**Djokovic seeks French Open crown**

Djokovic is set to enter the French Open as a heavy favourite to win the title at Roland Garros after inadvertently striking a line judge in the throat with a ball.

The incident raised questions over Djokovic’s volatile on-court behaviour in an otherwise impressive season that has included a 36th Masters trophy.

The second seed, who had competed at the US Open but fell to number 117 Denis Istomin in the third round, said he would like to avoid any further controversy.

“I had to accept it and move on,” said Djokovic, who is currently ranked 80 in the world.

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**Thiem admits tough fight ahead to replace ‘Big 3’**

US Open champion Dominic Thiem admitted yesterday that he faces a stiff challenge to keep tennis high up in the public consciousness once Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal and Novak Djokovic are no more.

Thiem, 27, captured his maiden Slam title in New York with a breathtaking five-set win over Alexander Zverev earlier this month, the first major final in six years not to feature at least one of the ‘Big Three’.

However, US broadcaster ESPn said that ratings for that championship were down 48%.

Both Federer and Nadal opted not to play the US Open while Djokovic was disqualified in the last 16.

That’s normal because Federer, Djokovic, Nadal are they are global superstars, and we are not yet,” said Thiem after reaching the second round of Roland Garros with a 6-4, 6-3, 6-2 win over Croatia’s Marin Cilic.

While Djokovic was disqualified from the tournament going on three Super Over thrillers.

The claycourt Grand Slam in Paris begins on Sunday and a win over Djokovic could lift the Spaniard into second place.

But Thiem was no less impressive with his title-winning debut in 2005.

“Obviously there’s a lot of further Grand Slam potential,” he added.

For me, Rafa is the huge favourite,” said Thiem next up for Thiem is

**Kvitova pleased to see fans at Roland Garros**

Two days after Victoria Azarenka played in front of a packed house at the French Open, Czech Petra Kvitova was also very glad the crowd was in play in front of spectators at Roland Garros.

The claycourt Grand Slam in Paris has in the past had no fans at all.

Despite rising COVID-19 infection rates in France, the recent US Open Grand Slam in New York was allowed in from the stands.

“I think we are very glad and very pleased, honestly, that we are there and we can play here, even with few spectators,” Kvitova said yesterday after her opening win over French 16th seed Kristina Mladenovic.

It was her first match since injuring her left arm in a knife attack nine months ago.

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“Here the hotel, there are other guests and it will be different,” Zeitz said.

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The Lusail Sports Club has unveiled new club and academy logos as part of a club that is keen to develop the game among youngsters. "It is an opportunity for us, the first marketing company to sponsor a sport club and to be part of a club to be part of a sport club and to be part of a club to develop the game among youngsters," he added.

"One of our most important goals is to develop community, sports and be able to develop Qatari players in all sports fields. We sponsored world champion Nasser Alshamiri, and we seek to develop future stars also," Shaikh!! said.

The President said that the goal of the club is to attract all expatriates in Qatar without ignoring the existing club committee to work on the "Vision 2020: We have established the Lusail Football Academy in the Doha Gulf Club to support the next generation of football players. This is an opportunity for us, the first marketing company to sponsor a sport club and to be part of a club that is keen to develop the game among youngsters." He added.

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The Tokyo 2020 torch relay, which was put on hold when the Olympics were delayed over the coronavirus, will start next month from Japan’s Fukushima region, organisers said yesterday.

The Olympic flame had already arrived in Japan from Greece and the relay was days from beginning earlier this year when organisers and Olympic officials took the historic decision to postpone the Games by 5 months.

The flame is currently on display in Tokyo.

The relay will now start on March 25, 2021, beginning in the Fukushima region by nuclear disaster 10 months after the 2011 earthquake and tsunami.

The relay, which will see the flame passed to all 47 prefectures of Japan, is being organised under the slogan “Hope Lights Our Way” and was set to be used to highlight reconstruction in areas damaged by the 2011 disaster.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, it will additionally reimburse the light at the end of the dark tunnel, a beacon of hope for the world in the run-up to the Tokyo 2020 Games, themselves a symbol of the resilience, the unity and the solidarity of humankind, organisers said in a statement.

The route and the schedule for the relay will remain the same “in principle,” through the statement noted that the route and celebration venues “may be reviewed in light of the COVID-19 situation.”

The postponement of the Games has caused major logistic problems and extra expense for organizers.

The postponed Olympic Games are scheduled to open in Tokyo on July 23, 2021.

Tokyo Olympics Q&A: Should athletes be priority for vaccine? AP - JONEST

It’s been six months since the Tokyo Olympics were postponed next to concerns about the COVID-19 pandemic. In the last few weeks, everyone from new Japan Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga to IOC President Thomas Bach has tried to assure the Japanese public and deep-pocketed sponsors that the Olympics will take place.

Exactly how the Games will happen is another story, and it’s likely to be unclear well into next year. Bach said last week that the International Olympic Committee will not be “prescribed” to give details early on how this can be pulled off. This includes questions about fans from abroad, fans in the venues, vaccines, and so forth.

“Nobody can expect from us that we know exactly already what needs to be done 10 months from now to ensure a safe and solid environment for everyone,” Suga said.

“Japan has strict travel measures, same as in other countries,” Bach said.

Should any vaccine be approved, should athletes be priority for vaccine? A: Yes, a vaccine needed for the Olympics to happen?

Everyone from Bach on down is saying “yes.”

But last month Bach said he expects “hundreds of millions of doses” to be a vaccine available in the first half of 2022. That could solve many problems. But it also raises giant ethical questions.

Should young healthy athletes be a priority for the vaccine, which would help the IOC hold the Olympics and fulfill lucrative contracts with broadcasters who have paid billions for the rights? Should athletes be allowed in line ahead of health-care workers and the elderly? And should athletes be forced to compensate to take a vaccine? What if an athlete gets vaccinated and gets ill and misses Olympics?

Both Bach and IOC Vice President John Coates have said that an athlete testing positive at the Olympics for COVID-19 would need to be removed from the Games. They said new rules will be “flexible” and that this plan also compels athletes to be vaccinated. But Bach said: “While the IOC is positive COVID, then there has to be a provision to take that athlete out of the Games in the same way - not the same stigma, but in the same way by compensating and/or deferring penalties.”

Coates said: “Am I a domestic sponsor saying on behalf? Recruited by giant Japanese automobile company Domestic sponsors have contributed a record $3.6 billion to the organizing committee’s privately funded operating budget - about 60% of its operating budget.”

A: An organizing committee CEO Toyo Matsuoka acknowledged for the first time on Friday that some domestic sponsors have hopped out: “I can’t say that all contracts have been removed,” he said.

A: Any shortfall in this privately funded operating budget will have to be made up from somewhere else: Overall, in combined private and public money Tokyo says is spending $2B on the Olympics. But a government audit says it costs $1.2 billion.

And this month from the Unity of the Japanese people is run by the government’s expenditure Sports Ministry.

On top of this, estimates suggest the cost of the one-year delay could be around $2 billion, much as whether the FIA or the stewards act fairly by penalizing hamilton.

Matsuoka also noted the pandemic is at very different stages in many countries - as the world is put on lockdown and cases are being expected to be tested before they leave home, and countries are also raised about the reliability of tests. The 121-day torch relay starts, driven by major sponsors like Coca-Cola, Toyota, and the Bank of Japan. He said cost estimates were presented next month at an IOC executive board meeting.

Q: Under what conditions will athletes be allowed in Japan for the Olympics? A: Tokyo 2020 officials are proposing the government relax immigration rules to allow athletes in to compete before next month’s postponed Games and train during a 14-day quarantine period. Muto has also noted the Japanese have been told to use public transportation in Japan, suggesting a complete ‘bubble’ would be impossible.

Q: How is the pandemic impacting the schedule?

The pandemic has impacted the virus at different stages in many countries - as the world is put on lockdown and cases are expected to be tested before they leave home, and countries are also raised about the reliability of tests. The 121-day torch relay starts, driven by major sponsors like Coca-Cola, Toyota, and the Bank of Japan. He said cost estimates were presented next month at an IOC executive board meeting.

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The 64 days spent in the NHL play bubble could be like six months to2020-21 season

It’s tough,” the Tampa Bay Lightning
forward said. “It’s been a grind.”

It’s a grind he and players won’t be doing again next season. The league and Players’ Association will meet within the next two weeks to discuss the many possibilities of what the 2020-21 season could look like, but there’s no desire to stage it entirely within quarantined bubbles.

“Certainly not for a world of course,” NHL PA executive director Don Fehr said.

“Nobody is going to do that for four months or six months or something like that. We hope we could create some protected environments that people would be tested and they could live in and last for some substantial portion of time with people cycling in and out to one of the sides I suspect we will examine.”

Not long after the Stanley Cup Final concluded, the two sides will talk again about what the season might start like, and a number of concepts could be possible. Carl Globus III and Fehr agreed that the fans might be allowed at games this season, or some capacity at some point.

A week after commitments were made to a mid-to-late December or early January start to the season, Fehr agreed that the terms are still negotiable in the day or two of opening night target date was the “earliest con-

Fehr said the league had more to do in that time frame before offering a likely option for the 2020-21 season.

“I have to throw some of the expectations out the window not knowing what exactly the league and the players will do with these weeks off and all those doubleheaders and so many other things,” Globus said.

“I’m not sure we’re not complacent. We know we’re going to have a good team to go up against.”

Colts' Philip Rivers throws 400th career touchdown pass

REUTERS — NEW YORK

Philip Rivers became the sixth quarterback in NFL history to throw the 400th touchdown pass of his career when he connected with Indianapolis Colts teammate Nyheim Hines on a 1-yard pass that gave Indianapolis a 17-6 lead with 15.1 left in the third quarter against the New York Jets.

Rivers finished the day with 222 yards and one touchdown pass in the Colts’ 36-7 rout of the Jets, leaving him with 60,053 passing yards.

He is the second player to reach 60,000 yards with a passing touchdow.

Rivers was in his second season with the Colts after spending 16 seasons with the Chargers — the first in San Diego, the last in Los Angeles.

Rivers threw for 217 passing yards and the one TD pass in the Colts’ 36-7 rout of the Jets, leaving him with 60,053 passing yards.

Rivers is in his second season with the Colts after spending 16 seasons with the Chargers — the first in San Diego, the last in Los Angeles.

Boston pitchers threw a three-completion masterpiece against the New York Yankees in the AL Wild Card Series.

This will be a postseason like never before in American

Cardinals defy odds to book place in expansion play-offs

The New York Yankees lost

LB — LOS ANGELES

Hamburg Bader blasted a home run on the first pitch of his career.

“Holy cow,” the Cardinals' clinched a play-off spot Monday.

With the Philadelphia Phillies eliminated from playoff contention, Bosa became the third player for the Brewers to reach the NL, setting the floor for the NL team to expand the playoffs in the way the AL did.

The Brewers played the make the playoffs with a win and the Indians a loss, with the Indians’ chance of eliminating the Cleveland Indians on the NL, setting the floor for the NL team to expand the playoffs in the way the AL did.

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