

Overview - St. Petersburg Open

Moderate fare this week in St. Petersburg with no players from the top 20 featuring and last week's Moscow winner, Mikhail Youzhny, the only player coming into the event with anything like decent form to his name.

That feeling of a lack of quality wasn't helped either as Viktor Troicki (No.3) went out in R1 as did Evgeny Korolev (No.6) and Pablo Cuevas (No.7) - all, to be fair, did lose to decent opponents in Beck, Stakhovsky and Kunitsyn respectively.

Better performances came from the remaining seeds, each winning in straight sets, and others to catch the eye included Marat Safin, who recorded a good win over Richard Gasquet and Illya Marchenko, as the Ukrainian beat Fabio Fognini for the loss of just five games.

Plenty of action in R2. Three further seeds exited the tournament, two on account of injuries. The one to lose on merit was Jeremy Chardy (No.4) who found Ernests Gulbis too strong whilst Mikhail Youzhny (No.1) withdrew from his match with Denis Istomin due to a back injury and Igor Andreev (No.5) was forced out of his clash with Marat Safin with a knee problem.

Two seeds did make the QF's as Victor Hanesu (No.2) saw off Marchenko and Horacio Zeballos (No.8) defeated Oleksandr Dolgoplov Jnr. in even more convincing style. Bjorn Phau, Sergiy Stakhovsky and Igor Kunitsyn completed the line-up - each one winning in two sets as well.

Marat Safin and Sergiy Stakhovsky were first into the SF's as each recorded dominant victories - winning the first set comfortably and then holding off their opponents to close out the match in straight sets. The other two ties caused surprises as Zeballos, although seeded, squeezed past the well-regarded Ernests Gulbis and Igor Kunitsyn battled past Hanesu in a hard fought 2'11" battle which saw the Russian sneak the win 7-6 in the deciding set.

Stakhovsky then scuppered the dream of one final title for Marat Safin before his retirement. It was a close match but the Ukrainian shaded the result over three sets. In the final he would play the Argentine, Zeballos, who made his first ATP final with a straight sets win over Kunitsyn.

The final went to Stakhovsky but only after he came back from losing the first set 2-6 and saved a match point at 6-7 in the deciding tie-break. *'It really means a lot because this season hasn't been very good for me'* - he said later after winning his second career title (2:0 in finals). Tough on Zeballos who came from nowhere to make a first ATP final and looks a player to watch.



St. Petersburg Open

October 26-01, 2009

Indoor, Hard - World Tour 250

R32	Mikhail Youzhny [1]	6 6	R16	Mikhail Youzhny	retd.	2 1
R32	Andrey Golubev	3 2	R16	Denis Istomin		6 2
R32	Denis Istomin	6 6	R16	Marat Safin		6 0
R32	Rainer Schuettler	4 4	R16	Igor Andreev	retd.	3 1
R32	Marat Safin	7 6	R16	Karol Beck	retd.	4 1
R32	Richard Gasquet	6 4	R16	Bjorn Phau		6 2
R32	Potito Starace	4 2	R16	Andrey Kuznetsov		1 4
R32	Igor Andreev [5]	6 6	R16	Sergiy Stakhovsky		6 6
R32	Viktor Troicki [3]	6 6 4	R16	Horacio Zeballos		6 6
R32	Karol Beck	7 4 6	R16	Oleksandr Dolgoplov Jnr.		3 1
R32	wc-Stanislav Vovk	3 2	R16	Ernests Gulbis		7 6
R32	Bjorn Phau	6 6	R16	Jeremy Chardy		6 3
R32	Marcel Granollers	7 6 4	R16	Igor Kunitsyn		6 6
R32	wc-Andrey Kuznetsov	6 7 6	R16	Michail Elgin		2 3
R32	q-Sergiy Stakhovsky	6 6	R16	Illya Marchenko		3 4
R32	Evgeny Korolev [6]	4 3	R16	Victor Hanesu		6 6
R32	Horacio Zeballos [8]	7 6	QF	Denis Istomin		0 6
R32	q-Yuri Schukin	6 3	QF	Marat Safin		6 7
R32	q-Oleksandr Dolgoplov Jnr.	6 1	QF	Bjorn Phau		2 5
R32	Robby Ginepri	retd. 2 0	QF	Sergiy Stakhovsky		6 7
R32	Ernests Gulbis	6 7	QF	Horacio Zeballos		7 6
R32	Florian Mayer	3 6	QF	Ernests Gulbis		6 4
R32	q-Petru-Alexandru Luncau	2 2	QF	Igor Kunitsyn		6 3 7
R32	Jeremy Chardy [4]	6 6	QF	Victor Hanesu		3 6 6
R32	Pablo Cuevas [7]	4 3	SF	Marat Safin		4 6 4
R32	Igor Kunitsyn	6 6	SF	Sergiy Stakhovsky		6 4 6
R32	wc-Michail Elgin	6 6	SF	Horacio Zeballos		7 6
R32	wc-Mikhail Kukushkin	3 3	SF	Igor Kunitsyn		6 3
R32	Fabio Fognini	4 1	SF			
R32	se-Illya Marchenko	6 6	RU	Horacio Zeballos		6 6 6
R32	Teimuraz Gabashvili	1 2	W	Sergiy Stakhovsky		2 7 7
R32	Victor Hanesu [2]	6 6				

	No. Matches	2 sets-3 sets	Ave. Sets/Match	Ave. Games/Match
R32	16 matches	14-2	2.12	20.06
R16	8 matches	8-0	2.00	15.62
QF	4 matches	3-1	2.25	23.25
SF	2 matches	1-1	2.50	26.00
F	1 match	0-1	3.00	34.00

St. Petersburg Open - Facts & Figures

Market Leaders	Odds
Mikhail Youzhny [1]	7/2
Richard Gasquet	8/1
Ernests Gulbis	8/1
Jeremy Chardy [4]	8/1
Victor Hanescu [2]	10/1
Igor Andreev [5]	16/1
Viktor Troicki [3]	16/1
Marat Safin	16/1
Evgeny Korolev [6]	20/1
Robby Ginepri	25/1
Pablo Cuevas [7]	25/1
Igor Kunitsyn	28/1
Karol Beck	40/1
Marcel Granollers	50/1
Denis Istomin	50/1

Performance Of The Seeded Players

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
2009	R2	QF	R1	R2	R2	R1	R1	RU
2008	W	R2	SF	R2	R1	R1	R1	R2
2007	R2	W	SF	QF	QF	RU	QF	R1
2006	R2	R1	W	R2	R2	R1	R2	R1
2005	QF	W	R1	QF	RU	R1	QF	SF
2004	QF	R1	R2	W	R2	R1	SF	R1

Recent Winners/Leading Performers

	Winner	Runner-Up	Losing SF's
2009	Sergiy Stakhovsky (50/1)	Horacio Zeballos (80/1)	Safin-Kunitsyn
2008	Andy Murray (7/2)	Andrey Golubev (200/1)	Verdasco-Hanescu
2007	Andy Murray (9/2)	Fernando Verdasco (7/1)	Youzhny-Cilic
2006	Mario Ancic (9/2)	Thomas Johansson (25/1)	Gulbis-Kunitsyn
2005	Thomas Johansson (13/2)	Nicolas Kiefer (9/1)	Verdasco-Vik
2004	Mikhail Youzhny (14/1)	Karol Beck (40/1)	Rusedski-Llodra

Betting - St. Petersburg Open

Pre-Tournament Briefing :-

Youzhny (7/2) cut an uneasy figure at the head of the market. The Russian may have won the week before in Moscow but that was probably a better reason for not backing the far from prolific No.1 seed than for expecting him to follow up here - admittedly in an event he had won back in 2004.

Problem was the alternatives were the increasingly frustrating Safin (16/1) and Andreev (16/1), both of whom seemed to have stopped winning, or the still improving, but still far from experienced, pairing of Troicki (16/1) and Korolev (20/1). Gasquet (8/1) was still to hit top form after his return to the main tour and as for Stakhovsky (50/1) he wasn't even quoted in the original lists as he was working his way through qualifying!

The bottom half was little better. Chardy (8/1) looked the bets player but had yet to prove it on hard courts, Hanescu (10/1) had no real pedigree on these courts, Cuevas (25/1) was yet to show he could win events and that left Zeballos (80/1) - another very unknown quantity. The alternative was the proven winning ability of Ginepri (25/1), Kunitsyn (28/1) or another perennial bridesmaid, Gulbis (8/1).

Overall, a very open tournament where up to a dozen players had chances.

Post-Tournament Review :-

Stakhovsky showed good form to win. He beat Korolev and Safin along the way, saved a match point in the final. He's won before and he can win again.

Zeballos, something of an unknown, could prove to be a flash in the pan or another Argentine who has decent hard court ability. Time will tell.

Those two, along with maybe Kunitsyn, were the only bright spots in an event which was there for the taking but guys like Gulbis, Hanescu, Andreev, Safin and Troicki all managed to blow their chance - sadly, not for the first time.

Pointers for 2010 :-

Names tend to win here - Stakhovsky was a big price but he was unlucky not to be in the draw, and even seeded, to begin with and he will prove his worth as a champion. The standard of players did drop this year, however, which is something to note but even allowing for that the list of finalists suggests a look to proven tour winners, those with indoor ability and guys found towards the top of the market. Sergiy Stakhovsky, Igor Andreev, Ernests Gulbis (once he starts winning), Evgeny Korolev (likewise) are the sort of players to select.