

All eyes on Djokovic and Serena

Federer, defying age, eyes his 21st Slam; Osaka looks to keep crown

AUSTRALIAN OPEN

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Old-stagers Novak Djokovic and Serena Williams will aim to keep the younger generation of players waiting in the wings as Grand Slam tennis enters a new decade at the Australian Open on Monday.



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After recent bushfire smog largely cleared in Melbourne, the view is all too familiar with Djokovic and Serena, who is seeking a record-equalling 24th Major title, installed as the bookies' favourites.

Nadal is top seed

Top seed Rafael Nadal, 33, is celebrating becoming World No. 1 in a third decade while Roger Federer, 38, is trying to defy the ageing process and stay ahead of his rivals with a 21st Grand Slam win.

The start of 2020 is not dissimilar to 2010, when Federer and Nadal shared the four Grand Slam titles and Serena won in Melbourne and Wimbledon.

Serena eyes Court's record

Ten years later, the men's Big Three – who have won all but two Australian Open titles since 2004 – occupy the top three rankings, and Serena is one step away from Margaret Court's record for Grand Slam victories.

Several challengers have come and gone but there is



Warming up: Naomi Osaka, the reigning champion, will be keen to defend her title. ■ AP

increasing hope for the men's up-and-comers, while nine women have won Grand Slam titles since Williams, 38, claimed her 23rd in Melbourne in 2017.

While Djokovic and Nadal split last year's Grand Slams, Dominic Thiem, Daniil Medvedev and Fabio Fognini won their first Masters trophies and Stefanos Tsitsipas, 21, became the youngest ATP Finals champion in 18 years.

"They're very close. I don't think that's miles, miles away maybe as it was some years ago," Djokovic of the NextGen winning a Major title.

The clash between old and new will be epitomised in the first round on Monday, when Venus Williams, who turns 40 this year, plays 15-year-old rising star Coco Gauff – who wasn't even born when her fellow American lifted her first Grand Slam trophies in 2000.

Japan's Naomi Osaka, 22, is defending a title for the second Grand Slam in a row after her repeat bid at last year's US Open fell flat in the fourth round.

World No. 1 Ashleigh Barty carries Australian hopes of seeing the first home-grown women's winner since 1978.

Monday's picks

MEN

- 2-Djokovic v Struff
- 3-Federer v Johnson
- 6-Tsitsipas v Caruso
- 8-Berrettini v Harris
- 12-Fognini v Opelka
- 13-Shapovalov v Fucsovics

Prajnesh v Ito

WOMEN

- 1-Barty v Tsurenko
- 3-Osaka vs Bouzkova
- 7-Kvitova v Siniakova
- 8-Serena v Potapova
- 10-Keys v Kasatkina
- 12-Konta v Jabeur

Anand dominates Carlsen in drawn match

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Viswanathan Anand raised visions of a possible win over World champion Magnus Carlsen in their 54-move draw in the seventh round of the Tata Steel Masters chess tournament here on Saturday.

Out of the opening lines of Sicilian Rossolimo, Anand looked clearly better but could not consolidate his position beyond a point. A worried Carlsen was banking on Anand to err in time-pressure but the veteran held on. Eventually, Carlsen found a way to draw.

Meanwhile, 16-year-old Iranian Alireza Firouzja continued to make the chess world sit up and take note of his exceptional showings.

He defeated USA's Jeffery Xiong to regain sole lead at five points – half-a-point ahead of Fabiano Caruana, Wesley So and Jordan van Foreest.

The leader is 1.5 points ahead of Magnus Carlsen, Anand and four others.

In the Challengers' Category, young Nihal Sarin (4) was the only winner of the day after conquering Dinara Saduakassova in 47 moves. Joint-second Surya Shekhar Ganguly (4.5) drew with Rauf Mamedov.

The results (seventh round): Viswanathan Anand (3.5) drew with Magnus Carlsen (Nor, 3.5); Alireza Firouzja (FIDE, 5) bt Jeffery Xiong (USA, 3); Fabiano Caruana (USA, 4.5) bt Daniil Dubov (Rus, 3.5); Nikita Vitiugov (Rus, 2.5) lost to Jordan van Foreest (Ned, 4.5); Jan-Krzysztof Duda (Pol, 3.5) drew with Anish Giri (Ned, 3.5); Vladislav Artemiev (Rus, 3.5) drew with Wesley So (USA, 4.5); Vladislav Kovalev (Blr, 1.5) drew with Yu Yangyi (Chn, 2.5).

Royal Crystal has the last laugh

HYDERABAD: Arjun Mangalorkar's ward Royal Crystal, ridden by S. John, won the Golconda Derby Stakes, the prestigious event of the season, held here on Sunday (Jan. 19). The winner is owned by Dr. Suresh Chintamaneni. Trainer Deshmukh saddled four winners on the day. Consigliori took a smart jump and led all the way before Royal Crystal, who was racing fourth, gradually improved and joined the leader in the straight. Royal Crystal fought every stride and got the better of Consigliori by a neck in a nail-biting finish.

1 TELANGANA CUP (1,800m), 4-y-o & over, rated 60 to 85 (Cat. II): **GOLDEN FORTUNE** (Ajeeth Kumar) 1, Galloping Gangster (Neeraj) 2, Exclusive Blue (Srinath) 3 and Havlock Cruise (Akshay Kumar) 4. 2, 1 and 3/4. Im, 52.86s. ₹26 (w), 14 and 9 (p), SHP: 14, FP: 175, Q: 69, Tla: 289. Favourite: Exclusive Blue. Owners: M/s. Zaveri Stud Farm Pvt. Ltd. rep. by Mr. Champakal Zaveri, Mrs. Bindu C. Zaveri, Miss Harsha N. Desai & Miss Niti N. Desai. Trainer: Deshmukh.

2 PRINCE PRADEEP PLATE (1,400m), 4-y-o & over, rated upto 25 (Cat. III): **SUN DANCER** (I. Chisty) 1, Halo's Princess (P.S. Chouhan) 2, Hopscotch (Mukesh Kumar) 3 and London Bridge (Gopal Singh) 4. 1-1/4, nk and nk. Im, 28.77s. ₹45 (w), 13, 8 and 15 (p), SHP: 28, FP: 232, Q: 105, Tla: 6,077. Favourite: Halo's Princess. Owners: M/s. Keerthi Narasimhachar, Rajesh Sanghai, Ketineni Sayaji Rao & Atul Bhanu Shangai. Trainer: L. D'Silva.

3 SHARAVAN KUMAR MEMORIAL CUP (1,800m), 4-y-o & over, rated 40 to 65 (Cat. II): **THE GREAT CATHY** (Ashhad Asbar) 1, City Of Wisdom (Suraj Narreddu) 2, Beyond Limits (Srinath) 3 and Reno Star (Mukesh Kumar) 4. 2, 3-1/2 and 2. Im, 52.75s. ₹50 (w), 13, 11 and 7 (p), SHP: 38, FP: 379, Q: 218, Tla: 1,595. Favourite: Beyond Limits. Owners:

M/s. Vijay Racing & Farms Pvt. Ltd. rep. by M/s. Vijay Kumar Gupta & Sushel Kumar Gupta. Trainer: Laxman Singh.

4 BANGALORE TURF CLUB CUP (1,400m), maiden 3-y-o only (Cat. II), (Terms): **GOOD CONNECTION** (David Egan) 1, Queen Daenerys (Mukesh Kumar) 2, Ice Berry (Nakhat Singh) 3 and Lightning Power (Akshay Kumar) 4. 3-1/4, 1/2 and hd. Im, 28.09s. ₹9 (w), 6, 12 and 29 (p), SHP: 42, FP: 72, Q: 58, Tla: 1,296. Favourite: Good Connection. Owners: M/s. Vijay Racing & Farms Pvt. Ltd. by M/s. Vijay Kumar Gupta & Sushel Kumar Gupta & M/s. Poonawalla Rac. & Br. P.L. rep. by M/s. Z.S. Poonawalla & S.Z. Poonawalla & Mr. Aditya P. Thackersey. Trainer: Deshmukh.

5 MYSORE RACE CLUB CUP (1,400m), 5-y-o & over, rated 20 to 45 (Cat. III): **ASHWA ARJUN** (Abhay Singh) 1 Wood Bridge (Akshay Kumar) 2, Sea Castle (Mukesh Kumar) 3 and Royal Dynamite (Srinath) 4. Not run: Delphina. 2, 1-1/4 and hd. Im, 27.57s. ₹66 (w), 18, 9 and 9 (p), SHP: 25, FP: 467, Q: 224, Tla: 3,445. Favourite: His Excellency. Owner: Mrs. Anita Chauhan. Trainer: M. Srinivas Reddy.

6 ROYAL WESTERN INDIA TURF CLUB CUP (1,100m), 4-y-o & over, rated 40 to 65 (Cat. II): **HAPPY TOGETHER** (Jitendra Singh) 1, Celeritas (B.R. Kumar) 2, Esteve (Akshay Kumar) 3 and City of Blossom (Mukesh Kumar) 4. 1-1/4 and nk. Im, 5.47s. ₹58 (w), 16, 10 and 10 (p), SHP: 26, FP: 589, Q: 259, Tla: 4,471. Favourite: Sovet Pride. Owner: M.A.M. Ramaswamy Chettiar of Chettinad Charitable Trust rep. Mr. A.C. Muthiah. Trainer: Satheesh.

7 VIJAY TEXTILES JUVENILE MULTI MILLION (1,200m), 3-y-o only (Terms): **LOMBARDY** (David Allan) 1, Air Blast (Nicky Mackay) 2, Allabouther (P. Trevor) 3 and Flameoftheforest (Yash) 4. 1-1/4, 3-1/2 and hd. Im, 11.86s. ₹17 (w), 6, 6

and 9 (p), SHP: 18, FP: 54, Q: 21, Tla: 299. Favourite: Air Blast. Owners: M/s. Vijay Racing & Farms Pvt. Ltd. rep. by M/s. Vijay Kumar Gupta & Sushel Kumar Gupta, M/s. Poonawalla Rac. & Br. P.L. rep. by Mr. Z.S. Poonawalla & Ms. Simone Z. Poonawalla & Mr. Aditya P. Thackersey. Trainer: Deshmukh.

8 MADRAS RACE CLUB CUP (1,400m), 4-y-o & over, rated 75 & above (Cat. I): **PRINCE VALIANT** (P.S. Chouhan) 1, Isabella (David Allan) 2, Highly Acclaimed (Surya Prakash) 3 and That's My Class (A.A. Vikrant) 4. 5, 1 and nose. Im, 24.93s. ₹11 (w), 7, 7 and 10 (p), SHP: 23, FP: 62, Q: 31, Tla: 285. Favourite: Prince Valiant. Owner: Mr. Ahmed Alam Khan. Trainer: Deshmukh.

9 GOLCONDA DERBY STAKES (2,400m), 4-y-o & over, rated 75 & above (Cat. I): **ROYAL CRYSTAL** (WESTERN ARISTOCRAT-SPARKLING CRYSTAL) S. JOHN 1, CONSIGLIORI (Air Support-Caprese) David Allan 2, PASO ROBLES (Arasan-Mawaheeb) Suraj Narreddu 3 and VIJAYS SINGHAM (Leitir Mor-Zarandja) Srinath 4. Nk, 2-1/2 and nk. 2m, 31.54s. ₹62 (w), 11, 7 and 6 (p), SHP: 19, FP: 329, Q: 122, Tla: 526. Favourite: Paso Robles. Owner: Dr. Suresh Chintamaneni. Trainer: Arjun Manglorkar.

10 BHAGMATI CUP (1,600m), 4-y-o & over, rated 20 to 45 (Cat. II): **GAZEBO** (B.R. Kumar) 1, Nova Scotia (David Egan) 2, Rhine (P. Sai Kumar) 3 and Ice Warrior (Nakhat Singh) 4. 1-1/4, nk and shd. Im, 40.91s. ₹49 (w), 14, 9 and 16 (p), SHP: 24, FP: 237, Q: 138, Tla: 5,095. Favourite: Mahashakti. Owner: Mr. A.C. Muthiah. Trainer: Satheesh.

Jkt (i): ₹2,48,351 (two tkts.). Runner-up: 3,801 (56 tkts.); Jkt (ii): 1,31,026 (11 tkts.). Runner-up: 4,609 (134 tkts.); Mini Jkt (i): 39,169 (five tkts.); (ii): 6,898 (38 tkts.); Tr (i): 2,457 (14 tkts.); (ii): 3,192 (29 tkts.); (iii): 1,581 (89 tkts.).



Rewarding success: Royal Crystal's owner Dr. Suresh Chintamaneni, right, trainer Arjun Mangalorkar, third from right, and jockey S. John, left, receiving the Golconda Derby Stakes trophy from K. Bhupal Reddy, Hyderabad Race Club steward, in the presence of, from left, Madras Race Club chairman M.A.M.R. Muthiah, Bangalore Turf Club steward Harimohan Naidu and HRC stewards R. Rajesh and C.S. Suresh. ■ G. RAMAKRISHNA



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