

Beat: Sports

Murray carrying lighter load than usual at Wimbledon

SPORTS NEWS

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USPA NEWS - Questions marks remain about the condition of his right hip but when Andy Murray walks into Wimbledon next week at least his shoulders will not be carrying the weight of a nation's hopes.

Not since Greg Rusedski in 2006 has another British man been ranked higher than Murray at the start of the championships.

This year that honour falls to world number 18 Kyle Edmund who underlined his new-found status with a straight-sets victory over Murray, now down at 156, in Eastbourne last week.

That was only twice Wimbledon champion Murray's third match back having returned to competitive action last week at Queen's Club where he lost to Nick Kyrgios in the first round.

Former world number one Murray is unseeded in the men's draw and will face a tricky opener against Frenchman Benoit Paire on Tuesday, most probably on his favoured Centre Court.

This time though, the usual frenzy of expectation surrounding Britain's most successful player, certainly of the modern era, is missing "partly because of World Cup fever but mainly because few even expected him to be ready in time.

Murray, 31, sounded almost relieved to be spared the usual pre-Wimbledon hype on Saturday during a news conference in which he said he would most likely be fit to play.

"Obviously, Wimbledon for me is special for a lot of reasons. I always want to be here competing," he told reporters.

"It feels a little bit odd coming into the tournament this year. Normally, like at this stage I feel really nervous, lots of pressure, and I expect a lot of myself around this time of year.

"I've always loved that and enjoyed that in a way. It has been difficult, but enjoyed it, whereas this year it feels very, very different."

Murray limped to defeat in the quarter-finals last year against Sam Querrey but has been moving freely in practice sessions at the All England Club this week and said the aches he felt after losing his comeback match to Kyrgios have gone.

"Four or five weeks ago, I didn't know whether I'd be capable of competing at a level I'd be happy with," he said.

"I think the last couple of weeks has been beneficial. I'm practicing at a high level, a high intensity every day with some of the best players in the world.

"That's really positive for me as part of getting better, to compete again."

Murray, who in 2013 ended Britain's 77-year wait for a Wimbledon men's singles champion, faces a tough route just to get to the second week, with fast-rising Canadian Denis Shapovalov and Juan Martin del Potro potential second and third round opponents.

While saying he is "pumped" to be back Murray will not be taking any chances and believes he will only really know where he stands once he has played a best-of-five-set match.

"How I'm going to feel if I play for four hours in the first match? I can't answer that question honestly," Murray said.

"I need to be mindful of how I'm feeling on a day-to-day basis. Right now you can't say for 100 percent certainty when you only started competing 10 days ago how you're going to feel after every match and each day."

Reporting by Martyn Herman, editing by Ed Osmond

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