Nadal topples Djokovic in epic tie to enter semifinals

Zvevrev stops Spanish teen Alcaraz

Paris, Jun 1: Rafael Nadal secured his 15th semifinal appearance by edging archrival Novak Djokovic in an epic quarterfinal clash in the early hours of Wednesday.

The No.5 seed won a breathtaking tiebreak in the fourth set to wrap up the victory over the top seed in four hours and 12 minutes at 6-2, 4-6, 6-2, 7-6 (7-4).

"He was the better player in the important moments. He showed why he's a great champion. Staying there mentally tough and finishing the match the way he did. Congrats to him and his team. No doubt he deserved it," said Djokovic.

"In the end it has been a very emotional night for me. I'm still playing for nights like today," said Nadal. "But it's just a quarterfinals match. So I didn't win anything. I just give myself a chance to be back on court in two days. Playing another semifinal here in Roland Garros means a lot to me," he added. Next for Nadal is third seed Alexander Zverev.

World No.3 Alexander Zverev is through to the Roland-Garros semi-finals for the second straight year thanks to a 6-4, 6-4, 4-6, 7-6 (9-7) victory over Spanish teen phenom Carlos Alcaraz on Tuesday. Zverev avenged his recent Madrid final defeat to Alcaraz.

Zverev saved a set point in the fourth-set tiebreak before completing a three-hour 18-minute success over the 18-year-old - his third over Alcaraz in four meetings.

"I told him at the tournament he's going to win this tournament, many times, not only once. I hope I can win it before he starts beating us all," Zverev told Alex Corretja in the on-court interview. It was Zverev's first top-10 victory at a Grand Slam. American teenager Coco Gauff advanced to the first Grand Slam semi-final of her career with a convincing 7-5, 6-2 victory over her compatriot Sloane Stephens at Roland-Garros on Tuesday.

The 18-year-old improved on her quarter-final showing in Paris from 12 months ago and becomes the youngest women's semi-finalist at a major since Amanda Anisimova made the last-four here in 2019. She will meet Martina Trevisan in the last four stage.

Martina Trevisan became the first Italian woman to reach the semi-finals at Roland-Garros since 2013 as she beat Canada's Leylah Fernandez 6-2, 6-7(3), 6-3 in a roller-coaster clash on Court Philippe-Chatrie.

The 28-year-old, a quarter-finalist in 2020 when she was a qualifier, couldn't close out match point at 5-4 in the second set but recovered her composure in the third to reach her first Grand Slam semifinal, and post a 10th consecutive victory.

China withdraws, AFC seeks new host for Asia Cup

Kuala Lumpur, Jun 1: The Asian Football Confederation on Tuesday issued an Expression of Interest (EoI) invitation to all of its member associations to host the 2023 Asian Cup after China withdrew as host owing to the circumstances arising out of the COVID-19 situation there.

This comes barely a week before the start of final qualification round for the main tournament. The third and final qualification rounds to select 11 teams for the tournament-proper are set to be played from June 8-14 across various venues.India is in Group D with Hong Kong, Afghanistan and Cambodia and will play at the Salt Lake Stadium in Kolkata.

"Following China's decision to withdraw as hosts of the Asian Cup, the recent 32nd AFC Congress had provided the mandate to the AFC Administration to define the terms and requirements of an expedited bidding process to find a replacement host for the competition," the continental football body said.

Following the conclusion of the bidding process, the AFC Administration will submit a report with its recommendations to its Executive Committee, which will then select the new host of the 2023 tournament.

The deadline for interested member associations to submit their EoI to host the tournament is June 30, 2022.

The AFC also has to decide the direct entry spot that was given to China before it withdrew as host. The position may go to the new host in case it fails to make it to the qualifiers.

In all, 24 teams will participate in the finals of the Asian Cup. Qatar is the defending champion, having won the event in 2019.

Bob's Banter

Robert Clements

We Need a Sense of Humour..!

We Need a Sense of Humour..!

Give me a sense of humor, Lord;

Give me the grace to see a joke,

To get some humor out of life,

And pass it on to other folk.

Ah! Tis easier writing tragedy than crafting comedy! It's so easy for a writer to bring tears into a reader's eye, but to force a grin, to see the shadow of a smile, to maybe, just maybe hear the beginning of laughter, oh, that isn't so easy at all! Every morning my paperboy brings me a pile of newspapers which I carefully read, but first put away the one carrying my column after seeing that printer's devil and author have not made mince meat of writer's thought. My wife, she enters, sits herself down, I pretend to be engrossed in the news but wait with bated breath as she reads my piece, then sigh with relief when from corner of my eye I see a smile, sulk when I see none, and grin happily when I hear her laughing!

There are times when there's none of these, and that's when I pretend I haven't noticed, and ogle the film stars with vengeance on page three!

But how often I've noticed that what she's laughed over, doesn't have the same reaction with someone else. I stagger under a deluge of hate mail from some while hearing laughter from appreciative others. To the former do I address this piece:

My friend Jack was in the hospital when the new priest from his church arrived. He had sent a message that he would like the priest to call on him but before the man of God could arrive, Jack ordered an extra catheter bag from the hospital pharmacy.

Then he filled the bag with his favorite lemonade.

The new priest soon arrived and they talked while. Then at one point, Jack with a twinkle in his eye which the priest didn't see, reached down and picked up the bag from the side of the bed. He studied it for a moment and then said, "It looks a little thin. Maybe I'll run it through again." And he drank from it.

After the new priest recovered from shock, Jack told him what the bag actually contained, "Nothing but lemonade Father, it's not what you thought it was!" he laughed. The priest laughed out loud with his new friend. And he discovered through the years that Jack brought a valuable gift to life -- laughter.

There were two things the priest could have done; walked out in disgust or been mad somebody had played a joke on him! He did neither. He saw the funny side of it, and enjoyed the humour!

So friends, especially you political leaders who put comedians in jail, don't think we are always laughing at you, nearly one percent of the time we are not..!

bobsbanter@gmail.com

Indian TT team for CG named, needs SAI stamp

New Delhi, Jun 1: A four-member Indian table tennis women's squad - comprising Manika Batra, Archana Kamath, Sreeja Akula and Reeth Rishya - was named for the Commonwealth Games, subject to clearance from the Sports Authority of India, after Archana Kamath was included in the side despite not meeting the existing criteria.The 129th-ranked Diya Chitale was the standby.

Kamath is the second highest-ranked Indian player at 66 after the 39-th ranked Manika Batra. Experienced players Ayhika Mukherjee and Sutirtha Mukherjee were ignored.

"Under the existing selection criteria, one of the members (Archana) falls outside the top four. The selection committee is convinced that the existing guidelines are "flawed" and has moved to make necessary course-correction, with new guidelines effective from October 1," S. D. Mudgil, CoA representative and chairperson of the selection committee said."However, in this transitional phase, with an eye on a rich medal haul in Birmingham, we have included the said player in the team. She (Archana Kamath) is one half of the doubles pair (Manika the other) that is ranked No. 4 in the world and which will be the top seeds at the Commonwealth Games.

"Therefore, the selection committee feels that this is a case worthy of consideration by SAI." The men's team which has been picked is a more straightforward one, consisting of the great Sharath Kamal, G Sathiyan and Harmeet Desai. Manush Shah will be the standby.