

## Daei saves Iran

YOKOHAMA, Japan, Sept 9: Former Bayern Munich player Ali Daei scored a sizzling shot from a free kick as Asian Games champions Iran held Japan to a 1-1 draw in a left corner here Wednesday, reports AFP.

The free-kick was awarded after Japanese keeper Yoshikatsu Kawaguchi found himself out of the area after jumping to catch a rebound following a left corner by Mehdi Mahdavikia.

Daei, who now plays in the Bundesliga for Hertha Berlin, calmly struck into the left side from just outside the area in the 68th minute.

"It was a difficult match. They have physical strength and experience and a very good forward like Daei," said Japan's head coach Philippe Troussier of France.

The 1-1 draw was a good score for Japan, because Iran had so many chances to score. We might have been beaten."

Japan bagged a lucky goal only 10 minutes into the match when Daisuke Oku's shot from outside the area hit a defender's leg and went into the Iranian goal.

But a lacklustre first half rather frustrated 35,860 spectators at the Yokohama Stadium -- which will be the venue for the 2002 World Cup final -- with the Japanese hitting only three shots on goal and the Iranians five.

The visitors moved into top gear in the second half and repeatedly threatened the Japanese goal.

Daei's shot from the left hit Naoki Soma and then the left post in the 57th minute while Mahdavikia's shot went just wide one minute later. Farhad Majidi narrowly missed a one-on-one battle against Kawaguchi in the 60th.

"My players couldn't move very well in the first half because it was too hot for us. I told them at half time to play more aggressive and they started to move much better," said Iranian coach Mansour Pourhaydari.

## McEnroe made skipper

NEW YORK, Sept 9: Former tennis bad boy John McEnroe has gone establishment, taking charge of the United States Davis Cup team with an eye to keeping top stars Pete Sampras and Andre Agassi in the fold, reports AFP.

"Needless to say it's one of the proudest moments of my life," McEnroe said here on Wednesday when the announcement was made at the US Open.

Judy Levering, president of the US Tennis Association, spoke with Sampras, Agassi, Todd Martin and Jim Courier about who they wanted. From a small group of candidates, McEnroe was the man.

"They all said, 'they would like to play for John McEnroe,'" Levering said.

"The consensus at the end is the decision we made."

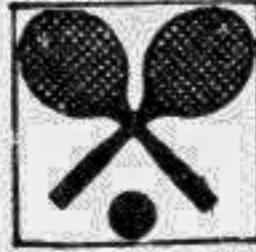
McEnroe replaced Tom Gullikson, a friend of Sampras who had been the US captain since 1994. Gullikson was criticized for his handling of the US team in July's Davis Cup quarterfinal home loss to Australia.

Asked about how far Sampras went in having Gullikson replaced, Levering said:

"I had his blessing on the naming of John yes."

"Tom skilfully brought Davis Cup to where we are today," Levering said.

## Kafelnikov tames Krajicek



NEW YORK, Sept 9: Australian Open champion Yevgeny Kafelnikov overcame a record 48-ace bar

rage by Richard Krajicek, taking one of his greatest triumphs despite breaking the Dutchman only once in five sets, reports AFP.

Kafelnikov captured a 7-6, 6-3, 1-6, 7-6 victory here Wednesday that ranks with his 1996 French Open and January Melbourne triumphs as the best of his career.

"That match stands together with the matches I have played in the Grand Slam finals. That's a big effort to beat a player like Richard," Kafelnikov said. "I didn't think it was going to be as exciting as it was."

The 25-year-old Russian advanced into a US Open semifinal against second seed Andre Agassi to decide which will replace Pete Sampras as world number one and play for the year's final Grand Slam crown.

French Open champion Agassi of the United States advanced to the last four by defeating Frenchman Nicolas Escudé 7-6, 6-3, 6-4.

"I'm sure it's going to be said, 'The fans are going to go ape,'" Krajicek, the 12th seed, broke the ATP and Grand Slam record of 46 aces in a match set by Goran Ivanisevic in a first-round loss to Sweden's Magnus Norman at Wimbledon in 1997. That kept Kafelnikov scrambling.

"I just tried to hang on and pray something might happen," he said. "I felt like there wasn't going to be much opportunity to break Richard's serve in the final set. I was trying to hang on until the tie-breaker."

"I was thinking just to get to that lottery, praying for one double fault or one mistake. Richard gave me the chance to win on his second serve and that was what gave me the chance to get the lead."

Third seed Kafelnikov squandered three match points before serving an ace to win the match.

"Here we go, your chance, win the match or lose the match. That's how I felt," Kafelnikov said. "I knew basically it's all the year that I was working on basically on that point."

Russian Yevgeny Kafelnikov jumps for joy after seeing off big-serving Richard Krajicek in the quarterfinals.

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