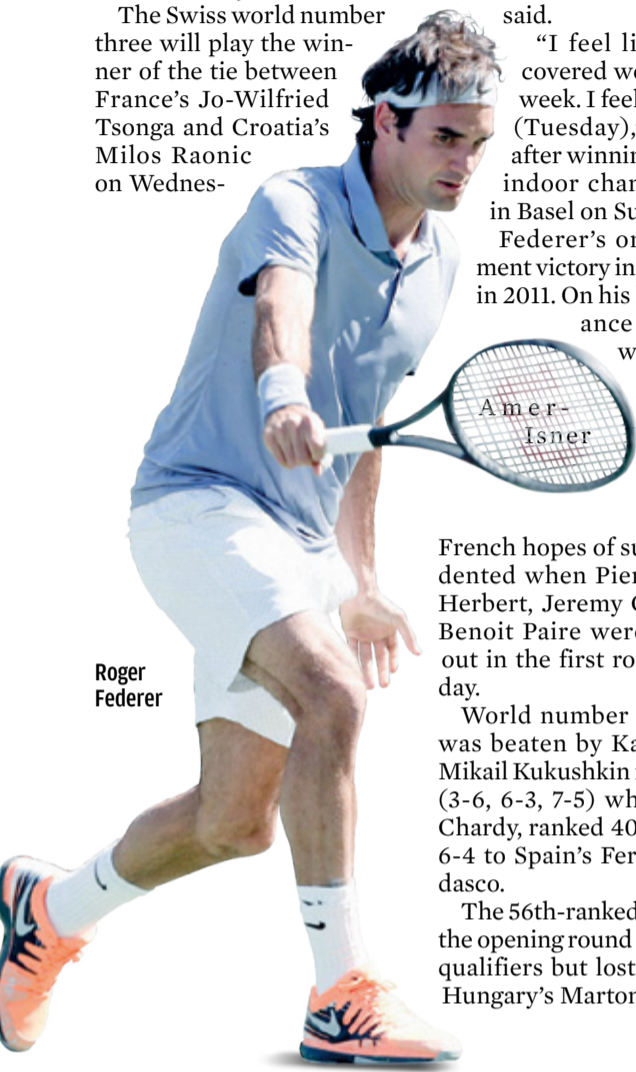


Federer confirms Paris Masters participation

AFP | Paris

Roger Federer yesterday confirmed his participation at this year's Paris Masters after a three-year absence.

The Swiss world number three will play the winner of the tie between France's Jo-Wilfried Tsonga and Croatia's Milos Raonic on Wednesday.



Roger Federer

day after receiving a bye in the first round.

"I prefer playing to training as long as I don't take any risks ahead of the London Masters, (November 11-18)," Federer said.

"I feel like I've recovered well after last week. I feel good today (Tuesday)," he added after winning the Swiss indoor championships in Basel on Sunday.

Federer's only tournament victory in Bercy came in 2011. On his last appearance in 2015 he was knocked out by American Jon Isner in the Round of 16.

Meanwhile French hopes of success were dented when Pierre-Hugues Herbert, Jeremy Chardy and Benoît Paire were knocked out in the first round yesterday.

World number 57 Herbert was beaten by Kazakhstan's Mikail Kukushkin in three sets (3-6, 6-3, 7-5) while Jeremy Chardy, ranked 40th, lost 6-4, 6-4 to Spain's Fernando Verdasco.

The 56th-ranked Paire made the opening round through the qualifiers but lost 6-4, 6-4 to Hungary's Marton Fucsovics.

Solari open to Real Madrid job long-term

AFP | Madrid

Santiago Solari said he is open to becoming Real Madrid coach long-term after being put in temporary charge on Monday following the sacking of Julen Lopetegui.

Solari has been promoted from his role as manager of the club's B team, Castilla, and took training for the first time yesterday morning at Madrid's base in Valdebebas.

The Argentinian, who spent five years playing for Madrid between 2000 and 2005, will be in charge for their Copa del Rey game away to Melilla on Wednesday. He has not ruled out becoming Lopetegui's permanent successor.

"I'm going to go into things very positively," Solari said at his opening press conference yesterday.

"I will do everything I can. It's a great opportunity and it's a great club. I don't just say that now as coach of the first team. I've been here with other teams, I've played and sweated in the shirt of this club.

"Madrid is bigger than all of us but it touches us all with its greatness. I want to be a part of it."

Solari is likely to remain in post for Real's La Liga game at home to Real Valladolid on Saturday and could stay on for next week's trip to Viktoria Plzen in the Champions League.

Madrid have sounded out former Chelsea and Juventus coach Antonio Conte but initial talks have reportedly not gone smoothly. Belgium boss Roberto Martinez and the club's former midfielder Guti have also been linked.

Solari, however, is the man



Temporary coach of Real Madrid CF, Argentinian former player Santiago Solari (3L), talks to players during a training session

"I will do everything I can. It's a great opportunity and it's a great club. I don't just say that now as coach of the first team. I've been here with other teams, I've played and sweated in the shirt of this club"

SANTIAGO SOLARI

in position and a run of positive results could turn opinion in his favour. Asked about his

strategy against Melilla, he said "the idea is to go there and play with balls".

Lopetegui paid the price for five defeats in seven matches, the last a 5-1 thrashing at the hands of Barcelona on Sunday. Solari believes the players are determined to turn things around.

"They are hurting, obviously, but eager to reverse the situation," Solari said. "This is a group of champions, warriors, who have won many things. The situation is not the easiest, but I have seen them eager to change it."

Solari was keen to dismiss comparisons with Zinedine Zidane, who also stepped up from coaching Castilla, before leading Madrid to three consecutive

Champions League titles.

"He's one of the greatest things we've ever had at this club," Solari said. "He's very calm, a great coach and nobody can compare to him."

Solari will be without Raphael Varane and Mariano Diaz on Wednesday, after Madrid confirmed the pair had sustained injuries against Barcelona.

Varane, who came off at half-time at the Camp Nou, has an adductor problem while Mariano has picked up a hamstring strain.

Any extended absence, particularly for Varane, would be a blow. After Plzen, Madrid face Celta Vigo and Eibar in La Liga next month, before a potentially decisive game away to Roma in the Champions League.

Derby boss Lampard eyes 'special' return to Chelsea



Frank Lampard of Derby County celebrates victory after the Carabao Cup Third Round match between Manchester United and Derby County

AFP | London

Derby boss Frank Lampard is relishing his first return to Chelsea as a manager in the League Cup on Wednesday after dumping Jose Mourinho's Manchester United out in the previous round.

Lampard is considered to be one of Chelsea's best-ever players after scoring a club-record 211 goals and winning 11 major trophies between 2001 and 2014, including the Champions League in 2012 and three Premier League titles.

"It's a special draw for me to be able to go back and see people behind the scenes and 40,000-plus friends in the stadium," said the 40-year-old ahead of the fourth-round clash at Stamford Bridge.

"I'm more emotional as I have gotten older, I think. These things catch you. Because you realise, in my life, how important Chelsea was and what I owe for that in terms of thanks."

Lampard is enjoying life at Derby, who are sixth in the second-tier Championship, just four points off top spot.

"This (Derby) is my working home now and I have a

great affiliation with this club already. I'm working hard to try to do something good here, and I love it here.

"But I can't forget 13 years of my career. It was a very special time for me, I was lucky to be part of such a strong era at the club. So it will be a very special night for me to be back there and to feel that atmosphere once again."

Derby head into the contest having made it through the previous round with a shock triumph on penalties against United, managed by Mourinho, Lampard's former manager at Chelsea.

Chelsea assistant boss Gianfranco Zola, who played with Lampard at Stamford Bridge, described his former teammate as a "legend of the club".

"I think you can understand when somebody has a future in this (managerial) position because to succeed as a coach you really need the ability to spend a lot of time thinking over things," said the Italian.

"Frank has always had this ability. As a player he had a lot of physicality and technicality, but he spent a lot of energy on football, on and off the pitch."

Kasatkina hangs on in Zhuhai

Aryna Sabalenka edges out Ashleigh Barty in the WTA Elite Trophy opener

AFP | Zhuhai, China

Top seed Daria Kasatkina survived a scare yesterday to claim victory over crowd favourite Wang Qiang in a thrilling contest at the WTA Elite Trophy in China, taking the match 6-1, 2-6, 7-5.

The 21-year-old Russian looked totally dominant in the early stages in Zhuhai, wrapping up the first set against the Chinese eleventh seed in just 26 minutes.

But the vocal supporters at the Hengqin International Tennis Center were given something to cheer about when Wang, 26, broke all four of Kasatkina's service games to claim the second set.

The deciding set saw some breathtaking points and rallies as each player tried to break the deadlock, but nerves appeared to take hold as both failed to win almost any of their service games.

Finally, after almost two hours on court, it was Kasatkina who held on to her serve at the crucial time to take the third and final set 7-5.



Kasatkina hits a return against Wang Qiang of China in their first-round match of the Zhuhai Elite Trophy tournament

Yesterday night's clash was their first round robin match, with both yet to play American Madison Keys, ranked 16th in the world. Earlier, big-hitting Aryna Sabalenka, 20, was too strong for Australia's Ashleigh Barty, 22, in the opening singles clash, taking the match 6-4, 6-4.

The pair produced some spectacular base-line battles, but Sabalenka, from Belarus, turned the screws on to see out the match in one hour, 26 minutes.

They are both yet to play

eighth seed and world number 18 Caroline Garcia from France in their round robin group.

"I think I played well in the first set, and in the second set I probably started to rush a little bit and make a lot of mistakes, and kind of stupid mistakes," Sabalenka said after the match.

"But I think the game was quite good, just a few... stupid moments."

Barty said: "I'm disappointed not to come away with the win, but I'll have another opportuni-

Sabalenka made the most of breaking Australian Barty in the very first game of the match, seeing out a nip-and-tuck opening set

ty in the next few days to try and finish my season on a real high."

Asked about the strength of the field in Zhuhai, the 2017 semi-finalist said: "It's phenomenal. I think last year was good, but this year's another level.

"It's really exciting for the women's game. We have the top 20 players in the world this year who are fighting right until the end of the season, which is really positive."

In yesterday's second singles match, fourth seed Elise Mertens from Belgium comfortably beat Estonia's Anett Kontaveit, the tenth seed, 6-3, 6-1.

Now in its fourth year the Elite Trophy features 12 players ranked roughly from nine to 20. This year's total prize money is \$2.35 million across the singles and doubles tournaments.