



PHOTO: AFP

Belgian tennis star Kim Clijsters puts some elbow grease on her forehand return to Dinara Safina during her first round match on the second day of the Australian Open in Melbourne yesterday.

Nadal, Clijsters romp

Ivanovic falls at first hurdle

AFP, Melbourne



Top seed Rafael Nadal was handed an easy win at the Australian Open Tuesday, as Kim Clijsters humiliated Dinara Safina 6-0, 6-0 and former number one Ana Ivanovic was another high-profile casualty.

Nadal, the French Open, Wimbledon and US Open champion, was leading 6-0, 5-0 when Brazilian journeyman Marcos Daniel threw in the towel after being troubled by a left knee problem.

Andy Murray went through in similar circumstances when Slovakia's Karol Beck retired with a shoulder problem while trailing 6-3, 6-1, 4-2, during an action-packed day two.

Swedish fourth seed Robin Soderling beat Italy's Potito Starace in straight sets and 2009 US Open champion Juan Martin del Potro enjoyed a successful return to Grand Slam tennis after being injured for most

of last year.

Nadal will play American qualifier Ryan Sweeting next as he targets the "Rafa Slam" -- the first time one man has held all four major titles since Rod Laver in 1969.

The Spaniard, forced out of last year's quarterfinal against Murray with a knee injury, said the disconsolate Daniel would be feeling "terrible".

"It's a terrible feeling to pull out of a match with an injury and I wish him all the best and a fast recovery," said Nadal. "If you are feeling bad you should not go on and it's best for the recovery."

In the women's draw, Belgium's Clijsters steamrolled the distraught Safina in just 44 minutes for her fourth whitewash at the tournament, but the first against illustrious opposition.

Injury-hit Safina, a former world number one, was a beaten finalist just two years ago and she was again inconsolable as she left Rod Laver Arena, burying her head in her hands as she faced the media.

"It was very tough,"

Safina said.

Serbia's Ivanovic, another former number one and the 2008 French Open champion, continued her miserable Grand Slam form with a quick exit at the hands of 49th-ranked Russian Ekaterina Makarova.

The popular brunette fell in round two at last year's Australian and French Opens, before being humbled in her first match at Wimbledon and reaching the US Open's fourth round.

Earlier Murray, last year's runner-up and the world number five, was cruising when Beck gave in to a serving shoulder problem.

"Obviously you'd rather finish the match off without your opponent being hurt," Murray said. "But it does happen quite a lot. So you just have to move on and get yourself ready for the next round."

Murray is searching for Britain's first Grand Slam title since 1936, after being beaten by Federer in last year's final here and the 2008 US Open decider.

The in-form Soderling

ended past Starace 6-4, 6-2, 6-2, raising hopes of another rousing run after reaching at least the quarterfinals at the last three Grand Slams.

And Argentina's del Potro, who has barely played since last year's Open following wrist surgery, overcame Israel's Dudi Sela, 7-6 (15/13) 6-4, 6-4 to help banish a nightmare 2010.

Women's second seed Vera Zvonareva moved towards her third consecutive Grand Slam final with an easy 6-2, 6-1 win over Sybille Bammer and Australia's Samantha Stosur crushed American wildcard Lauren Davis in just 53 minutes.

Elsewhere former world number one Jelena Jankovic, seeded seventh, ended a six-match losing streak as she went through 6-0, 7-6 (7/5) against Alla Kudryavtseva of Russia.

There were also wins for Croatian 15th seed Marin Cilic and Russian world number 10 Mikhail Youzhny, while Australian wildcard Bernard Tomic beat Jeremy Chardy of France in straight sets.

Hussey a serious doubt

AFP, Melbourne

Australia batsman Michael Hussey had surgery on an injured hamstring Tuesday, putting him in serious doubt for Australia's World Cup cricket title defence.

Team physiotherapist Alex Kountouris said scans showed Hussey had torn a hamstring tendon from his left knee during Sunday's one-day win against England, making it unclear if he will make the World Cup starting next month.

"Whilst the injury appeared to be minor at the time and soon after the game, scans have since revealed that he has avulsed (torn) one of the hamstring tendons from the attachment point at inner side of his knee," Kountouris said.

"As such, Michael had corrective surgery today. The recovery time and availability for the ICC (International Cricket Council) World Cup will be dependent on his progress with the rehabilitation program in the coming weeks."

Chairman of selectors Andrew Hilditch said a decision on Hussey would be delayed until as late as possible before the tournament in India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

"It is a severe injury and we will make a decision closer to departure date," Hilditch said.

Hussey had been named in Australia's 15-man World Cup squad just hours earlier. Australia, aiming for a record fourth successive title, open against Zimbabwe on February 21, although the quarter-finals are a month later.

Aussies pick Lee, Tait

AFP, Sydney



Defending champions Australia Tuesday unveiled their squad for next month's World Cup, banking on the fitness of a pair of injury-prone pacemen and elder statesmen Ricky Ponting and Mike Hussey.

Veteran Brett Lee and enigmatic short-form specialist Shaun Tait were both included in the 15-man squad for the tournament in India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, which they are trying to win for the fourth successive time.

Ponting was named as skipper, but is still recovering from a broken finger, while Hussey made the squad but is a major doubt after a severe hamstring tear in the six-wicket win over England at the MCG on Sunday.

Hussey is expected to be sidelined for at least six weeks, with Australia's first game on February 21, and chairman of selectors Andrew Hilditch conceded he was a doubt for the showpiece event.

Players can be replaced before the tournament.

By selecting Lee and Tait, as well as erratic duo Mitchell Johnson and Doug Bollinger, Australia will rely heavily on their pace bowlers to be at their best.

Lee performed well in Australia's win over England on Sunday, but the 34-year-old and

Tait are both on the comeback trail after serious elbow injuries.

Sunday's game was Lee's first one-day international for Australia since October 2009 and he missed the 2007 World Cup triumph due to injury.

Tait, who played in the 2007 final but mainly plays Twenty20 cricket these days, was ruled out of Sunday's game with a back problem.

The 27-year-old has only played three ODIs since February 2009, but taken eight wickets in those three matches.

Hilditch said the squad was perfect balanced.

The shock selection was Victorian all-rounder John Hastings, who has played just two one-day internationals, while David Hussey, Mike's younger brother, also made the squad.

Tasmanian wicketkeeper-batsman Tim Paine, touted by many as a future Australian captain, is part of the 15.

Victorian paceman Peter Siddle was not included, despite being one of the better Ashes performers for Australia with ball and bat.

SQUAD

Ricky Ponting (captain), Michael Clarke, Doug Bollinger, Brad Haddin, John Hastings, Nathan Hauritz, David Hussey, Mike Hussey, Mitchell Johnson, Brett Lee, Tim Paine, Steve Smith, Shaun Tait, Shane Watson, Cameron White.

Wellington poised for thrilling day



AFP, Wellington

Pakistan dismissed New Zealand for 293 at stumps on Tuesday after a dynamic late spell from Umar Gul threw the second Test at the Basin Reserve wide open heading into the final day.

Honours were even on the fourth day, with New Zealand's openers finally clicking to post a 120-run stand and Pakistan then taking seven wickets for 112 in the final session to give themselves a second innings target of 274.

Gul was the pick of Pakistan's bowlers, producing reverse swing to take four wickets for 61 runs -- including first innings century Daniel Vettori (1) -- supported by Abdur



PHOTO: AFP

Pakistan fast bowler Umar Gul appeals successfully for the wicket of New Zealand batsman Ross Taylor on the fourth day of the second Test at the Basin Reserve in Wellington yesterday.

Donald NZ's bowling coach

AFP, Wellington

Former South Africa pace-man Allan Donald has been appointed as New Zealand's bowling coach on a short-term contract until the end of the World Cup, officials said Tuesday.

New Zealand Cricket chief executive Justin Vaughan said Donald's experience would be a positive for the Black Caps, whose support staff have been revamped since John Wright was appointed head coach in December.

"I know he is really looking forward to the challenge of returning to international cricket and working with the Black Caps," Vaughan said.

The 44-year-old recently finished a stint as head coach of Zimbabwe domestic side the Mountaineers and has previously worked with English county side Warwickshire and the England national side as bowling coach.

Vaughan said Donald, who took 330 Test wickets for South Africa, would join the squad in Wellington this week ahead of Saturday's first one-day international against Pakistan.

Farshganj

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lead the table with 10 points followed by Mohammedan and Muktiyoddha Sangsad who have nine points each. Holders Abahani and Rahmatganj are jointly in third position with seven points each.

KFC and other tales

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TJ: In the morning of the game against Kenya, I twisted my ankle while warming up. The team wasn't announced but I had a chance to play that match. As a player I was very frustrated because I wasn't getting the chance to play.

I played only one game in the whole tournament.

DSS: Any funny memories?

TJ: There are some...in the opening ceremony all the teams were inside the hall-room as singing dancing was performed outside. (Makhaya) Ntini wore a traditional dress and was cracking jokes with everyone around. He made funny moves and made everyone in the room laugh.

There's another incident, which also involve him (Ntini). All the players were actually asked not to have foods from KFC (Kentucky Fried Chicken) while the tournament was going on, for health measures.

On one of the off days, Alok (Kapali) and I went to a shopping mall and both of us were having KFC. Suddenly (Makhaya) Ntini saw us and came up laughing to say that he would tell our physio about it (laughs).

DSS: What are your expectations from the 2011 World Cup?

TJ: Bangladesh is one of the hosts of the World Cup and I have a feeling the way the players are performing, we might reach the quarters or the semis. Others might say it would be an accident, but I won't agree.

National team players are performing very well in the leagues. Every corner of the Mirpur (Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium) ground is known to the players.

We just won two home series against New Zealand and Zimbabwe. I hope we perform well in the World Cup.

Dhoni bowls

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injured then you are going to come in. So it is important to be in a good frame of mind," he said.

"Finally you can pick only 15 players. It is not like that you will not get chance. Have a look at the players out here. They were not featuring in the original list. At the end of the day you can pick only 15 players and somebody is going to miss out. So I would say that you should do well in whenever you get to play and then wait for your chance."

Dhoni said India need to improve their fielding and focus more on bowling at the death.

"We have to improve in the fielding department. If we get one odd run out or take few outstanding catch, it can turn the course of the game. At the same time we have to put in lot of thoughts and work on bowling in the death overs. When we are going to play in the sub continent, bowling in the death becomes crucial," he said.

Yousuf shown the door

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are the only survivors of Pakistan's runners-up finish in the 1999 tournament.

Pakistan will be without key players Salman Butt, Mohammad Asif and Mohammad Aamer who were all provisionally suspended by the International Cricket Council (ICC) on charges of spot-fixing during team's tour to England last year.

A decision on their case is due on February 5 and the PCB last week said they can be included in the team if absolved.

Another player, Kamran Akmal, who was also under suspicion of match-fixing, was included after being reportedly cleared by the ICC, but all-rounder Shoaib Malik and leg-spinner Danish Kaneria failed to get

clearance. Both Malik and Kaneria, part of the 2007 World Cup team, are also reportedly under suspicion of match-fixing.

Pakistan, who won the World Cup title in 1992, are placed in Group A of the 14-team event to be played between February 19 to April 2. They open their campaign against Kenya at Hambantota on February 23.

SQUAD

Shahid Afridi, Misbahul Haq, Mohammad Hafeez, Kamran Akmal, Younis Khan, Asad Shafiq, Umar Akmal, Abdul Razzaq, Abdur Rehman, Saeed Ajmal, Shoaib Akhtar, Umar Gul, Wahab Riaz, Sohail Tanveer, Ahmed Shahzad.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS 1 Year-end abbr. 4 Couch 8 — and crafts 12 Eggs 13 Do 14 Enticement 15 Australia's capital 17 Recognize 18 Tramcar loads 19 Brigantine pair 20 Of an eye layer 22 Glide along 24 Drought relief 25 Biblical song 29 Sermon subject 30 Serf 31 "— the fields we go" 32 Episcopal, perhaps 34 Overly proper one 35 Go first 36 Artist's plaster of Paris mix 37 Wanderer wrap 40 Ganges 41 Grad 42 Jerky cousin? 46 Actress Wilson 47 Calla lily, e.g. 48 Time of your life? 49 Drunkards 50 Information 51 Present DOWN 16 Cereal choice 19 Catcher's aid 20 — Major Mendes 21 Conceited 22 Dieter's lunch 23 In due time 25 Anatomical cavities 26 Napoleon, by birth 27 Mainlanders' mementos 28 Therefore 30 Wasted no time 33 Camels' kin 34 Persian spirit 36 Third letter 37 Siestas 38 Margarine 39 No purebred 40 Filth 42 Cushion 43 Historic period 44 Past 45 Fresh

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CRYPTOQUIP

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Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHAT COULD YOU CALL THE CONDITION IN WHICH A PERSON IS REALLY HAPPY? ELATIONSHIP.
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: A equals E