

**Melbourne**

**R**afael Nadal fought back to deny mercurial Frenchman Gael Monfils over four sets and reach his first Grand Slam quarter-final since 2015 at the Australian Open yesterday.

The 14-time Grand Slam champion defeated sixth-seeded Monfils 6-3, 6-3, 4-6, 6-4 on Rod Laver Arena in almost three hours and will play Canada's world number three Milos Raonic in the quarters.

It was a gutsy effort from the never-say-die Spaniard, who was down a service break with a fifth set looming before he broke sixth-seeded Monfils twice to clinch victory.

The 2009 champion reached the last eight in Melbourne for the ninth time. He hasn't contested a Grand Slam quarter-final since the 2015 French Open.

"I'm very happy being in the quarter-finals of a Grand Slam after a couple of years without being there," he said.

"I start the season playing quarter-finals in a Grand Slam again, especially on hard court after a couple of years without being in this round which is great news."

It was Nadal's first win over a top-

10 player at a Grand Slam since he defeated number two Novak Djokovic to win the title at Roland Garros in 2014, his last major win.

"Gael is a special player. He is able to play unbelievable shots. It is a pleasure to see him in the top rankings," Nadal said.

"Sometimes it's tough to play against Gael when you don't know what he's going to do. He combines mistakes with great shots."

Nadal will go into his Australian quarter-final with a 6-2 lead over Raonic in their previous meetings.

"He's an opponent that makes you feel that you're playing with a lot of pressure all the time because his serve is huge and he's playing very aggressive from the baseline," Nadal said.

Monfils was broken in his opening service game as Nadal went on to take the first set in 46 minutes.

Nadal lost his service in the sixth game but broke the unpredictable Frenchman three times to open up a two-set lead and was closing in on a straight-sets victory.

But Monfils fought back, breaking Nadal in the ninth game and saving three break points in serving it out to trail 2-1 in sets. (AFP)



# Nadal breaks the jinx

**Subdues Monfils to break quarter-final drought**

