



Roger Federer

Federer advances to Halle final

Berlin

Roger Federer continued his Wimbledon preparations by reaching the Gerry Weber Open final with a hard-fought win over young Russian Karen Khachanov.

The 35-year-old, who is bidding for a record eighth title at Wimbledon next month, won 6-4 7-6 (7-5) in Halle.

Khachanov missed two set points to take the match into a decider, with Federer hanging on before taking the tie-break.

The Swiss top seed will play either Germany's Alexander Zverev or France's Richard Gasquet in today's final.

Eighteen-time Grand Slam winner Federer lost to 39-year-old Tommy Haas at the Stuttgart Open last week, his first match in

two months, but is yet to drop a set as he bids for a ninth title at Halle.

However, he was given a stern test by 21-year-old Khachanov in their first meeting.

While Federer is considered one of the greatest grass-court players of all time, 38th-ranked Khachanov was playing in his first tournament on the surface.

Federer took an early advantage after the opening three games all produced breaks of serve, going on to seal the first set at the second attempt before Khachanov pushed him in another tight set.

Federer took his opponent's serve for 5-4, leaving the world number five serving for the match, only for Khachanov to break back and level.

After missing his chances to win the set at 6-5, Khachanov fought back from two mini-breaks in the tie-break, but fired long after his own serve on match point. (BBC)

India hammer England in Women's World Cup opener

London

India beat hosts England by 35 runs on the opening day of the 2017 Women's World Cup at Derby yesterday.

India piled up an imposing 281 for three in their 50 overs thanks to fifties from Smriti Mandhana (90) and Punam Raut (86), who put on 144 for the first wicket, as well as 71 from skipper Mithali Raj.

Only reigning world champions Australia had previously made a success of chasing a bigger target in a women's one-day international. England just about kept themselves in the hunt and were still in with a chance thanks to Fran Wilson's maiden fifty at 229 for six in the 44th over.

But her departure for 81 -- one of four run-outs in the innings -- left the lower order of England, now a team of full-time professionals, with too much to do.

Three-times champions England, who've won the previous two World Cups staged in their own country, were eventually bowled out for 246. (AFP)

Petra Kvitova faces Barty for Birmingham title

Birmingham

Petra Kvitova, the two-time Wimbledon champion who is making a courageous comeback from injury, will face unseeded giant-killer Ashleigh Barty in the final of the Birmingham grass court tournament.

Kvitova showed few signs of the appalling knife injuries to her left playing hand, securing a one-sided victory by 6-1, 1-0 retired over her friend and compatriot Lucia Safarova, who quit with a thigh strain.

The on-court drama came later when Barty, a 21-year-old Australian who began the year ranked down at 271 in the world, showed such dexterity with grass court skills that she brought down the sixth-seeded former French Open champion Garbine Muguruza 3-6, 6-4, 6-2.

Barty won the Wimbledon girls title six years ago and proved a revelation in the way she used slice to blunt her famous opponent's attack before counter-attacking with heavy forehand drives.

The strongest emotions though were generated by Kvitova's continued progress. This is only her second tournament since a seven-month hole was torn from

her career, and it was only her sixth match -- yet she reached her first grass court final since her great Wimbledon triumph of 2014.

Kvitova is already beginning to suggest she can again do well at the grass court Grand Slam starting in nine days' time, and -- perhaps against her original intention -- even she is beginning to admit it.

"I could not have imagined a comeback better than the one I am having now," she said.

"The hand is good which is the

best news I could have, and I am not feeling any pain -- and that's the best news," she repeated.

Earlier she said: "I am sorry for Lucie and hope she soon gets a bit better. I love playing finals, I like big matches, and I've missed it over the last six months. So this is quite a dream."

Kvitova had never lost any of her nine WTA Tour encounters with Safarova, and this brief encounter had a sense of inevitability about it from the start. (AFP)



Petra Kvitova (file pic)

Cilic reaches Queen's final

London

Spain's Feliciano Lopez succeeded in his Queen's Club revenge mission against world number 11 Grigor Dimitrov to set up a final showdown with Marin Cilic.

Lopez held a championship point in the 2014 Queen's final against Dimitrov before crashing to a three-set defeat, but the world number 32 made amends for that painful loss in yesterday's semi-finals as he beat the Bulgarian 7-5, 3-6, 6-2.

The 35-year-old will face Cilic in today's title match at the Wimbledon warm-up event after the Croatian reached his third Queen's final with a 6-3, 5-7, 6-4 victory over Gilles Muller.

Lopez has won eight of his nine grass-court matches this year and will look to clinch his first ATP title of 2017 after losing in the Stuttgart final last week.

Cilic became the first player to break Muller in the tournament despite a barrage of 22 aces from the world number 26 and hammered down 20 aces of his own to return to the Queen's final for the first time since 2013. The 28-year-old lifted the Queen's trophy in 2012 and finished runner-up to Andy Murray a year later. (AFP)



Croatia's Marin Cilic celebrates