

# Matthews breaks course record at Ironman New Zealand

TDT | Manama

Britain's Kat Matthews made a stunning start to her Ironman Pro Series title defence at Ironman New Zealand, setting a new women's course record of 8:28:55 and finishing nearly seven minutes ahead of the field.

The 13-time Bahrain Victorious athlete arrived in Taupo with a clear goal: secure the maximum 5,000 Pro Series points. After emerging from the 3.8km swim in Lake Taupo two minutes behind the leaders, Matthews quickly began to make her mark on the 180km bike leg. By 35km, she had joined the lead trio alongside Hannah Berry and Lotte Wilms, steadily distancing themselves from the rest of the field.

Crossing into T2 just six seconds behind Berry, Matthews unleashed her strength on the marathon. Within the first five kilometres, she had already



Kat Matthews of Bahrain Victorious

**Final top five:**

1. Kat Matthews (GBR) - 8:28:55
2. Hannah Berry (NZL) - 8:35:43
3. Lotte Wilms (NED) - 8:39:57
4. Tamara Jewett (CAN) - 8:41:20
5. Danielle Lewis (USA) - 8:49:35

opened a one-minute gap, which expanded to over four minutes by the halfway point. Maintaining a sub-3:00 marathon pace, she continued to extend her lead, eventually crossing the line in a course-best 2:51:48, shattering Chelsea Sodaro's previous record of 8:40:07.

"This went to plan," Matthews said. "Even though it looks controlled, you have to work hard throughout, and I had so much empathy for everyone tackling that marathon. The community here is incredible - it really lifts you."

Berry delighted the home crowd with a second-place finish

in 8:35:43, also beating the previous course record, while Wilms of the Netherlands fended off Canada's Tamara Jewett to claim third in 8:39:57. Jewett recorded the fastest run split of the day at 2:42:40, overtaking several competitors in the closing kilometres. Completing the top five, the United States' Danielle Lewis finished in 8:49:35, rounding out a competitive field.

Matthews' triumph sets the tone for her third consecutive Pro Series title and reinforces her status as one of the sport's most complete triathletes. By finishing nearly seven minutes ahead of her rivals, she demonstrated why she remains a benchmark for excellence in long-distance racing.

The top five finishers also secured qualifying slots for the 2026 Ironman World Championship in Kailua-Kona, Hawai'i, adding further weight to their achievements over the week.

## Gilgeous-Alexander equals scoring record as Thunder roll Nuggets

AFP | Los Angeles

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander equalled Wilt Chamberlain's 63-year-old 20-point scoring record on Monday as the Oklahoma City Thunder defeated the Denver Nuggets 129-126 in a pulsating clash of the Western Conference titans.

Gilgeous-Alexander finished with 35 points, 15 assists and nine rebounds to pull level with Chamberlain's longstanding mark of scoring 20 points or more in 126 consecutive games set between 1961 and 1963.

But Gilgeous-Alexander's equalling of Chamberlain's streak was almost a footnote to a spellbinding individual performance that saw the reigning NBA Most Valuable Player seal victory with a game-winning three-pointer with three seconds on the clock.

Gilgeous-Alexander had given the Thunder what looked like a winning 126-122 lead with 14 seconds on the clock after another superb three-pointer.

The Nuggets though came roaring back with a nerveless three-pointer from Nikola Jokic, and a foul from Jaylin Williams in the same play allowed Jamal Murray to level it for Denver from the free-throw



Shai Gilgeous-Alexander in action

line. With overtime looming there was one last throw of the dice for Oklahoma City, and Gilgeous-Alexander duly delivered, launching a 25-foot step back three to snatch victory at the death.

"I just tried to make a play I was comfortable making," Gilgeous-Alexander said after sending the Oklahoma City home crowd into raptures.

"I tried to create space to get a shot off - it went down."

Gilgeous-Alexander's winning three was the final act of the latest in a series of blockbuster duels between the two Western Conference heavyweights, who came to blows when the two teams met last month.

## Man City to face Liverpool in FA Cup quarter-finals

- Arsenal travel to Southampton
- Chelsea host Port Vale at home

AFP | London

Manchester City will face Liverpool in a blockbuster FA Cup quarter-final, while quadruple-chasing Arsenal travel to Southampton.

Monday's draw for the last eight also handed Chelsea a home tie against League One giant-killers Port Vale, who stunned Sunderland with a 1-0 win in the fifth round on Sunday.

West Ham, who beat Brentford 5-3 on penalties after a 2-2 draw on Monday, will host Leeds in the other quarter-final. But it is City's latest showdown with rivals Liverpool that is the stand-out tie of the round.

Pep Guardiola's side have already beaten Liverpool twice this season, winning 3-0 in Manchester in November and earning a 2-1 victory at Anfield in February.



Manchester City's Norwegian striker #09 Erling Haaland (C) controls the ball during a match against Liverpool (file photo)

It will be the first FA Cup meeting between the clubs since Liverpool won 3-2 in the semi-finals in 2022.

Liverpool, 3-1 winners at Wolves in the last 16, have won the FA Cup eight times, most

recently four years ago.

Seven-time winners City, who beat Newcastle 3-1 in the fifth round, last lifted the trophy in 2023.

Premier League leaders Arsenal advanced to the quarter-fi-

nals with a 2-1 win at third tier Mansfield.

Mikel Arteta's men will head to Championship play-off hopefuls Southampton, who enjoyed a surprise 1-0 win at Fulham in the fifth round.



Arsenal's players celebrate a goal (file photo)

## Arsenal favourites against Leverkusen in Champions League last 16

AFP | London

Premier League leaders Arsenal, who have never been crowned European champions, remain on track for four trophies this season as they chase their first major silverware since 2020. Mikel Arteta's men won all

eight matches in the league phase to cruise into the last 16, where success against Leverkusen will set up a tie against Bodo/Glimt or Sporting.

Central defender William Saliba has missed Arsenal's past two matches with an ankle issue but could be back here.

Currently sixth in the Bundesliga, Leverkusen are still rebuilding after a tumultuous summer in which they lost coach Xabi Alonso and several players including Florian Wirtz, Granit Xhaka and new Gunner Piero Hincapie.

"We're strong at home. We have a chance there - we can win

there," Alejandro Grimaldo said Saturday.

Remarkably, Leverkusen's win against Olympiacos in the play-off round was their first victory in a Champions League knockout tie since 2002, when they reached the final before losing to a Zidane-inspired Real Madrid.