

Pacific Life Open Update

by Rick Angus
Indian Wells , CA

Canadian Frederic Niemeyer, a tour veteran at 31, triumphed over a similarly aged competitor and a former top ten player in 2000, Nicolas Lapentti of Ecuador. The South American represented a formidable challenge to his local aspirations.

In his opening round qualifying match at this highly regarded major A.T.P. Masters tourney, Fred dominated his opponent 6/3, 7/6(4), largely relying on his effective first serve, punishing ground strokes and his sly use of the drop volley and the occasional well placed top spin lob.

For the Canadian Davis Cup team leader during the recent victorious Calgary confrontation with Mexico, this match was proof positive that Fred's game is rounding nicely into form. Niemeyer possessed an A.T.P. Ranking of 182 coming to the desert. Better prospects loom.

As is often the case however, there is good and bad news as a result of this result.

Next up, is the eighteen year old Japanese sensation, Kei Nishikori. Last month at Delray Beach on hard courts, Nishikori entered qualifying and ran an unexpected streak of prosperity through to the finals, devastating American James Blake and gathering his first A.T.P. victory. Not only did this win end a sixteen year championship drought for Japanese tennis players on the tour, it elevated Kei to #125 in the world rankings coming into the Indian Wells event.

On the distaff side, Aleksandra Wozniak, Canada's #1 woman player met her demise 7/6 (6), 6/4 in a women's qualifying battle while enduring the desert's dry exhausting heat (high 80's) and fitness draining conditions, before succumbing to an eighteen year old Sabine Lisicki of Germany, who carried a equally competitive 140 ranking to court side.