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TENNIS TIFF

COLLINS BLASTS ‘INSINCERE’ SWIATEK AFTER BITTER OLYMPICS CLASH

Iga Swiatek was accused of being “insincere” by Danielle Collins after a stormy Olympics clash in which the Pole was left struggling to breathe after being felled by a pile-driver backhand by the powerful American. In a tense quarter-final, Collins retired at 1-4 down in the final set having left the court for a medical timeout. When the pair shook hands at the net, the 30-year-old Collins exchanged heated words with a bewildered Swiatek. “I told Iga she didn’t have to be insincere about my injury. I haven’t had the best experience and I don’t really feel like anybody needs to be insincere,” said Collins, without elaborating.

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GULF TIMES

SPORT



SWIMMING

Superstars Marchand and Ledecky light up Paris pool

Zhanle smashes his own 100m freestyle world record while Sjoestrom wins the women’s title

AFP
Paris

French superstar Leon Marchand added to his legend with a dazzling and historic performance in the Paris pool yesterday as Katie Ledecky became the first woman swimmer to win gold at four Olympics. On an action-packed evening in a pumping La Defense Arena pool, China’s Pan Zhanle smashed his own 100m freestyle world record while Swedish veteran Sarah Sjoestrom won the women’s title.

American great Ledecky again set new standards, cementing her reputation as the greatest distance swimmer the sport has known. She flew to the wall in a new Olympic record 15mins 30.02secs to defend her 1,500 freestyle title, more than 10 seconds clear of second-placed Anastasiia Kirpichnikova of France.

Pan was also on fire, clocking 46.40 for the first swimming world record of the Games. But the night belonged to Marchand who dethroned two defending champions to complete a historic feat. He produced a sensational final lap to upset Hungarian defending champion and world record holder Kristof Milak to win the 200m butterfly, then suited up again to claim gold in the 200m breaststroke, roared on by a deafening home crowd. No swimmer has ever won both at the same Olympics.

Marchand now has three gold after his 400m medley victory on Sunday – France’s first pool win in 12 years – with the chance of another in the 200m medley. Milak looked in control, but with the fans



France's Leon Marchand in action during the final of the men's 200m butterfly at the Paris Olympic Games in Nanterre, France. (AFP)

urging him on, Marchand made a dramatic late surge to get his hand in the wall first in an Olympic record 1:51.21, sending fans into a frenzy.

Milak was second, 0.54 behind, with Canada’s Ilya Kharun earning bronze. The 22-year-old returned to dominate the breaststroke, touching in 2:05.85, an Olympic record and the second quickest ever behind China’s Qin Haiyang who failed to make the final. Australia’s Zac Stubblety-Cook was second and Dutchman Caspar

Corbeau third.

Ledecky’s result was never in doubt – she has set the last six world records and now owns the fastest 20 times ever swum. It was her eighth Olympic gold, and 12th medal overall, with the 27-year-old becoming the first woman swimmer to win titles at four Olympics after grabbing her first at London in 2012.

Among men, only fellow Americans Michael Phelps and Ryan Lochte have

achieved the feat. “I just wanted to swim a time that I could be really happy with and that was one,” she said. “I try not to think about history much. I know those names, those people that I’m up with. It’s an honour just to be named among them.”

Ledecky, who took bronze in the 400m freestyle, will also dive in for the 800m this week as she guns for a fourth straight title. Should she win, she will equal the most Olympic golds – nine – ever



Katie Ledecky of the US celebrates after winning the Women’s 1,500m freestyle.

won by a woman athlete, matching former Soviet-era artistic gymnast Larisa Latynina.

Pan stole Australian veteran Kyle Chalmers’ thunder in the 100m freestyle, smashing the record he set at the world championships in Doha this year. Chalmers, who won gold in Rio and silver in Tokyo, came second with former world record holder David Popovici of Romania third.

Sjoestrom was a surprise winner of the women’s 100m freestyle, touching in 52.16 ahead of the United States’ Torri Huske and Hong Kong’s Siobhan Haughey. Australia’s Mollie O’Callaghan, the 200m champion, came fourth. While the Swedish veteran holds the world record, she had never won gold in the 100m at a major meet until now despite owning four Olympic medals and 25 at world championships. “I just felt like I had a really good race and I was so in my zone,” she said. “This is unbelievable. I didn’t think I would swim the 100 free, honestly.”

FOCUS

Oliva becomes Guatemala’s first Olympic champion

Reuters
Chateauroux, France

Adriana Ruano Oliva became Guatemala’s first Olympic champion after the accidental shooter won the women’s trap event of the Paris Games yesterday.

The 29-year-old hit 45 of her 50 targets, an Olympic record, in the finest moment of her shooting career, which could have never taken off but for a spinal injury in 2011. Italy’s Silvana Stanco hit five fewer targets to claim the silver, while Australia’s Penny Smith struck 32 out of 40 to win bronze.

Oliva began as a promising gymnast, who represented her country at the 2010 Pan American Championships but had to quit the sport after the injury. It took her one year to recover and her doctor suggested she try shooting instead.

She began trap shooting in 2013 and worked as a volunteer at the 2016 Rio Games before eventually making her Olympic debut in Tokyo, where she came 26th. “When I was younger, I was dreaming about (competing in) Olympics in gymnastics,” she said.

“I never thought I’d excel in this sport. It was all new to me. It was only when I started viewing and visiting shooting events that I thought it would be possible to represent Guatemala in Olympics Games. Lately, my dream was to win the gold medal in Olympics.”

It has been an incredible 24 hours for Guatemala, which had



just one Olympic medal heading into Paris. Jean Pierre Brol won bronze in the men’s trap on Tuesday before Oliva struck gold on a hot afternoon at the Chateauroux Shooting Centre.

The Rafael Nadal fan got off to a strong start and was flawless until her 17th shot when she missed her first target. She hit 23 out of 25 to lead the six-strong group heading into the elimination round of an event in which shooters take aim at flying clay targets from their stations.

Stanco and Smith overtook Spaniard Mar Molne Magrina but Oliva never looked under pressure. “I can’t even believe it’s for real, I’m so happy,” she said. “I hope more people can do the same or more for the sport. We only have one (shooting) range, so I hope this will make the sport bigger and more people will try it.”

Tokyo champion Rehak Stefeckova of Slovakia could not make the final, while world number one Fatima Galvez of Spain came fifth.

BADMINTON

Tai exits Paris in tearful goodbye

Reuters
Paris

Tokyo badminton silver medallist Tai Tzu Ying of Chinese Taipei made Thai rival Ratchanok Intanton cry after their match at the Paris Olympics yesterday.

The pair have gone head-to-head nearly 40 times in their careers, and for Intanton to beat her close friend 21-19 21-15 at Porte de La Chapelle Arena was to take away Tai’s last chance at Olympic glory. Tai, known fondly as ‘Queen Tai,’ has said she will retire at the end of this year.

Intanton wasn’t the only one who became emotional. Tai got a standing ovation as she walked off the court and was crying as she bowed one last time to a cheering crowd, embraced Intanton, and gave interviews to tearful local journalists, before leaving the mixed zone to further applause.

She was her country’s flag bearer in the Games opening ceremony in Paris, a mark of her success and popularity at home. Tai, who has a PhD from the Institute of Sports Training at the University of Taipei, made her professional debut in 2009 at the Grand Prix in Vietnam at about age 15.

By the time she was 22, Tai became the top-ranked singles player in the world and held that title for 214 weeks, making history at the time. She was world number one again at Tokyo but lost gold to China’s Chen Yufei in a match full of hypnotic rallies, that kept spectators on the edge of their seats.

Yesterday’s match in Paris was nothing like that. The 30-year-old shuttler, who needed a medic after she hurt herself trying to make a shot at the end of the first game, was visibly frustrated during the match in which she repeatedly adjusted braces on both knees.

“I know there are a lot of people who support me, but I know I’m not very well,” said an emotional Tai, who is typically stoic, soft-spoken and humble. “Before I came here, I knew I would find it hard to play the game because of my injury.”

Tai has previously opened up about an issue with her left knee and earlier this year withdrew from the Singapore Open. She has a similar style to 29-year-old Intanton, who said their matches are like playing a mirror, and that she had told Tai that she was happy they were brought together. “We knew it’s our last match,” said a sobbing Intanton. “It disturbed me but I knew I must do it.”



Thailand’s Ratchanok Intanton consoles Chinese Taipei’s Tai Tzu-ying after winning their group stage match at the Paris Olympics. (AFP)

Meanwhile, Two-time world champion Akane Yamaguchi of Japan came close to being defeated in the final round of group play by Canada’s world number 31 Michelle Li in a day of close shaves in the women’s singles at Porte de La Chapelle Arena. Yamaguchi, ranked fifth, eked out a 22-24 21-17 21-12 victory through sheer stamina, as Li tired in the third game, losing four points toward the end in quick succession.

World number 17 Kim Ga-eun of South Korea also looked to be in trouble against Malaysia’s Goh Jin Wei, who ranks 15 places below her, until she rallied at the very end of the third game. Kim skidded across the court on her knees to reach some shots and pull of a 21-17 20-22 23-21 victory.

In men’s singles, world number 22 Lakshya Sen of India produced some skilful returns to defeat Indonesia’s Jonatan Christie, who ranks fourth, 21-18 21-12. Defending champion Viktor Axelsen dismantled Ireland’s Nhat Nguyen to cruise into the quarters.

Denmark’s Axelsen made it three wins from three in Paris, overcoming a slow start to beat Nguyen 21-13, 21-10 and top his first round group.

China’s Shi Yuqi joined him with a 21-9, 21-10 stroll past Italy’s Giovanni Toti. Both Shi and Axelsen skip the last 16 and jump straight into the quarter-finals because of their world rankings.

Shi said he was not feeling any extra pressure as the top-ranked player.

MEDALS TALLY

TEAMS	G	S	B	T
1. China	9	7	3	19
2. France	8	10	8	26
3. Japan	8	3	4	15
4. Australia	7	6	3	16
5. Great Britain	6	6	5	17
6. South Korea	6	3	3	12
7. United States	5	13	12	30
8. Italy	3	6	4	13
9. Canada	2	2	3	7
10. Germany	2	2	2	6
11. Hong Kong	2	0	2	4
12. Sweden	1	1	2	4
13. Netherlands	1	1	1	3
14. Georgia	1	1	0	2
14. New Zealand	1	1	0	2
16. Belgium	1	0	2	3
16. Kazakhstan	1	0	2	3
16. South Africa	1	0	2	3
19. Croatia	1	0	1	2
19. Guatemala	1	0	1	2
19. Ireland	1	0	1	2
19. Romania	1	0	1	2
23. Argentina	1	0	0	1
23. Azerbaijan	1	0	0	1
23. Serbia	1	0	0	1
23. Slovenia	1	0	0	1
23. Uzbekistan	1	0	0	1
28. Hungary	0	2	1	3
29. North Korea	0	2	0	2
30. Brazil	0	1	3	4
31. Poland	0	1	2	3
32. Kosovo	0	1	1	2
32. Mexico	0	1	1	2
32. Switzerland	0	1	1	2
32. Turkey	0	1	1	2
36. Fiji	0	1	0	1
36. Mongolia	0	1	0	1
36. Tunisia	0	1	0	1
39. India	0	0	2	2
39. Moldova	0	0	2	2
41. Austria	0	0	1	1
41. Egypt	0	0	1	1
41. Greece	0	0	1	1
41. Slovakia	0	0	1	1
41. Spain	0	0	1	1
41. Tajikistan	0	0	1	1
41. Ukraine	0	0	1	1
READ AS: G- Gold, S- Silver, B- Bronze, T- Total				

SHOOTING

Bhaker hopes medals will inspire Indians

Reuters
Chateauroux, France

Indian shooter **Manu Bhaker**, the country's first multi-medallist at a single Olympic Games, hopes her feat in Paris will help to unlock the potential of other women athletes in the world's most populous nation.

"It's a long journey, let's keep going and let's not settle for these two medals," Bhaker said as she held up her bronze medals outside the Chateauroux Shooting Centre.

"Let's hope for many more medals in this Olympics and subsequent events," added Bhaker, who won the women's 10-metre air pistol bronze and the same medal in the mixed team event with Sarabjot Singh to open India's medal count in Paris.

India surpassed neighbour and powerhouse China as the world's most populous country last year, with more than 1.43 billion people, but remains an Olympic lag-gard.

Shooter Abhinav Bindra won India's first individual Olympic gold in 2008, while Neeraj Chopra's victory in men's javelin in Tokyo three years ago was India's first in track and field.

Bhaker's double success on Tuesday prompted a call from Prime Minister Narendra Modi and an avalanche of congratulatory messages but Bhaker is not celebrating yet as she chases a third medal in the women's 25-metre pistol later this week.

'I feel proud'
"I feel proud, and I feel a lot of gratitude that I was able to achieve it. It's just a blessing. Thank you so much for all the blessings and love," she said. Social media back home is abuzz with her exploits and the 22-year-old Bhaker hopes her success will have an impact.

"I don't know what's trending on social media but I hope a lot of parents would push their daughters to try different sports," she said. "My parents were so supportive of me in choosing any sport or any cultural activity, anything," she said.

"Even today, if I say 'I don't want to do this, I'll learn classical dance or something,' they'll support that too.

"If the women of our country get that kind of support, I think we as a nation can grow. There's a lot of scope for improvement."

When asked about her performance, she said: "Actually, we can't control anything; we can just try to do our best. Before coming here also, me and my partner were like 'let's try our best and however it goes, we will accept (the outcome) and we will keep fighting till the last shot.'" She added: "No time to celebrate. My work is unfinished. There's a lot to play for."

Bhaker's partner Singh said: "There was lot of pressure and the crowd amazing, So, I am really happy."

Bhaker hails from the north Indian state of Haryana, which has emerged as a hub for Olympic sport in India despite the state's male bias and a skewed sex ratio.

The state also produced India cricketer Shafali Verma, who had to crop her hair short and masquerade as a boy in order to pursue the game.



FOOTBALL

Fifteen stadiums, 5 cities in Saudi 2034 World Cup

SAUDI ARABIA PLANS TO HOST 'THE LARGEST-EVER EDITION'

AFP
Riyadh

Saudi Arabia, the only bidder for the 2034 World Cup, will host the 48-team tournament in fifteen stadiums across five cities, including eight in the capital, state media said yesterday.

The announcement came days after the kingdom submitted its official bid to the International Federation of Association Football (FIFA).

Saudi Arabia plans to host "the largest-ever edition" of the tournament in a single country, according to the bid book, details of which were carried by the Saudi Press Agency (SPA).

The bid book outlines five proposed host cities for the tournament, including the capital Riyadh, the Red Sea city of Jeddah, Al Khobar, Abha, and NEOM, a \$500bn, futuristic new city, SPA said.

They will feature 15 advanced stadiums, 11 of which are new, according to the agency.

Riyadh will be home to eight stadiums, including the new King Salman Stadium, which will accommodate over 92,000 spectators and is set to host the opening and final matches of the tournament, SPA said.

As the only bidder, Saudi Arabia was anointed host of the 2034 World Cup last October by FIFA after neighbour Qatar hosted the Middle East's first World Cup at an eye-watering cost of \$220bn, including related infrastructure.

To host the 48-team World Cup, the kingdom needs 14 all-seater stadiums capable of holding



A computer generated image of King Khalid Stadium in the city of Abha. This existing stadium is located in the south-east of Abha. Capacity will be expanded to more than 45,000 for the FIFA World Cup 2034, with refurbishment focusing on modernizing the infrastructure while respecting the stadium's historical context.



An infographic showing the cities proposed to host 2034 FIFA World Cup to be hosted in Saudi Arabia.

ing at least 40,000 people, according to the bid document. It

and Riyadh's venerable King Fahd International Stadium, which is undergoing a major refit.

Infrastructure is the initial concern for the oil-rich kingdom, which is snapping up high-profile sports events in an attempt to sweep away its conservative image and entice foreign investment.

By the time the World Cup kicks off, the desert country of 32 million will have hosted the 2027 Asian Cup and even the 2029 Asian Winter Games, a decision panned by environmentalists.

In 2034, the same year as the World Cup, Riyadh will host the Asian Games - a two-week tournament with more events than the Summer Olympics and a similar number of athletes.

FOCUS

QMMF president visits young QMA drivers in Barcelona



By Sports Reporter
Qatar

Abdulrahman bin Abdullatif al-Mannai, president of the Qatar Motor and Motorcycle Federation (QMMF) and Lusail International Circuit (LIC), paid a visit to the Circuit de Barcelona-Catalunya to observe and motivate Qatar Motorsports Academy's (QMA) drivers during their Formula 4 testing sessions.

Three talented Qatari drivers from QMA - Bader al Sulaiti, Taha Hassiba, and Tameem Hassiba - participated in the testing, which took place on July 22-23 and on July 30-31, 2024.

These young drivers were selected based on their experience, results, and commitment demonstrated throughout their karting careers since joining QMA in early 2022.

The drivers adapted to Formula 4 cars after previously competing in 125cc ROTAX Racing karts. They have been mastering a new track, focusing on racing lines, braking points, gear changes, and cornering techniques. After two days of testing, all drivers showed impressive progress, with lap times within tenths of each other and close to the track's best F4 category times.

Since the beginning of 2022, these promising young drivers have been representing Qatar in various national and international karting competitions under the support of the Qatar Motor & Motorcycle Federation. Their selection for Formula 4 testing fol-

lowed their strong performance in initial tests at Lusail International Circuit in March 2024, where they achieved lap times comparable to experienced Formula 4 drivers.

These young drivers demonstrated their impressive skills during the Formula 4 testing at the beginning of the year at Lusail International Circuit. Additionally, testing at the Catalunya Circuit provided them with valuable exposure, allowing them to test their abilities on a new track and adapt to different environments. Such experiences are crucial for their development, enhancing their capabilities and preparing them for success on bigger stages.

President al-Mannai's visit underscored QMMF and Lusail International Circuit commitment to nurturing local talent, in line with Qatar National Vision 2030, and promoting Qatar's presence in motorsports. The journey of these young drivers from karting to Formula 4 testing exemplified the success of Qatar's grassroots motorsports programs. Their progress highlighted the importance of events like the MENA Karting Championship Nations Cup and Qatar Karting Championship in developing young talent.



Canada fail in bid to overturn 6-point deduction in Olympic football

PARIS: Canada's six-point deduction over a spying scandal at the women's Olympic football has been upheld after an appeal to the Court of Arbitration for Sport failed yesterday. The Swiss-based body was asked to review the punishment handed down by world football's governing body FIFA which has left the reigning Olympic champions in danger of a group-stage exit at the Paris Games. Canada have won both of their matches so far, against New Zealand and France, but the penalty means they have zero points with only one group game remaining. They must now beat Colombia if they are to advance to the quarter-finals as they seek to repeat their gold medal at the Tokyo Games three years ago. Canada were docked six points and fined 200,000 Swiss francs (\$226,000) by FIFA as a punishment after a staff member used a drone to spy on a New Zealand training session ahead of their match, which Canada won 2-1. Coach Bev Priestman was previously given a one-year ban from all football-related activity by FIFA for her responsibility in the scandal. Assistant coach Andy Spence, who like Priestman is from England, was put in interim charge of the team.

ATHLETICS

Jacobs confident of defending Games 100m title



AFP
Paris

Olympic 100m champion **Marcell Jacobs** said yesterday he is a "changed, but better" athlete and is confident of defending his title at the Paris Games.

The Italian stunned the field to snatch gold in the Covid-delayed Tokyo Olympics, in a European record of 9.80sec. He made it double gold just days later by helping Italy to victory in the 4x100m relay.

The 29-year-old told reporters he was back at the Summer Games for one reason only: to defend his title in one of its standout events.

"I'm the Olympic champion. I want to win again," Jacobs told reporters.

"I know what I can do. I know I am the Olympic champion. I won the 100m at the Olympic Games. I worked

really hard to get here to win again... so I can do the double."

After his stunning success in Tokyo, Jacobs went off the radar, citing fatigue and a knee problem. His conspicuous absence raised eyebrows and brought criticism that still stings.

"What hurt me was that people didn't understand that we are not robots, we are not machines. We are human," he said. "We work every day at 100% with our body, so it's normal to have some difficulties, some injury."

"The problem with doping (accusations) after the Olympics didn't touch me because I know what I have to do to get a win, so I know what is not true."

"It's hard to survive at the Olympics and win, but it's harder to continue to win. So for that, you have a lot of injury and people didn't understand that. In Italy, we never had an Italian guy make the Olympic final, but I won and they

continued to criticise me. So it hurt me." Jacobs showed his determination to bag back-to-back golds by upending his life, both professionally and personally, changing coach in Olympic year and moving, with his family, to the US to work under Rana Reider. It seems to have paid off as Jacobs claimed a second European title in Rome in June.

"Of course I've changed since Tokyo," he said. "It was three years ago."

Since then, Jacobs added, "I win, I lose, I have a lot of injury. I change everything. I change country and change coach, so I'm different, but I'm better".

Jacobs maintained that reaching Sunday's 100m final was the hardest part of the jigsaw.

"The most difficult thing is the semi-final because we are this year 15 or 16 guys who can go to the final. The semi-final will be hard," he said. "Every year is a different. This year we have the Jamaicans, the Americans, but every year is like that."

TENNIS

Djokovic, Alcaraz move closer to gold showdown

‘It’s a very, very humid day as it was yesterday. But you have to accept and embrace the conditions’

Reuters
Paris

Serbia’s Novak Djokovic and Spain’s Carlos Alcaraz stayed on collision course for a golden showdown at the Paris Olympics as they surged through to the quarter-finals yesterday.

Djokovic, probably in the last-chance-saloon as far as his Olympic title hopes go, beat Germany’s Dominic Koepfer 7-5 6-3 to reach the last eight at the Games for a record fourth time.

The 21-year-old Alcaraz, seeded two, then followed suit with a 6-4 6-2 victory over Russian Roman Safiullin.

Women’s singles top seed Iga Swiatek became the first player from Poland to reach the semi-finals in Olympic tennis although she was given a fright by American Danielle Collins who retired with a medical issue when losing 4-1 in the third set.

With Greece’s Stefanos Tsitsipas set to play Djokovic in the last eight and Norway’s sixth seed Casper Ruud through to play Canada’s Felix Auger-Aliassime, the men’s singles draw is still loaded with familiar faces.

But the women’s singles continued to throw up surprises with Anna Karolina Schmiedlova stunning Wimbledon champion Barbora Krejickova of the Czech Republic 6-4 6-2 to become the first Slovak since Miloslav Mecir in 1988 to reach the semi-finals of the Olympic singles.

Zheng Qinwen ended the stellar career of Germany’s Angelique Kerber in a titanic tussle to emulate Li Na who reached the semi-finals of singles at the Beijing Games in 2008.

Zheng failed to convert three successive match points in the third set as veteran Kerber clung on grimly in stifling heat but eventually prevailed 6-7(4) 6-4 7-6(6)



Novak Djokovic of Serbia in action during his match against Dominik Koepfer of Germany during the Paris 2024 Olympics at Roland-Garros Stadium, Paris, France, yesterday. (Reuters)

- collapsing to the red clay in disbelief as Kerber’s last shot struck the net.

Three-time Grand Slam champion Kerber announced last week she would retire after the Paris event.

Swiatek was in control as she won the opening set 6-1 but went off the boil to lose the second 6-2 against an aggressive Collins. The Pole was struck by a ball early in the decider but regained her composure to lead 4-1, at which point eighth seed Collins decided she could not continue.

For all his 24 Grand Slam titles and countless accolades, the Olympics has never been especially kind to the 37-year-old Djokovic and a bronze medal remains his only souvenir.

But he looks in the mood to fill the only unoccupied space in his bulging trophy cabinet and is yet to drop a set.

After the emotions and hyperbole of Djokovic’s previous round against his claycourt nemesis Rafa Nadal, the atmosphere on a muggy centre court was more sedate as he comfortably dispatched 30-year-old Koepfer after some initial trouble.

Koepfer was matching the Serb until 5-6 in the first set when he played two bad points to hand over the opener and from then on Djokovic was comfortable as he notched his 16th career singles win at the Olympics - the most by any player since tennis returned to the Games in 1988.

Standing in the way of Djokovic and a fourth Olympic singles semi-final is eighth seed Tsitsipas who beat Argentina’s Sebastian Baez. The last time they met at Roland Garros was in the French Open final in 2021 when Tsitsipas was two sets ahead before succumbing in five.

“I don’t expect anything less

than a big fight and a tight match,” Djokovic said of yesterday’s clash.

“The goal is to get to the finals and have a battle for that gold,” he added.

“I’m soaking wet, honestly,” said Djokovic. “It’s a very, very humid day as it was yesterday. But you have to accept and embrace the conditions and try to make the best out of it.”

Games debutant Alcaraz has also been untroubled en route to the quarter-finals as he seeks to follow his French Open and Wimbledon titles with Olympic gold.

He was too good for Safiullin and powered to victory before preparing for his men’s doubles quarter-final with Rafa Nadal later on Court Philippe Chatrier.

Norway’s Casper Ruud will be eyeing a medal as the fifth seed beat Francisco Cerundolo of Argentina to set up a quarter-final with Canada’s Felix Auger-Aliassime.

Nadal, Alcaraz knocked out of Olympic Games doubles



Spain’s Rafael Nadal waves goodbye after he and Carlos Alcaraz lose to Americans Austin Krajicek and Rajeev Ram in their men’s doubles quarter-final match on Court Philippe-Chatrier at the Roland-Garros Stadium during the Paris 2024 Olympic Games yesterday. (AFP)

PARIS: Rafael Nadal and Carlos Alcaraz were dumped out of the Olympics men’s doubles yesterday by Austin Krajicek and Rajeev Ram in possibly Nadal’s last appearance at Roland Garros. The Spanish dream team lost 6-2, 6-4 to the US fourth seeds, who progressed to the semi-finals in Paris.

Nadal and Alcaraz, dubbed “Nadalcaraz”, have been one of the main talking points at the Paris Games tennis tournament, wowing the crowds in their first two matches.

But they came unstuck in the last eight against doubles specialists Krajicek and Ram, who both have Grand Slam-winning pedigree. Nadal was broken in the first game of the match on Court Philippe Chatrier and Alcaraz also lost serve as the US pair took the first set.

The Spaniards suffered another costly break in the seventh game of the second set, which ultimately proved decisive.

They battled tigerishly in the 10th game but failed to take advantage of three break points and Krajicek and Ram sealed victory on their second match point. Nadal, a 14-time French Open champion, said after his painful defeat to Novak Djokovic in the singles competition in Paris that he would make a decision on his future after the Olympics.

The 38-year-old, immortalised in a statue at Roland Garros, has been plagued by injuries in recent years and is now 161st in the world.

Alcaraz still has a chance of winning a medal in the men’s singles competition - he is through to the quarter-finals, where he will face US ninth seed Tommy Paul.

Jose Torres Gil celebrates winning BMX gold



FROM LEFT: Silver medallist Britain’s Kieran Darren David Reilly, gold medallist Argentina’s Jose Torres Gil, and bronze medallist France’s Anthony Jeanjean pose with their medals as they celebrate on the podium after the Men’s Cycling BMX Freestyle Park Final during the Paris 2024 Olympic Games yesterday. (AFP)

PEERLESS FOX THE PRIDE OF AUSTRALIA AFTER SECOND OLYMPIC GOLD

PARIS: There may be sports with more followers than canoeing in Australia, but there can be few bigger stars Down Under than **Jessica Fox** at the moment following her second gold medal at the Paris Games, achieved in stunning fashion yesterday. Just as she did in Sunday’s kayak final, Fox cannoned bravely through the course to win the canoe single gold, delighting the legion of fans that had travelled to the Vaires-sur-Marne Nautical Stadium east of Paris to share in her moment of glory. “It was so special. I would love to be swarmed like that every time I compete. It was amazing to share it with them. There were so many Australians and Aussie supporters,” Fox said following



her second triumph. Those supporters cheered her on relentlessly on a muggy afternoon, and once the competition was won, she went to celebrate with them.

“Some of them were family, some were friends, some travelled from Oz, some live in Europe,” she said. “It was incredible to see the support here and celebrate with my family

and team as well. I am over the moon.”

Yesterday’s win ensured a successful defence of the title she won at the Tokyo Games, and Fox said her success in Paris was the result of hard work in the intervening years.

“This has been a dream Games - as an athlete, you put in the blood, sweat and tears, and the team invests in you. For it to come down to one day every four years, and then to actually pull it off, is the best feeling in the world,” she said.

“It does not always go your way, and I have experienced that as well. For it to turn out this way, it has been the perfect Games, and it’s so magical to be here in Paris.”

GYMNASTICS

Oka dethrones Hashimoto in shock win

AFP
Paris

Japan’s **Shinnosuke Oka** claimed a shock victory in the Olympic men’s gymnastics all-around title yesterday, dethroning compatriot and defending champion Daiki Hashimoto in a thrilling final.

Oka, 20, claimed gold ahead of Chinese duo Zhang Boheng in second, with Xiao Ruoteng claiming bronze as Hashimoto finished sixth.

In a gripping battle for gymnastics’ most coveted title, less than a point split the top three going into the last of the six rotations - the horizontal bar.

With the Bercy Arena crowd holding their breath the last to go Zhang, who was set for bronze, produced a huge performance. That left all eyes trained on the giant screen for his score to see if he had pulled gold out of the bag. When it finally flashed up, Oka’s face lit up as his internal calculator worked out he had held on by just 0.233 points with an overall points tally of 86.832. Xiao, silver medallist behind Hashimoto at the Tokyo Games, was a further 0.235 points back.

Oka’s win gave Japan an unprecedented fourth consecutive men’s all-around title after Hashimoto and Japanese icon Kohei Uchimura, the winner at London 2012 and four years



later in Rio. This was Olympic debutant Oka’s second gold in the space of 48 hours after he helped Japan to the team title at the Paris Games on Monday.

Zhang had looked razor sharp in qualifying, topping the list of 24 going through to the final ahead of Oka and Hashimoto. The Tokyo champion started as though he meant business, landing his tumblers on the opening floor exercise with such sure-footedness the judges could have been forgiven for wondering if he had glue on the soles of his feet. Over to Zhang, who drew gasps of consternation from the Chinese contingent in the Bercy Arena with a fall at the start of his routine and a hop back on his last jump.

That left him well down the field with Hash-

imoto placed third, on the coattails of Britain’s Jake Jarman (who finished seventh) and Oleg Verniaiev of Ukraine.

Pommel horse woe for Hashimoto
The pommel horse was next for the six leading qualifiers - Hashimoto had fallen off the apparatus in Monday’s team competition - and he suffered the same fate again 48 hours later.

He jumped straight back into the saddle to earn a decent 12.966 with a flurry of Russian circles and flairs. But he moved onto the third rotation way down in 16th behind the new leader, Oka. At the midway point of the evening Verniaiev, parallel bars champion and all-around silver medallist in Rio 2016, was just over one and a half points behind Oka, with Xiao, another Ukrainian, Illia Kovtun, and Zhang completing the provisional top five. But the veteran 30-year-old Verniaiev grabbed the lead from Kovtun after his favoured parallel bars to leave the war-torn country with dreams of a memorable 1-2 on the podium. A flawed performance on the horizontal bar by Verniaiev quickly ruined that prospect.

Zhang was causing a stir on the adjacent parallel bars to earn a huge 15.300, but it was Oka who led the pack from Xiao with Zhang in third into the closing sixth rotation on the horizontal bar.

And that’s how the podium panned out, but not before a nerve-wracking finale.

JUDO AND BASKETBALL ACTION



Georgia’s Lasha Bekauri and Japan’s Sanshiro Murao (Blue) compete in the judo men’s -90kg gold medal bout of the Paris 2024 Olympic Games at the Champ-de-Mars Arena, in Paris, yesterday. (AFP)



Lebron James of USA in action against South Sudan during the Paris Olympic Games basketball game yesterday. The USA won 103-86. (Reuters)

HORSE RACING / QATAR GOODWOOD FESTIVAL

Al Ghadeer lands Qatar International Stakes for second time in a row

NOTABLE SPEECH SECURES CONVINCING VICTORY IN THE £1MN GROUP 1 QATAR SUSSEX STAKES



HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani, president of Qatar Olympic Committee, presented the trophy of the Qatar International Stakes to HE Sheikh Hamad bin Joaan al-Thani, representing Al Shaqab Racing, following the victory of champion colt Al Ghadeer on Day 2 of the five-day Qatar Goodwood Festival in UK yesterday.



HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani, president of Qatar Olympic Committee, honoured the winners of the Gr1 Qatar Sussex Stakes, which was landed by Notable Speech for Godolphin, trainer Charlie Appleby and jockey William Buick yesterday.

By Sports Reporter
Goodwood, UK

Al Shaqab Racing's Al Ghadeer repeated last year's victory in the Group 1 Qatar International Stakes on the second day of the Qatar Goodwood Festival yesterday.

Al Ghadeer's win yesterday in the Group 1 contest for Purebred Arabians was the first step towards the five-year-old regaining the Doha Triple Crown, which it completed last time. Making his seasonal debut yesterday, Al Ghadeer was given an easy return to the track by jockey Christophe Soumillon, who barely moved as the Al Shaqab Racing-owned horse won convincingly.

Cantering easily entering the final straight, the colt went clear despite a late challenge from Al Wakrah (Tm Fred Texas). Al Ghadeer found more power without forcing his talent and won by one length. Owner-companion Al Wakrah was a good second giving Al Shaqab Racing a memorable one-two. Ska De L'Aigle (Al Mour-tajez) took third.

Qatar Olympic Committee President HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani presented the trophy of the Qatar International Stakes to HE Sheikh Hamad bin Joaan al-Thani, who was representing Al Shaqab Racing. Sheikh Abdul-lah bin Mohamed bin Saoud al-Thani, ambas-sador of Qatar to UK, presented the trophies to trainer Francois Rohaut and jockey Soumil-lon.

Winner of six Group 1 (Purebred Arabians), the incredible colt Al Ghadeer was making a return to the track for the first time since winning the HH The Amir Sword earlier this year.

Meanwhile, the feature event of the day at Goodwood – the QREC-sponsored £1mn Group 1 Qatar Sussex Stakes was won by No-table Speech for owners Godolphin, trainer Charlie Appleby and jockey William Buick. HE Sheikh Joaan crowned the winners of the con-nections of Notable Speech.

Ridden by William Buick, Notable Speech tracked the favourite Henry Longfellow (Du-bawi) who led at a good pace alongside Sonny Liston (Lawman).



Jockey Christophe Soumillon guided Al Shaqab Racing's Al Ghadeer repeated last year's victory in the Group 1 Qatar International Stakes on the second day of the Qatar Goodwood Festival yesterday.



Wathnan Racing's French Duke won the Coral Daily Rewards Shaker Handicap yesterday.

Waiting for the cutaway on the final straight, Notable Speech quickened well when the gap appeared to lead inside the final furlong and beat Maljoom (Caravaggio) by one and half a

length. Facteur Cheval (Ribchester) took third. In the British Stallion Studs EBF Fillies Handicap for three-year-old+ fillies over 2000m, the Al Shaqab Racing-owned Al Anoud (Kings-man x Jadhaba) impressed with a strong finish to score for the third time in her fifth career start.

The four-year-old filly is trained by Ralph Beckett and was ridden by Hector Crouch.

HE Sheikh Hamad bin Joaan al-Thani, re-ceived the trophy of the British Stallion Studs EBF Fillies Handicap from Ed Harper, Director of Whitsbury Manor Stud and Trustee of the British EBF.

In the Coral Daily Rewards Shaker Handi-cap, French Duke (Sea The Stars x Duchess Of France) scored in impressive fashion for Wathnan Racing.

Under an excellent ride from James Doyle, the Roger Varian-trained colt proved the best in the 2400m race for three year olds.

Qatar Tourism announces renewal of Goodwood Racecourse partnership



Qatar Tourism (QT), represented by Visit Qatar, announced the renewal of multi-year partnership with Goodwood Racecourse that will commence in 2025. The partnership counts as a continuance of the triumphant collaboration with Qatar Racing & Equestrian Club that has been a successful 10-year partnership that commenced in 2015. The Goodwood Festival will continue and build on its position as one of the undisputed highlights of the British Flat racing season. It remains the biggest single sponsorship deal in British Horseracing and has enabled the Qatar Goodwood Festival to become one of the most prestigious and valuable meetings in the world. In a press statement, QT Chairman HE Saad bin Ali al-Kharji said: "Building on the legacy of the Qatar Racing & Equestrian Club, we are pleased to announce the renewal of a multi-year partnership with Goodwood Racecourse. This milestone reflects our dedication to continue showcasing Qatar's vibrant culture and distinctive offerings to a global audience. We look forward to the opportunities this partnership will bring, further solidifying Qatar's positioning in the international sport-ing world". The Duke of Richmond, chairman of Goodwood Racecourse, said: "I would like to take this opportunity to thank Qatar Racing & Equestrian Club for their enormous contribution to the Qatar Goodwood Festival and to British Horseracing. We are thrilled to announce our partnership with Visit Qatar, and we are very much looking forward to working with them to continue to take Visit Qatar Goodwood Festival to a new level".



Jockey William Buick rides Notable Speech to Qatar Sussex Stakes win.

FOCUS

France, Britain dominate triathlon after Seine suspense

AFP
Paris

France and Britain dominated the podiums in the Olympics triathlon yesterday, which finally began in the Seine after days of suspense over whether the river would be clean enough for racing.

Cassandra Beaugrand took the women's gold ahead of Switzerland's Julie Derron and Britain's third-placed Beth Potter.

In the men's competition, which had to be delayed by 24 hours after the Seine failed water tests, Alex Yee stormed to a dramatic victory by passing rival and friend Hayden Wilde from New Zealand in the final stretch.

Frenchman Leo Bergere finished third.

"I started to find my legs with about 3k to go and I said to myself 'I'll give myself one last chance to make this happen,'" Yee told

reporters of his late surge, adding that British legend Alistair Brownlee had shouted him on during the last lap.

All the attention during the build-up had been on the Seine, which was the centrepiece of a spectacular course that included a biking and running route through the historic heart of the French capital.

The Seine has been too dirty for swimming all week after Paris was deluged by rain during the opening ceremony of the Games on Friday, with the equivalent of a month's rain falling over 36 hours.

The storms overwhelmed the city's sewerage system despite a recent 1.4bn euros (\$1.5bn) upgrade, leading to discharges of untreated waste water that sent E.Coli bacteria levels spiking.

Beaugrand said she "never doubted" that the swimming would go ahead despite warnings that it might be cancelled, which would have turned the triathlon



Gold medalist France's Cassandra Beaugrand reacts on the women's individual triathlon podium at the Paris 2024 Olympic yesterday. (AFP)

into a duathlon of only cycling and running. "It would have been shameful for our sport... it would have been a disgrace," she told reporters afterwards.

After the competition was given the go-ahead at around 4am (0200 GMT), thousands of fans turned out to line the streets



Britain's Alex Yee celebrates after winning the men's individual triathlon race yesterday. (AFP)

which were slippery and hazardous during the women's race after overnight showers.

Beaugrand was in contention from the start, remaining in touch with front-runner and defending Olympic champion Flora Duffy during the swim when many competitors reported being surprised by the strength of the river cur-

rents.

The UK-based 27-year-old had vomited before the start, finding comfort in words from fellow competitor Georgia Taylor-Brown from Britain, the silver medalist at Tokyo 2020, who helped settle her nerves.

"She told me 'It's just a race, you can do it,'" Beaugrand, who grew up near Paris but moved to Britain in 2023, told French television.

After so much public debate about the water quality, Hayden said the currents were the biggest concern.

"I watched the women's race beforehand and was like 'wow,'" he told a press conference.

The triathlon in the Seine followed by marathon swimming next week were both intended to highlight efforts made by French authorities to clean up the water-way, which has been off-limits for Parisian swimmers since 1923.

Due to an exceptionally wet spring and early summer, the Seine had been consistently failing

tests until the start of July.

Levels of the E.Coli – a key indicator of faecal matter – had been 10 times higher than authorised triathlon limits on some days in June. More rain had threatened to force another delay to the schedule overnight on Tuesday-Wednesday, but deputy Paris mayor Antoine Guillou told AFP that had been no discharges from the sewers.

"The rain was quite light and low in quantity," Guillou, who is in charge of public sanitation, told AFP. But water charity Surfrider said it remained "worried that athletes began their triathlon race this morning at 8am even though it rained for several hours before the start," adding that it awaited the publication of full results.

"I'm definitely going to be visiting the bathroom later," South African Jamie Riddle, who finished 25th, joked to reporters.

"I swallowed gallons and gallons of water, so that's going to be a fun, post-race party."