

SPORT



After failing in three consecutive finals, Serena Williams finally overcame a mental hurdle to win a record-equalling 22nd Grand Slam title with a 7-5, 6-3 victory over Angelique Kerber at Wimbledon yesterday.

TRIVIA

- Serena Williams equalled Steffi Graf's Open era record of **22** major titles.
- This was her **7th** victory at Wimbledon.
- Serena has now reached nine Wimbledon finals and **28** in Grand Slams.
- Kerber failed to become the first player – other than Serena – to win two Grand Slams in a year since Justine Henin won French Open and US Open in 2007.
- Kerber also failed to become the first German woman to lift the Wimbledon singles crown since Graf **20** years ago.
- Serena had dropped just **1** set going into the final. More impressively, Kerber had dropped none.
- Serena maintains her number **1** ranking, while Kerber slips into second position.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Nepal friendlies on 15th, 17th Saintfiet to arrive on Tuesday

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh is set to host Nepal for two international friendly matches later this week at the Bangabandhu National Stadium in Dhaka. The two friendlies, slated for July 15 and 17, are believed to have been arranged as a preparation for Bangladesh's Asian Cup qualifying playoffs against Bhutan in September and October. While the All Nepal Football Association has already declared a full-strength 21-man squad for these two fixtures, which they are in turn using as preparation for November's AFC Solidarity Cup, Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) has yet to confirm the details of the matches officially. "The correspondence with our Nepalese counterparts began during the Eid holidays, and both the parties have agreed on the issue. However, we will officially confirm everything about the matches after a National Teams Committee meeting tomorrow [Sunday]," Abu Nayeem Shohag, general secretary of Bangladesh Football Association, told reporters yesterday.

The BFF general secretary further informed that Tom Saintfiet, the Belgian coach who has been chosen for the post of the national team's head coach, will arrive in Dhaka on the morning of July 12 and is expected initiate a preparation camp later that day. "Saintfiet will start training the team here in Dhaka on the day he arrives [Tuesday], and he will have a good idea about the players by the time the two matches are over. He has already made a list of 32 players, from which the squad for the Nepal matches and the qualifying matches against Bhutan will be selected," said Shohag. "The details of his contract will be finalised in the meantime. Saintfiet had asked for a goalkeeping coach and a fitness trainer. We have said that those things will be decided later while the issue of the Australian technical director will be discussed as well during this time." Shohag informed that the Belgian has been apprised of the security situation here in the wake of the Gulshan attacks. The Nepal team are expected to arrive in Dhaka on Wednesday. After the two matches, Saintfiet will watch the fixtures of the Bangladesh Premier League, which is scheduled to kick off on July 24 in Chittagong.

Hamilton grabs pole in Britain

AFP, Silverstone

Lewis Hamilton held his nerve to grab pole position ahead of Mercedes teammate Nico Rosberg for Sunday's British Grand Prix with a spectacular lap in the final seconds of an intense qualifying session. The defending three-time world champion, who had his first flying run in Q3 deleted because he ran off the track, outpaced the championship leader and his rival Rosberg with a lap in one minute and 29.287 seconds on Saturday. This lifted him clear of the German by three-tenths of a second and ensured they start together on the front row again, a week after their last-lap crash in Austria, where Hamilton seized a controversial victory. It was in-form Hamilton's fourth pole at the British Grand Prix, his sixth this season and the 55th of his career.

Finally her 22nd

AFP, London



Serena Williams powered to her seventh Wimbledon crown as the world number one finally claimed a record-equalling 22nd major title with a 7-5, 6-3 victory over Angelique Kerber in Saturday's final. Williams had been stuck on 21 Grand Slams since winning last year's Wimbledon, but the American star ended that frustrating barren spell to retain the title and draw level with Steffi Graf's Open era record. Serena was pushed hard by Kerber in a high-quality clash lasting 81 minutes on Centre Court, but the German fourth seed eventually crumbled under a barrage of 39 winners and 13 aces from the defending champion. "It's a great feeling to be here. Angelique brings out great tennis in me," said Serena. "Number 22 is awesome. Centre Court feels like home." Kerber said the American was a great champion. "Serena you deserve it, you are a great champion and great person. We played a great match," said Kerber. "It's an honour to play on Centre Court and a great feeling." Having avenged her shock loss against Kerber

in the Australian Open final in January, Williams was wreathed in smiles as she paraded the Venus Rosewater Dish around Centre Court after collecting a cheque for £2 million (\$2.5 million, 2.3 million euros). But the far more significant reward is the knowledge she has reestablished her supremacy at a time when doubters were beginning to question the 34-year-old's hunger for more silverware after consecutive Slam final defeats this year. In a testament to her remarkable longevity as the sport's preeminent force, Serena is once again Wimbledon's queen 14 years after her first success at the All England Club. Equalling Margaret Court's all-time record of 24 Grand Slam titles will be Serena's next goal. The 71st singles title of Williams' astonishing career also moved her within two of Martina Navratilova's all-time record of nine Wimbledon triumphs. Showing signs of cracking under the pressure of her bid for tennis immortality, Williams had cut a grumpy figure for much of the tournament, earning a fine for racquet smashing and threatening to sue Wimbledon officials if she was injured on a wet court. But a serene focus came over Williams with the trophy in sight and she delivered a 48-minute masterclass against Elena Vesnina in the quickest semi-final in Wimbledon history.

MOST GRAND SLAM TITLES (OPEN ERA)

NAME	COUNTRY	TITLES
Steffi Graf	Germany	22
Serena Williams	United States	22
Chris Evert	United States	18
Martina Navratilova	United States	18
Margaret Court	Australia	11

Wild cards for Sagor, Tumpa

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh received two more wild cards for the Rio Olympic Games as the number of confirmed participation for the country increased to four. Swimmers Mahfizur Rahman Sagor and Sonia Akter Tumpa earned the wild-card entries as confirmed Bangladesh Swimming Federation's general secretary Rafiz Uddin Ahmed. "I was confirmed of the two wild cards on Friday night. We had asked for four cards, but FINA, the International governing body of swimming, allocated us two cards for Sagor and Tumpa." The allotment of the two wild cards means a total of four Bangladeshi athletes have so far been eligible to represent the country in the Olympic Games, scheduled for August 5 to 21 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Earlier, shooter Abdullah Hel Baki and archer Shyamoly Roy also earned wild cards for the biggest sporting event on earth. However, the number of Bangladeshi participants is likely to increase as golfer Siddikur Rahman is all but confirmed to get a direct entry into the games through qualification.

Siddikur, who is now in 53rd position in the Olympic ranking with 60 golfers from across the world to be able to participate in the games, has a bright chance to directly qualify as the first ever athlete from Bangladesh. His participation will be officially confirmed when the final list is disclosed on Monday night. Sagor, who will return to Dhaka today after completing a year-long high-performance training course in Thailand, is going to participate in the Olympics for the second time after representing Bangladesh in the 2012 London Olympics. However, a shoulder injury during an Olympic qualifying meet in Hong Kong last month has left the country's best swimmer in some doubt. "I'm happy to get the wild card, but the shoulder injury is a major concern for me," Sagor said on Saturday. "Doctors and my trainers have told me to take rest, but it is not possible to rest ahead of the Olympics." Sagor, who won seven bronze medals in the South Asian Games in India earlier this year, failed to earn a direct entry in either of the 50m or 100m freestyle events.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Athletics Federation and Bangladesh Boxing Federation are still hopeful of getting at least two wild cards, but they are yet to get any positive response from either the Bangladesh Olympic Association or the respective world governing bodies. Athletics federation's general secretary Ibrahim Chengis said they are looking towards BOA for getting a wild-card as they asked for two wild cards for their two best sprinters Mezbah Uddin Ahmed and Shirin Akter. "BOA is corresponding with International Olympic Committee and World Athletics Federation on behalf of us regarding the wild cards," Chengis said. "As the mother of sports, athletics should get a wild card." Boxing Federation's general secretary MA Kuddus said they are waiting for positive news on boxer Al-Amin. "As he [Al-Amin] is undergoing a training course of the World Boxing Federation, we hope he will be considered for a wild card," Kuddus said. BOA said that the fate of Mezbah, Shirin and Al-Amin will be known on July 14 as the IOC will complete the list of participating athletes on that day.

32 runs & 2 scalps for Shakib so far

SPORTS REPORTER

While most of the national cricketers are spending quality time with their respective families, courtesy of the long break they received from the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB), ace all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan is busy with the Caribbean Premier League in the West Indies. He has played in all the three matches for the Jamaica Tallawahs so far. The all-rounder, who is playing alongside the likes of Kumar Sangakkara and Chris Gayle, has put in some decent performances. In the first game against St Kitts and Nevis, he finished with figures of 1 for 25 in four overs. That spell helped his side defend a moderate 153. He got whacked for 26 runs in two overs in the second game and was dismissed by New Zealand's Brendon McCullum. However, a Gayle special saved Jamaica from the Trinbago Knight Riders that day. Gayle smacked 108 off 54 balls to help his side chase down 191 and Shakib put in his best all-round performance. He scored 25 off 23 with the bat and before going on to bag figures of 1 for 21 in four overs. However, Jamaica went on to lose that game and are currently placed second with two wins. Shakib has plenty of good memories in the CPL. He even scalped a six-wicket haul here once and recorded his best bowling figures in T20 cricket. In fact his figures of 6 for 6 is the second best ever recorded in T20 cricket. He is scheduled to play the Barbados Tridents tomorrow.



Ace all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan (2nd from R) enjoys his dinner with team members at Barbados. PHOTO: COLLECTED

Gold, silver in children's games

SPORTS REPORTER

BKSP shooter Abu Sufian won a silver medal in the 10m air rifle event of the 6th Children of Asia International Sports Games yesterday, which is being held currently in Yakutia, Russia, said a press release from Bangladesh Olympic Association. Bangladesh had earlier won a gold medal in the mixed doubles of recurve bow (archery) event on Friday, thanks to the performance of Hakim Ahmed Rubel and Radia Akter Shapla of BKSP. Apart from shooting and archery, the Bangladesh contingent also comprise of a chess and taekwondo team.

Ganguly faces no opposition

PTI, Kolkata

Former India captain Sourav Ganguly is unlikely to face opposition at the 85th AGM of the Cricket Association of Bengal on July 31 as he is set to retain his president's chair. While there are some who are against Ganguly, with blessings of the ruling Trinamool Congress, it is a unlikely that anyone will stand against him. Leading bookmakers were quoting

Murray's steel goes up against Raonic's power

REUTERS, London



Canadian Milos Raonic will not be the only man experiencing something new on Wimbledon's Centre Court on Sunday -- for the first time Britain's Andy Murray will start a grand slam final as favourite after crushing Tomas Berdych in the semis. Murray was seeded to meet world number one Novak Djokovic in another major showdown but the Serb's shock early exit opened the door for sixth seed Raonic to reach his maiden grand slam final after making the semis two years ago. All 10 of Murray's previous grand slam finals were against either Djokovic or Federer, which explains why the 29-year-old Scot has endured more than his fair share of pain and still only has two majors to his name. One of those defeats came against a sublime Federer in the 2012 Wimbledon final and a repeat of that duel was expected until the Swiss maestro lost to Raonic on Friday. With a 6-3 head-to-head career lead over the 25-year-old Raonic, Murray will be expected to get his grand slam collection rolling again, three years after beating Djokovic to become Britain's first Wimbledon men's singles champion for 77 years. Leading bookmakers were quoting

FINAL H2H	
ANDY MURRAY (2) V MILOS RAONIC (6)	
Head to Head (Overall) Played:	9
6	3
Head to Head on Grass:	1
1	0
WIMBLEDON 2016 STATS	
20	Sets Played 23
2	Sets Lost 5
32	Return Games Won 16
51	Aces 113
196	Winners 345
13h	Time on court 15h
7m	4m

Murray as 2-7 on favourite hours after he beat Berdych on Friday. "It's the first time I'll play a slam final against someone that isn't Roger or Novak. So, yeah, that's different,"

Murray, who won the 2012 U.S. Open against Djokovic, told reporters. "But you never know how anyone's going to deal with the pressures of a slam final. I'll just concentrate on my side, do what I can to prepare well for it and see what happens." Murray's most recent encounter with the big-serving Raonic came in the pre-Wimbledon warm-up event at Queen's Club when he beat him in a fiercely-contested final having trailed. "It's obviously an opportunity. I put myself in a position to try and win the (Wimbledon) event again. It's against someone new that I'm playing against in the final," Murray said. "But Milos is a very tough opponent. He's played very well on the grass this year and has earned his right to (be in) the final by beating one of the best, if not the best, player ever at this event. So he deserves to be there." Raonic has played two tough five-setters to reach the final, against David Goffin in round four and Friday's thriller with Federer, whereas Murray's path has been relatively smooth. A two-hour semi-final against Berdych, in which he made only nine unforced errors for a 6-3 6-3 6-3 win, was about as stress-free as it gets at the business end of a grand slam tournament. "I feel pretty calm just now, maybe because of the way the match went," Murray said. "There weren't many complications. "I feel fairly calm."

Pakistan off to strong start

AFP, London

Azhar Ali's fine form with the bat gave Pakistan the perfect boost ahead of the first Test with England next week as he stroked his second successive century in their tour match with Sussex on Friday. Ali hit a fine 145 -- admittedly against an under-strength second-division county side attack -- as the tourists finished the first day on 363 for five. Younis Khan and Misbah-ul-Haq made half centuries with Sussex thankful that debutant pace bowler Jofra Archer didn't suffer from nerves as he returned impressive figures of four for 49. The 21-year-old had the Pakistanis in trouble early on with a two-wicket blast that saw them reduced to 49-2. But a third wicket stand of 125 between Ali and Younis turned the match back in Pakistan's favour until Younis fell on 59 to a catch by Ajmal Shahzad off the bowling of Danny Briggs. Misbah quickly replaced his team-mate and kept Pakistan on track, reaching 221 for three at tea, before he became another victim of Archer when he trapped him lbw on 68. Ali too fell before stumps, Archer having him caught by Ben Brown.