

Star SPORT

WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 14, 2011, E-MAIL: sports@thedailystar.net

British comedian swims Thames

British comedian David Walliams completed a 140-mile (225-kilometre) swim down the River Thames on Monday, having fought off "Thames tummy" to reach the Houses of Parliament. The 40-year-old completed his eight-day slog in the tidal section of the Thames, with thousands lining the river banks in London to cheer him on. The co-star of television sketch show "Little Britain" has raised more than 1 million pounds so far for the Sport Relief charity with his Thames exploits.



PHOTO: AFP

Novak Djokovic of Serbia exults after winning a hard-fought final against Rafael Nadal of Spain to be crowned the 2011 US Open champion at Flushing Meadows in New York on Monday.

King of 2011

REUTERS, New York

Novak Djokovic capped one of tennis's greatest seasons with a awe-inspiring US Open triumph on Monday that could just signal an end to the sport's obsession with "Rafael Roger" finals. The 24-year-old Serb broke the pain barrier to beat defending champion Rafa Nadal 6-2 6-4 6-7 6-1 and claim his third grand slam title of the year, underlining that the balance of power in the men's game had well and truly shifted. Seven-times grand slam winner Mats Wilander said Djokovic was on target for a rush of major title after winning a first in New York and the fourth of his career. "He's jumped up a level," Wilander told Reuters. "I think this is the very beginning. He may be riding the wave, but it's not like the wave is going to end. This is how good he is."

Djokovic struggled with rib pain, lower back pain and cramping and needed a medical timeout and pain killer to carry on in a punishing final but stubbornly refused to yield. Serbia's Davis Cup hero had also saved match points against Roger Federer in the semi-finals, underlining the steel that has produced an astonishing 64-2 record and 10 titles this year. "At this level you need those tough matches against top guys," said the Australian Open and Wimbledon champion. "To get confidence that you can really win majors and win the big matches. "I guess it just clicked in my head. Throughout the last couple of years I didn't change my game in any major way. I think most of the strokes are the same that they were. "It's just that I'm hitting the shots that I maybe wasn't hitting in the last two, three years now. I'm going for it.

I'm more aggressive and I have a different approach to the semi-finals and finals of major events." Djokovic showed his go-for-broke attitude in surviving his semi-final when, down match point in the fifth set after clawing his way back from two sets down, he ripped an all-or-nothing forehand return across court for a jaw-dropping winner that destroyed Federer's spirit. "I was always kind of trying to wait for their mistakes," the Serb, who replaced Nadal as world number one earlier this year, said about his attitude in the past. "Not really having the positive attitude and kind of belief that I can win." Even when his body looked like giving out on him, Djokovic dug deep with a determination and courage normally associated with Nadal himself. "I had the rib problem and they had

SEE PAGE 17 COL 4

Stunning Novak keeps rolling

AP, New York

Novak Djokovic was on the wrong side of the court, and the celebration, a year ago after the last ball was struck in the U.S. Open final. Somewhere in the back of his mind, though, as he watched Rafael Nadal fall to the blue concrete and bask in the lights of the world's biggest tennis stadium, Djokovic had a sense that someday, that could be him. On Monday night, it was. After defeating Nadal 6-2, 6-4, 6-7 (3), 6-1 over 4 hours and 10 minutes of relentless, draining tennis, Djokovic dropped to his knees and kissed the same concrete that Nadal ruled last year, celebrating a win that slapped an exclamation point on one of the greatest seasons in the sport's history. A win that, in many ways, came out of a loss on the same court. "I was always trying to wait for their mistakes and not having that positive attitude and believing I could win," Djokovic said. "This has changed and U.S. Open 2010 was one of the turning points in my career, definitely." Djokovic won his third Grand Slam title of 2011 to match what Nadal accomplished last year and what Federer did in 2004, 2006 and 2007. Djokovic bested them both en route to this title, taking down Nadal two days after he overcame two match points against Federer to win the semifinal. The man they call "Nole" improved to 64-2 for the season. With a few months left in 2011, the best win-loss record in the modern era John

McEnroe's 82-3 in 1984 is in reach. However it ends up, victory No. 64 may go down as the most impressive of them all. Over the first two sets, second-seeded Nadal broke top-seeded Djokovic's serve three times, and each time, Djokovic responded by doing what a champion does answering back right away, then not looking back. But it was the third set that was the classic 84 can't-miss minutes of side-to-side, unforgiving play from both men, filled with cartoonishly punished groundstrokes that somehow kept coming back. Nadal won that set, Djokovic walked off the court holding his back and the momentum shifted. What that did, though, was allow the world's top-ranked player to once again drive home the point he's been making all year: Yes, he improved his fitness and, yes, he changed his diet. But mostly, he changed his attitude. With his back and ribs aching and his legs starting to cramp, he said he knew he couldn't allow the fourth set to turn into yet another long series of rallies. He had to do what he'd been doing all year for it. "I knew I wasn't physically there," Djokovic said. "I wasn't as fit as I was at the start of the match. I needed to take the chances I did. It was an incredible set for me." Every bit as telling, and stunning, as any of the 17 winners Djokovic hit in that fourth set (against only four unforced errors), was the way Nadal reacted as the set wore on. Instead of rushing, skidding, shuf-

fling, reaching out to get one more ball back as is his norm, he stood and watched. Nadal watched at 30-all in the final game when Djokovic followed his serve with a backhand winner down the line. He watched again on match point when Djokovic hit a forehand down the line, then dropped his racket and fell to the ground to celebrate in almost the exact spot where Nadal did last year. A bit later, Djokovic pulled off his shirt and threw it into the stands, then put on a dark hat with "FDNY" written on it a nod to Sunday's 10th anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, which both he and Nadal mentioned during the trophy ceremony. "I've had an amazing year and it keeps going," Djokovic said. A year ago, Nadal was being celebrated as the next King of Tennis, with nine Grand Slams (Now 10, counting this year's French Open) and seemingly in need of nothing more than time and tournaments to match Federer, who holds the record with 16. A year later, however, Nadal is on a six-match losing streak to Djokovic all of them in finals, including this one and at Wimbledon earlier this summer. "He's having less mistakes than before," Nadal said when asked to explain the Djokovic renaissance. "In my opinion, that's all. He's confident enough in every moment to keep believing in one more ball, one more ball. I think his forehand is not more painful than before; his backhand is not more painful than before; he serves the same."

SEE PAGE 17 COL 2

Emily, Mithun banned, fined

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

National striking duo Zahid Hasan Emily and Mithun Chowdhury and winger Zahid Hossain have been suspended from domestic circuit for different terms and also handed monetary punishments for their breach of discipline before and during the FIFA World Cup Pre-Qualifiers against Lebanon in July. Emily and Mithun were fined Tk 2 lakh each and were banned from five domestic matches while Zahid was fined Tk one lakh and banned from two domestic matches for the upcoming season. The first two will have to face another three match suspension in case of non-payment while Zahid will have to face one match ban in case of non-payment.

"What Emily and Mithun did before their departure to Lebanon was unacceptable and it shocked the whole nation. They might have been punished at that time but we did not take any action against them as we had taken the World Cup Qualifiers seriously," said BFF vice president Badal Roy after a meeting of the National Team Management Committee at the BFF House yesterday. Roy added that Zahid has been given Tk one lakh fine as well as two match suspension. "The crime they committed deserves much severe punishment but we have shown some leniency so that they can rectify themselves while others footballers can take a lesson from this," said Roy. Emily and Mithun went to Manikganj to play a tournament on hire on July 19, hours before their departure for Beirut

to play the first-leg of World Cup pre-qualifiers against Lebanon while Zahid kicked a water bottle after being substituted during the second-leg match against Lebanon. Asked why their punishments were not considered for the international matches, Roy said, "We didn't want to harm the national interest and they still can contribute to the national team." This punishment means Emily, Mithun and Zahid can't represent the national team in the upcoming SAFF Championship in December in India and Badal Roy said that the coach would decide whether the trio would be picked or not. As a symbolic punishment, Emily, Mithun and Zahid were barred from being part of the reception team that welcomed Argentina and Nigeria on August 5.

SEE PAGE 17 COL 4

Cubs suffer 2nd loss

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Mahmudullah Riyad and Elias Sunny gave strong all-round performances in Bangladesh A's 56-run win over the GP-BCB National Cricket Academy in the BCB Cup yesterday. Put in to bat, the A team stuttered to 207-9 in 50 overs before shutting out the Academy challenge in 43.3 overs at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur. Riyad took the last two wickets to wrap up the Academy innings for just 151 runs, but it was the captain's steady half-century that made a huge difference and also won him the man-of-the-match award. Coming in to bat with his side hanging on 48 for three, Riyad provided damage control, adding a 42-run fourth wicket partnership with Naeem Islam (17) before building another valuable 47-run stand with Shamsur Rahman (18), this time for the fifth wicket. Riyad made 54 off 69 balls with the help of six boundaries, but the Mymensingh-born all-rounder was caught behind off Alauddin Babu in the 40th over. He fell at a good time for the Academy side as their spinners stuck to a good line to restrict their seniors to 57

runs in the last ten overs. Sunny however slammed a beautiful square-driven six and a boundary in an important 25 off 29 balls that took the A team's score past the 200-mark. Alauddin took three wickets with his medium-pace while Sohag Gazi took two wickets and Sanjamul Islam picked up one. Academy lost Abdul Majid early but recovered through a 40-run second wicket stand between Tasamul Haque and the talented Mominul Haque but the pair fell in the space of three overs to hand Bangladesh A the momentum. Skipper Mahmudul Hasan batted manfully for almost two hours but never found a batting partner to really threaten the 208-run target. Sunny, Rasel and Shahadat all took two wickets each as they applied the squeeze on the younger side. Forhad Reza and Naeem Islam took one each while Riyad's last two wickets sealed the deal. **BRIEF SCORES** BANGLADESH A: 207-9 in 50 overs (Riyad 54, Sunny 25 not out; Alauddin 3-51, Gazi 2-29). GP-BCB NCA: 151 all out in 43.3 overs (Mahmudul 30, Tasamul 25; Riyad 2-21, Sunny 2-28, Rasel 2-25, Shahadat 2-35). Result: Bangladesh A won by 56 runs.



Bangladesh A captain Mahmudullah Riyad sets up to hit through the covers during his 54 against the BCB Academy side in their BCB Cup match at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

ODI at Ctg also D/N affair

SPORTS REPORTER

All three one-day internationals between Bangladesh and West Indies will be held under floodlights. Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) disclosed the itinerary for the West Indies tour of Bangladesh on Sunday mentioning that the first two one-dayers at Mirpur will be held under floodlights but BCB's media committee chairman Jalal Yunus informed that the third and final ODI at Chittagong will also be a day-night match. Meanwhile, an inter-ministerial meeting was held yesterday surrounding the ICC Women's World Cup qualifiers and West Indies' and Pakistan's tours of Bangladesh later this year.

SEE PAGE 17 COL 4