



SERENA WILLIAMS



AGNIESZKA RADWANSKA

Murray mania at 7,000 dollars

AFP, London



Andy Murray was Friday attempting to become the first British man in 74 years to reach the Wimbledon final, an event so rare that Centre Court tickets were being sold for up to £4,500 (6,992 dollars).

Murray survived a gruelling examination from Spain's David Ferrer to reach the semifinals for the fourth successive year with a 6-7 (5/7), 7-6 (8/6), 6-4, 7-6 (7/4) victory on Wednesday.

The 25-year-old Scot, who has lost in his three previous semifinals at the All England Club, tackles France's Jo-Wilfried Tsonga bidding to be the first Briton since Bunny Austin in 1938 to reach the championship match.

French fifth seed Tsonga reached the semifinals on Wednesday with a 7-6 (7/5), 4-6, 7-6 (7/3), 6-2 win over German 27th seed Philipp Kohlschreiber.

The last British man to win Wimbledon was Fred Perry in 1936 and with history at stake, fans are splashing out to get a seat on Centre Court, where the roof is likely to be closed as heavy rain continued to fall on Friday morning.

Online ticket market place Viagogo said that semifinal tickets were changing hands for an average of £3,500 (5,438 dollars), with the highest sold for £4,500 (6,992 dollars).

The standard price for a Centre Court ticket is £105 (163 dollars).

Edward Parkinson, director of Viagogo UK, said: "If Murray gets through to the final it will be history in the making and we could see tickets being offered for up to £45,000 (69,958 dollars) for a pair."

Meanwhile, Tim Henman, who lost in four semifinals -- twice to Pete Sampras and then to Goran Ivanisevic and Lleyton Hewitt -- believes compatriot Murray can make the final.

'Slight problem' rules out Bolt

AFP, Paris

Sprint star Usain Bolt has withdrawn from the Diamond League meet in Monaco on July 20, which was to have been his last outing before the London Olympics, after picking up a "slight problem" at the Jamaican trials.

The defending 100 and 200m Olympic champion, and world record holder in both events, pulled up at the end of the 200m at last week's Jamaican Olympic trials.

The 25-year-old briefly received medical treatment on the track after crossing the finish line on Sunday, trainers working on his legs before he got up and walked off.

"Arising from Usain's participation at the National Trials in Kingston this past weekend where he had a slight problem, after careful assessment I have had to withdraw him from the Samsung Diamond League Meeting in Monaco on July 20 to give him sufficient time for treatment and time to train and prepare for the Olympic Games in London," Bolt's coach Glen Mills said.

Bolt suffered a shock at the trials, being beaten into second in both the 100 and 200m by training partner Yohan Blake.

"I am happy to have earned my spot on the Jamaican Olympic team despite the challenge," Bolt said.

"I will be in London to defend my titles in the 100, 200 and 4x100 metres. I want to congratulate my fellow Racers Track Club Members along with the other athletes who made the team. I thank everyone for their support."

Five Bangladeshi

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the seven franchises or the amount each player will receive for the 24-match tournament.

Recent media reports suggested that all seven franchises were bought by little-known Indian companies after organisers received lukewarm response from local firms.

The amount of salaries that the cricketers would get was not mentioned in the press release.

FOREIGNERS IN SLPL

UTHURA: Shakib Al Hasan, Brendan Taylor, Kevon Cooper, Imran Farhat, Fidel Edwards, David Miller, Dillon du Preez, Samuel Badree
NAGENAHIRA: Mitchell Marsh, Imran Nazir, Travis Birt, Ahmed Shahzad, Ben Laughlin, Elias Sunny, Musfiqur Rahim, Nasir Hossain

RUHUNA: Shahid Afridi, Daniel Harris, Ryan Harris, Aaron Finch, Jerome Taylor, Nathan McCullum, Ryan McLaren, Richard Levi
WAYAMBA: Azhar Mahmood, Umar Akmal, Tamim Iqbal, Colin Ingram, Kemar Roach, James Faulkner, Abdul Razzaq, Brad Hogg

KANDURATA: Saeed Ajmal, Misbah-ul-Haq, Sohail Tanvir, Chris Lynn, Dane Vilas, Albie Morkel, Johan Botha, Adam Voges
BASNAHIRA: Brad Hodge, Marlon Samuels, Daniel Smith, Dirk Nannes, Robin Peterson, Tim Southee, Clint McKay, Cameron Borgas

UVA: Andrew McDonald, Umar Gul, Shoaib Malik, Callum Ferguson, James Franklin, Abdur Rehman, Hammad Azam, Chris Gayle

Power v poise

AFP, London



Serena Williams and Agnieszka Radwanska will meet in Saturday's Wimbledon final in a battle of raw power against slender poise and expectation over hope.

Four-time champion Williams, the 30-year-old sixth seed, buried Victoria Azarenka under a record firestorm of 24 aces to reach her seventh Wimbledon final on Thursday, winning 6-3, 7-6 (8/6).

Third seed Radwanska, seven years Williams's junior, became the first Polish Grand Slam finalist for 73 years when she cruised to a 6-3, 6-4 win over Germany's Angelique Kerber.

As well as a record 24 aces, beating her own best of 23 set against Zheng Jie in the third round, Williams also fired a whopping 45 winners.

She has now hit a total of 85 aces in the tournament which even puts her into second place on the men's list where only Germany's Philipp Kohlschreiber has hit more with 98.

Williams will start as the hot favourite on Saturday having beaten Radwanska in their two meetings without dropping a set, including the Wimbledon quarter-finals in 2008 where the American lost just four games.

"I've been working so hard, I really wanted it," said Williams, the first 30-

year-old to reach the All England Club final since Steffi Graf in 1999.

"She was playing well and I got a little tight in the second set. I was looking too far in the future. I was so close, but I can't do that. I was happy to get through that second set tie-break."

Williams, who won the first of her four Wimbledon titles 10 years ago, insisted that the destination of the 2012 crown is far from a foregone conclusion despite her brutal power being expected to overwhelm the slender Radwanska.

"She's doing unbelievable. She's playing so great. Wow, she's going to get every ball back," said the American, whose serving prowess would not look out of place in the men's game.

Williams played two doubles matches on Wednesday with sister Venus, but showed no signs of fatigue against Azarenka, taking the first set courtesy of eight aces and 20 winners, while allowing her opponent just four points on serve.

That was the first set dropped by the 22-year-old Belarusian at the tournament.

Buoyed by a 7-1 winning record against the Australian Open champion, who could have retaken the world number one spot had she won, Williams broke for a 2-1 lead in the second set, secured with a sweeping forehand

service return.

Azarenka hit back to level at 3-3 and then saved a match point in the tiebreak. But the record 24th ace, blitzed right down the middle, gave Williams a deserved win.

Radwanska's first appearance in a Grand Slam final emulates the achievement of compatriot Jadwiga Jedrzejowska, who reached the pre-Open era French Championships final in 1939.

Jedrzejowska lost that French final and was also beaten in the Wimbledon and US Championships finals in 1937, so Radwanska is well aware she would write her name in tennis history as the first Polish winner of a major if she beats Williams.

"I know that she was the finalist here many years ago. I'm just very happy that I'm the second one to be in the Wimbledon final," Radwanska said.

"I think she lost in three sets that year but now I will try to win the final."

Radwanska is relishing Saturday's final, her first Grand Slam title match after falling in the quarter-finals on five occasions before this year's Wimbledon.

"I don't really have anything to lose, so I'm just going to try my best," she said.

"I was the first Polish player who won in a semi-final for many years, so I think this is already a big success. And now here in the final it's even bigger."

Gayle, Russell propel WI



AFP, Kingston

Chris Gayle smashed a third successive half-century and seamer Andre Russell bagged four wickets as West Indies cruised to a nine-wicket win over New Zealand in Thursday's opening one-day international.

Gayle, who made 53 and 85 in the back-to-back Twenty20 matches against the injury-hit tourists in Florida last week, continued his rich vein of form with 63 at Sabina Park as West Indies coasted home with 52 balls to spare.

Dwayne Smith was also undefeated on 65.

Russell, the 24-year-old seamer, had pinned back New Zealand, taking three wickets with the new ball and then got a fourth with his final delivery to end with 4-45 off 10 overs.

The Black Caps struggled to just 190-9 off their 50 overs after they were sent in to bat by captain Darren Sammy.

Off-spinner Sunil Narine (2-26) and pacer Ravi Rampaul (2-42) provided excellent back-up.

"I'm happy with the way I bowled. It

felt great. It was good to come back into the team after I missed the T20 series in Florida and make an impression right away," said Russell.

"To bowl first at Sabina Park, I knew I would get assistance from whatever moisture was in the surface.

"I got the opportunity to bowl the new ball and I knew I could make good use of it. I decided to run in with purpose, hit the deck hard and look for wickets. Before the match we said wickets with the new ball would be vital and my focus was on getting it right from the very start."

Gayle's 63 not out came off 57 balls with five sixes, much to the delight of his home supporters while Smith played some superb strokes and cleared the ropes three times in an unbeaten 65 off 77 balls.

The pair added an unbroken stand of 130 for the second wicket as the home side stormed to their rain-adjusted total of 136 off just 24.2 overs for the loss of just opener Lendl Simmons.

Heavy afternoon rain accompanied by lightning and thunder caused a break in play, bringing a Duckworth/Lewis target into play.

New Zealand captain Kane Williamson called on his young side to make the most of their underdog status in Saturday's second match at the same venue.

"It is disappointing, but we know we are underdogs and hopefully that breeds a fearless attitude in our camp," Williamson told cricinfo.com.

"We have to move forward as that is the only thing that we can do in a five-match series.

"There are a lot of challenges for us in the series, not only the quality of the opposition and the conditions, but more so (after) the injuries we have had to get a consistent side on the park and to have consistent planning to move forward."

Wicketkeeper BJ Watling's 60, off 98 balls with five fours, was the lone positive for New Zealand.

SCORES IN BRIEF

NEW ZEALAND: 190 for 9 (Watling 60, Oram 32; Rampaul 2-42, Russell 4-45)

WEST INDIES: 136 for 1 (Gayle 63 not out, Smith 65 not out)

Result: West Indies won by 9 wickets (D/L).

Man-of-the-match: Andre Russell.

Swann given rest

England-Australia 4th ODI today



AFP, Birmingham

England's Graeme Swann will miss the final two matches in the one-day series against Australia, allowing him to rest his sore bowling arm, national selector Geoff Miller said Thursday.

Swann, a mainstay of the England side in all three international formats, will be replaced by fellow off-spinner James Tredwell in the squad for the concluding fixtures of a five-match series against Australia at Chester-le-Street and Manchester on Saturday and Tuesday respectively.

England have also called up seamer Chris Woakes, drafted in for Wednesday's abandoned match against Australia at his Edgbaston home ground, where rain meant not one ball was bowled, while Jade Dernbach and Stuart Meaker attended the funeral of their former Surrey team-mate Tom Maynard.

Dernbach will be unavailable for the final

two matches as well because of a side strain.

Miller said team management had always intended to give Swann a break after the Edgbaston match, where the wash-out left England 2-0 up with two to play in a NatWest series they had to win 5-0 to replace Australia at the top of the one-day international rankings.

Former England off-spinner Miller added the decision had been made with a view to Swann being fit for the upcoming three-Test series with South Africa, where England will put their world number one status on the line.

"We had earmarked the fourth and fifth matches in this series as an opportunity to rest Graeme, regardless of the result at Edgbaston, because we have to consider our preparations for the Investec Test series later this month," Miller said in an England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) statement.

REVISED SQUAD

Alastair Cook, Ian Bell, Jonathan Trott, Ravi Bopara, Eoin Morgan, Craig Kieswetter, Tim Bresnan, Stuart Broad, Steven Finn, James Anderson, James Tredwell, Samit Patel, Chris Woakes, Jonathan Bairstow

Rain scuppers England's quest

AFP, Birmingham

England's hopes of becoming the world's number two-ranked one-day international side (ODI) during their series against Australia were ended after rain washed out the third ODI here Wednesday.

The match at Edgbaston was abandoned without a ball being bowled, with England 2-0 up in the five-match series.

However, England had to sweep this contest 5-0 to replace current table-toppers Australia at the head of the 50-over standings and so become the first team to be number one in all three formats, with the side already at the summit of the Test and Twenty20 rankings.

Radwanska's cough fit

AFP, London

Wimbledon finalist Agnieszka Radwanska, who faces Serena Williams for the women's title on Saturday, suffered a health scare on Friday when she cancelled a scheduled news conference.

The third-seeded Pole was fighting breathing problems and was struggling to talk, according to a WTA spokesman.

Radwanska, the first Polish Grand Slam finalist for 73 years, had to cut short her media duties on Thursday after beating Angelique Kerber 6-3, 6-4 in the Wimbledon semi-finals.

The 23-year-old -- a Wimbledon junior champion in 2005 -- was so badly troubled by a cough during the 10-minute session that she had to call a premature halt to proceedings after several sips of water failed to ease the problem.

Kylie, Sachin in royal box

AFP, London

India cricket superstar Sachin Tendulkar and Australian pop star Kylie Minogue were in the Wimbledon Royal Box on Friday to watch the potentially epic semi-final between Novak Djokovic and Roger Federer.

Tendulkar, who this week opted to sit out India's one-day series in Sri Lanka, was with wife Anjali.

Minogue was accompanied by Spanish model boyfriend Andres Velencoso.

Also in the Royal Box were former Wimbledon champions Rod Laver, Goran Ivanisevic and Manuel Santana.



India's cricket maestro Sachin Tendulkar, along with his wife Anjali (R), watches the Wimbledon semifinal between Roger Federer and Novak Djokovic from the Royal Box at the All England Tennis Club in London yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Major overhaul in squad

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prepare the team and I am hopeful that this team will perform well in Australia. Under the guidance of (Zafrul) Ehsan this team has been preparing for the last year and a half and I had the experience of working with some of the boys at different times," said Imran.

"Our main challenge would be to acclimatise ourselves with the Australian conditions as early as possible and it is nice that we are going early and that we are able to play some practice matches before the tournament proper. I think match-practice will not be an issue as we will be playing some practice matches at home and in Australia," he added.

Bangladesh, who have been placed in Group D along with Sri Lanka, South Africa and Namibia in the 16-team competition,

will depart for Australia on July 27 and play two unofficial and as many official practice matches before the tournament proper.

The team is also scheduled to play three limited overs practice matches at the Sheikh Abu Naser Stadium, Khulna against a BCB Invitational XI on July 17, 18 and 20.

The selected players have been asked to report to head coach Sarwar Imran at the BCB National Cricket Academy today at 5pm.

SQUAD

Anamul Haque (captain), Quazi Nurul Hasan (vice-captain), Asif Ahmed, Soumya Sarkar, Salman Hossain, Al Amin, Nur Hossain, Musaddek Hossain, Nayem Islam, Nasum Ahmed, Abu Jayed Chowdhury, Taskin Ahmed, Dewan Shabbir Ahmed, Abu Haider and Litton Kumar Das.