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# Sports



Spurs restore English pride in Europa league

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DUBAI: Tomas Berdych of the Czech Republic serves the ball to Philipp Kohlschreiber of Germany during a semi final match of the Dubai Duty Free Tennis Championships in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, yesterday. — AP

## BERDYCH, FEDERER REACH DUBAI FINAL

**DUBAI:** World number six Tomas Berdych continued his new-found run of good form when he reached the final of the Dubai Open for the second successive year.

Roger Federer battled back from a set down to beat top-seeded Novak Djokovic 3-6, 6-3, 6-2 to reach the Dubai Open final yesterday. The Swiss five-time champion took his career head-to-head record over Djokovic to 17-15.

Yesterday's win, built on a double break in the final set, stopped a run of three successive losses against the Serb. Fourth-seeded Federer will face Czech third seed Tomas Berdych in today's final.

Berdych had not won an ATP Tour title for 16 months until he won Rotterdam this month, but the 7-5, 7-5 victory over Philipp

Kohlschreiber, the seventh-seeded German was his 16th win in 17 matches.

Equally crucially Berdych was able to impose breaks of serve when it mattered most, at the end of each set, leaving his fluent but lighter-weight opponent with no chance to repair the damage.

"It feels absolutely great," he said "I am pleased with today because it was a really tough win. It's a pleasure getting to the final again here, a tournament which has such a strong field. "My rhythm is much better than it was. It is important for me to be hitting the ball nicely and then my game really works."

Kohlschreiber knew well the power Berdych can generate when allowed to, and volunteered before the match that he would aim to do something different to stop that.

He had only ever prevailed once in their eight matches. The plan involved dictating the patterns more, and trying to prevent Berdych from pushing him around. For almost a set, with his well-constructed orthodoxies, Kohlschreiber made it work effectively.

He was aided by Berdych's laboured start, double-faulting on the third point, and dropping his first service game. Nevertheless the German consolidated that break four times smartly.

Then, in trying to close out the set, his resolve appeared to waver. Three times Kohlschreiber allowed Berdych to get big blows into the rally, and after the Czech had broken back for 5-5 he began to strike the ball much more freely.

Another break, and the first set, followed for Berdych, and in the second he became even more fluent and relaxed. It took a while to finish the job though.

Kohlschreiber again began to play more enterprisingly, and hung on well when he went break point down in the fourth game, averting the danger with a rasping first serve. But again, in the big moments, he faltered. Serving to save the match at 5-6, he twice allowed Berdych to attack second serves, and twice drove forehands long, on the second occasion on match point.

Berdych was due to play the winner of two legends in the other semi-final, which was between Novak Djokovic, the titleholder, and Roger Federer, who holds a record five titles here. — Agencies (See Page 41)