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Davis Cup: Britain, Spain enter quarter-finals

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'Sad' Cook resigns as England Test captain



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Qatar Stars League giants eye ACL berths

The Peninsula

After posting their best AFC Champions League (ACL) performance to date in reaching the 2016 semi-finals, Qatar Stars League (QSL) giants El Jaish will be looking to build on last year's campaign.

To do so, though, they must first overcome Uzbekistan's Bunyodkor in today's vital play-off clash.

Runners-up in last season's Qatar Stars League, El Jaish also enjoyed a superb continental campaign before their final four elimination by Al Ain. With former Barcelona midfielder Seydou Keita skippering the side, Sabri Lamouchi's men will be hoping for another successful stint in Asia's premier club competition.

By way of contrast, Bunyodkor have endured a tough time in recent years having failed to progress beyond the Group Stage since 2014.

However, having twice reached the last four of the continental tournament in 2008 and 2012, the Uzbek side will be hoping a squad brimming with youthful talent will help recapture former glories.

Meanwhile, with a total of four Asian championships between them, the 2017 AFC Champions League Play-off showdown between Esteghlal and Al Sadd at Tehran's Azadi Stadium is certain to be one to savour with a place in Group A on the line.

In the AFC Champions League era, today's hosts Esteghlal have represented Iran seven times – second only to Sepahan – although the two-time Asian Club Championship winners have not gone further than the semi-finals (2013).

Like Esteghlal, Al Sadd missed out on the 2016 edition but the Qataris – continental champions in 1989 and 2011 – will be keen to return to the highest level of Asian club football. And with former Barcelona veteran Xavi pulling the strings in midfield, 2017 could be a campaign to remember.



Former Barcelona midfielder Seydou Keita (left) and captain of El Jaish team Sabri Lamouchi on the eve of the AFC Champions League match against Bunyodkor of Uzbekistan in Doha. RIGHT: Coach of Bunyodkor. The winner of El Jaish-Bunyodkor will book a place in the competition's Group Stage. Sixteen teams from various parts of the continent are vying for the eight final spots in the competition's Group Stage.



Al Sadd all set for Estaghlal test



My players understand the importance of this game. We are ready to give our best. There is a great buzz in the dressing room. We want to win and advance to the next stage, says Al Sadd coach

Jesualdo Ferreira



AFC Champions League Play-off

El Jaish vs Bunyodkor
Today at 3.15pm
Venue: Abdullah bin Khalifa Stadium
Winners will progress to Group C

PREVIOUS MEETINGS
AFC Champions League
April 2014
El Jaish 1-2 Bunyodkor
AFC Champions League
March 2014
Bunyodkor 1-2 El Jaish

Esteghlal vs Al Sadd
Today 3:30pm
Venue: Azadi Stadium
Winners will progress to Group A
Previous meetings: None

The Play-off Stage of the 2017 AFC Champions League kicks off today, with 16 teams from various parts of the continent are vying for the eight final spots in the competition's Group Stage.

El Jaish need a disciplined performance, says Lamouchi

Rizwan Rehmat
The Peninsula

El Jaish coach Sabri Lamouchi yesterday urged his players to produce a 'disciplined performance' in their AFC Champions League knock-out clash against Uzbek giants Bunyodkor, calling today's game a 'new challenge'.

The two sides clash at Lekhwiya Stadium today. Lamouchi said his side may have the advantage of playing on the home soil but he wouldn't take the opposition lightly.

"The real challenge is that we must win," he told a news conference yesterday.

"It is an important game. We need to put great emphasis on a disciplined performance," he said. "My team is entering a new challenge with this game. We wish to succeed in our test and get to AFC Champions League group stage. But for that to happen, we must overcome the next obstacle – and that is



The AFC Champions League matches are completely different. We wish to succeed in our test and get to AFC Champions League group stage: Coach Sabri Lamouchi



Bunyodkor," Lamouchi said. "The AFC Champions League matches are completely different compared to other tournaments and our team will be facing a difficult task," Lamouchi said yesterday. "Before every game, we

analyze our opponents and study all the tactical aspects of the game. We will fight the same way we fight every game," Lamouchi said. "Our focus has always been towards the development of our team in all aspects," the El Jaish coach said.

El Jaish's Mallan import Seydou Keita yesterday said: "We are ready to fight to win this game. We want to win and advance to the next stage. It is a do-or-die game for us. It is the most important match of the season." In another match involving a QSL side, Doha giants Al Sadd today face hosts Estaghlal of Iran at Azadi Stadium in Tehran.

Al Sadd coach Jesualdo Ferreira yesterday told a media conference in Tehran: "It will be a tough game against a strong side. This is completely different from our QSL matches. We will be playing in front of a huge crowd, I am sure."

"My players understand the importance of this game. We are

ready to give our best," Ferreira said.

"There is a great buzz in the dressing room," he said.

"We want to win and advance to the next stage," he said. When asked about Xavi's presence, the Al Sadd coach said: "Xavi is a great player. He has been talking to the players which always means so much to the team. He has so much experience and is a role model for most young players."

"We know what is required of us. We seek to get our best playing XI on the pitch," the coach said.

"The game could go to extra time and the players are ready for any eventuality," the coach said.

Al Sadd player Hossem Kamal said: "We must fight to win. We are ready, as our coach said. Surely it will be a hard-fought battle. Al Sadd will deliver a memorable performance. We will fight on the pitch for the result we are looking for."

Al Rayyan aim to narrow gap at the top in QSL

The Peninsula

Current Qatar Stars League (QSL) leaders Lekhwiya will seek to cement their place at the top when they take on defending champions Al Rayyan in the Round 20 clash at Al Sadd Stadium on Friday.

The clash between the two title chasing sides promises to be an interesting affair and a lot to offer.

Both sides have enjoyed undefeated stints to 2017 so far, and will have something offer as two of the leading sides in the QSL take on each other.

For the home side Al Rayyan, they have won all six games of 2017 so far, and have consolidated

third place in the QSL standings. Michael Laudrup's side have improved significantly in defence during the new year, conceding only three goals in that period. The Lions are currently nine points behind Lekhwiya and know that a win could pile the pressure onto Djamel Belmadi's side.

Laudrup is no stranger to the Lekhwiya set-up having led the side to a league and cup double during the 2014/2015 QSL season. One player who aided him during this time was Qatar International striker Sebastian Sorja who is now at Al Rayyan and could be a key player in this match. Sorja has rediscovered his goal-scoring touch in recent weeks, registering

two goals in his last three outings. The veteran attacker will have to be at his very best if Al Rayyan are to defeat the champions elect in Lekhwiya.

As for Lekhwiya they have yet to taste defeat this league season, and are now only nine rounds away from going the whole season undefeated. Last time out they bulldozed Al Khor with a 6-0 victory, which expressed their title credentials loud and clear.

One of the characteristics of this Lekhwiya side is their unrelenting will to win, and this mentality has been provided by coach Belmadi. In recent weeks Lekhwiya have been missing a host of key players through injury,

suspension and AFCON and now it seems that players are coming back at the right time for the Red Knights.

The sides leading scorer Yusef El Arabi made an immediate impact for his side on his first match representing Morocco in the AFCON. The former Granada striker notched a hat-trick in the 6-0 win over Al Khor, which took his tally to 20 goals in just 13 QSL games. Belmadi will certainly be expecting the Moroccan hit-man to be amongst the goals against Al Rayyan on Friday, with a victory over their rivals all but assured that the title is heading back to Lekhwiya for a fifth time in the clubs history.



A file picture of the QSL match between Lekhwiya and Al Wakrah played last month.

Brady fairytale as Patriots fightback seals Super Bowl

Houston
AFP

Tom Brady inspired the greatest comeback in Super Bowl history on Sunday as the New England Patriots stunned the Atlanta Falcons 34-28 in an epic overtime duel.

In an extraordinary finale to the most challenging season of his career, Brady confirmed his right to be regarded as the best quarterback gridiron has ever seen with a fifth Super Bowl crown.

Brady rallied the Patriots brilliantly to overturn a 28-3 third quarter deficit, completing a thrilling win on a night of improbable drama at Houston's NRG Stadium.

Brady, 39, collapsed to the turf with emotion after James White burrowed over from close range to score the winning touchdown on the opening drive of overtime.

"We all brought each other back," Brady said. "We never felt out of it. It was a tough battle."

The win capped a tumultuous season for Brady, who was banned at the start of the campaign for four games over the "Deflategate" saga.

National Football League commissioner Roger

Goodell - widely viewed as Brady's arch-nemesis - was subjected to deafening boos as he presented the Patriots with the Vince Lombardi Trophy.

Brady, who threw for 466 yards and two touchdowns, shrugged off suggestions that the win amounted to a personal redemption. "This is all positive," he said. "It took a lot of mental toughness. We're going to remember this for the rest of our lives."

The Falcons meanwhile were left shellshocked after snatching a defeat from the jaws of victory which ensures they remain on the list of teams never to have won a Super Bowl.

"There's nothing you can really say," said dejected Falcons quarterback Matt Ryan.

"That's a tough loss. Obviously very disappointing, very close to getting done what we wanted to get done, but it's hard to find words tonight."

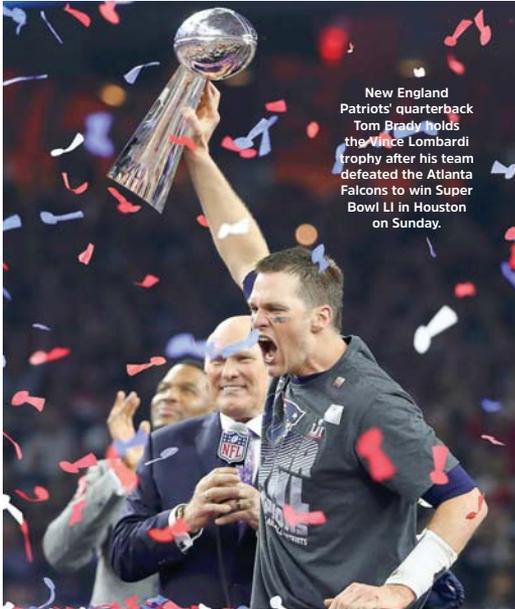
The Patriots had looked dead and buried after the Falcons scored three first half touchdowns and an early score in the third quarter to power 25 points clear.

No team had ever come back from more than 10 points to win the Super Bowl before, and the Patriots looked to be heading for a crushing defeat as the Falcons ran riot.

But Brady, who had looked a pale imitation of himself for much of the game, suddenly fired into life in the second half to produce a performance that will go into National Football League folklore.

The Falcons, who had gone into the game boasting one of the most potent offenses in history, were left distraught and still waiting for their first Super Bowl crown.

They had appeared to be roaring to the championship with quarterback Ryan pulling apart the Patriots in the first half. The Falcons scored



New England Patriots quarterback Tom Brady holds the Vince Lombardi trophy after his team defeated the Atlanta Falcons to win Super Bowl LI in Houston on Sunday.

touchdowns through Devonta Freeman and Austin Hooper before Robert Alford picked off Brady for an 82-yard interception score.

The Patriots could only muster a Stephen Gostkowski field goal to go into half-time 21-3 down in the game.

A shellshocked Brady looked bereft after his interception blunder and it got worse for the Patriots early in the third quarter.

The misfiring Patriots offense again squandered their next possession and Atlanta were back on the charge, powering forward with a nine-play drive that ended with Ryan lobbing a six-yard pass to Tevin Coleman for a touchdown.

New England grabbed

what looked like a consolation score when Brady found running back White to make it 28-9.

But Gostkowski missed the extra point afterwards, and it seemed as if all Atlanta had to do was ride out the clock.

But a further Gostkowski field goal made it 28-12 and when Brady hit Danny Amendola for a six-yard touchdown, with a successful two-point conversion to follow, it had suddenly become a one-score game.

Now the Falcons were flustered and a crucial drive faltered and the Patriots won the ball back.

An epic drive hinged on a logic-defying 23-yard reception to Julian Edelman, who somehow gathered a

deflected pass to put the Patriots in enemy territory.

Brady marched his team forward and White scampered in from one yard to make it 28-28 and take the game to overtime for the first time in Super Bowl history.

The Patriots won the toss and elected to receive and with momentum clearly on their side, there was only going to be one outcome.

Brady, just as he had done in his first Super Bowl victory in 2002, nervously led his team forward and soon they were camped on the Atlanta line.

It was left to White to score his third touchdown of the night to clinch an amazing victory.

Trump leads Twitter praise of Patriots

Houston
AFP

US President Donald Trump was quick off the mark in tweeting his praise of the New England Patriots on Sunday, after they authored the biggest comeback in Super Bowl history to beat the Atlanta Falcons.

"What an amazing comeback and win by the Patriots," Trump tweeted as social media echoed with tributes to New England's 34-28 triumph in the NFL championship showcase in Houston, Texas.

"Tom Brady, Bob Kraft and Coach B are total winners. Wow!" added Trump, who has regularly referenced his friendship with Pats quarterback Brady, coach Bill Belichick and team owner Robert Kraft.

Brady brought the Patriots back from a 28-3 deficit to force overtime - the first Super Bowl overtime in history - becoming the first quarterback to win five Super Bowl titles and the first four-time Super Bowl Most Valuable Player.

"That should shut up all the doubters about who the greatest QB of all time is!!" former Patriots linebacker Vince Wilfork tweeted.

Some of the comments celebrating Brady and the team were tinged with lingering bitterness over the four-game ban handed Brady by the NFL over the Deflategate saga.

"Justice Prevails," the Boston Police department tweeted. "Boston Strong. When they suspended TB12 for 4 games they didn't just disrespect the greatest QB of all time, they insulted a region."

Boston's other pro sports teams - the NBA's Celtics, NHL's Bruins and Major League Baseball's Red Sox - offered their congratulations, as did individual players.

Rising Celtics star Isaiah Thomas, who leads the NBA in fourth-quarter scoring, tweeted: "You know what time it is!!! 4th qtr kill!!! Damn that was amazing."

LeBron James (pictured), who led the Cleveland Cavaliers to an astonishing NBA Finals comeback triumph last season, added his praise of Brady as the "Greatest of All Time".

"Brady=GOAT. CONGRATS brother!!!" James tweeted, also posting a video salute on the Uninterrupted website.

Retired NBA star Kobe Bryant, winner of five NBA titles with the Los Angeles Lakers, tweeted: "5 rings can't be deflated #Brady #MUSE".



Amazing comeback

10

No team had ever come back from more than 10 points to win the Super Bowl before with the Patriots becoming the first side to achieve the honour

5

With the triumph, Tom Brady secures a record fifth Super Bowl crown

Ailing Lowry stars in Raptors win over Nets

New York
AFP

Toronto's Kyle Lowry shrugged off illness and stitches for his ninth triple-double on Sunday with 15 points, 11 assists and 11 rebounds, sparking the Raptors over the Brooklyn Nets 103-95.

Lowry played 40 minutes for the Raptors, who were without star DeMar DeRozan for a seventh game due to a right ankle sprain.

Raptors' Terrence Ross added 17 and DeMarre Carroll contributed 15 while Lopez had 20 points for the Nets, who suffered their ninth consecutive loss overall and 12th in a row at home, two shy of matching a club record home losing streak set in 2010.

NBA RESULTS

Oklahoma City 105	Portland 99
Boston 107	LA Clippers 102
Toronto 103	Brooklyn 95

Davis Cup: Britain, Spain enter quarters

Paris
AFP

Britain was defaulted into the Davis Cup quarter-finals on Sunday while Spain edged Croatia to advance and defending champion Argentina battled Italy into a decisive fifth match at a rain-hit tie.

Canada's Denis Shapovalov hit chair umpire Arnaud Gabas in the face with a ball and was defaulted in the deciding match, handing Britain's Kyle Edmund a 6-3, 6-4, 2-1 triumph and giving Britain a 3-2 victory in the first-round tie at Ottawa.

"It was a strange way to finish," Edmund said. "I've never been part of something like that."

Shapovalov, a 17-year-old Israeli-born Canadian, apologized to Gabas in the referee's office as the umpire was being treated for bruising and swelling of his left eye before being taken to a nearby hospital.

Pospisil had blasted 25 aces in a 7-6 (7/3), 6-4, 3-6, 7-8 (7/5) victory over Dan Evans to level at 2-2 for Canada, which was

Spain's Pablo Carreno Busta celebrates after winning his singles match against Croatia's Nikola Mektic during their first-round Davis Cup match in Osijek on Sunday.



without injured world number four Milos Raonic.

Britain won Saturday's doubles match. Edmund lost to Pospisil in Friday's singles and Shapovalov fell to Evans.

Britain, the 2015 champions playing without top-ranked Andy Murray, advanced to a quarter-final matchup April 7-9 against France with that winner

facing either Spain or Serbia in a September semi-final.

Spain's Pablo Carreno Busta swept Croatian journeyman Nikola Mektic in straight sets to clinch a 3-2 victory and set up a mouthwatering quarter-final clash with Novak Djokovic's Serbia.

Carreno Busta defeated world number 319 Mektic 7-6

(7/4), 6-1, 6-4 in the deciding rubber in Osijek as five-time champions Spain rallied from a 2-1 overnight deficit to knock out last year's runner-up.

Roberto Bautista Agut had earlier fought off a spirited challenge from Franko Skugor, winning 6-1, 6-7 (4-7), 6-3, 7-6 (8/6) to level the contest. said 26th-ranked Carreno

Busta, who atoned for Friday's shock loss to world number 223 Skugor in the opening singles rubber.

Rafael Nadal sat out after reaching the final of last month's Australian Open, but the 14-time Grand Slam champion could well return for an April showdown with former world number one Djokovic.

Serbia swept to a 4-1 victory over Russia in Nis as Dusan Lajovic beat Konstantin Kravchuk 6-3, 4-6, 6-3 in a truncated fourth rubber before the hosts conceded the final match.

Heavy rain in Buenos Aires interrupted Sunday's first match before Argentina's Carlos Berlocchio defeated Italy's Paolo Lorenzini 4-6, 6-4, 6-1, 3-6, 6-3, to level the tie at 2-2.

Argentina's Guido Pella and Italy's Andreas Seppi will meet in the decisive singles match starting Monday at 1400 GMT.

Holdovers Argentina are without Juan Martin del Potro and Federico Delbonis, the men who won the reverse singles to beat Croatia in last year's final.

Australia hopeful Wade will be fit for India series

Wellington Reuters

Australia are confident wicketkeeper Matt Wade will be fit for the upcoming Test tour of India and have no plans to call up another gloveman as a precaution, according to coach Darren Lehmann.

Wade, who took over as first choice wicketkeeper from Peter Nevill last November, missed two one-day internationals against New Zealand last week because of back spasms despite being initially named as stand-in captain for Steve Smith.

Lehmann, though, said Wade had already departed for the pre-series training camp in the United Arab Emirates.

"He'll be fine. He's got on the plane," he told reporters in Hamilton.

"If there was any doubt, he wasn't going to get on the plane. So that's a good thing."

The 29-year-old Wade was replaced behind the stumps for the defeats in Auckland and Hamilton by middle order batsman Peter Handscomb, who also stood in when the wicketkeeper was taken sick during the third Test against Pakistan in January.

Lehmann said Handscomb's performances were convincing enough not to warrant a call-up for Nevill, who has been in fine form with the bat in domestic cricket.

"He was a bit rusty when he only got 10 minutes notice at Eden Park," Lehmann said. "(But) he kept well (in Hamilton)."

Wade will be assessed after his flight and his match fitness tested in warm up matches in the UAE and Mumbai.

Wade was required as stand-in captain in New Zealand as Smith suffered an ankle injury but Lehmann said the Australia skipper was already in Dubai and batting.

Australia, who last won a Test in India in 2004, start the series on February 23 with the first Test in Pune, which will be followed by matches in Bangalore, Ranchi and Dharamsala.

'Sad' Cook resigns as England Test captain

London AFP

Alastair Cook resigned as England Test captain yesterday after a record 59 matches in the role, saying it was "a sad day" but the right decision for the team.

Yorkshire batsman Joe Root is the strong favourite to take over with an announcement expected in the next fortnight, as England build towards the Ashes in Australia at the end of the year.

Cook, England's leading scorer in Tests with 11,057 runs, became captain in August 2012 and led his country to Ashes glory on home soil in 2013 and 2015 as well as series wins in India and South Africa.

"It's been a huge honour to be England captain and to lead the Test team over the past five years," Cook, 32, who intends to carry on playing Test cricket, said in a statement.

"Stepping down has been an incredibly hard decision, but I know this is the correct decision for me and at the right time for the team."

Cook's decision to stand down follows England's 4-0 series defeat in India at the end of last year, which put pressure on him to quit.

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) said a "proper process" had started to appoint a successor, with the team not in Test action again until July.

Cook, who also led England in a record 69 one-day internationals between 2010 and 2014, is the country's most capped Test skipper and has scored more Test centuries than any previous captain.

He was named Wisden Cricketer of the Year in 2012



This file picture shows Alastair Cook who resigned as England Test captain yesterday after a record 59 matches in the role, saying it was "a sad day" but the right decision for the team.

and ICC (International Cricket Council) World Test Captain in 2013. He tendered his resignation to England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) chairman Colin Graves on Sunday.

"It's a sad day personally in many ways, but I want to thank everyone I've captained, all the coaches and support staff and, of course, the England supporters and the Army Army who follow us home and away and have given us unwavering support," Cook added.

"Playing for England really is a privilege and I hope to carry on as a Test player, making a full contribution and helping the next England captain and the team however I can."

England's director of cricket Andrew Strauss said Cook had made a "fantastic contribution" and "deserves to be seen as one of our country's great captains".

"We now move on with the process of appointing the right successor," Strauss said.

"There are a number of established players who are



Stepping down has been an incredibly hard decision, but I know this is the correct decision for me and at the right time for the team: Alastair Cook



playing formal or informal leadership roles and whilst we've rightly not spoken to anyone in relation to the Test captaincy so far, we can now talk fully and openly within the team.

"We expect to be able to make an announcement before the team head to the West Indies on 22nd February."

A classically elegant left-handed opening batsman, the square-jawed Cook took charge of the England Test team following Strauss' retirement from the game in August 2012.

In his first tour as captain he led England to a first series win in India in 28 years, hitting centuries in the first three Tests.

His first Ashes series in 2013 ended in triumph and after a harrowing 5-0 whitewash in Australia in 2013-14, England regained the urn in 2015.

Cook oversaw a historic series win in South Africa in 2015-16 and last year England came within one win against Pakistan of topping the ICC Test rankings.

He went 35 Test innings without a century between May 2013 and March 2015, but the milestones have continued to stack up.

He was the first England batsman to reach 10,000 and then 11,000 Test runs and sits 10th in the all-time list, 4,864 runs behind the record held by the great Sachin Tendulkar.

Mentor Gooch wanted Cook to stay as skipper

London Agencies

Alastair Cook's mentor Graham Gooch (pictured) said he tried to convince the opening batsman to stay as England Test captain. The former England captain

revealed this in an interview with the BBC Radio 5 Live following Cook's resignation.

"This type of sportsman only comes once in a generation, maybe less. He's a great man and he's still got great things to do for his country," said the former Test cricket.

"My one abiding memory of Alastair Cook batting was when I took a photo of the scoreboard in 2010 when Alastair Cook was 235 not out (against Australia in Brisbane). That's what he brings to the England team and I hope he continues that," added the former batsman.



Golf: Day leads world rankings

London Agencies

Australia's Jason Day continues to lead the world rankings after securing 9.93 points. Rory McIlroy is second followed by Sweden Henrik Stenson.

WORLD RANKINGS

1.	(1) Jason Day (Australia)	9.93
2.	(2) Rory McIlroy (Britain)	9.49
3.	(4) Henrik Stenson (Sweden)	8.93
4.	(3) Dustin Johnson (US)	8.85
5.	(5) Hideki Matsuyama (Japan)	8.80
6.	(6) Jordan Spieth (US)	7.78
7.	(7) Adam Scott (Australia)	5.97
8.	(8) Justin Thomas (US)	5.61
9.	(15) Sergio Garcia (Spain)	5.44
10.	(9) Patrick Reed (US)	5.22
11.	(10) Alexander Zverev (ESP)	5.20
12.	(11) Alexander Rose (Britain)	4.79
13.	(12) Bubba Watson (US)	4.67
14.	(14) Rickie Fowler (US)	4.67
15.	(13) Danny Willett (Britain)	4.63
16.	(16) Paul Casey (Britain)	4.24
17.	(17) Branden Grace (SA)	4.10
18.	(18) Russell Knox (Britain)	4.04
19.	(23) Tyrrell Hatton (Britain)	3.93
20.	(19) Brooks Koepka (US)	3.92

Matsuyama outlasts Simpson for second Phoenix trophy

Los Angeles AFP

Japan's Hideki Matsuyama won his second straight Phoenix Open title on Sunday, and just like last year he needed a fourth play-off hole to do it.

Matsuyama holed a 12-foot birdie putt at the fourth play-off hole, the par-four 17th at TPC Scottsdale, to edge former US Open champion Webb Simpson.

Simpson's 20-foot birdie attempt to win at the third play-off hole, the par-four 10th, had stopped one roll of the ball short.

Simpson charged up the leaderboard with a seven-under par 64, with birdies at 17 and 18 giving him the clubhouse lead at 17-under 267.

Matsuyama had his chances to seize the win in regulation, but it went to a playoff when his 20-foot putt at the 72nd hole stopped inches short.

He closed with a five-under

PHOENIX OPEN SCORES

-17	Hideki Matsuyama (Japan)	65 68 68 66
-16	Webb Simpson (US)	67 71 65 64
-16	Louis Oosthuizen (SA)	68 67 68 65
-15	Rickie Fowler (US)	67 68 69 65
-15	JJ Spaun (US)	71 64 67 67
-14	An Byeong-Hun (Korea)	66 66 65 73
-13	Martin Laird (Britain)	67 66 65 73
-13	Daniel Berger (US)	71 66 66 68
-12	Jordan Spieth (US)	70 68 67 67
-12	Matt Kuchar (US)	64 69 69 70
-11	Graham DeLaet (Canada)	67 69 65 71
-11	Kang Sung-Hoon (Korea)	68 65 74 66

par 66 to join Simpson on 267, one stroke in front of South Africa's Louis Oosthuizen.

The duo took advantage of the struggles of overnight leader An Byeong-Hun, who started the day with a one-stroke lead over Scotland's Martin Laird but finished with five bogeys and three birdies in a 73 that left him in sixth place on 270.

Rickie Fowler, bested in a play-off by Matsuyama in Phoenix last

year, fired a 65 to share fourth with JJ Spaun (67) on 269. World number five Matsuyama notched his fifth victory in his last nine starts worldwide, a stretch that included his triumph in the prestigious World Golf Championships HSBC Champions at Shanghai last October.

"It has been a great run," Matsuyama said.

"I'm going to ride this as long as I can."

Matsuyama was making his fourth consecutive start in Phoenix and has never finished outside the top five.

He thrives in the rowdy atmosphere of a tournament that attracts mammoth crowds.

Week-long attendance for the tournament this year was estimated at 655,434, by far the most for a golf tournament in history. The previous record of 618,365 was set last year at Phoenix.

But, as in 2016, he had to work on Sunday to pull off the win. "It was a struggle, especially



Hideki Matsuyama of Japan poses with the trophy after winning the Phoenix Open on the fourth play-off hole at TPC Scottsdale on Sunday in Scottsdale, Arizona.

that play-off, but I'm really happy to win," he said. With the victory, Matsuyama moved atop the USPGA Tour's FedEx Cup standings, surpassing Justin Thomas, who missed the cut.

He denied Simpson, the

2012 US Open winner, a first US tour title since 2013.

"To shoot seven-under on Sunday is a great feeling," Simpson said. "I wish I could have a couple of those putts (in the playoff) back and hit them a little harder."



Saeed Al Sulaiti of Qatar in action in round two of the QSTK600 at Losail International Circuit. Arch-rivals and top Qatari riders Mashel Al Naimi and Al Sulaiti shared honours in round two of the QSTK600, clinching a race each. RIGHT: Al Sulaiti receiving the super pole prize from an official.

Al Naimi and Al Sulaiti share honours

Super Stock 600

Al Naimi continues to head points table with a tally of 95, while Al Sulaiti has 85 after one win and three second-place finishes.

Rizwan Rehmat
The Peninsula

Arch-rivals and top Qatari riders Mashel Al Naimi and Saeed Al Sulaiti shared honours in round two of the QSTK600, clinching a race each under lights at Losail International Circuit.

By virtue of winning race 1 of the two-leg round, Al Naimi continues to head the points table with a tally of 95 points. Al Sulaiti has 85 points after one win (race 2) and three second-place finishes so far.

Nasser Al Malki is in third spot with 64 points after two rounds.

Al Sulaiti was thrilled with his top finish in race two and best lap-time of 2:04.578.

"I am very happy to get my first pole position at Losail and I felt very good on the bike," Al Sulaiti said after the Superpole.

In the first race, Al Sulaiti retained his lead for almost half of the race with Al Naimi very close to him. But in the fifth lap, Al Naimi overtook Al Sulaiti and stayed in the front for one lap as



Saeed Al Sulaiti (left), Mashel Al Naimi (centre) and Nasser Al Malki, the podium winners at race 2 of round two of the QSTK600, pose for a picture during the victory ceremony.

his rival regained his top position in lap sixth. Knowing that Al Naimi is faster on the straight line, Al Sulaiti pushed on to create as much gap as possible. But the veteran rider Al Naimi managed to pass Al Sulaiti with just two laps to go and sailed to his win.

"The race was good, I had a

good start. I was leading the first five laps and then I saw Mashel right at my back so I let him lead for a few laps and stayed behind him to study him a bit," Al Sulaiti said.

"I did that and it worked as I was able to overtake him. I was trying to make a gap in the last part of the race but then the

weather changed - there was more wind and I was losing fraction of a second and he caught me again. He overtook me with two laps to go," Al Sulaiti said.

"In the last lap, I tried to overtake him again but he knew the spot I was planning to overtake him and we passed one of the overlapped riders and I lost

more time again. I could not overtake him again," Al Sulaiti said. Al Naimi said the windy weather patterns made riding tough. "I suffered a lot with this indifferent weather. I had a problem with my arm band from second lap. I tried to push but I could not," Al Naimi said.

"After six laps, I pushed to the limit but I felt cramps in my body. I suffered a lot because of that. At the ninth lap I pushed hard, making my fastest lap of the race. I am glad I won the race," Al Naimi said.

"This week Saeed was very fast and he didn't make any mistakes in the race," he said.

The third place was secured by Al Malki.

"I had a good start but in the first corner I lost the gear so I went out of the track. When I came back there were too many riders in front of me and then I tried to pass some of them during the three laps but at the end Mashel and Saeed created a big gap and I couldn't get close to them," Al Malki said.

In the second race, Al Sulaiti sealed a memorable win with a narrow gap of 0.012 seconds ahead of Al Naimi.

Al Naimi remained in the lead during first four laps but Al Sulaiti overtook him in the fifth.

In the last lap, the two were riding so close that both riders touched their bikes and Al Naimi went wide that allowed Al Sulaiti the distance he wanted and he went on to win the race.

"I am very happy with this

win," Al Sulaiti said. "I am training very hard and finally the much-needed result has come. Regarding the race, I tried to push from the beginning. My plan was to go and let Mishal stay behind me but it didn't work."

"So in the second race it was a really funny fight from the beginning until the last lap. In the last lap, in the first corner, we had a touch. I want to say 'sorry' to him. I was a bit aggressive but this is racing and we are fighting for the victory," Al Sulaiti said.

Al Naimi applauded the performance of Al Sulaiti.

"It was a very good race. I struggled a lot to be in the front but today it was very difficult to be in front of Saeed. Today he really pushed me to the limit," Al Naimi said.

"This is a good fight for the championship and I hope next time, there will be more fight to show people how challenging and competitive this championship is. I would like to thank Ooreedo for the support as well as QMMF and LCSC for making this great championship," he said. Al Malki finished in third position while Al Al Shammari finished in fourth place. The trophies were presented by Qatar Motor and motorcycle Federation (QMMF) President Abdulrahman Al Mannai, the LCSC General Manager and Vice-President Khalid Al Remaihi and QMMF General Secretary Abdulrazq Al Kuwari.

The next round will take place during the Grand Prix of Qatar from March 23 to 26.

Cameroon toast Nations Cup triumph

Ignore papers, Martial tells United fans

Libreville
AFP

Cameroon celebrated the most probable of victories at the Africa Cup of Nations on Sunday which coach Hugo Broos hoped would pave the way towards a bright future for his team.

The Indomitable Lions showed remarkable character to come from behind and beat Egypt 2-1 in a brilliant game at the Stade de l'Amitie in Libreville with Nicolas Nkoulou and Vincent Aouabakar scoring to spark wild celebrations.

It was the first time a team had come from behind to win the final since 1994 and it was a first continental title for Cameroon since 2002, their fifth in total.

The triumph, witnessed by a crowd in the Gabonese capital made up of a majority of Cameroonians, completed a remarkable journey for a side who had been written off prior to the tournament.

Eight players, notably the Liverpool defender Joel Matip



Cameroon team players and coach Hugo Broos (centre) celebrate with the winner's trophy after beating Egypt 2-1 to win the 2017 Africa Cup of Nations final at the Stade de l'Amitie Sino-Gabonaise in Libreville on Sunday.

and the Schalke striker Eric Choupo-Moting, had refused

call-ups to the squad, leaving Broos to work with a young and

inexperienced side. That team had already eliminated the hosts

Gabon, much-fancied Senegal and Ghana en route to the tournament finale.

"I brought in some new young players and we started working. We did a good job and now today we have a team," said Broos after Sunday's match.

His man management has been remarkable and on Sunday it was notable that two substitutes scored the goals.

Nkoulou, the Lyon defender, started only once during the tournament and came on as a first-half replacement for the injured Adolphe Teikeu. Aouabakar, the powerful centre-forward currently playing for Besiktas in Turkey, also started only one game in Gabon, but he had scored the decisive penalty in the shoot-out against Senegal in the last eight and his winner in the final was stunning.

"It is the best way to win a final. I think we took a bit of a blow to the back of the head in the first half but the substitutions changed the match in the second half," said the forward Clinton N'jie.

London
AFP

Out-of-favour Manchester United forward Anthony Martial told Twitter yesterday to tell fans to ignore speculation he could be on his way out of the club.

British newspaper *The Sun* claimed Martial, 21, could join Paris Saint-Germain at the end of the season after struggling to convince manager Jose Mourinho of his worth. But the France international told his close to 800,000 Twitter followers: "Don't listen to the papers it's wrong thanks. Come on United."

Martial joined United from Monaco in September 2015 in a deal with a reported potential worth of up to £55m. He was United's top scorer last season with 17 goals in all competitions, but has found the net only six times this season.