

Sport

Agassi in semis

SCOTTSDALE, Arizona, Feb 26: Andre Agassi overwhelmed Bard Gilbert 6-1, 6-2 on Friday and advanced to the semifinals of the 288,750 dollars Arizona men's tennis championships, reports Reuter.

"I don't know if you can call a match like that easy," said Agassi, who won 10 of the first 11 games and captured 62 of the 98 points during the 59-minute rout of the third-seeded American.

"Certainly the score would lead one to believe it was easy," Agassi said. "Against a player like Bard who's been around the game so long and knows how to put together the right points at the right time, you never really feel like the match is under control," he said. "You always worry about him getting back into it."

"Tonight I remained patient, stuck to my game plan and it really paid dividends," said Agassi, the 1992 Wimbledon champion, who has slipped to 32nd in the ATP Tour world rankings.

"I think tonight he expected me to come out and give him a lot of pace, and I didn't do that. I threw a curve at him and he didn't adjust to it. Tonight I did everything well. It was surprising."

"Sometimes you just don't play your best," Gilbert said. "I wish I could have shown the fans something better but it was just one of those nights."

"Andre played a smart match," said Gilbert, who has split eight matches with his former Davis Cup teammate. "He's one of those guys when he's on fire, he's like a microwave. I just didn't have it tonight and he pasted me."

Malvai Washington was satisfied to get through to his first semifinal of the year.

"I don't think it was a great match," said the world's 22nd ranked player. "We were both making a lot of errors."

Washington, 23, thought he had the match in hand against the 1992 desert champion. "After I won the tiebreak, he kind of fell apart a little bit and made it easy for me. I just wanted to play tough, hang on, and not give him many openings."

Verdy very lucky

TOKYO, Feb 26: Verdy Kawasaki Sunday beat Gimnasia Y Esgrima of Argentina 4-2 in a penalty shootout and won the Sanwa Bank Cup Sunday, reports AP.

The penalty shootout came after the 1993 Japanese Professional Soccer League champion Verdy Kawasaki and the AFA Torneo Copa Centenario Campeon Gimnasia Y Esgrima struggled to a 2-2 tie in the 90-minute regulation time in the match before 45,617 spectators at National Stadium.

Guerra headed into the centre of the goal after receiving a volley pass from Gustavo Barros Schelotto 28 minutes into the first half as Gimnasia led 1-0 after the first half.

Verdy played with 10 players in the second half as Japanese goal keeper Kazuyoshi Miura celebrated his 27th birthday with a tying shot. Miura directly struck a corner kick into the goal with his left leg six minutes into the second half.

Easy winners

SINGAPORE, Feb 26: In what turned out to be merely a formality, the favourites all breezed through the quarter-finals of the Thomas Cup and Uber Cup Badminton championships at the Singapore Badminton Hall here Friday, reports AFP.

In the men's section the two favoured finalists South Korea and China made short work of their opponents to reach the last four. South Korea defeated Chinese Taipei 4-1 in Group A while China trounced Thailand 5-0 in Group B.

Chinese Taipei and Thailand who finished second in their respective groups also made it to the last four.

In the women's Uber Cup South Korea Australia, Japan and Thailand made it to the last four. South Korea topped Group A with a 5-0 win over Australia while Japan defeated Thailand in Group B.

Australia and Thailand as runner-up in their respective groups made it to the semi-finals which will be on a knock-out basis.

Three teams from each of the two events will qualify for the finals to be held in Jakarta this May. The crucial match will be between the beaten semi-finalists to decide the third places for Jakarta where eight teams will vie for the two titles.

Indonesia as hosts are automatic qualifiers for both the events while the European Zone championships now in progress in Glasgow will see three top teams go to Jakarta.

The other automatic qualifiers are Thomas Cup holders Malaysia and China, the Uber Cup holders.



Russian Vladimir Kramnik (L) is watched by his Indian opponent Viswanathan Anand (R) as he takes down his opening move during their game of the international chess tournament "Ciudad de Linares" in Linares on Feb 24. — AFP photo

— AFP photo