

## ITALY'S COMEBACK KIDS STUN ZAMBIA TO REACH SEMIS

**SEOUL:** Italy recovered from going a goal and a man down to beat Zambia 3-2 in extra time and set up an Under-20 World Cup semi-final against England yesterday. Things looked bleak for the Azzurri, who had gone behind to Patson Daka's early goal, when Giuseppe Pezzella was sent off for a shove following a video review just before half-time.

But Riccardo Orsolini scored five minutes after the restart and even when Fashion Sakala struck in the 84th minute, substitute Federico Dimarco's 88th-minute free kick sent the game into extra time.

Kenneth Kalunga narrowly missed after skillfully juggling the ball past Italy's defence, before another Italian substitute, Luca Vido, headed the decisive

goal from a Dimarco corner in the 110th minute.

The late strike finally knocked out Zambia, who stunned Germany in the round of 16, and sent last year's U19 European finalists into a meeting with England, who downed Mexico 1-0.

Dominic Solanke, who is Liverpool-bound after coming through the ranks at Chelsea, scored just

after half-time but England had to survive a nervy finish when Josh Onomah received his second yellow card with 18 minutes left.

Thursday's other semi-final will be between Uruguay, who edged Portugal 5-4 on penalties, and Venezuela, who beat the United States 2-1 after extra time in another tight game on Sunday. — AFP

## I WAS ASHAMED OVER MIAMI BEHAVIOUR, SAYS HALEP

**PARIS:** Simona Halep admitted yesterday she was "ashamed" that her on-court behaviour prompted respected coach Darren Cahill to call a temporary halt to their partnership.

Australian Cahill quit in frustration at the Romanian's negative demeanour after she surrendered winning positions to Britain's Johanna Konta in Miami in March. Cahill called it quits until the duo were reunited just in time for the build-up to the French Open where the 26-year-old reached the quarter-finals yesterday.

During the changeover before the final set in Miami, Cahill spent the best part of three minutes sitting next to Halep, desperately trying to coax her out of her negativity. "You can give up on yourself, but I'm not," said Cahill. It didn't work as Halep slipped to a dispiriting defeat. "I didn't like it when I saw the video (of the Cahill pep talk), I felt ashamed about what I did," said Halep.

"But now I'm happy that I can be positive on court, and I will never be negative like I was in Miami."

Halep said she had reached out to the 51-year-old Cahill who has worked with likes of Andre Agassi, Andy Murray and Ana Ivanovic in his time.

"He told me we will talk after Paris. But then he liked how I was in Fed Cup and then in Stuttgart," she explained. "So I think

when I finished Stuttgart, he said he had seen enough, and he's ready to come back.

"I asked him if he wants to come back before Madrid. He said yes, because I improved a lot, and he saw that I really wanted to change that. "Now I'm happy that I can be positive."

Halep, the third seed, made the quarter-finals at Roland Garros yesterday for the first time since 2014 when she went on to finish runner-up to Maria Sharapova.

She needed just an hour to coast to a 6-1, 6-1 win over Spain's Carla Suarez Navarro. It was her first win over Suarez Navarro on clay in six attempts. "I played my best match of the tournament. I served well and opened up the court," said Halep, who will become the new world number one if she wins the title on Saturday.

The 25-year-old Halep will tackle Ukraine's fifth seed Elina Svitolina for a semi-final place.

The two met in the Rome final on the eve of Roland Garros when Halep suffered an ankle injury which threatened her appearance in Paris.

Svitolina ended the dream run of world number 290 Petra Martic with a 4-6, 6-3, 7-5 win. But Martic, who came through qualifying, threw away a golden chance to make the quarter-finals after leading 5-2 in the final set. — AFP



**PARIS:** Britain's Andy Murray returns the ball to Russia's Karen Khachanov during their tennis match at the Roland Garros 2017 French Open yesterday in Paris. — AFP

TENNIS

## EMOTIONAL MURRAY IN FRENCH OPEN Q-FINALS WITH 650TH WIN

**PARIS:** Andy Murray racked up his 650th career win to reach the French Open quarter-finals yesterday before paying an unscripted, emotional tribute to the victims of the London and Manchester terror attacks.

World number one Murray, the runner-up in Paris to Novak Djokovic in 2016, brushed aside Karen Khachanov of Russia 6-3, 6-4, 6-4. In his seventh Paris quarter-final, Murray will face either Japanese eighth seed Kei Nishikori or Spain's Fernando Verdasco.

However, instead of discussing the match in the traditional on-court TV interview, Murray took the microphone to remember the 29 people who died in the recent outrages in London and Manchester. "Obviously there was terrible tragedy in London and Manchester. Paris has had its problems too in recent years," said Murray. "I am sure everyone will join me... we share our thoughts and prayers with everyone who has been affected. "I appreciate everyone still coming out to support the tennis. I am grateful that I can still perform in front of everyone."

Women's title favourite and 2014 runner-up Simona Halep trounced Spain's Carla Suarez-Navarro 6-1, 6-1 to make the last eight without

dropping a set or breaking sweat.

Third seed Halep, who can become the new world number one if she wins the title, claimed her first win on clay in six attempts against the Spaniard. "I played my best match of the tournament. I served well and opened up the court," said Halep. The 25-year-old Halep will tackle Ukraine's fifth seed Elina Svitolina for a semi-final place. The two met in the Rome final on the eve of Roland Garros when Halep was beaten and suffered an ankle injury which threatened her appearance in Paris. "I still feel the ankle some times but I am able to run. I don't think about it during the points," added Halep.

### MARTIC MAGICAL RUN ENDS

Svitolina reached the quarter-finals for the second time, ending the dream run of world number 290 Petra Martic with a 4-6, 6-3, 7-5 win.

However, Martic, bidding to become only the 10th qualifier to make the last eight in Paris threw away a golden chance for victory. The 26-year-old led 5-2 in the final set before Svitolina rallied to race away with the last five games.

Later yesterday, Czech world number two Karolina Pliskova, also in the running to become

both a first time major winner and the new world number one, faces Veronica Cepede Royg in her last-16 tie.

Cepede Royg, ranked 97 in the world, is only the second Paraguayan to make the fourth round of a major. The only other was Rossana de los Rios in Paris 17 years ago.

Argentina's Paola Suarez was the last South American woman to reach a quarter-final at a Slam at Wimbledon in 2004. Before this year, Pliskova had never made it beyond the second round in Paris. However, she has not yet had to face a player ranked in the top 65 in this tournament. Yesterday's other last-16 clash sees an all-French battle between Alize Cornet and Caroline Garcia who are barely on speaking terms.

The two fell out after Garcia withdrew from the Fed Cup team earlier this year. "I think that the relationship is not very good," said 27-year-old Cornet. "I think she may have a grudge against us, so she's not ready to talk with me."

Cornet is playing in her 45th Slam but has yet to reach a quarter-final. In the remaining men's last-16 ties, third seed and 2015 champion Stan Wawrinka faces Gael Monfils of France while Marin Cilic tackles Kevin Anderson. — AFP

SOCCER

## ADORING MADRID FANS DEMAND BALLON D'OR FOR HERO RONALDO

**MADRID:** Thousands of delirious Real Madrid fans called for Cristiano Ronaldo to win a fifth Ballon d'Or on Sunday as the Spanish giants paraded the Champions League trophy for a record 12th time. Ronaldo scored twice in Real's 4-1 thrashing of Juventus in Cardiff on Saturday as Madrid became the first side to retain the Champions League. Sporting a newly cropped haircut, Ronaldo was the star of a spectacular lights and firework show as 81,000 fans crammed into Real's Santiago Bernabeu stadium.

"Cristiano Ballon d'Or," the Portuguese sang along with the fans as he was lifted into the air by his teammates.

Ronaldo is the hot favourite to win the annual award for the best player in the world for a fifth time that would see him equal Barcelona rival Lionel Messi's record as Real also beat out Barca to win La Liga. "The truth is it has been a spectacular season," added Ronaldo. It is the first time Madrid have won both La Liga and the Champions League in the same season for 59 years. "Thanks for the love you have shown since the first match," said Madrid captain Sergio Ramos.

"We knew this season was going to be different. "The team has worked hard from the first minute...we have done a marvellous double."

Earlier, overseen by strict security measures, the Madrid squad greeted local government dignitaries before parading the famous trophy in an open top bus around the Cibeles fountain in the city centre where thousands of fans had gathered. "The players have entered into the legend of Real Madrid and of football, as has our coach," said club president Florentino Perez, as he reserved special praise for Zinedine Zidane.

"He is the only one to win two consecutive Champions Leagues," added Perez.

"That is why he is already the best coach in the world." The Frenchman, who won the Champions League as a legendary player for Real between 2001 and 2006, has enjoyed spectacular success since taking his first role in senior management just 18 months ago.

"I want to thank all of you," Zidane told fans as chants of his name rang around the Bernabeu.

"This is what we are here for. It has been a spectacular year thanks to you and in the end we won the double." A third Champions League



**MADRID:** Real Madrid's Portuguese forward Cristiano Ronaldo jubilates during a celebration event held at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium after the team won the UEFA Champions League football match final. — AFP

win in four years has drawn comparisons to the great Real side that won the first five editions of the European Cup between 1955 and 1960.

"I feel like this is the best team in history," Alvaro Mora, a fan who had travelled over 500 kilometres from the southern city of Almeria to take in the celebrations, told AFP.

And like Real's performance on the pitch at the Principality Stadium as they tore the Italian champions apart with goals from Casemiro and

Marco Asensio adding to Ronaldo's double, there was no sign of the Madrid fans' tiring of success. "It is the best thing that could happen," said Colombian shop worker Jose Ordonez, 54, who took in the festivities with his two sons. "We promised to return and we have returned as champions," added Ramos as the squad visited the home of Madrid's local government and the city hall. "I hope to return many more times and that we can celebrate many more titles." — AFP



**PARIS:** Romania's Simona Halep eyes the ball as she plays against Spain's Carla Suarez Navarro during their tennis match at the Roland Garros 2017 French Open yesterday in Paris. — AFP

## 'REVENGE' NOT MLADENOVIC'S PLAN FOR BACSINSZKY REMATCH

**PARIS:** France's Kristina Mladenovic insists "revenge" is not fueling her desire to beat Switzerland's Timea Bacsinszky when the pair clash in the quarter-finals at Roland Garros today.

Mladenovic accused Bacsinszky of gamesmanship after losing a tense three-set battle in February's Fed Cup first round, a tie Switzerland went on to win 4-1. But the French 13th seed said the anguish of that defeat would not factor into her approach as she looks to the reach last four of a Grand Slam for the first time.

"I don't see things like that. It's not, you know, because it's Timea that I must get my revenge. That's not my mindset," said Mladenovic, who is through to the last eight at a major for just the second time.

"It would be a negative approach. I don't prepare my matches out of revenge. I want to go out there and win every match. "I'm going to go into this match, (thinking) it's a Grand Slam quarter-finals here in Roland Garros."

Bacsinszky drew the ire of her French rival in Geneva after seeking medical help for a knee injury during a critical passage midway through the deciding set.

When she returned, she took a 21-shot rally and claimed eight of the next nine points to seize control of the match.

A day earlier, world number 31 Bacsinszky had left the court during her win over Alize Cornet for treatment to a wasp sting on her elbow. But the Swiss, a Roland Garros semi-

finalist in 2015, showed no remorse for her actions after dumping out Venus Williams in Paris for the second year in a row.

"I'm totally comfortable with what I did and said during the Fed Cup," said Bacsinszky, seeded 30th at this year's French Open.

"I know that the two French players were very critical. I'm not quite sure why. It wasn't a wasp trick. I was really stung by a wasp."

"I had to manage the pain. At night my nose clogged up and my eyes went all puffy. I had to take anti-allergy medicine."

"And the medical timeout I took against Mladenovic on the second day, it showed on the videos. "That's why I really wanted to take no risks. (Laura) Siegemund, her knee went 10 days ago, and she was a potential winner, too," Bacsinszky blasted Mladenovic's assertion that the Swiss was renowned for bending the rules, but she was keen to move on from the incident.

"When she said that I was known for that sort of thing on the circuit, really? I think we should ask other players if that's what they think," Bacsinszky replied.

"People can think what they want. Of course, it's not so cool to lose a match. Sometimes you need to take a step back, a deep breath."

"Do I bear grudges? Not really," she added. "I feel comfortable with what I did. I feel comfortable what I said about people. So I think that's it, really." — AFP