

Sabalenka and Azarenka withdraw with injuries

Alcaraz opens Wimbledon with straight-set victory

WIMBLEDON, England, July 1, (AP): Defending champion Carlos Alcaraz had goosebumps walking onto Centre Court before his opening match at Wimbledon on Monday, a 7-6 (3), 7-5, 6-2 win over qualifier Mark Lajal.

Lajal proved to be something of a speedbump for Alcaraz, who acknowledged that his 269th-ranked Estonian opponent "surprised me a little bit" on Day 1 at the All England Club.

Alcaraz, who won his third major championship at the French Open three weeks ago, defeated Novak Djokovic in last year's final on the grass at Wimbledon but said he was still nervous before Monday's match.

"When I walk into the court, I get goosebumps. I remembered last year. It was a great feeling," the 21-year-old Spaniard said in his on-court interview. "But I try not to think about it. It's a new year - totally different tournament. I have to be focused on my game just to play at the same level as last year if I want to repeat the same (success) as last year."

Earlier, Aryna Sabalenka and Victoria Azarenka both pulled out of the tournament because of respective shoulder injuries.

Sabalenka, a two-time Australian Open champion, said she was "heartbroken" to announce her withdrawal after it became clear in a practice session that she wasn't ready.

The No. 3 seed was seen as top contender at the All England Club, which has had seven different women win the title in the last seven years.

Azarenka is also a two-time champion at Melbourne Park.

Ninth-seeded Maria Sakkari was among the early winners on Monday, and said after beating McCartney Kessler 6-3, 6-1 that the women's draw is wide open.

"We could name like 20, 25 girls



Carlos Alcaraz of Spain plays a forehand return to Mark Lajal of Estonia during their first round match of the Wimbledon tennis championships in London. (AP)

that could win the tournament right now," Sakkari said.

Seventh-seeded Jasmine Paolini, the French Open runner-up last month, got past the first round at Wimbledon for the first time on her fourth try. The Italian beat Sara Sorribes Tormo 7-5, 6-3.

On the men's side, fifth-seeded Daniil Medvedev beat Aleksander Kovacevic 6-3, 6-4, 6-2, and eighth-seeded Casper Ruud defeated Alex Bolt 7-6 (2), 6-4, 6-4. Unseeded Canadian Denis Shapovalov eliminated No. 19 Nicolas Jarry 6-1, 7-5, 6-4.

Also Monday, former Grand Slam champions Coco Gauff and Emma Raducanu were set to play matches at Centre Court.

Raducanu won the 2021 U.S. Open at age 18, but she has been dealing with various injuries since then. Her scheduled opponent - 22nd-seeded Ekaterina Alexandrova - withdrew Monday because of illness. Alexandrova was replaced by Renata Zarazua, a "lucky loser" from the qualifying tournament.

Gauff, who won the U.S. Open last

TENNIS

September, closes out the day's schedule in the main stadium against Caroline Dolehide in an all-American matchup.

Meanwhile, Novak Djokovic's right knee has responded so well after surgery to repair a torn meniscus less than a month ago that he said Saturday he considers himself ready to contend at Wimbledon, where he has won seven of his 24 Grand Slam trophies.

And, no, he will not adjust how he plays to protect the knee.

"I don't see myself holding back. I don't see myself calculating or being a bit more cautious in the movement. I don't see that happening," Djokovic said at a pre-tournament news conference Saturday. "Really, I go all in. I go full out. I mean, that's the way I've been playing my entire career."

When a reporter asked Djokovic why he would risk getting back on court at all so soon after the surgery, the player said his wife posed the very same question.

Djokovic, who has yet to reach a final at any event in 2024, described what he called an "incredible desire to play, just to compete" and added that Wimbledon, in particular, has held a special place in his heart since he was a kid.

So, Djokovic continued, merely "the thought of me missing Wimbledon was just not correct; I didn't want to deal with that."

Venezuela stay perfect



Mexico's Johan Vasquez, (left), and Ecuador's Kevin Rodriguez go for a header during a Copa America Group B soccer match in Glendale, Ariz. (AP)

Ecuador reach last eight, Mexico eliminated

AUSTIN, Texas, July 1, (AP): Eduard Bello opened the scoring in the 49th minute and Venezuela completed Group B play with a perfect record, beating Jamaica 3-0 in Copa America.

Venezuela (3-0-0) played without coach Fernando Batista after he was handed a one-match suspension by CONMEBOL for his team's late arrival to the field in a victory over Mexico.

By winning Group B, Venezuela avoided a Thursday matchup in the quarterfinals against tournament favorite and defending champion Argentina. Instead, the Venezuelans will take on Group A runner-up Canada on Friday at AT&T Stadium in Arlington, Texas.

Bello took a crossing pass from Jon Aramburu and sent a header to the bottom right corner of the net from the right side of the 6-yard box. It was the

SOCCER

second goal of the tournament for Bello, who scored the winner in a 2-1 victory over Ecuador in the opener.

In the 56th minute, Salomón Rondón used an assist from Yangel Herrera to send a left-footed kick from the center of box to the middle of the net. It was also the second goal for Rondón, who scored on a penalty kick in a 1-0 victory over Mexico in the team's second match.

Eric Ramírez completed the scoring when he took a through ball from Kervin Andrade in the 85th minute and drilled a right-footed shot from the center of the box to the center of the goal.

Goalkeeper Rafael Romo stopped one shot on goal for Venezuela.

Jahmali Waite did not have a save in goal for Jamaica (0-3-0).

Ecuador avoided a penalty shot in stoppage time after a review and earned a spot the Copa America quarterfinals with a 0-0 draw against Mexico.

Mexico initially received a penalty kick from referee Mario Alberto Escobar Toca when Ecuador's Félix Torres took down Mexican forward Guillermo Martínez in the penalty box. VAR rescinded the penalty and Mexico was awarded a corner kick, sending in a chorus of boos raining down from the Mexican fans at State

Cockrell settles for silver

McLaughlin-Levrone breaks world 400m hurdles record again at US Olympic trials

EUGENE, July 1, (AP): McLaughlin-Levrone lowered her world record once again, running the 400-meter hurdles in 50.65 seconds Sunday to win the U.S. Olympic trials.

In only her fourth long hurdles race of the season, the 24-year-old defending Olympic champion cleared all 10 barriers with ease, then went on a dead sprint to the line to break the record for the fifth time. Four of those marks have now come on track at University of Oregon's Hayward Field.

She held her hand over her mouth and stared in amazement when she saw the time come up. The mark was .03 seconds better than her run at Hayward in the 2022 world championships.

"My husband asked me yesterday, 'What do you think you can do?' and I told him 'I don't know,'" McLaughlin-Levrone said in an interview over the stadium PA system. "Then today, I crossed the line and I'm like, 'Oh, snap. I'm blessed and happy to be here.'"

In an event that used to be decided by steps or slivers, McLaughlin-Levrone's victory was by 1.99 seconds over Anna Cockrell and 2.12 over Jasmine Jones.

It doesn't so much reset the storyline for the Olympics - McLaughlin-Levrone would've been the big-time favorite either way - as it makes track rethink what's possible.

From 2003-19, the world record in this event stayed stuck at 52.34. American Dalilah Muhammad broke it twice in 2019 - the second time at world championships in a race that demoral-

Farm Stadium.

Ahead on goal differential, Ecuador weathered a second-half push by Mexico at State Farm Stadium to finish second in Group B behind Venezuela. Ecuador will face Group A winner



Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone poses for a photo after winning the women's 400-meter hurdles final during the U.S. Track and Field Olympic Team Trials in Eugene, Ore. (AP)

ized McLaughlin-Levrone and sparked a move over to coach Bobby Kersee.

Kersee changed everything for her. One of the biggest adjustments was dropping her to 14 strides between the early hurdles. That was a game-changer

ATHLETICS

that has put her in a class by herself since she first set the record in 2021 - on the final day of trials on the track in Eugene, just like this time.

"I've been growing as a person and

growing as an athlete" with Kersee in charge, McLaughlin-Levrone said. "He challenges me and pushes me in ways I didn't think were possible."

Now, instead of a much-anticipated showdown with Femke Bol of the Netherlands, the conversation might turn to when the 50-second mark might come tumbling down in this race. Maybe as soon as Aug. 8, which is the date of the Olympic final in Paris.

"It could happen," hurdling great Edwin Moses told The Associated Press. "She might need a couple more races, but that's about it."

jeopardy.

El Tri was eliminated in the first round of the World Cup for the first time since 1978 in Qatar two years ago and lost to the United States in CONCACAF Nations League final in March.

Al-Qadisiya complete the transfer of Moroccan star Mahdi Barhama



A file photo of Al-Mahdi Barhama in action.

By Hassan Musa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 1: Al-Qadisiya has successfully finalized the signing of Moroccan professional Mahdi Rahma, marking its first major deal at the professional level in preparation for the upcoming 2024-2025 season.

Rahma, aged 32, spent three years with a Kuwait Club, achieving numerous accolades and championships during his tenure.

SOCCER

The club officially announced Rahma's transfer via its website, revealing that Bahraini club Al-Khalidiya had also pursued the player, but financial terms favored Al-Qadisiya.

Vice Chairman Sheikh Fahad Talal expressed gratitude to Abdulaziz Fawaz Al-Hassawi for sponsoring Rahma's contract advance, highlight-

ing his family's support in ensuring the success of Al-Qadisiya Club.

Reports suggest that Rahma's signing may facilitate the loan or release of Nigerian player Daniel Guibola, as Al-Qadisiya aims to strengthen its attacking and defensive lines.

Additionally, Al-Qadisiya has renewed contracts with Libyan Mohamed Sula and Djibula, while negotiations are ongoing to acquire Moroccan playmaker and striker Ismail Khafi.

In other news, Kuwait Club secured the international transfer of Bahraini professional Mohammed Al-Marhoon from Al-Riffa. Al-Marhoon played a pivotal role in Al-Abyad's recent successes, solidifying his place in the starting lineup and contributing significantly to championship victories.

Furthermore, the club extended contracts with local talents Meshari Ghanem and Youssef Al-Khubaizi, recognizing their outstanding performances in recent seasons.

Volleyball new season to start in Sept

By Khaled El Anzi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 1: Dr. Jaber Al Marri, President of the Volleyball Federation, announced that the upcoming season of volleyball will commence at the end of September. He emphasized continuity in the local competitions for the 2024-2025 season, maintaining the format from the previous season without changes.



Dr. Al Marri

"We are focusing on enhancing

the performance of our top volleyball team in upcoming competitions, alongside developing and preparing our youth and junior teams for future international events," Dr. Al Marri stated. "These teams are pivotal for our future success, as they comprise talented players who will play significant roles."

VOLLEYBALL

In related news, the National Coaches Course, conducted by the Volleyball Federation in collaboration with the Leadership Development Center, concluded from June 23 to 27. Dr. Jaber Al Marri, presenting graduation certificates, marked the successful completion of the course by the participants.



Left-right: Participants pose for a photo after the run.

KCICAI hosts the CA Run to celebrate Chartered Accountants Day

The Kuwait Chapter of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (KCICAI) organised a united run as part of ICAI's 75th year of celebration of Chartered Accountants Day.

The run was officially flagged off by CA Aditya Vikram Dhanuka, Chairperson of KCICAI.

The event saw enthusiastic participation of the members along

with their families. Mr. Davinder Punj, Second Secretary, Indian Embassy, Kuwait graced the occasion by his presence. Athlete Mr. Youmni Elhimer, who has been winners of 5Km, 10 Km and 21 Km marathons in Kuwait, was also present to motivate.

The event was successfully conducted with great enthusiasm and

was wrapped up with a raffle draw won by CA Harish Thakur, who received an air ticket sponsored by Jazeera Airways. Refreshments were distributed to all participants.

The annual sponsors, NBK & Al Mulla Exchange provided unwavering support for this KCICAI event.

This run showcased the unity, strength and contribution of the

Chartered Accountants in India and across the globe in 50 Foreign Chapters and embodied their commitment to the vision of a developed India by 2047, inspired by Prime Minister, Mr. Narendra Modi.

For more information about KCICAI and upcoming events, visit icaikw.org (<http://icaikw.org>)