

IOC might shift to new home

LAUSANNE, June 25: The International Olympic Committee could easily find a new home if it felt unable to stay in Switzerland, a top IOC official was quoted as saying Thursday.

The harsh and excessive attacks by certain Swiss media have pained us and have troubled a certain number of our members," IOC director-general Francois Carrard said in an interview with the Lausanne daily *Le Matin*.

The decision by the IOC last week to choose Italian city Turin as host for the 2006 Winter Olympic over Swiss candidate Sion led to vandalism at the Olympic Museum in Lausanne and to angry reaction from politicians and news media.

The IOC has had its headquarters in Lausanne since 1915, but in recent months its relationship with Switzerland has become shaky.

The Swiss government wavered on whether to grant a tax exemption to the IOC in the light of reports of corruption and bribery of its members before the IOC withdrew its request last February.

The decision to choose Turin over Sion has been seen by some Swiss as an act of revenge by IOC members after Swiss IOC member Marc Holder was the first senior Olympic official to make public allegations of corruption in the voting process.

Leading newspapers and officials have been questioning this week whether the IOC has really cleaned up its act.

Carrard said the IOC would only consider moving if its operation functions were badly impeded in Switzerland, and compared the IOC's relationship with Lausanne to that of a tree which had grown over time.

Sydney 2000

Bathurst seeks compensation

SYDNEY, June 25: A New South Wales state town is demanding compensation from Sydney Olympic organisers because of a decision to bar foreign marching bands at the Games opening ceremony next year, reports AP.

Officials in Bathurst say that western town will be out of pocket by about 3 million Australian dollars (about 2 million US dollars) because of a decision to eliminate 1,500 Japanese and American musicians.

Bathurst has spent the past eight months preparing to host the international students, to be joined by 500 Australians, to march in the opening ceremony — changing academic holidays, postponing civil events and booking out every form of accommodation.

The Sydney Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games (SOCOG) planned to have 200 Japanese and 1,300 Americans in the marching bands because ceremony organizer Ric Birch decided there was not enough talent in Australia.

Olympics Minister Michael Knight had signed arrangements for the performers and their entourage to stay in Bathurst for nearly three weeks before the Olympics.

But in the face of public complaints, SOCOG on Thursday did an about-face and promised the marching bands would be exclusively Australians.

"I'm cranky," Bathurst mayor Ian Macintosh said Friday. "No attempt was ever made to explain why that was happening and what the benefits were going to be for a lot of Australians. That was irresponsible."

Tapia-Ayala bout today

LAS VEGAS, June 25: Undeterred Johnny Tapia risks his World Boxing Association bantamweight title here Saturday against fellow American Paulie Ayala, reports AFP.

Tapia has a 46-0 record with two draws and 25 knockouts. He will make 250,000 dollars for facing the Texas southpaw, who is 27-1 with only 12 knockouts. Ayala will make only 60,000 dollars for his title chance.

"We trained diligently for this fight," Ayala said. "I know how tough Tapia is and I'm ready for a great fight. I'm confident I can beat him."

"It's time for Paulie to put up or shut up," Tapia said. "When I hear him saying he's going to win, that's enough. He may think he can win but once we get in the ring he will find it's a different story."

Tapia has won 17 in a row since a draw with Ricardo Vargas in 1995. His only other blemish was a draw in his 1988 pro debut.

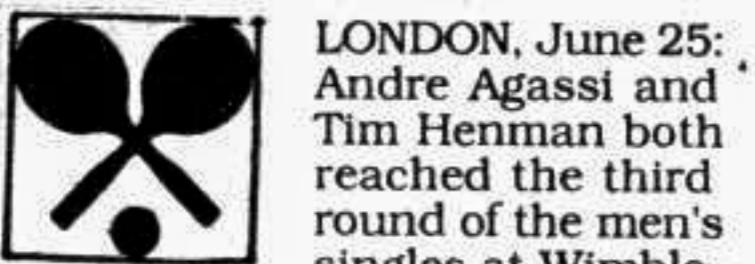
"I'm ready, willing and able," he said. "I'm planning on Paulie coming right at me and I'll be right there ready for him. If he doesn't come after me, I'll go after him. I know I'm too strong for him. He may be tough and he may be good at what he does. But I'm not losing."

Also on the card is Stevie Johnson's World Boxing Council lightweight title defense against unbeaten Aldo Rios of Argentina. Johnson enters 26-1 with 14 knockouts. Rios is 19-0 with three knockouts.

Tapia's father was murdered before he was born and his mother was kidnapped and killed when he was eight. One year after a woman was seated next to on a bus was killed in an accident. He turned to cocaine and was in and out of rehabilitation several times.

"Everyone knows what he's been through," promoter Bob Arum said. "Through it all, Johnny has become a much more determined and disciplined person. We're all thankful for that."

Becker, Novotna through



LONDON, June 25: Andre Agassi and Tim Henman both reached the third round of the men's singles at Wimbledon on Thursday -- but were largely upstaged as Boris Becker prolonged his love-affair with the event by winning his grudge match against fellow German Nicolas Kiefer, reports AFP.

Australian second seed Pat Rafter, who has never shone at Wimbledon despite his serve and volley talents, defeated Swedish doubles partner Jonas Bjorkman 6-2, 7-6, 6-2.

The US Open champion now faces another Swede, Thomas Enqvist.

Eighth-seeded American Todd Martin meanwhile enjoyed a routine straight sets win over Jiri Novak of the Czech Republic.

The winners were joined by British sixth seed Tim Henman, who completed his match held over from Wednesday evening to march past American Chris Woodruff 6-4, 6-3, 7-6 on Centre Court in 2hr 23min.

The Briton now faces Sébastien Grosjean of France before a possible match-up with fifth-seeded 1996 champion Richard Krajicek, who blitzed Australia's Todd Woodbridge 7-5, 6-4, 6-4.

Henman had led 6-4, 2-3 when the match was halted for fading light Wednesday, but he won six straight games to take the wind out of Woodruff's sails.

"I was really pleased with the way I came out. The way I came out the first six games was really impressive -- I was delighted," said Henman, whose win was greeted with huge cheers.

The decibel count went even higher, however, when three-time champion and crowd favourite Becker, on his last appearance at the tournament in his "garden" ousted Kiefer 6-4, 6-2, 6-4.

"Boris The Great," read a huge banner waved in the German's direction as he left the court -- and the packed crowd rose as one to agree as the 77th-ranked veteran completed victory in 1hr 57min.

Kiefer, seeded 15, became the third men's seed to head for the exit.

Becker can now look forward to a fascinating meeting with Australian teenager Lleyton Hewitt, who sped past Morocco's Karim Alami 6-1, 6-4, 6-4.

Another German, Tommy Haas, sneaked through almost unnoticed after overturning a two-set deficit to beat Australia's Richard Fromberg 6-7, 4-6, 6-4, 6-2.

Three-time former finalist Goran Ivanisevic also progressed, beating Australia's Sandon Stolle 7-6, 4-6, 6-4. Sweden's Thomas Enqvist beat Rainer Schuttler of Germany 6-

4, 6-2.

Boris Becker stretches for the ball during his Wimbledon second round encounter against countryman Nicolas Kiefer on June 24. —AFP photo

6-4, 6-2.

Smaller and less capable equipment (than they have now), it's easy to see why he could dominate.

"If he played today, he would present the same problems on a different level in a different way, and I learn from his competitive instincts and certainly his tenacity. But the game changes all the time," Agassi said.

Agassi's main challenge Thursday was his own service game against Canas.

Although he was a set up, the No. 4 seed went 3-0 down in the second before winning six of the next seven games to go two sets ahead.

"Until I was down 3-0 in the second set I hadn't had one service game where I wasn't down 15-30, 0-15, 0-30 or 15-40," he said. "There wasn't one service game that I was holding easily I snuck through the first set without giving up my serve."

"A lot of things are different now than then," said Agassi, who won Wimbledon in 1992.

When you look at a guy who was as last as Borg and could hit the ball with such pinpoint accuracy and guys were forced to try and generate pace with

Bayern rope in 'Ronaldo'

MUNICH, Germany, June 25: European Champions' Cup finalists Bayern Munich showed Friday they are already planning for next season in an audacious double transfer swoop, reports AFP.

Paraguayan teenage prodigy Roque Santa Cruz signed a five-year deal with the newly-crowned Bundesliga champions and was presented to the Bavarian club's fans.

Italian club Roma's Brazilian forward Paulo Sergio will also be playing at the Olympiastadion next season, the German club's spokesman Markus Horwitz said later Friday.

Santa Cruz, 17, had been on the books of Paraguayan club Olimpia Asuncion and will join Bayern after the Copa America, which ends July 18 in Paraguay.

The youngster dubbed 'the new Ronaldo' has even been compared with Pele and passed stringent medical tests Thursday before agreeing the deal.

Bayern general manager Uli Hoeneß claimed the fee was "less than 5.45 million dollars" -- a figure he claimed to be a world record for a player of that age.

As for Paulo Sergio a deal has yet to be concluded although Bayern were adamant that an agreement will be struck. The player hopes to tie up his move to Germany on Monday.

Bayern play Manchester United in the Champions' Cup final in Barcelona on Wednesday and are also in the German Cup final.

American Andre Agassi plays a double-fisted backhand in his match against Guillermo Canas of Argentina at the Wimbledon on June 24. —AFP photo

2, 6-4, 7-5 and another German, Jens Knippelschild, swamped Switzerland's Marc Rosset 6-3, 6-4, 6-4.

Tenth-seeded Ivanisevic now plays Dutchman Paul Haarhuis, who hammered Spaniard Fernando Vicente in straight sets.

Brazilian clay court specialist Gustavo Kuerten, seeded 11, also won, blasting his way past Germany's David Prinosil for the loss of just eight games.

In the women's singles, defending champion Jana Novotna thrashed Czech-born Austria's Sylvia Plischke, her Roland Garros conqueror, 6-3, 6-1 and will next play Spain's Maria Antonia Sanchez-Lorenzo.

"It wasn't very easy to play a player I lost to at the French Open. I knew before the match it wasn't going to be an easy one," said Novotna.

Third-seeded American Lindsay Davenport easily ousted Slovakia's Karina Habsová 6-2, 6-2 in 43 minutes to

set up a third-round match against Laura Gómez of Italy.

Dokic, who surrendered just two games against Hingis on her first ever appearance in the main draw hurtled through the first set in 23 minutes against Studenikova, but the 16-year-old, ranked just 129 in the world, allowed the second set to slip away before triumphing in a decider riddled with service breaks.

Ane Kremer of Luxembourg, who was an easy 6-2, 6-3 winner over American Brie Rippner, now meets Australian sensation Jelena Dokic.

If Dokic gets through that, she could play French ninth seed Mary Pierce, who swept past Italian Rita Grande 6-1, 6-3.

Last year's semifinalist Natasha Zvereva, the 16th seed, was sent crashing out by Russia's Tatiana Panova 6-4, 7-5 while French 11th seed Julie Halard-Decugis struggled to oust Sylvia Farina of Italy 6-2, 3-6, 8-6.

King calls for equality

LONDON, June 25: Wimbledon legend Billie-Jean King today said it was high time the world's most famous tennis tournament gave women equal pay, reports Reuters.

Otherwise "The Spice Girls of Tennis," as Martina Hingis calls them — may start a "girlcott" of Wimbledon.

King, who won a record 20 Wimbledon titles, said, "The money that Wimbledon is saving — less than two per cent of its profits — is not worth the resulting ill-will and distraction."

She argued that television ratings for the exciting new generation of glamorous teenage stars consistently favoured the women.

King, founder of the Women's Tennis Association and a key voice in the sport, also insisted that it was entertainment value and not length of performance that counted.

Runners who compete at 100 and 1,500 metres get paid more than those who run 10 kilometres and most people would rather watch a great two-hour movie than a four-hour quality.

Wimbledon organisers point out that the majority of fans coming to the tournament say they prefer to watch men play.

They also argue that women end up winning more prize money than men because they play shorter singles matches and therefore are able to play more women's doubles and mixed doubles.

King, writing in *The Times*, retorted, "Wimbledon should be encouraging the top women to continue doing this rather than penalising them by paying them less."

"It is a sad fact that Wimbledon remains a distant fourth among the four Grand Slams in the percentage of prize money it pays to women."

The men's champion won 455,000 pounds (724,000 dollars), while the women's champion gets 409,500 pounds.

At the Australian Open, the women receive 94 per cent of the men's prize money and at the French it is 90 per cent. Only the US Open gives both sexes equal prize money.

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