

## Tuchel backs 'unselfish' Lukaku to end goal drought



Thomas Tuchel, Manager of Chelsea celebrates with Romelu Lukaku after a match

AFP | London

Thomas Tuchel insists Chelsea striker Romelu Lukaku will end his worrying goal drought because he is so unselfish.

Tuchel's side moved to the top of the Premier league with a hard-fought 1-0 win at west London neighbours Brentford on Saturday.

But Belgium forward Lukaku was unable to get on the scoresheet as his run without a club goal extended to six games.

That is a concerning statistic as his strong start to his second spell at Chelsea begins to fade away.

Signed in a club record £98 million (\$134 million) deal from Inter Milan, Lukaku looked unplayable as he scored four times in his first four games for the Champions League winners.

But since then the goals have dried up, raising questions about a player who also flopped in the Premier League

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with Manchester United before reviving his career at Inter.

Lukaku tucked away Timo Werner's cross against Brentford, only to see the effort chalked out for offside. Ben Chilwell provided Chelsea's winning goal.

Blues boss Tuchel is relaxed about Lukaku's recent barren run, praising the 28-year-old's selfless approach.

"I am not concerned as I felt him a bit tired, and then isolated because we were defending too deep as a block," Tuchel said.

"I felt him a bit tired. Altogether we produced a very strong 60 to 75 minutes, including Romelu and Timo.

# Basilashvili, Norrie set up Indian Wells final without Top 25

Surprise finalists Cameron Norrie and Nikoloz Basilashvili set to clash in Indian Wells showdown

● **Nikoloz Basilashvili beat American Taylor Fritz 7-6 (5), 6-3**

● **Cameron Norrie of Britain beat Grigor Dimitrov of Bulgaria 6-2, 6-2**

AFP | Indian Wells



Cameron Norrie, of Britain, hits the ball during a semifinal tennis match

Britain's Cameron Norrie dominated Grigor Dimitrov 6-2, 6-4 on Saturday to book a title clash with Nikoloz Basilashvili at the ATP Indian Wells Masters.

The 26-year-old Norrie overpowered Dimitrov in their semi-final to become the first British finalist since 2009.

Norrie kept Dimitrov off guard with a strong serve, blasting four aces and hitting a number of precision forehands and backhands in the one hour, 27 minute match on the main stadium court in Southern California.

"I am so happy," said Norrie. "Unfortunately he didn't bring his best today.

"I was very solid. I went a lot to his backhand he was getting frustrated with that. I managed to serve well and in the big moments I executed when I needed to."

Several Brits have reached the final in the California desert without success, including Andy Murray, who lost to Rafael Nadal in 2009.

Tim Henman lost two finals in 2002 and 2004, and Canadian-born Briton Greg Rusedski was runner-up in 1998.

Norrie was born in Johannesburg, South Africa and grew up in New Zealand before becoming the No. 1 college player in America while attending university in Texas. He has represented Great Britain since 2013.

Norrie is seeking his second career title after winning earlier this year in Los Cabos.

"I'm looking forward to the match tomorrow and really looking forward to going out

and enjoying it again," he said.

He broke through in Los Cabos following a string of runner-up heartbreaks, including earlier this year in Estoril, Lyon and London.

"I've had some opportunities there to make the second week of a slam, but it's not gone my way," said Norrie who has never gone past the third round of a Grand Slam. "It's all been great learning for me.

"Hopefully with these results I can put myself in a higher seeding and maybe have some more chances."

Dimitrov was coming off a couple of upsets over top 10 seeded players. The Bulgarian battled back from a set down to beat top seed Daniil Medvedev

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4-6, 6-4, 6-3 in the fourth round and outlasted eighth seeded Hubert Hurkacz in the quarter-finals 3-6, 6-4, 7-6 (7/2).

There were no players ranked in the top 25 in the world in the men's semi-finals. Norrie, at 26, was the highest ranked semi-finalist.

Norrie easily won the first set by breaking Dimitrov on three of four service games. He got the early break in the second then held to serve to wrap up his 46th win of the season.

Norrie clinched the match on the first match point when Dimitrov hit a backhand into the net.

Norrie is going up against another surprise finalist in the 29th seeded Basilashvili, who defeated American Taylor Fritz 7-6 (7/5), 6-3 to post one of the biggest wins of his career.

Basilashvili, of Georgia, is gunning for his third ATP title of the season after earlier triumphs in Doha and Munich.

## Beijing flame to be lit in a vacuum in Olympia

AFP | Athens

The Olympic flame will once again be lit in an empty stadium on Monday as it starts its truncated journey to Beijing for the Winter Games in February.

Like the ceremony in March 2020 to light the flame for Tokyo, and like those Games, which were put back a year, Monday's ceremony is a victim of coronavirus restrictions.

"Due to the situation created by the Covid-19 pandemic, the Lighting Ceremony will be held in strict compliance with local health protocols," the Hellenic Olympic Committee announced in September.

The ceremony is conducted at the ruins of the Temple of Hera in Olympia, site of the ancient Greek games from eighth century BC to the fourth century AD.

Clear skies are forecast for 11.30 local time (0830 GMT) when the flame is due to be lit by the rays of the sun concentrated in a concave.

Priestess Xanthi Georgiou will light the torch from the flames.

Before the pandemic, the flame had been lit behind closed doors once, in 1984, when Greek organisers wanted to protest against the decision of the Los Angeles organisers to accept sponsorship of stretches of the torch relay in the United States.

This time the ceremony will be held in front of an audience



Rehearsals take place for the Lighting ceremony of the Olympic flame

limited to the members of the

Olympic committees as well as the president of Greece, Katerina Sakellaropoulou, and vaccinated members of the media.

While Greek skiers will run the first and last legs, and a Chinese participant will also carry the torch in a brief relay, organisers have decided to skip the usual journey round the country.

"There will be no Torch Relay on Greek soil and following the Lighting Ceremony in Ancient Olympia the Olympic Flame will be transferred to the Acropolis where it will stay overnight," they said on October 12.

They said that on the next morning it would be carried to the Panathenaic Stadium in Athens, a second-century arena used in both the 1896 and 2004 Games, and handed over to the delegation from Beijing 2022 to be flown to China.

International Olympic Committee, the Greek and Chinese



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## BRAVE CF 55 official poster highlights monumental USA vs Russia clash

TDT | Manama

BRAVE Combat Federation is set to take over Russia once again, this time with an epic main event between two of the best Flyweights in the world. At BRAVE CF 55, Ali Bagautinov meets Jose Torres in a bout that will decide the second finalist of the Flyweight tournament. And the Russia vs USA rivalry between them has found its way to the official poster that was released by the organization.

Both Bagautinov and Torres are seen with the colors of the Russia and United States flag, respectively, with attention also paid to two other huge bouts for the fight card - the co-main event between Artur Sviridov and Ibrahim Mane and the Lightweight duel opposing Sam Patterson and Kamil Magomedov.

Bagautinov and Torres will fight it out for the right to advance to the final of the biggest tournament in Flyweight history. The winner of the GP will become the BRAVE CF inaugural Flyweight champion of the world.

Sambo world champion Velimurad Alkhasov, who is coming off wins against Flavio Queiroz (quarter-final) and Zach Makovsky (semi-final), is waiting for either "Puncher King" or "Shorty" for the final.

Ali "Puncher King" Bagautinov was a late addition to the



tournament and won his spot by beating Oleg Lichkovakha at BRAVE CF 46. He then defeated Dustin Ortiz to earn a semi-final place.

Meanwhile, Jose "Shorty" Torres started out his road to the semi-final with a draw against Sean Santella. However, before the two rematched at BRAVE CF 49, Santella was forced to pull out. He then had to go through a last-minute

opponent in Blaine O'Driscoll, beating the Irishman by decision to earn his own spot in the final four.

BRAVE CF 55 takes place in Rostov-On-Don, on November 6th, in association with leading local promotion PRO FC. It will be the second time in 2021 that BRAVE Combat Federation hosts a show in Russia after the rousing success of BRAVE CF 46, back in January.