

Nadal to skip US Open

Nadal still preparing to play Roland Garros despite US Open withdrawal

● Defending champion Nadal won't play at Flushing Meadows due to COVID-19 concerns

Reuters | New York

World number two Rafael Nadal confirmed that he will not defend his US Open crown this year but said he still intends to play at the French Open next month.

Nadal also insisted the US Open will not carry an asterisk without its defending men's champion, even if he admitted it will take place under "special circumstances", with several top players expected to sit out.

The 34-year-old Spaniard's withdrawal was confirmed shortly after the Madrid Open was cancelled on Tuesday, with a rise in coronavirus cases in Europe raising doubts around other events, including the French Open, which is due to start in Paris on September 27.

Nadal, who would be going for a record-extending 13th title at Roland Garros, was asked if he thinks the tournament will go ahead.

"I trust it will yes, it is in my mind and I am preparing for it," said the 34-year-old in a briefing with international media on Wednesday.

"But we have to wait for events, to see how everything evolves because it is true that in recent weeks the situation seems to have worsened a little. But my hope and my intention



Rafael Nadal in action during a match (file photo)

would be to be there if conditions allow."

Nadal also explained his decision to pull out of the US Open. "My heart says today is not the moment to take long travels without knowing exactly what can and cannot happen.

"My decision is to stay at home in Mallorca where the situation is good, it looks under control here, and to wait for future opportunities."

'Special circumstances'

Women's world number one Ashleigh Barty has also chosen not to compete in New York, where a depleted entry list in both the men's and women's draws looks inevitable.

Serena Williams, Novak Djokovic and Andy Murray are all

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RAFAEL NADAL

still due to play.

"The tournament is still big, it's a Grand Slam," Nadal said. "I am not arrogant enough to say the tournament is not big because I am not playing. There will be important players.

"Of course it's a tournament under special circumstances but still a Grand Slam and the

winner will feel like the winner of a Grand Slam. It's true it will be under special circumstances with a lot of important players not travelling there."

Nadal added: "My words can have repercussions so it is difficult to say if it is the right decision or not, for some players it will be right for others not."

"I respect a lot the amount of work and positive intentions of the ATP and USTA (United States Tennis Association) to try to come back to the tour. I have taken my decision so you know my thoughts but I respect there are other players in different situations and they need to play because they have financial problems and need to earn money after a few months without income."

England skipper lauds 'dangerous' Stirling after Ireland upset



Ireland's Paul Stirling plays a shot

AFP | Southampton

England skipper Eoin Morgan said Paul Stirling is as dangerous an opener as there is in cricket after the Irishman smashed 142 off 128 balls to help his team to a remarkable upset of the world champions in the third one-dayer on Tuesday.

Ireland-born Morgan scored a century of his own as England set the visitors an imposing victory target of 329 at the Rose Bowl but he sat out the second innings because of a minor groin injury.

He watched on from the boundary as Stirling, who was dropped on 95 and 139, and Ireland captain Andy Balbirnie (113) put on 214 for the second wicket to help the Irish overhaul the target for a second victory over England in 12 attempts.

"Paul Stirling had a day out and he's the ability to do that," Morgan told reporters.

"But we play against world class players all the time and you know when you do, you

142

runs were scored by Ireland's Paul Stirling off 128 balls to help his team to a remarkable upset of England

need to take those opportunities because they will hurt you. "Ireland played really well and thoroughly deserved to win."

Morgan briefly overlapped with Stirling in the Ireland set-up before switching allegiance but knows him better from their time as team mates at English county Middlesex.

"He's as dangerous an opening batsman as there is around the world," he said of the 29-year-old.

"I know guys do not like bowling at him, he hits good balls for four or six and, on his day, he can take a game away from you."

Manchester City sign winger Ferran Torres from Valencia

AFP | London

Manchester City have announced the signing of Valencia winger Ferran Torres on a five-year deal as Pep Guardiola looks to bolster his attacking options.

The 20-year-old Spaniard, City's first signing of the summer transfer window, has penned a five-year contract for a reported

initial fee of £20.9 million (\$27 million). "I am so happy to be joining City," Torres told the Premier League club's website.

"Every player wants to be involved in attacking teams and Manchester City are one of the most attacking in world football.

"Pep encourages a really open, aggressive style, which I love, and he is a manager with a proven track record of improving players. To have him overseeing my develop-

ment is a dream."

Guardiola is keen to strengthen his squad following the loss of their Premier League title to Liverpool -- they have also agreed a £41 million fee for Bournemouth defender Nathan Ake.

"We have followed Ferran's progress closely and have been very impressed," said City director of football Txiki Begiristain.

"He is young and still developing, but his technical qualities are exactly what we are looking for in a winger. He is quick, direct, can create space with one movement and is capable of producing match-winning moments."

Torres can play on either wing and operate through the middle, with pace and an ability to beat players his main attributes.

He made 44 appearances for Valencia last season, scoring six goals.



Ferran Torres

Fulham's Bryan hails manager Parker for playoff free kick success

Reuters | London

Fulham's two-goal playoff hero Joe Bryan gave manager Scott Parker the credit for the opening goal that put his side on track for a 2-1 extra-time playoff final win over Brentford and sealed their swift return to the Premier League on Tuesday.

As Bryan's team mates celebrated around him, the fullback revealed the content of a sideline conversation he had with his boss just before opening the scoring in the 105th minute with a free kick from deep that flew past Brentford keeper David Raya.

"(Parker said) whip it in the near post, because the keeper comes ridiculously far off his line. That's something we practised this week," Bryan told Sky Sports.

Parker confirmed his instructions to Bryan, who added a second goal in the 117th minute to kill the game off.



Joe Bryan of Fulham celebrates after scoring his sides first goal

"We looked at Raya's positioning from free kicks, he's very, very aggressive, he's very aggressive in his starting position," Parker explained.

"I told him (Bryan), 'You need to keep an eye on his positioning, and I want you to commit to it, I want you to commit to the shot', and it's worked," he added.

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JOE BRYAN

run. That's all I've been doing, running, and it's paid off today," he said beaming.

Former Fulham captain Parker, 39, was delighted with his side's performance and gave credit to his players and backroom staff for bouncing back to the Premier League following their relegation last season.

"I'm the one that fronts it up, I'm the one that everyone sees but behind the scenes is a support network that keeps you going ... I'm very proud of my team," he said.

ICC to use front foot no-ball tech for England-Pakistan tests

Reuters | London

Front foot no-ball technology will be used for the first time on a trial basis in test cricket during the three-match series between England and Pakistan starting later on Wednesday, the International Cricket Council has said.

The responsibility to call no-balls when a bowler oversteps the mark currently lies with on-field umpires, but under the new system the TV umpire will monitor the landing foot after each ball and communicate to the umpires whether it was a legal delivery.

"Front foot no ball technology to be used in ICC World Test Championship series featuring England and Pakistan, with the support of both teams," the world governing body tweeted.

"Performance of the technology in these tests will be reviewed before any decisions

taken on its future use in test cricket."

The ICC has already conducted successful trials of the technology across men's 50-over international matches while it was also used at the women's Twenty20 World Cup in Australia earlier this year.