

SPORT

What to WATCH

T SPORTS
The Hundred
Birmingham Phoenix vs Southern Brave
Live from 4:30 pm
Trent Rockets vs Welsh Fire

Live from 12:30 am (Sunday)
GT20
Mississauga vs Brampton
Live from 9:00 pm
Toronto vs Vancouver
Live from 2:00 am (Sunday)



Alcaraz ready for 'special' Olympics tennis final

AFP, Paris

Carlos Alcaraz said it will be a "special moment" for him when he will be bidding to add Olympic gold to his four Grand Slam titles at Roland Garros on Sunday.

On Friday when Alcaraz thrashed Canada's Felix Auger-Aliassime 6-1, 6-1 in just 75 minutes, the 21-year-old became the youngest man to reach the final since tennis returned to the Olympics at Seoul in 1988.

He will meet Novak Djokovic in Sunday's gold medal showdown if the top-seeded Serb overcomes a knee injury and Italy's Lorenzo Musetti in the second semifinal.

"The final is going to be a really special moment for me, in my life, in my career, so I'm going to try and enjoy this moment," said Alcaraz.

"It's going to be difficult, but it's also going to be special. I will try to be focused on myself and try not to hear all this, all the fans, all the people that say

'I'm going to win'.

"I just want to give 100 per cent my best tennis and hopefully I reach my goal to get the gold."

Spanish star Alcaraz, playing on the same Roland Garros court where he won a maiden French Open in June, broke the 19th-ranked Auger-Aliassime three times in the first set, racing away with six consecutive games.

Alcaraz broke again in the fourth and sixth games of the second set on his way to claiming a fourth successive win over the Canadian having lost the first three of the pair's series.

Wimbledon champion Alcaraz is the fourth Spanish man to reach the Olympic men's final after Jordi Arrese at Barcelona in 1992, Sergi Bruguera in Atlanta four years later and Rafael Nadal who won gold at Beijing in 2008.

He now can also become the youngest men's champion since tennis returned to the Olympics in 1988.



Done in 46 seconds, but debate goes on

AFP, Paris

Algerian boxer Imane Khelif's 46-second win at the Paris Olympics on Thursday sparked a furious row about gender eligibility rules.

Italian boxer Angela Carini retired hurt and shrugged off attempts by Khelif to shake her hand, before collapsing to her knees and sobbing uncontrollably in the middle of the ring.

Khelif advanced to the quarterfinals of the women's 66kg category after unloading two strong punches to the face of Carini, who had blood on her shorts and was unable to carry on because of a badly hurt nose.

"My nose started dripping (with blood) from the first hit," said the distressed Carini, who also broke down in tears when talking to reporters.

The 25-year-old sobbed: "I fought very often in the national team. I train with my brother. I've always fought against men, but I felt too much pain today."

Khelif and Taiwan's Lin Yu-ting, who was set to fight on Friday at 57kg, were disqualified from the 2023 world championships in New Delhi run by the International Boxing Association (IBA) but deemed eligible to box in the women's competition in Paris.

Both boxers also competed at the Tokyo Olympics three years ago.

The IBA, in a statement on Wednesday, said Lin and Khelif were disqualified from the world championships as "a result of their failure to meet the eligibility criteria for participating in the women's competition".

"The athletes did not undergo a testosterone examination but were subject to a separate and recognised test, whereby the specifics remain confidential," it added.

The International Olympic Committee is running the boxing in the French capital because of governance, financial, and ethical issues at the IBA.

IOC spokesman Mark Adams told reporters this week that they "are women in their passports and it's stated in there that they are female".

With a host of public figures, including Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni and US presidential candidate Donald Trump, weighing in on the matter, the debate seems to go on as Khelif is set to return to the ring on Saturday.

While Meloni said the fight was "not on an equal footing", Trump declared on his Truth Social network: "I WILL KEEP MEN OUT OF WOMEN'S SPORTS!"



Lyles to kick off double dream in 100m

REUTERS, Paris

American Noah Lyles will bring his "main character energy" to the Stade de France on Saturday as he begins his quest for the Olympic sprint double in the men's 100 metres heats.

He failed to qualify for the shorter sprint at the Olympics three years ago and won bronze in the 200 - his signature event - before embarking on a period of self-reflection.

Lyles clocked 9.81 seconds to win at the London Diamond League meeting in his final Olympic tune-up event last month, a promising sign for American fans.

While most bookmakers would put him as a strong favourite in the longer sprint - he has not lost a 200 metres race since Tokyo - he could face a tougher road in the 100, as he takes on young challengers from the United States' archrival Jamaica.

Oblique Seville handed him his only 100 loss of the season in Kingston in June and Kishane Thompson set the world leading mark of 9.77 at the Jamaica team trials. That duo will be hungry to get their country back to the top of the podium eight years after retired great Usain Bolt last took the gold.

While the defending Olympic champion would typically command a decent share of the spotlight, Italian Lamont Marcell Jacobs has rarely been a factor on the track following a series of injuries since his shock win in Tokyo three years ago.

Instead, Kenyan Ferdinand Omanyala appeared on everyone's radar when he won his national trials in 9.79, while Lyles' compatriots Kenny Bednarek and Tokyo silver medallist Fred Kerley remain perennial contenders.



BILES, ANDRADE poised to soar

AFP, Paris

US gymnastics great Simone Biles will likely have to bring out the "big guns" again on Saturday as she vies for her third gold medal of the Paris Olympics in a women's vault final that again pits her against defending champion Rebeca Andrade of Brazil.

Biles shook off a sub-par uneven bars routine to edge Andrade for all-around gold on Thursday, two days after she and her USA teammates captured gold.

One difference-maker for Biles was her signature Yurchenko double pike vault, which has a difficulty score so high that even with an imperfect landing she out-scored Andrade. "I wasn't planning on it," Biles said of opting for the double pike in all-around.

"But I just knew how phenomenal of an athlete (Andrade) is. So I was like, 'OK, I think I have to bring out the big guns this time.'"

To retain the vault title she won in Tokyo, where Biles withdrew from multiple events because of the mental block gymnasts call the "twisties," Andrade might have to up her own firepower.

The Brazilian edged Biles for the vault world title last October and has indicated she could unveil a never-before-seen triple-twisting Yurchenko vault. If she pulls that off it would carry a difficulty score of 6.0 - closer to the 6.4 of the double pike version now known as the Biles II.

After her close call in the all-around, where Biles trailed for the first time since the halfway point in Rio, Biles quipped that Andrade was making her life too stressful. "I don't want to compete with Rebeca no more. I'm tired!" Biles said. "It's way too close."

But she added: "I knew if I did my work, it would all be fine."



Cricketers to undergo fitness test today amid unrest

SPORTS REPORTER

With a watchful eye on the ongoing unrest in the country, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has decided to go ahead with the previously scheduled physical assessment test of the cricketers in the Test fold at the Bangabandhu National Stadium (BNS) today.

"We are observing the situation and are in communication with the management. Our prime focus is to ensure everyone's safety, not just the players." BCB cricket operations in-charge Shahriar Nafees told The Daily Star on Friday.

"We will take the final decision after observing the entire day. But as of now,

everything is on track," he added.

The players will complete a 1.6km time trial at the BNS between 6:00 AM to 7:30 AM under their strength and conditioning coach Nathan Kiely before moving to the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur for a gym session and other fitness tests, scheduled from 8:30 AM.

Kiely and other coaching staff including head coach Chandika Hathurusingha have already reached Dhaka ahead of the Tigers' preparation camp for their two-match Test series against Pakistan.

Spin-bowling coach Mushtaq Ahmed, who will oversee the spinners during the Pakistan series, was the last

member of the coaching panel to arrive in the city on Friday night.

The preparation will get underway with the fitness test and the players will begin training in Mirpur on Sunday.

Some members of the Test fold, who recently returned home from their Australia tour with the High Performance Unit where they played two four-day matches against Pakistan Shaheens, will not take the fitness test.

Earlier, several members of the Test fold had played two intra-squad practice matches during their camp in Chattogram last month.

Skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto missed the practice matches as he travelled to Thailand for a

medical check-up while head coach Hathurusingha and some other members of the coaching staff failed to join the side due to travel issues.

The first Test in Rawalpindi will take place on August 21-25 while Karachi will host the second Test on August 30-September 3. The series will be part of the ICC World Test Championship 2023-25 cycle. The Tigers are expected to fly to Pakistan on August 17.

However, some players like Mushfiqur Rahim and Mominul Haque will travel to Pakistan on August 6 as part of the Bangladesh A team to feature in their opening four-day game against their Pakistani counterparts, scheduled on August 10-13.



Playing on his PSG home ground, Morocco captain Achraf Hakimi put on a player-of-the-match performance as his side outclassed the United States on Friday to reach the semifinals of the Olympics men's football. Hakimi was among the scorers as Morocco, who will play either Japan or Spain in Monday's semifinal in Marseille, dispatched the USA 4-0 in front of a packed crowd.

PHOTO: REUTERS

TODAY'S GOLD RUSH

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|---|--|--|---|--|---|---|---|--|---|
| ARCHERY Women's Individual 6:46 PM | 8:20 PM Men's Pommel Horse 9:16 PM | Sunday, 12:55 AM Women's 100m Sunday, 1:20 AM Men's Decathlon 1500m Sunday, 1:45 AM | CYCLING ROAD Men's Road Race 3:00 PM | FENCING 11:00 PM Women's Sabre Team Sunday, 12:00 AM | ROWING Women's Single Sculls 2:18 PM Women's Eight 2:50 PM Men's Eight 3:10 PM Men's Single Sculls 2:30 PM | Shooting 25m Pistol Women's 1:30 PM Skeet Men's 7:30 PM | Sunday, 3:12 AM SWIMMING Men's 100m Butterfly Sunday, 12:30 AM Women's 200m Individual Medley Sunday, 1:08 AM Mixed 4x100 Medley Relay | Sunday, 1:58 AM TABLE TENNIS Women's Singles 6:30 PM | TENNIS Women's Singles 4:00 PM Men's Doubles 4:00 PM |
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