

Qatar swimmers bag three gold medals on first day

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THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Qatar made a strong start to the GCC Games Doha 2026 after home athletes delivered medals across swimming, bowling and taekwondo, while also producing competitive displays in the rest of the appearances on the opening day of competition yesterday.

Swimmers delivered an impressive show in front of the home fans at the Hamad Aquatic Centre, winning three gold medals and two silvers to kick off the Games in style.

Saadeddin Saadeddin claimed Qatar's first gold after winning the men's 800m freestyle in a Games record time of 7:57.54 secs, while Bahrain's Robert Bonsall finished second and Kuwait's Saud Alshamroukh took bronze.

Mohamed Mahmoud added another gold for the hosts by topping the men's 200m individual medley in 2:03.02, also setting a Games record ahead of Bahrain's Saud Ghali and Kuwait's Khaled Alotaibi.

Mahmoud expressed pride after winning gold for the national team, describing the achievement as the result of months of hard preparation and strong teamwork.

The 22-year-old revealed that he and teammate Saad had been training in France since September as part of an extended camp ahead of the GCC Games Doha 2026, adding that the home support and high-level organization had helped deliver his best-ever performance.

The Qatari swimmer said the victory also came with a new Gulf record and a personal best time, but stressed that his mission at the Games was far from over with three more races and relay events still ahead.



Secretary General of the Qatar Olympic Committee and Vice Chairman of the Organising Committee of the Games Jassim bin Rashid Al Buenain with the podium winners of the men's 200m individual medley, won by Qatar's Mohamed Mahmoud.

Mahmoud said Qatar's strong showing in the pool reflected the quality of the team's preparation and expressed confidence that more gold medals and new Gulf and Arab records could follow during the remainder of the competition.

Later, Qatar's third gold came through Emile Fouzai, who won the men's 200m butterfly in 2:02.20 ahead of Saudi Arabia's Mohammed Alzaki and Kuwait's Mohammad Alotaibi.

In the men's 50m freestyle, Qatar's Ali Tamer Hassan settled for silver after clocking 22.69 seconds, finishing narrowly behind Saudi Arabia's Emad Addin Zaben, who won gold with a Games record of 22.64. Bahrain's Mikhail Arkhangelskiy claimed bronze.

Abdalla Elghamry secured Qatar's second silver medal after finishing runner-up in the men's 100m backstroke with a time of 58.32 seconds behind Saudi Arabia's Ali Alessa, who set a Games record of 57.39.

Qatar won two more medals after Bader Alsada claimed silver and Talal Almarri secured bronze in the men's singles bowling event at the Qatar Bowling Center. Alsada finished with 1275 points, while Almarri scored 1260 points to complete a double podium finish for the hosts. Saudi Arabia's Abdulrahman Alkheliwi won the gold medal after topping the standings with 1295 points.

Taekwondo players also contributed to the Qtaari medal tally, with Maram Fatnassi winning silver in the women's -67kg category, while Mohammad Shalan and Hassan Al Nuaimi secured bronze medals in the men's -80kg and -58kg events respectively.

Elsewhere, Qatar's star cueist Ali Al-Obaidli and compatriot Bashar Husain recorded mixed results but stayed on course for a podium finish in the men's 10-ball singles billiards competition at the Qatar Billiards and Snooker Federation Hall.

Al-Obaidli opened with a 7-5 victory over Kuwait's Sulaiman Gholoum before edging compatriot Bashar Husain 6-4, but later suffered a narrow 6-7 defeat to the UAE's Mahmoud Sharif. Bashar Husain, meanwhile, bounced back from his loss to Al-Obaidli by defeating Bahrain's Husain Yaqoob 6-4, before going down 6-7 to the UAE's Khalid Alzarooni in another closely contested match.



Qatar's Mohammad Shalan (second right) secured a bronze medal in the men's -80kg taekwondo competition.

Al-Obaidli remained positive despite a narrow 6-7 defeat to the UAE's Sharif, saying luck played a role in the contest and expressing confidence about bouncing back in the remaining matches. Al-Obaidli said he had led 5-2 before Sharif mounted a strong comeback, adding that he missed key opportunities in the tiebreak. The Qatari player stressed that setbacks are part of the sport, noting that he has previously recovered from losses to reach finals and win titles.

Al-Obaidli also praised the level of competition at the GCC Games Doha 2026 and highlighted the spirit of unity under the event's slogan "One Gulf, One Heart," saying the gathering of Gulf athletes was the tournament's biggest success.

Meanwhile, Qatar's women's 3x3 basketball team secured their place in the semi-finals at Al Gharafa Sports Hall after winning both their group stage matches.

At the end of the opening day, Saudi Arabia moved to the top of the GCC Games Doha 2026 medal tally with four gold, three silver and one bronze medal for a total of eight medals. Hosts Qatar sit second with 10 overall medals, including three gold, four silver and three bronze medals. Bahrain occupy third place with six medals, while the UAE, Kuwait and Oman complete the standings.



Qatar's Ali Al-Obaidli in action during the 10-ball singles billiards competition.

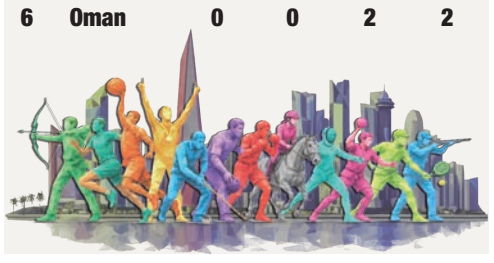


Action during the women's 3x3 basketball match between Qatar and Oman.

دورة الألعاب الخليجية الرابعة 4TH GCC GAMES | DOHA 2026

MEDAL TALLY

1	Saudi Arabia	4	3	1	8
2	Qatar	3	4	3	10
3	Bahrain	2	3	1	6
4	UAE	1	0	1	2
5	Kuwait	0	0	5	5
6	Oman	0	0	2	2



Doha 2026 Organising Committee honours GCC Olympic officials and participating delegations



Secretary General of the Qatar Olympic Committee (QOC) and Vice Chairman of the Organising Committee of the Games Jassim bin Rashid Al Buenain (second left) and QOC Second Vice-President Dr. Thani Abdulrahman Al-Kuwari with guests during the event.

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DOHA: The Organising Committee of the 4th GCC Games Doha 2026 hosted a luncheon in honour of Vice Presidents and Secretaries General of the GCC Olympic Committees, heads of administrative and sporting delegations as well as partners.

The luncheon followed a gracious invitation extended by Secretary General of the Qatar Olympic Committee (QOC) and Vice Chairman of the Organising Committee of the Games Jassim bin Rashid Al Buenain.

During the event, Al Buenain expressing pride in the distinguished Gulf participation and the close cooperation among the Gulf Olympic Committees.

He affirmed that Doha 2026 represents a new milestone in the journey of joint Gulf sports cooperation and reflects the growing stature of Gulf sport on both the regional and international stages before wishing all participating teams every success during the Games.

The luncheon was also attended by QOC Second Vice-President Dr. Thani Abdulrahman Al-Kuwari and QOC Sports Sector Director and Director General of the Organising Committee Sheikh Khalifa bin Khalid Al Thani.

Qatar begin World Cup countdown with 34-player preliminary squad



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DOHA: Qatar yesterday announced a 34-man preliminary squad for the FIFA World Cup 2026, with head coach Julen Lopetegui **(pictured)** opting for a blend of youth and experience as the two-time Asian champions enter the final phase of preparations for football's global showpiece.

The squad features 19-year-old Tahsin Mohammed Jamshid, the youngest player in the group, alongside 42-year-old veteran Sebastian Soria, the oldest, underlining Lopetegui's balance between emerging talent and proven experience ahead of the tournament in the United States, Canada and Mexico from June 11 to July 19.

The players will begin preparations with a training camp in Doha before travelling to North America, where Lopetegui will trim the squad to between 23 and 26 players ahead of FIFA's June 1 deadline for final submissions.

Besides Tahsin, the provisional squad includes promising Al Gharafa talent Rayyan Al Ali, 20, and Ayoub Al Oui, who was named the Qatar Football Association's Best Under-23 Player on Monday. However, Al Arabi goalkeeper Jasim Al-Hail and Al Rayyan forward Khalid Ali, both included in the March training camp squad, were left out this time.

Al Gharafa striker Mohammed Muntari also earned a call-up despite limited appearances at club level during the recently concluded domestic season. Veteran Hassan Al Haydos features among the attacking options alongside star playmaker Akram Afif and fit-again striker Almoez Ali.

At the back, Qatar SC defender and former Aston Villa player Niall Mason joins experienced campaigners Lucas Mendes and Pedro Miguel, while the goalkeeping department comprises Mahmoud Abunada, Meshaal Barsham, Salah Zakaria and Shehab Ellethy.

Qatar will be hoping for a stronger showing than at their debut World Cup appearance on home soil in 2022, when Felix Sanchez's side suffered a first-round exit after losing all three group matches.

"We did not perform at the required level, and we will try our best to prove that we deserve to be at the World Cup with a strong performance," Akram Afif said on Monday after receiving the QFA Best Player award.

Qatar will intensify preparations later this month with a training camp featuring warm-up matches against the Republic of Ireland on May 28 and El Salvador in Los Angeles on June 6 as Lopetegui fine-tunes his plans before the tournament.

Al Annabi will begin their World Cup campaign against Switzerland in Santa Clara on June 13 before facing co-hosts Canada in Vancouver on June 19 and concluding their Group-stage fixtures against Bosnia and Herzegovina in Seattle on June 24.

Lopetegui said Qatar would have sufficient time to prepare following the conclusion of the domestic season with the Amir Cup final, while stressing the importance of maintaining full fitness ahead of the tournament. The Spaniard expressed hope the squad would remain injury-free and reach the World Cup in peak physical and mental condition. "If you want to compete in the World Cup, you must be ready," he said on the sidelines of the Asian Cup 2027 draw in Riyadh on Saturday night.

QATAR'S PRELIMINARY SQUAD

Mahmoud Abunada, Meshaal Barsham, Salah Zakaria, Shehab Ellethy (goalkeepers); Abdulaziz Hatem, Ahmed Al Janehi, Ahmed Alaaeldin, Ahmed Fathy, Akram Afif, Alhashmi Alhussain, Almoez Ali, Assim Madibo, Ayoub Al Oui, Boualem Khoukhi, Bassam Al Rawi, Emilson Junior, Hassan Al Haydos, Homam Al Amin, Issa Laye, Jassim Gaber, Karim Boudiaf, Lucas Mendis, Mohammed Mannai, Mohammed Muntari, Mohammed Waad, Mubarak Shanan, Niall Mason, Pedro Miguel, Rayyan Al Ali, Sebastian Soria, Sultan Al Brake, Tahsin Mohammed, Tarek Salman, Yusuf Abdurisag



Qatar players during a training session.

Sinner dismisses Pellegrino to reach Italian Open quarter-finals, Zverev out

ROME: Jannik Sinner's charge towards a first Italian Open title continued yesterday after the world number one calmly dispatched countryman Andrea Pellegrino 6-2, 6-3, while Alexander Zverev suffered a shock exit at the hands of another local hero in Luciano Darderi.

Second seed Zverev fell 1-6, 7-6 (12/10), 6-0, the German collapsing to defeat in front of a passionate crowd that roared on 18th-seeded Italian Darderi.

But as expected, top seed Sinner outclassed qualifier Pellegrino on centre court in a match which was in truth never much of a contest.

The 24-year-old Sinner has now won 31 straight matches in Masters 1000 events to equal Novak Djokovic's record run.

"I'm very happy about the outcome, but at the same time I'm very happy for him, I know he's working very hard," said Sinner of Pellegrino.

"Tomorrow, a day off is important for me, trying to rest, and then hopefully I'm ready for quarters." Pellegrino's arrival in the last 16 of his home tournament is by far his best result in a Masters 1000 event.

The 29-year-old is set to move up to a career-best world ranking of 123rd after not just making the main draw of a top-ranked ATP tournament for the first time but also getting to face his country's biggest sporting star in front of over 10,000 fans.


Jannik Sinner hits a return to Andrea Pellegrino during their match yesterday.

Pellegrino received warm cheers as he put in a creditable performance against the dominant force in tennis, and he also showed some deft technique when given room to breathe by Sinner.

But Sinner was never in top gear and still comfortably dealt with Pellegrino to set up a clash with either 12th seed Andrey Rublev or another qualifier in Georgia's Nikoloz Basilashvili.

Should Sinner win a record-extending sixth straight Masters 1000 title, he will be the first Italian to win at the Foro Italico since Adriano Panatta 50 years ago.

With great rival Carlos Alcaraz out injured and Zverev now gone, Sinner is red-hot favourite for victory as he builds towards completing the career Grand Slam at Roland Garros.

Zverev, the 2024 champion in Rome, slumped in three sets as Darderi rallied to his first ever win over an opponent ranked among the world's top 10 players.

"It's my most important win, to beat Zverev at Roma is the most exciting win of my career," said Darderi.

While Sinner and Darderi -- set to rise to a career-high 17th in the world -- reached the last eight, their compatriot Lorenzo Musetti was not so fortunate as physical problems led to him being beaten 6-3, 6-1 by Casper Ruud.

Musetti was in tears at the end of his third-round win over Francisco Cerundolo and had to take a medical time-out for a problem with his left thigh during the second set against Ruud.

The Italian will drop out of the top 10 of the men's rankings ahead of the French Open next week, and he later told reporters that he is unsure of whether he will participate in Paris.

Norwegian Ruud is on the other side of the draw from Sinner and will face Karen Khachanov in the last eight after exploiting Musetti's struggles with fitness.

Khachanov, seeded 13th, ended Dino Prizmic's bid to reach his first Masters 1000 quarter-final, seeing off the spirited Croatian qualifier 6-1, 7-6 (7/2).

Prizmic had announced himself on the big stage this week by knocking out Novak Djokovic in the second round.

Veteran Sorana Cirstea, who knocked out world number one Aryna Sabalenka in the third round, reached the semi-finals of the women's tournament after beating Jelena Ostapenko 6-1, 7-6 (7/0). Romania Cirstea is set to retire at the end of the season and will face either Coco Gauff or Mirra Andreeva, on centre court after Sinner, for a place in Saturday's final. — ***AFP***

Spain coach counting on Yamal and Williams fitness for World Cup



MADRID: Spain coach Luis de la Fuente said yesterday he was counting on wingers Lamine Yamal **(pictured)** and Nico Williams to be fit and available for the World Cup next month.

Yamal, 18, suffered a hamstring injury in late April, which has caused him to miss the rest of the season for Barcelona, though his club have said he should be fit in time for the start of this summer's showpiece in the United States, Canada and Mexico.

Athletic Bilbao's Williams picked up a muscle injury on Sunday, while Arsenal midfielder Mikel Merino is also on the sidelines after breaking his right foot three months ago.

"I think that all the players who have been mentioned will be fit and available for the start of the World Cup and I believe for the first match," De la Fuente told journalists.

"But if it's not for the first match, it would be for the second or third, and it doesn't cause any major setbacks," the Spanish coach continued, adding it had been "a very tough year in terms of injuries".

"The world of injuries, which is the tragedy of sport, is what truly keeps us under a lot of pressure, especially in this critical phase because injuries that occur from now on, any minor muscular injury, are really difficult to recover from," he added.

Meanwhile, De la Fuente confirmed that his World Cup squad list will include 26 players but that there would be additional players who would be included for a friendly against Iraq on June 4.

Spain's World Cup opener will be against Cape Verde on June 15 in Atlanta. Their group also includes Uruguay and Saudi Arabia. — ***AFP***

Palestinian flag in Barca parade Yamal decision, says Flick

BARCELONA: Barcelona coach Hansi Flick refused to be drawn yesterday when asked to comment on star forward Lamine Yamal waving a Palestinian flag during the Catalans' title parade.

After wrapping up a second-consecutive La Liga crown on Sunday by beating Real Madrid 2-0, Barcelona celebrated their victory with a bus parade on Monday.

During the parade the Spanish international was seen waving a Palestinian flag from the vehicle carrying the players.

"I don't like it," Flick told reporters at a press conference yesterday.

"I spoke to him (Yamal) and if he wants to do it, it's his decision. He is 18.

"We have to bear in mind what people expect of us. We are playing football and you can see what people expect from us.

"When you saw people on the street with tears in their eyes. They were really happy. This is why we are here, we are playing football to make people happy." — ***AFP***

Workshop held for clubs to discuss new phase of QSL, QSL 2

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DOHA: Qatar Stars League, in co-operation with Qatar Football Association, held a workshop for clubs as part of preparations for the 2026-2027 football season.

Representatives from the QSL, QFA, Qatar Stars League clubs and Second Division clubs attended the meeting, which focused on the latest developments, decisions and the upcoming phase of competitions.


The workshop aims to boost club readiness and improve technical and administrative standards for competitions.

The workshop addressed the new phase of QSL and QSL 2 competitions, providing an overview of the strategy aimed at continuing development and enhancing competitiveness among clubs, ultimately serving the best interests of Qatar football, its championships and national teams.

The workshop also reviewed and clarified the new decisions, which include: cancellation of Olympic League and Second Division League, and the launch of a new competition called QSL 2.

This new competition will be played on a home-and-away format and will include Second Division clubs, Under-23 national team and 'B' teams of some First Division clubs that meet the participation requirements and criteria.

The meeting also clarified the participation mechanism and the number of foreign professional players permitted, based on the new regulations. These regulations permit each First Division club to field a maximum of five foreign professional players, in addition to at least two talented players, within the 11-man squad at any point during a match.

Regarding QSL 2, eight foreign professional players are allowed within the 11-man squad at any point during a match.

The meeting addressed several inquiries and questions from club representatives, providing necessary clarifications regarding the new regulations and their implementation mechanisms.

This aims to support club readiness and achieve the highest levels of technical and administrative organisation for competitions.

Narvaez wins Giro stage four as Ciccone takes leader's jersey

COSENZA: Ecuadorian Jhonatan Narvaez sprinted to victory in the fourth stage of the Giro d'Italia yesterday with Italian Giulio Ciccone taking the race lead.

Narvaez provided much-needed relief to UAE Team Emirates which has been decimated since the start of the race.

The 29-year-old beat a peloton from which all the main sprinters had been dropped on the long climb of Cozzo Tunno, halfway through the 138km stage that finished in Cosenza, in Calabria.

UAE had lost three riders in a pile-up on Saturday with British rider Adam Yates retiring with concussion while Marc Soler fractured his pelvis and Jay Vine broke his elbow.

"I'm really glad I could deliver this victory," added Narvaez.

"In the finale I took the corner at 700m to go in a really good position and then it was just all about the legs in the sprint."

Two years after Tadej Pogacar's Giro triumph the team's focus now is on winning stages with the Slovenian not competing in this edition.

Swiss teammate Jan Christen made a late break in the closing kilometres and moved into the maglia bianca as best young rider and second overall.

Ciccone leads Christen by four seconds in the overall standings. — ***AFP***


Jhonatan Narvaez celebrates his victory.

Dortmund sign Gadou as Suele replacement

BERLIN: Borussia Dortmund yesterday announced the signing of teenage centre-back Joane Gadou, who will replace the retiring Niklas Suele.

Gadou, 19, arrives from Red Bull Salzburg on a deal running until 2031 for a reported fee of 20m euros ($23.5m) plus bonuses.

A France international at junior levels, Gadou came through the Paris Saint-Germain academy before moving to Salzburg in 2024.

The transfer is Dortmund's first under new sporting director Ole Book, who pledged to return the club's focus to signing young talents. Erling Haaland and Karim Adeyemi also joined Dortmund from Salzburg.

Suele announced earlier in May he would retire in the summer, aged 30. — ***AFP***


Gujarat Titans' Kagiso Rabada (centre) delivers a ball during the match.

Rabada shines as Gujarat hammer Hyderabad in IPL

AHMEDABAD: South Africa's Kagiso Rabada led an inspired pace attack to power Gujarat Titans to the top of the IPL table with an 82-run thrashing of Sunrisers Hyderabad yesterday.

Hosts Gujarat defended 168 in Ahmedabad as Rabada took 3-28 and, with his fellow quicks, bowled out Hyderabad for 86, their lowest ever score in the IPL.

Fellow quick Jason Holder cleaned up the Hyderabad middle and lower-order to claim 3-20 from his four overs.

Former champions Gujarat leapfrogged Hyderabad and defending champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru to top the 10-team table, moving closer to a playoff spot.

Gujarat have 16 points with eight wins from 12 matches and are favourites to finish in the top two after the league stage.

The top four will make the playoffs with the top two getting an extra chance to make the final in Ahmedabad on May 31. — ***AFP***

Bangladesh down Pakistan in first Test

DHAKA: Pace bowler Nahid Rana claimed five wickets as Bangladesh trumped Pakistan by 104 runs in a rain-hit first Test yesterday after a thrilling fifth day of batting collapses.

Chasing 268 for victory in Dhaka, Pakistan were 119-3 before they fell to 163 all out in the final session with debutant Abdullah Fazal scoring a valiant 66. Bangladesh now hold a 1-0 lead in the two-match home series.

The 23-year-old Fazal put on 51 runs with Salman Agha, who made 26, to raise Pakistan's hopes of victory before Rana rattled the opposition with figures of 5-40.

Bangladesh came into the final day with a lead of 179 runs at 152-3 but a clutch of wickets made them falter despite skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto's 87.

Bangladesh declared their second innings on 240-9 to hand Pakistan a competitive target and a chance for their bowlers to make use of the turning pitch.

Taskin Ahmed took down opener Imam-ul-Haq for two and Mehidy Hasan Miraz bowled debutant and first-innings centurion Azan Awais for 15. Fazal and Agha counter-attacked in their fourth-wicket partnership but Bangladesh bowlers proved their mettle on home turf to secure victory in the final session of the day. Shanto stood out for his batting brilliance as he made 101 in the first innings to guide Bangladesh to 413.


Bangladesh players celebrate their team's win.

Pakistan responded with 386 in their first innings but conceded a slender lead after off-spinner Mehidy returned figures of 5-102. Rain played spoilsport on the third and fourth days of the Test with a few overs lost due to interruptions.

The second match will begin on Saturday in Sylhet.

BRIEF SCORES

Bangladesh 413 and 240 for 9 dec. (Shanto 87, Mominul 56, Hasan 3-52) **beat Pakistan** 386 and 163 (Fazal 66, Salman 26, Rana 5-40) **by 104 runs.** — ***AFP***