

Australian Open: Murray gets his first victory

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Murray gets his first win in three years in Australia. EPA

Melbourne, January 18 (RHC/AP)-- A lustrum later and after five arduous sets, Andy Murray was finally able to claim a victory at the Australian Open after defeating Nikoloz Basilashvili 6-1, 3-6, 6-4, 6-7 (5), 6-4 on Tuesday to advance to the second round.

The former world number one is participating in the first Grand Slam of the season thanks to an invitation after undergoing hip surgery and shuffling his retirement.

In 2019, Murray lost in five sets in a first-round match that he and others thought would be his last match in Australia after missing the 2018 edition due to injury. He didn't go in 2020 because of a pelvis injury, nor last year because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"It's been a tough three or four years. Of a lot of sacrifice to be here again," Murray said in the courtside interview at the John Cain Arena, which Australian fans prefer to call the 'People's Court'. "I've played here so many times, the atmosphere is incredible. This was where I thought I played my last game."

"It's incredible to come back, to win a five-set battle like this. You can't ask for more," he added.

Murray took three sets off Basilashvili last week in Sydney, where he reached the final of one of the pre-Australian Slam tournaments. It lasted nearly four hours.

When the 34-year-old Scot sealed the win with his third match ball, he turned around, closed his eyes and clenched his fist in celebration.

After walking to his chair and depositing his racquet, Murray returned to the court to let off steam: "Let's go!" shouted the five-time tournament runner-up.

It was Murray's 49th victory in the Australian Open singles draw, displacing Andre Agassi and Ivan Lendl for fifth in the all-time table. According to the International Tennis Federation, it is the most wins in a Grand Slam event without winning the title, exceeding Lendl's 48 at Wimbledon.

The 50th victory in the next priority. His next opponent will be Taro Daniel, a Japanese who came through the qualifying round.

"I have room to improve," said Murray, who lost the 2010 final to Roger Federer and four others to Novak Djokovic. "I'm looking forward to being able to advance as far as I can."

"It's what I haven't been able to achieve at the Slams since coming back from injury, and it's something that motivates me," he added.

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