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TENNIS | Page 3

Sabalenka struggles but closes out No. 1 Swiatek in semis



FOOTBALL | Page 4

Napoli crash to humiliating opening day defeat at Verona

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GULF TIMES SPORT



MOTORSPORT

Bagnaia keeps Martin at bay to win Austrian Grand Prix and takes championship lead

Page 2

OOREDOO STARS LEAGUE

Yansane strikes as Al Ahli beat Al Gharafa

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Al Ahli beat Al Gharafa 1-0 in the Ooredoo Stars League match at the Al Thumama Stadium yesterday.

The earlier match of the day between Al Khor and Al Shahania ended in a goalless draw at the Al Bayt Stadium.

The win saw The Brigadiers move into second place in the standings with four points to their credit with the positive result, and a draw, in their two matches so far while Al Gharafa dipped to 11th place with just 1 point in their kitty.

Al Duhail with six points are the leaders while Al Sadd (in 3rd place), Al Shamal, Umm Salal and Al Rayyan - all have 3 points each.

Al Ahli coach Igor Biscan coach was full of praise for his team's performance. He attributed the victory to their strong first-half display, which culminated in a crucial goal. The team's defensive efforts in the second half were also commended, as they successfully maintained their lead.

The coach further emphasized the role of focus, high spirits, and unwavering commitment to the team's strategy in securing the win.

He highlighted the players' ex-



Al Ahli's French player Sekou Oumar Yansane (centre) battles for ball possession against Al Gharafa during the Ooredoo Stars League clash at Al Thumama Stadium in Doha yesterday. Al Ahli won 1-0.

ceptional performance throughout the match, attributing the victory to their ability to outperform their opponents.

For Al Ahli, their forward Sekou Oumar Yansane got the winner in the 16th minute of the match as he picked on a Julian Draxler pass from just outside the box to dash

in and strike successfully.

The Cheetahs, who came into the match riding on a victory over UAE's Shabab Ali Ahli (in the Preliminary Stage 2 fixture to qualify for 2024-2025 AFC Champions League Elite), were kept at bay despite making several attempts to break the deadlock. Al Ghara-

fa's first chance came in the 21st minute when Saifelddeen Fadlalla provided Florinel Coman with a fine ball inside the 'D'. The Romanian Coman turned around after gaining grip on the ball but his left-foot strike from a short distance was well saved by Al Ahli goalkeeper Marwan Badreldin.



Action from Al Khor-Al Shahania match at Al Bayt Stadium yesterday. The match ended in a 0-0 draw.

In the 34th minute, Draxler latched on to a ball to strike but he was clearly offside and the flag was raised. Al Ahli had another go at the opposite goal in added time of the opening half as Eslam Yassein essayed a header but it was kept away by Al Gharafa goalkeeper Khalifa Ababacar.

A minute later, Driss Fet-touhi's corner kick for Al Ahli swung ferociously in but this time too Ababacar ensured safety. In the second session, a big chance for Al Gharafa came in the 63rd minute when a Coman free kick was pushed away by a

diving Al Ahli goalkeeper and the ball went to hit a 'blinded' Jose SanMarten before rolling into the net.

The referee however ruled that the ball had hit the hand of San-Marten, and rightly so.

The Cheetahs attacked more frequently towards the end but couldn't succeed in breaking the rival defence. In the dying moments of ten minutes of stoppage time, a brilliant Coman free kick was yet again pushed out by Al Ahli goalkeeper Badreldin and his team went on to savour a hard-fought victory.

PREMIER LEAGUE

Man City beat Chelsea 2-0 to begin title defence

Wissa's late goal gives Toney-less Brentford 2-1 win over Crystal Palace

AFP
London

Manchester City got their Premier League title defence off to a winning start as goals from Erling Haaland and Mateo Kovacic inflicted a 2-0 defeat on Enzo Maresca in his first match in charge of Chelsea.

Haaland marked his 100th appearance for the club with his 91st goal before Kovacic struck on his return to Stamford Bridge to give Pep Guardiola's men the perfect start to their attempt to win a record fifth consecutive English top-flight title. City were shorn of all four of their Euro 2024 finalists - Rodri, Kyle Waker, John Stones and Phil Foden - from the start as Guardiola opted to give them extra time off to recover from their summer exertions.

Yet, the champions were still able to lay down a marker against one of the few sides they failed to beat in the league last season.

Maresca has the tough task of moulding a functioning team unit from a bloated Chelsea squad that has 43 players and over 50 on the books including those on loan.

The consequences of those difficult decisions played out even before kick-off as Raheem Sterling's camp released a statement expressing his dismay at being left out of the matchday squad.

Ben Chilwell was another to face the cull, while Conor Gallagher and Romelu Lukaku are among those not to have been handed squad numbers. None of Chelsea's nine summer signings to date were included in Maresca's starting line-up. Even more surprisingly, Enzo Fernandez was named cap-



Erling Haaland dinks the ball past Robert Sanchez to open the scoring for Manchester City. (Reuters)

tain despite being embroiled in a race row for a post on social media after Argentina's Copa America victory last month.

City, by contrast, are a model of continuity and consistent excellence. Haaland was one of City's few stars to have had a summer off from international tournaments and took just 18 minutes to make his mark. Jeremy Doku's low cross was deflected by Bernardo Silva into the Norwegian's path and he coolly dinked over Robert Sanchez. Kevin De Bruyne curled

inches wide and Sanchez leapt high to turn over Doku's deflected shot. But Chelsea ended the first half in the ascendancy and should have been level before the break.

Ederson spilled Cole Palmer's tame shot but was bailed out by Nicolas Jackson's straying needlessly offside before he turned in the rebound.

Foden was forced into action earlier than Guardiola would have hoped at half-time as the lively Savinho was forced off injured on his Premier League debut.

The lack of pre-season minutes for many on show was apparent in the more pedestrian pace than normal for a major Premier League clash. Chelsea did most of the pressing for an equaliser but offered City chances to extend their lead in doing so. Sanchez made a fine save to deny Haaland a second before De Bruyne again fired inches off target when unmarked at the edge of the area. However, the Chelsea goalkeeper was at fault for the goal that sealed their fate. Kovacic was allowed to burst through



Brentford's striker Yoane Wissa (left) and coach Thomas Frank share a joke after the English Premier League match against Crystal Palace at the Gtech Community Stadium in London yesterday. (AFP)

the midfield unchallenged and took aim for the top corner, which he found thanks to a weak hand from Sanchez.

BRENTFORD WIN

Brentford shrugged off the absence of Ivan Toney to get their Premier League season off to a flying start with a 2-1 win over Crystal Palace yesterday. Bryan Mbeumo and Yoane Wissa got the goals for the Bees, who had left out England international Toney over speculation surrounding his future.

Toney has less than a year left to run on his contract with the London club and is attracting interest from Saudi clubs after his role in helping England to the Euro 2024 final. Brentford boss Thomas Frank said pre-match his side had shown last season they can cope without Toney - who missed much of last term due to a betting ban. Marc Guehi did captain Crystal Palace despite the interest in him shown by Newcastle.

The England defender had an

outstanding Euros but a moment to forget for Brentford's opening goal. Mbeumo raced onto Wissa's pass and cut inside Guehi before firing into the far corner.

Palace ended last season in sensational form under Oliver Glasner and will feel hard done by not to have earned at least a point.

Eberechi Eze had a brilliantly executed near post free-kick harshly ruled out for a foul by Will Hughes when the score was still level at 0-0.

A bright Palace start to the second half was rewarded when Ethan Pinnock turned Daniel Munoz's header into his own goal.

Seconds later, Odsomme Edouard slotted home Eze's pass only to be denied by a marginal offside decision. Instead it was Brentford who grabbed the vital third goal.

Dean Henderson could only parry Nathan Collins' shot straight into the path of Wissa, who bundled home. Eze was twice denied by Mark Flekken in the closing stages but Brentford held out for an impressive three points.

MOTOGP

Bagnaia clinches Austrian battle to reclaim his lead

'Our pace was incredible. I'm very happy to win three times here'

AFP
Spielberg bei Knittelfeld, Austria

Double world champion Francesco Bagnaia won a third successive Austrian MotoGP to complete a dream sprint-race weekend double and take the outright lead in the world championship yesterday.

Jorge Martin, who went into the weekend atop the riders' standings, had to settle for second with Enea Bastianini completing the podium at the Red Bull Ring circuit.

This was the Turin-born Bagnaia's seventh race success of the season to match his tally from last season with still nine races remaining.

That is a sobering thought for Martin who has a better sprint record than Bagnaia but when it comes to the main event it is Bagnaia who invariably comes out on top.

"Our pace was incredible," said the race winner.

"I knew over the last laps anything could happen so I'm very happy to win three times here," added Bagnaia, referring to the circuit that is KTM's home, but Ducati's back yard with the Italian team winning here in eight of the past nine years.

Martin said: "I would have preferred a better start, but we were super close. He (Bagnaia) pulled away but at the end of the race I tried again to push. Second was not what I expected."

Martin had no complaints unlike 24 hours later when a long lap penalty severely compromised his chances of denying Bagnaia the top of the podium with the gap between them less than five seconds.

There was no similar hard luck story in this 11th round of the season.

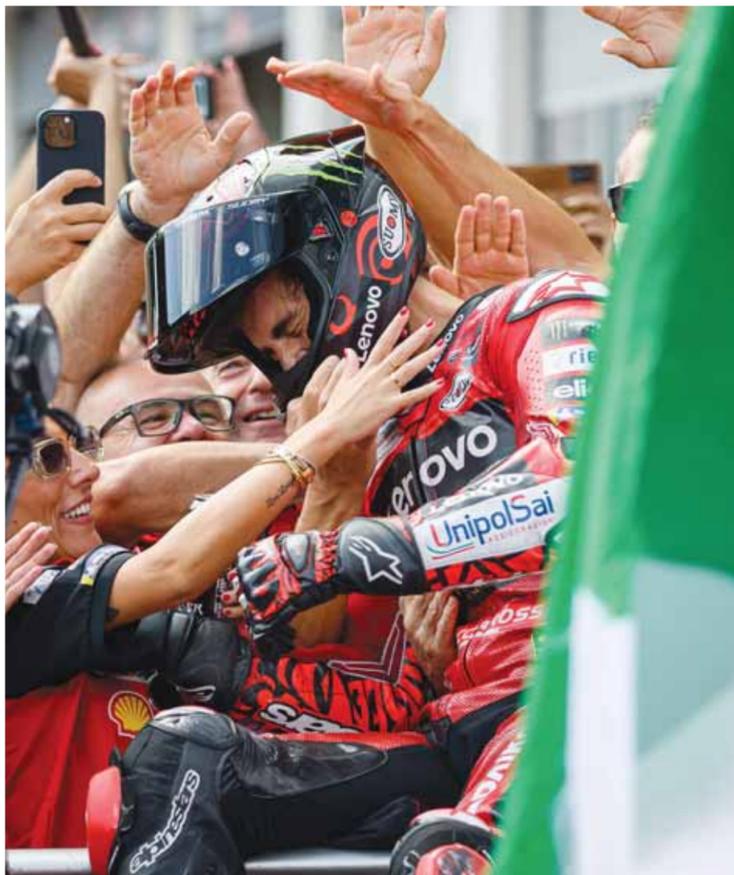
Martin had secured pole but second-placed Bagnaia had quickly moved into the lead as his new teammate next season, Marc Marquez suffered a nightmare grid getaway.

Setting off on the front row in third the six-time former MotoGP champion had plummeted to 13th by the first corner after a tangle with Franco Morbidelli.

Up front Martin kept close tabs with Bagnaia on the factory Ducati in the early laps, at one point briefly regaining command.

But this circuit plays into the hands of a rider like Bagnaia who is renowned for his fearless late-breaking going into corners at speeds of 300kmh plus and he soon had the measure of the luckless Spaniard riding a Ducati-satellite Pramac bike.

The front three - Bagnaia, Martin and Bastianini - were pulling clear of the chasing pack



Ducati Lenovo Team's Italian rider Francesco Bagnaia celebrates with members of his team after winning the Austrian MotoGP race in Spielberg, Austria, yesterday. (AFP)

led by Jack Miller. Miller's chance of one of his highest finishes of the season disappeared on lap six when the Australian hit the deck.

By lap 15 Bagnaia was turning on the gas with the gap back to Martin nudging one second.

Marquez had been quietly picking off the bikes in front of him and making his way up the field to be placed fourth after the midway point in the 26-lap race.

With rain clouds moving inexorably towards the circuit as per the forecasters' prediction Bagnaia's cushion over Martin had

grown towards the double-second mark with nine laps remaining.

And he never looked like relinquishing his advantage to duly secure his eighth podium on the trot.

That left Martin scratching his head as to just what he needs to do to foil Bagnaia getting his hands on a third straight world title come the final race of the season in Valencia in November.

Next up though is the Aragon MotoGP in Spain in a fortnight's time which returns to the MotoGP calendar after a one-year absence.

QCA to organise first edition of Classical Chess Tournament

DOHA: The Qatar Chess Association (QCA) announced yesterday, that it will organise the first edition of the Classical Chess Tournament starting from Aug 29-Sept 4, 2024.

In a statement, QCA stated that the tournament will be devoted to men and women and competitions are set to be held at Qatar Chess Association Training Center. The opportunity will solely be given to Qatari players in both genders.

Speaking to QNA, President of QCA Mohamed al-Mudahka, highlighted that the first edition of the new tournament is part of the QCA's updated calendar that aims to increase Qatari male and female fans, in addition to creating an environment conducive for players to learn from the best. Al-Mudahka indicated that the tournament comes as part of the QCA's plans dedicated to bringing about a qualitative leap for the game, emphasizing that the tournament is one of the precious opportunities before the national teams committee to explore further promising talents to be included in the coming period, in addition to expanding the process of selecting best players to represent the Qatari chess in tournaments abroad.

Upon concluding his remarks, al-Mudahka underlined that the tournament is incorporated into the major objectives set by the QCA's board of directors to promote the game and build a



Qatar Chess Association President Mohamed al-Mudahka.



generation that feeds national teams with talented players who will rightfully compete in the Arab, continental and international events. -QNA

FOCUS

MCG match in 2027 to celebrate 150th anniversary of first Test

Reuters
Melbourne

Cricket Australia (CA) plan to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the first ever Test match, played at the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) in 1877, with an Australia vs England Test at the same venue in March 2027, the governing body said yesterday. Australia won the single-innings timeless match played between March 15 and 19 by 45 runs, before England won the second match at the same venue to tie the series 1-1.

The 100-year anniversary of the inaugural Test was also observed with a Test between Australia and England at the MCG in 1977, with Australia winning the match, again by 45 runs.

"The 150th anniversary Test



match at the MCG in March 2027 will be a wonderful celebration of the pinnacle format of the game at one of the world's great sporting arenas and we can't wait to host England on that occasion," CA CEO Nick Hockley said in a statement.

The MCG will also continue to host the traditional 'boxing day test', played from Dec 26 every year, for the next seven seasons until 2030-31, with the Sydney Cricket Ground staging the new year's Test days later, the CA added.

GOLF

Japanese star Matsuyama surges to a five-stroke lead at St Jude

Reuters
Memphis, Tennessee

Japan's Hideki Matsuyama pulled away from his challengers on the back nine at the FedEx St Jude Championship on Saturday and will carry a five-stroke lead into Sunday's final round in Memphis, Tenn.

Matsuyama shot 6-under-par 64 during a steady round at TPC Southwind marred by an early bogey, but bolstered by five birdies and an eagle.

Matsuyama, who posted his 13th straight round of par or better at Southwind, is at 17-under 193. Tour rookie Nick Dunlap (66 on Saturday) is in second at 12 under, followed by Viktor Hovland (66) of Norway at 11 under and World No 1 Scottie Scheffler (69) and Sam Burns (70) tied for fourth at 10 under.

"Hideki is obviously playing some fantastic golf," Scheffler said. "I'll do my best to put a little pressure on him and see what happens...but if he goes out and shoots another 5- or 6-under he's going to be a pretty tough guy to catch."

Matsuyama and Denny McCarthy entered the third round atop the leaderboard at 11-under 129, one shot better than Burns.

While McCarthy faded in the heat and humidity with a 2-over 72, Matsuyama was unaffected during a tournament in which he would be forgiven for lacking focus.

Shortly before arriving in Memphis, Matsuyama, his caddie and his swing coach were



Dennis McCarthy, Hideki Matsuyama and Sam Burns shake hands after the third round of the FedEx St Jude Championship at TPC Southwind. (USA TODAY Sports)

robbed while dining at a restaurant in London last weekend. The caddie and coach were forced to return to Japan after having their passports stolen during the incident.

Matsuyama has been working in Memphis with Taiga Tabuchi, the regular caddie for Ryo Hisatsume.

"There's a learning curve when you have a new caddie and (you're) trying to work things out together," Matsuyama said. "But it really hasn't affected my play. We're a good team right now?"

Matsuyama continued his solid play on Saturday amid the untimely breakup of his team. He built an early three-stroke lead after sinking a 15-foot eagle putt on the 554-yard, par-5 third and fought off challenges from Burns on the front nine.

Burns closed the gap with consecutive birdie putts on Nos 4, 5 and 6 to catch Matsuyama at 13-under. Matsuyama re-opened

an advantage, by two strokes, with a short birdie putt on No. 7 while Burns faltered with a bogey. Burns fell farther back with a double bogey on the par-4 No 9.

On the back side, Matsuyama, the Paris Olympics bronze medalist, steadily pulled away and enjoyed a five-stroke advantage after 6-foot birdie putt on No 13.

Second-round co-leader McCarthy, who has not won on tour in seven seasons, struggled from the outset. He shot three-over par on the front nine and was six strokes behind Matsuyama at the turn. He double-bogeyed 11 to drop further out of contention. He finished strong with birdies on three of his final seven holes for a 2-over 72. He enters Sunday tied for sixth and eight shots back of Matsuyama.

Dunlap and Hovland remain in contention after their 66s Saturday, but if Matsuyama continues at his torrid pace, he'll be difficult to catch.

CRICKET

South Africa defeat West Indies to maintain 25-year Test series grip

AFP
Providence, Guyana

South Africa defeated the West Indies by 40 runs on an eventful third day of the second and final Test on Saturday to extend their dominance over the Caribbean side.

Set a challenging target of 263 after fast bowler Jayden Seales' Test-best figures of six for 61 dismissed the Proteas for 246 in their second innings in the morning session, the home team lost wickets at regular intervals to be dismissed for 222.

In a cruel twist of fate, Seales was the last wicket to fall just minutes before the scheduled close of play. He fell to man of the series Keshav Maharaj who claimed his 13th wicket of the two-match duel via a short-leg catch by David Bedingham.

The win extended South Africa's unbeaten Test series run against the West Indies from the first-ever series meeting between the two teams in 1998/99 when Shaun Pollock's men demolished the visitors led by Brian Lara 5-0.

West Indies had defeated South Africa in a one-off encounter in Barbados in 1992, their first-ever official Test encounter which marked the Africans' return to the Test fold after 22 years in isolation because of the country's apartheid policy.

Maharaj's left-arm orthodox spin earned him figures of three for 37. Kagiso Rabada shared bowling hours in the innings with three for 50, leaving the 29-year-old fast bowler one wicket away from claiming 300 victims in Tests.



Temba Bavuma of South Africa poses with the trophy after winning the second Test against West Indies at Guyana National Stadium in Providence, Guyana. (AFP)

"For a team that is in a transition phase we really did well to come away with this success," said a delighted Maharaj, whose three wickets lifted him one above Hugh Tayfield's 170 as the most successful spinner in South Africa's Test history.

"Getting ready for Test cricket is always part of my plan, no matter what other formats I play. I always have a red ball in my bag."

Wiaan Mulder took the man of the match award, the seam bowling all-rounder making the most of a rare opportunity to play Test cricket by claiming six wickets in the match and also contributing

an important 34 runs in the second innings. For West Indies captain Kraigg Brathwaite, the fate of the match hinged on the failure of the batting line-up in the first innings.

BRIEF SCORES
South Africa 160 all out (Dane Piedt 38 not out; Shamar Joseph 5-33) and **246 all out** (Kyle Verreyne 59, Aiden Markram 51; Jayden Seales 6-61) **v West Indies 144 all out** (Jason Holder 54 not out; Wiaan Mulder 4-32) and **222 all out** (Gudakesh Motie 45)
Result: South Africa won by 40 runs
Toss: South Africa

CYCLING

Niewiadoma wins first Tour title on her third attempt

'THE WHOLE STAGE WAS SUCH A CRAZY ROLLERCOASTER'

Reuters
Paris

Poland's Katarzyna Niewiadoma won her first Tour de France Femmes title yesterday, fighting off the challenge of defending champion Demi Vollering on the Alpe d'Huez who won a dramatic final stage - but not by enough to retain her crown.

Niewiadoma crossed the line in fourth place and broke down in tears as she realised she had done enough to keep the yellow jersey by a margin of four seconds, with Pauliena Rooijakkers taking second place on the stage and Evita Muzic third.

"I went through such a terrible time on this climb, so to arrive at the finish line to learn that I've won the Tour de France is insane, it's mind-blowing," Niewiadoma said.

Niewiadoma, who finished third in the previous two editions of the Tour, still had energy left after the finish, raising aloft her bike in celebration, while an exhausted Vollering lay on the ground crying in disappointment.

Vollering (SD-Worx-Prottime) began the day eighth overall, one minute and 15 seconds down on Niewiadoma (Canyon-SRAM), but the Dutch rider was expected to be the main danger on the 149.9km ride from Le Grand-Bornand to Alpe d'Huez.

She won the stage first but then had an agonising wait as an exhausted Niewiadoma dragged herself to the line one minute and one second behind Vollering.

Vollering took an extra 10 seconds for the stage win, but missed



FROM LEFT: Dutch rider Puck Pieterse wearing the best young rider's white jersey, Belgian rider Justine Ghekiere wearing the climber's polka dot jersey, overall leader and first-placed Polish rider Katarzyna Niewiadoma wearing the leader's yellow jersey and Dutch rider Marianne Vos wearing the best sprinter's green jersey celebrate on the podium after competing in the 8th and last stage of the third edition of the Women's Tour de France cycling race, a 149.9km between Le Grand Bornand and the Alpe d'Huez, in L'Alpe d'Huez, south-eastern France, yesterday. (AFP)

out by the narrowest of margins on what would have been an exceptional comeback after losing the yellow jersey following a crash on stage five.

Her expected move came close to the summit of Col du Glandon, with more than 50km left to ride, and Niewiadoma was unable to keep pace. In the end Pauliena Rooijakkers was the only one able to go with Vollering.

Rooijakkers was two seconds ahead of Vollering in the general

classification and had little intention of helping her fellow Dutchwoman, who had to do most of the work but couldn't shake off her pursuer until the finish line.

Behind them, Niewiadoma fought hard to lose as little time as possible. She had two others for company, Muzic and Gaia Re-alini, but as they climbed the Alpe d'Huez the gap began to increase going out to over a minute.

Rooijakkers, who finished third overall, attacked in the closing

kilometres but Vollering stuck with her and won the fight between the Dutch duo for the stage. Niewiadoma, meanwhile, did just enough to win the real battle on one of cycling's most famous climbs.

"It's so crazy to be honest because the whole stage was such a crazy rollercoaster," Niewiadoma said. "I had a really bad moment on Glandon and then on the descent I was able to kind of rebuild myself and refresh."

FOCUS

Groves blasts to Vuelta stage two victory



Team Alpecin's Kaden Groves celebrates crossing the finish in first place at the end of the stage 2 of La Vuelta a Espana cycling tour, a 194km race between Cascais and Ourem, yesterday. (AFP)

AFP
Barcelona

Kaden Groves edged a bunch sprint finish to claim victory on stage two of the Vuelta a Espana yesterday.

Australian Alpecin-Deceuninck rider Groves powered over the line ahead of Wout van Aert and Corbin Strong at the end of a 194km run between Cascais and Ourem in Portugal. Vismar's Van Aert takes the general classification lead after earning six bonus seconds for placing second.

"It's a really nice way to start this Vuelta," said Groves after his victory in five hours 12 minutes 55 seconds.

"It's been a hard year for myself, not having a win yet, but I came here super motivated to change that, and I've got to thank my team for a really strong ride today."

Van Aert now leads Brandon McNulty of UAE Team Emirates by three seconds overall, after the American took the red jersey after winning the stage one individual time trial.

Three-time winner Primoz Roglic, the Vuelta favourite, is 20 seconds off the top, while defending champion Sepp Kuss trails Van Aert by 56 seconds.

"I wanted to win this stage - my team did a really good job to make it a bunch sprint so it's unfortunate to arrive second, but today I knew that finishing in the first three meant the red jersey, so after all it's a good day," said Van Aert.

"It was difficult to time the sprint well because the guys from behind maybe carried a bit more

speed, so that's maybe something we should have looked (at), but Kaden passed me really strong and deserved his win."

Vingegaard victorious in Poland where it all began

Jonas Vingegaard won the Tour of Poland title yesterday in a triumphant return to the race where it all started for the Danish two-time Tour de France champion.

Vingegaard (Visma-Lease A Bike) decided against racing in the Vuelta a Espana after an exhausting Tour de France where he finished second having spent three months out of action following a crash at the Tour of the Basque Country in April.

Instead, the 27-year-old returned to Poland, the scene of his first UCI World Tour win in 2019 when he triumphed on stage six. While he didn't win a stage this time around, he went one better by claiming the overall race win.

"Everything went according to plan. After the Tour de France, I felt that I had 100% recovered from the injury," Vingegaard said.

"This season I have learned to enjoy the moments and not to make long-term plans. Now I need a rest and then I will think about the future."

Vingegaard took control of the yellow jersey after stage two, where he finished second in the individual time trial, and after the last of seven stages maintained his 13 second lead over Italian Diego Ulissi of UAE Team Emirates.

As expected, the final stage came down to a bunch sprint finish in Krakow, with Vingegaard's Dutch teammate Olav Kooij taking his second stage win of the Tour.

TENNIS

Djokovic blasts 'embarrassing' lack of video replays away from Grand Slams



AFP
Paris

Novak Djokovic blasted the absence of video technology as "embarrassing" yesterday as the Olympic champion and 24-time Grand Slam title winner weighed in on an umpiring row at the Cincinnati Masters.

Jack Draper defeated Felix Auger-Aliassime at the US Open warm-up event on Friday despite a suspicion the ball hit the Briton's racket and then the floor before it popped over the net to secure the match-winning point.

Despite the Canadian's protests, the point was ruled legitimate by the chair umpire and Draper was declared the winner.

"It's embarrassing that we don't have video

replay of these kind of situations on the court," Djokovic, who is not playing at the tournament, wrote on social media.

"What's even more ridiculous is that we don't have the rule in place that would allow chair umpires to change the original call based on the video review that happens off the court!"

"Everyone who watches TV sees what happened on the replay, yet the players on the court are kept in the 'dark' not knowing what's the outcome."

The Serb star added: "We have Hawkeye for line calls, we live in the technologically advanced 21st century! Please respect your Tours, make sure this nonsense never happens again!"

The US Open, the last Grand Slam event of the season, uses video replay but it is widely absent from tour events.

American star Coco Gauff also demanded

the introduction of video replays after being dumped out of the Olympic Games at Roland Garros in Paris last month

US Open champion and world number two Gauff became embroiled in a tearful, bitter dispute with the chair umpire over a line call during her loss to Donna Vekic.

She had also argued with the umpire during her semi-final defeat to Iga Swiatek at the French Open on the same courts in June.

Again, the dispute centred on a line call.

"I'm getting cheated in this game. You guys are not fair to me," Gauff told the chair umpire at the Olympics. "I feel like in tennis, we should have a VR (video review) system because these points are big deals. And, yeah, usually afterwards, they apologise, so it's kind of frustrating when the sorry doesn't help you once the match is over," she said.

SINNER BEATS RUBLEV IN THREE SETS

CINCINNATI: World number one Jannik Sinner turned around a losing situation on Saturday to move into the semi-final of the ATP Cincinnati Open.

Sinner prevented rival Andrey Rublev from repeating a triumph from last Saturday in Montreal as he defeated the sixth seed in a 4-6, 7-5, 6-4 fightback.

Sinner will square off in the semis against third-ranked 2021 champion Alexander Zverev, who got past rain interruptions in the final set to defeat Ben Shelton 3-6, 7-6 (7/3), 7-5.

The third set was start-stop but the German advanced to his third consecutive Cincinnati final-four spot.

"Conditions and the interruptions were tough, but Ben was the toughest part of the match," Zverev said.

"He has played amazing tennis all week. It was tough to find my comfort zone today, but it's great to get the win."

In the bottom of the draw Fances Tiafoe will play Holger Rune. The American advanced 6-3 after half an hour when fifth seed Hubert Hurkacz who underwent knee surgery a month ago, had to retire with a calf injury.

"At 2-2 I felt he was a little off," said Tiafoe, who claimed his 200th Tour match win. "I know how it



Jannik Sinner of Italy (left) shakes hands with Andrey Rublev after their Cincinnati Open match. (AFP)

feels dealing with pain, rehab...he did come back pretty quick."

Rune, who had never won a match here until this week beat Briton Jack Draper 6-4, 6-2 in 75 minutes.

Rune broke twice in the second set to take the win in 75 minutes. "The scoreboard was not how the match felt," Rune said. "It was very difficult, Jack was going after it," he said.

Top seed Sinner took to the court for only his second match of the week after a first-round bye and a walkover on Friday.

Sinner - whose fitness has been compromised in recent months by a hip niggle, illness and the tonsillitis which forced him to miss the Olympics - stormed back to win the second set and break Rublev to start the third. He clinched victory in a set where five of the 10 games were breaks of serve. His match point ball was caught by a gust of wind and put out of the reach of his opponent.

"There was a lot of mental strength required today," Sinner said. "It was tough conditions, very, very windy," he said. Sinner ended with 31 winners, including 10 aces, while Rublev, the runner-up at Montreal, committed 47 unforced errors.

SPOTLIGHT

Sabalenka struggles but closes out No. 1 Swiatek in Cincy semi-finals

AFP
Cincinnati

Aryna Sabalenka squandered nine match points but defeated world number one Iga Swiatek 6-3, 6-3 yesterday, breaking through to her first final at the WTA and ATP Cincinnati Open.

Four-time Cincinnati semi-finalist Sabalenka will rise to second in the WTA rankings with a week to go before the start of the US Open.

Sabalenka will play today's final against the winner of a later match between Spain's Paula Badosa and US sixth seed Jessica Pegula.

Sabalenka had a battle on her hands to close out the win, with Swiatek putting up a huge battle in the closing stages.

Third-ranked Sabalenka led 5-1 in the second set but Swiatek showed why she is ranked atop the WTA table as she repeatedly saved match-winners from her opponent.

Sabalenka was broken for 5-3 but finally claimed the hard-



Aryna Sabalenka of Belarus is congratulated by Iga Swiatek of Poland after their semi-final of the Cincinnati Open at the Lindner Family Tennis Center in Mason, Ohio. (AFP)

fought victory a game later with a concluding break of Swiatek on a return winner on her 10th match point after nearly two hours.

"I finally broke the barrier," Sabalenka said of her place in the title match. "It was such a tough battle with Iga, and we also had to be patient with the weather."

Raindrops required the court lines to be dried by towels dur-

ing several short interruptions. "On the match points I just had to tell myself that this is why she's world number one and will fight to the last point," Sabalenka said.

"I just had to keep doing the job and hopefully win."

The victory served as revenge for Sabalenka, who lost Masters-level clay finals to Swiatek in Madrid and Rome last spring.

HORSE RACING

Al Shaqab Racing's Luwsail lands UAE President Cup

The four-year-old Luwsail (Al Mourtajez) continued to improve by landing the Gr 1 (PA) UAE President Cup (UK Arabian Derby) which took place at Doncaster on Saturday evening.

With Ioritz Mendizabal in the saddle and trained by François Rohaut, Luwsail was third in the Gr 1 (PA) Qatar Derby des Pur-Sang Arabes de 4 Ans on last start. The Purebred Arabian reversed the form with favourite Extra Time (Valiant Boy).

Owned & Bred by Al Shaqab Racing, Luwsail is now a Gr 1 (PA) winner.

With all the runners racing keenly due to a lack of pace set by Amirat Al Zaman (Hilal Al Zaman), Luwsail was waiting in rear. Waiting for room over 3 furlongs out and going really easy, the home-bred struggled to find a way out. Inside the final furlong, the superb colt finally found a tiny gap to lead in the last strides. Extra Time ran on for second while Molfit (Al Mourtajez) went third.



SPOTLIGHT

Al Shaqab Racing's Simmering takes Gr 2 Prix Du Calvados

Winner of the Gr 3 So-dexo Live! Princess Margaret Stakes at Ascot on last outing, the two-year-old Simmering (Too Darn Hot) landed the Gr 2 Prix du Calvados at Deauville on Saturday.

Owned by Al Shaqab Racing and trained by Ollie Sangster, the talented filly improved again and is now a Gr 2 winner. She is also entered in the Gr 1 Cheveley Park Stakes to be run at Newmarket next month.

In the final pair and ridden by Dylan Browne McMonagle for the first time, Simmering was travelling comfortably. Gradually closing on the leaders, the daughter of Too Darn Hot cruised into the lead inside the final furlong to win by three lengths. Fraise des Bois (Zelzal) was a good second. Iron Bird (Showcasing) took third.

Bred by Lofts Hall Stud, Simmering is out of Cashla Bay (Fast-net Rock), who is a daughter to Gr 3 winner Rose Blossom (Pastoral Pursuits).



SERIE A

Conte's Napoli stunned 3-0 by Verona in opener

Verona new boys Livramento and Mosquera strike in second-half



Verona's Daniel Mosquera celebrates after scoring against Napoli in their Serie A match yesterday.

AFP
Milan

Antonio Conte suffered an embarrassing Serie A debut as Napoli boss yesterday after his new team crashed to a 3-0 defeat at Verona, while last season's surprise package Bologna were held to a 1-1 draw by Udinese.

Verona new boys Dailon Livramento and Daniel Mosquera were on target in the second half at the Stadio Marcantonio Bentegodi, giving Conte a nightmare league start in charge of his new club.

Conte on Saturday described this season as "year zero" after Napoli finished 10th as defend-

ing champions in their previous disastrous campaign in which they went through three different coaches.

The 55-year-old also warned against heightened expectations from fans as he waits on reinforcements while Victor Osimhen, the star of the 2023 title triumph, has been frozen out for pushing for a transfer.

And although Napoli were comfortably the better team in the first half the loss of talisman Khvicha Kvaratskhelia to injury just before the break proved crucial.

Kvaratskhelia was hurt by Pawel Dawidowicz after a last-ditch Jackson Tchatchoua tackle denied the Georgian star a chance to open the scoring.

With Kvaratskhelia off Napoli had much less cutting edge and Verona took the lead when Livramento neatly guided home Darko Lazovic's pinpoint cross four minutes after half-time.

Andre-Frank Zambo Anguissa came closest to drawing Napoli level when his powerful effort crashed off the crossbar on the hour mark.

Mosquera secured the points with a debut goal of his own 15 minutes later after chaos in midfield ended with the Colombian bursting through and confidently rolling home past Alex Meret.

And Mosquera made the scoreline even more embarrassing for Napoli and Conte in stoppage time

when left all alone to tap in Lazovic's low pass.

Bologna were also playing their first match under a new coach in Vincenzo Italiano, who was denied a win by Lautaro Giannetti's 68th-minute header for Udinese.

Argentine Giannetti struck seconds after Bologna goalkeeper Lukasz Skorupski saved Florian Thauvin's penalty, denying Bologna what deservedly took the lead in the 57th minute through a Riccardo Orsolini spot-kick.

Although the draw is a disappointing result Bologna played with the same verve as they did last season when under Thiago Motta they qualified for the modern Champions League for the first time in their history.

LA LIGA

Lewandowski's brace earns Flick first Barcelona win

AFP
Valencia

Robert Lewandowski struck twice for Hansi Flick's Barcelona to deliver a battling 2-1 win at Valencia in their La Liga opener on Saturday.

The German coach celebrated his first competitive match at the helm with three points as Barca came from behind against Ruben Baraja's solid Valencia side.

Hugo Duro sent the hosts ahead after 44 minutes but veteran Polish striker Lewandowski levelled from close range before the break and netted a penalty early in the second half.

With champions Real Madrid, led by new superstar Kylian Mbappe, in action on Sunday at Real Mallorca, Barcelona started their bid to steal the crown with an impressive result at Valencia's rowdy Mestalla stadium. Barca were without key players, including Frenkie de Jong, Gavi and Ronald Araujo and Flick selected three 17-year-olds in his starting line-up. They were Spain's Euro 2024 star Lamine Yamal, whose father was stabbed earlier this week in a violent attack, Pau Cubarsi and midfielder Marc Bernal, the latter making his debut.

Barcelona's summer signing Dani Olmo is not yet registered to play and Flick said the playmaker still needs to get up to speed in terms of fitness. The coach was happier with his team's second half display than their performance before the break.

An even first half burst into

life as the break beckoned after the teams managed to create few clear chances in the first 40 minutes. Duro nodded the best of them over the bar from a corner, while Valencia goalkeeper Giorgi Mamardashvili saved a fierce Raphinha drive.

Valencia took the lead in the 44th minute, with Duro nodding home Diego Lopez's cross after losing Inigo Martinez, who played him onside. Los Che should have doubled their lead but Cubarsi hacked Duro's effort to safety off the line after Marc-Andre ter Stegen gave the ball away. Lewandowski grabbed the leveller in stoppage time, turning home from close range after Yamal diverted Alejandro Balde's cross back into the danger area.

Barcelona moved ahead soon after the break when Valencia defender Cristhian Mosquera felled Raphinha in the area.

Lewandowski, who turns 36 next week, hammered the resulting penalty into the top corner with aplomb. Barcelona kept Valencia at arm's length for most of the second half, ensuring the pace of the game was slow.

The Catalans had the better chances to score again with Ferran Torres sending a weak effort straight at Mamardashvili when through, while midfielder Marc Casado fired wide when well placed late on.

Lewandowski had a chance to complete his hat-trick in stoppage time but rifled over the bar.

Yamal was applauded after being substituted by some Valencia fans for his performances with Spain as they won the Euros.



Barcelona's Robert Lewandowski celebrates with teammate Raphinha after scoring his team's second goal from the penalty spot during the La Liga match against Valencia at the Mestalla stadium in Valencia. (AFP)

Hamburg score seven in German Cup, Bochum eliminated

Hamburg thrashed fourth-division Meppen 7-1 away in the first round of the German Cup yesterday, while Bochum became the first top-flight side eliminated.

Hamburg, who won the European Cup in 1983 but have been in the second division since a first-ever relegation in 2018, were 2-0 up at half-time before scoring five goals in the second period.

Bochum lost 1-0 at second-flight Regensburg, becoming the first Bundesliga side booted out of this year's Cup competition.

Top-flight Augsburg came from a goal down to beat Viktoria Berlin 4-1 away to ensure their progress to the second round.

On Saturday, Borussia Dortmund and RB Leipzig both defeated their lower-division opponents by 4-1 scorelines.

On Friday, Bayern Munich beat second division Ulm 4-0 in Vincent Kompany's first competitive game in charge of the club.

Atalanta's Europa League hero Lookman dropped for Serie A opener

Ademola Lookman is not in Atalanta's squad for their Serie A opener at Lecce as rumours circulated yesterday about the Europa League hero's possible move to Paris Saint-Germain. Nigeria forward Lookman became an Atalanta legend in May when his stunning hat-trick downed German champions Bayer Leverkusen and won the traditionally provincial club their first ever European trophy, a first major honour of any sort since 1963. However the 26-year-old was not included in the squad announced on

Sunday for Atalanta's trip south, where Gian Piero Gasperini's side will begin their league campaign today evening. Italian media have widely reported that Lookman's representatives have told Atalanta of PSG's interest as the club go through an eventful summer transfer window. Yesterday, Serbia midfielder Lazar Samardzic arrived in Bergamo for his medical ahead of a 20m-euro (\$22m) move to Atalanta from Udinese, as another of last season's heroes Teun Koopmeiners agitates for

a move to Juventus. Koopmeiners was also not named in the 23-man squad for the Lecce match but Atalanta have as yet refused to agree terms with Juve who are rebuilding their team for new coach Thiago Motta. Atalanta lost centre-forward Gianluca Scamacca to a serious knee injury earlier this month, causing them to sign his Italy teammate Mateo Retegui from Genoa. Lookman, who has played 23 times for Nigeria, scored three goals in his country's run to African Cup of Nations final over January and February.