

## How Marat helped Svetlana

INTERNET, undated

New French Open champion Svetlana Kuznetsova said she almost quit the game during a low period in spring 2008, but was talked out of the idea by fellow Russian Grand Slam champion Marat Safin.

"I lost in Rome (May 2008) and I left to Moscow and my coach was not happy about it," said the winner of her second Grand Slam title after the 2004 US Open. "I didn't want to train, I don't want to think about it."

"I said a few times I want to quit playing tennis. I said it, but I never felt it."

Kuznetsova said she voiced her worries to Safin, twice a Grand Slam winner who also learned his tennis in Spain, who told her: "You are crazy or what? You have unbelievable opportunities, you just have to play."

That crisis over, Kuznetsova next faced another at the end of last season when she decided to quit her Spanish base near Barcelona and return to Russia, moving to Moscow despite growing up in St Petersburg.

"This probably was the worst time," explained the 23-year-old. "Everything was on top of me, and I had to take this decision finally to leave Spain."

"For me it was big, some people were telling me to do it earlier, but I was not ready. It's very important to listen to myself."

## Big three book

FROM PAGE 20 Verbeek will have been equally pleased that his former charges at South Korea also made the grade.

Their coach Huh Jung-Moo revealed he hoped his northern neighbours would follow his side to South Africa, to give Korea two teams at the tournament for the first time ever.

"I personally hope that North Korea can qualify with us to the finals because it will be the first time in World Cup history to have this," he said.

"I'm really happy that we made it. We played well and we are all satisfied with a performance that saw us win and ensure a place in South Africa in 2010."

The players were excellent throughout the qualifiers and they did a great job."

## Button extends

FROM PAGE 20 Vettel completed the podium ahead of Italian Jarno Trulli in a Toyota, German Nico Rosberg for Williams and Brazilian Felipe Massa, who was sixth for Ferrari.

Pole Robert Kubica confirmed BMW Sauber's revival after a disappointing start to the season, by finishing seventh ahead of German Timo Glock in the second Toyota.

Button's win was his fourth in succession and lifted him to 61 points in the drivers championship, 26 more than his nearest challenger and Brawn team-mate Brazilian Rubens Barrichello, who made a bad start and was later forced to retire from the race.

Defending drivers' champion Briton Lewis Hamilton of McLaren Mercedes started from 16th on the grid and battled his way through to finish 13th.

The result enlarged Brawn's lead in the constructors' championship - they now lead with 96 points ahead of Red Bull on 56.5 points.

The next race is Button's and Brawn's home British Grand Prix at Silverstone on June 21.

## Aussies rejoice

FROM PAGE 20 You have done your job -- get Australia to the World Cup," The Sunday Telegraph said.

"Verbeek is an Asian expert, with qualification the ultimate justification for the appointment of the previously unheralded Dutchman in the aftermath of the 2007 Asian Cup fiasco." Australia struggled to qualify from the group stages of the Asian Cup before being knocked out on penalties in the quarter final by Japan.

## National TT

FROM PAGE 17 Industries Minister Dilip Barua will inaugurate the weeklong meet in the afternoon while president and managing director of AB Bank Limited Kaiser A Chowdhury will be present as special guest.

Bangladesh Table Tennis Federation general secretary ATM Shamsul Alam disclosed the details at a press conference at NSC yesterday.



French Open winner, Russia's Svetlana Kuznetsova displays her trophy during a photocall in front of the Eiffel Tower in Paris on Saturday.

## Ricky's call to wake up

AFP, London



Australia captain Ricky Ponting said his side would have to raise their game after a seven-wicket loss to the West Indies in their opening match of the ICC World Twenty20 here at the Oval.

Although not a shock on the scale of hosts England's four-wicket loss to the Netherlands on Friday, this result was certainly far from expected and left Australia effectively needing to beat Group C rivals Sri Lanka at Trent Bridge on Monday to have a chance of getting through to the second phase Super Eights.

"We'll have two weeks in Leicester if we have an early exit here - that won't be good for anybody," said Ponting, who is set to lead Australia in the Ashes Test series in England starting in July.

But, joking aside, Australia could well be spending more time in the English Midlands than they would like should they turn in a similar performance against Sri Lanka to the one they produced at the Oval on Saturday.

West Indies captain Chris Gayle's breathtaking 88 off just 50 balls - featuring four towering sixes including one off fast bowler Brett Lee that went over the top of the pavilion and out of the largest ground in England - saw his side to their victory target of 169 with more than four overs to spare.

Australia, without the hard-hitting Andrew Symonds, sent home on the eve of the tournament following an "alcohol-related incident".

## Japan vow semifinal

Football

AFP, Tokyo

Japan have vowed to move mountains in the World Cup finals after becoming the first country to qualify for South Africa 2010 when they narrowly beat Uzbekistan 1-0 away.

"We will surprise the world! Hip, Hip, Hurrah!" The Blue Samurai chanted before spraying champagne over manager Takeshi Okada and themselves on the pitch in Tashkent late Saturday.

"At last, we stand on the start line of our challenge," said Okada, who has targeted a semifinal spot in South Africa after taking over from Iwica Osim in late 2007 when the Bosnian suffered a stroke.

"I feel thrilled and thankful now that we have this chance," he told Japanese media, although his goal has been widely snubbed as unrealistic.

"I want to let the players experience many things in the year ahead at the world's top level."

Striker Shinji Okazaki scored on nine minutes but the former Asian champions failed to convert more chances and survived a flurry of Uzbek attacks as well as what they described as dubious calls by the Syrian referee.

"We want to raise our level higher as we are aiming for the World Cup last four," added Okada, whose side have scored seven goals in his eight internationals.

Veteran centre back Yuji Nakazawa called Okada's semifinal goal a "huge flag for one

had been on the back foot from the start with Jerome Taylor removing Shane Watson and Ponting for ducks in the first over.

"We've just got to win on Monday," Ponting also told reporters at the Oval. "We were sloppy and they were a bit sharper than us."

Reflecting on the West Indies match, he added: "We spoke about getting the first over of each innings right."

"As it turned out we lost two wickets in our batting innings and they took a lot off our first bowling over as well."

"I thought 169 was going to be a competitive total if we could take wickets up front with the new ball but they took us on, hit some early boundaries and got the momentum going their way. They outplayed us for sure."

Gayle and Andre Fletcher (53) took the game away from Australia with an opening partnership of 133 - the third highest stand for any wicket in the history of Twenty20 internationals.

"We didn't underestimate them," insisted Ponting. "We know how dangerous a side they can be and in this format of the game I don't think you can afford to take your foot off the accelerator against any opponent as we saw last (Friday) night with the Holland-England game."

"The shorter the format of the game, the closer it brings teams together and when the opposition have players like Chris Gayle they can beat anybody."

He added: "This form of the game can change very quickly. We know there's nowhere else we can go now and we will work on our skills in this form ahead of the Sri Lanka game."

person alone to bear."

"I think I can be one of the persons up front to support it," he said.

Front pages on Sunday's Japanese newspapers were full of headlines praising Japan's qualification for a fourth straight World Cup finals.

"Okada-ism is in place. Now aim for last four," the daily Sankei Shimbun said.

Okada piloted Japan to a winless World Cup debut at France 1998 in his first stint as national coach.

Japan reached the last-16 round in 2002 at home under French coach Philippe Troussier but faded with two losses and one draw under Brazilian legend Zico at the group stage in 2006 in Germany.

"Japan have acquired the toughness unmatched in Asia," the influential daily Asahi Shimbun said, adding that Okada has picked up where Osim left off and polished the players.

Celtic midfielder Shunsuke Nakamura, the key man in Japan's qualifying campaign, said: "We will improve the quality of what we have been doing."

"We also want to play much stronger countries," added Nakamura, reported to be on the verge of returning to his old J-League club Yokohama Marinos.

The business daily Nikkei recalled that all four Asian countries in the 2006 finals -- Japan, South Korea, Iran and Saudi Arabia -- bowed out at the group stage at Germany 2006. Australia qualified then through Oceania.

Asia lack leader countries which have definite prospects of reaching the last-16 round such as the United States and Mexico in their continent, it said.

"It is about time Japan played such a role."

Kumar Sangakkara, leading Sri Lanka for the first time after good friend Mahela Jayawardene quit the job after the Pakistan tour, said the team looked forward to the game against Australia.

"The pressure will be on them, but we are not taking victory for granted," said Sangakkara. "They will come hard at us and we have to be ready to stand tall."

"We know a side must win at least one game to stay in the race. We have just got to take our chances."

Federer breaks clay

FROM PAGE 17

He came out to serve for a place in history but faltered to 30-40 with a wild, running forehand.

With pregnant wife Mirka looking anxiously on, he averted the crisis and went to match point with a confident volley and claimed victory when Soderling netted a service return after 1hr 55min on court.

Federer slumped to the Paris clay in celebration and in tears as he secured his place as arguably the greatest player of all time.

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Federer then sent down his 16th ace of the tie to stretch it to 4-2.

## Tigers aren't

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Daniel Diaz's goal in the 55th minute gave Argentina a crucial home victory, stretching the gap on lower rivals for coach Diego Maradona's side and staying within reach of the top spot.

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Ponting & co

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## England's KP fear

AFP, London



England are worried that key top-order batsman Kevin Pietersen may struggle to fit for this season's Ashes series at home to Australia.

The ex-England captain was ruled out shortly before the start of the side's humbling four-wicket loss to the Netherlands in Friday's opening match of the ICC World Twenty20 at Lord's with a recurrence of the injury he first sustained in the Caribbean earlier this year.

Pietersen has undergone an injection in a bid to make sure the South Africa born shotmaker is fit for England's match against Pakistan at the Oval on Sunday - a game they effectively have to win if they are to get through to the Super Eight second stage of the World Twenty20.

But England coach Andy Flower believes Pietersen may need several months rest to regain full fitness - and if that is the case he would miss the first Ashes opener in Cardiff starting on July 8 and possibly the entire Test series as well.

"They are terrible injuries," said former Zimbabwe batsman Flower. "I had an Achilles problem for about five years when I was playing and they are very difficult to get rid of."

"They can hang around for a long time and with our schedule you don't get huge chunks of time off. I think you need months off to get rid of those sort of problems altogether."

England are currently without all-rounder Andrew Flintoff - like Pietersen one of the stars of

their 2005 home Ashes series win - and the loss of another key player would be a major blow.

Flower stressed he'd been given the all-clear to play Pietersen, saying he would have withdrawn him had that been the opinion of team medics.

"Leading up to this tournament, I specifically asked for the medical advice on that because if it had suggested we rest him during this period leading up to five Test matches against Australia, we would have done so," said Flower.

"The medical advice was that we didn't need to do that and they could manage it through a Twenty20 tournament, but I don't necessarily think that advice was wrong because these injuries are very difficult to manage and having a three-week rest might not necessarily do the business."

Meanwhile Flower said he believed fast bowler Stuart Broad had the strength of character to bounce back from his nightmare display against the Dutch.

Broad dropped a return catch and missed three run-out opportunities in a last over where the Dutch won with a two off the final ball following the bowler's wayward shy at the stumps.

"I won't need to do much to pick Stuart Broad up," said Flower. "He's a strong man and he'll pick himself up."

"He had a few chances at the start of the over with one catch and two run-outs and then he had another run-out chance at the end, but Stuart is brilliant under pressure."

"For a young man I think he's been an outstanding international cricketer when he bats, when he fields, when he bowls."

## Harris eyes Aussie spot



CRICINFO, undated

Michael Harris, the Australia fast bowler, who recently signed up with Surrey and will represent them in the County Championship, has said he is hoping to impress Australian selectors during his stint in the English domestic season.

Heavy overnight rain delayed the start of the match until 4.10pm and Yorkshire's decision to bat after winning the toss quickly appeared imprudent as Jacques Rudolph and Vaughan fell to Cory Collymore in successive overs from the West Indian.

Both went after ed