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Hosts Qatar set sights on dream start

FAWAD HUSSAIN
THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Qatar's young guns looked confident and upbeat as they took to the Al Thumama training pitch during Media Promotion Day yesterday, stepping up preparations for the FIFA U-17 World Cup kicking off tomorrow.

Making their eighth appearance in the tournament, the young Al Annabi are eager to shine on home soil under Spanish coach Alvaro Mejia, aiming to go deep in the expanded competition.

Placed in Group A, Qatar will face Italy, South Africa and Bolivia, with their first target being a place in the knockout stage. The hosts will open their campaign with a tough clash against Italy, the European Under-17 Championship semi-finalists, at Aspire Zone Pitch 5 – Khaled Ballan tomorrow.

The players expressed confidence ahead of the challenge with talented forward Zaid Faisal Ktit eyeing a strong start.

"Italy are a strong team but all teams in this tournament will be tough. Of course, we will have to play well and we are looking forward to it," said the Al Gharafa striker on the sidelines of the team's training session at Al Thumama pitch.

He added that the squad has enjoyed excellent preparations under their coach and are eager to showcase their abilities.

"This is a great opportunity for us, representing the national team in a tournament like this. It's a chance to show our talents," he said.

Tameem Alqadi echoed his teammate's optimism, saying the team is determined to make the country proud.

"We will play a great game. Italy is a tough team, but there are no weak teams in the World Cup," said the Al Sadd youngster.

"It's a proud moment for us to represent our country



on home soil, and we will do our best in all the matches."

'Great atmosphere in Qatar'

Yesterday's Media Promotion Day saw several of the 48 participating teams in action during training sessions at Al Erssal and Al Thumama pitches.

Brazil coach Eduardo 'Dudu' Patetuci praised



Tameem Alqadi

Qatar's facilities and atmosphere as his side looks to regain the title, which they won in 2019 on home soil.

"The atmosphere here in Qatar is great, the



Zaid Faisal Ktit

environment is wonderful, and we're very happy to be here. It's going to be a beautiful World Cup," said Patetuci.

Brazil will face Honduras,

Indonesia and Zambia in Group H, with their opening match against Honduras on Tuesday.

"Brazil is arriving strong for the competition. We always play attacking football, take the initiative and aim for goals while maintaining balance. We're going to be very aggressive," the coach added.

He also welcomed the tournament's expansion to 48 teams, saying it gives more nations the chance to compete and helps globalise football further.

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia manager Abdulwahab Alharbi expressed confidence in his team's readiness after an extensive two-year preparation period.

"The team has been preparing for two years, and in the last three months, we've seen major improvement. InshaAllah, they will do well," he said.

Saudi Arabia are in Group L with Mali, New Zealand and Austria, and will open their campaign against Austria on Wednesday.

"We have a strong group, and our initial goal is to advance from the group stage," Alharbi added.

The tournament will feature 104 matches across the Competition Complex pitches in Aspire Zone, with up to eight games played daily. The grand finale is set for November 27 at the iconic Khalifa International Stadium.



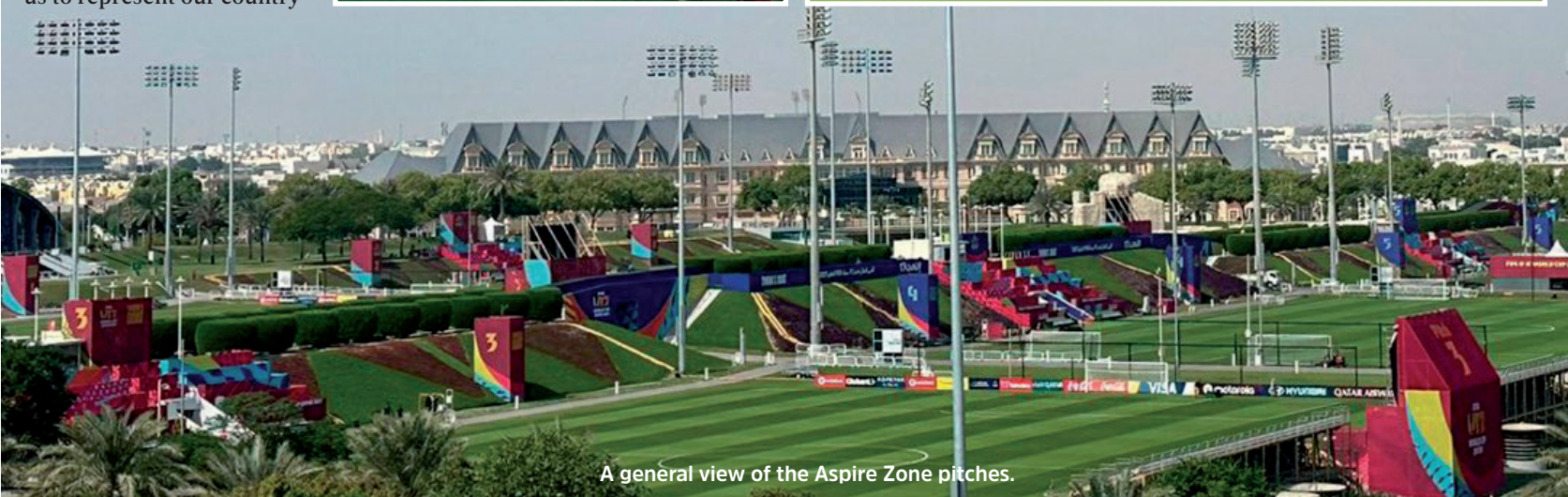
Argentina players and officials during a training session at Al Erssal.



Saudi Arabia U-17 players train at Al Thumama.



UAE players train at Al Erssal ahead of the FIFA U-17 World Cup.



A general view of the Aspire Zone pitches.

Aspire Zone pitches named after Qatari football legends

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DOHA: In recognition of Qatar's proud football legacy, the FIFA U-17 World Cup Qatar 2025 will feature matches on Aspire Zone pitches named after some of the nation's most celebrated footballers. Each honouree represents a milestone in Qatari football history and serves to inspire future generations.

Pitch 1 – Mohammed Ghanim

Mohammed Ghanim, among Qatar's most talented players, was named Most Valuable Player at the 1974 Gulf Cup in Kuwait.

As Al-Ahli's first captain, he lifted the Amir Cup in 1972 after a 6–1 victory over Al Rayyan at Doha Stadium.

Pitch 2 – Ibrahim Khalfan

A creative playmaker, Ibrahim Khalfan starred in Qatar's historic second-place finish at the 1981 FIFA World Youth Championship.

With Al-Arabi, he masterminded three consecutive Amir Cup wins from 1977 to 1979.

Pitch 3 – Bader Bilal

Striker Bader Bilal also featured in the 1981 World Youth Championship.

He later led Al Sadd to the 1988–89 Asian Club Championship title, scoring crucial goals throughout the tournament.

Pitch 4 – Khaled Salman

Khaled Salman famously netted a hat-trick against Brazil at the 1981 World Youth Championship, sending Qatar to the final.

He represented Qatar at the 1984 Olympics and guided Al Sadd to their first Asian Club title in 1988–89.

Pitch 5 – Khaled Ballan

The late Khaled Ballan was named Player of the Tournament at the 1970 Gulf Cup.

A one-club player for Qatar Sports Club, he helped secure multiple league titles during the 1970s.

Pitch 7 – Mansour Muftah

Known as "The Fox," Mansour Muftah remains Qatar's all-time leading scorer with 317 goals in 324 matches.

He won the Arabian Golden Boot twice and lends his name to the Qatar Stars League's top scorer award.

Pitch 8 – Mahmoud Soufi

The late Mahmoud Soufi is Qatar's top scorer in FIFA World Cup qualifiers with 12 goals.

He led Qatar to their first Gulf Cup title in 1992 and topped scoring charts for several domestic clubs.

Pitch 9 – Adel Mallala

Defender Adel Mallala represented Qatar at the Arabian Gulf Cup, Olympics, and AFC Asian Cup, spending his entire career with Al Ahli and winning multiple Amir Cup titles.

Ramos header earns PSG late win over Nice

PARIS: Substitute Goncalo Ramos scored with a powerful header in the 94th minute to earn European champions Paris Saint-Germain a late 1-0 win over Nice in Ligue 1 yesterday.

Ramos finally turned PSG's overwhelming possession into three points at the Parc des Princes and Luis Enrique's side can now switch their focus to the visit of Bayern Munich in the Champions League on Tuesday.

The victory means PSG will remain Ligue 1 leaders regardless of other results this weekend.

The introduction of Ramos in the 72nd minute in place of Senny Mayulu proved the injection of attacking thrust they needed.

Ramos, making his 100th appearance for PSG, forced a fine save from Nice goalkeeper Yehvann Diouf shortly before his decisive goal.

Then, as the seconds ticked down, the Portuguese international connected from close range with a corner from Lee Kang-in that was glanced on by the head of Khvicha Kvaratskhelia.

Ramos gave the corner flag a karate kick in celebration as the home fans roared their approval. — AFP

Al Shamal crush Umm Salal; Draxler brace powers Al Ahli to win

CHINTHANA WASALA
THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Al Shamal crushed Umm Salal 5-0 in the final fixture of Qatar Stars League's ninth week to climb to second spot in the standings yesterday.

At Al Khor Stadium, goals by Alex Collado and Baghdad Bounedjah, apart from an own goal by Umm Salal's Issoufou Dayo put Al Shamal ahead at halftime. In the second half, Collado struck again to make it 4-0 before Moufak Awad completed the 5-0 drubbing to hand Umm Salal their sixth defeat in the League this season.

The result moved Al Shamal to 17 points from five wins, behind leaders Al Gharafa, who are on 19. Al Shamal and Qatar SC are level on points but

ahead on goal difference. Umm Salal stayed 11th on 6 points.

Al Shamal's early success was mainly due to mistakes by Umm Salal custodian Jihad Mohammad Hudib.

Collado's powerful strike slipped through Hudib in the 11th minute, and a misread back-pass from Dayo went inside their own net in the 18th minute before Algerian goal machine Bounedjah added a third on 38 minutes from a Collado assist.

Collado scored his second goal with a left-footer from the edge of the box on 54 minutes. Awad's goal came in the 90th minute. A free kick by Bounedjah, resulting from an 88th-minute red card to Diyab Haroon Taha, was blocked by a leaping

Hudib, and Awad lunged forward to kick the ball in to complete a 5-0 rout, handing a miserable day to Umm Salal.

Earlier, at the Grand Hamad Stadium, Al Ahli secured a 2-1 win over Al Sailiya.

Julian Draxler scored a double (27th and 90+1 penalty) while Youssef Sinana (45+3) pulled one back for Al Sailiya via a penalty.

Draxler opened the scoring with a right-footed finish from the right side of the box. With the match heading for a draw, he converted a late penalty to seal a vital win for the Brigadiers.

The victory, their third overall triumph, moved Al Ahli to ninth spot in the standings, while Al Sailiya remained at six points in 10th position.



Al Shamal's Alex Collado (right) celebrates with teammate Akram Tawfik Elhagrasi.

Excitement builds with 30 days to go until FIFA Arab Cup



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DOHA: Only 30 days remain for the FIFA Arab Cup Qatar 2025, as excitement builds for the Arab world's biggest tournament taking place from December 1-18 in Qatar. The prestigious tournament returns to Qatar for a second time, following the successful delivery of the FIFA Arab Cup in 2021, which was the first time that the tournament was held under the auspices of FIFA. This

year's edition has set a new benchmark with the total prize money exceeding \$36.5m (approximately QR132.9m), with the FIFA Arab Cup now joining the ranks of the world's major international football tournaments. A total of 16 teams will have a chance to lift the coveted FIFA Arab Cup Qatar 2025 trophy. Nine of the highest FIFA ranked teams have qualified automatically, while 14 teams will vie for the

remaining 7 spots in a series of qualifiers. Current champions Algeria will look to defend their title, whereas hosts Qatar will look to lift their first FIFA Arab Cup trophy. Ticket sales went live on September 30, with fans from across the region gearing up to see their favourite teams in action. Tickets were in highest demand amongst supporters of the Qatar, Jordan, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia and Egypt national teams.

FIFA Arab Cup Qatar 2025 tickets can be purchased exclusively on: www.roadtoqatar.qa. This includes tickets for the qualifiers taking place ahead of the tournament on November 25-26 in Qatar, which will see fans eagerly rooting for their national teams in the determining matches. Throughout the competition, fans will be treated to a variety of entertainment and cultural activities around Qatar. All venues are

connected seamlessly by public transport and will offer a barrier-free experience to all. The tournament will kick off on December 1, 7:30pm, at Al Bayt Stadium featuring hosts Qatar and the winner of Palestine v Libya. The Final will be held on December 18, 7pm, at the iconic Lusail Stadium. Other stadiums that will host matches during the tournament are Ahmad Bin Ali, Education City, Khalifa International Stadium and Stadium 974.

Al-Qahtani wins Qatar Free-Style Drifting Championship season opener

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DOHA: A large crowd filled the stands at the weekend as the opening round of the Qatar Free-Style Drifting Championship for the 2025/2026 season concluded. The event was held under the patronage of Qatar Racing Club Chairman H E Sheikh Khalid bin Hamad Al Thani. Each driver was given one chance to enter the track and perform a set of required maneuvers - including drifting, reverse driving, figure-eight spins, and reverse maneuvers - within a total time limit of four minutes. There was also a specific score allocated for the overall style in which each driver performed their routine. After nearly three hours of thrilling action, Abdullah



Qatar Racing Club's Director General Sheikh Jabor bin Khalid Al Thani poses for a photo with the podium winners.

Al-Qahtani claimed first place with a total of 44 points, edging

out Saud Al-Marri by just three points.

Ahmad Al-Musnad secured third place, surpassing Ahmad Al-Banna by a single point, who settled for fourth place, while Rashid Al-Banna took fifth. At the conclusion of the event, H E Sheikh Jabor bin Khalid Al Thani, Director

General of Qatar Racing Club, crowned the top three winners on the podium amid enthusiastic fan attendance, bringing the first round of the four-round championship to a close. The second round is scheduled to take place on December 26.



Action during the opening round of the Qatar Free-Style Drifting Championship.

Poret, Hansen, Medori and Mariani seal World Aquabike titles

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DOHA: Estelle Poret, Oliver Koch Hansen, François Medori and Roberto Mariani clinched UIM-ABP World Aquabike Championship titles in their final Motos at the Old Doha Port Grand Prix of Qatar yesterday. Poret prevailed in Ski Ladies GP1 for the first time and Koch Hansen took his maiden Ski GP1 title. Medori earned a third world Runabout GP1 title with a stunning Moto 3 win after a shell-shocked series leader Jérémy Perez hit technical trouble on the parade lap and was unable to start the final Moto on time. Italian Roberto Mariani overcame a fierce late challenge from Team Abu Dhabi's Rashed Al-Mulla to seal the Freestyle crown. Emirati Amer Hawair took the top step of the final Runabout GP2 Asian Continental Championship podium from Saudi Arabia's Moto 3-winning Daoud Kaloti and Qatari Mohamed Abumaali. **Estelle Poret seals maiden Ski Ladies GP1 world title; Moto 3 win for Drange** Estelle Poret headed into her final Moto showdown with Jasmiin Ypraus defending a 15-point lead in the World Championship. Despite winning Moto 2, Benedicte Drange's fuel pump failure in Moto 1 had ruled her out of challenging for the world title, although she had a 16-point cushion over Naomi Benini in the battle for third. Drange sealed her second win of the weekend by 8.426 seconds and Ypraus passed Poret to take the runner-up spot but the final place on the podium was



Estelle Poret in action.

enough for Poret to earn her first world title. Poret also did enough to take honours in the Grand Prix with Ypraus and Drange finishing second and third in the World Championship. **Koch Hansen wins Ski GP1 world title** A vital podium finish in Moto 2 enabled Oliver Koch Hansen to start the final Ski GP1 heat with an 18-point lead over Jérémy Poret in his quest for a maiden title. Japanese rider Toshi O'Hara had already confirmed the bronze medal position with the runner-up spot in Moto 2 and had a slim chance of finishing second. **Rampant Medori takes third Runabout GP1 title with sensational Moto 3 win; GP win for Qatar's Al-Sharshani** Jérémy Perez's hard-earned Moto 2 victory in Runabout GP1 enabled the Frenchman to take the start of the final heat on pole position ahead of his friend and title rival François Medori. A crankshaft failure had cost the Corsican dearly on Friday afternoon and he trailed by nine points heading into the

showdown. The battle for third place was wide open with György Kasza leading the way from Pierre-François Savelli, Linus Lindberg and Andrzej Wisniewski. But disaster struck Perez on the parade lap when his Easy Rider ski stopped and the distraught Frenchman was not able to take the start. Medori needed to pick up just nine points to be

World Champion for the third time, although he started at the back of the field. Perez had to suffer the ignominy of watching the Moto unfold from the shoreline before starting the race a lap behind the rest of the field. His only consolation was being safe in second place in the World Championship. Kasza took the hole shot from Qatar's Waleed Al-Sharshani, Savelli, Yousef Al-Abdulrazzaq and Tory Snyder. Medori was already up to ninth and then climbed to sixth heading into lap two. The leading Hungarian continued to pull clear of the pursuing Qatari and Al-Abdulrazzaq made his way into third. Medori made it past the Qatari to claim second and he maintained his pace over the closing laps to confirm the world title with a stunning late heat victory by 4.082 seconds. Kasza finished third behind overall Grand Prix winner Al-Sharshani and the Hungarian was also third



Qatari riders in action at the Old Port Doha GP of Qatar.

in the final World Championship standings and second in the GP. **Freestyle world title for Mariani; Rashid Al-Mulla wins Grand Prix** Team Abu Dhabi's Rashid Al-Mulla had reduced Roberto Mariani's Freestyle lead to just seven points with his dominant display in the first Moto on Friday evening. Massimo Accumolo was assured of the bronze medal and could still catch both his main rivals in the second Moto that rounded off Qatar's return to the championship. Mariani confirmed the world title with on-water activities that netted him 223 points and Al-Mulla did enough to earn 251 points and take the Grand Prix win with a double back flip to finish his stunning session. **Amer Hawair wins Asian Runabout GP2 title; Moto 3 win for Kaloti** Emirati Amer Hawair headed into the last of the Runabout GP2 Asian Continental Motos with a 10-point cushion over fellow countryman Khalid Al-Maazmi and an advantage of 12 points over a tying Daoud Kaloti and Mahmoud Abumaali. The racers held their positions into lap five and Al-Maazmi held on to take the chequered flag ahead of Kaloti, Mohamed Mahmoud Abumaali, Hawair and Mahmoud Abumaali. Fourth place was sufficient for Hawair to win the inaugural Runabout GP2 Asian Continental Championship title but he was later promoted to third when Al-Maazmi received a 40-second penalty for a start infringement and Kaloti claimed the Moto win by 19.783 seconds from Mohamed Abumaali.

Arsenal cruise against Burnley as Forest hold United

LONDON: Arsenal brushed Burnley aside 2-0 yesterday to surge seven points clear at the top of the Premier League as struggling Nottingham Forest held in-form Manchester United to a 2-2 draw. Chelsea edged Tottenham 1-0 to climb to fourth in the table. Mikel Arteta's Arsenal have won five league games in a row to position themselves as firm favourites to end their painful two-decade wait to be crowned English champions. Viktor Gyokeres headed the Gunners ahead following a Declan Rice corner in the first half at Turf Moor for his first league goal since mid-September -- yet more joy for

Premier League Results
Brighton 3 (Welbeck 11, Gomez 64, 70) Leeds 0
Burnley 0 Arsenal 2 (Gyokeres 14, Rice 35)
Crystal Palace 2 (Mateta 30, Collins 51-og) Brentford 0
Fulham 3 (Sessegnon 9, Wilson 62, Mosquera 75-og) Wolves 0
Nottingham Forest 2 (Gibbs-White 48, Savona 50) Manchester United 2 (Casemiro 34, Diallo 81)
Tottenham 0 Chelsea 1 (Pedro 34)

the set-piece specialists. England midfielder Rice himself headed home to double the visitors' lead in the 35th minute and put them in total control. "The first half was

exceptional -- we scored two goals and gave nothing away," Arteta told the BBC. "That was the platform. We had to make a few changes and didn't have that much control in the second half. Defending was exceptional again, we didn't give anything." Arsenal, who have now won nine games in a row in all competitions, have enviable options in attack but their team is built on a rock-solid defence that has conceded just three league goals in 10 games this season. Ruben Amorim's Manchester United, seeking their fourth straight league win, were on track to climb to second in the table when

leading 1-0 at the City Ground courtesy of Casemiro's first-half opener. But Forest, who had not scored a league goal since September 20, roared back after the break as their confidence flooded back. Morgan Gibbs-White headed the home side level in the 48th minute before Nicolo Savona tapped in just two minutes later to complete a dramatic turnaround. But Amad Diallo levelled with a sweet volley in the 81st minute to rescue a point for United, who have been much improved in recent weeks after a poor start to the season. Amorim, marking a year since his appointment as United



Arsenal's Declan Rice celebrates after scoring team's second goal.

manager, was disappointed to drop points but encouraged by his team's mentality. Chelsea maintained their hex over Spurs, winning 1-0 courtesy of a goal from Joao

Pedro for a fifth straight Premier League win against their London rivals. Enzo Maresca's men now trail third-placed Tottenham on goal difference alone. — **AFP**