

## Sports

# Medvedev stunned by Dimitrov at Indian Wells

**INDIAN WELLS:** Reigning US Open champion Daniil Medvedev joined the growing list of top-seed casualties at the ATP/WTA Indian Wells on Wednesday, losing in the fourth round to world No. 28 Grigor Dimitrov 4-6, 6-4, 6-3.

Medvedev, who won his first Grand Slam title last month at Flushing Meadows, had not lost a set heading into the fourth round but dropped eight straight games, and had his serve broken six times against Dimitrov, en route to a stunning early exit for the top seed.

the second time in the set to cut the Russian's lead to 4-2. Dimitrov held serve in the next game and then broke Medvedev's serve twice more to take the set and lay the foundation for a dominating performance in the third. The Bulgarian closed out the match on the first match point, when Medvedev blasted a forehand long.

"Been watching quite a bit of his matches," Dimitrov said of Medvedev. "I really wanted to play this match to be completely honest. What he has been able to accomplish this past year and a half is pretty amazing. I think it really pushes me also to do better." Dimitrov will face Polish eighth seed Hubert Hurkacz, who rolled over Russian

Medvedev, who has won 50 matches in 2021, described this as a minor setback because this event is not a Grand Slam. "I don't see this as the end of the world. I don't think this would happen in a Grand Slam," he said. This is the second time Dimitrov has beaten Medvedev in five career meetings. The last time was a three-set win in their first encounter in 2017 in London.

In other men's fourth-round matches on Wednesday, second seed Stefanos Tsitsipas defeated Australian Alex De Minaur 6-7 (3/7), 7-6 (7/3), 6-2 and third-seeded Alexander Zverev of Germany overpowered France's Gael Monfils 6-1, 6-3 in just 61 minutes.



**INDIAN WELLS:** Grigor Dimitrov of Bulgaria reacts for a forehand return to Daniil Medvedev of Russia in their Round of 16 match at the Indian Wells tennis tournament on Wednesday in Indian Wells, California. — AFP

Aslan Karatsev 6-1, 6-3 on Wednesday in the quarter-finals.

### Minor setback

The 25-year-old Medvedev beat Djokovic in the US Open final last month to prevent the Serbian star from becoming the first man since the legendary Rod Laver in the 1960s to win all four Grand Slams in the same year. On Wednesday, Medvedev made six double faults in the two hour, 15 minute match in the main stadium.

## Pedri's new deal to include €1bn release clause

**MADRID:** Barcelona midfielder Pedri has agreed a contract extension until 2026, with the deal including a one-billion-euro (\$1.16 billion) release clause, the club announced on Thursday. "FC Barcelona and the player, Pedro Gonzalez 'Pedri',



**CHARLOTTE:** In this file photo taken on December 27, 2020 Kyrie Irving of the Brooklyn Nets runs the court during the fourth quarter of their game against the Charlotte Hornets at Spectrum Center in Charlotte, North Carolina. — AFP

## Irving 'doing what's best for me' in declining vaccine

**NEW YORK:** Brooklyn Nets star Kyrie Irving says he's "doing what's best for me" in declining a COVID-19 vaccine, a move that will see him sidelined from NBA play. Irving addressed the issue on Instagram Live on Wednesday, confirming that he hoped to be back on the floor with teammates eventually.

But he said he would not bow to pressure to be vaccinated, while insisting he was neither anti- nor pro-vaccines. "Do what's best for you, but I am not an advocate for either side," Irving said. "I am doing what's best for me. I know the consequences here, and if it means that I'm judged and demonized for that, that's just what it is, that's the role I play."

He added: "No, I'm not retiring, and no, I'm not going and leaving this game like this. There's still so much more work to do." Because of the pandemic, New York City implemented rules that do not allow unvaccinated athletes to take part in practices and games at public arenas — including the Nets' Barclays Center home and Madison Square Garden, home of the rival Knicks.

It had previously appeared that Irving could train with the team at their private practice facility and be available for road games, but the Nets said Tuesday that he would not play or practice with the team "until he is eligible to be a full participant."

"Kyrie has made a personal choice, and we respect his individual right to choose," Nets executive Sean Marks said. On Wednesday, Irving said his ultimate decision on getting a vaccine would have nothing to do with the Nets — nor with a New York mandate. "Once again, I'm going to repeat this," he said. "This is not about the Nets, this is not about the organization, it's not about the NBA, it's not politics. It's not any one thing. It's just about the freedom of what I want to do." — AFP

Ronald Koeman in his first season.

Pedri scored against Real Betis to become the fourth youngest Barcelona goalscorer in La Liga, behind Ansu Fati, Bojan Krkic and Messi. He was also pivotal in Spain reaching the semi-finals at Euro 2020 and then the team winning a silver medal at the Olympic Games in Tokyo. In the statement, the club described it as "a tough year, with many miles on the clock, but one full of reward". Pedri is among a group of youngsters hoping to lead a new era for Barcelona, which also includes the likes of Fati, Gavi, Sergino Dest, Eric Garcia, Ronald Araujo and Nico Gonzalez. — AFP



### Hubert Hurkacz advances after beating Karatsev

"I don't remember myself losing three service games, even four service games ever on hard courts," Medvedev said. "That shows how slow this court is and the conditions, more like clay, which I don't like. To lose four times the serve is just unacceptable. That's why I lost the (second) set."

World No 2 Medvedev did not take a break after his emotional US Open victory and said his busy schedule may have finally caught up with him. "I did feel exhausted in this tournament. Now I can say it. I couldn't say it before my matches. There are a few physical things that have come up," said Medvedev, who is hoping to eventually overtake world No 1 Novak Djokovic.

Medvedev won the first set, was up 4-1 in the second and appeared to be cruising to another easy victory when the wheels came off: his unforced errors mounted and service game fell flat. Medvedev had no answers for the way Dimitrov was playing and predicted the Bulgarian would likely go on to capture the title.

"If he plays like this, like the way he played me from 4-1, then he is going to win the tournament," Medvedev said. "He played the second half of the match better than anyone did against me at the US Open. It is not like I gave him the match."

The match turned in the sixth game of the second set as Dimitrov broke Medvedev's serve for



Pedri