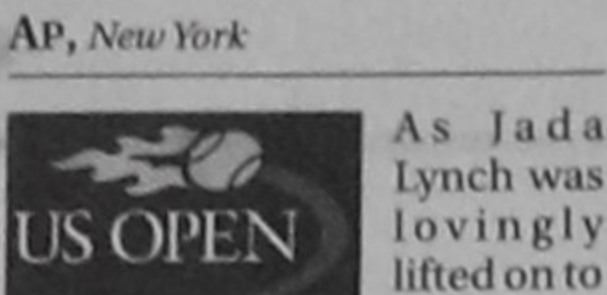


Fairytale in the making



As Jada Lynch was lovingly lifted onto a horse carriage ride in Central Park by her mother, the toddler collapsed into a fit of giggles.

Her blonde-haired mum joined in the laughter as she looked forward to an ordinary day out with her 18-month-old daughter.

Except mum in this case was no other than Kim Clijsters -- tennis player extraordinaire. For almost three decades, tennis courts around the world have been the domain of single-minded women who are prepared to eat, breathe and sleep tennis -- day and night, year in and year out.

Not anymore. In just 10 days Clijsters has turned the sport on its head as she was perched just two matches away from becoming the first mother to win a grand slam title since 1980.

"It's a fantastic story for Kim, it's a fantastic story for women's tennis. It sends an incredible message to working mums that you can have a career and be successful at your profession," WTA Tour chief Stacey Allaster told reporters.

What is even more remarkable is that Clijsters' comeback is just 32-days young and that she has bulldozed her way through a field where the women's draw has been decimated.

By the time the quarterfinals came around, only Serena Williams had fulfilled her commitment as the world number two.

The rest of the famous eight, including world number one Dinara Safina, could not handle the pace in New York and departed early.

Alarming, it seemed as if they could not wait to get out of Flushing Meadows.

"Just playing, playing, playing, playing... I don't have even time for myself to relax and to calm down," groaned Safina after her third-

round exit.

Serbian Ana Ivanovic, the 2008 French Open champion, added: "I feel like I constantly keep going and going. It's really hard. I haven't had proper holidays in years."

For these young women, crisscrossing the world many times over in pursuit of precious ranking points appears to be taking a toll on their mind and body.

If they needed any survival tips, they could seek out Clijsters for some guidance. She had turned professional at 14, climbed to the top of the rankings at 20 and had a body wracked with injuries by 21. By the time she turned 23, she had become disillusioned by the sport and quit -- or so it seemed.

"In the past I wanted to win a lot. Sometimes maybe too much even. It was 24/7 tennis," said the 26-year-old, who has been taking her daughter out and about New York on her days off.

"Now there's that other life that I have that keeps me away from tennis. It doesn't matter to our daughter or my husband whether I won the day before or not. That's a nice feeling."

After a two-year sabbatical to get married and have a baby, Clijsters' love for tennis appears to have been reignited.

And nowhere was this more evident than at the U.S. Open where the Belgian scorched five players, including third-ranked Venus Williams, to set up a semifinal showdown with Serena.

While many tennis fans are wondering how Clijsters can create such a stir so quickly after her comeback, men's world number one Roger Federer had an easy explanation.

"It's like riding a bike; once you know how to ride a bike, you never forget that," said the new father of twins. "That's why I'm not that surprised. I think it's a beautiful story."

Despite her break, Clijsters has lost none of the court craft or the speed she was renowned for during what she calls "my first career."

In fact if anything, Serena

observed: "Seems like she's even faster than what she was before. I was thinking that maybe I should have a baby and then I'll come back faster."

It is a concept that has been heard before.

After becoming a mother, Valerie Brisco-Hooks became the first sprinter to complete the Olympic 200 and 400m double at the 1984 Los Angeles Games while Evelyn Ashford captured two Olympic relay titles following her daughter's birth in 1985.

Ashford even said that being pregnant was "better for you than a store full of vitamins or steroids or anything else" after she successfully combined her track and field career with her role as a mother.

Austrian skier Ulrike Maier,

who died in 1994 after breaking her neck in a crash during a World Cup Alpine skiing downhill, credited her daughter for her superlative efforts on the slopes.

In 1989, Maier won her first super-G world title after learning she was two months pregnant and she repeated the feat two years later when her daughter Melanie was 18 months old.

In 1991, Melanie was waiting at the finish line when her mother swept to success in Saalbach, Austria, prompting Maier to joke: "I had her at the finish line so I'd get there faster."

It is a sentiment Clijsters could be echoing Saturday should she lift the famed silver cup on Arthur Ashe Stadium.



PHOTO: AFP FILES

Motherhood has made the Belgian former world number one more graceful, and her performances are as good as ever.

Colly, Jimmy to rest

AFP, London

England stars Paul Collingwood and James Anderson will be rested for the next three and two matches respectively in the current one-day international series against Australia.

Durham batsman Collingwood and Lancashire pace bowler Anderson have not missed an England fixture since early February and will finally get a chance to rest their weary limbs after being told they can leave the squad preparing for Saturday's match at Lord's.

Although England are 3-0 down in the seven-match series and need a victory on Saturday to have any chance of winning the series, it was decided that the strain of such a heavy schedule in the aftermath of the Ashes triumph has taken its toll on the duo.

Former England one-day captain Collingwood will return for the final match of the campaign at Chester-le-Street next weekend.

Anderson, meanwhile, will join up with the squad again for the second of back-to-back day-nighters at Trent Bridge.

England jet out to South Africa for the Champions Trophy on September 21, which means the only chance to combat player fatigue is to rest them against world champions Australia despite the threat of a series thrashing.

Despite this short break, Collingwood, 33, faces the prospect of virtually 12 months without a decent break.

He has been engaged in international action since January 20 and is contractually obliged to make himself available for Delhi Daredevils in next month's Champions League.

That club tournament takes place during a three-and-a-half-week lull for England's players, who leave for the tour of South Africa on November 1.

That tour comprises four Tests and five one-day internationals and finishes on January 18.

ICC mulling

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"The ICC has been proactive with ideas and innovations, like the powerplays. The idea of the 'super-sub' (scrapped in March 2006) wasn't as successful and got rid of quite quickly. One of the criticisms was that we trialled things at international as opposed to domestic level. Our tactics going forward are member countries trial changes first domestically and if they are successful, then we can take them on board at the international level."

The ICC's cricket committee is set to meet again in 2010 when the results of the experiment will be discussed.

Ctg

FROM PAGE 17

Shimul (Sweet), Kabir (Shahed), Mamun (Zakir), Choumin, Idris and Sagno.

CHITTAGONG MOHAMMEDAN: Uttam, Shawkat, Nazir, Sirajul, Lincon, Shariful, Emon, Murshed, Touhid (Bipul), Ridon and Farhad.

SHUKTARA JUBO SANGSAD: Shahidul, Abul, Biplol (Mohiuddin), Davis, Mohammad Ullah, Hanif, Liton, Mehedi, Sohel and Al Amin.

Del Potro

FROM PAGE 17

close to doing it but now I am focusing on the semis. Both players so tough for me and they will want to win like me."

Del Potro, though, will have to wait a while longer to find out who his semifinal opponent will be after the first rain of the fortnight forced the suspension of the day's second semifinal with Nadal leading 7-6 (7/4), 6-6 and 3-2 in the tie-break, Gonzalez serving.

The Spaniard, though, was in some difficulty with an abdominal strain that had him wincing at times on court and calling for a medical timeout.

Nadal had the same injury problem in his bruising fourth-round match against Frenchman Gael Monfils and there will be serious doubts over whether he can go the full distance at Flushing Meadows.

The match was rescheduled for Friday along with the women's semifinals, but with heavy rain forecast in the New York area for most of the day, organisers could be facing a major scheduling headache for the weekend.

Already last year, the men's singles final between Federer and Andy Murray was played a day late on Monday.

The other semifinal was already decided on Wednesday with top seed and defending champion Federer setting up another match with Serbia's Novak Djokovic whom he defeated in the 2007 final and in last year's semifinals.

'BCCI trying to isolate Pakistan'



CRICINFO, undated

Former ICC president Ehsan Mani has accused the BCCI of trying to isolate Pakistan from the cricketing world and held it responsible for turning down the proposition of holding Pakistan's share of the 2011 World Cup matches at neutral venues.

Mani had, in May, told Cricinfo that India had engineered a split in the Asian bloc to deprive Pakistan of hosting rights for the 2011 World Cup in the fear of losing the tournament altogether following the attack on Sri Lankan cricketers in Lahore.

"I can say this with conviction that no board is today able to stand up to the Indian board in the ICC," Mani was quoted as saying on PTI. "Unfortunately, it is all about making money these days and the Indians dominate."

The power wielded by the BCCI, Mani said, was crucial to the idea of Pakistan staging their matches at neutral venues being dumped. He revealed there had been an agreement to go ahead with the proposition but the Indian board's objection prevailed in the end. "I know for a fact that this was decided, but India turned it down at the cricket committee meeting and since Saleem Altaf was representing Pakistan in Ijaz Butt's absence things went wrong somewhere," he said. "India then insisted that the matches should only be held

in the South Asian region.

"In a calculated manner, India is trying to isolate Pakistan from international cricket. No board is willing to support us and we have no inputs coming from other boards."

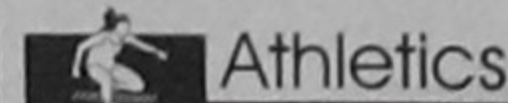
Mani also expressed his concerns over Pakistan's participation in the World Cup, given the current state of relations between India and Pakistan. "No one including the ICC is willing to answer the most important question: what happens if relations don't improve between India and Pakistan until 2011," he said. "Will Pakistan get permission to play its matches in India?"

"Given the existing relations between the two countries, any untoward incident can trigger off more problems. Then is the ICC willing to organise the World Cup without Pakistan?"

Mani, who served as ICC president from 2003-06, is widely thought to be the man who prompted the PCB's move to initiate legal action against the ICC for moving matches in Pakistan after the attacks in Lahore. Last month, both parties reached an agreement where it was decided that the PCB would retain its hosting fee and be paid an additional compensation for losing its hosting rights for the tournament.

Mani, however, clarified that the ultimate decision to file a legal notice against the ICC was the PCB's. "I gave them my honest opinion but the PCB took the final decision," he said. "When I was ICC president I ensured no board was allowed to promote its self interest and every board was treated equally and fairly. That is not happening now."

Big question mark over Semenya's gender



AFP, Sydney

Gender tests on South African athlete Caster Semenya have found she is a hermaphrodite, an Australian newspaper reported on Friday, as a senior official admitted she may not be "100 per cent" female.

Sydney's Daily Telegraph, citing an unnamed source involved in the tests on the world 800m champion, said she had both male and female sex organs and no womb or ovaries.

"There certainly is evidence Semenya is a hermaphrodite," the source was quoted as saying.

Pierre Weiss, secretary-general of the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF), earlier told AFP that Semenya was "possibly between two sexes".

"It is clear that she is a woman but maybe not 100 per cent," Weiss said, adding that the case

would be decided by the IAAF executive council in November.

"We have to see if she has an advantage from her possibly being between two sexes compared to the others."

The furore has enraged South Africa's ruling African National Congress (ANC) party, which called testing the 18-year-old "sexist and racist".

The IAAF has said Semenya is unlikely to be stripped of her world title earned last month in Berlin, but confirmed four athletes in earlier cases were "asked to stop their career".

"The trouble is the IAAF now have the whole ANC (African National Congress party) and the whole of South Africa on their backs," the source said.

"Everything is going to have to be done absolutely by the book, no question of a challenge to the findings."

She added: "The problem for us is to avoid it being an issue now which is very personal: of the organs being a hermaphrodite, of not being a 'real' woman. It's very dramatic."

Semenya, whose coach has quit over the controversy, has called the row "a joke" and undergone an image makeover in which she posed for a South African magazine.

"There's all sorts of scans you can do. This is why it's so complicated," the source said.

"In the past you used to do a gynaecological exam, blood test, chromosome test, whatever. That's why they (the findings) were challenged, because it's not quite so simple."

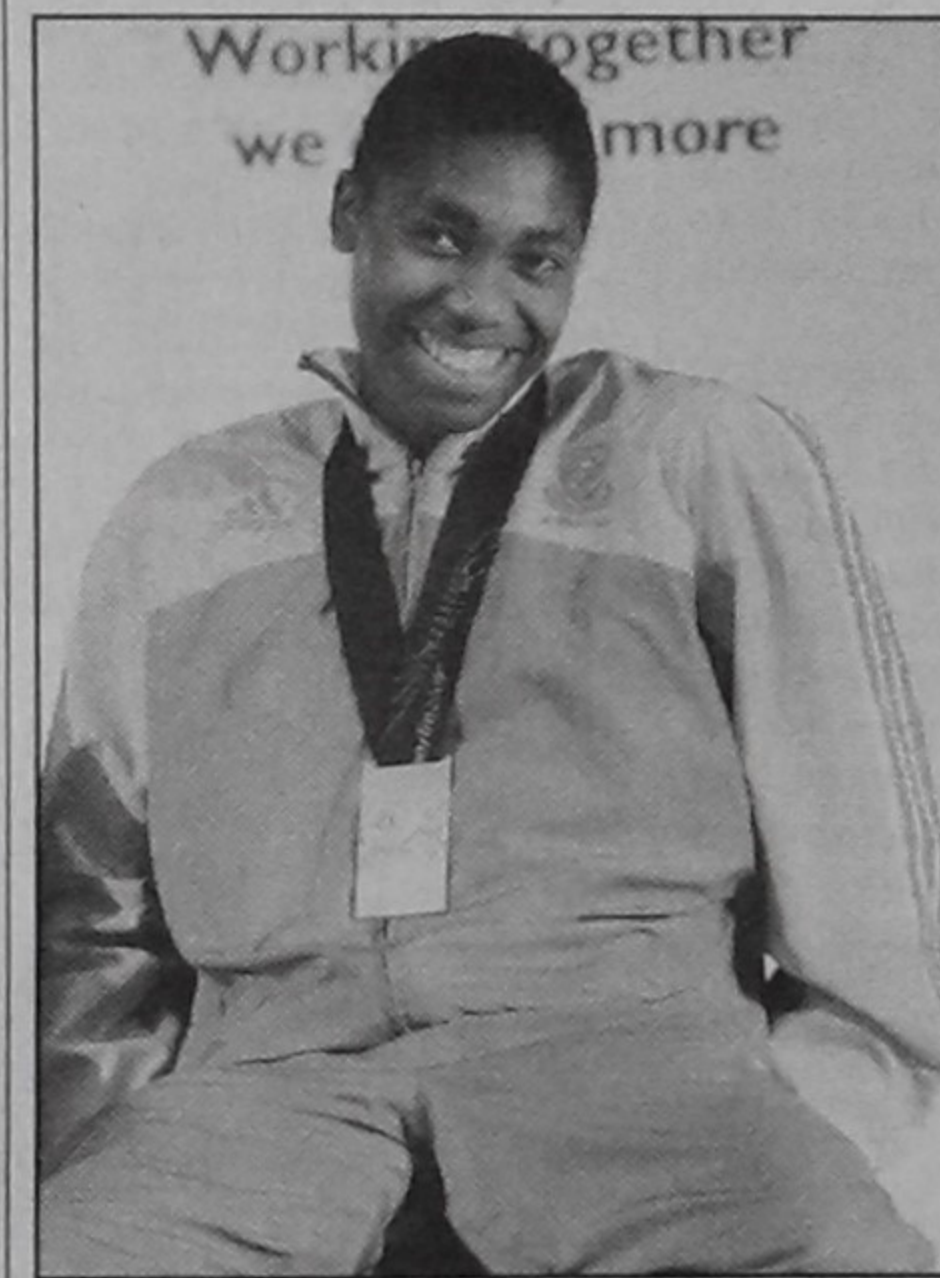
"So what they do now is they do everything, and then they can say look, not only has she got this, she's got that and the other."

Weiss admitted the IAAF was struggling to deal with the complex case, which will be decided at the November 20-21 executive council meeting.

"We still don't have all the results and those we do have must be submitted to experts for evaluation," he said.

"The problem we have today is to know whether we submit these results to experts from outside the IAAF or our own medical commission which meets in Monaco on October 16, or to the two panels."

He added: "We don't have any texts on this subject as we do for doping. There is no provision in our rules as to what our decision might be."



CASTER SEMENYA

Piquets accused of blackmail

AFP, Monza



Renault have launched criminal proceedings against Nelson Piquet junior and Nelson Piquet senior for making false allegations and blackmail in relation to claims that the team conspired to fix the outcome of the 2008 Singapore GP.

Renault face an investigation by the International Motoring Federation (FIA) into race-fixing allegations and has been called to appear before the FIA's International Motor Sport Council in Paris on September 21.

These allegations claim that Piquet junior was asked to crash his car deliberately into a wall during the 2008 Singapore Grand Prix and so facilitate a victory for his teammate Spaniard Fernando Alonso. In the race, Piquet crashed and Alonso went on to win.

Until Friday, following widespread overnight publication of what was reported to be a leaked copy of Piquet junior's statement to the FIA investigators, Renault and Briatore had declined to make any comment.

On Friday morning, however, Briatore denied all the accusations against him -- notably conspiring with his team management and Piquet junior to cause a deliberate accident -- and said that they were "outrageous lies".

In their statement, Renault said: "The FIA has announced that it is to hold an extraordinary meeting of the World Motor Sport Council (WMSC) on 21 September 2009."

"The ING Renault F1 Team is to attend that meeting and answer allegations that members of the team conspired with Nelson Piquet Jr to cause a deliberate accident at the 2008 Singapore GP, so that Fernando Alonso might benefit from the resulting safety car."

"The ING Renault F1 Team had not commented publicly during the FIA's initial investigation into this matter."

"However, today the ING Renault F1 Team and its Managing Director Flavio Briatore personally, wish to state that they have commenced criminal proceedings against Nelson Piquet Junior and Nelson Piquet Senior in France concerning the making of false allegations and a related attempt to blackmail the team into allowing Mr Piquet Jr to drive for the remainder of the 2009 season."

"The matter will also be referred to the Police in the UK."

Renault's appearance in Paris later this month will not be the first for Briatore who was associated with various controversies during the 1990s when German Michael Schumacher drove for the team, then owned and named Benetton.

If the charges against Renault are proved, the team could face expulsion from the sport.

Piquet is reported to have claimed that he was asked to crash deliberately and these claims, as presented in a document that appeared to have been leaked on Thursday, caused uproar at Monza on the eve of this weekend's Italian Grand Prix.

A spokesman for the FIA described the leak as "a very serious matter" and said the sport's ruling body will investigate the entire affair thoroughly.

"Members of the World Council must be able to consider the evidence in the round and speak to those involved and then take an objective decision -- not one based on hearsay or leaks," the FIA spokesman added, according to a report in the Daily Mirror, a newspaper that has carried the story consistently for several days.

Bopara, Shah's commitment in question

ANI, London

Indian origin England batsman Ravi Bopara and his teammate Owais Shah have been accused of playing for their places rather than for the team, as the team trails Australia 0-3 in the seven match ODI series.

Gloucestershire coach John Bracewell, who is the game's most sought-after one-day theorists, questioned the tactics applied by Bopara and Shah.

"I don't think that either Bopara or Shah are playing to the talent that got them selected," The Telegraph quoted Bracewell, as saying.

"They're playing for their places. And I think they're playing with too much responsibility on batting for too long. They should be getting as many as they can as quickly as they can for as long as they can. It's as simple as that."

"They look as though they're trying to build an innings and through that they're missing opportunities and applying pressure to their own team," he said.

"When you analyse their individual skills they're a pretty good team. But I don't think they play to a selfless pattern. I think they play to a reselection pattern. If I do all right today I'll get picked tomorrow," Bracewell added.

Bracewell believes that England's conservative batting has allowed Australia to seize the initiative in this series.

If it is to be wrested back, he argues, Andrew Strauss and his men need to "take a punt" whether that means using their power play earlier in the innings or rethinking their whole approach to batting.

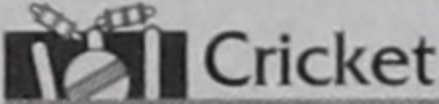
Pak to host

FROM PAGE 17

across Britain can see the neutral Test matches between Pakistan and Australia as well as ensuring a good geographical spread of the matches."

Meanwhile, England's Tests against Bangladesh next year will be played at Old Trafford and Lord's.

Flintoff gets new deal



AFP, London

Injured all-rounder Andrew Flintoff was awarded an incremental contract by the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) for the next 12 months on Friday.

Flintoff, 31, who is recovering from knee surgery, did not qualify for a full central contract as he retired from Test cricket after the end of the Ashes series win over Australia.

But fellow Ashes winners wicketkeeper Matt Prior, off-spinner Graeme Swann and pace bowler Graham Onions are among the 11 players awarded the lucrative full, annual deals, worth as much as 250,000 pounds, which give England coach Andy Flower say over when and where his leading players play.

But fast bowler Stephen Harmison and left-arm spinner Monty Panesar have been completely overlooked while former captain Michael Vaughan's retirement means he no longer has a central contract.

England captain Andrew Strauss and injured batsman Kevin Pietersen were among those given a full central contract.

National selector Geoff Miller said: "I am delighted Graham Onions, Matt Prior and Graeme Swann have all been awarded 12-month

central contracts for the first time.

"Central contracts are designed to reward players who perform well consistently for England and all three have made a very significant contribution to the team's recent success in regaining the Ashes and beating West Indies at home in both Test and one-day series," the former England off-spinner added.

Turning to Flintoff, who wants to continue his one-day international career, Miller said: "Following his retirement from Test cricket, Andrew Flintoff is no longer eligible for a 12-month central contract."

"The decision to award an incremental contract to Andrew reflects our view that he will still have an important role to play in our one-day side going forward and we wish him well with his rehabilitation from injury."

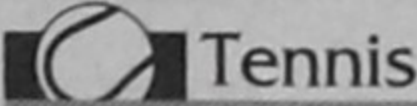
"As we saw in this summer's Ashes Test series, he remains a world-class talent."

As well as Flintoff, paceman Tim Bresnan, leg-spinner Adil Rashid and batsman Jonathan Trott, who all made their debuts in various forms of international cricket this year, have been awarded incremental contracts.

So too have Ravi Bopara and Owais Shah, who both, along with Flintoff, were selected by teams in the cash-rich Indian Premier League this year.

The contracts run from October 1, 2009 to September 30, 2010.

Life away from tennis



AP, Brussels

Justine Henin is now a UNICEF goodwill ambassador and says there are more important things to discuss than tennis.

Still, wherever she goes, the question persists: Is she coming back to the game she once ruled?

Henin had insisted she was done. Now she's not talking about the subject. And that seems to raise the tantalizing possibility of the return of another Belgian tennis star.

On Thursday, at UNICEF headquarters, she tried to keep her news conference focused on tetanus vaccinations for mothers and babies in developing nations. No matter. The question was sent her way again like a volley across the net.

"We are here to discuss child mortality in the world, a subject matter which is important enough to center on this today," she said.

Henin won seven majors, including the French Open four times. Last year, she jolted the tennis world by announcing her retirement while ranked No. 1. In May, she said the sport had left her with so much pain that a return was

unthinkable.

Yet she was seen training recently, apparently for a small exhibition tournament in Charleroi, one she has played regularly during the December winter break.

Some wonder if the exhibition will send the 27-year-old player on the path followed by Kim Clijsters. After retiring two years ago, Clijsters played an exhibition at Wimbledon this

theatre commitment, fuelling rumours she needed time for tennis practice.

On Thursday, she deflected such inquiries. Four months ago, she said competitive tennis is "truly a page that has been turned."

She was asked about Clijsters' surge and the surprising run of teenager Yanina Wickmayer, landing two Belgians in the Open semifinals.

"It is magnificent, that is evident," Henin said. "But understand that I am here in my role as ambassador."

Over the past months, Henin has travelled to Congo, Cambodia and Denmark to learn more about child vaccinations and how it affects survival for hundreds of thousands of poor mothers and babies around the world. Her face will become the face of the UNICEF tetanus campaign this fall.

"I have been able to discover so many things in my life after tennis," she said. "You live in a bubble and in leaving it, you ask plenty of questions on plenty of issues."

And others keep asking questions of her. Certainly, it would not be too late for a comeback. As the 26-year-old Clijsters proved, returning to the top on short notice is indeed possible.



JUSTINE HENIN

spring to test the new retractable roof. It got her competitive fire burning again. Clijsters, now a mother, returned to the tour last month, and will play in the U.S. Open semifinals Friday.

Henin also pulled out of a