

Sania set to meet with Venus

AFP, Charleston

India's Sania Mirza booked a second-round clash with second-seeded Venus Williams Tuesday with a straight-sets victory in the one million-dollar Family Circle Cup.

Sania Mirza beat Sesil Karatantcheva of Kazakhstan 6-4, 6-4 to line up the marquee meeting with Williams, who will be launching her campaign on Wednesday afternoon after enjoying a first-round bye.

Top-seeded Russian Elena Dementieva, who rose to a career-high ranking of number three in the world last week, reached the third round with a dominant 6-0, 6-2 victory over American Julie Ditty.

Third-seeded Vera Zvonareva and number four Nadia Petrova, both of Russia, also reached the third round, as did sixth-seeded Marion Bartoli of France and seventh-seeded Slovakian Dominika Cibulkova.

Zvonareva cruised past Paraguay's Rossana de los Rios 6-3, 6-2.

"I felt pretty good for my first match of the year on clay," said Zvonareva, a finalist here last year. "I didn't expect myself to play my best, and it was a bit of a struggle at times because of the wind, but it was pretty good."

Fourth-seeded Petrova beat Austrian Patricia Mayr 6-1, 2-6, 6-2, Bartoli defeated Anastasia Sevastova of Latvia 6-1, 6-3 and Cibulkova downed Austrian Tamira Paszek 6-4, 6-0.

DCA make it

FROM PAGE 17
Nayem who slammed a 50-ball century with sixteen boundaries and three huge sixes as he took his side (165-4) to an easy six-wicket win over Green Leaf (163 all out) at the Jahangirnagar University ground.

East End, Kathalbag, Sinha Textiles and Udayachal also won their respective matches.

Bloodshed

FROM PAGE 17
Kalabagan officials who hurled abuse at the umpires and the match referee at the Dhaka University ground in mid-March.

The infractions did not just end there. Abahani supporters abused Biman players Javed Omar and Tushar Imran during a Premier League match at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium last month resulting in the players exchanging abuses with the unruly supporters. Javed was involved in another fracas when he lost his temper with a BKSP student in another Premier League game.

Certainly, this has been a season of heated exchanges but this reported attack is the lowest point.

Discovery Cricket Academy is based at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium with Shaju as the head coach. This incident is nothing new to those who know the former footballer-turned-cricket coach. He has a reputation of flouting the law, for example, using the same batsman twice in an under-13 game, it was learned.

Only recently (on February 9) he was seen slapping a player of his academy, who plays for a First Division club, at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium.

Nimbus

FROM PAGE 17
where we have misunderstandings," Yunus added.

Earlier, Yannick told the reporters: "There are no outstanding issues in the meeting. It's just a regular meeting. We are trying to generate more money through new series and ideas."

Yunus also said that they have also discussed about the issue of telecasting the domestic matches. "They will work on it," he headed.

The six-year deal worth 56.88 million dollar made it mandatory to telecast Bangladesh domestic cricket for at least 10 days a year internationally but so far Nimbus has not showed a single domestic game to the world audience.

BCB's senior vice-president Mahbubul Alam, Ahmed Sajjadul Alam, Salman Ispahani, former board adviser Abul Momen, who headed the review committee to finalise the long-term agreement, were also present during the meeting.



Ten-time world champion Oscar De La Hoya waves to fans after announcing his retirement from boxing in Los Angeles on Tuesday.

De la Hoya retires

Boxing

AFP, Los Angeles

Ten-time boxing world champion Oscar de la Hoya announced his retirement from the sport here on Tuesday.

The 36-year-old Mexican-American's last bout was back in December when Filipino Manny Pacquiao stopped him in the eighth round.

De la Hoya looked a shadow of the boxer that had accrued 10 world titles in six different weight classes since he first announced his great talent by winning an Olympic gold medal at the 1992 Games in Barcelona.

"After reflecting a lot and speaking with my family and friends I came to the conclusion that I would bring to a halt my career as a boxer."

"After the Pacquiao bout I realised that I no longer had either the reflexes nor the power to compete at this level, hence I took this decision."

De la Hoya - known as 'The Golden Boy' - had pretty much indicated just after he had been battered into submission by the much smaller Pacquiao that he was contemplating retirement.

"My heart still wants to fight that's for sure, but when your physical doesn't respond, what can you do?"

De la Hoya, who started his own boxing promotion company, Golden Boy Promotions, while he was still active in the ring - retires with a record of 39 victories 6 defeats with 30 knockouts.

De la Hoya announced his decision at an outdoor plaza across the street from the Staples Center arena, where a statue of him stands.

Federer, Nadal in Round 3

Tennis

AFP, Monte Carlo

Rafel Nadal dropped serve twice as he and rival Roger Federer began their Roland Garros clay campaigns with challenging wins to reach the third round of the Monte Carlo Masters on Wednesday.

The first and second seeds each had to work at the end to secure victories, with Federer setting up an all-Swiss clash with Davis Cup teammate Stan Wawrinka.

Nadal, bidding for a fifth consecutive title at the Country Club overlooking the Mediterranean, came through over Argentine Juan Chela 6-2, 6-3 while Federer stopped Italian Andreas Seppi 6-4, 6-4.

The second seed was still kept on his toes as the Italian saved three match points in the penultimate game on his own serve before the Swiss brought proceedings to a rapid close after 1hr 23min.

Nadal is hoping to repeat his superman act of the past spring seasons as the four-time French Open champion begins another long haul towards Paris on the clay.

The number 1 has now compiled a 134-4 record on clay since 2005 and stands 22-

1 in finals on his foremost surface.

Other seeds joined the top pair in action after byes, with number 14 Croatian Marin Cilic the only loser as he was humbled by Fabio Fognini 6-2, 6-0. The victory earned the Italian a match-up with fourth seed Andy Murray on Thursday.

Nikolay Davydenko, seeded sixth, returned to the circuit after two months out with a heel injury, starting with a 6-4, 6-3 victory over Croatian giant Ivo Karlovic.

Davydenko's problem bothered him at the first tournament of the year in Chennai. He withdrew from his second round match in India and in February lost in the second round in Rotterdam.

Spanish seventh seed Fernando Verdasco advanced over German Philipp Kohlschreiber 6-3, 6-4 to lead that series 4-2. Argentine number 12 David Nalbandian staged a fightback to get past Spaniard Marcello Granollers 4-6, 6-3, 6-1.

Wawrinka, 13th, lines up against Federer after winning a 2hr, 37min marathon over Argentine Marcello Vassallo Arguello 2-6, 7-5, 6-2. "There was not much difference between us," said the Swiss. "But I was able to raise my game."

Younis ready

FROM PAGE 17

"The standard of the Australian team is so high that they will never miss any senior players like Ricky Ponting or Michael Hussey. They always have the commitment to win and so it won't be easy for us," added Khan, who has led Pakistan from the front with splendid knocks.

Talking about the confidence level of his team which has not been getting enough international matches, Khan said: "We are unlucky that we are not getting to play many one-day matches however, our players are in good touch,

playing in domestic cricket. As international cricketers, we have to get used to all conditions and situations."

Khan is delighted that the series is being held in the UAE. "For Pakistan, UAE is home. We have played many times in Abu Dhabi and we don't actually feel that we are playing outside Pakistan and so it looks like home for us."

Khan thanked his cricket board for ensuring that this series is held at all cost.

"I must thank PCB for selecting cities like Dubai and Abu Dhabi. This way we will be at least playing some matches."

Ground reality

FROM PAGE 17

The City Club ground in the Mirpur area has also given headaches to teams for its size as well as poor outfield.

Much is written about the world-class facilities of the home of cricket, Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium. But enjoying it is only a distant dream for professionals who ply their trade below the Premier League.

Maybe the level is lower but it is the same game and with the same set of rules both on and off the field. With better facilities, it is hoped that the players have less to think of, as a slight lapse of concentration could cost him his livelihood.

Booters off

FROM PAGE 17

or lose, but it depends on how much the players can adopt to the conditions," Dido was quoted as saying.

Nepal Police finished runners-up in the AFC President's Cup in 2007 and defeated Bangladesh champions Abahani 4-0 in the same competition last year.

Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) is also trying to bring a team from Kolkata, India for another practice match in Dhaka before the competition begins.

Bangladesh have been drawn in Group A along with Myanmar, Cambodia and Macau, who qualified on away goal rules after an aggregate 3-3 draw with Mongolia despite a 3-1 defeat in the away leg on Tuesday.

SQUAD

Aminul (captain), Biplab, Nasir, Wali, Mishu, Rashed, Rajani, Sujun, Saikat, Mamun, Arman, Sharif, Pranotosh, Manik, Zahed Parvez, Mamunul, Munna, Emon, Enamul and Mithun.

Officials: Imtiaz Sultan Jony (manager), Edson Silva Dido (head coach), Shafiqul Islam Manik (coach), Ariel Coleman (trainer) and Dalilur Rahman (Physio).

Asif to begin rehab in UK

CRICINFO, undated

Pakistan fast bowler Mohammad Asif is set to begin his rehabilitation in England this summer and possibly play league cricket to work his way back into form and fitness before the Champions Trophy this September. Asif is currently serving a one-year ban after testing positive to the banned substance nandrolone last year.

Salman Ahmed, one of Asif's agents, said they have applied for a work permit which will allow him to train in England for at least four weeks before taking up offers with clubs in Cambridge and Greater Manchester, which have reportedly shown interest in signing him up.

"All the setbacks that have hit him in the last year or so have left Asif really exhausted," Ahmed told the News. "We have prepared a fitness regime for him that will help him recover both mentally and physically."

"We have applied for a work permit which should be ready in about a month's time. Once it's ready, we will work out a contract for him with some club in England."

Asif will have to return home in August to make himself available for selection for the Champions Trophy in South Africa. His ban runs till September 21, 2009, and the tournament begins three days later.

Asif, who already left for London on Tuesday for a two-week stint, will fly to South Africa to watch a few IPL games. He was a member of the Delhi Daredevils team for the first season but the franchise banned him for a year following an internal dope test. He was banned by the PCB as well. He is still embroiled in another controversy after being detained at the Dubai airport last year for possessing opium, a case which the PCB is still investigating.

Botha reported for dodgy action

AFP, New Delhi

South African off-spinner Johan Botha has been reported for a suspect bowling action for the second time in his career, the International Cricket Council said Wednesday.

Botha, 26, was reported by match officials after Monday's fourth one-day international against Australia in Port Elizabeth over concerns that he bends his arm while bowling the quicker ball.

Botha will undergo tests by the ICC's panel of human movement specialists, but can continue playing till the results of the tests are disclosed, the governing body said in a statement.

CAB U-15

FROM PAGE 17

Chowdhury Rabbi (vice-captain), Al Mamun Rafsan, Md Zahed Javed, Omar Faruk, Shabaz Chowhan, Sajid Akhtar, Shah Afran Shakil, Sadman Islam, Jibon Chowdhury, Bayjid Amin, Abu Haider, Mahmudur Rahman, Abu Sayem, Taskin Ahmed.

CAB: Abhimanyu Easwaran, Bijoy Ghosh, Kaustav Sain, Satyaki Dutta, Saswata Das, Avishek Mishra, Aritra Mukherjee, Avijit Singh, Soumik Roy, Suman Debnath, Kuntal Ghoshal, Shewnaz Anwar, Rittick Roy Chowdhury, Saby Asachi Bose, Mithilesh Das.

Blues survive

FROM PAGE 17

Ashley Cole was booked for obstruction, ruling him out of the semifinal first leg, but Chelsea had the bit between their teeth and Lampard made it three in the 76th minute.

Drogba powered away down the left and crossed towards Lampard, who timed his run perfectly to finish from close range.

That should have been the killer goal but even then Liverpool refused to throw in the towel.

When Lucas scored with a low strike that deflected off Michael Essien in the 81st minute, it seemed no more than a consolation.

But two minutes later, Chelsea's defence allowed Kuyt yards of space to meet Albert Riera's cross with a close-range header that gave Cech no chance.

Liverpool had to throw caution to the wind now in search of the winning goal and their heroic effort was destined to end in failure as Lampard curled home the equaliser in the 89th minute. At long last, Chelsea could relax.

Flower new Eng coach

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Andy Flower has been confirmed as England's new full-time team director of cricket after working on an interim basis during the recent tour of West Indies.

Flower, 40, stepped up from his assistant role in January, following the dismissal of the former head coach, Peter Moores. Though England's results were mixed during a turbulent 11-week tour, he impressed the selectors with his work ethic and formed a strong bond with the captain, Andrew Strauss, which was rewarded with a last-gasp victory in five-match ODI series that followed the Tests.

After taking over in such uncertain circumstances Flower admitted it took him a while to decide if he wanted to apply for the full-time post. "When I went on that West Indian tour I didn't know whether I wanted to apply for this job or not. Halfway through I had made up my mind that I did," he said. "I'm very honoured to be given the position. I believe the last three months will stand me in good stead."

Now that he has the top job Flower has the chance to stamp his identity on the team and is looking forward to being able to plan ahead. "I was interim coach for that tour, now that I'm in charge, so to speak, things change, definitely," he said.

Flower's salary is expected to be approximately £250,000, and his first major job will be to help select the squad for the first Test against West Indies, at Lord's, which begins on May 6. An enlarged squad is expected to be named at the weekend.

"There are some big deci-

sions we have to make, it is a huge summer ahead of us," Flower said. "It's going to come up on us very quickly, some of our players are already away at the IPL, and the season starts today so there are big decisions to make and hard work to be done."

Having called upon the professional headhunting firm, Odgers Ray & Berndson, to help pinpoint the ideal candidate for the role, the ECB were left - partly by design and partly by accident - with what Hugh Morris, the managing director of England cricket, described as "a very short shortlist".

Morris said that 30 people had applied for the role



ANDY FLOWER

although many high-profile targets pulled out at various stages. "We had a great deal of interest and were very happy at the level of candidates and we believe we have the right man for the job," Morris said. "Andy was a world-class cricketer and we believe he has the potential to become a world-class coach."

One high-profile figure, Western Australia's coach, Tom Moody, chose not to put his name forward, while another, Kent's coach Graham Ford, the former favourite for the role, withdrew from the nomination after criticising the long-drawn-out nature of the process.

Other names mentioned

Fittest Hayden

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

These are strange days for Matthew Hayden. Three months removed from calling time on his international career - an announcement he had hoped to stage off until after the 2009 Ashes, but expedited due to an extended scoring trough - Hayden now finds himself preparing to return to a game with which he is still making his peace, and a league that contributed to his premature departure from the Australian team.

Hayden speaks glowingly of his experiences in the inaugural IPL, but there can be little doubt that the Achilles injury sustained during his four-game stint with the Chennai Super Kings last year marked the beginning of the end of his international career. It was that ailment that sidelined him from the ensuing tour of the West Indies, and thwarted the momentum he had built since The Oval Test of 2005. It was that ailment that prompted the chain of events culminating in a tearful farewell press conference after the Sydney Test.

Hayden has said a thousand goodbyes and done many a lap of honour in the intervening period, only to find himself poised for a return to the middle. The pain of his departure from international cricket might not have entirely subsided. "It's hard to watch a game you still want to be involved in" - but he is nonetheless buoyant at the prospect of again turning out for the Super Kings, for whom he bludgeoned 189 runs at 63.00 last year.

"The players really feel they are part of a revolution in cricket - the way that it is played, the way it's packaged, and the spectators who are watching it," Hayden told Cricinfo. "For someone like me, who has been in the game a long time, it blows me away what Twenty20 cricket has done, and is doing to the sport."

"[Last season] was unfortunate. I picked up that [Achilles] injury doing a running session because I wanted to be spot on for that West Indies tour. I came back [from the IPL] on a real high, not realising how bad the injury was. It didn't feel all that serious, and I wasn't expecting to miss any games let alone an entire Test series, so it wasn't until later that I realised what I was actually dealing with. But I don't look back on [the inaugural IPL] as a negative. If anything I found that really reinvigorated me and revived my enthusiasm, because you could feel you were a part of taking cricket to another level."

Had the Super Kings management harboured concerns for Hayden's physical condition post-retirement, they were placated within moments of the 37-year-old's arrival in India for a pre-IPL training camp. Hayden has spent much of the past three months immersed in one of his favourite training pursuits - surfing - and believes he is in better physical condition than at most stages of his international career.

KwaZulu-Natal beachgoers have been treated this week to the sight of a trim and toned Hayden surfing the Durban breaks with his one-time opponent, Jonty Rhodes. But the Australian batsman has also found plenty time to hit the nets, where he has found that the months away from the

game have done little to erode his technique.

"Skills-wise, I've had a week and a half in India and hit a million balls, so in that regard I'm up and running," Hayden said. "But in terms of actually playing, I haven't picked up a bat since my final Test in Sydney, so it will be interesting to be back out there competing again. It has felt quite good so far."

"I've probably never been fitter. I've done a stack of surfing in the last few months and, as ridiculous as it sounds, it's probably the best kind of fitness work a batsman can do. It's all about core strength, balance and stability. Fitness was probably the one thing you couldn't get to all that much when you were playing all the time. It was sort of game-recover-travel, game-recover-travel."

Had Twenty20 cricket arrived on the scene earlier in his career, Hayden is certain he would have taken the David Warner route and tailored his game to meet the format's specific demands. Indeed, Hayden took with him a "Twenty20 mindset" into the 2007 World Cup - a tournament he dominated to the tune of 659 runs at 73.22 - and was similarly dominant in his four games for Chennai last season. It is a format, he says, to which he is well suited, even at an advanced age.

"The World Cup for me was pretty much as good as it got, and that was about me basically going out there and striking the ball; trying to thump it as you would in a 20-over game," he said. "I wasn't so much worried about building innings or protecting my wicket. I was looking for boundaries, and it really took my game to another level. It's something I see in Warner. He turned the cricketing nation on its ear because he could strike a serious ball. He had everyone talking, and shows just how the game is changing."

"It's amazing to see the momentum of Twenty20. At first, it was considered quite a light-hearted thing and even now, in Australia, it's presented in a way where players are miked up and it's more about the entertainment. But I think it's changing elsewhere. Players are working more on how to develop their skills to be successful in Twenty20 cricket, which is the ultimate spectacle, and leaving the singing and jazzing about to others."

Cool Riders need

FROM PAGE 17

soon after arriving in this south-west city.

"We'll have Chris Gayle and Brendon McCullum, and then David Hussey will join us when Gayle has to leave. Brad Hodge is here, and so is Sourav Ganguly. Everyone has been practising over the past 10 days."

"We are working on amazing plans, including the captaincy issue, which has been a controversy over the past month. I think overall we are very well prepared."

"Unfortunately, we do have injuries but we'll be there, one hundred percent trying to do much better than last year."

English stars are competing in the Twenty20 league for

the first time, but none will represent the Knight Riders, due in no small part to high price tags.

"We have gold and black as a uniform, but the gold is not real," joked Khan. "We are a poor team and English players are very expensive."

"We would really like to have had them, but the auction rules and it's down to how much money you have."

Khan said the franchise was looking to appeal to a young fan base and encourage children to become more involved in sport, and admitted image was their main attraction.

"I don't know about the cricket," he said, "but we are the coolest-looking team."

NOTICE

Due to unavoidable circumstances, today's CROSSWORD could not be accommodated. We regret the inconvenience. Sports Editor