

Maria Kirilenko (R) of Russia signs autographs for fans during Day Four of the Sony Ericsson Open at Crandon Park Tennis Center on Friday in Key Biscayne, Florida.

PHOTO: AFP

Nadal gets rolling

Tennis

AFP, Miami

Rafael Nadal made an efficient start on a rain-soaked day at the WTA and ATP Miami Masters on Friday as the fourth seed subdued American Taylor Dent 6-4, 6-3 in his opening match.

The routine win in just over an hour was straightforward for Nadal, a two-time Miami finalist looking to stop the rot and win his first title since Rome last May.

"It was a good start for me," said Nadal. "Playing Dent is always a difficult match because you don't have rhythm."

"I had small chances on the return -- only a few. I converted, and I had three breaks against his unbelievable serve."

The Spaniard moved through despite a painful wisdom tooth which must be removed after his tournament ends.

"I'm happy for the victory. It was a comfortable win against a difficult opponent."

But there was high drama on court for most of the afternoon as Belgium's pocket rocket Olivier Rochus

pounded out a 6-2, 6-7 (7/9), 6-4 opening upset over Novak Djokovic to knock the second-seeded Serb out.

The victory marked the second win over a top 10 player in Miami for Rochus, who stands just 1.67 metres and ranks 59th in the world.

"He made me run a lot, the points were long, I'm exhausted," said Djokovic. "He was playing really well today, he deserved the win."

"He was motivated to win against a top player and had nothing to lose. He coped well."

Nadal improved to 13-3 on the season and 18-6 in Miami, where he lost finals in 2005 (to Roger Federer) and 2005 (to Nikolay Davydenko).

Djokovic and Rochus, were delayed for two and a half hours at their start as a rainstorm swept over Key Biscayne. They were also interrupted for 52 minutes after the ninth game of the second set by more bad weather.

Rochus fought like a tiger throughout the contest, sweeping the first set and battling hard in the second under a barrage of break points.

The underdog was broken leading 5-4 and serving for the

win in the third, but the Belgian broke back for victory as Djokovic sailed a forehand over the baseline after almost three hours on court plus the nearly one-hour rain delay.

"It was a very close match, so I knew I could do something," said the surprised winner. "I just tried my best."

"I had played well in the first round, so I was feeling confident. But of course I never expected to win."

The frustrated Djokovic was left to ponder 10 double-faults and six broken serves.

Djokovic, the 2007 champion, lost his fourth match of the season against 15 wins less than a month after lifting his 17th career title in Dubai.

The 22-year-old Serb, runner-up last year to Andy Murray, stands 1-3 against Rochus.

It was a second straight disappointment for Djokovic after losing in the Indian Wells fourth round last week to eventual champion Ivan Ljubicic.

"I didn't feel great on the court and everyone could see," said Djokovic. "Life goes on. I'll try to make up for this loss."

"I wasn't attacking, I was waiting for him to make shots. It wasn't the right approach."

Two other seeds advanced, with 12th seed Juan Carlos Ferrero moving through as Austrian Daniel Koelliker retired while trailing 4-0 and 15th seed David Ferrer scoring a 6-2, 6-4 victory over Frenchman Michael Llodra.

A pair of Americans were bundled out as Frenchman Jeremy Chardy stopped Sam Querrey 4-6, 6-4, 6-2 and Brazil's Tomaz Belicci added to the misery of veteran James Blake with a 3-6, 6-1, 6-2 defeat.

Women's seeds fared better with wins all round.

Holder Victoria Azarenka, seeded fourth, beat Romanian Alexandra Dulgheru 6-3, 6-2 while number seven Jelena Jankovic backed up her weekend title at Indian Wells 6-4, 6-0 triumph over Mariya Korytseva.

Australian ninth seed Samantha Stosur staged a fightback to take out Spain's Carla Suarez Navarro 4-6, 7-5, 6-2.

US Open winner Kim Clijsters put last week's early defeat behind her with a 6-1, 6-1 win over Czech Petra Kvitova. Italian number 15 Francesca Schiavone defeated Alize Cornet of France 6-3, 6-2.

Waqar happy with Afridi's appointment

CRICINFO, undated

Waqar Younis, the new Pakistan coach, has hailed the appointment of all-rounder Shahid Afridi as captain for the World Twenty20 starting next month in the West Indies. The Pakistan Cricket Board installed Afridi at the helm earlier this week, after initially announcing the squad for the tournament without naming a captain.

"Afridi is an all-rounder with a positive frame of mind who had been bowling excellently in last two years," Waqar told Voice of Germany. "His mere presence in the field generates a fighting spirit among the players."

Waqar takes charge during a particularly tumultuous period for Pakistan cricket -- several senior players were banned two weeks ago, and there have been persistent murmurs of match-fixing and dressing-room spats. However, he remained confident of a good show in the Caribbean. "Pakistan is capable of defending its title in the presence of Afridi, (Abdul) Razzaq and Akmal brothers Kamran and Umer."

Pakistan have had four coaches in three years, and with this being Waqar's first official role as head coach at any level, he acknowledged the difficulty of the task ahead for him. "The history of Pakistan cricket tells us that the coaching of the national team is no an easy task," he said. "But someone had to do the job and I dared to accept it and I assured the nation and the Pakistan Cricket Board that I would not disappoint them."

He tried to temper the expectations of the country's passionate fans, and said things couldn't be changed overnight. "I understand that the people of Pakistan are mad for cricket and their sentiments are badly injured when the national team loses but I would ask them that they should curb their emotions and try to understand the circumstances before reacting."

Padma abuzz

FROM PAGE 17 they blew away into the sky.

Around 50 kites of different size, colour and design took part in the competition, with the winner taking home a television set.

Kite-cutting is a Bangladeshi tradition, though international competitions have also been held in China and India.

The kite festival is usually held in Cox's Bazar, but due to logistical constraints the venue was moved to the Padma river this year.

President of the Bangladesh Kite Federation Anwar Khan said, "The weather today (Saturday) has been quite nice, with a steady wind of around seven kilometres per hour."

"Anything higher than 20 kilometres is impossible for kites," he informed.

Earlier, State Minister for Youth and Sports Ahad Ali Sarker inaugurated the festival.

Yousuf makes up mind To announce retirement tomorrow

Cricket

AFP, Karachi

Pakistan's world record holder batsman Mohammad Yousuf Saturday said he had decided to retire next week in protest over an indefinite ban imposed on him by the country's cricket board.

The 35-year-old Yousuf, who holds the world record for most runs in a calendar year with 1,788 made in 2006, was banned by an inquiry committee of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) two weeks ago.

"Yes, I have decided to retire as Pakistan player and my decision is not an emotional one," Yousuf told AFP. "It's of no use playing after such an insult which is unacceptable and I will announce my decision on Monday."

Yousuf led Pakistan on their twin tours of New Zealand and Australia between November and February after regular captain Yousuf Khan withdrew over a lack of form.

Pakistan drew the three-match series in New Zealand 1-1 but lost all three Tests, five



MOHAMMAD YOUSUF

one-day and a Twenty20 match in Australia -- results which prompted the PCB to investigate the reasons for their catastrophic tour.

The committee blamed infighting between Yousuf and Khan for the disastrous results, and recommended they "should not be part of the national team in any format", but no period of ban was specified.

Former captain Shoaib Malik and all-rounder Navedul Hasan were banned for one year besides being heavily fined. Shahid Afridi, Kamran Akmal and Umer

Akmal were also fined and put on six-month probation.

Last week Yousuf vowed to appeal.

"Yes, I may still appeal, but a final decision will be taken on Monday," said Yousuf who was also deprived of his annual central contract by the PCB last week, putting further question marks over his career.

Yousuf said his commitment in playing for the country had not been rewarded by the cricket authorities.

"I am deeply hurt because I have always played with commitment for my country and fans know this, but not those people who run cricket, this is a big tragedy."

"My 12-year career is impeccable and I have never let down anyone."

Originally a Roman Catholic, Yousuf converted to Islam in 2005 and has since been involved in preaching besides playing cricket.

Yousuf has so far played 88 Tests for Pakistan, scoring 7,431 runs with 24 hundreds. He has also scored 9,624 in 282 one-day internationals.

He was declared best player of 2007 by the International Cricket Council.

Miles to go before ...

Cricket

INTERNET, undated

Andy Flower has warned that England still have a long way to go before they can consider themselves one of the world's best sides.

Team director Flower can look back with considerable pride on recent results, with last summer's Ashes victory followed up by a one-day series win and Test series draw in South Africa and a just-completed tour whitewash over Bangladesh.

But while he is keen to acknowledge the positives from that period, he is clear in his assessment England remain a work in progress, saying: "If I'm quite honest, we've got a way to go if we are to compete with the top couple of sides in the world."

England completed a 2-0 Test series win over Bangladesh on Wednesday, and Flower was quick to praise Yorkshire's Tim Bresnan.

Having initially been selected as a limited-overs specialist for Bangladesh, he was asked to stay on as injury cover and quickly edged out

the likes of Ajmal Shahzad and Liam Plunkett to play a central role in both Tests.

And if Flower's glowing end-of-tour report on Bresnan's progress is anything to go by, it is a position he will have to become used to.

Bresnan outperformed the more established Stuart Broad in Chittagong and Mirpur and impressed with his enthusiasm, stamina and ability to reverse swing the old ball, not mention a knock of 91 in the second Test.

"Tim Bresnan wasn't originally selected in the Test party but with the opportunity given to him by the injury to Ryan Sidebottom, and after his performances in the one-day series, he sort of leapfrogged his way into the side," explained Flower. "He performed superbly and I think he was the standout seamer in the Test series and probably the one-dayers too."

"He's very skilful at reverse swinging the ball both ways and he's accurate with a heavy bouncer. He's very controlled and he was strong enough to keep going for long periods of time."

"He can bat a bit too and is a solid fielder who's worked very hard physically."

Davies targets WC

Football

AFP, Paris

Sochaux's American international striker Charlie Davies said on Friday that he hopes to return to fitness in time for the World Cup after being seriously injured in a car crash in October.

After weeks of rehabilitation, the 23-year-old resumed individual training with his French first division side on Monday.

"I'm dying to get back with the guys," he told reporters at the club's training ground. "I don't even know how it will feel, my first training session back. It's like finishing a 50-mile marathon."

"It'll just be such a feeling of achievement and I know I'll still have a way to go after. I'm just counting down the days until I'm back with the team."

Davies sustained fractures to his face and elbow, a badly broken leg and a lacerated bladder after a one-car accident on a motorway in the Washington suburbs on October 13 that left one female passenger dead.

Initial reports suggested he might need 12 months to fully recover but, just over five months since the accident, he is already planning his return.

"I've looked at the calendar. I hope to be able to play against Montpellier on May 5 or at Bordeaux on May 8," said Davies, who netted twice in Sochaux's 3-2 defeat by reigning champions Bordeaux on August 15.

"It's great to prove people wrong and it adds more fuel to the fire when people tell me, 'There's no way you're going to be back for Sochaux this season, there's no way you're going to be in the World Cup,'" he said.

"I have this burning desire in me to get back and I know I'm going to."

"I hope to play in two or three matches with Sochaux in May before joining the American training camp just after the last day of the season."

Davies, who joined mid-table Sochaux from Swedish club Hammarby last summer, has scored four goals in 17 international appearances for the USA.

Bob Bradley's side were drawn in Group C at the World Cup alongside England, Algeria and Slovenia.

Selectors

FROM PAGE 17

Top Sports Noakhali today to erase any doubt over his selection. His inclusion would have him opening with Tamim Iqbal and with most of the 'Tigers' scoring runs, it would be an interesting move.

"As it is everybody (in the national team) is a stroke-maker and none of them are too old," said Rafiqul while talking about the team composition.

Captain Shakib Al Hasan, Junaed Siddiqui, Mushfiqur Rahim, Tamim, Mahmudulhqueh Riyad and Naeem Islam are the automatic choices among the batsman with Ashraf and Aftab the most likely additions.

And if the selectors go for an extra batsman, the last position could be a toss-up between any of the younger brigade (Shamsul, Mithun, Nasir) and the left-hander Faisal.

Among the bowlers, a fit-again Mashrafe Bin Mortaza could make a comeback and support the experience-thin 'Tigers' attack. "Jamie (Siddons) learned from Dav Whatmore that Mashrafe (Bin Mortaza) is bowling quick and working hard. He has full fitness as I said before so he's under our consideration," informed Rafiqul.

Nazmul Hossain, Syed Rassel and Dollar Mahmud along with Rabiul Islam are the bowlers fighting for one or two spots as the Caribbean wickets are slow and offer spin.

In that case, Nasir could be a good choice as the Rajshahi all-rounder have proved effective with his accurate off-spin apart from being a batsman proper.

Strauss asks

FROM PAGE 17

appeal to umpire Tony Hill even though he had clean-bowled Mushfiqur Rahim, in an act of apparent petulance. Hill had earlier turned down a strong appeal from the bowler.

"It is something he has got to be aware of," said Strauss, who skipped the Bangladesh tour to recharge his batteries in time for the Ashes challenge in Australia."

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down. Includes clues like '37 SoCal', '55 Vend', '19 Vote', '1 Fungus product', etc.

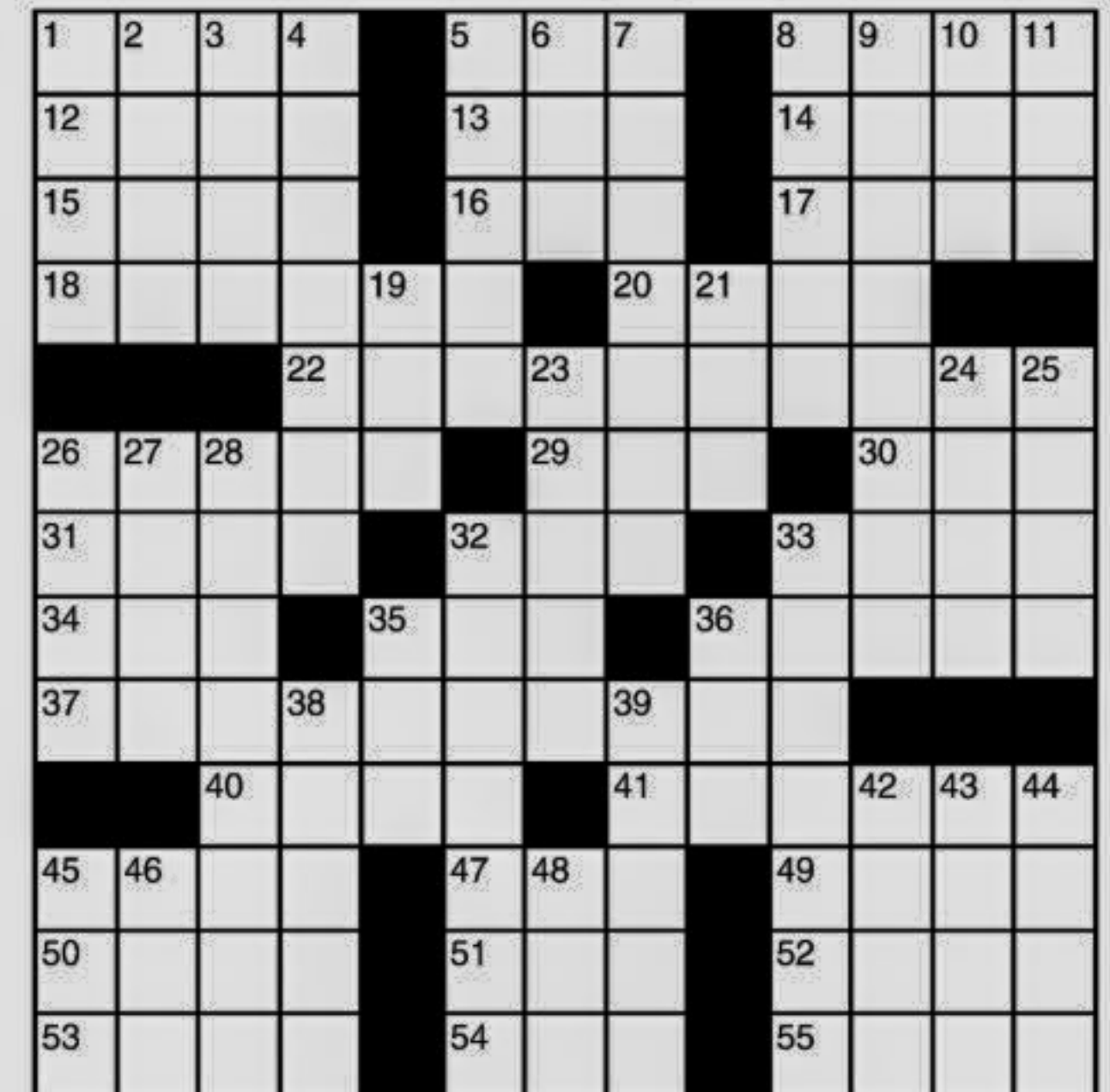


PHOTO: STAFF

GOC of Bogra Area Major General Zia-ur Rahman tees off the third Mobil Cup golf tournament at the Bogra Golf Club yesterday. A total of 100 golfers including a good number of lady golfers from different golf clubs of the country participated in the meet.

CRYPTOQUIP

Q O R S G O V H R G O M R L R H
X R A M X R X G V H G R D J G O R I M C
I J D S Z R G , A V F J X B V F H D B
G O R B Q R K R G D Z M S C A V L R K ?

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF A PERSON IS TOTALLY UNABLE TO ADD UP NUMBERS, YOU MIGHT SAY HE'S SUFFERING FROM IN-SUM-NIA. Today's Cryptoquip Clue: G equals T