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Sport

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Hathab Series has done wonders for young Qatari riders: QEF chief

The young riders participating in our competitions have shown great interest in becoming better. That was the sole reason we started this series, to get the young riders interested and in helping them achieve their dreams.

Hamad bin Abdul Rahman Al Attiyah

Sport |10



VUELTA A ESPANA: Stage 18 winner: Pascal Ackermann (Germany) 3:28:13 Overall winner: Primož Roglic (Slovenia) 72:46:12

City, Liverpool draw as Kane joins 150 club

AFP – LONDON

Kevin De Bruyne missed a penalty as Manchester City squandered the chance to close the gap on Liverpool yesterday while Tottenham's Harry Kane celebrated joining the Premier League's 150 club.

A win at the Etihad would have taken the Reds to the summit but they were forced to settle for a 1-1 draw in a battle between the two dominant powers over the past two seasons.

That meant Leicester clung onto top spot after leapfrogging Spurs with a 1-0 win at home to Wolves.

Jurgen Klopp's champions made an aggressive start against City, with Sadio Mane, Mohamed Salah, Roberto Firmino and Diogo Jota all in a fearsome-looking starting line-up.

The visitors went ahead in the 13th minute when Salah converted a penalty after Kyle Walker clipped Mane in the box.

City drew level just after the half-hour mark when De Bruyne picked out Gabriel Jesus in the area with his back to goal. The City striker cleverly turned past Trent Alexander-Arnold and poked past Alisson Becker.

City were awarded a penalty themselves just before the interval after a VAR check when Joe Gomez was unable to get his arm out of the way of a De Bruyne cross but the Belgian skewed wide.

The draw left Liverpool in third place on 17 points after eight games, one behind Leicester and five clear of City, who have a game in hand.

Kane reaches 150 goals

Earlier, Kane headed in a late winner in a 1-0 victory against struggling West Brom to briefly lift Jose Mourinho's side to the top of the table after their fourth win in five league games.

Only Alan Shearer and Sergio Aguero have scored 150 Premier League goals in fewer appearances than Kane, who reached the landmark in his 218th match.

Mourinho was effusive in his praise for his star striker, who also has 10 assists in all competitions this season.

"Harry Kane, you have to say has this many goals, this many assists, this number of balls recovered, this number of duels won, this number of balls that he saved his team in a defensive set-piece," he said.

"This is Harry Kane. It's goals plus this and this and this and that."

The landmark effort for Kane, who scored his 200th Tottenham goal in all competitions against Ludogorets on Thursday, was perfectly timed after they had laboured to break down stubborn Albion.



Harry kane you have to say has this many goals, this many assists, this number of balls recovered, this number of duels won. When you go to stats in relation to the strikers, I always say that the stats should be how many goals has a striker scored, and what he did for his team in the matches where he didn't score. And many of the strikers that history will show an incredible number of goals that they score, plus zero: ***Jose Mourinho insists striker Harry kane's influence for Tottenham Hotspur goes way beyond the 201 goals he has now scored for the north London club***

Tottenham Hotspur's English striker Harry Kane (left) celebrates after scoring the opening goal during the English Premier League match against West Bromwich Albion, yesterday.

Mourinho started with Kane, Gareth Bale and Son Heung-min in his front three for the first time, and while the latter two were quiet, Kane was on hand to clinch Tottenham's third successive league victory.

Spurs are now unbeaten in their past seven league games but were below their best for long periods against a West Brom team still without a league win this term.

Son wasted an early chance but the home side had opportunities of their own through Karlan Grant, Kyle Bartley and Jake Livermore.

Kane finally broke Albion's resistance in the 88th minute when Matt Doherty's cross caused indecision from Johnstone and the England captain arrived to flick a header into the far corner.

But Spurs' stay at the top of the Premier League table was short-lived as Jamie Vardy netted his eighth Premier League goal of the season for Leicester.

Vardy scored the decisive goal from the penalty spot in the 15th minute -- following a VAR check -- after Max Kilman handled Dennis Praet's cross in the area.

But he blew a chance to make it 2-0 when he was denied by Rui Patricio late in the first half after James Justin was brought down in the box but Brendan Rodgers' team held on to win all three points.





Al Sadd's coach Xavi Hernandez, Al Sailiya coach Sami Trabelsi, Al Duhail coach Sabri Lamouchi and officials in action during a friendly match played at the Aspire Zone, in Doha, yesterday. The match was hosted by the Qatar Stars League (QSL), on the sidelines of the QSL co-ordination meetings.

QSL hosts coordination meeting and friendly match

THE PENINSULA – DOHA

In line with the policy of continuous co-ordination and co-operation in order to reach the best technical, administrative and organisational levels, and within the framework of continuous development of Qatar football, the Qatar Stars League (QSL) held several meetings with coaches of clubs and officials at the Aspire Zone yesterday.

Executive Director of Competitions and Football Development at the QSL, Ahmed Khellil Abbassi, met with coaches, where the calendar for the current season 2020-21 and the approved health protocol for the next phase were discussed, and all opinions and proposals were reviewed, listening to the coaches, their comments and their points of view on technical matters.

Director of QSL's Competitions Department, Ahmed Salman Al Adsani, held a meeting with the sports officials of clubs, the calendar and tournaments of the season were reviewed.

The coaches and sports officials expressed their happiness with the discussions and by presenting all the views and opinions and comments that emerged out of the meetings. They also expressed their optimism about reaching the common targets and goals.

On the sidelines of the meetings, a friendly exhibition match was played in accordance with the COVID-19 precautionary measures and procedures, in the presence of Executive Director of Sales, Marketing and Communication at the QSL, Hassan Rabiah Al Kuwari, Executive Director of Competitions and Football Development at the QSL, Ahmed Khellil Abbassi, and a number of oficials and members of the QSL staff.

The match was held at the Aspire Zone.

Ronaldo strikes but Caicedo disappoints Juventus

AFP – MILAN

Felipe Caicedo again rescued Lazio, scoring deep into injury time to cancel out Cristiano Ronaldo's early goal for Juventus in a 1-1 draw yesterday.

Ronaldo had opened after quarter of an hour in Rome but second-half substitute Caicedo once again proved decisive firing in the equaliser five minutes into injury time.

The 32-year-old Caicedo had rescued his side in a 1-1 Champions League draw at Zenit Saint Petersburg during the week and also an injury time 4-3 winner against Torino last weekend.

Juventus missed the chance to move second behind Serie A leaders AC Milan, with the champions three points behind their northern rivals who host Hellas Verona later on Sunday.

Simone Inzaghi's Lazio, currently embroiled in coronavirus chaos, are ninth, five points off the leaders.

Lazio lined out without top striker Ciro Immobile, midfielder Lucas Leiva and goalkeeper Thomas Strakosha, who remain in coronavirus isolation.

The Roman club are being investigated by the Italian football federation for possible Covid violations.

Immobile was among a number of Lazio players blocked by UEFA from taking part in Champions League games against Club Bruges and Zenit Saint Petersburg after testing positive.

But they were included in last weekend's game against Torino, in which Immobile also scored, following negative tests carried out in a lab used by the club.

Inzaghi had been optimistic about them lining out in the Stadio Olimpico but they were left out after they were also reported to have tested positive in another Italian lab.

Lazio midfielder Luis Alberto returned after recovering from coronavirus with the hosts also boosted with defender Stefan Radu back after a month out injury. Leonardo Bonucci, making his 400th start for Juventus, proved decisive early blocking Vedat Muriqi.



Lazio's Felipe Caicedo (centre) celebrates with team-mates Adam Marusic and Andreas Pereira after scoring against Juventus, yesterday.

But it was again Ronaldo who proved decisive finishing off a Juan Cuadrado cross after the Colombian shook off defenders Luis Alberto and Mohamed Fares.

Ronaldo, 35, scored his sixth goal in four league games. Sergej Milinkovic-Savic sent a header wide for the hosts with Joaquin Correa also testing Wojciech Szczesny.

Ronaldo had two chances for a second in the first half, rattling the post, with Pepe Reina tipping a free-kick over the bar. But with Juventus looking in control, Ronaldo went off with 15 minutes to go after taking a knock to his ankle. And Caicedo, who had come off the bench nine minutes after the break, once again had the final word.

The Ecudorian picked up a Correa cross, swivelling to fire in the equaliser to hand Juventus their fourth stalemate in seven league games.

Magnificent Medvedev wins Paris Masters

AFP – PARIS

Third seed Daniil Medvedev claimed his first Paris Masters title at Bercy Arena yesterday by battling back from a set down to beat Germany's Alexander Zverev.

The Russian was on top form in a high-quality encounter, winning 5-7, 6-4, 6-1 to secure his first trophy of the season and the eighth of his career.

"It's great, I'm really happy. As I always say, I don't always show this after matches, but I'm always happy to win," said Medvedev after securing his third Masters title.

Both players will now turn their attentions to the ATP Tour Finals in London, an event won by Zverev in 2018.

Medvedev has had an up-and-down season, but was at his best this week in Paris, continuing his magnificent record on hard courts -- all of his ATP titles have come on the surface.

"Before this tournament I wasn't in great form, zero finals this year and I was crying, well complaining, to my wife, 'Oh my God, I don't have the level, not playing well, not even any finals'," he said.

"But now, three Masters titles, it's great. I have had the level this week. I managed to keep the pressure on and in the end I broke his level a little bit."

Fourth seed Zverev, who was bidding for a third straight tournament victory after back-to-back successes on home soil in Cologne, remains without a Masters title since the 2018 Madrid Open after seeing his 12-match winning streak ended. He has recently denied allegations from his ex-girlfriend Olga Sharypova that he tried to "strangle" her while at last year's US Open.

Zverev hit out at those criticising him after the match.

"I know that right now there are a lot of people who will be trying to wipe a smile off my face, but I'm still smiling under this mask," said Zverev.

The 24-year-old Medvedev has won two of his last three matches against Zverev, having also beaten him in last year's Shanghai Masters final, but still trails their head-to-head 5-2.

The world number five outlasted the US Open runner-up in a near-empty Bercy Arena -- with France in its second coronavirus lockdown -- securing the win after two hours and eight minutes on court.

Zverev, who knocked out Rafael Nadal in the semi-finals, was left to rue a losing run of seven straight games from the end of the second set and into the decider.



Russia's Daniil Medvedev celebrates with the trophy after winning the singles final against Germany's Alexander Zverev, on day 7 at the ATP World Tour Masters 1000 - Paris Masters, yesterday.

Both players continued their excellent serving form for much of the opening set, but the German waited for his moment to pounce, bringing up three set points in game 11 with a fine backhand passing shot.

It looked as though he had sealed the set at the second opportunity when a Medvedev backhand was shown by Hawkeye to have flown long, but there was no challenge from Zverev.

It mattered little, as the world number seven secured a one-set lead when his opponent fired off target on the next point, celebrating with a fist pump matched by coach David Ferrer sitting in his player's box.

Medvedev put Zverev under serious pressure in a marathon third game of the second set, but after eight deuces and four break points, the 23-year-old managed to hold on thanks to strong play at the net.

But Medvedev kept pushing and finally broke through to lead 5-4 as Zverev sent a forehand long.

He confidently served it out to force a decider for only the second time in the pair's seven meetings. Medvedev had seized the momentum and he broke to love in the opening game of the third set before staving off four break points to take a 2-0 advantage.

His return game was in full flow and he all but ended Zverev's challenge by sealing a sixth straight game to move a double break in front.

Zverev was visibly deflated by his opponent's surge and he double-faulted on Medvedev's second match point.

Ali, Qadir lift Pakistan to T20 series win against Zimbabwe

AFP – RAWALPINDI

Pakistan proved too strong for a sloppy Zimbabwe as they won the second Twenty20 international by eight wickets in Rawalpindi on Sunday, taking an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series.

Riding on half centuries from skipper Babar Azam (51) and 20-year-old Haider Ali (66 not out), Pakistan made short work of a modest 135-run target, achieving victory with 29 balls to spare.

Zimbabwe, who were sent in to bat, never recovered from early strikes by paceman Haris Rauf (3-31) and spinner Usman Qadir (3-23) as they were restricted to 134-7 in 20 overs.

Haider, playing only his third international match, cracked three sixes and six boundaries in a 43-ball knock and was declared man of the match.

Azam, ranked second in the world T20 batting rankings, smashed eight fours and a six off just 28 balls, the fastest of his 16 T20 international fifties.

Haider and Azam added 100 for the second wicket, taking away the game from Zimbabwe despite losing opener Fakhar Zaman for just five in the third over.

Zimbabwe fast bowler Blessing Muzarabani took two wickets for 33 runs, including Azam. Khushdil Shah cracked the winning boundary in his 11 not out.

The last match of the series is scheduled for Tuesday, also in Rawalpindi.

Earlier, Ryan Burl (32 not out) and Wesley Madhevere (24) were the main scorers for Zimbabwe, with Burl smashing the last ball of the innings for a big six. Pakistan's Rauf, who took 20 wickets in last year's Big Bash in Australia, removed Brendan Taylor (three) and skipper Chamu Chibhabha (15) in successive overs.

Donald Tiripano (15) added 30 for the seventh wicket with Burl before falling to Rauf in the 19th over. Usman, son of the late Pakistan star spinner Abdul Qadir, chipped in with the wickets of Madhevere, Sikandar Raza (seven) and Elton Chigumbura (18) to further derail Zimbabwe.

Pakistan's Ahsan Raza became the first umpire to officiate in 50 T20 internationals.



Pakistan's Haider Ali plays a shot during the second Twenty20 cricket match against Zimbabwe yesterday.

SCOREBOARD

ZIMBABWE

B. Taylor c Rizwan b Rauf	3
C. Chibhabha c Ashraf b Rauf	15
S. Williams b Ashraf	13
W. Madhevere lbw b Usman	24
Sikandar Raza b Usman	7
R. Burl not out	32
E. Chigumbura st Rizwan b Usman	18
D. Tiripano c Zaman b Rauf	15
T. Chisoro not out	3
Extras: (lb1, w3)	4
Total: (for seven wkts; 20 overs) 134	

Did not bat: R Ngarava, B Muzarabani

Fall of wickets: 1-5, 2-30, 3-38, 4-65, 5-66, 6-90, 7-120

Bowling: Hasnain 4-0-28-0, Rauf 4-0-31-3, Ashraf 4-0-20-1 (2w), Riaz 4-0-31-0 (1w), Usman 4-0-23-3

PAKISTAN

F Zaman c Chigumbura b Muzarabani	5
B Azam c Chigumbura b Muzarabani	51
Haider Ali not out	66
Khushdil Shah not out	11
Extras: (lb1, w3)	4
Total: (for two wkts; 15.1 overs) . 137	

Did not bat: Mohammad Hafeez, Mohammad Rizwan, Wahab Riaz, Haris Rauf, Mohammad Hasnain, Faheem Ashraf, Usman Qadir

Fall of wickets: 1-10, 2-110

Bowling: Muzarabani 4-0-33-2 (2w), Ngarava 3.1-0-28-0, Tiripano 2-0-18-0, Chisoro 3-0-26-0, Williams 1-0-11-0, Raza 2-0-20-0 (1w)



Delhi Capitals' Marcus Stoinis celebrates after taking a wicket.

Clinical DC beat SRH to enter maiden IPL final

IANS – ABU DHABI

Kagiso Rabada's four wicket-haul, Shikhar Dhawan's 78 and an all-round effort by Marcus Stoinis led a clinical Delhi Capitals (DC) to a 17-run win over SunRisers Hyderabad (SRH) in the second Qualifier of the 2020 Indian Premier League (IPL) yesterday. Chasing a target of 190, SRH were limited to 172/8 in their 20 overs.

DC have gone through to their first IPL final, where they face defending champions Mumbai Indians (MI) on November 10. The final this season will thus be contested between the two highest ranked teams in the group stage with DC finishing second with 16 points and MI first with 18.

SRH were off to a shakey start in the chase with their captain and opener David Warner falling to Rabada in the second over for just two runs. Fellow opener Priyam Garg next fell to Stoinis in the fourth over and Manish Pandey fell two balls later which meant that SRH had lost their top order in the powerplay.

This was in stark contras to DC whose openers Stoinis and Dhawan had scored 65 runs in the first six overs.

However, SRH were kept in the game by their middle order anchored by Kane Williamson, who scored 67 runs in 45 balls. He first shared a 46-run stand with Jason Holder for the fourth wicket and a 57-run stand with Abdul Samad for the fifth.

Williamson fell to Stoinis after which Rabada got Samad, Rashid Khan and Shreevats Goswami in the 19th over to effectively end the contest.

Earlier, Stoinis and Dhawan's 86-run opening stand followed by Shimron Hetmyer's fireworks towards the end of the innings helped DC scored 189/3 in their 20 overs.

Brief scores:

DC 189/3 (Shikhar Dhawan 78, Shimron Hetmyer 42 not out; Rashid Khan 1/26) vs SRH 172/8 (Kane Williamson 62, Abdul Samad 33; Kagiso Rabada 4/29)

Rangers thrash Hamilton 8-0

AFP – GLASGOW

Rangers restored their nine-point lead at the top of the Scottish Premiership with an 8-0 thrashing of Hamilton as Celtic bounced back with a 4-1 win at Motherwell yesterday.

Steven Gerrard's men have played two more matches than their Glasgow rivals but showed why they are now the bookmakers' favourites to end Celtic's record-equalling run of nine straight league titles.

Hamilton shocked the hosts on their last visit to Ibrox in March, but Rangers are a team transformed since Scottish football's return in August, unbeaten in 20 games in all competitions this season. Joe Aribo, Kemar Roofe and James Tavernier all scored twice, while Scott Arfield and Brandon Barker were also on target against the rock-bottom Accies.

In stark contrast to Rangers' fine European form, Celtic suffered a 4-1 home defeat to Sparta Prague.

Di Maria brace keeps injury-hit PSG on top

AFP – PARIS

Angel Di Maria scored twice as Paris Saint-Germain made short work of Rennes despite a raft of absences in a 3-0 win on Saturday that enables the champions to hold onto their lead at the top of Ligue 1.

Di Maria struck in each half, with Moise Kean scoring the other, to move PSG up to 24 points, five ahead of second-placed Lille.

Rennes stay third on 18 points -- but can be overtaken by Nice should they beat Monaco on Sunday -- while Montpellier are a further point back in sixth after their 2-0 win at Bordeaux.

PSG's win was their eighth in a row in the French top flight and came as under-fire coach Thomas Tuchel battles with an injury crisis that has left him without the likes of Neymar, Kylian Mbappe and Marco Verratti.

Striker Mauro Icardi was also out, Marquinhos was moved back into the defence following injury to centre-back Presnel Kimpembe, while Pablo Sarabia failed to overcome a muscle strain.

New arrival Kean put the hosts ahead after 10 minutes with his third Ligue 1 goal of the season when he collected Di Maria's pass following pressure on the Rennes defence and lashed a low shot past Alfred Gomis.

Di Maria then added the second 10 minutes later when Ander Herrera picked him out with a fine through ball and he dinked his finish over Gomis.

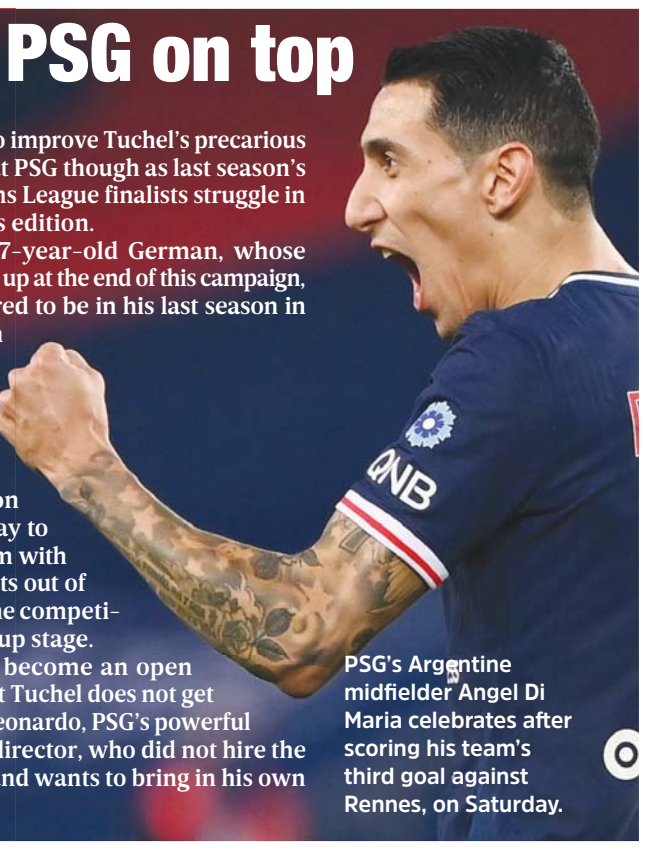
PSG suffered what looked to be more injury strife when Thilo Kehrer left the field 10 minutes before the end of the first half, before Kean then began limping on the hour mark before being substituted shortly afterwards.

The result was never really in doubt however, and Di Maria made absolutely sure of the points in the 73rd minute when his low drive squirmed past the unfortunate Gomis.

A thumping win over Rennes is unlikely to improve Tuchel's precarious position at PSG though as last season's Champions League finalists struggle in this year's edition.

The 47-year-old German, whose contract is up at the end of this campaign, is rumoured to be in his last season in the French capital after PSG lost 2-1 at RB Leipzig on Wednesday to leave them with two defeats out of three in the competition's group stage.

It has become an open secret that Tuchel does not get on with Leonardo, PSG's powerful sporting director, who did not hire the German and wants to bring in his own man.



PSG's Argentine midfielder Angel Di Maria celebrates after scoring his team's third goal against Rennes, on Saturday.

Hathab Series has done wonders for young Qatari riders: QEF chief

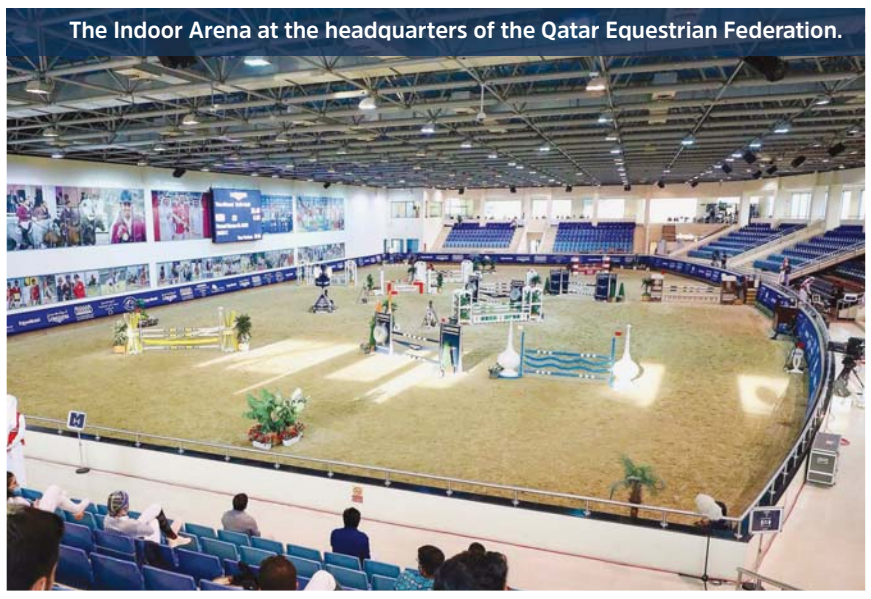
THE PENINSULA - DOHA

The hugely popular Longines Qatar Equestrian Tour Hathab series has helped the young Qatari riders improve their skills significantly since its launch in 2016, Qatar Equestrian Federation (QEF) President said yesterday.

The third round of the 2020-21 season concluded successfully on Saturday with Mohammed Khalifa Albaker guiding Verona to a convincing victory in the Big Tour competition at QEF's Indoor Arena.

Hamad bin Abdul Rahman Al Attiyah, President of QEF, said the Hathab Series - supported by the Social and Sport Contribution Fund - has done wonders for the young riding community in the country.

"Now we are into our fourth edition of the Longines Qatar Equestrian Tour Hathab series. This competition has achieved great success from the time we started this in 2016-2017 season. The riders receive great attention from their trainers, fans and family. All of this has helped in the development of their riding skills," Al Attiyah said on the sidelines of the third round.


The Indoor Arena at the headquarters of the Qatar Equestrian Federation.


Hamad bin Abdul Rahman Al Attiyah, President of QEF





"The young riders participating in our competitions have shown great interest in becoming better. That was the sole reason we started this series, to get the young riders interested and in helping them achieve their dreams," he said. "We are looking forward to the remaining rounds of the 12-round series," he said.

"What we have seen is the riders showing interest in horses they get to ride and the horses they want for future competitions," Al Attiyah said. "When the young riders or the seasoned ones, compete in our series, they strive to win in actual competition environment. That's what we want," he said. "This very attitude will help them win international events also in the future," the QEF President said.

"Over the course of three years, we have developed young riders and discovered new talent at the same time, talent that needs more riding, more competition, more training. These young riders will go on to serve the national team in the Olympic Games and other top international events. That's what we seek from this series," he said. "The Longines Qatar Equestrian Tour Hathab series offers stiff competition. We seek to create an international event environment and we feel we are doing it successfully. We have technical staff of the highest calibre. We have well-drilled organizing teams that put together this fine series every year," he said.

The QEF President said the current season and the ones held in the past have allowed Qatar to develop a young women's dressage squad capable of improving their skills further.

Al Attiyah said QEF is currently looking at increasing the number of events provided that the prevailing circumstances involving Covid-19 threat eases away. The QEF President details on the new events will be given in due course of time.

"We look to continue to host the Hathab Series as it is serving our purposely nicely. It has become one of the best conducted events in the region. The continuity has attracted sponsorship support for which are grateful to our partners," Al Attiyah said.

Regarding the joining of hands between QEF and Al Shaqab, Al Attiyah said that the partnership now has completed four years.

He said Al Shaqab continues to invest heavily in hosting world-class events that bring in international riders who create competitions held on Qatari soil the 'best in the world'.

"The success of four-year partnership is evident from the successes we have shared in the continuity of Longines Qatar Equestrian Tour Hathab series," he said.

When asked about Qatar's seasoned riders taking part in international events, Al Attiyah said the process would continue in the new season. He said Qatar's top riders like Bassem Muhammad, Salman Al Emadi and Hamad bin Ali Al Attiyah will continue to take part in top events held around the world including the ones that are staged at Al Shaqab Arena. He said Qatar riders will also be part of international training camps next year.

He QEF will organize a long camp for its riders starting from May 2021 in the Netherlands in preparation for their participation in the Asian Equestrian Championship that will be held in China in 2022.

Al Attiyah confirmed the 2020 Amir's Sword Festival will be held next February, the country's richest show jumping event that attracts international riders.

"The sport of equestrian has a rich history in Qatar. We have local and international events. We have a good rider base that can go on to become international stars. We give our thanks to the wise leadership of the Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani and the Qatar Olympic Committee (QOC) Chairman H E Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad Al Thani who back us in our endeavour to popularise the sport of equestrian," Al Attiyah said.

"We have international trainers like Jan Tops to assist our young riders, getting them ready for competitions in Qatar and away from the country.

Qatar National Sprint







Participants in the Qatar National Sprint are seen in action in their cars in the parking area of Losail International Circuit. The Qatar Motor and Motorcycle Federation (QMMF) stages the multiple-round series every season.

Al Khelaifi impresses with top speed

THE PENINSULA - DOHA

One of Qatar's top racing drivers, Abdullah Al Khelaifi clinched the honours in the Open Class 1 category in the fourth round of the Qatar National Sprint Championship.

The hugely popular one-day event was organised by the Qatar Motor and Motorcycle Federation (QMMF) in the parking area of Losail International Circuit.

Al Khelaifi just had a one run out of three allowed for the competitors, but that was enough for the Qatar Touring Cars Championship champion to seal the victory in his Westfield Sport.

His winning time was 58.610 seconds, well ahead of Abdul Aziz Al Jabri, who clocked 1:00.517 also in Westfield Sport to take the runner-up spot. Ayyad Al Okar was third in his Subaru BRZ.

In the Open Class 2 category, Mohammed al-Basti came out victorious in Subaru STI WRX in a time of 58.693 seconds. Mohammed Al Khayarin (Mitsubishi Evo 10, 59.649) was second, followed by Ali Emadadhi (Nissan 370Z, 1:01.249) in third.

The Open Class 3 category was won by Abdulla al-Abassi, who edged out Al Khelaifi this time.

Al Abassi clocked 58.302 seconds in a Lotus Exige, with Al Khelaifi following him in a Supra in a time of 1:00.507 seconds. Yousef al-Jabri (Supra, 1:01.425) was third.





OPEN CLASS 1
1. Abdullah Al Khelaifi (Model: Westfield Sport) 58.610
2. Abdul Aziz Al Jabri (Westfield Sport) 1:00.517
3. Ayyad Al Okar (Subaru BRZ) 1:01.590

OPEN CLASS 2
1. Mohammed Al Basti (Model: Subaru STI WRX) 58.693
2. Mohammed Al Khayarin (Mitsubishi Evo 10) 59.649
3. Ali Emadadhi (Nissan 370Z) 1:01.249

OPEN CLASS 3
1. Abdulla Al Abassi (Lotus Exige) 58.302
2. Abdullah Al Khelaifi (Supra) 1:00.507
3. Yousef Al Jabri (Supra) 1:01.425

PRODUCTION CARS 1
1. Nadim Ziade (Renault Clio) 1:00.569
2. Henry Kahy (Renault Clio) 1:00.710
3. Mansour Chebli (Renault Clio) 1:00.806

PRODUCTION CARS 2
1. Jad Alawar (Ford Focus) 58.506
2. Dean Bail (Porsche Boxster 718) 1:01.787
3. Dennis Nikitopoulos (Nissan 370Z) 1:03.552

PRODUCTION CARS 3
1. Fransesco Fornaciari (Lotus Exige) 58.070
2. Hosam Al Qatami (BMW M2) 1:02.234
3. Mohmoud Al Mahmoud (Porsche GT3) 1:03.380

Woods bids to repeat Augusta glory after poor outings

REUTERS - AUGUSTA

Tiger Woods will hope familiarity helps him recapture his form at Augusta National this week as the 15-time major winner aims to repeat the magic of his stunning Masters win last year.

Overcoming personal and physical obstacles that at times in his career appeared insurmountable, Woods ended an 11-year major drought to claim his fifth Masters in 2019, capping one of the most remarkable comebacks in the history of professional sport.

But a recent string of lacklustre performances have rendered that success a distant memory.

Woods has failed to crack the top 30 at any event since the PGA Tour returned from its COVID-19 hiatus in June, missing the cut at the US Open in September and finishing tied 72nd in the Zozo Championship last month -- a tournament he won a year ago.

"Last year he came into the Masters doing a lot of things well. His iron play was really, really good a year ago. We haven't seen that this year," said compatriot Andy North, a retired twice major winner and now golf analyst for *ESPN*.

Woods, who won his first major at Augusta 23 years ago, knows the course's unique tests, giving him a possible advantage over youngsters such as PGA Championship winner Collin Morikawa, 23, and 21-year-old Matthew Wolff, the US Open runner-up.

But changes to the tournament this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic - including the move from April to November and the absence of fans - could limit Wood's expertise.

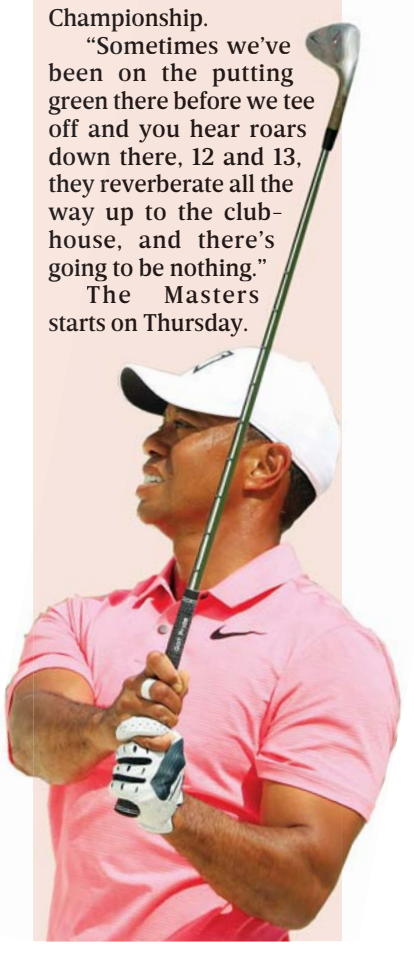
"There are a lot of guys that haven't played there very much," said North. "You know, I kind of thought, is this going to negate some of the history that our veteran players have and some of the course knowledge that they have versus some of the younger guys that we have seen play so well this fall?"

For Woods, the quieting of the crowd's roar may be the hardest part to reconcile.

"The one component that is going to be just, I think, so odd for all of us who have played there and who have been there is to have no spectators," Woods told reporters after the final round at the Zozo Championship.

"Sometimes we've been on the putting green there before we tee off and you hear roars down there, 12 and 13, they reverberate all the way up to the clubhouse, and there's going to be nothing."

The Masters starts on Thursday.



Handball: Al Arabi are League champions





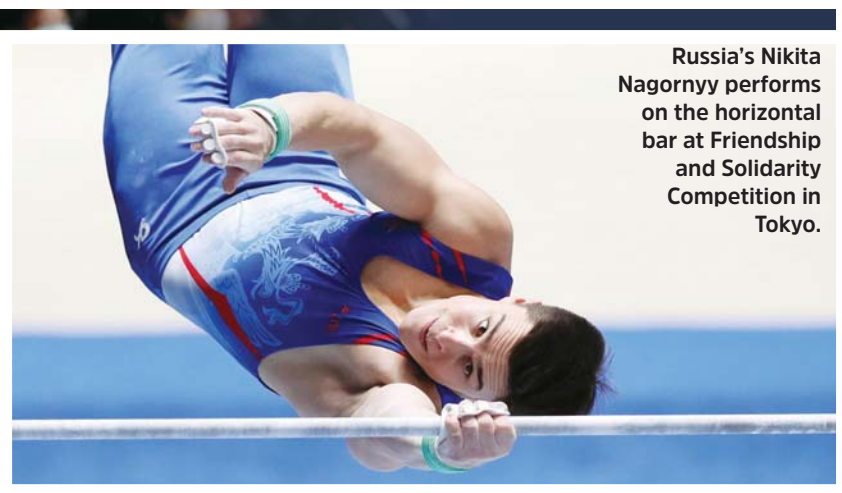
Al Arabi players (above and right) and team officials celebrate winning the handball league title for the 2019-20 season. Al Arabi yesterday became the league champions for the second time in their history by beating Al Wakra 31-29. Al Arabi had won their first title in 1983. Al Arabi produced a slick game yesterday and managed to lift the League Shield for the second time in the club's history.

Good news: Tokyo holds one-day gym meet to show Olympics may be possible

AP – TOKYO



Spectators wearing protective masks watch athletes' performances at Friendship and Solidarity Competition, the first international event at a Tokyo Olympic venue since the Games were postponed in March due to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, in Tokyo, Japan, yesterday.



Russia's Nikita Nagornyy performs on the horizontal bar at Friendship and Solidarity Competition in Tokyo.



Shane Wiskus of the US performs on the parallel bars in Tokyo.

The good news for the Tokyo Olympics is that Japan yesterday held a one-day exhibition gymnastics meet in front of several thousand fans with 22 athletes participating from Russia, China and the United States.

They were joined by eight from Japan.

The non-Japanese entered after a 14-day quarantine at home and were largely kept penned up in their Tokyo hotel in strict isolation. They also underwent PCR tests daily in Japan.

The event is the latest - a Japanese baseball stadium was filled to capacity last week - intended to show that the postponed Tokyo Olympics can open in just under nine months.

But there are more difficult numbers that the Olympics must overcome.

Next year's Games will involve 11,000 athletes from 206 nations and territories, all affected differently by COVID-19. Add to this 4,400 more Paralympians and thousands more officials, judges, VIPs, media, broadcasters and sponsors who will also need to enter Japan.

Will tens of thousands of non-Japanese fans be allowed to attend, or will the Games be for only Japanese spectators?

Tokyo organisers and the International Olympic Committee have given few details and concrete plans are not expected until next year when a vaccine and rapid testing might be available to resolve some problems. Kohei Uchimura, Japan's three-time Olympic gold medal gymnast, set out the problem very clearly after yesterday's exhibition meet.

"Unfortunately, 80% of the Japanese don't believe that the Tokyo Olympics can take place as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic," he said, speaking after the meet in Japanese on a public-address system to fans in the Yoyogi National Stadium.

"I know it is natural to think this way," he added. "But I would like people to change their minds from: We can't hold the Olympics to how can we do it?"

Uchimura pointed out that many athletes had not been able to practice and many have gone the entire year without any competition.

If the Olympics happen, these will not be Olympics like any other. Rules will be strict. Travel will be limited. And despite all the precautions, some athletes are bound to get COVID-19 and be removed from the competition. IOC President Thomas Bach and Vice President John Coates have acknowledged this. Fans entering the stadium, which was the venue for swimming in the '64 Olympics, had temperatures taken and hands sanitized. Seating was spread out and everyone wore masks, a standard practice everywhere in Japan. And cheering was not allowed.

"My only problem is my life inside the hotel," Angelina Melnikova, who won silver at the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, said before the meet. "I was surprised that I couldn't walk freely - even inside the hotel. I wanted to have a tour of Tokyo. But it's impossible to do that this time. I totally understand."

Japan is officially spending $12.6bn to organize the Olympics, although a government audit last year said it was twice that much. All but $5.6bn is public money.

Over and above this, estimates suggest the postponement will cost another $2bn to $3bn. The University of Oxford published a study in September showing these are the most expensive Summer Olympics on record.

Just over 1,800 people in Japan have died from COVID-19. Japan has controlled the virus better than most, although Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga warned on Friday of a resurgence of the coronavirus in Japan. The northernmost island of Hokkaido also raised warning levels last week.

Gymnastics organizers also said the southern Japanese city of Kitakyushu will hold the 2021 world championships in artistic and rhythmic gymnastics on Oct. 17-31.

Mir cruises to European Grand Priz victory in Suzuki one-two

REUTERS - VALENCIA

Suzuki's Joan Mir edged out team mate Alex Rins to claim his maiden MotoGP victory at the European Grand Prix in Valencia yesterday, extending his lead at the top of the world championship standings.

Starting fifth on the grid, Mir moved up to second inside the opening three laps before overhauling Rins with 11 laps remaining at Ricardo Tormo Circuit.

Mir absorbed the pressure from Rins to become the ninth different winner of the 2020 premier class season, while pole-sitter Pol Espargaro took the final podium spot on his KTM.

After getting on the podium in five of the previous six races, Mir's victory has made him a heavy favourite to become world champion and end Marc Marquez's four-year reign.

"I feel super happy. This is what I was missing and it comes at the perfect moment," Mir, 23, said. "The team did an unbelievable job this weekend and I felt really good with the bike."

Petronas Yamaha's Fabio Quartararo started 14 points behind Mir in the title race but the Frenchman went down on the opening lap along with Aprillia's Aleix Espargaro.

Quartararo, the only rider to win three races this season, was able to remount and finish 14th but his title hopes are all but over, with the gap to Mir now 37 points.

Italian great Valentino Rossi, who missed the last two rounds due to a positive COVID-19 test, pulled out on lap five due to a mechanical failure in his factory Yamaha bike.

His team mate Maverick Vinales, forced to start from the pitlane after Yamaha exceeded his engine allocation, finished a disappointing 13th to drop down to fourth in the title standings.

The championship continues in Valencia next weekend and another podium finish for Mir would see him crowned world champion.

EUROPEAN MOTOGP RESULTS AND STANDINGS

MOTOGP

1. Joan Mir (ESP/Suzuki): 41min 37.297, 2. Alex Rins (ESP/Suzuki) at 0.651sec, 3. Pol Espargaro (ESP/KTM) 1.203, 4. Takaaki Nakagami (JPN/Honda-LCR) 2.194, 5. Miguel Oliveira (POR/KTM-Tech3) 8.046, 6. Jack Miller (AUS/Ducati-Pramac) 8.755, 7. Brad Binder (RSA/KTM) 10.137, 8. Andrea Dovizioso (ITA/Ducati) 10.801, 9. Johann Zarco (FRA/Ducati-Avintia) 11.550, 10. Danilo Petrucci (ITA/Ducati) 16.803
Selected: 14. Fabio Quartararo (FRA/Yamaha-SRT) 39.639

MOTOGP STANDINGS AFTER 12 OF 14 RACES

1. Joan Mir (ESP) 162 points, 2. Fabio Quartararo (FRA) 125, 3. Alex Rins (ESP) 125, 4. Maverick Vinales (ESP) 121, 5. Franco Morbidelli (ITA) 117, 6. Andrea Dovizioso (ITA) 117, 7. Pol Espargaro (ESP) 106, 8. Takaaki Nakagami (JPN) 105, 9. Jack Miller (AUS) 92, 10. Miguel Oliveira (POR) 90

MOTO2

1. Marco Bezzecchi (ITA/Kalex) 40min 06.441sec, 2. Jorge Martin (ESP/Kalex) at 1.941sec, 3. Remy Gardner (AUS/Kalex) 3.553, 4. Enea Bastianini (ITA/Kalex) 4.494, 5. Lorenzo Baldassarri (ITA/Kalex) 4.648

MOTO2 STANDINGS AFTER 13 OF 15 RACES

1. Enea Bastianini (ITA/Kalex) 184, 2. Sam Lowes (GBR/Kalex) 178 pts, 3. Luca Marini (ITA/Kalex) 165, 4. Marco Bezzecchi (ITA/Kalex) 155, 5. Jorge Martin (ESP/Kalex) 125

NZ tips scales for smaller rugby players

AFP - WELLINGTON

The tackles still crunch and the darks arts of the front row remain, but don't expect to see the big men fly in New Zealand's weight-restricted rugby competition.

New Zealand Rugby set up a national tournament this year that allows only players weighing 85 kilograms (187lb, 13st 5lb) or less to compete, an innovation that has proved immensely popular among the game's grassroots.

Former All Blacks coach Sir Graham Henry believes the competition will lift flagging player participation rates and has the potential to boost the game's appeal in Asia.

"Since the advent of professionalism, there's probably been a focus on the elite, rather than everybody," Henry, who guided the All Blacks to World Cup success in 2011, said. "This gives an opportunity for those who can't compete because they're smaller to fulfil their ambitions and keeps them in the game."

A case in point is Joel Taylor, captain of the Eden Lizards, who won the competition final against Auckland University Squids 27-24 on Saturday at Eden Park, the spiritual home of New Zealand rugby.

Taylor, who describes himself as "a comfortable 83kg", was unsure if he would still be playing rugby if the weight-restricted game was not an option.

The 27-year-old advertising executive is a flanker, a position where elite players often weigh in excess of 110kg.

"It's definitely nice to be one of the bigger blokes on the field," he said. New Zealand Rugby's head of participation and development Steve Lancaster said the competition emerged after the union held focus groups to examine ways to address declining player numbers.

"The reality in open-grade rugby is there can be a big size and weight disparity and that creates physical mismatches," he said. "At this grade, you've got a cohort of players that are all within a relatively close weight range and it leads to a much more even competition."

Record-setting Roglic defends Vuelta crown

AFP – MADRID


Jumbo-Visma's Primoz Roglic (centre) celebrates on the podium after winning the Vuelta a Espana alongside second placed INEOS Grenadiers' Richard Carapaz and third placed EF Pro Cycling's Hugh Carthy, in Madrid, Spain, yesterday.

Slovenia's Primoz Roglic won the Vuelta a Espana for the second time in as many years on Sunday to make up for his crushing disappointment at the Tour de France.

Jumbo-Visma's Roglic becomes the first rider to defend the Vuelta since Roberto Heras in 2005, with Germany's Pascal Ackermann clinching the 18th and final stage victory in Madrid.

Ecuadorian Richard Carapaz finished runner-up after leading the general classification for five stages and putting Roglic under intense pressure in the penultimate stage on Saturday.

But Roglic rallied to avoid another collapse and instead took a 24-second advantage into the last day, which he maintained to cross the line as a worthy champion.

Britain's Hugh Carthy secured third place while Ireland's Dan Martin and Spaniard Enric Mas completed the top five.

Roglic's triumph will taste particularly sweet after a late collapse cost him victory in the Tour in September, when he fell away at the end, allowing compatriot Tadej Pogacar to claim first place.

There was no flinching this time around, the 31-year-old a deserved winner and arguably rider of the year at the end of an unprecedented cycling season.

Ackermann of Bora-Hansgrohe edged the final stage win in a photo-finish with Sam Bennett of Deceuninck-Quick Step. Sunweb's Max Kanter came third.

Bennett looked like he might edge it when the Irishman powered through in a fast and furious last 100 metres but Ackermann held on.

"I wasn't sure who won at the finish and I was asking Sam who won," said Ackermann.

"The team are so happy about the victory and I have to say thank you to my teammates. I think that today was an amazing lead-out. You could see it on the television. I'm really happy to take the victory, and I'm just so happy."

The day though belonged to Roglic, who had never been lower than fourth in the overall race and now has a second success to go with his 11 stage wins in the Grand Tours.

It was a final-stage procession for Roglic, who linked arms with Carapaz and Carthy en route to Madrid, with the podium separated by only 75 seconds.

"My whole team is special and we've done special things all year," said Roglic earlier on Sunday.

"This Vuelta they've pushed even when we've not been in our best moments. We've done our best and it's been amazing. I'm really happy and glad that I'm part of this team."

VUELTA A ESPANA SUMMARIES

STAGE 18 WINNERS

1. Pascal Ackermann (GER) BORA - hansgrohe 3:28:13 2. Sam Bennett (IRL) Deceuninck - Quick-Step " 3. Max Kanter (GER) Team Sunweb " 4. Jasper Philipsen (BEL) UAE Team Emirates " 5. Jasha Sütterlin (GER) Team Sunweb " 6. Emmanuel Morin (FRA) Cofidis " 7. Reinardt Janse van Rensburg NTT Pro Cycling Team " (RSA) 8. Lorrenzo Manzin (FRA) Total Direct Energie " 9. Robert Stannard (AUS) Mitchelton - Scott " 10. Jon Aberasturi (ESP) Caja Rural - Seguros RGA "

OVERALL LEADERS

1. Primož Roglic (SLO) Jumbo - Visma 72:46:12 2. Richard Carapaz (ECU) INEOS Grenadiers +24 3. Hugh Carthy (GBR) EF Pro Cycling +1:15 4. Daniel Martin (IRL) Israel Start-Up Nation +2:43 5. Enric Mas (ESP) Movistar Team +3:36 6. Wout Poels (NED) Bahrain - McLaren +7:16 7. David De La Cruz (ESP) UAE Team Emirates +7:35 8. David Gaudu (FRA) Groupama - FDJ +7:45 9. Felix Großschartner (AUT) BORA - hansgrohe +8:15 10. Alejandro Valverde (ESP) Movistar Team +9:34


Team Jumbo's Slovenian rider Primoz Roglic (left) is congratulated for winning the 2020 La Vuelta at the end of the 18th and final stage of the 2020 La Vuelta, yesterday.

Unbeaten Haney dominates Cuba's Gamboa

AFP – MIAMI

Undefeated Devin Haney easily beat former title-holder Yuriorkis Gamboa by a unanimous decision on Saturday night to defend his World Boxing Council lightweight belt in Florida.

Haney, who was fighting for the first time since last November after suffering from a shoulder surgery, cruised to victory over Cuban veteran Gamboa in the 12-round bout.

Two judges gave the 21-year-old Haney majority points for every round while the other judge had Haney winning all the rounds except for two.

Because of the global pandemic, which has gripped the US for the past seven months killing over 230,000 Americans, no spectators were allowed inside the Hard Rock Hotel in Hollywood, Florida.

Haney improved to 25-0 with 15 knockouts while Gamboa lost his second straight bout to drop to 30-3 with 18 KOs.

Haney underwent shoulder surgery in Los Angeles in January after beating Dominican challenger Alfredo Santiago two months earlier.

The 38-year-old Gamboa looked Saturday to be in the twilight of his boxing career which at one time included winning a gold medal at the 2004 Olympics.

Gamboa's best rounds were early in the fight as he appeared to tire late, spending more time clinching in the ring than throwing any meaningful punches.

Haney rocked Gamboa with several solid jabs and left hooks but was unable to get the knockout.

He had been hoping to score an impressive victory so he could land a shot at a unification showdown with unbeaten Teofimo Lopez who holds all the other major word titles in the 135-pound division.

Three weeks ago Lopez boosted his record to 16-0 after defeating Ukraine's Vasyl Lomachenko.

Magnussen says 'overkill' to strip Australia's London medals

REUTERS – MELBOURNE

Former world champion swimmer James Magnussen **(pictured)** has said it would be "overkill" to strip Australia's entire 2012 men's medley relay team of their bronze medals from the London Olympics after a retrospective positive drug test for Brenton Rickard.

Rickard, who swam a heat in the 4x100 medley and took no part in the final, tested positive for a banned diuretic in a rescreening of the sample he gave eight years ago..

The team's six swimmers, including twice 100-metre freestyle world champion Magnussen, could become the first Australians to lose Olympic medals from doping if a Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) hearing rules against them.

Magnussen, who was informed of the case in an email from Rickard, said it would be "a long bow" for CAS to cancel the whole team's medals.

"When I first read the message (from Rickard), I was wondering what it had to do with me. But then he said he was a heat swimmer in the medley relay team, so they are thinking about taking your medal," Magnussen told local broadcaster *Nine Network* late on Saturday.



"I didn't swim in the heat of that relay ... He didn't stand there on the podium, he didn't have an impact on the result of that race.

"You never want to give up an Olympic medal and for some of the guys in that team, it's the only medal they've got. It would be an even bigger blow to them."

Rickard told the team he took over-the-counter medication in the week before the test in 2012, which might have contained the diuretic.

He said he planned to fight any move to disqualify the London results.

Magnussen said it was a "hard situation" for Rickard.

"You have to feel for him because how do you defend yourself eight years later? It's a hard situation for him."

> *I didn't swim in the heat of that relay ... He didn't stand there on the podium, he didn't have an impact on the result of that race. You never want to give up an Olympic medal and for some of the guys in that team, it's the only medal they've got. It would be an even bigger blow to them:* ***Former world champion swimmer James Magnussen***


Action during game five of the 2019 NBA Finals between Golden State Warriors and Toronto Raptors.

Players' Union approves NBA's December 22 tipoff

AFP – NEW YORK

The National Basketball Players Association said on Thursday night it voted in favour of working towards a late December start date to the 2020-21 season and a planned 72-game season.

The players union voted to "tentatively approve" a December 22 start date that the owners have expressed interest in. The vote was conducted by the NBPA's board which is made up of player representatives from each team.

The players association stressed that the vote is part of a lengthy process in which a number of issues still need to be resolved.

"The Board of Player Representatives of the National Basketball Players Association (NBPA) has tentatively approved a start date of December 22, 2020 for the 2020-2021 NBA season," it said in a statement.

Additional details on remaining issues were still to be negotiated, the statement added without details, but said the NBPA were confident that an agreement would be reached.

The league plans to start the season with no spectators allowed in team arenas as coronavirus restrictions ban major indoor public gatherings.

Other matters that must still be resolved are how players' salaries will be managed, as well as how the league will conduct Covid-19 testing while the global pandemic still rages through the US.

The NBA, according to US media, said starting before Christmas Day -- keeping the traditional holiday television matches while finishing the play-offs before the Tokyo Olympics in mid-July -- will be worth between $500m and $1bn to a league that is set to lose money this year.

Players would face giving 18 percent of their salary to the league for the next two years, sharing the losses while keeping salary cap levels in place to avoid roster issues for teams.

NBA players had been reluctant to start so soon after an October finish, with some pushing for a January start on the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday even if it meant less money for fewer games and an August finish.

A deal would be needed quickly to begin a turnaround for the 2020-21 campaign, including a planned November 18 NBA draft, the start of free agency and pre-season training camps that would open around December 1.

Cowboys' Gilbert ready for first NFL start against the Steelers

AP – ARLINGTON, TEXAS

Garrett Gilbert appears set for his first NFL start for the Dallas Cowboys against the rival Pittsburgh Steelers.

The NFL Network, citing unidentified sources, reported the Cowboys planned to start Gilbert at home yesterday.

Gilbert's agent, Leigh Steinberg, posted on Twitter that he was travelling to "see Garrett Gilbert start" against the Steelers.

The Cowboys will start their fourth different quarterback in the past five games. Star Dak Prescott is out for the season after breaking his ankle in Week 5 against the New York Giants. Two weeks later, Andy Dalton was knocked out of a game in Washington because of a concussion and has since been placed on the COVID-19 list.

Ben DiNucci started last week's 23-9 loss to Philadelphia, but the rookie seventh-round pick was so overmatched, coach Mike McCarthy said the starter against Pittsburgh would be either Gilbert or Cooper Rush. Neither has started an NFL game, but both have been in the league much longer than DiNucci.

Gilbert's first start would come six years after he was drafted by the Rams. He has thrown six passes in his career. Dallas signed him off Cleveland's practice squad after Prescott's injury. Rush was Prescott's backup for most of three seasons before the Cowboys signed Andy Dalton in the offseason. Dalton started for nine years in Cincinnati before the Bengals drafted Joe Burrow No. 1 overall and moved on from Dalton. Dallas waived Rush after signing Dalton, and Rush ended up on the practice squad of the New York Giants before his release in late September. Rush rejoined the Cowboys after Dalton's concussion.

The Cowboys were expecting Dalton to return against Pittsburgh before the COVID-19 issue arose. McCarthy says Dalton should return late next week, when Dallas has its bye. Gilbert is the son of former NFL quarterback Gale Gilbert, who was the backup to Jim Kelly on all four Buffalo teams that reached the Super Bowl in the 1990s. He started for the Texas Longhorns in 2010-11 before losing his job and eventually transferring to SMU.