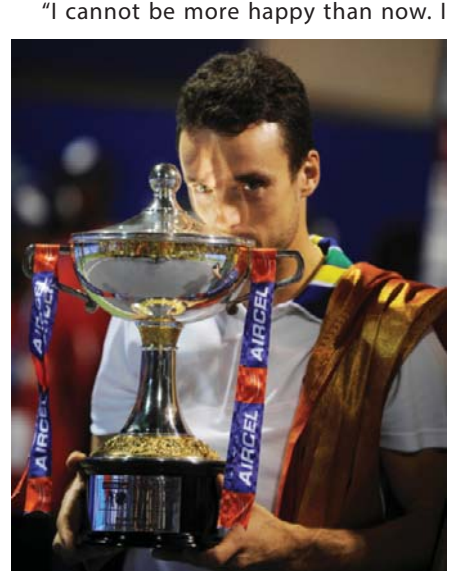


BAUTISTA STIFLES AGGRESSIVE MEDVEDEV TO WIN CHENNAI OPEN

CHENNAI: World number 14 Roberto Bautista Agut outclassed the aggressive Daniil Medvedev 6-3 6-4 to win the Chennai Open title yesterday.



CHENNAI: Roberto Bautista Agut of Spain holds the trophy after beating Daniil Medvedev of Russia in the final men's singles match at Chennai Open Tennis Championship in Chennai yesterday. —AFP

played a great tournament," Bautista Agut, who won his fifth ATP tour title, said during the presentation ceremony. "I know it is very difficult to be a top-10 player but my goal is to be a better player every day."

The second-seeded Spaniard, who was happy to play out long rallies in order to win points, oozed confidence as he comfortably held serve.

He needed to break the 20-year-old Medvedev only once to clinch the opening set. The second set was a much more even contest with Medvedev threatening to turn the tide after edging out a thrilling 30-shot rally as Bautista Agut, a Chennai finalist in 2013, struggled to break the Russian's service. Bautista Agut, however, finally broke Medvedev shortly after the big-serving Russian received on-court treatment for a suspected hamstring problem, and wrapped up the match in an hour and 10 minutes.

"I just had some soreness on my muscles (today). You're never happy unless you have won a tournament but I am really happy I made it to the final," said world number 99 Medvedev, who was playing in his first ATP tour final.

"If someone asked me before the tournament 'Will I be happy reaching the final?', I would said yes." —Reuters

BEATEN MURRAY UPBEAT ABOUT AUSTRALIAN OPEN CHANCES

DOHA: Andy Murray dismissed the idea that his defeat by arch-rival Novak Djokovic in the Qatar Open will have any impact on his attempts to win the Australian Open for the first time. The world number one lost 6-3, 5-7, 6-4 to the Serb in an early season classic, the Briton's first defeat in 29 competitive matches. But Murray said it would mean little when he soon begins his latest attempt to win in Melbourne where he has agonisingly lost five finals. "I still think I have a chance of winning the Australian Open after tonight," he said after the defeat in Doha.

"I don't think that changes. It's disappointing to lose for sure. I have a chance to win the Australian Open still," Murray lost Melbourne finals in 2010, 2011, 2013, 2015 and 2016, four of those to Djokovic.

Despite defeat in Doha, Murray said he had gained plenty from the week-long tournament. "I think physically it was a good test to start the year, and I did good here," he said. "My body feels all right just now, so that's positive. "Still think there are things I can do better. You know, I wasn't that clinical on break points this week, which maybe that comes with playing a

few more matches."

Djokovic, who has won the Australian Open five times in the last six years, said Doha had provided perfect preparation for Melbourne. "Best scenario I could ask for beginning of the season," he told reporters. "Playing five matches in this tournament and then three hours against the number one of the world, biggest rival, and winning in a thrilling marathon match is something that definitely can serve as a positive incentive for what's coming up in Australia."

The world number two also said that he expects further battles with Murray, possibly in the final in Melbourne.

"I hope we are going to play against each other. We make each other work hard and improve and continuously work on our games and ourselves. We strive to get better, both of us."

With six titles already, if Djokovic manages to win again in Melbourne this year he will go down in history as the player who has won the most Australian Opens.

A seventh victory would pull him one clear of Roy Emerson, who also won six titles but in the amateur era. The Australian Open begins on January 16. —AFP



SYDNEY: Eugenie Bouchard of Canada tries to keep cool during a break while playing China's Shuai Zhang during their women's singles match at the Sydney International tennis tournament in Sydney, Australia, yesterday. — AP

KUZNETSOVA OPENS SYDNEY TITLE DEFENCE WITH WIN

SYDNEY: Svetlana Kuznetsova opened the defence of her Sydney International title with a comfortable 6-1 6-4 victory over Irina-Camelia Begu yesterday as the Australian Open warm-up event suffered a pair of big-name withdrawals. The Russian fifth seed started strongly by winning 10 of the first 11 games and after her Romanian opponent rallied in the second set to tie it up at 4-4, Kuznetsova broke again in the ninth game and served out the victory in 77 minutes. "I started the year quite good with the feeling," the 31-year-old double grand slam winner told reporters. "Sometimes the results don't go together with whatever you feel. But I feel very good for the start of the year, and for me it's a very nice feeling."

"I never thought of defending my title or something like that. It's just another tournament—the title I have at home and no-one will take it away from me. This is another year and another opportunity to play."

Kuznetsova will next face the winner of the match between local favourite Sam Stosur and fellow Russian Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova.

Elsewhere, Canada's Eugenie Bouchard, a former Wimbledon finalist, also won her opening match with a 7-6(1) 6-2 first round win over China's Shuai Zhang.

However, fourth seed Karolina Pliskova, who will climb to world number five following her Brisbane title win on Saturday, will not be able to aim for back-to-back victories after she pulled out of the event with a left inner thigh injury. The Czech was joined on the sidelines by Ukraine's world number 14 Elina Svitolina, who withdrew citing a viral illness. "I've had constant headaches for the last two days and unfortunately in today's hot weather it got even worse when I was warming up and my body wasn't ready to compete," Svitolina, who was seeded seventh, said.

With the Australian Open tennis starting in a week's time in Melbourne, Frenchwoman Alize Cornet also decided against risking a sore back and pulled out of the Hobart International, which she won last year.

Cornet was the runner-up in Brisbane after going down 6-0 6-3 to Pliskova in the final. "I am very sad I am not being able to play the tournament at Hobart this year," she said in a video message on Twitter. "It was meaning a lot to me to come back here and defend my title but I have to be reasonable. "My back is not doing great and I have just one week to get ready for the Australian Open. I hope I can make it on time." — Reuters



SUNRISE: Goaltender James Reimer #34 looks towards the blue line as Michael Matheson #19 of the Florida Panthers checks Patrice Bergeron #37 of the Boston Bruins in front of the net at the BB&T Center on Saturday in Sunrise, Florida. The Bruins defeated the Panthers 4-0. — AFP

FLYERS SNAP 5-GAME LOSING STREAK WITH 4-2 WIN OVER TAMPA BAY

PHILADELPHIA: Jakub Voracek set up his team's first two goals, and the Philadelphia Flyers kept the pedal to the metal from there en route to a 4-2 win over the Tampa Bay Lightning, snapping a five-game losing streak. Rookie Travis Konecny, who has been mired in a prolonged slump, scored just his second goal in the past 23 games to start a barrage of four goals in the second period for the Flyers (24-15-5), sending Tampa Bay to a third straight defeat.

BRUINS 4, PANTHERS 0

Brad Marchand scored twice and Tuukka Rask stopped 25 shots as Boston improved to 4-0-0 versus the Panthers this season—all with Rask in goal. Backes, just off the injured list, scored his first goal since Dec. 27. He has three goals in three games against Florida this season.

KINGS 4, WILD 3 (OT)

Tanner Pearson scored 3:32 into overtime and Jeff Carter registered a goal and two assists as the Kings recorded a 4-3 victory over the Minnesota Wild. Pearson scored his 11th goal of the season and raised the Kings' record to 8-1 in the extra session. Minnesota (24-9-5) lost for the second time in three contests following a franchise-record 12 game winning streak.

SABRES 4, JETS 3

Brian Gionta scored midway through the third period to give the Buffalo Sabres to a 4-3 comeback win over the Winnipeg Jets. Gionta's goal capped a three-goal burst by the Sabres in the third after a sluggish start to the game.

RANGERS 5, BLUE JACKETS 4

Michael Grabner scored on a breakaway with 17 seconds remaining for his second goal of the game as the New York Rangers rallied from a two-goal third-period deficit to defeat the Columbus Blue Jackets 5-4. Columbus defenseman Seth Jones fanned on a pass at the New York blueline and the speedy Grabner pounced, lifting a backhand shot high over sprawling goaltender Curtis McElhinney. Grabner has a team-leading 18 goals.

CANADIENS 5, MAPLE LEAFS 3

Max Pacioretty, Artturi Lehkonen, Nikita Scherbak, Alexander Radulov and Michael McCarron scored as Montreal made it 3-for-3 over Toronto this season. Shea Weber and Jeff Petry added two assists each for the Canadiens, who extended their winning streak to three games. Carey Price stopped 33 shots in the Montreal net.

CAPITALS 1, SENATORS 0

T.J. Oshie scored early in the first period and was in the dressing room for the third as Washington won its fifth straight. Oshie took a hard hit on his left shoulder from the Senators' Dion Phaneuf but returned before the period was over. He did not, however, come out for the third period.

SHARKS 6, RED WINGS 3

Captain Joe Pavelski scored two goals to lead a San Jose offense that was the last team in the league this season to produce five goals in a game as the Sharks snapped a three-game losing streak. Twelve different San Jose players recorded points with five skaters enjoying two-point nights.

BLUES 4, STARS 3

Patrik Berglund scored with 1:54 left in the third period to snap a tie and lift St Louis to victory. Berglund redirected a shot by Kevin Shattenkirk past goalie Antti Niemi for the final goal. Paul Stastny collected two goals and an assist, Vladimir Tarasenko scored his 20th goal and Clutter Hutton had 25 saves for

the Blues, who improved to 12-5-2 in games following a loss this season.

FLAMES 3, CANUCKS 1

Goals by Alex Chiasson and Matt Stajan just over a minute apart in the first period sparked Calgary to a victory that stopped Vancouver's six-game win streak. Michael Frolik got an insurance goal for the Flames on a breakaway late in the third period. Chiasson and Stajan scored within 1:03 of each other and Calgary got a strong effort in goal from Chad Johnson, who made 27 stops.

OILERS 2, DEVILS 1 (OT)

Mark Letestu's power-play goal 3:59 into

overtime lifted Edmonton. Letestu's score came on a booming left-wing slap shot with New Jersey's Travis Zajac sitting in the penalty box after slashing the Oilers' Connor McDavid.

COYOTES 2, ISLANDERS 1 (SO)

Brendan Perlini scored the game-tying goal with 5:55 remaining and Anthony Duclair and Radim Vrba scored in the shootout as Arizona ended a season-high nine-game losing streak one short of the franchise record. The Coyotes had not won since Dec. 15 in Toronto. Arizona backup Louis Domingue made 27 saves, including six in overtime to win for the first time since Nov. 8 against Colorado.—Reuters

NHL results/standings

San Jose 6, Detroit 3; Calgary 3, Vancouver 1; Arizona 2, NY Islanders 1 (SO); St. Louis 4, Dallas 3; Montreal 5, Toronto 3; Washington 1, Ottawa 0; Boston 4, Florida 0; Edmonton 2, New Jersey 1 (OT); NY Rangers 5, Columbus 4; Los Angeles 4, Minnesota 3 (OT); Buffalo 4, Winnipeg 3; Philadelphia 4, Tampa Bay 2.

Western Conference						Eastern Conference							
Central Division						Atlantic Division							
W	L	OTL	GF	GA	PTS	W	L	OTL	GF	GA	PTS		
Chicago	25	12	5	115	102	55	Boston	21	17	4	102	101	46
Minnesota	24	9	5	121	84	53	Ottawa	20	14	4	94	99	44
St. Louis	21	14	5	114	118	47	Toronto	18	13	8	120	116	44
Nashville	17	15	7	110	105	41	Tampa Bay	19	18	4	116	121	42
Winnipeg	19	20	3	116	126	41	Florida	17	16	8	95	113	42
Dallas	16	16	8	103	121	40	Buffalo	15	15	9	89	109	39
Colorado	13	25	1	79	130	27	Detroit	17	18	5	100	115	39
Pacific Division						Metropolitan Division							
San Jose	24	14	2	105	90	50	Columbus	27	7	4	130	84	58
Anaheim	21	12	8	112	111	50	NY Rangers	28	13	1	146	107	57
Edmonton	21	13	7	117	108	49	Pittsburgh	25	8	5	133	107	55
Calgary	22	18	2	114	117	46	Washington	25	9	5	111	83	55
Los Angeles	20	16	4	98	99	44	Philadelphia	21	15	5	122	127	47
Vancouver	20	19	3	105	121	43	Carolina	17	15	7	100	105	41
Arizona	12	22	6	86	128	30	New Jersey	16	17	8	95	121	40
Eastern Conference						Atlantic Division							
Montreal	25	9	6	124	93	56	NY Islanders	15	15	8	106	117	38

Note: Overtime losses (OTL) are worth one point in the standings and are not included in the loss column (L)

MATTEK-SANDS DETHRONES MIRZA AS WORLD NUMBER ONE

LONDON: American Bethanie Mattek-Sands will rise to number one in the world when the WTA doubles rankings are released today.

Mattek-Sands sealed top spot after winning her 23rd WTA doubles title in Brisbane on Saturday with partner Sania Mirza. She ended her Indian partner's 91-week reign as world number one.

"Being number one is something that you dream of from the time you pick up a racket," Mattek-Sands, whose daring outfits and

knee-high socks mark her out from the crowd, told the WTA. "You're not given number one—you have to earn it and I feel really proud of myself for getting there." Mirza added: "I feel like I'm handing over the Miss World No 1 crown. Congratulations to her for becoming No 1. She has had an amazing year." Mattek-Sands has won three grand slam doubles titles all with Czech Lucie Safarova—the most recent coming at last year's US Open.—Reuters



Sania Mirza