

# Djokovic, Alcaraz to meet in Australian Open final

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP) — Novak Djokovic finally beat one of the two men who've been blocking his path to an unprecedented 25th Grand Slam singles title when he edged Jannik Sinner in five sets to reach the Australian Open final Friday.

To get that coveted No. 25, he'll have to beat the other: Top-ranked Carlos Alcaraz.

They're both chasing history in Sunday's championship decider, with Alcaraz striving to become the youngest man at 22 ever to complete a career Grand Slam.

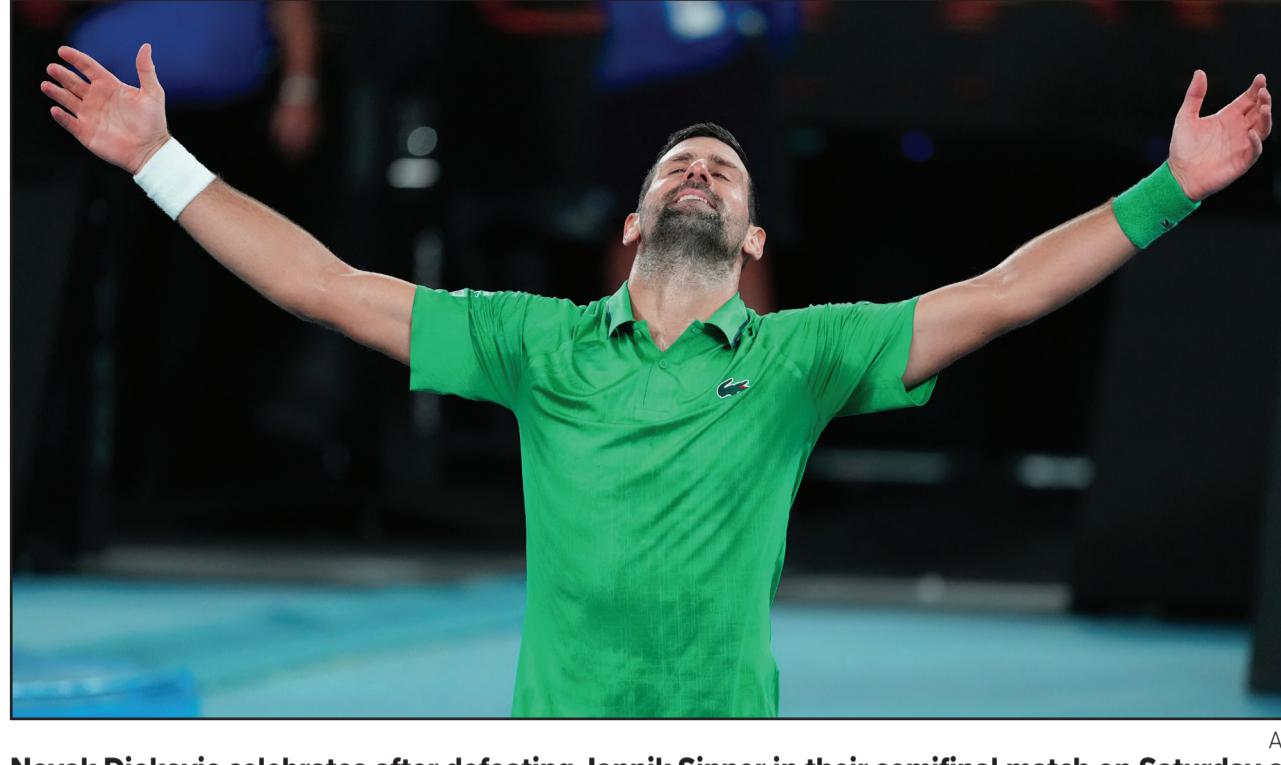
"There's always, for me, also for Carlos because of his age and everything he's achieved, history is on the line for both of us," Djokovic told reporters packed into a small room deep inside the stadium in a brief interview approaching 3 a.m. "Finals of a Grand Slam. There's a lot at stake."

The top-ranked Alcaraz came through his own grueling five-setter. He overcame cramps and a sore right leg to fend off No. 3 Alexander Zverev 6-4, 7-6 (5), 6-7 (3), 6-7 (4), 7-5 in a match that started in the warmth of the afternoon and, 5 hours, 27 minutes later, became the longest semifinal ever at the Australian Open.

That pushed the scheduled start of the Sinner-Djokovic semifinal back a couple of hours, and the 38-year-old Djokovic finally won 3-6, 6-3, 4-6, 6-4, 6-4 just after 1:30 a.m.

"It feels surreal," Djokovic said of his 4-hour, 9-minute triumph. "Honestly, it feels like winning already tonight. I know I have to come back ... and fight the No. 1 of the world. I just hope that I'll have enough gas to stay toe-to-toe with him."

"For me, this is a win that almost



**Novak Djokovic celebrates after defeating Jannik Sinner in their semifinal match on Saturday at the Australian Open tennis championship in Melbourne, Australia.**

equals winning a Grand Slam."

Djokovic conceded he was lucky to even get to the semifinals. He narrowly missed hitting a ball girl with a reckless swipe in the third round to be almost defaulted from the tournament, got a walkover in the fourth round, and felt he was heading home in the quarterfinals when he trailed Lorenzo Musetti by two sets until the Italian retired with an injured right leg.

Djokovic hadn't won a set since the third round but against Sinner, the two-time defending champion, Djokovic was at the peak of his attacking and defensive powers. He fended off 16 of the 18 breakpoints he faced and stifled Sinner's oppor-

tunities. It ended a run of five losses to Sinner, and a run of four semifinal exits for Djokovic at the majors.

"Had many chances, couldn't use them, and that's the outcome," Sinner said. "Yeah, it hurts, for sure."

Alcaraz and Sinner have split the last eight major titles between them since Djokovic won his last title at the 2023 U.S. Open.

But nobody knows how to win more often at Melbourne Park than Djokovic. He has won all 10 times he's contested the Australian Open final. He has been saying for months that Alcaraz and Sinner have been playing at a higher level than everyone else. He also said he never doubted he could rise to that level.

"I never stopped believing, I never stopped believing in myself," he said. "There's a lot of people that doubted me ... a lot of experts all of a sudden that wanted to retire me."

"I want to thank them all because they gave me strength. They gave me motivation to prove them wrong, which I have tonight."

## Final 4

The top four seeds reached the men's semifinals for just the fifth time and Day 13 was destined to produce some much-needed drama. The season-opening major had been a relatively slow burn until the back-to-back five-setters lasting a combined 9 hours, 36 minutes.

Alcaraz and Zverev, the 2025 runner-up, surpassed the 2009 classic between Rafael Nadal and Fernando Verdasco as the longest ever Australian Open semifinal.

## Medical timeout

Alcaraz was as close as two points from victory in the third set but was hampered by pain in his upper right leg and his medical timeout became contentious.

He said initially it didn't feel like cramping because the pain seemed to be just in one muscle, the right adductor, and he needed an assessment.

He endured the third and fourth sets and was behind in the fifth after dropping serve in the first game. He kept up the pressure but didn't break back until Zverev was serving for the match. He then won the last four games.

"Physically we pushed each other to the limit today. We pushed our bodies to the limit," Alcaraz said. "I rank this one in the top position of one of the best matches that I have ever won."

## Believe

Alcaraz admitted he was struggling but he kept "believing, believing, all the time."

"I knew what I had to do. I had to put my heart into the match. I think I did it."

Zverev was demonstrably upset about the time out in the third set, taking it up with a tournament supervisor. Later, he said that episode shouldn't overshadow the contest.

"I don't want to talk about this right now because this is one of the best battles there ever was in Australia," he said. "It doesn't deserve to be the topic now."

## THE DAILY SCOREBOARD

### NFL PLAYOFFS

Wild-card Playoffs	Saturday, Jan. 10
	Chicago 31, Green Bay 27
Sunday, Jan. 11	Buffalo 27, Jacksonville 24
	San Francisco 23, Philadelphia 19
Monday, Jan. 12	New England 16, L.A. Chargers 3
	Houston 30, Pittsburgh 6
Divisional Playoffs	Saturday, Jan. 17
	Denver 33, Buffalo 30, OT
	Seattle 41, San Francisco 6
Sunday, Jan. 18	New England 28, Houston 16
	L.A. Rams 20, Chicago 17, OT
Conference Championships	Sunday, Jan. 25
	New England 10, Denver 7
AFC	NFC
	Seattle 31, L.A. Rams 27
Super Bowl LIX	Sunday, Feb. 8
	At Santa Clara.
	New England vs. Seattle, 6:30 p.m. (NBC/Peacock)

### NHL GLANCE

Thursday's Games	Pittsburgh 6, Chicago 2
	Montreal 7, Colorado 3
	Tampa Bay 4, Winnipeg 1
	N.Y. Islanders 2, N.Y. Rangers 1
	New Jersey 3, Nashville 2, OT
	Buffalo 4, Los Angeles 1
	Carolina 5, Utah 4
	Boston 6, Philadelphia 3
	Washington 4, Detroit 3, SO
	Minnesota 4, Calgary 1
	St. Louis 5, Florida 4
	Edmonton 4, San Jose 3, OT
	Vancouver 2, Anaheim 0
	Seattle 5, Toronto 2
	Dallas 5, Vegas 4, SO
Friday's Games	Columbus 4, Chicago 2
	Saturday's Games
	Los Angeles at Philadelphia, 12:30 p.m.
	Colorado at Detroit, 1 p.m.
N.Y. Rangers at Pittsburgh, 3:30 p.m.	San Jose at Calgary, 4 p.m.
	Winnipeg at Florida, 4 p.m.
	Carolina at Washington, 5 p.m.
	Columbus at St. Louis, 7 p.m.
	Montreal at Buffalo, 7 p.m.
	Nashville at N.Y. Islanders, 7 p.m.
	New Jersey at Ottawa, 7 p.m.
	Toronto at Vancouver, 7 p.m.
	Dallas at Utah, 9 p.m.
	Minnesota at Edmonton, 10 p.m.
	Seattle at Vegas, 10 p.m.
Sunday's Games	Sunday at Carolina, 3 p.m.
	Boston vs. Tampa Bay at Raymond James Stadium, 6:30 p.m.
	Vegas at Anaheim, 9:30 p.m.

### SCHOLASTIC WRESTLING

at Franklin

#### EISENHOWER 40, FRANKLIN 31

107 — Seth Hollerman (F) tech. fall Lane Morrison 18-1.

114 — Ramsey Williams (E) tech. fall Chase Graham 18-3.

121 — Huck Fedorchuk (E) tech. fall Noah Riddle, 16-0.

127 — Aidan Snyder (E) won by forfeit.

133 — Austin Hart (F) pinned Benjamin Blauser, 3:57.

139 — Rever Caudill (E) pinned Avery Thomas, 1:54.

145 — Brian Hart (F) dec. Brenton Myers, 5-1.

152 — Corbin Clark (F) pinned Caleb Shafer, 1:28.

160 — Ethan Hart (F) won by forfeit.

172 — Collin Havers (E) won by forfeit.

189 — Bryceon Watkins (E) won by forfeit.

215 — Gary Kiselka (F) tech. fall Bryce Spinks, 16-0.

285 — Wesley Wilcox (E) won by forfeit.

### ANNOUNCEMENTS

#### BENEFIT BASKETBALL GAME

The Franklin High School junior varsity and varsity basketball teams and the Franklin senior high winter cheerleaders are putting on a benefit night next week for a Franklin basketball.

The two basketball games against Warren on Tuesday — junior varsity at 6 p.m. and varsity following at 7:15 p.m. — will benefit sophomore Austin Wallace, who is valiantly fighting osteosarcoma, a rare bone cancer.

Wallace is also an enthusiastic basketball player.

Donations will be taken for Wallace and his family at the games, and organizers are also seeking raffle items as further fundraisers.

#### WARM WATER FLY TYING CLASSES

The Keystone Fly Fishers will be offering a warm water fly tying class starting on Feb. 18 at 6:30 p.m. at the Emerging Technology Center, located at 191 Howard St. in Franklin. Each class will last for about two to two and a half hours each Wednesday night thru March 11.

This is not a beginner class and will move right along at a somewhat accelerated rate. Therefore, all tyers considering this class should have some familiarity with general tying skills (whip finishing/half hitching, pinch wrap, use of dubbing, etc.) and have their own vise and tools.

The class will be limited to 12 individuals and anyone between the ages of 12-17 must be accompanied by an adult. All four classes will be provided at a cost of \$50 total.

Pre-registration is required along with a non-refundable deposit of \$20. Checks are to be made payable to: Keystone Fly Fishers. The deposit is required to confirm registration as the classes fill up very quickly. Once a deposit is received, confirmation about a participant's registration will be sent via email. For questions, contact the Keystone Fly Fishers by email at Keystoneflyfishers1@gmail.com or check them out on Facebook at Keystone Fly Fishers or call 814-673-5479.

### SCHOLASTIC BASKETBALL BOXSCORES

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#### KEYSTONE (60)

D. Corbett 7 4-8 19, E. Corbett 0 2-2 2, Himes 1 0-0,

3. Nellis 0 4-6 13, Campbell 1 2-2 5, Hoffman 1 0-0 2,

Burns 1 0-0 3, Slaugenhaupt 3 0-0 8, Irwin 1 0-0 3,

Dunlap 1 0-0 2, Totals: 22 11-18 60.

#### NORTH CLARION (65)

Baumcratz 0 0-0 2, Bish 6 6-7 21, Lutz 3 1-2 7, Zacherl 0 1-2 2, Irwin 6 0-0 17, Swanson 1 0-0 2, O. Walter 0 0-0 0, E. Walter 5 5-5 15, Totals: 22 12-18 65.

#### Score by Quarters

Keystone 14 9 8 11 2 3 8 3 2 60

N. Clarion 11 4 5 12 2 3 8 3 7 65

3-point goals — Keystone (Slaugenhaupt 2, Nellis 2, D. Corbett, Himes, Spence, Burns, Irwin), North Clarion (Irwin 5, Bish 3, E. Walter).

#### CHIRICANTON (57)

King 0 0-0 0, Wright 3 0-0 6, W. Carroll 3 6-8 12,

Shorts 2 8-2 23, P. Haskins 0 0-0 0, Rynd 4 1-6 9,

Walker 3 0-0 7, N. Carroll 0 0-0 0, Totals: 22 9-16 57.

#### SAEGERTOWN (58)

Gjovik 1 0-0 2, Spence 6 6-9 18, Leslie 1 4-6 6, Shaffer 1 3-4 5, Gardner 4 2-4 10, Scott 6 5-6 17, Totals: 19 20-29 58.

#### Score by Quarters

Coontrahont 20 4 15 18 15 18 — 57

Saegertown 16 15 12 2 12 15 — 58

3-point goals — Coontrahont (Shorts 5, Walker).

#### FARRELL (46)

Jones 4 0-0 10, Cousins 2 0-0 5, Johnson 3 3-5 9,

Chambers 4 0 0-8, Norman 4 0-0 10, Cain 2 0-0 4, Totals: 19 3-5 46.

#### GROVE CITY (54)

Knouse 3 0-0 8, Marriacher 1 1-2 4, Earman 3 0-0 8,

Oshorn 3 2-3 11, Fischer 8 6-8 23, Gamble 0 0-0 0.

Totals: 18 9-13 54.