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West Indies stumble after Mahmudullah slams century

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# GULF TIMES SPORT



**FOOTBALL**

Sterling strikes as Manchester City move 5 clear

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**SPOTLIGHT**

# Olympic hosts must meet 'human rights standards'

IOC says boxing not guaranteed in Tokyo but will work to have it included

**DPA**  
Tokyo

Hosts of the Olympic Games must meet "human rights standards" from 2024, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) said yesterday after an executive board meeting in Tokyo.

And a new advisory committee on human rights chaired by Jordanian Prince Zeid Ra'ad al-Hussein, the former United Nations commissioner for human rights, is to be formed "to help the IOC meet its human rights responsibilities."

IOC president Thomas Bach said: "Promoting humanistic values in sport has been a core feature of the IOC since its beginning. Our mission, to put sport at the service of humanity, goes hand-in-hand with human rights, which is part of our DNA."

It goes alongside incorporating human rights standards into the "Operational Requirements" of the host city contract from the 2024 Olympic Games onwards, the IOC said.

This will "explicitly require organising committees to comply with applicable local, regional and national laws as well as international agreements," the IOC said, regarding "planning, construction, protection of the environment, health and safety, labour and anti-corruption laws" on "development projects and other projects necessary for the organisation of the Games."

Paris will host the Summer Games in 2024 and Los Angeles the 2028 edition. Tokyo will host in 2020. China, host of the 2022 Winter Games in Beijing,



International Olympic Committee (IOC) president Thomas Bach (L) and IOC spokesperson Mark Adams (R) attend a press conference in Tokyo yesterday.

has recently been criticised by the New York-based advocacy group Human Rights Watch for "conducting a mass, systematic campaign of human rights violations against Turkic Muslims," in the north-west of the country.

Bach, meanwhile, refused to guarantee boxing would be at the 2020 Games but did say the IOC wanted to include the sport despite ongoing problems with amateur governing body

AIBA. Planning for boxing at the Games was frozen on Friday as the IOC has taken a hard line with AIBA over controversial judging at the 2016 Games, financial issues and the election of Uzbekistan's Gafur Rakhimov as its president in early November.

Rakhimov is on a United States treasury department sanctions list in connection with organised crime and drug

trafficking, allegations he has denied. A three-strong panel headed by IOC executive committee member Nenad Lalovic is to look into AIBA's ethics, governance and finances and to submit a report ahead the IOC Session in June 2019. AIBA is expected to work with the IOC in the coming months with Rakhimov saying late Friday the organisation was "committed to improving in any area where they have concerns."

"In terms of my own situation, I can assure the IOC that the situation with US authorities based on false allegations by the previous regime of my country is being addressed and that my legal team is working hard to correct this."

Rakhimov also added AIBA has achieved "financial stability" and he looked forward to co-operating with Lalovic "so that we can get back to full scale preparations for Tokyo 2020."

**MANATEQ BAJA**

# Alloh and al-Kuwari claim top honours



Ahmed Alloh (third from left) and Nasser al-Kuwari (second from left) celebrate their victory at Losail yesterday.

**By Sports Reporter**  
Doha

Ahmed Alloh and co-driver Nasser al-Kuwari claimed top honours in the fourth round of the 2018 Manateq Qatar National Baja Championship yesterday but Sheikh Hamad bin Eid al-Thani maintained his overall lead despite a fourth place finish.

The 267km rally had two special stages at Sealine before the drivers headed back to the QMMF headquarters at Losail for the podium ceremony.

QMMF CEO, Sultan bin Zahir al-Muraikhi, and Manateq Director of the Office of Chief Executive Officer and Public Relations Manager, Ibrahim bin Issa al-Fadhal, crowned the champions at the end of the event.

"We are very happy. It was a perfect round for us. The new route device the QMMF gave us proved very helpful," said al-Kuwari. "In the past drivers would get lost during events but this time it didn't happen."

He added that a "tricky" spot on the route posed a problem but they negotiated it safely.

"There was one tricky spot where we had to negotiate muddy terrain. Most of the drivers thought they would get stuck, but we decided to go for it. Everyone else got a penalty but we didn't," added al-Kuwari.

Al-Kuwari said the strong field was challenging. "It was a really tough but I am happy we won despite it. We are determined to do well in local events."

Abdullah al-Rabban set the fastest time on stage one which ran for almost 70km, followed by Mohamed al-Harqan who came second six minutes back, while Mohamed al-Meer finished the stage in third.

On the second stage, al-Harqan was the fastest driver ahead of Alloh, who finally won the rally, while third place went to al-Meer.

Despite his fourth place, Sheikh Hamad maintained his lead with 57 points, ahead of al-Meer with 42 points and Nayef al-Nasr on 40.

Some driver force to retired in the second stage, Abdullah Rabban stopping due to punctures, Rashid al-Mohanadi delayed and passed time exceeded and Mohamed al-Attiyah with mechanical failure (gearbox).

# River Plate reject Libertadores final in Madrid

**Reuters**  
Buenos Aires

The troubled Copa Libertadores final between Argentina's two biggest clubs ran into more problems yesterday when River Plate said they rejected the decision to face Boca Juniors in Madrid in the postponed second leg.

In the latest twist to the saga, River, the home team, said it was "incomprehensible" that the fixture should be played outside Argentina, although the club stopped short of saying they would refuse to play.

the ground. Several players were hit by shattered glass and some were affected by tear gas used by police to break up the attack.

The match was rescheduled for the following day but was again postponed, hours before kickoff. The first leg in Boca's stadium had ended 2-2 one week earlier.

On Thursday, amid reports that the fixture could be played in Qatar, the South American Football Confederation CONMEBOL announced the decision to move the game to Real Madrid's Bernabeu stadium on Dec. 9. "River Plate reject the change of venue," the club said in a statement, adding that moving the game to Madrid "adversely affects those who bought tickets and also upsets the idea of equal conditions by taking away home advantage".

However, River did not say what action they would take if CONMEBOL stood by its decision.

River have been fined \$400,000 for the incidents and ordered to play their next two home matches in South American club competition behind closed doors. However, Boca have said they will appeal against the decision which they consider too lenient.

Boca themselves were thrown out of the Libertadores in 2015 after River players were attacked with pepper spray by fans at halftime during the second leg of a knockout tie at the Bombonera stadium. Boca say they want the same standards to apply to River.

River said the attack on the bus happened outside the area which was considered the club's responsibility.

"The responsibility for the failure of the security operation was openly accepted by the highest authorities of the state," it said.

"It's incomprehensible that the most important fixture in Argentine football cannot take place in the country which is hosting the G20. "Argentine football as a whole... cannot allow a handful of thugs to stop the Superclasico from taking place in our country."

It is the first time that the two clubs have met in the final of the competition, which is the South American equivalent of the Champions League. From next season onwards, the final will be played in a single match at a neutral venue — a decision which CONMEBOL had already taken before last month's trouble.



A view of the Santiago Bernabeu stadium in Madrid.

PREMIER LEAGUE

# Sterling sparkles in City win, United escape with draw

'My 400th win as a manager? I didn't know that. Congratulations Pep!'

AFP  
London

Manchester City moved five points clear at the top of the Premier League as Raheem Sterling inspired a 3-1 win over Bournemouth, while Manchester United's problems mounted as they escaped with a 2-2 draw at lowly Southampton yesterday.

Pep Guardiola's side racked up their sixth successive league win thanks to a second half surge after Bournemouth shocked the Etihad Stadium.

City hold a significant lead over second placed Liverpool, but they can close the gap back to two points if they beat Everton in the Merseyside derby at Anfield today.

"A good win, after the Champions League it is always tough. People think it's easy for us but that is not the truth, so I like to win in this way," Guardiola said.

In the second half one action from Raheem Sterling changed the game.

It was a landmark moment for former Barcelona and Bayern Munich boss Guardiola, who said: "My 400th win as a manager? I didn't know that. Congratulations Pep!"

Guardiola left City's record goal-scorer Sergio Agüero out of the squad, but even the Argentine star's absence couldn't halt the champions' momentum.

City had scored 40 goals in their previous 13 league games and it took them just 16 minutes to shatter Bournemouth's resistance as Bernardo Silva bagged his second goal of the season.

Leroy Sané's shot was saved by Asmir Begovic, but Silva was on hand to tap into the empty net.

City were stunned in the 44th minute when Callum Wilson headed Bournemouth's equaliser from a Simon Francis cross.

But the leaders restored order in the 57th minute as Sterling continued his mastery of Eddie Howe's team.

Sterling netted from close-range after Begovic spilled Danilo's shot, making it eight goals in six league appearances against Bournemouth for the City winger.

Ilkay Gundogan put the result



Manchester City's Raheem Sterling (left) scores a goal against Bournemouth during their match in Manchester yesterday. (Reuters)

beyond doubt when the German finished a fine move involving Bernardo Silva and Sané in the 79th minute.

While City remain the team to beat, their rivals United remain in turmoil after their winless league run extended to three games.

Jose Mourinho's side desperately needed a victory at St Mary's to stay in the hunt for a top four finish, but they ended up relieved to avoid defeat after falling two goals behind against third bottom Saints.

Southampton had won only once in 13 league matches this season, that solitary success coming at Crystal Palace on September 1, yet within 12 minutes they had carved open the United defence.

**STERN-FACED**

Nathan Redmond wriggled be-

yond four statuesque defenders on the edge of the penalty area before finding Michael Obafemi, who teed up Stuart Armstrong for a fierce effort that flashed past David de Gea.

Mourinho sat stern-faced on the bench as Southampton celebrated and his expression was even more vexed eight minutes later as Marcus Rashford's needless foul on Mario Lemina led to Southampton's second.

Cedric Soares lined up the resulting free-kick 20 yards from goal and curled a superb effort over the United wall and into the top corner of De Gea's net.

Romelu Lukaku gave United a lifeline when he slotted home from Rashford's pass in the 33rd minute as the Belgian striker grabbed his first goal in 13 games.

United suddenly had a spring in their step and Ander Herrera equalised in the 39th minute when he met Rashford's low cross with a clever back-heeled effort from close-range.

But seventh-placed United reverted to their spluttering form after the interval and they are now six points adrift of fourth-placed Chelsea, who would increase that gap if they beat Fulham today.

Brighton conceded the fastest goal in the Premier League this season, but Chris Hughton's team recovered to win 2-1 at 10-man Huddersfield.

Leicester won for just the second time in seven league games as Watford slumped to a 2-0 de-

feat at the King Power Stadium, with Jamie Vardy and James Maddison scoring for the Foxes.

West Ham ended Newcastle's three-match winning run as Javier Hernandez struck twice in a 3-0 victory at St James Park.

**RESULTS**

- Crystal Palace 2 (McArthur 16, Townsend 77) Burnley 0
- Huddersfield 1 (Jorgensen 1) Brighton 2 (Duffy 45+4, Andone 69)
- Leicester 2 (Vardy 12-pen, Maddison 23) Watford 0
- Manchester City 3 (B Silva 16, Sterling 57, Gundogan 79) Bournemouth 1 (Wilson 44)
- Newcastle 0 West Ham 3 (Hernandez 11, 63, Anderson 90+3)
- Southampton 2 (Armstrong 13, Cedric 20) Manchester United 2 (Lukaku 33, Herrera 39)

LIGUE 1

# Lyon fight back from 2-0 down to draw at Lille



Lyon's Moussa Dembele (right) is congratulated by teammates after scoring during the Ligue 1 match against Lille in Villeneuve d'Ascq, France, yesterday. (AFP)

Reuters  
Paris

Olympique Lyonnais fought back from 2-0 down at halftime to draw 2-2 with Lille in an exciting game yesterday and remain second in the Ligue 1 standings.

Lille were unbeaten in seven home games this season in France's top tier and that streak never looked in doubt after a fine first-half performance.

Loïc Remy put them ahead after 17 minutes when he got on the end of a cross from Mehmet Celik to score his first league goal in six years.

Remy was also involved 11 minutes later when he provided the assist for Nicolas Pepe to make it 2-0.

However, Lyon, who started

the day a point and two places above the home side, extended their unbeaten league run to nine games with a gritty comeback.

The visitors got a goal back through Bertrand Traore 18 minutes into the second half and substitute Moussa Dembele grabbed an equaliser four minutes from time when he threw himself at a deflected cross from Martin Terrier to make it 2-2.

It was a merited point for a team who had two-thirds of the possession and more shots on goal.

Lyon stayed second in the standings, a point ahead of third-placed Lille who are a point above Montpellier and St Etienne.

Runaway leaders Paris St Germain travel to Girondins Bordeaux today bidding to extend their record-breaking start to the season with a 15th win in 15 games.

SPOTLIGHT

## Fulham's Ranieri wary about special trip to Chelsea

Reuters  
London

Fulham manager Claudio Ranieri knows it will be special when he returns to his old club Chelsea in the Premier League today but said the game had come too soon for his new side.

The Italian managed at Stamford Bridge from 2000 to 2004 and steered Chelsea to the Champions League semi-finals but although he did not win a trophy he remains a popular figure at the club.

He took charge of Fulham this month after Serb Slavisa Jokanovic was sacked with the team bottom of the standings. Ranieri's first match, a 3-2 home win over Southampton last weekend, ended a run of 10 games without a victory.

Despite Chelsea losing for the first time this season at Tottenham Hotspur on Saturday, Ranieri did not feel his side were quite ready to get something from his old stomping ground.

"It's special because when I meet my former teams, it's always something special," he told a news conference on Friday.

"(But) for me, playing against Chelsea arrives too soon, because when you play against them you must be attentive. But we are working hard. I hope we can do a good derby."

Fulham still prop up the table but are now level with Cardiff City and Southampton on eight points from 13 matches and only one point away from the safety zone.

It is their goal difference of



minus 19 that has kept them in the basement spot with 33 goals conceded already this season.

Ranieri said he expected his whole team to defend and stop Fulham becoming the most porous team in a 38-game league season, the record held by Derby County who conceded 89 in 2007-08.

"In football, there are two things – when you have the ball and when you lose it. The first striker is the first keeper, the first defender in my opinion is the striker, everybody has to attack and everybody has to defend," he said.

"When I say I have to work in a defensive way I don't tell just the full backs, I tell everybody because everybody must work and help the others, the midfielders to the defensive line, the defensive line to the keeper."

SERIE A

# Juve ease to 3-0 win at Fiorentina

DPA  
Rome

Unrelenting leaders Juventus won 3-0 at Fiorentina yesterday to go 11 points clear of chasers Napoli in the Italian Serie A.

Cristiano Ronaldo converted a penalty after strikes from Rodrigo Bentancur and Giorgio Chiellini and is now joint top scorer on 10 goals with Genoa's Pole Krzysztof Piatek.

The unbeaten champions clinched a 13th win having only dropped two points from 14 games for a tally of 40 points. Napoli play at Atalanta tomorrow.

La Viola spoiled their unbeaten home record and stayed on 18 points in midtable.

Bentancur entered the box and struck clinically into the far corner on 31 minutes, while defender Chiellini struck on 69 despite a good effort by keeper from Alban Lafont, who stood no chance against Ronaldo 10 minutes later.

The Florence hosts saw Giovanni Simeone miss a close-

range chance after Bentancur's opener as Juve came close with near misses from Ronaldo and his Portuguese compatriot Joao Cancelo.

After the break Fiorentina's Federico Chiesa fired straight at Wojciech Szczesny, who also had little trouble stopping a Jordan Veretout volley.

Earlier in Ferrara, Jasmin Kurtic struck twice to help hosts Spal draw 2-2 against Empoli despite a dismissal and inch away from the drop zone.

Kurtic's early header put Spal ahead, but Francesco Caputo levelled on a counter-attack and Rade Krunic gave Empoli the lead before the break.

Thiago Cionek's foul was punished with a red card to complicate Spal's comeback, but Kurtic found a second header to level on 67 minutes.

Spal sit three points clear of danger in 15th. Promoted Empoli have one less point on 14.

**RESULTS**

- SPAL 2 (Kurtic 5, 67) Empoli 2 (Caputo 24, Krunic 43)
- Fiorentina 0 Juventus 3 (Bentancur 31, Chiellini 69, Ronaldo 79-pen)



Juventus' Rodrigo Bentancur (centre) celebrates with teammates after scoring a goal during the Serie A match against Fiorentina in Florence yesterday. (AFP)

BUNDESLIGA

# Bayern up to third with first league win for a month

Gnabry scores twice at Bremen but Bavarians still nine points behind Dortmund



Bayern Munich's Serge Gnabry (left) and Bremen's Nuri Sahin vie for the ball during the Bundesliga match in Bremen, Germany, yesterday. (AFP)

AFP  
Bremen, Germany

Bayern Munich earned their first Bundesliga win for a month as Serge Gnabry scored twice in yesterday's 2-1 win at Werder Bremen but the defending champions remained nine points behind leaders Borussia Dortmund.

Bayern's victory lifted them two places in the table to third, but they will drop back to fifth if Eintracht Frankfurt earn a fifth straight win at home to Wolfsburg today and RB Leipzig beat Moenchengladbach.

Bayern built on their 5-1 mid-week thrashing of Benfica in the Champions League, but still lag

well behind Dortmund, who won 2-0 at home against Freiburg.

The last time Bayern were so far behind in the table was in 2010/11, when Dortmund won the title, and their bid for a seventh straight Bundesliga crown is in danger after only their third win in their last nine league games.

Gnabry, who started for Arjen Robben, put Bayern ahead on 20 minutes in Bremen after Joshua Kimmich's chip into the area shortly after the visitors had a penalty appeal turned down.

Thomas Mueller then fired wide with the goal at his mercy, but Bayern's defensive frailties returned to haunt them as Bremen equalised 14 minutes later.

Centre-back Jerome Boateng was out-leapt by Japan forward Yuya Osako after a pin-point

accurate cross as Bremen drew level after midfielder Nuri Sahin had gone close.

It was 1-1 at the break, but Bayern grabbed the winner five minutes into the second period when Mueller delayed his pass into the box for Gnabry to deflect the ball into the net.

There was more good news for Bayern coach Niko Kovac.

Winger Kingsley Coman came on for his first appearance since tearing ankle ligaments on the opening day of the season in August.

Likewise, Thiago Alcantara played the last 10 minutes after a month out with injury.

In Dortmund, Paco Alcacer continued his phenomenal scoring run by netting his 10th goal of the season to become the

league's top scorer.

The Spaniard also equalled the Bundesliga record for most goals by a substitute in a season – just 13 matches into the 2018/19 campaign – with his ninth goal off the bench in his eighth league game.

The ex-Barcelona forward has so far averaged a goal for Dortmund every 28 minutes.

Dortmund went ahead when England teenager Jadon Sancho was brought down and Marco Reus hit his penalty attempt into the middle of the goal five minutes before half-time.

Alcacer came on in the 70th minute and tapped home a minute into added time after brilliant play by Sancho and Lukasz Piszczek.

Hertha Berlin picked up their

first win since stunning Bayern in September with a 2-0 win at Hanover.

Berlin's captain Vedad Ibisevic heading home in the second-half after centre-back Jordan Torunarigha put them ahead in the first-half.

Stuttgart escaped the bottom three with a 1-0 win over mid-table Augsburg after striker Anastasios Donis scored their first-half winner.

**RESULTS**

- Borussia Dortmund 2 (Reus 40-pen, Alcacer 90+1) Freiburg 0
- VfB Stuttgart 1 (Donis 39) Augsburg 0
- Werder Bremen 1 (Osako 33) Bayern Munich 2 (Gnabry 20, 50)
- Hanover 96 0 Hertha Berlin 2 (Torunarigha 44, Ibisevic 73)

SPOTLIGHT

## Afghan authorities, FIFA investigating abuse claims on women's team

AFP  
Kabul



Afghanistan Football Federation secretary-general Sayed Alireza Aqazada at a press conference in Kabul yesterday. (AFP)

Football's world governing body FIFA is looking in to claims of sexual and physical abuse on the Afghanistan national women's team, it confirmed in a statement yesterday, even as the Interior Ministry of the country said they are investigating the claims too.

The allegations against officials including the Afghanistan Football Federation's president Keramuddin Karim were reported in Britain's *Guardian* newspaper. The AFF has "vigorously" rejected claims.

"The serious subjects mentioned are being looked in to by FIFA," the global body said in a statement, adding that it has a "zero tolerance policy" on such violations.

Given the sensitivity of the allegations, particularly in deeply conservative, patriarchal Afghanistan, it said it was addressing the matter in a "do no harm" way and working with reputable entities to establish the facts.

The *Guardian* cited what it described as senior figures associated with the women's team who said the abuse had taken place in Afghanistan, including at AFF headquarters, and at a training camp in Jordan last February.

It quotes former captain Khali-da Popal, who fled the country after receiving death threats and has spoken out previously about the discrimination women face in Afghanistan, as saying male officials were "coercing" female players.

Interior Ministry spokesman Najib Danish said the government took the allegations very seriously and was examining the case.

"Based on a decision from the

Attorney General's office, a team has been set up to investigate the case," he said.

"The story is not true," Sayed Alireza Aqazada, secretary general of the AFF, told reporters in Kabul yesterday, adding: "No sexual harassment has been committed against any girl football player."

"It is easy for us to cancel or eliminate the girls football team due to the presence of the Taliban and the mullahs, but we don't want to go backwards, we support the girls football team," he continued.

He also disputed the *Guardian's* claim that Danish sportswear company Hummel had withdrawn its sponsorship due to the allegations. Hummel has not responded to queries from AFP.

In a statement on its Facebook page, the AFF also said it had not been directly contacted by the accusers and been given no information to investigate the allegations.

Afghanistan has made strides to promote female football – as well as the national side, four years ago it launched its first all-women's football league that ran in parallel with the men's.

In 2017 the female teams were sidelined by a lack of funding.

AFF CHAMPIONSHIP

## Holdings Thailand draw with Malaysia in semi-final first leg

Reuters  
Hong Kong

Holdings Thailand escaped with a 0-0 draw against Malaysia in the first leg of their Asean Football Federation (AFF) Championship semi-final at Kuala Lumpur's Bukit Jalil Stadium yesterday.

The hosts, roared on by a sell-out crowd of more than 85,000, kept the five-time winners of the regional tournament on the back foot for much of the 90 minutes but failed to establish a lead ahead of the second leg in Bangkok on Wednesday.

Malaysia started brightly against Milovan Rajevac's side who struggled to contain Gambia-born midfielder Mohamadou Samareh.

Safawi Rasid skied an early ef-

fort over the bar before Samareh sent a 26th minute shot narrowly wide of Thai goalkeeper Chatchai Budrom's right post as Malaysia threatened.

Samareh put the Thai under pressure again two minutes later but was forced to shoot off target.

Thailand had comfortably secured their spot in the last four but lacked the assuredness that had seen them finish top of their group ahead of the Philippines.

Adisak Kraisorn, the tournament's leading scorer, had a quiet evening, with the forward thumping an attempt from outside the area well over the bar just before the hour mark in a rare sight of goal for the Thais.

The winners of the tie will meet the Philippines or Vietnam in the final, with the Filipinos due to host the first leg of their semi-final in the southern city of Bacolod today.

OUTBURST

# Cameroon stripped of 2019 Africa Cup of Nations, search on for new hosts

AFP  
Accra, Ghana

Cameroon was on Friday stripped of hosting the 2019 Africa Cup of Nations due to delays in preparing for the continental showpiece, organisers the Confederation of African Football announced.

"Today we took the decision to withdraw the 2019 CAN from Cameroon," CAF president Ahmad Ahmad told a press conference in Accra, seven months before the 2019 opening match.

He was speaking after a 10-hour CAF executive meeting held behind closed doors in the Ghanaian capital.

Ahmad said "a task force" would be set up to launch an appeal for offers "to determine a new organising country between now and the end of the year".

South Africa and Morocco are two frontline contenders to step in as hosts for the event – expanded to 24 teams for the first time – in place of

Cameroon, who won the last edition in 2017 in Gabon.

Morocco, who lost out to a United States/Mexico/Canada bid to host the 2026 World Cup, have regularly been reported as possible replacements.

The North Africans had been set to stage the 2015 Cup of Nations before being stripped of its hosting rights in a row over the Ebola outbreak.

South Africa is the only African country to stage a World Cup, in 2010, and last staged the Cup of Nations in 2013.

"I know that there are countries which are interested, rest assured, candidate countries will come forward," said Ahmad.

"We know there won't be many (new candidates) but we will leave the task force to evaluate them and to set up visits in order to select the organisers of the CAN by the end of the year".

Alarm bells were sounded over the 2019 event at a September executive committee meeting in Egyptian resort Sharm el-Sheikh when CAF

noted "a significant delay in the realisation of the infrastructures" necessary for holding the Cup of Nations in Cameroon.

**TENSE SECURITY**

A report of the last two inspection visits to central African state Cameroon were made at Friday's meeting.

CAF inspectors recently travelled to the country, which last hosted the tournament in 1972, to check security, infrastructure, stadiums and accommodation.

"After numerous discussions and following inspections over the past 18 months CAF has become aware that several conditions of conformity have not been met," a CAF statement explained.

"There is a gap between what is necessary to organise a CAN and the reality on the ground," the statement added.

CAF's decision came as little surprise back in Cameroon.

"We knew what was going to happen, there's no stadiums, no roads, there's nothing," Henri Kelma, a mo-

to-taxi rider in Douala, told AFP.

For journalist Pierre Youte "it's perhaps a good decision...like this Cameroon will have the time to learn and find the means to host a CAN worthy of the name".

Cameroon is experiencing a tense security situation with persistent attacks by Boko Haram jihadists in the north and a conflict between the army and separatists in the two English-speaking regions.

That recalls the trauma that preceded the 2010 Cup of Nations in Angola, when the Togo team bus was attacked with three dead two days before the opening match.

Ahmad observed: "Football in Africa depends on our governments. But our priority is to look after the interests of our actors and above all our players."

"I don't know whether there are statistics but many have been injured during the CANs due to the condition of the organisation."

The Cup of Nations is no stranger to dramatic subplots.

In 1995 Kenya withdrew as hosts,

citing financial difficulties, with South Africa stepping in and going on to be crowned champions.

South Africa also took over holding the 2013 tournament after original hosts Libya had pulled out two years earlier because of the armed conflict then raging in the country.

Equatorial Guinea stepped in to the breach in 2015 when original hosts Morocco had appealed in vain for the competition to be delayed because of the Ebola epidemic.

Ahmad meanwhile appeared to hold out an olive branch to Cameroon.

"CAF is committed to supporting Cameroon, to give them time so that they can properly organise a CAN," he told reporters.

He refused to be drawn on whether that meant Cameroon could replace Ivory Coast as hosts of the 2021 edition, or Guinea as organisers in 2023.

The 2019 event is scheduled for June 15-July 13, a change from its traditional January-February slot.

And it will be the first to feature 24 teams – up from 16 at the 2017 edition in Gabon.



Confederation of African Football president Ahmad Ahmad.

## GOLF

# Rahm, Stenson share 1-stroke lead at Hero World Challenge

'This year was a big year of personal growth more than my golf game'

AFP  
Nassau, Bahamas

**B**ig-hitting Spaniard Jon Rahm muscled his way to a share of the Hero World Challenge lead on Friday, firing a nine-under par 63 to join Henrik Stenson on 10-under 134.

Rahm, 24 birdied four of his outward nine holes and five over the home stretch on the Albany course to share a one-shot lead with Stenson, who signed for a 66.

The victorious European Ryder Cup duo are one shot clear of the American pair of Dustin Johnson (67) and overnight co-leader Patrick Cantlay (70).

Tournament host, Tiger Woods had a share of ninth place in the elite 18-player field with five birdies through 16 bogey-free holes before coming unstuck at the last. The 14-time major champion's tee shot came to rest under a bush. He crouched down to hit an eight-iron back to the fairway, finally walking off with a double bogey six that left him sharing 14th place on two-under par. Woods at least escaped a penalty for hitting the ball twice as he tried to get out from under the bush.

Ultraslow motion, high definition video replay showed the ball did indeed make contact with the clubface twice, but a rules measure introduced in May of 2017 says that such high-tech means can't be used to impose a penalty if an infraction can't be "reasonably" seen by the naked eye.

"Under slow motion and high def you can see the ball did hit the clubface twice, but in real time I didn't feel that at all," Woods said after waiting out a 40 minute review. "So there is no penalty."

Rahm's round was smooth sailing in contrast. "I missed one fairway, I believe, and that's only because they put a patch of rough in the middle of the fairway on four, so that was kind of how everything went today," said Rahm, who is making his debut in the \$5 million tournament that offers world rankings points even though it is not an official US PGA Tour event.

## RAHM FINISHING STRONG

Rahm's 63 was one shot shy of his career-best 62 posted en route to a second US PGA Tour title in La Quinta, California, last January. That wasn't Rahm's only taste of success in 2018. He also won the Spanish Open and after finishing fourth two weeks ago in defense of his DP World Tour Championship title, he's looking to end the calendar year on a winning note.

"This year was a big year of personal growth more than my golf game," he said. "I was actually quite surprised on how well I played compared to what I had going on in my personal life and a lot of things going on. A lot of like I said, personal growth. I was able to play just as good golf. I won twice, the Career Builder and the Spanish Open, which is a huge win for me, got in contention in a couple of ma-



Spain's Jon Rahm follows his putt on the 17th green during round two of Hero World Challenge in Bahamas. (Getty Images/AFP)

jors, and then hopefully finish strong today and this week."

Stenson, who has battled tendonitis in his left elbow, was runner-up in the event two years ago and like Rahm, is keen to continue an impressive list of 'international' champions of the event with six of the past 19 winners being non-American.

"I'm trying hard to be first making it to the finish line," he said. "I haven't played a lot of golf since the Ryder Cup as I've had an injury problem, so I was out for five

weeks and I haven't played that much. "I guess I should be a little bit fresher than some of my colleagues who played out in Hong Kong or somewhere else at this point of the year. So, we'll just keep on going, try to make as many birdies as we can."

## SCORES FROM SECOND ROUND

134-Jon Rahm (ESP) 71-63, Henrik Stenson (SWE) 68-66  
135-Dustin Johnson 68-67, Patrick Cantlay 65-70

136-Tony Finau 72-64  
138-Gary Woodland 72-66, Alex Noren (SWE) 69-69  
139-Rickie Fowler 72-67  
140-Keegan Bradley 71-69, Justin Rose (ENG) 70-70, Justin Thomas 70-70  
141-Xander Schauffele 73-68, Bryson DeChambeau 70-71  
142-Tiger Woods 73-69, Hideki Matsuyama (JAP) 74-68, Bubba Watson 69-73, Patrick Reed 65-77  
143-Jason Day (AUS) 71 - 72

## RUGBY

## 'Hero' Drotske gives thumbs-up after robbery horror



AFP  
Johannesburg

**F**ormer Springbok World Cup winner and Super Rugby coach Naka Drotske was pictured yesterday making a thumbs-up sign from his hospital bed after being shot during an armed robbery.

The 47-year-old was wounded in the abdomen and arm late Thursday at the home of his brother near Pretoria when he charged at three intruders, two of whom were armed.

After being rushed to hospital, Drotske was initially listed as "critical" but a hospital spokesperson confirmed to AFP Saturday that he was now "stable".

Many on social media hailed Drotske as a "hero" for tackling the three men and pushing them out of the house.

Drotske was shot three times

during the melee and suffered a severe loss of blood while being rushed to hospital.

None of the other five people in the house, including former Springbok prop Os du Randt, were injured.

Police said Friday they were questioning two men but no arrests had been made.

Former hooker Drotske was an unused substitute in the 1995 Rugby World Cup final won by hosts South Africa against greatest rivals New Zealand in Johannesburg.

Capped 26 times by South Africa, he was the first choice four years later when they finished third in defence of the title in England.

Drotske played for and coached the Bloemfontein-based Free State Cheetahs in the domestic Currie Cup and southern hemisphere Super Rugby competitions.

He also spent two seasons as a player with the London Irish club.

## MOTORSPORT

## Force India name disappears from Formula One

Reuters  
London

**T**he Force India name will disappear from Formula One next season, after 11 years of competition, with the British-based team entered as Racing Point F1 on a list published by the governing FIA on Friday.

The chassis name was listed as Racing Point, with the company name Racing Point UK Limited.

The team, who became Force India in 2008 after Indian beer baron Vijay Mallya bought Spyker F1, were taken over in August by Canadian billionaire Lawrence Stroll after going into administration.

They then competed in the second part of the 2018 season as a new Racing Point Force India team to distinguish them

from the defunct Sahara Force India co-owned by Mallya and India's Sahara Group.

The team's 2019 drivers will be Mexican Sergio Perez and Stroll's son Lance.

Ferrari's official team name also changes to Scuderia Ferrari Mission Winnow and Haas becomes Rich Energy Haas F1 team to reflect sponsorship arrangements.

The 2019 entry list also revealed that Formula Two champion George Russell will race for Williams with the number 63 while McLaren rookie Lando Norris will have a four on his car.

Polish driver Robert Kubica, returning from an eight year absence after a near-fatal rally accident in 2011, will race with the number 88 on his Williams.

Thailand's Alexander Albon, debuting at Toro Rosso, had yet to have a number assigned.

## FOCUS

# Smith extends lead over Leishman on Day 3

Reuters  
Melbourne

**D**efending champion Cameron Smith shot a five-under-par 67 on day three of the Australian PGA Championship on the Gold Coast yesterday and will take a three-shot lead into the final round.

The Australian started the day with a one-shot advantage and turned in a bogey-free round at the Royal Pines Resort for a 14-under total of 202 after 54 holes to extend his lead over compatriot and World Cup of Golf team mate Marc Leishman.

American Harold Varner III, the 2016 champion, was tied for third place on seven-under at the European Tour co-sanctioned event, alongside Australia's Matthew Millar.

Smith, who could become the first player to successfully defend the title since Robert Allenby in 2001, started off with a par on the first hole and showed good composure to escape a greenside bunker and save par on the second.

He made gains on the fifth and the ninth to turn in 34 and added three more birdies on the back nine

to put himself in the driving seat ahead of today's final round.

"The last year I've been playing some really good golf," Smith said. "The last three days has been some of the best golf I think I've played both mentally and pulling off the shots. I'm feeling really confident and looking forward to tomorrow."

"I did a really good job today when I was out of position, just taking less risks and putting myself into the centre of the greens and taking a par. It's what you have to do around here."

World number 21 Leishman struggled with his short game, and had to wait until the eighth hole for his first birdie of the day. He turned in 35 and birdied the 10th, but dropped a shot on the next hole after landing in a fairway bunker.

Birdies on the 12th and the 17th helped him close with a three-under 69, but the 35-year-old knows he has work to do if he is to have any hope of overtaking Smith.

"I need to get off to a pretty good start, not as in the first two or three holes, but the first nine," he said. "I need to have a good front nine, at least make him think about it."

"I've come from behind before, so hopefully I can do it again tomorrow."



Defending champion Cameron Smith of Australia.

NBA

# Rockets romp over Spurs, Lakers rally past Mavericks

'It sucks to go out there and get embarrassed like that (back to back)'



San Antonio Spurs' LaMarcus Aldridge shoots the ball as Houston Rockets centre Clint Capela defends during the first half at AT&T Center. PICTURE: USA TODAY Sports

AFP

Los Angeles

James Harden and Chris Paul combined for 37 points as the Houston Rockets snapped a four-game losing streak by clobbering the rebuilding San Antonio Spurs 136-105 on Friday.

Harden delivered 23 points and 10 assists while Paul put up 14 points and 10 assists for the Rockets, who won the battle of the struggling Lone Star State teams.

"We're a confident group when we have all of our players. When we've got a healthy roster, we can compete with anybody in the league," Harden said.

Houston's Clint Capela led all scorers with 27 points, as the Rockets handed the Spurs their second straight lopsided defeat - San Antonio lost 128-89 to the Minnesota Timberwolves on Wednesday.

The Rockets and Spurs are two former NBA juggernauts who few would have guessed would both be under .500 at this point in the 2018-19 season.

Houston (10-11) have made some key

RESULTS

Boston	128-95	Cleveland
Utah	119-111	Charlotte
Detroit	107-88	Chicago
Philadelphia	123-98	Washington
Memphis	131-125	Brooklyn
Miami	106-101	New Orleans
Oklahoma City	124-109	Atlanta
Houston	136-105	San Antonio
Orlando	99-85	Phoenix
Lakers	114-103	Dallas
Denver	113-112	Portland

adjustments to their lineup through the first quarter of the season, and Paul's return after missing three games with a hamstring injury also helped them get back on track Friday.

The Rockets built a large enough lead that they were able to sit their starters for most of the final quarter.

LaMarcus Aldridge had 20 points and DeMar DeRozan added 18 for the Spurs, who have dropped to 10-12 on the season.

The numbers are not good - the Spurs allowed their biggest point total in a half this season and matched the most points they have allowed in the third quarter.

The Rockets scored 70 points in the first half and added 40 points in the third quarter. Houston finished 22 for 54 on three-pointers.

"It sucks to go out there and get embarrassed like that (back to back)," said DeRozan. It's been a tough season so far for San Antonio, who traded away Kawhi Leonard in the spring, saw veteran point guard Tony Parker leave for Charlotte, and then dealt with the retirement of heart-and-soul player Manu Ginobili.

"We're obviously discombobulated on offense," Spurs coach Gregg Popovich said. "A lot of that has to do with me, so I've got to do a better job there. I think defensively we've obviously got to shore up our effort and our wisdom at that end of the court. We've got a lot of work to do."

LEBRON LEADS LAKERS

Elsewhere, LeBron James scored 28 points and Tyson Chandler added 13 points as the Los Angeles Lakers snapped the Dal-

las Mavericks' three-game winning streak with a 114-103 victory.

"I just locked into the game plan and tried to get some easy shots in," said Chandler. Brandon Ingram tallied 19 points and Kyle Kuzma finished with 15 points and 12 rebounds as the Lakers - who trailed for most of the first three quarters - improved to 13-9 on the season.

In New York, Memphis point guard Mike Conley scored 13 of his team's 14 points in double overtime to lead the Grizzlies past the Brooklyn Nets, 131-125.

In the second extra session, Conley shot three-for-three from the field and made all seven of his free throws - he finished the game with 37 points and 10 rebounds.

Grizzlies rookie Jaren Jackson scored a career-high 36 points for Memphis, who snapped a three-game losing streak.

DeMarre Carroll had 21 points and 12 rebounds for the Nets, whose losing streak hit five games.

Elsewhere, Russell Westbrook flirted with a triple double by delivering 23 points, 10 assists and nine rebounds as the Oklahoma City Thunder beat the Atlanta Hawks, 124-109.

MLB

## Nats acquire catcher Gomes in trade with Washington Indians

Reuters  
New York

Catcher Yan Gomes, one of the most talked-about players in the trade rumour mill, has found a home in the nation's capital.

The Washington Nationals on Friday acquired Gomes from Cleveland, sending to the Indians a pair of minor leaguers: outfielder Daniel Johnson, right-hander Jefry Rodriguez and a player to be named later.

Both teams announced the deal Friday evening.

Gomes, 31, is under club control for three more seasons and on the books for \$7 million in 2019 with team options in 2020 and '21. He hit .266 with 16 home runs and 48 RBIs last season and made the All-Star Game for the first time in his career. His .762 OPS ranked fifth among catchers with at least 400 plate appearances. He is also considered a strong defensive catcher adept at handling a pitching staff.

He is the second catcher acquired this offseason by Washington, which signed Kurt Suzuki to a two-year, \$10 million contract earlier in November. According to MLB.com, Suzuki will serve as the backup to Gomes.

Gomes has been at the centre of numerous trade rumours this offseason, with multiple reports as recently as Friday saying both the Dodgers and Mets were closing in on acquiring him.

Johnson, 23, was selected by Washington in the fifth round of the 2016 draft. He is ranked as one of the Nationals' top 10 prospects by multiple outlets

after hitting .267 with six home runs and 31 RBIs to go with 22 stolen bases and a .731 OPS in 89 games at Double-A Harrisburg last season.

Rodriguez, 25, made his major league debut in 2018, compiling a 3-3 record with a 5.71 ERA and 39 strikeouts in 52 innings over 14 games. He made eight starts and also finished two games.

REDS CF HAMILTON TO

BECOME FREE AGENT

Cincinnati Reds centre fielder Billy Hamilton will become a free agent after the team did not offer him a 2019 contract, according to multiple reports. Teams had until Friday to tender contracts to arbitration-eligible players.

According to MLB.com, the Reds sought to trade the 28-year-old Hamilton but couldn't find a trading partner. He made \$4.6 million in 2018 and signed a one-year contract a year ago to avoid arbitration.

Hamilton is known for his speed and defense but not his offense, which has been on the decline. In 2018, he batted .236 in 153 games and had four home runs, 29 RBIs and 74 runs scored. He had 34 stolen bases after four straight seasons of at least 56.

He is a career .245 hitter. The team did not make a formal announcement about Hamilton's contract or those of other arbitration-eligible players. MLB.com said Cincinnati has five more players eligible for arbitration: second baseman Scooter Gennett, starting pitcher Anthony DeSclafani, reliever Michael Lorenzen, backup catcher Curt Casali and shortstop Jose Peraza (first year).



Catcher Yan Gomes

NHL

# Barkov overtime goal carries Panthers over Sabres

Reuters

Florida

Aleksander Barkov scored 2:26 into overtime to lead the host Florida Panthers to a 3-2 win over the Buffalo Sabres in Sunrise, Florida, on Friday.

Buffalo's NHL-best 10-game winning streak ended in a 5-4 loss in Tampa on Thursday, and Barkov eluded Jack Eichel, positioned himself in front of the Buffalo goal in overtime, and buried his ninth goal off a pass from Jonathan Huberdeau to hand the Sabres consecutive losses for the only time in November.

Florida also had goals from Jared McCann and Evgenii Dadonov, and Huberdeau had two assists. The Panthers won their sixth straight against Buffalo.

Huberdeau has 18 points in his last 14 games.

Jeff Skinner and Sam Reinhart scored goals for Buffalo, which finished November with an 11-3-1 record. Reinhart added an assist for a two-point night, and Eichel had two helpers.

Florida goalie James Reimer made his fifth straight start and stopped 22 shots. Buffalo's Linus Ullmark

made 40 saves and also recorded his first career assist on Reinhart's goal.

The Panthers outshot Buffalo 14-6 in the first period, had two power plays and hit a pair of posts, but the Sabres struck first at 10:55 by way of one of the league's top scorers.

Reinhart led a 2-on-1 break with Skinner and only Florida's Keith Yandle back to defend. Skinner roofed a clean pass from Reinhart over Reimer for his team-leading 20th goal and 12th on the road.

Skinner's marker broke a second-place tie with Boston's David Pastrnak among NHL leaders in total goals. The Buffalo left winger trails Winnipeg's Patrik Laine by one. McCann tied it 1-1 at 18:31 when his one-timer from the right circle hit the stick of Sabres defenseman Zach Bogosian and went over Ullmark for a power-play goal.

McCann's tally was his fifth this season and third in the last four games.

Florida's power play ranks second overall in November, and the Panthers have scored man-advantage goals in 14 of their last 15 games. Reinhart took a pass from Eichel and chipped in his sixth goal at 2:41 of the second period on Buffalo's first power play for a 2-1 lead.

Dadonov scored the Panthers'

RESULTS

Florida	3-2	Buffalo
Washington	6-3	New Jersey
Anaheim	2-1	Carolina
St. Louis	3-2	Colorado
Calgary	4-1	Los Angeles

second power-play goal just eight seconds after Casey Nelson went off for high-sticking, knotting the game 2-2 with his 11th goal at 11:56 of the third period.

BACKLUND HELPS FLAMES DOMINATE KINGS

Mikael Backlund scored twice in a three-point outing, and Johnny Gaudreau potted the game-winning goal in the third period as the host Calgary Flames beat the Los Angeles Kings 4-1 Friday night.

With the score tied 1-1 despite Calgary dominating all game, Gaudreau netted a power-play goal at 7:44 of the final frame to take the lead. Gaudreau, who rang three shots off the post on the night, sent a backhand into the cage for his 10th goal of the season and fourth in six games.

Flames goalie Mike Smith needed only 13 saves in winning his second consecutive start.

His biggest save came early in the

third period when it was a 1-1 game - a clutch diving blocker stop on Dustin Brown. The Flames, who are on a 5-1-1 run, gave up a season-low 14 shots on goal.

By comparison, they fired 18 on the Kings net in the third period alone. Backlund opened the scoring just 36 seconds into the affair with his first goal in 11 games, firing a long wrist shot that rang off the far post and into the net behind Kings goalie Cal Petersen.

With Petersen making several great saves to keep it a one-goal game, his squad drew even when Adrian Kempe scored at 13:41 of the second period.

While the Kings were buzzing in the Calgary zone, Kempe set up shop at the left face-off dot and snapped home a short-side shot.

Backlund scored the first of two empty-net goals for the Flames with 32 seconds remaining for his first multi-goal game in more than a year. Sean Monahan added another empty-netter with 7.3 seconds left on the clock. Matthew Tkachuk and Elias Lindholm, who played his 400th NHL game, each collected two assists for Calgary.

Petersen stopped 33 shots for the Kings, who have just two wins in their last six games and sit last in the NHL standings with 19 points.



Florida Panthers' Aleksander Barkov (left) celebrates with Jonathan Huberdeau after scoring the overtime goal to beat the Buffalo Sabres at the BB&T Center, Florida. (Getty Images/AFP)

## HOCKEY WORLD CUP

# Netherlands Crush Malaysia, Germany edge past Pakistan

'Pakistan are a strong team and they played really well today'



Pakistan's captain Mohamed Rizwan and Germany players vying for the ball during their group match at the 2018 Hockey World Cup in Bhubaneswar yesterday. (AFP)

FIH  
Bhubaneswar

Day Four of the Odisha Hockey Men's World Cup Bhubaneswar 2018 was all about Pool D, with the Netherlands making a big statement against Malaysia and Germany edging to a narrow victory over a well-organised Pakistan side.

The Netherlands were a cut above Malaysia in the first two periods of the day's opening match, showing brilliant movement to cause the team from Asia no end of problems.

Jeroen Herzberger's remarkable return from the international wilderness continued, with the 32-year-old forward scoring two wonderful backhand finishes either side of supplying a perfect pass for Mirco Pruijser to score as the Dutch raced into a 3-0 half time lead. It was an advantage that would certainly have been bigger were it not for veteran Malaysia goalkeeper Kumar Subramiam, who made numerous crucial saves to stop the Netherlands from running riot.

The Dutch continued their dominance after half time, with Mirco Pruijser and Billy Bakker both hitting the frame of the

goal before Mink van der Weerden scored a penalty corner drag-flick to make it 4-0. The score was moved to 5-0 before the end of the third quarter when Robert Kemperman volleyed home from close range, making the occasion of his 200th senior international appearance even more memorable.

A further two goals were scored by the rampant Dutch side in the final quarter, with Thierry Brinkman firing home a glorious backhand effort before Odisha Player of the Match Jeroen Herzberger completed his hat-trick in the final minute of the game. It was a terrific performance from the European champions, who have given early indication that they very much mean business here in Bhubaneswar.

Speaking after the match, Netherlands Head Coach Max Caldas was satisfied by his team's performance against a side that he said he respected greatly.

"Malaysia in the past few years have got good results. We took them very seriously. Things developed our way today, and I'm happy about that."

If the first match was one-sided, the day's second contest was anything but. Germany and Pakistan could not be separated in the first two quarters of game in which the defences of both teams ex-

celled.

The match burst into life in the third quarter, with Germany breaking the deadlock thanks to a wonderfully worked goal that was finished brilliantly by Marco Miltkau, who dived at full stretch to chip the ball over Pakistan goalkeeper Imran Butt and into the unguarded net. The Green Shirts came close to levelling moments later through a sliding Muhammad Zubair, but the Pakistan forward was unable to trouble Germany goalkeeper Tobias Walter with his attempted deflection.

Germany controlled the latter stages of the match to seal the victory, with Mats Grambusch being named the Odisha Player of the Match for his fine performance in midfield.

However, Pakistan's excellent performance suggests that they have the potential to upset the FIH Hero World Rankings at the Odisha Hockey Men's World Cup Bhubaneswar 2018.

"Pakistan are a strong team and they played really well today," said Germany captain Martin Häner after the match. "I'm always happy when we win, it is not always about scoring seven or eight goals. As a defender I'm happy we didn't concede."

Day Five of the Odisha Hockey Men's

World Cup Bhubaneswar 2018 takes place today, a day that will feature the second set of matches from Pool C. Canada take on South Africa at 1700 IST, with both teams searching for their first points of the competition after defeats in their respective opening matches.

The 1900 match will be a clash between the two winners of those opening games, with host nation India taking on Belgium in front of another 15,000-capacity crowd at the Kalinga Stadium.

Speaking ahead of his team's clash with South Africa, Canada captain Scott Tupper said: "Obviously, it's a hugely important game for both teams and will impact who goes through to the next round. Though we had patches of good play against Belgium, we'll be hoping to create more opportunity in the attacking area and capitalize on a few more chances. We were strong defensively in our first game, and it's critical that we maintain that mentality in our own half against South Africa. Ultimately, that team that prepares well and performs the best will come out on top."

In other news, Spain team captain Miguel Delas has been ruled out for the rest of the Odisha Hockey Men's World Cup Bhubaneswar 2018 through injury.

## NFL

## Rams, Chiefs eye playoff berths

AFP  
Los Angeles

The Los Angeles Rams will aim to become the first team to reach the NFL playoffs today with victory over the struggling Detroit Lions as the postseason picture takes shape.

A Rams side rejuvenated after a bye week head into today's game in Motor City buoyed by the fact they are now in pole position to claim home-field advantage through the playoffs.

The New Orleans Saints' upset 13-10 defeat to the Dallas Cowboys on Thursday means the 10-1 Rams now own the best record in the league.

A victory at Ford Field on Sunday would give the Rams the NFC West divisional title for a second straight season with four games to spare. It also leaves the Rams firmly in control of their playoff destiny as the top seeds in the NFC.

The challenge for the Lions, who are propping up the NFC North with a 4-7 record and are out of playoff contention, will be trying to stifle the Rams free-flowing offense.

So far this season, the Rams have averaged more than 35 points and nearly 450 yards of offense per game, with quarterback Jared Goff and running back Todd Gurley emerging as genuine MVP contenders.

"I think that's what makes the offense so special - they have very good players, a lot of very good players," Lions defensive coordinator Paul Pasqualoni said.

"Wide receivers, tight ends, running backs. And the quarterback is the number three rated guy in the league right now. He's playing really well."

The Rams' last outing was the mesmerising 54-51 shootout against Patrick Mahomes and the Kansas City Chiefs at the Los Angeles Coliseum on November 19.

Since that win, the Rams' defense has been boosted by the return to fitness of cornerback Aqib Talib, who is expect-

ed to line up against the Lions for the first time since late September.

### CHIEFS EYE OAKLAND AMBUSH

While the Rams will be the first team into the playoffs with a win today, the Chiefs can join them with a victory over AFC West divisional rivals Oakland. The Chiefs, however, who lead the AFC seedings with a 9-2 record, need other results to go their way to lock up a postseason berth this weekend.

And Chiefs coach Andy Reid is wary of being ambushed once again by the Raiders.

While the Raiders are 2-9 and out of the playoff reckoning, Reid's Chiefs have suffered two defeats at the Oakland Coliseum in recent seasons when they had entered the game as favourites.

"These AFC West opponents, they're tough venues to play at," said Reid. "The main thing is you've got to get yourself prepared when you go in there to play a good football team.... They played well against us."

Any slip-up by the Chiefs on Sunday could see the New England Patriots take over as top seeds in the AFC.

The Patriots, the only other team to beat the Chiefs this season, are one game behind on 8-3 going into their game against the Minnesota Vikings at Foxborough today.

Patriots coach Bill Belichick however remains solely focused on the threat posed by the Vikings (6-4), who are themselves chasing a playoff spot. Speaking to reporters this week, Belichick was full of admiration for Vikings counterpart Mike Zimmer.

"I think Mike's one of the best coaches in the league, no question about it," Belichick said. "He's done a great job with that program. He's been one of the great coaches in the league for a couple decades."

"They're a very, very good football team. They have good talent. Defensively, this is, I'd say, as good of coaching as we'll face."

### Vonn to delay retirement for one race next season

Lindsey Vonn will probably delay her retirement to compete at next year's World Cup stop at Lake Louise in the Canadian Rockies, the Olympic Alpine skiing champion said on Friday. Vonn had planned to retire at the end of the 2018-19 season, but her plans have changed after she injured herself in a high-speed crash last week.

The fall will keep the American out of the season-opening downhill this weekend at Lake Louise, where she has enjoyed more success than at any other venue on the World Cup circuit. "I've announced already I'm retiring after this World Cup season, so to miss my favourite stop on the tour

is devastating," she said in a YouTube video. "I'm probably going to have to come back next year and just race Lake Louise."

Vonn, 34, said she hyper-extended a knee, sprained a ligament and suffered a bone bruise in her fall.

"I'm going to be back shortly, probably be able to race in a few weeks," said Vonn, whose 82 career World Cup victories leaves her four short of the all-time record held by Ingemar Stenmark of Sweden. "Hopefully I'll break the record this season and I don't even have to think about it next year in Lake Louise... but whether I break the World Cup record or not, it doesn't matter."

## CRICKET

# ACC clinch Division 1 title of Zaffran tournament

By Sports Reporter  
Doha

Asian Cricket Club (ACC) defeated M Pallonji to win Division-1 title of the 1st Zaffran Cricket tournament 2018 organised by the Qatar Veterans League at the Losail Cricket Complex.

Batting first, M Pallonji batsmen were all out for 123 runs in 19 overs. Ayub and Sajeev scored 29 and 24 runs for their team. Prasanth took four wickets, while Appu and Mannu clinched two wickets each for ACC.

In reply, ACC achieved the target in 19.4 overs. Prasanth of ACC was adjudged man-of-the-match. Firoz of ACC was declared best batsman, while Ayub of M. Pallonji received the best bowler award. Naveed of ACC named best all-rounder and Neeraj of M. Pallonji adjudged best wicket-keeper. Business development manager of Zaffran Cafe Siddiq Fahad distributed the prizes.

Asian Cricket Club captain Sameer and his teammate Bashir receive winners trophy.



SECOND TEST

# Windies stumble in spin trial after Mahmudullah ton

Mehidy and Shakib share five wickets as West Indies are reduced to 75-5 at stumps

AFP  
Dhaka

Bangladesh spinners took a firm grip on the second Test against West Indies after Mahmudullah struck a career best 136 to guide the hosts to 508 in the first innings in Dhaka yesterday.

Mehidy Hasan and Shakib al-Hasan shared five wickets between them as West Indies were reduced to 75-5 at stumps on the second day, trailing the hosts by 433 runs in the first innings.

All five West Indies batsmen were clean bowled – only the third time in cricket history and the first time by spinners as Mehidy finished with 3-36 and Shakib claimed 2-15.

Shakib struck in the very first over when he flummoxed West Indies skipper Kraigg Brathwaite with inward delivery and Kieran Powell (four), Sunil Ambris (seven), Roston Chase (zero) and Shai Hope (10) followed him in quick succession.

Shimron Hetmyer (32 not out) and Shane Dowrich (17 not out) stemmed the rot to survive the day.

Hetmyer was given out off rookie spinner Nayeem Hasan on 10, but the decision was overturned by television replay.

The West Indies innings were in complete contrast to those of Bangladesh, which saw Shakib (80), Shadman Islam (76) and Liton Das (54) making useful contribution along with Mahmudullah.

Resuming on 259-5, Bangladesh's innings revolved around Mahmudullah, who faced 242 balls and struck 10 fours in his third Test century, on the second day.

Mahmudullah helped Bangladesh build on their overnight score putting on a 111-run with Shakib Al Hasan for the sixth wicket, 92-run with Liton Das for the seventh wicket, and a 56-run with Tajjul Islam (36) for the ninth wicket.

Shakib, who resumed on 55 overnight, added 25 to his overnight score before he gave a catch to Hope at gully off Kemar Roach.

Mahmudullah and Liton maintained the pressure, helping the home side add 128 runs in 25 overs of the morning session.

Liton – who was making a comeback to the side after being



Bangladesh's Mahmudullah plays a shot on the second day of the second Test against West Indies in Dhaka yesterday. (AFP)

### Scorecard

BANGLADESH 1st inn (o/h 259-5)		Total	(all out; 154 overs) 508	
S. Islam	lbw b Bishoo	76	S. Hope b M. Hasan	
S. Sarkar	c Hope b Chase	19	S. Ambris b Shakib	
M. Haque	c Chase b Roach	29	R. Chase b M. Hasan	
M. Mithun	b Bishoo	29	S. Hetmyer batting	
Shakib Al Hasan	c Hope b Roach	80	S. Dowrich batting	
M. Rahim	b Lewis	14	Extras	
M. Riyad	b Warrican	136	(b4, lb1) 5	
L. Das	b Brathwaite	54	Total	
M. Hasan	c Dowrich b Warrican	18	(five wickets; 24 overs) 75	
T. Islam	c Dowrich b Brathwaite	26	Fall of wickets: 1-0 (Brathwaite),	
N. Hasan	not out	12	2-6 (Powell), 3-17 (Ambris), 4-20	
Extras	(b2, lb8, wl, nb 4) 15		(Chase), 5-29 (Hope)	
			Bowling: Shakib 9-3-15-2, M.	
			Hasan 10-1-36-3, N. Hasan 3-0-9-	
			O, T. Islam 1-0-10-0, Mahmudullah 1-1-0-0	
WEST INDIES 1st inn				
K. Brathwaite	b Shakib	0		
K. Powell	b M. Hasan	4		

ing dropped in the first Test – hit Chase a six and a four in one

over to bring a quickfire fifty off just 50 balls.

Liton, who struck eight fours and a six in his fourth Test fifty,

fell after the lunch break when he attempted a reverse sweep off Brathwaite and missed the line to get bowled.

Jomel Warrican dismissed next batsman Mehidy Hasan, but Tajjul and Mahmudullah frustrated West Indies to take their score close to 500-run mark.

Mahmudullah faced 29 balls in nervous nineties before he cut Chase for four to bring his hundred.

Warrican bowled Mahmudullah to wrap-up the Bangladesh innings and finish with 2-91, while Roach, Devendra Bishoo and Brathwaite also claimed two wickets each.

Bangladesh are leading the two-Test series 1-0 thanks to their 64-run win in the first Test in Chittagong.

INDIA'S TOUR OF AUSTRALIA

# Vijay hits century but India's bowlers struggle in draw

AFP  
Sydney

Murali Vijay hit a stylish century yesterday to strengthen his bid to open the batting in the first Test against Australia, after India's rusty bowlers struggled against a young CA XI.

The veteran was dropped after the second Test against England this year, but has fought his way back into contention through a spell with Essex.

And with a nasty ligament injury on Friday ruling young opener Prithvi Shaw out of the Adelaide Test next week, he grabbed his chance with both hands, smashing 16 fours and five sixes in compiling 129.

KL Rahul, who is expected to face the new ball in Adelaide alongside either Vijay, Shikhar Dhawan, or even uncapped Mayank Agarwal, made 62 in their 212-2 total.

The four-day match at the Sydney Cricket Ground was India's last hit out before the Test and it ended in a draw after the CA XI made a mammoth 544 in reply to the visitor's first innings 358.

The big total from the home batsmen was a reality check for India's bowlers, who failed to impress.

Pacemen Umesh Yadav (1-113) and Ishant Sharma (1-73), and chief spinner Ravichandran Ashwin (2-122) were all expensive, but they at least got plenty of valuable practice.

Little-known Harry Nielsen was a thorn in their side, coming in at number six to hit exactly 100. It took skipper and very occasional bowler Virat Kohli to dismiss him.

Three other batsmen – D'Arcy Short, Aaron Hardie and Max Bryant – made half centuries.

The first of India's four-Test series gets underway on Thursday.



India's Murali Vijay (right) hits a shot on the fourth day of the tour match against Cricket Australia XI in Sydney yesterday. (AFP)

## Tamim Iqbal in line for Bangladesh ODI return

AFP  
Dhaka

Opening batsman Tamim Iqbal is set to make a comeback to the Bangladesh squad for the upcoming one-day international series against the West Indies, an official said yesterday. Tamim has not played since injuring his wrist during the Asia Cup opener against Sri Lanka in the UAE in September. He was expected to return to the side during the ongoing two-Test series against the West Indies but a rib injury in a recent training session delayed his comeback. "He has been cleared by the physio to play the ODIs. We are

expecting him to play from the start of the series," said chief selector Minhajul Abedin.

The three-match ODI series will be held from December 9-14 in Dhaka and Sylhet. Bangladeshi selectors on Saturday included Tamim in a Bangladesh Cricket Board XI squad for a warm-up match against the visitors in Dhaka on Thursday. Bangladesh ODI skipper Mashrafe Mortaza will lead the BCB team in the game. "We included Mashrafe and Tamim in the practice match squad as we felt they need some match practice before the series," Minhajul said. West Indies are currently trailing Bangladesh by 0-1 in the Test series.

NEW BEGINNING

# Teenage quick Shaheen Afridi set for Test debut

AFP  
Abu Dhabi

Teenage pace sensation Shaheen Afridi is all set to cap his meteoric rise with a Test debut for Pakistan in the third match against New Zealand in Abu Dhabi starting tomorrow.

A shoulder injury to medium pacer Mohamed Abbas in the second Test in Dubai has paved way for Shaheen to make his mark in the last act of a gripping series which stands at 1-1.

"If I get a chance I will do my best," Shaheen told AFP yesterday. "I always had belief in my ability and in my hard work although I didn't expect my chance will come in Tests so early."

The 18-year-old left-arm quick made his mark in a domestic match in September last year, claiming eight wickets for just 39 runs in a Quaid-e-Azam Trophy game, the best figures by a Pakistan bowler on first-class debut.

The cricket world took notice of the 1.98 metre tall bowler who could hit the 90 miles per hour mark with the ball. Within 15 months he is already being compared to Australian pace spearhead Mitchell Starc and legendary Pakistan

paceman Wasim Akram.

His rise to the Pakistan team began at home in Landi Kotal, a town in the Khyber District, close to the border with Afghanistan, where his elder brother Riaz who played one Test for Pakistan in 2004, gave him his first bowling lessons.

"My brother was my role model who taught me how to bowl and how to approach cricket with a positive frame of mind," said Shaheen. "I owe my success to him."

Riaz also taught his brother a few shots to the extent that he is considered a handy hard-hitting all-rounder.

Since his impressive first-class debut, Shaheen has continued to attract attention, finishing with 12 wickets at the ICC Under-19 World Cup in New Zealand this year and then grabbing a five wicket haul in a Pakistan Super League match.

### GRADUATION

Shaheen graduated to Pakistan colours in the home Twenty20 series against the West Indies in March, but real success came against New Zealand in last month's one-day series in which he claimed back-to-back four wicket hauls and finished as man-of-the-series.

Just like Wasim Akram, Shaheen has

also played just three first class matches before his first Test.

"Test cricket is the ultimate so matching the great Wasim's feat will motivate me a lot and just like I do in limited over matches, I will try to take wickets for my team to win the series," said Shaheen.

After his early form last month Pakistan's selection committee, headed by Inzamam-ul-Haq, named Shaheen in the Test squad for the New Zealand series with a view to developing him rather than playing him.

But Shaheen pressed his claims further when he took seven wickets – five of them clean bowled – in Pakistan A's win over England Lions in their four-day match in Abu Dhabi last month.

That performance and Abbas's injury pushed his chance earlier than expected.

"Our bowling coach Azhar Mahmood, coach Mickey Arthur and others have help me a lot and have worked very hard on me so I am ready to deliver my best."

The three-match series is currently tied at 1-1 with New Zealand winning the first Test by four runs in Abu Dhabi and Pakistan achieving an innings and 16 runs win in the second in Dubai.



**FOCUS**

# Hundreds register for QOC Flag Relay on Dec 13

By Sports Reporter  
Doha

More than 1,000 male and female Qataris and residents have registered their interest in carrying the Qatari flag around the country as the second edition of Flag Relay on December 13 draws closer.

Organised by Qatar Olympic Committee (QOC), the event aims to share pride, unity and inspiration through Team Qatar in celebration of Qatar's National Day five days later.

Current and retired Team Qatar athletes, schoolchildren, members from different communities and the public will carry the Qatari flag across the country's iconic landmarks, transporting it towards a grand finale at Aspire Zone through several sporting activities such as walking, running, cycling, kayaking and swimming.

Flag Relay is also designed to send a message of motivation to the younger generations to take up sport as they see their heroes, who make the nation proud at international events, carry the flag while practising their different sports.

The second edition of Flag Relay will see the organisers and participants attempt to break two Guinness World Records. The first record is for the

File picture of Qatar's cyclists participating in last year's Flag Relay.



most people in a cycling relay, which will start from Hamad International Airport to Meshereb Properties. QOC is working closely with Qatar Cycling Federation to include Team Qatar athletes and avid cyclists from the community.

Meanwhile, the second Guinness World Record attempt takes place at

Oxygen Park, the green lung of Education City, and is for the most people running 100 meters in a 1-hour relay. The current record stands at 252 and was achieved in the United States in 2012.

QOC is working closely with Qatar Foundation in preparation to break this record with Team Qatar athletes and

the public.

This year's edition aims to highlight Qatar's multiculturalism and unity by including expat participants. To do so, QOC has worked with the Foreign Ministry and foreign embassies to include expat communities in the flag relay in addition to Qatari students living in the United States, United Kingdom

and France.

Together with the participants from the public and the different national federations, the QOC has selected several public figures to be ambassadors for this edition of the Flag Relay. They are passionate sport, cultural, art and adventure advocates from Qatar that will help carry the flag while delivering the messages of peace, solidarity and friendship across the country.

Each ambassador comes from a different background with a different goal and vision in mind. They have each given back to their country by achieving 'first time ever' to ski the North Pole, to climb Mount Everest, to run around Qatar, and the image that has become the symbol of Qatar and more. The QOC will announce the names of these ambassadors on its social media channels leading up to the event.

Flag Relay 2018 will start at 6 a.m. at QOC Winter Camp in Sealine with the endurance team from Al Shaqab before the flag flies on a small plane to Qatar Racing Club. After that, the flag's journey continues through several stops, including Hamad International Airport where flagbearers walk with the flag before the Guinness World Record in cycling is attempted.

Jogging, cycling and walking are among the other activities that will continue the maroon flag's trip through Souq Waqif, Hamad Medical Corpora-

tion, the Museum of Islamic Art and Sheraton Park. After that, flagbearers will jog with the maroon flag and make a stop at Qatar Olympic Committee before carrying on to Katara, the Pearl and Qatar University via different activities, including driving, swimming, rowing and sailing.

Flagbearers will then kayak with the flag through Al Thakhira Mangroves and then continue by driving to Qatar Foundation where the participants will attempt to break the Guinness World Record for the largest number of people running 100 meters in a 1-hour relay.

The penultimate stop for Flag Relay 2018 is at Qatar Football National Team Club from which flagbearers will walk to Aspire Park where the journey concludes with raising of the flag and a series of fun activities in celebration of Qatar National Day.

Besides celebrating the colours of the maroon flag and what it means for the country in terms of unity, pride and achievement, Flag Relay 2018 will raise awareness of cancer and promote the importance of early detection.

The initiative, carried out in collaboration with Qatar Cancer Society, aims to empower those living with cancer and advocate scientific research on the disease. The flag relay will include ten cancer survivors who will carry the flag towards the end of its journey from Qatar Foundation to Aspire park.

**QNB STARS LEAGUE**

# Maaloul says Duhail face tough Rayyan challenge

Rayyan stand-in coach insists title race still not over

By Sports Reporter  
Doha

Table-toppers Al Duhail, the only unbeaten team in the QNB Stars League, will be wary of Al Rayyan when they clash for the second time this season in the country's premier top flight tournament.

A goalless draw in the first leg means Al Duhail would be extra cautious about preserving their enviable record so far, and coach **Nabil Maaloul** was well aware of the challenge ahead.

"The match against Al Rayyan is a clear challenge for the players to continue in the path of achieving positive results and our stay at the top of the standings," said Maaloul.

"It will be a very difficult game and Al Rayyan are the only team we dropped points against when we were held goalless in the first leg. We have won all other matches so far. Thank God, the team is in first place and there is a five-point difference between us and Al Sadd, which is comfortable."

Maaloul said injury to Abdulla al-Ahraq has complicated the situation for Al Duhail, especially since their Korean ace Nam Tae-hee is still unfit.



"After Nam Tae-Hee, our player Abdulla al-Ahraq has also joined the list of injured, but our youngsters know the difficulty of the task. The team has good bench strength and all of our young players are confident. They have high levels

and they do very well in future.

Meanwhile, Al Rayyan's stand-in coach Gilson Souza insisted that Al Duhail are still not guaranteed the title despite their huge lead at the top.

"It is too early to say that Al Duhail will

win the league, because there is plenty of time. Al Sadd are still there and the title fight is between them.

"Al Rayyan's chances are still there, mathematically. We will play for a win. We will miss goalkeeper Omar Barry, Abdulrahman al-Korbi, Sebastian Soria and Mousa Haroun in this game. We will try to compensate for their absences. We hope to come good.

"Everyone in our squad has the urge to win against Al Duhail. There are many matches still to play and we will seek to achieve good results," said Souza.

Meanwhile, Al Gharafa coach Christian Gourcuff said his team will be aiming to bounce back against Al Sadd.

"We had suffered a setback against Al Saliya in the last round. We need to compensate for that. We have prepared the side for the tough game against a side like Al Sadd. We are seeking a positive result," said Gourcuff.

"We have to keep our focus. Our performance against Al Saliya was ok, but making many mistakes led to our loss. In order to win, you must score more goals than the opponents.

"Our striker Mehdi Taremi has great potential. He is capable of making a difference and helping the team," said Gourcuff.

**QATAR SUPERSTOCK**

# Al-Sulaiti tops times in official practice



Superstock action from Losail during the weekend.

Qatar Superstock 600 defending champion Saeed al-Sulaiti began this season's campaign in style yesterday by topping the two-day official practice sessions at the Losail International Circuit.

Al-Sulaiti was the fastest rider with a lap time of 2:05.131 on Day 2 during the last session, ahead of Mishal al-Naimi, the runner up of last year's championship, who finished second with a time of 2:05.178. Last year's top rookie, Abdullah al-Qubaisi was the third fastest in a time of 2:05.367.

Nasser al-Malki and Hungarian Balint Kovacs completed the top five while Fahad

Al-Sowaidi, Jassim al-Thani, Kuwaiti Mohamed al-Zaidan, Ali al-Shammari and Kuwaiti Nawaf al-Shuabi made up the top ten.

Al-Sulaiti was very happy with the overall results of the official test. "To be honest, I faced difficult times for this weekend as I broke my finger last week while training. But I still was able to ride and set the fastest time," said al-Sulaiti.

"I am also really happy with Abdulla's performance. He is much faster and for sure. Thanks to Abdulrahman al-Mannai (QMMF President) and Khalid al-Remaihi (LCSC Vice President and General Manager) for their support and also to Ooredoo to continue with their sponsorship," added al-Sulaiti.

Al-Naimi had some problem with the front tyre but was happy with his overall performance. "I tried to find a good set up but we didn't have enough grip to do a good lap time and I had a problem with the front tyre. The bike is working very well and I

hope we can make a good result in the opening round"

Hungarian rider Balint Kovacs is back to Qatar to race again in this championship. Kovacs has been racing at the IDM and Suzuki Cup with a 1000cc bike and he finds this championship a great opportunity to train.

"It is really nice to race again here. After racing with the 1000cc it is a bit difficult to get again into the rhythm of the 600cc bike but this test is good to get used to the bike. I am really looking forward for the opening round next weekend" said Kovacs.

The Championship is organised by Losail Circuit Sports Club and Qatar Motor and Motorcycle Federation with Pirelli Qatar as sponsor. There will be a total of five rounds, with two races in each round and the two categories racing together, QSTK600 and QSTK Trophy. The first round of the season will be on December 6 and 7.

LCSC Vice President and General Manager al-Remaihi said: "We are looking forward to start the new season and happy with the good number of participants. "We are very proud of what we achieved last season and we expect another fierce and strong competition between all the participants in both categories."

**CALENDAR:**

- Round 1: 6th & 7th December 2018
- Round 2: 14th & 15th December 2018
- Round 3: 25th & 26th January 2019
- Round 4: 15h, 8th & 9th February 2019
- Round 5: 29th & 30th March 2019

**EPL Derby Day on beIN SPORTS**

All eyes are on beIN this weekend as fans look forward to some mouth-watering English Premier League derbies live and exclusive on beIN, the home of sports and entertainment.

The English Premier League has already seen its fair share of action this season. With at least five teams fighting for a top four finish and Liverpool trying to keep pace with leaders Manchester City, the Premier League season has definitely lived up to expectations.

Arsenal vs Tottenham Hotspur will kick off today at 17:05 Qatar Time and will be live and exclusive on beIN SPORTS HD2 in Arabic and beIN SPORTS HD11 in English. The game will also be live on beIN's dedicated 4K channel for a superior viewing experience.

The North London derby will see famous analysts in both Arabic and English studios, most notably Egyptian legend Mohamed Abutraka and former Arsenal player Gilberto Silva.

London hosts another derby today as Chelsea take on rivals Fulham in the West London Derby.

**REPORT**

# Al Arabi back to winning ways

By Sports Reporter  
Doha

Al Arabi got back to winning ways after beating bottom side Al Kharaitiyat 2-1 in Week 14 of the QNB Stars League yesterday.

Ahmed Ibrahim (43rd minute) and Mohamed Salah El Neel (49th) scored the goals for Al Arabi.

Valentin Lazar pulled one back for Al Kharaitiyat in the 55th minute.

It was Al Arabi's sixth victory and they stay in. Tunisian coach Hatem al-Moaddeb's men took their points tally to 18, while Al Kharaitiyat stayed on three points from the victory they registered against Al Gharafa.

The Thunders are precariously placed at the bottom of league standings and face relegation.

Al Kharaitiyat had the numerical advantage of playing with 10 men for most part of the game after Majed Aman was given his marching orders in the 42nd minute.



Al Arabi players celebrate their win over Al Kharaitiyat yesterday.

Both teams fought it out in their bid to gain advantage.

Al Kharaitiyat put up a gritty show. In fact they enjoyed more ball possession in the first half (53 per cent) although it was 50-50 at the end of the game.

Ahmed Ibrahim opened the scoring via a header off a free-kick from Tareq Hamad.

Brazilian Diego Jardel, who held the Al Arabi midfield together, gave the assist for their second goal scored by El Neel.

Algerian midfielder Jugurtha Hamroun was the livewire among the Al Kharaitiyat ranks. He set the stage for their goal netted by Valentin.