



Serbian Novak Djokovic celebrates after winning against German Philipp Petzschner during their second round match at the US Open in New York on Thursday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Hot shots on collision course

AFP, New York

Maria Sharapova gave further indications on Thursday that she is close to being back to her best after an injury-blighted 2009 as she stormed into the third round of the US Open.

The 23-year-old Russian glamour girl powered past Iveta Benesova of the Czech Republic 6-1, 6-2, sending out a warning that she is capable of winning for a second time at Flushing Meadows, four years after her first title.

"Last year here, the position I was in, I was trying to see where my game was, so it's nice to be back on the court and not having to worry about anything other than trying to win," she said.

The win sets her up nicely for a possible showdown with top seed and runner-up here last year, Caroline Wozniacki of Denmark, in the fourth round.

First though, she must overcome 18-year-old American wildcard Beatrice Capra in Saturday's third round.

Wozniacki powered her way into the third round by handing out a 6-0, 6-0 thrashing to Taiwan's Chang Kai-Chen.

It was an impressive performance by the 20-year-old Dane, a surprise finalist here last year who, in the space of the last 12 months, has established herself among the elite in the sport.

She needed just 47 minutes to record her 11th straight win, which includes

back-to-back titles in Montreal and New Haven, her third and fourth of the year, the most of any woman.

In two matches at Flushing Meadows, she has lost just two games.

"I go out there and I don't give up. I don't give any free points away and that is one of my strong points," said Wozniacki of her merciless display against Chang.

"I am feeling fresh, all recovered (from an ankle injury), from everything, I am happy to be playing injury-free. It's perfect."

Wozniacki will play another Taiwanese player, Chan Yung-Jan, for a place in the fourth round and a possible match against Sharapova.

Chan advanced to the third round of a Grand Slam tournament for the first time in 17 attempts when she defeated Austria's Tamira Paszek 6-3, 6-3.

The previous best for the 21-year-old from Taipei had been second-round appearances at the Australian Open in 2009, at Wimbledon this year and here in 2008.

She was in command from the start against Paszek, once touted as a budding star of tennis, but who has struggled with injuries over the last two years.

"I was not 100 per cent in my first match and was missing the easy ball," Chan said. "But that was better today and I am looking to play even better from now on."

The prospect of playing the top seed Wozniacki was not awesome, she said, as they had known each since they were

juniors and had played several times.

"Also I love playing on the big courts," she added.

Also through to the third round in early play Thursday was Russian seventh seed Vera Zvonareva, who eased past Sabine Lisicki of Germany 6-1, 7-6 (7/5), and semifinalist here last year Yanina Wickmayer of Belgium, who beat Julia Gorges of Germany 6-4, 7-5.

Swiss veteran Patty Schnyder used her experience to outplay Spanish 22nd seed Maria Jose Martinez 7-6 (7/2), 6-4 and she will next play Wickmayer for a place in the fourth round.

Also through was 2004 champion Svetlana Kuznetsova of Russia who breezed past Anastasiya Sevastova of Latvia 6-2, 6-3 and fourth seed, Jelena Jankovic of Serbia, who edged past Mirjana Lucic of Croatia 6-4, 3-6, 6-2.

There was an upset on the Grandstand Court though as the unheralded Capra ousted French 18th seed Aravane Rezaï 7-5, 2-6, 6-3.

Capra is making her debut in a WTA Tour tournament, and was the youngest player remaining in the women's draw and also the lowest-ranked at 371.

"A year ago I was playing the juniors here. I've been playing mostly the juniors tournaments the entire year and concentrating on that. I played a couple of pro circuit events and one okay, but its been mostly juniors," she said.

"Playing Sharapova she said would be an amazing experience."

## Div I football

OUR CORRESPONDENT,  
Manikganj

Dragon Sporting Club came from behind to beat Nabajagan Sangsad 2-1 in the Hafjil Islam Khan Uttu Smriti First Division Football League at the Shaheed Miraz-Tapan Stadium yesterday.

Toriquel put Nabajagan Sangsad ahead in the 35th minute but Jewel leveled the margin for Dragon after thirteen minutes.

Joy netted the match winner in the 72nd minute.

With the victory Dragon Sporting Club raised their tally to eight points from six matches while Nabajagan Sangsad remained at eight points from the same number of outings.

Diamond Friends Club will take on Sonali Atit Club in the today's match.

## Sarwan told to get in shape

REUTERS, Miami

West Indies batsman Ramnaresh Sarwan has been told to get in shape by the national selectors after failing to earn a central contract for the coming year.

Sarwan, Jamaican pace bowler Jerome Taylor and Trinidadian wicketkeeper Denesh Ramdin were the most notable absentees from the list of 15 players handed the retainers.

"The team management, the selection committee and the West Indies Cricket Board are concerned about Mr. Sarwan's extremely indifferent attitude and sporadic approach towards fitness, particularly in recent years," said a statement released by the board.

Injuries have kept the 30-year-old Sarwan, who has a test average of 41.73, out of test action throughout 2010.

## Delneri

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"Borriello preferred another team for contractual reasons while for Kaladze it's something else altogether.

"But all the others came here running like (Fabio) Quagliarella, showing that they love the shirt."

Delneri insists Juve will be aiming to qualify for the Champions League this season and he brushed off the scepticism surrounding him, particularly from fans expecting a bigger name at the club's helm.

This is the biggest job of Delneri's career. Prior to joining Juve his best achievement as a coach was guiding Sampdoria to fourth place last season.

"Even (Nelson) Mandela was suspicious when he was freed because he was afraid he'd be killed.

"To tell the truth I've felt a lot of warmth around me. But who's sceptical?"

"I'd say they're right because they don't know me, even if my career numbers are on my side.

"Not least given that last year when I didn't finish last but 12 points ahead of Juventus."

## Tendulkar calls for 'thorough' probe

Cricket

AFP, New Delhi

India's batting great Sachin Tendulkar on Friday called for a "thorough" investigation into Pakistan's spot-fixing scandal, saying the guilty should be punished.

"The ICC (International Cricket Council) should make a thorough probe in the scandal and take appropriate action if the players are found guilty," Tendulkar, 37, told reporters here.

"If the allegations are true, they will certainly bring the game into disrepute."

A British tabloid claimed last weekend that a middleman gave undercover reporters exact details of no-balls to be bowled by Pakistani seamers Mohammad Aamer and Mohammad Asif during the Lord's Test against England.

The News of the World said it had paid the middleman, Mazhar Majeed, 150,000 pounds (230,000 dollars) for information on the practice of spot-fixing, which allegedly is wide-

spread in illegal South Asian betting circles.

Majeed, who claimed to be an agent for several Pakistani cricketers, told the newspaper he worked for an "Indian party".

"They pay me for information," Majeed was recorded as saying.

Tendulkar, the world's senior-most active cricketer, who made his debut in 1989, said he had never heard of an instance when an India player was contacted by a bookmaker.

"In my 21 years of international cricket, I have never heard of an Indian player being approached by bookies," the star batsman said.

Tendulkar is cricket's leading run-getter in both Test and one-day formats.

He has scored 13,837 runs from 169 Tests with 48 centuries and 17,598 runs in 442 one-day matches with 46 hundreds.

Tendulkar's name did not figure during the match-fixing scandal in 2000 which saw life bans being imposed on three Test captains, Hansie Cronje of South Africa, Mohammad Azharuddin of India and Salim Malik of Pakistan.

## Ganguly predicts tough time for Dhoni

Cricket

CRICINFO

Sourav Ganguly, the former India captain, has said MS Dhoni's leadership will face a stern test in the next couple of years if the younger members of the team continue to underperform and the senior players retire.

While Ganguly acknowledged India's form in Tests had been good, the inconsistency in the shorter formats, he said, was a worry. India won the Asia Cup recently but were beaten in the final of the subsequent tri-series in Sri Lanka. They failed to make the semifinals of the World Twenty20 and Champions Trophy in 2009, as well as the World Twenty20 in 2010.

"Dhoni's biggest challenge will be in the coming one or two years when [Sachin] Tendulkar, [Rahul] Dravid and [VVS] Laxman retire," Ganguly told PTI. "Next year, we have about five away series and it will be a test of his captaincy and his players. His future as Indian captain will be determined."

## Injury adds to Pak woes

Cricket

PTI, Taunton

In yet another blow to Pakistan ahead of the two Twenty20s and five One-Day Internationals against England, four key players of the team suffered injuries during their warm-up match against Somerset. Pakistan are already without Salman Butt, Mohammad Asif and Mohammad Aamer, all three of whom are implicated in a 'spot-fixing' scandal.

And compounding the team's problems were injuries to four important players ahead of and during the practice match which the visitors won narrowly by eight runs. In-form batsman Umar Akmal had a concussion after suffering a blow in the nets before the match while seamers Umar Gul and Wahab Riaz ended up with finger and shoulder injuries respectively.

Both, however, are likely to be fit for Sunday's first Twenty20 match against England. Abdul Razzaq's back injury, suffered during practice, is a cause for concern for the tourists, as the all-rounder's absence will mean Pakistan taking the field without three of their frontline pace bowlers against England.

There was, however, some consolation for Pakistan as the warm-up match ended in a victory for them yesterday after Butt's replacement, Shahzaib Hasan, notched up a century for the visitors.

"That team fully firing might have cleaned us up a bit earlier but when you saw the death period and business end of game you could see they were well drilled in what they had to do," Somerset's stand-in captain Peter Trego was quoted as saying by 'The Daily Telegraph'.

"If there is any cloud hanging over those guys it needs to be addressed. The shame is it is three exceptionally good players they have lost and might detract away from the quality of the series with England. But on the whole with the issues around it is best they are out of the limelight now."

## Zac joins Japanese bid

Football

AFP, Tokyo

Japan's new coach Alberto Zaccheroni Friday joined a team of "ambassadors" promoting the country's bid to host the 2022 World Cup, just four days after his appointment.

"I've always had a lot of respect for Japan as a country," the 57-year-old Italian, who won the 1998-1999 Serie-A title with AC Milan, said in a statement. "Let's all do our best to bring the World Cup to Japan."

The bid committee said it was delighted to have Zaccheroni, who has coached a dozen Italian clubs, citing his "wealth of experience at European football's highest levels."

Asian neighbours Japan and South Korea co-hosted the 2002 World Cup which, Zaccheroni said, was "a fantastic tournament" where "the level of organisation and the passion of the fans were quite exceptional."

"That's the reason I'm confi-

dent that a World Cup hosted by Japan in 2022 would be something really and truly special," said Zaccheroni, the sixth foreigner and the first Italian to manage Japan, former Asian champions.

Football's world governing body FIFA will choose the hosts for the 2018 and 2022 World Cups on December 2 in Zurich.

The candidates are South Korea, Australia, Russia, England, the United States and Qatar as well as joint bidders, Netherlands-Belgium and Spain-Portugal.

Japan, South Korea, Australia and Qatar, all members of the Asian Football Confederation (AFC), have submitted bids for 2022 only, while the others are campaigning for both -- amid growing expectations Europe will get the 2018 edition after Brazil in 2014.

Zaccheroni will be the 32nd "bid ambassador" for Japan.

Other ambassadors included some of his predecessors and current and former national team players.

## Pakistan

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until their names are cleared," he added.

Hassan had also raised serious doubts on the authenticity of the News of the World's expose, saying, "What is the reputation of those people who have brought us this story?" In an interview on BBC television, Hassan had said, "We are not seeing on the video what the date is or what the time is." "Do you have answers to these questions? The video wasn't timed or dated. It could have been filmed before or after the match, or at a different time."

## I was never

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He further said those found guilty in the spot-fixing scandal should be "heavily punished". Without naming the accused -- Pakistan Test skipper Salman Butt and pacer duo of Mohammad Asif and Mohammad Aamer -- the left hander said, "I should wait for the outcome."

"The guilty should be heavily punished. These are all allegations, there is no proof yet. We should not make comments," he said. "Not just Pakistan is involved. I hear players from Australia and Bangladesh have been approached. It boils down to the players, it's their as well as captain's responsibility," Ganguly said.

Former Japan coaches on the bid team are his immediate predecessor, Takeshi Okada of Japan, as well as Brazilian legend Zico, Bosnian tactician Ivica Osim and Frenchman Philippe Troussier.

## A case

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Calling it a complex investigation, he said that if the players were found guilty, they could face a life ban.

"We will go where the evidence takes us," he said, adding that the ACSU was working very closely with the British police in their separate but parallel investigation.

ICC chief executive Haroon Lorgat expressed his "extreme disappointment and sadness" at the situation, but repeated that "we will not tolerate any sort of corruption in the sport."

"There is absolutely no truth to the suggestion that there is a conspiracy towards Pakistan cricket," the South African added.

"There is a lot of sympathy for Pakistan and its players."

## Roger rolls, Nikolay falls

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reach the second round, lost only seven of 52 points on his first serve as Davydenko made his quickest US Open exit since 2005.

Davydenko joined a US Open seeded scrap heap that includes No. 7 Tomas Berdych of the Czech Republic, US ninth seed Andy Roddick and Croatia's Cilic, who dropped the longest match of the week just 60 seconds shy of five hours.

"It was very humid. It wasn't easy to get oxygen," Cilic said. "I started to feel cramps in the end of the fourth set. But with that, I was all right toward

the end of the match. It was just the general tiredness and exhaustion."

Nishikori, ranked 147th, fought off cramping in the hottest day of a scorching week to defeat Australian Open semifinalist Cilic 5-7, 7-6 (8/6), 3-6, 7-6 (7/3), 6-1 in an exhausting five-hour duel.

"I was cramping from the second set but I kept fighting and fighting and got the fourth set tie-breaker. That was key for me," Nishikori said.

"It was hot but I feel good now."

Nishikori, whose run to the US Open fourth round in 2008

was his best Slam showing and the best here by a Japanese man since 1937, next faces Spanish 21st seed Albert Montanes, who beat Australian Carsten Ball 6-4, 6-3, 6-1.

Swedish fifth seed Robin Soderling reached the third round in straight sets as well, dumping American Taylor Dent 6-2, 6-2, 6-4.

"I'm pretty confident. I know I can do well when I play well," Soderling said. "But you need to play well. No one can play well every match. So anything can happen. I can lose first round. I can go on really deep as well."

US 19th seed Mardy Fish, who won two titles in July and was runner-up at Cincinnati last month, eliminated Uruguay's Pablo Cuevas 7-5, 6-0, 6-2.

Next in Fish's path is France's Arnaud Clement, who led 6-3, 5-5 when Argentina's Eduardo Schwank retired with an ankle injury.

Fish said he feels like he can crack the world top-10 next year and is confident he could win a possible fourth-round match against Djokovic.

"I've never put myself in position to be a guy who is talked about at a Grand Slam," Fish said.