

Tennis Wimbledon 2023

Why a sporting handshake at the net is now history at Wimbledon



Johnny Watterston at Wimbledon

Tension between Russia, Belarus and Ukraine continues as women reach semis

On Jabeur, one of the players with crusading winds and cause at their back, dropped behind early after a tiebreak before a tidy and businesslike couple of sets took her into the Wimbledon semi-finals yesterday.

She will meet Aryna Sabalenka from Belarus, who turned over Madison Keys of the United States in her quarter-final. "I saw she won very quick, which I wasn't happy about," quipped Jabeur in her court-side interview about Sabalenka's 6-2, 6-4 win over her opponent.

The Tunisian is seeking to become the first Arab to win a Grand Slam title, and must feel confident that it is a possibility after her 7-6(5), 6-4, 6-1 win over the player who beat her in last year's final, Elena Rybakina of Kazakhstan.

Rybakina's exit means there is guaranteed to be a first-time women's singles champion this year.

Sabalenka is ranked two in the world to Jabeur's six with the two bringing a clash of styles to the semi-final meeting.



Aryna Sabalenka reacts euphorically on her way to victory over Madison Keys in yesterday's women's singles quarter-final at Wimbledon. PHOTOGRAPH: SHAWN BUTTERILL/GETTY IMAGES

entire tournament before the quarter-final. A run of five games handed the second set to Jabeur before she shot to a 3-1 lead in the third and held her nerve to close the match and set up the meeting with Australian Open champion Sabalenka, who will become the world number one if she reaches Saturday's final.

Briefly threatened

"Very emotional on the court. It's going to be very difficult match," said Jabeur of the semi-final. "Probably her shouting that way, me shouting this way. Aryna is more emotional than Elena, so maybe it could be a good or bad thing. I'm not sure. But let's see tomorrow."

A physical player, Sabalenka was only briefly threatened by Keys when, after whizzing through the first set 6-2, she trailed 4-2 in the second. That challenge stimulated a change in gear and she went up another notch.

She broke back twice and then, approaching the 1½ hour mark, served out for victory on her second match point that the 25th seed Keys sent long.

"She has really good touch," said Sabalenka of Jabeur. "Especially on the grass court, all her slices, drop shots work really well here on grass court. 'Feel like mentally she's really strong. She's making the history. I think this is the biggest motivation for her. That's why she's really doing well this season, and especially here at Wimbledon.'"

Jabeur plays a more varied game to Sabalenka's big baseline swing replete with her own added sound effects. What it means for Jabeur is that she faces one of the most attacking players in the game.

"I saw she won very quick, which I wasn't happy about"

Russians and Belarusians, in protest at Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Instead, she waved to her and later said she was trying to be "respectful towards her decision."

Turned down Switolina had urged tennis authorities to publicise that Ukrainians won't be shaking hands with Russian and Belarusian players after matches, so that fans don't boo because they think some players are being snubbed. However, this request has been turned down.

"We've no intention of doing that," Wimbledon chief executive Sally Bolton said on Monday. "Historically in tennis, the decision on how a player reacts at the end of a match is entirely a personal decision for them

and I think we don't really want to start mandating what happens."

On Tuesday, Sabalenka reiterated that fans need to understand what is taking place and that if she does face Switolina in the final, she will not be left hanging at the net with no handshake.

"I think people also need to know what's going on and why there is no handshake between Ukrainians, Russian and Belarusian players," she said.

Jabeur dropped the first set on a tiebreak despite breaking the Kazakh's serve twice, but clinched the second set with a timely break of serve at 5-4. From then on, she dominated the match as her return of serve appeared to lift Rybakina as in the

athletes from competing at Wimbledon, the potential re-remains for a Ukraine player to face a Belarusian in the final and the further diplomatic squirm of the chance of the Princess of Wales handing the Venus Rosewater dish to Sabalenka.

A few days ago, fans on Number One Court booed Sabalenka's compatriot Victoria Azarenka when she didn't go to the net to shake hands with Switolina after the Ukrainian player's victory. Azarenka knew that Switolina doesn't shake hands with

three will, despite the crushing disappointment of losing, rank as a fine few weeks' work.

Medvedev, who won the US Open in 2021, has the pleasure of facing Carlos Alcaraz on Centre Court tomorrow to see who will meet Novak Djokovic or Jannik Sinner, who are contesting the other semi-final.

Although Eubanks lost the first set 6-4, he rebounded with an arresting second set, winning 6-1 to draw level. He then won the first two games of the third set and held off the higher ranked player for 6-4 and two sets to one. Medvedev then won a tight tiebreaker in the fourth,

where the match might have been decided. Sensing Eubanks had maybe reached his limit, the Russian sped to a 6-1 fifth set and the match.

He is just the third African American man to reach the quarter-finals at Wimbledon since the start of the Open era in 1968.

Bright beginning The fresh face of Denmark's Holger Rune on Centre Court did not slow down the march of Spain's Alcaraz. Both players 20-years-old, Rune was ranked six against the world number one.

Occasional doubles partners, Rune began brightly, taking the first set to a tiebreak, which Alcaraz turned his way 7-5. Throwing 10mph serves at the Spaniard might have troubled other players but Alcaraz has grown in each round.

Taking the second set 6-4, he then broke Rune's serve in the third and set himself up to serve for the match, swiftly moving to 40-0 for his second match point.

Finally, he had to reach to the third and fourth match points before wrapping up with an unreturned serve in two hours and 22 minutes.

It is Alcaraz's first Wimbledon semi-final. "It's amazing for me," he said after the match. "It's a dream since I first started playing tennis. For me it is a dream to play a semi-final here. I'm playing such a great level on this surface. You know for me it is crazy."

The fact that the Dane is a friend and sometimes doubles partner was not a hindering factor for the Spaniard. "At the beginning, I was really nervous," said Alcaraz. "Once you get on to the court, there is not friends. You have to be focused on yourself." Now that focus will turn towards the world number three.

Eubanks's magical run ends at hands of Medvedev

Youthful Dane Rune failed to slow the progress of world number one Alcaraz

JOHNNY WATTERSTON

American Chris Eubanks finally ran out of road to bring an end to a magical run on a grass surface he hated when he arrived before it became his favourite piece of tennis turf.

All the heavy serving the 67-year-old American could muster wasn't enough against Russia's Daniil Medvedev in a long five-setter

that petered to an end. Medvedev winning the fifth 6-1 as the world number 43 closed what was for him an otherworldly Wimbledon.

What was shaping up to be one of the sports stories of the year in his first time playing the tournament - having failed to qualify in previous years - a run to the quarter-final and defeated by the world number

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