

PHOTO: AFP

World no.2 tennis player, Serbia's Novak Djokovic serves to Netherlands' Thiemo De Bakker during his first round victory in the French Open at Roland Garros in Paris yesterday.

Novak, Roger get going

AFP, Paris



Novak Djokovic took his unbeaten record in 2011 to 38 wins on Monday before Grand Slam king Roger Federer demonstrated to the unstoppable Serb that he is still a French Open force.

Second seed Djokovic enjoyed a 6-2, 6-1, 6-3 dismissal of hapless Dutchman Thiemo De Bakker in the first round before 16-time Grand Slam title-winner Federer romped to a 6-3, 6-4, 7-6 win over Spain's Feliciano

Also going through on a sweltering day at Roland Garros was former US Open champion, and 2009 semifinalist here, Juan Martin del Potro, a winner in four sets against

Croatia's Ivo Karlovic. But sixth seed Czech Tomas Berdych, a semifinalist last year, wilted in the heat,

losing in five sets to French qualifier Stephane Robert, the world number 140. One day after his 24th birthday, the red-

hot, world number two Djokovic comfortably saw off the 71st-ranked De Bakker in just 92 minutes. Djokovic, who is likely to depose Rafael

Nadal as world number one by the end of the tournament, is also favourite to snatch the Spaniard's French Open title, having seen off his rival in the Madrid and Rome claycourt

His win on Monday took him to within four victories of equalling John McEnroe's 1984 record for a winning season start of 42 triumphs.

though I haven't won it yet," said Djokovic, a

Self belief

FROM PAGE 16

ball of the day.

bowled good areas."

40-run defeat inside four

Guyana National Stadium.

a series-levelling victory, and

as 27 in the women's

world rankings, Mirza's

injury-enforced absence

saw her slip to 166th by

a share of the spoils.

the injury was so bad.

Sania's

FROM PAGE 16

semifinalist in 2007 and 2008.

"I've been playing really well on clay. I've won three [claycourt] tournaments [Belgrade, Madrid and Rome] in the last few weeks, so I'm trying to build on that confidence," added Djokovic, whose complete winning streak has now reached 40 matches, stretching back to Serbia's Davis Cup triumph in December.

Djokovic, the Australian Open champion, who has seven titles under his belt already this year, will play either French wild card Benoit Paire or Romania's Victor Hanescu for a place in the last 32.

World number three Federer, playing at his lowest seeding in eight years at a Grand Slam, is taking part in his 46th consecutive major.

He had won all his previous eight matches against Lopez but would have been wary of an opponent who had a match point in their last encounter at the Madrid Masters second round earlier this month.

However, he was in little danger on Monday, cruising to victory against a player who has now lost eight times in the first round in 11 Paris visits.

Federer will next tackle French wild card Maxime Teixeira for a place in the last 32.

Argentina's del Potro overcame a first-set blip to defeat Karlovic.

Del Potro, who was a doubt for the tournament because of a hip injury, having missed the 2010 event due to wrist surgery, claimed a 6-7, 6-3, 7-5, 6-4 win.

The 25th-seed hit 21 unforced errors to Karlovic's 42 and will next face Slovenia's "It's my favourite Grand Slam, even Blaz Kavcic, with Djokovic a potential third round opponent.

Taufeeq lifts Pakistan

behind off their captain **FROM PAGE 16** Darren Sammy from the final After the break, they contin-

ued to extend Pakistan's "I was thinking I have to advantage before Azhar, play positive cricket," he whose innings contained said. "They bowled well with half-dozen fours from 90 the new ball, especially balls in close to three hours, Roach and Rampaul. They was caught at slip off Bishoo, top-edging a late cut, and Pakistan trail 0-1 in the Asad Shafiq was caught two-Test series, following a

days in the first Test, which Earlier, Pakistan were ended last Sunday at the frustrated, as West Indies, starting the day on 184 for This crushed their dreams eight, extended their innings of a maiden Test series vicfor about 1 1/4 hours into the tory in the Caribbean, but morning period thanks to Taufeeq felt the visitors were their tail-enders. now in a position to press for

behind off Roach for four.

Hafeez made the breakthrough however, when he trapped Roach lbw playing back and across for a careerbest 29, following a valuable 60-run stand for the ninth Having climbed as high wicket with Rampaul.

Saeed Ajmal, Pakistan's most penetrative bowler in the brief series, brought the innings to a close, when Devendra Bishoo edged a forward defensive shot, and

was caught at slip for one.

Hafeez was the pick of the

Pakistani bowlers, finishing

with a career-best three for

23 from eight overs, fellow

the end of 2010. Now moving in the right direction again, she revealed that the thought of treading the famous clay at Roland Garros had been one of the motivating factors behind her rehabilitation.

off-spinner Ajmal ended with three for 56 off 28.5 overs, and left-arm spinner Abdur Rehman captured two for 55 from 29 overs.

The visitors trail 0-1 in the two-Test series, following a 40-run defeat inside four days in the first Test, which ended last Sunday at the Guyana National Stadium, crushing their dreams of a maiden Test series victory in the Caribbean.

SCORES IN BRIEF

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

WEST INDIES: First innings 223 (Samuels 57, Bravo 24, Sarwan 20, Roach 29 Rampaul 32 not out; Ajmal 3-56, Hafeez 3=23, Rehman 2-55)

PAKISTAN: Second innings 202 for 3 (Hafeez 32, Umar 97 not out, Azhar 53)

Bollywood

FROM PAGE 16 his girlfriend, British actor and swimwear designer Elizabeth Hurley, would be on hand to help create the fashion label.

IPL's Blockbuster play-offs

SCHEDULE

Bangalore v Chennai

Wankhede Stadium, Mumbai

May 25: Eliminator

Mumbai v Kolkata

Wankhede Stadium, Mumbai

May 27: Qualifier 2

Winners Eliminator v Losers Qualifier

MA Chidambaram Stadium, Chepauk

Chennai

May 28: Final

Winners Qualifier 1 v Winners

MA Chidambaram Stadium, Chepauk,

May 24: Qualifier 1

PTI, Mumbai

The two most successful teams of the Indian Premier League's (IPL) first stage go nead to head as defending champions Chennai Super Kings take on Royal Challengers Bangalore in what promises to be an engross-

ing first play-off of the event here in

Mumbai on Tuesday.

The first of the two play-offs called Qualifier 1, a new format introduced by IPL from this fourth season, offers the winners a direct berth into the grand final on May 28 at Chennai while the losers of the match here would get another chance to make amends on May 27.

The team that gets defeated Tuesday would play against the winners of the Eliminator between Mumbai Indians and Kolkata Knight Riders, also to be held here on May 25, in Qualifier 2 on Friday in Chennai, with the victors of that tie advancing to the final on Saturday.

Royal Challengers' comprehensive eight-wicket victory Sunday in their concluding round robin clash at home against Chennai pushed them to the number one spot on the league table with 19 points.

Super Kings finished second with 18 on a better net run-rate following Mumbai Indians" stunning lastover victory against Kolkata Knight Riders at the Eden Gardens last night that put them in third spot behind Bangalore and Chennai, besides earning them a spot in this year"s Champions League along with the top two.

With the head-to-head score this season reading 1-1 going into Tuesday's first qualifying game for the final between the two southern outfits, the contest is expected to be intense and no-holds-barred on neutral territory.

Chennai were comfortable winners by 21 runs when the two teams clashed on April 16, which was reversed Sunday by Bangalore with a massive drubbing.

The biggest boost for the Royal Challengers since that first meeting in Chennai has been the arrival of the marauding West Indian opener Chris Gayle who has struck the IPL like a typhoon and blown away the rival bowling attacks with his blistering stroke-play.

Sunday too his unbeaten 75 took away any slim hopes

that Super Kings might have entertained after they were restricted to a meagre 128 for 8 by the superb bowling of Zaheer Khan, S Aravind and skipper Daniel Vettori.

The left-handed whirlwind has stunned all bowling attacks with his audacious shots to garner a whopping 511 runs in only nine games at an incredible strike rate of nearly 190.

Gayle, Virat Kohli (444 runs in 13 games) and AB de Villiers (262 in 13)

are the three major batting threats for the Super Kings on Tuesday.

On the downside is the fact that once Gayle falls early, as it has happened on the rare occasion, the Bangalore batting loses its way with the other Indian players like Saurabh Tiwary and Mohd Kaif not having had enough opportunities to settle down, while Cheteshwar Pujara is injured.

The loss of Tillakaratne Dilshan after ten games in which he accumu-

lated 226 runs before going to England as Sri Lanka's captain has robbed the Royal Challengers of not only a superb batsman but also a very useful slow bowler though Gayle has made up in the bowling department to some extent.

The major plus for Bangalore going into the return to his wonted form by

Zaheer Khan who had struggled in the initial part of the tournament after leading the Indian attack to the World Cup.

The master of swing showed he's back to his best on Sunday and also guided fellow-left arm pacer Aravind beautifully on the field.

With the wickets in all centres starting to offer a lot of turn, New Zealand ace Vettori has also become a dangerous proposition for the rival batsmen with his tantalising left arm spin.

These three bottled up the Super Kings' progress on Sunday by reducing them to a poor 24 for 2 and despite a superlative knock of 73 in 40 balls by captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni, Chennai's tally fell far below a competitive score.

The cheap send-offs of leading run-getter Michael Hussey (429 runs in 12 games), Murali Vijay (334 in 14), Suresh Raina (357 in 14) and the dependable S Badrinath (362 from 14) upset Chennai's apple cart on Sunday. They would be eager to avoid this sort of rut in the return clash.

Dhoni's pyrotechnics have not only fetched the Indian skipper 341 runs but also given the Chennai innings the final flourish, but he had to play the role of the anchor as well as destroyer on Sunday after the early clutter of wickets. Dwayne Bravo, who too arrived

late to bolster Chennai like his West Indian teammate Gayle did for Bangalore, and Morne Morkel have the crucial clash is not got sufficient chances to bat long which was to their team's disadvantage after the loss of four early wickets yesterday at the Chinnaswamy Stadium. The Super Kings bowling has been

spearheaded in excellent fashion by Doug Bollinger (15 wickets) and off spinner R Ashwin (16 wickets) who kept even Gayle quiet initially. Morkel too has done well with a

haul of 15 wickets though he has been a bit expensive and the team would be hoping Bravo hits the straps in this department on Tuesday to give it more teeth.

BANGLADESH LEAGUE Idris powers

Rahmatganj

SPORTS REPORTER

A brace from Idris Kasirye helped Rahmatganj MFS to a 3-1 win over hosts Chittagong Abahani at the Cox's Bazar Stadium yesterday, their seventh victory in the current Grameenphone Bangladesh League.

Rahmatganj, who won the first leg 1-0 at home, went ahead in the eighth minute through Ugandan striker Kasirye before Onokoro Felix doubled the margin in the 27th.

After resumption, Idris struck his second and the league's 11th to confirm the victory while Arafat netted a consolation goal for Abahani nine minutes from time.

Seventh victory in 17 matches means Rahmatganj leapfrog to the fifth position with 23 points while Abahani, with 12 defeats, remain at the pit with five points from 17 matches.

MSC lose another foreigner

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammedan SC's Rwandan midfielder Habuinugisha Ismael left for his country yesterday, leaving the Black and Whites deeper trouble in the ongoing Grameenphone Bangladesh League.

Ismael, who played his last league match against Chittagong Abahani in Cox's Bazar on April 28, fell sick during that match and was subsequently admitted to a city hospital where his condition deteriorated. Later he suffered a bout of chickenpox, said coach Shafiqul Islam Manik. This is a further blow to

the Motijheel outfit, who are already playing without Emeka Christian who sustained an ankle fracture during the Independence Cup fixture against Muktijoddha Sangsad and subsequently missed the five league matches with no chance of further taking part in the league. Mohammedan are currently in seventh position in the 12-team table, "Emeka has no chance to

return to the fold this season and we have now only three foreign players left," said a worried Manik, whose side take on leaders Muktijoddha Sangsad today at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

Sachin wary of KKR INTERNET, Kolkata is great and they made the atmosphere off the first four deliveries, before Rayudu sealed the game with a six off



Though visibly elated after an improbable last ball win over Kolkata Knight Riders, Mumbai Indians

skipper Sachin Tendulkar cautioned his teammates that they needed to be prepared for a tough battle in the Indian Premier League (IPL) play-off between the two sides in Mumbai as the vanquished would come back hard.

After a five wicket victory over the Knight Riders, Tendulkar was all praise for James Franklin and Ambati Rayudu and the other batsmen.

"It was a great match. The crowd here

special and that's why the result."

"We batted really well. Kept up the run-rate that was needed. Great work by Rayudu and Franklin," he said. Tendulkar said the duo got the

momentum going and that proved

crucial. "You can lose the momentum

but it is important to regain it. We got the momentum going." Needing 66 from the last five overs, Mumbai Indians batsmen Franklin (45 not out off 23 balls) and Rayudu (17 off

six balls) fired on all cylinders to win the match off the last ball. The visitors needed as many as 21 off the last over bowled by Laxmipathy

Balaji, but Franklin hit four boundaries

On if he thought Mumbai Indians could win, Tendulkar said: "Anything is possible in this game. If you have the

luck the edges go to the boundary.

the ultimate ball.

Franklin hit some good shots in the final over." He also said the team management's decision to send Harbhajan Singh

worked for the side as the turbanator scored some important runs. On meeting Kolkata Knight Riders

in the playoff he said: "Knowing KKR, they will come back hard, they are a good side and we are prepared for

National



Scene from the inauguration ceremony of the Bangladesh Professional Golfers' Association (BGPA) Open 2011 at the Kurmitola Golf Club in Dhaka yesterday. The tournament, which runs till May 26, includes the country's ace golfer Siddikur Rahman.

women's football SPORTS REPORTER Kishoreganj and Feni played

out a 1-1 draw in the lone match of the National Women's Football Championship at Birshreshtha Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday. Fouzia put Feni ahead in

the 13th minute but Sadia equalised for Kishoreganj in the 25th minute.

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