

Korda sends Alcaraz to another **early exit** in Miami, Sabalenka advances

Alcaraz suffers second straight early Miami exit after 16-0 start to 2026

● Sebastian Korda beats Carlos Alcaraz 6-3, 5-7, 6-4

● Sabalenka continued her "Sunshine Double" title pursuit

● Rybakina, Zheng Qinwen also through

● Qualifier Martin Landaluce upset Karen Khachanov to advance

AFP | Miami

Sebastian Korda stared down Carlos Alcaraz on Sunday, sending the world number one crashing out of the Miami Open third round 6-3, 5-7, 6-4.

Korda, ranked 36th in the world, notched his first victory over a world number one, sending Alcaraz to his second straight early exit in Miami following defeat to 55th-ranked Belgian David Goffin in the second round last year.

Since that defeat, Alcaraz had built a remarkable 73-6 record, including a 16-0 start to 2026 that included an Australian Open triumph to complete a career Grand Slam and a title in Doha.

It looked like Korda had



Sebastian Korda of the United States returns a shot against Carlos Alcaraz of Spain

missed his chance to spring the upset when he served for the match at 5-4 in the second set and was broken at love.

Alcaraz won the next two games to force a third set, part of a run of five straight games for the Spaniard.

But Korda didn't buckle, and it was the American who seized a break for 4-3 in the third when Alcaraz sailed a forehand wide.

He held his next service game with confidence, slamming

down an overhead winner on game point and after Alcaraz held serve Korda served for the match again, this time making no mistake.

"It feels great," said Korda, who has been ranked as high as 15th in the world but has endured two seasons disrupted by injuries.

"I took the scenic route, that's for sure -- a little more stress than I would want but happy with how I played, happy with

how I stayed with it."

Alcaraz said Korda played an "incredible" match.

"A lot of tight, tight moments that I just didn't make the most of it," Alcaraz said. "I think he was better on those points, on those moments. I would say that was the key of the match."

Korda will face Spanish qualifier Martin Landaluce for a place in the quarter-finals after Landaluce ousted 14th-seeded Russian Karen Khachanov 6-3, 7-6 (7/2).



Alcaraz had built a remarkable 73-6 record since his second-round Miami exit last year, including a 16-0 start to 2026, before Korda handed him another early defeat at the same tournament

Sabalenka marches on

World number one Aryna Sabalenka kept her title defense on track with a 6-4, 6-2 victory over 72nd-ranked American Caty McNally that was tougher than the score indicated.

They were on serve after exchanging four breaks in the opening set when Sabalenka gained the decisive break in the final game.

The Belarusian star, trying to complete the "Sunshine Double" after capturing her first Indian Wells title last week, wasted one chance to break in the second set before ramping up her return pressure to break McNally's on her last two service games.

"She played really great tennis," Sabalenka said, adding that

”

It feels great. I took the scenic route, that's for sure -- a little more stress than I would want but happy with how I played, happy with how I stayed with it

SEBASTIAN KORDA

her hold for 5-4 in the opening set, in a game that went to deuce five times, was key.

"(I'm) super happy to close this match in straight sets," said Sabalenka, who booked a meeting with China's Olympic gold medallist Zheng Qinwen a 6-2, 6-4 winner over Madison Keys.

It was Zheng's first win over a top-20 player since elbow surgery last July.

World number two Elena Rybakina, who beat Sabalenka in the Australian Open final but fell to her in the Indian Wells title match, moved smoothly into the last 16 with a 6-3, 6-4 victory over Ukraine's Marta Kostyuk.

Rybakina next faces Australian qualifier Talia Gibson, who knocked off another seed with a 6-2, 6-2 victory over 18-year-old 18th seed Iva Jovic.

Gibson, who reached the quarter-finals at Indian Wells, had ousted former world number one Naomi Osaka in the second round.



Carlos Alcaraz of Spain lunges for a ball

Alcaraz eyes clay court season after early exit

World number one Carlos Alcaraz remained confident his game is improving despite a third-round exit at the Miami Open, and after a few days to reset he'll be turning his attention to the clay court season.

"Probably I'm going to go back home," Alcaraz said after falling in three sets to 36th-ranked American Sebastian Korda on Sunday.

"Chilling with my family, with my friends a couple of days. I don't know how much my team are going to allow me to have rest and a day off.

"The clay season is around the corner. My mind right now is to take some days off, to reset my mind, reset the batteries, be ready and in good shape for the clay season."

The loss to Korda, a free-swinging American outside the top 30, was another reminder that even as world number one Alcaraz remains a marked man in every tournament he enters.

That status brings a different kind of challenge, with rivals able to swing without expectation while Alcaraz tries to treat each setback as another step in a longer-term process of sharpening his game for the rest of the season. "Obviously when you're winning tournaments and you have great record win/lose, everything is easier in the way of pressure to the opponents," he said. "I'm feeling they have more to win than to lose in those matches ... they're playing without pressure."

Alcaraz is trying to make sure he doesn't respond by piling pressure on himself.

"I'm not thinking about my pressure," he said. "I don't feel it at all. I'm trying to play my best."

That includes constant work to improve his game, and despite Sunday's result he's confident he's on the right track.

"I would say what I was practicing, you know, I think I just did it really well," he said. "Some couple things in previous tournaments that I just didn't feel comfortable, I think in this tournament, I started to feel better and better."

"I think the process has been good. Besides the loss today, I think I'm still in the right way."

Vinicius double helps Real Madrid edge Atletico thriller

AFP | Madrid

Vinicius Junior struck twice as Real Madrid shaded Atletico Madrid 3-2 in a thrilling derby clash on Sunday to stay on leaders Barcelona's tail at the top of La Liga.

After the Catalan giants edged Rayo Vallecano 1-0 earlier on, Madrid ensured the gap to the champions stayed at four points by beating Diego Simeone's side at the Santiago Bernabeu.

Ademola Lookman put At-

letico ahead in the first half but Vinicius and Federico Valverde's strikes gave the hosts the lead soon after the interval.

Nahuel Molina equalised for Atletico, fourth, with a spectacular effort from distance but Vinicius netted again to claim the three points for Los Blancos.

Valverde was sent off for hacking Alex Baena in the final stages but his side held on to win in Alvaro Arbeloa's first derby clash with Atletico since taking over in January.

Messi scores for Miami in 3-2 MLS victory at NYCFC

AFP | Miami

Lionel Messi scored his 901st career goal and Inter Miami delivered New York City's first loss of the Major League Soccer season on Sunday with a 3-2 triumph.

Argentine superstar Messi netted the equalizer off a free kick in the 61st minute and Brazilian defender Micael headed home the game winner in the 74th.

Visiting Miami was still smarting after being ousted from the CONCACAF Champions Cup following a draw with Nashville



Lionel Messi #10 of Inter Miami CF shoots the ball

on Wednesday, the same night Messi scored the 900th goal of his legendary career.

Argentine defender Gonzalo Lujan opened the scoring for Inter Miami in the fourth minute on a right-foot shot into the lower right corner.

Nicolas Fernandez answered for NYCFC in the 17th minute off a free kick, smashing a left-foot blast into the upper left corner.

Messi had his chances in the first half, missing right in the 27th minute on a fast break and being denied in the 36th minute by New York goalkeeper Matt Freese.