

Analysis | Australian Open tennis

Djokovic right to focus on Federer, Nadal, Slams



Hamish Blair/AP

Serbia's Novak Djokovic celebrates after defeating Russia's Daniil Medvedev in the men's singles final at the Australian Open tennis championship in Melbourne, Australia, on Sunday. It was the 33-year-old Serbian's 18th major championship.

World's No. 1 has his sights set on rivals and record books

BY HOWARD FENDRICH
AP Tennis Writer

It didn't take long for Novak Djokovic to make his intentions clear: All that matters to him from here on out is catching Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal in the Grand Slam standings.

Forget about winning other, run-of-the-mill tournaments or playing enough to retain the No. 1 ranking.

There is one, primary goal for the 33-year-old from Serbia. He wants to keep adding to his 18 major championships — he reached that number with No. 9 at the Australian Open on Sunday — until he no longer trails Federer and Nadal, who share the men's record of 20.

"They've made history already. They made a tremendous mark in our sport," Djokovic said.

"Whether I think about winning more Slams and breaking records? Of course, I do. And most of my attention and my energy for this day forward, until I retire from tennis, is going to be directed (at) majors, trying to win more major trophies."

Which is perfectly fine. There is no need for pretense. And there is absolutely no requirement that he show up to compete more often than he really wants or in places other than where he really wants. If all that matters to Djokovic from a tennis standpoint is accumulating Slams, and playing less frequently will also protect his body — he had surgery on his right elbow three years ago; his 2021 Australian Open nearly was derailed by what he said was a torn abdominal muscle — that is his prerogative.

It isn't much different from what Federer

himself or 23-time major champion Serena Williams, for that matter, have done for years.

"I think 99.9% of players — kids that get a racket in their hands — start dreaming about what they want to achieve. It's a Grand Slam, winning a major," Djokovic explained after his commanding performance in a 7-5, 6-2, 6-2 victory over Daniil Medvedev in the final at Melbourne Park.

"I mean, I don't feel like I'm old or tired or anything like that," he said. "But I know that biologically and realistically, things are different than they were 10 years ago for me."

Connected to that: His latest triumph at the Australian Open came with the additional bonus of assuring a stay atop the ATP rankings until at least March 8.

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MLB

Spring training still a hot ticket in sunny Arizona

BY DAVID BRANDT
Associated Press

PHOENIX — Even during a pandemic, the appetite to sit in the sun and watch Major League Baseball spring training appears robust.

The Arizona Diamondbacks sold out their entire spring allotment of tickets in less than 24 hours after they went on sale to the public. Approximately 2,200 tickets were sold for all 14 of the team's home games, with fans spread throughout the park in pods of two, four or six seats and masks are required except when eating or drinking.

That's 20% of the stadium's normal 11,000-person capacity. "The fact that it sold out as fast as it did — that fires me up," Arizona manager Torey Lovullo said. "We've been looking forward to this day as much as them."

The Colorado Rockies — who share the Salt River Fields facility with the D-backs — have also sold out of tickets to their home games. The two teams open their spring training schedule against each other next Sunday. Spring training facilities across Arizona and Florida have been making their own decisions about how many fans — if any — are allowed to attend games.

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NASCAR | CUP SERIES

Bell snags first Cup win in another surprise for Gibbs

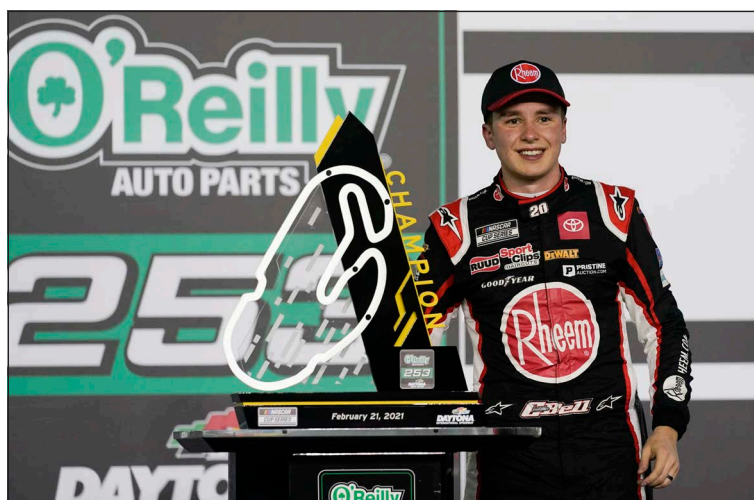
BY JENNA FRYER
AP Auto Racing Writer

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. — Give him good cars and Christopher Bell will win races. But in his second race? With a new team? That seemed unlikely.

Bell defied the odds Sunday and earned his first career Cup series victory — in just his second race since Joe Gibbs Racing pulled him back into its inner circle — to close out an unpredictable week of racing at Daytona International Speedway.

Michael McDowell was the surprise Daytona 500 winner and then Bell earned an earlier-than-expected first trip to victory lane. It's just the third time in NASCAR history the first two races of the season were won by first-time winners. It was previously done in 1949 and 1950 — NASCAR's first two seasons.

More important, Bell and McDowell have snagged coveted berths in the 16-driver playoff field, a troubling trend for mid-pack teams that need all 26 regular-sea-



John Raoux/AP

Christopher Bell celebrates in Victory Lane after winning the NASCAR Cup Series road course auto race at Daytona International Speedway on Sunday in Florida.

son races to point their way into the championship picture. Race winners earn automatic berths and the remaining spots are decided by the points standings.

"The dynamic has changed dramatically," Brad Keselowski said.

"We're very early in the season and it's now turned into a points race for those last few spots. If you don't win, you're in a lot of trouble because it's not looking like you're going to be able to get in the playoffs."

See **NASCAR** / A6

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Goodman leads OSU to upset UCLA

Aleah Goodman scored 20 points, Taylor Jones posted her fifth double-double of the season and Oregon State upset eighth-ranked UCLA 71-64 on Sunday to boost its NCAA Tournament hopes.

UCLA was within two late in the fourth quarter, but Goodman hit a 3-pointer with 1:32 remaining to extend Oregon State's lead to 66-61. Jones had 16 points and 11 rebounds as the Beavers controlled the inside with a 38-24 advantage in points in the paint.

The game was tied at 57 with 5:57 remaining but the Beavers (8-6, 6-6 Pac-12) outscored the Bruins 14-7 the rest of the way. Talia von Oelhoffen's jumper from beyond the arc put Oregon State on top for good.

Michaela Onyenwere led UCLA (13-4, 11-4) with 21 points and Lauryn Miller added 13. The Bruins, who posted a 27-point win over No. 13 Oregon on Friday, shot a season-low 27.6% from the field (21 of 76).

UCLA trailed 49-42 late in the third quarter before going on a 10-2 run over the final 2:32 to take a 52-51 lead going into the final 10 minutes. Onyenwere and Natalie Chou each had four points during the rally and Charisma Osbourne hit a jumper in the lane with a second remaining to put the Bruins on top for the first time since early in the second quarter.

Oregon State trailed 18-13 at the end of the first quarter, but took control in the second outscoring the Bruins by 10 to grab a 36-31 advantage at half-time. The Beavers started the second quarter with an 11-2 run and led by eight at various points in the period.

Parrish nets 17, No. 13 Oregon tops USC

Sydney Parrish hit four 3-pointers and scored 17 points off the bench and No. 13 Oregon ended a three-game losing streak with a 72-48 win over USC on Sunday.

The Ducks, who lost to three-straight Top 10 teams, matched their season high with 12 3-pointers on 28 attempts and shot 48% overall (27-56), their best shooting performance after seven games of shooting between 32 and 43%.

Erin Boley added 13 points and eight rebounds for Oregon (13-7, 10-6 Pac-12 Conference), which has won 10 straight in the series. Nyara Sabally and Sedona Prince both scored 11. Te-Hina Paopao had eight assists and Parrish four steals.

Alissa Pili scored 14 points for the Trojans (10-10, 8-9), who shot just 33% (18 of 55).

Taylor Chavez and Boley opened the game with 3-pointers and the Ducks never trailed. USC tied the game at 14 but Oregon scored the next six. A 10-0 run in the middle of the second quarter, featuring back-to-back Sabally and Parrish 3's, made it 34-20 and the lead was in double figures the rest of the way.

Oregon went 2-9 from 3-point range and was just 6 of 16 overall in the third quarter but limited the Trojans to 10 points.

The Ducks are scheduled to play rival Oregon State on home next Sunday to close the regular season. USC wraps up at No. 8 UCLA on Sunday.

— Associated Press