

Pogacar wins UAE Tour after Ewan claims closing sprint

AFP | Dubai

Slovenia's Tour de France champion Tadej Pogacar won cycling's season-opening UAE Tour as Australian Caleb Ewan claimed yesterday's seventh stage sprinting honours in Abu Dhabi.

The 22-year-old Pogacar dominated the race to turn the tables on Briton Adam Yates, who had edged the Slovenian in last year's coronavirus-curtailed edition of the World Tour event.

Pogacar took command of



Pogacar on his way to winning the UAE Tour

the general classification in Monday's time-trial, then won Tuesday's summit finish stage and carefully managed his lead in Thursday's second summit finish.

"This is really big," said Pogacar who gave his UAE state-sponsored team a second success in their home race, four years after it was won by Portugal's Rui Costa.

"It was my first goal of the season and my first home race, so it was really important and I'm super happy...This is one of our best achievements."

In the closing stage, Team

Ineos' Yates fell 40 kilometres from the line, but climbed back on his bike to rejoin the peloton.

Up front, Lotto rider Ewan pounced and passed Sam Bennett in the shadow of the finish to deny the Irishman a third stage win this week.

"We came here to win a stage and there was only one more left to take," said Ewan, who had claimed his first win of the season.

"It was a bit of a relief when I crossed the line. I haven't been this far into the year without a win in my whole career."

Stones sends Man City 13 points clear

John Stones strikes against West Ham as Manchester City make it 20 in a row

● Manchester City are closing in on their third Premier League in four seasons

AFP | London

Manchester City moved 13 points clear at the top of the Premier League as John Stones sealed a 2-1 win against West Ham that made it 20 successive victories in all competitions for the leaders.

Pep Guardiola's side are closing in on their third Premier League in four seasons thanks to priceless contributions from their in-form centre-backs.

Ruben Dias, imperious since signing from Benfica in September, put City ahead with his first goal for the club.

Michail Antonio equalised for West Ham just before half-time, but the revitalised Stones bagged the winner with a fine strike after the break.

City are enjoying the longest ever winning streak by an English top-flight team, with 14 of those 20 victories coming in the league to leave their title rivals trailing in their wake.

They are unbeaten in 27 games across all competitions, one match shy of their longest run without defeat under Guardiola in 2017.



John Stones of Manchester City scores his team's second goal past Darren Randolph of West Ham

27

games have been played by Manchester City without facing defeat across all competitions. They are one match shy of their longest run without defeat under Guardiola in 2017.

"It was really difficult. After 10-15 minutes today we realise we are not going to paint anything beautiful," Guardiola said. "Second half we were much better than the first half. When you play a lot of games, in the league and then the Champions League, this is normal. "We were lucky to get all

three points. The mathematics matter at the end of the season."

Second placed Manchester United and third placed Leicester can close the gap back to 10 points if they beat Chelsea and Arsenal respectively on Sunday. But it is hard to imagine anyone catching City over the last 12 games of the season.

They survived a stern test from fourth placed West Ham and ominously for the rest of the league, Sergio Aguero returned to the City starting line-up for the first time in four months.

Once he gets his sharpness back, City's record goalscorer will provide a boost to their bid to win an unprecedented quadruple.

Swiatek claims second career title with Adelaide crown

Reuters | London

French Open champion Iga Swiatek breezed past second seed Belinda Bencic 6-2 6-2 in the Adelaide International final yesterday to claim the second title of her career.

The 19-year-old Pole shot out of relative obscurity last year when she became the youngest woman to win the Roland



Iga Swiatek

Garros title since Monica Seles in 1992.

The world number 18 showed again why she is so highly rated with a superb week in Adelaide.

Swiatek did not drop a set throughout the WTA 500 tournament and lost only 22 games in all. She fired 22 winners and made only six unforced errors in the final.

Tokyo Olympics remains Marcial's main focus

TDT | Manila

Olympic-bound Eumit Felix Marcial could be fighting again as a professional boxer late next month or early April but his main focus remains the Tokyo Games in July.

Currently, the 25-year-old Zamboanga City native is undergoing rigid training at the Wild Card Gym in Los Angeles, California under the watchful eye of Manny Pacquiao's long-time training Freddie Roach.

Filipino Marvin Somodio, Roach's assistant trainer, is also supervising Marcial's preparation for his coming bout and the Olympics.

"He is taking advantage of all the sparring sessions he gets from different styles — Russians, Americans and Latinos," said Somodio, who added that Marcial is getting all the sparring hours he needs at the Wild Card Gym to keep himself fit and ready.

"He really likes to spar. He hits his punches accurately and is very composed," said Somodio, adding Marcial has improved a lot under Roach's keen eyes. "It wasn't like before when he just throws punches recklessly."

Marcial spars on Mondays,



Marcial with trainer Roach at the Wild Card Gym

Wednesdays and Fridays and does the mitts on Tuesdays alternately with Roach or Somodio.

He added Marcial needs to perfect his counterpunching, control and proper timing because the competition in Tokyo are professional in approach in scoring.

"So he needs to take care of his defense and hit his opponent solidly," he said.

Marcial made a successful debut as a pro by scoring a unanimous decision victory over American Andrew Whitfield last December 16 in Los Angeles.

He spends most of his time sparring with 6-foot-4 Diego Pacheco, Gabe Rosado, Russian Artur Akavov and Eric Priest.

In his Instagram post, Marcial — who also trained alongside former American Olympian Pepe Reilly of America, who competed in the men's welterweight event of the 1992 Summer Olympics — shared recent updates on social media regarding his training.

"Couldn't thank these people enough for their help," wrote Marcial with the hashtag #roadtotokyo2021.

A few days ago, Marcial had

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ASSISTANT TRAINER MARVIN SOMODIO

18 rounds of sparring, punching bag, punching mitt, and workout sessions.

Ricky Vargas, president of the Association of Boxing Alliances in the Philippines (ABAP), earlier said Marcial had expressed desire to join the national boxing team for a training camp in Thailand.

ABAP, through secretary-general Ed Picson, said Marcial's second professional fight has low chances of coming into fruition which could pave the way for the prized boxer's availability in the Thailand camp.

The rest of the Philippine boxing team are holed up at the Inspire Sports Academy in Calamba, Laguna under a bubble setup.

One of only four Filipino athletes so far have booked a place in the rescheduled Olympics.

Lewandowski, Gnabry net twice as Bayern Munich go five points clear



Bayern Munich's Robert Lewandowski (L) and Cologne's Jorge Mere challenge for the ball

AP | Munich

Bundesliga top scorer Robert Lewandowski bagged two goals as Bayern Munich routed Cologne 5-1 to end its two-game winless streak and consolidate its league lead yesterday.

Lewandowski took his season tally to 28 goals as Bayern moved five points clear of Leipzig, which hosts Borussia Mönchengladbach in the late game.

Leon Goretzka, making his first league start since recovering from the coronavirus, lifted a cross for Eric Maxim Choupo-Moting to open the scoring in the 18th min-

ute, then brilliantly set up Lewandowski in the 34th.

Goretzka received the ball from Lewandowski, turned and played the ball through Cologne defender Rafael Czichos' legs, before sending it to the right for Lewandowski to score.

Defensive errors from David Alaba and Jérôme Boateng allowed Ellyes Skhiri pull one back for Cologne after the break, but Lewandowski killed off any notions of a surprise when Thomas Müller set up his second in the 65th.

Müller had only been on the pitch a minute, after making his comeback from his coronavirus infection.