Bezzecchi wins Grand Prix of Qatar as Marquez waits to seal world title

FAWAD HUSSAIN
THE PENINSULA

LUSAIL: Marco Bezzecchi bounced back from his sprint disappointment with a clinical performance to win the MotoGP Qatar Airways Grand Prix of Qatar in front of 27,000 spectators at floodlit Lusail International Circuit yesterday.

The victory for the Aprilia Racing rider meant Ducati's Marc Marquez will have to wait at least another two weeks to clinch his eighth premier-class world title.

Needing a victory and hoping his closest title rival Jorge Martin finished outside the points to seal the championship in Lusail, Marquez finished second in the 22-lap race dominated by a resurgent Bezzecchi.

Martin, Bezzecchi's teammate, finished seventh as he continued his comeback from a broken right wrist, keeping his title hopes alive.

Pole-sitter Bezzecchi, who retired from Saturday's sprint following a collision with Marquez, was in superb form yesterday but remains 74 points behind the championship leader.

Third in the standings, the Italian is virtually out of contention for his maiden world title, with the gap matching the maximum number of points available in the remaining races. However, Bezzecchi is now in contention to overtake Martin for second place in the championship standings.

Marquez holds a 60-point lead over Martin and will need to outscore his rival by two points in the Grand Prix of Portugal sprint in a fortnight to secure the title, with the Valencia finale remaining after Portimao.

"I was confident in my strategy today. My strategy was just try to manage the race the first five laps," said Marquez.

"I saw that in one part of the race I was super fast, but I knew that riding on that riding style, I was eating the front tyre."

Marquez lost second place to Trackhouse Aprilia's Raul Fernandez at Turn 2 on the opening lap after Bezzecchi took the holeshot from pole position. He also dropped behind Pedro Acosta on lap three but regained second at the start of lap six when tyre pressure issues forced the KTM rider to drop back.

"Third position was (would have been) okay, but I saw that Fernandez was struggling, so you never know, I attack and four points more," said Marquez.

Fernandez finished third, just over half a second behind Marquez, while his Trackhouse Aprilia team-mate Ai Ogura took fourth place.

Bezzecchi, meanwhile, was untouchable, beating Marquez by 3.083 seconds to claim his sixth Grand Prix victory of the season.

"It was a wonderful race for me," he said.

"I was very motivated after yesterday, that was a sprint that I felt I could have fought for the victory. It's something that can happen in racing. But, anyway, this gave me an extra push to try to bounce back today and make the perfect start everything well. I'm glad that I was able to make it and super thankful to the team and Aprilia. It was good."

With his title hopes fading, Bezzecchi said: "I mean, I need a miracle, but it looks like this season [there have been] no miracles for me. But it's good to have an opportunity to be fighting with them. In the end, Jorge [Martin] and Marc are both super, super good riders. Just to fight with them is good."

Martin was unable to repeat his impressive sprint performance, when he climbed from 11th on the grid to challenge Marquez for the lead before finishing third.

However, making his first appearance since breaking his right wrist, the Spaniard earned applause from his team after keeping his title hopes alive.

Enea Bastianini finished fifth ahead of Acosta, with Fabio Di Giannantonio taking eighth place, followed by Johann Zarco in ninth and Iker Lecuona in 10th.



Qatar Motor and Motorcycle Federation and Lusail International Circuit (LIC) President Abdulrahman bin Abdullatif Al-Mannai, LIC CEO Abdulaziz Ali Al-Mohannadi with Qatar MotoGP winner Marco Bezzecchi, runner-up Marc Marquez and third-placed Raul Fernandez.


Aprilia Racing's Marco Bezzecchi (right) rides during the MotoGP Qatar Airways Grand Prix of Qatar. Pics: AFP

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Marco Bezzecchi

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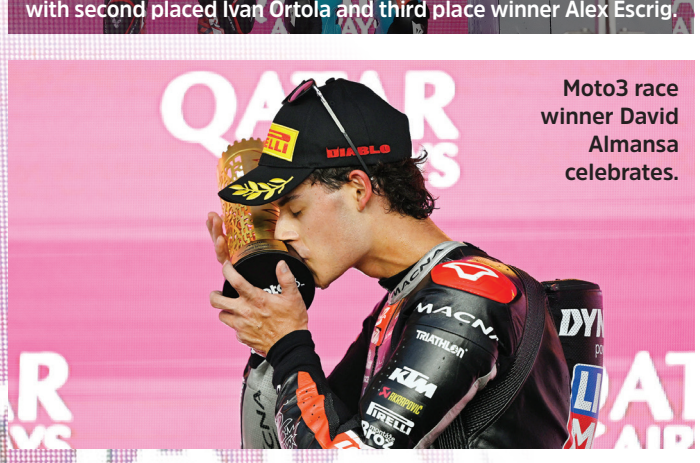
Marc Marquez


Moto2 winner Daniel Holgado (centre) celebrates on the podium with second placed Ivan Ortola and third place winner Alex Escrig.


Moto3 race winner David Almansa celebrates.


Marco Bezzecchi celebrates with the trophy.


Spectators enjoy fireworks after the MotoGP Qatar Airways Grand Prix of Qatar.

MOTOGP 2026 RIDERS' CHAMPIONSHIP STANDINGS

1. **Marc Marquez** (Ducati Lenovo Team) - **431 pts**
2. **Jorge Martin** (Aprilia Racing) - **371 pts**
3. **Marco Bezzecchi** (Aprilia Racing) - **357 pts**
4. **Pedro Acosta** (Red Bull KTM Factory Racing) - **309 pts**
5. **Ai Ogura** (SuperFile Trackhouse MotoGP Team) - **294 pts**
6. **Fabio Di Giannantonio** (Pertamina Enduro VR46 Racing Team) - **282 pts**
7. **Raul Fernandez** (SuperFile Trackhouse MotoGP Team) - **258 pts**
8. **Alex Marquez** (BK8 Gresini Racing MotoGP) - **197 pts**
9. **Francesco Bagnaia** (Ducati Lenovo Team) - **173 pts**
10. **Enea Bastianini** (Red Bull KTM Tech3) - **147 pts**

QATAR AIRWAYS GRAND PRIX OF QATAR 2026

MOTOGP RACE RESULTS

1. Marco Bezzecchi (Aprilia Racing) 41:29.173 - 25 pts
2. Marc Marquez (Ducati Lenovo Team) +3.083 - 20 pts
3. Raul Fernandez (SuperFile Trackhouse MotoGP Team) +3.614 - 16 pts
4. Ai Ogura (SuperFile Trackhouse MotoGP Team) +4.885 - 13 pts
5. Enea Bastianini (Red Bull KTM Tech3) +6.948 - 11 pts
6. Pedro Acosta (Red Bull KTM Factory Racing) +7.413 - 10 pts
7. Jorge Martin (Aprilia Racing) +14.023 - 9 pts
8. Fabio Di Giannantonio (Pertamina Enduro VR46 Racing Team) +15.517 - 8 pts
9. Johann Zarco (Castrol Honda LCR) +16.257 - 7 pts
10. Iker Lecuona (BK8 Gresini Racing MotoGP) +17.958 - 6 pts
11. Franco Morbidelli (Pertamina Enduro VR46 Racing Team) +20.275 - 5 pts
12. Fermin Aldeguer (BK8 Gresini Racing MotoGP) +20.576 - 4 pts
13. Maverick Viñales (Red Bull KTM Tech3) +21.095 - 3 pts
14. Jake Dixon (Honda HRC Castrol) +28.734 - 2 pts

MOTO2 RESULTS (Top 10)

1. Daniel Holgado (CFMOTO Power Electronics Aspar Team) 35:13.340 - 25 pts
2. Ivan Ortola (QJMOTOR - MSI) +2.265 - 20 pts
3. Alex Escrig (KLINT Racing Team) +2.285 - 16 pts
4. David Alonso (CFMOTO Power Electronics Aspar Team) +4.143 - 13 pts
5. Daniel Muñoz (Italtrans Racing Team) +4.962 - 11 pts
6. Manuel Gonzalez (LIQUI MOLY Dynavolt Intact GP) +8.396 - 10 pts
7. Senna Agius (LIQUI MOLY Dynavolt Intact GP) +9.034 - 9 pts
8. Jose Antonio Rueda (Red Bull KTM Ajo) +9.237 - 8 pts
9. Filip Salac (OnlyFans American Racing Team) +9.362 - 7 pts
10. Celestino Vietti (BETA Tools SpeedRS Team) +10.470 - 6 pts

MOTO3 RESULTS (Top 10)

1. David Almansa (Liqui Moly Dynavolt Intact GP) 33:09.479 - 25 pts
2. Adrian Fernandez (Leopard Racing) +2.516 - 20 pts
3. Maximo Quiles (CFMOTO Gaviota Aspar Team) +2.585 - 16 pts
4. Veda Pratama (Honda Team Asia) +5.653 - 13 pts
5. Alvaro Carpe (Red Bull KTM Ajo) +5.700 - 11 pts
6. Joel Kelso (GRYD Racing) +5.954 - 10 pts
7. Hakim Danish (AEON Credit - MT Helmets - MSI) +7.315 - 9 pts
8. David Muñoz (Liqui Moly Dynavolt Intact GP) +11.381 - 8 pts
9. Ryusei Yamanaka (AEON Credit - MT Helmets - MSI) +11.428 - 7 pts
10. Scott Ogden (CIP Green Power) +11.465 - 6 pts

Al Mannai proud of Qatar MotoGP return as attendance sets record

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: President of Qatar Motor and Motorcycle Federation (QMMF) and Lusail International Circuit (LIC) Abdulrahman bin Abdullatif Al Mannai said Qatar was proud to welcome MotoGP back and share another memorable weekend of racing with riders, teams and fans from around the world.

The 2026 Qatar Airways Grand Prix of Qatar attracted a record 55,120 spectators over the weekend, surpassing the previous attendance record set in 2023.

The total included 8,683 spectators before the weekend, 19,630 on Saturday and 26,807 yesterday.

"We are proud to have welcomed MotoGP back to Qatar and to have shared another memorable weekend of racing with riders, teams and fans from around the world," Al Mannai said.

"I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the government entities, our partners and sponsors, the riders and teams, and every member of the LIC team, whose hard work, resilience and commitment made the Grand Prix possible. Above all, I would like to thank the fans for making the Qatar Grand Prix such a special occasion.


QMMF and LIC President Abdulrahman bin Abdullatif Al Mannai


LIC CEO Abdulaziz Ali Al Mohannadi

"This event reflects Qatar's long-term, unwavering commitment to motorsport. With that commitment in mind, we look forward to welcoming motorsport fans back to Lusail International Circuit for the next chapter of racing."

CEO of Lusail International Circuit Abdulaziz Ali Al Mohannadi said the successful staging of the event reflected the quality of the facilities and the dedication of the teams working behind the scenes.

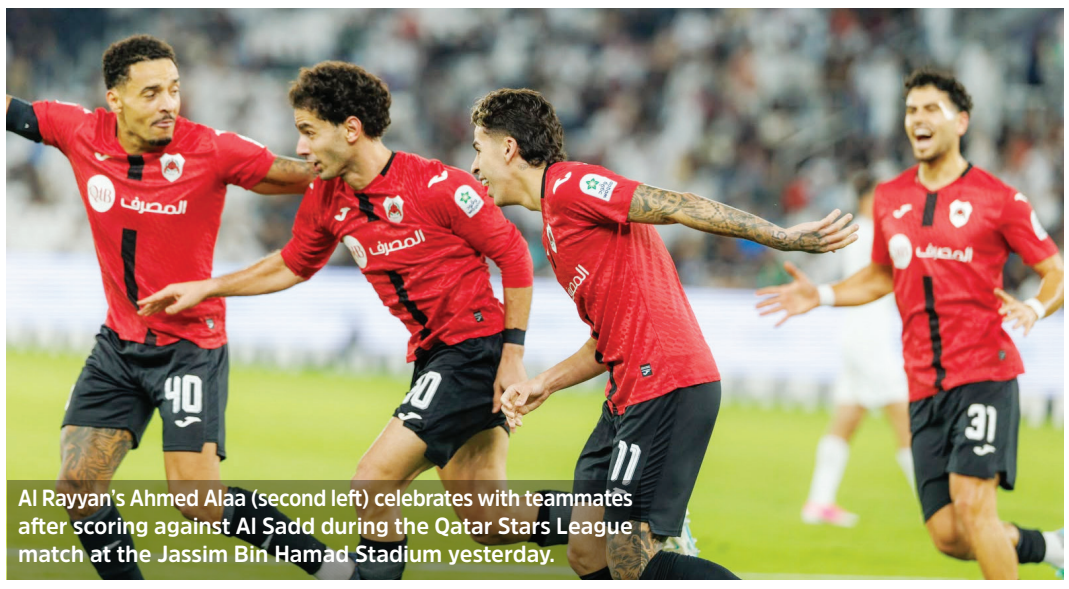
"Successfully delivering an event of this scale is a reflection of our world-class facilities and, above all, the commitment and dedication of the teams working behind the scenes. Their efforts ensure we provide an exceptional experience that reflects the highest standards of excellence.

"The enthusiasm of our fans created a fantastic atmosphere throughout the weekend, while the opportunities we created to bring riders closer to fans made the experience even more special, strengthening the connection between the sport and its supporters. Their passion continues to motivate us to raise our standards and deliver world-class events. We look forward to welcoming our fans back to the circuit for Formula 1 at the end of November."

On the track, Aprilia Racing's Marco Bezzecchi won yesterday's 22-lap race ahead of Marc Marquez, who finished second.

Al Rayyan edge Al Sadd in seven-goal Clasico to go top

THE PENINSULA


Al Rayyan's Ahmed Alaa (second left) celebrates with teammates after scoring against Al Sadd during the Qatar Stars League match at the Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium yesterday.


Lusail SC's Khaled Mohammed Saleh (left) and Khaled Walid Mansour celebrate a goal.

DOHA: The Qatar Clasico lived up to expectations as Al Rayyan produced a sensational 4-3 victory over defending champions Al Sadd in a seven-goal thriller at Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium yesterday to return to the top of the Qatar Stars League standings.

The victory lifted Al Rayyan to 21 points, level with Al Duhail but ahead on goal difference. Al Sadd remain third on 18 points, three behind the leaders and four ahead of fourth-placed Al Arabi.

In a match full of twists and attacking football, Al Rayyan looked to have taken firm control after scoring four goals in the first half, but Al Sadd fought back to set up a tense finish before the visitors held on for three valuable points.

Ahmed Alaa set the tone with an early opener in 10th minute before Otavio doubled Al Rayyan's lead three minutes later. Roberto Firmino pulled one back for Al Sadd in 21st minute, but Roger Guedes restored the two-goal cushion just a minute later.

Ahmed Alaa then struck again to make it 4-1 before half-hour mark, giving Al Rayyan a commanding advantage.

However, Al Sadd kept themselves in the contest as Giovanni Henrique scored their second goal three minutes before the interval. The hosts had a chance to reduce the deficit further in first-half stoppage time, but Akram Afif missed a penalty as Al Rayyan went into the break with a 4-2 lead.

Al Sadd returned with greater urgency after the restart and Afif made amends by scoring midway through the second half to bring the defending champions within a goal.

With the contest wide open, Al Sadd pushed forward in search of an equaliser, while Al Rayyan looked to exploit the spaces on the counter-attack. The visitors, however, stood firm to secure a memorable victory.

Two-goal hero Ahmed Alaa said the team had specifically worked on his opening goal in training.

"We actually practised that first goal yesterday. We knew how the goalkeeper plays, and we worked on it in training. For the first, I read the goalkeeper's movement, while the second was a textbook header," he said.

He also dedicated the victory to the Al Rayyan supporters, praising their backing.

"This is the result of a collective effort by the players, coaching staff, management and fans. I'd like to thank the fans and dedicate this victory to them. Hopefully, we can continue to make them proud and maintain this level of performance."

Lusail snatch late win over Qatar SC

Earlier, Lusail SC secured a dramatic 3-2 victory over Qatar SC with Hamidreza Firouzi scoring the winning goal in the 86th minute at Al Khor Stadium yesterday.

The victory continued an impressive run for the QSL debutants, who moved up to fifth place with 12 points, while Qatar SC remained 11th on six points. Rodrigo put Lusail ahead from the penalty spot in the 18th minute, but Joao Pedro levelled for Qatar SC with another penalty seven minutes before half-time.

Qatar SC completed their comeback early in the second half when Yohan Boli scored in the 52nd minute to put his side 2-1 ahead. Lusail responded quickly, with Khaled Mansour scoring equaliser in the 56th minute.

The match appeared to be heading for a draw before Firouzi struck four minutes from full time to give Lusail all three points.



China arrive in Doha ahead of U-17 FIFA World Cup

China U-17 national team arrived in Doha ahead of the FIFA U-17 World Cup Qatar 2026 which is taking place from 19 November to 13 December. China have been drawn into Group H, with Spain, Fiji and Morocco. They kick off their campaign on November 20 against Spain at the Competition Complex in Aspire Zone.

Tickets on sale for four friendlies in Qatar

THE PENINSULA


Qatar will play Australia and Republic of Korea on November 13 and 17 respectively.

DOHA: Qatar is set to host a number of friendly matches on 13 and 17 November 2026, featuring hosts Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Australia, Republic of Korea and Uzbekistan.

Tickets can be purchased exclusively at: www.roadtoqatar.qa, and are available in the following categories: Category 1: QR30; Category 2: QR15 and Accessibility Tickets: QR10

All tickets are digital and will be made available to download on the Road to Qatar official ticketing app. A maximum of six tickets can be purchased per person.

Disabled fans can purchase tickets by sending an e-mail to: accessibility.tickets@sc.qa.

Following the friendly fixtures, Qatar is set to host the FIFA U-17 World Cup Qatar 2026 from 19 November to 13 December, and the final three matches of the FIFA Intercontinental Cup on 6, 9 and 12 December, once again demonstrating its ability in hosting multiple sporting events.

The Local Organising Committee will be hosting the following matches in Doha.

Friday, 13 November

Saudi Arabia v Republic of Korea, 5:30pm

Venue: Jassim bin Hamad Stadium

Qatar v Australia, 5:45pm

Venue: Abdulla bin Khalifa Stadium

Tuesday, 17 November

Qatar v Republic of Korea, 5pm

Venue: Abdulla bin Khalifa Stadium

Saudi Arabia v Uzbekistan, 6:30pm

Venue: Jassim bin Hamad Stadium

Ligue 1: Lille keep pace with PSG

PARIS: Lille beat Rennes 2-1 away yesterday to climb second in Ligue 1 just two points behind European champions Paris Saint-Germain in the French Ligue 1 table.

Coached by Davide Ancelotti Lille go into the international break with 21 points from 10 games one ahead of Paris FC in third.

Italian Ancelotti, son of coaching great Carlo Ancelotti, took over at Lille in June after they finished third, and has hit the ground running domestically despite being thumped by Arsenal and Galatasaray in the Champions League.

Lille opened the scores with a thumping shot from 19-year-old striker Soriba Diaoune **(pictured)** on the edge of the box on 24 minutes, and after Rennes levelled, Nathan Ngoy's stinging winner for Lille came from a defensive error after 68 minutes.

Turkish goalkeeper Berke Ozer has conceded just seven goals and the giant Lille stopper will play for his country when they take on France in Bordeaux on November 15. — ***AFP***



Man United rescue Villa draw with incredible fightback; Chelsea stunned by Sunderland


Manchester United's Patrick Dorgu (left) celebrates with Bruno Fernandes during the match.

LONDON: Manchester United rescued an incredible 4-4 draw against Aston Villa as two stoppage-time goals gave Michael Carrick renewed hope of avoiding the sack, while Chelsea suffered a shock 1-0 loss at Sunderland yesterday.

United boss Carrick was seconds away from heading into the international break on the back of another devastating defeat that would surely have led to his dismissal.

But Carrick's side struck twice in the six minutes of additional time through Joshua Zirkzee and Patrick Dorgu to leave their manager's future still uncertain.

United are in the relegation zone and have not won in their last eight Premier League matches, so it is far from sure that Carrick will survive the axe.

He had earned a stay of execution when United's hierarchy allowed him to remain in charge despite last weekend's loss at Chelsea.

United responded by ending a nine-match winless run in all competitions as they came from two goals down to beat Roma 3-2 in the Champions League on Tuesday.

But United, who have only three wins in 15 games this season, were back in turmoil when they fell 2-0 down against Villa in the first four minutes at Old Trafford. Alysson struck in the first minute with a shot that squirmed under United keeper Senne Lammens.

Nicolas Jackson slotted in the second three minutes later after a weak save from Lammens pushed the ball into his path.

Bruno Fernandes got one back with a 16th-minute penalty after Boubacar Kamara fouled Matheus Cunha before former Villa midfielder Youri Tielemans slammed in United's 44th-minute equaliser.

Villa's John McGinn converted a 48th-minute penalty following Diogo Dalot's clumsy challenge on Alysson.

Leon Goretzka poked in Villa's fourth from close-range after United's Leny Yoro headed against his own crossbar in the 53rd minute.

Yet Zirkzee's stoppage-time finish gave United hope and Dorgu headed their dramatic equaliser in the final seconds after a weak punch from Villa keeper Zion Suzuki.

Carrick wore a bewildered look on his face as he walked down the tunnel towards an uncertain future, with United next in action at Liverpool on November 22.

Chelsea arrived at the Stadium of Light hoping to bolster their bid to qualify for the Champions League via a top-four finish.

Instead, they departed red-faced after an embarrassing loss to third-bottom Sunderland, who celebrated a league victory for only the second time this season.

Liverpool back on track

Chelsea were rocked in the 36th minute when Enzo Le Fee converted a penalty after Brian Brobbey was up-ended by Levi Colwill.

Liverpool got back on track with a 3-1 win at lowly Crystal Palace.

The Reds had been beaten by Arsenal and Fenerbahce before arriving in south London, sparking pointed questions about Andoni Iraola in the former Bournemouth manager's first season in charge.

But Alexis Mac Allister headed Liverpool in front from Dominik Szoboszlai's cross after 40 minutes.

Florian Wirtz bagged Liverpool's second with a composed finish from Bradley Barcola's cross in the 54th minute.

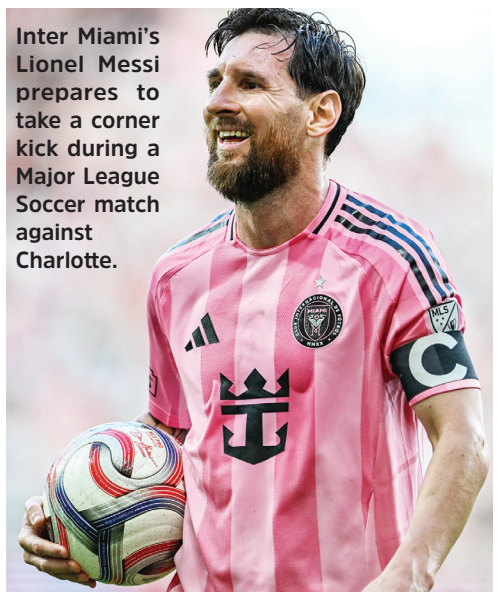
Alexander Isak finished off Wirtz's pass in the 89th minute to wrap up fourth-placed Liverpool's much-needed victory after a two-game losing streak.

Eddie Nketiah's stoppage-time penalty after a foul by Milos Kerkez was no consolation for Palace.

Palace manager Pierre Sage is in danger of being sacked after his side slumped to the bottom of the table following their seventh defeat in 10 league matches.

Brighton extended their superb start to the season, climbing to second place with a 2-0 win against Brentford at the Amex Stadium.

Bournemouth striker Evanilson maintained his hot streak with a goal in a 2-1 win at Ipswich. — ***AFP***


Inter Miami's Lionel Messi prepares to take a corner kick during a Major League Soccer match against Charlotte.

Messi wins second MLS Golden Boot as Nashville set points record

MIAMI: Inter Miami's Lionel Messi won his second consecutive MLS Golden Boot award on Saturday after the defending champions took second place in the Eastern Conference with a wasteful 3-3 draw against Charlotte on the final day of the regular season.

The Argentine superstar did not score but set up the first two goals at Miami's Nu Stadium, both from corners, to help procure his club a home-field advantage for the first two playoff rounds.

Messi's 26 goals this season were enough to make him the first back-to-back MLS Golden Boot award winner. Petar Musa of Dallas was second on 22, not scoring in his club's 3-1 home victory over Colorado.

Ian Fray, Luis Suarez and Rodrigo De Paul racked up three first-half strikes for Inter Miami before Liel Abada's brace soon after the break sparked a comeback sealed by Rodolfo Aloko's late strike.

Runaway overall leaders Nashville broke the all-time MLS points record for a season with a whopping 77 after beating Cincinnati 2-0. At 23-3 with eight drawn, Nashville won the East and broke the mark of 74 points set by Miami in 2024.

Miami finished second in the East on 60 points as third-place New England failed to take advantage of Inter's draw with a surprise 1-0 loss at Orlando to end on 58. — ***AFP***





International Padel Federation President Luigi Carraro, Qatar Tennis, Squash, Padel and Badminton Federation President Nasser Al-Khelaifi and QTSPBF Secretary-General Tariq Zainal with Spain's players and officials during the presentation ceremony. RIGHT: Players and officials of Spain women's team celebrate.

Spain complete FIP World Cup double

CHINTHANA WASALA
THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Spain completed a brilliant double in Doha, winning both the men's and women's FIP World Cup titles at the Khalifa International Tennis and Squash Complex late Saturday night.

The men's final, which stretched past midnight, saw Spain defeat defending champions Argentina 2-1 in a thrilling encounter to reclaim the title.

Aimer Goni Lacabe and Juan Lebron gave Spain the perfect start, fighting back from a set down to de-feat Martin Di Nenno and Leandro Augsburger 5-7, 7-5, 6-2 in a marathon two-hour battle.

However, Argentina hit back through Agustin Tapia and Federico Chingotto, who defeated Francisco Navarro and Jon Sanz 6-1, 6-2 to level the tie at 1-1.

With the title hinging on the deciding match, Arturo Coello and Jorge Nieto delivered a commanding performance, beating Gonzalo Alfonso and Valentino Libaak 6-3, 6-2 to seal Spain's victory and take sweet revenge on their archrivals, who had defeated them in the previous final at the same venue in 2024.

"We went through difficult moments during the match, but Aimar gave everything and we did well to stay in the contest," Lebron said following the memorable win.

"We had our chances in the first set, but we failed to take them. There were difficult moments in the second set too, but we managed to fight our way back into a match that had become very complicated. In the third set, I think we were the better pair, partly because we managed to open up a gap on the scoreboard and manage our service games more effectively. But Martín and Leo played a fantastic match and deserve our congratulations. We are absolutely delighted," Lebron added.

Earlier, Portugal claimed third place after edging Italy 2-1 in the bronze-medal match, while Sweden finished fifth with a 2-0 victory over Brazil.

The Netherlands secured seventh place after defeating Germany 2-0. France also recorded a 2-0 win over Paraguay to finish ninth, while Mexico claimed 11th place after overcoming Chile 2-1 in the classification play-off.

Meanwhile, hosts Qatar finished 14th after losing 2-0 to the United States in the men's classification play-off. Rashed Nawaf and Mashari Nawaf went down 6-7, 7-5, 1-6 in the opening match before Ray-yan Aljufairi and Mohammed Al-Khanji lost 1-6, 3-6. The third match was not played.

Earlier, Spanish women retained their World Cup title after defeating Argentina 2-0 in the final, ex-tending their dominance in the competition. Ariana Sanchez and Andrea Ustero gave Spain the perfect start, beating Osoro Ulrich and Fassio Goy-eneche 6-3, 6-3 in the opening match.

Paula Josemaria and Gemma Triay then sealed the title with a hard-fought 6-2, 6-7, 6-3 victory over Delfina Brea Sensei and Claudia Jensen in the second match. The third match between Bea Gonzalez and Claudia Fernandez and Virginia Riera and Julieta Bidahorria was not played after Spain secured the decisive second point.

Italy claimed third place after defeating France 2-0 in the bronze-medal match. Giulia Sussarello and C. M. Baldi secured the opening point with a 6-4, 6-6 victory, while Giulia Dal Pozzo and Emily Stellato sealed Italy's win with a 7-6, 6-3 success over Alix Collombon and Louise Bahurel. The third match was not played.

Rahm returns from LIV absence to claim Abu Dhabi title

ABU DHABI: John Rahm completed a winning return to the European tour as he held off Tyrrell Hatton by two strokes yesterday to win the Abu Dhabi Championship.

The Spaniard was playing in his first event on the DP Tour since leaving the bankrupt LIV Golf tour last month.

"It means a lot," Rahm, who turns 32 on Tuesday, said. "I'm almost not letting myself believe it because it's been quite a while since I played good in a DP World Tour event and my last showing, if we don't count withdrawals, I think I finished last.

"So last to first, it's a pretty good feeling." Rahm started the day one shot ahead of Englishman Hatton and Italian Francesco Laporta, with Rory McIlroy another shot back.

Rahm had three birdies going out and three more coming home. After a bogey on the third, he did not drop another stroke, though he had a scare.

"As far as I'm concerned, apart from the tee-shot at 17 it was a pretty flawless back nine. It was really, really solid," he said.

After briefly surrendering the lead after McIlroy started with a birdie and an eagle, Rahm regained it on the third hole and never surrendered it though he had to share it for a while.

He was in a four-way tie with Laporta, McIlroy and Hatton as late as the 11th hole.

Laporta dropped three shots on the next two holes and Rahm pulled clear with birdies on 12 and 15 for a final round of 67 and 23-under-par total of 265.

Hatton shot a 68 to finish two shots back and seal his place at next week's World Tour Championship in Dubai.

McIlroy was two shots further back to rise to second in the DP rankings, behind Eugenio Chacarra, who finished 22nd, in a bid for a record-equalling eighth Harry Vardon Trophy, the traditional award for the top player on the European tour. — *AFP*

Hodge hits 140 as West Indies build lead over Bangladesh

SYLHET: Kavem Hodge hit an unbeaten 140 to extend West Indies' lead to 315 on the fourth day of the second Test against Bangladesh in Sylhet yesterday.

West Indies reached 345-3 in their second innings when bad light halted play, with Hodge hitting 17 fours and a six off 189 balls and Amir Jangoo also unbeaten on 20.

Hodge, who scored his third Test century and passed his previous highest score, was backed by opener Brandon King, who made 61, and debutant Kevin Wickham, who scored 78 for his second half-century of the match.

West Indies resumed the day on 7-0, trailing by 23 runs.

King and Joshua Da Silva put on 85 for the opening wicket, before Taijul Islam trapped Da Silva lbw for 36.

King continued to attack, reaching his half-century off 62 balls. He was dropped by Towhid Hridoy on 56 off Taijul before Mehidy Hasan Miraz dismissed him for 61 off 84 balls, caught by Najmul Hossain Shanto at first slip.

West Indies went to lunch on 128-2, with Hodge and Wickham at the crease and their lead at 98.

Hodge reached his half-century off 78 balls, while Wickham needed 68 deliveries to bring up his second fifty of the match. The pair took West Indies to tea at 259-2, with their lead extended to 229.

Hodge completed his century after the break, reaching the milestone off 142 balls with 11 fours and a six.

Taijul then broke their 165-run partnership, dismissing Wickham for a career-best 78 off 107 balls after he chipped the ball back to the bowler. West Indies were 284-3 when Wickham departed. Bangladesh missed another chance to remove Hodge when captain Shanto dropped him off Nayeem Hasan on 117. Jangoo, who scored a century in the first innings, joined Hodge and helped push the West Indies lead beyond 300.

BRIEF SCORES: West Indies 356 and 345 for 3 (Hodge 140*, Wickham 78, Taijul 2-118) **lead Bangladesh** 386 (Hridoy 242*, Mushfiqur 34, Warrican 4-104, Seales 2-58) **by 315 runs.** — *AFP*

Team Qatar to take part in 2027 Asian Le Mans Series

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Following a strong 2026 campaign in the European Le Mans Series and its first participation in Le Mans 24H, Team Qatar will continue its international endurance racing programme by competing in the 2027 Asian Le Mans Series. The team's participation marks the next step in its development and reflects its ambition to build on its recent achievements while representing Qatar at the highest level of endurance racing.

Team Qatar will compete across a three-round championship held at renowned European circuits, carrying forward the momentum gained during the 2026 European Le Mans Series season.

The team will retain car number #62, along with the same livery and design used during the 2026 season.

The full-season driver line-up will feature Qatari driver Abdulla Al Khelaifi, alongside Julian Hanses and Maxime Martin.

The 2027 championship calendar will comprise three rounds:

- **Paul Ricard, France: November 11–16**
- **Jerez, Spain: January 13–17, 2027**
- **Portimão, Portugal: February 17–21, 2027**



Spain's Carlos Alcaraz celebrates with the trophy.

Alcaraz wins maiden Paris Masters title

PARIS: Carlos Alcaraz gained a measure of revenge on Ben Shelton yesterday as the seven-time Grand Slam champion beat the American 7-6 (7/5), 7-5 to win the Paris Masters for the first time.

In defeating the man that ended his US Open title defence earlier this season, the 23-year-old Spaniard claimed the ninth 1000-level title of his career.

Unlike their five-set quarter-final epic in New York two months ago, the clash in Paris lasted just under two hours.

"Coming here every year, not finding my best tennis but we never gave up," Alcaraz said after being handed the trophy for the first time by former Paris Masters winner Boris Becker.

"We had really painful losses here and we always said try again," he added with a smile.

Ahead of the ATP Finals, which run November 15-22 in Turin, world number three Alcaraz now holds five tour-level titles this year -- only the injured Jannik Sinner has more with six.

In Italy, he will be seeking a first coronation at the season-ender.

After winning two French Opens and now the Paris Masters, Alcaraz is undefeated in title matches in the city.

But not for the first time in the French capital, Alcaraz won the title by saving match points en route -- this time against Taylor Fritz in the quarter-finals in scenes reminiscent of his iconic Roland Garros final win against Italian Sinner last year.

For world number four Shelton, it was a first defeat in a Masters final after winning his two previous appearances in showpiece matches at that level-- both coming in the last two editions of the Canadian Open. — *AFP*

Norris wins rain-hit Sao Paulo Grand Prix as Mercedes clinch teams' title and double

SAO PAULO: Lando Norris picked his way through the rainstorms yesterday to claim a second consecutive victory for McLaren in the Sao Paulo Grand Prix as Mercedes clinched the constructors' championship and a famous title double.

The 26-year-old outgoing 2025 world champion came home 14.6 seconds clear of Red Bull's four-time champion Max Verstappen and Isack Hadjar to record his 14th career victory and the 50th podium.

Verstappen started from 21st on the grid and delivered another bravura drive while George Russell finished fourth, after starting fifth and spinning in the pitlane, for Mercedes ahead of teammate Kimi Antonelli, who finished fifth, seven days after becoming the youngest champion.

The 20-year-old had started from the front row alongside pole-sitter Norris and endured a difficult race, but it was enough to ensure that Mercedes outscored Ferrari to take a ninth teams' title.

"That was a very tough race," said Norris.

"It was difficult with the launches off the line, a lot of challenges, going to slicks in the wet and so tough when you are pushing! But I kept it cool and made no mistakes and it is nice to be on the top step again."

Verstappen said: "It was a challenging race! The first laps were so important. We were strong on the inters, but then it was not so good but starting P21 and finishing on the podium is a good result."

Hadjar, having taken his third podium of the year and led a Grand Prix for the first time, added: "That was so difficult. The switching from inters to softs and then back again! Very tricky to drive and then more rain."



McLaren's British driver Lando Norris looks at his trophy in the podium after winning the Sao Paulo Grand Prix.

The race began with a spectacular opening lap as Antonelli, with an excellent start, led into the Senna Esses as Norris struggled from his 20th pole and Lawson moved up to third in the Curva do Sol.

Behind them, Lewis Hamilton and Verstappen made light of their back-of-the-grid starts and were ninth and 10th within two laps as plumes of spray rose throughout the field.

By lap six, Norris had recovered to pass Liam Lawson while Antonelli was 5.1 seconds clear and instructed to keep his tyres cool. All were on intermediates as the track began to dry with heavy rain forecast.

Verstappen and Antonelli delayed their stops, allowing Norris to take advantage of his earlier stop to warm his tyres and, when Antonelli spun at the start of lap 20 on cold rubber, he took the lead.

On lap 50, Norris pitted again, returning third behind McLaren teammate Oscar Piastri, who let him by, before he took second when Hadjar pitted on lap 51, leaving the 2025 champion 7.4 seconds behind his successor.

Antonelli came in again on lap 55, handing Norris the lead. Again. He rejoined fifth behind Russell, with the Red Bulls second and third. It began drizzling and then intensified into rain.

Norris pitted on lap 63 for intermediate tyres, followed by Verstappen and the rest - with Antonelli released into the exit path of Franco Colapinto and Hamilton spinning - as conditions deteriorated in the final laps.— *AFP*