



India's tennis sensation Sania Mirza in action against Japanese Ayumi Morita during their first round match at the Japan Open in Tokyo yesterday.

JAPAN OPEN Flying start for Lu

AFP, Tokyo

Taiwan number one Lu Yen-Hsun fought off a ferocious challenge from Asian Games gold medalist Danai Udomchoke to move into the Japan Open second round here Monday.

Lu, ranked 96 in the world, fought back from one set down to win the next two and run out eventual winner 6-7 (4/7), 7-6 (9/7), 6-1.

Meanwhile, Indian star Sania Mirza, second seed, overwhelmed Japan's Ayumi Morita by hitting an array of power-packed strokes from the baseline to score a 6-0, 6-4 victory in the women's singles first round.

The Thai number one needed court-side treatment at 3-4 down in the second set after developing back pain.

But Danai dug deep and broke back to level at 5-5, and then went ahead 6-7 in the tie-breaker -- only to see Lu fire a service ace before hitting a forehand winner to level the contest at one-set-all.

Yousuf's denial

AFP, Karachi

Pakistani batsman Mohammad Yousuf Monday denied his last minute pull-out from the first Test against South Africa was linked to a legal notice from the breakaway Indian Cricket League (ICL).

The prolific 33-year-old last week made himself available to play for Pakistan after saying that he had cancelled a contract with the rebel ICL.

Yousuf was named in the 15-man squad for the Karachi Test, but minutes before the toss, selectors said he told them he could not play because he lacked match fitness and form.

He denied media reports the ICL had sent him a legal notice, saying, "It (the pull-out) has nothing to do with the Indian league and I have received no legal notice from them."

Yousuf said he had informed the selectors about his decision on Sunday.

"I told the selectors after practice on Sunday and my decision was taken after I realised that I would need time to get match fit. I have asked for ten days and hope that I will play in the second Test," said Yousuf.

The second Test starts in Lahore on October 8.

Totti's peace

FROM PAGE 20

Trafford last week and it contained a video message," she said. "It's a nice touch and let's hope it signals a more peaceful atmosphere when we play Roma twice in the next few months. Sadly, however, I have still not had an apology from the Italian police."

At least 11 United fans were stabbed in clashes with Roma's notorious Ultras before and after last season's quarterfinal in Rome and there were revenge attacks when the Italians came to Old Trafford. Greater Manchester police are treating tomorrow's game as a high-risk fixture and there will be a significant uniformed presence. Roma fans were involved in another incident ahead of their 4-1 defeat by Internazionale on Saturday, when two Inter fans were stabbed near the stadium.

A workmanlike innings

Cricket

CRICINFO, Karachi

Even though Hashim Amla perished late on the opening day of the first Test, beaten by the new-ball movement of Mohammad Asif, his innings was one of unabated patience, determined defence and steady concentration.

Although the majority of his time on the flat batting pitch in Karachi was spent playing second-rate Jacques Kallis, who scored a century, there was still a need to stay and apply one's technique.

"The conditions were favourable for batting and Graeme Smith (Smith) winning the toss really helped us," Amla said after the innings. "It is, however, a crumpling track and will deteriorate quickly which is why we are looking in excess of 500 as our first-innings

score."

The pitch was believed to assist the spinners greatly -- and it probably will more -- prompting Pakistan to go in with four spinners (two front-line and two past-times) and only two fast-bowlers. An hour into the day's play, there was neither seam movement for Asif and Umar Gul, nor was there any sharp spin to assist Danish Kaneria.

Kaneria's decision to go into the Test with only two fast bowlers surprised Amla in particular. "It was definitely unusual to play against only two fast bowlers and four spinners," he said, "especially before lunch on the first day, but we were prepared for it and played them well."

Amla appeared to be troubled by the spinners more than he was by the fast bowlers. On various occasions he tried to counter by sweeping his way out of strife, but only managed to top-edge the ball into the deep. Luckily for him, the 24-year-old from Durban,

ball landed safely on all occasions.

"Danish (Kaneria) got a lot of turn just before lunch and that made it difficult for me to play him at the start. However, as I got in, settled down and spent more time at the crease, I adjusted well and played him better."

Inevitably he was disappointed at being dismissed so close to the end and with a century on offer especially "after all the hard work we put in." He has, at least, the consolation of putting his side into a commanding position so early in this Test.

"It was disappointing to miss a hundred but we are in a good position and will look for 500 because the pitch is deteriorating and it was a good toss to win," said Amla.

"Kallis and I were even but then he paced his innings and he is a kind of a player who can do that (change pace) easily," added the 24-year-old from Durban.

IPL nets big-name Lankans

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

The Indian Premier League (IPL) received a boost as top Sri Lankan cricketers including Muttiah Muralidaran, Sanath Jayasuriya, Mahela Jayawardene and Kumar Sangakkara signed on. Although it will ultimately be down to various franchises to sign players onto their rolls, the latest announcement from Lalit Modi, the convenor of the IPL, makes it clear that these players are on board and available to be hired.

The signings of these players, along with Lasith Malinga, Dilshan Fernando, Farveez Maharoof and Nuwan Zoysa is the latest move from the IPL, which already announced that players like Shane Warne, Glenn McGrath and Stephen Fleming had expressed their interest to get on board.

"We at the IPL are committed to enticing an entire new generation

of sports fans into the grounds by showcasing some of the best cricketing talent on offer from the world over. It is in line with this philosophy that we have signed eight of the current Sri Lankan squad," Modi said while announcing the signings. "We are also in talks with some of the finest players in the international cricketing arena. I promise Indian fans that the IPL will truly be one of the finest cricketing leagues anywhere in the world."

Jayawardene, the Sri Lankan captain, though likely to play county cricket in England, will take part in the IPL before the English domestic season begins. Speaking on behalf of the Sri Lankan players who joined the league, Jayawardene said, "Twenty20 cricket is an exciting new format for both cricket players and fans. We are all thrilled to be joining the IPL, an innovative venture that has the potential to fuel cricket's growth around the world during the coming years. We are looking forward to making our mark in the league."

Farveez fires

FROM PAGE 17

Broad 10 0 54 2
Collingwood 10 0 44 2
Swann 10 0 47 1
Shah 2 0 13 0

ENGLAND

Cook c Sangakkara b Maharoof 46

Mustard c Malinga b Maharoof 27

Bell c Sangakkara b Maharoof 0

Pietersen c Sangakkara b Maharoof 1

Collingwood c Jayawardene 9

b Fernando 7

Shah c Mubarab Malinga 7

Bopara not out 27

Swann c Malinga b Dilshan 24

Broad run out 1

Sidebottom st Sangakkara b Dilshan 2

Anderson c Jayawardene 2

b Jayasuriya 0

Extras: (w-6) 6

Total: (All out in 34.5 overs) 150

Fall of wickets: 1-43, 2-58, 3-60, 4-

73, 9-51, 6-102, 7-144, 8-145, 9-149.

Bowler O M R W

Vaas 5 0 32 0

Malinga 6 0 32 1

Fernando 7 0 23 1

Maharoof 10 2 31 4

Dilshan 4 0 20 2

Jayasuriya 2.5 0 12 1

Total: (For three wkt in 90 overs) 294

To bat: De Villiers, Boucher, Nel, Harris, Steyn, Ntini.

Fall of wickets: 1-87, 2-109, 3-270.

Bowler O M R W

Asif 18 5 51 1

Gul 17 5 53 1

Kamran 23 2 76 0

Rehman 10 1 40 0

Malik 8 2 31 0

Hafeez 14 0 40 1

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