

Garcia takes Tianjin trophy



Caroline Garcia of France hits a return against Karolina Pliskova of Czech Republic

Reuters | Beijing

France's Caroline Garcia survived a difficult opening set before beating top seed Karolina Pliskova 7-6(7) 6-3 to lift the Tianjin Open title yesterday.

Trailing 5-1 in the tiebreak, Garcia made the most of Pliskova's two backhand errors to clinch the opening set after just over an hour of play.

With momentum on her side, Garcia broke Pliskova's serve twice to claim her first WTA title since her back-to-

back triumphs in Wuhan and Beijing last year.

"I was a little bit more aggressive than her, and I think that's what made the difference in the first set," the 24-year-old Garcia said.

"Of course, I've won three titles in China so it's bringing me luck... China is doing a lot for women's tennis."

The defeat means Pliskova will have to wait to book a place at the WTA Finals, but the Czech remains eighth in the Race to Singapore standings.

Djoko wins fourth Shanghai Masters

Novak Djokovic is within touching distance of Rafael Nadal's number one ranking after winning the Shanghai Masters with a victory over Borna Coric

AFP | Shanghai

The "new" Novak Djokovic warned that he was gunning for Rafael Nadal's world number one ranking after winning the Shanghai Masters with a 6-3, 6-4 victory over Borna Coric yesterday.

The 14-time Grand Slam champion has been imperious all week and barely offered a sniff to the 19th-ranked Croatian, a good friend and sometime-training partner.

The end when it inevitably arrived was anti-climactic, with the Serb winning the championship point after a video review.

Djokovic buried his head in his hand at the absurdity of it.

The 31-year-old will leapfrog Roger Federer into second in the world when the rankings are released on Monday but will not stop there as the season reaches its climax.

Spanish great Nadal, who was



Novak Djokovic of Serbia celebrates with the trophy after winning the final against Borna Coric of Croatia

not in Shanghai or Beijing last week because of a knee injury, Djokovic in the race to finish as year-end number one.

will be just 215 points ahead of "I could not ask for a better

scenario," Djokovic, who last sat atop the rankings two years ago, said of his late surge to the summit of men's tennis.

"I am very close now to Nadal in the rankings and put myself in a good position for the last period of the year."

Red-hot Djokovic has now been victorious in 18 ATP matches in a row and in recent months won Wimbledon, the Cincinnati Masters, the US Open and now Shanghai for a fourth time.

It is all a far cry from just five months ago, when Djokovic fell to 22nd in the world as he struggled following elbow surgery in February.

He missed the second half of 2017 with elbow and off-court issues, but said he had adapted his game since the operation.

Djokovic, who has been particularly dominant on his serve, not dropping one service game in Shanghai, said: "I think you're seeing the new Novak."

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