

## Sports

# Norrie beats Basilashvili to claim Indian Wells title

## First Briton to win the ATP Indian Wells crown



INDIAN WELLS: Cameron Norrie of Great Britain kisses his winners trophy after his victory against Nikoloz Basilashvili of Georgia in the men's final match of the BNP Paribas Open at the Indian Wells Tennis Garden on Sunday in Indian Wells, California. — AFP

INDIAN WELLS: Cameron Norrie's breakthrough season reached a high point in the California desert on Sunday with a 3-6, 6-4, 6-1 win over Nikoloz Basilashvili to become the first Briton to win the ATP Indian Wells title.

Norrie rallied from a set down to earn his career best 47th win of the season and is the first player from Great Britain to lift the trophy, achieving what former finalists Andy Murray, Tim Henman and Greg Rusedski failed to do.

This is Norrie's second title in his sixth ATP final of the season after winning his maiden crown earlier this year in Los Cabos. The victory will also propel him into the top 20 in the world for the first time in his career, and move him past Daniel Evans to become the new British No. 1. "I am so happy, this is my biggest title," said Norrie, who clinched the crown when Basilashvili belted a forehand long on the first match point.

Norrie hit just one ace had two double faults but won 77 percent of his first serve points and played better in the crucial moments than Basilashvili. "It has been an incredible week. I was expecting it to be a longer match and he made a couple of errors at the end," said Norrie.

Murray was the most recent British finalist in 2009 when he lost to Spaniard Rafael Nadal. Henman made

the final twice, in 2002 and 2004 when he lost in straight sets to Roger Federer 6-3, 6-3. Canadian-born Brit Rusedski was runner-up in 1998.

Norrie was born in Johannesburg, South Africa, grew up in New Zealand before becoming the top collegiate player in the United States at Texas Christian University. He has represented Great Britain for the



### Norrie's second title in sixth ATP final

past eight years.

The 29-year-old Basilashvili was going for his third title of the season. He has a reputation of being a streaky player capable of looking unbeatable one day and vulnerable the next. Unfortunately, the Georgian did not bring his A game against Norrie unlike the quarter-finals where he upset second seeded Stefanos Tsitsipas of Greece. Basilashvili said he had some health issues Sunday which sapped his energy in the

final set, but declined to go into detail.

#### Health issues

"I was very tight. I had some health problems in the third set. I tried to go out and take a breath but could not recover. I didn't have anything left," said Basilashvili, who left the court after the fifth game of the third set to go to the bathroom and try and regroup.

Basilashvili, the son of a former dancer with the Georgian National Ballet, blasted two aces and won just 56 percent of his first serves and 59 percent of his second serves in the one hour, 49 minute match. Basilashvili won the last five games of the first set to take it 6-3. Norrie got the early break and took a 3-1 lead but the Georgian held serve in the fifth game to begin his hot streak.

Norrie fought back in a tight second set that saw both players record service breaks early. Norrie got the upper hand with another service break in the 10th game to go on and level the sets at one each. Norrie got another early break in the second game of the third set, but Basilashvili won a six-minute long fourth game to cut the deficit to 3-1. That was the last hurrah for Basilashvili, who then lost the final three games of the match, in part due to the sloppy forehands and an apparent lack of focus. — AFP

#### News in brief

##### Norrie climbs rankings

PARIS: Roger Federer dropped out of the top 10 in the ATP rankings yesterday for the first time in almost five years, as newly-crowned Indian Wells champion Cameron Norrie jumped 11 spots. Federer, 40, has not played due to a right knee injury since losing in the Wimbledon quarter-finals to Hubert Hurkacz in July. Poland's Hurkacz climbed two places to 10th after making the Indian Wells last eight last week, knocking Federer down to 11th. It is the first time the 20-time Grand Slam champion has been ranked outside the top 10 since January 2017, when he went on to win the Australian Open following a knee injury. Norrie broke into the top 20 at world number 15, while his compatriot Andy Murray dramatically slid down the rankings, though, falling 51 places to 172nd. — AFP

##### First Arab in top 10

PARIS: Tunisia's Ons Jabeur became the first Arab tennis player to break into the world's top 10 yesterday, while Indian Wells champion Paula Badosa gained 14 places in the WTA rankings. Jabeur, a Wimbledon quarter-finalist earlier this year, was beaten by Spain's Badosa in the Indian Wells semi-finals last Friday. Before the tournament, 14th place was the highest achieved by Arab players, a record which was jointly held by Jabeur and former Moroccan star Younes El Aynaoui. The 23-year-old Badosa, who beat Victoria Azarenka in Saturday's final in California, started the year as the world number 70 but has now climbed to 13th. Four-time Grand Slam champion Naomi Osaka moved up two places and back into the top 10 despite not playing last week. — AFP

##### Napoli reclaim top spot

ROME: Napoli returned to the top of Serie A on Sunday after Nigerian international Victor Osimhen scored the only goal in a hard-fought 1-0 win against Torino. AC Milan had moved to the top of the table after battling back from two goals down to beat Hellas Verona 3-2 at the San Siro on Saturday. But Napoli moved back to the summit after Osimhen, who had scored for his country in a 2-0 win against the Central African Republic in World Cup qualifying last week, headed the 81st-minute winner. Elsewhere, Juventus continued their climb following a disastrous start as Moise Kean's first-half goal clinched a 1-0 win over Jose Mourinho's Roma. — AFP

##### Ansu inspires Barca

MADRID: Ansu Fati came to the rescue again on Sunday by scoring a sensational goal and earning a penalty in a 3-1 victory over Valencia as Barcelona got a big week off to a winning start. Memphis Depay slammed in the spot-kick and Philippe Coutinho, who came on for Fati on the hour, added a late third to give a comfortable complexion to a game that Valencia had led after just five minutes. Ansu went off with Valencia still chasing an equalizer, an indication of how important Ronald Koeman considers his involvement in Wednesday's Champions League game against Dynamo Kiev, with the season's first Clasico against Real Madrid coming four days later. — AFP

## Ireland thrash Netherlands in T20 World Cup

ABU DHABI: Fast bowler Curtis Campher took four wickets in four balls to help Ireland thrash Netherlands by seven wickets in a first round match of the Twenty20 World Cup yesterday. Campher took a hat-trick and then struck again to return figures of 4-26 as Netherlands were dismissed for 106

## Spain's Badosa beats Azarenka to capture Indian Wells title

INDIAN WELLS: Paula Badosa demonstrated her mental toughness to become the WTA Indian Wells champion in her desert debut on Sunday with a hard-fought, three-set victory over two-time champion Victoria Azarenka.

The Spaniard, who had not lost a set since her first match of the tournament, needed three hours and four minutes to out-muscle Azarenka 7-6 (7/5), 2-6, 7-6 (7/2). "Every morning I wake up and my dream is to win a tournament like this," Badosa said. "I have to keep working hard and always believe. The key is to enjoy the journey."

Badosa won her only previous WTA final earlier this season in Belgrade but she did it via a retirement over Ana Konjuh. This one was sweeter because Badosa got to close out the championship point on the court, hammering a forehand winner to the open side that Azarenka could only watch sail in.

Badosa celebrated the biggest win of her career by falling face first to the court, both hands covering her face while the crowd cheered. "This is a dream come true," said Badosa during the post-match festivities on the court. She then turned to Azarenka, saying "I remember when I was 14 or 15 years old seeing you win Grand Slams and hoping one day I can play like that." Two-time Australian Open winner Azarenka was trying to become the first three-time WTA winner in Indian Wells. She battled back several times on Sunday, digging in after dropping the first set in a tightly-contested tiebreaker. But the 32-year-old Belarusian fell behind early in the final set tiebreaker and couldn't recover.

Badosa got the first break of the match in the seventh game of the opening set but Azarenka immediately broke back to level at 4-4. Azarenka used an ace to win the fifth game of the opening set



OLYMPIA, Greece: Greek actress Xanthi Georgiou, playing the role of the High Priestess, holds the lit Olympic Flame during the flame lighting ceremony for the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics at the Ancient Olympia archeological site yesterday. — AFP

in the Group A opener in Abu Dhabi.

In reply, Ireland lost two early wickets but veteran opener Paul Stirling, who made an unbeaten 30, and Gareth Delany, who scored 44, put on 59 runs for the third wicket to ease into their chase. Ireland achieved their target with 4.5 overs to spare as Campher hit the winning runs for his team's first win over the Netherlands in a World Cup.

"(We wanted) just to attack the stumps as much as possible and, obviously, with Curtis' four-wicket over he did exactly that," skipper Andy Balbirnie said after the win. "We've had a slow but good build-up, I think we're peaking at the right time."

Campher became only the third bowler in T20 International history to claim four wickets in four



INDIAN WELLS: Paula Badosa of Spain reacts after defeating Victoria Azarenka in the Women's Singles Final match of the BNP Paribas Open on Sunday in Indian Wells, California. — AFP

and then used another ace to set up the winning point in the ninth game to take a 5-4 lead. The first set took one hour and 20 minutes including the tightly-contested tiebreaker.

Badosa jumped out to a 4-0 lead but Azarenka clawed her way back in to level it 5-5. An unforced error by Azarenka created set point and Badosa overpowered her with a blistering cross court forehand winner to end the marathon set.

#### Shorter rallies

Despite losing a grueling first set in a tiebreaker, Azarenka looked the fresher of the two in at the beginning of the second set. Azarenka started coming into the net more which shortened the rallies.

## Olympic flame lit for 2022 Beijing Winter Games

OLYMPIA, Greece: The Olympic flame for the 2022 Beijing Winter Games was lit in Olympia yesterday in the presence of IOC president Thomas Bach. Following tradition, the flame was lit from the rays of the sun at the ancient Temple of Hera, the cradle of the Ancient Games. But activists grabbed the spotlight by unfurling a Tibetan flag and a banner that said "no genocide" at the Games.

The demonstrators pulled out the flag and banner during the ceremony in Olympia attended by International Olympic Committee (IOC) president Thomas Bach and several dozen dignitaries including Chinese officials. Greek police forced the demonstrators, who had appeared in the ruins of the site of the Ancient Olympics, to take down the flag and the banner before detaining them. A spokesperson for the London-based Free Tibet organization identified the protesters as Chemi Lhamo, Jason Leith and Fern MacDougall.

#### 'Beijing to write history'

"Beijing will write history as the first city ever to host

balls after Afghanistan's Rashid Khan and Lasith Malinga of Sri Lanka in 2019. Campher sent back Colin Ackermann (11), Ryan ten Doeschate (0) and Scott Edwards (0) for a hat-trick and then bowled Roelof van der Merwe (0) in a sensational over.

The Johannesburg-born Campher is also just the second player with a hat-trick in the men's T20 World Cup after Australia fast bowler Brett Lee, who achieved the feat against Bangladesh in the inaugural edition in 2007.

Campher, 22, had a T20 best of 3-19 from his previous four matches since making his debut in August against Zimbabwe in Dublin. He switched ends in the match yesterday and got instant success after Ireland reviewed a caught behind for

Azarenka won the first three games of the second to set the tone and then served out the set with some solid placements and a few aces sprinkled in.

Azarenka smacked an ace to get to set point then closed it out when Badosa hit a backhand long. Azarenka held serve in the eighth game of the third set as the two painted the lines in one of the longest rallies of the match. Azarenka blasted a backhand winner down the line to level the set at 4-4.

Azarenka broke in the ninth game but Badosa returned the favor in the very next game as the third set, like the entire match, went back and forth. The tiebreak was pretty much all Badosa as the veteran Azarenka appeared to run out of gas, losing four of the final five points of the match. — AFP

both the summer and winter editions of the Olympic Games," Bach said in a speech. "The Olympic Games cannot address all the challenges in our world. But they set an example for a world where everyone respects the same rules and one another," he said.

"In these difficult times we are still living through, the Olympic Winter Games Beijing 2022 will be an important moment to bring the world together in a spirit of peace, friendship and solidarity. We need more solidarity. More solidarity within societies, and more solidarity among societies."

Due to coronavirus restrictions, the ceremony was held in front of an audience limited to IOC members, the Greek and Chinese Olympic committees, Greek President Katerina Sakellariopoulou and the media. In a break with tradition, there will be no torch relay on Greek soil.

Instead, the flame is due to be carried to the Panathenaic Stadium in Athens, a second-century AD arena used in both the 1896 and 2004 Games, and on Tuesday it will be handed over to the delegation from Beijing 2022 to be flown to China.

Pro-Tibet activists, as well as representatives of China's Uyghur community and human rights experts, are scheduled to hold a press conference in an Athens hotel today. They say they will "denounce the severe failure of the International Olympic Committee" in awarding the Winter Games to China. A police spokesman said three protesters arrested at the Acropolis on Sunday would be freed pending a trial in January. — AFP

Ackermann with the ultra edge technology showing a spike when the ball passed the batsman's gloves.

Technology helped Campher once again on the hat-trick ball when Edwards was given not out for an lbw call by the on-field official but replays suggested the ball would have hit the leg stump. Earlier this season, Campher underwent ankle surgery. "I didn't feel the best, coming back from injury," he said. "First over didn't go as planned but Bal (Balbirnie) kept faith with me."

Skipper Pieter Seelaar scored 21 to take Netherlands past the 100-run mark before quick bowler Mark Adair ran through the tail to return impressive figures of 3-9 — Ireland's most economical bowling ever in T20 World Cup. — AFP