

Djokovic, Nadal set for Olympics second-round showdown

Legends drawn for potential second-round meeting in Paris, as both seek elusive singles gold

● **Djokovic faces Matthew Ebden; Nadal plays Marton Fucsovics**

● **Alcaraz plays Hady Habib**

AFP | Paris

Grand Slam record-breakers Novak Djokovic and Rafael Nadal were placed on an Olympics second-round collision course in the draw for the Paris Games yesterday.

Nadal, a singles gold medallist at the 2008 Olympics, is playing

Rafael Nadal

in his final Games having also won doubles gold in Rio in 2016, while Djokovic was a bronze medallist in singles in 2008.

Serbia's Djokovic, a 24-time Grand Slam champion and top seed in Paris following the withdrawal of world number one Jannik Sinner, begins his campaign against Australia's Matthew Ebden.

"I am excited for this duel in the second round, and I will give it my all," said Djokovic, who has faced Nadal 59 times over the past 18 years.

"I am aware of the importance of the Olympic Games. I represent my country, which is more responsibility and even more pressure."

Spain's Nadal, who has won 14 of his 22 Grand Slams on the clay

Nadal, Djokovic and Nishikori are playing at the Olympics for the fifth time in their careers

of Roland Garros, faces Hungary's Marton Fucsovics in his opener.

French Open and Wimbledon champion Carlos Alcaraz, the second seed, tackles 275th-ranked Hady Habib of Lebanon in opening round of the tournament, which starts on Saturday.

"Roland Garros is the most special place in the world of tennis for me," said 38-year-old Nadal, who was defeated in the first round of the French Open by Alexander Zverev last month during an injury-hit season.

"This year I was not able to spend a lot of time at Roland Garros so I am excited to be back here. It's another opportunity and a chance to enjoy every single moment."

Defending Olympic champion Zverev, seeded third, takes on Jaume Munar of Spain.

Russian fourth seed Daniil Medvedev, playing in Paris as a neutral following Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, will meet Rinky Hijikata of Australia.

Two-time singles gold medallist Andy Murray, who will end his career at the Olympics after almost two decades on tour, will only play doubles.

Novak Djokovic

Murray withdraws from Paris Olympics singles but will play doubles

AFP | London

Andy Murray withdrew from the tennis singles at the Paris Olympics yesterday but the two-time gold medallist will play doubles in what will be the final event of his glittering career.

The British former world number one, who will retire at the end of his fifth Games, has still not fully recovered from back surgery last month.

He believes the decision to withdraw from the singles to concentrate on the doubles with Dan Evans, offers his best chance of another medal.

"I've taken the decision to withdraw from the singles to concentrate on the doubles with Dan," said the 37-year-old.

"Our practice has been great and we're playing well together. Really looking forward to getting started and representing GB one more time."

Murray won gold in singles

“Our practice has been great and we’re playing well together. Really looking forward to getting started and representing GB one more time”

ANDY MURRAY

at London 2012 and in Rio four years later, as well as silver in mixed doubles with Laura Robson in 2012.

His withdrawal means his final singles match was his brief second-round appearance at Queen's Club against Jordan Thompson last month before he was forced to pull out because of a spinal cyst.

The Scot confirmed earlier this week that he would retire after the Paris Olympics.

"The Olympics are incred-

Andy Murray

ibly special for me, had some amazing memories on the court in London in 2012," he said at Roland Garros yesterday.

"Playing at home and winning medals was unbelievable. I am happy to do it one more time to compete for my country."

"I trained the last few weeks to get myself ready to play singles and doubles but I am getting older and it's harder to recover

from all the

injuries. I just ran out of time. But I am happy to be in the doubles with Dan -- we can have a good run."

Murray has been ravaged by injuries in recent years, slumping to 121st in the world.

He has played with a metal hip since 2019 and suffered ankle damage earlier this year.

Murray was only fit enough to play doubles with his brother, Jamie, at Wimbledon this month.



World Cup holders Spain win women's Olympic football opener

AFP | Paris

Reigning Ballon d'Or Aitana Bonmati scored one goal and helped create another as World Cup holders Spain came from behind to beat Japan 2-1 in their first game of the women's Olympic football tournament yesterday.

Spain are making their Olympic women's football debut at the Paris Games but are leading contenders to win the gold medal after their World Cup triumph in Australia and New Zealand last year.

They fell behind against Japan in the western French city of Nantes to Aoba Fujino's early free-kick, but Bonmati soon equalised before Mariona Caldentey netted the winner in the 74th minute.

It is the perfect start for Spain



Spain players celebrate after scoring

in Group C, in which rivals Nigeria and Brazil meet later.

With 12 teams split into three groups of four, there is margin for error as the two best third-placed teams will advance to the quarter-finals.

That will provide some comfort for Japan, who won the silver medal at London 2012.

Spain's starting XI featured seven players who were in the line-up for last year's World Cup final win over England in Syd-

ney, plus Alexia Putellas, the two-time former Ballon d'Or winner.

Japan's side included Hinata Miyazawa, the top scorer at the World Cup, but it was Fujino who opened the scoring in the 13th minute with a fine strike from a dead ball which proved too powerful for goalkeeper Cata Coll.

However, Spain bossed possession and drew level midway through the first half when Bonmati was played in by Athenea del Castillo and rounded the goalkeeper to score.

They then grabbed what proved to be the winner when Caldentey came in from the left and played a quick exchange of passes with Bonmati before firing in.

Olympic Esports games to debut in Saudi Arabia in 2025



IOC and Saudi Arabian officials at the 142nd IOC Session

Hussain Almaskati
TDT | Manama

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has officially announced the debut of the Olympic Esports Games, scheduled for 2025 in Saudi Arabia. This landmark decision was confirmed during the 142nd IOC Session in Paris on July 23, 2024.

IOC President Thomas Bach highlighted the significance of this development, stating, "With the confirmation of the Olympic Esports Games, we are keeping up with the pace of the digital revolution." This initiative reflects the IOC's commitment to embracing new trends and engaging with younger audiences.

Saudi Arabia's National Olympic Committee (NOC) will host the inaugural event. HRH Prince Abdulaziz bin Turki Al Faisal, Minister of Sport and President of the Saudi Arabian Olympic and Paralympic Committee, emphasized the country's dedication to esports, viewing it as a natural progression in their sports evolution. "Our commitment to esports is a reflection of the world our young people live

in," he said.

HRH Princess Reema Bandar Al-Saud, an IOC member and board member of the Saudi Arabian Olympic and Paralympic Committee, added, "With over 23.5 million gamers, many of whom are women, hosting the Olympic Esports Games in 2025 is a natural progression in our journey."

The IOC has already begun planning for the event, focusing on selecting a city and venue, game titles, and participant qualification processes. The IOC will establish a dedicated structure for the Games to cater to the unique nature of esports.

Milestone for Esports

Thomas Bach reiterated the significance of this milestone, stating, "We are entering new ground on a very firm base." This decision follows the success of the Olympic Esports Week held in Singapore in 2023 and discussions at previous IOC sessions.

The Olympic Esports Games marks a significant step forward for the IOC and the global esports community, promising an exciting and inclusive future for digital sports