

Indefatigable Nadal denies Federer

AP, Melbourne

Rafael Nadal held off Roger Federer in another momentum-swinging, five-set final to win the Australian Open on Sunday, keeping the Grand Slam singles record safe for now.

After coming through the longest match in the tournament's history to reach the championship match, Nadal needed 4 hours, 23 minutes Sunday to win 7-5, 3-6, 7-6 (3), 3-6, 6-2.

Federer, who was trying to equal Pete Sampras' 14 major titles, has lost to Nadal the last three times they've met in Grand Slam finals.

The 27-year-old Swiss star couldn't hold back tears at the presentation.

"Maybe I'll try later. God, it's killing me," Federer said, sobbing. He returned to congratulate Nadal within minutes, saying, "You deserved it. You played a fantastic final."

Nadal collected the trophy and put his arm around Federer.

"Roger, sorry for today. I really know how you feel right now," Nadal said. "Remember, you're a great champion, you're one of the best in history."

He accepted the cup from Rod Laver, who was in Australia to mark the start of the 40th anniversary of the last Grand Slam season.

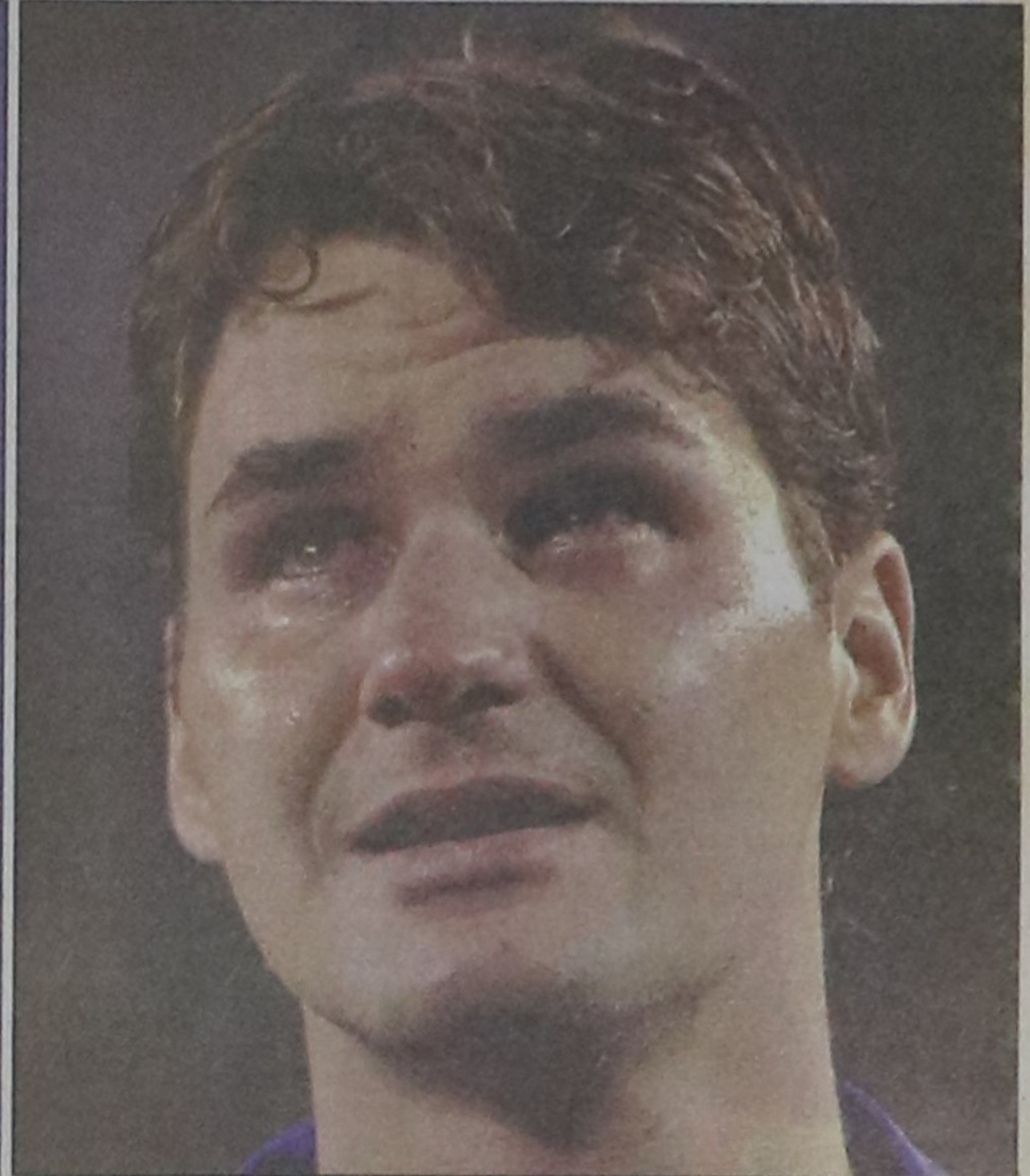
"To receive this trophy from Rod Laver is a dream for me," Nadal said.

Federer, so dominant when he won three of the four majors in 2006 and 2007, has now lost finals on three different surfaces to Nadal.

Now it's the 22-year-old Nadal who seems more likely to be the first since Laver to complete a Grand Slam with wins in one year in all four majors.

Nadal, who has four consecutive titles on clay at Roland Garros and beat Federer on grass in a five-set epic at Wimbledon last year, became the first Spaniard to win the Australian title.

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PHOTOS: AFP

IT'S HARD NO MORE: World number one Rafael Nadal (L) of Spain lies on the hard surface in Melbourne after winning the championship point in the Australian Open men's singles final against his magnificent rival Roger Federer for whom the defeat was understandably inconsolable after coming so close to equalling Pete Sampras' record 14 Grand Slam titles yesterday.



Did U Know?

Boris Yeltsin - who was president of the Russian Federation - was a volleyball player. Russia hosted the Boris Yeltsin Cup in 2008.



Talk Turkey



Younis Khan

(Pakistan's new cricket captain)
"The boys will all have to get together and wave their magic wands. I can't just wave it by myself."



What to Watch

ESPN
Sportscentre India
Sports News
Live at 8:30pm
English Premier League
Man United v Everton
Live from 2:00am (Tuesday)



Citycell B. League
Brothers Union v Abahani
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium
Time: 4:30pm

Full points for Dilkusha

SPORTS REPORTER

Dilkusha Sporting Club handed a 2-0 defeat to Swadhinata Krira Sangha in the Citycell 3rd Division Football League at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday.

Anik put the winners ahead in the 42nd minute while Sajju Mia doubled the margin in the 46th minute.

Promises to keep

SPORTS REPORTER



Despite having a six-point lead in the Citycell B. League table, leaders Abahani are not going to relax when they face Brothers Union in today's heavyweight clash at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

Brothers may have crashed out of the title race but the Gopibagh outfit still believe they have a golden chance to finish runners-up.

And memories of their 2-0 win over Amalesh Sen's defending champions in the first leg will boost them, commented Brothers manager Amer Khan ahead of the return-leg match.

Abahani, with 41 points from 17 games, need just four points to seal their second successive professional league trophy as nearest rivals Mohammedan and Sheikh Russel are both level on 35 points.

And the Sky-Blues target full three points before going into their top-of-the-table date with Russel, said Abahani manager Satyajit Das Rupu yesterday.

"We can't relax because if we want to maintain the gap (with Mohammedan and Russel), we have to win," the former national midfielder said.

"We are not yet champions and to retain the title, we have to keep the pressure on the opponents. This is also a match of revenge for us. If we beat all the teams and win the trophy, it would be wonderful," said Rupu, whose in-form side have conceded just one goal -- against archrivals Mohammedan -- in the previous eight matches since the defeat to Brothers on the first day of December.

Ghanaian defender Samad Yussif and midfielder Mamun, both on two yellow cards,

were rested in the last game but return today but Abahani may miss holding midfielder Joy, who limped off the ground their 1-0 win against Muktiyoddha last week.

"If Joy does not fully recover, we will not risk him. Our strength is in the bench and we can field an almost equal side even if we miss a vital player," added Rupu.

"We are going to play positive because we don't want to lose the position we have reached after hard work."

Brothers, who were only four points behind Abahani at the end of the first-leg, gradually bowed out of the big stage and Amer Khan blames 'bad luck'.

"We have played good football but the way our forwards missed the chances, it is really painful," said the former Brothers player, whose side had a visit from national team's new Brazilian coach Edson Dido Silva during their yesterday's training.

The Oranges had too many draws -- seven in 16 games, admits Amer saying that the most crucial were draws against lowly Arambagh and Muktiyoddha in both legs.

"In fact, not only the strikers, but our midfield has also failed to score. We missed Nigerian player Divine in the midfield and the defence also made silly mistakes, especially in the Mohammedan match."

"Still, if we win our remaining four games, we will finish on 40 points and have very good chance to clinch the second spot."

Brothers will have their playmaker Matiur Munna, the national captain, back after missing the last match through injury and will field a full side to make life as tough as possible for Abahani.

As it had happened often in the past, everyone can expect a good match if both the giants keep their promises.

Trophy not in Pakistan

England awarded Oval Test again

AFP, Perth



The International Cricket Council (ICC) Sunday decided to relocate the 2009 Champions Trophy from Pakistan due to lingering fears over the security situation in the troubled nation.

Following a meeting of the ICC board here, chief executive Haroon Lorgat said the "safety and security environment" in Pakistan had forced a relocation of the eight-nation event.

The second-biggest one-day tournament in world cricket behind the World Cup, the Champions Trophy had already been delayed 12 months to September this year because of concerns over player safety.

"The board was seeking some sort of certainty sooner rather than later, and as a result has decided it won't be staged in Pakistan," Lorgat said.

"We all know what is transpiring in Pakistan and India has now got a government directive not to tour, which adds some weight to the countries who had previously indicated they were not keen to tour Pakistan," he added.

"It is unfortunate the Champions Trophy will not take place in Pakistan due to

circumstances completely beyond the control of the PCB [Pakistan Cricket Board]," Lorgat said.

Despite the change of venue, Pakistan will still earn a hosting fee, the ICC said.

Sri Lanka is the alternative venue and Lorgat said a final decision would be made on the tournament before the next ICC board meeting in April.

"The alternate nominee is Sri Lanka," Lorgat said. "There are just a few things we want to iron out before we confirm that particular as the alternate host."

Sri Lankan officials have repeatedly said they are ready to host the tournament.

The ICC's postponement of the Champions Trophy in September over security concerns was the same reason given by Australia for not playing a Test series there last March.

The Indian cricket board in December cancelled a tour of Pakistan scheduled for January and February on instructions from the government in the wake of November's Mumbai attacks.

Lorgat said the ICC was committed to helping the PCB organise future cricket tours, with the country struggling to attract foreign teams since the September 11, 2001 attacks in the United States.

"It (security) is completely outside the control of the PCB,

and we have offered to work with them to try and get a task team to ascertain how best and when we can get international cricket back into Pakistan," Lorgat said.

Pakistan went through 2008 without playing a Test match as teams refused to tour the country, citing security fears.

Meanwhile, England have once again been awarded the controversial 2006 Oval Test against Pakistan, the ICC announced.

The match was originally awarded to England when the umpires ruled that Pakistan

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Jr tennis begins in BKSP

SPORTS REPORTER

China's Yuan Tao Pan beat Taiwan's Chi-Shan Jao 7-5, 6-3 in the AWR 7th BKSP International Junior Tennis Championships at BKSP yesterday.

In the day's other matches, India's Vishwajit Tirumurti beat Taiwan's Cheng Ju Hsieh 6-3, 6-0, Taiwan's Ching Hsu defeated compatriot Yen-Ju 6-2, 6-2 while Thailand's Rittahai Somroo lost to Taiwan's Chieh-Fu Wong 6-1, 6-4.

Pakistan arrive today

SPORTS REPORTER

Pakistan women's cricket team will arrive in Dhaka today to take part in a tri-nation tournament also involving Sri Lanka.

The first match of the tournament between hosts Bangladesh and Pakistan will take place at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra on February 6.

Two more matches -- Sri Lanka-Pakistan on February 7 and Bangladesh-Sri Lanka on February 9 -- will also be held at Bogra.

The participating teams will then travel to Khulna to play the remaining three league matches.

The final is scheduled to be held at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur on February 17.

PAKISTAN SQUAD

Sana Mir, Bismah Maroof, Syeda Nain Fatima Abidi, Syed Sajida Shah, Javeria Wadood, Sukhan Faiz, Nahida Bibi, Urooj Mumtaz Khan, Almas Akram, Asmavia Iqbal Khokhar, Sania Iqbal Khan, Qanita Jalil, Naila Nazir, Armaan Khan and Syeda Batool Fatima Naqvi.

Niggling Tigers inching back

SPORTS REPORTER

Ahead of Tuesday's Premier Division Twenty20 semifinal, Biman face an injury scare to their superstar Shakib Al Hasan, who is reportedly suffering from a groin problem.

The all-rounder has been asked to rest by national team physio Michael Henry who is currently working full time with some of the national players.

The injury to Shakib, who remains the number one all-rounder in the world, is not particularly severe and thought to be a result of the Tigers' busy international schedule.

Biman are also burdened with another injury in the form of a broken collarbone to former national batsman Tushar Imran.

Also in the injury front, pacer Nazmul Hossain has been diagnosed with typhoid but is expected to be fit by the middle of next week. He missed the last game for Abahani against Victoria on Saturday at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium. Dashing opener Tamim Iqbal is also suffering from illness and will require another two to three days of rest.

Another national cap Syed Rasel is now fully fit and will be starting to train after the this tournament finishes on February 4. With 50 international one-day wickets, Rasel last played for the tigers in November 2008 against South

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Emotions took over Roger

AFP, Melbourne



Roger Federer says he was overcome by the emotions of a major defeat when he broke down in tears on the presentation dais after losing the Australian Open to Rafael Nadal on Sunday.

The Spanish world number one downed the Swiss star in a thrilling five-set final 7-5, 3-6, 7-6 (7/3), 3-6, 6-2 in four hours and 23 minutes to continue his Grand Slam domination over the Swiss star.

The loss meant Federer missed the chance to move equal with American Pete Sampras' world record 14 Grand Slam wins.

After being presented with the runner-up trophy by legendary Australian player Rod Laver, Federer said the realisation of the magnitude of the loss sunk in and he couldn't control his emotions.

"In the first moment you're disappointed, you're shocked, you're sad, you know, then all of a sudden it overwhelms you," Federer said.

"The problem is you can't go in the locker room and just take it easy and take a cold shower. You can't."

"You know, you're stuck out there. It's the worst feeling. So, I don't know, it's rough."

Federer said the emotions were even stronger because he thought the match was his for the taking -- he had 19 break point opportunities but could only convert six.

Crucially he was not able to convert any of the six chances he had in the third set, which

Nadal went on to win in a tie-break.

"It is, sure, one of the matches in my career where I feel like I could have, or should have, won you know," he said.

"But you can't go through your whole life as a tennis player taking every victory that's out there."

"You've got to live with those, but they hurt even more so like if you're that close, you know, like at Wimbledon or like here at the Australian Open."

"So that's what's tough about it, but I have no regrets, so it's all right." Federer and Nadal were meeting for the first time since last year's epic Wimbledon final, when the Spaniard ended Federer's five-year hold on the trophy before deposing him as world number one.

They have now contested seven Grand Slam finals with Nadal holding a 5-2 edge in the meetings and 13-6 overall.

Both were fortunate to make the final. Federer almost falling to Czech player Tomas Berdych in the fourth round and Nadal surviving a five hour semifinal against countryman Fernando Verdasco.

Federer appeared back to his best in the quarter-finals, where he thrashed rising Argentine star Juan Martin del Potro, and in the semis where he beat an in-form Andy Roddick, so it came as a surprise when he started nervously.

He sprayed errors and double-faulted on break point before handing over the first set.

Federer recovered to push Nadal all the way, but he had trouble with his serve throughout the match, which he said cost him dearly.

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Kiwis steal Perth win

Cricket

BBC ONLINE, undated

Ross Taylor was New Zealand's hero as they won the first game of their one-day international series against Australia in Perth by two wickets on Sunday.

Kyle Mills took 4 for 35 as Ricky Ponting's side were bowled out for 181.

The Kiwis were reduced to 25 for 3 but Taylor then took charge, until he was superbly caught by Michael Clarke for 64 with 12 still needed off 15 balls.

Nathan Bracken bowled Tim Southee in the last over,

but Daniel Vettori saw his side home off the final delivery.

Jeetan Patel had levelled the scores with a single off the fifth ball of the over, and Vettori won it in style with a four through point.

Having just gone down 4-1 to South Africa, it was the first time Australia had suffered four consecutive ODI defeats since they lost five on the bounce against New Zealand and England in February 2007.

Ponting must have questioned his decision to bat first on winning the toss after his side found themselves 54-5 in the 20th over.

Mills removed openers

Shaun Marsh and David Warner, both to catches by the tall Peter Fulton at short cover, while some sparkling Kiwi fielding by rookies Neil Broom and Martin Guptill saw both Ponting and Clarke run out.

And when David Hussey was caught down the leg side by wicketkeeper Brendon McCullum off Patel's first ball, the home side were in serious trouble.

Mike Hussey (49) and Brad Haddin (31) were able to stage a partial recovery, while skipper Vettori was the model of economy -- his 10 overs of left-arm spin yielding just 22 runs.

Iain O'Brien grabbed two wickets, while the returning Mills took two more as the Australians were eventually skittled out with eight balls of the innings remaining.

But if Ponting's batsmen had failed to set a challenging target, his bowlers gave them a good start and kept them in contention throughout the innings.

McCullum, passed fit to play and keep wicket despite a hip injury, was trapped lbw by Shaun Tait off the second ball of the innings, while Guptill and Fulton fell soon after each other as Bracken and Mitchell Johnson turned the screw with a succession of maiden overs.

Taylor, though, was able to forge his side back into contention, and although he lost Grant Elliott cheaply, he added 42 with Broom (29) and 62 with Mills (26), whose all-round efforts earned him the man-of-the-match award.

The next match takes place in Melbourne on Friday.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the first one-day international between New Zealand and Australia at the WACA in Perth yesterday.

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PHOTO: INTERNET

New Zealand batsman Ross Taylor flicks the ball off his pads during his match-winning knock of 64 in the first one-day international against Australia at the WACA in Perth yesterday.