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## Sweltering conditions doubly testing on the court

By Linda Pearce

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In beating junior Wimbledon finalist Chris Guccione in the first round of yesterday's Australian Open wildcard play-off in brutal weather conditions at Melbourne Park, South Australian Andrew Derer lost 2.6 kilograms.

Today he will be weighed again, and a urine sample analysed, as researchers continue testing the effects of extreme heat and humidity on players.

Representatives from Tennis Australia and Deakin and Monash universities are monitoring tennis players' weight loss, core body temperatures and hydration levels.

Derer, Samantha Stosur and Dominic Marafiotte were among yesterday's guinea pigs in temperatures that topped 40 degrees on the notoriously toasty Rebound Ace courts. The warm weather forecast through to Saturday's play-off finals is testing competitors as thoroughly as it is aiding researchers' first attempt to measure the physical stresses endured in genuine match situations.

"A number of studies have investigated the physical stresses placed on the body, but only in practice or simulated conditions," said Australian Open chief medical officer Dr Tim Wood. "This will be the first time research of this kind will be conducted in tournament conditions, when we know players are really pushing themselves to the limit."

Queenslander Stosur, the women's top seed, lost only half-a-kilogram in her straight-sets win over Lauren Cheung, while Derer, who played Guccione in three sets in the hottest part of the day, shed more than five times that amount.

"In addition to giving us general research data, each player will learn something about the effectiveness of their existing strategies for coping with playing in hot conditions . . . (which) should hopefully give them an edge in future tournaments," said Dr Alan Pearce, from Tennis Australia's coaching unit.

Victorian Lauren Breadmore was the only seeded casualty from day one of a knockout competition in which 16 men and 16 women started out chasing an early guarantee of main-draw entry at next month's Open.

*This story was found at: <http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2003/12/17/1071337025457.html>*