

# Kerber smashes Sharapova



Angelique Kerber returns a shot (Picture courtesy: Xinhua)

## Melbourne

**A**ngelique Kerber signalled her return to form by battering Maria Sharapova 6-1 6-3 in the third round of the Australian Open.

Kerber looked at her best for some time as she polished off Sharapova in 64 minutes.

The 21st seed obliterated Sharapova in the first set, and while the Russian looked like offering some resistance in the second, she faded right at the

end. Kerber won 86 per cent of points on her first serve while Sharapova could only manage 37pc.

"Of course this was quite a big match," Kerber, who began working with new coach Wim Fissette at the end of last year, told reporters. "Maria is a champion. She's always dangerous, especially at the grand slams.

"But I was really trying to not think about everything around

and everything about the match, about against who I was playing. I was just more trying to go out on the special court for me and play good tennis."

As much as this was a resounding declaration of Kerber's return to top form, it also showed just how much progress Sharapova has to make as she orchestrates her own return.

Sharapova, back in Melbourne after testing

positive for a banned substance here in 2016 resulting in a 15-month ban, had looked menacing in the opening two rounds.

But Kerber, who plummeted down the rankings last year after finishing the year before at number one, broke her serve in the first game of the match and that set the tone for what followed. (Eurosport)

## Djokovic makes progress



Novak Djokovic of Serbia returns a shot (Picture courtesy: Xinhua)

## Melbourne

**N**ovak Djokovic's game was back but question marks remain about his body after a straight-sets win over Albert Ramos-Vinolas in the third round of the Australian Open.

After his struggles in the heat against Gael Monfils, Djokovic looked much more assured in a 6-2 6-3 6-3 victory over his Spanish opponent. But Djokovic appeared to tweak something in his upper left leg or lower back at the end of the first set and twice

needed treatment.

He said: "It was a straight sets win but almost two and a half hours, it wasn't that easy, I had to earn all of my points. I knew Albert is a great fighter.

"For me it's taking one match at a time. I had some incredible memories in Melbourne Park and that comes back every time I step out on the court but I have to be more humble with my expectations this time because I haven't played for six months, but I'm very happy

with where my game is."

Having spent six months sidelined by an elbow problem, it is not surprising that Djokovic is experiencing a few physical niggles back in the heat of grand slam competition.

The problem did not affect him too badly, though, with Ramos-Vinolas unable to apply any real pressure as Djokovic moved through to a fourth-round clash with young Korean Chung Hyeon, who knocked out fourth seed Alexander Zverev in five sets. (PA Sport)

## Berdych overpowers Del Potro

### Melbourne

**N**ot many players overpowered Juan Martin del Potro but Tomas Berdych did just that to win 6-3 6-3 6-2 and reach the fourth round of the Australian Open for the 10th time yesterday.

Del Potro arrived in Melbourne with high hopes having re-entered the world's top 10 for the first time since 2014 but was no match for the 19th-seeded Czech.

"Maybe it's the good air here," Berdych said on Hisense Arena to explain his consistency in the year's first slam.

Berdych struck 52 winners on his way to setting up a clash with Italian Fabio Fognini.



Tomas Berdych celebrates

"I think he was just better than me today," del Potro, who had led 5-3 in their previous meetings, told reporters.

"He hit very hard, he served very well and played a smart game. He deserved to win. No excuses today." (Reuters)

## Zverev collapses to defeat by Chung

### Melbourne

**R**elentless South Korean Hyeon Chung ground fourth seed Alexander Zverev into submission in a ferocious battle of young guns to reach the fourth round of the Australian Open yesterday.

German wunderkind Zverev led by two sets to one but 58th-ranked Chung was unflappable and roared back to win 5-7 7-6(3) 2-6 6-3 6-0. It all proved too much for 20-year-

old Zverev complaining bitterly to the umpire that the lights should be switched on despite it being only 6 p.m. in overcast Melbourne.

"I can't see anything," the German told the official.

The lights were duly switched on but once the bespectacled Chung took the fourth set, there only looked to be one winner. Zverev double-



Chung Hyeon hits a return (Picture courtesy: Xinhua)

faulted twice to gift Chung a break at the start of the fifth and when he dropped serve again two games later he demolished his racket. (Reuters)