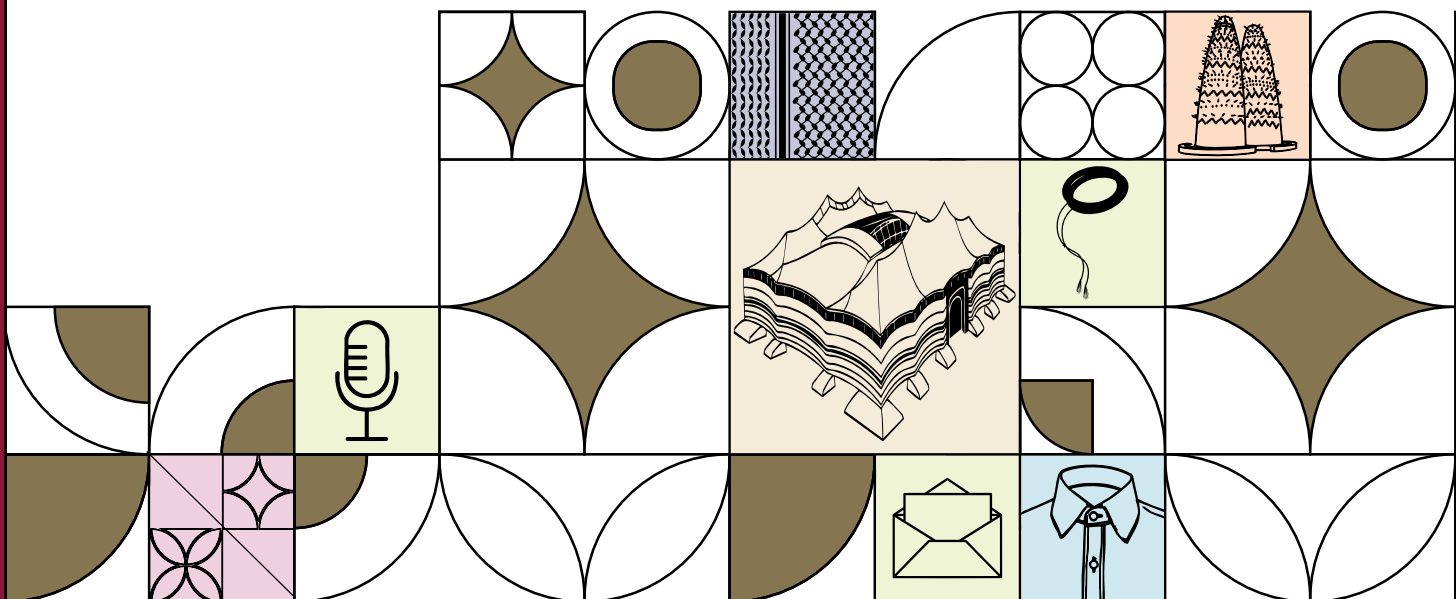
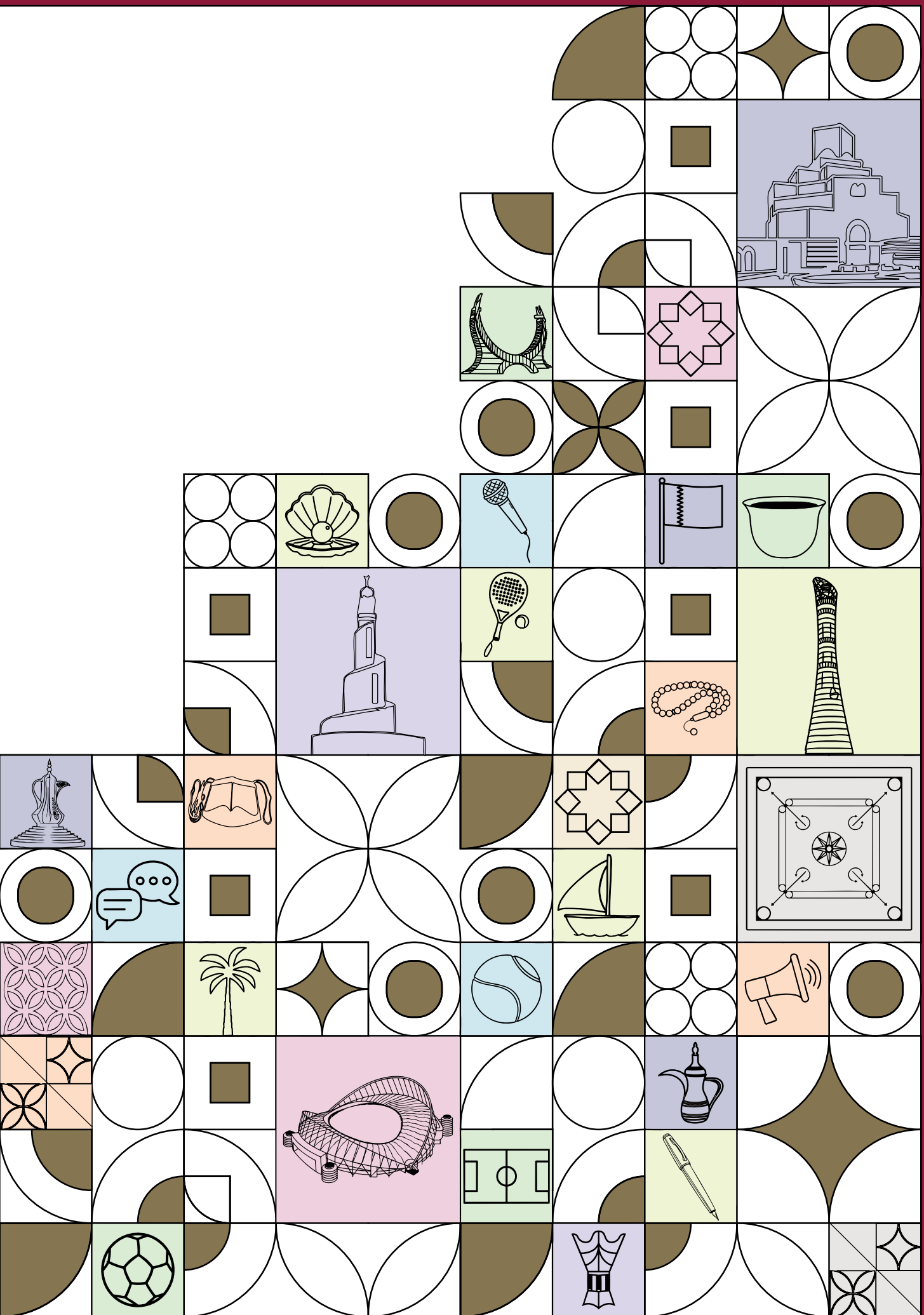


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Al-Resalah

An initiative of Aspetar Sports Medicine Journal





Inside Qatar's 3-2-1 Olympic and Sports Museum

– Written by Fai Al-Naimi



Dear readers,

There is no doubt that sport is a core pillar of Qatar's national identity and global influence. The 3-2-1 Qatar Olympic and Sports Museum is the ultimate expression of this commitment, offering a dedicated space to document and celebrate the history of athletes and the world of sports. This story aims to document this incredible museum space and to showcase how an ambitious idea evolved into a valuable institution designed to inspire people from all walks of life. I hope you enjoy reading it.

For this Al-Resalah, my team and I decided to visit the 3-2-1 Olympic and Sports Museum, which is situated right beside our facility. The museum is deeply tied to Qatar's journey toward becoming a major destination for international sports. The story of the museum began in 2006, when Doha hosted the 15th Asian Games. The games were a massive success that put Qatar on the global sports map. The event also left behind an immense amount of legacy items, including equipment, medals, and memorabilia that needed preservation. . With the incredible collection of objects garnered by the event, there was a pressing desire to build a museum to house this sports legacy for future generations. This is particularly significant since Qataris had long maintained a tradition of collecting and preserving a wide range of historical objects.





Image: His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani and Her Excellency Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad Al Thani mark the official opening of the 3-2-1 Qatar Olympic and Sports Museum with a ceremonial tennis ball toss, Khalifa Stadium, Doha, Qatar, 2022.

Qatar was collecting legacy items from all kinds of events, including regional tournaments, non-Olympic sports, and the Paralympics. The name that was settled on was "Olympic and Sports Museum." As for the name 3-2-1, it is also deeply symbolic. It represents the familiar countdown at the start of any race: "On your marks, get set, go." Furthermore, the lines on the logo are placed to mimic the lanes on a running track. The branding was so clever that when it was sent to the IOC headquarters for approval, there were rumors that the committee inquired if they could acquire the logo for their own use due to how impressive it was. However, Qatar chose to keep the design, preserving it as a unique symbol of the museum's identity. The project was officially set in motion under the leadership of Her Excellency Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad Al Thani, the Chairperson of Qatar Museums. Slowly but surely, the idea grew from a local archive into a world-class educational institution that directly supports the human development goals of the Qatar National Vision 2030. By March 30, 2022, the museum was officially inaugurated at Khalifa Stadium, marking a major milestone for the country just months before the 2022 FIFA World Cup.

This brings me to my next point. In terms of the location, the building is designed to interact directly with the Khalifa Stadium, an iconic facility originally built in 1976 that has always been a well-known football stadium in Qatar. To turn the energy of sports into a physical building, a Spanish-based architect, Joan Sibina,

was invited to conceptualize the design. The design was finalized in 2012, and construction began in 2015. Today, the museum is the largest sports museum in the world, spanning an incredible 19,000 square meters. It is split into two main structures: a five-story access building that follows the natural curve of the stadium, and a cylindrical glass building that sits outward. The external facade features five rings that are meant to resemble the five interlaced rings of the Olympic Games. These rings wrap around the structure at different heights and angles, and at night, they light up to display the iconic Olympic colors. You might wonder how the Olympic rings, which are heavily protected symbols, could be used in this design. This is because Qatar Museums secured support from the IOC, obtaining the rights to use the Olympic rings in this context.

The museum holds more than 22,000 objects in its inventory, combining pieces collected from local events with valuable objects acquired at open international auctions or borrowed from partner institutions. As a member of the IOC Museum Network, the 3-2-1 Museum regularly exchanges items with other elite cultural centers worldwide, giving it the international authority to preserve and showcase these historic objects. The museum moves away from traditional displays. The exhibition space is neatly divided into seven distinct galleries. A typical visitor's journey begins with the history of sports from ancient times, dating back to the 8th century BCE, and progresses to modern sports today. The third gallery

displays the contemporary significance of the Olympic Games, particularly their popularity in ancient Greece, as well as the legacy and values of the modern Olympics.

What truly intrigued us was the complete torch collection from every single Summer and Winter Olympiad, from Berlin 1936 to Paris 2024. The torch collection is, in fact, one of the museum's proudest achievements. When the former IOC President Thomas Bach visited the museum, he was surprised to see the impressive collection. He assumed that the IOC in Lausanne was the only institution that possessed an unbroken line of original torches. The Museums team was proud to show him that every torch on the wall was original and certified, proving Qatar's dedication to preserving global sports history.

The "Wall of Athletes" located in the fourth gallery celebrates the inspiring journeys of approximately 90 global champions from varying sports disciplines. This area also featured impressive historic and replica objects for visitors to draw inspiration from such narratives. For instance, the museum displays Muhammad Ali's gloves from his historic heavyweight title win against Sonny Liston.

Gallery 5 is remarkable as it denotes the most significant major sporting events hosted by Qatar in recent decades, and how they have become a matter of global fascination and national pride. Within this space, it is revealed what urban transformations were needed for the country to host such sporting events. By Gallery 6, visitors witness the history of sports in Qatar. The gallery traces the country's maritime and desert traditions, as well as its embrace of Western sports in the 1940s following the arrival of foreign employees working for Qatar Petroleum.

Lastly, the most interactive part of the museum is located in the Activation Zone. I could not overlook the level of detail that had gone into curating this area. It became evident that the museum functions as an educational institution rather than merely a passive exhibition space. This interactive area is deliberately designed to get people moving and even help discover early sports talent for future sporting potential. The zone features 18 interactive machines that test physical fitness, speed, agility, and motor skills. When young visitors enter, they are given a smart wristband to track their performance. At the end of the games, visitors receive a report



Image: The 3-2-1 Olympic and Sports Museum is located within the Sports City ecosystem alongside Khalifa Stadium, Aspetar Orthopaedic and Sports Medicine Hospital, and Aspire Academy, Doha, Qatar, 2017.



Image: The exterior glass façade of the 3-2-1 Olympic and Sports Museum features the 5 Olympic rings wrapping around its cylindrical form, directly connected to Khalifa Stadium, Doha, Qatar, 2022.

showing where they scored highest. This data, in turn, plays a role in the community. Through a partnership with Aspire Academy and national sports federations, the museum passes high-score profiles to talent scouts. The Activation Zone also works closely with Aspetar, particularly its Nutrition team, to provide families with all the tools and knowledge to implement healthy eating, offering practical advice to help kids avoid junk food and stay active. I was pleased to witness such a meaningful collaboration between the museum and Aspetar.

One cannot underestimate the key role the museum plays in educating its local community. Beyond being a destination for tourists, the 3-2-1 Museum functions as an active learning center.



Image: Editor-in-Chief Prof. Nebojsa Popovic exploring the history, legacy, and values of the modern Olympic movement, Olympics Gallery, 3-2-1 Olympic and Sports Museum, Doha, Qatar, 2026.



Image: The “Hall of Athletes” showcases the inspiring journeys and achievements of 90 sporting heroes from around the world, spanning a wide range of disciplines, Gallery 4, 3-2-1 Olympic and Sports Museum, Doha, Qatar, 2026.



Boxing gloves worn by Muhammad Ali during his historic heavyweight title victory over Sonny Liston are displayed in Gallery 4, 3-2-1 Olympic and Sports Museum, Doha, Qatar, 2026.



Image: His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani and His Excellency Sheikh Jassim bin Hamad Al Thani, alongside former IOC President Thomas Bach view the collection of Summer and Winter Olympic Games torches, Olympics Gallery at the 3-2-1 Qatar Olympic and Sports Museum, Doha, Qatar, 2022.



Image: Display of highly sought-after collectibles traditionally traded among athletes as symbols of friendship and exchange, Olympics Gallery, 3-2-1 Olympic and Sports Museum, Doha, Qatar, 2026.



Image: A father and his son reflect on Qatar's sporting development in Gallery 5: Qatar Hosting Nation, 3-2-1 Olympic and Sports Museum, Doha, Qatar, 2026.



Image: A young boy admires his father's motorbike helmet displayed in Gallery 5, 3-2-1 Olympic and Sports Museum, Doha, Qatar, 2026.



Image: In Gallery 6, the story of Qatar's sporting transformation is presented through its heritage sports, the emergence of football clubs, and key milestones in the nation's sporting history, 3-2-1 Olympic and Sports Museum, Doha, Qatar, 2026.

The outreach department works hand-in-hand with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, and more than 60,000 school students have visited the museum since it opened its doors to the public. The museum is also home to the region's first public sports library, holding over 5,000 books in its possession that cover everything from sports law and history to fitness and nutrition. The museum also mixes art with sports history through programs like the Cultural Olympiad. In this annual school competition, students pick an object from the galleries and paint it. The initiative recently

drew over 400 entries, which were displayed in the museum's VIP Lounge for families to see. The museum even plans to take some of these student paintings to be displayed at a special exhibition in Los Angeles ahead of the 2028 Olympic Games. In line with the environmental goals of the Qatar National Vision 2030, the museum practices sustainability by consistently recycling and reusing materials for its temporary exhibitions. The entire space is also fully optimized for visitors with disabilities, ensuring that all interactive machines, pathways, and exhibits are accessible to everyone.



Image: Abdulla Al Mulla, Director of the 3-2-1 Olympic and Sports Museum, sharing valuable insights into the museum's collections and the legacy of sport, Doha, Qatar, 2026.

“The 3-2-1 Olympic and Sports Museum is a treasure. I believe that what Qatar has contributed to sport is significant, and it is something we should all be very proud of as a country.”

Abdulla Yousef Al Mulla, Director, 3-2-1 Qatar Olympic and Sports Museum

The 3-2-1 Qatar Olympic and Sports Museum proves that sport is an incredible tool for bringing people together, educating communities, and building international connections. By placing this prestigious institution right inside Sports City, next to Khalifa Stadium, Aspetar, and Aspire Academy, Qatar has created a unique space where sports history, medicine, and education meet. This undoubtedly shows the country's long-term commitment to human development, nation branding, and cultural diplomacy, while keeping its focus on the health of the community. Ultimately, the 3-2-1 Museum reminds every visitor that sports are not just about elite competitions; they are about education and moving forward together toward a healthier future. I would like to extend my gratitude to Mr. Abdulla Al Mulla, the Director of the 3-2-1 Olympic and Sports Museum, for kindly hosting us. Mr. Abdulla shared first-hand insights and behind-the-scenes narratives that brought the museum to life. Ultimately, a visit is highly recommended for anyone looking to experience the absolute pinnacle of sports history and culture.

***With greetings from Qatar,
Fai Al Naimi***



Image: Museum visitors observing a gallery space at the 3-2-1 Qatar Olympic & Sports Museum, Doha, Qatar, 2024.