

# Fairy tale in the making

AP, New York

**US OPEN**  
As Jad a 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's 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.

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

"Just playing, 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's 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.

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.



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

## Bopara, Shah's commitment in question

**Cricket**

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.

## Flintoff gets new deal

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## Life away from tennis

**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

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

"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.

Henin also pulled out of a

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 another match with Serbia's Novak Djokovic whom he defeated in the 2007 final and in last year's semifinals.

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 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

FROM PAGE 17

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 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 Sagni.

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

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

CASTER SEMENYA

## 'BCCI trying to isolate Pakistan'

**Cricket**

CRICINFO, undated

Former ICC president Ehsan Mani has accused the BCCI of 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.

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.

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