

Wimbledon loses Russian glamour

WIMBLEDON

REUTERS, London

Anna Kournikova has confirmed she will not play next week's Wimbledon championships, organisers of the grasscourt Grand Slam said on Monday.

As expected, the Russian has failed to recover from the "chronic lumbar complaint" which prevented her from playing in two warm-up events she had initially entered.

Kournikova joins former men's champion Goran Ivanisevic and Monica Seles as high-profile names to miss Wimbledon through injury.

The 22-year-old Russian also missed last week's grass-court WTA tournament in Birmingham and this week's Eastbourne championships with the injury.

"They said my injury is chronic because it keeps coming back. It's the same problem I've had since after the Australian Open and it gives me referred pain in other areas, but it all comes from my back," Kournikova said when withdrawing from Birmingham.

A semifinalist at Wimbledon the first year she played the event in 1997, Kournikova has been plagued with injuries over the past two seasons.

sons.

She has not played on the WTA Tour since April's Family Circle Cup in Charleston, South Carolina, when she was forced to retire from her first-round match with a thigh strain.

Without a WTA title after spending more than seven years on the circuit, the Russian pin-up's off-court exploits have far overshadowed her tennis career.

Having reached those Wimbledon semis in 1997 as a precocious 16-year-old talent, the Russian has since failed to deliver the goods on court.

Last month, she tried to rebuild her confidence on the lower ITF Women's Circuit tournaments following four first-round defeats in the five WTA tournaments she has played this year, but injuries once again hindered her progress.

Her world ranking, and confidence, have been on the slide since she reached a career-high eighth in May 2001.

Now ranked outside the top 70 in the world, Kournikova is no longer considered a serious title contender on the WTA tour but remains the most photographed woman in sport.



ANNA KOURNIKOVA

Marvan in the runs

Cricket

AFP, Amos Vale

Sri Lankan opener Marvan Atapattu geared up for the upcoming Test series against the West Indies with a solid half-century in a warm-up cricket match here.

Atapattu slumped 59 to help the tourists reach 299 in their first innings at stumps on the second day of a three-day game against the West Indies Board President's team on Sunday.

Kumar Sangakkara (41), skipper Hashan Tillakaratne (40) and Thilan Thushara (34 not out) also gained valuable batting practice in Sri Lanka's only warm-up fixture before a two-Test series.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at close of play on the second day of the tour match between West Indies Cricket Board President's XI and Sri Lanka on Sunday:

Atapattu b Taylor 59

Jayasuriya run out 4

Skara c Mohammed b Hinds 41

Jayawardene lbw b Taylor 11

Dilshan c Baugh b Powell 20

S'weera c Ganga b Mohammed 25

Tillakaratne c Bravo b Best 40

Lokurachchi run out 21

Mirando not out 34

Fernando c Smith b Mohammed 7

Nayakantha st Baugh b Ganga 9

Extras: (b-11, lb-4, w-3, nb-10) 28

Total: (All out in 123.3 overs) 299

Fall of wickets: 1-7, 2-98, 3-123,

4-128, 5-159, 6-195, 7-247, 8-248,

9-279, 10-299.

Bowler O M R W

Powell 22 5 50 1

Best 19 5 50 1

Taylor 10 4 22 2

Bernard 7 2 22 0

Mohammed 23 7 55 2

Bravo 9 0 25 0

Hinds 25 8 30 1

Deonarine 8 0 23 0

Ganga 0.3 0 7 1

WICB PRESIDENT'S XI: Ganga,

Smith, Bravo, Hinds, Deonarine,

Bernard, Baugh, Mohammed,

Powell, Best, Taylor

Darwin pitches

FROM PAGE 13

WARE will create history when the drop-in wickets are installed on Thursday, using his pioneering portable pitch technology for the first time in Australia.

Each wicket will be divided in half and merged together using a sophisticated ratchet mechanism once in the ground.

Ware, who has spent the last four years developing the landmark technology, hoped it would create further opportunities for the game in Australia's Top End.

"This technology allows us to take advantage of a fantastic climate and really opens up additional opportunities for international and domestic cricket to be played in northern Australia," he said.

"Once this series is finished, we'll move the wickets back into the compound at Marrara and keep it maintained for possible further use down the track.

"The other main advantage is that we don't heavily impact on grounds like Marrara, which have

other usages. We can move the pitch in and out without disrupting the facility for football games."

Bangladesh will play Australia in a second Test in Cairns, northern Queensland from July 25-29 before three one-day matches.

Whatmore

FROM PAGE 13

EVERYDAY. I'm quite happy with the progress. The technique is improving."

When his attention was drawn to the resignation of chief selector Aliul Islam, Whatmore appeared philosophical.

"It comes as a surprise if anyone retires and resigns. Besides, I'm not in a position to comment on the impact since I have been here only two and a half weeks," said the Sri-Lankan-born Australian.

But Whatmore said that he enjoyed his brief association with Aliul, who tendered his resignation a day after announcing the 15-member Bangladesh squad for Australia on Friday.

Pakistan expect

FROM PAGE 13

THE LEADING decision makers in world cricket will gather in London next week when the ICC hosts its annual round of meetings from June 15-20 at Lord's.

The meetings will be dominated by the change of ICC President as Malcolm Gray's three-year tenure ends, discussions over compensation claims from the 2003 World Cup and the volume of international cricket.

Zia said Pakistani would like to see Mani urgently address some important issues and take steps to increase the authority of the ruling body.

"Pakistan has always believed that without the ICC being more independent and having more authority it cannot deal consistently with problems of its member nations and the sport," Zia added.

God Must

FROM PAGE 13

1992 and to Pete Sampras in 1994 and 1998, Ivanisevic had said from the start of the championships that it was his destiny to land the world's most prestigious tennis title.

"When they opened the gates on Monday, something was shining, something special happened," he said.

"I think God was so sick of me asking him all the time he said 'okay, here is one last chance let's see if you can win it this time.'

But Ivanisevic's pact with God appears to be over. It seems that was his 'last chance'.

Harbhajan asked to have surgery

REUTERS, Bombay

INDIAN off-spinner Harbhajan Singh has been advised to have immediate surgery on a finger injury that has been troubling him since the World Cup in South Africa earlier this year.

Orthopaedic surgeon Sudhir Warrier, who examined Harbhajan, said on Monday the off-spinner needed quick treatment on his right hand.

"He needs surgery to repair the ligament," Warrier told Reuters.

"If the injury is not treated in time, it can get worse. This is the right time to get the surgery done."

A decision on the operation from the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) is likely when president Jagmohan Dalmiya and secretary Karunakaran Nair return later this week from an International Cricket Council (ICC) meeting in London.

Navratilova misses out

AFP, Birmingham

Tennis legend Martina Navratilova was beaten in her bid to add to her collection of 170 career titles when she was beaten in the final of the Birmingham WTA doubles event on Sunday.

The 46-year-old American and partner Alicia Molik, of Australia, lost 7-6-4 to reigning champion Els Callens, of Belgium, and Meilen Tu, of the United States.

Navratilova, who won her first Wimbledon title 25 years ago, is hoping to play singles at Eastbourne next week in a bid to improve her doubles play.

Maleeva ends Asagoe's run

AFP, Birmingham

Japan's Shinobu Asagoe's dreams of winning her first ever WTA tour crown were ruthlessly crushed by experienced Bulgarian Magdalena Maleeva on Sunday who coasted to the Birmingham grasscourt title winning 6-1, 6-4. It was the 28-year-old Maleeva's tenth title of her career with her win coming in just 65 minutes.

Asagoe, ranked 103 in the world and appearing in her first final a day before her 27th birthday, had put an end to the magical run of Russian teenager Maria Sharapova in three sets in the semifinals but that performance took its toll on Sunday.

Maleeva, a former world number four, dominated the final from the start taking the first set in just 23 minutes.

Roddick, began in trademark style serving two powerful aces in the first game.

But neither was as quick as his record equalling 149 mph (239.7 kph) delivery against Agassi in the semi-final - a serve that matched Greg Rusedski's mark for the fastest serve ever recorded in professional tennis.

But sixth seed Grosjean, scrambling well and occasionally frustrating Roddick with the depth of his

Andy new King of Queen's

Tennis

AFP, London

Andy Roddick of the United States beat France's Sebastien Grosjean in straight sets to win the ATP Queen's Club tournament here Sunday.

Roddick, 20, won 6-3, 6-3, without dropping his serve in a final played in hot and sunny conditions that lasted just 59 minutes.

Both men were appearing in their first Queen's final with third seed Roddick having knocked out fellow American Andre Agassi - after saving match point - in the semi-final.

Meanwhile 25-year-old Grosjean, a wildcard, disposed of Wimbledon champion and three-time Queen's defending champion Lleyton Hewitt in the quarters before beating Britain's Tim Henman in the semis of this Wimbledon warm-up event.

There was nothing in the previous head-to-head to suggest such a convincing win for Roddick - in their only two other matches Roddick and Grosjean had one victory each, neither in straight sets.

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But sixth seed Grosjean, scrambling well and occasionally frustrating Roddick with the depth of his

groundstrokes was not overpowered early on.

And by careful placement he too delivered a couple of aces, in the fourth game.

The set went with serve until the sixth game when Roddick broke. Some well struck passing shots took Roddick to 40-0 up on Grosjean's



PHOTO: AFP

THE FINAL BITE: American Andy Roddick bites his nail while resting during his final encounter against France's Sebastien Grosjean at the Queen's Club on Sunday.

serve.

However, Grosjean recovered to deuce with the aid of some well-struck serves. But, having fought hard to get back on level terms, Grosjean lost his serve with a double fault.

The break put Roddick 4-2 up and he held for a 5-2 lead. It was always going to be difficult for Grosjean to win the set from that position although he did win his next service game.

Down 5-3, Grosjean had a break point on Roddick's serve when the American missed a sliced drop shot.

However, Roddick's wrongfooting forehand off a good length Grosjean approach took the game to deuce.

And Grosjean's overhit top-spin lob then gave Roddick his second

game point before a backhand volley saw the younger man take the set.

In the second, Roddick broke for 2-1. He wobbled at 15-30 down on his own serve in the eighth game but an ace put him 40-30 up to hold for 5-3 lead.

Grosjean then saved one match point when Roddick steered a backhand wide before a net cord winner gave Roddick the title.

one of the Grand Slams. They are all nice but, sure, this is my biggest title," he said.

"It was probably one of the toughest draws I have had."

Anxious to avoid over-confidence, Roddick is clearly looking forward to Wimbledon, the grasscourt grand slam where he lost in the third round last year to Greg Rusedski, the player with whom he shares the serve-speed record.

"I'm proud of the way I have behaved. Apart from a slight blow up where I trashed a trash can..."

Roddick has every right to be proud of his behaviour and his performance.

Still licking his wounds after a first round French Open exit and a painful parting from long-term mentor Tarik Benhabiles in the days following that loss, Roddick pulled himself together to clinch his biggest title.

"And more confident."

"You have got to be careful, though, because I felt good going into the French Open and I don't even want to talk about that."

"But if I could take this form into Wimbledon I would be really happy."

Roddick grows on grass