

Dancevic in last four

AFP, Indianapolis

Canadian Frank Dancevic defied rain that wreaked havoc at the ATP Indianapolis tennis championships on Friday, booking a semifinal showdown with top-seeded American Andy Roddick.

Dancevic, ranked 109th in the world, waited out three rain interruptions to defeat Russian Igor Kunitsyn 6-4, 7-6. The match ended nearly nine hours after it began.

The 22-year-old, who has never been this deep in an ATP tournament, will face Roddick, who beat sixth-seeded Korean Lee Hyung-taik 6-3, 6-7, 6-1 in the only other match that got on court.

Roddick fired 16 aces, including three in the concluding game, to go through in 90 minutes. "I'll take what I can get," Roddick said. "The only thing I'm a bit disappointed with was not taking my chances in the second and closing it out there."

The atrocious weather forced two quarterfinals to be postponed to Saturday.

Defending champion and second seed James Blake will face off against California teenager Sam Querrey while Russian third seed Dmitry Tursunov plays amateur Kei Nishikori of Japan.

Winners of those matches will have to double up on Saturday to try and reach the Sunday final.

Dancevic and Kunitsyn were interrupted for nearly four hours after the ninth game of their opening set and sat out another marathon of three hours in early evening.

The Canadian came from 1-5 down in the second set, a miracle finish which he could barely comprehend.

"I really don't know how I won the second set," he said. "I was down the whole time."

"I'm feeling pretty lucky this week."

The victory avenged a loss to Kunitsyn in February at Las Vegas and made Dancevic the first from his nation to reach an ATP-level semi-final ATP since Sebastien Lareau in Memphis in 2001.

Roddick improved to 9-1 over Lee and moved a step closer to another title at an event he won in 2003 and 2004. Roddick is chasing a second title of 2007 after winning Queen's in June.

India defeat

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Mohammad Shakil 2-490. BANGLADESH UNDER-19: 70 all out in 30.5 overs (Hamidul Islam 5, Rony Talukder 5, Iftekhar Nayem 4, Mahmudul Hasan 17, Ashraful Aziz 1, Tapos Ghosh 0, Nasir Hossain 21, Ariful Haque 0, Mohammad Shakil 3, Rubel Hossain 6 not out, Golam Kibria 1, extras 7; AN Ahmed 6-9, PJ Sangwan 1-17, Amanpreet Singh 2-14, I Abdulla 1-16) Result: India Under-19s won by 129 runs.

Korea third

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attempt blocked. Japan had their best chance nearing half-time when defender Yuji Nakazawa had a shot saved at point-blank range by goalkeeper Lee off a Shunsuke Nakamura corner.

The Koreans picked up two yellow cards in the opening half with Kang Ming-soo getting one for a hefty challenge on striker Naohiro Takahara in only the 10th minute and midfielder Oh Jang-eun cautioned for a late tackle.

The match blew up in the 57th minute when Kang received his second yellow card and was sent off by UAE referee Al Badwawi, which triggered the dismissal of coach Verbeek and two of his assistants for disrupting the decision.

But the Koreans marshalled their defence and saw off the Japanese threat to take it their third consecutive match into of extra-time and then penalties.

Valencia see off

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As expected, both teams made several changes at the break including Inter keeper Toldo for Julio Cezar and former Leeds midfielder Olivier Dacourt was also introduced by the Italians.

Substitute Migel Angulo flashed a 20-yard drive wide as Valencia again were the more industrious side.

Another familiar face to the English crowd was introduced with 27 minutes left when former Liverpool striker Fernando Morientes replaced Silva.

Both teams were happy enough to go through the motions in the closing stages.

Valencia midfielder Didier Digard drilled his 20-yard effort over, before Angulo somehow missed his kick in front of goal after great build-up in what was the final decent opening of the match.



Frank Dancevic of Canada smashes the ball towards Igor Kunitsyn of Russia during their match of the Indianapolis Tennis Championships on Friday.

New chief's hands full

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

The news last week that the West Indies Cricket Board had signed a contract extension with Digicel should have provided cricket in the region with a boost at a time the game is plumbing new lows.

On the face of it, the agreement seems to be beneficial for the board as it guarantees additional income at a time cricket is hardly fighting off potential sponsors, and also appears to remove some of the most contentious clauses that caused bitter disputes in the aftermath of the original deal. Only time will tell whether this is the case.

But there are some serious questions that need to be asked about the way the deal was negotiated, especially the role of Ken Gordon, the WICB's outgoing president.

Gordon's tenure ends this weekend on July 29. He arrived with West Indies cricket in a mess, but there were high hopes he was the man to turn things round. Sadly, few would argue that he leaves it in a better state than he found it. The last few months have been blighted by increasingly acrimonious disputes with players and a continuing decline on the field. Given that he was about to

depart, it might have been thought that he would leave such a major issue as the renegotiation of the Digicel contract to his successor, who is likely, barring an alternative candidate appearing late in the day, to be Julian Hunte.

But what actually happened was quite the opposite. Gordon and his executive actually accelerated the negotiation process. On July 15, two weeks before Gordon steps down, he held an executive meeting to ratify the deal. The board was split down the middle -- which raises concerns that the deal might not be as beneficial as it is being painted -- and Gordon had to use his deciding vote to force the contract through.

It also might be expected that Hunte, who will have to work within the restrictions of the contract, would have been closely involved in the process. However, he was not. A spokesman for the WICB told Cricinfo that Hunte was not at the time an officer of the board but that "even so he was invited as a courtesy to attend the meeting... unfortunately this clashed with certain other personal matters and he was unable to attend."

And what of the players? The original deal led to a long-running dispute over branding. It might have been expected that this time they would have been consulted. Even though a board official told Cricinfo

that the board would "we treat the organisation with the courtesy denied to us", a WIPA spokesman insisted that no consultation had taken place.

In fairness, the Digicel deal had been under the spotlight for some time and it was advantageous to both parties that it was extended. Nobody is querying the wisdom of the decision nor that was made within the rules, but there are serious questions to be asked about the manner with which it was handled.

It is yet another example of the increasingly high-handed way the WICB's executive had operated late in Hunte has his work cut out to restore credibility and player-board relations off the field before he can address what is happening on it.

It seems increasingly likely that the only way that can happen is for him to get rid of some of the executive who have been instrumental in ensuring he starts his unenviable task with one hand tied behind his back. The hand held by him already hampers him. If he has to work with the same people who have caused so much of the antagonism then his task might be impossible.

The Digicel deal in itself is not a problem. But the way it was handled does typify how West Indies cricket has reached the sorry state it is in today.

PCB looks for assistant coach

PTI, Karachi

Pakistan Cricket Board has advertised for the post of assistant coach of the national team despite a failed experimentation with this method while searching for the chief coach.

The advertisement, placed on websites, has the same condition that interested candidates must be Test cricketers and possess at least level-2 coaching experience. The assistant coach will work under the guidance of new coach, Australian Geoff Lawson.

The same sort of conditions were asked for the position of chief coach few months back and it angered some of Pakistan's former greats including Javed Miandad and Intikhab Alam who felt the board had devalued the prestigious position.

Ironically, the board did not get any high-profile applications for the position of chief coach and in the end had to make contact with Australians, Lawson, Dav Whatmore and Richard Done.

The assistant coach will help the chief coach in preparation of game plans and provide all support for organisation of fielding drills and nets practice sessions.

Initially, two-years contract will be given to assistant coach, the same as Lawson. Candidates have been asked to apply by August 15. Sources in the board said the advertisement scheme was apparently a move to either appoint a local coach, but not from among the big guns, or to allow the new coach the liberty to choose from foreign candidates.

Stars to raise flood funds

CRICINFO, undated

Pakistan's top cricketers have pledged to raise funds for victims of the recent cyclone and subsequent floods that devastated the provinces of Sindh and Balochistan.

Salman Butt, Pakistan's vice-captain, said some cricketers had visited the flood-affected areas and were deeply moved by the plight of those living in the region.

"We have decided to help raise funds for the Islamic Relief Pakistan (IRP) which is providing assistance to the victims in both provinces," Butt said.

Nearly 300 people died during the floods -- many more are missing -- and close to two million people are said to be affected. Hundreds of thousands of people have been forced to leave their homes.

Current cricketers, including Shahid Afridi, Imran Nazir and Misbah-ul-Haq will also work for the cause. Afridi, who toured the devastated areas said, "We were moved by the scenes that we witnessed. I believe it's our responsibility to come to the rescue of those people who have lost their dear ones, homes and livelihood."

A group of former cricketers, including Rashid Latif, Moin Khan and Jalaluddin, are also actively involved with the organisation's fund-raising activities. Islamic Relief is an NGO which conducts relief operations all over the world. It was established in 1984 in USA and in 1992 established its subsidiary in Pakistan. It plans to hold a series of fund-raising auctions in the US and UK in the near future.

Shiv joins Durham

AFP, Chester-le-street

West Indies batsman Shivnarine Chanderpaul has joined Durham, the English county announced Friday.

Chanderpaul, the mainstay of West Indies' batting, was at the crease for more than 24 hours while averaging 148.66 during England's 3-0 home win in a four-Test series earlier this season.

He also scored 116 not out in the second one-day international at Edgbaston, a match West Indies won as they came from behind to claim the three-match series 2-1.

Chanderpaul, 32, is due to join the squad on Saturday, replacing New Zealand all-rounder Scott Styris as one of Durham's overseas players, and will be with Durham until September's inaugural World Twenty20 championship in South Africa.

The northeast county hope he will be available for Sunday's Pro 40 one-day match away to Surrey at Guildford.

Pakistan want lively tracks

CRICINFO, undated

Having complained privately over the last year about playing crucial matches on lively, green pitches, Pakistan are now hoping more of the same will be on offer in South Africa for the Twenty20 World Championship in September.

Pakistan were poleaxed by South Africa in the Champions Trophy in Mohali last year on an unusually lively pitch. In the first round of the World Cup earlier this year, they were outfoxed by Ireland on a grassy surface. Both results led to some players and officials complaining of a conspiracy of sorts against Pakistan by the ICC but with their pace attack likely to be back at full strength, they are keen for similar tracks.

"We want to play on fast tracks," Talat Ali, Pakistan manager, told The News. "All our top pacers are back and available for selection and we are confident that we will go to South Africa with a pace attack second to none."

Instead of worrying about their batsmen's traditional inability to play on such surfaces, Talat believes Pakistan will look forward to letting their fast bowlers loose. "We have some of the best fast bowlers in the world in Shoaib Akhtar, Mohammad Asif, Mohammad Sami and Umar Gul. If they make fast tracks I believe it will help us more than other teams."

The batsmen are finding some form too; Salman Butt led the way with a century in one of the practice games that saw 371 runs scored in 40 overs. Shoaib Malik and Mohammad Hafeez have also been scoring runs in the practice games. It is likely now, however, that there will be only one practice match every other day during the camp, and not two, as was originally planned. Malik said players found it tough to maintain intensity levels after the first match in such difficult weather conditions.

"We are planning to talk to the officials about it and hope they will ease the schedule a bit. We were in full flow in the opening match of the day but by the time the second began most of us were feeling tired which is why the effort wasn't the same."

Mirza marches on

Tennis

AFP, Stanford

Unseeded Sania Mirza of India punched her semifinal ticket at this US Open tuneup Friday with a straight-set victory over fourth-seeded Patty Schnyder.

Mirza downed her Swiss opponent 7-6 (7/2), 6-1 for her second straight upset this week. She bounced sixth-seeded Tatiana Golovin of France in the second round.

Mirza's victory over world number nineteen Golovin was her first over a top-20 player since she was sidelined by a knee injury in March.

Now she is aiming to add to her one WTA Tour title, which she won at Hyderabad in 2005.

Top-seeded Russian Anna Chakvetadze booked her semifinal place, rallying against seventh-seeded Katarina Srebotnik of Slovenia 4-6, 6-2, 6-2. Chakvetadze has now won

seven consecutive hardcourt matches and is in position to capture her second singles title in as many weeks.

"The first set I was really up and down," said Chakvetadze, who won in Cincinnati last week. "I felt like if I could hold my serve I could turn it around. I started playing more aggressively."

"Katarina was a little more aggressive than me in the first set. She made me run all over the court. In the second set I started serving well and returning better."

"I still think my game is up and down," she added. "I don't know why, but sometimes I don't concentrate like I should."

Chakvetadze claimed her fifth career title and third this season on Sunday in Cincy. Ranked eighth in the world, the 20-year-old also has claimed titles at Hobart and 's-Hertogenbosch this year.

In the semifinals she'll play third-seeded Slovakian Daniela Hantuchova, who advanced with a 7-5, 6-3 victory against qualifier

Olga Govortsova of Belarus.

"She came out playing unbelievably well," Hantuchova said. "I just had to be patient, just make her play every ball. I was very impressed by the way she played."

In search of her third career singles title, the Slovakian has split four career meetings with Chakvetadze. Hantuchova won their only hardcourt meeting, 6-4, 6-1 in 2005 at Luxembourg.

Mirza's semifinal opponent is eighth seed Austrian Sybille Bammer, who advanced with a 6-2, 6-1 win over wild card Lilia Osterloh of the United States.

Osterloh, who attended Stanford University and delighted local fans with a win over Wimbledon finalist Marion Bartoli this week, failed to convert 11 of her 12 break chances.

"I was pretty exhausted after beating (Bartoli)," Osterloh said. "Now it's just a matter of my physical fitness in playing against the top players."

Weather perfect

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Here's the irony of it: the Indian bowlers were always going to need conditions to be really English to have a shot at dismissing England cheaply. They got their way today. Rahul Dravid won a toss he perhaps wouldn't have minded losing for he was forced to choose to bowl whereas he prefers batting first, but it gave his bowlers the perfect conditions: the air was heavy, clouds hovered around, there was a nice breeze blowing, and the pitch was juicy.

In fact, it could be said their day could have ended even better had one of their bowlers not sprayed it around.

RP Singh got the most important wicket of the day and he induced a genuine edge from Ian Bell, but he was also the most profligate, straying both in line and length. That was a shame for he had been India's most impressive bowler at Lord's, where he bowled within his limitations. With eight wickets in the bag, he was perhaps seduced by his own wicket-taking potential and ended up not doing the job normally assigned to the third seamer: the job of keeping it quiet.

And in fact, it had seemed like a familiar story at tea. After being reduced to 47 for 3, England had ended the session at 94 without further loss with Alistair Cook and Paul Collingwood latching on to some loose balls. They added 47 in 9.2 overs and England's run rate that point was nearly four. The momentum had turned, and an hour more of that and it could have been England's day.

In fact, it was an indictment of India's leading bowlers that Sourav Ganguly opened the

attack after tea but India were fortunate that he was up to the task. There had been a doubt before the match whether he would play and an even bigger doubt over whether he would be able to bowl for he had been afflicted with a stiff back. But in conditions that suited his kind of bowling, he was excellent, bowling a length that did not allow the batsmen the luxury of either driving or cutting.

With the ball nipping around all day, he demanded caution. He was India's second most economical bowler of the day, just a shade behind Sreesanth, and for the second time in the series he nabbed Alastair Cook, who looked England's most assured batsman, leg before. Hawk-Eye showed the ball going over, but it was a wicket well earned.

In many ways, it was the most crucial period of play for India. The 15 overs after tea produced only 18 runs and fetched two wickets. Ganguly's spell read 7 overs, 3 maidens, 11 runs and 1 wicket. It was as good a spell as you could ever expect from him.

India were also grateful for an opening spell befitting a new ball bowler in Zaheer Khan. He had let his team down woefully in helpful conditions on the opening day of the Lord's Test but here he looked dangerous from the first over, both slanting the ball across and cutting it in.

Andrew Strauss fell to a bad shot -- and despite his first-innings half century at Lord's he has looked England's weakest link -- but the ball that got him was just the kind of ball that was likely to get him. The fullness drew him tentatively forward and the movement found the edge. Strauss has an impressive Test record but he hardly has a stroke in front of the wicket. The Australians dried up

his runs during the Ashes by bowling full to him, and the rest of the world is beginning to get wise to his limitations. Sometime soon England's selectors will have to start looking at options.

The ball that found Michael Vaughan's edge was a peach. Zaheer had been slanting it away from him and had pinged him on the head with a short ball. Then there was the one that straightened off the pitch, forcing Vaughan to offer his bat. Zaheer was always menacing, apart from the second spell, when he went for runs against Paul Collingwood and Cook.

Ganguly's effectiveness also hid Sreesanth's patchy bowling. As always, he bowled some good balls, but he often bowled wide on either side for batsmen to be bothered to play. He beat Bell several times outside the off-stump but in reality none of those balls was close enough to get the edge.

At stumps India, in capturing seven English wickets for 169, had justified their decision to bowl first but the harder job lies ahead. The conditions are expected to stay the same and England have the bowlers to exploit them. If England manage to take their score near 200, it will not be as meagre a total as it might seem.

Given that more rain is predicted on Sunday and the drainage facility at Trent Bridge isn't anywhere close to what it was at Lord's the weather could yet again be a significant factor. But it must be said that it has also been a blessing. A glut of runs had been predicted for the series. But so far the contest between the bat and the ball has been thoroughly absorbing. High first-innings scores rarely produce thrillers. India have won the first day, but this match has just begun. It is full of possibilities.

'Totti is a closed book'

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concern that no big clubs wanted him. If someone is talented, he can prove it anywhere. He has real technique and quality, but the tough part comes now. He has to stay humble and he will go far. Otherwise, it'll get more complicated."

The Under-21 squad has qualified for the Olympics and many of those faces could break into the senior squad soon.

"I think the breakout stars of this season will come from the Under-21 side," added Donadoni. "People like Giampaolo Pazzini, Riccardo Montolivo, Antonio Nocerino, Domenico Criscito, Alessandro Rosina and

Raffaele Palladino. I am always in close contact with Pierluigi Casiraghi and Gianfranco Zola."

Another potential reinforcement for the Azzurri is Amauri, who is Brazilian but has an Italian passport and could be eligible for Italy.

"I like Amauri and am curious to see him in action again. Francesco Guidolin said he was crucial for Palermo."

Tactically the former Livorno boss is also considering a change of pace for 2007-08.

"I am thinking of a three-man defence. I have the right men for that system and used it when I was at Lecco."

Fergie out

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though, and real speed and two goals in two games is a good start for him."

Ferguson admitted that United's four-game tour of Asia had been a perfect preparation base for the club's defence of their Premiership title, despite the tough conditions in the Far East.

"It was very, very hot out there and that contributed to the slowness of the play, but Guangzhou made it difficult for us and I was happy to go in 2-0 ahead at the break," said the United boss.

"This trip has been good for us, though, because all of the players have had plenty of football and I am happy about our preparation levels for the start of the season."

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down words.

Cryptiquip puzzle grid with letters and numbers.

CRYPTOQUIP
E Y W E Q H Z M K W L Q H S Z U Z Z Q K H
O U A P Q S H E T K C Q H S
E W E L Q S O M Y U T E A A U P
M O U C Q M T O U H M O Q H C
Yesterday's Cryptiquip: WHEN WILD ANIMALS ARE VERY MANNERLY, SHOULD YOU SAY THEY'RE ON THEIR BEAST BEHAVIOR?
Today's Cryptiquip Clue: Z equals S

Wright days are back

FROM PAGE 17

In the short term, Bracewell envisages him working with the top order batsmen before their Test tour to South Africa. No matter who is chosen for that two-Test, three ODI trip in November, Bracewell acknowledges they will need hardening.

Wright will have a worthwhile message. If it is heeded and pays a dividend, Bracewell will be happy.

Longer term, he sees Wright's value in also working with the up-and-comers.

Wright will have a worthwhile message. If it is heeded and pays a dividend, Bracewell will be happy.

Longer term, he sees Wright's value in also working with the up-and-comers.

Vaughan thinks of Wright in a broad-based role covering the international batsmen, the high perfor-

mance centre, emerging talent and the major associations.

"When we started to think about winning culture, and toughness and performance, one of the names that certainly sprang to mind was John Wright," Vaughan said yesterday.

But, not surprisingly after his lengthy, largely successful tenure with India, others wanted him too.

"It just so happened it coincided with him being approached by the Australian academy. To a degree I suppose that accelerated my thinking, so we moved quickly to engage him. "He wanted to be able to contribute to New Zealand cricket. I think he

wasn't sure there was a role for him. I made it quite clear to him there was."

And so one of the game's most popular figures joins the NZC family. If he sits down with the national selection panel, it'll be an old boys' reunion.

Wright, 53, shared dressing rooms for years with Bracewell, Sir Richard Hadlee, Glenn Turner and even the nipper in the group, Dion Nash, who made his debut on the traumatic tour of Sri Lanka in 1992, when Wright and Vaughan arrived as replacements to help out a squad hit by departures after a bomb explosion in Colombo.