

GRASS CLASS

'Big 3' Djokovic, Federer & Nadal Start Favourites; Barty Eyes Major No. 2

Rajwal.Hegde@timesgroup.com

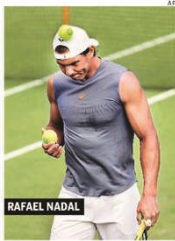
London: Novak Djokovic, Rafael Nadal and Roger Federer are racking the numbers. Between them, they've claimed the last 10 majors. Like those other classics that are hard to put away, the trio are the favourites to add another Grand Slam title to their collective haul of 53 when the Wimbledon tennis championships gets under way on Monday.



NOVAK DJOKOVIC



ROGER FEDERER



RAFAEL NADAL

Djokovic, who turned his season around at Wimbledon last year following elbow surgery, wasted little time in underlining the position of tennis' top-three. "Federer and Nadal are always among the top candidates. The three of us should be the favourites to win the title," he said. "The defending champion didn't say 'again', but then why state the obvious.



Just to give the numbers another perspective, Federer was just short of his 38th birthday by the time The Championships conclude on July 14. At 33, Nadal announced a staggering 12th French Open title in June and at 32, Djokovic is looking for a 16th major title in a bid to end his career with the biggest collection.

This time-tested consistency, in its essence, the core of sport, its crown and its challenge. Djokovic, eight-time winner Federer and Nadal, are quietly shredding American philosopher Henry David Thoreau's line of "age has not profited so much as it has lost". Consequently, the decibel level of the questions

posed to the ATP's next generation stars is gaining. German legend Boris Becker, who won the first of his three Wimbledon titles as a 17-year-old in 1985, said, "As much as I respect Roger, Rafa and Novak, young players should show up. You want to see the passing of the torch while they are still in their prime."

BARTY LEADS CHALLENGE
The next generation in the women's game have grabbed the big stages. American Cori Gauff, 15, the youngest player in the Open Era to advance through the qualifying at SW19, underlined that point. Gauff, 5'10", will go up against five-time Wimbledon champion Venus Williams, who is 39. Japan's Naomi Osaka comes into Wimbledon as the No. 2 seed and will play Kazuki Yuki Purintseva, who gave Osaka her only grasscourt win this season. Osaka's successor to the top spot in the WTA rankings — 23-year-old Ashleigh Barty is the only player among the women who has ticked the consistency box in Slams this season.

PRAJESH PLAYS RAONIC
Prajesh Gunneswaran is faced with a tall challenge in the 67th Miles Raonic today. The 29-year-old, ranked 94, hasn't played Raonic, seeded 15.

IT'S BETTER FOR ME AS NO. 2: OSAKA

London: The fame might have been oppressive for the first Asian World No. 1, but Naomi Osaka has used the new-found wealth, coming through multi-million dollar endorsements, to indulge herself in the joys of little joys of life. "You know the song 'More Money, More Problems'? Man, oh man," she said. "This might not necessarily be more problems, but I am definitely overthinking more," she continued. And giving more food for her thought is the fact that, having lost the

No. 1 spot to Aussie Ashleigh Barty, the Florida resident is keen to capture it this fortnight. "I mean, mentally it was way more stress and pressure than I could have imagined. So, I think it's better for me now to be — I was going to say lower ranked, isn't that crazy? — to be No. 2. The upside is that if you win the tournament, you are automatically No. 1." — K Kumaraswamy

Tears for Suarez, Uruguay

PERU WIN 5-4 ON PENALTIES AFTER LA CELESTE HAVE THREE GOALS RULED OUT DURING QUARTERFINAL

Salvador: Luis Suarez broke down in tears after his shootout miss saw Uruguay dumped out of the Copa America by unfancied Peru on Saturday, the 15-time champions losing 5-4 on penalties after having three goals ruled out in a scoreless draw.

Suarez spurned the first penalty of the shootout, his effort bouncing off the chest of Peru goalkeeper Pedro Gallese, to complete a frustrating evening for Uruguay's all-time top scorer, who also had a goal ruled out for offside. Every other player converted their spot kicks and Edison Flores sealed Peru's place in the last four by blasting past Fernando Muslera.

Suarez, who rushed back to full fitness after undergoing knee surgery in May in order to make it for the Copa, was in tears with his shirt and was consoled by team mates after the shootout defeat. "Luis was very sad, he ended up missing in a decisive moment but that's football and life," Edison Cavani told reporters.

Uruguay had poured into Paris for the tournament but were to lose. We have won the Copa before but today we have to accept that we are out." Peru will face neighbours Chile in the last four, with tournament hosts Brazil meeting arch-rivals Argentina in the other semi-final.



Suarez (below) missed his penalty

SEEDOR GETS A TASTE OF CAMEROON'S HIGH EXPECTATIONS

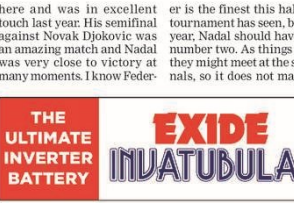
Ismailla: If Clarence Seedorf was not already aware of the high expectations surrounding his Cameroon team before the Africa Cup of Nations, he certainly will be following their first two matches. In a media conference following Saturday's 0-0 draw with Ghana, the coach was told that his defence was "amazing" and that Jean-Marc Evina, Amel Kana Biyi's performance was "a mess" while another reporter asked why his team had not "come out with all guns blazing and tried to win three or four nil."

World Cup heads for grand stage

Lyon: Television audience records have been smashed, global media coverage has been unprecedented and the quality of football has won over many sceptics — now the women's World Cup heads into its final week, the business end of the tournament. The United States, the defending champions and three-times World Cup winners, remain favourites to lift the trophy in Lyon on Sunday but first they must deal with a confident England side. European champions the Netherlands take on a Sweden side who are on a high after upsetting Olympic champions Germany on Saturday. On Sunday, fans of all four teams

Rafa should have been seeded above Roger

here and was in excellent touch last year. His semifinal against Novak Djokovic was an amazing match and Nadal was very close to victory at many moments. I know Federer is the finest this hallowed tournament has seen, but this year, Nadal should have been number two. As things stand, they might meet at the semifinals, so it does not make too much of a difference.



The other reason is the draw which has Nick Kyrgios playing Nadal in Round 7. Kyrgios is a tough opponent and though he first has to win the first round, it promises to be a debatable contest. Djokovic would also be excited. This was the venue that signalled his incredible comeback and perhaps he needs that energy and inspiration to take him past his French Open disappointment.

Verstappen wins Austrian Grand Prix

Spielberg: Red Bull's Max Verstappen won the Austrian Grand Prix for the second year in a row on Sunday, subject to stewards' investigation, while Christian Horner's Mercedes lost for the first time this season. Ferrar's Charles Leclerc, starting on pole, finished second after defending hard against Verstappen with the two youngsters banging wheels as the Dutchman forced his way past three laps from the end. Both 21, the pair were the youngest top two finishers in Formula One history.

Verstappen took the chequered flag, at a scenic circuit owned by Red Bull and with thousands of orange-shirted Dutch fans cheering him on, but still faces an anxious wait for confirmation. Valtteri Bottas finished third for Mercedes.

Sethu grabs 2 pts in rain-affected race

Suzuka (Japan): Enduring challenging conditions, Rajiv Sethu finished 14th in the crash-filled Race 2 of the fourth round of FIM Asia Road Racing Championship (ARRC), adding two points to Honda Racing India's kitty over the weekend. As many as nine riders crashed out on Suzuka's slippery tarmac. Starting 13th on grid, Sethu made a good start and climbed to seventh position before last corner lap. His helmet visor started fogging up leading to near zero visibility.

Aditi 12th after bogey free 2d day

Arkansas (US): Indian golfer Aditi Ashok birdied three of the four Par-5s in the second round to continue on her strong performance at the Walmart NW Arkansas Championship here. Aditi, who is coming out of a rather modest showing in 2019, shot a bogey-free four-under 68 on Sunday to move into 12th and was positioned tied-12th at the halfway stage of the tournament.

Advertisement for IAS coaching center, featuring logo and contact details for Kota, Rajasthan.

She had a bogey free 66 on the first day. Aditi trailed the lead winners, Sung Hyun Park and Carliota Cunga by four shots.

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Bhullar lies sixth in Spain: Gaganjeet Bhullar had a roller-coaster third round of one-over 72 to stay tied-6th at the Estrella Damm NA Andalucía Masters on one of the toughest layouts on the Race to Dubai. Bhullar had four birdies, three bogeys and a double bogey and is now two under 211. Shiv Kapur, the only Indian to make the cut, shot five-over 76 with four bogeys, two birdies and a triple bogey eight on Par-5 fourth. He is now tied-6th. Earlier, in the week, SSP Chawrasia and Shubhankar Sharma missed the cut.

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