

Ruthless Sinner subdues Fonseca to reach Indian Wells quarter-finals

Fonseca goes toe-to-toe with Sinner before Italian prevails in two tiebreaks

● Jannik Sinner beats Joao Fonseca 7-6, 7-6

● Sinner to face Learner Tien in quarter-finals

● Fils upsets Auger-Aliassime 6-3, 7-6

AFP | Indian Wells

Four-time major champion Jannik Sinner edged talented Brazilian teenager Joao Fonseca 7-6 (8/6), 7-6 (7/4) in a scintillating Stadium Court clash on Tuesday to reach the quarter-finals at Indian Wells.

The first meeting between the world number two Sinner and the big-hitting 19-year-old lived up to expectations, the fireworks sparking a raucous response from a crowd packed with enthusiastic Brazilian fans.

Sinner will face another fast-rising youngster in 20-year-old Learner Tien of the United States for a place in the semi-finals.

Fonseca went toe-to-toe with the Italian in a tense first set but was unable to convert his lone break chance and Sinner failed to capitalize on two.

A couple of uncharacteristic Sinner errors helped Fonseca power to a 6-3 lead in the tie-



Jannik Sinner of Italy serves against Joao Fonseca of Brazil

breaker, but the Italian responded, denying one set point with an ace to launch a run of five straight points that sealed the set.

Sinner looked headed to a comfortable victory with a break for 4-2 in the second, but Fonseca wasn't about to go quietly.

He broke Sinner to love in the ninth game and held for 5-5 as they went to a second tiebreaker.

An ace gave Fonseca a 4-3 lead

in the decider, but Sinner surged home with four straight points, polishing off the win with a masterful forehand service return.

"I felt like trying to be as aggressive as possible was the key," said Sinner, who is chasing a first title in the prestigious Masters 1000 event in the California desert.

"Joao's an incredible talent, very powerful from both sides. He was serving very well.

"Maybe he dropped a little bit at the end of the second set, but I'm very happy to get through," Sinner added.

Tien saved two match points to reach his first Masters 1000 quarter-final with a 4-6, 6-1, 7-6 (7/4) victory over Spain's Alejandro Davidovich Fokina.

"Honestly, after saving match points going into the tiebreak, just felt like I was playing with house money almost, really had

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nothing to lose," said Tien, a Southern California native who has fond memories of attending the tournament as a child.

Arthur Fils's injury comeback gathered pace as the Frenchman upset ninth-ranked Canadian Felix Auger-Aliassime 6-3, 7-6 (11/9) to book a quarter-final meeting with fourth-ranked Alexander Zverev.

Germany's Zverev downed American Frances Tiafoe 6-3, 6-4.

Fils is in the Indian Wells last eight for the second straight year, but it's been a twisting road to arrive there.

Tough competitor

Back trouble kept him off the courts for eight months, but since a return at Montpellier last month he has impressed with a run to the final in Doha.



Joao Fonseca led the first-set tiebreak 6-3 and had a set point, but Jannik Sinner saved it with an ace before winning five straight points to seize control of the match

The 21-year-old, now ranked 32nd in the world, appeared to be in control with a 4-2 lead in the second set. But he let that advantage slip away and trailed 0-5 in the tiebreaker before he steadied, saving five set points before wrapping up the straight-sets win.

"I was at 0-5 in the tie-break and I was going to my box and complaining and complaining," he said, adding that the advice he got was to stop complaining and focus on the match.

"I tried to focus as best I could. Not too much emotion, celebration. Just tunnel vision and I am happy with it," said Fils, who let the emotion emerge again with a mighty chest thump after putting away match point.

Sabalenka powers past Osaka, sets last-16 clash with Mboko

● Aryna Sabalenka beats Naomi Osaka 6-2, 6-4.

● Mboko beat Amanda Anisimova 6-4, 6-1

● Australian qualifier Gibson stuns Paolini

AFP | Indian Wells

World number one Aryna Sabalenka powered into the Indian Wells quarter-finals on Tuesday with a statement 6-2, 6-4 victory over former champion Naomi Osaka in a battle of Grand Slam winners.

It was another straightforward, straight-sets victory for Sabalenka, who fired 31 winners with eight aces.

"Overall I'm happy that I put so much pressure on her, that I brought variety today on the court," said Sabalenka, who mixed her booming groundstrokes with effective forays to the net.

"I think she was a little confused in the key moments, and I'm happy to see that," Sabalenka said. "I'm happy that my serve worked well, on the return I played really great tennis."

Sabalenka wrapped up the first set with two breaks of serve



Sabalenka expressed surprise she and Osaka have only met twice, but predicted more clashes ahead as Osaka, now ranked 16th, regains momentum after taking 2023 off to have daughter Shai

before Osaka began to find her rhythm.

But the Japanese star was unable to crack the serve of Sabalenka, who saved both break points she faced in the second set and grabbed a break for 4-3 with a pair of forehand winners.

It was just the second meeting between the two, both four-time Grand Slam champions. Osaka won the first back in 2018 on the way to her first major title at the US Open.

"That's actually crazy," Sabalenka said of the fact they haven't met more often. But she predicted there were more clashes in their future as Osaka, now ranked 16th, regains her momentum on the WTA Tour after taking off all of 2023 and



Aryna Sabalenka returns a shot to Naomi Osaka of Japan

having daughter, Shai, in July of that year.

Sabalenka, runner-up at Indian Wells in 2023 and 2025, will continue her pursuit of a first title in the prestigious ATP and WTA Masters 1000 event against 10th-seeded Victoria Mboko.

The 19-year-old Canadian saw off sixth-seeded American Amanda Anisimova 6-4, 6-1 to earn a shot at Sabalenka, who beat her in the fourth round of

the Australian Open.

"It was a big eye-opener playing her in the Australian Open," Mboko said. "Hopefully I can hold my ground a bit more against her."

'Completely speechless'

Australian qualifier Talia Gibson's dream run in the California desert continued as she belted 42 winners in a 7-5, 2-6, 6-1 victory over seventh-ranked Italian Jasmine Paolini.

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mounted and it looked as if the experienced Italian, a two-time Grand Slam finalist, had seized control.

But Gibson unleashed another barrage of winners in the third, including a stinging forehand service return on match point.

"Honestly, just completely speechless," said Gibson, who beat top-20 players Ekaterina Alexandrova and Clara Tauson on the way to the fourth round.

Gibson came into 2026 with just two WTA main-draw wins and had to save two match points in a qualifying victory just to give herself a chance to bag a few more at Indian Wells.

"I know that with my aggressive game, often I am able to create a lot of opportunities for myself in points," she said.

"But that being said, I think I have surprised myself a little bit with how well I have been able to play for quite a few matches in a row."