

# Bouchard blocking Li's path to final

AFP, Melbourne



Li Na has exciting young teenager Eugenie Bouchard standing in the way of a second consecutive Australian Open final after the Chinese star crushed Flavia Pennetta to make the last four Tuesday.

The fourth seed demolished the Italian 6-2, 6-2 to set up an enticing clash with the Canadian hotshot, 12 years her junior, who upset former world number one Ana Ivanovic in three sets.

Chinese trailblazer Li, 31, is a two-time Melbourne finalist but has never lifted the trophy, losing to Kim Clijsters in 2011 and last year to Victoria Azarenka after dramatically twice rolling her ankle and briefly blacking out.

With revenge against Azarenka in prospect, Li powered past Pennetta and appears to be hitting peak form at the right time.

"I think everyone wants to win a Grand Slam. But first you have to be in the semis, right?" said Li, when asked about her chances with Serena Williams and Maria Sharapova both already out.

"But I was really happy today. At least

tomorrow I have a day off. I can talk with (coach) Carlos (Rodriguez), can talk with the team and prepare for the next round."

The next match is an unknown quantity for Li with Bouchard coming from nowhere to make her first ever Grand Slam semi-final, mirroring last year's run to the last four by another teenager, America's Sloane Stephens.

Bouchard rallied from a set down to beat resurgent 2008 French Open champion Ivanovic and reinforce her status as one of the game's most exciting prospects.

The 19-year-old Canadian, the WTA's newcomer of the year in 2013, showed composure and grit to upset the 14th-ranked Serb 5-7, 7-5, 6-2.

It was all the more remarkable in that she is making her tournament debut, with the victory forecast to push her into the world's top 20 when the new rankings are released next week.

"I feel like she was playing really well and I had to keep fighting and playing aggressive," Bouchard said. "I feel like I stepped it up in the second and third sets."

The shock win ended the unbeaten streak of Ivanovic, who came into the tournament on the back of victory at the Auckland International and shocked Williams in his



Switzerland's Stanislas Wawrinka punches the air in joy after overcoming defending champion Novak Djokovic of Serbia in a gruelling four-hour Australian Open quarterfinal in Melbourne yesterday.

PHOTO: INTERNET

# Wow-rinka!

AFP, Melbourne



Switzerland's Stanislas Wawrinka stunned three-time defending champion Novak Djokovic at the Australian Open on Tuesday in a huge shock which threw the men's competition into flux.

The eighth seed triumphed after a pulsating five-set quarter-final which ran for exactly four hours and finished 2-6, 6-4, 6-2, 3-6, 9-7 when Djokovic volleyed out on the first match point.

It was a personal triumph for Wawrinka, 28, who took Djokovic the distance in last year's fourth round and was also denied by the Serb in another five-setter at the US Open.

Wawrinka's win halted Djokovic's 25-match winning streak at the Australian Open, which stretched back to 2011 and included 2012's record, six-hour final against Rafael Nadal.

It also snapped the six-time Grand Slam champion's sequence of 14 straight major semi-finals, and broke a 28-match unbeaten run dating back to the US Open final in September.

"Last year (at the Australian Open) I didn't finish it and it was really tough. But this year I came back, it's a new year and I was feeling really good," Wawrinka said.

"I tried everything, he's an amazing champion... I'm really, really, really, really happy."

Wawrinka, who was cramping by the end and headed straight for an

ice bath, goes into his second Grand Slam semifinal where he will face Tomas Berdych after the Czech ousted third seed Spaniard David Ferrer 6-1, 6-4, 2-6, 6-4.

The victory, Berdych's first at Rod Laver Arena, the tournament's centre court, means he has now completed a set of semi-final appearances at all four Grand Slams.

"It feels great. It's really a great feeling," Berdych said.

Djokovic bombed through the first set in just over half-an-hour but he stumbled in the second, and looked increasingly tight in the third, as Wawrinka took a two-sets-to-one lead.

The champion was tottering but just when he looked to be heading out against the increasingly confident Swiss, he broke for 5-3 in the

fourth set, letting out a mighty yell to the heavens.

He sealed the set with an ace to take it into a fifth, where they exchanged early breaks and Wawrinka staved off another break point at 2-1 down with a titanic, 31-shot rally.

The decider stretched on until the 16th game when a Djokovic error gave Wawrinka a match point. And as the clock ticked over to four hours, the Serb's long reign crumbled when he put a volley out.

"He took his opportunities. He deserved this win today. I congratulate him absolutely. There is nothing I can say," Djokovic said.

"You know, I gave it my best. I gave it all. I tried to come out as the winner. I tried to fight till the last point as I did in a very similar match we did last year fourth round, same

## Dav pleased with parting gift

AFP, Sharjah

Departing Pakistan coach Dav Whatmore said he ended his tenure on a happy note with his team winning the third Test, and admitted he may still return in another capacity.

The 59-year-old ended his two-year stint at the helm with the three-match series against Sri Lanka, which Pakistan levelled 1-1 by winning the third and final Test in Sharjah on Monday.

"(I am) absolutely delighted, it's a satisfying win... and a perfect gift the boys have given me on my departure," said Whatmore.

"I am leaving on a very happy note," he added.

Last month announced he would not renew his contract.

"I am leaving the Pakistan Cricket Board on amicable terms, but it's not a case of leaving Pakistan and not wanting ever to come back," he said.

## Mourinho has elbow op

AFP, London

Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho has undergone an operation on his elbow in a bid to cure a long-standing complaint, the Premier League club announced Monday.

The 50-year-old Portuguese boss oversaw Chelsea's 3-1 Premier League defeat of champions Manchester United at Stamford Bridge on Sunday before receiving a tribute award from the Football Writers' Association at London's Savoy Hotel.

He then had the operation on Sunday, with Chelsea's Twitter feed saying Monday: "Jose Mourinho today underwent a minor arthroscopic procedure on a long-standing elbow complaint. He will return to work tomorrow (Tuesday)."



Portuguese superstar Cristiano Ronaldo poses with the Order of Prince Henry medal during a ceremony at the Belem Palace in Lisbon yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Another feather in Ronaldo's cap

AFP, Lisbon



Cristiano Ronaldo was on Monday awarded one of the most prestigious honours in Portugal from the country's President Anibal Cavaco Silva.

The Portugal captain and Real Madrid forward was awarded the Ordem do Infante Dom Henrique, the Order of Prince Henry, in the presidential palace in Lisbon.

Silva paid tribute to "the extraordinary talent of Ronaldo ... who brings prestige to Portugal around the world."

He congratulated Ronaldo for "his talent, discipline and the determination he has always shown ... an example for young generations."

The 28-year-old received an honour that was created in 1960 to mark the 500th anniversary of the death of one of the most important figures in the Portuguese Empire.

The ceremony took place at the presidential palace in Belem, just outside Lisbon, a week after Ronaldo won the Ballon d'Or title for the second time, and the world's top footballer brought his new trophy with him.

The trophy will now go on display in the museum opened last December in Madeira, the Portuguese island from where Ronaldo comes.

"It gives me great pride to represent Portugal in the world," said Ronaldo.

"This distinction is a source of additional motivation to continue to work harder and represent Portugal at the highest level."

## Kiwis seek to continue pace test

AFP, Wellington

New Zealand's joy at exposing a weakness in the Indian armour and beating the top one-day team was tempered Tuesday with the loss of their new strike weapon for the rest of the series.

India's failure to handle short-pitched pace bowling played a large part in their 24-run loss in Sunday's opening match of the five ODI series.

New Zealand physio-therapist Paul Close said Tuesday that rising fast bowler Adam Milne -- who pounded India with a stream of deliveries in excess of 150 kilometres an hour (93 mph) and claimed the wicket of Suresh Raina -- required a six-week rehabilitation period for a strained abdominal muscle.

Mitchell McClenaghan, whose four for 68 shone in the win, said New Zealand had plans on how to unsettle each Indian batsman.

## FA charges Anelka

AFP, London



West Bromwich Albion striker Nicolas Anelka faces a lengthy ban after being charged by the Football Association on Tuesday over an allegedly anti-Semitic salute.

The 34-year-old French striker performed the 'quenelle' salute, putting one arm across his chest and straightening the other, during West Brom's 3-3 draw at West Ham United in the Premier League last month.

"The FA has charged the West Bromwich Albion player Nicolas Anelka following an incident that occurred during the West Ham United versus West Bromwich Albion fixture at the Boleyn Ground on 28 December 2013," read a statement published on the FA website.

The FA said that Anelka had made a gesture that was "abusive and/or indecent and/or insulting and/or improper" and included "a reference to ethnic origin and/or race and/or religion or belief".

Anelka has until 1800 GMT on Thursday to respond to the charge and if found guilty he faces a minimum five-game suspension under new anti-discrimination measures introduced by the FA in May last year.

An independent three-person commission will be appointed to deal with the case, which will be decided by a disciplinary hearing if Anelka contests the charge.

The FA revealed earlier this month that it was working with "an appointed expert" to investigate the matter.

The 'quenelle', popularised by French

comedian Dieudonne M'bala M'bala, has been described by critics in France as an inverted Nazi salute, but Anelka has insisted that it was merely "a dedication" to the comic.

M'bala M'bala, better known simply as Dieudonne, has been prosecuted for anti-Semitism in France, but he says the salute is merely an anti-establishment gesture.

The FA's decision to charge Anelka, after a three-and-a-half-week investigation, comes a day after West Brom's shirt sponsors, property website Zoopla, decided to end their association with the club.

"In recent weeks we have decided to re-evaluate this sponsorship and as a result we will focus our attention on other marketing activities from the end of the season," said Lawrence Hall, Zoopla's head of communications.

The deal was reportedly worth £3 million (\$4.9 million, 3.6 million euros) over two years, but West Brom said that they had already been planning to find a new sponsor.

British media reports suggested the company had called on West Brom to drop Anelka over the affair.

Anelka has agreed to a request from West Brom not to repeat the salute, following a wave of criticism in the immediate aftermath of the incident.

French sports minister Valerie Fourneyron condemned the gesture as "shocking" and "sickening", while the European Jewish Congress called for Anelka to face the same punishment that would be handed down for a Nazi salute.

## FIH president coming again

SPORTS REPORTER

Leandro Negre, president of International Hockey Federation (FIH), is set to come to Bangladesh for a second time in less than a year to inaugurate the National School Hockey Championship which will be held across the country from February 1.

Negre, who last visited Bangladesh in February last year on a request from the Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF), is expected to arrive here on January 31 to inaugurate the 102-school championship on February 1 as chief guest.

Negre will be the second president of an international sports body to inaugurate a grass-roots tournament in Bangladesh after the then FIFA president Joao Havelange had inaugurated the Pioneer Football League in 1983.

The BHF will distribute sports gear among the participating schools of Dhaka Division to boost training ahead of the championship.