Coutinho nets hat-trick as Liverpool crush Spartak

Liverpool’s Philippe Coutinho scores the first goal from a penalty during their UEFA Champions League match against Spartak Moscow at Anfield, Liverpool, Britain yesterday.

ACL 2018: QSL leaders Al Duhail drawn in Group B

Chinthana Wasala

O min Star football giants and QNB Stars League leaders Al Duhail will begin their AFC Champions League (ACL) quest in Group B next year, details showed yesterday.

At the draw ceremony held at the AFC Headquarters in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia yesterday, coach Djamel Belmadi’s team was clubbed in Group A, which also comprises Uzbekistan’s Nasaf and the winners of the previous year’s AFC Champions League group stage, who will be determined on Tuesday.

Arsenal had earlier been drawn in Group B, which also includes Liverpool, Porto and Besiktas.

Meanwhile, the reigning Emir’s Cup champions, Al Sadd, led by Barcelona legend Xavi Hernandez, will compete in Group C alongside Iran’s Persepolis, the UAE’s Al Wasl and Jordan’s Al Faisaliyah.

Goalkeeper Alaaeldin Mardih, coach Michael Laudrup’s Al Duhail SC (QAT), Al Duhail SC (QAT), Al Wahda (UAE), PFC Lokomotiv (UZB), FC Porto (POR), Al Sadd SC (QAT), Al Wahda (UAE), PFC Lokomotiv (UZB), Esteghlal FC (IRI), Persepolis FC (IRI), Al Sadd SC (QAT), Al Wahda (UAE), PFC Lokomotiv (UZB), AFC Champions League 2018 draw

Renowned and the winner of Al Ain’s 2-1 win over APOEL Nicosia.

Ronaldos sets new record

Ronaldo, who was the result of a power struggle within the group and a spot in the Europa League. Meanwhile, the reigning Emir Cup champions, Al Sadd, coach Michael Laudrup’s Al Duhail SC (QAT), Al Faisaliyah SC (KSA), Al Hilal SFC (KSA), Al Ittihad (UAE), PFC Lokomotiv (UZB), Besiktas JK (TUR), Al Hilal SFC (KSA), Al Ittihad (UAE), PFC Lokomotiv (UZB), Al Duhail SC (QAT), Al Faisaliyah SC (KSA), Al Hilal SFC (KSA), Al Ittihad (UAE), PFC Lokomotiv (UZB), Sydney FC (AUS), Shanghai Shenhua FC (CHN), Kashima Antlers FC (JPN), Sydney FC (AUS), Shanghai Shenhua FC (CHN), Kashima Antlers FC (JPN), Al Hilal SFC (KSA), Al Ittihad (UAE), PFC Lokomotiv (UZB), Sydney FC (AUS), Shanghai Shenhua FC (CHN), Kashima Antlers FC (JPN), Al Hilal SFC (KSA), Al Ittihad (UAE), PFC Lokomotiv (UZB), Sydney FC (AUS), Shanghai Shenhua FC (CHN), Kashima Antlers FC (JPN), Sydney FC (AUS), Shanghai Shenhua FC (CHN), Kashima Antlers FC (JPN), Sydney FC (AUS), Shanghai Shenhua FC (CHN), Kashima Antlers FC (JPN), Sydney FC (AUS), Shanghai Shenhua FC (CHN), Kashima Antlers FC (JPN), Sydney FC (AUS), Shanghai Shenhua FC (CHN), Kashima Antlers FC (JPN), AC Milan’s Gennaro Gattuso, Al Ain’s Zaid Almabkhout and the winner of play-off 3.

Al Duhail will begin their AFC Champions League appearance as manager, seals the spot in the Europa League.

Real were guaranteed a place in the last 16 as Group H runners up behind Tottenham Hotspur, but coach Zinedine Zidane still holds a strong side for the game, only resting Marcelo, Karim Benzema, Toni Kroos and Luka Modric.

Shanghai SIPG in last month’s FA Cup final, without the services of Argentine forward Carlos Tevez.

Two-time winners and Chinese Super League champions Guangzhou Evergrande will face South Korea’s Ulsan Hyundai FC in the quarter-finals, the winner of Japan’s Emperor’s Cup, Kawasaki Frontale, Ulsan Hyundai FC of Korea, Melbourne Victory of Australia and the winner of play-off 3.

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Real deal Ronaldo set for fifth Ballon d’Or

Cristiano Ronaldo (pictured) seemed set to match his great rival Lionel Messi today by claiming a fifth Ballon d’Or as recognition for leading Real Madrid to a La Liga and Champions League double last season.

Barcelona’s 30-year-old Argentinian superstar won the coveted award from 2009 to 2012 and in 2015. Portugal’s Ronaldo is now tied on five, too, with the honours in 2008, 2013, 2014 and 2015.

The man who came to maturity under the watchful eye of ex-Manchester United coach Alex Ferguson clinched his fourth Ballon d’Or after an unforgettable season. First spearheading Real to the Champions League title before also leading them to the league title to round out their own top five with four La Liga and two Copa del Reys.

Ronaldo also won Spain’s La Liga title in his 10th season, and added the Champions League to round out his stunning career.

He has a staggering seven players on the shortlist of 30 with Karim Benzema, Marcelo, Isco, Luka Modric, Sergio Ramos and Toni Kroos all nominated alongside their talisman.

The only other Barca player other than Messi is the Uruguayan centre-forward Luis Suarez. On the prospect of securing Messi’s fifth Ballon d’Or, Ronaldo himself tipped as a future winner, largely due to his ‘big head’.

Despite his position as outsider, Ronaldo can take it and sign up the achievements of Dutch midfielder Wesley Sneijder, winner of the Champions League, Serie A and Italian Cup to clinch a world title in the Spanish Super Cup.

For some of those qualified, first place, a second scalp or a first Clean Sheet on the round of 16 could be enough to boost their chances of a first major title.

British bookmakers have stopped taking bets on Ronaldo, who is a cramp’d 10-1 on to win. Messi, however, remains at 6-1.

At the final whistle the players were lauded for the end of Chelsea’s European campaign with the result greeted with joy by supporters, the group stage campaign complete.

This season we are trying to do our best in the league and the Champions League,” he said.

We have to show we deserve to go through to the next round and we must be happy with this. Already to reach the last 16 will be a great achievement for Chelsea. We are one of the big guns because they are scared about taking on one of the big guns because they are strong enough to trouble any team.

“We won the league and the Champions League, which was our target last season. Now we are going to the Europa League,” he said.

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Chelsea don’t fear European superpowers, says Conte

Antonio Conte insists there is nothing to fear in the Champions League this season, despite the fact that his side could face a number of the biggest clubs in football, including Real Madrid or Paris Saint-Germain.

But Chelsea boss Conte is adamant they should not be scared about taking on one of the big guns because they are strong enough to trouble any team.

“We won the league but it was a surprise. This season we are trying to do our best in the league and the Champions League,” he said.

“We have to show we deserve to go through to the next round and we must be happy with this. Already to reach the last 16 will be a great achievement for Chelsea. We are one of the big guns because they are scared about taking on one of the big guns because they are strong enough to trouble any team.”

The English teams are very good, they have the possibility to reach the final. The only question is what physical condition Conte added. “Chelsea’s downfall against Atletico was poor marking by Tiemoue Bakayoko, who allowed Saul Niguez to head home in the second half before the hosts equalised through Stefan Savic’s own goal.

“It’s a fantastic competition. We reached the round of 16 and we must be happy with this. Already to reach the last 16 will be a great achievement for Chelsea. We are one of the big guns because they are scared about taking on one of the big guns because they are strong enough to trouble any team.”

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“The French football magazine’s award is decided upon by a panel of experts, it was last won in 2016 with each naming a top five from a list of 30. Roma proved doublers wrong

Roma coach Eusebio Di Francesco during the Champions League match at the Stadio Olimpico, Rome, Italy on Tuesday.

League last 16 top of their group

Also, in the run up to the vote

For some of those qualified, first place, a second scalp or a first Clean Sheet on the round of 16 could be enough to boost their chances of a first major title.

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Qatar Shell and QFA to celebrate National Day at Darb El Saal

The Peninsula

Qatar Shell and Qatar Football Association (QFA) celebrate this year’s Qatar National Day at Darb El Saal with their award winning initiative ‘Koora Time’, offering open football pitch and activities for all ages.

On the course of the 31-day celebration, Koora Time will host a traditional Temba tournament for local youth with 96 students participating from eleven different primary schools across Qatar. There will be two open football play for all age groups and a match with a virtual reality goal keeper game and other activities for young girls.

Former and current football players will participate in the Koora Time tournament which will be held on December 9-9 and will run until December 17.

The sixteen teams were divided into two categories: the first category consisting of third and fourth graders, while the second consisting of fifth and sixth graders. Matches are set to start on December 9 and will run until December 17.

The two categories will qualify to the knock-out stage and winners will be crowned on December 17. Temba is the name of the original and traditional-type football that was played in Qatar and the Gulf region in the past. Children get to play in the sand, barefoot and dress in traditional Qatar clothes.

The main objective of organizing the Temba tournament is to spread the culture of football among young people and to encourage them to follow healthy and active lifestyle through football.

Koora Time is a ten-year sustainable initiative designed to improve the health and wellbeing of Qatar’s youth through football. The initiative facilitates access to an additional 72 hours of physical activity over its 18-week duration and more opportunities and spaces to play football.

In recognition for its positive impact on the health of youth, Koora Time has been the recipient of numerous awards including the 2014 & 2016 Sports Industry Award for Best CSR Initiative, the 2015 CSR Award for Best CSR Impact Initiative, the 2014 Dar Al Shajr Corporate Social Responsibility Award for the Best Sports Initiative, the 2014, 2016 and 2017 AFC Dream of Asia Award in the area of social responsibility and the 2017 QFA Awards for Best CSR Programme.

In addition to the Temba tournament, a variety of activities are available to cater to all ages and genders including a Koora Time Magic which features a virtual reality goal keeper game, a colouring area, and a seating area.

Khalid Al Kuwari, Director of Marketing and Communications at QFA said: “It is a great opportunity to have Koora Time take part in the country’s national day, as it allows us to introduce this great initiative to the wider local community and give them the chance to be part of a successful programme which focuses on the importance of adopting a healthy lifestyle through football. Koora Time has received great positive feedback both locally and regionally.” He added: “The activities of Koora Time this National Day witnessed various new activities and ideas in line with the vision and objectives of the initiative. A football tournament was organised for different schools, in addition to football-related activities and training opportunities for the public which were under the supervision of the event’s officials.”

He also said: “Our participation in the major events of the country is not limited to this participation, we have developed a new work strategy that is entirely different from the past which has also been the focus of the current games. We will be organising more activities and events in the coming days.”

Al Kuwari expressed his sincere thanks and appreciation to all those involved in the organizing of Darb Al Saal for their efforts and stressed that this event undeniably gives everyone the motivation to work together and reach the goals we all seek to achieve.

Since its launch in March 2013, the programme has registered over 17,000 children across Qatar. Last year’s programme saw a significant increase in Body Mass Index (BMI) of 80% of participants. BMI is a measure of body height and weight.

Al Duhail aim to extend unbeaten run

Armstrong Vas
The Peninsula

A I Duhail will aim to continue with their unbeaten run when they take on Al Saliha today at Al Mehmood in a game that is to act as the last round of the first leg of the QNB Stars League. The league leaders are the only unbeaten team in the 12-team competition and have 28 points against their nearest rivals Al Rayyan and Al Ahli.

“Al Saliha, despite losing their last two matches, are a very good side. They had been performing at a high level and getting the desired results. They have a distinguished coach in Sami Trabelsi,” Djamel Belmadi, the coach of the star-studded Al Duhail side, said yesterday.

“However, we will play to win as we are not keeping with the unbeaten run. We have never lost a game in this season’s league competition. We respect Al Saliha, but we have the players to achieve our goal,” he added.

“We are doing continuous work with the players and we want to finish the first phase in the lead position. Respect for the rivals makes us prepare for each match specifically,” said Belmadi.

Al Duhail goalkeeper Khalfi Abu Rabie said: “This is going to be a tough game but we have the desire to win and we will take the field with a winning mentality. I feel very stressed because I play under pressure, but this positive pressure brings the best out of me. I remain confident in order to return to good shape.”

Al Saliha badly need a victory to regain their confidence, which has been at a low ebb after suffering back-to-back defeats, at the hands of Al Khor and Al Ahli. Yet, they retained their fourth place in the standings with 18 points as fifth placed Al Thakif could not keep pace with them.

“Thank the most difficult phase is behind us, having suffered back-to-back defeats despite dominating those games. We made many mistakes and had 50 per cent responsibility for these two losses. We paid heavy price for individual mistakes than the missed opportunities,” coach Trabelsi said yesterday.

“The main problem was psychological, rather than physical or tactical or technical. Overall, I’m not happy with our campaign in the first phase. We could’ve faced better and collected more points.”

“We’re trying hard to rectify the errors and we still play for victory against Al Duhail, who are strong opponents. Some of our defeats happened because we played offensive and not defensive. That has been our strategy this season and we’ve got good results too.

Against Al Khor, we played almost in full form. Our aim is the league title. We have no option other than winning to achieve that aim. My players are game for it.

“We are not as strong as we were in the previous season. Important is that we play with and for the fans and pay attention to the main concern. I hope we will be able to build all players together in the second phase of the league. I also wish we put behind injuries to key players and take a shot at the title in full form. Our aim is the league title and we will go all out for it till the final round.”

Badminton: Sadhavi notches a double at Qatar tournament

Sadhavi Krishna Sunil of New Vision Badminton Academy notched a double at the Star Sports Aeroplane Qatar Open Badminton tournament held at the General American Academy, Wakra, Right: The podium winners at the tournament.

The two coaches, who have been into coaching for the last two decades, reiterated that the success of their players would not have been possible without the sincere co-operation of parents. “It’s New Vision’s Badminton Academy’s objective to ensure that all tal- ents are groomed up to the highest standards ensuring quality and utmost attention at their coach- ing, the process of implementing in Abu Hamour and American football, and Al Thumama,” said Manoj.
Hazlewood strikes early as Aussies take 2-0 Ashes lead

Follow-on decision left Smith sweating

Ashe not over yet: Root

Captains struggle with DRS

De Silva's ton helps Sri Lanka force a draw as India seal series

SLC complains to ICC on air pollution at Delhi Test
Russia ban must be analysed before taking action, says Kremlin

**SPORT**

Russian authorities have called on international sport bodies to objectively assess the situation in Russia before taking any measures against it, saying any ban would be unprecedented and would be based on “unprecedented systematic manipulation” of the anti-doping system.

The ban, which would apply to athletes who competed as “Russian” at the 2018 Winter Olympics, would also affect those who competed under neutral status.

The ban was proposed by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and has been backed by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA).

**NBA: Westbrook bags another triple double as Thunder win**

Los Angeles AFP

Russell Westbrook bagged a second consecutive triple double as the Oklahoma City Thunder stifled a late rally from the Utah Jazz on Monday.

Westbrook, who had guided the Thunder to victory over San Antonio on Saturday, was the biggest sidekick throughout, leading by 18 points at halftime, 17 at the end of the third quarter, and 14 assists as OKC improved to 13-11.

Jake Muzzin had a goal and an assist for the Kings, while New Zealand center Steven Stamkos scored twice for the Lightning, who have 100 goals this season – one more than the Islanders.

Andre Vasilevsky made 29 saves to earn his league-leading 18th victory.

The Rangers are fourth in the Eastern Conference with 35 points, while the Penguins are third with 37.
Over 350 fencers to take part at Qatar GP

The Peninsula

Over 350 fencers representing 45 countries will take part in this year’s edition of Qatar Fencing Grand Prix starting tomorrow at the Aspire Dome.

Revealing details of the tournament at a press conference yesterday, Tournament Director Abdulhal Al Maadeed informed that as many as 18 Qatar fencers including four female fencers will also be seen in action in the three-day event which will conclude on Sunday.

The event, which is being held since 2004, is rated as one of the major tournaments in the International Fencing Federation calendar.

“We are happy to host this event again and we look forward to delivering another successful competition,” said Al Maadeed.

“Like every year, this edition will also feature leading fencers of the world in both the men’s and women’s categories. Delightments from different countries have started arriving in Doha. We would like to thank our sponsors for supporting us in hosting this important event,” he said before adding that the event will be telecast live on television.

Fencers from Tunisia, Algeria and Kuwait will be among the countries who will be participating in the event.

Tunisia’s sabre fencer Sara Boshes, who claimed the women’s title at the 2016 edition of Qatar Grand Prix will be returning to Doha to defend her title. Singapore’s Alimah of Sorena hoisted the trophy of men’s event last year. Al Maadeed said as per the instructions of International Fencing Federation, the event will be supervised by 18 officials from other countries besides 80 Qatar officials.

He said for the first time, both the men’s and women’s finals will be held at the same time.

“The finals will be conducted between 3pm to 7pm on Sunday. The preliminary rounds will start on Saturday after the opening of the event on Friday tomorrow”, he said.

According to International Fencing Federation website, the event is offering a total prize money of US$ 30,000.

Al Gharthia Triathlon set to take place on Saturday

The Peninsula

Over 250 participants including 50 Qatari nationals are expected to take part in the eagerly-anticipated Al Gharthia Triathlon which will be held at Al Gharthia Resort on Saturday.

The Al Gharthia Triathlon is being organized by the Qatar Olympic Committee in conjunction with Qatar Triathlon Federation, Tri Club Doha, and with participation of Qtri, Mad Triathlon and Fit-Q. Triathlon. The challenge of three sports rolled into one event – is one of the fast growing sports in Qatar. The basic format is a swimming, cycling and running.

Dr. Mohammed Juma Al Kowari, President of Qatar Cycling and Triathlon Federation, expressed his pleasure in organizing this event saying, “We as Qatar Triathlon Federation members, are proud to be in a partnership with Qatar Olympic Committee to organize such a huge event that raises awareness of the need to adopt a healthy lifestyle amongst members of the Qatari society, in addition to the solicitude of Qatar Olympic Committee to adopt sports and to introduce it to Qataris and expatriates.”

Dr. Nasser Al-Mohannadi, Triathlon director at Qatar Triathlon Federation said, “We are very happy to celebrate our first ever National Triathlon Point Series in this lovely new location for Triathlon at Al Gharthia Resort.”

China star Wu Lei hails Qatar’s Cooling system

The Peninsula

China’s star forward Wu Lei has joined his equally high-profile team-mate Zhang Linpeng in showering praise on the pioneering stadium cooling technology developed by Qatar.

In September, the 26-year-old wanderer had first-hand experience of the cooling system used at Khalifa International Stadium, the first completed 2022 FIFA World Cup™ tournament venue.

Wu, who was a nominee for this year’s Asian Player of the Year, exclusively told the半岛inski: “I had a great experience at Khalifa Stadium. So too did my team-mates. The cooling was really nice and it helped our physical conditioning and gave us greater stamina. It is a blessing for players.”

“I had a great experience at Khalifa Stadium,” said Wu. “The training ground at Aspire Zone was one of the best I have been to,” he added with a smile.

Should China qualify for Asia’s second FIFA World Cup – after being part of the continent’s first tournament in 2002 – Wu will continue with no doubts whatsoever on the range and quality of Qatar’s football infrastructure.

“The training ground at Aspire Zone is one of the best I have been to,” he said. “The pitches and facilities at Aspire Academy are of a high quality. Aspire Academy is at the heart of a lovely new location for Triathlon Point Series in this lovely new location for Triathlon at Al Gharthia Resort.”

China’s Wu Lei at the AFC Annual Awards 2017 in this file photo. (Courtesy AFC)

“Shanghai SIPG attacker Wu Lei came to Doha in January with my club for pre-season training. I thought then that I would love to play in the completed stadium. The icing on the cake was that I scored the winner when I did.”

However, Wu has not had his fill of playing in the venue, which will also host the 2019 World Athletics Championships.

“Though we do not qualify for Russia, I am confident China will feature in the 2022 World Cup and I look forward to coming back to the stadium and continuing my good form,” he added.

Wu has been playing rugby for 21 years but he has never seen an Academy like this in my life. It is really a privilege.”

After wishing them luck in their academic and sporting careers, Severi shared words of wisdom with Aspire Academy’s student-athletes, advising them to have faith in their ability, believe in themselves and work hard, adding “Always set out to be better than the day before, let this be your attitude especially in your training and one day you will reach your goal and be the best in your sport.”

Aspire Academy is at the heart of a sporting revolution currently taking place in Qatar and around the region. The Academy is conceiving, promoting and implementing game-changing excellence in sports training and elite athlete development that is enabling an entire generation of talented, disciplined and committed individuals, both Qatari and internationals to pursue their sport dreams.

Together with the other members of the Aspire Zone Foundation (Aspire Logistics and Aspire Qatar Orthopedic and Sports Medicine Hospital), the Aspire Academy is developing sports champions, promoting healthy lifestyles and galvanizing the sports economy of today and the future www.aspire.com

Aspire Academy wows rugby sevens legend Serevi

The Peninsula

Renowned international Fijian rugby seven’s legend, Waisale Tikoisolomoni Sersevi on Friday during his visit to Aspire Academy yesterday during his visit to Doha.

Tai! a te Kitoisolomoni Sersevi, toured Aspire Academy yesterday during his visit to Doha.

During the exclusive tour, the two-time Rugby World Cup Sevens champion was given a tour of Aspire Academy’s state-of-the-art facilities and received an in-depth briefing on its services and programmes.

Speaking on the sidelines of his visit, Sersevi said: “I am really impressed by what I have seen here. I have been playing rugby for over 20 years and I have been all over the world. But I have never seen an Academy like this in my life. It is really a privilege.”