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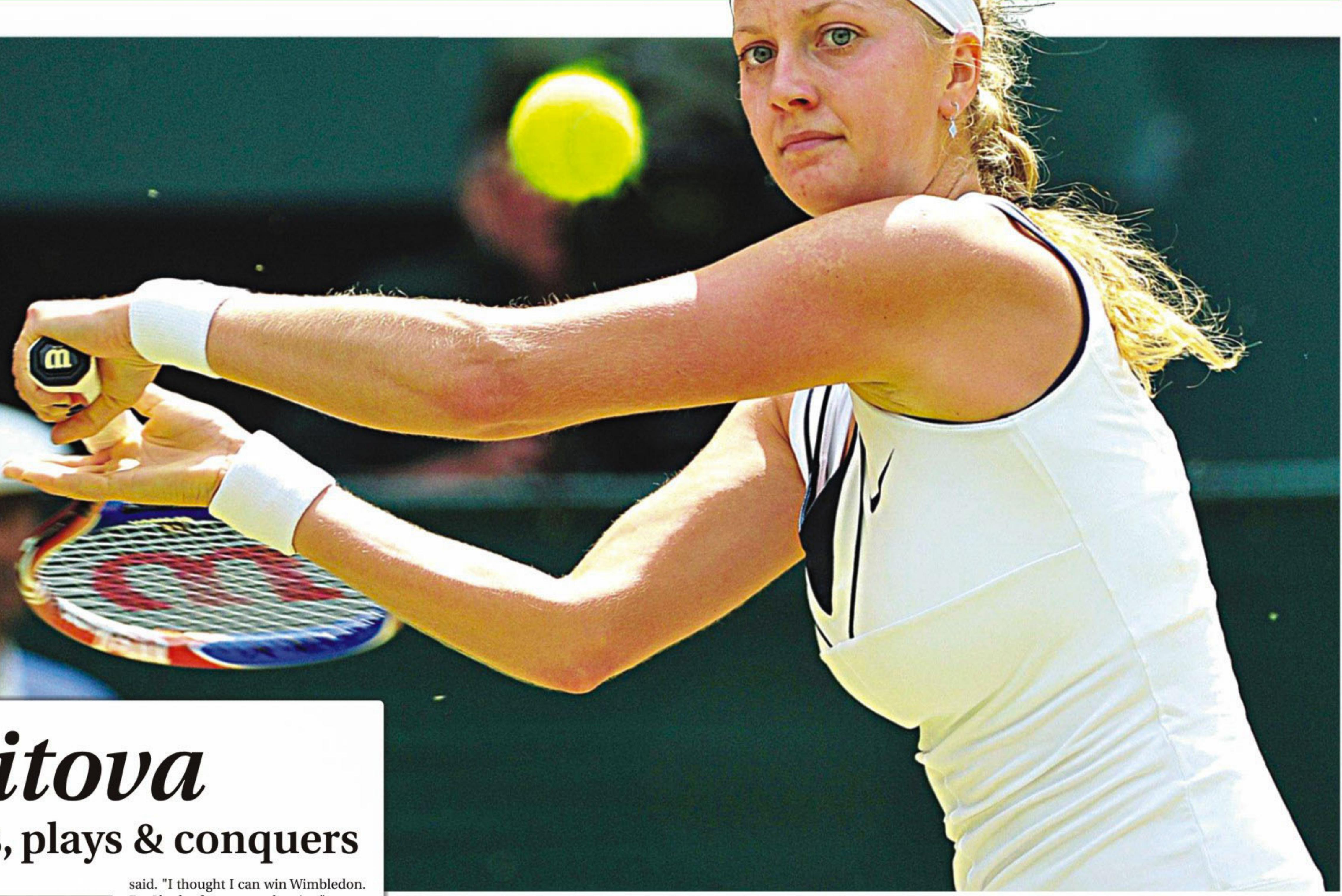
SPORT

DHAKA SUNDAY JULY 3, 2011, E-MAIL: sports@thecurrentstar.com

It had to be a Brazilian

With Argentina desperate to end 18 years without a major trophy and even more keen to avoid a third straight final loss to Brazil it just had to be a "Brazilian" who almost put the skids under the albiceleste in Friday's Copa America opener. The Argentinians just eked out a 1-1 draw against minnows Bolivia when Sergio "Kun" Aguero slammed a late equalizer after Edivaldo Rojas, born in a Julian father and Bolivian mother, put the hosts with a

- AFP



Kvitova comes, plays & conquers

AP, Wimbledon



Petra Kvitova won her first Grand Slam title Saturday by defeating Maria Sharapova 6-3, 6-4 at Wimbledon, finishing with an ace and dropping to her knees in disbelief.

Kvitova was playing in her first major final, but it was three-time Grand Slam champion Sharapova who showed her nerves. The 2004 Wimbledon winner double-faulted six times, including twice to get broken to 4-2 in the first set.

The 21-year-old Kvitova is the first left-handed woman to win Wimbledon since Martina Navratilova in 1990.

Using a fast and accurate forehand, Kvitova did little wrong on Centre Court as Czech greats Navratilova and Jana Novotna sat in the Royal Box with other former Wimbledon champions.

"It's hard to find some words if I'm standing here with the trophy and see the great players in the Royal Box," Kvitova said. "Well, I'm so happy that I won."

Kvitova kept Sharapova on the run with 18 winners, and never seemed to lose confidence despite being broken three times.

"Of course, I was nervous," Kvitova

said. "I thought I can win Wimbledon. But I had to focus on each point."

Sharapova was the clear favourite. Besides winning at the All England Club in 2004, she also won the US Open in 2006 and the Australian Open in 2008. Shoulder surgery in October 2008 slowed her career, but she returned to the semifinals at a Grand Slam tournament for the first time since then at the French Open last month.

"I've had amazing support over so many years and to be back at this stage and holding the runner-up trophy this year is something ... Obviously I would have wanted that big one. It's something I'm going to be back for and I'm hoping to get again," Sharapova said.

Sharapova had not lost a set heading into the final. But she struggled with her serve in the semifinals, double-faulting 13 times before beating German wild card Sabine Lisicki.

Sharapova won the toss at the net before the final and elected to receive, perhaps wanting time to settle in before testing her serve. Whatever the reason, it appeared a smart move because she broke for a 1-0 lead as Kvitova missed three forehands.

Sharapova then served for the first time in the next game. Although she

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EYES ON THE BALL: Surprise package Petra Kvitova of Czech Republic is unerringly calm as she returns against an erratic Maria Sharapova of Russia during her Wimbledon final victory in her first major final at the All England Tennis Club yesterday.

MEN'S FINAL PREVIEW: NADAL V DJOKOVIC Rafa can think of win only

AP, London



Rafael Nadal insists he will not be distracted by the pursuit of Grand Slam history or the loss of his world number one spot to Novak Djokovic when he takes on the red-hot Serb in Sunday's Wimbledon final.

Defending champion Nadal, on a 20-match winning streak at the All England Club, is adamant the prospect of a third Wimbledon title is the only statistic that occupies his mind.

Nadal, the champion in 2008 and 2010, will be appearing in his fifth Wimbledon final while Australian Open winner Djokovic will be making his debut in the title match.

The odds are stacked in the top seed's

favour, but the Spaniard believes that even victory will not necessarily mean he is destined to overtake Roger Federer's record of 16 Grand Slam titles.

"The number 16? I think about the number 10. That's what I have at home. I don't have 11, I don't have 12, I don't have 15, or 16... 16 is very far," said Nadal.

"I believe the number is not going to stop there. Roger will have chances to win more. Seriously, this is not my goal. I am very happy about my 10."

"The career of Roger is probably impossible to repeat. If you look at the history of tennis, he's the player with more Grand Slams in I don't know how many years of history of the tennis, 100, 125 years?"

Nadal, still only 25, also shrugged off the loss of his world number one ranking to Djokovic, whose march to the top

has been driven by a record of 49 wins in his last 50 matches.

"I said last year when I was No. 3 or No. 4 that being No. 1 wasn't a big goal for me," he explained.

"For me the big goal is to be competitive, be healthy. Today I lost the No. 1. One guy played unbelievable the first half of the year so he's the new No. 1. We just can congratulate him because what he did this first part of the season is something really impressive."

"I am happy about how I did. I think in normal conditions I would be No. 1 or a lot of chances to keep being the No. 1 for me for a few more times."

Nadal leads Djokovic 16-11 in head-to-head meetings although the Serb has won all four of their matches in 2011 -- the Masters finals on hard courts in Indian Wells and Miami as

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2014 WC PRE-QUALIFIER BD's chance at hand to put Pak away

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh national football team will attempt to seal their superiority over Pakistan when the sides face off tonight in the second leg of their 2014 World Cup pre-qualifier at the Punjab Stadium in Lahore.

The first-leg match, which took place at the Bangabandhu National Stadium in Dhaka last Wednesday, resulted in an emphatic 3-0 win for the home team. All that Bangladesh now need to do to progress is not allow Pakistan to win by a margin of more than three goals. If Pakistan go on to take a lead of three in this game, the match will be decided by going into extra time, and then, if necessary, through a shoot out. The match starts at 9:30pm Bangladesh time.

But such negative thoughts were far from Bangladesh captain Biplob Bhattacharjee's mind during the pre-match press conference at the Pakistan Football Federation yesterday.

"We are not thinking anything negative, all we know is that we will be playing a positive brand of football, focusing on a win, Bangladesh will not adopt any negative approach," said the Bangladesh skipper.

There is a subplot to today's encounter. Bangladesh's 3-0 victory came in heavy rain and soggy conditions, leading Pakistan's coach Tariq Lutfi to say that they would lodge a formal complaint to the

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CLASH OF TITANS: The Wimbledon women's final may have been a disappointment, but the men's edition is set to be a cracker as No. 2 Rafael Nadal takes on No. 1 Novak Djokovic today.

Less cricket in 2011-12 Calendar awaits approval

SPORTS REPORTER

The cricket operations committee of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has all but confirmed the domestic calendar for the upcoming cricket season.

The technical committee will now discuss the draft calendar, which has brought hardly any changes from that of last season's except the omission of the two tournaments -- National Cricket League one-day competition and the Club Cup -- in its meeting on June 5 before placing the calendar at the next board meeting for approval.

It has taken too much time for the cricket operations committee to prepare the draft calendar as most of the committees had been dilly-dallying to submit their proposals. Moreover, the cricket operations committee didn't get any response from the other committees about the reason behind the massive failure of not following the calendar last season.

During yesterday's cricket operations committee meeting, only a few issues like arranging a pre-season one-day tourna-

ment between the national team, A team and another selection in September, a knockout basis one-day tournament instead of the First Division Twenty20 in October, preparing the list of the pool players and on the Under-19 team's proposed tour to Pakistan were discussed. The members opined that there was no point for the Under-19 team to tour Pakistan in July 15 and they suggested a deferral of the tour.

"There is no major change in this season's calendar from the last one. Only significant change is that the tournament committee excluded the National Cricket League one-day competition. I think there was hardly any impact of the one-day competition rather we believe that we should concentrate more on the four-day competition," said Enayet Hossain Siraj, BCB's director and chairman of the cricket operations committee.

"The calendar is all but confirmed and it will be now reviewed by the technical committee and then it will be placed before the

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