Qatar marks two-year countdown to FIBA Basketball World Cup 2027

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Qatar yesterday marked the two-year countdown to the tip-off of the FIBA Basketball World Cup 2027. The most prestigious Basketball tournament in the world will begin with the opening game on 27 August 2027 and will conclude with the final at Lusail Multipurpose Hall, in Lusail on 12 September 2027.

On this occasion of this milestone the Local Organizing Committee confirmed the four World Cup venues that will host the 92 games.

The four venues are Lusail Multipurpose Hall, Duhail Sports Hall, Ali Bin Hamad Al Attiyah Arena, Al Janoub, they will be renamed to Lusail Arena, Duhail Arena, Al Attiyah Arena and Al Janoub Arena respectively - just for the tournament-to ensure homogeneity.

It will be the first time in the history of the Basketball World Cup that games will be played in a Football World Cup Stadium. Al Janoub will be converted to a Basketball Arena with its capacity exceeding the 8.000 spectators' seats, honouring Qatar's dedication to sustainability and continuing its legacy, connecting the two great sporting events.



Al Janoub Stadium, a FIFA World Cup 2022 venue, will be converted into a basketball arena for the historic FIBA World Cup.

FIBA Basketball World Cup Qatar 2027 Director General, President of Qatar Basketball Federation and Member of the FIBA Foundation, Mohammed Saad Al-Meghaiseeb said:

"Two years ago, Qatar won the bid to host the FIBA Basketball World Cup in 2027. It is a great honour and responsibility to deliver the best World Cup in the history, as well as to continue the legacy of our country in organising successful sporting events. Three of our venues are ready and we are working on one of the most distinguished projects in the history of our sport to transform a Football Stadium into a Basketball Arena. Al Janoub Arena will be the pinnacle of our efforts.

"Our main goal for the next two years is to continue to raise awareness and to leave a legacy for the game of Basketball both in Qatar and the whole MENA region. Exactly in two years, Qatar will welcome fans from all over the world. I can assure you that the members of the Local Organizing Committee, all our stakeholders and with the continuous support of the government Qatar will be ready to deliver an unforgettable experience to the Basketball world".

To celebrate this 2 Years to Go milestone FIBA with the support of the FBWC Qatar 2027 LOC has launched a fans registration website, to declare their interest and stay connected with all tournament updates, including early ticketing information.



It is a great honour and responsibility to deliver the best World Cup in the history, as well as to continue the legacy of our country in organising successful sporting events.
Saad Al-Meghaiseeb
QBF President


Qatar's U-20 players during a training session in Abha.

Qatar ready to face Kuwait at U-20 Gulf Cup in Saudi Arabia

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Qatar's U-20 national team is set to begin its campaign at the Gulf Cup in Abha, Saudi Arabia, with an opening match against Kuwait today, as head coach Emanuel Infante declared the squad ready for the challenge.

"The current tournament marks the first step for this generation and our current goal is to qualify for the next round," said Infante.

"Over the past two weeks we have prepared well, and the atmosphere within the group has been ideal, giving us confidence to deliver a performance that matches our ambitions."

The Qatar Football Association (QFA) confirmed a 23-player squad for the tournament, which runs from August 28 to September 9.

Infante's selection includes promising talents such as Naim Al Maghni, Ali Boumediene, Christian Saric, Ahmed Al Sayed, Ahmed Nasser, Iran Kothuru, Emmanuel Francis, Bilal Mohammed, Jadon Joseph, and Khaled Al Shuaibi.

Qatar are drawn in Group A alongside hosts Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Yemen.

Following the opener against Kuwait, they will face Yemen on August 31 before closing the group stage with a key match against Saudi Arabia on September 3.

Al Duhail seek recovery as Al Rayyan eye second win in crucial QSL clash

FAWAD HUSSAIN
THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Bassam Al Rawi has insisted that Al Duhail are under no pressure ahead of today's highly anticipated clash against Al Rayyan, as both sides look to recover from early stumbles in the Qatar Stars League (QSL) campaign.

The Red Knights are seeking their first win of the season after drawing with Al Shahania and falling to Al Wakrah. Despite sitting ninth in the standings, Al Rawi believes his side is showing signs of improvement and will rise to the occasion.

"We hope the Al Rayyan match marks the start of our return to form," said the experienced Qatari defender during the pre-match press conference yesterday.

"We're not under pressure. Every team can stumble, especially with new players in the squad, but we're improving with every game."

Coach Djamel Belmadi, who rejoined Al Duhail this season, is still looking for his first win in the league. He acknowledged the test posed by Al Rayyan and the intensity that often defines meetings between the two sides.

"We haven't won yet, and matches against Al Rayyan are always challenging because of their strength and large fan base," Belmadi said. "We must stick to our identity and play our game from start to finish."

Al Rayyan, too, are looking to bounce back after suffering a loss to Al Shamal following their opening win over Al Sailiya.

Head coach Artur Jorge believes preparation and belief in his players will be key to a positive result at Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium.


Al Duhail players during a training session as they prepare for match against Al Rayyan.


Al Rayyan players attend a training session.

"We've worked hard this week and are ready," said the Portuguese coach. "My confidence in the players is strong. Al Duhail have quality, but so do we. We must stick to our mentality, avoid previous mistakes, and be fully committed."

"These matches are always tight. We hope to show our strength and take the three points."

Midfielder Gregore added to the optimism in Al Rayyan's camp.

"We are confident and well-prepared. Al Duhail have a strong team, but we believe in our ability to win and deliver for our fans."

Meanwhile, defending champions Al Sadd are preparing for a testing match against high-flying Al Gharafa at Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium.

Al Sadd bounced back from a surprise defeat to Qatar SC with a convincing win over Al Ahli in the second round and are now looking to build momentum.

Coach Felix Sanchez is expecting a stern challenge.

"Al Gharafa have had a strong start. We've improved since our opening match and need to continue that progress," he said. "We're playing at home, and our goal is to deliver a strong performance and get a positive result."

Al Sadd defender Pedro Miguel echoed his coach's sentiments. "We enjoy difficult matches. Al Gharafa are a solid side with quality players, but we're confident in our squad and focused on earning the three points."

Al Gharafa, on the other hand, are aiming to continue their perfect start following wins over Umm Salal and Al Arabi. Coach Pedro Martins expects a competitive match but believes in his team's preparation.

"We must remain solid at the back without losing our identity. Focus and composure will be key," said Martins.

Spanish striker Joselu added, "A win would put us in a great position with nine points. Al Sadd are tough, but our team spirit is strong this season. We're confident and ready to perform in front of our fans."


Younis Al Balushi receives a certificate from Qatar Athletics Federation President Mohammed Issa Al-Fadala after winning pole vault gold.

Qatar clinch four more medals in Tunisia

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Qatar's athletics team added four more medals including one gold, two silver, and a bronze on Tuesday at the 11th Arab U-18 Athletics Championship in Tunis, Tunisia, bringing their total to five with one day of competition remaining.

Younis Al Balushi led the charge with gold in the pole vault, while teammate Abdullah Al Abdullah secured silver in the same event. Timo Jumaa clocked 10.76 seconds to take silver in the 100m sprint, and Saleh Mahmoud added a bronze in the discus throw to his earlier gold in shot put.

Qatar team also includes Abdulrazzaq Idris and Abkar Idris in the 400m hurdles; Mubarak Saeed in the 1500m race.

The Arab U-18 Athletics Championship is featuring rising athletes from a many as 15 countries.


Qatari athlete Saleh Mahmoud poses with his medals.

QBF reveals first phase of youth fixtures

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The Qatar Basketball Federation (QBF) has announced the schedule and fixtures for the first phase of the 2025-2026 youth basketball competitions, set to take place at the QBF Arena.

This initiative underscores the federation's commitment to developing the sport's grassroots and nurturing a new generation of players capable of representing Qatar's national teams in the future.

The competitions will commence on September 13, 2025, with the Under-14 category, featuring four exciting matches: Al Shamal vs. Al Sadd, Al Rayyan vs. Al Wakrah, Qatar Club vs. Al Arabi, and Al Ahli vs. Al Khor.

The first phase for this category will conclude on Saturday, November 29, 2025.

The Under-16 category will kick off on Sunday, September 14, 2025, with matchups including Al Gharafa vs. Al Khor, Al Rayyan vs. Al Wakrah, Qatar Club vs. Al Shamal, and Al Ahli vs. Al Arabi. This phase will wrap up on Sunday, November 30, 2025.

These tournaments are a cornerstone in building the future of basketball in Qatar.
Saadoun Sabah Al Kuwari
QBF Secretary-General

Meanwhile, the Under-19 category will begin on Monday, September 15, 2025, with games featuring Al Gharafa vs. Al Shamal, Al Rayyan vs. Al Wakrah, Al Arabi vs. Al Ahli, and Qatar Club vs. Al Khor. The first phase for this age group will conclude on Monday, December 1, 2025.

The second phase of the championship is slated to start in January 2026, adhering to technical regulations regarding player registration and participation across all categories.

The QBF will implement international basketball rules for youth competitions to ensure high standards of organisation and competitive fairness.

Saadoun Sabah Al Kuwari, Secretary-General of the Qatar Basketball Federation and Director of National Teams, emphasised that the announcement of the new season's schedule aligns with a comprehensive strategy to develop Qatari talent and foster an ideal competitive environment for various age groups.

"These tournaments are a cornerstone in building the future of basketball in Qatar. The federation is dedicated to providing optimal technical and organisational conditions to support this vision," Al Kuwari stated.

The Secretary-General further noted that the QBF aims to align clubs with long-term development plans through these competitions, creating a competitive atmosphere that prepares young players for a seamless transition to national teams across different age groups.

Djokovic fights off qualifier to reach third round as Raducanu advances

NEW YORK: Novak Djokovic battled past American qualifier Zachary Svajda in four sets yesterday to reach the US Open third round for a record-equalling 19th time.

The 38-year-old Djokovic dropped the first set but recovered to win 6-7 (5/7), 6-3, 6-3, 6-1 and stay in the hunt for an unprecedented 25th Grand Slam singles title.

"I wasn't really happy about my tennis for the first part of the match but also credit to Zach for playing some high quality tennis," said Djokovic.

The Serbian star admitted to feeling "not that great" after a laboured performance but is optimistic he will gradually find his rhythm.

"That's what I'm hoping, the deeper I go into the tournament the better I feel about my game," he said.

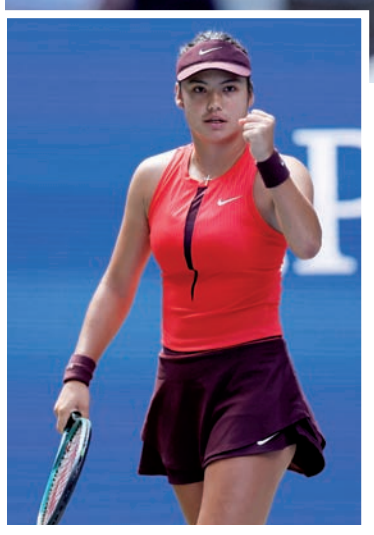
"Obviously a bit different for me the last couple of years body-wise. I get the wear and tear quicker than I used to do."

Djokovic, a four-time champion in New York, made a sluggish start against his 145th-ranked opponent who had won just two main-draw matches at majors.

The 22-year-old Svajda snatched a tight first set in a tie-break when he smacked a bruising backhand down the line that Djokovic could not return.



Novak Djokovic of Serbia celebrates match point against Zachary Svajda of the United States. INSET: Emma Raducanu of Great Britain reacts during the match against Janice Tjen of Indonesia.



Seventh seed Djokovic broke for a 4-2 lead in the second set on the way to levelling up the match in bright sunshine on Arthur Ashe Stadium.

Djokovic dropped serve early in the third set but then rattled off five consecutive games to grab the set after falling 3-1 behind.

With Svajda wilting and receiving treatment to both legs, Djokovic pulled away to victory by winning 11 of the final 12 games to register a record-tying 191st hard-court match win at Grand Slams.

He also surpassed the mark he shared with Roger Federer by making the last 32 of a major for the 75th time. He will next play Britain's Cam Norrie or Francisco Comesana of Argentina.

Indonesia's Tjen exits

Meanwhile, Indonesian qualifier Janice Tjen's US Open campaign ground to a halt yesterday with a comprehensive second-round defeat to Britain's Emma Raducanu.

Tjen upset Russian 24th seed Veronika Kudermetova on Sunday after becoming the first Indonesian to play in the main singles draw of a Grand Slam since 2004.

But any hopes of a sustained giant-killing run at Flushing Meadows evaporated in a 6-2, 6-1 defeat to 2021 US Open champion Raducanu at the Louis Armstrong Stadium.

Raducanu booked her place in the third round with a clinical performance, pulling Tjen all over the court with a succession of powerful deep groundstrokes into the corners.

Raducanu established control from the outset, breaking Tjen in the second game of the first set and holding twice for a 3-0 lead.

She broke Tjen again to take the first set, pinging a forehand into the corner as the 23-year-old from Jakarta scrambled unsuccessfully to return.

Tjen was soon under pressure in the second set, being broken twice in succession to fall 4-0 down.

Raducanu then held for a 5-0 lead, before wrapping up victory by holding in the seventh game.

Meanwhile, British fifth seed Jack Draper pulled out of the US Open yesterday ahead of his second-round match with a niggling arm injury.

The 23-year-old beat Argentine qualifier Federico Agustin Gomez in four sets in the opening round on Monday but withdrew before he was scheduled to face Belgium's Zizou Bergs. — *AFP*



Lusail International Circuit unveils 2025 Qatar GP key visual

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Lusail International Circuit (LIC) yesterday revealed the official key visual for the Formula 1 Qatar Airways Qatar Grand Prix 2025, capturing the energy, speed, and spirit of the event set for 28–30 November.

The artwork showcases the Qatar Formula 1 car in its bold and unique national colours, a bold reflection of Qatar's presence on the global motorsport stage. Speeding through LIC's iconic building, the car blazes a trail of light and color, symbolizing the sheer speed and adrenaline of Formula 1.

Local cultural elements are also woven into the artwork, with Saadu-inspired curb designs stretched along the track and a dramatic Doha skyline backdrop, blending tradition with modernity.

Front and center is the tagline "Where Hearts Are Racing" a campaign platform carried forward from 2024. More than a slogan, it reflects how motorsport has become deeply rooted in Qatari society and how Lusail International Circuit seeks to connect the emotions of the drivers on track with the fans in the grandstands.

Whether it's the thrill of watching Formula 1 live for the first time, witnessing the Sprint Race, cheering on the next generation through Formula 2, or simply soaking up the electric atmosphere of race weekend, "Where Hearts Are Racing" is a promise that every moment at LIC creates lasting memories. It underscores the circuit's role as a world-class hub for motorsport and as a destination where passion, culture, and performance come together on and off the track.

With British singer Seal renowned for his soulful music confirmed as Friday night's headlining artist and more exciting news still to come, anticipation is building towards one of the most thrilling weekends of the year.

Ashwin calls time on IPL career

NEW DELHI: Indian spin great Ravichandran Ashwin **(pictured)** yesterday announced his retirement from the Indian Premier League and plans to play in other global franchise tournaments.

The 38-year-old, a master off-spinner who quit international cricket in December during India's Test tour of Australia, ends as the fifth-highest wicket-taker in the IPL with 187 scalps. He played for five IPL franchises and won the tournament with Chennai Super Kings in 2010 and 2011, where he also played in this year's edition.

"They say every ending will have a new start," legendary Ashwin wrote on social media.

"My time as an IPL cricketer comes to a close today but my time as an explorer of the game around various leagues begins today."

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) does not allow any current player in Indian international or domestic cricket to feature in overseas leagues.

The feisty Ashwin finished his India career with 537 wickets in 106 Tests at an average of 24.00. He also played 116 one-day and 65 Twenty20 internationals. — *AFP*



Vingegaard regains lead as UAE win time-trial

FIGUERES: Jonas Vingegaard reclaimed the overall lead of the Vuelta a Espana on the fifth-stage team time-trial yesterday, while Team UAE riders Juan Ayuso and Joao Almeida climbed to second and third in the standings.

As the 21-day race arrived in Spain after four stages in Italy and France, the leaderboard was reshuffled with the three race favourites moving to the top of the deck.

Team UAE won the 24.1km stage around Figueres in 25min and 26sec, with Vingegard's Visma just eight seconds off the pace and Giulio Ciccone's Lidl-Trek a further second slower in third on the day.

The result leaves two-time Tour de France winner Vingegaard top of the overall standings, while UAE have Ayuso, Almeida and Marc Soler all eight seconds behind, with Italian climber Ciccone rounding out the top five.



Jonas Vingegaard celebrates on the podium wearing the overall leader red jersey.

Almeida said the result was a confidence boost for his team.

"The gaps are small and we need to be realistic. But it was full gas for everybody today. It would have been nicer to have the red jersey but we are getting closer and closer to it," said the Portuguese.

Some 15 national time-trial champions were sporting their country's colours on the course, where the eight-rider teams needed to finish the race with four riders together.

Team Lotto were the first down the starters' ramp from outside a giant pink castle decorated with croissants and boiled eggs designed by the surrealist artist Salvador Dali, who used to live in it.

Tom Pidcock's outfit Q36.5 did better than expected at 22sec on the British rider's first outing in the team event.

"It's not bad, I mean, I think we did a really great time-trial. It's my first as a pro, the first for this team," said Pidcock.

"The last 5km was horrible. I kept missing the back. When someone pulls out and you mistime it, then I was dying," said Pidcock, who dropped to 13th overall at 30sec.

Overnight leader David Gaudu slipped to sixth at 16sec, while Egan Bernal of Ineos dropped from fifth to 10th at 22sec.

The race next enters the Pyrenees with two tough mountain stages. — *AFP*

France overlook Ekitike for World Cup qualifiers, Akliouche called up

PARIS: Hugo Ekitike missed out on a place in the France squad named yesterday for the start of their 2026 World Cup qualifying campaign, but coach Didier Deschamps **(pictured)** did hand a first senior call-up to highly-rated Monaco winger Maghnes Akliouche.

Ekitike has made an impressive start to his Liverpool career with three goals in three competitive outings since arriving in the close-season from Eintracht Frankfurt.

However the 23-year-old striker, who scored five goals in five appearances for the France Under-21 side last season, will have to wait for his chance in the senior squad, where competition is fierce.

"We were already following Hugo when he was at Frankfurt. The fact that he is now at Liverpool and is still proving to be very effective, is great," Deschamps told reporters in Paris.

"Obviously he has the potential to be in the France squad."

France, World Cup winners in 2018 and runners-up in 2022, begin their bid to qualify for next year's finals in North America with a trip to Poland to play Ukraine next Friday, September 5.

They then host Iceland in Paris on Tuesday, September 9. Azerbaijan will be their other opponents in Group D, with further matches to be played in October and November and the group winners qualifying automatically for the finals.

Akliouche, 23, has been on the fringes of the full France squad for some time thanks to his impressive displays for Monaco which have led to him being linked with other big clubs around Europe. — *AFP*

FRANCE SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Lucas Chevalier (Paris Saint-Germain), Mike Maignan (AC Milan/ITA), Brice Samba (Rennes)

Defenders: Lucas Digne (Aston Villa/ENG), Malo Gusto (Chelsea/ENG), Lucas Hernandez (Paris Saint-Germain), Theo Hernandez (Al-Hilal/KSA), Ibrahima Konate (Liverpool/ENG), Jules Kounde (Barcelona/ESP), William Saliba (Arsenal/ENG), Dayot Upamecano (Bayern Munich/GER)

Midfielders: Desire Doue (Paris Saint-Germain), Manu Kone (Roma/ITA), Adrien Rabiot (Marseille), Aurelien Tchouameni (Real Madrid/ESP), Khephren Thuram (Juventus/ITA)

Forwards: Maghnes Akliouche (Monaco), Bradley Barcola (Paris Saint-Germain), Rayan Cherki (Manchester City/ENG), Ousmane Dembele (Paris Saint-Germain), Kylian Mbappe (Real Madrid/ESP), Michael Olise (Bayern Munich/GER), Marcus Thuram (Inter Milan/ITA)

Duplantis and Olyslagers seal Diamond League final wins



Sweden's Armand Duplantis celebrates after winning the men's pole vault final.

ZURICH: Sweden's Armand 'Mondo' Duplantis and Australian Nicola Olyslagers sealed wins in the Diamond League finals in a high-octane 'city event' in downtown Zurich yesterday.

"It was really cool, really amazing, I loved the atmosphere," said Duplantis.

"I've never done a street meet here. Compared to the stadium, it's kind of the same but different. I like it, I think it's super cool to be up and close to everybody."

Duplantis ran out the winner in 6.0m over Greek rival Emmanouil Karalis in the perfect tonic before the September 13-21 worlds in Tokyo.

The field of six was quickly cut, American Sam Hendricks, Dutchman Menno Vloon, Australian Kurtis Marschall and French veteran Renaud Lavillenie all falling by the wayside.

Just Duplantis and Karalis cleared 5.90 as the bar was raised to 6.0m.

Karalis failed in his first bid at the that mark, but Duplantis sailed over. A second failure and the pressure mounted on the Greek.

In front of a rowdy crowd of 5,000 and with 'Zorba's Dance' booming out over the tannoy, Karalis went clear to ensure the competition continued. The bar went up to 6.10m, but it proved too high on the night for both athletes, Duplantis winning on countback.

Ukraine's Olympic champion and world record holder Yaroslava Mahuchikh renewed her rivalry with two-time world indoor champion Olyslagers in the women's high jump.

Olyslagers was first over at 2.02m, Mahuchikh failing twice and skipping a third attempt.

The Australian then cleared 2.04m, Mahuchikh upping the ante by having the bar raised to 2.06.

Olyslagers had three failures at that height, leaving the Ukrainian with one shot at snatching the win.

But she clipped the bar and had to be content with second behind Olyslagers. Britain's Morgan Lake set a national record of 2.00m for third, on countback from Ukraine's Yuliia Levchenko.

There was home delight as decathlete Simon Ehammer, a 2022 world long jump bronze medallist, went out to 8.32m for victory.



Australia's Nicola Olyslagers reacts during the women's high jump final.

Italian Mattia Furlani took second, just 2cm shy of the Swiss jumper's mark, with Australian Liam Adcock rounding out the podium (8.24). — *AFP*