

Wozniacki reaches Pan Pacific final

Tokyo

Defending champion Caroline Wozniacki flattened world number one Garbine Muguruza 6-2, 6-0 yesterday to reach her fourth Pan Pacific Open final.

The Danish former number one will face Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova as she chases a third Tokyo title after the Russian toppled Angelique Kerber 6-0, 6-7, 6-4 in a see-saw first semi-final.

Top seed Muguruza, playing her first tournament since reaching the top of the women's world rankings, was blown off court in just under an hour in a stunningly lopsided match.

"I didn't feel that fresh," the Spaniard told reporters.

"It was always going to be a battle but I felt my energy was a little bit low," added Muguruza.

"I was struggling a bit in the long rallies and didn't make the important shots. I'm very disappointed, but she just played better."

Third seed Wozniacki tore through the first set, sealing it when Muguruza wafted a routine forehand badly wide.

Muguruza cut a forlorn figure as she trudged back to her seat but things went from bad to worse for the Wimbledon champion in the second set.

A dipping forehand pass gave Wozniacki an early break, consolidated after another wild Muguruza backhand in the fourth

game. Wozniacki, a two-time Tokyo winner and finalist in 2014, put Muguruza out of her misery by forcing the Spaniard into another whiffed backhand on match point after just 59 minutes.

"Obviously you don't go on court thinking that's going to be the scoreline," said Wozniacki. "But I just kept my head down and stayed aggressive."

Seventh seed Kerber, another former world number one, looked in danger of being fed the dreaded "double bagel" after losing the first eight games in the Tokyo sunshine. But the German recovered from 6-0, 5-2 down to pinch the second-set tiebreak as Pavlyuchenkova suddenly tightened up, the Russian

slamming her racquet to the ground in disgust.

Kerber, who has slipped back to 14th in the world since winning last year's Australian and US Open titles, clinched the breaker 7-4 with a fizzing serve down the middle which she celebrated with a little fist pump.

The 29-year-old Kerber, a former Tokyo finalist, then quickly raced to a 3-0 lead in the deciding set, only to be pegged back once more. But Pavlyuchenkova, who beat Wozniacki in the final at Monterrey earlier this year. (AFP)



Caroline Wozniacki celebrates

Roger Federer thanks lucky stars for Rafael Nadal fightback

London

Roger Federer has admitted this year would have been "very different" had he not battled back from a 1-3 fifth-set deficit in his Australian Open triumph against Rafael Nadal.

Without a Grand Slam title since 2012, Federer fought back to beat Nadal in January's decider in Melbourne, setting himself up for a stunning return to form.

He followed it up with back-to-back Masters victories at Indian Wells and Miami before winning his 19th Grand Slam title at Wimbledon and has risen to number two in the ATP ranking.

"I don't think I would have won both Indian Wells and Miami," said Federer, 36, in an interview published in Saturday's edition of The Times newspaper.

"Maybe I would have won one. I would have played on the clay maybe. The season would have been very different.

"My plan was to play maybe the quarters at best at the Aussie and then take it from there.



Spanish player Rafael Nadal (L) with Swiss Roger Federer

"By winning all those big three events at the beginning of the year, it allowed me to sit there in the top eight of the world already after a few months of the season and not worry about being ranked number 35 if I had lost early in the Australian Open because of the points I had to defend.

"It changed the entire mindset. Thank God it

happened like this."

Federer and Nadal's resurgence coincided in difficult seasons for Andy Murray and Novak Djokovic, both of whom saw their years curtailed by injury.

Stan Wawrinka, Kei Nishikori and Milos Raonic are also currently sidelined, but Federer does not believe players are put under too much

strain on the tour.

"I think that all of the guys had to take a break because either they are carrying an injury for a while or they are really not doing well. Some have had surgery," Federer said. "I think this is just a freak moment in time that it hit a lot of the guys at the same time. The US Open wasn't quite the same. (AFP)

Fabio Fognini beats Bautista, enters final

Saint Petersburg, Russia

Fierce Italian Fabio Fognini beat top seed Roberto Bautista Agut yesterday to reach the final at St Petersburg in his first tournament since being kicked out of the US Open.

The 30-year-old was disqualified from the doubles tournament at Flushing Meadows after launching into a sexist tirade against a female umpire during his first-round singles defeat.

Fognini, who has since said that he would also accept a ban from the Australian Open next year for his misdemeanour, saved two match points to battle past Spaniard Bautista Agut 2-6, 7-6 (9/7), 7-6 (7/5) and set up

a final with Bosnian Damir Dzumhur.

"It was a very tough match, it's never easy to play Roberto," Fognini, who is bidding for a sixth career ATP Tour title, said.

"My main goal now is to recover for the final. I've played two times on the clay with Dzumhur and I expect a difficult match tomorrow."

World number 55 Dzumhur had earlier seen off German Jan-Lennard Struff 6-3, 7-5 in the first semi-final.

"Today I played well from the start," Dzumhur said. "It was one of my best matches in the last few months. And I'm really happy to advance into my second final this year." (AFP)

Ostapenko powers into Korea Open final

Seoul

Top seed Jelena Ostapenko powered her way into the Korea Open final yesterday after a tight three-set battle with Thailand's Luksika Kumkhum, moving closer to claim the \$250,000 title.

The 20-year-old French Open champion from Latvia beat Luksika Kumkhum, who had earlier upset the number four seed Sorana Cirstea, 3-6, 6-1, 6-3 in 110 minutes.

The 24-year-old Thai stunned the world number 10

by winning the opening set 6-3 before Ostapenko won the following two sets to reach her third final of the 2017 season.

Ostapenko is a favourite to win the title after her surprise upset win over third-seed Simona Halep at the French

Open in June.

Ostapenko will face Brazil's Beatriz Haddad Maia, who sailed into the final after defeating Richel Hogenkamp of the Netherlands 6-1, 7-6 (9/7) in the semi-final yesterday. (AFP)



Fabio Fognini (file pic)