

Nadal sails, Murray fails



Rafael Nadal assured a jump past Britain's Andy Murray back into the world number two ranking by advancing to the US Open quarterfinals Tuesday while the Scotsman crashed out in humiliating fashion.

Spanish third seed Nadal, trying to complete a career Grand Slam with a seventh major title, defeated French 13th seed Gael Monfils 6-7 (3/7), 6-3, 6-1, 6-3 to book a spot in the last eight against Chilean Fernando Gonzalez.

"He's a very good player," Nadal said. "If I don't play my best it's going to be impossible."

Nadal showed no sign of pain after a two-month layoff with knee tendinitis, calling his knees "very good", or from a right abdominal muscle injury that was treated during his third-round victory Sunday over countryman Nicolas Pietrangeli.

"I had a few problems but I am in the quarter-finals here for the third time and I'm very happy," Nadal said. "I'm just trying to enjoy my comeback. It's a big result for me. It's much better than what I expected."

A spectator, camera in hand, ran onto the court moments after the match and reached Nadal to give congratulations before security guards pulled him away.

Nearly as shocking as the surprise intruder was Murray's fourth-round exit, the second seed never looking on form as Croatian 16th seed Marin Cilic reached his first Grand Slam quarterfinal with a 7-5, 6-2, 6-2 victory.

"I just struggled," Murray said. "I played poorly. I'm very disappointed. I didn't feel like I played well. I had my chance in the first set and struggled

after that." The 22-year-old who was last year's US Open runner-up failed in his bid to become the first British men's Grand Slam champion since Fred Perry in 1936.

"The way the match went makes it disappointing but I believe I will come back better from it," Murray said. "I will learn from this week like I have most weeks when I've lost and I will come back better and stronger."

"I think I will be a better player next year than this year."

Cilic will play for a semifinal berth against Argentine sixth seed Juan Martin Del

Potro, who fired 22 aces and 44 winners to defeat Spanish 24th seed Juan Carlos Ferrero 6-3, 6-3, 6-3.

"I have my confidence in the best moment," Del Potro said. "I've beaten many good players on this surface. I would like to be in the semis or my first final. I have everything to do it."

Gonzalez, the 11th seed, advanced past French seventh seed Jo-Wilfried Tsonga 3-6, 6-3, 7-6 (7/3), 6-4. Gonzalez, trying to become the first South American man to win the US Open in 32 years, is 3-6 lifetime against Nadal.

"I have a lot of confidence," Gonzalez said. "I have to be

worrying about myself only and try to play my best tennis." Gonzalez, the 2007 Australian Open runner-up in his best Slam showing, had not reached the US Open final eight since his 2002 maiden Slam quarterfinal appearance but denied Tsonga on 13-of-14 break-point chances to advance.

Nadal is trying to become just the seventh man to complete the career Grand Slam, joining Roger Federer, Andre Agassi, Fred Perry, Don Budge, Rod Laver and Roy Emerson as the only men to win each of the four major titles.

Monfils won five of the last six points in the tie-break but was undone by 63 unforced errors. Nadal broke twice to claim the second set, three times including the first and last games to take the third.

Nadal and Monfils exchanged breaks in the fourth and fifth games of the last set but the Frenchman double-faulted away a break in the eighth game and Nadal held to win after two hours 45 minutes.

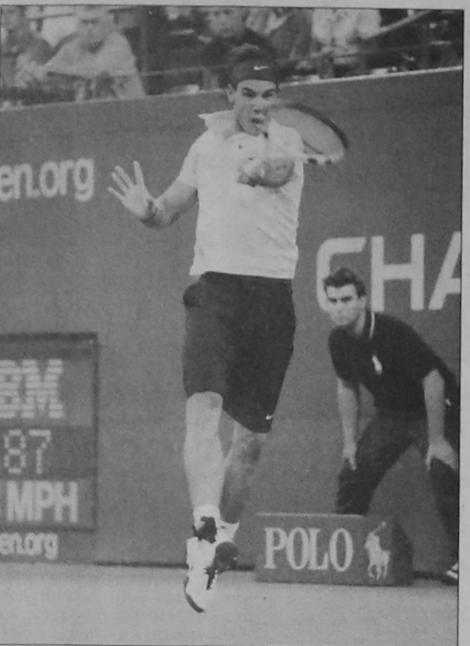
In taking his first victory over a top-three opponent in seven attempts, Cilic fired 10 aces and 35 winners while Murray went 0-for-7 on break-point chances and made 41 unforced errors.

"I played very well and he was missing a lot," Cilic said. "I don't think he was playing his best."

Defeat on the Flushing Meadows hardcourts was especially stinging for the 22-year-old Scotsman, who loves the surface as well as the atmosphere of a New York fortnight in the year's last Grand Slam event.

"I returned poorly. He served well. That felt like the difference," Murray said. "The momentum was with him and I didn't manage to get it back."

"I'm disappointed. I don't know how long or how quickly it will take me to get over it."



Spanish star Rafael Nadal plays forehand against France's Gael Monfils during their fourth round tie of the US Open at Flushing Meadows on Tuesday.

A dream dinner

SPORTS REPORTER

Participants of the Pepsi First Baller Captain contest were treated to a dinner with the former Bangladesh cricket captain and brand ambassador of Pepsi, Mohammad Ashraf, at a local hotel in the city on Monday night.

Man-of-the-match Thilan Samaraweera earlier cracked a solid 104 under pressure for his maiden one-day century to help Sri Lanka post a competitive total before Malinga completed the victory under lights.

Malinga bowled opener Brendon McCullum with the second ball of his fourth over, had Jacob Oram caught behind and then bowled Nathan McCullum with the last two deliveries to send the tourists reeling at 41-6.

Sugiyama to put up her racket

APP, Tokyo

Japanese veteran Ai Sugiyama is set to retire after this season after her ranking slipped amid her recent frustrating performance on the court, local media reported Wednesday.

The former world number-eight singles and number-one doubles player told national broadcaster Japan Broadcasting Corp. (NHK) that she could not see herself competing next season, after she was eliminated in the first round of the singles event in the US Open.

Sugiyama, who stood at the world number 71 in singles and six in doubles as of August 31, was quoted by NHK as saying that she wished to retire if she could not win and go above 30th in the world ranking.

"Every year, every season, there are times when I can see myself playing in the following season... I take breaks during the off-season and get going after that," she said in the interview in New York.

"I go through different psychological states and then see clear visions for my near future. But right now, to be honest, I cannot see the next season for myself," Sugiyama said.

Dhaka to host

FROM PAGE 17 satisfaction. He said that they would host the tournament at a world standard and with a colourful ceremony.

The groups of the teams will be decided through lottery on October 3 during the congress of South Asian Football Federation in Dhaka.

Malinga sees SL home

Cricket

APP, Colombo

Lasith Malinga grabbed three wickets off five deliveries to bowl Sri Lanka to a crushing 97-run win over New Zealand in a tri-series match here on Tuesday.

The paceman finished with a career-best 4-28 as New Zealand were dismissed for 119 chasing a 217-run target on a slow pitch in the day-night match.

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Grant Elliott top-scored with 41. Ian Butler (25), McCullum (14) and skipper Daniel Vettori (10) were the

other batsmen to reach double-figures in a dismal batting performance.

The hosts put New Zealand under pressure when they grabbed three wickets in the opening five overs, with Nuwan Kulasekara taking two in one over and Thilan Thushara one.

Thushara was the first to strike when he trapped Jesse Ryder leg-before in his opening over. Kulasekara had Martin Guptill caught behind and then dismissed Ross Taylor in his third over.

India are the third team in the competition. Each side will play two league matches before the top two qualify for the final on September 14.

Sri Lanka were struggling at 69-5 after electing to bat before Samaraweera led the fightback with a vital 127-run stand for the sixth wicket with Angelo Mathews (51).

Samaraweera, 32, smashed 10 fours in his 124-ball knock to become the oldest Sri Lankan to score a maiden one-day hundred, while Mathews hit four boundaries in his second half-century.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the tri-series match between Sri Lanka and New Zealand in Colombo on Tuesday.

Table with columns: SRI LANKA: 216, NEW ZEALAND, Bowler, O, M, R, W. Includes names like Malinga, Thushara, Mathews, Samaraweera.

India eye No. 1 spot

Cricket

APP, Chennai

Coach Gary Kirsten said Wednesday India needed to be consistent in the ongoing tri-series in Sri Lanka to become the world's best one-day team.

India, who have won five successive bilateral series, will top the one-day rankings if they beat both Sri Lanka and New Zealand in the league stage and also win the final on September 14.

"We have set our goals," Kirsten said ahead of the

team's departure for Colombo. "One of them is to be the best team in the world. We are headed that way and we are very excited."

"We have to perform well as we continue the quest to be the best. We won the last two series in Sri Lanka and we are confident."

India are without injured opener Virender Sehwag and paceman Zaheer Khan, but Kirsten said the team had the depth to do well.

"Obviously, missing a player like Sehwag is huge," the former South African opener said. "He is a quality batsman, but we have got a lot

of depth in our cricket at the moment.

"We have done well in Sri Lanka and are familiar with the conditions. We know we are playing against two good teams, but we have been performing well and we need to maintain our performance."

India open their campaign against New Zealand on Friday and play the hosts the next day. Each side will play two league matches before the top two make it to the final.

Kirsten said the toss would be vital on low, slow Sri Lankan pitches, where chasing a target under lights was not easy.

New Zealand found runs hard to come by on Tuesday when they were bowled out for 119 in reply to Sri Lanka's 216-7 in the opening match.

"Winning the toss is quite important," said Kirsten.

"But if you are going to be a world-class team, you need to win from any situation or condition. We have a good batting line-up which is flexible in the middle order."

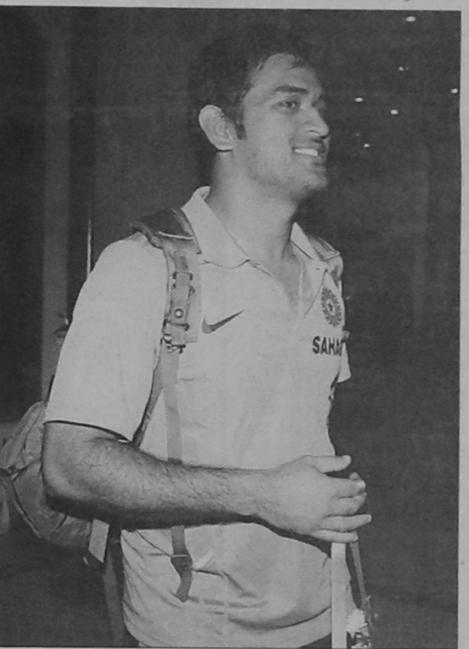
He said Rahul Dravid's return to one-day cricket after nearly two years also augured well for the team.

"It is good to have him in the team. With that sort of experience, he is always going to help the team," said Kirsten.

Dravid is only the second batsman in the current team after Sachin Tendulkar to have completed 10,000 runs in one-day internationals.

SQUAD

Mahendra Singh Dhoni (captain), Sachin Tendulkar, Gautam Gambhir, Rahul Dravid, Suresh Raina, Yuvraj Singh, Yusuf Pathan, Harbhajan Singh, Praveen Kumar, Ishant Sharma, Ashish Nehra, Rudra Pratap Singh, Amit Mishra, Dinesh Karthik, Abhishek Nayyar.



A joyous India captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni arrives in Colombo on Wednesday. India are to take part in a one-day international tri-series which also involves hosts Sri Lanka and New Zealand. India play their first game against Sri Lanka on Friday.

Reefat, Rajib bounce back

SPORTS REPORTER

GM Ziur Rahman dropped point again in the ninth round of the 4th Kolkata Open International Grandmasters Chess tournament when he drew with GM Vladislav Tkachiev of France at the Gorky Sadan yesterday.

Zia, who won his eighth round game after losing two successive matches, has secured 5.5 points while GM Enamul Hossain Rajib and GM Reefat Bin Sattar both have five points.

Rajib beat Indian WGM Nisha Mohota while Reefat beat India's Saravana Krishnan.

FM Abu Sufian Shakil stuck to his previous four points after losing to GM Petr Kostenko of Kazakhstan.

In the other ninth round matches, Minhazuddin Ahmed Sagar lost to India's Somak Palit and Debaraj Chatterjee beat Adityan.

GM Le Quang Liem of Vietnam leads the table with 7.5 points.

Younus supports Miandad advice

ANI, Karachi

Pakistan captain Younus Khan has backed the team's batting advisor, Javed Miandad's proposal of preparing bouncy practice tracks for the ICC Champions Trophy preparations.

Interacting with media persons, Younus supported Miandad's idea of preparing grassy and bouncy pitches to prepare batsmen for the South African conditions for the eight-nation tournament.

"It is a great idea as it will help us prepare for difficult conditions in South Africa," the News quoted Younus, as saying.



Did U Know?

Tiger Woods had picked up the game of golf after watching his dad practise his chipping in the back yard. Tiger grabbed a ball and hit it very well. His father saw this and decided to have his son learn how to golf at the young age of two.

Sealed with a kiss

APP, New York



Maybe what it takes to complete a career Grand Slam these days is having a spectator run out of the stands past security guards for an on-court show of support.

Roger Federer shrugged off a mid-match intruder at the French Open final to win and complete his career Grand Slam and Rafael Nadal has the same chance now that his bid to finish a career Slam at the US Open has been sealed with a kiss.

The Spanish third seed was greeted and kissed by an overzealous male fan Tuesday on the Arthur Ashe Stadium court moments after defeating French 13th seed Gael Monfils 6-7 (3/7), 6-3, 6-1, 6-3 to reach the US Open quarterfinals.

"For me, it wasn't a problem," Nadal said. "The guy was really nice."

"He was a great fan. He said, 'I love you,' and he kissed me."

Asked if the intruder spoke Spanish, Nadal cracked, "No, in English, but I understand that."

The spectator, camera in hand as he ran from the stands, was able to reach Nadal as he began gathering his belongings at his chair and meet his hero before security guards pulled him away.

Nadal is trying to become just the seventh man to complete the career Grand Slam, joining Federer, Andre Agassi, Fred Perry, Don Budge, Rod Laver and Roy Emerson as the only

men to win each of the four major titles.

Four-time French Open winner Nadal, whose reign was ended this year, won Wimbledon in 1998 and this year's Australian Open and hopes to improve upon his best US Open showing, last year's semifinal run.

Tennis has had its own special horror about spectators confronting players since 1993, when Monica Seles was stabbed in the back during a changeover at a match in Germany.

But the hapless intruder proved harmless and instead brought back memories of the French Open final.

That's when a Spanish interloper who regularly leaps into the action at sports events rushed up to Federer during the final, later saying he only wanted to show support for the Swiss star.

That incident happened with Federer leading Sweden's Robin Soderling 6-1, 2-1 and stunned onlookers at Philippe Chatrier centre court.

The man tried in vain to put a hat on Federer's head before security guards chased the man around the court before he was carried off forcefully.

Federer, who won the match 6-1, 7-6 (7/1), 6-4 to complete his career Slam, recalled similar spectator intrusions in matches at Wimbledon and Montreal.

Federer went on to win the Wimbledon crown for a record 15th career Grand Slam crown, passing Pete Sampras for the all-time mark.

And he didn't even receive a lucky kiss for the effort.

Siddons coach

FROM PAGE 17

short-listed candidates for the position of the chief executive officer (CEO) and decided that a special committee would finalise the appointment process.

But there is slim chance to see that the appointment will be being completed within a short time though the position has been lying vacant for nearly one-and-a-half years.

"It takes time," said Yunus without elaborating. The board however has approved the appointment of Shafiqul Islam as the chief financial officer of the country's richest sports body.

Meanwhile, following a request from the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) the board has agreed that the Tigers will appear in the first-ever day-night Test match during the Tigers' tour of England in May-June 2010, subject to approval by the International Cricket Council for holding a day-night Test.

The meeting was adjourned and Yunus informed that the meeting might resume on September 14.

Erratum

In our yesterday's report headlined 'Ad-hoc committee for chess', Bangladesh Chess Federation's general secretary Jamilur Rahman's name was wrongly published as Jamiluddin. We regret the slip.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down. Includes 'Solution time: 25 mins.' and a list of words like EMUS, MOAT, BOP, GYRE, INCH, RIO, GRACENOTE, ANN, SALAMI, RICKY, NO THEME, REST, BRO, ALMS, ALP, TAM, EAU, FLAB, AGE, STEP, CURSE, HIND, THESE, SUNDAY, RUB, PLAGE, KICK, AGA, RIGA, ERTE, PER, OVEN, REDS.

Cryptoquip puzzle grid with numbers 1-55 and letters CAH, RSV, BUMH, OC, HUOE, XAMXYA, EMXAWA, WM, XKXSKA, WUA, VMBW, XAKTAEV, XOYST, WUA, KOEA, OB, KORUW.

CRYPTOQUIP CAH RSV BUMH OC HUOE XAMXYA EMXAWA WM XKXSKA WUA VMBW XAKTAEV XOYST: "WUA KOEA OB KORUW" Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF SOMEBODY HAS A SNAPSHOT OF A BASEBALL PLAYER ON A MOUND, I'D SAY THAT'S A PITCHER PICTURE. Today's Cryptoquip Clue: X equals P