

Sports

Federer, Nadal, steam into Indian Wells quarter-finals

19-year-old Miomir Kecmanovic keeps Serbian flag flying

INDIAN WELLS: Former champions Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal edged closer to a blockbuster semi-final showdown at the ATP Indian Wells Masters on Wednesday with brisk fourth-round wins. World number two Nadal overpowered Serbian qualifier Filip Krajinovic 6-3, 6-4 to book his quarter-final berth in one hour and 26 minutes.

Federer, seeking a record sixth title in the California desert, needed just 64 minutes to get past Britain's Kyle Edmund 6-1, 6-4. Nadal said his performance on a windy stadium court wasn't as good as his 6-3, 6-1 third-round win over Argentine Diego Schwartzman.

But he was more than a match for 113th-ranked Krajinovic, breaking him early in each set and saving the only break point he faced. Nadal, who lifted the Indian Wells trophy in 2007, 2008 and 2013, is in the last eight for the first time in three years after missing last year's edition, skipping both Indian Wells and the Miami Masters with a hip injury.

He next will take on 13th-ranked Russian Karen Khachanov, who beat world number nine John Isner 6-4, 7-6 (7/1). Khachanov produced just one ace to the big-serving American's 12 but stretched his record over Isner to 4-0.

Fourth-seeded Federer, fresh off his 100th career title, looked poised to finish off Edmund in less than an hour. But the Swiss great had to fight off three break points as he served for the match, just a small speed bump in a match that he took charge of early.

"He didn't have the best start, so that cost him

the first set," Federer said. "Second set, it was definitely better. I think he probably struggled throughout a little bit. He never really got going.

"Conditions are tough with the glare, and the jump of the ball it's sometimes hard to find the rhythm and timing." Federer will fight for a semi-final berth against 22-year-old Pole Hubert Hurkacz.

Hurkacz, ranked 67th in the world, sent 25th-ranked Canadian Denis Shapovalov packing 7-6 (7/3), 2-6, 6-3. Although he'll be an overwhelming favorite against Hurkacz, Federer said he wouldn't take a semi-final meeting with Nadal for granted. "I hope I can get there," Federer said, "but I'm not going to underestimate Hubert."

A day after world number one Novak Djokovic tumbled out of the third round, 19-year-old Miomir Kecmanovic kept the Serbian flag flying. Kecmanovic became the first lucky loser to reach the last eight at Indian Wells since the ATP's Masters 1000 series launched in 1990.

Kecmanovic, ranked 130th in the world, had taken the first set against Yoshihito Nishioka 6-4 when the 74th-ranked Japanese retired because of injury. Kecmanovic, who gained entry to the second round when fifth-seeded Kevin Anderson withdrew with an elbow injury, is in his first ATP quarter-final.

Kecmanovic is the last teen left in the men's draw, after the departure of 19-year-old Shapovalov. At the other end of the age spectrum, 40-year-old Croatian Ivo Karlovic's run came to an end with a 6-4, 6-3 loss to 25-year-old seventh seed Dominic Thiem.



INDIAN WELLS: Roger Federer of Switzerland plays a backhand against Kyle Edmund of Great Britain during their men's singles fourth round match on day ten of the BNP Paribas Open at the Indian Wells Tennis Garden on Wednesday in Indian Wells, California. —AFP

Thiem needed less than an hour to subdue the 89th-ranked Karlovic, surrendering just seven points on his own serve and punishing Karlovic's second serve. Thiem said putting 87 percent of his first serves in play was key in his first meeting with Karlovic.

"I felt pretty confident on my own service games. That's what I transferred also to the return

games," he said. "I made two breaks in the right moment I would say."

Thiem booked a meeting with 18th-seeded Gael Monfils of France, who defeated Philipp Kohlschreiber 6-0, 6-2 in 57 minutes a day after the German stunned world number one Novak Djokovic in the third round. —AFP

Shiffrin wins first WCup Super-G globe

PARIS: Mikaela Shiffrin won the World Cup Super-G crystal globe for the first time yesterday, adding it to the overall title and the slalom globe she has already won this ski season. The American, who turned 24 on Wednesday, clinched the title in Soldeu, Andorra, to underline her dominance. Shiffrin was tied for fourth with Austria's Nicole Schmidhofer, 0.44sec behind winner Viktoria Rebensburg of Germany. She is almost certain to add the giant slalom globe in Andorra on Sunday when she only needs to finish in the first 15 places. With only 100 points available for a win, Petra Vlhova of Slovakia needs to overturn a 97-point deficit. If she achieves that feat, she would become the first skier—male or female—to collect World Cup titles in overall, slalom, giant slalom and super-G discipline in a single season.

Overall World Cup standings

1. Mikaela Shiffrin (USA) 2,004 pts, 2. Petra Vlhova (SVK) 1,235, 3. Wendy Holdener (SUI) 959, 4. Nicole Schmidhofer (AUT) 771, 5. Viktoria Rebensburg (GER) 769, 6. Federica Brignone (ITA) 764, 7. Ragnhild Mowinckel (NOR) 675, 8. Frida Hansdotter (SWE) 609, 9. Stephanie Venier (AUT) 528, 10. Ilka Stuhec (SLO) 507

Final World Cup Super-G standings

1. Mikaela Shiffrin (USA) 350 pts, 2. Nicole Schmidhofer (AUT) 303, 3. Tina Weirather (LIE) 268, 4. Viktoria Rebensburg (GER) 257, 5. Ragnhild Mowinckel (NOR) 247. —AFP

Andreescu overwhelms Muguruza to reach Indian Wells semis

INDIAN WELLS: Bianca Andreescu's breakout season continued Wednesday as the Canadian teenager swept past two-time Grand Slam champion Garbine Muguruza and into the Indian Wells WTA semi-finals.

Andreescu, 18 and ranked 60th in the world, won the first nine games on the way to a 6-0, 6-1 victory that took just 52 minutes. She reached her third semi-final of the season after a run to the final in Auckland and the last four in Acapulco.

"I just went out there, went for it," Andreescu said. "I didn't focus on who was on the other side. "It really helped me. I used my serve to my advantage. She didn't serve so well today, so I took advantage that as well."

Andreescu, who began 2019 ranked 152nd in the world, is now headed for the top 40. The win over Muguruza, now ranked 20th, followed a victory over 18th-ranked Wang Qiang of China in the fourth round and took her win-loss record to a remarkable 26-3 in 2019, including qualifying matches.

"I had a good day," Andreescu said. "She didn't have such a good day. I felt she was holding back a lot so I just kept putting pressure. She just kept missing." Muguruza said the overall quality of Andreescu's game

was just too much.

"I struggled to find a way to turn things around, because she was keeping her high level all the time," Muguruza said. Andreescu will get a shot at another top-10 player in the semi-finals, after sixth-ranked Elina Svitolina clawed out a 4-6, 6-4, 6-4 victory over another red-hot teen—Marketa Vondrousova of Czech Republic.

Vondrousova, who reached her second WTA final in Budapest in February to arrive in California ranked 61st in the world, was coming off an upset of world number two Simona Halep in the third round, which followed wins over 2018 finalist Daria Kasatkina and former French Open champion Jelena Ostapenko.

Svitolina, coming off a 7-6 (10/8), 5-7, 6-4 win over Aussie Ashleigh Barty that—at three hours 12 minutes—was the longest on the WTA Tour this year, struggled to get to grips with the unfamiliar left-hander's game.

But her experience and determination made the difference in the end. "Not every day you play your best game, you just have to stay strong and stay calm and fight for every ball," Svitolina said. The remaining quarter-finals will be played, with Belinda Bencic taking on Karolina Pliskova and Venus Williams facing Angelique Kerber in a battle of former world number ones. Bencic, 22, stunned world number one Naomi Osaka 6-3, 6-1 in the fourth round, bringing the Japanese star's first WTA title defense to an abrupt end.

The Swiss player is on the rise after a spate of injuries slowed her career and is ranked 23rd in the world after claiming her first title in four years at Dubai last month. —AFP