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SPORTS

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WORLD CUP

Three Lions roar into tourney's final four

ENGLAND 2,
NORWAY 1

BY ALANIS THAMES
Associated Press

MIAMI GARDENS, FLA. — Jude Bellingham locked arms with teammate Harry Kane as England fans belted out the Beatles' "Hey Jude."

Bellingham certainly earned the serenade.

He scored twice Saturday — an equalizer in the first half and the go-ahead goal in the third minute of extra time — to lift England past Norway, 2-1, and into the World Cup semifinals for the first time since 2018.

The Real Madrid star has now matched Kane with six goals in this tournament, one shy of Norway's Erling Haaland, who was held scoreless by England. Bellingham also scored twice in the round of 16 as England beat co-host Mexico.

England, winner of the 1966 World Cup and facing pressure to return to the title match, is now one win away from getting there.

"The game is split into loads of different facets. Some of it is technical, tactical," Bellingham said. "For me, the biggest one is psychological and how you can manage setbacks, how you can manage adversity. This team showed yet again that they can do it and that's a really valuable skill and trait to have."

Not everyone was thrilled with England's performance.

"We made life very, very difficult for ourselves today," Coach Thomas Tuchel said in a contentious interview with Fox Sports. "The result is fantastic. We're in the last four. It's amazing, but not happy with the performance ... in every sense."

Tuchel clarified in his news conference that he was "proud and happy" with how his squad has overcome adversity, but added, "I'm also a football coach, and I also have demands. ... I think we can play faster. I think we can play more clinical."

Bellingham seemed to disagree with his coach's critique after England prevailed in the heat and humidity of South Florida, with temperatures reaching 92 degrees at the start of warm-ups.

"Well, whatever," Bellingham said, shaking his head. "It's difficult out there. It's a tough shift. My thoughts and appreciation goes to the players out there who put in a great shift."

Andreas Schjelderup scored in the 36th minute for Norway, a squad that reached its first quarterfinals and took the internet by storm with its "Viking row" and the charisma of Haaland, its fearsome 6-foot-5 striker.

Haaland was kept off the scoresheet for the first time in this World Cup. The Manchester City star sat dejectedly on the bench after he was subbed out for Jorgen Strand Larsen in the second half of extra time.

"It was not a tough decision to take him out," Norway Coach Stale Solbakken said. "He was finished. Maybe I should have

SEE WORLD CUP ON B6



Jude Bellingham scored both of England's goals to send the Three Lions into Wednesday's World Cup semifinal match.



GARETT FISBECK/AP

Chris Hacopian was an All-Met at Churchill and spent two years at Maryland before hopping to Texas A&M for his junior season.

Homegrown talent

Nationals kick off first draft of new era with local product Hacopian

BY NOAH WHITE

During a Washington Nationals road series in June, President of Baseball Operations Paul Toboni sat in the dugout of his previous employer, the Boston Red Sox, speaking of "development." Up in New England, stars were drafted, not signed. But when he ventured down the coast last fall, the term was largely foreign to D.C. ears. The Nationals' minor league system had struggled to generate a consistent flow of talent for several years, which was the primary culprit for the club's struggles after its 2019 World Series victory.

Change needed to be swift. Thus, a week ago, Toboni welcomed a local prospect to Nationals Park — and showed him a hefty PowerPoint presentation, weaving through what Washington's player development department thought he did well and, acutely,

what he didn't.

The slideshow "fired me up," Chris Hacopian said. As it turns out, the same went for Toboni. In Washington's first draft for a reshaped front office, which has become known for its emphasis on player development and amateur scouting, the Nationals selected the Texas A&M second baseman with the No. 11 pick Saturday.

"One thing that really stood out with them was just their development plan for me," Hacopian emphasized. "Before they even picked me, they were so prepared in my development."

Hacopian is known for his plate discipline, ranking among the best in this class across most hitting metrics, especially exit velocity and hitting percentage. Most striking: This spring, he whiffed on pitches in the zone less than 10 percent of the time.

In 42 games with the Aggies, Hacopian

hit .319 with a .405 on-base percentage. The righty has some power upside — his 11 home runs back that up — though he was shakier at the plate, especially in generating loft, while dealing with back issues for part of this year.

While the injury played a role in Hacopian's switch from shortstop to second base — with some days as designated hitter — his defense remains a question mark. He isn't noticeably quick, limiting his lateral range, which he said the Nationals emphasized needed improvement. He may end up in a corner outfield spot in the majors. "I'm excited to play wherever they see fit," he said. "I just want to become the best player possible."

For some Nationals fans, Hacopian may be a familiar face. Before transferring to College Station for his junior season, he

SEE DRAFT ON B5

Another lead bites the dust as Nats drop series

YANKEES 4,
NATIONALS 2

This time, reliable relievers are to blame for meltdown

BY DANIELLE ALLENTUCK

It's already an all-too-familiar tale. The Washington Nationals have the lead in the late innings. Then the game shifts to the bullpen, and poof — it's gone.

Orlando Ribalta and Clayton Beeter were the culprits Saturday at Nationals Park as Washington fell, 4-2, to the New York Yankees. After their 27th blown save of the

season, the Nationals (48-48) must win Sunday's series finale to avoid a sweep and head into the all-star break above .500.

"I told the guys after the game ... all we're going to do is keep going," Manager Blake Butera said. "This is as resilient a group as I've seen. They've been through a lot already."

In Friday night's 5-3 loss, a questionable decision backfired on Butera. With Washington ahead by one run in the ninth inning, the rookie manager put in left-hander Matt Krook, who had a career ERA over 15.00, choosing to leverage traditional platoon splits instead of using a right-handed reliever who has pitched in high-leverage situations.

After Krook gave up a go-ahead two-run homer, Butera said the Nationals were re-

considering their process but that they still trust it, even though "we keep getting burned."

So on Saturday, Washington did stray from picking a lefty to face a lefty pocket in the eighth inning, instead turning to its two most reliable relievers. A better process yielded the same result.

With a 2-0 lead in the eighth, Ribalta gave up a solo home run to Ryan McMahon. He then walked Ben Rice before the game was handed to Beeter, who was promptly taken deep by Trent Grisham and Paul Goldschmidt to make it 4-2 Yankees.

SEE NATIONALS ON B5

Yankees at Nationals
1:35 p.m., Nationals.TV

WIMBLEDON

Noskova claims title in all-Czech showdown

BY ANDREW DAMPF
Associated Press

LONDON — Linda Noskova placed fingers in both of her ears to drown out the noise from the Centre Court crowd.

She draped one of Wimbledon's strawberry-red towels over her head.

And eventually — after she had wasted five match points and a 5-2 lead and conceded the second set of a drama-filled final — she left the court completely for a bathroom break.

During Noskova's brief time off the court, two shiny objects caught her attention: the Venus Rosewater Dish that is awarded to the women's champion and the smaller dish for the runner-up.

"I was like: 'I'm not going to take the small one. I'm taking the big one. I have been so close. This will probably be the heartbreak of my life,'" Noskova said. "I'm going to leave my soul on court in the third set, whatever that be."

The 21-year-old Noskova did just as she promised herself, overcoming her second-set meltdown to beat Karolina Muchova, 6-2, 5-7, 6-3, in an all-Czech final Saturday for her first Grand Slam trophy.

When Noskova finally finished it off with a service winner on her sixth match point — and first of the third set — she covered her face and dropped down to the grass on her back.

Minutes later, Noskova was being awarded the Venus Rosewater Dish by Catherine, Princess of Wales.

"It's never easy to get the last point," Noskova said during her victory speech. "Karo, you really made me work for it."

Noskova became the third Czech woman in four years to win the grass-court major after Marketa Vondrousova in 2023 and Barbora Krejickova in 2024.

Muchova and Noskova played doubles together at the 2024 Paris Olympics and finished fourth.

"I am so glad that I could play my first Grand Slam final with you," Noskova told Muchova during her speech. "We made history today. All our Czech fans at home are proud of us, no matter the result. It was a good day for both of us."

Petra Kvitova, who won Wimbledon in 2011 and 2014, was in attendance. She was joined by the greatest Czech-born player of them all, Martina Navratilova — who won a record nine singles titles at the All England Club and was seated next to the princess in the Royal Box — and Jan Kodes, the 1973 champion.

An excerpt from the poem "If" by Rudyard Kipling that was placed above the players' entrance to Centre Court more than a century ago summarizes the challenges Noskova had to overcome.

"If you can meet with triumph and disaster," the excerpt says. "And treat those two imposters just the same."

It's not the first time that Noskova has had to overcome adversity at Wimbledon.

Her mother died just before

SEE WIMBLEDON ON B3

Wimbledon: Men's final
11 a.m., ESPN



MATTHEW STOCKMAN/GETTY IMAGES

A look at the Venus Rosewater Dish, awarded to the winner, helped Linda Noskova rebound after dropping the second set.