

**25** Giants chase Kershaw, hold on to beat Los Angeles Dodgers 5-4



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NEW YORK: Rafael Nadal of Spain returns a shot during his Men's Singles semi-final match against Matteo Berrettini of Italy on day twelve of the 2019 US Open at the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center in the Queens borough of New York City. —AFP

## Nadal advances to US Open final

### Serena eyes historic 24th Slam against teen upstart Andreescu

NEW YORK: Rafael Nadal will play for his 19th Grand Slam title, one shy of Roger Federer's all-time men's record, after battling past Italy's Matteo Berrettini and into his fifth US Open final. The 33-year-old Spaniard dispatched Berrettini 7-6 (8/6), 6-4, 6-1 at Arthur Ashe Stadium to reach today's showdown against Russian fifth seed Daniil Medvedev, who ousted Bulgarian Grigor Dimitrov 7-6 (7/5), 6-4, 6-3.

"Very happy to be back into the final of the US Open," Nadal said. "It means a lot to be back where I am today after some tough moments at the beginning of the season."

Nadal, who shook off an early season right hip injury to win a 12th French Open title, seeks his fourth US Open crown — one short of the Open-era record of five shared by Federer, Pete Sampras and Jimmy Connors — to reach the brink of Federer's mark.

"It's just another chance on Sunday," Nadal said. "I want to enjoy a day off, have a good practice and Sunday is the day to play my best." Nadal, into his 27th Grand Slam final, beat Medvedev in last month's Montreal final in their only prior meeting. But the world

number two skipped Cincinnati, where Medvedev was champion the following week.

"He's one of the more solid players on tour," Nadal said of Medvedev. "He's making steps forward every single week. "I need to be playing at my best."

Medvedev, in his first Grand Slam final at 23, has gone 20-2 in the past six weeks with runner-up efforts in Washington and Canada, a title in Cincinnati and a breakthrough US Open run.

"I'm just happy to be in the final," Medvedev said. "When I was going to USA, I didn't know it was going to be this good. So I have to say I love USA." Medvedev is the first Russian in a men's Grand Slam final since Marat Safin won the 2005 Australian Open title and the first Russian to reach the US Open final since Safin won the 2000 crown.

Nadal has dropped only one set at the Open but was severely tested by 24th seed Berrettini, the first Italian man in the US Open semi-finals since Corrado Barazzutti in 1977. Berrettini denied Nadal on six break points in the first set, jumped ahead 4-0 in the tie-break and seized two set points at 6-4 as the Ashe crowd

roared with delight.

"Winning the first set would have been big," Berrettini said. "It's tough to go a set down with him after more than an hour. I was playing really good." But the Italian netted two backhand volleys, a baseline backhand and then hit a forehand long to hand Nadal the set.

US Open fans gave solid applause to Medvedev after earlier-round boos for flashing an obscene gesture and taunts saying he thrived on their jeers for energy to win. He later apologized. Medvedev took the first-set tie-break after Dimitrov netted a forehand and sent another long on the last two points.

"The confidence means a lot in this case because I do think he was better player in first set. I do think I was kind of lucky to win it," Medvedev said. "Then the momentum changed completely."

Dimitrov netted a backhand to surrender a break and the second set in the 10th game. Medvedev broke for a 3-1 lead in the third set and held to the finish. "There's something strong that makes me win these crazy sets and crazy matches, which maybe two months ago I

would have lost," said Medvedev. Dimitrov, ranked 78th, would have been the lowest-rated US Open men's finalist since the rankings began in 1973.

Earlier, Serena Williams will take a fourth shot at equaling Margaret Court's all-time record of 24 Grand Slam singles titles in US Open final against fast-rising Canadian teenager Bianca Andreescu.

Williams, who turns 38 in three weeks, is aiming for her first Grand Slam title since giving birth in September 2017 to arrest a run of three major finals defeats in a row. She would become only the fourth mother in the Open era to win a Slam after Aussies Court and Evonne Goolagong Cawley and Belgium's Kim Clijsters.

The 23-time Grand Slam champion won her last major at the 2017 Australian Open, finishing runner-up at Wimbledon the past two years either side of an infamous meltdown against Naomi Osaka in the 2018 final at Flushing Meadows. "Is this the best opportunity? I don't know. I literally haven't thought about it this tournament. I've been way more chill," said Williams, who could break her own record as the oldest women's Grand Slam champion. — AFP

### Lyles seals sprint double before world championships

BRUSSELS: American Noah Lyles completed a sprint double with victory in the 200 metres at the Diamond League finals on Friday to add to last week's 100 title before he seeks to be crowned world champion for the first time later this month.

In the last major meeting before the world championships in Doha starting on Sept. 27, Britain's Dina Asher-Smith also put down a marker with victory in

the women's 100 metres. Lyles was pushed by Turkey's Ramil Guliyev and Canada's Andre de Grasse, with both running season's bests.

Lyles, 22, had talked on Thursday of wanting to improve on his personal best, but on a cold wet evening in Brussels he had to settle for a still respectable 19.74 seconds. The American said it had started to rain just before the gun went off, while two of the pins on his bib popped off. He also felt a sudden urge to use the bathroom for the first time ever in a race.

"It was chaotic to be honest, a lot happened in that race," Lyles said. "That's when the race became a lot more complicated... This was definitely a test." In a photo finish, Guliyev came second, just ahead of De Grasse.

Lyles has broken through in the past two years and

bettered Usain Bolt's Paris Diamond League record for 200 metres last month. He also became the first man in the Diamond League's 10-year history to win both the 100 and 200 metres titles in the same season, having won the shorter sprint in Zurich last week.

Nevertheless, he will only run the longer distance in Qatar, saying he is not so strong over the 100 metres. The women's 100 on Friday was a straight foot race between Asher-Smith, 23, and 32-year-old Jamaican Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce, the Briton showing greater stamina in the final strides to finish a metre or two ahead in 10.88 seconds, her best time of 2019. Marie-Josee Ta Lou of the Ivory Coast was third.

Olympic champion Elaine Thompson of Jamaica, who had run the world leading time in the 100, had qualified but opted out of the race to prepare for Doha. Asher-Smith, who won the sprint double at the

European championships in Berlin last year, will compete in both the 100 and 200 metres in Qatar.

"My aim this year was to make sure I could translate my performance to be one of the top athletes in the world... You've got to take it to a different level. Europeans are great, but worlds and Olympics are different things," she said.

The closest finish was in the men's 3,000-metre steeplechase as Ethiopia's Getnet Wale held off a surge from Morocco's Soufiane El Bakkali to win in eight minutes, 6.92 seconds. There was drama ahead of the women's 100 metres hurdles as Nigerian Tobi Amusan was disqualified for coming out of her blocks in 0.096 seconds, just ahead of the permitted 0.1 reaction time.

After long protests and boos from the crowd, Danielle Williams of Jamaica won the race in 12.46 seconds. — Reuters