

MESSI SIMPLY 'AMAZING'

Tennis star Victoria Azarenka has heaped praise on the "amazing" Lionel Messi, insisting that he plays like he is in a video game. "Seeing Messi play is like watching a video game," she told reporters. "It's really something exciting. What Messi does on a football field is simply unthinkable. I had the pleasure of seeing him at the stadium once in Barcelona and, for me, he is amazing." The way he walks from side to side, and once he sees an opportunity, he simply creates



Murray crashes out
Federer in quarters

Andy Murray crashed out of the US Open in the fourth round Monday, his earliest Grand Slam exit in five years, while 17-time major winner Roger Federer advanced to the quarterfinals.

South African 15th seed Kevin Anderson stunned British third seed Murray 7-6 (7/5), 6-3, 6-7 (2/7), 7-6 (7/0) to end his run of 18 consecutive major quarterfinals since the 2010 US Open.

"That's something that is disappointing to lose because of that. That's many years' work that's gone into building that sort of consistency. To lose that is tough," said Murray.

"Also to lose a match like that, that was over four hours, tough after a couple of tough matches earlier in the tournament as well, it's a hard one to lose, for sure."

Anderson reached his first Grand Slam quarterfinal after seven prior fourth-round defeats.

"It was the match of my life," Anderson said. "This is a great accomplishment for me."

Anderson, who won his third career title two weeks ago at Winston-Salem, is the first South African in New York's last-eight since Wayne Ferreira in 1992.

"I'm just so excited to be through," said Anderson. "Beating a guy like Andy, I really feel like I've taken a step forward. It's amazing. I feel like it's a great accomplishment."

Anderson, 1-5 in prior matches against Murray, fired 25 aces in ending an 0-15 career hoodoo against top-10 opponents to book a last-eight date with Swiss fifth seed Stan Wawrinka.

With New York City FC and former

England midfielder Frank Lampard watching from the player's box, Murray fell behind two sets and a break, roared back, but ultimately could not win the tension-packed encounter at Louis Armstrong Stadium.

Murray, the 2012 champion, had 49 winners and 20 unforced errors, but did not make a forehand winner until the last game of the second set. Anderson blasted 81 winners to 57 unforced errors.

Swiss second seed Federer, seeking his sixth US Open title, dispatched US 13th seed John Isner 7-6 (7/0), 7-6 (8/6), 7-5 to reach a quarterfinal against French 12th seed Richard Gasquet, who ousted Czech sixth seed Tomas Berdych 2-6, 6-3, 6-4, 6-1.

"Of course Roger will be the favourite of the match but I will have nothing to lose," said Gasquet, who is 2-14 lifetime against the Swiss star.

Federer, trying to become at 34 the oldest US Open champion since Ken Rosewall in 1970, stretched his US Open win streak over Americans to 12 since losing to Andre Agassi in 2001.

Isner had held in 110 consecutive US Open service games since broken by Germany's Philipp Kohlschreiber in the third round in 2013, but Federer ended that streak on match point to close out the victory in two hours and 39 minutes.

"John has one of the best serves in the game," Federer said. "You have just got to hang around and win your service games."

Federer also inflicted the first shutout tie-break loss upon Isner.

"I served very well, picked up his second serves," Federer said. "You've got to get a little lucky."



A frustrated Andy Murray of Great Britain breaks his racket during his US Open men's singles fourth round match against Kevin Anderson of South Africa at Flushing Meadows in New York on Monday.

Vinci in US Open semis

Serena and Venus Williams prepared for their hotly anticipated US Open quarterfinals showdown Tuesday while Italy's Roberta Vinci put herself in the winner's path, advancing to her first Grand Slam semi-final.

Vinci, ranked 43rd, advanced to the US Open semi-finals by downing France's 40th-ranked Kristina Mladenovic 6-3, 5-7, 6-4 at Arthur Ashe Stadium, setting the stage for the dramatic 27th matchup between the Williams sisters.

"I'm so happy to be in the semi-final, if I play Serena or Venus, it doesn't matter right now," Vinci said.

Vinci is 0-4 against Serena and 0-3 against Venus in her career.

She becomes the lowest-ranked Slam semi-finalist since 83rd-rated compatriot Flavia Pennetta at the 2013 US Open.

Vinci reached her first Grand Slam semi-final at age 32, having lost in 2012 and 2013 US Open quarter-finals.

"It's an amazing moment for me. It's unbelievable," Vinci said. "First semi-final in my career. I'm so happy. I don't have words to say."

Mladenovic, playing in her first Slam quarter-final at age 22, made 64 unforced errors and 11 double faults in failing to become the first Frenchwoman in a US Open semi-final since Amelie Mauresmo in 2006.

Portugal close in on Euro place

Portugal closed in on a spot at the European Championship after midfielder Miguel Veloso scored in injury time to snatch a 1-0 win at Albania in qualifying on Monday.

Both teams had hit the woodwork before Veloso headed in substitute Ricardo Quaresma's pass for the late winner.

"I thought the ball was for me and fortunately it made it," Veloso said.

Portugal increased its lead of Group I to 15 points. Denmark has 12 while Albania has 11, but both Portugal and Albania have a game in hand.

Portugal's Nani hit the goal frame in the 13th minute, while Sokol Cikalleshi of Albania sent a shot off the bar in the 75th.

Two minutes later, Cristiano Ronaldo had an opportunity to put Portugal in front, but goalkeeper Etrit Berisha made a save.

The victory came exactly one year after Albania stunned Portugal 1-0.

Germany edge Scotland

World champions Germany kept hold of top spot in Group D and moved to the verge of Euro 2016 qualification with a 3-2 defeat of a spirited Scotland side at Hampden on Monday.

Thomas Muller, who grabbed a double in the corresponding fixture in Dortmund last year, opened the scoring in the 18th minute.

In full flow the Germans appeared unplayable as Scotland struggled for possession, yet Gordon Strachan's side grabbed a 27th minute equaliser as the usually reliable Manuel Neuer's attempted clearance of Shaun Maloney's free-kick bounced in off defender Mats Hummels.

Muller headed Germany back in front seven minutes later before James McArthur restored parity for a second time with a sensational strike in the 43rd minute.

Bayern Munich star Muller then turned provider for Ilkay Gundogan to put Germany ahead for the third time in the 54th minute.

Scotland now face a mammoth task to even claim a play-off place as they trail third-placed Ireland, who

RESULTS

Poland 8 (Grosicki 8, 15, Lewandowski 19, 29, Milik 56, 72, Blaszczykowski 59-pen, Kapustka 74) Gibraltar 1 (Gosling 87)

Ireland 1 (Walters 69) Georgia 0

Scotland 2 (Hummels 28-og, McArthur 43)

Germany 3 (Mueller 18, 34, Gundogan 54)

Finland 1 (Pohjanpalo 23) Faroe Islands 0

Northern Ireland 1 (Lafferty 90+3) Hungary 1 (Guzmics 74)

Romania 0 Greece 0

defeated Georgia 1-0, by four points with two games remaining. Poland's 8-1 demolition of Gibraltar kept the Poles two points behind Germany in second. At Hampden, Germany's total dominance of possession paid off when Muller broke the deadlock. The Bayern Munich star burst at pace at a terrified Scottish defence before drilling a low shot that took a deflection off the heels of Russell Martin to leave David Marshall completely wrong-footed as it rolled into the bottom left-hand corner.

Scotland surprised the World Cup winners with an unlikely equaliser. After Charlie Mulgrew was fouled by Emre Can on the edge of the box, Maloney whipped in a dangerous free-kick that Neuer failed to deal with as the keeper's flapped clearance

went in off Hummels.

However, Scotland weren't level for long as Muller restored Germany's lead. Marshall could only parry Can's shot and Muller was alert enough to nod the rebound over the line despite Scotland's desperate efforts on the line.

Things looked ominous when Gotze had the ball in the net for Germany again after collecting a pass on his chest before spinning to send a half-volley past Marshall but the flag was already up for offside.

Hampden erupted, however, as McArthur's sensational strike pegged Germany back for the second time. The Crystal Palace midfielder met Maloney's corner at the edge of the box to rifle a volley that Neuer got fingertips to.

Germany started the second half in menacing fashion and had the ball in the net again when the unmarked Gotze fired a Bastian Schweinsteiger pass past Marshall but the Bayern Munich forward was flagged for offside.

The Germans didn't have to wait long for their next opportunity and Gundogan soon made it 3-2. Muller turned provider as he cut the ball back from the byline perfectly for the Borussia Dortmund defender to slam home his shot in off the base of the post.

Player wages more than transfer fees

Player salaries now account for more than international transfer fees, world football governing body FIFA revealed on Tuesday.

In its annual Transfer Matching System (TMS) Big 5 report covering England, France, Germany, Italy and Spain, FIFA said that since 2013 players have received some 57 per cent of funds.

Transfer fees accounted for 41 per cent and club intermediary commissions the remaining 2 per cent.

The report also revealed that 80 per cent of the total amount of salaries committed in the context of international transfers since 2013 can be attributed to UEFA clubs.

English clubs spent twice as much as any other country on transfers during the summer - \$996 million dollars, compared to Spain's \$495m, which was 23 per cent less than summer 2014.

German clubs received \$300million in transfer fees for the players they sold abroad -- more than double the previous summer, with 74 per cent of the money coming from England.

In comparison to last summer, spending on international transfers only increased in Italy and France.

FIFA TMS general manager Mark Goddard said: "Most of the transfers discussed in the media involve large transfer fees, but in reality, only 13 per cent of all worldwide transfers involve the payment of a fee. Salaries, though, are part of every single contract."

Average salaries tend to grow with age, often peaking at 28 years of age and decreasing afterwards.

The Big 5 countries recorded a total of 1,340 incoming international transfers during this summer's transfer window -- an increase of 4 per cent on last year.

Bolt to skip Diamond League

Jamaican sprint star Usain Bolt will skip the season-ending Diamond League meet in Brussels on Friday to enjoy a break after storming to treble gold at the world championships in Beijing last month.

"After the excitement of the past few weeks at the World T&F (track and field) Championships in Beijing, I have decided not to race again in 2015," Bolt said in a post on his Facebook account.

"I am already thinking about next year and the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio where I will attempt to defend my titles in the 100m, 200m and 4x100m."

"I will enjoy a short break from training now to recharge before resuming background training next month."

Bolt saw off all rivals in the Chinese capital, sealing another world treble gold despite an injury-hit season.



Germany midfielder Thomas Muller (C) is the toast of his teammates after scoring his second goal against Scotland during their Euro 2016 qualifier in Glasgow on Monday.

England pull one back

James Taylor scored a maiden century to help England reach 300 for eight on Tuesday, before Australia's collapse to 207 all out in the third one day international of the five match series at Old Trafford.

England came back from 2-0 down in the series to make it 2-1, with two games yet to go. If England win the next match, the stage will be all set for a tantalising fifth game, which will decide the series.

The Aussies lost their first wicket for 33 runs, before Aaron Fich and Steve Smith put on 42 runs for the second wicket to take Australia to 75-2 after 15.5 overs.

With Smith's departure, things went awry as the visitors began to lose wickets at regular intervals and that, combined with their slow run-rate, cost them the match as they dug themselves deeper and deeper into a hole.

The match seemed to be long over before all ten Australia wickets were taken, with the visitors surrendering meekly.

Earlier, Taylor, brought back after England rested Ashes-winner Joe Root from this series, was out for 101 having been left short of a hundred on 98 not out when England were beaten by eventual champions Australia at the World Cup in Melbourne in February.

The diminutive 25-year-old Nottinghamshire batsman, playing his 21st match at this level, faced 114 balls.

But it was a testament to Australia's accuracy that he only managed five fours.

Taylor, whose fifty contained just one boundary, and England captain Eoin Morgan (62) put on 119 for the third wicket.

But the partnership would have been curtailed had not wicket-keeper Matthew Wade missed a stumping off ODI debutant spinner Ashton Agar when left-hander Morgan was on 15.

As it was Australia slowed England's run-rate, with a total of 200 for two in 32 overs, advancing only to 245 for four in the 43rd over.

After Taylor holed out in the last over, it needed some clean-hitting from Chris Woakes, including a six off Mitchell Starc, to take England to 300.

Jason Roy launched England's innings in style after Morgan won the toss with his second fifty in three innings this series.

Roy struck four fours in five balls off left-arm quick Starc in the seventh over, including a confident pull and a whip shot off his legs that split mid-on and mid-wicket.

But fellow opener Alex Hales could only manage nine off 31 balls and, once again this series, he was out hitting the ball straight to a fielder when he clipped pace-man Pat Cummins to Mitchell Marsh at mid-wicket.

SCORES IN BRIEF
ENGLAND: 300 for 8 (Roy 63, Taylor 101, Morgan 62; Cummins 2-50, Maxwell 2-56)
AUSTRALIA: 207 all out (Finch 53, Smith 25, Wade 42; Ali 3-32, Rashid 2-41)
Result: England won by 93 runs.