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# Alcaraz eases into Melbourne last 16 as Sabalenka ‘all over the place’

Spanish top seed eases past Moutet as Sabalenka, Medvedev and Gauff also progress

● **Alcaraz matches Borg in milestone win**

● **Sabalenka survives tense tiebreak battle**

● **Medvedev rallies from two sets down**

● **Gauff recovers after slow start**

AFP | Melbourne

Carlos Alcaraz stepped up his quest to win a maiden Australian Open as he overwhelmed showman Corentin Moutet yesterday to reach the last 16 while Aryna Sabalenka said she was “emotionally all over the place” in victory.

Three-time finalist Daniil Medvedev battled through on day six at a warm and sunny Melbourne Park, as did Coco Gauff.

Alexander Zverev, the third seed, plays later in the day.

Top seed Alcaraz was never in danger against French 32nd seed Moutet, easing through 6-2, 6-4, 6-1 at Rod Laver Arena in 2hr 5min.

It was the Spaniard’s 100th Grand Slam match and he boasts a remarkable 87-13 win-loss record, matching the legendary Bjorn Borg at the same stage of his career.

Victory thrust Alcaraz into a clash for a place in the quarter-finals with American 19th seed Tommy Paul, who progressed when Spain’s Alejandro Davidovich Fokina retired with an apparent knee injury when two sets down.

“It wasn’t easy. To be honest, when you play someone like Corentin you don’t know what’s going to be next,” said the 22-year-old Alcaraz, who is attempting to clinch the one major missing from his collection.

“But I had fun on the court. I think we both pulled off great shots, great points.”

Women’s top seed Sabalenka did not have it easy against unseeded Russian-born Anastasia Potapova of Austria, pulling through 7-6 (7/4), 7-6 (9/7) in just over two nervy hours.

The Belarusian is trying to win the title for a third time in four years, having been stunned in last year’s final by Madison Keys.



Carlos Alcaraz in action

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CARLOS ALCAZAR

“I was always on the back foot, one of those days you have to fight to try and get the ball back,” said the world number one.

“Emotionally I was all over the place,” added the 27-year-old four-time Grand Slam champion, who faces Canadian teenager Victoria Mboko in the last 16.

“It was such a fight and I really enjoyed it.”

The 19-year-old Mboko defeated Clara Tauson of Denmark 7-6 (7/5), 5-7, 6-3.

Gauff, the third seed, plays 19th seed Karolina Muchova next after beating fellow American Hailey Baptiste 3-6, 6-0, 6-3.

The 21-year-old Gauff has won the US Open and French Open, but her best performance in Melbourne is the semi-finals.

Fast-rising Russian eighth seed Mirra Andreeva plays Ro-

mania’s Elena-Gabriela Ruse later yesterday.

Jasmine Paolini, the seventh seed from Italy, comes up against dangerous United States teenager Iva Jovic.

Medvedev revenge mission

Russia’s 11th seed Medvedev faces 25th seed Learner Tien of the United States in the last 16.

It is a rematch of their late-night five-set epic last year, when the youngster stunned Medvedev in the second round in a match that finished just be-



Belarus’ Aryna Sabalenka hits a return to Austria’s Anastasia Potapova



Carlos Alcaraz’s win was his 100th Grand Slam match, giving him an 87-13 record that matches the legendary Bjorn Borg’s win-loss ratio at the same point in his career

fore 3:00 am.

The gutsy Medvedev yesterday fought back from two sets down against unseeded Fabian Marozsan of Hungary.

The 2021 US Open champion, who had a wretched record at the majors last year, scraped through 6-7 (5/7), 4-6, 7-5, 6-0, 6-3 in 3hr 43min.

It was the fifth time in his career that the former world number one has come back from two sets down to win a match.

“Five sets again,” he wrote afterwards on the on-court camera.

In other matches, Germany’s Zverev, well beaten by Jan-nik Sinner in last year’s final, dropped a set in both his opening two matches and will have an evening clash against British 26th seed Cameron Norrie.

## Liverpool on the up as new signings hit form, says Slot

AFP | London

Liverpool boss Arne Slot believes the Reds will only get better in the years to come as a huge outlay on young talent in the transfer market begins to bear fruit.

Hopes of retaining the Premier League title were high at the start of the season after Liverpool splashed out nearly £450 million (\$605 million) on new signings.

But bar some bright moments from Hugo Ekitike, the new faces struggled in the opening months of the season.

Alexander Isak has been be-



Arne Slot

set by injuries since his British transfer record £125 million move from Newcastle and will miss most of the rest of the campaign with a broken leg.

But Florian Wirtz, Milos Kerkez and Jeremie Frimpong have recently hit the form that saw them earn a move to Anfield during a 13-game unbeaten run for Slot’s men.

“If you look at the age of the signings, they will be better next season and the season after,” Slot said at his pre-match press conference ahead of Saturday’s trip to Bournemouth.

“We’ve spoken about Florian that he lacked goals and assists in the beginning but he was so close and even now he could almost double it with the chances he’s having or giving to his teammates.

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