

Brother's wedding no priority!

REUTERS, New York

Big-serving American John Isner captured his second career ATP title after skipping his brother's wedding to beat Belgium's Olivier Rochus 6-3, 7-6 in the Hall of Fame Tennis Championship final on Sunday.

The towering American blasted 22 aces past Rochus, 38 centimetres (1 foot 3 inches) shorter than his opponent, to become the first top seed to win the grasscourt tournament in Newport in 35 years.

Isner took a late wildcard into the event and missed his brother's wedding on Saturday but he said it was worth it.

"It definitely turned out to be a great decision," Isner said on the ATP website.

"It's the perfect start to the summer and I really feel like my best surface is the hard courts in the US so I'm going to have a lot of confidence from this."

Isner made four finals in 2010, winning his first title at Auckland, but was best known for winning the longest match ever played, a marathon five-setter against Nicolas Mahut at Wimbledon, which he clinched 70-68 in the fifth set.

He had not made a final this year, slipping down the rankings from a career-high 18 to 46, and was overlooked for the US team chosen to play Spain in the Davis Cup quarterfinals.

But the 2.06 metre (6 foot 9 inches) Isner beat Rochus in one hour and 42 minutes, claiming the title without dropping a set in the tournament.

The Belgian, runner-up in the same event last year, dropped serve in the fifth game to concede the opening set and lost the second in a tiebreak after saving five break points.

"I don't think I've ever had a better week serving," said Isner.

"I'm fortunate to have that weapon and I was in a groove for five matches. It carried me to the championship here."

Merkel sees

FROM PAGE 18 until 2016 just before the tournament started.

Accusations of tactical mistakes, poor choice of substitutes and a lack of leadership have all been leveled at Neid.

But despite seeing their side knocked out, Germans are still tuning into watch the tournament.

Just over six million watched the USA beat Brazil 5-3 on penalties in Sunday's quarterfinal, which made up nearly 30 per cent of the market.

On average, 16.95 million Germans tuned in to the defeat against Japan and similar figures were recorded for Germany's three group matches.

It is not just Germany games that have been attracting viewers: 6.88 million fans saw England lose to France on penalties in the quarterfinal.

Milan sweating

FROM PAGE 18 Galliano did not go into details about the impact the fine would make on the club, which closed the last fiscal year with a deficit of about 60 million euros, but it is likely to affect their summer recruitment policy.

"Milan is still in the heart of the president, he loves his baby," said Galliani.

"He bought the club from a bankruptcy tribunal (in 1986) and made it the most successful club in the world. I'm sure he will make every effort to keep it where it is now."

Berlusconi is due to be at the club's Milanese training ground on Tuesday.



John Isner of USA celebrates his victory against Olivier Rochus of Belgium in the final of the Hall of Fame Tennis Championships in Newport on Sunday.

PHOTO: INTERNET

Broad needs wickets



CRICINFO, London

Stuart Broad faces a vital week for the short-term prospects of his England place after being dropped for the deciding one-day international at Old Trafford on Saturday. His county, Nottinghamshire, have a Championship match against Somerset starting on Monday and Broad will need wickets to avoid being overtaken by Tim Bresnan.

It had been considered that Broad was so highly rated as part of the player-management structure within the England set-up that he would survive the axe, especially after finally opening his wicket tally with two scalps on his home ground at Trent Bridge. However, when England wanted to alter the balance of their team and include Samit Patel as a second spin option, it was Broad who made way with Jade Dernbach retaining his place.

Broad had been carrying a heel problem since the end of the Sri Lanka series and also hurt his ankle in training before the Twenty20 in Bristol, where he made his captaincy debut, but Alastair Cook didn't hide why the decision had been made.

It was a view echoed by Andy Flower, the England team director, who added that the extra rest will benefit Broad and suggested that he was still very much in the planning to face India. "A nice by-product of him missing this game is that he will have a four-day break from bowling between the fourth one-day international that he played and the four-day game that he will play for Nottinghamshire," Flower said.

The decision showed that Cook, in consultation with Flower, wasn't afraid to make

tough selection decisions even if it involved dumping a fellow international captain. However, it is England's three-captain policy which continues to throw up intriguing situations, as it is now Andrew Strauss who will have a major say on Broad's place in the team.

While Broad is bowling at Trent Bridge -- a good venue for a seamer to try to regain form and confidence -- other contenders for his place will be looking to stake their claims. At the head of the list are Bresnan and Steven Finn, the former who made a successful return from injury during the one-day series with eight wickets at 29 including 3 for 49 at Old Trafford while Finn was in the one-day squad without playing. Chris Woakes, the Warwickshire all-rounder, also couldn't get a game but he's some way off selection at present.

Yorkshire have a Championship match against Worcestershire which will allow Bresnan some extended spells of bowling after his one-day return, but Finn doesn't have a four-day game available with Middlesex not in Championship action. It was the situation that forced Strauss to ask Somerset if he could appear for them against India later in the week.

Finn was the next in line when a replacement was needed against Sri Lanka, at Lord's, but at that time Bresnan, who was outstanding at Melbourne and Sydney during the Ashes, was still on the sidelines. Finn was inconsistent at his home ground but still finished the match with four wickets.

Away from Bresnan and Finn, the other option could be Graham Onions if England wants a wicket-to-wicket bowler. Again, though, the scheduling isn't helpful for Onions -- who missed the whole of last season with a severe back injury -- as Durham aren't in four-day action before the first.

SLPL postponed



CRICINFO, Colombo

Sri Lanka Cricket has officially announced the postponement of the Sri Lanka Premier League to 2012, citing a lack of time to organise the tournament in the absence of Indian players as the main reason.

"Attempts to obtain the release of the Indian players were unsuccessful, causing a delay in the naming of the final composition of the SLPL teams which then had an impact on making related arrangements in an effective and timely manner," SLC said in a statement. "Therefore, SLC and the SLPL committee find that there is insufficient time to arrange a tournament of this magnitude this

year, within the available window."

The Inter Provincial T20 tournament will be held in place of the SLPL, as ESPNcricinfo had first reported on July 7. The winner of that tournament will qualify for the Champions League T20 to be played in September.

The SLPL would have featured seven teams and was scheduled to kick off on July 19, with the final to be played on August 6. The tournament hit its first hurdle when the BCCI decided to withhold its permission to allow Indian players to take part on the grounds that Somerset Entertainment Ventures, which owned the commercial rights, would be handling the contracts for international players and that it could lead to complications should disputes arise over payments.

Draw gives India Sk Russel

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India skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni defended his team's conservative approach at the close.

"We were risking a series win going after the target, we realised that it was not worth going for it after those wickets," he said.

"We gave it a go but we are happy with the series win. It was a good exposure for the youngsters."

West Indies skipper Sammy, whose team were warmly applauded by a lively and large Dominican crowd, enjoying the conclusion of their first ever, was also pleased with the way the series ended.

India's next international duty is a tour of England starting later this month.

Indian fast bowler Ishant Sharma was named man of the series after capturing 22 wickets and taking his career tally past 100.

"This is my first series

where I took the highest wickets," he said. "I am pretty confident about myself, looking forward to England."

SCORES IN BRIEF

WEST INDIES: First innings 204 (Baugh 60; Sharma 5-77)
INDIA: First innings 347 (Mukund 62, Laxman 56, Kohli 30, Raina 50, Dhoni 74, Kumar 23; Edwards 5-103, Sammy 2-51, Bishoo 2-125)

WEST INDIES: Second innings 322 (Edwards 110, Bravo 14, Chanderpaul 116 not out, Sammy 17, Edwards 30; Kumar 2-44, Harbhajan 4-75, Raina 2-32)

INDIA: Second innings 94 for 3 (Vijay 45, Dravid 34 not out; Rampaul 2-31)

Result: Match drawn and India clinched 3-match series 1-0.
Man-of-the-match: Shivnarine Chanderpaul.
Man-of-the-series: Ishant Sharma.

FROM PAGE 16 they are still discussing the matter with the authority concerned.

However, a BFF executive said Sheikh Russel have sought 10 instalments in 10 years to pay the fine but FIFA are yet to respond to Sheikh Russel's plea.

The Dispute Resolution Chamber (DRC), a FIFA body that provides arbitration and dispute resolution on the basis of equal representation of players and clubs, appointed Philippe Diallo to solve the matter.

After exchange of nearly 25 letters and different documents, the DRC in April ordered Sheikh Russel to pay an amount of 37567 dollars to Abdulai for breaching the contract.

Russel had an option to appeal against the decision but they did not appeal and FIFA asked them to pay fine before June 27.

Indo-Pak soccer in England

RUETERS, New Delhi

Cricket ties remain on hold but bitter neighbours India and Pakistan will resume their soccer rivalry next month with a series of three international friendlies in England, the All India Football Federation (AIFF) said on Monday.

"Playing Pakistan is always special," AIFF president Praful Patel said in a statement.

"It's a positive sign that we will play a bilateral football series against Pakistan. I'm sure all sporting fans are eagerly looking forward to it."

Manchester, Coventry and London will host the matches between Aug. 25-Sept. 11, the statement said, but the UK-based organisers told Reuters that neither the dates nor the stadiums had been finalised.

The last time India visited Pakistan for a soccer match was in 2005, although the sides last met in an AFC Challenge Cup qualifier in Malaysia this March. India won that con 3-1.

India snapped bilateral cricket ties with Pakistan after the 2008 Mumbai attack in which Pakistani gunmen killed 166 people in a three-day shooting spree in India's financial capital.

Pakistan Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani travelled to India in March this year to watch a World Cup semi-final featuring the neighbours and the 'cricket diplomacy' has rekindled hopes of a resumption of s and one-dayers between the sides.

Sammy proud

FROM PAGE 16

really pleasing to see the fight shown by both the batting and the bowling departments."

Sammy said he was happy with the result, though he was a touch surprised that the Indians shut shop early. "With 15 overs to go and 86 runs required, and considering the calibre of players they have like Dhoni and guys who can hit the ball, I thought they would give it a go, being one-up. But I guess (with) my ploy to have Bishoo bowl in the rough, they didn't fancy their chances of going after him. I am quite happy with the result. Starting the first innings, with one of our main bowlers Ravi down, the way the guys stuck at it, we showed a lot of character. And the batting came good in the very last innings of the series... it helped us salvage a draw. So well done to the team."

Swann No. 1

FROM PAGE 16

James Anderson has risen impressively up the rankings, gaining 17 places to 11th spot.

In the ICC Player Rankings for ODI batsmen, India's middle-order batsman Virat Kohli and skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni are at the 6th and 8th positions respectively.

The batting chart is still topped by the South African duo of Hashim Amla and AB de Villiers with Australia's Shane Watson in third.

Sri Lanka's Kumar Sangakkara moves up one place to fourth but his captain, Tillakaratne Dilshan has dropped six places after a wretched series with the bat to sit joint ninth with Australia captain Michael Clarke.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Door handle
5 Pigeon's remark
8 Wound cover
12 Modern-day money
13 That guy
14 Collins or Donahue
15 First place
16 "The Greatest"
17 Stow cargo
18 Landlord
20 In layers
22 Blackbird
23 Shell game need
24 Start of the XIIIth century
27 Backed, as a motion
32 Cheery word?
33 — jongg
34 Gabor or Longoria

DOWN

1 Ship's spine
2 Un-dressed
3 Raw rocks
4 Dwarfed potted plant
5 Special appeal
6 Lubricant
7 Skip over
8 Ill will
9 Party game
10 Staffer
11 Evicted a pinprick
19 Operating

21 Wall St. debut
24 "The A-Team" actor
25 Auto
26 "— of Fire"
28 Consume
29 San Diego squad
30 First lady?
31 Old man
36 If not Crazy
38 Perfect place
41 Other-wise
42 False god
43 Arm bone
44 Trudge (through)
46 Very long time
47 Peace-keeping org.
48 Ollie's partner
51 Historic period

Solution time: 25 mins.

C	A	S	S	A	G	O	O	H	M	S
A	R	C	H	P	O	D	L	E	A	P
M	E	A	T	H	E	A	D	A	T	A
P	A	T	I	O	S	L	I	D	E	R
D	A	W	E	S	T	I	R			
P	A	C	K	O	R	T	S	O	R	B
I	D	O	G	R	E	E	T	L	O	U
P	A	L	O	M	E	N	A	L	O	D
D	A	W	E	S	T	I	R			
T	O	D	I	N	E	L	I	M	B	O
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E	L	K	S	N	E	W	S	E	T	S

TESTS THROUGH TIME

Modern Invincibles

If Inzamam Haq didn't play that blinder in Karachi, it would have started in 1994.

But Australia's dominance began when they won the Frank Worrell trophy for the first time in 15 years, ending two decades of West Indies' supremacy.

It is generally accepted that from that moment on, Australia took over the 'best team in the world' mantle from West Indies although at that point, Brian Lara, Curtly Ambrose and Courtney Walsh only just managed to keep their head above water.

Between that day in May 1995 to the end of the 2006-07 Ashes when Shane Warne, Glenn McGrath and Justin Langer retired, Australia won 93 out of 136 Test matches, conceding a series only four times thrice in India (1996, 1998 and 2001), once in Sri Lanka (1999) and once in England (2005).

During this period, Australia were unstoppable and took Test cricket to a different level. Between 1995 and 1999, Mark Taylor always led by example and often took brave decisions: batting first on a green top in Manchester during the 1997 Ashes with the series still not in the bag. He inspired grandeur on one occasion when he declared on 334 not out against Pakistan, keeping himself equal to Don Bradman, yet cunningly giving his side enough time to bowl the opposition out.

Steve Waugh took over then and decided on bringing his perfection to the team. Since Taylor's regime saw the 'dead rubber syndrome' where the team would often lose an inconsequential last Test, Waugh wanted to weed that out.

After a rocky start in West Indies and a series loss in Sri Lanka where Waugh had his nose broken after a collision with Jason Gillespie, Australia began winning everything in front of them.

They won 16 Tests in a row, only stopped by an inspired VVS Laxman and Harbhajan Singh in the seminal 2001 series in India. Later under Ricky Ponting, they enjoyed another 16 wins in a row, culminating in the 5-0 Ashes whitewash (they had 13 whitewashes in all during their dominance).

Ponting, who played most of his career during the 12-year period, has 33 centuries among 9,386 runs to his name while Langer and Hayden, who smashed 380 against Zimbabwe in 2004, both have over 7,000 runs.

But what set Australia apart were two names: Warne and McGrath. Test cricket is sometimes all about taking 20 wickets and during this time, this leg-spin and pace duo have 1,053 wickets between them. Brett Lee and Gillespie have more than 200 wickets while Stuart MacGill and Michael Kasprovicz were fine operators too.

Another defining factor was the wicketkeeping which went from the best to the greatest. Ian Healy was safe as a house but when he was replaced with Adam Gilchrist, a new dimension to the word all-rounder was added to cricket's parlance.

He is often regarded as the greatest player alongside Warne and McGrath to have come from this team and there is hardly anyone doubting this claim.

Apart from his destructive batting which resulted in him breaking the record for the fastest double century once and almost touching the record for the fastest 100, his wicketkeeping against Warne and MacGill went unnoticed. Every wicketkeeper would want that.

For another dynasty to begin in Australia, it would take another paradigm shift. This one has taught enough lessons to bring about that new generation.

-- Mohammad Isam

CRYPTOQUIP

XRNI GRN UKZONIGNZ QKIYNN
RWF GRACQ XRWHN OVAIMWIY
K IKWH, W GRWIJ RN YVG
K RKCCNZRNKM FRVUJ
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF SOMEBODY'S LONG FOREARM BONE IS KIND OF FUNNY-LOOKING, I GUESS HE HAS A HUMOROUS HUMERUS.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: R equals H