



Novak Djokovic waves to the crowd holding the Wimbledon trophy after beating Roger Federer in the longest final of the tournament at the All England Lawn Tennis Club in London yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Djokovic claims fifth title in epic final

AFP, London



Novak Djokovic saved two match points to clinch a fifth Wimbledon title and 16th major on Sunday, shattering Roger Federer's bid to become the oldest Grand Slam champion in the longest final ever played at the tournament.

Despite being outplayed by the 37-year-old Swiss for large parts of the knife-edge encounter, the world number one triumphed 7-6 (7/5), 1-6, 7-6 (7/4), 4-6, 13-12 (7/3).

At 4 hours and 57 minutes, it was the longest Wimbledon final ever played and settled by a final set tiebreak for the first time.

Djokovic is the first man in 71 years to win the title from match points down.

He is now level with Bjorn Borg as a five-time Wimbledon winner.

"I think that if this is not the most exciting final then definitely it's in the top two or three of my career against one of the greatest players of all time, Roger, who

I respect," said Djokovic.

"Unfortunately in this type of match someone has to lose. It is quite unreal to be two match points down to come back and strange to play a tie-break at 12-12."

Djokovic is just four Grand Slam titles shy of the all-time record held by Federer who is more than five years older.

It was incredibly tough on Federer, chasing a ninth Wimbledon crown, who didn't face a break point until the eighth game of the fourth set.

He even had two match points in the 16th game of the deciding set which lasted over two hours.

"It was long and it had everything. I had answers, so did he and we played some great tennis," said Federer.

"I hope I give some other people at 37 the feeling it is not over yet."

Djokovic's win meant that the 'Big Three' of men's tennis -- himself, Federer and Rafael Nadal -- have won the last 11 Slams.

He has now won nine of his last 11 clashes against Federer and three of their four Wimbledon meetings.

Abahani unsure of Neymar renews war with PSG replacements

SPORTS REPORTER



Abahani made a piece of history last month by reaching the knockout stages of the AFC Cup for the first time, but the country's most successful club in domestic circuit are apparently in a quandary over the possible foreign and local replacements ahead of their inter-zone play-off semifinals against North Korea's April 25 Sports Club.

The six-time Bangladesh Premier League champions will host April 25 SC on August 21 in Dhaka before travelling to North Korea for the August 28 away fixture in a bid to qualify for the inter-zone final.

The Sky Blues played their last three group matches against Channaiyin FC, Manang Marshyangdi Club and Minerva Punjab without their injured Brazilian midfielder Wellington Priori while key players like centre-back Tapu Barman and defensive midfielder Atiqur Rahman Fahad also missed the last four matches due to injuries.

Ahead of the inter-zone play-off semifinals, Abahani are getting an opportunity to replace those injured players to strength their squad, but the team management is apparently in hesitation whether to include a foreign defender or a midfielder apart from the replacements of the two local players.

Each participating team is eligible to field four foreign players including a player from Asia and Abahani could use only three foreign players due to injury of Priori, who was fielded in both defence and in midfield in the first three games.

"We have recently sat with the coaching staff to discuss the matter but they pondered on whether we need a centre-back or a midfielder because we have to face a strong April 25 SC side.

"We have not made a final decision yet but we are looking for foreign players in both positions because we want to secure points against April 25 SC at home and then think of the away match," Abahani manager Satyajit Das Rupu said yesterday.

Rupu said that they are likely to finalise the decision by July 20, with the deadline of submission of the replacements is August 6.

Abahani's long-serving manager hinted that they might consider their former Ghanaian defender Samad Yussif or look for any other available foreign player from the ongoing Bangladesh Premier League.

"The replacements of local players depend on the collection of foreign players. If we rope in a foreign defender, then the vacuum in midfield will be filled by the local players," Rupu said, adding they have the opportunity to register at least six players in the third registration window for AFC Cup.

AFP, Paris



Neymar fired another shot in his battle with Paris Saint-Germain after saying his favourite football memory is Barcelona's incredible 2017 comeback win over PSG, which Neymar helped inflict on his current club.

Asked by online sports channel Oh My Goal about his best changing room memory, the world's most expensive player chose the aftermath of that win.

"We all went crazy afterwards. I think it was the best possible feeling for all of us," the Brazilian star said in the interview, which was posted on Saturday.

Neymar was speaking in Sao Paulo ahead of his belated return to the club on Monday, after insisting last week that he had prior agreement from PSG to stay in Brazil to help his foundation, the Neymar Institute.

His comments are set to further strain his relationship with the club.

He wants out of the Parc des Princes and would prefer a return to Barca, but is struggling to find suitors due to the 222 million euros (\$252 million) the capital splashed out to take him away from Barcelona two years ago.

The chances of him rejoining the Catalan giants are further complicated by Antoine Griezmann's arrival from Atletico Madrid for 120 million euros.

When Neymar missed last Monday's first training session PSG issued a statement declaring they would take "appropriate action" against the star.

Sporting director Leonardo has nevertheless said that "Neymar can leave PSG if there is an offer that suits everybody".



Brazilian star Neymar shields the ball from a player in a five-a-side football tournament for his charity Neymar Junior Project Institute in Praia Grande Sao Paulo on Saturday.

PHOTO: AFP

Later Saturday, Neymar added fuel to the fire over a possible return to the Camp Nou, with an Instagram post.

It was a 10-second video of himself in a Barcelona shirt, his father, and a quote from the Bible: "No weapon turned against you will prosper." (Isaiah Chapter 54, Verse 17).

Barcelona's famous rout of Paris Saint-Germain took place in the final 16 stage of the 2017 Champions League.

PSG had won the first leg of that Champions League last 16 tie 4-0 and were seconds away

from the quarter-finals.

Neymar scored in the 88th and 91st minutes of the famous match before setting up Sergi Roberto for a winner five minutes into stoppage time.

That sealed their 6-1 win over PSG, who then shelled out the world-record fee to bag the Brazilian the following summer.

"What we felt when we scored the sixth goal I've never felt anything like that, it was incredible," Neymar told Oh My Goal on Saturday.

Mihajlovic battling leukaemia

REUTERS, Milan



Bologna coach Sinisa Mihajlovic said on Saturday that he had a severe form of leukaemia but that he was sure he would win the battle.

Mihajlovic said in a news conference at the Serie A team's headquarters that his condition was treatable and that he would be in hospital from Tuesday.

"I always play to win, both in football and in life. I'll defeat Leukaemia," the former Lazio and Inter Milan defender said, holding back tears.



"It will take time but I'll recover," he added.

Rumours about his health had spread over the past days as he did not join his team on a pre-season

retreat, which started earlier this week in a Dolomites resort in north-east Italy.

"I have cried a lot on these days, but I don't like it when someone comes and pities me," Mihajlovic said.

Bologna's General Manager Walter Sabatini said that Mihajlovic would remain the team's coach, "whatever happens in the coming days".

Serbian Mihajlovic, who was famous for scoring spectacular free kicks as a player, took over as Bologna coach last January, helping the team recover from the threat of relegation to finish 10th in the table.

BCB begins hunt for head coach

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) officially began their search for a new head coach for the national team by posting an advertisement for the vacancy on their

official website recently.

Interested candidates were asked to submit their CVs by July 18. The post was made vacant when the BCB opted to part ways with Steve Rhodes, whose contract was until after the 2020 ICC World T20, in a decision that was termed mutual. The board authorities provided no official statement behind the move, which revived unanswered questions about the BCB's process for selecting and ejecting coaches.

The BCB faced a lot of criticism for the manner in which they parted ways with Rhodes after a rather disappointing exit from the World Cup, where they finished in eighth position.

According to the advertisement, the candidate must have elite level coaching experience while preference would be given to individuals having experience with any full ICC member national teams.

"Organizing and delivering quality coaching with the aim of improving performance and results of the Bangladesh National Cricket Team. Motivating the players and assisting them in reaching their optimum performance," the advertisement read.

Rhodes's stint began in June last year and his time with the Tigers was highlighted by ODI successes, which include bilateral series wins (both home and away) against West Indies, a runners-up finish in the Asia Cup and the nation's first ever multi-nation tournament win in

Ireland prior to the World Cup.

Bangladesh's next assignment is a three-match ODI series in Sri Lanka, which begins on July 26. The Tigers are also scheduled to tour India in November for a three-match T20I and two-match ODI series.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh's former technical director Khaled Mahmud, who according to sources is among the front runners for the interim head coach position, said that he is ready to step down from his BCB directorship position should he be given the role of head coach on a long term basis.

Mahmud was appointed as the team's technical director during a tri-nation series involving Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe and the following bilateral series against Sri Lanka in 2017 after Chandika Hathurusingha left the job midway through his tenure to join the Sri Lanka national team.

There will be a board meeting later this month where they will decide what further plans need to be made in order to get suitable replacements for some other members of the coaching staff as well.

The BCB did not renew the contracts of bowling coach Courtney Walsh and physio Thian Chandramohan while spin coach Sunil Joshi, who recently joined USA cricket in an advisory capacity, will not be available in the immediate future.

According to sources, the Tigers' limited over batting consultant Neil McKenzie will not travel with them for the upcoming Sri Lanka tour. However, there have been no confirmations made over his availability but it should be mentioned that his contract ended with the World Cup.

Perhaps the former South Africa batsman is also caught up in the uncertainty over his future with Bangladesh.

INDOOR ASIA CUP Bangladesh play against Malaysia today

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh will play their first match of the 8th Indoor Hockey Asia Cup against Malaysia in the opening match of the tournament in Chonburi, Thailand today.

The match will get underway at 10:20am Bangladesh time.

This is the debut appearance for the Bangladesh team in the indoor competition, which is a six-a-side format, played on rubber surface.

In the absence of Asia's top teams in outdoor hockey such as India, Pakistan, Japan and Korea, the indoor version is dominated by the likes of Iran and Malaysia.

Bangladesh's first-match opponents Malaysia are three-time runners-up while the men in red and green will play their second match against seven-time champions Iran tomorrow. Thailand and Philippines are the two other teams in Pool A while Pool B features Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Chinese Taipei, Singapore, Myanmar and Nepal.

Rain halts A team match

SPORTS REPORTER

Rain played foul once again during the third day of the second four-day match between the Bangladesh A and their Afghan counterparts at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram yesterday. At stumps, Bangladesh A were 112 for two in 41 overs before rain put a stop to day's play.

DAY'S EVENTS

BANGLADESH PREMIER LEAGUE
SAIF SC v SK JAMAL
VENUE: RAFIQ UDDIN BHUIYAN STADIUM, MYMENSINGH
TIME: 4:00PM



The 16-member Bangladesh under-19 cricket team pose for a group photo at the BCB headquarters in Mirpur yesterday on the eve of their departure for England where they are scheduled to play a tri-nation ODI series, also involving India and hosts England. Led by Ali Akbar, the team's tour will start with a practice match against Young Lions Invitational XI on July 18 before the first game of the series against England on July 22.

PHOTO: STAR