



PHOTO: AFP

Spaniard Fernando Verdasco (C) holds aloft the winners' trophy along with teammates after beating Argentina in the Davis Cup World Group final series at Islas Malvinas Stadium in Mar del Plata, Buenos Aires on Sunday.

Spain win 3rd Davis Cup

Tennis

AFP, Mar Del Plata

Fernando Verdasco won the Davis Cup for Spain here on Sunday, beating Argentina's Jose Acasuso 6-3, 6-7 (3/7), 4-6, 6-3, 6-1 to give his country a third title after 2000 and 2004 and deny the hosts a first.

Verdasco's success in 3hr 56min gave the Spanish, shorn of the services of injured world number one Rafael Nadal, a winning 3-1 lead.

"It's like a dream come true - it's the most beautiful day of my life," beamed Verdasco.

"It's a nice sensation. It's a great day for all the people in Spain."

Argentina had been hoping to land their first ever triumph in the competition after final losses away from home in 1981 against the United States and Russia two years ago - but Verdasco produced a fighting performance against a partisan crowd to secure the 'salad bowl' for the Spaniards.

A thumping drive on his third match point wrapped up the win for Verdasco against a cramping opponent who ran out of steam after going two sets to one ahead and the Spaniard pumped his fists, then embraced his squadmates as the home crowd looked on aghast.

Spanish skipper Emilio Sanchez Vicario paid tribute to his man.

"It was an incredible match - all the guys were so nervous. Fernando was just the better player - he's very strong," said

Sanchez Vicario.

Acasuso said the defeat was hard to take.

"There was a lot of sadness in the locker room after the loss and the fact that three of the four of us lost to Russia two years ago means that the pain was double," he said.

Sunday's match was to have pitted up-and-coming Argentine star Juan Martin del Potro against David Ferrer but the former had to cry off after suffering a groin strain during his opening-day loss to Feliciano Lopez while Ferrer was shell shocked by Friday's drubbing at the hands of David Nalbandian.

Acasuso, a 26-year-old from Buenos Aires with only three minor career titles to his name, almost became a Davis Cup hero when he took Russia's Marat Safin to five sets in the decisive rubber during the 2006 final.

But once again he was unable to last the distance.

Verdasco, a 25-year-old from Madrid with two career titles, made a tremendous start and did his best to dampen down the raucous 11,000 home crowd as he broke to love for a 4-2 lead before a wide forehand from his rival clinched the opening set in 35min.

The Spaniard promptly suffered an attack of the jitters, twice double-faulting as he gifted Acasuso a 2-0 lead in the second set and the Argentine then held to break 3-0 clear.

A further pair of double faults almost cost Verdasco dear but he just held for 2-4. There followed a run of breaks as

Verdasco forced the tiebreak, where Acasuso was fastest out of the blocks to level the contest.

Verdasco had pulled off a momentous showing on Saturday alongside Lopez to see off Nalbandian and Agustin Calleri in the doubles to bring Spain to the brink of another title which many had thought beyond them in the injury absence of Nadal.

The protagonists had split the opening-day singles with Lopez stunning number one Argentine Del Potro after Nalbandian had crushed Ferrer.

Worryingly for Argentina, in the last 36 years of Davis Cup finals, only three times had the doubles victors not gone on to win the title.

But Acasuso was not dwelling on that statistic and it was Verdasco who was feeling the heat as yet another double fault saw him drop serve at the start of the third set with Acasuso pounding down a slew of big forehands.

The pair traded breaks but Acasuso seized the moment as he belted down an ace before a confident overhead smash set up set point - which he netted and then drove wide on his second opportunity.

Third time round an ace finally moved him a set clear.

Verdasco pocketed a break for a 4-2 lead in the fourth, then served out to love to force a decider, where he broke twice in quick succession to race 4-0 clear.

The hard work done, he let slip two chances before completing the win on his third match point.

INDO-BANGLA WRESTLING

Three local females win

SPORTS REPORTER

Three Bangladeshi female wrestlers won their opening round bouts against West Bengal oppositions on the opening day of the 1st Indo-Bangla Bangladesh wrestling competition at the Outer Stadium yesterday.

Bangladesh's Kulsum Akhter beat Sushmita Mondol in 44kg weight category. Suinuching Marma defeated Hema Paramanik in 48kg while Rony defeated visiting Pompa Das in the 59kg.

All the West Bengal wrestlers won in the day's four men's bouts while Shampa Poddar and Jhuma Khan were the couple of women wrestlers to win for the touring side.

Earlier, Maj Gen ATM Amin, DG of Bangladesh Ansar and VDP, declared the meet of wrestlers from Bangladesh and West Bengal open.

Police finish unbeaten

UNB, Dhaka

Police AC clinched the Green Delta Insurance Metropolitan First Division Hockey League title with an unbeaten record after a 2-2 draw with Barnak Samaj in the last league match at the Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium yesterday.

The match was locked 1-1 at the break.

Rana Das and Ziaul Haque scored for the champions while Prosenjit netted both the goals for runners-up Barnak.

After 11 matches, Police secured 31 points while Barnak Samaj bagged 25.

Police player Rana Das emerged as the top scorer with 18 goals.

Earlier on the day, Farashganj defeated Bachelors 5-2.

Basabo edge BG Press

SPORTS REPORTER

A 12th minute goal by Nayan helped Basabo Torun Sangha beat BG Press 1-0 in yesterday's Second Division Football League at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur.

Basabo were on 20 points while BG Press stuck to 16 after 15 encounters.

The other match between Kadamtala Sangsad and Karwan Bazar ended in a 1-1 draw. Pragati, who took the lead through Mamun in the 15th round match, pushed their collection to 30 points while Kadamtala, who equalised through Hamid, took their tally to seven points.

SL clinch

FROM PAGE 17
Maharoor c Utseya b Mupariwa 14
Thushara not out 0
Extras: (lb-1, w-13, nb-2) 16
Total: (For 7 wickets in 28 overs) 171

Did not bat: Mendis, Muralidaran, Kulasekara. Fall of wickets: 1-13, 2-41, 3-51, 4-94, 5-149, 6-167, 7-171.

Bowler O M R W
Rainsford 5 0 21 0
Chigumbura 5 0 37 3
Mupariwa 6 0 39 4
Utseya 6 0 45 0
Price 6 1 28 0

ZIMBABWE

Masakadza c Kulasekara b Thushara 77
Sibanda c Sangakkara b Thushara 25
Taibub b Kulasekara 31
Chigumbura b Mendis 3

Matsikenyeri 19
lbw b Muralidaran 0
Chibhabhab Mendis 0
Williams not out 2
Mupariwa st Sangakkara b Muralidaran 0

Extras: (lb-5, w-4) 9
Total: (For 7 wickets in 28 overs) 166
Did not bat: Utseya, Price, Rainsford

Fall of wickets: 1-76, 2-134, 3-141, 4-151, 5-162, 6-162, 7-166.

Bowler O M R W
Maharoor 5 0 39 0
Kulasekara 6 0 35 1
Mendis 6 0 36 2
Thushara 5 0 31 2
Muralidaran 6 0 20 2

Result: Sri Lanka won by 5 runs and led the 5-match series 3-0.

Man-of-the-match: H Masakadza
Toss: Zimbabwe

Dhoni for changes

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

With his side sealing the seven-match series 4-0, Mahendra Singh Dhoni, the Indian captain, on Sunday said the team will look to field the unused players in the squad for the upcoming games against England.

"You will see a few changes in the side in the next three matches. Some of the people who have not played in the series so far will play but we still look to win games," he said. "Three more matches to come and we want to win those games."

The game in Bangalore was reduced to a 22-overs-a-side contest, and Dhoni felt his fast bowlers stood up on a day when the spinners found it tough in wet conditions. "Because of the wet outfield, the ball became soggy and it was not easy to grip the ball," he said.

"We have one specialist spinner (Harbhajan Singh) and part-time spinners, it was really difficult for them. But then Zaheer (Sharma) bowled very well, along with Ishant (Khanna) and Munaf (Patel). Overall it was a very good team effort."

Dhoni marshalled his bowlers well during the chase, and praised Zaheer for guiding the other bowlers.

"I was not giving much advice. First I like them to bowl to their own plans and if that does not work I ask them to bowl according to my plans."

"But Zaheer has been of great help throughout the series and has taken the extra initiative to help others. It has worked for us and we should be thankful to him."

SCOREBOARD
Scoreboard of the fourth one-day international between India and England at M Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bangalore on Sunday:

INDIA
Sehwag c Anderson b Swann 69

Tendulkar b Broad	11			
Gambhir c Anderson b Swann	40			
Yuvraj not out	25			
Dhoni b Patel	9			
Pathan not out	6			
Extras: (b-1, lb-1, w-4)	6			
Total: (For four wickets in 22 overs)	166			
Fall of wickets: 1-38, 2-117, 3-142, 4-160.				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Anderson	5	0	33	0
Broad	6	1	49	1
Flintoff	5	0	20	0
Patel	3	0	24	1
Swann	2	0	21	2
Pietersen	1	0	17	0

ENGLAND	
Bopara c Sharma b Patel	1
Bell b Harbhajan	12
Shah c Tendulkar b Zaheer	72
Pietersen b Sharma	5
Flintoff c Zaheer b Sharma	41
Collingwood c Tendulkar b Patel	22
Patel c Gambhir b Zaheer	11
Swann run out	5
Prior not out	0
Broad not out	0
Extras: (b-3, lb-2, nb-1, w-3)	9
Total: (For eight wts in 22 overs)	178
Fall of wickets: 1-1, 2-44, 3-52, 4-134, 5-141, 6-161, 7-178, 8-178	

Result: India won by 19 runs (D/L method) and led the 7-match series 4-0.
Man-of-the-match: Virender Sehwag.
Toss: England
Umpires: Daryl Harper (AUS) and Amiesha Saheba (IND)

Oram in doubt for WI

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

New Zealand all-rounder Jacob Oram's availability for the home series against West Indies has been thrown in doubt after he suffered a hairline fracture to his left index finger.

The incident occurred while attempting a sharp catch at gully for Central Districts in the State Championship match against Northern Districts in Hamilton on Monday.

Having opted out of the ongoing tour of Australia after sustaining a back injury in the first Test against Bangladesh last month, Oram was looking to return to full fitness in time for the first Test against West Indies starting December 11 in Dunedin.

"I've got to a point now where I wasn't disappointed, I just had a laugh," Oram told Radio Sport. "I just thought 'who have I annoyed so much to keep throwing this at me'. Hopefully it's character-building."

An X-ray cleared him of any tendon damage but it is uncertain how much impact the injury will have on Oram. He, however, sounded hopeful of playing a role in the final three days of the ongoing match at Seddon Park if the swelling reduced.

"But to what extent, I don't know," he said. "There's no point going out there if I'm going to do myself or the team a disservice, especially with the big picture in mind."

"This has thrown a spanner in the works but it could be worse."

Oram was desperate to

prove his fitness and continue bowling a short spell even after suffering the injury. However, the worst-case scenario may see the fracture taking up to a month to heal.

"I've got to show that I'm bowling-fit and capable of getting through overs. While I could still bowl and the right arm and the right hand were functioning properly, I thought I'd just continue bowling my overs. When I finished that spell, I came off, got irritated," he said.

This is not the first time that Oram has suffered a career-threatening injury. He was forced out of the Napier Test against England earlier this year and, in the return series, pulled out of the Twenty20 international at Old Trafford after injuring himself in the warm-up.

Robin's rescue act

FROM PAGE 17

There came enough space in the middle for the Black and Whites to mount heavy pressure.

Nasir, the young right fullback who was otherwise calm, created three openings with his deft runs but hit one over the bar from long range before finding Robin, who placed wide.

The pressure finally told when substitute Komol flicked a pass by Nasir to Robin, who got the ball in an almost impossible angle at the left side but moved on his heels nicely to struck a powerful and curling right-footer into the top left corner of Biplab to salvage a valuable point with his fifth league goal.

Amalesh, whose side will be fined Tk 10,000 for receiving four yellow cards, rued for letting Mohammedan off the hook but said he was helpless.

"We should have won but threw it away for trouble in midfield," said the veteran former international.

"I lost Pranotosh and Mamun was unfit, so I had to

send a defender for Abul. That's why we could not attack in the last minutes."

His Mohammedan counterpart said he was happy in the end.

"In a big match you can expect anything. But I always believed my team should score because we had superior possession. The way we pressed, a goal was bound to come and thanks to Robin for an outstanding equaliser," said Maruf.

TEAMS
ABAHANI: Biplab, Nazrul, Samad, Sujun, Waly, Zahid, Pranotosh (Joy, 41), Emeka, Abul (Obaidur, 80), Ibrahim and Emily.

MOHAMMEDAN: Aminul, Nasir, Saikat (Wahid, 46), Rajani, Hassan, Sharif, Arman Aziz, Hazem, Faisal Mahmud (Komol, 78), Robin and Bukola.

Referee: Abdul Hannan.

Usain, Yelena

FROM PAGE 17
Games was astonishing. They were even on the landing runway which is forbidden.

"Despite the rain, they stayed alongside the road in order to see me and touch me."

"But even so at the base of it I remain the same person."

Isinbayeva, a resident of Monaco, was delighted with her award.

Bangladeshis

FROM PAGE 17
Bangladesh climbed up to 55th position with 11 match points and 21.5 games points.

Bangladesh women's team also won their tenth round match, beating IBICA 3-1. WFM Shamima Akhter Liza beat Stolarczyk Anna, Nazrana Khan Eva beat FM Debowska Teresa and Syeda Shabana Parveen Nipa beat Fries Elisabeth. WIM Rani Hamid was the only player to lose for the women's team who are now 64th with 10 match points and 18.5 games points.

In the 11th and last round yesterday, the men's team were meeting Thailand and the women against Luxembourg.

Younis urges India to tour Pakistan

PTI, Karachi

Senior batsman Younis Khan on Monday urged India to put aside security apprehensions and go ahead with their tour of Pakistan scheduled early next year.

Younis said most countries are grappling with security issues and India needed to support Pakistan cricket by going ahead with the tour, featuring three Tests, five one-day internationals and a Twenty20 game.

"The security situation globally is a problem but life goes on and I would urge India to tour Pakistan," Younis said.

"As a player I would love to play India in my country and I would definitely like the series to go ahead on schedule," he said.

Rajin's near

FROM PAGE 17

producing 48 runs in the opening stand. But they kept losing their wickets at regular intervals with batsmen throwing the initiatives away after having a start. Shuvo struck five fours in his patient 162-ball knock. For Chittagong Younus, Rezaul Karim, Kamrul Islam and Masumuddowla took two wickets each.

SCORES IN BRIEF

BARISAL FIRST INNINGS: 240-8 in 90 overs (Rony 21, Nasiruddin 61, Raisul 22, Shaheen 58, Arafat 22, Tariqul 28*, Monwar 12*, Robiul 3-48, Raihan 2-16, Dollar 2-46)

RAJSHAHI FIRST INNINGS: 240 all out in 88.5 overs (Jahurul 31, Hamidul 24, Anisur 37, Shuvo 56, Shabbir 36; Younus 2-40, Rezaul 2-25, Kamrul 2-35, Masum 2-21)

SYLHET FIRST INNINGS: 256-5 in 90 overs (Imtiaz 58, Rajin 94, Kamrul 56*, Rezaul 13*, Azim 3-46)

Setback for Asia

Afghanistan win ACC U-17 Cup

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Afghanistan beat Oman by 42 runs to win the Asian Cricket Council's Under-17 Challenge Cup in Bangkok on Monday, but the event was hardly an inspiring advertisement for the sport in general, and China's development programme in particular.

Once again, the contentious issue of under-age players reared its ugly head with Maldives and Iran thrown out for breaching widely flagged regulations. Given the expulsion of eight teams in the ACC's Under-15 tournament less than a year ago, either there is continuing ignorance about the rules or teams are deliberately looking to flout them. The net result of this was that

China, thrashed in their group matches, progressed to the semifinals.

Much has been made of China's potential, and there seems to be little that the ICC and ACC won't do to help them progress. In August, JS Bindra, the former Indian board chief, was appointed by the ICC to develop the game in China. While the talk of how far they have come in a short time is bullish to the extreme, the dismal performance of their U-17 side must have come as a jolt to their supporters within the two organisations.

In their first match, China bowled out the Maldives for 68 only to be blown away for 29 themselves. They followed that with a shocking performance against Thailand when they made 17. The bare statistics hide the fact that China, who only turned up with 12 players, took the field with nine after

suffering three injuries.

That China still made the semifinals as a result of the expulsions reduced the event to near farce. Oman cruised to 298 for 2, with hundreds from Avinash Shekar and Gaurav Honavar, and then dismissed China for 48. In the other semi, Afghanistan eased to a 151-run victory over Thailand.

Afghanistan, who had lost to Oman on the opening day, gained revenge with victory in the final, with both teams promoted to the ACC U-17 Elite competition. The third-place play-off only served to heap more humiliation on the Chinese as Thailand romped to a 205-run win over them.

As for China, serious questions have to be asked within both the ACC and ICC over why massive hype has not come close to being matched by on-field performances.

Shoaib not finished yet

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Intikhab Alam, the Pakistan coach, believes Shoaib Akhtar still has a few years of international cricket left in him and has backed him to play a crucial role in the home series against India in January. Shoaib returned to the Pakistan squad for the series against West Indies in Abu Dhabi but missed all three ODIs due to a calf strain.

"He (Shoaib) can play a very important role against India and we will be relying on him to deliver the goods with experience and pace," Alam told PTI. "I don't think he is finished. If nursed properly and if he takes care of himself, Shoaib can do more for Pakistan than he has done in recent times."

Shoaib's appearances for Pakistan have been sporadic of late due to injury and disciplinary issues but Alam said he was working his way back through a rigorous rehabilitation program under the supervision of David Dwyer, the Pakistan trainer. "He is working very hard and doing what he has been asked to do to lose weight, become fitter and sharper," Alam said. "He was fit for the final match (in Abu Dhabi) but we decided to not risk him on the advice of the trainer."

Looking ahead to Pakistan's first Test series in more than a year, Alam said all the players had been given individual programs to get themselves fit. He acknowledged India's splendid success in recent months -- which included a 2-0 series win at home against Australia -- and said their bowlers had mastered

the art of using the SG ball effectively in domestic and first-class cricket.

"India have done really well in recent months and they were the better side against Australia. I think one of the reasons for their success is the balls they use in domestic cricket and against touring sides," Alam said. "The Indian players are well-versed with the SG cricket balls and know how to use them well. Compared to the Kookaburra, the SG has a more prominent seam that does not die down after a few overs and is a big help for the spinners and fast bowlers alike. It allows them to take a strong grip and use it effectively."

India's tour of Pakistan, which runs from January 4 to February 19, includes three Tests, five ODIs and a Twenty20 international.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	36 Root overhang	52 Sleep phenom	20 Colonial sewer
1 Wander	37 Long-abbr	53 Dilbert's place	21 Wheel connector
8 Wear a rut in the rug	41 Bear's companion	4 Multi-colored	22 Herr's wife
12 Ford or Lincoln	42 Camp-bodian money	5 Ethereal show	23 Pack down
13 Charged bit	43 Capital of Franc	6 Japanese pond	24 Spirit in a bottle
14 Punch	44 British replacement	7 Huge boa	25 Raise up
15 South African city	45 Roman-cit	8 False edge	26 Busy with
16 Depost	46 Egg-trail	9 Grad	27 Mid-east
17 Hansel and Gretel's	47 Fishing gear	10 Sidewalk	28 Baby horse
18 Subsequently	48 Morse symbol	11 Holly-wood	29 Jeff
20 Acceptable	49 Symbol	12 Rowboat need	30 Witicism
21 MRI fore-runner	50 Symbol	13 Rowboat need	31 Saharan
22 Brain's stimulus receptors	51 Symbol	14 Rowboat need	32 Sax-playing Simpson
23 Fatima's flight	52 Symbol	15 Rowboat need	33 Kesey and Olin
24 Money	53 Symbol	16 Rowboat need	34 Con job
25 Conclude	54 Symbol	17 Rowboat need	35 "Got a Secret"
26 Happiness, plus	55 Symbol	18 Rowboat need	36 Caviar, essentially
27 Partner	56 Symbol	19 Rowboat need	37 11-Down counter-parts
			38 Request

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