

# Nadal defence ends in tears

## Henin dream run continues



AFP, Melbourne

Andy Murray stayed on track for his first Australian Open final when defending champion Rafael Nadal pulled out injured on Tuesday, as Justine Henin's dream run gathered pace.

The fifth seeded Scot became the first Briton since John Lloyd in 1977 to make the semifinals in Melbourne after Nadal retired with right knee pain when trailing 6-3, 7-6 (7/2), 3-0.

Murray had looked the goods during the match, pumping down 13 aces and moving around the court effortlessly as he set up a showdown with surprise package Marin Cilic.

The big-serving Croatian made his first Grand Slam semi by outlasting seventh seed Andy Roddick in an epic five-setter, 7-6 (7/4), 6-3, 3-6, 2-6, 6-3, as the American once again failed to live up to expectations.

Murray, who carries an enormous burden in attempting to break Britain's Grand Slam drought in men's tennis stretching back to Fred Perry's 1936 US Open triumph, said he felt sorry for Spain's Nadal, the second seed.

"He's my favourite player to watch just because of what he brings to the court with his energy and I'm gutted for him," he said.

"I came through a few tough moments at the start of the match trying to do a little bit too much and I had to keep going with my shots and play the right tactics to win it."

Nadal said the knee starting hurting at the end of the second set and feared it was the same tendinitis that hindered him last year.

"It was in the end of the second set. It felt similar to what I had last year," he said.



PHOTO: AFP

Defending champion Rafael Nadal of Spain is in pain after losing a point against Andy Murray of Great Britain during their Australian Open quarterfinal in Melbourne yesterday.

"After that I couldn't get down properly, so it was impossible to win the match. I said sorry to Andy for that."

Fourteenth seeded Cilic once again proved his staying power, but he admitted it was tough going.

"It wasn't easy. In the last set I was just trying to hold my serve, and he was putting a lot of pressure on," said Cilic, the first Croat to reach the last four in Melbourne.

"I won the first game easily and that helped, and then when I broke him it got a bit easier."

"I can go one more five-setter, why not?"

It was marathon man Cilic's third five-set match of the tournament.

Roger Federer plays Nikolay Davydenko and Novak Djokovic faces Jo-Wilfried Tsonga in the other quarterfinals on Wednesday.

Henin powered into the last four by using her vast experi-

ence to down determined Russian 19th seed Nadia Petrova 7-6 (7/3), 7-5.

The 27-year-old Belgian decided to return to tennis after seeing fellow Belgian Kim Clijsters win the US Open last year, and she has more than justified the faith of organisers here who handed her a wildcard.

She now faces the dangerous but unseeded Chinese Zheng Jie, who destroyed unseeded Russian Maria Kirilenko 6-1, 6-3.

Henin said she was now darning to dream.

"I'm here again in the last four. It's just much more than what I could expect and the dream continues," said Henin, who called it quits in May 2008 after losing her enthusiasm.

"But there's still a long way to go. I'll just try to be focused on what I have to do on the court and hope it keeps going this way."

"I'll have good recovery and two good nights (rest). That's what I need."

Zheng is in her first Australian semi-final, matching her run at Wimbledon 2008, and with Li Na also still in the tournament, Chinese tennis is on a high.

Li plays sixth seed Venus Williams in the other quarterfinal on Wednesday, while defending champion Serena Williams takes on seventh seed Victoria Azarenka of Belarus.

"Henin for me is such a good player, she is so strong mentally," said Zheng, who was far too good for Kirilenko, who played with her left thigh heavily strapped and was clearly struggling in the heat.

"I just want to go out there and enjoy the match and play well."

By reaching the semis, the 26-year-old from Chengdu will return to the top 20 for the first time since last June.

# Zidane leads all-star team

SOCCERNET

Zinedine Zidane and Kaka led an All-Star side against a team of current and former Benfica players on Monday, with proceeds from the United Nations charity game going to victims of the Haiti earthquake.

UN goodwill ambassador Zidane and Real Madrid's Kaka were joined by Luis Figo, Rui Costa, Thierry Henry, Pavel Nedved and Edgar Davids in front of a capacity crowd of 65,000 at Benfica's Luz Stadium.

"By coming to the stadium people have done a great thing. I am very happy we can do something to help," said former France playmaker Zidane after the 3-3 draw.

"This is a very good cause, that's why there are so many players here. Football is with the people of Haiti," said Bayern Munich coach Louis van Gaal who was in charge of the All-Star team.

The Jan. 12 quake killed up to 200,000 people and left hundreds of thousands more Haitians injured and homeless.

After a minute's silence for the victims, Portugal great Eusebio took centre stage for a ceremonial kick-off and Italian referee Pierluigi Collina came out of retirement for the occasion.

Brazil playmaker Kaka put the All-Star team ahead before Nuno Gomes struck twice for the home side. Zidane set up the equaliser for Robert Pires only for Eder Luis to restore Benfica's lead in the 60th minute. The last goal of the night was scored by Frenchman Christophe Dugarry in the 85th minute.

## IN BRIEF

### Paraguay striker shot in Mexico

AFP, Mexico City

Paraguyan striker Salvador Cabanas, who helped his nation qualify for the World Cup, was in critical condition in a Mexican hospital after being shot in the head Monday at a Mexico City bar.

The 29-year-old forward for Club America of the Mexican league was shot in the front of the head and doctors were trying to remove the bullet.

Cabanas has scored 125 goals in 218 games in Mexico and is a former scoring champion in both Mexico and Chile.

### Briton eyeing 'keepy-uppy' record

AFP, London

A British man is trying to set a new world record by playing "keepy-uppy" with a football for 30 miles across London, visiting every Premier League stadium in the capital Tuesday.

Dan Magness's task involves keeping the ball off the ground and under control at all times by tapping it up into the air using all parts of his body except his hands.

The 26-year-old will be attempting to set the record for the longest "keepy-uppy" journey, travelling from Fulham's ground in west London to Tottenham Hotspur's White Hart Lane home in the east.

Magness, who describes himself as a "football freestyler", already holds the world record for the longest continuous "keepy-uppy" stint -- he kept a ball in the air for 24 hours in May last year.

### 'Algeria rematch will be war'

AFP, Benguela

Egypt striker Mohamed Zidan says his team's Africa Cup of Nations semifinal against Algeria here on Thursday will be a 'war', which Egypt have to win to prove they deserved to feature at the World Cup.

Egypt failed to qualify for this year's World Cup in South Africa after bitter regional rivals Algeria pipped them 1-0 in a play-off in Sudan after both teams were tied on the same points and goal difference in the qualifiers.

In November, both the World Cup qualifier in Cairo and the subsequent play-off in Sudan witnessed several violent scenes that world football ruling body FIFA are now investigating.

# Pharaohs tame Lions

AFP, Benguela



Egypt defeated 10-man Cameroon 3-1 after extra-time here at the Ombaka Stadium on Monday to set up a rematch against bitter regional rivals Algeria in the semifinals of the Africa Cup of Nations.

Wily Egypt shaded this crackling clash against a Cameroonian side that was full of running and drive but could not translate their dominance in normal time into goals.

Egypt's prize is a mouth-watering rematch on Thursday against bitter rivals Algeria, who pipped the Egyptians to a World Cup ticket in dramatic circumstances in November.

The Pharaohs have thus improved to 17 matches their unbeaten run in the tournament and also extended their five-year superiority over the Indomitable Lions.

Cameroon defender Aurelien Chedjou saw red in the 112th minute for a professional foul on Mohamed Nagy.

Cameroon opened the scoring in the 26th minute courtesy of an own goal by the record-setting skipper Ahmed Hassan, who got a slight touch with the head an Achille Emana corner at the near post as it sailed into the net.

Egypt would have equalised soon after when a long, searching free kick found Emad Motaheb, who raced past onrushing goalkeeper Kameni but his header was too long for him to control

and slot into an empty net.

Skipper Hassan turned from villain to hero in the 37th minute when he caught Kameni napping with a dipping shot from over 35 yards, which bounced in front of the Cameroon goalkeeper before resting at the back of the net to draw the champions level.

A faulty hour pass two minutes into extra-time by Geremi Njitap found super sub Mohamed 'Gedo' Nagy, who slotted home between Kameni's legs to give Egypt their first lead of this pulsating encounter.

The defending champions increased their lead on 95 minute when a curling freekick by Ahmed Hassan was adjudged to have been palmed beyond the goalline by goalkeeper Kameni. Television replays showed that the ball did not cross the line.

Man of the hour Hassan was unperturbed by the controversy.

"I'm very happy because we won today," he said. "We played a very good match, and I'm thrilled to score two goals and also with the record of 170 appearances."

In the 110th minute, Nagy dashed free through the Cameroon defence but Kameni made a brave save off his feet. The game appeared to slip away for the Lions of Cameroon when Chedjou was sent off moments later.

Cameroon fought to reduce the deficit in the second half of extra-time but Egypt kept their shape to stay on course for an unprecedented seventh Nations Cup title.



PHOTO: AFP

An Egyptian woman waves her national flag from inside a car in Cairo to celebrate her country's win over Cameroon in the Africa Cup of Nations quarterfinal on Monday.

# Nigeria ride on Victor

AFP, Lubango



quarterfinal.

John Obi Mikel, Obafemi Martins, Obinna Nsofor and Osaze Odemwingie also scored from the spot to give the 'Super Eagles' a 100 per cent success rate from five kicks.

Thomas Nyirenda was the inconsolable Zambian at the end after Enyeama saved his kick - the seventh of the shootout - and Nigeria scraped through despite having Onyekachi Apam sent off during extra time.

The ultra-negative last quarterfinal of the biennial African football showcase was a massive disappointment after victories for Ghana, Algeria and Egypt in thrillers.

Defending champions Egypt made the penultimate stage a few hours before Nigeria thanks to a 3-1 extra-time triumph over Cameroon with 170-cap midfielder Ahmed Hassan scoring twice for his side and once for his opponents.

Back in the knockout phase of the competition for the first time since 1996, Zambia had to make two enforced

changes from the side that defeated Gabon to reach the quarterfinals as shock Group D table-toppers.

Defender Chintu Kampamba and midfielder Rainford Kalaba collected two yellow cards each in the mini-league stage and young French coach Herve Renard drafted in Hichani Himonde and William Njobvu.

Nigeria retained the starting line-up from their final pool match against Mozambique that delivered an ultimately convincing 3-0 win and justification that they could go far in the tournament after a sluggish start.

Jubilant that his pre-tournament promise of a quarterfinals place had been met, Renard saw the game as a chance to embellish his reputation amid reports that he desires a more attractive African coaching post.

Rival coach Shaibu Amodu is 10 years older at 51 and under constant stress from public and media criticism despite just one competitive loss since taking charge of the national team a third time a couple of years ago.

The countries had come face to face four previous times in the Nations Cup with Nigeria winning two and Zambia one after a goalless first meeting in Ghana 32 years ago.

And after a goalless first half in this central Angolan town it was hard to fathom who would prevail this time and book a semifinals date with the Black

Stars of Ghana in Luanda on Thursday afternoon.

Chelsea midfielder Mikel ended a lot of cagey early combat with a sweetly struck drive after some slick passing, but Kennedy Mweene dived swiftly to his left and pushed the ball away with a strong one-hand save.

Zambia became more adventurous as time passed and after Enyeama rose to grasp a deep, dangerous cross, striker James Chamanga just failed to connect with a threatening ball across the six-yard box.

It was not a half for the faint hearted with some borderline tackling and by the break Zambians Felix Katongo, Himonde and Joseph Musonda had been shown yellow cards by the Egyptian referee.

The second half began as the first ended with more than fouls than thrills for a less-than-capacity crowd in the 20,000-seat venue and Apam joined the yellow-card offenders via a rash tackle on Chamanga.

Midway through the half and finally the crowd had something to cheer as Yusuf Mohammed cleared off the line to rescue Nigeria and hesitant captain Yakubu Aiyegbeni squandered a close-range opportunity at the other end.

It was painful watching the closing stages of regulation time as two teams far more concerned with not losing than winning rarely mounted threatening attacks and full-time came without a goal.

# Villa test for Gunners

AFP, London



The English Premier League title battle enters a potentially decisive phase on Wednesday as Arsenal and Chelsea go into tough fixtures aiming to replace Manchester United at the top of the table.

United claimed top spot at the weekend with a Wayne Rooney-inspired 4-0 demolition of Hull, but Arsenal will move back above them and into pole position if they can take all three points from their trip to Aston Villa, a side chasing a top four finish themselves.

Chelsea, who are level on points with the Gunners but have played a game less, entertain Birmingham, who have put together an impressive 15-match unbeaten run in all competitions.

Wednesday's programme also sees Blackburn entertain Lancashire neighbours Wigan with both clubs uncomfortably close to the relegation zone, while Everton will seek to bounce back from the

disappointment of their weekend FA Cup exit at the hands of Birmingham when they take on Steve Bruce's Sunderland.

With Manchester United due at the Emirates on Sunday, it is arguably Arsenal who have most to lose on Wednesday with Arsene Wenger's men starting a run of matches which also includes clashes with Chelsea and Liverpool.

The importance Wenger attaches to that sequence of fixtures was reflected in his making nine changes from the side that beat Bolton last Wednesday for the FA Cup tie at Stoke at the weekend.

The likes of William Gallas were sorely missed as the Gunners went out of the Cup but Wenger will regard that as a bearable setback if his squad are still in contention for their first league title since 2004 in a

month's time.

"Our selection at Stoke was simple," the Frenchman said. "Take a look at our schedule and you must see we cannot play the same 11 every time. That is for sure."

Birmingham defender Roger Johnson will realise a lifelong dream when he plays at Chelsea for the first time.

The former Cardiff player was brought up at a Chelsea fan and while he will be trying his hardest to put a dent in their campaign, he expects Carlo Ancelotti's men to go on and lift the title.

"I still get to watch as many Chelsea games as I can, mainly mid-week when Birmingham are not playing, and John Terry is a player I look up to," Johnson said.

"I think they'll win the league. They have been better than most sides this season. Manchester United haven't been quite as good as in previous seasons. Arsenal have come up on the rails in recent weeks but Chelsea have that strength to grind results out." They've done that for most of the season and, if they have a good second half, they should easily win the title."

## FIXTURES

**Wednesday**  
Aston Villa v Arsenal (1945 GMT), Blackburn v Wigan (2000 GMT), Chelsea v Birmingham (1945 GMT), Everton v Sunderland (2000 GMT)

# Real slam C'Ron red card

AFP, Madrid



Real Madrid blasted the "unfair" red card handed out to Cristiano Ronaldo at the weekend, but said it will accept the referee's decision.

"Seeing the move, he clearly did not want to hurt the opponent," Emilio Butragueno, the club's vice president and former player was quoted as saying Tuesday in sports newspaper Marca.

"I was a striker and when you are challenged you want to free yourself."

The world's most expensive player spoiled a stellar two-goal display on Sunday by getting red-carded after a stray elbow caught defender Patrick Mtiliga, who tugged the Portuguese winger's shirt during the 2-0 win over Malaga.

The Primera Liga's disciplinary committee is expected to announce later Tuesday whether he will be suspended for one or two matches.

Real's sporting director, Jorge Valdano, described the decision as "unfair and very hard" as Ronaldo was merely "trying to continue" the move.

"We regret very much the injury to the Malaga player, we accept any decision, but we defend the conviction that we are right," he told Spanish radio COPE Tuesday.

It was a second dismissal of the season for Ronaldo who was sent off in a 4-2 win over Almeria on December 5 for kicking out at an opponent.

The former Manchester United star said Monday he also felt his red card was unjust.

"I've spoken to Mtiliga and he said he doesn't believe I should apologise because he doesn't think I hurt him intentionally," he was quoted as saying on the club's website.

"I never try to trick referees. I never intended to injure the player. I believe they should be fair with what really happened."

# Blatter positive on World Cup

AFP, Madrid

FIFA president Sepp Blatter on Monday stressed he was confident the summer World Cup finals would go off without a hitch in South Africa and urged observers to dispense with any lingering doubts regarding the host nation's capacity to stage the event successfully.

"We should have confidence in the organisers - let's have an end to any doubts because having doubts does not move you forward in life," Blatter told a news conference on a visit to Madrid.

"In Africa we can bring about something important in the history of humanity," said Blatter, saying Africa deserved to stage the jamboree for the first time as "the continent has given much to the world of football."

"South Africa attracts 11 million tourists a year. I don't understand these doubts when it comes to (staging) football. On the contrary when last June we staged the Confederations Cup we had no security problems," Blatter stressed.



PHOTO: AFP

Nigeria goalkeeper Victor Enyeama runs off to celebrate after scoring the winning penalty against Zambia during their Africa Cup of Nations quarterfinal at the Tundavala Stadium in Lubango on Monday.