

SPORT



PHOTO: REUTERS

One set all and a break down in the third set against Alexander Zverev in their quarterfinal of the Australian Open on Tuesday, Novak Djokovic lost his cool and broke his racket. But the two-time defending champion gathered himself and showed great character from that point to win the match 6-7, 6-2, 6-4, 7-6 to reach his 39th Grand Slam semifinal.

Angry Novak, steely Serena book semifinal spots

AFP, Melbourne

Eight-time winner Novak Djokovic smashed his racquet en route to a tense, four-set win over Germany's Alexander Zverev to reach his 39th Grand Slam semifinal at the Australian Open on Tuesday.

It was a patchy performance from the world number one, who is nursing an abdominal injury and drew deeply on his mental fortitude to win 6-7 (6/8), 6-2, 6-4, 7-6 (8/6).

Djokovic will be hot favourite to advance to Sunday's final when he plays Russian qualifier Aslan Karatsev, who continued his dream run with a 2-6, 6-4, 6-1, 6-2 win against injured Bulgarian Grigor Dimitrov.

The Serb remains on track for a record-extending ninth Australian Open title and 18th Grand Slam trophy, nipping at the heels of rivals Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal, who both have 20.

Zverev lost to Dominic Thiem



in last year's Melbourne semifinals, and fell agonisingly short against the Austrian at last year's US Open in his only Grand Slam final.

Meanwhile, Serena Williams said she aimed to keep lifting her level after she stepped up a gear to destroy Simona Halep and set up a semifinal with an "incredible" Naomi Osaka on Tuesday.

The seven-time champion, in her 20th Australian Open and 77th Grand Slam, raised her intensity

and accuracy to beat the Romanian second seed 6-3, 6-3 on Rod Laver Arena.

"Definitely think this is the best match I have played this tournament, for sure," said 10th seed Williams, who is another step closer to a record-equalling 24th Grand Slam title.

"Obviously I had to be going up against the number two in the world, so I knew I had to do better, and that's what I did and I'm excited."

The 39-year-old, 23-time major winner has lost four Slam finals while chasing Margaret Court's all-time mark since her last major victory at Melbourne Park in 2017 while pregnant.

Japan's Osaka stands between Williams and a place in another decider after the third seed crushed Taiwanese veteran Hsieh Su-wei 6-2, 6-2.

"I feel good. I feel like, you know, I'm here and I'm happy to be here," said the veteran, after reaching her 40th Grand Slam semifinal.

Arambagh's unflattering record on day of goalfest

SPORTS REPORTER



Argentina's Oscar Becerra and Brazil's Robson Da Silva slammed hattricks in Bashundhara Kings' 6-1 thumping of Arambagh, seeing them hit a record low in their professional football league history.

Following a fortunate stalemate against Sheikh Jamal, the defending champions came out firing and demolished bottom-placed Arambagh at the Shaheed Dhirendranath Datta Stadium in Cumilla yesterday.

Arambagh gained possession of an unpleasant record by falling to an eighth consecutive defeat, eclipsing the seven-game losing streak that haunted Brothers Union's in the 2018-19 season.

The one-way affair also saw Becerra and Robson become the third and fourth players to register a hattrick in the ongoing season. Sheikh Jamal's Omar Jobe and Sheikh Russel's Obi Moneke also scored

his ninth goal of the campaign and overtake Omar Jobe as the campaign's top scorer.

ABAHANI EDGE PAST SAIF

At the Bangabandhu National Stadium, six-time champions Abahani eked out a 2-0 win over Saif SC to raise their tally to 21 points from nine matches, four behind leaders Bashundhara Kings.

Bolstered by a 2-1 win over Sheikh Russel in the previous match, Saif SC looked determined to fell another giant, taking the upper hand and creating two opportunities in the first half, but they could not carry that momentum into the second half and conceded two goals in the space of 13 minutes.

Brazil's Raphael Augusto nodded home eight minutes into the second half when a feeble clearance from Emanuel Ariwachukwu fell to him inside the box. Haitian forward Belfort Kervens controlled a Jewel Rana cross inside the box before firing home with an angular shot in the



Ronaldo's return to Portugal

AFP, Porto

Cristiano Ronaldo returns to his native Portugal for the first time as a Juventus player as his side face Porto on Wednesday with the Italian giants fighting to keep up with Europe's most powerful clubs in the Champions League.

Juventus have dominated Serie A for the last decade without managing to win the Champions League. Porto, meanwhile, are the only club from outside the so-called 'Big Five' leagues in this season's last 16. Both are two-time European Cup winners.

Juve's hopes will be on five-time Ballon d'Or winner Ronaldo, the Champions League record goal-scorer with 134 goals, signed from Real Madrid in 2018 to deliver them the trophy.

Ronaldo faces a Portuguese team for the first time since 2016 when with Madrid he beat his former club Sporting 2-1.

Ronaldo has played 12 European games against Portuguese teams, split between Benfica, Porto and Sporting. He has four goals against them and as many assists.

Meanwhile, Borussia Dortmund go last 16 first-leg tie at Sevilla with star striker Erling Braut Haaland urging his teammates to shake off their Bundesliga blues or risk a heavy defeat in Spain.

"We just have to stick to the match plan and try to perform," Haaland told Sky Sports.

"Sevilla are a strong team. We just have to find our form again and do our best on the pitch to have a chance.

"If we play like we did in the last few games, we have no chance," Haaland warned with Dortmund having won just three of their last eight games in all competitions.



Raul Becerra (2nd from L), seen here scoring a header, and Robson Robinho (L) bagged a hattrick each as during Bashundhara Kings thrashed Arambagh KS 6-1 in their Bangladesh Premier League fixture at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Dhirendranath Datta Stadium in Cumilla yesterday.

PHOTO: BFF

trebles and, interestingly, all four hattricks were scored against Arambagh.

The league leaders took just three minutes to break the deadlock, Becerra heading a Towhidul Alam Sabuz cross home.

Arambagh brought back the excitement by pulling level in the 18th minute, when the promising Nihat Zaman Uchash placed the ball beyond Anisur Rahman Zico's outstretched arms and into the far post.

But the equaliser apparently enraged Bashundhara Kings and they started scoring one goal after another, going into the break with a 3-1 lead after Robson scored twice, in 32nd and 42nd minutes.

After resumption, Becerra completed his hattrick by scoring in the 65th and 74th minute before Robson completed his treble in the 77th minute to register

66th minute to seal the fate of the game.

JOBE MAGIC RESCUES SHEIKH JAMAL A late brace from Pa Omar Jobe helped Sheikh Jamal DC to a thrilling 3-3 draw against Uttar Baridhara in the third match of the day at the BNS.

Uttar Baridhara looked headed for a 3-2 when Jobe showed his brilliant skill to score with a powerful back-heel in 90th minute as the Dhanmondi giants retained their unbeaten status alongside Bashundhara Kings and Abahani.

Jobe, who had eight goals to his name prior to this match, had made it 3-2 in the 72nd minute by tapping in a rebound after 10th-placed Baridhara scored three goals through Sujon Biswas, Suman Reza and Papon Singh in the 28th, 45th and 69th minutes following Nurul Absar's ninth-minute opener for third-placed Sheikh Jamal.

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India thrash Eng to level series

AFP, Chennai

India captain Virat Kohli said Tuesday his side showed more "grit" and "determination" to thrash England in the second Test, playing down complaints about the difficult pitch.

With local hero Ravichandran Ashwin claiming eight wickets in the match and scoring 106 in the second innings, India completed a 317-run victory inside four days in Chennai.

Left-arm spinner Axar Patel claimed a five-wicket haul on his Test debut as England were out for 164 while chasing an unlikely 482 on day four.

Some said the Chennai pitch, which crumbled from nearly the first day, was not fit for a Test.

But England made no public complaint and Kohli rejected the criticism and said his side played a "perfect game".

"I think our application with the bat was outstanding," said the India captain.

"The conditions were challenging for both sides but we showed more application and grit and determination to battle it out.

"We didn't panic out there looking at the hard turn and bounce on that pitch."

England captain Joe Root conceded that his side were "outplayed in all three departments this week" and had to learn quickly before the third Test in Ahmedabad.

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