

SPORTS  
sportsAl-Attiyah stretches  
Dakar lead in pursuit  
of third title

AFP | Arequipa, Peru

Two-time champion Nasser al-Attiyah extended his lead in the Dakar Rally on Thursday, winning the fourth stage between Arequipa and Tacna.

Qatari driver al-Attiyah, the 2011 and 2015 champion, had already won the first stage of this year's event on Monday behind wheel of his Toyota.

On Thursday, he edged out 13-time champion Stephane Peterhansel, in a Mini, by 1min 52sec and Jakub Przygonski, also in a Mini, by 8min 49sec.

Overall, al-Attiyah leads Peterhansel by 8min 55sec ahead of the fifth stage between Tacna and Arequipa.

"I'm pretty happy. I won the stage and it was very important to stay close to Stephane Peterhansel as there is still a long way to go before the end," said al-Attiyah.

Meanwhile, nine-time world rally champion Sebastien Loeb, who won the second stage on

Tuesday, suffered three punctures and finished 12min 23sec behind al-Attiyah.

The Frenchman, driving a private entry Peugeot, is sixth overall, more than 50 minutes behind the Qatari.

"It was a very complicated stage and it's shame because the rhythm was very good," he said.

In the motorcycling race, America's Ricky Brabec took the stage and top spot in the overall standings on his Honda, finishing 6min 19sec ahead of Austria's Matthias Walkner and 7min 7sec in front of Australia's Toby Price.

Overall, the Californian enjoys a 2min 19sec advantage over previous leader Pablo Quintanilla of Chile while he has a 4min 22sec edge on Price.

Thursday's win for Brabec was particularly uplifting as he had got lost on Wednesday's third stage.

"I needed it. Yesterday was tough on me and I lost a lot of time," he said.



Toyota's driver Nasser Al-Attiyah of Qatar (R) and his co-driver Matthieu Baumel of France compete during the Dakar 2019

Mourinho returns to football as  
BeIN television pundit

AFP | Paris

Jose Mourinho has secured his first job since being sacked as Manchester United coach after joining BeIN Sports as a pundit, the broadcaster announced on Thursday.

"The Special One" will be an analyst for Chelsea's Premier League trip to Arsenal on January 19 as well as Qatar and Saudi Arabia's Asian Cup group-stage tie on January 17 on the Qatari channel's broadcasts in the Middle East and North Africa.

He was sacked by United in December after the club's

worst start to a season since 1990 and won three trophies during his two-and-a-half year tenure at Old Trafford.

"Jose is one of the greatest football managers of all time, and we hope that his expert analysis and charismatic personality will be enjoyed by our millions of viewers," a BeIN spokesman said in a statement.

Mourinho had been linked with a return to former club Benfica after the Lisbon giants fired coach Rui Vitoria last week, but the 55-year-old told Correio da Manha earlier on Thursday that he would not take the job.



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## Andy Murray to retire

Murray appeared tearful at a press conference saying Open could be his last event

● Murray was knocked out in the second round on his return at Brisbane last week

● Murray pulled out of last year's Australian Open to have hip surgery and only returned in June at Queen's Club in London



Andy Murray of Great Britain breaks down during a press conference in Melbourne

AFP | Melbourne

A tearful Andy Murray yesterday announced he would likely retire this year due to severe pain from a hip injury, saying next week's Australian Open could be the last tournament of a glittering career.

The former world number one and three-time Grand Slam winner broke down at a press conference in Melbourne as he said the pain had become almost unbearable.

"I can play with limitations. But having the limitations and the pain is not allowing me to enjoy competing or training," the emotional Scot said.

Thirty-one-year-old "Sir Andy" said he would like to finish at his home Grand Slam in Wimbledon, but ruefully admitted he might not make it that far.

He will be remembered as the first British man to win Wimbledon in 77 years and as a player who battled his way to the top in a golden era for the game alongside Roger Federer, Novak Djokovic and Rafael Nadal.

"Wimbledon is where I would like to stop playing, but I am not certain I am able to do that," he said.

"I've been struggling for a long time. I'm not sure I can play through the pain for another four or five months.

"Pretty much done everything that I could to try and get my hip feeling better and it hasn't helped loads."

He pulled out of last year's Australian Open to have hip surgery and only returned in June at Queen's Club in London.

He ended the season at Shenzhen in September after only a handful of appearances to concentrate on working his way

back to full fitness.

But he was knocked out in the second round on his return at Brisbane last week and called it quits Thursday after less than an hour of a practice in Melbourne against Djokovic.

"I think there is a chance the Australian Open is my last tournament," he said.

While he intends to begin his opening-round match against 22nd seed Roberto Bautista Agut next week, how his body withstands potentially gruelling five-set clashes in energy-sapping heat remains to be seen.

## 'Legend of a bloke'

One of the so-called Big Four, along with Federer, Djokovic and Nadal, who have dominated the game for years, Murray's ranking has slumped to 230.

He hasn't reached a Grand Slam final since winning his second Wimbledon title in 2016, but has nevertheless enjoyed a glittering career since turning professional in 2005, with not only three Grand Slam titles, but two Olympic gold medals and 45

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ANDY MURRAY

## Sabalenka is title threat: Evert

Reuters | Melbourne

Chris Evert describes trying to pick a women's singles champion at this month's Australian Open as a "crapshoot" but the American says 20-year-old Aryna Sabalenka, one of many names being thrown into the mix, must be taken seriously.

The Belarussian surged up the WTA rankings last year, winning her first two titles and ending it just outside the top 10 and arrived in Melbourne fresh from winning in Shenzhen.

With her powerful groundstrokes and potent serve the quick Melbourne courts are likely to suit her style and American great Evert is looking forward to watching her progress as part of broadcaster ESPN's coverage team.

The last eight Grand Slam titles have been won by different players and the women's game is searching for a player to sustain dominance as Serena Williams has done in the past.

"I have no reason to believe that Sabalenka will not win more than one Grand Slam. Why? I see two things. I see



Aryna Sabalenka of Belarus in action against Caroline Garcia of France

hunger and I see boldness," Grand Slam title record of 24, she predicts strong challenges from the players who stopped the American reaching that tally last year - Japan's Naomi Osaka, who beat Williams in the U.S. Open final, and Angelique Kerber who trounced her in the Wimbledon title match.

"Whether that's fearlessness or what. It's tied up, the boldness, fearlessness, confidence. That's her swagger, I see that. Like this girl wants it. You can see it in her eyes. She's pretty intense."

While Evert thinks Serena is "raring to go" as she looks to equal Margaret Court's all-time

Grand Slam title record of 24, she predicts strong challenges from the players who stopped the American reaching that tally last year - Japan's Naomi Osaka, who beat Williams in the U.S. Open final, and Angelique Kerber who trounced her in the Wimbledon title match.

"I think Osaka is reliable, I think she's gotten some matches in. I think she's going to go in pretty confident at this point," Evert said.



Andy Murray was won three Grand Slam titles, two Olympic gold medals and 45 ATP crowns

ATP crowns.

Notably, in 2013 Murray became the first British man to win Wimbledon for 77 years, ending the nation's obsession with finding a champion to follow in the footsteps of Fred Perry.

World number five Juan Martin del Potro, who has also struggled with injuries and will miss the Australian Open, told Murray to "keep fighting".

"We love you @andy\_murray and we want to see you happy and doing well," he added.

Billie Jean King called him "a champion on and off court", referring to Murray's long-time support of women's equality in tennis.

"So sorry you cannot retire on your own terms, but remember to look to the future. Your greatest impact on the world may be yet to come. Your voice for equality will inspire future generations," she said.

Top Australian coach Darren Cahill, who until recently was mentoring world number one Simona Halep, said Murray was an example of the never-say-die attitude that separated the best from the average.

PSG complacent in  
League Cup loss: Tuchel

Reuters | Paris

Although he hopes Wednesday's defeat by En Avant Guingamp, which came after 44 consecutive wins in domestic cup games, was just an "accident", Paris St Germain coach Thomas Tuchel believes his team were complacent.

The runaway Ligue 1 leaders, well on course for a sixth title in seven seasons, lost 2-1 at home to bottom club Guingamp after the Brittany side converted two late penalties in the League Cup match.

"We lost a game, but most of all an opportunity to win a trophy," said Tuchel.

Having failed to make an impact on the Champions League in recent years, PSG used to compensate with domestic titles, lifting the French Cup every year from 2015-18 and the League Cup from 2014-18.

PSG were in the driving seat after Neymar's header put them ahead in the 63rd minute, only for the visitors to claim a shock victory.