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QMMF launches MENA Karting Championship Nations Cup

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The Qatar Motor and Motorcycle Federation (QMMF) officially launched the MENA Karting Championship Nations Cup 2025 on October 26 at the Lusail Karting Circuit.

The opening ceremony welcomed drivers, officials, marshals, national federations, partners, and motorsport enthusiasts from the region, kicking off the championship with an exciting atmosphere.

Commenting on the occasion, the FIA President and Nations Cup Founder, Mohammed Ben Sulayem, said, "With growing numbers of participating countries, this year's MENA Karting Championship Nations Cup represents the development of motor sport and new opportunities for young talent across our region. My congratulations and thanks to QMMF and President Abdulrahman bin Abdullah Al Mannai for hosting this milestone event. Good luck to all competitors, volunteers, staff and officials. Your passion, dedication and teamwork allow this competition to thrive on the global stage."

Additionally, QMMF and Lusail International Circuit (LIC) President Abdulrahman bin Abdullah Al Mannai said, "We are proud to once again host the MENA Karting Championship



The MENA Karting Championship Nations Cup provides a platform for young drivers from across the region to develop their skills and passion for motorsport.



This championship is not only in line with Qatar National Vision 2030 but also highlights our ongoing commitment to support the growth of motorsport from the grassroots level, helping the next generation of talent reach their full potential.

Abdulrahman bin Abdullah Al Mannai

QMMF and LIC President Abdulrahman bin Abdullah Al Mannai speaks during the launch.



Nations Cup, providing a platform for young drivers from across the region to develop their skills and passion for motorsport. We extend our gratitude to FIA President Mohammed Ben Sulayem for his continued support and vision in promoting motorsport development. This championship is not only in line with Qatar National Vision 2030 but also highlights our ongoing commitment to support the growth of

motorsport from the grassroots level, helping the next generation of talent reach their full potential. We wish all competitors, teams, and officials every success throughout the championship and thank Marshals for their commitment and hard work."

The championship brings together 173 drivers from 18 nations, Qatar, Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Mauritania,

Morocco, Iran, Oman, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen, competing across eight categories.

Last year, Lebanon took the MENA Nations Cup title, Morocco ranked second and UAE secured the third position overall. This year's competition is expected to be even more competitive, showcasing the depth of regional talent and the spirit of friendly competition among participating nations.

The MENA Karting Championship Nations Cup promises an exciting display of talent, determination, and teamwork. More than just a competition, it embodies the spirit of regional unity, collaboration, and friendly rivalry among the participating nations. The event is open to the public, allowing fans to enjoy the racing action and entertainment activities throughout the weekend. Spectators can park in the designated public parking areas on-site and take the free shuttle service to the Lusail Karting Circuit.

CATEGORIES

- Micro Max (ages 8–11)
- Mini Max (ages 10–13)
- Junior Max (ages 12–15)
- Senior Max (ages 14+)
- DD2 (ages 15+)
- DD2 Masters (ages 31+)
- R390 Sprint (ages 15+)
- R390 Endurance (ages 15+)



Aboubakar claims Qatar's first medal at Asian Youth Games

Idriss Aboubakar won Qatar's first medal at the Asian Youth Games in Bahrain, taking gold in the boys' 110m hurdles with 13.61 seconds at Bahrain National Stadium, ahead of China's Tao Kaidi (14.11) and Saudi Arabia's Naif Alsmairi (14.12). Earlier, in the girls' 1500m final, Qatar's Meryem Salek finished fifth, while Uzbekistan's Nazmina Rakhimjonova won gold. Second Vice President of the Qatar Olympic Committee and OCA Vice President for West Asia Dr. Thani bin Abdulrahman Al Kuwari attended the presentation ceremony. Qatar is represented by 67 athletes competing across 16 sports: athletics, badminton, 3x3 basketball, equestrian (show jumping), golf, judo, jiu-jitsu, cycling, swimming, table tennis, taekwondo, triathlon, wrestling, volleyball, beach volleyball, and boxing. Female athletes are taking part in four of these disciplines — athletics, badminton, volleyball, and beach volleyball.



Aemilianus storms to Sealine Cup win

FAWAD HUSSAIN
THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Aemilianus yesterday made a seamless return to action, launching his 2025–26 season campaign with a commanding victory in the Sealine Cup over 1400m at Al Rayyan Racecourse.

Racing in the colours of Sheikh Mohammed bin Salman Al-Thani, the six-year-old travelled strongly behind the leaders before quickening smartly in the straight.

Under Marco Casamento, Aemilianus, trained by Gassim Al Ghazali, swept past his rivals with ease to score by three lengths, confirming that his excellent form from last season has carried over into the new term.

"The horse ran very well. It was the first start for him this season. The 1400m distance was very short for him and today he did very well," Casamento said after the race.

Qatar Racing and Equestrian Club's (QREC) Racing Manager Abdulla Rashid Al Kubaisi presented the trophies to the winning connections.

The duo of trainer Al Ghazali and Casamento celebrated another victory shortly after as Mansoor bin Ebrahim Al-Mahmoud-owned Basalt topped the 1600m Thoroughbred Conditions in the following race.

The fourth Al Rayyan Race Meeting featured nine races on the card, with jockey

4TH AL RAYYAN RACE MEETING - SEALINE CUP

WINNERS: (Horse, Trainer, Jockey)

Sealine Cup, Thoroughbred Conditions

Aemilianus, Gassim Al Ghazali, Marco Casamento

Purebred Arabian Conditions

Burkan, Ibrahim Saeed Al Malki, Tomas Lukasek

Thoroughbred Conditions

Basalt, Gassim Al Ghazali, Marco Casamento

Thoroughbred Handicap 70-90

Horse: Foehn, Hamad Ramzan Al-Naimi, Damien Morin

Purebred Arabian Handicap (60-80)

Angus, Hamad Al-Jehani, Alberto Sanna

Purebred Arabian Maiden Plate

Manjam, Zuhair Mohsen, Soufiane Saadi

Local Purebred Arabian Maiden Plate

Maadi Alseej, Jassim Hamad Al-Atteya, Alberto Sanna

Purebred Arabian Maiden Plate

Dhariya, Jean de Mieuille, Olivier d'Andigne

Thoroughbred Maiden Plate

Sheikha SBS, Nayef Batal Al-Otibi, Alberto Sanna

Alberto Sanna maintaining his sizzling form, grabbing a hat-trick just a day after earning a double, which included the Asherij Cup triumph.

He opened the meeting

by guiding Nayef Batal Al-Otibi-trained Sheikha SBS to an impressive win in the 1400m Thoroughbred Maiden Plate before sealing victories in the Local Purebred Arabian Maiden

Plate and Purebred Arabian Handicap (60–80) with Maadi Alseej and Angus respectively.

Meanwhile, the 1400m Purebred Arabian Maiden Plate saw Jean de

Mieuille-trained Dhariya claiming victory under Olivier d'Andigne, while Manjam, ridden by Soufiane Saadi, reigned supreme in 1600m Purebred Arabian Maiden Plate.

In the Thoroughbred Handicap 70–90, Hamad Ramzan Al-Naimi-trained Foehn secured victory under the guidance of Damien Morin. Al Rabbani Racing's Burkan wrapped up the meeting in style, storming to a neck win in the 1600m Purebred Arabian Conditions to give trainer Ibrahim Saeed Al Malki and jockey Tomas Lukasek a well-deserved success.

Next week's action will feature two highlights: the Al Beshariyah Cup – Purebred Arabian Premium Maiden Plate (Class 6) on Wednesday and the Al Gharafa Cup – Purebred Arabian (Class 2) on Thursday.



QREC Racing Manager Abdulla Rashid Al Kubaisi presented the trophies to the winning connections of the Sealine Cup. PICS: JUHAIM/QREC



Action during the 4th Al Rayyan Race meeting.

Dominant Qatar reach Asia Padel Cup final

CHINTHANA WASALA
THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Qatar booked their place in the men's final of the FIP Asia Padel Cup after a commanding 2–0 victory over Iran in the semi-final yesterday. The hosts will take on the UAE, who beat Australia in a thrilling semi-final, in today's title clash at the Khalifa International Tennis and Squash Complex.

In yesterday's last-eight clash, Mohammed Al Khanji and Rashed Al Ajufairi gave Qatar the start they were looking for. Despite a strong challenge posed by Amir Mohamad Jamshidi and Sajad Zareian Jahromi in a marathon clash that lasted just over two hours, Al Khanji and Al Ajufairi prevailed with a score of 7–5, 7–6.

In the second match, brothers Rashed Naif and Mashari Naif overcame Farsad Shahi and Arya Roghani 6–4, 6–4 to seal the tie and

send Qatar through to the final.

The third rubber between Hami Golestan and Arsham Moradi Nejad Marian of Iran and Mohammed Saadon Alkuwari and Hassan Adel Waly of Qatar was not played as the hosts had already secured victory.

Unlike the hosts, UAE had to dig deep to book their place in the final.

After the pair of Mohammad Al Janahi and Abdullah Alabdulla were beaten 4–6, 6–7 by Australia's Vuk Velickovic and Jake Benzal, UAE fought back to secure the 2–1 victory.

Ignacio Vilarino Gestoso and Majed Al Janahi levelled the tie with a commanding 6–3, 6–1 win over Emeric Navarro and Timothy Brown. Enrique Goenaga and Fares Al Janahi then handled the pressure well, defeating Marious Zelba and Dominic Bechard 6–4, 7–5 to clinch the tie for the UAE.

Meanwhile, Iran and Japan will face each other for the maiden FIP



Qatar players and officials celebrate after qualifying for the final.

Asia Women's Padel Cup. After losing the opener, Japan's Kana Ozawa and Saki Tsukamoto equalised with a dominant 6–1, 6–3 win, before Kana Tokumoto and Yui Kushima completed the job 6–2, 6–3.

Iran, on the other hand, needed only the first two matches to overcome Indonesia as victories from Najafi Dehaghi-Hana and Zahrizi-Fard earned Iran a spot in the final.

Al Hadi, Al Nuaimi notch up wins as fifth Hathab round begins

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Khaled Al Hadi and Faisal Mohammed Al Nuaimi emerged victorious as the fifth round of the Qatar Equestrian Tour – Longines Hathab began yesterday at the Qatar Equestrian Federation's outdoor arena.

Al Hadi delivered a stellar performance in the Silver Round (130cm), riding Capoen to victory in 34.08 seconds. Cyrine Cherif finished second on Triple T in 36.5 seconds, while Rondoux Jean Francois claimed third on Flower du Rouet in 37.35 seconds.

Saeed Hamad Al Rashdi, Deputy Director of the Championship, crowned the winners.

Earlier, Faisal Mohammed Al Nuaimi captured the Amateur Round (100cm) title with a time of 48.28 seconds aboard Dilandra. Mohammed Abdullah Al Marri on Dusty (48.4s) and Khalifa bin Joaan bin Hamad Al Thani on Zion II Vdk (48.95s) completed the top three.

Omar Al Buainain, Chairman of the Support Services Committee at Hathab, presented the trophies.



Deputy Director of the Championship Saeed Hamad Al Rashdi presented trophies to the Silver Round podium winners.



Deputy Director of the Championship Saeed Hamad Al Rashdi honoured the Amateur Round's leading riders.

FIDE hails Qatar venues ahead of World Rapid, Blitz Championships

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The International Chess Federation (FIDE) praised Qatar's sports facilities and venues, saying they enable the country to deliver a distinguished, exceptional edition of the FIDE World Rapid and Blitz Championships, to be hosted from December 25 to 31. FIDE also noted Doha's success in staging many global events in recent years.

This came during a FIDE delegation's inspection visit to the Qatar University Sports and Events Complex to review preparations for the World Championships. The visit was attended by FIDE Executive Director Victor Bologan, Qatar Chess Association (QCA) President Mohammed Al Mudahka, and FIDE Chief Operating Officer Anton Zhuravlev.

Bologan expressed confidence in Qatar's ability to host the World Championships, citing the world-class facilities and high operational efficiency at Qatar University. He said these strengths will help Qatar deliver an outstanding edition of the event.

He affirmed that Qatar has strong recent experience



FIDE Executive Director Victor Bologan (centre) with QCA President Mohammed Al Mudahka and other officials during the visit.

hosting world championships, which earned its bid significant trust within FIDE, in addition to the success of the 2016 edition held in Doha.

Bologan added that the purpose of the visit was to assess Qatar's readiness for the event and to discuss promotional and marketing plans for the championships.

QCA President Al Mudahka said the visit included several coordination meetings covering arrangements to host an exceptional chess event.

In remarks, Al Mudahka said talks are under way with

FIDE to organize more than one event in the coming period as part of the championship's promotion.

He added that the venues for the World Championship finals have already been set: the Qatar University Sports and Events Complex, along with dedicated training halls, the main broadcast media center, and the official tournament hotels.

He announced that the QCA is preparing domestic activities to promote Qatar's hosting of the World Championships.

Al Mudahka noted that Qatar University's modern sports facilities and top-level

infrastructure, as well as the ease of movement between the competition venue, amenities, and accommodation, will greatly help deliver a high-quality event for all participating stars.

QCA Executive Director and Tournament Director Hamad Al-Tamimi said the organizing committee is close to completing all preparations, adding that ticket sales are being finalized and are expected to open in early November.

Al-Tamimi stressed that the World Championships will give young players the chance to watch elite stars and top-ranked competitors,

encouraging the next generations to take up the sport, develop their skills, and aim for professional levels.

He added that cooperation between the QCA and FIDE has been ongoing for a long time; Qatar previously hosted the World Championships in 2016. He noted that the visit concluded with agreement on plans for side events and special promotional programs for the championship, which will be announced later.

Hammoud Al-Hajri, Head of Sports Facilities at Qatar University, said Qatar aims to deliver an exceptional edition of the World Rapid and Blitz. He noted that the FIDE delegation reviewed all tournament facilities and playing halls and expressed admiration for the venues.

The championship, with a total prize fund of €1m, is expected to attract around 350 male and female players from among the world's top ranks. It is worth noting that the World Rapid Championship, held in Doha for the first time in 2016, was won by Ukrainian Vasyi Ivanchuk, with 120 grandmasters and 36 women grandmasters taking part.

FIFA U-17 World Cup trophy visits Aspire Park, Lusail Boulevard

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: With the FIFA U-17 World Cup Qatar 2025 set to kick off in less than two weeks, fans will have the opportunity to see the prestigious trophy, as part of a trophy experience tour led by the Local Organising Committee (LOC) ahead of the tournament.

The trophy will make its way to the following venues this weekend, where fans can take photographs with the prestigious trophy and learn more about the upcoming tournament:

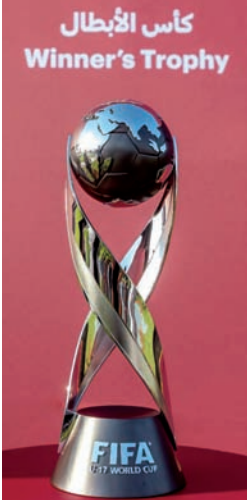
- Aspire Park: Today, 6pm-8pm
- Lusail Boulevard: Tomorrow, 6pm-8pm

The FIFA U-17 World Cup Qatar 2025 will take place at the state-of-the-art Competition Complex at Aspire Zone from November 3-27. The tournament will see as many as eight matches a day, for a total of 104 matches.

Fans can purchase FIFA U-17 World Cup Qatar 2025 tickets at: www.roadtoqatar.qa. Tickets will be available as a Day Pass for QR20, which will enable fans to attend multiple matches a day as well as cultural and entertainment activities taking place around matches, in what will be an electrifying football festival-like atmosphere.

Fans can also purchase a Prime Pass, which will enable them to reserve seats for high demand matches. Supporters of the Qatar national team can avail the Follow My Team ticket, which will enable them to attend all matches of the Qatar U-17 team during the group stage.

All tickets will be digital and will include wheelchair accessible seating options for disabled fans. Tournament updates are available at u17worldcupqa on all major social media platforms.



Messi signs Inter Miami contract extension: MLS

MIAMI: Lionel Messi (pictured) has agreed a contract extension with Inter Miami, Major League Soccer confirmed yesterday.

"Official: Leo Messi will continue to be an MLS player with Inter Miami," the league's Spanish language account on X said.

Inter Miami's X feed posted a video of Messi signing a contract sitting at a table in the middle of the club's new stadium, which is under construction, with the simple caption: "He's Home." The Argentine superstar's new contract will see him remain with Inter through the end of the 2028 season, sources with knowledge of the deal confirmed to AFP.

The 38-year-old World Cup-winner's current contract expires at the end of the 2025 MLS season.

A new deal had been viewed as a formality after club sources told AFP last month that the franchise had reached an agreement on an extension.

Messi's contract ensures he will remain in competitive action until and long after the 2026 World Cup hosted by the United States, Canada and Mexico. — AFP



Injured MotoGP champion Marc Marquez to miss rest of season

PARIS: MotoGP world champion Marc Marquez (pictured) will miss the rest of the season due to an injured shoulder, his Ducati team announced yesterday.

"Marc will have to spend four weeks with the arm completely immobilised before beginning rehabilitation, so it's impossible to think about his return to competition this year," Ducati said in a statement.

Marquez, 32, suffered a fracture and ligament injury after crashing on the opening lap of the Indonesia Grand Prix at the start of the month and underwent



surgery in Madrid a week later.

He has since missed the Grand Prix in Australia but has now been ruled out of the final three races of the season in Malaysia, Portugal and Valencia.

An emotional Marquez had already secured his seventh MotoGP world title -- and first since 2019 -- with five races to spare when finishing second in the Japan Grand Prix last month.

"This must not overshadow or make us forget the great goal we achieved this year: becoming World Champions again, and soon we will all celebrate it together," Marquez said in Ducati's statement.

The Spaniard dominated the MotoGP season, winning 11 races.

Ducati had hoped he could make a comeback for the season finale in Valencia but said that "the priority is to recover and return 100 percent fit for the next season".

He will be replaced by Italian Michele Pirro in Malaysia. — AFP

Melnikova wins all-around gymnastics world title

JAKARTA: Russia's Angelina Melnikova won gold in the women's all-around competition yesterday while competing under a neutral banner at the world gymnastics championships in Jakarta.

The 25-year-old, who also won the title in 2021, was cleared to return in March as a neutral athlete, but her neutrality has been challenged by Ukraine, which suspects her of having ties to the Russian government.

In the absence of US great Simone Biles and Brazil's Rebeca Andrade, Melnikova took gold ahead of American Leanne Wong and China's Zhang Qingying. Melnikova made a triumphant return to the global stage after more than three years away. — AFP

Verstappen chasing glory as McLaren duo bid to bounce back

MEXICO CITY: Max Verstappen chases a fourth win in five starts this weekend as he bids to heap more pressure on McLaren duo Oscar Piastri and Lando Norris at the Mexico City Grand Prix, one of his most rewarding tracks.

Red Bull's four-time world champion, who has won five times in seven years at the high-altitude Autodromo Hermanos Rodriguez, has cut Piastri's lead ahead of him, in third place, from 104 points to 40 since August with a scintillating burst of form.

Piastri still leads team-mate Norris by 14 points, but he has lost his metronomic consistency and, as McLaren appear to be floundering to match Red Bull for pace, he appears also, like Norris, to be weighed down by

the pressure of the title battle.

After finishing on the podium in every race bar one since the season-opener in Australia, his last three results have been a retirement, fourth and fifth.

His qualifying form has deteriorated at a similar rate.

Norris has also struggled for consistency, but appeared in Texas last weekend to have regained some confidence and pace as he finished second behind Verstappen, who had started from pole and also won the sprint.

He remains, however, without a win since the Hungarian race in August.

"They are weighed down with this looming battle," said former Indycar driver

and prominent analyst James Hinchcliffe, speaking on the F1 Nation podcast.

"Even Red Bull in 2024, started the season strong, but once McLaren caught up... you started seeing their pit stops falter a little bit..."

"Pressure is an interesting thing. You always want to be the hunted because it means you've got the points lead, but passing is tough in F1 -- on track and in a championship."

With the experience of four title triumphs, Verstappen heads into the season's run-in knowing what to expect and enjoying himself.

While Red Bull bid to snatch glory from McLaren in Mexico's thin air and the final races,

Ferrari travel in hope of an unlikely repeat of their last victory, claimed by Carlos Sainz in Mexico a year ago.

His successor Lewis Hamilton has yet to claim a podium in 19 races while team-mate Charles Leclerc has had six, including third last Sunday when Hamilton was fourth.



Ferrari team boss Fred Vasseur praised Hamilton's strong performance throughout the weekend, suggesting the 40-year-old Briton was back to his best as he seeks a third win in Mexico's carnival atmosphere.

Given that and McLaren team boss Andrea Stella's admission that Mexico is not a venue that will favour his team, Piastri and Norris are likely to endure another nerve-shredding weekend that reduces their advantage as they seek a first title double for McLaren since 1998.

Mercedes, with George Russell in form and also capable of claiming an upset win, lead the fight for second in the lucrative constructors' title race by seven points from Ferrari with Red Bull third, three points further adrift.

An unpredictable and dramatic high-speed contest, at more than 2,200 metres above sea level, is in prospect. — AFP

Pogacar, peloton face Alpe d'Huez twice as Tour de France 2026 route unveiled

PARIS: From Montjuic in Barcelona to Montmartre in Paris, the 2026 Tour de France presents champion Tadej Pogacar and his rivals with a plethora of mountain passes and peaks, including two stages tackling the revered Alpe d'Huez.

The 21-day race will start from Barcelona on July 4 and cover 3,333 kilometres before finishing beneath the Arc de Triomphe in Paris on July 26 after three climbs of the cobbled rue Lepic in Montmartre, organisers revealed at yesterday's unveiling.

It is an itinerary which offers Pogacar's chief rivals Jonas Vingegaard and Remco Evenepoel more hope than the 2025 route did.

"It's designed to maintain the suspense until the end," race director Christian Prudhomme said yesterday.

The route ignores the northern part of France altogether, in complete contrast to the 2025 edition.

"If you put those two races together, you'll see we've managed to get most of France in," said Prudhomme.

The Barcelona Grand Depart will be under intense scrutiny after pro-Palestinian protesters disrupted several stages of the Vuelta a Espana earlier this year.

"It's hard to know what the situation will be in nine months, we'll have to see," Prudhomme



said of the start venue, which had been negotiated long before pro-Palestinian protesters started targeting cycling races over the participation of the Israel Premier-Tech team.

The route takes the peloton into France via the Pyrenees and up as far as Bordeaux, before setting off on a diagonal route towards the Alps and a hefty overnight transfer to Paris for the final day.

The peloton races through several regions celebrated for their wine with Bordeaux, Bergerac and Beaujolais along the way, not to mention Evian,

with its world famous mineral water.

There are seven flat stages, four hilly runs and eight mountainous routes, with five of those featuring a mountain-top finish.

For the solo specialists, such as Olympic and world time-trial champion Evenepoel, there are two races against the clock.

The opening stage features a 19km team effort in Barcelona which could propel the Belgian into his first yellow jersey.

There is also a tough 26km individual run as the Tour enters the Alps on stage 16, with a formidable climb half way through.

"This should suit Evenepoel's strengths," said route designer Thierry Gouvenou. "You could see him quiet easily taking two minutes there." Last season, Vingegaard performed poorly on both time-trials, which is where Pogacar earned most of his final winning margin.

But the wealth of mountain racing is what stands out on the 2026 edition -- and this, on paper at least, favours Visma's Vingegaard.

The riders will tackle all five of France's mountain ranges: the Pyrenees, the Massif Central,

the Jura, the Vosges and then an extraordinarily challenging final week in the Alps.

Stage 19 and 20 tackle the legendary Alpe d'Huez mountain where British rider Tom Pidcock announced himself to the world.

His death-defying descent of the Col du Galibier followed by an agonised and eventually triumphant ascent around the 21 shoelace curves of Alpe d'Huez made him a fan favourite.

The route features 30 major climbs, the same total as the 2023 edition when Jonas Vingegaard rode to his second Tour de France title.

Introduced in 2025 as part of the Olympic Games legacy, the final stage will again feature three ascents of Rue Lepic in Montmartre, where its year crowds partied all day in the bistros before being treated to a memorable duel as Wout Van Aert dropped the game champion-in-waiting Pogacar.

The increasingly popular women's Tour de France starts in Lausanne, Switzerland a week after the men's one finishes.

Defending champion Pauline Ferrand-Prevot and Swiss rider Marlen Reusser should feature strongly on a nine-day race that takes in Mont Ventoux. The women's race ends in Nice with a run along the iconic Promenade des Anglais. — **AFP**

Short, Connolly shine as Australia beat India to seal one-day series

ADELAIDE: A composed 74 from Matt Short and a maiden half-century by Cooper Connolly steered Australia to a two-wicket win over India yesterday, sealing the three-match one-day series with a game to go.

After India made 264-9 at a sold-out Adelaide Oval on the back of Rohit Sharma's 73, the hosts reached their target with 22 balls remaining.

Short, who was twice dropped, led the charge before Connolly (61 not out) and Mitch Owen (36) finished the job.

Australia won a rain-affected opening game in Perth by seven wickets, with the dead-rubber clash in Sydney on Saturday.

"It's awesome and rapt to have won the series," said Australia skipper Mitch Marsh, who won the toss and sent India in.

"(Josh) Hazlewood was unbelievable, the whole bowling unit kept trying to pick up wickets and awesome batting. We'll certainly enjoy the series win."

The hosts made a tentative start to the chase with Marsh falling for 11 to Arshdeep Singh after swinging wildly.

Travis Head also departed softly, thick-edging Harshit Rana to Virat Kohli on 28.

Short was joined by Matt Renshaw and they got the scoreboard moving with quick singles, putting on 55.

But spin bamboozled Renshaw, bowled for 30 by Axar Patel, then Alex Carey, dismissed for nine by Washington Sundar accounting a sweep shot.

Short kept his focus, making a third ODI half-century, before departing to Rana, caught on the ropes as he tried to up the tempo. Some power-hitting from Owen, who slammed two fours and three sixes, left them needing 50 from the last 10 overs, a target reached after some late jitters.

Earlier, quick Hazlewood opened with 13 dot balls, but it was Xavier Bartlett who got the breakthrough for Australia. In the team for Nathan Ellis, he tempted Gill down the pitch only to chip an easy catch to Marsh at mid-off.

That brought Kohli to the crease and after an eight-ball duck in Perth the 36-year-old was keen for runs.

But he lasted just four deliveries with Bartlett trapping him lbw to leave India reeling at 17-2.

It was the first time Kohli has been dismissed for consecutive ducks in his long ODI career. Rohit weathered the storm, reaching a 59th half-century. Shreyas Iyer (61) ably played a supporting role until Mitchell Starc broke their 118-run partnership. He removed Rohit in the first over of his second spell, with Hazlewood collecting a mis-timed pull shot in the deep.

Iyer fell three overs later to Adam Zampa, who also accounted for KL Rahul (11), Patel (44) and Nitish Kumar Reddy (8). — **AFP**



Harmer stars as South Africa beat Pakistan to draw series

RAWALPINDI: South Africa beat Pakistan by eight wickets in the second Test in Rawalpindi yesterday to draw the series 1-1 with Simon Harmer taking a maiden five-wicket haul.

The 36-year-old off-spinner finished with 6-50, taking his 1,000th first-class wicket in the process, on a deteriorating Rawalpindi stadium pitch.

South Africa eased to the 68-run target for the loss of captain Aiden Markram (42) and Tristan Stubbs (nought), both to spinner Noman Ali, who finished with 2-40.

Ryan Rickelton, who scored 25 not out, hit Sajid Khan for a six to seal an emphatic win minutes before the lunch break for the World Test Championship holders.

Markram was delighted by his side's display after losing the first Test by 93 runs.

"It was a great response after Lahore," said Markram, standing in for regular skipper Temba Bavuma, who missed the tour with a calf injury.

Like Lahore -- where spinners took 34 of the 40 wickets to fall -- it was a battle of the slow bowlers.

Pakistan made 333 in their first innings before the South African tail wagged to help them pile up 404 for a crucial 71-run lead.

Yesterday's morning session saw Pakistan's batters fold, adding just 44 runs after resuming the fourth day on 94-4.

Harmer torpedoed Pakistan's hopes of saving the Test when he trapped Babar Azam leg-before with the fifth ball of the day after the batsman had reached his 30th Test half-century.

Markram said the performance of the South African spinners, especially Harmer and Keshav Maharaj, gave them a big



boost with two Tests in India next month.

"In South Africa you'd think just seamers and some spinners, but we are a work in progress heading to India," he said.

Pakistan captain Shan Masood said some of his side's batting was "not up to the mark".

"You have to give credit to South Africa," he said.

"They have kept fighting and our lower-order batting, finishing innings off, third-innings collapses are not up to the mark."

Pakistan's hopes had rested on Azam ending his century drought, having not scored a ton since December 2022.

His lean spell goes on.

Nine runs later Harmer had Mohammad Rizwan caught by close-in fielder Tony de Zorzi for 18.

In his next over the spinner dismissed Noman for nought, caught behind for Harmer's 1,000 wicket in his 235th first-class match.

Harmer is the fourth South African to take 1,000 or more first-class wickets, behind Mike Procter (1,417), Allan Donald (1,216) and Charlie Llewellyn (1013).

Harmer's previous best figures of 4-51 came in the first Test in Lahore.

Unlike South Africa, Pakistan's tail did not last long as they lost their last five wickets for 33 runs in their second innings, just their latest batting slump in the series.

Shaheen Shah Afridi was run out without scoring while Maharaj dismissed Salman Agha for 28 and Sajid Khan for 13 to swiftly wrap up the innings. Maharaj finished with 2-34 to follow up his 7-102 in the first innings.

BRIEF SCORES
South Africa 404 (Muthusamy 89*, Stubbs 76, Rabada 71, Asif 6-79) and 73 for 2 (Markram 42, Rickelton 25*) **beat Pakistan** 333 (Masood 87, Shakeel 66, Maharaj 7-102) and 138 (Babar 50, Harmer 6-50) **by eight wickets** — **AFP**

Saudi Arabia to host ATP Masters 1000 tennis event from 2028

PARIS: The ATP announced yesterday the creation of a new Masters 1000 event which will take place annually in Saudi Arabia from as early as 2028.

The new event will be played on hard courts and take place "at the start of the season" in a city yet to be determined, and will last "one week", ATP chairman Andrea Gaudenzi said at a press conference in Paris.

The long-expected move marks the first ever expansion of the top-tier category of men's tennis since its creation in 1990.

The Saudi tournament will join the nine existing Masters events, which take place in Indian Wells, Miami, Monte Carlo, Madrid, Rome, Toronto/Montreal, Cincinnati, Shanghai and Paris.

Gaudenzi called the expansion to 10 events "a proud moment for us and the result of a journey that's been years in the making".

The addition of another tournament to the tennis calendar comes at the end of a season marked by complaints from some players about the demanding

pace of the tour, whose tournaments run from January to November.

However, unlike the majority of its counterparts, the new Saudi tournament will not be a mandatory event.

"Our open system has a lot of pros because it provides a lot of freedom, options and choices for the players" in choosing which tournaments they want to compete in, said Gaudenzi.

The Six Kings Slam last week in Saudi Arabia attracted stars from the men's game, including

Marathon world record holder Chepngetich gets three-year doping ban

PARIS: Kenya's marathon world record holder, Ruth Chepngetich has been banned for three years for doping, the Athletics Integrity Unit (AIU) announced yesterday.

The 31-year-old, a former world marathon champion and a three-time winner of the Chicago Marathon, tested positive for the banned diuretic hydrochlorothiazide (HCTZ) in March. She had been provisionally banned from July.

AIU chair David Howman said that the case against Chepngetich underlined that "nobody is above the rules".

The Kenyan "accepted the charges and sanction", the AIU said.

The March 14 test showed that Chepngetich had 190 times the allowed limit of HCTZ in her positive urine sample.

The athlete at first denied all knowledge of having taken the diuretic, with the AIU saying "that she could not explain the positive test", with Chepngetich maintaining that she had never doped.

But she later changed that explanation, instead saying she had taken her "housemaid's medication" as a treatment after falling ill two days before the positive test -- an incident that she claimed she had failed to disclose to AIU investigators.

The Kenyan set the current women's world record of 2hr 09min 56sec at the 2024 Chicago Marathon.

She won the world marathon title in Doha in 2019 and was also the first woman to break the 2:11 and 2:10 barriers in the marathon. — **AFP**

Pakistan recall dropped Babar Azam for T20Is

RAWALPINDI: Babar Azam was yesterday recalled to Pakistan's Twenty20 international squad for two home series, nearly a year after the batsman was axed.

Pakistan play a three-match series against South Africa starting in Rawalpindi on October 28 and will also feature in next month's T20I tri-series involving Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe.

Azam last played for Pakistan in T20s against South Africa in December 2024, after which he was dropped because of his poor strike rate.

There is still no place for wicketkeeper Mohammad Rizwan while opener Fakhar Zaman, Mohammad Harris and fast bowler Haris Rauf are dropped from last month's Asia Cup squad.

Pakistan finished runners-up at the Asia Cup but lost all three matches against arch-rivals India.

Pacer Naseem Shah, batter Abdul Samad and wicketkeeper Usman Khan are called into the 15-man squad, which will be captained by Salman Agha.

After the T20s against South Africa, Pakistan will host them in a three-match ODI series on November 4-8.

Rizwan, replaced as ODI skipper by Shaheen Shah Afridi this week, is in the one-day squad. — **AFP**