

Pakistan Davis Cup Tie Against Iran 5th February, 2017

Time-tested pair of Aisam-ul-Haq and Aqeel Khan gave Pakistan an unassailable 3-0 lead in the Davis Cup Asia-Oceania Group-I, after thrashing Anosha Shahgholi/ Alborz in straight sets Saturday.

The rain threat was also looming over the match but it stayed away till Pakistan won the third set and the match.

Aisam was highly pumped right from the word go as his entire family was also among the crowd while Aqeel surprisingly looked highly off-colour and committed too many unforced errors.

Pakistan completely dominated the first set and after breaking second game Aisam/Aqeel again broke the 4th game and soon it was 5-0. But to their relief Iran finally managed to win their first game as Alborz hold on to his 6th serve to make it 5-1. But that's all they could get from the first set as Aisam hit four consecutive aces to wrap-up first set 6-1 in just 17 minutes. It was almost the same story in the second set as well. Aisam/Aqeel broke very first game of Albroz and then Aqeel held onto his serve to make it 2-0. Iranians were totally out of sort and lost their next serve as well. Aqeel got a bit casual and Iran managed to win two games as Anosha hold 5th game to make it 4-1 and then it was 5-2 before Aisam once again took the 8th game by hitting two back-to-back aces to make it 2-0.

Iran tried to bounce back in third set with dark clouds engulfing the arena and managed to hold onto their first serve. Aqeel also clings onto his serve to take second game but same old story once again started as Anosha's third game was broken and then Albroz's 5th game was also broken. Pakistan was comfortably placed and looking all set to clinch the tie before Iranian pair did manage to take one more game before losing the 8th game, thus bowing out of the match with 6-2 thumping in the third set in 27 minutes.

Though Aqeel and Aisam are providing the results for Pakistan since long but it is time for the PTF to induct young blood into the Davis Cup ties. Aqeel should be given only the singles games and player like Abid Ali Akbar, a future prospect and the only Pakistani player to have ITF singles ranking points, should be given chance to partner Aisam in doubles.

While talking to The Nation Aisam's parents Nosheen Ehteshama and Ehtesham Ul Haq showed their satisfaction over Pakistan team's performance and said the credit goes to the whole team that also includes Abid Ali Akbar and M Abid. They also showed delight to see Aisam playing at home turf and hoped Pakistan players would continue to play like this and bring more glories just like they did in the past for Pakistan .

Meanwhile, team captain Rashid Malik said he was always confident that ever-reliant Aisam/Aqeel will carve out victory for Pakistan . A clearly jubilant Rashid said he decided to put Aisam/Aqeel just to wrapped the tie in time due to the rain threat and if the rain allowed reverse singles, he wanted to give a chance Abid Ali Akbar and M Abid to show case their skills.

Rashid said no team posed major threat to Pakistan to hinder their way to Group-1. He said the next tie would be held in April in Islamabad on grass courts, which are the favourite hunting courts of Aisam and Aqeel, as IPC Minister and work is in progress to lay the courts. "Whether we face Hong Kong or Vietnam, we had never lost on grass courts with Aisam and Aqeel available, I am confident enough that Pakistan can beat any given opponent."