



Snigur, a former junior Wimbledon champion from Ukraine who lost in qualifying on Wednesday, says the war in her homeland has affected her form  
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WIMBLEDON QUALIFYING

## ‘My base in Kyiv was bombed by Russia. I can’t focus on tennis’

Matthew Kayanja

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For some of the Ukrainians trying to qualify for Wimbledon on Wednesday, the worry and strain caused by the war in their homeland left them looking bereft on court, while for others it motivated them to succeed.

“I miss my home,” said Daria Snigur, 20, fighting back tears after she had cut a distracted figure during her 6-0, 6-2 defeat in the second round of qualifying in Roehampton, southwest London.

“I don’t have base now, because my base in Kyiv, Russia bombed. Now I’m living in Warsaw, I’m practising but I don’t know where I keep practising tomorrow.”

The former Wimbledon junior champion, who was the seventh seed in qualifying here, seemed to be battling with herself, rather than her opponent, Hungary’s Timea Babos, as she put simple returns into the net.

A spectator commented that she looked as though she did not want to be there, which seemed the case when she let Babos’s serve go past her without lifting a finger on match point.

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“Today I feel myself very bad, I’m very sad you can see it,” Snigur said. “I don’t know what’s happened. I tried to play my game but I don’t know why I can’t do it today. I can’t focus on tennis because I want to watch news, read news.”

She explained that her mother and grandparents were still in Kyiv, and that she wanted to visit but could not be sure as the danger fluctuated every day.

“I don’t know why the [ATP and WTA] can’t ban Russian and Belarusian players. I think maybe some people need to visit Bucha [the city where hundreds of Ukrainian civilians were killed by Russian soldiers]. Did you hear about Bucha, their pain?” she said, pausing for emphasis.

But for Katarina Zavatska, 22, who beat the American Robin Anderson 6-4, 6-3 to move within one victory of the Wimbledon main draw, the war provides more motivation to succeed.

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“My parents have a restaurant [in west Ukraine] and they had to close at first because of the risk of a bomb, and they had to help all the others working in the restaurant,” she said. “I can help and earn money, I feel very useful that I can do something.

“At the beginning when it all started I could not practice because every ten minutes I wanted to cry. I was in France at the time. But then as time passes you understand that you need to live because if you stop you cannot help your family, you do nothing.

“This war gives people the idea to live in this moment. We don’t know who’s gonna die, who’s gonna stay alive. Today was a good day, we had nice food, nice weather, I feel good I won.”



Marchenko, who was also defeated in the second round of qualifying, admits tennis has “not been the priority the past three months”

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On the men's side, the Ukrainian former world No 49 Illya Marchenko, 34, lost 7-6 (7-5), 6-2 to Taiwan's Jason Jung, stopping for lengthy medical break early in the second set with an apparent leg problem.

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"I'm not playing at the level I used to or want to — this might be my last Wimbledon, my knee doesn't let me play that well," he said. "With everything going on in my country, tennis was not the priority the last three months, it's very difficult to focus."

Marchenko, who is based in Slovakia, fled his home town of Donetsk in 2014 after Russian-backed separatists clashed with Ukraine's forces. He also could not understand why the tennis authorities had not followed Wimbledon's lead in banning Russian and Belarusian players, and said his talks with them had led nowhere.

"The most important weapon in Russian propaganda is and always was Russian sport," Marchenko said in a video on his YouTube channel. "It relies on the success of Russian athletes to show the superiority of their nation. That's why doping in Russia is state-sponsored and systematic."

He also said he was in constant contact with Sergiy Stakhovsky, the Ukrainian former tennis player who made headlines for returning to his home country to enlist in the army.

"His eyes have changed, I know him pretty well," Marchenko said. "He wasn't in the middle of the fight but he's seen the results of the occupations."

Elsewhere, all three of Britain's prospects failed to reach the final round of qualifying, with the Scot Aidan McHugh losing 6-4, 6-2 to the Italian Andreas Seppi, Arthur Fery being edged out in two tie-breaks, 7-6 (7-2), 7-6 (7-3), by the American Nicolas Moreno De Alboran, and Sarah Beth Grey being defeated 6-3, 6-2 by Switzerland's Lulu Sun.

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