

Alcaraz battles back to reach Indian Wells fourth round

Novak Djokovic reaches the fourth round for the first time in nine years

● Alcaraz overcomes a set-and-break deficit

● Djokovic survives sixteen aces from Kovacevic

● De Minaur, Fritz, Bublik all lose

● Alcaraz to face Ruud in fourth round

AFP | Indian Wells

Carlos Alcaraz had to dig deep to extend his 2026 unbeaten run, rallying from a set and a break down to beat Arthur Rinderknech 6-7 (6/8), 6-3, 6-2 in the third round at Indian Wells on Monday.

The big-serving Frenchman's aggressive game forced world number one Alcaraz to call on every shot in his arsenal to turn a tense contest his way.

Alcaraz will face 13th-seeded Norwegian Casper Ruud for a place in the quarter-finals.

"Really happy that I was able to turn things around," said Alcaraz.

The Spaniard nearly managed to steal the first-set tiebreaker, in which he had trailed 2-5, but a wayward forehand on set point gave Rinderknech his chance to pocket the set with a pair of winners.

Rinderknech then produced



Carlos Alcaraz of Spain plays a backhand against Arthur Rinderknech of France

the first service break of the match to put the top seed in a hole in the opening game of the second set.

Alcaraz responded with an immediate break back, ramping up the pressure on Rinderknech's serve on the way to a decisive break in the sixth game.

When Alcaraz broke again to open the third set he was on his way, rolling to his sixth win over 26th-ranked Rinderknech in six career meetings.

"In the beginning I was a little bit mad with myself because I

just had a lot of chances in the first set, a few break points, set point, and I couldn't make it," Alcaraz said.

"I got in trouble to be honest. But I'm just really happy with the way that I just dealt with everything that was happening, accepted it, kept going, stayed strong mentally."

Rinderknech had never won a match in Indian Wells in three prior appearances and he leaves this edition without an on-court victory after enjoying a first-round bye and advancing to the

third round by walkover.

Alcaraz, 22, became the youngest man to complete a career Grand Slam with his victory at the Australian Open.

He followed that up with the Qatar Open title and with two wins under his belt in Indian Wells is now 14-0 on the season.

He next faces Ruud, who beat Valentin Vacherot 3-6, 6-3, 6-4.

It was hard going for world number three Novak Djokovic in his 6-4, 1-6, 6-4 victory over 72nd-ranked American Aleksandar Kovacevic, who peppered



Arthur Rinderknech reached the third round without winning a match on court, advancing via a first-round bye and a walkover before facing Alcaraz



In the beginning I was a little bit mad with myself because I just had a lot of chances in the first set, a few break points, set point, and I couldn't make it. I got in trouble to be honest. But I'm just really happy with the way that I just dealt with everything that was happening, accepted it, kept going, stayed strong mentally

CARLOS ALCARAZ

Djokovic with 16 aces.

Djokovic made an early break to take the first set, but Kovacevic found his groove and rolled through the second against the clearly frustrated Serb.

'Anybody's game'

Djokovic regrouped in the third but didn't find the break he needed until the final game.

"Today was really anybody's game until the last couple of points," Djokovic said. "That last game in the third where he missed some first serves, gave me looks on the second and I used it. That's pretty much it."

With five Indian Wells titles Djokovic is tied for the record with Swiss great Roger Federer, but he's in the fourth round for the first time since 2017.

Djokovic next faces defending champion Jack Draper, who beat

Argentina's Francisco Cerundolo 6-1, 7-5.

Draper's victory here last year launched his rise to fourth in the world.

But he then missed the better part of six months with an arm injury and arrived in California ranked 14th, his win over Cerundolo marking the first time since June that he's posted back-to-back ATP victories.

A trio of top-10 players were sent packing.

Britain's Cameron Norrie ousted sixth-ranked Australian Alex de Minaur 6-4, 6-4, Alex Michelsen beat seventh-ranked fellow American Taylor Fritz 6-4, 7-6 (8/6) and Australian qualifier Rinki Hijikata, ranked 117th in the world, shocked 10th-ranked Alexander Bublik of Kazakhstan 6-7 (3/7), 7-6 (7/3), 6-3.

Siniakova ends Andreeva defense in third round

● Katerina Siniakova beats Mirra Andreeva 4-6, 7-6, 6-3

● Iga Swiatek beats Maria Sakkari 6-3, 6-2

● Jessica Pegula rallies to beat Ostapenko

● Rybakina edges Kostyuk

AFP | Indian Wells

Mirra Andreeva's Indian Wells title defense met a bad-tempered end on Monday in round three as Katerina Siniakova stunned the talented Russian teenager 4-6, 7-6 (7/5), 6-3.

The 18-year-old Andreeva opened her bid to retain her crown with an imperious 6-0, 6-0 demolition of Solana Sierra.

But she was in trouble early and often against 44th-ranked Siniakova in a rollercoaster contest that ended with a shot from the Czech that hit the net cord and dribbled over in one last frustrating moment.

Andreeva slung her racquet as

she approached the net before departing the court with a defiant gesture at the crowd.

"I'm not really proud of how I managed it," said Andreeva, but added her profanities picked up by court-side microphones weren't directed at the fans.

"It was just anger coming out, just a lot of emotions," she said. "Not really towards anyone."

Siniakova, a former doubles number one, admitted it was an awkward way to seal the win in a match that featured seven service breaks for each player and 43 break chances between them.

"Of course I'm happy (the ball) went on the other side," she said. "I was, like, should I cheer? It's a really tricky finish. But definitely I will not say I'm not happy."

Siniakova said the swirling winds on Stadium Court were troubling both players.

Andreeva's emotions had already boiled over when she sailed a swinging volley long to surrender the second set, during which each player had remarks for the chair umpire about her opponent.

She regrouped to break Siniakova for a 3-2 lead in the third, but Siniakova won the next four games, saving two break points in the final game before gaining



Katerina Siniakova of Czechia plays a backhand volley against Mirra Andreeva

the win on her first match point.

Siniakova will face Elina Svitolina for a place in the quarter-finals after the ninth-seeded Ukrainian beat American Ashlyn Krueger 6-4, 6-2.

There was no drama for world number two Iga Swiatek, who defeated Greece's Maria Sakkari 6-3, 6-2.

Learning experience

Poland's Swiatek beat Sakkari in the final to claim both of her Indian Wells titles, in 2022, and 2024, but Sakkari had won their most recent encounter in the quarter-finals of the Qatar Open last month.

Swiatek said she had learned

from "obvious mistakes" she made in Doha.

"I knew what to focus on today and I did that from the beginning till the end," she said. "So I'm really happy with my focus and the way I was prepared."

Swiatek next faces Doha champion Karolina Muchova, who blew past Antonia Ruzic

6-0, 6-3.

Australian Open champion Elena Rybakina kept her bid for a second Indian Wells title on track with a 6-4, 6-4 victory over Ukraine's Marta Kostyuk.

Rybakina, seeded third, trailed 1-3 in the second set but surged home in chilly late night conditions to book a fourth-round clash with Britain's Sonay Karatal, a 2-6, 6-2, 6-3 winner over Madison Keys.

"I'm just happy that I managed to win in two sets," said Kazakhstan's Rybakina, who lifted the trophy in the California desert in 2023.

Fifth-seeded American Jessica Pegula shook off a slow start to beat Latvia's Jelena Ostapenko 4-6, 6-3, 6-2.

Pegula, coming off her fourth career WTA 1000 title at Dubai last month, fired 11 aces with just one double fault as she rallied for the win.

"I think today I had to kind of snap myself back and kind of lock in to not let that get away from me," said Pegula, who said she was in danger of letting negativity and frustration get the better of her.

Pegula next plays Switzerland's Belinda Bencic, who beat Elise Mertens 6-2, 6-3.