



PHOTO: AFP
Serbia's world number one Novak Djokovic pumps his fist in celebration after beating American Ryan Harrison in the second round of the Australian Open in Melbourne yesterday.

Marauding Novak, Maria

AFP, Melbourne



Defending champion Novak Djokovic oozed class in an awesome performance at the Australian Open Wednesday as Maria Sharapova stormed into the third round without dropping a game.

Djokovic, up last on centre court and chasing the first Australian Open hat-trick since the 1960s, wasted little time in dispatching America's Harrison, who was never close to taking his first ever set off the Serb.

The world number one, handed an uncomplicated draw after the withdrawal of Rafael Nadal, was irresistible as he blew away Harrison 6-1, 6-2, 6-3, but afterwards he spared a thought for his floundering opponent.

"It's a pity for him, I don't think he played his best. It's probably just the occasion, playing on centre court," Djokovic said.

With Roger Federer and Andy Murray both playing on Thursday, David Ferrer and Tomas Berdych also pressed their outside claims as they reached the third round, along with 2006 finalist Marcos Baghdatis and

Japan's Kei Nishikori.

And as women's pre-tournament favourite Serena Williams, a day after rolling her ankle, skipped a public practice session, Sharapova showed why she must be taken seriously for her second Australian Open title.

Sharapova, the world number two, had been flawless in her 6-0, 6-0 opener against Olga Puchkova, and she remarkably repeated the scoreline -- a feat not achieved at a Grand Slam since 1985 -- against Japan's Misaki Doi.

"It's not really the statistic I want to be known for. I want to be known for winning Grand Slam titles, not that I won two matches 6-0, 6-0," said Sharapova, the 2008 winner and beaten finalist last year.

Standing in Sharapova's way in round three is Serena's sister Venus, who is climbing back up the rankings after a long spell of illness and dispatched France's Alize Cornet on the centre court.

"Going out there, there won't be too many secrets. I hope for it to be a great match," Sharapova said.

Fourth seed Agnieszka Radwanska smoothly put away Irina-Camelia Begu to reach the third round, where she was joined by

German fifth seed Angelique Kerber and China's sixth seed Li Na.

"Australia for me -- I really believe I can win this Grand Slam," said 2011 runner-up Li, after her 6-2, 7-5 victory over Olga Govortsova.

But there was misery for Australian favourite Samantha Stosur, the ninth seed and 2011 US Open champion, who threw away five consecutive third-set games as she crashed out against China's Zheng Jie.

Stosur, who suffered first-round flops at WTA events in Brisbane and Sydney this year, was leading 5-2 in the third set but she choked in front of her home fans and ultimately double-faulted to hand Zheng victory 6-4, 1-6, 7-5.

In the men's draw, Spanish fourth seed Ferrer was extended by 125th-ranked American Tim Smyczek before winning 6-0, 7-5, 4-6, 6-3, while Berdych, the fifth seed, enjoyed a straight-sets win over Frenchman Guillaume Rufin.

Elsewhere on day three, Japan's Nishikori powered on with a straight-sets victory over Argentina's Carlos Berlocq, and Spanish 10th seed Nicolas Almagro went through in three sets.

Pakistan to go to Scotland in May

CRICINFO, Edinburgh

Scotland will host Pakistan for two ODIs in Edinburgh in May 2013, shortly before the Champions Trophy in England.

Both games -- on May 17 and 19 -- will be played at the Citylets Grange in Edinburgh. Scotland have played Pakistan on three occasions in the 50-over format, the last one being an abandoned fixture in 2007.

"These fixtures are a fantastic boost for Scottish cricket," captain Gordon Drummond said. "We have the chance to qualify for two global ICC events in 2013, and now we find we also have the opportunity to play two top test nations with Australia also visiting for an ODI in September. These matches are particularly important for the development of the current squad.

"We are all really looking to welcoming the Pakistan team to Scotland once again, and these fixtures will undoubtedly build on the already strong ties between the

Pakistani/Scots community. It's a fantastic platform for us to show what we are capable of, as we did with victory against Bangladesh last year-- these are the sort of matches that every Scottish squad member will want to be involved in."

"Following the ICC's additional investment in Cricket Scotland through their TAPP [Targeted Assistance and Performance Programme] scheme, we committed to secure further matches against the Full Members," chief executive Roddy Smith said.

BPL kicks

FROM PAGE 16
Harwood the only other foreign players in the side, Khulna are in dire need of some good replacements.

Acquiring new players was the need of the hour for a number of other teams as well. Duroto Rajshahi, who had signed up four Pakistani players, claimed to have contacted a number of other international players.

Simon Katich, Moeen Ali and Lahiru Thirimanne are some of the players who the franchise is confident of bringing. On the other hand, Sylhet Royals have reportedly signed up Elton Chigumbura and Suleimann Benn. The BPL governing council also stated that Kieron Pollard might make a comeback to the competition.

Cook hails cool Dhoni



CRICINFO, Kochi

Alastair Cook, England's captain, described MS Dhoni as one of the hardest players in the world to bowl to at the death after his counterattacking 72 from 66 balls late in India's innings provided the platform for their 127-run victory in the second ODI on Tuesday.

Dhoni and Ravindra Jadeja added 96 in ten overs for the sixth wicket, taking apart England's inexperienced attack during the closing stages of the innings, and Cook said that coming up with a field and a bowling plan for his India counterpart was extremely tough.

"He [Dhoni] is probably the best player in the world in those situations, in these conditions," Cook said. "He does it time and time again. He's incredibly hard to bowl at and with that extra man in the circle, it's very, very hard to stop on these flat wickets."

Although James Tredwell conceded just nine runs combined from the 42nd and 44th overs, Cook opted for his pace trio of Steven Finn, Jade Dernbach and Chris Woakes at the death but they failed to keep a lid on India's scoring rate.

"You're always going to have hindsight, but probably one batsman you don't want an offspinner bowling to is Dhoni," Cook said. "We've seen him a number of times and with a spinner at the end, it's very hard to bowl to him. So, look, clearly when

you get hit for 68 runs in the last five overs, you think, maybe you could have done things differently. But at the time, for me, it was a very big gamble to make."

The win drew India level at 1-1 in the five-match series but, despite the emphatic result, the top order again struggled, falling to 119 for 4 just past the midway stage of the innings before Dhoni, Suresh Raina and Jadeja rebuilt. The bowlers bounced back from conceding 325 in Rajkot to dismiss England for 158 but Dhoni said problems remained in both departments and they could not hope for the dominance of recent ODI series between the two sides in India.

"We're going through a stage when we don't have the same firepower when it comes to the bowling department. Our batting department is not able to convert those starts into a big innings. But we're fielding really well, and that's a big positive for us," he said.

Dhoni described the failure of the batsmen to go on when well set as a "big problem". He said: "If three or four batsmen make 50, then it's important at least one or two of them go on to make at least 75. So that the new batsmen coming after them, when say two quick wickets fall, then they won't feel that much pressure. I think it's very important. If you look at the good side, our batsmen are getting starts. Yes, I would like them to convert their starts to a big innings so that it won't put pressure on the rest."

Wade, Healy sort it out



CRICINFO, Brisbane

Matthew Wade has met with Ian Healy in Brisbane ahead of Friday's third one-day international and cleared the air over Healy's strong criticism of Wade's wicketkeeping last week. Wade said he took Healy's words as "constructive" and believed that while he had made a reasonable start to his international career over the past year, he knew the time had come for him to "go up a level".

Wade is back in Australia's ODI squad after being rested for the first two matches and in the lead-up to the one-day series he was the subject of harsh judgment from Healy, who during a radio interview said Wade had made all sorts of mistakes during the Test summer. However, Wade said he had spoken to Healy last week and met him in Brisbane on Tuesday to discuss how to improve his wicketkeeping.

"I took it as constructive," Wade said in Brisbane on Wednesday. "I flew up a couple of hours early yesterday and went and had a coffee with him and had a catch. We went through a few little different bits and pieces. I suppose it would have been easy for me to get grumpy about it. But I took it on board and I've tried to work on a few things. He's one of the best keepers who has ever played. His feedback is always welcome."

"I think there was a build-up to his comments [on radio]... I rang him straight away and had a chat to him about it. He was a little bit disappointed about what had been written and said. I'm sure he'll call me up next time and deliver it straight to me instead."

Wade believes his time off following the

Test series against Sri Lanka has allowed him to freshen up and has been especially valuable given the busy year he has had since becoming Australia's preferred gloveman in all formats. Over the past year, Wade has played 47 of a possible 50 matches for Australia in all formats and his heavy workload is set to continue on the upcoming tours of India and England.

But the man he replaced, Brad Haddin, performed impressively with bat and gloves when given a chance in the ODI side for the first two matches against Sri Lanka, and will keep the pressure on Wade if Australia take two wicketkeepers on their Test trips this year. Wade said he was pleased with how his first 12 months in the team had gone and after his short break he was ready to embark on another busy year.

U-18 cricket

FROM PAGE 16
RAJSHAHI: First innings 335 for 4 dec (Nazmul Hossain Shanto 185 not out, Sabbir Hossain 91; Jubayer 2-60) and Second innings 10 for no loss.

Result: Rajshahi won by 10 wickets
DHAKA METRO: First innings 164 all out (Zubayer 48, Sujan 37; Noman 5-29) and Second innings 145 all out (Wajib Hasan 62; Mostafiz 3-22, Noman 3-41).
KHULNA: First innings 205 for 9 dec (Noman Shahriar 50, Fagik 50; Mesbah 4-54) and Second innings 107 for 2 (Adnan Islam 45).

Result: Khulna won by 8 wickets
BARISAL: First innings 136 all out and Second innings 206 for 9 (Al Imran 49, Ranna 45; Arman 3-60).

DHAKA NORTH: First innings 222 all out (Ariful 96 not out, Ashiqur 47; Shawon Gazi 4-61) and Second innings 40 for 1. Result: Match drawn.

Champion bows out

SPORTS REPORTER

Enayetullah, defending champion in men's singles, was eliminated from the third round of the Qubee 32nd National Badminton Championships when lost against Enamul Haque of Sylhet at the Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmed Indoor Stadium yesterday.

Enayet went down 21-6, 21-10 to Summer Open champion Enamul to bow out of the championships before reaching the semifinal stage, first time since 2000.

Enayet was eliminated from the men's doubles event as well as he, pairing with Raju, lost to Waise and Tagar pair of Sylhet by 21-15, 21-16 points.

Cutting stays with squad

AFP, Brisbane

Australia have brought Ben Cutting back into their one-day squad as fast bowling cover for Friday's match against Sri Lanka.

Cutting, 25, made his ODI debut in Sunday's heavy defeat in Adelaide but was dropped as pacemen Mitchell Johnson and Mitchell Starc returned from minor injuries.

PCB bars its players

FROM PAGE 16

have taken such a tough stance without any prior notice knowing that it would throw the organisation into jeopardy," he said.

He however said that the PCB's action gave the BCB some breathing space with regard to sending the team to Pakistan and they will sit to decide on the future relationship with their Pakistan counterparts.

"We are no longer in a hurry. We were under tremendous pressure, so now we have some breathing space. We will now decide on the sort of response regarding the tour. But one thing is very clear -- it is not possible for us to commit to a tour without an inspection, and we will not go into any kind of conditional agreement," Papon said, adding jokingly that the PCB

was no longer in his mind.

Papon also confirmed that there was no scope for the Pakistani players to play the tournament even if their board had a change of heart.

"There have been problems with only one team (Khulna Royal Bengals). We are putting in all our efforts to search for replacement players and the good news is that we have got good alternative players who will be of no less quality than the Pakistani players, except one or two. So, there is no scope for them (Pakistani players) to play the tournament even if they want to come," said Papon.

He also expressed his optimism about the success of the second edition of the tournament despite the absence of the Pakistani players.

Strugglers seeking

FROM PAGE 16

"We played well in the first leg but the strikers could not avail the chances they got. At the same time we could not hold lead despite taking lead. Considering those aspects, we are searching for a quality striker from Nigeria and a defensive midfielder from Brazil," said Brothers manager Amer Khan.

Feni Soccer Club are ahead of Brothers in that respect as they have already brought five foreigners from Ghana and Nigeria for trial and are expected to rope in two to three of them.

"We have also requested Sheikh Jamal to loan us their two local players -- Shahed and Sohul Rana and they will inform us about it after their match against Brothers Union," said Feni Soccer Club's joint-secretary Shahin.

Arambagh have also confirmed the arrival of a Cameroonian midfielder and requested their old guard Amadi Moses and Goodwin to come and join them.

"I am hopeful about playing better than the first leg and avoiding relegation after the

inclusion of four foreign players," said Arambagh's manager Kazi Jolly.

Holders Abahani have little possibility of signing up any new players as manger Satyajit Das Rupu believes the new players would struggle to adjust with the system as well as the players. Sheikh Russel coach Maruful Haque wants to bring back Nigerian hitman Alamu Bukola Olalekan, who is very familiar with Bangladesh football as well as the coaching system of Maruf.

Sheikh Jamal are also aiming to bring back Nigerian defender Monday and midfielder Okemmiri, both of whom played for Sheikh Jamal in the Federation Cup. They are also mulling about bringing one striker and one midfielder from Morocco for a trial.

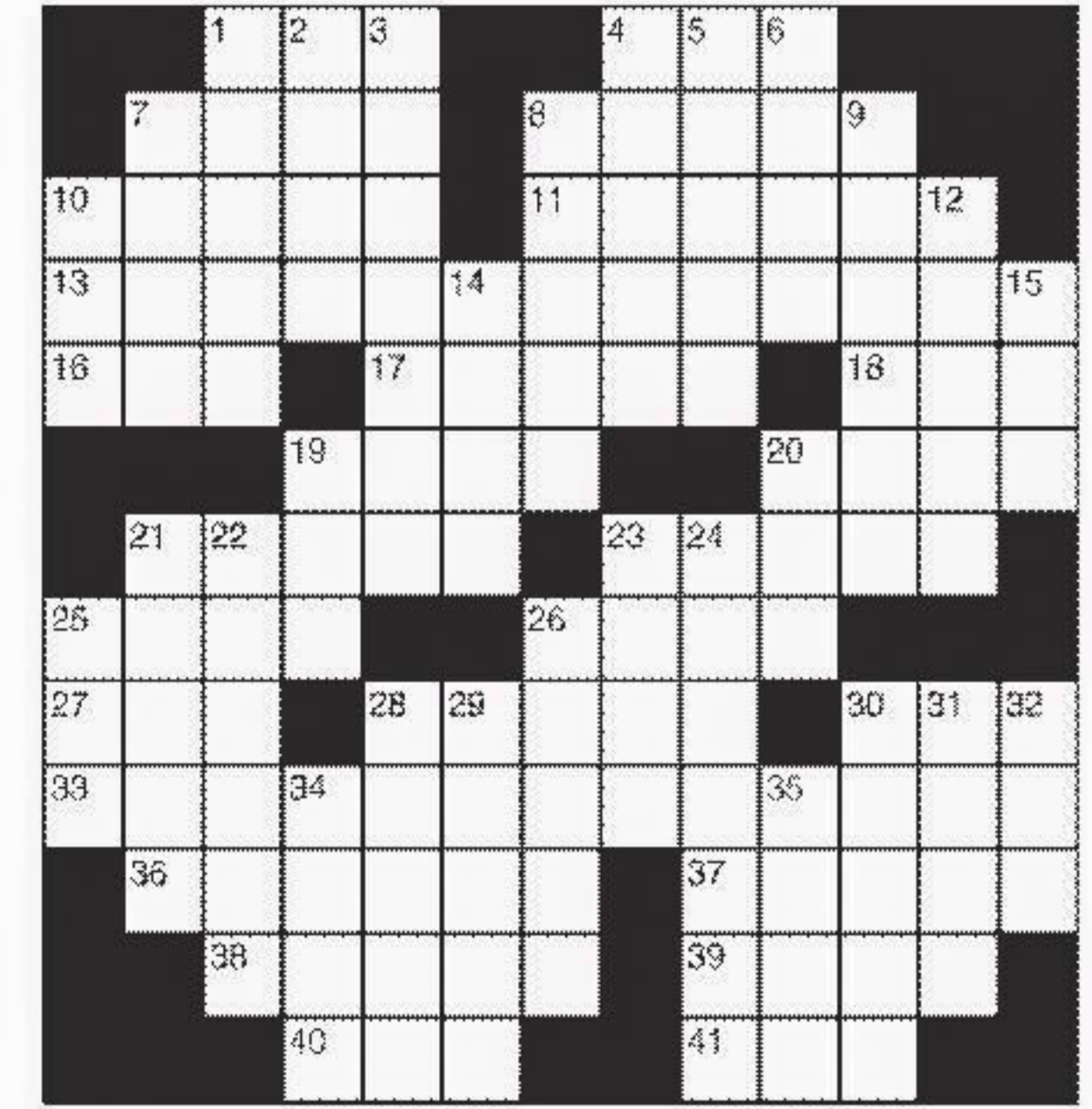
Mid-table clubs Mohammedan and BJMC have been trying to bring players from Africa and Russia respectively in a bid to lift their position in the points table.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	30 Illuminated	2 "Carmina Burana" composer	19 Deposit
1 AAA job	33 One-on-one sites in church org.	3 Magi	20 Regret
4 Fed. purchasing org.	36 Esprit de corps	4 Afaddin's ally	21 Gomerah's sister
7 Hindu garment	37 Screwdriver	5 Starch-yielding palms	22 Swedish money
8 Intended to the waves	38 Construction fastener	6 In due time	23 Henry
10 Takes material	39 Previous nights	7 Certain	24 Massachusetts city
11 Sweater check	40 Under-stand	8 Spars	25 Pouch
13 Pay-recipients	41 Scooted	9 Go places	26 Boob tube
16 Still	DOWN	10 Agent	28 Go
17 Partners	1 Fortune teller's deck	12 Preferred	29 Archipelago
18 By way of	14 Fundered	15 Perched	30 Burdened
19 Nerdy	15 Perched		31 Types

Solution time: 21 mins.

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CRYPTOQUIP

H V B K T M H A Y - B G K K E H A L
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H A E G M H F T Z A N Z F T B . H
L C M B B E G M N ' F M I C Q Q P M - V H B G .

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: NOVEL ABOUT A SCARLET-TONED FERRET'S RELATIVE THAT IS BRAVE: "THE RED BADGER OF COURAGE."
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: E equals T