



PHOTO: AFP

World number one Roger Federer of Switzerland shrieks in delight as he completes his straight-sets victory over Chilean Fernando Gonzalez in the final of the Australian Open in Melbourne on Sunday.

SERIE B Nedved saves Juve blushes

AFP, Rome

A goal in the second minute of stoppage time from Czech midfielder Pavel Nedved salvaged a 1-1 draw for Serie B leaders Juventus at Spezia on Saturday as the season reached its halfway stage.

The home side were leading through Simone Confalone's first-half header before Juve had midfielder Giuliano Giannichedda sent off for two yellow cards in the 79th minute.

Spezia spurned several good chances to secure the three points before Nedved equalised for the 10 men with a low drive from the edge of the 18-yard box.

A draw left Juventus on 39 points from their 21 games played, two clear of second-placed Bologna who won 1-0 at home to AlbinoLeffe.

Nedved admitted Spezia had given his side a run for their money.

"This is a very difficult place to come and get anything, so we are very pleased to take a point," Nedved told Sky Italia.

More trouble in Italian football

AFP, Rome

A director of amateur Italian team Sanmartinese died on Saturday following crowd trouble at the end of their 2-1 win against Calabrian rivals Cancellese.

Police believe 40-year-old Ermanno Licursi died from a brain haemorrhage after being hit on the nose as he tried to stop home fans from attacking the Sanmartinese players.

Confirmation of the cause of Licursi's death, which police originally thought was a heart attack, will be known after an autopsy has been carried out.

The two teams play in the regional Girone D in Terza Categoria, the equivalent of Italy's 10th division.

Licursi's death prompted the amateur Italian football association (LND) to suspend all football matches in Calabria from the Eccellenza (sixth division) to the Terza Categoria.

Real go down again

REUTERS, Madrid



LFP

Real Madrid slumped to their third defeat in five games when they went down 1-0 at Villarreal in the Primera Liga on Saturday.

Villarreal, who had won once in their previous six outings, notched up their first ever victory against Real when 19-year-old midfielder Marcos clipped the ball home after a slick passing move midway through the second half.

Real, missing AC Milan-bound Ronaldo, David Beckham, the injured Raul and the out-of-favour Antonio Cassano, barely managed

to threaten the Villarreal goal in a toothless performance at the Madrigal.

"We didn't take one shot in the second half and had almost no presence on the pitch. It was a very poor half," Real's sporting director Predrag Mijatovic told television station La Sexta.

The result meant Fabio Capello's side remain in third place in the table, a point behind leaders Barcelona who host Celta Vigo on Sunday.

Atletico Madrid's hopes of keeping the pressure on the leading pack were frustrated when they were held to a 1-1 draw by Racing Santander at the Calderon earlier on Saturday.

Atletico fell behind when Racing's little-and-large partner-

ship of Pedro Munitis and Nikola Zigic manufactured a classy goal 17 minutes from time.

The diminutive Munitis hooked a clever pass over his shoulder on the edge of the area and the towering Serb striker burst between two defenders before firing home from 10 metres.

Atletico hit back almost immediately, centre-back Pablo Ibanez marking his 100th appearance for the club with his first goal of the season when he skimmed a header into the net after a midfielder Jurado had whipped a free kick into the area.

The draw left Atletico in fifth spot in the table, level on 36 points with Valencia who play Real Betis on Sunday and three adrift of

SEE PAGE 18 COL 8



PHOTO: AFP

A dejected Real Madrid player walks off as jubilant Villarreal players celebrate a goal during their Primera Liga match at the Madrigal in Villarreal on Saturday.

Federer's perfect 10



AFP, Melbourne

Roger Federer captured his 10th Grand Slam singles title without dropping a set, finishing a dominating run through the Australian Open by beating Fernando Gonzalez of Chile 7-6 (2), 6-4, 6-4 in Sunday's final.

Federer improved his winning streak to a career-best 36 matches, became the first man in the Open era to twice win three straight majors and has won six of the last seven Grand Slam titles -- his only loss was in the French Open final to Rafael Nadal.

It was also the first time that a champion went through a major without dropping a set since the 1980 French Open, when Bjorn Borg did it for the third time. Ken Rosewall, who was sitting in the stands, was the last man to accomplish the feat at the Australian Open, in 1971.

The 25-year-old Federer now is within four of Pete Sampras' record 14 Grand Slam titles.

"I don't know how I did it so

quickly, in such a short period of time," Federer said.

Next up is the French Open, the only major he hasn't won.

"That's such a tough Grand Slam to win," Federer said. "I am improving year by year on clay and maybe one year (Nadal) won't be in the final. If he is, maybe I can beat him."

While Federer made his two-week blitz look easy, he said a lot of work went into it.

"It all works out in the end. It is just wonderful. I have had a great run here again this year," he told a crowd that included his parents, who sat courtside after flying in to watch him for the first time in Australia. "I am very proud to be holding this trophy again."

Gonzalez, who fell to 0-10 against Federer, said the Swiss star was simply too good.

"I have to congratulate again -- again -- Roger," the 26-year-old Chilean said. "He is a great champion who played a really good match today, all week -- almost all his life."

Federer said he had thought about a different strategy against Gonzalez, then recalled his past success.

"In the end I said, you know what, I've beaten him nine times, so

just take it easy and play your game, and hopefully it is going to work out," he said. "It did."

Gonzalez, seeded 10th and in his first Grand Slam final, kept Federer under pressure with his big forehand, but could not quite match the all-around game of the player who has been ranked No. 1 for 156 consecutive weeks.

He broke Federer in the ninth game, the first break point chance of the match, and had two set points in the next game but failed to convert.

"I was missing too many forehands, I didn't know what to do exactly with his slice," Federer said. "Maybe the wind, maybe his court coverage and everything put me under pressure, and I wasn't feeling that great right from the start."

"If he closes out 6-4, he is clearly the better player in that set. I came back just at the right moment."

Federer broke back to level it at 5-all, then had four set points in the next game before Gonzalez held in a game that went to deuce seven times. That forced a tiebreaker which Federer dominated, jumping out to a 5-0 lead after winning a challenge against an incorrect baseline call and getting the first point replayed.

Serena coming to India

AFP, Melbourne

Newly-crowned Australian Open champion Serena Williams is heading to India for her next tournament and says she can't wait to visit the country for the first time.

Williams, who won her eighth Grand Slam by beating world number one Maria Sharapova against the odds on Saturday, said she will play the Bangalore Open from February 12-18.

"I'm supposed to go to India next, Bangalore, the Sony Ericsson there," she said.

"I'm so excited. I've never been to India. I heard a lot about it. I'm really looking forward to going there. For some reason, I'm really

SEE PAGE 18 COL 5

History at Melbourne

AFP, Melbourne

Frenchwoman Sandra De Jenken became the first female umpire to take charge of a men's Grand Slam final Sunday when Roger Federer beat Fernando Gonzalez to win his third Australian Open.

Her turn in the chair came at the conclusion of a tournament that attracted a record crowd, with 554,858 people passing through the Melbourne Park turnstiles over the two-week event.

They ate their way through 41,109 buckets of French fries, 13,600 hot dogs and 21,323 pizzas, drinking 154,000 bottles of water and 126,353 soft drinks.

There were some 2,750 racquets strung during the championship, using 33 kilometres (20.5 miles) of string.

It was the first time the tournament used the HawkEye video line-calling technology on centre court, with the players challenging 188 calls and being found to be correct

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1



PHOTO: AFP

Fernando Gonzalez falls on his back during the final against Roger Federer in the Australian Open in Melbourne on Sunday.

Gonzalez rues missed chance



REUTERS, Melbourne

Fernando Gonzalez said the loss of a tight first set to Roger Federer was the turning point in the Australian Open final on Sunday.

The Chilean 10th seed, his country's first grand slam finalist since Marcelo Rios at Melbourne Park in 1998, fought bravely against the world number one before going down 7-6, 6-4, 6-4 in two hours and 20 minutes of high quality play.

Gonzalez, who had inflicted defeats on fifth seed James Blake and second seed Rafael Nadal en route to the final, had two set points at 5-4 in the opener before the Swiss maestro broke back and then won the tiebreak 7-2.

"The match may be different if I had won the first set," said the

south American, who will rise to number five in the world rankings after his run.

"Maybe I lose in four but I think every time I play him I never win the first set so that was maybe a key."

The 2004 Olympic doubles champion had lost all his previous nine encounters with the world number one, but in Sunday's first set he battled to the limit with Federer, making the Swiss great look less than unbeatable for the first time in the tournament.

Federer's ploy of constantly working his opponent round the court started to take its toll on an exhausted Gonzalez, who conceded breaks in game seven of the second and third sets.

"I had a chance in the first set he's a great player he can do everything and defended really well, when I attack him."

"I didn't take my opportunity, he needs only one break per set and he was playing really good tennis."

"He moved me around really well, was playing very good against the wind. He took me out of my position, it was tough."

Despite falling to a 10-0 career record against the Swiss, the 26-year-old was still adamant he could reach the summit of the world rankings.

"I think I can (be number one). I have to be ready when Roger comes down little bit. He's on the way to be the best player ever but he makes things very simple and whenever has a chance he takes it."

"I'm at a good level, I'm still improving and I can still improve further. It's been a very positive tournament for me."

"Of course he's beatable but it's tough I think every match is a new match so I'll have to try next time."

"He was missing a bit with his forehand, he gave me a chance, but only in the first set after that he was playing too good."

Now eyes on French Open



AFP, Melbourne

Roger Federer has been given the incentive to go after the Grand Slam title missing off his burgeoning resume with his dominating victory in the Australian Open here Sunday.

The incomparable world number one broke Chilean 10th seed Fernando Gonzalez's spirit for a 7-6 (7/2), 6-4, 6-4 win to claim his third Australian crown and his 10th Grand Slam title.

But as the 25-year-old Swiss maestro closes in on Pete Sampras's all-time Grand Slam title lead of 14, the one notable omission is the French Open.

Federer, out on his own as the game's top player, was runner-up to clay king Rafael Nadal at last year's French Open, his best performance in eight cracks at Roland Garros.

Nadal, Spain's world number two, has an Open Era (post-1969) record of 62 consecutive wins on clay and stands in Federer's path.

Nadal also boasts a perfect four-from-four record against Federer on clay, but the world number one believes he is getting closer to add the French title to his four Wimbledon, three Australian and three US Opens.

"Last year was the first time where I thought that if everything went perfectly well there might be a chance and I got so awfully close," Federer said of his Roland Garros holy grail.

"The French Open is the sec-

ond one, it's such a tough Grand Slam to win, I've given myself great chances in the last couple of years and Rafa (Nadal) has been so dominant on that surface, he's won over 60 matches in a row," he said.

"I always tell myself that he can't do it all the time. I gave myself three great shots at him in Monaco, in Rome, then at the French Open."

"It was disappointing at the French Open after all the hype and everything, but I am improving every year on clay and maybe one year he won't be in the final, and if he is then maybe I can beat him."

Federer linked up with coach Tony Roche two years ago to tap into Roche's clay court knowledge after the Australian won at Roland Garros in 1966 and was runner-up there in 1965 and 1967.

SEE PAGE 18 COL 5