SPORT ↘14
RAIN HALTS BANGLADESH VICTORY BID AFTER HASAN AND NAHID DEMOLISH PAKISTAN



SPORT ↘15
'GREAT MOMENT' FOR MBAPPE AS HE SCORES FIRST LA LIGA GOALS FOR REAL MADRID



The Peninsula SPORT
TUESDAY 3 SEPTEMBER 2024 | 16



Qatar rev up preparations for UAE clash as tickets sale receives overwhelming response

FAWAD HUSSAIN
THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Qatar entered the final phase of the preparations for their opening match of the third round of Asian Qualifiers for FIFA 2026 World Cup against the United Arab Emirates at the Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium, which is expected to operate at full capacity on Thursday.

Within a few days from the start of ticket sales, 75 percent of seats have already been secured by the fans for the highly-anticipated clash at the 45000-capacity venue, the Qatar Football Association (QFA) announced yesterday.

The team's training camp that started last week under the supervision of head coach Marquez Lopez has picked top gear as the two-time Asian champions look to emulate their performance of the second round in which they stayed unbeaten topping their group to advance in the qualifiers.

Qatar will need a top-two finish in their group to earn direct qualification for the World Cup and avoid the following stages in the Asian Qualifiers. They will also face Asian giants Iran, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and North Korea. Lopez's side will take North Korea in their second match on September 10 in Laos but currently their focus is on the opening match against the neighbouring side.

"All our focus is on getting the three points from our opening match of this crucial round. We respect UAE which is a strong side and we will need to give our best against them," Qatar's Jassem Gabir had said during a training session open to media at the weekend.



Qatar players in action during a training session at the Khalifa International Stadium.

Within a few days from the start of ticket sales, 75 percent of seats have already been secured by the fans for the highly-anticipated clash at the 45000-capacity venue, the Qatar Football Association (QFA) announced yesterday.

"We will give our all-out effort to make our fans happy on our home ground."

Qatar squad mostly comprises players who helped the side retain their Asian Cup crown at home earlier this year.

Lopez's blend of experienced and young players includes seasoned forwards Almoez Ali and Akram Afif along with the likes of youngsters Tamim Mansour and Yusuf Abdurisag.

Meanwhile, the organisational preparations are also in full swing to host the game in a befitting manner. Special arrangements have been planned for fans with QFA's Director of Marketing and Communications Khaled Mubarak Al Kuwari saying: "Our fans are always influential in the stadium and there is a surprise awaiting them in the stands."

"Everyone is a partner with us in our journey to the 2026 World Cup. We achieved large audience attendance rates in previous Al Annabi matches and the scene will be repeated," he said in a recent statement.

The QFA also launched a fan initiative aiming to enhance the roles of Qatar supporters in their quest to qualify for the World Cup.



Qatar's Akram Afif in action.

Medvedev into fifth US Open quarter-final

NEW YORK: Former champion Daniil Medvedev reached his fifth US Open quarter-final in six years yesterday with a straight-sets victory over unseeded Nuno Borges.

Medvedev, the 2021 winner in New York, outclassed Borges, who was bidding to become the first Portuguese man to make a Grand Slam quarter-final, 6-0, 6-1, 6-3.

Russia's Medvedev will meet Jannik Sinner for a place in the semi-finals if the world number one Italian defeats Tommy Paul of the United States in his last-16 clash in the night session on Arthur Ashe Stadium.

"I played Tommy twice this season. I beat him once but I feel as if he should have beaten me both times," said Medvedev.

"I've had unbelievable battles with Jannik. It will be very physical for both of us."

Medvedev is the only former champion left in the tournament after the shock exits of Novak Djokovic and Carlos Alcaraz.

Earlier, Jack Draper became the first British man since Andy Murray in 2016 to reach the US Open quarter-finals by seeing off Tomas Machac of the Czech Republic.

The 22-year-old left-hander came through 6-3, 6-1, 6-2 and has yet to drop a set at the tournament where he made his breakthrough in 2023 by reaching the fourth round.

Draper has only dropped served once over his four matches, winning 47 of 48 service games and saving 20 of 21 break points.

"I lost on Louis Armstrong Stadium in the same round last year so it was nice to come back and do better this year," said Draper.

The British player hailed Murray, the former world number one and 2012 US Open champion, who retired from the sport following the Paris Olympics. The 25th seed goes on to face either Alex de Minaur or Jordan Thompson who clashed in an all-Australian battle. — ***AFP***

SEE ALSO PAGE 15

Ali finishes sixth in 100m final, prepares for 800m contest

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Qatar's wheelchair racer Ali Arshad ended his campaign in the men's 100m T34 event at the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games, settling for sixth position at Stade de France yesterday.

Ali, who clocked a personal best of 15.20 secs in the qualifying round on Sunday, finished the final in 15.42 secs with Thailand's Chaiwat Rattana clinching the gold medal with a time of 14.76 secs – his personal best mark and area record.

Tunisia's world record holder Walid Ktila claimed silver medal in 15.14 secs while Canada's Austin Smeenk took the bronze after clocking 15.19 secs.

Australia's Rheed Mccracken (15.31 secs) and UAE's Mohamad Othman (15.40 secs) respectively completed the top five in yesterday's final.

Ali's time was better than Finland's Henry Manni (15.64 secs) and China's Wenhao Gong (15.67 secs), who finished in seventh and eighth positions respectively.

The Qatar athlete will now look for his maiden Paralympic medal in the 800m T34 event which will start on Friday.

"I am overall satisfied with my performance in the 100m because it was a tough field," Ali said after the event.

"I am hoping to be better in the 800m event as I have gained good experience now."

Al Annabi's main hope Sara Masud will begin her medal hunt in the women's shot put on Thursday.



Qatars' Ali Arshad (right) competes in the men's 100m T34 final during the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games.

Al Tamimi leads Qatar's charge in star-studded Qatar Classic

CHINTHANA WASALA
THE PENINSULA

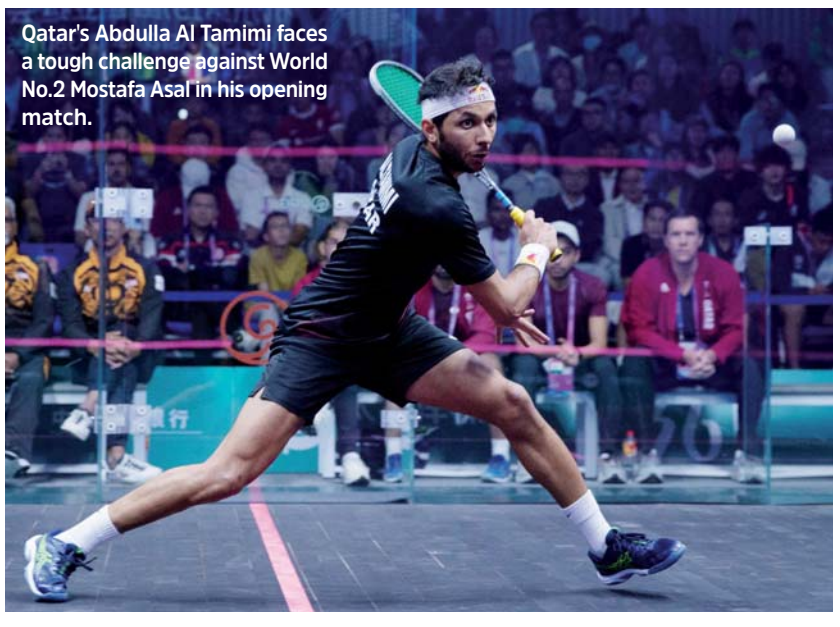
DOHA: Abdulla Al Tamimi will lead Qatar's charge at the star-studded Qatar QTerminals Classic 2024 when the premier PSA and WSA World Series event returns to Doha on September 30.

Qatar's top-ranked player Al Tamimi, making his ninth appearance in the Qatar Classic, faces a tough challenge in the first round against No.3 seed Mostafa Asal, the draw for the prestigious tournament revealed.

Al Tamimi, who fell to Tarek Momen in the third round last year, will be looking to go higher this time. Still, the recent British Open champion Asal who reached the semi-finals in 2022, will also aim to impress on his return to Doha after skipping the event in 2023.

World's No.1 ranked players, Ali Farag and Nour El Sherbini – both from Egypt – headline the line-ups in the men's and women's tournaments this time at the Khalifa International Tennis and Squash Complex.

The defending men's champion Farag, aiming to match British former World No.1 Mohamed Elshorbagy with a fourth title in Doha, will be up against a stellar field that includes almost all the top-ranked players in the PSA tour.



Qatar's Abdulla Al Tamimi faces a tough challenge against World No.2 Mostafa Asal in his opening match.

Already a three-time champion of the Qatar Classic, Farag, begins play against India's Ramit Tandon in the opening round. Meanwhile, his opening match will be Qatari wildcard entry Salem Al Malki.

The draw also features New Zealand's Paul Coll, the World No.3, who is in immaculate form after clinching four titles, including two Platinum level events and one Gold level event. Coll, a two-time Qatar Classic finalist and one of only two players who managed to defeat World No.1 Ali Farag multiple times last season, will start his campaign against Scotland's Greg Lobban.

Stellar women's field for Doha

Meanwhile, the women's side is also no short of global stars.

Defending champion Hania El Hammamy is aiming to make a strong comeback at the Qatar Q-Terminals Classic as she looks to regain her top form following a challenging season last year. Currently ranked No. 3 in the world, El Hammamy will take on USA's Sabrina Sobhy, aiming to challenge ElSherbini in the race for the world no. 1 ranking.

Top seed ElSherbini has twice missed the Qatar title after finishing as runner-up in the last two tournament but will be out to prove she is a top contender for the title this time around. ElSherbini, who is the top seed for the second consecutive year, will face a tough opponent in former World No. 3 Joelle King in her opening match.

Nouran Gohar, the No. 2 seed, also enters the tournament in outstanding form after racking up five consecutive event wins last season, including her maiden World Championship title. Gohar will meet Welshwoman Emily Whitlock in the opening round.

The Qatar Q-Terminals Classic will also feature Belgian sisters Nele and Tinne Gilis, along with Georgina Kennedy, Olivia Weaver, and Rowan Elaraby, all placed in the top 10 in the world rankings, promising thrilling clashes in the tournament's early rounds.

Speaking to Qatar News Agency, the Secretary General of the Qatar Tennis, Squash, Padel, and Badminton Federation and Tournament Director Tariq Zainal expressed his excitement about the upcoming event.

"We are pleased to announce the hosting of a new edition of the Qatar QTerminals Classic, and we are eagerly looking forward to welcoming all the players participating in this exceptional edition," Zainal said, emphasizing that squash enthusiasts in Qatar will enjoy a week of high-level competition and thrilling matches.

Gauff joins exit of US Open superstars as Zheng shines in record late show

NEW YORK: Coco Gauff joined Novak Djokovic and Carlos Alcaraz on the US Open scrap-heap Sunday as the defending champion crashed out to Emma Navarro in a blizzard of mistakes as China's Zheng Qinwen won a record-setting 2:15 a.m. finish.

As Gauff exited, US chances were then rekindled when Frances Tiafoe and Taylor Fritz reached the men's last-eight, igniting hopes of a first homegrown male Grand Slam champion since Andy Roddick's win in New York in 2003.

Third-ranked Gauff slumped to a 6-3, 4-6, 6-3 fourth-round defeat to her fellow American on the back of 19 double faults and 60 unforced errors.

The 20-year-old's exit means Serena Williams remains the last woman to successfully defend the US Open title, in 2014.

"I lost in the first round the last two years and now to be making the quarter-finals is pretty insane," said Navarro, who will face Spain's Paula Badosa for a place in the semi-finals.

Gauff's loss was another body blow to the season's final Grand Slam.

Djokovic, the defending men's champion, was knocked out in the third round to suffer his earliest exit in 18 years.

Fellow crowd-pleaser Alcaraz, the 2022 winner in New York and reigning French Open and Wimbledon champion, was stunned in the second round.

"I gave it my all," said Gauff. "Obviously there were things execution-wise, where I was like, I wish I could serve better. I think if I did that, it would have been a different story." Navarro had defeated Gauff at Wimbledon in July and was dominant again on Sunday from the outset. The 23-year-old broke for 4-2 in the first set and sealed the opener in the ninth game where one rally stretched to 27 shots.

Gauff recovered from a break down in the second to level the match, but it was a brief respite as she served up three more double faults to slip a crucial break down again in the decider.

Zheng reached the quarter-finals for a second time with victory over Donna Vekic in a record late finish for a women's match.

Seventh-seed Zheng won 7-6 (7/2), 4-6, 6-2 against her 24th-ranked Croatian opponent who she also defeated in the Paris Olympics final four weeks ago.

The early morning finish was two minutes later than the old record of 2:13 a.m. from 2021, when Maria Sakkari beat Bianca Andreescu in a last-16 tie.

"I like to play in the night session. Here in New York it's my first time," said Zheng in front of a few hundred spectators in the 24,000-capacity Arthur Ashe Stadium.

The powerful 21-year-old is only the second Chinese woman to appear in two quarter-finals in New York after Li Na in 2009 and 2013.

Zheng will next face world number two Aryna Sabalenka who defeated her in the last-eight in 2023 as well as in the final of the Australian Open in January.

Sabalenka eased into a fourth successive quarter-final with a 6-2, 6-4 win over Belgium's Elise Mertens.

Tiafoe joined former champions Andre Agassi, Roddick and Pete Sampras as the only American men to reach at least three US Open quarter-finals since 2000.

The 20th-ranked Tiafoe notched a 6-4, 7-6 (7/3), 2-6, 6-3 victory over Alexei Popyrin, who shocked Djokovic in the previous round.

Tiafoe saved three set points in the second set and will face Bulgarian veteran Grigor Dimitrov for a place in the semi-finals.

The 26-year-old became the second American man to reach the quarter-finals after Fritz defeated Casper Ruud earlier.

Tommy Paul can make it three, but he has to get past world number one Jannik Sinner.

"I used to hit the ball off a wall dreaming about playing on Arthur Ashe Stadium where the Williams sisters won and where (Roger) Federer won like a million times," said Tiafoe. "I want to be part of that."

Dimitrov, the ninth seed, put out Russian sixth seed Andrey Rublev, 6-3, 7-6 (7/3), 1-6, 3-6, 6-3 to return to the quarter-finals for the first time since 2019 when he defeated Federer on the Swiss legend's final appearance in New York.

Alexander Zverev, who blew a two-set lead to lose the 2020 final to Dominic Thiem, made his fourth quarter-final by beating Brandon Nakashima of the United States, 3-6, 6-1, 6-2, 6-2.

Up next is a last-eight clash with 12th seed Fritz who knocked out 2022 runner-up and eighth-ranked Ruud 3-6, 6-4, 6-3, 6-2 to reach his third Grand Slam quarter-final this year.

Earlier, New York-born Badosa reached her first US Open quarter-final with a 6-1, 6-2 win over China's Wang Yafan. — *AFP*



Qinwen Zheng of China reacts after defeating Donna Vekic of Croatia.

Coco Gauff of the United States hugs Emma Navarro of the United States after a losing the match.



ACL Elite trophy set to dazzle fans as AFC unveils continental tour

THE PENINSULA

KUALA LUMPUR: Football fans in Asia will have the thrilling opportunity to get up close and personal with the new AFC Champions League Elite (ACL Elite) silverware when it makes its way across the Continent over the course of the 2024/25 campaign.

The magnificent original trophy is set to embark on a Trophy Visit to each of the 12 participating Member Associations of Asia's elite men's club competition, with the home of reigning champions Al Ain FC of the United Arab Emirates earmarked as the first stop on the opening matchday of the League Stage on Monday, September 16.

Every subsequent matchday in the League Stage will feature a different destination, along with two more in the Round of 16, as the silverware travels across Australia, China, Iraq, Iran, Japan, Korea Republic, Malaysia, Qatar, Thailand, and Uzbekistan before arriving in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia to stay for the duration of the Final Stage that culminates in the all-important decider on May 4, 2025.

The Trophy Visit will allow passionate supporters a once-in-a-lifetime chance to see and be photographed with the dazzling prize, unveiled during last month's League Stage draw, as Asia's finest 24 clubs take centre stage for the highly anticipated showdowns in the revamped ACL Elite.

Fans will also be able to take in the new trophies for both the AFC Women's Champions League and AFC Champions League Two (ACL Two), which will be on display during the opening matchday of each competition – on October 2 and 3 in Wuhan, China, which will serve as the centralised host for Group A of the AFC Women's Champions League, and Hiroshima where Japan's Sanfrecce Hiroshima open their ACL Two Group E campaign against Kaya FC-Iloilo of the Philippines on September 19.

Juventus held by Roma in goalless draw

TURIN: Juventus were held to a goalless draw by Roma on Sunday, ending Thiago Motta's perfect start as coach of the Serie A giants.

A match short on action and goalmouth incident left Juve on seven points from their first three matches of the new campaign.

Motta's team are behind champions and league leaders Inter Milan on goals scored after a much less inspiring performance than the two three-goal wins which preceded it.

"It was an even match and the right result," said Motta to Sky Sport.

"We're only on our third game and today we played a team which is hard to play against, with a good coach and good players... There are lots of things we can improve.

"It's very early in the season, let's see where we are at the business end of the season, for now it's too early to talk about our objectives for the season."

A draw at Juve, where Roma traditionally struggle, gives coach Daniele De Rossi some breathing room for the international break after a difficult opening fortnight.

His team showed a level of defensive discipline which had been lacking in their first two fixtures of the campaign but offered very little else for fans to cheer about.

The closest the away side game to scoring was a speculative distance effort in the final minute from full-back Angelino which whistled past the post.

"We're under a lot of pressure for right now and it was important to get away from here with a point," said De Rossi.

"This is a good starting point. It wasn't the best performance as we could have done better with the ball, but Juve brought on some brilliant players in the second half and we held out." Earlier Fiorentina came back from two goals down to draw 2-2 thanks to Moise Kean and debutant Robin Gosens, who looped in his new team's equaliser in the sixth minute of stoppage time.

Como fell to a 1-0 defeat at Udinese -- who won of four teams level with Inter -- after Patrick Cutrone smashed a stoppage-time penalty wide, leaving Cesc Fabregas' promoted side bottom of the division on a single point. — *AFP*

Retirement won't be a 'difficult decision': Ronaldo

LISBON: Cristiano Ronaldo **(pictured)** has ruled out any immediate thought of retirement from international football as he believes he still has plenty to give Portugal, he told a press conference yesterday.

"When the time comes, I'll move on. It won't be a difficult decision to make," the 39-year-old said ahead of Thursday's Nations League clash with Croatia in Lisbon.

"If I feel like I'm no longer contributing anything, I'll be the first to leave," he added, citing the example of his former team-mate Pepe, "who left through the front door" after announcing his retirement from the game last August at the age of 41.

The five-time Ballon d'Or winner, who has been playing for Al Nassr in Saudi Arabia for almost two years now, failed to score as he appeared at a record sixth European Championship this year, with Portugal exiting in the quarter-finals.

In spite of the criticism he received in the press Ronaldo said he "never considered leaving the national team" and he has retained the backing of coach Roberto Martinez.

"People's expectations of the national team were too high," said Ronaldo, adding that the bad times in a footballer's life "allow you to evolve".

After Thursday's meeting with Croatia, Portugal remain in Lisbon to face Scotland on Sunday. — *AFP*



'Great moment' for Mbappe as he scores first La Liga goals for Real

MADRID: Kylian Mbappe answered his critics in style as he netted his first La Liga goals to give Real Madrid a 2-0 win over Real Betis at the Santiago Bernabeu on Sunday which sends them second in the table.

Since scoring in the UEFA Super Cup against Atalanta, new signing Mbappe had failed to find the back of the net in Madrid's opening three games in La Liga, prompting criticism in the Spanish press.

Mbappe was made to wait for his goals as he squandered a series of chances, finally finding the back of the net in the 67th minute, sweeping the ball past the Betis goalkeeper with his left foot after a well-timed back-heel from Fede Valverde.

Eight minutes later the France captain added a second from the penalty spot and was cheered off the field when he was replaced by Luka Modric in the 84th minute.

"It's a great moment," Mbappe told Spanish television after the match.

"I was really hoping to score at the Bernabeu, in this mythical stadium, the best in the world. But the most important thing was to win." The smile on Mbappe's face was in contrast to the concern that had been shown since scoring his first goal and winning his first trophy in Warsaw on August 14.

On Saturday, coach Carlo Ancelotti had hit back at the criticism, insisting that his star recruit was settling in well and he reasserted at the press conference after the match that "we never put Mbappe under pressure to score goals".

"He was very effective in the box, he had many opportunities. I think it is important for him to score, but we appreciate more the work for the team," added Ancelotti, who confirmed that Vinicius let the French striker take the penalty.

Madrid's win takes them second in the table with eight points, four behind early leaders Barcelona who evisCerated Real Valladolid 7-0 on Saturday to make it four wins from four in La Liga under new coach Hansi Flick.

Atletico Madrid are third after a late victory in Bilbao on Saturday while Villarreal are fourth, both of them also on eight points.

Girona are fifth after picking up their second win of the season in Seville.

Ivan Martin put Girona ahead in the 41st minute with Abel Ruiz wrapping up a 2-0 win over Sevilla with a penalty in the 73rd minute.

Goals from Carlos Vicente and Luka Romero gave Alaves a 2-0 win over Las Palmas while Osasuna are in seventh after an exciting 3-2 win at home against Celta Vigo.

Ante Budimir teed up Flavien Boyomo to put the home side ahead after 21 minutes but the lead was short-lived as Borja Iglesias levelled for Celta.

A Carlos Dominguez own goal just before the break put Osasuna back in front with Abel Bretones adding a third just after the hour.

Celta were reduced to 10 men when Alfonso Gonzalez was sent off four minutes from time but an own goal from Moi Gomez was small consolation in the last minute. — *AFP*



Real Madrid's Kylian Mbappe celebrates scoring his team's second goal against Real Betis.

Kimmich to take over as Germany captain

BERLIN: Germany men's football coach Julian Nagelsmann said yesterday he had tapped Bayern Munich midfielder Joshua Kimmich to take over as national team captain.

Kimmich was a "role model for the whole group", Nagelsmann said at a press conference ahead of Germany's Nations League fixture against Hungary in Duesseldorf on Saturday.

"He always gives his all, he always wants to train -- sometimes too much -- he is never tired, he always wants to win," Nagelsmann said.

Kimmich, 29, was "number one" in a player leadership group alongside Real Madrid defender Antonio Ruediger and Arsenal striker Kai Havertz, Nagelsmann said.

All three had a "good connection" with the rest of the squad, the coach added.

Kimmich takes over from Ilkay Gundogan, who captained Germany at Euro 2024 on home soil before retiring from international football in August. — *AFP*

Al Hussein brings 'message of hope' in Paris

PARIS: Refugee Paralympic Team triathlete Ibrahim Al Hussein said yesterday he had come to "give a message of hope" after taking part in his third Paralympic Games.

Born in Syria, Al Hussein fled the civil war in his homeland, first seeking refuge in Turkiye before settling in Greece in 2014.

But prior to his managing to flee Syria, the future Paralympian was injured during the war and lost his right foot as well as the joint of his left foot in 2012.

"I came to give a message to everyone, a message of hope," said Al Hussein after completing his race at the Paris Paralympics.

"Everyone, from where we are in the world, is going through a difficult time. Everyone can reach their destination.

"With serious work, with hard work, everyone can achieve their goal. It's not just the athletes. Everyone can achieve their goal."

Al Hussein overcame the hardships of war, injury and displacement to participate in para-swimming at Rio 2016 and then at the Tokyo Games three years ago.

Now in his third Paralympics, the 35-year-old competed in the triathlon, finishing sixth in the men's PTS3 race -- the category for athletes with significant disabilities.

"I am very happy. It was a very good result for me.It was my goal to be in the top six," said Al Hussein after recording a time of 1hr 12min 34sec.

"I want to thank the International Paralympic Committee for giving me this opportunity," he added.

"And I want to thank the UN Refugee Agency for believing in me." — ***AFP***



This handout photograph taken and released by OIS/IOC yesterday shows Refugee Paralympic team's Ibrahim Al Hussein is helped out of the water in the Para Triathlon Men's PTS3 at Pont Alexandre III at the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games, in Paris.

Guity wins battle of Paralympic amputee sprinters

PARIS: Sherman Guity of Costa Rica was a clear winner of the eagerly awaited men's T64 100m at the Paralympics yesterday, leaving the world's fastest amputee sprinters in his wake.

Guity crossed the line in a Paralympic record of 10.65sec ahead of world champion Maxcel Amo Manu from Italy who clocked 10.76sec. Reigning Paralympic champion Felix Streng of Germany picked up the bronze medal one hundredth of a second further back.

Two-time champion Jonnie Peacock of Great Britain had to settle for fifth place in 10.91sec and US sprinter Hunter Woodhall, whose wife is newly crowned women's Olympic long jump champion Tara Davis-Woodhall, was sixth in 10.96sec.

Earlier, 19-year-old American Ezra Frech won the first Paralympic title of his career by taking a closely-fought T63 100m in a personal best time of 12.06sec.

The Californian, an above-the-knee amputee, ran into the arms of his family in the front row at the Stade de France after crossing the line.

Frech was fifth in the long jump earlier in these Games and will also compete in the high jump. — ***AFP***

Ten Hag back under pressure at United after brutal reality check

LONDON: Erik ten Hag is already back under extreme pressure at Manchester United after flunking his first big test since the club decided to keep faith with their Dutch manager.

United's chastening 3-0 home defeat at the hands of Liverpool on Sunday left them languishing 14th in the Premier League table just three games into the season.

Co-owner Jim Ratcliffe, seated alongside the new Old Trafford hierarchy, had his head in his hands as United showed all their old failings against their bitter rivals.

Ten Hag's side went toe to toe with Arne Slot's men for the first half an hour but costly errors from Casemiro and clinical finishing from Luis Diaz put the visitors in total command at half-time.

Mohamed Salah scored his customary goal against United in the 56th minute and Liverpool saw out the game with relative ease in a rapidly emptying stadium.

For long-suffering United fans, it appears to be a case of rinse and repeat.

The club, who have not won the Premier League since Alex Ferguson's final season in charge in 2013, appear to be stuck in a seemingly endless cycle of mediocrity despite multiple changes of personnel on and off the pitch.

Ten Hag was handed a contract extension in July but only after United had considered alternatives following a season in which they finished a lowly eighth in the Premier League.



Manchester United's Dutch manager Erik ten Hag watches the players from the touchline during the match against Liverpool on Sunday.

United's chastening 3-0 home defeat at the hands of Liverpool on Sunday left them languishing 14th in the Premier League table just three games into the season.

United's 2-1 victory against Manchester City in the FA Cup final in May proved vital after it seemed likely the Dutchman would be sacked.

The embattled Ten Hag was forced to defend himself after Sunday's defeat, which followed a last-gasp win against Fulham and a defeat at Brighton.

"It is just the third game in the season, we have to build a new team," said the 54-year-old. "I explained this so many times, we will build this new team, we have young players and players to build in.

"It is clear we have to improve but at the end of the season I am confident we will have a big chance to lift another trophy."

The former Ajax boss can point to mitigating circumstances -- Manuel Ugarte, United's new midfield recruit from Paris Saint-Germain, was not available while another recent arrival, defender Leny Yoro, is injured along with Mason Mount, Luke Shaw and Rasmus Hojlund.

But United looked short of ideas and quality against Liverpool, who have won all three of their Premier League games under new boss Slot.

Former Real Madrid midfielder Casemiro was at fault for both of Diaz's goals and was hauled off at half-time while forward Marcus Rashford looked desperately short of form and confidence.

United's paucity of options was laid bare by the fact that Ten Hag was forced to turn to 20-year-old Toby Collyer, making his Premier League debut.

Ten Hag pleaded for patience over Ugarte.

"We have to build him in the team, it will take time," he said. "It is not like I'm Harry Potter, that is what you have to acknowledge. If you see Manuel Ugarte, he didn't play so far in the season, not one match minute."

Whether or not United now regret their decision to stick with Ten Hag, former Manchester United captain Gary Neville, a Sky Sports pundit, believes he will be given until Christmas to turn things around.

"It is a time for a bit of calm," he said. "It's the international break, which is probably well-needed for United.

"But Erik ten Hag is going to have to get the club into a position challenging for the Champions League towards Christmas or else he is going to be in trouble."

September's international break has come at the right time for Ten Hag -- United are next in action at Southampton on September 14.

But the United manager faces some sleepless nights as he tries to figure out a way to stop the rot. — ***AFP***



Scottie Scheffler of the United States celebrates with the trophy.

Scheffler crowns dominant season with FedEx Cup title

WASHINGTON: World number one Scottie Scheffler crowned his remarkable season by winning the PGA Tour's season-ending Tour Championship and with it the $25m FedEx Cup title with a four-stroke win at East Lake Golf Club in Atlanta on Sunday.

Scheffler began the final round with a five-stroke lead over Collin Morikawa but saw that advantage cut to just two after back-to-back bogeys on the 7th and 8th but he recovered to secure his seventh win on the PGA Tour this season.

He is the first player to win seven PGA Tour events in a year since Tiger Woods in 2007 and his remarkable season has also included a Masters win and an Olympic gold.

For the past two years, Scheffler had entered the Tour Championship as number one in the rankings but had failed to close out and clinch the FedEx Cup and having led the standings for most of this year he was delighted to get his reward.

"I try not to think too much about the past or think too much about the future," he said.

"But I think two years ago was pretty tough, having a good lead going into the last round and not playing my best and then losing. And then last year I just had a pretty off week so was fairly disappointing.

"So to come in with a lead for the third time and be able to finish it off is definitely pretty sweet," he added.

Morikawa, who collected $12.5m for his second place, was pleased with his effort but said Scheffler provided the perfect example of how to close out a golf tournament.

Sahith Theegala finished third for a $7.5m reward, six shots off the lead while Xander Schauffele, Russell Henley and Australian Adam Scott ended tied for fourth on 19-under.

Henley lept into fourth with an eagle on the 18th hole where he chipped in from 36 yards. — ***AFP***

UEFA sets 60-euro price cap on CL away tickets

LAUSANNE: European football's governing body yesterday imposed a 60 euro (£50) ceiling on ticket prices for fans travelling to away games in the Champions League (CL) this season.

The new maximum price represents a reduction of 10 euros on the scheduled cost of an away day ticket for the continent's top club competition.

"UEFA has today announced a reduction on the maximum ticket prices that home clubs can charge visiting fans across its three men's club competitions," it announced.

The statement added it was a decision "that underscores UEFA's commitment to making European football more accessible and affordable for all supporters". The new maximum price represents a reduction of 10 euros on the scheduled cost of an away day ticket for the continent's top club competition. Away tickets in the Europa League will now cost 40 euros, and 20 euros for the third-tier Conference League.

"This will be further reduced in the 2025/26 season to a maximum price of EUR50 in the UEFA Champions League, EUR35 in the Europa League and still EUR20 in the Conference League," UEFA said.

UEFA President Aleksander Ceferin commented: "Lowering the price cap of the ticket prices for visiting supporters in the new UEFA men's club competitions is an important signal from all European Club Association member clubs in actively contributing to improving the overall match experience for fans." — ***AFP***

Rain halts Bangladesh victory bid after Hasan, Nahid demolish hosts Pakistan

RAWALPINDI: Pacemen Hasan Mahmud and Nahid Rana shared nine wickets yesterday to set Bangladesh on course for victory over Pakistan before rain stopped play on the fourth day of the second Test.

Hasan took 5-43 while Nahid added 4-44 -- both career-best figures -- in dismissing Pakistan for 172 in their second innings and giving the visitors a target of 185 to secure a 2-0 series win in Rawalpindi.

Openers Zakir Hasan and Shadman Islam raced to 42 without loss, with Zakir hitting two sixes and two boundaries, before rain clouds gathered and bad light suspended play one over after the tea break.

Bangladesh lead the two-match series 1-0 after a surprise win in Rawalpindi last month, their first in 14 Tests against Pakistan.

They have won only two series away from home -- against the West Indies in 2009 and Zimbabwe in 2021 -- and need another 143 runs on the final day on Tuesday to secure victory.



Bangladesh's Hasan Mahmud bowls during the fourth day of the second and last Test against Pakistan.

Pakistan head coach Jason Gillespie acknowledged that Bangladesh were favourites.

"The odds are probably in favour of Bangladesh and we don't shy away from that," said Gillespie, who is coaching Pakistan for his first series.

"We know what can happen, but we took six for 26 in the first innings so we know that we can have an impact with the ball."

Pakistan had been 117-6 at lunch, with Mohammad Rizwan and Salman Agha fighting to save the hosts before Hasan ended their 55-run stand.

Hasan had Rizwan caught behind for 43 and had Mohammad Ali caught in the slips on the next ball for a golden duck to leave Pakistan teetering on 136-8.

Salman, who top-scored with 47, added 27 for the last wicket with Mir Hamza before Hasan wrapped up the innings with his fifth wicket, getting Hamza caught in the slip. "It's very joyful," Hasan said of his first five-wicket haul.

"We're very happy to win the first game and now have a chance to win another one."

"We tried to bowl according to our plans and kept taking wickets," he said. "I am delighted that I contributed to my team's good position."

The morning session belonged to 21-year-old Nahid, who dismissed Shan Masood (28), Babar Azam (11) and Saud Shakeel (two).

Pakistan took their overnight score of 9-2 to 47-2 in 10 overs on Monday before Bangladesh broke through with three wickets for 18 runs.

Saim Ayub fell for 20 to a brilliant catch by Najmul Hossain at mid-off as the opener failed to keep down a drive off fast bowler Taskin Ahmed. Nahid then had Pakistan skipper Masood caught behind by Liton off a wild shot before getting the prized wicket of Azam, caught at slip off a sharp delivery in his next over.

Nahid grabbed his third by dismissing Shakeel and went to lunch with figures of 3-22 off five overs.

Brief Scores: Bangladesh 262 and 42 for 0 (Zakir 31*) need another 143 runs to beat Pakistan 274 and 172 (Agha 47*, Rizwan 43, Mahmud 5-43, Nahid 4-44) — ***AFP***