



Qatar's Meteb Al Marri (centre) celebrates on the podium.

Record-setting Al Marri wins skeet gold at Asian Shotgun Championship

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Qatar's Meteb Al Marri claimed gold and set new Asian and world records in the youth skeet competition on the third day of the Asian Shotgun Championship at the Lusail Shooting Complex.

Al Marri produced a stellar performance in the final, hitting 32 of 36 targets to establish the new records.

Kazakhstan's Maxim Pochivalov took silver with 31 targets, while his compatriot Vladislav Zavodilenko earned bronze with 26.

Qatar added another medal in the youth team skeet competition, as the trio of Al Marri, Jassim Mohammed Al Yafai and Abdulrahman Ahmed Al Harami secured

silver with a total of 304 points. The Kazakhstani team of Pochivalov, Zavodilenko and Artem Rykov won gold with 340 points, while Kuwait's Ahmed Al Hassan, Ibrahim Al Harbi and Mohammed Al Rashidi claimed bronze with 266.

In the Junior Women's Skeet event at the Asian Grand Prix, Kazakhstan swept the podium. Lydia Basharova won gold with 25 targets, followed by Asul Sadakbayeva with 23 for silver, and Angelina Sorokina with 21 for bronze. The medalists were crowned by Dr Meshaal Ibrahim Al Nasr, President of the Qatar Shooting and Archery Federation, and Sheikh Salman Al Hamoud Al Sabah, President of the Asian Shooting Federation.

Al Gharafa aim to maintain QSL lead in Al Arabi clash

FAWAD HUSSAIN
THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Al Gharafa head into their Qatar Stars League (QSL) clash against Al Arabi today in buoyant mood, with head coach Pedro Martins confident his side can maintain their lead at the top of the table.

The league leaders are coming off a hard-fought 3-2 victory over Umm Salal, overcoming a late surge from the Orange Fortress to preserve their five-point cushion in the title race.

"Our confidence has been boosted after the win over Umm Salal," Martins said ahead of the match at Al Thumama Stadium.

"The atmosphere is much more positive, which has helped us prepare well for the upcoming match."

Despite their advantage, Martins stressed that complacency is not an option, with defending champions Al Sadd – on a five-match winning run – and Al Rayyan both chasing the leaders on 23 points. The Al Gharafa coach also praised Al Arabi's progress this season.

"Al Arabi can compete for a top-three finish. This is one of the most important matches of the season for us because they are a developing team with strength in all areas," Martins said.

Coached by Cosmin Contra, Al Arabi are currently fifth after defeating Al Wakrah to move to 20 points – one behind fourth-placed Al Shamal and



Al Gharafa players during a training session.

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Pedro Martins
Al Gharafa coach

former champions will be bolstered by the return of Adel Boulbina following international duty with Algeria at the Africa Cup of Nations. Karim Boudiaf, Marco Verratti and goalkeeper Salah

Zakaria will also make a return for the Red Knights.

"These are positive indicators for strong performances in the coming period," Belmadi added.

Meanwhile, Al Wakrah coach Vicente Moreno expressed confidence in his squad's readiness following their loss to Al Arabi.

"We are ready for the next match because I have seen the players' hard work this week," Moreno said.

"Al Duhail are a big club with quality players, and the teams are very close in the standings. If we want to win, we must give everything."

The Al Duhail-Al Wakrah match kicks off at 5:30pm, followed by Al Arabi vs Al Gharafa at 7:30pm.



Al Duhail players gear up for the clash against Al Wakrah.



Senegal's Sadio Mane (right) celebrates his goal with teammate Iliman Ndiaye.

Mane takes dominant Senegal past Egypt into AFCON final

TANGIERS: Sadio Mane scored a 78th-minute winner to give Senegal a 1-0 victory over Egypt yesterday in their Africa Cup of Nations semi-final in Tangiers.

Former champions Senegal dominated possession against cautious Egypt and will face hosts Morocco or Nigeria on Sunday in the final.

The result maintained the dominance of Senegal over Egypt. The Teranga Lions beat the Pharaohs in the 2022 AFCON final and in a 2022 World Cup play-off. Both victories came after penalty shoot-outs.

Egypt captain Mohamed Salah was well contained by the Senegal defence. This was his fifth AFCON and the closest he has come to a winners' medal is finishing a runner-up twice. Veteran Senegal centre-back Kalidou Koulibaly was yellow-carded after 17 minutes for fouling Egypt striker Omar Marmoush.

It was his second booking in as many matches and ruled him out of the final.

Worse was to follow for the 34-year-old based in Saudi Arabia as he sustained an injury six minutes later and had to be replaced by Mamadou Sarr.

Senegal did more attacking in a cagey first half without seriously threatening 37-year-old Egypt goalkeeper Mohamed El Shenawy.

An attempt by Nicolas Jackson flew over and, soon after, teammate Pape Gueye was on target with a low angled shot, but it lacked power and was comfortably saved.

Egypt threatened the Senegal defence for the first time in added time at the end of the opening half when awarded a free-kick close to the touchline.

But the set-piece delivery from Salah slipped through a crowded goalmouth and out of play beyond the far post.

With 15 minutes of regular time remaining, Egypt had not had a goal attempt on target nor had they forced a corner.

Finally, with 12 minutes remaining, the Senegalese pressure was rewarded with two-time African player of the Year Mane scoring.

An ambitious long-range effort by Camara was deflected to Mane, and his low shot flew past El Shenawy and into the net. — AFP

Qatar players eye strong show as Star Contender main round begins

CHINTHANA WASALA
THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The WTT Star Contender Doha 2026 enters its main draw at the Lusail Sports Hall today following the successful completion of the qualifying rounds yesterday.

A strong Qatar contingent will feature across singles, doubles, and mixed doubles as the home paddlers prepare to test themselves against some of the world's best.

Led by national No.1 Mohammed Abdulwahhab, the hosts face a demanding opening day, with multiple first-round clashes across different categories.

Abdulwahhab takes on China's Xue Fei in one of the highlights for home fans in the men's singles Round of 64, which will also see wildcard Sultan Al Kuwari take on Portugal's Joao Geraldo, who advanced from the qualifying rounds.

The women's singles draw also features two Qatari wildcards.

Rokaia Elbaz is drawn against Hong Kong star Doo Hoi Kem in a demanding Round of 64 encounter, while Aia Mohamed meets fellow wildcard Yoo Yerin in search of a place in the next round.

In the women's doubles Round of 16, Aia Mohamed and Rokaia Elbaz will face the Chinese pairing of Qin Yuxuan and Zong Geman. The men's doubles sees Ahmed Korani and Sultan Al Kuwari up against France's Florian Bourrassaud and Lillian Bardet, while brothers Mohammed and Abdullah Abdulwahhab take on second seeds Wong Chun Ting and Chan Baldwin of Hong Kong in a challenging contest.

In mixed doubles, Sultan Al Kuwari and Rokaia Elbaz meet China's Chen Yuanyu and Kuai Man, while Mohammed Abdulwahhab and Aia Mohamed face Pang Koen and Zeng Jian, rounding off a packed day for the hosts.

Mohammed Abdulwahhab



Meanwhile, yesterday's action saw the final stages of the qualifying rounds.

The state-of-the-art venue witnessed an action-filled day, including a mesmerizing 54-point game in which Germany's Cedric Meissner produced the standout result of the day.

Meissner knocked out No.13 seed Indian Akash Pal in a gripping five-game battle (8-11, 28-26, 8-11, 11-4, 11-5). Ranked World No.125, Meissner dropped the opening

game and trailed 2-6 in the second. The game then gained remarkable momentum, with Pal fighting back before the Germans finally sealed a 28-26 win. Pal then regained control by taking the third game, but Meissner wrapped up a memorable win by securing the fourth and fifth games to complete an upset. However, Meissner was beaten in the third round of the qualifiers by China's Fei (3-2), who booked a meeting with Mohammed Abdulwahhab.

The women's singles qualifiers were equally intense. Unranked Arina Slautina pushed World No.196 Vlada Voronina all the way in a five-game contest. However, Voronina's run was halted by India's Diya Chitale, who recorded a straight games win before she went down in the third round of qualifiers.

She lost to top Chinese Taipei's Tsai Yun-En (1-3), who is set to take on Wales' Anna Hursey today in the round of 64.

Serradori wins Dakar stage as Al Attiyah returns to top

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Mathieu Serradori delivered a breakthrough victory for Century as Qatar's Nasser Al Attiyah reclaimed the overall lead on Stage 10 of the Dakar Rally 2026 around Bisha, Saudi Arabia, yesterday.

The 420km test formed the second leg of the marathon stage, with crews forced to race in cars they had serviced themselves overnight, without external assistance. Serradori mastered the demanding conditions to secure his second Dakar stage win, his first since 2020, and a historic maiden victory for the South African Century CR7. It was also a first Dakar stage success for navigator Loïc Minaudier.

Serradori finished 6 minutes 12 seconds clear, despite receiving a two minute penalty for speeding.

Al Attiyah, driving for Dacia, finished second on the day despite a 40 second penalty.



Qatari driver Nasser Al Attiyah competes in Stage 10. (AFP)

The result proved decisive in the overall classification. The Qatari now leads the rally by 12 minutes over South Africa's Henk Lategan, with Spain's Nani Roma a further 50 seconds back in third.

Al Attiyah admitted the physical and mental toll of a demanding Dakar Rally stage, but praised his team after pushing hard from start to finish.

"It was very difficult. Not easy at all. It takes

a lot from the body and the mind," Al Attiyah said after the stage, describing the intensity of the challenge in the Saudi desert.

The five-time champion credited his co-driver Fabian for a strong performance, stressing that full commitment was required throughout the day. "We pushed from the beginning until the end. Fabian did a really good job," he said.

Despite the exhaustion, Al Attiyah was satisfied with the outcome and the car's reliability. "We are very happy and also a bit lucky, because we knew today would be a difficult day," he added, before joking about the physical strain. "The car was okay. No problem. Except me. I am completely destroyed."

Adrien Van Beveren claimed the stage win, French rider's seventh Dakar stage success. The result lifted the Monster Energy Honda HRC rider to sixth overall, leaving him around an hour adrift of race leader and teammate Ricky Brabec.

Posuelo Py clinches Al Kharrara Cup as Boudot shines

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Pierre Charles Boudot continued his outstanding run this season guiding Posuelo Py to Al Kharrara Cup triumph in the Purebred Arabian Handicap (1200m) at Al Rayyan Racecourse yesterday.

Drawn widest, the eight-year-old bay gelding travelled midfield before powering down the home straight to score decisively by 1 1/4 lengths for owner Ibrahim Mohammed Al-Fadala and trainer Hamad Al-Jehani, giving Boudot a treble on the evening.

Qatar Racing and Equestrian Club (QREC) Racing Manager Abdulla Rashid Al Kubaisi presented the trophies to the feature winners.

Boudot had opened the card with a neck-winning ride on La Quyood for trainer Julian Smart in the Purebred Arabian Handicap Plate (1900m).

The in-form jockey later guided Deauville to victory in the Local Purebred Arabian



QREC Racing Manager Abdulla Rashid Al Kubaisi hands the trophy to jockey Pierre Charles Boudot. RIGHT: Action from the Al Kharrara Cup feature race won by Posuelo Py at Al Rayyan Racecourse yesterday. PICS: Juhaim/QREC



Handicap (1200m, Class 5) for trainer Ibrahim Khaled Elahmed.

Other winners during the eight-race card meeting included Burkan (trainer

Ibrahim Saeed Al Malki, jockey Tomas Lukasek) in the 1900m Purebred Arabian Conditions race, Galeb Al Shahania (Gassim Al Ghazali and Marco Casamento) in the Local

Purebred Arabian Handicap, Funny Bunny (Ibrahim Saeed Ibrahim Al Malki and Mohammed Hassan Ali Alabdulmalik) in the Thoroughbred Handicap, Tawfeeq (M H K Al

Atiyah, Szczepan Mazur) in the Local Thoroughbred Novice Plate, and Fantastic Deal (Abdulla Al-Mulla and Ivan Rossi) in the Thoroughbred Maiden Plate.

36TH AL RAYYAN RACE MEETING

AL KHARRARA CUP

WINNERS: (Horse, Trainer, Jockey)

Al Kharrara Cup, Purebred Arabian Handicap

Posuelo Py, Hamad Al-Jehani, Pierre Charles Boudot

Purebred Arabian Conditions

Burkan, Ibrahim Saeed Al Malki,

Tomas Lukasek

Local Purebred Arabian Handicap

Galeb Al Shahania, Gassim Al Ghazali,

Marco Casamento

Local Purebred Arabian Handicap

Deauville, Ibrahim Khaled Elahmed,

Pierre Charles Boudot

Thoroughbred Handicap

Funny Bunny, Ibrahim Saeed Ibrahim Al Malki, Mohammed Hassan Ali Alabdulmalik

Local Thoroughbred Novice Plate

Tawfeeq, M.H.K Al Attiyah, Szczepan Mazur

Thoroughbred Maiden Plate

Fantastic Deal, Abdulla Al-Mulla, Ivan Rossi

Purebred Arabian Maiden Plate

La Quyood, Julian Smart,

Pierre Charles Boudot

Madison Keys overcomes serve demons to win latest Australian Open warm-up

ADELAIDE: Defending Australian Open champion Madison Keys (pictured) overcame some first-set serve wobbles to win her latest warm-up match for the opening Grand Slam of the year yesterday.

The 30-year-old American, who will be seeded ninth when the Australian Open begins on Sunday, beat Czech teenager Tereza Valentova 6-4, 6-1 at the Adelaide International.

Keys, who won in Adelaide last year before going on to lift her maiden major, served up seven double faults in the opening set against the 18-year-old. She improved in the second, breaking twice and converting her third match point to reach the quarter-finals after an 85-minute workout on court.

"Experience helps get through the tricky moments," Keys said.

"I was able to take momentum in the second set and play really well. I had to raise my level. You have to take your chances on any opportunities you get."

World number 60 Valentova is one of a number of rising young talents on the women's circuit.

Keys said that facing the new generation was always a



challenge. "I have to lean on my experience a little bit. They are so young, have so much energy and are just so good. You expect them to play great tennis."

The American will face another teenager, 17th-ranked Victoria Mboko, in the last eight. The 18-year-old Canadian announced herself on the world stage last year by winning the WTA 1000 title in Montreal and the Hong Kong Open.

Keys began her 2026 Australian Open preparations last week in Brisbane, losing in the quarter-finals to world number one Aryna Sabalenka in a rematch of last year's Australian Open final. —AFP

Sinner in way as Alcaraz targets career Grand Slam in Australia

MELBOURNE: Carlos Alcaraz is targeting a career Grand Slam at the Australian Open but winning the only major to elude him will be no easy feat with great rival Jannik Sinner standing in his way.

Spain's Alcaraz already has six major titles under his belt aged just 22, but success on the Melbourne Park hard courts is a glaring hole in his resume.

He has not made it past the quarter-finals in four trips to Australia, losing at that stage in 2025 to Novak Djokovic and Alexander Zverev the year before.

"It's my first goal to be honest," Alcaraz said of Australia after winning the US Open last year, his second Slam title of 2025 after defending his crown at Roland Garros.

"When I just go to the pre-seasons to what I want to improve, what I want to achieve, Australian Open is there."

Should he snap his Australia drought at the tournament starting on Sunday, Alcaraz would become the youngest man to bank a career Grand Slam, surpassing retired compatriot Rafael Nadal.

Nadal secured all four majors by the age of 24.

Alcaraz faces a significant



Spain's Carlos Alcaraz during an exhibition event ahead of the 2026 Australian Open at Rod Laver Arena in Melbourne yesterday.



It's my first goal to be honest. When I just go to the pre-seasons to what I want to improve, what I want to achieve, Australian Open is there.

Carlos Alcaraz

roadblock in Italy's Sinner, the two-time defending champion who is chasing his own slice of history.

If the 24-year-old makes it

three in a row in Melbourne he would join Djokovic as the only men in the Open era to do so. The Serbian legend has done the three-peat twice during his 10 titles at Melbourne Park.

"I feel like a better player than last year," warned Sinner after completing his 2025 campaign with 58 wins and just six defeats.

"A lot of wins and not many losses. And in the losses I had, I tried to see the positive thing and tried to use it to evolve me as a player."

Sinner came from two sets down to defeat Daniil Medvedev in the 2024 Australian Open

final before seeing off Zverev in straight sets a year ago.

While Sinner is the defending champion, Alcaraz leads 10-6 in their head-to-head record and bumped Sinner from the season-ending world number one spot.

They met in a light-hearted exhibition match in South Korea last weekend, the pair's only warm-up for Melbourne, with Alcaraz coming out on top.

Such is the dominance of "Sincaraz", as they are being called, they have shared the last eight Grand Slam titles, picking up four each since Djokovic won his 24th major at the 2023 US Open.

Still chasing a record 25th major crown, Djokovic could be at his last Australian Open and will be desperate to win there again.

World number three Zverev, along with Lorenzo Musetti, Alex de Minaur and Felix Auger-Aliassime, ranked five, six and seven respectively, will be looking to crash the party and win a first major.

Three-time losing finalist Medvedev is a dark horse after winning the lead-up Brisbane International, while American Learner Tien spearheads the new guard fresh from lifting the ATP Next Gen title. —AFP

Mitchell hits ton as New Zealand down India to level ODI series

RAJKOT: Daryl Mitchell struck an unbeaten 131 to lead New Zealand to a series-leveling seven-wicket win over India in the second one-day international yesterday.

Chasing 285 for victory, Mitchell's eighth ODI ton and a 162-run stand with Will Young (87) for the third wicket helped New Zealand reach their target with 15 balls to spare in Rajkot.

Mitchell's knock trumped an unbeaten 112 by KL Rahul in India's 284-7 and forced the three-match series into a decider on Sunday in Indore.

Mitchell walked in to bat with New Zealand on 46-2 and along with Young helped the Black Caps take control.

Young fell to Kuldeep Yadav



BRIEF SCORES
New Zealand 286 for 3 (Mitchell 131*, Young 87, Prasidh 1-49) beat India 284 for 7 (Rahul 112*, Gill 56, Clarke 3-56) by seven wickets

in the 38th over but Mitchell stood firm to bring up his hundred.

He hit 11 fours and two sixes in his 117-ball innings and with Glenn Phillips, who made 32 not out, put together an unbeaten stand of 78.

Indian bowlers enjoyed early success when Harshit Rana bowled Devon Conway, who made 16, and fellow quick Prasidh Krishna had Henry Nicholls inside-edge a delivery onto his stumps for 10.

But Mitchell, who was dropped on 80, and Young struck regular boundaries as New Zealand completed their highest-ever ODI chase in India.

Earlier, India skipper Shubman Gill made 56 before a

brief collapse and a 73-run fifth-wicket partnership between Rahul and Ravindra Jadeja.

Rahul raised his eighth ODI ton in 87 balls with a six off Kyle

Jamieson. India started strongly courtesy of Gill and Rohit Sharma, who scored 24, as the opening pair put on 70 runs.

Rohit failed to capitalise on

his start and fell to Kristian Clarke, before pace spearhead Jamieson sent back Gill.

Clarke kept up the charge with his medium-pace bowling to dismiss Shreyas Iyer for eight and the in-form Virat Kohli for 23.

The 37-year-old Kohli, who returned to the top of the ODI batting rankings on Wednesday, walked back to stunned silence after he played on as India slipped from 99-1 to 118-4.

Rahul then took centre stage to rebuild the innings along with Jadeja, who made 27.

The series will be followed by five T20s, ahead of the T20 World Cup in India and Sri Lanka between February 7 and March 8. —AFP

Pakistan to play Australia in final T20 World Cup preparation

LAHORE: Former champions Pakistan and Australia will face off in three Twenty20 internationals to wrap up their preparations for next month's World Cup, the Pakistani cricket board said yesterday.

India and Sri Lanka are co-hosts of the Twenty20 World Cup, which runs from February 7 to March 8.

"Pakistan will play Australia in three Twenty20 internationals in Lahore which serves as crucial game time for both sides ahead of the World Cup," the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) said.

They will play at the Pakistani city's Gaddafi Stadium from January 29 to February 1, it added. Australia's T20I squad will arrive in Lahore on January 28.

Pakistan are placed in Group A of the 20-team World Cup along with arch-rivals India, the United States, Namibia and the Netherlands. Australia are placed in Group B with Sri Lanka, Ireland, Zimbabwe and Oman.

The top two teams from each of the four groups will qualify for the Super Eight stages. —AFP

SCHEDULE

January 29: 1st T20I

January 31: 2nd T20I

February 1: 3rd T20I

Alonso has great future despite Real end: Flick



BARCELONA: Barcelona coach Hansi Flick said yesterday Xabi Alonso has a great future in football despite Real Madrid replacing him at the helm this week.

Flick's Barca beat Alonso's Madrid in the Spanish Super Cup final on Sunday and a day later Los Blancos agreed a deal with the Basque coach to depart and appointed Alvaro Arbeloa.

"We have to continue, we have to think about what we can do better, but he's a fantastic coach and also has a great future," Flick told a news conference ahead of Barca's Copa del Rey last 16 clash at Racing Santander today.

Alonso, who won the Bundesliga unbeaten with Bayer Leverkusen in 2024, lasted less than eight months in charge of Madrid but Flick believes the former Liverpool and Bayern Munich player will soon land another big role.

"This is football and it's not my business, but what I can say is that I have a very good relationship with Xabi," explained Flick.

"I met him at Leverkusen, when I was the (German) national coach, I always stayed in contact with him. He's a fantastic coach."

"This is football, we have to accept these things, I wish him all



the best and I think he will get a new one, a big project for him and his team."

Flick confirmed Barcelona's new loan arrival Joao Cancelo could feature against second division leaders Racing.

The coach said he was hoping to take advantage of Cancelo's attacking quality between now and the end of the season.

"Joao is a fantastic football player, with a lot of quality in attack and this is what we need," added Flick.

"When the opponent is (deep in their own territory), we have to (overcome) them and we need quality and he's a good option for that." —AFP