

Bahrain lady riders shine



■ The Bahrain lady riders celebrate their achievements. Right, the riders during the race

THE Bahrain Royal Endurance lady riders completed a respectable finish in the CEIO Two Star Shaikha Fatima bint Mubarak Ladies Endurance Cup race being held in Verona, Italy.

Shaikha Najla bint Salman bin Saqer Al Khalifa, Dana Al Dossary and Manal Fakhrawi claimed second, fourth and fifth places, respectively, in this event which was supported by the Shaikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan Global Arabian Horse Flat Racing Festival.

Over 70 lady riders representing 15 countries battled it out in this first-ever Shaikha Fatima bint Mubarak Ladies Endurance Cup over 120kms, a world-class ladies competition being held in Europe for the first time.

Shaikha Najla finished the race which consisted of five stage in a total time of 7.54.17 hours, just few seconds behind the winner, Afra Al Suwaidi, from the

UAE team who finished in 7.54.04 hours.

Shaikha Najla was ahead of another entry from the UAE, Alya Abdulredha, who came third with a total time of 7.54.37 hours.

Dana finished fourth with a total time of 7.54.51 hours, while Manal finished fifth with a total time of 7.55.09 hours.

Trophy

The Royal team claimed the second place trophy in the teams category with an overall time of 16.53.05 hours, behind overall winners the UAE team who finished in 16.18.26 hours.

Meanwhile, His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa made a phone call to all the Royal ladies team riders, where he praised their performances and achievements.

On the other hand, the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports President, Bahrain Olympic Committee Chairman and honorary president of the Bahrain Royal Equestrian and Endurance Federation Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa praised the Royal Endurance team riders for showing high technical levels and performance at the race.

Shaikh Nasser said that such great performance indicate a bright future for Bahraini equestrian and endurance sports.

He dedicated this outstanding achievement to His Majesty the King who has been a major inspiration for all the Bahraini riders who competed in the race as well as during the previous championships.

The Royal Endurance ladies team riders thanked Shaikh Nasser for his support that enabled them to take part in this event.

Monaco pips Haase to enter Swiss final

GSTAAD, Switzerland: Argentine Juan Monaco claimed a place in his first final in almost a year yesterday as he defeated Robin Haase 6-3, 7-6 (7/4) at the Swiss Open.

The ATP number 105, who has slipped out of the top 100 after a series of injuries going back to late 2013, recovered from breaks down in both sets to claim victory over the Dutch seventh seed, a losing finalist

here a year ago to Mikhail Youzhny.

Monaco will play Pablo Andujar who beat fourth seeded Fernando Verdasco 6-3, 6-7 (2), 6-1 in an all-Spain semi-final.

The 30-year-old Argentine went through to his first final since Kitzbuehel 51 weeks ago after playing his first semi-final of 2014.

"At the start I didn't play well, he deserved his 3-0 lead. But I began playing better and

got into the match," Monaco said of a contest which began four hours late due to rain.

"We had no time to really warm up but it was the same for both. I got some rhythm and hit the ball harder than him. I was able to get into control.

"In the second set I had some opportunities that I didn't take, I was a bit nervous, I've not played a semi-final this season.

"But at the end I just relaxed and played my tennis,"

Monaco improved to 3-2 over Haase after losing the pair's last two meetings.

The South American has been bothered by three different injuries this season - his back, a wrist and a foot.

His victory took his 2014 record to 13-14 and 5-1 at this alpine village whose clay stands 1,050m above sea level.

Monaco came from 2-1 down in the second set after trailing 2-0 in the first.

He was eventually able to overpower a frustrated Haase, who has won two clay trophies at altitude in Kitzbuehel, Austria.

Monaco carried the second set into a tie-breaker and advanced to the title match on the second of three match points after one and three-quarter hours.

"I'm glad to be playing again. I'm just trying to be happy on court," said Monaco.

Cook brushes aside Pietersen 'quit call'

SOUTHAMPTON, United Kingdom: Alastair Cook shrugged off calls from Kevin Pietersen to resign as England captain ahead of the third Test against India at Southampton.

Pietersen used his *Daily Telegraph* column published yesterday to say he was only still in the job because it would be "yet another PR disaster" for the England and Wales Cricket Board to sack him now.

Cook has faced repeated calls to resign the captaincy from the likes of Michael Vaughan and Nasser Hussain during a run that has seen England go 10 Tests without a win.

Meanwhile Cook's form with the bat has also declined.

It is now 27 innings since he scored the last of his England record 25 Test hundreds, and the left-handed opener's last nine Test innings have yielded just 129

runs. But Cook speaking at Southampton, where England will start today's match 1-0 down in the five-Test series, following India's 95-run win at Lord's on Monday, insisted once again he would not resign.

"The last three or four weeks, everyone's been saying that. It is no different who else says it," Cook said at Southampton yesterday when asked about Pietersen's comments.

True

"I've just got to stay true to myself and say how good it would be if I could get through this as a person, as a player, as a leader and take huge strides from it," the 29-year-old added.

"I'm desperate to carry on because I love being England captain, it's a huge honour.

"I said when I first took over 'I just want to throw

everything into it' and until that time where I don't feel as if I can carry on doing it or someone taps me on the shoulder then that's what I'm going to do."

If England lose the third Test, they will be unable to win the series against India, having already been beaten 1-0 in a two-Test contest this season at home to Sri Lanka. Not since 2001, when they drew with Pakistan and lost to Australia, have England failed to win either of their series in a home season.

Cook insisted England could recover against India.

"The good news in a five Test match series is you've got a chance to bounce back."

"The frustrating thing has been that we've been getting ourselves into situations, especially in the four Test matches where we've been ahead of the game by quite a long way and haven't been able to force that result.

SPORT AT A GLANCE

■ Isner reaches Atlanta semis

ATLANTA: John Isner kept his Atlanta ATP title defense on track on Friday with a 7-6 (10/8), 6-4 quarter-final victory over Australian Marinko Matosevic. A day after Isner fired 30 aces and still had to fight off two match points in a second-round win over Robby Ginepri, the towering American fired 17 aces and won 84 percent of his first-serve points in his win over Matosevic.

Isner was broken in the first game of the match, but kept his composure to take the opening set in a tie-break, saving a set point along the way. He converted two of his own five break chances to seal the win, breaking for a 4-3 lead in the second set and pounding an ace on his first match point.

Isner, the champion in Atlanta in 2013 and runner-up to Mardy Fish in both 2010 and 2011, will face fellow American Jack Sock for a place in the final.

Sock rallied from an early 1-4 deficit to dispatch Slovakian Lukas Lacko 7-6 (8/6), 6-2. Sock, enjoying the best season of his career, was in his fifth quarter-final of 2014.

■ Furyk and Petrovic on top

MONTREAL: US veteran Jim Furyk fired a bogey-free even-under 63 on Friday to seize a share of the Canadian Open second-round lead alongside Tim Petrovic with home hope Graham DeLaet lurking. Petrovic joined Furyk on 10-under 130 with a four-under par 66, while DeLaet, like Furyk, matched the Royal Montreal Golf Club's Blue Course record with a 63 for 132.

The round put DeLaet in a strong position going into the weekend, boosting his chances of ending the 60-year victory drought for Canadian golfers in their home open.

But there are plenty of players in striking distance. DeLaet shared third place on eight-under with American Kyle Stanley, who posted a 67.

Northern Ireland's Graeme McDowell carded a 65 for 133, heading a group that also included American Justin Hicks (67), Scott Brown (66) and Andrew Svoboda (66).

■ Fury pulls out of bout

LONDON: Britain's Tyson Fury has withdrawn from his heavyweight fight against Belarusian Alexander Ustinov yesterday after his uncle fell seriously ill, organisers announced.

"Tyson Fury has withdrawn from his heavyweight contest tonight (Saturday) against Alexander Ustinov after his uncle and first trainer, Hughie, has been taken seriously ill into hospital," said Queensberry Promotions in a statement.

"Tyson's uncle and trainer Peter took the decision to pull him out of the fight rather than risk his health by sending him into the ring with his mind not focused."

Ustinov, 37, had stepped in at the last minute to face 25-year-old Fury after the Briton's compatriot Dereck Chisora was forced to pull out of their scheduled fight in Manchester due to injury.

■ Whitney wins 200m race

EUGENE, Oregon: Sixteen-year-old American Kaylin Whitney won the 200 meters Friday at the world junior athletics championships.

Whitney was shown a yellow card for what appeared to be a false start but was not disqualified, going on to win in a wind-aided 22.82 seconds. At 16, she became the youngest gold medalist at the international event that runs through today. This month at the US junior championships, Whitney broke the world youth record in 22.49, besting the 17-and-under mark of 22.58 set by Marion Jones in 1992. She claimed the bronze medal in the 100 metres at the worlds earlier this week.