

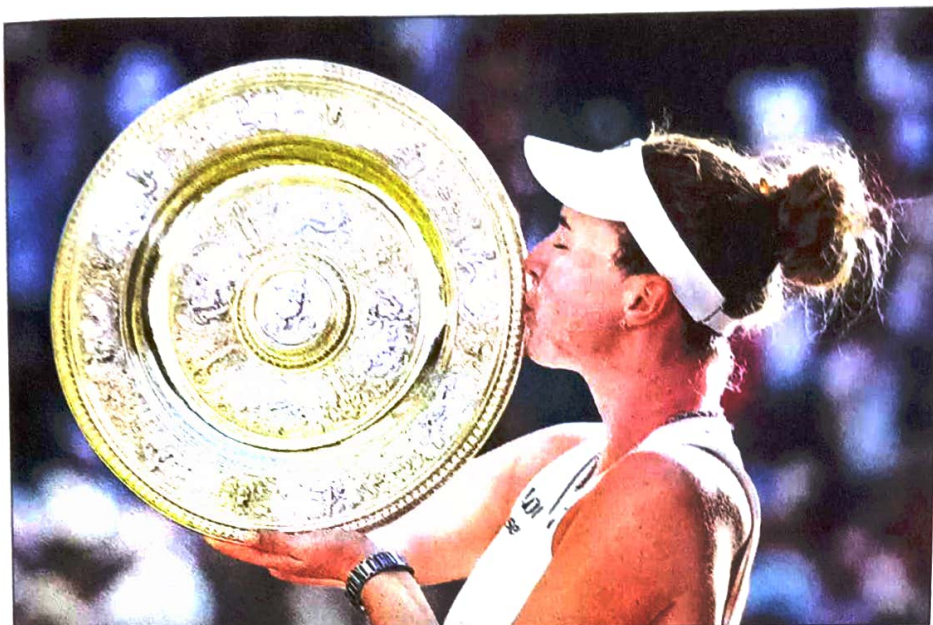
Five match points lost, but title won

London: Linda Noskova recovered from an attack of nerves that saw her squander five match points in the second set as she completed a 6-2, 5-7, 6-3 win over fellow Czech Karolina Muchova in a roller-coaster Wimbledon women's singles final on Saturday.

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The 21-year-old was in complete control as she won the opening set in 32 minutes and led 5-2 in the second in the first grand slam singles final between two women from the Czech Republic in the professional era.

But a battling Muchova saved three match points at 2-5, another in the next game when a faltering Noskova served a double fault and then another at 4-5 as a rath-



Linda Noskova celebrates with the Venus Rosewater Dish after winning the Wimbledon final against Karolina Muchova on Saturday. (Reuters)

er one-sided contest belatedly burst into life on Centre Court.

Ninth seed Noskova lost five successive games as Muchova dragged the match into a decider.

However, Noskova banished the demons in her head as she regained control to forge a 5-2 lead in the third set.

The 29-year-old Muchova pulled one game back as the shadows crept across the court. But Noskova, serving

for the match for a second time, made no mistake to claim her first grand slam title.

After bringing up another two match points, well over an hour after her first one, she banged down an unreturnable serve before collapsing to the court in relief and joy.

She is the third Czech player in four years to win the Wimbledon women's title after Marketa Vondrousova in 2023 and Barbora Krejickova

in 2024.

Their compatriot Petra Kvitova, who won Wimbledon in 2011 and 2014, was in attendance, as was the greatest Czech-born player of them all, Martina Navratilova — who won a record nine singles titles at the All England Club.

Navratilova looked on from the Royal Box, where she was seated next to Kate, the Princess of Wales. She later presented the Venus Rosewa-

ter Dish to Noskova.

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

Doubles glory

World No.1 pair Henry Patten and Harri Heliövaara claimed their third major together as they beat Mate Pavic and Marcelo Arevalo 7-6 (7-4), 7-6 (7-3) to win the men's doubles title here for the second time on Saturday.

The match did not produce a single break point as the servers held their ground to force a tie-break in both sets, where Briton Patten and his Finnish partner Heliövaara prevailed.

"These are the moments you've always dreamed of, playing on the Centre Court of Wimbledon. But doing it twice, this well, I need to thank Henry for being the best partner in the world," said Heliövaara, who first won at Wimbledon in 2024 during the first year of his partnership with Patten.

Patten and Heliövaara, who also won the Australian Open last year.

"The ATP Tour submitted proposals to maybe cut some of the doubles, and I am a strong believer that we're here to grow the game," said Patten.

Reuters, AP



Karolina Muchova reacts during the final match at Wimbledon on Saturday. (Reuters)