team will be without regular goalkeeper Amine Lecomte and defender Lucas Mendes.

Al Shahania are also in great form. They are eighth in the table with 12 points, having won and drawn three games, and lost five. They have a goal difference of -8 after scoring 10 goals and conceded 18.

Al Shahania have not tasted defeat in their last three matches. They beat Al Saliya in Week 9 and then drew with Umm Salal and Al Gharafa.

In third match of the day, Qatar SC and Al Gharafa will clash in what is expected to be a thriller. Gharafa are sixth in the standings with 15 points. They have won and lost four games each, and drawn three times to have a goal difference of +7 (22 goals for and 15 against).

The Cheetahs have the third-best attack line in the QNB Stars League that has scored 22 goals so far. They are behind only Al Sadd (38) and Al Duhail (27). Al Gharafa, who were held goalless by Al Shahania last week, will be keen to be back on the winning path and thus start their second-leg campaign on a victorious note. More so because they are eager to finish among the top-four teams. On the other hand, Qatar SC, who lost 0-2 to Al Rayyan in Week 11, are in the 10th place with 11 points. They have won three games, drawn six and lost two to have a goal difference of -7 (12 goals for and 19 against).

Overall The Kings have been enjoying a good run with a series of positive results ever since Argentinian coach Sergio Batista took over the side. In the four games under him, Qatar SC won two, drew one and lost one. The match will also be noted for the star presence of Dutchman Wesley Sneijder (Al Gharafa) and Cameroonian Samuel Eto'o (Qatar SC).

RUGBY

All Blacks show faith in under pressure Williams

AFP
London

New Zealand plan to remain patient with Sonny Bill Williams despite having a midfield quartet "jumping out of their skin" ahead of Saturday's clash against England at Twickenham. Cross-code international Williams won his 50th All Blacks cap as the world champions beat Australia 37-20 in Yokohama last month.

But the 33-year-old centre did not feature in last weekend's 69-31 rout of Japan in Tokyo. "Sonny's had the least rugby, he's still finding his top form; I think that's fair to say," New Zealand assistant coach Ian Foster said yesterday.

"I don't think our patience (with Williams) will be driven by his background, more based on how we see players perform in training. I think when we look at the physical nature of the game, how they are training, sometimes things are going really good off the park and it hasn't quite gelled to the extent they want on the park. Sometimes players are deemed to have had a quiet game, but in reality they may not have had too many opportunities to show what they are good at," Foster added.

New Zealand will take on Ireland in Dublin on November 18, and conclude their tour of the northern hemisphere with a trip to Rome to face Italy on November 25. "We've got a whole lot of players who have had injuries this year, significant injuries over time, and they've come back and at various degrees of accuracy in their game," said Foster.

"But also some of them have taken a



New Zealand's Sonny Bill Williams trains in London yesterday. (Reuters)

little longer to get their feet right. All our midfielders right now are actually jumping out of their skin, to be honest. In the last two weeks, the energy levels and work rate is as good as it's been all year in that group."

England will hope to unleash a powerhouse centre of their own on Saturday if Manu Tuilagi is able to make his long-awaited Test comeback. The Leicester midfielder, whose career has been blight-

ed by injuries, had been due to make his first England appearance in more than two years during last Saturday's 12-11 win over South Africa at Twickenham before a minor groin strain ruled him out of a place on the bench. Tuilagi's arguably best match in an England shirt came during his try-scoring display in a 38-21 win over New Zealand at Twickenham in 2012. Leicester teammate Ben Youngs, the England scrum-half, is eager for more

of the same this weekend.

"I was gutted when he pulled out (of the South Africa match), but it was a tiny niggle," said Youngs. "But with someone like him, it was not worth risking. It's great to see him running around in training. I'm really please he's able to get back out there. He's looking good. We know what a world-class operator Manu is. It settles down the boys to know that he's there."

Qatar's Fares wins bronze at Weightlifting World Championships



Qatar's Fares Ibrahim talks to the media after winning a bronze medal at the World Weightlifting Championships in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, yesterday. Competing in the 96kg class, Fares lifted a total of 388 kilos. Iran's Sohrab Moradi won the gold with a lift of 416 kilos, while China's Tao Tian took silver with 407.

TENNIS

'Struggling' Kyrgios seeing psychologists, working on mental health

AFP
Sydney

Temperamental Australian tennis star Nick Kyrgios says he is talking to psychologists and "trying to get on top" of his mental health after another roller-coaster season where he was criticised

for his on-court antics.

Kyrgios finished his season early in October after an elbow injury forced him out of the Kremlin Cup in Moscow. The fiery 23-year-old lost his status as Australian number one to 19-year-old Alex de Minaur in the same month.

Returning home to prepare for next year, the world number 37 admitted he was working through mental health is-

suces that had plagued him throughout the season. "I was obviously struggling with a couple of things on and off the court this year, so it hasn't been easy," he told the *Canberra Times*.

"But I'm starting to see some psychologists and trying to get on top of my mental health. I probably left it a little too long. But I've been doing that and I feel more open about talking

about it, I don't feel like I've got to hide that sort of stuff any more."

The supremely talented but combustible Kyrgios has become infamous for petulant behaviour, outbursts and meltdowns on court. At the US Open in August, an umpire gave the Australian a controversial pep talk during his second-round game for his perceived lack of effort. He exited the Shanghai Mas-

ters in the first round last month, where he was also criticised for his lacklustre performance. Kyrgios said he was "very lucky" to have had an international tennis career and announced an overhaul of his playing schedule to try and avoid a repeat of his mental and physical burnout.

"I'm going to work with my team to get the correct schedule, I don't think

I've got it right the last couple of years because I haven't made it to the end of the year once," he said. Kyrgios started the year well when he captured a fourth career title in Brisbane in January.

But he then missed two months of the campaign, including the French Open, in the spring. A hip injury forced his early withdrawal from the ATP season last year.

NBA

McCollum's 40 points power the Blazers past Bucks

Among his myriad highlights, a wicked move around Donte DiVincenzo that brought the Bucks rookie to his knees



Portland Trail Blazers guard CJ McCollum (3) looks for an opening as he is guarded by Milwaukee Bucks' Giannis Antetokounmpo (34), Malcolm Brogdon (13) and center Brook Lopez (11) at Moda Center on Tuesday. PICTURE: Troy Wayrynen-USA TODAY Sports

AFP
Los Angeles

CJ McCollum scored 40 points Tuesday as the Portland Trail Blazers cooled off the red-hot Milwaukee Bucks with a 118-103 NBA victory.

McCollum connected on 17 of 23 attempts from the field, including five of 10 from three-point range, as the Trail Blazers improved to 8-3 and handed Giannis Antetokounmpo and the Bucks just their second defeat of the season.

"It's a great win for us," said McCollum, who scored 19 points in the third quarter alone.

Among his myriad highlights, a wicked move around Donte DiVincenzo that brought the Bucks rookie to his knees.

"Whenever you see a rookie you've got to be aggressive, attack them, make them move their feet," McCollum said.

It was a breakout performance for McCollum, who had struggled to find his shooting touch in the first 10 games of the season.

He added six assists and five rebounds as the Trail Blazers snapped a four-game losing streak to the Bucks.

"I just tried to be aggressive and take advantage and help the team get a win," McCollum said.

Evan Turner posted his first double-double of the season with 16 points and 11 rebounds, also handing out four assists for the Blazers. Damian Lillard, Jusuf Nurkic and Jake Layman also scored in double figures.

Antetokounmpo led a trio of Bucks players to score in double digits with 23 points, along with nine rebounds and six assists.

Meanwhile, Luka Doncic scored 23 points to lead five Dallas players in double figures as the Mavericks snapped a six-game skid with a 119-100 victory over the Washington Wizards.

Doncic, the 19-year-old Slovenian rookie, added six rebounds and three assists for the Mavs. Wesley Matthews added 22 points and Dennis Smith contributed 19 — making a trio of crucial plays down the stretch as the Mavericks

thwarted Washington's bid to rally in the second half.

"It's been a long time since we won a game," Mavericks coach Rick Carlisle said. "Feels good." The Wizards trailed by as many as 24 in the first half and were down 70-49 at halftime.

But they piled on the pressure in the second half, and trailed by just six with 5:33 to play when Smith got past Dwight Howard for an offensive rebound and fed DeAndre Jordan for a dunk that stretched Dallas' lead to 101-93.

Less than a minute later Smith connected with Jordan on an alley-oop dunk, and Smith came up with a steal to feed Harrison Barnes for a three-point play that pushed the Mavs lead to 106-93. "Resilience," Carlisle said of what he saw from his team. John Wall led the Wizards with 24 points. Otto Porter Jr. and Bradley Beal had 19 each, although Beal struggled from three-point range, making just one of nine.

In Charlotte, Kemba Walker scored 29 points, and the host Charlotte Hornets pulled away from the Atlanta Hawks in the

fourth quarter for a 113-102 victory on Tuesday night.

The Hornets went on a 17-4 run early in the fourth to turn an 84-83 deficit into a 100-88 lead, and they went on to lead by as many as 15 points from there.

Marvin Williams played a key role in the rally, with eight fourth-quarter points, including two 3-pointers. He finished with 20 points for the game.

Walker came into the game averaging 28.0 points per game, fifth best in the NBA, but he had not hit his average in any of the previous three games. He finished the night 12 of 22 from the field and 4 of 10 from 3-point range. He also had seven assists, three rebounds and three steals.

The Hornets got 13 points apiece from Jeremy Lamb and Malik Monk, and 10 points from Nicolas Batum, who also hit a key 3-pointer in the fourth-quarter surge.

The Hornets have won two straight and three of their past four. The Hawks have now lost five of their past six.

Jeremy Lin led the Hawks with 19 points. Trae Young had

18 points and 10 assists but scored only four in the second half. Kent Bazemore finished with 16 points, and Alex Len scored 12.

The Hawks led 25-23 after one quarter and 54-51 at halftime. The Hornets scored the first nine points of the third quarter and went on to lead 81-77 after three. Atlanta led 84-83 after Alex Poythress' 3-pointer with 10:04 remaining before the Hornets regrouped and went on their run. The Hawks were without Taurean Prince (ankle), John Collins (ankle) and Justin Anderson (leg). The Hornets continue to be healthy, and they have not lost a player to injury for any game this season.

The Hawks will return home to face the New York Knicks on Wednesday. The Hornets closed out a 3-1 homestand. They will open a three-game road trip tomorrow at Philadelphia.

RESULTS

Dallas.....	119	Washington.....	100
Portland.....	118	Milwaukee.....	103
Phoenix.....	82	Brooklyn.....	104
Charlotte.....	113	Atlanta.....	102

NFL

Panthers, Steelers ready for offensive battle

Field Level Media
Pittsburgh

Tonight's matchup of the visiting Carolina Panthers and the Pittsburgh Steelers shapes up as a showdown of big offenses.

Pittsburgh running back James Conner has emerged as one of the top stories in the NFL. A fill-in for the disgruntled Le'Veon Bell, Conner has four consecutive 100-yard rushing games to stand second in the league with 706 rushing yards overall. He also has proven effective catching the ball out of the backfield.

"He's a beast," Carolina linebacker Luke Kuechly said of Conner, according to the Panthers' website. "They are really good up front — they're big and physical. They work really together, but that guy is really good. He's playing with a lot of confidence."

"He's like these new-age backs where they are good, obviously, running the ball, but he can catch the ball and cause some mismatches as well."

The two other biggest names in Pittsburgh's offense haven't changed. Receiver Antonio Brown is off his standard pace with 51 catches for 594 yards, but he is tops among receivers with nine touchdowns.

Quarterback Ben Roethlisberger has spread the ball around primarily to Brown, JuJu Smith-Schuster, his tight ends and Conner. His average of 320 passing yards per game ranks third in the NFL.

The Steelers (5-2-1) have won four in a row. The Panthers (6-2) have won three straight.

Roethlisberger's counterpart, Cam Newton, has been limited in practice because of a right shoulder problem, but that is considered to be precautionary, and Newton should be ready to go.

With 1,893 passing yards, Newton easily could eclipse 2,000 today. He has averaged 245 passing yards a game during the winning streak, with two touch-

down tosses in each of the games. He has rushed for 342 yards and four touchdowns this year.

Christian McCaffrey is Conner's counterpart. He leads the Panthers with 502 yards rushing, and like Conner, is also a threat catching the ball.

"You should start with Cam Newton because he can run it, he can throw it, he's strong, he can make all the throws (with) accuracy from a distance standpoint," Steelers coach Mike Tomlin said.

"But I really think what's going on with them is looking at the infusion of roles between what he and McCaffrey are able to do. You talk about multitalented players, multidimensional players that are really performing well together."

The short week can exacerbate injury situations, but that seems to be affecting Carolina more than Pittsburgh.

Ryan Kalil did not practice Monday and Tuesday, but coach Ron Rivera said the Panthers "feel pretty comfortable" about the center being ready today.

"He did some stuff with the trainers and he's feeling pretty good," Rivera said.

Carolina safety Eric Reid has been limited in practice after he finished Sunday's game against Tampa Bay despite a sprained right shoulder. Receiver Torrey Smith (knee) did not practice Tuesday, and he could miss a third consecutive game.

Pittsburgh looks to be in good shape. The only new injury was to receiver James Washington (knee), who was a full participant in practice Tuesday.

Roethlisberger was limited in practice Tuesday, but that was because of a broken left (non-throwing) index finger, which did not stop him from playing a full game Sunday against the Baltimore Ravens.

Steelers offensive tackle Marcus Gilbert (knee) seems likely to miss his third game in a row, but Matt Feller has filled in capably as a starter for two weeks, playing a part in Conner's rushing total.

Celtics ace Irving fined for ball toss



New York: Boston Celtics star Kyrie Irving was fined \$25,000 on Tuesday after angrily throwing a basketball into spectator stands, the NBA said in a statement.

Irving hurled a ball into the public seating area at the end of Boston's 115-107 defeat to the Denver Nuggets at the Pepsi Center in Colorado on Monday. A furious Irving was incensed after Nuggets ace Jamal Murray attempted a three-pointer with the final move of the game. Murray, who finished the Nuggets' win with 48 points, had been attempting to break through the 50-point barrier. Irving however reacted furiously

following Murray's attempt, suggesting the 21-year-old had showed a lack of respect.

"The ball deserves to go in the crowd after a move like that," Irving said later. "So I threw it in the crowd."

Nuggets head coach Michael Malone denied Murray had intended to be disrespectful to the Celtics.

"He's young, he's still learning," Malone said afterwards. "You never want to disrespect anyone. I think it wasn't disrespectful; he was trying to get to 50 points, which you understand. But our veterans talked to him, and it's something he'll learn from."

NHL

O'Reilly's hat trick sends Blues past Hurricanes

Reuters
New York

Ryan O'Reilly's first career hat trick led the St. Louis Blues to a 4-1 win over the visiting Carolina Hurricanes on Tuesday.

O'Reilly scored twice in the first period, netting the game's first goal after a pass from Vladimir Tarasenko at the 11:57 mark. The center then struck again on a late power play, firing a Tarasenko pass from behind the net into the Hurricanes' goal with just five seconds remaining in the period.

An empty-net goal at 16:50 of the third period capped off the night for O'Reilly, giving him his first hat trick after 664 career NHL games.

After being traded from the



St. Louis Blues center Ryan O'Reilly (90) celebrates with left wing Alexander Steen (20) after scoring an empty net goal for his first career hat trick during the third period against the Carolina Hurricanes at Enterprise Center. PICTURE: Jeff Curry-USA TODAY Sports

Sabres to the Blues in the off-season, O'Reilly's tenure in St.

Louis began somewhat slowly, as he didn't score until the sev-

enth game of the season. Now, O'Reilly has seven goals and eight assists over his last eight games, with the eight-game point streak matching his previous career best.

Tarasenko and Tyler Bozak each had two assists in the game, all coming on helpers for O'Reilly. Playing his third game after an absence of nearly 21 months from NHL action, Blues center Robby Fabbri scored at 14:01 of the first period to notch his first goal since Dec. 28, 2016. Fabbri put the final touch on a quality series of passes from the Blues, who quickly took the puck back the other way after Carolina rookie Andrei Svechnikov's shot hit the post.

Jacob Slavin accounted for Carolina's only goal, a power-play effort on a slapshot from beyond the circle at 19:34 of

the first period. The goal was Slavin's first of the year and ended a 24-game goalless drought dating back to last season.

The Hurricanes scored just the one goal despite a hefty 39-20 edge in shots, with Jordan Staal and Lucas Wallmark each contributing five shots apiece. Carolina also came close on four more occasions that saw the puck bank off the post, with Sebastian Aho twice putting scoring chances off the ironwork.

RESULTS

TORONTO.....	3	Las Vegas.....	1
NY RANGERS.....	5	Montreal.....	3
COLUMBUS.....	4	Dallas.....	1
OTTAWA.....	7	N Jersey.....	3
DETROIT.....	3	Vancouver 2 (SO)	2
TAMPA BAY.....	5	Edmonton.....	2
ST. LOUIS.....	4	Carolina.....	1
LOS ANGELES.....	4	Anaheim.....	1
SAN JOSE.....	4	Minnesota.....	3

EUROPA LEAGUE

In-form Arsenal face Sporting Lisbon, eye knockout spot

The Gunners are top of Group E having won all three of their matches so far

AFP
Paris

Unai Emery's Arsenal head into today's clash with Sporting Lisbon at the Emirates bidding for a place in the Europa League knockout stage, buoyed by an impressive display in their draw against Premier League title hopefuls Liverpool. The Gunners are top of Group E having won all three of their matches so far, and have looked revitalised in the early stages of the post-Arsene Wenger era. A second straight victory over Portuguese giants Sporting would extend their unbeaten run to 15 matches in all competitions.

Back-to-back defeats by Manchester City and Chelsea at the start of the campaign had left some onlookers questioning whether Arsenal could compete with stronger opposition, but close-season signing Bernd Leno said Saturday's performance had proved a point. "I think we saw that we can play our way against big teams," the German goalkeeper told the club's website. "We controlled Liverpool. We played out from the back. It was not just lucky or lucky things to create from. We played the ball with passes from behind and that's the way we want to play."

The 2006 Champions League runners-up failed to qualify for Europe's top competition in each of Wenger's last two seasons at the helm, but are now in contention to end that run on two fronts. Leno thinks that Emery's influence has been key to changing the mood around the Emirates Stadium.

"The coach gives us a lot of confidence to play like this," he added.

"I can't compare it because last year I was not here but I think (Emery) changed some things — of course, the way we play from behind but also to play very aggressive, the defence is getting better, controlled. "Tactically, it is one step better than at the beginning of the season because it needs time and it also needs time now in the next weeks. If we work like this and play like this, we could have a great season."

Chelsea will also book a ticket for the



Arsenal players (from left) Alexandre Lacazette, Sead Kolasinac, Shkodran Mustafi and Hector Bellerin share a light moment during training yesterday. (Reuters)

last 32 with victory over BATE Borisov in Belarus, after seeing Alvaro Morata make it five goals in six games in their

win over Crystal Palace at the weekend. Maurizio Sarri's side are unbeaten since a 2-0 Community Shield loss to Man

City in August, and have scored 18 goals over their last six outings.

They top Group L with nine points

and will qualify for the last 32 with a win. "I have started scoring again for two weeks and now I am happy, the

team plays good and I don't need to think about scoring more goals than other players," Morata told Chelsea's website, after breaking a terrible run of form that saw him net just four times in his previous 31 matches. Elsewhere on Thursday, record five-time winners Sevilla travel to Turkish side Akhisar Genclik Spor looking to strengthen their grip on top spot of Group J, while Gennaro Gattuso's AC Milan travel to Spain hoping to avenge their defeat by Real Betis two weeks ago.

FIXTURES (ALL TIMES GMT)

Group A: Bayer Leverkusen (GER) v Zurich (SUI) (2000); Ludogorets Razgrad (BUL) v AEK Larnaca (CYP) (2000)

Group B: Rosenborg (NOR) v Salzburg (AUT) (2000); Celtic (SCO) v RB Leipzig (GER) (2000)

Group C: Bordeaux (FRA) v Zenit St Petersburg (RUS) (2000); Slavia Prague (CZE) v FC Copenhagen (DEN) (2000)

Group D: Dinamo Zagreb (CRO) v Trnava (SVK) (2000); Fenerbahce (TUR) v Anderlecht (BEL) (1550)

Group E: Arsenal (ENG) v Sporting Lisbon (POR) (2000); Vorskla Poltava (UKR) v Qarabag (AZE) (2000)

Group F: Real Betis (ESP) v AC Milan (ITA) (2000); Olympiakos (GRE) v Dudelange (LUX) (2000)

Group G: Rapid Vienna (AUT) v Villarreal (ESP) (1755); Spartak Moscow (RUS) v Rangers (SCO) (1755)

Group H: Apollon Limassol (CYP) v Eintracht Frankfurt (GER) (1755); Lazio (ITA) v Marseille (FRA) (1755)

Group I: Genk (BEL) v Besiktas (TUR) (1755); Malmö (SWE) v Sarpsborg (NOR) (1755)

Group J: Akhisar Genclik Spor (TUR) v Sevilla (ESP) (1755); Krasnodar (RUS) v Standard Liege (BEL) (1755)

Group K: FC Astana (KAZ) v Jablonec (CZE) (1550); Dynamo Kiev (UKR) v Rennes (FRA) (1755)

Group L: BATE Borisov (BLR) v Chelsea (ENG) (1755); Vidi (HUN) v PAOK (GRE) (1755)

SPOTLIGHT

Beckham celebrates as Miami voters approve path to stadium

AFP
Coral Gables, United States

David Beckham was celebrating in South Florida on Tuesday after his dream of building a team in Major League Soccer took a notable step forward. The former England captain's push to bring a franchise to Miami has been hamstrung for close to five years with a suitable venue for a new stadium extremely difficult to find. But voters in Miami on Tuesday came out in favour of a change in regulations that will allow his ownership group — Miami Freedom Park Group LLC — to negotiate a 99-year lease for the latest target: city owned land at the Melreese Country Club, the city's only municipal golf course, near Miami airport.

The measure voted on Tuesday, which allows for a no-bid process in negotiations, had a 60% lead with 88% of precincts reporting. The 73 acre site is the fifth location put forward by Beckham, whose investment group consists of Jorge Mas and his brother Jose, owners of local infrastructure company Mas-Tec, as well as Sprint chairman Marcelo Claure and SoftBank chief executive Masayoshi Son.

The saga has stretched on since February 2014, when Beckham first announced his intentions to own a franchise. There's much more work to do, yet the 43-year-old Londoner was delighted to have cleared the latest hurdle in what has been a torturous process so far.

"I need to say a big thanks to the fans who have stuck by us," the former Manchester United, Real Madrid and LA Galaxy star said after speaking emotionally in front of an excited crowd in Coral Gables, many of whom were decked out in Inter Miami FC colors.

"Today is an exciting day," Beckham said. "We have had a



David Beckham's lavish \$1bn, privately financed project in Miami will include a stadium complex as well as a huge shopping mall, a 750 room hotel, office space and a 58-acre public park. (AFP)

dream of bringing a team to this great city.

We want to create a legacy, something our children will aspire to. But we also want to win. I am not coming here just to have a pretty team. Winning championships are important to me."

The next step, however, is far from straightforward. Beckham's group must now earn approval from four of the five city commissioners. Two of them — Manolo Reyes, a staunch critic of the plans, and Willy Gort, whose district includes Melreese — opposed the referendum earlier this year. Furthermore, with the Melreese site built on a toxic waste dump which could cost upwards of \$35m to clean up, doubters have suggested the plans will encounter many more roadblocks before building permits are granted, something which must happen by November 2019 according to the previously agreed

MLS expansion agreement.

Critics fear the clean-up costs could spiral and leave the taxpayers footing the bill — a daunting prospect after the uproar caused after baseball's Miami Marlins Stadium fiasco left locals with a tab which has almost reached \$3bn. Beckham's lavish \$1bn, privately financed project will include a stadium complex as well as a huge shopping mall, a 750 room hotel, office space and a 58-acre public park. Locals were encouraged to vote 'yes' to ensure jobs and other benefits for Miami including \$20m to help reinvestigate other public parks in the area.

MLS stress the team will begin playing in 2020 although it will have to be at a temporary venue, potentially at the Hard Rock Stadium, home of the Miami Dolphins, or the Marlins baseball stadium. "We will look at all options," Jorge Mas said.

FOCUS

FA appeals against decision to clear Mourinho of foul language charge

AFP
London

The Football Association is appealing against the decision by an independent regulatory commission to clear **Jose Mourinho** of using foul language at the end of Manchester United's Premier League match against Newcastle, the English game's governing body announced yesterday.

Television footage showed Mourinho saying something, apparently in his native Portuguese, while at one point looking into a camera, as he headed towards the tunnel after the final whistle of the 3-2 comeback win over Newcastle on October 6.

But on October 31 it was announced the FA charge against Mourinho of using abusive language had been "not proven". Now, however, the FA has decided to prolong the case with an appeal. "Having carefully considered the written reasons of the independent regulatory commission relating to the case involving Jose Mourinho, the FA can confirm it is appealing the decision, it said in a statement.

Mourinho had been thought to have escaped a touchline ban following the original commission decision but this now remains a possibility. However, the Portuguese manager is expected to take his seat on the touchline for Sunday's derby with Premier

League champions and leaders Manchester City as the appeal hearing will not take place before the international break.

The written reasons explaining the commission's decision show that both Mourinho and the FA employed Portuguese language experts. Mourinho accepted the words ascribed to him by the FA's expert, but said they were an "inwardly-directed expression of relief and happiness", with the manager asking who in fact had been offended by his outburst. It was a view endorsed by the commission, who ruled: "We find that JM (Jose Mourinho) was celebrating victory without aiming the words at anyone in particular. The words mouthed were a Portuguese colloquial profanity. Thus, the objective person would have had to lip read JM's mouth and interpret Portuguese colloquialisms to accurately decipher the comments."

Mourinho could well face questions about the appeal after United's match away to Italian giants Juventus in the Champions League last night. Mourinho had been under intense pressure heading into the Newcastle game at Old Trafford amid speculation he would be sacked as United had not won any of their four previous matches.

Newcastle went 2-0 up inside 10 minutes but United recovered to win, with Alexis Sanchez's 90th-minute goal sealing victory. The 55-year-old Mourinho said after the match he had been the subject of a media "manhunt".



Dortmund must bounce back against Bayern: Goetze

Berlin: Mario Goetze says German league leaders Borussia Dortmund must put their first defeat of the season behind them and bounce back in Saturday's crunch Bundesliga showdown at home against Bayern Munich.

Atletico Madrid avenged their 4-0 drubbing at Dortmund from a fortnight ago with a 2-0 home victory on Tuesday in the group stages of the Champions League as the Germans suffered their first loss of the 2018/19 season.

Dortmund lead the Bundesliga and have a four-point lead over defending champions Bayern Munich who they host this weekend. "Losing is a new situation, but

we knew it would be a very intense week with Atletico and Bayern — now we have to bounce back," said Goetze, who replaced striker Paco Alcacer for the last 15 minutes in Madrid.

Goalkeeper Roman Buerki, who has only been beaten 10 times in as many league games this season, said the defeat may have done Dortmund some good.

"Perhaps it's not so bad, that we have come back down to earth after a few weeks when everything was going so well," said Buerki.

Club captain Marco Reus, who has been in great form this season with nine goals and seven assists in 16 games, brushed the

defeat off. "We were not so fresh, Atletico closed down the space, which was very difficult for us, we only found a few ways through," said Reus. "It was the first defeat, but life goes on."

The defeat in Madrid leaves both Dortmund and Atletico neck-and-neck on nine points in Group A with two matches left. However, their focus now is on this weekend's Bundesliga showdown as Dortmund look to prove their status as Germany's top side and make amends for their heavy defeat to the Bavarians the last time they met. Bayern thrashed Dortmund 6-0 in Munich in March, as Robert Lewandowski netted a hat-trick against his former club.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Barca through, Liverpool stunned by Red Star

Thierry Henry's Monaco eliminated following a resounding loss to Club Brugge



Red Star Belgrade's Milan Pavkov (centre) is over the moon after scoring against Liverpool during the Champions League group stage match at Rajko Mitic stadium in Belgrade, Serbia, on Tuesday night. (Reuters)

AFP
Paris

Barcelona secured their place in the Champions League knockout stage on Tuesday night with a 1-1 draw away to Inter Milan, as Harry Kane revived Tottenham Hotspur's hopes but Liverpool slumped to a shock defeat.

Last year's runners-up were beaten by Red Star Belgrade, although the biggest losers on the night were Thierry Henry's Monaco, who were eliminated following a resounding loss to Club Brugge. Lionel Messi was still missing for Barcelona at the San Siro, and it was substitute Malcom who came off the bench to give the Spanish champions a late lead.

But Inter hit back to earn a point thanks to Mauro Icardi's 87th-minute leveller, keeping the three-time former winners on course to join Barcelona in qualifying for the last 16 from Group B. Tottenham remain in the hunt, howev-

er, after Kane's late brace secured a 2-1 win over PSV Eindhoven.

The Dutch side had got off to a superb start at Wembley, taking the lead in the second minute. Mauricio Pochettino's team were starting to get desperate when skipper Kane equalised with 12 minutes left, and he headed home in the 89th minute with the help of two deflections as Spurs got their first win of the campaign.

"We had to dig deep and find another level when it mattered. The whole season we've been grinding out results here and there," said Kane. Liverpool were strong favourites away to Red Star in Serbia, but Jurgen Klopp's team were poor in a 2-0 defeat to the 1991 European Cup winners.

Milan Pavkov scored twice in seven first-half minutes, heading in the opener and then beating Alisson with a powerful strike from range, to the delight of a huge home support. "The boys are very disappointed, I'm very disappointed and we have to do better," said Klopp.

The defeat exposes the Anfield club to the threat of an early elimination in Group C, with Napoli coming from behind to draw 1-1 at home to Paris Saint-Germain in the night's other game.

Kylian Mbappe set up Juan Bernat to put Paris ahead just before the break, but Lorenzo Insigne beat Gianluigi Buffon from the penalty spot in the second half as these sides played out a draw for the second time in a fortnight. "This is a difficult group but we saw with Liverpool losing that everything is possible," said PSG's Julian Draxler. "A draw in Naples is not bad and we still have our fate in our own hands."

Liverpool and Napoli are locked on six points from four games, with PSG one behind and Red Star another point adrift. Liverpool travel to the French capital in their next game.

Meanwhile, Atletico Madrid gained revenge for a 4-0 defeat away to Borussia Dortmund last month as Diego Simeone's side defeated the Germans 2-0 in Spain, Saul Niguez and Antoine Griezmann scoring the goals.

The two favourites in Group A are not guaranteed a path to the last 16 yet, however, after Club Brugge claimed a stunning 4-0 win at Monaco. The Belgians had not won a Champions League match since 2005, but they were 3-0 up midway through the first half at the Stade Louis II. Hans Vanaken scored twice, including a penalty, and the Brazilian Wesley belted in the third before Ruud Vormer sealed the win.

Semi-finalists in 2017, Monaco are now eliminated. It was a dreadful display from a side who have not won in 15 games, including five matches under Henry. This result also came on the day the club's Russian billionaire owner Dmitry Rybolovlev was arrested in a corruption investigation.

"We started well, but once we fell behind we stopped playing and that's a little bit worrying," said Henry of his team's performance. Porto are on the brink of qualification from Group D after a 4-1 win at home to Lokomotiv Moscow. They lead the section by two points from Schalke, who defeated

Galatasaray 2-0 in Gelsenkirchen.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE RESULTS ON TUESDAY

Group A: At Monaco: Monaco (FRA) 0 Club Brugge (BEL) 4 (Vanaken 12, 17-pen, Wesley 24, Vormer 85); At Madrid: Atletico Madrid (ESP) 2 (Niguez 33, Griezmann 80) Borussia Dortmund (GER) 0

Group B: At Milan, Italy: Inter Milan (ITA) 1 (Icardi 87) Barcelona (ESP) 1 (Malcom 83); At London: Tottenham (ENG) 2 (Kane 78, 89) PSV Eindhoven (NED) 1 (De Jong 2)

Group C: At Naples, Italy: Napoli (ITA) 1 (Insigne 63-pen) Paris Saint-Germain (FRA) 1 (Bernat 45+2); At Belgrade: Red Star Belgrade (SRB) 2 (Pavkov 22, 29) Liverpool (ENG) 0

Group D: At Porto, Portugal: FC Porto (POR) 4 (Herrera 2, Marega 42, Corona 67, Otavio 90+3) Lokomotiv Moscow (RUS) 1 (Farfan 59); At Gelsenkirchen, Germany: Schalke 04 (GER) 2 (Burgstaller 4, Uth 57) Galatasaray (TUR) 0

SPOTLIGHT

Tottenham still alive, insists Kane

AFP
London

Harry Kane believes Tottenham can still make the last 16 of the Champions League after coming to his side's rescue once more in a late turnaround to beat PSV Eindhoven 2-1 on Tuesday night. Mauricio Pochettino's side were only 12 minutes away from being eliminated as they struggled to recover from Luuk de Jong's opener for PSV after 61 seconds at Wembley.

But England captain Kane came to the rescue with a predatory equaliser before heading the crucial last-gasp winner with the aid of a deflection off PSV's Trent Sainsbury. "We were just on the attack all the time," said Kane. "In the end we managed to take a couple but I think we deserved it. We had to dig deep and find another level when it mattered. The whole season we've been grinding out results here and there. Obviously we'd like to be higher up the table in the league and doing better in the Champions League, but we're still fighting."

Spurs still face an uphill task to reach the knockout stage as they need to beat Inter Milan at home in their next Champions League clash and most likely Barcelona away on December 11. "It's another game we must win, we want to have the possibility to go to the next stage," said Pochettino, who praised his players' efforts after an arduous run of four games in eight days.

"The team is growing up. In these four games, three victories, we lost to Man City and I think the draw was more the fair result. Pleased of course, we're always trying to improve, but with all the circumstances the team is fighting."

CAPTAIN KANE HAPPY TO HONOUR ROONEY IN FINAL ENGLAND FAREWELL Meanwhile, England captain Kane has given his backing to the honouring of former skipper Wayne Rooney in an international friendly against the United States next week. Rooney, a record goalscorer for both Manchester United and England, retired from international football in August 2017.



Tottenham Hotspur's Harry Kane (right) scores against PSV Eindhoven during the Champions League group B match at Wembley Stadium in London. (AFP)

But the 33-year-old, now based in the United States where he plays for Major League Soccer side DC United, is set to wear the Three Lions shirt one last time at Wembley on November 15. "I think it's great," Kane said. Next week's match will be called The Wayne Rooney Foundation International in support of the striker's children's charity, and England manager Gareth Southgate has named Rooney in the squad. FA chiefs have faced accusations they are devaluing international football by recalling Rooney but Kane was in no doubt about having his predecessor as England skipper involved one last time.

"It's a really good thing that everyone should be a part of. Wayne is one of the greatest ever players to play for England, the greatest goalscorer to play for England, so why not give him the send-off he deserves? I've not spoken to Gareth (Southgate) too

much about how he's going to do it when we play but it'll be great to see him again and I'm sure he's looking forward to seeing a few of the boys. It's a great experience for the younger players in our team. So I think everyone should get right behind it, and it'll be a good send-off."

And Kane said he would have no problems handing over the captain's armband to Rooney should the former skipper come off the bench. "He deserves it. He was a great captain for us. He was captain when I got into the squad. So if he plays, of course he'll be the captain," said Kane.

Former Everton and United forward Rooney scored 53 goals in 119 England appearances. He scored 12 times for DC United after joining them in June following a second spell at boyhood club Everton, and helped them climb from the bottom of the league to the play-offs.

FOCUS

Malcom finally delivers after difficult start at Barcelona

AFP
Barcelona

Malcom cried tears of joy after scoring against Inter Milan in the Champions League on Tuesday night but his emotions must have marked relief too after a difficult start at Barcelona.

Signed from Bordeaux for 41mn euros (\$47mn) in the summer, the 21-year-old was always circled as a player for the future but his lack of involvement this season has been a surprise. He was poor when handed a rare outing against Cultural Leonesa in the Copa del Rey last month while some have suggested Malcom was signed at the behest of the club, not coach Ernesto Valverde, who has started him only once so far this term.

His goal at the San Siro, however, sent Barca through to the

knock-out stages with two games to spare, even if Mauro Icardi's late equaliser denied the visitors victory in Group B. "Malcom Exits!" read *Diario Sport's* front page headline yesterday, while *Mundo Deportivo* also centred on the Brazilian, with the headline "Malcom X".

"We're all so happy for Malcom," Valverde said after the match. "He gave us the edge that we had been missing at other times in the game. "He has been working hard to get better every day. He's still young and there's a lot of room for improvement."

After finishing off a slick Barca break with a smart left-foot finish, Malcom celebrated in the corner, his hands covering his face. His teammates soon joined him. "His tears were emotional," Sergio Busquets said.

"He's not getting the minutes he wants but in training he's working really hard. He wants to turn things around. He's a great

kid. He's done really well and the goal will do him good. He is going to help us a lot."

Busquets believes the criticism has also been severe. "It's not fair that he's judged on one game in the cup because he had hardly played all season before that," he said. "It's impossible to have any sort of rhythm. There was a lot of unfair criticism about the players that played in the cup match."

Malcom had been linked with Tottenham and Arsenal last year, and was on the cusp of signing for Roma before Barca made their move. He indicated his long-term future remains at the Camp Nou.

"My dream with Barca is just starting," Malcom said. "My dream is to make history and do big things."

I have to thank my teammates for showing confidence in me. Making my debut in the Champions League and scoring will stay in my memory forever."



Barcelona's Malcom reacts after scoring against Inter Milan on Tuesday. (Reuters)

Super League players would risk a World Cup ban, says FIFA boss

London: FIFA President Gianni Infantino warned yesterday that any players taking part in a breakaway European super league would be excluded from the World Cup and other international tournaments.

Those who might be barred should such a league get off the ground could include the likes of Argentina's Lionel Messi, Brazilian Neymar, France's Kylian Mbappe and Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo. "You are either in or you are out," the head of the world football body said. "If there are players who don't play organised football then that encompasses everything — national leagues, confederation competitions, the Euros and the World Cup," told the *Times*.

German news magazine *Der Spiegel* reported last week that plans for a Super League, involving top clubs such as Real Madrid and Manchester United, were back on the table. The magazine shared access to the documents with more than a dozen other media outlets in cooperation with European Investigative Collaborations (EIC). According to *Der Spiegel*, a 16-team Super League would replace the Champions League and feature 11 'founders' — including Messi's Barcelona and Real Madrid — who could not be relegated for the first 20 years. Other clubs mentioned include Manchester United, Mbappe and Neymar's Paris St Germain, Bayern Munich and Ronaldo's Juventus.

"We have seen for many years these attempts to break away outside of the structures, going back to the 1990s," said Infantino. "It is up to us to protect football and come up with solutions that benefit clubs and also the world football community."

Infantino said the Club World Cup was his answer to any breakaway attempt, presenting it as a competition that would generate more revenues for the clubs but also benefit the football community. Infantino revealed plans in May for a new Global Nations League and a revamped Club World Cup which he says are backed by a 'solid and serious' group of investors willing to spend \$25bn over a 12-year cycle starting in 2021.

HORSE RACING

Guillambert stars as Scudding tops Qatar Cup

Jockey rides four winners on the day including the feature-topper

By Sports Reporter
Doha

JP Guillambert rounded up a great performance in the saddle with four victories, guiding Mohamed Riyaz-saddled Scudding to victory in the Qatar Cup at the Al Rayyan Park yesterday.

The Thoroughbred Conditions event for fillies and mares, yesterday's 1,700m feature on dirt, saw Guillambert, riding in the colours of Khalifa bin Sheail al-Kuwari, guide the four-year-old to a comfortable victory ahead of Marvin Suerland-helmed Tea Leaf, who locked out the top two spots for the trainer.

Harry Bentley was astride Jassim Mohamed Ghazali-trained Hillside Dream to third.

Ghazali combined with Guillambert for his two victories earlier in the day.

Ghazali's second victory of the day was a one-two with Guillambert-helmed Yaarmen, owned by Shaheen bin Khalid Shaheen al-Ghanim, winning the 1900m Thoroughbred Graduation Plate event, three quarters of a length ahead of Bentley and his ride, Perigee.

Guillambert even rode Ghazali's Take A Nap to his maiden victory.

Scudding was Riyaz's second winner of the day after Shaza Al Sulaimi registered her first career win, also with Guillambert as her partner.

Faleh Bughanaim, after coming close on the first two days of the season, snapped up two victories in quick succession, riding AJS Al Ruwais to victory in the Purebred Arabian Handicap event for horses rated 70 and below, before leading a Qatari one-two in the Local Thoroughbred Handicap event for horses rated 75 and below astride Sandaan.

Hadi Nasser al-Ramzani's ward, AJS Al Ruwais, edged out Riyaz's charge, Fawwaz by half a length at the post, before Abdullah Sultan Ahmed al-Jabir-saddled Sandaan beat Al Ayyar, ridden by another Qatari jockey Rashid Ali al-Marri, by one and a half lengths.

Another rider, who had a double on the day, was Anas al-Seyabi, who after guiding Khat Al Nar to his maiden victory in the first race of the card, helmed Ibrahim al-Malki's Victory Laurel as the gelding topped the penultimate race of the day, the 1,100m Class 2 Thoroughbreds event.

Al-Ramzani too completed his double when Tomas Lukasek rode Tijan to victory in the Thoroughbred Handicap event for horses rated 75 and below.

Alban de Mieuille-schooled Akmar, owned by Umm Qarn, topped one of the four maiden races of the day.

RESULTS

Race 1: 1. Khat Al Nar (Anas al-Seyabi), 2. Al Huwailah (Harry Bentley), 3. Shaman Bu Thaila (Jimmy Quinn), 4. Sharhan Azam (Faleh Bughanaim). Won by: 7 ¼, 2 ¼, 2. Time: 1:12.85. Owner: Subaiya Awad Ibrahim. Trainer: Mohamed Khaled Elahmed.

Race 2: 1. Take A Nap (JP Guillambert), 2. Acclaimed Dancer (Adnan Hawa), 3. Almasah (Stephan Ladjadi), 4. Qianlong (Harry Bentley). Won by: 7 ¾, 1 ½, ¾. Time: 1:11.82. Owner: Abdullah Mohamed al-Kuwari Sons. Trainer: Jassim Mohamed Ghazali.

Race 3: 1. Akmar (Ronan Thomas), 2. Fawwaz Al Shajaa (Rashid Ali al-Marri), 3. Wishah (Harry Bentley), 4. Broog Stefania (Saleem Golam). Won by: 1 ¼, 3 ¾, 13. Time: 1:19.88. Owner: Umm Qarn. Trainer: Alban de Mieuille.

Race 4: 1. Shaza Al Sulaimi (JP Guillambert), 2. Jazalah (Ronan Thomas), 3. Alanoud (Jean Baptiste Hamel), 4. Yanar (Harry Bentley). Won by: ¾, 10, 6. Time: 2:00.97. Owner: Jassim Mohamed al-Badi. Trainer: Mohamed Riyaz.

Race 5: 1. Yaarmen (JP Guillambert), 2. Perigee (Harry Bentley), 3. Comrade in Arms (Saleem Golam), 4. Almkfee (Marco Casamento). Won by: ¾, 7 1 ½. Time: 2:02.87. Owner: Shaheen bin Khalid Shaheen al-Ghanim. Trainer: Jassim Mohamed Ghazali.

Race 6: 1. AJS Al Ruwais (Faleh Bughanaim), 2. Fawwaz (JP Guillambert), 3. Uda Al Wajba (Harry Bentley), 4. AJS Al Maha (Tomas Lukasek). Won by: ½, 1 ¼, 1 ½. Time: 2:01.28. Owner: Al Jeryan Stud. Trainer: Hadi Nasser al-Ramzani.

Race 7: 1. Sandaan (Faleh Bughanaim), 2. Al Ayyar (Rashid Ali al-Marri), 3. The Shark (Marco Casamento), 4. Al Khazileah (JP Guillambert). Won by: 1 ½, Shd, No. Time: 1:52.91. Owner: Ahmed Sultan Ahmed al-Jabir. Trainer: Abdullah Sultan Ahmed al-Jabir.

Race 8: 1. Tijan (Tomas Lukasek), 2. Magic Line (Rashid Ali al-Marri), 3. Lawless Louis (Jean Baptiste Hamel), 4. Greyscape (Jimmy Quinn). Won by: Nk, 1 ¾, ½. Time: 1:12.17. Owner: Nasser



Al Shaqab Equestrian Facility Expert Majid Nasser al-Kaabi (centre) presents the owner's trophy to Khalifa bin Sheail al-Kuwari after Scudding won the Qatar Cup at the Qatar Racing and Equestrian Club's Al Rayyan Park yesterday. PICTURES: Juhaim



JP Guillambert rides Scudding to victory in the Qatar Cup yesterday.

Owaida Salem al-Hajri. Trainer: Hadi Nasser al-Ramzani.

Race 9: 1. Victory Laurel (Anas al-Seyabi), 2. Cristofano Allori (Stephan Ladjadi), 3. My Sharona (Marco Casamento), 4. Receding

Waves (JP Guillambert). Won by: Nk, 1 ¾, ¾. Time: 1:04.76. Owner: Ibrahim al-Malki. Trainer: Ibrahim al-Malki.

Race 10: 1. Scudding (JP Guillambert), 2. Tea Leaf (Marvin

Suerland), 3. Hillside Dream (Harry Bentley), 4. Festive (Marco Casamento). Won by: 1 ½, 1 ¼, ¾. Time: 1:51.09. Owner: Khalifa bin Sheail al-Kuwari. Trainer: Mohamed Riyaz.

MOTORSPORT

Abdulla sets up drive for Manateq Qatar rally

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Abdel Abdulla has pieced together a last-minute deal to drive a powerful Ford Fiesta R5 in next week's Manateq International Rally of Qatar, the final round of the FIA Middle East Rally Championship (MERC).

The former FIA T2 world champion has been tackling rounds of the FIA World Cup for Cross-Country Rallies in recent seasons, but has held the ambition of tackling his home round of the regional rally series since taking part in the event for the first time as a navigator in 1990.

The Doha-based driver will drive a car under the management of Roger Feghali's Autotune operation and is hopeful that the experienced Lebanese navigator Joseph Matar will accompany him to the official start at Souq Waqif in downtown Doha from 19.00hrs next Thursday (November 15).

Abdulla said: "I saw that there were a lot of drivers entering the rally and I wanted to take part. I made the deal very late. It is my dream to do the Qatar International Rally. It is a good time of year, good weather and I think it will be good experience for me. There are no more races in the Cross-Country this year, so the



timing is ideal.

"There are no plans to fight to win. I will do my best. It is my first time to drive this type of car. I did my first race here in 1990 and now I have a chance to do it as a driver after three years driving in the Cross-Country World Cup."

Abdulla's challenge for success comes with the support of the Qatar Motor and Motorcycle Federation (QMMF) and Ooredoo Qatar.

While he is realistically not out to challenge the likes of 14-time regional champion Nasser Saleh al-Attiyah and his season-long Czech rival Vojtech Staf in the R5 battle, Abdulla is hopeful that a podium finish is the realistic goal against a strong field of MERC 2 entrants.

SPOTLIGHT

Qatar to host AFC U23 group qualifiers

QNA
Kuala Lumpur

Qatar will host AFC U23 Championship Finals Group A qualifiers on March 22-26, 2019.

The qualifiers divided the 44 participating teams into two zones of West (West, South, Central) with 24 teams, and East (East, ASEAN) with 20 teams. Qatar will face Oman, Nepal and Afghanistan, according to the AFC.

Host of Group B, Bahrain, will make their fourth attempt at qualifying to the Finals, as they go up against Palestine, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

Iran, the host nation for Group C, will prove their mettle against inaugural champions Iraq, Turkmenistan and Yemen.

Saudi Arabia, the 2013 runners-up, will be aiming to better their previous best result after failing to progress past the group stage in January. They host United Arab Emirates, Lebanon and Maldives in Group D.

Kuwait were among the first teams to participate in the first-ever AFC U23 Championship in 2013, and will bid to reach the Finals again when they face opponents Jordan, Syria and Kyrgyz

Republic in Group E.

Reigning champions and host nation Uzbekistan will begin their title defence against Tajikistan, India and Pakistan in Group F. Mongolia will be counting on home support when they host Group G and go up against North Korea, Hong Kong and Singapore.

Cambodia have yet to reach the Finals but they are determined to impress when they welcome Korea Republic, Australia and Chinese Taipei in Group H.

After missing out on two editions, Group I host, Myanmar, will play against 2016 winners Japan, Timor-Leste and Macau.

Group J host Malaysia, who reached the quarter-finals of the competition for the first time in their history in January, are set to host China PR, Laos and Philippines.

Vietnam, who finished runners-up in the 2018 edition returns to the Qualifiers as host of Group K, where they will meet Thailand, Indonesia and Brunei Darussalam.

The 11 group winners and four best second-placed teams among all groups will qualify for the Finals, with the host nation of the Finals receiving automatic qualification.

FOOTBALL / UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Insigne beats Buffon as Napoli hold PSG

AFP
Naples, Italy

Lorenzo Insigne beat former Italy teammate Gianluigi Buffon from the spot to keep Napoli well in the hunt for a place in the last 16 of the Champions League thanks to a 1-1 draw at home to Paris Saint-Germain on Tuesday.

PSG travelled to the Stadio San Paolo looking to go one better after being held to a 2-2 draw in the French capital two weeks ago.

But after Juan Bernat capped a dominant first-half performance from PSG to hit the opener on the stroke of half-time, Insigne made no mistake when the hosts were awarded a penalty just after the hour as Jose Callejon was sandwiched in the area.

The result sees Napoli go top of Group C, level on points with Liverpool following their shock 2-0 defeat by Red Star Belgrade earlier Tuesday.

But in comments to Sky Sport, coach Carlo Ancelotti warned qualification is not secure yet. "We'll have to battle until the

very end, we're holding on tight," said Ancelotti.

PSG sit third, only one point adrift, leaving Buffon with plenty of belief in their last-16 chances.

"Paris played a great game, it was a solid performance and I'm happy because I think we're on the right road," Buffon told RMC Sport.

"Red Star did both us and Napoli a big favour earlier but there's everything to play for in the final matches.

"But I'm confident because we're improving and each draw for us sends an important message."

In what was captain Marek Hamsik's record 512th appearance for Napoli, former teammate Edinson Cavani played only a cameo role after replacing Angel Di Maria for the final quarter-hour.

It left Neymar and Kylian Mbappe pulling the strings up front for the visitors, who produced a strong first 45 minutes that had Napoli's demanding fans frustrated throughout.

The first real scare for Napoli came on 23 minutes when



Napoli's Lorenzo Insigne (foreground) in action during the UEFA Champions League match against Paris Saint-Germain in Naples, Italy, on Tuesday. (Reuters)

Mbappe ran on to Neymar's looping cross to fire a left-footed

half volley that dipped just over David Ospina's crossbar.

After Mertens poked wide of Buffon's upright after a well-

worked free-kick, Kalidou Koulibaly rescued the Italians twice in succession with a well-timed tackle on Mbappe and a timely interception to prevent Mbappe reaching Thomas Meunier's pass.

MBAPPE MAGIC

At the other end, Callejon set up Insigne for a deft volley which the diminutive Napoli midfielder fired a yard wide of Buffon's upright.

But Napoli's fans were in despair moments later courtesy of more Mbappe magic.

The World Cup star's pace carried him on to a cross down the left and he bamboozled Raul Albiol before sending a deft cutback into the path of Bernat.

The Spaniard took a touch and, as he fell to the turf, swiped with his right foot to stun Ospina.

A half-time pep talk by Ancelotti appeared to have had the desired effect when a far more enterprising Napoli emerged after the interval, with the 40-year-old Buffon rolling back the years with some fine saves.

The former World Cup winner first stretched to palm Nikola Maksimovic's angled effort to

safety before guiding Mertens' lobbed effort over the bar moments later.

Napoli should have scored when acrobatic control by Mertens set up Callejon to the right of Buffon's goal, but the Spaniard bundled wide.

As PSG panicked at the back, Buffon palmed Callejon's close-range cross into the path of Mertens only for the Belgian to fire over from two yards out.

Napoli fans were further frustrated when former Juventus legend Buffon stood his ground to parry Fabian Ruiz's first-timer following Mertens' cross.

Buffon was finally beaten, but only from the spot, by Insigne's 62nd-minute penalty.

PSG coach Thomas Tuchel introduced Cavani for the final 14 minutes while Mertens, holding an injured arm, was replaced by Adam Ounas.

The much-needed boost in attack failed to materialise for PSG, who five minutes from time saw Mbappe somehow sweep his strike from Thilo Kehrer's delivery wide of Ospina's upright when eight yards from goal.