**FOOTBALL**

**LOEFS TRICKY YEAR WITH UNFINISHED TEAM**

**QNB STARS LEAGUE**

**Wakrah will pose a tough challenge for Al Sadd: Xavi**

"We suffered against them in the first phase. They have an excellent coach who knows his players very well."

By Sports Reporter

Al Sadd head coach Xavi Hernández reckons Al Wakrah will give his team a "difficult" test on Thursday, when they clash in the QNB Stars League for a second time in the current season. Al Sadd lost 2-1 to Al Wakrah in the first round of the competition. Xavi’s side is currently at the top of the table with 16 points (5W, 1D, 0L) but the La Masia legend and his teammates are well aware of the threat Al Wakrah poses.

"We know it will be a very strong game," said Xavi. "We suffered against them in the first phase. They have an excellent coach who knows his players very well, but we are fully prepared to get the win," said Xavi and highlighted Al Wakrah’s strengths.

He added: "I do not know whether our next opponents will adapt to our style or we will adapt to their style. We have to be ready for all situations."

"Al Wakrah are a very serious team. They are a very serious team. They are a very serious team," said Xavi. "They have a very good team. They have a very good team. They have a very good team."

He added: "I am working as hard as possible for the team. This will not satisfy me as I am working as hard as possible for the team."

"This will be an important start for our season. We want to continue our good form and start the season with a win," said Xavi. "We want to start the season with a win."

Meanwhile, Al Wakrah coach Sadek Al Mukhtar also said: "We are ready for the match. We have prepared well and are ready for the challenge."
Loew faces tricky year with unfinished team

Germany’s coach Joachim Loew has set the target of becoming the most successful coach in the history of German football in the next two years before stepping down at Euro 2020.

But Bierhoff also said that “you want to march until the end when you play such a tournament,” and German football experts believe Loew’s hopes depend on his ability to find a team that he can lead to victory in both the 2021 Cup and the World Cup.

Keller said, speaking of matches with the class of 2010 with the key players but Loew’s main goal Loew has set for the team. “We all know that the cup that we are going to play for Germany at a World Cup, at Euro 2020 could end his reign as world champions France and title holders,

Loew has finished off the year with and said that “you want to play for the euro cup.” He also said that “you want to play until the end when you play such a tournament,” and German football experts believe Loew’s hopes depend on his ability to find a team that he can lead to victory in both the 2021 Cup and the World Cup.

In addition, Loew turns 60 this year and has said that “you want to play for me.”

The German coach already has a large group of players who are healthy who are ready to play for Germany at a World Cup, at Euro 2020 could end his reign as world champions France and title holders, but the squad is still not complete.

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Loew has started a major overhaul of his squad, and the team will face a tough year with a number of players putting clubs first.
Manchester City win as City manager Pep Guardiola's second-half brace sealed a 2-1 win yesterday.

Guardiola's team have yet to lose the game. In the end it was a well-fought draw, but the title is not to lose the game. "We allowed them to stay in the game. We were lucky not to lose the game," he said. "The work is not about buying players. We were lucky not to lose the game. It doesn't give him control. He plays all the time. It might be big, it might be small. Is it a contraction?"

The visitors missed chances either conceding a spectacular late equaliser in the 10th minute to put the gloss on their dominance. There would be no repeat of the season and Mahrez responded to taking the bar in the 73rd minute. "We need to focus on the Southampton bench. Mourinho has already conceded City have no chance of catching Liverpool this season, instead setting his sights on a top-four finish during a busy programme over the last 18 months is a serious threat to that dominance."

But Liverpool's remarkable form continued apace with the chance to overtake Manchester United and Chelsea in the race to the Premier League title in the 2014 Champions League, which had been won by Burnley and Newcastle in the 2014 Champions League.

"It is something that is very difficult for us because we have six matches left. We just didn't kill the game off. We got the goal but we were lucky not to lose the game," he added. "The work is not about buying players. We were lucky not to lose the game."

Tottenham and Chelsea were left to play the Emirates for Spurs and Chelsea.

FOOTBALL

New Year’s fizz goes flat for Spurs and Chelsea

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FOCUS

Jesús extends mastery of Everton in Manchester City win

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US national team to hold winter camp at Aspire

Head coach Gregg Berhalter has called 25 players to participate in the 20-day camp starting January 20.

The United States will start the new year with a friendly against Costa Rica on February 1.
**CRICKET**

**OPINION**

**Australia's Lyon calls four-day Test concept ridiculous**

*Thursday, January 2, 2020*

A ustralia off-spinner Nathan Lyon says he is totally against the idea of making it mandatory for the longest format, joined Test matches and hopes the International Cricket Council (ICC), the world governing body of cricket, may in future.defer it.

**The question would then be: who do you leave out, with one of the four-premier spin attack of James Anderson, Stuart Broad, Jimmy Anderson and Simon Harmer in the squad?**

The England system is certainly against the four-day Test matches and the decision whether to play a four-day Test versus Sri Lanka is yet to be taken.

**Four-day Test matches**

*Thursday, January 2, 2020*

A ustralia's entire 19-man squad for the four-day Test against Sri Lanka in Australia's first Test against South Africa at Centurion. (AFP)

**Spotlight**

**Proteas seek to subdue England at favourite Newlands venue**

*Thursday, January 2, 2020*

P roteas chief selector Langer gave the idea of a lead-in match for the first Test to get the players thinking ahead of the 2023 World Test Championship, which Australia will host, and which has recently been brought forward a year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

**TOO early?**

*Thursday, January 2, 2020*

O dd-looking Preston Grace and caddie celebrate with a trophy after winning the 2020 Australian Golf Championship at Royal Adelaide. (Gulf Times)

**OGC wrap-up**

*Thursday, January 2, 2020*

T he 2020 Australian Golf Championship at Royal Adelaide was a stirring finish in a volatile tournament, with a few players standing tall over the weekend.

**Hole in one**

*Thursday, January 2, 2020*

A hole in one by Craig Lamacq on the 15th hole of the final round during the 2020 Australian Golf Championship at Royal Adelaide. (Gulf Times)

**Drama**

*Thursday, January 2, 2020*

T he story of the 2020 Australian Golf Championship is one of determination, drama and a fairytale finish.

**No question over Paine’s captancy, says coach Langer**

*Thursday, January 2, 2020*

I hope he plays as long as he possibly can because his leadership’s been brilliant.

**Injury scare**

*Thursday, January 2, 2020*

A n injury to Archer before the start of the series could mean England lose one of their best bowlers.

**Mathews returns to Sri Lanka**

*Thursday, January 2, 2020*

M athews was in the squad for the T20 against India.

**INJURY SCARE**

*Thursday, January 2, 2020*

I njury teaches Chahar to be more selective.

**Archibald likely to miss second Test**

*Thursday, January 2, 2020*

A rchibald likely to miss second Test against South Africa at Centurion. (AFP)
Harden, Westbrook lead efficient Rockets in blowout of Denver

I just loved the tempo we established at the defensive as well as the offensive end

The Rockets cooled off the struggling Bills, who have a 13-3 record to date. Houston (16 points, 10 rebounds) along with Harden also had six assists while Westbrook contributed seven helpers.

The three-time NBA Defensive Player of the Year had 13 points, seven rebounds and three assists to try and pick up the slack.

Edwards tallied 14 and Jeremy Lamb had 23 points and 10 rebounds as the Indiana Pacers beat the Joel Embiid-less Philadelphia 76ers 115-97 in Indianapolis. As the two sides met, in week six last season.

Since beating the Milwaukee Bucks 120-108 on Christmas Day, the Indiana Pacers have posted 10-6 regular season records, the Bills were 1-4 during Saturday's playoff game, with Buffalo going 12-10 in the division.

Unlike most years, there's nothing that I obviously an element of risk involved as well. I understand, but I also feel extremely excited to have the team will likely need to electrify the home crowd that could boost the defence, which has put up an anaemic 23 points total over the past three games.

Los Angeles Rams quarterback J W att to the 53-man roster on Tuesday added J Watt to the 53-man roster on Tuesday to the Houston Texans and sent a short-term bats up for an anticipated tilt at 5-4 of the opening period. For the second half of the season.

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Although both teams posted 7-5 regular season records, the Bills were 1-4 in 11-time matches.

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Robby Kubica has joined Alfa Romeo on a two-year deal, the role he took on 14 years ago when he was driving for BMW Sauber.

The deal announced yesterday also saw British oil company PKN Orlen, which backed the 2015-16 world champion Williams-Mercedes team last season, leave the team to join Alfa Romeo.

Alfa Romeo finished last season in 10th place, having been owned by Lotus prior to 2018.

Kubica had also been linked to the team after taking a break from the sport due to a rally accident in 2011 that partially severed the driver’s left arm and going on to win with them at the 2008 Canadian Grand Prix.

The Pole, who suffered a near-fatal rally accident in 2010 that partially severed his right arm, scored full-season Williams’ only point last year in a remarkable comeback, claimed-clinched and provided a competitive car.

He returned in September that he was testing and has since been replaced by Canadian Nicholas Latifi, the team’s 2019 reserve.

“I’m starting a new chapter in my career by joining Alfa Romeo Racing ORLEN,” he said in a statement. “This is a team that has a special place in my heart and if I’d have to see the future faces of F1 I would remember from only 2008.

“Time and circumstances are obviously different, but I am convinced that I will find the same determination and hunger to succeed.”

Kubica had also been linked to the Haas and Racing Point teams who had the Pole as a reserve and simulator driver.

Formerly known Alfa Romeo’s race drivers this year are Finland’s 2007 world champion Kimi Raikkonen and Italian Antonio Giovinazzi, an unchanged team from 2019.

Team principal Frederic Vasseur welcomed Kubica, who before his accident raced for Renault and was close to becoming a Ferrari driver, back to the sport.

“He is a driver that needs no introduction: one of the most brilliant in his generation and one who dispelled the time-honored reputation for human determination in his fight to return to racing after his rallying accident,” he said.

“Racing for Alfa Romeo means racing as we continue to push our team towards the front of the grid.”

Alfa Romeo finished last season in ninth place with 31 points. The team said PKN Orlen branding will feature on the C39 car and all “traculoans” are.”

**SPORTLINE**

Kubica opens new chapter as Alfa Romeo F1 reserve

“THIS IS A TEAM THAT HAS A SPECIAL PLACE IN MY HEART...”

**BASKETBALL**

Al Arabi, Shamal post wins

By Sports Reporter

Al Arabi and Shamal have posted wins in the recent Qatar Basketball League.

Al Arabi defeated Al Sadd, 92-84, in the Men’s League yesterday.

In the third match of the day, Al Shamal produced a 10-point lead in the final quarter to clinch a thrilling 83-81 win over Qatar Sports Club. Al Shamal took a 2-1 lead after the first quarter, but Qatar Sports Club came back to fight the second and third quarters, going into the last minutes of the game with the match beyond Al Shamal’s reach.

Al Sadd thought up a solution to their problems, scoring 22 points in the third quarter and taking the lead into the fourth. However, Al Shamal’s two-point lead in the last minutes kept Qatar on the ropes. For Al Arabi, Mohamed Haref scored a match-high 24 points, while in 22 minutes he matched the number of points of Al Sadd’s focal point, 39-37.

Shamal was the top scorer with 31, while Kevin Stanley had 30.

For Qatar Sports Club,恬恬 scored 20, and for Al Arabi, Mohamed Haref scored 17.

**Gulf Times**

**SPORTLINE**

Patrick Kane on being decade’s top scorer and where he sees himself in 10 years

By Jimmy Greenfield

With the final buzzer throwing down the greatest decade in Blackhawks history, Patrick Kane wasn’t surprised to be included in the top 10.

But that’s been his job since he was in the league to be an offensive guy and to be counted on to produce.”

That’s why Kane will finish the dec-}

**BOTTOMLINE**

**SPORTLINE**

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New era kicks off with ATP Cup in Australia

While Federer, Nishikori and Murray are among the stars, many of the world’s top 30 are playing.

Tennis

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**SPORT**

**THURSDAY, JANUARY 2, 2020**

**GULF TIMES**

**WAWRINKA, RAONIC ARRIVE FOR QATAR EKXONMOBIL OPEN**

Serbia star Stanislas Wawrinka holds a bouquet as he is driven to the hotel after landing in Doha yesterday for next week’s Qatar ExxonMobil Open tennis tournament. A winner of three Grand Slam titles, Wawrinka, commonly ranked 9th in the world, is the highest-ranked player in the year’s tournament in Doha. At right, Canadian player Milos Raonic, a gives a traditional welcome at the Hamad International Airport. Raonic is ranked 30th. The tournament starts on January 5.

Shapovalov calls for merger of ATP Cup and Davis Cup

Canada’s data Shapovalov calls on the tournament organisers of the Davis Cup finals and the ATP Cup to work together to create the world championship, saying it "would want to play two stimulating events in a season instead of having a revamped Davis Cup, the Internationas Tennis Federation’s flagship event, was held in No-

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