**SPORT ↘14**

AL BIDDA SC PARTNER WITH AJAX TO DEVELOP CLUB'S YOUTH PROGRAMMES



**SPORT ↘15**

US SPRINT KING NOAH LYLES CRUISES INTO 200M SEMI-FINALS IN TREBLE GOLD BID

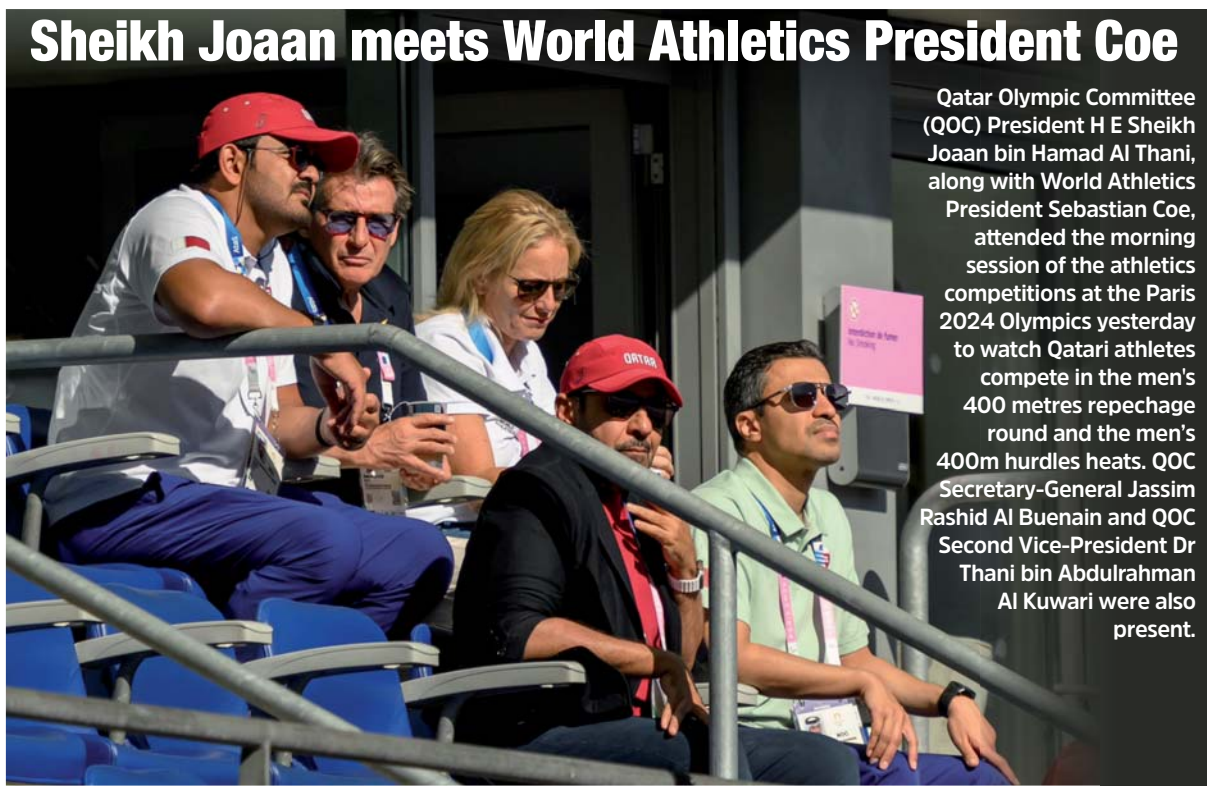


The Peninsula **SPORT**

**TUESDAY** 6 AUGUST 2024 | **16**




## Sheikh Joaan meets World Athletics President Coe



Qatar Olympic Committee (QOC) President H E Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad Al Thani, along with World Athletics President Sebastian Coe, attended the morning session of the athletics competitions at the Paris 2024 Olympics yesterday to watch Qatari athletes compete in the men's 400 metres repechage round and the men's 400m hurdles heats. QOC Secretary-General Jassim Rashid Al Buenain and QOC Second Vice-President Dr Thani bin Abdulrahman Al Kuwari were also present.



## *Sheikh Joaan meets World Triathlon chief*

Qatar Olympic Committee (QOC) President H E Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad Al Thani yesterday met with World Triathlon President Marisol Casado, on the sidelines of the Paris 2024 Olympic Games. QOC Secretary-General Jassim Rashid Al Buenain, and Secretary General of World Triathlon Antonio Arimany also attended the meeting in which they discussed areas of development and mutual cooperation.

# Sublime Younousse and Tijan storm into quarter-finals

**CHINTHANA WASALA**
**THE PENINSULA**

**DOHA:** Qatar's Cherif Younousse and Cherif Tijan yesterday maintained their top form to storm into the quarter-finals of the Olympic beach volleyball competition for the second time in a row.

The Tokyo 2020 Games bronze medalists dominated Chilean cousins Marco and Esteban Grimalt to clinch a 21–14, 21–13 victory in the Round of 16.

The victory in the last Round of 16 clash under lights at the picturesque venue next to the Eiffel Tower, also meant that Younousse and Ahmed stay perfect in Paris.

Younousse and Ahmed barely encountered stiff resistance from the former Pan American and South American champions in yesterday's 38-minute affair, which turned out to be the biggest win margin among all Round of 16 clashes.

The Qatari duo's opponents in the Wednesday's quarter-final will be Miles Partain and Andy Benesh of the United States, who secured a commanding victory over Italy's Samuele Cottafava and Paolo Nicolai earlier yesterday.

As the youngest Olympic men's beach volleyball team in US history, Partain and Benesh overcame the seasoned Italian pair, which included Tokyo Games silver winner Nicolai, in straight sets with scores of 21-17 and 21-18.

In the morning session, Spanish veterans Pablo Herrera and Adrian Gavira also filled in a spot in the men's quarter-finals.

Herrera and Adrian Gavira, ranked 17th in the world, advanced to the Olympic quarter-finals for the first time in their fourth Olympic appearance, recording a straight-set win (23-21, 21-18) against 10th-seeded Michal Bryl and Bartosz Losiak of Poland in a thrilling encounter.

Next up for the Spaniards are the reigning Olympic champions Anders Mol and Christian Sorum of Norway, who later clinched a strong win over USA's Miles Evans and Chase Budinger.

Mol and Sorum, seeded No.2 at the Paris Games, outplayed the 19th-seeded Evans and Budinger in straight sets (21-16, 21-14) with little difficulty in under 39 minutes.

The quarter-finals take place today and tomorrow.



Qatar's Ahmed Tijan (right) digs the ball beside Cherif Younousse during their Round of 16 match against Chile. AFP

# Samba advances in 400m hurdles as Ismail books semi-finals berth

**FAWAD HUSSAIN**
**THE PENINSULA**

**DOHA:** Qatar's Abderrahman Samba cleared first obstacle in search for his maiden Olympic medal as he reached the semi-finals of the men's 400m hurdles at Stade de France in Paris yesterday.

The Asian Games gold medalist secured third place in his heat, clocking 48.35 secs to finish behind reigning Olympic champion Karsten Warholm of Norway, who topped the heat with a time of 47.57 secs. Frenchman Clement Ducos recorded a personal best of 47.69 secs to take second place in the heat. The semi-finals will take place tomorrow.

"The semi-finals will be tougher in presence of a strong field that includes several Olympics and World Championships medalists. I am focused on reaching the final to step closer to my goal," said Samba, who is targeting an Olympic victory.

Qatar participated in the 400m hurdles with three athletes marking the first time ever an Asian nation was represented by three runners in the discipline at Olympics.

Also yesterday, Bassem Hemeida registered his season's best of 49.82 secs but could only secure fifth place in his heat, won by America's Tokyo silver medallist Rai Benjamin in 48.82 secs.

Hemeida will now take part in today's repechage, hoping for a top-two finish in his heat to qualify for the semi-finals. The third Qatari athlete in the event Ismail Doudai Abakar did not finish his heat.

Meanwhile, Qatari sprinter Ammar Ismail [Yahia Ibrahim] yesterday displayed another impressive show of pace to reach the semi-finals of men's 400m.

Ismail, who clocked a personal best of 44.66 secs in heats on Sunday, topped his repechage heat with a time of 44.77 secs to advance in the competition at Stade de France.

The semi-final will take place today.

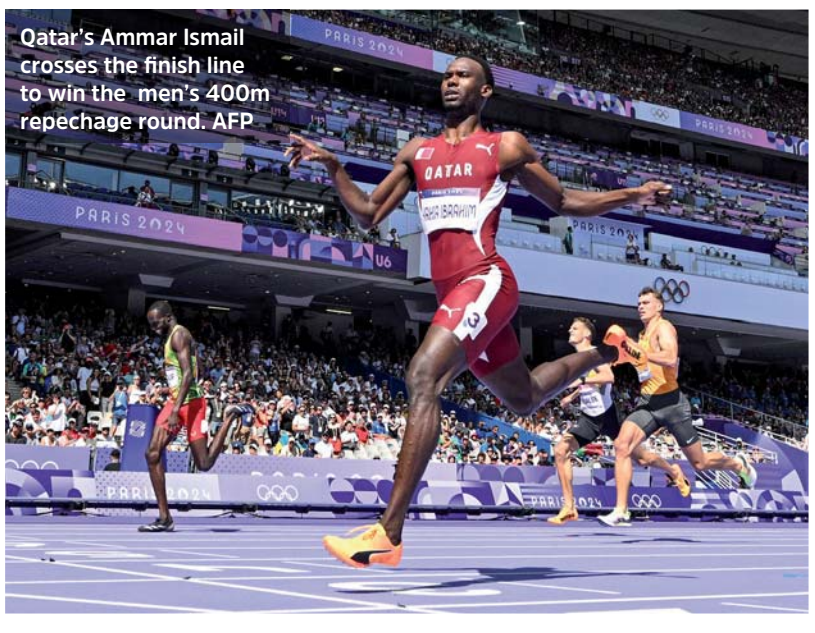
"I will look to improve my time and qualify for the final," he said.

Ismail has several accolades to his credit including the 2022 GCC Games, 2023 West Asian Athletics Championships and 2023 Asian Indoor Athletics Championships gold medals.

Tomorrow, Qatar's Olympic hero Mutaz Barshim will start his title defence in the men's high jump with middle-distance runner Abubakar Hayder also starting his campaign in the 800 meters the same day.




Qatar's Abderrahman Samba (centre) in action during the men's 400m hurdles heats, yesterday.




Qatar's Ammar Ismail crosses the finish line to win the men's 400m repechage round. AFP




Qatar's Bassem Hemeida in action yesterday.

**PARIS 2024 MEDALS TABLE**

| | NOC | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | China | 21 | 18 | 14 | 53 |
| 2 | United States | 20 | 30 | 28 | 78 |
| 3 | Australia | 13 | 11 | 8 | 32 |
| 4 | France | 12 | 16 | 18 | 46 |
| 5 | Great Britain | 12 | 13 | 17 | 42 |
| 6 | South Korea | 11 | 8 | 7 | 26 |
| 7 | Japan | 10 | 5 | 11 | 26 |
| 8 | Italy | 9 | 10 | 7 | 26 |
| 9 | Netherlands | 7 | 6 | 4 | 17 |
| 10 | Germany | 7 | 5 | 4 | 16 |
| 11 | Canada | 5 | 4 | 8 | 17 |
| 12 | New Zealand | 3 | 5 | 1 | 9 |
| 13 | Hungary | 3 | 3 | 2 | 8 |
| 13 | Sweden | 3 | 3 | 2 | 8 |
| 15 | Romania | 3 | 3 | 1 | 7 |
| 16 | Ireland | 3 | 0 | 3 | 6 |
| 17 | Brazil | 2 | 4 | 5 | 11 |
| 18 | Ukraine | 2 | 2 | 3 | 7 |
| 19 | Croatia | 2 | 1 | 2 | 5 |
| 20 | Belgium | 2 | 0 | 3 | 5 |

## American Allman wins women's discus gold

**PARIS:** American Valarie Allman defended her women's Olympic discus throw title in Paris yesterday.

Allman managed a best of 69.50 metres, with China's Feng Bin claiming silver in 67.51m and Croatia's Sandra Elkasevic taking bronze (67.51).

After winning the Olympic title in Tokyo, Allman claimed two world medals – bronze at the 2022 championships in Oregon and silver at last year's event in Budapest. But the American is unbeaten this year and carried her form through to the final in the French capital in some style.

France's veteran thrower Melina Robert-Michon, in a record-equalling seventh Olympic Games for a track and field athlete, finished 12th and last with a best effort of 57.03m. The 45-year-old was a flag bearer for the host nation at the opening ceremony and hopes to continue to next year's worlds in Tokyo. — ***AFP***





Noah Lyles (front) competes in the men's 200m heat yesterday.

## Lyles cruises into 200m semi-finals in treble gold bid

**PARIS:** Noah Lyles, fresh from winning Olympic 100m gold, cruised his 200m heat at the Stade de France yesterday to keep his bid for a sprint treble alive.

Lyles, who won the 100m in a photo-finish from Jamaican Kishane Thompson in 9.79 seconds, topped his 200m heat in 20.19sec.

The triple world 200m champion had a slow start but as soon as he hit the bend he looked in total control.

The semi-finals are scheduled for 1802 GMT tomorrow, with the final slated for 1830 on Thursday.

Also going through were fellow 100m finalists Letsile Tebogo of Botswana (20.10sec) and American Kenny Bednarek (19.96) as heat winners.

A third American, Erriyon Knighton, a silver and bronze medallist at the past two world championships, topped another heat in 19.99sec.

And Canada's Andre de Grasse, defending champion and silver medallist at the Rio Games, also qualified, clocking 20.20sec behind Lyles.

South Africa's 400m world record holder and gold medallist in Rio, Wayde van Niekerk, went through after finishing third in his heat, won by Liberia's Joseph Fahnbulleh. — ***AFP***

# D'Amato triumphs as Biles falls in 'weird, awkward' balance beam final

**PARIS:** Alice D'Amato gave Italy a historic Olympic gymnastics gold as Simone Biles joined the fallen in what the US great called a "weird and awkward" balance beam final yesterday.

Biles, who led the US women to team gold before claiming the all-around and vault titles, was among a series of finalists to fall off the unforgiving apparatus, finishing fifth.

Biles closed out her Paris Games campaign with a floor exercise silver behind Brazilian Rebeca Andrade, and put a philosophical spin on an unexpected final day of competition.

"Obviously (it) wasn't my best performances, but at the end of the day, whoever medalled medalled and that's what's so exciting, because you just never know with gymnastics," Biles said.

D'Amato, with a score of 14.366, celebrated a first-ever women's gymnastics gold for Italy, who also saw Manila Esposito take bronze behind China's Zhou Yuqin.

"Today, I was a little bit lucky," D'Amato said with a laugh. "I tried to face up to the situation, considering that there were mistakes in the final.

"It was a great achievement for me to be in the balance beam final in the first place, and it was incredible to perform such a great routine at the end."

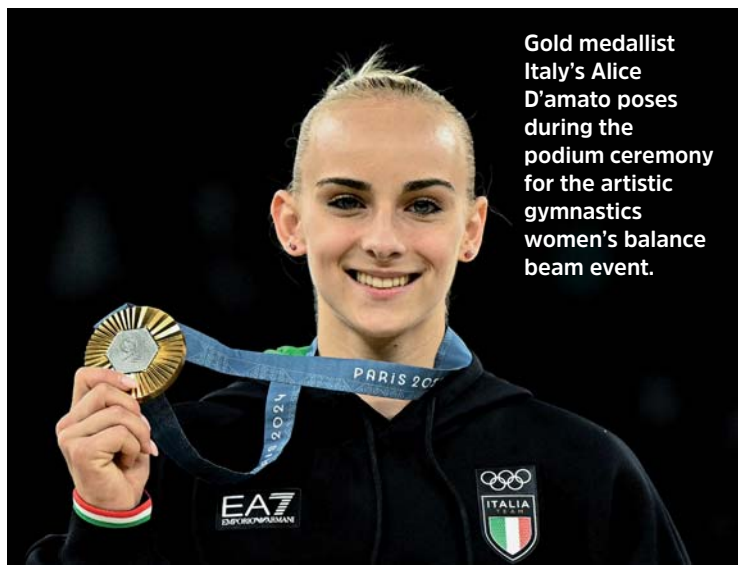
Biles found the atmosphere during the beam final "really weird and awkward," saying a lack of music made random noises such as phones and cameras stand out.

"None of us liked it," Biles said.

The first three finalists made big mistakes on the 10cm-wide beam.

China's world silver medallist Zhou lost her balance and had to grab onto the beam to avoid a fall.

American Sunisa Lee and Brazilian Julia Soares both fell, Lee taking a hard fall onto the wooden beam when her foot slipped at the end of what would have been an impressive aerial series.


Gold medallist Italy's Alice D'amato poses during the podium ceremony for the artistic gymnastics women's balance beam event.

Italy's Esposito had a big wobble, and Romania's Sabrina Maneca-Voinea fell twice.

D'Amato had a couple of minor wobbles in an otherwise impressive routine to seize first place just before Biles competed.

The US superstar, again greeted rapturously by Bercy Arena fans, made a confident start, but she somehow went off-line on an aerial series and slipped off, drawing a collective gasp from the crowd.

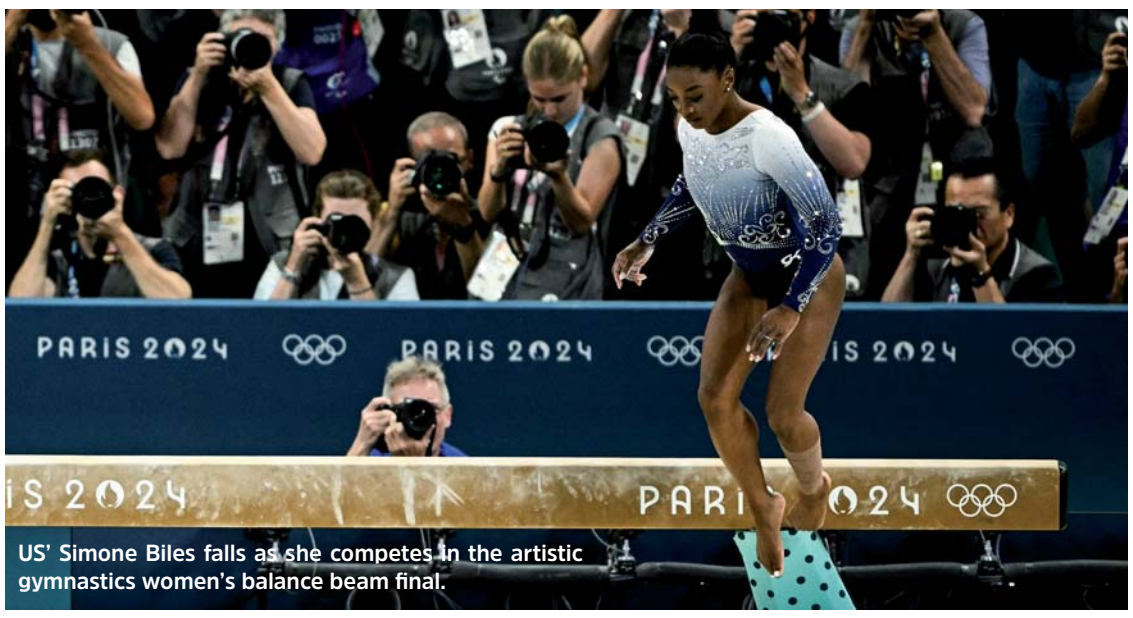
Lee said she and Biles were both put off by crowd members trying to quiet others who were cheering during the beam competition -- including competitors trying to encourage their teammates.

"You could feel the tension in the room," Lee said. "Me and Simone were like, 'Why are they shushing?' "She came off, and she was like 'I don't know why they were shushing in the middle of my routine'."

Biles then had to wait an agonisingly long time for her score of 13.100.

"Beating Simone and Sunisa was only possible because both of them fell off the beam," D'Amato said. "But this is how a beam final works.

"The one who can best withstand the pressure, use it to her advantage and perform the best exercises will win. "Today, this person was me." — ***AFP***



US' Simone Biles falls as she competes in the artistic gymnastics women's balance beam final.

# Sweden's record-breaker Duplantis retains Olympic pole vault crown

**PARIS:** Sweden's Armand Duplantis improved his own world record en route to retaining his Olympic pole vault title in Paris yesterday.

In a sensational finish to the fifth day of track and field at the Stade de France, Duplantis sailed over the bar raised to 6.25 metres to rapturous applause from a 69,000-capacity crowd.

It bettered by 1cm his own previous best of 6.24m set at the Xiamen Diamond League meet in April.

Remarkably it was the ninth time the US-born Swede had broken the record.

In the competition before the procession, American Sam Kendricks won silver with a best of 5.95m, Greece's Emmanouil Karalis taking bronze (5.90) on countback.

The gold meant Duplantis became the first man to retain the pole vault title since American Bob Richards in 1952 and 1956.



Winner Sweden's Armand Duplantis celebrates after setting the new world record yesterday.

As soon as he crashed down on the landing mat after his third and final successful attempt at 6.25m, Duplantis bounced away on the track to embrace family and friends in the stands.

Draped in the Swedish flag and with Abba's "Dancing Queen" booming around the stadium, Duplantis made an emotional lap of the track.

The music halted as he leaned down to ring the victory bell, capping yet another exceptional display from the irrepressible 24-year-old. — ***AFP***

# Spain beat Morocco to reach Olympic men's football final

**MARSEILLE:** Substitute Juanlu Sanchez struck a late winner as Spain came from behind to beat Morocco 2-1 yesterday and reach the final of the Olympic men's football.

Morocco had led in the semi-final through a Soufiane Rahimi penalty towards the end of the first half at the Stade Velodrome in Marseille. However, Barcelona's Fermin Lopez equalised midway through the second period and then set up Sevilla right-back Sanchez to fire in the winner.

It is Spain's second consecutive appearance in the final of the Olympic men's football. They had to settle for silver three years ago in Tokyo after losing in extra time to Brazil.

Spain, who are chasing a second gold after triumphing in Barcelona in 1992, go to Paris for the final on Friday against either hosts France or Egypt. Morocco can still claim a first medal by winning the bronze medal match, which will take place on Thursday in Nantes.

Morocco had impressed on their run to the semi-finals and looked on course to shock Spain when they went ahead in the 37th minute thanks to the prolific Rahimi.

Morocco were awarded a penalty following a VAR check for a foul by Pablo Barrios on Amir Richardson in the box, and Rahimi stepped up to send the goalkeeper the wrong way from the spot.

Lopez, a member of Spain's triumphant Euro 2024 squad who scored twice in the Olympic quarter-final against Japan, pounced to snatch possession when the ball broke loose in the box and fired low into the net to make it 1-1.

With the prospect of extra time looming, Spain won it in the 85th minute as Lopez found Sanchez bounding into the area, and he sent a shot low into the far corner. — ***AFP***




### *Chebet wins gold*

Kenya's Beatrice Chebet celebrates after winning the women's 5000m final of the athletics event at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games at Stade de France in Saint-Denis, north of Paris, yesterday. She easily defeated Dutchwoman Sifan Hassan to end the defending champion's dreams of a long-distance treble. Chebet accelerated past Faith Kipyegon down the home straight to win in 14min 28.56sec but her compatriot was swiftly disqualified for a shove in the closing laps. AFP

# Britain break women's team sprint world record

**PARIS:** Britain stormed to the first track cycling gold of the Paris Olympics in the women's team sprint yesterday, with the world record shattered five times in the session.

The trio of Emma Finucane, Sophie Capewell and Katy Marchant surged around the Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines velodrome in a new world best of 45.186sec to beat New Zealand, with Germany earning bronze.

It was the first gold for Britain in the event since it was added to the Olympic programme at London in 2012.

Their win capped an extraordinary day on which the world record was repeatedly lowered.


FROM LEFT: Britain's Katy Marchant, Emma Finucane and Sophie Capewell celebrate their gold medal yesterday.

Britain first smashed China's old mark in qualifying, crossing the line in 45.472.

But the record fell again to Germany in round one and minutes later New Zealand toppled it once more before Britain reclaimed the mark when they clocked 45.338.

With the title at stake, Britain again blazed to a new world best in the final showdown against New Zealand, with Finucane riding a storming last lap to make history.

While the velodrome in Paris is the normal standardised length, it is wider than usual, offering more momentum to the riders, particularly sprinters, with many tipping world-record times ahead of the event.

Two-time defending champions China only finished sixth.

It is the first time at an Olympics that the women's sprint has featured three riders, matching the men, working together to post the fastest time over three laps (750 metres).

In previous Games, there were only two riders over 500 metres. — ***AFP***

# Qatar Stars League gears up for new OSL season

THE PENINSULA

**DOHA:** As part of arrangements being made ahead of the start of 2024-2025 season Ooredoo Stars League (OSL), the Qatar Stars League (QSL) held technical meeting for the tournament's first leg at its Headquarters in Al Bidda Tower yesterday.

The meeting was attended by QSL Competitions Department Director Ahmed Salman Al Adsani, Head of Football Operations Ahmed Abdullah Al Sayed, representative of Qatar Football Association's Referees Department Abdullah Al Balooshi, and club representatives.

Al Adsani welcomed all attendees and representatives of club companies, and praised the continuous co-operation between QSL and clubs in order to achieve the goals and aspirations during the new OLS season, and wished everyone success.

The meeting discussed instructions and guidelines related to organisational matters and procedures for match day operations, including entry permits, access areas and players' entrances. The importance of attending the stadium on the specified match dates was stressed. Official kits of each team (main and reserve) were also confirmed during the meeting.



QSL Competitions Department Director Ahmed Salman Al Adsani, Head of Football Operations Ahmed Abdullah Al Sayed, representative of Qatar Football Association's Referees Department Abdullah Al Balooshi, and club representatives during the meeting, yesterday.




QSL Sales, Marketing and Communication Executive Director Hassan Rabiah Al Kuwari (left) and Rafeeq Al Darb company CEO Abdullah bin Thamer Al Hemeidi during the sponsorship signiing ceremony.




QSL CEO Hani Taleb Ballan (left) and Doha Bus company CEO Khalid Al Suwaidi exchange documents after the two parties extended the sponsorship agreement, yesterday.

### QSL, Rafeeq Al Darb company extend partnership

Qatar Stars League (QSL) has announced the renewal of sponsorship agreement with Rafeeq Al Darb, one of the leading companies in the State of Qatar providing delivery services and everything related to daily needs.

Commenting on the agreement, QSL Sales, Marketing and Communication Executive Director Hassan Rabiah Al Kuwari said, "In line with the plan to develop the work related to marketing and sales aspects and aligning with continued joint co-operation with one of the leading Qatari companies providing services, we're pleased to announce the renewal of sponsorship agreement with Rafeeq Al Darb company, which will continue with us for the second season in a row. In this regard, I thank the company's Board of Directors and staff for their support and co-operation with us, and we look forward to achieve common aspirations and goals. I wish them more success."

Rafeeq Al Darb company CEO Abdullah bin Thamer Al Hemeidi said, "We're very happy in Rafeeq App that we were an important and new factor in marketing one of the strongest domestic football seasons in our beloved country Qatar for many years, through joint efforts in our partnership with QSL to achieve the required level. The most beautiful result was the final outcome at the end of an exciting league won by Al Sadd and a wonderful conclusion to Qatar Cup 2024 won by Al Wakrah. As partners in these two tournaments as a delivery sponsor, we, at Rafeeq Al Darb company, are keen to repeat this successful experience by all standards. Accordingly, we're proud to announce the renewal of our partnership with QSL for the 2024-2025 season, and we're fully confident that we'll contribute once again to the success of the football system and make the fans happy in a new competitive journey for the league and Qatar Cup, so stay tuned for our new appearance. And we thank all our partners for their trust and, in turn, we're committed to present another exceptional season."

### QSL renews sponsorship agreement with Doha Bus company

The Qatar Stars League (QSL) and Doha Bus company announced the renewal of sponsorship agreement between the two entities, during a ceremony held at the QSL Headquarters in Al Bidda Tower, yesterday.

Doha Bus is a distinguished Qatari company, which aims to provide a professional experience full of fun and excitement between a number of tourist points. It provides tourism programmes and services with a distinctive modern and entertaining concept in order to introduce the architectural, historical and cultural landmarks of the State of Qatar.

In his comments, QSL CEO Hani Taleb Ballan said, "In continuation of our partnership and strong relationship with one of the distinguished Qatari companies in the field of tourism, we're pleased today to announce the renewal of sponsorship agreement between QSL and Doha Bus company. We're proud of its role in tourism and educational programmes, and its partnership with QSL. I take this opportunity to extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to the company's Board of Directors, wishing them more success and good luck, and we look forward towards strengthening our co-operation in the future."

Doha Bus company CEO Khalid Al Suwaidi said, "On the occasion of signing the league partnership agreement for the upcoming 2024-2025 season, Doha Bus Adventures extends its heartfelt thanks to QSL and its entire team for their exceptional efforts in promoting the league and Qatar football. At Doha Bus Adventures, we're dedicated to promote Qatar as a premier tourist and sports destination, placing it prominently on the map of regional and international events. We eagerly anticipate a long-term partnership, working together to achieve our shared goals. We look forward to a wonderful and successful football season by all standards." **(QSL)**

# PSG sign Portugal teenager Neves




**PARIS:** Benfica's 19-year-old Portugal midfielder Joao Neves has signed for Paris Saint-Germain until 2029, the French champions announced yesterday.

According to media reports, the deal is worth around €70m ($77m) and includes the return of 26-year-old international midfielder Renato Sanches to Benfica on loan.

"I'm very proud to be joining Paris Saint-Germain, a very ambitious club," said Neves in a statement released by PSG, which described him as a "hard worker, a complete and versatile player".

Neves, who has nine caps and played two group matches for Portugal at Euro 2024, is expected to add creativity to the PSG midfield, alongside Vitinha, Fabian Ruiz and Warren Zaire-Emery.

"Joao is one of the most talented players in Portugal and in the world," said PSG's Qatari president Nasser Al Khelaifi.

Neves is the Paris club's second summer recruit after Russian goalkeeper Matvey Safonov. — ***AFP***

# West Ham complete move for Germany striker Fuellkrug

**LONDON:** West Ham signed Germany striker Niclas Fuellkrug from Borussia Dortmund on Monday for a reported fee of £27.5m.

Fuellkrug scored 16 goals in his sole season at Dortmund to help the German giants reach last season's Champions League final.

The 31-year-old also netted twice despite starting all five matches on the bench as Germany reached the quarter-finals of Euro 2024 on home soil.

A battering ram of a centre-forward, Fuellkrug is a huge fan favourite in his homeland, with many calling for him to start ahead of Arsenal's Kai Havertz at the Euros. — ***AFP***

# Al Bidda SC partner with Ajax to develop club's youth programmes

THE PENINSULA

**DOHA:** Al Bidda SC has signed a long-term partnership agreement with Ajax to manage and train their club Youth Program, utilizing its worldwide renowned philosophy, culture, and methodology. The Club Youth Program educates children and teens from the age of 8 until the age of 19 years old.

Al Bidda SC Vice Chairman Sheikh Hamad bin Mohamed bin Fahad Al Thani said, "With this partnership, we are setting a strong and solid foundation towards creating the best local club Football Youth Academy in Qatar. This, in turn, will help us foster great talents who will move up to join our first team. The Ajax academy is one of the best, if not the best, in the world. They have been doing it for a long time, and they have produced global talents and legends. Indeed, this would have a very positive impact on our players, coaches, administrators at the club, and, of course, for the development of Qatari football."

Ajax Technical Director Alex Kroes said: "We are delighted to expand our international football network through this partnership. The global interest in Ajax's football expertise is enormous and we are convinced that, in Al Bidda SC, we have found a partner with the same vision as Ajax. In the coming years, we will make every effort to set up a strong youth academy, which should ultimately ensure a constant flow of youth players to their first team. It is also great that we can implement our football philosophy on a broader scale. We have noticed a huge demand for this and are looking forward to these activities."

Ronald De Boer, former Netherlands star and now Ajax A1 assistant manager, who was also present on the occasion, while speaking of the partnership said Ajax were keen to work with the youth of Al Bidda SC.




FROM LEFT: Al Bidda SC's Managing Director Ghassan Oueijan, Al Bidda SC Vice Chairman Sheikh Hamad bin Mohamed bin Fahad Al Thani, Ajax Technical Director Alex Kroes, and Ajax A1 Assistant Manager and Former Netherlands star Ronald de Boer hold Al Bidda club jerseys after announcing the partnership at the Stadium 974, in Doha, yesterday.

"When I came here, I saw football was already very popular, and Qatar had a vision to improve, and it doesn't stop even after the FIFA World Cup. Sports is a big part of life here.

"The broader objective is to ensure that even those who don't become professional football players learn valuable lessons from their experiences. This will help them in their future endeavors, making them better prepared for whatever path they choose. Our ultimate goal is to help young people achieve their dreams, whether in football or other fields."

As part of the partnership, Ajax Academy trainers and coaches will be directly conducting all Al Bidda SC youth training and development programs starting immediately.

Currently playing in Qatar Second Division League, Al Bidda SC was established in 2015. The club started as an amateur team playing in the Second Division and even winning the Division Cup in 2022 and being a finalist in 2023. In July 2023, the club was granted full membership in the Qatar Football Association Cup (QFA) and played its 2023-2024 season as a full member.

The club won the Qatari League Cup in 2024. With the new partnership, Ajax continue to form talented young players into top football players. The Academy currently operates in Pachuca (Mexico), Gamba Osaka (Japan), Athletico Paranaense (Brazil), and Sharjah FC (UAE) and will soon start providing its expertise in Qatar in the form of training programs, local, regional, and international competitions.

# Former England batsman Thorpe dies aged 55

**LONDON:** Former England batsman and coach Graham Thorpe has died at the age of 55, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) announced yesterday.

Thorpe won 100 Test caps beteen 1993 and 2005 and scored 16 centuries during a stellar England career and was regarded as one of the best batters of his generation.

In total he scored 6,744 Test runs for England at an average of 44.66 and also appeared in 82 one-day internationals.

Alongside his international exploits he enjoyed a 17-year spell with his county side Surrey.

After retiring in 2005, he transitioned into coaching, working with the England international teams in various roles between 2010 and 2022.



Graham Thorpe

"There seem to be no appropriate words to describe the deep shock we feel at Graham's death," the ECB said in a statement.

"More than one of England's finest-ever batters, he was a beloved member of the cricket family and revered by fans all over the world.

"His skill was unquestioned, and his abilities and achievements across a 13-year international career brought so much happiness to his teammates and England and Surrey CCC supporters alike.

"Later, as a coach, he guided the best England men's talent to some incredible victories across all formats of the game." After leaving his role with England following defeat to Australia in the 2021-2022 Ashes series, Thorpe became head coach of Afghanistan.

In May, the Professional Cricketers' Association revealed Thorpe had fallen seriously ill with an unclear diagnosis. — ***AFP***

# Sri Lanka to tour England for three-match Test series

**COLOMBO:** Sri Lanka will tour England in August and September for a three-match Test series, the cricket board announced yesterday.

The 1st Test will be from August 21 in Manchester, with the 2nd at Lord's from August 29. The final will be from September 6 at the Oval, it said.

The tour is part of the ICC World Test Championship, Sri Lanka Cricket said.

Sri Lanka was last in England for a Test series after a three-match tournament, which the hosts won 2-0 in 2016.

Since then, England has toured Sri Lanka twice in 2018 for a three-match series, and in 2021 played two matches.

England won all five games. — ***AFP***