

Alcaraz, Osaka crash out of US Open

Former champions Carlos Alcaraz and Naomi Osaka knocked out in second round upsets

● **Alcaraz falls to world No. 74 van de Zandschulp**

● **Osaka loses to 52nd-ranked Muchova**

● **Sinner and Swiatek advance comfortably**

● **Rybakina withdraws due to injuries**

AFP | New York

Former champions Carlos Alcaraz and Naomi Osaka were knocked out of the US Open on Thursday as the final Grand Slam of the year lost two of its biggest crowd-pullers.

Alcaraz, the world number three and 2022 champion in New York, was stunned by Dutch world number 74 Botić van de Zandschulp 6-1, 7-5, 6-4.

Osaka, who counts the 2018 and 2020 US Opens amongst her four career majors, slipped to a 6-3, 7-6 (7/5) loss at the hands of 52nd-ranked Czech Karolína Muchova.

Alcaraz had made at least the quarter-finals in his three previous appearances in New York. Thursday's defeat was his earliest at a Grand Slam since a second round exit at Wimbledon in 2021.

Defeat ended his dream of becoming only the third man in the modern era to win the French Open, Wimbledon and the US Open in the same season.

"The tennis schedule is so tight. I've been playing a lot of matches lately with Roland Garros, with Wimbledon, Olympic

Games," said Alcaraz who lost a draining Olympics final to Novak Djokovic in Paris just over three weeks ago.

"I took a little break after the Olympic Games. Probably it wasn't enough. Probably I came here with not as much energy as I thought that I was going to come. But I don't want to put that as excuse."

Van de Zandschulp said he was lost for words after only his second career win over a top five player.

"It was an incredible evening out here in my first time in the night session on Arthur Ashe," he said.

"I tried to stay calm.

You have to keep your head against these guys otherwise they will take advantage."

He broke twice in the opening set to

stake his claims in front of a shell-shocked crowd.

He was breaks to the good in sets two and three, leaving Alcaraz to counter-punch before surrendering his hard-earned foothold.

His fate was sealed when he committed his 27th and final unforced error of the night as van de Zandschulp pulled off one of the biggest upsets in recent Grand Slam history.

The Dutchman, who had lost his two previous matches with Alcaraz, will next face 25th-seeded Jack Draper.

For Osaka, her comeback from maternity leave remains stalled.

She missed last year's tournament after giving birth to daughter Shai but made up for that absence in the first round when she brushed aside Jelena Ostapenko for a first 10 win in four years.

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pearance at the majors since the 2022 Australian Open.

Osaka blew three set points in the second set before a wild forehand handed her Czech rival victory.

"It's been a little difficult because obviously I can only gauge how I'm doing by results. I feel faster. I feel better, but I lost in the second round. So it's a little rough," said Osaka.

Muchova will meet Russia's Anastasia Potapova for a last 16 spot.

"Honestly this year the biggest win for me is that I could play again," said Muchova who picked up a wrist injury at last year's US Open which sidelined her for nine months.

Alcaraz's defeat removed a major title barrier from the path of top seed Jannik Sinner, who had been scheduled to meet the Spaniard in the semi-finals.

World number one Sinner won his 50th match of the year when he defeated America's 49th-ranked Alex Michelsen 6-4, 6-0, 6-2 to make the last 32 for a fourth successive year.

The 23-year-old Italian unleashed 28 winners and broke serve eight times. He will face Australia's Christopher O'Connell for a place in the last 16.

Women's world number one Iga Swiatek charged into

the third round, routing 217th-ranked Ena Shibahara of Japan 6-0, 6-1 to record her 55th match win of 2024.

Poland's Swiatek, the 2022 US Open winner who is seeking to add a second title in New York to her four French Open triumphs, overwhelmed the 26-year-old qualifier, who was in the main draw of a Grand Slam for the first time, in just 65 minutes.

She goes on to face 25th seed Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova who was a quarter-finalist in New York 13 years ago.

Rybakina withdraws

Swiatek then saw likely semi-final opponent Elena Rybakina withdraw from the tournament ahead of her second round clash with 143rd-ranked French qualifier Jessika Ponchet.

Rybakina issued a statement saying she was forced to withdraw "because of my injuries".

Karolina Pliskova, the 2016 runner-up, suffered a left ankle injury and was forced to retire from her match with fifth-seed Jasmine Paolini after just three points.

Fourth seed and 2021 champion Daniil Medvedev defeated Hungary's Fabian Marozsan in straight sets.

Japan's Naomi Osaka warms up ahead of her match

Carlos Alcaraz reacts after his defeat

YOU KNOW WHAT

Carlos Alcaraz's defeat ended his dream of becoming only the third man in the modern era to win the French Open, Wimbledon, and the US Open in the same season

Rain washes out opening day of Pakistan-Bangladesh second Test

AFP | Rawalpindi

Heavy rain washed out the first day of the second and final Test between Pakistan and Bangladesh in Rawalpindi yesterday.

Overnight downpours delayed the toss and after more monsoon rains, umpires abandoned play for the day shortly after midday.

"The first day's play has been called off due to persistent rain and wet outfield," Pakistan Cricket Board said. Neither team left their hotels.

Hosts Pakistan are desperate



Dark clouds loom over Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium

to square the two-match series after Bangladesh won the first Test, also in Rawalpindi, on Sunday.

Bangladesh's 10-wicket victory was their first in 14 Tests against Pakistan.

Pakistan have left out pace spearhead Shaheen Shah Afridi from their 12-member squad, allowing him time to spend with his newly born son.

Bangladesh are aiming to win only their third away series since gaining Test status in 2000, having beaten the West Indies (2009) and Zimbabwe (2021).

Chelsea handed trips to Germany, Athens in Conference League

AFP | London

Chelsea will face trips to German Bundesliga side Heidenheim and to Athens to play Panathinaikos in the league phase of this season's UEFA Conference League, the draw for which took place yesterday in Monaco.

The Stamford Bridge side are playing in the Conference League for the first time in their history after finishing sixth in last season's Premier League.

They will play home games against Gent of Belgium, Shamrock Rovers of Ireland and FC Noah of Armenia, who came through four qualifying ties to reach the league stage.

Enzo Maresca's Chelsea will go to Heidenheim, who qualified after finishing eighth last season in their first ever German Bundesliga campaign.

Chelsea will also visit former European Cup runners-up Panathinaikos and Astana of Kazakhstan.

Man Utd to come up against Mourinho's Fenerbahce in new-look Europa League

AFP | London

Manchester United will travel to Turkish giants Fenerbahce, now coached by Jose Mourinho, among their eight games in the league phase of the new-look Europa League, the draw for which took place in Monaco yesterday.

The Old Trafford club won the Europa League with Mourinho as coach in 2017. He recently became coach of Fenerbahce, who were knocked out of the Champions League in the third qualifying round.

United will also notably play at home to 2022 Europa League



Manchester United's players celebrate a goal (file photo)

runners-up Rangers and go to Portugal to play Porto, another of Mourinho's old sides.

Tottenham Hotspur, the other English representative in the competition, will also take on

Rangers, in their case away from home.

In addition, Ange Postecoglou's side will play at home to Roma and go to Istanbul to face Turkish champions Galatasaray.

The format of the Europa League has changed for this season, along the same lines of the new-look Champions League.

The number of clubs in the competition proper is now 36, all of whom are placed into one league but split into four pots of seeds. Each participant plays eight games, facing two clubs from each pot, one at home and one away.

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