




## Australian Open Roof Hot Issue as Temperatures Rise (Update3)

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By Christopher Elser and Grant Clark



Jan. 29 (Bloomberg) -- The roof of Rod Laver Arena is the hot issue at the Australian Open, where officials are trying to cope with temperatures as high as **43 Celsius (109 Fahrenheit)**.

Serena Williams came back yesterday to beat Russia's **Svetlana Kuznetsova** after organizers shut the roof on the arena to counter the heat for the first time this year. The American said it was so hot in the opening set that she felt she was having an "out-of-body experience" at Melbourne Park.

With Melbourne heading for its most severe heat wave in a century, officials enacted the so-called **Extreme Heat Policy**

after Williams lost the first set, drawing criticism from players. Kuznetsova said she was angry about the decision to cover the arena and turn on the air-conditioning.

"Why should I not be?" Kuznetsova, 23, said after her 5-7, 7-5, 6-1 defeat. "(The) game was going my way. You (are) just playing outdoor tennis and one set you play indoor tennis. I didn't get the rule at all."

**Tennis Australia**, which runs the event, operates a policy to protect players' health that gives the tournament referee the ability to halt play on outer courts and put a roof on the two main show courts if a measure of heat and humidity is reached.

"It was definitely helpful," said 27-year-old Williams of the call to deploy the roof. "I was happy because I really wasn't playing my best."

### Match-Changing Weather

Four players, including defending champion **Novak Djokovic**, dropped out of matches during the two previous days because of illness or injury. Two juniors needed treatment yesterday, tournament doctor Tim Wood said. The stadium roofs were closed from the beginning today and play was suspended on all outside courts as temperatures broke the **40 Celsius barrier around noon**.

Dr. Michael Bergeron of Sanford University of South Dakota Medical Center, who has worked with tennis players on hydration and heat issues, said the combination of hot weather and high-level competition creates a dangerous situation.

"Usually when people are exercising in the heat they slow down, but with these guys having to keep up a certain pace of play and a certain intensity because they're trying to win, then the effects of the heat and the sweating is going to be fairly dramatic," Bergeron said in a telephone interview.

Dr. Wood said it was "perfectly safe" to play at the levels of heat and humidity that trigger the extreme heat policy, but that there are "issues of performance."

The heat and humidity threshold was obtained yesterday afternoon as a high pressure system over the

Tasman Sea pushed northerly winds over southeastern Australia, prompting forecasts of temperatures above 40 degrees for three more days.

#### Figures, Not Forecasts

Eleven-time Grand Slam champion **Rod Laver**, speaking at a news conference yesterday morning, said the roof on the arena named for him should be closed from the start of play if forecasters expect extreme weather.

"You're going to see your best tennis," Laver, 70, told reporters at Melbourne Park. "It's just wonderful that they have a roof they can close, so take advantage of it."

**Craig Tiley**, the tournament director, said the policy uses actual readings rather than forecasts and would have been wrongly applied had predictions been used.

"It is an outdoor tournament," Tiley said. "We make every effort to keep it outdoors and every effort to keep it where you can continue to play."

Like Kuznetsova, **Elena Dementieva** said she didn't understand the weather rules. The Russian had earlier completed her quarterfinal victory over Spaniard **Carla Suarez Navarro** 6-2, 6-2 under the sun in 39 degrees heat.

Dementieva, a former U.S. and French Open finalist, will begin her semifinal today after slogging outside for 95 minutes yesterday, about twice as long as opponent Williams.

#### Use It

"I'm really surprised because when you see the forecast, like it's going to be the hottest week in a month, why not close the roof?" Dementieva said. "If you have a roof, why not use it?"

Men's top-seed **Rafael Nadal** said the Melbourne heat was far worse than in his native Spain. Nadal, who grew up on the island of Mallorca, said he had never experienced such heat as during his warm-up outside the stadium before last night's match.

"Believe me, it's not like here," Nadal said, when asked if it helped coming from Spain, after defeating **Gilles Simon**.

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*Last Updated: January 28, 2009 21:42 EST*

