

Eng-Pak Tests Indoor drinks in Ramadan

KARACHI, Aug 31: Pakistan and English players will have to take drinks breaks in their dressing rooms during two Test matches on England's forthcoming cricket tour because they fall during Ramadan, an official said Thursday, reports AFP.

"Due to the sanctity of the holy month of Ramadan teams will have to take off-field drinks during the second and third Tests," a Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) official said.

Muslims all over the world fast from dawn to dusk during Ramadan. Eating or drinking in the open is prohibited.

But those Pakistani players who are not fasting will be able to eat and drink behind the closed doors of their dressing room, the official added.

"We have informed the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) well in advance as the codes will have to be followed," he said.

It will be the first time in international cricket that drinks will be taken off the field.

England are due to arrive in Pakistan on October 16 to play three Tests and three one-day internationals in their first tour of Pakistan for 13 years.

England's last tour in 1987-88 was marred by the infamous confrontation between Mike Gatting and umpire Shakoor Rana.

Gatting, then captain of England, had a blazing row with Rana and a day's play was lost as the umpire sought an apology.

Gatting later apologised for his behaviour.

The PCB plans to hold all the one-dayers under floodlights. Light towers have been erected in Rawalpindi and Karachi while Lahore'saddafi stadium already has such facilities.

"We are taking weekly report on the progress of work and do all the best arrangements for England," PCB's Director of Operations Yawar Saeed said.

Windward WI youth champs

GEORGETOWN, Aug 31: The Windward Islands under-19 cricket team has been crowned champions of West Indies youth cricket after battling Jamaica to a draw at the Bourda Cricket Ground here, reports AP.

It is the first time that the Windwards won any tournament organised by the West Indies Cricket Board and officials were elated.

"This was a combined effort. Words simply cannot express how I feel," said Lockhart Sebastian, team manager and former Windward Islands, senior player, Wednesday.

The Windwards, by virtue of winning the first innings, had done enough to clinch the series after three outright wins in the tournament, the only team to have done that in this year's competition.

The team won the tournament playing as the Combined Islands back in 1972-73, but never as the Windwards.

Kevin Brazil of Guyana, a slow offspin bowler, was the highest wicket-taker with 31 wickets, followed by Windward Islands leg-spinner Camillus Alexander with 28.

The tournament will be in Guyana again next year because there are more than enough grounds to play four matches simultaneously and it is less expensive, organisers said.

The Windwards' Devon Smith was the highest run scorer with 336 runs, while Guyana's Hemraj Garbaran was the runner-up with 322.

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Trials & tribulations

NEW YORK, Aug 31: Defending US Open champion Andre Agassi, already slowed physically by back spasms from a July auto accident, has also been distracted by worry about his sister and mother, both diagnosed with cancer, reports AFP.

Top seed Agassi is set to face France's 37th-ranked Arnaud Clement here on Wednesday in a second-round match.

But nagging the thoughts of the six-time Grand Slam champion are concerns about mother Elizabeth and sister Tammie, who each have breast cancer.

"It has been a difficult year in many respects with my sister having breast cancer, and my mom was diagnosed with it just a month ago," Agassi said. "It hasn't been easy, but in many ways it has gotten the family stronger and closer."

"And it has given me the perspective that sometimes only certain tragedies can bring. That I am trying to utilise in a positive way. My concentration has not been the easiest. But I think it's getting better."

Monica Seles, no stranger to off-court troubles including recovery from a stabbing and her father's cancer illness, sympathised with Agassi as he tries to deal with tennis and the deadly affliction in his family.

"I'm sure it's a very difficult time for Andre and his family, but he is an amazing person and I'm sure he can handle it," Seles said.

Agassi's Open preparation was slowed by back spasms from when his car was rear-ended on his way home from

the Las Vegas airport after a Wimbledon semifinal loss.

The reigning Australian Open champion dropped out of a Davis Cup semifinal tie and an ATP event in Los Angeles, then lost a first-round match at Toronto and retired in a second-round match at Cincinnati.

By his run to the Washington final two weeks ago, Agassi's back woes were gone. But so too was the time he needed to round

himself. "My shots are there, but as the tournament goes on I'm going to have to pick up my concentration and focus. It still has a tendency to wander a little bit because of the lack of matches. I'm not closing out certain situations the way I like, but that can come around in a few matches."

Age is also a concern. At 30, a shaven-headed Agassi has replaced the once long-haired wonder boy. And the American knows his ability to rise and fall like a yo-yo in the rankings, from 141st to first in 1998.

"I don't have another shot at this," Agassi said. "I need to keep my momentum for as long as possible."

"I feel the same sense of urgency here as I have the last couple of years. You never know, by choice or injury, when it's going to be your last Open."

Agassi slumped after marrying Brooke Shields in 1997. They were divorced last year and his new girlfriend, retired German tennis great Steffi Graf, has helped Agassi relax while understanding the pressures of tennis stardom.

Fans here have even taken to screaming "Steffi" during Agassi matches.

"As long as they don't want her playing instead, it's fine," Agassi said.

And despite the tribulations of a difficult year, Agassi knows that a first successful Slam title defence here can have a revivifying effect upon him.

"If you can play a great Open after a tough summer, you can make the whole year," Agassi said. "Forget the summer. You can make the whole year by winning here."

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NEW YORK, Aug 31: Australian tennis star Jelenka Dokic's father, ejected from Wimbledon after an unruly drunken disturbance, was banished from the US Open here Wednesday after abusive behaviour in the player's lounge, reports AFP.

And the 17-year-old outburst banishing him from his events after the year's final Grand Slam event has concluded.

Damir Dokic was unhappy about the 10-dollar price for salmon in the player dining area and escorted out by police after making a scene.

His 17-year-old daughter, a Wimbledon semifinalist last month, watched and followed as her bearded Serbian-born father went on a profanity-laced tirade in the parking lot.

"The security are... idiots," he said. "They are machines. They are fascists. They are..."

The elder Dokic was still shaking his finger at a security official as he sat in the front passenger seat of a mini-van that took him and his 43rd-ranked daughter from the grounds.

"He will not be allowed back on the grounds for the remainder of the US Open," a statement from tournament director Jay Snyder said.

Damir Dokic is not getting the total WTA banishment treatment that hit Mary Pierce's father Jim yet. But Bart McGuire, the WTA's chief executive officer, said the Tour would review the Dokic situation after the Open.

Based upon Dokic's history of such incidents, a final review is being conducted to determine what additional action will be taken by the tour, said McGuire. "The Tour will announce its decision shortly after the US Open."

At Wimbledon, the elder Dokic was yelling and waving the English flag while roaming the All-England Club grounds and he broke a journalist's cellular telephone.

He was also arrested in Birmingham in 1998, also while intoxicated, after laying on a road in traffic outside a tennis venue.

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Darsha sets new Asian mark

JAKARTA, Aug 31: Dama-yanthi Darsha of Sri Lanka set her second meet record in as many days Thursday to win the women's 200 metres and join China's Wu Qingdong as double gold medalists at the 13th Asian Athletics Championships, reports AP.

Darsha, who earlier won the 400 metres, was timed in 22.84 seconds to break the 5-year-old record of 23.00 by compatriot Susanthika Jayasinghe. But her mark was still off the overall Asian record of 22.01 set in 1997 by China's Li Xiumei.

Wu won the women's 5,000 metres to go along with her gold Wednesday at 15.00 metres.

With eight of the 43 events still to be decided Thursday evening, China extended its overall dominance in the medals race with nine golds among its 27 medals. India was second with 16 medals, including four golds, followed by Japan with 14 medals, including three golds.

China also got victories from Lin Na in the women's 800 metres with a time of two minutes and 34.6 seconds and Song Yinglan in the women's 400 hurdles in 57.73 seconds.

A jubilant Mehdi Jeloudar Zadeh won gold in the men's 800 metres in one minute, 49.80 seconds to give Iran its first medal. To the crowd's delight, he stripped off his shirt, wrapped himself in his national flag and took a victory lap before Jakarta's half-full Madaya Stadium.

Yurly Pakhlyayev edged China's Wang Zhouzhou to win the men's high jump and give Kazakhstan its third gold of the games. Both cleared 2.23 meters, but Pakhlyayev had fewer overall misses.

NEW YORK, Aug 31 (AFP): Venus Williams has won so many matches in a row, not even she can keep track of them all.

All the Wimbledon champion knows for sure is that she has not felt the disappointment of a loss in a very long time.

The 20-year-old American stretched her win streak to 21 here Wednesday, defeating 40th-ranked Czech Kvetka Hrdlickova 6-1, 6-1 in 48 minutes to reach the third round as she bids for her fifth consecutive title.

"How many is it now? 21. That's nice. I have been playing pretty well. It has been a long time since I've experienced a loss. It's a good feeling."

Third-seed Williams, who could face younger sister and defending champion Serena in the finals, will next face 48th-ranked compatriot Meghann Shaughnessy for a berth in the round of 16.

Williams has not been beaten since losing to Spain's Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario in the Wimbledon quarter-finals, and that match came only a month after she returned from an extended layoff due to tendinitis.

Now Williams has supreme confidence and she credits a fearless attitude with enabling her to create the longest win streak of her life.

"I feel confident in the big points. I feel it's going to go my way," Williams said. "You feel like you have as much time as you need to hit winners or set your point up. I don't feel too much pressure."

"Now I'm willing to go for it, to do the right things at the right moment. Maybe that's what it is because it takes a lot of guts not to be afraid. In the end, if you're afraid, the match is over. It holds you back."

Williams modestly considers her serve the best of any woman.

"I would say I have the best," Williams said. "As far as placement, my serve is better than mine. As far as serving the cheese, mine is the best."

Pete Sampras joked that he did not think Williams always knew where her high-velocity serves were headed, which drew a terse reply: "I think I know where it's going."

Her domination is similar to that of golf star Tiger Woods, who won three of the year's four major titles. But golf isn't really Venus' idea of a good time.

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Seeds take a stroll

NEW YORK, Aug 31: Third seed Magnus Norman of Sweden, one of the rising stars of men's tennis, was awarded centre stage at the US Open yesterday and showed he deserved to be a headline as he swept into the second round, reports Reuters.

Norman dispatched American Paul Goldstein 7-5, 6-4, 6-4 and revelled in his time in the spotlight at Arthur Ashe Stadium.

"I feel very honoured to play on centre court today... It's great to be appreciated," said the soft-spoken, 24-year-old Swede, who is romantically linked to women's world number one Martina Hingis.

The top-seeded Hingis very nearly carved out a love-victory in her time upon the main stage last night, routing American Kristina Brandi 6-1, 6-1 in just

44 minutes.

Four-time Open champion Pete Sampras also took care of business swiftly, closing out the night programme with a 6-3, 6-1, 6-3 thrashing of fellow-American Justin Gimelstob to run his record to 14-0 under the lights at the open.

Hingis's primary nemesis, American superstar Venus Williams, preceded Norman on the Centre Court but stuck around for just 48 minutes in beating Czech Kvetka Hrdlickova 6-1, 6-1 to extend her current match winning streak to 21.

Sixth-seeded two-time champion Monica Seles opened the Day 3 programme with a 6-3, 6-4 victory over Anne Kremer of Luxembourg and faces a tough third-round test against 17-ranked American Chanda Rubin, who overcame Austrian Barbara Schett 2-6, 6-1, 6-1.

Joining Williams and Seles in the third round were eighth seed Nathalie Tauziat, ninth-seeded former champion Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario, 11th seed Sandrine Testud and 15th seed Jennifer Capriati, all straight sets winners.

Sixth-seeded Russian up-and-comer Marat Safin, who like Norman is seeded for the first time at the Open, had a tougher time but advanced with a 7-5, 6-7, 6-4, 6-4 victory over Frenchman Thierry Guardiola.

A trio of former US Open finalists - Greg Rusedski, Cedric Pioline and Mark Philippoussis - also easily cleared the first hurdle yesterday.

Unseeded Briton Rusedski, the 1997 runner-up, had no problems with Sweden's Magnus Gustafsson, posting a 6-1, 6-2, 6-4 win to improve on his showing at Wimbledon.

Tenth-seeded Frenchman Pioline, runner-up in 1993 and a surprise semifinalist last year, cruised to a 6-3, 6-3, 6-1 victory over Sargis Sargsian of Armenia.

Australian Philippoussis, the 15 seed, made a successful return to Flushing Meadows with a dominating 6-3, 6-2, 6-3 victory over Spanish club court specialist Albert Port