

Andre tops Champs Race

AFP, Paris

Andre Agassi's Australian Open triumph has propelled him to the top of the ATP Champions Race.

In what was his first counting event of the year, Agassi amassed the maximum 200 points for winning a Grand Slam title.

The man he defeated in the final in Melbourne on Sunday, Rainer Schuettler of Germany, moved up to second spot with 163 points with South African Wayne Ferreira third on 106.

1. André Agassi	200
2. Rainer Schuettler	163
3. Wayne Ferreira	106
4. Andy Roddick	93
5. Juan Carlos Ferrero	74
6. Younes El Aynaoui	72
7. Stephan Koubek	59
8. Mikhail Youzhny	55
9. David Nalbandian, David	51
10. Pradorn Srichaphan	50
11. Sébastien Grosjean	50
12. Felix Mantilla	46
13. Jan-Michael Gambill	45
14. Hyung-Taik Lee	44
15. Roger Federer	43
16. Gustavo Kuerten	42
17. Nikolay Davydenko	39
18. Gargis Sargsian	38
19. Guillermo Coria	38
20. Andreas Vinciguerra	32

League One preview Marseille need to regroup

AFP, Paris

Bruised and battered Marseille hope to make a quick recovery from their French Cup exit by climbing to the top of the championship on Tuesday.

Marseille, currently in third spot, entertain second-placed Nice with both sides hoping to unseat current pacesetters and reigning champions Lyon.

All three have 39 points, but with Lyon not playing until Wednesday at Lens, the table is guaranteed to have a new leader if only for 24 hours.

However, Marseille's preparations have not been helped by the legacy of their extra-time 2-1 defeat at the hands of Paris Saint Germain in the last 32 of the French Cup on Sunday where they had Manuel Dos Santos sent-off, six players booked and saw influential defenders, Belgian international Daniel Van Buyten as well as skipper Franck Leboeuf pick up injuries.

Both men are doubtful for the match while Dos Santos is definitely suspended for his red-card at the Parc des Princes.

But Marseille midfielder Brahim Hemdani believes that his team can turn that defeat to their advantage.

"We lost to a very good Paris team but we created a few good chances in extra time," said Hemdani.

"We still have the championship and League Cup to play for and we will be waiting to play Paris at our stadium."

"We have lost twice at the Parc des Princes this season and when we play them in the league again we will have 60,000 fans behind us and things will be very different."

Nice will be without suspended defender Noe Pamarot who will be replaced by either Sammy Traore or Cedric Varrault.

FIXTURES

Tuesday: Marseille v Nice
Wednesday: Nantes v Monaco, Lens v Lyon, Bastia v Auxerre, Paris Saint Germain v Lille, Sochaux v Rennes, Troyes v Bordeaux, Guingamp v Le Havre, Sedan v Strasbourg, Montpellier v Ajaccio

Monday Van Gaal's D-day

AFP, Vigo

Under-fire Barcelona coach Louis van Gaal will know on Monday whether or not he will keep his job after his side slumped to a 2-0 defeat at Celta Vigo, club vice-president Francesc Closa said on Sunday.

Van Gaal faces the sack after Barcelona suffered their eighth league defeat of the season to leave them in 12th place in the Spanish First Division.

"They now face finishing in the lower half of the table for the first time since 1942."

"Now is not the moment to take a decision," announced Closa following a brief meeting after the game with Barcelona president Joan Gaspart, who is under pressure himself.

"To have heated talk and take heated decisions is not a good idea. We will have a night of reflection. If we have to make decisions, they will be done coolly and calmly," added Closa.

Closa said that there would be a directors meeting back at Barcelona's Nou Camp stadium on Monday to discuss the issue of van Gaal carrying on as the club coach.

Jadeja ban lifted

Cricket

AFP, New Delhi

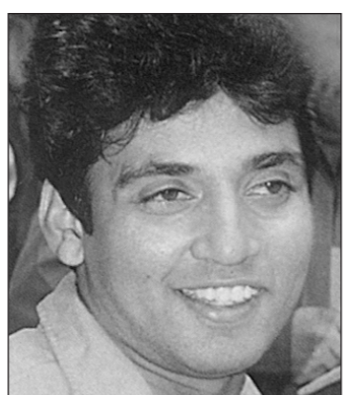
The Delhi High Court on Monday overturned a five-year ban on Indian cricketer Ajay Jadeja on match-fixing charges, saying there was no proof he was guilty.

Jadeja was banned from official cricket two years ago by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) after he was named in a match-fixing investigation by federal investigators.

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), in its report, claimed that Jadeja hobnobbed with alleged bookmakers and cited phone records to link his association with them.

But the arbitrator appointed by

the High Court ruled the probe was one-sided and he was not given a



AJAY JADEJA

change to prove his innocence. There was no reaction yet from Jadeja or the BCCI, which has the

option to appeal against the ruling in the Supreme Court.

It is unlikely that Jadeja, who turns 32 on Saturday, will be reinstated immediately in the Indian team since he has not played cricket officially for two years.

Regarded as one of India's finest limited-overs cricketers, the stylish middle-order batsman played 196 one-dayers in which he scored 5,359 runs with six centuries and 30 half-centuries.

Jadeja also played 15 Tests, scoring 576 runs averaging 26.18.

His last international engagement was the Asia Cup match against Pakistan in the Bangladeshi capital of Dhaka in June, 2000.

Former captain Mohammad Azharuddin, slapped with a life ban following the CBI probe, is also fighting a legal battle in an Andhra Pradesh court to clear his name.



PHOTO: STAR

Scene from the third round preliminary phase matches of the Professor Abdur Razzak 29th National Chess Championship qualifiers at the NSC yesterday.

Mind doc for Indians

ICC Cricket World Cup SOUTH AFRICA 2003

AFP, Calcutta

Saurav Ganguly's India have sought the help of a South African psychologist to hit the right groove ahead of next month's cricket World Cup, officials said on Sunday.

Noted sports psychologist Sandy Gordon will have two sessions with the Indians soon after they arrive in South Africa for the limited-overs tournament from February 8 to March 23.

The Indians go into cricket's showpiece event recovering from a disastrous tour of New Zealand, where they were blanked 2-0 in the Test series and lost the one-dayers 5-2.

"It's a good idea to get a psychologist to pep up the boys," Board of

Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) president Jagmohan Dalmiya said after a meeting with the team management.

Dalmiya held talks with coach John Wright, captain Ganguly, physiotherapist Andrew Leibus and physical trainer Adrian Le Roux ahead of the team's departure on Tuesday.

"We deliberated on the lessons learnt from the Kiwi trip and what could be expected in South Africa," Dalmiya said.

Dalmiya said the team's showing in New Zealand could not be taken as a yardstick as "even the hosts struggled to notch up 100 runs on the fast and bouncy tracks".

The Indians will train at their World Cup base in Durban from Thursday and play two warm-up matches against local teams on February 4 and 6.

The BCCI has asked the hosts to

arrange 24 South African bowlers to bowl to the Indian batsmen in the nets, Dalmiya said.

He ruled that players' wives will not accompany their husbands for the preliminary leg of the tournament, nor will the cricketers be allowed to give media interviews.

Ganguly will meet the press only before and after matches, but the team's media manager Amrit Mathur will be available to answer queries on non-match days, Dalmiya said.

India is grouped with defending champions Australia, England, Pakistan, Zimbabwe, Namibia and the Netherlands in a tough preliminary pool, from which three teams will advance to the second stage. India take on the Netherlands in their first match at Paarl on February 12.

Bacher's rejection

ICC Cricket World Cup SOUTH AFRICA 2003

AFP, Johannesburg

Cricket World Cup organiser Ali Bacher on Monday said he did not speak to or meet opposition groups during a visit to Zimbabwe last week, despite threats of demonstrations in that country.

Asked on SABC public radio whether he had been contacted by opposition groups to President Robert Mugabe's government, including the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), Bacher said he had not.

"I didn't receive any phone calls or any enquiries from any opposition groups in Zimbabwe to come to have a chat to us," he said.

Bacher and International Cricket

Council (ICC) chief executive Malcolm Speed visited Zimbabwe last week to check on the country's security arrangements.

Bacher said he and Speed were in the country for only 18 hours, before departing for South Africa and Britain.

"We were only there for about 18 hours and we didn't have time (to meet the opposition). Also, I wouldn't know who to contact or what phone number to use," he said.

Earlier this month a Zimbabwean coalition of opposition and political groups vowed to hold widespread anti-government demonstrations before and after games.

"We will hold demonstrations before and after cricket matches," said Lovemore Madhuku who heads the National Constitutional Assembly.

Madhuku said the protest

marches were not aimed at cricket, "but the focus is to expose to the international community the excesses of the Zimbabwean regime".

Bacher on Monday reiterated assurances from Zimbabwe's police chiefs that demonstrations against the Harare government would be permitted as long as "the right channels were followed and they were peaceful."

Asked what the World Cup organisers could do if these assurances were not met Bacher said: "If there is an application for a peaceful demonstration in Zimbabwe and they don't keep their word, we'll go public on that. We can't go beyond that," he said. The ICC on Friday announced that the six World Cup matches scheduled to take place in Zimbabwe would go ahead.

Canada pray for luck!

REUTERS, Johannesburg

Canada were looking to a higher power to prolong their involvement in the 2003 cricket World Cup after arriving in Johannesburg on Sunday.

No sooner had the squad disembarked than a Muslim spiritual leader from Senegal, Murtada Mbacke, colourfully made his way through the arrivals hall.

"Maybe we should speak to him. We could probably do with some divine intervention," Canada coach Gus Logie, the former West Indies test batsman, told reporters.

"Our preparations have not been the greatest, but we made the best of difficult circumstances," Logie said, explaining that the squad had trained in Toronto in temperatures that dwindled to 16 degrees below freezing.

"We've been working on mental toughness more than anything."

"I've told the players that it's going to be a lot warmer in South Africa, and that the pitches will be much harder than what they are used to."

Canada are playing in their second World Cup and are in Group B with fellow minnows Bangladesh and Kenya, but should struggle against Sri Lanka, West Indies, South Africa and New Zealand.

Lindsay ready to roll

AFP, Tokyo

Two-time champion Lindsay Davenport said Monday that she has recovered from the knee surgery which saw her miss six months last year and is hoping to reclaim the Pan Pacific Open title here this week.

"My condition is great, my knee is recovering very well," the 26-year-old American said. "It's always a very tough tournament here, a lot of good players."

"But right now, I'm happy to be back and hopefully I will play well this week," said Davenport, who was ousted in the fourth round of the just-ended Australian Open.

Davenport is seeded third here behind compatriot Monica Seles and second seeded Jelena Dokic of Yugoslavia. Chanda Rubin of the United States is seeded fourth.

Davenport, who won the Pan Pacific Open in 1998 and 2001, reached the final of an Australian Open warm up event in Sydney earlier this month but has not won a title since October 2001.

Her path to the 1.3 million-dollar Tokyo indoor title could be made easier with the withdrawals of defending champion Martina Hingis and last year's Australian Open champion Jennifer Capriati.

As one of the top four seeds, Davenport earned a first-round bye. She will take on the winner of the first round match between 1996 champion Iva Majoli of Croatia and American Alexandra Stevenson.

Other players in her half of the draw are sixth seed Silvia Farina of Italy, who faces wild card entry Mary Pierce of France in the opening round, and Thai ace Tamarine Tanasugarn.

Sorry for your hips!

AFP, Paris

David Beckham and Ronaldo, beware: within a couple of decades of hanging up their boots, football stars are prime candidates for replacement hip surgery.

Sports doctors sent questionnaires to the 92 managers of the English Football League and Premiership clubs, 80 of whom were former professional players, asking them about their medical history.

Of the 74 who replied, nine, all former players, had suffered osteoarthritis of the hip. Six of the nine had undergone a total of eight hip replacements.

Among a control group of 136 men in the same 35-55 age bracket who had no professional link with football, only two had had any problems with hip arthritis.



ANDRE AGASSI

Aura of invincibility

Australian Open

AFP, Melbourne

It was Andre Agassi first and daylight second as the American tennis star whisked away another Australian Open title.

Agassi took just 76 minutes to pick up his eighth Grand Slam crown with a majestic straight-sets win over out-gunned German Rainer Schuettler in Sunday's final to win his fourth Australian title.

Only five players in history have won more Grand Slam singles titles than Agassi -- Pete Sampras tops it with 14 from Roy Emerson (12), Bjorn Borg (11), Rod Laver (11) and Bill Tilden (10).

Agassi, at 32, was the oldest player to win a Grand Slam since Andres Gimeno captured the 1972 French Open in Paris.

He dominates the Australian Open like no other in the modern era. He has strung together a record unbeaten sequence of 21 matches at the year's first Grand Slam, one more than two-time champion Ivan Lendl.

Fastidious Agassi left nothing to chance in his preparations, arriving in Australia in peak condition after weeks of hard training.

"Winning Slams is a function of getting through the days that things don't go as planned. It's also a question of playing your best tennis when you need to," he said.

"For me, it's about challenging myself, pushing myself. I can live without the competition. I can live without the hard work. But I can't live without knowing what it feels like to try to accomplish something that I

don't believe that I question if I can."

Agassi became only the fourth man to win four Australian Open titles, behind Emerson (6) and on a par with Jack Crawford (4) and Ken Rosewall (4).

Schuettler, who had not previously gone beyond the fourth round of a Grand Slam event in 17 attempts, reached his first major final.

He was the first German to play in a Grand Slam final since Michael Stich at the 1996 French Open.

Andy Roddick and Younes El Aynaoui played unquestionably the match of the men's tournament, their record-breaking five-hour epic to go down as an Australian Open classic.

The 20-year-old US ninth seed dug deep to deny the amazing 31-year-old El Aynaoui 21-19 in the fifth to reach his first Slam semi-final.

"It's pretty humbling when you have guys like (Jim) Courier and (Martina) Navratilova coming up and saying that's one of the best matches they've ever seen," Roddick said. "You know, it was pretty surreal."

Roddick's second career fifth set victory came just two days after he fought back from two sets down to defeat Russian Mikhail Youzhny in the fourth round.

But the matches exacted a heavy toll as Roddick succumbed to the fresher Schuettler in the semi-final, going down in four sets.

El Aynaoui thrilled the crowds with his exhilarating shot-making, even if he destroyed Australian hopes of a first home-grown winner of the Open in 27 years along the way.

He upset world number one

Lleyton Hewitt in the fourth round. It was the seventh successive year Hewitt had failed to get beyond the fourth round at his home Grand Slam tournament.

"Obviously, the pressure and expectation is a lot more on your focus," Hewitt said. "Whenever you're a top player playing at any Grand Slam, there's always pressure and expectation."

South African Wayne Ferreira reached his second semi-final at the Australian Open 11 years apart after upsetting Spanish fourth seed Juan Carlos Ferrero.

But he predictably became one of Agassi's victims in a one-sided semi-final. It was all over in 88 minutes as rampant Agassi systematically dismantled Ferreira's game. The rollercoaster career of Russian Marat Safin plumbed new depths when he withdrew before his third round match with Schuettler with a wrist injury.

Asian tennis continued to make strides at the Open with Thailand's Paradorn Srichaphan impressing in his lead-up tournaments before he was beaten in five sets by Australian Mark Philippoussis in the second round.

It completed a rousing few weeks for the popular Thai, who started the year with eight wins in 10 matches.

South Korean Lee Hyung-Taik, who broke through for his first ATP title when he beat Ferrero in the lead-up Sydney tournament, bumped into ruthless Agassi in the second round. He crashed out 6-1, 6-0, 6-0 in just 80 minutes.

Man beats machine

Chess

AFP, New York

In just 27 moves, chess Grand Master Garry Kasparov on Sunday defeated a computer programme said to be more cunning than the one that beat him nearly six years ago.

The match, the first of six being played in the tiny New York Athletic Club near Central Park, pit Kasparov -- one of the best players in the history of chess -- against an Israeli computer programme called "Deep Junior," itself the three-time world champion in the computer world.

Kasparov, 39, is still smarting from his 1997 defeat in a series of matches in Philadelphia against an IBM supercomputer known as "Deep Blue."

A miffed Kasparov charged that human experts helped the machine defeat him, and demanded a rematch. But "Deep Blue" was dismantled, never to play again.

Enter "Deep Junior," a program able to review some three million possible moves in one second. While "Deep Blue" was able to analyze far more moves, the newer program is designed to play the game more like a human would.

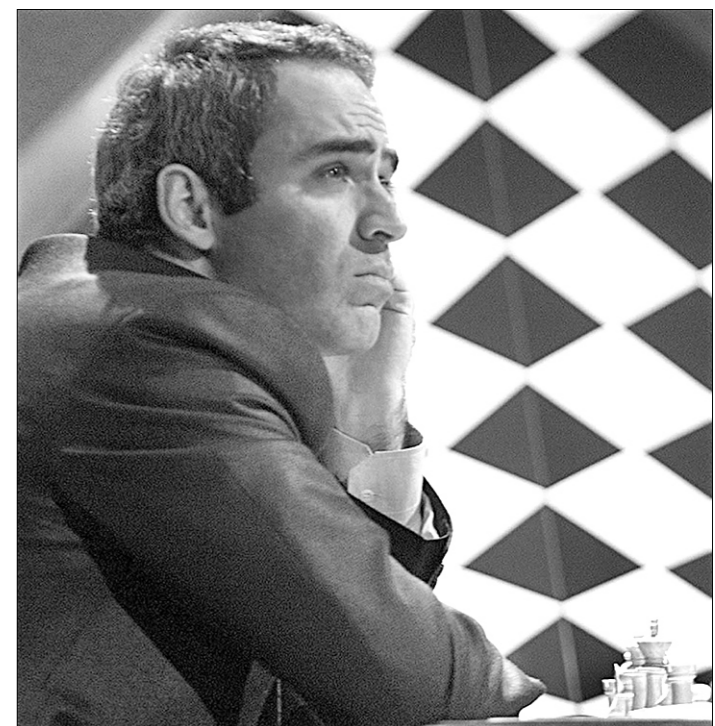
"Deep Junior" is the three times champion of the world of the chess software. It won last in July 2002 in Maastricht, in the Netherlands, defeating 18 other programs.

Ekultant, Kasparov explained his winning strategy after the match.

"One of the ways to win is to find holes in the opening preparation. That machine has insufficient preparation," he said.

"I think we still have some time before being wiped out by machines," a beaming Kasparov said.

Kasparov reigned as the undisputed chess champion of the world from 1985 -- when he won the title at the age 22, making him the youn-



GARRY KASPAROV

gest ever world champion -- to 2000, when he lost it to fellow Russian Vladimir Kramnik.

He is nevertheless ranked as the world's top player, and is seeking a rematch with Kramnik.

Kasparov, tournament organizers and computer programmers say this is the first time that a chess grandmaster faced off against a computer under the supervision and rules of the International Chess Federation -- the body that oversees world chess tournaments -- the International Computer Game Association, and the US Chess Federation.

According to the new rules any questions can be appealed. The setup lays down a framework for future human-computer matches.

"The raw power of a computer is not everything," said Amir Ban, one of the Deep Junior programmers,

speaking ahead of the match. "But it's important to use that power efficiently. The quality of chess knowledge is important too."

Kasparov was respectful of his rival ahead of the matchup, describing the program as dangerous, unpleasant and unpredictable, with near-human qualities.

"If you take the six Deep Blue games, Deep Junior would do better than me in every moment except two, when Deep Blue made genius moves," said Kasparov.

Kasparov was able to practice with the Deep Junior program ahead of the match, something he was unable to do when he faced Deep Blue for the first time.

"There are many games by Deep Junior that I can study, including against very strong players," Kasparov said.

Jamal ton

FROM PAGE 13

Masud	7	0	30	0
Razzak	21.4	5	70	2
Hasanuzzaman	20	5	65	4
Manjarul	24	2	68	3
Jamaluddin	9	0	37	1

KHULNA: First innings

Sajjadul c Neeyamur b Fahim	68
Parvez c Fahim b Monir	0
Salim lbw b Monir	6
Jamaluddin c Naimur b Monir	121
Hasanuzzaman b Arafat	13
Asadullah c Kadir b Naimur	12
Manjarul run out	7
Monirul batting	20
Razzak batting	4
Extras: (b-2, lb-9, w-9)	20
Total: (For 7 wickets in 83 overs)	271

Fall of wickets: 1-1, 2-29, 3-157, 4-183, 5-218, 6-230, 7-264

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Monir	23	5	68	3
Neeyamur	7	4	17	0
Naimur	22	4	70	1
Arafat	20	2	64	1
Fahim	11	3	41	1



PHOTO: COURTESY

Participants and organizers of the AKTEL badminton and table tennis tournament pose with the chief guest Dato' Ezanee Bin Ab Aziz, managing director TMIB, at the wooden floor gymnasium on January 25.