

Sport

Edberg ends title drought

DOHA, Jan 10: Sweden's Stefan Edberg clinched his first title in nine months Sunday when he brushed aside Holland's Paul Haarhuis 6-3, 6-2 in a one-sided final at the Qatar Open tennis tournament, reports AP.

Edberg the world No. 5 and the No. 3 seed here, took just 74 minutes to overwhelm Haarhuis, ranked No. 42, to clinch the dls 71,000 first prize.

Haarhuis, who beat No. 4 seed Goran Ivanisevic of Croatia in the semifinals, earned dls 42,000 at only his second appearance in a major final.

Edberg hadn't won a title since the Madrid clay court crown in April. But he said the victory was a timely boost to his chances of capturing his third Australian Open title. That Grand Slam tournament

begins in Melbourne on Jan. 17.

"This win is a relief to me because I have had a problem winning tournaments," said Edberg.

"It's great for my confidence and it's a good sign. I had a fight yesterday in the semifinal, playing three sets against (Austrian) Gilbert Schaller but I think that helped me today," he said.

"I always knew I would win another tournament. I was waiting for it to happen," he added.

Despite his recent drought of titles, Edberg said he never lost hope that he would win again, adding "now it's important for me to keep my fitness and concentration."

He was confident because even though he was not win-

ning "I was always playing well, I kept working hard. Winning today is a relief."

Haarhuis said Edberg is still one of the top players in the world.

"He's still world-class. He has a chance to win in Australia," said the Dutchman.

The final was controlled by Edberg from start to finish. He gained the only break of the first set in the eighth game and went on to win in 34 minutes.

He won a further two breaks in the second, race into a 4-0 lead before his opponent staged a late rally, but it was too late for the dispirited Haarhuis.

"I would have liked to have got a draw," joked Haarhuis. "I tried to go past him, through him and even over him, but it was too late for the dispirited Haarhuis."

"I always knew I would win another tournament. I was waiting for it to happen," he added.

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A first for Israel, PLO

TOKYO, Jan 10: Palestinian and Israeli sportsmen met for the first time since 1948 at a table tennis match in Tokyo on Monday, thanks to last September's historic peace accord, reports Reuter.

The two had not faced each other in any international sports event since Israel was founded in 1948.

But last September's agreement between the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and Israel allowed them to compete for the first time at the Global Youth Table Tennis Championships in Tokyo.

Israel's Yaniv Sharon beat Palestinian Mohamed al Turk in a men's singles preliminary round match.

Afterwards Sharon told reporters he felt nervous before the match but was glad to have had such an opportunity.

Al Turk said he did not care about the result because it was a match for peace and sport.

Ben Johnson's doc arrested

NEW YORK, Jan 10: Dr Jamie Astaphan, who prescribed steroids to Ben Johnson and other athletes, was arrested on drug charges after bad weather diverted his plane here, authorities said Sunday, reports AFP.

Astaphan, who was flying from Antigua to Toronto, was wanted for importing and distributing steroids and conspiracy to distribute steroids and cocaine.

FBI agents in Barbados notified US drug enforcement agency officials he was on the plane.

Astaphan, 47, will be held here for several weeks until being sent to the custody of federal officials in Buffalo.

Johnson, his most famous patient, won the 100 metres, gold medal in a world record at the 1988 Seoul Olympics but was then stripped of his medal and all records for using anabolic steroids.

Gilbert rallies

AUCKLAND, Jan 10: Frenchman Rodolphe Gilbert rallied to upset fifth-seeded Canadian Greg Rusedski 5-7, 7-6 (7-2), 6-2 Monday, opening day of the dls 313,750 New Zealand Open tennis championship, reports AP.

Rusedski slammed down 18 aces but negated his good work with 13 double faults.

Left-hander Gilbert, 25, used effective groundstrokes to take control of the match.

South African Marcos Ondruska, the only seed in action, was more successful than Rusedski.

The fourth-seeded Ondruska struggled early on against German qualifier Lars Burgsmuller before winning 7-5, 6-3.

Burgsmuller, 18, served for the first set at 5-2 before his game faded.

"I've only played one match this year so I was a little uneasy," Ondruska said. "I wasn't sure what was happening and I needed to find my rhythm."

Other first-round winners Monday were Tomas Carbonell of Spain, Swede Thomas Enqvist and American Jeff Tarango.

Carbonell downed Czech-born German David Prinosil 6-2, 6-3, while Tarango scored a 2-6, 6-4, 6-2 triumph over Italian Gianluca Pozzi.

Enqvist downed rising Italian star Andrea Gaudenzi 7-5, 7-5.

The top two seeds — Magnus Gustafsson of Sweden and defending champion Alexander Volkov of Russia — play their first-round matches on Tuesday.

Stefan Edberg of Sweden proudly hoists the trophy after defeating Holland's Paul Haarhuis in the final of the Qatar Open in Doha on Jan 9. Edberg won the match 6-3, 6-2.

— AFP photo

Pioline an early loser again

SYDNEY, Jan 10: Frenchman Cedric Pioline, struggling with form and racket in Australia, became

the first men's seed to fall at the New South Wales Open on Monday, reports Reuter.

Fourth-seeded Pioline, whose old-fashioned magnesium racket caused chaos with the experimental line call system at the Hopman Cup last week, was still looking for his first singles win of 1994 after a 6-1, 5-7, 6-4 defeat to Russian Andrei Chesnokov.

The only other seed to fall was South African Amanda Coetzer, seventh in the women's list, who faded after a promising start to a 4-6, 6-3, 6-3 loss against Japan's Naoko Sawamatsu.

Shuzo Masuoka made it a notable day for Japanese players, by defeating an opponent 102 places higher in the computer, sweeping aside 25th-ranked Amos Mansdorf 6-4, 6-2.

World number 10 Pioline's departure was largely self-inflicted, a high number of er-

rors flowing from his now infamous white racket.

Chesnokov, nevertheless, still looked capable of blowing a 4-0 lead in the final set as his opponent drew back to 4-3, but four consecutive errors from the increasingly frustrated US Open finalist in the final game were sadly predictable.

Women's top seed Conchita Martinez, back to full fitness after a bout of flu, was meanwhile an impressive 6-3, 6-0 winner over Germany's Sabine Hack. The world number four hinted there was more to come, saying: "I think I can improve a lot as a player."

Her compatriot Emilio Sanchez and American Aaron Krickstein, both former winners of the event in 1992 and 1989 respectively, had straight set victories in their opening matches.

Sanchez was forced to save two set points in the second set before removing Briton Andrew Foster 6-3, 7-6, but his brother Javier was less fortunate against Frenchman Arnaud Boetsch who won 6-4.

The bigger names appear on Tuesday, with Pete Sampras, Ivan Lendl, Mats Wilander, Pat Cash and Gabriela Sabatini all in first round action on the centre court at White City.

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