

Sharapova falls to Garcia

Maria Sharapova loses in three sets, 3-6 7-6(6) 6-4

Stuttgart

Maria Sharapova's claycourt season got off to a poor start yesterday as she lost in three sets to Caroline Garcia in the first round of the Porsche Tennis Grand Prix in Stuttgart.

France's Garcia staged a strong fightback to prevail 3-6 7-6(6) 6-4 in two hours and 44 minutes for her first victory over the former world number one in her fifth attempt.

"It was a very close match. I know she is a fighter and it would be difficult until the end," sixth seed Garcia, who saved two match points in the second set, said.

Sharapova, who came back from a 15-month doping ban at this tournament last April, won the first set with ease but the 31-year-old could not prevent a determined Garcia from dragging herself back into the contest through a tiebreak.

A 10th double fault by Sharapova at 4-4 handed Garcia the crucial break in the decider and the world number seven clinched the contest on her serve in the next game.

"I was a little more aggressive today and I returned a bit better. Finally I can say that after seven years I have beaten her... it's an important win," Garcia added.

Up next for Garcia is Ukrainian teenager Marta Kostyuk who beat Antonia Lottner 6-4 6-1. The 15-year-old qualified for the main draw by overcoming France's Alize Cornet on Monday.

"I can't say I'm super surprised, because that's what I work for, and I know I can play at this level," Kostyuk said.

World number six Karolina Pliskova also advanced with a 6-2 6-2 win over Kiki Bertens while Magdalena Rybarikova dumped out Russia's Daria Kasatkina 6-2 6-2. (Reuters)



Maria Sharapova (file pic)



Caroline Garcia (file pic)



Andy Murray (file pic)

It's been harder than ever to come back

London

Andy Murray has revealed that his recovery from his hip injury has been harder than any previous fitness issues in his career.

Murray, 30, is expected to make his first appearance since Wimbledon when he competes at the Challenger Tour event in Glasgow at the end of the month. But the former world number one has admitted that coming back from his latest injury has been far harder than any other recovery in his career.

"This time has been harder. There's been a lot more ups and downs this time. It's been longer and a lot more complex than the back issue," Murray said.

"Having been through a back injury and a difficult surgery before helps, but the back injury was easier because I was

back on the court competing quite soon afterwards.

"I will enjoy it more (returning to action). I think when you go through an injury like this you realise how much you miss playing, how important it is to you."

Murray's injury absence has been the longest of his career, and the two-time Wimbledon champion says he has missed the thrill of competition.

"I like pressure, I miss that, something that you don't get in day-to-day life, something that I've had as part of my life for 13, 14 years since I became a pro," Murray said. "I miss that, I miss the competition."

"You never quite know what's around the corner. I certainly never anticipated something like this, so I certainly won't take anything for granted when I come back." (Eurosport)

Root backs plans for 100-ball format

London

England captain Joe Root says controversial plans for a domestic 100-ball competition could attract a new audience to Test cricket.

The England and Wales Cricket Board's proposal to introduce a new format, tentatively titled "the Hundred", with 15 regular six-ball overs and one 10-ball over, has proved divisive since an announcement last week but the England skipper is on board with the idea.

One of the fundamental aims of the ECB is to simplify the game for a fresh audience, specifically women and children, and Root thinks if the format takes off it could lead to interest in the longer forms of the game.

"It's going to appeal to a completely new audience and I think that's great," Root told the i newspaper. "The more people and kids we can get into sport, the better."

"We've got to be very careful we don't measure it against the other formats... it's something to gather a new audience and gain interest, not a threat to other formats. As players, working with the ICC (International Cricket Council), we've got to make sure the other formats don't suffer but it has a place in the game and, hopefully, we'll see that over time." (AFP)



Joe Root (file pic)

Michael Matthews wins Prologue



Michael Matthews rides

Fribourg

Michael Matthews (Sunweb) won stage 1 of the Tour de Romandie after pipping Tom Bohli (BMC Racing) and Primoz Roglic (LottoNL-Jumbo) in the testing 4km time trial in Fribourg.

The surprising Bohli spent much of the afternoon in the hot seat after setting the quickest mark early on, and his closest challenger was his teammate Rohan Dennis, who finished just fractions of a second outside his time, good enough for fourth place come the end of the day.

Bohli was ultimately denied the biggest win of his career by Matthews, who delivered a perfectly-timed effort on the stiff climb to the finish to come home a second inside the Swiss rider's mark.

"It was a little bit of a surprise because I didn't have such a good day in Liege on Sunday," said Matthews. "I had one easy day yesterday and then straight back into it today. I didn't know how my legs were going to feel but I just gave it my best and it was enough to win."

It was Matthews' maiden victory of a 2018 campaign that began on a trying note when he fractured his shoulder in his first race, Omloop Het Nieuwsblad.

The Australian returned in time to place seventh at Milan-San Remo and battle in the cobbled Classics, but he endured further ill fortune when a late puncture ended his challenge at Amstel Gold Race. (Cyclingnews)

Tour de Romandie 2018 results:

Prologue: Fribourg to Fribourg, 4.02km

1. Michael Matthews (Aus) Team Sunweb, in 5 hrs 33 secs
2. Tom Bohli (Sui) BMC Racing, at 1 sec
3. Primoz Roglic (Slo) LottoNL-Jumbo, at 1 sec
4. Rohan Dennis (Aus) BMC Racing Team, at 1 sec
5. Victor Campenaerts (Bel) Lotto Soudal, at 5 secs
6. Geraint Thomas (GBr) Team Sky, at 5 secs
7. William Clarke (Aus) EF Education First-Dracpac, at 6 secs
8. Diego Rosa (Ita) Team Sky, at 6 secs
9. Pierre Latour (Fra) Ag2r La Mondiale, at 6 secs
10. Gorka Izagirre (Spa) Bahrain-Merida, at 9 secs

General classification:

1. Michael Matthews (Aus) Team Sunweb
2. Tom Bohli (Sui) BMC Racing, at 1 sec
3. Primoz Roglic (Slo) LottoNL-Jumbo, at 1 sec
4. Rohan Dennis (Aus) BMC Racing, at 1 sec
5. Victor Campenaerts (Bel) Lotto-Soudal, at 5 secs