Al Wasmiyah Racing's Laffan stays unbeaten with victory at La Teste

THE PENINSULA


The connections of Laffan celebrate with the trophies after winning the Gr.2 (PA) contest for three-year-olds at the Gr.2 (PA) Qatar Coupe de France des Chevaux Arabes.


Jockey Jean-Bernard Eyquem and Laffan lead the race.

DOHA: Al Wasmiyah Racing's homebred Laffan (Af Al Buraq) won the Gr.2 (PA) contest for three-year-olds over 1600 metres at the Gr.2 (PA) Qatar Coupe de France des Chevaux Arabes was run at La Teste, France, yesterday.

Ahmed Aman Alla Al-Sheebani, Director of QREC Support Services Department, presented the trophies to the winners of the event which was sponsored by the Qatar Racing and Equestrian Club (QREC).

The Purebred Arabian colt is trained by François Rohaut and was ridden on the occasion by Jean-Bernard Eyquem. The race brought together a field of seven runners and marked just the second career start for Laffan, who, under Eyquem as well, had made a successful debut last month over the same trip at Bordeaux. Stepping straight into Group company, the son of Af Al Buraq remained unbeaten with another polished display.

The early pace was not particularly strong, with Mansour de Faust (Mister Ginoux) taking up the lead and Ghazan Du Soleil (Gazwan) tracking in second. Favourite Laffan was caught three wide without cover, but travelled well despite his position. Eyquem kept him relaxed throughout and began to move closer as they approached the final turn.

Once balanced at the top of the straight, Laffan moved up smoothly to take the lead. He responded gamely when asked and maintained a narrow advantage to the line, holding off fast-finishing rivals.

Amjaad (Azadi), owned by Al Shaqab Racing, trained by Thomas Fourcy and ridden by Mme Margot Romary, came flying late to take second, beaten only a head. Motus De l'Aigle (Mister Ginoux), representing Khalifa bin Sheail Al Kuwari, trained by Mme Jf. Bernard and partnered by Valentin Seguy, also finished strongly to claim a very close third in a thrilling finish, just a short head further behind. Once again, the top three placings went to Qatari-owned runners – mirroring the result less than 24 hours earlier in the QREC-sponsored Gr1 P/A Qatar Purebred Arabian 4YO Derby at Chantilly.

QCTF partners with Bioracer to raise standards of cycling in Qatar

CHINTHANA WASALA
THE PENINSULA


QCTF President Eng Abdulaziz Saud Al Tamimi (centre) and Bioracer CEO Danny Segers (second left) with other QCTF officials hold cycling gear delivered by Bioracer.

DOHA: The Qatar Cycling and Triathlon Federation (QCTF) yesterday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with leading Belgian sportswear manufacturer Bioracer, marking a significant milestone in the federation's efforts to raise the standards of cycling in the country.

The partnership was announced during a ceremony held in Doha, attended by top officials including QCTF President Eng Abdulaziz Saud Al Tamimi and Bioracer CEO Danny Segers.

Addressing the press conference, Eng. Abdulaziz highlighted the importance of the MoU, stating that the partnership will significantly elevate the standards of Qatar national cycling teams.

"With the signing of the MoU with Bioracer, we are not merely taking a procedural step – we are reaffirming our firm commitment to developing our sport, elevating the standards of our national teams, and enhancing Qatar's presence on the international stage," the QCTF President noted.

He added that the partnership is part of a bold vision aimed at propelling Qatari cycling to new heights.

"The partnership is an ambitious vision aimed at propelling our sport to the ranks of the global elite and at preparing a generation of athletes capable of honouring the name of Qatar in all international arenas."

Known for its high-performance apparel worn by elite riders worldwide, Bioracer brings together decades of expertise in the sport and state-of-the-art technology to craft perfect gear for road cycling, mountain biking, gravel cycling and many other sports.

The company, based in Belgium, will work closely with QCTF to deliver customised, innovative cycling gear, custom designed to meet the needs of members of the Qatari cycling teams.

Segers said: "At Bioracer, passion is one of our key values. Our passion for performance apparel make athletes faster. This passion is matched by a commitment to collaboration – with federations, teams and athletes worldwide."

"Through this MoU, we pledge to bring our full suite of technical expertise, customization capabilities, and innovation to Qatar. Whether it's aerodynamic cycling jerseys, tri suits, or race-day gear, we will work closely with the QCTF to cater designs and products specifically to the needs of Qatari athletes," the Bioracer CEO said.

Sager added that the collaboration stretches beyond just providing racing kits.

"This doesn't revolve around customised clothing only. It will also create opportunities for athletes' development by providing training facilities in Belgium, wind tunnel testing, aerodynamics studies, bike manufacturers and recommending races in Belgium. Moreover, we are currently working on providing and developing racing and training clothing for female athletes," he said.



Simeone refuses to blame heat after Atletico lost to PSG

LOS ANGELES: Atletico Madrid coach Diego Simeone **(pictured)** refused to blame the scorching temperatures at Pasadena's Rose Bowl for his side's heavy 4-0 loss to Paris Saint Germain in their Club World Cup opener on Sunday.

Atletico was outplayed for most of the game, with Fabian Ruiz and Vitinha giving PSG a 2-0 lead at halftime. Late goals from Senny Mayulu and Lee Kang-in sealed the win, while Atletico finished with 10 men following Clement Lenglet's red card.

"The first half, we didn't play as we should have," admitted Simeone, who acknowledged the team improved after the break, but noted that "Lenglet's sending off made things more complicated."

"They (PSG) have a very young team, and they rounded it off in a great way," said the Atletico coach.

He dismissed suggestions that the 30-plus degree heat was a factor.

"It's the same heat in August (in Spain), so I don't blame that, and it was hot for both sides," he said, while praising PSG for their quality.

"They played better than us, they play a team game with very young players and wingers who can change a game ... they won the Champions League, the League, the Cup," said Simeone, who admitted Atletico must now "get good results" in upcoming matches against Seattle Sounders and Botafogo.

Botafogo moved into second place in the group later in the day with a narrow 2-1 win over Seattle, who tested the Brazilian side throughout the match. *— XINHUA*


Igor Jesus of Botafogo celebrates after scoring his team's second goal against Seattle Sounders. The reigning South American champions Botafogo secured a 2-1 win over Seattle Sounders FC at the Major League Soccer outfit's Lumen Field home. AFP

Botafogo eager to improve for PSG test at Club World Cup

THE PENINSULA

SEATTLE: Defender Gregore and coach Renato Paiva talk about their PSG showdown

Botafogo's primary objective was to settle a score: after defeats to CF Pachuca at the FIFA Intercontinental Cup 2024 and to Racing Club de Avellaneda in this year's CONMEBOL Recopa Sudamericana, the reigning South American champions began their FIFA Club World Cup 2025 quest with a bang, securing a 2-1 win over Seattle Sounders FC at the Major League Soccer outfit's Lumen Field home.

"It felt good to get the three points," Gregore told FIFA, "although we struggled in the second half as Seattle put us under a lot of pressure. But the important thing was to get the win."

The Fogão rounded off a dominant first-half display in which they enjoyed vast swathes of possession reinforced by a relentless rearguard that thwarted any threat forthcoming from the Sounders. It was the Brazilians' aerial attack that eventually unlocked their opponents: Jair Cunha jump-started the action before Igor Jesus soared into the Seattle sky.

"We started the game very well, had chances and then scored," said Botafogo coach Renato Paiva in his post-match press conference.

The second half saw a complete role reversal. Sounders coach Brian Schmetzer introduced a couple of changes and leaned into his squad's pride. Wearing their hearts on their sleeves and driven on by the experienced Cristian Roldan and the prodigious Obed Vargas – who orchestrated play from the middle of the park – the Sounders started to pin back Botafogo, eventually halving the deficit through Roldan and carving out further chances for what would have been a memorable equaliser.

"We know we didn't play too well," conceded Botafogo captain Marlon Freitas.

Next up for Botafogo are none other than European juggernauts Paris Saint-Germain, who look to be in unstoppable form after sweeping aside FC Internazionale Milano in the UEFA Champions League final before repeating another rout against Atlético de Madrid in their Club World Cup curtain-raiser.

Avoiding mistakes will be among Botafogo's top priorities. Alarm bells were ringing in their last outing before departing for the USA, which came against Ceara in the Brazilian top flight. In the build-up to the showdown with the Sounders, Paiva had publicly acknowledged that they needed to rekindle the defensive traits that had previously served them so well, and with Alexander Barboza at the heart of the rearguard action, they looked impregnable during an impressive first-half showing.

Botafogo goalkeeper John ending up being one of the stars of the night, as the Rio de Janeiro outfit came under siege from the Sounders and the enthusiasm of a cacophonous home crowd. With a couple of vital saves, the second a somewhat serendipitous stop from Argentina's Pedro de la Vega, the custodian helped seal his side's victory and secure three vital points that keep Botafogo's dream of progressing past the group stage alive.

"We can't go out and repeat today's mistakes against a team like PSG," said Paiva. "These competitions are anything but easy; they are packed with emotions and nerves and the first game always comes with added pressure. That's why the result matters more than the performance.

"We have already shown that we can play better, that we can be more compact and balanced both in attack and defence. We haven't conceded many goals of late. We'll use that as our starting point, knowing that PSG will prove to be very tough opposition. We'll only stand a chance if we up our game and things go our way on the night." (FIFA)

USA end losing streak with rout of hapless Trinidad at Gold Cup

LOS ANGELES: The United States ended their four-match losing run with a resounding 5-0 win over Trinidad and Tobago in their opening game of the CONCACAF Gold Cup on Sunday in San Jose.

Mauricio Pochettino and his team, which is missing several Europe-based regulars, had faced plenty of criticism after recent friendly defeats to Turkiye and Switzerland.

In desperate need of a change in mood around the team, a year out from the World Cup they will co-host with Canada and Mexico, Pochettino fielded an attacking line-up.

Against a Trinidad team, coached by former Manchester United striker Dwight Yorke, it proved to be just the kind of stress-free comfortable win that the Argentine coach was seeking.

The USA were on top from the outset with two early chances for striker Patrick Agyemang and it was the striker who helped create the 16th-minute opener.



Malik Tillman scores first goal for the United States.

The USA, looking for an eighth Gold Cup title, face Saudi Arabia and Haiti in their remaining two games in Group D.

Agyemang won the ball off Trinidad defender Alvin Jones, found Jack McGlynn on the right who kept his cool and clipped the ball to the back post where Malik Tillman collected and then slotted home.

It was a tough day for Jones, who then gifted the USA their second goal with a back-pass that went straight to winger Diego Luna who broke away and then unselfishly squared to Tillman for the PSV Eindhoven midfielder's second.

Trinidad were showing why they have fallen down the FIFA rankings, slipping to 100th and fourth in the Caribbean, below Curacao, lacking any kind of solidity.

The lively Luna created the third, a minute before the break, when he cut in from the left and his low shot deflected off Agyemang and beat the helpless Marin Phillip.

It was easy going for Pochettino's side in the second half with Trinidad managing to threaten once when Tyrese Spicer put a low ball across the face of the goal but the sliding Dante Sealy was unable to connect.

With the game fizzling out, Pochettino made a triple substitution and that added some late urgency to his side's attack.

Sub Brenden Aaronson cut in from left and squeezed a low shot past Phillip's near post and then another man off the bench, Haji Wright completed the convincing victory when he broke down the left and drifted inside before placing the ball in the far corner.

The USA, looking for an eighth Gold Cup title, face Saudi Arabia and Haiti in their remaining two games in Group D. — ***AFP***


A file photo of Kazuyoshi Miura.

Record-breaking Japan striker 'King Kazu' plays at 58

TOKYO: The record-breaking striker Kazuyoshi Miura played in Japan's fourth tier aged 58 for his 40th season as a professional footballer.

Former international Miura, fondly known as "King Kazu", is the oldest professional in Japan and almost certainly beyond.

He came on as an 82nd-minute substitute for Atletico Suzuka Club on Sunday and helped them seal a 2-1 win in the Japan Football League.

Miura, one of Asia's best-known footballers in the 1990s, did not score but told reporters he was "glad I was able to contribute" after his cameo aged 58 years and 109 days.

"Thanks to help from my teammates and trainers, I've been able to make it this far. Now I want to raise my game even more," said.

Miura returned to Japan last year after two seasons with Portuguese second-division outfit Oliveirense, where he made nine appearances on loan from Yokohama FC.

He made his debut in 1986 with Brazilian side Santos and has also played in Italy, Croatia and Australia.

The forward helped put football in Japan on the map when the professional J-League was launched in 1993.

He made his Japan debut in 1990 but was famously left out of the squad for their first World Cup finals appearance in 1998, despite scoring 55 goals in 89 games for the national side. — ***AFP***

Almeyda appointed Sevilla coach

MADRID: Sevilla yesterday announced the appointment of former Argentina international Matias Almeyda as the Spanish club's new coach on a three-year deal.

The 51-year-old Almeyda joins Sevilla after three seasons with Greek side AEK Athens, where he won a league and cup double in 2022-23. He also had a spell in Major League Soccer with the San Jose Earthquakes after coaching River Plate and Banfield in his homeland, as well as Mexican club Guadalajara.

Almeyda returns to the club he represented as a player almost three decades ago. He played for Sevilla in 1996-97 before stints with Lazio, Parma, Inter Milan and Brescia in Italy. The former midfielder made 40 appearances for Argentina.

Almeyda takes over from Joaquin Caparros, who was brought in for a brief fourth spell at Sevilla in April after the dismissal of Francisco Garcia Pimienta. — ***AFP***

No doubt Delap will be England number nine: Chelsea's Maresca

ATLANTA: Chelsea coach Enzo Maresca said he is confident new signing Liam Delap will become England's number nine after Harry Kane.

Bayern Munich striker Kane, 31, has led the line for England for most of the last decade, but Delap is showing great potential, which led Chelsea to snap him up for £30m ($41m) from relegated Ipswich Town earlier this month.

"I don't have any doubt that he can be in the future England's number nine," said Chelsea's coach on the eve of their Club World Cup opener against Los Angeles FC, when asked if Delap could succeed Kane.

Maresca would not confirm if the 22-year-old forward will start at the Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta on Monday but said Delap was not showing any nerves after taking the Blues' number nine shirt.

Chelsea have signed several high-profile strikers in recent years who have struggled at the club, including Fernando Torres, Romelu Lukaku and Alvaro Morata.

"Liam knows quite well how important is the number nine for this club... I see him quite relaxed, easy, he's doing well, since he arrived he's working well," said Maresca.


Chelsea manager Enzo Maresca talks to the media.

The Italian coached Delap in Manchester City's under-21 team previously and said the link between them would be mutually beneficial.

"We know each other already from years ago, so I know what Liam can give us, he knows what we can give to him to improve and to become a better player," explained Maresca.

"He was keen to join us because he knows the way we play, the season that we were together...he scored 24 goals.

"We like Liam, Liam likes us, so it was an easy conversation."

The coach said he had not promised Delap he would be starting ahead of Nicolas Jackson.

"I never say to a player you (will) be a first choice, the message is always the same, you arrive, you work hard, you work more than the other number nine (and you can be)," he added.

Maresca said Chelsea were interested in signing a left-winger later in the summer to replace Jadon Sancho, whose loan will not be made permanent, but for now were focused on the Club World Cup and first opponents LAFC.

"I'm never confident, I don't know if it's something good or something bad, but I think because of the technology today, any game can be difficult," he said.

"They can watch many games about us, we can watch many games about them, so every game becomes very complicated." — ***AFP***

Nantes name Portugal's Luis Castro as boss

NANTES: Nantes have appointed Portuguese boss Luis Castro as their head coach for next season, the Ligue 1 club announced .

The 45-year-old has signed a two-year deal and leaves Dunkerque after taking the club to the second-tier play-offs and the French Cup semi-finals last season.

Castro's Dunkerque led Paris Saint-Germain 2-0 in the Cup last-four clash before losing 4-2. He had been linked with a possible move to Brazilian giants Botafogo, currently playing in the Club World Cup, earlier this year.

Nantes avoided relegation from the French top flight on the final day of last season with a victory over Montpellier.

Previous coach Antoine Kombouare was sacked after that match, ending his second spell in charge. The eight-time French champions have not won the league title since 2001, with their only major trophy since then being 2022 French Cup under Kombouare. — ***AFP***

Hamilton 'devastated' after hitting groundhog



MONTREAL: Lewis Hamilton **(pictured)** said he felt devastated after learning that he had hit and killed a groundhog, damaging his Ferrari car, on his way to finishing sixth in the Canadian Grand Prix.

Hamilton, who owns a French bulldog called Roscoe that is often seen with him at Grands Prix, said he did not see the groundhog and felt that the incident reduced the performance of his car after a bright start Sunday.

"It was feeling pretty decent up until then," said the seven-time world champion. "I got a good start, I held position and I was holding onto the leading group. I was managing the tyres well, so I was feeling optimistic.

"I didn't see it happen, but I heard I hit a groundhog. That's devastating because I love animals and I'm so sad about it. It's horrible.

"That's never happened to me before here, but the floor -- basically the right-side -- there was a hole in it.

"Given that, and we had a brake issue halfway through as well, and then we probably stayed out too long in the first stop and came out behind traffic... it went from one thing to another."

After going 10 races without a podium this season for the first time in his Formula One career, having joined Ferrari, Hamilton was expressing mounting frustration at the team's disappointing start to the year.

"I'm grateful that I finished, particularly with the brake issue I had. We are really in need of an upgrade, but there are a lot of things that need to change in order for us to compete at the front."

Team-mate Charles Leclerc finished fifth despite missing much of Friday practice after crashing in the opening session, but said he was frustrated by how his race had unfolded. . — ***AFP***


Lewis Hamilton races during the Canadian Grand Prix.

Sri Lanka star Mathews hails 'dream run' in final Test against Bangladesh

GALLE: Sri Lanka are set to begin a two-Test series against Bangladesh in Galle today that will mark the end of Angelo Mathews' "dream run" in the game's longest format, as the cricket season resumed following South Africa's World Test Championship triumph at Lord's.

The red-ball matches between Sri Lanka and Bangladesh will be followed by a white-ball series of three one-day internationals and three T20s.

Hosts Sri Lanka begin the contest as firm favourites, eager to turn a fresh page after a stuttering end to the previous WTC cycle.

Sri Lanka were firmly in the mix for a place in the WTC final until December before the wheels came off spectacularly.

Two defeats in South Africa followed by a twin collapse at Galle against Australia saw them tumble down the rankings.

"We had one hand on a spot in the final but a few brain fades at crunch moments cost us dearly," Sri Lankan captain Dhananjaya de Silva told reporters on Monday.

"We've learnt our lessons. A strong home start lays the foundation for success on the road."


Sri Lanka's coach Sanath Jayasuriya (left) and Angelo Mathews speak during a practice session in Galle yesterday.

'Dream run'

Sri Lanka's squad includes six uncapped players, with at least one debut cap set to be handed out.

Spin remains Sri Lanka's strength, with Prabath Jayasuriya the key and selectors also calling up off-spinner Akila Dananjaya.

Bangladesh enter the series without stalwarts Tamim Iqbal and Shakib Al Hasan, and captain Najmul Hossain Shanto is realistic about the challenge.

"Tamim and Shakib -- those are massive boots to fill," he said. "But this is a chance for the young guys to put their hands up."

The wins in England in 2014 and whitewashing the Aussies in 2016 stand out.
Angelo Mathews

Shanto, who is playing in Galle for the first time, said the team have "prepped well and we're ready for the challenge".

The Test will also be the swansong of Sri Lanka's veteran Angelo Mathews, who is retiring after 118 Tests.

The former skipper also played his first Test on the famous pitch perched beneath the fortress in Galle in 2009.

"It's been a dream run," said 38-year-old Mathews.

"The wins in England in 2014 and whitewashing the Aussies in 2016 stand out. I've seen so many youngsters come through the ranks," he said.

"I truly believe Sri Lanka's future is in good hands."

Sri Lanka have won 20 of the 26 Tests they have played against Bangladesh, who have only managed a solitary win along with five draws.

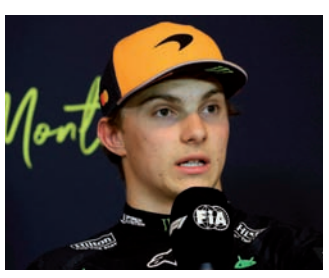
The second Test will begin in Colombo on June 25. — ***AFP***

Piastri accepts Norris apology after Canadian GP collision


Australia's Oscar Piastri leads Charles Leclerc of Monaco during the F1 Grand Prix of Canada.

MONTREAL: Championship leader Oscar Piastri **(pictured)** accepted McLaren team-mate Lando Norris's apologies on Sunday after the Briton misjudged a passing move and crashed into him in the closing laps of the Canadian Grand Prix.

The collision on lap 67 of the 70-lap race came when Norris attempted to overtake his Australian team-mate and title rival on the straight, but attacked a diminishing space and hit the back of Piastri's car, demolishing his own front



wing. Piastri continued and finished fourth while Norris retired.

Mercedes' George Russell won the race from pole ahead of four-time champion Max Verstappen of Red Bull with teenage rookie Kimi Antonelli third in the second Mercedes to become the third youngest driver to take an F1 podium position.

Piastri's fourth place finish left him frustrated and disappointed. But he boosted his lead in the drivers' title race to 22 points with 198 ahead of Norris and Verstappen, who is third on 155. Russell is fourth on 136.

"It's not ideal for anyone," said Piastri. "I've not actually seen the incident, so I don't know exactly what happened, but if Lando has taken full responsibility then that's how it goes I guess.

"It was just a bit of a tricky race in general and not an ideal finish."

On his duel with Norris, he added: "It was fair, but he made quite a large move into Turn 10, I held my own into the chicane. It was definitely a tough battle, but a clean one up until that point.

"I've not seen the incident, but I don't think there was any bad intentions involved. I think it was just unfortunate really.

"I will go and have a look -- we're both fighting for a world championship and I'm very thankful to the team that they allow us to race. I don't expect this to change anything in terms of that."

Norris did not finish and accepted the blame for the accident.

"There's no one to blame but myself, so I apologise to the whole team and to Oscar as well for attempting something a bit too silly. Glad I didn't ruin his race and yeah apologies to the team." — ***AFP***

Spaun creates his magic moment to clinch first major at US Open

OAKMONT: J.J. Spaun achieved his dream of winning his first major golf title by capturing the US Open. Doing it with a 65-foot birdie putt on the last hole was pure magic.

Spaun birdied four of the last seven holes to win at Oakmont on Sunday, firing a two-over 72 to defeat Scotland's Robert MacIntyre by two strokes, clinching matters with his stunning putt at the 72nd hole.

"Just to finish it off like that is just a dream," Spaun said. "You watch other people do it... you see crazy moments. To have my own moment like that at this championship, I'll never forget this moment for the rest of my life.

Spaun drove the par-four 17th green to set up the tap-in birdie that put him ahead to stay, joining a list of birdie-birdie finishers to win the US Open that includes Jack Nicklaus, Ben Hogan, Tom Watson and Jon Rahm.


J.J. Spaun of the United States poses with the trophy.

"It's definitely like a storybook, fairytale ending, kind of underdog fighting back, not giving up, never quitting," Spaun said.

"With the rain and everything and then the putt, you couldn't write a better story. I'm just so fortunate to be on the receiving end of that."

Spaun, whose only prior PGA Tour win was the 2022 Texas Open, was a runner-up at the Cognizant Classic and Players Championship this year, losing a playoff to second-ranked Rory McIlroy at the latter.

"I just felt like you keep putting yourself in these positions, like eventually you're going to tick one off," Spaun said.

Spaun made bogeys on five of the first six holes, including the first three, and birdied four of the last seven.

"As bad as things were going, I just still tried to just commit to every shot," Spaun said. "I tried to just continue to dig deep. I've been doing it my whole life."

Spaun has been resilient. In 2018 he was diagnosed with one type of diabetes but treatment was ineffective. In 2021, Spaun found he had been misdiagnosed and had another type of diabetes.

On Sunday morning, he made an early trip for medicine.

"My daughter had a stomach bug and was vomiting all night long," Spaun said. "Kind of a rough start to the morning. I'm not blaming that on my start, but it kind of fit the mold of what was going on, the chaos."

A 96-minute storm delay was crucial, allowing Spaun to reset after his miserable start.

"I just needed to reset everything, kind of like start the whole routine over," Spaun said. "I felt like I had a really good chance to win the US Open at the start of the day. It just unravelled very fast.

"But that break was actually the key for me to winning this tournament."

That and his monster 65-foot birdie putt at the final hole. "I was just in shock, disbelief that it went in and it was over," Spaun said. "I couldn't even believe what I witnessed when that went in."

Neither could his playing partner, Norway's 14th-ranked Viktor Hovland, who settled for his best US Open finish at third on 282.

"That was unbelievable," Hovland said. "After his start, it just looked like he was out of it immediately. Everyone came back to the pack. "And then the one on 18, it's just absolutely filthy there." — ***AFP***

US Open (Top Scorers)

279 - J.J. Spaun (USA) 66-72-69-72
281 - Robert MacIntyre (SCO) 70-74-69-68
282 - Viktor Hovland (NOR) 71-68-70-73
283 - Tyrrell Hatton (ENG) 73-70-68-72, Carlos Ortiz (MEX) 71-72-67-73, Cameron Young (USA) 70-74-69-70
284 - Scottie Scheffler (USA) 73-71-70-70, Sam Burns (USA) 72-65-69-78, Jon Rahm (ESP) 69-75-73-67
285 - Russell Henley (USA) 70-72-72-71, Ben Griffin (USA) 69-71-74-71
286 - Chris Kirk (USA) 73-70-72-71, Brooks Koepka (USA) 68-74-73-71, Xander Schauffele (USA) 72-74-71-69, Thriston Lawrence (RSA) 67-74-70-75, Christiaan Bezuidenhout (RSA) 72-71-71-72, Rasmus Neergaard-Petersen (DEN) 69-74-69-74, Adam Scott (AUS) 70-70-67-79

Albanese grabs stage two of Tour of Switzerland

SCHWARZSEE: Vincenzo Albanese pounced in the closing metres to win the second stage of the Tour of Switzerland yesterday.

The Italian was one of three riders who gave chase when Quinn Simmons shot off the front of the pack with 600 metres to go.

As the American national champion faltered in the finishing straight, Albanese burst past and edged Swiss rider Fabio Christen and Briton Lewis Askey to the line. It was Albanese's first win at World Tour level.

Today's third stage, 195.6km from Aarau to Heiden is another hilly run with a rising finish. The 8-day Tour of Switzerland is the final significant stage race before the start of the Tour de France on July 5. — ***AFP***

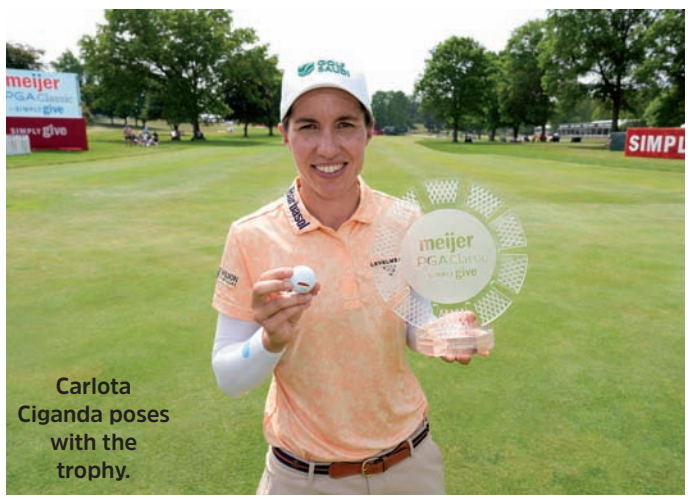
Spain's Ciganda ends LPGA title drought with Meijer Classic win

WASHINGTON: Spain's Carlota Ciganda ended her eight-and-a-half year title drought with a one-shot victory at the Meijer LPGA Classic in Michigan on Sunday.

The veteran Spaniard, who had been part of a six-way tie for the lead after Saturday's third round, closed with a five-under-par 67 to clinch her first win since winning in Mexico in 2016.

Ciganda snatched the lead to move to 16 under after back-to-back birdies on the 17th and 18th holes, edging her just in front of South Korea's Choi Hye-jin, who shot a closing 68 to finish on 15 under.

Lee Somi was third after a dazzling seven-under-par 65 to finish on 14 under, ahead of three players tied on 13 under including France's Celine Boutier and US star Lexi Thompson.


Carlota Ciganda poses with the trophy.

But the day belonged to Ciganda, whose round included seven birdies with two bogeys.

"Winning is always very special," Ciganda said afterwards.

"(The last) was in Mexico in 2016. I wanted to win in the US and I think winning against all these really good players -- it's very special.

"I think a lot of mental work that I put in on these months and years. I think when you win it's when you realize all the hard work pays off." — ***AFP***

Expert's view



By Dr. Mahfoud Amara

Coaching question in Qatar's sport future: Why domestic development matters

THE Qatar Stars League (QSL) as other sport leagues in the country is dominated by foreign coaching talent. While this international presence has brought tactical sophistication and visibility to Qatari football and sport in general, it has also presented a paradox: the very excellence that foreign coaches deliver may involuntarily hinder the growth of a sustainable domestic coaching ecosystem.

The reliance on foreign coaches reflects global trends in talent acquisition but raises pressing questions about the future of football development in Qatar, especially in relation to national capacity-building.

One of the core challenges lies in the limited opportunities available for domestic coaches to break into the top level. Without regular access to managerial roles, aspiring local coaches struggle to gain the competitive experience required to evolve professionally. This creates a self-reinforcing cycle: clubs lack confidence in domestic coaches due to their inexperience and coaches remain inexperienced because they are not given the chance to lead.

The apparent absence of structured mobility within the league further complexes this problem. Unlike foreign coaches who may arrive with top-tier experience, domestic coaches often start at grassroots or youth levels and find few avenues for upward movement. Without defined progression pathways, the pool of qualified and competitive local coaching talent risks stagnation. When coaching roles are overwhelmingly filled by foreigners, it can send an implicit message that local knowledge and leadership are undervalued – something that can dissuade younger generations from viewing coaching as a viable long-term career in sport.

Despite these challenges, there are significant opportunities to transform the current reality into a foundation for sustainable growth. The presence of high-caliber foreign coaches should be viewed not necessarily as a source of competition but also as a potential resource for mentorship and knowledge exchange. Well-designed mentorship schemes could pair experienced foreign coaches with local counterparts, enabling practical learning through direct engagement.

Creating a truly competitive cohort of domestic coaches requires deliberate, strategic investment across multiple institutional layers. National sport coaching programs need to expand their reach and rigour, aligning with global best practices while incorporating local context. Certification processes must be standardised and trusted, and ongoing development opportunities should be built into the coaching lifecycle. Furthermore, domestic coaches need regular exposure to competitive environments. This can be achieved through rotations within youth national teams, assistant roles in senior squads, and even overseas placements through bilateral exchange agreements with foreign sport federations. A structured pathway—from licensing to apprenticeship to head coach roles—would allow talent to be nurtured methodically, rather than sporadically.

Here, the newly launched College of Sport Sciences at Qatar University plays a critical role. As the country's academic and research institution, the College is well positioned to serve as a national hub for sport coaching development, supported by strong partnerships with key national sport organizations. Through its current undergraduate and future postgraduate programs, research initiatives, and community partnerships, it can foster a new generation of sport professionals—including coaches—equipped with both theoretical knowledge and practical competence. Moreover, the College's emphasis on evidence-based coaching, culturally rooted but open to international trends, makes it an ideal partner in designing and implementing domestic coaching pathways aligned with Qatar's broader sport vision.

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Stuttgart triumph lifts Fritz back to fourth in ATP rankings



Taylor Fritz with the Stuttgart Open trophy. Xinhua

PARIS: Taylor Fritz, who beat Alexander Zverev in the final at Stuttgart at the weekend to make a strong start to the grass court season, reclaimed his place in the top four in the ATP rankings on Monday.

The 27-year-old American returned to his highest ranking of 4, which he reached last November but lost during the clay court season in which he won just three matches in four tournaments.

Fritz lost in the first round of the French Open last month to Daniel Altmaier as he slipped down to seventh.

He now trails only the unchanged top trio of Jannik Sinner, Carlos Alcaraz and Zverev. Jack Draper drops two to sixth while Lorenzo Musetti, who did not play last week, falls to seventh. Another American Ben Shelton enters the Top 10 for the first time in his career after reaching the semi-finals in Stuttgart.

ATP Rankings (Top 10)

1. Jannik Sinner (ITA) 10,880 points
2. Carlos Alcaraz (ESP) 8,850
3. Alexander Zverev (GER) 6,500
4. Taylor Fritz (USA) 4,735 (+3)
5. Novak Djokovic (SRB) 4,630
6. Jack Draper (GBR) 4,550 (-2)
7. Lorenzo Musetti (ITA) 4,470 (-1),
8. Tommy Paul (USA) 3,470
9. Holger Rune (DEN) 3,440
10. Ben Shelton (USA) 3,170 (+2)

Maria climbs 43 places in WTA rankings

Meanwhile, Tatjana Maria jumped 43 places to 43rd in the WTA rankings published yesterday, the day after completing her fairytale run to the title at Queen's.

The 37-year-old mother of two, who had to come through two rounds of qualifying before reaching the main draw at Queen's, became the oldest winner of a WTA 500 event when she beat American Amanda Anisimova 6-3, 6-4 in Sunday's final.

Maria, who was the first female Queen's champion since Olga Morozova 52 years ago, climbed one place short of her career high-ranking of 42, which she attained last year.

The top three remained unchanged with Aryna Sabalenka, Coco Gauff and Jessica Pegula. Zheng Qinwen climbed one place to fourth, her highest ranking after reaching the semi-finals at Queen's.

Jasmine Paolini dropped one place to fifth while Iga Swiatek who has yet to set foot on grass after an unsuccessful season on clay, slipped one place to eighth. — ***AFP***