

Difficult times ahead



REUTERS, London

Top-and-tailing the French Open draw, Lleyton Hewitt and Andre Agassi know they will face a mammoth task next week...

Former champions and dogged battlers from Spain, Argentina, Brazil and Chile pepper the draw as the second grand slam of the year slides into action.

Hewitt may be sitting atop the world rankings but he is not high on confidence on the slow surface while Agassi must pray his 33-year-old legs can motor him around...

The tournament is a showpiece for France but it is the Latins who are most at home and there will be no margin for error for Agassi or Hewitt as the baseliners snap at their heels.

Certainly Agassi knows it will not be easy but he has an edge the younger players are missing -- experience.

"I'm at a place in my career where I have the luxury of using my experience. Most people who have

my experience aren't playing any more," he says.

"My body is still holding up, my mind is still eager and my heart still wants it. So now I can use my experience."

Hewitt is equally hungry but realises it may be lack of experience which costs him.

"Maybe I have to work a bit harder on clay," he freely admits. "It's a challenge and I've always liked challenges."

"Whether I will ever win the French (Open) and master playing on clay, who knows? But I'll give it a shot."

Juan Carlos Ferrero lurks immediately beneath the top two. Runner-up last year and a semifinalist in 2001 and 2000, the Spaniard is desperate to go one better this time round.

Victories in Monte Carlo and Valencia in recent months are testament to his form.

Seeded fourth lies Carlos Moya, no stranger to glory at the Stade Roland Garros.

In 1998 he lifted the French crown and went on to take number one spot in the rankings. "Paris is the biggest goal for me," he warned all comers earlier this week.

Moya's vanquished opponent in five years ago was Alex Corretja, another Spaniard who will also

pose a threat in the French capital, seeded 16th this time.

Reigning champion Albert Costa sits menacingly in the ninth seeded position. One of the fittest men in the sport he will be looking to replicate last year's heroics.

The power of the Spaniards is beyond question but it is the form of the Argentinians which has grasped the imagination this month.

The nation made history last week when four Argentinians reached the semi-finals of the Hamburg Masters -- marking the first time any four countrymen had ever advanced to the final four at a Tennis Masters Series event.

The historical feat was accomplished by David Nalbandian, Guillermo Coria, Agustin Calleri and Gaston Gaudio.

Coria went on to clinch the title but all four are sure to be a threat in Paris.

"The Argentine success doesn't really surprise me," Coria said. "We are a very good group and we play at a very high level."

"There has been a lot of bad news from Argentina and I think that as sportsmen, we can give our people something to think about which is positive and forget about the negative things."

Graf expecting again



AFP, Paris

Andre Agassi says his promise to play mixed doubles with Steffi Graf in next week's French Open had to be put off because his wife is going to be a Mum again.

Agassi, here for his 15th French Open, promised a doubles appearance with Graf after winning his eighth Grand Slam title in the Australian Open in Melbourne in January.

"When I said we could mixed doubles with Steffi I didn't know the news," he told the sports daily l'Equipe Thursday.

"It wouldn't be wise for a pregnant woman to play."

He said he didn't know whether 20-month-old Jaden Gil would be having a brother or sister.

Graf, who won 22 Grand Slam titles, married Agassi in October 2001.

She retired in 1999 after winning the French Open for a sixth time.

Graf played mixed doubles with former world number one John McEnroe at Wimbledon in

1999 when they reached the semi-finals.

The 33-year-old Agassi was the sport's oldest No 1 when he went to the top of the rankings earlier in the year but if he wins here he will not be the oldest French Open winner.

Agassi Gomez of Ecuador was the last 30-year-old to win Roland-Garros, beating a 20-year-old Agassi in the 1990 final.

Spaniard Andres Gimeno was 34 years and 10 months when he won in 1972 while Australian Ken Rosewall and fellow American Franck Parker both triumphed on the famous French clay at the age of 33.

Australia's 20th in a row



AFP, Castries

Youngster Michael Clarke and Andrew Symonds each scored half-centuries as Australia stretched their unbeaten one-day international winning run to 20 games with a 25-run defeat of the West Indies in the third ODI match at Beausejour Stadium here on Wednesday.

Clarke, 22, and playing in only his second one-day international, was named man-of-the-match after his unbeaten 75 off 100 balls and taking three catches in the West Indies innings.

Symonds, one of Australia's heroes of this year's World Cup triumph in southern Africa, smashed nine fours in his 75 off 82 balls as Australia scored 258 for four off 50 overs after being sent into bat.

The Windies had their chances yet again to be 150 for four after 35 overs but again self-destructed with three run outs to play out the final overs with no winning chance at 233 for nine.

The victory put Australia 3-0 up in the seven-game series and needing just one more win in the last four games in Port of Spain to tie the weekend and the following weekend in Grenada to take the series.

Clarke has been sitting in the stands for most of the Caribbean Test and one-day tour watching his Australian teammates and finally got his chance on Wednesday when vice-captain and wicketkeeper Adam Gilchrist was rested from the St Lucia match.

Clarke, who many are tipping as a future Test batsman, played shots all around the wicket and although he faced 100 deliveries he was composed and technically adroit.

He gave a tough caught and bowled chance to fast bowler Corey Collymore on 59 only when he stepped up the scoring tempo late in his innings.

Symonds, who has taken a grip on the all-rounder position in the Australian limited-over team following on from his marvellous World Cup, started slowly but accelerated his scoring before he was out, bowled by a full toss from spinner Chris Gayle as he attempted to force the pace.

The athletic Queenslander hit

the ball with tremendous power and was the perfect batting foil when young Clarke came to the wicket at the loss of skipper Ricky Ponting's wicket for 32 leaving Australia 79 for three.

Symonds and Clarke put on 99 for the fourth wicket and Clarke combined with Michael Bevan (32 not out) to add a further 80 runs for the unfinished fifth wicket.

"I was looking forward to today having been in the West Indies for a long time and watching a lot of cricket and very happy to get a game and rapt to be man of the match," Clarke said.

Ponting paid tribute to Clarke and another youngster, spinner Nathan Hauritz, who took the important wickets of Ramnaresh Sarwan (15) and Chris Gayle (43) early in the West Indies innings.

"Nathan's wickets were vital to come on inside the first 15 overs and young Clarke has been around throughout the tour and we've all been waiting for him to get a game and he got his chance today and played beautifully," Ponting said.

Ponting said his team's winning sequence would inevitably end, but hopefully not next weekend in Trinidad as the Australians attempt to wrap up the series.

"We're playing well, if we stick to the basics and keep doing them well we know we are going to be competitive in most games, so that's what we are focusing on."

Gayle topscored with 43 off 46 balls but the 65-run fifth-wicket partnership between Wavell Hinds (42) and Marlon Samuels (37) caused the Australians some concern.

But a breakdown in communication between the pair led to Hinds being stranded and run out after Bevan had time to underhand a throw back to wicketkeeper Jimmy Maher to remove the balls and leave the Windies 150 for five.

Ricardo Powell energised the crowd with 26 off 11 balls, including sixes off Brad Hogg and Andy Bichel, before he was caught by Clarke at deep point and Samuels followed next ball to an identical catch to Clarke off Jason Gillespie's bowling.

That was it for the West Indies.

Earlier, Lara was again out cheaply, inside-edging on to his off-stump off Bichel for four off nine balls. It was sixth time on the Caribbean tour that Bichel had

taken Lara's wicket.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard in the third one-day international between the West Indies and Australia at Beausejour Stadium here on Wednesday:

AUSTRALIA

Table with columns: Batter, Runs, Balls, Extras. Includes Maherc Smith, Hayden, Ponting, Symonds, Clarke, Bevan.

Total: (For 4 wickets in 50 overs) 258

Fall of wickets: 1-25, 2-48, 3-79, 4-178

Did not bat: Hogg, Bichel, Hauritz, Gillespie, McGrath

Table with columns: Bowler, O, M, R, W. Includes Dillon, Collymore, Banks, Hinds, Gayle, Samuels.

WEST INDIES

Table with columns: Batter, Runs, Balls, Extras. Includes Gayle, Smith, Sarwan, Lara, Hinds, Samuels, Powell, Banks, Hogg.

Table with columns: Bowler, O, M, R, W. Includes McGrath, Gillespie, Bichel, Hauritz, Hogg.

Total: (For 9 wickets in 50 overs) 233

Fall of wickets: 1-20, 2-67, 3-70, 4-85, 5-150, 6-181, 7-181, 8-186, 9-197

Result: Australia won by 25 runs and Australia lead seven-game series 3-0.

Man-of-the-match: Michael Clarke.

Toss: West Indies

Umpires: Billy Doctrove (West Indies) and David Shepherd (England)

Porto in paradise

FROM PAGE 13

into extra time, while Valente was shown the red just before the end of the match by 35-year-old Slovak referee Lubos Michel.

By then Derlei had scored Porto's third to give them a UEFA Cup and Portuguese league double -- with the possibility of a third trophy to come in the Portuguese Cup final next month. It was Porto's first European honour since lifting the European Cup in 1987.

For Celtic there was honour in a narrow defeat in their first European final for 33 years, although their season can still end on a high if they retain their Scottish title on Sunday.

In the end they did not emulate their famous Lisbon Lions heroes who won the European Cup in the Portuguese capital in 1967.

On the night they could not quite master a dazzling Portuguese midfielder or the Portuguese champions who rarely lived up to their billing as favourites but got their hands on the silverware in the end.

"Despite the many difficulties which we had to face we managed to score goals and emerge victorious," said Derlei.

"This was not a victory for me, it

was a victory for this fabulous team."

Celtic coach Martin O'Neill accused the Portuguese champions of blatant play-acting.

However, he insisted Celtic would learn from the defeat and bounce back as a more potent European force.

TEAMS section with details for Celtic and FC Porto players.

FC Porto: Vitor Baia; Paulo Ferreira, Jorge Costa (capt), Pedro Emanuel (70), Ricardo Carvalho, Nuno Valente, Deco, Costinha (Ricardo Costa 9), Maniche, Dmitri Alenichev, Capucho (Marco Ferreira 97), Derlei

Yellow cards: Celtic - Valgaeren, Lennon, Balde, Petrov, Porto - Valente, Maniche, Marco Ferreira

Red cards: Celtic - Balde, Porto - Valente

Att: 52,972 Referee: Lubos Michel (SVK)

"I will probably get into trouble for this, but it was poor sportsmanship," O'Neill said. "The rolling over, the time wasting."

"But they have beaten us, well done to them and it's up to us to learn from this."

"It is a steep learning curve, but this was a wonderful, wonderful experience."

O'Neill pinpointed Balde's dismissal as the main reason for Celtic's defeat.

"If we had 11 men in extra-time, I thought we were the strongest side at that stage," he said.

"It was probably the turning point of the game because we were looking forward to going into extra-time."

Larsson reflected on the bitterness of equalising twice yet still collecting a runner's up medal.

"To come back twice and still lose was unbelievable. But the luck wasn't on our side," said the Swede.

"We have just lost one of the biggest games you can play as a professional footballer and I'm not very happy at the moment."

"There is no joy whatsoever but we have to get on with it."

Gough targets 2nd Test



INTERNET, London

Darren Gough is out of the Lord's Test that started Thursday but desperate to play in the second Test at Durham on June 5.

He hopes to resume playing for Yorkshire before the end of May, as he retains aspirations to represent his country once again.

Gough produced a handful of pumped-up performances at the start of the season before straining a hamstring at Headingley on 5 May.

Had he got through that game unscathed, he may well have been named in the squad for the first Test against Zimbabwe starting on

Thursday.

But having not played a Test since the summer of 2001, all he is thinking of at the moment is donning the whites for England again.

"You can't take away that feeling when you've got the ball in your hand, the first ball of an NPower Test match, and that's what I want to get back to doing," he said.

"I've got the rest of my career to think about other things. I just want to play Test and one day cricket at the moment."

Having conquered the heartache of endless knee trouble, Gough regards his latest setback as a minor mishap.

"I've had three operations and seen specialist after specialist," he said.

"I want to see a specialist in

Australia who told me to find another job, basically.

"The first thing I did, being a Northern lad and being from Barnsley, was to try to prove him wrong, and I've done that."

"I've proved with the desire and enthusiasm that you can get back, and I'm going to do the same again, hopefully, from my hamstring."

Magura Cricket

OUR CORRESPONDENT

Abul Hossain Khan Smriti Sangsad, Islampurpara Sporting Club, Independent Cricket Club and Shaheed Mintu Sangha moved into the semifinals of the Econo Cricket League at the Magura Stadium yesterday.

Independent CC meet Islampurpara SC in the first semifinal on May 25 while Abul Hossain Khan SS take on Shaheed Mintu Sangha the day after.

New Mariner Youngs body

SPORTS REPORTER

ASM ALI KHAIR ALAMGIR KABIR

ASM Ali Khair Chand and Mohammad Alamgir Kabir have been elected as the president and general secretary of the Mariner Youngs Club.

They were elected in the club's biennial general meeting on Thursday. The meeting also named a 47-member executive committee.

Fleming said he agonised over his decision to retire after 15 years of playing first-class and international cricket.

Baptiste innocent

INTERNET, London

Former West Indies fast bowler Eldine Baptiste is to be released from custody after tests revealed he did not import cocaine into Britain.

Baptiste, 43, was detained at London's Gatwick Airport on Sunday after arriving on a flight from his native Antigua.

Josephites, Europa win

UNB, Dhaka

Europa Youth and Josephites won their respective matches in the First Division Basketball League at Dhanmondi wooden-floor gymnasium yesterday.

Europa defeated the Flame Boys Club 104-44. In the other game, Josephites beat Gregarious Club 109-56.

Fleming quits cricket for coaching

AFP, Adelaide

Former Test seam bowler Damien Fleming retired from cricket on Thursday to take up a coaching role at the Australian Cricket Academy here, the Australian Cricket Board said.

Fleming, 33, agreed to a two-year contract to join the Adelaide-based academy, replacing Wayne Phillips, who was earlier this month appointed coach of South Australia.

He will join head coach Bennett King and fellow senior coaches John Harmer and David Moore at the academy, which has produced a steady stream of Test and one-day international players.

Fleming said he agonised over his decision to retire after 15 years of playing first-class and international cricket.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down.

Cryptoquip puzzle grid with numbers 1-58.

CRYPTOQUIP

UNIICDN BTRZMNA JZ

GCPFJH CZRUCK PTCFNT

BCPFCDN: "AJ ZJM NCM

RH INCX RI GTJFNZ."

Saturday's Cryptoquip: BEING A TAILOR IS A GOOD THING. THERE ARE DEFINITELY A LOT OF FRINGE BENEFITS.

Today's Cryptoquip clue: I equals S

The Cryptoquip 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.

Workers clean the Centre Court stands at Roland-Garros stadium in Paris on May 21 ahead of the French Open which starts on May 26.

Protest at Lord's



AFP, London

Around 100 exiled victims and critics of President Robert Mugabe protested Thursday outside the home of English cricket at the start of the first Test match against Zimbabwe.

Opposite the Lord's cricket ground in central London, protesters held up placards stating: "Say no to state terrorism in Zimbabwe" and "Wake up world! Zimbabwe is dying!"

Zimbabwe is a former British colony.

"No cricket while Mugabe kills", "Free Zimbabwe now", "Murder, torture and rape, it's just not cricket", the protesters chanted as they danced and blew whistles near one of the main gates.

Some protesters were planning to follow up with an open-top bus ride to the Zimbabwe High Commission where they were hoping to deliver a letter calling for an end to state-sponsored political violence.

Earlier this week some 94 ruling Labour party and opposition Conservative ministers signed a

House of Commons motion opposing Zimbabwe's tour.

England refused to play their World Cup match in Zimbabwe in February and in April had to pay the Zimbabwe Cricket Union an undisclosed sum of money in compensation.

The "goodwill" offer was made to ensure Zimbabwe went ahead with their 10 week tour of England and Ireland.

There had been speculation that Mugabe might veto the tour to England in retaliation for the World Cup boycott.

England are due to tour Zimbabwe in November next year.

Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer said Tuesday that Mugabe should step down to help the country to pull out of its political, economic and social crises.

Downer was speaking at a London meeting of the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group, which made no move to lift Zimbabwe's suspension from the 54-member club of mostly former British colonies.

Mugabe's regime has been suspended from the ministerial councils of the Commonwealth since March 2002.



PHOTO: AFP

Stewards escort a protester off the ground during the first Test between England and Zimbabwe at Lord's yesterday.

Aussies more strong atop



INTERNET, London

Australia has strengthened their position at the top of the ICC Test Championship table under the new system launched on Wednesday at Lord's cricket ground here.

Australia lead the way with a rating of 129, 14 ahead of South Africa. The other side to benefit most from the new system is Pakistan which has overtaken West Indies to move to seventh position, behind India only by virtue of fewer matches played.

ICC Chief Executive Malcolm Speed said the revised system now takes account of every match and series result.

TESTTABLE ON 21ST MAY

Table with columns: Position, Team, Rating. Lists Australia, South Africa, New Zealand, Sri Lanka, England, India, Pakistan, West Indies.