


# Longines Global Champions Tour underway in full swing at Al Shaqab







Chairperson of Qatar Museums H E Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad Al Thani crowned the podium winners of CSI1* 1.1m at the Longines Global Champions Tour at Al Shaqab yesterday. Qatar's Abdulaziz bin Jassim Al Thani won the event followed by Saudi Arabia's Nasser Albagami and Fahad Aljuaid respectively. Meanwhile, the Cannes Stars won the season-opening Global Champions League (GCL) of Doha on the second day. **REPORT ON PAGE 11**

# Giovinazzi grabs pole for Ferrari at Qatar 1812 KM

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

**DOHA:** In challenging conditions at the Lusail International Circuit with chilly winds sweeping across the track, Antonio Giovinazzi delivered a stunning performance to secure Ferrari's pole position for today's 10-hour Qatar 1812 KM set to get underway at 2pm.

The Italian driver clocked a time of 1m38.359s, edging out BMW's Dries Vanthoor to claim the top spot in qualifying ahead of the 2025 World Endurance Championship season opener.

Vanthoor had looked set to take the pole for much of the Hyperpole shootout, but Giovinazzi found an extra burst of speed on his final lap, snatching the top spot with a time that was 0.136 seconds faster than Vanthoor's.

"Everybody in the team has done a fantastic job working to improve the car, and to be on pole is a great achievement," said Giovinazzi.

"I was surprised by how much the wind changed at the start of the session and how tricky that made it, but everything came together at the end. I gave it everything in the final sector – I was on the limit – and to take pole on the last lap was really cool.

"It will be a long, intense race tomorrow and we will need to be smart and make sure we take the right decisions, but we are starting from a good position and I think we have the car and the team to score some good points."




Ferrari's Italian driver Antonio Giovinazzi celebrates his pole position.

Meanwhile, Antonio Fuoco's Ferrari AF Corse No.50 secured third place on the grid, despite a challenging start. Alongside Fuoco's Ferrari on the second row is the No.2 Cadillac V-Series.R, piloted by Alex Lynn.

The car, run by the Cadillac Hertz Team JOTA squad, saw Lynn set the best time in the No.12 machine, while his teammate Sebastien Bourdais made a solid contribution by qualifying fifth in the No.30 car.

In sixth place is Robin Frijns, who ensured both BMWs would join the Ferraris and Cadillacs in the top six.

**United Autosports dominate LMGT3 qualifying**

Meanwhile, United Autosports dominated the LMGT3 qualifying, clinching a one-two with Sean Gelael taking the pole position – his first in the WEC.

Making his first appearance for the team, the Indonesian driver defeated his team-mate Sebastien Baud by 0.2 secs.

"The United Autosports guys put in so much effort throughout last year and over the winter, and that work is paying off. It's obviously a ten-hour race so we will need to be vigilant, but we're off to a good start," said Gelael.

Taking third place in the qualifying was WEC rookie Finn Gehrsitz on No.78 Akkodis.

Alongside the Lexus on the second row is the No.54 VISTA AF Corse Ferrari 296 LMGT3, piloted by Francesco Castellacci.

In fifth, the No.21 VISTA AF Corse Ferrari rounds out the top five. Completing the top six is the second Akkodis ASP Lexus, driven by Clemens Schmid, who secured his position during the Hyperpole session.

MotoGP icon Valentino Rossi put BMW eighth on the grid for Team WRT.

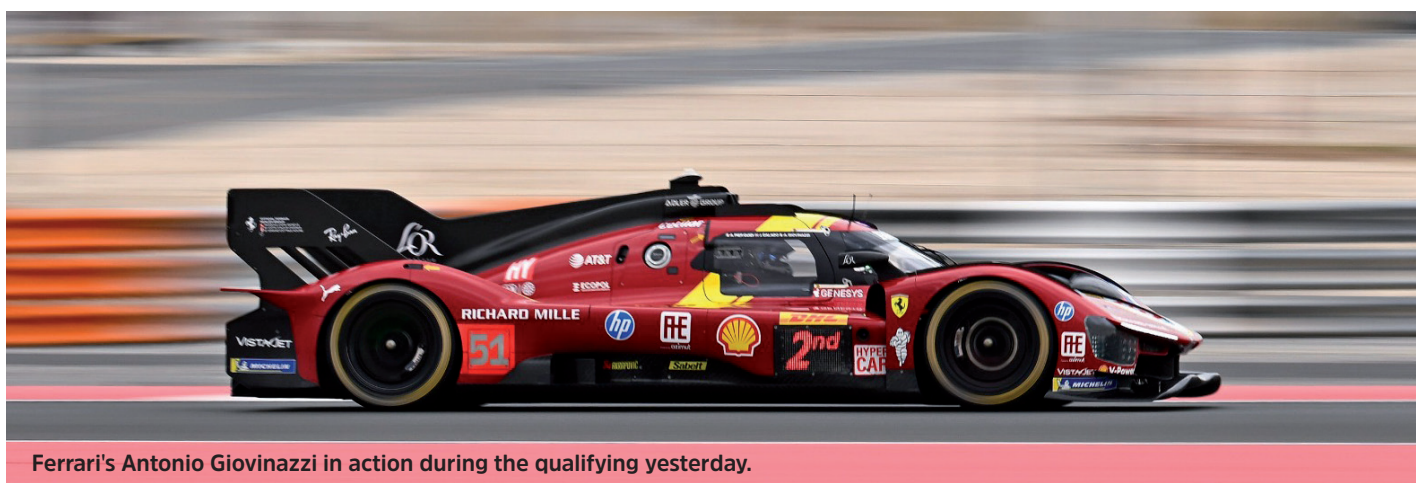
In the afternoon, during Formula 4 Middle East Championship Race 1, Adam Al Azhari converted his pole position into a win with a time of 32:55.668, ahead of Italy's Emanuele Olivieri and Britain's Kean Nakamura-Berta. Local driver Taha Hassiba claimed a standout result, finishing as the second-placed rookie, an impressive performance for the Qatari competitor.

In Race 2, Alex Powell triumphed with a time of 31:43.699. Reno Francot finished second, just 0.645 seconds behind Powell, while Olivieri rounded out the podium. Qatar's Bader Al Sulaiti showed strong performance, finishing 5th in the rookie category, followed closely by Hassiba in 7th place.

In the FRME Race 1, Italy's Nikita Bedrin, racing for Sainteloc Racing, claimed victory with a time of 30:35.318, also setting the fastest lap at 1:50.541. Ugo Ugochukwu from the USA finished second, 5.535 seconds behind, while France's Evan Giltaire took third. In Race 2, Mexican driver Ernesto Rivera clinched victory with a time of 30:11.611, while Enzo Deligny finished second, 1.851 seconds behind, and also set the fastest lap at 1:51.166. Bedrin secured third, 5.200 seconds off Rivera's pace.

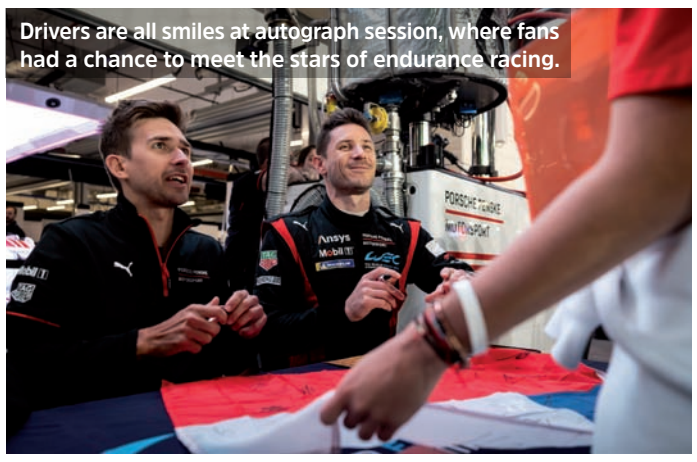
In the Lusail Classic Race 1, Jamie Constable emerged victorious in his 1971 Chevron B19, narrowly beating the #4 1971 Porsche 908/03 by just 1.499 seconds. S. Brooks finished in third place, driving his 1968 Lola T70 Mk.3B.

*With input from WEC*




Ferrari's Antonio Giovinazzi in action during the qualifying yesterday.

> *It will be a long, intense race tomorrow and we will need to be smart and make sure we take the right decisions, but we are starting from a good position and I think we have the car and the team to score some good points.*
> ***Antonio Giovinazzi***



Drivers are all smiles at autograph session, where fans had a chance to meet the stars of endurance racing.



Action from the Lusail Classic Challenge race at the Lusail International Circuit yesterday.

# Al Attiyah seals fifth Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge title




Qatar's motorsport icon Nasser Saleh Al Attiyah delivered a dominant performance at the 2025 Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge, the second round of the FIA World Rally-Raid Championship (W2RC), securing his fifth win in the history of the prestigious event. Teaming up with co-driver Edouard Boulanger in their Dacia Sandrider, Al Attiyah concluded the five-stage rally with a total time of 14hr 26min 55sec. The victory marks Al Attiyah's eighth win in 16 rounds of the W2RC as he regained the championship lead with a commanding 91 points, 19 points ahead of his closes rival Yazeed Al Rajhi. Toyota Gazoo Racing's Lucas Moraes/Armand Monleon and Seth Quintero/Dennis Zenz finished second and third respectively in the overall standings after a dramatic final day in which Al Attiyah won the last stage by 1:47.



# Cannes Stars secure GCL of Doha title again

THE PENINSULA

**DOHA:** The Cannes Stars powered by Iron Dames continue their success story. After a victory in Doha last year and the triumph in the big Global Champions League (GCL) final in Rabat, the Cannes Stars with riders Sophie Hinners and Janne Friederike Meyer-Zimmermann have continued their winning streak in 2025.

In the season-opening GCL of Doha 1.55m class at the Longines Arena of Al Shaqab yesterday, German riders Hinners (astride bay gelding Iron Dames my Prins) and Meyer-Zimmermann (on chestnut mare Iron Dames High Level) combined superbly to log a combined best time of 157.50secs as Cannes Stars secured their first trophy of the season with only one time penalty over two rounds.

Prague Lions finished in second place with Belgium's and Fernando Martinez Sommer riding chestnut mare Toupie de la Roque and Peter Devos astride grey gelding Primo DV combining for a total of 153.76secs.

Monaco Comets took the third podium place with a score of 154.09secs being guided by their star riders Australia's Edwina Tops-Alexander, who rode bay gelding Fellow Castlefield, Jeanne Sadran on bay stud Dexter De Kreglenn, and Greece's Ioli Mytilineou on bay gelding L'artiste de Toxandra, combining for a cumulative score of 154.09secs.

The winners were crowned by Bader Al Darwish, Vice-Chairman of the Organising Committee of the Championship and President of the Qatar Equestrian Federation, Mohammed Jaber Al Khayarin, Event Director, and Jan Tops, President of the Longines Global Champions Tour.

The best in the individual ranking on the night was Jana Wargers with her Nations Cup mare Dorette OLD as the pair registered a fastest clear round of 70.96 seconds.

Meanwhile, Chairperson of Qatar Museums H E Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad Al Thani crowned the winners of the CSI1* 1.1m showjumping. The 1.10m class, which had 63 starts, saw Qatar's Abdulaziz bin Jassim Al Thani take the top honours on the second day of the Global Champions Tour.

Abdulaziz excelled astride grey mare Gabbana M. Abdulaziz to clock a flawless and fastest best time of 55.64 seconds.



President of the Qatar Equestrian Federation and Vice-Chairman of the Organising Committee of the Championship Bader Al Darwish, Event Director Mohammed Jaber Al Khayarin and President of the Longines Global Champions Tour Jan Tops honoured the top three finishing teams of the season-opening GCL of Doha.

*German riders Hinners (astride bay gelding Iron Dames my Prins) and Meyer-Zimmermann (on chestnut mare Iron Dames High Level) combined superbly to log a combined best time of 157.50secs as Cannes Stars clinched their first trophy of the season with only one time penalty over two rounds.*

Finishing in second place in 60.84secs was Saudi Arabia's Nasser Albagami, who rode bay gelding Newyork Grandia Z. Albagami's compatriot Fahad Aljuaid, riding chestnut mare Dushi, was third clocking 61.39secs.



Deputy Director of the Event Omar Al Bouainain honoured the top six riders of Optimum Time (80 cm) class. Abdulla Ahmed A Al Khulaifi won the event followed by Jassim Saoud A Al Darwish, Abdulaziz Abdullah Alabri, Khalifa bin Joaan bin Hamad Al Thani, Salman Faisal Almarri and Hamad Mohammed A Al Marri.



Qatar's Ibrahim Yousuf Al Mahmoud celebrates his victory in the CSI3* 1.40m class.

**Qatar's Al Mahmoud wins CSI3* 1.40m class**

Qatar's Ibrahim Yousuf Al Mahmoud topped the CSI3* Against the clock (1.40m) class, beating a field of 63 international riders. Al Mahmoud excelled with bay gelding Qataro van het Texelhof as the duo completed a flawless best routine in 53.54secs.

Italian Roberto Previtali, who rode chestnut stud Castlefield Rouge, had to be content with the runners-up spot after finishing in 56.22secs while the experienced Emanuele Gaudiano settled for third place with chestnut gelding Chalou (56.84secs).

**Delestre tops CSI3* 1.50m**

The CSI3* Against the clock (1.50m) class was clinched by Frenchman Simon Delestre, who combined with bay gelding Moeboetoe v/d Roshoeve to clock the best 65.53secs. Italian Roberto Previtali on chestnut stud Qashquai SB finished second (67.32secs), and Antoine Ermann of France third astride bay gelding Delirium Zoetendaele Z (70.06secs).. Khalifa bin Jassim Al-Juham al-Kuwari, Chairman of the General Tax Authority, honoured the winners.

Saudi Arabia's Khaled Alhady continued his fine run at the venue as he won the CSI1* Against the clock (1.25m) class with a best time of 58.66secs astride bay gelding Capoen. Finishing a close second was Qatar's Hamad Nasser Al Qadi on his trusted mount Happy Tina, a bay mare, in 58.94secs, while Saudi Arabia's Bader Alfard was third with grey mare HW Cosette in 61.98secs.

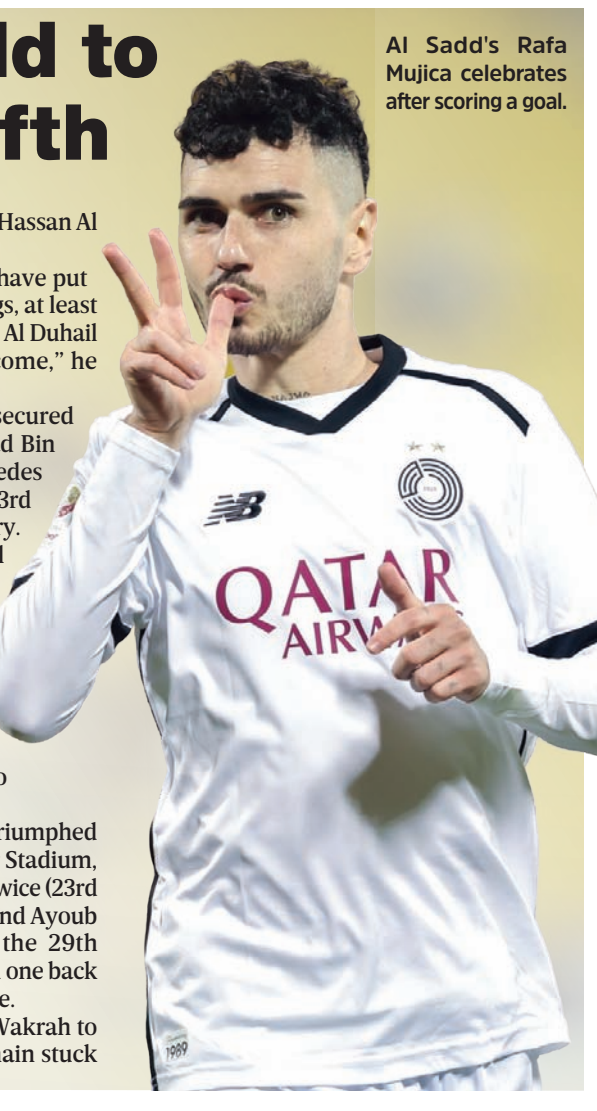
Meanwhile, the individual GCL - Against the clock (1.55m) class was bagged by Dutch rider Sanne Thijssen, who show-jumped with bay stud Con Quidam RB with a best time of 67.48secs. Norwegian Johan-Sebastian Gulliksen on chestnut gelding Equine America Harwich VDL was second (71.71secs), and Austrian Gerfried Puck riding bay gelding Equitron Ornaat V third (71.79secs).

The Future Riders' Optimum Time (80cm) class was won by Abdulla Ahmed Al Khulaifi, who astride Manni, finished with the best ideal time of 55.83 seconds. He was followed by Jassim Saoud Al Darwish on Cascade Sammy in 55.02 seconds, while the third place was taken by Abdulaziz Abdullah Alabri, riding Anyway II, with an ideal time of 57.1 seconds.



Action during the GCL of Doha at Al Shaqab yesterday.

# Mujica hat-trick propels Al Sadd to top spot; Al Rayyan climb to fifth



Al Sadd's Rafa Mujica celebrates after scoring a goal.

THE PENINSULA

**DOHA:** Rafa Mujica fired a stunning hat-trick as defending champions Al Sadd thrashed Al Gharafa 4-0 at Thani Bin Jassim Stadium, propelling them to the top of the Ooredoo Stars League standings yesterday.

Al Rayyan also enjoyed a rise in the rankings, moving up to fifth after securing a hard-fought 2-1 victory over Al Arabi, while Al Wakrah surged to eighth following a 3-1 win over Al Khor.

Felix Sanchez's Al Sadd, fresh off a 2-0 triumph over Al Duhail in their previous match, were in scintillating form against Al Gharafa. Mujica starred with a second-half hat-trick, netting in the 56th, 70th, and 77th minutes, after Akram Afif had opened the scoring in the 26th minute.

With 37 points, Al Sadd now lead by two points over long-time leaders Al Duhail, who have a chance to reclaim the top spot with a win over Al Shahania today.

Pedro Martins' Al Gharafa, who remain in third with 34 points, suffered further blow late in the match as Seydou Sano was sent off in the 87th minute.

"We've beaten Al Duhail and Al Gharafa, two of the best teams in the league, and our strong collaboration with the coach was evident. This teamwork had a positive impact on our performance in these crucial matches," said veteran Al Sadd midfielder Hassan Al Haydos.



Al Rayyan's Roger Guedes in action with an Al Arabi player.

"The three vital points have put us at the top of the standings, at least until we see the result of the Al Duhail match. The best is yet to come," he added.

Meanwhile, Al Rayyan secured an important win at Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium, with Roger Guedes converting a penalty in the 73rd minute to seal the 2-1 victory. Trezeguet had given Al Rayyan an early lead in the fifth minute, only for Hassan Alaa Aldeen to level for Al Arabi in the 25th minute.

Al Rayyan now sit on 24 points, just four behind fourth-placed Al Ahli, who will face Al Shamal today.

Elsewhere, Al Wakrah triumphed over Al Khor at the Al Khor Stadium, with Farid Boulaya scoring twice (23rd and 65th minute, penalty) and Ayoub Assal adding another in the 29th minute. Ricardo Gomes pulled one back for Al Khor in the 52nd minute.

The crucial win lifted Al Wakrah to 20 points, while Al Khor remain stuck in 12th with just seven points.

## Sinner dropped from Laureus awards list after doping ban

**PARIS:** Jannik Sinner had his nomination for the prestigious Laureus sportsman of the year award withdrawn yesterday after he was banned for three months following two failed drugs tests, an official said.

The world number one from Italy, who is the reigning US Open and Australian Open champion, twice tested positive for traces of the banned anabolic steroid clostebol in March last year.

"Following discussions by the Laureus Academy it has been decided that Jannik Sinner's nomination for this year's Laureus World Sportsman of the Year Award is to be withdrawn," said the awards body chairman Sean Fitzpatrick.

"We have followed this case, the decisions of the relevant global bodies and - whilst we note the extenuating circumstances involved - feel that the three-month ban renders the nomination ineligible. — ***AFP***

# Al Wasmi storms to Loyalty Cup win; Al Jehani seals quadruple

THE PENINSULA

**DOHA:** Al Wasmiyah Farm-owned Al Wasmi stormed home to clinch the Loyalty Cup by a quarter of a length as the 30th Al Rayyan Race Meeting concluded on a high note on turf at the Al Uqda Racecourse yesterday.

The centerpiece of a thrilling nine-race card, a Local Purebred Arabian Graduation Plate for four-year-olds over 2100m, saw the Mohammed Ghazali-trained bay gelding recording his second career win in three starts, this time under expert guidance of Marco Casamento.

Earlier, trainer Hamd Al Jehani enjoyed a jubilant day with four winners.

He struck first in the opening race of the day, a Thoroughbred Maiden Plate over 1400m, as Weissmuller prevailed under Saleh Salem Al Marri by half a length. In the Purebred Arabian Maiden Plate (1400m), Angus secured the victory by three-quarters of a length under Pierre Charles Boudot earning Al Jehani his second win of the day.




Qatar Racing and Equestrian Club's Registration and Studbook Department Deputy Director Saad Ali Al Kubaisi with the connections of Al Wasmi. PICS: Juhaim/QREC

Al Jehani's third success came in the Thoroughbred Handicap 75-95, 2200m, as Boudot-ridden Thunder Flow edged out the runner-up by a nose. Al Jehani's quadruple was completed in the penultimate race of the day, Purebred Arabian Conditions 1400m, when Shgarde was ridden to success by Boudot.

Among other winners of the day were Makarem Al Shahania who dominated the Local Purebred Arabian Maiden Plate 1400m by two and a quarter lengths under jockey Lukas Delozier and Suhail Star who landed Thoroughbred Handicap 0-75 1400m by three-quarters of a length with Boudot in the saddle. Jefferson Smith-ridden Saqr captured the Purebred Arabian Handicap 65-85 1400m by a head while Ends Of The Earth, with Delozier in the saddle, snatched the victory in the Thoroughbred Handicap 80-100 1400m by half a length.

Qatar Racing and Equestrian Club's Registration and Studbook Department Deputy Director Saad Ali Al Kubaisi crowned the winners at the end of the thrilling day of racing.

**WINNERS: 30TH AL RAYYAN RACE MEETING - LOYALTY CUP**
(Horse, Trainer, Jockey)

**Loyalty Cup, Local Purebred Arabian Graduation Plate, 4YOs, 2100m** Al Wasmi, Mohammed Ghazali, Marco Casamento
**Purebred Arabian Conditions, 4YO+, 1400m**
Shgarde Hamad Al Jehani, Pierre Charles Boudot
**Thoroughbred Handicap (80-100), 4YO+, 1400m**
Ends Of The Earth, Julian Smart, Lukas Delozier
**Thoroughbred Handicap (75-95), 4YO+, 2200m**
Thunder Flow, Hamad Al Jehani, Pierre Charles Boudot
**Purebred Arabian Handicap (65-85), 4YO+, 1400m**
Saqr, Ahmed Kobeissi, Jefferson Smith
**Thoroughbred Handicap (0-75), 3YOs, 1400m**
Suhail Star, M.H.K Al Attiyah, Pierre Charles Boudot
**Purebred Arabian Maiden Plate, 4-6YOs, 1400m**
Angus, Hamad Al Jehani, Pierre Charles Boudot
**Local Purebred Arabian Maiden Plate, 4-6YOs, 1400m**
Makarem Al Shahania, Rudy Nerbonne, Lukas Delozier
**Thoroughbred Maiden Plate, 3-6YOs, 1400m**
Weissmuller, Hamad Al Jehani, Saleh Salem Al Marri


Jockey Marco Casamento guides Al Wasmi towards the finish line in the feature.

# Momen and Gawad to clash in final

THE PENINSULA

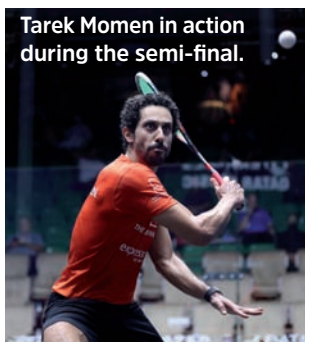
**DOHA:** The finalists of the QSF 2 2025 have been confirmed after top seeds Tarek Momen and Karim Abdel Gawad claimed comprehensive victories over Fares Dessouky and Declan James, respectively.

The bottom half semi-final was up first as an all-Egyptian battle entertained the Doha crowd. Dessouky has the capabilities to beat anyone on his day and Gawad was certainly aware of this. The former World Champion used his tactical prowess to pin Dessouky into difficult positions and used his experience to close out a crucial opener 13-11.

Dessouky battled back to take game two 11-8, but Gawad didn't panic as he reverted back to his tried and trusted line and length followed by a backhand drop, which worked a treat as he won 11-7, 11-2 to take his place in the final.

Top seed Momen was next up, facing the surprise package of the tournament, James. The tall Englishman had already downed two top eight seeds en route to the last four and was determined to scalp a top 10 player. The pair split the opening two games with both showing their quality in different periods.

This pressure proved to be too much for James as Momen captured them 11-4, 11-2 to reach another final.


Tarek Momen in action during the semi-final.


Ducati Lenovo's Francesco Bagnaia (left) and his teammate Marc Marquez take part in a press conference yesterday.

# Marquez 'has fire inside again' ahead of 2025 MotoGP season opener

**BURIRAM:** Six-time world champion Marc Marquez warned yesterday that he has the fire back in his belly ahead of MotoGP's season-opening race in Thailand.

The Spanish great has joined double world champion Francesco 'Pecco' Bagnaia at the Ducati factory team -- the duo are hailed as a motorcycling dream team by many.

The 32-year-old Marquez enjoyed a strong pre-season on his new bike and speaking ahead of Sunday's race at steamy Buriram he made no attempt to hide his ambitions.

"Always the first race is special, it's a different kind of butterflies in your stomach," said Marquez.

"But it's good because the last years I didn't feel that fire inside the stomach and inside of me.

"This year I know I am in the correct place. I am in the correct team and on the correct bike if I want to fight again for the championship.

"I feel good with the bike, I feel fast, riding in a good way," said Marquez, who joined from Honda and was last world champion in 2019.

But he cautioned: "Test is test, race is race."

Marquez and Bagnaia threaten to dominate the 22-race season, but some observers have cautioned that the high-octane mix of two fast high-profile racers could prove too combustible.

The 28-year-old Italian Bagnaia said: "It will be an intense fight, we know how strong Marc is."

"It's not a secret that we both want to win the championship," he added.

"I think many times this season we will fight.

"We will work together to improve the team and then during the race fight, and the best will win."

The start of the new season has been overshadowed by the absence of world champion Jorge Martin.

The Spaniard suffered fractures to his right hand and left foot in a horror crash during pre-season testing in Malaysia.

Then his Aprilia team said on Tuesday that Martin suffered another mishap in training and had to have more surgery.

Aprilia now say he will miss both Buriram and the next race, in Argentina in mid-March.

Marquez and Bagnaia said they had both texted him to wish him a speedy recovery. — *AFP*

# Empowering young athletes in India: Need for financial support in sports

***Sustainability is guaranteed if proper return values are provided everywhere : Manoj Sahibjan's take on Pullela Gopichand's recent statements.***


By Manoj Sahibjan

**DOHA:** Sports, like education, should be accessible to everyone, regardless of their financial background. It is a platform where talent, hard work, commitment and determination shape success. However, all over the world, many young talented athletes face financial barriers that prevent them from reaching their full potential. Providing financial support, including cash prizes at the grassroots level—starting from Under-9 competitions—can play a crucial role in reducing these struggles.

While Mr. Pullela Gopichand has contributed immensely to the growth of Indian badminton and his vision has shaped many champions, his recent statement suggesting that only the rich can afford to play sports has sparked discussions. While his perspective might stem from the challenges he has observed, it is essential to shift the conversation towards solutions that ensure sports remain inclusive for all. Rather than discouraging the dreams of highly talented young athletes who are financially unstable highlighting financial barriers, the focus should be on creating structured financial support systems that sustain their journey to reach their dream destination.

**The Need for Financial Incentives in Grassroots Sports**

Many talented young athletes drop out of sports because their families cannot afford the costs associated with entry fees in competitions, training fees, travel, buying equipment, food and accommodation.

From my knowledge and experience as a player and coach, introducing cash prizes and sponsorships to kids from an early age, same as the opportunities senior players are getting because they are representing a district, state, nationals or country would not only serve as motivation but also provide financial relief to parents to sustain for longer term in sports. Monetary rewards should not be viewed merely as incentives; they should be seen as a necessary mechanism and structure to support aspiring athletes, because all the organisations are conducting tournaments with sponsorships and entry fees. Hence, the deserving players should get the return value from those sports itself.

> *While it is true that financial constraints exist in India for some kids, the narrative must shift from discouragement to empowerment.*

If 50% of students secure jobs based on their academic qualifications, the sports industry offers numerous career and business opportunities beyond just being an athlete, often providing greater financial stability than traditional academic fields. Many former players have successfully transitioned into coaching, academy management, sports commentary, fitness training, and sports entrepreneurship. A notable example is Mr. Gopichand, who, after his successful badminton career, established the Gopichand Badminton Academy, producing world-class players like PV Sindhu, H S Prannoy and Saina Nehwal. Similarly, many ex-athletes like legendary Mr. Prakash Padukone, Ms. P T Usha have built their careers by running sports academy. And others by working as sports analysts or managing sports events. With the growing emphasis on fitness and sports, the industry continues to expand, offering global recognition, networking opportunities, and a viable career path beyond academics.

**A Call for Change**

At the current stage of India's badminton development, individuals like Mr. Gopichand, who have the power and influence to introduce systematic changes, should advocate for solutions rather than emphasizing the uncertainties of a sports career. While it is true that financial constraints exist, the narrative must shift from discouragement to empowerment. A structured initiative to provide financial support will ensure that more children from all backgrounds can take up sports seriously and reach a stage where they represent India even in Olympics without worrying about economic hardships.

This kind of approach will bring India to new heights.

***The author is a former Indian national and international badminton player.***

# Boon appointed to CA board

**SYDNEY:** Former Test batsman David Boon was appointed to the Cricket Australia (CA) board yesterday, stepping down as an ICC match referee to take up the position.

The 64-year-old, who played 107 Tests and 181 ODIs for Australia, will finish up with the International Cricket Council after the ongoing Champions Trophy in Pakistan and Dubai.

Boon was an Australian selector for more than a decade from 2000 following his retirement as a player in 1999, before becoming an ICC match referee in 2011. — *AFP*

# Hosts Pakistan finish bottom after Bangladesh match washed out



Pakistan's Imam-ul-Haq (second left) speaks with teammate Haris Rauf (left) as field umpires inspect the outfield.

**RAWALPINDI:** Pakistan's last Champions Trophy group match with Bangladesh yesterday was abandoned without a ball being bowled in Rawalpindi because of rain, ensuring the host country's title defence ended with a wet whimper.

Pakistan, who won the 50-over tournament in 2017, lost to New Zealand and arch-rivals India to finish bottom of the four sides in Group A.

Their last match had only pride at stake for both teams, with Bangladesh similarly out of the running for the semi-finals.

Pakistan's failure to advance beyond the group phase or even win a game was a huge letdown for a country hosting its first major cricket tournament in three decades.

"The expectations were very high but we didn't perform well and it is disappointing for us," Pakistan skipper Mohammad Rizwan said.

"We are upset and we are accepting that we didn't do well. Hopefully we will do more hard work and come back."

Like his counterpart, Bangladesh skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto was disappointed they did not get to go out on a high.

Pakistan finished fourth and last with one point, a position below Bangladesh, who also have one point but a better net run-rate.

Overnight rain in Rawalpindi continued on and off and despite several inspections by the umpires, no play was possible.

India and New Zealand progressed to the semi-finals from Group A.

In Group B, South Africa, Australia and Afghanistan compete for the other two semi-final spots. England are out of contention. — *AFP*