

Ngeny eyeing 1500m mark

MUNICH, Germany, Sept 11: Kenyan prodigy Noah Ngeny will make a bid for the 1500m world record Saturday at the IAAF Grand Prix Final at Munich's Olympic Stadium, reports AFP.

All Africa Games 400 children get food poisoning

JOHANNESBURG, Sept 11: Some 400 children who were to have taken part in the opening ceremony of the All Africa Games were taken to hospital with food poisoning on Friday, a hospital spokesman said, reports Reuters.

A Johannesburg hospital spokesman said the hospital was treating 120 children and other hospitals around the city were treating the rest.

Mbeki opens All Africa Games

JOHANNESBURG, Sept 11: South African President Thabo Mbeki used the official opening of the All Africa Games on Friday to promote his dream of an African Renaissance, reports Reuters.

No all-Williams finale



NEW YORK, Sept 11: Serena Williams dethroned defending champion Lindsay Davenport, but world number one Martina Hingis stopped her sister Venus in the semifinals Friday to prevent an all-Williams US Open final, reports AFP.

Hingis, seeking Grand Slam redemption after an emotional French Open final defeat followed by a humiliating first-round exit at Wimbledon, played a near flawless first set, then gutted out two draining sets to beat third-seeded Venus Williams 6-1, 4-6, 6-3.

The 18-year-old Swiss player, who beat then 17-year-old Venus in the 1997 US Open final, now gets a shot at 17-year-old Serena, who beat Davenport 6-4, 1-6, 6-4 to reach her first Grand Slam singles final.

"Another one!" Hingis said. "I was so far never able at the same tournament to beat both of them, but there's always a first time."

A little luck and a lot of determination were the key components of victory for both Hingis and Serena Williams.

Serena, playing the first Grand Slam semifinal of her young career, earned the decisive break of the third set with a shanked service return that just made it over the net.

Davenport raced up but couldn't scoop it back over. "After 17 years, I say I deserve a break once in a while," said Williams, who fought off five break points in the next game -- despite a couple of double faults -- to consolidate her advantage.

"I just decided I couldn't lose serve," Williams said. "I just had to hold in, hold my own, hold my serve even if I was down a break point."

"I just told myself, 'Serena, stay strong,'" Davenport, who was down two match points against Mary Pierce in the quarterfinals, saved one in the ninth game to force Williams to serve for the match.

The youngster betrayed no sign of her inexperience as she gave herself two match points with two 115-mph service winners up the middle and a 108-mph ace -- her 12th -- out wide.

She closed it out with a 77-mph second serve that Davenport could do nothing with. "She can serve a lot of serves well," Davenport said. "She throws in 115, then she'll slow it up. She has a great kick serve."

Venus Williams' service woes, probed crucial, even in a match that featured a combined 15 breaks of serve.

She and Hingis exchanged four breaks of serve in the third set before Hingis held to lead 4-3.

"At the end, we just kept breaking each other," Hingis said. "Once I held serve, I'm like, 'Yeah, I broke.'"

In the next game Venus double faulted twice, the second time on break point when she hit two into the bottom of the net.

Grimacing in pain each time she completed her service stroke, Venus called for the trainer to treat cramping in her thighs. As her legs were massaged, a weary Hingis rested on the court with her back on the court and her feet in her chair.

"It was physical," Venus said. "We were both doing all types of running, I was moving her, she was moving me."

Williams refused to blame her defeat on fatigue. "I should have just taken my opportunities earlier so I wouldn't have had to have been out there at that point," she said.

Hingis recalled losing in three sets to a cramping Venus in Sydney last year.

Hingis, owner of five Grand Slam singles titles, has won three of her five meetings with Serena Williams. But the younger Williams won their last

encounter, in the semifinal of the WTA Tour event in Los Angeles last month.

Hingis hadn't gone to three sets in her last 11 matches, including five here. Serena Williams was taken to three sets for the fourth match in a row, but didn't let that dim her focus on her chances of winning the title.

"This is great," Williams said. "I still have one more match to win."

The women's semis were the only singles of the day, and Hingis and Serena Williams had less than a day before their

(Ger) 6-2, 6-0 Semifinals: Venus Williams (USA x3) 6-1, 4-6, 6-3

Serena Williams First Round: Kimberly Po (USA) 6-1, 6-0 Second Round: Jelena Kostanic (Cro) 6-4, 6-2 Third Round: Kim Clijsters (Bel) 4-6, 6-2, 7-5 Fourth Round: Conchita Martinez (Spa x16) 4-6, 6-2, 6-2 Quarterfinals: Monica Seles (USA x4) 4-6, 6-3, 6-2 Semifinals: Lindsay Davenport (USA x2) 6-4, 1-6, 6-4

World number one Martina Hingis rejoices after reaching the US Open final. The Swiss star saw off American Venus Williams in the semifinals. —AFP photo



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FACTFILE

Factfile on Martina Hingis, who defeated Venus Williams Friday to reach the US Open Tennis Championships women's singles final.

Age: 18. Height: 5-feet-7-inches. Weight: 130 pounds. Plays: right-handed

Career titles: 25 Grand Slam singles titles: 5 US Open seeding: 1

1993: Won French Open junior title to become youngest Grand Slam junior champion.

1994: International Tennis Federation junior girls champion.

1996: Moved into top 10 in World Rankings at age 16. Won first WTA Tour title at Filderstadt.

1997: Won Australian Open for first career Grand Slam singles title. Runner-up at French Open, won Wimbledon, defeated Venus Williams to win US Open title.

1998: Won 37 straight matches to start season, second best start in Open Era behind Steffi Graf's 45 in 1987. Became third woman ever to hold the number one ranking in singles and doubles simultaneously (joining Martina Navratilova and Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario).

1999: Won: Australian Open, Chase Championships, Indian Wells, Hamburg, Italian Open. Became fourth woman in history to win doubles Grand Slam when she won Australian Open doubles with Mirjana Lucic, won French Open, Wimbledon and US Open doubles with Jana Novotna.

1999: In January won third straight Australian Open title. Runner-up to Steffi Graf at French Open. Lost 1st round to Australian qualifier Jelena Dokic at Wimbledon. Won singles titles at Toronto and San Diego in August. Reclaimed world number one ranking on August 9. Won 14 of its first 15 singles matches to start the year, six WTA Tour titles leads all players.

HEAD TO HEAD

Martina Hingis v Serena Williams Hingis leads Williams 3-2 1998 Key Biscayne Hard QF Hingis 6-3, 1-6, 7-6 1998 Los Angeles Hard QF Hingis 6-4, 6-1 1999 Key Biscayne Hard SF Williams 6-4, 7-6 1999 Rome Clay QF Hingis 6-2, 6-2 1999 Los Angeles Hard SF Williams 6-3, 7-5

ROAD TO FINAL

Martina Hingis First Round: Kveta Hrdlickova (Cze) 6-1, 7-5 Second Round: Sarah Pitkowski (Fra) 6-1, 6-1 Third Round: Sandra Kloesel (Ger) 6-3, -1 Fourth Round: Sanchez-Vicario (Spa x10) 6-4, 7-5 Quarterfinals: Anke Huber

stopped short of calling the match-up the "real" US Open final.

"No," Agassi said. "When you have to play on Sunday, it's very dangerous to think like that. It's actually absurd. It's a ridiculous, ridiculous concept."

Kafelnikov, the reigning Australian Open champion who also won the French Open in 1996, is eyeing a third leg of a career Grand Slam for himself.

Kafelnikov has won four of their seven meetings, although Agassi triumphed most recently, in the final of the hard-court ATP Tour event in Washington in August.

"It's going to be big-hitting groundstrokes from the baseline," Kafelnikov predicted. "Whoever's going to be mentally tough will win. I've got Andre's number. He's got my number."

But he never played in this stage in a Grand Slam, although I did beat Andre once in the quarterfinals of the French in '95.

"He's probably looking for revenge. Kafelnikov neglected to mention that Agassi beat him in the Australian Open quarters on hardcourt that same year. The star wattle in the bottom half of the draw has thrown the second semifinal into stark shadow. Seventh seed Todd Martin of the United States and unseeded Frenchman Cedric Pioline have emerged from the half of the draw that was expected to produce a repeat of last year's Pete Sampras-Pat Rafter semifinal.

Pioline, ranked 26th in the world, is playing in his fourth Grand Slam semifinal. Twice in his previous three trips to the final four he has gone on to the final, losing to Sampras here in 1993 and to Wimbledon in 1997. Martin overcame the after

Lareau, O'Brien take doubles title

NEW YORK, Sept 11: Sebastien Lareau became the first Canadian to win a Grand Slam title in 13 final appearances, joining American Alex O'Brien to upset India's Mahesh Bhupathi and Leander Paes in the US Open final here Friday, reports AFP.

"This is the moment in time," she said. "This is what I've been working for, the Grand Slams."

Williams, a second-year pro, had not played a Slam quarterfinal until Monday and on Friday she ousted defending champion Lindsay Davenport to advance to Saturday's final

Bhupathi and Paes made history as the first men's doubles duo in the Open era to play in all four Slam doubles finals in the same year. They were beaten in the Australian Open finals as well.

Davenport in search of solace

NEW YORK, Sept 11 (AFP): Lindsay Davenport's reign as US Open champion ended with a semifinal loss to Serena Williams, but winning Wimbledon has helped ease the pain of a disappointing year.

"It has been a magnificent year that I won Wimbledon," Davenport said. "Other than that it has been okay. It hasn't been tremendous. Winning Wimbledon helped a lot."

Last year was a breakthrough season for the 23-year-old American. She lost weight and added speed to her tall, powerful frame.

She won six titles, including her first Grand Slam crown, under the guidance of coach Robert Van't Hof. She swept three US Open tune-up titles in her home state of California and became the world's number one player.

This year, Swiss teen Martina Hingis has passed her for the top ranking, she fell in the Australian Open semifinals and French Open quarterfinals but has won four titles, including her second Slam crown.

"My performance in Grand Slams was very good this year," she said. "I'm giving myself a lot of chances to get through. I gave myself some chances in this tournament where I could have been out in the quarters."

"Some of the other tournaments I haven't played my best, not as focused. I'm going to have to change that at the end of the year."

Despite being dethroned, Davenport enjoyed her run at keeping the crown.

"Coming back as a first time defending champ of a Grand Slam, you really don't know what to expect," Davenport said. "My first four rounds I played really well. Really, I have enjoyed playing here. I have been really excited every match. I have had a good time trying to defend this title."

A rain delay of more than five hours kept Davenport on edge wondering when she might get started, but she did not consider it a major factor.

"It affects everyone's preparation when the rains come," she said. "Once I got out there, the first couple games went by. I felt warm. I did the best I could to get warmed up. I was ready to go. You always like it to go according to plan. But you have to be flexible sometimes."

Davenport, who has never felt comfortable in the starting role of Slam success brought her in the past year.

"I enjoy playing tennis. I don't enjoy necessarily having a lot of attention focused on me," she said. "That's not a bad thing. That's just how I am. I get a little uncomfortable with it. When I quit tennis, I hope it goes away, back into anonymity."

Cerezo drub Gamba

TOKYO, Sept 11: South Korean international Hwang Sun-Hong shot to the top of the J-League goal chart here Saturday, bagging a brace as Cerezo Osaka defeated rivals Gamba Osaka 4-1 for an easy win, reports AFP.

Hwang's 15th and 16th goals were also the fifth consecutive match he has scored in, putting him ahead of Brazilian Baron in the goal rankings.

"We really wanted to win this game," said Hwang, who struck in the 28th and 39th minutes.

"As a striker, it's my job to try to become the top goal scorer. Goals will follow me if I try to do my best to win each game," added the Korean.

A match-winning streak by front-running Yokohama Marinos stopped as they crashed to Vissel Kobe 1-0, but maintained the lead with five wins, one defeat and a draw for 15 points.

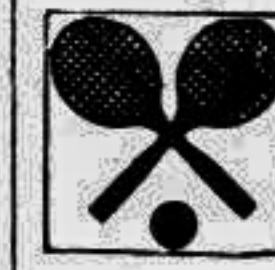
They are followed by Shimizu S-Pulse and Kyoto Purple Sanga with 14 points, and Verdy Kawasaki with 13 points.

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Defending champions Kashima Antlers notched up their third straight win since Brazilian legend Zico re-joined the club as general manager as they defeated Urawa Red Diamonds 2-1.

Grand moment for Serena



NEW YORK, Sept 11 (AFP): Serena Williams, the youngest of five black sisters who grew up in the slums of suburban Los Angeles, has played her way into the US Open tennis final and a date with destiny at age 17.

"This is the moment in time," she said. "This is what I've been working for, the Grand Slams."

Williams, a second-year pro, had not played a Slam quarterfinal until Monday and on Friday she ousted defending champion Lindsay Davenport to advance to Saturday's final

against world number one Martina Hingis.

The Swiss 18-year-old defeated Serena's older sister Venus to spoil their father Richard Williams' predicted all-Williams title match.

"I didn't want that final to happen, Williams versus Williams," Hingis said. "They are three against me, so in talking I can't beat them. I have to beat them on the court."

Hingis started by beating Venus here in the 1997 final. Now she faces another Williams coming out party after taking advantage of leg cramps by Venus. But she knows she must outlast another beat-stressed rival.

"I have really developed mentally a lot," she said. "I'm really more composed out there. I didn't get nervous or anything. I just stayed determined and focused. I'm able to pull it through."

Nobody knows that better than dethroned Davenport, who watched Williams hit 35 winners and make 44 unforced errors to control the tempo.

"When you go for shots like she does, you're going to make errors," Davenport said. "She cut that down tremendously from what she did a year ago. She has always had a good serve. She seems now to make some first serves in some bigger moments of a match."

"I lost to a player who is a very, very good player. This happens to be her first time in a Grand Slam final. But she has had a great year."

Serena, ranked a career-high sixth, won titles in Paris, Indian Wells and last month in Manhattan Beach. She is 37-6 in matches in a row, losing to Mary Joe Fernandez in the third round of the French Open. She skipped Wimbledon with an illness.

Serena Williams went on a 16-match win streak earlier this year before Venus beat her in the Key Biscayne final, the only all-Williams final for now.

Serena said she will not fully appreciate the accomplishment she has achieved over this fortnight until well after it ends.

"Maybe next week," she said. "Then it will all be over and I will know the outcome."

OPEN NOTEBOOK

NEW YORK, Sept 11 (AP): The draw for the 2000 Davis Cup will be held October 7 in London.

The first round will be held February 4-6.

Currently, there are only eight nations that are certain to play in the World Group next year: France, Belgium, Russia, Australia, Switzerland, Slovak Republic and the United States.

Joining the World Group will be the winners of the qualifying round matches to be held September 24-26. Those matches pit the Czech Republic at Uzbekistan, Germany at Romania, South Africa at Great Britain, Finland at Italy, the Netherlands at Ecuador, Sweden at Austria, Spain at New Zealand and Chile at Zimbabwe.

CELEBRITY GOLF AND TENNIS

Old tennis foe John McEnroe and Karel Novacek will participate in the first annual Mats Wilander Celebrity Tennis and Golf Challenge on October 19 at the Westchester Country Club in Rye, New York.

The Challenge will raise funds to find a cure for epidermolysis bullosa, or EB, a devastating life-threatening genetic skin condition that afflicts more than 100,000 Americans. EB strikes three times as many

people as those who suffer from cystic fibrosis.

Wilander's 2-year-old son, Erik, suffers from a mild form of EB.

Others scheduled to participate include John Andriese, the "Voice of the New York Knicks," Ahmad Rashad of NBC Sports and Rich Eisen of ESPN.

AMERICAN JUNIORS

Americans playing in the junior events at the US Open had a lot of problems on Friday.

In the boys singles, Mardy Fish of Vero Beach, Florida, lost to Demetrio Vlasov of Russia 6-2, 6-4 and Phillip King of Long Beach, California, lost to Nicolas Mahut of France 7-5, 6-4.

In the girls singles, Iroda Tulyaganova of Uzbekistan beat Jenny Hopkins of Leawood, Kansas, 2-6, 6-1, 6-3 and Lina Krasnoroutskaja of Russia beat Laura Granville of Chicago in a walkover.

However, Tres Davis of Lubbock, Texas, teamed with Alberto Francis of McAllen, Texas, to beat Mario Ancic of Croatia and Steve Berke of North Miami Beach, Florida, and advance to the boys doubles championship match.

TENNIS IN HDTV

CBS Sports is television 18 hours of the US open in high definition.

val. Told Serena was practicing into the night, Hingis said. "All right. Work more and get cramps too. I'm going to have a massage."

A glum Venus Williams had high hopes her sister could take a measure of revenge for her own '97 loss to Hingis.

"Hopefully, Serena will do better than I did two years ago. She has a lot more to work with than I did at that time," Venus said. "Now she's playing for two people. I hope I gave Martina a good workout."

The Williams sisters have helped boost minority participation in US tennis, proving that effort can overcome difficult circumstances.

"It's amazing. I think it's an awesome accomplishment to do what they have done," said US Open men's semifinalist Todd Martin.

"I don't know everything about their history. But I know they haven't come from the same type of background most of us have. It's quite an example they've set, more than anything else just a great achievement."

Serena won four consecutive three-set matches to reach the final, rallying after losing the opening set in the first three of them. She called the toughness to recover a sign of an improved mental game.

"I have really developed mentally a lot," she said. "I'm really more composed out there. I didn't get nervous or anything. I just stayed determined and focused. I'm able to pull it through."

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Roger has to count the cost

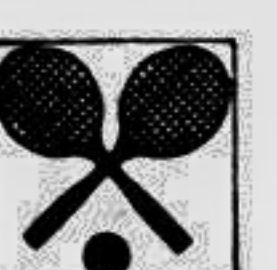
SAO PAULO, Brazil, Sept 11: Sao Paulo goalkeeper Roger faces the sack after posing naked for a popular gay magazine, reports AFP.

The Brazilian First Division outfit's coach Paulo Cesar Carpegiani has said Roger will be thrown out of the club if the pictures are published in G Magazine.

But 26-year-old Roger, who was paid a considerable sum for the pictures, is under contract with Sao Paulo until 2001 and says he has no regrets about posing nude.

Two other Brazilian players, the national team's Copa America squad member Vampeta and Corinthians ace Dinei, have already appeared in G Magazine.

As material as ultimate



NEW YORK, Sept 11: Andre Agassi and Yevgeny Kafelnikov square off Saturday in the final before the final at the US Open Tennis Championships, reports AFP.

Their semifinal showdown on Saturday will be not only for a berth in the championship match, but also for the world number one ranking.

"It's great that you're playing a match at the semis of the Open that has also that riding on it," Agassi said. "I can't honestly say that neither one of us will be thinking about that."

But Agassi, who capped a spectacular career revival by winning the French Open in June to become only the fifth man to win each of the four Grand Slams at least once,

stopped short of calling the match-up the "real" US Open final.

"No," Agassi said. "When you have to play on Sunday, it's very dangerous to think like that. It's actually absurd. It's a ridiculous, ridiculous concept."

Kafelnikov, the reigning Australian Open champion who also won the French Open in 1996, is eyeing a third leg of a career Grand Slam for himself.

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But he never played in this stage in a Grand Slam, although I did beat Andre once in the quarterfinals of the French in '95.

He's probably looking for revenge. Kafelnikov neglected to mention that Agassi beat him in the Australian Open quarters on hardcourt that same year. The star wattle in the bottom half of the draw has thrown the second semifinal into stark shadow. Seventh seed Todd Martin of the United States and unseeded Frenchman Cedric Pioline have emerged from the half of the draw that was expected to produce a repeat of last year's Pete Sampras-Pat Rafter semifinal.

Pioline, ranked 26th in the world, is playing in his fourth Grand Slam semifinal. Twice in his previous three trips to the final four he has gone on to the final, losing to Sampras here in 1993 and to Wimbledon in 1997. Martin overcame the after

effects of a stomach virus to beat Greg Rusedski in five de-bilitating sets in the fourth round.

He needed four sets to get past 95th-ranked Czech Slava Dosedel in the quarters.

"Get some rest, get some treatment and come out Saturday firing," was his preparation programme. "Hopefully I'll be able to play as well as I have been."

Martin will be playing in his fifth Grand Slam semi, his second at the US Open and his first since Wimbledon in 1996. The only time he has gone farther was when he finished runner-up in the 1994 Australian Open.

At 25, Kafelnikov is the oldest of the remaining four. Agassi and Martin are both 29 and Pioline is 30.

They are followed by Shimizu S-Pulse and Kyoto Purple Sanga with 14 points, and Verdy Kawasaki with 13 points.

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