

Australian Open

Djokovic reaches fifth Australian final

By JOHN PYE
Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia — Novak Djokovic reached a fifth Australian Open final, avenged a long and arduous loss to Stan Wawrinka and ensured he'd renew an old rivalry with Andy Murray.

The top-ranked Djokovic was so absorbed in the moment, he lost track of the score during Friday's semifinal. His mental lapse after the third set probably cost him the fourth, but the four-time Australian Open champion recovered with three service breaks in the fifth set to beat defending champion Wawrinka 7-6 (1), 3-6, 6-4, 4-6, 6-0.

"Sometimes these things happen, you get carried away by a moment," Djokovic said, trying to explain his perplexed expression after he'd taken a lead of two sets to one. "I was

very confused when I saw the security on the court.

"The circumstances, obviously playing Grand Slam semifinals against the defending champion ... a lot of emotions going around. Sometimes you can't keep track of the score."

Djokovic has a 100 percent winning record in finals at Melbourne Park, claiming his first Grand Slam here in 2008 and winning three straight titles from 2011 before losing in the quarterfinals last year to Wawrinka. Only Roger Federer and Stefan Edberg had reached five men's finals at the Australian in the Open era.

The previous two meetings between Djokovic and Wawrinka at the Australian Open had gone to five sets and lasted a combined nine hours. Friday's match lacked that kind of intensity and memorable moments.

"Strange," Wawrinka said. "Not the best."

At times Wawrinka got on top of Djokovic, who sometimes looked lethargic. Despite dropping serve in four of the five sets, Djokovic kept his composure in the 3-hour, 30-minute match as Wawrinka blasted 42 winners but offset that with 69 unforced errors.

The momentum shifted suddenly in three of the five sets, with both players struggling to turn service breaks into big leads and wasting breakpoint opportunities. Djokovic hit 27 winners — none in the fourth set — and finished with 49 unforced errors.

"The battle was great ... in terms of fighting from both sides," Djokovic said, "but the level of performance was not where I wanted it to be."

It was good enough to increase his career record to 17 wins in 20 matches against Wawrinka, who won his first major title here last year. The

Swiss player didn't advance past the quarterfinals at his next three Grand Slam events, and will drop to No. 9 when the next rankings are released.

"There's no pressure for that," Wawrinka said of the burden of defending a title. "But, no, for sure we had some great battles here last two years. Today was strange match. He was there playing good enough to win and he deserve to win and play the final."

Murray is moving in the other direction, restoring his position in the so-called Big Four of major winners that includes Djokovic, No. 2 Federer and No. 3 Rafael Nadal, who dominated the Grand Slam titles for so long.

Sixth-seeded Murray, who has lost three Australian Open finals, moved into the championship match with a fiery four-set win over No. 7 Tomas Berdych on Thursday night.



AP Photo/Vincent Thian

Novak Djokovic of Serbia celebrates a point won against Stan Wawrinka of Switzerland during their semifinal at the Australian Open tennis championship in Melbourne, Australia, Friday, Jan. 30, 2015.

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SATURDAY, JANUARY 31, 2015

ARIES (March 21-April 19). You come to the mysterious door and turn the key in the lock, and to your utter delight, you see... Your answer to the question points to the direction of your happiness. How can you get there faster?

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). Your early memories of faith or religion will have a bearing on your thought process today. Recognize that you are still being influenced by someone else's moral code even though you don't completely share it.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). Because of the way our minds work, whatever the endeavor, the first time is usually the most memorable one. It's time for another first in your life. Make it happen.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). You desire to grow your brain, yet there is a point at which reading too many unfamiliar concepts, words and styles makes you numb, immune to learning or sleepy. Take it in small bites.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). There's a subject that keeps revisiting your mind several times a day, and this is likely to continue until it's resolved. As much as you dislike confrontation, this is probably not going to happen without one.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Sitting quietly and waiting for inspiration won't work. The muses are likelier to visit you while you're walking, cooking, showering or driving. One good idea could change your life.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). You'll practice the kind of skill that is pretty easy to pick up initially but takes years to perfect. Keep at it. The mastery of common things can be uncommon indeed.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). It's not about what actually happened; it's about the context, mood and feeling -- the incalculable data -- that have to line up with the actual events for the situation to work.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). Do you have the manpower, tools and resources necessary to complete a job? It doesn't matter. You'll cross the finish line because of your sheer determination.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Maybe you're not exactly in a state of harmony today, but you will be in the near future. Trust that, and build your resources for the later date when you'll need them.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Some social scientists have concluded that brainstorming in groups actually impedes innovation. Whether or not that's true, the groupthink will annoy you now, and you'll be brilliant on your own.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). There's poetry in simplicity, though - with the exception of nursery rhymes, haiku and limericks -- it rarely happens in the reverse. You'll have an audience for the beautiful simplicity you concoct today.

TODAY'S BIRTHDAY (Jan. 31). If life is a party, you're the "it" guest this year. February is a whirl of fun. After March's call to clear out negativity and dysfunction, you'll work on the fundamental building blocks of good living again in May. July and August are focused on a moneymaking venture with a stellar chance of success if you don't give up. Leo and Aries adore you. Your lucky numbers are 5, 22, 31, 39 and 13.

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