

Injury rules Nash out of action

WELLINGTON, Feb 8 (Reuters): A stress fracture in his back has forced all-rounder Dion Nash out of the New Zealand side that will host a tour by Australia starting next week.

"He continues to have problems with a stress fracture in his lower back which has seen him play as a batsman only for Auckland's last few Shell Cup (domestic) matches," New Zealand Cricket (NZC) said on Tuesday.

"The injury has not healed sufficiently for him to be considered for international cricket."

NZC physician Rob Campbell said Nash, 28, would take three months to heal enough to resume bowling, ruling him out of both the five one-dayers and the three Tests against Australia.

Dion will have a further examination by the end of this week to determine the full extent of the fracture to the vertebrae in his lower spine," Campbell said.

Nash, stand-in captain when regular skipper Stephen Fleming was injured during last year's India series, has a history of back problems and missed almost two years of cricket from 1996 to 1998.

He was one of the key bowlers in the whitewash of the West Indies on their recent Test series in New Zealand.

Nash said he hoped to be fit enough for the upcoming tour of southern Africa in August.

Two other injury clouds hanging over New Zealand players - wicketkeeper Adam Parore and all-rounder Chris Cairns - appear to have lifted and they are expected to be available for the Australian games.

The New Zealand team for the first one-day game against Australia, in Wellington on February 16, is to be named on Wednesday.

Seeds falter at Sybase

SAN JOSE, California, Feb 8: Seventh-seeded South African Wayne Ferreira kicked off the year's first US tennis tournament with a convincing victory on Monday, but the other two seeds in action at the Sybase Open were sent packing. reports Reuters.

Serving-and-volleying with efficiency and ripping return winners, Ferreira dominated qualifier Jeff Salzenstein for a 6-4, 6-4 win over the American left-hander.

"I played well but I could play a lot better," said the 29-year-old Ferreira. "I haven't played much the past couple of weeks but I served well enough to get through."

In a matchup of American prospects, Justin Gimelstob upended eighth seed Jan-Michael Gambill 7-6, (7-2) 6-2, while sixth seed Franco Squillari of Argentina was bounced 7-5, 7-5 by Sweden's Mikael Tillstrom.

World number one and four-time champion Andre Agassi is scheduled to play his opening match on Wednesday, as is second seed and defending champion Mark Philippoussis of Australia.

Agassi, who was kicked out of the tournament last year for a series of profanities, arrived in San Jose Monday, just one day after the Australian Open champion helped the US Davis Cup team rally for a victory over Zimbabwe in Harare.

Gimelstob, 24, had Agassi's Davis Cup teammate, Chris Woodruff, on his mind as faced Gambill in the fifth ATP Tour meeting between the two former junior rivals.

Gimelstob took the court with two names written on his hand for motivation — Woodruff, who pulled off the clinching win under great pressure in Harare, and golfer Tiger Woods, who won at Pebble Beach in spectacular fashion earlier on Monday.

What those two guys did was to stay motivated, focused, kept giving efforts and competed so hard in pressure situations," Gimelstob said. "I tried to emulate that tonight, to play hard and keep digging."

Gimelstob did just that, digging down and coming up big when Gambill was serving for the first set with a 5-3 lead. After blowing the first set, the 22-year-old Gambill never recovered.

"If you are a top-10 or top-20 player, you just don't hand it to your opponent when you're serving for it," Gambill said.

"I've got to figure out why that's happening to me," added Gambill.

"I had a great last couple weeks of practice with Michael Chang and I thought I was hitting the ball well but then I came out here feeling flat-footed."

Judge does Lennox a favour

PHILADELPHIA, Feb 8: A federal judge has reiterated an earlier order that boxer Lennox Lewis does not have to fight Henry Akinwande, a lawyer for Lewis said, reports AP.

Patrick English, a New Jersey lawyer who represents Lewis, said the brief hearing before US District Court Judge Norma Shapiro was to clarify an order she had issued in 1997.

Lewis was in New York and did not attend the hearing.

The original order was issued in a case brought by boxer Orlin Norris, Jr., who had claimed that boxing promoter Don King had conspired with the World Boxing Association to manipulate the rankings, English said. The court entered an order protecting Norris, who was later defeated by Akinwande.

Cricket Week program

The International Cricket Council (ICC) has promoted a number of programmes designed to develop and globalise cricket. A significant initiative in this on-going process has just been announced with the launch of the first 'Cricket Week' from April 2-9, says a press release.

When announcing this, ICC president Jagmohan Dalmiya said: "Cricket is already played in over 100 countries around the world. From Test-playing giants to tiny specks of islands in the Pacific, millions enjoy the game. Yet we wish to promote awareness of the game throughout the world. 'Cricket Week' will add to those numbers as the ICC makes a positive effort to ensure that the game is known from Jamaica to Japan and from Headingley to Cape Town."

Dalmiya stated that, as part of ICC's 'fast track' programme for the best Associate Member nations, an emerging nations tournament would be staged in Harare during Cricket Week. Denmark, Holland, Ireland, Kenya and Scotland will be joined by Zimbabwe A in a 15-match series. He thanked the Zimbabwe Cricket Union for their support of this event.

TransWorld International (TWI) are assisting ICC with the overall marketing of the event and producing some 20 hours of television programming which is designed to explain the appeal of cricket to the uninitiated and enter-

already have an appreciation of the game. A programme of the Dalmiya will be available.

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• *Cricket a look at cricket in each world*

• *Stars of the future out some of the talent from participating in World Cup in S*

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Julius, the new sensation



LAGOS, Feb 8: Nigerians have fallen in love with a pencil-slim teenage footballer who rejected the advances of his country last year, reports AFP.

Striker Julius Aghahowa from Tunisian club giants Esperance spurned a call-up for an Olympics qualifier and was threatened with suspension from national teams.

He came on against Morocco in the final round of African Nations Cup group action last week and scored the late goal that clinched victory and condemned mighty Morocco to an early exit from the biennial championship.

On Monday night in Lagos he went one better by snatching a late equaliser against Senegal in an explosive quarter-final and grabbed the decisive goal one minute into extra time.

A 2-1 victory for the title favourites was marred by the late dismissal of midfield magician Augustine "Jay Jay" Okocha for elbowing Mbaye Badji and he automatically misses the semi-final against South Africa Thursday.

Rapidly-tiring Senegal were lucky to survive until extra time and it was Aghahowa who

delivered the final blow, the same day after causing the shock of the first knockout phase by eliminating lacklustre defending champions Egypt 1-0 through a Khaled Badra penalty in the northern city of Kano.

The semi-final losers play off for third place in Accra Saturday and the winners meet Sunday in Lagos to determine which national team is the best in Africa.

Nigeria lifted the cup in Tunisia six years ago, but refused to defend it due to political differences with hosts South Africa, a decision that led to their suspension from the following edition in Burkina Faso.

Senegal went ahead after six minutes when Kallou Fadiga, sentenced to one month in jail by a Belgian court recently for punching a football fan, punished slack marking to fire a low shot past statuesque Ike Shorunmu.

Constant Nigerian pressure created several near misses and it was Aghahowa, who finally raised the crowd to its feet with six minutes of normal time left when he raced through and hammered a close-range shot past Oumar Diallo.

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delivered the final blow, the same day after causing the shock of the first knockout phase by eliminating lacklustre defending champions Egypt 1-0 through a Khaled Badra penalty in the northern city of Kano.

The goal triggered a tragi-comedy in Lagos as police

tried to restore order.

Extra time provided a dramatic climax as physically-drained Senegal comfortably held off Nigeria in a showdown with (The Boys).

Egypt, so improving their matches, made it to the final.

Even regular

Sam Hassan, a

Tunisian goalke

keeper, was

pushing away a

half free kick f

itan captain.

The match was

lucky to survive until extra time and it was Aghahowa who

Vasco get tough with 'Ani



RIO DE JANEIRO, Feb 8: The board of top Brazilian outfit Vasco da Gama have Monday handed a 10-day ban to their star striker Edmundo, who on Saturday refused to play in his team's match with Palmeiras, leaving the dressing room just minutes before the game, reports AFP.

That is just a provisional sanction and club officials are expected to discuss the player again Monday night with a view to him leaving the team he rejoined less than a year ago after a stint with Italian Serie A side Fiorentina.

The reasons behind the player's latest brush with authority seems to be his rivalry with Vasco's other striker Romario, Brazil's 1994 World Cup winning hero, and Edmundo - dubbed "the animal" - had some choice words for his rival.

Vasco bought Romario from Rio arch-rivals Flamengo in December and the two - both out

of favour with Brazil coach Wanderley Luxemburgo because of their reputations for making trouble - are known not to get on.

Edmundo described his

team-mate as false, saying: "I left the dressing room because there was a lack of consideration towards me. I have a lot of love for Vasco but I think for me to stay with the team is difficult

given the situation."

Vasco president Eurico Miranda has confirmed Romario is the new club captain and Edmundo said: "If Romario is false then I can be too. A month ago he was swearing his eternal love for Flamengo our biggest rivals."

The highly-paid Edmundo also denounced what he called the "regime of slavery" at his club and the salary he claims is still owed to him by his employers.

Edmundo has indicated he wants to leave and as well as a potential move to Palmeiras, rabbished Monday by the Sao Paulo club's directors, there has been talk of a return to Italy although given the fact that he scuppered Fiorentina's title bid last season by quitting the club to play the drums in a samba band during the Rio carnival Italian clubs may well balk at any such deal.

But the player insisted: "In

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Edmundo's

stuff of legend

press. The well known felon

ferociously contested a paternity

suit brought by a famous Brazilian

TV presenter but she was

vindicated by forensic tests.

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On an even more serious

note he was sentenced to a jail

term for his role in a fatal car

crash that killed three people

but has not served any real time

in prison for that offence.



Action from the Hong Kong Cup international match between Japan and the hosts yesterday. — AFP photo

WTA rankings

MAMI, Feb 8 (AFP): Latest WTA rankings released on Monday:

Player	points	1	2	3	4	5	6
Hingis	5734	30	Prune	2	"Clue-	14	Tend a
Davenport	5190	33	Too	less"	tear	8	9
V Williams							