



(L)Serena Williams showed her emotion to the crowd after winning against Elina Svitolina while Bianca Andreescu was in disbelief after her win over Belinda Bencic in the women's singles semifinals of the US Open at Flushing Meadows in New York on Thursday.



PHOTO: AFP

Record-chasing Serena faces teen challenger Bianca in final

AFP, New York

Serena Williams will face Canadian teenager Bianca Andreescu for the US Open title as the American set herself up for another attempt to clinch a record-equalling 24th Grand Slam singles title. Williams, who turns 38 this month, cruised into a 10th US Open final Thursday by brushing aside fifth seed Elina Svitolina 6-3, 6-1, earning her 101st win at the tournament to draw level with Chris Evert for the most in history. Williams is seeking to match Margaret Court's all-time record of 24 major titles and will play 19-year-old Andreescu, who defeated Belinda Bencic 7-6 (7/3), 7-5, on Saturday in her bid for a record seventh US Open triumph. "To be in yet another final, it seems honestly crazy. But I don't really expect too much less," said Williams, who is through to her 33rd major final. "I've had so many chances to pass it (Court's record) and to have a lot more, but it's cool because I'm playing in an era with so many -- five eras with so many amazing players."

She won her first Grand Slam title at the 1999

US Open -- before Andreescu was even born -- but has lost her last three major finals since capturing the 2017 Australian Open crown while pregnant. She hasn't won the US Open since 2014. Williams fought off six break points across her opening three service games before finding her rhythm to dispatch Wimbledon semi-finalist Svitolina in 70 minutes, hitting 34 winners against just 20 unforced errors. "I know how (Svitolina) can play, she's such a good player," Williams said. "Obviously two semis in a row is really hard to do and I just wanted to not get off to a slow start and I wanted to hang on in there." Williams, who was beaten by Simona Halep in the Wimbledon final in July, returns to the championship match in New York a year on from her infamous meltdown in a loss to Naomi Osaka overshadowed by controversy. Svitolina, 24, was attempting to become just the second Ukrainian to play in a Grand Slam singles final after Andrei Medvedev, who lost in five sets to Andre Agassi at the 1999 French Open. "On the important moments, she steps up,

always steps up, always brings her best game," Svitolina said. "She knows what she has to do. She has unbelievable strength. She gives lots of power. There's lots of power behind her shots all the time. That's what makes her unbelievable, legendary tennis player." Andreescu, who fell in US Open qualifying the past two years, continued her meteoric rise on her main draw debut in New York to overcome former Swiss prodigy Bencic. The 15th-seeded Canadian played catch-up for much of the opening set and saved a set point at 4-5 with a forehand winner, but she rattled off the first five points of the tie-break and sealed it when Bencic swatted a forehand long. Bencic, the 13th seed, raced 5-2 ahead with a double break in the second set but Andreescu refused to buckle and reeled off the final five games to set up a rematch of last month's Toronto final against Williams, who retired from that clash with a back injury. "It's just surreal. I really don't know what to say. It's a dream come true playing Serena in the finals of the US Open. It's crazy, it's crazy," Andreescu said.

BKSP girls retain Subroto Cup title

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Protishtan (BKSP) retained the Subroto Cup U-17 Women's football title after thrashing Manipur's Nilmani English School 4-0 in the final in India yesterday. The BKSP girls dominated the opponents throughout the match as they scored two goals in each half, with Aklima Akter scoring in the 19th and 58th minutes while Shirina Akter and Swapna Rani netting one goal apiece in 29th and 55th minutes respectively. BKSP goalkeeper Surudhani Kisku and Afrida Khandaker were adjudged the best goalkeeper and the best player while coach Jaya Chakma was named the best coach of the tournament.

Tigresses meet Thailand in title bout

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The Bangladesh women's team will face their Thai counterparts in the final of the ongoing ICC Women's T20 World Cup Qualifiers at Dundee in Scotland today. The match will begin at 7:00 pm Bangladesh time. The Tigresses had already qualified for the ICC Women's T20 World Cup, which will start from February 21 in Australia next year, when they defeated Ireland Women by four wickets in the semifinal on Thursday. Bangladesh are unbeaten so far in the tournament so far and will look to extend their winning streak and lift the trophy for the second time in as many years.

HP's second 4-dayer ends in damp draw

SPORTS REPORTER

The second and final four-dayer between the Bangladesh High Performance (HP) team and their Sri Lankan counterparts ended in a draw after the fourth day was called off without a ball being bowled due to a wet outfield at the Sheikh Kamal International Stadium in Cox's Bazar yesterday. The first match in Khulna was drawn and therefore the series was shared between the two sides after yesterday's washout. Match referee Debabrata Paul informed The Daily Star yesterday that overnight rain had completely ruined the outfield and thus it was impossible for the match to be resumed.

ARGENTINA V CHILE

Stalemate in LA

AFP, Los Angeles

Argentina and Chile ground out a 0-0 draw here Thursday in a niggly friendly international between the two South American rivals. Argentina, missing the suspended Lionel Messi and several other European-based stars including Sergio Aguero and Angel Di Maria, enjoyed the better chances but were unable to find a goal in front of a sparsely populated Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum. Chile, with Alexis Sanchez leading their attack, were similarly uninspired in front of goal. Thursday's game was the latest instalment of an increasingly bitter rivalry between the two sides who met in both the 2015 and 2016 Copa America finals, won by Chile on each occasion. The two sides also faced off in this year's Copa, with Argentina winning a third-place play-off. The intense rivalry was evident throughout, with US referee Jair Marrufo showing no fewer than 10 yellow cards in an often ill-tempered contest. Chile midfielder Charles Aranguiz was lucky to stay on the pitch after picking up an early booking and then committing a brutal stamp on Tottenham Hotspur's Giovanni Lo Celso in the first half. Marrufo had brandished his yellow card three times within the first 15 minutes, cautioning Paris Saint-Germain midfielder Leandro Paredes in the sixth minute for a rugged tackle on Sanchez. Aranguiz got Chile's retaliation in moments later, flattening Rodrigo De Paul to earn a yellow card before later flying in on Lo Celso. Argentina came closest to breaking the deadlock on 23 minutes, Lo Celso releasing Lautaro Martinez on the edge of the area who teed up Paulo Dybala for a shot that was superbly saved by Chile's Manchester City reserve goalkeeper Claudio Bravo. Chile's best chance of the half came five minutes from half-time, with Aranguiz forcing a save from Porto goalkeeper Agustin Marchesin. River Plate defender Lucas Martinez Quarta almost gave Argentina the lead in the second half, glancing De Paul's cross just wide. Chile then missed a golden chance to go in front when Eduardo Vargas cut back to find Cesar Pinares only for the midfielder's shot to clip the top of the bar. The game deteriorated thereafter with both teams making a flurry of substitutions and the play often interrupted by fouls. Quarta missed the chance to give Argentina a late winner, causing problems with his aerial power. Once again though the centre-half was left frustrated, his header from hitting the bar.

Army archery team win medals

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh archery team featuring archers from Bangladesh Army won two silver medals and one bronze medal in recurve events of the 2nd International Archery Tournament, which concluded in Kyrgyzstan yesterday. Tofazzal Hossain lost by 6-2 set points against Kyrgyzstan's Kursanaliyev Ulukbek in the recurve individual final while the recurve mixed team comprising Tofazzal and Nasrin Akter lost their final by 5-3 set points against the hosts. The bronze medal came in men's team event, who beat the hosts by 6-0 sets in the final, said a Bangladesh Archery Federation press release yesterday.

U-16s win first warm-up match

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh team got their preparation for AFC U-16 Women's Championship off to a winning start, beating Chonburi Academy 1-0 in their first of three practice matches in Chonburi, Thailand yesterday. Shamsunnar Sr scored the all-important goal against Chonburi U-17 side in the 38th minute. The girls will play their second practice match against the same side on September 9 before wrapping up their preparation by taking on Kasetsart University Women's team on September 11. Bangladesh will play their first match of the championship against hosts Thailand on September 15.



Italy forward Andrea Belotti scored twice to lead the Azzurri to a 3-1 win against Armenia in the Euro 2020 qualifier at the Vazgen Sargsyan Republican Stadium on Thursday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Spain, Italy stay perfect

AFP, Paris

Spain took a step closer to qualification for Euro 2020 on Thursday after surviving a scare in Romania to win 2-1 and continue their 100 percent record, while Italy also kept their perfect start with a 3-1 win in Armenia. A Sergio Ramos first half penalty and a beautiful team goal finished off by Paco Alcacer were just about enough for Spain in Bucharest, and made their record five wins from five to maintain their five-point lead at the top of Group F in their first match since Luis Enrique stepped down as coach in June to look after his daughter Xana, who died late last month of bone cancer. Spain are followed by Sweden, who are on 10 points after thumping the Faroe Islands 4-0, and Norway a further two points back after their comfortable 2-0 over Malta. Ramos got the ball rolling for the away side from the spot after

Dani Ceballos was brought down by Ciprian Deac, and the points looked secure two minutes after the break when Alcacer tapped home Jordi Alba's cross following a sensational pass from Ceballos. However substitute Florin Andone made an almost immediate impact when he nipped in front of Ramos to nod one back just before the hour mark. **BELOTTI FIRES ITALY** Earlier Italy strengthened their grip on Group J after coming from behind to see off Armenia thanks to a Andrea Belotti brace and Lorenzo Pellegrini's first international goal. Roberto Mancini's side are three points ahead of second-placed Finland, 1-0 victors over Greece thanks to a Teemu Pukki penalty, and seven ahead of Bosnia and Herzegovina in third after the win in Yerevan, which came despite the Italians trailing after 11 minutes when Aleksandre Karapetyan. Torino captain Belotti tapped in Emerson Palmieri's cross to put Italy level on 28 minutes before

Karapetyan went from hero to villain by being sent off in first half stoppage time for a second yellow card. Belotti doubled his tally 10 minutes from time after substitute Pellegrini had put the away side in the lead. "The satisfaction is to have won a game that was not at all easy," said Mancini, who becomes the first Italy coach to win five consecutive European qualifiers in one group. "Playing the 11 against 10 paradoxically penalised us because Armenia focused even more on defending and reduced the spaces further. "But we had the patience to continue to attack even at the risk of exposing ourselves to counter-attack." David McGoldrick made sure that the Republic of Ireland stayed top of Group D with a late leveller in Dublin that gave the hosts a 1-1 draw with Switzerland. The Irish are three points in front of second-placed Denmark -- 6-0 winners over Gibraltar -- and six ahead of third placed Switzerland, who however have two games in hand.

Day has his plans set for Afghanistan

SPORTS REPORTER



While Bangladesh's four opponents in Group E of Joint Qualifiers for the World Cup and the Asian Cup were busy playing their opening matches on Thursday night, the men in red and green completed their final preparation match in Tajikistan ahead of their opening match against Afghanistan. Neighbours India gave Oman a run for their money, but eventually surrendered a first-half lead in a 2-1 defeat while group favourites and current Asian Cup champions Qatar humiliated Afghanistan with a massive 6-0 win in Doha. Following their 1-1 draw in the second practice match against CSKA Pamir, Bangladesh coaching staff including head coach Jamie Day tried to watch the Afghanistan-Qatar match, but failed to do so as there was no live-streaming of that match available at the team hotel. However, the coach must have managed information regarding that match in a bid to know details about their first two opponents, especially about Afghanistan who they will face on September 10 in Tajikistan. Day believes the heavy defeat for Afghanistan against Qatar will not have an impact on their game against Bangladesh. "I don't think the defeat [of Afghanistan] last night will have much impact as they played against very a good team in Qatar and no one would have expected them [Afghanistan] to win," the Bangladesh coach said yesterday. Afghanistan coach Anoush Dastgir, however, was understandably disappointed with the result but vowed to come back strong in the match against Bangladesh. "Despite the big defeat, I'm proud with what the players showed today as they gave their best and hopefully, we will learn from the mistakes before our next game against Bangladesh," Dastgir was quoted as saying by AFC website. Under the guidance of Day, Bangladesh have been playing counter-attacking football, keeping the defence solid. However, Bangladesh conceded three goals and gave away one penalty in the last two practice matches against club teams despite the same defence helping them keep cleansheet in the last three international matches against Laos and Cambodia. "There is nothing to worry about. The defence is fine but we will need to be organised and have good shape throughout the qualifiers," opined Day, whose side on Thursday struggled to maintain the defensive line during transition periods against CSKA Pamir. Day, however, found some positives from the two practice matches. "It was another good match and pleased again with the performance. There were lots of positives to take from the two games. The boys passed the ball well, the shape was good and every player got some game time." Assistant coach Stuart Watkiss said they now have plenty of information to select the starting eleven against Afghanistan. "We had good workout and to be fair there were two good games against two Tajikistan Premier League teams. We got plenty of information through these two games to select the team. Now, Jamie and the coaching staff will sit down to talk about it. We have 3-4 days left to build the team for the big match against Afghanistan," Watkiss said in a video message.