

## Djokovic beats Pouille to reach Cincinnati semis



Novak Djokovic of Serbia returns a shot to Lucas Pouille of France

Reuters | Cincinnati

Novak Djokovic wore down Lucas Pouille after an even first set, dispatching the Frenchman 7-6(2) 6-1 in a Cincinnati Masters quarter-final in Ohio on Friday.

The match was much closer than when the pair met in the Australian Open semi-finals in January, when Djokovic conceded only four games before going on to win the title.

It took Djokovic nearly an hour to prevail in the first set but he closed out a one-sided tiebreak with a deft backhand passing shot.

The second was one-way traffic as the world number one played with relentless efficiency against an opponent who ran out of answers.

Perhaps the only concern for Djokovic with the U.S. Open looming in less than two weeks was a sore elbow which required brief treatment by his trainer late in the match.

"I managed to finish the match, had a little bit of tightness in my elbow but hopefully everything will be fine for tomorrow," Djokovic said in an on-court interview.



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He will have less than 24 hours to recover for a semi-final against Daniil Medvedev, who continued his recent hot form, ousting Russian compatriot Andrey Rublev 6-2 6-3 in barely an hour.

Medvedev, a career-high eighth in the rankings, faced only one break point.

He has made two finals in the past two weeks, losing to Nick Kyrgios in Washington and Rafa Nadal in Montreal.

In other quarter-final action, Frenchman Richard Gasquet continued his comeback from groin surgery by defeating 11th seeded Spaniard Roberto Bautista Agut 7-6(2) 3-6 6-2.

Gasquet, who defeated Andy Murray in the opening round, set up a semi-final clash with Belgian 16th seed David Goffin.

Goffin advanced when his quarter-final opponent, Japan's Yoshihito Nishio, pulled out before their match on Friday due to illness.

# Liverpool extend perfect start

Sadio Mane and Roberto Firmino shoot Liverpool to victory at Southampton

● **Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang sinks Burnley to maintain Arsenal's winning start**

AFP | London

Liverpool made it two successive wins to start their Premier League title bid as goals from Sadio Mane and Roberto Firmino clinched a hard-fought 2-1 victory over Southampton yesterday.

Jurgen Klopp's tired team were ragged in their passing and lacked organisation in defence, but still showed enough mental strength to come away with three points.

It was completely against the run of play when Senegal winger Mane put Liverpool ahead against his former club just before half time at St Mary's.

Brazil forward Firmino scored a clinical second but a dreadful error by Reds goalkeeper Adrian gifted a goal to Danny Ings that set up a tense finish.

Former Liverpool forward Ings should really have equalised to give Southampton what would have been a well-deserved point.

The reason for the Champions League winners' lacklustre display was not hard to find.

While Southampton were recovering from their defeat at

Burnley on the opening weekend of the season, Klopp's men were in Istanbul, playing extra-time against Chelsea in Wednesday's European Super Cup victory.

That gruelling trip seemed to take its toll against Southampton and Liverpool, who also faced Manchester City at Wembley in the Community Shield 13 days ago, looked out on their feet at times.

Liverpool soon began to struggle against a lively home side, who should have gone ahead after 21 minutes when Maya Yoshida got above Virgil Van Dijk to reach a corner from James Ward-Prowse, only to see Adrian parry his header to safety.

The Spanish goalkeeper was in action again just short of the half-hour, pushing out a low cross from Ryan Bertrand and for a few seconds all was chaos in the Liverpool penalty area as defenders tried in vain to clear the ball.

And neither Joel Matip nor Van Dijk dealt with a first-time cross by Ward-Prowse from the right, Che Adams getting between them to nod the ball over the crossbar.

### Second wind

Mane gave Liverpool the lead in first half stoppage-time when he took a pass inside from James Milner before sidestepping a defender and curling a shot inside



Roberto Firmino of Liverpool vies for the ball with Oriol Romeu of Southampton

the far post.

That and the interval seemed to give Liverpool their second wind.

Mohamed Salah had an excellent chance to double their lead 10 minutes after half-time when he raced clear of defenders, but the Egypt striker failed to disguise his shot, allowing Angus Gunn to spread himself and save.

Firmino sliced the ball wide of goal after Mane had outpaced the defence and swept the ball in low from the left.

Southampton sent on Ings and

he faded a shot just over the crossbar from distance.

But after 70 minutes Liverpool showed again how deadly they can be when teams relax against them even for a second.

Mane won the ball from Southampton's own throw-in and found Firmino, who danced inside along the edge of the penalty area, waited his moment and shot low past Gunn.

Andrew Robertson was denied a goal-of-the-month contender when Gunn dived to his right to block the Scotland

left-back's volley after a quick exchange of passes with Mane.

Adrian had to save well when Matip deflected Stuart Armstrong's cross towards the corner of his own net.

But the goalkeeper blundered badly with seven minutes left, hitting an attempted clearance against Ings' right foot and back into goal under no pressure at all.

And Ings miskicked from six yards when any sort of contact would have produced an equaliser in the closing moments.

## Brave Smith out for 92 after being hit in head by Archer bouncer

AFP | London

Australia batsman Steve Smith just missed his third Ashes hundred in as many innings after returning following a sickening blow to the neck from a Jofra Archer bouncer on the fourth day of the second Test against England at Lord's yesterday.

Smith left the field during the day's second session. He came back and was eventually out leg before wicket for 92, the first time this series he had failed to make three figures.

The star batsman was on 80 when he turned away from an express delivery from England fast bowler Archer timed at 92.4 mph. The ball struck him on the side of the neck and head.

Smith, fell face forward onto the ground. He was wearing a helmet without the additional neck protection that was introduced following the death of Phillip Hughes after his former Australia team-mate died after being hit by a bouncer in a 2014 domestic Sheffield Shield match in Sydney.

Smith received several minutes of on-field treatment involving both Australian and English medical staff.

He got to his feet but, after a prolonged conversation with Australia team doctor Richard Saw, decided to retire hurt.

Smith received a generous round of applause as he walked back into the pavilion.

Australia were then 203-6, 55 runs behind England's first-in-



Australia's Steve Smith plays a shot

nings 258.

World Cup-winner Archer, making his Test debut, had previously struck Smith on his unprotected forearm with another bouncer during a fiery eight-over spell that cost 31 runs.

Smith resumed his innings as soon as he could. After 46 minutes off the field, he came back in when Peter Siddle was caught behind off Chris Woakes to leave Australia 218-7.

From the second and third balls he faced on his return, Smith hit two fours off Woakes: a slammed shot over mid-on followed by a backfoot drive through the covers.

But on 92, facing his ninth ball after resuming, Smith shouldered arms to a Woakes delivery that nipped back and was plumb lbw to leave Australia 234-8.

Smith turned towards the

pavilion, signalling that he was reviewing umpire Chris Gaffaney's decision almost as an after-thought.

Replays confirmed his dismissal, with Smith receiving more applause from the MCC members in the pavilion as he walked back in.

A Cricket Australia spokesman, explaining how Smith had been allowed to resume his innings, said: "Steve was hit on the neck below the left ear.

"He was assessed lying on the pitch at the instructions of team doctor Richard Saw.

"Dr Saw made the precautionary decision to remove Steve from the field of play to have him further assessed under Cricket Australia's head impact protocol. Steve then passed his assessments and will now be monitored on an ongoing basis, as is routine."

## Sri Lanka set up final day thriller against New Zealand



Sri Lanka's Dimuth Karunaratne plays a shot

AFP | Galle, Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka's batters set the stage yesterday for a thrilling final day, reaching 133 without loss at stumps on day four as they chased 268 to beat New Zealand in the first Test in Galle.

Openers Dimuth Karunaratne and Lahiru Thirimanne were involved in a record opening stand of 133 runs and benefited from some sloppy fielding by the tourists.

It leaves Sri Lanka needing a further 135 runs to record their first win in the World Test Championship.

Karunaratne was unbeaten on 71 off 168 balls with two boundaries while Thirimanne was on 57 having faced 132 deliveries and hit four fours. They were in no mood to withdraw to the dressing room but bad light ended play 34 minutes before schedule.

Batting fourth in Galle is not the prettiest thing for batsmen and the highest successful run chase here is 99. But this track

held together and there weren't any demons for batsmen making life difficult.

Both openers were slow off the blocks with the first boundary coming in the 22nd over. Karunaratne was the first to reach half-century with a cut shot off William Somerville. It was the Sri Lankan skipper's 23rd Test fifty.

Thirimanne reached his sixth half-century with a flick for four off Ajaz Patel. After a series of low scores, he was under pressure to post a decent figure and the half-century will have saved his place for the next Test in Colombo.

A bat pad chance off Thirimanne when he was on 29 fell just short of short leg fielder Tom Latham. But the luckier of the two openers was Karunaratne, who was put down twice. Latham spilled a chance at short leg when he was on 58 off the bowling of Patel and in the very next over B.J. Watling missed a stumping chance off Somerville.