

# Centurion Djokovic romps to win as Swiatek, Gauff move on in Melbourne

Title contenders advance, but Auger-Aliassime and Eala fall in first-round action

● Djokovic beats Pedro Martinez in straight sets

● Stan Wawrinka wins in tournament farewell

● Felix Auger-Aliassime retires with cramp

AFP | Melbourne

Novak Djokovic began his latest bid for a record 25th Grand Slam crown with an emphatic straight-sets victory yesterday as fellow Australian Open title contenders Iga Swiatek and Coco Gauff also won but with less sparkle. Three-time finalist Daniil Medvedev stayed alive, as did 40-year-old Stan Wawrinka, who rolled back the clock to reach the second round in his tournament farewell.

Serbian great Djokovic, 38, tamed Spain's 71st-ranked Pedro Martinez 6-3, 6-2, 6-2 on Rod Laver Arena, a court where he has won a record 10 Australian Open crowns.

The world number four owns 24 major titles, equal for the most ever with Australia's Margaret Court, but a 25th has remained agonisingly out of reach.

His last came at the 2023 US Open with Jannik Sinner and Carlos Alcaraz sharing all eight since then.

"What can I say? I like the sound of it. Centurion is pretty nice," he said after his 100th victory at the Australian Open.

"I always give my best whenever I'm on the court. Obviously, history-making is a great motivation, and particularly in the last 5-10 years of my career."

The 2014 champion Wawrinka lived to fight another day with a gutsy four-set victory.



Serbia's Novak Djokovic hits a return against Spain's Pedro Martinez

The three-time major winner is playing his last season before retiring and gave his all to down Serbia's Laslo Djere 5-7, 6-3, 6-4, 7-6 (7/4) in front of a crowd willing him to victory.

"The passion is still intact. But I'm not young any more, so I need to be careful also," said the Swiss warhorse, who made his Australian Open debut in 2006.

Medvedev, runner-up in 2021, 2022 and 2024, warmed up for Melbourne with victory in Brisbane and ground to a 7-5, 6-2, 7-6 (7/2) opening round win over Dutchman Jesper de Jong.

The famously feisty Russian said he was trying to be more "positive" on court.

"So far I'm doing it well," he said.

Sixth seed Alex de Minaur, the big home hope, was also a straight-sets winner on another hot day where temperatures

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NOVAK DJOKOVIC

reached about 30C and record crowds of more than 100,000 faced long queues to get into Melbourne Park.

The tournament is over, however, for seventh seed Felix Auger-Aliassime, who retired from his match with cramp.

Auger-Aliassime won the opening set 6-3 against Nuno Borges but then lost the next two before calling time.

"I want to be on the court competing with my opponent. I don't want to be just standing there like a punching bag," he said.

The same fate befell tearful compatriot Marina Stakusic, who was taken off in a wheelchair when she cramped up against home player Priscilla Hon.

**'Overwhelming'**

In the women's draw, six-time major winner Swiatek was made to work unexpectedly hard against Chinese qualifier Yuan Yue.

The Polish second seed, who will complete a career Grand Slam of all four majors if she breaks her Australian Open duck, eventually saw off her spirited opponent 7-6 (7/5), 6-3.

"I was a bit rusty at the beginning," said Swiatek.



USA's Coco Gauff hits a return to Uzbekistan's Kamilla Rakhimova

**YOU KNOW WHAT**  
**Djokovic, now 38, sealed his 100th Australian Open win on Rod Laver Arena – where he has claimed all 10 of his Melbourne titles**

"For sure many ups and downs, but overall I have some stuff to work on."

Gauff beat Uzbekistan's Kamilla Rakhimova 6-2, 6-3, but was also less than convincing at the start and struggled with her serve.

"I am only satisfied if I win, but I am proud of myself regardless of how I get on," she said.

Her reward is a clash next with Venus Williams' conqueror Olga Danilovic.

Like Swiatek, Gauff has yet to go past the last four in Melbourne.

Gauff's fellow American, fourth seed Amanda Anisimova, began her quest for a third consecutive major final with a ruthless win over Switzerland's Simona Waltert, 6-3, 6-2.

Sixth seed Jessica Pegula and eighth seed Mirra Andreeva also progressed.

However, former champion Sofia Kenin crashed out and so did Alexandra Eala despite manic support from Philippines fans.

The 20-year-old Eala was in the main draw for the first time and even practice sessions were mobbed by large numbers of her compatriots.

"I think this week definitely there were elements that were a bit overwhelming," she said of the support following a three-set loss to Alycia Parks.

## Bahrain Olympic Committee Participates in Asian Beach Games International Media Conference in China



Manama

The Bahrain Olympic Committee took part in the International Media Conference for the 6th Asian Beach Games, scheduled to be held in Sanya, China, from 22 to 30 April 2026.

The conference, which runs from 18 to 21 January 2026 in China, is attended by media representatives from across Asia. Representing the Bahrain Olympic Committee are Hasan Ali Ahmed, Head of Media and Digital Content, and Ali Al-Hal-

waji, Photography Specialist.

The conference opened with a welcoming address delivered by Mr Jeans, Director of Media and Broadcast at the Olympic Council of Asia, who conveyed the greetings of the Chairman of the Olympic Council of Asia Media Committee, Mr Fires Mustafa Al-Kooheji.

In his remarks, he expressed full confidence in China's ability to successfully host the Games and deliver outstanding media services, citing the country's extensive experience and high

level of expertise in staging major multi-sport events, including beach, summer, and winter Games.

He added, "This will be the second time China hosts this event. You can be assured that world-class venues, along with high-quality broadcasting and media services, will be in place to ensure a smooth and professional experience while covering and transmitting the Games to Asia and the rest of the world."

The conference programme

included a series of presentations and briefings covering media services, accommodation, transportation, competition venues, medical and nutritional services, as well as the opening and closing ceremonies.

The 6th Asian Beach Games will be hosted in Sanya, with broad participation expected from Asian media organisations and sports institutions, as preparations continue for the successful delivery of the continental sporting event.

## Australia rest Cummins, Hazlewood, Maxwell for Pakistan T20 series

AFP | Sydney

Australia will rest five top players, including Pat Cummins and Glenn Maxwell, for a three-match Twenty20 series in Pakistan ahead of the

World Cup, selectors said yesterday.

Josh Hazlewood, Tim David and Nathan Ellis will also skip the series starting later this month.

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