

# Alcaraz reaches final, Sinner to face Djokovic in semis

**No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka faces No. 2 Coco Gauff in the women's final**

**AFP, PARIS:** Reigning champion Carlos Alcaraz reached the French Open final as Lorenzo Musetti retired injured from their last-four tie on Friday, ahead of World No. 1 Jannik Sinner clash with 24-time Grand Slam champion Novak Djokovic.

World No. 2 Alcaraz was leading 4-6, 7-6 (7/3), 6-0, 2-0 in the fourth set under the Court Philippe Chatrier roof when Italian Musetti called it quits due to an apparent thigh injury.

Alcaraz will aim to win his fifth Grand Slam title against either Sinner or Djokovic, who meet in the second semi-final, on Sunday.



He beat Sinner in five sets in last year's semi-finals, but has lost both of his meetings with Djokovic at Roland Garros -- in the 2023 semis and last year's Paris Olympics final.

Djokovic continues his bid for a record-breaking 25th Grand Slam title in the second semi-final against Sinner, who is looking to reach his first French Open final.

Sinner has stormed into

AFP



Spain's Carlos Alcaraz reacts to a point as he plays against Italy's Lorenzo Musetti during their men's singles semi-final match on Day 13 of the French Open tennis tournament on Court Philippe-Chatrier at the Roland-Garros Complex in Paris on Friday

the last four without dropping a set while Djokovic impressed in a four-set win over last year's runner-up

Alexander Zverev in the quarter-finals.

Top seed and three-time Grand Slam winner

Sinner takes on the most successful man ever to play the sport in a rivalry that connects one genera-

tion to the next.

Sinner, 23, and Djokovic, 38, have split their eight meetings, but the Italian has won four of the last five matches to signal the undeniable power shift in men's tennis.

Aryna Sabalenka ended Iga Swiatek's French Open reign with a devastating third-set performance on Thursday to tee up a Roland Garros final against Coco Gauff after the American knocked out French hero Lois Boisson.

The Belarusian snapped Swiatek's French Open winning streak at 26 matches with a 7-6 (7/1), 4-6, 6-0 success to reach her first final in the clay-court Grand Slam.

World No. 2 Gauff ended the dream run of 361st-ranked wildcard Boisson with a 6-1, 6-2 victory in the second semi-final on Court Philippe Chatrier.

Gauff and Sabalenka are level at 5-5 in their head-to-head record and have won one each of their two meetings at major tournaments.

Sabalenka will be the favourite to lift the trophy when she takes on Gauff, to whom she lost in the 2023 US Open final.

Swiatek, who was bidding to become the first woman to win four successive French Opens in over a century, will drop to seventh in the world rankings next week.

## KL Rahul warms up for Test series with fine ton

**PTI, NORTHAMPTON:** KL Rahul gained the requisite confidence and much-needed game time ahead of the upcoming five-Test series with a classy hundred for India A against a quality England Lions

attack that featured seasoned pacer Chris Woakes. Rahul's flawless 116 off 168 balls — his 19th first-class hundred — was complemented by Dhruv Jurel's 52 off 87 balls, his third successive half-century, as India A reached 319 for 7 in 83 overs on a rain-hit opening day.

At stumps, Tanush Kotian (5) and Anshul Kamboj (1) were at the crease.

The Lions' bowling attack, with comeback man Chris Woakes (3/50 in 17 overs) hitting the straps straightaway in a fine opening spell in conditions aiding seam and swing, posed its own set of challenges, but Rahul had an answer to every probing question thrown at him by the English speedster.

The other English seamer Josh Tongue, who primarily bowls inswing with an open chested action, was handled with aplomb by the Bengaluru man, who hit 15 fours and a straight six down the ground off spinner Farhan Ahmed's bowling. Rahul opening the innings was a clear indication that he, along with Yashasvi Jaiswal, is likely to face the new ball in the opening Test at Leeds from June 20.

Brief scores: India A 1st Innings 319 for 7 in 83 overs (KL Rahul 116, Dhruv Jurel 52, Chris Woakes 3/50) vs England Lions.

## shorttakes

### Gukesh overcomes Wei Yi challenge, presses hard for Norway Chess title with Carlsen

**STAVANGER (Norway):** Reigning world champion D Gukesh crossed another hurdle, beating China's Wei Yi in the ninth and penultimate round to earn three full points and emerge as a top contender, along with Norwegian star Magnus Carlsen, for the prestigious Norway Chess title here. With one round to go, Gukesh is placed second on 14.5 points, while five-time world champion Carlsen -- who fought back from a losing position to defeat American Grandmaster Fabiano Caruana and earn full points -- is just half-a-point ahead in the six-player double round-robin tournament on Thursday. Gukesh will take on American Grandmaster Fabiano Caruana, while Carlsen will play Arjun Erigaisi in the deciding 10th round, with both hoping to prove a point in one-upmanship by claiming the title and a USD 69,000 prize purse. Results (Round 9): Open: Hikaru Nakamura (USA 13 points) bt Arjun Erigaisi (Ind11.5) in Armageddon tie-break; D Gukesh (Ind 14.5) bt Wei Yi (Chn 8); Magnus Carlsen (Nor 15) bt Fabiano Caruana (USA 12.5). Women: R Vaishali (Ind 9.5) lost to Sara Khadem (Esp 9); Ju Wenjun (Chn 12.5) lost to Anna Muzychuk (Ukr 15.5); Lei Tingjie (Chn 13) bt Koneru Humpy (Ind 13.5).

### Satwik-Chirag bow out of Indonesia Open

**JAKARTA:** India's top men's doubles pair Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty bowed out of the Indonesia Open Super 1000 tournament after losing to Malaysia's Man Wei Chong and Tee Kai Wun in the quarterfinals here on Friday. The former world No. 1 Indian duo, who won the title in 2023, went down 19-21, 16-21 in a 43-minute contest against the flat-hitting Malaysian pair, who notched up their first win over the Indians in five meetings. Satwik-Chirag's loss ended the Indian challenge in the competition. The Indians looked rusty as they struggled with their serve and return against Man and Wee, who won the Malaysia Masters last month and Indonesia Masters in January. The Indians also lacked the discipline in defence and anticipation and were often put in uncomfortable positions and rushed errors throughout the match by the Malaysians.

### Olympic champ Khelif skips Eindhoven event after World Boxing introduces sex testing

**EINDHOVEN (Netherlands):** Olympic champion Imane Khelif is skipping the Eindhoven Box Cup in the Netherlands less than a week after World Boxing announced mandatory sex testing for all athletes. The Algerian boxer, who won gold at the Paris Games last summer amid scrutiny over her eligibility, did not register in time for the event before applications closed on Thursday. "The decision of Imane's exclusion is not ours. We regret it," tournament media director Dirk Renders told The Associated Press. The 26-year-old Khelif had intended to return to international competition at the Eindhoven tournament this weekend before World Boxing announced its new sex testing policy last Friday. The governing body specifically mentioned Khelif, saying she'd have to be screened to be approved to fight at any upcoming events, including the Eindhoven Box Cup. Eindhoven mayor Jeroen Dijsselbloem criticized World Boxing's decision.

### India eying maximum points from Euro leg of Pro League to secure direct WC berth

**AMSTELVEEN (Netherlands):** The Indian men's hockey team will look to produce its best and earn maximum points from the European leg of the FIH Pro League in a bid to secure a direct qualification to next year's World Cup. The next World Cup will be jointly hosted by Belgium and Netherlands. The Harmanpreet Singh-led side is currently placed third in the FIH Pro League standings with 15 points from eight matches, behind Belgium (16) and England (16). Good results in the upcoming eight matches of the European leg can propel India to the top, which means a direct berth in the World Cup. India played the home leg of the ongoing Pro League in Bhubaneswar earlier this year, where they raked up 15 points with five wins in eight games. In the European leg, first up for India is hosts Netherlands here on Saturday followed by the return leg match on June 9. The Indians will next play Argentina here on June 11 and 12, followed by matches against Australia (June 14, 15) and Belgium (June 21, 22). India will be led by talismanic dragflicker Harmanpreet, while midfield mainstay Hardik Singh will be his deputy. The Indians will take on Belgium at their home turf in Antwerp.

### Australia struggle to fill gaping opener hole left by Warner

**SYDNEY:** Filling the giant shoes of David Warner continues to be a headache for Australia 17 months after the bombastic Test opener retired, with Marnus Labuschagne shaping as the latest contender in the World Test Championship final against South Africa. Warner pulled stumps on the red-ball game in January last year after 112 Tests and 8,786 runs, long accompanied at the top of the order by Usman Khawaja. Khawaja will open again in the blockbuster clash at Lord's starting on June 11, potentially with a fifth different partner since Warner called it quits. Steve Smith initially plugged the hole, but only lasted four Tests before dropping back down to four and giving Nathan McSweeney a chance. McSweeney struggled against the Jasprit Bumrah-led India late last year, with gung-ho teenager Sam Konstas then thrust into the limelight in spectacular fashion during the home series. He scored a blazing 60 with a slew of unorthodox shots on debut, but was less effective in the next Test and was jettisoned in favour of Travis Head for their tour of Sri Lanka this year. With Head set to revert to five, the chatter is that it's now a toss-up between Konstas, who has been working on technical aspects of his batting, and Labuschagne to open against the Proteas.

### Arsenal defender Gabriel signs new contract extension

**LONDON:** Arsenal center back Gabriel Magalhaes signed a new long-term deal Friday that will reportedly keep the Brazil international at the club until 2029. Gabriel missed the last two months of the season with a hamstring injury but has formed a formidable partnership with France international William Saliba to anchor an Arsenal defense that has been the best in the Premier League. "I arrived here as a young player and after almost five years I'm so happy and I've learned a lot," Gabriel said. "I'm so proud of myself, it's an amazing journey, and I'm so happy to continue it."

### Raphinha wins Liga player of the year as Yamal gets youth prize

**BARCELONA:** Brazil winger Raphinha has been voted player of the year of Spain's La Liga after Barcelona won the domestic double. The 28-year-old, in his third season at Barca having joined from Leeds, notched 18 goals and nine assists. The hard working right-sided winger is a skilled dribbler and assiduous back-tracker. Barcelona's teenage striker Lamine Yamal won the under-23 award. Raphinha was on the verge of leaving the Catalan club in the close season but instead new coach Hansi Flick named him captain and offered him an extension until July 2028.

## Chawla retires from all forms of cricket

**PTI, NEW DELHI:** Veteran leg-spinner Piyush Chawla, who was part of India's two World Cup-winning campaigns, on Friday announced his retirement from all forms of cricket after a career spanning more than two decades to undertake a "new journey" that he did not specify.

The 36-year-old made the announcement via an Instagram post.

"After more than two decades on the field, the time has come to bid adieu to the beautiful game," Chawla wrote.

"Though I step away from the crease, cricket will always live within me. I now look forward to embarking on a new journey, carrying with me the spirit and lessons of this beautiful game," he said.

Chawla was a member of India's T20 and ODI World Cup-winning squads in 2007 and 2011 respective-



ly. He represented India in three Tests, 25 ODIs, and seven T20Is, taking 43 wickets across the three formats of the game.

"From representing India at the highest level to being part of the victorious 2007 T20 World Cup and 2011 ODI World Cup squads, every moment in this incredible journey has been nothing short of a blessing. These memories will forever remain etched in my heart," Chawla said in the post.

He thanked his coaches, teams and IPL franchises for playing a part in shaping his career, and described his time in the popular T20 league as "a special chapter in my career."

"A heartfelt thank you to the IPL franchises who placed their trust in me Punjab Kings, Kolkata Knight Riders, Chennai Super Kings, and Mumbai Indians.

"The Indian Premier League has been a truly special chapter in my career, and I have cherished every moment playing in it. I owe my deepest gratitude to my coaches Shri K.K. Gautam and Late Shri Pankaj Saraswat-for nurturing and shaping me into the cricketer I became," he said.

"Today is a deeply emotional day for me as I officially announce my retirement from all forms of international and domestic cricket," he added.

**AP, WELLINGTON (New Zealand):** Rob Walter has been hired to coach the New Zealand men's cricket team in all three formats as a replacement for Gary Stead.

Walter coached South Africa's teams in the one-day and Twenty20 formats from January 2023 until April this year. Before then he coached New Zealand's Otago province for five years and at the Central Districts association.

He guided South Africa to the semifinals of the 2023 World Cup and the Champions Trophy earlier this year in the ODI format and to the final of the T20 World Cup last year.

Stead was New Zealand head coach in all three formats from 2018 until earlier this week, when New Zealand Cricket announced it was seeking a replacement.

Stead announced in March he was stepping down from his roles in the



limited-overs formats but intended to remain as test coach. New Zealand Cricket said it preferred a coach to lead the Black Caps in all three formats.

It's an amazing opportunity to work with such a talented group of players and support staff through a period of time in which so many global events, as well as massive bilateral series will be contested, Walter said. I just can't wait to get started. It's exciting, it's

challenging and the opportunity is enormous.

The 49-year-old Walter was high on New Zealand Cricket's list of preferred candidates from the moment it decided to pursue another all-formats coach, ruling out Stead who guided the Black Caps to the inaugural World Test Championship.

Rob is a world-class coach with an outstanding pedigree, NZC chief executive Scott Weenink said. His success in New Zealand's domestic game combined with his recent achievements on the global stage with South Africa makes him the ideal candidate to lead the Black Caps.

He'll take over in time for New Zealand's tour to Zimbabwe, which starts with a T20 tri-series against the hosts and South Africa before a two-Test series against Zimbabwe.

## India, Australia look after Test players but not West Indies: Russell

**PTI, DURHAM:** West Indies allrounder Andre Russell has "no regrets" about being a sought-after T20 freelancer, as he genuinely believes that Test cricket was never meant to be a part of his cricketing journey.

"Honestly? No. I believe in Test cricket, but at the end of the day, I'm a professional. It wasn't part of my journey. I have no regrets because it wasn't me that turned my back," Russell told "The Guardian" ahead of West Indies' T20I series against England.

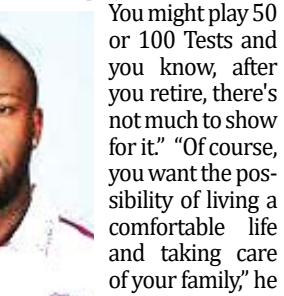
Recently Virat Kohli termed IPL victory for RCB as an achievement which is "five levels below Test cricket" but Russell believes that perspective depends from where one is coming.

"I think when you're from India, Australia, Eng-

land, those places where they look after their Test players, it's totally different to being from West Indies," Russell said.

"Those guys (India, Australia and England) get lucrative central contracts to play Test cricket and play on the biggest stages, of course they want to play. West Indians?

You might play 50 or 100 Tests and you know, after you retire, there's not much to show for it." "Of course, you want the possibility of living a comfortable life and taking care of your family," he didn't discount the financial advantages of plying trade in T20 leagues. Talking about Test cricket, the 37-year-old Jamaican was clear that he never gave up on traditional format but people in power typecasted him into a white-ball specialist.



## 'Playing WTC final at Lord's is huge for SA'

**PTI, LONDON:** AB de Villiers feels South Africa playing World Test Championship final against Australia at Lord's is a massive moment in the country's cricketing history.

South Africa and Australia will play in the final of the third edition of the World Test Championship final from June 11 to 15. Australia are the defending champions.

"This is a massive moment for South African cricket—a final at Lord's. The entire nation will be behind our team, and hopefully, we can cross the line," De Villiers told Star Sports.

"I'm excited for the challenge. It's a well-balanced side, and I'm quietly confident we can upset Australia—I say 'upset' because they're clearly the favourites for this ICC World Test Championship Final."

However, De Villiers termed Australia as a "well-oiled machine".

## Kohli may come out of Test retirement if India lose: Clarke

**PTI, NEW DELHI:** Former Australia captain Michael Clarke believes Virat Kohli, who considers Test cricket as the pinnacle, could come out of retirement if India suffer a heavy defeat in the upcoming five-Test series in England and is requested to return by the team management and selectors.

Kohli had announced his retirement from the longest format last month after featuring in 123 Tests for India, scoring 9,230 runs at an average of 46.85, including 30 centuries.

"I believe this. If India go to England and get flogged, if they lose the series 5-0 for example, I think the fans will want Virat Kohli to come out of retirement and play Test cricket again," Clarke told the Beyond23 Cricket podcast on Friday.

"And I honestly, I think if he was asked by the captain, selectors and supported by fans, if they get beaten big time in England, I think he'll come. He still

loves Test cricket.

"I think his words, I think those words, like you could hear his passion for Test cricket is real."

Following his long-cherished dream of winning the IPL with Royal Challengers Bengaluru, Kohli had said the title triumph still ranked "five levels under Test cricket."

### ENGLAND TOUR

Both Kohli and Rohit Sharma had announced their retirement from Tests ahead of the England series, which begins with the opening match in Leeds on June 20.

"Rohit Sharma retires from Test cricket. I think tactically any team will miss his captaincy. I think tactically he was a brilliant captain. Virat Kohli walks away from test cricket. Devastating! What an absolute champion he's been and test cricket will miss him," Clarke said.

Shubman Gill has been named captain following Rohit's retirement.