

SPORTS
sports

Serena withdraws from Italian Open with injury

Serena Williams won her first round match after two months out with a knee injury

AFP | Rome, Italy

Serena Williams withdrew from the Italian Open yesterday with a recurring left knee injury handing sister Venus a walkover into the third round.

In yesterday's statement the 23-time Grand Slam winner insisted she would still be competing in the French Open later this month.

"I must withdraw from the Italian Open due to pain in my left knee," Serena said in a statement.

"I will miss the fans and competition at one of my favourite tournaments.

"I'll be concentrating on rehab and look forward to seeing you all at the French Open and next year in Rome."

The French Open starts on May 26.

Serena's withdrawal comes a day after she beat Sweden's Rebecca Peterson in straight sets to set up a second round meeting with her older sister Venus.

She had been returning after more than two months out with a knee problem, in the final warm-up clay-court tournament before the French Open.

Four-time Rome winner Serena, 37, had eased through 6-4,



Serena Williams' withdrawal sends Venus Williams, the 1999 winner, through to a third round meeting with either Johanna Konta of Britain or American seventh seed Sloane Stephens

6-2 her first round match against Swedish qualifier Petersen.

Serena had also played Petersen in the second round at the Miami Open in March before withdrawing with a knee injury.

Her withdrawal sends Venus Williams, the 1999 winner, through to a third round meeting with either Johanna Konta of Britain or American seventh seed Sloane Stephens.

Serena -- now ranked 11th --



US Serena Williams hits a return to Sweden's Rebecca Peterson (file photo)

has completed just eight matches this year, also withdrawing from Indian Wells in March with illness.

There are now doubts that the veteran can add to her tally of Grand Slams, something which has so far proved beyond her

since returning last year after taking time out following the birth of her first child.

Her last Grand Slam singles title was won at the Australian Open in 2017, where she was pregnant, breaking a tie with Steffi Graf for the most in the

professional era.

Her win in Melbourne moved her one behind Australian Court's record of 24 major singles titles.

She is a three-time French Open winner, claiming her last title in Roland Garros in 2015.

History made as women to referee men's AFC Cup clash

AFP | Kuala Lumpur

The Asian Football Confederation announced yesterday that for the first time an all-female referee team will take charge of a men's continental club cup clash.

Japanese referee Yoshimi Yamashita and assistants Makoto Bozono and Naomi Teshirogi will officiate the AFC Cup match between Myanmar's Yangon United and Cambodia's Naga World at the Thuwunna Stadium on Wednesday.

"This will be the first time three female referees preside in the Asian Football Confederation's club competitions, marking a new milestone in Asian refereeing," the AFC said in a statement.

Watson 'gave blood' for Chennai during IPL final

AFP | New Delhi

Bloodstains on the leg of Shane Watson's trousers during the IPL final as he scored a blistering 80 for Chennai Super Kings were revealed yesterday to be from a cut that needed six stitches when he finished.

The 37-year-old Australian batsman was on the losing side in the end, but teammate Harbhajan Singh hailed Watson's courage in continuing to play despite suffering a gashed knee while diving for a catch.

Dutch GP returns

AFP | Paris

The Dutch Grand Prix will return next season at Zandvoort after a 35-year absence, Formula One organisers announced.

A deal to stage the race at the historic seaside resort circuit near Amsterdam has been signed for at least three years.

"I am pleased to see that Zandvoort will be part of the proposed calendar... and thankful for the hard work of Formula 1 to bring the sport back to the Netherlands", Jean Todt, president of the sport's ruling body the FIA, said.

Bahrain national boxing team make history

TDT | Manama

Bahrain's National Boxing team marked their participation in the Zayed Open Sports Championship with an unprecedented achievement, bagging two golds and three bronzes. Held under the patronage of Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan on May 11-12, 2019, the event took place in UAE's capital Abu Dhabi.

Gifting gold medals were Abdullah Fadel who triumphed in the 69 kg category and Mohammed Belal, who won the 52 kg class. Noor Al Nesa Jan handed Bahrain the last gold medal after his victory in the 51 kg section. Meanwhile, the two bronzes were claimed by

Ali Al Aradi (64 kg) and Yousif Al Baluchi (56 kg).

On this occasion, HH Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad Al Khalifa, First Deputy President of the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports and President of Bahrain Olympic Committee hailed the results achieved by the Bahrainis in Abu Dhabi.

He praised the efforts behind this achievement, expressing pride in winning such a number of medals in a very important event. His Highness stressed the importance of forming a strong base to create a strong Bahrain National Boxing team that are able to conquer any arena and win everywhere.



Badminton coaches during a technical course organized by the Bahrain Olympic Committee (BOC) in cooperation with the Bahrain Badminton and Squash Federation. Scheduled to run until May 18 at Khalifa Sports City Hall in Isa Town, the course is supported by the International Olympic Committee's Olympic Solidarity Committee and features theoretical and practical sessions. 20 coaches from Bahrain, Oman, Saudi Arabia and Syria are participating in the event



Shahzad Zafar team members with organisers after winning their match in the Ramadan Cup 2019 organised by Pakistan Club. Highlight of the day was the first individual century by Waqas who scored 106* runs in 21 balls. With the help of Nadeem's century, JOZ Group also won their match after posting a huge total of 139 runs in 6 overs which was also the highest total so far this year.

Roma's De Rossi moving on after 18 years

AFP | Rome

Captain Daniele De Rossi will bring the curtain down on his 18-year career with Roma at the end of the season, the Serie A side announced yesterday.

The 35-year-old former World Cup winning midfielder will play his final

game at home against Parma on May 26, but will not be retiring from professional football.

"(De Rossi) plans to pursue a new adventure away from Rome," the club said in a statement.

"It will be the end of an era."

The game could be a

crucial one for Roma's Champions League ambitions next season as last year's European semi-finalists are sixth in Serie A just one point off fourth place with two games to play.



Daniele De Rossi