

## Griezmann to leave Atletico for Orlando at end of season



Antoine Griezmann reacts during a match (file photo)

AFP | Paris

Antoine Griezmann will leave Atletico Madrid for MLS side Orlando City at the end of the season, the two clubs announced yesterday.

Atletico's all-time record goalscorer has agreed a two-year deal with Orlando and will become the latest veteran star to move to North America. "The forward travelled to Orlando, with the club's permission, during the two days of rest granted to the first team, to finalise his contract with the Florida side," Atletico said in a statement.

The 35-year-old Griezmann will be hoping to sign off in style and cap his 10th season as an Atletico player with a second major trophy at the Rojiblanco, after the 2018 Europa League.

Atletico will face La Liga rivals Barcelona in the Champions League quarter-finals next month and take on Real

Sociedad in the Copa del Rey final on April 18 in Seville.

Griezmann, who won the 2018 World Cup with France, retired from international football in 2024 after scoring 44 goals in 137 caps for Les Bleus.

He has netted 211 times for Atletico, surpassing the previous record of 173 set by Luis Aragones.

Griezmann joined Atletico in 2014 from Real Sociedad and has made 488 appearances for the club, who he left for Barcelona in 2019 before returning two years later, initially on loan.

Griezmann has scored 13 goals in 43 appearances for Diego Simeone's Atletico this season.

The MLS will add Griezmann to the ranks of well-known players to have made the switch from Europe in recent seasons, including his former Barcelona teammates Lionel Messi and Luis Suarez.

# Bahrain Basketball League semi-finals tip off tomorrow

Hussain Almaskati  
TDT | Manama

The 2025-26 Zain Bahrain Basketball League semi-finals tip off tomorrow night at Khalifa Sports City Hall in Isa Town, with top-seeded Muharraq facing fourth-placed Al Ahli at 8 PM and second-placed Manama meeting third-placed Al Najma at 6 PM.

Both series are best-of-five, with the finals set for April 5 if a semi-final ends in three games, or April 8 if extended to four, leaving open the possibility of a Muharraq-Manama rematch for the league title.

Muharraq enter the play-offs brimming with confidence. The reigning league champions lifted their second trophy of the season on Monday night, defeating Manama 80-73 in the Khalifa bin Salman Cup final, which was played behind closed doors due to regional conflicts.

Reflecting on the victory, power-forward Mohamed Ameer said: "It means a lot to me. I hope this is not the last championship and that next year will be full of more titles. I want to celebrate the fans who could not be with us today and hope they are proud of what we have achieved."



Captain Bader Abdulla Malabes lifts Muharraq's fourth league title last season

Their momentum is further reinforced by a clean sweep over Al Ahli in the cup semi-finals series (93-87 and 96-80), which gives them an added edge heading into tomorrow's matchup.

First in the league with a 14-1 record, Muharraq will rely on captain Bader Abdulla, sharp-shooter Michael Warren, and Ameer to maintain their high standard under coach Peter Schomers.

Manama also arrive in strong form, holding a 9-6 record to sit second in the league. The Blues, guided by coach Salman Ramadhan, overcame Al Najma 78-66 and 77-75 in the cup semi-finals, giving them confidence ahead of tomorrow's clash.

Ali Jaber and Ahmed Salman will be key to providing scoring and leadership as they aim to overcome an Al Najma side that has consistently given them tough challenges in recent matches.

Al Najma (8-7) and Al Ahli (7-8) enter as underdogs but will look to test the top two sides.

While both teams hope to engineer an upset, all eyes remain on Muharraq and Manama, whose recent cup final offered a glimpse of the intensity and rivalry that could carry into the league championship series.

## Bahrain Victorious brace for wind-tested sprint at Ronde van Brugge

TDT | Manama

Bahrain Victorious will line up at today's Ronde van Brugge, targeting a sprint finish while preparing for heavy wind and rain that could shape a far more selective race. The event, a reworked version of Brugge-De Panne, kicks off a key block of cobbled Classics ahead of the Tour of Flanders.

Starting and finishing in Brugge, the 202.9 km route begins at the historic Markt, heads south through Torhout, Wingene, and Beernem, then returns to the Brugge area for a decisive circuit phase. Riders will tackle a cobbled section on Briersweg (1.3 km) and exposed sections along the Damse Vaart, where crosswinds are expected to create echelons and splits well before the finale.

Sports director Nikolas Maes stressed the challenges of the new course. "It's a new parcours, so we don't know exactly how the race will unfold, but it's clear that the wind and rain will make it very hard," he said. "These conditions usually create echelons, with the race opening up and coming back together repeatedly. It will be crucial to be attentive from the start



Men's peloton rolls out from Bruges at the 2025 Classic Brugge-De Panne, now called the Ronde van Brugge

and stay in the front group."

Bahrain Victorious will target the sprint with experienced fast man Phil Bauhaus and in-form Zak Erzen, who recently finished sixth at GP Monseré. Oliver Stockwell and Kamil Gradek

will protect the leaders early, while Alberto Bruttomesso, Daniel Skerl, and Attila Valter focus on positioning ahead of the key sectors.

Maes added: "We have the ambition to go for the sprint, but

the harder the race becomes, the more difficult it will be to be there in the final. With Phil's experience and Zak's current form, we believe we can survive in a reduced group of around 20-25 riders."

## IPL's Bengaluru to keep 11 seats empty in honour of stampede dead



A view of Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru

AFP | Bengaluru

Indian Premier League champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru will keep 11 seats at their M. Chinnaswamy Stadium empty in memory of the fans crushed to death in title celebrations last year, the team said yesterday.

Eleven supporters aged between 14 and 29 died in a stampede outside the stadium in June after RCB won the IPL for the first time.

The lucrative T20 tournament begins its 2026 season on Saturday when RCB host

Sunrisers Hyderabad.

The Bengaluru team, including star batsman Virat Kohli, will warm up for the game in tops sporting the number 11 and wear black arm bands for the match.

Along with the permanently empty seats, CEO Rajesh Menon said: "This is a tribute to our fans, who will always remain a part of our journey."

After the tragedy, authorities deemed the venue unsafe due to structural and crowd management deficiencies, and moved important fixtures elsewhere.