

New job for Bubka

AFP, Lausanne

The world's best ever pole vaulter Sergei Bubka of the Ukraine has been appointed Chairman of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) Athletes' Commission, the IOC announced.

Bubka, 39, was proposed by IOC president Jacques Rogge and officially designated here Monday to succeed five-time Olympian in sailing Peter Tallberg of Finland.

"I am honoured to be voted Chairman of the Athletes' Commission," said former Olympic gold medalist and six-time world champion Bubka.

"As the first active athlete's representative of the IOC Executive Board I have enjoyed playing a role for athletes in the IOC since 2000.

"This new position will allow me to further the work which Peter Tallberg has been so keenly contributing to over the past years - that of giving the athletes a voice within the Olympic movement."

The Athletes' Commission is composed of 19 members with the majority being active athletes elected by their peers.

During his career Bubka beat the world record 35 times and is the current record holder with 6.15m. He has been a member of the IOC Athletes' Commission since 1996 and was elected to the IOC Executive Board as the first active athlete's representative in 2000.

Nicol off to winning start

AFP, Hong Kong

England's world number one and reigning British Open champion Peter Nicol began his campaign for a third Hong Kong Open title with a 3-0 victory over Egyptian Omar Elborolossy here Tuesday.

Nicol defeated Elborolossy 17-14, 15-11, 15-8 to book a berth in the second round of the 100,000-dollar tournament. He will meet Australian Joseph Kniepp in the second round. Kniepp toppled Welshman David Evans 16-17, 15-13, 15-7, 15-8.

"I need to win this tournament badly. It is very important for my rankings that I win in Hong Kong. A loss could see Jonathon (Power) close the gap on me," said Nicol.

Nicol is determined to cast off the recent dominance Canada's world number two Power has over him presently. The Scot-turned-Englishman has lost the last four outings against Power, including the final at the Commonwealth Games in Manchester last month.

"Losing the gold medal was a big blow to me. I hope to avenge that defeat here and also to cement my number one ranking. I have got to start winning again and now would be a good time," said Nicol.

ICC sets Friday

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To keep the Friday deadline. I want the ICC executive board to hear me out on Saturday before they take any further steps."

Dalmiya, however, received little support from the world governing body he himself headed till last year.

An ICC statement released on Tuesday night asked all boards to "confirm their players have signed the Player Terms and that they will be sending their best team to Sri Lanka for the tournament."

India's newly-appointed sports minister, Vikram Verma, called on the players and the board to resolve the crisis quickly.

"My appeal to them is to find a solution," he said. "The players should not be forced to sign. Both sides have their own problems. They should solve it taking into mind each other's interests."

Verma, who replaces Uma Bharti in the sports ministry, clarified the government will not interfere in the matter.



Australian swimming superstar Ian Thorpe is jubilant after winning the men's 100-meter freestyle gold at the Pan Pacific Swimming Championships in Yokohama yesterday.

Thorpe rules the pool

Swimming

AFP, Yokohama

Australian Ian Thorpe swam close to his personal best time in claiming his fifth gold medal in the 100-metre freestyle at the Pan Pacific Swimming Championships here on Wednesday.

The triple world record holder captured the gold medal in 48.84 seconds in a one-two Australian finish with Ashley Callus second and American Nate Dusing third.

Thorpe remains undefeated at the Yokohama meet following his earlier successes in the 200 and 400m freestyle and the 4x100 and

4x200m freestyle relays. "It's a pretty quick time and it's near my personal best time," Thorpe said.

"Part of my preparation for this meet was for the sprints and I was focusing on the 100m race."

Thorpe's best time in the 100m is 48.73 in winning the gold medal at this month's Manchester Commonwealth Games. Dutchman Pieter van den Hoogenband holds the world record mark of 47.84.

Thorpe says he wants to scale down swimming in the longer-distance events and concentrate on the shorter ones.

"There are two reasons behind my interest in the 100m freestyle," Thorpe said.

"I don't think that I have ever reached my potential or been able to put in a performance in competition that really shows what I have done in training and how well I can sprint."

"I'm also looking to the future and my intentions are to look to those shorter events rather than the longer ones."

"To establish a fast time in that race is important to me."

Wednesday's win continues an extraordinary run of success for the 19-year-old Australian in major swimming meets.

The Thorpedo won a record six gold medals at the Manchester Commonwealth Games and the same number at last year's Fukuoka world championships.

Australia blank England

Hockey

AFP, Macau

Reigning World Cup champions Australia kept their bid for an unprecedented sixth Commonwealth Trophy on track Wednesday as the Hockeyroos

exacted sweet revenge on Commonwealth Games conquerors England.

England, who disposed of the World Cup winners in the semifinals of the Commonwealth Games last month, found a fired up Aussie team and the burning afternoon sun too hot to handle as they crumbled 2-0 at Macau Stadium.

"I'm very happy with the performance. It was a very hard game in the conditions and to come out of two 0'clock starts with two wins is very satisfying," said Australian coach David Bell.

However, he denied the Australians were hell bent on revenge after the Commonwealth Games last month. "Nah. What's there to revenge. They beat us four weeks ago. We get on with life and take each game as it comes."

A revitalised Australian team, who had looked out of sorts at the start of the elite six-nation tournament, swept aside a hopelessly outgunned England side to notch their second successive win, just three days after crashing to a shock 1-0 loss to unheralded China.

The Australians put England's defence under pressure from the start and only a reflex save from young goalkeeper Katy Roberts to beat out a sharp effort from Julie Towers kept the score level.

Nikki Hudson thought she had opened the scoring when she cut across two defenders on the right and unleashed a vicious shot past the despairing dive of Roberts only to be adjudged by umpire Ute Conen to have been just outside the circle when she left.

The English defence finally caved into the relentless bombardment when Joanne Banning's prodded shot cannoned off Roberts' foot and looped over the helpless keeper into the net.

Australia then doubled their lead when Hudson's run through the heart of the English defence caused havoc and Wendy Alcorn latched onto the loose ball to lash home her second goal of the tournament.

The Australians spent much of the second period as they had the first, camped out in the England half, but though they created several great opportunities they were unable to add to their tally.

Hudson was guilty of the most glaring miss, firing wide when faced with an unguarded net after new strike partner Melanie Twitt had committed Roberts.

The Aussies, who failed to score in their first two outings, have now rattled in five goals in the past two games, but Bell admitted there was still much room for improvement.

"We missed a lot of good opportunities to score today. We're very slowly improving in that department but there's still a long way to go."

England coach Tricia Herberle said: "Australia is a quality team... it was almost like goalshooting practise for the Aussies in the second half and if they hadn't been so wasteful they would have scored a lot more."

Australia now have seven points and will have to defeat defending champions Argentina in their final round robin match on Friday to have any chance of making Sunday's final.

Bell forecast a high quality encounter between arguably the world's two best teams and admitted Argentina had played the best hockey of the tournament in dispatching England 4-0 on Tuesday.

"We're going to have to be very strong strategically. It's a balance between nullifying their players and playing our own game."

The Netherlands will take on New Zealand in the second match on Wednesday followed by China against Argentina.

Lleyton reignites fine row

REUTERS, New York

World number one Lleyton Hewitt has vigorously stoked his row with the organisers of professional men's tennis by branding the ATP liars.

"The ATP people were lying," said the 21-year-old Australian at the U.S. Open when asked of his feud with the governing body over a fine imposed earlier this month.

"It was always 'ATP spokesperson' ... no one ever wanted to put their name to it. I think a lot of people lied, I think that is a known fact," he said.

Hewitt was handed a \$103,000 fine in Cincinnati earlier this month -- half his runners-up prize money -- for refusing to conduct an interview with host broadcasters ESPN before his first round match.

The player said he had told the ATP he would attend the interview "just to get it all out of the way", but that nobody had got back to his coach Jason Stoltenberg until it was too late and a fine was inevitable.

"You know, I didn't really want to come out and make a big deal of it," said the top seed after sweeping past Frenchman Nicolas Pietrangeli 6-2 6-3 6-3 in the first round in New York.

"But it was all one-sided coming out ... it was just absolute lies coming out ..."

"I felt I was copping the brunt of it and the ATP was just sort of riding the wave. There were so many guys just making up stories just to ... save their jobs, I guess."

Hewitt said earlier this month he was annoyed by the ATP's attitude over the ESPN incident because he had already agreed with the broadcasters to do the interview after the match.

"ESPN was satisfied with that," said Hewitt at the time. "(ATP chief executive) Mark Miles was satisfied with that and the tournament director was satisfied with that but there was one guy, the PR manager, who wasn't."

"When things happen like in Cincinnati, when you think about the way everything has been run, it's just not much fun," added the Australian, who is appealing against the fine.

Hewitt called the governing body of men's tennis a badly-run "circus" and said he could in future ignore ATP rules governing how many tournaments a player is obliged to compete in and that he would play where, and when, he wanted, regardless of what that would mean to his ranking.

"There are times when you feel like (walking away) ... it is a great sport if the ATP would just get out of the way," he said.

On Tuesday, he cranked up the row. Explaining his annoyance, and why the row developed, he said: "It was basically about the timing of the whole situation, when they notified me ... the whole little details they put into it, which tries to make their story a lot stronger."

"Where in the end, it's basically just crap."

Beem to play Aussie Open

AFP, Sydney

American Rich Beem, who emerged from obscurity to win the US PGA title earlier this month, has signed to play in the Australian Open at Melbourne's Victoria Golf Club, the Australian Golf Union (AGU) announced on Wednesday.

Beem, 32, will join leading Australians Craig Parry, Adam Scott, Peter Lonard, Robert Allenby and Stuart Appleby in the tournament from November 21-24 after accepting an invitation from event organisers.

Youhanna becomes only the second Pakistani player to be sent home on disciplinary grounds. Leg-spinner Abdul Qadir was sent home from New Zealand in 1984-85 after he disagreed with then captain Zaheer Abbas.

Safin will next face former world number one Gustavo Kuerten of the unseeded Brazilian ousted France's Julien Boutter 3-6, 7-6, 6-1, 6-0.

In earlier action, men's ninth seed Carlos Moya recovered from a slow start to oust Romania's Adrian Panu 3-6, 6-4, 6-3, 7-6.

The Spanish baseliner needed two hours 22 minutes to down Panu on a sun-baked court 11 and next faces American heartthrob Jan-Michael Gambill.

Gambill booked his second round spot after just 38 minutes when his Austrian opponent Julian Knowle retired while trailing 6-1, 2-1.

Andy Roddick gave home fans plenty to cheer about. The 11th-seeded American crushed Dutchman Martin Verkerk 7-6, 6-3, 6-4 in the night match.

Injury ousts Scud

AFP, New York

Australia's Mark Philippoussis, who has known only heartache at the US Open since his 1998 runner-up showing, found more misery here Tuesday, re-injuring his left knee and retiring while leading a first-round match.

Dutchman Sjeng Schalken advanced 6-7, 4-6, 6-3, 5-3 when Philippoussis quit after two hours and 56 minutes, having played four games after suffering the injury before concluding that he could not continue.

The hard-serving Aussie nicknamed "Scud" quickly left Arthur Ashe Stadium for Florida, where doctors will examine his knee, which underwent surgery three times from January of 2000 to March of 2001 after a 1999 injury suffered at Wimbledon.

"He was going to Miami to see the doctor who performed his last surgery in March, 2001," said David Felgate, Philippoussis' agent, who said an MRI was planned for Wednesday.

Philippoussis missed the 1999 and 2001 US Opens because of the knee injury. He was bounced in the second round in 2000.

Synthetic cartilage is now injected into Philippoussis' left knee every six months, most recently in March just before the Miami ATP Masters Series event.

The injury jeopardizes Philippoussis' status in next month's Davis Cup semi-final. He had healed a rift with the team and was set for his first tie in two years, against India in Adelaide from September 20-22.

Australia needs to win the play-off to regain its place in the Davis Cup World Group in 2003 after losing in the first round of this year's competition to Argentina in Buenos Aires in February.

"It's a setback, but I don't think it's going to matter too much," Aussie Davis Cupper Wayne Arthurs said. "I still think we have got a very good chance to win the tie. If I play singles, I give myself a very good chance to beat whoever I play."

Philippoussis suffered his latest mishap in the fifth game of the fourth set with the score at 2-2 and 15-15.

The 25-year-old from Melbourne leaped high to swat a return from Schalken when he saw the ball was going to sail beyond the baseline. He turned his head and upper body to watch the ball land long and landed with all his weight upon his left leg.

"It looked very fancy but it was very unfortunate," Schalken said.

Philippoussis turned his ankle and injured the knee, then fell to the court in a crumpled heap and lay there for several minutes before rising. After treatment, he continued for four games but finally surrendered to the pain.

"It's very tough for Mark. Hopefully he can play soon," Schalken said. "I hope he doesn't have to continue with all his troubles."

Schalken said a tough series of tuneup events might be the cause of several retirements in the first two days of the year's final Grand Slam event.

"Maybe it's the result that here everybody is getting fatigued," he said.

Philippoussis, ranked 70th, fired 18 aces and 56 winners past his 25th-rated foe. As he played through the pain, Aussie fans in the stands at Louis Armstrong Stadium screamed, "Aussie, Aussie, Aussie, Oy, Oy, Oy" to inspire their man.

But Philippoussis was hampered by the injury and seconds after Schalken won the eighth game on serve at love, Philippoussis walked off.

"That's unlucky," Australia's Alicia Molik said after her first-round victory. "He has had a very rough run."



Mark Philippoussis of Australia clutches his knee after injuring it during his match against Dutchman Sjeng Schalken at the US Open in New York on August 27.

Jennifer relishing the prospect

AFP, New York

Australian Open champion Jennifer Capriati ripped Richard Williams for disrespectful remarks and said she likes being seen as the main threat to his top-ranked daughters meeting in another Grand Slam final.

Third seed Capriati blanked American qualifier Bethanie Mattek 6-0, 6-0 in 44 minutes in a first-round US Open match here Tuesday, then cut loose on the father of world number one Serena Williams and her second-ranked sister Venus.

Told of Williams' remarks to Inside Tennis magazine that she should stop cursing on the court and listen to her father, Capriati lashed out.

"You can see how ignorant that sounds and how disrespectful that sounds," Capriati said. "And he gets away with it. It's too bad. It's no class. He should just concentrate on his daughters. I don't need his advice."

"I've never made personal remarks. I could say things about them. But I'm not going to because I'm not going to lower myself to

that," Capriati said. "That's fine. Let them think what they want to think. It's better that way. I can go through the draw quietly the way I have been."

Serena Williams has beaten Capriati in their three meetings this year, including 3-6, 7-6 (7/2), 6-2 in the French Open semi-finals, a 6-2, 3-6, 7-5 Rome semi-final triumph and a 7-5, 7-6 (7/4) victory in the Miami final.

"It's hard with me. I have played Serena tough," Capriati said. "I thought I could have won some of those matches."

Chanda Rubin, who beat Serena Williams in the Los Angeles quarterfinals earlier this month, sees the sisters getting tougher as rivals gang up against them.

"You sort of hear that. I think that's all fine and good," Rubin said. I look at that as a challenge as a player. You accept that challenge. We will have to see who steps up."

Jelena Dokic, the fifth seed, is among the players who have said the Williams sisters simply might be too tough for the rest of the field. But Rubin cites Capriati in saying the WTA's finest have not given up just yet.

"Jennifer has had some great matches with Serena," she said. "It didn't seem like she was taking a step back or just conceding."

Venus' next foe is Australia's Alicia Molik, who has confidence she can dethrone the queen of Flushing Meadows.

"If she was unbeatable, she would have a clean record and I'm pretty sure she has one or two losses," Molik said. "She is a great player. She is not going to lose the match. She doesn't have too many weak points."

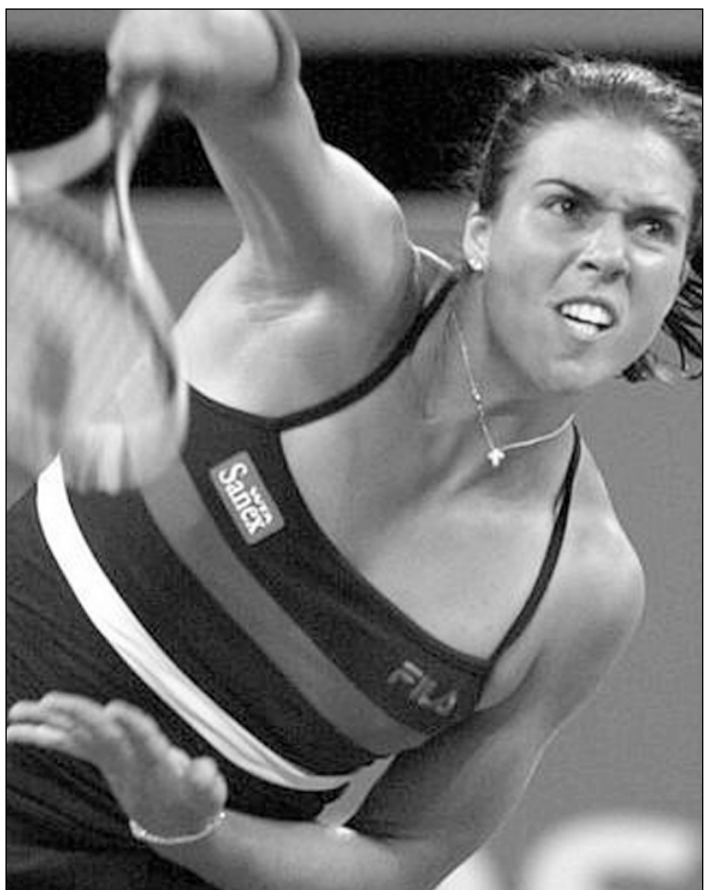
"Anyone that is going to beat Venus needs to serve well, return well, hit bloody well off the ground. They also need to mix their game up. I need to make her think. If you can do all that, maybe you are giving yourself a good shot."

Aussie Nicole Pratt gives Capriati a solid chance against either Williams sister, but see the sisters as less vulnerable the deeper into the draw they go.

"They are beatable in the early rounds," Pratt said. "As soon as they start to get their teeth into the tournament, that's when they start to do very well."

"Capriati is always in for a shot. There are a few girls out there who can give them a run in the first rounds. In think in the earlier rounds, they think they can just go out there and win based on who they are and how they are playing."

"(But) if they don't get knocked out in the first week, I would say put money on both of them getting through."



American Jennifer Capriati in action against compatriot Bethanie Mattek at the US Open on Tuesday.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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8 Somalian super-model
12 The Eternal City
13 Summa-laude link
14 Actress Merrill
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16 "NYPD Blue" persona
17 Raggedy fellow?
18 River rowboat
20 Pearl Harbor site
22 Unofficial polls
26 Make an assertion
29 Teensy
30 Berlin's "What'll —"
31 Jants
32 Jam ingredient?
33 Long story
34 Arts deg.

DOWN

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11 Aye
12 Under
13 After-hrs.
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15 Ball-bearing item
16 Caesar!

Solution time: 24 mins.

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CRYPTOQUIP

E C K X T A A N H I Q Q G Q I O K U R
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G U K T K U E Z M K U K V K Z J K U R

Yesterday's Cryptquip: THE GOOFBALL SURGEON POURED OIL ON HIMSELF IN ORDER TO BE A SMOOTH OPERATOR.

Today's Cryptquip Clue: G equals P

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 apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.