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Sport

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Warner retires in pain after making 200 in 100th Test as South Africa struggle

The boys were cramping left, right and centre. So, difficult (conditions) but nice to get us to the position where we are now. I think we're in a nice spot.

Steve Smith

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FRENCH LIGUE 1: Paris Saint Germain vs Strasbourg; Auxerre vs Monaco – **PREMIER LEAGUE:** Leeds United vs Manchester City

Mbappe and Neymar back as Ligue 1 reboots

Messi set for PSG return next week

AFP — SAINT-GERMAIN-EN-LAYE, FRANCE



PSG's Neymar (left) and Kylian Mbappe take part in a training session yesterday. AFP

World Cup winner Lionel Messi is set to return to work at Paris Saint-Germain next week, his club coach Christophe Galtier said yesterday.

Messi, 35, was the lynchpin of the Argentina side that won the World Cup in Qatar on December 18, scoring twice in the final against France which finished in a penalty shoot-out victory.

He then returned to Argentina with his teammates to celebrate their third World Cup triumph.

"Leo had a very big World Cup with his victory," said Galtier on the eve of PSG's meeting with Strasbourg as Ligue 1 kicks off again today after the World Cup break.

"He had to return to Argentina for the celebrations and we decided that he was going to be off until January 1.

"He will come and join us either on the second or third (January) to pick up the season with us.

"He will have had between 13 and 14 days of recovery."

Messi looks likely to miss two Ligue 1 matches and the French Cup match at Chateauroux, possibly making his return at home against Angers on January 11.

He is also expected to sit down with PSG President Nasser Al Khelaifi and other top club officials to pen a one-season extension to his current deal in the French capital which expires in the summer.

Meanwhile, Kylian Mbappe and Neymar are both set to feature for points leaders.

Mbappe, who scored a hat-trick in the World Cup final but still ended up on the losing side as France flunked the penalty shoot-out, reported back to training on Wednesday with Achraf Hakimi, one of the stand-outs in Morocco's run to the semi-finals.

Mbappe, Messi and Hakimi were just three of the 14 Ligue 1 players -- from eight different clubs -- who reached the semi-finals in Qatar. Neymar, whose Brazil crashed out to Croatia in the quarter-finals, was back on Thursday with compatriot Marquinhos, with both expected to play a role in today's game at the Parc des Princes.

He had to return to Argentina for the celebrations and we decided that he was going to be off until January 1. He will come and join us either on the second or third (January) to pick up the season with us.

Christophe Galtier

PSG are currently five points clear of second-placed Lens who they meet in Flanders on Sunday. Lens, meanwhile, will look to keep up the pressure on PSG going into that game when they head down to Nice tomorrow.

Third-placed Rennes have Croatia's Lovro Majer and on-loan Wales defender Joe Rodon back from action in Qatar as they head to Reims tomorrow.

"For me, it's a second season that's starting up again, with the same uncertainties, the same unknowns before a first league match of the season," said Rennes manager Bruno Genesio.

"We'll see which teams have best managed this."

Marseille, who are just one point behind in fourth, host a Toulouse side that is bumping around in mid-table.

Messi is not the only World Cup winner in Ligue 1 -- Nicolas Tagliafico has also been enjoying his moment in the sun and will be absent for Lyon's trip to Brest today.

"Tagliafico has become world champion and I take the opportunity to congratulate him," said Lyon coach Laurent Blanc who took charge in October when Peter Bosz was sacked after a five-match winless run.

"He is due to return on January 1 and he is getting married on the 28th. He has a lot to celebrate at the moment.

"I hope he will come back in good shape. To be a world champion is not nothing. May he come back quickly."

Lyon are currently eighth in the table, 10 points away from the Champions League places, prompting Blanc to insist that they will need to be busy in the January transfer window if they are to compete.



Lionel Messi

Chelsea blank Bournemouth 2-0 at Premier League

REUTERS — LONDON

Chelsea returned to winning ways as they scored early to ensure a 2-0 triumph over Bournemouth at Stamford Bridge yesterday in their first Premier League victory since mid-October.

Kai Havertz and Mason Mount both netted in the first half of a dominant performance but the hosts will feel they could have won by a bigger margin given the possession they enjoyed and chances they created.

Chelsea ended a run of five league matches without a victory and moved up one place in the league standings to eighth.

Bournemouth have now lost four of their past five league games and remain in 14th place on 16 points.

Havertz had Chelsea ahead after 16 minutes at the end of a swift move through the middle, started by Jorginho, helped on by Mount and then with Raheem Sterling delivering a perfect cross to the back post for the German to stretch into the net.

Chelsea extended their lead in the 23rd minute at the end of another storming forward drive, with several players involved before Havertz laid it back for Mount to hit a right-footed curler into the net from outside the penalty area.

Chelsea, with seven players from the World Cup in their starting line-up, had Reece James back after the knee injury that made him miss out on the tournament in Qatar and the England right back wasted no time in reminding of his qualities.

Liverpool agree deal for Dutch World Cup star Cody Gakpo

AFP — EINDHOVEN

Gakpo's arrival is a further rejuvenation for Liverpool's frontline after the signings of Luis Diaz and Darwin Nunez in the past year.

Liverpool appear to have won the race to sign Dutch international forward Cody Gakpo after PSV Eindhoven announced an agreement with the English giants.

Gakpo, who scored three goals at the World Cup Qatar 2022 for the Netherlands, had previously been linked with a move to Liverpool's rivals Manchester United.

"PSV and Liverpool FC have reached an agreement on the proposed transfer of Cody Gakpo," PSV said in a statement.

"The 23-year-old attacker will leave for England imminently where he will be subjected to the necessary formalities ahead of the completion of the transfer."

PSV general manager Marcel Brands said the transfer fee would be a club record for the Dutch club.

According to reports, the fee could rise to as much as 50m euros ($53m, £44m).

Gakpo's arrival is a further rejuvenation for Liverpool's frontline after the signings of Luis Diaz and Darwin Nunez in the past year.

The Reds sit sixth in the Premier League, five points outside the top four places that secure qualification to the Champions League after a poor start to the season.

But Jurgen Klopp's men secured a third consecutive league win by beating Aston Villa 3-1 on the Premier League's return to action after the World Cup on Monday.

Thrilling races on the cards at Qatar Oaks

FAWAD HUSSAIN
THE PENINSULA



Kadupul edges Pom Malpic to win Qatar Oaks for Thoroughbreds in this December 22, 2021 file photo.

Qatar Oaks – the Qatar Racing and Equestrian Club's (QREC) 23rd Race Meeting at Al Rayyan Racecourse – is expected to throw up exciting contests with lucrative prizes up for grabs during the 10-race card day.

The Qatar Oaks for Thoroughbreds (3yo fillies only), today's feature, will carry a total prize money of $100,000 receiving 13 entries for the 2000m run.

While last year's winner Kadupul is not among the competitors, it is expected to be a thrilling race in presence of Sheikh Faisal bin Hamad Bin Jassim Al Thani-owned Kareema and Al Wakrah, owned by Al Shaqab Racing.

QATAR OAKS - RACE CARD

1 - Purebred Arabian Maiden Plate
2 - Thoroughbred Maiden Plate (2yo Fillies Only) (Class 6)
3 - Purebred Arabian Novice Plate
4 - Thoroughbred Novice Plate (Fillies & Mares) (Class 5)
5 - Qatar Oaks - Local Purebred Arabians (3yo Fillies Only)
6 - Qatar Oaks - Purebred Arabians (3yo Fillies Only)
7 - Qatar Oaks - Local Purebred Arabians (4yo Fillies Only) (Far Bend)
8 - Qatar Oaks - Local Thoroughbreds (3yo Fillies Only) (Far Bend)
9 - Qatar Oaks - Purebred Arabians (4yo Fillies Only) (Far Bend)
10 - Qatar Oaks (Qa Listed) - Thoroughbreds (3yo Fillies Only) (Class 1) (Far Bend)

Jockey Marco Casamento, who is relishing a fine season, will ride Blind Drunk while Szczepan Mazur will be on Different Vibes during the race.

Go Razzmatazz, Kaliysta, Laguna Veneta, Midheaven, Muneerah, Promised, Rawasi Almeydan, Rozi Is King and Subahiyah will also run for the title in the feature.

Also today, as many as 11 horses will compete for the Purebred Arabians title – the penultimate race of the day – carrying a prize purse of QR 60,000. Four-year-old A'lia, owned by H E Sheikha Yasmeen bint Mohammed bin Khalifa Al Thani, and Hazal to be led by Soufiane Saadi will also take part in the race.

In another anticipated race today, a total of nine horses will battle for top honours in the 2000m Local Thoroughbreds, offering a prize purse of $75,000.

Sheikh Faisal Bin Hamad bin Jassim Al Thani-owned Al Warkah and Injaaz Stud's Monya will be among the title contenders.

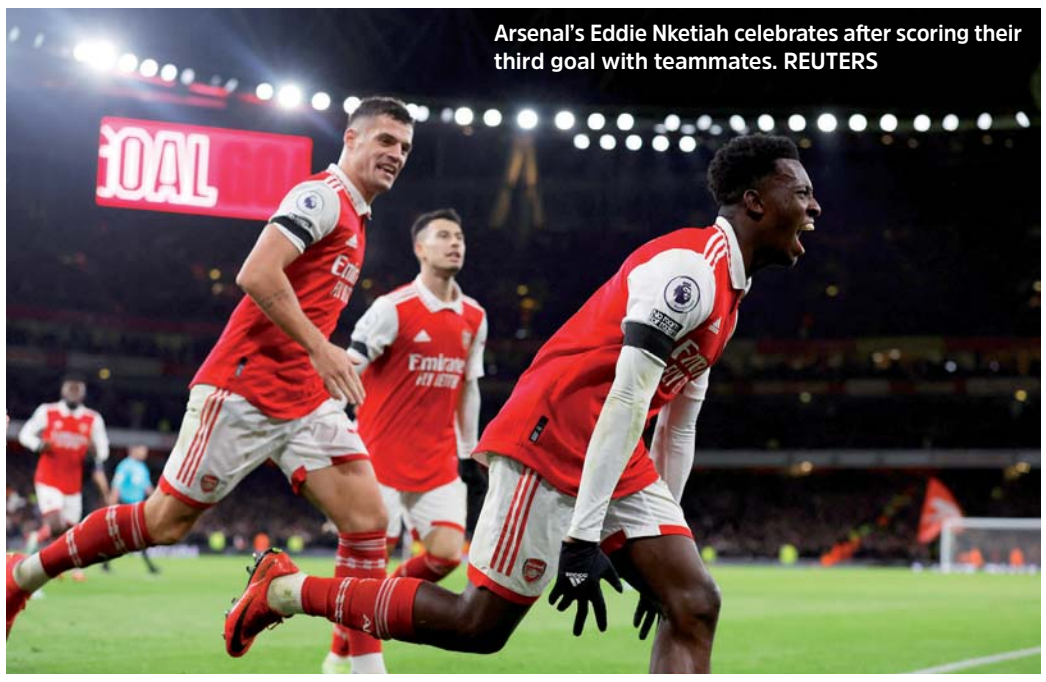
Meanwhile, jockey Carlos Henrique will ride Fortuna – owned by Wathnan Racing – in the 2000m Local Purebred Arabians to be competed among nine entries including Al Faarisa and Al Maronah Al Sakab. The race carries a prize purse of $60,000.

Al Jeryan Stud's AJS Naifah and Al Shaqab Racing's Felowah will be in contention for 1600m Purebred Arabians (3yo fillies only) title offering $50,000 in prize money.

Titles in Local Purebred Arabians, Thoroughbred Novice Plate, Purebred Arabian Novice Plate, Thoroughbred Maiden Plate and Purebred Arabian Maiden Plate will also be decided.

Arsenal comeback opens up 7-point Premier League lead

AFP — LONDON


Arsenal's Eddie Nketiah celebrates after scoring their third goal with teammates. REUTERS

Arsenal's composure to rally from 1-0 down to beat West Ham 3-1 impressed manager Mikel Arteta as the Gunners opened up a seven-point lead at the top of the Premier League on Monday.

Bukayo Saka and Gabriel Martinelli turned the game around in the space of five second half minutes before Eddie Nketiah stepped up in the absence of Gabriel Jesus to seal all three points.

Said Benrahma's first half penalty had given the Hammers the lead, but David Moyes' men remain just one point above the relegation zone in 16th.

"We showed composure and never panicked and did what we had to do to earn the right to win the game," said Arteta.

"We scored at the perfect time and the crowd was incredible, also in the moment we conceded the goal. They kept on believing. When we scored it got loud and we generated the momentum we needed."

Arsenal's momentum towards a first league title since 2004 could have been halted by a six-week break for the World Cup.

Bukayo Saka and Gabriel Martinelli turned the game around in the space of five second half minutes before Eddie Nketiah stepped up in the absence of Gabriel Jesus to seal all three points.

Arteta made no allowances for his stars that have been away in Qatar as William Saliba started just eight days after being part of the French squad that lost the final on penalties to Argentina.

However, that decision backfired when Saliba hesitated to allow Michail Antonio latch onto a ball over the top and then dived in on Jarrod Bowen.

Despite Bowen not going to ground immediately, referee Michael Oliver pointed to the spot and Benrahma confidently dispatched the penalty.

Arsenal thought they had a spot-kick of their own in first half stoppage time but Oliver reversed his initial decision after seeing a replay of Martin Odegaard's shot come off Aaron Cresswell's head rather than the left-back's arm.

The Gunners got the break they needed to turn the tide eight minutes after the break when Odegaard's mishit shot fell perfectly into the path of Saka to sidefoot home.

Martinelli added the second goal moments later with the help of West Ham goalkeeper Lukasz Fabianski, who was far too easily beaten at his near post.

A prolonged injury layoff for Jesus had raised doubts over Arsenal's ability to maintain their title challenge in the coming months with games against Newcastle, Tottenham and Manchester United to come in January alone.

But Nketiah grabbed his opportunity on his first Premier League start of the season with a brilliant spin and low finish into the far corner from Odegaard's pass 21 minutes from time.

"They smothered us all over the pitch," said West Ham captain Declan Rice.

"They are a top team, you can see they are coached incredibly well. They have a young squad with attacking talent and can go the whole way, that is for sure."

Manchester City can reduce the gap at the top to five points and move back above Newcastle into second place with victory when they travel to Leeds tonight.

However, another show of resilience from Arsenal showed the fight that lies ahead of the defending champions if they are to retain the title once more in the second half of the season.

QFA names Qatar squad for U-20 AFC Asian Cup

THE PENINSULA — DOHA

Qatar Football Association (QFA) announced the national team's 27-player squad gearing up to participate in the 2023 U-20 AFC Asian Cup due to be held in Uzbekistan.

The tournament leads to the FIFA U-20 World Cup .Qatar were drawn in Group B along with Australia, runners up of the 2010 edition, Iran and Vietnam, the semi-finalist of the 2016 edition.

Team Qatar who claimed the 2014 trophy in Myanmar, qualified for the tournament as leaders of Group B in the AFC qualifiers with 12 points.

QATAR SQUAD

Ahmed Riyad, Ali Mohammed, Shanin Al Abdulrahman (all Duhail SC), Mostafa Al Sayed, Sami Mazen, Ibrahim Mohamed (all Al Rayyan), Al Hashmi Al Hussein, Amir Hassan, Mohammed Khalid (all Al Arabi), Mahdi Salem, Talal Al Shuaibi (both Al Sadd), Jassim Al Sharshani, Eissa Al Najjar (both Al Ahli), Yousef Tariq, Nabil Irfan (both Al Wakrah), Anas Abdulsalam, Ahmed Haganeh (both Al Shamal), Awab Al Awad (Al Sailiya), Muhammed Mansour (Al Gharafa), Abubakr Muhammad (Al Khor), Fares Saeed, Mubarak Shanan,Hassan Al Ghareeb, Mostafa Essam (all Cultural y Deportiva Leonesa, Spain), Ahmed Al Rawi, Rashid Al Abdullah (both AD Alcorcon, Spain), Chalpan Abdullah (KAS Eupen, Belgium).


A file photo of Qatar U-20 players.


Liverpool's Uruguayan striker Darwin Nunez (right) controls the ball during the Premier League match against Aston Villa. AFP

Liverpool's Klopp hails 'unstoppable' Nunez despite lack of goals

REUTERS — LONDON

Darwin Nunez was not on the scoresheet in Liverpool's 3-1 win over Aston Villa on Monday but manager Juergen Klopp said he was delighted with the Uruguayan's all-round play and is confident the goals will come.

Nunez missed several chances against Villa but his tireless running and chance creation saw him named Man of the Match, with his late cutback allowing teenager Stefan Bajcetic to score his first senior goal.

Klopp said he had been around long enough in football not too lose any sleep over Nunez's recent scoring record.

"There are so many other things that are much more important because we look back at strikers and you cannot imagine some of the chances strikers who I worked with missed," he said.

"The work rate he put in, the spaces he creates, he's unstoppable in the moment. There is no defender who can really catch up speed-wise."

Nunez has scored just five league goals since being brought in as Sadio Mane's replacement in a transfer that cost Liverpool an initial fee of 75m euros ($79.92m) in the close season.

Klopp said he is being patient with the 23-year-old, who also failed to score in three games at the World Cup.

"He will score goals, I have no doubt about that," said the German. "Everything will be fine."

Premier League talking points

REUTERS — LONDON


Everton manager Frank Lampard reacts during match against Wolverhampton Wanderers.

Talking points from the latest round of Premier League games:

WIDE MEN KEEP NEWCASTLE FLYING HIGH

Eddie Howe's Newcastle United rose to the dizzy heights of second place in the table on Monday with a 3-0 win over Leicester City as once again his wide men provided the attacking spark.

From his starting point on the left, Joelinton won a penalty and added a goal of his own from a set piece, while on the far side of the pitch Miguel Almiron caused chaos by cutting inside onto his left foot and scoring the second goal for Newcastle.

It's not just the wide men that are benefitting, either - with Joelinton and Almiron on the flanks defences are drawn out to cover them, and this leads to gaps for more central forwards and midfielders to exploit.

Backed up by a solid defence, Newcastle are now firmly in the title race alongside leaders Arsenal and third-placed Manchester City, and any team wanting to stop them will have to work out a way to clip their wings.

RELEGATION LOOMING LARGE FOR SOUTHAMPTON

Southampton's survival in the top flight looks highly doubtful after Monday's defeat to Brighton & Hove Albion left them at the bottom of the table on 12 points.

The south-coast club lacked the fighting spirit against Brighton and looked poor in all departments as they suffered their fourth straight league defeat.

Southampton sacked Ralph Hasenhuttl before the World Cup hoping to rejuvenate their fortunes with the appointment of Nathan Jones, but the new manager faces an uphill battle with the team still two points outside the safety zone with 12 games left.

PRESSURE INCREASING ON LAMPARD AT EVERTON

Everton appointed Frank Lampard in January this year to get them out of a relegation scrap last season, which he duly did amid much drama and with one game to spare.

Fast forward almost 12 months and there may be genuine concerns at board level that not much has improved following Monday's 2-1 home loss to fellow strugglers Wolverhampton Wanderers.

Everton were the better side and created almost double the number of chances of Wolves, but as has been their Achilles heel all season, they failed to take them and were punished late on.

With Dominic Calvert-Lewin under a constant injury cloud, unless Everton can bring in a forward with quality in the January transfer window, they may well be fighting for their Premier League survival again come the end of the season.

Lingard slams United's 'false promises' ahead of Old Trafford return

REUTERS — LONDON

Nottingham Forest midfielder Jesse Lingard said he was given "false promises" about playing time during his final year at Manchester United and is still in the dark over why he was used so sparingly.

Lingard, who joined United at the age of seven, had returned to Old Trafford last year after a successful loan spell at West Ham United, where he revived his career with nine goals and five assists in half a season.

The 30-year-old played 232 times for his boyhood club but started only two Premier League games last season under former managers Ole Gunnar Solskjaer and Ralf Rangnick before he joined Forest on a free transfer earlier this year.

"I don't know what the problem was, whether it was politics or whatever. I still haven't got an answer to this day," Lingard told *The Telegraph* ahead of Forest's trip to United.

"I didn't even ask. I'd rather that someone out of respect for me being there that long told me,

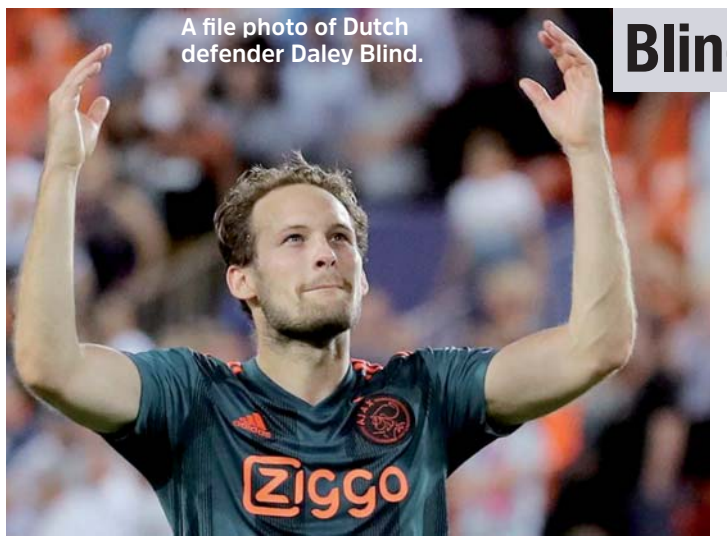
'This is why you're not playing', but I never got that.

"It was false promises. I was training hard and I was sharp, I was ready to play... When you're working hard in training and don't play at the end of it, it's very frustrating."

Forest are struggling in 19th place but Lingard hopes they can bounce back in the second half of the season.

"This is another chapter in my life, and a different challenge for me which I wanted," he said.

"It will be an enjoyable one, but we want to win the game. You can't get caught up too much emotionally. It's a chance to say my goodbyes because I never really got that."


A file photo of Dutch defender Daley Blind.

Blind and Ajax agree to terminate contract

REUTERS — AMSTERDAM

Dutch defender Daley Blind will leave Ajax Amsterdam after agreeing to terminate his contract six months early, leaving the player as a free agent, the Eredivisie club said yesterday.

"I hope he can find another club to end his successful career with. Together with Daley, we have decided on a match in the Arena where he can say a proper goodbye to the supporters," Ajax CEO Edwin van der Sar said. Blind, 32, made his debut for Ajax in 2008 and, after a four-season stint in the Premier League with Manchester United, returned to Amsterdam in 2018 to win Dutch league titles in 2019, 2021 and 2022.

The 32-year-old won seven titles with Ajax, making 333 appearances, scoring 13 goals and contributing 21 assists.

Blind played for the Netherlands at this year's World Cup in Qatar.

Meanwhile, Argentina centre back Nicolas Otamendi has arrived in Portugal to return to training with Benfica after helping his team win the World Cup in Qatar.

"I'm happy, now I'm just focused on Benfica," he said yesterday.

The former Manchester City defender did not give any details about his future following media reports that he could Leave Porto as a free agent in June.

Sport in 2023: Five big events to watch

AFP — PARIS

World Cups in cricket, rugby union and women's football while world titles in swimming and athletics are up for grabs in 2023.


England's Eoin Morgan and team-mates celebrate with the trophy after winning the ICC World Cup in this July 2019 file photo. REUTERS

CRICKET WORLD CUP

Where: India

When: October-November (dates to be decided)

The 13th edition of the global 50-over showpiece will see England defend the title they won in thrilling fashion on home ground in 2019. Despite the event stretching over seven weeks and featuring 48 games, only 10 teams are taking part. The top seven countries from the Super League plus hosts India will make it through as well as two teams from a qualifying tournament to be held in Zimbabwe in June/July. There is, however, already controversy with former Pakistan Cricket Board chief Ramiz Raja having hinted his country could boycott the World Cup if India refuse to play the Asia Cup scheduled for Pakistan also in 2023.

RUGBY UNION WORLD CUP

Where: France

When: September 8-October 28

All eyes will be on Antoine Dupont as he leads strong favourites France into a home World Cup featuring 20 nations playing at nine venues. The opening game pitches France against New Zealand in what promises to be a thrilling start. Reigning champions South Africa are drawn in the same pool as Ireland, while Wales are in a pool alongside Australia, Georgia and Fiji, the first two of which they lost to in the Autumn Nations Series. England go into the tournament in a state of flux having axed coach Eddie Jones in favour of Steve Borthwick.

WORLD ATHLETICS CHAMPIONSHIPS

Where: Budapest

When: August 19-27

World athletes of the year Armand Duplantis and Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone will bid to recreate their world record-setting victories in the Hungarian capital. Coming a year after the Covid-delayed world champs in Eugene, Oregon, the biennial event will play host to a raft of up-and-coming track and field stars. All eyes will be on Jamaica's five-time 100m champion Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce in the women's sprints, at the age of 36. The US team will look to the likes of Fred Kerley, Noah Lyles, Michael Norman and Erriyon Knighton to light up the men's short track, while Norway's Jakob Ingebrigtsen and Karsten Warholm will bid to extend their winning form.

WORLD SWIMMING CHAMPIONSHIPS

Where: Fukuoka, Japan

When: July 14-30

As swimming tries to catch up after the pandemic, Fukuoka hosts the second of three World Championships in 19 months. The meet was originally scheduled for 2021 but was elbowed aside when the Tokyo Olympics were pushed back. Fukuoka says it has a 'concept': "Water Meets the Future", expressing "the hope that all the participants will meet the future."

Yet, as established stars, with one eye on the 2024 Olympics, skipped major events swimming did meet its future in 2022. Romanian David Popovici, Australian Mollie O'Callaghan, Canadian Summer McIntosh, Italian Benadetta Pilato and American Torri Huske, can all arrive in Japan to defend world titles they won last June as teenagers.

WOMEN'S FOOTBALL WORLD CUP

Where: Australia and NZ

When: July 20-August 20

The all-conquering United States women's national team face stiff competition from a series of emerging European contenders for the World Cup. The Americans have won four of the eight previous editions of the tournament, including the last two, but have been beaten by Germany, England and Spain this year. England are looking to back up their victory on home soil at Euro 2022, while co-hosts Australia will be hoping Chelsea star Sam Kerr can lead the Matildas beyond the quarter-finals for the first time.

Ten venues across nine host cities in Australia and New Zealand will host the first 32-team women's World Cup, which is set to smash records for attendance and viewing figures in a further indication of the growing popularity of the sport.

Warner retires in pain after making 200 in 100th Test as SA struggle

AFP — MELBOURNE


Australian batsman David Warner celebrates after scoring his double century yesterday. AFP

Opener David Warner battled through searing heat to hit an epic unbeaten 200 in his 100th Test yesterday before retiring in pain as Australia consolidated their advantage against South Africa at the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

On a scorching day, the hosts were 386-3 at stumps on day two of the second Test, leading by 197 after the Proteas were dismissed in their first innings for 189.

Travis Head was not out 48 with Alex Carey on nine.

Steve Smith (85) and Marnus Labuschagne (14) were the only wickets to fall. But worryingly for Australia, Cameron Green, who took 5-27 in South Africa's first innings, also retired hurt after a nasty rap on the finger from Anrich Nortje.

Smith and Warner's 239-run partnership took the game further away from South Africa, whose bowlers toiled in temperatures touching 37 degrees Celsius (98.6 Fahrenheit).

Warner, 36, snapped a near-three-year century drought in typically aggressive and gritty fashion, reaching three figures for a 25th time after coming into the game under pressure after a lean run.

It was his first Test hundred since January 2020 and as the opposition bowlers tired, he battled the elements and converted it to 200 for only the third time.

But it was an exhausting effort, as he passed 8,000 Test runs en route.

Chairs had to be brought out for Warner and Smith to rest on in the drinks breaks, with towels draped over their heads and ice-packs around their shoulders.

Warner needed treatment for cramp several times and retired in pain after reaching 200 and dropping to his knees, eventually helped from the field by support staff. Australia resumed on 45-1, having lost Usman Khawaja late Monday after taking charge of the opening day, with Green's heroics helping dismiss the visitors for under 200 again.

They were all out for 152 and 99 in the first Test in Brisbane, which they lost by six wickets inside two days.

Warner began on 32 and showed his aggressive intent with an early boundary off Kagiso Rabada.

Nortje was routinely sending down 150 kph (93 mph) rockets, smacking Warner on the head when he was on 47. The batter was given the all-clear after a mandatory concussion test on the field, with a lengthy delay as a new helmet was found.

But disaster struck two balls after play resumed.

Warner pushed Nortje for a single and came back for a second, but Labuschagne hesitated and was run out despite a lunging dive.

Unfazed, Warner put his head down to motor to 100, punching the air when he got there with a boundary after a near-flawless knock characterised by his trademark strong running between the wicket.

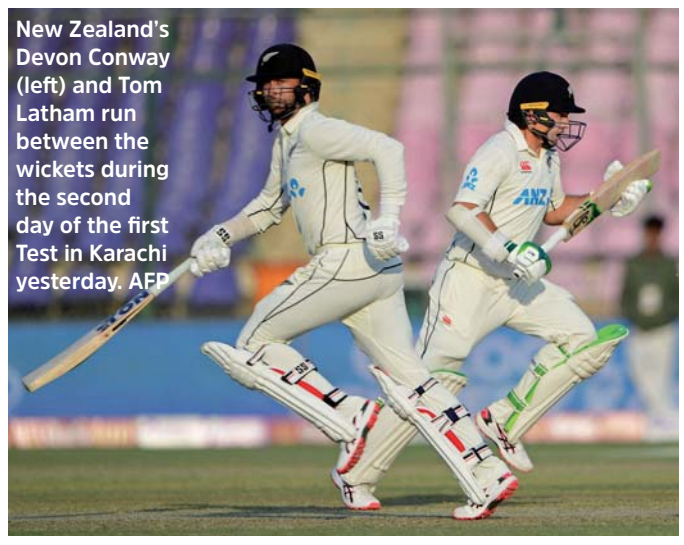
Smith was not as comfortable, escaping on nine when he was dropped by wicket-keeper Kyle Verreynne and then on 39 when he was given out caught behind only for it to be called a no-ball after Rabada overstepped the mark.

But he persevered to reach a 37th Test fifty with a four off Marco Jansen.

Warner upped the ante after his century and raced to 200 off 254 balls before calling it quits.

Smith departed shortly before his partner reached the milestone, with Nortje getting his reward for a hard day's work, with Theunis de Bruyn taking a catch at gully.

Brief Scores: Australia 386 for 3 (Head 48*, Carey 9*) lead South Africa 189 by 197 runs


New Zealand's Devon Conway (left) and Tom Latham run between the wickets during the second day of the first Test in Karachi yesterday. AFP

First Test: New Zealand foil Pakistan after Salman's hundred in Karachi

AFP — KARACHI

New Zealand openers Devon Conway and Tom Latham blunted Pakistan bowlers to guide their side to a solid 165 without loss at close on the second day of the first Test in Karachi yesterday.

Conway became the fastest New Zealand batter to complete 1,000 runs in his 11th Test when he reached 82 at close and was ably supported by Latham who was unbeaten on 78.

The tourists are now 273 runs behind Pakistan's first innings total of 438 which was spiced up by a brilliant maiden hundred from middle-order batter Agha Salman.

"I feel proud because it's great to score a hundred for your country," said the 29-year-old. "I can't describe the feeling in words and am happy that I took responsibility after our skipper fell early."

Salman anchored the innings after skipper Babar Azam fell in the first over of the day without adding to his overnight score of 161. Azam struck 16 boundaries and a six in his 365-minute knock.

Conway, the South African-born left-hander who migrated to New Zealand to boost his career, was lucky to survive a caught behind dismissal on 57 off spinner Nauman Ali.

Pakistan did not challenge home umpire Aleem Dar's not out decision but television replays showed the batter had edged the ball.

Before Conway, John Reid had reached 1,000 career runs in 12 Tests in 1985.

Conway has so far struck 12 boundaries while Latham has eight hits to the rope.

Fast bowler Tim Southee forced an edge off Azam's bat to wicketkeeper Tom Blundell to give a kickstart to New Zealand.

The spin-assisting National Stadium pitch was set to change behaviour, Salman said.

"The pitch is playing well but definitely it will take more spin as the game progresses and batting on the fifth day will be tough," said Salman.

Pakistan also lost Nauman (seven) and Mohammad Wasim (two) in the first session, which produced just 60 runs.

Salman added 54 runs for the seventh wicket before New Zealand took two wickets in the space of three runs.

Pacer Neil Wagner had Nauman caught off a short-pitched delivery before Wasim was caught behind off Sodhi.

Salman then cut loose, hitting two successive boundaries off Sodhi to complete three figures. His previous best of 62 was against Sri Lanka at Galle in July.

Southee, who finished with 3-69, finally ended the innings by trapping Salman leg before, completing 350 wickets in his 89th Test.

He is the third New Zealand bowler behind Richard Hadlee (431 in 86 Tests) and Daniel Vettori (362 in 113) to take 350 or more wickets in Tests.

Salman hit 17 boundaries during his 155-ball knock.

Ajaz Patel, Michael Bracewell and Sodhi took two wickets apiece.

The two-match Test series is New Zealand's first in Pakistan since 2002.

Brief Scores: New Zealand 165 for 0 (Conway 82*, Latham 78*) trail Pakistan 438 (Babar 161, Salman 103, Southee 3-69) by 273 runs

England to visit Bangladesh in February-March

AFP — DHAKA

The England cricket team will visit Bangladesh in February-March to play three one-day internationals and three Twenty20 internationals, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) announced yesterday.

Originally scheduled for last year's September-October session, the tour was postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic.

It will be England's first visit to Bangladesh since 2016.

The tour will kick off with the ODI series, with the first two matches to be played at Dhaka's Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium on March 1 and 3.

Chittagong's Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium will host the third and final ODI on March 6 and then the first T20 international match on March 9.

Then on March 12 and 14, the teams will return to the capital for the remaining T20 matches.

England, the defending world champions in both formats, will arrive on February 20 and play two warm-up fixtures ahead of the ODI series.

"In a World Cup year, this series provides a wonderful opportunity for the teams to assess their respective strengths," BCB chief executive Nizam Uddin Chowdhury said in a statement.

England are the only side to win an ODI series in Bangladesh since 2015.

"There is a great passion for cricket across Bangladesh, and we expect a tough challenge against a side who have an excellent record in home conditions," said Clare Connor, the interim chief of England and Wales Cricket Board.

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>
> *Clare Connor*

NBA: Nets sink Cavs for 9th straight win

REUTERS — NEW YORK

Kyrie Irving scored 15 of his 32 points in the fourth quarter as the Brooklyn Nets survived a shaky finish and extended their winning streak to a season-high nine games with a 125-117 victory over the host Cleveland Cavaliers on Monday night.

On the 11th anniversary of his NBA debut with Cleveland, Irving made 11 of 19 shots and hit seven 3-pointers as Brooklyn took a pair of 19-point leads before withstanding Cleveland's late comeback try that featured several big shots by Darius Garland, who led all scorers with 46 points.

While Garland made 14 of 20 shots and finished with his fourth 40-point game of his career, Donovan Mitchell was held to 15 points.

Kevin Durant scored 32 points but fouled out for the sixth time in his career when he bumped Garland with 1:54 remaining. Durant also moved past Tim Duncan for 15th place on the all-time scoring list and ended the night at 26,516 career points.

Garland scored 18 of his points in the fourth, including a jumper in the lane that made it 121-117 with 44 seconds left. After two free throws by Irving, Garland was blocked in the lane by Nic Claxton with 31.3 seconds remaining and TJ Warren hit two free throws to ice it with 13.8 ticks left.

Clippers 142, Pistons 131 (OT)

Paul George scored 32 points and handed out 11 assists as visiting Los Angeles, which rallied from a 14-point deficit in the last three minutes of regulation, captured an overtime victory over Detroit. Luke Kennard had 18 points for Los Angeles, while Marcus Morris Sr., Norman Powell and John Wall supplied 16 points apiece.

Heat 113, Timberwolves 110

Miami's defense forced 22 turnovers, the last coming on Kyle Lowry's steal in the closing seconds, to hold off visiting Minnesota.

Max Strus led the way with 19 points, including 5-of-10 shooting from beyond the arc. Strus was one of five Miami players to score in double figures. Lowry finished with 18 points and a game-high nine assists.

Pelicans 113, Pacers 93

Jonas Valanciunas had 20 points and 12 rebounds and short-handed New Orleans routed visiting Indiana for its third win in a row.

Naji Marshall added a career-high 22 points for the Pelicans, who played without Zion Williamson (reconditioning), Brandon Ingram (toe), Herbert Jones Jr. (health and safety protocols), Trey Murphy III (non-COVID illness) and Dyson Daniels (non-COVID illness).

Bennedict Mathurin put up 15 points and Myles Turner scored 14 to lead the Pacers, who finished a 2-1 road trip.

Rockets 133, Bulls 118

Kevin Porter Jr. scored 15 of his season-high 36 points in the fourth quarter as Houston snapped a five-game losing streak with a victory over host Chicago.

After the Bulls cut what was a 19-point deficit to 109-100, Porter responded with back-to-back 3-pointers and a midrange pull-up that allowed the Rockets to finally seize control of a back-and-forth affair. Porter had plenty of help, however, as Alperen Sengun added 25 points, 11 rebounds and six assists.

DeMar DeRozan led Chicago with 31 points and nine assists. Zach LaVine scored 22 points and Coby White had 14 off the bench for the Bulls, who had their three-game winning streak snapped.

Spurs 126, Jazz 122

Devin Vassell scored 24 points and Tre Jones hit two shots in the lane in the final seconds to allow San Antonio to outlast visiting Utah.

The Spurs, who had lost four of their previous five games, held on down the stretch after being up by 20 points late in the third quarter and by 14 heading to the fourth. Keldon Johnson added 21 points for the Spurs, with Malaki Branham scoring a career-high 20.

Lauri Markkanen led the Jazz with 32 points and 12 rebounds. Jordan Clarkson added 25 points for Utah, which had a two-game winning streak end.

Trail Blazers 124, Hornets 113

Jerami Grant recorded 32 points and 10 rebounds, Jusuf Nurkic scored a season-high 28 points and grabbed 15 rebounds and Portland continued its home domination of Charlotte.

Nurkic made a career-best five 3-pointers (in seven attempts) and Grant made four as Portland ended a three-game slide. LaMelo Ball registered 27 points, seven rebounds and seven assists before fouling out for the Hornets, who lost for the 10th time in the past 12 games.

The setback was Charlotte's 15th in a row in Portland dating back to a 93-85 victory on March 29, 2008, when the franchise was known as the Bobcats.



Brooklyn Nets guard Kyrie Irving (left) shoots over Cleveland Cavaliers forward Cedi Osman during the first half at Rocket Mortgage FieldHouse.

Stars look to beat Predators for third time this season



Action during game between Dallas Stars and Montreal Canadiens in Dallas in this Dec 23, 2022 file photo.

REUTERS — DALLAS

The Dallas Stars have certainly had their way with the Nashville Predators this season.

The Stars are aiming for a third consecutive victory over the Predators while also looking to extend their season-high road point streak to five games in the matchup on Tuesday night.

Dallas went into the NHL's Christmas break with 46 points, leading the Central Division. The Stars are in a 6-2-1 stretch after overcoming a 2-0 hole during Friday's 4-2 home victory over Montreal.

Roope Hintz scored twice to raise his goal total to 16. Jason Robertson, who has just one goal in his last 10 contests, added two assists to reach the 50-point mark in 35 games, and rookie Wyatt Johnston posted his 10th goal of the season for Dallas, which has five players with at least 10 goals and four posting 30 or more points.

"The guys who are supposed to score have scored, and we've gotten some depth scoring," Stars coach Peter DeBoer said. "We've gotten contributions from a lot of people."

Six players have at least one goal for the Stars as they've outscored Nashville 9-2 to win both the previous meetings. Three of Mason Marchment's nine goals have come versus Nashville this season, while Hintz recorded two goals with two assists. Robertson posted one of his 24 goals, plus three assists, and Johnston scored once.

Dallas' Jake Oettinger has a 2.14 goals-against average in his last six starts, and has stopped 60 of 62 shots in the two games versus Nashville. Backup Scott Wedgewood owns a 3.03 GAA in 13 games this season, but in his most recent appearance, he gave up five goals in 38 shots during a 5-4 overtime loss to Carolina in Raleigh, NC, on Dec. 17.

The Stars are amid a 3-0-1 stretch on the road.

The Predators are sixth in the Central with 33 points, but they're 2-0-1 in their last three games following an 0-4-2 slide.

Despite blowing a 2-0 lead during Friday's 3-2 overtime loss to visiting Colorado to fall to 1-2-1 in its last four home contests, Nashville is pleased with the progress it's made of late.

"We're playing much better," said forward Matt Duchene, who's amid a four-game goal streak.

"We're still right there. So, we've got to string some together. We know that, and we're looking for a big new year here."

PENOMAG

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