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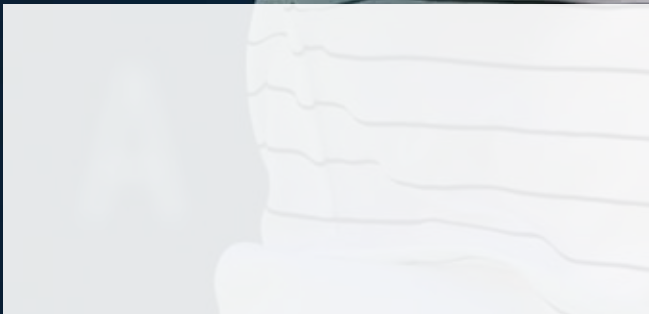
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USA Moves Forward, Israel Prevails

By Beth Rifkin



RODDICK ROLLS US TO VICTORY

The United States easily moves forward in their quest for a 33rd Davis Cup championship with a first-round 4-1 win over the Federer-less Swiss, clinched by Andy Roddick during the 4th rubber at Birmingham, Alabama's Jefferson Convention Complex Arena. US Captain Patrick McEnroe's dream team, whom have competed together for 11 of the last 12 ties, will travel to Croatia for the quarterfinals in July. It will be the first time the US faces off against Croatia since their opening-round loss in Carson, California in 2005, the year Croatia went on to win the championship.

The Americans got off to a difficult start on day one when Swiss anchor Stan-

islas Wawrinka defeated 13th ranked American James Blake, 3-6, 6-4, 6-3, 7-6(3). Roddick leveled the score to 1-1 in the second rubber by defeating Marco Chiudinelli, 6-1, 6-3, 7-6(5). American doubles team Mike and Bob Bryan beat Switzerland's Yves Allegro and Stanislas Wawrinka, 6-3, 6-4, 3-6, 7-6 (2) on day two. Roddick sealed the tie in reverse singles during the final day of competition with a 6-4, 6-4, 6-2 win over Stanislas Warwinka, making it the 11th time Roddick triumphantly closed out a Davis Cup tie. The world #7, Roddick now holds the second-highest total American Davis Cup singles wins, 31, ten short of John McEnroe's record of 41. However the real drama took place in Sweden.

ISRAEL TRIUMPHS OVER CONTROVERSY

Israel celebrated a champagne 3-2 win over Sweden, proving that sport can prevail over politics. Based on a 5-4 vote by Sweden's Malmo town council, the tie took place in a near empty stadium. The left-leaning local government cited fear of violence from protestors due to the large Muslim population, whom have severely criticized Israel after Israel's recent Gaza invasion. The decision stayed despite objections from the Israeli and Swedish teams and the International Tennis Federation.

Though unwelcome, the Israeli team did not experience any problems while in Malmo, as Sebastian Adams, a former tennis coach in Israel and current unofficial advisor and friend of Israeli Davis Cup player Dudi Sela, explains, "When we first arrived it was very tense, we were holed up in the hotel with both Israeli and Swedish security and couldn't go anywhere without protection."

Adams believes the small crowd allowed inside the arena, made up mostly of local tennis clubs and about 100 Jewish people from surrounding communities, may have actually worked to Israel's advantage, "They didn't have to play against the usual hostile Davis Cup crowd. Israel pulled off an extreme result, to beat Sweden on Swedish soil is big any time, but amidst the controversy and protestors, it was phenomenal. We had a big celebration at the hotel!"

The victory came just a couple of weeks after the United Arab Emirates denied Israeli WTA player Shahar Peer a visa to play in the Dubai Tennis Championships.

The much publicized controversy allowed for Israeli ATP player Andy Ram to participate in the men's tournament the following week.

Israel's Harel Levy defeated Malmo's own Andreas Vinciguerra, 6-4, 4-6, 6-4, 3-6, 8-6, in a 3 hour and 34 minute match in the fifth rubber to secure the tie. Dudi Sela, Andy Ram and Amir Hadad also played for Israel. This is the first time since 1987 and just the second time ever that Israel has advanced to the quarterfinals. They will next meet Russia on their home soil in Tel Aviv.



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