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Arshdeep, Surya star
as India beat USA to
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FOOTBALL

Hosts Germany eye title as fans get ready for Euro 2024 party

Germany has suffered a series of failures since their 2014 World Cup victory

Reuters
Berlin

Germany begin their quest for a first major title in a decade as the Euro 2024 hosts play their Group A opener against Scotland tomorrow to kick off the tournament and what the country hopes will be a month-long party for visiting fans.

Germany have won four World Cups and three European Championships but their stellar tournament reputation has been somewhat tarnished with a series of failures since their 2014 World Cup victory in Brazil. They went out of the next two World Cups in the group stage, their worst showing in over 80 years, and exited the last Euros in the round of 16.

With the tournament on home soil, there is only one outcome that will satisfy Germany's fans, who are desperate for the success they once took for granted: winning the title. Despite their 2022 World Cup disappointment, a string of terrible results since, including a 4-1 home defeat to Japan back in September, and a change of coach a month later, the Germans still have their eyes on the big prize.

Coach Julian Nagelsmann, who took over in October 2023, made that clear only days before the tournament. "The normal ambition: we want to win it," Nagelsmann said of the team's goal. "It's the same in all other tournaments. It's probably not best for us to make this big claim that we're going to become European champions. We will face up to the task. It is a huge task, it will be challenging, and it's certainly not a chance that comes around very often."

His team are banking on a mix of hugely talented young players, including Jamal Musiala and newly-crowned Bundesliga champion Florian Wirtz, and experienced veterans such as 2014 World Cup winners Manuel Neuer, Thomas Mueller and Toni Kroos.

The big question remains their goal-scoring ability with Kai Havertz, far from a natural number nine, being their first-choice striker. Burly forward Niclas Füllkrug will be on the bench. They will need to underline those big ambitions against the Scots, who are playing in back-to-back European Championships for the first time since 1996.

Scotland, clear underdogs, are hoping for an early upset that could help guide them through the group stage for the first time in



Germany's head coach Julian Nagelsmann (centre) watches as his players train, ahead of the Euro 2024 football Championships, in Herzogenaurach, Germany, yesterday. Germany kick off the tournament against Scotland tomorrow. (AFP)

11 international tournaments.

Meanwhile, Germany called up Emre Can to replace Aleksandar Pavlovic for the tournament, who misses out through tonsillitis, the DFB confirmed. Can, who captained Borussia Dortmund in their Champions League loss to Real Madrid in June, made his Germany debut in 2015 but had not played for his country since September 2023.

The former Liverpool and Juventus midfielder has played 43 times for Germany, scoring one goal. This marks the first time Nagelsmann has called the Dortmund player into the squad, with Can's last nomination taking place under previous manager Hansi Flick.

"We wanted another defensive midfielder in the squad," Nagelsmann said in a statement, saying Can had "immediately expressed his enthusiasm and willingness" to join the team. "We wanted to have another player in the squad who has played a

lot of games, who knows how to deal with the pressure. (Can) can fulfil the profile that we can use now."

Pavlovic, 20, played in Germany's 0-0 draw with Ukraine but missed Friday's 2-1 win over Greece. Born in Munich, the Bayern youth product made his Bundesliga debut in October and was also eligible to play for Serbia. He was a surprise call-up, brought into the side at the expense of experienced club teammate Leon Goretzka.

Nagelsmann decided to call up Can rather than recall Goretzka, who has scored 14 goals in 57 Germany games.

Apart from success on the pitch, the host country is also banking on a wave of enthusiasm from their own fans as well as an estimated 2.7 million visitors for the June 14-July 14 event. Large fan zones have been set up across all major cities, including Berlin's massive fan space, stretching from the iconic Brandenburg gate far into the west of

the city. The fan zones were an overwhelming success during the 2006 World Cup in Germany, helping to fuel the party atmosphere of that tournament, dubbed locally the 'summer fairytale'.

Conditions are not quite the same this time, with more than one in four Germans having no interest in the Euros, and security being top of the agenda. Thousands of police will be deployed around the clock in an attempt to head off potential threats from terrorists, hooligans, violent individuals and cyberattacks.

"It is a major effort when it comes to the deployed forces," Interior Minister Nancy Faeser said. "Each day we have 22,000 police officers in action for the Euro." German police have also been working with colleagues in other countries to identify potential threats and make sure the tournament becomes another summer hit for the country.

Manager Ten Hag to stay at Manchester United

Manchester, England: Manchester United manager Erik ten Hag will remain in the job for next season and has entered into talks with the Old Trafford club over a contract extension despite the team's lowest ever Premier League finish of eighth, British media reported.

The decision comes after an end-of-season review by the club's board for the 2023-24 campaign, which finished on a high with a shock FA Cup final win over favourites Manchester City. Ten Hag's contract runs until the end of next season, with the club having the option of extending it a further 12 months.

Former Ajax Amsterdam coach Ten Hag had come under increasing pressure after 20-times English champions United suffered their worst start to a season since 1962-63 with eight defeats in their first 15 matches in all competitions. They ended up eighth after 14 defeats in their 38 league games and bowed out of the Champions League in the group phase.

Ten Hag's job security had been the subject of speculation all season and many pundits believed the FA Cup final would be the Dutchman's last game with the team, win or lose. But moments after their thrilling triumph, the 54-year-old insisted he had no doubt he would be back and said he had received the backing of the club's owners all season. "I'm in a project and we are exactly where we want to be. We're constructing a team. When I took over it was a mess at United, and we are on our way to construct a team for the future," he told reporters at Wembley. "The team is developing, the team is winning and the team also plays to an identity. What you need to play is to be available, you need a strong squad in top football, and especially when you play in England, the Premier League is so competitive."

Ten Hag pointed to United's revolving door of injuries last term, the most of any Premier League team and concentrated in key positions such as central defence. He also spoke about the breakout seasons of young players such as midfielder Kobbie Mainoo, who is part of England's Euro 2024 squad in Germany, and Argentina winger Alejandro Garnacho. In Ten Hag's two seasons in charge, United have played in three Wembley finals and lifted two trophies, having also won last season's League Cup. Among potential replacements were Thomas Tuchel and Gareth Southgate.

ASWAT EMERGES 2024 QATAR KARTING CHAMPIONSHIP CHAMPION

Qatari driver Omar Aswat clinched the 2024 Qatar Karting Championship title after a strong performance throughout the season. Despite not reaching the podium in the fifth and final race at the Lusail Karting Track on Tuesday, Aswat finished at the top of the overall standings with a total of 74 points to secure the championship. Aswat gathered 74 points from five races, while Karim Rizkallah took the second spot with 58 points. Tameem Hassiba finished third in the standings with 56 points. Thomas Estevez came fourth in the final standings after securing 15 points in the fifth round, pushing his total to 46 points, while Faesal al-Yafei completed the top five with a total of 43 points. In Tuesday's grand finale, Rizkallah topped the podium with a total time of 14:22.221. Rizkallah led the race by a significant margin of 27.788 seconds. Yousuf al-Sulaiti secured the second place in 14:50.009, 0.021 seconds ahead of the third-place finisher Estevez. Earlier in Group 1, Felice Carena clinched the top spot, while Nimr al-Qahtani and Victor Litaudon came second and third, respectively.

MATCH REPORT

Arshdeep and Suryakumar power India to 7-wicket win

THE 2007 WORLD CUP WINNERS BECOME FIRST SIDE TO REACH SUPER EIGHT FROM GROUP A

AFP
New York

Suryakumar Yadav hit an unbeaten half-century and left-arm seamer Arshdeep Singh claimed a career-best 4-9 as India defeated the United States by seven wickets to reach the T20 World Cup second round yesterday.

Chasing 111 to win the Group A clash, India were rattled at 15-2 and then 44-3 before Yadav (50) and Shivam Dube (31) put on an undefeated fourth-wicket stand of 67 to secure a third win in three games for Rohit Sharma's team with 10 balls to spare.

Despite the defeat, the United States are still well-placed to join India in the Super Eights as they have four points while Pakistan and Canada are on two.

India were stunned by Mumbai-born fast bowler Saurabh Netravalkar who had superstar batsman Virat Kohli caught behind for nought off the first ball he faced.

Rohit was then caught by Harmeet Singh at mid-off, again off the bowling of the 32-year-old Netravalkar in the third over.

Rishabh Pant's 18-run cameo was ended when his stumps were uprooted by Ali Khan in the eighth over. However, Yadav went to his 18th international T20 half-century from 49 balls with two fours and a pair of sixes.

Left-hander Dube's 31 came off 35 deliveries and featured a boundary and a six on the same notoriously tricky and slow Nassau County International Cricket Stadium pitch where India had made just 119 in a six-run win over Pakistan at the weekend.

Earlier, Arshdeep removed recalled opener Shayan Jahangir lbw off the first ball and had Andries Gous (two) caught in the deep five



India's Arshdeep Singh celebrates a successful lbw with a teammate during the ICC Twenty20 World Cup match against the USA at Nassau County International Cricket Stadium in East Meadow, New York, yesterday. (AFP)

balls later as the USA found themselves 3-2 after the opening over.

Big-hitting skipper Aaron Jones, who clubbed an undefeated 94 in the hosts' opening win over Canada in Dallas, made just 11 before he fell to Hardik Pandya.

That left the US on 25-3 before opener Steven Taylor (24) and top-scorer Nitish Kumar (27) put on 31 for the fourth wicket.

Nitish became Arshdeep's third victim, smartly caught on the boundary by Mohamed Siraj.

Former New Zealand star Corey

Anderson (15) was the sixth man out with the score on 96 thanks to a running catch by wicket-keeper Pant off Pandya who completed a wicket-maiden. With the Americans looking to push the total into three figures, Arshdeep had Harmeet Singh caught behind for 10. Shadley van Schalkwyk (11) and Jasdeep Singh (two) ensured the United States posted what they hoped would have been a defendable total.

Both teams went into the game with a perfect four points from two

wins with the USA having stunned Pakistan in a famous Super Over triumph last time out. India join Australia and South Africa as the three teams to have so far booked their places in the next stage.

BRIEF SCORES
USA 110-8 in 20 overs (Nitish Kumar 27, Steven Taylor 24; Arshdeep Singh 4-9) **v India 111-3 in 18.2 overs** (Suryakumar Yadav 50 not out, Shivam Dube 31 not out)
Toss: India
Result: India won by 7 wickets



Suryakumar Yadav of India plays a shot against the USA in New York yesterday. (AFP)

Sri Lanka staring at early T20 Cup exit after Florida washout



Nepal's supporters cheer for their team after the match was abandoned due to weather conditions during the ICC Twenty20 World Cup clash against Sri Lanka at Central Broward Park & Broward County Stadium in Lauderhill, Florida, yesterday. (AFP)

Lauderhill, Florida: Former champions Sri Lanka are on the brink of an early exit from the T20 World Cup after heavy rain washed out their Group D match against Nepal in Lauderhill, Florida yesterday. The 2014 champions badly needed a win to keep their tournament hopes alive after defeats by South Africa and Bangladesh in their first two matches. Wanindu Hasaranga's team are bottom of the group with just one point and look certain to crash out unless other results go their way. "It's not going to be easy for us and it would be a miracle

actually," Sri Lanka spinner Maheesh Theekshana said of their chances of advancing. They will conclude their group campaign against the Netherlands on Sunday and Theekshana acknowledged nothing had clicked for them in the 20-team tournament. "We didn't bat well, we didn't assess the conditions really well and our plans, everything went wrong," the off-spinner said yesterday. Nepal are also winless after two matches and tomorrow they face unbeaten group leaders South Africa, who sealed their place in the Super Eight after three straight victories.

'In our best interest' to see England suffer early exit, says Hazlewood

North Sound, Antigua and Barbuda: Australia fast bowler Josh Hazlewood believes "it's in our best interest" to see defending champions and bitter rivals England suffer an early exit at the T20 World Cup, refusing to rule out manipulating the system to achieve their aim. Australia have already secured their place in the second round Super Eights with three wins in three matches in Group B. England have just one point from two games and need to win their remaining two matches to have any chance of join-

ing the Australians in the next phase. Scotland are currently second with five points and set to grab the remaining Super Eights spot. "In this tournament you potentially come up against England at some stage again and they're probably one of the top few teams on their day," said Hazlewood after Australia cruised past Namibia by nine wickets yesterday. "We've had some real struggles against them in T20 cricket so if we can get them out of the tournament that's in our best interest as well as probably everyone else."

SPOTLIGHT

Zampa shines with 4/12 as Aussies reach Super Eight

AFP
North Sound, Antigua and Barbuda

Australia marched into the Super Eight of the T20 World Cup with a nine-wicket demolition of Namibia at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium in Antigua yesterday.

Adam Zampa led the rout of an outclassed Namibia with figures of 4-12, becoming the first Australian man to reach 100 T20I wickets.

The southern Africans were bundled out for just 72 off 17 overs after batting first.

With victories under their belt over Oman and arch-rivals England, Australia then sped to the target in just 5.4 overs for the loss of one wicket.

Travis Head finished unbeaten on 34 and captain Mitchell Marsh struck the winning boundary to be 18 not out.

Put in to bat in breezy, drizzly conditions, Namibia were first strangled by the 2021 champions' efficiency with their new-ball bowlers and some safe catching.

Zampa then took over, the leg-spinner ripping through the lower half of Namibia's demoralised batting line-up.

His fourth wicket came off the last ball of his four-over spell when he bowled Bernard Scholtz to reach his milestone of 100 wickets in the shortest format.

"I bowled a couple of pies (bad balls) tonight to get a couple wickets but that happens at times," said Zampa after receiving the Man of the Match award.

"I've been feeling really good and encouraged by the captain to take wickets through those middle overs. It is a bit of a challenge here in the Caribbean but it's something you have to cope with for sure.

"This is the first step in trying to take the trophy home, but there is a long way to go," he added.

Namibia captain Gerhard Erasmus, who needed 17 deliveries to get off the mark, top-scored with 36 off 43 balls (four fours, one six)



Australia's Adam Zampa (right) celebrates the dismissal of Namibia's Zane Green during the ICC Twenty20 World Cup match at Sir Vivian Richards Stadium in North Sound, Antigua and Barbuda yesterday. (AFP)

before being ninth out, the second wicket for Marcus Stoinis.

Stoinis shared the new ball with Josh Hazlewood, the senior seamer also picking up two wickets.

"You cannot sit back against the best in the world. The gap in skill is there but you can sort of close that by fighting fire with fire," said Erasmus in the aftermath of the chastening loss. We did not do that tonight. A good side like Australia will expose you if you are not willing to mentally step up to this level on a particular day"

The comprehensive win throws an interesting light over Australia's final group match.

They face Scotland, who are currently second in the group and poised to eliminate title-holders England if they beat the rampant Aussies on Saturday in St Lucia.

"It's going to get pretty busy after our match against Scotland so

we'll manage as many people as we can over the next few days," said Marsh, hinting at the possibility of resting a couple of players.

The captain was full of praise for his premier spinner Zampa.

"If you look at his career over the last four or five years, he's probably our most important player," said Marsh. "He loves the big moment, loves the pressure. I think that all comes with experience and he's bowling beautifully at the moment"

BRIEF SCORES
Namibia 72 all out off 17 overs (Gerhard Erasmus 36; Adam Zampa 4-12, Marcus Stoinis 2-9, Josh Hazlewood 2-18) **v Australia 74-1 off 5.4 overs** (Travis Head 34 not out, David Warner 20; David Wiese 1-15)
Toss: Australia
Result: Australia won by 9 wickets



Australia's Travis Head hits a boundary against Namibia yesterday. (AFP)

TENNIS

Osaka powers into last-eight of Wimbledon warm-up

AFP
The Hague

Former world number one Naomi Osaka blasted her way into the quarter-finals of the 's-Hertogenbosch grass-court tournament yesterday with a rapid-fire straight sets victory as she tunes up for Wimbledon.

The four-time Grand Slam winner dispatched home favourite Suzan Lamens 6-2, 6-2 in less than an hour, her powerful service and groundstrokes proving too much for the Dutchwoman.

The Japanese woman, now ranked 125th in the world, will face Canada's Bianca Andreescu, who came through her match against sixth-seed Yuan Yue from China in straight sets.

"I definitely do feel more re-

laxed. I feel more calm with the plan I have and just really grateful to be back," said Osaka.

She added that the key to her good form was to be "more comfortable returning and accepting mistakes as they come."

The first set went on serve until the sixth game, both players struggling to adapt to blustery conditions.

Then Osaka took the initiative, breaking the Dutchwoman's service with a series of powerful drives off both wings, helped by some unforced errors from Lamens.

More errors in Lamens' next service game handed Osaka the first set 6-2 in just 26 minutes of play.

The Japanese was too strong for her opponent at the start of the second set as well, breaking her first service game with a string of winners to race into a 3-0 lead.

She wrapped the match up as Lamens dumped another ground-stroke into the net.

By Osaka's own admission, grass is not her favourite surface, her four Grand Slams coming on hard courts in the US and Australian Opens.

She has never made it past the third round on the Wimbledon grass but appears to be gradually coming back into the form that took her to world number one.

Osaka had a match point against eventual French Open winner Iga Swiatek in the second round, the sternest test the world number one faced on the Paris clay.

Japan's Naomi Osaka hits a return to Netherlands' Suzan Lamens on the fifth day of S-Hertogenbosch WTA tennis tournament in Rosmalen yesterday. (AFP)



SWIMMING

Titmus shatters 200m freestyle world record

'I think just the field we have is why we are swimming so fast'

AFP
Brisbane

Arianne Titmus shattered fellow Australian Mollie O'Callaghan's 200m freestyle world record yesterday, touching in 1min 52.23secs just weeks before defending her Olympic title in Paris.

She hit the wall in Brisbane at Australia's Olympic trials ahead of O'Callaghan, who also went under her previous world record of 1:52.85, surging home in 1:52.48.

Titmus went out hard and was 0.81sec under the pace at 100m, holding on as her teammate pushed her to the limit. "Looking at the results, it's unbelievable. I'm really happy to finally produce a swim in the 200 that I feel like my training reflects," said Titmus, 23.

"I think just the field we have is why we are swimming so fast.

"We push each other every day. To have five girls under (trainer) Dean (Boxall) in that final is unbelievable. It's a credit to him and the programme."

Titmus stunned American great Katie Ledecky to clinch gold in Tokyo three years ago.

She will head to Paris as a red-hot favourite alongside O'Callaghan, who smashed Italian great Federica Pellegrini's 14-year-old world record last year.

"We push each other to the best of our limits," said 20-year-old O'Callaghan of training and racing with Titmus. "I'm still learning, still getting used to the 200m freestyle. It's a very difficult event to get your head around. The past few days I've just been getting eaten up by nerves."



Australia's Arianne Titmus reacts after winning the women's 200m freestyle final in a new world record time during the Australian swimming trials at the Brisbane Aquatic Centre yesterday. (AFP)

The pair share eight of the 10 fastest times in history, with Ledecky, Canadian phenomenon Summer McIntosh and Hong Kong's Siobhan Haughey all in the chasing pack.

So far, McIntosh is the only other swimmer to go under 1:54 this

year. Lani Pallister and Brianna Throssell came third and fourth in Brisbane to position themselves to be part of an ominously fast 4x200m relay team.

Titmus has been in top form this week, swimming the second-fastest 400m freestyle of all time on Monday as she also prepares to defend that Olympic title. She is also the world record holder.

Cameron McEvoy, who won gold at the 2023 world championship in 21.35 ahead of Ben Armbruster to become the first Australian male swimmer to make four Olympics, owning three of the four quickest times this year.

"It's pretty unreal. The job's not done yet, but awesome," said the 30-year-old.

Elijah Winnington qualified for the 800m freestyle, coming home in 7:44.90.

But Sam Short, who boasts the fourth fastest swim in history, set at the 2023 world championship behind Tunisian winner Ahmed Hafnaoui, was second and outside the time needed to make the grade.

"That's probably not as fast as I've been before or wanted to go, but I don't want to peak here, I want to peak in six weeks' time," said Winnington.

Winnington and Short had already qualified in the 400m freestyle, where they are both former world champions and serious Paris medal contenders.

No one hit the Australian qualifying mark - which is more stringent than the official Olympic requirement - in the men's 200m butterfly.

FOCUS

Nadal, Alcaraz to play Olympic doubles, Badosa to skip Games

Reuters
Madrid

Spain's Rafa Nadal and Carlos Alcaraz will team up to play doubles at this year's Olympics in Paris, the Royal Spanish Tennis Federation (RFET) said yesterday, but former world number two Paula Badosa will skip the Games.

Nadal won an Olympic singles gold medal in 2008 and a doubles gold in 2016, but the Paris Games will be Alcaraz's first as he returns to Roland Garros where he was crowned French Open champion on Sunday. Nadal's participation was up in the air with the 14-times French Open champion still not at his best following injuries but national team coach David Ferrer said the 38-year-old would team up with 21-year-old Alcaraz.

"One pair, which I think everyone knows and was hoping for is Carlos Alcaraz and Rafael Nadal and the second pair is yet to be decided, it hasn't been 100% confirmed yet," Ferrer told reporters.

"We'll wait a bit before announcing that. But Rafa and Carlos will be playing together in Paris.

"We have a great team and we are going to play at Roland Garros, the court that Nadal and Alcaraz know so well. We hope to bring joy to Spanish sport."

The other players selected are Pablo Carreno Busta and Alejandro Davidovich Fokina while Marcel Granollers, who is ranked world number two in

doubles, is also in the squad.

Sara Sorribes and Cristina Bucsa, Spain's top-ranked players and Madrid Open doubles champions, form the women's team with Badosa not travelling after her ranking plummeted due to injuries.

Badosa can use her protected ranking only at two major events, with the former world number two expected to use it at Wimbledon and the US Open.

"She does not enter with her current ranking (118) because she has been injured for a long time," coach Anabel Medina said. "This has made her take a very difficult decision, because she was really looking forward to being in Paris."

Scotland's Andy Murray may opt out of challenging for a third Olympic gold medal next month if he is not selected to play in the doubles tournament, Britain's former world number one said.

The three-times Grand Slam winner and twice Olympic champion is eligible to compete in the singles at the Games with two places reserved for players who have previously won a Grand Slam or Olympics tournament.

However, Murray could miss out on the doubles at Paris with Britain set to send Joe Salisbury and Neal Skupski instead.

"I need to see what happens with the Olympics," he told reporters on Tuesday.

"I'm not 100% sure what the situation is there with the doubles yet and whether or not I will play if I just get in the singles. I don't know."

PSG and Nike unveil the club's home kit for the 2024-2025 season

Paris Saint-Germain and Nike unveil the Club's new home kit for the 2024-2025 season, a much-anticipated moment for supporters. This kit offers a contemporary take on the traditional Hechter jersey, drawing inspiration from the urban art scene that defines Greater Paris.

The new design features the iconic central red stripe, bordered by thin white lines, reinterpreted with a fluid and dynamic brushstroke style. This fresh twist on a classic pattern embodies the bold and innovative identity of Paris Saint-Germain, a club synonymous with the new generation.

The jersey incorporates Nike's latest high-performance technology, Dri-FIT ADV, designed to enhance athletic performance. It was developed at the Nike Sport Research Lab (NSRL) in Beaverton, Oregon, using advanced body mapping tech-

nologies like 4D data analysis and computational methods. Thanks to extensive research focused on optimising mobility, breathability, and ventilation, the 2024-2025 jersey is designed to give Paris Saint-Germain players the perfect conditions to perform at their best, enhancing their game experience and helping them shine in every competition.

As part of the launch campaign, Paris Saint-Germain players were featured in a series of photographs created with the help of Artificial Intelligence, in addition to traditional photography - a first for the Club. This innovative approach demonstrates Paris Saint-Germain's dedication to providing fans with a more creative experience using state-of-the-art technology. The 2024-2025 home kit is now available in PSG Stores Villaggio Mall and Hamad International Airport.



The latest home kit brings a fresh twist to the classic Parisian style by reimagining the iconic red and blue stripe with a bold touch.

Basketball legend West dead at 86

Jerry West, an iconic 1960s star guard for the Los Angeles Lakers who inspired the NBA logo, died yesterday at age 86, the Los Angeles Clippers announced.

West played for the Lakers from 1960 through 1974, winning his only NBA title in 1972, and was co-captain on the 1960 Rome Olympic US basketball gold medal squad. In later years, West served as an executive on several NBA clubs, most recently the Clippers.

With impressive speed and quickness and a deft shooting touch, West was nicknamed "Mr. Clutch" for his skilled shotmaking under pressure. In the 1969 NBA Finals against the arch-rival Boston Celtics, he received the Most Valuable Player award even though the Celtics beat the Lakers for the title. West was a 14-time NBA All-Star and the league scoring champion in 1970. His jersey number, 44, was retired by the Lakers and he was inducted into the Basketball Hall of Fame in 1980. (AFP)

GOLF

Scheffler unfazed as ever, chased by all

AFP
Pinehurst, United States

Scottie Scheffler appears unstoppable as today's first round of the US Open approaches, with many top rivals amazed the world number one already has five wins this year including the Masters.

"He's the gold standard right now," said 2020 US Open winner Bryson DeChambeau.

"Undoubtedly the best player in the world at the minute by a long way. It's up to us to try to get to his level," said four-time major winner Rory McIlroy, who dubbed Scheffler "relentless."

Two-time major winner Jon Rahm said Scheffler is "basically replicating a Tiger Woods season. It's fantastic."

What can stop Scheffler? Well, he did settle for eighth at May's PGA Championship after being arrested on driving-related charges that were later dropped.

"The only thing that took him from winning a golf tournament

was going into a jail cell for an hour," McIlroy joked.

Scheffler will play the first and second rounds at Pinehurst with third-ranked McIlroy and second-ranked Xander Schauffele, the PGA Championship winner who sings Scheffler's praises as well. "Scottie is doing incredible things," Schauffele said. "Every week we play, he seems to build a bigger lead and somehow make the mountain even taller for all of us to climb."

Scheffler is the first player since Tom Watson in 1980 to win five PGA Tour events before the US Open, having taken titles at Bay Hill, the Players, the Masters, the Heritage and last week's Memorial. The 27-year-old American, who became a father last month, has 12 top-10 efforts in 13 PGA Tour events this year, and he does it with a matter-of-fact attitude about his success.

"I'm not thinking about my wins anymore," Scheffler said. "All I'm focused on is this week and getting ready to play. Last

week doesn't really matter." Every golfer is chasing his ranking and success but he doesn't feel it.

"I still don't feel like there's much of a target on my back," said Scheffler. "It's not like anybody is out there playing defense. When I play with Xander and Rory here Thursday and Friday, they're not going to be saying weird stuff to me or trying to block my putt from going in the hole."

"Target on my back? I don't really feel it and I don't really think about it much."

Scheffler hasn't spoken with people about how to cope with his success. "I haven't really discussed that with anybody," he said. "I try not to think about the past too much and I try not to think about the future too much. I just try and live in the present. Sometimes it's easier and sometimes it's a bit harder."

Even the high praise of rivals is taken as brotherly compliments.

"It's nice to hear a little bit of good things from my peers," Scheffler said. "Definitely nice."

HORSE RACING

Wathnan Racing emerges leading owner of season

Al Jeryan best among non-sheikh owners; Bughanaim top Qatari jockey; Hamad al-Jehani best trainer; Al Ghadeer and Ghadah PA leaders for Al Shaqab Racing



By Sports Reporter
Doha

Wathnan Racing emerged as the leading owner while Al Jeryan Stud were the leading non-sheikh owners as the Qatar Racing and Equestrian Club's (QREC) yesterday announced the list of owners, trainers, jockeys and horses topping the 2023-24 racing season.

The list - announced as per prize-money and points - was produced after 67 race days conducted throughout the season to confirm the merit of the leaders, who proved the best, having secured the largest numbers of wins and the highest amount of prize money, the QREC said.

QREC Racing Manager Abdulla al-Kubaisi said, "QREC announces the list of the leading owners, trainers, jockeys and horses after each season and such list is based on the prize-money won or the handicap rating and points."

He explained: "According to the prize-money mechanism in effect at QREC, Wathnan Racing are the leading owners, having won the highest amount of prize money by the end of the last season, which came to an end in late April. Al Jeryan Stud are the leading non-sheikh owners. Alban de Mieuille is the leading trainer, having saddled many winners in prestigious races for Wathan Racing. Hamad al-Jehani is the leading Qatari trainer. Szczepan Mazur is the leading jockey and Faleh Bughanaim is the leading Qatari jockey while Saleh Salem al-Marri is the leading Qatari apprentice jockey."

"As for the leading horses based on prize-money, Al Shaqab Racing's Al Ghadeer is the leading Purebred Arabian horse," said al-Kubaisi. "Al Shaqab Racing's Ghadah is the leading Purebred Arabian mare. Mohamed bin Fahad AH al-Attiya's Molfit is the



leading four-year-old Purebred Arabian colt. HE Sheikhha Yasmeen bint Mohamed bin Khalifa al-Thani's Mkaee'lat Al Shahania is the leading four-year-old Purebred Arabian filly. Al Shaqab Racing's Al Mirage is the leading local Purebred Arabian horse. Wathnan Racing's Nesrine is the leading local Purebred Arabian mare. Al Jeryan Stud's AJS Lattam is the leading four-year-old local Purebred Arabian colt while AJS Najma, carrying the same colours,

is the leading four-year-old local Purebred Arabian filly.

"Abdulatif Hussain MZ al-Emadi's Pazeer is the leading Thoroughbred horse. Sheikh Faisal bin Hamad bin Jassim al-Thani's Gold Lily is the leading Thoroughbred mare. Wathnan Racing's Jeff Koons is the leading four-year-old Thoroughbred colt. Injaaz Stud's Kerindia is the leading four-year-old Thoroughbred filly. Sheikh Mohamed bin Salman M al-Thani's Odyssey is the leading three-

year-old Thoroughbred colt. Fahad Nasser AE al-Romaihi's Full Gambit is the leading three-year-old Thoroughbred filly. Wathnan Racing's Balzac is the leading local Thoroughbred horse.

"Saeed Ibrahim Saeed al-Malki's Al Gamamah is the leading local Thoroughbred mare. Abdulatif Hussain MZ al-Emadi's Al Faisal is the leading four-year-old local Thoroughbred colt. Mohamed Abdulhadi S al-Hajri's Maysara is the leading four-year-old local Thoroughbred filly."

Al-Kubaisi pointed out that in terms of the leaders by handicap rating and points, there was no change in this list from the other list for owners, trainers and jockeys. He added that the change only occurred in some horse categories and that there are horses, which led by both prize money and the point system, such as Al Ghadeer, Ghadah, Mkaee'lat Al Shahania, AJS Lattam, Kerindia, Odyssey, Full Gambit, Al Gamamah and Maysara.

On the other hand, other horses took the lead by the handicap rating and points. Al Jeryan Stud's AJS Berline is the leading local Purebred Arabian mare. Al Jeryan Stud's AJS Agadir is the leading four-year-old local Purebred Arabian filly. Wathnan Racing's Simca Milleis is the leading Thoroughbred horse. Nasser Saeed MS al-Eida's Gold Fleece is the leading Thoroughbred mare. Al Wasmiyah Farm's Eddie's Boy is the four-year-old leading Thoroughbred colt. Wathnan Racing's Equinox is the leading local Thoroughbred horse.

Al-Kubaisi further pointed out that as per the points system, every leading horse must have won at least one race in Qatar during the 2023-2024 season in order to qualify for their title.

In the event of two horses having the same merit score, the Leading Horse will be the horse which has won the highest-value race, or the horse with the greatest number of total wins if a further tie-breaker is required.

FOOTBALL

Motta named as new coach of Juventus

AFP
Rome

Italian giants Juventus yesterday named **Thiago Motta** as their new coach, replacing Massimiliano Allegri who was sacked last month. "It's official, the next Juventus coach will be Thiago Motta. The Italian-Brazilian has signed with Juventus until June 30, 2027," the club said in a statement.

Motta, 41, was previously in charge at Serie A rivals Bologna. "I am really very happy to start a new experience at the helm of a big club like Juventus," said Motta who, according to the Italian press, will earn an annual salary of 3.5mn euros (\$3.8mn).

Motta made his coaching name at Bologna who he joined in 2022. Last season, he led the team to fifth place in Serie A and qualified them for the Champions League for the first time. The former Italian international was part of the squad which finished runner-up at the 2012 European championships.

He was also a five-time French champion with PSG and played in Champions League winning teams

at Barcelona and Inter Milan. Juve will be his fourth club as coach after Genoa (2019), where he only stayed three months before being fired with a record of just one victory in ten matches, and La Spezia (2021-22) and Bologna.

Juventus finished last season in third place in Serie A but 23 points behind champions Inter Milan. They did, however, clinch the Italian Cup for the 15th time. Their end to the season was painful with just three wins in 17 league matches having been hot on the heels of Inter at the turn of the year.

Juve fired Allegri for his explosive behaviour during the team's Italian Cup triumph which the club deemed "incompatible" with its values. Allegri was sent off in the final minutes of the 1-0 win against Atalanta for ranting at match officials and was also alleged to have manhandled and threatened the chief editor of a newspaper. His behaviour led to an investigation by the Italian Football Federation's disciplinary authorities. The 56-year-old won 12 trophies, including five Serie A titles, and reached two Champions League finals with Juventus over two spells as manager.



Messi expects Inter Miami to be his final club

Argentine football superstar Lionel Messi says he expects Inter Miami to be the club where he closes his legendary playing career, but he is not intending to depart right away.

Messi, who has a contract with the MLS squad until the end of the 2025 campaign, made his comments to ESPN in an interview to be broadcast yesterday. "Yes, as of today, I think it's going to be my last club," Messi said. But Messi, who turns 37 on June 24, also added, "I'm not ready to leave football either."

The record eight-time Ballon d'Or winner became a legend with Barcelona, helping capture four Champions League crowns and 10 La Liga titles. Messi sparked Argentina victories in the 2021 Copa America and 2022 World Cup and is set to play for Argentina in this month's Copa America, to be staged in the United States.

After playing for Barca from 2004-2021, Messi joined Paris Saint-Germain from 2021-2023 and then moved to Inter Miami last year, helping the club win the Leagues Cup crown in his early days with the squad. "It was a difficult step to leave Europe to come here," Messi said. "The fact of having been world champion helped a lot to see things differently also."

Messi's star turn raised the profile for MLS in the United States, matches selling out wherever he plays and his shirt by far the most popular among MLS jersey purchasers. Messi now ponders playing for his homeland in the 2026 World Cup, to be co-hosted by the USA with Mexico and Canada, and is contemplating the end of his incredible career.

"My whole life I did this. I love playing ball. I enjoy the training, the day every day, of the matches. A little afraid that everything will end," Messi said. "I try to enjoy. That's why I enjoy everything much more, because I'm aware that there's less and less to go and I have a good time at the club. How lucky I am to have colleagues and friends by my side. I had a good time in the selection, where I have teammates and friends too, and many of them, and I enjoy the little details that I know I'm going to miss when I don't play anymore."

ROUND-UP

Ronaldo double helps Portugal beat Ireland in final Euros warm-up

AFP
Aveiro, Portugal

Cristiano Ronaldo struck twice for Portugal as they comfortably beat the Republic of Ireland 3-0 on Tuesday in their final Euro 2024 warm-up friendly. Joao Felix was also on target as Roberto Martinez's side bounced back from a defeat by Croatia last week to build confidence for the tournament in Germany.

Ronaldo, 39, watched that match from the bench but started against Ireland in Aveiro and came close in the first half before dismantling the visitors in the second. Veteran defender Pepe, 41, set to become the oldest player ever to play at the Euros, also started.

Euro 2016 winners Portugal qualified with a 100 percent record but recent performances had allowed some doubts to creep in. "The Portuguese expect a lot from Portugal, there's no margin for error, none, they always want Portugal to win because of the

generation, the talent there is," said Ronaldo. "We have to have our feet on the ground and our thoughts in the sky, dreaming of the Euros."

Ronaldo will appear at a record sixth edition of the tournament, having played in his first back in 2004. "Going back to 2004... my thoughts and my pride remain the same," said Ronaldo. "Playing for the Portuguese national team, it doesn't get better than this. For the Euros we have to think positively, this team has to dream and has been working hard, because just having talent is no use if there's no hard work."

Euro 2024 begins tomorrow and Portugal's first match is against the Czech Republic on June 18, before facing Türkiye and Georgia in Group F.

VAR decisions to be explained to fans at Euro 2024

Fans at Euro 2024 will be given more detailed information on video assisted refereeing decisions than before, organisers UEFA said. The head of UEFA's refereeing



Portugal's forward Cristiano Ronaldo celebrates scoring his second goal with teammate Diogo Jota during the International friendly against Ireland at the Municipal Stadium in Aveiro on Tuesday. (AFP)

committee Roberto Rosetti said screens at stadiums across Germany will provide "technical ex-

planations" of VAR calls in order to improve spectator understanding.

One of various criticisms of VAR technology since its widespread introduction has been the difficulty match-going fans have in understanding why certain decisions are made. "After the video assistance, the technical explanation of the decision will be shown on the giant screens in the stadiums," explained Rosetti at a press briefing at the Allianz Arena, ahead of the tournament opener.

Rosetti offered an example of the type of information fans will be given after a VAR call. "Penalty, handball, Germany's number nine touched the ball with his left hand, which was in an unnatural position, over his shoulder and extending away from his body," he said. At the 2023 Women's World Cup officials announced decisions to spectators verbally before restarting play. Rosetti said referees will be able to give explanations to the captains of the teams they are refereeing but other players challenging decisions or demanding information will be cautioned.

This rule was applied in all three UEFA club competition fi-

nals, with two yellow cards in the Champions League final, two yellow cards in the Europa League final and one yellow card in the Conference League final. "We do this for the next generations... for football and the image of the game, for the young players and for the young referees," said Rosetti.

For teams with a goalkeeper as captain - Italy and Slovenia - an outfield player will be chosen before the match to stand in.

In-demand Leipzig striker Sesko extends until 2029

Sought-after striker Benjamin Sesko has extended his stay at Bundesliga side RB Leipzig until 2029, the club announced. Sesko, 21, was in high demand after an impressive first season at the club, with reported interest from Premier League sides Arsenal and Manchester United. The Slovenia forward arrived in Leipzig from sister club Red Bull Salzburg last summer and despite a slow start scored 14 goals in 31 Bundesliga games, netting in each of his last seven league fixtures.