

SPORTS
sports

Nadal crashes out to Fognini

● Rafael Nadal stunned on clay as Fabio Fognini produces one of his best ever performances to book spot in Monte Carlo final

● Nadal was beaten 6-4, 6-2 by Fognini in the semi-final match

● Fognini will face Dusan Lajovic in the final

Daily Mail | Monte Carlo

Rafael Nadal had no answers against Fabio Fognini as the Italian produced one of the best performances of his career to reach the Rolex Monte Carlo Masters final.

After Novak Djokovic was eliminated in the quarter-finals against Russia's Daniil Medvedev, Nadal looked even more likely to leave Monte Carlo with the title.

But world No 18 Fognini is a fine player on clay and looked close to producing a first bagel



Italy's Fabio Fognini hits a return to Spain's Rafael Nadal

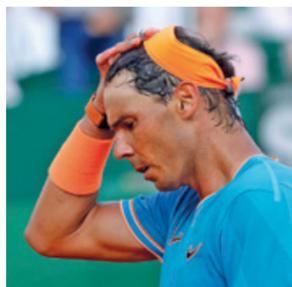
set on clay against Nadal before eventually getting over the line with a 6-4, 6-2 win.

Victory for Fognini ended Nadal's 18-match winning run in Monte Carlo and ensures the final includes two players making their debuts at that stage.

It represents a bitter disap-

pointment for Nadal as he continues his preparations for the upcoming French Open and defeat will likely raise further questions as to his physical condition.

Nadal has won the ATP Masters 1000 event in Monte Carlo 11 times but never looked likely



Spain's Rafael Nadal reacts after being defeated by Italy's Fabio Fognini

to make it 12 as Fognini put in a ruthless showing, edging a first set before totally dominating in the second.

The Spaniard was determined not to be embarrassed in the second set and was able to rescue three match points before taking the next two games to provide brief hope of a sensational turnaround.

Fognini was backed by good support - the tournament is relatively close to the Italian border - and while the win sent Fognini to his first ATP Masters 1000 final, the win also saw him become the first Italian to go the distance in Monte Carlo since Corrado Barazzutti in 1977.

It all started as expected, Na-

dal in control, as the Spaniard raced into an early 3-1 lead in the first set.

But Fognini, who went into the tournament with a five-match losing streak on clay, was determined to make a game of it and he claimed 11 of the next 14 games to reverse the momentum.

The odds have been against Fognini for much of the Masters event; he has taken scalps against both Alexander Zverev and Borna Coric before producing one of the biggest surprises of the season so far by beating Nadal in straight sets.

He now faces Dusan Lajovic who will fancy his chances given he is yet to drop a set in Monte Carlo after a stunning campaign.

Many tennis fans were expecting Medvedev to get the better of Lajovic having beaten his Serbian counterpart Djokovic, only to be beaten 7-5, 6-1.

Lajovic's resilience was highlighted when he managed to come from 1-5 down in the first set to win 7-5 after a shock collapse from the highly-rated Medvedev.

Neymar could be back today, says PSG coach

Reuters | Paris

Brazil striker Neymar could return to playing today when Paris St Germain take on Monaco in Ligue 1, coach Thomas Tuchel said yesterday.

"He has been working hard, with a good mindset. We could get him back as soon as tomorrow," Tuchel told a news conference.

Neymar, who has scored 13 goals from 13 league appearances this season, has been out of action since picking up a foot injury in January. PSG will clinch their eighth Ligue 1 title if they beat Monaco at the Parc des Princes.

With Neymar missing from action, PSG were knocked out of the Champions League last 16 after losing the return leg 3-1 at home to Manchester United. They beat the Premier League club 2-0 in the first leg at Old Trafford.



Neymar

Barty beats partner Azarenka in Fed Cup

AFP | Brisbane, Australia

Australia and Belarus shared the spoils on day one of their Fed Cup semi-final in Brisbane Saturday with Ashleigh Barty sweeping past Victoria Azarenka while Aryna Sabalenka ground down Samantha Stosur.

With the tie evenly poised at 1-1, the reverse singles on Sunday will be critical, with world number nine Barty first up against 10th ranked Sabalenka



Victoria Azarenka of Belarus hits a return to Ashleigh Barty of Australia

before the veteran pair of Stosur and Azarenka face off.

While Belarus are bidding to reach the final for the second time in three attempts, after being beaten by the United States in 2017, Australia are targeting their first decider in 26 years.

It's been an even longer wait between titles, with the last of Australia's seven victories coming in 1974.

France or Romania await this weekend's winner.

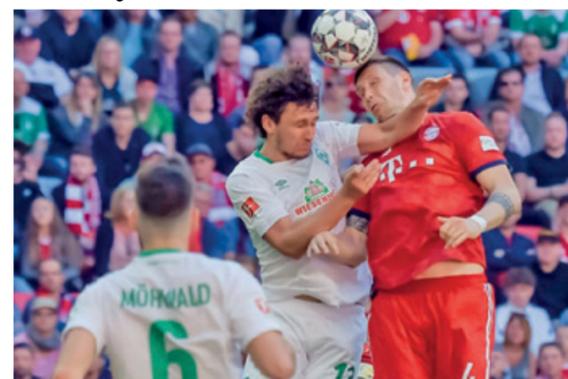
"I'm so proud of the level of

tennis the girls put on today," said Australia captain Alicia Molik.

"It's a great position we're in and we are prepared for a fifth rubber if necessary. We have a quality doubles pairing."

An ice cool Barty, who has rocketed through the ranks, breaking into the top 10 with her win at the Miami Open this month, proved too much for tour doubles partner Azarenka at Pat Rafter Arena, winning 7-6 (7/2), 6-3.

Bayern grind out Bremen win to stay ahead of Dortmund



Bremen's Serbian defender Milos Veljkovic (L) fouls Bayern Munich's German defender Niklas Sule

AFP | Berlin

Niklas Sule's late goal saw Bayern Munich break a brave resistance from ten-man Werder Bremen to snatch a crucial 1-0 win and stay ahead of Borussia Dortmund in the Bundesliga title race.

Bayern toiled in the searing Bavarian sun against Bremen, eventually grinding out the victory to go four points clear at the top of the table overnight.

The win puts pressure on title rivals Dortmund, who need to win a tough away game in Freiburg on Sunday if they are to remain within a point of Bayern.

Bremen held Bayern at bay for much of the game, but suffered a lethal blow just before the hour mark, when Milos Veljkovic was sent off for a second yellow card.

Chances came and went for Bayern as the clock ticked down, until Sule finally broke through with a deflected shot

from the edge of the area 15 minutes from time.

At the other end of the table, Stuttgart look doomed to a bottom-three finish after they suffered a humiliating 6-0 defeat to fellow strugglers Augsburg.

Augsburg obliterated their relegation rivals with a delightful display of attacking football. Goals from Rani Khedira, Andre Hahn and Philipp Max saw them establish a 3-0 lead before the half-hour mark.

Max added another in the second half, and a Marco Richter double completed a disastrous display for Stuttgart.

Augsburg's win lifts them ten points clear of the relegation play-off place, and also confirms survival for Mainz, who beat local rivals Fortuna Dusseldorf 3-1.

Jean-Philippe Mateta put Mainz into the lead after just 36 seconds, but Dodi Lukebakio levelled the scores with his second goal in two games.

Bassil Al Dosseri defends showjumping title

TDT | Manama

Bahraini showjumper Bassil Al Dosseri has successfully defended his Grand Prix title in Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa Showjumping Championship which was held on Friday.

Al Dosseri completed the race which included 130-140 cm obstacles in 89.55 seconds without committing any fault.

Saber Salman came second in 90.14 seconds with five faults, while Al Dosseri himself took third riding on a different horse.

Organised under the patronage of HH Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Representative of His Majesty the King for Charity Works and Youth Affairs, Chairman of the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports and sponsored by Ithmar Development and Dilmunia, the event featured seven competitions, including the Grand Prix which was won in style by Al Dosseri



Action from the showjumping championship

amid broad participation at the Military Sports arena.

The top three winners in the Grand Prix and in the other contests were crowned by Shaikh Khalid bin Mohammed Al Khalifa, President of the Showjumping Committee in Bahrain

Equestrian and Endurance Federation (BREEF) in the presence of his deputy Shaikh Abdullah bin Mohammed Al Khalifa.

This wasn't the end for Al Dosseri who also emerged victorious in the seventh competition which took place after

the Grand Prix. Commenting after the event, Shaikh Khalid bin Mohammed expressed his utmost thanks and gratitude to HH Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa for sponsoring this event and to HH Shaikh Faisal bin Rashid Al Khalifa, President of BREEF and Vice President of the Supreme Council for Environment for his constant support to the showjumping competitions. He hailed the performances showcased by the participants in the championship.

In the other competitions, Mayoof Al Rumaihi won the first competition which was for the junior participants, while Ali Alwani triumphed in the second one. Al Rumaihi stole the limelight again by winning the third and fourth contests. In the fifth competition, veteran showjumper Sami Ghazwan topped the podium following an impressive performance.