

Sport

SAF Games

Nepal assures about safety

KATHMANDU, Aug 2: Nepal pledged today it would provide exhaustive security measures to protect the 1,700 athletes at next month's 8th South Asian Federation Games (SAF Games), reports AFP.

"Keeping in view the 1,040 kilometres (650 miles) open border running parallel to the Indian states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh there is every possibility of the terrorists or insurgents crossing into Nepal to disturb during the SAF Games," Minister of Sports and Culture Sharat Singh Bhandari told journalists.

"Only five entry points will be opened along the Indo-Nepalese frontier during SAF Games and they will be closely watched by the Nepalese security personnel and anti-terrorism experts," he said.

"Likewise we will be very alert and watchful at the Tribhuvan International Airport (TIA) to check the entry of such insurgents during or before the Games," he said.

Randell stands trial

HOBART, Aug 2: Former Australian Test cricket umpire Steve Randell faced 18 sex charges against 10 girls when his trial started in the Tasmanian Supreme Court on Monday, reports AP.

The court heard evidence from two of the girls who alleged they had been indecently assaulted in 1981-82 by Randell, 43, who stood in a national record 36 Tests. Randell has pleaded not guilty to the charges.

The father of one girl who testified Monday told the court he hit Randell after hearing the allegations, adding he was "mad as a meat ax" and could have killed Randell.

The man was giving evidence after his daughter told a jury of nine men and three women Randell had fondled her in her classroom, a craft room, during a school camp and in her home during 1982 when he was her sixth year school teacher.

In opening the prosecution, Mike Stoddart said evidence of "touchings" for which Randell had not been charged would also be given to help establish a "modus operandi" or system regularly applied in the abuse of children by the accused.

Stoddart said Randell's alleged actions were secretive in the sense that they followed a pattern, but open and arrogant in the sense that he was getting away with them. He said they occurred in school settings and at girls' homes.

Randell established a pattern of visiting homes, ingratiating himself with parents and turning up unexpectedly.

In homes where he'd become a welcome guest of parents, he would go into bedrooms and sexually touch their daughters, Stoddart said.

The second of two alleged victims to give evidence on the opening day of the trial said Randell sexually assaulted her in a classroom and on camp when he was her class teacher in 1982.

The woman said she hadn't told anyone about the incidents previously because she was "really scared" and was frightened of Randell's temper.

Chess C'ships round up

LAS VEGAS, Aug 2: Five players facing elimination took back in the second game of the World Chess Championship on Sunday, reports AP.

Russians Sergei Dolmatov and Alexander Khalifman, Vlastimil Babula of the Czech Republic, Anthony Miles of England and Karen Asrian of Armenia bounced back in the second game of the first round, forcing play-off on Monday.

Each had lost or drawn in Saturday's first game, the first of two in a mini-match that comprises each round. The seven-round elimination tournament runs through the month at Caesar's Palace hotel-casino.

Daniel Fridman of Latvia and Levon Aronian of Armenia, who scored upset victories in the first game, swept higher-seeded opponents to advance to Round 2, which begins Tuesday.

Another 22 players also advanced.

Yasser Seirawan, one of the Grand Masters commenting on the games, was particularly impressed by Fridman's victory over Utut Adianto of Indonesia.

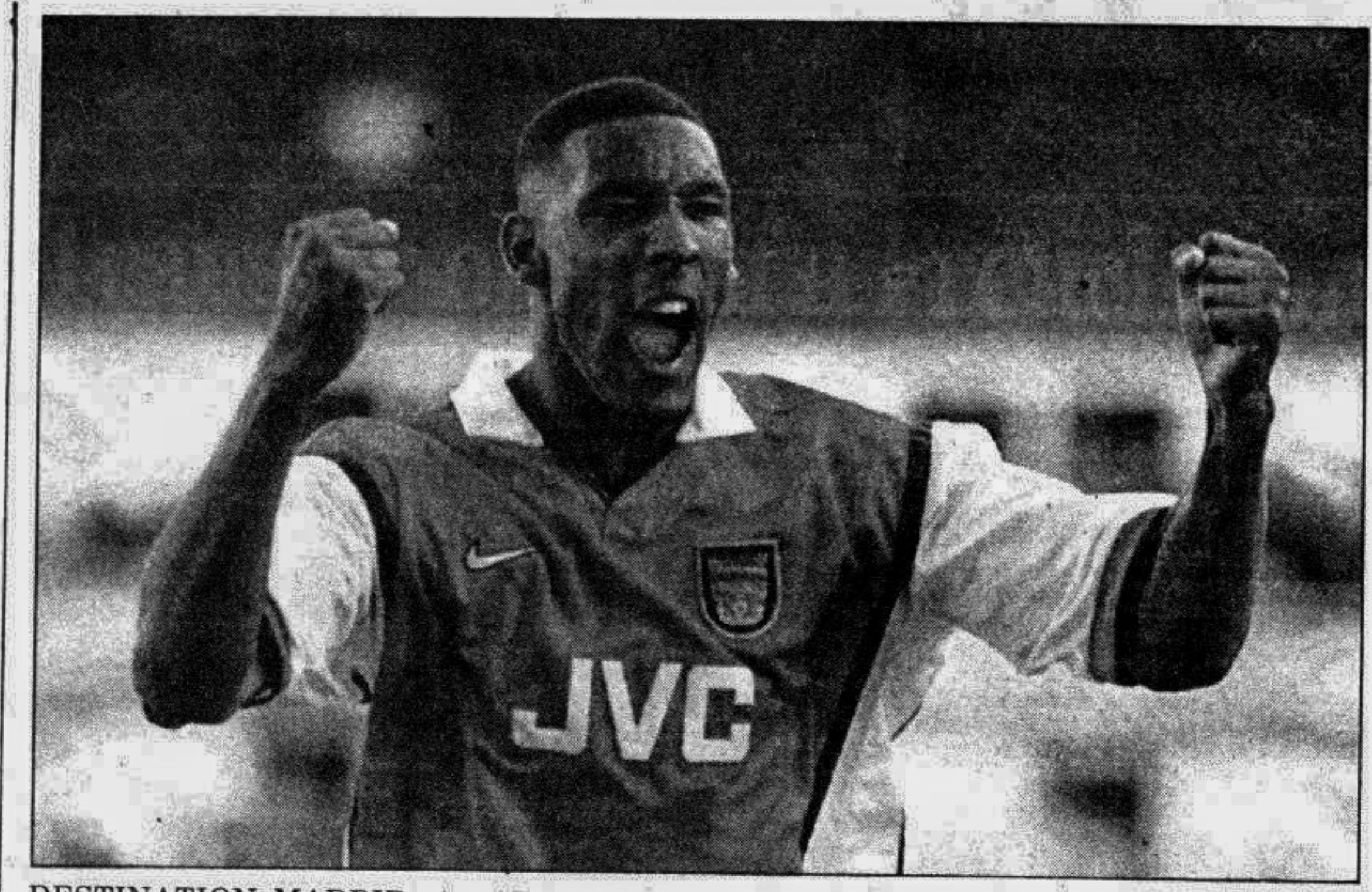
In other play, Mihail Kobalija of Russia, the 73rd seed, upset No. 37 Nick deFirman of the United States, while Christian Bauer of France advanced as the 79th seed with a second round win over the 43rd seed, Rustam Kasimdzhanov of Uzbekistan.

Favourites who advanced included: Ruslan Ponomariov (Ukraine); Xiaomin Peng (China); Vasilios Kotronias (Cyprus); Boris Gulko (US); Goran Dizdar (Croatia); Aleksei Aleksandrov (Belarus); Jaan Ehvest (Estonia); Vladimir Akopian (Armenia); Rogelio Antonio (Philippines); Magem Badals (Spain); Sergei Tkachiev (France) and Ulf Andersson (Sweden).

Costa clinches Generali Open

KITZBUHEL, Austria, Aug 2: Albert Costa made it a hat-trick of titles here as he won the ATP 535,000-dollar Generali Open by defeating fellow Spaniard Fernando Vicente in Sunday's final, reports AFP.

Costa, who won here in 1995 and 1998, came through 7-5, 6-2, 6-7, 5-7, 7-6 (7-4).



DESTINATION MADRID: An AFP file photo of French superstar Nicolas Anelka whose much publicised transfer saga from Arsenal ended yesterday with a move to Spanish giants Real Madrid.

Real Madrid take Anelka



PARIS, Aug 2 (AFP): Disgraced Arsenal striker Nicolas Anelka has signed a seven year contract in a 33 million-dollar transfer deal with Real Madrid, his agent told AFP Monday.

"A contract between the two clubs will be signed on Wednesday in London," said the French international's agent, Marc Rogers.

On Thursday the wantaway 20-year-old will have to undergo a routine medical before committing his future to the Spanish first division club.

If all that goes without a hitch Real fans could get a quick glimpse of their new signing as soon as Saturday in a planned friendly game.

Monday's deal wraps up a tortured tale that first began back in May when Marseille revealed that Anelka was constantly phoning them over a possible move to France.

Anelka had refused to return to Arsenal for pre-season training and was threatening legal action in order to terminate his contract if Arsenal did not allow him to join the club of his choice.

Real Madrid were the 20-year-old's first choice but Arsenal pulled the plug on the deal and asked world body FIFA to investigate whether Real had made an illegal approach to

Anelka. Anelka then agreed terms with Italian club Lazio but they failed to meet Arsenal's asking price.

Arsenal vice-chairman David Dein later described the drawn out process as long and unpleasant.

"We've got to get on with our lives," he added.

Meanwhile, Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger was hunting for new strikers after revealing the sale of Anelka.

Speaking after the 2-1 Charity Shield win over Manchester United at Wembley, Wenger said the deal had not yet been signed but an agreement had been reached.

The latest is that he (Anelka) will leave. We have found an agreement with Real Madrid, subject to contractual agreement," said Wenger.

That means we have to sit together and sign the contract and, as long as that's not done,

"It is the best thing for everybody that it is all over," said Wenger.

"We have had an explanation from Real Madrid that has satisfied the club. I wanted to keep the player and I'm disappointed we could not sit down together and talk but in the end he wants to go."

We have decided to let him join Real Madrid because the transfer figure is a reasonable one and we don't want to be re-

sponsible for killing the boy's career," he said.

"It is a story that has lasted all summer and has always been on a knife-edge. This club (Arsenal) would have survived if he had not played but I'm not sure Anelka could have."

"Now we must forget all this and concentrate on the season ahead. And that performance today showed we still have the right spirit and don't have to depend on one man."

The Frenchman said Arsenal would try to sign two replacement strikers as soon as possible.

"We are losing Anelka but it is a bit soon before the season starts and we need to make a quick decision," Wenger said.

"I have some ideas, we need a quick striker and a young striker."

Arsenal had been linked with Juventus' French striker Thierry Henry as part of a possible player-plus-cash deal with Anelka, but Anelka failed to agree terms with the Italian club.

Wenger said on Sunday: "He (Henry) wants to join us. That is positive. He wants to play for Arsenal, but the financial deal with Juventus is not yet done."

The Turin club are believed to be asking 11 million pounds (17 million dollars) for Henry.

The English Premiership season starts on Saturday.

Transfer-ology of a Frenchman



LONDON, Aug 2 (AFP): The saga of French striker Nicolas Anelka's transfer from Arsenal looks set to end after Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger said on Sunday an agreement with Real Madrid had been reached.

The following is a diary of one of the most protracted ones in football history.

June 7: French club Marseille claim that Anelka will not stop phoning them over a possible move to France. Marcel Dib, sporting director of the UEFA Cup finalists, said: "He doesn't stop phoning. He's put the ball into our court."

May 13: Anelka's agents hold talks with Spain's former European champions Real Madrid.

May 18: Anelka cites the English media as another reason he wants to leave the English game. "The one thing I can tell you is that I can't stand the English press, who cause me enormous problems on a personal level," Anelka storms.

May 19: Anelka's brother and agent, Claude, guarantees that Nicolas will stay at Highbury next season. "His future is still at Arsenal. He will be with the club next year, I can guarantee that," Claude says.

June 29: Italian club Juventus refuse to deny reports that they are set to open talks with Arsenal.

says. Anelka underlines his desire by firing a broadside at Arsenal over "illegal approaches." "All the clubs do that. Arsenal did the same thing with me to get me to leave Paris St Germain," he snipes.

July 1: Anelka insist that they will play fair with Arsenal over Anelka. "What is important is that Lazio is waiting for a call from Mr (David) Dein to sit down and negotiate," Lazio's official agent Morabito says.

July 2: Anelka threatens strike action if Arsenal try to block his move to Lazio. "Arsenal must hurry if they want to conclude a deal - if not Nicolas will stay a year without playing. That's no problem," Anelka's agent and brother, Claude says.

July 4: Anelka announces that he has no intention of ever returning to Arsenal. "It's impossible for me to stay in England. With Arsenal, I've finished for ever," Anelka says.

July 5: Lazio chairman Sergio Cragnotti arrives in London in a bid to finalise deal.

July 6: Lazio tempt Arsenal with a 20 million pound-plus-a-player proposal for Anelka.

July 10: Lazio set a deadline for the signature of Anelka or the deal is off. "The English club has until noon Monday to reply, otherwise we will try and conclude another transfer," Lazio president Sergio Cragnotti says.

July 23: Lazio agree 22 million pound fee with Arsenal but ask Anelka to cut his wage demands by 4 million over five years.

July 27: Arsenal set noon deadline for Anelka to agree deal or return to Highbury. When this passes, the Gunners withdraw their offer to sell him to either Lazio or Juventus and insist he returns for pre-season training.

July 29: Lazio officially declare the Anelka transfer dead, claiming they no longer have any interest in signing him.

July 30: Arsene Wenger insists that Anelka will not be allowed to quit Highbury unless Arsenal are offered their "minimum price" for him.

July 31: Real Madrid club president Lorenzo Sanz is reported on Spanish television as saying his club are about to sign Anelka. The price quoted is 23.5 million pounds, "Anelka is a great champion," says Sanz.

August 1: Wenger says the saga is nearly at an end with the Gunners having agreed a deal with Real, subject to "contractual agreement."

Norman's third

UMAG, Croatia, Aug 2: Magnus Norman made light work of American Jeff Tarango to take his third title of the season, the 375,000-dollar Croatia Open here on Sunday, reports AFP.

One week after winning in Stuttgart the 23-year-old, ranked 30th in the world and eighth here, won in straight sets 6-2, 6-4 to take the clay tournament.

Tarango lost his service twice in the first set.

Albert Costa of Spain plays a forehand against compatriot Fernando Vicente during their Generali Open final at Kitzbuhel, Austria on Aug 1. Costa won 7-5, 6-2, 6-7 (5-7), 7-6 (7-4). AFP photo

Davenport defends title

PALO ALTO, California, Aug 2: World number one Lindsay Davenport proved she is still more powerful and consistent than fourth-ranked Venus Williams, out-punching her cocky 18-year-old opponent 7-6, 6-2 to win the 500,000 dollars Bank of the West Classic yesterday, reports Reuters.

"It was funny," said Davenport, who won her second straight Bank of the West title. "I was at dinner last night with a couple other players and they were saying Venus said, 'No one can hit hard with me. If you try and hit with me you're going to lose.'

"I said, 'I'll take my chances. That's what I did. I'm not going to win matches by running down a lot of balls or serving and volleying. What I do in my game I do very well and today I was able to execute and win.'

Davenport, whose superb serving in the second set matched his usual strong return game, was disappointed to open the second-set tiebreaker with his lone double fault of the match.

"It's not an ideal way to start off a tiebreaker," said Agassi, who served 10 aces and put 79 per cent of his first serves in play. "He definitely plays well when he sees light at the end of the tunnel."

Agassi was left regretting two missed opportunities: a break point against Sampras in the ninth game of the first set and his set point against Sampras' serve in the 12th game of the second.

"I had the breakpoint at 4-all," he said. "I had the backhand and I went for too good of a shot. I hit it a little too big."

"Certainly it could have gone either way today, he just played

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Sampras' triple delight

better at the end of each set."

"It was two heavyweights going at it," said Sampras, who was playing his first tournament set point.

said.

He said he felt more comfortable going into the second set tiebreaker, having fought off the set point.

"The first set, I was up 1-0 and I let him back in," said Sampras, who earned the first break of the match in the second game as he raced to a 3-0 lead.

Agassi put the match back on serve with a break in the seventh, but gave up the first mini-break in the first-set tiebreaker with a forehand error to give Sampras a 2-1 lead.

Sampras stretched his lead to 4-1 with two service winners. Agassi narrowed the gap to 4-3, but Sampras won the last three points -- taking the set when Agassi hooked a crosscourt backhand wide.

"When you get an early lead in the breaker it frees you up to go for your shots," Agassi said.

"Sometimes that's all it takes."

Sampras stretched his lead over Agassi in their head-to-head series to 15-10. The long-time rivals, who first played each other as juniors, engaged in some good-natured needling after the match. Sampras pointing out that he leads Agassi 3-1 in grand slam finals, and Agassi indicating he was saving himself for a US Open showdown.

"It was good tennis, no question," Sampras said. "I need to play at a high level to beat him, and that's what happened the last two times."

PETE SAMPRAS

ment since he beat Agassi in the Wimbledon final to capture his 12th grand slam title.

Sampras, who stretched his match winning streak to 17 -- a run that included a title at Queen's Club as well as Wimbledon -- served 11 aces in the one-hour, 35-minute match.

He, too, thought the match could have easily turned out differently.

"Just a couple of points and we could easily be out there playing a third set," Sampras

Fed Cup final at Stanford

STANFORD, California, Aug 2: Stanford University's Taube Stadium was named as the site of next month's Fed Cup final between women's tennis teams from the United States and Russia, reports AFP.

The hardcourt venue, which has hosted the WTA Bank of the West Classic for the past week, will be the site of the Fed Cup final September 18-19.