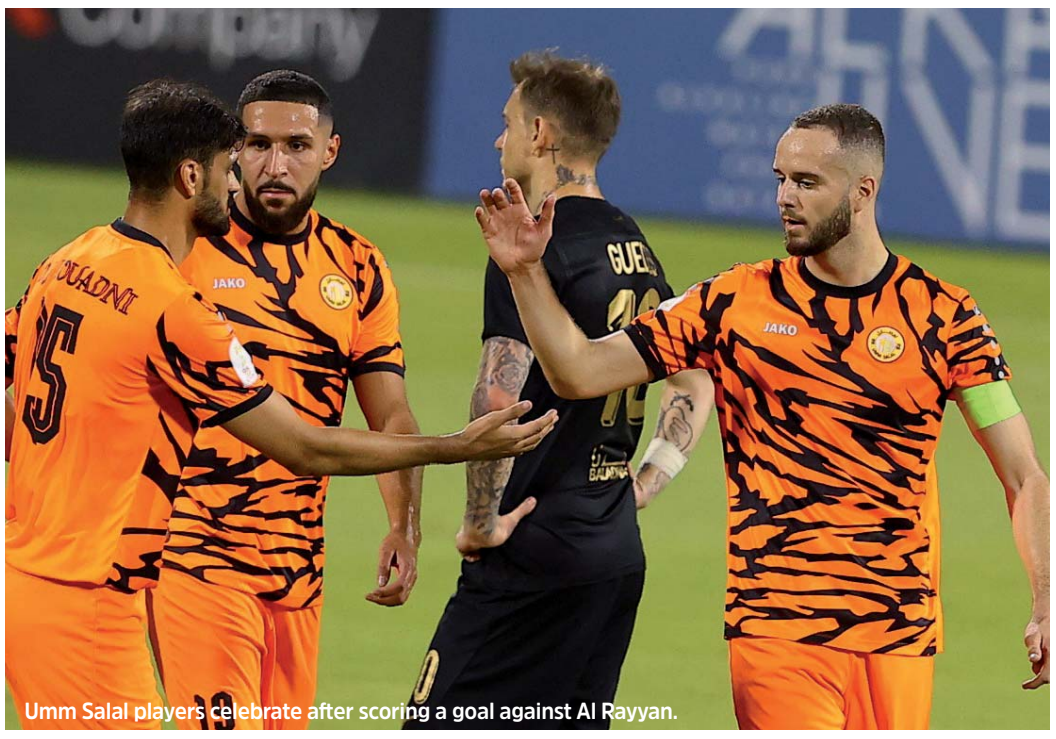
Umm Salal to clash with Al Arabi in QSL Cup semi

FAWAD HUSSAIN
THE PENINSULA


Umm Salal players celebrate after scoring a goal against Al Rayyan.

DOHA: Umm Salal advanced to the semi-finals of the QSL Cup with a commanding 2-0 victory over Al Rayyan at Grand Hamad Stadium yesterday. The defending champions will now face Al Arabi in a rematch of last season's final, where Umm Salal triumphed in a dramatic penalty shootout to clinch their maiden title.

Anthony Hudson's Al Arabi cruised to the semi-finals after defeating Al Shamal 3-0 following a second-half onslaught yesterday.

Al Rayyan started brightly creating several chances but Umm Salal defended resolutely, keeping them at bay in the first half. A golden opportunity came for Al Rayyan's Khaled Ali Binsabaa after a swift charge in the 31st minute but his effort was parried by a defender.

Umm Salal responded strongly taking the lead in the 43rd minute when Marouane Louadni headed a Naim Abdulrazaq Al Aidouni free kick into the top corner of the net.

Al Rayyan pushed for an equaliser but struggled to find accuracy in the final third, rarely troubling Umm Salal goalkeeper Landing Badji. In contrast, Umm Salal continued to threaten keeping Al Rayyan keeper Fahad Younis busy. The game was sealed in the 71st minute when captain Victor Lekhal, left unmarked, headed home a precise cross from close range.

"We are on track for our second straight title and we will do our best to win it," Umm Salal player Adil Alwi said after the match.

"We'll prepare well for the semi-finals but now our focus shifts to the Ooredoo Stars League match against Al Ahli."

Earlier at Thani Bin Jassim Stadium, Isaac Lihadji opened the scoring for Al Arabi in the 54th minute with a powerful strike after clearing a defender. Three minutes later, Youssef Msakni doubled the lead, finishing from close range following a low cross from Rodriguez Sanchez. Ghanim Al Sulaiti rounded off the win in the 73rd minute with a low shot on the rebound after Ahmed Alaaeldin's header struck the bar.

QSL CUP
QUARTER-FINALS

YESTERDAY
Al Arabi 3 - 0 Al Shamal
Umm Salal 2 - 0 Al Rayyan

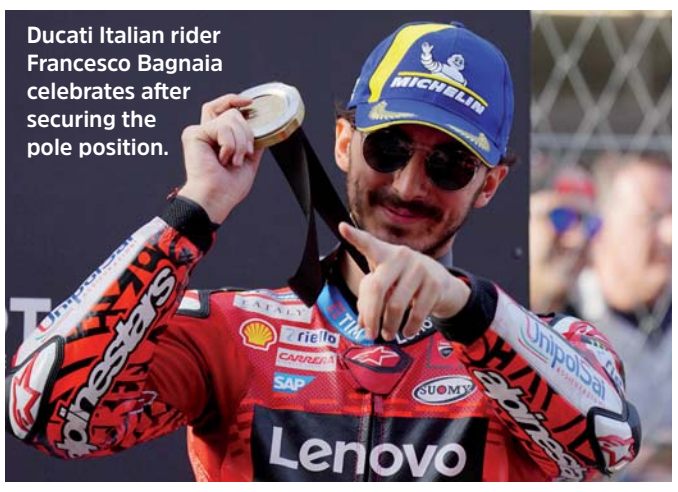
ON FRIDAY
Al Duhail 2 - 1 Al Khor
Al Wakrah 3 - 1 Al Ahli

Seeking their maiden QSL Cup title, Al Arabi have now reached the semi-finals for the sixth time.

On Friday, Al Duhail and Al Wakrah secured semi-final berths with quarter-final victories. Al Wakrah triumphed 3-1 over Al Ahli while Al Duhail narrowly defeated Al Khor 2-1 setting up another exciting semi-final clash.

The semi-finals will be played on December 13.


Al Arabi's Youssef Msakni celebrates with teammates after scoring his team's second goal against Al Shamal.


Ducati Italian rider Francesco Bagnaia celebrates after securing the pole position.

Bagnaia wins Barcelona MotoGP sprint to take season to final race

BARCELONA: Francesco Bagnaia produced a commanding performance to win yesterday's sprint at the Barcelona MotoGP, ensuring that the battle for the world championship title would go to the last race of the season.

Championship leader Jorge Martin finished third behind Bagnaia's Ducati-Lenovo teammate Enea Bastianini and will take a reduced 19-point lead into Sunday's grand prix.

"Job done for today but tomorrow we need to repeat what we did," Bagnaia told TNT.

"I just tried to be smooth in the first sector. As soon as I was leading I knew my pace was good enough to open a gap. That was the objective for today. I didn't need to push too much to open the gap.

"Jorge did a fantastic job so it's fantastic that it's like this. But let's see tomorrow." Bagnaia arrived in Barcelona with a 24-point deficit and knowing that he effectively needed to win both the sprint and the grand prix to have any chance of denying Martin a first world title.

The Italian has already won 10 of 19 grands prix this season but his lack of consistency has let him down.

But having won in Malaysia a fortnight ago he was again in imperious form as he set the pace in qualifying to take pole for both the sprint and the grand prix.

Martin, in contrast, could only qualify fourth, on the second row of the grid.

The Spaniard, however, made a good start although not good enough to catch Bagnaia who made sure he didn't repeat the error he made in the sprint in Sepang when he crashed out early after again starting on pole.

While Bagnaia ran his own race up ahead Martin was locked in a thrilling duel with Bastianini, the two swapping places throughout until the final lap when the Italian swept past on turn 5 and held on for second.

If Bagnaia is to collect a third consecutive title, he will have to win Sunday's grand prix and hope that the Madrid rider finishes no better than ninth. Or he can finish second and pray that Martin does no better than 15th.

The race was due to take place in Valencia but had to be moved after the region suffered its worst floods in a generation which have killed more than 220 people.

The race was switched to the Circuit de Barcelona-Catalunya and has been dubbed the Solidarity GP to show support for the people of Valencia.— *AFP*

BARCELONA MOTOGP GRID

Front row: Francesco Bagnaia (ITA/Ducati), Aleix Espargaro (ESP/Aprilia), Marc Marquez (ESP/Ducati-Gresini)
2nd row: Jorge Martín (ESP/Ducati-Pramac), Franco Morbidelli (ITA/Ducati-Pramac), Pedro Acosta (ESP/GasGas-Tech3)
3rd row: Maverick Vinales (ESP/Aprilia), Enea Bastianini (ITA/Ducati), Marco Bezzecchi (ITA/Ducati-VR46)
4th row: Fabio Quartararo (FRA/Yamaha), Alex Marquez (ESP/Ducati-Gresini), Johann Zarco (FRA/Honda-LCR)
5th row: Joan Mir (ESP/Honda), Miguel Oliveira (POR/Aprilia-Trackhouse), Alex Rins (ESP/Yamaha)
6th row: Luca Marini (ITA/Honda), Raul Fernandez (ESP/Aprilia-Trackhouse), Brad Binder (RSA/KTM)
7th row: Jack Miller (AUS/KTM), Takaaki Nakagami (JPN/Honda-LCR), Augusto Fernandez (ESP/GasGas-Tech3)
8th row: Michele Pirro (ITA/Ducati-VR46), Stefan Bradl (GER/Team HRC)

Al Duhail suffer first defeat; Al Rayyan to meet Al Kuwait at Asian Club Handball

CHINTHANA WASALA
THE PENINSULA


A Khaleej Club player prepares to score a goal against Al Duhail.

DOHA: Qatar's Al Duhail yesterday suffered their first loss in the 27th Asian Men's Club League Handball Championship.

At the Al Duhail Main Hall, the home team yesterday went down fighting to Saudi Arabia's Khaleej Club 25-27 as the visitors took the lead in Group A while maintaining their unbeaten run in the tournament.

Al Duhail, two-time champions of the tournament, had previously beaten Oman's Ahli Sidab with a dominant 42-27 scoreline and Kuwait's Kazma SC 30-28 in a thrilling match.

Al Duhail currently occupy the second place in their group with four points after three matches.

Khaleej Club lead the group with six points, while Sanat Mes Kerman from Iran shares the same points tally as Al Duhail but trails in goal difference.

Kazma SC has only managed to win one match out of four, placing them in fourth spot, while Ahli Sidab remain winless at the bottom.

Al Duhail take on Sanat Mes Kerman of Iran in their last Group match today.

The Group B winners will meet Bahrain's Al Shabab Club in Tuesday's quarter-final, while a second-place finish will book a last-eight clash against UAE's Sharjah SC.

Meanwhile, Al Rayyan SC, the five-time Asian title-holders, are vying for the top spot in Group A.

Al Rayyan secured a vital 28-26 victory over Sharjah SC on Thursday.

They had earlier drawn with Bahrain's Al Shabab Club in the tournament's opening clash. With a tally of three points, Al Rayyan are placed second in Group A, led by Al Kuwait SC, who hold four points.

Having already secured a place in the quarter-finals, Al Rayyan will take on the Kuwaiti club today in the final match of the group stage.

The Championship serves as qualifiers for the 18th IHF Men's Handball Club World Championship to be held in New Administrative Capital, Egypt, in October 2025.

Al Qadi and Haidan shine in Hathab Round 5

THE PENINSULA


Hamad Nasser Al Qadi guides Happy Tina over a fence on his way to win the Big Tour event.

Director of the First Equestrian Team Fahd Al Ameri, presented the trophies to the podium finishers in Big Tour.

DOHA: Hamad Nasser Al Qadi delivered a stunning performance to claim victory in the Big Tour category during the fifth round of the Longines Hathab Tour at Qatar Equestrian Federation's (QEF) outdoor arena yesterday.

Riding the 12-year-old mare Happy Tina, Al Qadi posted an impressive error-free time of 59.96 seconds to secure the win.

Andre Sakakini, on Heavens Light H, finished second with a time of 60.46 seconds while Rashid Towaim Almarri and Navaronne took third place with a time of 61.90 seconds.

Director of the First Equestrian Team, Fahd Al Ameri, presented the trophies to the podium finishers.

Al Qadi also earned fourth place aboard Stella, while Cyrine Cherif, riding Triple T Calamando Blue, secured fifth.

In the Open Class, Hussain Saeed Haidan, astride D Saucedo, clocked a flawless 54.38 seconds to claim victory.

Khalid Mohammed Al Emadi, riding Mira, finished second with a time of 55.65 seconds, and Ibrahim Khalid Al Kuwari on Flexy Bel Z came third.

Ahmed Jaber Al Mulla, a member of the Qatar Equestrian Federation's Board of Directors, crowned the winners.

Earlier, Jassim Al Jaham Al Kuwari and 10-year-old Jack Sparrow triumphed in the Dressage – Medium Advanced category, followed by Jessica Waldon on San Francisco in second place and Michelle Grimes on Damon's Rubin (Dogajola IB) in third.

In the Preliminary Dressage Test, Maryam Khalid Al Marikhi, riding Rociero, took top honours, while Jassim Mohammed Al Fahd Al Kuwari and Keslervanck PP claimed victory in the second category.

Faisal Al Kahla, Director of the Longines Championship, Hamza Al Kuwari, Director of Corporate Services at Al Shaqab, and dressage judge Yuri Romanov presented awards to the winners.



U23 friendly: Qatar beat Cambodia

Qatar U23 team defeated Cambodia 2-1 in a friendly match at Hamad Bin Khalifa Stadium yesterday. Mubarak Shanan and Jassim Al Shershni scored goals for Qatar. The match was held after Kuwait U-23 team apologised for the scheduled friendlies against Al Annabi.

Artistic gymnastics coaches course concludes

THE PENINSULA



QGF President Ali Al Hitmi poses for a group photo with participating coaches and gymnasts.

DOHA: The five-day artistic gymnastics coaches course, organised by the Qatar Gymnastics Federation (QGF) in cooperation with the Asian federation, successfully concluded with the participation of 26 coaches representing 9 countries from Pakistan, Philippines, Thailand, Myanmar, India, Iran, Bangladesh, Jordan and Qatar.

The closing ceremony and honouring of the participating delegations were held in the gymnastics training hall in Al Laqta in the presence of QGF President Ali Al Hitmi and participants in the Asian course.

The participants, both coaches and experts from International Gymnastics Federation, praised the wonderful organization of the course and their presence Qatar, which they wished to return to again in other tournaments and courses.

Certificates of participation were awarded to the trainees in the presence of Eric Bishrwan, an international gymnastics expert.

Al Hitmi said that the course is of great importance to the Asian federation as it hosts coaches and players from Asia, looking forward to the latest technologies, new training and technical programs, as well as new regulations and laws.

Al Hitmi pointed out that the course achieved many gains for the coaches and participants in its activities, and we were keen to develop the technical level of our coaches, which will of course be reflected in achieving the goals of the Qatar Gymnastics Federation in expanding the base of the game in different age groups at the level of boys and girls in the coming period.

Qatar Sand Drag's new season begins with high-octane action

THE PENINSULA



QRC Director H E Sheikh Jabor bin Khalid Al Thani with the podium winners of the second day of opening round. BELOW: Sheikh Jabor poses with the winners on the first day.



DOHA: The opening round of the Qatar Sand Drag Competition at the Qatar Racing Club's sand strip in Sealine featured widespread participation, fierce competition, and intense rivalries.

The event was held under the generous patronage of QRC Chairman H E Sheikh Khalid bin Hamad Al Thani.

The opening round featured an impressive lineup of motorsport champions from Qatar and across the Gulf, including Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

The first day, dedicated to motorcycle and Polaris vehicle competitions, showcased thrilling performances. In the Modified UTV category, Hassan Abdul Karim emerged victorious, delivering the best timing to narrowly defeat Abdullah Al Sulaiti, who claimed second place, while Zayed Al Naimi secured third.

In the Pro Modified category, Mhana Al Naimi took the top spot on the podium, leaving Abdul Aziz Al Ali and Mohammed Al Emadi in second and third places, respectively.

The Open UTV category, known as the most competitive and unrestricted class, saw record-breaking performances, with all top-three competitors breaking the four-second barrier. Yaqoub Al Alewi clinched the title with the best time, followed by Ahmed Bazkeer in second and Ibrahim Al Darmaki in third.

In the Polaris Vehicles for Children category, Homoud Al Sulaiti claimed first place, followed by Youssef Agha in second and Saad Al Kuwari in third.

The motorcycle categories, featuring two-wheelers, attracted 14 competitors and delivered thrilling races. Khalid Al Mohannadi emerged as the winner with a remarkable time of 5.054 seconds. Abdulrahman Al Nasr secured second place, while Waleed Al Sharshani completed the podium in third.

The ATV (quad bikes with four wheels) categories drew the strongest participation with 40 competitors battling across three classes. In the Modified category, Nawaf Al Sharrah claimed the title, with Dhari Al Ansari and Fahad Al Dashti securing second and third places, respectively.

The Professional Modified category saw Ahmed Al Mas take the top spot while Ali Al Derai and Hashim Ismail finished as runners-up in second and third.

In the highly competitive Open category, Mohammed Al Mazmi dominated the field, clinching first place. Abdullah Al Mazmi followed in second and Abdullah Al Hazza rounded off the podium in third.

Car and buggy races heat up track

The second day saw heightened intensity as powerful engines roared into action, starting with the Buggy categories. In the Spring Suspension class, Mohammed Al Sulaiti claimed victory, with Abdullah Al Sulaiti second and Mohammed Hassan third. In the Airbag Suspension class, Mhana Al Naimi secured first place, while Abdullah and Mohammed Al Sulaiti finished second and third, respectively.

In the Nitrous category for six-cylinder engine cars, Mzahim Al Kaabi took the title, with Faisal Al Balushi and Mohammed Al Sharshani finishing second and third, respectively. The Turbo category was divided into two classes. In the originAl bodied cars class, Khalid Al Habsi claimed victory, followed by Fahad Al Jassim in second and Abdulrahman Al Asafi in third.

In the modified-bodied cars class, Al Habsi secured his second title, with Jaber Al Zaabi and Abdulaziz Al Anzi taking second and third.

For the cars powered by six-cylinder engines, the Nitrous category title went to Mzahim Al Kaabi, with Faisal Al Balushi and Mohammed Al Sharshani taking second and third places. The Turbo category was divided into two classes: For originAl bodied cars, Khalid Al Habsi emerged victorious, ahead of Fahad Al Jassim in second and Abdulrahman Al Asafi in third. Modified-bodied cars saw Al Habsi win his second title, with Jaber Al Zaabi and Abdulaziz Al Anzi finishing second and third.

In the eight-cylinder engine cars, there were also two categories: The Nitrous category was won by Khalid Al Habsi, with Ibrahim Al Naimi finishing second. The Turbo category title went to Ibrahim Al Shunaifi, followed by Mishal Al Khalidi in second and Hashim Al Masayed in third.

The final and most exciting category, the Pick Up, witnessed intense competition. Hashim Al Masayed claimed first place, while Ibrahim Al Shunaifi and Mahdi Al Salloum finished second and third.

QRC Director H E Sheikh Jabor bin Khalid Al Thani awarded the top three finishers in each category. The second round is scheduled on Thursday and Friday.



Legend Of Xanadu races to victory under Tomas Lukasek.

Legend Of Xanadu, Marinara bag wins

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Legend Of Xanadu won the Thoroughbred Handicap (65-85) by a remarkable margin of six and a half lengths during the Umm Bab Cup Race Meeting, Division 2 at Al Uqda Racecourse yesterday.

Owned by Umm Al Shukhut Farm, trained by Ibrahim Saeed Al Malki and ridden by jockey Tomas Lukasek, Legend Of Xanadu demonstrated dominance throughout the race, pulling away effortlessly in the final stages.

Division 1 of the Thoroughbred Handicap (65-85), saw a competitive field over 1400 meters, with Marinara, a four-year-old bay filly, claiming a well-earned victory.

Owned by Wathnan Racing, trained by Alban de Mieulle, and ridden by jockey Soufiane Saadi, Marinara displayed both tactical speed and determination, securing the win by a length.

The runner-up was Poderoso (Kodiac) while Sardem (Siyouni) finished third, just half a length further behind.

Steamboat, Ibsharah Al Naif and John Steed also clinched victories.



Soufiane Saadi guides Marinara to title at Al Uqda Racecourse yesterday.

Spanish players dominate at FIP Promises Aspire Academy Tournament

THE PENINSULA



Players celebrate with their trophies.

DOHA: The first-ever International Padel Federation (FIP) organized youth event in Qatar concluded at Padel In at Aspire Zone yesterday.

The FIP Promises Aspire Academy Tournament, part of a global tour for youth players, marked a significant moment in Aspire Academy's 20th-anniversary celebrations.

Featuring Under-14 and Under-16 players, this event underscored Aspire Academy's partnership with the Qatar Padel Federation to boost youth engagement in the sport across the region.

The U-16 event was won by Izan Violero Lloret and Javier Bolumar Orti from Spain who beat compatriots Rafa Lacuesta Martinez and Jose Manuel Lillo Albertos 2-1.

It was the same score in the U-14 event as Jaime Rodriguez Gonzalez and Eduardo Vazquez Moruno, also from Spain, beat their fellow countrymen Javier Garcia Alonso and Lucas Villa Gimenez.

The standout performance by a Qatari player was fourth place in the U-16 for Aspire Academy student-athlete Abdulrahman Khalid Alyafei and his Spanish partner Antonio Gracia Fernandez who lost a tight match against Javier Garcia Caro and Rafael Reyes Moreno from Spain.

The FIP Promises tournament brought together 22 teams from Qatar, Spain, Bahrain, Lebanon, and Kuwait, providing a valuable platform for emerging padel talent.

The tournament's final matches drew the attendance of Aspire Academy Deputy Director General Ali Salem Afifa, Education Director Ali Salem Afifa, Head of Shared Services Ali Sultan Fakhroo, Marketing and Communication Director Alanoud AlMesnad, and Padel head coach Mariano Amat.

Among the participants were all nine of Aspire Academy's padel student-athletes, representing Qatar's future in the sport. They were joined by Yousef Largach and Elias Lejmi in the U-14 category, the duo is part of Aspire Academy pre-academy training programme. Also in the U-14 category, Aspire Academy's Hamad Mohammed Al Modadi teamed up with Spain's Alex Acelga Dominguez as the top seeds, alongside Ali Abdulrahman Al Malik, who partnered with Qatar's Ahmed Hassan, and Essa Al Kuwari with Ali Ebrahim Al Malik, all Aspire student-athletes.

For the U-16 category, Aspire was represented by Abdulrahman Khalid Alyafei, Saadon Alkuwari, Rayan Meknassi, Mohammed Ali Al Hiji, and Abdulla Alqadi.

Additionally, four other players from the broader Qatari padel community participated, contributing to a strong national showing in both categories.

Fourth round of QMMF's QSTK, QTCC concludes at LIC

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The postponed round one and the fourth round of the Qatar Superstock 600 (QTSK 600) and Qatar Touring Car Championship (QTCC) took place at Lusail International Circuit on Friday and yesterday. Organised by the Qatar Motor and Motorcycle Federation (QMMF) and Lusail International Circuit (LIC), the championship provides a platform for local talent to showcase their skills on the internationally renowned Lusail International Circuit. A total of 48 competitors participated in the fourth round.

On Friday, riders and drivers completed their free practice and qualifying sessions in preparation for race day. Additionally, the postponed Race 2 of Round 1 for both the Qatar Supersport 300 (QSSP 300) and Qatar Superstock 600 (QSTK) championships was concluded. This race had been previously canceled due to rain back in March, 2024.

The postponed Round 1 of QSSP 300 Race witnessed intense competition for the top position on the podium as Johann Emmanuel emerged victorious with a time of 19 minutes 18.511 seconds, with Marton Bellelli claiming second place at 19 minutes 18.549 seconds, and Mahmoud Elbanna rounding out the podium at 19 minutes 18.847 seconds.

As for the QSTK 600 postponed Race 2, Abdulla Al Qubaisi crossed the finish line first at 25 minutes 04.24 seconds, followed by Mashel Al Naimi and Saeed Al Sulaiti, recording times of 25 minutes 05.49 seconds and 25 minutes 09.13 seconds respectively. In the QSTK 600 Trophy category, rider Alexian Macary claimed first place with a time of 25 minutes 46.445 seconds, while Alexander Qabazard secured second place with a time of 26 minutes 11.552 seconds, followed by Emmanuel Geoffrey in third place with a time of 26 minutes 25.384 seconds.

In yesterday's QSTK 600 Race 1, rider Abdulla Al Qubaisi set the pace at 25 minutes 01.283 seconds, with Meshaal Al Naimi and Saeed Al Sulaiti completing the podium at 25 minutes 15.602 seconds and 25 minutes 21.248 seconds. Race 2 saw Abdulla Al Qubaisi take the checkered flag at 20 minutes 43.874 seconds, followed by Meshaal Al Naimi and Saeed Al Sulaiti with times of 20 minutes 51.347 seconds and 21 minutes 06.286 seconds.

The QSTK 600 Trophy category featured rider Kavin Quintal leading Race 1 with 25 minutes 41.095 seconds, while Alexian Macary and Emmanuel Geoffrey secured second and third positions with 25 minutes 41.383 seconds and 25 minutes 41.524 seconds. In Race 2, Alexian Macary clinched victory at 21 minutes 15.553 seconds, with Emmanuel Geoffrey and Kavin Quintal following at 21 minutes 16.810 seconds and 21minutes 21.772 seconds.

The QSSP 300 championship delivered thrilling performances, with Emmanuel claiming Race 1 honors at 19 minutes 2.315 seconds. Elbanna secured second place at 19 minutes 16.277 seconds, while Bellelli completed the podium at 19 minutes 16.334 seconds. Race 2 saw Johann Emmanuel triumph with 18 minutes 54.562 seconds, followed by Bellali at 19 minutes 12.929 seconds and Elbanna at 19 minutes 12.931 seconds.

In QTCC competition Al Khelaifi secured Race 1 victory with 28 minutes 21.613 seconds, trailed by Al Hajri and Alasiri posting times of 28 minutes 21.786 seconds and 28 minutes 22.247 seconds. Race 2 witnessed Al Khelaifi capture first place at 24 minutes 12.505 seconds, with Alasiri and Emadadhi completing the podium at 25 minutes 01.257 seconds and 25 minutes 01.676 seconds respectively.

The fifth round of the QSTK and QTCC is scheduled to take place in January 2025. Follow LIC's social media channels for updates on upcoming rounds and championship information.


Executive Director of Qatar Motor and Motorcycle Federation and CEO of Lusail International Circuit Amro Al Hamad poses for a photo with the podium winners of a QSTK 600 Race.


Action during the QSTK 600 Race at the Lusail International Circuit, yesterday.



A general view of action during the Qatar Touring Car Championship round.

Youtuber Paul beats Tyson in heavyweight return

ARLINGTON: Mike Tyson's controversial return to boxing ended in a one-sided defeat on Friday, with Youtuber-turned-prizefighter Jake Paul cruising to victory by unanimous decision against the heavyweight icon in Texas.

Tyson, 58, barely landed a punch during the eight-round bout at the AT&T Stadium in Arlington, with Paul winning by big margins on all three cards -- 80-72, 79-73 and 79-73.

Paul, 27, used his superior speed and movement to dominate the ageing Tyson with ease, and had the former undisputed heavyweight champion in trouble after landing a flurry of punches in the third round.

Yet the younger fighter was unable to land the knockout blow he had promised to deliver during Thursday's ill-tempered weigh-in, where Tyson slapped him across the face.

Tyson, however, looked every bit of his 58 years, managing to land only a handful of meaningful punches during the fight, watched by a live crowd of around 70,000 spectators with an estimated millions more tuning in around the world.

Final statistics showed Tyson connected with just 18 of 97 punches thrown while Paul threw some 278 punches and landed 78 of them.



Retired pro-boxer Mike Tyson (left) and YouTuber-boxer Jake Paul fight at The Pavilion at AT&T Stadium.

As the final seconds of the eighth round counted down, Paul could even afford to bow in respect to Tyson before the bell sounded.

"First and foremost, Mike Tyson, it's such an honor. Let's give it up for Mike," Paul said after embracing Tyson following his win.

"He's the greatest to ever do it. He's the GOAT, he's a legend. I'm inspired by him and we wouldn't be here today without him.

"This man is an icon and it's just an honor to be able to fight him. He's obviously the toughest, baddest man on the planet; it was really tough like I expected it to be."

Tyson, meanwhile, said he was satisfied with his performance despite the one-sided nature of the defeat.

"I came to fight," he said. "I didn't prove nothing to anybody, only to myself... I'm just happy with what I can do." Tyson had fought with a brace on his right knee but said it had not impacted his performance.

"I can't use that as an excuse. If I did I wouldn't be in here," he said. Tyson, meanwhile, praised the quality of his opponent Paul, who has successfully parlayed a career as a popular Youtuber and content creator into a string of lucrative boxing contests such as Friday's event, bankrolled and broadcast by streaming giant Netflix.

"He's a very good fighter," said Tyson, who refused to rule out the possibility that he might even fight again.

"I don't know. It depends on the situation," said Tyson. Pressed on whether Friday was his last fight he added: "I don't think so."

Tyson was reportedly paid $20m to sign up for Friday's contest, which came 19 years after his last officially sanctioned professional bout, a defeat to Irish journeyman Kevin McBride in 2005.

The former heavyweight champion's return to the ring had been greeted with dismay across the boxing world, which had dismissed Friday's contest as a macabre circus that risked injuring the boxing icon.

Those concerns deepened in May when the fight -- initially set for July -- was postponed after Tyson suffered a medical scare during a flight from Miami to Los Angeles. Tyson later revealed he had vomited blood caused by an "ulcer flare-up." Tyson, though, brushed off the concerns for his health, insisting that his critics were mostly jealous that he remains a box-office draw decades after his 1980s peak when he terrorised the heavyweight division.

Tyson tried to recall that era of dominance in his ring walk on Friday, marching into the arena in his signature black trunks with a black poncho draped over his body.

Yet that was as close as Tyson came to reflecting the fighter he once was, with Paul comfortably keeping him at arm's length throughout the contest. — ***AFP***

Donnarumma thankful for Mbappe absence in France showdown

APPIANO GENTILE: Gianluigi Donnarumma said yesterday that he was grateful Italy wouldn't have to face his former Paris Saint-Germain teammate Kylian Mbappe in their final Nations League group match with France.

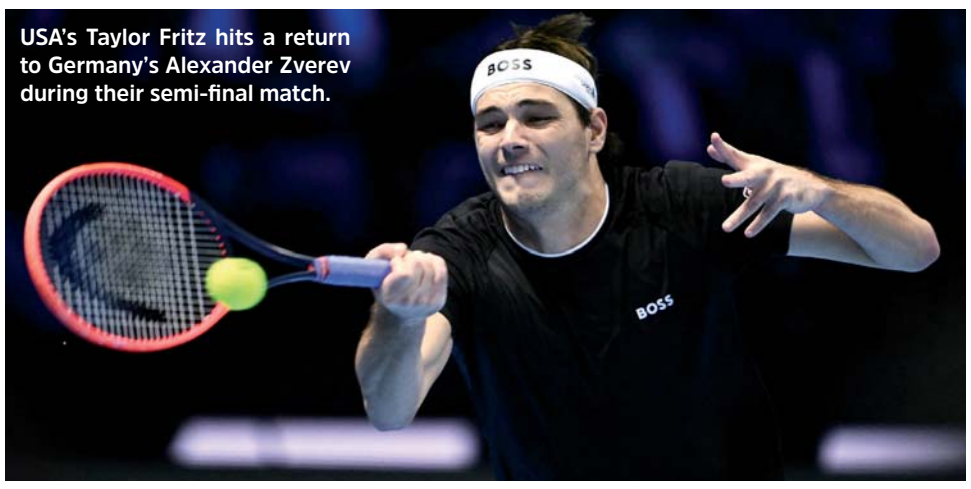
Mbappe was surprisingly dropped for France's fixtures in November after an underwhelming start to life at Real Madrid this season.

France could only manage a fraught goalless draw with Israel in Mbappe's absence, and Deschamps' team have to win by at least two goals in order to top Group A2.

"It's a big absence, I know him and he's one of the best players of the world," Italy captain Donnarumma said.

"If he was there he would have caused us problems but they have other players and a lot of quality... They have a lot of good players who can cause us problems and have a lot of energy."

Italy are unbeaten since the Euros and lead France by three points. — ***AFP***


USA's Taylor Fritz hits a return to Germany's Alexander Zverev during their semi-final match.

Fritz battles past Zverev to reach ATP Finals title decider

TURIN: Taylor Fritz reached the ATP Finals title decider yesterday by beating Alexander Zverev 6-3, 3-6, 7-6 (7/3) at the season-ending event in Turin.

Fritz will face either world number one Jannik Sinner or Casper Ruud in today's showdown where he will bid to become the first American since Pete Sampras in 1999 to claim the title.

James Blake, in 2006, was the last US man to make the final.

Fritz could yet have the chance to gain revenge on Sinner for being beaten in the US Open final following a gruelling match in northern Italy.

Both players had chances to take control in a topsy-turvy third set, but failed to capitalise on a host of break points.

But Fritz held his nerve better in the tie-break to claim a spot in the final.

Home hope Sinner will be backed by a passionate crowd in the day's main event, the Italian aiming for his first Finals title after an exceptional year in which he won seven tournaments, including his first Grand Slam victories at the Australian and US Opens.

He lost last year's final to Novak Djokovic, who pulled out of the tournament injured this time around and he entered the 2024 event already assured of becoming the first Italian to top the ATP end-of-year rankings. — ***AFP***

Johnson's five-fer seals Australia series win over Pakistan

SYDNEY: Speedster Spencer Johnson took 5-26 to propel Australia to a tense 13-run victory over Pakistan in Sydney yesterday and seal their three-match T20 series with a game to go.

Set just 148 to win after Haris Rauf claimed 4-22 to keep the hosts in check, Pakistan were all out for 134 in the final over despite a lively 52 from Usman Khan.

Australia won a rain-hit first match in Brisbane by 29 runs with the final game at Hobart tomorrow.

Australia secured a vital breakthrough by removing Babar Azam (3) off Xavier Bartlett in the second over and Pakistan's woes deepened when Johnson accounted for Sahibzada Farhan (5).

Runs were hard to come by and after facing 26 balls for 16, skipper Mohammad Rizwan knew he had to up the tempo.

But it cost him with Tim David taking a fine diving catch in the deep off Johnson, who then bagged Salman Agha next ball, caught behind by Inglis to leave Pakistan on 44-4 after 10 overs.

Khan played himself in and brought up his first T20 half-century.

But Johnson struck again with Abbas Afridi (4) following soon after to earn the 28-year-old a maiden five-wicket haul in his seventh T20.

Two wickets in an over by spin king Adam Zampa piled the pressure on Pakistan who were unable to rise to the challenge.


Australia's Spencer Johnson (centre) celebrates with teammates after dismissing Pakistan's Abbas Afridi.

Earlier, Australia was restricted to 147-9 after a rip-roaring start, but a slew of dropped catches cost Pakistan.

Jake Fraser-McGurk and Matthew Short stitched together a highly entertaining 52-run opening stand off just 22 balls before Rauf struck twice in three deliveries.

After tempting Fraser-McGurk (20) into another slog that was taken in the deep by Agha, he enticed a leading edge from Inglis (0). Pakistan had their tails up and Short quickly followed for 32, bowled by Afridi, with three wickets falling for four runs. Marcus Stoinis survived two dropped catches but finally fell on 14, reverse-sweeping to Sufiyan Muqeem, who was brought into side for Haseebullah Khan.

Muqeem's wrist-spin then took care of dangerman Glenn Maxwell (21) as the runs dried up.

David was removed by Rauf for 18 and he collected his fourth by bowling Bartlett (5).

Aaron Hardie made a handy 28 before Afridi removed him and Johnson in successive balls in the final over.

BRIEF SCORES

Australia 147 for 9 (Short 32, Rauf 4-22, Abbas Afridi 3-17, Muqeem 2-21) **beat Pakistan** 134 (Usman 52, Irfan 37*, Johnson 5-26, Zampa 2-19) **by 13 runs** — ***AFP***