

Monfils beats Medvedev for return to Rotterdam final



Gael Monfils hits a return

AFP | Rotterdam

Gael Monfils returned to the final at the Rotterdam Open as he overhauled Daniil Medvedev 4-6, 6-3, 6-4 yesterday.

The French showman left it late but gave the Ahoy Arena crowd a thrill as he broke in the penultimate game of the third set and served out the win a game later.

Victory sent the 32-year-old into the final here for the second time after reaching the title match in his last Rotterdam appearance in 2016, when he lost to Martin Klizan.

Monfils will take on either top seed Kei Nishikori or former champion Stan Wawrinka in today's final.

Victory was quick revenge for Monfils, who lost to Medvedev a week ago in the Sofia semi-finals, an event which the Russian won.

Medvedev's defeat was only his third loss of the season, leaving his record at 14-3.

The contest featured several momentum shifts and a total of nine breaks of serve in just over two hours.

Sri Lanka seal thrilling win

Kusal Perera scored an unbeaten 153 in the fourth innings, guiding Sri Lanka to a sensational win over South Africa

● Sri Lanka secured their second win in 14 Test matches in South Africa

● The visitors won the thrilling first Test in Durban by one wicket

AFP | Durban, South Africa

Kusal Perera carried Sri Lanka to a sensational one-wicket win on the fourth day of the first Test against South Africa at Kingsmead yesterday as he hit a career-best 153 not out.

Perera and Vishwa Fernando put on an unbeaten 78 in a last-wicket partnership to secure only Sri Lanka's second win in 14 Test matches in South Africa.

Victory seemed unlikely when the ninth wicket fell with the total on 226, with the tourists chasing a target of 304.

But the left-handed Perera successfully farmed the strike, with South African captain Faf du Plessis persisting with wide-spread fields for the in-form batsman, while Fernando only had to face 27 balls during a 96-ball partnership.

Perera was on 86 when the ninth wicket fell but managed to keep most of the strike and to hit some telling blows in an innings of 200 balls which included 12



Vishwa Fernando (L) and Kusal Perera (R) of Sri Lanka celebrates Sri Lanka's win

fours and five sixes.

"It was a superman effort," said Du Plessis. "He (Perera) deserves all the accolades."

Low previous average

South Africa took the second new ball with the total on 263 but still kept most of their fielders on the boundary for Perera, who hit sixes off both Dale Steyn and Kagiso Rabada before slashing Rabada to third man for the winning boundary.

Perera, who came into the match with a career batting average below 30 and with his only previous century in 14 previous



Sri Lanka's 304/9 was the third-highest successful run chase in nearly 100 years of test cricket at the Kingsmead ground in Durban

Tests having been made against Zimbabwe in Harare two seasons ago, shared three important partnerships.

He put on 58 for the fourth wicket with debutant Oshado Fernando (37) and 96 for the sixth wicket with Dhananjaya de Silva (48) before his extraordinary association with Vishwa Fernando.

"I'm a little tired now, I don't know what to say," said Perera when he received the man of the match award. "I did my part but we are winning as a team."

The stand with Oshado Fernando was broken by Dale

Steyn, who had Fernando caught at second slip by South African captain Faf du Plessis. Two balls later he caught Niroshan Dickwella off his own bowling.

Sri Lanka were still a distant 194 runs short of their target when Perera was joined by De Silva, Sri Lanka's last recognised batsman.

South Africa, who were without opening bowler Vernon Philander because of a strained left hamstring, struggled for the next two hours as Perera and De Silva brought the target down to single figures.

Left-arm spinner Keshav Maharaj took two wickets off successive balls, dismissing De Silva leg before wicket and having Suranga Lakmal caught at slip.

| | |
|-------------------------------------------------|-----|
| South Africa, first innings, 235 | |
| Sri Lanka, first innings, 191 | |
| South Africa, second innings, 259 | |
| Sri Lanka, second innings (overnight 83-3) | |
| D. Karunaratne lbw b Philander | 20 |
| L. Thirimanne c Du Plessis b Rabada | 21 |
| O. Fernando c Du Plessis b Steyn | 37 |
| K. Mendis c De Kock b Olivier | 0 |
| K. Perera not out | 153 |
| N. Dickwella c and b Steyn | 0 |
| D. de Silva lbw b Maharaj | 48 |
| S. Lakmal c Du Plessis b Maharaj | 0 |
| L. Embuldeniya c Markram b Olivier | 4 |
| K. Rajitha lbw b Maharaj | 1 |
| V. Fernando not out | 6 |
| Extras (b2, lb11, w1) | 14 |
| Total (9 wkts, 85.3 overs) | 304 |
| Result: Sri Lanka won by one wicket | |
| Series: Sri Lanka lead the two-match series 1-0 | |

Brighton edge into FA Cup quarter-finals

AFP | London

Brighton moved into the FA Cup quarter-finals for the second successive season as goals from Anthony Knockaert and Jurgen Locadia clinched a 2-1 win over Derby yesterday.

Chris Hughton's side have been sucked into relegation danger in the Premier League after six games without a win.

But the Seagulls made the most of a welcome break from the grind of the relegation battle as they saw off Frank Lampard's Championship side at the Amex Stadium.

Derby had claimed the scalps of Manchester United and Southampton in domestic cup competitions this season.

But the fifth round tie was tipped in Brighton's favour by

a dominant first-half display.

Brighton opened the scoring after 33 minutes when Knockaert bent his first-time shot into the bottom corner of Kelle Roos' net after connecting with Yves Bissouma's cross.

Hughton's team doubled their advantage when Locadia fired home from close-range in first-half stoppage time after Bissouma's effort hit the post.

Former Chelsea and Arsenal star Ashley Cole set up a tense finish when the Derby defender headed in after 81 minutes.

It was the 38-year-old's first goal in England since 2012 and his first ever in the FA Cup and the landmark strike came in his second game since joining Derby until the end of the season following his release by LA Galaxy.



Anthony Knockaert of Brighton and Hove Albion celebrates after scoring his team's first goal

Crowds flock to Argentine village to pay tribute to Sala

AFP | Progreso, Argentina

The death in a plane crash of Cardiff City striker Emiliano Sala was a cruel blow to family, friends and supporters in his home village in Argentina, and yesterday they came, grieving, from miles around to pay their respects.

Through the morning, mourners gathered for a public vigil in a gymnasium in Progreso, the small farming town in Santa Fe province which Sala left as a teenager to play in Europe.

He was "loved and admired by all," a restaurant owner told AFP. Sala would come home on breaks and would never fail to kick the ball around with village youngsters, they said. Unlike some soccer stars, he would keep a low profile, not flaunting his new wealth.

As his heartbroken father, mother and sister watched yesterday, a giant poster of the



Yellow flowers are displayed in front of the portrait of Argentinian forward Emiliano Sala at the Beaujoire stadium in Nantes, France (file photo)

28-year-old hung behind his coffin, which was draped in the red and white colors of the San Martin de Progreso club where he began his career.

Sala's father, Horacio, was devastated by his son's death, family members said, and refused for days to leave his home.

Outside the club, which was at the center of the day's commemorations, was a banner reading: "Emi, you will never walk alone."

"He represented a lot for us," the club's president, Daniel Ribero, told AFP. "We're a small village and Emi was a celebrity, the only player to turn profes-

sional.

"He was one of us. He meant a lot to us."

More than 3,000 mourners came to pay respects.

"We all carry Emi in our hearts," said Mayor Julio Muller in an emotional tribute.

Crash in the Channel

Sala had played for Nantes, becoming one of the top strikers in France, before being traded in January to Cardiff City in England's Premier League in a 15 million pounds (19.3 million dollars) deal.

Just two days after making the move, Sala had flown back

to Nantes on January 21 to pay farewell to his former teammates.

On the return flight across the English Channel, the single-engine private plane carrying Sala and pilot David Ibbotson crashed near the British island of Guernsey.

Sala reportedly had messaged friends from the plane, flying in rough weather, that he was "so afraid" and that the craft "seems like it's falling to pieces."

The player's body was recovered from the submerged wreckage on February 7 but 59-year-old Ibbotson remains missing.

“People tell me: ‘He never played for you,’ but he was my player, I signed him, we had two or three conversations and he told me he would score the goals to keep Cardiff in the Premier League

NEIL WARNOCK
CARDIFF CITY MANAGER