

Nadal recovers against Chela to reach Barcelona semi-finals

Battling champion Rafael Nadal followed fellow Spaniard David Ferrer into the semi-finals of the Barcelona Open tennis with an heroic comeback to beat Juan Chela 6-4, 6-2.

Earlier, second seed Ferrer stayed the course in a grudge meeting with compatriot Tommy Robredo to post a 7-6 (7-4), 6-4 win Friday.

Nadal had a big task ahead as he trailed grinding Argentine No.37 Chela 4-2 in the first set.

But the fighting qualities of the three-time French Open winner from Mallorca were clearly visible in front of a frenzied public at the Real club, with Nadal forcing Chela to three break points and eight deuces in 20 minutes in the seventh game.

The South American finally cracked to give Nadal a break-back, opening the door to a storming comeback from the world number two, who began the second set with a break and never looked back to run his record over the Argentine to 4-1.

'I'm just glad to be in my fourth straight semi here. I'd like to win the tournament again, but I have a semi-final to play first,' said a relieved Nadal, who ripped away his left shoulder taping as he went down the break in the first set.

'It was a tough match all around and I had to work hard. I just want to do my best to win again.'

Nadal said he had to work through his most difficult moment of the week so far at the event where he has triumphed for the last three years.

'When Chela had points for 5-2, it was tough, but it looked better at 3-4.'

Nadal will now face German Denis Gremelmayr, a winner over tenth seed Nicolas Almagro 6-2, 3-6, 7-6 (9-7).

At the bottom of the draw, Stanislas Wawrinka reached his second straight Barcelona semi-final after holding off a late charge from Spain's Alberto Montanes 6-3, 6-7 (6-8), 6-4.

Wawrinka, who squandered the chance to close out a straight-sets victory in the second set as he missed on a match point, lead 5-2 in the third on the home clay for Montanes.

But the Iberian mounted an attack which took him to 5-3. He then broke Wawrinka as the Swiss tried to close out his win.

But at 5-4, Wawrinka didn't flinch, breaking back a game later to seal the result.

'I should have closed it out in two sets, but I couldn't capitalise on all of my chances,' said the winner. 'But I played a good match, it's great to go through again.'

Wawrinka is no stranger to the Barcelona semis, having gone this far in 2006, the last time he played the French Open tune-up event.

The Swiss was also boosted by confidence after putting out Argentine third seed David Nalbandian a day earlier.

Montanes went down with six double faults while losing serve four times. Wawrinka played two other quarter-finals in 2008, at Doha and Indian Wells.

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