

## Superb Alcaraz underlines Wimbledon credentials



**BBC** – Top seed Carlos Alcaraz underlined his status as the man likeliest to stop Novak Djokovic winning another Wimbledon after beating 2021 finalist Matteo Berrettini in the fourth round. The 20-year-old Spaniard fought back to win 3-6 6-3 6-3 6-3 and reach the SW19 quarter-finals for the first time. Alcaraz will next face Denmark's Holger Rune, who won 3-6 7-6 (8-6) 7-6 (7-4) 6-3 against Bulgaria's Grigor Dimitrov. Djokovic, 36, remains the man to beat after his victory over Hubert Hurkacz. The Serb second seed, who cannot meet Alcaraz until the final, is aiming for a fifth successive Wimbledon title which would also see him equal Roger Federer's record of eight men's singles victories. Alcaraz has emerged as the main challenger to Djokovic's recent dominance at the All England Club. Having grown up on clay courts in Murcia, grass is the Spaniard's least natural surface and how quickly he has successfully adapted his game is a mark of his considerable talent. He warmed up for Wimbledon by winning the title at Queen's in only the third grass-court event of his professional career. The success served to increase

his expectations of lifting another trophy in London this month – and so will passing his biggest test so far. Berrettini is still one of the biggest threats on grass, even though he has been hampered by a recurring abdominal injury this year. That menace was shown in a first set where he fought off three break points before taking Alcaraz's serve for a 5-3 lead and serving out the opener. "I knew it was going to be really tough – Matteo is a great player," said Alcaraz. "It is not easy to come back after losing the first set, but I knew I would have my chances. "I had to stay focused, that's something I am working on, to not lose my mind." Alcaraz's speed and athleticism meant he was able to soak up the Italian's huge serves and groundstrokes, turning defence into attack with his own power from the baseline. A single break of serve was enough to secure the second set before Alcaraz ramped up the intensity in the third. The US Open champion broke to move 3-1 ahead and, as a result, the pressure forced Berrettini into more errors as he looked to blast his way back into the match. With his second serve also under

**Spain's Carlos Alcaraz celebrates winning his fourth round match against Italy's Matteo Berrettini at Wimbledon in London, Britain, on July 10, 2023.**  
● HANNAH MCKAY/REUTERS

scrutiny, Berrettini lost serve again to hand over the set and it led to him pleading with umpire John Blom for the roof to be closed because of fading light. The Italian said his game was "suffering" with the increasing darkness and there was a short break as the match moved indoors under the lights. Both players comfortably held serve in the opening seven games, until Alcaraz pounced to break and serve out the match in the following game. Now he faces Rune – another 20-year-old who he has known since they played junior tournaments as 12-year-olds – in the first Wimbledon men's quarter-final between two players under the age of 21. Asked about his reaction to reaching the last eight, Alcaraz said: "It is something I really wanted. "I came in with that goal to get into the quarter-finals. Now I'm looking for more. "It is my dream to win this title one day. I hope to reach that dream this year."

## Double derby hero Alekasir leaves Persepolis for Sepahan



### Sports Desk

Iranian striker Issa Alekasir parted ways with Persepolis to sign a two-year contract with Persian Gulf Pro League club Sepahan as a free agent. Alekasir, 34, is the seventh signing in a busy transfer window for Sepahan – runner-up to Persepolis in the league last season – giving Portuguese manager Jose Morais a dilemma for the No. 9 position as the Isfahan-based club had already secured the services of Kaveh Rezaei, Reza Asadi, and Reza Shekari to add to the previous campaign's top scorer Shahriyar Moghanlou in the frontline. The Iranian forward, who contributed with 19 goals and 10 assists in 59 matches for Persepolis, leaves the Reds with mixed memories after his four-year spell at the club characterized by both success and setbacks. The former San'at Naft striker's first appearances in the Persepolis shirt came in the 2020 AFC Champions League, where he spearheaded the team's progress to the semifinals – following the competition's resumption in Qatar during the pandemic – by bagging four

goals in six outings. However, his controversial goal celebrations in a 2-0 victory over Pakhtakor in the quarter-finals was deemed as a "discriminatory gesture" by the Asian football governing body, handing the Iranian a six-month ban on the eve of the last-four clash against Saudi side Al Nassr, which also ruled him out of the 2-1 defeat against Ulsan Hyundai in the final showpiece. On his return, Alekasir netted five in 20 games – including a late winner against archrival Esteghlal – as Persepolis lifted a fifth successive trophy in the Iranian top-flight while reaching the last-eight of the Asian elite clubs competition. The 2021/22 campaign came to an end for Alekasir midway through the season as a torn ligament injury sidelined him for another 12 months. With Persepolis lagging behind Sepahan and Esteghlal in the domestic league table, Alekasir's recovery proved pivotal for Yahaya Golmohammadi's men last term. Alekasir came off the bench at halftime to score another derby winner in a massive 1-0 victory over Esteghlal in April to help Persepolis leapfrog the top two

**Issa Alekasir scores for Persepolis during a 1-0 victory over Esteghlal in the Persian Gulf Pro League at Tehran's Azadi Stadium on April 23, 2023.**  
● MEGHDAD MADADI/TASNIM

in the table with three games to spare before ultimately walking away with ultimate prize in May. He also found the net against Sepahan, Golgozar, and Havadar in the Hazfi Cup to inspire the Reds to a second domestic double in four years. Alekasir is the fifth player to leave Persepolis in the pre-season after veteran midfielder Kamal Kamyabinia, Siamak Nemati, Malian forward Cheick Diabaté, and second-choice keeper Iahamd Gohari, who joined Iralco on a season-long loan contract. With Persepolis likely to cut loose from Brazilian Leandro Pereira, Golmohammadi will have to step up pursuit for a new frontman as new signing Shahab Zahedi and Mehdi Abdi are the only established strikers in the squad.

## Nassar, disgraced USA Gymnastics doctor, stabbed in prison

**REUTERS** – Larry Nassar, the disgraced doctor of USA Gymnastics who was convicted of sexually abusing young female gymnasts, has been stabbed multiple times by another inmate in prison and was in stable condition on Monday, U.S. media reported. The Federal Bureau of Prisons confirmed that an inmate at the U.S. Penitentiary Coleman in Florida was assaulted on Sunday afternoon, but declined to identify the prisoner over privacy and security concerns. "Responding staff immediately initiated life-saving measures," bureau spokesperson Benjamin O'Conne said in a statement. "The inmate was transported by (emergency personnel) to a local hospital for further treatment and evaluation." The FBI was notified of the inci-



● REBECCA COOK/REUTERS

dent, and an internal investigation is ongoing, O'Conne added. No other staff or inmates were injured, he said. Nassar, who is serving a de-

cade-long sentence following his 2018 conviction, was stabbed 10 times – twice in the neck, twice in the back, and six times in the chest – Joe Rojas, president of the local correction officers' union, told CNN. According to the Associated Press, which was first to report the assault, Nassar was in stable condition. Nassar was sentenced to up to 175 years in prison for sexually abusing young female gymnasts who were entrusted to his care, including Olympic gold medalists Simone Biles, Aly Raisman and McKayla Maroney. His sentencing followed an extraordinary week-long hearing in which 160 of his victims, most of whom were minors at the time they were abused, unflinchingly told their stories.

## Chelsea make transfer enquiry for Juve striker Vlahovic

**GOAL** – Chelsea have reportedly enquired about the availability of Dusan Vlahovic, with Juventus setting their minimum price tag for the Serbian forward. The Blues want to add firepower upfront after parting ways with Kai Havertz to Arsenal. Chelsea have drawn up a shortlist with Vlahovic emerging as the primary target, and they have made an initial approach to the player's intermediaries. According to Alfredo Pedulla, Juventus believe that Vlahovic is not transferable but if an offer of around €75-80 million plus bonuses is tabled then they will take it up for consideration. The striker scored 14 goals for Juventus across all competitions last season as he struggled with injuries throughout the campaign. According to a report in



● ALESSANDRO SABATTINI/GETTY IMAGES

Corriere dello Sport, the Old Lady will be willing to lower their demands to €25m (£21m) if Chelsea add Romaleu Lukaku in a swap deal. Moreover, Chelsea have also initiated talks with Montpellier for Elye Wahi, who scored an

impressive 19 goals in 33 league games last season, according to the Evening Standard. However, a final decision is yet to be made on the third attacking option as the Blues have already signed Christopher Nkunku and Nicolas Jackson this summer.