

Qatar stay perfect in AFC U20 Asian Cup Uzbekistan Qualifiers

AFC

ARAD (BAHRAIN)

QATAR qualified for the AFC U20 Asian Cup Uzbekistan 2023 Finals after defeating Bahrain 2-0, while Bangladesh defeated Nepal 3-0 in Group B of the Qualifiers at the Sheikh Ali Bin Mohammed Al Khalifa Stadium on Sunday.

Qatar signed off with a perfect tally of 12 points while Bahrain look set to miss out on the Finals following the defeat.

Qatar produced a solid second half display to see off Bahrain 2-0 to earn a spot in Uzbekistan 2023.

Qatar came into the tie with a perfect record, while Bahrain needed a win to qualify but neither team was able to find the back of the net in the opening

“

We came to Bahrain with great ambitions. All the four matches were tough but we were able to come out victorious. I am confident they will show a good performance in the finals too.

Qatar U20 coach Inaki Gonzalez

45 minutes.

Midfielder Jassem Alsharshani put Qatar ahead two minutes into the restart before Alhashmi Mohialdin sealed the three points with his 52nd minute effort.

Qatar U20 coach Inaki



The Qatar U20 football team celebrates at the Sheikh Ali Bin Mohammed Al Khalifa Stadium in Arad, Bahrain on Sunday after defeating the hosts 2-0.

Gonzalez praised Al Annabi for their outstanding performance in the tournament.

“We worked hard for the event and I am proud of my

players. I am confident they will show a good performance in the finals too. We came to Bahrain with great ambitions. All the four matches were

tough but we were able to come out victorious owing to teamwork,” said Gonzalez.

Nepal 0-3 Bangladesh

Both sides were playing for pride with Bangladesh having only a point to their name while Nepal had suffered three defeats going into the tie.

Bangladesh started on the front foot with Md Mojibor Jony finding the back of the net as early as the sixth minute before Md Piash Nova doubled their advantage four minutes later.

Nepal were overwhelmed by their opponents as they continued to struggle in the second half with Bangladesh sealing the win through Sajed Hasan Nijum's 52nd minute strike.

The 10 group winners and five best second-placed teams join hosts Uzbekistan in the Finals with Group H - to be contested by Australia, Iraq, India and Kuwait - to be decided in October.



Roger Federer on his arrival in London for Laver Cup.
 (Pic courtesy Tennis Channel)

Federer to make last-moment decision on Laver Cup: Fitness coach

STATS PERFORM/DPA
 BERLIN

ROGER Federer will make a “last-moment decision” on his participation in next week's Laver Cup, according to fitness coach Pierre Paganini.

The 20-time Grand Slam champion announced on Thursday he will retire from top-level tennis after the tournament at London's O2 Arena.

However, Federer has not competed since Wimbledon 2021, after which he underwent a third knee operation.

And Paganini has cast doubt over whether the Swiss will be able to link up with the likes of Novak Djokovic, Rafael Nadal and Andy Murray in what is supposed to be his farewell event.

“This will probably be a last-moment decision,” Paganini told Swiss newspaper Blick. “He's practised at a level in order to determine exactly if playing is a good idea or not.”

Federer is bringing down the curtain on a remarkable career that saw him win 103 ATP Tour-level titles - only Jimmy Connors (109) boasts more in the Open Era.

Among an array of other notable achievements, the 41-year-old spent a record 750 weeks in the top 10 of the men's singles rankings.

But Paganini says it “became clear a return to the Tour would be impossible” around July as injury problems took their toll on the all-time great.

In a more positive update, fellow coach Severin Luthi indicated Federer is on course to be fit to play at least some part in the Laver Cup.

“His aim is to play something, though whether it's singles or doubles we'll have to see,” Luthi told Blick. “His aim is still to play at the Laver Cup - definitely.”

“We train for three hours in the morning, then another two hours in the afternoon. He trained last week and is training again this week.”

Brazil goalkeeper faces stiff competition from Alisson and Ederson to claim the A Seleção No1 jersey

Lining up at Qatar 2022 would involve another long journey in Weverton's career and this time the destination is totally different and involves a very unique culture, but he is in a different place now and feels ready to embrace the challenge.

“I'm going to tell you a story that not many people have heard and one that my agent may not even be aware of. Before playing in La Copinha (the most prestigious youth competition in Brazil), I had a trial lined up at Sao Paulo,” Weverton, the Palmeiras and Brazil goalkeeper, tells FIFA+.

“I wasn't brave enough to tell my mum about it.”

This episode took place halfway through 2005, when the shot-stopper was coming up through the youth ranks at Atletico Clube Juventus in his native Acre, a region completely submerged in the Amazon rainforest and the least densely populated area in Brazil.

To a fresh-faced Weverton, leaving his hometown of Rio Branco to try his luck in bustling Sao Paulo, which has a population of over 12 million, was enough to strike “fear” into him.

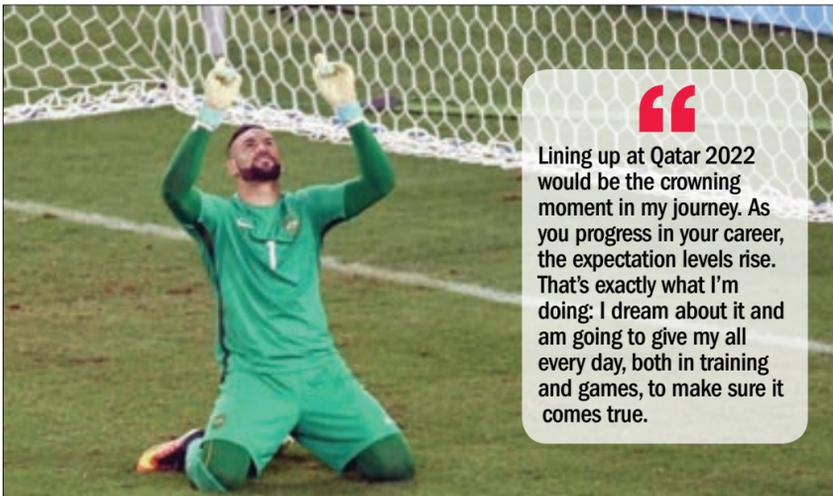
Instead of telling his mum, Josefa, directly about the opportunity, Weverton sought out his auntie to act as a go-between. The conversation between the sisters did not go all that well: “My mum got angry and said: ‘Come off it, what are you trying to do, kill him [laughter]?’ That conversation didn't go very well and I'm actually glad it didn't, because I wasn't keen on going for the trial.”

This tale tells us a lot about the rather unique career path of a player who only established himself as a goalkeeper at 15 and now harbours hopes of gracing his first FIFA World Cup at the ripe old age of 34. In an era when bright young things are unearthed at an increasingly earlier age, Weverton has no qualms in admitting that his on-field talents only emerged a decade after he let that opportunity slip through his hands. The talented keeper is now a Palmeiras legend, a two-time Copa Libertadores winner and an Olympic Gold medalist.

“Everything came together at the right time,” he says. “Looking back on things, I perhaps wasn't mature enough back then to be where I am today. I may have ended up losing my way and wouldn't have been capable of controlling everything that could have come my way.”

Megacity adventures

In terms of controlling his des-



Weverton.



Brazilian goalkeepers Alisson (left) and Weverton before the 2021 Copa America final against Argentina.

tiny, although Weverton passed up the chance to go for a trial at Sao Paulo, his potential earned him a second opportunity in the country's most populous city. The boy from Acre accepted the chance to line up for Juventus in the Copinha and bravely set out on a 3,500km bus journey that would last two days and three nights. Although his team finished bottom of their group, he shone so brightly in the game against the group winners, Corinthians - eternal enemies of both Sao Paulo and Palmeiras - that they moved quickly to secure his services days later.

Life at Corinthians proved to be far from easy, at least during his early days. “I escaped from the training centre and asked to go home because I missed my family,” recalls Weverton, who speaks of a close relationship with his mother, who passed away in 2020, and other family members. However, when the going got tough, he received the support he needed to pursue his dream. “I got used to things over time. I met people who have played a really important part in my life and they helped me out and took me home with them at weekends.”

Weverton goes on to reveal that his family acted as a source of motivation to keep him going

during those darker days. “I was raised by my granddad. I never had a dad and only met him when I was older. My mum always had to go out and get a job. I had to go to training on my own on a little bike,” he recalls. “When you've had that sort of upbringing, you have one wish in life and that's to be able to give your mum a house and get her out of that situation.”

The promising goalkeeper put in the hard yards to make up for his technical deficiencies and was drafted into the Corinthians first team in 2008. However, he soon realised that he had a long way to go before being ready to turn out for one of the country's heavyweights. As fourth-choice goalkeeper he realised that he had no chance of seeing any first-team action anytime soon and so sought pastures new and took what proved to be an inspired decision.

He spent time at four clubs before eventually returning to Sao Paulo in 2010 to sign for Portuguesa. His rise continued, with the team securing Brazil's Serie B title the following year, before making the move to fellow second-tier side Athletico Paranaense. During the course of 2013, he established himself as a top-flight goalkeeper and in 2016, his name regularly

“Lining up at Qatar 2022 would be the crowning moment in my journey. As you progress in your career, the expectation levels rise. That's exactly what I'm doing: I dream about it and am going to give my all every day, both in training and games, to make sure it comes true.”

cropped up in conversations surrounding the national-team squad and he was a last-minute inclusion to the Olympic team that did battle for glory on home soil. “That was a turning point,” he notes.

Fame at last

One of the over-23 berths at the Men's Olympic Football Tournament Rio 2016 was occupied by Palmeiras No1 Fernando Prass, only for an elbow injury to rule him out on the eve of the competition.

“I've got some really fun memories from the atmosphere in and around the camp at the Olympics. When we got out of the hotel, it was madness with Neymar and the rest of them. But when I came out, the fans were whispering between themselves and asking each other who I was. That same scene was repeated every single day.”

Things would be very different three weeks later after Weverton starred for the team that captured the one medal that had proved elusive in A Seleção's impressive trophy haul. In the penalty shoot-out in the showpiece against Germany, he saved Niels Petersen's spot-kick before wheeling away in celebration after Neymar converted his effort.

“When we returned home as champions, I think I was one of the last players to get off the bus. I could hear people cheering and I thought it must have been because Neymar was behind me, but I looked over my shoulder and could see that I was all alone. People now actually knew who I was.”

Sought-after silverware secured

Weverton's performances and calm approach in a situation of immense pressure impressed Tite and earned the goalie a call-up to the senior national side. His consistent displays also attracted the attention of Palmeiras, who signed him in late 2017. It was only following this move that his performances were, at long last, rewarded

with trophies.

At the first seven clubs he represented during his career, Weverton collected three pieces of silverware, one of which was a top-flight trophy. During his four-year stint with the Periquito Verde, he has added a further seven trophies to that haul, including the 2018 top-flight crown and the last two editions of the Copa Libertadores.

“You could say that I had one life up until I was 30 and another after that. In fact, things started to fall into place when I joined Palmeiras at that age and I started to win a lot of trophies,” he says.

Upon reflection, Weverton understands that his road to success, despite being long and winding, was the only route possible. “It all happened at the right time, it really did. I'm married and have three children and live a settled life. My career has played a massive part in that.”

Set for take-off

Palmeiras continued to rack up the trophies and club football was Weverton's main focus. However, his career path would soon involve the prospect of gracing the FIFA World Cup, a development that becomes all the more extraordinary when we consider that he is the only domestically-based player in many of Tite's squads.

Not only is Weverton intruding on this biggest of stages, he is also waging an intriguing battle with Liverpool and Manchester City goalkeepers Alisson and Ederson. He got the nod four times during qualifying in a rotation system masterminded by Tite and his goalkeeping coach, Claudio Taffarel. Meanwhile, he took his place between the sticks for June's friendly meeting with Korea Republic in Seoul.

“Being involved at the World Cup would be so satisfying. It's something I've always dreamt of because I've been part of the national team's journey. Being the only one [who plays domestically] is difficult for me to think about. It's perfectly normal that there are an increasing number of European-based players in the squad because our top stars emigrate at a young age. But if I had to bet on it, I'd say that there'll be more players in the squad who are based in Brazil and I'd be delighted to be one of them.”

Lining up at Qatar 2022 would involve another long journey in Weverton's career.

“It'd be the crowning moment in my journey,” he says. “As you progress in your career, the expectation levels rise, but that's something that you've always got to have in your life because it drives you on to achieve your dreams. That's exactly what I'm doing: I dream about it and am going to give my all every day, both in training and games, to make sure it comes true.”

'Irreproachable' Neymar gives PSG best balance: Galtier



Paris Saint-Germain's Argentine forward Lionel Messi (R) celebrates with Paris Saint-Germain's Brazilian forward Neymar (L) after scoring a goal during the French L1 match between Olympique Lyonnais (OL) and Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) at The Groupama Stadium in Decines-Charpieu, central-eastern France, on Sunday. (AFP)

STATS PERFORM/DPA PARIS

CHRISTOPHE Galtier has heaped praise on "irreproachable" Neymar following Paris Saint-Germain's 1-0 win over Lyon, suggesting the Brazil international gives the Ligue 1 leaders "the best balance."

Neymar marked his 100th appearance in the French top flight with an assist for Lionel Messi's fifth-minute strike at Groupama Stadium, meaning he has now been directly involved in 15 of his side's 26 goals this term (scoring eight and assisting four).

The former Barcelona forward took his tally of goal involvements to 121 in Ligue 1 (77 goals, 44 assists) - more than any other player in their first century of appearances since Opta began analysing the competition in 2006-07.

"It is he who gives [us] the best balance," Galtier said of Neymar during his press conference. "He is generous to the team."

"Obviously, the great players have to come out in this type of match."

"Neymar worked a lot for

the team, and he came off a little tired and angry. This is normal. He has an irreproachable behaviour."

"He is sharp and has a lot of ambition for the season - both with the club and in terms of personal statistics."

Despite dominating possession for long stretches, PSG had to fend off a determined Lyon in the second half to take maximum points, and extend their winning streak to six matches across all competitions.

But while admitting his side could have been more clinical, having converted only one of their 15 shots on goal, Galtier insists his side were worthy of their victory.

"We knew we were going to face a tough game, but we had a very good game," he added. "We can still regret the number of missed or stopped chances by Anthony [Lopes], who had a very good game. The score could have been wider."

"As long as you are at 1-0, you are not immune to a reaction, Lyon pushed for that. But over the whole game, both in possession of the ball and clear situations, we deserved our victory in my opinion."



Qatar to play Croatia in friendly today

TRIBUNE NEWS NETWORK
DOHA

THE Qatar national football team will play Croatia in a friendly on Tuesday at 7pm Doha Time at the Stadion Wiener Neustadt Stadium in Wiener Neustadt, Austria, as part of their preparations for the forthcoming FIFA World Cup 2022.

The two teams had previously met on June 30 last year at the Aldo Dorsena stadium in

the Croatian city of Pula, with Qatar winning 3-1.

The Qatari team will also play friendlies against Canada on September 23, and Chile on September 27.

All the three matches will be held in Austria where the Qatar team is currently based for a training camp.

The Qatar national football team had earlier trained at a camp in the Spanish city of Marbella in June.



beIN SPORTS to mark countdown with exclusive content line-up

BEIN SPORTS - the Official Broadcaster of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region - celebrates the two-month countdown to the historic tournament with a full-day of exciting exclusive sports and entertainment programming - scheduled for Tuesday, 20 September 2022.

Coverage starts on beIN SPORTS NEWS with Issue of the Day at 00:00 Mecca Time, followed by a 30-minute episode of Al Hassad at 01:00 Mecca.

At 19:00 Mecca, beIN SPORTS PREMIUM 1 and beIN SPORTS NEWS will broadcast a commemorative "Two-Month To Go" live three-hour studio for Arabic-speaking viewers and subscribers, that will include exclusive interviews with Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy spokespeople, who will be on hand to provide updates on the latest preparations and overall fan experience, as well as FIFA World Cup stars and former footballers from different countries. Moreover, beIN reporters will be on-ground to bring you fan reactions from across the region.

Over on beIN SPORTS ENGLISH 1, a corresponding "Two-Month To Go" studio will air live at 21:00 Mecca, presented by beIN's Aarran Summers with guests including Irish footballer, Jason McAteer, who played during the 1994 and 2002 FIFA World Cups and the former Paris Saint-Germain left-back, Didier Domi. For one hour, they will discuss various

topics about their own experience as former professional footballers, special moments from their careers, and their expectations about this year's FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022.

FIFA 2010 World Cup finalist Nigel De Jong and beIN SPORTS Presenter Nicky Crosby will provide viewers with an exclusive insight into the World Cup stadiums hosting the opening and the final games, Al Bayt and Lusail.

Moreover, football enthusiasts will hear from Kaylyn Kyle, who represented Canada in the 2015 FIFA Women's World Cup, on up-to-date Canada and US tournament preparations.

Throughout the day, the coverage will take place with a celebratory feel over beIN SPORTS and beIN SPORTS PREMIUM 1 in Arabic and over beIN SPORTS English 1 in English, with a content line-up of documentaries, interviews, exclusives, tournament updates from beIN's original programmes including "Welcome to Qatar", "Stars Align", "Postcards from Qatar", and "Memories and Dreams".

Mohammed Al Bader, Managing Director of beIN's MENA Channels, said: "We have been preparing for this moment for over ten years - and now, with just two-months-to-go, we are confident that our millions of viewers and subscribers will have an unparalleled viewing experience during the world's most prestigious event. We look forward to counting down the last few weeks with our audience and to putting on the greatest show on earth from November 20."

'Impossible to replace Benzema' but Real's Rodrygo savours derby goal

STATS PERFORM/DPA MADRID

RODRYGO considers Karim Benzema "impossible to replace", but the Brazilian is nevertheless giving his all to fill in for the injured Real Madrid striker.

Madrid's opener came from Rodrygo in their 2-1 derby triumph at Atletico Madrid on Sunday, as Carlo Ancelotti's side kept up their 100% record in LaLiga to top the table heading into the international break.

The Brazil international combined excellently with Aurelien Tchouameni to slot home in the 18th minute, before Federico Valverde made it 2-0 prior to the break.

Atleti fought back through Mario Hermoso's late goal, but it was not enough to inspire a full comeback - with the hosts' scorer subsequently sent off after picking up two bookings in as many minutes.

While captain Benzema is set to return after the international break, Ancelotti has been able to rely on Rodrygo to lead Madrid's line in the France frontman's absence, with the 21-year-old contributing to five goals in his last four LaLiga appearances.

Asked in an interview with Movistar+ how difficult it was to replace Benzema, Rodrygo said: "I've always had confidence, but last season I scored more goals at the end [of the campaign] and now I have scored them at the beginning as well."

"I'm coming off a very good season and I want to continue like this, because I [can get] even better."

"It's impossible to replace



Real Madrid's Brazilian forward Rodrygo (L) celebrates after scoring his team first goal during the Spanish League match against Club Atletico de Madrid at the Wanda Metropolitano stadium in Madrid on Sunday. (AFP)

Benzema, but I try and I think I'm doing well. I have to say that I do things differently to him, we have changed the style of play." Defender Dani Carvajal, meanwhile, said Rodrygo had given Madrid "wings in attack", even if Benzema was "fundamental" to Los Blancos.

Madrid have won all nine of their matches this season in all competitions, and they are the only side in Europe's top five leagues with a perfect record.

It marks the third time Madrid have won their first nine games in a single campaign after 1961-62 and 1968-69, when they won their opening 11 games in both campaigns.

"We are very happy. We started the season at 100%, winning everything," Rodrygo said. "We are going into the

break wanting to rest, play with our national teams and come back better."

Rodrygo celebrated his opener with compatriot Vinicius Junior, who in the wake of being crudely told to "stop playing the monkey" by a football agent in midweek, was the target of racist chanting from some Atleti supporters outside the Civitas Metropolitano prior to kick-off.

"It's a pleasure to play with him, something very special, without a doubt," said Rodrygo of his team-mate, who played a key role in Valverde's goal, hitting the post after a brilliant run, which enabled the midfielder to tuck home on the rebound.

The match was not without its contentious moments, with

Hermoso's second yellow particularly harsh. Having previously been booked for dissent, the centre-back was adjudged to have lashed out at Dani Ceballos, though replays showed it was a questionable decision.

"We have lost a very important match. We have not been so bad, we have not deserved the defeat, but it is football," Atleti goalkeeper Jan Oblak told Movistar+.

On Hermoso's red card, Oblak said: "I've seen the video. The referee was very close and I don't know what he saw, but it's his decision and on video it's easier than [live], it's true."

"It didn't have to be yellow, there were still three minutes left and we could have taken advantage."

Dier thankful to Conte, hopes England recall 'just a starting point'

STATS PERFORM/DPA LONDON

ERIC Dier has thanked Antonio Conte and his Tottenham team-mates for helping him earn a recall to the England squad, which he hopes is "just a starting point."

Spurs defender Dier has been called up by Gareth Southgate for the upcoming Nations League matches with Italy and Germany.

The most recent of his 45 caps came in November 2020, but an upturn in form at club level has Dier in contention for a World Cup spot.

Dier's improved performances have coincided with the appointment of Conte last November, and the 28-year-old is confident he can continue his upward trajectory. "I am just looking forward to going and



Tottenham Hotspur's English defender Eric Dier (R) celebrates scoring during the Premier League match against Leicester City in London on Saturday. (AFP)

I think as my manager [Conte] said during the week, for me it is my ambition for this just to be a starting point for me," he said.

"I think I can still do a lot more. Honestly, [a recall] wasn't what I was thinking about. "I was just thinking

about being as good a player as I can be for Tottenham and everything else that happens is a consequence of that."

"I think that's the only thing I had to focus on and the only thing that was in my control. Everything else that happens, happens."

"I'm just thankful for the way my team-mates, coaching staff and everyone at Tottenham has supported me, pushed me and tried to help me get back to the national team." Dier started all four of England's matches at Euro 2016 and was used six times at the 2018 World Cup, but he was not part of Southgate's squad for Euro 2020.

He is back involved with the Three Lions after performing at a consistent level across Tottenham's nine games this season, during which he has

scored twice.

The most recent of those goals came in Saturday's 6-2 win against Leicester City, with Son Heung min grabbing the headlines after scoring a 13-minute hat-trick.

And Dier joked Son, who was dropped for the first time this season after failing to score in his first eight outings, should start on the substitutes' bench regularly.

"We told him the manager should drop him more often if he scores a hat-trick every half an hour," Dier said.

"Everyone is delighted for him. Obviously for someone who lives for scoring goals it has been a difficult start to the season."

"I think that's no secret. But he's come back in an emphatic way - the floodgates have opened."

Al Janoub Stadium: An architectural gem paying tribute to Zaha Hadid

Designed by the late British-Iraqi architect Zaha Hadid, Al Janoub Stadium in Al Wakrah was officially inaugurated on 16th May 2019 when it hosted the Amir Cup final. Here's a closer look at the venue that is set to host seven matches during the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022.

Design

Located 23km from central Doha, the stadium's design is inspired by traditional dhow boats that pay tribute to Al Wakrah's maritime history, with the futuristic design seamlessly connecting tradition with modernity.

"When Zaha Hadid studied the city of Al Wakrah and the area surrounding the stadium, she was inspired to integrate seafaring elements into the design, shaping the exterior to look like a pearl, and the interior to look like a dhow boat," said Abdulaziz Al Ishaq, the stadium's Facilities Management Director.

Capacity: The stadium will host



40,000 fans during Qatar 2022.

Transport

Al Janoub Stadium is easily accessible by road or metro. Al Wakrah station, on the Doha Metro Red Line, is just 4.5km away. Shuttle bus services will transport fans to and from the metro on match days.

Location and legacy After the World Cup, around 20,000 seats from the upper tiers will be donated to

support football development projects overseas. The remaining 20,000-capacity venue will be used for football and other sporting events.

During legacy mode, the stadium will become a sporting hub for the Al Wakrah community. Additional facilities are being developed in the stadium precinct, including a cycling and running track. The precinct will also feature a host of other community facilities, including a mosque,



multipurpose indoor arena, a school and wedding hall. The stadium precinct also includes Al Janoub Park – a green space featuring both recreational and children's play areas.

"Al Janoub Stadium's location was strategically chosen in order to serve the people of Al Wakrah and those in surrounding areas, as they represent a large demographic of Qatar's population," said Al Ishaq.

Sustainability

Al Janoub Stadium has achieved three sustainability certifications: Global Sustainability Assessment System (GSAS) Design & Build Certificate (four stars), GSAS Construction Management Certificate (Class A* rating), and a Seasonal Energy Efficiency ratio certificate for the energy centre.

The stadium's roof also contributes to its sustainability. The magnificent steel structure

provides shade to parts of the pitch which contributes to the efficiency of the stadium's innovative cooling system.

Contractors

The Al Janoub Stadium project was managed by KEO International Consultants. MIDMAC, Sixco and PORR Qatar were the main project contractors.

Tournament mode

During the FIFA World Cup, Al Janoub Stadium will host seven matches through to the round of 16 stage, including:

- 22 November: France v Australia (Group D)
- 24 November: Switzerland v Cameroon (Group G)
- 26 November: Tunisia v Australia (Group D)
- 28 November: Cameroon v Serbia (Group G)
- 30 November: Australia v Denmark (Group D)
- 2 December: Ghana v Uruguay (Group H)
- 5 December: Round of 16 (Group E winner v Group F runner-up). (SC)

Ooredoo Cup: Al Sadd beat Al Sailiya 4-0 in opener

Qatar SC bt Al Wakrah 3-1; Umm Salal edge Al Ahli 2-1

TRIBUNE NEWS NETWORK
DOHA

AL Sadd defeated defending champions Al Sailiya 4-0 in the opening match of Group A of the 2022-2023 season Ooredoo Cup at the Al Ahli Stadium on Monday.

All of Al Sadd's goals came in the second half with Hassan Ahmed (57th minute), Santi Cazorla (75th minute), Faisal Mohammed (89th minute), and Rodrigo Tabata (90+3 minute) getting the goals.

It was a resounding start for Al Sadd, who had first emerged as the champions when the tournament's title name was changed from QSL Cup to Ooredoo Cup in the 2019-2020 season.

Al Sadd, however, had to work hard with many of their efforts in the first half failing to yield any result. Their stars Rodrigo Tabata and Santi Cazorla came close to scoring on at least four occasions with one Tabata free-kick (38th minute) being saved off by goalkeeper Abdraman Mahamat Aziz, who dived to his left.

In another chance, Cazorla's left-footed curling kick from well outside the box hit the bottom of the left goal post in the 43rd minute.

Al Sailiya also came close to scoring in the added time of the first half but Ahmad Yasser Sebaie's kick was well stopped by Al Sadd goalkeeper Jehad Mohammad Hudib.

The scenario soon changed



Al Sadd players celebrate one of their four goals against Al Sailiya in their first round Group A match of the Ooredoo Cup at the Al Ahli stadium on Monday.

as Al Sadd came out blazing in the second session with Hassan Ahmed breaking the deadlock. He struck after being provided with a fine pass by Ahmad Mohammed Alsaeed once inside the penalty area.

Cazorla then scored from a free-kick from near and left outside of the box which went past a three-man wall and through the goalkeeper's legs.

Faisal Mohammed then added to the lead making good of a chance inside the danger zone.

Tabata's efforts were also rewarded in the end as he ran in to collect a good pass to slam in from the left.

Qatar SC score exciting 3-1 win over Al Wakrah

Qatar SC scored an exciting 3-1 win over Al Wakrah in their Group A match of Ooredoo Cup 2022-2023 season played at the Hamad Bin Khalifa Stadium on Monday.

Underlining their prowess, Qatar SC gained three points from the positive result with the goals for them being scored by Javier Martinez (25th minute), Sebastian Soria (38th minute), and by Matheus Dos Santos (90th minute)

For Al Wakrah, the consolation goal came via a penalty kick taken by Ismail Mahmoud in the 73rd minute.

While luck eluded Al Wakrah, their rivals attacked from both the flanks and succeeded twice from superb corner kicks. The first was headed in by Martinez, who judged and jumped perfectly to lob the ball in to the top left corner of the net. The second was seemed like a repeat act, but this time Soria was well positioned to seize the chance and his header went in despite goalkeeper Mohamed Saeed Ibrahim punching the ball with his right hand.

The twin-blow was hot

to handle but Al Wakrah did make big efforts to bounce back. They won a penalty and pulled one back but could not manage to get an equalizer.

Towards the end, Matheus Dos Santos scored the third goal for the winners after initiating the move himself. He passed the ball, ran into the 'D' and was given a cross by substitute Youssef Mohamed Ali to do the rest.

Umm Salal prevail over Al Ahli

In the third match of the day played at the Saoud bin Abdulrahman Stadium, Umm Salal scored through Nasser Al Nasser (12') and Ilyes Brimil (44') to start their campaign on a winning note.

Al Ahli got one when Yousef Omar scored an own goal in 38th minute.

Umm Salal will now meet Qatar SC in their second group match on September 25.

Frenchman Koude on joining Barcelona over Chelsea: 'I preferred Xavi's speech'

STATS PERFORM/DPA
MADRID

JULES Koude opted to join Barcelona over Chelsea as he "preferred Xavi's speech" to Thomas Tuchel's.

The France international had looked set to sign for Chelsea during the most recent transfer window, only to put pen to paper on a five-year deal at Camp Nou.

Sevilla director of football Monchi suggested at the time that Barca pounced for Koude after Chelsea had withdrawn their offer due to "having doubts."

However, in an interview with French outlet L'Equipe, Koude insisted the decision was his own after being wooed by Barca head coach Xavi.

"First, I have come to a huge club, which has known



Barcelona's French defender Jules Koude during Spanish League match against Elche CF at Camp Nou stadium in Barcelona on Saturday. (AFP)

good times and which, lately, has had less," he said.

"I come to a project that I would not call reconstruction, because we already have a competitive team, but rather, being updated.

"I was interested in being

part of this new wave, in search of titles, and to put Barca back where it has always been, among the best clubs.

"Then there was the conversation with the coach. We talked about football. I felt a real confidence from him, that

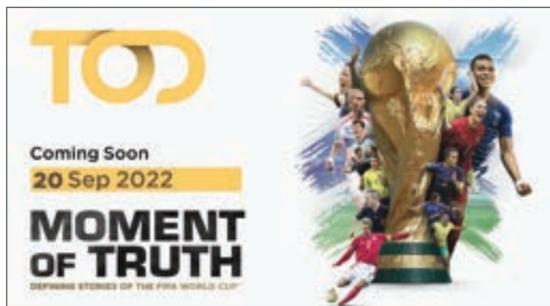
he had a real knowledge of myself, my game and my qualities.

"I spoke with Tuchel and I also felt that he wanted me to come, but I simply preferred Xavi's speech."

Chelsea have made a slow start to the 2022-23 season and recently brought an end to Tuchel's 20-month tenure.

Despite their high-profile financial issues, meanwhile, Barca have made a strong start to their campaign and are two points off LaLiga leaders Real Madrid after six matches.

Koude was registered by Barcelona at the end of August, a month after joining, and has helped the Catalan giants to four clean sheets in his five appearances. Indeed, the five clean sheets Barca have kept in their opening six league matches is a tally they did not reach until 21 games played last season.



Moment Of Truth docuseries recalling top World Cup moments exclusively on TOD

TOD, a leading sports and entertainment OTT platform for the MENA region, announced the release of an exclusive series – "Moment of Truth" highlighting defining stories from previous World Cups. Given billions of people's obsession with football, FIFA World Cup tournaments are one of the most anticipated sporting events on the planet.

The series 'Moment of Truth' dissects this obsession by exploring famous tales from the FIFA World Cup's past offering insightful analysis through the lens of human endeavour.

TOD will premiere the first episode on Tuesday, 20th September, and subsequent episodes will be made available every Friday following the FIFA countdown, with the series finale being streamed on 18th November 2022.

Distributed by Sony Pictures Entertainment, 'Moment of truth' is produced by Whisper Productions in collaboration with FIFA. Composed of 10 episodes, the series is narrated by British actor and presenter - David Harewood. Viewers from the region can enjoy the series with Arabic subtitles.

Its first episode titled "Absolution" narrates tales of villains turned World Cup heroes. Featuring David Beckham's moment of madness for England, France's unlikely semi-final savior, and Ronaldo's mysterious omission from Brazil's final line-up, those closest to the players reveal insider details about how the World Cup greats bounced back from their disappointments.

Moment of Truth features interviews with legendary players Cafu (Brazil), Andrés Iniesta (Spain), Hope Solo (USA), Michael Owen (England), Ricky Villa (Argentina), Claudio Gentile (Italy), Marcel Desailly (France), Bebeto (Brazil), and Philipp Lahm (Germany).

Fans, commentators, and world-leading psychologists also give their take on the career-defining redemption stories that only the FIFA World Cup can provide.

Whisper Productions in collaboration with FIFA, Final Replay and Sony Pictures Television announce new 10-part series, streaming exclusively on TOD for MENA viewers; The series reveals iconic, surprising, and a few unheard tales from past FIFA World Cups

Mark Cole, Managing Director, Whisper, said, "sport generates and ignites emotion like no other – especially football.

"In Moment of Truth, we speak to those who lived through massive moments in World Cup history. Using incredible archive from FIFA, sporting stars such as Andres Iniesta, Lothar Matthäus, Aya Miyama and Michael Owen, explain the fervour, joy and genius that drove them, as we seek to uncover why football makes us all care so much and so passionately."

Commenting on the exclusive series on TOD, John Paul Mckerlie, VP Marketing and Sales at TOD, said, "Nothing excites a FIFA fan more than untold inside stories, anecdotes and behind the scenes efforts that teams put together for the 90 minute on-field thrill. 'Moment of Truth' beautifully brings out the passion, persistence, and faith that players, teams and fans have in the spirit of football, and TOD is thrilled to stream this spectacular series for the MENA region.

For a football aficionado, this series is an absolute unmissable one."

Following the series' finale on 18th November, TOD will go on to stream the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 for the MENA region. The platform integrates latest technologies and is available for download on all prominent Android and iOS devices in the region.

It houses premium live and recorded sports along with 35,000+ hours of entertainment content, spanning English, Arabic and Turkish blockbusters and series.



Bangladesh pacer Rubel Hossain says goodbye to Test cricket

ANI
DHAKA

BANGLADESH pacer Rubel Hossain on Monday announced his retirement from Test cricket.

Taking to Facebook, he announced his retirement and said that he wanted to give youngsters a chance to represent Bangladesh. Hossain took to his Facebook account and wrote, "Assalam Alaikum. I wanted to inform you about something. I have officially submitted a letter to the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) and decided to retire from Test cricket."

"The longer version of cricket plays a big role in strengthening the national team's pipeline. I think our pipeline will strengthen more if the young pacers get more opportunities. In order to provide the youngsters more opportunities in the red-ball format, I have decided to retire from Test cricket," he added.

Hossain made his Test format debut in 2009 and represented Bangladesh in 27 Tests over the span of 13 years. The pacer scalped 36 wickets in his Test career with the best figure of 5/166 - his one and only five-wicket haul.

"I was able to able to play 27 Tests for Bangladesh, which is a big achievement for me. Those who have helped me during my journey with the red ball cricket, I am grateful to all of them and I hope I will get your support in the coming days as well. I may have retired from Test cricket but I believe I still have a lot to give in the ODI and T20I formats for Bangladesh.

Bangladesh pacer said that he will continue to play in the Dhaka Premier League, Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) along with other white-ball tournaments. "I will continue playing in the Dhaka Premier League (DPL), the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) along with the other white-ball tournaments."

Quick read

Pakistan unveil new jersey for T20 World Cup

PAKISTAN team's jersey for the upcoming ICC T20 World Cup 2022 was unveiled on Monday. The Pakistan Cricket Board took to Instagram to reveal the jersey in a video and captioned it: "The Big Reveal! Presenting the official Pakistan T20I Thunder Jersey'22." The front of the jersey has two shades of green - light and dark - while the sleeves feature dark forest green colour. The Babar Azam-led Pakistan will take on India in their tournament opener on October 23. (ANI)

T20Is: India aim for good start against Australia

ANI
MOHALI

THE first T20I of the three-match series between India and Australia will start in Mohali on Tuesday and it will be on the mind of Men in Blue to head into the ICC T20 World Cup 2022 after downing the defending champions in home conditions.

India will start off their home series against Australia on September 20. The next T20I will be played in Nagpur on September 23, followed by the third and final T20I in Hyderabad on September 25.

Though India could not progress past the Super Four phase of Asia Cup 2022, they have some positives coming into this series.

The biggest of them all is Virat Kohli regaining his form. Kohli scored 276 runs in five innings during the Asia Cup, which included one century, a highly-anticipated one and two half-centuries.

The way ball found the middle of his bat was a sight not seen since a long while and fans would be hoping that they get to see more of it.

Openers KL Rahul and skipper Rohit Sharma will have to lay a solid foundation for a big score by giving a positive start, filled with the attacking brand of cricket they are known for. KL though will have to score well in all three matches with a superb strike rate as he has been blowing hot and cold since his return from injury, which has put his opening slot at risk.

This series is a chance for in-form middle-order batters like Suryakumar Yadav, Deepak Hooda, Hardik Pandya and Rishabh Pant to score big against a world-class team which currently has the biggest prize in T20I cricket. Pant has



India players attend a practice session at the Punjab Cricket Association Stadium in Mohali, near Chandigarh, on Monday, the eve of their first Twenty20 International against Australia. (AFP)

scored heavily against Australia historically and it would be his chance to prove his worth as a T20I player, a format in which he has struggled.

Indian bowling attack has been boosted by the returns of pacers Jasprit Bumrah and Harshal Patel.

They both will be looking forward to get among wickets on their return as the World Cup approaches. Other pacers Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Deepak Chahar and spinners Axar Patel, Yuzvendra Chahal will have to do well as well.

Australia on the other hand is coming to the series after

some T20I series win throughout the year and a 3-0 win over New Zealand in ODIs. A lot of eyes will be on globetrotting power-hitter Tim David, who has been included in the Australian squad.

He could be really dangerous with his no-look shots, big sixes and Indian bowlers will have to beware of him.

Skipper Aaron Finch will have to rectify his poor run of form by scoring against India to boost his side's chances in the series and World Cup as well. This series will also be an opportunity for star batter Steve Smith to establish himself as

a T20I player.

Though Australia will miss stars like Mitchell Marsh, David Warner and Marcus Stoinis, this series will be a good opportunity for the likes of all-rounders Cameron Green and Daniel Sams, batter Josh Inglis, pacer Nathan Ellis to present their case as the future of Men in Yellow.

Australia have travelled to the sub-continent with a top-class bowling attack consisting of Josh Hazlewood, Sean Abbott, Adam Zampa and Pat Cummins. With their quality, they can wreak havoc in any conditions.

India squad for Australia T20I series:

Rohit Sharma (Captain), KL Rahul (vice-captain), Virat Kohli, Suryakumar Yadav, Deepak Hooda, Rishabh Pant (wicket-keeper), Dinesh Karthik (wicket-keeper), Hardik Pandya, R. Ashwin, Yuzvendra Chahal, Axar Patel, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Harshal Patel, Deepak Chahar, Jasprit Bumrah, Umesh Yadav.

Australia squad: Sean Abbott, Ashton Agar, Pat Cummins, Tim David, Nathan Ellis, Aaron Finch (c), Cameron Green, Josh Hazlewood, Josh Inglis, Glenn Maxwell, Kane Richardson, Daniel Sams, Steve Smith, Matthew Wade, Adam Zampa.

Smith wins LIV Golf Chicago for maiden victory on breakaway tour

STATS PERFORM/DPA
NEW YORK

CAMERON Smith proved too good for the field at LIV Golf Chicago as the Australian scored a three-shot win for his maiden triumph on the new tour.

Smith, the reigning Open and Players champion, posted a three-under 69 in his third trip around Rich Harvest Farms, with six birdies and three bogeys seeing him finish at 13 under overall.

He started his round in a wobbly fashion, with two bogeys in his first six holes, but steadied down the stretch to fend off any late drama. Smith birdied his final two holes and capped the win with a long-range putt, living up to his reputation as arguably the world's best putter.

Smith pockets \$4 million, but during his interview after stepping off the 18th green he said this week was about proving how good he is, no matter where he is playing.

"I think I had to prove to probably myself and some

other people that I'm a great player, and I'm still out here to win golf tournaments," Smith said.

"I'm proud of how I hung in there today, I didn't have my best stuff for the first eight or nine holes, but I stuck it tough and made a few good putts coming in - it was nice."

Smith fended off a late push from Dustin Johnson, who finished tied for second at 10 under, and said he hopes the two of them can build a friendly rivalry as LIV's top two players.

"I think so, he's probably the one in the group of players here who you look at and think he's going to be close to the top of the leaderboard every week," Smith said. "I hope he thinks the same about me, and hopefully we can keep it going."

While Johnson fell just short in the individual play, he converted a crucial birdie on the final hole to secure the fourth consecutive team title for 4 Aces GC, edging out Smash GC, who were able to count on the other player tied for second place, Peter Uihlein.



Team captain Cameron Smith of Punch GC reacts after winning the individual title on the 18th green during Day Three of the LIV Golf Invitational - Chicago at Rich Harvest Farms in Illinois, on Sunday. (Getty/AFP)

"It feels good, obviously this one was really close and came down to the wire," Johnson said. "I knew we were one

up on Peter [Uihlein]'s team, so I needed to tie or beat him on the last hole, and we both made nice up-and-downs.

"It feels great to get another team win - but a little disappointed with the way I played today, and yesterday."

We showed character in ODIs against England: Harmanpreet

ANI
HOVE (UK)

FOLLOWING her side's seven-wicket win over England in the first ODI, Indian skipper Harmanpreet Kaur said that her side showed a lot of character.

Half-centuries from opener Smriti Mandhana, captain Harmanpreet Kaur and wicketkeeper-batter Yastika Bhatia powered India to a seven-wicket win over England in the first ODI held in Hove on Sunday.

"We are very happy with the support we have got, very motivating. Very important win, we showed the character we were talking about in the T20Is. It was a crucial toss to win, and then there was a great bowling



India's Harmanpreet Kaur during her unbeaten 74-run knock against England in Hove on Sunday.

partnership between Meghna and Jhulan," said Kaur in a post-match presentation.

"I think everyone who came on gave us breakthroughs. (On Deepti Sharma) She is a very smart cricketer, she was doing what we were telling her to bowl.

"I think there was a great partnership between Yastika and Smriti, happy with the way I batted as well. Very important to get amongst the runs," she added.

With this victory, Team India has a 1-0 lead in the three-match series.

Put into bat, the England eyes posted 227/7 in their 50 overs. Alice Davidson-Richards (50*) and Danni Wyatt (43) were the top scorers for the hosts.

Sophie Ecclestone (31) and Charlotte Dean (24*) helped enough during the final overs to push England to a respectable score.

Deepti Sharma was the pick of the bowlers with the spell of 2/33.

Jhulan Goswami, Meghna Singh, Rajeshwari Gayakwad, Sneha Rana and Harleen Deol got one wicket each.

Chasing 228, fifties from Mandhana (91), Harmanpreet (74*) and Yastika Bhatia (50) helped India brush off the English challenge in 44.2 overs with seven wickets intact.

Kate Cross was England's pick among bowlers with figures of 2/43.

Charlotte Dean also took one wicket.