

Ekitike injured early in Liverpool's match at Brighton in Premier League

BRIGHTON, MAR 23

Liverpool striker Hugo Ekitike lasted less than eight minutes before hobbling off with a left leg injury in the Premier League game against Brighton on Saturday.

The France international was hurt in a challenge by Brighton midfielder James Milner in the third minute. After receiving treatment, he tried to run it off but couldn't continue and was replaced by Curtis Jones. Ekitike was selected in France's latest squad ahead of friendlies against Brazil and Colombia in the United States. Liverpool was already without the injured Mohamed Salah and Alisson Becker.

Aditi Ashok moves to tied-3rd after strong second day

MENLO PARK (CALIFORNIA), MAR 23

Aditi Ashok carded a second round of 6-under 66 to move into tied third alongside world number one Jeeno Thitikul of Thailand at the Fortinet Founders Cup here. Both Ashok and Thitikul carded rounds of 6-under 66 following their opening even par rounds to move up into tied third alongside Karis Davidson, Nelly Korda, Hye-Jin Choi, Minjee Lee and Jin Hee Im. Hyo Joo Kim extended her lead as she fired a second round of 2-under 70 to move four shots clear of her closest rival, Gaby Lopez of Mexico.

Kim is now at 11-under par. Lopez had carded 5-under 67 on the first day and followed it up with a round of 2-under 70 to hold the second place at 7-under heading into the weekend. Ashok started her second round on the front nine and had four consecutive birdies starting on the third hole. A fifth birdie on the eighth had Ashok at 5-under par before the turn.

Karnataka's Tumakuru to host first ITF Women's W35 meet

BENGALURU, MAR 23

In a significant boost to Karnataka's growing tennis stature, Tumakuru is set to host its first ever ITF Women's World Tennis Tour W35 tournament from May 4-10. The tournament will be held at the Tumkur District Tennis Stadium, Tumkur University Campus.

The upcoming W35 will be the second international event in Tumakuru's history and the first ever ITF Women's tournament in over two decades. The USD 30,000 event is part of the global ITF Women's circuit, offering a pathway for players to earn professional ranking points and progress towards the WTA Tour.

Emerging international players and top Indian professionals will compete across a 32-player singles main draw and qualifying rounds. Following a successful run of international tournaments in Bengaluru and Kalaburagi, the event strengthens Karnataka's presence on the global tennis calendar and reflects efforts to take the sport beyond established centres. The tournament marks a historic moment for Tumakuru, which last hosted an international tennis event in 2003 -- the ATP Challenger (Tumkur Open).

The event featured players such as Rohan Bopanna and Prakash Amritraj, while Germany's Philipp Kohlschreiber claimed the title.

Vinicius scores twice to lead Real Madrid to a pulsating 3-2 win over Atletico in La Liga

BARCELONA, MAR 23

The cheers were back for Vinicius Junior at the Santiago Bernabeu after the Real Madrid forward scored twice in a 3-2 win over Atletico Madrid on Sunday, keeping his team in the thick of the La Liga title race. Vinicius had to endure jeers from Madrid's fans earlier this season following the firing of coach Xabi Alonso and some embarrassing losses. But as the results have improved, so has Vinicius' reception from Madrid's supporters. Madrid has reached a high mark under new coach Alvaro Arbeloa with the win over Atletico — after a humiliating 5-2 loss in September — and the elimination of Pep Guardiola's Manchester City in the Champions League. And Vinicius has rightfully gotten some credit for the team's recent

improvement in form as he had helped to lead Madrid along with midfielder Federico Valverde, with stars Kylian Mbappé and Jude Bellingham out injured. Vinicius converted a penalty in the 52nd minute to cancel out Ademola Lookman's first-half opener for Atletico before the speedy Madrid forward grabbed the winner with a curling strike in the 72nd.

"Another great game by Vini, it was an example of his character, his talent. It was a great goal that gave us a win in a difficult moment. I am lucky to have him on my team," Arbeloa said. "We remain in the league fight. Mission accomplished."

Surprisingly, the goals were Vinicius' first against Atletico in La Liga after 12 scoreless derbies for the player. He had scored once before against Atletico in the Copa del

Rey. "I have worked hard all season for games like this," Vinicius said. "I don't know why, but when this time of the season arrives the goals and assists just flow." Madrid had to hold on for the last 12 minutes when Valverde, who had scored to make it 2-1 before Nahuel Molina leveled for Atletico, got a direct red card for a tough-looking challenge on Alex Baena, who in 2023 accused Valverde of assaulting him after a game.

The sending off almost cost Madrid when Julian Alvarez got free and hit the post with 10 minutes to play. But Arbeloa's team saw out the final minutes to ensure second-place Madrid stayed within four points of Barcelona with nine games remaining.

Vinicius decides the derby. Lookman made it five goals since joining Atletico from Atalanta in

the winter transfer window when Giuliano Simeone used an exquisite touch of the side of his boot to leave the Nigeria striker free to score in the 33rd. Madrid had to wait until after the break to quickly turn things around. Vinicius equalized from the spot after Brahim Diaz was fouled in the box by David Hancko. Valverde then won the ball from José Giménez and made it 2-1 in the 55th, extending his league scoring run to three straight games in addition to his recent hat trick against City. Atletico had looked finished but Molina came off the bench to lash in a long strike in the 66th before Vinicius restored Madrid's advantage for good. He came in from the left flank and curled home the decider as Spanish tennis great Rafael Nadal cheered from the VIP section of the Santiago

JSW Indian Open 2026: Abhay and Anahat win titles

MUMBAI, MAR 22

Local favourites Abhay Singh and Anahat Singh won the men's and women's singles titles respectively on the final day of the JSW Indian Open 2026 squash tournament at the CCI here on Sunday. The men's title clash was an all-Indian battle, with the second seeded Abhay overpowering his four seeded compatriot Veer Chotrani 3-0 (11-9 11-8 11-4).

Young sensation Anahat blew away Hana Moataz of Egypt 3-1 (11-5 11-6 9-11 11-6) in the women's title clash. Abhay was in superb form in the men's final. Although Chotrani produced a spirited fight in the first two games, the second seed zoomed up a gear as the match progressed.

The opening game was a hard-fought battle with every point contested fiercely. Abhay finally prevailed in the see-saw battle to take the opening game 11-9 and take the lead. The second game followed a similar script with every point witnessing long rallies keeping the spectators hooked. However, Abhay managed to quell an intense challenge by his compatriot to win 11-8 and extend his lead. Abhay



cranked up the intensity in the third game with Chotrani finding it difficult to read his deceptive angles and powerful smashes. The second seed took the game 11-4 to win the match and the title. Anahat prevails over Hana. Earlier, top seeded Anahat came up with a sublime performance to outclass Hana and clinch the women's title. Although the second seeded Egyptian was a much experienced contender, the younger Anahat was in a league all her own.

The top seeded Indian came up with a lethal combination of deception and speedy cross-court movements to leave her second seeded opponent struggling

to match her pace. During the initial exchanges, both opponents were equally matched, matching each other blow. The first game saw the lead change hands after almost every other rally before the Indian rattled off six consecutive points to take it 11-5 and surge into the lead. Anahat continued her dominance in the second game as well, building up a comfortable 5-1 lead in double quick time. Although Hana did her best to put up a strong fight, she failed to match up to the in-form India, who went on to win the second game 11-6 and double the lead. Despite being outgunned during the first two games, Hana staged a

spirited comeback in the third game, taking a tight 11-9 verdict to stay alive in the contest. The Egyptian tried to slow down the rallies in an effort to counter her much faster Indian opponent while the difficult angles of her shots stood her in good stead. The third game loss seemed to break Anahat's rhythm with Hana forcing the pace. The Egyptian raced into a 4-1 lead in the fourth game. To her credit, Anahat managed to pick herself up and fought back to claim the lead at 5-4 before winning five back-to-back points to win the game 11-6 and claim the title. On winning title for the second consecutive year, Anahat said, "I think I played well in the first two games. I went a bit off track in the third. I was excited that I was winning. But I spoke to my coach when he came to my corner in the middle of the game, and he told me to focus on getting a good start because it was important not to let it go to the fifth. I started the fourth well, and I'm glad I was able to get through it. I tell myself to focus because I lose focus quite easily, and if I lose two points in a row, I remind myself to stay motivated, focus on the next few points, and get back into the game."

Carlos Alcaraz loses to Sebastian Korda in the third round of the Miami Open

MIAMI GARDENS (USA), MAR 23

Carlos Alcaraz was eliminated in the third round of the Miami Open on Sunday, losing to Sebastian Korda in three sets. The 22-year-old Alcaraz, who completed the career Grand Slam when he won the Australian Open in January, dropped to 17-2 this season. The No. 1 player in the men's rankings also lost to Daniil Medvedev in the semifinals at Indian Wells last weekend.

Korda served for the match at 5-4 in the second, but Alcaraz rallied by winning five consecutive games. The 25-year-old Korda then regrouped and closed out a 6-3, 5-7, 6-4 victory in two hours, 19 minutes.

"It was a tough match, obviously," Alcaraz said. "I think (Korda) was incredible today. Played such a great game. A lot of tied moments that I just didn't make the most of it, and I think he was better on (those) points and (those) moments." At No. 36, Korda became the lowest-ranked man to beat Alcaraz since No. 55 David Goffin accomplished the feat in the second round in Miami last year, according to the ATP Tour. "A lot of tense moments, for sure," Korda said. "But you

know I think today, the ultimate thing was belief. Going back to just believing, committing into every shot, and luckily I got it done at the end." Next up for Korda is qualifier Martin Landaluce, who advanced with a 6-3, 7-6 (2) win against 14th-seeded Karen Khachanov.

Americans Taylor Fritz and Tommy Paul joined Korda in the fourth round. The sixth-seeded Fritz beat Reilly Opelka 6-3, 6-4, and No. 22 seed Paul eliminated Raphael Collignon with a 6-2, 3-6, 7-6 (5) victory. No. 21 Jiri Lehecka, No. 24 Valentin Vacherot and No. 29 Tomas Martin Etcheverry also were among the winners.

On the women's side, top-seeded Aryna Sabalenka cruised to a 6-4, 6-2 win against Catherine McNally. No. 3 Elena Rybakina beat No. 27 Marta Kostyuk 6-3, 6-4, and No. 5 Jessica Pegula posted a 6-2, 6-2 win over No. 26 Leylah Fernandez.

No. 7 Jasmine Paolini, No. 9 Elena Svitolina, No. 11 Ekaterina Alexandrova, No. 15 Madison Keys and No. 18 Iva Jovic were eliminated. Paolini lost to No. 25 Jelena Ostapenko in three sets, and Svitolina was knocked out by Hailey Baptiste in straight sets.

Candidates: Ukraine's Anna Muzychuk steps in for Humpy

NEW DELHI, MAR 23

Ukraine's Anna Muzychuk has replaced Koneru Humpy in the upcoming Candidates Tournament in Cyprus after the Indian Grandmaster withdrew citing safety concerns due to the host country's proximity to the ongoing West Asia conflict. The tournament, which will determine the challengers for the world championship crowns currently held by D Gukesh (Open) and Ju Wenjun (women), is



scheduled to begin in Paphos on Saturday. Humpy, a two-time Women's World

Rapid Champion, pulled out of the event despite assurances from organisers, citing concerns over

personal safety. Earlier this month, a British air base in Cyprus was targeted in a drone attack, heightening security fears in the region. In a statement, FIDE confirmed that Muzychuk had been invited as Humpy's replacement. "In accordance with the tournament regulations, her (Humpy's) place was offered to the next highest finisher in the Women's Events Series 2024-25 who has not yet secured qualification. As a result,

Hardik, Sukhjeet, Sanjay, Abhishek in fray for Hockey India Player of the Year award

NEW DELHI, MAR 23

Star Indian midfielder Hardik Singh, forwards Sukhjeet Singh and Sanjay, and defender Abhishek are in contention for the Hockey India Balbir Singh Sr Player-of-the-Year award for 2025. In the women's category, Salima Tete, Navneet Kaur, Lalremsiami and Savita have been nominated for the top honour. The HI awards ceremony, scheduled to be held here on Friday, will also throw spotlight on emerging talent through the Jugraj Singh Award for Upcoming Player-of-the-Year (U-21 men) and Asunta Lakra Award for Upcoming Player-of-the-Year (Under-21 women). A total of 32 nominees across eight categories have made the final shortlist. In addition, special recognitions such as the President's Award for Outstanding Achievement and Jaman Lal Sharma Award for Invaluable Contribution will be presented. Officials will also be honoured through awards for Umpire/Umpire Manager of the Year, Technical Official of the Year, and Best Member Unit. The ceremony will also felicitate the gold medal-winning Indian men's team from the Asia Cup and the junior men's side who secured a bronze medal at the World Cup. "As we enter a crucial year for Indian hockey, it is important to recognise the



standout performers and contributions made over the past year," Hockey India president Dilip Tirkey said. "The Hockey India Annual Awards celebrate the dedication and achievements of players and officials who continue to elevate the standard of Indian hockey. We look forward to acknowledging their efforts and the progress made," he added. Nominees Baljit Singh Award for Outstanding Achievement and Jaman Lal Sharma Award for Invaluable Contribution will be presented. Officials will also be honoured through awards for Umpire/Umpire Manager of the Year, Technical Official of the Year, and Best Member Unit. The ceremony will also felicitate the gold medal-winning Indian men's team from the Asia Cup and the junior men's side who secured a bronze medal at the World Cup. "As we enter a crucial year for Indian hockey, it is important to recognise the

Player of the Year (Women - Under 21): Sakshi Rana, Jyoti Singh, Sunelita Toppo and Kanika Siwach. Jugraj Singh Award for Upcoming Player of the Year (Men - Under 21): Prince Deep Singh, Manmeet Singh, Anmol Ekka and Arshdeep Singh. Balbir Singh Sr. Award for Player of the Year (Women): Navneet Kaur, Salima Tete, Lalremsiami and Savita. Balbir Singh Sr. Award for Player of the Year 2025 (Men): Hardik Singh, Sukhjeet Singh, Sanjay and Abhishek. Star Indian midfielder Hardik Singh, forwards Sukhjeet Singh and Sanjay, and defender Abhishek are in contention for the Hockey India Balbir Singh Sr Player-of-the-Year award for 2025. In the women's category, Salima Tete, Navneet Kaur, Lalremsiami and Savita have been nominated for the top honour. The HI awards ceremony, scheduled to be held here on Friday, will also throw

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