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Sinner in way as Alcaraz targets career Grand Slam in Australia

● Carlos Alcaraz seeks first Australian Open win

● Jannik Sinner aims for third straight title

● Victory would complete Alcaraz's career Grand Slam

● Djokovic pursues record 25th major title

AFP | Sydney

Carlos Alcaraz is targeting a career Grand Slam at the Australian Open but winning the only major to elude him will be no easy feat with great rival Jannik Sinner standing in his way.

Spain's Alcaraz already has six major titles under his belt aged just 22, but success on the Melbourne Park hard courts is a glaring hole in his resume.

He has not made it past the quarter-finals in four trips to Australia, losing at that stage in 2025 to Novak Djokovic and Alexander Zverev the year before.

"It's my first goal to be honest," Alcaraz said of Australia after winning the US Open last year, his second Slam title of 2025 after defending his crown at Roland Garros.

"When I just go to the pre-seasons to what I want to improve, what I want to achieve, Australian Open is there."

Should he snap his Australia drought at the tournament starting on Sunday, Alcaraz would



Spain's Carlos Alcaraz (R) shakes hands with Italy's Jannik Sinner (L) after their exhibition tennis match at Inspire Arena in Incheon

become the youngest man to bank a career Grand Slam, surpassing retired compatriot Rafael Nadal.

Nadal secured all four majors by the age of 24.

Alcaraz faces a significant roadblock in Italy's Sinner, the two-time defending champion who is chasing his own slice of history.

If the 24-year-old makes it three in a row in Melbourne he would join Djokovic as the only men in the Open era to do so. The Serbian legend has done the three-peat twice during his 10 titles at Melbourne Park.

"I feel like a better player than last year," warned Sinner after

completing his 2025 campaign with 58 wins and just six defeats.

"A lot of wins and not many losses. And in the losses I had, I tried to see the positive thing and tried to use it to evolve me as a player."

Sinner came from two sets down to defeat Daniil Medvedev in the 2024 Australian Open final before seeing off Zverev in straight sets a year ago.

Djokovic record hunt

While Sinner is the defending champion, Alcaraz leads 10-6 in their head-to-head record and bumped Sinner from the season-ending world number one spot.

They met in a light-hearted exhibition match in South Korea last weekend, the pair's only warm-up for Melbourne, with Alcaraz coming out on top.

Such is the dominance of "Sinner", as they are being called, they have shared the last eight Grand Slam titles, picking up four each since Djokovic won his 24th major at the 2023 US Open.

The Serb is back again at his most successful hunting ground, but there are questions over his fitness and form with the 38-year-old pulling out of this week's Adelaide International.

Still chasing a record 25th major crown, Djokovic could be at

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If Alcaraz wins, he would become the youngest man ever (22) to achieve a career Grand Slam, surpassing his compatriot Rafael Nadal, who completed the feat at age 24

his last Australian Open and will be desperate to win there again.

Djokovic made the semis at all four majors last year but went no further, admitting "I can do only as much as I can do".

World number three Zverev, along with Lorenzo Musetti, Alex de Minaur and Felix Auger-Aliassime, ranked five, six and seven respectively, will be looking to crash the party and win a first major.

Three-time losing finalist Medvedev is a dark horse after winning the lead-up Brisbane International, while American Learner Tien spearheads the new guard fresh from lifting the ATP Next Gen title.

Jakub Mensik and Joao Fonseca are also among the young talents looking to make a mark, while Alexander Bublik will fancy going deep after winning the Hong Kong Open and breaking into the top 10.

Roma sunk by late Torino winner in Italian Cup



Torino players celebrate during the match

AFP | Rome

Roma crashed out of the Italian Cup on Tuesday as they lost 3-2 at home to Torino despite a goal from 16-year-old prodigy Antonio Arena.

Trailing 2-1 going into the final 10 minutes, Gian Piero Gasperini decided to bring on the Australian-born centre forward who has represented Italy in underage football since last year.

On his debut for Roma, Arena sent the Stadio Olimpico wild as his first touch of the ball was to head in a leveller for the hosts.

But Roman joy was short-lived as Emirhan Ilkhan netted a 90th-minute winner for Torino.

Earlier, a Che Adams brace either side of a strike by Mario Hermoso had given Torino the advantage.

Torino will face Serie A leaders Inter Milan in the next round.

Semenyo an instant hit as Man City close on League Cup final

AFP | London

Antoine Semenyo made himself an instant Manchester City hero as Pep Guardiola's men took a giant stride towards the League Cup final with a 2-0 win at Newcastle.

The Ghana international, who joined from Bournemouth for £65 million (\$87 million) last week, opened the scoring and also had a second goal controversially ruled out.

But Rayan Cherki delivered what could be the knockout blow to the holders in the 98th minute.

The Magpies ended a 70-year wait for a domestic trophy by winning the League Cup last season, but will need a heroic fightback to reach Wembley when the sides meet again for the second leg of the semi-final on February 4.

Semenyo also scored on his debut on Saturday in a 10-1 demolition of Exeter in the FA Cup.

In previous years he would have been cup-tied after featuring for Bournemouth earlier in the competition.

Newcastle boss Eddie Howe made clear his dissatisfaction before the game with a rule change this season that allows players to play for two clubs in the one campaign and City took full advantage.



Manchester City's Ghanaian midfielder #42 Antoine Semenyo (C) celebrates with teammates after scoring a goal

Guardiola showed his desire to reach the final for the first time since 2021 as Erling Haaland made a first League Cup start in three years in a strong City selection just days before they visit Manchester United in the Premier League.

Yoane Wissa blazed a glorious early chance over the bar as Newcastle roared out of the blocks in front of a packed St. James' Park.

But that was the closest either side came in a cagey first half.

City goalkeeper James Trafford had been a long-term target for Newcastle prior to his return to the Etihad from Burnley in July.

The England under-21 international has had to play second fiddle to Gianluigi Donnarumma for most of the season but proved his worth with a stunning save to claw away Wissa's

looping header early in the second half.

Seconds later, Bruno Guimaraes blasted against the post as Newcastle pressed for the opening.

But they were caught with a sucker punch at the other end when Jeremy Doku sped towards the by-line and his cross was turned by Bernardo Silva into the path of Semenyo to prod home from close range.