

Star SPORT



NOVAK wins an epic

Sets up a final rematch with Rafael

AP, New York

Facing two-match points against a beloved player whose name is already in the history books, Novak Djokovic clenched his jaw, nodded his head and flashed an ever-so-slight glimpse of a smile.

"I would lie if I say I didn't think I'm going to lose," Djokovic said.

Might as well go down swinging then, right?

He turned violently on a wide, 108 mph serve from Roger Federer for a cross-court, forehand winner that barely nicked the line. The fans in Arthur Ashe Stadium, ready to explode for a Federer victory, instead found themselves taking a cue from Djokovic who raised his hands, asking them to pump up the volume, and give him a little more love.

About 10 minutes later, those fans were dancing with Djoko as he boogied at Center Court to celebrate an epic US Open semifinal win one in which he dug out of a two-set hole, then saved two match points to beat Federer for the second straight year.

Top-seeded Djokovic won 6-7 (7), 4-6, 6-3, 6-2, 7-5 Saturday to improve to 63-2 on the year and set up a rematch in the final against No. 2 Rafael Nadal, who thrashed No. 4 Andy Murray 6-4, 6-2, 3-6, 6-2 in the second semifinal.

In the first match, Djokovic completed only his second career comeback from two sets down, while Federer lost a two-set lead for the second time in less than three months after going 178-0 lifetime before this year's Wimbledon quarterfinals.

It all turned on one shot. "The forehand return, I cannot explain to you because I don't know how it happened," Djokovic said. "I read his serve and I was on the ball and I had to hit it hard, and it got in, luckily for me."

Nadal beat Djokovic in the final last year, but Djokovic is 5-0 against the Spaniard this year. All the meetings have been in tournament finals, including Wimbledon. On Monday, Nadal must try to stop the losing streak against a player who will come into the final on the high of a win he called definitely the biggest of the year and "one of the biggest wins of the career under the cir-

cumstances."

"He's obviously the favourite for the final, and I know I have to do something better than the other matches to try to change the situation," Nadal said.

Djokovic spent much of the first two sets shaking his head, commiserating with the folks in his players box, even folding his hands in mock prayer. Then, he turned things around suddenly and unexpectedly.

He got an early break in the third to capture the momentum, and as the match wore on, the prospect of Federer grabbing it back, let alone getting a match point, seemed bleak.

In the fourth set, Djokovic placed 16 of 20 of his first serves in and tore off his first 15 service points to easily push the match to the distance.

The fifth-set end-game started with Djokovic serving at 3-4 and stringing together an uncharacteristically bad game, getting broken at love on two mishit forehands, a framer of Federer's that set up a winner and a double fault on a second serve that missed the line by about a foot.

After missing a backhand to open his service game at 5-3, Federer hit three straight serves Djokovic couldn't get back. That gave him two match points, same as he had last year against Djokovic in the semifinals, and the fans were squarely on his side, as he stood oh-so-close to making his 24th Grand Slam final and moving a win away from adding to his record 16 Grand Slam titles.

But Djokovic isn't putting together one of the greatest seasons in tennis history for nothing. And Federer wasn't totally convinced the shot that turned the match was legit. He said the Djokovic winner reminded him of shots hit by players he played as a kid who fall behind, then start taking huge chances when they feel they have nothing else to lose.

"I never played that way," Federer said. "I believe in the hard-work's-going-to-pay-off kind of thing, because early on, maybe I didn't always work at my hardest. So for me, this is very hard to understand how can you play a shot like that on match point. But, look, maybe he's been doing it for 20 years, so for him it was very normal. You've

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Michelle Obama loves tennis

First Lady Michelle Obama played kid-sized doubles against Serena Williams, clocked a 55-mph serve and even did some hula-hooping in her first visit to the US Open.

Obama spoke to a group of local youngsters Friday as part of her campaign against childhood obesity. "I'm not really good or anything like that. That's the beauty of tennis," she said. "You don't have to be good to enjoy it. I love the game, and my skills are very questionable."

-AP



WI to arrive on Oct 4

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

West Indies will arrive on October 4 for a month-long tour. They will play two practice matches, three ODIs, a Twenty20 international and two Tests against the Tigers.

The first leg of the tour will be played in Dhaka where the tourists will take part in two practice matches and then the Twenty20 on October 11 before the ODI series begins two days later at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur. The third ODI will be held in Chittagong, which will also host the first Test of the two-match series. The tour will conclude with the second Test back in Dhaka.

The scheduled two warm-up games raised a few eyebrows but cricket operations manager Sabbir Khan explained the ICC ruling in the matter of the practice matches.

"Normally, the rule is for the visiting team to get a three-day game if their first game on tour is a Test match and if it's the start of an

ODI series, it will be one or two one-day games as the warm-up," he said yesterday.

"West Indies wanted to play two one-dayers for this series and they have the right to ask," added Sabbir, begging the question that why the Tigers couldn't do so during the Zimbabwe series.

"Obviously we played a Test to start the tour, and we asked them to extend the initially scheduled two-day game into a three-dayer back in February," he informed.

Interestingly, the Twenty20 international will only be the second in Bangladesh after

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ITINERARY

Oct7	Warm-up match	Fatullah
Oct9	Warm-up match	Fatullah
Oct11	Only T20 Int'l	Mirpur
Oct13	1st ODI	Mirpur
Oct15	2nd ODI	Mirpur
Oct18	3rd ODI	Chittagong
Oct21-25	First Test	Chittagong
Oct29-Nov2	Second Test	Mirpur

BCB Cup to test captains

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) will test the waters during the BCB Cup which begins today, as they wait on naming the new national captain.

Chief selector Akram Khan informed that the board have decided on Mushfiqur Rahim as the captain of the national side (Abdur Razzak his deputy) during the season opener while Mahmudullah Riyad will lead Bangladesh A with Junaed Siddiqui the vice-captain.

But the former national captain also made it known that it won't be just Mushfiqur and Riyad who will captain

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It's Serena-Samantha final

AFP, New York



Three-time champion Serena Williams stormed past world number one Caroline Wozniacki on Saturday to set up a showdown with Samantha Stosur in what promises to be an emotional US Open women's final.

Williams, a 13-time Grand Slam champion, said she was thrilled to have a chance to represent America as the country commemorates the 10th anniversary of the September 11, 2001 attacks -- an outrage that resonates in New York where the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center were destroyed.

"Especially with 9-11, it really meant a lot to me to come out here as an American and still be here and still be in the tournament," Williams said after mauling the top-seeded Wozniacki 6-2, 6-4.

The final will be preceded by a ceremony remembering the victims and

honoring the efforts of rescue workers in the catastrophe.

"I really wanted to get to the final," Williams said. "Everything that New York and America went through. It's hard to believe it has been 10 years."

Stosur, the 2010 French Open runner-up, reached the second Grand Slam final of her career with a 6-3, 2-6, 6-2 victory over unseeded German Angelique Kerber.

Williams sent Wozniacki packing from yet another major, her 34 winners, including 11 aces, never giving the Dane a look-in.

Despite her world number one ranking, Wozniacki's best Grand Slam performance remains her 2009 runner-up finish to Kim Clijsters at Flushing Meadows.

Williams, in contrast, will be seeking a 14th Grand Slam title and her first since Wimbledon in 2010.

That victory was followed by a litany of health problems, starting with a cut

foot that required surgery and including blood clots in her lungs.

"I really feel like I don't have anything to lose," Williams said. "I've beaten all odds. Six months ago I was in the hospital."

The drop in her ranking caused by her 11-month layoff led to her lowly seeding here.

Although she had shown she was ready to challenge with two hardcourt titles in the build-up to the US Open, Williams' joy was evident in her spinning leap of celebration.

"It has been such an arduous long road and I can't believe it, I really can't," said Williams, who beat Stosur in the final at Toronto for one of her two titles this summer.

Stosur at least has the comfort of knowing she has beaten Williams twice, including in the quarter-finals of the French Open last year when Stosur saved a match point en route to her victory.

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