

Nadal cruises through at Roland Garros

● Rafael Nadal starts bid for title No 12 in style with win over Yannick Hanfmann

● Serena survives scare

● Wozniacki knocked out

AFP | Paris

Defending champion Rafael Nadal got his bid for a record-extending 12th French Open title off to the perfect start by brushing aside German qualifier Yannick Hanfmann in the first round at Roland Garros yesterday.

The 17-time Grand Slam champion cruised to a 6-2, 6-1, 6-3 victory on the rebuilt Court Philippe Chatrier to set up a clash with another German qualifier -- world number 114 Yannick Maden -- in round two.

Nadal had suffered three consecutive semi-final defeats earlier in the clay-court season, but appeared to find his best in an Italian Open title success sealed with victory over old rival Novak Djokovic, while his French Open win-loss record now reads 87-2.

"It's always amazing to play here, the new Chatrier is very nice," the second seed said. "It's been an important place in my career.

"I played a good tournament in Rome which was very important for

my confidence. Now we'll see."

The 32-year-old Nadal raced into a 3-0 lead in the opening set before a second break of serve in the eighth game sealed it after just 40 minutes.

The second set was over in a flash as Nadal crushed nine winners past his beleaguered opponent.

The winning line honed in view when Nadal broke after a lengthy game to take a 2-1 advantage in the third, and the Spaniard completed the job on his first match point as world number 184 Hanfmann blasted long.

Meanwhile, Serena Williams survived a first-set scare before defeating Russia's Vitalia Diatchenko 2-6, 6-1, 6-0 to reach the second round.

The 37-year-old American, who is attempting to equal Margaret Court's all-time record of 24 Grand Slam titles, racked up her 800th career main draw win with her victory in front of a half-full Court Philippe Chatrier

Wozniacki dumped out

Earlier yesterday, former world number one Caroline Wozniacki collapsed to a 0-6, 6-3, 6-3 loss to Russian world number 68 Veronika Kudermetova in the first round.

The Danish 13th seed had retired injured from her two previous matches in the lead-up to Roland Garros, and fell away badly after a strong first set.

"I think she got very lucky at the start of the second set and took advantage of the opportunities she got," said Wozniacki.

"I ran out of steam in the end and made some unforced errors that I don't usually do, so that was very frustrating."

Sixth seed and two-time Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova was forced to pull out before her scheduled opener against Sorana Cirstea with a left arm injury, but said she should be fit for Wimbledon, which starts on July 1.

"(I'll be out for) two to three weeks, so I'll do some fitness and everything that I can do to prepare my body for the tennis on the grass," said the Czech.

Dutch fourth seed Kiki Bertens looked in fine fettle, though, beating home player Pauline Parmentier 6-3, 6-4.

Elsewhere in the women's draw, Australian eighth seed Ashleigh Barty saw off American Jessica Pegula 6-3, 6-3, while Britain's Johanna Konta clinched her first Roland Garros win at the fifth time of asking with a 6-4, 6-4 victory over German Antonia Lottner.

In the men's event, Australian Alex De Minaur, seeded 21st, beat the United States' Bradley Klahn 6-1, 6-4, 6-4, although Georgian 15th seed Nikoloz Basilashvili fell to a surprising 6-4, 6-1, 6-3 thrashing at the hands of Argentinian world number 78 Juan Ignacio Londero.

Russian 12th seed Daniil Medvedev also exited the tournament, blowing a two-set lead to lose 4-6, 4-6, 6-3, 6-2, 7-5 against Frenchman Pierre-Hugues Herbert.



Spain's Rafael Nadal serves the ball to Germany's Yannick Hanfmann

Pochettino upbeat about Kane ahead of CL final

AFP | London

Tottenham Hotspur manager Mauricio Pochettino has said Harry Kane is in a "very positive situation" and could be fit to face Liverpool in Saturday's Champions League final in Madrid.

England forward Kane has been out of action since suffering an ankle injury during the first leg of the quarter-final against Manchester City.

But Pochettino, speaking to reporters yesterday, indicated Kane was close to a return.

"Harry Kane in the last week, Friday and Saturday, started to be involved in the group, it's a very positive situation for him," Pochettino said.

"We will wait and see how he is progressing in his problem."

The Spurs manager was equally positive regarding the prospects for the injured trio of Davinson Sanchez, Jan Vertonghen and Harry Winks.

Meanwhile Pochettino faced fresh questions about his own future.

The Argentinian has been linked with Juventus following the recent departure from the Italian giants of Massimiliano Allegri, but Pochettino insisted his focus was firmly on

Spurs' first appearance in a European Cup final.

"Today no one is more important than the game that we have ahead, Tottenham deserve that we are all 100 percent focused on the game. We can make history, we can provide our fans the best happiness in football," he said.

Spurs midfielder Moussa Sissoko said the players were in a positive frame of mind ahead of a final against English rivals Liverpool, five-time kings of European club football.

"The spirit is fantastic, every time we were close to be out but we showed a lot of character to win the game," said Sissoko.

"We know we can challenge against every team," the Frenchman added. "I am not scared of Liverpool or any team."

"We all need to challenge and we have to give our best and if we do it, we can beat any team. In the past we have showed it."



Harry Kane

Morata determined to extend Atletico stay

Reuters | Madrid

Spain striker Alvaro Morata says he wants to remain at Atletico Madrid until the end of his career and has no plans to return to Chelsea, who he left in January to join the Spanish side on an 18-month loan deal.

"I am very clear that I want to stay here. Leaving here has not crossed my mind. I hope it gets resolved as soon as possible, I'm happy here and I want to be here for the rest of my career," Morata told Spanish newspaper Marca. "As long as the club wants me and the fans are happy I want to be here. I've found happiness here. I'm where I want to be."

Morata has rediscovered his form at Atletico after a poor spell at Stamford Bridge, scoring six goals in 13 La Liga starts, but Chelsea have the option to recall Morata from his loan spell.

"If it was up to me it would have been sorted a long time ago, that's what I want," Morata added. "I'd have liked to have signed my contract with Atletico already. I did everything to come here and I'll do everything to stay."



Alvaro Morata

Archer, Root strike as Afghanistan collapse in England warm up

AFP | London

Jofra Archer and Joe Root took three wickets apiece as Afghanistan slumped to 160 all out in a World Cup warm-up match at the Oval yesterday.

England, fresh from their 12-run defeat by world champions Australia in their pre-

vious warm-up fixture, were too strong in the field for rank outsiders Afghanistan in south London.

Fast bowler Archer, in what is tournament hosts England's last match before they open the World Cup against South Africa at the Oval on Thursday, struck twice with the new ball before ending some late resistance from

Mohammad Nabi.

Afghanistan were in danger of being dismissed for under 100 before Nabi, with 44, helped the last two wickets add 68 runs.

Archer dismissed Hazratullah and Rahmat Shah in a brisk new-ball spell.

Meanwhile opener Noor Ali saw scrapped his way to 30 before he played on to Ben Stokes.

Hashmatullah could not get going and that prompted Asghar Afghan to attack the occasional off-spin of Test captain Root.

But, having missed out on a first-ball full toss, Asghar tried to drive Root over the top but found Jason Roy in the deep instead.

Afghanistan lost their next

four wickets in a mere seven deliveries, Hashmatullah and Najibullah Zadran carelessly run out, Gulbadin Naib holing out to Moeen Ali and Rashid Khan steering Root to slip for a golden duck.

Nabi's defiant hitting, which included three sixes, at least ensured England would have some sort of target to chase.

He was last man out when a thick edge off Archer carried to Jonny Bairstow on the boundary.

Before play started, England were boosted by the news that fast bowler Mark Wood had been passed fit to face South Africa after a foot injury and that one-day captain Eoin Morgan was back in the team following a fractured finger.