

'Relieved' Raducanu back swinging freely ahead of US Open defence



Emma Raducanu in action
Reuters | Cincinnati

Emma Raducanu will head into her US Open title defence in just over a week relieved that she is swinging freely again and playing the same brand of attacking tennis that took her to a maiden Grand Slam title last year.

The 19-year-old put in ruthless performances at the Cincinnati Open to beat former major winners Serena Williams and Victoria Azarenka before exiting the tournament with a loss to world number eight Jessica Pegula.

"This week was a great step for me," she told reporters on Thursday. "In the past year it's probably like the first tournament or like one of the few tournaments that I have actually, like started going for my shots more."

"This week I kind of just was like, 'look, I'm just going to try, I don't care if I make errors, like it's fine, but I'm just going to like overhit if anything'. I'm pretty proud of how I did this week, and I think it's a great step to move forward."

Britain's Raducanu was a 150th-ranked qualifier when she went on to lift the US Open title last year without dropping a set. She has not won a tour-

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EMMA RADUCANU

name since.

Raducanu, who reached a career-high ranking of 10th last month, said she was tired of just trying to play defensively and realised that she would not succeed at the top level by just pushing the ball around.

"It is definitely like relieving, because I feel like I'm swinging with the same sort of freedom as I probably had, like, more similar to last year," added Raducanu.

"So it feels really good. I think that I can really take it as a positive week, and I actually feel like I'm heading in a good direction again."

The main draw of the US Open starts on Aug. 29.

Bahrain begin Asian handball title defence

Kingdom's rising stars to lock horns with Uzbekistan in opening-night match of ninth Asian Men's Youth (U19) Handball Championship

● Bahrain names final 19-player roster for tournament

TDT | Manama

Bahrain are all set to kick off their title-defence in the ninth Asian Men's Youth (U19) Handball Championship starting tonight when they face off with their counterparts from Uzbekistan.

The game is scheduled for a 7pm start and it will be the final fixture of a five-match opening day in the tournament at the Khalifa Sports City arena in Isa Town. At 11am, South Korea face Iran, followed at 1pm by Qatar taking on the UAE. At 3pm, Saudi Arabia play Iraq and then at 5pm Japan play Kuwait.

All are welcome to attend the matches and cheer on the teams.

Bahrain have named their final 19-player squad for the competition.

Coached by Mohammed Al Maraghi, the youth national team roster includes Ali Abdulkarim Abbas, Noah Syed Redha Hashem, Mohammed Yusuf Yaqoob, Ali Redha Hamadah, Jaafar Abdulshaheed, Ahmed Taleb Ibrahim, Mohammed Abdulla Issa, Sayed Ali Hassan Al Wadaei, Hussain Majed, Sayed Hussain Fadhel, Qassim Mirza, Elyas Mohammed Ali Nasser, Hussain Abdul-



Bahrain's youth national handball team...all set for title-defence

la Al Hayki, Mohammed Shamu, Sayed Mahmood Al Falahi, Ali Ahmed Al Madani, Mustafa Ahmed Al Shehab, Mohammed Al Marzooq and Abbas Hussain Abbas. The 11-nation championship has been organised by the Bahrain Handball Association in cooperation with the Asian Handball Federation.

It also acts as a qualifying competition for next year's 10th International Handball Federation Men's Youth World Championship, with the top five teams booking their tickets.

As part of the lead-up to the tournament's start, the official technical meeting was held yesterday, with the participating teams presenting the uniforms they will be playing in during

the event.

Bahrain are in Group A for the preliminary round alongside Iran, India, South Korea and Uzbekistan. Group B features Japan, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the UAE, Iraq and Kuwait.

The Bahrainis are the two-time defending champions in the event, having won the title in the previous two editions held in 2016 and 2018. The 2020 tournament was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Following their game tonight against Uzbekistan, the nationals next face off with South Korea tomorrow evening, and then return to the court on Wednesday against India following a two-day break. The nationals wrap up the preliminaries

against Iran on Friday.

Following the opening phase, the top two teams from each group advance directly to the semi-finals, while the remaining teams will play in the classification games.

Bahrain won the 2016 competition, which was also held in the Kingdom, after defeating Japan in the final. South Korea were the bronze-medallists. In the 2018 tournament in Amman, Jordan, the nationals were once again triumphant, defeating Japan in the gold medal game, while Chinese Taipei finished third.

Bahrain are tied with Qatar and South Korea with the most wins in the tournament at two apiece.

Medvedev advances while Swiatek sinks in Cincy

AFP | Cincinnati

Top-ranked Daniil Medvedev advanced to the ATP and WTA Cincinnati Masters quarter-finals on Thursday while women's world number one Iga Swiatek was upset by American Madison Keys.

Top seed Medvedev kept Denis Shapovalov winless against world number ones with a 7-5, 7-5 victory while Poland's Swiatek lost 6-3, 6-4 to 2019 Cincinnati champion Keys, who needed five match points to finish off the shock triumph.

Shapovalov, who lost in an hour and three-quarters, has dropped all eight career matches he has played against the elite echelon.

Medvedev moved into a quarter-final against 11th seed Taylor Fritz after the American stopped number six seed Andrey Rublev 6-7 (4/7), 6-2, 7-5.

"It was a fight today, definitely not easy," said Medvedev, who clinched the top US Open seeding when Rafael Nadal lost here in the second round.

"The match was pretty tight, played at a great level. My goal was to stay in every point possible and try to put pressure on him if I had the chance."

Medvedev secured late breaks in both sets as he matched his volatile Canadian opponent.

Medvedev and Fritz have nev-



Daniil Medvedev returns a shot during his match against Denis Shapovalov

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"I got a lot of break opportunities. Broke first in the first set. Served pretty well even in the game where I lost my serve. In general, happy with my level and looking forward to the next matches

DANIIL MEDVEDEV

er played.

"We trained together at the start of the season before the ATP Cup," Medvedev said. "He won Indian Wells, he's a Mas-

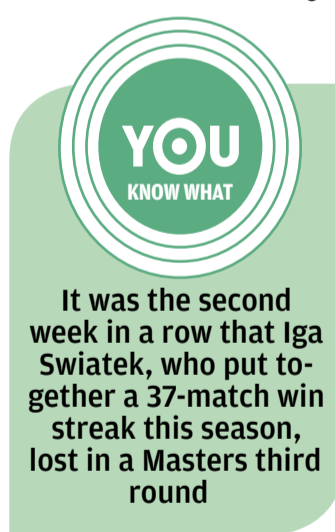
ters champion. I need to be at my best to try and beat him."

Unseeded Keys was thrilled with her defeat of Swiatek, against whom she had lost two prior matches.

"I had a couple of games with a couple of match points," Keys said. "She beat me pretty badly last time so I'm happy to get the win."

Swiatek never found an ace and was broken five times as she fought back in vain after standing one game from defeat.

It was the second week in a row that the Pole, who put together a 37-match win streak this season, lost in a Masters third round. She suffered the same fate in Toronto seven days



earlier.

Keys plays on Friday against Wimbledon winner Elena Rybakina, who advanced to the last eight 6-2, 6-4 over Alison Riske-Amritraj.

Also ousted was Estonian second seed Anett Kontaveit, who fell to China's Zhang Shuai 2-6, 6-4, 6-4. Top-ranked American Jessica Pegula ended the run of US Open champion Emma Raducanu 7-5, 6-4, sending the Briton onto the practice courts before the August 29 start of her Grand Slam title defence.

Raducanu will head to New York with a 15-18 record since her 2021 title triumph and will drop from the top-10 after failing to reach the quarter-finals.

Zarco tops practice for Austrian MotoGP

AFP | Vienna

Frenchman Johann Zarco set the fastest time in the first two free practice sessions of the Austrian MotoGP yesterday.

Zarco, who rides for Pramac Ducati, was 0.024 seconds faster than Australian Jack Miller on a factory Ducati, with another Pramac rider Jorge Martin at 0.029.

Zarco topped qualifying for the last race at Silverstone but then crashed out on lap five. "Happy with this first day,"



Johann Zarco in action

said Zarco after the session, adding that he had given himself insurance in case the forecast rain arrives during the third practice session on Saturday.



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