

'FREER' Venus exits

REUTERS, New York

Forty-five-year-old Venus Williams made an emotional exit in the first round of the US Open on Monday (yesterday, Bangladeshi time).

Ten-time Grand Slam winner Williams, back at Flushing Meadows — courtesy of a wildcard entry — after a year's hiatus, fought bravely against 11th seed Karolina Muchova, forcing a deciding set before bowing out 6-3 2-6 6-1.

"I'm very proud of how I played," said Williams, who last appeared here in 2023 and had sealed the singles title twice in 2000 and 2001.

"I think for me getting back on the court was about giving myself a chance to play more healthy," added Williams, who disclosed in 2011 that she had been diagnosed with Sjogren's, an autoimmune disease that causes fatigue and joint pain.

"When you play unhealthy, it's in your mind. It's not just how you feel. You get stuck in your mind too. So it was nice to be freer."

New hairstyle, same old ALCARAZ

Carlos Alcaraz arrived at the US Open with a drastic new look — a buzz cut that became the talk of Flushing Meadows — but the haircut didn't stop him from dismantling Reilly Opelka 6-4, 7-5, 6-4 to reach the second round. The 22-year-old Spaniard revealed the severe military-style crew cut was the result of his brother mishandling clippers before the tournament. "The only way to fix it was just to shave it off," Alcaraz laughed. "Some people like it, some don't. I'm just laughing at the reactions." Among the critics was close friend Frances Tiafoe, who called it "terrible," though Alcaraz insisted he was joking. The haircut debate aside, Alcaraz was clinical against Opelka, seizing crucial breaks in each set and finishing with a blazing forehand down the line. The 2022 US Open champion next faces Italy's Mattia Bellucci.

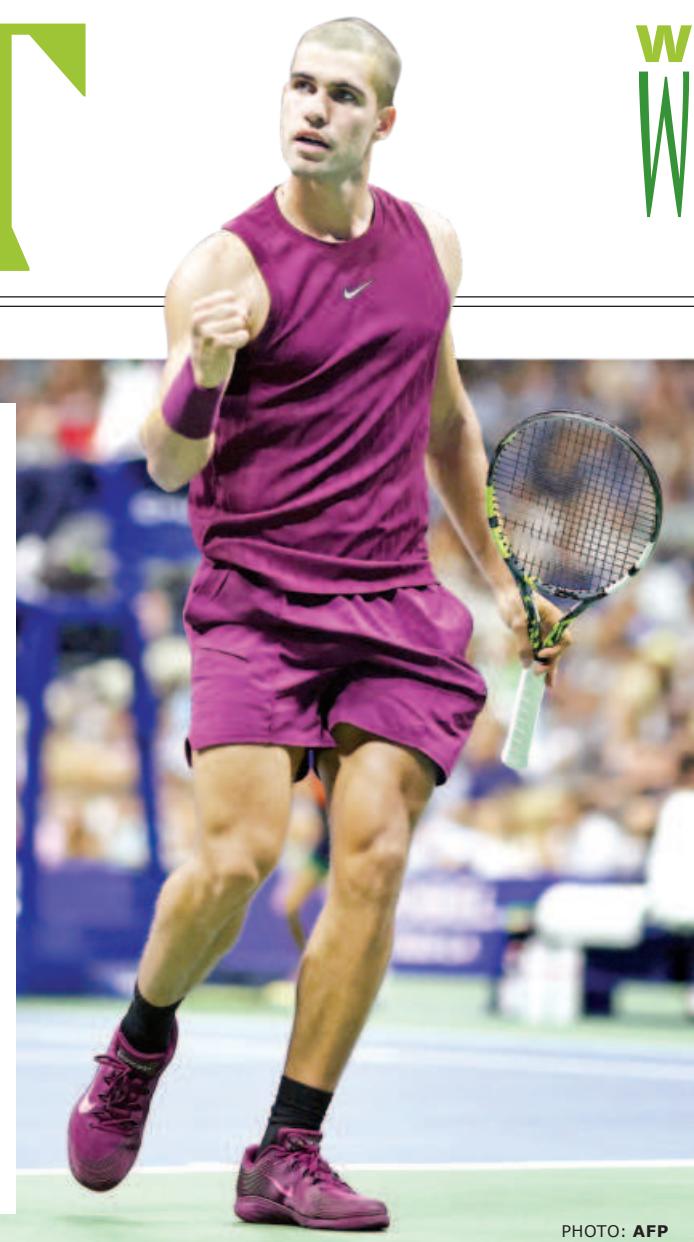


PHOTO: AFP

Kiron discloses mega plan for women

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) has outlined a preliminary plan to arrange at least six international matches for the Bangladesh women's team as part of their preparation for next year's AFC Women's

yesterday.

Kiron previously stated that preparations for the women's team were initially scheduled to begin in early September. However, the residential training camp has been postponed by two weeks and is set to start in mid-

camp, the team will play two friendly matches against Thailand during the October international window. On October 30, the squad will travel to Japan for an intensive three-week training camp, where the players will focus solely on physical and tactical preparation

"If we are unable to organise the tri-nation series, we will still arrange two international friendlies," Kiron said. She added that discussions are also underway with New Zealand to potentially schedule two more matches against the New Zealand women's team in February. These would follow a training camp in January.

"If the matches in New Zealand go ahead, we will travel directly to Australia for the Asian Cup. Otherwise, we will arrange matches against other countries such as Malaysia, Singapore, or Hong Kong en route to Australia," she said.

"Current plan for senior women's team involve six international matches and a training camp in Japan. Some players from the U-20 squad will have the opportunity to join the senior team, while separate matches for the U-20 team are also being arranged as part of their preparation for April's AFC U-20 Women's Asian Cup in Thailand," Kiron added.

She also announced the launch of a more competitive Women's Football League starting on December 15, with the inclusion of stronger teams and at least one prominent corporate sponsor.



Asian Cup in Australia. Among the fixtures, two friendlies against Thailand are scheduled for October.

Mahfuz Akter Kiron, head of the BFF women's committee, revealed the plan during an informal briefing with select media representatives at the BFF House

September, once head coach Peter Butler returns to Dhaka from England.

Training camp for the senior women's team along with the U-20 squad will be accommodated in a hotel or resort rather than the BFF dormitory," Kiron said.

Following the September training

without any scheduled matches.

Kiron, who is also an AFC executive member, confirmed that BFF plans to utilise the FIFA windows in November and December by hosting a tri-nation tournament in Dhaka involving Vietnam and Azerbaijan.

The team will play two friendly matches against Thailand during the October international window. On October 30, the squad will travel to Japan for an intensive three-week training camp, where the players will focus solely on physical and tactical preparation

Shanto, Miraz collect CWAB nomination forms

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh batter Najmul Hossain Shanto and all-rounder Mehdi Hasan Miraz were among others who collected nomination forms on Tuesday for the upcoming Cricketers Welfare Association of Bangladesh's (CWAB) elections, set for September 4. Yesterday was the deadline for form collection.

Interested parties will have until August 30 to submit or withdraw forms.

Aside from Shanto and Miraz, national batter Mohammad Mithun, former captain Khaled Mashud, Imrul Kayes, former national team stars Shamsur Rahman and Shahriar Hossain Bidut have also taken nomination forms.

It could not be confirmed what specific categories of forms each player collected. There are a total of 11 categories for the CWAB elections.

"Yes, all of them came, but who bought the nomination form for presidency is unknown to us. We haven't heard about which category forms Shanto and Miraz collected. Since it's the players' personal choice, no one will divulge at this moment," a cricketer, who has already submitted the form, informed.

"Only on August 30 will it be revealed how many players are contesting for the post of president and for member secretary and others," a source informed, wishing to remain anonymous.

Mohammad Mithun's name has, however, come up as a potential strong candidate for presidency. While Tamim Iqbal's name was heard as another potential candidate for the post, he has been away from the limelight in terms of CWAB elections recently. It could not be learned whether he submitted a nomination form.

Sources have also claimed that veterans such as Mahmudullah Riyad and Mushfiqur Rahim were not interested in contesting for presidency.

"We have confirmed the voting list of 225-230 (approx.) members," CWAB's ad-hoc committee member Neeyamur Rashid Rahul informed.



Bangladesh's 24-member national hockey team departed Dhaka in the morning and reached Raigir, Bihar via Kolkata yesterday ahead of the AHF Men's Hockey Asia Cup, starting August 29.

'Can't use wickets as excuse': Pinky on World Cup prep

Bangladesh's batting often leans on skipper Nigar Sultana Joty, but much will also depend on experienced opener Farzana Haque Pinky in the ICC Women's World Cup, to be held in India and Sri Lanka from September 30 to November 2. Farzana -- Bangladesh's top run-scorer in the previous edition in New Zealand in 2022, with 173 runs in seven matches -- recently spoke to The Daily Star's Samsul Arefin Khan about preparations and expectations for the marquee event. Excerpts from the interview are as follows:

The Daily Star (DS): How satisfied are you with overall preparation?

Farzana Haque Pinky (FHP): We've been preparing for a long time, but... ultimately, the quality of our preparation will show in the World Cup, which arrives every four years -- unlike the [biennial]

bad, but the groundsmen worked hard to make those playable. I've built the mindset that we can't use pitches as an excuse, having played on these conditions for 15 years. Australia and New Zealand always bat on flat wickets, and that's why their mindset is different. We must prepare by adjusting to what we get.

DS: What are this team's strengths and weaknesses?

FHP: Our strength is that everyone knows we can only succeed as a team, not as individuals. Joty is a fantastic player, but she knows she can't win matches alone. In our victories, contributions have come from across the side. We don't have a super batter striking at 100-150 to finish games single-handedly, but our spin attack is world-class. The weakness is pace -- if the board invests in developing fast bowlers, we could become a much more complete side.

DS: You're often criticised for low strike rate. How do you see it?

FHP: At home, we usually play on slow, low wickets. My role is to anchor the innings. I accept I take time to settle, but my focus is on putting the team in a strong position. Since the West Indies tour, I've worked on rotating the strike and improving my powerplay batting, even taking help from personal coaches. In the qualifiers, you could see progress; especially in Powerplay.

DS: This will be your second World Cup. Your goal?

FHP: We are going with high expectations. I won't claim we'll do something extraordinary, but if everyone contributes, we can achieve plenty. "We



Liverpool's 16-year-old Rio Ngumoha struck in the 100th minute to seal a 3-2 win over Newcastle in a Premier League thriller on Monday. The defending champions had led 2-0 through Ryan Gravenberch and Hugo Ekitike while Newcastle were reduced to 10 men due to a red card for Anthony Gordon just before half-time. But the Magpies fought back via Bruno Guimaraes and William Osula. Ngumoha's stoppage-time goal made him the youngest scorer in Liverpool's history.

No Neymar, Vinicius for Brazil's final WC qualifiers

AGENCIES

Brazil coach Carlo Ancelotti announced his squad on Monday for the final two World Cup qualifiers against Chile and Bolivia, with Neymar missing out and Vinicius Junior rested.

The five-time champions, who have already secured their place at the 2026 World Cup, will host Chile at the Maracana on September 5 before travelling to La Paz to face Bolivia on September 11.

Neymar, 33, has not played for Brazil in nearly two years due to repeated injuries and was sidelined again with thigh discomfort. "We

don't need to test him. Everyone knows him," Ancelotti said. Vinicius, meanwhile, is suspended for the Chile match and was spared the trip to high-altitude Bolivia.

West Ham midfielder Lucas Paqueta returns after being cleared of betting charges, while Chelsea forward Joao Pedro is also recalled following an impressive Club World Cup campaign. The squad reflects a mix of established names such as Alisson, Marquinhos, and Casemiro, alongside emerging talents including Chelsea teenager Estevo.

Meanwhile, on Tuesday, the

Brazilian Football Confederation confirmed that Brazil will also face South Korea in Seoul on October 10 and Japan in Tokyo on October 14 as part of their preparations for next year's tournament. CBF general coordinator Rodrigo Caetano said the plan is to test Ancelotti's side against varied opposition, including African teams in November and top European nations in 2026.

Ancelotti, who took charge in May, said the upcoming fixtures will be crucial in assessing his squad ahead of the expanded 48-team World Cup in the United States, Canada, and Mexico.

Achievement of PhD degree



Dr. Sultana Begum

Sultana Begum (Moni) has successfully obtained her PhD degree from the Department of Information Science and Library Management, University of Dhaka. The research titled is "Total Quality Management (TQM) in Engineering and Technology University Libraries of Bangladesh", was supervised by Former Chairman of the department Professor Dr. Muhammad Mejbah-ur-Islam.

Her research is expected to open new opportunities for modern practices and greater adaptability in the library management system of Engineering and Technology Universities across Bangladesh.

It is worth mentioning that Dr. Sultana Begum also completed her MPhil degree from the same department in 2003. She is the second daughter of Haji Md. Maksudur Rahman and Sufia Maksud of Tangail, daughter-in-law of Haji Md. Jamshed Ali and Rezia Begum of Hazaribagh, and wife of Mr. M. A. Kader.

Dr. Sultana Begum firmly believes that the knowledge and insights gained from her research will strengthen the bridge between academia and industry, contributing significantly to the country's industrial development. Her achievement stands as both an inspiration and an important milestone in the field of research in Bangladesh. She humbly seeks everyone's prayers and good wishes for the journey ahead.



T20 World Cup -- so we're determined to make it count.

DS: You're playing in the Challenge Cup at Savar's BKSP. Is it ideal preparation for the sporting wickets you'll see at the World Cup?

FHP: At first, the [BKSP] wickets were too