

U.S. Open

Sharapova grinds out win in grand slam return

By HOWARD FENDRICH
Associated Press

NEW YORK — So much about Maria Sharapova was the same as it ever was during her first Grand Slam match since a 15-month doping suspension: the shot-punctuating shrieks, the aggressive baseline style, the terrific returning, the sometimes-shaky serving.

Another familiar sight: The five-time major champion gutted out a victory.

Sharapova recovered after faltering midway through the match and emerged to beat No. 2-seeded Simona Halep 6-4, 4-6, 6-3 at the U.S. Open on Monday night to reach the second round.

"This girl has a lot of grit and she's not going anywhere," Sharapova told the crowd in an on-court interview.

After leading by a set and 4-1 in the second, Sharapova showed some fatigue and rust, dropping five games in a row. But in the third,

Sharapova regained control by going ahead 3-0, using her power to keep two-time French Open runner-up Halep under pressure.

Sharapova had not played at a Grand Slam tournament since January 2016, when she tested positive for the newly banned heart drug meldonium during the Australian Open. It was as if every one of Sharapova's winners — and she compiled 60, 45 more than Halep — was her way of declaring, "I'm back!"

When a Halep shot sailed long to end the match after more than 2½ hours, Sharapova dropped to her knees on court, then covered her face as her eyes welled with tears.

"I just thought that was another day, another opportunity, another match," Sharapova said. "But this was so much more. I tried not to think about it."

The 30-year-old Russian was allowed back on the tour this April, but she was denied a wild-card invitation



AP Photo/Kathy Willens
Maria Sharapova, of Russia, follows through in her match against Simona Halep of Romania during her match in the opening round of the U.S. Open tennis tournament in New York on Monday.

for the French Open the next month. The U.S. Tennis Association did grant a wild card to Sharapova, who was once ranked No. 1 but is currently 146th.

That is 144 spots below Halep, who is among eight women that entered the

U.S. Open with a chance to top the WTA rankings by tournament's end. The draw at Flushing Meadows randomly paired the two players, providing a buzz-generating matchup that managed to live up to the hype on Day 1 at the

year's last Grand Slam tournament.

It was a tremendously entertaining and high-quality contest, more befitting a final than a first-round.

These two women have, indeed, faced off with a Grand Slam title at stake: Sharapova beat Halep in the 2014 French Open final, part of what is now her 7-0 head-to-head record in the matchup.

On Monday, they traded stinging shots, often with Sharapova — dressed in all black, from her visor to her dress that sparkled under the lights, to her socks and shoes — aiming to end exchanges and Halep hustling into place to extend them.

Points would last 10 or 12 strokes, or more, repeatedly leaving a sellout crowd of 23,771 in Arthur Ashe Stadium clapping and yelling and high-fiving, no matter which player won them. The chair umpire repeatedly admonished spectators to hush.

Halep blinked at the end

of the hour-long first set, double-faulting to face a break point, then watching Sharapova punish a 71 mph second serve with a forehand return winner. That was Sharapova's sixth return winner; she would finish with 14, more than enough to counter her seven double-faults.

It was quickly 4-1 for Sharapova in the second set and she held a break point there to allow her to go up 5-1 and serve for the victory. But she couldn't convert it. Then, only then, did Sharapova struggle for a bit. Her footwork was a bit off. Her forehand lost its way. She would end up losing that game and the next four, too, as Halep managed to force a third set.

But with the outcome in the balance, Sharapova once again looked as if she had never been away. She raced ahead 3-0 in the third, then 5-2. And this time, she did not let Halep back in, improving to 11-0 in first-round matches in New York.

FLOODING: LSU-BYU football game moved from Houston to New Orleans

Continued from 1B

anonymity because the move was not disclosed.

If the Astros play both series in Florida, they will end up playing 19 straight games away from Houston, where the AL West leaders last played on Aug. 24. A 10-game road trip begins after the Mets series.

"The safety of our fans, players and staff remain our main priority," Astros President Reid Ryan said. "We are extremely grateful to the Tampa Bay Rays organization for allowing us to use their facility."

Rangers general manager Jon Daniels said the team was open to hosting the series in Arlington this week, but had no interest in swapping a series against the Astros later in the season to accommodate the change. He said the Rangers declined partially because of thoughts for the fans, but also because that change would have left the Rangers with a 12-game road trip late in the season.

"Just the competitive challenge of having our guys' last road trip of the year, (a

four-city trip was not something that we wanted to do," he said. "We were prepared, we offered to host the series, but the decision was made to go to Tampa instead."

The Texans have been in the Dallas area since leaving New Orleans after playing the Saints there on Saturday night. As the flooding dominated the news for another day, athletes with ties to Houston kept nervous watch, worrying about loved ones.

Nationals star Anthony Rendon, who grew up in Houston, has been stressed out hearing tales of his relatives struggling back home. He spoke to his parents on Monday morning.

"They were saying the water was creeping up to their garage now," he said. "They've got a lot of land so it has to cover the land first before it gets to their house. It's tough to know they're not in a flood zone. They're in the middle of nowhere so how can the water reach over there?"

Consumed by feelings of helplessness and frustration, LSU starting right tackle Toby Weathersby said he

filled his truck with gas with the intent of venturing into Houston to try to evacuate his grandparents. He held off — but it was hard.

"I was going to be stupid, but I had to come to the realization that I've got to leave it up to the professionals," Weathersby said. "I just sat down and just thought about the situation I was going to be putting myself in. I wasn't worried about school or nothing. I was just worried about trying to get there, get my people."

Weathersby, a junior, said he'd been in contact with his grandparents on Sunday and their home had not flooded, though rising water had engulfed their vehicles.

"They're stuck right now in the flood. Water is almost in the house," said Weathersby, a 6-foot-6, 308-pound junior. "You try to stay positive but ... It's one of those situations right now where you've got to keep praying. Hopefully my prayers reach over to my grandparents so they can hear me right now trying to tell them to try to get out."

Weathersby and his LSU teammates were supposed

to play BYU on Saturday at the home of the Texans. That game has been moved to the Superdome in New Orleans.

The Rice football was settling in on TCU's campus in Fort Worth. The Owls opened the season over the weekend in Australia, where they lost to Stanford. They arrived in Los Angeles on Monday morning before another flight to Dallas, and were expected to share the campus with the Horned Frogs until things improve in Houston. The Owls have a week off before traveling to play UTEP on Sept. 9.

"While we would love to be coming home today, our first responsibility is the safety of these players," coach David Bailiff said. "We learned some lessons in 2008 (during Hurricane Ike) about coming home too soon."

TCU coach Gary Patterson said there are still specifics to work out, but that the Horned Frogs will do whatever they can to help.

"They're worried about parents and their families back there, but then all their belongings and their apart-

ments, and their housing," Patterson said. "It must have been a very tough feeling to be playing a ballgame all the way in Australia knowing that maybe everything that you own may be gone."

The University of Houston football team, meanwhile, is in Austin, where former coach Tom Herman is preparing for his first season in charge of the Longhorns after two seasons at Houston. He said the Cougars canceled their scheduled practice Sunday when the flooding was getting worse back in Houston, and "guys being worried and not really being focused on football, nor should they have been."

Houston coach Major Applewhite said he wasn't sure how long the team would remain in Austin, but that they'd been able to determine that the families of all players and staff back in Houston were safe.

"On this trip, our job is (to) be No. 1, parents, and No. 2, to be coaches," he said. "We have to understand the human element in this."

Teams and athletes got in on the fundraising efforts

for what will undoubtedly be a long rebuilding process. The Texans and owner Bob McNair donated \$1 million to the United Way of Greater Houston Flood Relief Fund. The NFL Foundation said it would match the \$1 million donation, and New England Patriots owner Robert Kraft and his family pledged to match all funds donated to the American Red Cross in support of Harvey flood relief up to \$1 million.

This came after Texans star J.J. Watt started a fundraising page that had raised more than \$620,000 by Monday afternoon and Houston Rockets and owner Leslie Alexander donated \$4 million to hurricane relief. Major League Baseball also contributed to the cause, joining with the players association to donate \$1 million to the Red Cross and relief organizations chosen by the players.

AP Sports Writers Stephen Hawkins, Schuyler Dixon, Jim Vertuno, Brett Martel, Ralph D. Russo and AP freelance writer Ben Standig contributed to this report.

MARINERS: Gonzales lasts just 3 1/3 innings, allows five runs and eight hits

Continued from 1B

fifth straight victory.

Chris Davis doubled in the tiebreaking run in the seventh inning for the resurgent Orioles, who climbed over .500 (66-65) for the first time since June 11.

"I think it's pretty obvious that if you're .500 or below you're not going to the playoffs," manager Buck Showalter said. "Mathematically, we know that's a given. Got another game tomorrow that could take you back in the other direction. That's the world we live in."

Following a three-game sweep in Boston with a 16-hit attack against the Mariners, Baltimore jumped past Seattle (66-66) to within 1½ games of idle Minnesota for the final AL wild-card spot.

"You've just got to keep your head down and try to win the next game," Showalter said, "and figure out a way to score enough runs to do it."

Seven was just enough on this night.

Jones' solo home run in the fifth inning gave him 25 for an Orioles-record

seventh consecutive season. He shared the mark of six with Cal Ripken Jr.

"That's some select company," Showalter said.

Ben Gamel homered and had a career-high five RBIs in Seattle's third straight defeat.

"Some positive signs from our offense, no doubt," manager Scott Servais said. "We played a crisper game tonight, but obviously not enough."

With the score tied at 6, Trey Mancini led off the Baltimore seventh with a single off Emilio Pagan

(1-3) and Davis followed with a liner into the right-field corner.

"I just missed down," Pagan said. "He's a good hitter, and he made me pay for it."

Donnie Hart (2-0) pitched the seventh, Darren O'Day worked out of a jam in the eighth and Zach Britton got three outs for his 12th save — the first since his run of converting 60 in a row ended last week.

Seattle trailed 6-4 in the sixth before Chris Tillman issued successive one-out walks and Gamel smacked

a two-run single off Mychal Givens.

Tillman gave up six runs, three hits and four walks — all of which turned into runs. A 16-game winner last year, Tillman is winless in 16 starts since May 7.

Mariners starter Marco Gonzales allowed five runs and eight hits in 3 1/3 innings. He left with the bases loaded in the fourth, but Christian Bergman kept Seattle within 5-4 by retiring Manny Machado and Jonathan Schoop on popups.

Jones connected off Bergman in the fifth for a

two-run cushion. It was the 250th of his career.

ROSTER MOVES

Mariners: Bergman had his contract selected from Triple-A Tacoma and RHP Dan Altavilla was optioned to the Rainiers. It's Bergman's third stint with Seattle this season.

UP NEXT

Mariners: In the second game of the series Tuesday night, Erasmo Ramirez (5-4, 4.52 ERA) makes his fifth start with Seattle.

Orioles: Dylan Bundy (12-8, 4.18 ERA) is 4-0 in six starts since July 6.

SCOREBOARD

Local slate

PREP FOOTBALL

Friday

Hermiston at Union (WA), 4:30 p.m.

La Grande at Pendleton, 7 p.m.

Mac-Hi at Dayton-Waitsburg (WA), 7 p.m.

Umatilla at Union, 7 p.m.

Irrigon vs. Amity (at Hood River), 7 p.m.

Grant Union at Weston-McEwen, 7 p.m.

Stanfield at Enterprise, 7 p.m.

St. Paul at Heppner, 7 p.m.

Elgin at Pilot Rock, 7 p.m.

Echo vs. Arlington (at Condon), 7 p.m.

PREP VOLLEYBALL

Heppner at Dufur, 2 p.m.

Enterprise at Helix, 4 p.m.

Weston-McEwen at Helix, 4 p.m.

Condon/Wheeler at Riverside, 4 p.m.

Elgin at Umatilla, 5:30 p.m.

Weston-McEwen vs. Enterprise, 6 p.m.

Thursday

Union at Weston-McEwen, 4 p.m.

Stanfield at Helix, 4 p.m.

Mac-Hi at Helix, 5:30 p.m.

Hermiston (JV) at Irrigon, 7 p.m.

Friday

Pendleton, Hermiston at Mtn. View Invite, 8 a.m.

Imbler at Pilot Rock, 4 p.m.

Stanfield at Echo, 4 p.m.

Umatilla at Union, 5:30 p.m.

Saturday

Weston-McEwen, Pilot Rock at Heppner Tournament, 9 a.m.

PREP BOYS SOCCER

La Grande at Riverside, 4 p.m.

Pendleton at Lewiston (ID), 4:30 p.m.

Umatilla at Mac-Hi, 4:30 p.m.

Thursday

Milwaukie at Pendleton, 6:30 p.m.

Friday

La Grande at Hermiston, 4:30 p.m.

Oregon Episcopal at Umatilla, 4:30 p.m.

PREP GIRLS SOCCER

Baker at Riverside, 4:30 p.m.

Mac-Hi at Umatilla, 6 p.m.

Wednesday

La Grande at Hermiston, 4:30 p.m.

Thursday

Pendleton at Milwaukie, 6 p.m.

Friday

Mac-Hi at Walla Walla (WA), 4 p.m.

Saturday

Umatilla at Pendleton, Noon

Riverside at Stevenson (WA), 1 p.m.

PREP CROSS COUNTRY

Saturday

Hermiston, Umatilla, Heppner at Ultimook

Nike Invitational, 8 a.m.

COLLEGE VOLLEYBALL

Tuesday

Blue Mountain at Walla Walla Univ., 6 p.m.

Wednesday

Blue Mountain vs. College of Southern Idaho, 6 p.m.

COLLEGE WOMEN'S SOCCER

Tuesday

Eastern Oregon at Hope Int'l (Calif.), Noon

Baseball

MLB

AMERICAN LEAGUE

East Division

Boston 74 57 565 —

New York 70 60 538 3½

Baltimore 66 65 504 8

Tampa Bay 66 67 496 9

Toronto 61 70 466 13

Central Division

Cleveland 74 56 569 —

Minnesota 67 63 515 7

Kansas City 64 66 492 10

Detroit 57 73 438 17

Chicago 52 77 403 21½

West Division

Houston 79 51 608 —

Los Angeles 66 65 504 13½

Seattle 66 66 500 8

Texas 64 66 492 15

Oakland 58 72 446 21

Monday's Games

Baltimore 7, Seattle 6

Cleveland 6, N.Y. Yankees 2

Boston 6, Toronto 5

Tampa Bay 12, Kansas City 0

Detroit 4, Colorado 3

Oakland at L.A. Angels, late finish

Tuesday's Games

Cleveland (Bauer 13-8) at N.Y. Yankees

(Garcia 5-8), 4:05 p.m.

Seattle (Ramirez 5-4) at Baltimore (Bundy

12-8), 4:05 p.m.

Boston (Sale 14-6) at Toronto (Anderson

2-2), 4:07 p.m.

Texas (Perez 9-10) at Houston (Fiers 8-8),

4:10 p.m.

Chicago White Sox (Shields 2-4) at Minne-

sota (Santana 13-7), 5:10 p.m.

New York Bay (Cobb 9-8) at Kansas City

(Junis 5-2), 5:15 p.m.

Detroit (Fulmer 10-11) at Colorado (Mar-

quez 10-5), 5:40 p.m.

Oakland (Smith 0-3) at L.A. Angels (Scrib-

ner 2-1), 7:07 p.m.

NATIONAL LEAGUE

East Division

Washington 79 51 608 —

Miami 66 64 508 13

Atlanta 57 72 442 21½

New York 57 73 438 22

Philadelphia 49 81 377 30

Central Division

Chicago 70 60 538 —

Milwaukee 68 63 519 2½

St. Louis 65 65 500 5

Pittsburgh 63 69 477 8

Cincinnati 55 76 420 15½

West Division

Los Angeles 91 38 705 —

Arizona 73 58 557 19

Colorado 71 60 542 21

San Diego 57 73 438 34½

San Francisco 52 80 394 40½

Monday's Games

Washington 11, Miami 2

Philadelphia 6, Atlanta 1

Chicago Cubs 6, Pittsburgh 1

Detroit 4, Colorado 3

St. Louis at San Diego, late finish