

25 Bottas takes pole position as Mercedes claims front row

26 England faces their day of destiny in World Cup final against New Zealand

27 Disappointed Nadal sees chances of third Wimbledon title slipping



LONDON: Romania's Simona Halep raises the Venus Rosewater Dish trophy after beating US player Serena Williams during their women's singles final on day twelve of the 2019 Wimbledon Championships at The All England Lawn Tennis Club in Wimbledon. — AFP

Simona Halep claims first Wimbledon crown

Thwarts Serena history bid in a sensational 56-minute victory

LONDON: Simona Halep torpedoed Serena Williams's latest bid to capture a record-equaling 24th Grand Slam on Saturday when she stormed to a sensational victory in a 56-minute Wimbledon final. The 27-year-old Romanian captured her second career major with a 6-2, 6-2 victory adding a maiden Wimbledon — the first for her country in both men's and women's singles — to her 2018 Roland Garros triumph. Defeat for 37-year-old Williams, a seven-time Wimbledon champion who won the last of her 23 Slam titles at the 2017 Australian Open, meant her attempt to equal Margaret Court's all-time record for major wins was put back on ice until at least the US Open.

"My mom said when I was 10 that if I want to do something in tennis I have to play in the final at

Wimbledon," said Halep. "I had lots of nerves, my stomach wasn't very well. I have never played a better match. "I said at the start of the tournament that one of my motivations was to win and become a lifetime member of the club." Williams bluntly admitted she had not been at the races against a superior opponent.

"She played out of her mind. I was like a deer in the headlights," said Williams. Williams was undone by 26 unforced errors to Halep's two. Williams may have kept Halep waiting to go on court but if she hoped that would upset her opponent it did quite the opposite. Indeed the Halep fan who burst into song — waving a Romanian scarf from the 2015 Rugby World Cup — singing "We love you Simona, we do!" served to give her the boost to rattle Williams from the start.

Fired up

A flashing forehand crosscourt set the tone and she broke her in the first game. She broke again to lead 3-0 — things clearly not going Williams's way when a Halep shot clipped the net and went over but the American's shot also clipped the net but failed to go over. Already 3-0 down after eight minutes, Williams was completely at sea and by the time Halep served to lead 4-0 Williams had won just six points.

She finally got on the board with her next service game but Halep had little trouble in sealing the set which included another remarkable point from the Romanian. The 27-year-old raced to retrieve an incredible get which sneaked over the net and Williams was only able to put her shot into the net. Williams — who has let slip opportunities to equal Court's record in last

year's Wimbledon and US Open finals — appeared to at last get fired up in the first game of the second set.

She let out a long yell at the ground when she won a point on her serve and another on the next point. However, that was a rare show of her fiery side as Halep broke her to lead 3-2. Halep rubbed in her superiority to break her again for 5-2 — two powerful serves earlier in the game had Williams saying why was I not able to do this earlier — and took the match and the title with aplomb with the first of her three match points. She sank to her knees a broad smile on her face before rising to hug Williams. Her victory also gave Halep's favored royal Kate, Duchess of Cambridge, bragging rights over sister-in-law Meghan, Duchess of Sussex — they were sitting beside each other in the Royal Box. Meghan is a close friend of Williams. — AFP

Barca get Griezmann but Atletico contest fee

MADRID: Barcelona announced the signing of Antoine Griezmann on Friday for 120 million euros (\$135 million), sparking a furious reaction from Atletico Madrid over the amount the La Liga champions paid for the World Cup winner. In a statement, Barca revealed they had paid the 120 million euros to activate the Frenchman's release clause, adding he would sign a five-year deal that included a "buyout clause of 800 million euros".

Griezmann almost signed for Barca 12 months ago, but instead opted to remain at Atletico, announcing his choice to stay in a documentary called "The Decision". "When

I was a boy, my dad taught me that trains don't come around just once," Griezmann said in a video posted on the Barcelona website on Friday. "Now it's time to take on the challenge of a new destination. "Finally, our paths cross. I'll defend the Barca colours with all my determination and commitment. It's our time. This is our path."

However, within minutes of Barcelona's announcement, Atletico said they believed "the amount paid is insufficient to meet the release clause as it is obvious that the agreement between the player and Barcelona had been concluded before the release clause dropped from 200 million euros to 120 million euros" at the start of the month.

They said Griezmann had gone to the headquarters of Spanish Football League (LFP) to "unilaterally" break his contract after Barca met the release clause, and added they had already "begun appropriate procedures" to defend their "rights and legitimate interests". The announcement was the latest episode in a spat between the two clubs and Griezmann after the 28-year-

old failed to show up for Atletico's pre-season gathering on Sunday following his announcement in May he would be leaving for an unnamed destination — long-suspected to be Barcelona. Last week Atletico accused Barcelona and Griezmann of a "lack of respect" after Barca president Josep Maria Bartomeu revealed the two clubs had held talks about the former Real Sociedad forward.

Replacement already signed

Atletico then claimed Griezmann had told the club he had struck a deal with Barcelona in March, just days before the second leg of their Champions League last-16 tie with Juventus, which saw them dumped out by a Cristiano Ronaldo hat-trick after winning the first leg 2-0 in Madrid. Griezmann joined Atletico in 2014 and has scored 133 goals in 257 appearances, lifting the Europa League in 2018.

He won the Golden Boot at Euro 2016 when France were beaten in the final on home soil by Portugal before helping to guide his country to World Cup glory in



VALENCIA: In this file photo taken on May 18, 2019 Atletico Madrid's French forward Antoine Griezmann controls the ball during the Spanish League football match between Levante and Atletico Madrid at the Ciutat de Valencia stadium. — AFP

Russia last year. The sale of Griezmann comes after Atletico stumped up a whopping 126 million euros to sign rising star

Joao Felix from Benfica last week, making the 19-year-old one of the five most expensive players in history. — AFP