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**SEINE SICKNESS**  
**GERMANY WINS ILLNESS-AFFECTED MIXED TEAM RELAY TRIATHLON**  
Germany won gold in the mixed triathlon relay at the Paris Olympics, with the event disrupted by illnesses that saw at least three teams report sick team members who swam in the River Seine last week. In a thrilling climax to the team race through central Paris, Germany's Laura Lindemann won a sprint finish, narrowly edging out Taylor Knibb from the United States in second and Beth Potter from Britain in third. The Belgian team did not race at all after their athlete Claire Michel fell sick, reportedly with E. coli, having swum in the Seine during the women's individual triathlon last Wednesday.

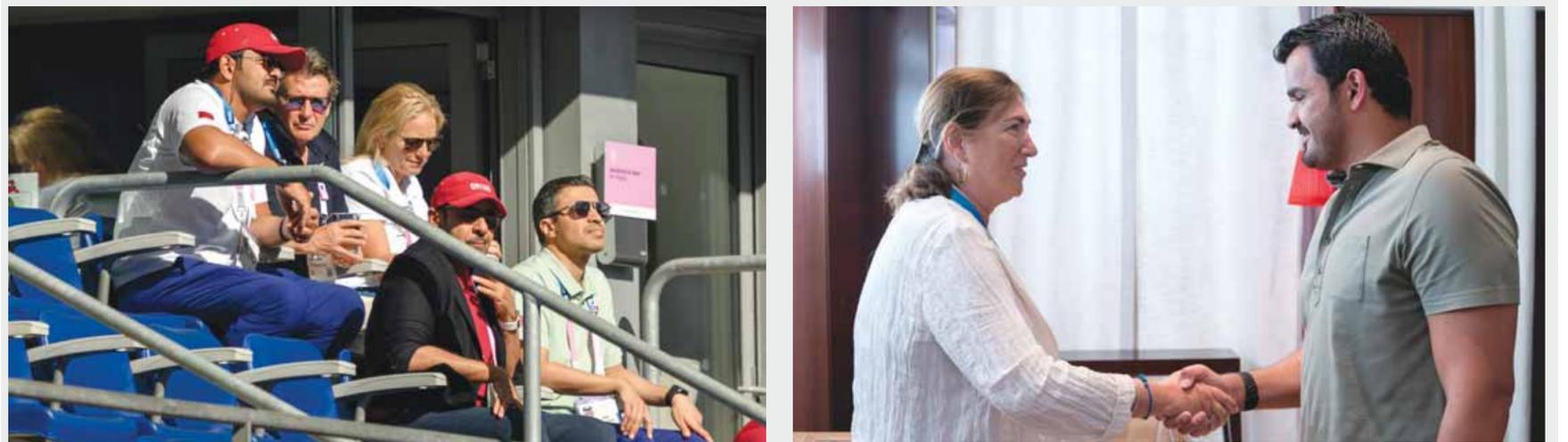
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**GULF TIMES**  
**SPORT**

PARIS 2024

**SHEIKH JOAAN MEETS PRESIDENTS OF WORLD ATHLETICS AND ITU**



Qatar Olympic Committee (QOC) President HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani attended the athletics competitions at the Paris Olympic Games yesterday. Sheikh Joaan met with Sebastian Coe, President of World Athletics, to discuss a partnership project between the QOC and the world governing body. The project involves QOC funding the construction of 10 athletics stadiums in some developing countries. **RIGHT:** HE Sheikh Joaan also met with International Triathlon Union (ITU) President Marisol Casado at the Paris Olympics. The meeting was also attended by QOC Secretary-General Jassim bin Rashid al-Bueinain and ITU Secretary-General Antonio Arimany. The meeting discussed areas of development and mutual co-operation between the QOC and the ITU.

**ATHLETICS**

**Samba targets medal after reaching semis**

'Good preparation for semi-final is crucial to achieve my goal of winning a medal'

By Sports Reporter  
Doha

Qatar's Abderrahman Samba qualified for the semi-finals of the 400m hurdles at the Paris Olympic Games yesterday. At the Stade de France stadium, Samba came third running in Heat 2 alongside Norwegian world and Olympic record holder Karsten Warholm in a time of 48.35 seconds. Warholm won the heat in an impressive 47.57 secs, while France's Clement Ducos was second in 47.69 ahead of Samba. Both Warholm and Ducos are considered strong contenders for the medals, alongside Brazil's Alison Santos and America's Rai Benjamin. In the semis, Samba - who has struggled with injuries in recent times - will have to be at his best if he has to progress into the final. Samba made his return from the recent lay-off at the Stockholm Diamond League in June clocking 49.69 secs. But he showed improvement winning the Meeting Madrid with a time of 47.97. In July, he clocked 48.27 at Monaco Diamond League. The two-time Asian Games champion and 2019 World Championships bronze medalists though was confident of not just qualifying for the final but also winning a medal. Samba had finished fifth in Tokyo Olympics. "I'm happy with this result. Good preparation for the semi-final is crucial to achieve my goal of winning a medal. The semi-final race will be more challenging. I hope for success in the semi-final and to achieve the best time to get one step closer to the desired goal," the 28-year-old said. Meanwhile, another Qatari runner Bassem Hemeida will have to win his repechage round today to qualify for the 400m hurdles. Hemeida finished fifth in Heat 1 yesterday with a season best time of



Qatar's Abderrahman Samba (centre) competes during the the 400m hurdles heat at the Paris Olympic Games yesterday. (AFP)

49.82 seconds but that was not enough for automatic qualification. The semi-final round includes 24 runners divided into 3 groups, with the first and second place finishers qualifying for the final. There is another opportunity through repechage for runners to compete for qualification to the semi-finals. Ammar Ismail too qualified for the 400m semi-final yesterday after he won his repechage race in a time of 44.47 seconds. Ismail said his aim is to qualify for the final. My goal is to continue working hard to qualify for the final. The competition was not easy and will be even more challenging in the semi-finals, but entering the race in the best mental state is essential to achieve the best result and reach the final."



Qatar's Ammar Ismail reacts after winning the 400m repechage round.



**Younousse and Tijan sail into quarters**

Qatar's Cherif Younousse and Ahmed Tijan booked their place in the quarter-finals of the beach volleyball event of the Paris Olympic Games yesterday. At the Eiffel Tower Stadium, 13th-seeded pair and 2020 Tokyo Games bronze medalists Esteban Grimalt of Chile 2-0 (21-14, 21-13) to register their fourth consecutive win in Paris. Younousse and Tijan stayed well in control throughout the match and prevailed in all elements of the game. Younousse starred on the block and raised as many as seven stuffs, including the one that brought in the match winner, and finished with a 15-point match high.

Tijan led the Qatari attack and fired one ace to tally a total of 14 points. Tomorrow, Younousse and Tijan will take on Miles Partain and Andrew Benesh of the United States in a quarter-final battle for passage to the last four. Partain and Benesh beat Italy's Samuele Cottafava and Paolo Nicolai in straight sets, 21-17, 21-18. The US pair found success with the jump set technique, reading the Italian defence to perfection and converting for easy scores. Benesh was a force at the net, winning multiple meetings in the air with Tokyo silver medalist Nicolai. A 3-0 run gave the Americans a 12-7 lead in the first and they went on to take the set by a comfortable margin.

**MEDALS TALLY**

TEAMS	G	S	B	T
1. China	21	18	14	53
2. USA	20	30	28	78
3. Australia	13	11	8	32
4. France	12	15	18	45
5. Great Britain	12	13	17	42
6. South Korea	11	8	7	26
7. Japan	10	5	11	26
8. Italy	9	10	7	26
9. Germany	7	5	4	16
10. Netherlands	6	6	4	16
11. Canada	5	4	8	17
12. New Zealand	3	5	1	9
13. Hungary	3	3	2	8
13. Sweden	3	3	2	8
15. Romania	3	3	1	7
16. Ireland	3	0	3	6
17. Brazil	2	4	5	11
18. Ukraine	2	2	3	7
19. Croatia	2	1	2	5
20. Belgium	2	0	3	5
21. Hong Kong	2	0	2	4
22. Azerbaijan	2	0	0	2
22. Philippines	2	0	0	2
22. Serbia	2	0	0	2
25. Israel	1	4	1	6
26. Spain	1	3	5	9
27. Georgia	1	2	1	4
28. Switzerland	1	1	4	6
29. Kazakhstan	1	1	2	4
29. South Africa	1	1	2	4
31. Denmark	1	1	0	2
32. Taiwan	1	0	3	4
33. Uzbekistan	1	0	2	3
34. Czech Republic	1	0	1	2
34. Guatemala	1	0	1	2
34. Kenya	1	0	1	2
37. Algeria	1	0	0	1
37. Argentina	1	0	0	1
37. Chile	1	0	0	1
37. Dominica	1	0	0	1
37. Ecuador	1	0	0	1
37. Norway	1	0	0	1
37. Saint Lucia	1	0	0	1
37. Slovenia	1	0	0	1
37. Uganda	1	0	0	1
46. Jamaica	0	2	1	3
46. Mexico	0	2	1	3
46. North Korea	0	2	1	3
49. Ethiopia	0	2	0	2
50. Greece	0	1	5	6
51. Poland	0	1	3	4
52. Kosovo	0	1	1	2
52. Turkiye	0	1	1	2
54. Armenia	0	1	0	1
54. Colombia	0	1	0	1
54. Fiji	0	1	0	1
54. Mongolia	0	1	0	1
54. Thailand	0	1	0	1
54. Tunisia	0	1	0	1
60. India	0	0	3	3
60. Tajikistan	0	0	3	3
62. Dominica	0	0	2	2
62. Lithuania	0	0	2	2
62. Malaysia	0	0	2	2
62. Moldova	0	0	2	2
66. Austria	0	0	1	1
66. Cape Verde	0	0	1	1
66. Cuba	0	0	1	1
66. Egypt	0	0	1	1
66. Grenada	0	0	1	1
66. Indonesia	0	0	1	1
66. Portugal	0	0	1	1
66. Slovakia	0	0	1	1

READ AS: G- Gold, S- Silver, B- Bronze, T- Total



FOOTBALL

# Qatar Stars League renews sponsorship deals

The Qatar Stars League (QSL) yesterday signed extended sponsorship deals with the Doha Bus company and the Rafeeq Al Darb company.

QSL announced the renewal of sponsorship agreements at QSL Headquarters in Al Bidda Tower.

Doha Bus is a distinguished Qatari company, which aims to provide a professional experience full of fun and excitement between a number of tourist points.

It provides tourism programmes and services with a distinctive modern and entertaining concept in order to introduce the architectural, historical and cultural landmarks of the State of Qatar.

In his comments, Hani Taleb Ballan, CEO of QSL, said: "In continuation of our partnership and strong relationship with one of the distinguished Qatari companies in the field of tourism, we're pleased today to announce the renewal of sponsorship agreement between QSL and Doha Bus company. We're proud of its role in tourism and educational programmes, and its partnership with QSL. I take this opportunity to extend my sincere



Hani Taleb Ballan, CEO of Qatar Stars League, shakes hand with Khalid al-Suwaidi, CEO of Doha Bus company, at QSL headquarter Al Bidda Tower in Doha yesterday.

thanks and appreciation to the company's Board of Directors, wishing them more success and good luck, and we look forward towards strengthening our co-operation in the future."

On his part, Khalid al-Suwaidi, CEO of Doha Bus company, said: "On the occasion of signing the league partnership agreement for the upcoming 2024-2025 season, Doha Bus Adventures extends its

heartfelt thanks to QSL and its entire team for their exceptional efforts in promoting the league and Qatar football. At Doha Bus Adventures, we're dedicated to promote Qatar as a premier tourist and sports destination, placing it prominently on the map of regional and international events. We eagerly anticipate a long-term partnership, working together to achieve our shared goals. We



Hassan Rabiah al-Kuwari, Executive Director of Sales, Marketing and Communication at QSL, Abdullah bin Thamer al-Hemeidi, CEO of Rafeeq Al Darb company, after a sponsorship agreement signing ceremony.

look forward to a wonderful and successful football season by all standards.

### Agreement with Rafeeq Al Darb company

Also yesterday QSL announced the renewal of sponsorship agreement with Rafeeq Al Darb, one of the leading companies in the State of Qatar providing delivery services and everything related

to daily needs. Commenting on the agreement, Hassan Rabiah al-Kuwari, Executive Director of Sales, Marketing and Communication at QSL, said: "In line with the plan to develop the work related to marketing and sales aspects and aligning with continued joint co-operation with one of the leading Qatari companies providing services, we're pleased to announce the renewal of sponsorship agreement

with Rafeeq Al Darb company, which will continue with us for the second season in a row. In this regard, I thank the company's Board of Directors and staff for their support and co-operation with us, and we look forward to achieve common aspirations and goals. I wish them more success."

On his part, Abdullah bin Thamer al-Hemeidi, CEO of Rafeeq Al Darb company, said: "We're very happy in Rafeeq App that we were an important and new factor in marketing one of the strongest domestic football seasons in our beloved country Qatar for many years, through joint efforts in our partnership with QSL to achieve the required level. The most beautiful result was the final outcome at the end of an exciting league won by Al Sadd and a wonderful conclusion to Qatar Cup 2024 won by Al Wakrah.

"As partners in these two tournaments as a delivery sponsor, we, at Rafeeq Al Darb company, are keen to repeat this successful experience by all standards. Accordingly, we're proud to announce the renewal of our partnership with QSL for the 2024-2025 season."

FOCUS

# New Zealand's Butcher gets gold in kayak thriller

'IT'S GONNA TAKE A WHILE TO SINK IN, BUT I'M SO STOKED'

Reuters  
Paris

After a tense wait before the drop that signalled the start of the first-ever men's kayak cross Olympic final, New Zealander Finn Butcher was greeted with the one sight he wanted to see more than anything else - clear water, which he made the most of by going on to become Olympic champion.

The Kiwi paddler blazed out of the traps to open a lead on Britain's world number one Joe Clarke, and despite his rival's best efforts Butcher held on to win, with Germany's Noah Hegge picking up the bronze.

"When we dropped off the ramp and I had a bit of clear water in front of me, I just went as hard as I could and went for it and to finish in front was insane," an emotional Butcher told Reuters, his gold medal around his neck.

"I think coming out of the last upstream (gate), I honestly couldn't believe it. It's gonna take a while to sink in, but I'm so stoked," he added.

Butcher navigated the course, featuring eight downstream and two upstream gates plus an Eskimo roll, in flawless fashion. And a good thing, because Clarke was hot on his heels, and one error could have cost Butcher gold.

"I could feel him all the way down the middle, and he's an absolute powerhouse. I was just



FROM LEFT: Britain's silver medallist Joseph Clarke, New Zealand's gold medallist Finn Butcher and Germany's bronze medallist Noah Hegge pose for a selfie photo on the podium during the medal ceremony after the men's kayak cross final of the canoe slalom competition at Vaires-sur-Marne Nautical Stadium in Vaires-sur-Marne during the Paris 2024 Olympic Games yesterday. (AFP)

going as hard as I could, and I could feel him in the last couple downs (downstream gates)," Butcher explained.

"I just knew that I needed to execute the last upstream, and it would be good as gold."

The 29-year-old was as good as his word, rounding the last upstream gate in a controlled fashion before paddling power-

fully to the finish line to become the first men's Olympic champion in the discipline, with Clarke taking the silver.

"An absolute adrenaline dump," he said, describing his feelings as he left the last upstream gate. "I was just looking around, I couldn't believe it. And all my friends on the side, running down with me, was like crazy!"

"Shout out to the Aussies.

Shout out to the New Zealand team, like they were just running down, so loud beside me, and pushed me to the end," Butcher said, his voice cracking with emotion.

"It's just special to bring this home, it's crazy," he added. "It was crazy. I couldn't even like process any of it, it was pretty special to see the (New Zealand) flag get raised."

## FORMER ENGLAND BATSMAN THORPE DIES AGED 55

London: Former England batsman and coach **Graham Thorpe** has died at the age of 55, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) announced yesterday. Thorpe won 100 Test caps between 1993 and 2005 and scored 16 centuries during a stellar England career and was regarded as one of the best batters of his generation.

In total he scored 6,744 Test runs for England at an average of 44.66 and also appeared in 82 one-day internationals.

Alongside his international exploits he enjoyed a 17-year spell with his county side Surrey. After retiring in 2005, he transitioned into coaching, working with the England international teams in various roles between 2010 and 2022.

"There seem to be no appropriate words to describe the deep shock we feel at Graham's death," the ECB said in a statement. "More than one of England's finest-ever batters, he was a beloved member of the cricket family and revered by fans all over the world. "His skill was unquestioned, and his abilities and achievements across a 13-year international career brought so much happiness to his teammates and England and Surrey CCC supporters alike. "Later, as a coach, he guided the best England men's talent to some incredible victories across all formats of the game."

After leaving his role with England following defeat to Australia in the 2021-2022 Ashes series, Thorpe was appointed head coach of Afghanistan.



However, he did not take up the role after the Professional Cricketers' Association revealed in May 2022 Thorpe had fallen seriously ill with an unclear diagnosis.

Tributes from stars past and present have poured in for a player that was often a shining light during a difficult time for the England Test side during the 1990s.

Thorpe scored 114 on his debut against Australia at Trent Bridge in 1993 and would go on to become a mainstay of the middle-order making a highest Test score of 200 not out against New Zealand in 2002.

"RIP Thorpey. Thanks for all the advice throughout my career, you were a great player and a brilliant teammate," former England captain Michael Vaughan posted on X. "You have gone far too young but you leave as an England cricket legend." Current England skipper Ben Stokes posted a photo of him wearing a jersey emblazoned with "Thorpe 564", the latter's Test cap number, with a series of heart emojis.

Thorpe spent the entirety of his playing career at Surrey and chair Oli Slipper said the country had lost one of its "great sons". "Graham is one of the great sons of Surrey and there is an overwhelming sadness that he will not walk through the gates of the Oval again," Slipper said in a Surrey statement.

"He is a legend of Surrey and brought great pride to the Club wearing both the Three Feathers and the Three Lions. He made outstanding contributions to the Club as a cricketer, and as a man, and he will be so sorely missed."



Retired Pakistan player Waqar Younis puts out a message on X following the death of his former Surrey county teammate Graham Thorpe.

SPOTLIGHT

# Charismatic Lyles taking athletics back to 'Bolt territory', says Coe



AFP  
Paris

Rob Woollard World Athletics chief Sebastian Coe said yesterday newly crowned Olympic sprint king **Noah Lyles** has given a boost to the sport not seen since the glory years of Usain Bolt.

Speaking to reporters after Lyles won an epic men's 100m final at the Stade de France on Sunday, Coe said the charismatic American was now "hugely important" for athletics.

Lyles, 27, revels in his role as one of the great showmen of track and field, and was a central character in the recent Netflix docu-series *Sprint*.

Coe said reigning 100m and 200m world champion Lyles was on course to fill the void created by the departure

of Jamaican icon Bolt, the eight-time Olympic gold medallist who retired in 2017.

"I have to be relatively agnostic, but if I'm wearing a promoter's hat, then him winning last night was important because he's now creating a narrative that is heading us back into the Usain Bolt territory," Coe said. "That is hugely important. Because he's a recognisable face. It's a face that I've now got young people talking about. And I know that not just from being in the stadium here or being in the athletics world.

"I know what they're talking about. I know friends of mine who've got young kids, they're now talking about Noah Lyles in the same breath as some of the highest profile sports men and women in the world."

Lyles himself greeted his victory on

Sunday with a call for athletics to do a better job of promoting itself. The Florida-based sprinter also hopes to leverage his Olympic success by securing a Michael Jordan-style sports shoe deal.

"I can understand that," Coe said. "That's between him and his shoe company. But look, what he is recognising and reflecting on is that he is beginning to transcend his sport, which is really what we want them all to do."

Coe meanwhile said Lyles' win by just 0.005sec on Sunday - the narrowest margin of victory in a 100m final in modern Olympic history - had demonstrated his greatness.

"What he has is what all great individuals and great teams in sport have - when it really matters, they find a way to win, and that's what he did last night," Coe said.

"He was never ahead in that race until the last frame of that photo finish, but he found a way. He didn't look outstanding in the first round, and his semi final was okay, but last night was his kingdom."

Coe added that Lyles' enthusiastic embrace of his role as an entertainer was an example to other stars of the sport.

"I've always said, performance is your passport, but promotion is everything," Coe said. "It's not enough to be just another Olympic champion or another world champion.

"He wants to fill a stadium and he also wants to fill a press conference.

"And actually, what he has to say is profoundly important for the sport. And there are things he has said that have got us all thinking slightly differently on occasions."

FOOTBALL

# Al Bidda sign deal with Ajax to develop youth programmes

By Sports Reporter  
Doha

**A**l Bidda SC has signed a long-term partnership agreement with Ajax to manage and train their club youth programme, utilising its worldwide renowned philosophy, culture, and methodology. The club youth programme educates children and teens from the age of eight until the age of 19 years old.

The partnership deal was announced at a press conference held at the 974 Stadium yesterday.

Speaking on the occasion, Sheikh Hamad bin Mohamed bin Fahad al-Thani, Vice-Chairman of Al Bidda SC, said: "With this partnership, we are setting a strong and solid foundation towards creating the best local club Football Youth Academy in Qatar. This, in turn, will help us foster great talents who will move up to join our first team. The Ajax academy is one of the best, if not the best, in the world. They have been

doing it for a long time, and they have produced global talents and legends. Indeed, this would have a very positive impact on our players, coaches, administrators at the club, and, of course, for the development of Qatari football."

Alex Kroes, Technical Director of Ajax, said: "We are delighted to expand our international football network through this partnership. The global interest in Ajax's football expertise is enormous and we are convinced that, in Al Bidda SC, we have found a partner with the same vision as Ajax. In the coming years, we will make every effort to set up a strong youth academy, which should ultimately ensure a constant flow of youth players to their first team. It is also great that we can implement our football philosophy on a broader scale. We have noticed a huge demand for this and are looking forward to these activities."

Ronald De Boer, former Netherlands star and now Ajax A1 assistant manager, who was also present on the occasion, while speaking of the partnership said Ajax were



Vice-Chairman of Al Bidda SC Sheikh Hamad bin Mohamed bin Fahad al-Thani, former Netherlands star and now Ajax A1 assistant manager Ronald De Boer, Al Bidda SC Executive Director Ghassan Oueijan and Technical Director of Ajax Alex Kroes during the partnership signing announcement yesterday.

keen to work with the youth of Al Bidda SC. "When I came here, I saw football was already very popular, and Qatar had a vision to improve, and it doesn't stop even after the FIFA World Cup. Sports is still a big part of life here. But

we need to be patient and use the opportunity to develop our own identity in football. This requires starting at the grassroots level and gaining experience over time.

"There are many young talents here. Our goal is to give these

youngsters a chance to fulfil their dreams of becoming professional football players. However, it's important to understand that not everyone will become a professional. Only a small percentage will make it to that level. "The

broader objective is to ensure that even those who don't become professional football players learn valuable lessons from their experiences. This will help them in their future endeavours, making them better prepared for whatever path they choose. Our ultimate goal is to help young people achieve their dreams, whether in football or other fields."

Given the partnership, the Ajax Academy trainers and coaches will be directly conducting all Al Bidda SC youth training and development programmes starting immediately. The Al Bidda SC has a top team currently playing in Qatar Second Division League. The club was established in Qatar in 2015 and started with an amateur team playing in the Second Division and even winning the Division Cup in 2022 and being a finalist in 2023.

In July 2023, the club was granted full membership in the Qatar Football Association Cup (QFA) and played its 2023-2024 season as a fully professional member.

BADMINTON

# South Korea's An, Denmark's Axelsen emerge champions

'To do it once is crazy, to do it twice is - I don't know what to say'

Reuters  
Paris

**S**outh Korea's An Se-young beat He Bingjiao of China 21-13 21-16 to capture the badminton women's singles Olympic gold medal, while Denmark's Viktor Axelsen defeated Kunlavut Vitidsarn of Thailand, 21-11 21-11, to successfully defend the men's title.

Upon winning, Axelsen wrapped a Danish flag around himself and did a victory lap before giving his badminton racket to a child in the crowd.

"To win here in front of I don't know how many thousands of Danish supporters as well," said Axelsen, who spoke with the King of Denmark, Frederik X, after winning his country's first gold medal in Paris. "To do it once is crazy, to do it twice is - I don't know what to say, I'm still a little bit in shock."

Axelsen becomes only the second men's singles shuttler to win consecutive gold medals after China's Lin Dan, widely thought to be the best badminton player of all time as a twice Olympic gold medalist and a five-times World champion.

"Lin Dan is the G.O.A.T. for me... I'm just very, very happy and proud to be on the same level in Olympic terms but in my eyes he stands as the best ever," Axelsen said. Ranked eighth in the world, Vitidsarn's silver was Thailand's first badminton Olympic medal in history, and first medal in Paris across all sports. Malaysia's Lee Zii Jia bagged the bronze after defeat-



South Korea's An Se-young reacts after winning the women's singles badminton final during the Paris 2024 Olympic Games at Porte de la Chapelle Arena in Paris yesterday. **Right:** Denmark's gold medalist Viktor Axelsen celebrates after winning the men's badminton gold medal yesterday. (AFP)



ing India's Lakshya Sen, 13-21 21-16 21-11, at the Port de La Chapelle Arena in Paris yesterday.

Indonesia's Gregoria Tunjung took the women's singles bronze by default as her would-be opponent, Spain's Carolina Marin, was forced to retire midway through her women's singles semi-final against China's He on Sunday with what appeared to be a serious knee injury.

"We met in the medical centre after the matches," Tunjung said, adding that Marin congratulated her. "Carolina said her condition was very bad. I hope she can continue playing badminton."

An was already the women's singles world's number one and

world champion. Her presence on court has been compared to that of China's Lin Dan.

Yesterday, An had large bandages strapped around her right leg, which she injured at the 2023 Asian Games. She had to withdraw during the 2024 India Open in January after causing further damage.

"My injury was very difficult to overcome. At first there was a little bit of a misdiagnosis," An said, adding by the time they re-diagnosed it there was very little time before the Olympics. "My coach helped me through."

"I always try to dream big and have the confidence that I can achieve that dream," An said. "My

golden age is not here yet because I'm still young. I will be able to show better games to you."

The 22-year-old An powered through in Paris, as her controlled pacing finished off He, with the pair at one point delivering a rally that lasted nearly a minute.

South Korea fans came to the arena in droves to chant the name of their last hope of a Paris gold medal in badminton.

The country is the sport's third-most successful at the Olympics after China and Indonesia, medaling at least once in each Games since badminton became an Olympic sport in 1992.

"When I go home," said An, "I'll go with a desire to celebrate in style," she said.

SHOOTING

# Italy denies Hancock fifth gold, Li seals China's dominance

Reuters  
Chateauroux, France

**A**merican great Vincent Hancock fell agonisingly short of a fifth Olympic gold after the Italian pair of Gabriele Rossetti and Diana Bacosi won the final shooting competition of the Paris Olympics in the inaugural mixed team skeet event yesterday.

Two days after beating protegee Conner Prince to win the men's skeet gold for the fourth time, Hancock teamed up with another apprentice, Austen Smith, but had to settle for silver this time following their 45-44 loss. Rossetti, who won the men's skeet gold in Rio, missed just one target and so did Hancock on a hot afternoon at the Chateauroux Shooting Centre.

It was a second medal in two days for Smith, who won the bronze in women's skeet for the US on Sunday.

China won bronze after Jiang Yiting combined with Lyu Jianlin for a 44-43 win against the Indian pair of Maheshwari Chauhan and Anant Jeet Singh Naruka.

"We are absolutely delighted by this great result," Bacosi, who won the women's skeet gold in Rio, told a press conference.

"We worked a lot and fought hard but we also had fun out there!"

Hancock said he was extremely proud of the performance of his teammates. "She is

one of the best competitors that I've ever seen," he said of Smith. "We are sitting next to some very, very good competitors too."

"To win the silver with her was a lot of fun... we enjoyed competing along side each other."

China comfortably topped the shooting competitions of the Paris Games winning 10 medals, half of them gold.

Li Yuehong supplied the final gold of China's shooting haul in the men's 25 metres rapid fire pistol with a comfortable 32-25 win against silver medalist Cho Yeong-jae of South Korea.

It was a China one-two in the men's rapid fire pistol qualification round, and the trend continued as Li and bronze medalist Wang Xinjie started off

with a perfect five-from-five in the final. Korea's Cho sandwiched himself between the Chinese pair but world record holder Li, whose Paris preparations included two weeks military training, ran away with the gold.

It was a stellar display by Li, who said he did not initially like the sport. "I did not think I had any talent but my parents told me to stick to it," he said. "My teammates also encouraged me along the way."

A perfect sixth series earned Li a two-point lead and the 34-year-old capitalised on it to win his first Olympic gold after taking bronze in the last two Games. Compatriot Wang beat Germany's Florian Peter in a shoot-off to make the podium.



**FROM LEFT:** Silver medalists US' Austen Jewell Smith and Vincent Hancock, gold medalists Italy's Diana Bacosi and Gabriele Rossetti and bronze medalist China's Jiang Yiting and Lyu Jianlin pose on the Skeet Mixed Team podium during the Paris 2024 Olympic Games at Chateauroux Shooting Centre yesterday. (AFP)



**FROM LEFT:** Silver medalist South Korea's Cho Yeong-jae, gold medalist China's Li Yuehong and bronze medalist China's Wang Xinjie pose for a selfie after winning the 25m Rapid Fire Pistol. (AFP)

FOCUS

# Spain beat Morocco to reach football final

AFP  
Marseille

**S**ubstitute Juanlu Sanchez struck a late winner as Spain came from behind to beat Morocco 2-1 yesterday and reach the final of the Olympic men's football.

Morocco had led in the semi-final through a Soufiane Rahimi penalty towards the end of the first half at the Stade Velodrome in Marseille.

However, Barcelona's Fermin Lopez equalised midway through the second period and then set up Sevilla right-back Sanchez to fire in the winner.

It is Spain's second consecutive appearance in the final of the Olympic men's football. They had to settle for silver three years ago



**Spain's defender Juanlu Sanchez celebrates after scoring his team's second goal during the Olympic Games semi-final against Morocco in Marseille yesterday. (AFP)**

in Tokyo after losing in extra time to Brazil. Spain, who are chasing a second gold after triumphing in Barcelona in 1992, go to Paris for the final on Friday against either hosts France or Egypt, who play their last-four tie later.

Morocco can still claim a first medal by winning the bronze

medal match, which will take place on Thursday in Nantes.

Last year's Under-23 Africa Cup of Nations winners had impressed on their run to the semi-finals and looked on course to shock Spain when they went ahead in the 37th minute thanks to the prolific Rahimi.

Morocco were awarded a penalty following a VAR check for a foul by Pablo Barrios on Amir Richardson in the box, and Rahimi stepped up to send the goalkeeper the wrong way from the spot.

It was a sixth goal of the Olympics for the tournament's leading scorer, with four of his strikes coming from the penalty spot.

That sent the large Moroccan support wild but Spain kept their cool to equalise through their own star man in the 66th minute.

Lopez, a member of Spain's triumphant Euro 2024 squad who scored twice in the Olympic quarter-final against Japan, pounced to snatch possession when the ball broke loose in the box and fired low into the net to make it 1-1.

With the prospect of extra time looming, Spain won it in the 85th minute as Lopez found Sanchez bounding into the area, and he sent a shot low into the far corner.



## ATHLETICS

# Duplantis soars to new pole vault world record, Hodgkinson wins 800m

Kenya's 'smiling assassin' Chebet wins 5,000m gold, Allman claims women's discus gold

AFP  
Paris

Rob Woollard Armand Duplantis soared over his rivals in clinching back-to-back Olympic pole vault crowns yesterday with a new world record as Keely Hodgkinson won Britain's first gold of the Paris Games on the track with a sensational 800m final victory.

Swedish star Duplantis cemented his status as the greatest pole vaulter in history with a superb display, blowing the roof off the Stade de France with a world record-breaking final leap of 6.25m.

The 24-year-old Duplantis, popularly known as "Mondo", is the first man to win consecutive Olympic pole vault golds since the USA's Bob Richards, who achieved the feat with victories in 1952 and 1956.

In perfect, warm conditions in Paris, defending champion Duplantis never looked like being threatened by his rivals as he clinched victory.

The only suspense in a dominant performance was whether the US-born Swede could break his own world record to crown victory.

He duly delivered with his third and final attempt, beating his previous best of 6.24m to deafening roars of appreciation from the Parisian crowd.

American Sam Kendricks won silver with a best of 5.95m, Greece's Emmanouil Karalis taking bronze (5.90m).

Duplantis' gold was one of four gold medals up for grabs yesterday.

On the track, British middle distance runner Hodgkinson finally ended her long wait to capture a major global championship title with gold in the 800m.

Hodgkinson, who had claimed three consecutive silver medals at the Tokyo Olympics in 2021 and the World Championships in 2022 and 2023, led from start-to-finish to win in 1min 56.72sec.

Ethiopia's Tsigie Duguma claimed silver in 1:57.15 and Kenya's Mary Moraa took bronze (1:57.42).

"I have worked really hard for the last year and I think you can see how much it meant to me when I crossed the line. I can't believe I have finally done it," Hodgkinson, 22, told the BBC after her triumph.

## Chebet ends Hassan dream

In the women's 5,000m Kenya's "smiling assassin" Beatrice Chebet dethroned the Netherlands' defending champion Sifan



Winner Sweden's Armand Duplantis celebrates setting the new men's pole vault world record at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games at Stade de France in Saint-Denis, north of Paris, yesterday. (AFP)



Britain's Keely Hodgkinson celebrates after winning the women's 800m final yesterday. (AFP)

Hassan with a tactical masterclass. The pre-race hype had focused on the Ethiopian-born Hassan's attempt to win an improbable treble of 5,000m, 10,000m and marathon golds at the same Olympics.

But Hassan's dream of emulating Czech great Emil Zatopek - who completed the same triple at the 1952 Helsinki Games - was put to bed ruthlessly by Chebet.

The 24-year-old 10,000m world record holder bided her time before accelerating past compatriot Faith Kipyegon down the home straight to win in 14min

28.56sec. Kipyegon, the reigning 5,000m world champion, crossed the finish line in second place but was disqualified for a shove in the closing laps.

That ruling saw Hassan moved into the silver medal position with a time of 14:30.61 while Italy's Nadia Battocletti took bronze in 14:31.64.

Hassan deployed her usual tactics of staying at the back of the field for most of the race before moving steadily through the pack into third.



Kenya's Beatrice Chebet crosses the finish line to win the women's 5,000m final yesterday. (AFP)

But when Kipyegon and Chebet kicked for home, Hassan had too much ground to make up and it became a race to the line, with Chebet taking the honours.

In the women's discus, American Valarie Allman defended her Olympic crown comfortably with a throw of 69.50m. China's Feng Bin won silver with a best effort of 67.51m and Croatia's Sandra Elkasevic took bronze.

Elsewhere yesterday, newly crowned 100m champion Noah Lyles sailed through the opening

heats of the 200m to remain on course for a hat-trick of Olympic golds in Paris.

Lyles, who is aiming to add the 200m and 4x100m titles to his 100m crown won in thrilling fashion on Sunday, romped home in his heat in 20.19sec.

"I spent years working on the 100m, but the 200 is where it's at," Lyles said.

"This is where I get to show my speed and endurance and my top-end speed.

"This is where I get to show I'm stronger than everybody else."

## Algeria accuses IBA body of 'baseless claims' in Olympic gender controversy

Algeria's Olympic Committee accused the International Boxing Association (IBA) of "baseless claims" after the IBA alleged yesterday that an Algerian boxer in the semis of the Paris women's competition was "a male". Imane Khelif, together with Taiwan's Lin Yu-ting, are in the eye of a storm after it emerged they were disqualified from the IBA's 2023 world championships for failing gender eligibility tests, without specifying what the tests were. The boxing in Paris is run by the International Olympic Committee because of financial, governance and ethical concerns at the IBA. The IOC cleared the two boxers to fight and both are in the semi-finals and therefore guaranteed a medal. The two organisations have been in open dispute. An IBA press conference in Paris was designed to clarify what tests Khelif and Lin underwent last year, and what the results showed. IBA officials including Kremlin-linked Russian oligarch Umar Kremlev, the organisation's president, who was on a remote video call, gave a series of contradictory statements to a room packed full of reporters. The officials said they were also constrained by medical confidentiality. What was clear was when Ioannis Filippatos, former chairman of the IBA's medical committee, said "abnormalities" were detected in blood tests of both boxers in 2022. The two boxers were tested again in 2023 to confirm the initial findings, IBA officials said, and after that they were disqualified. "The medical result, blood result, looks - and the laboratory says - that this boxer is male," said Filippatos. "The problem is that we have two blood exams with karyotype of male. This is the answer from the laboratory." A karyotype is an individual's complete set of chromosomes, according to the National Human Genome Research Institute in the US. It can also be a laboratory-produced image used to look for abnormalities in chromosome number or structure. The Algerian Olympic and Sports Committee quickly hit back, saying: "Algeria is not a member of the IBA. We do not recognise the IBA as a legitimate institution, and it has no connection with the Olympic Games. Our champion, Imane Khelif, remains untouched and undeterred by the baseless claims of the IBA." IOC chief Thomas Bach and high-level officials from Algeria and Taiwan have strenuously defended Khelif and Lin, saying they were born and raised as women, and have passports saying that. The Olympic body, which has effectively expelled the IBA from the Olympic movement, has accused the IBA of making "an arbitrary decision" over disqualifying the duo in 2023. Khelif and Lin also fought at the Tokyo Olympics in 2021, but did not win a medal and competed without controversy. The IOC told AFP following the IBA press conference: "The content and the organisation of the IBA press conference tells you everything that you need to know about this organisation and its credibility."

## GYMNASTICS

# D'Amato wins balance beam gold, Biles finishes fifth



Gold medallist Rebeca Andrade (centre) of Brazil, silver medallist Simone Biles (left) of United States and bronze medallist Jordan Chiles of United States celebrate on the podium of artistic gymnastics women's floor exercise during the Olympic Games at the Bercy Arena in Paris yesterday. (Reuters)

Reuters  
Paris

Italian gymnast Alice D'Amato emerged as the surprise champion on the balance beam at the Paris Olympics yesterday after American favourite Simone Biles unexpectedly fell off the 10cm wide apparatus during the final to finish out of the medals.

D'Amato had ranked only seventh during the qualifying competition but after performing a routine devoid of any major errors yesterday, D'Amato emerged triumphant with a score of 14.366 points. She became the first Italian woman to win an Olympic gold in gymnastics.

The 21-year-old dropped to her knees and sobbed uncontrollably when she realised she had just clinched her first Olympic title.

Zhou Yaqin of China, the runner up to Biles on balance beam at last year's world championships, had been the top qualifier for the final after eclipsing her American rival by a razor thin margin eight

days ago. Zhou made a solid start her routine but she had to bend over and grab the beam with both hands during her jump sequence to prevent herself falling off. Despite the error, she captured silver with 14.100 points.

D'Amato's compatriot Manila Esposito finished third, 0.1 of a point behind her Chinese rival.

Biles, the most decorated gymnast of all-time, was one of four finalists to fall off the apparatus yesterday.

The 27-year-old was had been expected to perform a sequence featuring hand-spring layout-layout but and she aborted the series after the first layout and loud gasps could be heard around Bercy Arena as she lost her balance and slipped off.

She re-mounted the beam to finish off the routine but upon completing her dismount, she appeared to be annoyed by noise coming from the crowd.

Biles repeatedly asked her teammate and fellow finalist Sunisa Lee "Why are they shushing?", sug-

gesting she had been distracted by some sections of the crowd trying to silence those trying to cheer her on during the performance.

The American, a two-time Olympic bronze medallist and a four-time world champion on the balance beam, finished a disappointing fifth with 13.100.

Lee, the 2020 all-around Olympic champion, crashed to the mat during her flight sequence and finished sixth.

"It was just crazy to kind of see how everybody was going down like that," Lee said. "But I think it's just because there's just so much pressure. You could feel the tension in the room."

Lee said the absence of music in the background during the final and the "shush" sounds made by fans had unnerved some gymnasts.

Biles yesterday physically bowed to rival Rebeca Andrade on the podium after being pipped for gold by the Brazilian in the women's floor exercise final. US teammate Jordan Chiles snatched the bronze.