

# Djokovic downs Delbonis

● **Djokovic passes Delbonis test to reach Miami fourth round**

● **Simona Halep and Venus Williams advance in Miami**

AFP | Miami

Novak Djokovic remains on course for a record seventh Miami Open title, but the world number one admitted to a loss of focus in a 7-5, 4-6, 6-1 victory over spirited Federico Delbonis which booked his place in the last 16.

Djokovic is hoping to eclipse Andre Agassi's six ATP crowns in South Florida over the next week and although the 31-year-old endured some shaky moments at Hard Rock Stadium, he still possessed enough quality during the key moments to see off the battling Delbonis.

The Serbian, though, wasn't happy with letting a 5-2 advantage slip in the first set and became furious with himself as the second squirmed from his grasp.

He will need to tighten up his game if he is to reach next Sunday's final with Roberto Bautista Agut waiting in the fourth round after the Spaniard defeated Italian Fabio Fognini 6-4, 6-4.

"To be honest, I lost my focus," said Djokovic who smashed 36 winners compared to 24 from Delbonis. "I should have done



Novak Djokovic of Serbia returns a shot to Federico Delbonis of Argentina

better I think mentally than I have done at the end of the first two sets.

"I managed to really play well last couple games of first set, go up a break, put myself in front, then I played a couple of really bad service games. Credit to

Federico, he stepped in."

Djokovic had looked impressive in the second round win over Bernard Tomic and the Serbian continued his decent form by immediately imposing himself onto the Argentine.

Djokovic moved 5-2 ahead but

after he missed a set point opportunity on the Delbonis serve, his game deserted him and suddenly, the South American had a spring in his step.

Delbonis had opportunities to steal ahead, yet calling on all his experience and mental resolve,

the Serbian was able to hold firm and take the opener.

The world number one was getting incredibly frustrated, he received a warning for racket abuse and was furious for allowing a 3-1 lead to slip in the second, yet credit to Delbonis who stayed calm and served out confidently to force a decider, something which looked beyond him midway through the opening set.

He couldn't keep the pressure on, however, and when Djokovic managed to get 3-1 ahead, this time there was no way back for the 28 year-old from Azul who rightly received an ovation from the center court crowd for his monumental efforts.

"I think last four games were terrific, so I ended up in a positive way," Djokovic added.

Defending champion John Isner blew Spain's Albert Ramos-Vinolas off court with serves touching 139 mph as the American sealed an ultimately comprehensive 7-5, 7-6 (8-6) win



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to set up an intriguing match with Kyle Edmund in the last 16 after the British number one impressively saw off Canadian Milos Raonic 6-4 6-4.

In the women's draw, Simona Halep kept alive hopes of regaining the world number one ranking Sunday, beating Polona Hercog 5-7, 7-6 (7/1), 6-2 to reach the last 16 where she will play Venus Williams.

Halep, 27, lost her place at the top of the rankings following Naomi Osaka's triumph at the Australian Open earlier this year.

But with the Japanese faltering here on Saturday, Halep can return to the position she last held at the end of 2018 if she lands the Miami Open for the first time.

"It's always tough against Venus," said the current world number three, who has beaten the American in their previous three encounters.

"I'm not going to say that it's going to be easier because I won the last matches against her. It's a big challenge for me."

Seven-time Grand Slam champion Williams, meanwhile, swept past Russian Daria Kasatkina 6-3, 6-1.

"Simona always plays flawless tennis against me, so I have to be ready for that," Williams said.

Elsewhere in women's action, American Sloane Stephens's title defense ended in a 6-3, 6-2 loss to Germany's Tatjana Maria.

It was another disappointing ending for Stephens, who fell in the third round at Indian Wells.

## Zorc dismisses rumours linking Sancho to United

AFP | Berlin

Borussia Dortmund sporting director Michael Zorc has dismissed rumours that 19-year-old rising star Jadon Sancho is set for a move back to Manchester United.

English youngster Sancho has flourished since joining Dortmund from Manchester City two years ago, and

recently signed a contract extension which keeps him at the German club until 2022.

Yet Sancho, who picked up an assist in England's 5-0 thrashing of the Czech Republic on Friday, has been repeatedly linked with a return to the Premier League.

A recent report in The Sun alleged that Sancho's agent was in talks with Manchester United, but Dortmund boss Zorc dismissed the rumours as "irrelevant".

"I have no knowledge (of the talks), but it is also completely irrelevant," Zorc told Bild.

In a recent interview with the same newspaper, Zorc admitted that it would be hard for Dortmund to hold on to Sancho long-term, but insisted that the youngster would remain at Dortmund next season.

"I can't put a price tag around Jadon's neck but I can say that even the biggest clubs in the world struggle to afford him at the moment," said Zorc.

"Jadon will be playing at Borussia Dortmund next season. But it is obvious that the interest in him will keep growing, especially from English clubs. He will not end his career in Dortmund, that much is true."



## Stuani strikes again as ruthless Uruguay win China Cup

Reuters | Shanghai, China

Stand-in forward Cristhian Stuani scored his third goal in two games as Uruguay taught Thailand a footballing lesson to win the China Cup with a 4-0 victory yesterday.

The 2018 World Cup quarter-finalists hardly missed the injured star striking duo of Luis Suarez and Edinson Cavani as they made it seven goals in two games.

Uruguay, comfortable 3-0 victors over Uzbekistan on Friday in the four-team tournament, profited from some poor Thailand defending in the Chinese city of Nanning.

Unmarked Inter Milan midfielder Matias Vecino headed



Uruguay's Gaston Pereiro in action

home after just six minutes -- Thai goalkeeper Siwarak Ted-sungnoen should have done better -- and it was 2-0 on 38 minutes when Gaston Pereiro

prodded in after the Thai defence went AWOL.

Stuani, starting because of the absence of PSG's Cavani and Barcelona's Suarez, made

**126th**  
appearance was made by Diego Godin for Uruguay yesterday

it 3-0 just before the hour with a close-range bullet header from a corner. The Girona striker, who scored a brace against the Uzbeks, had hit the post just minutes earlier.

Substitute Maxi Gomez made it 4-0 two minutes from the end of normal time with goalkeeper Siwarak stranded out of position.

## Cardiff to claim Emiliano Sala transfer 'null and void': report

AFP | London

Cardiff are set to tell FIFA that the £15 million (\$19.8m, 23m euros) deal they agreed to pay Nantes for Emiliano Sala became "null and void" after he died in a plane crash, a report said yesterday.

The 28-year-old Argentine forward was killed when the small plane carrying him came down in the Channel on January 21, two days after he completed his transfer from the French



Flowers are displayed in front of the portrait of Emiliano Sala at Beaujoire stadium in Nantes (file photo)

Ligue 1 side.

The Daily Telegraph said Sala signed a contract with Cardiff that was rejected by the Premier League and died before a revised one could be signed, adding that there is a dispute about whether he had agreed to sign a new deal.

According to the report, a source close to Cardiff said the agreement stipulated that Welsh and French football authorities had to confirm to both clubs

that Sala "has been registered as a Cardiff City FC player and that the player's International Transfer Certificate has been released".

The source said this had not happened before Sala died.

"The transfer agreement between Cardiff and Nantes was subject to several conditions," the source told the paper.

Nantes reportedly plan to dispute Cardiff's case, saying the club completed the paperwork.