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Monday, July 15, 2024  
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# GULF TIMES SPORT



TENNIS

Alcaraz blows past  
Djokovic to retain  
Wimbledon title

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FOOTBALL

# Oyarzabal's late strike seals Euro glory for Spain

'I was lucky enough to score the winner. You value it a lot. And if you're lucky enough to score the goal... It's the best'



Spain players celebrate with the trophy after winning the Euro 2024 final against England in Berlin yesterday. (Reuters)



Spain's Mikel Oyarzabal (right) celebrates scoring their second goal with Nico Williams yesterday. (Reuters)



England's Harry Kane shakes hands with Britain's Prince William, the Prince of Wales and President of the English Football Association, after receiving his runners up medal yesterday. (Reuters)

AFP  
Berlin

Substitute Mikel Oyarzabal scored a dramatic late winner as Spain triumphed in yesterday's Euro 2024 final, beating England 2-1 to confirm their re-emergence as a force on the international stage and end their opponents' dreams of winning a first title in almost six decades.

Spain lost influential midfielder Rodri to injury at half-time, but shrugged that off to take the lead within two minutes of the restart through Nico Williams, who was set up by his fellow star winger, Lamine Yamal.

England came from behind as they have done so often at this Euros, as substitute Cole Palmer drove in the equaliser on 73 minutes, moments after entering the fray. But their resurgence in the game was cut short as Oyarzabal, the Real Sociedad forward, turned in a cross in the 86th minute to

hand Spain a record fourth European Championship crown, and a third in the last five editions.

"I did my job, what I had to do at every moment. I was lucky enough to score the winner. You value it a lot. And if you're lucky enough to score the goal... It's the best," Oyarzabal said on his match-winning strike.

They previously won in 1964, 2008 and 2012, the last two titles coming either side of their triumph at the 2010 World Cup during the golden era of Xavi Hernandez, Xabi Alonso and Andres Iniesta. Whether this generation, led by the brilliant Yamal who was playing here a day after his 17th birthday, manage to repeat the achievements of that magnificent side remains to be seen, but theirs was a fitting victory.

Spain have been comfortably the best team over the last month in Germany and were not intimidated by the atmosphere at the Olympiastadion, where the majority of the crowd were given over to England's cause. England had

hoped to finally claim a first men's international title since their fabled victory at the 1966 World Cup, but fell just short in their first ever final on foreign soil.

After the agony of their defeat on penalties to Italy three years ago, they are the first side ever to lose back-to-back Euros finals.

Captain Harry Kane, meanwhile, is left at the age of 30 still looking for the first trophy of a career so rich in goals, this defeat coming after a season in which he also won nothing with Bayern Munich.

It was always likely that Spain would control this game, and England spent most of the first half chasing the ball.

Spain controlled the game from the off, but it took until stoppage time at the end of the first half for either team to manage a shot on target, with Phil Foden's effort from a Declan Rice free-kick delivery being easily saved by goalkeeper Unai Simon.

But it was just before that in which Rodri hurt himself, sliding

into teammate Aymeric Laporte on the follow-through as he blocked a Kane shot.

Spain's outstanding holding midfielder was unable to continue, and made way for Martin Zubimendi at the restart. It felt like the loss of such a presence in the middle of the park could completely throw Spain off course, and yet they wasted no time in opening the scoring.

England were braced for the danger to come from Spain's two wingers, and it was they who combined for the goal, as Yamal collected a Dani Carvajal pass and darted inside. He released a pass for Williams, who scored with a controlled, low first-time shot across Jordan Pickford and into the far corner.

England would now need to come from behind, but then again that was exactly what they had done in each of their three previous knockout games.

Southgate took off his talisman Kane on the hour mark and sent on Ollie Watkins, a repeat of the sub-

stitution that won the semi-final against the Netherlands.

Spain had chances to increase their lead and their fans began to greet every successful pass with an 'ole', as Southgate tried to turn the tide by sending on Palmer for Kobbie Mainoo.

Within three minutes England were level as Bukayo Saka's ball in from the right was laid off by Jude Bellingham for Palmer, who found the net from range with a low

first-time effort into the corner. However, Spain grabbed the winner with four minutes to go thanks to their own super-sub.

Oyarzabal played the ball out to Marc Cucurella on the left before racing into the middle to turn his teammate's low cross into the net, staying just inside in the process.

Spain then held on, although only after a vital clearance off the line from Dani Olmo to deny Marc Guehi at the death.

## Barshim wins International High Jump Meeting in Heilbronn



Qatar's high jump star Mutaz Essa Barshim won the International High Jump Meeting in Heilbronn, Germany, yesterday, topping the charts with 2.31m. Barshim aced the mark in three straight jumps starting with 2.24 and then 2.27. His aim to jump 2.35, however, failed after two attempts. The Olympic and former world champion is preparing for the forthcoming Paris 2024 Games. German Potye Tobias finished second at the meet at 2.29 while Bahrain's Thomas Donald was third in 2.27.

## Portuguese Almeida succeeds Asbaghi as Al Shamal coach

Al Shamal Club have announced official contract with Portuguese coach Nuno Almeida to take over the leadership of the team in the new season 2024-2025. Almeida, who has previously worked with Al Sadd as an assistant to his compatriot Jesualdo Ferreira, will now coach Al Shamal, succeeding Swedish coach Poya Asbaghi, who has moved to coach Al Rayyan, after his contract was terminated and the release clause was paid.

Al Shamal Club said on its official website that the Portuguese coach will begin his duties of training the team during the coming hours and before the team travels to the Netherlands for a preparatory camp ahead of the next season in the city of Tiel from July 14 to August 2. Al Shamal finished the last season in ninth place in the Stars League standings with (25) points, behind Qatar SC, who finished eighth on goal difference.

### Al Wakrah sign up Tunisian Laidouni

Al Wakrah have announced their official contract with Tunisian Aissa Laidouni, a former player with Germany's Union Berlin, to strengthen the team in the 2024-2025 season, with a contract extending for four seasons until 2028. The club confirmed through their official website that Laidouni signed the contract inside the Al Janoub Stadium, in the presence of the club's vice-president, Salman

al-Ghani, after passing the medical examination and agreeing to all the financial details and the duration of the contract.

Laidouni becomes the third professional to be signed by Al Wakrah during the summer, after Ricardo Gomez, the Cape Verdean striker coming from Al Shamal, as a replacement for the Algerian Mohamed Benyettou, and the Danish defender Alexander Scholz, coming from the Japanese Urawa Red Diamonds. With the development, Al Wakrah have completed the list of professional signings for the new season, as the Egyptian midfielder Hamdi Fathi, the young Jordanian Omar Salah, the Angolan Gelson Dala, and the Moroccan Ayoub Asal continue with the club. The 27-year-old Tunisian star arrived in Doha four days ago to finalise the contract details and then underwent the necessary medical examinations at the Aspetar Orthopedic Sports Medicine Hospital.

Meanwhile Al Duhail Club have announced contract with Hammam al-Amin, the left back of Al Gharafa Club, as part of a swap deal to strengthen the team's ranks in the new season 2024-2025. In return, Al Gharafa contracted Al Duhail trio of Mohamed Muntari, Rabeh Yahya and Asim Madibo within the framework of the same deal. Al Duhail were ranked sixth in the Qatar Stars League club standings last season 2023-2024.



CRICKET

# India's second-stringers complete 4-1 series win

'It was an excellent series. The hunger that we showed after the first loss was phenomenal'

AFP  
Harare

India's second-string touring team beat Zimbabwe by 42 runs in the fifth Twenty 20 international at the Harare Sports Club yesterday to complete a 4-1 series win.

India captain Shubman Gill said his team, which included only three of the squad that won the T20 World Cup last month, had adapted well to conditions after losing the opening match.

"It was an excellent series," said Gill.

"The hunger that we showed after the first loss was phenomenal. A lot of the players had long flights and they weren't used to conditions. The way they adapted was remarkable."

India made 167 for six after being sent in yesterday. Sanju Samson top-scored with 58 off 45 balls. Zimbabwe were bowled out for 125.

The final match got off to an extraordinary start when Yashasvi Jaiswal hit sixes off the first two deliveries.

Zimbabwe captain Sikandar Raza bowled a no-ball full toss which Jaiswal hit over the mid-wicket boundary. Jaiswal took ad-



Indian players celebrate winning the T20I series against Zimbabwe in Harare. India won the five-match series 4-1. Right: India's Sanju Samson during his innings of 58 against Zimbabwe in Harare yesterday. (@BCCI/AFP)



**One-day delay for India, Sri Lanka white-ball series**

The start of a six-match white-ball series between India and host Sri Lanka will be delayed by one day, the cricket board said yesterday, without giving a reason.

India arrives in the island as scheduled on July 22, but will play their first T20 on July 27, a day later than originally planned, Sri Lanka Cricket said.

Under the revised plan, the second T20 match will be on July 28 and the final in the three-match T20 series on July 30.

All three T20 matches will be at Pallekele.

The ODI matches will start on August 2 with the second to be played on August 4 and the final three days later.

All ODI matches have been scheduled at Premadasa Stadium in Colombo.

**BRIEF SCORES**

**India 167-6 in 20 overs** (S. Samson 58; B. Muzarabani 2-19). **Zimbabwe 125 in 18.3 overs** (D. Myers 34; M. Kumar 4-22, S. Dube 2-25).

**Result:** India won by 42 runs. **Series:** India won the five-match series 4-1. **Toss:** Zimbabwe

GOLF

# Garcia jolts Lahiri in LIV playoff, pockets \$4mn

Reuters  
Sotogrande, Spain

Sergio Garcia recorded his first LIV Golf individual victory - on home soil, to boot - by defeating India's Anirban Lahiri in a playoff at Andalucia yesterday in Sotogrande, Spain.

After falling short in a playoff on three occasions this season, Garcia finally broke through at Real Club Valderrama yesterday to secure his first professional win since the 2020 Sanderson Farms Championship.

Garcia recorded a 5-under-par 66 during the third round to chip into the four-stroke advantage of overnight leader Lahiri, who missed a 3-foot putt on No. 18 and limped to a 73 yesterday.

Garcia then rolled in a short putt in the playoff to secure the win and pocket \$4mn for his first-place finish.

Garcia was asked if winning in Spain on his favourite course served as one of the highlights of his career.

"Without a doubt," he said. "Not only that, but also Carlos winning. Alcaraz won today (at Wimbledon). Hopefully Spain wins tonight (versus England in the Euro 2024 Championship). It would be an unbelievable weekend."

"Actually I was talking to my wife, my manager, and I was like,



Fireballs GC's David Puig, Abraham Ancer, Sergio Garcia and Eugenio Chacarra pose with the trophy after winning the LIV Golf Andalucia at Real Club Valderrama, Cadiz, Spain, yesterday. (Reuters)

shooting 5-under and I'll see what happens. But played well, played well in the playoff. It's just a tough hole. But so happy."

Garcia, who ended up at 5-under 208 for the tournament, also saw Fireballs GC edge Crushers GC in a playoff to win the team competition. Abraham Ancer and David Puig defeated Crushers GC captain Bryson DeChambeau and Paul Casey on the first playoff hole for the \$3mn team prize.

Lahiri walked away with a

second-prize payday of \$2.25mn while England's Tyrell Hatton (69 yesterday) pocketed \$1.5mn after finishing in third place at 4-under. Patrick Reed (67) and South African Louis Oosthuizen (69) each ended up with \$900,000 after finishing at 3-under.

"Yeah, I felt pretty gutted for Lahiri," Hatton said. "It was a bit awkward on the 18th green with the crowd because they wanted Sergio to win. Yeah, I mean, I think everyone thought it would

be done there, and unfortunately for Lahiri and the Crushers, they ended up having to go into a playoff. That's definitely going to sting a lot for those guys. From my point of view, nice to have another good week going into the Open."

New Zealand's Danny Lee carded his second straight 72 yesterday to finish in a tie for sixth place at 2-under with Australian Cameron Smith (68) and Chilean Joaquin Niemann (69).

SPOTLIGHT

# Native son McIntyre wins Scottish Open crown

Reuters  
Dundee

Robert MacIntyre birdied the final hole to win his home country's tournament, shooting 3-under-par 67 yesterday in the Scottish Open at North Berwick.

MacIntyre, who was clearly a crowd favourite at The Renaissance Club, finished at 18-under 262. That gave him a one-shot victory over Australia's Adam Scott, who also posted 67 and finished earlier with a two-shot lead.

MacIntyre, who won last month's Canadian Open, had time to catch up. He used an eagle on the par-5 No. 16 to make a move and then finished it on No. 18. Scott was bidding for his first victory since the Genesis Invitational in February 2020. Scott,



Robert MacIntyre celebrates winning the Scottish Open in North Berwick, United Kingdom, yesterday. (@ScottishOpen)

who turns 44 tomorrow, had only one top-10 finish in his first 14 PGA Tour outings this year - and that came by tying for eighth place in February at the Phoenix Open.

The Scottish Open is the first of

two tournaments co-sanctioned by the PGA Tour and European Tour. France's Romain Langasque (64) was third at 15 under.

Sweden's Ludvig Aberg, the third-round leader, slumped to 73 and shared fourth place at 14

under. Northern Ireland's Rory McIlroy (68), the 2023 champion, and England's Aaron Rai (63), with the fourth-best score in the final round, finished at 14 under.

Also in the fourth-place mix were Collin Morikawa (69), Sahith Theegala (69) and South Korea's Sunjae Im (69).

Even with two bogeys and a double-bogey, Scott looked to be in solid position. He notched birdies on three of the five par-3s in the final round. England's Richard Mansell turned in 61 yesterday, rising to a tie for 10th at 13 under. He had a bogey at No. 2, then ripped off 10 birdies the rest of the way. He recorded 29 on the backside.

Four others - Wyndham Clark (62), Sweden's Alex Noren (65), France's Victor Perez (65) and Canada's Corey Conners (67) - also finished in that logjam at 13 under.

## OLYMPIC TORCH RELAY SEEKS TO WIN OVER SCEPTICAL PARISIANS



A torch bearer walks amid the crowd as part of the Olympic Torch Relay at Place Vendome in Paris ahead of the upcoming Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games. (AFP)

Paris: The torch relay ahead of the Paris Olympics reached the French capital for the first time yesterday, with organisers hoping to build enthusiasm for the Games among the city's sceptical residents.

The flame was first glimpsed during the traditional military parade held every year on the July 14 national holiday and then began its tour around the city from the Champs-Elysees.

World Cup-winning footballing great Thierry Henry was given the honour of the first leg on the capital's most famous avenue, with the torch then heading for landmarks including the parliament and Notre-Dame cathedral.

"It's not something you turn down, on our national day, on the Champs-Elysees, the Olympics in Paris," Henry told reporters of his star turn. "Just extraordinary."

The build up to the Paris Games has been marked by what chief organiser Tony Estanguet has called "Olympics-bashing", with many Parisians the sternest critics of the event and the disruption in the city.

In the wealthy districts, many families have already left for extended summer holidays, deliberately missing the July 26-August 11 extravaganza.

"I'm following them putting up the equipment, the stadiums, the impact that it will have on us, not really the torch," 22-year-old student Manon Skura told AFP at the Champs-Elysees.

The Games have been designed to take place at locations in the heart of the City of Light, with temporary stadiums built at tourist hotspots such as the Eiffel Tower, Invalides and Place de la Concorde.

Using the capital's famed streets and the river Seine as a backdrop will ensure "iconic" Olympics, organisers say, but it has also led to large parts of the centre being closed off and left traffic in gridlock.

The latest change to the capital's streets has been the appearance of around 44,000 metal barriers around the river Seine, where a spectacular opening ceremony is being planned on July 26.

"Some residents have shared with us their amazement, as well as the physical impossibility of leaving their homes," the mayor of the upmarket river-side 7th district of Paris, Jean-Pierre Lecoq, said last week.

Chief organiser Tony Estanguet told AFP that pushing back the pessimists had been one of his most difficult tasks.

"My role has been to protect our vision against everyone who criticises, those who don't believe in it, those who would take pleasure in seeing it not go well," he said during an interview released on Thursday.

The torch relay had been a huge success nationally, he said, with around five million people turning out to see it since May 8.

"We're delighted with how it has gone so far," he explained. "It has completely met the targets we gave ourselves."

Most importantly, the relay through 450 French towns and cities has taken place without any major security problems - testimony to the huge numbers of police officers deployed and careful planning.

Around 200 members of the security forces are positioned permanently around the torch, including an anti-terror SWAT team and anti-drone operatives.

A 26-year-old man was arrested and charged in Bordeaux in May over suspected threats to the procession as it travelled through the southwestern city.

Although polls generally find a slim majority of French people support the Olympic Games in the French capital, a survey on March 25 by the Viavoce group found that 57 percent of respondents felt "little" or "no" enthusiasm about them in Paris.



TOUR DE FRANCE

# Determined Pogacar leaves rivals far behind in stage 15

'I wasn't sure myself I'd be able to keep up the pace, but this year I've adopted a different approach'

AFP  
Plateau de Belle, France

**T**adej Pogacar extended his overall lead at the Tour de France to more than three minutes yesterday with a convincing second-straight stage win in the Pyrenees.

The Slovenian dropped the last of his rivals with five kilometres to go after five more Pyrenean peaks.

A valiant Jonas Vingegaard could only finish 1 minute and 8 seconds adrift in second, with Remco Evenepoel in third at 2min 51sec on the day.

As Pogacar crossed the line at the magnificent Plateau de Belle deep in the Pyrenees, resplendent in his yellow outfit, he had racked up a second straight iconic mountaintop triumph and a 14th Tour de France stage win aged just 25.

The overall leader expressed surprise at Vingegaard and his team.

"Jonas did most of the work," Pogacar said after Visma hogged the front of the peloton most of the day.

"With today being the 14th of July you might have expected a French win, but Visma went at it very strong."

"I wasn't sure myself I'd be able to keep up the pace, but this year I've adopted a different approach and it seems to be working," said Pogacar, munching on a candy bar.

The Team UAE leader's audacious bid for a Tour de France and Giro d'Italia double in the same season seemed closer after a third stage win on this year's Tour lifted him comfortably clear.

The last man to win such a double was Marco Pantani in 1998. On his way to his French triumph, the Italian also won a stage ended on the Plateau de Belle.

Pogacar yesterday ascended the mountain over four minutes faster than Pantani.

"That's a very good sign," Pogacar's team director Mauro Gianetti said.

There are two murderous moun-



UAE Team Emirates' Slovenian rider Tadej Pogacar douses himself with water as he celebrates after winning the 15th stage of the 111th edition of the Tour de France cycling race, 197.7km between Loudenvielle and Plateau de Belle, in the Pyrenees mountains, southwestern France, yesterday. (AFP)

tain slogs to go in the Alps, where the weather will likely be much hotter, which Pogacar dislikes.

The final-day lottery is a fearsome 34km individual time trial on the cornice between Monaco and Nice.

For now, the sun shines on the Slovenian as he leads the two-time defending champion Vingegaard by 3 minutes 9 seconds with the young Belgian Remco Evenepoel on his first Tour de France third at 5min 19sec.

Evenepoel also looked happy with his day's work after he arrived for his debut Tour de France stage when he was targeting the best young rider's jersey, which he looks good for now.

"I felt it was a mistake to try

and follow them when they went. It was a race between them two," he said. "I kept going at my steady rhythm. It was a good weekend for us."

Evenepoel is third overall, five minutes clear of Mikel Landa, and leads the young rider category by six minutes from Carlos Rodriguez.

Vingegaard and Evenepoel were both involved in a bone-breaking crash in March, and it remains to be seen how their stamina stands up in the third week.

After today's rest day the race rushes back to the Alps, where tradition holds that the Tour is won.

Pogacar agreed with that yesterday.

"Only when I cross the finish

line will I believe I have won," said the 2020 and 2021 champion.

The weekend crowds were well-behaved yesterday. A roadside spectator who threw crisps in the faces of Pogacar and Vingegaard on Saturday was charged with violent behaviour yesterday morning, after spending a night in the cells to sober up.

The Tour de France also stepped up protective measures to "limit health risks" with the reintroduction of the dreaded face masks due to a resurgence of Covid-19.

Today is a rest day.

"We go into Monday with a big smile," said Pogacar.

The fans watching roadside or in armchairs also likely left with a smile.

## Covid restrictions brought back at Tour de France



Lidl-Trek's Giulio Ciccone reacts with spectators during stage 15 of the 111th Tour de France Cycling yesterday. (Reuters)

**Plateau de Belle, France:** The Tour de France stepped up protective measures yesterday, to "limit health risks" in the face of a resurgence of Covid-19, which has affected several riders in recent days. Masks must now be worn by everyone, including organisers, guests and journalists, who may be "in contact with the riders and members of the cycling teams" before and after the stages, said organisers Amaury Sport Organisation (ASO).

Several riders, including Britain's Tom Pidcock and Spain's Juan Ayuso, team-mate of yellow jersey Tadej Pogacar, have already retired after testing positive.

Pogacar said before the start of the race that he had been affected by the virus in mid-June while 2018 winner Geraint Thomas is continuing the Tour for the time being despite "slight symptoms". Several riders such as Remco Evenepoel, who is third overall, have already started wearing masks again over the last few days with the Belgian explaining he was doing so because the journalists in front of him were not wearing them.

## Fan arrested at Tour de France after throwing crisps at riders

A roadside spectator who threw crisps in the faces of Tadej Pogacar and Jonas Vingegaard was arrested and held overnight in a police cell, according to French media reports.

The incident, which was caught on film and swiftly did the rounds on social media, happened in the heat of the stage 14 struggle on Saturday as the Slovenian Pogacar was breaking away from the defending champion.

The bare-torsoed spectator appeared to toss the potato chips into the faces of both riders with witnesses saying he was removed by police within five minutes of the incident.

"I do not understand people who go to a bike race to throw potato chips," said two-time title-holder Vingegaard at the finish. Professional riders union CPA told reporters yesterday they intend to sue the spectator. The guilty fan was allegedly inebriated to make a statement so police held him overnight in order that he could do so Sunday morning.

## Man United sign Dutch striker Zirkzee from Bologna



**London:** Manchester United signed Netherlands striker **Joshua Zirkzee** from Bologna in a deal worth a reported £36.5mn (\$46.3mn) yesterday. Zirkzee agreed a five-year contract with the Premier League club that includes the option of a further 12 months. United reportedly opted to pay slightly more than Zirkzee's £33.6mn release clause in order to spread the fee over a three-year period to help with Profit and Sustainability Rules. The 23-year-old rose to prominence in Serie A last season as he helped Bologna unexpectedly qualify for the Champions League. He scored 12 goals in 37 appearances for Bologna last term and was also part of the Netherlands squad that reached the Euro 2024 semi-finals before losing to England. United's Dutch boss Erik ten Hag spoke to Zirkzee to convince his compatriot to make the move to

Old Trafford. "I am a player who has always dedicated everything to winning. I'm ready for this next challenge, to go to another level in my career and win more trophies," said Zirkzee, who started his senior career with Bayern Munich and had loan spells with Parma and Anderlecht prior to joining Bologna. "Having had discussions with the manager and the leaders of the club I know how exciting the future is going to be here and I cannot wait to play my part in achieving success for Manchester United. "It is a privilege to join such an iconic club. "I have to take a short break now after being with the national team, but I'll be coming back ready to make an impact straight away." Zirkzee will compete with Rasmus Hojlund, Marcus Rashford, Alejandro Garnacho and Antony for a place in United's attack in the coming season.

## TENNIS

# Veteran Nadal ready to face rookie Borg in Bastad

AFP  
Paris

**I**n the world of fantasy tennis, pitting Nadal against Borg may seem everyday but in the real world it has never happened before.

Sadly, although obviously given the age difference, fans at the ATP event in Bastad next week will not be watching the two kings of Roland Garros - Rafael Nadal and Bjorn Borg with 20 French Open titles between them.

Instead Nadal will be up against Leo Borg, the 21-year-old son of the long-retired former world number one, now 68.

"It was crazy because we were looking when they did the draw and my name just popped up against Rafa," said Borg, currently ranked 467 in the world.

"I'm feeling very excited and it's going to be a great match," he added.

According to his ATP biography, Borg has never watched a single point of his father's storied career which included six French Open titles and five successive Wimbledon.

Instead he credits Nadal as one of the reasons he turned to tennis as a child, making Friday's practice session together all the more special.

"It was a very good practice and of course he's been my idol since I was very young, so it's going to be



Rafael Nadal trains in Bastad ahead of his match against Leo Borg. (@NordeaOpen)

a very special moment in my career," Borg said.

"But I'm looking forward to that and I'm feeling really, really excited."

Borg's only ATP Tour match win last year was in Bastad against Elias Ymer. The 22-time Grand Slam champion Nadal on the other hand, has competed in Bastad on three previous occasions, most recently in 2005, when he lifted the winner's trophy.

The 38-year-old, who was

knocked out of the first round at Roland Garros last month before choosing to skip Wimbledon (which was won by Carlos Alcaraz yesterday), will also be taking part in the doubles in tandem with Casper Ruud in preparation for the Olympics.

At Paris Games, Nadal will team up with fellow Alcaraz.

Defending champion and top seed Andrey Rublev begins his defence against Thiago Agustin Tirante or a qualifier.



Leo Borg, son of tennis icon Bjorn Borg, being interviewed ahead his match against Rafael Nadal.

## ATHLETICS

# Bol second woman to break 51sec in 400m hurdles

**W**orld champion Femke Bol became the second woman to break 51 seconds in the 400m hurdles yesterday at La Chaux-de-Fonds, Switzerland, 12 days ahead of the Olympic Games.

The 24-year-old Dutch athlete finished third in the last Olympics in Tokyo when world record hold-

er Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone took gold. Bol ran 50.95 yesterday smashing her own European record of 51.45. McLaughlin-Levrone has also been running fast after returning following a two-year break from hurdles.

She set a new world record in 50.65 at the US Olympic trials on 30 June.

It was the second time the American had slipped under 51sec and the fifth time she had broken the record.

After winning the European title in Rome in June, Bol said she was looking to a showdown with McLaughlin-Levrone, who missed the hurdles at the 2023 world championships.

"It's great she's there and it will always be exciting and always bring some nice nerves," said Bol of her American opponent. The first round of the women's 400m hurdles in Paris is on August 4.

"I hope it's going to be a nice battle!" Bol said. "I will try to be at my best form I can be and then we will see where it will bring us."



## FOCUS

# Alcaraz blows past Djokovic to retain Wimbledon title

SPANIARD SHOWED IMPRESSIVE POWER, SKILL AND COMPOSURE IN WINNING HIS 4TH GRAND SLAM TITLE



Britain's Catherine, Princess of Wales congratulates Spain's Carlos Alcaraz as he receives the winner's trophy after beating Serbia's Novak Djokovic in Wimbledon final yesterday. (AFP)



Winner Spain's Carlos Alcaraz (left) shakes hands with Britain's Princess Charlotte of Wales next to Britain's Catherine, Princess of Wales in the clubhouse. (AFP)

AFP  
London

Carlos Alcaraz overpowered seven-time champion Novak Djokovic in straight sets to retain his Wimbledon title yesterday in a brutal statement that the new era of men's tennis has arrived.

The Spanish third seed produced a performance combining awesome power with delicate touch to win 6-2, 6-2, 7-6 (7/4), collecting the fourth Grand Slam of his young career.

Alcaraz equals the Open Era record for most Grand Slams won at the age 21 or under, joining Boris Becker, Bjorn Borg and Mats Wilander. And he is just the sixth man to win the French Open and Wimbledon back to back.

Djokovic, 37, who had knee surgery just weeks ago, was aiming to win a 25th Grand Slam – which would have been a record in the men's and women's game. But he had no answers in the Centre Court sunshine as the electric Alcaraz pounded him from the back of the court and treated the crowd to an array of his trademark drop shots. "Honestly, it is a dream for me winning this trophy," said the Spaniard. "I did an interview when I was 11 and I said my dream is to win Wimbledon. For me this is the most beautiful tournament, the most beautiful court and the most beautiful trophy."

Alcaraz paid tribute to his beaten opponent, who only found his range in the third set. "Djokovic is an unbelievable fighter, I knew he was going to have his chances," said Alcaraz who had needed five sets to defeat the Serb in the 2023 final. "It was difficult but I tried to stay calm going into the tie-break and tried to play my best tennis. I was glad at the end I could find the solutions."

## BREAKTHROUGH

Alcaraz seized the initiative in a first game of breathtaking quality lasting 14 minutes, taking advantage of his fifth break point.

The Spaniard settled quickly into his routine on serve and went up a double break when Djokovic double-faulted in the fifth game.

The shell-shocked Serbian, playing in his 10th Wimbledon final, held serve to love to close the gap to 5-2 but dumped the ball into the net to hand the Spaniard the first set.

Alcaraz was immediately on the front foot in the second set, forcing a break in the first game

and fending off pressure on his own serve to take a 2-0 lead.

A Djokovic backhand into the net in the seventh game handed Alcaraz another break point and a double fault put the defending champion 5-2 up and on the cusp of a two-set lead.

The Centre Court crowd, including Catherine, Princess of Wales, looked on in disbelief as their hopes for a titanic tussle evaporated.

The under-par Djokovic fended off another of clutch of break points early in the third set to stay alive and showed signs that he was finding his rhythm. But Alcaraz broke for a 5-4 lead and moved to 40-0 on his own serve, only to suffer a wobble as Djokovic saved all three championship points, breaking for the first time in the match. He recovered his composure quickly and the set went to a tie-break. Djokovic went wide with a forehand to give Alcaraz a 5-3 lead and the Spaniard won the title with his fourth championship point, clambering up to the players' box to celebrate with his family and coaching team.

The champion struck 42 winners to Djokovic's 26 over the course of the match. Princess Catherine, patron of the All England Club, handed over the trophy.

Last month she tentatively returned to British public life for the first time since her diagnosis, attending a military parade in London to mark King Charles III's official birthday.

Djokovic, still without a title this year, will now turn his attention to the Paris Olympics as he seeks to win gold for the first time.

"It obviously was not the result I wanted but of course in the first couple of sets the level of tennis wasn't up to par from my side," he said.

"But credit to Carlos for playing elite tennis, especially from the back of the court, he had it all today."

## RECENT WIMBLEDON CHAMPIONS

2024:	Carlos Alcaraz (ESP)
2023:	Carlos Alcaraz (ESP)
2022:	Novak Djokovic (SRB)
2021:	Novak Djokovic (SRB)
2020:	Tournament cancelled
2019:	Novak Djokovic (SRB)
2018:	Novak Djokovic (SRB)
2017:	Roger Federer (SUI)
2016:	Andy Murray (GBR)
2015:	Novak Djokovic (SRB)
2014:	Novak Djokovic (SRB)

## SPOTLIGHT

# Alcaraz leads tennis into new golden age

AFP  
London

Carlos Alcaraz not only swept past Novak Djokovic in the Wimbledon final yesterday, the charismatic Spaniard's fourth Grand Slam triumph confirmed a generational shift in men's tennis.

He has won three of the past five majors and has joined Bjorn Borg, Boris Becker and Mats Wilander as the only men to claim four majors at the age of 21 or under.

That is an achievement that proved beyond even Djokovic, the retired Roger Federer and injury-plagued Rafael Nadal, the three men who collected 66 Grand Slams in a golden age that appeared to have reached its end with defeat for the 37-year-old Serb yesterday. Alcaraz's coach Juan Carlos Ferrero once predicted that his compatriot would win 30 Grand Slams.

He already has a comfortable head start. Djokovic may have 24 Slams but after capturing his first at the 2008 Australian Open as a 20-year-old he had to wait three more years for his second.

Federer, who finished his career with 20 Slams, managed the 2003 Wimbledon title as a 21-year-old.

Alcaraz's compatriot Nadal, the holder of 22 majors, had three at 21 – all at the French Open, in 2005, 2006 and 2007. Alcaraz's Grand Slam collection currently comprises the 2022 US Open, the 2023 and 2024 Wimbledon titles and last month's triumph at the French Open.

He is yet to lose a Slam final and is only the sixth man to win Roland Garros and Wimbledon back-to-back. His win in Paris last month made him the youngest man to claim majors on all three surfaces – clay, hard and grass – and before he turns 22 in May next year, he could move to six Slams.

Should he triumph for the first time in Australia he would depose Nadal as the youngest man to complete a career Grand Slam.

"I normally call Federer the greatest player of all time, and that has nothing to do with the statistics or the results," Wilander told eurosport.com.

"It has to do with what he meant for the sport, the expectations that people had. Carlos Alcaraz is going through the same thing." Much has

been made of the new rivalry of Alcaraz and Jannik Sinner, the beanpole Italian who took Djokovic's Australian Open title and his world number one ranking this year.

However, Alcaraz, as well as being 21 months younger, has a better record at the Slams than Sinner, who won his maiden Slam in January. Alcaraz enjoys a 5-4 head-to-head advantage over Sinner, including a five-set triumph in the semi-finals at Roland Garros this year.

"What he's doing, having won the title at Roland Garros, flipping the switch to prepare on grass and reach the final, is scandalous," said Ferrero.

Alcaraz, who hails from the small Murcian town of El Palmar in Spain's south-east, hit the giant-killing jackpot at Madrid in 2022 when he became the only man to defeat both Nadal and Djokovic at the same clay-court event.

"Carlos's intensity and speed is something you rarely see," said Rafael Nadal's uncle and former coach Toni Nadal. "His game follows the same path as Rafa – he never gives up until the last ball and has that characteristic intensity."

Nadal, who will play with Al-

caraz in the doubles at the Paris Olympics, has acted as his mentor and pleaded with fans not to put pressure on his young compatriot by making bold comparisons.

"I forgot what I was like at 19," said Nadal, now 38. "The only thing we can do is enjoy the career of an extraordinary player like Carlos."

"If he manages to win 25 Grand Slams, it will be fantastic for him and for our country. But let him enjoy his career."

Despite Nadal's reservations, making comparisons is unavoidable. Nadal won the first of his 92 titles at Spot at the age of 18 in 2004. Alcaraz was also 18 when he captured his maiden ATP trophy at Umag in 2021. Both men are fiercely protective of their private lives, enjoy passionate crowd support. "I know that I am a very competitive kid. I compete whenever I play anything – golf, petanca," said Alcaraz. "I don't like to lose."

Alcaraz's raw potential as a teenager quickly attracted sponsors, with marquee brands such as Nike and Rolex rushing to sign up Nadal's heir apparent. His win yesterday has taken his career earnings to \$35mn already.



Wimbledon champion Spain's Carlos Alcaraz with runners-up Serbia's Novak Djokovic yesterday. (AFP)