

Nadal wins Monte Carlo Masters title



Spain's Rafael Nadal holds his trophy after defeating Serbia's Novak Djokovic during their final match of the Monte Carlo Tennis Masters tournament, in Monaco, Sunday, April 19, 2009. (AP Photo/Claude Paris)

MONACO (AP) - Rafael Nadal became the first player to win five straight Monte Carlo Masters titles by beating Novak Djokovic 6-3, 2-6, 6-1 Sunday.

The top-ranked Spaniard dropped his first set since the 2006 final against Roger Federer as the third-seeded Djokovic rallied to win the second set, pinning Nadal behind the baseline and picking him off at the net.

Nadal trailed 3-1 in the first set before reeling

off five straight games. Struggling on serve in the decider, he saved three break points and needed 14 minutes to hold his opening service game. But Nadal held and it was Djokovic who crumbled as the Spaniard clinched victory on his first match point when the Serbian sent a backhand into the net.

Nadal extended his winning streak at Monte Carlo to 27 and won his 21st straight victory on clay since losing to Juan Carlos Ferrero of Spain

in the second round of the Rome Masters in May 2008.

Nobody has matched Nadal's performance at the Monte Carlo tournament since tennis turned professional in 1968.

Reggie Doherty won the event six times overall between 1897-99 and 1902-04, while five-time winner Anthony Wilding of New Zealand won four times in a row from 1911-14 and got his other title in 1908.

The momentum of the match went Djokovic's way after he dominated the second set, winning all nine points at the net and putting huge pressure on Nadal's wavering serve.

But Djokovic missed his chance at the beginning of the third set, wasting three break points in the first game. After a long rally at 30-40, Djokovic seemed certain to break Nadal with a drop shot, but Nadal somehow got it back for a winner and Djokovic sank to his knees.

With Djokovic finding his range with huge shots, he forced another chance that Nadal saved with a strong first serve. Another big forehand winner offered up a third break point, which Djokovic missed when his return landed just out.

Nadal broke Djokovic immediately for a 2-0 lead, but he was struggling to hold and dropped serve on his third break point in the third game to let Djokovic back in the match.

But Nadal improved and won the next five games - just like he did at 3-1 down in the first set - as Djokovic went for extravagant winners that landed out.

Delhi beats Punjab by 10 wickets

CAPE TOWN, South Africa (AP) - The Delhi Daredevils beat Kings XI Punjab by 10 wickets Sunday in an Indian Premier League match twice shortened due to rain.

Led by Virender Sehwag's 38 off 16 balls, Delhi reached 58-0 off 4.5 overs chasing 54 from six after Punjab had scored 104-7 off 12 overs at Newlands.

Sehwag blasted four boundaries and three sixes, while opening partner Gautam Gambhir hit 15 off 13 balls.

Punjab captain Yuvraj Singh said Delhi became favorites once the target was revised.

"I think it's always the case," Yuvraj said. "That is what happened. We, however, take some positives from it."

Sehwag agreed.

"Yes, it's easier to chase because you get to know the total you want," he said. "You are more free to go for the ball."

Left-arm Daredevils spinner Daniel Vettori claimed 3-15, removing Ravi Bopara (22), Kumar Sangakkara (8) and Mahela Jayawardene (6) in three consecutive overs to slow the scoring by the Kings XI.

Brief scores:

Delhi 58-0 in 4.5 overs (Virender Sehwag 38 not out, Gautam Gambhir 15 not out) def. **Punjab** 104-7 in 12 overs (Karan Goel 38, Ravi Bopara 22; Daniel Vettori 3-15)

Donaire floors Martinez to keep IBF crown



Nonito Donaire of Philippines displays his belts during the IBF flyweight title bout in suburban Quezon City, north of Manila, Philippines on Sunday April 19, 2009. (AP Photo/Aaron Favila)

MANILA, Philippines (AP) - Nonito Donaire of the Philippines knocked down American challenger Raul Martinez four times Sunday to win by technical knockout and retain his International Boxing Federation flyweight title.

Donaire (21-1) pummeled the previously undefeated Martinez (24-1) with rapid punches to the head, sending him to the canvas a fourth time before the referee stopped the fight 2:42 into the fourth round.

"I just did what I had to do," said the 26-year-old Donaire, who earlier vowed not to fail the big hometown crowd at Manila's Araneta Coliseum.

The taller Donaire worked early on Martinez, flooring him twice in the first round and once in the second. In the fourth round, Martinez took a sharp left uppercut and fell backward, prompting referee Pete Podgorski to stop the match. The Filipino crowd roared, chanting Donaire's name.

Martinez, from San Antonio, Texas, had a

record of 24 wins - 14 by knockout - before losing his first fight Sunday. After Donaire won, Martinez grabbed and waved a Philippine flag.

Former Philippine president Joseph Estrada, who sat in the ringside, congratulated Donaire.

Brian Vilorio of the United States knocked out Ulises Solis of Mexico with a powerful right to the jaw in the 11th round to become the new IBF light flyweight champion.

The Hawaii-born Vilorio (25-2), who is of Philippine ancestry, raised his arms in victory and shed tears as Solis lay on the canvas.

"He's not a Filipino executioner no more. It ended today," the 28-year-old Vilorio said of Solis (28-2-2), who had defeated three Filipino fighters in the last two years.

President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo's office said she was "ecstatic" over the victories by Donaire and Vilorio, adding that Philippine boxing was going through a "Renaissance."

Davis Cup 2009 in Syria

It was fantastic campaign - Iddamalgoda

by Revata S. Silva

Sri Lanka's Davis Cup Non-Playing Captain Aasiri Iddamalgoda speaking to 'The Island' on Sunday (19) said this year's Davis Cup campaign in Syria was fantastic as Sri Lanka could earn the much anticipated Group-II entry in their Asia-Oceania Zone.

After defeating Lebanon 3-0 on Saturday (18), Sri Lanka earned qualification for Group-II after 10 years in this main annual international men's team tennis competition.

Speaking from the Hamadanya

Sports Centre in Aleppo, Syria, the venue of this year's Asia-Oceania Zone Group-III, Iddamalgoda, who featured himself as a player in the 1999 Sri Lanka campaign in Davis Cup when she last appeared in the prestigious Group-II, thanked the Sri Lankan tennis administration and all the parties that supported their successful campaign.

Sri Lanka's only loss was recorded on Sunday when the highest ranked team this year, Pacific Oceania, beat them 3-0 to grab the No.1 spot in the eight-team competition. Sri Lanka

ended up as the second which is a sufficient placement for their Group-II qualification that has been eluding them quite painfully during the last three years.

"The training we had in Thailand days before we left to Syria proved very vital. The reception and the facilities we have here are very good. I thank everyone who helped us here and in Colombo, especially the Sri Lanka Tennis Association," remarked Iddamalgoda.

In a format where only the top two nations earn the upper Group qualifi-



Aasiri Iddamalgoda

cation, Sri Lanka ended up third in the Philippines in 2006 and a joint second in Colombo in 2007 before ending up as the fifth in Iran last year in Asia-Oceania Group-III.

Sri Lanka team is to arrive here in Sri Lanka today (20).

Results on Sunday:

SL lost to Pacific Oceania 3-0
Harshana Godamanna lost 1st Singles 7-5, 6-3.

Rajeev Rajapakse lost 2nd Singles 7-6(-), 6-4.

Sankha Atukorale & Guyana Weerasekera lost Doubles 4-6, 6-4, 6-4.

Final Standings of Davis Cup Asia-Oceania Zone Group-III:

1. Pacific Oceania and
2. Sri Lanka.

The two countries will qualify for Group-II in 2010.