

# Collins, Alexandrova fight into Miami semis

Collins dominates Garcia, Alexandrova battles past Pegula in thrilling encounter

● **Danielle Collins** secures 6-3, 6-2 victory over Caroline Garcia

AFP | Miami

Danielle Collins and Ekaterina Alexandrova will meet in the semi-finals of the WTA Miami Open after victories in the last eight.

Collins powered into the last four with an emphatic 6-3, 6-2 win over France's Caroline Garcia before Alexandrova emerged triumphant from a near two-hour three set battle with American fifth seed Jessica Pegula.

Thursday will see the opening semi-final with three-time Miami winner Victoria Azarenka up against fourth-seeded Elena Rybakina, the highest ranked player left in the tournament.

Garcia went into the match against Collins on the back of an upset win over third-seeded American Coco Gauff but was unable to get a foothold against the Floridian.

Garcia still appeared to be troubled by an injury to her right



Danielle Collins of the US reacts during her win against Caroline Garcia of France

shoulder and received some treatment early in the second set.

Collins broke to go 5-3 up in the first set and then held serve for the set, then in the second set broke in the third game and never looked back as she wrapped up the win in one hour and 19 minutes.

Collins reached the semi-finals of Miami six years ago as a qualifier and at 53rd is the lowest ranked semi-finalist in the tournament.

The 30-year-old American is now 4-0 against Garcia and has yet to lose a set to the Frenchwoman but said the numbers didn't tell the true story.

"I think against someone like Caro, it forces me to be more concentrated. I know I don't want to give her an inch or she can get in there," Collins said.

Garcia said she had felt the pace of back-to-back tournaments.

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CAROLINE GARCIA

back at the beginning and then the she shoulder which came back," she told reporters, adding that the shoulder issue was a recurrence of a previous injury.

"I think it's nothing too serious but (shoulder) is always quite problematic for a tennis player," she said, before adding that Collins had played "an amazing match".

Collins intends to retire at the end of the year but while she agreed she had a relaxed look to her play, she rejected the idea that it was a result of her impending departure from the sport.

"I think I feel pretty relaxed, but that could be due to a number of things. I've got a new hobby. I'm playing some more

YOU KNOW WHAT  
Ekaterina Alexandrova's win marks her third victory against a top-five player this year

golf, running more, Pilates, all of these different things," she said.

"My dog is here. I'm feeling relaxed because I get to be with him at night. I don't know," she said with a smile.

## Home favourite

Alexandrova beat home favourite Pegula 3-6, 6-4, 6-4, showing plenty of grit in a third set where both players showed signs of fatigue.

Pegula broke to go 4-3 up in the first and broke again to clinch the set but the Russian fought back, breaking in the first game of the second set.

Again 14th seed Alexandrova

broke early in the third but she let Pegula back into the set when she double-faulted on break point to leave the set balanced at 3-3.

The pair produced a fantastic rally in the subsequent game which Pegula was able to hold, but at 4-4, Alexandrova struck the decisive blow with Pegula going long on a back-hand return on the second break point.

The Russian held to grab the win and fell to her knees in joy at the result.

Alexandrova, who upset world number one Iga Swiatek in the previous round, said it was tough to break down Pegula's gritty defense.

"I couldn't understand how it was possible to return that ball it was always back. She was everywhere so I needed to do something," she said. "I tried to wait and use any opportunities that I got."

The win was Alexandrova's third against a top five player this year and she said her success was the result of developing patience.

"You have to wait and wait and something is going to come - and then you have to use it," she said.

## Al Ahli through to Crown Prince's Cup volleyball semis

● **Al Ahli** book berth following straight-sets win against Bani Jamra

TDT | Manama

Al Ahli barged into the semi-finals of this year's His Royal Highness the Crown Prince's Cup volleyball tournament.

Ahli secured their berth following a 3-0 (25-18, 25-23, 25-17) sweep of Bani Jamra in their quarter-final match.

Ahli claimed their victory just days after narrowly missing out on the coveted title in the 2023/2024 Isa bin Rashid Bahrain Volleyball League. They have now shifted their

focus on this ongoing single-elimination tournament and winning the HRH the Crown Prince's Cup title.

Ahli have joined Al Najma and Muharraq in the final four. Najma advanced with a four-set win against Al Nasser, while Muharraq were straight-sets winners against Nabih Saleh.

One game remains in the quarter-finals. It is between recently crowned back-to-back Isa bin Rashid Bahrain Volleyball League champions and reigning HRH the Crown Prince's Cup holders Dar Kulaib, who take on Al Shabab in their round-of-eight assignment.

Dar Kulaib won last year's competition after defeating Ahli in four sets in a rocking final.



Al Ahli's Ali Ebrahim attacks the net against Bani Jamra during their quarter-final contest

## Sinner and Medvedev book Miami Open semi-final clash



Jannik Sinner of Italy serves against Tomas Machac of the Czech Republic  
AFP | Miami

World number three Jannik Sinner will face defending champion Daniil Medvedev in the semi-finals of the Miami Open - a rematch of the Australian Open final won by Sinner and last year's Miami title match.

Sinner moved into the last four in emphatic style on Wednesday, beating Czech Tomas Machac 6-4, 6-2 before Medvedev overcame a stern test against Chilean Nicolas Jarry before emerging with a 6-2, 7-6 (9/7) win.

Italy's Sinner, who rallied from two sets down to beat Medvedev and claim his first Grand Slam title at the Australian Open, will play in his fourth semi of the season after dealing with lively Machac in 91 minutes.

Sinner broke the opening game serve from the Czech but Machac responded immediately to make it 1-1.

The crowd were on their feet to appreciate some brilliant defensive play from Sinner who eventually took charge of the set, breaking to go 4-3 up and then closing out.

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I played good, especially in the important moments of the match, which makes it... the scoreboard, you see the score, but it's sometimes lying. Today was a little bit like that

JANNIK SINNER

The second set was more straightforward with Sinner breaking in the third game and never looking back.

Despite the comfortable margin of the win, Sinner said Machac deserved praise for his energetic and aggressive performance.

"He has an incredible talent. He is super fast, also physically he is in great shape," said the world number three.

"I didn't know exactly what to expect today. The first games I was looking a little bit at what kind of tactics could work or not," he added.

## James triple-double leads Lakers, Warriors win despite Green ejection

AFP | Los Angeles

LeBron James returned from a one-game absence to post a 23-point triple-double on Wednesday and lead the Los Angeles Lakers to a 136-124 NBA victory over the Memphis Grizzlies.

James sat out the Lakers' come-from-behind double-overtime victory over the Milwaukee Bucks on Tuesday with a sore left ankle.

Anthony Davis, who played nearly 52 minutes on Tuesday, was sidelined with a hyperextended left knee, but Rui Hachimura provided a big lift, drilling seven of eight three-point attempts on the way to 32 points with 10 rebounds to help the Lakers win their fifth straight, as they vie to work their way out of the play-in tournament and straight into the playoffs.

Against a Grizzlies team play-



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ing out a season blighted by injuries, the Lakers led by eight at halftime and never trailed after the break.

James added 14 rebounds and 12 assists for his fourth tri-

ple-double of the season.

The 39-year-old superstar, who said he'd have to be "strategic" in dealing with the ankle injury that has nagged him much of the season, said he

didn't change his game because of Davis's absence.

"Read and react to the game, see how the defense is playing and seeing the rhythm of my guys," he said of his approach.

"It's good to be back out there with them and be able to do a lot of things tonight to help us win."

The Golden State Warriors, fueled by 23 points from Andrew Wiggins and two late baskets by Stephen Curry, beat the Magic 101-93 in Orlando, despite the ejection of Draymond Green just 3min 36sec into the contest.

Curry was left shaking his head when Green was tossed, receiving two quick technical fouls for heatedly arguing a foul call.

It was the fourth ejection of the season for Green, who missed 16 games after he was suspended in December for swinging an arm into the head of Suns center Jusuf Nurkic.