Changes in Australian Open

Why in News?

A plethora of changes were announced ahead of the Australian Open, the first Grand Slam tournament of the year 2019.

What are the changes?

- Out of the changes two are significant changes.
- They are
    1. The introduction of a 10-point tiebreak at 6-6 in the deciding set.
    2. 'Heat Stress Index' to replace the old Extreme Heat Policy.
- Other changes include
    1. The use of serve clock (to be set at 25 seconds) to help speed up matches.
    2. Hawk-Eye review technology on all 16 courts
    3. Increase in the number of spots in the women's qualifying draw from 96 to 128.
    4. Upgrade in the prize money pool.

Why were they needed?

- The tiebreak rule has followed a similar move by Wimbledon, but at 12-12 in the decider, to prevent long-drawn matches from messing up the schedule.
- At Melbourne, where a night session is a huge attraction, a marathon encounter extending into the late hours is undesirable.
- The change in heat policy is probably the result of the severe criticism the previous set of rules came under.
- In the last edition, Novak Djokovic and Gael Monfils were vociferous after being forced to play at temperatures that almost touched 40 degrees Celsius.
- The hospitalization of Simona Halep, immediately after the women's

singles final which was played with the roof open, appears to have forced the organizers' hands.
- The serve clocks will help enforce the guideline that players have 25 seconds to initiate play after the previous point ends.
- The additional spots in the women's qualifying draw are to restore parity with the men.
- The use of line-calling technology on all 16 match courts will ensure equal conditions for every player in the draw.
- This technology is used in tennis to automatically detect where a ball has landed on the court.

How will it impact players?

- While it is sure to help players physically, the move has generated criticism, with many arguing that the women's game could have been spared.
- If anything, it was the men's game which needed trimming and there too it was felt that curtailing the end would deprive fans of drama.
- The way in which new heat policy, that takes into account air temperature, radiant heat, humidity and wind speed, plays out is yet to be seen.

Basic Terminologies

- The Grand Slam tournaments - Australian Open, Roland Garros(French Open), Wimbledon and US Open - are the most prestigious individual competitions in tennis.
- The term Grand Slam refers to the achievement of winning all four major championships within a single calendar year within one of the five events: men's and women's singles; men's, women's, and mixed doubles.
- Winning the four majors in consecutive tournaments but not in the same year is known as a Non-Calendar Year Grand Slam.
- Winning all four majors at any point during the course of a career is known as a Career Grand Slam.
- Winning the gold medal at the Summer Olympic Games in addition to the four majors in one calendar year is known as a "Golden Grand Slam" or more commonly the "Golden Slam".
- This major tennis calendar event starts with Australian open,

followed by French Open, Wimbledon and at last US open.

- Hawk-Eye is a computer vision based technology that allows the trajectory of a ball and players to be tracked purely from video and it’s completely un-intrusive.

Source: The Hindu