

Sinner sets up Fonseca clash, Zverev advances at Indian Wells

Sinner eases past Shapovalov as Brazilian teen Fonseca continues dream run

● Sinner beats Shapovalov 6-3, 6-2

● Fonseca, 19, beats Tommy Paul 6-2, 6-3

● Alexander Zverev wins three-set battle vs Nakashima

AFP | Indian Wells

World number two Jannik Sinner took another step toward a first Indian Wells Masters title on Sunday, easing past Denis Shapovalov 6-3, 6-2 to reach the fourth round and a clash with exciting Brazilian teenager Joao Fonseca.

After dropping just two games in his second-round opener against Czech qualifier Dalibor Svrčina, Sinner was caught napping to drop his serve in the opening game.

He responded with confidence against a potentially tricky opponent known for producing winners.

Sinner quickly recouped the break and grabbed another in



Jannik Sinner of Italy plays a forehand against Denis Shapovalov of Canada in their third round match

the eighth game.

"It's a very tough second match for me," the Italian said. "He's a very high-quality player... he had great wins in the past so I'm very happy about today's performance."

With one set in his pocket Sinner was in full control in the

second, opening with a break on the way to a 5-2 lead and closing it out with a love game.

"I tried to stay solid on the baseline but also a bit more aggressive in the second set," Sinner said. "It was a tough start for me with a break down but I'm happy how I reacted."

Sinner faces the 19-year-old Fonseca for a place in the quarter-finals.

Fonseca, who saved two match points in his second-round victory over Karen Khachanov, beat another seeded player, American Tommy Paul, 6-2, 6-3.

Fonseca brought the heat,

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We tennis players, we look to playing against top players so it's going to be a pleasure -- and hopefully I can get the win

JOAO FONSECA

displaying thunderous groundstrokes as he reached the fourth round of a Masters 1000 for the first time.

He said he was eager for the chance to test himself against four-time major winner Sinner.

"We tennis players, we look to playing against top players so it's going to be a pleasure -- and hopefully I can get the win," he said.

Fourth-seeded German Alexander Zverev held off a determined Brandon Nakashima 7-6 (7/2), 5-7, 6-4.

Zverev didn't have a break point against the 30th-ranked American until the third set. He missed his first two opportunities before finally making one count, breaking Nakashima in the final game to seal the victory.

"He played a fantastic match today," Zverev said of Nakashi-

ma, who had 17 aces to Zverev's 15.

"He served like I have never seen before. He was hitting his spots well. Every ace was more or less on the line for him, so I've got to give credit to him. He played a great match."

Zverev gained the upper hand in a close-run contest with a dominant first-set tiebreaker, but the American converted his fifth break chance for a 6-5 lead in the second and leveled the match with a love game.

"Definitely happy to get the win because that was a difficult match," said Zverev, who next plays American Frances Tiafoe.

Tien tops Shelton

Frances Tiafoe beat Flavio Cobolli 6-1, 6-2 in a rematch of last week's final in Acapulco won by the Italian.

Rising US talent Learner Tien knocked off eighth-seeded compatriot Ben Shelton 7-6 (7/3), 4-6, 6-3.

Tien peppered big-serving Shelton with 15 aces while Shelton, apparently still feeling the effects of the illness that slowed him in a second-round win over Reilly Opelka, produced just eight.

Sabalenka, Osaka set fourth-round clash as Gauff retires injured

AFP | Indian Wells

Aryna Sabalenka and Naomi Osaka lined up a fourth-round clash at Indian Wells on Sunday as fourth-ranked Coco Gauff retired with a left arm injury.

World number one Sabalenka powered past Romania's Jaqueline Cristian 6-4, 6-1 to book a last-16 meeting with former champion Osaka.

Japan's Osaka, seeded 16th, pounced for a 6-1, 3-6, 6-1 victory over Camila Osorio to avenge a demoralizing first-round loss to the Colombian here last year.

They were joined in the fourth round by the Philippines' rising star Alexandra Eala, who was leading Gauff 6-2, 2-0 when the American retired with a left arm injury.

Gauff said the pain "felt like a firework going off inside of my arm, and then my whole arm felt like it was on fire."

"And then as the match played, it got progressively worse, even on shots that I wasn't even using my left arm for ... it was a scary feeling."

Gauff trailed 5-2 in the first when she took a medical timeout, a trainer massaging and manipulating her left arm and shoulder.

After Eala broke to take the set on a double fault from Gauff the trainer wrapped her left



Aryna Sabalenka plays a backhand in a match against Jaqueline Cristian of Romania

forearm.

It was to no avail, and after 54 minutes Gauff went to the net and told Eala she was calling it a day.

"I really didn't want to win this way," said Eala, who was cheered on as usual by a big contingent of Filipino fans.

"But this is still a really big moment for me to be able to play on Stadium One of Indian Wells and against such a great competitor," she added, wishing Gauff a speedy recovery.

Earlier action was relatively drama-free.

"So many things I felt like I did great today," Sabalenka said after overpowering Cristian

with a performance that included 23 winners. "Serving well, happy with the way I stayed focused no matter what (and) of course happy with the win." Sabalenka is chasing a first title in the prestigious ATP and WTA Masters 1000 event after twice coming up empty in the final.

Osaka won her first title in Indian Wells in 2018, going on to win the US Open that year in a run that included a victory over Sabalenka.

That's the only meeting to date between the two -- who are now both four-time Grand Slam champions.

"I'll have a chance to get a

revenge, hopefully," Sabalenka said.

Attitude adjustment

Osaka, playing her first tournament since withdrawing before her Australian Open third-round match with an abdominal injury, roared through the opening set against Osorio but lost her way in the second.

The Colombian broke Osaka for a 4-2 lead and fended off a break point in the ninth game to take the set.

That proved the end of her resurgence. Osaka broke on the way to a 3-0 lead in the third as she brought it home without facing another break point.

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I felt it, like, the second game of the first set. I guess a simple way to put it, it felt like a firework was going off inside of my arm, and then my whole arm felt like it was on fire. And then as the match played, it got progressively worse, even on shots that I wasn't even using my left arm for

COCO GAUFF

Wemby shines as Spurs thrash Rockets, Lakers down Knicks

AFP | Los Angeles

Victor Wembanyama scored 29 points as the San Antonio Spurs laid down a playoff marker with a dazzling 145-120 thrashing of the Houston Rockets on Sunday.

French superstar Wembanyama was one of six Spurs players to reach double figures as San Antonio bombarded Western Conference rivals Houston with a stream of 21 three-pointers.

Wemby dominated at both ends of the court, fleshing out his stat line with four blocks and two steals in addition to eight rebounds.

The towering Frenchman



San Antonio's Victor Wembanyama swats away a shot by Tari Eason

was backed with 23 points from Stephon Castle and 20 points apiece from De'Aaron Fox and Keldon Johnson.



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