

## Sports

# Medvedev claims 4th ATP title of the year

## Djokovic takes No 1 spot back from Alcaraz

MIAMI GARDENS: Russian Daniil Medvedev claimed his fourth ATP title of the year with an emphatic victory over Italy's Jannik Sinner in the final of the Miami Open on Sunday. Sinner had upset world number one and defending champion Carlos Alcaraz in Friday's semi-final, but the 21-year-old struggled in the heat against the fourth seed Medvedev, who triumphed 7-5, 6-3. The win was Medvedev's 19th career ATP title and his fifth in a Masters 1000 event and confirmed his dominance on hard courts in 2023.

Sinner, also beaten in the Miami final two years ago and now with a 0-6 record against the Russian, said he had not been at 100%. "We woke up this morning not at my best, I felt a little bit sick...unfortunately today I couldn't play at my best," said the Italian who, however said there had been no question of him pulling out of the contest. "No, it was not that bad. But, you know, with the heat, when you run a lot, it gets a little bit worse and worse. Obviously the first half an hour we played in the sun also," he said.

Medvedev, who had already won three titles in three weeks at Rotterdam, Doha and Dubai before losing to Alcaraz in the Indian Wells final, started confidently, holding serve to love while Sinner's first service game was a real battle. Sinner had to save a break point and fought through a 26-shot rally before coming through at the end of a 10-minute game.

In contrast, Medvedev again served to love but Sinner was showing signs of settling as he held his serve and then the Italian broke Medvedev to go 3-2 up, with a deft touch volley. Medvedev immediately broke back, however, with Sinner's effort clipping the net and going out and after the Russian held again, the Italian had attention from the ATP trainer.

Sinner, looking uncomfortable in the bright sunshine, took a pill along with a powder in his water in the 87 F (30.5 C) heat. Medvedev, looking composed and confident, grabbed the first set when Sinner was serving at 6-5 down and the Italian's poor shot into the net handed the Russian the crucial break. Medvedev quickly got ahead in the second set when Sinner sent a forehand long but just as quickly handed the break back to Sinner.

But Sinner was making too many errors and when Medvedev broke again to go 3-1 up, the Italian was unable to turn things around and the world number five completed his first ever win in Miami. "I'm really happy. Today was a tough match. It was probably the hottest day and the most humid during the day," Medvedev said. "It was not easy conditions. I don't know if Jannik had a small injury or cramp. I was also struggling, tried not to show it," he added.

### At home on hard courts

Medvedev's 19 ATP Tour wins have come at 19 different events, but he had not won a Masters 1000 event since Toronto in 2021. "I haven't won such a big title in probably a year and a half. At the end I was quite shaky," he said. "Not even tight, because I'm not scared to win. But still the hands get a little shaky so the serve is a little bit tougher... I managed to get myself together and close the match."

The 27-year-old has now won five of the six hard-court ATP Masters 1000s and has also reached the final at both hard-court Grand Slams, winning the 2021 US Open. Now he must turn his attention to the clay courts where he has had much less success. "I love hard courts. If it would be my choice there would be only hard courts," he joked.



MIAMI GARDENS: Daniil Medvedev of Russia holds the Butch Buchholz Trophy after defeating Jannik Sinner of Italy during the Mens Finals of the Miami Open on April 02, 2023. —AFP

### Number one spot

In another development, Novak Djokovic returned to number one spot in ATP rankings published Monday despite missing US tournaments last month because of his lack of a Covid vaccination. Carlos Alcaraz had taken the top ranking from Djokovic af-

ter victory in Indian Wells, but the Spaniard bowed out of the semi-finals of the Miami Open on Friday to allow the Serb back for a record 380th week as No 1. Djokovic has a 380-point lead over Alcaraz, with Greece's Stefanos Tsitsipas in third, more than 1,000pts behind the leading duo. —AFP

## Exeter qualify for Champions Cup quarter-finals

PARIS: Exeter qualified for the Champions Cup quarter-finals on tries scored when Sunday's last 16 thriller with Montpellier ended 33-33 after extra time. French champions Montpellier, reduced to 14 men after No 8 Zach Mercer was sent off, pushed their English hosts all the way, with the sides locked at 26-26 after normal time. The visitors looked to be heading for the last eight when Louis Carbonel broke the deadlock in the second period of extra time.

But Jack Yeandle crashed over with Joe Simmonds converting in the last minute to draw Exeter level at the end of 100 minutes of breathless rugby. Yeandle's try was Exeter's fifth to Montpellier's four, sending the 2020 European champions through to a quarter-final with the Stormers after the South African side beat Harlequins 32-28 in Cape Town on Saturday.

"We've had a few rollercoasters over the years. I am really pleased for the players. We've challenged them a bit this season around some of the highs and lows of performances," said Exeter boss Rob Baxter. At Exeter's Sandy Park home an Englishman opened the scoring, but not one of the hosts, rather Montpellier's Curtis Langdon, who powered over the line seconds after coming on for Brandon Paenga-Amosa.

Paolo Garbisi converted and then a try from Vincent Rattiez put Montpellier 12-0 up with only seven minutes on the clock. Exeter regrouped and cut into that deficit when Scott Sio touched down with Joe Simmonds adding the conversion. Simmonds' older brother Sam had Exeter back level after the hour mark, with Joe converting to make it 14-12. A deliberate knock-on by Henry Slade earned the Exeter centre 10 minutes in the sin bin with Garbisi kicking the resulting penalty to put Montpellier back in front by a point at half-time.

### 'Impossible to handle'

Montpellier had to play the final 30 minutes of regulation time down a man after Mercer's red card for a tackle to the head of Christ Tshinza. Garbisi extended their lead with a 53rd minute penalty but that was cancelled out seconds later when Sam Simmonds found Tom Wyatt who went on to score an eye catching try.

Josh Iosefa-Scott then crossed over and after a successful conversion Exeter found themselves eight points clear. With four minutes of normal time left on the clock Lenni Nouchi's touchdown lifted Montpellier to within three points of Exeter, Garbisi's injury time penalty leaving the teams inseparable at 26-26. With the winner eventually determined by tries count-back Montpellier will rue the two touchdowns they had disallowed in the second half.

Baxter hailed Sam Simmonds, the Exeter No. 8 who will join Montpellier after the World Cup later this year. "He looked almost impossible to handle sometimes," said Baxter. Five-time European champions Toulouse downed the Bulls 33-9 to set-up a last-eight clash with the Sharks, another South African side, next weekend. Lock forward Emmanuel Meafou, winger Matthis Lebel and flanker Thibaud Flament were the try-scorers for the French side Thomas Ramos was perfect with the boot, succeeding with all of his seven kicks at goal.

Three-time winners Saracens will next face defending champions La Rochelle after seeing off Ospreys of Wales 35-20. Saracens pounced on a late blunder by the Ospreys which proved to be pivotal in the game. With a tight round-of-16 tie locked at 20-20 approaching the final 10 minutes, Rhys Webb took a quick line-out around his 22 only for the ball to fall straight into the arms of Duncan Taylor. It was Taylor's first touch of the afternoon having just arrived as replacement for Alex Lozowski and the former Scotland centre strolled over before being mobbed by his team-mates. —AFP

## Kohli, Du Plessis lead Bangalore to IPL victory

BENGALURU: Virat Kohli and skipper Faf du Plessis led Royal Challengers Bangalore to a thumping eight-wicket drubbing of Mumbai Indians as the tournament's big guns ruled on an action-packed Sunday at the Indian Premier League. England's Jos Buttler smashed a blazing fifty to help Rajasthan Royals hammer Sunrisers Hyderabad by 72 runs in the first match of the day. Kohli (82 not out) and Du Plessis (73) capped off a run-filled day with an opening stand of 148 as Bangalore achieved their victory target of 172 with 22 balls to spare in front of a raucous home crowd.

The pair bossed the chase from the start with some assured strokemaking and regular boundaries to open their IPL campaign in style. "I thought it was a phenomenal win, a homecoming after four years. Couldn't have asked for a better game," an elated Kohli said as he reflected on a tournament which has reverted to a home-and-away format following a number of years impacted by the Covid pandemic.

Man-of-the-match Du Plessis, a 38-year-old South African veteran, said "My first time playing here (at M.Chinnaswamy Stadium) as a home player, especially batting with Virat Kohli. Energy bounces off him." Five-time winners Mumbai looked clueless despite the presence of Jason Behrendorff, who came in as the "impact player" when they fielded, and the returning England fast bowler Jofra

## Bezzecchi claims maiden MotoGP win at Grand Prix

TERMAS DE RIO HONDO: Marco Bezzecchi claimed a maiden MotoGP win at the rain-lashed Argentina Grand Prix on Sunday, also delivering a first victory for a Ducati team owned by motorcycling legend Valentino Rossi. Italian rider Bezzecchi finished ahead of Frenchman Johann Zarco with Alex Marquez, who started on pole position, rounding out an all-Ducati podium. Bezzecchi, 24, also took the lead in the overall standings after world champion Francesco Bagnaia, the winner of last weekend's season-opener in Portugal, crashed off the circuit while running in second place before recovering to finish in 16th.

Bezzecchi had started in second place on the grid but swept past Marquez on the opening lap and was rarely troubled to take the chequered flag

## China's Yin claims first LPGA title at Los Angeles Open

LOS ANGELES: China's Yin Ruoning shook off an early bogey burst to card a one-under-par 70 and win her first US LPGA title at the Los Angeles Open, holding off major winner Georgia Hall by one stroke. Yin, 20 and in her second season on the US tour, started the day with the lead but appeared in deep trouble after three straight bogeys at the third, fourth and fifth holes. But she kept her nerve, reeling off four straight birdies from the sixth through the ninth to get her title bid back on track.

"I fought so hard today," said Yin, who was in tears as fellow Chinese players congratulated her on the 18th green. "I'm so happy that I fought back, from holes six through nine it was four birdies." Her 15-under par total of 269 at Palos Verdes Golf Club put her one clear of Hall, who missed a six-foot birdie putt at 18 that would have forced a playoff as Yin two-putted from 25 feet for a closing par. Hall had four birdies with-

Archer. Du Plessis smashed six sixes in his 43-ball knock before departing in the 15th over. New man Dinesh Karthik soon fell for a duck off Mumbai's big-buy Cameron Green.

Glenn Maxwell then struck two sixes and Kohli smacked the winning hit over the fence as Bangalore started their hunt for a maiden IPL title in season 16 of the cash-rich T20 tournament. Mohammed Siraj led an inspired bowling attack with figures of 1-21 to keep down five-time winners Mumbai to 171-7 despite an unbeaten 84 by Indian talent Tilak Varma. Varma, a 20-year-old uncapped India batsman, took charge after an early collapse when Mumbai lost their top three including Green (5) and skipper Rohit Sharma (1) inside six overs after being invited to bat first.

### Varma 'courage'

Australia's Green, who was the second-most expensive buy after Mumbai forked out \$2.11 million in the auction, was bowled by England left-arm quick Reece Topley. Rohit lasted 10 balls before Akash Deep got the star batsman caught behind for one as Mumbai slipped to 20-3, but the all-format India captain praised Varma's fightback. "Some of the shots he played today, he showed a lot of courage," said Rohit. "We wanted to be courageous enough, and hats off to Tilak for getting us to the total. We did not bat to our potential."

Bangalore suffered a blow when Topley awkwardly landed on his right shoulder while fielding and left the ground with the physio. Topley was believed to have suffered a dislocated shoulder, which was put back in place but the 2.01 metre tall (6 feet and 5 inches) player was ruled out of the rest of the match. Buttler's 22-ball 54 led Rajasthan's batting onslaught as they posted 203-5, and then their bowlers restricted hosts Hyder-

by 4.085sec. "Normally I'm not very good when it rains, but today the sensations were incredible," said the Italian who now has a nine-point lead in the championship. South African KTM rider Brad Binder, who won the sprint race on Saturday after starting from 15th place on the grid, was 17th and last on Sunday after a fall on the opening lap.

Former MotoGP world champion Joan Mir missed Sunday's race due to injuries suffered in the sprint, his Honda team announced. "After a morning medical check, Joan Mir was declared unfit for the Argentina GP by MotoGP and circuit medical staff due to cranial and cervical trauma," Honda said. The Spaniard, who won the MotoGP title in 2020, crashed in the opening lap of Saturday's sprint. During the medical tests he experienced feelings of nausea and dizziness, and will now return to Europe and prepare for the Grand Prix of the Americas at Austin.

Honda were already missing six-time world champion Marc Marquez, injured in the season-opener in Portugal. Mir's absence reduced the usual 22-rider grid on Sunday to 17 with Marquez, Enea Bastianini, Spanish veteran Pol Espargaro and

out a bogey in her four-under 67, nabbing her second straight runner-up finish after falling in a playoff to Celine Boutier in Arizona last week.

Another pair of major champions, Patty Tavatanakit and Kim Hyo-joo, shared third on 272. Thailand's Patty charged up the leaderboard with a six-under par 65 while Kim, playing in the final group, carded an even-par 71. Spain's Carlotta Ciganda and American Nelly Korda shared fifth on 273. Yin, who turned pro in 2020 and won her first three China LPGA starts, took a two-shot lead into the final round and birdied the second hole.

Then came three straight bogeys before she righted the ship—she had just one par through the first 10 holes. "Like I said yesterday, I can make birdie at this course for sure, and I just told myself got to be patient," she said. After bogeys at the 10th and 14th, Yin fought back again with a birdie at the 14th—where her second shot took a lucky bounce off a tree. Hall, who had three birdies on the front nine, could find just one coming in, at the 16th.

Yin became just the second player from China to win on the LPGA tour, after 10-time winner Feng Shanshan. "That means a lot, not just for me, also for China," Yin said. "And Shanshan is always my goal here—I think she got 10 tour wins here and it's just my first one. "She's definitely the person I look up to," added Yin, who is the fifth different winner in five



BENGALURU: Royal Challengers Bangalore's Faf du Plessis plays a shot during the Indian Premier League (IPL) Twenty20 cricket match between Royal Challengers Bangalore and Mumbai Indians on April 2, 2023. —AFP

abad to 131-8. Leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal returned figures of 4-17 after pace spearhead Trent Boult struck twice in his first over.

Buttler and his opening partner Yashasvi Jaiswal - who also made 54 - had provided an explosive start to last year's runners-up and the inaugural IPL champions. Skipper Sanju Samson also joined in the charge with his powerful 55 before he departed in the 19th over and Shimron Hetmyer finished off the innings with his unbeaten 22. "It is a fantastic start for us. We had a really good season last season but it counts for nothing this year," said player of the match Buttler. —AFP



TERMAS DE RIO HONDO: Ducati Italian rider Marco Bezzecchi (right) celebrates his first win with second-placed Ducati French rider Johann Zarco in Santiago del Estero, Argentina. —AFP

Miguel Oliveira all nursing injuries from Portimao. Sunday's Moto2 race in Argentina was won by Tony Arbolino with Alonso Lopez and Jake Dixon filling out the podium. Moto 3 honors went to Japan's Tatsuki Suzuki with Diogo Moreira fending off Andrea Migno at the line for second place. —AFP



CALIFORNIA: Yin Ruoning of China poses with the winner's trophy after winning the DIO Implant LA Open at Palos Verdes Golf Club on April 02, 2023. —AFP

events so far this year. The LPGA will now take a week off before the Lotte Championship in Hawaii, with the first major of the year, the Chevron Championship, coming up April 20-23 at its new venue, the Club at Carlton Woods near Houston. —AFP