

shorttakes

Shuttlers Tanvi, Ayush in US Open badminton final
IOWA (US): Talented Indian shuttlers Tanvi Sharma and Ayush Shetty moved into the finals of the US Open badminton tournament in contrasting fashion as they continued their impressive run in the Super 300 Tournament here. The 16-year-old unseeded Indian Tanvi defeated Ukraine's seventh-seeded Polina Buhrova 21-14, 21-16 in the women's singles semifinal in just 34 minutes to make it to the title round. This was the teenager's second career victory against the Ukrainian in as many outings. Tanvi will take on top seed Beiwen Zhang of the United States in the final. Ayush, seeded fourth here, created a big upset by overcoming the challenge of top seed and world No. 6 Chou Tien Chen of Chinese-Taipei 21-23, 21-15, 21-14 in a gruelling men's singles contest that lasted more than an hour. Ayush will face another tough opponent in third-seed Brian Yang on Canada. Yang overcame the challenge of Chinese-Taipei's Liao Jhuo-Fu 21-10, 21-12. In the quarterfinals, Tanvi had defeated her higher-ranked Malaysian opponent Karupathevan Letshanaa 21-13, 21-16, while Ayush had also dished out an excellent performance to get the better of junior world champion Chinese Taipei's Kuo Kuan Lin 22-20, 21-9.

Maharaj becomes first South Africa spinner to take 200 Test wickets
BULAWAYO: Stand-in skipper Keshav Maharaj on Sunday became the first spinner from South Africa to take 200 Test wickets, reaching the landmark on the second day of the first match against Zimbabwe here. The 35-year-old, who has been playing Test cricket for the past nine years, has gradually grown into the team's lead spinner in the five-day format. Maharaj achieved the feat when he dismissed his Zimbabwe counterpart Craig Ervine in the 34th over, stunned by Kyle Verreynne. Maharaj has been South Africa's highest wicket-taker among slow bowlers since going past former off-spinner Hugh Tayfield's tally of 170 scalps. Left-arm spinner Maharaj now has 202 wickets from 59 Tests, with 11 five-wicket hauls and one 10-wicket match haul. Maharaj also has 631 wickets from 166 matches in First-Class cricket. Zimbabwe were all out for 251 in response to South Africa's first-innings total of 418 for nine declared, with Maharaj returning figures of 3/70 in 16.4 overs and Wiaan Mulder finishing with 4/50 in 16 overs.

Club World Cup: Chelsea overcome weather delay, set up Palmeiras quarter-final
PHILADELPHIA: Chelsea beat Benfica in a game which went on for close to five hours at the Club World Cup on Saturday to set up a quarter-final showdown with Brazilian side Palmeiras at the tournament in the United States. The London club were grateful to extra-time goals by Christopher Nkunku, Pedro Neto and Kiernan Dewsbury-Hall to give them a 4-1 victory over Benfica. Their late burst of scoring settled a last-16 tie which took four hours, 39 minutes to complete at Charlotte's Bank of America Stadium in North Carolina after a near two-hour weather delay. Chelsea manager Enzo Maresca was left satisfied with his team's victory but slammed the delay that turned the tie into a near five-hour marathon. Results: Palmeiras 1 (Paulinho 100) Botafogo 0 - after extra time; Benfica 1 (Di Maria 90+5-pen) Chelsea 4 (James 64, Nkunku 108, Neto 114, Dewsbury-Hall 117) - after extra time.

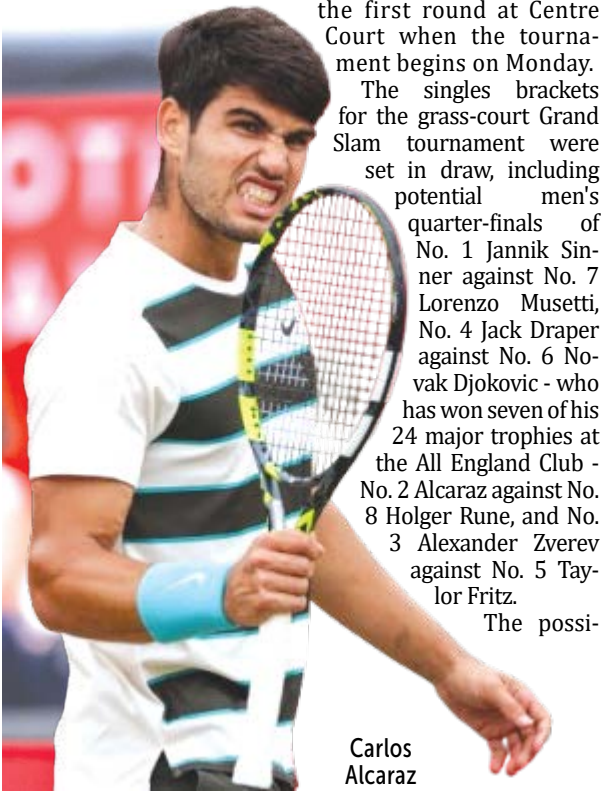
England fined for slow over-rate in first WT20I against India
NOTTINGHAM: England have been fined 10 per cent of their match fee for maintaining a slow over-rate against India in the first Women's T20 International which the visitors won by 97 runs here. Helen Pack of the Emirates ICC International Panel of Match Referees imposed the sanction as England were ruled to be two overs short of the target after time allowances were taken into consideration. England captain Nat Sciver-Brunt pleaded guilty to the offence and accepted the proposed sanction, so there was no need for a formal hearing. On-field umpires Jacqueline Williams and James Middlebrook, third umpire Sue Redfern and fourth umpire Anna Harris levelled the charge. Invited to bat, India piled on 210 for five, with stand-in skipper Smriti Mandhana hitting 112 off 62 balls, her maiden T20I hundred. Chasing 211, England were all out for 113 in 14.5 overs, as India took 1-0 lead in the five-match T20I series. The second match will be played at Bristol on Tuesday.

Daren Sammy fined for criticising TV umpire during first Test
BRIDGETOWN (Barbados): West Indies coach Daren Sammy has been fined 15 per cent of his match fee after publicly criticizing TV umpire Adrian Holdstock during the first test against Australia in Barbados. The sanction followed Sammy's post-play press conference on day two, where he called for consistency in Decision Review System (DRS) rulings after a series of contentious calls at Kensington Oval. Sammy expressed frustration that his side were on the "sharp end of the stick" for two caught behind decisions that had been referred to Holdstock which saw Australia batter Travis Head given not out, while West Indies wicketkeeper batter Shai Hop was adjudicated out. The 41-year-old, in his first test as West Indies' test team coach, pleaded guilty to breaching the ICC's code of conduct for "public criticism of, or inappropriate comment" toward a match official. Fast bowler Jayden Seales was also fined 15% of his fee for his send-off to Australian skipper Pat Cummins on day one. Australia won the first test by 159 runs to take a 1-0 series lead. The second test begins Thursday in Grenada.

Zimbabwean batsman Bennett ruled out of Test with concussion
ZIMBABWE: Zimbabwe opening batsman Brian Bennett was ruled out of the rest of the first Test against South Africa on Sunday after being diagnosed with mild concussion. Bennett, who scored 139 on his previous Test appearance against England in Nottingham last month, had scored 19 off 24 balls on the second day of the match when he attempted a hook against fast bowler Kwena Maphaka and was struck on the helmet. After lengthy treatment on the field the 21-year-old resumed batting and faced three more deliveries in the next over from Codi Yusuf before walking off the field.

England defend Under-21 Euro crown with dramatic win over Germany
BRATISLAVA: England successfully defended their Under-21 European Championship title as Jonathan Rowe's header gave Lee Carlsley's team a 3-2 extra-time victory over Germany in the final on Saturday. The reigning champions took an early two-goal lead but were pegged back as Germany took the match to an added half-hour. Marseille winger Rowe provided the crucial moment in the 92nd minute as England secured their fourth Under-21 Euro title, moving one ahead of Germany and just one behind joint record five-time winners Spain and Italy.

Alcaraz faces Fognini, Gauff meets Yastremska in first round



Carlos Alcaraz

POTENTIAL MEN'S QUARTER-FINALS
No. 1 Jannik Sinner against No. 7 Lorenzo Musetti, No. 4 Jack Draper against No. 6 Novak Djokovic - who has won seven of his 24 major trophies at the All England Club - No. 2 Alcaraz against No. 8 Holger Rune and No. 3 Alexander Zverev against No. 5 Taylor Fritz

AP, LONDON: Carlos Alcaraz will begin his bid for a third consecutive Wimbledon championship and put his career-best 18-match winning streak on the line by facing the volatile Fabio Fognini in

ble women's quarter-finals are No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka vs. No. 6 Madison Keys, and No. 4 Jasmine Paolini vs. No. 5 Zheng Qinwen in the top half, and No. 2 Coco Gauff vs. No. 8 Iga Swiatek or 2022 champion Elena

Rybakina, and No. 3 Jessica Pegula vs. No. 7 Mirra Andreeva in the bottom half. In addition to Sinner, Djokovic, Draper and 2024 semi-finalist Musetti, the top half has No. 10 Ben Shelton and No. 13 Tommy Paul of the United States, along with Alexander Bublik, an unpredictable and underarm-serving player from Kazakhstan. He reached his first major quarterfinal at the French Open by defeating Draper - his potential third-round opponent next week - and then won a grass-court title at Halle, Germany, for the second time, beating Sinner along the way.

Alcaraz and Sinner could only meet at Wimbledon in the July 13 final, which would be re-match of their epic showdown for the French Open title won by the 22-year-old Alcaraz for his fifth major trophy.

In Fognini, Alcaraz faces a 38-year-old veteran who has been ranked as high as No. 9 and was a French Open quarterfinalist in 2011 but is currently No. 130 and never has been past the third round in 14 previous ap-

pearances at Wimbledon.

Fognini, who is married to 2015 U.S. Open champion Flavia Pennetta, has described himself as a hot-head and is known for mid-match flareups, including at Wimbledon, where he was fined \$3,000 in 2019 for saying he wished "a bomb would explode at the club" during a third-round loss and a then-record \$27,500 in 2014 for a series of outbursts during a first-round victory. He was put on a two-year probation by the Grand Slam Board in 2017 after insulting a female chair umpire at the U.S. Open and getting kicked out of that tournament.

Gauff, coming off her second major title at the French Open, will open Wimbledon on Tuesday against Dayana Yastremska, a 2024 Australian Open semi-finalist. Win that, and Gauff might face former No. 1 and two-time Australian Open champion Victoria Azarenka in the second round, while a rematch with No. 28 seed Sofia Kenin could await in the third. Kenin eliminated Gauff in the opening round at Wimbledon two

years ago.

Sabalenka, the runner-up to Gauff at Roland-Garros three weeks ago, finds herself in an intriguing quarter of the women's bracket. Sabalenka, who owns three Slam titles, begins against Canadian qualifier Carson Branstine, and could meet 2024 Wimbledon quarter-finalist Lulu Sun in the second round and 2021 U.S. Open champion Emma Raducanu or 2023 Wimbledon champion Marketa Vondrousova in the third.

Defending champion Barbora Krejickova begins Tuesday's Cen-

POSSIBLE WOMEN'S QUARTER-FINALS
No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka vs. No. 6 Madison Keys and No. 4 Jasmine Paolini vs. No. 5 Zheng Qinwen in the top half and No. 2 Coco Gauff vs. No. 8 Iga Swiatek or 2022 champion Elena Rybakina and No. 3 Jessica Pegula vs. No. 7 Mirra Andreeva in the bottom half

tre Court schedule against Alexandra Eala, who is the first woman representing the Philippines to be ranked inside the top 100 and upset Swiatek on the way to reaching the Miami Open semifinals in March.

In their section of the draw, 2011 and 2014 Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova, who announced she will retire later this year, takes on No. 10 Emma Navarro in the first round.

New-look Wimbledon prepares for life without line judges

AFP, LONDON: Wimbledon is guaranteed to be picture-perfect when it gets under way next week but the courts will never look the same again after the demise of line judges.

For the first time in the tournament's storied 148-year history, the men and women stationed at the back of the courts, calling "out" and "fault", will be missing. The Grand Slam announced in October that it was scrapping its smartly dressed officials in favour of electronic line-calling (ELC) from 2025, following the general trend in tennis.

The Australian Open and the US Open have already gone down this route, leaving the French Open as the only one of the four Grand Slams still to use humans in the role.

Wimbledon is cherished for its traditions, from the white kit worn by players to the strawberries and cream served to fans and

the sumptuous flowers that colour the grounds.

But the All England Club must balance that unique heritage with innovation. Tournament Director Jamie Baker emphasised the point in an interview with AFP this week. "We are very much plugged into the wider tennis ecosystem, the wider tennis industry, on everything that we do," said the former professional player.

"And this was something that we've been talking about for many years, because we could see the way that it was going.

"And as you would imagine, for us, balancing the tradition with innovation is really a thing that we look at in pretty much every single decision we make."

Baker emphasises that Wimbledon is careful to protect its heritage, including the "untouchable" white clothing rule, which he says is observed more strictly now

The decision to switch to live electronic line-calling (ELC), which builds on existing ball-tracking and line-calling technology, was made following extensive testing at last year's Championships. Since 2007, Hawk-Eye has assisted officials at Wimbledon on certain courts, with players able to challenge a number of calls. Its introduction added a new element for spectators

than two decades ago.

But the former British number two said the integrity of the competition was the most important element.

"First and foremost for us here, we've got to get the competition aspects right, he said. "That's such an important part of everything. "And player expectation now,

across the professional game at the highest level, is that the lines will be called in this way."

Baker believes the people who will least notice the change are the players, who are so used to the technology. The decision to switch to live ELC, which builds on existing ball-tracking and line-calling technology, was made following extensive testing at last year's Championships.

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Its introduction added a new element for spectators.

There was a buzz of excitement when the umpire signalled a video replay of a line judge's decision, followed by rhythmic clapping as it was shown on the big screen.

More than 450 cameras have been installed at Wimbledon and at the qualifying tournament in

nearby Roehampton this year, with machines making the decisions previously made by humans.

But around 80 former officials will be employed as match assistants, with two on each court offering support to the umpire, while they will also provide back-up should the electronic system fail. So does the demise of line judges remove a bit of Wimbledon's magic?

Baker thinks the opposite. "I think that's a massive positive move for us in terms of the actual look and feel of the court and the recognisable Wimbledon brand, which is green grass courts, players wearing white tennis clothes -- it's instantly recognisable," he said.

"So the more emphasis that's on that, the better. But also, just if you get back to the very nature of the sport itself, it's gladiatorial, it's one-on-one, everything that happens on the stage should be focused around that."

T20 World Cup triumph: Rohit recalls emotional build-up to final, Surya's catch and Kohli's knock

Sunday marked the first anniversary of the memorable win in Barbados that broke 13 years of World Cup title drought for India

PTI, NEW DELHI: Revisiting India's T20 World Cup triumph under his captaincy, Rohit Sharma has revealed he was a bundle of nerves, didn't sleep the whole night, and "couldn't feel my legs" before the big final against South Africa.

Sunday marked the first anniversary of the memorable win in Barbados that broke 13 years of World Cup title drought for India.

"Thirteen years is a long time. Most people don't even have a 13-year career. So, to wait that long to win a World Cup... the last one I won was in 2007. For me, it couldn't have gotten any bigger than this. I didn't sleep the whole night. I was only thinking about the World Cup. I was nervous. I couldn't feel my legs," Rohit reminisced while speaking to JioHotstar.

"Did I feel nerves? Of course. I just don't show it — but inside, it was a lot. We were supposed to leave around 8:30 or 9 in the morning. But I woke up at 7. From my room, I could see the ground and just kept watching it."

"I remember thinking — 'In two hours, I'll be there. And in four hours, the result will be out. Either the Cup

will be here or it won't."

The skipper described the nimble-footed Suryakumar Yadav's catch to dismiss David Miller in the last over as the defining moment of the final.

"Even after (the catch), the umpires sent it up to the third umpire and it was being checked whether Surya caught the ball or not, and everyone's hearts were in their mouths.

"I thought it was gone, and it was a six because I was on the long off. I was standing right opposite Surya," Rohit said of the thrilling game.

Suryakumar showed great presence of mind to pull off a stunning catch at long-off to dismiss the dangerous looking Miller, which eventually sealed a seven-run win for the Indian team.

Detailing the catch, the then India captain added, "I saw this and thought 'Oh shit', (they now need) 10 (runs) off five balls. But then I saw that the ball is coming into Surya's hands."

"It would have taken a blinder to take that catch. It would have taken a lot of effort to take that catch because when it was in the air it looked like it would cross

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the rope easily. Maybe the wind pulled the ball a bit into the ground.

"I was standing with Surya. When the umpires were checking the catch and I said 'Surya, tell me. You tell me. I don't want to look there (at big screen). And he said I have caught it."

"Surya is honestly one of the safest catchers in the team — without a doubt. I haven't seen him drop many catches. He's got incredibly safe hands."

South Africa needed 16 in the last over bowled by Hardik Pandya but could manage only eight runs, after Virat Kohli anchored India to 176 for seven with a 59-ball 76 after Keshav Maharaj and Kagiso Rabada removed Rohit, Rishabh Pant and Suryakumar.

Pandya also contributed to the win with three vital wickets.

"When we lost those three wickets up front, there were obviously a lot

of nerves in the dressing room," Rohit said.

"I was panicking. I was not comfortable. I was thinking that we let them into the game.

"But of course, in the back of my mind there was always a thought that our lower middle order had not batted so much in the tournament but whenever they had the opportunity, they made an impact."

Rohit recalled the useful knock played by left-arm

