

SPORTS
sports

Andy Murray aims for singles return this year

AFP | London

Andy Murray hopes to be back on the singles court later this year, but the British former world number one is setting no time limits on his return.

Murray will step up his comeback bid from the hip surgery he underwent in January when he competes in the doubles with Feliciano Lopez at Queen's Club next week.

The 32-year-old then plans to play doubles at Wimbledon, where he has won two of his three singles Grand Slam titles.

However, Murray still expects to take his time before returning to singles action, which probably rules out competing at the US Open at the end of August.

"It's baby steps just now," said the Scot. "I'm feeling good, pretty much pain-free and enjoying kind of just training, practising, improving all the time just now."

"I don't think when Wimbledon finishes that I will just step onto the singles court the following week and everything's good. I still have quite a lot of work to do before I'm at a level where I feel like I'll be able to be competitive."

Murray, who last played singles at the Australian Open in January, said he had been making consistent progress but he would probably plateau at some stage.

"I hope at some stage this year I would be able to get back to playing singles again,"

said Murray, speaking at the launch of a new tennis support scheme in partnership with Amazon Prime at the Queen's Club in London.

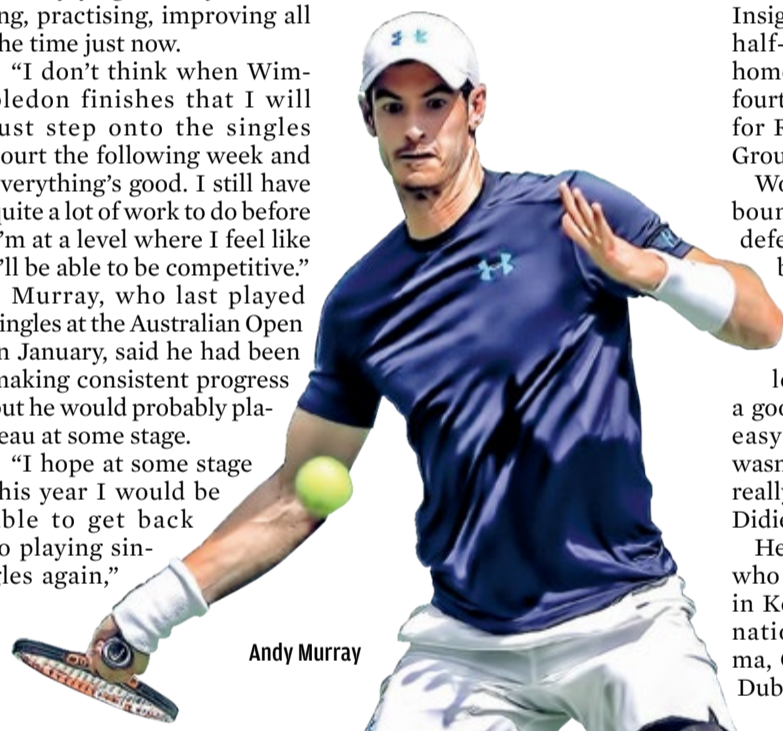
"When that is, I'm not really interested in putting a time limit on because I'm quite happy just now so I don't need to play singles after Wimbledon or at the US Open."

"If I can, that would be brilliant, but I don't think that's going to be the case. I think it's going to take a bit longer."

Murray has been training with American Frances Tiafoe but has still not fully tested his recovery with any singles practice matches.

"Earlier on I was hitting with singles players but I was more stationary. I was moving them rather than them moving me about."

"So, I have not played properly singles-wise yet. I am hoping that will come more after Wimbledon."



Andy Murray

Italy edge Bosnia as Germany, France stroll

Insigne, Verratti push Italy closer to Euro 2020 with Bosnia win

● **Mbappe Scores as France Beat Andorra 4-0**

● **Germany beat Estonia 8-0 in 2020 Euro Qualifier**

AFP | Paris

Italy needed a late winner from Marco Verratti to defeat a determined Bosnia-Herzegovina 2-1 in Euro 2020 qualifying Tuesday, while Germany and France piled up the goals in lopsided victories.

Edin Dzeko fired Bosnia in front in Turin, but Lorenzo Insigne equalised shortly after half-time and Verratti curled home on 86 minutes to earn a fourth win in as many attempts for Roberto Mancini's side in Group J.

World champions France rebounded from last weekend's defeat in Turkey with a trouble-free 4-0 win away to minnows Andorra.

"We reacted well after not playing to our usual level on Saturday against a good Turkey team. It looked easy today and the intensity wasn't the same but we played really well," said France coach Didier Deschamps.

He retained just four of those who began Saturday's 2-0 loss in Konya, handing first international starts to Kurt Zouma, Clement Lenglet and Leo Dubois.



France's forward Kylian Mbappe (L) shoot and scores

Kylian Mbappe opened the scoring with a chipped finish on 11 minutes, with Wissam Ben Yedder and Florian Thauvin adding to their lead in the first half.

Zouma bundled home a fourth on the hour as France reclaimed top spot in Group H after Iceland beat Turkey 2-1 in Reykjavik to further sour the mood in the visiting camp.

Turkish officials had denounced the "disrespect" shown to the team when they arrived in Iceland, unhappy at being kept waiting for several hours at passport control at the airport and subjected to extensive

security checks.

Two headers in the first half by centre-back Ragnar Sigurdsson saw Iceland draw level on nine points with France as well as Turkey, for whom Dorukhan Tokoz scored a consolation.

Germany made light work of Estonia as Serge Gnabry and Marco Reus fired them to a thundering 8-0 victory in Mainz.

Gnabry and Reus scored two goals each, with Leon Goretzka, Ilkay Gundogan, Timo Werner and Leroy Sane also on target, as Germany ran riot to seal a third win from three games in Group C.

Underdogs Estonia were helpless against a bright young Germany side who now appear to have left last year's World Cup woes far behind them.

Belgium extended their perfect start to Group I with a 3-0 defeat of Scotland in Brussels.

Romelu Lukaku headed in an Eden Hazard cross on the stroke of half-time and bagged a second early in the second half, with Kevin De Bruyne thumping home another at the death.

Russia followed up their 9-0 trouncing of San Marino with a much nervier win over Cyprus that came courtesy of a single goal by Aleksei Ionov.

Froome out of Criterium after training fall

AFP | Roanne, France

Chris Froome was taken to hospital Wednesday after falling on a training run for the Criterium du Dauphine 4th stage, Team Ineos said.

The team confirmed that Froome would take no further part in the race, potentially casting a shadow over the 34-year-old's bid for a fifth Tour de France which starts in Brussels on July 6.

"Team INEOS can confirm that Chris Froome crashed during a recon of stage four of the Criterium du Dauphine today. He is currently on his way to a local hospital and won't start today's fourth stage. We will provide a further update in due course," Ineos said on Twitter.



Team Ineos rider Great Britain's Christopher Froome rides during the 71st edition of the Criterium du Dauphine cycling race

Froome fell heavily during training for the Giro d'Italia opening stage time-trial in 2018, but eventually went on to win the race.

At the Criterium Froome was seeking to fine tune his form having failed to win a stage yet this season, but was eighth overall just 24 seconds off the pace in Criterium.

During Froome's training run on Wednesday conditions were windy but the roads were dry with the route presenting no difficulties apart from two well-signalled downhill bends.

Ineos also have defending champion Geraint Thomas in their ranks with the Welshman scheduled to take part at eight-stage Tour de Suisse which starts Sunday.

Bangladesh confident injured Shakib will play Windies

Reuters | London

Bangladesh are optimistic that all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan will recover from a high injury in time for Monday's World Cup match against West Indies in Taunton, their coach Steve Rhodes has said.

Shakib strained a muscle in his left thigh while batting against England in Cardiff last week, but fought past the pain to make 121 runs as Bangladesh lost by 106 runs.

The 32-year old, who has scored 260 runs at the tournament so far, was a doubt for Tuesday's match against Sri



Shakib Al Hasan takes a catch

Lanka, which was subsequently abandoned, and Rhodes is confident the extra week's rest will do him good.

"He picked up a little injury in that game against England and he fought on and battled on and played extremely well with an injury," Rhodes told reporters on Tuesday.

BOC adds water sports for Olympic Day

TDT | Manama

The Bahrain Olympic Committee, organisers of the 2019 Olympic Day, has confirmed a number of water sports that will be featured at this year's edition, scheduled for June 29 at the Water Garden City, near the Bahrain City Centre in Manama.

Bahrain will join other parts of the globe in celebrating the 2019 Olympic Day, when hundreds of thousands of people, young and old, get moving and participate in sporting and cultural activities, such as runs, exhibitions, music and educational seminars.

Among activities to take place is kids competition, as well as a color run. The date, venue and programme was recently finalized by the organising committee, headed by BOC secretary general Mohammed Al Nusuf.

Other set of activities include a demonstrating shows as well as health, cultural and special corners for kids will be

presented on spot.

But the highlights of the day will be a swimming race in open water, a sailing competition, kayak race and rafting, in addition to a 2km run, taekwondo, karate and martial arts.

Meanwhile, the organising committee's sub panel had a coordinating meeting with representatives of the six sports federations that will present the day's programme.

They include the Bahrain Martial Arts Federation, Bahrain Maritime Sports Association, Bahrain Swimming Association, Bahrain Athletics Association and Bahrain Mixed Martial Arts Association.

During the meeting, chaired by Olympic Day supervisor Lounes Madene, discussions on preparing the activities programme and its venues were brought up. It was decided that the committee will address the ministries of interior, health and Bahrain Defence Force, to coordinate for the build up to this much-awaited occasion.