



Ukraine's Marta Kostyuk returns to Italy's Jasmine Paolini

# Kostyuk sets up Wimbledon semi-final against Noskova

- Kostyuk defeats Paolini in straight sets
- Noskova beats Mertens to reach semi

AFP | London

Ukraine's Marta Kostyuk cruised past Jasmine Paolini yesterday to book a Wimbledon semi-final clash with Linda Noskova. Kostyuk raced to a 6-3, 6-2 victory after just 69 minutes on Centre Court and will face Czech ninth seed Noskova on Thursday for a place in her first major final. "I was on this court as a spectator once nine years ago watching Roger (Federer) and to be back here as a player is amazing," said the 24-year-old after her first appearance on the showpiece court at the All England Club.



Czech Republic's Linda Noskova returns to Belgium's Elise Mertens

"I walked past the 'wall of honour', stood beside it and took a moment." The 12th seed has only lost one of her last 22 matches -- a semi-final defeat by eventual champion Mirra Andrejeva at the

**YOU KNOW WHAT**

Kostyuk, who watched Roger Federer on Centre Court nine years ago as a spectator, recalled standing beside the "wall of honour" before her first appearance there as a player

French Open last month. Former Wimbledon runner-up Paolini could not reproduce the form she showed in her last-16 win over Alexandra Eala, losing in the last eight of a Slam for the first time. The in-form Noskova was the highest seed left in the bottom

half of the draw after shock early exits for Iga Swiatek and Elena Rybakina. The 21-year-old lived up to that billing with a 6-3, 7-5 win over experienced Belgian 25th seed Elise Mertens on Court One. Mertens battled hard in her first Grand Slam quarter-final since 2020, but could not deal with Noskova's power. The Czech has enjoyed an excellent grass-court campaign, reaching her first Slam semi-final after also winning her second WTA title in Berlin. Kostyuk won her only previous meeting with Noskova, a straight-sets success in the quarter-finals en route to the Madrid Open title earlier this year. "A tough one, it's never going to be easy," said Noskova. "Marta, she's an incredible player." Two-time Grand Slam champion Coco Gauff or Czech 10th seed Karolina Muchova will await the winner in Saturday's final.

## I can still win another Grand Slam, says Osaka after exit

AFP | London

Naomi Osaka insists she can still win a fifth Grand Slam title despite seeing another good opportunity pass her by with a Wimbledon quarter-final loss. The Japanese star lifted the last of her four major trophies at the 2021 Australian Open



Naomi Osaka reacts during the match

and raised hopes of ending that five-year wait when she downed world number one Aryna Sabalenka in the last 16 at the All England Club. But Osaka could not back that performance up, slipping to a 7-6 (7/4), 6-4 loss to Czech 10th seed Karolina Muchova. It was her latest disappointing

defeat in the latter stages of a Grand Slam tournament, after losing to Amanda Anisimova in last year's US Open semi-finals. "I know my results don't show it, but whenever I play a Slam, my intention is to win," said Osaka, who had never before got past the Wimbledon third round.

## Messi 'didn't want to go home'

AFP | Atlanta

Lionel Messi said his tears after Argentina's dramatic win over Egypt were "a release" in what could have been his final international appearance. The 39-year-old broke down at the end of an incredible last 16 tie in Atlanta that took the defending champions to the brink of a shock elimination. "I think it was a release, a relief for everyone. It was an ugly moment at 2-0," Messi told reporters. The Argentina captain saw a first-half penalty saved as Egypt stormed into a 2-0 lead. But Messi also led the late fightback. His cross teed up Cristian Romero to halve the arrears 11 minutes from time before the eight-time Ballon d'Or winner smashed in the equaliser. Enzo Fernandez completed the comeback in stoppage time to set up a quarter-final clash against Colombia or Switzerland. "Turning a match around like that -- coming back from 2-0 down -- it wasn't easy, especially given how this World Cup is

playing out and the fact that no one is just rolling over," added Messi. "It was a moment of pure happiness and relief; we wanted to stay in the tournament. We didn't want today to be the end, we didn't want to go home." Messi was thrown into the air by his team-mates in celebration after netting his 21st World Cup goal and eighth of this tournament to edge back in front of the battle for the Golden Boot. However, he highlighted Romero's goal as the key moment the dynamic of the match changed. "Today was yet another display of character, coming back from a goal down isn't easy. That was a really tough blow for everyone. "Fortunately, we managed to get that goal. That was the moment, I think, when everyone inside felt it and believed it was possible, that we were going to do it. "We were lucky enough to equalise and then win it in 90 minutes. We went all the way, it was just incredible what this group achieved."



Lionel Messi

## Egypt file complaint against referee after controversial World Cup exit

AFP | Atlanta

The Egyptian football federation said yesterday it had asked for the officiating team who handled the Pharaohs loss 3-2 last-16 to Argentina to be thrown out of the World Cup. "Hany Aburida, President of the Egyptian Football Federation, filed a complaint with FIFA, demanding an investigation into the French referee Francois Letexier... after the serious refereeing mistakes committed by the team of referees and double standards, which caused the Egypt team to lose the match and leave the World Cup," said a statement from the federation. On Tuesday evening, Letexies ruled out a Mostafa Ziko goal ruled out when they were leading 1-0 after VAR intervened to spot a foul on Lisandro Martinez much earlier in the move. A few minutes later, Ziko did put Egyptian 2-0 up and on the brink of a place in the last eight for the first time but there was further controversy in added time, after Cristian Romero and Lionel Messi had brought the champions level. In the build-up to Argentina's



Hossam Hassan, Head Coach of Egypt, argues with referee Francois Letexier

winner scored by Enzo Fernandez, Egypt believe they should have instead been awarded a penalty for a pull by Alexis Mac Allister on Hamdy Fathy. "Aburida demanded the investigation of the entire team of referees, including the video technology referees, because of the blatant errors and insisting on not reviewing some of the footage that we believe are in favour of the Egyptian national team, and we see in it the Pharaohs' right to a correct goal and a penalty," said the Egyptian

statement. It added that the president had also "demanded the exclusion of the referee and the entire crew from the World Cup after investigating these mistakes and proving the crime of discrimination against the Egyptian national team". The statement echoed remarks by Egypt coach Hossam Hassan immediately after the game. "I do not want to put it nicely and talk about hard luck. We have been cheated unfairly to-

**"We haven't seen respect or fair play. There has not been respect or fair play. A penalty was ruled out, was not even checked by VAR. A second goal was remarkably disallowed. There has not even been a VAR check when we have all seen the image of the (shirt) being pulled back"**

HOSSAM HASSAN

day, we have suffered injustice," Hassan told journalists. "We haven't seen respect or fair play. There has not been respect or fair play." Hassan told BeIN: "Perhaps they wanted to keep the world champions in the competition. Perhaps they wanted Messi to stay in the running. "In football, there are sometimes external factors that go beyond the technical aspects. The world champions received support at every level."