

Qatar to host inaugural FIP Asia Padel Cup in October

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Doha will host the inaugural edition of the FIP Asia Padel Cup, the continental national team tournament scheduled from October 17 - 24.

The event is organised by the International Padel Federation (FIP) with the Qatar Tennis Federation (QTF) and Padel Asia, and is part of FIP's broader project to renew and strengthen its continental championships.

The tournament will unfold in two stages: the first, titled Phase 2, to run from October 17 to 19, will feature 17 teams ranked from 5th to 21st in the Asia-Oceania region, divided into four groups: (three groups of four teams and one group of five), with the top team from each group qualifying for the final stage.

The second stage, titled Final 8, the top-tier phase of the competition, to take place from October 20-24, will feature the four teams that qualify in the first stage, along with the continent's top four ranked teams.

This stage will be played at the prestigious Khalifa International Tennis and Squash Complex.



Commenting on this, President of Padel Asia and Tournament Director Tareq Zainal said: "We are proud to host the First Edition of the FIP Asia Padel Cup in Qatar. It is a memorable moment for our continent and for the sport of padel."

"This tournament represents more than just a competition, it is a celebration of ambition and the tremendous growth of padel across Asia. As Padel Asia, we are proud to witness our shared vision come to life in Doha, a city that has embraced padel with passion and purpose," he added.

In turn, FIP President Luigi Carraro said: "The FIP Asia Padel Cup takes place in Doha, a symbolic location for padel, because it is precisely here that our beloved sport gained the scale, vision, and ambition that have brought us to where we are today. And it is from here that we will set out once again toward new goals and new achievements."

"My special thanks go to the Qatar Tennis Squash and Badminton Federation (QTF), a model of hospitality, support, and forward-thinking in organizing world-class sporting events," Carraro added.

Veteran Venus wins in return, Osaka to face Raducanu at DC Open

WASHINGTON: Venus Williams made a triumphant return to singles tennis after a 16-month hiatus, defeating fellow American Peyton Stearns 6-3, 6-4 to reach the second round of the WTA and ATP DC Open.

The 45-year-old winner of seven career Grand Slam singles titles rolled to her 819th career WTA singles victory in 97 minutes at the first US Open hardcourt tuneup event.

"It is not easy to come off after all that time and play the perfect match," she said. "Peyton played so well. I felt like I was trying to slow myself down from going faster and faster and faster."

Williams had not played a WTA singles match since March of last year at Miami and had not won a match in 709 days -- since defeating Russian Veronika Kudermetova in the first round at Cincinnati in August 2023.

Williams became the oldest player to compete in a WTA tour-level match since Japan's Kimiko Date at 46 in Tokyo in 2017. — ***AFP***

Qatar beat Ukraine's FC Metalist in friendly



Qatar beat FC Metalist 1925 Kharkiv of Ukraine 2-0 in a friendly at the Sportzentrum Aug Stadium in Seekirchen am Wallersee, Austria, yesterday. The match was a part of Al Annabi's preparations at their overseas camp in Austria for the forthcoming Asian Qualifiers Playoffs for FIFA World Cup 2026.

QBF to host four-nation tournament

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The Qatar Basketball Federation (QBF) will host a quadrangular International Friendly Basketball Tournament from July 28 to August 1, at the world-class Lusail Multipurpose Hall.

The event will feature four leading Asian national teams: Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Japan, and Iraq, as part of their preparations for upcoming continental competitions, notably the 31st FIBA Asia Cup, to be held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, from August 5 to 17, with 16 participating teams.

This tournament represents the final stage of the Qatar national team's rigorous preparation program, following intensive training camps in Turkiye, Doha, and South Korea.

It is designed to evaluate the players' technical and physical readiness in a highly competitive setting against diverse Asian basketball styles.

The tournament schedule:

- July 28: Qatar vs. Saudi Arabia at 1:00 PM
- July 30: Qatar vs. Japan at 5:00 PM
- Iraq vs. Saudi Arabia at 7:00 PM
- August 1: Saudi Arabia vs. Japan at 5:00 PM
- Qatar vs. Iraq at 7:00 PM

Led by Turkish coach Hakan Demir, the Qatar national team roster includes Omar Mohammed Saad, Abdulrahman Saad, Ahmed Saeed Mohammed, Zain Eldin Al Badri, Hajji Bobo Magassa, Babacar Dieng, Mohammed Al Sayed, Saidu Al Hajj Ndaye, Hamad Yassin, Mustafa Ndao, Ghassan Hajjar, Mahmoud Darwish, Tyler James Lee, Brandon Goodwin, Alen Hadzibegovic, and Mohammed Brashar.



Roberto Firmino joins Al Sadd on a two-year deal, running until 2027.

Al Sadd sign former Liverpool star Firmino

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Qatar football giants Al Sadd yesterday announced the signing of Brazilian international striker Roberto Firmino **(pictured)**.

The former Liverpool and Al Ahli (Saudi Arabia) star joins Al Sadd on a two-season deal, committing his future to the current league champions until 2027.

The move sees the 33-year-old forward embark on a new chapter in his illustrious career, transitioning from the Saudi Pro League to the Qatar Stars League.



Firmino initially arrived in Saudi Arabia in the summer of 2023, signing a three-year contract with Al Ahli after an impactful eight-year spell at Liverpool FC, and won numerous accolades, including the Premier League and Champions League.

During his tenure with Al Ahli, Firmino proved to be a pivotal figure.

He featured in 65 matches across various competitions, netting 21 goals.

His time with the Saudi club culminated in significant success, most notably contributing to their triumph in the 2024-2025 AFC Champions League Elite, where he was also recognized with the ACL Elite MVP Award, highlighting his crucial role in their continental victory.

Qatar defeat Lebanon to book semis spot at West Asian Volleyball Championship

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Qatar advanced to the semi-finals of the inaugural West Asian Men's Volleyball Championship in Manama, Bahrain, after a straight-set (25-17, 25-15, 25-13) victory over Lebanon yesterday.

Qatar's performance has been dominant throughout the tournament, extending their winning streak. The team advanced to the knockout stage after finishing at the top of Group B with three consecutive wins.

Their journey began with a 3-0 win against Saudi Arabia, followed by a 3-1 victory over Oman, and concluded the group stage with a hard-fought 3-2 win against Kuwait.

In the other quarterfinal matches, Saudi Arabia and Oman also secured their spots in the semi-finals with 3-0 wins against Jordan and the UAE, respectively. The final quarterfinal match between Bahrain and Kuwait is still in progress. The championship, led by Ali Ghanem Al Kuwari of the West Asian Volleyball Federation, was created to enhance regional competition and elevate the sport's technical standards.

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Milan wins crash-marred sprint at Tour de France

VALENCE: Italy's Jonathan Milan won a crash-marred finale to stage 17 of the Tour de France in lashing rain yesterday, extending his lead in the sprint points race.

Overall leader Tadej Pogacar and his closest rival Jonas Vingegaard (4min 15sec behind) finished safely despite a mass fall 800m from the finish line at Valence at the foot of the Alps.

On the rain-slick roads at Valence once one rider had fallen his interminable slide across the tarmac sent riders flying like skittles leaving only 10 to contest the sprint.

This was a second stage win for Milan, who won Italy's first stage since 2019 on stage eight.

The 24-year-old Lidl Trek rider now has 312 points, and is in a powerful position to win the battle for the green jersey in Paris as Pogacar is second at 240 with only two possible sprints left at 50pts each.



Lidl - Trek team's Italian rider Jonathan Milan cycles to the finish line.

As the remaining 164 riders embarked from the sleepy Provence village of Bollene, the collective will of the peloton made for a slow approach of the Alps.

Billed as a sprinters stage on an unusually mild (22C) day the riders were also spared the 50kph winds that had been forecast.

But the rain deprived the stage a full bunch sprint due to the horrid fall.

The three massive climbs culminating with the ascent to the 2304m altitude Col de la Loze on stage 18 will sort the wheat from the chaff on Thursday's Queen stage.

While tomorrow's hellishly designed five mountains of madness on stage 19 sound the final call for any pretender to knock Pogacar off his high perch.

Unless that is the three ascents of the cobbled roads to the Sacre Coeur Basilica in old Montmartre descend into chaos on Sunday. — ***AFP***



Sinner reappoints coach he sacked in doping scandal

PARIS: World No.1 Jannik Sinner **(pictured)** is teaming up once again with Umberto Ferrara, the fitness coach he sacked in the summer of 2024 after it was revealed that the Italian had tested positive for doping, his management team announced yesterday.

Since the revelation of Sinner's positive tests for the anabolic steroid clostebol, Sinner has constantly maintained his innocence, laying the blame squarely on his team.

Although he quickly dismissed Ferrara and his physiotherapist, Giacomo Naldi, after the revelation of his positive tests, Sinner still described the former as an "excellent coach" on the sidelines of the ATP Finals in Turin in November 2024.

"Jannik Sinner has reappointed Umberto Ferrara as his fitness coach with immediate effect," his new management team Avima announced in a brief statement.

"The decision has been made in alignment with Jannik's management team as part of ongoing preparations for upcoming tournaments, including the Cincinnati Open and US Open.

"Umberto has played an important role in Jannik's development to date, and his return reflects a renewed focus on continuity and performance at the highest level." Doping authorities accepted that it was accidental and imposed a three-month ban which Sinner served following his victory in the Australian Open in January.

He returned in time for the French Open where he lost an epic final to Carlos Alcaraz before beating the Spaniard in four sets to win his first Wimbledon title earlier this month. — ***AFP***

India suffer Pant setback in fourth England Test

MANCHESTER: India suffered a potentially major setback when Rishabh Pant retired hurt on the first day of the fourth Test against England at Old Trafford yesterday before they reached stumps on 264-4.

Earlier, spinner Liam Dawson marked his first Test in eight years with the key wicket of Yashasvi Jaiswal after England captain Ben Stokes went against history by opting to bowl first after winning the toss.

No team winning the toss and bowling first has ever won a Test at Old Trafford.

India, 2-1 down after three Tests, must win in Manchester if they are to keep alive their hopes of winning the five-match series.

But the tourists will have to make history as they have never managed to win in nine previous Tests at Old Trafford.

India, got through the first session without losing a wicket only for three batsmen, including skipper Shubman Gill, to be dismissed before tea.

The recalled Sai Sudharsan, dropped on 20, twice hooked fast bowler Jofra Archer for four before Pant launched Brydon Carse for a superb straight six.

But the audacious Pant was hurt when trying to reverse sweep off a yorker-length delivery from paceman Chris Woakes -- a shot many batsmen would not even contemplate let alone attempt.

England appealed for lbw but a review revealed wicketkeeper Pant had got an inside edge before the ball deflected onto his right foot.



India's Rishabh Pant reacts as he receives medical attention following a foot injury.

Pant, who had made 37 off 48 balls, took his boot off and, following on-field treatment, eventually limped into a buggy before being driven off the field, with India then 212-3.

Soon afterwards Sudharsan fell for a well-made 61 when a top-edged swivel pull off a shirt ball from lively paceman Stokes that cramped him for room flew straight to Carse at long leg.

Even though the floodlights were on, there were still several overs remaining when the umpires took the players off for bad light at 1721 GMT despite England bowling spin at both ends with Dawson and the part-time off-breaks of Joe Root.

Jaiswal and fellow opener KL Rahul defied difficult conditions and testing bowling from Woakes and Jofra Archer to take India to 78-0 at lunch But Rahul had added just six more runs to his lunch score of 40 when, trying to force Woakes off the back foot, he edged to Zak Crawley at third slip, leaving India 94-1.

Jaiswal late-cut Carse for four to go to 49 before completing a 96-ball fifty.

Dawson, recalled after 21-year-old off-spinner Shoaib Bashir suffered a series-ending finger injury during England's thrilling 22-run win in the third Test at Lord's, did not bowl before lunch.

But the Hampshire veteran, 35, playing his first Test since 2017, needed just seven balls to strike on Wednesday when Jaiswal pushed forward defensively to a good-length delivery and edged to Harry Brook at first slip.

Gill, who had accused England of contravening "the spirit of cricket" with their time-wasting tactics during an ill-tempered match at Lord's, was greeted with a chorus of boos from spectators as he walked out to the middle.

Shortly after Sudharsan was dropped by wicketkeeper Jamie Smith off the bowling of Stokes, the England skipper removed Gill for 12 when his opposing skipper played no shot and was judged lbw after a vociferous appeal from the all-rounder.

Gill reviewed, but to no avail, with India now 140-3.

His early exit means he has scored just 34 runs in his past three innings after scoring three hundreds in the first two Tests.

India selected paceman Jasprit Bumrah again even though they had previously announced he would only play three Tests in the series.

The policy was aimed at protecting the world's top-ranked bowler following a back injury.

Bumrah missed the second Test in Birmingham, which India won, but returned for the dramatic match at Lord's.

The fifth and final Test takes place at the Oval, starting on July 31.

BRIEF SCORES

India *264 for 4 (Sai Sudharsan 61, Jaiswal 58)* ***vs England*** *— AFP*

Canada swim star McIntosh primed to take worlds by storm

LOS ANGELES: Three world records in five days put Summer McIntosh in rare company and now the 18-year-old Canadian swimming sensation is primed to take the world championships by storm.

McIntosh won three gold medals at the Paris Olympics last year and then broke three world records in a breath-taking performance at the Canadian trials in June.

The teenager is the first swimmer to set world records in three different individual events since Michael Phelps did it on the way to his glittering eight-gold haul at the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

"Absolutely wild," McIntosh said of the accomplishment in an interview with Canadian broadcaster CBC.

Then she promptly pointed to a litany of things she could improve on in each race, saying the self-criticism is part of her mission to keep testing the boundaries of her sport.

"I don't think there is such a thing as a perfect race, at least I haven't done it yet," she said ahead of the world championships in Singapore starting on Sunday.

"There's room for more and that's what keeps me going. And I'm also still so young, I have so much more to achieve and I know I can get so much stronger."

That competitive spirit runs deep in the McIntosh family.

Her mother Jill competed at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics in swimming and older sister Brooke is a top pairs figure skater who won bronze in 2022 at the world junior championships.

"We're very competitive. This is really in our blood," Brooke once said.

McIntosh's rapid journey to the pinnacle of swimming has taken her from Canada to Florida, where she trained with the Sarasota Sharks from 2022 and through the Paris Games.

After the world championships she will begin training with Phelps's mentor Bob Bowman in Texas, as she builds toward the Los Angeles Olympics in 2028.



Summer McIntosh

In the meantime she has been training since January with French coach Fred Vergnoux and his group in Antibes, crediting his contribution to "the best meet of my career" despite the relatively brief association.

"I've gone way faster than I ever could have imagined," she said. At the Canadian trials in Victoria she smashed the 400m freestyle world record with a time of 3min 54.18sec, regaining a mark she had lost to Australian Ariarne Titmus.

She also broke the decade-old 200m individual medley world mark and lowered her own 400m medley world record.

In between she threatened Katie Ledecky's latest 800m free world mark on the way to the third-fastest time in history. She also clocked the second-fastest 200m butterfly ever, edging toward the record set by China's Liu Zige in 2009.

McIntosh launched her Olympic career in 2021 in Tokyo, where at 14 she was the youngest member of the Canadian team.

She didn't win a medal but in Paris last summer she took gold in the 200m butterfly, 200m medley and 400m medley, and claimed silver in the 400m free.

In Singapore she's expanding her program to include the 800m free and another mouthwatering showdown with Ledecky -- one of the swimmers she idolized as a youngster.

Now that she has established herself among swimming's elite, McIntosh has no trouble finding new motivation.

"I always want more," she said. — ***AFP***

Kelly hits winner as late drama takes England into Women's Euro 2025 final

GENEVA: Chloe Kelly scored a dr`amatic late winner in extra-time as reigning champions England came from behind to beat Italy 2-1 on Tuesday and reach the Women's Euro 2025 final.

The Lionesses had been on the brink of elimination as they trailed to Barbara Bonansea's first-half strike for surprise semi-finalists Italy in Geneva.

But after their remarkable comeback from two goals down to beat Sweden on penalties in last week's quarter-final, they pulled off more heroics here.

Michelle Agyemang came off the bench and forced the extra period by equalising in the 96th minute, and fellow substitute Kelly completed the turnaround by following in to score the winner in the 119th minute after her penalty had been saved.



England's Chloe Kelly (right) rushes to the ball to score in front of Italy's goalkeeper Laura Giuliani.

Sarina Wiegman's team are through to their third consecutive major tournament final and the 2022 European champions head to Basel for Sunday's showpiece.

That will be either a repeat of the 2023 Women's World Cup final, which they lost to Spain, or a repeat of the last Euro final, in which they defeated Germany at Wembley -- those sides met in their semi yesterday. It has been quite a ride for England, with this victory following their comeback against Sweden, while the nature of the defeat for Italy was cruel.

Many of their players were in tears at full time, as the Azzurre -- who are ranked 13th in the world and were not expected to come this far -- fell short of reaching a first final since the 1997 Euros.

Italy looked fresher and they opened the scoring in the 33rd minute as the impressive Sofia Cantore reached the right byline before delivering a cross which reached Bonansea at the back post. The Juventus player controlled before lashing a shot into the roof of the net from close range. Alessia Russo and Lauren James came closest for England in the first half, but Italy held their lead into the break and Wiegman then sent on Beth Mead at the start of the second half.

Lauren Hemp headed onto the roof of the net and an Alex Greenwood long-ranger was punched away by goalkeeper Laura Giuliani, who was booked for timewasting with almost 20 minutes still to play.

With the clock ticking down the England coach introduced Kelly followed by Agyemang, two players who had already made a big impact off the bench against Sweden. Agyemang, the teenage Arsenal forward, replaced captain and centre-back Leah Williamson in a clear sign of desperation in the Lionesses camp.

Italy could have killed the game off but Hannah Hampton made a crucial double save to deny Michela Cambiaghi and Emma Severini at a corner in the 86th minute.

That proved to be crucial, as England equalised in the sixth of the seven allotted added minutes at the end of normal time.

Giuliani failed to hold an awkward cross into the box from England's right and the ball came out to Agyemang who took a touch and blasted in. Once again England would have to go through extra time. They now had the momentum, and Giuliani did well to stop a Kelly corner going straight in with 108 minutes played. The remarkable Agyemang then saw a lobbed effort beat Giuliani but come back off the crossbar with four minutes of extra time remaining.

Penalties loomed, but instead it would be just the one spot-kick, awarded when Mead was pushed over in the area right in front of the Croatian referee.

Kelly's effort was saved by Giuliani, but she was on hand to convert the rebound and send England into another final. — ***AFP***

Juventus make Conceicao loan permanent

ROME: Portuguese international Francisco Conceicao, who spent last year on loan at Juventus, has completed a full transfer from Porto, the Serie A club has announced.

The 22-year-old winger, who has 11 caps for Portugal and scored seven goals in 40 appearances in all competitions for Juventus last season, has signed a deal taking him up to 2030.

"Juventus announce that they have reached an agreement with FC Porto for the permanent acquisition of Francisco Conceicao," Juve said in a statement released on Tuesday evening.

Juventus, the only Italian club listed on the stock exchange, said it had paid "30.4 million euros ($35.6 million) payable in four annual instalments", in addition to 1.6 million euros in fees and other costs.

According to the Italian press, Juventus are also close to finalising the transfer of another player from Porto, Portuguese right-back Joao Mario while defender Alberto Costa is expected to go in the other direction.

Juve, now coached by Igor Tudor, have already strengthened their attacking line with the signing of Canadian international Jonathan David from French side Lille. — ***AFP***



Francisco Conceicao

Brighton forward Ferguson joins Roma on loan

LONDON: Brighton and Ireland forward Evan Ferguson has joined Serie A side Roma on a season-long loan, the clubs announced yesterday.

Ferguson, 20, burst onto the scene as a teenager, scoring 10 goals for Premier League club Brighton and making his international debut in the 2022/23 season.

He scored a hat-trick against Newcastle as an 18-year-old but his career has stalled due to loss of form and injury.

In total he has made 80 appearances for Brighton, scoring 17 goals, but has scored just one goal at club level since November 2023.

Ferguson spent the second half of the last campaign on loan with West Ham, where he made eight appearances, failing to score a goal.

"AS Roma are delighted to announce the signing of Evan Ferguson from Brighton and Hove Albion," said the Serie A club.

"Ferguson will join Roma on loan with an option to buy." Brighton manager Fabian Hurzeler said: "Evan had a challenging period across the past season and a half, and it has been one disrupted by niggling injury issues, which hasn't allowed him a run of games.

"He is over those injuries and has come back in great shape. Now he really wants to play regularly. This is an exciting opportunity in a strong league and with the prospect of European football." — ***AFP***