



PHOTO: AFP

German tennis legend Boris Becker stretches during a training session in Hamburg on Wednesday. The former Wimbledon champion will team up with fellow German Michael Stich for two special doubles matches against John and Patrick McEnroe on May 8, 9. It is being billed as a remake of the 1987 Davis Cup match between Germany and USA.

Gone are the Graf days

Tennis
REUTERS, Berlin

It is springtime in Berlin, the sun is out and the German Open tennis tournament is on, maybe for the last time.

The fourth oldest tournament in the world for women and the favourite event of Steffi Graf, who won it nine times, might be scrapped from next year.

Once a symbol of the wealth of German tennis, the Berlin clay-court show is not even live on a national television channel this year and its main sponsor is threatening to pull out.

Without a deal with a broadcaster for next year, tournament director Eberhard Wensky, who has been running the event created in 1896 since it moved from Hamburg to Berlin in 1979, will find it hard to save it.

"Without the presence of a free television channel, it will be difficult to keep one of the most prestigious women's tournaments in Germany," he said.

The tennis boom generated in the country by Boris Becker and Graf has not survived their retirements, and Germany has already lost several high-profile tournaments, notably the Stuttgart Masters Series and the men's year-end championships which were staged in Hanover for years and now change venue every year.

The German Tennis Federation (DTB), which turned 100 last year with little to celebrate, has lost a

valuable source of income as a result and is struggling with severe financial difficulties.

The DTB has also come under criticism from Graf, who said the governing body's structure and its policy in schooling young talent were two of the reasons for the current crisis.

Since not only Becker and Graf but also Michael Stich and Anke Huber have stopped playing competitive tennis, television ratings have dropped significantly and buying the rights for German tournaments is no longer a priority for the public channels.

As a consequence, sponsors are also losing interest and prefer to invest money elsewhere.

The main reason there is less tennis in Germany is because the country no longer has a truly great player.

Neither Tommy Haas nor Nicolas Pietrangeli has lived up to huge expectations and the enthusiasm for Rainer Schüttler's surprise run to the Australian Open final last January came as a reminder of how frustrated German tennis fans were getting.

Schüttler has struggled since and the situation in the women's game is even more critical with no German player in the top 50.

The only local to make the main draw of this year's German Open without needing a wild card or having to qualify was world number 73 Anca Barna, who survived the first round with a 6-4, 6-2 win over Spain's Anabel Medina Garrigues.

"I'm feeling more pressure than

usual," said the 25-year-old Barna. "Normally nobody cares about how I play and this is new to me but it's all right."

Germany are struggling at team level as well, facing battles against relegation from the world group in both the Davis Cup and the Fed Cup.

Becker, who has suffered a string of misfortunes since leaving the professional circuit, and Graf, concentrating on her family life with fellow tennis great Andre Agassi, still win more play in the German media for anything they do than any active German player.

The two, who won 28 Grand Slam titles including 10 Wimbledon crowns between them, are now being called to the rescue.

Becker and his Switzerland-based marketing agency BCI have stepped in to save the Hamburg Masters Series, starting next week, from financial collapse, while Graf has promised Wensky she will play an exhibition at the German Open next year in an effort to convince a German broadcaster to show the tournament live.

To promote this year's Hamburg event, Becker has organised exhibition matches on a Davis Cup format featuring himself, Stich and the McEnroe brothers, John and Patrick.

"That's entertainment," said Becker, who has gone through a multi-million divorce settlement, a dispute with a pregnant lover and a trial for tax evasion since leaving the professional circuit.

At least when the present is too depressing, Germany can always look to the past.

Roddick joins casualties

Tennis
REUTERS, Rome

American fifth seed Andy Roddick followed compatriot Andre Agassi out of the Rome Masters on Wednesday, losing his second round match against big-serving Dutch qualifier Martin Verkerk 6-7, 6-3, 6-4.

Roddick's exit ended America's presence at the clay court tournament. The only other US player left in the draw, Mardy Fish, succumbed earlier to Felix Mantilla 6-4, 6-3.

Mantilla was one of five Spanish players to reach the last 16, including second seed Juan Carlos Ferrero, whose metronomic groundstrokes dispatched 1997 winner Alex Corretja 6-4, 6-4, seventh-seeded Albert Costa -- a 6-7, 6-2, 6-4 winner over Frenchman Arnaud Clement -- and third seed Carlos Moya, who defeated Max Mirnyi 6-4, 6-4.

Swiss number four seed Roger Federer played a patchy game to beat Argentina's Mariano Zabaleta 7-6, 6-2.

Gaston Gaudio and David Ferrer -- the two men who had pulled off the biggest upsets of the opening two days in beating 1999 winner Gustavo Kuerten and world number one Agassi respectively -- had differing fortunes.

While Gaudio continued his impressive run with a 6-4, 6-2 win over fellow Argentine Agustín Calleri, Ferrer went out, surrendering tamely to Croatia's Ivan Ljubicic 6-2, 6-3.

Roddick -- renowned for one of the biggest serves in the world -- was shot down by the lanky Verkerk, who struck 22 aces on his way to clinching the match.

After losing a tight first set tiebreak, the Dutchman came from a break down in the second to level the match at one set all.

In the decider the balance swung firmly in Verkerk's favour. Roddick saved two breakpoints in the first game, but could only scoop a tired reply into the net when his opponent whipped a topspin forehand to the back corner in the fifth game and lost his serve.

The 68th-ranked Dutchman, who usually feels more at home on grass or fast indoor carpet, showed no hint of nerves when serving for the match, blasting down aces numbers 20, 21 and 22 to complete a memorable victory.

Verkerk put his improvement down to a different mental attitude.

"Sometimes, when you play big players you think more about the name or about what they achieved before," he said.

"Now, I'm thinking more like: 'It's today and you play whoever, it doesn't matter who they are.'"

Dokic, Capriati canter

Tennis
AFP, Berlin

Jelena Dokic admitted she hasn't quite got used to being without her father after struggling to reach the third round of the German Open with a 7-6, 6-4 win over German wild card Francesca Weingartner.

The Serbian also suffered from spells of dizziness during a less than convincing performance, but her greater concern was the time it is taking to adapt to a different coaching set-up.

Many people assumed that she was relieved to separate from the controversial and his erratic behaviour, even though her dad proved a surprisingly effective tutor.

But Dokic still hasn't got used to the regimen of his successor, the highly regarded Swiss, Heinz Günthard, and recently slipped from the top ten for the first time since September 2001.

"I made a few changes coaching wise and it takes a while to get this into matches," she admitted.

"I have worked a lot on these changes and it can be confusing, but I feel like it is coming along."

It may need to do so more rapidly, for the 20-year-old is quite used to making changes, having previously parted with two highly regarded coaching assistants, Tony Roche and Lesley Bowrey, and having lived in three different countries.

The changes she is attempting involve taking the ball earlier, coming to the net more often, and knowing when to step up the attack -- all sensible investments for a player of medium physique in a field increasingly dominated by more powerfully built opponents.

"The practices are different from what I am used to," she volunteered. "Overall everything is different."

Earlier Jennifer Capriati reckoned that she is ready to challenge for the top spot yet again after a fighting performance in her first match of the European clay court season carried her to the third round.

The former world number one from the United States won 6-4, 6-4 against Francesca Schiavone, the

rising in-form Italian who last week in Warsaw was close to beating Venus Williams.

Capriati was often under pressure against a 22-year-old who played with imagination and flair, but the fourth seed defended and contained when she had to and counter-attacked excellently at important moments.

"I believe I am better than before the (eye) operation (in January)," Capriati said.

"I had to work extra hard to get back because I had fallen a long way back (behind the Williams sisters)."

"I definitely notice a difference now. Things are a lot easier. I think it's in my character to make comebacks. Many other people give up and I don't," she added.

Her performance suggested she is building well for a challenge to win the German title for the first time in her career and perhaps to do well at the French Open in two and a half weeks time.

Capriati failed to serve out for the first set at 5-3 but still had the composure to break again in the following game, and she again made a well-timed push in the second set when Schiavone had a point to reach 5-5.

On each occasion her mobility and her forehand were the key factors -- the one keeping her in the rally and the other offering a constant threat of a sudden fierce counter-hit or a gradual counter-attack.

"I hung in with her well. I rallied with her, and I was aggressive at the right moments. She had a lot of confidence after her performance against Venus last week, so I am very happy with the way I played," Capriati said.

Later two seeded players went out.

Anastasia Myskina, the number nine, offered limited opposition to her fellow Muscovite, the 18-year-old Vera Zvonareva, earning only three games, and this was followed by the exit of Meghann Shaughnessy, the 14th seeded American.

Shaughnessy's attacking skills best express themselves on hard courts, and she was worn down 3-6, 6-4, 6-1 by the persistence of the Columbian qualifier Fabiola Zuluaga.

Mahela new deputy

Cricket
REUTERS, Colombo

Mahela Jayawardene has been named vice-captain of a new-look Sri Lanka one-day side for the triangular series which starts on Saturday.

Jayawardene had been dropped from the one-day squad after a disastrous World Cup when the 25-year-old middle order batsman scored just 21 runs in seven innings.

However, Sri Lanka's disappointing performance in the Sharjah Cup last month, coupled

with Jayawardene's return to form since, has forced a re-think by the selectors.

Jayawardene was appointed vice-captain of the national side in 1999 but lost the job to current one-day captain Marvan Atapattu after a slump in his batting form.

The right-hander has played in 140 matches, scoring 3,607 runs at an average of 30.31.

Sri Lanka have dropped six players from the squad that failed to qualify for the final of the Sharjah quadrangular.

Russel Arnold, who was also dropped for the Sharjah Cup after a lean World Cup, has also been recalled.

Romesh Kaluwitharana has been preferred to Prasana Jayawardena behind the stumps after missing the second half of the triangular series in Australia, the World Cup and the Sharjah Cup.

There are also recalls for middle order batsman Tillakaratne Dilshan, all-rounder Kaushalya Weeraratne, leg spinner Upul Chandana and fast bowler Prabhath Nissanka.

Sri Lanka's 15-man squad is heavily loaded with spinners, four having been picked.

DU calls up 20 cricketers

UNB, Dhaka
Dhaka University called up 20 players to select a team for the National Cricket Championship, beginning on May 15.

The players are Ehsanul Haq, Mazharul Haq, Chowdhury, Tanisul Hakim, Tareq Aziz Khan, Bikas Ranjan Das, Sajal Chowdhury, Lablur Rahman, Khandaker Musharraf Hossain, Debashish Kumar Kar, KMA Azizul Noor, Helaluddin Ahmed, Saiful Islam, Nasrul Islam, Somen Das, Akhmal Haq, Ishtiaque Mahmud, Sheikh Farid, Iftekhar Ahmed, Avijit Chakravarty and Shafiqul Haq.

The players have been asked to report today at 3:30pm at the Jagannath Hall cricket ground.

Flower

FROM PAGE 13
"It would have been nice to have played England but we enjoyed the points. But ideally it would have been better to have played them," Flower said.

Anti-Mugabe protesters, who want the tour stopped, were at Lord's for last week's opening media conference but Flower said the squad was relaxed about their threats of further demonstrations.

"I don't think anyone's under stress. You've got to be open-minded. People have views. That's fine."

Kalabagan

FROM PAGE 13
rate of a target match. I think Kalabagan has taken that advantage. I was there on the ground and I tried my best to make them play. But they were determined not to play," said CCDDM coordinator Jamil A Sattar.

"We cannot punish them because our hands are tied by the by-laws," he added.

BCB or BCCB?

FROM PAGE 13
executive committee on May 17. If the NSC want, they can very well retain the name BCB instead of going back to BCCB. But who will take the initiative?" asked a senior cricket organiser.

However, there was a little glimmer of hope from the Director Sports of NSC Nazmul Huda who said that the name of the Board might remain as BCB.

"We haven't received any proposal so far regarding changing the name of the Board. We have formed a five-member committee headed by Manzoor Hasan Minto to review the draft of the amended constitution of BCB. They will sit on Saturday and approve the draft. Change, I don't think is an important issue," Huda said.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	40 "Clue"	4 Stipend	25 Chignon
1 Removes	42 Bawl	5 Beach	26 Spaghetti
a hat	44 Fast	6 Men	28 Very
6 Atelier	46 Sills solo	7 Glee	30 Beati-
closeful	50 Powerful	8 Insepar-	tudes
12 Critique	52 Eat	9 Chinese	31 Basilica
13 Helmet	54 Do a	10 Hardy	33 Resort
variety	laundry	11 Impale	34 Doze
14 Russian	55 Alfred of	12 Eminem's	39 Say
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letters	SCOTT WHY BLUE		special?"
27 Japanese	ELLA RAY BAKE		49 —
mountain	TUG SOX MANES		glance
29 Harvest	HEARTS SAY		51 "Sesame
32 Survey	EYE PROFIT		Street"
list	K I E V B O U Q U E T S		Muppet
35 Child's	E C R N U R D O T T P		53 Calendar
play	GENE DOSE AIS		abbr.
36 Albacore			
37 Fresh			
38 There's a			
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CRYPTOQUIP

HTS CWRGFISGEGFP NGOO
PHI FCCSWEGFIW NFGIGPQ
FSHTPR . AW AFL OGIOW
CFIGWPIL .

Yesterday's Cryptquip: VERY CONCISE REVIEW OF A NEW BOOK ABOUT THE FIRST WATCHMAKERS: "IT'S ABOUT TIME!"

Today's Cryptquip Clue: C equals P

The Cryptquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.

MSC revolve round Bhatia

FROM PAGE 13
balls and hit eleven fours. His partnership with Bhatia yielded 141 runs in 41 overs. Very next ball the impressive Raj removed Mohammedan captain Minhazul Abedin by taking a return catch. Although Naimur Rahman survived the hat-trick ball, Raj was denied a wicket with the last ball of that eventful over when wicketkeeper Mohammad Salim missed a caught behind chance that went for a four.

Naimur did not last long, being bowled while trying to sweep Nayeem and Mohammedan were in trouble at 106 for five. But wicketkeeper Anwar Hossain (29 not out) played sensibly after the tea break and shared a 78-run stand with the fluent Bhatia. A visibly tired Bhatia eventually got

out four overs from stumps giving a simple catch to Nayeem of Raj. In his chanceless 300-minute stay at the crease, he faced 206 deliveries and belted five sixes and nine fours.

"It was a superb batting track and only a top quality spinner might have got purchase out of it," said Bhatia later adding that no bowler in particular troubled him.

Among the Victoria bowlers, Raj stood out. With the absence of influential teammate and fellow left-arter Manjarul Islam, who is now in England as part of the Bangladesh Cricket Board's development programme, Raj bowled a staggering 37 overs to finish with four for 102. Nayeem gave him admirable support with two for 25 off 11 overs.

Mohammedan, who desperately need a win in their last game of the season to have any hope of staying in contention for the title, will have nine more overs to bat today in their first innings as they try to push the score beyond 300. Victoria, only needing two points to retain the crown and with a game in hand, were however holding the psychological edge by close of play.

SCOREBOARD
Scoreboard on the first day of the GrameenPhone Premier Cricket Super League clash between Mohammedan Sc and Victoria SC at the Bangabandhu National

Stadium yesterday:

MOHAMMEDAN SC: First innings
Javed c Azam b Razzak 67
Nafees c Salim b Razzak 15
Aftab run out 0
Rajat c W Nayeem b Razzak 129
Minhazul c & b Razzak 0
Naimur b W Nayeem 13
Anwar batting 29
Enamul c Salim b W Nayeem 0
Hasibul batting 5
Extras: (lb-5, nb-1, w-3) 9
Total: (For 7 wkts in 91 overs) 272
Fall of wickets: 1-20, 2-20, 3-161, 4-161, 5-186, 6-264, 7-265.

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Mushfiq	19	4	45	0
Parvez	3	1	13	0
Razzak	37	9	102	4
Sabbir	10	2	35	0
Masudur	11	1	42	0
W Nayeem	11	1	25	2

Star WHIZZ KID COMPETITION 193
Tick the correct answers, post to The Daily Star Win attractive prizes
Competition closes at 8 pm May 9, 2003 and draw shortly afterwards

1. Who clinched the Professor Abdur Razzak 29th National chess title?
Niaz Zia Reefat

2. Who became man-of-the-match in the Sharjah Cup final?
Youhana Sami Taufiq

3. Who will lead Sri Lanka's one-day side?
Tillekeratne Vass

4. Who won the man-of-the-series award in the TVS Cup triangular tournament?
Atapattu

Name

Class..... Roll No.

School Address

Phone: (If any)

Murali

FROM PAGE 13
knew before the tour they were preparing to block me and try scoring against other bowlers."

Muralitharan is the third highest wicket-taker in Test history with 450 wickets, behind Courtney Walsh (519) and Australian leg-spinner Shane Warne (491).

But the Sri Lankan believes wickets will become increasingly harder to come by for spinners, partly due to the widespread use of video technology.

"It's not becoming any easier bowling to batsmen who have worked you out," he said.

"Ask any spinner like Shane Warne, it's harder now video analysis is playing a big part."

"But videos can only help you study a spinner, they can't help you score runs. Batsmen mostly learn to tackle spinners in a negative way."

Muralitharan, who added that he aims to continue playing for another four years, is in the Sri Lanka lineup for the limited-overs series against New Zealand and Pakistan which starts on Saturday.



PHOTO: AFP

American Jennifer Capriati hits a backhand against Frenchwoman Nathalie Dechy in Berlin yesterday.