

Premier League gallops back into action

Three title races set the Tone as NPL Returns

● Three matches today

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TDT | Manama

The Nasser bin Hamad Premier League returns today after a lengthy pause due to the national team's Arab Cup preparations and participation in Doha. With the last matchday on November 11, teams resume at a crucial stage, where every point counts and the table remains tightly con-

tested. The round kicks off with three matches today. At 4:15pm, Al Hidd will face Al Khaldiya at Bahrain National Stadium. Al Hidd are seventh with 9 points and come off a 3-0 defeat to Muharraq, making a positive result vital. Al Khaldiya, second on 15 points, will look to build on their 2-1 win over Sitra, thanks to quickfire goals from Mehdi Abduljabbar and Gleison Moreira. At the same time, Sitra meet A'ali at Khalifa Sports City Stadium. Sitra sit 6th with 8 points and aim to consoli-

d a t e their place in the top half, while A'ali, 10th on 5 points, hope to bounce back after a heavy 4-1 loss to Al Riffa. Later today at 7 PM, Budaiya face defending champions Muharraq at Shaikh Ali Bin Mohammed Stadium. Budaiya have 9 points, while Muharraq are 3rd with 14, just 1 behind the leaders and with a game in hand. The champions arrive following an overseas training camp, including friendlies against Al Ain and Al Hilal, giving them valuable preparation. Tomorrow, Bahrain SC (bot-

tom with 3 points) will host Al Shabab (5 points) at Bahrain National Stadium at 4:15 PM, followed by Al Riffa (4th with 12 points) facing Al Ahli (5th with 11 points) at Khalifa Sports City Stadium at 7 PM. The round concludes Sunday with Al Najma (9th with 6 points) taking on league leaders Al Malkiya (15 points) at Khalifa Sports City at 7 PM. In the race for individual honors, Juninho of Muharraq and Abdullah Al Hashash of Al Ahli top the scoring charts with 7 goals each. Bakay Walad of Al Hidd has 5, while Mohammed Al Faleh of Malkiya has 3.



Argentina and Spain to meet in Qatar for intercontinental 'Finalissima'



Argentina's forward #10 Lionel Messi celebrates after scoring during the 2026 FIFA World Cup South American qualifiers football match between Argentina and Bolivia at the Mas Monumental stadium in Buenos Aires

Asuncion, Paraguay

Spain, the European champions, and Argentina, the Copa America winners, will compete in the "Finalissima" international super final on March 27 in Qatar, the South American and European football confederations announced yesterday.

The match, which will take place less than three months before the kick-off of the 2026 World Cup in the United States, Mexico and Canada, will be a chance to gauge the form of Argentina, the reigning world champions, and Spain, one of the favourites for the North American tournament.

"The Finalissima celebrates football excellence by bringing together the best of European and South American national team football," said UEFA, the European governing body, on its website.

Argentina won the previous edition of the Finalissima, beating Italy 3-0 with goals from Lautaro Martinez, Angel Di Maria and Paulo Dybala in June 2022 at Wembley Stadium.

Spain currently top the FIFA world rankings ahead of Argentina in second.

One of the main attractions of the match will be the meeting between Argentina's Lionel Messi and Spanish prodigy Lamine Yamal -- the past and present of Barcelona.

The Lusail Stadium will also bring back fond memories for the Argentinians, as it is the stadium where their captain Messi lifted the World Cup trophy three years ago.

At the upcoming World Cup, Spain are in Group H alongside Uruguay, Saudi Arabia and Cape Verde.

Argentina have been drawn in Group J with Algeria, Austria and Jordan.

Australia all out for 371 in 3rd Ashes Test

Adelaide, Australia

Australia added a valuable 45 runs for their remaining two first innings wickets on day two of the third Ashes Test Thursday before being dismissed by England for 371.

The hosts resumed on 326-8 with Mitchell Starc not out 33 and Nathan Lyon yet to score with temperatures soaring towards a forecast 39 Celsius at Adelaide Oval.

Starc plundered five quick boundaries before being bowled by Jofra Archer for 54.

Lyon and Scott Boland then piled on more misery for the tourists in a 23-run last-wicket stand before Lyon was trapped lbw by Archer for nine.

Alex Carey top scored on 106 while a rejuvenated Usman Khawaja hit 82, with Jofra Archer the pick of the attack with 5-53.

Australia lead the five-Test series 2-0 and will retain the Ashes if they win or draw, after back-to-back eight-wicket thumpings in Perth and Brisbane.

Odermatt takes foggy downhill for 50th World Cup win

Val Gardena, Italy

Marco Odermatt secured his 50th World Cup win when he took a fog-hit men's downhill at Val Gardena, Italy yesterday.

The Swiss skier equals Italian Alberto Tomba's World Cup tally. The pair are level fourth in the all-time men's list behind Ingemar Stenmark (86), Marcel Hirscher (67) and Hermann Maier (54).

Mikaela Shiffrin holds the overall record with 105 World Cup wins.

"It's amazing to be on the same number as Alberto now," Odermatt said.

"And doing it here in Italy makes it even more special," he added.

The start of the competition was delayed for an hour and



Winner Switzerland's Marco Odermatt (top R) with Second-placed Switzerland's Franjo von Allmen celebrate with their team on the podium after the men's Downhill replacing Beaver Creek competition, during the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup in Val Gardena

half and there was a further fog interruption after just 22 of the 67 competitors had completed their runs.

It took nearly four hours to complete the marathon event.

By that stage the 28-year-old, who won here last year, had already set the quickest time on a Saslong course that had been shortened to the super-G start gate due to tricky, warm conditions and was waiting for confirmation that he had equalled Tomba's tally.

Odermatt's victory comes less than two months from the start of the Milan-Cortina Winter Olympics on February 6.

Dominik Paris completed the podium, 0.19sec behind Odermatt. The Italian will have a

chance to repeat his 2023 success in the Dolomites when he goes in Saturday's longer downhill.

Norway's Fredrik Moeller suffered a nasty crash and was evacuated by helicopter to hospital.

World Cup downhill champion for the past two season, Odermatt retains the lead in the discipline standings having won both races this season.

He also leads the overall standings, with more than twice as many points as Norway's Henrik Kristoffersen, as he bids for a fifth successive globe.

Val Gardena hosts a super-G on Friday before the full-length downhill on Saturday.

Thai queen wins SEA Games gold in sailing



Thailand's King Maha Vajiralongkorn presenting the gold medal to Queen Suthida after her victory in the mixed keelboat SSL47 sailing event during the 33rd Southeast Asian Games (SEA Games) at the Ocean marina yacht club in Chonburi province.

AFP | Bangkok, Thailand

The queen of Thailand yesterday won a gold medal in sailing at the Southeast Asian Games, a regional competition being held in her country this month.

Queen Suthida, the wife of King Maha Vajiralongkorn, competed in the mixed keelboat SSL47 category, on a 47-foot (14-metre) sailboat with nine other crew members.

The queen, 47, served as tactician and helmswoman to lead the Thai team to victory in the waters off Pattaya, ahead of Malaysia and Myanmar.

King Vajiralongkorn, 73, presented gold, silver and bronze medals to the winners Thursday evening -- including to Suthida, whom he married in 2019.

Her team, dressed in match-

ing black sailing attire, celebrated earlier aboard their boat with cheers, while one sailor waved the Thai national flag. A communications graduate, Suthida worked as a flight attendant for Thai Airways before embarking on a career in the military.

A keen athlete, she ran a half marathon in 2:13:40 this month in the capital Bangkok alongside Kenyan running legend Eliud Kipchoge.

The queen led the Thai delegation at the opening ceremony of the SEA Games on December 9 in Bangkok.

Suthida is not the first member of the royal family to win gold in sailing.

King Bhumibol Adulyadej, the father of Vajiralongkorn, sailed in the fourth edition of the regional Games, held in Thailand in 1967.



Skiing is considered the world's fastest non-motorised sport – the highest speed ever recorded by a skier is nearly 255 km/h (158 mph), achieved in a specialised discipline called speed skiing.