

Tsitsipas says 'strength of Navy SEAL' needed to win French Open

AFP | Paris

Stefanos Tsitsipas believes he'll need to have the mental and physical strength of an elite, battle-hardened special forces commando to break through to a maiden Grand Slam title.

The Greek world number five came agonisingly close to winning the French Open in 2021 when he surrendered a two-sets lead to lose in five to Novak Djokovic.

It's a memory which still haunts him, especially after losing to the Serbian superstar again in January in the final of the Australian Open.

"There are a few guys that can play good under pressure, especially in big, tight moments, and you have to have the mental strength of a Navy SEAL to pull it through," said Tsitsipas, hailing the crack US special forces unit.

Tsitsipas made the French Open last 32 for the fourth year in succession yesterday with a 6-3, 7-6 (7/4), 6-2 victory over Spain's Roberto Carballes Baena.

As well as making two Grand Slam finals, the 24-year-old has fallen at the semi-finals on four occasions -- twice to bitter rival Daniil Medvedev (2020 and



Greece's Stefanos Tsitsipas



As a teenager, Tsitsipas almost drowned when swimming in the Mediterranean Sea - he was saved by his father, who helped him to a rock.

"The waves were covering us every two to three seconds and, for the first time in my life, I felt I was a few seconds from dying," Tsitsipas recalled. "On the court after this, I was looser and more relaxed."

2021 Australian Open) and to Djokovic (2020 French Open) and Rafael Nadal (2019 Australian Open).

In his quest, he has resorted to consulting Rafael's Nadal autobiography because he "kind of shows you that anyone can do it".

"You have to have the physique of a marathon runner, the

lungs of a marathon runner. You have to have the power of a football player," added Tsitsipas when asked what constitutes a Grand Slam champion.

"There are so many little components that you have to link up in order to make this unbelievable player where you allow yourself to be unstoppable."

Tsitsipas racked up his 50th

Grand Slam win in the first round against Jiri Vesely while Wednesday's victory against Carballes Baena was his 20th at Roland Garros.

"I get excited when I see personal records being kind of set and broken," he added. Another of Tsitsipas's ambitions is to deliver a first Davis Cup title to Greece.

However, he is his country's only player in the world's top 500 so if an unlikely triumph in the prestigious team event is ever to be secured, it would require Greece to have a reliable doubles pairing.

That's where his brother Petros, who is Greece's top-ranked doubles player, enters the equation.

The Tsitsipas brothers were beaten in the first round in Paris on Tuesday, losing in a final set tiebreak to Marcelo Arevalo and Jean-Julien Rojer.

"Trust me, it sucks. To be losing that with your brother, it sucks more than usually," said Stefanos.

"I'm doing this for my brother. I don't think I would have done this for anyone else. One of our own personal dreams is winning Davis Cup together. Doing that with your brother is probably the most beautiful thing you can witness on a tennis court."

Young footballer dies after cup brawl in Germany

Berlin

A 15-year-old footballer from Berlin died yesterday after he was seriously injured in a fight with players from a French team at an international youth tournament, police said.

The teenager "died in hospital as a result of his severe brain injuries" after being hit on the head in the altercation in Frankfurt on Sunday, local police said in a statement.

A 16-year-old player from the French team was arrested following the fight and was still being held in custody, police said.

The brawl occurred following the final whistle in a game between the victim's side JFC Berlin and a team from French second-division club Metz.

Investigators were still look-



Representative picture

ing at the "detailed sequence of events" which led to the young player's injuries, they said.

The victim was seemingly hit "on the head or neck" before he "fell to the floor and had to be resuscitated", police said in a separate statement Tuesday.

The victim, already declared brain dead on Tuesday, was kept on life support so his organs could be donated, a spokeswoman for the Frankfurt prosecutor's office said.

Man Utd's Martial ruled out of FA Cup final



Manchester United's French striker Anthony Martial

London

Manchester United forward Anthony Martial will miss Saturday's FA Cup final against Manchester City due to a hamstring problem.

The Frenchman sustained the injury after coming off the bench against Fulham on Sunday in United's final game of the Premier League season.

"Anthony Martial is out of Saturday's FA Cup final against Manchester City due to injury," United said in a statement Tuesday.

"The France international strained his hamstring towards

the end of Sunday's 2-1 win against Fulham at Old Trafford.

"Assessments have since revealed a muscle tear that rules the 27-year-old out of the Wembley showdown."

Martial scored nine goals in 29 appearances for United this term but was restricted by a series of injuries.

Only 11 of his 21 league appearances have been in the starting line-up, but he had been hoping to be in contention to start at Wembley against City, who are bidding for a treble of Premier League, FA Cup and Champions League.

Kokkinakis ends 38-year-old Wawrinka's French Open

AFP | Paris

Thanasi Kokkinakis knocked 38-year-old Stan Wawrinka out of the French Open yesterday in a five-set rollercoaster to book a third round place at Roland Garros for the first time since 2015.

Australian world number 108 Kokkinakis came through 3-6, 7-5, 6-3, 6-7 (4/7), 6-3 in four hours and 38 minutes against the 2015 champion.

"I feel better now that I've won," said the 27-year-old after securing victory on a fifth match point.

"What a match. I know Stan is getting older but in the first set he was playing the best. I was nowhere, just hanging in."

Kokkinakis, who described Wawrinka, a three-time major winner, as a "legend" of the sport, last made the third round



Switzerland's Stan Wawrinka

of a Slam in Paris eight years ago when he was just 19.

However, he has been plagued by physical and medical problems with a shoulder injury limiting him to just one singles match from November 2015 un-

til May 2017.

He then missed the entire 2020 season due to mono before undergoing surgery on his sinuses in 2022.

"I've had a pretty crazy story. I came on the scene when I was



Australia's Thanasi Kokkinakis

pretty young, looked like I was set for a big future but I went missing for a few years," he said.

Kokkinakis will take on either Russian 11th seed Karen Khachanov or Moldova's Radu Albot for a place in the last 16.

Dalot signs new contract with Man Utd

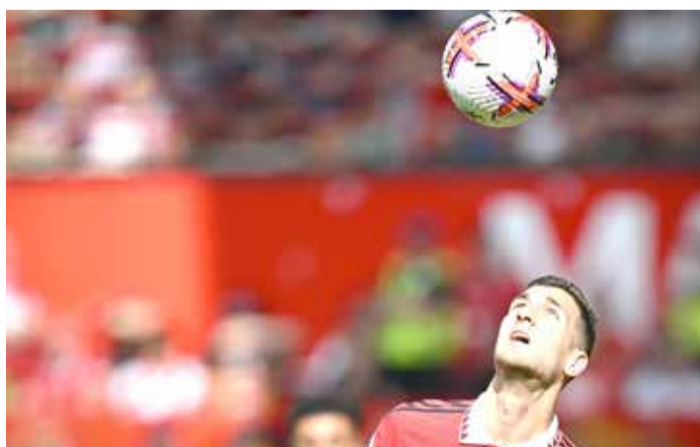
London

Manchester United defender Diogo Dalot has signed a contract extension that will keep him at Old Trafford until at least 2028.

Dalot's new five-year deal includes the option of a further season as the right-back is rewarded for an impressive season with the club.

Erik ten Hag's team finished third in the Premier League, won the League Cup and face Manchester City in the FA Cup final on Saturday.

The 24-year-old, capped 11 times by Portugal, joined United from Porto in 2018 and has gone on to make 107 appearances in



Manchester United's Portuguese defender Diogo Dalot

all competitions.

Dalot, who spent the 2020-21

season on loan at AC Milan, said: "Playing for Manchester United

is one of the highest honours that you can have in football.

"We have shared some fantastic moments over the past five years and I've grown so much and my passion for this incredible club has only increased since the day that I joined.

"As a group of players, we all feel like we are at the start of a special journey right now.

"I can assure you that I will dedicate myself relentlessly to helping this group to achieve our aims and make the fans proud of this team.

"That drive continues this week with everyone intensely focused on preparations for the FA Cup final."

Sabalenka powers into French Open third round



Belarus' Aryna Sabalenka

Paris, France

World number two Aryna Sabalenka cruised into the French Open third round yesterday with a straight-sets win over fellow Belarusian Iryna Shymanovich.

The Australian Open cham-

pion took some time to get the measure of her opponent, who had never won a main-draw WTA match before this tournament, before wrapping up a 7-5, 6-2 victory.

Sabalenka will face either Poland's Magdalena Frech or Russian Kamilla Rakhimova in the last 32.