



Serbia's Novak Djokovic slams a forehand to Spain's Rafael Nadal during their semifinal match of the French Open tennis tournament at the Roland Garros Stadium in Paris. (AP)

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Krejcikova wins 1st Grand Slam title

Djokovic hands Nadal 3rd loss in 108 French Open matches

PARIS, June 12, (AP): Thinking of her late coach the whole time, Barbora Krejcikova went from unseeded to Grand Slam champion at the French Open.

Krejcikova beat 31st-seeded Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova 6-1, 2-6, 6-4 in the final at Roland Garros on Saturday to win the title in just her fifth major tournament as a singles player.

When it ended with Pavlyuchenkova's backhand landing long on the fourth match point for Krejcikova, a 25-year-old from the Czech Republic, they met at the net for a hug.

Krejcikova is the third unseeded women's champion since 2017 at Roland Garros. There were zero from 1968 through 2016.

She now will try to become the first woman since Mary Pierce in 2000 to win the French Open singles and doubles titles in the same year. Krejcikova and partner Katerina Siniakova already own two Grand Slam doubles titles and reached Sunday's final of that event.

TENNIS

Pavlyuchenkova, a 29-year-old Russian, was playing in her first Grand Slam final in the 52nd major tournament of her career - the most appearances by a woman before reaching a title match.

This was only the second WTA singles title for Krejcikova - and they've come in her past two tournaments.

She is the sixth consecutive first-time Grand Slam champion to collect the women's championship at Roland Garros, where the red clay can frustrate players by diminishing the effectiveness of speedy serves and by creating odd bounces.

Saturday's matchup was a fitting conclusion to two surprise-filled weeks.

Some jitters were apparent in the final's opening game, when Krejcikova double-faulted twice and got broken. But she snapped out of it right away, excelling with her crisp two-handed backhand, net skills honed in doubles and perfect defensive lobs. One curled over Pavlyuchenkova and landed right in a corner for a winner that helped Krejcikova break to 1-1 and begin a six-game run.

Pavlyuchenkova went up 5-1 in the second, before she stretched for a backhand, winced and reached for her upper left leg. During a medical timeout, a trainer taped that leg while Pavlyuchenkova was on a towel, a bag of candy within reach.

In the third set, Krejcikova nosed ahead for good at 4-3 by breaking at love with a forehand winner.

Soon enough, she was being handed the Coupe Suzanne Lenglen by 18-time major champion Martina Navratilova and gently rocking the trophy during the Czech national anthem.

Sprinting, sliding and stretching, anticipating each other's moves for four sets and more than four hours, Novak Djokovic and Rafael Nadal produced a masterpiece in the French Open semifinals.

Djokovic, as it happens, is one of only two men in tennis history who knows what it takes to beat Nadal at Roland Garros. And now Djokovic has done it twice - this time ending Nadal's bid for a 14th championship there and record-breaking 21st Grand Slam title overall by coming back to win their 58th career matchup 3-6, 6-3, 7-6 (4), 6-2.

"Just one of these nights and matches that you will remember forever," said the top-seeded Djokovic, who trailed 2-0 in the closing set before reeling off the last half-dozen games to reach his sixth final at the clay-court major tournament.

"Definitely the best match that I was part of ever in Roland Garros, for me, and (one of the) top-three matches that I ever played in my entire career - considering quality of tennis, playing my biggest rival on the court where he has had so much success and has been the dominant force in the last 15-plus years," Djokovic said, "and the atmosphere, which was completely electric." It was Nadal's third loss in 108 matches at a tournament he won each of the last four years, including by beating Djokovic in the 2020 final.

Nadal's first defeat at the French Open came against Robin Soderling in 2009; the next against Djokovic in 2015.

"Each time you step on the court with him," Djokovic said, "you know that you have to kind of climb Mt. Everest to win against this guy here." And to think: There wasn't even a trophy at stake in this one. That will happen Sunday, when Djokovic, a 34-year-old from Serbia, faces Stefanos Tsitsipas, a 22-year-old from Greece.

The fifth-seeded Tsitsipas edged sixth-seeded Alexander Zverev 6-3, 6-3, 4-6, 4-6, 6-3 earlier to reach his first Grand Slam final.



Czech Republic's Barbora Krejcikova poses with the Cup after defeating Russia's Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova in their final match of the French Open tennis tournament at the Roland Garros Stadium in Paris. (AP)

Eriksen taken to hospital after collapsing, Wales hold Switzerland to 1-1 draw

Italy make flying start to European Championship

ROME, June 12, (AP): Italy waited a long time for this European Championship to start and then showed just how eager the team was to play the tournament opener.

After humiliateingly failing to qualify for the 2018 World Cup, Italy were already back on track with a perfect qualifying campaign of 10 wins in 10 matches. Now Roberto Mancini's team have begun their first major international tournament in five years with a convincing 3-0 win over Turkey.

Ciro Immobile and Lorenzo Insigne both scored after an own-goal from Turkey defender Merih Demiral had given Italy the lead - all in the second half.

Demiral redirected a cross from Domenico Berardi into his own net after attempting to intercept the pass. Immobile then poked in a rebound of a shot from Leonardo Spinazzola on another play that began with Berardi, and Insigne later curled one in after a failed clearance by Turkey goalkeeper Ugurcan Cakir.

Italy dominated from the start but was denied in the first half by a superb save from Cakir and a decision by the referee not to award a penalty for an apparent handball.

The victory extended Italy's unbeaten run to 28 matches and boosted the Azzurri's status as a title contenders.

Italy, which won their only European title in 1968, had never before scored more than two goals at the European Championship, according to UEFA.

SOCCER

The tournament, which is still being called Euro 2020, began a year late because of the pandemic.

The Stadio Olimpico was still only 25% full because of coronavirus measures and fans sat in small groups safely distanced from one another. Still, the crowd of about 16,000 was the largest gathering in Italy since the pandemic took hold.

Italy appeared energized from the start and dominated possession while Turkey sat back and waited for rare counterattacks.

In the first half alone, Italy produced 13 attempts and Turkey none. By the end, Italy had 24 attempts and Turkey three - and none on goal.

Midway through the first half, Cakir made an acrobatic save to deny Giorgio Chiellini. The Italy captain was left unmarked on a corner and directed a header toward the target before Cakir leaped up, extended his right arm high into the air and pushed the ball over the



Wales' Gareth Bale (right), and Switzerland's Ricardo Rodriguez battle for the ball during the Euro 2020 soccer championship Group A match between Wales and Switzerland at Baku Olympic Stadium in Baku, Azerbaijan. (AP)

bar with his fingertips.

With his head wrapped in bandages the same color as his red shirt, Keiffer Moore nodded in an equalizer to give Wales a 1-1 draw with Switzerland at the European Championship in Baku, Azerbaijan.

The goal off a cross from Joe Morrell in the 74th minute hinted that Wales could again be a surprise contender at Euro 2020, like it was five years ago when the team reached the Euro 2016 semifinals.

For Moore, it was the biggest step so far in a long journey to soccer's elite after starting in the non-league system in southwest England.

He nearly gave Wales a lead with a looping header which Switzerland goalkeeper Yann Sommer stretched to push over the bar, but he was hurt in a clash on the resulting corner. Moore left the field bleeding and returned in bandages, but was largely cut out of the game as Wales defended deeper in the first half.

Switzerland dominated possession but wasted numerous chances before Breel Embolo scored the opening goal in the 49th minute. First he won a corner when his shot was pushed wide after a solo run, then rose above his marker to head in a cross from Xherdan Shaqiri.

The Swiss pushed for a winning goal after Moore's header and thought they had one when Mario Gavranovic put the ball in the net, but it was ruled offside on video review.

Saudi Arabia close in on 3rd round spot

Kuwait WC hopes end as Australia advance to 3rd round

KUWAIT CITY, June 12, (Agencies): Kuwait hopes of advancing to the third round of Asian World Cup were ended after drawing 0-0 with

Jordan at Jaber International Stadium.

The first half lacked intensity as both sides created little chances.

The turning point of the game came in 60th minute after Kuwait defender was sent off for two yellow cards.

The visitors were denied the maximum points by outstanding goalkeeping from Khaled Al-Rashid.

10-man Kuwait nearly broke the deadlock in closing stage of the game but striker Youssef Nasser missed that golden opportunity.

With this result Jordan stayed second with 14 points while Kuwait third with 11 points.

Australia became the fourth Asian team to advance to the third stage of World Cup qualifying after beating Nepal 3-0.

Goals from Mathew Leckie, Fran Karacic and Martin Boyle in Kuwait City earned Australia Group B honors and a seventh win out of seven matches. The Australians joined Japan, South Korea and Syria in the next round, scheduled to start in September.

Only the eight group winners progress along with the four best second-placed teams.

China kept alive their hopes of adding to their sole World Cup appearance in 2002 by beating the Maldives 5-0 in Sharjah. Victory against Group A winners Syria on Tuesday will be enough to send China into the third round.

The team's form is good. In three games since the second round resumed on May 30, China have taken nine points, scored 14 goals and conceded none. But Syria will be a tougher test.

SOCCER

Iran thrashed Cambodia 10-0 but will still have to win against Group C leaders Iraq - which defeated Hong Kong 1-0 to stay two points clear at the top - on Tuesday to finish first.

There will be another showdown between first and second in Group G. Vietnam stayed two points clear of the United Arab Emirates with a 2-1 win over Malaysia. UAE's 5-0 victory over Indonesia means victory over Vietnam on Tuesday will be enough for first place.

In Group D, Saudi Arabia scored three goals in the last six minutes to defeat Singapore 3-0 in Riyadh, a result that left the host needing on Tuesday just a point against Uzbekistan, which beat Yemen 1-0, to finish first.



A Kuwaiti player kicks the ball as two Jordanians look on during a World Cup qualifying match in Kuwait. KUNA photo

Italy lead Group A with three points. Wales and Switzerland have one point each.

Denmark midfielder Christian Eriksen was taken to a hospital Saturday after collapsing on the field during a match at the European Championship.

The governing body of European soccer said Eriksen has been stabilized and the Danish soccer federation said

he was awake.

"Christian Eriksen is awake and is undergoing further examinations at Rigshospitalet," the Danish federation wrote on Twitter.

The Euro 2020 match between Denmark and Finland was suspended after Eriksen was given urgent medical attention on the field near the end of the first half.

He was treated for about 10 minutes after collapsing. He was then carried off on a stretcher. UEFA then announced the game had been suspended "due to a medical emergency."

UEFA said the teams were having an emergency meeting and more information would be provided at 7:45 p.m. local time. A stadium announcer asked fans to stay in their seats and stay calm.