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## Torres lead Yankees past Twins

Cardinals edge Braves, Tampa Bay's Kiermaier smashes three-run homer



MINNEAPOLIS: Gleyber Torres #25 of the New York Yankees slides in safe on a double against the Minnesota Twins in the ninth inning in game three of the American League Division Series at Target Field in Minneapolis, Minnesota. — AFP

WASHINGTON: Gleyber Torres clubbed a second inning home run and made a couple of clutch defensive plays as the New York Yankees punched their ticket to the American League Championship Series by sweeping the Minnesota Twins in three games.

Torres, of Venezuela, started things off with a homer in the second and belted two doubles as the Yankees sent the Twins crashing out of the Major League Baseball playoffs with a dominant 5-1 win on Monday night.

"I compete everytime, it doesn't matter who is pitching," the 22-year-old Torres said. "I just try to focus and do my job, going to home plate, getting a really good at bat, and keeping it simple."

The Yankees advanced to the ALCS for the second time in three years as they outscored the Twins 23-7 in the best-of-five series. Didi Gregorius hit two RBI singles for the Yankees, who extended their playoff winning streak over the Twins to 13 consecutive games.

"Our pitching did a great job," said Yankees outfielder Brett Gardner, who added an RBI single. "Anytime we get a little lead and turn it over to our bullpen we feel good about our chances."

"It is just a lot of fun. We got a young team they are pumped up about moving on." New York starts the AL Championship Series on Saturday, at home against the Tampa Bay Rays or at the Houston Astros.

Earlier on Monday, Tampa Bay's Kevin Kiermaier smashed a three-run homer to help power the Rays over Houston 10-3 to sustain their title hopes.

The host Rays pulled within 2-1 in the series and will host game four on Tuesday, when Houston's Justin Verlander will pitch on short rest to seek a series-winning victory.

Houston's Jose Altuve opened the scoring on Monday with a first-inning solo homer but Kiermaier's blast in the second inning put the Rays ahead to stay.

"Running around the bases not feeling my feet hit the ground was a great feeling," Kiermaier said.

Tampa Bay pitcher Charlie Morton, a 35-year-old American right-hander who

played with Houston the past two seasons, struck out nine batters while issuing only three hits and two walks over five innings. Morton improved to 4-0 in career playoff elimination games.

"Nothing ever bothers him. He's so composed," Kiermaier said.

In St. Louis, catcher Yadier Molina drove in the tying and winning runs to rally the Cardinals past Atlanta 5-4 in 10 innings and force a one-game showdown to advance in the playoffs.

The Cardinals pulled level at 2-2 in the series with the final game on Wednesday in Atlanta, the winner advancing to the National League Championship Series.

St. Louis second baseman Kolten Wong doubled down the left-field line off Atlanta

reliever Julio Teheran in the 10th and Marcell Ozuna, who hit two home runs, reached on a fielder's choice that moved Wong to third.

Molina, who had singled in the tying run in the eighth inning, then blasted a sacrifice fly to left field, sending Wong to home plate for the winning run.

"I was ready to hit the fastball and he gave it to me right down the middle," said Molina, in his 93rd career playoff start. "We put some good at-bats together in the last inning and we got the win."

Elsewhere, Max Scherzer pitched seven quality innings on a short rest and the Washington Nationals routed the Los Angeles Dodgers 6-1 to even their series 2-2. — AFP

## Angry Murray accuses Fognini after bitter Shanghai exit

SHANGHAI: A fuming Andy Murray accused Fabio Fognini of shouting during a critical point as the Briton went down fighting in three bitter sets at the Shanghai Masters yesterday.

The two players confronted one another

in a lengthy exchange by the net near the end of a bad-tempered match that stretched past three hours.

The 12th-ranked Fognini plays the unseeded American Taylor Fritz or Russian seventh seed Karen Khachanov in the last 16 after a contentious 7-6 (7/4), 2-6, 7-6 (7/2) victory.

But Murray, 32, on the comeback from career-saving hip surgery in January, said: "Someone made a noise, I didn't know who made the noise, I looked in the direction of where the noise came from."

"He then told me, 'Stop looking at me, what are you looking at me for?'"

"I was like, 'I was just about to hit a shot and someone made a noise'. He then told me to stop looking at him," Murray added.

"The sound came from him, which you're not allowed to do, it's against the rules, it's hindrance, you shouldn't do it."

The three-time Grand Slam winner was frustrated the chair umpire failed to intervene as the match turned increasingly sour.

Yesterday should have been a day for minor celebration after the Australian Open said that Murray will make his return to Grand Slam tennis there in January, a year after surgery.

"Fabio wanted to engage with me, I probably shouldn't have done, but I am not having him talk to me like that on court," said Murray of their exchange.

The former number one was also annoyed he repeatedly served for the match but failed to win.

"I want to say that's the first time ever in my career that that's happened," Murray said. "I think it's the first time I served for a match twice and not won."

Ruthless Roger Federer claimed victory in his opener with a straight-sets win over Spain's Albert Ramos-Vinolas.

The 38-year-old Swiss won 6-2, 7-6 (7/5) and plays Belgium's 13th seed David Goffin or Mikhail Kukushkin of Kazakhstan in the last 16.

The third-ranked Federer is looking to end the season on a high with a fourth title of the year — although he failed to win a 21st Grand Slam this season.

The 46th-ranked Ramos-Vinolas put up a better fight in the second set, forcing the tie break and taking a 2-0 and then 4-1

lead. But cheered on by his band of local supporters, who held aloft banners proclaiming their hero "superhuman", Federer won the tie break — and the match — with a forehand smash.

Federer said a loss to the Spaniard in 2015 in Shanghai had driven him on. "The truth, yeah, I was thinking about it, watched highlights," said the Swiss maestro.

"Remember how it felt, I had my chances. I won many more points that time than I lost, so I should have actually won that match."

Red-hot Daniil Medvedev, the US Open finalist, got his tournament off to a flying start with a 6-3, 6-1 demolition of Britain's Cameron Norrie. — AFP