**SPORT**

Xavi wary of motivated Al Arabi in Amir Cup final

Arab's coach Hallgrimsson calls on his players to go into 'a game of emotions' with 'a belief of winning'

By Selwyn Klipgen

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Arab will hope to script another upset and an end to their 15-match winless run when they take on overwhelming favourites Al Sadd in the prestige Amir Cup final on Friday.

Al Arabi will go into the match on the back of their second straight 2-1 win, this time over Al Gharafa, but they will have to count the cost for their three most important players who are out for the encounter.

The trio of Al Arabi's star forward Ali Ahmed al-Masmi, goalkeeper Yasser Hassan and defender Ali Zainettin, were among the players who were dropped from the team by coach Jose Manuel Hallgrimsson due to injuries.

The team is depending on the temporary return of two ex-core members of Al Arabi to fill in for the trio.

Hallgrimsson did not want to make any comment on the decision to drop the trio. He said: "They're not available for the match except for the goalkeeper. We have to decide on a huge match, and this makes us optimists."

Despite missing his trio, Al Arabi are looking forward to the match.

"The positions in the league will not mean anything tomorrow. Tomorrow, if Yasser is here, he will help him do so. Tomorrow, if Ali Zainettin is here, they can help the players. Everyone might be happy and be ready to play well, to show on the pitch. I am happy that we're in a good moment, playing very good football but we've to show that we're in a good moment, playing very good football but we've to show that tomorrow," he said.

The Spanish midfield maestro was optimistic about winning the competition for his team,

"It's a historic game for them (Al Arabi) to be in the final, but we will miss the final for many years. We will not look at the past, the past is over and we have to give our best to the final. But it is not only us and we have to give our best to the final. The team is in a good moment, playing very good football but we've to show that we're in a good moment, playing very good football but we've to show that tomorrow," he said.

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HONOUR

Lewandowski beats Messi and Ronaldo to FIFA Best Player Award

Barcelona prove too strong for La Liga upstarts Real Sociedad

Qatar will benefit a lot from playing European qualifiers: UEFA chief

Spotlight

Qatar's al-Jassim to officiate in AFC Champions League final
Liverpool go top as Firmino’s late winner stuns Spurs

Tottenhan begged the night at Anfield ahead on goal difference and will rue some great chances before the break. (Reuters)

Liverpool’s Roberto Firmino takes a shot on goal against Tottenham Hotspur in the Premier League clash between the teams at Anfield, Liverpool. (Reuters)

PREMIER LEAGUE

Liverpool go top as Firmino’s late winner stuns Spurs

Tottenhan begged the night at Anfield ahead on goal difference and will rue some great chances before the break.

Robert Firmino’s 18th-minute header sent Liverpool back to the top of the Premier League on Wednesday night. The result means that Manchester City have yet to win a single league game this season, leaving Liverpool two points clear at the summit.

Liverpool went ahead on 35 minutes when Firmino met Andrew Robertson’s cross with a header. It was the Brazilian’s 10th goal of the season and moved him level with team-mate Virgil van Dijk at the top of the scoring charts.

Spurs were reduced to 10 men in the 65th minute when Tanguy Ndombele was shown a second yellow card for a tackle on Robertson.

After the break, Liverpool continued to dominate and were rewarded for their persistence when Firmino scored his second goal of the night in the 84th minute. It was a simple goal, with Firmino just having to tap home after goalkeeper Hugo Lloris saved a shot from Robertson.

Despite the victory, Liverpool are still only third in the table, a point behind Manchester City and two behind Chelsea.

For Tottenham, it was a third consecutive home defeat and they remain 11th in the table, 16 points behind leaders Liverpool.

SERIE A

Lukaku spot on as Inter close gap on leaders Milan

PSG hot on Lille’s heels withlorient victory

Champions Paris St Germain moved four points clear of their bitter rivals as Kylian Mbappe and Lionel Messi scored in a 3-0 win over Angers on Wednesday night.

With 37 minutes left, Mbappe was brought down by Angers goalkeeper Camilo Vargas after the Frenchman had pounced on a loose ball in the area. The Chilean midfielder had earlier saved a shot from Mbappe.

Angers were reduced to 10 men just before half-time when defender Kamara was shown a second yellow card for a tackle on Mbappe.

The visitors were reduced to nine men in the 43rd minute when Mbappe was brought down by defender Kamara after the Angers man had pushed through on goal.

The visitors pushed hard for a second goal and eventually got it on 55 minutes when Mbappe’s shot was parried by Angers goalkeeper Ellyes Skhiri into the path of Messi, who netted from close range.

PSG now have 12 goals in their last three games, having scored at least three in each of their last five outings.

BUNDESLIGA

Bayern sink Wolfsburg double checker, Leverkusen stay top

Bayern Munich’s Robert Lewandowski scored twice to help the champions to a 2-0 win over Wolfsburg on Wednesday night.

Leverkusen edged out Union Berlin 2-1 as the visitors scored twice in the second half to stay level on points with Bayern in second place.

Leverkusen went ahead on 35 minutes when Leon Bailey netted after being fed by Karim Bellarabi. The German international then scored again in the 76th minute to secure all three points.

Borussia Dortmund and Borussia Moenchengladbach also won their matches, as the two teams moved into second place in the table.
Comical Kohli runs out as hosts take grip on opening Test

‘Obviously a wicket like that, or that run out especially Virat Kohli, was massive’

Comical Kohli run out as hosts take grip on opening Test

AUS VS IND, DAY 1, 1ST TEST

A dogged Cheteshwar Pujara was run out for 132 two runs short of a maiden century, but Comical Kohli run out as India took grip on the opening Test.

India bowled Australia out for 239 in the opening session of the day-night Test at the Adelaide Oval. Rahane, who earlier bowled a stunning 10-over spell, finished with 1-50 on debut.

But in the final session of the day, Kohli looked untroubled until he was bowled by Nathan Lyon for a tidy 77. It was a comical run-out as Kohli was run out without striking a single four.

For the hosts, it was a day to remember as they took a 140-run lead in the first innings.

Struggling when Pat Cummins bowled him off his stumps as he looked to drive, Kohli was out for 17.

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**NFL**

The game will take on even more glamour if Saints quarterback Brees can return.

**Focus**

The league switched to a 17-game schedule in 1978 and 176 teams equalled 17 weeks after previously playing 16 regular-season games. When a 17th game is added, it will be an interconference matchup based on standings from the previous season. The eight opposition will also rotate annually and a minimum of seven teams from each conference will be invited to participate by NFL Network. The 17th game will be in a situation that will be named.

ESPN reported that Goddell’s final precondition from four games to rotate back push from prominent owners. But according to our agreement, we have that right to make that decision."

MLB gives 1920-1948 Negro Leagues’ Major League status

The Negro Leagues are one of the most storied eras of baseball history, but they never received the same recognition as their white counterparts. Now, the Major League Baseball Players Association has given the Negro Leagues major league status, making it the first time the Negro Leagues have been recognized in this way.

The Negro Leagues were formed in the early 20th century as a response to the Jim Crow laws that barred African Americans from playing in the major leagues. The leagues were home to some of the greatest players in the history of the sport, including Jackie Robinson, who broke the color barrier in 1947.

The Negro Leagues played a pivotal role in the Civil Rights Movement, and their contributions have been long overlooked. This recognition is a step towards righting that wrong.

**NFL**

The Kansas City Chiefs are one of the most dominant teams in the NFL, with three straight conference championships and one Super Bowl title. The Chiefs are led by quarterback Patrick Mahomes, who has won two MVP awards and led the league in passing yards each of the past two seasons.

The Saints are a team on the rise, led by quarterback Taysom Hill, who has been a dual-threat player for the team. The Saints have made the playoffs three of the past four seasons, and are looking to take the next step in 2023.

**Spotlight**

The New Orleans Saints and Kansas City Chiefs are two of the most popular teams in the NFL, and their game on Sunday is sure to draw plenty of attention.

For fans of both teams, this game is a chance to see two of the best quarterbacks in the league go head-to-head. Mahomes and Hill are both young and talented, and they have led their teams to success this season.

The Saints are playing well this season, currently sitting at 6-4-1 and in second place in the NFC South. The Chiefs, on the other hand, are 11-0 and leading the AFC West.

This game is a must-watch for football fans, and it promises to be an exciting showdown between two of the league’s most talented teams.
Six former players join lawsuit against rugby authorities

The action is over the sport’s failure to protect players to the risks posed by concussions

Former World Rugby chairman defends the sport

Paris: After a World Rugby Championship instigated by the concussive pandemic, the World Rugby’s Council decided yesterday that in future at least half the tournaments will be open to former players.

At a meeting hosted from Geneva on Wednesday by Jean Todt, the president of the International Automobile Federation (FIA), the council made two key decision points from the closing power of the governing bodies.

The governing bodies have a maximum

French Open champ Kim A-Lim. Naples, Florida

No sponsors: French Open axed

Golf

Kim Sei-young chases repeat at LPGA Tour Championship

The event was downgraded in 2019 after the coronavirus pandemic, Kim has played on the LPGA Tour since 2015, making her a strong contender for the major.

The International Golf Federation, which is due to hold its AGM in Naples, Florida, on Wednesday by Jean Todt, said they had rethought their planning schedule and the French Golf Federation joint statement declaring: “As with any event, the french authorities over brain injuries, “Rugby is a contact sport and while there is an element of risk to playing it, we share the view that it is also a sport and we must continue to improve the sport’s safety and performance.”

The World Rugby’s Council said that it had received a joint statement declaring: “As with any sport, the World Rugby authorities are open to the possibility of awarding the title to the best player in the world.”

The French Open win in 2019 was the first for a South Korean player. Kim Sei-young, who is now 30 and has joined the affiliated Drivers Tour after the coronavirus pandemic, Kim has played on the LPGA Tour since 2015, making her a strong contender for the major.

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Russia banned for two years, to miss Tokyo Olympics

Russia will still be allowed to compete, but only as neutrals if they can prove no connection to doping

SPORT

Russia banned for two years, to miss Tokyo Olympics

Russian President Vladimir Putin announced the decision at a news conference on Monday, saying it was a “political decision” made by the Russian authorities. “We have no intention to boycott the Olympics,” he said.

The ban was announced just weeks before the start of the Tokyo Olympics, with many sports federations expecting Russia to be excluded.

The ban comes after a series of doping scandals involving Russian athletes, including a manipulation of their testing data.

The decision has not been welcomed by all, with some calling it unfair and others arguing that it is a step towards better anti-doping rules.

The Tokyo Olympics are due to start on July 23, with Russia’s participation in doubt.

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port's highest court yesterday banned Russia from the Summer Olympics and the 2022 Winter Games, having found the country guilty of systematic doping.

The decision was made by the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) after a five-week hearing in Stockholm.

The ruling means that Russia will be excluded from the Tokyo Olympics, which start on July 23, and the Beijing Winter Olympics, which start on February 4, 2022.

The country will also be banned from any Olympic or Paralympic events in the four years leading up to the 2026 Winter Games in Italy and France.

The ban has been met with mixed reactions. Some have welcomed it as a way to clean up sport, while others have criticized it as a political decision.

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APT

Russia banned for two years, to miss Tokyo Olympics

The announcement comes after the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) called for Russia to be banned from the Olympics.

WADA had previously sought a four-year ban for Russia, but the International Olympic Committee (IOC) was considering a shorter ban.

Russia has until January 18, 2021 to appeal the decision to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS).

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APT

Russia banned for two years, to miss Tokyo Olympics

The decision is a blow to Russia’s hopes of hosting the 2024 Olympic Games in Paris.

Russia was one of the top contenders to host the Games, but the ban could now force the country to look elsewhere for its Olympic destiny.

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Russia banned for two years, to miss Tokyo Olympics

The ban is a victory for WADA, which has long been fighting to clean up sport.

The organisation had hoped for a four-year ban, but the IOC and other anti-doping bodies were considering a shorter ban.

The decision is expected to be announced at a meeting of the IOC on Saturday.

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Qatar’s legacy initiatives to benefit Asia and the world

“It’s also the result of our dedication over the years to develop sport in Qatar and in the region”

By Sports Reporter

Qatar has come up with innovative and visionary ideas to host its second largest multi-sport event after the 2022 FIFA World Cup and also its vow to create a remarkable experience of Aspire and best practice for NOC development and the development of elite sport.

Talking about the initiative, Sheikh Joaan had said: “The role that the Asian Games can play in inspiring hope and celebrating our continent’s diversity is immense. They have been a perfect platform to draw from the proven experiences of Aspire and build programmes that can develop the next generation of stars.”

The 21st edition of the Asian Games in 2022 will feature a combination of sport and culture, and showcase the strength, unity and harmony in the region.

A Sharks of Asia Programme will be designed to develop future ambassadors for sport in Asia in collaboration with all Asian NOCs to invite 90 bright individuals of diverse Asian cultures to take up a full scholarship in Qatar, N.O.C., and Foundation, will offer scholarships, training and professional certification in sport and event development for NOC staff.

By Sports Reporter

We went more Asian ath- letes on Olympic podiums. We want more of those moments of pride for Asian athletes. We want them to share their story with the whole world. We want more Asian athletes to make a mark and be remembered.

Sheikh Joaan al-Thani, Qatari Olympic Committee (QOC) President and Doha 2030 Bid Committee Chairman, was in Muscat only for the OCA General Assembly meeting in Muscat only took it a step ahead of the previous Asian Games.

Leaving a lasting legacy has been the driving force behind all Qatar projects, most notable among them is the 2019 Asian Games that the country hosted in 2019 and the Fifth World Cup in 2022. QOC has already started the Asian Games before and has found that experience to create a new generation and international competitions in the region, becoming almost 100% of the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA).

By Sports Reporter

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QOC President and Doha 2030 Bid Committee Chairman HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani speaks to the media after Doha was announced as hosts of Asian Games 2030 in Muscat, Oman, on Wednesday.