



Swiss maestro Roger Federer is ecstatic after defeating Marin Cilic in a five-set thriller to retain the Australian Open title. It was the 36-year-old's 20th Grand Slam victory, meaning he has now won a staggering 10 per cent of all Grand Slams in the Open Era.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## Federer: 20 and counting

AFP, Melbourne

**AO**  
australian open

A tearful Roger Federer surged home to beat Marin Cilic in five riveting sets and win his sixth Australian Open and 20th Grand Slam title in Melbourne on Sunday.

The Swiss defending champion dropped his only sets of the tournament before completing a 6-2, 6-7 (5/7), 6-3, 3-6, 6-1 win over the sixth seeded Croatian in 3hr 3min.

Federer, playing in his 30th Grand Slam final, joined Novak Djokovic and Australian great Roy Emerson as joint top for the most Australian Open men's titles.

"I'm so happy it's unbelievable. This is a dream come true, the fairytale continues for me," Federer said at the presentation.

"After the great year last year, it's incredible," the 36-year-old added as he broke down in tears. "This is what you live for, to one day experience these moments."

"This one tonight reminded me more of 2006 here when I beat Marcos Baghdatis in the final and had a great run to the final and was a huge favourite going in," he later explained.

"I was keeping the composure and I was just so relieved when everything was said and done and I think I felt the same way tonight and that's why I couldn't speak, it was terrible."

Federer added to his already imposing win-loss record in Melbourne and is now 94-13. His overall Grand Slam mark stands at 332-52.

Despite his latest triumph, he will remain world No.2 behind Nadal, with Cilic moving to a career-high three.

"It was an amazing journey to come to the final. It could have been the best two weeks of my life, but Roger played a great fifth set," said Cilic, who was chasing his second major title after winning the 2014 US Open.

"I want to thank my team, you're unbelievable. We worked hard for

this year, hopefully we will lift these trophies in the future."

Federer now leads Cilic 9-1 with his only defeat coming in the semi-finals of the 2014 US Open.

The roof was closed over Rod Laver Arena as the tournament's heat policy was implemented amid scorching evening temperatures of

38 Celsius (100 Fahrenheit).

Federer broke Cilic's serve six times and lost his twice and hit a total of 24 aces to the Croat's 16.

Cilic's serve came under immediate pressure with a whipping backhand return winner for break point which the Croatian followed with a smash into the net for a break in the opening game.

The Croat found it difficult to settle as he dropped serve again to trail 0-3. The Swiss star served out the set in just 24 minutes, capitalising on Cilic's shaky opening.

Cilic worked his way back into the match and in the second set tiebreaker he got to two set points when his forehand clipped the line before a winning smash levelled the match as Federer dropped his first set of the tournament.

But the six seed lost serve on the back of a couple of ground stroke errors and Federer raced 4-2 up in the third set.

The defending champion shifted gears with a stunning forehand off his toes and confidently held serve to lead 5-2 before clinching the set in 29 minutes.

Cilic was then broken in the opening game of the fourth set with a poor backhand dropshot into the net, but he broke back in the sixth game after working three break points.

He was now more in the flow and broke Federer again with his big forehands starting to find their mark. He served it out to take the absorbing final into a fifth.

But Federer stayed calm and crucially broke to 2-0, and then got a vital double break when Cilic netted a forehand, leaving him to serve out for the championship.



Of the 30 times that Roger Federer has made it to a Grand Slam final, the Basel native has come out on top a jaw-dropping 20 times. His first title (Bottom R) came at Wimbledon in 2003.

PHOTO: AFP

### KING OF THE OPEN ERA

Wimbledon  
2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2012, 2017  
Australian Open  
2004, 2006, 2007, 2010, 2017, 2018  
US Open  
2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008  
French Open  
2009

With a record-equalling sixth Australian Open title, Roger Federer extended his record Grand Slam title haul to 20. His arch-nemesis Rafael Nadal is second on that list, with 15 Grand Slam triumphs.

The Swiss maestro has won 10 per cent of all Grand Slams in the Open Era (20 of 200).

Federer has won 20 of the 60 Grand Slams since his debut Grand Slam, meaning he wins a Grand Slam 33.3 per cent of the time.

After a drought of nearly five years without a Grand Slam title, the 36-year-old has now won three of the last five.

## Own goal sends Rahmatganj thru'

SPORTS REPORTER



Rahmatganj moved into the semifinals of the Walton Independence Cup with a single-goal win over neighbours Farashganj in the second quarterfinal at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Farashganj's captain-cum-defender Khalekuzzaman Sabuj headed into his own net four minutes into the second half to send their Old Dhaka rivals into the semifinals -- their second last-four birth in the season after the Federation Cup.

A buoyant Farashganj came into the last-eight battle on the back of a win against Brothers Union and a draw against Muktijoddha Sangsad, but the 2011 champions were a shadow of their group-stage selves and failed to expose the defence of Rahmatganj, who qualified for the quarterfinals with two draws.

Play was mostly confined in the midfield as both sides played without purpose, but Rahmatganj had the last laugh, thanks to the own goal from Sabuj, who headed the ball into his own net while trying to clear a

free-kick from Faisal Ahmed in the 49th minute.

Farashganj came close to levelling the margin in the 68th minute but a curling free-kick from Abu Shahed from the edge of the left-hand box came off the crossbar.

"I don't want to term the win as lucky because we scored from a free-kick and it doesn't matter who the scorer was," Rahmatganj coach Kamal Babu said. "How-

FARASHGANJ SC 0 - 1 RAHMATGANJ MFS  
(SABUJ OG 49)

ever, I admit that our team played poorly compared to the two matches of group stage but we will definitely try to improve our performance in the semifinal."

"Conceding a suicidal goal was the turning point of the match because it is not possible to make amends in such a tight game," said Farashganj coach Mohidur Rahman Miraz, who was unhappy with an appeal for a penalty turned down.

"The referee could have given the penalty as a Rahmatganj defender handled the ball inside the box," Miraz said.

### QUICK SINGLES

The following are a few samples of stories that did not make the print edition. However, if they pique your interest, you can always read them online on The Daily Star website by simply scanning the QR codes listed below:

Federer credits wife for keeping him going

Roger Federer has credited his wife Mirka with keeping him motivated and still going strong at 36, although his longevity has "many pieces to the puzzle". He said having a supportive partner was key to him still being able to do what he loves, with wife Mirka courtside for most of his big games, despite now having four children to look after.

VAR comes of age at Anfield amid much criticism

English football's embrace of VAR technology prompted the most contentious response yet after coming under fire from West Bromwich Albion manager Alan Pardew following his side's FA Cup victory at Liverpool on Saturday.

Call to suspend Italian FA elections

The head of the Italian Olympic Committee (CONI) has called for Monday's vote to elect a new president of the Italian Football Federation (FIGC) to be postponed for three months.

## Mertens keeps Napoli on top

AFP, Milan

Dries Mertens scored a brace as Napoli bounced back from a goal down to reclaim top spot in Serie A on Sunday with a 3-1 home win over Bologna.

Napoli restored their one-point advantage over champions Juventus who went top after Sami Khedira and Gonzalo Higuain scored in a 2-0 win at nine-man Chievo on Saturday.

In Naples, it proved to be a battle with Rodrigo Palacio nodding Bologna ahead after 25 seconds before an Ibrahima Mbaye own goal four minutes later pulled the hosts back at their Stadio San Paolo.

Mertens edged Napoli ahead on 37 minutes with a penalty awarded for a foul on Jose Callejon. The Belgian then claimed his 13th goal of the season with a spectacular curling effort on 59 minutes.

Maurizio Sarri's side have 57 points from 22 games, one more than Juventus.

In an earlier match, Inter Milan missed a chance to move third with a frustrating 1-1 draw at promoted SPAL. Inter are two points behind Lazio who can move further ahead when they play AC Milan at San Siro later on Sunday. Roma are just three points behind Inter in fifth before playing at Sampdoria. It was Inter's seventh consecutive league game without a win.

Alberto Paloschi headed in a last-gasp equaliser to grab a precious point for SPAL after Inter had taken the lead on 48 minutes when defender Francesco Vicari turned the ball into his own net.

"When you concede a goal like that in stoppage time, it leaves a bitter taste in the mouth," said Inter coach Luciano Spalletti. "It doesn't change anything though. There is certainly work to be done better. I wouldn't say I'm worried, even when we were winning I didn't see big improvements. Now the results are worse, we're losing easy balls and at other times we're not fighting."

Crotone and Cagliari drew 1-1 in a relegation battle as Torino thrashed bottom team Benevento 3-0, with Vid Belec sent off for a kick on M'Baye Niang.

### Cavani sets benchmark for PSG

APP, Paris

Edinson Cavani broke Zlatan Ibrahimovic's all-time goalscoring record for Paris Saint-Germain on Saturday, while Neymar scored twice in a 4-0 win over Montpellier.

The Uruguayan striker tapped in his 157th PSG goal in the 11th minute at the Parc des Princes to spark celebrations, having levelled the Swede's previous mark 10 days ago.

"It's something magnificent, I'm very emotional," Cavani told Canal+. "In life, you're not always given so much warmth. I'm very content, very happy to be here."

"I think it was an individual statistic that all of the fans and all of us wanted for him," coach Unai Emery said of Cavani's mark. "This is an important moment in the history of PSG, but as he said - we want more."



Uruguay striker Edinson Cavani entered the annals of Paris Saint-Germain history on Saturday night, netting a club-record 157th goal to take him past Zlatan Ibrahimovic's tally in a routine 4-0 Ligue 1 win over Montpellier.

PHOTO: REUTERS

### CONGRATULATIONS SIDDIKUR RAHMAN

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