



David Ferrer of Spain waves to the fans after winning against United State's Andy Roddick in the quarterfinal of the Shanghai Masters on Friday. PHOTO: REUTERS

Ferrer overpowers Roddick

Tennis

AP, Shanghai

Andy Roddick lost to David Ferrer 6-7 (5), 6-2, 7-6 (2) Friday, while Andy Murray eased into the semifinals with a 6-3, 6-2 win over qualifier Matthew Ebden at the Shanghai Masters.

The second-seeded Scot has won 23 of his last 24 matches since mid-August, with the only loss coming to Rafael Nadal in the semifinals of the US Open. He's attempting to win his third title in as many weeks.

Ferrer had a string of errors to drop the first-set tiebreaker in his match, but he cleaned up his game in the second set, striking winners off the forehand and backhand side to break Roddick twice.

The 15th-ranked American had an opportunity to go up early in the third, but he wasted three break points on Ferrer's first service game and never

challenged the Spaniard's serve again. Fifth-ranked Ferrer finished with 49 winners twice as many as Roddick. Both players had 11 aces.

Murray will face Kei Nishikori of Japan, who advanced with a 6-4, 6-3 win over Alexandr Dolgoplov. Feliciano Lopez beat 15th-seeded Florian Mayer of Germany 6-2, 6-4, in just over an hour to set up an all-Spanish semifinal clash with Ferrer. Mayer had ousted Rafael Nadal in straight sets on Thursday.

After a win over fourth-seeded Jo-Wilfried Tsonga, Nishikori will become the highest-ranked Japanese player in ATP tour history. Ranked 47th, he's projected to rise to 32 with his quarterfinal win beating Shuzo Matsuoka's previous best ranking of 46.

The 21-year-old Nishikori, who is coached by former top-10 player Brad Gilbert, is having his best season on tour, reaching one final and four semifinals. He has won more matches this

year (32) than in the previous four years combined.

Nishikori, who roomed with Gilbert's son Zachary at the Nick Bollettieri Tennis Academy in Florida, said the coach's instruction has been key to improving his game.

Roddick had beaten Ferrer in the fourth round of the US Open, after Ferrer scored an emotional win over the American two months earlier in a Davis Cup match played in Roddick's hometown of Austin, Texas.

Ferrer also beat Roddick's teammate, Mardy Fish, to lead Spain past the Americans on their way to the Fed Cup finals against Argentina in December.

Ferrer was nearly out of the Shanghai tournament in the last round he had to fight off three match points against countryman Juan Carlos Ferrero before winning in three sets. With the victory, he became the fifth player to qualify for the ATP World Tour Finals next month in London.

'Give Fletcher time & space'

Cricket

PTI, New Delhi

Duncan Fletcher has not had the best of times since taking over as India cricket coach but veteran batsman Rahul Dravid says he should not be written off just yet as the Zimbabwean needs "more time and space" to produce results.

Keeping in mind his wealth of experience and exploits with the England team, which includes the famous Ashes series win over Australia in 2005, Fletcher was appointed as Gary Kristen's successor after India's World Cup triumph.

The 63-year-old, however, had a forgettable experience in his first major outing with the Indian team in England, where the visitors, approaching the series as world's numero uno Test side, were whitewashed in all formats of the game.

But Dravid backed Fletcher to turn things around for Mahendra Singh Dhoni's men, provided he is given more time.

"Look at his (Fletcher's) achievement with the England team. He comes in with a lot of experience behind him. He has vast knowledge to offer (to India)," Dravid told PTI in an interview. "It's too premature to judge him. We need to give more time and space to him to produce results," he said.

At 38, Dravid is still going strong and was India's star performer with the bat in England. He, however, was disappointed with the outcome of the series but felt the hosts were by far the better side and deserved to be praised highly for their achievement.

"Obviously, England are a very good team at present. They played some very good cricket and you need to give them credit. They outplayed us in all departments of the game. They showed better skills during that series," he said.

"But that's not an excuse. We didn't play well enough. Sometimes there is no harm losing to a team that is better than you as long as you learn from the mistakes," Dravid said.

He also did not buy the theory that fatigue had a role to play in India's poor performance in England.

"Playing a lot of cricket is part and parcel of the game. That's the way FTP is made and the tours are structured. You just get to learn with it and get on with it," the right-hander said on the sidelines of the launch of SG's Maxxport, a sportswear brand here.

Dravid, however, was hopeful of a reversal of fortunes for India in the ODI series against England, termed as a revenge series, that started yesterday at Hyderabad.

"The Indian team (against England) is quite young because of lot of injuries but I hope we will be able to perform well. But it won't be easy because Eng-

land are a very good team at the moment. They are playing very good cricket and they are well prepared. So it will be a challenge," he observed.

He also feels that the five-match home series against England is an ideal opportunity for young fast bowlers to make themselves count in the absence of regulars like Zaheer Khan, Ishant Sharma and Munaf Patel, who are out with injuries.

In the first two ODIs against England, India's pace attack will be spearheaded by Praveen Kumar in the presence of rookies Varun Aaron, Sreenath Aravind, Umesh Yadav and RVinay Kumar.

"It's exciting time for a young fast bowler and a lot of them had been picked in the ODI series. Because of injuries a few spots have been created for them and it's a great opportunity for them to establish themselves. It would be interesting to see which one of them grabs the opportunity and pick up the chance," Dravid said.

Asked about Harbhajan Singh's omission from the first two ODIs, Dravid said the off-spinner is too good a bowler to be left out of the team for long.

"Harbhajan is a top-class performer and I am sure he will bounce back. He is a very good bowler. I hope that we see the best of him against the West Indies and Australia. When he performs well we are a very competitive team," Dravid insisted.

No respect

FROM PAGE 16 something he should aspire to do more often despite the shaky ground he's standing on.

But the rest just faded away, like they have done so many times in the last decade.

Alok Kapali and Mohammad Ashraf, despite their age and international experience, and Nasir Hossain to some extent, should ask the team's video analyst to show them Shakib Al Hasan's innings because most would have missed out despite standing at the other end.

Shakib didn't let any of the bowlers settle into a rhythm, picked 43 singles at every angle and hit only two boundaries and a six. It was a quintessential Shakib innings and this is the sort of knock that should be set on a pedestal.

More importantly, his effort should be copied unashamedly or one should be ready for more respectable losses, however respectable they are.

Aus too sharp for SA

Cricket

REUTERS, Cape Town

Australia were too sharp for rusty South Africa as the touring side won the first Twenty20 international by five wickets with three balls to spare on Thursday.

South Africa, playing their first match in seven months, struggled to 146 for seven thanks to JP Duminy's brilliant 67, but Shane Watson's 52 off 39 balls laid the platform for a comfortable run chase by the Australians.

Watson's tremendous driving and ruthless punishment of the short ball brought him six fours and two sixes and he added 82 runs off 54 balls with Shaun Marsh for the second wicket.

Cameron White (28) and David Hussey (25) then added 40 in 5.5 overs to take Australia to the brink of victory.

Duminy's 67 off 53 balls, including six fours and three sixes, was a fine effort which brought South Africa back into the game after the Australian bowlers had made a very good start.

The left-hander's innings was his usual mix of classical strokeplay and sweet timing, and Duminy was helped by muscular knocks by Colin Ingram (33) and David Miller (20).

India start

FROM PAGE 16 looked to be in the running especially as Alastair Cook continued his impressive form as England captain

with a brisk 60 but as soon as he perished, a dramatic collapse aided mostly by Ravindra Jadeja saw them crash to 126 for 6 in 27 overs. From then on it was only a matter of time, as the Indians completed the formality bowling out their recent conquerors for 174.

SCORES IN BRIEF
INDIA: 300 for 7 (Rahane 15, Gambhir 32, Kohli 37, Raina 61, Dhoni 87 not out, Jadeja 27; Swann 1-35)

ENGLAND: 174 all out (Cook 60, Pietersen 19, Trott 26, Patel 16, Finn 18; Yadav 2-32, Ashwin 3-35, Jadeja 3-34)
Result: India won by 126 runs.
Man-of-the-match: Mahendra Singh Dhoni.

Siddikur steady

SPORTS REPORTER

Siddikur Rahman maintained steady form in the Hero Indian Open as he managed a 2-under-par (70) in the consecutive rounds at the Delhi Golf Club yesterday. The 2010 Brunei Open champion was tied in joint 14th position (19th overall) as he carded an aggregate four-under-par (140) over the two rounds in the 1.25 million dollar Asian Tour event. The lead was assumed by India's Chiragh Kumar who played a five-under-par 67 for a total of 13-under-par 131 at his home course.

Australia's David Gleeson eagled two holes for 66 to lie in second while Chapchai Nirat of Thailand, who holds the world 72-hole scoring record he set in India in 2009, was a further shot back in third after his blemish free round of 67.

Ross Bain of Scotland, Scott Barr of Australia and Young Nam of Korea were tied in fourth place on 137.

The halfway cut was set at one-over-par 145 with a total of 70 players making the weekend rounds.

NAT'L YOUTH HOCKEY Super League line-up completed

SPORTS REPORTER

The Super League line-up of the Southeast Bank 22nd National Youth Hockey Championship was completed yesterday when Joypurhat and Chittagong emerged champions in their respective groups at the Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium yesterday.

Joypurhat defeated Faridpur 1-0 with Sanjoy netting the winner one before the breather while Chittagong blanked Jessore 3-0 with Yasin striking twice and Nizamuddin scoring the other.

In the day's other match, Rajshahi handed a 4-0 defeat to Sylhet. Prosenjit struck twice while Lalon and Rubel scored one goal each for the winners.

Earlier, Narail, Dhaka, Rangpur, Dinajpur, Rajshahi and Rajshahi Division moved into the eight-team Super League, which will get underway from today.

RATING CHESS Mostafa in solo lead

SPORTS REPORTER

Golam Mostafa Bhuiyan took solo lead in the Prime Bank 14th International Open Rating Chess Championship at the close of the fourth round at the Bangladesh Chess Federation hall-room yesterday.

Mostafa beat Abdul Momin to earn maximum four points while Nurul Islam Mahin was in the second position with three points.

Afanur Abedin, Akhter Hossain, Moksedul Monir and Asfakur Rahman shared third position with two points each.

Kiwi's Zimbabwe tour starts today

Cricket

AFP, Harare

New Zealand's new cricket leadership will be put to its first test during a tour of Zimbabwe, starting Saturday with a Twenty20 international at Harare Sports Club.

The Black Caps will be led by Ross Taylor after long-serving skipper Daniel Vettori stepped down following the World Cup and the team also have a new director of cricket in former Australia coach John Buchanan.

Vettori is not in the squad which will play two Twenty20 and three one-day internationals, but will return under Taylor's captaincy for a one-off Test at the end of the tour.

Vettori said after the World Cup he was no longer available for limited overs games because he wanted to prolong his Test career.

New Zealand face what is likely to be a more challenging assignment following the Zimbabwe campaign when they start a two-Test tour of Australia less than two weeks after the Test in Bulawayo.

It is New Zealand's first tour of Zimbabwe since 2005 and is a continuation of the host country's rehabilitation as a Test nation.

Zimbabwe withdrew from Test cricket in 2005 at a time of upheaval, which included a player revolt and culminated in the national side suffering six successive heavy Test defeats that year, including two by an innings against New Zealand.

With stability seemingly restored, and leading former players back in the system as administrators and coaches, Zimbabwe made an impressive return to Test cricket with a 130-run win in a one-off match against Bangladesh in August.

But they were brought back to earth when

Pakistan beat them by seven wickets in another one-off game last month.

Pakistan's tour, which had the same six-match itinerary as for New Zealand, provided a sobering reality check for the Zimbabweans as Pakistan won every match.

The home side will hope to improve on those performances against a New Zealand team which includes several inexperienced players.

The New Zealand one-day squad includes 11 of the players who took the Black Caps to the World Cup semifinals but is missing the retired Scott Styris, Vettori and injured fast bowlers Tim Southee and Hamish Bennett.

Southee has been included in the Test squad.

All-rounder Keegan Meth was named in Zimbabwe's Twenty20 squad after recovering from a mouth injury suffered when he was hit by a ball during a one-day international against Bangladesh in August but promising fast bowler Brian Vitori is still absent with a shin injury.

SQUADS

Twenty20
ZIMBABWE: Brendan Taylor (capt), Charles Coventry, Chamu Chibhabha, Elton Chigumbura, Kyle Jarvis, Hamilton Masakadza, Keegan Meth, Natsai M'shangwe, Christopher Mpofu, Forster Mutizwa, Raymond Price, Vusumuzi Sibanda, Tatenda Taibu (wk), Prosper Utseya, Malcolm Waller.

NEW ZEALAND: Ross Taylor (capt), Graeme Aldridge, Doug Bracewell, James Franklin, Martin Guppill, Brendon McCullum (wk), Nathan McCullum, Andy McKay, Kyle Mills, Rob Nicol, Jacob Oram, Jesse Ryder, BJ Watling, Kane Williamson, Luke Woodcock.

Clarke quashes fixing claims

Cricket

REUTERS, Sydney

Australia Test and one-day captain Michael Clarke has defended his players against match-fixing allegations after a sports agent said the country's top cricketers were "the biggest" culprits.

Mazhar Majeed, accused by prosecutors of taking bribes to fix matches, also said that Australian cricketers had fixed "brackets", a set period of a match on which punters bet, a London court heard on Monday.

The accusation drew a scornful response from Cricket Australia earlier this week and Clarke said on Friday he was "very confident" no Australian players were involved.

"For me personally, it's not the Australian way," Clarke told reporters in Sydney before boarding a plane for the tour of South Africa.

"Never in my time have I experienced a conversation with anybody about any such thing.

"There's obviously been a couple of occasions when guys have been approached and that's been reported to our team manager and the ICC... so all the boys in the Australian team are aware that it is happening, it is going on.

"But it's never involved me and I'm very confident it's never involved any of the Australian players."

Clarke's comments come as the trial involving spot-fixing allegations against former Pakistan captain Salman Butt and bowler Mohammad Asif continues in London.

Prosecutors allege that Majeed conspired with Butt and fast bowlers Asif and Mohammad Amir to fix parts of the Lord's test between England and Pakistan last August.

Clarke will lead Australia in three one-day internationals and two tests against South Africa in October and November.

Sabina rises above all

FROM PAGE 16

goalscoring feats, two other players also stood out with remarkable performances. Mohammedan vice-captain, Suinu in particular won the best player award despite finishing on the losing side in the final. Also catching the eye, was national forward Mainu who displayed some good skills and tackles but still failed to make much of a mark on the Sheikh Jamal side.

Sabina showed great appreciation towards the organizers and the crowd of about 1000 who had turned up to watch the final on the weekly holiday. She thanked everyone for their immense support and remained hopeful that the tournament would come back next year, bigger and better.



Officials and dignitaries inaugurate the Citycell Captain Cup Golf Tournament at the Kurmitola Golf Club yesterday. PHOTO: COURTESY