

Jones ready for next month return

AFP, London

Triple Olympic champion Marion Jones will make her comeback after giving birth to her first child at the Golden League meeting in Brussels in September, her sprint star boyfriend Tim Montgomery said here Thursday.

The Olympic 100m and 200m champion has not raced this year after taking time out for the birth of their son Tim Jr.

Jones, 27, will not compete at this month's World Championships, although she is likely to travel to Paris to watch Montgomery, the men's 100m world record holder.

She may run at a low-key meeting in the United States before returning to world-class action in Brussels on September 5.

"She's happy, she's getting ready, she's excited," said Montgomery who will compete in the Crystal Palace meet here on Friday.

"And I'm hoping she will be watching me in Paris."

Wilfried Meert, the Brussels IAAF Golden League meeting director, confirmed that he had been informed by Montgomery that Jones wanted to compete during the Stockholm meet on Tuesday.

"At Stockholm, Montgomery hinted that she wanted to compete in Brussels by saying 'She wants to run your meet!'," Meert told AFP.

He added that their coach Dan Pfaff and agent Charlie Wells also confirmed the news.

The couple got together last year after Jones split from her husband, former shot-putt champion CJ Hunter.

She gave birth to her first child in June and now wants to concentrate on her preparations for the Athens Olympics next year.

Hegg scared

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"It was one of the most memorable matches I've ever been involved in and it was one of Wasim's great performances," Hegg said.

"We had no right to win, we didn't have a chance until Wasim smacked their bowling around."

"I remember the crowd storming onto the field at the end after we'd won and someone pinched Gary Yates's cap. I think he got it back but we stayed in the dressing room celebrating for hours afterwards."

Looking ahead, Hegg said he expected the crowd to be similarly excited this time around.

"We have players in top form but Worcestershire are having a good season as well and it could be just as tight again."

"The atmosphere should be terrific - just what you need for a big cup game."



Belgian Kim Clijsters plays a backhand against Russian Maria Sharapova at the JP Morgan Chase Open on Thursday.

Kim, Lindsay in qtrs

Tennis

AFP, Los Angeles

Top seeds Kim Clijsters and Lindsay Davenport both prevailed with hard-fought three-set victories on Thursday to reach the quarterfinals of the 635,000 dollar WTA Los Angeles event.

Former world No 1 Davenport had to overcome an early deficit and a strong crosswind to beat Paola Suarez 4-6, 6-2, 6-4.

The 27-year-old American, who blasted eight aces past Suarez, advanced to the quarterfinals where she will face South Africa's Amanda Coetzer.

"It was very gusty on the court and with the wind going one way it creates some problems because the ball moves around so much. But I managed to come through in the third set," said Davenport.

Second seed Davenport will be joined in the quarters by top seed Clijsters who beat 16-year-old Maria Sharapova, of Russia, 6-4, 1-6, 6-1 in front of about 1,500 fans.

Davenport, who turned pro in 1993, said Thursday she has no plans to try and recapture the world No 1 ranking which should change hands this week or next after Clijsters wins a few more matches.

"That would be difficult," said Davenport, who has 38 career singles titles. "Physically it takes its toll on you week in and week out."

"It wears on you when you have to force yourself to stay eager and

stay positive. "Next year I don't plan to play 18-24 tournaments. I am going to cut back and try and peak for the Grand Slams."

The next Grand Slam is in two weeks in New York when the men and women take to the hardcourts for the US Open. Davenport is using this tournament as a tune-up for the US Open and likes her chances.

"I love the court there," said Davenport. "With Serena out, and nobody knows what Venus' status is, well that would open the door quite a bit for someone else."

Clijsters won her one hour, 19 minute night match capitalizing on the first match point as Sharapova's volley sailed wide.

Sharapova, who is making her debut in Los Angeles, looked impressive in overpowering the second best female player in the world in the second set. She needed just 21 minutes to win the set.

"Maria played great," said Clijsters. "If she stays consistent she has a great future."

Clijsters saved some points with a couple of wicked returns off her patent full-split slide.

Asked if the gravity-defying move hurt, Clijsters said, "No, I was warmed up."

Clijsters dominated the first set with her serve, winning 19 straight serving points during one masterful stretch.

But the pivotal point in the match came in the third set when Clijsters broke Sharapova in the fifth game to take a commanding 4-1 lead.

Clijsters will square off against

another Russian in the quarters, Svetlana Kuznetsova.

A disappointed Sharapova said she hopes the lessons learned from losses like this will one day propel her to become the best female player in the world.

"My goal is to be No 1," said Sharapova. "But I know I have a long journey ahead of me."

"I need to learn to play at the same level throughout a match and not let chances slip away."

Eight seed Coetzer beat American Meghann Shaughnessy 7-6 (7/4), 6-3 to move on.

The 31-year-old South African took control of the match early in the second set when she went up 2-0 after breaking Shaughnessy's serve in the second game.

"I competed very well. I gained a little momentum when I held serve and then broke her early in the second set," said Coetzer, of Hoopstad, 320 kilometres (198 miles) southwest of Johannesburg.

"I am just taking it one tournament at a time and trying to gain a little confidence."

In other third-round matches on Thursday, Japan's Ai Sugiyama trounced 14-year-old Viktoriya Kuzuzova 6-2, 6-3; Francesca Schiavone defeated Italian compatriot Rita Grande 6-3, 6-0 and Australia's Nicole Pratt ousted former Wimbledon champion Conchita Martinez, of Spain, 4-6, 6-4, 6-4.

Bologan takes the lead

AFP, Dortmund

Moldovan Grand Master Viorel Bologan stormed ahead in the international chess tournament here, building up his lead to 1.5 points late Wednesday, as the "Tiger of Madras" Viswanathan Anand continued to improve.

The 33-year-old Indian, number three in the world ratings and former FIDE world champion, crushed world number four Peter Leko, 23, of Hungary, the official challenger to independent world champion Vladimir Kramnik next October-November.

Bologan, 31, who has never won a major tournament, easily beat German Grand Master Arkadi Naiditsch in 36 moves playing white.

After suffering two defeats in the first two days of the tourney, Anand overcame Leko despite playing black and is now in third position, notching up his second successive win. He had started his fightback on Monday by beating Naiditsch.

Leko, who at age 14 was the youngest Grand Master in the history of chess, lies in last place with no chance of repeating the stunning victory he scored at last year's Dortmund tournament.

Kramnik, 28, had to content himself with a draw against Azeri prodigy Teimur Radzhabov, 16, whom he had beaten in 31 moves at the beginning of the tournament on August 1.

Venus misses Toronto meet

REUTERS, Los Angeles

Venus Williams has withdrawn from next week's Rogers AT&T Cup in Toronto due to an abdominal tear that she aggravated at Wimbledon, tournament director Stacey Allaster said on Thursday.

The world number four has not played since the Wimbledon final in early July where she lost to her sister Serena, and the latest withdrawal means her next scheduled tournament will be the U.S. Open starting on August 25.

Serena will not be in New York to defend her U.S. Open title after the world number one underwent knee surgery last week and is expected to be sidelined for six-to-eight weeks.

Two other American players, Chanda Rubin and Alexandra Stevenson, have pulled out of the Toronto event with injuries.

Belgians Kim Clijsters and Justine Henin-Hardenne are the tournament top seeds for the Rogers AT&T Cup.

Mac ventures into politics?

Tennis

AFP, Lisbon

Three-time men's Wimbledon champion John McEnroe, famed for his temper tantrums and rows with umpires, said he is considering becoming a politician in an interview published Friday.

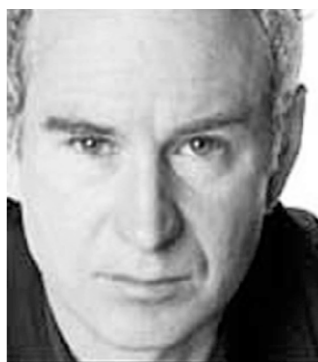
"I may decide to dedicate myself to politics, to get involved in the real problems people face," he told Portuguese daily newspaper Publico.

"But I would need some five years to study the issues, it would be like returning to school," he added.

The American tennis great, nicknamed "Superbrat" for his regular run-ins with authority, currently works as a respected TV analyst.

McEnroe, who also runs an art gallery and has presented a television show and worked as a tennis coach, admitted that the life of a politician would be difficult.

"It is frustrating because you get the sense that people do not have a lot of trust in politicians, which goes against what I believe, but is



JOHN MCENROE

the result of the way they behave," he added.

McEnroe, 44, is in Portugal to take part in the Vale do Lobo Grand Champions tennis tournament in the southern Algarve resort province.

Federer moves on

Tennis

AFP, Montreal

Wimbledon winner Roger Federer found his serving form to take a win 6-4, 6-3 win over Tommy Robredo into the quarterfinals of the 2.45-million-dollar Masters Series on Thursday.

The third seed, who celebrates his 22nd birthday Friday, has been lamenting his poor delivery.

Federer, who has lost only one set in four matches to Robredo, didn't allow the Spaniard to get into the match.

The win puts Federer into a showdown with former doubles partner Max The Beast Mirnyi, the giant from Belarus who Thursday snatched the 11th seed Paradorn Srichaphan 6-3, 6-2 less than 24 hours after sending out Lleyton Hewitt.

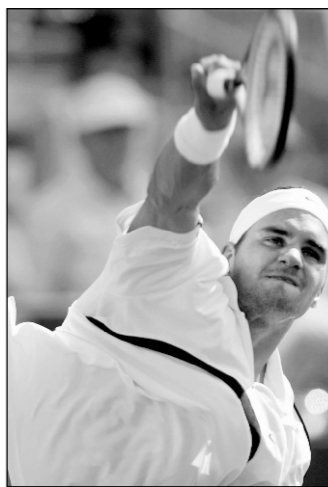
"I felt my serve finally got better in the second set," said Federer, who will need all of his firepower against Mirnyi, the world number one in doubles.

"I got some first serves in, they helped me win the match. I'll need that confidence against Max."

Federer, who has never made much of an impression during the

pre-US Open period, is now endowed with a Grand Slam winner's confidence.

"That Wimbledon champion's title just doesn't go away," he said.



ROGER FEDERER

"I've now won three rounds on hardcourt. I feel better already."

"I'll go in a favourite against Max, but he's dangerous and has beaten some good players," he said of the man he leads 3-2 in their head-to-heads.

"I'm looking forward - not only to this week, but the rest of the summer."

Freitas retains crown

AFP, Miami

Undefeated World Boxing Association super featherweight champion Acelinio Freitas of Brazil makes his third title defence here Saturday, taking on once-beaten Jorge Barrios of Argentina.

Freitas, 33-0 with 30 knockouts, took the title with a unanimous decision over then-undefeated Cuban Joel Casamayor in January of 2002.

"I fight for my family and for my country," Freitas said. "The fight with Casamayor was like the Super Bowl in America. I have never let my people down, and I hope I never will."

Freitas, 27, stopped his first 29 opponents before recording a unanimous decision over Alfred Kotay here in September of 2001. Freitas posted a unanimous decision over Daniel Attah last August in his first title defence.

In his second defence last March, Freitas stopped Juan Carlos Ramirez in the fourth round.

Barrios, 39-1 with one draw and 29 knockouts, is a powerful puncher as well.

"I want to show against Freitas that I am the champion of the Argentines," Barrios said. "I am very serious about this, and I will chase him until he gives me the chance. Then, I will beat him."

Anwar thinking

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including 11 hundreds, but he achieved global fame through his exploits in ODIs.

His defining innings was his 194 against India at Madras in 1997 - the highest score by any batsman in one-day cricket. He went on to score 8823 runs at an average of 39.21, with 20 hundreds. He was one of the few batting successes of Pakistan's disastrous 2003 World Cup campaign, but even his fine 101 against India at Centurion couldn't avert defeat.

Anwar's priorities in life altered in 2002, following the tragic death of his baby daughter, and he spent several months out of the game in the build-up to the World Cup. In its aftermath, however, he was one of eight players dropped from the squad as the rebuilding process began.

Tim vows to bounce back

Athletics

AFP, London

World 100m record holder Tim Montgomery vowed Thursday to prove his poor showing in Stockholm earlier this week was just a temporary glitch when he competes in the Super Grand Prix meet at Crystal Palace here on Friday.

Montgomery, 28, finished just sixth Tuesday in a race which he claimed beforehand was tailor-made for him.

And in the absence of triple world champion Maurice Greene, Montgomery is gunning to put British 100m rival Dwain Chambers in his place, as the countdown begins to the world championships in Paris in two weeks.

"Stockholm was the most embarrassing moment in my life - and I don't want to be embarrassed again. This is the benchmark for me. Now it's make or break," said Montgomery.

"I know the form and the performances are there. It's just a matter of them coming out."

"Crystal Palace is the pivotal part of my season in terms of my quest for gold in Paris."

"No one can ever say that I'm slow because in the past I ran 9.87secs. My belief system in what God gave me is still there."

Montgomery has been denied a showdown with Greene as the Olympic and world champion failed to agree terms with the organisers.

But despite Greene's loss of form after struggling with injuries for the past couple of years, Montgomery

refused to write off his American rival's chances in Paris.

"Maurice Greene put the benchmark up for the 100m," he said. "He set the standard - 9.9secs means nothing now if you don't do it every time."

"What he did to the 100m was remarkable and you can't count him out. It's like a video game. Once you've done it once you can do it again."

Chambers, meanwhile, is equally confident of his chances.

"You train to be favourite and number one contender," said the Briton who has been training in Germany.

"I've been away from all the hustle and bustle. It's been very hard - but it's working."

All on his shoulders

Cricket

NEWS24, undated

In December 2000, on a Goodyear Park pitch that died as the match wore on and with attention focused squarely on Allan Donald's quest for his 300th Test wicket, Makhaya Ntini all but upstaged the great man by taking six for 66 in the New Zealand second innings to set up a five-wicket victory for South Africa.

It was a supreme effort requiring skill and stamina (Ntini bowled close on 32 overs in the innings) and it seemed as if the investment in Ntini had started to pay dividends. He had been taken on South Africa's 1997/98 tour of Australia and the 1998 trip to England as a raw youngster with decent pace and bags of enthusiasm.

He was also, as he demonstrated during an impromptu 400-metre dash against several of Australia's top sprinters during a break in the Sydney Test match, a gifted natural athlete.

A year on from Bloemfontein, however, with India as the visitors, Ntini had gone backwards. He had been ineffective in the West Indies on pitches that drew the sting from his pace, but he looked little better against the Indians.

With Donald unavailable and Nantie Hayward sharing the new ball with Shaun Pollock, the moment should have arrived for Ntini to cement his place in the attack, but something was clearly amiss.

There were at least two theories doing the rounds to explain Ntini's loss of form. One was that pressure had been brought to bear on the United Cricket Board from on high to keep Ntini in the side.

When he was dropped for the fifth Test in the West Indies, there were whispers of phone calls from the sports ministry that sought an explanation for his omission.

The second theory, and one which came from sources far closer to the inner circle of the South African team, was that with Donald unsure of his Test match future and Mfuneko Ngam's fledgling career cut short by injury, Ntini had become a little too confident of his place in the team and had eased up.

He bowled poorly in the West

Indies and poorly against India at home towards the end of the year. So much so that it was difficult to fathom why the selectors persisted in him. During the unofficial "Test" match against India, a senior UCB official was asked directly whether there was an Ntini policy.

His response was unenlightening, but, with hindsight, curiously prescient.

"Why don't you ask whether there's a Lance Klusener policy," he said.

Finally, after being clattered about the Adelaide Oval during the first Test against Australia, he was left out of the side.

He returned for the one-day

triangular series which followed the Test matches and it was if a new bowler had been flown out to strengthen the South African squad. He was sharper and more aggressive than he had been for nearly a year and he was getting as close to the stumps as it was possible for him in his delivery stride.

"Being left out was a good thing," he told Michael Atherton recently.

"It gave me pain."

Quite apart from the rags-to-riches aspect of his career which, quite rightly, continues to fascinate journalists, Ntini had to endure the stigma of a rape conviction, later overturned on appeal. It says much for his resilience that he has put this England tour.

His name is now up on the honours board in the visitors' dressing room at Lord's along with a host of illustrious predecessors. You can bet, though, that none of them expressed their delight at their achievements quite so colourfully as Ntini.

"If my grandfather was alive he would have slaughtered a cow," said the fast bowler.

With Donald gone, Ntini has accepted the responsibility of leading the attack, but there may be just a little more to that than simply a bowler coming of age.

When South Africa needed a wicket at Lord's, and at Edgbaston, Graeme Smith turned to Ntini, much as Hansie Cronje once turned to Donald.

This is not to decry Pollock's role in the new ball partnership, nor his handling of Ntini when he was captain. But when he led the side, Pollock was under an obligation to bring himself on when he needed to make something happen.

It went without saying that Ntini has responded magnificently.

It is a partnership that is still in its infancy but one which now offers so much hope for the future.



MAKHAYA NTINI

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	41 Adult	DOWN	21 Place of refuge
1 Humorous one	43 Dilly	1 Dilation	23 "May- berry, —"
4 Increase	Cyrus	Frankenstein's	25 Texas city
7 Val'dictorian's vestment	44 Hub	3 Popular Oriental cuisine	27 Ohio nine
11 Turkish title	46 Sajak's concern	4 Museum attractions	28 Bang
13 Uncouth	53 Gailion	5 Brush the door	29 Verdi
14 Hydrox	55 Poet —	6 Carelessly	30 Jog
15 Bellow	Wheeler	7 Mc-	31 Sweet potato
16 Election	Day abbr.	8 Raw	35 Auction
17 Lecherous look	57 Actor	9 Rock	38 Tida
18 Exensive (Var.)	58 Back talk	9 Itsy-bitsy competitor	40 Squabble
20 Abacus unit	59 Busy one	10 Neither's mate	42 Drop a letter?
22 That girl	60 Pinnacle	12 O'Connor role	45 Canyon come-back
24 Milwaukee ballplayer	61 Trawler equipment	19 "Certainly"	47 Verve
28 Appease			48 Other-wise
32 Varlet			49 Make it through the night
33 Old Italian bread?			50 Tablet
34 Use a powder puff			51 Freudian concern
36 Served perfectly			52 Poolroom need
37 Pueblo material			54 Puppy's cry
39 "Furnishings" in a carnival house			

Solution time: 24 mins.

CRYPTOQUIP

H U L C H K U V A M U I Z N ,
 B C X Q A I N B M H V H V Z B G U H I .
 H D T J J C D N H X T D R G U L N

K N N J - D N U R N K Q N U I D .
Saturday's Cryptoquip: WHEN SCULPTORS BREAK FOR LUNCH, I ASSUME THE PREFERRED DESSERT IS MARBLE CAKE.
 Today's Cryptoquip Clue: I equals R

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.