

SPORTS

Halep, Azarenka set up battle of former world number ones



United States' Reilly Opelka makes a return to Switzerland's Stan Wawrinka in a men's singles match during day three of the Wimbledon Tennis Championships in London on July 3. (AP)

Next big thing Opelka blasts past Wawrinka into 3rd round

LONDON, July 3, (RTRS): In recent years Wimbledon has not exactly been dreamland for Simona Halep and Victoria Azarenka, and the nightmare will continue for one of them after the former world number ones set up a third round showdown.

Seventh seed Halep appeared to be heading for an easy win when she was a set and 2-0 up against Mihaela Buzarnescu before her fellow Romanian stormed back to take the second set.

Buzarnescu even stopped in her tracks midway through the seventh game of the second set to hand over a bottle of water to a spectator who had fainted in the stands.

But Halep was less charitable and turfed her compatriot out of the championships with a 6-3 4-6 6-2 defeat.

Twelve months ago Halep perished in the third round despite being top seed and she will be hoping for better fortune on Friday when she faces Azarenka.

The Belarusian made sure there was no repeat of her 2018 second-round exit as she dished out a 6-2 6-0 mauling to Australian Ajla Tomljanovic.

Halep and Azarenka were among four former WTA number ones in singles action on day three, along with Karolina Pliskova and Caroline Wozniacki.

TENNIS

Pliskova has long been thought of as a Grand Slam champion-in-waiting and the Czech provided evidence of her grass court pedigree as she hurtled past Monica Puig 6-0 6-4.

But if Pliskova was hoping her success at Eastbourne would easily translate to a Wimbledon title, she will have to buck the trends as fellow Czech Jana Novotna was the last woman to have pulled off the feat 21 years ago.

On Wednesday, though, Pliskova showed why she is considered as one of the front runners for this year's Wimbledon crown.

Watched by former Formula One driver David Coulthard from the Royal Box, the third seed appeared to be in the fast lane to victory as she dropped only two points on serve to zoom through the first set in 20 minutes.

At the other end of Centre Court, a double fault on set point summed up the kind of torturous day Olympic champion Puig was having to endure.

But just when it seemed the race was on for Pliskova to produce the first double bagel of this year's championships, the Puerto Rican drew a prolonged round of sympathetic applause as she finally won a game in the second game of the second set.

The respite was shortlived as her Czech opponent, who could topple Ash Barty from the WTA rankings summit if she reaches the latter stages of the grass court major, broke Puig to go 3-1 ahead and served for the match at 5-3.

Being on the edge of defeat allowed Puig to come out swinging in the ninth game as she broke Pliskova.

But if that gave Puig a glint of hope for an upset, the Czech quickly snuffed out such thoughts by breaking the 25-year-old in the very next game to seal a third-round match with Taiwanese 28th seed Hsieh Su-wei.

Reilly Opelka blasted his way into the third round at Wimbledon as the giant 21-year-old American's serve eventually proved too hot to handle for triple grand slam champion Stan Wawrinka in a high-octane five set duel.

Opelka came through 7-5 3-6 4-6 6-4 8-6 against the 22nd seeded Swiss for the biggest win of his career and there will be plenty of bigger names in the draw now scrabbling anxiously for

a tape of this match.

At 6ft 11in (2.10 metres) the former Wimbledon junior champion is the joint-tallest-ever ATP-ranked player (with Ivo Karlovic) and, unsurprisingly, his biggest weapon is his serve. It reached 142mph (228kph) on Wednesday - the fastest of the Championship so far - and, combined with some surprisingly deft court movement, is the perfect Wimbledon weapon.

Wawrinka, who has never gone beyond the quarter-finals at Wimbledon despite winning all three of the other slams and previously reaching number three in the world rankings, could not deal with it at all in the first set.

The 34-year-old eventually used all his experience to work things out and start getting it back and then treating the crowd to some of his sublime backhand winners en route to taking the second and third.

But, just as it seemed as if he would go through smoothly, Opelka found another gear to snatch the fourth.

From then on Wawrinka was having to work harder and harder to hold, while rarely threatening to break. The full match statistics showed the American successful with 73 percent of first serves compared to the 64 percent of Wawrinka and Opelka lifted that to a remarkable 91 percent in the fifth set.

Those figures proved the difference eventually as Wawrinka, at full stretch to even reach, let alone return most of them, was eventually worn down.

In a period of declining fortunes for American men's tennis, the victory was warmly welcomed former world number four and highly respected coach Brad Gilbert. "Wow, what a clutch performance from big fella Opelka in winning 1st career 5 set

over Stanimal," he tweeted.

Opelka, into the third round of a grand slam for the first time, now faces a possible meeting with 15th seed Milos Raonic.

Six years ago Spain's Fernando Verdasco led Andy Murray by two sets in the Wimbledon quarter-finals only to let the British favourite off the hook and allow him to continue his journey to what would be an historic title.

On Wednesday, the feisty left-hander, found himself two sets behind to Kyle Edmund, the man with the onerous task of trying to fill the void left by Murray's absence from the singles draw.

Where there were roars of joy from around the grounds after that see-saw battle in 2013, this time there were groans as Verdasco turned the tables to win 4-6 4-6 7-6(3) 6-3 6-4.

Asian boxing championship registration period extended

KUWAIT CITY, July 3: The organizing committee of the Asian Boxing Championship, which is due to kick off on Aug 1, has extended the registration period for participants until July 10 in order to give more time for the teams that were unable to register on time.

So far, 24 national teams have submitted their registration forms. This highlights the eagerness of Asian national teams to participate in this continental event, which will continue for nine days at the Al-Kuwait Sports Club boxing ring.



Al-Azmi

Treasurer of Kuwait Boxing Federation Adel Al-Azmi affirmed that the extension of the registration period was requested by some national teams that were unable to register on time due to some routine procedures in their countries.

He praised the organizing committees and the Public Authority for Sports for the role played in watering down the obstacles, both administrative and financial.

BOXING

It was earlier revealed that Kuwait's national boxing team was fully prepared for the championship. Al-Kuwait club is currently holding local training camp at Sulaibikhat Sports Club, which will be followed by an overseas training camp in Azerbaijan this month.



Belarus' Victoria Azarenka returns to Australia's Ajla Tomljanovic in a women's singles match during day three of the Wimbledon Tennis Championships in London on July 3. (AP)



Czech Republic's Karolina Pliskova celebrates after beating Puerto Rico's Monica Puig in a match during day 3 of the Wimbledon Tennis Championships in London July 3. (AP)



Italy's Thomas Fabbiano returns to Croatia's Ivo Karlovic in a men's singles match during day three of the Wimbledon Tennis Championships in London on July 3. (AP)

NBA Roundup

Jazz, Mudiay agree to 1-year deal

Warriors rescind Quinn Cook's 'qualifying' offer

SEATTLE, July 3, (RTRS): The Golden State Warriors have reportedly rescinded the one-year, \$1.9 million qualifying offer they made Saturday to guard Quinn Cook, making the Duke product an unrestricted free agent.

Shams Charania of The Athletic tweeted the development Wednesday morning, citing league sources.

Cook, 26, spent the past two seasons with the Warriors, providing valuable minutes as a backup to Stephen Curry. In 2018-19, he appeared in 74 games (10 starts), averaging 6.9 points and shooting 46.5 percent from the field and 40.5 percent from 3-point range.

The Warriors, who have won three of the past five NBA championships, are a team in transition. Star Kevin Durant departed in free agency for the Brooklyn Nets, forward Andre Iguodala was traded to the Memphis Grizzlies and guard Klay Thompson will miss the start of the season as he recovers from surgery on a torn ACL.

They are adding guard D'Angelo Russell, acquired in a sign-and-trade agreed upon with the Nets earlier this week, and agreed to contracts with center Willie Cauley-Stein and wing Glenn Robinson III.

The Utah Jazz agreed Tuesday to sign Emmanuel Mudiay to a one-year contract, according to ESPN's Adrian Wojnarowski.

The 23-year-old guard spent the 2018-19 season with the New York Knicks. Mudiay played in 59 games (42 starts), averaging 14.8 points and 3.9 assists and 27.2 minutes per game.

The Jazz will be the third NBA team in four seasons for Mudiay. After being drafted with the seventh overall pick by the Denver Nuggets in 2015, he played three seasons there before joining the Knicks for the 2017-18 season.

The Los Angeles Lakers have reportedly landed veteran forward Jared Dudley on a one-year deal worth \$2.6 million. News of the agreement came Tuesday from ESPN, citing Mark Bartelstein of Priority Sports, which represents Dudley.

Dudley is a 12-year veteran who is known around the league as a great locker room presence and was a nominee for the NBA's Twyman-Stokes Teammate of the Year Award last season.

The Utah Jazz agreed to a one-



Miami Heat forward Yante Maten (left) drives to the basket against Sacramento Kings forward Hollis Thompson during the second half of an NBA basketball summer league game in Sacramento, California on July 2. (AP)

year, \$2.5 million deal with veteran forward Jeff Green on Tuesday, according to multiple reports.

Utah is hoping the veteran can help fill the void for the recent loss of Derrick Favors, who was traded to the New Orleans Pelicans.

The 32-year-old Green averaged 12.7 points and 4.0 rebounds in 77 games (44 starts) for the Washington Wizards last season.

The Jazz will be the eighth organization for Green, who entered the NBA with the Seattle SuperSonics in 2007-08.

Golden State Warriors shooting guard Klay Thompson underwent surgery to repair the torn anterior cruciate ligament in his left knee on Tuesday, according to multiple media reports.

The operation was performed by Dr. Neal ElAttrache in Los Angeles, according to ESPN.

Thompson, 29, sustained the injury during Game 6 of the NBA Finals, a series won by the Toronto Raptors, ending in that contest.

Restricted free-agent forward Dorian Finney-Smith has agreed to re-sign with the Dallas Mavericks, getting a three-year, \$12 million deal, according to multiple reports.

Finney-Smith played 81 games (26 starts) in 2018-19, his third season with the Mavs, averaging 7.5 points, 4.8 rebounds and 1.2 assists per game.



Group photo taken from the event

Kuwait Camel Racing Club congratulates new NOC Board Chairman

Chairperson and members of Kuwait Camel Racing Club sent a cable of congratulations to Kuwait National Olympic Committee's (NOC) Board Chairman Sheikh Fahad Nasser Sabah Al-Sabah and its members for winning the post, which will be held for the next four

years (2019-2023).

They expressed best wishes to the committee and its board chairman and commended them for serving Kuwaiti sport and contributing to the development of the sport movement at all local and international forums.

Nike pulls shoe after Kaepernick's criticism

NFL, union to ramp up CBA negotiations

NEW YORK, July 3, (RTRS): Negotiations between the NFL and the NFL Players Association are expected to heat up this month as the two sides try to reach a new collective bargaining agreement before the start of the season, ESPN reported Tuesday.

The existing CBA will expire after the 2020 season.

A group of league owners and players have met three times this year and plan to sit at the negotiating table as many as four times this month, ESPN said.

FOOTBALL

Both sides seem optimistic that they can reach an agreement before the current CBA expires. The owners also are set to begin re-negotiations of their television deals soon.

Nike has scuttled its plans for a Fourth of July-themed sneaker that was to bear a Revolutionary War-era flag, a design that NFL player-turned-activist Colin Kaepernick disliked, multiple news outlets reported Tuesday.

Kaepernick said the Air Max 1 Quick Strike Fourth of July, as the shoe was called, would be "an offensive symbol because of its connection to an era of slavery," according to a

tweet from The Wall Street Journal, the first to report on the cancellation.

Nike released multiple statements Tuesday about its decision. The first statement indicated that the company decided against releasing the shoe because "it featured an old version of the American flag."

After meeting with NFL commissioner Roger Goodell on Tuesday, Dallas Cowboys running back Ezekiel Elliott apologized for his actions at a Las Vegas music festival and vowed to "make better decisions."

The two-time NFL rushing champion apologized to Kyle Johnson, the security guard he got into a confrontation with at the Electric Daisy

Carnival festival on May 18.

There was no immediate word from the commissioner's office about whether Elliott will face a suspension or other penalty for the incident, during which Elliott was handcuffed but not arrested.

Former NFL quarterback Anthony



Kaepernick

Wright was in stable condition at a North Carolina hospital Tuesday morning after being shot multiple times in a domestic dispute, police said.

The incident took place Monday afternoon in Concord, NC.

According to police, the former boyfriend of Wright's girlfriend and Wright, 43, got into an argument when the man dropped off his daughter with her mother, and shots were fired. The Concord Police Department has issued an arrest warrant for William "Willie" Moses Hooker Jr for assault with a deadly weapon inflicting serious injury with intent to kill.

Former New York Giants backup quarterback Jared Lorenzen was said to be gaining "traction" Wednesday, a positive sign after being hospitalized last week with heart and kidney issues, as well as an infection.

"Jared's overnight was uneventful and that is a good thing," Lorenzen's family said in a statement through Matt Jones of Kentucky Sports Radio.

"He remains on dialysis. He continues to maintain his ground. His cardiac and renal issues remain however his treatment has been effective. Jared is still very sick ... but (is) developing some traction and remains a fighter. The entire family thanks you for your support and prayers."