

Medvedev knocked out of French Open

World 172 Seyboth Wild stuns Medvedev at French Open as Djokovic fallout continues

● **Djokovic courts controversy with Kosovo 'heart of Serbia' message**

AFP | Paris

World number two Daniil Medvedev was knocked out of the French Open in the first round on Tuesday, losing in five sets to 172nd-ranked Thiago Seyboth Wild of Brazil as Roland Garros attempted to move on from Novak Djokovic's Kosovo controversy.

Seyboth Wild, who came through the qualifiers and had never previously won a Grand Slam match, triumphed 7-6 (7/5), 6-7 (6/8), 2-6, 6-3, 6-4.

It was Medvedev's fifth loss in the opening round at Roland Garros in seven appearances.

"I have watched Daniil play in my junior years. It's a dream come true to beat these kinds of players on this court," said the 23-year-old Brazilian who unleashed 69 winners.

"I was cramping in the second set and couldn't really serve the way I wanted to but I tried to play my best tennis."

Seyboth Wild, without a win on the main tour since February 2022, held his nerve in the conclusion of the four-hour 15-minute match on Court Philippe Chatrier.

He twice saw breaks retrieved by Medvedev in the deciding set before finally backing up a third



Daniil Medvedev reacts during his match against Thiago Seyboth Wild



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THIAGO SEYBOTH WILD

break with a hold for 5-3. Two giant forehands secured victory.

He will face either Guido Pella or Quentin Halys for a place in the last 32.

Medvedev arrived in Paris buoyed by winning his first ever clay court title at the prestigious Italian Open last week for his fifth trophy of 2023.

"Every time the clay court season finishes, I'm happy," said Medvedev.

'Vandals' destroy image

Djokovic will return to Court

5 out of Medvedev's 7 Roland Garros appearances, have ended with his defeat in the opening round

Philippe Chatrier on Wednesday night for his second round match with controversy over his "Kosovo is the heart of Serbia" message still raging.

The Belgrade-born superstar, chasing a record 23rd Grand Slam title in Paris, wrote the message in Serbian after his opening round victory over Aleksandar Kovacevic on Monday.

"Kosovo is our cradle, our stronghold, centre of the most important things for our coun-

try," 36-year-old Djokovic told Serb media.

His comments came amid heightened ethnic tensions in northern Kosovo where demonstrators and NATO soldiers have been injured.

Serb TV reported Tuesday that "vandals" had destroyed a mural bearing the image of Djokovic on a building in Orahovac, a small town in south-western Kosovo where a small number of Serbs live amongst the majority Albanians.

Defending champion Iga Swiatek overcame an early wobble to reach the second round with a straight sets win over Cristina Bucsa of Spain.

The world number one, bidding to become the first woman to successfully defend the title at Roland Garros since Justine Henin in 2007, came through 6-4, 6-0.

"I know this court pretty well and I am focusing on the future,"



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A screen shows the output from a camera on which Novak Djokovic writes a message



Kosovo is our cradle, our stronghold, centre of the most important things for our country... There are many reasons why I wrote that on the camera

NOVAK DJOKOVIC

said Swiatek, who could lose the top ranking to Aryna Sabalenka or Elena Rybakina at Roland Garros.

Wimbledon and US Open runner-up Ons Jabeur eased past Italy's Lucia Bronzetti, who won her maiden WTA title in Rabat on Saturday, 6-4, 6-1.

Five-hour marathon

Coco Gauff, the 2022 runner-up, battled to a 3-6, 6-1, 6-2 success over Rebecca Masarova of Spain but Barbora Krejčíková, the 2021 champion, was knocked out in the first round

for a second successive year, losing 6-2, 6-4 to Lesia Tsurenko of Ukraine.

Wimbledon champion and fourth-ranked Elena Rybakina brushed off a slow start to dispatch Czech teenager Brenda Fruhvirtova 6-4, 6-2.

Fourth seed Casper Ruud, the runner-up to Rafael Nadal last year, eased past Swedish qualifier Elias Ymer 6-4, 6-3, 6-2.

Danish youngster Holger Rune, seeded six, came through a tough test against American Christopher Eubanks, winning 6-4, 3-6, 7-6 (7/2), 6-2.

"It was super difficult. There are always nerves coming into the first round and Chris was playing very freely," said Rune who made the last-eight in 2022.

Italian qualifier Andrea Vavasori saved five match points to knock out Serb 31st seed Mimir Kecmanovic in a five-hour 10-minute epic.

Vavasori hit a colossal 106 winners in his 5-7, 2-6, 7-6 (10/8), 7-6 (7/3), 7-6 (11/9) win.

Zverev wins first French Open match since ankle injury

AFP | Paris

Alexander Zverev made a winning return to Roland Garros yesterday with a straight-sets win over Lloyd Harris in the French Open first round, 12 months since suffering a serious ankle injury in the semi-finals.

The German had to retire injured from a dramatic last-four clash with Rafael Nadal last season after twisting his ankle and



It's nice to be back. I've marked this day in bold on my calendar since last year. I was obviously very disappointed with how that tournament ended for me (last year). That's why I think I appreciate even more when I play in a full stadium and the crowd is behind me

ALEXANDER ZVEREV



Germany's Alexander Zverev serves to South Africa's Lloyd Harris

did not play again in 2022.

That match had already reached three hours and was locked at 6-6 in the second set after Nadal won a first-set tie-break when Zverev suffered torn ankle ligaments and had to be taken off Court Philippe Chatrier in a wheelchair.

Zverev, who was the third seed last year, is only seeded 22nd this time around after struggling to recapture his best form since returning to the ATP Tour.

But the former US Open fi-

nalist had enough to beat South African Harris 7-6 (8/6), 7-6 (7/0), 6-1.

"It's nice to be back. I've marked this day in bold on my calendar since last year," Zverev said.

"I was obviously very disappointed with how that tournament ended for me (last year)."

"That's why I think I appreciate even more when I play in a full stadium and the crowd is behind me."

Zverev went out in the first round in 2017 and needed five

Zverev, who was the third seed last year, is only seeded 22nd this time around after struggling to recapture his best form since returning to the ATP Tour

sets to win his opening tie at Roland Garros in both 2019 and 2021.

"No (not happy with his performance). But I'm happy that I won in three sets. Normally I start with five-set matches so I'm happy to win in three."

Zverev will next face Slovakia's Alex Molcan as he tries to reach the third round for a sixth straight year.

He came back to the Tour at the start of 2023 but has since slipped from 12th to 27th in the rankings.

Andreeva, 16, says Murray 'maybe' helped her French Open breakthrough



Mirra Andreeva plays a forehand return Alison Riske

AFP | Paris



After he won a Challenger, I texted him. I said, 'Congratulations. He actually answered me, so I was really happy about it. He said, 'Thank you, and good luck in Roland Garros'. Maybe that's why I'm playing that good now

MIRRA ANDREEVA

Russian teenager Mirra Andreeva said yesterday that a good luck message from Andy Murray "maybe" helped her win on her French Open debut.

The 16-year-old made headlines with a run to the fourth round at the Madrid Open last month and came through qualifying at Roland Garros to make her Grand Slam tournament debut, beating Alison Riske-Amritraj 6-2, 6-1 in the first round.

Andreeva also attracted attention in Madrid for comments about Murray being "beautiful" in real life, with the former men's world number one remarking about "how good she's going to be when she gets her eyes fixed".

Murray is sitting out Roland Garros to prepare for the grass-court season, but he did

wish Andreeva the best for her campaign.

"After he won a Challenger, I texted him. I said, 'Congratulations,'" said Andreeva.

"He actually answered me, so I was really happy about it. He said, 'Thank you, and good luck in Roland Garros'. Maybe that's why I'm playing that good now."

Schmidtke joins Liverpool as sporting director

AFP | London

Liverpool has appointed Jorg Schmidtke as its new sporting director, the Premier League club announced yesterday.

The 59-year-old German spent

over four years in the same role with Bundesliga side Wolfsburg before leaving at the start of 2023.

He will begin his new role on June 1, subject to work permit formalities as Liverpool look to bounce back from a trophy-less

season.

Schmidtke will take over from Julian Ward, who is leaving after more than a decade at Anfield that featured Premier League and Champions League titles.



Jorg Schmidtke