

Agassi so agile, yet so aghast

NEW YORK, Sept 1: Top-seeded defending champion Andre Agassi escaped an ambush set by a most unlikely attacker Thursday by battling back to beat inspired Spaniard Alex Corretja in five sets in the second round at the US Open, report agencies.

Corretja, a clay court specialist who was winless this year on hard courts entering

the Open and was a first-round victim in his three previous visits here, played like a man possessed on the stadium court stage before falling 5-7, 6-3, 5-7, 6-0, 6-2 to the world number one.

Agassi struggled to find his rhythm against the top-spin blasting Spaniard, who ran the American all over the court and coaxed an inordinate number of errors from the favourite during the first

champion Sergi Bruguera of Spain was beaten 6-2, 6-3, 6-4 by Czech Daniel Vacek, and 16th seed Andrei Medvedev lost to former playing partner Sargis Sargsian of Armenia, ranked 392, after winning the first two sets.

Agassi, who was given a wildcard as the US college singles champion from Arizona state, ruined the mercenary Medvedev's 21st birthday by winning 1-6, 4-6,

6-3, 6-2, 6-4.

As junior players, Sargsian, 21, had trained together with Medvedev and the two represented the former Soviet Union in international competitions.

Agassi, who has compiled an awesome 90-10 match record since his electrifying run to the Open title last year as an unseeded, nearly topped the list of upset victims.

Corretja played impeccably in the first set, pounding deep top spin drives into both corners and committing just five unforced errors against a whipping 21 made by Agassi, who ended the opening set with a double fault.

SL-PCB XI match drawn

KARACHI, Sept 1: A three-day match between a Pakistan Cricket Board XI and Sri Lanka ended in a draw today, reports Reuter.

Scores: Sri Lanka 286 for eight declared and 148 for four, Pakistan Cricket Board XI 244 for eight declared.

Earlier on Thursday, a stylish 80 by Amir Sohail enabled a Pakistan Cricket Board XI to post a respectable 182 for four against Sri Lanka despite a minor collapse on the second day.

Replying to Sri Lanka's 256 for eight declared, the Board XI looked well in command as they reached 113 for the loss of opener Mohammad Ramzan who was run out for 18.

But then three wickets fell in the space of 12 runs and seven overs, including that of Sohail who drove a catch to deep mid-off.

It left the Board XI in some trouble at 125 for four but Test batsman Zahid Fazal and Javed Sami patiently rebuilt the innings with an unbroken fifth-wicket partnership of 57.

Zahid's 38 came from 87 balls with the help of two fours and two sixes while Sami, playing his first representative match against a touring team, was unbeaten with 19 from 56 deliveries.

Sri Lanka, resuming at 252 for five, had earlier added 34 runs for the loss of three wickets after batting on for 18 more overs.

Lankan U-24s level one-dayers

COLOMBO, Sept 1: Sri Lanka's slow bowlers stole the limelight as the home defeated South Africa by 69 runs in a dramatic comeback in the second and final under-24 one-day international here Thursday, reports AFP.

Sri Lanka made a modest 209 for nine in the allotted 50 overs and just when the visitors seemed set to post their second straight straight one-day win, slow bowlers Sajith Fernando, Nimesh Perera and Suranga Wijanyake turned the tide.

From a strong 65 for one South Africa crashed to 140 in 40.1 overs allowing Sri Lanka to square the one-day series. The tourists had trounced Sri Lanka by 95 runs in the first one-dayer.

Off-spinner Fernando and leg-spinner Perera claimed three wickets each while left-arm spinner Wijanyake captured two wickets.

Windies maintain control

SCARBOROUGH, England, Sept 1: Michael Bevan and Ashley Metcalfe hit centuries for Yorkshire on Thursday, but the West Indies stayed firmly in control, reports Reuter.

At the close of the second day of their three-day match, the tourists led by 241 with seven second innings wickets in hand.

Bevan (105) and Metcalfe (100) put on 191 in 39 overs for the fifth wicket, but the rest of the batting failed again as the home side were dismissed for 297, 129 behind on first innings.

West Indies closed on 112-3 with Test men Shivnarine Chanderpaul (33) and Carl Hooper (15) at the wicket.

West Indies leg-spinner Rajindra Dhanraj, who toiled for no reward in the fifth Test against England, bowling 55 overs without a wicket, had some recompense on Thursday, capturing five Yorkshire wickets for 111 in 23.4 overs.

Among his victims were Bevan and England all-rounder Darren Gough, caught behind the wicket for 13.

Bevan, who is emerging as favourite to stay on as the club's overseas player for next season, hit a six and 17 fours in his 105 made from 144 balls.

Metcalfe was even more aggressive, his 100 coming from 123 balls with 12 fours and three sixes, all three coming in one over from Dhanraj which took him to his first century for two years.



World number one Andre Agassi raises both hands in relief after winning yet another point against unseeded Spaniard Alex Corretja at the US Open in Flushing Meadows, New York on Aug 31. Corretja gave Agassi a run for his money before going down 5-7, 6-3, 5-7, 6-0 and 6-2.

— AFP/UNB photo

Andre's US Open collection!

NEW YORK, Sept 1: Andre Agassi, the world's number one, is holding his rival, Pete Sampras, at bay both on and off the court, reports Reuter.

Besides overtaking friendly rival Sampras on the rankings chart this spring, Agassi is also winning in TBE fashion with his new clothing line flying off the shelves at the US Open, well ahead of the more conservative took endorsed by Sampras.

"People want the clothes, the bandanna, even the shoes," said a salesman. "Agassi is ahead of Sampras, but he's not blowing him away."

Agassi unveiled yet another new look at the US Open with a brown and white striped shirt topping the baggy shorts. The top seller is the knee-length black shorts, which retail at 4500 dollars a close second is the Agassi bandanna, or head-rang, offered in both black and white and costing 12.00 dollars.

No one is deterred by the prices. The full Agassi look — bandanna, shirt, shorts, black socks and shoes — could set you back over dollars 275.

"People come here straight from the court and buy whatever they just saw Agassi wearing," said the salesman. "They just want to look exactly like Andre."

Bruno's last punch for glory?

LONDON, Sept 1: Frank Bruno, the British heavyweight with the bodybuilder's physique, limitless ambition and strictly limited ability, gets a fourth shot at a world title this Saturday before his adoring home fans, reports Reuter.

Britain's favourite loser was stopped by Tim Witherpoon, Mike Tyson and Lennox Lewis respectively in his three previous title challenges.

Now following a series of farcical mismatches against handpicked opponents who have hit the canvas shortly after lumbering into the ring, Bruno has been granted a tilt at the World Boxing Council (WBC) version of the title against American Oliver McCall at Wembley Stadium.

Once stripped for action, Bruno has always looked the part of a world title contender.

At 33, he remains in magnificent condition but in essence Bruno is a manufactured fighter whose limitations have been badly exposed in each of his three

world title fights, stretching back to the Witherpoon clash in 1986.

Relying almost exclusively on a powerful left jab, Bruno is cumbersome in the ring and, crucially, appears to have no idea how to cover up under pressure.

Bruno's perennial optimism that he will one day be world champion has again been given full voice, sharpened this time by the realisation that with Tyson now back in action another chance is unlikely.

"I feel stronger, fitter, more focused and more mentally prepared than I have ever been," he said. "I feel cool and completely in control."

"I realise this is the last chance. I'll be made redundant after this if it doesn't work."

McCall, 30, a native of Chicago, stopped Lewis inside two rounds last September to take the WBC title.

But he then struggled unconvincingly to outpoint the 45-year-old Larry Holmes this year, watched closely by an exultant Bruno.

A lengthy career as a

sparring partner, including 300 rounds with Tyson, argues a certain lack of ambition and in addition McCall has a well documented taste for the high life.

But the American is openly contemptuous of Bruno's chances, based in part on his experiences as a training partner for the Briton.

"He was bottom of the list and nothing has changed," McCall said.

"Once he gets hit a couple of times, it will be 'deja vu'. As far as Bruno's ability to put together combinations goes and his capacity to last into the heart of a hard fight, I don't see any championship quality."

"He is too wooden and there's no speed to his punches. I'm quicksilver compared to him."

Saturday's undercard features American Virgil Hill, who defends his World Boxing Association (WBA) light-heavyweight title against Canadian Drake Thadzi.

Britain's Nigel Benn defends his WBC super middleweight title against American Ray Perez.

Stars galore at Hyderabad cricket tourney

HYDERABAD, Sept 1: Leading lights of Indian cricket would take part in the Moin-Ud-Dowla Invitation Gold Cup tournament starting here on September 2, reports PTI.

Twenty teams, including Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, would be taking part in the prestigious tournament, Hyderabad Cricket Association secretary Ranga Reddy said.

The Sungrace team is loaded with superstars like Sachin Tendulkar, Vinod Kambli, Atul Bedade, Nayan Mongia, Sandeep Patil and Venkatapathi Raju, besides upcoming Amol Mazumdar, Rohan Gavaskar and Suresh Shetty.

The Mercantile (Sri Lanka) team has Test stars D Ranatunga, Marvan Atapattu, Hemantha Wickramaratne, Romesh Kaluwardhna and former Starts Russell Arnold and Wendell Lebroy.

The 20 teams would be segregated into four groups and the toppers of each group would play the semi-final on September 12. The final would be a day-and-night match at the Lal Bahadur Stadium on September 14.

The winners would get a cash prize of Rs one lakh, while the runners-up would take home Rs 50,000.

The teams: Group A: MRF, Escorts, HCA, ACA, TNCA. Group B: Indian Cements, SBI, Public Sector, Bangladesh Cricket Control Board (BCCB) and HCA.

Group C: KSCA, Mercantile (Sri Lanka), Sungrace, Indian Bank and CAB.

Group D: HCA A, Chemplast, PCL, IOC and Services.

Graf first into last sixteen

NEW YORK, Sept 1: Steffi Graf became the first to reach the fourth round at the US Open on Friday by defeating Nathalie Tauziat of France 6-3, 6-3, reports AP.

She was quickly joined by 12th-seeded Natasha Zvereva, who defeated Ann Grossman 6-4, 7-6 (7-5).

Mohsin Cup b'ball

Sports Reporter

Gregory's Club pulled off a squeaky 47-46 victory over Rangers-A in the lone Moshin Cup Second Division basketball league encounter played at the Dhamondi Gymnasium yesterday. The winners led 22-21 at the breather.

Mahmudur caged the highest 12 points for the Gregorians while Babu topped with seventeen for the Rangers.

Cavallo gets Diego's pat on the back

BUENOS AIRES, Sept 1: Diego Maradona, once accused of having links to the Mafia while playing in Italy, said Thursday Argentina's Economic Minister is correct in his remarks about organized crime, reports AP.

"We Argentines don't deserve such an honest minister," Maradona, speaking in a radio interview, said of Domingo Cavallo. "It pains me that we're such hypocrites here. We all know the Mafias exist. And now Cavallo has to justify himself to people who don't deserve it."

Cavallo's taming of hyperinflation has attracted several sports stars back to Argentina in recent years.

Fossett sets new sailing record

TIBURON, USA, Sept 1: American adventurer Steve Fossett, who earlier this year became the first person to cross the Pacific Ocean solo in a balloon, broke a 110-year-old Trans-Pacific sailing record on Thursday, reports Reuter.

Fossett, 51, and three crew members aboard his trimaran "Lakota" sailed from Yokohama, Japan to San Francisco Bay in 16 days, 16 hours and 23 minutes, knocking almost five days off the old Japan-San Francisco sailing record of 21 and a half days.

Showtime cashing in on iron Mike

NEW YORK, Sept 1: Mike Tyson's 89-second fight with Peter McNeeley will gross more than 96 million dollars worldwide, including a US record 63 million dollars from pay-per-view television sales, Showtime TV said Thursday, reports AFP.

Showtime Entertainment Television said the August 19 fight in Las Vegas, Tyson's first foray into the ring since he served a three-year prison term for rape, was bought by a record 1.52 households.

Return of the Swede

NEW YORK, Sept 1: They farmed Stefan Edberg out to Court 16 at the US Open. It's about as far from Centre Court as this sprawling complex goes, reports AP.

Edberg understands. A two-time winner of the tournament, owner of six Grand Slam titles, he has fallen on hard times.

His game has been inconsistent, so bad, in fact, that he is not even seeded in this year's Open, his record 50th consecutive Grand Slam tournament. That's sort of like top seed and defending champion Andre Agassi, his next opponent, was a year ago.

"I've had a long spell when I was at the top of the game," Edberg said after defeating Daniel Nestor 6-1, 7-6, 2-6, 6-1 Thursday. "You can't keep going, going forever. I am not going to be top five for the rest of my life. Sometimes you run into trouble. There's always a way out of it, always a way back."

Agassi found his way out. Edberg is still looking for his. On Thursday, the search took him far afield.

"It was a long time since I played on an outside court," he said. "It is different because there is not that much room. Everything is tighter. Everything is smaller."

"It's a pretty good court" to play on. Quite a good atmosphere. At least the place is full. That is what you want

sometimes, to play on a court like that when it is full, rather than to play in a half-empty stadium."

That was the circumstance when Edberg played his first match here this year, hidden away at 11 am when most tennis fans are still consuming their second cup of coffee.

His pride was not dented by playing on an outside court. "I could play another outside match," Edberg said.



STEFAN EDBERG

Like maybe his next one against Agassi, he joked.

Sometimes Edberg wonders where everything went wrong. Just three years ago he won his second straight Open. Now he is treated as an afterthought.

"Obviously, I'm not winning as many matches," he

said. "I think I've lost a little bit of consistency. It is really the first time in my life I faced sort of a downhill slide, and it is a little hard to adjust to it."

"It is not great being in that position, but there is room to move up again. I am not playing that badly. It is just... some matches this year where I haven't played very well and I had some bad losses."

"Once you start losing matches, other people think they have a chance and you lose a little bit of confidence. So it is a bit of a tough position to find yourself in, but it is not the end of the world."

Typical was Nestor, a 23-year-old Canadian who is ranked No. 165 in the world and has never won a tournament. He did, however, beat Edberg in their only previous match in Davis Cup.

So Edberg digs in and looks for a solution. Perhaps it will come against Agassi, his next opponent, probably on Saturday. He is excited at the prospect of continuing his search against No. 1.

"It is an opportunity and it is great playing on Centre Court, playing against the best player in the world, and I know he is going to make me play my absolutely best tennis to have a chance to beat him," Edberg said. "He is in the position where I have been from many years. Hopefully I will be a good challenge for him."

Otherwise, it will be back to the outside courts.

World University Games

US, Japan on even keel

FUKUOKA, Japan, Sept 1: Italy upset the favoured Americans in the women's basketball final Friday, blocking the United States from passing Japan again in the World University Games overall gold medals race, reports AP.

David Oaks had evened the Americans with the Japanese at 20 gold medals each by winning the men's 100 metre sprint.

But in the two nations' seesaw battle atop the standings, the United States still led 62 to 58 in total medals with 22 events left Saturday and Sunday. Japan was shut out of the gold column Friday, while the Americans just missed medals by finishing fourth in baseball and women's volleyball.

Russia and China each had 12 golds. South Korea had nine and Germany and Hungary each had six.

The day's only double gold winners were China and Yugoslavia. Each had one victory in track and field. China also won the women's volleyball gold, and Yugoslavia beat Hungary 10-9 in overtime in the water polo final. Australia took the water polo bronze with a 14-11 victory over Russia.

Two nations won their first medals of these Games, both with victories in 400-metre races. Esword Coombs of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines won the men's, and Nigeria's Olabisi Afolabi won a seesaw women's battle with China's Du Xiuju.

In women's basketball, Italy led 43-34 at halftime, lost the lead, and then shot ahead again with a 17-7 run for a 73-65 gold medal victory.

"This is a dream for us," said Italian coach Riccardo Sales. "It is the first time an Italian women's team has ever beaten an American team."

Japan won the bronze with an 86-71 victory over Russia.

On the track, Oaks and Germany's Melanie Paschke claimed the fastest sprinter titles.

Oaks had to overcome a bad start to beat Obadele Thompson in the men's 100. He finished in 10.28 seconds. Thompson took the silver—Barbados' first medal in international competition—in 10.34.

Paschke won her 100 final in 11.16. Ekaterina Thanou of Greece was second in 11.30 and Mary Tombrini of Nigeria third in 11.43.

In the 400s, Coombs won the men's race in 45.38, followed Udem Ekpenyong of Nigeria in 45.57 and Dmitri Kossov of Russia in 45.70.

In the women's race, Afolabi said that when Du "passed me on the last curve, it was a challenge for me to beat her." She did, by 22 seconds in 50.50.

Romania's Lulia Negura and Camelia Tecuta finished 1-2 in the women's 10,000 metres, but Negura was more than 15 seconds ahead in 32 minutes, 28.25 seconds.

In the men's high jump, Dragutin Topic of Yugoslavia and Germany's Wolfgang Kreissig both cleared 2.29 metres (7 feet, 6 inches), but Topic took the gold by making it on his first try. Kreissig needed three. Brendan Reilly of Britain took the bronze at 2.27 (7-5 1/4).

China's Zhang Lianbiao won the men's Javelin with a throw of 79.30 metres (260-2), well ahead of the 77.52 (254-4) of Austria's Gregor Hoegler and the 76.16 (249-10) of Ukraine's Andrey Uglov.

Ukraine's Vitaliy Sidorov was the men's discus winner at 62.16 metres (203-11). South Africa's Frederick Potgieter followed with 61.38 (201-4) and Italy's Diego Fortuna took bronze with 61.16 (200-8).

Sarka Kasparkova of the Czech Republic triple-jumped 14.20 meters (46-7 1/4) for a women's gold medal. Lioudmila Doubkova of Russia edged Barbara Lof of Italy 13.87 (45-6 1/4) to 13.85 (45-5 1/4) for the silver.

Baseball ended with the same gold and silver medalists as in the last games in the 1993. Cuba beat South Korea 2-0 in the final, with Eduardo Pare's solo home run providing the only run the Cubans needed. Japan won the bronze by beating the United States 7-3.

Jansher storms into last eight

HONG KONG, Sept 1: World champion Jansher Khan stormed into the Hong Kong Open quarter-finals on Thursday in a near-empty arena as a typhoon raged outside, reports Reuter.

The Pakistani top seed and defending champion beat qualifier Mark Chaloner of England 15-7, 15-4, 15-8 and led the top seven seeds into the last eight.

Organisers were given the go-ahead by local authorities to play the second round matches on the condition that spectators would not be allowed into the arena during typhoon Kent, which lashed the territory from late morning.

"I played better today than in the first round. My short game has picked up and I was taking my volleys better," said Jansher after ousting world number 31 Chaloner, who came into the tournament after impressive displays at the Singapore and Malaysian Opens.

"That was the first time I have played Chaloner. He is fit and has a lot of potential to climb up the rankings."

Jansher, bidding for his seventh Hong Kong Open title, has a quarter-final match against seventh seed Del Harris of England, who defeated compatriot Mark Cairns 15-8, 15-9, 5-15, 15-6.

Australia's Ronney Eyles, the second seed, was given a tough work-out by Federico Usandizaga of Argentina before emerging with a 17-16, 15-14, 15-11 win.

Eyles will play Gary Waite in the last eight after the Canadian qualifier's 15-12, 15-10, 15-12 victory over compatriot Jonathan Power.

The other quarter-finals will pit 1993 Hong Kong Open champion Brett Martin of Australia, the number four seed, against England's Simon Parke and Scotland's Peter Nicol, seeded three, against number five seed Chris Walker of England.



Anke Huber of Germany fires in a double-handed backhand against American Anne Miller during their second round encounter at the US Open at Flushing Meadows New York on Aug 31. Huber won 6-0, 7-5.