

Appelmans backs Clijsters claims

Former Belgian tennis star Sabine Appelmans has defended Kim Clijsters' credentials as the new world number one.

Clijsters replaced Serena Williams at the top of the rankings after beating Lindsay Davenport in the final of the JPMorgan Chase Open on Sunday.

The 20-year-old is the first number one never to have won a Grand Slam singles title, whereas Serena has claimed six, including this year's Australian Open and Wimbledon crowns.

Indeed Serena, whose season has been severely disrupted by injury, has lost only three singles matches this year.

Yet Appelmans, a former top-20 ranked player who won a WTA doubles title with Clijsters before retiring in 2001, argues her compatriot deserves her place at the top.

"Kim is a very worthy number one player," said Appelmans, 31, who now works as a commentator on Belgian television.

"She has played a lot of tournaments this year and has got to at least the semis in every one. She's also played many more tournaments than Serena.

Shane skips

FROM PAGE 13 paper last week as saying Warne telephoned her up to 40 times after a models' party.

"Every time he came to South Africa he would contact me," Cohen Alon told Australia television on Monday.

Cohen Alon said she met Warne on February 20 last year in a clothing store. "The moment he laid eyes on me, he was interested," Cohen Alon was quoted as saying in the Sunday Times.

New coach

FROM PAGE 13 Kenyan captain Steve Tikolo said the team was likely to be hampered by a lack of player contracts, which expired in June.

"The Kenya Cricket Association told us they are hoping to get a sponsorship contract done by the end of the month and meanwhile have asked that we get on with training," Tikolo said.

"But if we are not getting money to pay our bills, it will be difficult to assemble a team. Those like Hitesh (Modi) and Ravindu (Shah) who work elsewhere would rather go and work than come here."

'Clear the air, Warne'



AFP, Melbourne

Controversial Australian Test cricketer Shane Warne needs to clear the air with teammates about his latest off-field drama, his state coach David Hookes said on Tuesday.

South African woman Helen Cohen Alon, 45, has accused Warne of harassment and claims she was offered R200,000 (28,000 US dollars) by an associate of Warne to keep quiet about their relationship, phone calls and a series of text messages.

The sensational allegations have led to reports that some unnamed teammates are fed up with the adverse publicity Warne attracts.

Hookes said the stand-off situation would probably remain difficult until 33-year-old Warne broke his silence and gave his side of the story.

"It's rare for Shane not to speak," Hookes said here on Tuesday.

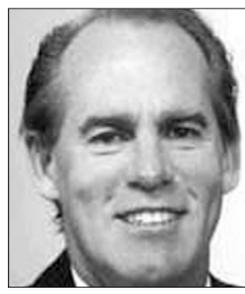
"It's probably going to be tense until Warne speaks. From his mates' point of view, when they hear from Shane then they can make some judgement."

Hookes was left to face the media when Warne, who is serving a 12-month ban for taking a banned diuretic, did not attend a Victorian

squad training session. But Hookes said it was unfair to judge the 107-Test veteran on the latest controversy.

"I think Warne handles himself pretty well on the majority of occasions," Hookes said. "Occasionally he does things that we put a moralistic view on and that's pretty unfair of us."

His view was echoed by Warne's state teammate Matthew Elliott,



DAVID HOOKES

who said the high-profile spin bowler should be left alone to sort out the situation.

"It's just a private issue and best be kept that way I think (to) give him some space to work it all out," Elliott said.

"Before we all start pointing the

finger let's get down to the real facts and make sure everything gets sorted out."

Hookes said the controversy "certainly wouldn't" affect Warne as a player and had not been officially discussed by his state teammates.

He also rejected suggestions that cricket authorities were lying of the problems associated with Warne, which have ranged from phone sex harassment allegations from an English nurse to accepting money for information from a book-maker and his positive drug test.

"I'm not sure you get weary of it it's part and parcel of having a job that's in charge of a group of blokes," Hookes said.

Former Australian captain Greg Chappell said he had no doubt Warne could regain his Test place next year despite the excellent form of fellow spinner Stuart MacGill against Bangladesh and the West Indies over the past few months.

But Chappell said Warne needed to retain his desire to play cricket otherwise the drug ban could affect his future.

"If the break confirms in his own mind that he wants to play more, it will have been good for him," Chappell said.

"But, if he's not missing cricket, then it will make a difference. He needs the desire because it's not just a matter of running in and rolling your arm over."

ICC, ACC to help Afghans



AFP, Kabul

Cricket's international and Asian councils want to help develop and promote the game in Afghanistan, which has produced "good talent" despite a lacking proper grounds and equipment, an official said Tuesday.

Asian Cricket Council (ACC) development officer Iqbal Sikander, who is also representing the International Cricket Council (ICC), made the pledge on the first official ACC visit to Afghanistan.

"The main reason for this visit was to see as to how cricket can be developed because the international community as yet do not know whether cricket is being played here at all," Sikander said.

"I can assure you of the ICC and the ACC's desire of developing cricket in Afghanistan and hope that together we could develop cricket

from the ground level and, Inshallah (God willing), we will see some very good positive results in two to three years' time," he said.

"I'm representing both the ACC and the ICC simply because there's been war for the last two decades and no-one wants to come here so this is the first time that someone from the cricket community has come here," he said.

The Afghanistan Cricket Federation (ACF) joined the ACC in June but was already a member of the ICC.

"Cricket is becoming more popular than ever in Afghanistan and the people are very keen to see and play this game," said ACF founder and fast bowler Allah Dad Noori, whom Sikander described as "the father of cricket in Afghanistan".

Sikander met Monday with Afghan and ACF officials to discuss development of the game in the Central Asian country, where it faces tough competition from football and buzkashi, a polo-like game played with a goat carcass.

"They've all been very helpful and cooperative and are keen to see that cricket flourishes in Afghanistan," he said.

"I was very happy to see tremendous support from the local government. They're very keen to see cricket develop and I've had some very constructive meetings with the vice president of Afghanistan, Mr Hedayat Amin Arsala," he said.

Most Afghan cricketers are former refugees who learned their love of the game in neighbouring Pakistan and brought it back to their homeland where schoolchildren are also starting to play.

"What I've seen so far is that all the refugees that were in (the Pakistani city of) Peshawar for a number of years, they've developed this game, they've developed the skills and now they want to bring everything back into Afghanistan," he said.

"There's a lot of enthusiasm, there's a lot of talent I've seen so far. Of course that needs polishing, it needs to be refined."

Cohen Alon tried to sell story to newspaper

AFP, Sydney

The South African woman accusing Australian Test cricketer Shane Warne of harassment, offered to sell her story to the Sydney Morning Herald for 250,000 USD, the newspaper said on Tuesday.

The Herald said it declined the offer but published an interview with Helen Cohen Alon, a 45-year-old divorced mother-of-three from Johannesburg.

She said she wasn't trying to blackmail Warne, telling the Herald: "Why would I want to blackmail Shane Warne when he was a friend of mine?"

"Why doesn't he just come out with the truth that he did harass me. Why doesn't he do that, and that we were friends in the beginning? And I really liked him, and I still do. He's a fantastic guy. There's nothing wrong with him."

"It's just that you cannot get away with things that you try and do to a woman all the time."

Warne, who is serving a 12-month ban for taking a diuretic, has yet to comment publicly on the allegations.

Warne has left it to his manager-brother, Jason, to release a statement last weekend.

"We regard the allegations of the South African woman, Helen Cohen Alon, as a personal issue between Shane, (Warne's wife) Simone and the relevant parties," the statement said.

The latest controversy in Warne's eventful career follows an admission in August 2000 that he made lewd telephone calls to a nurse while playing county cricket in England. He subsequently lost the Australian Test team vice-captaincy over the incident.

Cohen Alon said she was not alone in her situation.

"I'm not the only woman he has harassed," she told the Herald. "There's quite a few women and there's a few women in South Africa in my own country that he's done that to. And I'm the one that's sitting with the truth. The truth will come out."

Before Alon's revelations, her New York-based lawyer, Donald Levine, had said she "doesn't want to give the story away unless she is walking out of it with something in her hand ... unless she gets ... 250,000 USD, or we can negotiate on that".

Cohen Alon said she felt her life was under threat.

"I'm going to go to the police because I've been receiving calls when nobody speaks on the other side, and it comes through on an anonymous number. So what is that? It's harassment. It's somebody that's trying to scare me."

Bankers in

FROM PAGE 13 The first half belonged to the bankers but were let down by their poor finishing.

After regrouping in the lemon break, Sonali Bank launched a series of attacks and managed to equalise through Indian Anil Ekka who converted a penalty-corner in 58th minute.

Earlier in the first match, a hat-trick by veteran Zahid Biswas helped Mariner trounce all-losers Bangladesh Sporting after dominating the first half 4-0.

Sultan Ashraf opened the flood-gates converting a penalty-corner and he netted another goal after the break.

Besides Jubaier Riaz, Pakistani Abdur Razzak and Raju Sarker scored apiece to complete the rout.

Mohammad Rashed scored for the losers just before the long whistle.

Taufel pays

FROM PAGE 13 morning after a lengthy pre-game rendition of the Bangladeshi national anthem, the third umpire - Australian Simon Taufel -- was overheard saying that: "Let's hope the Bangladeshis go as long as their national anthem."

A furious and aggrieved Tigers' management reported the matter to match referee Mike Proctor of South Africa and demanded action against the umpire in question.

Proctor assured the team that he will take care of the matter and took the incident up with Taufel. Taufel later came to the Bangladesh dressing room after the match was over on July 20 and apologised to the whole squad for his unbecoming remark.

Sources also said that the International Cricket Council (ICC) severely reprimanded Taufel for his irresponsible behaviour after Proctor had informed the game's governing body.

The incident only came to light after the Tigers returned home from Australia on August 9.

Coria cruises



AFP, Cincinnati

Guillermo Coria, one of the hottest players on tour this summer, moved into the second round at the 2.45 million-dollar Tennis Masters Series-Cincinnati Monday with a hard fought 6-3, 4-6, 6-4 victory over Tim Henman of Britain.

Having won three consecutive clay court events at Stuttgart, Kitzbuhel and Sopot last month - without losing a set in 15 straight matches - the fifth-ranked Coria retired in his first round match last week in Montreal.

Explaining his quick departure from Montreal Masters Series, Coria said: "I was tired, and I didn't want to get hurt."

"Because I came from a really long tournament, I just wanted to get some rest."

Now feeling rested and confident, the Argentine proved to be crafty enough to handle the change of surfaces to hard courts this week despite a concerted effort by Henman to upend the 21-year-old.

"I've been playing a lot lately, so that inspires me to play better," said Coria, who now has a 2-1 career edge over Henman. "So that's why I've been doing so well lately. It was really hard today but thank god I got to break the serve and I just won."

A finalist here in 2000, the 32nd-ranked Henman has been fighting to regain the Top 10 form he possessed prior to shoulder surgery last November.

Despite his tough draw here in Cincinnati, Henman seemed pleased with his performance on

court, except for his shaky forehand.

"When you're coming into these types of tournaments, when you have so many of the top guys playing, there aren't going to be any easy matches," Henman said.

"You know, that's the predicament when you're trying to move back up, which I obviously am, and you're not seeded in these events. You're going to be playing some tough guys in the opening round."

The match was tightly contested in the third set, but when Henman netted a shot at 30-40 in the eighth game, Coria was set to serve out the match.

Briton Greg Rusedski proved luckier than his countryman, pulling out a 2-6, 7-6 (7/3) 6-4 upset over 12th-seeded Jiri Novak of the Czech Republic.

"For me, that's a great win today," said Rusedski, who is now tied at two matches apiece with Novak. "It's a quality player and a guy who's been in the Top 10 last year and plays very good tennis."

Making the last of 16 career visits to Cincinnati, 31-year-old Michael Chang was unable to capitalize on one match point in the second-set tiebreaker to lose to Hicham Arazi of Morocco 4-6, 7-6 (9/7), 6-0.

"You know, you're serving for the match, then you get a match point, it's a little bit discouraging," Chang said. "Then just for some reason, the old energy level kind of went down. I think I got a little bit nervous serving for it at 6-5 and I threw in a couple of doubles. That really didn't help my cause too much."

The 217th-ranked Chang, a two-time winner in Cincinnati, posted an overall 41-14 record at this tournament.

He will arrive at the US Open, his last tournament prior to retiring, with a weak 2-8 win-loss record for the year.

Earlier in the day, Frenchmen Fabrice Santoro and Paul-Henri Mathieu scored upsets over two seeded Spaniards.

The 60th-ranked Santoro sent defending champion and fourth seed Carlos Moya packing with a 3-6, 6-3, 6-4 first round victory.

The 54th-ranked Mathieu upended 15th-seeded Tommy Robredo 6-4, 4-6, 6-3 to move into the second round where he will face Arzi.

Chilean Fernando Gonzalez, the 13th-seed, made quick work of Brian Vanahly of the USA 7-5, 6-2.

Noam Okun of Israel upset recent French Open finalist and 16th-seed Martin Verkerk of the Netherlands.



Guillermo Coria of Argentina plays a backhand against Briton Tim Henman at the Tennis Masters Cincinnati tournament on Monday.

Radcliffe eyeing double



REUTERS, London

World marathon record holder Paula Radcliffe will attempt a 5,000-10,000 double at this month's Paris world championships in a bid to win her first global title.

The 29-year-old, whose training has been interrupted by bronchitis and a leg injury, has yet to win an Olympic or world gold medal.

Paris might represent her last chance on the track if she decides to concentrate on the marathon in next year's Athens Olympics.

"I am pleased that my training has progressed to a level where I am able to be selected," she said in a statement on Tuesday.

"My final couple of training sessions will tell me if I am at the level I want to be, and need to be, to do myself justice in Paris.

"As always my main focus will be the 10,000 metres and thoughts will only turn to the 5,000 metres afterwards."

Announcing the final British selections, UK Athletics performance director Max Jones said Radford had enjoyed five weeks' training at a high level.

"She is desperate to have a world title," he told a news conference. "It was always her intention to double."

Radcliffe, who seemed doomed to finish behind the fleet-footed

two hours 15 minutes 25 seconds in London last April, three minutes faster than any other woman in history.

Last year she translated her form on the roads to the track, breaking the European 10,000 metres record by more than 12 seconds in the rain at the Munich European championships and coming close to the world 5,000 mark at the Commonwealth Games in Manchester.

Olympic heptathlon champion Denise Lewis, who has not competed for three years and gave birth to her first child in April, has also been selected.

Lewis reached the qualifying mark in Finland last month but looked well short of championship form when she finished last in the long jump at Sunday's Berlin Golden League meeting.

"Denise is determined to compete although she was disappointed in Berlin," Jones said.

He added that Olympic and world triple jump champion Jonathan Edwards hoped to take part in the world championships starting on August 23 despite spraining his right ankle in Friday's London grand prix.

She went on to break the mark in Chicago and reduced it further to



PAULA RADCLIFFE

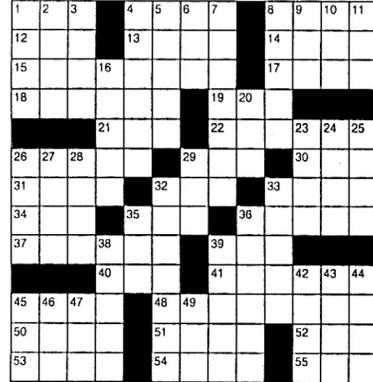
Africans on the track, set the fastest time ever by a debutant in last year's London marathon.



Winners of the Uro Cola-ACCL Pool tournament pose with guests (L-R, sitting) UCBL chairman and president of All Community Club Limited Zafar Ahmed Chowdhury, State Minister for LGRD and Cooperatives Ziaul Haque, chief of Parlex Group MA Hashem MP and managing director of Uro Cola Harunur Rashid at the All Community Club in Gulshan on Monday.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS 1 Stashed in-laws 4 Twain lad 8 Collapse 12 Euro fore-runner 13 Cupid's field 14 Bread spread 15 Adam Sandler portrayal 17 Paper quantity 18 Former talk-show host Tom Caudron 21 Ms. Thurman 22 Richard Pryor movie 26 Alliances 29 Artesian appellation 30 "I - Camera" 31 Rodeo prop 32 Writer Rand 33 Post-diet 34 Copper head? 35 English channel?



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Nasser rebukes

FROM PAGE 13 to make himself available for them all.

"Whenever Michael Vaughan or David Graveney ring me up and say 'There's a Test match next week' wherever it is in the world 'We need you, we want you', I'll be the first one there because I desperately enjoy playing for England," he added.

No-entry

FROM PAGE 13 that they had not received any official message from the cricket board.

He, however, said that the committee would be holding an emergency meeting to discuss the fate of the venue.

On Monday the BFF finalized the groups for the 'Super Six' phase but were unable to release the fixtures.

Defending champions Mohammedan Sporting Club have been billed in Group B along with Dhaka giants Muktijoddha Sangsad and Arambagh Krira Sangsad while last year's runners-up Abahani Krira Chakra were drawn in Group A with high-flying Moulvibazar Wanderers Club and Chittagong Mohammedan.

Be hungry

FROM PAGE 13 Anthony McGrath.

South Africa, brimming with confidence after their recent performances, will be further boosted by the return of premier all rounder Jacques Kallis, who missed the first two Tests following the death of his father.

With Gary Kirsten, Herschelle Gibbs and Boeta Dippenaar also among the runs and opening bowlers Shaun Pollock and Makhaya Ntini in a rich vein of form, Smith should be confident of continuing his good start as South Africa captain.

The 22-year-old, who took over from Pollock this year following the team's disappointing showing as World Cup hosts, has already won the respect of his team mates.

"Graeme has opened our eyes with regards to professionalism and understanding your job and what your role is as a professional sportsman," wicketkeeper Mark Boucher said.

"We can all see that Graeme is a very dedicated young guy and he leads from the front. He is so hungry and never satisfied with what he has got."