

Two-time F1 world champion Alonso to join Aston Martin
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Qatar's World Cup final venue to stage Lusail Super Cup on Sept 9

TRIBUNE NEWS NETWORK
DOHA

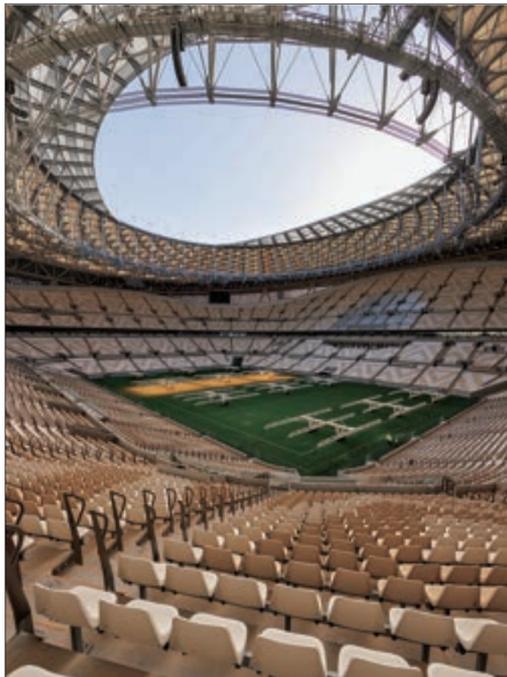
QATAR'S biggest stadium and the stage for this year's FIFA World Cup final will host a special event on Friday 9 September. The 80,000-capacity Lusail Stadium will stage the Lusail Super Cup between the Saudi Pro League champions and Egyptian Premier League winners, followed by a concert from a famous singer. Ticket details for the event will be announced soon.

The stunning venue, which is located in the pioneering Lusail City, 15km north of central Doha, will host matches during every stage of Qatar 2022, starting with the Group C clash between Argentina and Saudi Arabia on 22 November.

The stadium's design is inspired by the interplay of light and shadow that characterises the fanar lantern.

Its shape and golden façade echo the intricate decorative motifs on bowls, vessels and other art pieces found across the Arab and Islamic world during the rise of civilisation in the region.

H.E. Hassan Al Thawadi, Secretary General of the Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy (SC), said: "Show-



Inside view of the Lusail Stadium.

casing Lusail Stadium is the final milestone in our journey ahead of the big kick-off on 21 November. This incredible

venue forms the centrepiece of our tournament and will be the focus of the world's attention when it hosts the FIFA



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World Cup final on 18 December, which is also Qatar National Day. I am proud this venue will play a major role during the tournament and also deliver a lasting legacy for the people of Lusail and the wider community."

Eng. Yasir Al Jamal, Director General of the SC, said:

"Lusail Stadium is an incredible feat of engineering. Dedication and commitment from our project teams, along with outstanding collaboration with stakeholders across Qatar, have helped to deliver a venue the whole country and region can be proud of. I would like to pay tribute to everyone

who worked so hard to deliver this stadium and prepare it for the biggest show on Earth."

Nasser Al Khater, CEO, FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, said: "Lusail Stadium will provide a magnificent stage for this year's FIFA World Cup final – the biggest and most prestigious football match on

the planet. As far as preparations for the FIFA World Cup are concerned, this is the final piece of the jigsaw.

Fans can expect a memorable and welcoming experience when they arrive in Qatar for the first FIFA World Cup in the Middle East and Arab world.

Hosting this prestigious match at Lusail Stadium will give us a great opportunity to test the venue's readiness and the many operational plans we have put in place."

Sustainable building practices were used throughout the construction of Lusail Stadium.

Recycled water was used to irrigate plants around the stadium, while water efficient fixtures and leak detection systems are operational.

The construction site conserved 40% more fresh water than conventional stadium developments. The arena's roof has been designed with sustainability in mind.

A state-of-the-art material called PTFE protects the stadium from warm wind, keeps out dust and allows enough light for the pitch to grow while providing shade to reduce the burden on the stadium's air conditioning.



Qatar Sports Club coach Youssef Safri (left) and Al Arabi coach Younes Ali address the media on eve of their teams' QNB Stars League match on Tuesday.

Eager Al Arabi take on Qatar Sports Club at Education City Stadium today

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AL Arabi coach Younes Ali is more determined than ever to kick off the QSL season against Qatar Sports Club at the Education City Stadium on Tuesday.

Coming off a successful last season, Ali stressed the importance of a good start ahead of their opening match.

"Early matches are difficult. We don't know what to expect but we are keen to gain three points that'll give us the advantage in the long league," Younes said on Monday at the pre-match press conference.

Al Arabi finished fourth last season, behind champions Al Sadd, Al Duhail and Al Wakrah. It was their best finish in recent years.

While talking about their preparations, Younes said: "I'm satisfied with what the players presented during our camp. The atmosphere was positive and we need to bring that positivity to the games now."

Qatar SC, ninth last season, will also be keen to register success early on in the league.

"Our preparations went off well and everyone at the management level and the players did their best to make the training period a success both during the camp in Spain and in Doha," Qatar SC coach Youssef Safri said.

The signing of Moroccan Badr Benoun has strengthened their team, but he is a doubtful starter for today's match.

"The preparation period for the new season was strong and positive. During our training camp in Spain we played good friendly matches and gained great benefit. We then completed our preparations in

Doha with increased pace and are ready for our first match in the new season of the QNB Stars League. We aim to make a good result for a positive start," Qatar SC player Mohammed Salem said.

Al Gharafa take on Al Saliya

In the second match of the day, Al Gharafa take on Al Saliya at the Khalifa International Stadium. Gharafa coach Andrea Stramaccioni said the team was dealing with a few injuries, notably to Abdullah Al Saei and Othman Al Yahri.

However, the Cheetahs have Algerian star Yacine Brahimi in their ranks and the Italian is very happy with that.

"I'm happy to have Yacine Brahimi with us. Another experienced player, Uzbek Isom Tukhtakhujjev, joined us recently. We hope the new additions lead us to wins," he said.

Al Saliya, who escaped relegation last time, will be aiming for an improved performance this season.

"Matches against Gharafa are always competitive. We need to be fully focused so that we can utilise all our capabilities and achieve victory," said Saliya coach Sami Trabelsi.

Al Gharafa are one of the most prominent clubs which gives opportunities to young players from the age groups, and is banking on them this season to provide with the best and lead the team towards competing for the title.

Al Saliya have Senegalese Serigne 'Kara' Mbodji, and the team has signed Argentinian defender Sergio Javier Vittor and Greek Giannis Fetfatzidis (from Al Khor), in addition to the return of Iraqi Mohanad Ali and Tunisian Bilal Saidani.

IKOLI VICTOR
DOHA

IN a shocking upset defending champions Al Sadd were handed a 4-3 defeat by the newly-promoted Al Markhiya on the first day of the QNB Stars League 2022-23 season on Monday at the magnificent Al Khalifa International Stadium, one of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 venues.

Iraqi international Aymen Hussein scored twice, while former Wolves player Algerian Hamroun Jugurtha was Man-of-the-Match with two assists and a goal on the stroke of halftime to cancel out Al Sadd's two-goal lead, which was scored by Rodrigo Tabata and Baghdad Bounedjah. With eleven minutes remaining, Qatar's Ali Said secured the three points for Markhiya, while veteran Spanish player Santi Cazorza scored a consolation goal in the second minute of added time.

In the absence of more than 15 players in Qatar's national team camp preparing for the FIFA World Cup Qatar in November and December 2022, Al Sadd entered the match under Spanish coach Juan Manuel Lillo 'Juanma.' After being knocked out earlier in the AFC Champions League, the league champions knew they had to be competitive to retain their title, and Rodrigo Tabata opened the scoring in the fifth minute. The former Qatari international beat goalkeeper Louay Sherif with a trademark free kick from 19 metres. The goal was the Brazilian's 140th in the league, and his thirty-third for the Wolves after previous stint with Al Rayyan.

Al Sadd's lead was extended after Bounedjah took advantage of a defense splitting pass from Ahmad Al Saeed to slot the ball past the rushing Sherif. That was all it took for Markhiya, led by former Qatari player Abdullah Mubarak, to up their game. Jugurtha, a former Al Sadd player, cut the



Al Markhiya players celebrate with 'Man-of-the-Match' Hamroun Jugurtha (2nd left) after he scored the first goal against Al Sadd in the opening clash of the new QNB Stars League season 2022-23 at the Khalifa International Stadium on Monday.



Action from the Al Sadd vs Al Markhiya match with the Al Rihla ball.

deficit in half after receiving a pass from Aymen and chesting the ball down to strike the ball past goalkeeper Jehad Mohammad from outside the box. The Wolves goalkeeper's blunder cost his team the lead just five minutes into the second half when he failed to clear a loose ball, allowing rushing Iraqi striker Aymen to pounce and tie the game at 2-2.

With the game tied, both

teams threw men forward in search of the game-winning goal, but it was Markhiya and former Al Sadd player Jugurtha who did the damage with a fine cross from the right flank that allowed Aymen to nod the ball into the space between two defenders to make it 3-2.

Al Sadd's woes were compounded a minute later, just as they resumed play, as Ali Said was on hand to score his side's



Action from the Al Ahli-Umm Salal match played at Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium on Monday. Al Ahli won 1-0.

fourth goal of the game with a calm finish following a through pass from Jugurtha. Sultan Al Kuwari replaced the Algerian in stoppage time after his heroics.

The former Arsenal man cut the deficit thanks to Ghanaian international Andre Ayew's deft touch pass.

Al Sadd Coach 'Juanma,' who had hoped that some of his new wards would take advantage of the opportunity to play more games, will reconsider as they prepare for their next game against Umm Salal.

It's a dream start in the league for coach Mubarak and Markhiya, and they'll want to maintain ahead of their next match against Qatar SC.

Al Ahli edge Umm Salal 1-0
Al Ahli scored a late goal to edge Umm Salal 1-0 at the Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium for a winning start to the season. Yazan Abdallah Alnaimat scored the winner in 82nd minute after connecting a fine cross from Abdulrasheed Umaru to seal three points for Al Ahi.

Asia's pathway to FIFA World Cup 2026 and AFC Asian Cup 2027 revealed

Eight World Cup spots for Asia – How Asian teams can qualify for 2026 FIFA World Cup

AFC
KUALA LUMPUR

THE Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Executive Committee has approved the qualification format for Asia's Road to the FIFA World Cup 2026 as well as the AFC Asian Cup 2027 in preparation of the eight direct spots and single Intercontinental Playoff slot allocated to the AFC by FIFA following the expansion of the FIFA World Cup 2026 to 48 teams.

The new qualification format has been established after several consultation and dialogue sessions with the AFC Member Associations (MAs), briefings with the AFC Competitions Committee, as well as the Confederation's key stakeholders. It was decided that the FIFA World Cup 2026 qualification tournament will comprise four rounds:



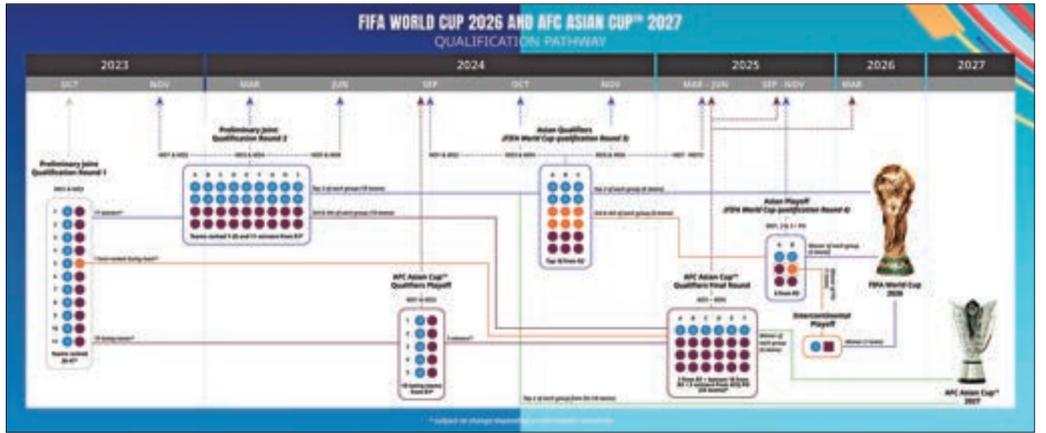
Qatar are current Asian Cup champions having won the title in 2019.

Preliminary Joint Qualification Round 1: 22 teams, ranked 26 to 47, will be drawn to face off in a home and away format, where the 11 winners will progress to the Preliminary Joint Qualification Round 2. Preliminary Joint Qualification Round 2: 36 teams – teams ranked from 1 to 25 as well as the 11 winners from the first round – will be divided into nine groups of four teams each, who will each compete in a round robin, home and away format, where the top two teams from each group – 18 in

total – will advance to the AFC Asian Qualifiers.

AFC Asian Qualifiers: Subsequently, the 18 teams, who also qualify automatically for the AFC Asian Cup 2027, will be divided into three groups of six teams each, competing in a round robin, home and away format, with the top two teams from each group – six in total – qualifying directly to the FIFA World Cup 2026.

Asian Playoff: The final round will consist of the third and fourth placed teams from all



groups of the AFC Asian Qualifiers – six teams in total. The six teams will be drawn into two groups of three teams each, competing in a single round robin format. The two first placed teams from the Asian Playoff groups will advance to the FIFA World Cup 2026. The second-placed teams from both groups will compete in a playoff match to determine the side that will represent the AFC in the Intercontinental Playoff.

The AFC Asian Cup 2027 Qualifiers will continue from the Preliminary Joint Qualification Round 1 and Round 2, in parallel with the FIFA World Cup 2026 qualification competition: AFC Asian Cup Qualifiers Playoff: The 10 losing teams from the Preliminary Joint Qualification Round 1 will be drawn to compete in a home and away format, where the five winners will advance to the AFC Asian Cup Qualifiers Final Round. AFC Asian Cup Qualifiers Final

Round: 24 teams in total – 1 best ranked losing team from the Preliminary Joint Qualification Round 1, 18 third and fourth placed teams from each group of the Preliminary Joint Qualification Round 2 and the five winners from the AFC Asian Cup Qualifiers Playoff – will be divided into six groups of four teams each, where only the first placed team of each group will qualify to the AFC Asian Cup 2027.

The format above is based

on the entry of all 47 Member Associations and is subject to change depending on the final number of entries.

Additionally, the AFC Executive Committee also approved the proposal of the competitions' (national teams, futsal and beach soccer) calendar for 2023/2024 which is tabled below and at the same time, provided the Administration with the mandate to alter the Match Days (MD) where necessary.

Round	Date	Match
Preliminary Joint Qualification Round 1	18 and 19 September 2023	18 and 19 September 2023
	20 and 21 September 2023	20 and 21 September 2023
Preliminary Joint Qualification Round 2	2 and 3 October 2023	2 and 3 October 2023
	4 and 5 October 2023	4 and 5 October 2023
AFC Asian Cup Qualifiers	10 and 11 November 2023	10 and 11 November 2023
	12 and 13 November 2023	12 and 13 November 2023
AFC Asian Cup Qualifiers Playoff	16 and 17 November 2023	16 and 17 November 2023
	19 and 20 November 2023	19 and 20 November 2023
AFC Asian Cup Qualifiers Final Round	23 and 24 November 2023	23 and 24 November 2023
	26 and 27 November 2023	26 and 27 November 2023
AFC Asian Cup 2027	18 and 19 September 2027	18 and 19 September 2027
	20 and 21 September 2027	20 and 21 September 2027

Schedule for new AFC club competitions' seasons confirmed

AFC
KUALA LUMPUR

FOLLOWING the decision to transition the AFC Club Competitions from its current Spring-Autumn season to Autumn-Spring on February 25, 2022, the AFC Executive Committee has today approved the new calendar of the 2023/2024 AFC Champions League and AFC Cup seasons.

The AFC Champions League 2023/2024 edition is set to kick off with the Preliminary Stage 1 on August 8, 2023, while the Group Stage is scheduled to take place from September 18 to December 13, 2023.

The Knockout Stage will be held from February 12 to April 24, 2024, before the two-legged Final is staged on May 11 and 18, 2024.

Meanwhile, the AFC Cup

2023/2024 season will commence with the Preliminary Stage on August 1, 2023, while the Group Stage is set to be held from September 18 to December 14, before the Zonal Semi-finals take place from February 2024, followed by the single-leg Final on May 5, 2024.

The recommendation to eliminate the away goals rule as a tiebreaker option was also approved and instead, extra time and, if necessary, kicks from the penalty mark will be used to determine the winner of tied home and away matches.

This will be implemented in the AFC Club Competitions from the 2023/2024 season onwards.

The tentative match dates for the 2023/2024 AFC Champions League and AFC Cup seasons are as follows:

Round	Date	Match
Preliminary Stage 1	1 and 2 August 2023	1 and 2 August 2023
	4 and 5 August 2023	4 and 5 August 2023
Preliminary Stage 2	7 and 8 August 2023	7 and 8 August 2023
	10 and 11 August 2023	10 and 11 August 2023
Group Stage	18 and 19 September 2023	18 and 19 September 2023
	20 and 21 September 2023	20 and 21 September 2023
Zonal Semi-finals	2 and 3 October 2023	2 and 3 October 2023
	4 and 5 October 2023	4 and 5 October 2023
Final	5 and 6 May 2024	5 and 6 May 2024
	12 and 13 May 2024	12 and 13 May 2024

STATS PERFORM/DPA
BERLIN

NEYMAR insists team-mate Lionel Messi has nothing to prove to his critics in his second season as a Paris Saint-Germain player.

Messi had an underwhelming first campaign with PSG following his move from Barcelona, scoring 11 goals in 34 games – down on the 38 scored with Barca the previous year.

Messi assisted 14 goals, though, 10 of which came after the turn of the year – only Barca's Ousmane Dembele (11) has managed more across Europe's top five leagues in 2022.

The 35-year-old impressed in his first competitive outing of the 2022-23 campaign on Sunday as he opened the scoring in PSG's 4-0 Trophée des Champions win over Nantes.

However, when asked if that display is a sign of a new Messi at PSG, Neymar leapt to the defence of his colleague.

"I don't think so. I think people talk too much," he told Amazon Prime.

"They don't know what's going on every day, what's going on inside.

"Leo, it's Leo. It's still Leo, it doesn't change. No, he continues to make the difference. He adapts.

"It is obvious that we hope that everything goes well for the three of us, for me, for Leo, for Kylian [Mbappe]. If the



Paris Saint-Germain team players celebrate winning the French Champions' Trophy (Trophée des Champions) final against FC Nantes, in the at the Bloomfield Stadium, in Tel Aviv on Sunday. Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) beat Nantes 4-0 to clinch the trophy. (AFP)

three of us are well, I'm sure it's good for the team."

Neymar scored twice after Messi had opened the scoring in Tel Aviv and Sergio Ramos was also on target as PSG won

their first silverware under Christophe Galtier.

The Parisians have now won 11 Trophée des Champion crowns, including nine of the past 10 editions of the compe-

tion. Neymar, who also created a game-high three chances, is pleased to have started the new campaign - his sixth with PSG - in style.

"I'm satisfied. We had

a very good match with the team," he said.

"It's very important to start winning and it's a match that ends in a trophy. Whatever happens, you have to win."

Messi could end career in Barca shirt despite painful split: Laporta

STATS PERFORM/DPA
BERLIN

BARCELONA'S infatuation with Lionel Messi has been underlined after president Joan Laporta raised the tantalising idea that the Argentina great could return to end his career with the club.

It is coming up to 12 months since Messi tearfully departed and joined Paris Saint-Germain, breaking a 21-year association with a struggling Barca who could not afford to keep him.

The forward won every trophy available with the Catalan giants and departed as the club's all-time record scorer with 672 goals from 778 appearances. To give that some context, next on the goalscoring list is Cesar Rodriguez, who scored 232 goals for Barcelona. Laporta spoke in New York on Thursday evening, as Barce-



(From L) FC Barcelona's vice-president Rafael Yuste, Barcelona's Spanish President Joan Laporta, FC Barcelona's new french defender Jules Kounde, FC Barcelona's sports director Mateu Alemany and Barcelona's Spanish sporting advisor Jordi Cruyff pose for pictures during a press conference as part of Kounde's presentation ceremony at the Joan Gamper training ground in Sant Joan Despi, near Barcelona, on Monday. (AFP)

lona's US tour neared its end, and addressed the prospect of Messi one day resuming his career with the Blaugrana.

"Leo's phase did not end as we all wanted. It ended up very conditioned by economic issues," said Laporta. "We owe

Kounde details Xavi role in choosing Barca

Jules Kounde has detailed the role Xavi played in bringing the defender to Barcelona from Sevilla, describing how "important" it was the coach was pushing for the deal.

The 23-year-old was long courted by Premier League outfit Chelsea, who were widely reported to be set to secure a deal before Barcelona moved to hijack the agreement.

It was the second time in the window a late Barca move had frustrated the English side, with the Blaugrana beating them to the signature of Raphinha from Leeds United, while they also signed Andreas Christensen on a free transfer from the Blues.

For Kounde, though, the key to his decision was the conversations he had with Xavi. "I had some good conversations with Xavi, he always expressed desire for me to come here, and that was important for me," he told a news conference.

"This is an important moment in my career, and in the conversations, he asked me to continue to do what I was doing in Sevilla, to continue to be aggressive, bring the ball out from the back, distribute, those are some of my strengths.

"Barcelona is a great club, very demanding as well, and that's something that Xavi talked to me about." Kounde's arrival at Barcelona comes as part of a significant recruitment drive from Xavi's side, with Robert Lewandowski, Raphinha, Christensen and Franck Kessie fellow new arrivals. (STATS Perform/DPA)

all stadiums.

"This is an aspiration. There is nothing spoken. I feel jointly responsible for this ending. I think it is a provisional end, I think we will make this aspiration a reality."

Barca's financial situation in August 2021 meant they could not agree fresh terms that adhered to La Liga's salary cap rules.

Messi has another year to run on his PSG deal, which will take him through to the age of 36, though that contract also contains the option of a third season in Paris.

Laporta might be pushing the right buttons for those who dream of a Messi comeback in LaLiga, but whether his ambitions are realistic remains to be seen.

Barcelona have sold off a proportion of future TV rights revenue in order to bolster their financial resources, al-

lowing them to embark on a signing spree ahead of the new La Liga season.

They are suddenly moving in a positive direction again, and Laporta will look to make it sustainable.

Messi was directly involved in 937 goals for Barcelona, with his most prolific season coming in 2011-12 when he scored 73 in all competitions and assisted a further 28.

That is in stark contrast to the 11 goals and 14 assists managed in 34 games during his first season with PSG.

Diminishing returns are setting in, as would only be expected of a player who reached staggering heights at the peak of his career.

Yet Laporta is determined to have Messi back on board, surely mindful of the commercial opportunities it could bring, and how such a coup would reflect on his presidency.



In this file photo taken on June 30, 2022, Alpine's Spanish driver Fernando Alonso attends a press conference ahead of the Formula One British Grand Prix at the Silverstone motor racing circuit in Silverstone, central England. (AFP)

Two-time F1 world champion Alonso to join Aston Martin

DPA
BERLIN

FERNANDO Alonso, a two-time world champion, will join Aston Martin to replace the departing Sebastian Vettel from next season, the British Formula One team said Monday.

Germany's Vettel, who won four world titles with Red Bull 2010-2013, announced his retirement aged 35 ahead of last weekend's Hungarian Grand Prix.

And Aston Martin moved immediately to secure the services of Spanish 41-year-old veteran Alonso from Alpine on a "multi-year contract."

"This Aston Martin team is clearly applying the energy and commitment to win, and it is therefore one of the most excit-

ing teams in Formula One today," said Alonso, who won his titles 2005-2006 with Renault.

"No one in Formula One today is demonstrating a greater vision and absolute commitment to winning, and that makes it a really exciting opportunity for me." Alonso will partner Canadian driver Lance Stroll, whose father Lawrence is a major backer of the team.

"I have known Lawrence and Lance for many years and it is very obvious that they have the ambition and passion to succeed in Formula One," Alonso said. "I have watched as the team has systematically attracted great people with winning pedigrees, and I have become aware of the huge commitment to new facilities and resources at Silverstone."

Spain's World Cup star Fabregas joins Serie B side Comon



A file photo of April 06, 2021, shows Monaco's Spanish midfielder Cesc Fabregas shoot to score in a penalty shootout in the French Cup round of 16 match against FC Metz at Louis II stadium in Monaco. (AFP)

DPA
ROME

CESC Fabregas, a World Cup winning midfielder with Spain in 2010, has extended his football career by joining Serie B side Como 1907, the northern Italian club said Monday.

Several fans welcomed the 35-year-old to the team stadium upon his arrival.

Fabregas was last at Ligue 1 side Monaco where he struggled for playing time but was previously one of the best players of his generation.

In addition to his World Cup win, he won the 2008 and 2012 Euros with Spain along with various domestic titles in stints with Arsenal, Barcelona and Chelsea.

"I come with the same ambition as always, I want to play, win and bring Como to Serie A," the Gazzetta dello Sport paper reported Fabregas saying.

He added a move to the North American MLS "was never in my plans, I wanted to stay in Europe where the level is higher."

Borja Mayoral leaves Real Madrid for Getafe in permanent transfer

Real Madrid have confirmed the departure of forward Borja Mayoral, who has joined Getafe on a five-year deal. The 25-year-old spent the second half of last season on loan with Getafe, scoring six goals in 18 matches, and leaves Madrid after 15 years associated with the Spanish giants. With Madrid, Mayoral has won the Champions League, Club World Cup, Super Cup and Supercopa de Espana, although he never quite established himself as a regular

within the first-team squad. Mayoral made his debut for Madrid in 2015 but subsequently went on loan to Wolfsburg for the 2016-17 season, returning to the Santiago Bernabeu the following year. A two-year loan with Levante was followed by a two-season spell with Roma, which was cut short in January with Getafe taking over the deal for the remainder of the 2021-22 campaign before securing his permanent signing. (STATS Perform/DPA)

England's Euro 2022 triumph will turbo charge women's game, says FA chief

PA MEDIA/DPA
LONDON

FOOTBALL Association chief executive Mark Bullingham insists England's Euro 2022 success will "turbo charge" the women's game in this country.

Chloe Kelly's extra-time goal sealed a 2-1 victory as the Lionesses claimed the first major trophy in their history and the first for a senior England side since the 1966 World Cup triumph over West Germany.

"The last few years have been incredible. We have invested really heavily and the Lionesses have taken their opportunity and they have produced something incredible. It's been an amazing month and an amazing day yesterday," Bullingham told the BBC.

"I think it will really turbo charge everything we have been doing in the women's game."

"There is no reason why we shouldn't have the same number of girls playing as boys and it will inspire a whole new generation of players."

Bullingham continued: "We have worked incredibly hard to make a lot of new opportunities for girls and to make sure clubs and schools are embracing opportunities and schools are using football in the curriculum and for them to see it as normal for girls to play football like boys do."

"We have been preparing for this moment for years. We have got clubs throughout the country ready to take girls on, we have been investing in schools, we have created opportunities for girls to come forward and we are ready and willing to do that."



England's players celebrate during a victory party in Trafalgar Square in central London on Monday, a day after they beat Germany 2-1 to win the Women's Euro 2022 football tournament. (AFP)

Team celebrates with Trafalgar Square party

England players celebrated their Euro 2022 success in front of a packed Trafalgar Square on Monday.

Sarina Wiegman's side beat Germany 2-1 after extra-time at a sold-out Wembley on Sunday to win the first major trophy in their history and the first for a senior England side since the 1966 World Cup.

Celebrations had gone on throughout the night and continued the next day with a spe-

cial event in central London in front of thousands of fans.

Former England international and BBC pundit Alex Scott introduced the players on to the stage shortly after and started a rendition of 'Football's coming home'.

Fans who could not get into Trafalgar Square gathered on the steps of the National Gallery just to get a vantage point.

Manager Wiegman, captain Leah Williamson and goalscorers Ella Toone and Chloe Kelly led the squad on to the stage to raucous cheers.

Asked how she was feeling, Wiegman deadpanned: "Pretty good. Nice that you're all here, thank you for coming," while Williamson said: "I think we've partied more than we've played football in the last 24 hours!" Williamson said she hoped the tournament could lead to lasting change for the game across the world.

"I think the legacy of the tournament was already made before that final game, the young girls and the women who can look up and aspire to be us," she said.

"We've changed the game, hopefully in this country and across the world." England men's captain Harry Kane had tweeted to Toone on Sunday: "Take a bow for that finish".

Asked about that onstage, Toone joked: "Yeah, I taught him that." Kelly, referencing her ecstatic celebrations after her winning goal, said: "The shirt's staying on!" Confetti cannons and giant sparklers greeted England once again lifting the trophy, with Wiegman then encouraged to lift it by herself to more acclaim.

Germany welcomed by fans after heartbreak

DPA
FRANKFURT

THOUSANDS of fans greeted the Germany team on their return from Euro 2022 on Monday despite the heartbreak of a 2-1 extra-time defeat to England in the final on Sunday's final.

"That's unbelievable and what we've dreamed of," defender Giulia Gwinn said at the reception at Frankfurt's Römer city hall. "It's wonderful to experience that the people are so enthusiastic." Germany had won eight previous Euros but with less media exposure than delivered by the four-week spectacle in England which ended with a record crowd of more than 87,000 watching the Wembley showpiece.

"Of course we suffered a lot," said coach Martina Voss-Tecklenburg.

"We actually wanted to be European champions and not champions of the heart."

"But if the amazing performance has contributed to us having played our way into the hearts of the German people then we're happily champions of the heart." Federal chancellor Olaf Scholz, interior minister Nancy Feaser and German football federation boss Bernd Neundorff all lauded the team and said the chance was there to boost women's football.

"That was an engaging tournament and all of Germany is proud of this team," Scholz tweeted.

Voss-Tecklenburg added: "We have promised ourselves that we want to force it now. Olaf Scholz has promised me that we will also meet to go into topics for the future."



Members of the German national women's football team applaud from the balcony of Frankfurt's city hall "Roemer" as supporters welcome them at Roemer square in Frankfurt am Main, Germany, on Monday after they placed second in the UEFA Women's Euro 2022 football tournament. (AFP)



Supporters of the German national women's football team cheer as they welcome players on August 1, 2022 at Roemer square in Frankfurt am Main, western Germany, on Monday. (AFP)

NFL to review Browns QB Watson's suspension

STATS PERFORM/DPA
BERLIN

THE NFL will review the decision of a former US district judge to impose a six-game suspension on Cleveland Browns quarterback Deshaun Watson.

The former Houston Texans star faced 24 civil lawsuits following sexual assault and misconduct allegations. He was not charged by two grand juries and has strenuously denied any wrongdoing.

The NFL was seeking a suspension for a breach of the league's personal conduct policy, and retired judge Sue L Robinson ruled Watson should be sidelined for six games with no additional fine.

The league issued a statement on Monday that read: "We thank Judge Sue L Robinson, the independent disciplinary officer, for her review of the voluminous record and attention during a three-day hearing that resulted in her finding multiple violations of the NFL personal conduct policy by Deshaun Watson."

"We appreciate Judge Robinson's diligence and professionalism throughout this process. Pursuant to the collective bargaining agreement, the NFL or the NFLPA [NFL Players' Association] on behalf of Watson may appeal the decision within three days."

"In light of her findings, the league is reviewing Judge Robinson's imposition of a six-game suspension and will make a determination on next steps."

Despite the NFL stating the possibility of an appeal, the NFLPA previously confirmed it would not oppose any decision taken by Robinson.

"Every player, owner, business partner and stakeholder deserves to know that our process is legitimate and will not be tarnished based on the whims of the league office," the NFLPA said in a statement on Sunday.

Quick read

Promoted Bremen edge into German Cup second round, Union survive

Goals in either half from Romano Schmid and Mitchell Weiser ensured Werder Bremen progressed to the second round of the German Cup on Monday with a 2-1 win at Energie Cottbus. Bremen secured promotion back to the Bundesliga at the first time of asking last term and secured a morale-boosting victory in Cottbus over fourth-tier opposition. Schmid slickly finished a pass from Niclas Füllkrug to break the deadlock two minutes before half-time and Weiser poked home a deflected shot to seal matters in the 73rd minute. Tim Heike did pull one back for Cottbus but the hosts could not find an equalizer despite late pressure. Chemnitz, another fourth-level outfit, led Bundesliga Union Berlin for 90 seconds in the second half through Tobias Müller's header but debutant Jordan Siebatcheu equalized immediately to force extra-time. And substitute Kevin Behrens headed in a corner in the 113th minute to secure a 2-1 win for the capital side, who were semi-finalists last term. Union avoided the fate of city rivals Hertha, who exited on Sunday to follow fellow Bundesliga sides Bayer Leverkusen and Cologne in crashing out of the competition. There is a Berlin derby to open the Bundesliga this coming weekend. (DPA)



QHA announces national squad ahead of IHF World Cup 2023

QNA
DOHA

QATAR Handball Association (QHA) announced on Monday the national team's squad for the 28th Men's World Cup to be held in Poland and Sweden from Jan. 11 to 29, 2023.

The national squad comprises 23 players as follows: Belal Mararneh

(Al Ahli), Abdulrahman Tarek Al Abdullah, Mustafa Amir Heiba, Ahmed Nader Naseem, Ahmed Mohamed Maddadi, Rafael De Costa Kabote, Belal Lbenka, Alladine Nabil Belrashed, Ali Khaled Hamed (Al Duhail); Rasheed Yussef, Mohamed Mahmoud Abdelmajid, Ibrahim Shebli Ebeid (Al Sadd); Anis Abdulrazaq Zawawi (Al Arabi); Mahmoud Ahmed Zaki, Abdelhadi Medhat Rashad (Al Gharafa), Kamaladine Mallash, Amin Mowafak Zekkar, Edler and Ali Emad Al Diri (Al Rayyan); Yassine Sami Ebrahim and Ahmed Abdulhamid El Meniawy (Al Wakrah); Frankis Carol Marzo (Kuwait's Al Kuwait) The national team starts preparations on Aug. 14 under the leadership of Spanish coach Valero Rivera.

The Qatari national team was drawn in Group E along with Germany, Serbia and Algeria. Group A includes



Spain, Montenegro, Chile and Iran, and group B consists of France, Poland, Saudi Arabia and Slovenia.

Sweden, Brazil, Cape Verde and Uruguay were drawn for group C, and Iceland, Portugal, Hungary and South Korea will compete in group D. Group F includes Norway, Macedonia, Argentine and the Netherlands, while group G includes Egypt, Croatia, Morocco and the United States.

Group H consists of Denmark, Belgium, Bahrain and Tunisia. The Qatari national team qualified for the 2023 World Cup after leading group A at the group stage of the 20th Asian Cup held in January in Saudi Arabia, which saw the Qatari team being crowned champion for the fifth consecutive time after a 29/24 victory over Bahrain in the final.

The national team's participation will be the ninth in the World Cup after previous eight appearances in Portugal 2003, Tunisia 2005, Germany 2007, Spain 2013, Qatar 2015, France 2017, Germany & Denmark 2019 and Egypt 2021 with the silver medal in Qatar 2015 as the best achievement in world cup appearances

Afghanistan begin T20 World Cup preparation; unveil squad for Ireland T20Is

ICC

AFGHANISTAN have named a 16-member squad for the upcoming five-match T20I assignment against Ireland, starting 9 August.

All the five T20Is are slated to be played in Belfast which will form a vital part of their preparation for the Asia Cup and the ICC Men's T20 World Cup in Australia later this year. Star spinner Mujeeb ur Rahman is awaiting his visa and has been named on the reserve list.

"We have had good results in our recent tours, the squad has done well recently and we are looking forward to having good results again in our next series against Ireland," said ACB Chief Selector Noor Malikza, "Mujeeb's visa is not yet issued and thus he has been added to reserve players. Once the problem is resolved, he will be included back in the

main squad," he added.

Players making a return to the T20I mix are Fareed Ahmad, Hashmatullah Shahidi, Ibrahim Zadran, and Naveen-ul-Haq. Ibrahim is making a return to the shortest format after last representing the side in 2019 while the others made their last T20I appearances in 2021.

Noor Ahmad, the 17-year-old left-arm wrist spinner, who represented Afghanistan at this year's ICC U19 Men's Cricket World Cup, has retained his spot after an impressive performance in his debut match for the senior side. In his only T20I match, against Zimbabwe in Harare in June, the spinner returned a sensational 4/10.

Fixtures:
09 August - 1st T20I, Belfast
11 August - 2nd T20I, Belfast
12 August - 3rd T20I, Belfast
15 August - 4th T20I, Belfast
17 August - 5th T20I, Belfast



Qatar's table tennis team tops overall standings at West Asian Championship

QNA
AMMAN

THE Qatari national table tennis team topped the general rankings of the combined West Asian Championship competitions, which are currently being held in Jordan, and will continue until the fifth of this month, with the participation of 12 countries.

The Qatari team succeeded in topping the general standings after winning 15 medals (6 gold, 2 silver, and 7 bronze) after the conclusion of the singles and doubles team competitions.

Khalil Ahmed Al Muhanadi, President of the Qatar, Arab and Asian Federation and First Vice President of the International Table Tennis Federation, praised the distinguished results achieved by the Qatari team during the tournament, and said that the Qatari team's 15 medals came after a good performance by the team players, and that the results that were achieved did not come. In a vacuum, it was the result of great work and effort from everyone, which made the Qatari table tennis achieve successive achievements annually.

Al Mohannadi stressed that the great support provided by the Qatar Olympic Committee to the game and all Qatari sports contributed to the achievement



of these achievements made by the Qatar champions in international forums.

For his part, Abdullah Youssef Al Mulla, a member of the International Table Tennis

Federation, said: The achievement made by Qatari table tennis in Jordan is supported

by a large team of players, coaches and administrators, and it came after continuous effort and continuous work by everyone. He congratulated the Qatar Federation, headed by Khalil Al-Mohannadi and members of the Board of Directors, for winning 15 colored medals, stressing that this is a distinguished number that indicates that the game is on the right track.

Al Mulla thanked and congratulated the Jordanian Federation for the Game, headed by Tariq Al-Zoubi, for the great success of the tournament's competitions, explaining that Jordan brought together all the Arabs during this tournament, and that the tournament achieved great technical and organizational success.

For his part, Khaled Ali Al Kuwari, director of the Qatari national teams for table tennis, expressed his happiness with what the Qatari team achieved in the tournament competitions. He said that the Qatari team performed well in the tournament, and succeeded in qualifying to the final 6 times in the male competitions, and succeeded in winning in all matches, he won 6 golds, to get first place in the male category, and the girls also won two silver medals despite their absence for a long time from the competitions.

Windies star Dottin makes snap call on future

ANI

ST JOHN'S (ANTIGUA)

STAR West Indies all-rounder Deandra Dottin called time on her international cricket career on Monday, citing the current climate and team environment as a reason behind her decision.

"Thanks to all for the love and support with in my past 14 years of playing cricket for West Indies! I look forward to be playing domestic cricket around the world," tweeted Dottin.

"Please accept this letter as my formal retirement from the senior women's West Indies team effective 1st July 2022. This announcement has come with much contemplation as cricket has always been a pas-



Deandra Dottin.

sion of mine. However, when the fire burns out, one has to take time to reassess their

All-rounder Deandra Dottin cites the current climate and team environment as a reason behind her decision.

commitment," said Dottin in a letter.

"There have been many obstacles during my cricket career that I have had to overcome however, the current climate and team environment has been non-conductive to my ability to thrive and reignite my passion. I am appreciative of the opportunities afforded to me and I have ruminated on my decision over a period of time," she added.

Dottin said that playing for West Indies has been a hon-

our for her.

"During my 14 years of playing, I have trained at my best and grown as a player physically, mentally and emotionally. It is the combination of this growth that has assisted me in reflecting on what is truly important to me. With much sadness but without regret, I realize that I am no longer able to adhere to team culture and team environment as it has undermined my ability to perform excellently. I wish the organization and the team all the best in the future," she concluded.

She has represented West Indies in over 260 international matches. She has scored 3,727 ODI runs in 143 games at an average of 30.54 with three

centuries while she has scored 2,681 runs in 124 T20Is at an average of 26.28 with two centuries. She has also taken 133 international wickets.

Dottin retires as the second highest run-scorer for the West Indies women's team in ODIs and T20Is and fourth on the list of leading wicket-takers in the T20I format.

The right-hander retires as the second-highest run-scorer for the West Indies in both women's ODIs and T20Is, and fourth on the wicket-takers list for the side in the shorter format.

She will however continue to represent Barbados in CWG 2022, where they will take on India in a do-or-die match on Wednesday.

PGA Tour announces record prize money for 2022-23 season

STATS PERFORM/DPA
BERLIN

RECORD prize-money will be up for grabs on the PGA Tour next season amid the growing threat of the breakaway LIV Golf series.

Dustin Johnson, Brooks Koepka and Phil Mickelson are among the big names who have defected from the PGA Tour to sign hugely lucrative deals with the Saudi-backed LIV Golf. The PGA Tour on Monday revealed its 2022-23 schedule, which will see prize money for the 43 tournaments they run at \$428.6million.

Bonus pools will total \$145m, including \$75m for the FedExCup. There will be eight invitational events spread throughout the schedule.

The FedEx St. Jude Championship, BMW Championship and TOUR Championship will be the three FedExCup Playoffs events.

Just 70 players will earn a spot in the first Playoffs event in a change to the qualification criteria.

PGA Tour commissioner Jay Monahan said: "We've heard from our fans and the overwhelming sentiment was that they wanted more consequences for both the FedExCup Regular Season and the Playoffs, and to further strengthen events that traditionally feature top players competing head-to-head."

'I played like a captain' - Stenson after LIV Bedminster win

STATS PERFORM/DPA
BERLIN

HENRIK Stenson could not resist taking a dig at his Ryder Cup predicament after winning his debut event on the breakaway golf tour at LIV Golf Bedminster, saying "I guess we can agree I played like a captain."

Stenson - who was sensationally stripped of his Ryder Cup captaincy after announcing he would leave the PGA Tour - was a wire-to-wire winner in the 54-hole event, shooting a seven-under 64 in his opening round, before following it with a pair of 69s.

He finished two strokes ahead of Matthew Wolff and Dustin Johnson at nine under, with Carlos Ortiz (eight under) and Patrick Reed (sev-



Henrik Stenson won his debut event on the breakaway golf tour at LIV Golf Bedminster.

en under) rounding out the top-five, and a further three-stroke buffer to sixth.

Speaking immediately after sinking his winning putt, Stenson said it was pleasing to per-

form so well after such a hectic couple of weeks, but only after taking a shot at those in charge of his Ryder Cup ban.

"Yeah, I guess we can agree I played like a captain,"

he said, before acknowledging Ian Poulter is the captain of his Majestic GC team.

"It's been a busy 10 days, and I'm extremely proud that I managed to focus as well as I did. I was a little wobbly coming home here - I haven't finished the deal in a couple of years with any wins - so it's always a little added pressure when you're up in contention, but I did well." For the win, Stenson pocketed a \$4.375million cheque, as well as a \$375,000 bonus for his team finishing in second-place, only trailing Dustin Johnson's 4 Aces GC, which included Pat Perez at five over.

Stenson is understood to have accepted a signing-on fee to join LIV Golf in the region of \$50 million, according to ESPN's report.

DONALD REPLACES STENSON AS EUROPEAN RYDER CUP CAPTAIN

LONDON: Luke Donald was named Europe's Ryder Cup captain on Monday for next year's contest in Rome after Henrik Stenson was stripped of the role. Stenson was appointed captain on March 15, but the Swede's tenure lasted just 127 days before he was sacked for joining the Saudi-backed LIV Golf series. Donald, who was on the winning side in all four of his Ryder Cup appearances as a player, said: "I am incredibly proud to be named European Ryder Cup captain for 2023. "It is truly one of the greatest honours that can be bestowed

upon a golfer, to lead a team of your peers and be an ambassador for an entire continent.

"I feel extremely privileged to have been given that responsibility and it is a responsibility I do not take lightly. "Some of my best experiences in golf have been in the Ryder Cup and I would not swap those for anything. It is an event like no other and I cannot wait to create more special memories in Italy next year." Donald's appointment came just hours after Stenson pocketed 4.375million US dollars on his LIV debut, the 46-year-old winning the individu-

al event and finishing second in the team competition at Trump National Golf Club.

That was described as "the greatest F/U in the history of Golf" on Twitter by Donald Trump Jr, whose father - former US president Donald Trump - owns the course in New Jersey. Donald was on the winning side in 2004, 2006, 2010 and 2012 and was also a vice-captain to Thomas Bjorn for the 2018 win in Paris. The 44-year-old's first taste of defeat in the biennial contest came in the same role under Padraig Harrington at Whistling Straits last year, when

the United States stormed to a record 19-9 victory.

Five members of the European team have defected to LIV - Sergio Garcia, Lee Westwood, Paul Casey, Ian Poulter and Bernd Wiesberger - while Americans Dustin Johnson, Bryson DeChambeau and Brooks Koepka have joined the controversial breakaway. The trio have been indefinitely suspended from the PGA Tour and are therefore, as things stand, ineligible for the Ryder Cup, while it remains unclear if the European rebels will be able to qualify.

(PA Media/DPA)