

'Paris love match could be tough'

AFP, Melbourne

Andre Agassi thinks he will have his work cut out persuading wife Steffi Graf to join him for mixed doubles - and he reckons the all-star couple might get thrashed even if they do play.

Agassi's victory at the Australian Open here Sunday paves the way for him and retired former world number one Graf to join forces at the French Open in May.

The 32-year-old said although Graf had in theory agreed to play doubles at Roland Garros with him if he won the Australian Open, she still needed to be persuaded.

"She's not too pleased about that, but hopefully I'll have 50 years with her to be mad at me about more things," said Agassi, when asked about the pact following his win here Sunday.

"It's going to be my responsibility to make it happen. I'm the one that said it so I've got to make it up to her somehow. Count on me to work on it," added Agassi, who married 22-time Grand Slam winner Graf in October 2001.

Agassi thinks that even if he is successful in coaxing Graf out of retirement for Paris the glamorous duo are unlikely to do well.

"I assure you if we do play, we don't have much of a chance, definitely not," Agassi said.

Friendly cricket

Coats Bangladesh outplayed HSBC by nine wickets in a friendly match at the Banani WAPDA ground on Friday.

Winning the toss, HSBC batted first and scored 157 all out in 32.3 overs. In reply, Coats made 159 for one in 26 overs.

HSBC: 157 all out in 32.3 overs (Aqub 31, Nafis 27, Shourab 25, Rashed 3/25, Ahsan 2/17, Ehsan 2/19 and Aftab, 2/22).

COATS BANGLADESH: 159/1 in 26 overs (Adil Jr 92, Borhan 39, Rashed 4*, Mamun, 1/45).

Shane Warnes

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anything to anybody about what I can do on the field on the big occasion.

"What I have to do is just prove it to myself that my shoulder is OK and just keep giving it a rip. As the games go on, hopefully I will keep improving.

"I still have a few little doubts about certain things, but I'm not far away. It's all about momentum and confidence."

Warne also said that England's Michael Vaughan, player of the Ashes series, was one of the best batsmen he had ever encountered.

The Yorkshire opener made 633 runs at 63.30 despite England's 4-1 series defeat and scored an impressive 60 from 81 balls in Saturday's five-run loss in the second one-day final in Melbourne.

"Besides Sachin Tendulkar, I think Michael Vaughan is probably the best player that I've played against for 10 years," Warne said.

"I can't think of somebody who's played consistently that well. Brian Lara has played a couple of great innings (against Australia).

"Just his (Vaughan's) aggressive style of play, against the quality of bowlers that he has faced all summer. Considering their team's been losing, I think that shows he is a really good player, one of the best going around."

Heightened

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controlled.

Upon arrival, the teams will be briefed by South African security specialists and police, who will talk to players about ICC regulations, as well as their personal safety.

At the grounds, fans will be met by metal detectors and security personnel doing manual searches.

"They will be looking for a host of restricted items, from firearms to bottles, to items that could be deemed as so-called 'ambush advertising'," Ronan said.

Close circuit cameras will cast a beady eye over South African grounds, controlled from a central command post.

Nobody, except players and umpires will be allowed on the field, with a 1.7 metre moat covered by tangled netting standing between the spectators and the players.

The penalties can be severe. For running onto the field, a perpetrator can get a fine of up to 4,000 dollars, or two years in jail, or both, Ronan said.

"Even just an over-excited spectator can unintentionally run into a star player who then tears a ligament," said Ronan.

South African police spokeswoman Charmain Muller said police started their deployment for the contest on Saturday.

"We have started mobilising," she said but declined to give numbers on the ground.

"Suffice to say that like the successful UN Earth Summit last year, we will have enough people to deal with any eventuality," she said.

Hayden best in both



AFP, Sydney

Australia's run machine Matthew Hayden can expect to be a marked man at the World Cup after being officially recognised Sunday as the best batsman in Test and limited-overs cricket.

Hayden's 458 runs off English and Sri Lankan bowlers during the tri-nations one-day series, at an average of 65.42 and strike-rate of 91.05, moved him to the top of the PricewaterhouseCoopers one-day rankings.

He already led the Test list. Hayden joins West Indian pair Brian Lara and Sir Vivian Richards and India's Sachin Tendulkar as the only players to have held both number one batting positions simultaneously.

While Australia's entire top order packs a big punch, Hayden will be the key wicket for opposition bowlers at the World Cup after his dominance in the tri-nations contest which ended here Saturday.

Adam Gilchrist and Ricky Ponting blaze away like tornadoes and Damien Martyn, Darren Lehmann and Michael Bevan "milk" attacks with more finesse than fervour.

Hayden can do both. He can annihilate pacemen and spinners at better than a run a ball, but if Australia are in trouble, he can ease the tempo and bat through the innings, guarding his wicket but still getting runs.

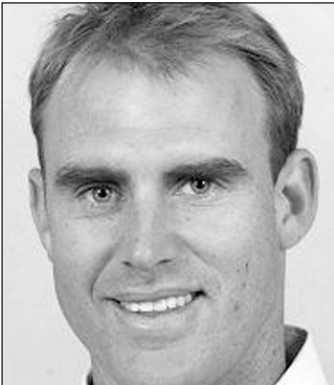
Australia's two tri-nations series finals wins against England were perfect examples. In the first, with Australia guaranteed victory, he slammed 45 off 37 balls.

In the second, as Australia

struggled with 56 for three, he compiled a less sensational but more important 69 off 91, ensuring a respectable total that ended up being enough to win the match.

He was Australia's most consistent batsmen all series, his overall tally being 148 runs more than Gilchrist and 152 better than Ponting.

He averaged more than 20 runs per innings better than both of them, while his strike rate was swifter than the dashing Ponting (86.19) but not



MATTHEW HAYDEN

as good as Gilchrist (119.23), who in the first final slammed a hurricane-like 69 off 37 balls.

South African captain and all-rounder Shaun Pollock leads the bowlers after carving up Pakistan recently, with Sri Lankan spinner Muttiah Muralitharan at number two ahead of Australia's Glenn McGrath.

Sri Lanka's swashbuckling left-hander Sanath Jayasuriya, who scored back-to-back tri-nations series centuries this summer, is second on the list ahead of Pakistan's Yousuf Youhana and India's Virender Sehwag.

Australian speedster Brett Lee -- man of the match in both tri-nations finals and also the player of the series -- reached a career-high fifth place.

With the World Cup starting February 9, Australia have the most representatives in the batting and bowling top tens ahead of South Africa.

Hayden, Bevan (sixth), Gilchrist (eighth) and Ponting (ninth) lead the batsmen with McGrath, Lee and Jason Gillespie (eight) in the top tier

RANKINGS

Batting
1. Matthew Hayden (AUS), 2. Sanath Jayasuriya (SL), 3. Yousuf Youhana (PAK), 4. Virender Sehwag (IND), 5. Chris Gayle (WI), 6. Michael Bevan (AUS), 7. Jonty Rhodes (RSA), 8. Adam Gilchrist (AUS), 9. Ricky Ponting (AUS) and 10. Jacques Kallis (RSA).
Bowling
1. Shaun Pollock (RSA), 2. Muttiah Muralitharan (SL), 3. Glenn McGrath (AUS), 4. Makhaya Ntini (RSA), 5. Brett Lee (AUS), 6. Wasim Akram (PAK), 7. Andrew Caddick (ENG), 8. Jason Gillespie (AUS), 9. Chaminda Vaas (SL) and 10 Harbhajan Singh (IND).

of bowlers.

South Africa, regarded as Australia's biggest World Cup threat, have two players in the batting top 10: veteran Jonty Rhodes at seventh and all-rounder Jacques Kallis 10th.

The Proteas also have two top-10 bowlers: Pollock and paceman Makhaya Ntini in fourth.

Ctg Senior football

CU CORRESPONDENT

The CJKS Elite Paint Senior Division Football League begins today at the MAAziz Stadium.

The 10-team league kicks-off with Abahani playing Satadal Club in the opener.

The other teams are: Regency Sports Club, Chittagong Mohammedan, Chittagong City Corporation Ekadash, Customs Sports Club, BCIC Krira Sangstha, Agrabad Nowzowan Club, Friends Club and Bakulia Ekadash.

Sylhet cricket

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Gymkhana Cricket Club recorded an emphatic 123-run victory over Young Victors Club in opening match of the Delta Life First Division Cricket League at the Sylhet Stadium yesterday.

Put into bat, Gymkhana scored 263 for nine in 50 overs. Kavi topscored with 69 while Ahmed made 46.

Suman Tashnid and Kashem grabbed two wickets each for Young Victors.

Young Victors were dismissed for 140 in 44.5 overs. Only Suman offered some resistance with 27 runs.

Prof Razzak chess 21 earn full points

SPORTS REPORTER

Twenty-one players earned full points after the second round preliminary phase matches in the Professor Abdur Razzak 29th National Chess Championship yesterday.

Following are the second round results: Nasir beat Rouf, Amin beat Mahbub, Lavlu beat Mahmood, Sakil beat Roton, Pollab beat Kazal, Javed beat Parag, Ejaz beat Anwar, Emon beat Bably, Polash beat Ariful, Masud beat Robin, Shafiq beat Amir, Arif beat Mujib, Rani beat Kabir, Monir beat Ronodev, Reza beat Shafiqui, Debaraj beat Mahtab, Monur beat Shahid, Shamsul beat Nasir and Rashed beat Mostafa.

Khulna on cherry

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Rashid will be looking forward to using the long handle in the remaining ten overs when Dhaka resume their innings today.

SCOREBOARD
Scoreboard on the opening day of the Ispahani Mirzapore Fourth National League final between Dhaka and Khulna at the Bangabandhu National Stadium

yesterday:
DHAKA: First innings
Javed b Razzak 26
Rashedul c Selimb Hasanuzzaman 50
Jahangir c Monir b Hasanuzzaman 27
Mazharul c Jamal b Hasanuzzaman 119
Sajjad c Selim b Hasanuzzaman 9
Naimur c Saijadul b Jamal 45
Kadirul b b Manjarul 27
Fahim batting 15
Neeyamur batting 1
Extras: (b-12, lb-7, w-1) 20
Total: (For 7 wickets in 90 overs) 339
Fall of wickets: 1-60, 2-103, 3-116, 4-140, 5-236, 6-321, 7-335

Bowler
Al-Amin 15 0 56 0
Masud 7 0 30 0
Razzak 19 4 66 1
Hasanuzzaman 19 5 60 4
Manjarul 21 2 62 1
Khaliduddin 9 0 37 1

Ctg hockey Play-off today

CU CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh Shipping and Trade Mahanagari Hockey League title will be decided after a play-off between defending champions Anirban Club and Ganga Bari Young Society at the Dampara Police Lines ground today.

Both teams drew their final league encounter 1-1 yesterday.

Agassi's the man

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getting through the days when things don't go as planned. It's also a question of playing your best tennis when you need to," he said.

"For me, it's about challenging myself, pushing myself. I can live without the competition. I can live without the hard work. But I can't live without knowing what it feels like to try to accomplish something that I don't believe that I question if I can."

Schuetttler took positives out of his heavy defeat, saying it had been a great experience to play in his first Grand Slam final.

"He played very good. He's definitely at the moment the best player in the world," Schuetttler said.

"I was under pressure from the first point. I never had the chance to play my game. It was a little disappointing to lose the final like that.

"Even today it was a great experience to play in my first final. It was a normal result for him.

"I played a great tournament. I played two great weeks. It was great to play in a Grand Slam final."

It was a commanding Agassi performance. He first served at 67 percent, hit 30 winners to 16 and made just 13 unforced errors. He won 80 of the points to Schuetttler's 43.

Agassi got out of the starting blocks like a sprinter, stringing together the first eight points before Schuetttler could win his first point.

He broke Schuetttler's first two service games to sprint to a 3-0 lead.

"My game is designed to control

the points and to control the tempo of the match and how hard a guy has to work," Agassi said. "So if I'm doing it well, that means I'm going to win the first set in a lot of cases."

Shell-shocked Schuetttler steadied from his horror start and broke back in the fourth game, but relentless Agassi worked his way to two break points in Schuetttler's fourth service game and broke when the German overhit a forehand.

Agassi was down 0-30 as he served out for the set but skated to the first set in just 29 minutes on the back of two Schuetttler forehand errors.

He went on with the job with two more service breaks to reel off the second set in 26 minutes.

Schuetttler was angry with himself as the final slipped away from him.

The German's game unravelled under the might of Agassi's assault and he was broken three more times in a 21-minute third set to complete a hapless first-ever Grand Slam final appearance.

LEADERS LIST			
Pete Sampras	14		
Roy Emerson	12		
Bjorn Borg	11		
Rod Laver	11		
Bill Tilden	10		
Jimmy Connors	8		
Ivan Lendl	8		
Fred Perry	8		
Ken Rosewall	8		
Andre Agassi	8		

Martina rewrites history



AFP, Melbourne

Tennis legend Martina Navratilova made history here Sunday when she became the oldest player ever to win a Grand Slam title after landing the Australian Open mixed doubles crown.

The 46-year-old partnered India's Leander Paes in a 6-4, 7-5 victory over Australia's Todd Woodbridge and Greece's Eleni

Norman Brookes, who was 46 and two months when he won the men's doubles crown in 1924.

"When I was growing up, I wanted to be the youngest to win something, not the oldest," a beaming Navratilova said afterwards. "I certainly didn't think I'd still be playing at this age."

Navratilova's victory was assured in the second set, when a Woodbridge forehand plopped into the net. The veteran Czech-born American hugged teammate Paes as she celebrated another milestone in a remarkable 30-year



PHOTO: AFP

Tennis legend Martina Navratilova and India's Leander Paes pose with the Australian Open mixed doubles trophy.

Daniilidou to earn her 57th title at a Grand Slam event.

At 46 years and three months of age, Navratilova beat the existing record for the oldest player to win at a Grand Slam, held by Australia's

career.

The win came a full 29 years after her first Grand Slam mixed doubles crown, won at Roland Garros in 1974 with Ivan Molina, one year after Paes was born in 1973.

No reason to worry



AFP, Melbourne

Australia's senior cricket selector Trevor Hohns rejected suggestions Sunday that the national team were "in crisis" with injuries 16 days before the start of the World Cup in South Africa and Zimbabwe.

Experienced middle-order left-hander Michael Bevan became Australia's latest casualty Saturday when he was stretched off with a groin injury during the second tri-nations series final against England here.

The Bevan incident came shortly after young all-rounder Shane Watson had been forced to withdraw from the World Cup squad with a back problem.

Several other players, including star fast bowlers Glenn McGrath and Jason Gillespie, are still under fitness clouds.

But Hohns, chairman of the selection panel, said there was no cause for panic.

"I think to have so many injuries before the World Cup is obviously a little disturbing, but the pieces of the jigsaw are coming together," he said. "There is certainly no crisis."

"Glenn McGrath is okay -- the team medicos are totally confident of that and he could have played Saturday against England."

"Gillespie did play today (taking 1-28 in 10 overs for South Australia in a one-day inter-state match against Tasmania) and from all reports bowled very well."

"Shane Warne is back playing. Now the only problem area is Bevan."

"Our first World Cup game is in 16 days, but the injury isn't as bad as first thought, so that's a bonus."

Bevan said he was hopeful of playing in the World Cup after scans Sunday revealed his injury, a torn groin muscle, will sideline him for two to three weeks rather than six to eight weeks as first feared.

The injury could rule Bevan out of Australia's first two games, against Pakistan February 11 and India

February 15, while fellow middle-order batsman Darren Lehmann is already out of the Pakistan game through suspension.

Selectors will have a telephone hook-up Monday to decide whether Bevan should be retained in the Cup squad or replaced by a fully fit player. "My absence will probably be limited to two to three weeks... which is good news from my point of view," Bevan said.

"I guess it means I will miss maybe two matches maximum of the World Cup if the selectors decide to go that way."

The selectors will be reluctant to lose Bevan, who averages an impressive 54.8 runs over 196 limited-overs internationals.

If Australia did replace him, they would have to use a player from the original 30-man squad.

The most likely replacement would be Michael Clarke, who made a timely 116 for New South Wales in their Sheffield Shield match against Western Australia at Newcastle Sunday.

Eng want game shifted



AFP, London

England's cricketers will insist that their controversial World Cup match in Zimbabwe next month be switched away from Harare, a report claimed here on Sunday.

The team, who said in Australia on Saturday that they would issue a statement outlining their thoughts on the matter, will declare their reluctance about the fixture in the statement to be issued on their behalf by Richard Bevan, the man-

aging director of the Professional Cricketers' Association, the Sunday Telegraph reported.

"The statement is expected to call for England's qualifying match against Zimbabwe to be transferred from Harare to South Africa, and make plain that they will only agree to go to Zimbabwe because of the England and Wales Cricket Board's contractual obligation," said the report.

Nasser Hussain's men's opposition to the game, one of six to be staged in Zimbabwe, is understood to have firmed after it was revealed that the squad had received anonymous threatening letters aimed at

sparking a change of mind.

The newspaper reported that Port Elizabeth and Bloemfontein have already been identified as the grounds, which could stage matches, switched from Zimbabwe at short notice.

On Friday, England captain Hussain informed England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) chairman David Morgan, who was also in Melbourne where the English lost the one-day series final against Australia, that threatening letters had been slipped under the doors of players' rooms in their previous hotel in Sydney.

"Nasser advised me that players who were ready to go a week ago were less ready now," Morgan said.

"They were receiving threats about the possibility of disturbances and riots in the lead up to our match."

Hussain said in Melbourne late on Saturday the English squad would release their statement in the next 24-48 hours before confirming players had received the anonymous letters, but denied they contained death threats.

"It (the statement) is not going to be world-shattering news, it's just what the side thinks at the moment," said the skipper.

On Friday, the International Cricket Council (ICC) confirmed that the six World Cup matches due to take place in famine-ravaged Zimbabwe were going ahead.

Earlier this week ICC chief executive Malcolm Speed and World Cup tournament director Ali Bacher visited Zimbabwe to check on the country's security arrangements.

Speed said the situation in Zimbabwe had "deteriorated" since the ICC's November inspection visit there.

But on Friday, the ICC's executive board unanimously gave the green light for the games to continue following assurances that players' and officials' safety would be guaranteed.

However Morgan, who represented England at that meeting, said the ICC would be having a further meeting at 1000 GMT Thursday where Zimbabwe's status as a World Cup host would once again be up for discussion.



PHOTO: STAR

Scene from yesterday's second round preliminary phase matches of the Professor Abdur Razzak 29th National Chess Championship qualifiers at the NSC yesterday.

Indian players given all-clear



REUTERS, Calcutta

All Indian cricketers bound for next month's World Cup in South Africa have cleared precautionary dope tests, a senior board official said on Sunday.

Indian players underwent the tests during their recent New Zealand tour. Drugs tests have been introduced at the World Cup to comply with strict South African laws.

The Indian board has also engaged the services of a South African sports psychologist to help the players recover from their disastrous New Zealand tour.

The team members, who leave for the tournament on Wednesday, will hold sessions with sports psychologist Sandy Gordon during their



PHOTO: COURSEY

State Minister for Youth and Sports M Fazlur Rahman talks to a participant in the South Asian Junior Table Tennis Championships at BKSP yesterday.

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