



Barcelona teammates Claudio Bravo (L) and Lionel Messi face each other in the Copa America final tonight. The Chilean captain will have his work cut out to stop the Argentine superstar.

Serena to clash with Venus

Djokovic, Sharapova also through

AFP, London



Serena Williams set up a titanic Wimbledon fourth round showdown with sister Venus as the world number one staged a dramatic final set fightback to beat Britain's Heather Watson 6-2, 4-6, 7-5 on Friday.

Williams, bidding for a sixth Wimbledon title and a calendar Grand Slam, was on the brink of a humiliating third round exit when Watson served for the match at 5-4 in the final set.

But Serena, who had trailed 3-0 in the decider, broke back before finally sealing an epic escape in two hours and 14 minutes in front of an enthralled Centre Court.

The 33-year-old American will face Venus on Monday for the first time in a Grand Slam since beating her in the 2009 Wimbledon final.

The sisters' last meeting came in 2014 when Venus won in Montreal, but Serena holds a 14-11 advantage over the 35-year-old in their career head to head.

Earlier, Maria Sharapova saw off a late comeback to reach the Wimbledon fourth round with a 6-4, 6-3 win over Romania's Irina-Camelia Begu.

The fourth seed and 2004 champion won the key points in the first set and saw off some last-ditch resistance in the second to book her place in last 16.

The Russian former world number one will face either Germany's 14th seed Andrea Petkovic or unseeded Zarina Diyas of Kazakhstan for a spot in the quarter-finals.

"What everyone at this stage of the tournament expects is to go further and expect more, better things from yourself. As the matches get tougher, you have to raise your level," said five-time Grand Slam winner Sharapova.

"That's why there's only one champion, that's why it makes it so special: it's the one that really raises their game."

"I want to be the winner and I do my best to do that."

Defending champion and top seed Novak Djokovic breezed into the Wimbledon fourth round with a 6-3, 6-3, 6-3 win over Bernard Tomic of Australia.

Djokovic, also the 2011 champion, will face Kevin Anderson of South Africa for a place in the quarterfinals.

Australia's controversial Nick Kyrgios and Frenchman Richard Gasquet set up a Wimbledon last-16 clash after knocking out last year's semi-finalists Milos Raonic and Grigor Dimitrov.

Kyrgios, who famously defeated Rafael Nadal in 2014 when he was ranked 144 in the world, avenged his quarter-final loss of 12 months ago to Raonic with a 5-7, 7-5, 7-6 (7/3), 6-3 third round victory over the seventh seed.

Fourth seed Stan Wawrinka reached the fourth round with a 6-4, 6-3, 6-4 win over Fernando Verdasco for his first win over the Spaniard in 10 years.

French Open champion Wawrinka will take on Belgium's David Goffin for a place in the quarter-finals.

Clash of the golden generations

AFP, Santiago

COPA AMERICA CHILE 2015

The prospect of leading his country to a first major title in 22 years is driving Lionel Messi as Argentina meet Chile here Saturday in a Copa America final clash of the golden generations.

The three-week South American football showpiece reaches its climax at the Estadio Nacional with a dream final pitting the favourites against the hosts, and the stakes could not be any higher for both sides.

Messi heads a star-studded Argentina desperate to write their own piece of history by winning a first international title since 1993, 12 months after an agonizing defeat to Germany in last year's World Cup final.

Chile, meanwhile, are anxious to finally shed their unwanted tag as the perennial nearly men of South American football, ending 99 years of hurt by winning a first Copa America.

An Argentine triumph would crown a remarkable season for Messi, who less than a month ago completed a treble-winning

PAST WINNERS	
YEAR	CHAMPIONS
2011	Uruguay
2007	Brazil
2004	Brazil
2001	Colombia
1999	Brazil
1997	Brazil
1995	Uruguay
1993	Argentina

HEAD-TO-HEAD	
Matches played:	80
Argentina wins:	53
Chile wins:	6
Drawn matches:	21
In Copa America	
Matches played:	24
Argentina wins:	18
Chile wins:	0
Drawn matches:	6

ROAD TO FINAL	
ARGENTINA	
v Paraguay	2-2
v Uruguay	1-0
v Jamaica	1-0
v Colombia	0-0 (5-4)
v Paraguay	6-1
CHILE	
v Ecuador	2-0
v Mexico	3-3
v Bolivia	5-0
v Uruguay	1-0
v Peru	2-1

campaign with Barcelona with victory in the Champions League final.

It would also erase the sense of frustration Messi has often felt at international level, 10 years after he led Argentina to victory as a teenager in the 2005 Under-20 World Cup.

"This generation is desperate to win a title with the national team," Messi told reporters on the eve of the Copa America.

"As a team, we deserve to win something and it would mean so much after the World Cup last year where we came so close."

Argentina striker Sergio Aguero, who

featured in an Under-20 World Cup-winning side in 2007, believes defeat is not an option.

"If this generation of players don't win anything we're going to regret it for the rest of our lives," the Manchester City star said.

After a series of unconvincing performances in the first phase, and a nervy win on penalties against Colombia in the quarter-finals, the signs are that Argentina have hit form at the right time.

Messi produced a scintillating man-of-the-match display in Tuesday's 6-1 semi-final destruction of Paraguay, setting up three goals and running the opposition ragged

with a virtuoso performance.

Standing in Messi's way however are a Chilean team who know they may never have a better chance to finally end their nation's long wait for a trophy.

Since a 6-1 defeat to Argentina in the inaugural South American Championship in 1916, Chile have endured nearly a century of failure.

While Argentina will join Uruguay as the most successful side in the tournament's history if they win on Saturday, with 14 titles, Chile are still waiting for their first crown after finishing runners-up four times.

Chile have also never beaten Argentina at the Copa America in 24 attempts.

Chile's own golden generation -- featuring the likes of Arturo Vidal, Alexis Sanchez and Claudio Bravo -- believe Saturday represents a now-or-never moment.

"This group of players has grown a lot, it's the right time to win something," Juventus midfielder Vidal said earlier this month.

"There is pressure but we are very calm and anxious to show we are a strong team."

GM Rakib champion

SPORTS REPORTER

Grand Master Abdullah Al-Rakib emerged champion in the Walton International Rating Chess Tournament with a one match left when he beat FM Mohammad Javed in the penultimate round at the Bangladesh Chess Federation hall room yesterday.

Rakib has now maximum eight points from as many matches.

FM Mehdi Hasan Pagar was in the second position with seven points while Enayet Hossain was in the third position with 6.5 points.

Eight players were jointly in the fourth position with six points each.

Sunday powers Abahani

SPORTS REPORTER

A brace from Nigerian marksman Sunday Chizoba powered Abahani to an emphatic 3-0 win over Feni Soccer Club in the Manyavar Premier League at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The seventh win in 12 matches meant four-time professional football league champions Abahani closed the gap with leaders Sheikh Jamal DC by four points as Abahani moved to the third position with 23 points while Sheikh Jamal have 27 points from 12 matches.

Fresh from a 2-0 win over Rahmatganj MFS, Abahani dominated the proceedings and created a few scoring chances in the first half but failed to cash in on any of those opportunities before Sunday, who also struck a brace against Rahmatganj MFS, proved his worth by netting another brace to rescue the Sky Blues.

That might play as a wake-up call for

FENI SOCCER 0 - 3 ABAHANI
CTG ABAHANI 1 - 1 MUKTIJODDHA
SK RUSSEL 3 - 1 BROTHERS

Abahani, who finally wake up from their slumber to strike three goals within 11 minutes.

Sunday, availing a square pass from Shahedul Alam Junior, nicely placed the ball on the edge of the box in the 58th minute and doubled the lead with a powerful shot that braced into the net after hitting the inside of the crossbar in the 67th minute.

Away at MA Aziz Stadium in Chittagong, hosts Chittagong Abahani came from behind to play out a 1-1 draw against visiting Muktijoddha Sangsad to collect first point on home ground.

Muktijoddha Sangsad, who were travelling to Chittagong on the back of a goalless draw with Feni Soccer Club, went ahead in the 69th minute by a strike from Faisal Mahmud only to be canceled by new signing Choumin Rakhaine in the 80th minute.

Meanwhile in the day's third match Sheikh Russel KC beat Brothers Union 3-1 at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. Sheikh Russel moved up to the fourth position with 23 points from 11 matches while Brothers slipped to the fifth position with previous 21 points from 12 matches.

Midfielder Hemanta Vincent Biswa gave Sheikh Russel a 27-minute lead with a placing shot before new signing Cameroonian midfielder Jean Jules Ikanga struck twice in the second half.



Abahani striker Sunday Chizoba (L) celebrates one of his two goals against Feni Soccer Club in the Manyavar Bangladesh Premier League match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

'No right to call it a World Cup'

DAWN.COM

In a scathing attack on the International Cricket Council (ICC), Scotland captain Preston Mommsen has labelled the governing body as myopic and threatened legal action over their decision to restrict future World Cups to 10 teams.

27-year-old Mommsen, who captained Scotland at the 2015 edition, said the Associate Members may 'consider taking the ICC to a higher body'.

The Associates had discussed plans to take the ICC to the Court of Arbitration for Sport when it was suggested that the 2015 tournament be a 10-team event as well.

"I don't think they have any right to call it a World Cup," Mommsen was quoted by ESPNcricinfo as saying.

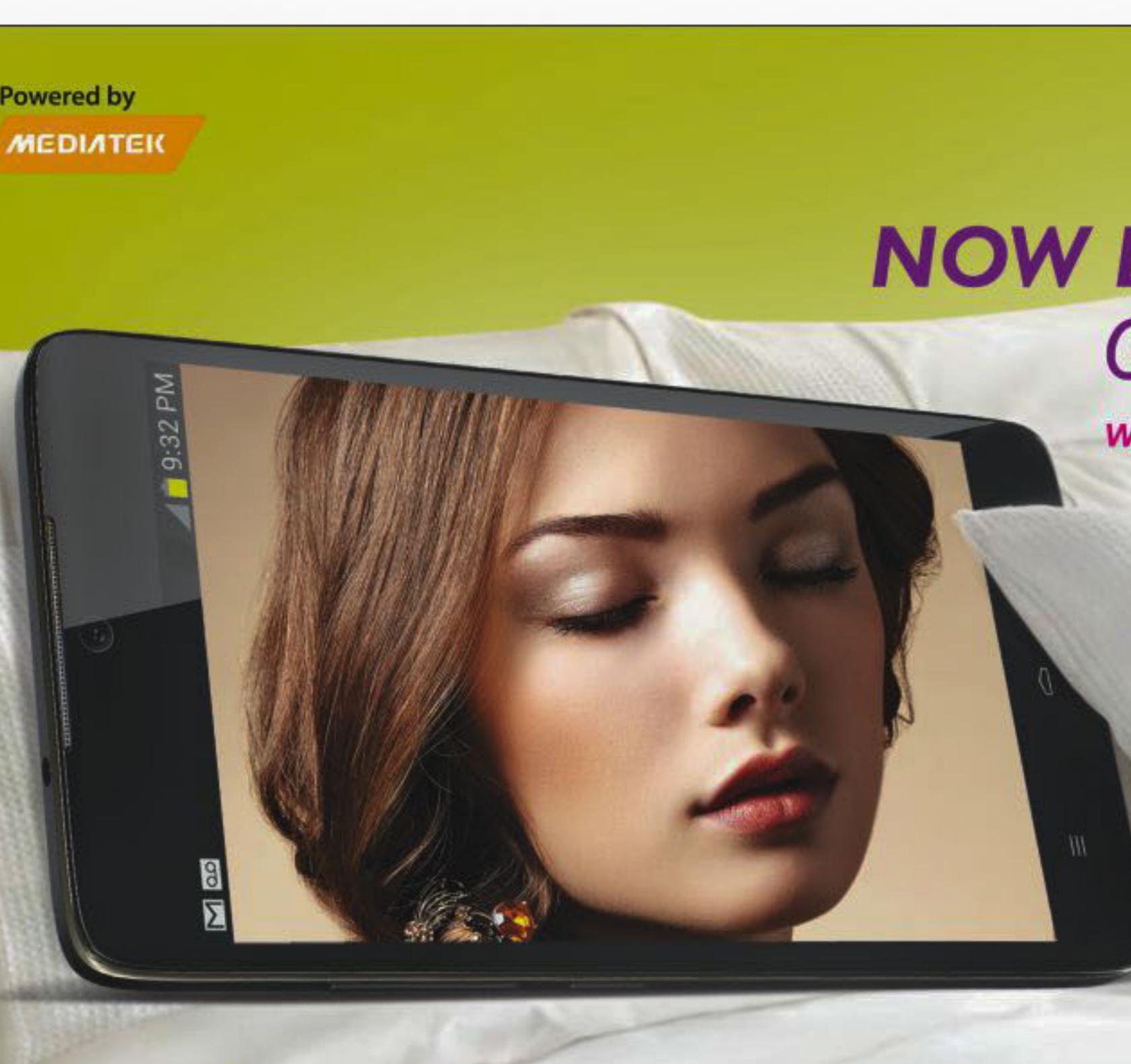
"The idea and dream of playing in a World Cup is what inspired me to try and play for Scotland. I'm sure it was the carrot for many current and past Scottish players to play the game."

The 2015 World Cup was termed by many former cricketers and experts as the 'Cup of the Associates' for their great performances. Indian legend Sachin Tendulkar went as far as saying the World Cup should be expanded to 25 teams.

Ireland's Niall O'Brien said he was baffled by the ICC's decision.

"All the other sports are expanding their World Cups and we don't see why we should be shrinking ours," he said.

"It's gut-wrenching. It's just a bit sad that potentially Ireland have played in their last World Cup."



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