

# Collision course: Djokovic, Nadal roll into last 16 at French Open

Novak Djokovic into Roland Garros fourth round for 13th straight year after beating Aljaz Bedene

● **Rafael Nadal powers past Botic van de Zandschulp**

AFP | Paris

Novak Djokovic and Rafael Nadal closed in Friday on a blockbuster clash at the French Open as both reached the last 16, while Carlos Alcaraz prepared to face the only man to beat him on clay this year.

Reigning champion Djokovic and 13-time winner Nadal are on course to meet in the quarter-finals, with the Spaniard seeded outside the top four at Roland Garros for just the second time.

World number one Djokovic strolled to a 6-3, 6-3, 6-2 win over Slovenia's Aljaz Bedene and Nadal eased past Dutch 26th seed Botic van de Zandschulp 6-3, 6-2, 6-4.

"I'm always very motivated when I get on the court, with the desire to produce my best level each time. It's not always



Serbia's Novak Djokovic returns the ball to Slovenia's Aljaz Bedene

possible to do it, but today it was very good," said Djokovic.

The 35-year-old Serb is aiming to become the oldest men's singles champion in Paris in the Open era as he chases a record-equalling 21st Grand Slam title.

Next up for Djokovic, who was also French Open champion in 2016, is a match-up with Argentina's Diego Schwartzman, the 15th seed.

Nadal, the 21-time major champion, improved his record at Roland Garros to 108-3 after seeing off 2021 US Open quarter-finalist Van de Zandschulp.

He has now reached at least the fourth round in 17 of 18 visits to Roland Garros, with the exception of 2016 when he withdrew in the third round with a wrist injury.

"I think I played a good match against a good player. I'm very

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NOVAK DJOKOVIC

happy to win," said Nadal.

The Spaniard had a break point for 5-0 in the third set, but Van de Zandschulp refused to roll over, winning four of the next five games before Nadal put away his second match point, having saved a break point in between the two.

"You always feel a little bit the nerves to finish the match, so I'm happy to be through in straight sets," said Nadal, who plays Canadian ninth seed Felix Auger-Aliassime for a place in the last eight.

"I think it was my best match of the tournament so far for two-

and-a-half sets, so I'm very happy with that."

**Anisimova, Gauff move on**

Amanda Anisimova, the 27th seed and a 2019 semi-finalist, advanced to the last 16 as injury-plagued Karolina Muchova retired down 6-7 (7/9), 6-2, 3-0 after falling and twisting her ankle midway through the second set.

Last year's US Open runner-up Leylah Fernandez beat Olympic champion Belinda Bencic of Switzerland 7-5, 3-6, 7-5, while Aliaksandra Sasnovich defeated three-time Grand Slam winner Angelique Kerber 6-4, 7-6 (7/5).

Coco Gauff, the youngest player left in the French Open, made the last 16 with a straight-sets win over Kaia Kanepi, the oldest woman in the tournament at 36.

After saving a match point in a thrilling five-setter against countryman Albert Ramos-Vinolas, Spanish teenage star Alcaraz goes up against Sebastian Korde, the US 27th seed who won their meeting in Monte Carlo last month.

"I believe in myself, and of course I work hard every day," said the 19-year-old Alcaraz.

"You have to have a good goal, good dreams. Of course trying to follow your dream. Work hard every day. I think that's the secret."

"I'm still young, but I would say pretty experienced player now. I feel comfortable playing on the big stadium, big matches, playing in a Grand Slam. As I said, physically I'm strong. Mentally I'm strong, as well."

Alexander Zverev, the third seed and 2021 semi-finalist, was also staring at defeat in the second round against Sebastian Baez, saving a match point on serve at 4-5 in the final set after fighting back from two sets down.

The German Olympic champion meets Brandon Nakashima of the US who is enjoying his best Grand Slam run on his Roland Garros main-draw debut.

It is the first time since Wimbledon in 2011 that all top 12 men's seeds have reached the third round at a major.

## Asitha rips through Bangladesh as Sri Lanka win Test series

AFP | Dhaka

Asitha Fernando finished with a career-best 6-51 as Sri Lanka thrashed hosts Bangladesh by 10 wickets in the second Test on Friday to win the series 1-0.

The visitors bowled out Bangladesh for 169 runs in their second innings with the 24-year-old playing a starring role at Dhaka's Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium.

"We knew we needed a couple of wickets to go our way," said Sri Lanka skipper Dimuth Karunaratne.

"The fast bowlers did the job for us, both in the first innings as well as the second."

Sri Lanka made 506 runs in the first innings after bowling out Bangladesh for 365.

Oshada Fernando sealed the devastating win with an unbeaten 21 in three overs.

Play had resumed on the fifth and final day with the hosts at a



Asitha Fernando celebrates with teammates after picking up the wicket of Mahmudul Hasan Joy

precarious 34-4 and Sri Lanka upped the pressure when Kasun Rajitha bowled Mushfiqur Rahim for 23 in the eighth over.

Shakib Al Hasan and Liton Das both hit fifties in a 110-run stand and held on through the first session with a mix of caution and aggression.

Shakib's counter-attack saw

him hit Rajitha for three fours in one over, forcing Sri Lanka to widen their field set-up, while Liton played an anchor role after resuming on one overnight.

Liton was given out caught behind off Rajitha on nine as he attempted to flick a ball going down the leg, but survived on review.

**"We knew we needed a couple of wickets to go our way. The fast bowlers did the job for us, both in the first innings as well as the second"**

SRI LANKA SKIPPER DIMUTH KARUNARATNE

It was the fourth caught behind decision overturned in the match, all given by West Indies umpire Joel Wilson.

A counter-punching Shakib brought his 27th Test fifty in the last ball before lunch with a boundary off Dhananjaya de Silva, before Asitha drove the hosts' collapse after lunch.

He took the scalps of both Liton and Shakib soon after the break, claiming four of the last five wickets after dispatching openers Mahmudul Hasan Joy and Tamim Iqbal the previous day.

## Ukraine can make nation proud in World Cup playoff, says Zinchenko

Reuters | London

Ukraine full back Oleksandr Zinchenko said his team hope to make their country proud when they take on Scotland in a World Cup playoff semi-final next week.

Ukraine play Scotland at Hampden Park on June 1 in a match that was postponed from March due to the Russia's invasion, which Moscow calls a "special military operation."

"The first period when it just started, it was so complicated to be focused on football," Zinchenko told the BBC.

"All my thoughts were with Ukraine, Ukrainian people. I would say for everyone, for every Ukrainian footballer ...

"This game is one of the most important games in my life. The guys look ready and it's not necessary to talk about motivation."

It will be Ukraine's first



Manchester City's Oleksandr Zinchenko celebrates with the Premier League trophy

competitive match since the invasion began in February. The Ukrainian Premier League season was abandoned last month.

"The physical condition, obviously without the games, it's not easy to prepare yourself for the guys that haven't played for a while," Zinchenko said.

"In this case, there is no excuses and we have to do our job as best as we can.

## Halep hopes to learn from on-court panic attack

AFP | Paris

Simona Halep said she would have to learn to put less pressure on herself after suffering a panic attack during her second-round loss at the French Open on Thursday.

The former world number one and 2018 French Open champion called for the doctor during the third set of her loss to Chinese teenager Zheng Qinwen on Court Simonne Mathieu.

"It was just a panic attack. It happened," she told reporters with a smile afterwards.

"I didn't know how to handle



Simona Halep receives medical attention during the match

it, because I don't have it often. I don't really know why it hap-

**"It was just a panic attack. It happened. I didn't know how to handle it, because I don't have it often. I don't really know why it happened, because I was leading the match, I was playing well"**

SIMONA HALEP

pened, because I was leading the match, I was playing well. "I lost it. I couldn't focus. Af-

ter the match, was pretty tough. But now I'm good. I'm recovered, and I will learn from this episode. Nothing like dangerous, in my opinion."

The mental health of top women athletes has been brought into focus over the last year after Naomi Osaka and American gymnast Simone Biles spoke out about their struggles.

Halep, who lost three Grand Slam finals before winning majors at Roland Garros and Wimbledon, said last year she sometimes struggled to handle the pressure of being an elite athlete.

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