

Gibbs gearing

FROM PAGE 13 before the runs came. "Gary and I have put a few together, and I think our partnership is growing into a really strong one."

Gibbs and Kirsten set up South Africa's highest one-day score of 363 for three with a first wicket stand of 153 off 115 balls.

Gibbs audaciously square drove a delivery from fast bowler Travis Friend over the backward point boundary in scoring one of his two sixes.

"There was bound to be a bit of swing with the new ball, and if the ball's there to be hit we're going to hit it," Gibbs said of the shot. "With a right arm bowler swinging it away, it's more or less a free hit. It's a matter of choosing the right one to hit."

Shame on

FROM PAGE 13 Shame! Shame! Even the BTV news bulletin couldn't provide anything about the records.

One of the game's greatest playmakers, Sachin Tendulkar of India was about to break this record of Pakistani Mushtaque Mohammad once. But he couldn't. Tendulkar fell short of 12 runs from that record mark and came back to the pavilion weeping. But our Ashraf smiled instead of weeping. Only pity is that our commentators did not know that. -- Sohail Sultan Zulkar Nain Kabir Steve (Through e-mail)

Britain

FROM PAGE 13 opponents in Albacete. Juan Carlos Ferrero got the home side off to a sure-footed start on Friday as he beat Ogorodov 7-5, 6-2, 6-4.

Corretja followed that up with a 6-0, 6-2, 6-7, 6-0 success against Kutsenko.

Argentina brushed Belarus aside to secure top flight action next year.

Franco Squillari and Gaston Gaudio got the South Americans off to the best possible start with wins over Vladimir Voltchkov and Max Mirnyi before Guillermo Canas and Luis Lobo beat Voltchkov and Mirnyi in the doubles for an unassailable 3-0 lead.

The Czech Republic came back from an opening match defeat to beat Romania and reach the World Group. Bohdan Ulihrach lost his opener to Adrian Panu in five sets but beat Gabriel Trifu on Sunday to give the Czechs victory.

Slovakia joined the Czechs, beating Chile while Morocco and Belgium were tied at 2-2 with one match to play.

The remaining world group qualifier between the United States and India will be played on October 12-14.

Masur sounds Hewitt alarm



AFP, Sydney

France would need something exceptional to vanquish red-hot Lleyton Hewitt in the Davis Cup final in November, Australian coach Wally Masur said Monday.

French captain Guy Forget fired the first shots in the psychological battle leading up to the November 30 to December 2 event in Melbourne when he declared that the US Open champion was "not very powerful, doesn't serve very strong and we have weapons to worry him".

Masur said Forget was just reassuring his players before they took on an Australian team led by in-form Hewitt and world No. 4 Patrick Rafter.

"There is no value in saying that Lleyton's unbeatable," Masur said Monday.

"The French guys know that to beat Lleyton in Davis Cup takes something exceptional."

Masur said he did not know how the French could sink his gun singles pairing of world No.3 Hewitt and Rafter.

"We have got the number three and four on current form, I don't know how you overcome this -- the players in the French team have got to figure that one out," he said.

"They are a good one-two punch. If you beat Pat who is a serve and volleyer you've got to come out and beat Lleyton who doesn't miss a shot from the back of the court, you've got to be pretty bloody good - - (Gustavo) Kuerten could not do that."

Hewitt beat world No.1 Kuerten in Australia's quarter-final victory in Brazil last April.



PHOTO: INTERNET

Australia's Lleyton Hewitt (R) is embraced by teammate Pat Rafter after his win over Sweden's Thomas Johansson in their Davis Cup semifinal in Sydney.

The Australian team is leaning towards holding the final on a drop-in grass court at Melbourne Park, home of the Australian Open.

Australian captain John Fitzgerald will inspect the grass courts being grown in rural Victoria on Thursday.

Grass was originally nominated for the weekend semi-final here against Sweden, but the strip grown

for the job wasn't deemed ready to be laid on top of the Rebound Ace surface at the Sydney International Tennis Centre.

But Tennis Australia officials were confident Monday the grass surface would be transported to Melbourne, pending approval from the International Tennis Federation.

The French team will arrive in Australia two weeks before the tie.

Unity is strength



AFP, Sydney

Team unity is more important than the return of a fit-again Mark Philippoussis to the Australian squad for the Davis Cup final against France, say team members.

Australia booked a re-match of their 1999 final against the French from November 30 to December 2 in Melbourne following their 4-1 semifinal victory over Sweden here on Sunday.

Former US Open finalist Philippoussis is making his long-awaited return to tennis after injury in Hong Kong this week.

The power-serving Philippoussis has not played since March because of a recurring knee injury which

required surgery last December.

Team members were questioned about how they felt about a return by Philippoussis to the team after Lleyton Hewitt carried them to their first home final since 1986.

"He hasn't played a tie since the last year's first round in Switzerland," US Open champion Hewitt said of calls to reinstall Philippoussis.

"To have gone through all the stuff that we've gone through as a team, and those who haven't played matches, it would be very hard to break up a team that's so close at the moment," said 20-year-old Hewitt Monday.

"I think any of the guys were to miss out on playing in a Davis Cup final, knowing what they've gone through the whole year, they would be extremely disappointed."

"If Mark is playing well enough

and puts his hand up for selection, there's no reason why he's not going to be included in the squad and we'll see what happens."

Team captain John Fitzgerald said Philippoussis's first task would be to get back on to the tennis court. "He's had a rough trot these last six months and I just hope he can really get back to be healthy," said Fitzgerald.

"You always want a player of his calibre available (but) we do have a team that has played very well together over the last couple of ties and it's a big thing to be in a Davis Cup final."

Philippoussis, 25 in November, has had a on-off relationship with Australia's Davis cup team, not always declaring his availability in the past, but he was instrumental in Australia's victory over France in the final two years ago in Nice.

DAVIS CUP RESULTS

AFP, Paris

Davis Cup collated results Sunday:

World Group Semifinals Netherlands 2 France 3 - France qualify for final

Australia 4 Sweden 1 Final Australia v France, November 30 to December 2

World group qualifiers Argentina 5 Belarus 0 Belgium 2 Morocco 3 Czech Republic 3 Romania 2 Ecuador 1 Great Britain 4 Italy 2 Croatia 3 Slovakia 3 Chile 2 Spain 4 Uzbekistan 0 (last reverse singles scrapped)

USA v India - postponed until October 12-14

World Group match winners play in World Group, losers relegated to Zonal Group One

Euro-African zone Group I

Relegation clashes Austria 4 Ukraine 1 Zimbabwe 3 Slovenia 2

Group II Promotion matches Greece 3 Denmark 2 Luxembourg 1 Israel 4

American Zone Group I

Relegation clashes Mexico 2 Peru 1 Asia-Oceania zone Group I

Relegation clash China 1 Indonesia 4 Group II

Promotion match Lebanon v Taiwan - postponed to November 1-3



JELENA DOKIC

Dokic feels great



AFP, Tokyo

Teenage sensation Jelena Dokic is getting closer to full bloom after a recent birthday freed her from World Tennis Association (WTA) rules which restrict the number of games played by younger competitors.

"I become 18 this year and the limitation is gone so I can play a lot of tournaments," Dokic said after winning her second career title out of three finals on Sunday. "I think it has helped me, definitely."

The WTA allows 14-year-olds to play up to only seven tour events a year, a 15-year-old player a maximum of eight, a 16-year-old ten, and 17-year-olds 13.

"It's not good when you are on and off, playing one week and having one month off. Getting physically fitter... has definitely helped me. I feel the difference, especially this year," Dokic said.

"I've played a lot more consistently, and I'm able to play a lot better tennis in general," added the Yugoslav, currently ranked her career highest at 11th.

Dokic caused a sensation when she stunned world number one Martina Hingis of Switzerland in the 1999 Wimbledon first round, one of the Open season's biggest upsets, where she reached the quarter-finals.

She also reached the semi-finals at the Sydney Olympic Games -- her most memorable experience -- before she changed her adopted Australian nationality to that of her Yugoslav parents.

But Dokic had to wait for her first appearance in a tour final until May this year in Rome, where she clinched her first career title at the Italian Open -- one of the biggest tennis events outside of the Grand Slam competitions.

She upset 1994 Wimbledon champion Conchita Martinez of Spain in the semifinals, and 1999 Australian finalist Amelie Mauresmo

of France in the final.

Dokic reached her second career final at the Brazilian Open a week ago -- only to lose to Monica Seles -- before winning the Princess Cup in Tokyo at her third attempt Sunday where she beat Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario 6-4, 6-2.

"To win a second title in the same year... is great. I'm really happy with the way this year has gone," Dokic said.

"I can say Rome was a stepping-stone for me, (but) my whole year has been really consistent -- I had really good results. I'm happy with the way (things have) gone so far, and hopefully I can finish off well."

"My goal for this year was originally to finish in top 15 -- which I did already -- and I'd really like to finish in the top 10. Tennis right now is at such a hard level, so it (would be) really great for me to finish in top 10," Dokic said.

"I have a great chance to do that. But whatever happens, I've had a great year and I'm happy with myself."

Forget Lleyton



AFP, Rotterdam

France coach Guy Forget on Sunday dismissed the threat posed by Australian young gun Lleyton Hewitt in their Davis Cup final against Australia in Melbourne next November.

"He's not very powerful, doesn't serve very strong and we have weapons to worry him," said Forget of newly-crowned US Open champion Hewitt who powered Australia into the Davis Cup final with a four-set victory over Sweden's Thomas Johansson in Sydney on Sunday.

Forget said the fact that Nicholas Escude, 25, beat Hewitt, 20, at Wimbledon this year was confidence-boosting for the French as they bid to avenge their loss at home in Nice to the Aussies in 1999.

"Their beatable at home," said Forget, brushing aside the fact that France have never won a Davis Cup tie in their four previous trips down under. Australia have a 10-3 win record against the French.

"My role will be to keep the players under pressure so that they arrive in Australia on a collective high and to prepare them in a more precise manner."

France booked their second Davis Cup final in three years here

Saturday when veteran Cedric Pioline and Fabrice Santoro, comprising a makeshift doubles pairing, outlasted Paul Haarhuis and Sjeng Schalken of the Netherlands 7-5, 6-1, 7-5 for an unbeatable 3-0 lead.

Arnaud Clement and Escude had won Friday's opening singles ties, though the Dutch took both points on Sunday when Sjeng Schalken defeated Clement 7-6, 7-6, and Jan Siemerink beat Fabrice Santoro 6-4, 6-4 in the meaningless reverse singles for a final result of 3-2 to France.

The French captain said that as preparation for the final Pioline and Santoro would be competing together in the doubles at the ATP events in Stuttgart on October 15 and Paris-Bercy on October 29.

As for the singles the results of the final tournaments of the season will be crucial to decide between Arnaud Clement, Nicolas Escude and Sebastien Grosjean.

The French team will arrive in Australia two weeks before the November 30 to December 2 final, with Grosjean hopeful of qualifying for the Masters in Sydney from November 12-18.

It will be Australia's third successive Cup final, having beaten France in Nice in 1999 and losing to Spain in Barcelona last year.

Australia will be hosting their first Davis Cup final since beating Sweden 3-2 on grass at

Melbourne's Kooyong stadium in 1986.

The Australians have won the title 27 times and will be playing in their 46th final.

Eight-times winners France are in their 14th final and their fifth in the past 20 years. Their last win came in 1996 in Sweden.

Wang Nan wins Japan Open TT

AFP, Kobe

China's world champion Wang Nan defended her title for a third consecutive victory in the women's singles at the 81,000-dollar Japan Open table tennis tournament on Monday.

The Sydney Olympic dual champion, who defeated Lin Ling 12-14, 11-6, 11-4, 11-8, 11-4 in an all-Chinese semi-final earlier in the day, went on to win the final with a 7-11, 11-7, 6-11, 11-6, 11-9, 11-4 win over South Korean Kim Kyun-Ah.

It was the third title on the ITTF Pro Tour for the 22-year-old Chinese top seed this season, following her victories at the China Open in June and the Korea Open last week.

It was also her 13th title on the tour, including her triumph at the 1998 Pro Tour Finals.

Martina in awe of Venus



REUTERS, Tokyo

Former world number one Martina Navratilova says she would have been a match for any of today's top women, with the possible exception of Wimbledon and U.S. Open champion Venus Williams.

"I think at my best I would stack up pretty well against anybody at their best. But Venus is so big and she isn't at her best yet," Navratilova, who is currently enjoying a comeback as a doubles player, said.

However, the 44-year-old Navratilova, who competed at this week's Toyota Princess Cup in Tokyo with Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario, complained that the modern game is too one-dimensional with the emphasis on big serving and

power from the back of the court.

"Today's players are better hitters, but the variety has gone down. Everyone stays on the baseline. It would be weird for me to do that, even on clay," she told Reuters.

The Prague-born American, who won 167 singles titles -- more than any man or woman in the history of tennis -- between 1975 and 1994, claimed that the result would have been hard to call if she had ever faced Williams at the peak of her powers in the 1980s.

"My lefty serve would have given her fits and my variety would have been pretty good against her. But Venus has the wingspan of a condor, it's unbelievable," said Navratilova, who won 18 grand slam singles titles on the back of an aggressive serve-and-volley game.

The nine times Wimbledon champion had some words of

advice for current world number one Martina Hingis, who has failed to win a grand slam since the 1999 Australian Open.

"Take away the serve and Hingis wins because she doesn't miss. But she needs to improve her serve. The big hitters win too many free points on their serve - she wins hardly any," said Navratilova.

"She used to have to beat one big hitter but now there are too many of them. Their average game beats her average game. Their great game beats her great game."

Of her own prospects, Navratilova believes she is very close to winning her 166th career doubles title following her return to the tour at last year's Wimbledon.

Her visit to Tokyo, however, ended in a disappointing defeat to unseeded Janet Lee and Rachel McQuillan at the quarterfinal stage.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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5-14 CRYPTOQUIP

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Saturday's Cryptquip: WITH A FEW DEADLINES LOOMING, THE ORIGAMI ARTIS HAD TO FOLD UNDER PRESSURE.

Today's Cryptquip Clue: J equals S

The Cryptquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostroph give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.



PHOTO: INTERNET

US tennis legend Martina Navratilova (L) leads a moment of silence for victims of attacks on the United States prior to the final of the Toyota Princess Cup.