The Peninsula
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SPORT

QTERMINALS QATAR CLASSIC

Farag leads star cast in Doha; Women's event makes return

THE PENINSULA – DOHA


Qatar's Abdulla Mohamed Al Tamimi (left) in action against New Zealand's Paul Coll during an earlier edition of the QTerminals Qatar Classic. Qatar's No.1 ranked player Al Tamimi will meet Frenchman Lucas Serme in the first round while Coll will begin his journey from the second round having received a bye.

Egyptians Ali Farag and Nouran Gohar, the Number ones in men's and women's world rankings, highlight this year's QTerminals Qatar Classic draw, PSA announced yesterday.

The PSA World Tour Platinum event will see the return of the women's event since 2015 when the tournament begins at the Khalifa International Tennis & Squash Complex in Doha from September 9.

With the now-retired Laura Massaro winning the event eight years ago, it is guaranteed that a new name will be etched onto the women's trophy, and it's World No.1 Nouran Gohar who will headline the 48-women draw for the second PSA World Tour Platinum event of the 2023-24 campaign.

Gohar will receive a bye into round two where she will come up against either Emily Whitlock of Wales or Ineta Mackevica of Latvia. From there, she is seeded to come up against World No.9 Olivia Fiechter and World No.7 Amanda Sobhy before a mouthwatering semi-final with arch-rival Hania El Hammamy. On the opposite side of the draw is World Champion and No.2 seed Nour El Sherbini, who reached the final of the Qatar Classic in 2015. The likes of World No.10 Rowan Elaraby, World No.6 Nele Gilis and World No.4 Joelle King will stand between El Sherbini and the final.

Malaysia's former World No.5 Low Wee Wern and Egypt's World No.62 Malak Khafagy have taken the wildcard spots in the women's draw. They will face World No.28 Nada Abbas and World No.31 Lucy Turmel, respectively, in round one.

World No.1 Nouran Gohar who will headline the 48-women draw for the second PSA World Tour Platinum event of the 2023-24 campaign.

The men's draw will be headed up by two-time champion Farag. The World No.1 – a Qatar Classic champion in 2018 and 2020 – will look to improve on a disappointing third round exit last year and is seeded to play compatriots Mohamed Abouelghar, Fares Dessouky and Tarek Momen – who won his World Championship trophy in Qatar in 2019 – in his first three matches.

In the semi-finals he is seeded to meet No.4 seed Paul Coll, who was a losing finalist in both 2020 and 2021.

Peruvian Diego Elias is seeded at No.2 and he returns to the scene of his first Platinum title win, when he defeated Coll to take the trophy in 2021, becoming the first South American to win the prestigious title.

He is seeded to play defending champion Mohamed ElShorbagy in a mouthwatering semi-final contest. ElShorbagy has four Qatar Classic trophies under his belt and is one win away from a 50th PSA title – he would become only the fourth man to achieve that milestone.

The men's draw will be headed up by two-time champion World No.1 Ali Farag who is seeded to play compatriots Mohamed Abouelghar, Fares Dessouky and Tarek Momen – who won his World Championship trophy in Qatar in 2019 – in his first three matches.

Qatari No.1 Abdulla Mohamed Al Tamimi will take on Frenchman Lucas Serme in round one, while his compatriots Syed Azlan Amjad and Salem Al Malki take the wildcard spots.

The tournament kicks off with the first round of the women's event on Saturday September 9 and the final will take place on Friday September 15. The men's event will be held between September 10-16. Total player compensation of $375,000 – split equally between the men's and women's events – will be on offer.

Action from the glass court will be broadcast live on SQUASHTV, while the semi-finals and finals will also be shown live by PSA's broadcast partners.

2023 QTERMINALS QATAR CLASSIC
MEN'S DRAW

[1] Ali Farag (EGY) [bye]
Henry Leung (HKG) vs Mohamed Abouelghar (EGY)
Dimitri Steinmann (SUI) vs Karim El Hammamy (EGY)
Fares Dessouky (EGY) [bye]
Omar Mosaad (EGY) vs Tsz Kwan Lau (HKG)
Lucas Serme (FRA) vs Abdulla Mohd Al Tamimi (QAT)
Adrian Waller (ENG) vs Timothy Brownell (USA)
[8] Tarek Momen (EGY) [bye]
[7] Victor Crouin (FRA) [bye]
[WC] Salem Al Malki (QAT) vs Patrick Rooney (ENG)
Ramit Tandon (IND) vs David Baillargeon (CAN)
Todd Harrity (USA) vs Greg Lobban (SCO)
Iker Pajares Bernabeu (ESP) vs Rory Stewart (SCO)
Faraz Khan (USA) vs Mohamed ElSherbini (EGY)
Joel Makin (WAL) [bye]
[4] Paul Coll (NZL) [bye]
[3] Mohamed ElShorbagy (ENG) [bye]
Charlie Lee (ENG) vs Gregoire Marche (FRA)
Baptiste Masotti (FRA) [bye]
Leandro Romiglio (ARG) vs Youssef Ibrahim (EGY)
Shahjahan Khan (USA) vs George Parker (ENG)
Curtis Malik (ENG) vs Aly Abou Eleinen (EGY)
Miguel Rodriguez (COL) [bye]
[6] Mazen Hesham (EGY) [bye]
[5] Marwan ElShorbagy (ENG) [bye]
Karim Abdel Gawad (EGY) [bye]
Nicolas Mueller (SUI) [bye]
Eain Yow Ng (MAS) [bye]
Youssef Soliman (EGY) [bye]
Balazs Farkas (HUN) vs Saurav Ghosal (IND)
Auguste Dussourd (FRA) vs [WC] Syed Azlan Amjad (QAT)
[2] Diego Elias (PER) [bye]

WOMEN'S DRAW

[1] Nouran Gohar (EGY) [bye]
Ineta Mackevica (LAT) vs Emily Whitlock (WAL)
Hana Moataz (EGY) vs Ka Yi Lee (HKG)
Olivia Fiechter (USA) [bye]
Fayrouz Aboelkheir (EGY) vs Nicole Bunyan (CAN)
Amina Orfi (EGY) vs Nadine Shahin (EGY)
Hollie Naughton (CAN) vs Salma Eltayeb (EGY)
[7] Amanda Sobhy (USA) [bye]
[8] Georgina Kennedy (ENG) [bye]
[WC] Malak Khafagy (EGY) vs Lucy Turmel (ENG)
Tsz-Wing Tong (HKG) vs Enora Villard (FRA)
Sarah-Jane Perry (ENG) [bye]
Sana Ibrahim (EGY) vs Sivasangari Subramaniam (MAS)
Olivia Clyne (USA) [bye]
Hana Ramadan (EGY) vs Georgia Adderley (SCO)
[3] Hania El Hammamy (EGY) [bye]
[4] Joelle King (NZL) [bye]
Kenzy Ayman (EGY) vs Jasmine Hutton (ENG)
Tomato Ho (HKG) vs Marie Stephan (FRA)
Tinne Gilis (BEL) [bye]
Tesni Evans (WAL) [bye]
Emilia Soini (FIN) vs Melissa Alves (FRA)
[916] Salma Hany (EGY) [bye]
[5] Nour El Tayeb (EGY) [bye]
[6] Nele Gilis (BEL) [bye]
Zeina Mickawy (EGY) vs Lucy Beecroft (ENG)
Mariam Metwally (EGY) vs Katie Malliff (ENG)
[WC] Low Wee Wern (MAS) vs Nada Abbas (EGY)
[916] Sabrina Sobhy (USA) [bye]
Rowan Elaraby (EGY) [bye]
Alexandra Fuller (RSA) vs Nour Aboulmakarim (EGY)
[2] Nour El Sherbini (EGY) [bye]


Portuguese forward Goncalo Ramos reacts, in this April 7, 2023 file photo. AFP

Benfica striker Ramos signs for PSG

AFP – PARIS

Portugal attacker Goncalo Ramos has joined Paris Saint-Germain from Benfica on a one-year loan deal with an option to buy, the French champions announced yesterday.

Ramos, 22, came through the Portuguese club's academy and scored 19 league goals in 30 matches last season.

At the 2022 World Cup he scored a hat-trick and made an assist in his first international start in the last 16 win over Switzerland.

"It's a big moment of pride and immense joy to join Paris Saint-Germain," Ramos said in a PSG statement.

"PSG are one of the biggest clubs in the world with one of the best squads," he added.

Ramos is the Parisians' eighth summer signing after the arrivals of the likes of France defender Lucas Hernandez and Spain attacker Marco Asensio.

They missed out on Harry Kane with the England striker being heavily linked with Bayern Munich.

PSG open the defence of their Ligue 1 crown by hosting Lorient on Saturday but the start of the campaign is being clouded by questions over Kylian Mbappe's future.

The France captain has one year left on his contract with PSG, who want him to leave now rather than for free next summer.

England survive Nigeria scare to reach World Cup quarters; Australia advance

AFP – BRISBANE


England's players celebrate their Women's World Cup round of 16 victory over Nigeria in Brisbane, yesterday. AFP

England survived the sending-off of Lauren James to scrape past Nigeria on penalties yesterday and were joined in the Women's World Cup quarter-finals by an Australia side boosted by the return of Sam Kerr.

European champions England will play either Colombia or Jamaica in the last eight on Saturday, but they got there the hard way.

Chloe Kelly scored the winning penalty in Brisbane as England beat Nigeria 4-2 in the shoot-out after a tense last-16 tie finished 0-0 at the end of extra time.

England had a major scare before a crowd of 49,461, having come through the whole of extra time a player short following the 87th-minute sending-off of James for a stamp on Nigeria's Michelle Alozie.

Coach Sarina Wiegman, who welcomed key midfielder Keira Walsh back into her side after injury, called it "a very, very hard game".

"How we did that and how the team just kept going, I'm so proud of them," said Wiegman, whose side are regarded as favourites to take the crown from beaten holders the United States.

Georgia Stanway put the first penalty of the shoot-out wide for England, but Desire Oparanozie and Alozie followed suit, both missing the target with Nigeria's first two attempts.

Beth England, Rachel Daly and Alex Greenwood all scored for England before Kelly converted the decisive kick.

"It's amazing, anything that's thrown at us we show what we're capable of," said the Manchester City forward Kelly, who scored the winning goal in last year's European Championship final.

"We've been practising (penalties) a lot and it's working." The defeat was cruel on Nigeria, the world's 40th-ranked team, who followed up their impressive performances in the group stage by pushing England all the way.

Their England-born defender Ashleigh Plumptre crashed a shot off the woodwork in the first half and Uchenna Kanu also hit the frame of the goal.

"We had every opportunity to get the result and unfortunately we didn't get it done," said their American coach, Randy Waldrum.

"I think we could have (won it in 90 minutes). We had the best chances, we hit the crossbar twice in regulation play. We were a bit unlucky not to get something out of it."

England will discover the identity of their quarter-final opponents on Tuesday when Colombia face surprise-package Jamaica in Melbourne.

World Cup co-hosts Australia are also into the last eight as their skipper Kerr came off the bench in a 2-0 win over Denmark in front of nearly 76,000 fans in Sydney.

They will play France or Morocco on Saturday in Brisbane after making fairly light work of a toothless Denmark.

To cap a good night's work for the Matildas, talismanic striker Kerr came on with 10 minutes left to huge cheers for her first action of the tournament after a calf injury.

The dangerous Caitlin Foord ran Denmark ragged throughout and scored a fine first after being set up by the impressive Mary Fowler on 29 minutes.

Hayley Raso grabbed a second to make the game safe 20 minutes from time.

The Chelsea predator Kerr, who was supposed to have been the face of the World Cup before injury struck on the eve of the tournament, said it was "a big relief to be back".

"I feel good. I think I was a bit rusty, but, no, I feel great.

"I'll sleep better tonight than I have for the last three weeks." Denmark coach Lars Sondergaard said he was "proud but disappointed", having seen his side have the better of the opening part of the game.

"The match today was decided by Australia's effectiveness in front of goal and us not being so efficient in front of goal," he said.

"I think we started better. Up until the 1-0, I think we were the better team and played a very good game up until then." The home side are getting up a head of steam at this World Cup, where the demise of the United States has opened the door for a new champion.

"I think we're embracing it, I think the girls are loving it," Kerr said of the growing expectation and excitement.

"The Australian public has been amazing. We've felt the love, just walking down the street it's been a real buzz."

Jamaica vow to deliver Colombia World Cup knockout punch

AFP – MELBOURNE



Jamaica's coach Lorne Donaldson (right) talks to player Jody Brown during a training session in Melbourne, yesterday. AFP

Jamaica coach Lorne Donaldson likened their Women's World Cup last-16 clash against Colombia in Melbourne today to a boxing bout and pledged to be the ones delivering the knockout punch.

Both sides are gunning to make the last eight for the first time with a clash against either European champions England or another tournament surprise-package, Nigeria, at stake.

"They're all big games, this is just a different round, so the approach, we are not going to change much," said Donaldson, whose side have yet to concede a goal, holding powerhouses France and Brazil.

"We are going to come up and give it a good shot. Someone will be knocked out, like a boxing match, someone will go down. We're going to be the one standing when the game is over." While the 51st-ranked Reggae Girlz have yet to concede, they have only scored once -- against Panama through Paris Saint-Germain's Allyson Swaby.

Donaldson admitted that must change.

"The lack of goals coming in, I don't think it's a major concern to us," he said.

"We have played some good teams here, France and Brazil, two of the top teams in the world and we were actually supposed to be losing by six or seven, according to the critics.

"To get through the (group) round you just need to do what you have to do. But obviously now we need to score goals to win this game or we are knocked out." An impressive Colombia, ranked 26, are banking on two teenage stars to help steer them into the last eight.

Real Madrid striker Linda Caicedo has already announced herself to the world with goals in wins against South Korea and Germany during the group phase.

She is set to be joined by fellow 18-year-old Ana Maria Guzman in her tournament debut with attacking defender Manuela Vanegas suspended after two yellow cards.

Coach Nelson Abadia has mentored both Caicedo and Guzman since they were 12 years old and has full faith they will rise to the occasion.

"I have 23 players and they are all very talented," said Abadia, who is renowned for sticking with the same starting team where possible.

"I'm fully confident in Ana, she is very capable." Guzman played at last year's under-17 World Cup in India where they lost 1-0 to Spain in the final, and said she was ready to step up.

"I will play any position, left or right and enjoy every second," said the Deportivo Pereira player, sitting next to her coach.

"It's a great opportunity. The coach has been a key person in my life, he has always supported me and I want to give my best.

"To be playing with Linda is extra special. Yes, we are the youngest, but we will break our backs for this shirt," she added.

Guzman is expected to be the only change to the team that lost 1-0 to Morocco in their last group game.

Abadia said he was wary of a Jamaican side who have defended consistently well at the World Cup.

"We know what Jamaica offer, they are a very solid team in defence," he said. "We must pay attention to the counter-attack as well, because they are very strong in that area too."

Messi magic as Miami move past Dallas after shoot-out

AFP – FRISCO, UNITED STATES

Lionel Messi scored twice, including a brilliant late equaliser, as Inter Miami advanced past FC Dallas to the quarter-finals of the Leagues Cup on penalties after an enthralling 4-4 draw.

A trademark curling free-kick in the 85th minute, Messi's seventh goal in four games for Miami, took the game to a shootout after the Argentine's side had trailed 4-2 with 10 minutes to go.

Dallas exposed Miami's defensive weaknesses, in Messi's first game away from home, and kept Spanish midfielder Sergio Busquets relatively quiet for long stretches but the World Cup winner still made the difference.

"It's obvious that for him a free-kick around that area is like a penalty kick for another player," said Dallas's Spanish coach Nico Estevez of Messi's superb strike.

Dallas began brightly before Messi put Miami ahead in the sixth minute with a precise side-foot finish from a pull-back from Jordi Alba, the former Barcelona full-back who was making his first start for the club.

It was initially ruled out for offside but the decision was reversed after the referee, on review, ruled that Miami forward Josef Martinez had not blocked the view of the goalkeeper.

Dallas drew level in the 37th minute through Argentine Facundo Quignon, who swung home a cross from overlapping full-back Marco Farfan.

They went ahead on the stroke of half-time through Bernard Kamungo, who rounded Miami keeper Drake Callender.

Another Argentine, Alan Velasco, made it 3-1 in the 63rd minute with a free-kick from the left which flew untouched into the far corner.

Teenage substitute Benjamin Cremaschi took only a minute to reduce the deficit but an own goal from Robert Taylor restored the two-goal cushion for Dallas at 4-2.

Messi then chipped a free-kick into the box and Farfan, unchallenged, inexplicably headed into his own goal to keep Miami alive.

Five minutes from the end Messi strode up and slotted home a free-kick from 20 yards to take it to penalties.

The Leagues Cup, the tournament for clubs from Major League Soccer and Mexico's Liga MX, does not feature extra-time, with drawn games going directly to penalties.

Messi converted the first penalty in the shoot-out, Paxton Pomykal missed for Dallas and the 18-year-old Cremaschi secured Miami's place in the last eight with the final spot-kick.

"It's amazing what (Messi) can do," said Miami-born Cremaschi.

"He scored twice in almost every game and it's just impressive." Miami were without a win in 11 games in Major League Soccer before Messi's arrival, but have triumphed in every game with him and Busquets in the team.

"You can see our mentality, how things have changed in this club, how we were willing to fight until the last second, especially with the quality players that we have," said Cremaschi.

"We know that we could be down by a bunch of goals and still come back in a matter of seconds." Miami's Argentine coach Gerardo Martino said that Messi's magic and the result should not disguise the clear deficiencies in his team.

"Obviously being 4-2 down in the 80th minute and then coming back like that, we are very happy with the result.," he said. "But the fact that we have gone through, shouldn't let us lose sight of the things that we have to improve."



Lionel Messi of Inter Miami celebrates after scoring a goal during the Leagues Cup Round of 16 match against FC Dallas in Frisco, Texas. AFP

CL PLAY-OFFS DRAW

Faeroe Islands club KI sees unlikely path to face football's elite

AP – NYON

The unlikely path of KI Klaksvík from the Faeroe Islands toward the Champions League group stage would go through Galatasaray or Olimpija Ljubljana in the playoff round which was drawn yesterday.

KI already eliminated Hungary's Ferencváros and Hacken of Sweden to ensure it will play in one of the three men's club competition group stages that start next month - a first for a club from the Faeroes, an isolated archipelago of islands in the Atlantic Ocean with a total population of around 50,000.

On Tuesday, KI returns to action hosting Norwegian champion Molde in the first leg of the third qualifying round, which starts after the playoff round pairings were drawn.

Either KI or Molde will be at home in the first leg on Aug. 22 or 23 against Turkey's Galatasaray or Slovenia's Olimpija. The return game is on Aug. 29 or 30.

At this stage of the qualifying rounds, losing teams move to the next tier down ensuring KI will eventually enter the group stage of either the Europa League or the third-tier Europa Conference League.

Playoff round pairings in both those competitions were also being drawn yesterday.

Six Champions League playoff pairings were drawn. The eventual winners will complete the lineup for the elite 32-team group stage that is drawn on Aug. 31 in Monaco.

Japan's Hibino makes most of luck to win Prague title

AFP – PRAGUE

Japan's Nao Hibino completed a fairytale journey from lucky loser to champion as she beat Czech teenager Linda Noskova in straight sets yesterday to win the rain-hit Prague Open.

Hibino, 28, swept aside fourth seed Noskova 6-4, 6-1 in the final disrupted by rain. She added a third WTA title to her previous wins at Tashkent in 2015 and Hiroshima in 2019. The final had to be suspended when Hibino, the world number 136, was 4-1, 30-0 up in the second set because of rain plaguing the tournament since Saturday.

Hibino already had to complete her semi-final against Romania's Jaqueline Cristian yesterday morning, but she only spent five minutes on the court.

The rain washed out Saturday's programme and the semi-finals were postponed to Sunday, which were further delayed due to rain.

Noskova, 18, managed hers in straight sets, while Hibino's semi-final was suspended after five hours and three disruptions with the Japanese player leading 5-2 in the third set. In windy and chilly conditions, the 71st-ranked Noskova started the final brilliantly and took a 3-0 lead, but Hibino came back fast. More patient throughout the match, Hibino took the first set with a break of serve and then cruised on to take the honours as Noskova kept piling up errors, double-faulting on match point.

US teen Gauff and Britain's Evans win Washington titles

AFP – WASHINGTON

US teen star Coco Gauff and Britain's Dan Evans captured titles with straight-set triumphs on Sunday at the ATP and WTA Washington Open.

World number seven Gauff won her fourth career WTA title by defeating Greece's ninth-ranked Maria Sakkari 6-2, 6-3 while 30th-ranked Evans dispatched 37th-ranked Dutchman Tallon Griekspoor 7-5, 6-3 at the hardcourt event, a US Open tuneup.

Gauff, at 19 the youngest Washington WTA finalist, added to a trophy haul that also included 2019 at Linz, 2021 in Parma and this past January at Auckland.

The success came after a first-round exit at Wimbledon last month.

"It was really tough a couple weeks ago," Gauff said. "We were all feeling it and I'm glad that I was able to bounce back." Gauff, last year's French Open runner-up, had lost four of five prior matches against Sakkari, who fell to 1-7 in WTA finals with her sixth consecutive loss in a tour championship match.

"It's pretty disappointing, but a month ago we didn't think I'd be here," Sakkari said.

Evans, a 33-year-old Englishman whose only prior ATP title came in a 2021 outdoor Melbourne event, became the first British champion in Washington since Tim Henman in 2003.

Evans, with only eight tour-level wins this year entering the week, will advance to a new career high of 21st in the world after arriving in the US capital on a seven-match tour-level losing streak.

"I couldn't have really thought about this at the start of the week. Amazing week," Evans said. "It means the world to me. It genuinely does." Griekspoor was denied his third career title after crowns at Pune in January and 's-Hertogenbosch in June.



Coco Gauff of the US poses with the trophy after winning the women's singles final of the Mubadala Citi DC Open in Washington. AFP

"First time in DC, making finals, not too bad I guess," Griekspoor said.

Griekspoor, 27, saved a set point in the 10th game with an ace wide but Evans broke him in the 12th game to take the first set when the Dutchman netted a backhand after 53 minutes.

Evans had 14 winners to only three unforced errors in the opening set.

The second set was halted at 2-2 by lightning and resumed after a delay of about two hours and 20 minutes.

Evans broke at love for a 5-3 lead, a backhand winner and backhand lob winner setting up a break the Dutchman surrendered on a double fault.

The Englishman saved four break points in a tense ninth game and after nearly 10 minutes blasted a service winner on his first championship point to take the title after one hour and 41 minutes.

Gauff, who didn't drop a set all week, won the first in 42 minutes but Sakkari broke her to begin the second. They traded service breaks in the fourth and fifth games but Sakkari double faulted away another break to lift Gauff level at 3-3.

Gauff held, broke in the eighth game when Sakkari swatted a forehand beyond the baseline, and held again to complete the victory after 84 minutes on a backhand winner.

Sakkari, 28, won her only prior WTA title at the 2019 Morocco Open.

Varane says players ignored over 'dangerous' added time rules

AFP – MANCHESTER

Manchester United defender Raphael Varane said yesterday that players' views have been ignored on new guidelines that will see more time added on at the end of matches.

Competitions around the world have been instructed to more accurately calculate time lost to stoppages this season, including goal celebrations and VAR checks.

Football's lawmakers IFAB said in March that the approach to calculating added time was "positively received" when it was first tested at the men's World Cup in Qatar last year and would be rolled out worldwide.

Arsenal equalised in the 11th of 13 added minutes at the end of Sunday's Community Shield against Manchester City and went on to win on penalties.

"From the managers and players, we have shared our concerns for many years now that there are too many games, the schedule is overcrowded, and it's at a dangerous level for players' physical and mental well-being," the Frenchman posted on social media.

"Despite our previous feedbacks, they have now recommended for next season: longer games, more intensity, and less emotions to be shown by players.

"We just want to be in good condition on the pitch to give 100 percent to our club and fans. Why are our opinions not being heard?"

Marsh named Australian T20 captain, Cummins injured

AFP – MELBOURNE

Mitchell Marsh was named Australia's new Twenty20 captain yesterday for their tour of South Africa, as selectors revealed Test and one-day skipper Pat Cummins has a fractured wrist but should be fit for the World Cup.

Marsh will take the armband for the first three T20 matches since Aaron Finch's retirement, leading a squad missing Mitchell Starc, Josh Hazlewood, Cameron Green and David Warner, who are all being rested.

Cummins will also be absent as he recovers from the injury sustained in the final Ashes Test in London.

All of them will join up for the one-day leg of the South African tour.

"He has an undisplaced fracture of his left radius which requires six weeks rehabilitation," chairman of selectors George Bailey said of Cummins.

"We expect him to join the squad during the South African ODI series. We view a period of enforced rest for Pat as a positive ahead of this important World Cup campaign.

"There are still a number of games he could play before the World Cup which is more than enough for him to have a strong preparation," he added.

Rising all-rounder Spencer Johnson, power-hitter Matthew Short and left-arm seamer Aaron Hardie all earned maiden national call-ups for the T20 games.

Jason Behrendorff also returns to national colours for the first time since the 2022 Pakistan tour.

"Mitch has long been a senior player within the white-ball structure, with this an opportunity for him to add to his leadership skills at international level," said Bailey of Marsh's elevation.

"We look forward to him taking that step in South Africa." Marsh was named as skipper for the South Africa series only, with Cricket Australia yet to commit to a full-time replacement for Finch, who played his final international last October.

An initial 18-man squad for the 2023 World Cup and preceding five-match one-day series against South Africa was also named, largely a continuation of the group which defeated India 2-1 in March.

But Marnus Labuschagne was a glaring omission, with Hardie and promising young spinner Tanveer Sangha included.

"This side has been extremely impressive for several years in limited-overs cricket," said Bailey of the 50-over team.

"There is an enormous amount of skill and experience in the group which you need in a World Cup." The World Cup squad will be slimmed down to 15 in early September.

AUSTRALIA T20 SQUAD

Mitchell Marsh (capt), Sean Abbott, Jason Behrendorff, Tim David, Nathan Ellis, Aaron Hardie, Travis Head, Josh Inglis, Spencer Johnson, Glenn Maxwell, Matt Short, Steve Smith, Marcus Stoinis, Adam Zampa Australia ODI squad: Pat Cummins (capt), Sean Abbott, Ashton Agar, Alex Carey, Nathan Ellis, Cameron Green, Aaron Hardie, Josh Hazlewood, Travis Head, Josh Inglis, Mitchell Marsh, Glenn Maxwell, Tanveer Sangha, Steve Smith, Mitchell Starc, Marcus Stoinis, David Warner, Adam Zampa



Mitchell Marsh

Pakistan appoint Inzamam as new chief selector

AFP – LAHORE

Pakistan appointed former cricket captain Inzamam-ul-Haq as their new chief selector yesterday, giving him the task of picking squads for the Asia Cup and subsequent World Cup later this year.

The 53-year-old replaces Haroon Rasheed, who was shown the door after a change in the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) set-up two months ago.

In a PCB press release, Inzamam said the new job was challenging.

"Heading the selection committee is a tough job, but it will be more challenging this time with Asia Cup and World Cup around the corner," he was quoted as saying.

"Despite the paucity of time, we will announce the best possible sides." Himself a World Cup winner in 1992, Inzamam will likely announce on Thursday the squad for both the Asia Cup and for a three-match one-day international series against Afghanistan in Sri Lanka. The ODI series will be played on August 22, 24 and 26, while the Asia Cup is scheduled from August 30 to September 17.

The Asia Cup will be held on a hybrid model after India refused to send its team to Pakistan, leaving the latter to host just four matches, while nine will be held in Sri Lanka.

Medvedev back in his element on Canadian hardcourts

AFP – TORONTO

Russia's Daniil Medvedev has returned to his tennis heaven with the summer hardcourt season starting yesterday in North America at the Toronto Masters.

The world number three is seeded second behind Carlos Alcaraz due to the absence of Novak Djokovic, with the Serb leaving it late to prepare for the US Open which begins August 28.

"I feel great on the hardcourt, my game suits it," Medvedev, 27, said in the tournament run-up. "But it's easy to lose also - there are so many guys who want to win."

Medvedev, with 20 career titles, has earned half of them on his preferred outdoor hardcourts.

"I feel my best on hardcourt; on clay and grass I have more things (bothering) my body.

"On hardcourt I feel very fluid," he said as he awaits a second-round opening opponent from Canadian wild card Vasek Pospisil and Italian Matteo Arnaldi.

"I'm very happy here, let's see where it goes." The winner of the Canadian trophy two years ago, has already had a weekend practice hit with top rival Alcaraz, the reigning Wimbledon and US Open champion who heads the field.

The 20-year-old Spaniard has defeated one of his top rivals in two of their three previous meetings, with the Spanish prodigy winning their last two including the Wimbledon semi-finals in July.

"We had a great practice," Medvedev said.

"He was playing only the day after he flew in. Even if it's just six hours (time change) your body is still tired after the flight. It was good to have this one (hit-out), I'm no better prepared for the tournament. I don't train every day with my rivals but it can happen a few times per year."

He added: "I want to do well here, there is always a little bit of pressure but you put up with it and deal with it.

"I don't know if it's climate change, but every ball on the Tour seems to be getting slower after a few games."



Daniil Medvedev



Noah Lyles

'Medals first, records second' as Lyles eyes sprint world double

AFP – PARIS

Noah Lyles says his priority is "medals first, records second" as he bids to become only the fifth man to achieve the 100/200 metres double at the World Athletics Championships.

The 26-year-old American is seeking a third successive 200m world crown in Budapest later this month where he will face stiff competition from teenage compatriot Erriyon Knighton.

He is also looking at wresting the 100m title from fellow American Fred Kerley and then teaming up with him to win the 4x100m relay.

With a best time of 19.31 seconds in the 200m, Lyles is the third fastest man in history though still some way off the world record of 19.19sec posted by Usain Bolt -- who completed the world sprint double three times -- in 2009.

"I already have gold in the 200 and 4x100 so I just definitely want to add another gold medal to that," Lyles told news agencies in an interview.

"It is medals first then records second. You can always grab a world record somewhere else during the year.

"My fastest time is so low it all depends on the right weather, right competition and right day.

"I am going for the gold and if something amazing comes from that even better."

He will need all his nerve and speed to see off 19-year-old Knighton if he is to retain his 200m title.

"He's a kid and he's stepped into the world of professional athletics early, earlier than I did," said Lyles.

"When I first arrived I was ready to take off everybody's head.

"Last year he got a taste of what it is like to be at the top in the months leading up to the US championships. You have a target on your back and it can be a very heavy burden to hold if you are not prepared for it."

Lyles says Knighton's relative rawness -- even though he finished fourth in the Tokyo Olympics 200m final in 2021 -- did not serve him well last year.

"Being his second year as a professional athlete I don't know if he was able to handle it," said Lyles, who had Knighton back in third when he retained his 200m title last year.

> I already have gold in the 200 and 4x100 so I just definitely want to add another gold medal to that. It is medals first then records second. You can always grab a world record somewhere else during the year.
> **Noah Lyles**

"I have been holding it (the number one tag) for a very long time and I knew it was something I would not allow others to hold. I treat him like I do everybody else.

"Some people say 'why do you do that to the kid he is only 18' but as soon as you enter the professional world you are a professional.

"That goes for everybody whether it is him, Fred Kerley or Christian Coleman. When we step on the track it is a different mindset." Whilst some like to build up the image of a great rivalry building between him and Knighton, Lyles dismisses the suggestion.

"I see rivalries as almost lazy, it is the easiest form to conceptualise," he said.

"But in track there are so many of us that to simplify it to rivalry diminishes it. There is great story telling that can be told.

"Why concern it with two people when we have a field of eight, who all have stories to tell? Rivalries are fun but it can be dead in a day." Lyles cuts a very different figure to the one who admitted he had suffered from depression in 2020.

"I am in a lot better spot than 2021 and 2020 for sure," he said.

"My biggest issue is being frustrated at what I want to see happen in the track world. It is not so much my own struggles and mental state which is a good sign."

Vettori replaces Lara as IPL Hyderabad coach

AFP – NEW DELHI

Former New Zealand captain Daniel Vettori has joined Indian Premier League franchise Sunrisers Hyderabad as head coach in place of West Indies batting great Brian Lara, the team announced yesterday.

Vettori -- who represented the Kiwis in 113 Tests, 295 one-day and 34 T20 internationals -- previously coached Bangalore in the IPL, and also took up coaching roles with the Australia and Bangladesh men's teams.

Lara ended his two-year association with Hyderabad after the 2016 champions finished bottom of the 10-team table this year in the T20 tournament.

Slade cut from England's World Cup squad

AFP – LONDON

Henry Slade was the shock omission from England coach Steve Borthwick's 33-man squad for the World Cup yesterday.

The Exeter centre was part of England's run to the final four years ago and had appeared in 30 of the last 37 Tests.

However, he has missed out to Joe Marchant, who impressed despite a disappointing 20-9 defeat to Wales on Saturday.

"There have been a number of very difficult selection decisions to make," said Borthwick.

"Some very good players have missed out on selection such has been the competition for places over the last eight weeks and more of preparation."

Borthwick also defended the decision to name his squad early with further warm-up matches against Wales, Ireland and Fiji to come before the deadline later this month.

"We believe that announcing the squad a little earlier than otherwise might have been the case, brings a clarity and certainty to the group, allowing the players as much time as possible to settle and develop as a squad," he added.

The exclusion of Alex Dombrandt means that Billy Vunipola is the only specialist number eight bound for France next month.

Vunipola is chosen despite not having played since April because of two knee surgeries and missing the entire Six Nations after being frozen out by Borthwick on form grounds.

Lewis Ludlam, Ben Earl and Tom Curry cover number eight and are present among a large contingent of versatile back five forwards that includes rookie Leicester duo Ollie Chessum and George Martin.

Other big names to miss out are wings Jonny May and Joe Cokanasiga, both of whom played at the World Cup four years ago.

England will face Argentina, Japan, Samoa and Chile in Group D in what is regarded as the kinder half of the World Cup draw.



England's Ben Youngs (centre) arrives on the pitch with teammates to pose for a group photo after the announcement of England's Rugby World Cup Squad. AFP

ENGLAND SQUAD

Forwards Props: Dan Cole (Leicester), Ellis Genge (Bristol), Joe Marler (Harlequins), Bevan Rodd (Sale), Kyle Sinckler (Bristol), Will Stuart (Bath) **Hookers:** Theo Dan (Saracens), Jamie George (Saracens), Jack Walker (Harlequins) **Locks:** Ollie Chessum (Leicester), Maro Itoje (Saracens), David Ribbans (Toulon/FRA) **Back row:** Tom Curry (Sale), Ben Earl (Saracens), Courtney Lawes (Northampton), Lewis Ludlam (Northampton), George Martin (Leicester), Billy Vunipola (Saracens), Jack Willis (Toulouse/FRA) **Backs Scrum-halves:** Danny Care (Harlequins), Ben Youngs (Leicester), Jack van Poortvliet (Leicester) **Fly-halves:** Owen Farrell (Saracens), George Ford (Sale), Marcus Smith (Harlequins) **Wings:** Max Malins (Bristol), Anthony Watson (unattached), Elliot Daly (Saracens) **Centres:** Ollie Lawrence (Bath), Joe Marchant (Stade Francais/FRA), Manu Tuilagi (Sale) **Full-backs:** Henry Arundell (Racing 92/FRA), Freddie Steward (Leicester)