

Taiwan's Chang defeats top seed

Written by Taipei Times

Tuesday, 29 September 2009 07:14 - Last Updated Tuesday, 29 September 2009 07:25



Chang Kai-chen of Taiwan hits a return against world No. 1 women's player Dinara Safina

PHOTO: AFP

World No. 1 and defending champion Dinara Safina was knocked out in the second round of the Toray Pan Pacific Open yesterday by Taiwanese qualifier Chang Kai-chen (張凱貞) only hours before her fellow Russian Svetlana Kuznetsova was ousted in another upset result.

Safina was serving for the match in the third set when she double-faulted to give up a break. Chang, ranked 132nd and playing only for the fourth time in a WTA main draw, held her own serve and then broke Safina again for a 7-6 (7/5), 4-6, 7-5 win to reach the third round of the US\$2 million tournament.

"The double-fault didn't affect me that much," Safina said. "Whether it's a double-fault or a mistake it's the same. It's just the way I played at 5-4. It wasn't the right game, I didn't use my first serve the whole game."

Chang converted her third match point on Safina's forehand error after the Russian had fought back from 0-40 to 30-40.

"On match point, I was just thinking the same thing as always," Chang said. "I wasn't thinking: 'Oh, I have match point, I'm going to win.'"

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Russia's Maria Sharapova returns to Francesca Schiavone of Italy during their first-round

PHOTO: REUTERS

Safina's status as the world's top-ranked player has been under scrutiny and a third-round loss to 72nd-ranked Petra Kvitova of the Czech Republic at the US Open did little to ease that. She has never won a major title — having lost finals at the French Open and Australian Open tournaments this year — but has been consistent in other tournaments, winning three titles this year and four last year, including the Tokyo tournament.

“I wasn't thinking: ‘Oh, I have match point, I'm going to win.’”
— Chang Kai-chen, Taiwanese tennis player

“This is not an easy moment, but that's sport,” Safina said. “I didn't play good in the match today. I had a lot [of] chances in the third set and just let it go.”

Chang, who defeated Kaia Kanepi of Estonia 6-3, 6-3 in Sunday's opening round, put Safina on the defensive from the outset, breaking her twice to go up 3-0 in the first set.

Safina rallied to take a 6-5 lead, but Chang forced and then won the tie-breaker.

Chang said the first thing that came to mind after her huge win was her parents.

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"My mother doesn't get out to watch a lot of matches, but she follows the live scoring and I was thinking about what she thought when she saw today's score," Chang said.

Chang made her Grand Slam debut at this year's US Open, advancing to the second round where she lost to Magdalena Rybarikova.

Later yesterday, Germany's Andrea Petkovic knocked out French Open champion Kuznetsova 7-5, 4-6, 6-3 to advance to the third round.

Kuznetsova lost to Safina in last year's final.

Former Tokyo winner Maria Sharapova restored some pride for Russia, however, and gave the tournament sponsors some cheer with a battling 4-6, 7-5, 6-1 win over Italy's Francesca Schiavone.

Former world No. 1 Sharapova improved as her first-round match progressed, storming through the final set before closing out with a blistering forehand down the line.

"I did a great job of hanging in there," said Sharapova, 25th in the world rankings following shoulder surgery last October. "I was a down a break in the second set. It was really important to stay patient. What I have learned is that it takes a really long time to come back and I'm OK with that. I've been playing catch-up. I know that I've got to push myself more than I ever have in my career."

In first-round matches yesterday, Japanese veteran Ai Sugiyama, playing in her last singles match, was forced to retire from her first-round match trailing 6-0, 2-1 to 13th-seeded Russian Nadia Petrova.

The 34-year-old Sugiyama, who announced earlier this month she was quitting the women's circuit after 17 years, said the effects of a high temperature and stomach problems had made it impossible for her to continue playing.

Players seeded 11 to 14 all advanced.

No. 11 Agnieszka Radwanska of Poland beat Russia's Ekaterina Makarova 7-5, 6-3, No. 12 Samantha Stosur of Australia had a 7-5, 6-0 win over American Alexa Glatch and No. 14 Marion Bartoli of France defeated Sorana Cirstea of Romania, 6-3, 6-0.

□ THAILAND OPEN

AFP, BANGKOK

Guillermo Garcia-Lopez saved match points yesterday, but could not stop Brazil's Tomaz Bellucci as the Spaniard exited 6-4, 7-6 (9/7) in the first round of the Thailand Open.

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Bellucci, winner last month of the Gstaad clay title, added another victory to the one he took last year over Garcia Lopez at a Challenger event in Morocco.

The world No. 61 needed a shade under two hours to go through at the Impact arena in an event where Frenchman Jo-Wilfried Tsonga is hoping to defend his title.

Bellucci advanced with four aces and two break-point conversions from six chances. Garcia Lopez missed on 11 of 12 of his own break points.

Bellucci moved into a second-round clash with Serb Viktor Troicki, who had a bye in the first round. France's Gilles Simon, making his Bangkok debut, is seeded second ahead of American Sam Querrey, who broke through with a trophy at an LA event prior to the US Open.

Source: [Taipei Times](#) [2009/09/29](#) from [AP AND REUTERS, TOKYO](#)