

# SPORT

## Maria out of Rio

AFP, Lausanne

The Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) said Monday it has put back its ruling on the two-year doping ban for Maria Sharapova for two months to September, ruling the tennis superstar out of the Rio Olympics.

The 29-year-old Russian tested positive for the banned medication meldonium during January's Australian Open, in a severe blow to her reputation.

If the ban -- which Sharapova has called "unfairly harsh" -- is upheld it would almost certainly end one of sport's most celebrated and high-profile careers.

"Maria Sharapova and the International Tennis Federation (ITF) have agreed to defer the CAS decision until September 2016," said a CAS statement.

"Due to the parties requiring additional time to complete and respond to their respective evidentiary submissions, and several scheduling conflicts, the parties have agreed not to expedite the appeal.

"A decision is expected to be issued by September 19, 2016."

The original ruling was expected by July 18, with Sharapova hoping that a successful appeal would have allowed her to spearhead the Russian tennis team in Rio.

CAS confirmed to AFP that Sharapova will not be able to compete at the Olympics.

Russia's participation at the Games, which begin on August 5, is already under fierce scrutiny after its track and field team was banned for separate state-sponsored doping.

The Russian tennis federation chief said Sharapova's absence in Rio would badly dent their medal hopes.

"(It is) a serious loss for our team at the Olympics as we counted on her medal in women's singles," TASS news agency quoted Shamil Tarpishchev as saying.

## Siddikur Bangladesh's first

SPORTS REPORTER



Golfer Siddikur Rahman became the first Bangladeshi sports personality to qualify for the Olympic Games after he was placed in 56th position in the final eligibility list for the Rio 2016 Games yesterday. The latest and final list, which is updated each week corresponding to world golf rankings, was updated late last night, confirming the 31-year-old's participation in the games, which will be held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil from August 5 to 21.

"The two-year qualification process for golf's return to the Olympic Games for the first time in 112 years has been completed today with the publication of the Final Olympic Golf Rankings," read a statement on the website of International Golf Federation.

"With no fewer than 40 countries included in the Final Rankings across the men's and women's competitions, to be played at



Reserva de Marapendi Golf Course between August 11 and 20, the composition of the Olympic fields will highlight the broad global diversity of the sport in Rio de Janeiro," added the statement.

The confirmation ensured that the two-time Asian Tour winning golfer will be the first Bangladeshi to participate in the Olympic Games through qualification, as all the other athletes to have participated so far have done so through wild

cards provided to each national Olympic association by the International Olympic Committee to encourage participation for all countries.

Siddikur was ecstatic on hearing the news of the confirmation of his participation.

"This is a great honour for me as well as for the game of golf. I believe no other sportsman from the country ever took part in the Olympic Games through qualification before this. So I am honoured and glad that I will be representing my country through the game 1 play in Rio de Janeiro," the 31-year-old told The Daily Star last night.

Having slipped out of the eligibility list in April, the Bangladeshi golfer stormed back into contention the following month by finishing second in the prestigious Afr-Asia Mauritius Open. Since then he has been confident about holding the position, so much so that he had already booked his flight for Rio de Janeiro.

"I have already booked a ticket for Rio and hopefully I will be able to make my country proud in the golf event, which will be held in 72-hole strokeplay format over four days," said the ace golfer.

Bangladesh have thus far earned four wild cards for this year's games -- two for swimmers Mahfizur Rahman Sagor and Sonia Akter Tumpa and one each for archer Shyamoly Roy and shooter Abdullahel Baki. The Bangladesh officials are still hoping of getting at least another wild card by the time

## Saintfiet deal on the cards

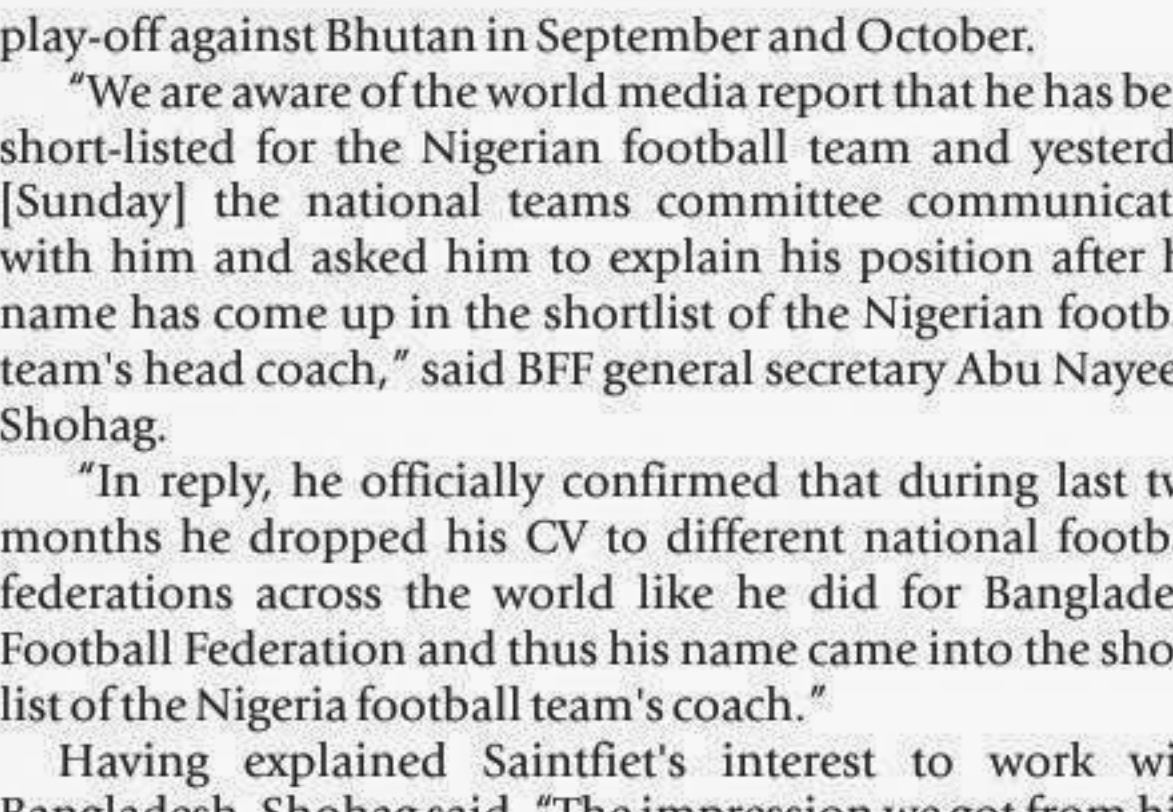
SPORTS REPORT



The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) seem optimistic in their pursuit of striking a short-term deal with Belgian coach Tom Saintfiet as head coach of Bangladesh's national football team despite the fact that the 42-year-old coach is in a three-man shortlist for the post of Nigeria's national football team head coach as well.

Saintfiet, who garnered his vast experience through managing different national teams across the world as well as working as technical director at the Nigerian football federation and a few clubs, is scheduled to arrive in Dhaka early today.

As reported, he plans to conduct a five-day training camp to get an impression of the players as well as finalise the contract to guide Bangladesh in their Asian Cup Qualifiers



**A WAY OUT:** Several deprived youngsters who make a living off the streets were given an opportunity to celebrate Eid in one of the best ways possible. They took part in a two-day football tournament that began at the Walton Ground yesterday. This initiative was taken by the Sports Lovers Association along with Walton.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

## 'Didn't mean to embarrass him'

BBC ONLINE

Andy Murray has told fans he did not mean to embarrass David Cameron in his Wimbledon victory speech.

The prime minister was jeered when Murray paid tribute to him after lifting the championship trophy on Centre Court on Sunday.

In a Facebook question-and-answer session, the world number two was asked whether he meant to embarrass the PM.

"No I certainly didn't," he said. "I appreciate that he came to support yesterday and came to watch."

The 29-year-old from Dunblane beat Milos Raonic in three sets to win his second Wimbledon title.

In an on-court interview with Sue Barker after the match, he acknowledged Mr Cameron, who watched from the royal box.

As the crowd jeered, the camera panned to the prime minister but he managed to laugh off the moment.

Despite the chorus of boos, Murray said: "I think playing in a Wimbledon final is tough but I certainly wouldn't like to be prime minister. It's an impossible job."

And in a Q&A on social media on Monday, he added: "Like I said afterwards, it's one of the hardest jobs in the world with lots and lots of responsibilities."

"I don't envy anyone who's in a position like that - it's extremely difficult."

Murray also told fans that he was "pretty tired" after celebrating his Wimbledon victory with his team on Sunday night.

"My head's not too bad," he said. "It was good fun."

And asked whether he had seen Ivan Lendl shed a tear, he joked about his famously poker-faced coach.

"His excuse was that he wasn't crying and that it was allergies that were making his eyes run," Murray said.

"I don't believe him but that's what he said."

He said his immediate plans were to take a few days off after playing tennis "pretty much non-stop" for the last few months. The father-of-one also gave an insight into how important his family



Wimbledon champion Andy Murray delighted the fans on Sunday at the All England Lawn Tennis Club with his shots as well as a humorous post-match speech, which unintentionally gave the spectators a reason to jeer UK Prime Minister David Cameron (INSET) in the aftermath of Brexit.



PHOTOS: REUTERS

## Sunny's sugar comfort

PTI, Mumbai

Sunil Gavaskar is known for his impregnable defence against the all-time-great West Indies pace battery, but the former opening batsman, who turned 67 on Sunday, had a weakness -- glucose biscuits from Amchi Mumbai.

This was revealed by his younger sister Nutan at a function organised to mark his birthday by the Legends Club at the Cricket Club of India.

"He used to like those biscuits...Parle G glucose biscuits. West Indies was a long way off and (it was a) long tour, so he would like to have those biscuits for his tea or coffee, so whoever was travelling there, we would try and send those packets of biscuits for him," Nutan Gavaskar told reporters.

"He would pack (the biscuits before the tour), they often used to get over in three weeks or a month. Whoever travelled to that place...some journalist, or someone we knew, or relatives, some friends (we used to send biscuits with them)," she added.

"Now he is a little worried about diabetes and those biscuits are little sweet, so he tries and avoids them."

## Coming full circle

AFP, London



The floppy hair he had as a teenager may have been replaced by a shorter cut and the once clean-shaven face is now home to a goatee beard.

But there was no mistaking the whippy left-arm action as Mohammad Amir ran into bowl against Somerset at Taunton last week or the "airplane" celebration that greeted his three first-innings wickets.

It was a sight many fans would have been forgiven for thinking they would never see again on an English field after Amir's career came to a dramatic and possibly terminal halt at Lord's in 2010.

During that year's Test against England, Amir and Pakistan new-ball partner Mohammad Asif bowled no-balls to order on the instructions of their captain Salman Butt as part of a sting operation carried out by a tabloid newspaper.

All three received five-year bans from cricket and, together with sports agent Mazhar Majeed, jail terms.

There was a sense of shock and anger among cricket fans, although in Amir's case there was also an overwhelming sense of sadness that an 18-year-old should have become caught up in such a scandal.

Former West Indies fast bowler Michael Holding is not given to excessive displays of emotion in his work as a television commentator and pundit.

Yet he was in tears as he discussed Amir's plight live on air the morning after the night the story during the Lord's Test.

For Amir was -- and on the evidence of the Somerset match still is -- a superbly skilled bowler, with the rare ability to make the ball swing late at sharp pace off a good

length, one of the most difficult types of bowling for even the best batsmen to face.

It helped him earn him the Pakistan man of the series award against England after he had taken 19 wickets at under 19 apiece in four Tests.

His talent created a certain sympathy among cricket fans amid a widespread belief that he had been led astray by more experienced team-mates.

He has only played limited overs internationals for Pakistan since his return, but his career could come full circle when the first of a four-Test series against England starts at Lord's on Thursday.

Interestingly, Amir himself is now in favour of life bans, telling AFP in an interview in Karachi last month: "If fixing is still happening then it's really alarming. I fully back that fixers should be banned for life."

With Amir's talent undimmed, Pakistan captain Misbah-ul-Haq opined before the Somerset match that 'he can still be the best bowler in the world'.

England captain Alastair Cook, who played in the 2010 match, suggested Amir might get a rough ride from the Lord's crowd.

But there were no boos at Taunton and he could well get a polite reception at the "home of cricket".

"You don't see many 18-year-old's bowl like he did, he is an exceptional talent," said Cook at Lord's last week.

"It will be difficult for us."

Meanwhile Amir is well aware of his good fortune.

"I still can't believe that this is happening," he said.

"You call it a coincidence or whatever but for me it's a blessing that I am restarting (Tests) right at Lord's from where I stopped

