



World number one Novak Djokovic hits a return (file photo)

Djokovic in Brisbane, Nadal in Perth as ATP Cup draw made

AFP | Sydney

World number one Novak Djokovic will begin his 2020 season in Brisbane, Rafael Nadal in Perth and Roger Federer in Sydney after yesterday's draw for the ATP Cup, the new world tennis team event.

The championship, which will take place from January 3-12 in the lead-up to the year's first Grand Slam, the Australian Open in Melbourne, will feature 24 nations split into six groups across Sydney, Brisbane and Perth.

Eight teams -- with up to five players each -- will emerge from the round-robin stage to compete in the knockout phase in Sydney until one is left standing.

Most of the world's top 30 men will take part, with ties comprising two singles and one doubles match.

At the draw in Sydney, Djokovic's Serbia were pitted

against France, South Africa, Germany, Greece, Canada and wildcard entry Australia in Brisbane.

Nadal's Spain will face Japan, Georgia, Russia, Italy and the United States in Perth while Federer's Switzerland take on Belgium, Austria, Croatia, Argentina and the Andy Murray-led Britain.

The final five nations in the ATP Cup standings, based on the ranking of their number one singles player, will be determined by the second entry deadline of November 13.

The new-look start to the year offers Aus\$22 million (\$15 million) in prize money and a maximum of 750 singles and 250 doubles ATP rankings points.

It will be held on the back of a revamped Davis Cup, run by the International Tennis Federation, in November, bringing together 18 nations in one place for a week at the end of the 2019 season.

Reus plots Dortmund path past Barcelona

AFP | Berlin

Borussia Dortmund captain Marco Reus insisted yesterday that his team could beat Barcelona regardless of whether Lionel Messi plays or not, but feared however that Dortmund would 'have to suffer' when the two sides meet in the Champions League on Tuesday.

Messi is a doubt for Tuesday's game amid ongoing struggles with a calf injury, but Reus suggested Dortmund could win if they play to their own strengths instead of obsessing over the opponent.

"We have to concentrate on ourselves. We have a good team, we are at home, and we can win the game," said Reus at a press conference yesterday.

"It will of course be a tough game tomorrow, and we are going to have to suffer a lot," he said.

Tuesday's Champions League opener is a baptism of fire for Dortmund as they

look to qualify from a fiercely difficult group which pits them against Barcelona, Inter Milan and Slavia Prague.

Yet Reus said his side were confident they could make a perfect start by beating Barcelona on Tuesday.

"It is important to start well in the group. We are confident enough to say that we can win the game," he said.

"We want to test ourselves against the best clubs. We have to be bold, push forward and try to score goals."

Both sides come into the game on the back of impressive results against top-four rivals in their domestic leagues at the weekend, as Dortmund thrashed Bayer Leverkusen 4-0, and Barcelona beat Valencia 5-2.

The injured Messi watched that win from the stands, meaning he is still waiting to make his first appearance for Barcelona this season.

Both sides come into the game on the back of impressive results against top-four rivals in their domestic leagues at the weekend, as Dortmund thrashed Bayer Leverkusen 4-0, and Barcelona beat Valencia 5-2.

The injured Messi watched that win from the stands, meaning he is still waiting to make his first appearance for Barcelona this season.

The injured Messi watched that win from the stands, meaning he is still waiting to make his first appearance for Barcelona this season.



Marco Reus

Klopp expects bumpy ride as Liverpool eye Istanbul return

Liverpool start their bid to win a seventh European Cup with a trip to Napoli for their Group E opener today

AFP | London

Jürgen Klopp has warned Liverpool that retaining the Champions League will be even harder than their incredible march to victory in Madrid last season.

Klopp's side start their bid to win a seventh European Cup with a trip to Napoli for their Group E opener today.

The Reds have reached the last two Champions League finals, beating Tottenham in the Spanish capital in June after losing to Real Madrid 12 months earlier.

But Klopp believes Liverpool face a daunting task to make it to the final in Istanbul's Ataturk Stadium -- a venue which carries extra resonance for the club after they won the 2005 Champions League with an astonishing comeback against AC Milan in the same stadium.

Before Liverpool can dream of emulating Steven Gerrard and company's triumph by the banks of the Bosphorus, Klopp knows they will have to run the gauntlet in what he expects to be a fiercely contested tournament.

Napoli are expected to pose the sternest test to Liverpool in a group which also includes unfancied Salzburg and Genk.

Carlo Ancelotti's team came within a whisker of ending Liverpool's European campaign in the group stage last season when Alisson Becker's superb late save denied Arkadiusz Milik to preserve a 1-0 win at Anfield that sent the Reds into the last 16 at the expense of Napoli.

Even if Liverpool should advance to the knockout rounds without so much drama this season, Klopp is wary of the restocked superpowers certain to be lying in wait in the latter stages.

"I will have no problem with it (reaching the final) if it hap-



Klopp expects daunting ride as Liverpool eye Istanbul return

“We have the same chance like everyone else, but that is all, and I don't see us, the English teams, dominating. I really think a lot of teams have a good chance”

JURGEN KLOPP

pens again, but at this moment I am not too sure it will," he said when the draw was made in August.

"We have the same chance like everyone else, but that is all, and I don't see us, the English teams, dominating. I really think a lot of teams have a good chance.

"Look at the squad Borussia Dortmund has and tell me we are stronger than them. That is

incredible. They can make five changes and you think: 'Really, they didn't play last week? Why?' There are a lot of quality teams.

"Juventus will be there, PSG will be there. Real Madrid? Do you think they gave up already? Bayern Munich now finally brought in Perisic and Coutinho which is a big boost."

'Like a rock'

While Liverpool will always have a special relationship with the Champions League after the club's dominance of the competition in the 1970s and 1980s, it is not hard to believe that some die-hard Kopites would happily exchange their continental supremacy for a season of domestic bliss.

Having erased the pain of that 2018 final defeat against Real, Liverpool's main goal this term is to end the club's long wait to win the English title.

Pipped to the Premier League trophy by Manchester City on

the final day of last season, Liverpool are desperate to win the title for the first time since 1990.

That desire has been clear to see in a blistering five-game winning streak which has already taken them to the top of the table this season.

Even an injury to Alisson has failed to interrupt their flow and the Brazilian keeper's replacement Adrian admits Liverpool's rock-solid defence -- marshalled by the imperious Virgil van Dijk -- has made his life much easier as the former West Ham player adapts to his new club.

"It's easy to play with them; you have some of the best players in the world, the best defenders, midfielders and attackers. From the back, I need to help on the occasions when I have to," Adrian said.

"I'm really proud to have won the last few games. We are in a good moment, we are like a rock -- all together, the manager, the staff, players and fans. The club is living a great moment."

Bianca Andreescu feted in hometown

AFP | Mississauga, Canada

Bianca Andreescu, who beat Serena Williams in the US Open final to become Canada's first Grand Slam singles champion, was honoured with a rally in her hometown on Sunday.

"I am truly blessed," the beaming 19-year-old told hundreds gathered to celebrate her achievement.

"I did not get here overnight. There has been a lot of hard work and sweat that went into it, a lot of downs, a lot of ups."

Bonnie Crombie, the mayor of Mississauga, a suburb of Toronto, presented Andreescu with a key to the city.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, in the midst of campaigning for second term, was also on hand.

"She is an inspiration to all Canadians old and young, but to be honest, especially an inspiration to young Canadians because she showed that



US Open champion Bianca Andreescu of Canada with her trophy (file photo)

young people can do anything," Trudeau said.

Andreescu's stunning 6-3, 7-5 victory at Flushing Meadows denied Williams a record-equalling 24th Grand Slam title.

In the course of a year she

has climbed from 200th in the world rankings to a career high fifth.

Her rise has been another source of pride for Canadian sports fans, who saw the Toronto Raptors claim the NBA championship in June.

Pliskova qualifies for WTA Finals in Shenzhen

Reuters | London

World number two Karolina Pliskova has become the second singles player to qualify for the season-ending WTA Finals in Shenzhen after top-ranked Ash Barty, the WTA Tour said yesterday.

The 27-year-old Czech won the inaugural Zhengzhou Open on Sunday, adding to trophies won in Brisbane, Rome and Eastbourne, and will make her fourth appearance in the Oct. 27-Nov. 3 Finals which offer \$14 million in prize money.

"It's always a goal of mine to qualify for the WTA Finals, and I'm proud to have done it for my fourth time. I look forward to competing against the best players of the season," Pliskova said.