

IVANOVIC ROUTED

Henin completes hattrick title

AFP, Paris



Justine Henin joined the Roland Garros greats by defeating Ana Ivanovic 6-1, 6-2 on Saturday to complete a hattrick of French Open titles.

In what was an embarrassingly one-sided 65-minute final, the 25-year-old Belgian became just the second woman in the post-1968 Open era to win three in a row after Monica Seles in 1990-92.

It was also her fourth win in five years in Paris and the sixth Grand Slam title of her career taking her past both Martina Hingis and Venus Williams. Only Serena Williams with eight titles has a better record among players still active.

All her wins in French Open finals have come in straight sets and this was no exception as the 19-year-old Ivanovic, playing in her first Grand Slam final, failed to reproduce the sparkling form that saw off Maria Sharapova in the semifinals.

"Everything went so well for me though I was tight at the start," said Henin.

"All my matches have been in straight sets and it is just majestic.

"It feels different this year because I have had some difficult moments (her divorce) this year but

I have rediscovered my happiness and my family."

Ivanovic praised the Belgian.

"She's a great player and played a great match," said the Serbian teenager who admitted that nerves got the better of her when she served at 1-0, 40-0 early in the final.

"I started OK but I got nervous in the second game and my ball toss went everywhere. I had no control over it."

"You have to be a great player to beat her."

Clad in the same all-black dress with a pink horizontal stripe that had seen her win six in a row in Paris, Ivanovic did get off to an encouraging start.

ROLL OF HONOUR

The list of the last 15 women's singles winners at the French Open:

2007 - Justine Henin (BEL)

2006 - Justine Henin (BEL)

2005 - Justine Henin (BEL)

2004 - Anastasia Myskina (RUS)

2003 - Justine Henin (BEL)

2002 - Serena Williams (USA)

2001 - Jennifer Capriati (USA)

2000 - Mary Pierce (FRA)

1999 - Steffi Graf (GER)

1998 - Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario (ESP)

1997 - Iva Majoli (CRO)

1996 - Steffi Graf (GER)

1995 - Steffi Graf (GER)

1994 - Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario (ESP)

1993 - Steffi Graf (GER)

She blasted a forehand winner down the line to open the final and broke Henin's serve when the Belgian double-faulted on break point.

Ivanovic then had three points at 40-0 on her own serve to go 2-0 up but she started having problems with her toss allowing Henin to get into the match and break back thanks to a soul-destroying net-cord.

Two games later and still struggling to relax, Ivanovic again had game point on her serve, but again she failed to convert it and then a double fault gave Henin a second straight break of serve to go 3-1 up.

Against a player who had won 20 matches in a row at Roland Garros, the last 16 in straight sets, that was a luxury that Ivanovic could ill afford.

Henin grabbed control of the rallies switching the play intelligently from side to side to move around her much bigger opponent.

The Belgian rattled off the next three games to take the first set 6-1 in just 34 minutes.

The agony continued for Ivanovic as she dropped her serve in the opening game of the second set and she was rapidly 2-0 down and left with a mountain to climb.

The Serb did manage to stop the rot of eight games in a row lost by winning her next service game, but two games later she was put under pressure by Henin and once again she crumbled.



PHOTO: AFP

I'VE DONE IT AGAIN: Justine Henin of Belgium is ecstatic after her straight-sets win over Serbia's Ana Ivanovic in the French Open final at the Roland Garros on Saturday.



Did U Know?

America and Los Angeles Lakers legend Jerry West was the model for the official NBA logo. His silhouette appears dribbling a basketball.



Mark Viduka

(Australian star striker)
"I'm over the moon - the main thing that attracted me to the club was that it is moving in the right direction."

After completing his move from Middlesbrough to Newcastle.

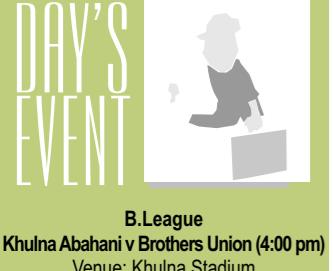
What to WATCH



ESPN
Afro-Asia Cup
Asia XI v Africa XI
Third ODI
Live from 2:55 pm

STAR Sports

French Open
Men's Singles Final
Live from 7:00 pm



B League
Kulna Abahani v Brothers Union (4:00 pm)
Venue: Kulna Stadium

Arambagh v Farashganj (4:30 pm)
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium

Africa stare at defeat

Cricket

STAR SPORT MONITOR

Facing a tall order of 338 to square the series, Africa XI lost five wickets for 217 at the 37th-over mark, once again leaving the middle and lower order to resurrect the chase in the second one-day international at the MA Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai last night.

Africa won the opening match by 34 runs in Bangalore on Wednesday.

While the required rate was within reach, the pressing issue was wickets in hand, with big partnerships the need of the hour. The chase hinged on last match's centurion Shaun Pollock on 22.

Bangladesh pace spearhead Mashrafe Bin Mortaza was replaced by his Tigers teammate Mohammad Rafique for the second one-day.

Opener Vusi Sibanda hit 35 before miscuing a pull off fast bowler Dilhara Fernando after his partner AB De Villiers (13) fell early, again to Pakistan paceman Mohammad Asif. Captain Justin Kemp followed next ball when his middle-stump was knocked back by the Sri Lankan bowler.

South African batsman Boeta Dippenaar was putting the innings together before he pulled a long-hop from part-time spinner Yuvraj Singh straight at deep square-leg where substitute Harbhajan Singh took the running catch. Dippenaar stroked nine boundaries in his 72-ball 67.

Wicketkeeper-batsman Mark Boucher, who scored 73 off 71 balls, chipped the ball straight to Asif off paceman Fernando.

Earlier, Indian batsmen Sourav Ganguly and Virender Sehwag hit contrasting half-centuries to help Asia reach a challenging 337 for 7 in the day-night affair.

Ganguly top-scored with a watchful 88 and Sehwag smashed a

quickfire 52.

They were not the only batsmen among the runs as Mohammad Yousuf (51), skipper Mahela Jayawardene (45), wicket-keeper Mahendra Dhoni (33) and Yuvraj Singh (30 not out) also made important contributions after their team had elected to bat on a good track.

Jayawardene also became the fifth Sri Lankan to complete 7,000 runs in one-day internationals

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PHOTO: AFP

Indian batsman Sourav Ganguly drives on the up during the second one-day international of the Afro-Asia Cup between Asia XI and Africa XI at the MA Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai on Saturday.

England near series win

Cricket

AFP, Manchester

Alastair Cook was closing in on his sixth Test hundred as England ended a series win against the West Indies at Old Trafford here on Saturday.

England, 1-0 up in the four-match series, were 228 for three in their second innings at tea on the third day of the third Test, a lead of 369.

Cook, who had scored a hundred in the drawn series opener at Lord's and 60 in the first innings of this match, was 89 not out after sharing a third-wicket stand of 122 with Kevin Pietersen, who made 68.

Pietersen, who followed up his century at Lord's with a Test-best 226 in England's innings and 283

run win at Headingly -- West Indies' heaviest Test innings defeat -- was out hit wicket in unlucky fashion.

Trying to hook a short ball from Dwayne Bravo, Pietersen's helmet fell off, despite being attached to a chin-strap, and hit the stumps.

West Indies, whose ground fielding was poor throughout, missed Cook on 42 and Pietersen on 51.

England resumed after lunch on 136 for two with Cook 48 not out and Pietersen unbeaten on 23.

Left-hander Cook then completed a 96-ball fifty with five fours.

But by then the 22-year-old Essex batsman was fortunate to still be at the crease after a miscued hook off Fidel Edwards went straight through the hands of Corey Collymore, running in at long leg.

Occasional leg-spinner Pietersen, who made 68.

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Gayle rejected as captain?

CRICINFO, undated

It is being reported that the West Indies Cricket Board has rejected the selectors' choice of Chris Gayle as stand-in captain for the one-day series against England and the quadrangular series in Ireland which follows.

The caribbeancricket.com website reported that the selectors met last weekend and picked Gayle to lead the side with Denesh Ramdin as his vice captain. But when those choices were passed to the WICB executive committee for approval both were rejected.

Gordon Greenidge, the head of the three-man selection panel, was then summoned to meet with WICB officials and notified of their decision. Furthermore, the officials advised him that they had picked Daren Ganga as captain, even though he was not in the original one-day squad, with Shiv Chanderpaul as his vice-captain.

Tony Deyal, the WICB's corporate communications manager, told caribbeancricket.com that the selection of the tour party should have followed the naming of the captain, as that individual should then have sat with the selectors to pick the side.

"I am not in a position to confirm that (the captaincy) right now," Bruce Aanen, the WICB's chief executive, told Cricinfo. "There are differences between the selection committee and the board (which need to be addressed) before we can announce either the captain or the squad. We expect to be able to do so in the next 24 hours."

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LOCAL SNIPPETS

SPORTS REPORTER

Ramzan of Jhenidah won gold in the men's singles competition of Samia 2nd Divisional Karate in Khulna yesterday.

Jhenidah were given more reason to smile as Tania won the under-48kg gold while Mita of Narail and Sharmin of hosts Khulna won gold in the under-43kg and under-53kg competitions respectively.

Khulna had two further gold medals as Imran won the under-45kg and Monir was victorious in the under-50kg event.

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RECEPTION FOR YOUNG FOOTBALLERS

Canary Wharf will accord reception

SEE PAGE 18 COL 5

Shaun sets his stall

Ashraful inspired by 2001 debut

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Terming the Sri Lanka tour as the biggest challenge, interim Bangladesh coach Shaun Williams said yesterday that his main duty is to go forward with the team in terms of improvement.

It was not only because most of the formidable sides in the world struggle in the island nation, but also the Australian has had first-hand experience about the difficult conditions as he toured with Bangladesh A team last March.

"It's a tough task to play against Sri Lanka in their den as the condition is not only hard but the pitches are quite bouncy which is altogether different from the other subcontinent countries. We are going to face one of the best teams around, so we would be needing a decent effort and an all-out effort as well," said Williams, who joined the Tigers' training camp at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

"There will be nothing better if we got some outcome from the tour in the end," he added.

Although the 35-year-old Australian holds the post of national game development manager, he coached Bangladesh A and under-19 teams for the last two years and was recently handed the job of national team's head coach following the departure of Dav Whatmore.

The short-term Tigers' coach looked hardly concerned about the result in the series rather wanted the best efforts from his newly acquired charges during the three-match Test and one-day series.

"In international sport, everybody is looking for a win. But we should understand what kind of opposition we are up against. What we can do is to perform at our best, to take a step forward at the highest level of the game," he said of his target.

The 35-year-old however has no special plans with the national side, rather kept his modus operandi -- what he followed during his job with the A team and the age level teams.

"I always try to give the guys a simple message which is to 'learn from mistakes' and there is no exception this time. I don't like to deal too much with the wrong things, I am more inclined towards the positive things and what we are capable of doing. But one should ask questions about their performance if improvement is needed," he said.

Williams was also little bothered with the tag of 'interim coach' as he believed that his main duty is to deliver to the board as much as he can, in any capacity.

"Coaching is nothing new to me. Yes, my job has changed as I am appointed (as the) interim coach for the national side, but the players are



THE NEW THINK-TANK: Padded-up Bangladesh captain Mohammad Ashraful (L) and interim coach Shaun Williams in conversation during a practice session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.