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GULF TIMES

SPORT

CRICKET

Nortje takes 4-7 as South Africa beat Sri Lanka in T20 World Cup

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FBWC Qatar 2027: Sheikh Joaan receives golden ball

HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani, President of the FIBA Basketball World Cup - Qatar 2027 Local Organising Committee and the Qatar Olympic Committee, received the golden ball from Mohamed Saad al-Meghaiseb, Qatar Basketball Federation President and Director General of FBWC Qatar 2027. The golden ball symbolises Qatar winning the rights to host the event.

Sheikh Joaan honours Qatar's mountaineer Sheikhha Asma

Qatar Olympic Committee President HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani honoured Qatar's mountaineering star Sheikhha Asma bint Thani al-Thani for her new achievement as she became the first and only Arab to climb two 8,000m summits without oxygen support.

FRENCH OPEN

Djokovic stages French Open escape act, Medvedev out

SECOND SEED SABALENKA BLUDGEONS 22ND SEED NAVARRO FOR QUARTER-FINAL SPOT

AFP
Paris

Novak Djokovic sealed a 15th consecutive French Open quarter-final with a thrilling comeback victory over Argentinian Francisco Cerundolo in the fourth round yesterday, while Daniil Medvedev became the highest seed to crash out at Roland Garros so far.

In the women's draw, both Aryna Sabalenka and Elena Rybakina comfortably powered into the last eight.

A limping Djokovic looked to be heading for a shock defeat when 2-1 down in sets and 4-2 behind in the fourth set, but battled back from the brink to delight the Court Philippe Chatrier crowd by winning 6-1, 5-7, 3-6, 7-5, 6-3 after four hours and 39 minutes.

"Three or four times I was points away from losing this match," the reigning champion said to the spectators. "I'm not sure how I won this match."

Djokovic narrowly avoided his earliest exit from the tournament since 2009, teeing up either a rematch of last year's final against Casper Ruud or a clash with Taylor Fritz.

The 24-time Grand Slam title winner had reached the last 16 by defeating Italy's Lorenzo Mussetti in another bruising five-set encounter which concluded at 3:07am Sunday.

He appeared to be feeling no ill-effects as he dominated the first set, but then needed a medical time-out early in the second after pulling up with an apparent knee injury.

The 37-year-old, eyeing a record 370th Grand Slam match win to break out of a tie with Roger Federer, played on but continued to walk gingerly between points.

Cerundolo grabbed the second set by finally taking a break point after 12 previous misses.

The 23rd seed moved ahead by two sets to one against an increasingly frustrated top seed, who was



Serbia's Novak Djokovic celebrates after winning his French Open fourth round match against Argentina's Francisco Cerundolo at the Roland Garros Complex in Paris yesterday. (Reuters)

complaining the court was too slippery, before edging to the cusp of a famous win by forging 4-2 in front in the fourth.

But, seemingly from nowhere, Djokovic dug deep to break and

level at 4-4. He forced a decider on his fourth set point of a dramatic 12th game when a stretching Cerundolo could only find the net.

There appeared to be only one outcome on the cards when the

Serbian star took a 2-0 advantage in the fifth, but his opponent rallied to level.

Djokovic was left covered in clay after a nasty tumble, sarcastically saying: "Well done supervisors,



Belarus' Aryna Sabalenka plays a forehand return to US' Emma Navarro during their French Open match in Paris yesterday. (AFP)

ground staff, everyone, the court is not slippery at all."

But he was not to be denied, grabbing the decisive break with a blistering forehand that clipped the back of the baseline.

A dramatic triumph and yet another quarter-final was secured on his first match point when a Cerundolo backhand was given out by the chair umpire after initially being ruled in.

DE MINAUR BEATS MEDVEDEV

Fifth seed Medvedev suffered a four-set loss to Australia's Alex de Minaur, starting strongly before slipping to a 4-6, 6-2, 6-1, 6-3 defeat.

De Minaur will face either Alexander Zverev or Holger Rune, who meet in the night session, in his second Slam quarter-final and first since the 2020 US Open.

Medvedev's best performance in the French Open remains a quarter-final run in 2021, while he has also lost in the first round in five of his eight appearances.

"Alex played better," admitted Medvedev, a former US Open champion and six-time Grand Slam finalist.

De Minaur had never got past the second round at the tournament before this year, winning just three of 10 matches.

In the women's tournament, world number two Sabalenka, who

was a semi-finalist in 2023 and has made at least the last four at her past six Grand Slams, proved far too strong for American 22nd seed Emma Navarro. The Belarusian raced into the quarters, hammering 36 winners during a 6-2, 6-3 success in only 69 minutes.

"I'm super happy that I was able to bring this consistency on the Grand Slams," said the two-time Australian Open champion. "That's really amazing."

Sabalenka, who lost to Iga Swiatek in the Madrid and Rome Open finals this clay-court season, will play 17-year-old Russian Mirra Andreeva in the last eight.

Andreeva became the youngest French Open women's quarter-finalist since 2005 with a 7-5, 6-2 win over Russian-born French player Varvara Gracheva.

"When they were screaming 'Varvara, Varvara, Varvara' I imagined they were screaming my name and it really helped," Andreeva said.

Former Wimbledon champion Rybakina, the fourth seed and the only woman to defeat world number one Swiatek on clay this year, saw off experienced Ukrainian 15th seed Elina Svitolina 6-4, 6-3, also in just 69 minutes.

She will next face Italian Jasmine Paolini after the 12th seed fought back to defeat Russian Elena Avanesyan 4-6, 6-0, 6-1.

MATCH REPORT

Nortje takes 4-7 as South Africa crush Sri Lanka

SRI LANKA'S TOTAL OF 77 THEIR LOWEST IN ALL T20 CRICKET



South Africa's Anrich Nortje (left) celebrates with teammate Keshav Maharaj after Sri Lanka's Kamindu Mendis (right) is dismissed during the ICC World Cup 2024, Group D match at Nassau County Stadium in East Meadow, New York, yesterday. (AFP)

AFP
New York

South Africa's Anrich Nortje took a remarkable four wickets for just seven runs as the Proteas dismissed Sri Lanka for a record low 77 on their way to a six-wicket win in the teams' T20 World Cup opener in New York yesterday.

Sri Lanka's total was their lowest in all T20 cricket, with fast bowler Nortje's figures the best by a South African at a T20 World Cup, surpassing his own 4-10 against Bangladesh in Sydney two years ago.

Kagiso Rabada (2-21) and left-arm spinner Keshav Maharaj, who took two wickets in two balls on his way to 2-22, also damaged Sri Lanka's cause.

Opener Kusal Mendis (19) and veteran all-rounder Angelo Math-

ews (16) were the only Sri Lanka batsmen to pass 15 after their captain, Wanindu Hasaranga, seemingly misread conditions by opting to bat first after winning the toss in what was the first match at a Long Island ground built specially for this tournament.

But South Africa too lost early wickets in their chase as their top order also struggled to time the ball on a difficult pitch for batting.

They were 23-2 early in their reply but opener Quinton de Kock made 20 before, with the Proteas wobbling at 58-4, the big-hitting Heinrich Klaasen struck a six and a four off successive deliveries to ease his side's nerves.

Klaasen was 19 not out as South Africa finished on 80-4 with 26 balls to spare.

South Africa fast bowler Otteneil Baartman, making his World Cup debut, sparked Sri Lanka's collapse when, with his first ball,

he had Pathum Nissanka caught in the deep before Nortje dismissed Kamindu Mendis in similar fashion.

Maharaj then struck twice in the ninth over as both the advancing Hasaranga, stumped by De Kock and Sadeera Samarawickrama, clean bowled by a quicker delivery, fell for nought to leave Sri Lanka 32-4 before Charith Asalanka survived the hat-trick ball.

Nortje returned to dismiss Mathews in his last over.

Sri Lanka were bowled out with five balls left when last man Nuwan Thushara was run out for one of four ducks in the innings.

Markram, the South Africa skipper, said: "Yeah happy with the win. The batting was a little up and down, speaks to quite a tough wicket but we found some way to score runs. It's a tough one from a batting perspective. You

try to take the pitch out of it, but if the ball misbehaves or there's low bounce, it's just one of those things and hopefully we can take some learnings out of it. Lots of different conditions as you move around the tournament."

He added: "Obviously fortunate that we have our next two games here, so we know what to expect. But important to assess as you move around. Wasn't worried about him (Nortje), but it's a fantastic day for him. From a mental point of view, he was massively down (with his recent form), so the boys were really happy for him. And hopefully he kicks on for the rest of the tournament."

BRIEF SCORES
South Africa 80 for 4 (De Kock 20, Hasaranga 2-22, Shanaka 1-6) **beat Sri Lanka 77** (Nortje 4-7, Rabada 2-21, Maharaj 2-22, Baartman 1-9) **by six wickets**

SPOTLIGHT

Record prize money announced by ICC for T20 World Cup 2024



www.icc-cricket.com
New York

ICC have announced a record-breaking prize fund of \$11.25mn for the Men's T20 World Cup 2024, with the winners set to receive at least \$2.45mn.

The ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024 winners will receive the highest amount in the tournament's history.

This ninth edition will see 20 teams competing over 28 days across nine venues in the West Indies and USA, making it the largest event of its kind.

The runners-up will earn at least \$1.28mn, while the losing semi-finalists will take home \$787,500 each.

Teams that do not advance past the second round will receive \$382,500 each, and those finishing

between ninth and 12th place will get \$247,500 each. Teams ranking from 13th to 20th place will each earn \$225,000. Additionally, every team will receive an extra \$31,154 for each match won, excluding the semi-finals and finals.

The tournament will start with 40 matches in the first round, leading to the Super 8s, followed by the semi-finals in Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana. The final match will take place at the Kensington Oval in Barbados, where the 2024 men's champions will be crowned.

ICC Chief Executive Geoff Allardice remarked on the event's historic significance, "This event is historic in so many ways, so it is fitting that the prize money for players reflects that. Hundreds of millions of fans around the world will be entertained by the players in what we're hoping to be an Out of This World event."

GEARING UP

Australia team cruising ahead of WC opener

Reuters
New York

A sunset catamaran cruise on the blue waters of Barbados was the perfect way for Australia to bond before knuckling down to the business of winning the T20 World Cup, bowler Ashton Agar said.

The Test and one-day world champions launch their tournament against minnows Oman tomorrow and have enjoyed a relaxed buildup while waiting for team mates to arrive from the Indian Premier League.

With all players on deck by Saturday, the squad freshened up with a few drinks while sailing the Caribbean coastline, spinner Agar said.

"We're sort of sitting on the roof of the catamaran as we're coming back last night," spinner Agar told reporters.

"Stoin (Marcus Stoinis) actually mentioned, he goes, 'I don't know if many other teams would be like this where you got all the boys just sitting on the roof, watching the sun go down, having a beverage to-

gether and just having a genuinely good time enjoying each other's company?'"

"It was pretty easy to forget you're here for a World Cup because it's just so beautiful."

"But it's a great way to start."

Mitchell Marsh's team will bid to become the first nation to hold all three of cricket's major global trophies, having taken the Test and one-day World Cup titles last year.

In the World Test Championship final and in the 50-ver World Cup title clash, Australia beat India on both occasions last year.

The tournament has taken the game to fresh pastures, with the United States co-hosting despite the sport's low profile in the country. The US started with a big win over North American rivals Canada in front of a few thousand fans in Dallas on Saturday, with New York-born Aaron Jones blasting an unbeaten 94.

"Great opening game. For US, Canada to have a game like that, it's a great start to the tournament," said Agar. "I'm pumped for those guys, I think they would have loved it and it's good for world cricket."

PAKISTAN AND ENGLAND PLAYERS PREPARE FOR OPENING MATCHES



Pakistan captain Babar Azam gets ready for catching practice during a team training session in Dallas, Texas, yesterday. Pakistan, champions in 2009, take on hosts the USA in their first match on Thursday at the T20 World Cup 2024. (@TheRealPCB)



England pacers Jofra Archer (left) and Chris Jordan are seen during a team photoshoot in Barbados yesterday. England, champions in 2010, face Scotland in their opening T20 World Cup 2024 match today. (@englandcricket)

GROUP B CLASH

Namibia edge past Oman after Super Over thriller

AFP
Bridgetown, Barbados

Namibia scored a nerve-shredding victory over Oman in their T20 World Cup Group B clash in Barbados yesterday after a low-scoring thriller was decided by a Super Over.

David Wiese was the hero for Namibia, contributing 13 runs in the Africans' super over total of 21 before then restricting Oman to 10 runs with the ball in hand to seal a crucial win at Kensington Oval.

The match had gone to a decisive extra over after a tense duel saw both teams finish with 109 runs from their allotted 20 overs.

Oman had looked to be heading for defeat after a superb four-wicket bowling display from Ruben Trumpelmann saw them all out for 109 off 19.4 overs.

But Oman's bowlers responded with a disciplined performance to contain Namibia's bats, with Mehran Khan conjuring a superb spell to leave the match on a knife edge.

Khan finished with figures of three wickets for seven runs off three overs.

The veteran Oman bowler took two wickets in the final over to frustrate Namibia, who had need-



Namibia's David Wiese takes the catch to dismiss Oman's Khalid Kail (left) during the ICC World Cup, Group B match at Kensington Oval, in Bridgetown, Barbados, yesterday. (AFP)

ed just five runs from the over to clinch victory. But Khan was bizarrely overlooked for the super over bowling duties by Oman, with Bilal Khan handed the ball instead.

That move backfired spectacularly, though, with Wiese blasting a four off the first ball and then crushing a full toss for six off Khan's second delivery. Wiese took three more runs off the next two balls before Namibia skipper Gerhard Erasmus hit back-to-back fours to set Oman a daunting victory target of 22 off their super over.

Wiese took over the bowling duties for Namibia and after conceding just two runs from his first two deliveries, took the wicket of Naseem Khushi.

Two more singles left Oman needing 18 from the last delivery to win, meaning Wiese could allow Zeeshan Maqsood to blast a six knowing victory was assured.

"I definitely aged a couple of years tonight," the 39-year-old Wiese said. "And I don't have a lot of years left in me. It was an emotionally draining evening."

Wiese said he had been confident of steering Namibia to victory with bat and ball in the super over.

"It helped that I had a feel of the game and knew if I get a few hits out in the Super Over then with the ball, felt like taking the ball and executing."

"The pitch was difficult and didn't play the way we thought. But we adapted well."

Oman captain Aqib Ilyas was left lamenting an agonising near-miss - but defended the decision to opt for Bilal as the super over bowler over the in-form Khan.

"I think Bilal is one of the best bowlers you can have at this level," Aqib said. "But there are days where you plan and it doesn't execute. "He was clear, we were clear, but maybe the ball was wet and he couldn't execute."

Earlier, Trumpelmann had given Namibia a dream start with two wickets from the first two deliveries of the match, part of a four-wicket performance. Wiese also impressed in the regulation 20 overs with 3-28 off 3.4 overs.

BRIEF SCORES
Namibia 109 for 6 (Frylinck 45, Mehran 3-7) tied with Oman 109 (Kail 34, Trumpelmann 4-21, Wiese 3-28) **Super Over:** Namibia 21 beat Oman 10

ANNOUNCEMENT

World Athletics unveils a new biennial event

Significant prize bag announced for gold medal winning athletes

Reuters
London

World Athletics has unveiled a new biennial global championship meant to serve as a grand conclusion to the 2026 season, with a record \$10mn prize pot on offer and Budapest as the inaugural host city.

The World Athletics Ultimate Championship will be held every two years, with gold medallists receiving \$150,000 as part of what the sport's world governing body says is the richest prize pot ever in the sport.

The event is aligned with World Athletics' aim to stay relevant, and keep pace with the interests of a desired younger viewing audience.

"It absolutely sits at the epicentre of what we're trying to do," World Athletics president **Sebastian Coe** told reporters in a video call from Budapest.

"We're trying to remain interesting. We're trying to create new formats that keep our sport at the top of people's consciousness. Our sport is in very, very good shape. This is the time to keep the pedal flat to the floor."

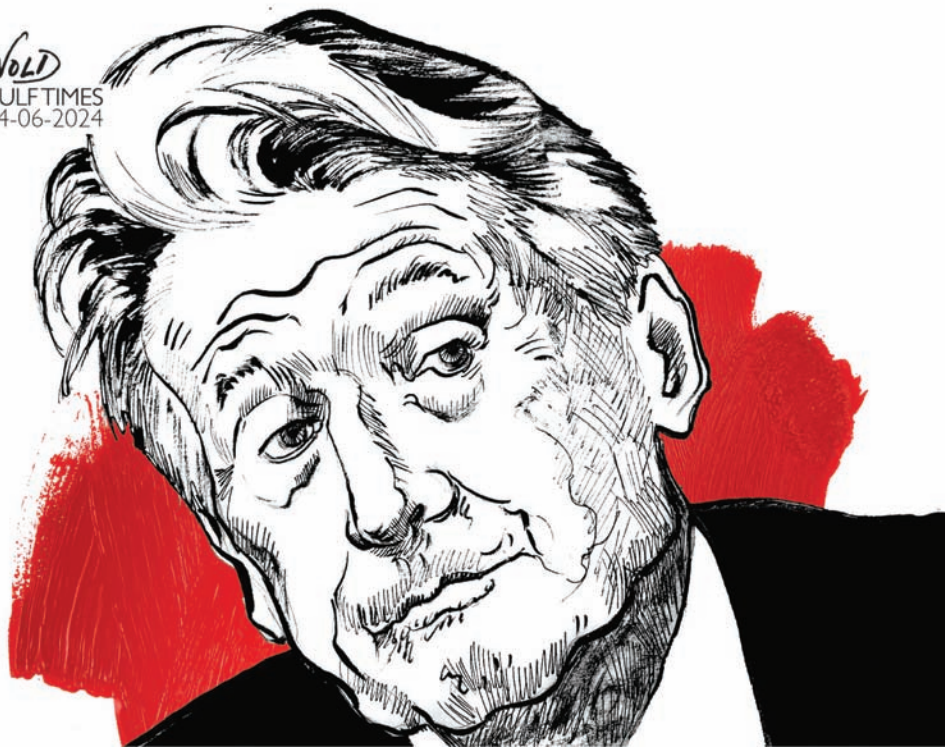
The inaugural championships are scheduled for three evenings, Sept 11-13, with each session taking place in under three hours, in a bid to offer a fast-paced event to captivate global television viewers.

The three-hour slots, however, mean not every discipline will be included, with longer events such as race walks likely to miss out.

"Going forward, there are innovations out there, there are disciplines we're looking at, the 4x100 metres mixed relay, but only if they road test well," said Coe, who announced on Friday that the mixed relay and a steeplechase mile will be tested.

"I can tell you is that all those


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marquee events that you would expect to be in there will be in there."

The meet will feature between eight and 16 of the world's top-ranked athletes per discipline, with selections based primarily on world rankings.

Some 400 athletes from about 70 countries are expected to compete. The prize pot is more good news for leading athletes.

World Athletics announced in April that it would offer prize money for Olympic gold medalists in Paris this year, breaking with a 128-year Games tradition.

The move was met with sharp criticism from other international sports federations.

"Let me be absolutely blunt here," Coe said.

"I am elected to do what I think is in the best interests of the sport.

This is not done on a wing and a prayer. And I am elected to represent my sport in the Olympic movement, not the Olympic movement in my sport."

Coe said he was conscious that free to air is crucial, amid complaints that from 2025 the Diamond League in the US, currently covered by NBC, will only be available on pay channel FloTrack.

"It is really important that people get to see this," Coe said in the interview. The traditional world athletics championships are also held every two years. Budapest hosted the 2023 event, with the next one in Tokyo in 2025.

Meanwhile Ethiopian distance runner Selemon Barega hopes to make it two in a row at the Paris Olympics but acknowledged he faced strong competition from Ethiopian and Ugandan rivals.

The 24-year-old said he wants to repeat his success at the Tokyo Games held in 2021 when he won the 10,000 metres crown.

"I am aiming to win a gold medal and replicate my success from the Tokyo Olympics," he said.

"It is difficult to make predictions now, but I anticipate strong competition from my fellow Ethiopians, and (Ugandan) athletes Joshua Cheptegei and Jacob Kiplimo. I am well-prepared physically and mentally. I am avoiding other competitions to stay focused on the Olympics," he added.

"Previously, African athletes excelled in long-distance events, but now European and American athletes are also in good shape. I have recently competed with them in the 5,000m race and other events."

SPOTLIGHT

Qatar East to West Ultramarathon 2024 set for December 13



Officials of Qatar Sports For All Federation (QSFA) and sponsors at the end of a press conference held to unveil details of Qatar East to West Ultramarathon 2024.

QNA
Doha

Qatar Sports For All Federation (QSFA) yesterday announced the details of Qatar East to West Ultramarathon 2024, in collaboration with Qatar's athletics team.

The event is an international race that extends from Doha Corniche, Sheraton Hotel to Dukhan Beach, completing a distance of 90kms.

This came during a press conference held at Lusail Multipurpose Hall and set December 13 as the date for Ultramarathon 2024.

The event offers an opportunity for all people from both genders whose age is over 18 to participate.

QSFA Director of Events and Activities Abdullah al-Dosari affirmed that the 2024 edition is distinguished considering the huge

turnout that has been rising in crescendo on yearly basis, emphasising that the previous edition drew roughly 1,000 participants from both genders from 73 nationalities, of whom 733 men and 267 women from all nationalities.

Al-Dosari highlighted that Ultramarathon is a major event organised by QSFA throughout the year and draws 29 runners in collaboration with many bodies in the country, stating that Ultramarathon is characterised by a record distance of 90km, and it was originally a small project among young runners.

He added that in the coming period partners of the event, along with all details about the prizes for winners will be announced through QSFA application, indicating that the registration period will extend for six months to offer the opportunities for runners to be ready in a better way.

Australia women in gold medal form before Paris

Melbourne: Australia will head to the Paris Olympics targeting a second rugby sevens gold medal in the women's tournament after toppling the powerful New Zealand team on the way to victory in the inaugural SVNS series "Grand Final" in Madrid.

Maddison Levi scored a hat-trick of tries in Sunday's decider against Olympic hosts France as the Australians ran out comfortable 26-7 winners. However, it was the 21-19 semi-final win over arch-rivals and Olympic champions New Zealand that was the main tonic for Tim Walsh's team. New Zealand had swept the previous four events but finished with the bronze medal in Madrid.

"We're finally getting some pay for our hard work, which is good. It's so close to the Olympics, we're finally building," said Levi.

"Having not beaten New Zealand since Perth, it's always a tough battle between the two and I think for it to finally just click and just to work hard, it just proves that we've got it."

Australia won the inaugural Olympic tournament at the 2016 Rio Games but their title defence ended in the quarter-finals in Tokyo three years ago.

However, with the help of Levi and her younger sister Teagan, Australia have re-emerged as New Zealand's main threat to their bid for back-to-back gold medals.

Rawabi Sports League (RSL) Concludes with 50,000 QR Prize Money Distribution



Rawabi Management proudly concluded the Rawabi Sports League (RSL) grand finale at Old Ideal School Doha, where trophies and a total of 50,000 QR in cash prizes were awarded to the winners and runners-up.

Under the astute leadership of the Rawabi Sports League Team Management, comprising Mr. Muhammed Abdulla - Managing Director, Mr. Ajmal Abdulla - Executive Director, Mr. Haris Thayyil - Group Director, Mr. Muhamed Sadik - Group Director, Mr. Kannu Baker - Group General Manager, and Mr. Muhammed Jaseel, the league was successfully completed. The management extended their gratitude to all the sponsors for making the league a grand success.

The league concluded with team Rawabi Royals taking the overall cup, while the runners-up trophy was awarded to Rawabi Stars.

Mr. Kannu Baker, Group General Manager, congratulated the winning team,



Rawabi Royals, and applauded the efforts of Rawabi Stars and all participating teams. He also expressed deep appreciation for the sponsors, acknowledging that their generous support was crucial to the success of the league.

Mr. Baker concluded the event by announcing that the 2025 RSL Season 2 final will be held on Qatar National Sports Day, promising another exciting season for all participants and fans.

We are grateful to our team sponsors:



Nellon, Rainbow, Kinza, Lipton, Coca-Cola, Widam, Cocos, Baladna and Penta Trading Group. Additionally, we appreciate the support from our associate sponsors: Abevia, Cafe Lovella, Hot Chicken, Snowfog, Anchor, Qatar Foods,

Society Tea, English Oven, Gulf Times, Radio Olive, Radio Suno, Rawabi Media, Prestige, and Dorado Advertising. Their extensive reach and coverage brought the excitement of the league to audiences far and wide.

FOOTBALL

Mbappe makes ‘dream’ move to Real Madrid

AFP
Madrid

Kylian Mbappe signed a five-year deal to move to Real Madrid from Paris Saint-Germain yesterday and hailed the move as a “dream come true”. The announcement is the culmination of Real’s long courtship of one of the most prolific forwards in world football. “Real Madrid have reached an agreement for the player to be at Real Madrid for the next five seasons,” the club said in a statement. “So happy and proud to join the club of my dream @realmadrid. Nobody can understand how excited I am right now. Can’t wait to see you, Madridistas, and thanks for your unbelievable support,” 25-year-old Mbappe added on social media.

He will earn 35mn euros (\$38mn) a season, according to reports in Spain. Mbappe’s last contract with PSG, signed in 2022, was a two-year deal worth some 72mn euros before tax with loyalty bonuses of a similar amount and a signing-on fee of 150mn euros.

Mbappe had verbally agreed to move to Real in February and then announced



Kylian Mbappe will earn 35mn euros a season, according to reports in Spain. (AFP)

in May he would leave PSG at the end of the season. Real, fresh from winning their 15th Champions League on Saturday with

a 2-0 victory against Borussia Dortmund, moved to confirm the deal on Monday before Mbappe is involved in pre-Euro 2024

friendlies for France. A World Cup winner as a teenager in 2018, Mbappe scored a club record 256 goals for PSG since joining the Qatar-owned club from Monaco on an initial loan in 2017.

He eventually moved to PSG in a 180-million-euro deal – all at the age of 18. Mbappe helped PSG to six Ligue 1 titles and steered them to the 2020 Champions League final, but they lost to Bayern Munich. He scored a hat-trick in the World Cup final against Argentina in Qatar in 2022 but still finished on the losing side as Lionel Messi’s Argentina won on penalties.

PSG lavished huge sums to put Mbappe, Brazil star Neymar and Messi in the same team, hoping to finally unlock the Champions League puzzle. But the French club came up short. As Mbappe’s fame has grown, so has his importance to both the French national team and France the country. President Emmanuel Macron intervened to persuade him to stay at PSG in June 2022 when a move to Real seemed almost cut and dried.

At Real, who also won back the La Liga title from fierce rivals Barcelona this season, Mbappe will form a formidable attacking trio with Brazilian forward Vinicius Junior and England international Jude

Bellingham. A lethal trio of such unequivocal quality brings to mind Real’s glittering era with Cristiano Ronaldo the star in a trio that also included Gareth Bale and Karim Benzema.

Mbappe idolised Ronaldo as a child and now has the chance to emulate the Portuguese forward, Madrid’s all-time top goalscorer. At PSG, Mbappe was briefly the junior member of a stellar trio with Messi and Neymar. At Real, Mbappe will be the senior striker. Real started 23-year-old Rodrygo alongside 20-year-old Bellingham and 23-year Vinicius in Saturday’s Champions League final.

In February, coach Carlo Ancelotti was asked how he would accommodate Mbappe. “Good players need to know how to play together. The important thing is to maintain a balance,” he said. “For me, the most important things in a team are: quality and balance. If you can combine these two things, you’ll be successful.”

As part of a formidable rebuild, the club has already brought in young midfielders to take over from retiring Toni Kroos and 39-year-old Luka Modric in Eduardo Camavinga, Federico Valverde and Aurelien Tchouameni, all 25 or under. They have also signed teenage Brazilian star Endrick.

SPOTLIGHT

LIC unveils new brand campaign as countdown begins for F1 Qatar GP

Lusail Circuit will also host Formula 1 Academy and Formula 2 support races

By Sports Reporter
Doha

With just six months to go for the Formula 1 Qatar Airways Qatar Grand Prix at the Lusail International Circuit (LIC), excitement levels are reaching fever pitch right across the region. As part of the 2024 season build up, LIC’s new QatarGP brand campaign was unveiled yesterday, at an event which also featured delegates from Qatar Tourism.

The campaign called ‘Where hearts are racing’ is a further evidence of how motorsport has become deeply ingrained into Qatari society and LIC’s mission to empower and excite fans and families through showcasing the stories and action that Formula 1, Formula 2 and F1 Academy has to offer.

Amro al-Hamad, Executive Director of Qatar Motor & Motorcycle Federation and CEO of LIC said: “At LIC, we are dedicated to delivering a world-class experience for all our fans and participants. LIC has established itself as a world-class hub of motorsports, hosting a range of premier motorsport events while providing state-of-the-art facilities for spectators and fans alike. With that in mind, the Formula 1 Sprint Race will be returning this year, and with the introduction of the F1 Academy and FIA Formula 2, we are poised to deliver an unforgettable experience. Our landmark ten-year agreement ensures that LIC will continue to be a premier destination for motorsport and F1 enthusiasts for years to come.”

Al-Hamad further commented, “Ticket sales are going very strong, and we have a limited number of tickets available in some categories. I encourage all fans to secure their tickets and enjoy the event. We look forward to welcoming fans from around the world to experience the excitement and passion that define racing at LIC.”

Additionally, Fatima al-Qaedi, Marketing & Communication Manager at LIC, added: “As we approach the Formula 1 Qatar Airways Qatar Grand Prix 2024, we are thrilled to unveil our new QatarGP campaign, ‘Where hearts are racing.’ The campaign aims to create a platform that connects the emotions of drivers with those of the fans



Amro al-Hamad, Executive Director of Qatar Motor & Motorcycle Federation and CEO of Lusail International Circuit speaks at a ceremony held to unveil new brand campaign for Formula 1 Qatar Airways Qatar Grand Prix 2024 yesterday.

attending the QatarGP and to tell the stories that focus on the exceptional event experiences happening both on and off the track at LIC. It seeks to create emotional connections and long-lasting memories through the experiences felt at Lusail International Circuit during race weekend, whether you’re a driver winning a race, a fan watching F1 live for the first time, getting an autograph from a racing hero, being inspired by future stars on the track, enjoying music and entertainment, or just soaking up the electric atmosphere at our venue.”

Dr Buthaina al-Janahi, Head of Communication at Qatar Tourism: “I am pleased to witness the unveiling of Lusail International Circuit’s new visuals for QatarGP, the most prominent round of the most famous global championship in car racing, along with the inspired Formula 1 Qatar Airways Grand Prix campaign platform ‘Where hearts are racing’. The launch of the anticipated championship in Qatar affirms that tourism and sports represent two vital pillars for diversifying the nation’s economy and supporting sustainable development in line with Qatar National Vision 2030.”

She added: “There is no doubt that hosting major tournaments contributes to familiarising visitors with our cultural herit-

age, identity and authentic values. At Qatar, we welcome racing fans who will flock to Qatar to attend the Formula 1 Qatar Airways Grand Prix 2024, we are confident that they will enjoy a rounded tourism experience with the events and offers provided by Qatar Tourism across Qatar’s calendar of events, making Qatar an attractive tourist destination for visitors throughout the year.”

LIC has established itself as one of the world’s most revered hubs for top-flight racing, with a state-of-the-art 5.419km circuit and world-class hospitality and fans facilities. The venue secured a ten-year deal, starting in 2023, promising racing action for motorsports fans in Qatar for the next decade.

For the new season ahead, fans can look forward to the nail-biting F1 sprint race which will make its return to Qatar. Making its dramatic debut in 2023.

Formula 1 has also announced two additional support races that will add to the excitement of the three-day extravaganza: the F1 Academy. This highly competitive all-female racing series is designed to nurture and propel young female drivers towards higher echelons of competition. It not only showcases the exceptional talent and skill of these athletes but also highlights the fierce



Dr Buthaina al-Janahi, Head of Communication at Qatar Tourism speaks at the ceremony yesterday.



Fatima al-Qaedi, Marketing and Communication Manager at LIC

competition they bring to the track, adding an extra layer of excitement to the event.

LIC will be one of only six circuits to welcome F1 Academy – a global gateway initiative committed to driving change through increasing female participation in motorsport using grassroots activities and professional programmes.

This will be followed by the FIA Formula 2 Championship, a thrilling one-make single-seater race with 22 identical cars, which allows drivers to showcase their prowess in front of a Formula 1 audience. It promises to enhance the overall excitement of the on-track action meaning fans can enjoy not double, but triple the action.

The early bird ticket sales were successful, and phase 2 of ticket sales is now live. Fans can book day and weekend tickets at <https://tickets.lcsc.qa>

Chelsea appoint Leicester’s Maresca as new coach



London: Chelsea have appointed Leicester boss **Enzo Maresca** as their new manager on a five-year deal to replace the departed Mauricio Pochettino.

The Italian, 44, caught the eye of Chelsea chiefs after leading Leicester to the Championship title last season in his first campaign at the King Power Stadium. Several candidates were linked with the Chelsea job following Pochettino’s exit after just one season in charge.

Former Brighton boss Roberto De Zerbi, Ipswich manager Kieran McKenna and Brentford’s Thomas Frank were reportedly in contention before the west London club decided on Maresca. Maresca, formerly on Pep Guardiola’s staff at Manchester City, will begin his new role on July 1 on a five-year contract, with a club option of a further year. Maresca, who had a brief spell in charge of Italian side Parma in 2021, will be the sixth coach to have managed the first team since Todd Boehly’s Clearlake Capital consortium bought the club two years ago.

Chelsea have spent more than £1bn on signings since Clearlake took over ownership from Roman Abramovich in May 2022. Chelsea have been trophyless for the past two seasons under a succession of managers including Thomas Tuchel, Graham Potter and Pochettino.

MOURINHO DREAMING OF WINNING TURKISH LEAGUE WITH FENERBAHCE

Jose Mourinho said he was dreaming of winning the Turkish Super Lig with new club Fenerbahce but that he is making “no promises” during a press conference that was followed online by more than 80,000 people.

Mourinho was speaking from Fenerbahce’s headquarters after he was appointed coach of the Istanbul-based club on Sunday. “No promises. But is obvious that the main target, the main dream is to win the Turkish Super Lig,” said the 61-year-old.

Last season, Fenerbahce missed out on the league title to arch-rivals Galatasaray by three points despite finishing on a total of 99 across the 38-game campaign. The club’s last league title dates back to 2014. “But step-by-step we see, hopefully we are going to be in the new Champions League,” added Mourinho, who will be tasked with guiding Fenerbahce through second round qualifying before the new, expanded version of European football’s premier competition begins next season.

Mourinho boasts five European titles, including two Champions Leagues, across his managerial career with Inter Milan, Porto, Manchester United and Roma. The Portuguese also confirmed the length of his contract at Fenerbahce, which will be for a duration of two years.

QMMF making significant strides in developing young talent, says al-Hamad

Doha: Qatar is witnessing a surge in young talent in motorsport, driven by a well-structured vision and robust training programmes. The Qatar Motor & Motorcycle Federation’s (QMMF) strategy to back emerging racers across various disciplines is showing promising results. Recently, Qatari rider Hamad al-Sahouti made his Moto3 World Championship debut with the Rivacold Snipers Team. Other Qatari racers too are excelling in international competitions like the Rotax Max Challenge karting series and the Hankook 24H Dubai, part of the 24H Series Middle East Trophy Challenge.

Amro al-Hamad, Executive Director of the Qatar Motor & Motorcycle Federation and CEO of Lusail International Circuit (LIC), said Qatar is making significant strides in developing its future champions.

“Our young riders and drivers have been doing well. Hamad has been stepping up big time; now you see him in FIM Moto3 racing in the FIM World Championship,” said al-Hamad yesterday.

Highlighting the broader efforts, he added, “There is another emerging rider we are focusing on, not just Hamad. Mohamed al-Mutawa is undergoing training in Spain and participating in the Spanish Championship, albeit in a lower class. We are trying to build a platform where younger kids look up to older kids and aspire to be like them one day.”

Al-Hamad emphasised that QMMF’s efforts extend beyond individual successes. “We also have F4, with four Qatari drivers preparing to compete next year. They are going through an extensive course this

summer to get ready and represent the Qatar Motor Academy. Hosting events like Formula One or F2 is part of a broader vision. Our goal is to build a platform for younger enthusiasts by hosting these events, aligning with our 2030 vision to promote sports among younger generations, both expatriates and locals. This is a well-studied plan, not just about hosting events for the sake of it,” he explained.

Al-Hamad believes his recent appointment as Vice-President of the Single Seater Committee in the World Motor Sport Council (WMSC) under the FIA will significantly aid QMMF’s mission to promote motorsport culture in Qatar and also young drivers.

“I am very excited about this appointment. It is linked to our future plans and goals, specifically to promote and expedite

the progression of our F4 programme. This role provides a valuable opportunity to connect with subject matter experts within the committee, allowing us to understand the best ways to elevate or speed up the development of our drivers from karting to higher levels,” said al-Hamad.

He continued: “The four drivers in our F4 programme came from the Qatar Motor Academy, all starting as karting drivers. Now, we are advancing them into F4 cars. My position on the committee allows me to gather insights and best practices from experienced experts, which I will implement in our programmes in Qatar.”

As Qatar continues to build its motorsport legacy, the strategic vision and initiatives led by al-Hamad is paving the way for a new generation of racing stars.