

'Henmania' all over again

WIMBLEDON

AFP, London

It has become as much a part of a British sporting summer as fruit-laden hats at Royal Ascot: Tim Henman raising hopes of a home triumph at Wimbledon to fever pitch.

Four times in the last five years, the British number one has taken his fans on a rollercoaster ride from hope to heartache by advancing to the semi-finals only to stumble just as the biggest prize in tennis appears to be within his grasp.

Few would bet against a fresh outbreak of Henmania this year.

It normally only takes a couple of wins to get the juices flowing among Henman's most fervent supporters - the bulk of them, it seems, middle-aged, middle-class women seduced by their hero's blend of considerable ability with an old-fashioned, understated Englishness.

They will never give up hope that their Tim will be the man to finally end Britain's 67-year wait for a home-grown champion.

But with every year that passes the odds on a Henman victory

lengthen a little more and his preparations for this year's tournament have been far from encouraging.

Shoulder surgery at the end of last year kept the 28-year-old sidelined until April and has not eliminated the pain which forced him to go under the knife in the first place.

During his semi-final defeat by



TIM HENMAN

Sebastien Grosjean in the traditional Wimbledon warm-up tournament at Queen's, Henman had to have treatment on the shoulder.

"I'd be lying if I said I didn't have it always in the back of my mind," he

admitted.

The injury problems have resulted in Henman dropping to 29th in the world rankings. But his solid grasscourt record has seen him installed as the 10th seed and the draw has been relatively kind to him.

The late withdrawal of Spaniard Alex Corretja following the birth of his first child means Henman will start against Tomas Zib of the Czech Republic, a lucky loser from the qualifying competition.

Victory in that match would set up an equally winnable second round tie against Spain's David Sanchez or France's Michael Llodra.

But according to his former coach, David Felgate, the kindly draw may not necessarily be in Henman's best interests.

"With a lack of matches this year because of his shoulder injury, it is even more important that he gets some good tough matches under his belt to give him the confidence going into the second week," Felgate warned.

Happily for British fans, their hopes do not rest entirely on Henman's suspect shoulders.

Just in time for Wimbledon, Greg Rusedski appears to have emerged

from the injury nightmare that almost forced him to quit in despair earlier this year.

The 29-year-old only resumed competitive tennis at the French Open last month after undergoing the draw and knee surgery at the end of last year.

A neck injury further hampered his recovery and prevented him from getting back on court.

But having worked intensively on his fitness in the gym, Rusedski seemed to have slipped straight into something close to his best form as he romped to victory in last week's warm-up tournament at Nottingham.

After sweeping American Mardy Fish aside in the final on Saturday, he attributed his form to the physical work he had done during those frustrating months when he could not get out on court.

"I stop-started three times and I've been on the stationary bike for about 20,000 miles," he said. "But all the work has finally come to fruition and paid off."

"I've worked hard on my fitness and now I've got the match hardness so I'm very excited about Wimbledon."

Rating chess

SPORTS REPORTER

Thirteen players were sharing the lead with maximum 3 points each after the end of third round of the Open FIDE Rating Chess Tournament at the Chess Federation Auditorium yesterday.

They are: GM Ziaur Rahman and GM Niaz Murshed, IM Enamul Hossain Rajib, IM Reefat bin Sattar, IM Abdullah Al Rakib, FM Taibur Rahman Sumon, FM Abu Sufian Shakil, Mehdi Hasan Parag, Abdul Maleq, Chanchal Kumar Gosh, Syed Mahfuzur Rahman Emon, Arman Monir and Sohel Chowdhury.

In the round Zia beat Debaraj, Niaz beat Polash, Razib beat Alamgir, Rakib beat Feroz, Taibur beat Nazir, Shakil beat Farhad, Maleq beat Robin, Parag beat Khorshed, Emon beat Kazal, Arman beat Murad and Sohel beat Amin.

The fourth round will start today from 4:00 pm at the same venue.

Emphatic Gloucs win

CRICINFO, undated

Ian Harvey and Craig Spearman smashed the biggest partnership in the Twenty20 Cup so far as Gloucestershire demolished their west country rivals Somerset by 10 wickets at Taunton on Saturday.

With the win, Gloucestershire maintained their 100 per cent record to stay neck-and-neck with Warwickshire at the top.

Having won the toss and elected to chase, Gloucestershire produced a marvellous display with the ball on an excellent surface for batting as they restricted their opponents to 119 for nine.

Off-spinner Martyn Ball took 1-11 in his four overs and Mike Smith conceded 14 runs while striking twice.

In reply, Gloucestershire raced to their target off just 12 overs as Harvey and Spearman amassed the first century partnership in the tournament.

Harvey smashed a remarkable 75 off just 34 balls, with 24 runs and three sixes coming off Wes Durston's only over.

Spearman finished unbeaten on 43 off 28 balls.

Gloucestershire were without Jack Russell, who broke his thumb on Thursday.

Brazil thank

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States did have two decent attempts.

The first was a nicely weighted 43rd minute free kick from Clint Mathis which edged right off Dida's goal, the second came a minute later when US captain Earnie Stewart found Landon Donovan whose shot was gathered by Brazil's AC Milan stopper.

Howard, who has been linked with a move to Manchester United, had to act sharply to keep out an Adriano header with the second half just minutes old.

His Brazilian counterpart was pressed into action in the 62nd minute after Donovan had burst clear to shoot from the right.

This preceded a bright spell from the States, some neat passing keeping the South Americans on their toes with Donovan again forcing Dida to earn his keep.

A spate of second-half substitutions included Arena bringing on Preston North End midfielder Eddie Lewis for Chris Klein.

One of Brazil's better second-half efforts came with quarter of an hour left when Ronaldinho's 20-yard free kick curled towards the goal only to find the safe hands of Howard waiting.

So as Parreira prepares to face Turkey on Monday with everything still to play for Arena knows only honour will be at stake when his men take on Cameroon.

But the US coach was far from despondent.

"I played a number of young players and they did well - these are the type of experiences they need to improve," he said.

Abahani, Usha

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Sangha away scoring eleven goals in the 70-minute encounter.

Shawkat, Abdul Haque, Ajit Roy, Mobin and Rahul scored the other goals for the winners who led the first half 3-0.

It was Usha's third win that helped them top Group D with highest nine points.

They will now face defending champions Mohammedan Sporting Club in tomorrow's first semifinal.

In the other match of the day, Barnak Samaj and Bachelor's Sporting Club shared points with a 2-2 draw in a Group A match.

Nat'l football

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Hosts Jhenidah Mohammedan defeated PK Union Club of Satkhira at the Jhenidah Stadium to set up a semifinal clash with the winners between Magura Nijanandawali SC and Biplob Smriti Sangsad of Khulna on June 26.

The day's other match between Comilla Mohammedan and Rising Star Club of Noakhali could not be held at the Noakhali Stadium because of rain.



Laila remains unbeaten

AFP, Los Angeles

Laila Ali, daughter of boxing legend Muhammad Ali, remained undefeated in the ring here Saturday, stopping Valerie Mahfood in the sixth round of their scheduled eight-round bout.

Ali didn't dominate Mahfood throughout as she did when the two fought on November 8, 2002, when Ali pounded away at Mahfood until referee Joe Cortez stepped in midway through the eighth round.

Mahfood managed to land her share of punches in exchanges in the third and fifth, but was willing under an Ali onslaught when referee David Mendoza stepped between them and stopped the fight at 1min 17sec of the sixth.

"I trained harder for this fight than I did for our first match-up," said Ali, the Women's International Boxing Association, International Women's Boxing Federation and International Boxing Association super middleweight champion who took her record to 15-0, with 12 victories inside the distance.

"I didn't underestimate her and she didn't underestimate me."

"I wasn't as careful this time as last time I fought her," Ali said, but added: "She didn't hurt me at all."

The first meeting between the two was aired on ESPN2, and was the first women's fight to headline the cable television channel's Friday Night Fights programme.

In contrast, Home Box Office declined to show Saturday's bout, a decision that ranked Ali.

Super middleweight champion Laila Ali poses with her belt after stopping Valerie Mahfood on June 21.

Wessels sees no England chance

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Kepler Wessels, a former South Africa captain, believes England have no chance of beating South Africa in this summer's NatWest Series.

Speaking to the Northampton Chronicle and Echo ahead of Northamptonshire's match against South Africa on Sunday, Wessels claimed England's new-look team will be demolished by South Africa, who are also rebuilding after a disappointing World Cup.

He said: "England haven't got a chance. They need to pick their best players if they are going to be in with a shout of winning."

He added: "You certainly can't leave out a batsman of the quality of Graham Thorpe and there are a lot more other players on the county circuit better than the ones they

have chosen.

"I can see they're building for the future, but they need to build around experience and Thorpe would be ideal. South Africa have brought over a pretty competitive side. They have a very strong batting line up, though the bowling is a bit weak."

South Africa also brought over their youngest ever captain in Graeme Smith, who has already caused a stir when he said Lance Klusener would have been a disruptive influence on the team.

On that issue, Wessels said: "It's a controversial move to appoint him captain. He will be under pressure to establish himself in the side with some runs. He has made runs in the past, but there is a bit of unrest in the camp that needs to be dealt with."

The NatWest Series starts on June 26 when England play Zimbabwe at Trent Bridge, while South Africa's first match is against England on June 28 at The Oval.

India set to bury the Denness hatchet

CRICINFO, undated

India is set to "forget" the Mike Denness affair, on "humanitarian grounds," according to an International Cricket Council (ICC) spokesman, reports the Press Trust of India.

Denness was the match referee who handed severe punishments to six Indian cricketers during India's last tour of South Africa.

According to reports, India has agreed to let bygones be bygones as Denness has undergone a heart surgery and is ailing.

At a meeting with Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) president Jagmohan Dalmiya, the new ICC chief Ehsan Mani is thought to have proposed this course of action. Dalmiya, it is reported, readily agreed to the suggestion.

Denness had caused a storm by holding Sachin Tendulkar guilty of ball-tampering while finding five other cricketers, including Virender Sehwag and Saurav Ganguly, guilty of excessive appealing. Sehwag was the worst affected, being suspended for one Test and thereby missing the first Test against England at home soon after.

Shoaib joins Durham

CRICINFO, undated

Shoaib Akhtar will play for Durham for the remainder of the season, and will join up with his new teammates on Monday, following the completion of Pakistan's NatWest Challenge series against England.

Shoaib replaces fast bowler Dewald Pretorius, who was a surprise for South Africa's tour of England.

Razzaq gives

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Razzaq, though, taking a big stride to leg and swinging hard with an open-faced bat to keep the fielders guessing, changed the mood. His biggest strike off Clarke sailed into the stands at long on.

When Khan fell to James Anderson, playing early and lofting to mid-on, Azhar Mahmood continued in festive mood and swung the same bowler over mid-wicket.

Razzaq put on 60 from 37 balls with Mahmood as England's tight fielding disintegrated before the all rounder fell to Flintoff off another slog to leg which went straight up in the air.

Flintoff finished with four for 32 off 10 overs.

The series is tied at 1-1. The start was delayed by 45 minutes due to rain.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard in the third and final one-day international between England and Pakistan at Lord's on Sunday:

PAKISTAN				
Hafeez c Clarke b Gough	19			
Nazir c Vaughan b Flintoff	8			
Hameed c b Flintoff	5			
Youhana c Read b Clarke	5			
Younis c McGrath b Anderson	63			
Maik c Read b Flintoff	23			
Razzaq c Trescottick b Flintoff	64			
Mahmood not out	20			
Akhtar not out	0			
Extras: (lb-15, nb-1, w-6)	22			
Total: (For 7 wks in 50 overs)	229			
Fall of wickets: 1-29, 2-38, 3-44, 4-61, 5-117, 6-165, 7-225				
Did not bat: Latif, Sami				

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Anderson	10	1	52	1
Gough	10	1	45	1
Flintoff	10	2	32	4
Clarke	6	0	29	1
McGrath	5	0	21	0
Giles	9	0	35	0

ENGLAND: Trescottick, Solanki, Vaughan, Troughton, Flintoff, McGrath, Clarke, Read, Giles, Gough, Anderson

Time to forget Paris

WIMBLEDON

AFP, London

Serena Williams is confident she can bury the painful memory of her French Open final defeat with a successful defence of her Wimbledon crown.

The younger of the Williams sisters was left in tears after being booed and jeered by the crowd at Roland Garros on her way to a shock defeat at the hands of Belgium's Justine Henin-Hardenne.

But as she practised here under the watchful gaze of father Richard, Serena said she was too busy working on her service action to dwell on events in Paris.

"I couldn't get my serve right in Paris so that is what I've been working on."

"My confidence is high now. I'm always a perfectionist - I want everything to be just right but I feel like I'm ready and I'm in good shape."

Richard Williams was absent from Wimbledon last year following an acrimonious divorce from his former wife, Orecene.

But both parents are expected to

be in London supporting their daughters as they attempt to make it through to what could be an all-Williams final.

Current form however suggests Venus will struggle to keep the date.

Her fourth round exit at the French Open was her worst performance in eight Grand Slam tournaments.



SERENA WILLIAMS

In the aftermath there has been much speculation that she is growing disenchanted with a tennis career increasingly being played out in the shadow of her younger sister, who has beaten her elder sibling five

times in finals at the Grand Slams.

But even if her enthusiasm for playing second fiddle is waning, Venus insisted she had no intention of retiring at the age of 23.

"I have a lot of years left in me because I've paced myself," she said.

Henin-Hardenne suffered an injury scare at the weekend when she was forced to concede the final of a pre-Wimbledon tournament in the Netherlands to her compatriot Kim Clijsters.

Henin had won the first set on a tiebreak 7-6 (7/4) but trailed 3-0 in the second when she slipped and injured her left hand.

"Fortunately it wasn't the right one," Henin said. "But I don't think the injury was too serious. When I went to start playing again the pain persisted so I thought the best thing was to stop."

"I won't be playing Wimbledon till Tuesday so that gives me three days to recover and I hope to be able to hit a few balls on Monday. I think it will be okay."

Henin, seeded third at Wimbledon, meets Ukrainian Julia Vakulenko in her first match.

Serena Williams will open up on Monday against her compatriot Jill Craybass, ranked 66 in the world.

Wimbledon starts today

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with his quick return to form after injury and warmed up for Wimbledon with a win at Nottingham.

Roddick got the better of Rusedski at Queen's but the Briton will take heart from a victory at Wimbledon last year.

Rusedski is also in action on Monday against Alexander Waske, while Lee Childs, Arvind Parmar and Alan Mackin will be hoping that the home crowds can inspire them to opening day success.

If the men's singles appears relatively open, the women's seems certain to be carved up by the usual suspects.

At least Justine Henin-Hardenne's French Open victory has proved that world number one Serena Williams is beatable.

But Serena is sure to be smarting from her defeat in Paris and her power game and serve will make

her a strong favourite on the Wimbledon grass.

Whether big sister Venus is playing well enough right now to reprise last year's all-Williams final is questionable.

Four straight defeats in Grand Slam finals by Serena have clearly taken their toll on Venus' confidence, and she looked a shadow of her former self during her brief stay at the French Open.

With Amelia Mauresmo absent, and the American duo Lindsay Davenport and Jennifer Capriati in decline, Serena's main challenge is sure to come from the Belgian axis of Kim Clijsters and Henin-Hardenne.

The French Open champion is a genuine threat, and is not expected to be hampered by the hand injury that forced her out of Saturday's Ordina Open final against Clijsters.

Serena will begin her campaign as tradition dictates on Centre

Court on Tuesday, meaning world number two Clijsters and Venus will be the main attractions on Monday.

ORDER OF PLAY

REUTERS, London

Monday's order of play on show courts at the Wimbledon championships (prefix number denotes seeding):

CENTRE COURT (PLAY STARTS 1200 GMT)

Men's singles, first round 1-Lleyton Hewitt (Australia) v Ivo Karlovic (Croatia)

Women's singles, first round Rossana Neffa-De Los Rios (Paraguay) v 2-Kim Clijsters (Belgium)

Men's singles, first round John Van Lottum (Netherlands) v 17-Gustavo Kuerten (Brazil)

COURT ONE (PLAY STARTS 1200 GMT)

Men's singles, first round Davide Sanguineti (Italy) v 5-Andy Roddick (US)

Women's singles, first round 5-Lindsay Davenport (US) v Samantha Stosur (Australia)

Men's singles, first round Alexander Waske (Germany) v Greg Rusedski (Britain)

COURT TWO (PLAY STARTS 1100 GMT)

Men's singles, first round 12-Paradorn Srichaphan (Thailand) v Dominik Hrbaty (Slovakia)

Women's singles, first round Stanislava Hrozenska (Slovakia) v 4-Venus Williams (US)

Men's singles, first round 4-Roger Federer (Switzerland) v Lee Hyung-taik (South Korea)

Women's singles, first round Marion Bartoli (France) v 9-Daniela Hantuchova (Slovakia)

COURT 14 (PLAY STARTS 1100 GMT)

Men's singles, first round Flavio Saretta (Brazil) v Alan Mackin (Britain)

Women's singles, first round Seda Noorlander (Netherlands) v Francesca Schiavone (Italy)

Men's singles, first round Kenneth Carlsen (Denmark) v Nicolas Lapentti (Ecuador)

Women's singles, first round 24-Magui Serna (Spain) v Virginia Ruano Pascual (Spain)

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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