

OOREDOO PARTICIPATES IN EQUESTRIAN TOURNAMENT

KUWAIT: Ooredoo Kuwait, a member of international Ooredoo Group, participated in one of the most exciting activities of Hala Febrayer, which was held on February 19th and 20th in collaboration with Kuwait Riding Centre.

The tournament was organized by Kuwait Riding Centre, where participants had the chance to compete in 3 different categories, based on their level of experience and skills. The two-day program included intermediate tournament, horse dancing shows, beginners' tournaments, advanced tournaments, raffle draws and winners honouring.

Prizes were distributed to winners at the end of each day, first day winners of all three categories received a KD5 cash prize

each, while winners of the second day received KD1000 each, in addition to the grand draw prize which was a Hyundai 2016 model car.

The tournament is one of the key activities under Hala Febrayer Festival 2016 with Ooredoo, which included various activities that interest nationals and expats, locals and visitors of all age groups, the prominent festival included a camp, carnival, musical concerts, cultural and religious nights, shopping festival, graffiti competition, marathon and many other events. Ooredoo's sponsorship of the festival stems from its belief in the importance of effectively taking part in national events and activities that bring the people of Kuwait together, and spreading the festive spirit.



WATSON AIMS FOR SECOND RIVIERA WIN IN THREE TRIES

PACIFIC PALISADES: Bubba Watson fired a four-under par 67 in Saturday's third round of the PGA Northern Trust Open to take a one-shot lead over three Americans, including Dustin Johnson, whom Watson edged for the 2014 title.

Two-time Masters champ Watson seized the outright lead with a birdie at 17 on the same Riviera Country Club course where he shot 64-64 on the weekend two years ago to beat Johnson by two strokes. "I am very happy," Watson said. "It is all about the steadiness on the greens."

Johnson is tied for second with second-round leader Jason Kokrak, who shot a 70, and Chez Reavie, who had a 69. Watson, ranked sixth in the world, finished 54 holes at 12-under 201. Northern Ireland's Rory McIlroy, making his Pacific Palisades debut, and former world number one Adam Scott of Australia are part of a group of five tied for fifth at 10-under, just two strokes back. McIlroy and Scott both shot 67s.

Watson's best finish this season is a tie for 10th at the Hyundai Tournament of Champions. He stumbled at Pebble Beach last week in the third round and missed the 54-hole cut.

The third round has been a problem for Watson in his last three outings as he shot 73s in Maui and Phoenix and 74 at Pebble Beach. But the 37-year-old from Florida is back on track this week and Riviera has been good to him in the past.

"This three-week stretch has been tough," Watson said. "There was a lot of negative vibes out there."

"Pebble was very difficult because I haven't been there in so many years, so I pressed there. You get excited and you want to do so well. "Phoenix I didn't make very many putts, Pebble I didn't make too many putts. But then around here, I haven't made too many mistakes around the greens."

After his birdie on 17, Watson got up and down on 18 for par with a superb 100-foot chip from off the green that landed two feet from the cup. "Nobody expected me to hit the shot that good," Watson said. The shot drew a loud cheer from the huge gallery on the grassy hill overlooking the green at 18 that was taking advantage of a clear-sky afternoon and warm temperatures.

"It is better than booing me," Watson joked. "I guess being a past champion here they respect that. They know you can play and they appreciate a past champion."

Watson seized the lead with a birdie on the par-five 17. His tee shot sailed 321 yards to the fairway. The second shot landed in the rough, 55 feet from the pin. He got on the green and sank a three-foot birdie putt.

MCILROY IN TITLE HUNT

Considering the history of the event and with the leaderboard crowded as it is, 72 holes might not be enough to determine a winner. There are a dozen golfers within

four shots of Watson. Seven of the past 15 tournaments at Riviera have gone to a sudden-death playoff, including three in the past four years.

US Open runner-up Johnson certainly put himself in the mix for that long-desired Riviera win with a round Saturday that included five birdies and one bogey.

Besides finishing second to Watson in 2014, Johnson lost a sudden-death playoff to James Hahn last year.

"This is a tournament that I really enjoy playing," Johnson said. "I am definitely happy with my position."

"You have to attack the golf course when you can. There are a bunch of difficult holes where four is a good score."

McIlroy, who is trying to reclaim the world number one ranking from Jordan Spieth, made his lone bogey of the day on the par-four third hole. He then settled in for his third straight round in the 60s and said the tight leaderboard will make for an exciting yesterday.

"You have to try and play a solid round of golf and see where the chips fall. If you shoot the lowest score, then that's great," he said. —AFP



LOS ANGELES: Bubba Watson chips up onto the 18th green during the third round of the Northern Trust Open golf tournament, Saturday, in the Pacific Palisades section of Los Angeles. — AP



Rajeev Ram

RAJEEV RAM BEATS DIMITROV IN DELRAY BEACH SEMIFINALS

DELRAY BEACH: American Rajeev Ram upset fourth-seeded Grigor Dimitrov of Bulgaria 6-4, 6-3 on Saturday in the Delray Beach Open semifinals.

American Sam Querrey beat Argentina's Juan Martin del Potro 7-5, 7-5 in the second semifinal. The last All-American final on the ATP Tour was last April when Querrey lost to Jack Sock in Houston.

The 31-year-old Ram won his only other career finals he has played, in Newport in 2009 and last year. He beat Querrey in '09 to claim his first tour-level title.

"I felt calm from the start because I had a game plan going in to make sure I was on the offensive," said Ram, who - regardless of what happens in the final - will rise to a career-high ranking in the top 70. "I didn't want to let him set his feet too much. I wanted to take the first strike before he did. I do not need to be running side to side chasing his forehand."

After admitting to a bout of nerves during his three-set quarterfinal win over Benjamin Becker, the 31-year-old Ram played what he called "two of the best sets of tennis I've ever played."

Ram played composed, controlled tennis, mixing up powerful forehands and big serves with well-timed forays to the net. He took advantage of a bevy of unforced errors by Dimitrov, particularly off the backhand side. Ram broke Dimitrov in the first game of the match and then again in the third game of the second set. He never faced a break point on his own serve and won on his second match point when Dimitrov dumped a forehand return into the net. "It wasn't my best, best day today," Dimitrov said. "I was trying everything, serve and volley, slice, trying to attack. But everything went his way and absolutely nothing was going my way."

The match was disrupted briefly in the second set when chair umpire Simon Cannavan spotted a drone flying high over the court. During the US Open last year, a drone crashed into the stands during a match between Flavia Pennetta and Monica Niculescu.

Querrey never faced a break point against del Potro and lost just nine points on serve, including two in the second set. Both sets were identical in that neither player blinked until the 11th game when Querrey broke and then held serve.

"That was definitely the best I've played so far," said Querrey, who served 10 aces to del Potro's five. "I served great and it allowed me to claw myself in until I could break him."

Del Potro, the 2009 US Open champion who was playing in his first tournament in 11 months due to two surgeries on his left wrist last year, used a mix of one- and two-handed backhands, as well as his customarily potent forehand. But his fatigue after playing four matches - the same number he played in all of last year - was evident.

"I think this week I more than won the tournament," said del Potro, who confirmed that he will be playing the BNP Paribas Open in Indian

Wells next month. "There are so many positive things. I'm looking forward to the future because I can make a plan for playing tournaments." —AP

NADAL VOWS 'HARD WORK' AFTER NEW DEFEAT

RIO DE JANEIRO: Rafael Nadal has vowed he will put in more hard work in a bid to get his game back to the level where he can win more tournaments.

The 29-year-old Spaniard endured another frustrating defeat late Saturday when he lost a marathon semi-final in the ATP Rio de Janeiro Open to 45th-ranked Pablo Cuevas 6-7 (6/8), 7-6 (7/3), 6-4.

It was just the second time since 2005 that Nadal has lost to a player ranked outside the world top 30 on clay. That loss came just a week after he lost in the semi-final of the Argentina Open in three sets to Austria's Dominic Thiem, also on clay.

Nadal had travelled to South America following his first round loss at the Australian Open in a bid to reverse, on his favourite clay-court surface, the form loss that has seen his world ranking slump.

But the latest defeat will cast more doubts

on his ability of once again winning the French Open title in early June, having lost to Novak Djokovic in last year's quarter-finals.

"I lost an opportunity, that's it," said Nadal of his loss to Uruguayan Cuevas.

"I fought until the end. I have to accept it and keep working to try to change the dynamic. That's what's happening today and I have to work hard to change it."

"I didn't win a title, so it wasn't a positive two tournaments. I had my chances in both. I lost in the semi-finals of both tournaments and just have to look forward to Indian Wells."

That tournament, the first of the year's Masters Series events, gets underway in California on March 20 followed by the Miami Masters. Both tournaments are on outdoor hardcourts and Nadal will be hard pushed to match world number one Djokovic, who has already won the Australian Open in dominating fashion. — AFP



RIO DE JANEIRO: Rafael Nadal of Spain returns a shot to Pablo Cuevas of Uruguay during the men's singles semi-final match of the 2016 Rio Open tennis tournament in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on Saturday. — AFP

DJOKOVIC TO FACE ROBREDO IN DUBAI

DUBAI: After taking a three-week vacation from tennis after winning his sixth Australian Open title, Novak Djokovic is ready to get back on court today at the Dubai Tennis Championships.

Having won his first two tournaments of the year - the Qatar Open and his 11th Grand Slam title in Australia - the top-ranked Serb has been focusing on his family.

"I've played a lot of tennis from the beginning of preparation through the finals of the Australian Open, more or less every day," Djokovic said Sunday. "I think it was necessary for me to just cool off a little bit and do something else."

"Thankfully, I'm a father and husband, and that's already a lot of work and a lot of pleasure,"

he said. "And the few weeks (off) felt like it was even more and I'm eager to come back."

Djokovic is a four-time champion in Dubai, but lost the last two years to Roger Federer in the final and semifinals. Federer recently underwent arthroscopic knee surgery and won't be defending his Dubai title this week.

Djokovic will play Spanish veteran Tommy Robredo in the first round. On the other side of the draw, second-seeded Stanislas Wawrinka of Switzerland is returning to Dubai after an eight-year absence.

Wawrinka has only played here twice before - in 2006 and 2008 - and lost in the first round on both occasions. "It's been many years since I played here and I wanted to change things in my

calendar, to feel like I'm going to new tournaments," Wawrinka said.

Wawrinka beat Djokovic on the way to both of his Grand Slams - in the 2015 French Open final and the 2014 Australian Open quarterfinals - but knows the challenge ahead.

"He's dominating the tennis, for sure, and he's playing a different level from the rest of the players," Wawrinka said. "But we've had some tough battles in Grand Slams when I was playing my best tennis. My game, the power I have from the backhand, the baseline, and the forehand, makes me feel like I have a game I can trust to beat him."

Wawrinka plays Sergiy Stakhovsky of Ukraine in the first round tomorrow. — AP