

Tennis

Seppi upsets Federer in third round of Aussie Open

46th-ranked player knocks out four-time champ

By JOHN PYE
Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia — Roger Federer will look back on it and wonder, just as he did on court, why he just watched as Andreas Seppi went down the line and ended his streak of reaching the Australian Open semifinals for 11 consecutive years.

The 17-time Grand Slam champion was facing match point against Seppi for the first time in their 11 head-to-head meetings, and had control of the rally when he hit a deep forehand into the corner and followed it to the net.

The No. 46-ranked Seppi lunged to his right and stuck out his racket, more hopeful than confident, and guided the ball down the line. Federer let it go past, and glanced back to see it land inside the baseline, giving Seppi a 6-4, 7-6 (5), 4-6, 7-6 (5) win and a spot in the fourth round.

“The way he hits it you think, ‘This can’t possibly land in.’ You kind of go and you’re there and you’re like, ‘No, I’m going to let it go,’” the second-seeded Federer said. “As you’re telling yourself that, you look behind you and you already know it’s done.”

Federer had reached the semifinals or better at Melbourne Park ever since winning the first of his four Australian titles in 2004. He hadn’t been ousted before the fourth round here since 2001. That changed in an instant.

“I don’t know. Ask him how he felt hitting it,” Federer said. “It’s clearly a big blow because I actually hit my forehand pretty good.”

Seppi was euphoric, but acknowledged that the defining shot of the match was not a calculated winner.

“Yeah, was for sure a strange shot,” the 30-year-old Italian said. “At the beginning I thought I couldn’t even reach the ball. Then, when I hit it, I didn’t see it going there. I just saw when it bounced in.

“Was for sure one of the important shots of my life.”



AP Photo/Bernat Armangué
Andreas Seppi of Italy celebrates after defeating Roger Federer of Switzerland in their third round match at the Australian Open tennis championship in Melbourne, Australia, Friday, Jan. 23, 2015.

Seppi had only advanced beyond the second round once at his nine previous trips to the Australian Open. He held his nerve despite some withering winners from Federer, who registered his 1,000th career match win earlier this month in Brisbane. Federer, uncharacteristically, let mini-breaks slip in both tiebreakers, had nine dou-

Nick Kyrgios, who shrugged off concern over a nosebleed to beat Malek Jaziri of Tunisia 6-3, 7-6 (6), 6-1. Kyrgios beat then No. 1-ranked Rafael Nadal in the fourth round at Wimbledon last year.

Nadal is still a contender in Australia after rebounding from his five-set, second-round win to beat No. 106-ranked Dudi Sella 6-1, 6-0, 7-5.

The 14-time major winner is coming off a lengthy stint on the sidelines, and has been playing down his chances of going all the way again in Melbourne, where he won in 2009.

Andy Murray hasn’t had a match on the center court at Melbourne yet this year, but it hasn’t bothered the three-time finalist. He won in straights sets again, beating Joao Sousa 6-1, 6-1, 7-5 to set up a clash with No. 10 Grigor Dimitrov, who labored through a five-set win over 2006 Australian Open finalist Marcos Baghdatis.

Seventh-seeded Tomas Berdych needed eight match points before beating Viktor Troicki 6-4, 6-3, 6-4 and will next play Bernard Tomic,

who beat fellow Australian Sam Groth 6-4, 7-6 (8), 6-3.

After having to fend off match points in her previous match, Maria Sharapova made sure it wasn’t even close in the third round by beating No. 31 Zarina Diyas 6-1, 6-1 in 61 minutes. She next plays Peng Shuai and has a potential quarterfinal against No. 7 Eugenie Bouchard.

The 20-year-old Canadian struggled through a scrappy opening set before recording a 7-5, 6-0 third-round win over Caroline Garcia that featured 10 breaks of serve.

“I don’t think it was the prettiest tennis out there,” said Bouchard, who reached the semifinals in her first trip to Melbourne Park last year and went on to make the semifinals or better at two of the other three majors in a breakthrough season.

Third-seeded Simona Halep, who lost the French Open final to Sharapova last year, advanced with a 6-4, 7-5 win over Bethanie Mattek-Sands. Her fourth-round match is against Yanina Wickmayer, who had an upset win over No. 14-seeded Sara Errani.

MLB

Mariners sticking with Montero

By JOSH LIEBESKIND
Associated Press

SEATTLE — Jesus Montero still has a chance with the Seattle Mariners.

Mariners’ officials spent their pre-spring training luncheon on Thursday lauding the transformation of the once highly touted prospect, reporting that he had lost 40 pounds this offseason.

Montero was part of a trade prior to the 2012 season in which he came to the Mariners from the New York Yankees in exchange for young right-hander Michael Pineda.

Montero never panned out as a catcher, though, and despite a decent first season at the plate with the Mariners, hitting became a serious issue. Problems beyond the field became a concern, as well, as he was suspended 50 games for being connected to the Biogenesis scandal. He also came to spring training last year overweight.



Montero played in just six major league games this past season and had an incident last August during a Single-A game when he confronted a scout in the stands. The last incident seemed to be the final straw.

But general manager Jack Zduriencik and manager Lloyd McClendon were cautiously optimistic Thursday when talking about the offseason work Montero has put in. He’s now down to 235 pounds, a target weight set for the start of spring training.

“He’s made some very poor decisions, but he’s a good kid,” Zduriencik said. “Sometimes bad decisions, sometimes the wrong focus. Obviously, got a big egg in his face. He deserves a second chance, he deserves a third chance.

“One of the things that was really, really a goal of ours in September when we brought him up here face-to-face with him and his wife was, Jesus, first and foremost, we need to save you as a human being. First and foremost, we need to make you a functional person, in terms of some of these decisions and some of these directions that you’re misguided upon. I think we set a program in place that he embraced.”

McClendon met with Montero a couple months ago and said the two had “a real good conversation” about the game of life. Since then, Montero has accomplished all that McClendon set out for him.

“Now he can start concentrating on being a better baseball player,” McClendon said.

College Football

Mannion among passers trying to be No. 3

By JOHN ZENOR
Associated Press

MOBILE, Ala. — The NFL draft’s quarterback pecking order beyond Jameis Winston and Marcus Mariota might not have gotten much clearer at the Senior Bowl.

Baylor’s Bryce Petty and Oregon State’s Sean Mannion were among those trying to make headway leading up to Saturday’s game for top senior NFL prospects. It’s unclear if they were successful.

“There’s kind of that (question), Could someone distinguish himself as the third guy?” said Charles Davis, an NFL Network analyst. “I don’t know if anyone really did that this week.”

Winston and Mariota, the past two Heisman Trophy winners, are projected as early first-round picks. Then there’s the other guys, including those hoping to use the Senior Bowl as a first step toward climbing the draft boards.

Petty is trying to follow Baylor predecessor Robert Griffin III into the NFL and make the transition from Baylor’s uptempo, high-scoring offense. He has been working with quarterback coach George Whitfield Jr. on making the adjustment since Jan. 6 as well as during spring break the last few years, going under center each time.

Petty makes it clear he’s motivated by the doubters, citing a report predicting he wouldn’t be anything more than a career backup.

“That’s more motivation for myself,” Petty said. “For me, I have pretty high expectations for myself, more so than what anybody else can say about



Oregon State quarterback Sean Mannion looks on during NCAA college football practice for the Senior Bowl, Thursday, Jan. 22, 2015, at Ladd-Peebles Stadium in Mobile, Ala.

AP Photo/Brynn Anderson

me. I try not to pay too much attention to that kind of thing, but that’s reality. My job is to prove that I belong and that I am relevant. Hopefully at the end of this week, it’ll be Petty and the other guys. That’s what I’m trying to do here.”

There’s no questioning his college credentials. Petty finished his college career with a 550-yard passing performance in the Cotton Bowl against Michigan State and set an NCAA record with interceptions on just 1.18 percent of his career passes. He’s also hoping Griffin’s struggles in adapting to the NFL won’t be held against him.

North coach Ken Whisenhunt of the Tennessee Titans said Petty has proven his commitment to mastering the pro-style offense. That includes getting used to taking snaps under center and making five- and seven-step drops.

Like Petty, the other quar-



• Saturday, 1 p.m.
• TV: NFL Network

terbacks all put up big numbers in college, from Mannion to former Mariota backup Bryan Bennett of Southeastern Louisiana, East Carolina’s Shane Carden, Alabama’s Blake Sims and Colorado State’s Garrett Grayson.

Mannion set 18 Oregon State passing records and his 13,600 career yards puts him eighth on the NCAA charts. He views the Senior Bowl as a weeklong competition with five more senior NFL hopefuls.

“The goal I set for myself is to come in here and be the best guy,” Mannion said. “It’s something that every day, every meeting, every practice, every rep, I want to be the best one. In terms of where people are drafted, that kind of thing, that’s still a ways down the road. But right now I just want to be the best guy here at the Senior Bowl.”

Sims led Alabama to a Southeastern Conference title

in his lone season as a starter after switching back from running back, setting the Tide’s single-season passing record.

He said he gave no thought to trying another position, feeling he “showed the world” he could play quarterback last season.

Bennett was a late addition. He flew in from San Diego, California, overnight Tuesday to join the South team after Auburn’s Nick Marshall opted to play cornerback instead.

Bennett transferred after backing up Mariota in 2012, then ran for 31 touchdowns and passed for 5,522 yards over the past two seasons.

“Obviously I wanted to win the spot” at Oregon, said Bennett, who ran into his former coach Chip Kelly before his first practice. “I’m a competitor. Nobody who’s competing wants to lose a competition. My thought was really what can I do to find myself on the field now.”

His thought now is trying to find himself on an NFL field.

NHL

American-born talent at highest point in over decade for NHL All-Star game

Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Some of the best players in the world — Sidney Crosby, Evgeni Malkin and anybody wearing a Detroit Red Wings or Colorado Avalanche jersey — will be absent from the NHL All-Star game on Sunday.

Yet the list of American-born talent at the game is longer than it’s ever been.

When the sport’s best showcase their talents, there will be nine U.S. born and bred players. It’s the largest red, white and blue contingent since the NHL went to this format in 2003.

“That upsurge has been

there,” said Nashville Predators coach Peter Laviolette, born in Norwood, Massachusetts, who will serve as a head coach in the annual goal-fest held for the first time this year in Ohio’s capital city.



• Sunday, 2 p.m.
• TV: NBCSN

The native sons include some of the biggest names in the sport: Chicago right wing Patrick Kane and Columbus left wing Nick Foligno (both from Buffalo, New York), Toronto right wing Phil Kessel and Minnesota

defenseman Ryan Suter (both from Madison, Wisconsin), and others such as Winnipeg defenseman Dustin Byfuglien, St. Louis blue liner Kevin Shattenkirk, Ottawa left wing Bobby Ryan, Tampa Bay center Tyler Johnson and Carolina defenseman Justin Faulk.

“You’re seeing a lot of

great players start to come up now,” said Shattenkirk, one of the game’s best young defensemen. “It’s been a great few years for U.S. hockey. It’s exciting to see that many guys here. We do take a lot of pride in, I don’t want to say proving ourselves, but just making sure that American hockey is respected.”

Your EO Youth Sports

The Pendleton 6th grade Big John’s Pizza AAU basketball team went undefeated to repeat as champions of the Clash of The Borders Basketball Tournament on Jan. 17-18 in Pendleton. More than 70 teams from Oregon, Washington and Idaho from grades 4-8 participated in the tournament. PICTURED: Top Row (left to right) — coach Ryan Sams, Kyle Field, Dakota Sams, Buck Weilert, Ruger Deming, coach Preston Bronson. Bottom Row (l-r) — Greyson Sams, Reuben Bronson, Tyasin Burns, Tucker Zander, Zack Rabb.



Contributed photo courtesy of April Rabb

Little League registrations open

Online registration is open for Pendleton and Hermiston Little League.

Baseball and softball players ages 5-13 in Hermiston can get a \$10 early bird discount on their registration fees if forms are received before Jan. 31. Cost is \$65 for players ages 5-12 and \$75 for 13-14. There are also discounts for families with three or more players. Players can register at HermistonLittleLeague.com.

Pendleton’s fees are \$60 per player or \$140 for a family. Online registration can be completed at PendletonLittleLeague.com, or at one of three public

registration sessions.

On Tuesday, Feb. 10 and Thursday, Feb. 12 players can register at the Community Room at City Hall from 5:30-8 p.m. Another session will be held in the same place on Saturday, Feb. 14 from 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

Milton-Freewater Little League also has announced its public registration dates and locations.

Registration will be held at the Mac-Hi cafeteria from 6-7:30 p.m. on Tuesday, Jan. 27 and Thursday, Feb. 5. Cost is \$55 for baseball and softball, and \$35 for tee-ball.

— East Oregonian