

Pe'er Denied Entry to Dubai

What a weekend, on and off the court. Here's the highlights:

* Israel's Shahar Pe'er was refused a visa to play in the \$2 million tournament in Dubai this week, despite having played a few weeks ago in neighboring Arab country Doha. Why? She's an Israeli citizen. Ironies abound. CEO Larry Scott, the No. 1 executive of the women's tour, a few years ago pulled off one of his greatest coups by getting Dubai to agree to equal prize money for women, matching what they give the men in their stop in that country. Scott is Jewish.

* OK, Venus and Serena Williams. Time for you to step up. Both are entered in Dubai, the same sisters who have for seven years refused to play at Indian Wells, Calif., because, they claim, spectators there racially insulted them when Venus pulled out of the semifinals against her sister, saying she was injured. I'd like to see the sisters now pull out of Dubai, which would not only show some solidarity with Pe'er but generate a little more sympathy from a generally unsympathetic tennis community which doesn't understand their continuing grudge against Indian Wells.

* Rafael Nadal hurt his knee in the opening game of his second set in the Rotterdam final against Andy Murray, but refused to quit. The guy is the best sportsman in tennis. Somehow, he won the second set before going down 6-0 in the third. There were eight consecutive breaks of service in the second set. Did Nadal, the No. 1 player, use his injury as an excuse? Absolutely not. Nor did he cry after the loss. He said, pointedly, that he didn't want to talk about the injury, then praised Murray.

* Amelie Mauresmo, who most of us thought was French toast after a succession of injuries the last two years, rallied from behind to beat Elena Dementieva in the Paris Indoors final. Mauresmo, who has the intelligence to become the elder stateswoman of the WTA Tour, used her post-match press conference to rail against the government of Dubai.

* What's going to happen at Dubai? Nothing this year. But, despite the big bucks they're plunging into women's tennis, I doubt it will be on the 2010 calendar. Why can't governments just treat athletes like athletes instead of political pawns? One other point about Dubai. This is a favorite vacation and training spot for Roger Federer. He should boycott the country until it changes its political position on Pe'er.

* Where are they this week? Women have three stops -- Dubai, a small \$220,000 event in Memphis, which is where most of the Americans will be playing, and a \$220,000 event on clay in Bogota, Colombia. The men share the stage in Memphis with the women but the prize money for them is \$1.3 million. Also: a \$600,000 clay event in Buenos Aires and in Marseilles, where the money is 576,000 Euros. I think the current exchange rate is \$1 to 1.28 Euros. You do the math if you care deeply.

Charles Bricker can be reached at tennis@primesportsnetwork.com