

Sharapova and Roddick crash at Wimbledon



WIMBLEDON (AP) — Moments after Maria Sharapova walked off the court in defeat, her father stomped away from the stadium walkway, spitting out words in Russian as he gestured to a companion.

Upon climbing a stairway to the players' patio, Yuri Sharapov encountered the father of two other former Wimbledon champions, Richard Williams. They shook hands without a word, and Williams began to giggle at the seething Sharapov, who couldn't resist cracking a rare smile.

They belong to an exclusive club of dads who know what it's like to watch their little girl flop as the world watches. Sharapov endured the experience Thursday, when his daughter lost 6-2, 6-4 in the second round to Alla Kudryavtseva, a fellow Russian ranked 154th.

"There's only one winner in the tournament, and everybody else is disappointed," Sharapova said. "I'm one of them."

While Sharapova never really gave herself a chance, missed opportunities doomed Andy Roddick. The two-time Wimbledon runner-up went 0-for-8 converting break points, squandered three set points in the final set and lost to Janko Tipsarevic 6-7 (5), 7-5, 6-4, 7-6 (4).

"Any chance I got, I pretty much just choked it," Roddick said. "It's like you want something so bad you almost squeeze too tight."

Other title contenders gave their parents more to cheer about. No. 2-ranked Rafael Nadal showed a rare flash of anger at a questionable call in the opening set but regained his composure to beat 19-year-old Ernests Gulbis 5-7, 6-2, 7-6 (2), 6-3. Williams' daughter, Venus, seeking her fifth Wimbledon title, needed 26 points to win a single game but eventually shook stubborn Anne Keothavong of Britain, 7-5, 6-2.

Venus and sister Serena also won their second-round doubles match shortly after being named to the U.S. Olympic team.

But 1999 Wimbledon champion Lindsay Davenport withdrew before her second-round match because of a lingering knee injury. Davenport, back at Wimbledon for the first time in three years after becoming a mother, said she still expects to play in the Olympics.

American men went 0-for-3. The elimination of Roddick, Jesse Levine and Olympian James Blake left the United States with one player in the third round of gentlemen's singles: No. 102-ranked Bobby Reynolds.

U.S. fans might want to claim Kudryavtseva, who was born in Moscow but lives in Boca Raton, Fla. She sent Sharapova to her earliest exit at a Grand Slam tournament since 2003.

Adding insult to the result, Kudryavtseva trashed the tuxedo-style ensemble worn by Sharapova that had been the talk of the tournament.

"I don't like her outfit," Kudryavtseva said. "It's a little too much of everything. ... It was one of the motivations to beat her."

Spraying shots from the start, cover girl Sharapova disproved the adage that anybody looks good in a tux. The 2004 Wimbledon champion had eight double-faults, including three in one game, and wore the net out with her groundstrokes.

"I guess it wasn't my day," Sharapova said. "I was just pretty tentative."

And why was that?

"Not sure. Very good question. A question I'll be asking myself later today."

The second-ranked Sharapova won her third Grand Slam title at the Australian Open in January but has experienced dismal defeats at two major events this month. She blew a big lead in a fourth-round loss to Dinara Safina at the French Open.

Kudryavtseva, the daughter of a world champion in Greco-Roman wrestling, has been ranked as high as 59th. She came within two points of upsetting Venus Williams in the first round last year.

"I was so close to winning, and then just played a little too passive in the end," Kudryavtseva said. "So today I was like, 'There's no way I'm going to do the same mistake again,' so I went for my shots."

In the final game, Sharapova shanked two shots, then double-faulted to reach match point. Kudryavtseva fulfilled her pledge to stay aggressive, smacking a forehand winner for the victory, then hopped backward toward the net with glee.

"She beat me, and it probably made her tournament," Sharapova said.

Sharapova walked off wearing a frown and not her tuxedo warm-up jacket, which instead was tucked in her bag, not to be seen again in the tournament.

Also gone for good is the sixth-seeded Roddick, who failed three times to put returns in play when he had set points in the fourth set. When he chipped one of the returns awkwardly into the net, he cursed himself, and he was just as self-critical an hour after Tipsarevic closed out the upset.

"I just didn't make anything happen out there," Roddick said. "Zero, zero, zero."

Tipsarevic advanced one day after fellow Serbian Novak Djokovic was upset in the second round by Marat Safin.

"This means the world to me," Tipsarevic said. "I'm just glad that I won and Serbia will have more representatives in the men's singles draw."

The elimination of Roddick eases the path to the final for Nadal, seeking to become the first man since Bjorn Borg in 1980 to win the French Open and Wimbledon back to back.

Facing a tough second-round opponent in the precocious Gulbis, a French Open quarterfinalist, Nadal looked unusually edgy early. He threw a brief tantrum at 5-all in the first set when the chair umpire awarded a point to Gulbis, ruling the ball had bounced twice before Nadal hit it.

"I say, 'That's unbelievable how you can't see something like this,'" Nadal said. "I said, 'Probably your fault I'm going to lose the set.' But ... I lose the set because I played terrible, terrible next game."

There was also a tense moment in the second set of the Williams match, when she and Keothavong exchanged shots at point-blank range. Keothavong ripped a backhand that hit Williams in the neck area.

"It hurt," Williams said. "This is tennis. You've got to be ready for whatever. I've hit some people, too. That's just how it goes sometimes. I don't think she was aiming for me. And if she was, she didn't tell me about it."

It has been an eventful week for Williams, who was attacked by a bumblebee in her first match. But she's into the third round without any stings or bruises, so who can blame her dad for giggling?

Iran to take on S. Korea, Saudi Arabia

Tehran Times Sports Desk
KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia — Iran has been drawn with South Korea and Saudi Arabia soccer teams in Group B of the 2010 World Cup qualifying round.

In Group A, Asian heavyweights Australia and Japan will face each other.

The two Asian groups are as follows:

Group A: Australia, Japan, Uzbekistan, Qatar, and Bahrain

Group B: Iran, South Korea, Saudi Arabia, North Korea, and the UAE.

The top two teams in each group will automatically qualify for the final round while the third teams play in a two legs play off. The winner will have to face Oceania's representative to book a place in the 2010 World Cup final round.

Iran is scheduled to play Saudi Arabia in the opening day of the tournament in Riyadh on September 6.



Asian Football Confederation Director of Competitions Michelle Chai shows "Iran" during the draw for 2010 FIFA World Cup Asian Qualification Final Round soccer matches in Kuala Lumpur June 27, 2008. (Reuters)

'We are in a tough group'

Tehran Times Sports Desk
KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia — Iran football coach expressed his concern here on Friday about Iran's group in the 2010 World Cup qualifying round.

Iran was drawn along with the two Koreas, Saudi Arabia and the UAE in the final round of the 2010 World Cup qualifications in Group B. Group A consists of Australia, Japan, Bahrain, Qatar, and Uz-

bekistan.

"We were drawn in a tough group, however will do our best to advance straight to the final round. To play the UAE once again will be difficult and it definitely is different from the preliminary round," stated Ali Daei.

Iran will hold a preparatory camp in Spain ahead of the competitions which starts in September, he added.



Spain reign supreme to leave Russia's ambitions in ruins

VIENNA (AFP) — Spain one of the pre-tournament title favorites ensured they made their first final for 24 years when they demolished Russia 3-0 here on Thursday in their Euro 2008 semi-final.

Xavi, Daniel Guiza and David Silva scored the goals as Spain brought Russia quickly back down to earth following their surprise win over Holland in the quarter-finals to give them a chance of a second European crown after the one they won in 1964 - they also made the 1984 final where they lost to hosts France.

ball more often than not was poor.

Spain had the first chance as David Villa cleverly played in Fernando Torres in the sixth minute but goalkeeper Igor Akinfeev kicked away his snap-shot.

Villa then tried his luck from distance with a vicious shot that Akinfeev palmed to safety.

Arshavin was largely anonymous throughout although his strike partner Roman Pavlyuchenko proved an occasional menace and lashed a free-kick over the bar on 16min.



Spain's Arsenal midfielder Cesc Fabregas was a standout player creating two of the goals after coming on for leading scorer David Villa in the first-half, and said that the task was not over.

"We came here to win the title, and the most difficult match is to come," said the 21-year-old.

"It was kind of strange coming on that early and also as I am not a natural striker a strange position for me to take up.

"Will I play in the final? Well he (Luis Aragones) is the boss and I will be there if he needs me."

Asked if this was the best game of his life he shrugged: "Maybe, but I'll have to watch it on video again to have a better opinion.

"I don't think I changed the game though when I came on, I just played the way I could."

Guus Hiddink's team failed to spark here with the much-hyped Andrei Arshavin a huge let-down.

Spain were always the more controlled and measured and when they let their passing game flow in the second half they proved too irresistible for their inexperienced opponents.

The result matched the 4-1 Group D drubbing the Spaniards had dealt Russia in their opening game of the competition and they will now meet Germany - who beat Turkey 3-2 in Wednesday's other semi-final - in Sunday's trophy match.

Russia began with a lot of energy, although their final

Iran's CP football team to play in Portugal

Tehran Times Sports Desk
TEHRAN — Iran's cerebral palsy (CP) football team is set to travel to Lisbon, capital of Portugal, to hold a preparatory camp prior to the 2008 Beijing Paralympic Games, Iranian CP team's supervisor said here on Friday.

Ramin Allahmani stated, "We will travel to Portugal to participate in a warm up camp with the participation of the host and the Netherlands."

Iran's one week camp will start on August 3.

Firat named as Sepahan coach

Tehran Times Sports Desk
ISFAHAN — Engin Firat has been appointed as Sepahan of Isfahan coach replacing Jorvan Vieira, said Sepahan's general manager here on Thursday.

Firat who was assistant coach of Iran's national team, will head the Asian runner-up in the current season, said Mohammad Reza Saket.

"Following a telephone discussion with Iran's coach Ali Daei, Firat, whose contract is extendable for a further three years, will head Sepahan in the upcoming season," added Saket.

Iranian women cyclists league to be formed

Tehran Times Sports Desk
TEHRAN — Iran's women cycling league will be established said Iranian Cycling Federation's vice president here on Friday.

"Our women cyclists had a pretty good performance in the Asian competitions compared to last season. It shows we can succeed."

"Iranian women cyclists will participate in the domestic competitions and we have requested our committees for speedy implementation of more teams to form a strong national team," said Farideh Neisian.

Turkey learns that not all fairy tales have happy endings

VIENNA (AP) — Turkey impressed many with the fighting spirit, technical skills and strength in adversity that carried the team to the European Championship semifinals, until the team learned that not all fairy tales have happy endings.

A run of late goals that stunned opponents continued into a scarcely believable fourth match Wednesday in Basel, Switzerland, but unluckily for the Turks, Germany seemingly learned to work from a similar script. The three-time European champions struck even later for a 90th-minute winner in a 3-2 victory.

Germany advanced to Sunday's final in Vienna while Turkey flew home to Istanbul on Thursday with full of pride, sweet memories and self-confidence. Only the trophy was missing in its luggage.

Turkish President Abdullah Gul, who watched the semifinal alongside German Chancellor Angela Merkel, was proud of the team's performance during the tournament.

"This is how the game ended but we played really well. We are coming back (home) proud. No need to be upset, we are coming back our heads high up," he was quoted as saying by Turkey's state-run media.