

# OVECHKIN BECOMES FIRST RUSSIAN TO SCORE 500 GOALS

**WASHINGTON:** Washington Capitals superstar Alex Ovechkin joined the NHL's 500 goal club Sunday, becoming the first Russian-born player to reach the milestone.

Ovechkin's 500th NHL goal came on a powerplay against the Ottawa Senators with 3:41 left in the second period, and he added his 501st in the third to wrap up the Capitals' 7-1 victory. "It's a great feeling, obviously, to do it in front of our fans," Ovechkin said. "Mom and dad are here. Celebrating. Everybody jumping. Yeah! It was a very special moment."

Ovechkin became the 43rd player in NHL history to score 500 goals, and the fifth-fastest to reach the milestone, doing

so in his 801st game. Ovechkin's snapshot from the top of the left faceoff circle beat Ottawa goaltender Andrew Hammond on the glove side to give the Capitals a commanding 5-1 lead.

The 30-year-old Capitals left winger celebrated with a left fist pump and was then mobbed by his teammates who came off bench while the crowd at the Verizon Center arena gave their hero a standing ovation.

"I was surprised," Ovechkin said of his teammates' instant celebration, but added teammate Jason Chimera told him they had planned it. "I'm sure everyone is going to remember that moment," he said. "It's history." Only four other players—Wayne Gretzky in

575 games, Mario Lemieux (605), Mike Bossy (647) and Brett Hull (693) — have reached 500 goals quicker. That's caused some to wonder if Ovechkin could ever catch Gretzky as the league's all-time goal leader with 894.

Ovechkin had already notched one milestone this season, when his 484th career goal on November 19 saw him surpass Sergei Fedorov for most goals by a Russian in the NHL.

Since entering the NHL in 2005-06, Ovechkin has posted 150 more goals and 50 more points than any other player. He ranks first in the Capitals' 42-year history in goals (501), points (934), power-play goals (185), game-winning goals (85) and overtime goals



Washington Capitals left wing Alex Ovechkin.

(16). Capitals coach Barry Trotz said this week that he thought Ovechkin was more nervous about passing Fedorov than he was about reaching 500. "He's going to score a lot more than 500 goals, I'm pretty sure on that," Trotz said. Ovechkin has achieved numerous individual milestones but is still seeking team success as he has yet to win an Olympic medal with Russia or a Stanley Cup with his Capitals.

Washington has lost in the Conference semi-finals two out of the past five seasons. They lost in the Conference quarter-finals in 2012-13, failed to reach the postseason in 2013-14 and were bounced in the second round last season. — AFP

## AUSSIE KYRGIOS IN THE SPOTLIGHT AT KOOYONG

**MELBOURNE:** The pre-Australian Open spotlight will be fixed firmly on volatile Nick Kyrgios with the exuberant young Aussie heading the field at the Kooyong Classic starting today.

Days after leading Australia to only its second title at the Hopman Cup mixed-teams event in Perth, the 20-year-old has become a hot topic in the Grand Slam run-up due to his heroics on-court and his new-look good behaviour.

Kyrgios, who had frequent brushes with officialdom last season, is the top drawcard in an expanded 12-man field at Kooyong Club in Melbourne, former home of the Australian Open and venue for an upcoming first-round Davis Cup tie against the United States in March.

The richly-talented youngster is coming off a contentious 2015, including an infamous on-court spat with Stan Wawrinka which sparked stinging criticism from fellow players.

It led to the ATP handing him a 28-day suspended sentence that remains in effect until late February. It will be imposed if he gets in trouble on court again, something he managed to avoid in Perth. The powerful Kyrgios, who won all four of his singles rubbers at the Hopman Cup and helped team-mate Daria Gavrilova to the first Aussie victory in the event for 16 years, will take to the court on Wednesday when he faces Belgian David Goffin. "My game can always get better. There's always things I need to

improve on. You can never be too ready, I feel, for a Grand Slam," world number 30 Kyrgios said as he prepared for the business end of the Australian tennis summer.

"I'm nervous, I'm excited. I don't really know how much or how little to do. I'm just going to get out there and practise a bit more. "I feel like I play my best tennis on big stages. If I'm serving well and playing the right game style, I think I've got a good chance."

Tuesday's opening programme will feature half of the field on court with the remainder to play Wednesday. As in the past, winners progress while losers complete relegation play.

Today, Frenchman Gilles Simon brings a 2-2 record into an opening match with Spain's Feliciano Lopez as the pair meet for the first time since 2014.

Australian Open wildcard Omar Jasika faces South Korea's Hyeon Chung and Nicolas Almagro and Paul Henri Mathieu hold another Spain-French clash.

The Wednesday line-up includes former Australian Open finalist Marcos Baghdatis taking on Spanish youngster Pablo Carenno Busta, while German teen Alex Zverev plays Britain's Kyle Edmund in addition to the showcase Kyrgios match.

The event is also used by major players for one-off warm-ups under match conditions with Kei Nishikori to take advantage of an invitation do that by testing himself against Jasika, a former US open junior winner. — AFP



WASHINGTON: Patrick Wiercioch #46 of the Ottawa Senators checks Tom Wilson #43 of the Washington Capitals as Andrew Hammond #30 attempts to make a save at the Verizon Center on Sunday in Washington, DC. — AFP

## PANTHERS EXTEND WINNING STREAK, BEAT OILERS 2-1

**EDMONTON:** The Florida Panthers directed only 14 shots on goal but Jaromir Jagr and Jonathan Huberdeau were still able to find the net in a 2-1 win over the Edmonton Oilers on Sunday. It was the Panthers' 12th straight win-marking the first time a team has won a dozen games in a row since the Boston Bruins did it during the 2013-14 season. After just 3:22 of the first, the ageless Jagr scored on a breakaway. The 43-year-old actually lost control of the puck as he bore down on Oilers goalie Cam Talbot but still managed to slide a shot between the netminder's pads. It was Jagr's 737th career goal, putting him just four behind Brett Hull for third all-time on the NHL all-time goals list. Huberdeau scored less than four minutes later before Oilers center Mark Letestu halved the deficit at 12:32 of the first but there were no more goals in a feisty, fight-filled encounter.

### CAPITALS 7, SENATORS 1

Alex Ovechkin became the fifth-fastest player to record his 500th NHL goal and added his 501st for good measure, leading the Washington Capitals to a 7-1 rout over the Ottawa Senators. It was the 30-year-old Ovechkin's 801st NHL game. Justin Williams, T.J. Oshie, Zach Sill, Tom Wilson and Dmitry Orlov also scored goals for the Capitals. The Senators' only offense came from Mike Hoffman, who netted his team-high 20th goal of the season in early in the second period.

### BLACKHAWKS 6, AVALANCHE 3

Patrick Kane and Marian Hossa scored two goals apiece, and Chicago overwhelmed Colorado. Jonathan Toews scored a goal and added two assists, Brandon Mashinter also scored for the Blackhawks. Matt Duchene led the Avalanche with two goals and Nathan MacKinnon added a goal. Corey Crawford stopped 34 shots for the Blackhawks and Semyon Varlamov allowed four goals on 20 shots before he was replaced by Calvin Pickard, who stopped 13 of 15 shots in relief for the Avalanche.

### NHL results/standings

Buffalo 4, Winnipeg 2; Washington 7, Ottawa 1; Chicago 6, Colorado 3; New Jersey 2, Minnesota 1; Detroit 2, Anaheim 1; Florida 2, Edmonton 1.

Western Conference						Eastern Conference							
Central Division			Atlantic Division			Metropolitan Division			Pacific Division				
W	L	OTL	GF	GA	PTS	W	L	OTL	GF	GA	PTS		
Dallas	29	11	4	149	116	62	Detroit	22	13	7	105	108	51
Chicago	27	13	4	126	104	58	Montreal	23	17	3	122	107	49
St. Louis	24	14	7	111	112	55	Boston	21	14	5	123	108	47
Minnesota	22	12	8	111	99	52	Tampa Bay	21	17	4	107	102	46
Nashville	19	16	7	107	115	45	Ottawa	20	17	6	119	131	46
Colorado	21	19	3	125	123	45	Toronto	16	17	7	104	112	39
Winnipeg	19	20	3	111	121	41	Buffalo	16	22	4	97	115	36
Los Angeles	26	12	3	108	90	55	<b>Metropolitan Division</b>						
Arizona	21	16	4	116	125	46	Washington	32	7	3	139	90	67
Vancouver	16	16	10	102	118	42	NY Rangers	22	14	5	121	109	49
Anaheim	17	17	7	78	99	41	NY Islanders	22	15	5	114	107	49
San Jose	19	18	2	109	108	40	New Jersey	21	17	5	97	102	47
Calgary	19	19	2	105	124	40	Pittsburgh	20	16	5	97	100	45
Edmonton	17	23	3	105	127	37	Philadelphia	18	15	7	91	108	43
<b>Eastern Conference</b>						<b>Atlantic Division</b>							
Florida	26	12	4	116	89	56	Carolina	18	18	7	102	118	43
Note: Overtime losses (OTL) are worth one point in the standings and are not included in the loss column (L).													

### SABRES 4, JETS 2

Marcus Foligno snapped a tie early in the third period with his third goal of the season to help spark Buffalo over Winnipeg. Sam Reinhart's hat-trick scored three goals for the other Sabres goals. Blake Wheeler fired his 11th and Mathieu Perreault scored his seventh for the Jets.

### DEVILS 2, WILD 1

Jon Merrill scored for the first time in 13 months, and New Jersey snapped a three-game losing streak with a victory in a defensive battle with Minnesota.

Cory Schneider did the rest of the work for the Devils, stopping 17 shots for a New Jersey team that has scored just four goals in its past

four games. Adam Henrique also scored for the Devils. Darcy Kuemper returned from an injury to make 15 saves in the loss for the Wild. Zach Parise had the only goal for Minnesota, scoring for the first time against his former team.

### RED WINGS 2, DUCKS 1

Riley Sheahan scored with 3:44 to play, giving Detroit a victory over Anaheim at the Honda Center. Petr Mrazek stopped 30 shots to earn his fourth consecutive win for the Red Wings, who now have their longest winning streak of the season: four games.

Tomas Tatar scored in the game's opening seconds. Corey Perry collected his 16th goal for the Ducks, who took their second loss in three games. — Reuters



SYDNEY: Nick Kyrgios of Australia reacts during an exhibition match of Fast4 Tennis against Gael Monfils of France during the Sydney International tennis tournament in Sydney yesterday. — AFP

## KERBER SURVIVES 'EXTREME HEAT' TEST IN SYDNEY

**SYDNEY:** Germany's Angelique Kerber overcame the loss of the first set on a day of extreme heat in Sydney as she maintained her build-up to next week's Australian Open yesterday. The fourth seed, one of the few members of the women's world top 10 not to be hit by injury in the lead-up to the year's first Grand Slam, came from a set down to oust Ukraine's Elina Svitolina 4-6, 6-0, 6-3 in Sydney International's first round.

Kerber, who lost to Victoria Azarenka in Saturday's Brisbane International final, is looking for more matches to hone her form leading into the Australian Open in Melbourne. While defending champion Petra Kvitova and second seed Agnieszka Radwanska pulled out of the Sydney event citing injuries, Kerber powered on to get in some valuable match practice.

Kvitova and Radwanska's withdrawals came after injury problems at other Australian tournaments for the world's top-ranked stars including Serena Williams (knee), Simona Halep (Achilles), Garbine Muguruza (foot) and Maria Sharapova (forearm).

"I had a lot of matches last week, but that was actually also my plan to come to Australia, to have a lot of matches, and also to play a few more matches here," Kerber said. "I don't know how far I can get. I'm healthy. I have no pain

anywhere. I will just try to recover and see how I feel tomorrow. But my body feels good." Kerber struggled with the intense heat early in her match, dropping the opening set without winning a game, but she battled on. "It's good to have a match like this under my belt. It's always hot in Australia. I think it was a good match to prepare for Melbourne," she said. With temperatures hitting 37 Celsius (99 Fahrenheit) the WTA's extreme heat policy came into force, allowing Kerber and Svitolina to take a 10-minute break before the third and deciding set.

Australia's Samantha Stosur fought back from a set and a service break down to overcome defeat Italy's Roberta Vinci 4-6, 7-5, 7-5 in two hours 30 minutes. Among other first-round winners on Monday were Italy's world number 19 Sara Errani, over Spanish seventh seed Carla Suarez 6-3, 6-3, and German Sabine Lisicki, who eased past Slovenia's Polona Herczeg 6-4, 6-3. In the men's draw, Italian fifth seed Andreas Seppi eliminated Denis Istomin of Uzbekistan in three sets, but Seppi's compatriot Simone Bolelli went out to American qualifier Alexander Sarkissian 6-2, 7-6 (7/5).

In the evening match, experienced Spaniard Tommy Robredo was too strong for Australia's John Millman 7-6 (7/3), 6-3. — AFP



SYDNEY: Angelique Kerber of Germany hits a return against Elina Svitolina of Ukraine during their women's singles first round match at the Sydney International tennis tournament in Sydney yesterday. — AFP

## BOUCHARD COMEBACK GATHERS STEAM

**HOBART:** Canada's Eugenie Bouchard swept into the second round of the Hobart International with a straight sets demolition of American Bethanie Mattek-Sands yesterday.

The former world number 5 now ranked 47 took just 57 minutes to dispose of one-time tournament finalist Mattek-Sands 6-2, 6-1. Bouchard, 21, who reached the semi-finals of the 2014 Australian and French Opens before playing in the final at Wimbledon in the same year, suffered a big setback at the US Open last September.

She sustained a head injury after slipping in the locker room and was forced to pull out of her fourth-round match at Flushing Meadows with a concussion, which also forced her to withdraw from an event in Wuhan, China later that month.

It was feeling pretty solid out there, Bouchard said after her latest win. "The foundation of my game is to be really aggressive, but I also want to have that balance with consistency and I think I did a good job of that today." Bouchard lost just 14 points on serve in her first win in three attempts against the more experienced American.

It was nice to get a win against her finally, Bouchard said. "She's a great player and I was really aware that when she came to the net she is really solid, so I was just always trying to pass her."

Bouchard said she was feeling good. "The most important part right now for sure is feeling healthy and I walked off the court feeling healthy, and that's a very good positive sign," she said. The Canadian will next play eighth seed Alison Van Uytvanck of Belgium. — AFP