

# Kvitova battles into second Dubai final

Petra Kvitova triumphs 3-6, 6-2, 6-4 to reach today's final at the Dubai Championships

● The 2013 champion came from a set down to beat Hsieh Su-Wei

AFP | Dubai

Petra Kvitova booked her third final in two months yesterday, winning a marathon over Hsieh Su-wei 3-6, 6-2, 6-4 at the Dubai Championships.

The double Wimbledon winner from the Czech Republic already owns a title from Sydney last month and lost to Naomi Osaka in the Australian Open title match.

She won here in 2015 and is playing the event for the first time in three years.

Kvitova will play either Switzerland's Belinda Bencic or Elina Svitolina, the Ukrainian winner of the last two editions in Dubai.

"It was a tough one today, she really didn't give me anything for free," Kvitova said. "I'm glad I was able to come back in the second.

"I'm pleased with my mental focus after losing the first set. I was calmer when I came back



Petra Kvitova of Czech Republic returns the ball to Taiwan's Hsieh Su-wei

and played the second.

"She didn't give me any high balls. I really had to be very low, bend my knees, whatever I

really needed.

"I'm a bit tired right now, to be honest. I have a final tomorrow, so I don't know how I going to

recover. Hopefully I have a few hours to do something."

Hsieh, who lost to Kvitova in the Sydney second round,



The 2013 Dubai champion lost the first set after being broken twice in the seventh and ninth games

snatched the opening set on a pair of breaks, with the Czech forced into a fightback in the second.

The Czech, with 26 career titles, earned two breaks of her own in the second, with Hsieh saving a set point in the penultimate game before the contest levelled at a set apiece.

The third began with three straight breaks; but Kvitova settled into hold serve and run out the winner after more than two hours.

The victory was her fourth over Hsieh without a defeat and marked her 10th career Dubai win.

## Riifa Club triumph in HM the King Cup

AFP | London

Pep Guardiola has admitted he is surprised by Chelsea's revolving-door policy with managers as he prepares for Sunday's League Cup final, the match that could seal the fate of the London club's current boss Maurizio Sarri.

There has been mounting speculation over the Italian Sarri's future in recent weeks after a spectacular mid-season slump best exemplified by a 6-0 humiliation in their league visit to City's Etihad Stadium earlier this month, but Guardiola believes Chelsea should adopt the same sort of long-term view City took when they employed him in 2016.

Comparisons have been drawn with Guardiola's first season in England, when City struggled to adapt to his demanding style of play, although the Catalan was keen to downplay the similarities.

"The situation is different. In my first year never the club doubted me," he said.

"It was never in the media that I'd be sacked if they lose this game. When (Antonio) Conte won the title, people were saying he'd be sacked when they lost one or two games the next season. But he had won the Premier League two or three months before.

"I said the same after we lost there (to Chelsea in December) and won here, my opinion of him is the same."

## Klopp expects Solskjaer to be named permanent United boss

AFP | London

Liverpool boss Jurgen Klopp said he believes Ole Gunnar Solskjaer will be the next permanent manager of Manchester United. The clubs meet on Sunday in a showdown of Premier League giants.

Solskjaer has won 11 of his 13 matches since taking interim charge following Jose Mourinho's sacking in December, with the only loss a 2-0 defeat to Paris Saint-Germain in the Champions League.

Ahead of Liverpool's trip to Old Trafford, Klopp said he had been impressed with the job the Norwegian is doing at Old Trafford.



Manchester United interim manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer applauds the fans at the end of a match

” He (Solskjaer) deserves (the job) 100 percent, he did everything that you have to do to be successful with them

JURGEN KLOPP

"He has the quality and he had the luck in the right moment," said the German. "Now he's in charge and there is no doubt that he will be the manager next year as well, that's clear.

"Can you imagine one situation when they say 'we are bringing in another manager'? Then a new manager will lose one game and that's not possible.

"He deserves (the job) 100 percent, he did everything that you have to do to be successful with them."

Klopp, whose team are level on points with Manchester City at the top of the Premier League, said all managers needed an element of luck.

"When I went from Mainz to (Borussia) Dortmund, people said I have no international experience. It was true but it's not something you can buy. You have to make it.

## Sri Lanka eye history in low-scoring battle

AFP | Port Elizabeth, South Africa

Sri Lanka's cricketers have been told to enjoy themselves as they seek to make history after a dramatic second day of the second Test against South Africa at St George's Park yesterday.

Needing 197 runs to become the first Asian team to win a Test series in South Africa, Sri Lanka were 60 for two at the close, needing 137 more runs to complete a 2-0 series triumph.

"Everybody knows what is expected of them," said bowling coach Ramesh Ratnayake.

South Africa, first innings, 222  
Sri Lanka, first innings (overnight 60-3)  
D. Karunaratne c De Kock b Rabada 17  
L. Thirimanne c and b Olivier 29  
O. Fernando b Olivier 0  
K. Mendis c De Kock b Olivier 16  
K. Rajitha b Rabada 1  
K. Perera c De Kock b Rabada 20  
D. de Silva c De Kock b Mulder 19  
N. Dickwella c Elgar b Rabada 42  
S. Lakmal lbw b Maharaj 7  
V. Fernando not out 0  
L. Embuldeniya absent injured  
Extras (lb1, nb2) 3  
Total (37.4 overs) 154  
Sri Lanka, second innings  
D. Karunaratne c De Kock b Olivier 19  
L. Thirimanne c De Kock b Rabada 10  
O. Fernando not out 17  
K. Mendis not out 10  
Extras (lb4) 4  
Total (2 wks, 16 overs) 60



South Africa's Quinton de Kock lifts a ball into the hands of Sri Lanka's Suranga Lakmal

"The leadership has said, 'just go out and enjoy yourselves'. Everybody is aware of history being made but that should be at the back of the mind. Everybody has the freedom to bat how they want to do at the right time."

Eighteen wickets fell and 282 runs were scored during an extraordinary day's play, leaving both teams with a chance of victory.

South Africa seemed set to take control when Sri Lanka collapsed in a flurry of strokes to be bowled out for 154 before lunch, giving the hosts a first

innings lead of 68 runs.

But Sri Lanka's bowlers hit back, bowling out the hosts for a paltry 128 -- by 40 runs their lowest total in a home Test against the islanders.

Suranga Lakmal, Sri Lanka's most experienced bowler, took four for 39, while part-time off-spinner Dhananjaya de Silva took a Test-best three for 36.

With only ten wickets in 24 previous Tests, De Silva had match figures of five for 51.

He was forced into a frontline role when left-arm spinner Lasith Embuldeniya suffered a badly dislocated left thumb,

an injury which required surgery and prevented him from batting or taking the field yesterday.

Lakmal said a key for Sri Lanka's bowlers was that they bowled consistently in the right areas.

"The accuracy and intensity has been good," he said.

"We are quite confident that we are going to win," said Lakmal. But it's not going to be easy. The bowling of South Africa is of a world-class level."

South African batting coach Dale Benkenstein insisted the Test was still on a knife-edge.