

2006 C 'wealth Games Kiwi boss resigns

WELLINGTON, New Zealand, Jan 30: The chief executive of Wellington's bid team for the 2006 Commonwealth Games has resigned, saying he doesn't think the city can raise the necessary local funding to challenge Melbourne for the right to host the event, reports AP.

Arthur Klap, who has worked on the bid full time for three years, resigned during a special closed meeting of the bid committee on Thursday. It was reported that the committee had voted unanimously to continue Wellington's bid.

But Klap said Saturday that only the vote by the nine mayors had been unanimous. He voted against continuing with the bid and then resigned.

He said the bid had reached a "drop-dead point" and Wellington could not afford it. Funding from local businesses had proved difficult, Klap added.

The committee had asked him to reconsider but he said it was time to rule in the mind rather than the heart.

"I thought this strategy was a very important part of the bid process and at that drop-dead point we had to assess what our inability and the financial position of the Games," he said.

"In my view, our chances of winning had been greatly reduced in the last month. The bid funding was too unsure and I don't have the confidence that the Commonwealth Games Federation would be able to guarantee us the money required to run a successful Games."

Committee head and deputy mayor Kerry Prendergast revealed last week that she had been approached by Commonwealth delegates asking for favours to ensure a vote for Wellington.

The Wellington group is also concerned that a contract between the Commonwealth Games Federation and Australia's Channel Nine could disadvantage Wellington's bid against that of Melbourne.

The Australian city is the only other venue bidding for the 2006 Games, with a decision expected at an Oct 11 general assembly meeting in Fiji.

Athens invites bids for logo

ATHENS, Jan 30: Organisers of the Athens Olympics on Friday announced a contest for the logo that will grace the 2004 Summer Games, reports AP.

According to a news release, the contest is open to advertising agencies, designers and other professionals and companies dealing with "the development of corporate identity, strategies for image creation, commercial logos or creative communications."

In their release, organisers did not say what they would award for a successful logo. It will replace the 1996 Athens used to win the Olympics.

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Duel between baseliners

MELBOURNE, Jan 30 (AP): For those who complain that power is killing men's tennis, with aces flying wild at Wimbledon and the US Open, that will most certainly not be the case in the Australian Open final.

No matter who wins Sunday's match between Russia's Yevgeny Kafelnikov and Sweden's Thomas Enqvist, the rallies will be long and the points constructed by baseline craftsmen.

"The one thing I promise you," Kafelnikov said, "is going to be a long match."

All their matches the past five years have been close with

Enqvist holding a 4-2 lead.

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looking for the corners and sharp angles, working their way toward the net carefully and cautiously.

They'll each have their share of aces — in three-set series, Kafelnikov had 16 against Tommy Haas, Enqvist 11 against Nicolas Pietrangeli — but the dominant shot will be the groundstroke.

"I'll try to work as hard as I can on court," Kafelnikov said. "I definitely will not try to play for the shortest point possible."

Nor will Enqvist, who is seeking to be the first unseeded winner at the Australian since Mark Edmondson in 1976.

They are grinders, Kafelnikov and Enqvist, trying to wear each other down.

That's how Kafelnikov won the 1996 French Open, and that's how he hopes to win this one on the relatively slow, rubberised hard court.

Enqvist has won 14 straight matches, including titles in a tneup tournament and an exhibition. But Kafelnikov hopes the pressure of a Grand Slam final might work against the Swede.

"I don't know how he's going to handle the pressure in a slam final," Kafelnikov said. "But all I can say is I definitely feel like the underdog because he's playing a lot better right now than me. He's in great form at the moment."

Yet, Kafelnikov also knows that Enqvist is capable of calculating at odd moments.

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He mentioned the way Enqvist "played loose" when he was serving for the match at 5-4 against Mark Philippoussis in the fourth round, then got pushed to five sets.

"I mean, you don't need to do such things," Kafelnikov said. "All you have to do is just concentrate for one game, just serve out the match and it's over. I know if I'll stay in the match with him, I will get my chances."

Someone suggested to Kafelnikov that he played just as loose serving for the match at 5-3 in the fifth set against Andrei Pavel in the fourth round. Pavel broke, but Kafelnikov broke back to win at 6-4.

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Paes, Bhupathi come so close

MELBOURNE, Jan 30: Patrick Rafter got his first Grand Slam title on home soil while Jonas Bjorkman defended the doubles championship he won last year with Jacco Eltingh, reports AP.

For Indians Leander Paes and Mahesh Bhupathi, Saturday's five-set loss in the Australian Open men's doubles championship was just another in a long line of devastating Grand Slam defeats.

Rafter and Bjorkman, getting rowdy support from a combined, Australia-Sweden cheer squad, scored a thrilling 6-3, 4-6, 6-4, 6-7 (10-12), 6-4 win.

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MARTINA RULES: A delighted Martina Hingis with the Australian Open trophy at Melbourne yesterday. This is her third consecutive triumph at the Open by Hingis.

Hingis came up with three brilliant shots to come back from love-40 and take a 5-3 lead to set herself up for a victory that brought her 679,000 Australian dollars (427,700 dollars).

"I just played some awesome tennis," Hingis said. "I hope I can continue playing life this all year."

Mauresmo, who won 427,770 Australian dollars (213,885 dollars), left undaunted and ready to take on Hingis, or anyone else, again for another major title.

"First I'm going to learn how to deal with a Grand Slam final," said Mauresmo, who won the junior title at Wimbledon and the French Open and knows she has the game to win on any surface. "It's a lot of pressure, a lot of tension. For the first time, I don't think it was too bad."

"I've worked for this for all my young career. Emotionally it's very intense."

Facing the break at love-40, Hingis produced a backhand drop from behind the baseline that left the speedy Mauresmo stranded.

"That was so lucky," Hingis said. "At that point, I was like, OK, take it."

Hingis brought the game back to deuce with the help of two unforced errors by Mauresmo.

But Mauresmo, the unseeded 19-year-old from France playing in her first major final, then drilled a forehand deep that almost sped by Hingis.