



Australia's Samantha Stosur returns the ball to Czech Republic's Iveta Benesova during their French Open first round match at the Roland Garros stadium in Paris yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Quiet start at Roland Garros

Stosur gets going; injured Hewitt pulls out

REUTERS, Paris

Gusty winds and half-empty stands gave no sense of the usual Parisian glamour as last year's French Open runner-up Samantha Stosur began with an easy win on Sunday and Leyton Hewitt pulled out injured.

Stosur shook off the effects of a virus to beat Czech Iveta Benesova 6-2, 6-3 on a sunbathed, yet windswept Court Philippe Chatrier at Roland Garros.

"The conditions weren't always so easy with some gusts of wind and whatever else, but, yeah, overall, very happy," said Stosur, who noticed with a smile that there "weren't quite as many people this time".

The clay-court French Open is the only Grand Slam event to start on a Sunday rather than the traditional Monday and the feeling is quite bizarre, according to Stosur, who lost to Italian Francesca Schiavone in last year's final.

"With all the others not doing it, it

definitely is a bit of, not a shock, but it's just weird knowing that, okay, my tournament starts on Sunday and then I think you get two days off now," she explained.

"So it's just a bit of a different feel, and I guess there's still a lot more people here practising today than playing matches."

The crowd grew bigger on Philippe Chatrier when local favourite Jo-Wilfried Tsonga sparked off his campaign but the fireworks did not last long as the 17th seed spent less than two hours to dismiss Czech Jan Hajek 6-3, 6-2, 6-2.

Serbian Jelena Jankovic, a three-time semifinalist in Paris, was also untroubled on Court Suzanne Lenglen as she breezed past Ukraine's Alona Bondarenko 6-3, 6-1.

This year's French Open has been hit hard by injuries and Hewitt, the Australian former world number one, added to the list of absences when he pulled out because of a left ankle problem.

American Andy Roddick and former champion Juan Carlos Ferrero both pulled out on the eve of the year's second grand slam, joining the likes of Serena and Venus Williams and Dinara Safina in being forced to miss out.

Croatian Marin Cilic would certainly get the feeling his tournament was finished before it had properly started as the 19th seed was sent packing with a 7-6, 6-4, 6-4 defeat by Spain's Ruben Ramirez Hidalgo.

There was no smell of an upset on as seventh seed David Ferrer of Spain thrashed Finn Jarkko Nieminen 6-3, 6-3, 6-1 to advance into round two.

French women players wore a black ribbon in memory of Virginie Razzano's coach and fiance Stephane Vidal, who died of a brain tumour earlier this month.

"It's really moving for all of us, and I'm a good friend of Virginie's. I play with her, I play doubles with her. We wanted to do something," Alize Cornet, who booked her place in the second round, told reporters.

Vettel edges out Hamilton

REUTERS, Barcelona

Red Bull's Formula One world champion Sebastian Vettel took his fourth win in five races on Sunday in a Spanish Grand Prix that shed its reputation for predictable processions.

McLaren's Lewis Hamilton finished second, just 0.6 seconds behind, after harrying the 23-year-old German over the closing laps in a far closer finale to a race many had forecast would be a duel between the dominant Red Bulls.

"That was crazy, crazy man, you were coming, coming, coming," Vettel told Hamilton before the podium Champagne celebrations.

Hamilton's team mate and fellow-Briton Jenson Button was third, beating Red Bull's Australian Mark Webber for the final place on the podium and helped by a three-stop strategy to the others' four.

However the stewards announced some 19 minutes after the end of the race that Hamilton, Button and Webber were all under investigation for failing to slow for yellow flags.

WI falter too

FROM PAGE 16
off Saeed Ajmal's off-spin but he was caught by a diving Taufiq Umar at long-off.

Kemar Roach, 10 not out, and Ravi Rampaul, unbeaten on 15, then guided West Indies to the close.

Pakistan, who have never won a series in the Caribbean in six previous visits, lost the opening Test in the two-match series.

SCORES IN BRIEF

PAKISTAN: First innings 272 (Azhar 67, Ahmed 57, Akmal 56; Rampaal 3-68)

WEST INDIES: First innings 184 for 8 (Samuels 57, Hafeez 2-16, Rehman 2-46)

Warne won't come back

REUTERS, Sydney

Shane Warne is ready to move on with the next chapter of his life after calling time on his career as professional cricketer and has asked his fellow Australians not to pester him with questions about a comeback.

The spin-bowling great played his final match in the Indian Premier League (IPL) in the early hours of Saturday morning Australian time and said it was now time to focus on his business career.

"I'm happy and ready to go," the 41-year-old said in his column in the Sunday Herald Sun newspaper.

"It's the right time. During the week I found myself with a big smile, feeling content with my life and what the future holds personally and from a businessman's point of view.

"I am totally ready to say goodbye to the great game of cricket. Please, no more questions about a comeback, even though the ball is still coming out pretty well."

That final caveat is bound to give hope to some of his compatriots when the Australian Test team is struggling as happened during the Ashes humiliation over the start of this year.

Two minutes later Emmanuel Ayuk, Sheikh Jamal's Cameroonian striker, found two glorious opportunities to double the lead, but each time he failed to find the goal, further proof that Sheikh Jamal's African recruits are fast losing their initial gloss.

The second half started with dark clouds frighteningly hovering overhead, and Farashganj found a deserved equaliser four minutes into the half, through Jewel Rana. After receiving a cross pass from Congolese striker Siyo Zunapio outside the box, Jewel unleashed a grounder that missed the outstretched hands of Aminul and nested on the back of the net.

However, Farashganj's delight lasted only a while as Sheikh Jamal midfielder Mamunul Islam restored the lead with a similar attempt from outside the box. Shakil's pass outside the box was dispatched clinically by Mamun's left foot.

By the time Mamun scored for Sheikh Jamal, heavy rains were descending making it hard for the players to control the ball on a soggy pitch. The rain continued till the end, making it quite impossible for players to conjure any penetrative move and the game meandered to an expected outcome with Sheikh Jamal edging 2-1.

Warne, who retired from international cricket in 2006, said he could not imagine a better way to end his career than with the thumping victory for his Rajasthan Royals over Sachin Tendulkar's Mumbai Indians with his actor girlfriend Liz Hurley looking on. "It seemed fitting that my last match was against the great Sachin Tendulkar in his back yard," he said. "All week I had been looking forward to resuming battle against the best cricketer I have played with or against."

"After the match he approached me and said, 'It has been an honour and a privilege to play against you. I wish you all the very best for the future. You are a legend.' It was a great moment."

Warne, who took 708 Test wickets and was named as one of five Wisden cricketers of the 20th century, said he would miss the game and would like to be remembered as a player who always gave his all.

"I am not exactly sure what my future holds, but I will stay in touch with cricket through my media work, so my opinion -- if you like it -- will still be heard," he said.

"But from today, I am no longer Shane Warne the playing cricketer. I am Shane Warne the businessman, and I'm happy with that."

Sk Jamal hot on

FROM PAGE 16

21st minute against Shyamol Ahmed and Mokhlesur Rahman and a second attempt from Mokhles came off the crossbar.

Two minutes later Emmanuel Ayuk, Sheikh Jamal's Cameroonian striker, found two glorious opportunities to double the lead, but each time he failed to find the goal, further proof that Sheikh Jamal's African recruits are fast losing their initial gloss.

The second half started with dark clouds frighteningly hovering overhead, and Farashganj found a deserved equaliser four minutes into the half, through Jewel Rana. After receiving a cross pass from Congolese striker Siyo Zunapio outside the box, Jewel unleashed a grounder that missed the outstretched hands of Aminul and nested on the back of the net.

However, Farashganj's delight lasted only a while as Sheikh Jamal midfielder Mamunul Islam restored the lead with a similar attempt from outside the box. Shakil's pass outside the box was dispatched clinically by Mamun's left foot.

By the time Mamun scored for Sheikh Jamal, heavy rains were descending making it hard for the players to control the ball on a soggy pitch. The rain continued till the end, making it quite impossible for players to conjure any penetrative move and the game meandered to an expected outcome with Sheikh Jamal edging 2-1.

Wozniacki's fourth title

AP, Brussels

Top-ranked Caroline Wozniacki overcame a thigh injury to defeat China's Peng Shuai 2-6, 6-3, 6-3 and win the inaugural Brussels Open.

Wozniacki won her fourth tournament this year, the most on the WTA Tour, and her first win on red clay ahead of the French Open.

Starting slowly after a tough three-set win over Francesca Schiavone late Friday, the Dane improved in the second set against the 31st-ranked Peng.

Wozniacki needed medical treatment on her left thigh in the third set before clinching victory.

She played the rest of the match with tape on her leg but said it wouldn't affect her opener at Roland Garros. She will play 40-year-old Kimiko Date-Krumm of Japan.

Cambridge champions of school rugby

SPORTS REPORTER

Cambridge High School became champions of the Cooline AC School Rugby Competition-2011, beating Madartek School & College 5-0 in the final at the Birshreshtha Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday.

The first half was scoreless but Cambridge came back strongly in the second half to score five points. Madartek had some consolation as their captain Rakib was nominated the best player of the tournament.

SOS Shishu Palli became third as they defeated St. Gregory's High School 20-0 in the place deciding match.

Nasiruddin Ahmed, chief guest and chairman of sponsors Abaroni International Limited distributed prizes among the teams after the final.

Morgan, who was in the Ashes squad but did not play in any of the Tests, has long been considered the next batsman in line and his inclusion for the opener against Sri Lanka, the first of a three-match series, in Cardiff on Thursday reflects England's desire for consistency of selection.

Earlier this week the 24-year-old scored 193 against Sri Lanka for the second-string England Lions in a four-day fixture in Derby that concludes later on Sunday.

"Eoin Morgan impressed us last summer when he was given his opportunity in the Test side and has worked hard on his game throughout the tour of Australia and now has the opportunity to play a role in the Test team," said England national selector Geoff Miller.

There had been speculation Morgan's decision to spend the early part of the English season playing in the Indian Premier League (IPL) could count against him especially as Essex's Bopara, who also bowls medium pace, had opted to miss this year's edition.

Eoin overtakes Ravi

Cricket

AFP, London

Eoin Morgan won the race for the vacancy in England's middle-order when he was named in a 12-man squad on Sunday for the first Test against Sri Lanka, seeing off the challenge of Ravi Bopara.

Former Ireland left-hander Morgan filled the place created by the Test retirement of Paul Collingwood, who quit the five-day format following England's Ashes series win in Australia in January.

Morgan, who was in the Ashes squad but did not play in any of the Tests, has long been considered the next batsman in line and his inclusion for the opener against Sri Lanka, the first of a three-match series, in Cardiff on Thursday reflects England's desire for consistency of selection.

Morgan, who was in the Ashes squad but did not play in any of the Tests, has long been considered the next batsman in line and his inclusion for the opener against Sri Lanka, the first of a three-match series, in Cardiff on Thursday reflects England's desire for consistency of selection.



EIN MORGAN

Meanwhile fast bowler Steven Finn, Morgan's Middlesex team-mate, was recalled to the squad. Finn played in the first three Tests of the Ashes series win before losing his place to Tim Bresnan. But the Yorkshire seamer is currently sidelined with a calf injury.

Finn, who was competing for a squad spot against Ajmal Shahzad, offers seam bowling support for the frontline trio of James Anderson, Stuart Broad and Chris Tremlett.

Former England off-spinner Miller added: "Chris Tremlett had a very encouraging (northern hemisphere) winter after a period of time away from the national side and, alongside Stuart Broad, James Anderson and Steven Finn, offers us a number of options with our pace attack."

All of England's squad were in Australia, with Morgan the only member of the current 12 not to have played in the 3-1 Ashes series victory. England, who will continue to be captained by Andrew Strauss and have retained Kevin Pietersen despite a lack of early season runs, have set their sights on reaching the summit of Test cricket, as Miller explained.

"We currently have a talented and ambitious group of players who are committed to becoming the number one ranked side in Test cricket and we are determined to start an important summer strongly beginning against Sri Lanka in Cardiff."

SQUAD

Andrew Strauss (captain), Alastair Cook, Jonathan Trott, Kevin Pietersen, Ian Bell, Eoin Morgan, Matt Prior, Stuart Broad, Graeme Swann, Chris Tremlett, James Anderson, Steven Finn.

PCB wants SL series to be played in Pakistan

Cricket

CRICINFO

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has asked Sri Lanka Cricket "for their views" on the prospect of playing their series later this year in Pakistan instead of Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka were the last team to play international cricket in Pakistan -- their tour in March 2009 was cut short after terrorists attacked their team bus as it was on the way to the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore for the second Test.

That attack, on the back of growing security concerns over the previous two years, brought to an end international cricket in the country, taking away the 2011 World Cup in the process.

The two sides are due to play a full Test and limited-overs series in October, scheduled in the Future Tour Programme officially as a "home" series for Pakistan. Until now the series was due to take place in Sri Lanka, but after a meeting between PCB chairman Ijaz Butt and Pakistan's Interior Minister Rehman Malik on Thursday, the government is keen on bringing international cricket back to the country.

"The government wants this series to be held in Pakistan," a senior PCB official told ESPNCricinfo. "We have asked SLC [Sri Lanka Cricket] again to let us have their views on the issue."

The prospect of the series actually taking place in Pakistan remains a distant one. So

far the government has only passed on verbal instructions to the PCB, who in turn have written to SLC. As of Saturday, when a SLC official was asked about the development or whether the board had been approached, he told ESPNCricinfo: "Not to my knowledge."

Most of Pakistan's major cities -- where such a series is likely to be played -- have been targeted fairly recently by terrorist attacks, within the last year in the cases of Lahore and Karachi. At the beginning of this month Osama bin Laden was killed in an operation by US forces in Abbottabad, a town not far from the country's capital Islamabad.

Pakistan have played their "home" series since the Lahore attacks at a number of venues; a series against South Africa was arranged in the United Arab Emirates. In 2009-10, they broke up a full tour of New Zealand by playing the ODIs in Abu Dhabi and the Tests in New Zealand itself. They used England as a venue for two "home" Tests against Australia last summer. Pakistan are also, incidentally, in talks with SLC over staging their series with England over the turn of the year in Sri Lanka.

Afghanistan will actually become the first international team to play in Pakistan next week when they take on Pakistan A in three 50-over games. Interestingly enough, one of the games was arranged for Abbottabad, but after the meeting between Butt and Malik the venue was switched to Islamabad.

