

Elena wins Paris title

AFP, Paris

Russia's Elena Dementieva won the Paris Indoors WTA tournament for the first time in her ninth attempt on Sunday defeating Lucie Safarova of the Czech Republic 6-7 (5/7), 6-1, 6-4 in the final.

The top seed dropped a tightly-contested first set when Safarova, 23, powered a forehand past her to take the tie-break 7-5, but she was in total command in the second as her heavy ground strokes kept Safarova pinned back.

The 28-year-old Russian grabbed an early break in the third set and held on to win her second WTA title of the year after Sydney.

She had been the losing finalist here last year, going down to the now retired Amelie Mauresmo of France.

"I have been trying to win this tournament for so many years -- it's been one of the most difficult wins of my career and I am so happy," she said.

"You have to fight to the very end and if you fight for every point anything can happen."

"I will be back to play Roland Garros because I love playing in Paris," added the 2004 French Open finalist.

Beach soccer

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will be 36 minutes and there will be a three-minute interval after every 12 minutes and the matches will strictly follow the rules of beach football, informed Shafulul Islam Manik, the general secretary of WAF.

Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation chairman Hemayet Uddin Talukdar and Comfort Seat Star managing director Md Enayit Ullah spoke on the occasion.

Pakistan

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turned down an offer.

Wasim said he was not averse to a foreign coach.

"Foreign or local, the coach should be well versed with modern ideas and techniques and must develop a good rapport with the players," said Wasim who was instrumental in bringing in Richard Pybus as Pakistan's first foreign coach.

Pybus, who played for the English league and has been coaching in South Africa, first took over in 1999 but, coming back for a second stint, finished prematurely following Pakistan's first-round defeat in the 2003 World Cup.

But Wasim said poor security in Pakistan, where Islamist militant bombings have killed more than 3,000 people since July 2007, would put off foreigners.

"A foreign coach will not be willing to come to Pakistan and if you want a coach who can train the players only on tour then why not appoint a local man," said Wasim who backed former team-mate Ijaz Ahmed.

NZ mend

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Bangladesh will be pleased with the way they have competed, but will need to make early breakthroughs on day two to stand any chance of pulling off an unexpected victory.

SCOREBOARD
 On the first day of the only Test between New Zealand and Bangladesh at Seddon Park in Hamilton on Monday:
NEW ZEALAND: First innings
 McIntosh c Imrul b Shaful 7
 Watling c Zunaed b Rubel 13
 Ingram c Shahadat b Rubel 42
 Taylor c Mushfiqur b Rubel 40
 Guptill not out 80
 Vettori b Shakib 10
 McCullum not out 58
Extras: (b-1, lb-2, w-3, nb-2) 8
Total: (For 5 wks in 88.1 overs) 258
To bat: Tuffey, Patel, Southee, Martin.
Fall of wickets: 1-17, 2-57, 3-66, 4-126, 5-158.
Bowler O M R W
 Shahadat 13.1 1 74 0
 Shaful 16 1 54 1
 Rubel 16 0 86 3
 Shakib 20 5 34 1
 Aftab 2 0 4 0
 Mahmudullah 1 0 3 0

BANGLADESH: Tamim Iqbal, Imrul Kayes, Zunaed Siddique, Mohammad Ashraful, Aftab Ahmed, Shakib Al Hasan, Mushfiqur Rahim, Mahmudullah, Shahadat Hossain, Shafulul Islam, Rubel Hossain.

Toss: Bangladesh



The players of Rajshahi celebrate the fall of another Chittagong wicket during the opening day of their four-day National League match at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra yesterday. Chittagong were bowled out for 198 runs.

PHOTO: STAR

Senators back 'strict' action against Afridi

Cricket

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistani senators on Monday demanded 'strict action' against dashing all-rounder Shahid Afridi, who was caught tampering with the ball in a one-day match in Australia.

The Senate standing committee on sports made the call after discussing Pakistan's woeful performance on a tour of Australia and the Afridi case.

"We should not select Afridi for some time and tell the world that we are not cheats and we know how to deal with indisciplined players," said Senator Tariq Azeem, calling for a five-year ban on the all-rounder.

But the committee stopped short of calling for such a hefty punishment, instead demanding that the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) take 'strict action' against Afridi and ban him for at least three series.

The all-rounder was caught on television biting the ball twice during the fifth and final one-day match against Australia in Perth late last month.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) match referee Ranjan Madugalle handed him a ban of

two Twenty20 matches. Afridi later apologised.

"I shouldn't have done it. It just happened. I was trying to help my bowlers and win a match, one match," said Afridi.

Azeem said the PCB should penalize the all-rounder.

"Yes, I had suggested a five-year ban on Afridi but finally the committee requested the PCB to take strict action," Azeem told AFP. "In view of Afridi's offence with the whole world watching, we need to come down hard on him."

A PCB committee is investigating Pakistan's crushing defeats in Australia -- 3-0 in Tests, 5-0 in one-day series and a Twenty20 match.

"We cannot take premature action against Afridi," PCB chairman Ijaz Butt told the committee. "Once the report of the evaluation committee comes, then only we can take any action on the matter," Butt told the meeting.

"Under ICC rules you can't punish a player twice for one offence," said Butt, adding that an ICC lawyer had suggested Afridi could challenge any further punishment in court.

Afridi was also banned for a Test and two one-day games for damaging the pitch in a Test against England at Faisalabad in 2005.

Two years later, he was handed a four-match one-day ban for trying to hit a spectator during a match in South Africa.

Soderling takes Rotterdam title

Tennis

AFP, Rotterdam

Roland Garros finalist Robin Soderling became the first Swede in nearly two decades to win the Rotterdam Open as he defeated injured former champion Mikhail Youzhny 6-4, 2-0 Sunday.

Anders Jarryd in 1993 was Sweden's last winner at the Ahoy arena. Soderling lost the 2008 final here to Frenchman Michael Llodra.

World number eight

Soderling broke a personal title dry spell dating back to last July in Bastad as he earned the victory in 54 minutes.

Youzhny was unable to go on, ending his participation after losing serve in the second game of the second set after taking treatment in the first set.

"I'm sorry I could not finish," said Youzhny. "I couldn't move so well. I tried my best, I had been hoping to do better today."

Soderling's success this week capped his return to form after losing first-round matches in both of his previ-

ous 2010 events, Chennai and the Australian Open.

"I've always wanted to play well here again," said the former finalist. "It was a good week for me but a bit up and down."

Soderling said that an enforced rest at home after going out in Melbourne finally put him right physically and mentally.

"I didn't start so well in the first few matches, but along with my coach we worked and my game is back. I'm playing really well once more."

"But that's all over -- I feel perfect again."

The 25-year-old improved to 5-2 on the season and ran his record against Youzhny to 3-1 with win in their last three meetings.

Clash of the titans

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Ferguson's team and I'd love to score a goal against them because these matches are going to be really special, with everyone watching."

But despite his importance to Milan and his rejuvenated countryman Ronaldinho also playing for the Italians, the most in-form striker on the pitch will be playing for the opposition.

If there is one player who worries the Italians it is Premier League top goalscorer Wayne Rooney, but the powerful forward won't be taking Milan lightly.

Rooney has not forgotten the lesson Milan gave United three years ago, in particular

from Seedorf.

"For me, Seedorf is probably the best player I've ever played against. When we played Milan at the San Siro a few years ago, he was unbelievable," said the Liverpool-born player.

"Milan have a number of players who can score goals, particularly from set-pieces, so I think we'll have to be wary of that."

"They have Pirlo and Beckensome great players. Ronaldinho is a special player, too. He's unbelievable when he's on form. I saw recently that he was voted Player of the Decade, so that shows how much of a talent he is. We'll need to beat our best to beat them."

BD's Tajik test

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points as the boys have got the self-belief to put up a fight after superb performance in the SA Games," Titu told reporters here on Sunday before their departure for the Sri Lankan capital.

Keeping the fact in mind, Titu said that he would first try not to concede a goal against Tajikistan and then go for goals through counter-attacks.

However the Bangladesh coach refused to put any department ahead of the others as he believed his team was a balanced side.

Captain Aminul Haque was also positive and looking forward to a good start in the

tournament they last time failed to even qualify.

"The first match against Tajikistan is very important for us. If we can make a good start against them, our target to play the semifinals will be easier before the matches against Myanmar and hosts Sri Lanka," said Aminul, who didn't concede a goal in the five matches Bangladesh played in the SA Games.

Like the SA Games, the Bangladesh captain wants to take the tournament match by match and said that they were highly motivated to play good football throughout the tournament.

Verdasco conquers San Jose

AFP, San Jose

Second-seeded Spaniard Fernando Verdasco rallied to topple top-seeded Andy Roddick 3-6, 6-4, 6-4 Sunday to win the ATP Tour SAP Open.

Verdasco, who claimed his fourth career title, had lost 15 straight matches against top-10 players before breaking through against world number seven Roddick.

He became the first Spaniard to win a title in the San Francisco Bay Area since Manuel Santana did it in 1964 in nearby Berkeley.

Verdasco set up the only break point of the final set with a backhand cross-court winner for 30-40 in the ninth game.

Roddick then dumped a forehand volley into the top of the net, leaving Verdasco to serve for the match at 5-4.

Early exit for Sania

AFP, Dubai

Sania Mirza, the first Indian woman to score high profile success in tennis, admitted Monday after defeat in the first round of the Dubai Open that a career-threatening wrist injury had returned.

Mirza was beaten 6-3, 6-4 by Anabel Medina Garrigues, the world number 33 from Spain, and her performance looked little like those of the zesty, dynamic player who has become the heroine of much of Asia.

Sachin, Sehwag

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after the visitors resumed at the overnight 266-9. **SCOREBOARD**
 Scoreboard at stumps on the second day of the second and final Test between India and South Africa at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata on Monday:
SOUTH AFRICA: First innings (overnight 266-9)
 Smith b Zaheer 4
 Petersen c Dhoni b Zaheer 100
 Amla c Dhoni b Zaheer 114
 Kallis c Laxman b Harbhajan 10
 De Villiers run out 12
 Prince lbw b Harbhajan 1
 Duminy lbw b Harbhajan 0
 Steyn lbw b Mishra 5
 Harris c Dhoni b Sharma 1
 Parnell lbw b Zaheer 12
 Morkel not out 11
Extras: (b-1, lb-4, w-10, nb-11) 26
Total: (All out in 85 overs) 296
Fall of wickets: 1-9, 2-218, 3-229, 4-251, 5-253, 6-253, 7-254, 8-255, 9-261.
Bowler O M R W
 Zaheer 22 5 90 4
 Sharma 18 3 67 1
 Mishra 21 3 70 1
 Harbhajan 24 2 64 3
INDIA: First innings
 Gambhir run out 25
 Sehwag c Prince b Duminy 165
 Vijay c De Villiers b Morkel 7
 Tendulkar c Kallis b Harris 106
 Laxman not out 9
 Badrinath b Steyn 1
 Mishra not out 1
Extras: (b-5, lb-5, w-12, nb-6) 28
Total: (For five wks in 76 overs) 342
To bat: Dhoni, Harbhajan, Zaheer, Sharma.
Fall of wickets: 1-73, 2-82, 3-331, 4-335, 5-336.
Bowler O M R W
 Steyn 17 4 66 1
 Morkel 15 1 80 1
 Parnell 12 1 61 0
 Kallis 7 0 24 0
 Harris 24 2 97 1
 Duminy 1 0 4 1

'Pakistan are dangerous'

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Paul Collingwood, England's captain for the Twenty20 series against Pakistan, has warned against underestimating his team's opposition, despite their woeful tour of Australia during which they failed to secure a single win.

"I think Pakistan are dangerous, it's as simple as that," he said. "Whenever you come and play against Pakistan they're a difficult side to beat. I guess sometimes you're unsure of what you're going to come up against but we're really going to concentrate on what we have to do this week. We've got a lot of confidence at the moment but we don't want to just sit back and rely on the confidence, we've got to do some hard yards before the games on Friday and Saturday."

"Pakistan are a very strong Twenty20 side and we're going to have to be right on our game to beat them. It might be a good time to play them, but you never quite know what you're going to get on the day so I think we've just got to concentrate on our own game and see what we get on the day."

The two matches at Dubai provide an inter-

national warm-up ahead of England's trip to Bangladesh, and they will also be an opportunity for England to get some vital match practice with the World Twenty20 tournament in West Indies less than two months away. "It's good to have these two games before the world cup to see exactly where we are in terms of team selection and squad selection. The important thing this week is to get a few wins under our belt and that would give us great confidence going in to the world cup."

Collingwood, who has played in all but one of England's Twenty20 internationals since 2005, captaining the side to eight victories in 17 games at the helm, was confident that England are approaching a watershed as a one-day and Twenty20 outfit and are a vastly improved side since the last World Twenty20 tournament.

"I'm excited because certainly with our batting line up we seem to be getting stronger and stronger with every one-day game we're playing and the confidence that we're building all the time. There are some important players among us already who can take the game away from the opposition. You need as many match-winners in your side as possible and I think we really are starting to get a lot of them."

Zim leave for the Caribbean

Cricket

AFP, Harare

Zimbabwe's 15-man cricket squad leaves for the West Indies next week determined to face up to their most stringent examination so far as they bid for a return to Test status.

Zimbabwe will play a Twenty20 match and three ODIs against a full strength West Indies.

Their convenor of selectors Alistair Campbell, a Test veteran here of a decade ago, told AFP: "We don't expect to win the series, but we might snatch one result."

"Our realistic objective is to be competitive. It is of paramount importance that we are, so as to improve our credibility. Failure in this regard would be a serious setback to our efforts and plans."

In June Zimbabwe are planning to host India in a probable five-match ODI series, during which they will again hope to provide at least serious competition and evidence of improvement.

Then they believe they can make sufficient further improvement in the next year or so towards the day a formal submission can be made to the International Cricket Council for a place on the new 'forward Test programme' scheduled for 2012.

After the India tour, Zimbabwe will seek to play a lengthy series of four-day matches -- the nearest they can presently get to five-day Test cricket -- against full ICC member country 'A' sides.

Ten of the 15 players destined for the West Indies tour have played Test cricket for Zimbabwe in the past, indicating a strong reliance on experience at present. But a second emphasis is to develop youth for the future.

A new national coach is to be selected in the next few days from a short list containing two former prominent Zimbabwe Test stalwarts -- Grant Flower and Heath Streak.

The other applicants include England's Chris Silverwood and Alan Butcher, the son of former England opening batsman Mark Butcher.

Flower and Streak appear to be the front runners. Flower, 39, the young brother of England head coach Andy Flower, would form part of a unique family national coaching duo if appointed.

Grant played in 87 Tests for Zimbabwe, scoring over 3,400 runs at 34.57. He was also a useful left-arm spin bowler. In recent years he has been contracted to Essex and played several big innings for the English county.

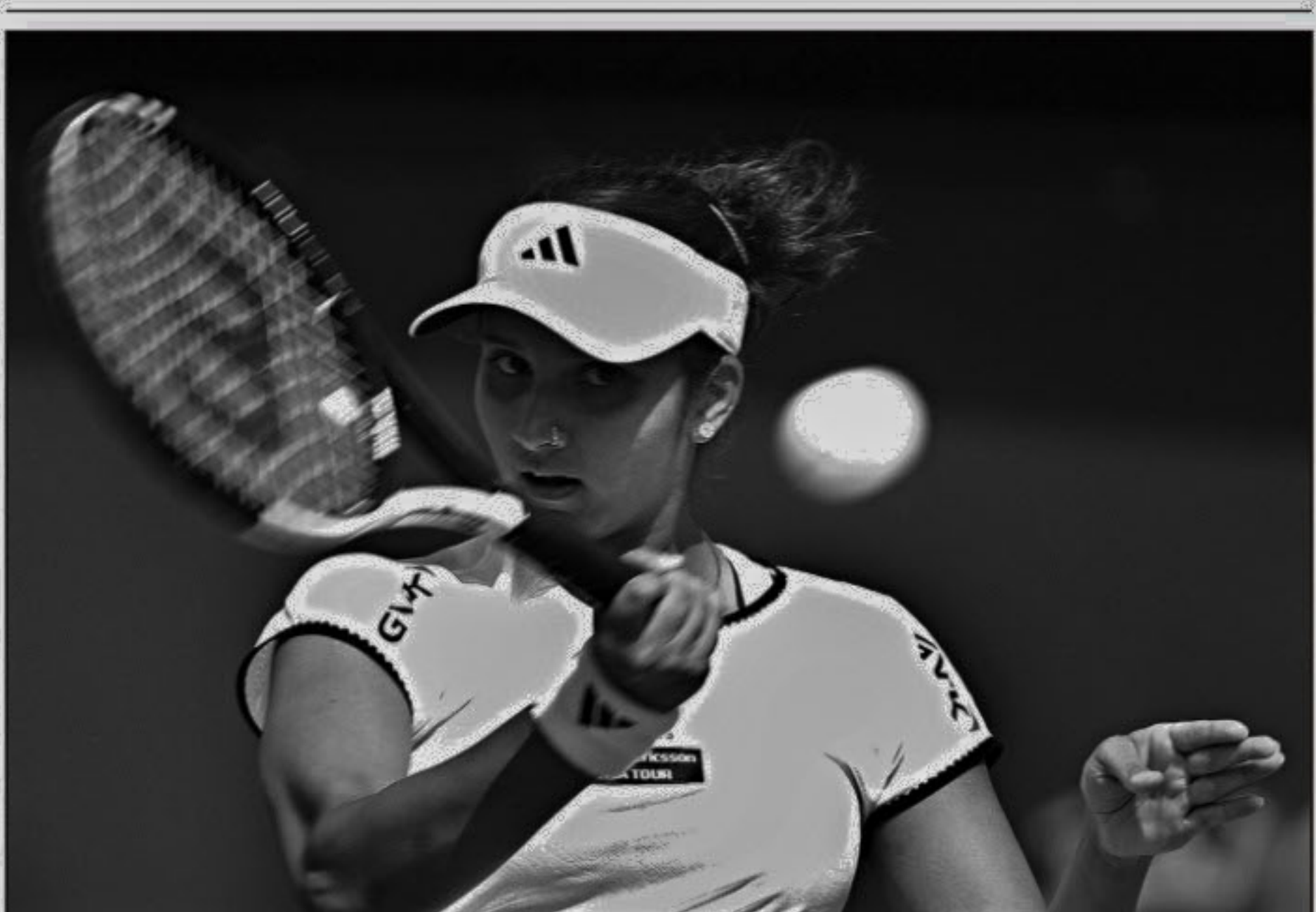
Streak, 35 is the present bowling coach for the new regional league. He played 65 Tests for Hampshire as an all-rounder, later signing for Hampshire before moving on to Warwickshire as captain.

Heath's application throws up a curiosity. In 2001 he objected to what he referred to as selection of black players on racial grounds rather than capability and quit as Zimbabwe captain.

He was sacked from the team, whereupon nearly all the other players went on strike. The affair was also part of a heated pay and expenses dispute which presaged the demise of Zimbabwe cricket.

SQUAD:

Prosper Utseya (captain), Hamilton Masakadza, Vusi Sibanda, Tatenda Taibu, Stuart Matsikenyere, Kyle Jarvis, Shingai Masakadza, Graeme Creame, Ray Price, Elton Chigumbura, Timson Maruma, Gregory Lamb, Charles Coventry, Chris Mpfu.



India's tennis star Sania Mirza hits a return against Spain's Anabel Medina Garrigues in the first round of the Dubai Open yesterday. Sania lost 6-3, 6-4.

PHOTO: AFP

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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DAY'S EVENT

National Cricket League (Four-Day Match, Day Two) Rajshahi v Chittagong Venue: Shaheed Chandu Stadium, Bogra Dhaka v Khulna Venue: Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium, Chittagong