

James leads Cavs into break with victory over the Pacers

Washington AFP

LeBron James scored 31 points, Kyrie Irving added 26 and Kyle Korver had 22 to spark Cleveland over the visiting Indiana Pacers 113-104 on Wednesday.

In their final game before Sunday's 66th NBA All-Star Game, the Cavaliers won their third game in a row and seventh in eight starts to stand 39-16 and atop the Eastern Conference. At 7-1 in February, the Cavs matched their win total from a 7-8 January.

"We've played some good ball," James said.

"Obviously we know January wasn't such a good month for us, but overall, for the season, we're in a good place."

Korver came off the bench to become only the seventh NBA player with 2,000 career 3-point baskets. He made 6-of-8 3-point shots, netting 13 points in the fourth quarter.

"It means something to me for sure," Korver said. "I've always taken a lot of pride in

NBA RESULTS			
LA Clippers	99	Atlanta	84
Golden State	109	Sacramento	86
Oklahoma	116	NY Knicks	105
Phoenix	137	LA Lakers	101
Minnesota	112	Denver	99
Utah	111	Portland	88
Miami	117	Houston	109
New Orleans	95	Memphis	91
Boston	116	Philadelphia	108
Toronto	90	Charlotte	85
Milwaukee	129	Brooklyn	125
Detroit	98	Dallas	91
San Antonio	107	Orlando	79
Cleveland	113	Indiana	104



Cleveland Cavaliers' LeBron James argues a call during the first quarter against the Minnesota Timberwolves during their NBA game. James led Cavs to win over Pacers on Wednesday by scoring 31 points.

shooting and studying it and thinking about it and trying to be better, and obviously I'm working on it every day."

Klay Thompson scored 35 points and Kevin Durant added 21 as the Golden State improved the NBA's best record to 47-9 by routing visiting Sacramento 109-86.

San Antonio, with the second-best record in the NBA behind Golden State, never trailed in routing host Orlando 107-79 behind 23 points from LaMarcus Aldridge and 22 by Kawhi Leonard.

Boston's Isaiah Thomas scored 33 points, matching John Havlicek's 45-year-old Celtics record with a 40th consecutive 20-point game, to spark the hosts to their fourth win in a row.

a 116-108 victory over Philadelphia.

Oklahoma City's Russell Westbrook scored 38 points, grabbed 14 rebounds and passed out 12 assists to power the host Thunder over New York 116-105. Carmelo Anthony led the Knicks with 30 points while Derrick Rose added 25 for New York.

Detroit never trailed in a 98-91 victory over visiting Dallas, with Reggie Jackson scoring 22 points and Jon Leuer adding 20 points and eight rebounds. German star Dirk Nowitzki had 24 points and 10 rebounds to pace the Mavericks, who lost both games against the Pistons in a season for the first time since the 1997-98 campaign.

Miami's Hassan Whiteside had 23 points, 14 rebounds and

five blocked shots in powering the Heat over host Houston 117-109. Miami trailed as Dion Waiters added 23 points, nine rebounds and seven assists. James Harden led the Rockets with 38 points, 12 rebounds and 12 assists.

Greek star Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 33 points and the Milwaukee Bucks held off a late rally to defeat host Brooklyn 129-125, inflicting the Nets' 14th loss in a row and stretch their home losing skid to 16 games.

Kyle Lowry scored 21 points and sparked a Toronto rally from 17 points down to defeat visiting Charlotte 90-85. Lowry's 3-point play late in the fourth quarter gave the Raptors the lead for good.

Kohli, Smith inspire new England captain Root

Leeds AFP

Joe Root hopes becoming a Test captain will take his batting to the "next level", just as it's done for India's Virat Kohli and Australia's Steve Smith.

Root was confirmed as England's new Test skipper, following Alastair Cook's resignation, despite the likes of former Test spinner Graeme Swann saying it could adversely affect his batting.

The 26-year-old Yorkshireman already boasts an impressive batting average of nearly 53 in his 53 Tests to date.

Yet Kohli averages over 67 as captain of the India side now top of the world Test rankings compared to a shade above 41 when a player in the ranks.

The corresponding figures for Smith are equally stark, at 71 and 53 respectively.

"That excites me," said Root at his Headingley home ground on Wednesday.

"It's a great motivator to make sure I do everything I can to get my batting in the best place possible and set the example for the rest of the guys in the team."

Root added: "You look at other guys who've taken similar roles like Virat and Steve Smith and they've gone on to bigger and better things and taken their game to the next level. I don't see why I can't look at it in the same light."

"It's a great opportunity to take that added responsibility and really motivate me to get better."

"Every kid dreams of being England captain one day... I'm just really looking forward to getting my teeth into it and putting my mark on things," he said.

Root insisted he had no hesitation in accepting the captaincy when it was offered to him by England and Wales Cricket Board director Andrew Strauss.

Meanwhile Strauss, Cook's predecessor as England captain, forecast an initial upsurge in the form of Root, a regular in all three international formats.

"When you get to the end of a captaincy career, you look at Alastair Cook and talk about him feeling a bit drained," said Strauss.

"The opposite is also true. Early on in your captaincy career, it's incredibly energising."

"You walk a bit taller, you are passionate about taking the team forward, and you want to contribute to winning games of cricket."

"We've seen with a lot of captains that it's had a really positive effect on their game generally. There's no reason why that wouldn't happen to Joe for the next 18 months. And it's 18 very important months for both him and the England team."

Root has plenty of time to ease himself into his new role as England's next Test in Lord's in July, with his focus for the time being on limited overs cricket, including June's Champions Trophy on home soil.

Olympic champion Hackett found after going missing

Melbourne Reuters

Australian swimming great Grant Hackett (pictured) has been found safe and sound after being reported missing yesterday, the triple Olympic champion's father Neville said.

Hackett, who has struggled with drug and alcohol problems away from the pool, was detained by Gold Coast police on Wednesday after his parents reported he had suffered a "breakdown" at their family home.

He was released after a few hours without charge but a day later, his parents said he had disappeared.

"Grant's been found alive and sober," Neville Hackett said outside the family's Mermaid Waters home. "He's spoken to police."

"He's actually hiding because he's very, very embarrassed about all this," he said, adding that while he was unsure where his son had been he had made contact with police.

Earlier yesterday, Hackett's father had put out a plea to find the former Olympic swimmer.

"He's definitely a missing person," he told local media. "He's mentally disturbed and needs urgent help... If anybody has seen him contact the media or the police or the Hackett family."

"Grant, let us know where you are. We love you and we want to help you."

The swimmer's brother



Craig told reporters on Wednesday that Hackett was a "danger to himself and to the community" and that his family were unable to help him alone.

However, before he was reported missing, Hackett posted a photo of himself on Instagram with cuts and bruises to his face and said his brother had beaten him.

"My brother comments to the media... but does anyone know he beat the shit out of me," Hackett wrote. "Everyone knows he is an angry man."

It is unclear when or where the photo was taken and Hackett did not appear to be sporting any injuries when he was released by police.

The incident has shaken Australia's sporting community and the Australian Olympic Committee (AOC) expressed its

concern for Hackett. "This is just a big shock and surprise," AOC President John Coates told Sydney's Daily Telegraph newspaper.

"I am very worried for him and his family."

"He is one of ours. He's an Olympian, and one of our greatest Olympians. We'll give him whatever support we can."

After Hackett's arrest, his father said the 36-year-old was "ranting and raving a bit" and the family had called the police when he had refused to get treatment.

"He's big and powerful when he's not happy," Neville Hackett said.

"We decided he needed some treatment but there was no way he was going to go and get treatment this morning, so we called the police."

Kirk first round leader at Aussie Open

Adelaide AFP

Australia's Katherine Kirk posted an eight-under 65 to lead a large foreign contingent in the LPGA/ALPG co-sanctioned Australian Open at Royal Adelaide yesterday.

Kirk carded eight birdies in a morning round and watched the afternoon players struggle in windy conditions to hold a two-stroke lead after the opening 18 holes.

Kirk, a 14-year professional who has made her living in the United States on the LPGA Tour, was outside the top 100 on the money list last year and has not won a big tournament since 2010.

But she rammed home three consecutive birdies and carried the momentum through to the finish in benign conditions to miss only four greens with a total of 24 putts.

Kirk leads the way, ahead of Americans Jane Park and Marissa Steen and Taiwan's Min Lee and South Korea's Chella Choi at six-under.

Scotland's Michele Thomson is a further shot back with Thailand's Pornanong Phatlum and American Lizette Salas.

World number two Ariya Jutanugarn of Thailand played in the tougher conditions and began with a one-under 73 to remain in contention.



England's newly-announced Test captain Joe Root poses for photographers ahead of a news conference at Headingley Stadium in Leeds, yesterday.

Pakistan vow to host PSL final despite Lahore blast

Dubai AFP

Pakistani cricket officials have vowed to stage the final of their Twenty20 league in Lahore next month, despite a powerful Taliban suicide bomb blast that killed 13 people there this week.

The first two rounds of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) are being played in Dubai and Sharjah, but organisers had planned the March 5 final in the eastern Pakistani city, vowing "international of state security" for head-of players.

However multiple Taliban suicide attacks in Pakistan this week, including Monday's bomb in Lahore, put those plans in jeopardy.

"We are committed to hosting the final in Lahore as our people want it there and it will be a step towards reviving international cricket," PSL chairman Najam

Sethi said yesterday in Dubai. "VVIP security is ensured," said the PSL chairman.

The violence-hit country has not hosted a high-profile foreign team since a 2009 gun and bomb attack on the Sri Lankan cricket side that killed eight people and injured nine others, including visiting players.

Sethi said international players competing in the PSL -- a list which includes former New Zealand captain Brendon McCullum, West Indian stars Chris Gayle and Dwayne Bravo, Australia's Shane Watson, Bangladesh's Shakib Al Hasan and England's Twenty20 captain Eoin Morgan -- would be asked by February 22 if they are willing to go to Lahore.

Officials have already said players will be provided with bullet-proof buses and heavy police protection, among other high-level security measures.

Blackburn bid to roll back the years against United

London Reuters

It is 22 years since Manchester United and Blackburn Rovers were duelling for Premier League supremacy but a rivalry that has faded into footballing obscurity will be rekindled when they meet in the FA Cup fifth round on Sunday.

With Blackburn anchored in the Championship relegation zone and uncertainty hanging over the future of their manager Owen Coyle, their glory days seem a very distant memory. At the start of the Premier League era, however, they were powerful challengers as United set about creating an English footballing hegemony.

Managed by Kenny Dalglish and bankrolled by steel magnate Jack Walker's millions, Rovers were the only side to win the title other than United between 1993 and 1997. Their 1995 triumph, which was spearheaded by former England striker Alan Shearer, prevented United from being champions five years in a row, and they also finished runners-up in 1994.

Unlike United, who used their success in the early 1990s, when the Premier League was beginning to boom into the financial behemoth it is today, to become one of world football's richest and most powerful clubs, Blackburn wilted and fell away.

They finished seventh in 1996 and never again challenged for top-flight honours, although their current predicament is far bleaker.

Having dropped out of the Premier League in 2012, they are 23rd out of 24 teams in the Championship and facing the prospect of dropping into the third tier, having won just seven out of 31 league games this season.



Arsenal's Colombian goalkeeper David Ospina misses as Bayern Munich's Polish forward Robert Lewandowski scores during their UEFA Champions League round of 16 match in Munich, southern Germany on Wednesday.

Brilliant Bayern out-gun Arsenal

Berlin Reuters

Treble-chasing Bayern Munich silenced their critics in spectacular fashion on Wednesday, dishing out a humiliating 5-1 Champions League triumph over Arsenal with their most complete performance yet under Carlo Ancelotti.

The Bavarians may be seven points clear at the top of the Bundesliga but their position of strength has been built more on a recent dip in form by second-placed RB Leipzig than their own performances.

Low-scoring and underwhelming, Bayern appeared to have shed their long-standing air of domestic invincibility with sections of fans growing increasingly frustrated with the side's lacklustre displays.

Suddenly accustomed to narrow victories or disappointing draws in recent weeks, Ancelotti was forced to repeatedly call for patience by saying the team needed to peak when the big games arrived and not any earlier.

The Italian could not have wished for a more perfect example of showing up when it

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE Last 16 - Results

- Bayern Munich (Germany) beat Arsenal (England) 5-1
- Real Madrid (Spain) beat Napoli (Italy) 3-1
- Benfica (Portugal) beat Borussia Dortmund (Germany) 1-0
- Paris St Germain (France) beat Barcelona (Spain) 4-0

mattered on Wednesday as Bayern swatted aside a hapless Arsenal in their round-of-16 first leg encounter to all but ensure a quarter-finals berth.

"If that was no answer (to our current form), then I don't know what is," Arjen Robben, who opened the scoring, told reporters.

"I am a bit surprised but it is the Bayern mentality. When it matters we are always there... despite not having necessarily played well this year so far," the Dutch winger said.

Bayern, aiming to reach the last eight for a sixth successive season, produced a near flawless second half, scoring three times in a devastating 10-minute spell as they delivered a performance worthy of the five-time European champions.

Their offensive efficiency was coupled with a solid backline and attacking midfielder Thiago Alcantara excelled in his playmaking role.

"I think this was probably our best game this season," a beaming Ancelotti said. "We played really well and this result gives us a lot of confidence."

The Bavarians are looking to win a record-extending fifth consecutive Bundesliga title but Ancelotti's main goal remains the Champions League after three consecutive semi-final exits under former coach Pep Guardiola.

Wednesday's victory could not have come at a better time with substitute Thomas Mueller also contributing with a welcome rare strike in an otherwise barren campaign.

The talismanic midfielder, a crowd favourite in Munich who scored two league goals last season, has scored just once in the league and three times in Europe's elite club competition.

"That was just the start for Thomas," Ancelotti said. "I think that was the breakthrough for him. He deserved it. Now we can look into the future with optimism. He will be very important for us in the coming games."

QMMF celebrates Hussein's victory

Doha QNA

Qatar Motor and Motorcycle Federation (QMMF) on Wednesday held a ceremony to recognise the achievement of Qatari racer Adel Hussein Abdulla in winning the FIA World Cup for Cross-Country Rallies.

The ceremony took place in Qatar. Hussein originally came second in the unofficial standings to Saudi Arabia's Yasir Saïdan. However the Qatari racer and his team protested, saying that the Saudi's car allegedly did

not match the FIA's standards in the Morocco rally. The protest was upheld, which meant the Saïdan lost his point for the rally in question. This was enough for Hussein to leapfrog him and win the title.

Saïdan lost 50 points out of the Morocco rally to end the season with 141 points. The sum was 14 points than Hussein's score. Although it is worth noting that the Qatari driver's points for the Morocco rally were also scrapped after Saïdan also protested the former's car.

President of QMMF Abdulrahman Al Mannai expressed his delight at the achievement of the Qatari racer, saying the win was a boost for Qatari sports. He stressed that Qatari racers have proven their excellences with Nasser bin Saleh Al Attiyah winning the T1 category of the same competition.

For his part, the driver said he was delighted to win the World Cup on his first try at the T2 category. He expressed his thanks to QMMF for their support and for the ceremony they held today to recognize his achievement. He added that the win made him even hungrier for success in the future.



Adel Hussein Abdulla

Isner fires 26 aces to beat Nishioka

Washington AFP

US second seed John Isner blasted 26 aces on Wednesday in rallying to defeat Japan's Yoshihito Nishioka 4-6, 6-3, 6-4 and advance to the ATP Memphis Open quarter-finals.

Isner took one hour and 49 minutes to book a Friday last-eight date with compatriot Donald Young, who advanced with a 7-6 (7/3), 6-3 triumph over American teen Reilly Opelka in the indoor

hardcourt event. Bosnian Damir Dzumhur upset Belgian seventh seed Steve Darcis 7-6 (7/2), 6-4 in another second-round match. He will face American Ryan Harrison -- who eliminated US third seed Sam Querrey 6-3, 6-1 -- in another quarter-final today.

In first-round matchups, Georgia's Nikoloz Basilashvili downed Australia's Jordan Thompson 6-3, 6-0, and Kazakhstan's Mikhail Kukushkin ousted German lucky loser Benjamin Becker 6-3, 6-4.

Real Madrid bounce back to beat Napoli

Madrid AP

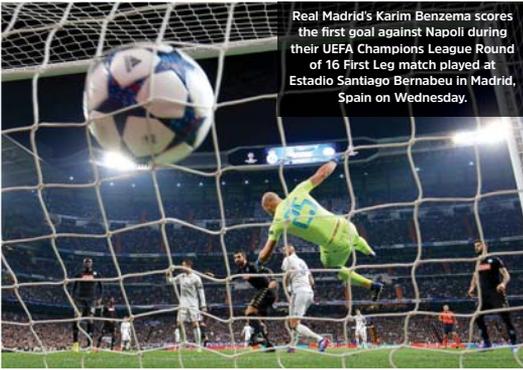
Defending champion Real Madrid recovered after conceding a stunning early goal to beat Napoli 3-1 on Wednesday and set a course for the quarter-finals of the Champions League after the seventh straight season.

Karim Benzema, Toni Kroos and Casemiro all scored for Madrid after Lorenzo Insigne's extraordinary goal for Napoli less than 10 minutes into the Round of 16 first-leg match at Santiago Bernabeu Stadium.

The Italian forward struck a shot from way outside the area, catching Madrid goalkeeper Keylor Navas off his position.

Playing in the last 16 for only the second time, Napoli was one game short of matching its unbeaten record of 19 matches in all competitions.

The return match against Napoli is on March 7 in Italy.



Real Madrid's Karim Benzema scores the first goal against Napoli during their UEFA Champions League Round of 16 First Leg match played at Estadio Santiago Bernabeu in Madrid, Spain on Wednesday.

Jamaican Carter files CAS appeal



Kingston Reuters

Embattled Jamaican sprinter Nesta Carter (pictured) has filed an appeal to the Court of Arbitration for Sports (CAS) after he was retroactively found guilty of doping at the 2008 Beijing Olympics, his lawyer said on Wednesday.

Carter is awaiting a date to come before the CAS for his appeal, lawyer Stuart Stimpson told Reuters

after confirming the appeal had been submitted to the Switzerland-based body within the 21-day deadline.

"Yes, they were sent electronically today and the hard copies (sent by courier) will get there tomorrow, so they (documents) have been filed," Stimpson said.

"We've paid our fees and we met our time line."

Carter retroactively tested positive for the banned stimulant methylhexanamine in 2008 and

on Jan. 25 was stripped of his 4x100 gold medal along with team mates Usain Bolt, Asafa Powell, and Michael Frater.

The filing of the appeal came four days after the 2013 world championship 100m bronze medalist made his competitive return by anchoring his MVP track Club's 4x100m team to second place at the Milo Western Relays in Montego, ending 17 months of inactivity.

That came after clearance was given to him by the IAAF, the world

Thiem pounces after Zverev tantrum

Rotterdam AFP

Austria's Dominic Thiem battled into the second round of the Rotterdam World Tennis on Wednesday after Alexander Zverev's challenge fizzled out in a racquet-smashing tantrum.

The German teenager lost 3-6, 6-3, 6-4 after dominating in the first set against second seed Thiem. He ended up smashing a racquet with five heavy blows in the final set after dropping serve.

The meltdown did not help in the end, with world number eight Thiem going through after one and three-quarter hours to next face France's Gilles Simon.

Grigor Dimitrov advanced with a 6-7 (4/7), 6-2, 6-4 win over Alexander's elder brother Mischa Zverev as the red-hot Bulgarian racked up his 15th win of 2017.

Dimitrov, who captured his second title of the season last weekend on home ground in Sofia, had to dig deep, however, to see off Zverev who stunned world number one Andy Murray at the

Australian Open last month. The 25-year-old Dimitrov improved to 15-1 on the season and will next face Denis Istomin, who beat Novak Djokovic in the second round in Melbourne at the season's opening Grand Slam.

Dimitrov, the fifth seed, took victory in just under two hours, firing his 11th ace for a match point and breaking on four in nine occasions.

"I'm pleased with the win. Mischa did not make it easy for me with his game. I had to fight to win," said Dimitrov, who was champion in Brisbane and a semi-finalist at the Australian Open in January.

Belgian third seed David Goffin comfortably beat Andrew Kuznetsov 6-3, 6-2

Richard Gasquet put out Viktor Troicki 6-4, 6-2, ending with a pair of picture-perfect backhand passing shots.

In the second round, defending champion Martin Klizan battled to a 6-7 (5/7), 6-4, 6-1 defeat of 2016 semi-finalist Philipp Kohlschreiber while French sixth seed Jo-Wilfried Tsonga dismissed Gilles Muller 6-4, 6-2.

Cibulkova in semis on day of upsets

Armstrong Vas
The Peninsula

Third-seeded Dominika Cibulkova withstood a tough test from Australia's Samantha Stosur to advance to the semi-finals of the Qatar Open on a day of big upsets at the Khalifa International Tennis Complex yesterday.

Cibulkova, the world's fifth-ranked player from Slovakia, posted a 7-5, 6-4 victory over the 2011 US Open winner, to taste her first success in six meeting between the two players.

"She was really fighting. It came down to a few points here and there; you can see from the scoreline that it was very tight," the Slovakian said after her match.

"The conditions are tough here, but I'm happy to have gotten lucky this week so far," Cibulkova said.

The win over Stosur, ranked World No. 21, turned out to be

the 400th career win for the 27-year-old.

"I tried to have a new tactic against Sam because I'd never beaten her before, and it was really working today. I have to say, I was playing well," said Cibulkova, who won the 2016 WTA Comeback player of the year Award for her remarkable resurgence last season which saw her climb from 66 in February 2016 to the top ten at the end of the year.

The 27-year-old had things under control in the first set taking a 5-1 lead, but Stosur - who was playing her second match of the day - made a late charge but Cibulkova attacking play won the day for her.

In the second set, the World No.5 clinched the crucial break in the ninth game, to make her maiden semifinal appearance in Doha in five appearances.

Cibulkova will face the winner of the quarterfinal between Zhang Shuai and second-seeded Karolina Pliskova.



Dominika Cibulkova of Slovakia prepares to serve against Australia's Samantha Stosur during their Qatar Total Open Quarter-final played at the Khalifa International Tennis Complex in Doha yesterday. Cibulkova won 7-5, 6-4.

But the other seeds were not fortunate to make it past the last eight stage on a day where the rain affected play, albeit for brief spells late in the evening but not for long spells as it did for the first three days of the event.

Top-seed Germany's Angelique Kerber, fourth-seeded Pole Agnieszka Radwanska and Russia's Elena Vesnina and were some of the top players who bite the dust in the rain-affected tournament.

Advancing to the quarter-final stage of the tournament were Denmark's Caroline Wozniacki, qualifier Lauren Davis, Czech Karolina Pliskova and Russia's Daria Kasatkina.

Wozniacki defeated

Radwanska 7-5, 6-3 to extend her win record to ten in 16 meetings so far.

23-year-old Davis ranked 55 in the world, who came through the qualifying ranks, upset sixth-seeded Vesnina 7-4, 6-2.

Top-seeded Kerber, who was handed a bye, fell at the first hurdle losing 6-4, 0-6, 6-4 to World No. 32 Kasatkina in two hours.

The former World No.1 who is aiming to bounce back to the top of the rankings summit, said she was missing the 'rhythm' associated with her game which brought her success last year.

"It's always tough to play the first matches after a longer break like I have. But I was not feeling



Russia's Darya Kasatkina hits a return to Germany's Angelique Kerber during their Qatar Total Open second round match yesterday. Kasatkina defeated the world number two Kerber 6-4, 0-6, 6-4 to storm into the quarter-finals. Pictures: Anvar CH

the best. I'm trying to find my rhythm.

But she (Davis) plays good. I make too many mistakes in the important moments. I think it was, for sure, not my day. I was not feeling the best today," said the German.

Kerber is eager to get back to top her rhythm right before

next week's championship in Dubai.

"First of all, I have to get ready again and the feel good feeling, because, I was not feeling very good in the last few days. I think this is the most important thing for me right now, looking forward to next week."

QATAR TOTAL OPEN RESULTS

Quarter-finals

- ◆ 3-Dominika Cibulkova (Slovakia) beat Samantha Stosur (Australia) 7-5, 6-4
- ◆ Caroline Wozniacki (Denmark) beat 4-Agnieszka Radwanska (Poland) 7-5, 6-3
- ◆ Darya Kasatkina (Russia) beat 1-Angelique Kerber (Germany) 6-4, 0-6, 6-4
- ◆ Samantha Stosur (Australia) beat 8-Barbora Strycova (Czech Republic) 6-3, 3-6, 6-4
- ◆ 2-Karolina Pliskova (Czech Republic) beat Caroline Garcia (France) 7-5, 6-4
- ◆ Lauren Davis (US) beat 6-Elena Vesnina (Russia) 7-5, 6-2



Casey Wallace of the US shoots during the men's Trap event of the Qatar Open Shotgun championship at the Losail Shooting Range yesterday. INSET: Podium winners of the event, (from left) Nikita Egorov, Wallace and Hamad Alkendi pose for a photograph.

Wallace tops in Qatar

The Peninsula

US Olympic Training Centre resident athlete Casey Wallace walked away with the top place in the men's Trap event of the Qatar Open Shotgun championship at the Losail Shooting Range yesterday.

The 27-year-old, a Colorado Springs resident, topped the field of 33 athletes, taking home the top prize, while yet another young upcoming shooter Nikita Egorov of Russia clinched the silver.

The 21-year-old Russian, who came through the junior ranks of the national team, shot four targets less than the eventual winner in the final round, in which six shooters qualified, to finish second.

On a day where two young shooters grabbed the spotlight, it was veteran Hamad Alkendi of UAE, who took the bronze.

The 47-year-old, finished with a score of 32 in the final round to take the third place, while Piotr Kowalczyk of Poland came fourth followed by Thomas Ward (Great Britain) and Talal Al Rashidi of Kuwait.

Skeet, Trap and Double Trap Finals rules have undergone a change from the current semifinal-medal match format to a progressive elimination Final. All Trap finalists will shoot 25 targets with eliminations or medal decisions occurring after 25, 30, 35, 40 and 50 targets.

Wallace, who was introduced to the shotgun sports at 11 after breaking his hips, which forced him into a wheelchair for 23 months, was happy to open his medal account for the 2017 season in Qatar.

"It was my first outing in Doha. The conditions were a bit tough. I am very delighted with the win in the very first tournament of the season," said Wallace.

"It is always good to win the gold and get some extra bugs as prize money. The competition was tough as all the shooters are of top quality, but I kept my cool to emerge winner," he added.

"I am impressed with the facilities here (at Losail). The range is very good and the targets were also perfect," Wallace said about the facilities at the Losail Shooting Range.

"I am feeling more confident after the win for the World Cup in Delhi (which starts on February 23). I hope to carry by winning touch to the World Cup," said the 2012 Lindenwood University graduate.

The American got hooked to shooting when he saw a shooting program on one of the outdoor networks and thought that it was something he could do from a chair.

He started shooting from a chair, and progressed to international competitions when he was able to walk again.

Workers Cup postponed due to bad weather

The Peninsula

The opening round of the fifth edition of the Workers Cup has been postponed by a week and will now kick-off on Friday, February 24.

Organized by the Qatar Stars League and sponsored by the

Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy, the tournament will feature more than 600 players playing among 32 teams.

The postponement occurred due to unexpected weather conditions.

The opening match will be played between Bin Omran Trading and Contracting and Nakheel Landscapes.

Before the match there will be an opening ceremony featuring live performances by artists from Ghana and Nepal.

General admission is free for all the matches of the Workers' Cup. People are encouraged to attend and cheer on the 32 teams taking part in the tourney.

Gutsy Al Kharaitiyat edge El Jaish

The Peninsula

Al Kharaitiyat yesterday relied on two late goals to deny El Jaish for a 2-1 victory in round 21 of the Qatar Stars League (QSL).

Elsewhere, striker Rodrigo Tabata struck twice in their easy 5-0 victory against football minnows Muaither while in another game, Baghdad Bounedjah lifted Al Sadd to the top of the points table with a hat-trick when they beat Al Arabi 7-0.

In a game played at Grand Hamad Stadium, El Jaish opened the scoring through Romarinho (7) but Al Kharaitiyat hit back in the second half when Abdulziz Rashid Al Ansari (63) and Tiberkanine



Al Rayyan's Rodrigo Tabata (right) celebrates with team-mate Myongin Koh after scoring one of his goals during their QSL match against Muaither SC yesterday.

Rachid (64) produced quick goals to complete the win.

It was Al Kharaitiyat's only 6th win of the season whereas El Jaish - placed 4th in the QSL standings - wasted an opportunity to pick up three points.

Employing somewhat a cautious tactic, 'home team' Al Kharaitiyat, yesterday relied more on ball possession than to attack the visitor's penalty area at Grand Hamad Stadium.

But in the 7th minute, the script of the game changed rather swiftly. El Jaish flexed their muscles with purpose when quick-footed Romarinho opened the scoring for the visitors.

After a neat dribble close to the Al Kharaitiyat box, veteran Malian

midfielder Seydou Keita intelligently picked out Romarinho - who slipped past two defenders before slotting the ball past Al Kharaitiyat goalkeeper Ahmed Sufian with low shot to the right of the goalmouth.

Five minutes later, El Jaish stalwart Keita produced a feeble shot from inside the Al Kharaitiyat box - beating the goalkeeper - but the ball narrowly slipped past the goalpost.

In the 15th minute, Al Kharaitiyat's Al Ansari - lurking inside the El Jaish's box - was denied by the woodwork. Al Ansari - after receiving a neat clip from the flank - produced a deft deflection from close range but his

shot ricocheted off the crossbar. Four minutes from the first half whistle, striker Romarinho beat the Al Kharaitiyat defense but his shot - with only the goalkeeper to beat - hit Sufian's leg and deflected away in what was a golden opportunity to score for the visitors.

A minute later, Al Kharaitiyat's Mehadi Al-Khamasi was slapped with a yellow card for bringing down El Jaish's Ahmed Moien as the men in blue started showing their frustration with reckless tackling.

At the one-hour mark, Al Kharaitiyat's Domingos Santos fired one in from close range but his effort was declared off-side by the linesman, much to the dismay of the men in blue.

The turnaround for Al Kharaitiyat came rather quickly after sustained attacks in the first 15 minutes of the second half.

Poor marking by El Jaish's Yasir Abubakar Isa allowed Al Kharaitiyat's Al Ansari to deflect a corner kick easily into the net from close range in the 63rd minute.

A minute later, Al Kharaitiyat grabbed the lead when substitute Rachid flicked one home on first attempt with goalkeeper Mubarak Al Khater in no position stop the low ball crashing into the net.

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James leads Cavs into break with victory over the Pacers



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US shooter Casey Wallace tops in Qatar

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FIFA hails Qatar's 2022 World Cup progress

Fawad Hussain
 The Peninsula

Hailing Qatar's rapid progress on infrastructure projects related to the 2022 World Cup, FIFA President Gianni Infantino yesterday said the arrangements for the mega event would be completed 'well in time'.

Extensive work - worth billions of dollars - on the region's maiden FIFA World Cup is under way with Qatar authorities targeting to complete all projects before 2021.

Last week Qatar's Finance Minister H E Ali Shareef Al Emadi said that the country was spending \$500m every week on major infrastructure projects for football's biggest tournament.

Infantino yesterday said he was impressed with the report on the progress of the 2022 FIFA World Cup related projects he got to assess during his short trip to Doha.

"A lot has been done by the authorities (already). Great progress has been made," FIFA President Infantino told reporters at the end of two-day FIFA Executive Football Summit which concluded in the Qatari capital yesterday.

"We have full confidence in everyone. The Qatari government and Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy (SC) are fully committed. A lot is still to be done but I am confident everything will be ready well in time," the 46-year-old added.

Some of the new stadiums being built include multi-purpose sports venues namely Al Bayt Stadium, Al Rayyan Stadium, Al Wakrah Stadium, the Khalifa International Stadium and Qatar Foundation Stadium.

All of them will be delivered ready-to-use by 2019.

Infantino said that the game's governing body would organise various test events ahead of the World Cup to assess the arrangements.

"Discussions are under way about the events. Our options are open to hold test tournaments for the World Cup. Qatar last year hosted the Italian Super Cup and it was a huge success. Such events would continue to be held in Doha."

While replying to a query, Infantino said he would encourage applications to co-host the 2026 World Cup, hinting that the event



FIFA President Gianni Infantino speaks to the media in Doha yesterday.

could be split among four countries.

"(We could) ...maybe bring together two, three, four countries who can jointly present a project with three, four, five stadiums each. We will certainly encourage it. Ideally the countries will be close to

each other. I am very interested in that," Infantino said.

The FIFA President also said that he didn't foresee any problem in the expanded World Cup in 2026.

"I still struggle to find any negative in the 48-team World Cup (formula). Most of the countries are happy and some are unhappy. We are open to discussion with the ones who are unhappy," Infantino said.

Meanwhile, the two-day summit which concluded in Doha yesterday saw representation of Presidents and general secretaries of around 40 football bodies from all around the world.

"It was an intense meeting about football development. The idea was to exchange expertise of football between countries," Infantino informed yesterday.

"We held similar meetings in Singapore, Paris and Miami and we felt the same summit should be held in Doha which is an important international hub," the Swiss-Italian said.

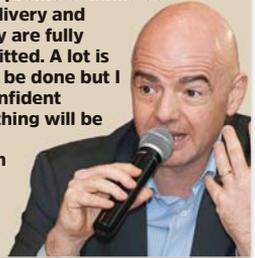
Infantino who almost completed a year in top FIFA office expressed satisfaction on his one-year performance.

"My objective was to promote football and I talked about it. We were elected to take the game forward," added Infantino who was elected FIFA boss last February.



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We have full confidence in everyone. The Qatari government and Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy are fully committed. A lot is still to be done but I am confident everything will be ready 'well in time'.



Qatar on track

- ▶ 2022 World Cup stadiums to be ready-to-use by 2019.
- ▶ Qatar spending \$500m every week on major infrastructure projects for football's biggest tournament.
- ▶ FIFA President sticks to the idea of 48-team World Cup.
- ▶ The two-day summit in Doha sees representation of Presidents and general secretaries of around 40 football bodies from all around the world.

QATAR NATIONAL BAJA

تنبيه

بتاريخ ١٨ فبراير ٢٠١٧ سيقام سباق رايلي باها قطر المحلي بمنطقة الخرسعه وسيتم استخدام الطرق الموضحة في الخريطة. يرجى اخذ الحذر الشديد اثناء القيادة او التخيم في المناطق.

WARNING

On 18th February 2017 Qatar National Baja Rally will be held in Al KHARSAAH area using the routes marked on the map. Please take extra care if you driving or camping near these areas.



FIFA President Gianni Infantino, accompanied by officials, visits the Khalifa International Stadium, one of the main venues for the 2022 World Cup, in this April 2016 file photo. The FIFA boss yesterday said that the arrangements for the mega event would be completed 'well in time'.