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# GULF TIMES SPORT

CRICKET

Suryakumar, Bumrah shine as India defeat Afghanistan at T20 World Cup

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HORSE RACING

## Wathnan Racing's Shareholder lands Norfolk Stakes



The connections of Shareholder celebrate after the Wathnan Racing colt won the Norfolk Stakes at the Royal Ascot yesterday.

Agencies  
Ascot, United Kingdom

The trio of owner Wathnan Racing, trainer Karl Burke and jockey James Doyle struck in the opener for the second successive day with a two-year-old – Shareholder landing the Gr.2 Norfolk Stakes at the Royal Ascot yesterday. The Trio claimed the opening Queen Mary Stakes on Wednesday's card with the impressive Leovanni and Shareholder followed the suit for the same connections in the day-three curtain-raiser. Turning out just 12 days after overcoming greenness to make a

successful debut at Beverley, the colt travelled strongly throughout in the five-strong group that raced on the far side of the track and despite edging left late on, he passed the post a length to the good. Tropical Storm filled the runner-up spot, with Arizona Blaze a close-up third and 10-11 favourite Whistlejacket in fourth. "He's still learning, his debut was a bit messy at Beverley which is a hard place to teach a horse," Doyle said of the colt, who recorded the third-fastest time in the race's history at Ascot and was just two ticks off Valiant Force's time of 12 months earlier. "I tried to keep a lid on him for as long as possible, as I just wanted to give him time to get organ-

ised. He took time to get balanced up but, once he did, he always felt as though he had enough in the tank to keep going. He's got a big engine. Karl was very confident and when he is that confident, you respect his opinion." Trainer Burke feels the best is still to come from Shareholder. "He is a very good horse I think, he did a lot wrong first time out when we'd only had him for six weeks. That was his first run and we had to back him up quickly to come here, he took a huge step forward after that first run. "Mentally, as well as physically, he improved and I think you saw that there. That was the plan and I'll get home and discuss it with the guys from Wathnan, but I'd see

no problem stepping him up to six furlongs, maybe more. I'd be surprised if he'd be a Guineas horse – though I wouldn't rule it out, I would be surprised. We're still learning a lot about this horse but from what I've seen so far, I think he's very good," he said. Bred by Skyfall Thoroughbreds Llc, Shareholder is out of Cloudy Dancer (Invincible Spirit), who is a half-sister to Gr.3 winner Gale Force Ten (Oasis Dream) and a half-sister to Listed winner Rousay (Muhaarar). Jockey James Doyle guides Shareholder to Norfolk Stakes victory at the Royal Ascot yesterday.



EURO 2024

## Lacklustre England held by Denmark

'WE'RE TOP OF THE GROUP. WE KNOW WE CAN IMPROVE'

AFP  
Frankfurt, Germany

England failed to guarantee their place in the knockout stages of Euro 2024 after Morten Hjulmand's spectacular strike earned Denmark a 1-1 draw yesterday. A point was the least the Danes deserved as England again flat-tered to deceive in Frankfurt after an underwhelming 1-0 win over Serbia to open their tournament. Harry Kane had given the Three Lions an early lead as England pounced on a Danish defensive error. Hjulmand's rocket from outside the box levelled before half-time and Denmark were left to rue missing late chances to secure a famous victory. England remain on top of Group C, two points clear of Slovenia, who they face in Cologne on Tuesday, and Denmark. Serbia's late equaliser in a 1-1 draw with Slovenia earlier on Thursday also keeps their destiny in their own hands. Kane insisted England will find the right formula for Euro 2024 success. "We're top of the group. We know we can improve. I know there will probably loads of noise and a bit of disappointment back home... Step by step, we'll get there." Denmark coach Kasper Hjulmand and goalkeeper Kasper Schmeichel claimed on the eve of the game they would not be fuelled by revenge for their Euro 2020 semi-final heartbreak to England three years ago. However, the Danes were a different beast from the side that disappointed at the 2022 World Cup and in drawing against Slovenia to open their tournament in Germany.



Denmark's Morten Hjulmand celebrates with his teammates after scoring a goal during the Euro 2024 match against England in Frankfurt yesterday. (AFP)

Denmark had made the brighter start as both sides struggled to cope with a bobbly pitch in Frankfurt that cut up badly in just its second game of five at Euro 2024. Yet, England capitalised on a howler from Hjulmand's men to take the lead on 18 minutes. Victor Kristiansen was caught unaware of Kyle Walker's run down the right and his deflected low cross fell perfectly for Kane to roll in his 13th goal at major tournaments. Failing to build on early 1-0 leads has been a consistent criticism of England under Southgate. In the 2018 World Cup semi-final and final of Euro 2020, Croatia and Italy were able to wrestle away momentum from

the Three Lions. This time Denmark were not deterred by conceding, although it took a spectacular strike to bring them level. Hjulmand was given far too much room by the England midfield to take aim but he took full advantage from long range with a blistering shot that clipped the inside of the post on its way in. Southgate made no changes at the break, but the future of his experiment of playing Liverpool right-back Trent Alexander-Arnold in a midfield role is in doubt after he was hooked for Conor Gallagher on 55 minutes. Phil Foden's form for England had been a source of much debate after he again failed to shine at in-

ternational level against Serbia. The Manchester City playmaker looked much more like the man that won Premier League player of the year awards this season and was inches away from restoring England's lead with a low drive that came crashing back off the post. Southgate's caution has been criticised in the past, but he was bold with his changes in the search for a winner as Kane, Foden and Bukayo Saka were sacrificed for Eberechi Eze, Ollie Watkins and Jarrod Bowen. Watkins nearly made an immediate impact as he was denied by Schmeichel after a brilliant through ball from Jude Bellingham.

FOOTBALL

## Dominant Spain brush past Italy to reach knockouts

AFP  
Gelsenkirchen, Germany

Spain qualified for the last 16 of Euro 2024 with a match to spare yesterday after beating Italy 1-0 in a dominant display which ensured that La Roja would go through as Group B winners. Riccardo Calafiori's own goal nine minutes after half-time was the difference between the two sides at Gelsenkirchen in the biggest match to date at the tournament in Germany. But the slender margin of victory didn't reflect a statement performance from Spain who completely nullified Italy and should have had the game won by half-time, as they did in their opening round thumping of Croatia. Nico Williams was the star for Spain as he ran Napoli right-back Giovanni Di Lorenzo ragged and supplied the cross from which the unfortunate Calafiori poked the winning goal into his own net. Luis de la Fuente's team have a perfect six points at the top of the group and take on Albania on Monday knowing that they are already in the knockout rounds and playing like potential champions. For Italy yesterday's deserved defeat was a reality check as vibrant Spain peppered the brilliant Gianluigi Donnarumma's goal throughout the match while the Azzurri failed to have a single attempt on target. It was a performance reminiscent of the Euro 2012 final between the two teams when Spain crushed Italy 4-0 in the last international hurrah for tiki-taka football. However all is not lost for Luciano Spalletti's team, who are second on three points, as a draw with Croatia on Monday will be enough to guarantee qualification behind Spain. Spain could have been ahead twice in the first 10 minutes but squandered two great headed

chances. Less than two minutes were on the clock when an unmarked Pedri nodded Williams' pinpoint cross straight at Donnarumma. And then Williams, who had a field day against Di Lorenzo, was the guilty party by somehow heading wide Alvaro Morata's superbly delivered, inswinging ball from the left flank. Spain were clearly on top as Italy struggled to get out of their half, Gianluca Scamacca toiling on his own up front with little support and wasting possession when it did come his way. Donnarumma had to be at his best twice within a matter of seconds when he first stuck out a foot to deny Morata and then pulled off a superb fingertip save which kept out Fabian Ruiz's powerful drive from distance. Meanwhile at the other end of the pitch Spain goalkeeper Unai Simon was a virtual spectator as Italy's sole shot in the first half came just before the break when Federico Chiesa blazed a poor effort over from a difficult position. The same pattern of Spanish possession and Italian defending continued after half-time and Pedri again wasted a great chance in the 51st minute, slamming wide after Marc Cucurella pulled back a perfect low cross. But Spain got the breakthrough soon after and it came through more sensational play from Williams on the left, who made mincemeat of Di Lorenzo before fizzing across a ball which Calafiori couldn't help but divert into his own goal. La Roja went close to doubling their lead with two distance strikes from Morata and teen sensation Lamine Yamal, before the superb Williams smashed an effort past Donnarumma which came crashing out off the crossbar in the 71st minute. In the dying moments Donnarumma again made two superb saves to twice stop Ayoze Perez making the scoreline better reflect a one-sided contest.



## MATCH REPORT

# Suryakumar sparkles as India crush Afghanistan

INDIA EASILY DEFEND 181 FOR 8 AS PACE ACE JASPRIT BUMRAH IMPRESSES YET AGAIN

AFP  
Bridgetown, Barbados

Suryakumar Yadav smashed a fine half-century before India's bowlers slammed the brakes on Afghanistan's flamboyant shot-makers to romp to a 47-run win in the T20 World Cup yesterday.

Suryakumar's 53 was his 19th fifty in the format and helped India post a challenging 181-8 in their second round Super Eights opener.

Experienced fast bowler Jasprit Bumrah then combined with spin trio Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav and Ravindra Jadeja to strangle Afghanistan, seen by many as dark horses for the title, who were dismissed for 134 off the last ball.

Afghanistan slipped quickly to 23-3 losing openers Rahmanullah Gurbaz (11) and Hazratullah Zazai (two) to the wily Bumrah while Patel sent back Ibrahim Zadran (eight).

Gulbadin Naib (17) and top-scorer Azmatullah Omarzai (26) put on 44 for the fourth wicket but once they fell to Kuldeep and Jadeja respectively, Afghanistan wilted in their chase.

Bumrah finished with a career best 3-7 from his four overs while fellow seamer Arshdeep Singh took 3-36.

Afghanistan, who won their opening three games in the group stage, have now lost back-to-back matches.

In their last first round fixture, they suffered a humbling 104-run loss to the West Indies at St Lucia.

India and Afghanistan will face Australia and Bangladesh in their remaining Group 1 fixtures with the top two teams making the semi-finals.

Suryakumar made 53 from 28



India's Suryakumar Yadav (left) hits four as Afghanistan's wicketkeeper Rahmanullah Gurbaz looks on during the ICC Twenty20 World Cup Super Eight match at Kensington Oval in Bridgetown, Barbados, yesterday. (AFP)

balls with five fours and three sixes and shared a 60-run fifth-wicket partnership with Hardik Pandya.

Skipper Rashid Khan and left-arm fast bowler Fazalhaq Farooqi both took three wickets for Afghanistan.

Farooqi struck first for Afghanistan by having India skipper Rohit Sharma caught by Rashid for just eight.

It was the 23-year-old Farooqi's 50th career T20 international wicket.

Virat Kohli and Rishabh Pant put on 43 for the second wicket with Pant hitting three successive boundaries off Mohamed Nabi.

His 11-ball cameo had yielded 20 runs when he was lbw to Rashid attempting an ill-judged reverse

sweep. That left India on 54-2 before Rashid struck again in his next over, claiming

India's Jasprit Bumrah celebrates with teammate Rohit Sharma (left) after the dismissal of Afghanistan's Hazratullah Zazai during the ICC Twenty20 World Cup Super Eight match at Kensington Oval in Bridgetown, Barbados, yesterday. (AFP)

the prestige scalp of Kohli who was caught by Nabi at long-off for 24 off 24 balls.

Kohli had at least made it to double figures after a miserable run of just five runs in his first three matches at the tournament.

At the halfway point India were 79-3. Rashid was hit for a boundary and a six in the 11th over by Suryakumar.

But the leg-spinner was soon celebrating his third wicket when he had Shivam Dube trapped lbw for 10. Rashid finished with impressive figures of 3-26.

Suryakumar and Pandya threatened to take the game away from Afghanistan.

But Farooqi dismissed Suryakumar in the 17th over before Pandya, who made 32 from 24 balls with three fours and two sixes, fell to Naveen-ul-Haq off the last ball of the 18th over.

Farooqi also sent back Jadeja to finish with 3-33 and take his tournament total to 15 wickets.

**BRIEF SCORES****India 181-8 in 20 overs**

(Suryakumar Yadav 53, Hardik Pandya 32; Rashid Khan 3-26, Fazalhaq Farooqi 3-33) **v**  
**Afghanistan 134 all out in 20 overs** (Azmatullah Omarzai 26; Jasprit Bumrah 3-7, Arshdeep Singh 3-36)

**Toss:** India**Result:** India won by 47 runs

## Williamson taking it 'one year at a time' but still committed to NZ

**Auckland:** Kane Williamson will opt out of a handful of internationals in January to take up a contract in South Africa's Twenty20 league but plans to keep playing for New Zealand for as long as he can, the batsman said yesterday. Williamson announced on Wednesday he had given up the captaincy of New Zealand's white-ball teams and would decline a national contract for the 2024/25 season following the team's early elimination from the T20 World Cup. Arriving home yesterday, the nation's best batter said he wanted to manage his schedule more carefully. "I want to play as long as I can. I love playing for New Zealand, I've really enjoyed my time captaining," the 33-year-old told reporters at Auckland airport. "But I'm excited with what's next for the team in terms of their leadership as well and I'm looking forward to being a part of that. "In terms of a time-frame (for my career), it's difficult to say. I want to keep being fit, keep doing as well as I can, keep trying to improve and play as long as I can." New Zealand crashed out of the opening phase at the T20 World Cup co-hosted by the United States and the West Indies, having made the semi-finals of the previous three editions and the final in 2021.

Long-serving fast bowler Trent Boult confirmed he will not be part of the New Zealand setup for the next tournament in Sri Lanka and India in 2026, while fellow quick Lockie Ferguson has also opted out of a New Zealand contract. With a number of senior players over 30, New Zealand may face a difficult rebuilding phase and struggle to be competitive by the time the next World Cup rolls around. Williamson, however, said the squad was in a good place. "We know that there are more events that we need to keep building towards and largely the team is in a really healthy place," he said. "There are some really talented younger guys coming through and (still) a number of experienced players as well," Williamson said. Williamson is the latest elite player opting for T20 franchise cricket over international duties in an increasingly crowded calendar. He said it was up to the world's cricket boards to monitor the situation and that every player had different priorities. Speaking of his own playing future, he said it was "one year at a time". "(It's about) managing that time as your career develops ... Family's a big part of that. "Doing that as well as you can is really important," the former New Zealand skipper said.

## India to play Bangladesh, NZ and England in 2024-25 home season

**New Delhi:** India will kick off their home season against Bangladesh in September before hosting New Zealand in October and England next year, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) announced yesterday. India will welcome Bangladesh for a two-match Test series, which will be played in Chennai and Kanpur from Sept. 19-23 and Sept. 27-Oct. 1, respectively. It will be followed by three Twenty20s in Dharamsala, Delhi

and Hyderabad. They will then host the Black Caps for three Tests, with the first test starting on Oct. 16 in Bengaluru. England will visit India in January next year to play five T20s and three one-day internationals. Chennai, Kolkata, Rajkot, Pune and Mumbai will be the venues for the T20s, while Nagpur, Cuttack and Ahmedabad will host the ODIs. England's tour of India will begin on Jan. 22 and conclude on Feb. 12.

## FOCUS

# England reignite WC title defence with win over WI

Reuters  
Barbados

Defending champions England brushed aside their struggles in the opening phase of the Twenty20 World Cup with an eight-wicket victory over the previously unbeaten West Indies in their Super Eight opener in St Lucia yesterday.

England's bowlers restricted West Indies to 180-4 on the same pitch where the co-hosts had scored 218 against Afghanistan on Monday before opener Phil Salt led the way with 87 from 47 balls as the batters got the job done inside 18 overs.

Having squeaked into the second stage on net run rate, England will take a huge boost of confidence from beating one of the in-form teams at the tournament to top Group 2 with South Africa, who they meet at the same ground on Friday.

"I thought we did really well to restrict such a powerful batting lineup," said England captain Jos Buttler.

"It's still a decent score and you have to play well to chase them down. But I thought we were very smart with the bat."

The meeting of the only two teams to have won the T20 World Cup twice was expected to be a run-fest and much of the credit for the win will go to the England bowlers for preventing the big-hitting locals from cutting loose.

Having won the toss and elected to field, they served up 51 dot balls and took regular wickets in the second half of the innings to prevent any of the West Indies batters from reaching a half century.

"I think we left 15-20 runs out there as a batting group (and) we could have given a better display with the ball," West Indies skipper Rovman Powell said.

"Credit has to be given to England bowling unit, you can see they have killer plans and the execution was good."



England's Phil Salt hits a six during the ICC Twenty20 World Cup Super Eight match against the West Indies at Daren Sammy National Cricket Stadium in Gros Islet, Saint Lucia, yesterday. (AFP)

A groin injury ended opener Brandon King's night on 23 but West Indies would still have been confident of a big score when they reached the halfway point of their innings on 82 without loss.

Just when they would have been looking to accelerate, however, the other opener, Johnson Charles, fell into a trap and holed out in the deep for 38 off the bowling of Moeen Ali.

Danger man Nicholas Pooran and Powell both scored 36 before being dismissed in successive overs and Andre Russell followed

for one in the next over to leave West Indies on 143-4 in the 17th over.

Sherfane Rutherford (28 not out) and Romario Shepherd put on another 37 runs but England will have been confident that it was a reachable target, particularly after Salt and Buttler put on 67 for the first wicket.

Buttler was trapped in front by Roston Chase's off-spin for 25 but Salt kept the runs ticking over before he was joined by Jonny Bairstow.

Salt let Bairstow (48 not out)

take the strike initially but clubbed 30 off Shepherd in the 16th over with three sixes and three fours to all but finish the chase.

**BRIEF SCORES****West Indies 180-4 in 20 overs**

(Johnson Charles 38, Nicholas Pooran 36, Rovman Powell 36; Adil Rashid 1-21) **v England 181-2 off 17.3 overs** (Phil Salt 87 not out, Jonny Bairstow 48 not out; Roston Chase 1-19)

**Toss:** England**Result:** England won by eight wickets



MOTORSPORT

# Sainz to make decision on F1 future soon

Reuters  
Barcelona

Carlos Sainz has yet to make his next move in Formula One but the Ferrari driver, who is being replaced by Lewis Hamilton at the end of the season, said yesterday he would decide very soon.

The Spaniard told reporters ahead of his home Grand Prix at Barcelona's Circuit de Catalunya that he did not want to wait any longer.

"I think it's getting to a point where it's obviously taking space out of my head for some weeks and months now," said the 29-year-old.

"I think it's obviously time to make a decision, and the decision will be taken soon. Hopefully, soon we will have things to talk about."

Sainz has been linked most strongly to Swiss-based Sauber, who will become the factory Audi team in 2026, and former champions Williams.

Red Bull and Mercedes have closed the door while his previous team McLaren have no vacancy.

Sauber and Williams have made overtures to the Spaniard but assessing how competitive they might be next year, and in 2026

when the engine and chassis rules are changing in a major shake-up, is no easy matter.

"I am still not sure one way or another," said Sainz. "It's still something that I'm discussing with my team, and brainstorming, and obviously I need a couple of days back at home."

"It is a bit of a lottery, or a coin toss, to see who's going to be quicker in '26 given that the regulations are so different."

Sainz is also key to the wider driver market, with others waiting to see where he goes.

"Carlos is the cork in the bottle," said Haas's Kevin Magnussen, who also looks likely to be on the move at the end of the year.

"A lot of guys are waiting for him to make a move. Then eventually all the other pieces of the puzzle will fall. That's the truth of that."

Sauber have already announced Haas's Nico Hulkenberg as one of their drivers while Williams have Alex Albon signed up on a multi-year deal.

Sauber's Valtteri Bottas and China's Zhou Guanyu could be looking for seats while American Logan Sargeant is not expected to retain his place at Williams.

Alpine's Esteban Ocon is also looking for a drive, and waiting on Sainz, after Renault-owned Al-



Ferrari's Spanish Formula One driver Carlos Sainz (right) speaks with RB's Australian driver Daniel Ricciardo during a press conference at the Circuit de Catalunya in Montmeló, on the outskirts of Barcelona, ahead of the Spanish Grand Prix to be held this weekend. (AFP)

pine announced he would be leaving. (Reporting by Alan Baldwin in London, editing by Ken Ferris)

## Ricciardo wants to earn another season in F1

Daniel Ricciardo said he wanted to earn his seat in Formula One with

Red Bull-owned RB next season and eighth place in Canada had helped.

The Italy-based team have already confirmed Japan's Yuki Tsunoda for 2025 but have yet to say who will take the second seat, with New Zealand reserve driver Liam

Lawson also in the reckoning. Ricciardo, 34, is an eight times Grand Prix winner but has been outscored by Tsunoda over the nine races so far this season.

The race in Montreal was the Australian's first top 10 finish of the campaign whereas Tsunoda

has had five so far. "I needed a result like that," Ricciardo, who started his comeback with RB last season after leaving McLaren in 2022, told reporters ahead of the Spanish Grand Prix at Barcelona's Circuit de Catalunya.

"Now that I'm back in that Red Bull family..."

"I really don't see myself anywhere else. So that's where I'd love to stay and continue."

"I obviously want to earn it. I don't just want it to be like 'Yeah, yeah.'"

"OK. Stay another year! I obviously want to be here because I know that I still belong here and can do performances like I did last week."

Ricciardo had faced criticism from retired 1997 world champion Jacques Villeneuve before qualifying fifth in Canada, with the Canadian questioning why he was still there.

"We're hearing the same thing for the last five years. 'We have to make the car better for him, poor him!'"

"No. You're in F1. If you can't cut it, go home. There'll be someone else to take your place," Villeneuve said on *Sky Sports* television.

"I think his image has kept him in F1 more than his actual results," Villeneuve said.

TENNIS

# Draper sends Alcaraz crashing out at Queen's

'I HAD TO COME OUT AND PLAY WELL AND LUCKILY I DID'



Britain's Jack Draper celebrates winning his round of 16 match against Spain's Carlos Alcaraz, the world number two, at Queen's Club Championships in London, Britain, yesterday. (Reuters)

AFP  
London

Wimbledon champion Carlos Alcaraz suffered a shock defeat by Britain's Jack Draper in the last 16 of the Queen's Club tournament in London yesterday.

Alcaraz, also the reigning Queen's champion, lost 7-6 (7/3), 6-3 with the British number one claiming the biggest win of his career.

World number two Alcaraz arrived for this grass-court warm-up event for Wimbledon fresh from his French Open triumph on the clay of Roland Garros.

But the 21-year-old Spaniard was undone by Draper, 22, who is bidding to become the first British men's singles champion at Queen's since Andy Murray won his fifth title at the event in 2016.

Alcaraz had not been beaten in seven weeks or indeed lost a match on grass in nearly two years. Draper, however, put that record to one side as he became the first British man to beat a top-two player on grass since Murray

## Vondrousova out of Berlin Open due to injury

**Berlin:** World number six Marketa Vondrousova suffered an injury setback less than two weeks before her Wimbledon title defence when she was forced to retire from her Berlin Ladies Open second-round match against Russian Anna Kalinskaya yesterday. The 24-year-old Czech was leading 5-3 in the opening set before she slipped and retired at 5-5 with what appeared to be a

hip problem. Kalinskaya, ranked 24th, will face either twice Grand Slam champion Aryna Sabalenka or Daria Kasatkina of Russia in the quarter-finals. It was, however, a good day for 2022 Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina as she beat Veronika Kudermetova 6-4 7-5. Other top-ranked players, including Coco Gauff, Jessica Pegula and Ons Jabeur, also advanced. Wimbledon runs from July 1-14.

defeated Novak Djokovic in the 2013 Wimbledon final.

Alcaraz was annoyed by the automatic shot clock, which forced him to hurry his serve, and complained to umpire Mohamed Lahyani.

But he had no qualms about the result as his 13-match unbeaten streak on grass ended in decisive fashion, with Alcaraz saying: "I'm not too good right now."

"I felt like I didn't play well, I didn't move well," added Alcaraz, who begins the defence of his Wimbledon title on July 1.

"Of course I have to give credit to Jack. I think he played really good tennis today."

For the 31st-ranked Draper, this stunning victory came hot on the heels of his first ATP title in Stuttgart last week.

"It was a really tough match," said Draper. "Carlos is the defending champion, he won Wimbledon, he's an incredible talent and amazing for the sport."

"I had to come out and play well and luckily I did. There's no place I'd rather be right now."

An enthralling first set ended

in a tie-break after neither Alcaraz nor Draper had managed a break point. But it was Draper who pulled clear with several fine serves to earn five set points, with the Briton taking the third when Alcaraz hit a return into the net.

Left-hander Draper earned the first break point of the match at 3-2 up in the second set and duly converted it with an excellent return of serve down the line.

Alcaraz saved three match points on his own serve at 5-2 down before Draper finished the job for a win that appeared to signal a changing of the guard in British tennis. Draper will next play American fifth-seed Tommy Paul, a 6-3, 6-4 winner over Chile's Alejandro Tabilo, in the quarter-finals. There was more British success when wildcard Billy Harris joined Draper in the last eight.

The 29-year-old journeyman from Nottingham, who usually travels to lower-tier tournaments in a camper van, celebrated his award of a wildcard for Wimbledon - and a guaranteed £60,000 (\$76,000) - by beating French qualifier Giovanni Mpetshi Perriard 6-4, 7-5.

## Ledecky continues domination of 1,500m freestyle at US trials



Katie Ledecky and Katie Grimes of the US react during the medal ceremony for the Women's 1500m freestyle final at the 2024 US Olympic Team Swimming Trials in Indianapolis, Indiana. (AFP)

**Los Angeles:** Katie Ledecky cruised to another dominating win in her signature event, the 1,500m freestyle, at the US Olympic trials in Indianapolis yesterday, while teenager Thomas Heilmann became the youngest American man to make the squad in 24 years. After already secured her place at a fourth Games by winning the 200m and 400m freestyle this week, the seven-time Olympic champion made it a hat-trick of titles by touching first in 15 minutes, 37.35 seconds, the fastest time in the 1,500m free this year. Having posted the 18 fastest times in the world in the event there was never any doubt about who was going to get to the wall first, Ledecky as usual spending most of the swim racing against herself and the clock. Katie Grimes was next to come home, more than 20 seconds behind. The only person unimpressed by Ledecky's performance was the 27-year-old herself. "I was pretty excited coming into tonight, would have wanted to swim a little faster but I'll take it," said Ledecky her time just .01 second off her gold medal winning time at the Tokyo Summer Games. "I'll be better in a few weeks."

Just looking forward to getting together as a team and getting to know each other, push each other and go represent Team USA." Kate Douglass got the evening off to an rousing start by winning the 100m free, powering away at the turn from a quality field packed with Olympians to get to the wall first in 52.56. Torri Huske touched second ahead of Gretchen Walsh and Simone Manuel, the first Black woman to win an individual Olympic swimming gold medal at the 2016 Rio Games. All three will be going to the Paris Games as part of the US relay squad. Minutes later, Heilmann had another big crowd of more than 20,000 at Lucas Oil Stadium back on its feet, the 17-year-old punching his ticket to Paris by winning the 200m butterfly in 1:54.50. Heilmann becomes the youngest American man to make the Olympic team since Michael Phelps and Aaron Peirsol at the 2000 Sydney Games. Chris Guiliano powered his way to victory in the men's 100m free in 47.38 ahead of Jack Alexy. Caeleb Dressel, the reigning Olympic champion in the event, will not get the chance to defend his gold medal in Paris after coming home third.

## ANNOUNCEMENT

# Russian cyclist Vlasov turns down Games spot

AFP  
Moscow

Russian cyclist Alexander Vlasov has declined to take part in the Olympic Games in Paris due to his "very busy calendar", a top Russian sporting official said yesterday.

Vlasov, 28, was one of 14 Russian athletes approved to compete in the Games under a neutral flag by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) on Saturday.

The IOC suspended Russia from the 2024 Games last year, but gave the green light for its athletes to compete as neutrals as long as they did not actively support the Kremlin's offensive in Ukraine.

"The profile of the Paris track doesn't suit him," the head of the Russian Cycling Federation, Vyacheslav Ekimov, told the state

TASS news agency. "And the athlete has a very busy calendar," he added.

Vlasov won the 2022 Tour of Romandie and came fourth in the 2021 Giro d'Italia.

Fourteen Russians were included on the IOC's initial list of "Individual Neutral Athletes" (AINs) eligible to compete in the Paris Games.

More than half of those were wrestlers and the others were from trampolining gymnastics and road cycling.

The athletes had to qualify for the Games and pass two checks, first by their international sports federations and then by the IOC, to prove they did not actively support the conflict in Ukraine or have any links with the army.

The IOC will update its list as other sports complete their qualifying competitions.



EURO 2024

# Jovic scores late as Serbia draw against Slovenia

**AFP**  
Munich, Germany

Luka Jovic snatched a last-gasp equaliser for Serbia in a 1-1 draw with Slovenia yesterday, keeping both teams in contention for a place in the last 16 of Euro 2024.

Slovenia looked on course for their first ever win at the tournament after Zan Karnicnik put them ahead in the second half, but Jovic headed in a corner in the fifth minute of stoppage time to haul Serbia level. “We will not give up, the result came as a reward for believing. For many the match was over but for us it was not,” said Serbia coach Dragan Stojkovic.

Slovenia are on two points from two games in Group C going into their clash with England on Tuesday, while Serbia have one point ahead of their final match in the section against Denmark.

“Sport in general and football can be cruel but I believe karma will do its part for this team,” said Slovenia coach Matjaz Kek.

Serbia boss Stojkovic, who felt his team showed England “too

much respect” in their opening 1-0 defeat, recalled captain Dusan Tadic in one of three changes, with Filip Kostic ruled out due to injury.

A former international midfielder, Stojkovic incidentally played in Yugoslavia's 3-3 draw with Slovenia in the group stage at Euro 2000, Slovenia's only other appearance at the tournament.

But it was Slovenia, coming off a creditable 1-1 draw against Euro 2020 semi-finalists Denmark in their first game, who created the early chances. Adam Gnezda Cerin drove straight at Predrag Rajkovic from distance before the Serbia goalkeeper used his legs to save well from Jan Mlakar.

After mustering a solitary shot on target against England, Serbia's strike pair of Dusan Vlahovic and Aleksandar Mitrovic both went close. Vlahovic's diving header drew an easy save from Jan Oblak, with Mitrovic unable to connect with Tadic's teasing corner yards out as he grappled with a defender.

Timi Max Elsnik rattled the post after skipping his way into the Serbia area following a favourable bounce off an opponent and Benjamin Sesko scooped over the

rebound. Oblak, who produced a crucial stop to keep Slovenia in the game before they equalised against Denmark, pulled off another similar save just before half-time to deny Mitrovic from inside the six-yard box.

Mitrovic again found his route to goal blocked by Oblak minutes into the second half, with Slovenia defender Jaka Bijol lucky not to slice a cross into his own net. A header from Mitrovic deflected just over as Serbia started to impose themselves on the game, but Sesko kept Rajkovic busy with a curling attempt.

Karnicnik started and finished the move that led to Slovenia's goal, winning the ball back deep in his half and igniting the counter-attack that culminated in him stabbing in Elsnik's cross from the left. Mitrovic's luck deserted him as the Al Hilal forward whacked the crossbar, his half-volley from Andrija Zivkovic's delivery taking a vital touch off Karnicnik.

Lazar Samardzic stroked wide as Serbia desperately pushed for an equaliser, their prayers answered as Jovic turned in a corner with the final act of the match.



Serbia's Luka Jovic celebrates after scoring his team's first goal during the UEFA Euro 2024 Group C match against Slovenia at the Munich Football Arena in Munich yesterday. (AFP)

FOCUS

# France hoping to have masked Mbappe vs Dutch

‘EVERYONE HAS TO BE READY. I DON’T THINK IT’S ANYTHING SPECIAL’

**Reuters**  
Leipzig, Germany

France coach Didier Deschamps is hopeful that Kylian Mbappe will be able to play in today's Euro 2024 clash with the Netherlands as he said the striker was making good progress in his recovery from a broken nose.

“Everything is going well. It was a heavy collision that he had, but he was able to come out and train yesterday and take part in some activities,” Deschamps told reporters in Leipzig on the eve of the Group D encounter.

“That will be the case this evening too. Things are progressing in the right direction enough for us to try to have him available tomorrow.

“We will do what we can to have him available.”

A short while after Deschamps spoke to reporters, Mbappe took part in the French team's training session wearing a striking protective face mask in the French colours of blue, white and red.

The 25-year-old France skipper suffered the injury in an accidental collision with Austria defender Kevin Danso late on in his team's 1-0 win in their opening game at the tournament in Duesseldorf on Monday.

Mbappe trained apart from his teammates on Wednesday while wearing a plaster on his nose and did not appear to be overly hindered by the injury.

The French Football Federation said following the Austria game that Mbappe would not require an operation and would be able to return to the pitch once he had been fitted with a mask.

Mbappe's teammate Antoine Griezmann insisted the new Real Madrid signing was “doing really well”.

“The nose is a bit less swollen. We will wait until the last moment and see how he is feeling,” Griezmann told reporters.



France's forward Kylian Mbappe arrives wearing a face mask to take part in a training session in Leipzig yesterday, on the eve of their Euro 2024 Group D match against Netherlands. (AFP)



Netherlands coach Ronald Koeman watches as defender Virgil van Dijk runs during a training session in Wolfsburg yesterday. (AFP)

Netherlands coach Ronald Koeman said his team's preparation would not be heavily influenced by the Mbappe situation.

“Deschamps will know if Mbappe will play or not, we will just have to wait and see,” said the Dutch coach.

“France is such a strong team -- even if Mbappe is not playing his replacement will be a great player as well.

“We can't influence this, all we can do is influence our team and do the best that we can, and not everything depends on whether Mbappe is there or not.

“We know that he can be a game changer.”

The Netherlands came from behind to beat Poland 2-1 in their opening match and Koeman was confident his team could step up a level against France.

“I can't predict everything but I have a good feeling, this match is a challenge,” continued Koeman.

“Three points against Poland give us a bit of breathing space, we can be calm now.

“We want to get a good result, it's a challenge for us now and we need to be good. I'm really looking forward to it.”

PREVIEW

# Poland hopeful of Lewandowski return for key Austria clash

**AFP**  
Berlin

Poland are hopeful star striker Robert Lewandowski will feature against Austria today in a crunch Euro 2024 Group D clash after battling to return from a thigh injury.

The 35-year-old Barcelona forward missed the team's opening defeat to the Netherlands, spending time in a cryochamber to help his recovery, and goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny suggested the forward would play some part in the game.

It is a must-win game for both sides after Poland lost to the Netherlands and France overcame Austria in their opening matches. “The Austrians will not be happy that he is fit... I don't know if he's ready for 90 mins tomorrow, it's not for me to judge,” Juventus goalkeeper Szczesny told a news conference Thursday.

“The fact he's on the pitch will add a lot of value to our team.”

Poland coach Michal Probiez said he would decide his lineup after Poland's training session later Thursday, but said “all players” were available, including Lewandowski.

“There is a big difference if you have the best player in the world on the bench, and if he's available to play or not,” continued the coach, keeping his cards close to his chest. “We will make a decision later today. I'm waiting for the decision from our medical staff. I hope the decision is positive and I hope I will select him tomorrow.”

Former Bayern Munich striker Lewandowski is Poland's all-time top goalscorer with 81

goals. Adam Buksa stepped in against the Netherlands and scored with a header from a corner before the Dutch fought back to win.

“Robert has been our best player for many years now and in my opinion he's the best Polish player ever, of all time,” said Szczesny.

“Regardless of how well others play, because Buksa played a very good match, and scored against the Netherlands, the fact is that Robert Lewandowski will change our overall approach and our opponents' approach as well.

“It's natural that his presence on the pitch can only help us.”

Earlier Austria said they were anticipating Lewandowski would feature at Berlin's Olympiastadion.

“We expect that ‘Lewa’ will be playing tomorrow... but it doesn't really change our way of playing a lot,” coach Ralf Rangnick said. “Lewandowski is the key player for Poland and everyone tries to pass to him. I think he'll be playing tomorrow.”

Austria midfielder Marcel Sabitzer played with Lewandowski at Bayern Munich. “I had the joy to play with him for a year so I know his qualities, he's an exceptional player,” said Sabitzer.

“The tactics won't change for us. You can't give him space around the box... because he can score from any position.”

Defeat for either side at the Olympiastadion would leave them on the brink of elimination. “The importance of the match is clear,” added former Manchester United interim boss Rangnick. “The team that wins tomorrow has a good chance of going through so it's a match you have to win.”



Poland's forward Robert Lewandowski controls the ball during a training session in Berlin yesterday, on the eve of their Euro 2024 Group D match against Austria. (AFP)

## EUPHORIA OVER AS SLOVAKIA EAGER TO AVOID REPEAT OF THREE YEARS AGO

Any euphoria after Slovakia's shock victory over Belgium in their Euro 2024 opener was quickly replaced by the stark reality that they have achieved nothing yet, coach Francesco Calzona said yesterday ahead of their clash with Ukraine.

Slovakia will qualify for the last 16 from Group E if they beat Ukraine in Duesseldorf but they need only rewind three years to remind themselves of how fortunes can change. At the delayed Euro 2020 tournament, Slovakia began with a victory

over Poland but subsequently lost 1-0 to Sweden via a late penalty before a 5-0 hammering at the hands of Spain sent them spinning out of the competition.

Calzone, one of five Italian coaches working at Euro 2024, was asked whether it had been difficult to bring his players down to earth and prepare for Ukraine after the Belgium win. “That wasn't difficult. We had a bit of euphoria for a few short hours, but we haven't achieved anything yet. We've only secured three points and three

points aren't enough to make it through to the knockout stage,” he told reporters. “There's not too much to celebrate in terms of that win over Belgium because we still have our objective in front of us, which is to make it through the group.”

Attacking midfielder Ondrej Duda was part of the team that was swept aside by rampant Spain in Seville almost three years to the day and like the rest of the vastly-experienced squad, he is desperate to ensure they escape from the group. “Of course,

it was a bad experience that we had,” the 29-year-old said. “You know, sometimes football can be cruel. Sometimes it can be beautiful.”

Ukraine enjoyed 66% possession against Romania in their opening match but suffered a 3-0 defeat which leaves them with little margin for error against Slovakia. “It will be a kind of a final for them,” Duda said. “But also for us. For me, every game at the tournament is a final and we are ready 100%.”

Calzona noted how Romania were happy to concede possession high up the pitch against Ukraine and counter-attack quickly and does not expect any radical new approach from his opposite number Serhiy Rebrov.

“They've been playing for quite a while in this system,” he said. “We have out own identity too and will press ahead regardless of who we are playing. These days, there aren't too many secrets in the world of football.”