



PHOTO: AFP

Serbian Novak Djokovic celebrates after beating world number one Spaniard Rafael Nadal in the Miami Masters final at Crandon Park Tennis Centre in Key Biscayne on Sunday.

Novak takes Rafa again

Tennis

AFP, Miami

Novak Djokovic did it again Sunday, defeating world number one Rafael Nadal 4-6, 6-3, 7-6 (7/4) to win the ATP Miami Masters crown and remain unbeaten in 2011.

Djokovic has now won all 24 matches he has played this year, the best start to a season since Ivan Lendl began 1986-25-0.

The Serbian, ranked second in the world, has captured four titles, including the Australian Open, Dubai and, now, back-to-back elite Masters titles at Indian Wells and Miami, both with victories over Nadal in the finals.

"It's the best four months in my life, but it's only the start of the season," said Djokovic, who will remain at number two behind Nadal for the time being, even though the Spaniard hasn't won since Tokyo in October.

"It's a bit early to talk about getting that top spot in the rankings," Djokovic said. "Rafa is definitely the best player in the world now."

"If I want to have the number one

ranking, I need to play consistently well throughout the whole year."

As in the championship match at Indian Wells a fortnight earlier, Djokovic surrendered the first set to Nadal.

But after a slugfest lasting almost 3 1/2 hours on a steamy stadium court it was Djokovic who emerged the victor, blasting a forehand cross court for the victory on his third match point.

Any fatigue he might have been feeling disappeared with the victory, as Djokovic jumped for joy and an exhausted Nadal headed to his courtside chair.

"What he's doing is unbelievable," Nadal said. "First thing, he's very good. Second thing, he's playing with big confidence."

"The easiest thing to say: He's a very good tennis player."

But Djokovic, who had painted himself as the underdog going in, said he was never sure of the outcome until he had sealed the victory.

"It was such a close match," Djokovic said. "To win against the No. 1 player of the world in a tiebreaker in the third set, it's just incredible."

Djokovic added a second Miami title

to the one he captured in 2007. And he joined Roger Federer, Andre Agassi and Pete Sampras as the only players to win the Australian Open, Indian Wells and Miami -- the three most important early-season events -- in the same year.

Nadal seized the early advantage with a break for a 2-1 lead in the opening set -- the first time Djokovic had been broke in the tournament.

Nadal broke Djokovic again for a 4-1 lead, but surrendered his own serve while serving for the set in the eighth game.

Two games later, after nearly an hour, Nadal secured the first set.

Djokovic drew first blood in the second, breaking for a 2-0 lead. Despite moments of frustration -- including a testy bounce of his racquet after allowing Nadal a break chance -- Djokovic held on to claim the second set with an ace.

Both players held throughout the final set, although Nadal applied some pressure when he pushed Djokovic to 15-30 in the final game before Djokovic held on to force the tiebreaker.

The momentum swung Djokovic's way when Nadal delivered his sixth double-fault of the match to fall behind 3-2 in the tiebreaker.

Rajshahi polish off Ctg

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Rajshahi crushed Chittagong by nine wickets in the space of two days in the National Cricket League at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra yesterday.

The Chittagong batting once again failed to put up a good show as they surrendered cheaply for just 108 runs in their second innings, setting a target of just 30 runs to win for Rajshahi. It took less than three hours of the day's play for Rajshahi to bowl out Chittagong and finish the match.

Meanwhile at the Sylhet Divisional Stadium, Dhaka finished the day with a healthy second innings score of 228-2 against Barisal.

RAJSHAHI-CHITTAGONG

Dismal batting performance by the port city side cost them the match after they failed in the second innings as well, following their 78 shut out in the first innings.

None of the batsmen showed resistance, the highest score of 20 coming from No 8 Faisal Hossain.

After his fiver in the first innings, Forhad Reza got another three along with his pace-partner Shuvashish Roy who took 3-26.

Set to chase the mere 30 runs, Farhad got out to Kamrul Islam for just six.

Rajshahi opener Myshukur Rahman

didn't delay their win and he slammed 24 of 13 balls with all the runs coming from boundaries to finish the match in just the fourth over.

With a total of eight wickets in the match, Rajshahi skipper Forhad was adjudged the man-of-the-match.

DHAKA-BARISAL

Resuming the day at 173-7, Barisal managed to reach 230 before Elias Sunny cleaned up the tail. Sohag Gazi scored 39 off 57 with seven four's to help Barisal take the lead of 97 runs, Sunny finishing with figures of 3 for 32.

Dhaka bounced back from their first innings batting disappointment, finishing at a strong 228-2 courtesy of a fine 108-run opening partnership between Uttam Sarker and Mohammad Majid.

Uttam got out after scoring 54 off 91 balls with nine boundaries, but it was newcomer Majid who missed the opportunity of scoring a maiden first-class century after he got out on 84 off 164. His bat produced fourteen boundaries.

Sunny came in to bat at No 3 and remained unbeaten at the end of the day with 53 runs. Rony Talukder was the other batsmen not out on 22.

They will start Day Three today looking to extend their current lead of 131 runs.

KHUNLA-SYLHET

Before weather played its part in the game at the Shaheed Kamruzzaman

Stadium in Rajshahi, Sylhet continued their slow and steady approach which got them to 408 runs losing six wickets against a helpless Khulna side.

Golam Rahman, who started the day on 46, added two more runs before Monowar Hossain got him out. After his brother Golam Mabud got out of the same bowler for 40, it was the partnership of Tasamul Haque and Ijaz Ahmed that took the score past the 350-mark.

The duo added 140-runs for the sixth wicket before Tasamul fell for 60 and his 183-ball knock saw him hit ten boundaries. When the game stopped at quarter to four, Ijaz was still at the crease with 94 from 161 balls. His willow produced nine four's and three big sixes.

BRIEF SCORES

CHITTAGONG: First inns 72 all out and second inns 108 all out (Faisal 20; Shubhashish 3-26, Farhad 3-41).

RAJSHAHI: First inns 151 all out and second inns 31-1 (Myshukur 24 not out; Kamrul 1-10).

Result: Rajshahi won by nine wickets.

DHAKA: First inns 133 all out and second inns 228-2 (Mazid 84, Uttam 54; Monir 1-31, Shohag 1-83).

BARISAL: First inns 230 all out (Asif 57, Shohag 39; Mahbubul 4-31, Sunny 3-32).

SYLHET: First inns 408-6 (Imtiaz 62, Ejaz 94 not out; Tapash 3-111, Monowar 2-80).

Aussie media hail India

PTI, Melbourne



For all the joy that the World Cup triumph has brought in, there is also a tinge of sadness in the Indian cricket team as it marks the end of inspirational coach Gary Kirsten's tenure and batsman Yuvraj Singh says the "father figure" would be missed.

"He always kept a check

on me. He pulled me up when the chips were down. He is a father figure and I am going to miss him," Yuvraj told ICC's official website.

Kirsten, under whose guidance India became the number one Test and ODI side, ended with the team's World Cup title triumph and he has already ruled out reconsidering the decision.

"Cricket has been in the right direction since Gary came on and I hope it will remain so," said Yuvraj.

The dashing left-hander, who was named Man of the Tournament for a fine show with both bat and ball, said winning the mega-event was a dream realised. "It's like living a dream. It still hasn't sunk in and the guys haven't slept. We have kissed the trophy about a 1000 times," he said.

"I am very proud of the team and myself. Our dream was to make the finals but to win it was extraordinary. Now I understand what it means to be a world champion," he added.

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