

PRIME TIME

friday — (all times are kuwait local)

- 09:30 australian open/tennis bein sports 8 hd
- 10:00 atalanta vs napoli/soccer bein sports 4 hd
- 11:00 qatar vs s. korea/soccer bein sports 3 hd
- 13:00 wizards vs thunder/basketball bein sports 14 hd
- 15:30 madrid vs istanbul/basketball bein sports 8 hd
- 22:30 eintracht vs gladbach/soccer bein sports 5 hd
- 22:45 dijon vs rennais/soccer bein sports 6 hd
- 23:00 athletic vs eibar/soccer bein sports 3 hd

Sports

Latest sports scores at — <http://sports.arabtimesonline.com>

Halep, Woz in winner-takes-all final

Dominant Cilic sweeps past Edmund

MELBOURNE, Jan 25, (AFP): Simona Halep survived a three-set thriller against Angelique Kerber Thursday to set up a winner-takes-all Australian Open final against Caroline Wozniacki, where the number one ranking will be on the line.

The Romanian said for a fleeting moment she thought "everything had gone" when facing two Kerber match

points before battling past the former champion 6-3, 4-6, 9-7.

But the tenacious Halep stayed alive to put her number one ranking up for grabs in the showdown against the number two seed, with both desperate to win a maiden Grand Slam title.

"Definitely was very tough. I'm shaking now," said Halep, who saved the match points at 5-6 on Kerber's serve in the third set.

She confessed she wasn't sure how she did it.

Wozniacki beat unseeded Belgian Elise Mertens 6-3, 7-6 (7/2) after a late wobble when she was broken serving for the match at 5-4 in the second set.

Saturday's final, which could be played in forecast temperature of up to 35 Celsius (95 Fahrenheit), looks set to be a gruelling do-or-die clash between two players known for their tenacity and court coverage.

In a see-sawing contest, Halep sprinted into a 6-3, 3-1 lead before 2016 Melbourne Park winner Kerber, seeded 21, fought back.

The Romanian finally prevailed in 2hr 20min with her fourth match point to ensure a new name will grace the trophy.

In her match, Wozniacki almost let Mertens back in when serving for the win at 5-4, and seemingly in complete control.

Two double faults enabled the Belgian, in her first semifinal at this level on her Australian Open debut, to level at 5-5. Serving to take it to a tiebreak at 5-6 Wozniacki then needed to save three set points before sealing the match in the tiebreak.

The final will be only the 17th time

TENNIS

in Australian Open history that the number one and two seeds have met for the title — first and second seeds have won eight times each.

The last time it happened was in 2015 when top seed Serena Williams beat second-seeded Maria Sharapova.

Marin Cilic dominated British hope Kyle Edmund in straight sets to become the first Croatian to reach the final of the Australian Open on Thursday.

The world No.6 powered into his third Grand Slam decider with a 6-2, 7-6 (7/4), 6-2 win in 2hr 18min on Rod Laver Arena over the unseeded Edmund to be the first man into Sunday's final.

He will face either defending champion Roger Federer or unseeded South Korean Chung Hyeon, who play on Friday.

It was an emphatic performance by the 2014 US Open champion, who broke Edmund's serve four times and nullified the Briton's powerful forehand.

The victory ensured that he will rise to a career-high of three when the new rankings come out on Monday.



Croatia's Marin Cilic celebrates after winning the second set against Britain's Kyle Edmund during their men's singles semifinals match on day 11 of the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne on Jan 25. (AFP)



(Left): Denmark's Caroline Wozniacki hits a return against Belgium's Elise Mertens during their women's singles semifinals match on day 11 of the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne on Jan 25. (Right): Romania's Simona Halep hits a return against Germany's Angelique Kerber during their women's singles semifinals match on day 11 of the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne on Jan 25. (AFP)



Edmund

City on course for clean sweep

Sanchez in Man U FA Cup squad

LONDON, Jan 25, (AFP): Manchester United manager Jose Mourinho on Thursday hailed new signing Alexis Sanchez as one of the "best attacking players in the world", confirming he will be in the squad to face Yeovil in the FA Cup.

United travel to the fourth-tier club on Friday at the start of a weekend that will also see Premier League leaders Manchester City tested by Championship high-fliers Cardiff and Liverpool taking on West Brom in the fourth round.

Chile international Sanchez, 29, completed his transfer from Arsenal on Monday in a straight swap deal that saw Henrikh Mkhitaryan move in the opposite direction.

United's new number seven, who has previously played for Italian side Udinese and Barcelona, is available for the Huish Park tie because he did not appear for Arsenal in their third-round loss at Nottingham Forest.

SOCCER

"We've got one of the best attacking players in the world. I think he'll be very important for us because we want to have the best players possible," Mourinho told reporters.

The United boss praised his new player's versatility in attack, where he joins an impressive roster of players including Romelu Lukaku, Marcus Rashford and in-form players Jesse Lingard and Anthony Martial.

"Our careers are almost made in the same countries simultaneously, so I know him very, very well," said former Inter Milan and Real Madrid boss Mourinho.

"I saw him play on the right, on the left, as a striker and behind the striker, these are Alexis's positions.

"I saw him play in different tactical systems, with different philosophies of different managers, I saw him successful in every country, with every manager, with every system, in every position."

Earlier this week Yeovil, playing United in the FA Cup for the second time in four seasons, reacted to Sanchez's potential debut on their home ground.

"You said you've joined 'the biggest club in the world @Alexis_Sanchez so it's only right you start your #MUFC career in the biggest away dressing room in @SkyBetLeagueTwo. Maybe," the club tweeted.

Mourinho was asked about the possibility of another big acquisition, the return of Real Madrid superstar Cristiano Ronaldo to Old Trafford.

"Madrid is on fire, the results are not good," said the United boss. "I care about the club. I am the last one to add fire. Cristiano is the kind of player that every man-

ager and club wants but only one manager and club can have him, (Zinedine) Zidane and Real Madrid."

Pep Guardiola's City remain on course for an unprecedented quadruple after reaching the final of the League Cup this week but have a tough challenge on their hands away to Cardiff, third in the Championship.

Guardiola made clear where his priorities lie after beating Bristol City to reach the Wembley showpiece.

"I like the Premier League a lot, because every single weekend or every three days you have to be ready," he said. "For me that is more important. The Champions League is the most beautiful, the most prestigious.

"But the Premier League is something special — like it was the La Liga for me or the Bundesliga in Germany. After that the FA Cup is important, and now we are in the final of the League Cup we try to win that."

Chelsea take on Newcastle in an all-Premier League fixture at Stamford Bridge, licking their wounds after defeat to Arsenal in the League Cup semifinal on Wednesday.

For all his league success at Juventus and Chelsea, boss Antonio Conte has yet to win a cup as a manager.

In another all Premier-League tie, Liverpool host West Brom, looking to bounce back after defeat to bottom club Swansea ended their 18-match winning run in all competitions.

Nottingham Forest's reward for dumping out champions Arsenal in the third round is a trip to play Hull.



Chelsea's Marcos Alonso (left), challenges for the ball with Arsenal's Hector Bellerin during the English League Cup semifinal second leg soccer match between Chelsea and Arsenal at the Emirates Stadium in London Jan 24. (AP)

Bert to take Aussies to WC

SYDNEY, Jan 25, (AFP): Bert van Marwijk will take the Socceroos to the World Cup in Russia, Football Federation Australia announced Thursday following Ange Postecoglou's sudden resignation from the top job late last year.

Dutchman Van Marwijk, who led Saudi Arabia to World Cup qualification before leaving in September last year over a contract dispute, was one of the leading foreign candidates to take on the short-term coaching stint.

"This is a great result for Australian football," FFA chairman Steven Lowy said in a statement.

"He knows a lot about our team and how they play because he studied them closely as an opposition manager in the same (World Cup qualifying) group. These experiences make him a compelling choice.

"In Bert van Marwijk we have a manager who can achieve great things with this team."

Mou 'extends' contract at Utd

LONDON, Jan 25, (AFP): Jose Mourinho has signed a contract extension that will keep him at Manchester United until at least 2020, the club said Thursday, putting an end to rumours he is unhappy at Old Trafford.

Mourinho became the first United manager in history to win a major trophy in his first season when he secured the League Cup last year, and he also led the club to victory in the Europa League, the only competition they had never won.

But this season they are a distant second in the Premier League to Pep Guardiola's Manchester City, who are 12 points clear in the table and unlikely to be caught barring a spectacular collapse.

"I am really honoured and proud to be Manchester United manager," Mourinho, 54, said in a club statement.

"I would like to say a big thank you to the owners and to (executive vice-chairman) Mr (Ed) Woodward for the recognition of my hard work and dedication. I am delighted they feel and trust that I am the right manager for this great club for the foreseeable future.

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