

THE BIGGEST BLOWOUTS IN SUPER BOWL HISTORY

NEW YORK: The Super Bowl has produced plenty of memorably tense moments and unfathomably wild finishes. Just last year, the pinnacle of the NFL season was punctuated by a last-second interception in the end zone by New England that sealed a victory over Seattle, when the Seahawks decided to pass instead of run and the Patriots made them pay.

Then there are the not-so-nerve-racking games that are decided by halftime. Even with a format designed to pit the two best teams against each other for the championship, or at least produce a high-caliber contest, plenty of duds have emerged.

Here's a look back at three of the biggest blowouts in Super Bowl history:

THE BIG, BAD BEARS

The Chicago Bears were dominant during the 1985 regular season, finishing 15-1 while allowing an average of 12.4 points per game. So this lopsided result was hardly a surprise.

The New England Patriots were the wild-card team from the weaker AFC and making their first trip to the big game. The Bears were confident enough that year to film the famed "Super Bowl Shuffle" video, with players dancing to vintage 1980s synthesized rap music in full uniform with a series of simple rhymes touting their talent and inevitable title.

They had no trouble backing up the bravado with a 46-10 victory. With seven sacks and only seven yards rushing allowed, the defense led by Super Bowl MVP Richard Dent put the Patriots in their

place. Walter Payton had a quiet game on the ground, but he was hardly needed. The Bears led 23-3 at halftime and 44-3 in the third quarter, after defensive tackle William "The Refrigerator" Perry rumbled in for a 1-yard touchdown run.

FANTASTIC 49ERS

Joe Montana and the San Francisco 49ers managed to outscore their own nickname in this 55-10 trampling of the Denver Broncos, still the most points ever scored by a Super Bowl team and the largest margin of victory in the game's history. The first two possessions of the second half by the Broncos ended with interceptions thrown by John Elway, and the outcome was never in doubt. By the time Montana threw his fifth touchdown pass of the night, the 49ers led 41-3 in the third

quarter. That was more than enough for him to win his third Super Bowl Most Valuable Player award.

SUPERIOR SEAHAWKS

The 48th Super Bowl was as low on drama as it was high on hype, with Denver's dazzling offense facing Seattle's stingy defense for the first Super Bowl held in the nation's biggest market.

Propelled by an NFL-best 55 touchdown passes by Peyton Manning during the 2013 regular season, the Broncos set an all-time record with 606 points, an attack so potent they were slight favorites entering the game. The Seahawks, though, were more than ready for them with their hard-hitting, hustling, high-motor secondary dubbed the "Legion of Boom."

This was the first Super Bowl held outdoors in a northern location, but instead of snowy or cold, it was a balmy 49 degrees at kickoff at MetLife Stadium in New Jersey. The opening kick was the last time Manning and the Broncos were actually in it.

The first snap sailed past Manning and into the end zone for a safety 12 seconds into the game, the quickest score in Super Bowl history. The Seahawks built a 22-0 lead by halftime, padded by a 69-yard interception return by Malcolm Smith for one of four turnovers by the Broncos. Percy Harvin took the third-quarter kickoff back 87 yards for another score, and Russell Wilson tacked on two more touchdown passes after that to leave no doubt about the league's best team that year with a 43-8 decision. —AP

DAD-TO-BE MURRAY ON 'NEXT PLANE HOME' AFTER AUSSIE LOSS

MELBOURNE: Andy Murray declared "I just want to get home" and headed straight for the airport yesterday as he raced to be reunited with his pregnant wife after his Australian Open final defeat.

Murray, who has been on baby alert all tournament with his wife, Kim Sears, due to give birth within weeks, said he was getting the next flight home after his loss to world number one Novak Djokovic.

"I'm proud that I got into this position, you know. Just quite looking forward to getting home now," Murray said in a quickfire press conference before rushing for his plane.

The British world number two had pledged to quit the tournament if his wife went into labour, and he was also close to pulling out when his father-in-law Nigel Sears collapsed at Rod Laver Arena last week.

"It was a tough, tough couple of days. Thankfully, he's fine now. Yeah, I just want to get home," said London-based Murray.

He added: "I've been held on flights for, it feels like five days. I've been held on almost every single flight, so the first one out of here, I'm leaving. It's at 1:00, I

think." Earlier Murray had tears in his eyes and a faltering voice as he paid tribute to his wife after he was well beaten 6-1, 7-5, 7-6 (7/3) — his fifth defeat in the Melbourne final.

"You've been a legend for the last two weeks. Thank you so much for all of your support and I'll be on the next plane home," the Scot said at the on-court awards ceremony.

He later explained it had been a difficult tournament as he was beset by distractions, but which also, however, seemed to take the sting out of his latest Grand Slam disappointment.

With the defeat, Murray became only the second man in the post-1968 Open era after Ivan Lendl, his former coach, to lose five finals at the same Grand Slam tournament.

"Regardless of today's result, it's been hard. Had I lost in the third or fourth round it still would have been difficult with everything that's happened," Murray said.

"She's been amazing. Handled everything unbelievably well. Yeah, I have to thank her for allowing me to play and stay here with everything that was going on. But, yeah, it was tough." — AFP



MELBOURNE: Andy Murray, right, of Britain is congratulated by Milos Raonic of Canada after winning their semifinal at the Australian Open tennis championships in Melbourne, Australia. — AP

KERBER, RAONIC BIGGEST RANKINGS MOVERS AFTER AUSTRALIAN OPEN

MELBOURNE: Angelique Kerber's upset win over Serena Williams at the Australian Open and Milos Raonic's second Grand Slam semifinal appearance will ensure they're the biggest movers among top players in projected rankings to be released this week. Seventh-seeded Kerber's three-set win on Saturday, which prevented Williams from securing her 22nd major title, is expected to result in the German player moving to No. 2 on the WTA Tour. The rankings, expected to be released Monday, should show Williams at No. 1, Kerber at No. 2 and Simona Halep, who lost in the first round at Melbourne Park, dropping one spot to No. 3.

"She's had a great month," Williams said of Kerber. "She got to the finals in Brisbane. She won here. So, yeah. I was surprised and really happy for her. I'm like, 'Whoa, No. 2.' What's after

2 is 1, so I guess I better be careful." Agnieszka Radwanska, who lost to Williams in the semifinals, remains at No. 4, while Garbine Muguruza drops two places to fifth.

Maria Sharapova, the 2015 finalist who lost to Williams in the quarterfinals this year, moves to sixth, followed by Flavia Pennetta, Carla Suarez Navarro, two-time Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova and Lucie Safarova.

Safarova did not play in Melbourne due to a bacterial infection. On the men's side, Raonic, the 25-year-old Canadian who lost in the semifinals to Andy Murray, was expected to be biggest mover among the top 15 on the ATP Tour, improving three places to No. 11.

It was Raonic's second major semifinal after losing to Roger Federer in the final four at Wimbledon in 2014. Quarterfinalist David Ferrer

moved to sixth place in a straight switch with Tomas Berdych, who slips down to eighth.

The top five remained unchanged. Six-time champion Novak Djokovic and five-time losing finalist Murray would have remained 1-2 regardless of the result of their Sunday night final, which Djokovic won in straight sets.

Federer, who lost to Djokovic in the semifinals, remains at No. 3, Stan Wawrinka at 4 and Rafael Nadal, a first-round loser to Fernando Verdasco in Melbourne, rounds out the top 5.

Following Ferrer is Japan's Kei Nishikori, unchanged at 7 after losing to Djokovic in the quarterfinals.

Jo-Wilfried Tsonga moves to No. 9, replacing fellow Frenchman Richard Gasquet, who drops to 10. Following Raonic is No. 12 John Isner of the United States. —AP



MELBOURNE: Andy Murray of Britain gestures as he speaks during a press conference following his loss to Novak Djokovic of Serbia in their men's singles final match on day 14 of the 2016 Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne. — AFP

SOARES WINS TWO GRAND SLAM TITLES ON SAME DAY

MELBOURNE: Brazil's Bruno Soares lifted the Australian Open mixed doubles trophy yesterday—the same day he also won the men's doubles, in the early hours of the morning.

Soares and Russia's Elena Vesnina, seeded five, beat the unseeded pairing of American Coco Vandeweghe and her Romanian partner Horia Tecau 6-4, 4-6, 10-5 on Rod Laver Arena. The win comes after Soares and Jamie Murray, the brother

of singles finalist Andy, beat Czech veteran Radek Stepanek and Canadian Daniel Nestor in three sets for the men's title in a 1:00 am finish.

"I feel like I've been on this court for the last 24 hours," said Soares, who now has 22 men's doubles titles and also won the US Open mixed doubles in 2012 and 2014. "But it's a good feeling. Elena carried me the whole week. She was awesome." —AFP



MELBOURNE: Elena Vesnina of Russia (R) and partner Bruno Soares of Brazil (L) kiss the winner's trophy at the awards ceremony following their victory over Coco Vandeweghe of the US and Horia Tecau of Romania in the mixed doubles final on day 14 of the 2016 Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne yesterday. —AFP

NO REST AS BUSY KERBER JETS OFF FOR FED CUP

BERLIN: There was no rest for newly-crowned Australian Open champion Angelique Kerber after a whirlwind of partying and engagements before jetting home yesterday to prepare for the Fed Cup. The 28-year-old German earned her first Grand Slam title by shocking world number one Serena Williams 6-4, 3-6, 6-4 in Saturday's final in Melbourne. After countless interviews, posing for pictures and undergoing a drugs test, Kerber eventually got back to her hotel around 3:00 am local time on Sunday morning, then went straight out partying. The new champion was sleepless in Melbourne, but brushed off any tiredness to celebrate on Sunday by swimming in the Yarra river next to the Rod Laver Arena, in echoes of the dip American Jim Courier took after his 1992 championship win on the same court.

The new world number two made the plunge along with her team, including coach Torben Beltz and physiotherapist Simon Iden, plus a German Eurosport commentator, who made a bet with Kerber to jump in the river if she won. "It was cold, but it was worth it," said Kerber after her dip. "I haven't slept for a minute. I only had appointments to get to," she told broadcaster ZDF, having become the first German since Steffi Graf in 1999 to win a Grand Slam title.

"I managed to eat a banana after the final and then it was the next day. 'I had never been so tired as in that moment,' she said after a night of partying as, despite only leaving the stadium in the early hours, "we still managed to go for a drink," Kerber added with a grin. "I still can't believe it. I've made history. A dream has come true. 'I'm ready for anything now—even the wedding with 'Petko,'" she joked after her Fed Cup team-mate Andrea Petkovic wrote: "Angelique, you're crazy! I want to marry you!" on Twitter.

After posing for her official winner's photo in Melbourne's Botanical Gardens, Kerber flew back to Europe on Sunday night and had the chance to catch up on sleep on the long flight via Bangkok to Frankfurt, Germany, then onto Posen in Poland.

From there, she will drive to Puszczykowo, where she lives near to her grandparents.

"We'll celebrate there with some sparkling wine. I am really looking forward to getting home," she said. "My family have always stood by me and given me strength, even in moments when I didn't believe in myself."

There will be little time to enjoy her success, because on Tuesday she will join up with her Germany team-mates to prepare for next weekend's Fed Cup first-round match against Switzerland in Leipzig.

There promises to be some fun for Kerber's team later in the year as she will make good on a bet with her coach Beltz to skydive together, take a dancing class with her support staff and her physio will mark her victory in ink by getting a tattoo. "It will be the trophy from Melbourne," he admitted. —AFP



MELBOURNE: Germany's Angelique Kerber poses with The Daphne Akhurst Memorial Trophy as she celebrates her victory in the women's singles final on day fourteen of the 2016 Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne yesterday. — AFP