

BRIEFLY

No. 2 Wozniacki saves 2 match points, advances to 3rd round

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP) — Second-ranked Caroline Wozniacki fended off two match points and rallied from 5-1 down to win the last six games in the third set and avoid a second-round upset at the Australian Open.

Former No. 1-ranked Wozniacki used her experience to save match points in the seventh game of the deciding set against No. 119-ranked Jana Fett, who was making her main draw debut at a major, and eventually pull off a 3-6, 6-2, 7-5 win.

“That was crazy,” said Wozniacki, who has reached two Grand Slam finals and was a semifinalist here in 2011. “I don’t know how I got back into the match.”

“She’s a tricky opponent and she had nothing to lose. And then I think she realized she was up 5-1 and she let off the speed just a little bit, and I was like, this is my last chance. I have to go in and attack.”

Wozniacki won the next nine points, and 24 of the 31 points played from when she first faced match point. She clinched a 75-minute third set on her first match point when Fett netted a backhand.

Bengals thank Jaguars by donating to Bortles’ foundation

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (AP) — Cincinnati Bengals fans are thanking Blake Bortles for helping the Jacksonville Jaguars eliminate Pittsburgh from the playoffs.

The Blake Bortles Foundation says more than 100 Bengals fans have combined to contribute nearly \$5,000 since Jacksonville beat Cincinnati’s biggest rival, the Steelers, 45-42 last Sunday.

Bortles threw for 214 yards and a touchdown in the victory. He says he appreciates the contributions and adds that Bengals fans “should know their support will make a difference.”

Established in 2016, the Blake Bortles Foundation supports first responders in Florida and helps children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities lead pursue full, independent lives.

Earnhardt interested in becoming minority owner of Panthers

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP) — Retired NASCAR driver Dale Earnhardt Jr. says he is interested in becoming a minority owner with the NFL’s Carolina Panthers.

Earnhardt told The Associated Press he was not asked by local businessmen Felix Sabates to join a potential ownership group, but said he did contact Marcus Smith, the CEO of Speedway Motorsports, to say he’d be interested.

Current Panthers owner Jerry Richardson announced in December he’s selling the team.

PGA Tour

Palmer eager for 2018 after year when his wife faced cancer

By DOUG FERGUSON
Associated Press

HONOLULU — Ryan Palmer couldn’t wait for 2018 to arrive.

It began with an up-and-down week at the Sony Open — a 64 sandwiched between a pair of 71s, and a tie for 58th — though his mood was decidedly steadier. Palmer was in good spirits when he arrived and nothing on the scorecard was going to change that.

It’s nice to have last year behind him.

He had surgery on his shoulder in October, and that’s now healed. A new home being built on seven acres in the Dallas area is almost finished. Above all that, his wife, Jennifer, is getting nothing but favorable scans in her recovery from breast cancer.

“I couldn’t have been any more calm when I got here Monday — on the range, practice rounds, the pro-am, everything,” Palmer said.

A year ago when he arrived on Oahu, his wife was still undergoing chemotherapy for the cancer. Palmer missed four straight cuts to start the year and didn’t crack the top 35 until April. He had only three top-10 finishes, one of them the team event with Jordan Spieth at the Zurich Classic.

“It seemed like a blur,” Palmer said. “Usually you can go back and look at tournaments and see what you did. It was mostly bad stuff. But I don’t remember one thing about it. The time Jordan and I had was awesome. I know I had a good week in Reno (tie for ninth).”

One day he does recall clearly is when Jennifer had her last round of

chemotherapy, which was followed by 35 radiation treatments.

“Each time she goes back to get checked the scan is good,” he said.

Palmer is on a minor medical extension and has five tournaments remaining to earn 24 FedEx Cup points, the least of his worries.

He hadn’t played since August, when he failed to qualify for the FedEx Cup playoffs. He knew he needed arthroscopic surgery to clean up a bone spur in his shoulder but thought about playing a few events when the new season began in October.

Instead, he took off the entire fall and spent time going to 10-year-old son Mason’s hockey games. It also allowed him to recover in time to go to Hawaii. He plans to play next three events in the California desert, Phoenix and San Diego. He’ll take the following two weeks off to move into his house.

“This year couldn’t be any better right now,” Palmer said.

BROADCAST REVIEW: One of the local rules adopted at the start of the new year involved video review. Players no longer are penalized two shots if they sign an incorrect scorecard that they thought was correct at the time, which stems from violations discovered after the round.

The major golf organizations also agreed to assign one or more official to monitor the broadcast to help identify and resolve any issues that arise.

“We’ll have someone watching the broadcast, whether that person is a rules official coming in from the golf course or ... whether it’s someone

back in the office watching the broadcast and communicating,” PGA Tour Commissioner Jay Monahan said.

Still to be determined is who that person will be.

Rules officials don’t think the staff is big enough to take an official off the course. If it’s a PGA Tour official, the question becomes how adept the official is at spotting a violation. And while such video reviews get plenty of attention, they don’t happen often enough to warrant someone sitting in front of a TV for three hours.

There has been video monitoring for years. When the final group makes the turn, with fewer players on the course, the tour will send one official in to watch TV.

A DEFINITION OF CONFIDENCE: Fifteen months ago, Justin Thomas had one PGA Tour victory and was No. 35 in the world. Now he’s the PGA Tour player of the year, FedEx Cup champion and a major champion and has seven victories.

That his confidence has soared is obvious. What exactly does that mean?

“I don’t have the sense of panic,” Thomas said. “I know that I don’t need to be what I thought I had to be to be in contention. I know that I don’t have to go out and play this perfect round. I know that if I shoot 1 under the first round at this tournament, that I still have a chance to win. I know that I’m not going to win every tournament. It’s more the fact of the whole body language and the patience thing.”

His own example would have been the TPC Boston last year during the FedEx Cup playoffs, and the CJ Cup in South Korea when he was exhausted from a busy fall and squeaked out a playoff victory.

USA Gymnastics

Ex-doctor’s victims recount sex abuse as young gymnasts

By DAVID EGGERT
Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. — One after one, gymnasts and other victims of a disgraced former sports doctor stepped forward in a Michigan courtroom Tuesday to recount the sexual abuse and emotional trauma Larry Nassar inflicted on them as children — one with the warning that “little girls don’t stay little forever.”

Nearly 100 women and girls planned to speak or have their statements read during an extraordinary four-day sentencing hearing. Many of them cried as they told their stories. Some requested that their identities not be made public. The judge consoled the victims and said they should not blame themselves.

“I testified to let the world know that you are a repulsive liar and those ‘treatments’ were pathetically veiled sexual abuse,” one victim, Kyle Stephens, said to the 54-year-old Nassar, who bowed his head with his eyes closed or looked away as she and others spoke.

Stephens, the first to speak, said Nassar repeatedly abused her from age 6 until age 12 during family visits to his home in Holt, near Lansing. She said he rubbed his genitals on her and digitally penetrated her, among other abuse.

She said Nassar later



Matthew Dae Smith/Lansing State Journal via AP
Former family friend to the Nassar family, and babysitter to Nassar’s children Kyle Stephens, right, addresses Larry Nassar Tuesday during the first day of the victim impact statements in Circuit Court Rosemarie Aquilina’s courtroom in Lansing, Mich. Behind Stephens is her mother, and Asst. Prosecutor Angela Povilaitis, center.

denied it, and her parents initially believed him. Stephens said she largely blamed her father’s suicide on the shame and self-loathing he felt for defending Nassar.

“Perhaps you have figured it out by now, but little girls don’t stay little forever,” Stephens said. “They grow into strong women that return to destroy your world.”

Nassar has pleaded guilty to molesting females with his hands at his Michigan State University office, his

home and a Lansing-area gymnastics club, often while their parents were in the room. He also worked for Indianapolis-based USA Gymnastics, which trains Olympians.

Another statement came from Donna Markham, who told of how her daughter Chelsey killed herself in 2009, years after Nassar sexually abused her during a medical examination.

“It all started with him,” she said, describing her daughter’s downward spiral into drug abuse.

Victims described experiencing “searing pain” during the assaults and having feelings of shame and embarrassment. They said it had changed their life trajectories — affecting relationships, causing them to be distrustful and leading to depression, suicidal thoughts, and anger and anxiety about whether they should have spoken up sooner.

“He touched the most innocent places on my body,” said 17-year-old Jessica Thomashaw,

recounting how she was sexually assaulted at ages 9 and 12. “I couldn’t be just a normal girl anymore, and I forever lost a big piece of my childhood due to his abuse.”

Ingham County Circuit Judge Rosemarie Aquilina, who is expected to order a sentence Friday, said the system had failed them.

“You shouldn’t be angry with yourself,” she told a 31-year-old victim, who said she was assaulted almost 20 years ago. “You went to him for pain and healing, and you didn’t know. No one faults you or any other victim for that. You were a child.”

The Michigan attorney general’s office is seeking 40 to 125 years in prison for the 54-year-old Nassar. The maximum represents a year for each of the 125 girls and women who filed reports of abuse with campus police. He already has been sentenced to 60 years in federal prison for child pornography crimes.

Olympic gold medalist Simone Biles on Monday said she was among the athletes sexually abused by Nassar. Another gold medalist, Aly Raisman, tweeted Monday that she would not attend the sentencing “because it is too traumatic for me. My impact letter will be read in court in front of Nassar. I support the brave survivors. We are all in this together.”

Olympians McKayla Maroney and Gabby Douglas also have said they were among Nassar’s victims as teens.

In November, he admitted to digitally penetrating 10 girls, mostly under the guise of treatment, between 1998 and 2015. As part of plea deals in two adjacent Michigan counties, he said his conduct had no legitimate medical purpose and that he did not have the girls’ consent.

Nassar is scheduled to be sentenced in Eaton County in two weeks.

The criminal cases followed reports last year in The Indianapolis Star about how USA Gymnastics mishandled complaints about sexual misconduct involving him and coaches. Women and girls said the stories inspired them to step forward with detailed allegations of abuse.

Melissa Imrie told the judge she was assaulted in 1997, when she was 12, after breaking her tailbone. She described years of severe depression, sleeplessness and other issues.

“Everybody’s story that I listened today is just an echo of everything that I’ve went through. They’re just speaking like it’s my voice,” Imrie said.

She said she wants young athletes “to be safe from sexual predators, from this kind of abuse.”

NFL

Seahawks bring on Schottenheimer, Norton as coordinators

Associated Press

RENTON, Wash. — The Seattle Seahawks have hired Brian Schottenheimer as their offensive coordinator and are bringing back Ken Norton Jr. to oversee the defense.

The Seahawks officially announced the anticipated hires Tuesday after reports surfaced over the holiday weekend of agreements with the pair. San Francisco 49ers coach Kyle Shanahan released a statement Monday that Norton had been offered a coordinator position less than a week after Norton was hired by the 49ers. The Seahawks did not confirm Norton’s hiring until Tuesday.

Norton was the defensive coordinator in Oakland before getting fired after 10 games last season. He was subsequently hired by the 49ers last week as an assistant



Schottenheimer



Norton

head coach before taking the job with Seattle. Norton replaces Kris Richard, who was Seattle’s defensive coordinator for the past three seasons and was selected ahead of Norton for the job in 2015.

Norton served as linebackers coach for Seattle from 2010-14, but when he was bypassed for the job three years ago jumped at the chance to be a coordinator in Oakland. Along with firing Richard, the Seahawks let go of linebackers coach Michael Barrow. Schottenheimer takes over

for Darrell Bevell, who was fired last week after seven seasons in charge of Seattle’s offense. Bevell was let go along with offensive line coach Tom Cable following a disappointing season where the Seahawks offense was defined by inconsistency.

Seattle also hired veteran Mike Solari as offensive line coach, replacing Cable.

Schottenheimer was an offensive coordinator from 2006-2014 with the New York Jets and the St. Louis Rams. He spent the 2015 season as the offensive coordinator at Georgia before returning to the NFL the past two seasons as the quarterbacks coach with the Indianapolis Colts.

Schottenheimer will inherit an offense that has great potential but significant problems to solve.

Russell Wilson led the NFL with 34 touchdown passes this

season but was regularly underwhelming during slow first-half performances that put stress on Seattle’s defense and often had the Seahawks playing from behind.

Schottenheimer’s biggest challenge will be re-energizing a Seattle running game that disappeared this season. Wilson was the Seahawks’ leading rusher by more than 500 yards. No running back for Seattle had more than 240 yards rushing and the six running backs who carried the ball for the Seahawks in 2017 averaged a mere 3.3 yards per carry.

His final three seasons in New York were the most optimistic sign that Schottenheimer can help the Seahawks return to the run-first style that head coach Pete Carroll desires. The Jets were the No. 9 run team in the NFL in 2008; No. 1 in 2009; and No. 4 in 2010.

With the return of Norton,

Seattle chose a return to the past. There was a belief Seattle was trying to bring back Gus Bradley, but the former Seahawks defensive coordinator opted to remain with the Los Angeles Chargers. Norton knows much of Seattle’s veteran personnel and will be more apt to run what Carroll wants defensively.

Richard’s units slipped the past two seasons, but that was partly due to critical injuries. Seattle lost safety Earl Thomas for the final month of the 2016 season and played half of the 2017 season without Richard Sherman, Kam Chancellor and Cliff Avril. Seattle’s defense ranked 11th overall and 13th in points allowed this season.

Solari joins Seattle from the New York Giants. He has ties to the Seahawks after serving as offensive line coach in 2008-09