

Boris evades jail term



REUTERS, Munich

Former Wimbledon champion Boris Becker has been found guilty of tax evasion but has been spared jail by a German court which handed him a two-year suspended sentence and a hefty fine.

Becker, 34, whose heroics on the tennis court made him one of Germany's biggest post-war celebrities, had sought leniency by admitting in court on Wednesday he made a mistake by dodging tax and by paying \$3 million (1.94 million pounds) that he owed last week.

On top of the suspended sentence, the Munich state court fined the three-times Wimbledon champion 300,000 euros (189,000 pounds), and ordered him to pay 200,000 euros more to charity plus the case costs, estimated at more than 100,000 euros.

"I'm happy and relieved that this chapter has finally been closed," Becker said in a written statement. "I am a free man and that is the most important thing. A very difficult phase of my life, full of problems, has now been ended."

State prosecutors had demanded Becker be jailed for three years and six months for evading German taxes and lying about where he lived.

He claimed residence in the tax haven of Monaco while actually staying in Munich between 1991 and 1993, they said. Becker earned about \$25 million in winnings during his 16-year career and tens of millions more in endorsements.

The conviction on Thursday is the latest misfortune to befall Becker since his retirement from tennis in 1999, including a costly divorce, an admission he fathered a child with a Russian model and a string of failed business ventures.

"The defendant is guilty of four cases of tax evasion as well as two additional cases of attempted tax evasion," Judge Huberta Knoeringer told the court.

"His confession in trial here was a mitigating factor," the judge said, adding that the punishment was consistent with other sentences handed to tax dodgers who confessed their misdeeds.

A judge renowned for handing down tough sentences but himself an avid tennis player, Knoeringer added: "We all know the defendant



PHOTO: AFP

TRUTH HURTS: Boris Becker

as an excellent tennis player."

Wearing a brown suit and brown tie, Becker appeared tense as the verdict was read but laughed when Knoeringer warned him about the terms of probation and added that she did not expect him to be involved in any more tax misdeeds.

Becker thanked his lawyers and shook hands with Knoeringer. They chatted for a few minutes and Becker then disappeared through a back exit.

Becker's lawyers had argued he did not deserve jail because he had paid 45 million marks (14 million pounds) in tax since moving his residence back to Germany in 1994 as well as paying the outstanding tax he owed for 1991 to 1993.

Becker became a German icon after winning the first of three Wimbledon titles in 1985 at age 17 and became world number one in 1991. On Wednesday, he said: "I

made a mistake 10 years ago and I know that I will have to pay the consequences."

Becker, who moved to Monaco in 1984, admits he rented a small apartment in Munich in 1991. He did not start paying German tax until 1994 and had spent the last decade claiming he did not have a home in Munich before 1994.

"The only thing I had on my mind was tennis, and sometimes girls," Becker said. "My life was all about tennis. My office was the whole world. The word home didn't really exist."

Many other top German sport idols such as Franz Beckenbauer, Michael Stich, Michael and Ralf Schumacher have for years lived abroad in Austria and Switzerland to avoid high German taxes.

In his court remarks, Becker blamed the tax office and prosecutors for distracting him from his

career. He said he never won another tournament after they first raided his Munich home in 1994 searching for financial documents. He said he retired in 1999 because of the distraction.

Becker's seven-year marriage to his German-American wife, Barbara Feltus ended in divorce in January 2001 after he agreed to a multi-million-dollar settlement.

Becker also agreed to pay a reported \$2.8 million to a Russian model, Angela Ermakova, in July 2001 after admitting fathering her daughter in the laundry cupboard of a restaurant where he had been

drinking heavily after losing his last Wimbledon match to Australian Pat Rafter in 1999.

He described the notorious incident as "five seconds that will haunt me for the rest of my life".

The tax investigation was aided, ironically, by an avid Becker fan whose attempt to obtain an autograph from his idol was rebuffed.

The fan, Hans Gerd, charted Becker's movements with a newspaper scrapbook for seven years. After Becker ignored his autograph request, Gerd turned the documents showing where Becker spent his time over to the tax office.

THE BECKER TAP

REUTERS, Munich

Factbox on Boris Becker who has been given a two-year suspended sentence after being found guilty of tax evasion:

Born November 22, 1967, in Leimen, Germany
Height 1.90 m, weight 85 kg
Righthanded player
Best career ranking: 1 (January 1991)

Becker made 24.9 million dollars in prize money in a 16-year playing career.

He won 49 singles titles and 15 doubles titles.
Grand Slam record: six singles titles. Australian Open 1991 and 1996. Wimbledon 1985, 1986 and 1989. U.S. Open 1989. Wimbledon runner-up 1988, 1990, 1991 and 1995.

Becker was the youngest Wimbledon champion in 1985 at the age of 17 years seven months. He is the only unseeded player to have won Wimbledon and was the first German champion. He described Wimbledon as his back yard.

He won his final Grand Slam tournament in Australia in 1996 but at Wimbledon later in the year he ruptured a tendon in his wrist. At his last Wimbledon, in 1999, he lost in four sets to Pat Rafter in the quarterfinals and announced his retirement.

He lost finals to Pete Sampras in 1995, to Michael Stich in 1991 and Stefan Edberg in 1988 and 1990.

Becker had a classic serve and volley game suited to grass and fast surfaces and was never happy on clay. His best result at the French Open was reaching the semifinals twice.

He was nicknamed Boom Boom

for his big serve and loved by crowds for his acrobatics on court, leaping to reach volleys and rolling on the court. Respected and feared by opponents. Sampras described him after his last Wimbledon match as "a class act".

A member of the German Davis Cup team for many years, Becker helped his country to victory in 1988 and 1989. He went on to coach young German players. Won Olympic doubles title in 1992 with Michael Stich.

Married German-American Barbara Feltus in December 1993. The couple had two sons, Noah, born in January 1994, and Elias, born in September 1999, but divorced in January 2001 after reaching a multi-million-dollar settlement.

Becker also agreed to pay a Russian model, Angela Ermakova, a reported \$2.8 million dollars in July 2001 after admitting to being the father of her child following an encounter in a laundry cupboard in a London restaurant.

Becker went into sports marketing after retiring from the tennis circuit.

In July 2001, lawyers said German tax officials had demanded some 25 million marks (10.8 million dollars) in back taxes from Becker.

Last month a plan by captain Stich to bring back Becker for a Davis Cup tie prompted the rest of the team to threaten a walk-out. Stich was appointed captain after Becker declined the job.

October 23: Trial of Becker on tax evasion charges opens in Munich.

October 24: Becker given two-year suspended sentence.

When life went Boom Boom



REUTERS, Munich

Boris "Boom-Boom" Becker flashed across the tennis world like a comet in the mid-1980s, becoming West Germany's biggest post-war sporting idol.

But his conviction on tax evasion charges is the latest in a series of disasters, including a costly divorce and a string of failed business ventures, which have plagued Becker since he announced his retirement in 1999.

The three-time Wimbledon champion, renowned for his booming serve and never-say-die attitude, has now lost much of his fortune, as well as his credibility in Germany.

Things started to fall apart in 1999 when he and his German-American wife, Barbara Feltus, separated. The seven-year marriage ended in divorce in January 2001 after Becker agreed to a multi-million-dollar settlement.

Becker also agreed to pay a reported \$2.8 million to a Russian model, Angela Ermakova, after admitting being the father of her daughter, born in March 2000.

Becker said the child was conceived in the laundry cupboard of a restaurant where he had been drinking heavily after losing his last Wimbledon match to Australian Pat Rafter in 1999.

He described the notorious incident as "five seconds that will haunt me for the rest of my life".

Now he has been handed a two-year suspended sentence and a hefty fine for tax evasion, damaging his image still further.

Becker burst upon the tennis world in 1985 when he became the youngest men's Wimbledon champion at just 17.

He was the first unseeded player to win the championship and the big, red-haired youngster captured the hearts of tennis fans everywhere with his full-blooded serves, acrobatic volleying and courageous fight-backs.

He coupled natural modesty with an outgoing manner. But it was his buccaneering serve-volley game on Wimbledon's grass, which he called his own back yard, that proved the clincher.

With his Wimbledon victory in 1985, Becker almost single-handedly turned the country from a

tennis backwater into a potent force in the sport.

He charmed his way into German hearts to a degree unrivalled by any sporting personality, giving the German language a new catch word -- "Beckermania".

Becker's appearance in the latter stages of tournaments caused frantic rescheduling of television programmes by networks anxious to satisfy an insatiable public.

Becker was born on November 22, 1967, in Leimen, a small town near Heidelberg, to Elvira and Karl-Heinz Becker.

He was no more than a toddler when his father, an architect and tennis enthusiast, introduced him to the sport he later came to dominate. He began taking lessons at the age of five from former Yugoslav Davis Cup player, Boris Breskvar.

Breskvar, who was also the West German Tennis Federation (DTB) trainer for the area, coached Becker for 10 years. He said the boy's will to win was his most impressive asset.

Becker was enrolled in the DTB's youth scheme and despite detractors who bemoaned a lack of mobility, he blossomed.

Those outside the DTB ranks were given a hint of his potential when he won the West German youth championship in 1982 at the age of 14, a title he retained for the next two years.

In 1983 he went to Florida to compete in the under-16s at the Orange Bowl, the unofficial world youth championships, losing in the final.

In the 1984 Australian Open, he reached the last 16 and he romped through to the third round at Wimbledon before an ankle injury forced a two-month layoff.

By this time he had turned professional. His coach Guenther Bosch drew Becker's talent to the attention of fellow Romanian Ion Tiriac, the mentor of Argentina's Guillermo Vilas.

Tiriac became Becker's manager and invested 150,000 dollars a year in the young player, perhaps foreseeing some of the 24.9 million dollars prize money he would win during his 16-year career.

After 1985, Becker went on to win the Wimbledon title twice more, beating Ivan Lendl in 1986 and Stefan Edberg in 1989. He also lost in the final four times, most recently in 1995.

Gayle goes on

FROM PAGE 13

Hinds was the only batsman to be dismissed in the morning session, caught by Jacob Martin in the slips off-spinner Kulamani Parida.

Gayle, without a half-century in two Tests, went on the rampage in the afternoon as he punished both seamers and spinners to score 75 of the 132 runs his team made in the two-hour session.

He offered one chance in his 293-ball knock when he was on 19, but Kartik failed to hold on to a return catch.

Runs came from both the ends as Ganga staked his claim for the final Test with a 214-ball knock. The 23-year-old Trinidadian has so far struck 11 fours.



GAYLE...154

Ramnaresh Sarwan, Ryan Hinds, Gareth Breese, Mahendra Nagamootoo, Cameron Cuffy, Darren Powell

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Hamder	11	2	37	1
Hussain	10	1	41	0
Yadav	15	3	35	0
Kartik	29	7	78	0
Parida	19	6	62	1
Tejinderpal	6	1	25	0
Khanolkar	2	0	9	0

WEST INDIES: First innings
Gayle b Harvinder 154
W Hinds c Martin b Parida 50
Ganga not out 66
Samuels not out 0
Extras: (b-5, lb-5, nb-17) 27
Total: (For 2 wickets in 92 overs) 297
Fall of wickets: 1-71, 2-296
To bat: Ridley Jacobs,

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

- Scenery chews
- Earns an Obie, maybe
- Visibility problem
- Pub order
- United nations
- Egg
- Tenet
- Latvia's capital
- Skirt length
- Love of money?
- Lummo
- Stipend
- Like mid-August weather
- Crimson
- Harvard ex-prexy
- Derek
- October stone
- Goose egg
- "Doonesbury" character
- Hiatus
- Upper limit
- Brave

DOWN

- Locks
- Glutton
- Additional
- Note to the boss
- Overseas hit
- Forum fashion
- O.R.
- Cozy and comfy
- Tel — years
- New Mexican
- Semester
- Easter emblem
- Cautious Gilels
- Work hard
- Young fellow
- Urge onward
- Outlay
- Medicinal plant
- In the neighborhood
- Boo-Boo's big buddy
- Like the Sabin vaccine
- Quite
- Duel
- Tool

CRYPTOQUIP

S M C V Q K Y Y K H Y K M G V M
V O K Z Z A G I S P Y E S P K A M I P
C S F G M O K Q H I L H V Y V
P S I F Z K V E K P

Solution time: 23 mins.

ACROSS
1 SCENERY
2 EARNS AN OBIE, MAYBE
3 VISIBILITY PROBLEM
4 PUB ORDER
5 UNITED NATIONS
6 EGG
7 TENET
8 LATVIA'S CAPITAL
9 SKIRT LENGTH
10 LOVE OF MONEY?
11 LUMMO
12 STIPEND
13 LIKE MID-AUGUST WEATHER
14 CRIMSON
15 HARVARD EX-PREXY
16 DEREK
17 OCTOBER STONE
18 GOOSE EGG
19 "DOONESBURY" CHARACTER
20 HIATUS
21 UPPER LIMIT
22 BRAVE

DOWN
1 LOCKS
2 GLUTTON
3 ADDITIONAL
4 NOTE TO THE BOSS
5 OVERSEAS HIT
6 FORUM FASHION
7 O.R.
8 COZY AND COMFY
9 TEL — YEARS
10 NEW MEXICAN
11 SEMESTER
12 EASTER EMBLEM
13 CAUTIOUS GILELS
14 WORK HARD
15 YOUNG FELLOW
16 URGE ONWARD
17 OUTLAY
18 MEDICINAL PLANT
19 IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD
20 BOO-BOO'S BIG BUDDY
21 LIKE THE SABIN VACCINE
22 QUITE
23 DUEL
24 TOOL

Agassi storms through

AFP, Moscow

Top seed Andre Agassi eased into the second round of the one-million-dollar Saint Petersburg Open with a 6-3, 6-4 win over unseeded Czech Radek Stepanek here on Wednesday.

Agassi, who made his debut ATP appearance in Russia, came into the match with maximum confidence, winning his serves to love and breaking his 23-year-old opponent to grab a 3-0 advantage.

Stepanek fought hard to pull level but Agassi's lead was never in doubt and he took the opening set in 25 minutes.

The American underlined his supremacy at the Saint Petersburg carpet courts, starting the second with another break to put himself 2-0 up.

The 32-year-old Las Vegas kept his advantage to win the set and the match after one hour on court to face Slovak Karol Kucera in the second round.

France's Sebastian Grosjean, third seed here, eliminated Armenia's Sargis Sargsian 6-4, 6-4 to record his fourth win in as many meetings with the 29-year-old hard-working baseliner.

Clueless Hewitt



AFP, Stockholm

Wimbledon champion and world number one Lleyton Hewitt plunged into further despair on Wednesday when he slumped to a 6-3, 6-3 defeat to Dutchman Raemon Sluiter in the second round of the 650,000 dollar Stockholm Open.

Just a week after illness forced him to miss the Masters event in Madrid, the 21-year-old Australian put in a poor performance which would not have improved his mood as he tries to resist Andre Agassi's assault on his world top spot.

Agassi, a winner Wednesday at St. Petersburg, went into the Russian event trailing the Australian by just 43 points after claiming the Madrid title at the weekend.

Hewitt went down an early break in the opening set on Wednesday and could never recover as Sluiter recovered from 0-30 in the final game to win the opener 6-3.

The underdog began with a break in the second, lost it in the fourth, but recovered quickly as Hewitt double-faulted to give it back, 3-4.

Sluiter went into a 5-3 lead with a love game and waited patiently as

the desperate Hewitt saved three match points with serve winners before double-faulting on a fourth to lose.

"I didn't feel 100 per cent, but I've been getting better gradually," he said. "I felt right to play."

"But I've got to take my hat off to that kind of solid tennis. He came at me from the start. He was aggressive. He's had some of his best results indoors, this is his best surface."

Hewitt refused to be drawn out on his looming struggle with the on-form Agassi who has a simmering desire to end the year as number one at age 32.

"It doesn't worry me," said the Australian.

Thailand's Paradox Srichaphan, who beat Hewitt in Japan recently, thrashed Swedish teenager Robin Soderling 6-2, 6-1 to reach the second round.

The 23-year-old from Bangkok, a semi-finalist and quarter-finalist at his last two ATP events, now meets Frenchman Michael Llodra in the next round.

Paradox was untroubled against Soderling, the world's third-ranked junior and a Swedish hope for the future.

The Asian ace broke twice in the opening set, finishing the job with an untouchable serve. In the second,

he broke the young Swede for 2-1 and never relaxed his grip on the one-way match.

Paradox finished it up on his second match point with a backhand winner.

Swede Magnus Norman's season-long comeback attempt sputtered as he crashed out in his opening match, a 6-2, 6-2 victim of Hicham Arazi.

Norman, who has not yet recovered the form which took him to the French Open final two years ago and accounted for ten titles over the 1999 and 2000 seasons, has now lost a dozen times since February in the first round.

Arazi now moves into a second-round clash with American Taylor Dent, who put out second-seeded and defending champion Sjeng Schalken 7-6, 6-4.

Dangerous Frenchman Fabrice Santoro, a semi-finalist last weekend at the Madrid Masters, eliminated Argentine fifth seed Juan Chela 6-1, 6-3.

Number four seed Thomas Johansson was also knocked out on Wednesday.

The Swede's 3-6, 6-3, 6-2 loss to Spain's Tommy Robredo all but knocks him out of the race for the November 11-17 Shanghai Masters Cup, limited to the top eight points finishers on the season.

No improving England

AFP, Perth

England's preparations for the Ashes took another mighty battering here Thursday -- from a part-time cricketer who works most days as a window cleaner.

Callum Thorp, 27, yet to play in a first-class match, embarrassed the tourists' batsmen on the opening day of a two-day clash against Western Australia at the WACA Ground with a destructive 4-58 display of swing bowling.

SCORECARD

Scoreboard at stumps on opening day of the two-day match between Western Australia and England at the WACA Ground Thursday:

ENGLAND: First innings
Trescothick c Hussey b Wilson 46
Key lbw Thorp 4
Butcher c and b Thorp 7
Hussain c Ronchi b Thorp 1
Crawley c Ronchi c Clark 0
Stewart c Ronchi c Clark 42
Foster b Casson 11
Giles c Ronchi b Thorp 6
Caddick not out 62
Hoggard b Wilson 33
Harmison c Goodwin b Wilson 6
Extras: (b-1, lb-1, nb-1) 3
Total: (All out in 87.2 overs) 221
Fall of wickets: 1-4, 2-32, 3-39, 4-48, 5-89, 6-112, 7-116, 8-126, 9-205

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Wilson	18.2	9	38	3
Thorp	20	6	58	4
Clark	18	7	42	2
Harvey	16	5	49	0
Casson	15	6	32	1

WESTERN AUSTRALIA: First innings
Hussey not out 0
Rogers not out 3
Total: (For no loss in 3 overs) 3

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Hoggard	2	1	2	0
Harmison	1	0	1	0

WESTERN AUSTRALIA: Mike Hussey, Beau Casson, Michael Clark, Murray Goodwin, Kade Harvey, Shaun Marsh, Marcus North, Chris Rogers, Luke Ronchi, Callum Thorp, Paul Wilson.

Cricket academy

FROM PAGE 13
We'll start our activities from Dhaka and Chittagong Divisions," said Ratan, who has been actively involved in coaching since 1995.

Interested boys and girls have been requested to collect prospectus and registration forms from Shah Sports at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium, Gulshan-1 DMC Market, Inter Sports on Elephant Road, Film Fair Video at Sobhanabagh, Malancha Flower Centre at Shahbagh, New La Bamba at Dhanmondi and also from Abahani ground.

Capriati in quarters

AFP, Linz

America's Jennifer Capriati and Anna Smashnova of Israel won through to the quarterfinals of the 585,000-dollar Linz WTA event here on Wednesday.

Capriati, the 26-year-old top seed, beat Argentina's Paola Suarez 6-4, 6-4 to book her place in the last eight.

"She was a difficult opponent. I am satisfied because recently I lost two matches right at the beginning of tournaments," Capriati said of her first indoor victory this autumn.

"But then I worked myself up to it, my concentration improved and I moved well."

Ninth-seed Smashnova fought a hard battle against Russian Elena Dementieva in her second round match, winning in three sets 6-3, 3-6, 7-5.

Austrian Daniela Kix gave up her first-round match against America's Jill Craybas because of stomach cramps, after losing the first set 6-2 and three games in the second.

Doctors who examined the 17-year-old player believe she is suffering from a virus.

Craybas, 28, will now face Yugoslav star Jelena Dokic in the second round on Thursday.

In the day's other first round matches, Russian Tatiana Panova beat fellow countrywoman Lina Krastnorutskaja 6-4, 6-1 and Swiss Marie-Gaiane Mikaelian beat German Anca Barna 6-4, 6-3.

Father Tim back to business

AFP, Basel

Top-seeded Briton Tim Henman put the nappies aside following the weekend birth of his baby daughter Rose Elizabeth to send Cedric