



Indian tennis star Sania Mirza hits a forehand during her match against Sanja Ancic of Croatia in their women's singles tie at the 19th Hopman Cup held in Perth on Wednesday.

Czechs too good for Spaniards

Tennis

AFP, Perth

The Czech Republic kept its Hopman Cup hopes alive with an upset win over Spain in their Group B tie at the mixed teams tournament here Wednesday.

The Czech pairing of Lucie Safarova and boyfriend Tomas Berdych came into the tournament ranked third, but were surprisingly beaten by rank outsiders India in their opening round robin clash.

Up against the second seeded pairing of Annabel Medina Garrigues and Tommy Robredo on Wednesday, the Czechs rebounded strongly to notch a 2-1 victory that kept them in the hunt for Friday's final.

Safarova gave her team a perfect start with a gritty three-set win over the higher ranked Medina

Garrigues.

The richly talented Berdych then sealed the victory with a comprehensive straight sets win over Robredo.

In the mixed doubles, Spain gained some consolation with a straight sets win, 7-5 6-2.

Despite losing the tie, Spain can still reach the final after beating Croatia in their opening tie.

In the women's singles, the 42nd-ranked Safarova recovered from a set down to beat the 23rd-ranked Medina Garrigues, 4-6 6-4.

Unforced errors harmed Safarova in the first set, but she maintained the pressure on her opponent, finally breaking in the 10th game of the second set to level the match.

The deciding third set went for almost an hour, but Safarova produced her best tennis when it counted to claim her first win in

three meetings with the Spaniard.

"It was great for me," Safarova said.

"I lost the first two times that I have played her, so I really wanted to win one."

"I'm really happy I did so well."

Safarova was beaten by India's Sania Mirza in her first singles match and admitted she again struggled early against Medina Garrigues.

"I felt much more comfortable today," she said.

"In the beginning I didn't play so well and then I improved and hit some good shots."

Safarova said the match practice on the Rebound Ace surface would hold her in good stead for the Australian Open, starting on January 15.

Robredo, a previous Hopman Cup winner, was an impressive winner over fellow top 10 player Mario Ancic on Monday, but had no

answer to the power of an in-form Berdych, who made it two wins from two singles matches here.

Ranked six places below his Spanish opponent at 13, Berdych prevailed in a slugging first set and then blitzed Robredo in the second, winning 7-5 6-1.

Berdych was pleased to post such a comfortable victory against a player of Robredo's calibre.

"I expected the same, Tommy is a top 10 player," he said.

"I think that the first set was tough."

"We started the first game and it was so long and I thought that if the whole match was going to be like the first game we were going to be here until midnight."

"At the end of the first set I made some good shots and I won the first set. "After that something changed and I started playing really well."

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Robredo, a previous Hopman Cup winner, was an impressive winner over fellow top 10 player Mario Ancic on Monday, but had no

out next ball to Lee for two, giving Gilchrist his fourth catch.

Sajid Mahmood was out next ball, popping an easy catch off the shoulder of the bat to Hayden in the gully to put Lee on a hatrick.

But Lee's hat-trick attempt was wide of off-stump, not obliging Harmison to play a shot.

Harmison lasted 24 balls before he was lbw to Clark for two and Flintoff's second half-century of the series ended when he played extravagantly outside off-stump and was caught by Gilchrist, his fifth catch, off Clark.

Panesar, who was also dropped by the butter-fingered Langer, became Warne's only wicket of the innings in his farewell Test match when he was lbw attempting to sweep, terminating England's innings.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at the close of the second

day of the fifth and final Ashes Test between Australia and England at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Wednesday:

ENGLAND: First innings (234 for 4 overnight)

Strauss c Gilchrist b Lee 29

Cook c Gilchrist b Clark 20

Bell McGrath 71

Pietersen c Hussey b McGrath 41

Collingwood c Gilchrist b McGrath 27

Flintoff c Gilchrist b Clark 89

Read c Gilchrist b Lee 2

Mahmood c Hayden b Lee 0

Harmison lbw b Clark 2

Panesar lbw b Warne 0

Anderson not out 0

Extras: (lb-5, w-3, nb-2) 10

Total: (All out in 103.4 overs) 291

Fall of wickets: 1-45, 2-58, 3-166, 4-

167, 5-245, 6-258, 7-258, 8-282, 9-

291, 10-291

Bowler O M R W

McGrath 29 8 67 3

Lee 22 5 75 3

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AUSTRALIA: First innings

Langer c Read b Anderson 26

Hayden c Collingwood b Harmison 33

Ponting run out (Anderson) 45

Hussey not out 37

Clarke c Read b Harmison 11

Symonds not out 22

Extras: (lb-8, w-4, nb-2) 14

Total: (For 4 wkt in 55 overs) 188

Fall of wickets: 1-34, 2-100, 3-118, 4-155

Bowler O M R W

Flintoff 6 0 31 0

Anderson 17 7 55 1

Harmison 16 5 34 2

Mahmood 4 1 15 0

Panesar 12 0 45 0

Toss: England

Umpires: Aleem Dar (PAK), Billy Bowden (NZL)

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