



Farag bests Elias to win QTerminals Qatar Classic title for a third time

TRIBUNE NEWS NETWORK
DOHA

TOP-SEEDED Ali Farag claimed his second PSA Platinum title in a row – and his third QTerminals Qatar Classic crown – as he beat Diego Elias in four games at the Khalifa International Tennis & Squash Complex on Saturday.

Egyptian Farag prevailed 3-1: 15-13, 11-5, 8-11, 11-9 in 69 mins over the Peruvian.

Ahead of the match, much had been made of the World No 1's dominant 19-3 head-to-head record over Elias, with the Peruvian's sole win since 2017 coming when Farag was forced to retire hurt in the final of last year's US Open.

Despite Farag's superior record, it was Elias who started the opening game better, with the 26-year-old accurate at the front as he took the first five points of the final. Farag responded by pushing up the court and flipped the momentum, taking ten of the next twelve points to earn three game balls at 10-7.

Elias dug in well to save all three, forcing a tie break at 10-10. After three more game balls for Farag, and one for Elias, it was the Egyptian who managed to break the deadlock, clinching a brutal 26-minute first game 15-13.

The bruising nature and finale of the first game appeared to have sapped the strength from Elias' legs in the second, with the Peruvian struggling badly against Farag's relentless pressing as the top seed doubled his lead with a comfortable 11-5 win.

Game three was a more even contest, with Elias moving far better than in the second game.

Farag, who appeared to be closing in on a second title of the season at 8-5 up, then allowed Elias back into the contest, with the World No.1 making an uncharacteristic number of errors as a resurgent Elias forced his way into the contest with an 11-8 win.



Minister of Municipality HE Dr. Abdulla bin Abdulaziz bin Turki Al Subaie with Egypt's Ali Farag and runner-up Diego Elias of Peru, QTBSF Secretary-General Tariq Darwish Zainal and other officials on the final day of the QTerminals Qatar Classic Squash 2023 tournament at the Khalifa International Tennis & Squash Complex on Saturday.



Ali Farag celebrates his third QTerminals Qatar Classic triumph and his second PSA Platinum title in a row.

There were more worrying signs from Farag early in game

four, with the Egyptian – who appeared fatigued – making

more errors as Elias dominated play to take the first three

points.

The Egyptian, however, was

able to claw back momentum, finding a second wind and going on the hunt as he reeled in 'the Puma's' lead before bringing a thrilling final to an end with an 11-9 win.

For both Elias and Farag, attention turns to the Platinum-level U.S. Open, which takes place between 07-14 October in Philadelphia's Arlen Specter US Squash Center.

Afterwards, Farag said: "I had to put in a world class performance to be able to compete with Diego. He's such a champion, the way he's been playing these last couple of years.

"This week he's been phenomenal, and I don't need to talk about his squash because it speaks volumes about itself.

"He's a true champion. To call a tin against himself at 12-12 when we're going for the No.1 spot and the referee hadn't called it speaks volumes about the character he is and I really appreciate sharing a court with him and I look forward to many more [finals] together in the future.

"It doesn't get any better than this. I had a lot of the people I care for and who care about me in my corner. The crowd lifted me up all week."

Farag added a moving tribute to wife and women's World No.8 Nour El Tayeb: "The one person I want to thank the most and is my inspiration every day is Nour. The way she juggles between being a great mother, a great wife, a great squash player, a great daughter and a great friend, everything is about her is admirable. I really am grateful to be with such a person day in and day out."

Elias added: "I'm not very happy with the result, but I'm actually very happy with the way I ended up fighting at the end of the match.

"I'm just happy I'm getting closer and hopefully next time I get the title. I've been improving match by match, tournament by tournament and I didn't finish too badly. I'm just excited for the next one and hopefully I can fight for another title soon."

Al Bidda SC gets QFA membership, to battle for place in QSL

TRIBUNE NEWS NETWORK
DOHA

IN a significant development marking a new chapter in the history of Al Bidda SC, the club announced that it has been granted membership in the Qatar Football Association (QFA). Al Bidda, who have been competing in the Second Division league as an amateur side, can now target a place in the top flight Qatar Stars League.

Al Bidda was established in 2015 and has developed a roster of skilled local and international players. They were granted approval by the QFA in September 2018, allowing them to participate in the Second Division League season as an amateur team.

Earlier this year in June, the club's membership was accepted to officially join QFA as a professional team. Al Bidda, who won the 2021-2022 Second Division Cup, finished second in the same competition last season.

The club's quick rise comes after seasons of persistent work and dedication where the team showed notable progress and exceptional performance on the field. President of the club's Board Sheikh Fahed bin Mohamed Al Thani said in a statement. "I would like to express my deep gratitude to the Qatar Football Association for their continuous support and trust in us, and the acceptance of our membership is the result of the commitment and hard work of each and every member of the



Al Bidda SC Vice-President HE Sheikh Hamad bin Mohamed Al Thani, Executive Director Ghassan Oueijan and Al Bidda's coach Sami Salahaldin during a press conference on Saturday.

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Al Bidda SC family."

At a press conference yesterday, the club's Vice President Sheikh Hamad bin Mohamed Al Thani and Executive Director Ghassan Oueijan outlined the club's vision as they chart their path towards Qatar Stars League.

"It's been an exciting as well as a difficult journey since we started as an amateur team. The COVID-19 pandemic ham-

pered our progress but we have very good memories in recent years as we won the Second Division Cup," Sheikh Hamad told reporters.

"We are aware it is going to be a difficult challenge in the Second Division League because all clubs are tough but we are looking forward to emerge on top and qualify for the QSL," he added.

Al Bidda SC's Executive Di-

rector Ghassan Oueijan echoed Sheikh Hamad's views. "We are making all out efforts to strengthen the side and have included new international players for the Second Division League as we will compete for the title," he said.

To strengthen its position and face the challenges of the Second Division, Al Bidda SC added six new players to its ranks: Akram El Hamdaoui



Al Bidda SC's new professional players speak to the media during the press conference on Saturday.

from Morocco, Edmilson Correia from Guinea-Bissau, Bright Enobakhare from Nigeria, Timothy Akinola from Britain, Yanis Bourbia from France, and Yamin Maouchi from France.

The players, who were unveiled at a press conference on Saturday, were chosen after rigorous negotiations, bringing with them experience, skill, and a fresh vision for the team. Al Bidda's coach Sami Salahaldin said: "Integrating these six players into our team reflects our big ambitions; we are here to participate, to compete, and to achieve success".

At the beginning of the current season, Al Bidda played a series of friendly matches and held a training camp in Turkey, all in preparation for the challenges ahead. Moreover, in a new and ambitious step, the Club has also launched Al

Bidda Academy.

"This represents a strategic project for the club with the aim of developing and elevating talented young footballers. Despite its recent formation, the academy boasts a specialised training team and modern techniques aimed at building a new generation of players equipped with the necessary skills and capabilities to excel in the sports field.

"The Academy aspires to be a central pillar in Al Bidda SC's strategy for the coming years, focusing on the technical, physical, and mental aspects of its players," the club said in a statement.

Furthermore, Al Bidda SC also announced a sponsorship partnership with Nakheel Landscapes. The three-year partnership will establish Nakheel Landscapes as the official sponsor for the club.

JULIAN DRAXLER ARRIVES IN DOHA, TO JOIN AL AHLI



Germany international Julian Draxler arrived in Doha on Saturday after leaving Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) to embark on a new chapter with Al Ahli. Draxler is scheduled to undergo his medical examination on Sunday with his signing set to be formalised immediately afterward. Al Ahli, on their social media handles shared photos of their new acquisition upon his arrival in Qatar. Draxler follows in the footsteps of Marco Verratti and Abdou Diallo, who recently made moves to Al Arabi from PSG. The midfielder had spent the previous season on loan at Benfica and had not featured for PSG in the current season.

QFA HONOURS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ARBITRATION NEJI JOUINI



The Qatar Football Association (QFA) honoured the Association's Arbitration Department Executive Director Neji Jouini for his services at the end of his 20-year tenure. Jouini had been the head of the Referees Association of Qatar Football Association. (TNN)

Quick read

Wilson on the spot as Newcastle warm up for Champions League with win

Newcastle: Callum Wilson sent Newcastle into Champions League action on the back of a first Premier League win since the opening game of the season as they edged past Brentford at St James' Park. The England striker's 64th-minute penalty proved enough to clinch the points for the Magpies, who had not won since they trounced Aston Villa 5-1 on August 12 and had since slipped to back-to-back defeats by Manchester City, Liverpool and Brighton. They will now head for Italy for their Champions League opener against AC Milan on Tuesday evening in positive mood after a victory which was achieved without the rested Sandro Tonali and Alexander Isak as head coach Eddie Howe used the depth of his squad. The Bees will perhaps feel aggrieved at both the penalty decision and the fact that they gave at least as good as they got for long periods in front of a crowd of 51,670, although ultimately they were unable to trouble keeper Nick Pope often enough. (PA Media/DPA)



Callum Wilson (L).

Dortmund win 4-2 at Freiburg in crazy game

DPA
BERLIN

MATS Hummels scored twice, including the crucial 88th-minute go-ahead goal, to hand Borussia Dortmund a roller-coaster 4-2 Bundesliga win at Freiburg on Saturday.

Last season's runners-up fought from 2-1 down at half-

time to remain unbeaten as they ended a run of two straight draws in dramatic fashion to move seventh after four league games.

Ten-man Freiburg - fifth last term - are 10th after also losing 5-0 at VfB Stuttgart before the international break.

"It was workman-like win. It was a top start with the lead but

then we didn't dominate," Hummels told Sky TV. "But ultimately we were ready for a match in Freiburg." RB Leipzig went third, a point off the top, after 3-0 home win over Augsburg thanks to a diving header from Xavi Simons, Loïs Openda's cool finish and a David Raum strike all in the first half.

"Congratulations to my lads,

they did well overall today. We played a very good first half," said Leipzig coach Marco Rose, whose side next visit Young Boys Bern in their Champions League opener on Tuesday.

Fourth-placed Stuttgart's strong start continued with a 3-1 success at Mainz thanks to league top scorer Serhou Guirassy's hat-trick.



Inter Milan's Armenian midfielder #22 Henrikh Mkhitaryan (L), Inter Milan's Argentine forward #10 Lautaro Martinez (C) and Inter Milan's Italian midfielder #16 Davide Frattesi (R) celebrate after a goal during the Italian Serie A match against AC Milan at the San Siro Stadium in Milan on Saturday. (AFP)

Mkhitaryan double helps Inter to win over AC Milan

STATS PERFORM/DPA
ROME

HENRIKH Mkhitaryan's double ensured Inter Milan continued their unbeaten start to the season with a 5-1 drubbing off bitter rivals AC Milan.

Inter got off to a perfect start in the Milan derby with two goals from Mkhitaryan and Marcus Thuram, before Rafael Leao gave Milan some hope with a quick finish after the break.

Mkhitaryan earned his brace before Hakan Calhanoglu's penalty and Davide Frattesi's goal ensured there was no way back for Milan, who now face Newcastle in the Champions League on Tuesday.

Three points means Inter have now won all four of their games in Serie A this season and remain top of the table by two points.

Mkhitaryan set the tone in the fifth minute with a clean first-time effort from close range,

which found the bottom corner and the goal stood despite a VAR check for a foul in the build-up.

The former Manchester United and Arsenal midfielder came close to a second with his header flashing wide of goal and Federico Dimarco then fired a free-kick over the crossbar before Theo Hernandez tried his luck for Milan, but his effort rolled past the post.

Thuram struck to double Inter's advantage in the 38th minute with a stunning strike across the face of goal and into the top corner.

Milan had a chance after being awarded a free-kick outside the box just before the break, but Olivier Giroud blasted the ball over the bar.

Despite a bright start from Inter in the second half, it was Milan who pulled one back in the 58th minute after a superb through-ball from Giroud found Leao and his deflected shot landed in the net.

Brighton beat Man United; City, Reds and Spurs leave it late

PA MEDIA/DPA
LONDON

MANCHESTER United slumped to their third Premier League defeat of the season as Brighton won 3-1 at Old Trafford on Saturday.

Danny Welbeck scored against his former club and further goals from Pascal Gross and substitute Joao Pedro increased the pressure on United boss Erik ten Hag.

Hannibal Mejbri's first United goal gave the home fans some hope, but boos rang out at the final whistle with another defeat leaving United in the bottom half of the table.

Manchester City maintained their 100% start to the season after hitting back to win 3-1 at West Ham.

James Ward-Prowse's diving header - his second goal of the season - gave the Hammers a half-time lead against the run of play.

Jeremy Doku struck his first goal for City within a minute of the restart and Bernardo Silva put them in front with 14 minutes left before Erling Haaland's seventh goal in five league games sealed the points for the champions.

City retained their two-point advantage over Liverpool, who had briefly gone top after their 3-1 win at Wolves in the lunchtime kick-off.

Liverpool left it late to clinch their fourth win of the season after trailing to Hwang Hee Chan's early opener, with Cody Gakpo's second-half



Brighton's English striker #18 Danny Welbeck (L) takes a shot during the English Premier League match against Manchester United at Old Trafford in Manchester on Saturday. (AFP)

equaliser followed by Andrew Robertson's late effort and Hugo Bueno's own goal.

Tottenham struck twice in stoppage-time to snatch a 2-1 home win against Sheffield United.

Gustavo Hamer gave the Blades a surprise lead and they held on until deep in stoppage time when Richarlison equalized and then set up Dejan Kulusevski for the winner in the 10th minute of added time.

Aston Villa also scored three late goals as they came from behind to beat Crystal Palace 3-1 at Villa Park.

Odonne Edouard put Palace ahead early in the second half before John Duran's late equalizer and two further goals from Douglas Luiz and Leon Bailey.

Carlos Vinicius scored in his first appearance of the season for Fulham - five minutes after stepping off the bench - to secure his side a 1-0 home victory against winless Luton.

In the evening kick-off at St James' Park, Callum Wilson's second-half penalty was enough to secure Newcastle a 1-0 win against Brentford.

Wilson maintained his

perfect penalty-taking record at Newcastle by converting his 10th successive spot-kick as Eddie Howe's side halted a run of three successive defeats.

Premier League Saturday Results:
Wolverhampton 1 Liverpool 3
Aston Villa 3 Crystal Palace 1
Fulham 1 Luton 0
Manchester United 1 Brighton & Hove Albion 3
Tottenham Hotspur 2 Sheffield United 1
West Ham United 1 Manchester City 3
Newcastle United 1 0 Brentford.

Real Madrid boss Ancelotti hails 'consistent' Bellingham

PA MEDIA/DPA
LONDON

REAL Madrid boss Carlo Ancelotti has praised the "consistency" of Jude Bellingham's recent performances ahead of his side's clash with Real Sociedad on Sunday.

Madrid have won all four of their league games so far this season, including a 2-1 win over Getafe last time out in their first game back at the Bernabeu, where Bellingham netted a stoppage-time winner.

The 20-year-old has scored five times in those opening games and his streak continued into the international break where he also netted in England's 3-1 friendly win over Scotland.

Ancelotti has spoken highly of Bellingham following the bright start

to his Real Madrid career and thinks he will remain grounded, despite the increased attention.

Speaking in a pre-match press conference, Ancelotti said: "He's evaluated by what he does on the pitch and he's doing well.

"He wasn't widely known because he played in the German league and he didn't have the role he has now. He's playing in an important league and at an important club. He's doing very well and I'm not surprised.

"He's very serious, focused and professional. I don't think he's the type of player who will let it go to his head if someone praises him.

"He has the ability to get to the opponent's box early and threatening. We talked about him in pre-season and he's good in this position. He



Jude Bellingham.

shows consistency and he has great physical strength.

"I don't know how many goals he can score, but he has to maintain this consistency because he helps us a lot in our attacking play." Los Blancos are preparing for two games in a week for the first time this season, welcoming Real Sociedad before they kick-start their Champions League campaign with the visit of German side Union Berlin, who are making their debut in the competition.

Ancelotti admitted he may have to rotate some players over both games to ensure they remain fit. He continued: "Tomorrow's game is an important one against tough opposition.

"We've got a lot of games and I'm going to rotate a bit more compared to when we played one game a week.

Everyone is going to be involved.

"For us, what is important is that we're given time to recover properly. That's enough. The internationals have returned in good shape and with more desire and enthusiasm after scoring goals and playing well in matches. They've come back in good condition." Vinicius Jr has been absent for Real Madrid since the second game of the season as he recovers from a hamstring injury suffered in their victory over Almeria in August.

Ancelotti does not know when he will get the playmaker back but insists he is recovering well from the problem.

"I don't know the exact day he will be back," Ancelotti said. "He's recovering very well and we don't want to force his recovery. The scar is fine and he's increasing the workload."

Al Attiyah withdraws from Lebanon Rally following accident

QNA
BEIRUT

DEFENDING champion Qatari driver Nasser bin Saleh Al Attiyah announced his withdrawal from the competitions of the 45th edition of the Lebanon International Rally, which constitutes the fourth round of the Middle East Rally Championship, the competitions of which are held over three days.

Al Attiyah's withdrawal came after he was involved in a very serious accident in today's stages, Saturday, which led to major damage to his car, preventing him from completing the rest of the stages, and the final day's stages on Sunday.



Qatar's ace rally driver Nasser Al Attiyah after being involved in an accident during the Lebanon International Rally on Saturday. Al Attiyah and French co-driver Mathieu Baumel were not seriously injured when their car rolled over and left the track, but the car was seriously damaged. Al Attiyah had won the title of the exhibition stage of the rally on Friday evening.



Al Attiyah and French co-driver Mathieu Baumel were not seriously injured when their car rolled over and left the track, but the car was seriously damaged.

Al Attiyah had won the title of the exhibition stage of the rally on Friday evening, beating the Lebanese Roger Feghali, accompanied by his co-driver and compatriot Joseph Matar, who topped the stages of the rally today after Al Attiyah withdrew.

The total distance of the Lebanon Rally is 634.43 km, including 195.34 km in the 11 special speed stages, which will be held at Keserwan, Jbeil, Batroun and Matn on an asphalt track.

Sainz gets Singapore GP pole; Red Bull, Verstappen streaks under threat

DPA
BERLIN

FERRARI'S Carlos Sainz claimed pole position for the Singapore Formula Grand Prix on Saturday while the Red Bull team and their star Max Verstappen need a miracle to continue their winning runs in what has so far been a weekend to forget for them.

Sainz clocked 1 minute 30.984 on the floodlit 5.063-kilometres Marina Bay street course for his second straight pole and fifth overall.

Mercedes driver George Russell split the Ferraris, trailing Sainz by a mere .072 of a second and being just seven-thousandths ahead of Charles Leclerc as the top three were separated by less than one-tenth of a second.

Red Bull's problems all weekend culminated in Verstappen missing Q3 by seven-thousandths and placing 11th while team-mate Sergio Perez, last year's race winner, was 13th and spun on his last fast lap.

Runaway championship leader Verstappen avoided further trouble after stewards opted against a grid penalty for allegedly impeding other drivers on three occasions in qualifying.

Red Bull have won the last 15 races which includes all 14 this season, and Verstappen the last 10, both F1 records.

"I knew it would always be tough to put it on pole. But this I didn't expect," Verstappen told Sky TV.

"Throughout the weekend we have been struggling. FP3 was actually not too bad but then we tried a few more things on the car for qualifying and that tipped it over where it became undrivable again. It's just a shocking experience." When later asked if he could still win on a street circuit famous for a lack of overtaking, he said: "You can forget about that (a win).

"I don't want it to sound



Ferrari's Spanish driver Carlos Sainz Jr gestures after the qualifying session of the Singapore Formula One Grand Prix night race at the Marina Bay Street Circuit in Singapore on Saturday. (AFP)



Red Bull Racing's Dutch driver Max Verstappen drives during the third practice session ahead of the Singapore Formula One Grand Prix night race at the Marina Bay Street Circuit in Singapore on Saturday. (AFP)

too dramatic but it has been a tough weekend." Sainz delighted in his pole two weeks after achieving the same in Monza at the Italian GP where he then finished third, and he is taking

nothing for granted again. "Keeping it clean in Singapore normally pays off. We had a very good car on certain tracks and conditions. These short apexes and quick changes

Starting Grid

Front row: Carlos Sainz (ESP/Ferrari)/ George Russell (GBR/Mercedes)
2nd row: Charles Leclerc (MON/Ferrari)/ Lando Norris (GBR/McLaren)
3rd row: Lewis Hamilton (GBR/Mercedes)/ Kevin Magnussen (DEN/ Haas)
4th row: Fernando Alonso (ESP/Aston Martin)/ Esteban Ocon (FRA/Alpine)
5th row: Nico Hulkenberg (GER/ Haas)/ Liam Lawson (NZL/AlphaTauri)
6th row: Max Verstappen (NED/Red Bull)/ Pierre Gasly (FRA/Alpine)
7th row: Sergio Perez (MEX/Red Bull)/ Alexander Albon (THA/Williams)
8th row: Yuki Tsunoda (JPN/AlphaTauri)/ Valtteri Bottas (FIN/Alfa Romeo)
9th row: Oscar Piastri (AUS/McLaren)/ Logan Sargeant (USA/Williams)
10th row: Zhou Guanyu (CHN/Alfa Romeo)/ Lance Stroll (CAN/Aston Martin).

of direction, our car seems to be very good this weekend," he said.

"We know our weakness is always the race pace and where we pay the price. But I think our team has been doing a great job over the last couple of weekends. We have definitely made a bit of progress, keeping in mind this circuit always suits Ferrari well." Ferrari's last win dates back to Leclerc's success at the 2022 Austria GP while Russell was the last non-Red Bull driver to win a race, in Brazil last November.

"I felt really confident in the car, the team did a great job with the strategy," Russell said. "We are on an off-set strategy compared to everybody else, so we have an extra set of medium tyres tomorrow which nobody around us has. So to get to Q3 and be on the front row with a strategic advantage tomorrow is an exciting place to be," he said.

Q1 ended prematurely as it was red-flagged after Lance Stroll lost control in the final turn and crashed his Aston Martin into the barriers.

Stroll walked away unharmed but the car was badly damaged and the barrier repair led to a lengthy delay.



Officials address the media at Al Gharafa Complex on Saturday, the eve of the FIBA U16 Asian Championship 2023.

FIBA U16 Asian C'ship at Al Gharafa Hall from today



Qatar Basketball Federation President Mohammed Saad Al Mughaiseeb.

TRIBUNE NEWS NETWORK
DOHA

QATAR will take on Saudi Arabia at 5pm on Sunday at the Al Gharafa Hall as the FIBA U16 Asian Championship 2023 which gets underway being hosted by the Qatar Basketball Federation.

As many as 16 teams are taking part in the competition eyeing the trophy on September 24 when the final will be played. Qatar are in Group B along with of Iran, Japan and Saudi Arabia.

The details of the event were announced at a press conference attended by QBF President Mohammed Saad Al Mughaiseeb, Asian Basketball Federation Secretary-General Hagop Kagerian, QBF Secretary General Saadoun Sabah Al Kuwari and Chairman of Media Committee Dr. Khalid Al Qahtani.

"It is the second time that Qatar is hosting this event. We are looking forward to continue hosting events for youngsters who are future of the sport," Al Mughaiseeb said yesterday.

Meanwhile, Kagerian thanked the QBF for their efforts in hosting the tournament, saying the tournament is expected to throw up exciting games in presence of talented players who represent their clubs.

Speaking on Qatar U-16 team's readiness for tournament, Al Kuwari said the national team is well prepared and looking to achieve best results.

There's a little mix of everything from defending champions, former champions, teams aspiring to be champions for the first time, teams looking to make some noise, and even a debutant set to make an appearance in Doha.

China are still the all-time leader in U16 titles won, sweeping through the first three editions of the competition undefeated for three straight titles.

Led by now well-known stars from Guo Ailun to Zhou Qi to Hu Jinqiu, there was little that the rest of the teams could do.

From there, it has been Australia's turn to dominate the competition. The Crocs made their debut in 2018, went on to win the title and have still not lost a game since.

Only three teams have played in all editions of the U16 Asian Championships. They have all made it to the Final, but only Korea have been able to make it over the hump to hoist the trophy when all was said and done.

The Philippines lost to China in the Final of the 2013 edition of the competition. Meanwhile, Japan suffered a tough loss only recently last year to Australia even when they were led by eventual MVP Yuta Kawashima.



New Zealand, Lebanon, Iran are previous semi-finalists. This trio of teams have yet to make a final appearance in the competition yet, but they've come as close as a team can get - the semi-finals.

New Zealand, in particular, have made it to the semis on both of their first-ever appearances of the U16 Asian Championship, finishing at Third-Place as well. They featured some interesting talents like the towering tandem of Nic Book and Julius Halaifonua who averaged a double-double and nearly averaged a double-double, respectively.

Hosts Qatar are not only banking on homecourt advantage but also experience with two players who played in 2022, in particular Mohamed Massamba Ndao who led the team in scoring and EFF.

Most of the attention outside of the usual suspects will be on India. The South Asian side made quite an impression in 2022 with historic wins over Korea and Iran to earn themselves a 5th-place finish - their best-ever final standing.

Davis Cup format set to stay despite being branded a 'clear disaster'

PA MEDIA/DPA
LONDON

THE current Davis Cup format has been branded a "disaster" and "wrong", but players' calls for the return of home-and-away ties look set to be rejected.

Since 2019, the historic competition has been converted to a World Cup-style event with group stages and matches on neutral soil, but low crowd numbers have attracted consistent criticism.

Stan Wawrinka posted a video on social media on Tuesday showing virtually empty stands in Manchester for Switzerland's tie against France, a stark contrast to the 9,000-strong crowd that attended Britain's contest with Australia the following day.

After Britain's 2-1 victory



Switzerland's Stan Wawrinka reacts as he plays against France's Ugo Humbert during their men's singles of the Davis Cup finals for Group B at the AO Arena, in Manchester on September 12, 2023. (AFP)

over Switzerland on Friday, Wawrinka said: "We see the difference between today and three days ago - it's not normal. I played some Challenger tournaments this year and there were way more people and a way better atmosphere than when we played France.

"You have to try new things, that's for sure, but it's been quite a clear disaster. This company, they finish a 25-year deal after five years so that means something is wrong. And the people who took this decision are still deciding for the future of Davis Cup." German icon Boris Becker has also lamented the changes.

A lot of the ire has been directed towards former Barcelona and Spain footballer Gerard Pique, whose Kosmos group took over the running of the competition from the International Tennis Federation in 2018 and instigated the changes.

Kosmos promised to invest \$3 billion into the sport over 25 years in a deal that always seemed financially questionable and it is heading for the courts

after collapsing earlier this year, with both sides blaming the other.

Australian former doubles great Mark Woodforde, who is chair of the Davis Cup committee, believes the focus on Kosmos has masked the problems that existed with the old format.

He told the PA news agency: "We're fully aware that some players will say, 'Why don't we go back to that home-and-away format?' That format was not working. That's why the change came about. The old format was killing Davis Cup.

"We had nations telling the ITF they were unhappy, it needed to change. We had our title sponsor telling us we need to make changes, we need to keep the competition alive, we need to make it fresh."

Carlsen, Nakamura and Assaubayeva among top stars for Qatar Masters International Chess

3rd edition of \$110,000 championship to be staged at Lusail Hall from October 10-20

TRIBUNE NEWS NETWORK
DOHA

THE Qatar Chess Federation (QCF) is preparing to host the third edition of the Qatar Masters International Open Chess Championship which will include an elite group of the most prominent world champions. The championship will be held at the Lusail Sports Hall from October 10-20, 2023.

Qatar Masters International Open Chess carries a total prize money of \$110,000 with the title winner receiving \$25,000. The championship will witness the participation of 170 players with the biggest and brightest chess stars present.

World No. 1 and five-time world champion Norwegian Magnus Carlsen is at the forefront of the participating stars as he makes his third appearance after having previously appeared in the 2014 and 2015 editions,



Mohammed Al Mudahka, President of Qatar Chess Federation.



Hamad Al Tamimi, Executive Director of Qatar Chess Federation.



World No.1 & 5-time world champion Magnus Carlsen of Norway.



Kazakh IM and Woman Grandmaster Bibisara Assaubayeva.

along with American Hikaru Nakamura, ranked third in the world, Dutchman Anish Giri, ranked seventh in the world, and his compatriot Jorden van Foreest. In addition to Indian Dommaraju Gukesh, ranked eighth in the world, and the Iranian Parham Maqsoodlou.

Also participating in the championship is 17-year-old Indian Rameshbabu Pragnanandhaa, who defeated world champion Magnus Carlsen last year in the Airthings Masters Chess.

Kazakh International Master and Woman Grandmaster Bibisara Assaubayeva, the world blitz chess champion for the years 2021 and 2022, has also announced her participation in the women's competition, which



includes 16 players along with Indian International Master and Woman Grandmaster Ramesh Vaishali and her compatriot Vantika Agrawal.

Among the Arab players, Qatari participation is led by Hussein Aziz, besides Bassem Amin of Egypt and Salem Abdulrahman from the United Arab Emirates.

Mohammed Al Mudahka, President of the Qatar Chess

Federation and Chairman of the Organizing Committee, confirmed that the federation is putting the final touches on all arrangements in order to complete them on time, indicating that the tournament will witness many accompanying events through organizing the international tournament with the participation of a large number of male and female players from the affiliated training center for

the Federation, as well as some players of different nationalities.

He added: "The Qatar Masters Championship is considered one of the strongest open tournaments, given that it includes the most prominent champions of the game in the world."

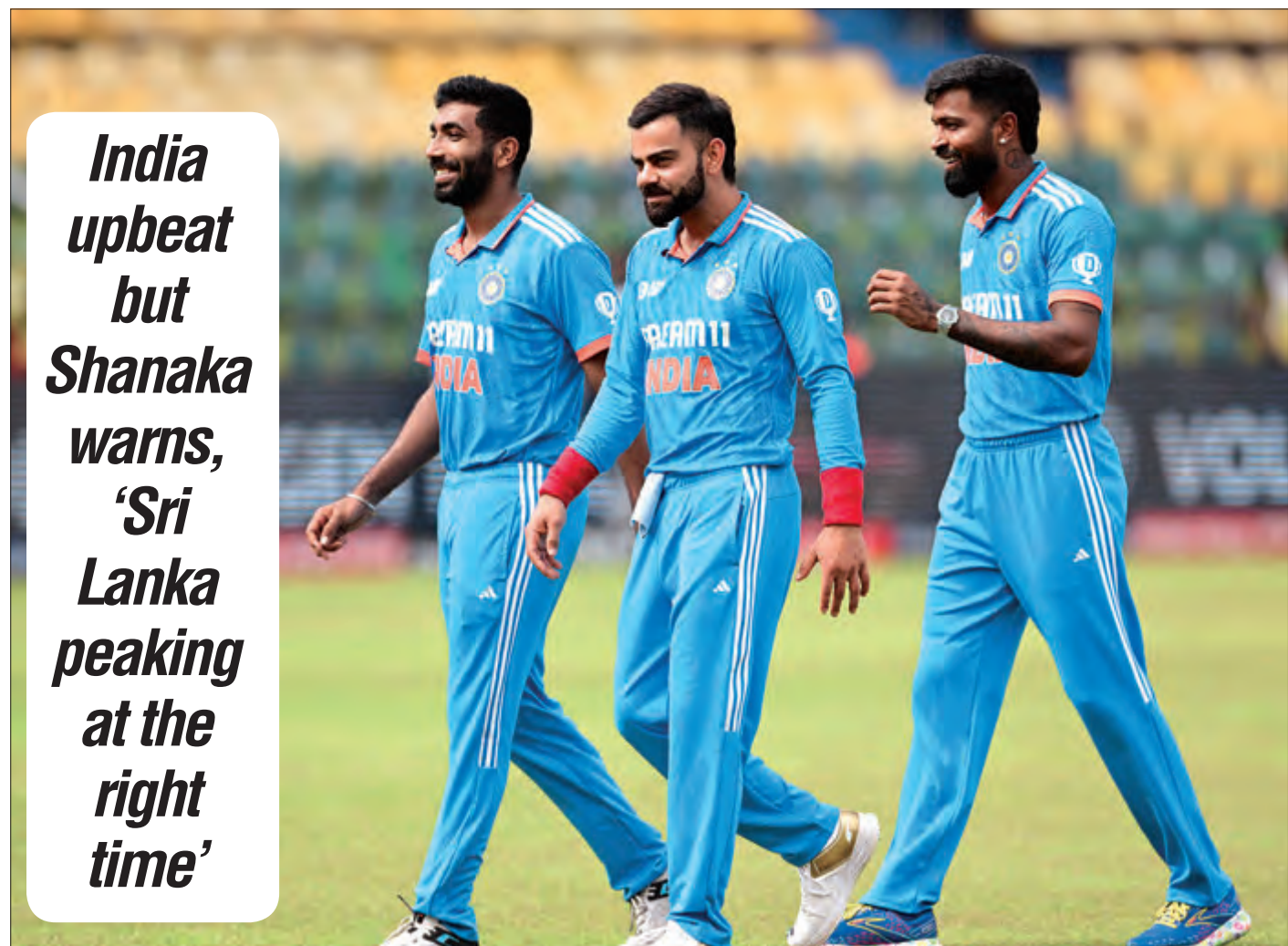
He continued: "I believe that the competitions will be exciting in October and we are very happy to host this major tournament and its return again after it was previously organized in two successive editions in 2014 and 2015," pointing out that the presence of the most prominent world champions will enrich the tournament and raise its technical level, especially in light of the participation World No. 1

Magnus Carlsen and a number of other top chess stars.

For his part, Hamad Al Tamimi, Executive Director of the Qatar Chess Federation and Director of the Championship, confirmed that the organizational preparations have reached their final stages, indicating that the championship matches will be broadcast on international chess websites, as well as the QCF's website, in addition to the presence of studio analysis throughout the championship.

He said: "We seek to continue the series of successes in organizing an ideal tournament for this type of tournament, and organizing a successful edition of the Qatar Masters International Open Chess Championship."

ASIA CUP FINAL TODAY



India upbeat but Shanaka warns, 'Sri Lanka peaking at the right time'

India's Virat Kohli (C), Jasprit Bumrah (L) and Hardik Pandya at the R. Premadasa Stadium in Colombo on Friday. (AFP)

ANI
COLOMBO

SRI Lanka captain Dasun Shanaka praised his team for reaching in Asia Cup 2023 final, scheduled to be played at R Premadasa Stadium in Colombo on Sunday.

Defending champions Sri Lanka will face India in the Asia Cup 2023 final here at R Premadasa Stadium in Colombo on Sunday.

Shanaka emphasised that Sri Lanka have only lost to India in the ongoing tournament.

The all-rounder credited the defending champions for fighting spirit in the match against India, where Dunieth Wellalage's five-wicket haul and Charith Asalanka's four-wicket haul helped them bundle out the visitors for 213. Youngster Wellalage achieved a remarkable feat as he secured his maiden 5-wicket haul, single-handedly dismantling a formidable Indian batting lineup and bagging the wicket of top batters like Rohit Sharma, Shubman Gill, Virat Kohli, KL Rahul and Hardik Pandya.

"Yeah, Sri Lanka are peaking at the right time. You know the boys deliberately want to deliver for the country. As a team, we've been underdogs, so everyone wants to perform on the bigger stage. These young-



Sri Lanka's captain Dasun Shanaka attends a press conference at the R. Premadasa Stadium in Colombo on Saturday. (AFP)

sters need to show the world what they are capable of. That's the secret of this young team," Dasuna said in a pre-match press conference as quoted by Sri Lanka Cricket Board's YouTube channel on Saturday.

Asalanka also troubled India a lot as he finished with the figure of 4/18 while Dhananjaya De Silva kept things quiet from one end while the other bowlers picked up wickets from the opposite end.

"In the India game, you saw how we fought after the first 10 overs with the bowling. They [fans] like to see these kids Dunieth Wellalage, Matheesha Pathirana, and the young batsmen like Charith Asalanka, and Pathum Nissanka how they

chip in this game. Not to forget Sadeera Samarawickrama as well," Dasun Shanaka said.

Shanaka added that they would need to replicate their Super 4 performance against India if they wanted to have a chance of winning the Asia Cup.

"Of course, we are ready [for the Asia Cup 2023 final]. See, it totally depends on the pitch. The pitches have been playing a part in this tournament.

"According to the pitch stats, we are picking a good side, especially bowling against India, we need to take more wickets upfront. That opens the game for us. That's a key area in the game," he added.

Quick read

Sundar called as back-up for Axar

Colombo: Spin bowling all-rounder Washington Sundar has been called as a back-up for all-rounder Axar Patel ahead of India's Asia Cup title clash against Sri Lanka on Sunday, as per the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) sources. During India's final Super Four Asia Cup clash against Bangladesh, Axar received a blow to his hand while batting. However, the team management has not taken a final call regarding Axar's status for the final yet. Axar has played in two matches during the tournament so far, having scored 68 runs at an average of 34.00, with the best score of 42 against Bangladesh, which went in vain during a run-chase of 266 runs. He has also taken a wicket. If Sundar is drafted into the team, he will be extremely useful with his left-arm batting and right-arm off-breaks. He has played 16 ODIs for India, taking 16 wickets and scoring 233 runs in nine innings with one fifty. (ANI)



Gulf T20i Cricket: Waseem stars as UAE beat Oman

TRIBUNE NEWS NETWORK
DOHA

CAPTAIN Muhammed Waseem struck a quickfire 35 ball 80 to set up a 22-run win for UAE over Oman in the T20i Gulf Cricket Championship at the West End International Cricket Stadium on Saturday.

After Waseem's knock that included eight sixes, UAE posted 191-4 and confined Oman to 169-7 despite a 90-run innings from their skipper Aqib Illyas.

Meanwhile, hosts Qatar opened their campaign on winning note beating Bahrain by 19 runs on DLS method in late Friday's match. The home team will return to action as they will take on Oman in today's first match to be followed by Saudi Arabia-UAE clash.



UAE skipper Muhammed Waseem.

Pak pacer Naseem Shah likely to miss entire World Cup due to injury

ANI
COLOMBO

PAKISTAN'S star pacer Naseem Shah is likely to miss the entire ICC ODI World Cup 2023 after scans showed that an injury to his right shoulder is worse than was originally suspected, as ESPricinfo reported.

Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has not detailed how severe Naseem's injury is. The bowler has undergone scans in Dubai for a muscle injury below his right shoulder that he sustained while bowling against India on Monday.

He was off the field during the middle of his over and later ruled out of the competition. Rauf also did not bowl after five overs due to his side strain and Pakistan rested him against SL as a precautionary measure ahead of the World Cup.

In the past 18 months, his workload has increased a lot. He has gone from a red-ball player to an all-format bowler. His potency as an ODI bowler is high, having taken 32 wickets in just 14 games at an average of under 17.

The 20-year-old pacer Naseem has had many injury issues in the early stages of his career. A back injury at 17, just one year into international cricket, kept him out for 14



Naseem Shah. (R)

The 20-year-old pacer Naseem has had many injury issues in the early stages of his career

months. Six weeks after his return, another shoulder injury in the County Championship sidelined him for a month.

Haris Rauf, another star pacer's recovery for the start of the World Cup. Rauf is dealing with a side strain. The pacer also did not bowl after five overs due to his side strain and Pakistan rested him against SL as a precautionary measure ahead of the World Cup.