

Sports

Federer, Kerber stunned as Nadal powers into Australian Open quarters

Barty downs Sharapova to fire Australia's Open dreams

MELBOURNE: Defending champion Roger Federer was stunned by fiery Greek Stefanos Tsitsipas who ended his bid for a record seventh Australian Open yesterday on a day of upsets that also saw second seed Angelique Kerber crash out.

The Swiss master caved in under the energy and pressure of a man 17 years his junior to tumble out 6-7 (11/13), 7-6 (7/3), 7-5, 7-6 (7/5) in the last 16 on Rod Laver Arena. World number two Kerber was also sensationally bundled out by a woman playing the event for the first time, with American Danielle Collins humiliating the Wimbledon champion 6-0, 6-2 in under an hour.

The man Federer beat in last year's final, sixth seed Marin Cilic, was also sent packing by Spain's Roberto Bautista Agut, who now plays Tsitsipas in the quarter-finals. Five-time Grand Slam winner Maria Sharapova was another to fall, but there was no such drama for a rampant Rafael Nadal who powered into the last eight with a straight sets win over Tomas Berdych.

Federer was gunning for a 21st Grand Slam title but had a battle on his hands from off against the 20-year-old, touted among the new generation of young stars as a future champion. "I'm the happiest man on Earth right now, I cannot describe it," said the 14th seed, who is the first Greek in history to reach the quarter-finals of a Slam.

"I've been idolising him (Federer) since the age of six. It was a dream come true for me just being on Rod Laver facing him. Winning at the end, I can't describe it." The Swiss great was gracious in defeat, saying "I lost to a better player who was playing very well, who hung in there and stayed calm".

Wimbledon winner and 2016 champion Kerber, the bookies' favourite along with Serena Williams

after defending champion Caroline Wozniacki was ousted early, was no match for Collins, ranked 35 in the world.

Collins is little known after playing much of her tennis in the US college system and was making her debut in the main draw at Melbourne Park. She had never won a Grand Slam match before this year.

"I may not have won a Grand Slam match before this but I tell you, it's going to keep happening," said the 25-year-old. "I better have many more of these."

Chipping away

Men's second seed Nadal, returning from foot surgery, barrelled past former world number four Tomas Berdych 6-0, 6-1, 7-6 (7/4) as he stays on track for an 18th Grand Slam title.

"I always say the same when I am back for injury," said the Spaniard. "I don't expect negative or positive things. I just try to do my work every day and just be with (the) right attitude every single day."

He will play world number 39 Frances Tiafoe for a place in the semi-finals after the young American celebrated his 21st birthday by grinding his way past Grigor Dimitrov 7-5, 7-6 (8/6), 6-7 (1/7), 7-5.

Hometown hero Ashleigh Barty also made the last eight after muscling past Sharapova and will next meet Petra Kvitova. Sharapova claimed her biggest scalp since completing a drugs ban in 2017 when she rolled Wozniacki in round three and looked on track to carry the momentum forward.

The 30th seed won the first set but then fell to pieces, eventually succumbing 4-6, 6-1, 6-4. "I knew I had to keep chipping away—in a sense, trust the work we've done. I know that I can match it with the best," said Barty, seeded 15.



MELBOURNE: Greece's Stefanos Tsitsipas hits a return against Switzerland's Roger Federer during their men's singles match on day seven of the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne yesterday. — AFP

Next up for the diminutive 22-year-old is Kvitova, who beat Barty in the final of the warm-up Sydney International this month. The two-time Wimbledon champion beat 17-year-old Amanda Anisimova 6-2,

6-1 to match her best performance at a major since being slashed in a terrifying attack at her home in late 2016 that left her with lasting nerve damage in her fingers. — AFP

Tearful Vonn says 'possibility' Cortina Super-G her final race

CORTINA D'AMPEZZO: American ski star Lindsey Vonn said there was a "possibility" yesterday's World Cup Super G at Cortina d'Ampezzo, which she failed to finish, would be her final race. "There's only so much my body can take," a tearful Vonn, 34, told journalists after a disappointing return from a knee injury in the Italian Dolomites where she has won a record 12 times.

"My body is inhibiting me for doing what I want to do. I'm just not able to ski the way I want to and know I can," said the former Olympic champion who competed with braces on both her knees. "I really don't know what to think at this point. Definitely it isn't the way I had hoped that things would go."

"I've been able to fight through a lot of injuries in my career but I think my injuries might get the better of me at this point." Vonn, with 82 World Cup wins to her name, has set herself the challenge of overhauling Swedish great Ingemar Stenmark's all-time record of 86 World Cup wins before retiring at Lake Louise in December.

It was her final race down the Olimpia delle Tofane piste, where she took her first World Cup podium in 2004, but she admitted it could possibly be her final race altogether. "I'm not sure," she said. "I'm going to give it a couple of days and make some decisions." She had been due to compete in Garmish next week where she has won nine times—including a downhill double last season—and then on to the world championships in Sweden from February 5.

"It's more emotional than I expected," said Vonn, who



CORTINA D'AMPEZZO: USA's Lindsey Vonn competes in the Women's Super G event of the FIS Alpine skiing World Cup in Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italian Alps, yesterday. — AFP

finished 15th and ninth in the downhills staged in Cortina on Friday and Saturday. "I know the end is coming but that doesn't make it easier. It's a great place for me, I have amazing memories and was hoping for more amazing memories, but things didn't go as I expected."

Vonn was comforted in the finish zone as Olympic downhill ace Sofia Goggia, one of her best friends on the circuit, gave her a bunch of flowers. "I cried," said Vonn. "I don't expect things like that. The ski club gave me a nice trophy and made a video."

"To have that in my last race (in Cortina) means more to me." American ace Mikaela Shiffrin won on Sunday, ahead of Tina Weirather of Liechtenstein and Austrian Tamara Tippler. It was 23-year-old Shiffrin's 54th World Cup triumph, and just this season she has won five slaloms, two giant slaloms, three super-G's and a parallel giant slalom and may well beat the record of 14 wins in a single season

set by Vreni Schneider in 1989. Shiffrin and Vonn have both won 12 in a single season. "I told her 'congratulations and awesome skiing'," said Vonn, who won her last downhill in Cortina last January. "It's great that there's another American on top of the podium."

Shiffrin said: "It must be incredibly emotional for Lindsey. Her last race in Cortina and possibly her final one. "She has had such an incredible career, so many wins, so many emotions, all those memories coming back today."

"She's been inspiring for a lot of racers and athletes coming up in the US team and around the world." The 29-year-old Weirather, a super-G specialist, praised Vonn who she said "has defined women's alpine racing". "Her mentality was something you've never seen before. "She was never afraid to say she's the best and wanted to be the best. "Europeans think that's very arrogant, but she never thought about that, she raised the sport to a new level." — AFP

Jones wary of Ireland star Sexton's 'bat phone' to referee

TWICKENHAM: England coach Eddie Jones believes Jonathan Sexton has a "bat phone to the referee" as he suggested the Ireland star receives preferential treatment from match officials. Jones' side have the toughest possible start to their Six Nations Championship campaign, away to Grand Slam reigning champions Ireland on February 2.

Fly-half Sexton, the World Player of the Year, is currently out of action with a knee tendon injury but is expected to be fit for the match at Dublin's Lansdowne Road. "Sexton is a reasonably big player who has the bat phone to the referee," said Jones in a reference to the device police used to summon Batman in the American television series based on the comic book hero.

"He is the only one allowed to pick up the red phone to talk to the referee." "Targeting" an opposition No 10, who is usually the main playmaker in any rugby union team, is standard practice. Many Ireland fans feel that, consequently, Sexton is often on the receiving end of late tackles while, by contrast, opponents have suggested their legitimate challenges on him result in unfair punishment.

Technically a captain is the only player on the field who, under rugby's rules, is allowed to initiate a conversation with the referee. But Jones said Sexton-whose Ireland skipper is Ulster hooker Rory Best-had earned his 'hot-line' because of the excellence of his play, as now retired former New Zealand World Cup-winning captain Richie McCaw had done before him.

"When he (Sexton) talks, the referee listens. That is because of his status in the game—you earn that, like Richie McCaw did," Jones explained.

Meanwhile Jones also entered into the row sparked by an admission from Marcelo Bielsa, the manager of English football's second-tier leaders Leeds United, that he has had their divisional rivals watched in secret by a member of his backroom team this season.

Jones, a former coach of both his native Australia and Japan, said that while such 'spying' had been commonplace in rugby, it had now been made obsolete in rugby by modern technology. "Fifteen years ago we used to send people out in costumes to watch training," he said.

"I can remember sending a coach who is now in a very senior position in a costume to go and watch one team play and he got chased out of there. "He was dressed up like a swagman, wearing one of those hats with corks."

"Now you don't need to do that because you see everything in the game. I have been coaching for 20 years and it has always been going on. If you want to do that you can do it. "I can say with a hand on my heart we don't do it anymore. We just don't see the value of it because we can glean most of the stuff from the games." — AFP



Group picture of winners.



Duaij Al-Otaibi hands Sheikh Thamer a memento with Sheikh Maryam looking on.

Late Sheikh Ali Sabah Al-Salem shooting tournament concludes

By Abdellatif Sharara

KUWAIT: Tournament of the late Sheikh Ali Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah was concluded Saturday after three days of fierce competition by a large number of shooters from the club, National Guard and shooters from Qatar, in the skeet and trap events.

The closing ceremony was attended by Sheikh Thamer Ali Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah and Sheikh Maryam Thamer Ali Sabah Al-Salem, President of Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federations, KSSC Assistant Secretary Eng Mohammad Al-Ghurba, and board member Nayef Al-Daihani. Engineer Duaij Al-Otaibi welcomed guests and shooters, adding Kuwait shooting is honored to organize the tournament due to the status of the man it is named after among the shooting community.

The tournament saw skeet shooter Eman Al-Shammaa make a new world record by scoring 123 out of 125.

Tournament patron Sheikh Thamer Al-Sabah said after the ceremony "we congratulate the winners, and wish those who missed out good luck next time. He said this tournament was distinguished by breaking a world record

by a female shooter."

He said we support such sports, and see now developments every year due to the efforts of board members, as Engineer Duaij Al-Otaibi continued the efforts after being deputy chairman to the now Honorary President of KSSC Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah, and continued their winning ways in the Gulf, Arab, international and Olympic arenas, besides the unlimited support by HH the Amir.

Results of the tournament are as follows:
Skeet men: Rashid Masoud from Qatar first, Abdelaziz Al-Saad second, and Saud Habib third

Trap men: Talal Al-Rashidi first, Abdelrahman Al-Faihan second, Nasser Al-Miqid third.

Skeet women: Eman Al-Shammaa first, Fatima Al-Zaabi second, Munira Al-Sbaiti third.

Trap women: Shahad Al-Hawal first, Asmaa Al-Qatami second, Sarah Al-Hawal third.

Skeet juniors: Hamad Al-Ablani first, Salem Al-Rashidi second, Salem Al-Rashidi third.

Trap juniors: Yousuf Al-Rashidi first, Salah Al-Rashidi second, Khalid Al-Rashidi third.



Eman Al-Shammaa new record holder.