

## Novak, Serena named world champions

AFP, Paris

Serbia's Novak Djokovic and US player Serena Williams were on Tuesday announced as this year's International Tennis Federation world champions, based on their performances in tournaments throughout 2012.

The sport's governing body also said that US brothers Bob and Mike Bryan were men's doubles world champions for the ninth time in 10 years, while Sara Errani and Roberta Vinci of Italy were the women's equivalent.

Dutch wheelchair tennis legend Esther Vergeer won the title for the 13th year in succession after she won Paralympic singles gold for the fourth Paralympics in a row. Stephane Houdet of France won the men's award.

Djokovic, 25, finished top of the world rankings after successfully defending his Australian Open title and reaching the finals of the French Open and US Open. It is the second year in succession that he has been named ITF world champion.

Williams, 31, took her total number of Grand Slam titles to 15 in 2012 after winning Wimbledon and the US Open. She also finished top of the world rankings and won singles gold at the London Olympics.

## Kaneria plea against ban adjourned

AFP, London

Pakistan leg-spinner Danish Kaneria's appeal against the lifetime ban given to him by the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) was adjourned on Monday.

Kaneria was punished by the ECB Disciplinary Panel in June for his role in a spot-fixing scheme after being found guilty of pressuring former Essex teammate Mervyn Westfield into accepting cash in return for trying to concede a set number of runs in an over during a English county 40-over match in 2009.

## Close escape

FROM PAGE 16

least that's what the driver told us," said Saleh.

The accident led Kapali to criticise the organising committee. "In all my years of domestic cricket, this year was the most tedious one. We were all fed up because of all the travelling. We had three games in Rangpur and it was really difficult going there from Sylhet by road every time," said Kapali.

Sylhet lost their last game to Dhaka Metro by 9 wickets and finished fifth in the league tables.

## Premier

FROM PAGE 16

where they held the teams like Abahani, Muktiyoddha Sangsad and even beat Mohammedan SC in previous years.

There are two big matches - Mohammedan versus Sheikh Russel on Thursday and Abahani versus Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club on Friday -- in the Bangladesh Premier League.

Abahani and Sheikh Jamal are jointly on top of the table with maximum nine points, followed by Muktiyoddha Sangsad who have six points from three matches.

## Rafa returning for Abu Dhabi

Tennis

BBC ONLINE, London

Former world number one Rafael Nadal has confirmed he will return from knee trouble in the Mubadala Championship in Abu Dhabi over December 27-29.

Nadal has had a partial tear in his patella tendon and has not played a match since June when he lost to Czech Lukas Rosol in round two at Wimbledon.

But on Tuesday he wrote on his Facebook page: "Can't wait to get back on court in Abu Dhabi at the end of the month."

"I won in 2010 and 2011 -- would love to get my hands on the trophy again!"

The 26-year-old Spaniard, now ranked fourth in the world, has struggled with knee problems in the past and was unable to defend his Wimbledon title in 2009 because of tendonitis.

He secured a record seventh French Open title in June and has won a total of 11 Grand Slams, but missed the Olympics and the US Open. Last week he was cautious about rushing his comeback.

"I will only come back when I am fit. I won't come back worrying about my knee," he told Spanish radio station Onda Cero.

"The results will not worry me in the first tournaments back. We are in the last stage of the recovery and I want to recover as soon as possible but I will not rush back and then have to stop again in six months or a year's time."

## Broad's heel bothers him

Cricket

CRICINFO, Nagpur

Fast bowler Stuart Broad has been sent for scan on his left heel and is a doubt for England's two T20 matches against India.

Broad suffered a recurrence of the heel injury that threatened his involvement in the first Test of the series during training at the VCA Stadium on Tuesday, ahead of the fourth and final Test of the series that starts on Thursday.

While Broad is unlikely to win a recall to the side for that game, he remains a key player in England's T20 side. His absence would also necessitate England naming a new captain for the two games. Eoin Morgan would appear to be the likely replacement.

It may be an inexperienced looking England squad assembled for the T20 games. Not only have experienced players such as Graeme Swann and Kevin Pietersen been rested, but senior coaches Andy Flower, Graham Gooch and the team manager Phil Neale are also going home immediately after the Test.

## Afridi at a crossroads

FROM PAGE 16

India so he should have been included."

But on the street, ordinary fans are fast losing patience with their one-time hero.

"It's time to move on," said Athar Khan, a student in Karachi. "Afridi's form has not been up to the mark and it is common that every rise has a fall, he rose to fame and now he is losing it."

Afridi burst onto the international stage in 1996 when aged just 16 he smashed a 37-ball century -- still an ODI record -- against Sri Lanka in only his second match, and his explosive batting style earned him the nickname

"Boom Boom".

The shortest form of the game brought more fame for Afridi as he starred in Pakistan's World Twenty20 triumph in England in 2009, helping the team with both bat and ball.

The performance elevated him to the captaincy the following year and he led Pakistan to the semi-final of the 2011 World Cup but differences with coach Waqar Younis and then Pakistan Cricket Board chairman Ijaz Butt almost ended his career prematurely.

His form suffered and at this year's T20 World Cup in Sri Lanka in September-October he was a shadow of the player he once was,

## Handball teams leave for Nepal

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's national men's and women's handball team leave here for Nepal today to take part in the IHF Trophy Tournament to be held in Kathmandu from December 12-18.

The men's group comprises of hosts Nepal, Pakistan, Yemen, India, Afghanistan and Bangladesh the women's group includes Bangladesh, Nepal, India and Pakistan.

Though the fixtures have not yet been released but it is expected that the top two teams from both men's and women's groups will play the final after single-round matches.

Bangladesh Handball Federation yesterday announced a 14-member men's squad and a 13-member women's squad following one-month training.

## Rajib held again

SPORTS REPORTER

GM Enamul Hossain Rajib was again forced a draw in the Rose Valley Open International Chess Tournament as Indian IM Dinesh Kumar Sharman held Razib in the ninth round in Kolkata yesterday.

Rajib played with white pieces against French Defence of Dinesh and drew after 67 moves. Razib has five points from nine games.

## Knit Concern

FROM PAGE 16

shuttlers of the country are participating. Tk 1.6 lakhs will be distributed among the winners while six shuttlers from the tournament will be selected for advanced training.

scratching and groping for runs where once he smashed the ball to all corners.

Afridi admitted he was not up to expectations but vowed to fight on.

"I am disappointed at not being able to live up to the expectations but every cricketer goes through such a time. I am not one to run away from challenges as I am a fighter and I will come back," Afridi said in October.

Despite all the disappointments and frustrations of the past few years, there are still some in Pakistan who believe -- or at least hope -- he can manage one last stand.

## India need to change

FROM PAGE 16

all we know, but it didn't look like that. It looked like serious stuff, with some finger-jabbing going on from Patil. And Fletcher would have hated that.

When I worked with Duncan for England, he hated anything like that being done in public. He even hated us talking team business in the dressing room because he felt any player watching us might think we were talking about them. He liked to conduct his business in private.

Fletcher has a very different job now. When he was England coach, he could take people on for the good of the team.

He would incur the wrath of many a county chairman because he knew what was best for England and he wasn't

afraid to upset people along the way. And he turned English cricket around with the help of central contracts and the sort of support for the England team that poor David Lloyd could only dream about when he was coach.

Can Fletcher do that now? Perhaps if India lose this series 3-1, the public will realise that there needs to be a shake-up and support Duncan's attempts to do that, for what is happening in Indian cricket is not Fletcher's fault. Remember, they have lost Rahul Dravid and VVS Laxman, while Sachin Tendulkar is not what he was. Fletcher will want to look into the eyes of Dhoni, Gambhir, Virender Sehwag and even Tendulkar to see how much hunger they have. The day that hunger goes is the day they will have to step down and

Fletcher will know what needs to be done.

It is whether he will be allowed to do it and whether the players take responsibility for what has happened that will be key.

The turnaround in this series has been incredible. For England to have lost three tosses and to have been defeated in the first Test so heavily but to be 2-1 up with one to play is little short of phenomenal.

When they were 2-1 up in the last Ashes series, they went to Sydney and produced their best performance and that is what they want to do now.

There have been echoes in this series of how they came back in Australia after a slightly shaky start in Brisbane and England will not want to share the series.

If they complete the job in Nagpur, it will be right up there with the Ashes.

## Serena as hungry as ever

Tennis

AFP, Paris

Comfortably into her third decade on tour, Serena Williams remains the dominant power in women's tennis with her eyes firmly fixed on overhauling Martina Navratilova and Chris Evert's Grand Slam record in 2013.

The American, who will turn 32 in September, finished the year at three in the world.

She was in a class of her own in the second-half of 2012, winning Wimbledon, the Olympics, the US Open and then capped it off with a stunning straight sets demolition of Maria Sharapova in the WTA Championships final.

"I definitely think I can improve some more," said Williams, who now has 15 Grand Slam singles titles.

That's just three off the 18 collected by Navratilova and Evert with only Steffi Graf's record of 22 looking potentially out of reach.

"The day I feel that I can't improve, I think that's the day I should probably hang up my racket," added Williams, whose success in the latter half of the year looked a distant dream in the first six months of 2012.

Having missed 12 months of action in 2010 and 2011, battling life-threatening blood clots on her lungs, she was a fourth-round loser at the Australian Open.

Then, despite winning claycourt titles in Charleston and Madrid,



SERENA WILLIAMS

her stunning first round defeat to Virginie Razzano at the French Open was her worst career loss at a major and seemed to beckon the end of the line.

But by the time Wimbledon came around in June she was rejuvenated, taking a fifth title at the All England Club in a final where opponent Agnieszka Radwanska at least went down fighting.

It was also at Wimbledon where Williams, never far from controversy, celebrated her Olympic gold with an impromptu "crip walk", a dance linked with America's violent gang culture.

After her trials in the first half of 2012, the American is reluctant to predict another "Serena Slam" where she would hold all four Grand Slam titles at the same time.

To do that she would have to win both the Australian and the French Opens -- trophies currently held by world number one Victoria Azarenka and Sharapova, the world number two, respectively.

Azarenka, 22, who pushed Williams all the way in the US Open final in September, finally came of age in 2012, claiming six titles and realising the talent that had often been at loggerheads with a dangerously frail temperament.

Not that her feistiness has completely vanished.

At Rome, neither she nor Sharapova would give ground at a changeover, a mutual stubbornness which led to an unladylike shoulder barge at the net.

With Williams, Sharapova remains the

sport's biggest attraction.

The 25-year-old Russian also dominates the rich list of women's sports -- according to Forbes, she has raked in at least 20 million dollars each year since 2007.

Completing a career Grand Slam with her win at Roland Garros in June only served to boost the Russian's A-list profile even more.

However, the year wasn't without setbacks when her romance with basketball player Sasha Vujacic ended.

Sharapova is a more mature figure on and off the court, a legacy of her lengthy absence from the sport in 2008 and 2009 when a crippling shoulder injury saw her ranking plummet to 126.

"I try to think that if you're level-headed about difficult defeats and then if you get something in your career that's incredible, you take it in a calm way, then the defeats don't seem as difficult," she said.

While the likes of Sharapova, Williams and Azarenka will be back for more in 2013, former world number one Kim Clijsters will be deep into her second retirement.

The 29-year-old triple US Open champion saw her career ended for good by British teenager Laura Robson at Flushing Meadows in August.

"This feels like the perfect place to retire. I just wish it wasn't today," Clijsters said. "I gave it all and just wasn't good enough at the end of the match."

## Tigers keep up the momentum

FROM PAGE 16

supposed to flex their muscles. With four debutants and without Shakib Al Hasan Bangladesh supposedly did not have a prayer against the likes of Chris Gayle, Marlon Samuels, Kieron Pollard and Sunil Narine. By the time the teams came back to Dhaka after the first two ODIs in Khulna, that notion was dispelled.

The Tigers reprised their Asia Cup discipline and spirit to win the two games by seven wickets and a Bangladesh record 160 runs. The victories owed to the Tigers keeping their heads under pressure, sticking to their lines and

lengths even when the big-hitting West Indians went after the bowlers. Only in the fourth match did they look out of their depth, stumbling to 13 for five before being all out for 136 to lose by 75 runs. But that fighting spirit was again on display when they arrested the West Indian momentum to win the series deciding fifth ODI, that too after being 30 for three in chase of 218.

In a side without Shakib and with Tamim Iqbal not showing up with the bat except in the first game, Bangladesh showed their depth in quality as at different times youngsters put up their hands to

chime in with crucial contributions -- Anamul Haque's century in the second match, Mominul Haque's 25 under severe pressure in the decider and Shohag's consistent show with the ball throughout the series. It was a complete team performance as the older hands Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, captain Mushfiqur Rahim and Mahmudullah Riyad made match-turning contributions.

Even in the 18-run loss in the tour-closing T20I, Bangladesh was not disgraced as they lost only one wicket in the chase of a mammoth 198. It was

more a case of West Indies playing better than Bangladesh playing worse.

There are still problems -- some dropped catches turned the game in favour of the West Indies in the fourth ODI which also saw the Tigers' frailties against genuine pace and swing bowling resurface. But it was a tour that carried on from the Asia Cup in March in strengthening the notion that Bangladesh are an improving side, and will keep improving the more they play. In case of Test cricket, one hopes that the BCB pays special attention in that regard.

## CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

**ACROSS** 1 Fire residue 4 One of the Seven Dwarfs 7 Spruced up 11 Dazzle 13 Historic period 14 Related (to) 15 Caffeine-rich nut 16 Battle 17 Dissolve 18 Okafenone, e.g. 20 Traditional tales 22 Conger, for one 24 The Enlightened One 28 Knot for human consumption? 32 Thin porridge 33 Apiece 34 Martini ingredient 36 Gumbo base 37 "Hog-wash!"

**DOWN** 1 Requests 2 Pack away 3 Hawaiian dance 4 Morning moisture 5 Verbal 6 Chocolate substitute 7 B-list braggarts 8 — 9 Have a bug 10 Explosive letters 12 Old music-based game show

**ACROSS** 39 Sleeping bag closers 41 Exact 43 Burst 44 Stole 46 Cardiff's people 50 Suitor 53 Uncooked 55 Hindu princess 56 React with boredom 57 Clay, now 58 Mouthful of drink 59 — Stanley Gardner 60 Coop dweller 61 To the — degree

**DOWN** 19 Candy known for its dispensers 21 Carpet 23 Lower limb 25 Top-ranking noble 26 Mr., in Munich 27 "Sad to say ..." 28 Energizes, with "up" 29 Grate 30 Reverbate 31 Claiborne of fashion 35 Pinch 38 Court 40 "Bam!" 42 O'Donnell of TV news 45 Hardy cabbage 47 Home turf? 48 Fit of peevishness 49 Lofty 50 "See ya" 51 Listener 52 Puncturing tool 54 Triumph

**Solution time: 24 mins.**

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

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11			12			13			14
15				16				17	
18			19		20		21		
			22		23		24		25
26								27	
28	29	30			31		32		
33				34		35		36	
37				38		39		40	
41				42		43			
				44		45		46	47
48					49			50	51
52					53		54		55
56					57			58	
59					60			61	

## CRYPTOQUIP

GYWPA PUSPKSWSJ T ZMXPWTY  
C T Y A W S J Z D K G T P X C W V B  
Z D M X K B X K U - Y W A X M U C X K Z :  
" V B X G T S V T Z V W P G Y U U K . "

**Saturday's Cryptoquip:** I KNEW IT WAS THE BAKERY ATTEMPTING TO CALL ME BACK. THE NUMBER SHOWED UP ON MY CRULLER ID.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: C equals W