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BOXING Page 6

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Monday, May 13, 2019
 Ramadan 8, 1440 AH

GULF TIMES SPORT

CRICKET

Mumbai Indians rule IPL after dramatic last-ball victory

Page 4

FOOTBALL

City bounce back against Brighton to win EPL title

City are the first side to retain the title since their bitter rivals Manchester United managed the feat in 2009

AFP
 London

Manchester City retained the Premier League title in style yesterday, holding their nerve to come from behind against Brighton and see off a charging Liverpool after a thrilling campaign.

Pep Guardiola's team thumped Brighton 4-1 away to finish on 98 points – the second-highest total in Premier League history – as Liverpool beat Wolves 2-0 at Anfield to finish a single, agonising, point adrift.

City, who strung together 14 league wins at the end of the season, are the first side to retain the title since their bitter rivals Manchester United managed the feat in 2009, and remain on course for the first domestic treble in English football history.

But Guardiola's team of aristocrats did not have it all their own way on a day of drama on England's south coast in keeping with an astonishing season in which the lead switched hands time after time.

Liverpool drew first blood yesterday, with Sadio Mane striking in the 17th minute to put them mathematically top of the table and on course for their first English top-flight title since 1990, before the Premier League era even started.

City fans' nerves were shredded even further when Glenn Murray put Brighton in front from a corner in the 27th minute, resulting in a huge roar at Anfield.

But those cheers were quickly muted, with Guardiola's side level just 83 seconds later, Agüero staying onside and keeping his cool to finish after a brilliant ball from David Silva.

Ten minutes later, the unmarked Aymeric Laporte rose to head in Riyad Mahrez's corner to complete the turnaround for City.



Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola lifts the trophy as they celebrate winning the Premier League on the final day of the competition yesterday.

Guardiola's side continued to dominate at the start of the second half and were rewarded when Mahrez smashed in a third goal with 27 minutes to go.

Ilkay Gundogan then blasted home a free-kick to put the result beyond doubt.

City broke a host of Premier League

records in romping to the title last season, becoming the first team in English top-flight history to reach 100 points and finishing a record 19 points

clear of closest rivals Manchester United.

This term has been a totally different campaign, with Guardiola's men

forced to dig deep to see off the relentless challenge of Liverpool, who have lost just one Premier League game all season.

The champions have ground out a number of 1-0 victories in recent weeks, showing they have added steel to their style.

The outcome was cruel on Liverpool, who are second behind only United in the all-time list of English champions with 18 titles, although the last came in 1990.

The Merseysiders' points tally is the third-highest in Premier League history.

Jürgen Klopp's side travelled to face City at the Etihad in January with the chance to open up a 10-point lead but the defending champions won 2-1 in what turned out to be the pivotal match of the campaign.

Liverpool suffered a blip in late January and February, held to a series of draws, but they found their form again and relentlessly harried City, finishing with nine straight league wins.

Klopp's team will have to put the disappointment behind them as they prepare to face Premier League rivals Spurs in the Champions League final in Madrid on June 1.

Elsewhere on the final day of Premier League action, Tottenham made mathematically certain of a place in the top four, drawing 2-2 against Everton.

Arsenal beat Burnley 3-1 while fellow Europa League finalists Chelsea were held to a goalless draw at Leicester.

Ole Gunnar Solskjær's Manchester United finished their season with a whimper, losing 2-0 at home to relegated Cardiff.

There were also wins for Crystal Palace, Newcastle and West Ham. Southampton and Huddersfield drew 1-1.

BOTTOMLINE

Delighted Ferreira thanks Al Sadd fans, Xavi

By Sports Reporter
 Doha

Al Sadd head coach **Jesualdo Ferreira** expressed his delight after his side reached the final of the 2019 Amir Cup with a 2-0 semi-final win over Al Rayyan on Saturday night.

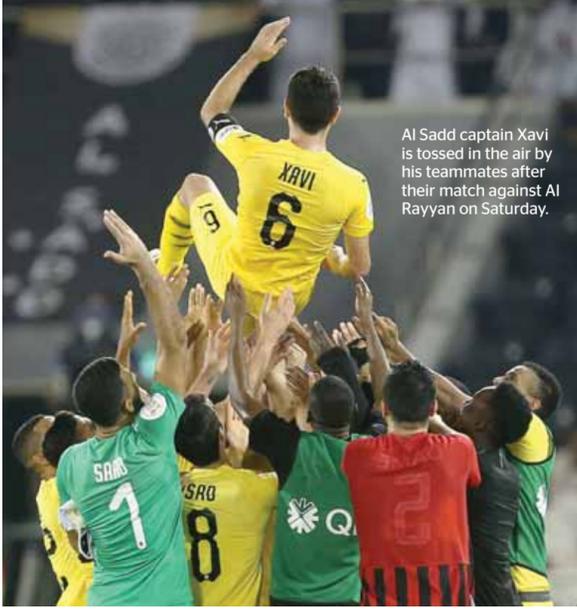
Speaking at the post-match press conference, Ferreira said: "Al Sadd dominated throughout the 90 minutes. We were keen to avoid mistakes and conceding goals. We could have scored more but we played with defensive caution. We also missed a penalty and were not lucky in front of goal.

"We are really happy that we have achieved this victory, just days after defeating Al Ahli in the AFC Champions League. So I want to congratulate the players and also the fans who supported us. I would have been delighted to reach the final, even if the result was 1-0.

"I am happy that we will play the final at the Al Wakrah Stadium, which will attract the attention of the world. Our players will never forget those historic moments. The fans need to be with us on that occasion. Today you saw the intense desire of the players to



reach the final and get the title."
 "I don't know who Al Sadd will face in the final. But we will not have many chances, that's how finals are because the teams are cautious and the Al Sadd players are also tired.
 However, we won't waste the chance to win the title. We know how tough the match between Al Duhail and Al Saliyah. We will welcome any team."
 Ferreira also praised Xavi, who played his last home game.
 "Throughout my time working with



Al Sadd captain Xavi is tossed in the air by his teammates after their match against Al Rayyan on Saturday.

Al Sadd fans honour Xavi

Playing in his final home game, Al Sadd captain Xavi was honoured by the club fans who unfurled a huge banner of him during the Amir Cup semi-final against Al Rayyan.

Xavi had earlier announced his retirement from the game at the end of the game and this was his last game at the Jassim bin Hamad Stadium. The legendary midfielder still has the Amir Cup final to play at the Al Wakrah Stadium

on May 16, in addition to the remaining AFC Champions League group stage game against Persepolis on May 20.

When the clock showed six minutes, the Al Sadd fans unfurled a banner with Xavi's number 6 on it, in addition to writing 'Thank You' in Spanish.

Xavi won the Qatari league title this year, while he has also won the Amir Cup in 2017, and the Qatar Cup and the Sheikh Jassim Cup in the same year.

Xavi, he was always at a high level. I want to salute Xavi, because he focused on the young players. He did not give importance to his status or fame; he just wanted to work for the team."

Asked about Xavi becoming the coach of Al Sadd, Ferreira said: "Xavi will be in the most suitable position in his sporting career. He knows Qatar well and he knows Al Sadd and the players here. He will be fortunate that he will be in a country with good infrastructure that is unmatched in the world.

"I wish him and Al Sadd all the best and I am sure that success will continue to follow Al Sadd, because of the

way Xavi deals with Al Sadd, the fans and Qatari sport in general."

Finally, he concluded by saying: "This is my 124th match with Al Sadd. I am happy to end my career here at Al Sadd's stadium. I want to thank the Al Sadd fans first, for their support for me throughout the years. My career with Al Sadd is over but my coaching career is not done yet. I am ready to work with clubs in Qatar or outside if I get offers. I will study them with care and choose the best option for me.

"I want to continue working in Qatar or any other continent, and why not for many years to come. You know I will not abandon my love for football."



PREMIER LEAGUE

Man City triumph 'toughest title' of my career: Guardiola

Guardiola won his eighth domestic championship in 10 seasons that have featured titles with Barcelona and Bayern

AFP
Brighton, United Kingdom

Pep Guardiola said Manchester City's 2018/19 Premier League success was the toughest triumph of his illustrious managerial career. City came from behind to win 4-1 away to Brighton in yesterday's final day of the season – a result that meant the reigning champions finished just a point in front of second-placed Liverpool, who won 2-0 at home to Wolves.

In most seasons, Liverpool's tally of 97 points would have seen them crowned champions. Guardiola, celebrating his eighth domestic championship in 10 seasons that have featured La Liga and Bundesliga titles with Barcelona and Bayern Munich, was in no doubt about Liverpool's quality.

"We worked a lot," he said. "I have to say congratulations to Liverpool of course. Thank you so much. They helped to push us and to increase our standards from last season. To compete against this team pushed us to do what we have done. It's incredible, 198 points in two seasons."

"I think last season Manchester City made the standards," Guardiola added. "That is the level in the Premier League and Liverpool have helped us to be there all the time."

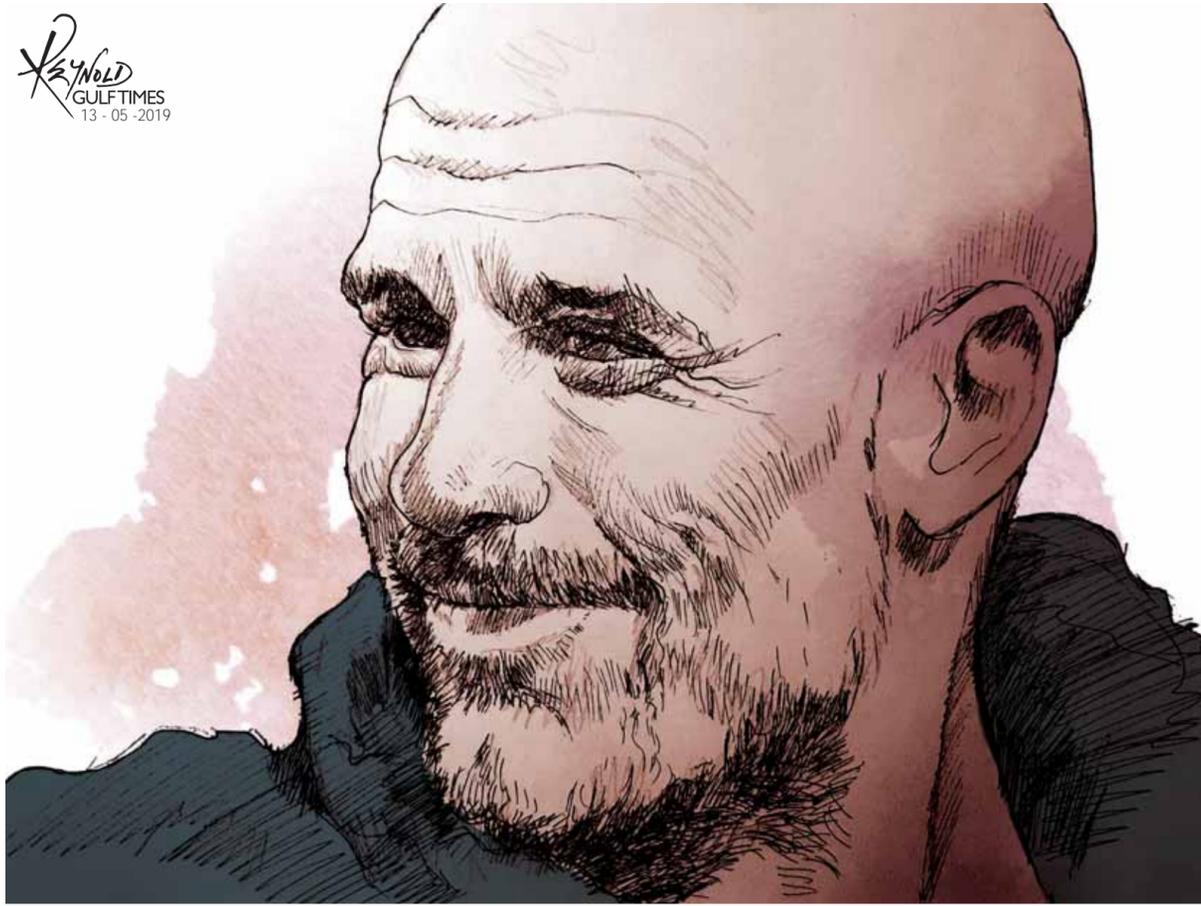
Guardiola's side secured exactly 100 points in winning the title last season but the manager was arguably even more impressed by their efforts this term, even if the overall tally was lower. "To win the title we had to win 14 games in a row," he explained.

"For two to three months we cannot lose one point and we did it all playing in all competitions until the semi-finals of the Champions League. It's incredible. Normally if you get 100 points the tendency is to go down but Liverpool helped us to be consistent. This was the toughest title in all my career."

But Guardiola said next season could be even more competitive. "It will be tougher but we will be stronger too," he said. "When you can win two in a row I have the feeling that next season we will come back and try to be who we are right now."

Yesterday's result meant Liverpool's wait for a maiden Premier League title – their last domestic championship was in 1990 – goes on, although they could yet win the Champions League if they beat Tottenham Hotspur when the English rivals meet in a Madrid final on June 1.

KEYWORD
GULFTIMES
13-05-2019



Liverpool forward Mohamed Salah, whose 22 goals this season made him a joint-winner of the Premier League's golden boot award, said the Anfield club would challenge again next term. "We only lost one (Premier League) game all season," the Egypt forward said. "We gave everything. We got 97 points. We will fight next season for the title."

Manchester City captain Vincent Kompany said the title win was the "hardest" he had experienced. "Back to back... I think it was the hardest, most tough Premier League ever," Kompany said. "Liverpool was exceptional. I don't mean to rub it in, it is what it

is, they didn't deserve to lose. It makes me so much more happy that we played such a great team all season. We had our backs to the wall, we won at the Etihad and today we were able to stay in front."

Asked if he was aware of the score at Anfield when Liverpool scored early on, Kompany said: "Honestly I didn't know. We heard the Brighton fans singing '1-0 to Liverpool' just at the moment we conceded so we knew then but we've done it before. We were creating chances, finding the gaps, imposing ourselves. Though the pitch was slow I felt we were magnificent. We did everything we needed to do in a game such

as today." Kompany said City would now focus on next week's FA Cup final and the prospect of an unprecedented domestic treble. "It's a combination of a great group of players, great staff and our incredible desire to over-achieve," he said.

"Because we've got such a good team over-achieving is difficult but we're looking forward to the FA Cup final now, that would be unprecedented. We'll go and celebrate but we're also thinking of that next game on Saturday."

Kompany scored a stunning goal to win last Monday's match with Leicester

1-0 which kept City in the driving seat – but he said the title was a result of a team effort. "I know which (goal) was most special to me but we all chipped in this season," he said. "We talk about the goal but I think about how many clean sheets we've achieved in the last 15 games. It's ridiculous."

RESULTS

Brighton 1 (Murray 27) Manchester City 4 (Aguero 28, Laporte 38, Mahrez 63, Gundogan 72); Burnley 1 (Barnes 65) Arsenal 3 (Aubameyang 52, 63, Nketiah 90+4); Crystal Palace 5 (Batsuaui 24, 32, Simpson 37-og, Van Aanholt 65,

POINTS TABLE

Read as: played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points:

Man City	38	32	2	4	95	23	98
Liverpool	38	30	7	1	89	22	97
Chelsea	38	21	9	8	63	39	72
Tottenham	38	23	2	13	67	39	71
Arsenal	38	21	7	10	73	51	70
Man Utd	38	19	9	10	65	54	66
Wolves	38	16	9	13	47	46	57
Everton	38	15	9	14	54	46	54
Leicester	38	15	7	16	51	48	52
West Ham	38	15	7	16	52	55	52
Watford	38	14	8	16	52	59	50
C Palace	38	14	7	17	51	53	49
Newcastle	38	12	9	17	42	48	45
B'mouth	38	13	6	19	56	70	45
Burnley	38	11	7	20	45	68	40
S'mpton	38	9	12	17	45	65	39
Brighton	38	9	9	20	35	60	36
Cardiff	38	10	4	24	34	69	34
Fulham	38	7	5	26	34	81	26
H'sfield	38	3	7	28	22	76	16

Notes: Top four qualify for Champions League; Fifth and sixth-placed teams qualify for Europa League; Bottom three relegated to Championship

Townsend 80) Bournemouth 3 (Lerma 45, Ibe 57, King 73); Fulham 0 Newcastle 4 (Shelvey 9, Perez 11, Schar 61, Rondon 90); Leicester 0 Chelsea 0; Liverpool 2 (Mane 17, 81) Wolves 0; Manchester United 0 Cardiff 2 (Mendez-Laing 23-pen, 54); Southampton 1 (Redmond 41) Huddersfield 1 (Pritchard 55); Tottenham 2 (Dier 3, Eriksen 75) Everton 2 (Walcott 69, Tosun 72); Watford 1 (Deulofeu 46) West Ham 4 (Noble 15, 78-pen, Lanzini 39, Arnautovic 71)

MANCHESTER CITY HONOURS

League titles: First Division/Premier League: 1936/37, 1967/68, 2011/12, 2013/14, 2017/18, 2018/19

Domestic Cups: FA Cup: 1903/04, 1933/34, 1955/56, 1968/69, 2010/11

League Cup: 1969/70, 1975/76, 2013/14, 2015/16, 2017/18, 2018/19

FA Community Shield: 1937, 1968, 1972, 2012, 2018

European trophy: European Cup Winners' Cup: 1969/70

FOCUS

Solskjaer says work starts now for United after dismal end

AFP
Manchester, United Kingdom

Ole Gunnar Solskjaer said Manchester United will "take some time" to close the gap to Manchester City and Liverpool after they finished their season with a dismal 2-0 defeat at home by already-relegated Cardiff. United finished in sixth place in the Premier League, 32 points behind champions City, who accumulated 98 points, edging out Liverpool by a single point.

That gap between Solskjaer's side and City is wider than the difference of 30 points between United and top-flight winners Leeds in 1973/74, a season when the Old Trafford club were relegated – albeit in an era when teams were awarded just two points for a win instead of the current three.

United finished five points behind fourth-placed Tottenham Hotspur, meaning they miss out on qualifying for the lucrative Champions League, which will make it harder to attract top-class players to the club.

"Today was not the problem," said United manager Solskjaer, who previously had a brief spell in charge of Cardiff, after away fans at Old Trafford yesterday had chanted he would be "sacked in the morning".

"You can have all the possession and chances you want but we concede easy goals and not score at the other. That is not where our challenge lies – we have a long and hard way to be where we want



Manchester United's midfielder Paul Pogba (left) shakes hands manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer after their loss to Cardiff City. (AFP)

to be." The Norwegian, who initially oversaw a dramatic upturn in form after he took over from Jose Mourinho in December, said: "It will take some time to close in on the top. We finished five or six points behind third, fourth, fifth and that has to be our aim. The top two teams have set a standard higher than before and we have to take up the next challenge."

The former United striker added: "The work starts now. Everyone has the summer off but we have to come back with a different mentality and different attitude of being a Man United team. The ones who played, did well but it was not good enough."

United last won the Premier League title in 2013, in Alex Ferguson's last season in charge at Old Trafford.

Since then they have finished seventh, fourth, fifth, sixth, second and now sixth again – a far cry from their repeated title triumphs under the outstanding Scottish manager.

They won 14 out of their first 17 games after Solskjaer replaced Mourinho, including a remarkable 3-1 triumph at Paris Saint-Germain to reach the Champions League quarter-finals but have lost eight out of 12 in all competitions since then.

Solskjaer said the past couple of months had been "extremely hard" for the club. "More or less the only positive from today is that the season is over," he said following boos from home fans at full-time as United ended the campaign without a win in six matches in all competitions, and just two victories from 12 games.

SPOTLIGHT

Premier League title near-miss is only Liverpool's first step, says Klopp

AFP
Liverpool

Jürgen Klopp vowed this season was just the "first step" for his Liverpool team as he congratulated Manchester City on pipping his side to the Premier League title yesterday. Liverpool beat Wolves 2-0 at Anfield thanks to two goals from Sadio Mane, but City came from behind to win 4-1 at Brighton and retain their title by a single point.

It meant Liverpool ended the season on 97 points, the third-highest tally in Premier League history, but fell agonisingly short of securing their first English top-flight title since 1990. "Congratulations to Manchester City," Liverpool boss Klopp said. "We tried everything to make it as difficult as possible but not difficult enough. I couldn't be more proud of the boys. It's incredible what they did all season and today was a strange situation. We were really good until 1-0, what happened then was clear. You can't tell the people to calm down."

City trailed for 83 seconds after Glenn Murray's first-half header for Brighton, briefly putting Liverpool two points clear at the top as it stood, but Pep Guardiola's side fought back to ultimately win with ease. "At that moment (when Liverpool fans celebrated Brighton's goal) it was a shock for everyone and Wolves were there," added Klopp.

"We had to fight. In the end we scored two and kept a clean sheet. It's nice but not how we wanted it. It's clear we had to work hard and City too. Our target during the week was to get 97 points, we got that – that's special. We want to write our own history and we did. Today feels not so good but we have plenty of time to prepare for an important game in three weeks (Champions League final)."

Klopp hailed his team's progress in the past year, having needed a 4-0 victory over Brighton on the final day of last season just to



Liverpool's German manager Jurgen Klopp (right) greets a child at the end of the English Premier League match against Wolverhampton Wanderers at Anfield. (AFP)

finish fourth. "The boys were all there from last season apart from (goalkeeper) Alisson," he said. "He had a big impact but all the rest were here last season. It's a very special season, a better season than I played with my team (Borussia Dortmund) when we were champions in Germany. But we cannot ignore one team were better."

"It's clear we were lucky in moments, like City were. We were unlucky against City but scored in the last second against Everton and late on against Newcastle, they could have

been draws as well... They (City) have 198 points in two years, that's special. We made such big steps. It's only the first step. Always after a good year we lost key players (in the past) but we won't (this time) so we'll be there again."

Liverpool could yet be crowned European champions for a sixth time if they beat English rivals Tottenham in the Champions League final in Madrid on June 1. And Klopp said: "We have three weeks to prepare for the Champions League final – let's give it a go."

LA LIGA

Barca bounce back from Champions League nightmare

Real Madrid slip to their second defeat in three games

AFP
Madrid

Barcelona's Champions League recovery has begun and Getafe's hopes of qualifying for the tournament could be over after they were beaten 2-0 at Camp Nou yesterday. Arturo Vidal and a Djene Dakonam own-goal saw Barca bounce back from their capitulation against Liverpool, even if their fans had not forgotten judging by the swathes of empty seats and scattering of whistles before kick-off.

Getafe might have hoped for their opponents to suffer a longer European hangover but instead they drop out of the top four, with one match left to play, after Valencia eased to a 3-1 victory over Alaves. Valencia now sit fourth, level on points with Getafe but in front due to their superior head-to-head. They finish the season away at struggling Real Valladolid while Getafe are at home to Villarreal.

Barcelona's victory means they stretch their lead at the top of the table to 11 points over Atletico Madrid, who were held to a 1-1 draw by Sevilla, and 18 ahead of Real, who lost 3-1 to Real Sociedad after Jesus Vallejo was sent off.

If they beat Valencia in the final of the Copa del Rey on May 25, Barca will claim a second domestic double in as many years but even that will not make amends for the collapse at Anfield.

Ernesto Valverde insisted on Saturday that he wants to continue as coach and a smooth end to the season, including winning the cup, might reduce the appetite for change. They will be without the injured Luis Suarez for the final in Seville and the sight of Philippe Coutinho hobbling off against Getafe, clutching his hamstring, will be a concern.

The whistles before kick-off had not been unanimous, with some also chanting "Barca until the end", but the empty seats at Camp Nou perhaps sent the loudest message. Jorge Molina thought he had put Getafe ahead in the first half but was ruled offside by VAR and then hit the post in the 88th minute with a header from close range.

In between, Vidal gave Barcelona the lead, turning in the rebound after Gerard Pique's header was pushed out by David Soria. Molina might have equalised but instead Lionel Messi forced a late second after a one-two with Sergi Roberto was poked in by Getafe's Djene.

Real Madrid's revenge from their own Champions League exit is yet to materialise as Zinedine Zidane's side slipped to their second defeat in three games. It is also now only three wins from eight for Madrid, who took the lead thanks to a brilliant individual goal from Brahim



Getafe's Uruguayan defender (left) Leonardo Cabrera vies for the ball with Barcelona's Argentinian forward Lionel Messi during the La Liga match at the Camp Nou Stadium in Barcelona yesterday. (AFP)

Diaz, the former Manchester City winger finishing after a mesmerizing, weaving run.

But Mikel Merino equalised after a silky backheel from Willian Jose and Madrid defender Vallejo was sent off for saving a shot with his hand.

Thibaut Courtois parried away Willian's penalty but La Real capitalised on their extra man as Joseba Zaldua headed in at the back post before Ander Barrenetxea drove past Courtois.

Real's defeat confirms Atletico as the highest-placed club in the Spanish capital for a second consecutive year as the Wanda Metropolitan waved goodbye to their captain Diego Godin. Atletico's players formed a tunnel for the tearful Godin after the final whistle, with a message in the centre circle that read "Gracias Diego". Godin, who has announced he will leave this summer after nine years, was unable to finish with a home win after Pablo Sarabia cancelled out Koke's deflected opener.

A point for Sevilla means they could yet snatch fourth place on the final day, as they sit two points behind Getafe and Valencia.

But Valencia are in pole position, Carlos Soler, Santi Mina and Kevin Gameiro giving them victory over Alaves to ease the disappointment of losing to Arsenal in the Europa League semi-finals on Thursday. At the other end of the table, Girona are all but relegated.

Their 2-1 defeat to Levante leaves them needing to make up three points on Celta Vigo, as well as a six-goal

swing in goal difference next weekend.

SPANISH LA LIGA RESULTS

Villarreal 1 (Toko Ekambi 60) Eibar 0; Athletic Bilbao 3 (Raul Garcia 16-pen, 17, Williams 40) Celta Vigo 1 (Aspas 89-pen); Rayo Vallecano 1 (Medran 73) Valladolid 2 (Unal 6-pen, Guardiola 80); Real Sociedad 3 (Merino 26, Zaldua 57, Barrenetxea 67) Real Madrid 1 (Diaz 6); Barcelona 2 (Vidal 39, Djene 89-og) Getafe 0; Leganes 0 Espanyol 2 (Iglesias 35, 71-pen); Atletico Madrid 1 (Koke 30) Sevilla 1 (Sarabia 70); Real Betis 2 (Joaquin 22, 90+8) SD Huesca 1 (Juanpi 55-pen); Girona 1 (Stuani 60) Levante 2 (Morales 62, Bardhi 86); Valencia 3 (Soler 29, Santi Mina 34, Gameiro 68) Alaves 1 (Ximo Navarro 12)

PREMIER LEAGUE

African trio share Golden Boot award

AFP
London

The race to be crowned the English Premier League's leading scorer this season ended in a three-way tie yesterday as the African trio of Sadio Mane, Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang and Mohamed Salah shared the Golden Boot.

Gabon forward Aubameyang scored twice for Arsenal at Burnley to join Salah and his Liverpool teammate Mane, who netted a final-day double against Wolves, on 22 goals for the Premier League season. Sergio Agüero, of champions Manchester City, was next in line with 21 goals.

Salah has now won the award two seasons in a row but this term's winning tally was the lowest by players in English football's top-flight since 2010/11 when Dimitar Berbatov and Carlos Tevez shared the Golden Boot with 20 goals apiece.

Aubameyang was delighted to be a member of an all-African trio of winners, saying in quotes reported by the BBC: "I share this trophy with two other guys I like, great players and African. We are representing Africa, that's cool. I am happy we won, and I am sharing this trophy with two other guys I like. My teammates knew about the Golden Boot, I said nothing. I did not want them to play and only focus on me. I am a team player."

For Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp there was the satisfaction



Arsenal's Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang celebrates after scoring against Burnley in the Premier League. (Reuters)

of knowing he had played a part in the careers of all three of this season's Golden Boot winners, having signed Aubameyang from Saint-Etienne in 2013 when he was in charge of Dortmund.

"Auba too? Do they have three boots?" said Klopp, who suffered the last-day heartache of seeing Liverpool finish just one point behind City. "It is good. They are all my players," the German added.

Salah scored 32 league goals last season, a record for a 38-game Premier League campaign. The 26-year-old is the sixth player to win the Golden Boot award in consecutive seasons.

Hazard future uncertain, says Chelsea boss Sarri

London: Chelsea manager Maurizio Sarri said yesterday he is still in the dark over Eden Hazard's future after his side secured third spot in the Premier League. The forward, heavily linked with a move to Real Madrid, came off the bench in yesterday's goalless draw at Leicester on the final day of the Premier League season.

Hazard blew kisses to the travelling fans who called for him to stay after a 21-minute cameo. The Belgian was rested for most of the match by Chelsea ahead of their Europa League final against London rivals Arsenal at the end of the month.

Hazard, 28, has talked about it being "a dream" to one day play for Real Madrid boss Zinedine Zidane but Sarri said he did not know if the playmaker was set to leave Stamford Bridge for the Bernabeu. "I hope of course, like every fan of Chelsea, that he will remain with us," he said.

"But at the moment I don't know. I know very well that Eden tried to do his best for seven seasons at Chelsea," the Blues boss added. "He did very well, he has become one of the

best two or three players in the world, but I think also that we have to respect him and his decision."

Despite finishing third in the Premier League, Chelsea were still 26 points adrift of champions Manchester City. Sarri also cast doubt over his own position and could not say for sure if he will be at Stamford Bridge for a second season.

"I think but I am not sure. I don't know. I can say only the club asked me to get into the Champions League and we reached the target — the Champions League. As you know very well, I love English football. I love the Premier League, the level is really the best in the world I think, the atmosphere in the stadiums is wonderful. I like very much to stay here."

The Foxes finished ninth and boss Brendan Rodgers, who replaced Claude Puel in February, is looking forward to the future. "There is no waiting in football now, there is no time," he said.

"It was a difficult decision and normally, ideally as a coach or a manager, you don't want to come in until the summer. I've had an invaluable period here."

BUNDESLIGA

Frankfurt botch chance to reclaim fourth spot

DPA
Berlin

Eintracht Frankfurt wasted the chance to reclaim the fourth and final Champions League spot in the Bundesliga after a 2-0 home defeat by mid-table Mainz yesterday. Adi Huetter's side, who visit leaders Bayern Munich in the final round of Bundesliga matches next Saturday, looked tired following Thursday's Europa League semi-final defeat at Chelsea with Anthony Ujah netting two smart goals for derby rivals Mainz.

Frankfurt, in sixth, sit one point behind fourth-placed Borussia Moenchengladbach and Bayer Leverkusen. Gladbach thumped Nuremberg 4-0 away on Saturday while Leverkusen, who thrashed Frankfurt 6-1 last weekend, drew 1-1 with Schalke.

Next Saturday promises to be one of the most exciting finales in Bundesliga history with Frankfurt hoping to sneak back into fourth spot at Bayern and Gladbach hosting Borussia Dortmund, who can still steal the title.

"I have to defend better,"

Frankfurt centre back Martin Hinteregger said. "We have not used this chance. We will give everything against Bayern and have a full week now to prepare and recover. We can still claim a big prize but we can also lose everything."

The kick-off in Frankfurt was delayed for five minutes because of fan pyrotechnics set off before the local derby and when the smoke eventually cleared, the hosts had an early chance through Luka Jovic. But they quickly ran out of steam with the disappointment of losing on penalties in Thursday's energy-sapping game appearing to take its toll. First the excellent Jean-Philippe Mateta set up strike partner Ujah for the opener on 53 minutes and then soon afterwards, Jean-Philippe Gbamin burst into the box amid weak Frankfurt defending and Ujah expertly made it two.

The defeat means Frankfurt are not even assured of a Europa League place as they could drop to eighth if results go against them next Saturday. Bayern, Dortmund and third-placed RB Leipzig have already wrapped up Champions League berths.

SERIE A

Belotti brace keeps Torino for European chase

AFP
Milan

Andrea Belotti scored the winner with a spectacular overhead kick as Torino came from behind to see off ten-man Sassuolo 3-2 yesterday to keep the pressure on their rivals for Champions League football next season.

Torino skipper Belotti missed a penalty after 17 minutes in Turin but made up with two second-half goals.

Torino needed a win to keep their hopes of a first foray into elite European football next season alive after Atalanta, AC Milan and Lazio won their games on Saturday.

Walter Mazzarri's side overtake Roma — who were hosting champions Juventus late last night — and are now in sixth position three points adrift of Inter Milan, who occupy fourth place and host bottom club Chievo today. "We knew very well how important it was to win today," said Belotti. "We have to fly low, there are still two games left and we have to win them."

Mehdi Bourabia put Sassuolo ahead after 27 minutes, but the visitors played a man down for most of the game as the Moroccan midfielder was sent off for a second yellow card after celebrating by pulling his jersey over his head. Belotti almost scored after the break but Sassuolo goalkeeper Andrea Consigli denied his overhead kick.

The Torino captain grabbed the equaliser on 56 minutes, but Sassuolo charged



Napoli's Allan (left) and SPAL's Andrea Petagna are involved in a keen tussle for the ball during the Serie A match in Ferrara, Italy, yesterday. (Reuters)

back with Jeremie Boga racing down the flank to force a Salvatore Sirigu save, only for Pol Lirola to turn in the rebound with a back-heel flick.

Simone Zaza pulled Torino back into the game on 81 minutes with Belotti sealing victory with another overhead kick

which this time found the back of the net a minute later for his eighth goal in the last ten league games, to bring his tally to 15.

The three points could also be vital for Torino's Europa League hopes, with their final two games against struggling Empo-

li and Lazio. Sassuolo are sitting in tenth position.

Empoli kept their hopes of Serie A survival alive with a 2-1 win at Sampdoria. Diego Farias and Giovanni Di Lorenzo's second-half goals put the third-from-bottom Tuscan within one point of safety. Fabio Quagliarella pulled a goal back for Sampdoria converting a penalty in injury time to take his Serie A leading tally to 26 goals — five more than Juventus star Cristiano Ronaldo.

Napoli beat SPAL 2-1 in a game with nothing to play for as Carlo Ancelotti's side are already assured of second place and SPAL have staved off relegation. Elsewhere, Stefano Okaka's first-half brace gave Udinese a 3-1 win at relegated Frosinone, to move the north-easterners above Genoa, two points clear of the drop zone.

ITALIAN SERIE A RESULTS

Torino 3 (Belotti 56, 82, Zaza 81) Sassuolo 2 (Bourabia 27, Lirola 71); Sampdoria 1 (Quagliarella 90+2-pen) Empoli 2 (Farias 56, Di Lorenzo 75); Frosinone 1 (Dionisi 85) Udinese 3 (Okaka 11, 44, Samir 49); SPAL 1 (Petagna 84-pen) Napoli 2 (Allan 49, Rui 88)

On Monday: Bologna v Parma (1700), Inter Milan v Chievo (1900)

Played Saturday: Atalanta 1 (Barrow 46, Castagne 53) Genoa 1 (Pandev 89); Cagliari 1 (Pavoletti 90+1) Lazio 2 (Alberto 31, Correa 53); Fiorentina 0 AC Milan 1 (Calhanoglu 35)

SPOTLIGHT

Watson despair as Mumbai win IPL title off final ball

Chennai opener Watson rode his luck to smash 80 but could not prevent his team going down to Mumbai

Reuters
Hyderabad

Mumbai Indians became the most successful franchise in the history of the Indian Premier League after their bowlers snatched a thrilling one-run victory over three-time champions Chennai Super Kings in an edge-of-the-seat final yesterday.

Having posted a modest 149-8, but-ter-fingered Mumbai found themselves on the brink of defeat but Lasith Malinga conceded just seven runs off the final over to seal Mumbai's fourth IPL title. Chennai opener Shane Watson rode his luck to smash the match's only half-century but his 80 could not prevent his team going down to Mumbai for the fourth time in this year's IPL.

Earlier, Quinton de Kock smashed four sixes, including three in a Deepak Chahar (3-26) over, in his 29 but Mumbai lost both their openers, including skipper Rohit Sharma, in successive overs after opting to bat. De Kock fluffed his pull shot off Shardul Thakur, while Deepak Chahar foxed Rohit with a knuckle-ball with Chennai captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni taking both catches.

Boundaries soon dried up and pressure mounted on Mumbai who kept losing wickets in their stop-start innings. Leg-spinner Imran Tahir claimed a couple to finish as the tournament's leading wicket-taker while Thakur took a brilliant running catch off his own bowling to dismiss Krunal Pandya. Krunal's brother Hardik Pandya (16) did hardly any better but Kieron Pollard smashed three sixes in his 41 not out off 25 balls to help them to a modest total.

Faf du Plessis (26) and Watson survived a couple of mix-ups in an opening stand of 33 when Chennai replied. Watson struggled to find gaps initially but hung on, aided by generous doses of luck. Rahul Chahar dropped Watson twice, including once off his own bowling, while Malinga could not place himself under a swirling skier when the all-rounder was on 31.

Mumbai roared back into the contest by claiming three quick wickets,



Mumbai Indians players celebrate with the trophy after winning the 2019 Indian Premier League in Hyderabad yesterday. (AFP)

including that of Dhoni who perished trying to steal a second run only to be beaten by a direct throw. Chennai plundered 20 runs off the 16th over and as many from the 18th when Watson smashed Krunal Pandya for three successive sixes.

Mumbai's best bowler and man of the match Jasprit Bumrah then bowled a brilliant penultimate over, sending Dwayne Bravo back caught by de Kock behind the stumps. However, de Kock missed an easy gathering to gift Chen-

nai four byes in the last ball of the over.

There was more drama in the final over, with Watson running himself out after another mix-up, his exit leaving his team needing four off the last two deliveries. Thakur collected two off the fifth ball but Malinga then trapped him lbw with the final delivery of the match to trigger wild celebrations in the Mumbai camp.

Mumbai captain Rohit Sharma praised Malinga for keeping his nerves in the final over drama. "About Mal-

inga, that's what champions do. I had confidence in him despite a poor third over. He also had confidence he could do it. I thought we could use Hardik for the 20th, but wanted to back someone who has done it for us. Malinga has done it many times in the past, so not a very difficult," he said.

"Our bowling was excellent. At different stages, our bowlers put their hands up and brought us back in the game. Every bowler who got an opportunity put their hand up, whatever

condition we played in. We backed our ability and our skills, and that's probably why we got rewards," Rohit added.

The losing captain Dhoni rued the poor performance of the middle order batsmen. "As a team we had a good season. But we need to go back and reflect. Wasn't one of those years where we played very good cricket. Middle order never clicked, but somehow we managed. Today was one game we should've done slightly better. It was quite a funny game, we were passing the trophy

to each other. Both teams committed mistakes, and eventually the winning team was the one that committed one mistake less," he said.

BRIEF SCORES

Mumbai Indians: 149/8 in 20 overs (Kieron Pollard 41 not out, Quinton de Kock 29; Deepak Chahar 3/26, Imran Tahir 2/23) **Chennai Super Kings: 148/7 in 20 overs** (Shane Watson 80, Jasprit Bumrah 2/14) **by one run**

ROUND-UP

South Africa hopeful Rabada will be fit for World Cup

IAN S
Durban

South Africa are hopeful that injured pace spearhead **Kagiso Rabada** will be fit in time for the World Cup as he was sidelined for another 2-3 weeks. Cricket South Africa's medical team said they had taken an 'extra cautious' approach with Rabada due to his history of back complaints and were confident he will play a role in the tournament.

"The anticipated recovery period for Rabada's injury is two to three weeks and we are hopeful he'll make a full recovery to be part of the World Cup squad," team doctor Mohammed Moosa-jee was quoted as saying by www.cricknet.com.au.

Rabada complained of back pain while playing for Delhi Capitals in the Indian Premier League. He returned home for further assessment. Besides Rabada, South Africa are also plagued with injuries to Dale Steyn (shoulder) and Lungi Ngidi (side). "The selectors have ensured they have enough options on the table but there are some players that have been earmarked as standby players," Moosa-jee added.

The 15-man World Cup squads must be finalised by May 23, while injured players can be replaced during the tournament. For the Proteas, paceman Anrich Nortje was ruled out of the tournament due to a hand injury last week and was replaced by all-rounder Chris Morris.

DE VILLIERS PULLS BACK FROM BIG BASH LEAGUE
Former South Africa superstar AB de Villiers has gone back on his earlier interest of being a



part of the upcoming season of the Big Bash League (BBL). Last month, reports had emerged that de Villiers' management had indicated to BBL clubs that he was interested in playing in the competition in 2019-20.

However, according to a report in cricket.com.au, it has been confirmed that the former Proteas captain has now flagged to interested clubs his unwillingness to take part in the BBL. De Villiers was in sublime form in this edition of the Indian Premier League as he scored 442 runs in the 13 matches he played for Royal Challengers Bangalore.

The development comes as Cricket Australia have announced that each club in the Big Bash will now be permitted to sign up to six overseas players during the season, an increase from four. A maximum of two overseas players can be there in the 18-player roster of a club at any time, but now four more players can be contracted as potential replacements throughout the season.

ODISERIES

Pakistan left wondering how to stop Buttler

AFP
Southampton, United Kingdom

How do you stop Jos Buttler? It was a question that was being asked again after the talented batsman's latest one-day international hundred saw England to a 12-run win over Pakistan in the second one-day international on Saturday.

With a home World Cup just weeks away, Buttler's 110 not out, which saw him reach three figures off just 50 balls, was another reminder of his match-winning ability in white-ball cricket. This was Buttler's eighth century in 129 matches at this level, with the England ODI wicket-keeper now having scored 3,497 runs at an average of 42.

But what makes Buttler a particularly devastating batsman in this format is a strike-rate of 119.88 — a figure bettered only by the West Indies' Andre Russell (130.45) and Australia's Glenn Maxwell (121.95). Russell, however, has only scored 998 runs in 52 ODIs, with Maxwell making 2,700 in 100 matches.

Alterations in field and bounce restrictions, a reduction in the number of overs in an ODI, generally shorter boundaries and the change to a ball from each end as opposed to just one for a full duration of an innings, make comparisons across the generations arguably even harder than they would be in Test cricket.



England's Jos Buttler celebrates after scoring a 50-ball hundred during the second one-day international against Pakistan at The Ageas Bowl in Southampton. (AFP)

For many observers that means Vivian Richards remains the most destructive one-day batsmen they've seen. The West Indies great scored 6,721 runs in 187 ODIs including 11 hundreds at an average of 47, — a tally including a brilliant, match-winning 138 not out in the 1979

World Cup final against England at Lord's — with a strike-rate of 90.20.

But just as Richards revolutionised ODI batting with extraordinary 'inside out' drives to the boundary off bowlers as fast as Australia's Jeff Thomson, so are Buttler's range of scoops and flicks help-

ing expand the repertoire of present-day run-getters. Buttler's success is also a matter of attitude as well as talent — as evidence by the words "fuck it" he has written on the top of his bat handle to remind him of his best approach to batting.

Pakistan coach Mickey Arthur admitted he was at a loss about the best way to stop Buttler following the 28-year-old's batting fireworks in Southampton. "Oh, I don't know, I've just asked the bowlers actually. They didn't give me an answer either," Arthur said after Pakistan fell 1-0 behind in this five-match series.

"We'll sit down and analyse that and try to work out a plan. I don't think we're going to stop him, we've got to find a way to get him out. The longer he bats he's going to do some serious damage."

England captain Eoin Morgan had arguably the best view in the ground while making a far from sluggish 71 not out while sharing an unbroken stand of 162 with Buttler that took the hosts to 373 for three in their 50 overs. "He's very good. He really is," left-hander Morgan said. "I was in prime position to see the whole innings and his freakish knocks seem to be getting closer and closer together, so that's a good sign for us moving forward. He seems to have a gear that not many of us have and it's great to watch. He always seem to time his run really well, regardless of what time he comes in, he always seems to have enough balls to go on and bang a 50-ball hundred."

FOCUS

Ambris ton helps West Indies make record chase

AFP
Dublin, Ireland

Sunil Ambris's maiden one-day international hundred saw the West Indies complete their highest successful ODI run chase as they beat Ireland by five wickets in Dublin on Saturday. Ambris made 148, off just 126 balls including 19 fours and a six, as the West Indies surpassed Ireland's total of 327 for five with 13 deliveries remaining.

The West Indies, who unlike Ireland

have qualified for the upcoming World Cup in England and Wales, were behind the run-rate at 112 for two in the 20th over. But a third-wicket stand of 128 between Ambris, playing only his fourth ODI, and Roston Chase (46) helped get the tourists back on track.

Not even a three-wicket haul from Ireland's former England fast bowler Boyd Rankin was sufficient to deny the two-time World Cup-winners, with Jonathan Carter (43 not out) and captain Jason Holder (36) seeing the West Indies to their second triangular series win over

the tournament hosts.

Earlier, Andrew Balbirnie scored a brilliant hundred of his own in an Ireland total of 327 for five.

Balbirnie scored 135 from 124 balls and registered his fourth ODI hundred, passing 3,000 runs for Ireland in the process.

He received good support came from Paul Stirling (77) and Kevin O'Brien, who smashed 63 off 40 balls that included three consecutive sixes off paceman Holder. West Indies' victory moved them above Bangladesh in the tri-series standings, and left Ireland without a win after

three matches. Ireland will now need to beat Bangladesh next week and hope other results go their way if they are to reach the final. West Indies open their World Cup campaign against Pakistan in Nottingham on May 31.

BRIEF SCORES

At Malahide, Dublin: Ireland 327-5 in 50 overs (A Balbirnie 135, P Stirling 77, K O'Brien 60) **lost to West Indies 331-5 in 47.5 overs** (S Ambris 148, B Rankin 3-65) **by five wickets**

NHL

Sharks draw first blood, feast on Blues' errors in game one

'He was a bull. When he skates and his strength, he's tough to defend'



Timo Meier (centre) of the San Jose Sharks scores a goal against Jordan Binnington of the St Louis Blues during the second period in game one of the Western Conference Finals during the 2019 NHL Stanley Cup playoffs at SAP Center in San Jose, California. (Getty Images/AFP)

By Curtis Pashelka
The Mercury News

Remember all of the hits, animosity and general bad blood the Sharks had in their first-round series in these playoffs?

Well, it's all back, and it seems to suit the Sharks just fine.

Kevin Labanc snapped a six-game goal drought and Timo Meier scored his fourth and fifth of the playoffs in the second period to help the Sharks earn a 6-3 win over the St. Louis Blues on Saturday in Game 1 of the Western Conference final at SAP Center. Game 2 is Monday in San Jose at 6 p.m.

Meier also added a pretty assist on the first of Logan Couture's two goals, and Martin Jones finished with 28 saves as the Sharks took the first game of a playoff series for the third straight round. They also beat the Vegas Golden Knights in a bruising first round and the Colorado Avalanche in a less hostile second round by identical 5-2 scores.

The Sharks led 2-1 after the first period before Labanc and Blues center Ryan O'Reilly traded goals 1:17 part in the second. O'Reilly's goal, at the 8:58 mark of the second, cut the Sharks lead to 3-2.

Then Meier took over. He took a pass from Couture inside the St. Louis blue line, slipped the puck under the stick of a flat-footed Jay Bouwmeester, skated around him, then went forehand-to-backhand in close on Jordan Binnington, tapping the puck past his left pad for a 4-2 lead at the 10:24 mark.

Then with 2:26 left in the second, Meier, slightly behind the goal line to the left of the St. Louis net, picked up the loose puck after a shot from Marc-Edouard Vlasic and put it off the stick of Blues defenseman Vince Dunn and put it past Binnington.

Labanc's goal was his first, and the first for his line with Marcus Sorensen and Joe Thornton, since Game 1 against the Avalanche on April 26. That goal was also a game-winner.

"I think we've been doing a pretty good job of bringing it every game, but it's a new se-

ries, different teams, so we just have to keep doing what we've been doing," Labanc said Saturday afternoon. "Being good offensively and defensively and offensively. Getting pucks to the net and not giving up opportunities at the other end."

The Sharks knew this would be a much more physical series than the one they just completed against the Avalanche, and the tone was set early.

Officially, the two teams combined for 35 hits in the first 20 minutes, with the Blues being credited with 22. But it was the Sharks who had a 2-1 lead after the first period.

Couture opened the scoring at the 3:31 mark of the first, as he took a pass from Gus Nyquist on a 2-on-1 and scored on a nearly open net for his league-leading 10th of the playoffs. The play was set up by Meier, who barreled over Alex Pietrangolo to free the puck before he tapped it ahead to Nyquist for the odd man rush.

The Blues got that goal back at the 9:13 mark, as Jaden Schwartz's shot from the faceoff circle to the right of the Sharks net was

tipped by Joel Edmundson past Jones. Just second before, Schwartz made contact with Couture, who had a partial breakthrough before he went hard into the end boards feet first.

No penalty was called on that play, but the Blues were called for interference and slashing in a span of 51 seconds to set up a Sharks 5 on 3.

The Sharks capitalized, as Burns found PavelSKI near the side of the Blues net. PavelSKI's first two tries were stopped by Binnington, but he batted the third try into the net for his fourth goal of the playoffs at the 11:24 mark.

The Sharks were just 2 for 20 with the man advantage against the Avalanche and the Blues were one of the least penalized teams in the second round of the playoffs. But the Sharks had three power play tries in the first 25 minutes of Saturday's game.

"Both of us feel comfortable in our 5-on-5 games, but the reality is there's going to be penalties," Sharks coach Pete DeBoer said Saturday afternoon. "I think special teams are going to be a big factor."

NBA

Vogel will be new Lakers coach with Kidd assist: reports

AFP
Los Angeles

NBA superstar LeBron James and the Los Angeles Lakers will be coached next season by Frank Vogel, a former coach at Indiana and Orlando, with Jason Kidd as an assistant, media reports said Saturday.

Vogel has agreed to a three-year deal to coach the Lakers with former NBA star guard Jason Kidd to serve in a major assistant's role, ESPN and the Los Angeles Times reported, each citing unidentified sources.

The move came two days after Vogel interviewed with the club, which has missed the NBA playoffs for six consecutive seasons and hopes to rebuild around James, who joined the team last season after eight consecutive trips to the NBA Finals.

It also follows reports that Tyrone Lue, a former coach of James with the Cleveland Cavaliers, was set to become the Lakers coach before talks fell apart.

Vogel went 304-291 in eight seasons as an NBA coach, six with Indiana from 2010-2016 and the next two with a rebuilding Orlando Magic squad.

Vogel guided the Pacers to the Eastern Conference finals in 2013 and 2014 but missed the playoffs in the of the four seasons after that.

Kidd played as an NBA guard from 1994 to 2013, winning a title with the Dallas Mavericks in 2011. He coached the Brooklyn Nets in 2013-14 and the Milwaukee Bucks from 2014 until he was fired in January 2018 after a 23-22 start.

Lakers general manager Rob Pelinka gathered information on Vogel, 45, and Kidd, 46, for the past few days, ESPN reported, noting Vogel was a candidate for the New York Knicks coaching job in 2016 when former Laker coach Phil Jackson was the Knicks' decision maker.

The Lakers are searching for a replacement for Luke Walton, who parted ways with the Lakers last month after they endured another disappointing campaign.

Troubled RB Walton gets Dolphins tryout

Former Cincinnati Bengals running back Mark Walton was invited to try out with the Miami Dolphins, despite pending criminal charges against him. "I think people deserve a second chance," new Miami coach Brian Flores told the Palm Beach Post. "I believe that. I think that's the case. I don't want to judge people based on one incident. Two incidents. I think it's a case-by-case situation for a player and for people in general. That's kind of my stance."

The Bengals waived Walton on April 6 after his third arrest of 2019. He was arrested on a misdemeanor marijuana charge in January, a misdemeanor battery charge in February, and in April on possession of marijuana, reckless driving and felony concealed weapons charges from an alleged incident in March. "He's here on a try-out," Flores said. "Obviously, talented player. But we want to take a look at him and see if he was a fit for us, on the field and off the field. I think he's done a good job, really in the one day that he's been here. So we'll see how it goes."

Flores said that the Dolphins brass had discussed Walton's legal issues. "Again, it's a tryout," Flores said. "And just that's kind of part of the process. Getting to know him. And getting to see him on and off the field." Walton, 22, played his college football at Miami and was taken by the Bengals in the fourth round of the 2018 NFL Draft. He saw limited action The New York Giants signed offensive lineman Mike Remmers, the versatile veteran's agent announced Saturday on Twitter.

After starting 16 games at right guard last season for the Minnesota Vikings, Remmers will shift back to right tackle with the Giants, according to agent Brett Tessler. NFL Network's Ian Rapoport reported it was a one-year deal for \$2.5 million, with \$1 million fully guaranteed. Another \$1.5 million is available in incentives related to playing time, bringing the max value to \$4 million.

MLB

Pujols homers twice as Angels defeat Orioles

Reuters
New York

Albert Pujols hit two home runs and the visiting Los Angeles Angels beat the Baltimore Orioles 7-2 on Saturday.

It was the 59th career multi-homer game for Pujols, who homered in the first and fourth innings, and his first since July 12, 2018, against Seattle. He was 3-for-5 with three RBIs and three runs.

The two homers and a single gave Pujols 3,110 career hits, tying him with Dave Winfield for 22nd place on the all-time list.

Luke Bard (1-1) pitched 1 2/3 scoreless innings of relief for the Angels, who have won 10 of 14.

Dwight Smith Jr. had a homer and a single for the Orioles, who have lost four straight.

Dylan Bundy (1-5) took the loss, giving up three runs on four hits over five innings. Angels starter Matt Harvey allowed two runs on five hits over four innings. He threw 93 pitches and walked two while striking out six. With two outs and Mike Trout on first in the top of the first, Pujols homered to left on a 1-0 fastball.

RESULTS

Angels	7-2	Orioles
Cubs	2-1	Brewers
Nationals	5-2	Dodgers
Red Sox	9-5	Mariners
Rays	7-2	Yankees
Tigers	5-3	Twins
Twins	8-3	Tigers
Pirates	2-1	Cardinals
Mets	4-1	Marlins
White Sox	7-2	Blue Jays
Athletics	3-2	Indians
Phillies	7-0	Royals
Padres	4-3	Rockies
Astros	11-4	Rangers
Braves	6-4	D'backs
Reds	5-4	Giants

The 2-0 lead was short-lived as Baltimore's Jonathan Villar doubled to open the bottom of the first and with one out and Smith lined a homer to right.

Baltimore's first two batters reached via singles in the third, but Harvey struck out

Rio Ruiz and Stevie Wilkerson. After a walk loaded the bases, Joey Rickard flied out.

Pujols led off the fourth and sent a 2-0 fastball out to left, just beyond the reach of a leaping Smith. The Angels gained some breathing room with a three-run sixth.

After the Angels loaded the bases with one out, Kole Calhoun singled home a run, Pujols scored on a fielder's choice in which all runners were safe, and Jonathan Lucroy scored on a force out at second.

CONTRERAS' BLAST GIVES CUBS 15-INNING WIN

Willson Contreras hit a walk-off home run in the 15th inning to lift the Chicago Cubs to a 2-1 win over the visiting Milwaukee Brewers on Saturday afternoon.

Contreras crushed a shot estimated at 424 feet into the left-field bleachers for Chicago's third walk-off victory since Tuesday. The Cubs have won 11 of their past 13 games.

Tyler Chatwood (2-0) earned the victory after pitching four innings of hitless, scoreless relief in the marathon matchup, which lasted more than five hours. Chatwood was one of seven relief pitchers to follow starter Cole Hamels, who allowed one run and three hits in seven innings.



Los Angeles Angels first baseman Albert Pujols hits a two run home run during the first inning against the Baltimore Orioles at Oriole Park at Camden Yards. PICTURE: USA TODAY Sports

GOLF

Woods heads to PGA with Nicklaus record back in play

'I really haven't thought about that yet. I'm sure that I'll probably think of it going down the road. Maybe, maybe not. But right now, it's a little soon, and I'm just enjoying 15'



Tiger Woods reacts to chipping in for birdie on the 17th hole during The Match: Tiger vs Phil golf match at Shadow Creek Golf Course in Las Vegas on November 23, 2018.

Reuters
New York

Tiger Woods proved many doubters wrong with his triumph at last month's Masters, where he not only completed a comeback story for the ages but also put Jack Nicklaus's record of 18 major titles back into play.

Woods, who has not competed since collecting his 15th major at Augusta, will get his next chance to chip away at the landmark when he tees it up in Farmingdale, New York for the May 16-19 PGA Championship.

After Woods secured a one-shot victory to claim his fifth Green Jacket, the former world number one was naturally asked about his pursuit of the all-time major record.

"I really haven't thought about that yet," Woods said at

his post-Masters news conference.

"I'm sure that I'll probably think of it going down the road. Maybe, maybe not. But right now, it's a little soon, and I'm just enjoying 15."

Woods should feel good about the opportunity that lies ahead as he will undoubtedly bring a renewed sense of confidence into the year's next two majors as well as the knowledge that he has won on both courses before.

The PGA Championship will be held at Bethpage Black, the scene of the 2002 U.S. Open triumph by Woods, while the June 13-16 U.S. Open will be held at Pebble Beach, where in 2000 he won that event by 15 strokes.

"Eighteen is, I think, a lot closer than people think," said reigning PGA Championship and U.S. Open winner Brooks Koepka. "I would say that's probably what all fans, what we're thinking.

That he's definitely back and 18's not far."

When Woods held his nerve to close out his Masters win it ended a once-unthinkable major drought for the best golfer of his generation that stretched back to the 2008 U.S. Open.

During his barren run, Woods had to overcome a highly-public divorce following revelations of his marital infidelities, a DUI arrest he blamed on an "unexpected reaction" to prescription medicine and multiple career-threatening surgeries.

Through it all, Woods plummeted to 1,199th in the world rankings, given his long spells on the sidelines, while many on-lookers never gave him a chance of winning another major.

But in his comeback campaign last year after spinal fusion surgery in 2017, Woods put himself in contention at both the British Open and PGA Champion-

ship before his triumph at the season-ending Tour Championship.

If there were any doubts left that Woods was back, he sent a resounding message to the golfing world with his win at Augusta National, a victory that left even Nicklaus, 79, wondering how much longer his record would stand.

"I felt for a long time he was going to win again," Nicklaus told Golf Channel the night Woods won the Masters. "And, you know, the next two majors are at Bethpage, where he's won, and at Pebble Beach, where he's won.

"He's got me shaking in my boots."

History is not on Woods' side since only two golfers have won multiple majors after turning 43 and none have done it since 1968 when 48-year-old American Julius Boros won the PGA Champi-

onship five years after picking up a U.S. Open title.

But even though Woods does not intimidate his rivals like he did during his prime, if his back holds up over the long haul he will surely have plenty more chances to close the gap on Nicklaus.

"Health is a major thing, but he's definitely still got his nerves," six-times major winner Nick Faldo told CBS Radio.

"That's the other very important part. Bethpage Black will be tough. The U.S. Open will be tougher. I don't know, but there is still a chance, (whereas) five years ago we were quite happy to say there's no chance.

"If he stays healthy, the rest of the players, they know he's out there now. They know how he can fend everybody off and get in the mix. I guess he will be in the mix, but I really don't know. I haven't really got a gut feeling."

SPOTLIGHT

Every seizes one-shot lead

AFP
Los Angeles

Matt Every pounced on the rain-softened Trinity Forest course to take a one-shot lead midway through the delayed third round of the US PGA Tour's Byron Nelson on Saturday.

The start of play on the Dallas, Texas, course was delayed six hours because of heavy rain that lasted through the night and into the morning.

When he finally teed off, America's Every chipped in for eagle at the par-five first, then birdied four holes in a five-hole span to take a one-stroke lead through nine on 18-under par.

When darkness halted play he was one stroke in front of South Korea's Kang Sung, who matched the course record with a 61 on Friday and took a four-shot lead into the third round. Kang was one-under for the

round after following birdies at the third and sixth with a bogey at the eighth and 17-under for the tournament.

Tyler Duncan, who began the day tied with Every four adrift, was three-under for the day and 15-under for the tournament with nine to play. They'll return to complete the round on Sunday morning. Only 12 of 83 players finished the third round. Every, a two-time winner on the PGA Tour, said his front-nine charge felt "like a normal round".

"It was playing super-easy, so it wasn't like I had time to be nervous about anything," he said. "I just had to keep making birdies. I got in a nice rhythm."

Nicholas Lindheim also took advantage of the rain-softened course. He was nine-under through 15 holes and 12-under for the tournament, tied for seventh after starting the day in 44th. Among those who completed the third round, defending champion Aaron Wise carded a five-under 66 and was tied for 23rd.



Matt Every of the United States plays a shot on the 14th hole during the continuation of the third round of the AT&T Byron Nelson at Trinity Forest Golf Club in Dallas, Texas. (Getty Images/AFP)

BOXING

Pacquiao to fight Thurman in WBA welterweight showdown

AFP
Los Angeles

Philippine boxing legend Manny Pacquiao and Keith Thurman will fight for World Boxing Association welterweight supremacy on July 20, promoters confirmed Saturday.

An announcement on the Fox television broadcast of the Premier Boxing Champions card featuring Jarrett Hurd and Julian Williams confirmed the bout.

Eight-division world champion Pacquiao, 40, is coming off a January victory over American Adrien Broner that took his record to 61-7-2 with 39 knockouts.

He holds the WBA's secondary "world" welterweight title. In Thurman, he'll be taking on the WBA's "super world champion" in the division.

"In the biggest night of boxing this year, boxing's only eight-division world champion, Senator Manny 'Pac Man' Pacquiao, will take on undefeated WBA Welterweight World Champion Keith 'One Time' Thurman on Saturday, July 20 in a blockbuster showdown that headlines a Premier Boxing Champions on FOX Sports Pay-Per-View event," promoters said in a statement.

Venue for the bout was not announced, but the card will also feature a free-television clash between undefeated International Boxing Federation Super Middleweight World Champion Caleb Plant, making his first title defense against unbeaten contender Mike Lee.

Pacquiao, who last month polled his legion of social media followers on who he should fight next, took to Twitter to let them know the bout was coming. "#TeamPacquiao is

back. July 20 1 #PacThurman," he tweeted. Thurman returned from a near two-year layoff to retain his title with a 12-round majority decision over Josesito Lopez on January 26.

The victory saw Thurman improve to 29-0 with 22 wins inside the distance and in the immediate aftermath he said he'd be ready to take on Pacquiao this year.

"Maybe Brooklyn, maybe Vegas, wherever Manny Pacquiao wants it," Thurman said. "I'd even fight him in the Philippines if I have to."

Thurman had been idle since edging Danny Garcia by split decision in March of 2017 to unify two 147-pound titles.

The next month he had surgery to remove calcium deposits from his right elbow, and as he was readying to return to the ring he suffered a left hand injury in March of 2018 that forced him to take more time off.

On January 20, Pacquiao battered Broner in a lopsided bout in Las Vegas, winning easily with an impressive display of superior hand speed and destructive power that landed him the unanimous decision over the much younger American at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas.

"I really don't believe my career is over. I proved it in my last fight against (Lucas) Mattheus," Pacquiao said after that fight. "And now I prove it again at the age of 40."

After beating Broner, Pacquiao also called out Floyd Mayweather, who beat the Filipino on points in the world's richest prize fight in 2015.

Although fans have clamoured for a rematch, the unbeaten Mayweather, who is officially retired, hasn't risen to the bait.



Manny Pacquiao.

FOCUS

Berchelt wins over Vargas to retain WBC title

AFP
Los Angeles

Mexico's Miguel Berchelt retained his World Boxing Council super featherweight world title on Saturday, overpowering Francisco Vargas with a sixth round stoppage, in a rematch of their 2017 fight.

Berchelt won by technical knockout when Vargas' corner waved the white towel as he sat on the stool after taking six rounds of brutal punishment at the Convention Center arena in Tucson, Arizona.

The one-sided bout was reminiscent of their first fight two years ago when Berchelt easily dethroned 130-pound champ Vargas. Once again the 27-year-old Berchelt was too young, too powerful and too talented for the 34-year-old fellow Mexican.

The fight transpired the way many had predicted it would with Berchelt following the same strategy he used to punish Vargas in January 2017 when he knocked him out in the 11th round. It was pretty

clear this one wouldn't go that far as Berchelt dominated all the rounds Saturday.

Vargas, who is prone to cuts and suffered several in the first fight, was also cut on the bridge of his nose in the third round on Saturday.

After the fight Berchelt defended his decision to have a rematch against a fighter who many thought would deliver a predictable outcome.

"He gave me my first opportunity for a world title so it is only fair I give him a shot to win it back," said Berchelt, who improved to 36-1 with 32 KOs. "But his corner did the right thing."

Berchelt has now won 14 of his last 15 fights by stoppage and has not lost a fight in five years. Vargas wasn't arguing with the decision by trainer Joel Diaz to throw in the towel. "My trainer did what he is supposed to do. He is here to protect me," Vargas said.

Berchelt said he wants to fight the winner of a 130-pound bout between Masayuki Ito and Jamel Herring. "I want to leave no doubt who the best junior lightweight in the world is," he said.

TENNIS

Djokovic beats Tsitsipas to win third Madrid Open title

'I didn't drop a set the entire tournament, so I'm very pleased. I played some of my best tennis here'

DPA
Madrid

The imperious Novak Djokovic beat Stefanos Tsitsipas 6-3, 6-4 to win his third Madrid Open title yesterday without dropping a set in the tournament.

Greek starlet Tsitsipas, 20, knocked out clay court king Rafa Nadal in the semi-finals and ousted last year's champion Alexander Zverev before that, but could do nothing to stop the outstanding Serbian. Djokovic, who triumphed in 2011 and 2016, equalled Nadal's record of 33 ATP Masters 1000 titles as he won in 1 hour 30 minutes.

"These are the best tournaments, biggest tournaments we have in our sport, in the ATP, of course alongside the Grand Slams," said Djokovic, 31.

"This is as important and as good as it gets. I'm very pleased. I was saying after yesterday's semi-final win that it was a very, very important win for me for my confidence. "I wasn't playing my best Tennis after Australia so I was looking to regain the momentum this week. I started off well. I didn't drop a set the entire tournament, so I'm very pleased. I played some of my best Tennis here."

The world number one had not won a title since clinching the Australian Open in January but now looks in fine form with the French Open starting on May 26. Djokovic went 2-0 up in the first set after an overhit Tsitsipas forehand on the second of two break points.

He was virtually flawless, giving Tsitsipas little room to wriggle back in, sending him scrambling all over the court.

Djokovic saw the set out on serve when Tsitsipas hit the net with a forehand return.

The second set was a tighter affair as the Greek battled back but Djokovic broke to go 5-4 up with a sublime backhand winner followed by a Tsitsipas forehand miss, leaving Djokovic to serve out for the match.

Tsitsipas hailed Djokovic who will hold all four Slam titles if he goes on to claim a second French Open next month.

"It's inspiring what you do, simply amazing. You deserve it," the Greek told the Serb.

"You had a great week. It was also a great one for me, with good memories and good crowd support."



Serbia's Novak Djokovic celebrates with the trophy after winning Madrid Open final against Greece's Stefanos Tsitsipas yesterday. (Reuters)

Serena looking to turn the clock back in Rome before Roland Garros bid

Serena Williams returns from injury in Rome next week looking to get back to winning ways as she prepares her bid to match Margaret Court's record of major singles titles at the French Open later this month. Rome will be Williams's fourth tournament of the season and the first since being forced to withdraw from the Miami Open in April due to a knee injury. The 37-year-old American now ranked 11th - has completed just seven matches this year, also withdrawing from Indian Wells in March with illness. There are now doubts that the veteran can add to her tally of 23 Grand Slams, something which has so far proved beyond her since returning last year after taking time out following the birth of her first child. Her last Grand Slam singles title was won at the Australian Open in 2017, where she was pregnant, breaking a tie with Steffi Graf for the most in the professional era. Her win in Melbourne moved her one behind Australian Court's record of 24 major singles titles. After giving

birth to her daughter Olympia in September 2017, Serena made her return to Grand Slam tennis at last year's French Open, where she reached the fourth round. She reached the finals of Wimbledon and the US Open, suffering a meltdown in Flushing Meadows, as she smashed her racket and called the umpire a "thief" and a "liar" in a temper tantrum after losing to Naomi Osaka. More drama followed in the quarter-finals of this year's Australian Open, when she suffered a spectacular collapse in a three-sets defeat by Karolina Pliskova. Williams led 5-1 in the decider before failing to convert four match points and losing six games in a row. She has admitted that it has been tougher than expected to get back winning after her maternity leave. "From day one, I expect to go out and, quite frankly, to win. That hasn't happened. But I do like my attitude," she said. "I like that I don't want to go out there and say: 'I expect to lose because I had a year off. I've been playing for 10 months.

I'm not supposed to win. I don't have that attitude." Rome is a special place for Williams who met her husband Alexis Ohanian in the Eternal City in May 2015, a year when she withdrew from the tournament with an elbow injury. A four-time Rome winner Williams last won at the Foro Italico in 2016 defeating her compatriot Madison Keys in a straight-set final. She also won the Rome title in 2002, 2013 and 2014.

This year she is in the top half of the draw along with world number one Naomi Osaka, Kiki Bertens, and Simona Halep. Three of the four semi-finalists from Madrid are in the top half, along with winner Kiki Bertens and runner-up Simona Halep. Williams will open against a qualifier and could face older sister Venus Williams in the second round. Should Serena and Venus meet in Rome, it will be their first meeting on European clay in nearly 17 years. Their last meeting on red clay came at the 2002 Roland Garros final.

SPOTLIGHT

Nadal hoping for clay turnaround after Madrid semi exit

AFP
Madrid

Rafael Nadal heads into the final fortnight of the countdown to the French Open facing uncertainty after crashing out in his bid for a sixth title at the Madrid Open.

Spain's formerly invincible king of clay - who in most years would have at least one dirt title to hand upon arrival at Roland Garros - will have a last chance in Rome to pick up a trophy.

His mission at the Foro Italico from today will be to try and rescue his form prior to the start of the Grand Slam where he dreams of collecting a record 12th title.

Nadal went down in the Madrid semi-finals to young gun Stefanos Tsitsipas of Greece 6-4, 2-6, 6-3, with the ninth-ranked "El Greco" exposing some of the emerging fault lines in the game of the 17-time Grand Slam champion.

"Not winning here means that I'm not going back to my hotel happy," said Nadal, who also made semi-finals in Monte Carlo and Barcelona.

"But I think I still have tennis ahead of me."

Nadal said his longer term focus was on Roland Garros, confident that an improvement would see him contesting titles later in the season.

"In Paris, I have 11 titles. Each week that I play in this tourna-

ment is a lot of memories, a lot of unforgettable memories," he said.

"What I have to do is to be fit and to play properly and have a high tennis level."

"If I manage to do that... I think I will still have a very good opportunity to fight for titles for the rest of the year."

After starting slowly on clay last month after another knee injury pause, Nadal is hopeful of quick progress.

"I've done a few steps forward, maybe not enough, but I have improved some things. We'll see (for how long) I can (continue to) play at a high level - and I think I will be able to continue."

"If I'm not able to do these things (play) properly, that is the end of the situation, period."

"This is a sport and in a sport it's a matter of winning and sometimes losing and accepting both as naturally as possible."

As in Monte Carlo and Barcelona, Nadal will be defending a title in Rome after beating Alexander Zverev in the 2018 title showdown.

The second seed behind Novak Djokovic opens in the second round against one of two Frenchmen, Richard Gasquet or Jeremy Chardy.

"I've played just three tournaments on clay this year," Nadal said. "It's not much."

"I play when I want to play and I play where I want to play."

"I just play for my happiness and I play when I really want to play. That's all."



Spain's Rafael Nadal returns the ball to Greece's Stefanos Tsitsipas during their Madrid Open semi-final at Caja Magica in Madrid. (AFP)

CYCLING

Ackermann stuns Viviani for Giro stage two win

AFP
Fucecchio, Italy

German champion Pascal Ackermann won a high speed bunch sprint to claim victory on stage two of the Giro d'Italia yesterday, edging home favourite Elia Viviani at the line.

Slovenian Primoz Roglic retains the overall lead as the peloton finished together after a 205km run from Bologna to Fucecchio, with Ackermann, of the Bora-hansgrohe team, crossing the line in 4hrs 44mins and 43sec. Ackermann finished just ahead of Viviani and Australian Caleb Ewan, to claim his first stage win on his Giro debut.

The 25-year-old had warmed up for the three-week race around the Italian peninsula by winning the Eschborn-Frankfurt, a World Tour race in his native Germany earlier this month.

His Bora team have claimed 21 wins this season, but just one by Slovak team leader Peter Sagan.

Ackermann said his victory boded well for the teams ambitions at the three week race.

"I feel so happy. It was my first chance to win a stage and we achieved it straight away. It's good for the next three weeks.

"I chose the right moment to sprint from 250 meters to go. To win the first stage of my first Grand Tour is fantastic," said the German road race champion, who made his run earlier than Viviani.

The race started under heavy rain with eight riders involved in an early breakaway before the four remaining - Francois Bidard, Giulio Ciccone, Marco Frapporti and Lukasz Owsian - were caught seven kilometres from the finish line. Overall race leader Primoz Roglic, who took the pink during Saturday's short time trial said he had not enjoyed the rain on Sunday.

"It wasn't an easy day because it was cold from the beginning and also quite fast all the time," he said of the pacy 45.2km per hour average speed of racing.

"It'll be another day in the pink jersey tomorrow. The team worked hard for that. It's a pleasure to retain the jersey," said the former champion ski-jumper.

Monday's third stage remains in Tuscany, getting underway in Vinci, to mark the 500th anniversary of the death of Italian master painter Leonardo da Vinci, who was born in the town, and covers 219km to Orbetello.

The mainly flat route should suit the sprinters who will have 400 metres along the Tyrrhenian Sea coast to test

their legs.

RESULTS FROM STAGE 2

1. Pascal Ackermann (GER/Bora) 4hrs 44min 43sec.
2. Elia Viviani (ITA/DEC) same time.
3. Caleb Ewan (AUS/LOT) s.t.
4. Fernando Gaviria (COL/UAE) s.t.
5. Arnaud Démare (FRA/FDJ) s.t.
6. Davide Cimolai (ITA/ICA) s.t.
7. Vyacheslav Kuznetsov (RUS/KAT) s.t.
8. Jasper De Buyst (BEL/LOT) s.t.
9. Kristian Sbaragli (ITA/ICA) s.t.
10. Rudi Selig (GER/BOR) s.t.

Overall standings

1. Primoz Roglic (SLO/Jumbo) 4hrs 57mins 42sec.
2. Simon Yates (GBR/MIT) at 19sec.
3. Vincenzo Nibali (ITA/BAH) 23.
4. Miguel Ángel López (COL/AST) 28.
5. Tom Dumoulin (NED/SUN) 28.
6. Rafal Majka (POL/BOR) 33.
7. Tao Geoghegan Hart (GBR/INE) 35.
8. Bauke Mollema (NED/TRE) 39.
9. Damiano Caruso (ITA/BAH) 40.
10. Pejo Bilbao (ESP/AST) 42.
11. Victor De la Parte (ESP/CCC) 45.
12. Bob Jungels (LUX/DEC) 46.
13. Richard Carapaz (ECU/MOV) 47.
14. Tanel Kangert (EST/EF1) 47.
15. Hugh Carthy (GBR/EF1) 47.
16. Diego Ulissi (ITA/UAE) 50.
17. Davide Formolo (ITA/BOR) 50.
18. Domenico Pozzovivo (ITA/BAH) 53.
19. Chad Haga (USA/SUN) 54.
20. James Knox (GBR/DEC) 57.



Team Bora rider Germany's Pascal Ackermann celebrates after winning the stage two of 2019 Giro d'Italia in Fucecchio. (AFP)

BEACH VOLLEYBALL

Qatar's Tijan and Cherif win Asian title again

By Sports Reporter
Maoming, China

Qataris Ahmed Tijan and Cherif Younousse head to Hamburg next month for the FIVB Beach Volleyball World Championships in Germany buoyed with confidence after their successful title defence at the 2019 Asian Senior Beach Volleyball Championships yesterday.

Second-seeds and reigning champions Ahmed and Cherif completely smashed Chinese dreams of ending the nine-year men's title drought in the Asian meet after overpowering top seeds Gao Peng and Li Yang 2-0 (21-13 21-18) in the highly-anticipated showdown which lasted 33 minutes.

China had set its sights on landing the men's title at the Asian Senior Beach Volleyball Championships for the first time in nine years. Wu Penggen/Xu Linyin handed China the last gold medal in the 2010 Asian meet at home in Haikou, but since then no Chinese team captured the men's title.

The Ahmed/Cherif victory in Maoming stretched Qatar's invincibility in the Asian meet to two times in a row and it also sent an ominous sign to Asian beach volleyball that the promising duo prove to be the strongest rivals to beat in any Asian competition in a few more years to come.



Qatar's Ahmed Tijan and Cherif Younousse celebrate with the national flag as coach Mariano Barasetti (bottom left) and the team physio hold the trophies after winning the Asian title yesterday. At right, the Qatari duo pose with their winning cheque.

A pleased Younousse commented after the prize distribution ceremony, "We're very delighted and proud to bring the Asian title home once again. We want to thank our family, friends and the association, especially the President Ali Ghanim al-Kuwari, Secretary-General Yousef Kano and QVA

beach volleyball vice-chairman Mohammed Salem al-Kuwari, who really supported us right from the first day.

"We have been out on the Tour for more than two weeks. The final particularly was challenging as the Chinese players had a huge local backing. But our experience on the World Tour,



which is certainly much tougher than the Asian one, helped us piled pressure on the opponents and win the second back-to-back Asian title," Younousse added. Eighth at the World Tour ranking, Ahmed/Cherif, who did not lose a set to their respective rivals in the Asian meet in Maoming, cap-

tered the gold medal at the last year's Asian Games in Indonesia apart from taking bronze at the last month's FIVB World Tour 4-star in Xiamen, China and finishing fifth place at home in the FIVB World Tour 4-star in Doha in March. Gao and Li also performed well in their career, winning back-to-back

Asian Tour Samila Open in Songkhla, Thailand (2018 and 2019) and claimed gold medal at the 2018 FIVB World Tour 2-star in Singapore aside from the 9th place at the World Tour 4-star in Xiamen, China last month.

Gao/Li and Ahmed/Cherif will take part in the 2019 FIVB Beach Volleyball World Championships between June 28 to July 7 in Hamburg, Germany and both sides are expected to make a positive impact among the world's best.

In the third-place playoff, Chinese third seeds Wu Jiaxin/Ha Likejiang restored their pride after beating Aussies Cole Durant/Damien Schumann 2-0 (21-19 21-16) to pick up bronze.

Home fans had experienced repeated failure and disappointment when top seeds Wang Fan and Xia Xinyi found title-holders Taliqua Clancy and Marifate Artacho Del Solar from Australia an impossible nut to crack. The Chinese duo went down in hard-fought two-set thriller 15-21 30-32 in the women's final clash. Crowd favourites Wang and Xia stayed unbeaten without losing a set in the tournament until they suffered a bitter defeat at the hands of second-seeds Clancy and Artacho Del Solar on Sunday.

Wang and Xia captured gold medal at the last year's Asian Games in Indonesia aside from winning the title at the last month's Asian Tour Samila Open in Songkhla. Wang alone had already finished second for two times in succession in the Asian meet.

FORMULA 1

Hamilton claims lead with Spain win

Responding to being outpaced by Bottas in qualifying, Hamilton came home 4.074 seconds ahead of the Finn who was second ahead of Max Verstappen of Red Bull



Mercedes' Lewis Hamilton climbs through a fence after winning the Spanish Grand Prix in Barcelona yesterday.

AFP
Barcelona

Lewis Hamilton beat Valtteri Bottas in the Spanish Grand Prix yesterday to replace his teammate as world championship leader as Mercedes' extended their record start to the season with a fifth 1-2 finish.

The defending five-time world champion seized the initiative at the start in Barcelona and led from lights to flag with a consummate demonstration of his speed and race-craft at the Circuit de Catalunya.

It was his third win this year, the 76th of his career and his fourth in Spain following victories in 2014, 2017 and 2018.

Responding to being outpaced by Bottas in qualifying, Hamilton came home 4.074 seconds ahead of the Finn who was second ahead of Max Verstappen of Red Bull, four-time champion Sebastian Vettel and his Ferrari team-mate Charles Leclerc.

Pierre Gasly was a solid sixth in the second Red Bull ahead of Kevin Magnussen of Haas, home hero Carlos Sainz Jr of McLaren, Daniil Kvyat of Toro Rosso and Romain Grosjean in the second Haas.

It was the 16th time that Hamilton won a Grand Prix after leading every lap of the race.

Hamilton's triumph hoisted him back to the top of the standings with 112 points, including one for fastest lap, ahead of Bottas on 105.

"I have to put it down to this incredible team," said Hamilton. "This is history in the making to have five 1-2's. I am very proud of that!"

RESULTS/STANDINGS

1. Lewis Hamilton (GBR/Mercedes) 1hr 35min 49.780sec, 2. Valtteri Bottas (FIN/Mercedes) at 4.074sec, 3. Max Verstappen (NED/Red Bull-Honda) 7.679, 4. Sebastian Vettel (GER/Ferrari) 9.167, 5. Charles Leclerc (MON/Ferrari) 13.361, 6. Pierre Gasly (FRA/Red Bull-Honda) 19.576, 7. Kevin Magnussen (DEN/Haas-Ferrari) 28.159, 8. Carlos Sainz Jr (ESP/McLaren-Renault) 32.342, 9. Daniil Kvyat (RUS/Toro Rosso-Honda) 33.056, 10. Romain Grosjean (FRA/Haas-Ferrari) 34.641

Fastest lap: Lewis Hamilton (GBR/Mercedes) 1:18.492 on 54th lap

Did not finish: Lance Stroll (CAN/Racing Point-Mercedes), Lando Norris (GBR/McLaren-Renault)

Drivers championship

1. Lewis Hamilton (GBR) 112 points, 2. Valtteri Bottas (FIN) 105, 3. Max Verstappen (NED) 66, 4. Sebastian Vettel (GER) 64, 5. Charles Leclerc (MON) 57, 6. Pierre Gasly (FRA) 21, 7. Kevin Magnussen (DEN) 14, 8. Sergio Pérez (MEX) 13, 9. Kimi Räikkönen (FIN) 13, 10. Lando Norris (GBR) 12, 11. Carlos Sainz Jr (ESP) 10, 12. Daniel Ricciardo (AUS) 6, 13. Nico Hülkenberg (GER) 6, 14.

"It's definitely been a bit of a hard first four races. Naturally we have a great car, but we don't always get along. I'm grateful in the race that we managed to settle our differences."

Bottas said: "I lost it there, at the start. The clutch was strange — bite and release, bite and release. I've never had that before."

Verstappen said: "It was a hectic first corner — I just backed out of it and it gave me a good position. From there, the Mercedes were just too quick today."

Hamilton made a near-perfect start to draw level with pole-man Bottas and seize the initiative as they began the long run to Turn One.

This left Bottas to respond, but he had to defend against an attack on his left from Vettel down the third-longest straight on the F1 calendar. Hamilton's surge gave him the inside line while Vettel locked up as he attempted to pass Bottas and swerved left to avoid a collision.

Bottas had to move quickly too as Leclerc cut in from the right, the Ferraris narrowly missing each other as the order settled in Turn Two. Verstappen, taking his chance to pass the flat-spotted Vettel, then swept up to third.

Almost invisibly, Hamilton then began to pull clear. From 1.7 seconds after three, his lead was 2.2 in six and three seconds by lap 10. Bottas could not match his thrust through traffic and by lap 20, when Vettel pitted, the champion was clear by seven seconds.

In that time, on lap 12, Ferrari told Vettel to let Leclerc pass him for fourth, the Monegasque moving up to third when Verstappen pitted on lap 23. By the time Hamilton had been in and out after lap 27, the order resumed: Hamilton ahead of Bottas by eight seconds with Verstappen, Leclerc and Vettel chasing.

Notably, both Ferraris stops took 4.4 seconds while the Mercedes men were stationary for 2.8 and 2.6 respectively.

Clearly keen to quell Bottas' bid for another win, Hamilton was in steely mood. "Keep me updated, man," he asked his engineer Pete Bonnington.

RACING

Sheikh Abdullah's Tayf tops in France



Olivier Peslier rides Tayf to victory in the President of The UAE Cup race at ParisLongchamp racecourse in Paris yesterday.

H Sheikh Abdullah bin Khalifa al-Thani-owned Tayf (Amer) landed the Group 1 President of The UAE Cup for four-year and older purebred Arabian horses in Paris yesterday.

Tayf gave a brilliant well-timed performance throughout the 2000-metre race, making it a perfect start for his seasonal debut in Europe. In the early stages, he cantered in sixth position and when right moment came, he showed a fantastic turn of foot, chasing and passing Khataab (Amer).

Tayf continued his strong surge till the end, securing a decisive win by a margin of three quarters of a length in front of Al Shaqab Racing's Khataab who came second.

Lightning Bolt (Munjiz) completed the frame by two further lengths behind.

"Olivier Peslier knows him by heart," said the winning trainer, Alban de Mieulle.

"We could have run Yazeed in his place, but in a soft ground, Tayf seemed a better choice. He had won in heavy ground in Goodwood. He is back in great form after a long period of absence. It was two years since his last success in England.

"We had a hard time getting him back at this level, but he is back. 200m from the post, he had enough energy to take the lead, but his jockey knows how to do and he made him take the advantage at the end because we know he has a tendency to stop once in front."



Jockey Olivier Peslier (C), trainer Alban de Mieulle (R) and others celebrate on the podium.

Schumacher documentary headed to Cannes

Cannes, France: Former Formula One world champion Michael Schumacher will be the subject of a new documentary featuring unseen archive footage and rare interviews, producers announced yesterday before the Cannes Film Festival.

The film, directed by German duo Michael Wech and Hanns-Bruno Kammertoens, was made with the blessing of the driver's family and will include interviews with them as well as companions and competitors, the filmmakers said. Schumacher turned 50 on Jan. 3 but has not been seen

in public since a skiing accident in the French Alps five years ago which left him with severe head injuries and in a medically-induced coma. The film is in post-production, with international rights sales to be launched at the Marche du Film, a business event held in parallel to the cinema showcase on the French Riviera that kicks off on May 14. Other films set to be introduced to buyers include a documentary about rock band Led Zeppelin. As yet untitled, it will feature band members Jimmy Page, Robert Plant and John Paul Jones.