

# Osaka steals show at Australian Open as Sinner strolls through

Sinner launches three-peat bid while Monfils says emotional Melbourne farewell

● Jannik Sinner wins after opponent retires

● Gael Monfils loses epic first-round match

● Naomi Osaka makes dramatic fashion entrance

AFP | Melbourne

**J**annik Sinner barely broke sweat in launching his quest to win a third Australian Open in a row yesterday as Naomi Osaka stole the show with a bold fashion statement.

Popular Frenchman Gael Monfils meanwhile bid farewell to Melbourne Park with an epic defeat and thanks for "an amazing ride".

The Italian Sinner strolled into round two when French opponent Hugo Gaston retired on Rod Laver Arena with the second seed in full control at 6-2, 6-1.

Gaston slumped to his chair and shook his head as his Australian Open ended in distress.

Two-time reigning champion Sinner said it was not how he wanted to win, but was pleased with his night's work.

"I knew from the beginning that I had to play a very high level and was trying to be as aggressive as possible, which I've done," he said.

Should he win three titles in a row in Melbourne, Sinner would join Novak Djokovic as the only men in the Open era to do so.

Great entertainer Monfils was bundled out in the first round in a brave goodbye to a tournament



Italy's Jannik Sinner serves to France's Hugo Gaston

he has lit up so many times down the years.

The 39-year-old, one of the most colourful and popular players in men's tennis, battled all the way but Australian qualifier Dane Sweeny prevailed 6-7 (3/7), 7-5, 6-4, 7-5 in an epic lasting nearly four hours.

There was an on-court presentation and standing ovation afterwards for Monfils, who said:

"Somehow it is the finish line, but thank you so much for an amazing ride."

Monfils, who has won 13 ATP titles in a career stretching back to 2004, said in October that this year would be his last in tennis.

Italian fifth seed Lorenzo Musetti moved on when his Belgian opponent Raphael Collignon retired in the fourth set.

Ben Shelton, the eighth seed and a semi-finalist last year, saw off France's Ugo Humbert, 6-3, 7-6 (7/2), 7-6 (7/5).

But Brazilian 19-year-old Joao Fonseca, touted on the eve of the tournament by Roger Federer as a star of the future, was dumped out by Eliot Spizzirri at the first hurdle.

The American defied the crowd of chanting Brazilian fans to win 6-4, 2-6, 6-1, 6-2.

#### Fashion statement

Ahead of the final match on day three on Rod Laver Arena, former world number one Osaka emerged holding a white umbrella and wearing a matching wide-brimmed hat and veil for her night match, creating a dramatic and regal fashion statement before the contest began



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Naomi Osaka entered Rod Laver Arena holding a white umbrella and wearing a matching wide-brimmed hat and veil for her night match, creating a dramatic and regal fashion statement before the contest began



Japan's Naomi Osaka arrives to face Croatia's Antonia Ruzic

Keys lost the first four games before rallying to beat Ukraine's Oleksandra Oliynykova 7-6 (8/6), 6-1.

"I've been thinking about this moment for basically a year," the American said of walking out on centre court again.

"Obviously I was very nervous at the start."

Keys stunned Aryna Sabalenka 12 months ago in a three-set epic to win her first major crown at the age of 29, but she failed to push on, winning no more titles in 2025.

She started her season with quarter-final exits at Brisbane and Adelaide, admitting before the Grand Slam to feeling the weight of expectation as defending champion.

And so it proved as she threat-

ened to implode against the Ukrainian ranked 92, before finding her feet to pull away with ease in the second set.

Also in the women's draw, Janice Tjen clocked another milestone in her rapid rise as she became the first Indonesian to win a match at the Australian Open in 28 years.

Unseeded Tjen stunned Canadian 22nd seed Leylah Fernandez 6-2, 7-6 (7/1).

Tjen, who this time last year was ranked 413 but is now the world number 59, is the first Indonesian to win a match at the major since Yayuk Basuki in 1998.

Also through was Elena Rybakina, the fifth seed from Kazakhstan who eased past Kaja Juvan of Slovenia 6-4, 6-3.

## Ten-Man Muharraq Stun Sitra

Hussain Almaskati  
TDT | Manama

**M**uharraq overcame a rollercoaster of a match to come out 5-3 winners over Sitra at Khalifa Sports City yesterday, booking their spot in the Khalid Bin Hamad Cup final against Riffa on Saturday.

The game started with Sitra on the front foot, probing Muharraq's defence and creating early pressure, but the Red Wolves struck first in the 15th minute. Soufiane Mahrouk met a clever delivery from Facundo Tobares, and headed low into the corner, giving ten-man Muharraq an early lead.

Minutes later, their momentum slipped way after a VAR review awarded Sitra a penalty. Muharraq's Amine Bennadi was shown a second yellow for clipping Karl Namnganda's heel as he rose to meet a cross, and Juda da Silva converted emphatically from the spot to level the score at 1-1.

Despite being a man down,



Juninho strikes his trademark celebration after his 3rd goal

Muharraq regained the lead in the 38th minute. Edimarc Ribeiro da Costa expertly controlled a Rezende delivery under pres-

sure and finished to make it 2-1. However, Ali Abdulmajed's men were undeterred. They equalized in first-half stoppage

time through Abdulwasea Al Matari, who finished beautifully to the far post, sending the teams at halftime at 2-2.

The second half belonged to Ribeiro da Costa. He restored Muharraq's advantage in the 54th minute, volleying in from a corner delivered by Gervasio Oliveira. Four minutes later, he completed his hat-trick, again set up by Oliveira, who delivered a dead-ball free kick from the left wing. Ribeiro da Costa beat Carlos Cavafé to the ball, and his powerful strike bounced off the crossbar and over the line.

Sitra earned a late penalty in the 75th minute after Abdulwasea Al Matari's effort struck Waleed Al Hayyam's arm. Juda da Silva's second penalty cut the deficit to 4-3, giving his side a fleeting chance to fight back. That hope, however, vanished in stoppage time as Arthur Rezende's low floated ball found Facundo Tobares, who volleyed emphatically to make it 5-3 and send Nandinho's men to the final.

## Man City's Foden to play through pain of broken hand

AFP | London

**M**anchester City forward Phil Foden is set to face Bodo/Glimt yesterday despite suffering a broken hand as Pep Guardiola looks to erase the bitter taste of defeat in the Manchester derby.

Foden was forced off at half-time against Manchester United on Saturday after landing awkwardly on his arm.

But the England star's hand injury won't stop him playing in City's Champions League group phase tie in Norway.

"He has, a little bit, broken his bones but he has protection and he is fine for tomorrow," Guardiola told reporters on Monday.

Guardiola dismissed suggestions that City striker Erling Haaland, who has not scored from open play in his last seven matches, could be rested on his return to his homeland.

"He said to me he slept unbelievably, so he is fit," said Guardiola of Haaland, who has netted 39 times for club and



Phil Foden

country this season.

City's winless run in the Premier League extended to four matches after their 2-0 loss at Old Trafford, allowing Arsenal to increase their lead at the top to seven points.

Guardiola has postponed an inquest into the damaging loss to focus on City's bid to secure a place in the Champions League last 16.

City are currently fourth, with the top eight automatically advancing to the last 16, while the teams finishing ninth to 24th go into the play-off round.