

# Hingis triumphs in style

Basuki-Vis pair defeats Carlsson-Habsudova 6-0, 4-6, 6-2 to clinch doubles title

By Sunil K. Vaidya

**Dubai**

Martina Hingis' reign at the top of the women's tennis world continued with another title triumph at the Aviation Club Stadium yesterday.

Hingis was richer by \$90,000 for beating Nathalie Tauziat 6-4, 6-4 in the Dubai Duty Free women's final. This was the second title for Swiss Miss in the Gulf, having won the Qatar Open last week in Doha. It was a day of milestones for Hingis as she remained at the top of the world ranking for the 179 weeks, surpassing Monica Seles in the process.

Hingis was not really aware of her feat yesterday while taking on her French rival Tauziat, nicknamed the tennis professor by Hingis, mother Melanie Molitor.

The professor, however, was not in a state to teach a lesson to Hingis although she did try hard to catch up with the more supple and athletic Swiss rival. Senior citizen on tour, Tauziat, 33, was obviously tired after a tough singles semifinal against Rachel McQuillan which was followed by a three-set doubles semifinal. But, down 1-4 in the second set, she caught up with Hingis at 4-4 but that didn't worry Hingis. "No, I wasn't worried because I knew even if the match went to the third set, I would win," Hingis said at the post match press conference while trying to explain that she (Hingis) held an advantage for being younger and fresher to last longer.

The points, however, were not longer in their final clash as Tauziat's serve and volley game suited more for short points. Hingis didn't mind short exchanges as long as she won the points. There was more consistency in Hingis, play although she hit double faults and her first serve was not as effective as Tauziat's, who served four aces in the first set and two more in the second. Hingis, who was playing Tauziat in a final for the first time, saved a game point to break her



Martina Hingis with the Dubai Duty Free Women's Open Singles' Championship trophy at the Dubai Tennis Stadium yesterday. - GN picture by Ryan Hernandez

French rival in the first game of the first game and that set the tempo for the rest of the match. Tauziat was rushing to the net but Hingis managed to pass her with some lovely forehands shots.

The Swiss girl also played measured lobs to take advantage whenever Tauziat rushed to the net. After the match Tauziat

requested Hingis in a jest to give her some match in her last year on the circuit but there was no a quarter given not asked by Hingis as she used her superior skills to ward off determined Tauziat. Tauziat failed to earn a point as Hingis served for 2-0 lead in the first set. And, the pattern (Hingis not conceding a point) was repeated three more times in the

match despite the fact that on several occasions service returns from Tauziat drew oohs and ahs in amazement from the near-packed audience.

Tauziat also had to work hard to hold her service in the fifth game of the first set. Tauziat's double fault at game point seemed to have inspired Hingis as he hit inside out forehand smash that put her level.

After six break points, Tauziat held her service to close the gap to 2-3. Tauziat was broken again in the seventh game but a double fault and a sizzling forehand saw Tauziat save a game point and break Hingis.

But by then much water had flowed under the bridge (net) as Hingis played percentage tennis to hold her service in the tenth game and close the first set at 6-4 in 36 minutes.

Ironically, the second set also lasted for 36 minutes but it was more dramatic compared to the first one.

Hingis conceded only two points while taking 2-0 lead. In what could be termed as the best game of the match, Hingis emerged triumphant to hold her serve (for 4-1 lead) as Tauziat saved three game points and then four break points as the game went into six dues.

Tauziat battled back to level the game at 4-4 with two successive service breaks but visibly tired French veteran failed to hold her own service in the ninth to give Hingis edge (5-4). Hingis served out the match conceding only one point in the tenth game.

Hingis later praised Tauziat but also pointed out that the level of tennis here and among the top five women's players was vastly different. But she disagreed that playing in the field below par would be counter productive for her. "I think it was a good tournament for me here and in Qatar," she said. It was a happy ending to the first part of the Dubai Duty Free production, "Court Warriors," - the theme that pleased the star performer, Hingis, as much the fans made her happy.



Yayuk Basuki and Caroline Vis, the winner of the doubles title, during the final against Asa Carlsson and Karina Habsudova in the Dubai tennis Championships at the Dubai Tennis Stadium yesterday. - GN Picture by Asghar Khan

## A pleasant experience for Martina

Champion promises a return to Gulf; falls in love with the different cultural ambience

By Sunil K. Vaidya

**Dubai**

Dubai was a pleasant experience for Martina Hingis, not because she won her third title on the WTA Tour this year, but a different sort of encounter in the Gulf has made the Swiss Miss determined to return, at least for a vacation.

"There is so much of cultural difference in my country and here, but I really loved this place (Dubai)," Hingis said.

Definitely this has been a trip to cherish for her.

The pleasant and most sought after tennis star at the Dubai Duty Free owned WTA Tour event also showered praise on the crowd at the Aviation Tennis

Stadium.

"It was so different here, normally spectators back underdogs, contrarily here I was supported," pointed out Hingis with a broad smile.

She was often seen smiling on court in the final too.

"Oh, that happens whenever I play Tauziat."

Acknowledging that tourna-

ments in Dubai and Qatar were good in her build up before the American tour, Hingis said; "I think it was really good that I came here."

And especially, she liked the Hollywood-like campaign designed for the tournament. "I made us feel like stars and it is good entertainment too."

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