

Djokovic breezes past Anderson

AFP, LONDON

Defending champion Novak Djokovic survived a series of falls on Centre Court to reach the Wimbledon third round on Wednesday with a straight sets win over Kevin Anderson.

World number one Djokovic, chasing a sixth Wimbledon and record-equalling 20th Grand Slam title, won 6-3, 6-3, 6-3 over the 102nd-ranked South African.

However, he slipped and fell on at least five occasions on Centre Court, the day after Serena Williams suffered a tearful, tournament-ending injury on Tuesday due to similar



slips.

Each time, 34-year-old Djokovic dusted himself down to set up a clash against either Italian veteran Andreas Seppi or American qualifier Denis Kudla.

Despite the tumbles, the Serb cruised to victory over the man he defeated in the 2018 final without facing a single break point and committing just six unforced errors.

"I have a nice connection with the crowd," said Djokovic. "I also seem to be having a really nice connection with the grass. I don't recall falling so much in the first two matches at Wimbledon previously."



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"Over the years, we have talked about how unique this group is and sometimes you can hear that too often.

It can be a bit boring to hear how fantastic we think we are, but when things get rough, you can see how people react."

Those were the words of Denmark goalkeeper Kasper Schmeichel on 14 June, just 36 hours after Christian Eriksen's medical emergency during the team's opening game against Finland. Time stood still for those fans at the game in Copenhagen that day. The image of Eriksen's team-mates spontaneously forming a protective cordon around him while he received treatment will stay with me forever. Denmark were shocked but a

team united, a country united. "I'm looking forward to starting training," said striker Martin Braithwaite. Schmeichel offered similar sentiments: "I think it will be nice to touch a ball again and get a sense of joy back." The team needed to get back to playing football.

"We're not only going to play for Christian," said coach Kasper Hjulmand ahead of the Matchday 2 game against Belgium. "We're going to play for who we are, our identity and the whole of Denmark who experienced what happened to us. We're not done with this tournament."

Those words now seem prophetic, but Hjulmand is no fortune teller. He is a coach who knows his team and what they are capable of. He managed to pull them together enough to put in a fine showing against the world's number-one-ranked side. "I don't

think I have experienced anything so emotional before," said Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg after the 2-1 loss. "Never. It was as if everyone was united around this one thing. I've never seen or felt it. It's one thing to see, another to feel. Never felt it before." The atmosphere did something to the team. The players touched the fans, and the fans moved the players. Jannik Vestergaard put it best. "I have found the little boy inside me, the little boy from the playground, from when I was a child," he said. "The little boy and the joy of the game and the joy of life, in general, has come out in all of us, and I think you could see that."

This was after two defeats, remember. And it showed that there was something afoot in the Denmark camp; they were fuelled by something different. Then came Matchday 3 against Russia.

When Andreas Christensen

fired into the net from distance to put the hosts 3-1 ahead, the roof came off Parken Stadium. Denmark were through.

"It's the first time I've seen support like this," said Russia keeper Matvei Safonov after his side's eventual 4-1 loss. "One of their players would just complete a pass and the whole stadium was on its feet."

The celebrations continued in the round of 16 with a 4-0 defeat of Wales, and next up for Denmark is Saturday's quarter-final against the Czech Republic in Baku. For Joakim Maehle, on target against both Wales and Russia, the team will approach that tie with precisely the same spirit of unity.

"We have discovered that there are more important things in life than football. We have agreed on that and stand together. Not just us as a team, but the whole of Denmark."

Shamsi inspires SA against Windies

AFP, St. George's



Tabraiz Shamsi enhanced his reputation as the top T20 bowler in the international game by inspiring South Africa to a thrilling one-run victory over the West Indies in the third of their five-match series at the National Cricket Stadium in Grenada on

Tuesday.

Defending another moderate total of 167 for eight after they were put in to bat for the third time in the series, the left-arm wrist spinner bowled his most economical four-over spell in conceding just 13 runs for the important wickets of Evin Lewis and Shimron Hetmyer.

Yet as well as he bowled, and as much as the vaunted West Indies power-hitters stuttered for the second consecutive match, the duel still came down to the final over bowled by Kagiso Rabada with 15 runs needed.

Fabian Allen struck an early boundary and then a six off the last ball of the match but the pacer had held his nerve in between those wayward deliveries to limit the home side to 166 for seven.

South Africa now take a 2-1 lead going into the fourth



match at the same venue on Thursday.

Lewis and Nicholas Pooran were the joint-top scorers for the West Indies with 27 while Andre Russell contributed 25.

"We faced a lot of criticism after we lost the first match so badly so I am really proud of how we have fought back in the last two matches," said Shamsi after receiving the man-of-the-match award.

"These pitches are getting harder and harder to score runs and while I would have obviously liked a bigger total to defend, I felt we had a good chance once we stuck to our plans, and on this occasion, it all worked out well for us in the end."

Earlier Obed McCoy and veteran Dwayne Bravo combined for seven wickets as South Africa faltered from a promising position.

Quinton de Kock, playing in his 50th T20 International, led the Proteas batting effort once again with a top score of 72 while Rassie van der Dussen contributed 32 and Aiden Markram, brought into the middle order at the expense of Heinrich Klaasen, chipped in with 23.



Final farewell for tearful Serena?

AFP, London



American legend Serena Williams's dreams of winning an eighth Wimbledon singles title and equalling Margaret

Court's Grand Slam record of 24 ended in tears on Tuesday as further doubt was cast on her future in the sport.

The 39-year-old was leading 3-1 in the first set of her first round match against Aliaksandra Sasnovich of Belarus when she slipped and injured her right leg.

Williams returned from receiving medical attention but called it a day at 3-3 and walked off Centre Court in tears. "I was heartbroken to have to withdraw today after injuring my right leg," she said in a statement posted late evening on her Instagram account.

Perhaps tellingly, she waved to all four sides of the court as she left.

However, she gave no indication in the statement of how serious the injury was nor about her future.

It is the first time that Williams has bowed out in the opening round of Wimbledon in 20 appearances. She had only once previously lost in the first round at any Slam, in the 2012 French Open.

The tears said it all as with the withdrawals of 2019 champion Simona Halep and of Naomi Osaka prior to the tournament the American would have fancied her chances of at last equalling the controversial Court's landmark.

"Brutal for @serenawilliams but centre court is extremely slippery out there. Not easy to move out there," tweeted British star Andy Murray.

Wimbledon's 2019 star Coco Gauff said she could not look as the player who inspired her to take up tennis wept as she left the stage.

"I turned away," said 17-year-old Gauff after beating British wildcard Francesca Jones in her first round match. "I was in the gym actually stretching. I turned away because stuff like that makes me, like, really emotional."

Gauff, who in 2019 as a qualifier beat Serena Williams's elder sister Venus on her way to the last 16, said she hoped the injury was not too severe. "I wish that hopefully she can have a speedy recovery," said Gauff. "Yeah, you could tell she was really emotional." "Nobody ever wants to retire, but especially at a Grand Slam, a place as special as Wimbledon after waiting two years to come back (it was cancelled last year due to the coronavirus pandemic)."

Kings toil for victory against resolute Mohammedan

SPORTS REPORTER



A stoppage-time strike from Raul Becerra gave Bashundhara Kings a narrow 1-0 win over Mohammedan in an eventful Bangladesh Premier League encounter at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The ninth straight triumph took defending champions Kings closer to the prestigious league title with 49 points from 17 outings, 16 points more than the nearest rivals Abahani, who have played a match less. Kings need 10 points from remaining seven fixtures to ensure back-to-back titles. Meanwhile, Mohammedan remain glued to fourth position in the 13-team table with 29 points from 17 matches.

The Black and Whites, who came into the match on the back of a spirited showing against archrivals Abahani in a 1-1 draw, put up another spirited performance and went really close to snatching a point. But Argentina's Becerra and Brazil's Robson da Silva showed their class by rescuing Kings three minutes into the four minutes of added time. However, Mohammedan players protested the

decisive goal, citing offside.

Mohammedan carried the momentum from their previous game into the match against the unbeaten Kings and earned two corners within the first 10 minutes. It was evidence of the Black and Whites' hunger, but Kings goalkeeper Anisur Rahman Zico ensured no lasting damage.

Having survived two scares, Kings regrouped on the muddy ground and launched a fine attack, with Robson Da Silva, Biplu Ahmed and Raul Becerra combining brilliantly, but Mohammedan goalkeeper Hossain Sujon denied Becerra in the 13th minute. However, Sujon received his marching orders just seven minutes later as he handled the ball outside the box in an attempt to stop a long ball. Despite being one man short, the Motijheel outfit fought neck-and-neck and created two good opportunities to take the lead before the break. First, Cameroonian striker Yassan Ouatching saw his close-range drive blocked by Zico before defender Mounzir Couliati of Burkina Faso saw his header come off the post.

After resumption, Kings coach Oscar Bruzon sent on forward Mahbubur Rahman Sufil in place of Eleta Kingsley, who was off-colour in

his second match, and Kings twice came close to breaking the deadlock, with Becerra heading wide from inside the six-yard box in the 60th minute before Becerra's goal-bound shot was well blocked by defender Couliati in the 64th minute. 10 minutes later, Kings defender Yasin got a second yellow and was sent off.

Just as it seemed the match was destined for a draw, Becerra killed the game by bringing down a pass from Robson with his chest and driving home from the six-yard line to send Kings players and officials into raptures.

Meanwhile, the continuation of the league matches became uncertain following the country-wide shutdown starting from today, but the Bangladesh Football Federation was seeking permission from the concerned authorities to continue the league matches.

In the day's second match, Bangladesh Police played out a goalless draw against Brothers Union. With their fifth draw in 16 matches, Police remained at eighth place with 17 points while Brothers were second from bottom with six points from 17 outings.



Amit gone all too soon

SPORTS REPORTER

Ahsan Ahmed Amit, head of media of the Bangladesh Football Federation, died of brain hemorrhage at a Delhi hospital yesterday.

Amit, who was 43, left behind his father, one brother and a host of well-wishers. Amit had undergone a successful kidney transplant in Delhi on June 22 after cared for by doctors for months, but he suddenly suffered brain hemorrhage yesterday after hearing news of his elder brother being put on life support in Dhaka.

"I heard that Amit bhai suffered a stroke after getting the news that his elder brother, Bunty, had been put on life support in Dhaka following a brain hemorrhage," BFF media executive Khalid Mahmud Nowmee said at the Bangabandhu National Stadium during the Bangladesh Premier League match between Mohammedan and Bashundhara Kings.

Nowmee later called Amit's attendant in India to confirm his premature passing. Amit had also been a popular face in grassroots football and table tennis. He had also been treasurer of the Bangladesh Table Tennis Federation.

Amit has been involved with football since 1990 before representing Bangladesh Boys in 1993 or 94 as a club official. He was a dedicated organiser, who ran three table tennis clubs with his own money.