



Rafael Nadal of Spain holds the Australian Open tennis trophy for photographers a day after defeating Swiss Roger Federer in the final in Melbourne on Monday.

PHOTO: AFP

Nadal calls for shorter season

Tennis

AP, Melbourne

A day after winning his first Grand Slam on hard courts, Rafael Nadal called on tennis officials to be mindful of the physical toll the hard surface takes on players in an ever-expanding schedule.

"This calendar I am playing with this surface hard court surfaces is tougher than grass or clay for the body, and all the time we are playing more on this surface," said Nadal, who beat Roger Federer 7-5, 3-6, 7-6 (3), 3-6, 6-2 for his first Australian Open title Sunday.

"In my humble opinion, we have to change that a bit more," the Spaniard said. "I can say that because I won a grand slam on hard (courts)."

Nadal, 22, has previously won four Grand Slams on the French Open clay courts, as well as Wimbledon on grass last year.

"Before I say that, a lot of people think 'He wants to change because he's a clay player.' But believe me, I don't think anything about if I am a clay court player or not."

"When I say this, I think about the best for the players and for the future. It's not possible to have a lot of injuries on tour like this. So we have to try to change something."

The Australian Open marked the first time Nadal reached the final of a major on hard courts, having been knocked out in the semifinals of the Australian and US Opens last year.

Even this time, he had to struggle to make the last weekend at Melbourne. He held off a fellow Spanish left-hander Fernando Verdasco in the semifinals on Friday in 5 hours, 14 minutes—the longest match in the tournament's history.

"To play with this aggression and with this rhythm all the time from the 1st of January to 31st of December is impossible," he said.

Nadal said he was worried the rigors of the present ATP Tour could hinder his quality of life after his tennis.

"I love (soccer) I can't play (soccer) right now because I am playing (tennis) but I would love to play (soccer) with my friends later when I finish," said Nadal, whose uncle Miguel Angel Nadal played for Barcelona and represented Spain.

"I would love to continue playing tennis and to do what I want," he added. "But if we continue to play this (many tournaments), later maybe it's going to be tough to practice sports."

Nadal, who now needs a US Open title to complete a rare career Grand Slam, on Monday blamed exhaustion for his semifinal loss to Andy Murray at Flushing Meadows last year.

"Last year was tough at the US Open," he said. "I arrived playing well, winning Olympics, winning Toronto, having semifinals in Cincinnati. So I was playing a high level of tennis."

"But I felt during the tournament it was going to be almost impossible to win the title because I feel too tired. Mentally and physically, I wasn't there. The semifinals especially, against Murray, I really can't move."

Liza atop alone

SPORTS REPORTER

Shamima Akter Liza took solo lead in the BASIC Bank 30th National Junior Chess Championships when she won the sixth round board against Abdullah Al Saif at the federation hall-room yesterday.

Liza bagged maximum six points. FIDE Master Minhazuddin Ahmed Sagar beat Mohammad Sagar in the sixth round to follow the leader with 5.5 points.

Imran Ali Elin, Saif, Rezaul Islam Babu, Sharif Hossain, Ekramul Haque Siam, Masum Hossain, Mohammad Sagar, Shahjalal Faruqi, Ashrafuzzaman and Nurul Islam Mahin earned five points each to share the third spot.

Zimbabwe's fourth win

AFP, Nairobi

Zimbabwe beat Kenya by 66 runs in the fourth one-day international here on Tuesday, their fourth consecutive win in their five-match series between the two countries.

BRIEF SCORES

ZIMBABWE: 285-8 in 50 overs (Mutizwa 61, Masakadza 58; Odhiambo 3-56, Bhudia 2-42) KENYA: 219 all out in 49 overs (Obanda 96 not out; Chigumbura 4-28, Cremer 3-34)

BOA to honour

FROM PAGE 17
secretary general Kutubuddin Ahmed at a press conference at the NSC conference room yesterday.

"It's not possible to develop the condition of the sports arena without sponsors. We want give them recognition officially and honour them at this programme. I hope they will be extending their helping hands for sports more in the future," Kutub told.

BOA vice-presidents Mizanur Rahman Manu, Khondokar Jamil Uddin and CEO Col (ret) M Waliullah attended the press conference.

Golam Sobhan Chowdhury, a councillor of Harrow Council, UK was also present. The Harrow Council has already offered to help Bangladeshi athletes for preparation of the 2012 Olympic Games in London.

Balaji's

FROM PAGE 17
debut in November 2002, has so far taken 27 wickets in eight Tests and 34 wickets in 29 one-dayers.

Balaji will reach Colombo later on Monday and will be available for the third one-dayer at the Premadasa stadium on Tuesday.

India lead the five-match series 2-0.

VDP, Ansars

FROM PAGE 17
In Teesta zone, Rajshahi blanked Naogaon 3-0 at the Dinajpur Stadium with Sharifa scoring all three goals.

Joypurhat secured a solitary goal victory over hosts Dinajpur in the other match of the zone. Bobby netted the all-important goal in the 44th minute.

Pak court suspends ban on ICL players

Cricket

AFP, Karachi

A court in Pakistan on Monday suspended a ban imposed by the country's cricket board barring players from domestic matches after they agreed to join the unofficial Indian Cricket League (ICL).

Around 19 Pakistani players featured in the ICL, bank-rolled by the country's largest media group, Zee Television, but not recognised by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) or the International Cricket Council (ICC).

In 2007, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) barred the players, who included former Pakistan captain Inzamamul Haq and star batsman Mohammad Yousuf, from playing at all levels in the country.

The ICL players challenged the ban in the provincial Sindh High Court last month. Their lawyer Zahid Fakhruddin Ibrahim said justice had been done.

"Judge Amir Hani Muslim has suspended the PCB ban

imposed on the ICL players and they are now free to play," Ibrahim told AFP.

Asked if the players could now play for Pakistan, Ibrahim said: "The ban was only on domestic cricket, it's up to the PCB to select a player for an international match or not and that cannot be challenged."

The players lined up for the Lahore Badshahs in the ICL season and were a major attraction, winning the Twenty20 league last year.

Their coach Moin Khan, a former Pakistan captain, said the suspension of the ban was good for Pakistani cricket.

"Some of the ICL players can still play for Pakistan and when they play in domestic cricket, youngsters will learn from them," Moin told AFP.

"The ban had hurt the players financially as well as cricket-wise, so it's a great decision," he said.

The court has summoned PCB officials to its next hearing on February 10 to hear their explanation for the ban.

The PCB has a strict policy of banning all players who have joined the ICL.

PCB chairman Ijaz Butt

said last week that the matter would be taken up at the ICC board meeting in Perth, Australia, after they received a legal notice from the ICL players.

Meeting at the weekend, the ICC delayed a decision on an ICL application for recognition, saying that further discussions would be held.

Butt, who took charge last October, hinted that the BCCI and ICC would be on weaker ground if the ICL or the ICL players legally contested the ban.

Former captain Inzamam and opener Imran Farhat welcomed the court's decision.

"The injustice done to the ICL players seems to be over," said Inzamam. "Not allowing the players to play cricket in Pakistan was unjust and I hope these players will play for Pakistan very soon," he headed.

Farhat, one of the 19 players reinstated by Monday's decision, said he still hopes to play for Pakistan.

"I am delighted," said Farhat. "I hope that the PCB will allow me to play for Pakistan again."

Sunny in 2nd round

SPORTS REPORTER

Local boy Omar Faruk Sunny got off to a winning start in the AWR 7th BKSP International Junior Tennis competition when he beat Yu-Cheng Wang of Taipei 6-3, 4-6, 6-0 at BKSP yesterday.

Sunny will play the second round game against Lo Yi of Taipei today.

In other matches, Yuan-Tao Tan beat Aravind Fernando 6-0, 6-3, Nuttorn beat Senli 6-2, 6-3, Yen-Ju Ho beat Pearljit Singh Sandhu 6-3, 6-0, Chieh-Su Wang beat Ashraf Mohammed 6-2, 6-1, Ho-Phih Jen beat Bishwanath Savadi 6-1, 6-3, Kinivor Saraza beat Ching Hsu 6-1, 6-1, Jui Mao beat Hao Zhao 6-2, 6-2, Yun-Hao beat Cheng Ju Hsieh 6-0, 6-1, Chi Shan Zao beat U Shwe Shwe 6-1, 6-3, Amrul Amin Mokhter beat Vlad Alexandru Batchia 6-2, 6-3.

In the girls' singles, Caroline van Te Wijgaart beat Peerada Looareesunwan 6-4, 6-0 and Jaanesh Cakaur beat Chun Pi Cheng 7-5, 6-1.

Flintoff on the mend

CRICINFO, undated

England's selectors spent Sunday pondering the side for this week's Jamaica Test, but Andrew Strauss admitted that much of the chat was about the merits of Steve Harmison and the fitness of Andrew Flintoff.

The good news for England is that the chances of Flintoff playing appear to be improving with every passing day. His side strain has responded well and he had no adverse reaction to a spell in the nets ahead of Saturday's final day at Warner Park. He is expected to have a more intense session Monday.

Harmison, who was dropped for England last Test in Mohali, blew hot and cold in the drawn warm-up match in St Kitts, but memories of his career-best 7 for 12 when England last played a Test at Sabina Park will be at the back of everyone's minds. With the pitch likely to be fast, Harmison's chances of a recall seem good.

"From Harmy's point of view it was great for him to play two matches and get a lot of overs under his belt," Strauss said. "We all know that the more Harmy bowls, the more rhythm he gets into and the quicker he gets it through as well. I think he got better and better each spell he bowled and he has definitely got his name in the hat. It was difficult to tell much from this last pitch but his areas were good and his pace increased throughout."

Harmison himself, inevitably faced with a barrage of questions about his 2004 performance, was revealing little. "I don't remember much about that day, it is a bit of a blur. I'm not really one for watching old tapes, so I can't recall it specifically."

"I'm looking forward to going back, especially if they produce a wicket like that, but I don't want to count any chickens."

Pakistan greets lament Champs Trophy snub

Cricket

AFP, Karachi

Former Pakistan greets Monday bemoaned the decision to take away the Champions Trophy tournament over security concerns, leaving the cricket-mad country increasingly isolated internationally.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) on Sunday decided to move the elite eight-nation 2009 series out of Pakistan, marking the third major cricketing event cancelled in the troubled country in 12 months.

"Pakistan has definitely been isolated," former captain Wasim Akram told AFP.

"Sure there were security problems in the past but things are getting better and Pakistan deserved more and more cricket at international level."

The Champions Trophy was originally scheduled for

September-October 2008 but was put off for 12 months after South Africa pulled out of the event, while Australia, England and New Zealand showed reservations about security.

Wasim said the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) had failed to convince teams the country had become safer.

"PCB should convince nations to play in Pakistan. How would cricket develop in Pakistan when there is no international cricket?" said Wasim.

"You can't blame the ICC, they go by what their member countries say," said Wasim, who still holds the world record of most one-day wickets at 502.

Former fast bowler Sarfraz Nawaz blamed India for pressuring other countries not to play in Pakistan.

"Since the Mumbai attacks, India is going all out to isolate Pakistan. India must have pressurised the English-speaking countries not to play

in Pakistan," said Nawaz.

"The ICC is to be blamed equally. The only thing left for the ICC is throw Pakistan out of international cricket."

Last March, Australia refused to tour Pakistan over security fears.

India decided not to allow its team to tour Pakistan this January and February as political tensions between the two arch rivals heightened after November's attacks in Mumbai, which India blamed on militants in Pakistan.

Former PCB chairman, retired Lieutenant General Tauqir Zia, said Pakistan's isolation was temporary.

"We must remain patient, it's a temporary isolation," said Zia. "Since the Mumbai attacks we have lost an important power in India who at government level have gone against us but at cricket level they are not against us."

"The return of international cricket to Pakistan depends on the security situation, which will improve."

Abahani almost there

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out Abul and Ghana defender Samad Yussif, both on two yellowcards.

Ibrahim was also substituted after the playmaker created one chance for Emily but the national striker's weak head in the 62nd minute on a perfect centre went straight to Zia, who stayed on pitch despite picking up a head injury seven minutes earlier.

Zia was finally stretched off midway through the second half and the Brothers goalkeeper, remained unconscious for a few minutes.

A city scan was done later and the doctors at the Metropolitan Hospital in the city declared him out of danger. Zia was resting at the club tent as of writing this report, informed Brothers manager Amer Khan.

Wasim Iqbal's men made a few attempts with Zahid being

inspirational at the right flank but found the rival backline hard to crack before Emeka sealed the victory four minutes from time.

Snatching a loose ball just outside the penalty area, the Abahani player weaved his way through three defenders and also went round substitute goalkeeper Shakil for a poacher's finish to make it 3-0.

Yellow card: Shuvra (Brothers)

TEAMS

ABAHANI: Biplab, Nazrul, Samad (Siraji), Sujun, Waly, Zahed, Pranotoshi, Emeka, Abul (Mamun), Ibrahim (Joy) and Emily.

BROTHERS: Zia (Shakil), Aurup, Shuvra, Ariful, Mishu, Zahid, Rikto, Atiur Munna, Shakil, Henry and Nicodemus (Abdullah Parvez).

Referee: Abdul Hannan.

Pak govt bars

FROM PAGE 17
players due to the scheduled ODI series against Australia between April 20 and May 10.

"It impacts very [us] much as we will not have Umar Gul, a fine cricketer," he said. "Even then our strategy for the auction has already been thought of keeping in mind any development like this. While this was not a reality a few days ago it is out in the open now. So the IPL will have to offer options."

The IPL, though, has already provided a possible alternative for the franchises. Teams will be allowed to sign players unsold at the upcoming auction as replacements for those who won't be available for the entire season this year. Also, the amount spent on them will not count towards the franchise's 2-million-dollar cap on player purchases at the auction.

Lanka must

FROM PAGE 17
three-match series.

India coach Gary Kirsten said his team were keen to clinch the series with a victory on Tuesday.

"Yes, it would be nice if we could finish off the series as quickly as possible," said Kirsten.

"We know we have a lot of work to do but the momentum is with us at the moment. We just have to focus on what we have been doing and give us the best chance of winning the next match."

India made one change to their 15-man squad, with paceman Lakshmi Prasad replacing injured Munaf Patel.

Balaji, who played his last one-dayer in August 2005, has taken 34 wickets in 29 matches.

TEAMS

INDIA (from): Mahendra Singh Dhoni (captain), Virender Sehwag, Gautam Gambhir, Sachin Tendulkar, Yuvraj Singh, Rohit Sharma, Suresh Raina, Ravindra Jadeja, Yusuf Pathan, Zaheer Khan, Ishant Sharma, Lakshmi Prasad, Balaji, Prayag Ojha, Irfan Pathan, Praveen Kumar.

SRI LANKA (from): Mahela Jayawardene (captain), Sanath Jayasuriya, Kumar Sangakkara, Upul Tharanga, Tillakaratne Dilshan, Chamara Kapugedera, Thilina Kandamby, Jehan Mubarak, Farveez Maharoof, Muttiah Muralidaran, Ajantha Mendis, Dilhara Fernando, Nuwan Kulasekara, Thilan Thushara, Angelo Mathews.

Gaibandha cricket

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Thanapara Cricket Club and Russel Smrity Sangsad won their respective matches in the second division cricket league at the local stadium yesterday.

In the first match, Thanapara registered an 83-run victory over CYMA Club. CYMA were all out for 62 in 15.4 overs in reply to Thanapara's 145-7 in 20 overs.

Rassel scored 154 for five in 20 overs and then dismissed Khaleq Smrity for 98 to secure the 56-run victory.

Phelps sorry for pot

FROM PAGE 17

United States swimmer who won four medals at the 1996 Olympics, was suspended for three months by swimming's international governing body, FINA, for testing positive for marijuana. Under the current World Anti-Doping Agency code, cannabis is not considered a banned substance during out-of-competition testing. Athletes face suspension only if they test positive for it at a competition.

Hall, who came back to win six medals at the 2000 and 2004 Olympics, said in interviews before the Sydney Games that his failed drug test had caused him to lose all of his endorsement deals. The swimming manufacturer Speedo, which sponsors Phelps and awarded him a \$1 million bonus for tying Spitz's record, dropped Hall after his drug suspension.

Since his record-breaking performance in Beijing, Phelps has added Kellogg's, Mazda and Subway, among others, to an endorsement portfolio that already included Visa and AT&T. In a "60 Minutes" interview that aired in December, Phelps's agent, Peter Carlisle, said that Phelps could earn more than \$100 million over his lifetime.

"We have been in touch with those sponsors," the U.S.O.C. spokesman Darryl Seibel said, "and let them know that we're disappointed and that going forward we expect different and better conduct."

Phelps has never tested positive for a banned substance. Last year, he agreed to increased testing to prove that he was a clean athlete. The News of the World said the photograph was taken in November, during a house

party Phelps attended while visiting the University of South Carolina on the weekend of Nov. 8. While there, he attended the Gamecocks' football game against Arkansas and received a rousing ovation when he was introduced.

The newspaper did not say that Phelps was smoking marijuana, but it pointed out that the pipe typically was used for that purpose. At the time, Phelps was in the middle of a four-month break from swimming. He resumed swimming this month in Baltimore, his hometown, with an eye toward the 2012 Olympics.

Phelps was in Tampa, Fla., during Super Bowl week for promotional appearances for one of his sponsors. He was supposed to attend Sunday's game but changed his plans.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

- 1 Type of machine
- 5 Corpulent
- 8 Ocean motion
- 12 Former larva
- 13 — de Janeiro
- 14 Caspian feeder
- 15 Height
- 17 Roller coaster, for one
- 18 Greek consonants
- 19 That guy's
- 20 — salts
- 21 Cam-bridge sch.
- 22 "How — love thee?"
- 23 Big parties
- 26 Whodunit
- 30 Enthusiastic
- 31 Coloration
- 32 1997 Peter Fonda role
- 33 Passed the time idly

DOWN

- 1 Unwanted e-mail
- 2 Hum-dinger
- 3 Makes up one's mind
- 4 Mai — (cocktail)
- 5 Still-life subject, often
- 6 Helps
- 7 Place-kicker's pride
- 8 Depravity
- 9 Rainbow
- 10 Pedestal part
- 11 Preceding H.S.
- 16 Anything but that
- 20 Dawn goddess
- 21 Unit of force
- 52 Firma — ment
- 53 Male turkeys
- 54 Unit of force
- 55 Firmament
- 56 Dawn goddess
- 57 Unit of force
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- 59 Dawn goddess
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- 61 Firmament
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- 98 Dawn goddess
- 99 Unit of force
- 100 Firmament

Solution time: 21 mins.

CRYPTOQUIP

S L F E G A H K L N G B M L N L F N K F

S O G F K D K L M K Z Q P F K E G A K U

L W H U N K L F Z U M B N N Q K

"U O L A H R W D F H A L M K F P L R."

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF SOMEONE MAKES A DISH OF CARROTS, RADISHES AND YAMS, COULD YOU CALL THAT ROOT COCKTAIL?

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: S equals W