

# Aryna Sabalenka Eases Past Marta Kostyuk Into Madrid Open Semi-Finals

<Last year's runner-up Aryna Sabalenka survived a gritty Marta Kostyuk and an untimely rain interruption to complete a 7-6(7/4), 7-6(9/7) win over the Ukrainian and reach the Madrid Open semi-finals for a fourth time on Wednesday. The top-seeded Sabalenka needed 84 minutes to take the opening set before securing the win in cold, breezy conditions. Kostyuk saved a match point and broke to take the second set into a tiebreak. At 5-4 in the breaker, it started to rain and play was halted briefly to close the roof of the Manolo Santana stadium.

Upon resumption of play, Sabalenka saved three set points and eked out the win, her third over her rival in as many meetings.

"Honestly, that was a battle and conditions were incredibly tough. It wasn't about tennis, it was about the way you handled your emotions," said the Belarusian world number one, who hit 48 unforced errors.

"I think I did really well and I'm super proud I was able to handle myself in



such a difficult situation."

Sabalenka next takes on another Ukrainian in the form of Elina Svitolina, who extended her winning streak to 11 consecutive matches with a swift 6-2, 6-1 rout of Japan's Moyuka Uchijima in just 52 minutes.

A champion in Rouen last week, Svitolina is undefeated on clay this season and is the first Ukrainian woman to reach

the semi-finals in Madrid.

The 30-year-old has won her last 22 consecutive sets on the red dirt. Svitolina has a three-year-old daughter, is running a foundation that has taken over the responsibilities of the Ukrainian national tennis team both financially and from a managerial side, and is on an incredible run that will see her re-enter the top 15 in the rankings.

"I have a lot on my plate, but I draw energy and motivation from my people," said the former world number three.

"When I go back to Ukraine, I just get so much energy from all the people that are right now over there having a tough time. I'm just trying to keep it up and bring some wins for Ukraine."

Earlier in the day, Iga Swiatek kept her Madrid

Open title defence alive, as she avenged her Australian Open defeat to Madison Keys with a 0-6, 6-3, 6-2 win against the American in the quarter-finals.

The second seed will next square off with Coco Gauff, who beat 18-year-old Mirra Andreeva for the third time in as many meetings, 7-5, 6-1.

Searching for her first title of the season, the second-seeded Swiatek recovered from a poor opening set to improve her clean record on clay against Keys to 4-0 and reach a third consecutive Madrid semi-final.

Keys knocked out the Pole on her way to a maiden Grand Slam title in Melbourne three months ago and seemed to have cracked the Swiatek code when she handed her a bagel in the first set on Wednesday.

But Swiatek, who was contesting a 17th consecutive quarter-final on clay, cut down on her errors and struck back to book a last-four clash with Gauff.

On court in the Arantxa Sanchez stadium, Gauff saved two set points while receiving at 4-5 before

seizing a one-set lead after 63 minutes of play against Andreeva.

Gauff cruised in the second set to dismiss the seventh-seeded Russian and reach her first semi-final of the year -- outside of the mixed team United Cup event.

The fourth-seeded American gave herself a 9/10 grade for her performance, adding: "I think I played really well and stayed composed, even when facing those set points." In ATP action, Novak Djokovic's conqueror Matteo Arnaldi earned multiple top-20 wins in one event for the first time by knocking out 16th-seeded Frances Tiafoe 6-3, 7-5 to move into the Madrid quarter-finals. The Italian world number 44 will take on Jack Draper, who reached his first Masters 1000 quarter-final on clay with a 6-2, 6-2 result against world number 12 Tommy Paul. Lucky loser Gabriel Diallo saved three match points to claim the biggest win of his career over world number 16 Grigor Dimitrov 5-7, 7-6(9/7), 6-4 and reach the quarter-finals.

## Barcelona Fight Back Against Inter Milan In Sensational Champions League Semi-Final Draw



Barcelona and Inter Milan shared a compelling 3-3 draw in a high-octane Champions League semi-final first leg clash on Wednesday. The Italian side raced into a two-goal lead with superb strikes from Marcus Thuram and Denzel Dumfries, before the unstoppable Lamine Yamal pulled Barca back into it with a sublime solo effort. Ferran Torres levelled for the five-time champions and although Inter nosed ahead through Dumfries again, a Yann Sommer own goal left the tie on a knife-edge at the halfway stage. Inter were desperately hoping Thuram would be fit to play after a thigh injury and he showed precisely why, scoring the fastest ever Champions League semi-final goal after 30 seconds. Barcelona's Copa del Rey final winning goalscorer Jules Kounde hacked a poor clearance to the edge of the box, and Inter capitalised.

Dutch wide man Dumfries aimed a low cross towards Thuram and Inigo Martinez slipped at just the wrong time, allowing the France striker room to finish with an impudent back-heel flick.

Quadruple-chasing Barcelona seized control and pushed forward, roared on by a nervous 50,000 strong Olympic stadium crowd.

Yamal, on his 100th Barcelona appearance, appealed for a penalty after he was shoved by Alessandro Bastoni and then set up Torres, who fired wide.

The Spaniard, standing in for Barca's injured top goalscorer Robert Lewandowski, lashed a volley narrowly off target. Against the run of play Inter, whose treble hopes crumbled after three consecutive domestic defeats prior, scored their second, with another fine finish. Francesco Acerbi nodded on a corner and Dumfries reached the dropping ball first to score with a stunning acrobatic effort.

## 'It's a shame we won't have Arshad Nadeem': Neeraj Chopra Classic participant breaks silence on post-Pahalgam snub



The inaugural Neeraj Chopra Classic is scheduled to place on May 24 in Bengaluru and the javelin throw event has already been hit with controversy. After the recent Pahalgam terror attack, the competition received national attention as an invitation was also sent to reigning Olympic champion Arshad Nadeem. After the Pahalgam attack, Nadeem revealed that he would not be travelling to India for the event due to training commitment for the upcoming Asian Athletics Championship, which is scheduled for May 27-31 in South Korea.

Neeraj was on the receiving end of criticism and abuse from fans, who felt that he ignored national sentiments. But what

many fans didn't know is that invitation was sent before the Pahalgam attack, and Neeraj revealed that in a public statement, also accusing fans of abusing his family.

2016 Olympics silver medalist Julius Yego, who will be participating in the event in Bengaluru, expressed his disappointment on the absence of Arshad. The Pakistan athlete threw a record distance of 92.97m in Paris last year.

Speaking to Livemint, Yego said, "I feel for Nadeem! It could have been so nice for him to compete there (at Neeraj Chopra Classic). To me it's a loss to the big sport. I also feel for Neeraj because he has tried his best to have him come but

situations didn't allow it to happen."

"So it's a shame we will not have the Olympic champion (Arshad) competing in this very important event by Chopra in India," he added.

Yego also hailed Neeraj for organising the upcoming event in India. He said, "For Neeraj to organise this big event in India is big step to making the sport popular in places perceived to be less popular like Africa/Kenya in particular and now India which has made this sport very popular."

"Every competition is a learning experience for all but more to the young ones. Indian athletes will be able to experience that feeling on competing among the best in the world so it's a very good learning experience and opportunity. This is will be a very special event with special learning to most if not all." The NC Classic will also feature the likes of two-time world champion Anderson Peters, 2016 Olympics gold medalist Thomas Rohler and current world leader Curtis Thompson. Fans will also get to see Neeraj in action.

## Shreyas Iyer Handed Big Punishment By BCCI After Win Against Chennai Super Kings. Reason Is...



Punjab Kings captain Shreyas Iyer was fined Rs 12 Lakh for maintaining slow over-rate during the IPL 2025 encounter against Chennai Super Kings on Wednesday. PBKS registered a comprehensive victory over CSK in the match but Shreyas was punished as his team was not able to complete the full quota of overs within the stipulated time. PBKS were even forced to bring an extra fielder inside the circle before the start of the 19th over but that did not stop Chahal from claiming a brilliant hat-trick.

"Shreyas Iyer, Captain, Punjab Kings has been fined after his team maintained a slow over-rate during Match 49 of the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2025 against Chennai Super Kings at the MA Chidambaram

Stadium, Chennai on Wednesday."

"As this was his team's first offence of the season under Article 2.22 of the IPL Code of Conduct, which pertains to minimum over-rate offences, Iyer was fined INR 12 Lakh," BCCI said in a release. Skipper Shreyas made an excellent fifty to support

Yuzvendra Chahal's hat-trick as Punjab Kings defeated Chennai Super Kings by four wickets in their IPL match on Wednesday. Shreyas (72, 41b, 5x4 4x6) and opener Prabhshimran Singh (54, 36b, 5x4, 3x6) were the main run-makers for PBKS as they overhauled the 191-run target in 19.4 overs. Earlier, Sam Curran's 88 helped hosts CSK reach a competitive 190 all out despite Chahal taking four wickets including a hat-trick (4/32).

Pakistan's Olympic gold-winning javelin thrower Arshad Nadeem's Instagram account has been blocked in India owing to a "legal request" in the aftermath of the Pahalgam terror attack. Users attempting to access Nadeem's Instagram page from India are met with the message: "Account not available in India. This is because we complied with a legal request to restrict this content."

Twenty-six people, mostly tourists, were killed and several injured when terrorists opened fire at a meadow near the popular tourist town of Pahalgam in south Kashmir on April 22. The government has since cracked down on Pakistani social media accounts that have large following in India.

Earlier this week, several Pakistani YouTube channels were also restricted in India for "disseminating provocative and communally sensitive content, false and misleading narratives and misinformation against India, its Army and security agencies".

Former cricketers Shoaib Akhtar, Basit Ali,

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Nadeem, who won gold

at the Paris Olympics after

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Neeraj Chopra, had been

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However, he declined

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