

SPORTS
sports

Bencic soars, then crashes in Dubai



Belinda Bencic hits a return

AFP | Dubai

Holder Belinda Bencic ran off the first 19 points against Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova before collapsing to a 1-6, 6-1, 6-1 loss yesterday at the Dubai Championships.

Another former champion, the 2017 and 2018 winner Elena Svitolina, also fell, 6-2, 6-1, to US qualifier Jennifer Brady. Pavlyuchenkova could not have made a worse start.

"It's tennis, sometimes it happens," the 31st-ranked Russian said "You go out there and you just don't feel anything.

"I just kept on fighting, still trying to hit every ball, trying to be there

"It doesn't matter what the score is, just play. Slowly I started to turn it around, I started to find my game."

"I honestly wasn't focusing on the score. Sometimes you can play amazing tennis and still lose 6-1. In the third set, it was a good level from both of us."

Pavlyuchenkova advanced in 92 minutes.

Bencic, who is Swiss was

seeded four and Ukrainian Svitolina third. That leaves the spotlight to tournament number one Simona Halep and second-seeded Karolina Pliskova, who begin in the second round after byes.

Weekend ATP Rotterdam winner Gael Monfils watched in pain as girlfriend Svitolina went down to Brady.

Svitolina had little to offer as the 52nd-ranked Brady gained her second victory this season over a Top 10 opponent after beating Ashleigh Barty in Brisbane.

The Ukrainian's usually steady game was nowhere to be found at the Aviation Club as first-round play concluded.

"It was not a bad start, but then everything just went downhill," Svitolina said.

"I wish I could regroup better. In the end, I didn't feel so good the ball. Just everything was all over the place today.

"At this level it's tough to pick just one thing; everybody is putting the ball over the net, and you have to play long rallies, you have to build the points.

India set to arrive for Fiba Asia Cup qualifier

Visitors include two seven-footers to spearhead 12-man roster

TDT | Manama

Bahrain's men's national basketball team are all set to welcome their counterparts from India today for their upcoming qualifier on Friday for the 2021 Fiba Asia Cup.

The Indian squad are expected to arrive this morning, according to the Bahrain Basketball Association (BBA).

The Basketball Federation of India Selection Committee has picked a 12-player team that is travelling to Bahrain.

The roster includes two seven-footers in Amritpal Singh and Jagdeep Singh, both of whom are a towering seven feet, two inches tall. The rest of the squad features captain Vishesh Bhriguvanshi, Muin Bek Hafeez, Joginder Singh, Prasanna Vankatesh Sivakumar, Sahil, Prashant Singh Rawat, Aravind Annadurai, Princepal Singh, Amaan Sandhu and Arvind Arumugam.

The Indians are coached by renowned Serbian tactician Veselin Matic, who has worked in the past with several top NBA players including Boris Diaw, Peja Stojakovic, Vladimir Radmanovic, Marcin Gortat, and others. He was also the former head coach of the national teams of Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Iran and Poland before signing with India.

The visiting Indian delega-



India basketball team with officials

tion is being headed by team manager B Dayananda, and it includes assistant coaches Mohit Bhandari and Pradeep Tomar, and physiotherapist V Siva Shanmuga Singh.

Friday's qualifier is scheduled for a 7pm tip-off and it will be played at the Khalifa Sports City arena in Isa Town. The BBA announced yesterday that entrance will be free for fans wishing to attend.

Meanwhile, the BBA has yet to reveal the final list of players who will be suiting up for the qualifier.

There are currently 14 on the roster, including Mohammed Hussain, Ahmed Aldurazi, Ali Shukrallah, Mohammed Bual-

ay, Subah Hussain, Mohammed Salman, Mohammed Qurban, Maytham Jameel, Hesham Sarhan, Ahmed Abdulaziz, Mohammed Ameer, Muzamel Ameer, Ahmed Najaf and CJ Giles. It is expected that two will be dropped to make a final line-up of 12.

The Bahrainis are coached by former NBA champion Sam Vincent, who is heading into his first official competition with the national team in Friday's qualifier. Following this game, the Bahrainis travel directly to Beirut to play their Lebanese counterparts just three days later on Monday next week.

Bahrain, India and Lebanon

are all in Group D of the qualification process along with Iraq.

Following their first two games, there will be a long break before the Bahrainis next take to the court on November 26, which will be away against Iraq. They then play away once again against India on November 29. Their final two qualifiers will be held in February of next year, both at home against Lebanon and then Iraq.

Only the top two teams from each of the six qualification groups book their tickets to the Fiba Asia Cup, while the third-placed teams go to another stage of qualification, where another four final spots will be up for grabs.

BIC set for Speed Weekend thrills

BIC to host Porsche, 2,000cc and BMR 600 races this weekend

TDT | Manama

Motorsport fans are in for a treat as Bahrain International Circuit (BIC) hosts the always-exciting Speed Weekend this Friday and Saturday in Sakhir.

Speed Weekend brings together three of the top circuit racing championships to have originated from BIC.

Headlining all the action will be the Porsche Sprint Challenge Middle East, while plenty of thrills will also be enjoyed in the BIC 2,000cc Challenge and the Bahrain Motorcycle Racing (BMR) 600.

Both BIC's 5.412-kilometre Grand Prix track and the 2.55km Inner circuit will be used in the meeting. The Porsche and 2,000cc competitors will be battling on the Grand Prix track, while the BMR riders will be racing on the Inner circuit.

All are welcome to attend the two days of action. Tickets are



Bikes in action at BIC

available at the gate.

The Porsche Sprint Challenge Middle East is the region's most professional and successful one-make GT series. It is powered by motorsport experts Lechner Racing, headed by Austrian racing legend Walter Lechner. Featuring a new name this season but the same identity, the challenge gives participating drivers an equal chance to com-

pete, as they race in identically constructed Porsche GT3 Cup cars type 991.2.

Speed Weekend's Porsche action will mark the fourth and penultimate round of the 2019/2020 season.

Practice will kick off their programme on Friday at 9.05am. Qualifying will then be held at 10.40am, setting the grid for the first 12-lap race at 1.20pm. Ac-



Cars in action at BIC

tion in the round continues on Saturday with Qualifying Two at 11.30am. That sets the grid for the weekend's second race, scheduled for a 2.19pm start. A third race will then be held starting 5.20pm to wrap up the Porsche action.

Meanwhile, the BIC 2,000cc Challenge will be staging its sixth and penultimate round of 2019/2020. The 2,000cc is the longest-running circuit racing

series in the region. Established in 2007, it follows simple regulations yet is still extremely fun to watch. The drivers are divided into two classes, including the Pro and the Novice.

All of the 2,000cc's events will be held on Friday, starting with Practice at 9.40am. Qualifying is then set for 11.15am, setting the stage for the eight-lap first race at 2.05pm. Race Two featuring a reverse grid will then be held

at 3.40pm.

The BMR 600 is a riders' championship, with participants taking to the tarmac in Yamaha, Kawasaki, Triumph, MV and Honda motorbikes.

The BMR participants will be the first out on track on Friday with Practice at 8.30am. Qualifying will then be held at 10.15am, to be followed by the first 11-lap race at 12.35pm. Race Two is then set for a 3.05pm start.