

Serena's shock exit

AFP, Melbourne



An injury-hit Serena Williams crashed out of the Australian Open against Ana Ivanovic Sunday, missing the chance for an 18th major title and a rare calendar-year Grand Slam.

As men's champion Novak Djokovic reached the quarterfinals with his 28th straight win since September, another Serb rubbed out the hot women's favourite and ended one of the longest streaks of her career.

In a result which throws the women's draw wide open, Ivanovic capitalised on Williams' poor movement to take her first ever sets against the world number one, winning 4-6, 6-3, 6-3.

Afterwards, Williams said she was on strong medication for a back injury which almost prompted her to pull out before her third-round win over Daniela Hantuchova.

The upset robs Williams of the chance to join Chris Evert and Martina Navratilova on 18 Grand Slams, and draw nearer to Steffi Graf's Open-era record of 22.

Williams' coach, Patrick Mouratoglou, had said she was capable of winning all four Grand Slam titles this year -- a feat not achieved since Graf's sweep in 1988.

"Maybe I can win four in a row, but it seems like in the one year it's kind of difficult for me for whatever reason," said Williams, 32.

Her departure is a giant opportunity for those left in the draw, including Ivanovic, defending champion Victoria Azarenka and Li Na, who beat Ekaterina Makarova to reach the last eight.

Williams was on a 25-match winning streak, the second best of her career, after

one of her most successful seasons in 2013 when she won a career-high 11 titles, including the French Open and US Open.

Ivanovic, the former world number one who is resurgent under new coach Nemanja Kontic, will now play Canada's Eugenie Bouchard, 19.

Meanwhile, Djokovic had to endure a grating comedy act, but little threatening tennis, from Italian seed Fabio Fognini, a close friend whom he has known since junior days, to reach the quarter-finals.

The four-time champion kept focus to win 6-3, 6-0, 6-2 despite relentless antics at the other end from Fognini, who splashed water in his face, knocked a marshal's hat and clowned for the crowd.

Spanish third seed David Ferrer doggedly ground down Germany's Florian Mayer 6-7 (5/7), 7-5, 6-2, 6-1 to set up a quarter-final with Tomas Berdych, who beat Kevin Anderson 6-2, 6-2, 6-3.

And China's Li was irresistible in her 6-2, 6-0 win over Russian 22nd seed Makarova as the two-time finalist reached the last eight in just under an hour.

The 2011 French Open winner will next play fellow veteran Flavia Pennetta, who at 31 is exactly one day older than the Chinese number one. Italy's Pennetta beat German Angelique Kerber 6-1, 4-6, 7-5.

In the evening session, teenager Bouchard beat Australian wildcard Casey Dellacqua in three sets to become the first Canadian Grand Slam quarter-finalist in 22 years.

And Swiss number two Stanislas Wawrinka beat Tommy Robredo of Spain 6-3, 7-6 (7/3), 7-6 (7/5) to set up a clash with Djokovic, reprising last year's fourth-round classic which went to five gripping sets.



Serbia's Ana Ivanovic celebrates her victory against top seed Serena Williams of the US in the fourth round of the Australian Open in Melbourne yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Khedira's chances in jeopardy

AFP, Berlin

Germany midfielder Sami Khedira is facing a race against time to recover from injury and enter Germany coach Joachim Loew's World Cup calculations.

The Real Madrid star's participation in Brazil was put in jeopardy in mid-November when he suffered a serious knee injury in Germany's 1-1 friendly draw with Italy.

Khedira, 26 and a key figure in the German teams that reached the semi-finals in both the 2010 World Cup and Euro 2012, underwent surgery to repair the ruptured anterior cruciate ligament in his right knee.

Loew, giving an update on Khedira's fitness, told German newspaper Bild: "I spoke by phone with Sami three days ago, he's feeling fine, working a little on the treadmill and isn't feeling any bad reaction."

He warned that it would be difficult to pick a player "who hasn't played in a competitive match".

Germany are in Group G at the World Cup against Portugal, Ghana and the United States.

Kruse out for Brazil

REUTERS

Australia's Robbie Kruse is likely to miss the World Cup finals in Brazil after sustaining a knee injury that will need surgery next week.

The Bayer Leverkusen forward was injured at training on Friday and scans on Saturday confirmed he had torn his anterior cruciate ligament in his left knee and would miss the rest of the season, his Bundesliga club said.

Similar injuries have required up to a year of rehabilitation for other athletes, though local media have reported the 25-year-old was considering a different procedure that could see him playing again in three months.

Kruse was seen as the linchpin of Ange Postecoglou's attack for the World Cup, where they open their Group B campaign against Chile in Cuiaba on June 13. The Netherlands and world champions Spain are also in the group.

French duo to face trial

AFP, Paris

French footballers Franck Ribery and Karim Benzema go on trial Monday charged with having sex with an underage prostitute who later gained fame as a lingerie model and designer.

Bayern Munich winger Ribery, 30, and Real Madrid striker Benzema, 26, are facing up to three years in prison and fines of up to 45,000 euros (\$55,000) each on charges they paid for sex with Zahia Dehar while she was under 18.

Neither of the two men are expected to attend the start of the trial in Paris, Ribery's lawyer Carlo Alberto Brusa said.

Ex-call girl Dehar is also not expected to attend.

Dehar has also withdrawn as a civil plaintiff in the case. "She is not asking for anything," said her lawyer, Daniel Vaconsin.

The two players are accused of having paid for sex with Dehar when she was 16, in Benzema's case, and 17, in Ribery's.

Eto's treble buries MU

AFP, London



Samuel Eto'o's hat-trick saw Chelsea to a 3-1 win over Manchester United at Stamford Bridge on Sunday that piled the pressure on the Premier League champions.

Victory left Jose Mourinho's Chelsea within two points of leaders Arsenal but this result meant title-holders United are 14 points adrift of the Gunners with 16 league games of the season remaining.

United's seventh league loss this term also turned the spotlight back on David Moyes, the successor chosen by Alex Ferguson, British football's most successful manager, to replace him at Old Trafford following his retirement at the end of last season.

Eto'o gave Chelsea a 17th minute lead when his shot from just outside the box deflected off Michael Carrick's outstretched boot and past the despairing dive of United goalkeeper David de Gea.

The 32-year-old veteran Cameroon striker made it 2-0 on the stroke of half time when, following Gary Cahill's centre, he smashed the ball home from six

RESULTS

Chelsea 3 (Eto'o 17,45,49) Manchester United 1 (Hernandez 78)

Swansea 1 (Bony 78) **Tottenham 3** (Adebayor 35,71, Chico 54og)

yards out.

United, without injured strikers Wayne Rooney and Robin van Persie, found themselves 3-0 behind four minutes after the interval when more lax defending from a set-piece allowed Cahill a free header from a few yards.

His effort was just about blocked by de Gea but, barely a yard away, Eto'o reacted first and made no mistake with the simple chance.

In the process Eto'o become the first Chelsea player to score a hat-trick against United since Seamus O'Connell back in 1954.

Javier Hernandez, on as a substitute for Ashley Young, pulled a goal back 12 minutes from time.

But that was as good as it got for United whose misery was compounded when captain Nemanja Vidic sent off in stoppage time for a rash challenge on Eden Hazard.

Earlier, Emmanuel Adebayor scored twice as Tottenham Hotspur moved level on points with fourth-placed Liverpool after a 3-1 win

away to struggling Swansea.

Adebayor's goals, separated by a Chico Flores own-goal, ensured Tottenham remained unbeaten in the league under manager Tim Sherwood, whose record now stands at five wins and a draw since the Englishman replaced sacked predecessor Andre Villas-Boas.

For Swansea, an eighth successive league match without a win left Michael Laudrup's men just three points above the relegation zone.

After Swansea's Wilfried Bony had hit the crossbar with the match still scoreless, Adebayor gave Spurs the lead, against the run of play, in the 35th minute when he headed in an excellent cross from Christian Eriksen.

And the north London side made it 2-0 in the 53rd minute when Flores turned Kyle Walker's cross into his own net with Spurs' Nacer Chadli waiting behind him.

Adebayor put the result beyond doubt 19 minutes from time when, with Swansea's defence opened up again, he turned in Danny Rose's ball across the six-yard box.

Bony scored seven minutes later with a shot from the edge of the box but it was all too late for Swansea.

Australia clinch series easily

AFP, Sydney



Australia eased past England for a convincing seven-wicket victory on Sunday that wrapped up the one-day series with two matches still to play.

The hosts put the brakes on England at the Sydney Cricket Ground, restricting the tourists to 243-9, and then smashed 244 with 10 overs to spare.

Opener David Warner set the tone blasting 71 runs off 70 balls before miscuing Ben Stokes for a simple chest-height catch to Ian Bell.

Shaun Marsh equalled that score in a patiently built innings and hit the winning runs.

Wicketkeeper Brad Haddin crashed an unbeaten 35 off 33 balls after skipper Michael Clarke went for 34 to a fine delivery from seamer Ravi Bopara.

Alastair Cook won the toss and chose to bat, but despite some promising starts no one could go on to a big score.

Irish-born Eoin Morgan made the highest total with 54 while tailender Tim Bresnan scored 41 off 29 balls.

After a 5-0 Ashes whitewash and demoralising losses in the first two ODIs in Melbourne last Sunday and Brisbane on Friday, England still have to face Australia in Perth on Friday and Adelaide next Sunday.

SCORES IN BRIEF

ENGLAND: 243 for 9 in 50 overs (Cook 35, Bell 29, Ballance 26, Morgan 54, Bopara 21, Bresnan 41 not out, Faulkner 2-35, Coulter-Nile 3-47, Christian 2-52)

AUSTRALIA: 244 for 3 in 44 overs (Finch 22, Warner 71, Marsh 71 not out, Clarke 34, Haddin 35 not out; Bopara 1-14)

Result: Australia won by 7 wickets.

Player-of-the-match: David Warner.

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