

Seles' successful comeback

KLAHOMA CITY, Feb. 28: Aravinda de Silva capped her return to tennis with a five-month comeback by capturing her 45th career title with a victory over seed Nathalie Dechy of France at the IGA Super Thrift Classic, reports Reuters. After powering her way through three lopsided victories in an hour each, the second seed had to battle back in 2-5 down in the second set to post a 6-1, 7-6 (7-3) victory over Dechy and claim what was Seles' somewhat unexpected title.

This tournament rates high here with my others because I didn't play in five months," Seles, who had been sidelined by a stress fracture to her foot, an injury that caused her to miss the Australian

Open and Wimbledon. I want to get ready for the Open and Wimbledon. I want the doctors will give me 10 days," added Seles after the 10-day break.

Seles looked on her way to her first set when Dechy, her first appearance in a tour final, shook off a nerves and threatened to end the match.

"I was ready to play," said who turned 21 this week in the final. "But I looked and I realised I was in my element."

Seles broke Seles for the first time in the first set. But Seles battled back to force the tiebreaker and third set.

Seles' former world number one second set made the match a 15-minute final set. "This was a good match today, having to

next heads to Scotts- then Indian Wells, where I will get a more true test of my game as she runs into the top players on the WTA Tour."

Primera Liga Leaders see off Mallorca

MADRID, Feb. 28: Deportivo La Coruna raced six points clear at the top of the Spanish league after a 2-1 win at home to Mallorca on Sunday, reports AFP.

Dutch striker Roy Makaay and Brazilian Djalminha scored the goals as Deportivo moved to 49 points from 26 matches, six ahead of Real Madrid, who beat arch-rivals Barcelona 3-0 on Saturday night, and Real Zaragoza. Both have 43 points.

Real Zaragoza kept up their championship challenge with a 2-1 win at home to Celta Vigo. Argentine midfielder Roberto Acuna and Yugoslav international Savo Milosevic got the goals while South African Benny McCarthy was on target for Celta.

Japanese international Shoji Jo scored his first goals in Spain to lift Valladolid to a 2-1 win over Real Oviedo.

Jo opened the scoring in the 34th minute on the counter-attack and then scored the decisive goal of the match with a header.

The striker, the first Japanese player to play in the Spanish First Division, has made a big impact since making his debut on January 16 against Numancia.

Two other Japanese stars play in Italy: Hidetoshi Nakata (Roma) and Hiroshi Nanami (Venezia).

Athletic Bilbao were held to a 2-2 draw at home to Malaga, while Alaves scored a 2-0 win over Atletico Madrid to leave the capital's second club still in danger of relegation. The win lifted unattractive Alaves into fourth place, ahead of Barcelona.

Espanol trounced Rayo Vallecano 5-1 and Racing Santander and Real Sociedad drew 0-0.

The Seville derby between Real Betis and Sevilla ended in a 1-1 draw with both goals coming from penalties.

teamwork and thorough preparation.

Aravinda's aspiration

RAWALPINDI, Pakistan, Feb. 28: Veteran batsman Aravinda de Silva Sunday vowed to keep on scoring runs in international cricket as long as he stays fit, reports AFP.

"I want to be remembered as a run-scoring and successful batsman and want to go on (while) I am fit enough to play and perform," De Silva told this news agency after smashing 112 against Pakistan in the Rawalpindi Test.

De Silva's 18th ton in his 80th Test was his eighth against Pakistan.

"All hundreds are special but considering the situation this can be rated as one of the best of my career," the 34-year-old from Colombo said.

De Silva hit 122 with five sixes at Faisalabad in the 1985-86 series against Pakistan and followed it with 105 in Karachi.

"My hundreds against the likes of Imran Khan and Abdul Qadir in 1986 were my best but



ARAVINDA DE SILVA

this Pakistan attack is also world class."

De Silva hit twin centuries against Pakistan (138 not out and 103) in the Colombo Test in

1997-98. "It is often said I like batting against Pakistan but it's due to my success against them," he said.

He was instrumental in Sri Lanka's triumph in the 1996 World Cup but lost favour after his side failed to defend the title in England last year.

"It was disappointing but I want to forget all that and let my bat do the talking," he said.

De Silva opted out of Sri Lanka's tour to Zimbabwe last year due to family commitments and was not considered for the one-day series against Pakistan.

"It's up to the selectors but I think I can still deliver the goods in both forms of the game," he said.

"I don't play for records but to score more and more runs for my country is my concern," he said.

De Silva said his ambition was to beat South Africa. "We have beaten Australia and now I wish we can beat the South Africans."

SA to be equipped with H-gun

MUMBAI, India: South Africa's quickie Mornan Hayward, one of the world's fastest bowlers, could play for South Africa in the second Test against India in Bangalore starting on Thursday.

While the playing eleven will be decided only on Wednesday night, there is a lot of speculation that the ginger-haired demon will make his five-day debut on the sub-continent.

Even skipper Hanle Cronje admits there is a temptation to let loose the ginger-haired demon on the Indian batsmen, who - except for two run-outs - all fell victim to SA's seamers in the first Test in Mumbai.

Tony Greig (former England captain and naturalised Australian) told me that the mistake a lot of teams make when touring India is that they try to bowl them out with spinners.

"With the exception of Sachin Tendulkar and Mohammad Azharuddin, all their other batsmen looked vulnerable to pace (in the first Test)."

SA omitted Hayward from the team in the opening Test, opting for two spinners in Clive Eksteen and Nicky Baje.

The thinking behind that is believed to have been partly

forced by the injury to number four star Daryll Cullinan, who sat out because of a groin strain. Boje, apart from being able to spin, added some batting depth to a fragile line-up also missing Jonty Rhodes, who has just become a father.

But with Cullinan expected to be fit for the second Test, the selectors could feel confident enough to sacrifice batting slightly to include Hayward.

Alternatively, they could maintain their depth by keeping Boje instead of Eksteen.

United Cricket Board (UCB) managing director Dr Ali Bacher also believes Hayward should be selected.

"He has to play in the second Test... Even if the wicket is slow, he can generate incredible pace."

Hayward played in the three-day warm-up match a week ago when he bagged five wickets and injured internationals Azharuddin and Nayan Mongia in the process.

The Swiss player maintained his extraordinary supremacy over the world number three and has now won 10 of their 13 matches.

By reaching the final, Kafelnikov became the leader of the new ATP Champions Race, which counts results from this year only, leapfrogging over Andre Agassi at the top.

Rosset, the only man apart from Agassi to have won titles in the 1980s, 1990s and this decade, started electrically, whipping a backhand pass down the line for a break in the third game.

Kafelnikov, champion here in 1998, broke back immediately with a similar backhand but three games later Rosset again broke the Russian's serve.

Kafelnikov, so impressive in his semifinal demolition of Greg Rusedski, seemed unable to impose his game on the Swiss.

Rosset used his full 2.01 metres frame to smash down serves and his court coverage frustrated the normally cool Kafelnikov.

He served out the opening set - clinching it with an ace - in just 35 minutes as Kafelnikov struggled for ideas.

It was the same story in the second set as Rosset threatened the Russian's serve at every turn and rarely looked troubled on his own delivery.

He made the breakthrough in the seventh game of the second set, stepping in to a short ball and slamming a forehand into the corner past the groping top seed.

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Mallorca's Cameroon international Lauren Bisan-Etame (L) trying to go past Deportivo's



Bayern Munich's super star Lothar Matthaeus (R) meets fan 'number one' Franz Dillinger (L) during celebrations marking the 100th anniversary of the team in Munich on February 27.

Bayern Munich celebrate centenary

Beckenbauer targets Champions Cup

MUNICH, Feb. 28: Bayern Munich celebrated their 100th birthday Sunday with president Franz Beckenbauer announcing his wish list for Germany's most successful club, while using the occasion to lobby for the 2006 World Cup, reports AP.

Beckenbauer said Bayern want to maintain their financial independence and have a new soccer stadium, but one wish clearly topped the list for Beckenbauer, along with business manager Uli Hoeness and vice-president Karl-Heinz Rummenigge.

"We want a victory in the Champions Cup," Beckenbauer told a 800-strong gathering at the Prinzregententheater composed of German politicians and global soccer dignitaries like FIFA head Sepp Blatter and UEFA president Lennart Johansson.

Bayern Munich, founded on Feb. 27, 1900, are heading to their 16th Bundesliga title, but the side hasn't ruled Europe since Beckenbauer, Hoeness, Bert Vogts and Sepp Maier kicked the team to three straight European Cups from 1974-76.

Those players made Bayern Munich a worldwide soccer name, with fan clubs as far away as Japan, while also providing the backbone of Germany's 1974 World Cup championship team.

But since Beckenbauer and Hoeness have moved into the

club's executive suite, the most prestigious European trophy has proved elusive.

Last season, Bayern lost a heartbreaking 2-1 Champions Cup final to Manchester United, with the British club snatching the long yearned-for prize away at the last second by striking twice in injury time.

This year, Beckenbauer and company are again hopeful since Bayern appear to be the equal of last year's squad and again are chasing three titles.

Bayern top the Bundesliga by five points, have reached the German Cup final and are reaching top form as they play their first Champions League quarterfinal Tuesday against Real Madrid.

Beckenbauer, who has vowed to bring the 2006 World Cup to Germany, also used the centenary as an opportunity to court votes for Germany's bid.

Attending the celebration were nine members of FIFA's executive committee body - the 24-member body of soccer's world governing body that will decide on July 6 which country wins the right to host soccer's premier event.

Among them was Cameroon's Issa Hayatou, president of the African Soccer Confederation. Beckenbauer also met with three other committee members on Saturday.

Bayern, who apparently have abandoned plans to go public, appear to be in no danger of losing their financial independence. Germany's leader in merchandising grossed 250

million marks (dfls 125 million) last year and also turned a Bundesliga record profit of 24 million marks (dfls 12 million).

"The basis our success was laid in the '70s, by winning the European Cups," said Hoeness, regarded as the Bundesliga's most astute manager. "If you don't have international success and a tradition, you can forget about merchandising."

Bayern, a club that has more fans and more detractors than any other in Germany, played their first match on April 1, 1900. The contest, a 7-1 pounding of MTV 1879, came just three days after players met in a tavern to form the club.

The founding side's first real success came in 1932, when they swept the German title. Then they were taken over by the Nazis and faded into anonymity until a 1957 German Cup title.

When the Bundesliga was formed in 1963, Munich played in a regional league and didn't gain promotion to the First Division until two years later. A German Cup title came in 1966, followed by the Beckenbauer era making them Germany's premier club - a status they have never lost despite runs by Borussia Moenchengladbach in the 1970s and Borussia Dortmund in the 1990s.

Bayern have gone on to capture seven more German Cups, 15 Bundesliga titles, the three European crowns and a 1996 UEFA Cup trophy, among other titles.

English League Cup

Leicester lift crown

LONDON, Feb. 28: Leicester City won the English League Cup final on Sunday - beating Tranmere Rovers 2-1 at Wembley with captain Matt Elliott scoring the winner nine minutes from time, reports AFP.

Elliott had given City the lead after 29 minutes but veteran David Kelly levelled for Rovers 13 minutes from time.

Martin O'Neill's side also booked their place in next season's UEFA Cup by lifting the trophy, their second triumph in four years.

Rovers, enjoying the first-ever major final in their 116-year history, started brightly and it was against the run of play when the Premiership side went ahead.

Steve Guppy's corner picked out Elliott who sent a powerful header past keeper Joe Murphy via the underside of the crossbar.

The only sour note was the sending-off of Tranmere's Clint Hill after 63 minutes for a professional foul on England international Emile Heskey, his

second bookable offence. But despite Tranmere playing with 10 men, Kelly hauled Rovers back in the game with an angled shot after 77 minutes - only for Elliott to steal the

glory four minutes later. In a carbon copy of his first goal, Elliott scored his eighth goal of the season with another firm header from a Guppy corner which left Murphy helpless.



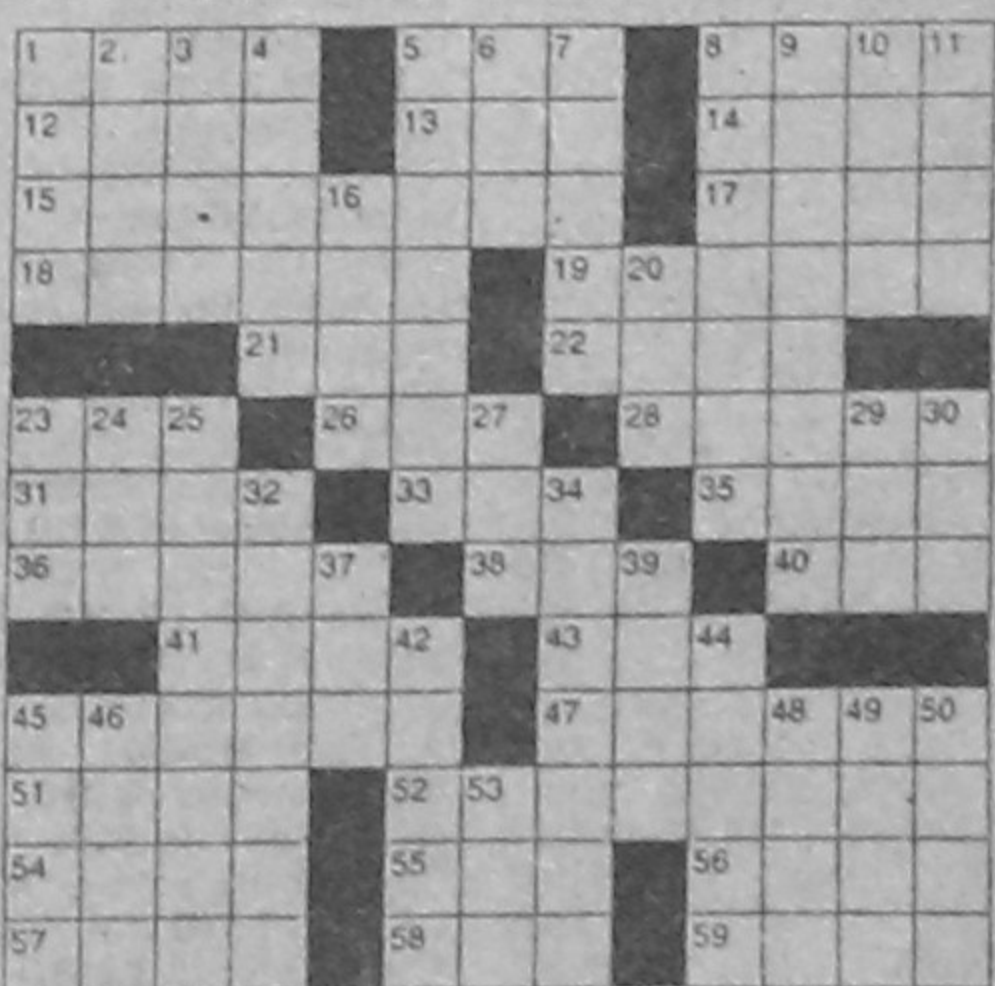
Leicester City's Matthew Elliott (L) scoring the opening goal against Tranmere Rovers in the final of the League Cup at Wembley Stadium on February 27.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS
1 Pop
5 Grill setup
8 Trojan
12 Non-discriminatory
13 Perfume label word
14 Heavy reading
15 Fu Manchu
17 Fe
18 Nail
19 Day
21 End of a Web site
22 Gymnast
23 Fireplace
26 Wild a needle
28 Aluminum of Company
31 Opening course
33 Succumb to gravity
35 Barak of

DOWN
2 In the style of
3 Secretary
4 Capricious
5 Turns into
6 Sil boom
7 Cheese, at Taco Bell
8 Prickly
9 Rich
10 Cupid's field
11 Gabrielle's mentor
16 Singer
20 In the style of
23 Onager
24 Toper
25 Mexican sandwich
27 Skirmish
29 Town
30 Summer-time quencher
32 Got down from?
34 Italian dumplings
37 Elongated swimmer
39 Hose material
42 Opening night
44 Teheran
45 Tentmaker
46 Symbol for York or Lancaster
48 Wile E.'s supplier
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PCB chief discontent

RAWALPINDI, Feb. 28: Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) ad hoc chairman general Tauqir Zia Sunday voiced dissatisfaction over the state of affairs in the country's cricket and the team performance of late, reports AFP.

"I am not satisfied at all, neither with the working at Board's headquarters in Lahore nor with team's recent slowing, it's zero per cent," he told reporters during the Test in here.

"But I am not losing heart. The team needs just one win to lift the morale," he added.

Pakistan were blanked 3-0 in the Test series against Australia down under and were whitewashed 2-0 by the same team in the Carlton and United one-day tri-series finals.

Sri Lanka inflicted 3-0 one-day series defeat on the home team ahead of the three-match Test series.

"I am myself disappointed with the results," Zia said.

Injury to top players Wasim Akram, Shoaib Akhtar and Azhar Mahmood added to the home team's problems.

"But give us time, at present five top men are working in the advisory council. If they can't improve Pakistan cricket nobody can," Zia said.

Pakistan has a history of mismanagement in cricket affairs with three set-ups changed last year.

Zia, an army commander, took over in December and his is the third interim set-up.

"Our cricket is not in disarray... the chief executive General Pervez Musharraf has given me full authority," he said, referring to the military ruler who seized power in October.

Zia came down hard on Akhtar, who was suspended for a one-day match against Sri Lanka earlier in the month and was fined 200,000 rupees (4,000 dollars) after he violated discipline during Pakistan's tour of Australia.

"We gave the players a psychologist for mental guidance and the only thing left is my last weapon," Zia said, without elaborating.

Zia denied a newspaper interview report which quoted him as saying Pakistan will have a new captain after the series against Sri Lanka.

A three-member selection committee has been appointed by the board headed by former captain Wasim Bari.

Former Test players Iqbal Qasim and Ehteshamuddin are its members.

WTA's top 20 money earners

ST PETERSBURG, Florida, Feb. 28 (Reuters): Top 20 money winners this year in women's tennis, according to WTA Tour:

- 1 Davenport 847,955
- 2 Hingis 467,089
- 3 Serena 158,906
- 4 Tauziat 144,158
- 5 Testud 139,886
- 6 Stubbs 135,463
- 7 Kournikova 132,809
- 8 Raymond 127,576
- 9 Conchita 127,164
- 10 Pierce 125,717
- 11 Halard-Decugis 120,393
- 12 Mauresmo 119,458
- 13 Capriati 116,417
- 14 Arantxa 91,879
- 15 Ai Sugiyama 89,043
- 16 Likhovtseva 88,595
- 17 Rubin 64,933
- 18 Schneider 62,364
- 19 Sidot 61,461
- 20 Coetzee 60,761