

## Djokovic heaps praise on 'very complete' Medvedev



Novak Djokovic of Serbia hits a return (file photo)

AFP | Shanghai

World number one Novak Djokovic hailed Daniil Medvedev as a "very complete player" yesterday, having lost to the young Russian in their last two matches.

The 23-year-old Medvedev is at a career-high fourth in the world and reached the final at the US Open, only to be on the end of an agonising five-set loss to Rafael Nadal.

Medvedev has won three titles this year including beating Djokovic on the way to claiming victory at the Masters in Cincinnati in August.

"The last several months he's been playing the tennis of his life," Djokovic said at the Shanghai Masters, where he is the defending champion.

"He's played finals at least in every event in the last what-ever, five, six events, which is amazing."

The 32-year-old from Serbia, who could again face Medvedev in Shanghai semi-finals,

said it was hard to find a weakness in the Russian's game.

"He's improved his movement, his fitness. He's got the big serve, he's got the height and he uses angles very well," said Djokovic.

"Backhand -- hard to break that backhand, it's very flat.

"He doesn't make many mistakes and he can hit anything he wants from that corner.

"Forehand maybe has been his weaker side, but now he's improved that, so he's a very complete player."

Nadal, ranked second in the world, pulled out of Shanghai because of a wrist problem.

But Djokovic is primed for a battle with the 19-time Grand Slam champion for the year-end number one spot.

"I have been in this position many times before, obviously," he said.

"Rafa has had an amazing year so far and I have to do well here in order to really have a chance or go toe to toe with him in the indoor season."

## Murray to make Grand Slam return in Australia



Andy Murray speaks to Fabio Fognini after his defeat in the second round at the Shanghai Masters

AFP | Shanghai

Andy Murray will make his Grand Slam return at the Australian Open in January, a year after career-saving hip surgery, tournament organisers announced yesterday.

The British three-time major winner has been slowly working his way back to fitness and is now ranked 289th, up from 503rd just a week ago.

With his confidence seemingly growing by the day, Australian Open organisers said the former world number one had committed to extending his comeback into the majors in January.

"Confirmed: Andy Murray will return to compete at

the #AusOpen in 2020," they tweeted.

The official Australian Open website said Murray "will return to the main draw with a protected ranking of number two and restored physical powers".

World number one Novak Djokovic said it was "pleasantly surprising" to see Murray back following hip-resurfacing surgery.

"Regardless of his ranking currently, he is a great champion and one of the greats of this game," the reigning Australian Open champion said at the Shanghai Masters.

"If he's healthy, you can definitely expect him to play at the highest level very soon."

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NOVAK DJOKOVIC

# Federer avoids another Shanghai Stunner

Roger Federer Enters pre-quarterfinals with win over Albert Ramos-Vinolas

● Fognini edges Murray in tense three-set win in Shanghai

Reuters | Shanghai

Four years after a stunning second-round loss to Albert Ramos-Vinolas at this venue, No. 2 seed Roger Federer defeated the Spaniard 6-2, 7-6 (5) yesterday at the Shanghai Masters in China.

The Swiss star played aggressively throughout the 86-minute, second-round match, winning 81 percent of his points at the net. Federer won 91 percent of his first-service points, never faced a break point and finished with eight aces and zero double faults.

"Serve was solid. I was hitting my spots and really was never in trouble there," said Federer, who came back from 4-1 down in the tiebreak.

Federer, seeking his 29th career ATP Masters 1000 title, admitted he was thinking about his 2015 loss to Ramos-Vinolas before the match.

"Watched highlights. Remember how it felt. I had my chances. I won many more points that time than I lost, so I should have actually won that match," Federer said. "... To play him again in the same circumstances, basically I knew (he) could be dangerous, and that's why I'm very pleased how I was able to control the match out there today."



Roger Federer of Switzerland hits a return against Albert Ramos of Spain

A two-time Shanghai champion (2014, 2017), the 38-year-old Federer will face either No. 13 seed David Goffin of Belgium or Kazakhstan's Mikhail Kukushkin for a spot in the quarterfinals. Goffin beat France's Richard Gasquet 6-2, 6-3 yesterday and Kukushkin eliminated Serbian Miomir Kecmanovic on Monday.

In other second-round play, Italy's Fabio Fognini knocked out three-time Shanghai champ Andy Murray of Scotland 7-6 (4), 2-6, 7-6 (2) in three hours and nine minutes.

Murray served for the match at 5-4 and 6-5 in the deciding set, but couldn't put away the 10th-seeded Fognini. Fognini



Federer is seeking his 29th career ATP Masters 1000 title

will face either No. 7 seed Karen Khachanov of Russia or Taylor Fritz in the third round.

No. 3 seed Daniil Medvedev improved to 25-3 in his last 28

matches with a 6-3, 6-1 victory over British qualifier Cameron Norrie in just 55 minutes.

"I'm trying my best to keep the form I have," said Medvedev, who leads the ATP with 55 wins in 2019. "It's really not easy, because as soon as you relax a little bit, the results will start to fall. That's why I'm trying not to relax."

Other winners yesterday included No. 11 seed Matteo Berrettini of Italy, No. 15 seed Nikoloz Basilashvili of Georgia, Australia's John Millman and Canadians Vasek Pospisil and Felix Auger-Aliassime. Poland's Hubert Hurkacz upset No. 9 seed Gael Monfils of France, 6-2, 7-6 (1).

## Struggling Lyon plan to dismiss coach Sylvinho

AFP | Paris

Lyon have decided to sack Brazilian coach Sylvinho just 11 matches into the season after a dreadful run of form, the Ligue 1 club said on Monday.

The former Arsenal and Barcelona full-back only took over at the Groupama Stadium in May to replace Bruno Genesio.

"OL have decided to implement a procedure which can lead to the termination of the contract of Sylvio Mendes Campo Junior (Sylvinho)," read a Lyon statement.

It was the 45-year-old's first role as a head coach, having previously been assistant to Tite for the Brazil national team.

Despite losing several key players, including Ferland Mendy, Tanguy Ndombele and Nabil Fekir, in the close-season, Sylvinho made a dream start as Lyon won 3-0 at Monaco and thrashed Angers 6-0 in their first two games.

But they have not won a league match since and have



Sylvinho looks on during a match

slipped to within a single point of the bottom two.

Sylvinho's surprise exit comes even though Lyon have claimed four points from their first two Champions League group-stage outings, after a draw with Zenit Saint Petersburg and a 2-0 win at RB Leipzig last week. He was hand-picked by Juninho, a former Lyon star midfielder, who took over as sporting director in May.

Asked at the end of September if his future was linked to

his compatriot's, Juninho said: "Not 100 percent but I chose the coach. I'm taking responsibility."

Juninho also said that when it comes to firing staff on a struggling team, "the coach is first because it's the law of football. He's on the bench and he has the last word".

The club said that Gerald Baticle, who was an assistant coach under Genesio, will take training yesterday under Juninho's direction.

## Espanyol fire head coach Gallego and bring in Machin



Pablo Machin

AFP | Madrid

Espanyol, in the bottom two in La Liga with just one win eight matches, fired manager David Gallego on Monday and hired Pablo Machin.

Gallego, who played much of his career for lower-division teams in Catalonia, joined Espanyol as a youth coach in 2013 and became head coach in June.

"The club has decided to dismiss the Catalan from his responsibilities as coach of the first team," said Espanyol on their website.

"The club has taken this decision as a result of the performance of the first team and with the clear idea to redirect the current situation of the white and blue team in La Liga."