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OAKLAND: Doug Martin #28 of the Oakland Raiders is tackled by Justin Simmons #31 and Josey Jewell #47 of the Denver Broncos during their NFL game at Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum on Monday, in Oakland, California. — AFP

## Raiders rip Broncos in NFL farewell

### 174th Raiders win in their 303rd game at Oakland Coliseum

**SAN FRANCISCO:** Dwayne Harris returned a punt 99 yards for a touchdown and the Oakland Raiders beat the Denver Broncos 27-14 on Monday in what might have been the hosts' final NFL game in Oakland.

Doug Martin and Jalen Richard added touchdown runs for Oakland in a game between teams already eliminated from playoff contention. The Raiders improved to 4-11 but will miss the playoffs for the 15th time in 16 years while Denver fell to 6-9, ensuring back-to-back losing seasons for the first time since 1971-72.

It was the 174th Raiders win in their 303rd game at the Oakland Coliseum, which opened in 1966 and remains the only NFL stadium shared with a Major League Baseball club, the Oakland A's.

A federal anti-trust lawsuit filed by the city of Oakland to recover damages related to the Raiders' planned move to Las Vegas in 2020 prompted the team to retract a one-year lease offer for the 2019 campaign earlier this month, leaving the team's home venue uncertain for next season.

Quarterback Derek Carr and coach Jon Gruden were among the Raiders who after the game went to the "Black Hole"—an area where devoted Raiders fans dress in monster-themed Silver and Black outfits—and exchanged high-five hand slaps with supporters for what might be the last time.

"Raider Nation is tough, gritty and loyal. We've had a lot of good times in that stadium," Carr said. "Raider

Nation is the most loyal fan base in the world. We don't know if we're going to be here next year so I wanted to say thank you to all of them, thanks for having our back."

Gruden added: "Our fans fueled us. To share the victory with them is always special." Options mentioned for Raiders 2019 home games include sharing the NFL San Francisco 49ers stadium in nearby Santa Clara, playing at the home of baseball's San Francisco Giants, striking a deal with Oakland or playing home games in London, England.

The NFL has staged games in London since 2007, playing three contests at Wembley Stadium this year. Raiders owner Mark Davis says he hopes to decide in a

few weeks on the team's home for next season.

Harris opened the scoring 4:50 into the game, matching the second-longest runback in NFL history. Martin added a 24-yard touchdown run and Dan Carlson added a 43-yard field goal for a 17-0 Oakland half-time edge, their biggest lead this season.

Denver answered on Case Keenum's 7-yard touchdown pass to DaeSean Hamilton but the Raiders responded on Richard's 3-yard touchdown run. Keenum flipped a 19-yard touchdown pass to Courtland Sutton with 7:31 remaining, but Carlson added a 45-yard field goal to create the final margin of the Raiders' first Monday night win since 2002 after seven losses in a row. — AFP

## Resurgent Djokovic leads the way as old guard stays on top

**PARIS:** Next Gen poster boy Alexander Zverev's season-ending Tour Finals triumph served up a glimpse into the future of men's tennis although 2018 remained a year dominated once more by the usual, yet aging, suspects as a revitalised Novak Djokovic returned to the peak of his powers.

The Serb tumbled out of the top 10 for the first time in a decade and was ranked as lowly as 22nd in June, slumping to a string of uncharacteristic defeats—including an embarrassing loss to Italian journeyman Marco Cecchinato at the French Open—following elbow surgery to fix a lingering injury.

Over the next few months though Djokovic surged back to his all-conquering best, sweeping to Wimbledon and US Open crowns and completing a historic Masters sweep with an elusive victory in Cincinnati.

"There was always part of me that believed I could make it back and I never thought it was impossible," Djokovic said of his climb back to world number one.

"It turned out to be a perfect five months of the year, with two Grand Slam titles." Roger Federer continued to defy his advancing years as he defended his

Australian Open title and then eclipsed Andre Agassi as the oldest top-ranked player in ATP history, at the age of 36.

Rafael Nadal dominated in typical fashion on clay, swaggering to an 11th Roland Garros title, but the injury-plagued Spaniard limped out of two other Grand Slams before further fitness problems curtailed his season.

He played in just nine tournaments, his fewest since 2002, yet still won five titles and compiled a commanding 45-4 record.

Serena Williams returned to the court after her 14-month maternity leave, battling back from life-saving surgery, but twice fell agonisingly short of landing a record-equaling 24th Grand Slam crown.

She required a series of operations to free her from the risk of blood clots in the wake of giving birth to her daughter in September 2017, a scare that prompted her to sport an eye-catching black catsuit at Roland Garros.

She finished runner-up at both Wimbledon and the US Open, but it was the nature of her defeat in New York that will stick in the memory after a meltdown in the final against Japan's Naomi Osaka.

Williams erupted after a code violation for

receiving coaching from her box, and subsequently called chair umpire Carlos Ramos a "liar and a thief" after she incurred a one-point penalty for racket abuse.

The American later described the decision to then hit her with a game penalty following her tear-filled tirade as "sexist".

An astonishingly poised Osaka held her nerve to seal victory and become the first Japanese woman to win a Grand Slam singles title, but the 20-year-old was reduced to tears when a pro-Williams crowd booed the trophy ceremony announcers.

Fortunately, Williams gracefully intervened and called for them to show the young champion respect. In a season of firsts, Simona Halep eased the pain of three previous major finals defeats, to follow in the footsteps of her manager Virginia Ruzici, 40 years on, by claiming the French Open championship.

Caroline Wozniacki's patience yielded her maiden Grand Slam triumph too, the Dane taking the Australian Open title to briefly return to world number one.

However, she later revealed her battle with rheumatoid arthritis, an autoimmune disease which causes swelling of the joints and fatigue, following her diagnosis ahead of the US Open. Angelique Kerber completed the third leg of a career Grand Slam by battering past Williams to become the first German woman to win Wimbledon since Steffi Graf in 1996. The season also marked the end of the



Novak Djokovic

118-year Davis Cup in its traditional format, with a revamped version of the competition next November bringing together 18 nations in one place for a week.

Kevin Anderson's 26-24 defeat of John Isner in the fifth set of this year's Wimbledon semi-finals prompted another rethink, leading the All England Club to introduce a tie-

break to settle matches that reach 12—all in the decider.

"It is bucking tradition but I think a lot of people believe that is not a bad thing," Isner said in the wake of the rule change. Similarly, a 10-point tie-break will be used in the final set at the Australian Open, where Federer will eye his 100th career title. — AFP