

## Man City to return to China after Beijing debacle

AFP | Shanghai, China

Manchester City will return to China this year for the first time since their ill-fated visit of 2016, when a game with cross-town rivals United was called off at the last minute.

The first overseas Manchester derby was cancelled just hours before kick-off because of an unplayable surface at Beijing's "Bird's Nest" stadium following heavy rain.

Pep Guardiola's City will hope there is no repeat when they compete in the 2019 Premier League Asia Trophy, which will be held in Nanjing on July 17 and nearby Shanghai on July 20.

The other teams will be Newcastle United, West Ham United and Chinese-owned Wolverhampton Wanderers, the Premier League said yesterday.

Each side will play two games in the mini tournament, which is likely to be testing for the players with peak temperatures over 30 degrees Celsius (86F) and the possibility of torrential rain.

The Asia Trophy was similarly dogged by pitch problems -- again after rain -- when it was held in Hong Kong in 2013.

Then-Sunderland manager Paolo Di Canio labelled the muddy surface "a killer pitch" and Tottenham Hotspur's Jan Vertonghen suffered an ankle injury on the waterlogged surface.

A glut of European football clubs look set to visit China in pre-season, with Barcelona and Tottenham Hotspur also committed to coming.

# Halep swats Venus in Miami

● **Simona Halep got the better of Venus Williams once again as the Romanian made light work of the 38-year-old American to book a place in the quarter-finals**

● **Hsieh Su-Wei who continued her excellent form with a 6-3, 6-7 (0/7), 6-2 win over Caroline Wozniacki**

AFP | Miami, United States

Simona Halep got the better of Venus Williams once again as the Romanian made light work of the 38-year-old American to book a place in the Miami Open quarter-finals with a 6-3, 6-3 triumph.

Halep, the highest seed left following Naomi Osaka's exit on Saturday, has now won her last four meetings with Williams, their previous encounter before clashing at Hard Rock Stadium coming earlier this year at the Australian Open.

The world number three and number two seed for the tournament triumphed in straight sets



Simona Halep of Romania plays a point against Venus Williams

in Melbourne and it was more of the same in Miami as the world number 43 was overpowered by Halep.

At the culmination of the first set, Williams had won just 52% of points on her first serve and hit only four winners to Halep's 20 - the Romanian finished with 30 compared to 13 from Williams and won 75% on her own first serve.

"I'm really happy with my game and the numbers back that up," said a delighted Halep on

court afterwards.

"She never gives up, she fights for every ball so I tried to keep her close to the baseline."

Williams' serve deserted her in a first set which saw the reigning French Open champion establish an early 3-0 lead and although the American responded with her own break soon after, she was unable to back it up.

Halep's best performance in South Florida came in 2015

when she was runner-up to Serena Williams, and with China's Wang Yafan or Wang Qiang waiting in the last eight, the 27-year-old will fancy her chances of another run to Saturday's final.

Hsieh Su-Wei, meanwhile, continued her excellent form with a 6-3, 6-7 (0/7) 6-2 win over Caroline Wozniacki and will play Anett Kontaveit after Canada's Bianca Andreescu retired with a shoulder injury in the second set.

## Federer to play Madrid Masters on clay return

AFP | Madrid

Roger Federer will play on clay before this year's French Open after being confirmed on the entry list for the Madrid Masters, which starts on May 3, on Tuesday.

The 37-year-old last played the tournament, where he is a three-time champion, in 2015, when he also made his most recent appearance at Roland Garros.

Federer has skipped the clay-court season for the last two years to focus on being ready for the grass courts of Wimbledon, but announced after the Australian Open that he would return to the red dirt in 2019.

## Froome crashes in Catalonia

AFP | Madrid

Chris Froome's hopes of winning the Tour de Catalonia are almost certainly over after the Briton suffered a crash during yesterday's second stage, which was won by Australian Michael Matthews.

With less than 40 kilometres to go, four-time Tour de France champion Froome fell along with Bora-Hansgrohe pair Andre Schillinger and Jay McCarthy before finishing more than 13 minutes behind Matthews of Team Sunweb.

Froome, who is racing for the first time since his season debut in January, was left with a nasty gash down the top of his right leg.

## Race fans to meet F1 stars in autograph session at BIC



Racegoers during autograph session at BIC (file photo)

TDT | Manama

Bahrain International Circuit will be giving motorsport fans a chance to get up close and personal with their favourite Formula 1 drivers at this weekend's Formula 1 Gulf Air Bahrain Grand Prix 2019.

As part of the weekend's events, "The Home of Motorsport in the Middle East" will be hosting an Autograph Session on Race Day Sunday right before the start of the 57-lap sprint.

The Autograph Session will take place in the Formula 1 Village vending area next to the Main Stage.

It will be held from 2pm to 4pm, and fans are advised to line up as early as possible so as not to miss out on a dream

chance to meet their favourite stars.

Lucky fans will be able to take pictures with the drivers and share a moment or two.

All those with tickets to this year's Bahrain Grand Prix will be able to attend Sunday's Autograph Session.



**The Autograph Session will take place in the Formula 1 Village vending area next to the Main Stage**

## Federer wary of Medvedev after Miami victory

● **Roger Federer dispatched Filip Krajinovic in straight sets at the Miami Open**

AFP | Miami

Roger Federer admits he faces a real battle to land the 101st title of his career with the in-form Daniil Medvedev next up after Serbian Filip Krajinovic was dispatched 7-5 6-3 on Monday at the ATP and WTA Miami Open.

The Swiss superstar produced an excellent all-round performance despite being tested by the world number 103 who belied his lowly ranking by producing some excellent first set.

Federer, however, stylishly weathered the storm to seal the win - the 52nd of his career in Miami - and set up an intriguing last eight match with the highly-rated Medvedev.

The Russian, who is at a career high ranking of 15, saw off American Reilly Opelka 7-6 (7/5) 6-7 (5/7) 7-6 (7/0), and has won four ATP hard-court titles, including three since last August.

Federer beat him twice last year but is already a fan.

"He's clever how he plays the court because he can play it up and down, and he's unusual when he plays from back," said the Swiss, who hit 14 aces and won an impres-



Roger Federer of Switzerland celebrates plays a point against Filip Krajinovic of Serbia

sive 74% of points on his first serve.

"It's a bit of a different approach. Thankfully I played him last year twice in Basel and Shanghai and I'm very impressed about his progress. I must say the last year has been unbelievable for him."

Krajinovic struggled with injury last year as problems with his ankle, left foot and hand restricted him to just seven tournaments in the first seven months of 2018.

Yet some fierce hitting from the back of the court surprised the predictably pro-Federer crowd and a brilliant run and

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ROGER FEDERER

flick over the net handed him an early break for 3-2.

Keeping the pressure on, however, was a different matter as Federer broke straight back before pocketing the opening set.

The second set wasn't as competitive, Federer easing home and finishing with 35 winners compared to the Serbian's 18.

Elsewhere, number 24 seed Grigor Dimitrov was beaten by world number 77 Jordan Thompson in straight sets ensuring the Australian will meet 2018 Wimbledon finalist Kevin Anderson who beat Portugal's Joao Sousa 6-4, 7-6 (8/6).