

## WC souvenirs fetch \$48,900

PARIS, June 30: Shirts, soccer balls and even a piece of turf from the Stade de France stadium where France won last year's World Cup fetched 312,000 francs (48,900 dollars) at an auction held to battle anti-personnel mines, reports AFP.

The auction late Tuesday was to raise funds to help the Red Cross crusade against landmines.

A football made by Louis Vuitton and autographed by the 22 members of the cup-winning French squad went for 25,000 francs while star player Zinedine Zidane's signed jersey fetched 7,000 francs.

The piece of turf, carved from the pitch on the day of the final, was sold for 17,000 francs.

## Schools h'ball

Narayanganj Adarsha Girls' School & College reached the semifinal of the 10th Bata schools handball tournament crushing Ahmed Bawany High School by 10-0 at the Sultana Kamal Women's Sports Complex yesterday, reports UNB.

Rashida scored 7 goals for the Narayanganj which led the first half 6-0.

Earlier, on Tuesday, Viqarunnisa Noon School & College booked the first berth for the semis as they trounced East Basabo High School 20-1 after leading the first half 12-0.

Diana and Eva netted six goals each while Smriti and Rapi scored three each for the winners while Shamira netted the consolation goal for the losers.

In the other matches of the day BAF Shaheen School and College beat Sher-e-Bangla Girls' College (school section) 5-0, Lake Circus Girls High defeated East Basabo Girls High 10-1, Scholastica School beat Mirpur Girls' Ideal Institute 9-0 and Rifles School & College outplayed Kamalapur Sher-e-Bangla Railway High by 12-1 goals.

## Kasparov, Karpov share points

FRANKFURT, June 30: Playing their first match in three years, Russian chess masters Garry Kasparov and Anatoly Karpov drew Tuesday after 38 moves in the first round of a semi-rapid competition in Frankfurt, reports AFP.

The two last faced each other at a 1996 tournament in Las Palmas, Spain.

Playing at the Frankfurt Chess Classics festival, the Russians are also due to match their wits against India's Viswanathan Anand, 29, ranked second in the world, and their compatriot Vladimir Kramnik, 24, who is ranked third.

Anand and Kramnik also played to a draw Tuesday, but in 19 moves.

The four are engaged in a semi-rapid competition which allows each player 25 minutes to make a move.

Over the last eight years, the two Russian masters have created one of the greatest rivalries in chess history.

They have played five world championships against each other, and a total of 167 matches since 1981.

Kasparov, 36, has gotten the better of his rival, with 28 victories, 20 defeats and 119 draws against Karpov.

## United decide to skip FA Cup

MANCHESTER, June 30: Manchester United confirmed on Wednesday they have pulled out of the 1999-2000 FA Cup, reports AFP.

The decision means they will now participate in FIFA's inaugural World Club Championship in Brazil next January without fixture congestion.

In a statement the club said: "We realise that many of our supporters will be disappointed as we will be as our decision not to compete in the FA Cup."

Manchester United see this as an opportunity to compete for the ultimate honour of being the very first world club champions.

The English Football Association offers to exempt the FA Cup holders from the competition in a bid to persuade them to play in the FIFA World Team Championship and so help England's 2006 World Cup bid.

That left United in a no-win situation, knowing that they would disappoint their fans if they agreed to pull out of the FA Cup and disappoint the FA and the Government if they refused to play in Brazil.

United agonised over their decision for two days before announcing at an Old Trafford press conference that they had reluctantly agreed to accept the FA's offer.

The decision is subject to contractual issues which still have to be resolved.

## Van Hooijdonk joins Vitesse

AMSTERDAM, June 30: Dutch striker Pierre van Hooijdonk, who went on strike while at Nottingham Forest last season, signed a four-year contract with Dutch First Division side Vitesse on Tuesday, reports Reuters.

The Dutch club announced the move but did not disclose the transfer fee. Newspaper reports said it would be around 3.5 million sterling (\$5.54 million).

Van Hooijdonk has been transfer-listed since last August when he refused to return to the English club, who were then in the premier league, for three months after the World Cup finals in France.



England cricketers limbering up during a practice session at Edgbaston yesterday.

— AFP photo

## Gough's vote of confidence



LONDON, June 30 (Internet report): Darren Gough has backed new England captain Nasser Hussain to dispel the World Cup disappointment with victory over New Zealand in the first Test at Edgbaston.

England failed to reach the Super Six stage of the tournament, leading to the departure of Alec Stewart as captain.

But Yorkshire fast bowler Gough insists that a good England performance is more important than the personal performance of Hussain.

"I don't think the captain will make a big difference," Gough said.

"People have said in the past that somebody was a great captain but in cricket, you need the players around you to win."

"In the past people have called Mike Brearley and Ray Illingworth great captains, but you have to remember they had great players around them and they all played together."

"What we have got to show now is that we are a good team and make the captain look very good."

"But, as he has shown with Essex, Nasser is a strong captain. If he wants to say something, he won't be scared to say it. In that respect, he is very good."

"We have a new manager and captain, and it will be like a fresh start. And with some new players coming in, it can only be for the best."

But England will be without the services of Gough after he suffered a leg injury a fortnight ago.

However, a resilient Gough has already put his own disappointment behind him and is gearing himself for a return to action in the Super Cup semi-final at Warwickshire on July 10 - although he admits a more realistic target is the County Championship game against the same opposition three days later.

A return then would put him in line for an England recall for the second Test against the New Zealanders at Lord's.

"I have stopped thinking about the disappointment. Obviously I am disappointed but last season, I broke my finger so I missed out," Gough said.

"But I always come back so I have got to be realistic and not rush it. But hopefully when I come back, I will make up for lost time."

"It is a difficult injury. Ten days ago, I couldn't walk so I am improving. And hopefully, I'll be running later on this week."

"I have then got to start bowling and do little hurdles. I am hoping to get back for the Super Cup semi-final but I might not get a game before that. So it might be difficult to get selected."

"But the week after we play Warwickshire so I would like to come back then because if I can put in a good performance, I would be in for selection for the Test match, but that might be a little too soon."

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Gooch, England's coach for the rest of the summer while Duncan Fletcher completes his commitments with Glamorgan, compiled some of his best Test scores once he reached the latter end of his career.

It is that inspiration which Stewart is looking towards as he begins another chapter in his England career against New Zealand later this week, having been stripped of the captaincy and wicketkeeping duties to concentrate on opening the innings alone.

"I've kept myself fit and I'm looking forward to this - it's almost like starting again," admitted 36-year-old Stewart, whose place behind the stumps will be taken by debutant Chris Read on Thursday.

"I've been given the chance to open the batting, which I did in the last two Tests. I played and got a hundred and a 50 - the only disappointment is that I've only had three first class innings in the last six months, but that's the way it is."

Since helping England to make a stirring fightback in the finale to the Ashes series at Melbourne and Sydney, Stewart's staple diet has been one-day cricket in the run-in to last month's disappointing World Cup exit - a factor he believes was crucial in the selectors' decision to appoint Nasser Hussain as captain.

"After the World Cup they wanted to be seen to make a change and that's what they've done," conceded Stewart. "People can use the word scapegoat and it's up to them what they say, but a decision and a change was made and you're expected to go along with it."

"Going out of the World Cup at the first hurdle was disappointing for the crowd, the players and everybody, and that's why a change was made."

But although he maintained a diplomatic stance on his first day back on England duty since being relieved of the captaincy, Stewart could not hide his frustration at the time it took the selectors to make a decision on the issue.

Stewart said: "The only relief I had was that they had finally made a decision. I kept reading that Nasser was captain, but I didn't find out until Thursday morning when I got a phone call from David Graveney telling me that Nasser was going to be captain."

They had to make a decision and if it took them three or four weeks then that's how long it took them. There was a lot of press coverage and headlines that Nasser was captain, but you just have to take it in your stride."

"It was disappointing when I got the call from Graveney because I enjoyed captaining England. I won a series against South Africa and I thought we fought back well in the Ashes series. We didn't do well in the one-day cricket, but they've changed the captain for Test cricket so you just accept it."

His return to the ranks comes against a New Zealand side used to being under-rated and with few pundits predicting anything but an England triumph under Hussain's new regime.

But key batsman Craig McMillan is warning England they could face a shock if they under-estimate a New Zealand side stressed by McMillan, whose century against Somerset at Taunton was a major factor in the tourists' six wickets success two days ago.

"We can't rely on that any more because we have played together now for three or four years - we have a lot of experience as a team and it's now time to go out and do the job."

"We had disappointments to begin with and that was probably understandable because of our inexperience, but we have to go on from that and it's no good using that as an excuse because it doesn't wash."

McMillan added: "England have new faces and they have a new captain and a new coach and there is a lot of pride in their, which is something we are very aware of."

"Since the World Cup, expectations have risen back home and they are always very high anyway, very similar to the expectations here, but we have beaten India 1-0 at home and we only lost 1-0 to South Africa so there is no reason why we cannot do well this summer."

"A lot of people wrote us off and didn't think we would go as far as we did in the World Cup and were quite surprised when we got to the semi-finals, but we weren't because we thought we could have gone even further."

"We don't take too much notice at what people say because we're used to people putting us down and saying we're not going to get anyone much of a test. I hope they expect that because if they do they are going to get a hell of a shock in this Test series."

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## CHAMPIONSHIPS CHIPS

WIMBLEDON, June 30 (AP): Billie Jean King has a message to the parents of rising young tennis stars: Stay away from the tournaments and give the kids some space.

Winner of 20 titles at Wimbledon, King said she was concerned about the number of parents who are making headlines for the wrong reasons by shouting at officials or being over protective.

"The parents have to stay working (at home)," she said. "They need to work instead of attending the tournaments with the younger players because that's what kills it."

"When you have 14 and 15-year-old financially and emotionally taking care of a family, something is not right with this picture."

"Allow them to believe in themselves as a human being first," King said. "This should be about champions in life, not just champion tennis players."

**FAST MOYA**

No prizes for guessing who's hit the fastest serve after eight days of Wimbledon — Greg Rusedski.

But the second fastest comes as a surprise.

It's Carlos Moya, a solid Spanish clay-court player not renowned as a big server, and second-round loser to Jim Courier.

Moya's top serve of 217 kph (135 mph) is second to Rusedski's best of 22 kph (138 mph). Several noted big servers such as Mark Philippoussis, Goran Ivanisevic, Richard Krajicek, Boris Becker and defending champion Pete Sampras are behind.

**FERGIE ARRIVES**

Sarah Ferguson, the Duchess of York, snarped fans by showed up at Wimbledon on Tuesday even though her name was not on the list of royal guests.

The duchess arrived in a chauffeur-driven car outside the gate reserved for corporate guests. Asked which match she had come to see, she said only, "Tennis."

Sadly for her and the thousands of fans who huddled under umbrellas at the All England Club, there wasn't any because play was totally washed out.

Also spotted at Wimbledon were Hollywood actor Michael Douglas and his latest companion, 29-year-old Welsh actress Catherine Zeta Jones.

**Blanc on transfer**

MARSEILLE, France, June 30 (Reuters/Internet): French World Cup defender Laurent Blanc said on Wednesday his surprise transfer to Inter Milan was due entirely to Olympique Marseille no longer wanting him in their squad.

"I have not gone to Inter for financial reasons. The sole reason for my departure is that OM and their trainer didn't want to keep me in their squad," Blanc said.

"I was convinced I would finish my career as a player in OM's colours before becoming an actor (behind the scenes) in the club in the years to come," the 33-year-old libero told a news conference.

"The club ... put me on the transfer market without warning me," he said.

"At the France team camp at Clairefontaine (early in June), I was sought again by Liverpool who had already contacted me the previous season," Blanc said.

"I was then surprised and also very disappointed to learn that the club were signing players telling them that Laurent Blanc would no longer be in the squad next season."

Coach Roland Courbis said on Monday that he signed central defender Eric Decroix from Nantes in preparation for Blanc's possible departure.

Blanc said he was surprised by the speed with which the deal — sealed at a surprisingly low \$3 million for a 1998 World Cup winning player — was completed.

"I was contacted for the first time on Friday and I signed in Milan on Monday," said Blanc, who is returning to Italy after a spell with Napoli in the early 1990s.

Marseille fans were outraged at the news that the club were selling one of their best players, a key figure in their return to the top of the French and European game in the last two seasons.

Their ire was mainly directed at Courbis, with whom Blanc appears not to have enjoyed a close relationship or been consulted on tactics.

"My only regret is not having won a title with OM," Blanc added.

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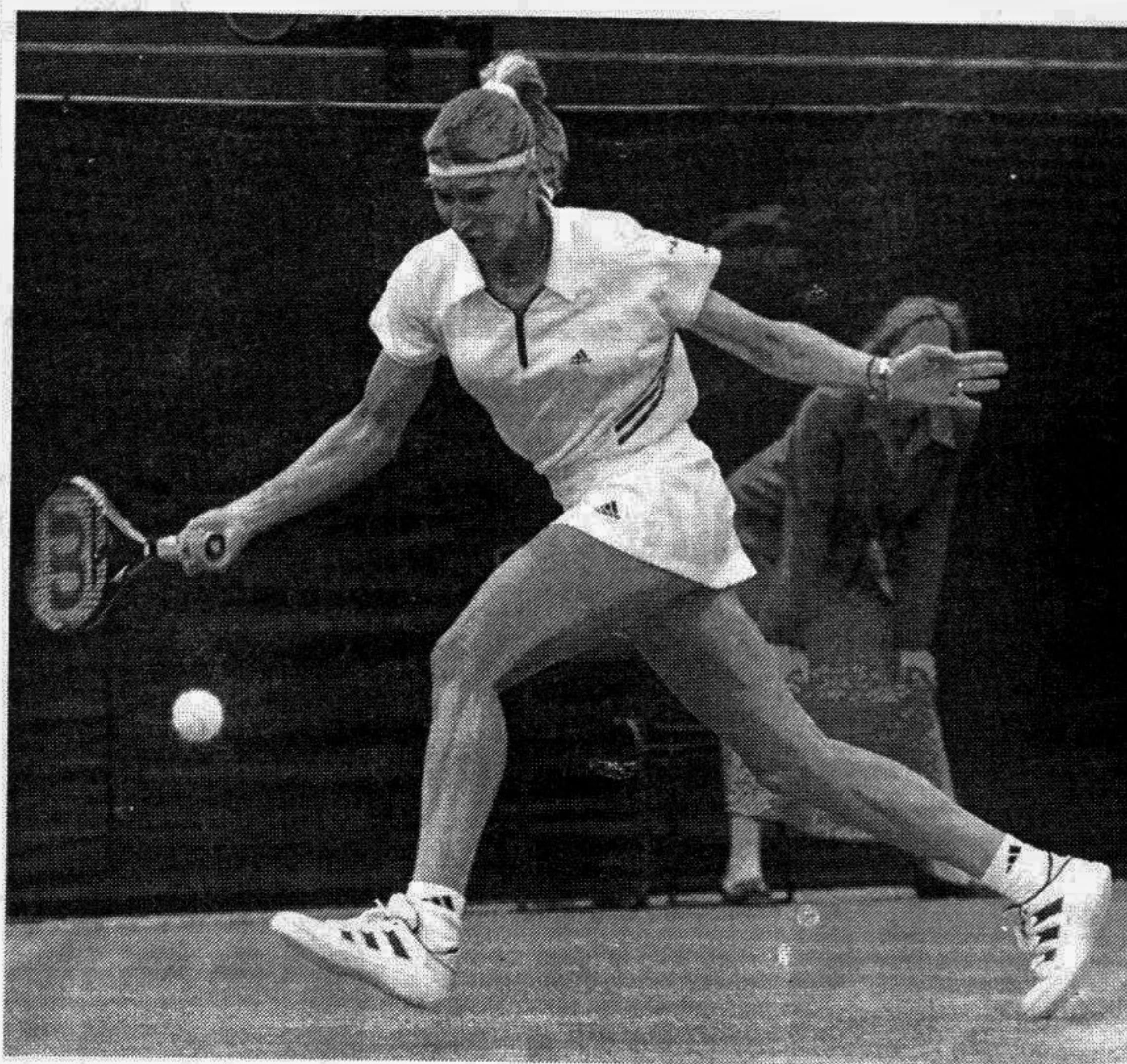
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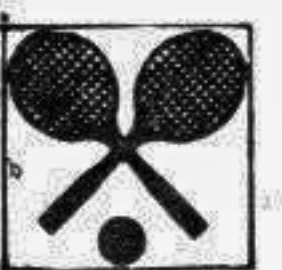
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Steffi Graf about to execute a forehand against Belgium's Kim Clijsters yesterday. Graf won 6-2, 6-2.

— AFP photo

## Wanted a Wimbledome?



WIMBLEDON, June 30 (AP): Here we go again. Rain is causing havoc at Wimbledon.

The first week of dry, warm weather proved too good to be true. The curse of Wimbledon has struck back with a vengeance.

All but five matches were rained out Monday. And not a ball was struck Tuesday as the entire day's play was washed out.

It was the 30th complete washout in Wimbledon history and the first since 1997, when two straight days were wiped out by rain.

All of which begs the question: Why not have a Wimbledome?

Paul McNamee, director of the Australian Open, says it's high time the All England Club put up a stadium roof.

The Australian Open has a sliding roof on its Centre Court stadium and is building another on its main show court.

While Wimbledon wants to protect its tradition, McNamee said, the club should also consider the needs of fans, players and television.

"The easiest solution would have been to build Court 1 with a roof," he said. "That would have guaranteed play would have gone on at all times and you wouldn't have changed Centre Court at all."

"Rain is tedious for everyone, and we understand and share the frustrations of fans during a rain delay," said club chief executive Christopher Goringe.

"Putting roofs on Centre or No 1 Court ... merely creates difficulties in other areas ... deciding which matches should be played indoors and whether those players who play indoors receive an unfair advantage over those who do not."

"Fans come to Wimbledon because they still want to see the world's finest tennis players in action outdoors, on grass and across all 18 courts. We continue to believe that should remain so."

Weather permitting, organizers hoped to get all of the 11 remaining fourth-round matches completed Wednesday.

German star Steffi Graf was due up first on Court 1, only two games away from victory against Belgian qualifier Kim Clijsters, leading 6-2, 6-4.

Graf and Clijsters warmed up for a few minutes Tuesday before showers sent them scurrying back to the locker room.

American Jim Courier spent less than a minute on Centre Court on Tuesday as the drizzle forced them back indoors.

With Henman leading two sets to one, the match is scheduled to resume Wednesday after the serve-and-volley duel between Germany's Boris Becker and Australia's Patrick Rafter.

Other featured matches include American Venus Williams vs Russia's Anna Kournikova; American Pete Sampras vs Canada's Daniel Nestor; Britain's Greg Rusedski vs Australia's Mark Philippoussis and American Todd Martin vs Croatia's Goran Ivanisevic.

Britain's Tim Henman in action against American Jim Courier during their epic fourth round match yesterday. Henman triumphed 4-6, 7-5, 7-5, 6-7, 9-7.

— AFP photo

## Hi-tech facility at hand

