



WIMBLEDON, United Kingdom: US player Amanda Anisimova returns the ball to US player Coco Gauff during their women's singles tennis match on the sixth day of the 2022 Wimbledon Championships at The All England Tennis Club in Wimbledon, southwest London, on July 2, 2022. —AFP

## Tomljanovic reaches Wimbledon last 16

### Anisimova beats US rival Gauff to reach fourth round

LONDON: Ajla Tomljanovic reached the Wimbledon last 16 on Saturday—a surprise for her father, who only booked her into tournament accommodation until after the second round. Despite making the quarter-finals last year, Ratko Tomljanovic had only reserved their nearby house until Friday.

"I was like, you thought I'd lose second round," said Tomljanovic. "At least book it till like Sunday. So it's a good problem to have. I'm not really satisfied being in the third round and then moving houses."

The 29-year-old Australian said finding a new place was a headache. "The problem was it's so hard to find something. London is packed, and I didn't want to stay an hour away. He didn't take it well. I gave him a lot of grief yesterday." Tomljanovic managed to find a hotel near the All England Club on Friday.

With that settled, she was able to seal a 2-6, 6-4, 6-3 win over Czech 13th seed and 2021 French Open champion Barbora Krejickova. However, there was more bad news from Ratko on Saturday. "Today when I finished, he's like, 'Oh, I have to book again'. I was, like, 'you're kidding me'."

"He wasn't kidding but he managed to book the same hotel, so I have a room probably until Tuesday. "But I don't care. I said, even if someone is joining me in my room, I'm not leaving this hotel." Next up for the world number 44 is a last-16 clash against either world number one Iga Swiatek or French veteran Alize Cornet.

She says her father will keep booking her flights and hotels as he has done throughout her career even if his explanation for the hotel blunder left her bamboozled. "He's like, 'Ajla, hungry rats swim the fastest', whatever

that means," she added. "I'm like, 'I'm not a rat and I'm not hungry. I just want my house from the beginning till the end, or maybe you should just believe in me a little more.'"

Earlier, Amanda Anisimova came from behind to beat 11th seed Coco Gauff 6-7 (4/7), 6-2, 6-1 in an all-American clash on Wimbledon's Centre Court on Saturday. French Open finalist Gauff took the first set after a tie-break but was broken three times in the second set as the 20th seed levelled the match.

A break in the fourth game of the decider put Anisimova in the box seat and she swept into a 5-1 lead with another break. The 20-year-old served out to love to set up a fourth-round match against Serena Williams's conqueror Harmony Tan, who defeated British wild card Katie Boulter earlier on Saturday. —AFP

### Wimbledon, Tour, cricket and rugby find COVID still in the air

PARIS: As fans again fill stadiums this summer, a string of COVID-19 cases in major events suggest it is too early to cheer pandemic-free sport. After being cancelled in 2020 and requiring spectators to test last year, this year's Wimbledon seemed to signal a return to sunnier days as the United Kingdom relaxed its pandemic rules.

Then 2021 runner-up Matteo Berrettini, 2017 finalist Marin Cilic and Spanish 17th seed Roberto Bautista Agut withdrew. They had all tested themselves and owned up to their positive results. "We paid the price, we ate our black bread with a year of bubbles and tests. We all got vaccinated," said tennis player Alize Cornet before adding: "COVID is part of our lives now."

British player Liam Broady suggested less well-off competitors might think twice about disqualifying themselves. "At the end of the day, if you have got a bit of a cold, you play the main draw of Wimbledon for £50,000 and a chance at more. I'm not sure some of the lower-ranked guys are going to, scout's honour, take themselves away and do a COVID test," Broady said.

The Women's Euros which kick off on July 6 in England are also relying on honesty. France coach Corinne Diacre said her team would do what European governing body UEFA asked "which is not much".

"The only constraint...imposed on us by UEFA, will be to wear a FFP2 mask when we arrive at the stadium and in the changing rooms," she said. Adding that the squad would take the masks off "once we are among ourselves." "We will have to take them off anyway to play," she said.

Also in the UK, the rearranged England-India cricket Test, cancelled last year because of fears of an outbreak in the Indian camp, started Friday without visiting captain Rohit Sharma and home wicket-keeper Ben Foakes, both recovering from COVID.

Foakes was forced out after feeling ill and testing positive halfway through England's last Test with New Zealand. The same thing happened in Sri Lanka on Friday as all-rounder Angelo Mathews went into isolation before the third day of a Test with Australia. The world swimming championships in Budapest is relying on self-testing by individuals or teams.

#### 'COVID is everywhere'

A few days before the Tour de France started on Friday, the International Cycling Union (UCI) decided to reintroduce tests. They acted after some 30 riders were forced out of the Tour of Switzerland which ended on June 21 and several cases were detected just before the Tour.

Yet even if a rider tests positive, team doctors, the Tour and the UCI medical director, will discuss the case before deciding whether to remove him from the peloton. In an event where fans crowd the roadside, Tour boss Christian Prudhomme has asked riders to "refuse selfies and autographs".

Teams for two of the weekend's opening summer rugby union internationals have been reshaped by COVID. The French rugby team faced tougher protocols in Japan. The squad had to undergo three days of quarantine and tests after arriving.

"Unfortunately, we're used to this," fly-half Antoine Hastoy told a press conference. "We've been living with it for over two years. We're doing our best not to let the virus spread through our ranks." Second row Thomas Lavault said the squad was trying to balance team spirit with caution. —AFP

### USA, Dominican Republic earn 2024 Olympic berths

SAN PEDRO SULA: The United States beat Honduras 3-0 in the semi-finals of the CONCACAF Under-20 Championship on Friday to secure a berth in the 2024 Paris Olympic football tournament. The Dominican Republic also punched their ticket to Paris, beating Guatemala 4-2 in a penalty shootout after the teams played to a 2-2 draw.

For the Dominican Republic it will be a first appearance in the Olympics, while the United States will return to the Games for the first time since 2008. The USA took control early, with goals from Paxten Aaronson in the third minute, Alejandro Alvarado in the 22nd and Quinn Sullivan in the 43rd giving them a 3-0 lead. They made it stand up against a determined Honduras side, who saw Jefryn Macias sent off in the 87th minute.

In the first semi-final, Guatemala grabbed a 2-0 lead with a goal from Arquimides Ordonez in the 23rd minute and an own-goal from Dominican defender Sebastian Manon in the 29th. The Dominican Republic scored two goals in three minutes in the second half as Guillermo De Pena struck in the 62nd and Edison Azcona made it 2-2 in the 64th. After neither team could find a decider through extra time, it went to the shootout in which Adhony Maria converted the winning shot. —AFP



SAN PEDRO SULA, Honduras: US players celebrate after winning their Concacaf U-20 World Cup semifinal football match against Honduras at the General Francisco Morazan stadium in San Pedro Sula, Honduras. —AFP

### NBA moves heat up as Jazz 'trade' center Gobert to T'Wolves

NEW YORK: The Utah Jazz agreed to trade star center Rudy Gobert to Minnesota. ESPN reported Friday amid a welter of free agency deals that included Zach LaVine's \$215-million decision to stay with the Chicago Bulls. ESPN said France's Gobert, a three-time Defensive Player of the Year, would head to Minnesota in exchange for Malik Beasley, Patrick Beverley, Jarred Vanderbilt, No. 22 draft pick Walker Kessler and four first-round NBA Draft picks.

The 30-year-old Gobert has spent all nine of his NBA seasons with Utah, where he has helped the Jazz reach the playoffs for six straight years. Last season, Gobert averaged 15.6 points per game, a league-leading 14.7 rebounds and 2.1 blocks. In Minnesota, the player dubbed the "Stifle Tower" will be teaming with another star big man in Karl-Anthony Towns, who has reportedly agreed to a four-year, \$224 million extension.

Earlier Friday, LaVine's agents announced the coveted free agent had agreed to a five-year max-

imum deal worth \$215 million to remain with the Bulls. Klutch Sports Group also announced that Jusuf Nurkic has agreed to a four-year contract worth \$70 million to stay with the Portland Trail Blazers and John Wall has agreed to a two-year deal worth \$13.2 million to play for the Los Angeles Clippers. The deals come on the first full day of NBA free agency for the 2022-23 campaign. Most deals are announced by agents or reports but no actual NBA contracts can be signed before Wednesday.

LaVine, 27, helped last year's US Olympic team bring home Tokyo gold and then completed a second straight NBA All-Star campaign with 24.4 points, 4.6 rebounds and 4.5 assists a game over 67 contests for the Bulls. After missing the playoffs for four consecutive seasons, Chicago went 46-36 and made the post-season, losing to Milwaukee in the first round. LaVine underwent left knee surgery in May.

Bosnian big-man Nurkic, 27, has spent the past six seasons with Portland after playing his first three NBA campaigns for Denver. Nurkic averaged 15.0 points, a career-high 11.1 rebounds, 2.8 assists and 1.1 steals a game for the Trail Blazers last season. Portland went 27-55 and missed the playoffs for the first time since 2013. Wall, a 31-year-old US guard taken first in the 2010 NBA Draft by Washington, has averaged 19.1 points, 9.1 assists and 4.3 rebounds a game over nine seasons with

the Wizards and last season in Houston.

#### Booker, Morant stay put

Other reported deals struck in the first hours of NBA free agency have center Mitchell Robinson staying with the New York Knicks, according to ESPN and the New York Daily News, on a four-year deal worth \$60 million while Gary Payton II joins Portland on a three-year deal for \$28 million, also according to ESPN. Spanish guard Ricky Rubio, 31, has reportedly reached a deal on a three-year contract worth \$18 million with the Cleveland Cavaliers.

The free agency negotiating period had barely opened on Thursday when it was reported that two-time reigning MVP Nikola Jokic planned to sign a five-year \$270 million extension with the Denver Nuggets - the largest contract in NBA history. Devin Booker has reportedly agreed to a four-year, \$224 million deal to stay in Phoenix while young Memphis star Ja Morant is expected to ink a five-year extension worth \$193 million. —AFP



Rudy Gobert