



Romania's Simona Halep holds aloft the Wimbledon trophy after beating record-chasing Serena Williams of USA in the final of women's singles at the All England Lawn Tennis Club in London yesterday.

# Halep halts Serena's history bid

AFP, London

Simona Halep torpedoed Serena Williams's latest bid to capture a record-equalling 24th Grand Slam on Saturday when she stormed to a sensational victory in a 56-minute Wimbledon final.

The 27-year-old Romanian captured her second career major with a 6-2, 6-2 victory adding a maiden Wimbledon -- the first for her country in both men's and women's singles -- to her 2018 Roland Garros triumph.

Defeat for 37-year-old Williams, a seven-time Wimbledon champion who won the last of her 23 Slam titles at the 2017 Australian Open, meant her attempt to equal Margaret Court's all-time record for major wins was put back on ice until at least the US Open.

"My mom said when I was 10 that if I want to do something in tennis I have to play in the final at Wimbledon," said Halep.

"I had lots of nerves, my stomach wasn't very well. I have never played a better match."

"I said at the start of the tournament that one of my motivations was to win and become a lifetime member of the club."

Williams bluntly admitted she had not been at the races against a superior opponent.

"She played out of her mind. I was like a deer in the headlights," said Williams.

Williams was undone by 26 unforced errors to Halep's two.

Williams may have kept Halep waiting to go on court but if she hoped that would upset her opponent it did quite the opposite.

Indeed the Halep fan who burst into song -- waving a Romanian scarf from the 2015 Rugby World Cup -- singing "We love you Simona, we do!" served to give her the boost to rattle Williams from the start.

A flashing forehand crosscourt set the tone and she broke her in the first game.

She broke again to lead 3-0 -- things clearly not going Williams's way when a Halep shot clipped the net and went over but the American's shot also clipped the net but failed to go over.

Already 3-0 down after eight minutes, Williams was completely at sea and by the time Halep served to lead 4-0 Williams had won just six points.

She finally got on the board with her next service game but Halep had little trouble

in sealing the set which included another remarkable point from the Romanian.

The 27-year-old raced to retrieve an incredible get which sneaked over the net and Williams was only able to put her shot into the net.

Williams -- who has let slip opportunities to equal Court's record in last year's Wimbledon and US Open finals -- appeared to at last get fired up in the first game of the second set.

She let out a long yell at the ground when she won a point on her serve and another on the next point.

However, that was a rare show of her fiery side as Halep broke her to lead 3-2.

Halep rubbed in her superiority to break her again for 5-2 -- two powerful serves earlier in the game had Williams saying why was I not able to do this earlier -- and took the match and the title with aplomb with the first of her three match points.

She sank to her knees a broad smile on her face before rising to hug Williams.

Her victory also gave Halep's favoured royal Kate, Duchess of Cambridge, bragging rights over sister-in-law Meghan, Duchess of Sussex -- they were sitting beside each other in the Royal Box. Meghan is a close friend of Williams.

# Federer seeks to break Djokovic spell

AFP, London

Eight-time Wimbledon champion Roger Federer believes the "stars have aligned" as he attempts to become the oldest Grand Slam winner of modern times in Sunday's final against Novak Djokovic.

The 37-year-old Swiss can clinch a record-extending 21st major if he manages to break free of the world number one's stranglehold.

Four-time Wimbledon winner and defending champion Djokovic enjoys a 25-22 edge in career meetings, stretching back 13 years.

The Serb has won 14 of their last 20 meetings and eight of the last 10.

Federer has lost all four of their most recent meetings at the Slams and it's now seven years since he triumphed over the 32-year-old at the majors.

That was 2012 in four sets in a Wimbledon semifinal.

However, Federer, who will be 38 next month, insists such statistics are meaningless as he attempts to succeed Ken Rosewall, at the 1972 Australian Open, as the oldest Slam champion of the Open era.

"It's been a rock solid year for me. I won in Halle (on grass on the eve of Wimbledon). The stars are aligned right now," said Federer.

"From that standpoint I can go into the match very confident."

Federer, who passed the 100-win mark at Wimbledon in his quarterfinal victory over Kei Nishikori, is feeling especially confident after seeing off Rafael Nadal in four sets in the semifinal.

That win was crucial coming as it did just a month after his old rival had condemned him to his worst Slam loss in 11 years in the semifinals at Roland Garros.

Appearing in his 12th final at the All England Club, and 16 years after his maiden Wimbledon title triumph, Federer believes there is little new that either he or Djokovic can do to prepare for Sunday's showdown.

"This is like at school -- on the day of the test you're not going to read, I don't know, how many books that day."

"It's quite clear the work was done way before."

There is no doubt whatsoever as to who the crowd will support.

Djokovic, a 15-time Grand Slam champion, is respected by British fans but certainly not revered in the same saintly fashion reserved for Federer.

Too intense and too new age for modest British tastes, Djokovic did little to endear himself in his semifinal win over Roberto Bautista Agut.

After a punishing 45-shot rally ended in his favour, the Serb roared out his frustration, cupped his ear and placed an admonishing finger to his lips as most of Centre Court willed the ball to fall in the



DJOKOVIC FEDERER

Spaniard's favour.

"Look, I focus on what I need to do," said Djokovic.

"At times they wanted him to come back into the match, maybe take a lead because he was an underdog."

"I understand that. But I had enough support here over the years, so I don't complain."

Djokovic has yet to be truly tested at this Wimbledon.

The highest-ranked player he has faced was 21st-seeded David Goffin of Belgium who was dismissed for the loss of just six games in the quarterfinals.

The 'NextGen' hopefuls in his half of the draw all failed to fire.

# Chess coach Rausis caught cheating?

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh chess team's coach and Grand Master Igor Rausis has been allegedly caught cheating during a chess tournament in Strasbourg, France and faces heavy punishment from the game's world governing body FIDE.

The 58-year-old chess-player-cum-coach, who has coached Bangladesh five times since between 2000 and 2018 was photographed using his cellphone -- allegedly using chess apps to determine his next moves -- at a toilet during a game of Strasbourg Open on Thursday.

The former Latvian champion climbed from a FIDE rating of around 2500 to the verge of 2700 in six years. Rausis also became the oldest player in the top 100, reaching number 40 and has a current FIDE rating of 2686.

It was not disclosed who photographed the chess player in that position and under what circumstances, but some chess players have in recent times expressed their suspicion over the meteoric rise of Rausis in rating points.

It is understood that FIDE Fair Play Commission had been following Rausis closely and the photograph might have been a part of a sting operation.

"The final result is finding a phone in the toilet and also finding its owner. Now the incident will follow the regular procedure and a trial will follow to establish what really happened," FIDE Fair Play Commission's secretary Yuri Garrett said on a Facebook post on Thursday.

Media reports said Rausis has been suspended from the tournament and French police will conduct its own investigation into the incident.

Rausis, speaking to Chess.com after the incident, said: "I simply lost my mind yesterday. I confirmed the fact of using my phone during the game by written [statement]. What could I say more? Yes, I was tired after the morning game and all the Facebook activity of accusers also have a known impact. At least what I committed yesterday is a good lesson, not for me -- I played my last game of chess already."

Meanwhile, the news was greeted by the chess authorities in Bangladesh with initially disbelief before international media coverage convinced them of the authenticity of the scandal.

"We are shocked and aggrieved at the findings regarding Rausis, who we knew as a good person and a good coach while he worked with our chess players," Bangladesh Chess Federation's general secretary Syed Shahabuddin Shamim told the Daily Star last night.

"We had sent Rausis air ticket to Dhaka to train FM Fahad Rahman for one month for the upcoming World Cup. He was supposed to arrive on July 20. We even talked with him yesterday [Friday] as we initially thought the news was a conspiracy. But now it is quite evident that he was cheating and we deplore the coach's action. So there is no point of him coaching Bangladesh team anymore," Shamim added.

Rausis had participated in the chess leagues in Bangladesh in the late 1990s and early 2000s before coaching the national team in 2000, 2002, 2007 and 2008. His last assignment as Bangladesh coach was last year when he took the team to Georgia for the 43rd Chess Olympiad following three months' training.



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ICC CRICKET WORLD CUP FINAL

ENGLAND v NEW ZEALAND

LIVE FROM 3:30PM

STAR SPORTS SELECT 2

WIMBLEDON MEN'S SINGLES FINAL

DJOKOVIC v FEDERER

LIVE FROM 7:00PM

**Atleti to take Barca to FIFA**

AFP, Madrid

Atletico Madrid will challenge the amount Barcelona paid to acquite Antoine Griezmann's transfer, Spanish media reported on Saturday.

Sports daily AS said Atletico will go to FIFA, the governing body of world football, to argue that Barcelona owe more than the 120 million euros (\$135 million) release clause deposited by a lawyer for the player on Friday.

AS wrote that Atletico wants to have both Barcelona and Griezmann punished. Contacted by AFP on Saturday, the club refused to comment.

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