

25 Dennis hits back to retain world time-trial title



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27 Messi injured but Barca seal much-needed win over Villarreal



Barty downs Kenin to reach Wuhan quarters

Kyrgios blames 'clicking shoulder' for first-round exit



WUHAN: Ashleigh Barty of Australia hits a return against Sofia Kenin of the US during their third round women's singles match at the Wuhan Open tennis tournament in Wuhan yesterday. —AFP

WUHAN: World number one Ash Barty fended off a late comeback attempt by American Sofia Kenin to reach the Wuhan Open quarter-finals yesterday, while second seed Karolina Pliskova was knocked out in straight sets by Ukrainian teenager Dayana Yastremska.

After cruising through the first set without any trouble, Barty fought back from a break down in the next, saving two set points to overcome Kenin 6-3 7-5 for her third win over the 20-year-old Guangzhou champion in four meetings this season.

Next up for the Australian top seed will be Croatia's Petra Martić who defeated qualifier Veronika Kudermetova 6-3 6-1. World number two Pliskova's hopes of dethroning Barty as world number one by the end of the week ended with a 6-1 6-4 defeat by Yastremska.

The unseeded 19-year-old did not drop serve and smashed 26 winners past her Czech opponent for the

first top 10 victory of her career. Yastremska next faces another Czech top 10 opponent in Petra Kvitová, who advanced to the quarter-finals with a 6-3 6-3 victory over Sloane Stephens — her first win over the former US Open champion.

Wimbledon champion Simona Halep was forced to retire from her match against wildcard Elena Rybakina while trailing 5-4 in the first set after feeling sharp pain in her back. The Romanian had suffered a herniated disk late last year which ruled her out of the season-ending WTA Finals.

"It's a lower back (injury). I think it's more muscle, but I don't know yet because I didn't check it properly," the fourth seed told reporters. "At four-all, 0-30, with the backhand... I had a sharp pain. I don't know yet (if it is the same as the previous injury). It looks a little bit different but it's still the same zone."

Rybakina will next face Belarusian ninth seed Aryna

Sabalenko who dispatched sixth-seeded Dutchwoman Kiki Bertens 6-1 7-6(9). Ukraine's Elina Svitolina beat Russia's Svetlana Kuznetsova 6-4 6-2 to stay on course to qualify for the season-ending WTA Finals in Shenzhen where she will bid to retain her title.

Meanwhile, Nick Kyrgios fears he could face several weeks out after struggling with what he said was a "clicking" shoulder in a limp first-round exit at the Zhuhai Championships yesterday. The 24-year-old Australian, who has been accused of tanking matches in the past, served underarm on one occasion and led the veteran Italian Andreas Seppi 4-1 in the first set.

But the unpredictable firebrand went down 7-6 (7/5), 6-1 in southern China after his game spectacularly fell apart. Kyrgios, who has had numerous run-ins with tennis authorities down the years, said that he was "struggling a lot" — but he still played doubles soon after. "I was battling with a bit of a shoulder/collar

bone injury," said the 27th-ranked Kyrgios, a colourful but controversial figure. "At this rate I'm not thinking about playing until my shoulder's — or I don't even know what it is — but until my front of my shoulder feels better and I can serve," he added, saying his right shoulder had been "clicking".

"I mean the reason I lost today was because I couldn't serve. "If I could serve, it would have been a pretty routine win for me, to be honest." Asked if he could sit out the next few weeks or even the rest of the season, Kyrgios replied: "For sure, I mean at this rate I wouldn't be surprised. "I wasn't able to even serve at a reasonable pace. "I'm probably not going to bother playing until I can get it right again," he added. Kyrgios elicited a few giggles from a sparse crowd in Zhuhai with an underarm serve in the first set. Coasting 3-1 and 40-0 up, Kyrgios served weakly into the net, before surging into a 4-1 lead. — Agencies

Coe gets new term as IAAF chief

DOHA: Britain's Sebastian Coe was re-elected unopposed yesterday as president of the IAAF for a second term following four years dominated by doping and the issue of gender. The former Olympic and world champion middle-distance runner became head of world athletics' governing body in 2015 and receives his second mandate just two days before the World Athletics Championships open in Doha.

"I genuinely am very pleased and proud of the way the sport has come together," said Coe, 62, following his re-election. "Two-hundred changes, the Athletics Integrity Unit — no sport has a unit in the same space, it's about malpractice, corruption. "In making those achievements, I recognise we have had to detour from being able to really focus as hard as I would have liked in the early years around the field of play. We're now in the position to really genuinely do that."

Coe, who took over the reins during a period

of turmoil in world athletics, was re-elected by unanimous vote of the 203 delegates attending the International Association of Athletics Federations' Congress in Doha.

Four years ago the IAAF was in chaos as a result of far-reaching corruption allegations. They included damaging charges of links between outgoing president Lamine Diack, his influential son Papa Massata, and a Russian cover-up of a state-sponsored doping conspiracy.

During his first term, Coe set up the independent Athletics Integrity Unit which serves as watchdog dedicated to cleaning up corruption in the sport. "It's been a tough four years, the first two were the reforms — the second two years were really making sure they were implemented," he said.

"(We) got here pretty much implementing everything we said we'd do. "I want the next four years to be the fun bit... I want the sport to grow." Coe is notably credited with tackling the issue of state-sponsored Russian doping, with the IAAF maintaining a tough stance and banning Russia from competition since November 2015. Gender has also been a complex issue, with South African runner Caster Semenya spearheading the fight

against IAAF rules on "hyperandrogenic" competitors whose significance goes beyond the boundaries of the sport.

The new regulations came into force on May 8 and oblige women with higher than normal male hormone levels to artificially lower their testosterone to run at some distances. Semenya, the best-known athlete to fall foul of the rules, has refused to take the medication and consequently will not take part in Doha.

Semenya initially won a legal battle, enabling her to compete in 800m races, before a Swiss court overruled the decision. Coe said "the issue of transgender more generally is going to be dominating, not just athletics, but all sports".

Two female Kenyan middle-distance runners have been dropped from the team for Doha due to high levels of testosterone. Ximena Restrepo, a former sprinter from Colombia, was elected as an IAAF vice-president at the congress, the first time the body has elevated a woman to the position. "It's a great moment for me and my country," she said. "I would like to thank you Seb. Because of the changes you've done to the constitution, women are having more opportunities than before." —AFP



DOHA: IAAF's first female vice president, former Colombian sprinter Ximena Restrepo, poses next to IAAF's president Britain's Sebastian Coe following his re-election for a second term in the Qatari capital Doha yesterday. — AFP