

## KIB CONCLUDES SPONSORSHIP OF 8TH KUWAIT OPEN TENNIS TOURNAMENT

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait International Bank (KIB) recently concluded its sponsorship of the 8th Kuwait Open Tennis Tournament, which took place under the patronage of the President of the Kuwait and Arab Tennis Federations, Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The tournament kicked off on March 2nd and took place at Al-Yarmouk Sports Club and the Kuwait Tennis Federation (KTF) courts, featuring around 500 participants of all ages.

The tournament was the largest organized by KTF throughout the entire season, as it included 302 matches overall. The closing game was attended by various sponsors, KTF members, parents of the players, as well as a huge audience of local sports fans. During the closing ceremony, over 50 players from all age groups and winners of the tournament were recognized for their sportsmanship and performance throughout the tournament.

Speaking at the closing ceremony, Nawaf Najia, Manager of the Corporate Communications Unit at KIB, stated: "The Bank pays special attention to promoting a culture of sports across the community and, for that reason, actively seeks to support community-based sports initiatives and activities. We are proud of KIB's sponsorship of this tournament, as it reflects our ongoing belief in the importance of sports and our role in encouraging regular exercise among people to achieve a healthy lifestyle, enhancing both physical and mental well-being."

Najia also congratulated international tennis player,



Mohammad Al-Ghareeb, who was honored during the closing ceremony for his outstanding athletic performance. He lauded Al-Ghareeb's sportsmanship in boosting Kuwait's standing internationally and successfully representing Kuwait in Davis Cup, The World Cup of Tennis, over the course of 20 years; his performance successfully placing Kuwait amongst international rankings.

KIB considers sports a cornerstone of its social responsibility program and so, the Bank is keen on providing its full support to athletes and local talents within various different sports. The Bank continues to be an adamant supporter of local athletes who have acted as a true inspiration to the community, as well as those who have played a role in strengthening Kuwait's standing, within the region and internationally.

## PLISKOVA EASES THROUGH IN MIAMI

**MIAMI:** Second seed Karolina Pliskova cruised into the third round of the Miami Open, the Czech beating American qualifier Madison Brengle 6-1, 6-3 on Thursday.

While her serve was not at its best, the 25-year-old Pliskova never looked in danger, comfortably dominating while winning 78 percent of return points.

"There were a few tight games but I think I was pretty solid. It went quite easy and I was really happy to spend only an hour out there because it's pretty hot and humid and so I am happy to save some power for the later matches," said Pliskova.

"The serve wasn't really great and hasn't been for the last few weeks but I think my game from the baseline was better, it's improving, my backhand is better, I was feeling pretty good just want to improve the serve a bit now," she added.

Pliskova reached the semi-finals of Indian Wells last week and she said she was keen to avoid a repeat of last year when she made the last four in California but fell at the first hurdle in Miami.

"It's a big tournament and I wanted to make it better this year. I will be ready for the next one," said the Czech, whose twin sister Kristyna is also in the Miami field.

Slovakian fourth seed Dominika Cibulkova needed to dig deep to fight past Paraguayan qualifier Veronica Cepede Royg. The 90-minute encounter was far tougher for Cibulkova than the 6-3 6-2 scoreline suggests and she was relieved with the win. "I just stayed aggressive," she said. "It was my first match here, so it was pretty hot and it wasn't easy conditions. But I made it through. I'd never played her before, so that's always a new experience. I'm glad I got the job done."

Cibulkova faces another tough test, though, against Belgian Kirsten Flipkens, who fought her way past Croatian 29th seed Ana Konjuh 7-6 (7/4), 6-7 (6/8), 6-2.

Agnieszka Radwanska beat China's Wang Qiang 7-6, 6-1 and Caroline Wozniacki comfortably went through 6-1, 6-2 against Varvara Lepchenko.

Sixth-seeded Spaniard Garbine Muguruza was trounced 6-0 in the first set by American opponent Christina McHale and was down 3-2 on McHale's serve in the second when rain began. Play was eventually cancelled for the day and McHale will look to complete the upset today. — AFP

### TENNIS

# TOMIC PULLS OUT AT MIAMI WITH INJURY

**MIAMI:** Bernard Tomic's woes continued Thursday as he pulled out of the Miami Open due to a back injury, the latest setback in a disappointing year for the Australian.

Ranked 17th in the world as recently as November, Tomic has tumbled down the rankings to 44th. Since a third-round Australian Open exit, the 24-year-old has lost four first-round matches to lowly ranked opponents. The most recent setback came at Indian Wells, where he was beaten by 112th-ranked Bjorn Fratangelo of the United States. At Acapulco in February, Tomic retired from his opening match citing "unbearable heat" and the fact that he withdrew from four ATP matches last year has led to some questioning of his attitude.

Tomic was due to face Kazakh qualifier Mikhail Kukushkin at Crandon Park on Thursday but pulled out shortly before the contest was due to begin. Lucky loser Mikhail Youzhny of Russia took Tomic's place in the first-round contest, but was ousted 6-4, 6-1.

US teen Frances Tiafoe downed Russia's Konstantin Kravchuk 7-5, 5-7, 6-1 to book a second-round match against 18-time Grand Slam champion Roger Federer. It will be the 19-year-old American's first match against a top-10 foe. "The guy has about a million Grand Slams and done everything. I can't tell you how excited I am to play," Tiafoe said. "Seeing the draw was partly probably why up a set and 4-1, I started rushing and thinking, 'Oh my god, I'm going to play Roger.' 'He's my idol, everyone's



**KEY BISCAZYNE:** Milos Raonic, of Canada, prepares to serve during a tennis match against Viktor Troicki, of Serbia, at the Miami Open, yesterday in Key Biscayne, Fla. — AP

idol." World number 41 Marcel Granollers of Spain fell 7-6 (8/6), 4-6, 6-3 to promising 62nd-ranked Croatian Borna Coric in a testing two hours, 51 minutes contest.

Coric tired towards the end and offered some openings to Granollers while missing three match points but was able to recover well to hold on and

set up a meeting with sixth seed Dominic Thiem of Austria.

Russian 19-year-old Andrey Rublev made short work of world number 46 Florian Mayer of Germany, winning 6-1, 6-1 in just 44 minutes. Rublev will now face a tough challenge against 2010 Miami finalist and 10th seed Tomas Berdych. — AP