



AVIS UNLOCK EXACTLY WHAT YOU ASKED FOR

- Short Term Rentals
- Long Term Leasing
- Charter Services
- International Deliveries
- Bus & Minivan Rentals

4466 7744 MAIN OFFICE AIRPORT MESARA AL KHOR
 www.avis.com

Al Rayyan Club and Al Arabi will clash in the QNB Stars League fifth round **PAGE 14**



THE BIG ONE
QNB STARS LEAGUE
AL ARABI VS AL RAYYAN

2018 FINA SWIMMING WORLD CUP 2018 DOHA

Hosszu makes the golden splash on opening day



'Iron Lady' Katinka Hosszu of Hungary, who won two gold medals on the opening day of 2018 FINA Swimming World Cup in Doha on Thursday, with QOC Vice-President Sheikh Saud Al Ali Al Thani during the victory ceremony at the Hamad Aquatic Centre.



Blake Pieroni of the US after being awarded for his gold medal swim in the men's 400m freestyle at the Hamad Aquatic Centre on Thursday.

Sjostrom, Morozov, Pieroni & Andrew notch up a win each

VINAY NAYUDU
 DOHA

THREE-TIME Olympic swimming champion Katinka Hosszu has always loved competing in Doha. On Thursday, she once again thrilled the cheering Qatar crowds emerging on the podium three, winning two gold medals on the opening day of the three-day Doha leg of 2018 FINA World Cup Series which saw some swift and splashing contests at the Hamad Aquatic Centre.

After the opening stop of Cluster 1 in Kazan (Russia) saw seven World Cup

records fall, no records was made on Day 1 in Doha but many of the top swimmers in the world had some fast performances. Hosszu, however, stole the show. Nicknamed 'Iron Lady', the 29-year-old Hungarian, competed in all the five finals in the evening session emerging supreme in women's 400m freestyle and 200m butterfly events. She finished third in the 50m backstroke.

"It's always good to win races and I have enjoyed the opening day in Doha," exclaimed Hosszu soon after one of her wins.

"I am trying to keep the right balance. My message for young swimmers is to enjoy your swimming," she added indicating to the presence of a lot of youngsters at the arena.

Among the men, American Blake Pieroni (400m freestyle) and Michael Andrew (100m butterfly) cruised to notch a win each.

Meanwhile, Russia's Vladimir Morozov and sprint queen Sarah Sjostrom of Sweden, the current rankings leaders, kept themselves in the run too with wins.

Morozov, who broke a World Cup record in 50m freestyle, also outdid US teen Andrew and his compatriot Pieroni to win the event with a time of 21.80secs. "I am happy on the win. I

DAY 1 RESULTS

RESULTS (All Final)
Women's 400m Freestyle: 1. Katinka Hosszu (HUN) 4:10.02; 2. Femke Heemskerk (NED) 4:12.58; 3. Chunhui Zhou (CHN) 4:13.62.
Men's 400m Freestyle: 1. Blake Pieroni (USA) 3:53.98; 2. Loris Weimersma (BEL) 3:54.94; 3. Yaling Wu (CHN) 3:55.57.
Women's 50m Backstroke: 1. Kira Toussaint (NED) 28.01; 2. Ranomi Kromowidjojo (NED) 28.49; 3. Katinka Hosszu (HUN) 28.57.
Men's 200m Backstroke: 1. Michael Larkin (AUS) 1:57.45; 2. Manuel Baciazo (ESP) 2:02.52; 3. David Vendrusco (HUN) 2:07.98.
Women's 200m Butterfly: 1. Katinka Hosszu (HUN) 2:09.26; 2. Tszachina Sakabara (HUN) 2:10.34; 3. Galina Brand (RUS) 2:18.58.
Men's 100m Butterfly: 1. Michael Andrew (USA) 51.83; 2. Ryan Coetzee (RSA) 52.26; 3. Willyam Gosson (NED) 52.98.
Women's 200m Backstroke: 1. Kira Toussaint (NED) 2:23.52; 2. Yulia Svirina (RUS) 2:24.06; 3. Alina Vokurac Ruiz (ESP) 2:30.33.
Men's 100m Breaststroke: 1. Felipe Lima (BRA) 59.61; 2. Amir Kromowidjojo (NED) 59.74; 3. Anton Chuprikov (RUS) 59.89.
Women's 50m Freestyle: 1. Sarah Sjostrom (SWE) 23.99; 2. Femke Heemskerk (NED) 24.54; 3. Ranomi Kromowidjojo (NED) 24.62.
Men's 50m Freestyle: 1. Vladimir Morozov (RUS) 21.80; 2. Michael Andrew (USA) 21.95; 3. Blake Pieroni (USA) 22.17.

"I was expecting this victory. I am happy to continue winning this event and I am looking for some more victories in Doha," said Sjostrom, indicating that there's surely more to come from her.

In the men's 400m freestyle, the 22-year-old Pieroni topped the race finishing in 51.83secs - his second World Cup win of the season.

Pieroni was fourth at the 200 mark, third at the 250, second at the 300 and swam a 29.25 at the 350 to take the lead and a stellar 27.71 in the final 50 to secure the victory.

Belgium's Lorenz Weimersma was second in 3:54.94, followed by China's Wu Yuhang (3:55.57).

fastest (51.83) in the men's 100m butterfly leaving behind South Africa's Ryan Coetzee (52.26) and Dutchman Mathys Goosen (52.99).

The women's 50m backstroke event was won by Kira Toussaint of the Netherlands in 28.01 secs. Her compatriot Ranomi Kromowidjojo was in 28.49 while Hosszu took the bronze in 28.57.

Australia's Mitchell Larkin claimed the men's 200m backstroke gold winning in 1:57.45, ahead of Spain's Manuel Baciazo (2:02.52) and Hungary's David Verzasato.

Brazil's Felipe Lima won the men's 100m breaststroke with a time of 59.61.

Big pool action will resume on Saturday morning with ten titles at stake.

Asian giants Australia post big victory over depleted Qatar

AYENI OLUSEGUN
 DOHA

QATAR suffered a disappointing 43-95 home loss to Asian Giants Australia in the 2019 FIBA Basketball World Cup qualifiers at the Al Gharafa Club Indoor Hall on Thursday.

An already uphill task was made more difficult as the Aussies ran out to a 12-point lead in the first quarter. Tangyu Ngombo scored 14 points as the other 12 players were held under 10 points. The hosts shot poorly managing just 16 of 29 shots for 27 percent shooting from the floor.

The Boomers also had 46 rebounds to Qatar's 32, outscoring Qatar with 58 bench points to 24.

Coach Tim Lewis lamented the injuries to six players cost his team. "It's difficult



QBF President Ahmed Al Muflih presents a memento to Basketball Australia chief Ned Cotter in Al Gharafa on Thursday.

being a young team with little experience and not enough games for the players."

Qatar were without the services of Clinton 'Trey' Johnson and guard Abdulrahman Saad, both of whom

have been instrumental in the team's success. "I have two sixteen-year-olds with no point guards in the team, what are we to do?" Lewis asked during the post game press conference.

Nasser al Rayes said the team could have played better but the players failed to live up to expectation. "We knew it was going to be tough against Australia but I'm sure if we had shown some more spirit, we wouldn't have lost by this margin. I didn't play well and some older players didn't give their best also.

"For me it's disappointing not to put hard work in and end up with a painful loss," he said.

Australia boast one of the best defence in the qualifiers which was evident as they held Qatar just under 25 points in the first half.

"We had a good attitude for the game and with players coming in and out of the team, it makes it easy for me as a coach to just let them play. The third quarter was just great basketball from us and we look forward to



Qatar's Tangyu Ngombo tries to avoid a fallen Australian player during their FIBA Basketball World Cup Asian Qualifier second round match at the Al Gharafa Club Indoor Hall on Thursday. Australia won the match 95-43.

the next game," Australian coach Andrej Lemanis. The Aussies coach also took time out to appreciate

the Qatar Basketball Federation here. "We have been here for a week and the federation made us feel at home

and that was immense for us." Qatar next play the Philippines in Manila on Monday.

Proud to represent my country in the organisation of Artistic Gymnastics World Championships: Abeer Ali

TRIBUNE NEWS NETWORK
DOHA

FOR the first time in history of the organisation of a world gymnastics championship, a Qatari woman has assumed the chairmanship of one of the sub-committees for the 48th FIG Artistic Gymnastics World Championships Doha 2018 to be held at the Aspire Dome in Doha from October 25 to November 3.

While Jana Elkayy will be representing Qatar at the worlds as a gymnast, Abeer Ali Al Buainain is taking care of the organisational aspect as the Director of Operations, Planning and Human Resources at the Organising Committee for the world gymnastics.

Empowering women has always been one of Qatar's aims and these two, as an athlete and office-bearer, highlight the high levels of competency among women in Qatari society.

Committed and confident, Abeer Ali Al Buainain is sure that the forthcoming championships will once again prove the capabilities of Qatar, its openness and the abilities of Qatari women.

Speaking of her role and goals ahead, she said, "At a personal

level, I am very proud to be representing the Organising Committee at this championship. I also feel responsible as a woman representative and strive to achieve the desired goals and aspirations. We are sure of delivering another top world level sports event in line with what has already made Qatar a capital for global sporting events and the hub of major tournaments in the region and the Middle East.

"I am also happy that the woman component is strongly present in various committees which reflects the culture of the country's global organisation, and we are proud of our cadres in different categories.

"Such a grand tournament will leave a legacy for future generations and not just in sports but culturally too with the vision of our wise leadership which is always motivating our people to achieve success at various levels," she adds.

Elaborating on the preparations, planning and challenges, Buainain said, "The organising committee has stepped up the pace of work with the launch of the championships approaching fast. And the fact that there is absolute cohesion and cooperation between the various committees underlines



Abeer Ali Al Buainain: Committed to highlighting competency and abilities of Qatari women

our aim of achieving maximum success. It also emphasises that Qatar is not only good at hosting major sports events but is also known for leaving a memorable impression in the minds of people for long even after these events are over.

On operations, planning and human resources front, she said all efforts are being made to bring all those with a single-minded approach together.

"Everyone knows that this edition of the world gymnastics will see the largest participation in its

"At a personal level, I am very proud to be representing the Organising Committee at this championship. I also feel responsible as a woman representative and strive to achieve the desired goals and aspirations. We are sure of delivering another top world level sports event in line with what has already made Qatar a capital for global sporting events and the hub of major tournaments in the region and the Middle East," said Abeer Ali al Buainain

history with 85 countries participating. Certainly, we have made the appropriate strategic plans for this level of hosting, and we were delighted to welcome many of those wishing to work with the Organising Committee during the championships. The number of volunteers in the early stages is already nearly 500 and it's still growing. We have benefited from the people with the experience and the high competencies in getting ready to the best possible degree. The national competencies (of both men and women) in the organisational aspect has reached global levels and we have been happy to receive continues praise from the International Gymnastics Federation (FIG).

"We consider it as a catalyst for us to continue to work more strongly and we aspire to achieve

maximum success through this tournament, which comes at a very important time for our nation. We shall be fully ready to show Qatar's cultural image to the world."

Buainain also pointed out that the cooperation between the various committees and ministries, especially the Ministry of Culture and Sports, as well as the continuous support from the Qatar Olympic Committee confirms that everyone has a common goal and an extraordinary organisation of the event.

"The International Gymnastics Federation has seen the latest preparations at all levels. Qatar in producing this version in the most beautiful manner and we will continue from the start of the countdown to the completion of the championships. We are ready now for this event, according to the time schedule specified."



Al Rayyan Club coach Rodolfo Arruabarrena during a press conference ahead of the QNB Stars League fifth round match against Al Arabi Club in Doha.

Rayyan wary of resurgent Al Arabi

The two teams clash in the Week 5 feature match today

TRIBUNE NEWS NETWORK
DOHA

AL Rayyan Club are cautious about resurgent Al Arabi Club after the latter's big win over Umm Salal in the fourth round of the QNB Stars League.

Both Al Rayyan Club and Al Arabi will clash on Friday in the fifth week's feature fixture at 6 pm. The second match at the same Al Arabi Club is scheduled between Qatar Sports Club and Al Shahania at 8.10 pm.

Though both will be keen to extend their winning run, the match is expected to be a fierce battle for the points with a big crowd of fans is expected to come and support them.

Al Arabi are currently in the fourth spot behind leaders Al Sadd, second-placed Al Duhail, the defending champions, and surprise package Al Shahania, while Al Rayyan are occupying the fifth spot in the league.

Al Rayyan coach Rodolfo Arruabarrena was delighted to return to the league action and said, "We are back to league action after an international break and we are into a big match against Al Arabi. They had suffered a setback against Al Sadd, but they came back strongly (as they crushed Umm Salal 5-1).

"In the process, Al Arabi also showed they can score many goals. They are playing

the way we also want to play at the moment. We can expect a tough fight. They already have nine points and that is how you start a league competition."

But Arruabarrena added that his team was hotly chasing the leaders and needed to be patient.

"We do not lag behind. In fact, the difference between top team Al Sadd and us is only two points. You must show patience especially at the start of a league competition and wait for good results to come.

"Al Arabi have the potential to make it a great match and I am sure fans can see a great contest tomorrow. All our players are ready and I will decide on the playing eleven based on the fitness

and form of the players on the match day. The same is applicable in the case of new recruit Jonathan Mendezez also.

"I have players who play with great energy and passion. We will not change altogether just for one match. Our system is for the entire season. We study our opponents and try to take advantage of their weaknesses," said Arruabarrena.

Al Arabi coach Luka Bonacic was a bit upset that the fine momentum his team had gained was stopped due to the international break.

"We have been in great form. We registered three victories as well. We are in the fourth position also. Of course, the break was not good for us as we were maintaining a good momentum. But we have to honour the FIFA commitments.

"We were training without two main players (Qatar international Ahmed Fahy

and Iraq's Ahmed Ibrahim). It is good that they came back without any injury."

"After the big defeat to Al Sadd in the second round, we showed remarkable improvement and that has reflected in our performances. I am expecting a good game against Al Rayyan. I wish my boys will go out and bring out their best."

"In the QSL Cup held during the break, we played without four or five players. But then, our team is about 18 players and not 11. I can say that whoever will field against Al Rayyan, they will fight for us. They will give their 100 percent."

"This game is special from the fans' point of view also. Our fans are something special. I have been experiencing that ever since I took over Al Arabi. It's good that they play for them. But playing against Al Rayyan is the greatest motivation for our players," said Bonacic.



Al Arabi Club coach Luka Bonacic: Feeling upbeat after Umm Salal thrashing in the previous round.

FIXTURES	
QNB Stars League Week 5 fixtures	
Friday	Al Rayyan vs Al Arabi (Abdo Stadium)
Al Sadd vs Qatar SC (Abdo Stadium)	Al Shahania vs Qatar SC (Abdo Stadium)
Saturday	Al Doha vs Umm Salal (Gharafa Stadium)
Al Gharafa vs Al Rayyan (Abdo Stadium)	Al Ahli vs Al Khairat (Abdo Stadium)
Sunday	Al Sadd vs Al Duhail (Abdo Stadium)
Al Rayyan vs Al Sadd (Al Khor Stadium)	Al Khor vs Al Sadd (Al Khor Stadium)

Shahania hope to defend well against Qatar SC

TRIBUNE NEWS NETWORK
DOHA

AL Shahania coach Jose Murcia feels his team will defend strongly against Qatar Sports Club when they meet at the Al Arabi Club in the fifth round on Friday.

Speaking ahead of the match, he said, "It is going to be a difficult game. In fact, it will be difficult for both teams. We have been working to collect full points against QSC, who are a strong side. They can be really tricky and have some very good players in their ranks such as Samuel Eto'o and Osama Omari. Still, we will play for three points."

Talking about the Al Sadd match in which they were just crushed, he said, "Against Al Sadd, we conceded four goals in the first half. Our defence must improve. There are many areas for improvement. Our players need to get more experience. That has been affecting their performance."

"We cannot defend like how fans players of Al Sadd and Al Duhail do. When you play Al Sadd and Al Kharaitiyat, you must show the same mentality. That should be the attitude," said Murcia.

Umm Salal face tough game against Gharafa

Umm Salal coach Laurent Banide's team have prepared in the best possible way after the Al Arabi crushing and they would try to get a positive result, though their rivals Al Gharafa are not an easy side.

"It is a difficult match again because of the strength of the opponents. We prepared the side in the best possible way as we were keen to come back into the league competition after suffering a demoralising defeat at the hands of Al Arabi.

"We have to do something and Al Gharafa are a big team. We will try to put up a good



Al Shahania coach Jose Murcia (right) during a press conference.

show and achieve a positive result. In the previous game, we started badly and we could not compensate. A good start is important against Al Gharafa. I know our opponents are good and we prepared well for this game.

"The defence is the spirit of the team and we worked well to tackle Al Gharafa. Our new professional player Arnold Muevrida is good and I hope he will be a strong addition to Umm Salal.

"Each game is different from the physical and mental side and we have to give confidence to the players. I hope we will be successful," said Banide.

Al Gharafa Club to field full team

Al Gharafa coach Christian Gourcuff is happy that his players are back from their international duty and ready to contribute their bit for the club.

"The game against Umm Salal is of great importance. We are trying not to disturb our team composition. The absence of international players and injuries to some other players affected our preparations, but they went off well."

"We played a match in the

QSL Cup too. Those who did duty for their countries have returned and we are trying to field the best eleven against Umm Salal. We are keen to maintain our momentum and keep achieving good results.

"In a way, international commitments are helping us. Abdelaziz Hatem and goalkeeper Yousef Hassan were regulars and played full-time in Qatar's friendlies against China and Palestine, which Al Annabi won. Wesley Sneijder played his farewell game against Peru and Vladimir Weiss also showed a remarkable level while spending one hour on the pitch for his country Slovakia.

"Since the beginning of the season, we have had good results. For example, Umm Salal beat Al Ahli 4-1, then lost to Al Arabi 1-5. They received two goals in quick succession in that match.

"They are more enthusiastic even though such negative results at the beginning of the league have put them in a difficult situation. They will be hungry to react. Matches between Al Gharafa and Umm Salal always create sparks. Both teams' coaches are Frenchmen. You can expect a tough match," said Gourcuff.

India coach Shastri under fire after England series debacle

AFF
NEW DELHI

INDIA coach Ravi Shastri has come under fire for his side's humiliating 4-1 Test series loss to England -- a second consecutive away defeat for the world's top-ranked side.

The thrashing in England, following the loss in South Africa earlier this year, played a part in Shastri's decision to tour to Australia in November and next year's World Cup -- as well as a massive clash with arch-rivals Pakistan next week.

Critics and former captains have rounded on the coach, particularly for his mid-series

claim that his team is the best to come out of India in 15 years.

"Self-belief is a wonderful quality; but being caught in the bubble of your own publicity is self-defeating," said Sambit Bal, chief editor of cricket website *CricTrif6*, on Twitter.

"India had their moments but the scorecards say 4-1 and India weren't as good as they should have been," said commentator Harsha Bhogle.

"This is two overseas disappointments in a row now." India have won two recent series in Sri Lanka and one in the West Indies. But Shastri's comments ranked former star

players. Sourav Ganguly, who was part of the committee that appointed Shastri last year, dismissed the coach's claims as "immature", telling Indian television Shastri must improve the team.

Sunil Gavaskar pointed out that Indian teams of the 1980s had won series in England and the West Indies -- as well as a series victory in England as recently as 2007.

"The best travelling teams are made by performances on the ground and not by sitting in the dressing room and talking about it," added former Test opener Virender Sehwag.

Clash of the marksmen in Premier League



Liverpool's Mohamed Salah (left) and Tottenham's Harry Kane during the English Premier League match recently.

Kane, Salah in focus as struggling stars clash

Tottenham will host Liverpool in a Premier League blockbuster game at the Wembley Stadium

AFP LONDON

HARRY Kane and Mohamed Salah have the perfect stage to end their unexpected slumps when the superstar strikers go head to head at Wembley on Saturday.

Just four months ago, Tottenham striker Kane and Liverpool forward Salah were being hailed as Europe's most feared marksmen after the pair tore through Premier League defences on a weekly basis. Yet they go into this weekend's eagerly anticipated clash between Tottenham and Liverpool with concerns about their ability to maintain that breathtaking form in the midst of a post-World Cup malaise.

Kane and Salah slugged it out for the Premier League's Golden Boot prize right up to the last game of the season.

The Egyptian international, with 32 goals, pipped his England rival to the coveted prize despite Kane's first 30-league-goal season.

Salah bagged an incredible

44 goals in all competitions in his debut year with Liverpool, earning him the Professional Footballers' Association and Football Writers' Association player of the year awards.

But Salah's season came to a bitter conclusion in the Champions League final when he suffered a shoulder injury after a cynical challenge from Real Madrid's Sergio Ramos.

Leaving the pitch in tears, Salah's departure triggered Liverpool's 3-1 defeat and ultimately cast a cloud over his World Cup, where he missed the first match and was unable to stop Egypt crashing out at the group stage.

The 26-year-old returned to Merseyside to kick off the new campaign with a goal in the demolition of West Ham.

But while Salah has scored twice in four games so far for Jurgen Klopp's high-flying Liverpool, he has not been the efficient figure that tormented opponents last term.

The combination of lethal finishing and off-the-cuff inspiration that made him such a joy to watch has been re-

placed with a more subdued demeanour that gives the impression he has lost his mojo for now.

Replicating the sky-high standards of 2017-18 was never going to be easy for Salah and, ironically, he was warned of the potential for a sophomore slump by Kane last May.

Fixtures

Saturday
Tottenham v Liverpool
Bournemouth v Leicester City
Chelsea v Cardiff City
Huddersfield v Crystal Palace
Man City v Fulham
Newcastle v Arsenal
Watford v Manchester United
Sunday
Wolverhampton v Burnley
Everton v West Ham United

"For me it is about doing it year after year. Any player wants to do it on a consistent basis and that's what defines a good player from a great player," he said.

Kane and Salah have a

respectful relationship, but their rivalry intensified when Salah questioned the decision to award Tottenham's second goal in April's 2-0 win at Stoke to Kane, after it had initially been credited to Christian Eriksen.

Kane may have been hurt by the perception he was greedily hunting individual accolades but, undeterred, the England captain finished as top scorer at the World Cup with six goals.

Yet, by his own admission, Kane was not quite at his best in Russia despite England's run to the semi-finals and the hangover has continued into the new campaign.

The 25-year-old has just scored two goals in six games for club and country this season, with the statistics behind those numbers making for even more unsettling reading.

Sky Sports statistics released this week show Kane averaged 6.7 shots per 90 minutes by the end of August 2017, whereas he currently averages 2.6 shots per match.

Amid fears Kane is near-

ing burnout, England boss Gareth Southgate was forced to defend his decision to bring out his captain as a substitute in the 1-0 friendly win over Switzerland on Tuesday.

Ankle ligament damage suffered at the beginning of April, fatigue after such a short summer break and opponents taking extra care to snuff him out have all been mooted as reasons for Kane's problems.

"I'm concerned about Harry Kane. Since 2015, Kane has played 175 matches. Forget the physical side, he needs a mental break as well because he's struggling," former England assistant coach Gary Neville told Sky Sports this week.

Salah's dip has not stopped Liverpool climbing to the top of the Premier League after four successive wins, while Tottenham are just three points behind.

Even so, it would be a comforting sight for Reds manager Klopp and Tottenham boss Mauricio Pochettino if their star men were back on song this weekend.

Barca, Real's perfect records at risk in difficult Basque trips

Real Madrid play Athletic Bilbao while Barcelona visit Real Sociedad

REUTERS BARCELONA

REAL Madrid and Barcelona's flying starts to the La Liga season will be put to the test on Saturday when they both travel to the Basque country.

Real play Athletic Bilbao while Barcelona visit Real Sociedad in fixtures that have often proved to be among their hardest away trips over the last decade.

Real were held to a goalless draw at the famously atmospheric San Mames stadium last season and have only won two of their five league visits to the ground since it was built in 2013, and they will face a typically hostile atmosphere as they chase a fourth win after seeing off Getafe, Girona and Leganes.

Champions Barca, meanwhile, have scored 12 goals in their opening three league wins but have only picked up one victory in their last eight league visits to Real Sociedad's Anoeta Stadium, finally snapping an 11-year winless run there by coming from two goals down to win 4-2 in January.

Things could be even tougher than usual for Ernesto Valverde's side as Real Sociedad will be playing for the first time at their stadium since it was renovated to get rid of a running track and bring the stands closer to the pitch.

"We are very happy because at last we get to play at a stadium without a running track, it's going to be a very special day," said Real Sociedad president Jokin Aperribay.

A new pitch has been laid at Anoeta and both clubs will be hoping it fares better than the new surface Barca had to play on in their last away trip, when the pitch repeatedly cut up in a narrow 1-0

win at Real Valladolid which led to La Liga launching an investigation.

Barca often struggle in the first game back after an international break but this time they will benefit from extra rest for talisman Lionel Messi, who sat out Argentina's recent international friendlies, and defender Gerard Pique, who has retired from the Spanish national team.

Real Madrid players featured heavily in Spain's 6-0 drubbing of Croatia on Tues-

Sociedad difficult terrain

Barca have only picked up one victory in their last eight league visits to Real Sociedad's Anoeta Stadium, finally snapping an 11-year winless run there by coming from two goals down to win 4-2 in January.

day and the impressive display of midfielder Dani Ceballos may see him force his way into the starting line-up in Bilbao.

Real forward Marco Asensio will also be feeling confident after playing a part in five of Spain's six goals against Croatia, while Gareth Bale will be looking to extend his run of scoring in six consecutive La Liga games, having scored a wonder goal in Wales' 4-1 win over the Republic of Ireland.

Elsewhere, Atletico Madrid host Eibar while Valencia will be out to rectify their poor record of two points from three games when they host Real Betis.



Real Madrid's Karim Benzema (right) celebrates with Real Madrid's Sergio Ramos after scoring his goal in a Spanish league match at the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium in Madrid recently. (AFP)

PSG launch Jordan branded kit, footwear

The collection will be available at PSG store at Villaggio Mall today

TRIBUNE NEWS NETWORK DOHA

PARIS Saint-Germain, the world's fastest-growing football club have launched a groundbreaking agreement with the iconic Jordan Brand on Thursday.

The new collection revolves around the Parisian club's new alternative kits for the 2018-19 season, which sees the standard Nike branding replaced with Jordan's iconic "Jumpman" logo -- the famous silhouette of the eponymous brand originator and NBA legend Michael Jordan.

PSG and Jordan have been working together for several years but this marks the first time the pair have produced a special edition football kit that will actually be worn in competitive matches.

between Paris Saint-Germain and Jordan underlines the ambition of both brands to combine performance, innovation, and style. It is a logical next step in our project to make Paris Saint-Germain one of the biggest global sports brands, capitalising on the avant-garde approach of our Parisian roots. This partnership builds on our long-term association with Nike and will enable us to reach new audiences as well as offering our loyal fans around the world the most stylish club merchandise."

Michael Jordan added: "Jordan Brand and Paris Saint-Germain share a distinct position in sport and style, so to partner with the club is a natural fit. We're excited to unite these two passionate communities by putting the Jumpman on the chest of Paris Saint-Germain to continue fueling the energy for sport and style globally."

Discovering the collection, Neymar Jr. declared: "For me,



PSG's Kylian Mbappe with a new jersey in Paris on Thursday, after the presentation of the team's outfit with an acronym 'Jordan'. (AFP)

the Jordan Brand means phenomenal, magic, irreverent. It is perfect for Paris and for the Champions League. It is a huge responsibility to carry Jordan's name on a shirt and we look forward to an excellent season. Two partners that are champions, both Paris and Jordan, so I really hope this connection

brings us many titles. While Nike remains Paris Saint-Germain's long-term kit manufacturer, this new innovative deal with Jordan Brand will strengthen the club's reputation as an icon of sport and style, leading the way as one of the trendsetters in world football.

The partnership will boost the club's visibility worldwide, especially in Asia and North America, confirming Paris Saint-Germain's place in the top tier of global sports merchandise sales.

By the end of the 2018-2019 season, the collection will include over 90 items from performance, training, and lifestyle. It will be the first time a football club has launched such a diverse and innovative collection and over 100 exclusive boxes have been sent to a select group of personalities from the worlds of entertainment and fashion.

Fans will also be snapping up this eagerly-awaited Paris Saint-Germain x Jordan collection via PRE-ORDER from September 13 on store.psg.fr/Jordan, and from September 14 in the Paris Saint-Germain online and official stores, including the brand-new boutique opened with Edifice in Tokyo, as well in the Nike/Jordan stores. This is in line with Paris Saint-Germain's strategy to develop a strong network of premium stores all around the world.

Over 100 cases reported over Sport Integrity Hotline

TRIBUNE NEWS NETWORK DOHA

THE Sport Integrity Hotline (SIU), a whistleblower channel launched by the ICSG to provide a safe and secure platform to address wrongdoing in sport, has reached a significant milestone in receiving over 100 reported cases.

Officially rolled out in January 2018, the SIU Hotline has rapidly reached the grassroots level in sport, setting up a much-needed platform for athletes, fans and others to report misconduct, and integrity issues in global sport.

Reports coming in include allegations of match-fixing, doping, sexual exploitation, corrupt club ownership practices, human trafficking and other accusations of criminal activity in sport. The Sport Integrity Hotline platform is supported by a specialist ethics and case-management agency based in Canada which operates the hotline around the clock, fielding confidential reports via phone,

email and online. The SIU has exclusive access to the incoming reports and handles the ongoing management of cases.

Speaking of the latest hotline statistics, Dale Sheehan, Director of the SIU, said: "The number of reported cases is a strong indicator of the global need for a safe, confidential and secure channel for those in sport to speak up. We are extremely pleased that people have felt empowered to reach out in an effort for a clean and fair environment for sport. Our role is to ensure that the investigations are conducted with appropriate due diligence and with as much transparency as possible, without breaching the confidentiality of the reporting process."

All cases submitted through the hotline are reviewed under the SIU Risk Matrix for due diligence and validity. Certain cases that have not met the threshold have now been closed. Other cases have been forwarded to relevant law enforcement entities and sports authorities for follow up.