

## Sports

# Murray, Venus defeated in Washington openers

## Ymer ousts Murray as Halep, Pegula win

WASHINGTON: Three-time Grand Slam champion Andy Murray of Britain crashed out in the opening round of the ATP and WTA Washington Open on Monday, falling to Sweden's Mikael Ymer. The 35-year-old Scotsman fell to 115th-ranked Ymer 7-6 (10/8), 4-6, 6-1 after two hours and 50 minutes at the US Open tuneup tournament. "I'm excited," said Ymer, who saved four set points in the first set. "A lot left to do but it's a very good start of the American swing."

World number 50 Murray, the 2012 and 2016 Olympic champion, is trying to earn a seeding at the US Open, which he won a decade ago. "It's still possible," Murray said. "I would just need to have a good run in Canada or Cincinnati really. It's pretty straightforward if I was to make a quarterfinal or a semifinal, which right now after a loss like that—doesn't seem realistic. "I do feel like if I play very well that I could do that. But I'll need to certainly play better than I did today."

Seven-time Grand Slam champion Venus Williams, playing her first singles match in nearly a year, was also eliminated in the opening round, falling to Canadian qualifier Rebecca Marino 4-6, 6-1, 6-4. "It was nice to have the crowd behind me," Williams said. "Definitely a great experience. It's my first match so I didn't think I played well a lot of the times. "Just trying to shake off some rust. That's just to be expected. All I can do is just play another tournament and play better."

Williams had not played a WTA singles match since falling to Taiwan's Hsieh Su-wei 49 weeks ago in Chicago. Ymer, who lost his only career ATP final last August in Winston-Salem, will next

face 15th seed Aslan Karatsev. Ymer won 75 percent of his first-serve points, 49-of-65, and smashed 37 winners past Murray, who made only 25 with 35 unforced errors, five more than Ymer. Murray had a set point in the 12th game of the first set but sent a backhand wide and Ymer held into a tiebreaker.

Murray had three more set points in the tiebreak but Ymer smashed two forehand winners and a forehand volley winner to pull level at 7-7, prompting Murray to toss his racquet in frustration. Ymer, 23, took the set on a backhand volley winner. "Had chances in the first set to close that out," Murray said. "Didn't get it. Yeah, frustrating." While Murray clawed back to force a third set, Ymer raced to a 4-0 lead, they exchanged breaks on double faults and Ymer ended the match on a backhand crosscourt winner.

Two-time Grand Slam champion Simona Halep, coming off a Wimbledon semi-final run, beat Spanish qualifier Cristina Bucsa 6-3, 7-5. "Always the first round is difficult when you change the surface," third seed Halep said. "I know it's going to take time to make the game more solid." US top seed Jessica Pegula cruised 6-2, 6-2, over US wildcard Hailey Baptiste. Pegula won the most recent WTA Washington event in 2019 after two missed years due to COVID-19. "It definitely feels weird," Pegula said. "It's great to be back."

### Edmund wins ATP return

Britain's Kyle Edmund made a triumphant return to ATP singles after three left knee sur-



WASHINGTON: Andy Murray of Great Britain returns a shot to Mikael Ymer of Sweden during Day 3 of the Citi Open at Rock Creek Tennis Center on August 01, 2022. —AFP

geries and a 20-month layoff by defeating Japanese qualifier Yosuke Watanuki 6-4, 7-6 (10/8). Edmund, who next faces British 16th seed Daniel Evans, played in his first tour-level singles

match since October 2020 at Vienna, a month before his first operation. "I didn't find it easy today," said Edmund. "I hung in there and I got my reward in the end." —AFP

## Talking points as F1 takes a break

PARIS: Fernando Alonso's move to Aston Martin to replace retiring Sebastian Vettel next year was the focus of interest in Formula One after the Hungarian Grand Prix. Here AFP looks at talking points as the world championship heads into its annual summer holiday shutdown:

### Ferrari's problems

Team boss Mattia Binotto faced increasing pressure on Monday after Sunday's flop as Ferrari started the Hungarian Grand Prix second and third, with Carlos Sainz and Charles Leclerc, but finished fourth and sixth. World champion Max Verstappen and his Red Bull team-mate Sergio Perez went from 10th and 11th to first and fifth with a comprehensive demonstration of smart team-work and strategy. Red Bull lead the constructors championship with 431 points. Ferrari has 334. Rising Mercedes are third on 304. Although Ferrari have had the fastest car for much of the season, notably in qualifying, they have squandered that advantage with bungled strategy calls, driver error, engine and other technical failures and a lack of consistency and reliability.

Former driver Johnny Herbert, a pundit on Sky Sports F1, described their latest flop as "embarrassing". Leclerc, 80 points adrift in the title race, pleaded to stay out on the track on medium compound tyres while leading with 30 laps to go, but was called in, switched to hards and fell down the order. Binotto remained calm and blamed an unexpected drop in car and tyre performance, but promised another in a series of in-depth reviews.

### Mercedes recovery

The Mercedes recovery after a dismal and bumpy start to the season has revived seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton, not only rekindling his belief he will secure a 104th career victory this year, but also energising him for a bid for a record eighth drivers' title. The 37-year-old Briton's run of five consecutive podium finishes, including two successive seconds, has confirmed the team are back as a competitive - if not yet winning - force. Hamilton said: "For sure, if we take this pace into the second half of the season, we can start to fight those other guys!"

Alonso move triggers 'silly season' Fernando Alonso's swift move to take Sebastian Vettel's seat has triggered 'silly season' speculation forecasting more action in the driver market for 2023. The first vacancy to fill will be at Alpine. Reserve driver Oscar Piastri, winner of the 2020 Formula Three and 2021 Formula Two titles, is an obvious candidate. The Australian, managed by former Red Bull driver and compatriot Mark Webber, is regarded as a major talent. Another vacant seat could be at Williams, where Nicholas Latifi will be out of contract this year. Williams may be interested in Piastri, if he misses the Alpine seat, or Mercedes reserve Nyck de Vries.

### Bouncing and porpoising

While the drivers take to the European beaches for their vacations, many teams will keep working on solutions to the 'porpoising' and bouncing problems that have affected many cars this season. The ruling body the FIA is scheduled to introduce measures to control the problem and safeguard drivers starting from the Belgian Grand Prix, but some teams, notably Red Bull, remain opposed to any changes affecting the 'ground effect' formula introduced this season. Red Bull have designed a car that is less prone to porpoising and have reaped the reward in results. Team boss Christian Horner has warned of rifts in the paddock and pitlane if new rules are introduced mid-season.

### Abusive behavior

Abusive behavior from fans at races and on social media has prompted a response by Formula One. It launched a 'Drive it Out' campaign on Saturday, but there were continued reports of abusive behavior and filmed reports on social media showing Max Verstappen fans allegedly burning Lewis Hamilton merchandise at the Hungaroring. "It is not acceptable," said the 24-year-old Dutchman. "I definitely don't agree with that because it's disgusting." The recent incidents in Austria and Hungary follow others when fans cheered drivers crashing their cars or generally booed or abused them. —AFP

## China's former golf world number one Shanshan retires

HONG KONG: China's former world number one and 2016 Olympic bronze medalist Feng Shanshan announced her retirement from professional golf and the LPGA Tour on Tuesday. "Now it is time for me to try something different," said Feng, who will turn 33 on Friday, in a statement posted on her official Instagram page.

The announcement comes a year after her last competitive appearance, at the Tokyo Olympics, where Feng had strongly hinted she was about to retire. "In recent years, the global pandemic has changed a lot of things, and has me reflecting," she said. "It is time to slow down a little, focus more on my personal growth, and spend some time with my family." Feng told AFP in Tokyo it had been an honor to represent her country, for potentially the last time.

"We're representing our own countries and we're not playing for prize money, we're playing for honor," she said at Kasumigaseki Country Club, where she could not repeat her medal heroics of five years earlier, finishing eighth. "Out of all my achievements, I would say a medal at the Olympics is very special," said Feng, whose only major win came at the 2012 US PGA Championship. "Even though I've been a major winner, think about it, we have five majors every year, in four years we have 20 chances to win a major."

### 'My last dance'

"So I would say it's harder, much harder, to get a medal at the Olympics. It was the most memorable moment of my career." Brought up in China's southern Guangdong province, neighboring Hong Kong, an 18-year-old Feng became the first Chinese player



China's Feng Shanshan

to earn an LPGA tour card in 2007. The easy-going Feng went on to be the first Chinese player, man or woman, to win a major and lifted 10 LPGA titles during her 14 active years on the tour. In 2017, Feng became the only Chinese golfer to date to reach the world number one ranking.

During a supremely consistent career, Feng registered 18 top-10 finishes in majors, two of them in 2021 even as she was winding down her playing commitments. It seems clear that golf will remain a big part of Feng's life, even in retirement. Since December she has been helping to coach China's

women's national team. "I will be devoting my heart and sweat off the course in helping young talents grow," she wrote. "Golf has brought me everything. Maybe now is my chance to give back." She also left the door open for a final appearance on the LPGA tour to say goodbye, possibly when the elite women's circuit returns to Asia later in the year for events in South Korea, Taiwan and Japan. "Due to the pandemic, I have never made an official farewell to people who support me on the golf course," Feng said. "I hope to see all my LPGA friends again in the near future for my last dance." —AFP

## McCoy lifts West Indies

BASSETTERRE: A record-breaking six-wicket haul by Obed McCoy paved the way for a nervy series-leveling five-wicket win for the West Indies over India in the second T20 International of the five-match series at Warner Park in St Kitts on Monday. Comfortable winners of the opening encounter in Trinidad three days earlier, India were dismissed for 138 off 19.4 overs with left-arm seamer McCoy returning the outstanding figures of six for 17, the best-ever by a West Indian in T20 Internationals.

Opening batsman's Brandon King's 68 set the home side on their way to what looked a comfortable victory before they stumbled towards the end and needed an unbeaten 31 from wicketkeeper-batsman Devon Thomas to reach the target at 141 for five off 19.2 overs and set the stage for the third match at the same venue on Tuesday.

McCoy, who has endured a succession of injury setbacks in the previous 12 months, looked to be back to his best and gave the West Indies the perfect start when he claimed the vital wicket of Indian captain Rohit Sharma with the first ball of the match. He also completed his four-over effort with a

wicket - Bhuvneshwar Kumar - off his final ball and in between added the scalps of Suryakumar Yadav, Ravindra Jadeja, Dinesh Karthik and Ravi Ashwin as India's vaunted batting line-up labored on pitch offering disconcerting bounce.

"I went into this match with a much clearer mind than the last game," said McCoy after receiving the 'Man of the Match' award. "I am enjoying the challenge bowling at the start of the innings and at the death and so far I am really learning a lot from these experiences." Hardik Pandya topscored with 31 but no-one in the visitors' line-up was really able to get on top of a disciplined West Indies bowling effort. King's polished innings at the start of the West Indies reply came off 52 balls with eight fours and two sixes.

When he was yorked by Avesh Khan in the 15th over though at 107 for four, India looked to tighten the screws, only for Khan to spoil his earlier good work when he bowled a no-ball at the start of the critical final over of the match and Thomas capitalized to take his relieved team across the line. "We didn't bat well. We just didn't apply ourselves, but that can happen," was Sharma's assessment of his team's batting performance. "But as I have said many times already, when you're trying to achieve something as a batting group you won't always succeed, so we aren't going to change our plans based on this result." —AFP



BASSETTERRE: Obed McCoy (right), of West Indies, celebrates the dismissal of Rohit Sharma, of India, during the second T20I match between West Indies and India at Warner Park in Basseterre, Saint Kitts and Nevis on August 01, 2022. —AFP

## Wimbledon champion Rybakina falls at WTA San Jose event

SAN JOSE: Reigning Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina of Kazakhstan lost to seventh seed Daria Kasatkina on Monday in a first-round match at the WTA San Jose hardcourt tournament. World number 12 Kasatkina won 11

of the last 12 games to win 1-6, 6-2, 6-0 in Rybakina's debut match since winning her first major title.

Kasatkina will next play American Taylor Townsend, who eliminated Australian Storm Sanders 6-1, 6-4 at the US Open hardcourt tuneup event. After 23rd-ranked Rybakina rolled through the opening set in 35 minutes, Kasatkina dominated the final two. American Madison Keys, the 2017 US Open runner-up, defeated China's Zhang Shuai 6-4, 6-2 to book a second-round date against Tunisian Ons Jabeur, who lost

to Rybakina in last month's Wimbledon final.

Japan's Naomi Osaka, a four-time Grand Slam champion, and American sixth seed Coco Gauff would meet in a second-round matchup if both win their openers on Tuesday. Former world number one Osaka will face China's Zheng Qinwen while 18-year-old Gauff, this year's French Open runner-up, meets Anhelina Kalinina of Ukraine. Osaka, whose ranking has slid to 41st, has not played since losing her first-round match at the French Open. She had suffered a right ankle injury in a tuneup event at Madrid. —AFP