



Qatar International Baja boosted by FIA T3 and T4 categories global strength

● Saudi's Al Saif and Seidan top FIA World and Middle East T3 rankings

● Young Spaniard Pau Navarro and Kuwait's Al Dhafeeri ahead in T4

● Lusail Boulevard to host ceremonial start on Thursday evening

TRIBUNE NEWS NETWORK LUSAIL

THE record entry for this weekend's Qatar International Baja has been boosted by the global strength and popularity of the FIA T3 category for light-weight prototype machines and the secondary FIA T4 section for modified production side-by-side vehicles.

The Qatar Motor and Motorcycle Federation (QMMF) announced on Monday that 21 vehicles had been entered in T3 with a further 13 in T4, although Saudi Arabia's Saleh Al Saif has since confirmed that he will not be able to attend the event and defend his early lead in the T3 category of the FIA World Cup for Cross-Country Bajas.

The FIA T3 class is booming, largely due to the success of the South Racing and FN Speed Can-Am Maverick X3s, the new X-raid Yamaha YXZ 1000 R prototype, the Xtreme-Plus Polaris RZR, the PH-Sport Zephyr and the G Rally Team's OT3.

In Al Saif's absence, the defending champion Fernando Alvarez has the perfect opportunity to move ahead in the rankings. The Spaniard finished second at the opening event in Saudi Arabia and only trails Al Saif by eight points heading into what is sure to be a challenging weekend coping with the heat, possible winds and the tricky navigation that makes Qatar's Baja such a challenge.

Dania Akeel finished as runner-up to Alvarez last season and will be looking to recover quickly from a disappointing Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge in her Can-Am. The Saudi holds third in the rankings, three points clear of the Dutch businessman Kees Koolen in his G Rally Team OT3.

Other regular championship contenders present include Spain's Santiago Navarro, Brazilian Otavio Sousa, Argentina's Hector Diego Martinez and Kuwait's Meshari Al Thefiri.



Saudi Arabia's Dania Akeel, who finished second last season in FIA T3 class, in her Can-Am.



Kuwait's Meshari Al Thefiri.

Yasir Seaidan leads the FIA Middle East's T3 category but is not present at the Qatar Baja. His absence paves the way for fellow countrymen Hamad Al Harbi and Abdullah Al Shegawi to battle it out for valuable points against a fierce local line-up.

The QMMF has entered seven Can-Ams for a selection of Qatar's leading drivers and former FIA World T2 Champion Adel Abdulla, Rashid Al Muhannadi, Mohammed Al Meer and Nouef Hassan Al Suwaidi are registered to score points in the FIA Middle East Cup, along with Lebanon's Henry Kahy, a former FIA MERC3 champion.

The remaining three

QMMF drivers, Abdulaziz Al Kuwari, Nasser Al Kuwari and Ahmed Al Muhannadi, are registered for the FIA World Cup, alongside Frenchman Lionel Baud in a second OT3, Frenchman Jean-Luc Ceccaldi in a PH-Sport Zephyr and Portuguese privateer Mario Franco (Yamaha YXZ 1000 R).

Spaniard Pau Navarro holds a six-point advantage over Frenchman Jeremie Warnia in the FIA World Cup's T3 standings. But the young FN Speed Team Can-Am driver faces a strong field in Qatar that includes Warnia and his other title rivals - Brazilian Cristiano de Sousa, Uruguay's Luis Henderson, Italy's Pietro

Cinotto and Spain's Ricardo Ramilo.

Kuwait's Salem Al Dhafeeri arrives in Lusail with a five-point advantage over Saudi female driver Maha Al Hameli in the FIA Middle East Cup's T4 championship.

Adding strength to the T4 category are a quartet of local drivers registered for the FIA Middle East Cup, with former biker and quad rider Ahmed Al Kuwari leading the way in his Yamaha.

He is joined by Khalid Al Mohannadi (Polaris), Abdullah Al Khelaifi (Yamaha) and Mohammed Al Attiyah (Can-Am). Italy's Stefano Marrini has also entered in a Can-Am.



Spaniard Fernando Alvarez, who is currently second in T3, and leads the challenge in Saudi Saleh Al Saif's absence.



Nasser Al Kuwari of Qatar.

FIA World Cup for Cross-Country Bajas

T3 positions after round 1:

1. Saleh Al Saif (SAU) 38pts
2. Fernando Alvarez (ESP) 30pts
3. Dania Akeel (SAU) 25pts
4. Kees Koolen (NLD) 22pts
5. Santiago Navarro (ESP) 18pts
6. Otavio Sousa (BRA) 17pts
7. Hector Diego Martinez (ARG) 11pts
8. Meshari Al Thefiri (KWT) 9pts

T4 positions after round 1:

1. Pau Navarro (ESP) 38pts
2. Jeremie Warnia (FRA) 32pts
3. Michele Cinotto (ITA) 24pts
4. Ricardo Ramilo (ESP) 22pts
5. Cristiano de Sousa Batista (BRA) 18pts
6. Luis Henderson (URY) 16pts

FIA Middle East Cup for Cross-Country Bajas

- ##### T3 positions after round 1:
1. Yasir Seaidan (SAU) 40pts
 2. Hamad Al Harbi (SAU) 33pts
 3. Abdullah Al Shegawi (SAU) 26pts

T4 positions after round 1:

1. Salem Al Dhafeeri (KWT) 38pts
2. Maha Al Hameli (SAU) 33pts
3. Saeed Al Mourri (SAU) 28pts

The competitive action gets underway with a Prologue stage on Thursday from 14.15hrs onwards. This precedes the ceremonial start at a new location on Lusail Boulevard, starting with the motorcycles and quads from 19.30hrs.

On Wednesday, administration checks and scrutineering will take place at Lusail before several of the leading riders and drivers attend the official pre-event press conference from 18.00hrs at the Lusail Sports Complex.



India Maharajas' Robin Uthappa and Gautam Gambhir share a word during their unbeaten 159-run stand as Asia Lions' Sohail Tanvir reacts in the Legends League Cricket Masters match at the Asian Town International Stadium on Tuesday.

Vintage Uthappa-Gambhir show sets Asian Town Stadium alight as India Maharajas tame Asia Lions

VINAY NAYUDU DOHA

ROLLICKING vintage stuff from opener Robin Uthappa and skipper Gautam Gambhir and their unbeaten 159-run partnership saw India Maharajas breeze to a smashing 10-wicket win over Asia Lions in the Legends Cricket League (LLC) Masters at the Asian Town International Stadium on Tuesday.

Blazing drives, cuts and pulls provided the thrills to a large crowd as Uthappa cracked 88 not out off just 39 balls with 11 fours and 5 big sixes while Gambhir made 61 not out off 36 balls with 12 sterling fours in a total of 12.3 overs to overhaul Asia Lions' score of 157 for 5 from 20 overs.

It was a great comeback for the Maharajas who had lost their opening two games - one each to Asia Lions and the World Giants.

Asked about his secret behind the sizzling show during the presentation, Uthappa joked to say, "I've been playing a little bit of golf," referring to his big drives and hits. On a serious note, he added, "The previous defeat (by 2 runs to Giants) hurt us a bit because we couldn't make sense out of it since we have the calibre to canter through that kind of a situation. So we wanted to really put up a good show for the fans and for our own pride."

On the three consecutive sixes he hit to Mohammad Hafeez, missing out on a fourth, Uthappa said, "It was right in my slot to go for the hits though the wicket did do a bit while still being good to bat."

On making 65 runs in the first six powerplay overs, Uthappa said, "The plan was to see off Sohail Tanvir because he is one who can trouble us a lot."

A pleased Gambhir said,

"Robin made life much easier the way he was muddling the ball. It took off a lot of pressure. We were then scoring good and we thought we might just as well keep going on."

Gambhir with three consecutive fifties under his belt is also the highest run-getter in the tournament so far (183 runs). But he said he was more contented with the win. "We could have won both our last two games which we lost. So this win has been quite satisfying."

Opting to field first, India Maharajas faced Asia Lions' fury at the start as Upul Tharanga 69 (48 balls; 7x4s, 2x6s) and Tillakaratne Dilshan 32 (27 balls; 4x4s; 1x6) made a big start before Stuart Binny dismissed Dilshan caught to a fine catch by Irfan Pathan at short third man.

Off-spinner Harbhajan Singh soon trapped Mohammed Hafeez leg before for 2 and then Uthappa in a flash

stumped the dangerous Misbah Ul Haq for nought off leggie Pravin Tambe.

Reduced to 77 for 3 from 73 for none in 10.3 overs, the Asia Lions then stuttered before Dilshan and the versatile all-rounder Abdul Razzaq 27 n.o. (17 balls; 2x4s, 2x6s) combined in the end overs to provide their side a respectable total.

Uthappa and Gambhir, however, had different ideas as they simply stole the show for India Maharajas.

On Wednesday, Gambhir & Co will take on the World Giants once again at the same venue.

Scores: Asia Lions 157 for 5 in 20 overs (Upul Tharanga 69, Tillakaratne Dilshan 32, Abdul Razzaq 27 not out, Suresh Raina 2-16) **lost to India Maharajas 159-0 in 12.3 overs** (Robin Uthappa 88n.o., Gautam Gambhir 61n.o) **by 10 wkts.** **Player of the Match:** Robin Uthappa (India Maharajas).

World Cup 2026 with a record 104 matches as FIFA changes format



Belgium's forward Jeremy Doku reacts during the Qatar 2022 World Cup against Croatia at the Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium. (File photo) (AFP)

DPA
BERLIN

THE 2026 football World Cup in the United States, Mexico and Canada will retain four-team groups after all for a record 104 matches as the council of the ruling body FIFA agreed on Tuesday to change the competition format.

The first 48-team tournament will now have groups of four teams as past editions, with the top two from each group and the eight best third-place finishers advancing into a round of 32.

The additional round means the champion will play eight matches instead of the seven in the past and under the first 2026 scheme.

FIFA had initially planned to have the teams in 16 groups

2026 final on July 19

FIFA said that the 2026 World Cup final would take place on July 19 in a tournament expected to be played over around 40 days, which would be 11 more than the very compact winter World Cup in Qatar

of three in an 80-match tournament. That would have been 16 games more than the format used between 1998 and 2022 with 32 teams and 64 games.

But the success of last year's Qatar World Cup football-wise with the traditional four-team groups as well as the possibil-

ity of dead rubbers or even the chance of result manipulation in groups of three led FIFA to have a rethink.

FIFA said the decision was taken "based on a thorough review that considered sporting integrity, player welfare, team travel, commercial and sporting attractiveness, as well as team and fan experience.

"The revised format mitigates the risk of collusion and ensures that all the teams play a minimum of three matches, while providing balanced rest time between competing teams," a statement said.

The council meeting was held in the Rwandan capital of Kigali in advance of Thursday's FIFA congress where president Gianni Infantino is set for reelection.

FIFA said that the 2026

World Cup final would take place on July 19 in a tournament expected to be played over around 40 days, which would be 11 more than the very compact winter World Cup in Qatar.

The date of the opening match is yet to be set but FIFA said that the overall release period for players would be the same 56 days as for the 2010, 2014 and 2018 tournaments.

The format change with more matches could also boost FIFA revenues through additional broadcasting rights income.

FIFA originally said it expects to generate \$11 billion from the period 2023-2026. That figure was already considerably higher than FIFA's earnings of \$7.568 billion it had announced for the previous cycle 2019-2022.

Ramsey named Wales captain in wake of Bale retirement

DPA
CARDIFF, WALES

AARON Ramsey has been named as Wales captain following the retirement of Gareth Bale.

The 32-year-old Nice midfielder, who has won 78 caps, will lead his country for the first time in the forthcoming Euro 2024 qualifiers against Croatia and Latvia later this month.

Ramsey will spearhead a youthful looking 24-man squad named by boss Rob Page on Tuesday.

Page said: "Aaron was the vice-captain behind Gareth and I see this as a natural progression.

"He's got a big opportu-

nity to work with the young players. He's in the right time of his career to lead the boys out and he is relishing it.

"I've spoken to Aaron. He's very appreciative of it and he's looking forward to role." Bale ended his distinguished career in January after winning a record 111 caps for the Wales men's national team.

Ramsey has done the job before, having been appointed Wales captain at the age of 20 by the late Gary Speed in March 2011.

Speed's successor Chris Coleman gave the armband to Ashley Williams in October 2012 to allow Ramsey to focus on his football.

Garnacho ruled out of 'upcoming games' for Man Utd and Argentina

DPA
LONDON

ALEJANDRO Garnacho has vowed to come back "stronger than ever" after being ruled out of action for Manchester United and Argentina due to the injury he sustained against Southampton on Sunday.

The 18-year-old was withdrawn 18 minutes after stepping off the bench in the second half of the 0-0 home draw following a challenge by Kyle Walker-Peters. Garnacho, who left Old Trafford on crutches, said on Instagram that he will miss "upcoming games" for United and will not be joining up with Argentina's squad for friendlies against Panama (March 23) and Curacao (March 26).

"It is difficult to put into words how I'm feeling right now," the player wrote on Instagram. "Unfortunately I will not be able to help my team and team-mates in the upcoming games in what is a very important part of the season for us at

Manchester United.

"I am disappointed to also miss the opportunity to be with my team-mates of the Argentinian national team in what would have been a great and proud moment for me and my family.

"This is part of football and our profession, however, I am already focused in my recovery.

"God has taught me to never give up and I will make sure I am back stronger than ever." United boss Erik ten Hag said after Sunday's game that he did not think Garnacho's injury was "too bad".

Neither the player nor United have specified what the injury is or for how long he will be ruled out. Garnacho was forced off soon after a challenge by Walker-Peters.

The Southampton defender later addressed the issue on Instagram, posting: "It would never be my intention to injure a fellow professional. I wish you a speedy recovery and hope to see you back in action as soon as possible."

Man who racially abused Ivan Toney banned from every stadium in England

DPA
LONDON

A man who racially abused Brentford's Ivan Toney on social media has become the first person to be banned from every English stadium under a new law.

Twenty-four-year-old Antonio Neill sent the message via Toney's Instagram account in October last year, with the player sharing it publicly, prompting a police investigation.

Neill pleaded guilty before Newcastle magistrates on January 25 to sending an offensive message. On Monday he received a four-month jail sentence suspended for two years and a three-year ban from

attending football matches in England.

The ban extends to the top five English leagues, as well as to England home internationals, qualifying matches and tournaments played overseas.

Neill is the first person to receive such a sentence under the new legislation introduced last year, which brought in new powers for courts to ban offenders who engage in abuse and commit hate crimes online.

Superintendent Scott Cowie, hate crime lead for Northumbria Police, said on Brentford's website: "Discrimination has absolutely no place in any society, whether out in our communities or online.

"I am therefore delighted

that the seriousness of Neill's offence has been reflected with this banning order.

"I hope this reinforces our commitment to taking action against anybody who commits a hate crime - it will not be tolerated and we will do all we can to put perpetrators before the courts." Toney has repeatedly been the target of online racist abuse this season. As well as the offence committed by Neill, the striker was also sent racist messages following Brentford's draw with Arsenal in February.

The Premier League said at the time it was supporting Brentford with their investigations into the incident, adding that the league "condemns all forms of discrimination."

Pique vows Negreira probe will not smear Barcelona 'golden era'

DPA
MADRID

GERARD Pique is adamant Barcelona achieved all their success during his time at the club without resorting to underhand dealings and favour from referees.

A corruption complaint has been filed by Spanish prosecutors against Barcelona concerning alleged payments made to the company of Jose Maria Enriquez Negreira - a former vice-president of Spain's Technical Committee of Referees (CTA).

Newspaper *El Pais* last month reported Enriquez Negreira's company - DASNIL 95 SL - produced written reports and DVD assessments of ref-

erees for Barcelona prior to games.

Real Madrid have said they are ready to appear at any trial that stems from the investigation, having expressed concern at board level about the allegations levelled against their fierce rivals. Yet Pique, the long-serving defender who retired last November, rejects any suggestion of there being wrongdoing behind Barcelona's on-field success.

He told Spanish broadcaster RAC1: "I would put my hand in the fire that Barca have not bought referees. If you want to buy a referee it's as easy as going and paying him directly with black money, not paying a vice-president of the committee with

an invoice." Pique said he was never aware of the payments to the former top-tier referee's company during his 14-year first-team stint.

"The players don't know that. I don't know if this gentleman's job was to help in this, but as players we were out of it," Pique said.

Pique added: "No matter how much they want to smear, that was a golden era."

He said Barcelona, who had the likes of Lionel Messi, Xavi and Pique himself as key playing figures for much of their dominant period, were clearly much stronger than their rivals.

"It's not just the titles won, but how they were won," Pique said.

Frankfurt admit fans will be in Naples as German minister laments ban

DPA
FRANKFURT

EINTRACHT Frankfurt have acknowledged that supporters of the Bundesliga side will be in and around Napoli's stadium for Wednesday's Champions last-16 second leg despite a ban.

After much to-ing and fro-ing, Naples authorities stopped the sale of tickets to fans from Frankfurt due to security concerns after trouble at last month's first leg, won 2-0 by the Italian league leaders.

But Dario Minden from the Frankfurt fan department thinks the ban will be counter-productive.

"The safest thing is always to have people in a visitors' block.

Whether you think it's good

or bad, realistically Naples will not be a Frankfurt-free zone despite all efforts," he told dpa on Tuesday.

"The situation has become more dangerous due to the supposed security measures." Germany's interior and sports minister Nancy Faeser said she had "little understanding" for the decision to exclude Frankfurt fans.

"In the case of high-risk matches, every possible security measure should be examined very carefully before excluding all fans of a team as the very last option," she told dpa. "Such a drastic measure may not contribute to de-escalation."

Frankfurt's lawyers won an appeal against an original decision by Italian authorities to bar fans from the German



Frankfurt's Austrian head coach Oliver Glasner (left) and Eintracht Frankfurt's German midfielder Sebastian Rode attend a press conference on the eve of the UEFA Champions League football match against Napoli at the Diego-Maradona stadium in Naples on Tuesday. (AFP)

club, only for Naples authorities to reimpose a ban specifically blocking ticket sales to citizens of the city of Frankfurt.

Without evidence, German

supporters have accused Italian police of trying to ease Napoli's passage to the quarter-finals by removing the famously passionate Frankfurt fans.

They helped carry their team to Europa League glory last season, famously taking 30,000 to Barcelona despite only having an official ticket allocation of 5,000 in the last-eight clash.

Theoretically, Eagles fans who live outside Frankfurt can get tickets for the Napoli game but those who bought them already and reside in Frankfurt will struggle to get their money back on flights and accommodation, according to an expert.

Tourism lawyer Paul De-gott told dpa: "It's a difficult and complex situation, but I think the Eintracht fans have been unlucky." German sports lawyer Thomas Summerer meanwhile says the steps taken by the authorities in Italy are not proportionate.

"Restrictive measures to maintain public safety and order must adhere to a strict framework. In view of the trouble in the first leg, there may be a risk of problems in the second leg. But I do not consider this merely abstract danger sufficient to justify a blanket ticket ban," he said.

"The ticket ban on fans, who live in Frankfurt, is against European law." But Germany's police union (GdP) said the exclusion of fans from a certain city at football matches is "conceivable" in Germany too.

"It should also be feasible if the police have the necessary information. However, such a measure can and should only be a very special exception," GdP federal chairman Jochen Koppelke told dpa.

WASET AL SHAQAB AND FARHA AINAIN CHAMPION STALLION AND MARE AT 8TH QATAR NATIONAL PENINSULA HORSE SHOW FOR INDIVIDUAL OWNERS



Waset Al Shaqab won the Senior Stallions Championship gold while Farha Ainain won gold in the Senior Mares Championship on the second and final day of the 8th Qatar National Peninsula Horse Show for Individual Owners which concluded at Al Shaqab on Tuesday. Yazeed Al Rayyan and AK Dana claimed gold in the Junior Colts and Fillies' Championships respectively. The Yearling Fillies Championship gold went to LD-Ghalia Al Marroona. Earlier the 11th Qatar National Arabian Horse Show for Individual Owners was held from March 10-12. (TNN)

Bangladesh seal historic T20 series victory over England

Alcaraz savours first 100 wins as Spanish star excels at Indian Wells

AGENCIES

ENGLAND stumbled to a 16-run defeat in the final T20 as Bangladesh completed a 3-0 series clean sweep.

Chasing 159, England were in control at 100-1 as Jos Buttler and Dawid Malan added 95 for the second wicket in Mirpur. But Bangladesh fought back when the pair fell in consecutive balls in the 14th over.

The pressure built on England's middle order and they finished on 142-6 after losing 5-28 in the space of 35 balls.

Bangladesh's 158-2 was set up by opener Litton Das' explosive 73 from 57 balls and Najmul Hossain Shanto's 47 not out from 36.

Ben Duckett dropped Das on 51 and Rehan Ahmed dropped a simple chance from Rony Talukdar on 17.

But England salvaged some pride at the death as Sam Curran and Chris Jordan restricted Bangladesh's scoring, conceding only 27 runs from the final five overs.

Despite losing Phil Salt for a duck in the first over, Malan and Buttler led an impressive counter-attack on a slow, wear-



Bangladesh's players pose with the trophy after winning the series at the end of the third and final Twenty20 international against England at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Dhaka on Tuesday. (AFP)

ing pitch.

But Mustafizur Rahman changed the game when Malan was caught behind for 53 and Buttler was sensationally run out for 40 by Mehidy Hasan.

The series concludes England's winter and the white-ball side will not be in action again until August.

It has been a difficult series for England's batters as captain Buttler and coach Matthew Mott have attempted to juggle a bowler-heavy squad because

of absences.

England are without key batters from their T20 World Cup triumph last year in Ben Stokes, Alex Hales, Harry Brook and Liam Livingstone.

Bangladesh comfortably chased 157 in the first game before England crawled to 117 in the second, and in Mirpur it was a similar situation as the hosts handled the conditions better.

Das capitalised on England's sloppy fielding to hit

10 fours and a six but Bangladesh also ran smartly, constantly pushing for a second run and scampering singles when boundaries were not on offer.

But England faltered even when the run-rate was under control. Even after Malan and Buttler fell in succession, the equation was an achievable 59 from 40 balls.

The pitch did start to deteriorate to favour the bowlers, but England kept searching for boundaries instead of adjusting and accumulating.

In the crucial 17th over the masterful Taskin had Moeen Ali caught on the boundary and Duckett was bowled attempting a heave down the ground.

Knowing the players they have to return, England will not be too concerned, but their batters will have learned valuable lessons from the tour with the 50-over World Cup taking place in India in October.

Scores
3rd T20, Mirpur
Bangladesh 158-2 (20 overs): Das 73 (57), Shanto 47* (36)
England 142-6 (20 overs): Malan 53 (47), Buttler 40 (31)
Bangladesh won by 16 runs.

DPA

INDIAN WELLS, CALIFORNIA

CARLOS Alcaraz felt "really proud" to complete 100 wins at ATP Tour level while still a teenager as the world number two marched on at the Indian Wells Open.

Only John McEnroe has reached a century of victories in fewer matches, the ATP said, with the American getting there from 131 contests while it took Alcaraz 132 to get to that landmark. Alcaraz made it 10 wins from 11 matches in 2023 by defeating Tallon Griekspoor 7-6 (7-4), 6-3 on Monday at the California tournament.

The youngster's first tour-level win came against fellow Spaniard Albert Ramos-Vinolas at the 2020 Rio Open, with the then 16-year-old wrapping up a 7-6 (7-2), 4-6, 7-6 (7-2) at 3 am local time.

Reflecting on his time on tour so far, Alcaraz said: "A lot has happened since that first ATP win. I'm really proud of myself to have my 100th win on the tour, in like 132 matches."

"I saw I was the second player in history with less matches to be able to get to 100 wins. I'm really proud of myself about



Carlos Alcaraz.

that." The Spanish prodigy last year won the US Open and in doing so became the youngest men's world number one, with Novak Djokovic having since clawed back top spot.

Victory over Griekspoor made Alcaraz the third men's tour player born after 2000 to claim 100 tour wins, after Jan-nik Sinner and Felix Auger-Aliassime, said OptaAce.

The latest victory was his 24th at ATP 1000 level, going past Djokovic on the all-time ranking for wins at that elite tier by players before turning 20. Alcaraz trails Denis Shapovalov (25) and Rafael Nadal (49), in that regard, but the chances are he will soon only trail Nadal, whom he cannot catch.

New golf rule proposed for option of using distance-reducing ball

DPA
LONDON

GOLF'S governing bodies have proposed a new local rule to give tournament organizers the option to require the use of a distance-reducing ball.

Advances in fitness and golf equipment technology have seen players hit the ball further and further in recent years, leading to golf courses being lengthened in an effort to continue to test the world's best.

The R&A and USGA said in February 2020 that they intended to "break the ever-increasing cycle of hitting distance" but admitted it could take years before solutions were found.

Since then they have been consulting with equipment manufacturers about the issue and on Tuesday announced

the proposal of a Model Local Rule (MLR) that gives organizers the option to require the use of balls which are tested under modified launch conditions.

Speaking in 2021, Masters chairman Fred Ridley said a specific "Masters ball" would be a last resort in the battle to limit hitting distances.

The fifth hole at Augusta National was lengthened by 40 yards ahead of the 2019 Masters and the par-five 13th has now also been extended by 35 yards.

The MLR is intended for use only in elite competitions and, if adopted, will have no impact on recreational golf.

The proposal was sent to equipment manufacturers on Monday and they can provide feedback until August 14. If adopted, it would take effect in January 2026.

TRIBUNE NEWS NETWORK
DOHA

THE Qatar Junior Open Squash Championship, organized by the Qatar Tennis Squash & Badminton Sports Federation (QTSBF), kicked off on Tuesday at the Khalifa International Sports Complex.

More than 40 players are competing in the five-day tournament in Under 11, 13, 15, 17 and U19 categories. The championship also has the participation of national players such as Khaled Al Baker, Abdullah Al Sharshani and Ahmed Al Maraghi.

Tournament director Saad Al Mohannadi, said "The tournament has recorded a wide participation of players who are aiming to gain experience



Saad Al Mohannadi.

and to enhance their technical levels."

Al Mohannadi, who also holds the position of Executive Director of the Qatar Ten-

Qatar Junior Open Squash begins at Khalifa International Sports Complex



More than 40 players are competing in the five-day tournament in Under 11, 13, 15, 17 and U19 categories.

nis, Squash and Badminton Federation, stressed that the federation is committed to developing national players as a

priority to advance the game, in addition to its keenness to spread squash in the local community.