The Peninsula
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SPORT



Qatar Racing and Equestrian Club (QREC) Board Member Khalifa bin Mohammed Al Attiyah crowned the winners of the Al Rayyan Cup (left) and Doha Cup, at Deauville Racecourse in France, yesterday. PICTURES: Scoopdyga

Abbes lands Doha Cup for Wathnan Racing; Extra Time wins Al Rayyan Cup in France

THE PENINSULA – DOHA

Wathnan Racing owned Abbes landed the Doha Cup while the Al Rayyan Cup was won by the Guy Neivens owned and bred Extra Time at the Deauville Racecourse in France, yesterday.

Khalifa bin Mohammed Al Attiyah, Qatar Racing and Equestrian Club (QREC) Board Member, awarded the winners of the two races, sponsored by QREC.

Both prestigious races are Group 1s for Purebred Arabians and are run over 2,000m. While the Doha Cup is for four-year-olds and older, the Al Rayyan Cup is for three-year-old and each of them is the best race of the summer in France for the relevant age category of the Purebred Arabian breed.

Abbes (TM Fred Texas x Raqiyah) won the Doha Cup for trainer Alban de Mieulle and jockey Mickael Barzalona while the Al Rayyan Cup was won by the Guy Neivens owned and bred Extra Time (Valiant Boy x Sand Witchh) for trainer David Morrison and jockey Émilien Revolte.

A half-length runner up to Soko (Nieshan) in the same contest in 2022 and putting his experience to good use, it was the Abbes who got his head in front to take the 2023 edition of the Gr.1 (PA) Doha Cup.

Now a five-time Gr.1 (PA) winner, Abbes under the care of De Mieulle, the French bred Abbes returned to winning ways domestically in the Gr.1 (PA) Doha Cup, having chased home Ch'ezza (AF Albahar) in the Gr.1 (PA) The President of the UAE Cup at ParisLongchamp in May.

Held up in the five-runner contest under Mickael Barzalona and blinkered, Abbes travelled well while Edalbar (AF Albahar) set decent fractions at the head of affairs. Switched wide in the home straight, the grey six-year-old laid down a strong challenge to get up close home and reverse the form with the Abdullah bin Fahad Al Attiyah owned and Francois Rohaut trained Ch'ezza, who was ridden by Christophe Soumillon, by a half a length.

Hadi De Carrere (Nieshan) ran well to take third. The Khalifa bin Sheail Al Kuwari owned and Thomas Fourcy trained Hadi De Carrere (Nieshan) ran well, on his first outing since January this year, to take third as he was further two lengths under Olivier Peslier.

The winning trainer De Mieulle announced after the race that, given the fact that Abbes does not like soft ground,the star Purebred Arabian owned by Wathnan Racing will sidestep the autumn season in France and Qatar Arabian World Cup (Gr1 PA) in order to focus on the big races in Qatar, where he has so far been imperial.

Bred by Haras De Victot, Abbes is by stallion Haras des Thouras' triple Group 1 winning stallion TM Fred Texas (Burning Sand). His dam Raqiyah (Amer) is a four-time Group One winner in France.

In the Al Rayyan Cup (Gr1 PA), Extra Time proved a clear-cut winner at the expense of AJS Lattam and Kanti de Bozouls. Trained at La Teste by David Morisson, he began his career with a second place "on home turf" in a Group 3 PA race. Fans were treated to an international finish, as AJS Lattam is trained in Qatar by Mohammed Hamad Al Attiyah, whereas Kanti de Bozouls is handled by Xavier Thomas-Demeaulte at Mont-de-Marsan.

Mohammed Hamad Al Attiyah, the trainer of AJS Lattam, explained: "He had won twice in good style in Qatar. We then took him to England where I am based in the summer. And he ran well there, in a prep race over 1,700m, which was of a modest level. AJS Lattam therefore made the trip to Deauville with several question marks hanging over him, and he answered all of those positively. He's a progressive horse and he has not shown the full extent of his talent."

Barshim headlines Qatar team for Budapest Worlds

CHINTHANA WASALA
THE PENINSULA

The reigning world high jump champion Mutaz Essa Barshim will lead the Qatar team at the World Athletics Championships in Budapest 2023 which will be held from August 19-27, Qatar Athletics Federation announced yesterday.

The three-time world champion, Barshim will be aiming to make it four in a row after winning the prestigious title at the 2017 London, 2019 Doha and 2022 Eugene World Championships, while Bassem Hemeida (400m hurdles) and Moaaz Mohamed (discus throw) will also be seen in action at the brand new National Athletics Centre in Budapest.

The 32-year-old Barshim is once again a front runner in the race for the World title, and has already posted the world's leading mark this season, an impressive 2.36m at the Silesia Kamila Skolimowska Memorial Diamond League meet in Chorzow, Poland, last month.

He then recorded a 2.33-metre mark at the London Diamond League despite finishing second behind American JuVaughn Harrision. However, the reigning Olympic title-holder Barshim will not only set his eyes on winning an unprecedented fourth World gold in a row, but also the world record in this pet event, held by Cuban great Javier Sotomayor since 1993.

Barshim came close to beating Sotomayor's 2.45m mark in Brussels in 2014, but got injured while attempting to clear the bar at 2.46m.

The winning height in the high jump at the last three worlds championships (Eugene, Tokyo and Doha) - has been 2.37m.

Barshim's teammate, Hemeida will also try to make his presence felt at the Worlds, competing in the one lap hurdles event in the absence of compatriot Abderrahman Samba who missed most part of the season due to an injury.

Hemeida is a former Asian Athletics Championships gold winner, and has a personal best of 48.64 secs which places him in the top 30 in the world this season.

The third member of the Qatar team, Mohamed is a former U-20 World and Asian champion, with a personal best of 62.48 metres. The Qatar contingent, sponsored by the Seashore Group and PUMA, will be led by Qatar Athletics Federation (QAF) President Mohamed Issa Al Fadala who will also attend the World Athletics meetings along with Issa Abdullah Al Harami, Secretary General of the Federation. The delegation also includes Talal Mansour, Khalifa Abdul Malik, Khaled Al Marri and trainer Massimo.

Meanwhile, the medals of the World Athletics Championships Budapest 23 were unveiled yesterday, with 10 days to go until the competition begins.

"Deviating from traditional medal designs, the emphasis was placed on representing the host country and capturing the essence of a sporting nation," World Athletics said on its web site.



QBF signs Skortopoulos as new national team head coach

THE PENINSULA – DOHA

The Qatar Basketball Federation (QBF) announced its official contract with the Greek Thanassis Skortopoulos as the new head coach of the national team, and with him, fitness coach Nathaniel Alkidos. The announcement was made during a press conference held yesterday evening at the Federation's headquarters, in the presence of Saadoun Sabah Al Kuwari, Secretary General, and Yassin Ismail, Director of National Teams.

For his part, Al Kuwari expressed his happiness at contracting with the Greek coach who succeeded Serbian coach, Miodrag Perisic.

Al Kuwari said that the coach has a distinguished CV, as he previously trained the Greek national team and many Greek clubs, and he is a big name in the world of coaching in Europe.

Al Kuwari explained that the national team has many important continental competitions, during which QBF seeks to honour Qatari basketball, especially that Doha will host the 2027 World Cup.

While Yassin Ismail praised the success of QBF, headed by Muhammad bin Saad Al Mughisib, in assigning the task of training Al Annabi to a coach with a distinguished personality and biography, as he is considered one of the best foreign coaches to coach the national teams.

The director of the national teams emphasised that the strategy of the Basketball Federation is to mix youth elements with those with experience, especially since the federation's plan is to form a competitive team for many years.

The Greek coach Skortopoulos admitted that he did not hesitate for a single moment in accepting the offer to train the national basketball team, indicating that he has a lot of information about Qatari basketball through some friends and coaches who work in Doha.



FROM LEFT: Director of National Teams Yassin Ismail, fitness coach Nathaniel Alkidos, head coach Thanassis Skortopoulos and Qatar Basketball Federation Secretary General Saadoun Sabah Al Kuwari during a press conference, yesterday.

Meanwhile, the fitness coach, Alkidos, confirmed that he is doing his best to raise the physical level of the players, expressing his happiness at joining the Qatari basketball family, which is preparing to host the World Cup in 2027 for the first time in the history of the Middle East.

In a related development, the delegation of our national basketball team will leave today to Chinese Taipei, to participate in the William Jones 42 Championship for men, which will start tomorrow and will continue until August 20. This tournament will witness the participation of teams that will participate in the 19th edition of the FIBA World Cup. It will be held in Indonesia, Japan and the Philippines from August 25 to September 10, with the participation of 32 teams.

Al Anabi are scheduled to play in the William Jones 42 Men's Championship, against the US national team on August 12, and Iran on the next day. On August 14, Qatar will play against Chinese Taipei and the Philippines next day. Then they will play against UAE and Chinaese Taipei B, South Korea and Japan on the following days.

US Open prize money and player compensation hits $65m

AP – NEW YORK

Total prize money and player compensation at this year's US Open tennis tournament will reach a record $65m, the US Tennis Association said Tuesday, noting that the number is boosted by increases in the amount of expenses covered.

Last year's total payout was about $60m.

Play in the main draws for singles begins on Aug. 28 at the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center and closes with the women's final on Sept. 10 and the men's final on Sept. 11.

This is the 50th anniversary of the US Open becoming the sport's first event to pay women and men the same, and both singles champions will get $3m in 2023.

That represents a jump of about 15% from last year's $2.6m but remains below the pre-pandemic paycheck of $3.9m that went to each winner in 2019. Players losing in earlier rounds do get a bump: Those exiting in the first round of singles, for example, will receive $81,500 - up from $80,000 in 2022 and from $58,000 in 2019.

In doubles, the champions will get $700,000 per team, up from $688,000 in 2022.

The USTA is providing more expense money for women and men in qualifying and main-draw singles, doubles and mixed doubles and wheelchair events.

That includes giving competitors $1,000 travel vouchers for the first time; providing a second free room in an official tournament hotel to everyone instead of just one room or, if they prefer, a stipend of $600 per day (up from $300) to be used for other housing; increased meal allowances; and racket stringing.

Subtract that from the total compensation being paid out, and the prize money based on results at the US Open is about $60m, the most at any Grand Slam tournament this year. Based on currency exchange figures at the times of the events, Wimbledon offered about $56.5m in prizes, the French Open about $54m and the Australian Open about $53m.

Rampant France set up Australia clash; Colombia also into quarters

AFP – ADELAIDE


France's Eugenie Le Sommer (right) scores her team's fourth goal against Morocco, yesterday. AFP

France issued a Women's World Cup warning yesterday to set up a tasty quarter-final clash against Australia, with Colombia joining them in the last eight and facing England.

A rampant France scored three times in eight minutes in a first-half blitz as they won 4-0 to bring Morocco's fairytale run to a brutal end.

Veteran striker Eugenie Le Sommer scored twice, once in each half, and Kadidiatou Diani and Kenza Dali were also on the scoresheet in Adelaide.

Herve Renard's side will now play co-hosts Australia in Brisbane on Saturday, with the winners of that going on to play either England or Colombia in the semi-finals.

"We fulfilled our objective. You always want a little bit more, but it's fine," Renard told broadcaster M6.

France were knocked out in the quarter-finals as hosts in 2019, losing to eventual winners the United States.

A win against Australia will see them equal their best-ever performance at the World Cup, when they got to the last four in 2011.

"We have matched our performance of four years ago, but our objective was to do better than we did in 2011, so we know what we have left to do," Renard said.

Asked if his side could beat the Matildas in front of a hostile crowd, he added: "We are capable of doing it but it won't be easy, albeit not easy for either team." While France are desperate to win a first major women's international title, Morocco came into the game with the pressure off, their World Cup already a huge success.

They recovered from a 6-0 thrashing to Germany on their World Cup debut to exceed all expectations by defeating Colombia and South Korea to reach the knockout rounds.

Colombia make history

Colombia reached the quarter-finals for the first time and a meeting with England after a 1-0 win over Jamaica.

Skipper Catalina Usme scored the only goal of the game in Melbourne in the 51st minute, bringing the ball down expertly and bending it into the bottom corner.

It was the first time at the tournament that Jamaica had conceded a goal.

It set a cagey game alight and sent the pumping pro-Colombian crowd into deafening delirium.

Fired up, Jamaica almost had an immediate reply with Jody Brown's shot cleared off the line.

Behind for the first time at the World Cup and facing the exit door, Jamaica abandoned their defensive posture and threw players forward frantically looking for the equaliser.

Drew Spence almost grabbed it with a header that spun just wide, but Colombia held on.

They will play European champions England in Sydney on Saturday.

James says sorry

England will be missing attacker Lauren James after she was sent off for stamping on Nigeria's Michelle Alozie in their last-16 game on Monday.

England went on to squeeze through on penalties.

The 21-year-old James apologised yesterday.

"All my love and respect to you," James tweeted to Alozie, who had written on social media that she had "all respect for Lauren James".

"I am sorry for what happened," James added.

In the other quarter-finals, Spain play the 2019 runners-up the Netherlands, and Sweden -- who sent holders the United States home -- face Japan.

Jamaica bowed out but made history of their own, winning a World Cup game for the first time with a 1-0 victory over Panama and holding heavily fancied Brazil and France to goalless draws.

But despite boasting the prolific Manchester City striker Khadija Shaw, Jamaica's lack of goals proved to be their undoing -- they scored just one all tournament, against Panama.



Suryakumar blasts India to win over Windies

AFP – PROVIDENCE, GUYANA

Suryakumar Yadav smashed 83 off 44 balls as India beat West Indies by seven wickets in the third T20 international in Guyana yesterday to keep the series alive.

After India lost T20 debutant Yashasvi Jaiswal and Shubman Gill cheaply in pursuit of 160, Suryakumar took charge in a dazzling innings comprising 10 fours and four sixes.

He eventually fell clipping an Alzarri Joseph full toss to deep backward square leg, but Tilak Varma finished unbeaten on 49 and captain Hardik Pandya hit the winning six with 13 balls to spare.

"It was really important to be myself in the powerplay. The team wanted me to bat as much as possible," said Suryakumar.

"I practised these (scoops) strokes a lot. I have loved to do that. I just like to express myself."

West Indies skipper Rovman Powell had earlier dragged his side to 159-5 with a quick-fire 40 not out after winning the toss in Providence and choosing to bat.

Brandon King made a run-a-ball 42 while fellow opener Kyle Mayers (25) and Nicholas Pooran (20) also made decent contributions for the hosts.

Left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav, recalled in place of Ravi Bishnoi, claimed 3-28 to lead the Indian bowling attack. Axar Patel and Mukesh Kumar picked up a wicket apiece.

"We were 10-15 runs short," said Powell. "It was a pretty good wicket. The start we got (with the bat), it was something we asked for. We lost our way in the middle."

India cut West Indies' lead to 2-1 in the five-match series after they lost the opener by four runs followed by Sunday's dramatic two-wicket defeat.

West Indies are aiming to win their first series of two or more matches against India in any format since 2016.

India won the preceding two-Test series 1-0 before beating the West Indies 2-1 in the ODIs.


India's Suryakumar Yadav hits a shot. AFP

Man City aim to hold off big spenders to PL crown

AFP – MANCHESTER


Manchester City players in action during a training session. Pic: Twitter/@mancity

Manchester City begin the defence of their Premier League title away to newly-promoted Burnley on Friday as Pep Guardiola's men look to hold off an ambitious group of challengers to their crown as English champions.

Arsenal and Manchester United have spent big to try and end their long wait for a league title, while Liverpool and Chelsea are expected to bounce back from last season's disappointment.

But another transfer window of major investment by English clubs has been overshadowed by the lavish sums luring even some of the Premier League's best talent to Saudi Arabia.

City still the benchmark

City not only won the Premier League for a fourth time in five years last season, but completed a treble of FA Cup and the club's first ever Champions League.

Maintaining his side's hunger is the task awaiting Guardiola, but the Catalan coach is confident City will rise to the challenge of becoming the first side to ever win four consecutive English top-flight titles.

City have lost captain Ilkay Gundogan to Barcelona and Riyad Mahrez to the exodus from Europe to Saudi.

The arrival of Croatian internationals Josko Gvardiol and Mateo Kovacic has softened that blow, but the champions have been quiet in the market compared to the chasing pack.

Arsenal were second last season and have splashed out over £200m ($255m) on Declan Rice, Kai Havertz and Jurrien Timber in an attempt to go one better this time. The Gunners saw an immediate reward by beating City on penalties to win the Community Shield on Sunday and goalkeeper Aaron Ramsdale believes victory at Wembley was an important psychological hurdle for Arsenal to clear.

United remain in limbo off the field as talks over a potential takeover of the Red Devils drag on.

But manager Erik ten Hag has still been handed his desired targets with the arrival of goalkeeper Andre Onana, midfielder Mason Mount and Denmark striker Rasmus Hojlund.

United finished third and won the League Cup in Ten Hag's first season, but have gone a decade without a Premier League title.

Liverpool are not in the Champions League for the first time in seven years after finishing fifth last season.

A midfield overhaul at Anfield has been accelerated by the departures of captain Jordan Henderson and Fabinho to Saudi Arabia with Argentine World Cup winner Alexis Mac Allister and Dominik Szoboszlai coming in.

New Chelsea boss Mauricio Pochettino has overseen a huge clearout at Stamford Bridge to trim down a bloated squad that sank to 12th last season.

Tottenham are also under new management, but the early days of Ange Postecoglou's reign have been overshadowed by the doubt over whether Harry Kane will leave to join Bayern Munich.

Luton's fairytale rise

As hundreds of millions are spent jostling for positions at the top end of the table, Luton Town are spending big just to get their 10,000 capacity stadium Kenilworth Road up to scratch for life in the top flight.

Luton have risen from the fifth-tier National League to the Premier League in just 10 seasons.

The Hatters, who begin their campaign away to Brighton, will have to wait for a first home game until at least next month after a clash with Burnley was postponed to allow extra time for stadium upgrades to be completed.

PSG Academy to kick off new season on August 27

THE PENINSULA – DOHA

The 2023-2024 season at PSG Academy will commence on August 27 running through December 16, 2023.

With over 12 locations (Education City, Duhail, The Pearl, Al Bidda, Al Khor, Al Wakrah, Barwa City, Al Sadd, West Bay, and Al Waab) PSG Academy is listed as one of the most prestigious multisport academies in Qatar, managed by a team of expert coaches and former professionals. The combination of world class facilities results in an athletic setting unmatched by any other local sports academy.

In addition to Football, Handball and Futsal, PSG Academy is introducing a new fitness program in partnership with Alter Ego, a cross functional gym specializing in high intensity interval training. The program will be available to players 12 years and over, providing them with the right platform to maximise their potential and achieve their athletic goals.

Through the season, PSG Academy coaches leverage their professional expertise to ensure that each member has the necessary tools for optimal development. The methodology focusses on creating a holistic training environment that includes positive decision making, accountability and commitment to excellence.

"Our goal is to create an environment where every member can recognise the importance of team atmosphere through sport and develop lasting relationships with their teammates and coaches," said former Paris Saint-Germain player Didier Domi.

Following the end of every Term and Camp, coaches review their players' progress, providing them with a report detailing their progress and areas to focus on to prepare for the upcoming cycle.

Enrollment for the 2023-2024 season is now open and we encourage players who are passionate about sports to get their registrations in early.

Registration details for the 2023-2024 Season can be found at psgacademy.qa (registration link: https://register.psgacademy.qa/login.php and WhatsApp: 33062115).

Venus Williams loses to Madison Keys in Montreal

AP – MONTREAL

Venus Williams lost to fellow American Madison Keys on Monday night, falling 6-2, 7-5 in the opening round of the National Bank Open.

The 43-year-old Williams, a seven-time Grand Slam champion, dropped to 2-4 in six career matches against the 28-year-old Keys.

The 16th-ranked Keys broke Williams twice in the first set. She recorded two more breaks in the second and held on for the win.

Keys, who also is playing with fellow American Jennifer Brady in the women's doubles tournament, now faces Italian Jasmine Paolini in the round of 32.

Czech Republic's Karolina Pliskova posted a 6-3, 6-7 (8), 6-2 win over China's Lin Zhu in the opening round.

Rebecca Marino of Vancouver was eliminated by Britain's Katie Boulter, 6-3, 6-1. Pliskova, ranked No. 23 in the world, had 11 aces and seven double-faults. She converted five of 16 break points.

Zhu had two aces and eight double-faults. She broke on two of her three opportunities. As the second set began, Boulter continued to assert her dominance, breaking Marino's serve and building a 3-0 lead. She clinched the straight-sets victory in 65 minutes.

Boulter had an impressive performance at the Rothesay Open in June, earning her first career WTA singles title. Next up is a match against Coco Gauff.