



Serbian Novak Djokovic celebrates after beating world number one Spaniard Rafael Nadal in the Miami Masters final at Crandon Park Tennis Centre in Key Biscayne on Sunday.

Novak takes Rafa again

Tennis

AFP, Miami

Novak Djokovic did it again Sunday, defeating world number one Rafael Nadal 4-6, 6-3, 7-6 (7/4) to win the ATP Miami Masters crown and remain unbeaten in 2011.

Djokovic has now won all 24 matches he has played this year, the best start to a season since Ivan Lendl began 1986-25-0.

The Serbian, ranked second in the world, has captured four titles, including the Australian Open, Dubai and, now, back-to-back elite Masters titles at Indian Wells and Miami, both with victories over Nadal in the finals.

"It's the best four months in my life, but it's only the start of the season," said Djokovic, who will remain at number two behind Nadal for the time being, even though the Spaniard hasn't won since Tokyo in October.

"It's a bit early to talk about getting that top spot in the rankings," Djokovic said. "Rafa is definitely the best player in the world now."

"If I want to have the number one

ranking, I need to play consistently well throughout the whole year."

As in the championship match at Indian Wells a fortnight earlier, Djokovic surrendered the first set to Nadal.

But after a slugfest lasting almost 3 1/2 hours on a steamy stadium court it was Djokovic who emerged the victor, blasting a forehand cross court for the victory on his third match point.

Any fatigue he might have been feeling disappeared with the victory, as Djokovic jumped for joy and an exhausted Nadal headed to his court-side chair.

"What he's doing is unbelievable," Nadal said. "First thing, he's very good. Second thing, he's playing with big confidence."

"The easiest thing to say: He's a very good tennis player."

But Djokovic, who had painted himself as the underdog going in, said he was never sure of the outcome until he had sealed the victory.

"It was such a close match," Djokovic said. "To win against the No. 1 player of the world in a tiebreak in the third set, it's just incredible."

Djokovic added a second Miami title

to the one he captured in 2007. And he joined Roger Federer, Andre Agassi and Pete Sampras as the only players to win the Australian Open, Indian Wells and Miami -- the three most important early-season events -- in the same year.

Nadal seized the early advantage with a break for a 2-1 lead in the opening set -- the first time Djokovic had been broke in the tournament.

Nadal broke Djokovic again for a 4-1 lead, but surrendered his own serve while serving for the set in the eighth game.

Two games later, after nearly an hour, Nadal secured the first set.

Djokovic drew first blood in the second, breaking for a 2-0 lead. Despite moments of frustration -- including a testy bounce of his racquet after allowing Nadal a break chance -- Djokovic held on to claim the second set with an ace.

Both players held throughout the final set, although Nadal applied some pressure when he pushed Djokovic to 15-30 in the final game before Djokovic held on to force the tiebreaker.

The momentum swung Djokovic's way when Nadal delivered his sixth double-fault of the match to fall behind 3-2 in the tiebreaker.

SPORTS AWARD BWSA asked to show cause

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Women's Sports Association (BWSA) has been served a show-cause notice, asking the organisation to clarify if it had taken permission from the Bangladesh Trusty Board to use the name of a family member of Bangabandhu for a sports award.

The National Sports Council (NSC) yesterday served the notice and asked BWSA president Rafia Akther Dolly and general secretary Mahfuza Akhter Kiron to reply within three days.

The BWSA this year for the first time introduced the Sultana Kamal Independence Award (only for women organisers and former athletes) and handed it over to 23 women organisers including 'controversial' Aleya Ferdousi, who is believed to have played an anti-liberation role.

BWSA general secretary Kiron admitted that they had received the show-cause notice signed by NSC secretary Shafiq Anwar and they would reply in time.

TALK TURKEY

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Pakistan Interior Minister Rehman Malik appears to be right on top of matters.

"*Badhaiyaan ho, badhaiyaan ho (congratulations, congratulations)*" Yuvraj Singh greets the press after India clinched the World Cup

"*Tendulkar has carried the burden of the nation for 21 years. It is time we carried him on our shoulders.*" Virat Kohli leads the Tendulkar tributes after India's World Cup triumph.

Next two WCs

FROM PAGE 16

length of the tournament with 14 teams and the ICC's view that 10 is the ideal number of competitors for the 50-over World Cup were the major factors in the decision.

"We have always wanted to try to be as compact as possible," he said. "That is not the only reason why it is a 10-team event. We also believe that in 50-over cricket, there are 10 teams that will make for good competition. That is part of reason as well." About Ireland's progress, Lorgat stayed positive, and also sought credit for their

WORLD CUP TROPHY ICC rubbishes media reports

ANI, Mumbai

The International Cricket Council (ICC) on Monday rubbished some erroneous and mischievous media reports that the ICC had presented India with a duplicate World Cup trophy at the Wankhede Stadium on Saturday.

In a statement, the ICC confirmed that the trophy was original and the one that was always intended to be presented to the winner of the event.

It said: "There is no question that this was a replica. The trophy presented to India indeed carries the specific event logo of ICC Cricket World Cup 2011 and has always been the cup that the 14 teams were playing for."

The trophy seized by Mumbai customs is the promotional, perpetual trophy which remains in the keeping of ICC at its headquarters in Dubai. It carries the generic ICC corporate logo rather than the logo specific to the 2011 event.

progress over the last two World Cups. "We have got initiatives in place to focus on the development of the game, and more particularly to try and upgrade the standards of play with respect to what we call the high-performing countries," he said.

"We have got a programme in place. I think you ought to credit the fact that the way Ireland is now performing is a consequence of that. Similarly, Netherlands have improved. To some extent you may say that we were disappointed with the way Kenya and Canada have in fact in some respects gone backwards. We do spend a lot of time on the high-performance countries, and going into the next strategic plan we want to bring into play what we call targeted investment, which will further support those sorts of high-performance countries."

Afridi slams

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relationship with them," he said. "You can see how many times we have had friendship in 60 years and how many times relations got strained."

India and Pakistan have fought three wars since the subcontinent was partitioned in 1947. In India, on the eve of the semi-final, Afridi had called himself an "ambassador for Pakistan, so I should know what to say."

"I think it's a great sign for both countries and sports, especially cricket always brings these two countries together," he added.

Afridi takes back decision

REUTERS, Karachi

Pakistan's limited-overs cricket captain Shahid Afridi has made himself available for the tour of West Indies after previously opting for a break.

"Earlier I had decided to skip the tour because I wanted to take a well deserved rest from the game, but some former players and my family and friends told me to change my decision at this crucial time for Pakistan cricket," Afridi told the Express News channel on Monday.

Afridi, 31, who has played 320 one-day internationals, led Pakistan to the semi-finals of the recent World Cup where they lost to eventual winners India.

The seasoned all-rounder, who finished with 21 wickets in the tournament, said he wanted a break from cricket but the upcoming tour was an ideal opportunity to groom two or three new players.

"That is why I want to be part of the team on the coming tour and carry on the momentum we got from the World Cup," he said.

Afridi revealed the morale of the players was boosted by the warm welcome they received on returning from the World Cup hosted in India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

"It is an indication that Pakistan cricket is on the right track and on the coming tours to West Indies and Zimbabwe we can form an ideal one-day combination," he added.

The Pakistan team will play a Twenty20 match against West Indies on April 21, then five ODIs and two Tests.

Indications from the national selectors suggest they plan to rest some of the senior players for the limited over matches in the Caribbean and try out new players who have performed well in domestic cricket.

Rajshahi polish off Ctg



SPORTS REPORTER

Rajshahi crushed Chittagong by nine wickets in the space of two days in the National Cricket League at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra yesterday.

The Chittagong batting once again failed to put up a good show as they surrendered cheaply for just 108 runs in their second innings, setting a target of just 30 runs to win for Rajshahi. It took less than three hours of the day's play for Rajshahi to bowl out Chittagong and finish the match.

Meanwhile at the Sylhet Divisional Stadium, Dhaka finished the day with a healthy second innings score of 228-2 against Barisal.

RAJSHAHI-CHITTAGONG

Dismal batting performance by the port city side cost them the match after they failed in the second innings as well, following their 78 shut out in the first innings.

None of the batsmen showed resistance, the highest score of 20 coming from No 8 Faisal Hossain.

After his fiver in the first innings, Forhad Reza got another three along with his pace-partner Shuvashish Roy who took 3-26.

Set to chase the mere 30 runs, Farhad got out to Kamrul Islam for just six.

Rajshahi opener Myshukur Rahman

didn't delay their win and he slammed 24 of 13 balls with all the runs coming from boundaries to finish the match in just the fourth over.

With a total of eight wickets in the match, Rajshahi skipper Forhad was adjudged the man-of-the-match.

DHAKA-BARISAL

Resuming the day at 173-7, Barisal managed to reach 230 before Elias Sunny cleaned up the tail. Sohag Gazi scored 39 off 57 with seven four's to help Barisal take the lead of 97 runs, Sunny finishing with figures of 3 for 32.

Dhaka bounced back from their first innings batting disappointment, finishing at a strong 228-2 courtesy of a fine 108-run opening partnership between Uttam Sarker and Mohammad Majid.

Uttam got out after scoring 54 off 91 balls with nine boundaries, but it was newcomer Majid who missed the opportunity of scoring a maiden first-class century after he got out on 84 off 164. His bat produced fourteen boundaries.

Sunny came in to bat at No 3 and remained unbeaten at the end of the day with 53 runs. Rony Talukder was the other batsmen not out on 22.

They will start Day Three today looking to extend their current lead of 131 runs.

KHUNLA-SYLHET

Before weather played its part in the game at the Shaheed Kamruzzaman

Stadium in Rajshahi, Sylhet continued their slow and steady approach which got them to 408 runs losing six wickets against a helpless Khulna side.

Golam Rahman, who started the day on 46, added two more runs before Monowar Hossain got him out. After his brother Golam Mabud got out of the same bowler for 40, it was the partnership of Tasamul Haque and Ijaz Ahme that took the score past the 350-mark.

The duo added 140-runs for the sixth wicket before Tasamul fell for 60 and his 183-ball knock saw him hit ten boundaries. When the game stopped at quarter to four, Ijaz was still at the crease with 94 from 161 balls. His willow produced nine four's and three big sixes.

BRIEF SCORES

CHITTAGONG: First inns 72 all out and second inns 108 all out (Faisal 20; Shubhashish 3-26, Farhad 3-41).

RAJSHAHI: First inns 151 all out and second inns 31-1 (Myshukur 24 not out; Kamrul 1-10).

Result: Rajshahi won by nine wickets.

DHAKA: First inns 133 all out and second inns 228-2 (Mazid 84, Uttam 54; Monir 1-31, Shohag 1-83).

BARISAL: First inns 230 all out (Asif 57, Shohag 39; Mahbulul 4-31, Sunny 3-32).

SYLHET: First inns 408-6 (Imtiaz 62, Ejaz 94 not out; Tapash 3-111, Monowar 2-80).

Yuvi calls Gary 'father figure'

PTI, Mumbai

For all the joy that the World Cup triumph has brought in, there is also a tinge of sadness in the Indian cricket team as it marks the end of inspirational coach Gary Kirsten's tenure and batsman Yuvraj Singh says the "father figure" would be missed.

"He always kept a check on me. He pulled me up when the chips were down. He is a father figure and I am going to miss him," Yuvraj told ICC's official website.

Kirsten, under whose guidance India became the number one Test and ODI side, ended with the team's World Cup title triumph and he has already ruled out reconsidering the decision.

"Cricket has been in the right direction since Gary came on and I hope it will remain so," said Yuvraj.

The dashing left-hander, who was named Man of the Tournament for a fine show with both bat and ball, said winning the mega-event was a dream realised. "It's like living a dream. It still hasn't sunk in and the guys haven't slept. We have kissed the trophy about a 1000 times," he said.

"I am very proud of the team and myself. Our dream was to make the finals but to win it was extraordinary. Now I understand what it means to be a world champion," he added.

PTI, Melbourne



The Australian media raised a toast to Mahendra Singh Dhoni's "bold" leadership as it declared India the worthy world champions who defied history and intense pressure to come out triumphant in the summit showdown against Sri Lanka.

The newspapers here said Dhoni's leadership and his performance in the final match in Mumbai stole the limelight from iconic batsman Sachin Tendulkar who was playing in his sixth World Cup.

With its headline reading "India defies history to win its first World Cup in 28 years", The Australian said though it was not a fairytale finish but nonetheless India were the deserved world champions. "It was about two great South Asian teams giving fans a thrilling, edge-of-the-seat one day final and a deserved triumph for a cricketing nation which felt its time had come. It wasn't a fairytale finish but for Mumbai and a nation still licking its wounds, it was more than enough," the newspaper said.

It said the current Indian team showed

that it was no longer solely dependent on Tendulkar to win matches.

"Tendulkar might have been the name on everyone's lips but if ever there was a sign that the Indian team has moved beyond its one-man juggernaut, Saturday night's gritty victory was it."

"The team showed determination and discipline that surprised even the most nationalist fans to snatch a victory every man in the team then dedicated to their diminutive teammate playing in his sixth and final World Cup," it said.

"The win bore little resemblance to the fairytale finish the Mumbai crowd had been hoping for; one in which Sachin Tendulkar saw out his final World Cup by hitting his hundredth century before his home town crowd."

The newspaper described Dhoni as an "all-conquering captain" who now rivals Tendulkar in popularity.

"The 29-year-old is already cricket's top earner after signing a record two-year, 42-million-dollar contract last year to endorse whatever product comes his way, and after Saturday night's remarkable home-ground win against Sri Lanka, his marketability knows no bounds."

Why is birthday blast on media?

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is simply to win the three-match one-day international series.

He said the gravity of taking over from long-time incumbent skipper Ponting will set in when he leads the team out onto the pitch for the first match.

"He [Ponting] is probably stoked I'm here doing the

press. He doesn't have to do it anymore," he said.

"I think when I walk onto the field in the first one-dayer against Bangladesh it'll probably sink in more. I don't think it's really sunk in just yet."

Australia begin their tour with an ODI against Bangladesh in Dhaka on April 9 with Ponting

included in the touring team, purely as a batsman.

Futsal turning

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the tournament but they finally agreed to take part in the tournament after getting assurance of handsome participation money as well as attractive prize money.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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EGG

DROP

DANA

OBEYS

WASTREL

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INFER

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CRYPTOQUIP

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NUSSRK YJBDH DL T QJDUY

HDZU XMTL, ZDOGH NRB WR

DH DL T QTLTLR - XUFRLW ?

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IN A CERTAIN BIG SAUDI ARABIAN CITY, IS COMPUTER STORAGE SPACE MEASURED IN MECCA-BYTES?

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: D equals I