

Swiatek beats Rybakina to take Poland into United Cup final

AFP- Five-time Grand Slam champion Iga Swiatek beat Elena Rybakina in straight sets to take Poland into the final of the mixed-teams United Cup on Saturday with victory over Kazakhstan. Last year's runners-up will meet either a United States team led by Coco Gauff, or the Czech Republic on Sunday for the title in Sydney.

"This win makes me really proud," Swiatek said after seeing off Rybakina 7-6 (7/5), 6-4 to give Poland an unassailable 2-0 lead in the tie.

It was a real statement of intent from the world number two with the first major of the year starting on January 12.

"It is perfect preparation for the Australian Open," said the Pole.

Swiatek again played with strapping on her right thigh, having been troubled in her tough three-set win over Britain's Katie Boulter in the quarter-finals.

That clash lasted nearly three hours and Swiatek was slow out of the blocks against Rybakina, who is ranked sixth in the world.

They went to a first-set tie break after Rybakina saved two set points, before the 23-year-old Pole pulled away to take her country into the final.

"I for sure did not start well and had the handbrake on a bit. I knew I had to do something and change the momentum," said Swiatek.

"I told myself I am not going to miss any more. For sure it

was tough, it's always tough against Elena."

Before that, Hubert Hurkacz put Poland on the way when he beat Alexander Shevchenko 6-3, 6-2 in the men's singles.

The 16th-ranked Hurkacz lost both his singles matches in group play but defeated Britain's Billy Harris in the quarter-finals and took that momentum into the meeting with Shevchenko.

"The last match here gave me a little bit of confidence and I've been playing better with every single match," Hurkacz said.

The United States face the Czechs in the other semi-final later Saturday.

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