

## Indians disappoint on day one of Challenger

Indian players disappointed again with only Ashutosh Singh and Vishnu Vardhan making it to the pre-quarter-final stage on the rain-hit opening day of the Challenger tournament at the DLTA complex here Monday.

Prakash Amritraj, Yuki Bhambri, Sunil Kumar Sipaeya, Mustafa Ghouse all made first round exits and four more Indian players -- Harsh Mankad, Rohan Gide, Purav Raja and Tushar Liberhan -- play their first round matches Tuesday.

Bhambri was no match for national grass court champion Vishnu Vardhan as he could win only one game, getting blanked in the second set, 1-6, 0-6. Nothing seemed to go right for the Delhi youngster as he had problems with his serve and made a series of errors.

Vardhan on the other hand served well and his shot-making was good, hitting with intensity. The scoreline indeed underlines his supremacy over Yuki.

Prakash played a lot better than he did in the SAIL Open Challenger last week, but his inability to come good in playing big points against Australian Adam Feeney saw him bowing out 4-6,5-7.

Prakash adapted his game to the demands of the situation even though he didn't volley as well as he is known to. The Indian suffered from tendonitis on his right knee, which affected his movement on the court. That made things easier for the Australian who showed consistency to sail through.

Feeney broke Prakash in the fifth and seventh games of the first set to lead 5-2, but the Indian Davis Cupper pulled one back. Feeney, however, made no mistake with his next service game to win the first set.

Prakash fought hard in the second set and after being broken in the fifth game he broke back in the tenth game to draw level. But Feeney again broke him and then served out the set and match.

A dejected Prakash admitted after match that his knee troubled him a bit during the match. " I felt a bit sluggish today. Because of my knee, I had problem in moving on the court. But I am disappointed with the way I played as I really looked forward to these two weeks of challengers. But I couldn't perform as well as I should have. Today I let him (Feeney) win too many points on my serve."

Ashutosh Singh, the only Indian to cross the first round hurdle in the SAIL open challenger, got the better of American Travis Rettenmaier, 6-4,7-5.

Sunil Kumar Sipaeya went down fighting to fifth-seeded Pakistani Aisam-ul-Haq Quereshi 6-3, 4-6, 5-7, while Mustafa Ghouse lost to Australian Colin Ebelthite 3-6, 4-6.

In the doubles, Indian pair Harsh Mankad and Ashutosh Singh defeated Rohan Gide and Yannick Nelord 6-0,6-2 while Japanese Go Soeda and Toshihide Matsui beat Indians Tushar Liberhan and Vishnu Vardhan, 6-4,6-2.

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