

Nadal reaches 50th Masters final

● Rafael Nadal sweeps past Stefanos Tsitsipas to reach Italian Open final

● Johanna Konta reaches final after victory over Kiki Bertens

● Konta to face Pliskova for Rome title

AFP | Rome

Defending champion Rafael Nadal swept past Greece's Stefanos Tsitsipas 6-3, 6-4 to advance to his 50th Masters final and first on clay this season at the Italian Open yesterday.

The eight-time Rome winner had been stunned by Tsitsipas, seeded eighth, in the semi-finals at the Madrid Open last weekend.

But the 32-year-old Spaniard was clinical on the red clay of the Foro Italico, winning through in 1hr 42min to reach the final for the 11th time.

"It's an important victory for me," said Nadal. "I played a solid match against a good player who is winning lot of matches on this surface. Last week I didn't play very well in Madrid. Today I did better."

Nadal, seeded second, was playing his fourth straight semi-final, but had not managed to go further on clay this season.

But he has not dropped a set so far this week and next plays either world number one Novak Djokovic or Argentine Diego Schwartzman, who meet in the second semi-final.

Nadal's run to the Rome final comes just a week before he starts his assault on a 12th French Open title at Roland Garros.

"The feeling is that I am playing better every week, every day. That's important for me," he said.

"It's not a drama to lose in



Rafael Nadal of Spain returns a forehand to Greece's Stefanos Tsitsipas

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RAFAEL NADAL

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"I say in Madrid I was playing better, then I played a bad match in the semi-finals, true.

"But my feeling, especially after my loss against (Dominic) Thiem in the semi-finals of Barcelona, I think my personal feeling improved and my energy came back a little bit."

"I've been through some tough moments after Indian Wells. Recovery of the knee again... was not easy to come

back and to prepare myself the right way."

Britain's Johanna Konta fought back from a set down to seal victory on her fourth match point against Kiki Bertens to reach the WTA final.

Konta, ranked 42, came through 5-7, 7-5, 6-2 against sixth seed Bertens, winner of the Madrid Open last week, after almost three hours on the red clay of Rome.

Dutchwoman Bertens had advanced to the semi-finals after world number one Naomi Osaka of Japan retired with a hand injury before their match Friday.

Konta next meets Czech fourth seed Karolina Pliskova who eased past Greek qualifier Maria Sakkari 6-4, 6-4 in 88 minutes.

Pliskova and Sakkari last met in the second round at the Foro Italico in 2018 when the Czech, furious at a line call, smashed a hole in the umpire's chair after losing in three sets.



Atletico Madrid's French forward Antoine Griezmann controls the ball

Valencia hold on to fourth, Griezmann jeered on last game

AFP | Madrid

Valencia held their nerve to secure La Liga's last Champions League place yesterday as a 2-0 victory over Real Valladolid ended Getafe and Sevilla's hopes of snatching fourth.

Getafe had to better Valencia's result at the Estadio Jose Zorrilla as they faced Villarreal, while Sevilla needed beat Athletic Bilbao and hope both Getafe and Valencia lost.

Sevilla held up their side of the bargain by seeing off Bilbao 2-0 but Getafe drew 2-2 and Valencia won, meaning it is Marcelino's side who reach the Champions League for a second consecutive year.

They sit seven points behind Real Madrid, who play Real Betis at home on Sunday, and 15 adrift of second-placed Atletico, who earlier drew 2-2 away at Levante, with Antoine Griezmann jeered in his final match for the club.

Valencia's Champions League chances looked slim after they were knocked out of the Europa League by Arsenal two weeks ago and even slimmer when a miserable start to the season left them 15th after 15 games, a scrap for survival more likely than a dash for the top four.

But Marcelino stayed and oversaw the recovery, which could now have a final flourish if they manage to beat a physically and mentally drained Barcelona and win the Copa del Rey on May 25.

After 11 weeks in the top



Griezmann joined Atletico in 2014 and signed a new five-year deal last June, but announced on Tuesday that he would be leaving

four, fifth place and the Europa League comes as a disappointment for Getafe, even for a team promoted to the top flight only two seasons ago whose annual wage bill is more than 10 times smaller than Real Madrid's.

Sevilla qualify for the Europa League too, finishing sixth after Ben Yedder and Munir El Haddadi extinguished Bilbao's own hopes of European football next season.

Instead, Sevilla are joined by Espanyol, whose fans invaded the pitch when the full-time whistle blew at Cornella, where a 2-0 win over Real Sociedad means the Catalan side clinched seventh.

Griezmann bitter farewell

Getafe sat fourth for 23 minutes over the course of the afternoon, after Francisco Portillo pulled an early shot into the corner, but news soon filtered through that Valencia had scored against Valladolid,

Carlos Soler capitalising on a mistake by Kiko Olivas.

From there, everything went Valencia's way as Rodrigo gave them a two-goal cushion, shortly after Villarreal's Vicente Iborra had nodded in an equaliser against Getafe.

A brilliant header from Nemanja Maksimovic looked to have given Getafe a winning finish but even that was denied them when Gerard Moreno's angled shot bobbed its way in after some clumsy handling by David Soria.

Earlier, Griezmann was barracked by fans during his last game for Atletico and Rodrigo might have scored his final goal for the club as they came back from two goals down to draw with Levante.

Griezmann received whistles at the City of Valencia Stadium from the visiting fans, who were also heard chanting "out, out, out" before goals from Sergio Camello and Rodrigo ensured Atletico ended the season with a point.

"We had to highlight the work of the gladiators who are leaving," Simeone said afterwards.

"Their greatest legacy is not the titles won, it is their commitment and respect. I love them very much."

Simeone has dismissed fears of a mass exodus, despite both Diego Godin and Griezmann already announcing their departures, with the likes of Rodrigo, Juanfran and Filipe Luis all expected to follow.

Man City thrash Watford 6-0 in FA Cup final to complete treble

AFP | London

Manchester City completed the first ever domestic treble in English football in emphatic fashion by dispatching Watford 6-0 at Wembley to claim the FA Cup yesterday.

Raheem Sterling scored a hat-trick, while David Silva, Kevin de Bruyne and Gabriel Jesus also netted to cap a glorious campaign with the biggest margin of victory in a FA Cup final since 1903.

Watford's wait to win their first ever major piece of silverware goes on, but after going behind they had little answer to Pep Guardiola's relentless champions as the Catalan picked up the 27th trophy of his coaching career.

It could have been very different for the Hornets had Rober-

to Pereyra not missed the first big chance of the game after Watford pounced on one slack pass by Oleksandr Zinchenko to spring a counter-attack.

Gerard Deulofeu fed the Argentine, but City goalkeeper Ederson raced from his goal to make a fine save with his trailing leg.

Watford were also left angered as a handball shout for a penalty against Vincent Kompany was not looked upon favourably by referee Kevin Friend or the Video Assistant Referee.

And Javi Gracia's men also played a big part in their own downfall for City's first goal on 26 minutes from which Guardiola's men never looked back.

The diminutive figures of David Silva and Sterling both won headers against taller defend-



Manchester City's Vincent Kompany lifts the FA Cup

ers before the ball broke for the Spaniard to fire across Heurelho Gomes.

City control then turned into total dominance as a gloriously crafted second gave Watford a mountain to climb.

Bernardo Silva's curling cross picked out Jesus at the back post and the Brazilian's effort was heading in before Sterling snatched his 24th goal of the season by smashing the ball over the line.

Veteran goalkeeper Gomes was making what is expected to be his final game before he plans to become a pastor in retirement.

Watford were left praying for a miracle that never came, but the 38-year-old briefly kept his side in the game either side of half-time with saves from Riyad Mahrez and Jesus.