

Federer leads
Cincy seeds

AFP, Cincinnati

Swiss Roger Federer should be among the freshest of the seeds as the Olympic silver medallist begins play as top men's seed at next week's ATP-WTA Cincinnati Masters.

The 17-time grand slam champion who turned 31 on August 8 only three days after losing to Andy Murray in the London Olympic final, took a few days off at his family chalet to recharge before hitting the practise courts in the USA last in the week.

The four-time champion won the Masters 1000 titles in 2005, 2007, and 2009-10 but suffered a quarter-final loss last year to Tomas Berdych.

Federer will start after a bye against the winner from Finn Jarkko Nieminen and Russian Alex Bogomolov.

The tournament has been plagued by injury pullouts, many a result of a jammed-up schedule made ever more demanding by the Olympics.

Despite going nonstop since the Games where he exited without a medal, second seed Djokovic is carrying on for another week as the US open's August 27 start draws near.

Murray takes the third seeding despite the Scot having some doubt concerning his fitness after complaining of knee pain and pulling out after his first match in Toronto.

Murray is defending 1,000 ranking points as 2011 holder in Cincinnati. Spain's David Ferrer returns to post-Games action as fourth seed, ahead of Berdych, who will be trying to end a three-match loss streak dating to Wimbledon in June.

The women's draw, headed by Poland's Agnieszka Radwanska with double 2012 Olympic champion Serena Williams on second, has suffered as well from the Games hangover.

Missing is Maria Sharapova, the silver medalist who has been suffering for a week with a stomach virus. She was joined as an absentee by WTA number one Victoria Azarenka, who withdrew from Montreal this week to rest a knee which she says has been troubling her.

Czech Petra Kvitova is seeded fourth ahead of German Angelique Kerber.

Untouchable

FROM PAGE 16

The gymnasts perform floor routines accompanied by music with four pieces of apparatus -- a hoop, a ball, a set of clubs, and a ribbon -- and are awarded a score by three juries.

Kanaeva had dropped her hoop during qualifying on Thursday, but she made no such mistake during a delightful opening routine with that piece of apparatus and took the lead with a score of 29.350 points.

Rhythmic gymnastics is often described as a cross between ballet and gymnastics, but the ball routine suggests freestyle football is an element of the mix as well.

The final clashed with the culmination of the men's football tournament next door at Wembley Stadium, but even Brazil and Mexico's millionaire players would have marvelled at the audacity of Kanaeva's footwork with the ball.

Like all the gymnasts, Kanaeva displayed remarkable dexterity and flexibility to send the rubber ball rolling around the contours of her body, even cradling it in the small of her back at one point.

After two rotations, she led Dmitrieva by 1.900 points but a faultless display with the clubs enabled her to stretch her advantage to 2.600 points ahead of the final routine.

To the tune of Chopin's 'Fantasie-Improptu', Kanaeva brought home the gold with a beautifully accomplished 90-second ribbon display that drew roars from the sizeable Russian contingent in the crowd.



South Africa's double amputee runner Oscar Pistorius runs in the last leg of the men's 4 x 400m relay final at the Olympic Stadium in London on Friday. South Africa finished eighth and last in the relay final.

PHOTO: AFP

Pistorius happy to be there

AFP, London

Oscar Pistorius might have seen his South African relay team's Olympic medal hopes go up in smoke, but the history-making double amputee described his Games experience as "phenomenal" and "humbling".

Pistorius, who had both legs amputated below the knee before he was aged one because of a congenital condition, is known as the 'Blade Runner' because he runs on carbon fibre blades.

The 25-year-old was cleared four years ago to run against able-bodied athletes when the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) overturned a ruling by the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) that his blades gave him an unfair advantage.

And his participation in the London Olympics was a first ever for a double amputee, although his team finished eighth and last in the 4x400m relay final on Friday.

"The whole experience was phenomenal for us," Pistorius said. "To step out here for an Olympic final is more than I could ever have hoped for. It's been a truly humbling experience."

There was an emotion-packed path to the final for the South African team, who failed to finish their semi-final after second-leg runner Ofentse Mogawane tangled with a lane-changing Kenyan, Vincent Kiuu.

While Mogawane nursed a dislocated left shoulder, Pistorius thought his chances of running the Olympic final were over.

But a successful appeal saw the South

Africans reinstated in lane one of the nine-lane Olympic Stadium.

"After yesterday, today can only be good!" said Pistorius. "I was so disappointed yesterday, so down, and there were so many mixed emotions."

"We got back to the warm-up track and then heard Kenya were disqualified."

"Then we found we could run in the ninth lane. There was an extra lane and they gave us that because we finished second in the world championships last year. We got reinstated."

Pistorius added that relay team leader LJ Van Zyl had already headed for a plane back home when news came in of the green light for the final won by the Bahamas over the US team.

"LJ was on his way to the airport and got called back to come and run," beamed Pistorius, who ran the fourth and final anchor leg of the relay team.

"Representing my country and knowing I have to bring back home the baton meant I ran a lot harder."

"It's always an honour to be the anchor, although quite stressful. I never get that much responsibility. I ran a very good back straight."

Pistorius added: "It's a dream come true. It's the most amazing experience of my life, and it will inspire and motivate me for the next four years."

"Just to take part has been great."

Attention would now turn to the Paralympics, he said.

"I am really looking forward to them. I think they will be the best ever."

"It makes me stoked to come out here in this stadium again."

Sergey's historic walk

FROM PAGE 16
including Kirdyapkin and reigning world champion Sergey Bakulin.

Also there were two Guatemalans including Erick Barrondo, whose silver medal in the 20km walk had been his country's first ever at an Olympics, along with fancied Frenchman Yohann Diniz, the two-time European champion.

Bakulin upped a gear at the 25km mark and the lead group shrank to eight, comprising Deakes and Tallent, the other two Russians, Diniz and the two Guatemalans, although Jaime Quiyuch was one warning away from being disqualified.

Quiyuch's walk on the wild side came to a sad end just after the two-hour mark when the judge raised the red card, prompting him to raise his hands in shock, then burst into floods of tears.

Quiyuch was bidden his time and then swept past tiring athletes including Si. But he was Si who blew the

race apart as he produced a burst just after the 30km mark, and in double-quick time wiped away the 20-second gap between himself and the lead group of five.

Such was his momentum he surged on to open an eight-second lead over the five.

Barrondo's lack of experience at the distance, in which he only made his debut this year, told and he dropped away while Deakes' hopes of bowing out with an Olympic title also ended as he too lost touch.

Tallent, though, found a second wind and joined the chasing group, passing Diniz, who was already struggling when he tripped over a hoarding and fell, dashing his medal hopes.

While Tallent was in pursuit of the Russian trio, Kirdyapkin came alive and joined his compatriots in reeling in Si with 10km to go.

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Kayak sprint

FROM PAGE 16
on the first two or three strokes and I wanted to nail those and get out cleanly," he said.

In two other men's finals on Saturday, Yuri Cheban of Ukraine won the men's single canoe 200m, ahead of Lithuania's Jevgenij Shulkin with Russian Ivan Shytal taking bronze.

Russia's Yury Postrigay and Alexander Dyachenko teamed up to win gold for Russia in the men's double kayak 200m, with Raman Piatrushenka and Vadzim Makhnev of Belarus taking silver and Britain's Liam Heath and Jon Schofield earning bronze.

AB shines as SA dominate

AFP, London

AB de Villiers blasted a quick-fire 97 as South Africa warmed up for next week's third Test against England at Lord's with a dominant start to their tour match at Derbyshire on Friday.

De Villiers smashed his imperious innings of 97 from just 96 balls before retiring out and JP Duminy also got some good practice time with 69 before the tourists declared on 365 for four.

There was good news for South Africa off the field as well, ahead of the final Test of a series they lead 1-0, as captain Graeme Smith and Jacques Kallis were passed fit after injury scares in the second Test at Headingly and were included in a 15-man team.

Alviro Petersen is also expected to recover from a hamstring strain in time for Lord's.

Smith's declaration gave his bowlers 90 minutes before the close and Vernon Philander picked up the wicket of Matt Lineker as Derbyshire replied with 75 for one from 22 overs.

The only South African to miss out after Derbyshire won the toss and put the tourists in was Jacques Rudolph who was lbw for 15 in the fourth over after he played across a full length ball from Ally Evans.

Hashim Amla faced 19 balls from Evans without scoring before changing gear to take 16 off the pace bowler's next five.

But Amla's innings was

ended on 42 by a good ball from Ross Whiteley who moved one away to knock out his stump.

De Villiers has yet to make his mark on the Test series but he looked in ominous form, even against an inexperienced attack, as he cruised to his half century, which included eight fours and six sixes, off only 46 balls.

Duminy also hit Wainwright for two sixes as he and De Villiers enjoyed themselves in the sunshine and a century for the 28-year-old looked a formality until he pulled out after hitting 16 fours and two sixes.

Wainwright took a stinging return catch to remove Duminy but Faf du Plessis and Albie Morkel plundered 123 in 17 overs either side of tea.

Du Plessis reached his fifty by pulling Evans for six and Morkel was on 49 when the declaration came after an over from Mark Footitt which cost 28.

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Novak wins two in a day

Tennis

AFP, Toronto

Top seed Novak Djokovic came through two battles on a rain-soaked day at the Toronto Masters to move into the semi-finals.

The world number two, who came up empty-handed last weekend at the London Olympics, is making the best of his return to the ATP as the last showcase player in the mix at the pre-US Open event.

Djokovic will face off on Saturday -- more rain is possible then -- against compatriot Janko Tipsarevic, who dispatched Croatian Marin Cilic 6-2, 6-4 in a first match and then put out Spain's Marcel Granollers 6-4, 6-4 in the quarter-finals.

Djokovic needed almost two and a half hours to hold off tenacious Tommy Haas 6-3, 3-6, 6-3 as the 34-year-old German continued to roll back the years after playing three ATP finals since mid-June and winning a grass title over Roger Federer in Halle.

Djokovic started his longest day by defeating American Sam Querrey 6-4, 6-4 in a match which lasted just 65 minutes but which was interrupted for two and a half hours by a rainstorm.

"It's tough for players and fans," said the Serb. "We have had no luck with the weather. We were all waiting around to play."

Forecast for the weekend are slightly more promising but with some rain still in the outlook.

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Novak Djokovic of Serbia waves to the crowd after beating Sam Querry of USA in their Rogers Cup match at the Rexall Centre of York University in Toronto on Friday. Djokovic defeated Tommy Haas later on the same day to move to the semifinals.

PHOTO: AFP

Grand after-party to close

FROM PAGE 16

recorded with the London Symphony Orchestra, with only vocalists performed live.

Traditional matters of Olympic protocol have been incorporated, including the march of more than 10,000 athletes and flagbearers.

The worldwide broadcast will start at 9pm London time on Sunday and feature more than 4,100 performers. It will take place across the stadium, with specially constructed sets.

Arnold has composed original music to link segments together and all tracks have been pre-

Jacques Rogge, President of the International Olympic Committee. There is a flag ceremony, which will include the national anthems of Greece (to honour the birthplace of the Olympics), Great Britain (as host of the Games) and Brazil (the nation hosting the 2016 Olympics). The President of the IOC will declare the Games closed and, at the climax, the Olympic Flame will be extinguished.

