

Kenin stuns Muguruza, takes title

Fights back from a set down to break down the error-prone Spaniard

AUSTRALIAN OPEN

REUTERS
MELBOURNE
American Sofia Kenin counter-punched her way back from a set down against Garbine Muguruza to win her first Grand Slam title at the Australian Open with a 4-6, 6-2, 6-2 win on Saturday. The 21-year-old Kenin, seeded 14th, converted her second match-point against the twice Grand Slam champion, who double-faulted on the final point, to end an engrossing contest that lasted more than two hours.

It's official!
"I just want to say my dream has officially come true... I'm just so grateful standing here," Kenin said after lifting the Daphne Akhurst Memorial Cup. "I'm looking forward to coming back here next year... These past two weeks have been the best two weeks of my life."
Kenin and Muguruza produced a fitting and intense final under the closed roofs of a packed Rod Laver Arena. Muguruza had arrived in Melbourne suffering from a virus that forced her to quit the Hobart International, but the Spaniard was soon back to playing to her strength which helped her reach the top of the women's rankings in 2017. Some of the inconsistency that led to her slipping to 36th last year resurfaced against Kenin, however, as the Spaniard blew hot and cold with her serve, getting 57% of her first serves in while mixing her nine aces with eight double-faults.



In wonderland: Sofia Kenin's dream run ended with her holding up the Daphne Akhurst Memorial Cup on Saturday. • AFP

Kenin's game-plan was a mix of deft drop-shots and deep forehand groundstrokes. But, Muguruza soon found her range and converted her third breakpoint in the third game to nose ahead in the opening set. Kenin, who beat Ashleigh Barty in the semifinal despite trailing the World No. 1 for most of the match, refused to throw in the towel and boosted her confidence by saving four breakpoints to hold the seventh game. She was rewarded for her tenacity in the next game

with two consecutive double-faults from Muguruza that gave her a break back, and brought the set back on serve. But the Spaniard came out firing on all cylinders to break the Moscow-born Kenin again and took the opening set when her opponent missed the sideline with her forehand. Kenin took the court in the second set with renewed vigour and got the break in the fourth game and then a confident hold gave her a 4-1 lead. There was no come-

back for Muguruza from there as the American levelled the match with another break. The intensity of the decider rose considerably with Muguruza slapping her thigh to egg herself on while Kenin was almost reduced to tears out of frustration at some of her shots. Down 0-40 in the fifth game and with her back to the wall, Kenin probably produced her best tennis. She painted the sidelines with three scorching winners while also producing an

ace to hold serve for 3-2. **Breaking ground**
A fifth double-fault from the Spaniard gave Kenin a 4-2 lead, and she was suddenly within striking distance of victory, which she sealed by breaking her opponent again. "I think I'm gonna keep it short because I'm going to get very emotional," said Muguruza, before congratulating her opponent. "I have to thank my team... they were over there suffering with me today."

Who is Sofia Kenin?



Daddy dearest: Sofia Kenin, left, is greeted by father Alex after the triumph. • AP

Age: 21
Country: United States
Birthplace: Moscow
Plays: Right-handed
Turned pro: 2017
SINGLES
Winner: 2020: Australian Open; 2019: Hobart, Mallorca, Guangzhou.
Finalist: 2019: Acapulco.

It hasn't sunk in yet. Everything is still a blur for me. I just can't believe what happened... I feel like I'm doing some great things for American tennis. It's such an honour

DOUBLES
Winner: 2019: Auckland (with Eugenie Bouchard), Beijing (with Bethanie Mattek-Sands).

Compiled by G. Prasad

Jimenez Kasintseva claims Grand Slam first for tiny Andorra

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MELBOURNE

Fourteen-year-old Victoria Jimenez Kasintseva became the first Andorran to capture a title at a Grand Slam when she won the Australian Open girls' tournament on Saturday.

Jimenez Kasintseva, who was the youngest player in the draw and was making her Grand Slam debut, beat 17-year-old Pole Weronika Baszak 5-7, 6-2, 6-2 in 2hrs 4mins.

"It was a very tough tournament, I actually didn't think that I would win," said Jimenez Kasintseva, who divides her time between the tiny European state - sandwiched between Spain and France - and Barcelona, where her father has a tennis academy.

"I guess I fought a lot for it. I was about to lose in some matches, and I just kept fighting. I guess that's how I won."



Victoria Jimenez Kasintseva. • AFP

Look Ma, I did it!

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MELBOURNE

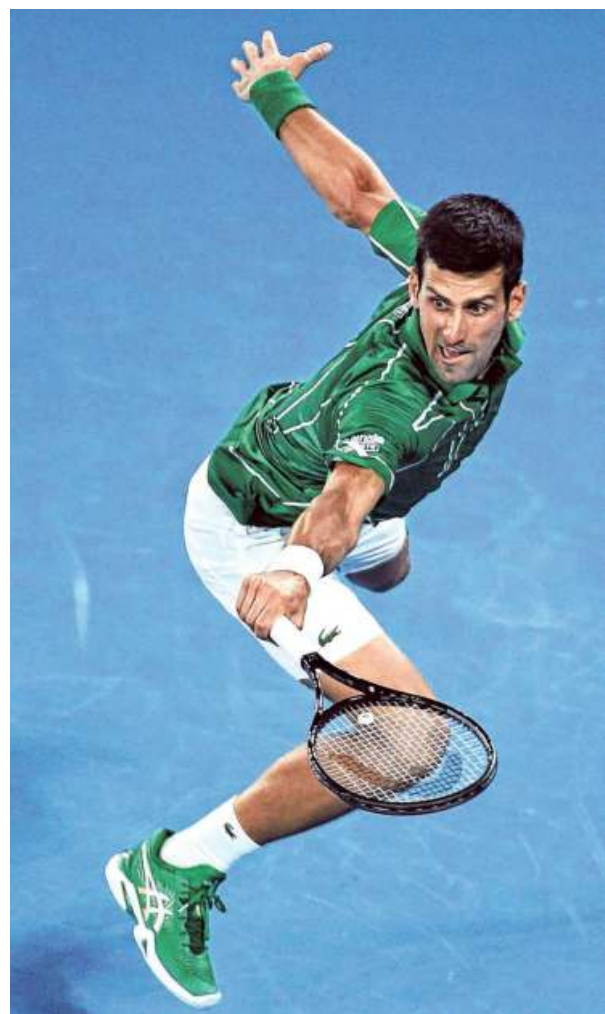
Sofia Kenin had to call her superstitious mother, Lena, to break the news she had won on Saturday because she refuses to watch on TV, fearing it will bring bad luck.

The 21-year-old's father is her coach but the rest of the family was back in the United States as Kenin announced herself to the sporting world with her first Grand Slam title.

"I called her right after the match just to tell her that

everything's fine, I won, she can just relax now," a beaming Kenin told reporters. "She's been really stressed at home, very superstitious. I told her I'm not going to be able to talk to you for hours, but at least you know that I won. I'm coming home, you can give me the biggest hug of your life."

At least Lena did not suffer alone and was accompanied by Kenin's grandmother, sister and the family dogs back in Florida.



NOVAK DJOKOVIC

Road to the Final
1st round: bt Jan-Lennard Struff (Ger) 7-6(5), 6-2, 2-6, 6-1
2nd round: bt Tatsuma Ito (Jpn) 6-1, 6-4, 6-2
3rd round: bt Yoshihito Nishioka (Jpn) 6-3, 6-2, 6-2
4th round: bt Diego Schwartzman (Arg) 6-3, 6-4, 6-4
Quarterfinals: bt 32-Milos Raonic (Can) 6-4, 6-3, 7-6(1)
Semifinals: bt 3-Roger Federer (Sui) 7-6(1), 6-4, 6-3

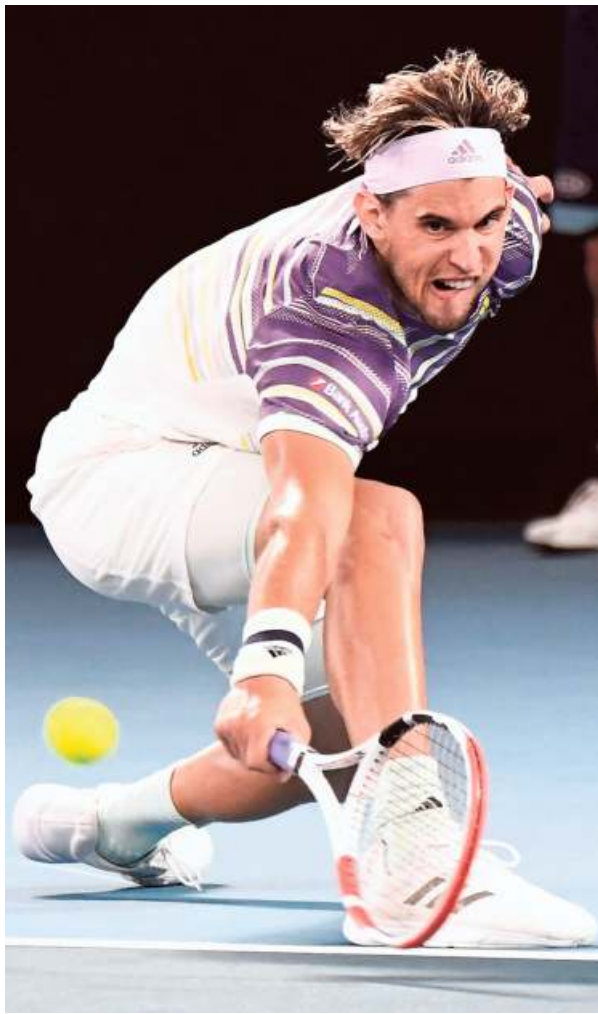


STREAMING
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H2H

- Overall:** Djokovic 6-Thiem 4
- Hard Court:** Djokovic leads 3-1
- Last meeting:** ATP Finals 2019, Thiem won 6-7(5), 6-3, 7-6(5)
- In their last five meetings since the 2017 quarterfinal at Roland Garros, Thiem has the edge over Djokovic 4-1 (four of these matches were held on clay)
- Since losing in the opening round of last year's US Open, Thiem holds a 23-6 (W/L) on hard courts
- Non-Big-3 players who beat the Big-3 players in Slam finals: Wawrinka (three times) Murray (twice) Del Potro
- Stan Wawrinka in 2014 was the last man to beat both of the top two seeds to the title at Melbourne Park, when he beat No.2 seed Djokovic in the quarterfinals and then No.1 seed Nadal in the final



DOMINIC THIEM

Road to the Final
1st round: bt Adrian Mannarino (Fra) 6-3, 7-5, 6-2
2nd round: bt Alex Bolt (Aus) 6-2, 5-7, 6-7(5), 6-1, 6-2
3rd round: bt 29-Taylor Fritz (USA) 6-2, 6-4, 6-7(5), 6-4
4th round: bt 10-Gael Monfils (Fra) 6-2, 6-4, 6-4
Quarterfinals: bt I-Rafael Nadal (Esp) 7-6(7), 7-6(7), 4-6, 7-6(8)
Semifinals: bt 7-Alexander Zverev (Ger) 3-6, 6-4, 7-6(3), 7-6(4)

Ghosh stuns listless Sharath; Ankita reaches semifinals; Sathiyani, Sutirtha tested to the hilt

RAKESH RAO
HYDERABAD
For Siliguri-based former champions Soumyajit Ghosh and Ankita Das, it was a memorable Saturday on their comeback journey. Exceeding all expectations, these 2016 Rio Olympics debutants gate-crashed into the singles semifinals of the National table tennis championship here. Champion in 2013 and 2015, Ghosh ended a listless Sharath Kamal's title-defence 4-2. Ankita, the 2014 winner rallied from 0-3 to stun former champion K. Shamini and seventh seed Anusha Kutumbale. Fighting marital matters in court and trying to set right things that went wrong from the eve of the 2018 Common-

wealth Games, a grossly-overweight Ghosh chose to right stage to make a point. His determined effort against the nine-time champion brought him the first three sets. Sharath, looking almost disinterested in the proceedings, did win some points at will and claimed the next two sets. But in the sixth set, when Sharath led 6-4, Ghosh pulled off six straight points and eventually halted Sharath's unbeaten run since 2017. **Incredible day**
Incredibly, the day saw Ghosh playing seven sets against S.F.R. Snehit and six by Sudhanshu Grover. He also played six sets in doubles - and remained unbeaten! "If I had not won the sixth

game, it would have been very difficult for me in the decider," admitted Ghosh, who last beat Sharath to qualify for the 2016 Rio Olympics. Sharath, on his part, said, "I was not in the match today. Perhaps, he needed to win more badly than me. I'm happy for Ghosh." Top seed G. Sathiyani, down one set to three and 1-3 in the fourth against Manush Shah in the pre-quarterfinals, trailed 1-2 against Ronit Bhanja before racing away with the last three sets. Sathiyani, will have to play much better on Sunday to emerge the winner. Like Ghosh, fellow-resident from Siliguri, Ankita Das marked her comeback by storming into the semifinals. In the pre-quarterfinal,



On the ball: Ankita Das fought past two former champions K. Shamini and Anusha Kutumbale to reach the semifinals. • G. RAMAKRISHNA

featuring two former champions, Ankita rallied from 0-3 to win 4-3 against K. Shamini,

who suffered a shoulder injury during the match. Ankita went on to upstage seventh

seed Anusha Kutumbale in the quarterfinals. Top seed Sutirtha Mukher-

jee, too, rallied from 0-3 to oust Kaushini Nath 4-3 to reach semifinals against Ayhika. **The results:** **Men: Quarterfinals:** G. Sathiyani (Pet) bt Ronit Bhanja (Ben 'A') 11-6, 9-11, 7-11, 11-7, 11-9; Manav Thakkar (Pet) bt Sarthak Gandhi (TTFI) 11-7, 11-6, 8-11, 11-6, 11-8; Harmeet Desai (Pet) bt Sanil Shetty (Pet) 12-11, 11-5, 11-6, 11-8; Soumyajit Ghosh (Har) bt Sharath Kamal (Pet) 12-10, 11-8, 11-7, 9-11, 7-11, 11-7. **Pre-quarterfinals:** Sathiyani bt Manush Shah (Gu) 4-3; Bhanja bt Sourav Saha (Har) 4-3; Sarthak bt Sushmit Sriram (AAL) 4-3; Manav bt Jubin Kumar (Har) 4-1; Sanil bt Jeet Chandra (Har) 4-1; Harmeet bt Akash Pal (Ben 'A') 4-3; Soumyajit bt 10-Sudhanshu Grover (Del) 4-2; 2-Sharath bt Arjun Ghosh (Ben 'A') 4-1. **Women: Quarterfinals:** Sutirtha

Mukherjee (Har) bt Kaushini Nath (Rlys) 8-11, 9-11, 9-11, 11-9, 11-8, 11-4, 11-9; Ayhika Mukherjee (RBI) bt Mousumi Paul (Ben 'A') 7-11, 11-7, 11-7, 11-9, 11-3; Krittwika Sinha Roy (Pet) bt Pooja Sahasrabudhe (Pet) 11-6, 11-8, 11-5, 11-13, 4-11, 11-7; Ankita Das (Ben 'B') bt Anusha Kutumbale (Pet) 9-11, 11-7, 11-2, 6-11, 13-11, 11-5. **Pre-quarterfinals:** Sutirtha bt Madhurika Patkar (Pet) 4-0; Kaushini bt Surbhi Patwari (Ben 'A') 4-3; Mousumi bt Anindita Chakraborty (Rlys) 4-3; Ayhika bt Sagarika Mukherjee (Rlys) 4-0; Krittwika bt Varuni Jaiswal (Tel) 4-0; Pooja bt Prapti Sen (Ben 'A') 4-2; Anusha bt Takema Sarkar (Rlys) 4-0; Ankita bt K. Shamini (Pet) 4-3. **Semifinal-line up (men):** Sathiyani-Manav Thakkar; Harmeet Desai-Soumyajit Ghosh; **(women):** Sutirtha-Ayhika; Krittwika-Ankita.