

# Barty falls to Kvitova in Sydney epic

● **Petra Kvitova defeated Ashleigh Barty 1-6, 7-5, 7-6 (3)**

● **Barty loses Sydney final for second year running**

AFP | Sydney

**P**etra Kvitova outlasted Ashleigh Barty in a final-set tiebreak to win the Sydney International for the second time yesterday.

The Czech 2015 champion and fifth seed fought back from dropping the first set and an early break in the final set to beat the top-ranked Aussie, 1-6, 7-5, 7-6 (7/3) in two hours 19 minutes.

It was a gutsy performance from the two-time Wimbledon champion who only finished her semi-final against Aliaksandra Sasnovich in the early hours of yesterday.

Kvitova had beaten Barty both the previous times they played, including in the Birmingham final in 2017, but she had to dig deep to win her eighth straight final, coming back from an 0-3 deficit in the final set.

Kvitova prevailed despite her serve being broken six times in the match but she finished with 31 winners to Barty's 23.

Barty raced through the opening set after breaking the big-serving Kvitova in the first game on back-to-back double faults.



Petra Kvitova of the Czech Republic hits a return to Australia's Ashleigh Barty

**26<sup>th</sup>**

career title was claimed by Petra Kvitova by winning the Sydney International

Kvitova began to hit her spots with her powerful groundstrokes in the second set and broke Barty for 6-5 and then served out the set in the next game with a backhand winner that clipped the back of

the baseline on her second set point.

Barty broke early to lead 3-0 in the final set, but Kvitova broke back in the fifth game to level at 3-3.

Barty saved four break points in the ninth game but with the break in hand, Kvitova couldn't serve out the match.

She broke again in the 11th game but began to struggle physically and back-to-back double faults took the deciding set to a tiebreak.

The Czech fired a running cross-court forehand winner on match point to claim her 26th career title and a sixth WTA title in the past 12 months.

## De Minaur downs Seppi to win first ATP title

AFP | Sydney

**A**ustralian teenager Alex De Minaur won two matches in a day to claim his first career ATP title at the Sydney International yesterday.

De Minaur, 19 and ranked 29, conquered the fresher Italian Andreas Seppi 7-5, 7-6 (7/5) in the final after overcoming Frenchman Gilles Simon in a rain-postponed semi-final earlier in the day.

De Minaur's triumph made him the youngest winner of the Sydney tournament since his mentor Lleyton Hewitt claimed it as a 19-year-old in 2001.

Sydney-born De Minaur is the first Australian champion at the

134-year tournament since Bernard Tomic in 2013.

"It's crazy that this actually happened," De Minaur told the crowd shortly after his victory.

"I thought it wouldn't happen. Third time lucky, and you guys don't know how much it means to do it in front of all you guys, in front of my home."

In his second straight Sydney final, the fifth seed won 75 percent of first-serve points to improve on his runner-up finish to Russian Daniil Medvedev last year.

De Minaur has soared 208 places to 29 in the ATP Rankings and was named ATP Newcomer of the Year after earning 28 tour-level victories throughout his 2018 campaign.

After conceding a break of serve in the opening game of the match, De Minaur levelled the opening set at 3-3.



**Alex De Minaur, 19, is the youngest winner of the Sydney tournament since his mentor Lleyton Hewitt claimed it as a 19-year-old in 2001**



Australia's Alex De Minaur hits a return against his compatriot Jordan Thompson

## Zverev sad at Murray quitting tennis

AFP | Melbourne

**B**rightest new kid on the block Alexander Zverev said yesterday he was sad to hear "super nice" Andy Murray say the Australian Open could be his last tournament.

Murray on Friday shocked the tennis world by declaring that his chronic hip pain had not been eased by surgery a year ago and he could end his storied career in Melbourne next week.

World number four Zverev is the flag-bearer for the next generation of stars, having beaten

**Obviously Murray is one of the best guys on tour outside the court. He's always super nice to be around, super nice to kind of be in the locker room with**

ALEXANDER ZVEREV

Roger Federer and Novak Djokovic to win the biggest crown of his career at the ATP Finals last year.

And he said he would always appreciate what the 31-year-old three-times Grand Slam winner Murray had done for the sport and new players like himself as they emerge on tour.

"Obviously he's one of the best guys on tour outside the court. He's always super nice to be around, super nice to kind of be in the locker room with," Zverev told reporters at Melbourne Park.

## Rashford can be as good as Kane, says Man Utd boss Solskjaer

AFP | Manchester

**M**anchester United boss Ole Gunnar Solskjaer says Marcus Rashford has the potential to be as good a centre-forward as England teammate Harry Kane as the pair prepare to face off in the Premier League this weekend.

Rashford is expected to line up as the spearhead of United's attack when they face Kane's Tottenham at Wembley on Sunday with both the team and striker on a hot run of form under the interim manager.

Rashford looks reborn under interim coach Solskjaer, scoring three times in the centre-forward position as United have rattled off four straight league wins since the Norwegian took over from the sacked Mourinho in December to close in on the Champions League places.

"He can become a top, top striker," said Solskjaer. "We can talk about Harry Kane and his class and I'm sure Marcus as well. He's got the potential to get up there."

"He's got frightening pace, he's now become stronger and can hold the ball up for us. He's a great link player."

Kane, 25, has set the goalscoring standards in English football over the past three years -- he was the league's top scorer in 2015/16 and 2016/17 before finishing runner-up to Liverpool's Mohamed Salah last season.

He won the Golden Boot at

last year's World Cup and this season is joint-top scorer alongside Arsenal's Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang on 14 goals.

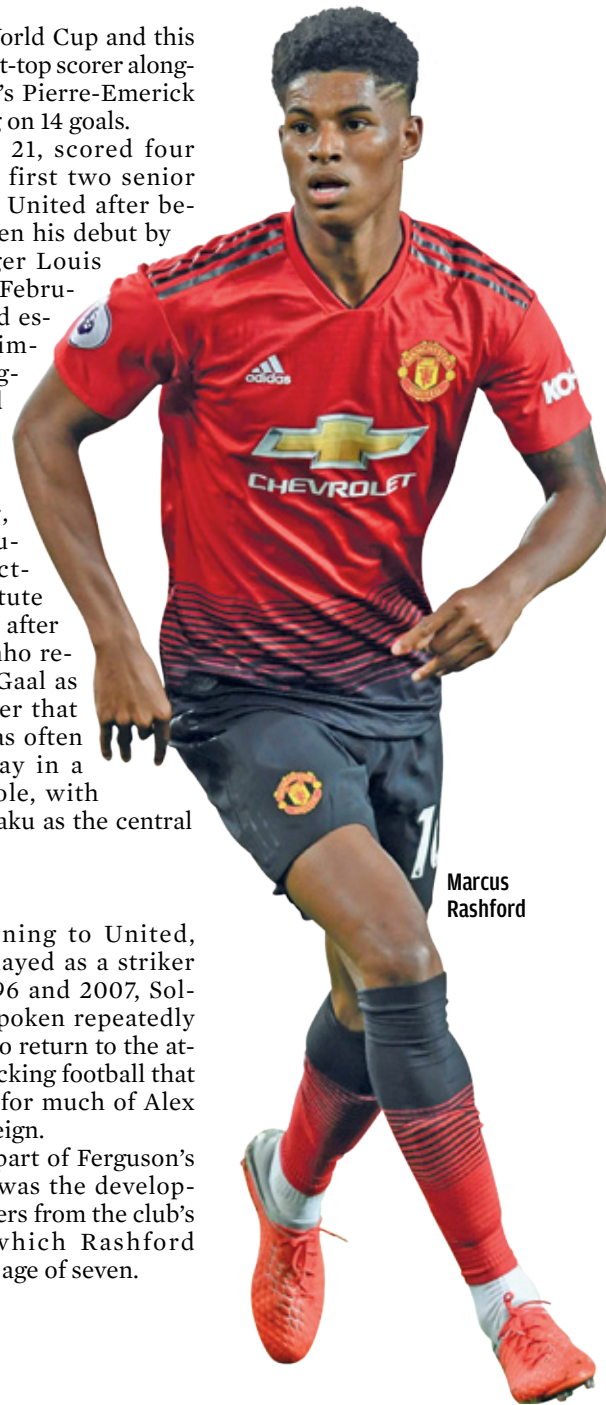
Rashford, 21, scored four goals in his first two senior matches for United after being given his debut by then-manager Louis van Gaal in February 2016, and established himself as a regular squad member at Old Trafford.

However, he was regularly restricted to substitute appearances after Jose Mourinho replaced Van Gaal as manager later that year, and was often asked to play in a left-sided role, with Romelu Lukaku as the central attacker.

**'Top striker'**

Since returning to United, where he played as a striker between 1996 and 2007, Solskjaer has spoken repeatedly of the need to return to the attractive, attacking football that they played for much of Alex Ferguson's reign.

A central part of Ferguson's philosophy was the development of players from the club's academy, which Rashford joined at the age of seven.



Marcus Rashford

## Son may need a rest, warns South Korea coach

Son Heung-min

AFP | Al-Ain

**S**outh Korea's coach warned that Tottenham Hotspur star Son Heung-min may have to be eased in gently when he arrives at the Asian Cup after a frantic few months for club and country.

Son has played nearly 1,000 minutes in 16 games for Spurs already this season, on top of his appearances at last year's World Cup and Korea's title run at the Asian Games.

He will arrive in the United Arab Emirates on Monday, a day after Spurs' Premier League clash with Man-

chester United, and Portuguese coach Paulo Bento said he was mindful of the player's workload.

"After he arrives we will see what we are going to do in the game against China. We will talk and then we are going to take the best decisions for the team," said Bento.

"So we need to wait for the game that probably he's going to play on Sunday and then check everything he's done in the last months, because he played a lot of games."

South Korea, the 2015 runners-up, have laboured to 1-0 wins over debutants the Philippines and Kyrgyzstan without Son, who sat out the Group C openers under a deal with Tottenham.

However, the Koreans are safely into the last 16 ahead of Wednesday's group decider against China, who hit form in a 3-0 demolition of the Philippines on Friday.

