Basilashvili downs Bautista Agut to soar with the Falcon

‘This tournament was one of the strongest 250s I have ever seen probably... To be able to win it... surprising and happy’

By Muhannad Al Bassam

In fact the first time he played against Roger Federer in the quarter-finals, and the Georgian made it worthy the legendary Swiss star.

Yesterday in the final, where he had booked a place after beating Taylor Fritz in straight sets on Friday, with His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani in the audience, Basilashvili was able to return the favour immediately. The affair was settled when a backhand return from the Georgian put him 4-2 ahead. Another double break point, this time in the championship, and Basilashvili forged ahead marginally wide to hand his opponent the Falcon trophy.

Nikoloz Basilashvili of Georgia poses with the Falcon trophy after his Qatar ExxonMobil Open win yesterday.

"I don’t like to lose. I think I could have played a better but, today, it was his final. I want to congratulate Basilashvili, he played great. He played very aggressive. Now it is time to re- cover, to keep working, to keep playing great. He played very aggressive. Now it is time to recover, to keep working, to keep playing great."

"It is the strong and long- term partnership we share with the Qatar Tennis Federation that allows us to create a world-class tournament in Qatar for the world to enjoy. We’re very proud of how it has evolved over the years through our close collaboration and look forward to the future holds for us."

"I somehow found a way to deal with these circumstances. I was not expecting that (to win the title). But (at the) same time, I was not facing a break point in the final. Even though the Spaniard gave me a lot of confidence of the tournament that is “one of my favourite” on Tour."

"I thought for Roger, even if he was completely ready, in my opinion. It’s tough to come back and play these competitions after a long break when you play matches. Even thought my preparation and tournament matches are completely different."

"I don’t like to lose. I think I could have played a better but, today, it was his final. I want to congratulate Basilashvili, he played great. He played very aggressive. Now it is time to recover, to keep working, to keep playing great."

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Al Gharafa complete grand treble with Amir Cup

**Basketball**

Qatar Cup titles yesterday as Al Wakra, Al Gharafa and Al Sadd booked their places in the final, with Al Sadd winning the Amir Cup to their league and cup titles yesterday, and a remarkable coincidence they beat Al Wakra in all three finals, with a 77-70 win yesterday in the Amir Cup final proving the icing on the cake.

Tyren Harris and Abdurahman Saad were the heroes yesterday as Al Gharafa edged all quarters, leading for almost 35 minutes of the match. Both Harris and Saad had 23 points, while Franklin Sesay had 13 and Neftin Music 12.

For Al Wakra, Brandon Spearman and Julius Colon had 21 points each and Fan Soud covered in with 11. Al Gharafa were quick on the break, scoring 14 fast break points, while Al Wakra had only five.

**Tennis**

Muguruza ends two-year title drought in Dubai

I’m very happy after losing a few finals in a row, to get this one,” said Muguruza, who was runner-up in Doha last week, as being able to claim her first title since Monterrey in April 2019 and enjoy great success in doubles, as well as at the Arrive Valley Classic.

“First of all, it’s an unbelievable achievement, “ Medvedev said. “I think in the world of tennis we talk about Grand Slams and at the same time you step out on the court and play Roger. He’s one of the greatest players that ever played. I would definitely like to play Roger. He’s one of the best players in the world. I’ve always said about the Big Three, they are the best. The records they have are just probably not going to be broken in my opinion. The memories that you see in this part. I don’t think you can see other players were not good enough in this era. It’s just that they were unable to beat Roger and there’s nothing for others to be ashamed of.”

**Spotlight**

Djokovic can extend No.1 record to 400 weeks: Medvedev

“I would definitely like to be No.1. It’s one of my dreams to be the No.1 of the world. It’s always great playing him,” Medvedev said, adding: “Every time you step out on the court against the Big Three, it’s a special feeling.”

“The Big Three” refers to Novak Djokovic, Rafael Nadal and Roger Federer.

The 25-year-old Medvedev will become the first player outside Djokovic, Federer and Nadal and Andy Murray to hold the top two since Lindsay Davenport in 2005 when the rankings are updated on Monday. Only 11 of the last 61 Grand Slam champions have been No.1 for at least 400 weeks - the Big Three.

**ICYC**

IOC approves set of reforms for Games, host cities

The ninth seed was contesting her first final in Melbourne. In a remarkable turnaround, she admitted that she had been losing on a wide court as she grabbed a set point and saved a set point on the way to victory.

“I’m very happy after losing a few finals in a row, to get this one,” said Muguruza, who was runner-up in Doha last week, as being able to claim her first title since Monterrey in April 2019 and enjoy great success in doubles, as well as at the Arrive Valley Classic.

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12/03/21

**Tokyo**

The International Olympic Committee on Monday approved a series of reforms that will again turn the Olympic Games into an attractive proposition for fans, cities and sponsors through reduced cost, an increased digital presence for fans, cities and sponsors through reduced cost, an increased digital presence and new revenue streams.

The IOC has used its top project – the summer and winter editions of the Olympic Games, have seen some of the actions recently taken in response to the coronavirus crisis, such as the postponement last year of the Tokyo 2020 Olympics – the first to be delayed outside world-wide pandemic periods – by 12 months to further affect the Games and the IOC’s finances. The current crisis has affected the games that include digitisation, sustainability development and financial resources and according to the IOC are designed to better position the organisation and the Games in the global environment after the repair consequent pandemics and to develop the Games in the digital age. As part of the Plan of action for the 2018-2020 and the 2024 editions of the Games, the postponement last year of the Tokyo 2020 Olympics – the first to be delayed outside world-wide pandemic periods – by 12 months further affected the Games and the IOC’s finances. The current crisis has affected the games that include digitisation, sustainability development and financial resources and according to the IOC are designed to better position the organisation and the Games in the global environment after the repair consequent pandemics and to develop the Games in the digital age. The World’s number 65 claimed the first top-20 win of her career in singles earlier this season at the Cincinnati Open and reached the semi-finals at the Australian Open, winning the most weeks to 400, 14 fast-break points, 400 weeks to 311 weeks as world number one.

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As he celebrates 311 weeks as world number one with his family and supporters in front of his restaurant “Novak” in Belgrade, on March 8, 2021.

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**By Sports Reporter**

**PSG opt for caution**

Marseille shake of Brest for second under Sampoli

**PSG shake off  Brest with four goals in a row.**

Fear and caution dominated the game with both teams willing to play a defensive game. However, the two goals scored by Neymar and Mbappe in the 1st half put Brest in a tough position. In the 2nd half, Brest made a comeback, but PSG sealed the victory with two more goals scored by Camavinga and Cavani in the 65th and 76th minutes respectively.

**AFR**

Neymar will miss France vs. Germany game after testing positive for COVID-19. The five-time Ballon d’Or winner was ruled out of the game against Germany due to a positive test result.

**FOOTBALL**

**Marseille shake of Brest for second under Sampoli**

Marseille forward Romain Alessandrini scored a late goal to give Marseille a 2-0 win over Brest. The victory is Marseille’s second in a row under Rudi Garcia, who took over from Jorge Sampaoli at the end of last season.

**PSG opt for caution**

PSG defeated Brest 4-0 in Ligue 1, with three goals scored by Neymar and one from Mbappe. The win keeps PSG at the top of the table.

**SPOTLIGHT**

**Olivier and Cunha seal win at Marathon FINA Swim World Series Dolha**

Olivier and Cunha seal victory at the FINA Swim World Series in Dolha, Portugal. Olivier won the 10km race in 2:01:31.9, while Cunha took the 15km race in 3:02:13.2.

**SPORT**

**Marcelo Fabian and Diego Lainez seal win at Marathon FINA Swim World Series**

Marcelo Fabian and Diego Lainez secured wins in the 10km and 15km races respectively at the FINA Swim World Series in Dolha, Portugal.

**LaLiga**

**Benzema to the rescue again as Real edge past Elche**

By Sports Reporter

Olivier and Cunha seal

Benzema’s late equaliser salvaged a draw for Real Madrid as they held Elche 1-1 in a La Liga match.

**From front left:** Senator-General of the Qatar Olympic Committee Yousef Al-Ghanim, FIFA football chief Jean-Claude Blanco and FIFA Swim World Series president Viktor Kovaltchouk at the award ceremony yesterday. “There’s been a lot of wind but I like swimming in these conditions. There were no currents. I had the sea on my right and the wind on my back,” said Olivier from the podium.

**LIGUE 1**

**PSG opt for caution with Neymar out**

Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) were at the top of the table before conceding two goals to Olympique Marseille (OM) to slip down to third. PSG’s Neymar has in recent weeks been ruled out of action due to injury.

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B Lewandowski equals goal milestone as Bayern cruise

Borussia Dortmund score twice in the second half over visitors Hertha Berlin to move back into fifth place

AFP

Beveren Munich romped to a 3-0 win yesterday as Robert Lewandowski scored his 16th goal in the German top flight this season as they came from behind to beat Hertha Berlin 2-1 in the Bundesliga match yesterday. The Pole netted twice from the 55th and 74th minutes as his side kept pace with leaders Bayern Munich. Thomas Delaney scored the other goal in the 66th minute. It was the 5-11-1-0 defender's 16th goal this season and 132nd in all competitions. The former Schalke striker Klaus Fischer's picture has not been a lot to look at this season and his former team-mate David Alaba has found his form again. But Julian Brandt tried his luck from outside the box early on and his shot was deflected wide of the post. It was 2-0 at the break and Lewandowski scored twice in the second half to seal the win. The former Schalke No.15 scored seven goals in his last ten matches in all competitions and his side now have 45 points from 12 games. They are in second place, three points behind leaders Bayern Munich, who have two games in hand.

Chelsea and Everton stumble in top four chase

Jesse Lingard scored twice as Manchester United beat West Ham United 3-0 yesterday to keep up the pressure on the top four teams. United have now won five of their last six matches and are four points behind leaders Chelsea, who have two games in hand. It was their fourth straight win in all competitions. The English midfielder's first goal came early in the second half when he scored from the penalty spot after Lingard, who had been brought on as a substitute, was fouled by West Ham goalkeeper Lukasz Fabianski. The win kept United in fifth place as they try to get back in contention for a Champions League place. The west London side are in fourth place on 39 points but they have played one game less than Chelsea.

Chelsea 2-0 West Ham

The Blues played the second goals of Michail Antonio's controversial double against West Ham. Antonio was controversially given a second yellow card for an apparent misconduct against Chelsea defender Thiago Silva in the 16th minute. It was the Spaniard's first goal against the Czech goal after the Czech international scored twice against the Blues in the 2018/19 season.

Wolves 2-1 Liverpool

This was and Everton 2-0 win over West Ham United in the Premier League yesterday. The Toffees had won their last four league games and were in form coming into the match. The Hammers were also in form but they were no match for the in-form Toffees. The Toffees took the lead in the 32nd minute when Calvert-Lewin scored from a header after a cross from Gueye. The Hammers equalised in the 50th minute when Mo Dahoud scored from a deflection but the Toffees went 3-0 up in the 54th minute when Mendy made a brilliant save to deny Tyler Adams and the Blues scored their third goal in the 70th minute when Fabianski tipped over a shot from a distance. It was a comfortable win for the Toffees, who have now won six of their last seven league games. They are in seventh place on 42 points and are looking for a top four finish. The Hammers are in 17th place on 27 points and are still in danger of relegation.

Bundesliga

Lewandowski equals goal milestone as Bayern cruise

Borussia Dortmund score twice in the second half over visitors Hertha Berlin to move back into fifth place

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Brady inks extension with Bucs

OK and be healthy tomorrow. “

Joe Jakubowski/Reuters

BOSTON, MA - MAY 14: Rob Brantly #29 of the Miami Marlins hits a three-run home run in the first inning against the Boston Red Sox at Fenway Park on May 14, 2021 in Boston, Massachusetts. Rob Brantly in a win over Detroit Tigers.

May 15, 2021; Arlington, Texas, USA; Brock Holt of the Texas Rangers bats in the sixth inning against the Texas Rangers at Globe Life Field.

May 15, 2021; Philadelphia, PA, USA; Rhys Hoskins #17 of the Philadelphia Phillies reacts after he hit a solo home run in the second inning against the Philadelphia Phillies at Citizens Bank Park.

May 15, 2021; St. Louis, MO, USA; Paul Goldschmidt of the Arizona Diamondbacks bats in the seventh inning against the St. Louis Cardinals at Busch Stadium.

May 15, 2021; Seattle, WA, USA; Alex Bregman #2 of the Houston Astros bats in the sixth inning against the Seattle Mariners at T-Mobile Park.

May 15, 2021; Cincinnati, OH, USA; Hunter Greene #51 of the Cincinnati Reds bats in the first inning against the Pittsburgh Pirates at Great American Ball Park.

May 14, 2021; Arlington, Texas, USA; Tony Wolters #2 of the Texas Rangers bats in the fourth inning against the Texas Rangers at Globe Life Field.

May 15, 2021; Kansas City, MO, USA; Hunter Dozier #20 of the Kansas City Royals bats in the eighth inning against the Houston Astros at Kauffman Stadium.

May 14, 2021; Chicago, IL, USA; Michael Brantley #24 of the Chicago White Sox bats in the third inning against the Tampa Bay Rays at Guaranteed Rate Field.

May 15, 2021; Miami, FL, USA; Christian Yelich #22 of the Miami Marlins bats in the third inning against the New York Mets at Marlins Park.

May 15, 2021; Los Angeles, CA, USA; Albert Pujols #5 of the Los Angeles Angels bats in the third inning against the Seattle Mariners at Angel Stadium of Anaheim.

May 15, 2021; Washington, DC, USA; Victor Robles #12 of the Washington Nationals bats in the third inning against the Atlanta Braves at Nationals Park.

May 14, 2021; San Francisco, CA, USA; Steven Duggar #6 of the San Francisco Giants bats in the third inning against the San Diego Padres at Oracle Park.

May 15, 2021; Chicago, IL, USA; Willson Contreras #40 of the Chicago Cubs bats in the first inning against the Miami Marlins at Wrigley Field.

May 15, 2021; Kansas City, MO, USA; Hunter Dozier #20 of the Kansas City Royals bats in the first inning against the Houston Astros at Kauffman Stadium.

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May 15, 2021; San Diego, CA, USA; Jedd Gyorko #19 of the San Diego Padres bats in the sixth inning against the San Francisco Giants at Petco Park.

May 15, 2021; St. Louis, MO, USA; Ryan Helsley #28 of the St. Louis Cardinals pitches during the seventh inning against the Arizona Diamondbacks at Busch Stadium.

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May 15, 2021; New York, NY, USA; Albert Pujols #5 of the Los Angeles Angels bats in the third inning against the New York Mets at Citi Field.

May 15, 2021; Kansas City, MO, USA; Ryan McBroom #34 of the Kansas City Royals bats in the second inning against the Houston Astros at Kauffman Stadium.

May 15, 2021; Chicago, IL, USA; Matt Duffy #16 of the Chicago Cubs bats in the second inning against the Miami Marlins at Wrigley Field.

May 15, 2021; Tampa, FL, USA; Brandon Lowe #15 of the Tampa Bay Rays bats in the second inning against the Texas Rangers at Tropicana Field.

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Lewis ton clinches series for WI

West Indies' Evin Lewis celebrates hitting a century during the first T20 international against Sri Lanka. AP

Evin Lewis of West Indies celebrates his century against Sri Lanka at the Vivian Ahmedabad. AFP

England's John Archer takes a wicket in action against India during the first T20 international on Friday. AFP

England's Archer determined to clinch WC place

Archer was declared man of the match after taking three wickets in Friday's eight-wicket bowling of Sri Lanka, who could manage only 147 for 10 against England.

But after the game he revealed his struggle with a troublesome elbow that made him drop out of two of the three Tests in India — that England won 1-0.

And there was no firm commitment for the World Cup to him, as Archer looks to hone the skill suits us. "I think about what is going to the World Cup to Australia after.

I feel it is a very good wicket to take care of your bowlers before it's gone out of the nets a lot.

"He's excellent, and I think our bowling unit today against our batting unit has a lot of competition for places.

Sri Lanka faltered in the T20 opener after a successful first season with Kohli bowled for 95 out of their problems, which was certainly by their last 10 wickets over series before the World Cup.

We are all on the same page, that we are not going to take any chances at all, we have to accept that as common in the modern game.

But the premier batsman said really hard stage, and with the T20 World Cup taking place in India in October-November, and the Ashes tour insists he will hone the skill as well, "I think about what is going to the World Cup to Australia after.

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ODI

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And there was no firm commitment for the World Cup to him, as Archer looks to hone the skill suits us. "I think about what is going to the World Cup to Australia after.

I feel it is a very good wicket to take care of your bowlers before it's gone out of the nets a lot.

"He's excellent, and I think our bowling unit today against our batting unit has a lot of competition for places.

Sri Lanka faltered in the T20 opener after a successful first season with Kohli bowled for 95 out of their problems, which was certainly by their last 10 wickets over series before the World Cup.

We are all on the same page, that we are not going to take any chances at all, we have to accept that as common in the modern game.

But the premier batsman said really hard stage, and with the T20 World Cup taking place in India in October-November, and the Ashes tour insists he will hone the skill as well, "I think about what is going to the World Cup to Australia after.

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FORums

England's Archer determined to clinch WC place

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Japan's Mima Ito is all smiles after claiming the women's title.

Takuya Harimoto held off a valiant effort from qualifier Filus, while Ito came back from one game down to beat Tianwei in the men's final.

Earlier, Ito made it a double for Japan as she also won the mixed doubles final, while Harimoto held off a valiant effort from qualifier Filus.

The Japanese came back strongly as they lost the first game but then took the next three to win 11-9, 11-9, 12-14, 11-5, 7-11, 11-8 in the final.

Harimoto's win secured him the men's singles title, while Ito's success in the women's singles final made it a double for Japan.

Feng fell short to Ito and the Singaporeans had to settle for silver in the mixed doubles final, fighting back from one game down to win 3-2.

However, Harimoto is built for the big stage and his victory secured him the men's singles title.

Meanwhile, Mima Ito's victory in the women's singles final was the highlight of the day as she claimed her second consecutive title in the WTT Contender event. Defeat for the German qualifier Filus was a learning curve for her.

Qatar Table Tennis Association president Khaleel al-Mohannadi (right) and International Table Tennis Federation CEO Steve Dain表示 full praise of Qatar Table Tennis Association's (QTTA) organisation of WTT Middle East Open.

"Stop's hosting of many tournaments has strengthened our confidence and France led 7-0. England box-kick and an eight-minute passage of play before Itoje just did enough to pass found wing Penaud in space on his own leg but, with Brace initially decided that Itoje had not kicked a high tackle from Thomas and Cameron Woki but consulted TMO to make sure and she ruled that the lock had appeared to have hit his boot clear at 13-7. France responded with a Mattyball Jackpot penalty and a 17-13 lead.

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Veteran Fichardt braces the wind to take one-stroke lead

IT'S TOUGH BECAUSE YOU CAN'T GET A HOT PUFF OR SHOT AND STILL END IN DISASTER

E ligation’s Lee Westwood, foiling “valleys and undulating” fairways to shred six birds in a one-under-par 68 as he sank a birdie on the 16th to finish runner-up behind Bryson DeChambeau, the defending champion. Westwood, who has a total of 18 victories on the South African-based Sunshine Tour, used some solid wedge-play yesterday.

"When I started today I couldn’t stop the pain in the back, which was first noticed yesterday, the wind. I was three-shooting holes it was going out of fashion, on every hole. Finally I ignored my putting setup on the map before fired off 30,” said DeChambeau, who has finished second to the world No. 1 on 19 occasions but never won the coveted Mother of Pearl trophy.

Fichardt, said he’d carried his confidence from last week, of playing well and hitting good wedges in the Sunshine Tour Qualifying School, and he is now in the mix for his fifth European Tour win. He finished tied for 31st at the 2018 Fiji International, the 2017 Alfred Dunhill Championship, the 2014 Open de Portugal, the 2012 South African Open and the 2010 Commercial Bank Qatar Masters.

"This is a feel-good experience for me every year, which is the way to start my campaign," Fichardt said.

On a course where some of the flags were moving, DeChambeau, ranked sixth in the world, couldn’t keep the ball in play and didn’t miss too many greens but didn’t make too many birdies. The main target was to keep the ball in play and make some pars or a bit of birdies in regulation so not to stay in the greens for the long putts. “The wind made it a bit more difficult. I thought it was pretty solid. Yesterday, I hit a lot of greens and gave myself a lot of birdie opportunities. I made a few four小鸟s in the beginning, but played well in the middle. That was the time when the wind picked up. I had feeling of conditions that I could play well in the wind," Westwood added.

South Africa’s Devon Fichardt tied for second during the third round of the Commercial Bank Qatar Masters at the Education City Golf Club yesterday. AFP

FEW SHOTS SEPARATE FOR THIS WEEK, AND WE CARRIED THAT INTO THE FIRST TWO ROUNDS.

On a course where some of the greens were struggling — defending champion Rory McIlroy of Northern Ireland was among those who had a good week — Westwood was very happy to be a nine-under-par total of 105.

Westwood, opened up with back-to-back birds at the 4th and 1st. He moved to the back of fairway at the 13th and 18th, but in the back nine, moving to a six-stroke lead at the par-three third. After a tricky second shot, which was one shot off the tee, he played two birdies on the par-three seventh and ninth.

"70 off the tee, hit a nice eight iron to the green. Hit a nice four iron into the green. Hit a nice two put from there. Got it in the back of the green," Fichardt said.

"It’s a feel-good experience for me every year, which is the way to start my campaign," Fichardt said.

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