

Davis Cup Russia bank on Safin

Tennis

AFP, Paris

Russia's defence of the Davis Cup will be severely tested in Argentina this weekend and star player Marat Safin has already come in for a tongue-lashing from captain Shamil Tarpishev.

Everyone knows that the towering Muscovite is up there with the best in terms of sheer talent, Tarpishev said, but his motivation is not always what it should be.

"He has the power, the agility, the speed, everything you need to be a great athlete," Tarpishev said.

"He could be as dominant as Michael Jordan was or Michael Schumacher, Tiger Woods, you name it."

"Unfortunately, he has the talent but not the desire to be the world number one."

Safin will once again team up with veteran Yevgeny Kafelnikov and the hero of last year's stunning win over France in the Davis Cup final, Mikhail Youzhny.

Barring their way on the claycourts of the River Plate Club will be a strong Argentinian quartet of David Nalbandian, Gaston Gaudio, Mariano Zabaleta and Lucas Arnold.

Usually the South Americans are near unbeatable on their home clay, but in Safin and former French Open champion Kafelnikov the Russians have two players who were brought up on the slow surface.

Former Argentine great Guillermo Vilas, however, is in no doubt.

"Argentina will win easily," he told Clarin newspaper.

"Because we are at home, we are playing on clay and because when guys

like these (Russians) who are playing well come to Argentina their form drops. Just look at Germany in the last round here."

The French, losing finalists last year, but winners in 2001 are still in the thick of things and they will start favourites against Switzerland on indoor hardcourts in Toulouse.

Captain Guy Forget has again plumped for the tried and tested Sebastien Grosjean and Nicolas Escude in the singles with Australian Open winners Fabrice Santoro and Michael Llodra teaming up again for the doubles. Switzerland will rely heavily on Roger Federer especially as number two singles player Michel Kratochvil is out with a knee injury. His place is likely to go to the lowly-ranked Ivo Heuberger.

Grosjean insisted that the French would not be taking the tie lightly.

"Federer is fifth or sixth in the world and he is capable of winning both singles and then adding the winning point in the doubles. They really are a dangerous team and we will need to be at our best."

Over in Valencia, Spain, many people's favourites to win this year's cup, look too strong and compete on clay against Croatia, who shocked the United States at home in the last round but who will have to do without their spearhead Goran Ivanisevic this time round.

Ivan Ljubicic and Mario Ancic are both accomplished claycourt players, but arrayed against them are four of the best in the world on the surface - Juan Carlos Ferrero, Carlos Moya, Albert Costa and Alex Corretja.

Moya joined up with the Spanish "Dream Team" on Tuesday after losing in the Miami Masters Series final on Sunday to Andre Agassi and said that he was feeling the effects of his efforts.

England 'two' good

UEFA Euro 2004 PORTUGAL

AFP, Paris

Taking a gamble seemed out of character for England's Swedish coach Sven-Goran Eriksson - but it paid off on Wednesday as he threw 17-year-old Wayne Rooney into the fray and saw him play a big part in a 2-0 Euro 2004 qualifier win over Turkey.

The three points propelled England to the top of Group Seven with ten points to nine for the Turks after

promptly scored from close range to break the deadlock.

Rooney then gave way in the closing moments to Dyer, who won the penalty from which skipper David Beckham wrapped up the win.

The Turks took their goalless run against England to nine matches - which included two 8-0 thrashings - although since then the visitors have made enormous strides and took third place at the World Cup.

In addition they had won their opening three qualifiers whereas England had dropped home points in a

Zidane secured the points after Omri Afeq had given the Israelis a shock lead in the second minute.

Group rivals Slovenia beat Cyprus 4-1 but trail the French by nine points, albeit with two matches in hand.

Scotland could have done with a Rooney, meanwhile, as they went down 1-0 in Lithuania, who showed their draw in Germany on Saturday was no fluke.

The Lithuanians denied their status as Group Five also-rans by winning courtesy of Tomas Razanauskas's 73rd-minute penalty, awarded for a foul by

Ruud van Nistelrooy and Mark van Bommel were on target as the Dutch won 2-1 in Moldova, coming from behind.

In Group Two, a goal from Ole Gunnar Solskjaer helped Norway to a 2-0 win in Luxembourg for their seventh successive away win in Euro qualifiers going back to 1995.

The streak equals previous runs by the former Yugoslavia and the Czech Republic.

Norway are three points clear of Denmark, who had been top on goal difference, after the Danes, who won 5-



PHOTO: AFP

England's Darius Vassell (L) scoring the first goal against Turkey past custodian Rustu Recber at Sunderland on April 2.

Rooney showed the passion that the British media had accused the team of lacking in Saturday's lacklustre 2-0 win in Liechtenstein.

Rooney came in for the dropped Emile Heskey of Liverpool, despite the fact that the latter had been the provider for clubmate Michael Owen's opener in Liechtenstein.

Eriksson also brought in Manchester United's Nicky Butt in place of Kieron Dyer to allow Paul Scholes greater freedom in midfield for what was England's biggest match since last summer's World Cup quarter-final defeat by Brazil.

After 57 minutes of English pressure which had failed to bring a breakthrough Eriksson withdrew Owen, who had picked up a knock, and sent on Aston Villa's Darius Vassell - who

shambolic 2-2 draw against Macedonia five months ago.

But this time the English passion returned.

"There was definitely passion, straight from the off," said skipper Beckham.

"It's a great night for English football."

Defending European champions France meanwhile bagged their fifth straight win in Group One with a 2-1 success over Israel in Palermo which leaves them as good as qualified.

The French, who posted a scintillating 6-0 win over Malta at the weekend, were less assured in a match played amid a stifling security presence - a by-product of the political situation in the Middle East.

But David Trezeguet and Zinedine

Jackie McNamara of Celtic.

Razanauskas had also been on target in the 1-1 draw in Germany.

Scotland's German coach Berti Vogts said his men could only blame themselves for not finding the net.

"We had to score and we didn't. I don't know if it was a penalty. I will have to watch it again," said the man who must plot his own country's downfall in the group.

Elsewhere, Ireland could only draw 0-0 in Albania while Group Ten rivals Switzerland settled for the same score in Georgia.

The Swiss now have a two-point lead over Russia with Albania third and the Irish fourth.

In Group Three the Czech Republic beat Austria 4-0 to stay top ahead of Holland on goal difference.

2 at Romania on Saturday, somehow slumped 2-0 at home to dark horses Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Poland top Group Four on goal difference from Latvia after hammering San Marino 5-0 while Sweden are still in the hunt after a 2-1 win in Hungary.

In Group Six, Northern Ireland made it eight games without a goal as they lost 2-0 to Greece in Belfast while leaders Spain beat Armenia 3-0 to take their lead over Ukraine to four points.

Bulgaria head up Group Eight despite only drawing 0-0 at Estonia while Croatia trail them by three points following a 2-0 home win over minnows Andorra.

Euro 2004 qualifier results on Wednesday:

STANDINGS																							
Standings after Wednesday's qualifying group matches for the 2004 European Championships (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, against, points):																							
GROUP 1				GROUP 6				GROUP 7															
France	5	5	0	19	2	15	Spain	4	3	1	0	10	2	10	England	4	3	1	0	8	3	10	
Slovenia	3	2	0	1	7	6	6	Ukraine	4	1	3	0	6	4	6	Turkey	4	3	0	1	10	3	9
Israel	3	1	1	4	3	4	Greece	4	2	0	2	4	4	6	Slovakia	4	2	0	2	7	5	6	
Cyprus	4	1	1	2	5	8	4	Armenia	4	1	1	2	3	7	4	Macedonia	4	0	2	2	4	7	2
Malta	5	0	0	5	11	7	0	N.Ireland	4	0	1	3	0	6	1	Liechtenstein	4	0	1	3	11	2	1
GROUP 2				GROUP 8				GROUP 9															
Norway	4	3	1	0	7	2	10	Bulgaria	4	3	1	0	6	1	10	Wales	4	4	0	0	10	11	2
Denmark	4	2	1	1	9	6	7	Croatia	4	2	1	1	6	2	7	Italy	4	2	1	1	6	3	7
Romania	4	2	0	2	12	6	6	Turkey	4	2	0	2	6	6	6	Serb-M'Negro	3	1	2	0	5	3	5
Bosnia	4	2	0	2	4	5	6	Slovakia	4	2	0	2	4	7	2	Finland	4	1	0	3	3	6	3
Luxembourg	4	0	0	4	0	13	0	Macedonia	4	0	2	2	4	7	2	Azerbaijan	5	0	1	4	2	13	1
GROUP 3				GROUP 10																			
Czech Rep	4	3	1	0	9	1	10	Switzerland	4	2	2	0	7	3	8								
Netherlands	4	3	1	0	9	2	10	Russia	3	2	0	1	9	6	6								
Austria	4	2	0	2	4	7	6	Albania	4	1	2	1	5	6	5								
Belarus	4	1	0	3	2	8	3	Ireland	4	1	1	2	5	7	4								
Moldova	4	0	0	4	2	8	0	Georgia	3	0	1	2	2	6	1								
GROUP 4																							
Poland	4	2	1	1	7	1	7																
Latvia	3	2	1	0	2	0	7																
Hungary	4	1	2	1	5	3	5																
Sweden	3	1	2	0	3	2	5																
San-Marino	4	0	0	4	0	11	0																

Revelling in Rooney

UEFA Euro 2004 PORTUGAL

AFP, London

Sven-Goran Eriksson believes England have found the ideal strike partner for Michael Owen in 17-year-old Wayne Rooney.

Rooney inspired England to victory with a stunning individual display as goals from Darius Vassell and David Beckham sealed a 2-0 win over Turkey in Wednesday night's Euro 2004 qualifier over Turkey.

"He's a great talent, we knew that before. But now we know he's ready for the big matches," Eriksson said.

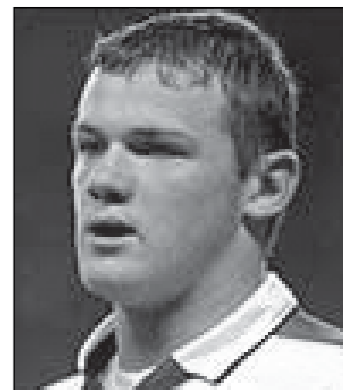
"I can't see any reason why I should leave him out if he plays like that."

"But all the players played well. It was an extremely good effort all round and these are three very good points," he added.

Eriksson revealed that he had left it late to tell Rooney he would be playing.

"Wayne only knew about it at about four o'clock. To be fair to him he said 'okay' - it was a very good reaction," Eriksson said.

Rooney's first international start came seven weeks to the day after he became England's youngest ever cap,



WAYNE ROONEY

with a second half appearance in a friendly against Australia at the age of 17 years and 111 days.

Six months ago Rooney was a 16-year-old trainee on 70 pounds a week who had not even started a Premier League match for Everton.

Life changed forever for Rooney on October 19 of last year when he came off the bench at Arsenal to strike a dipping, curling 25-yard shot that bamboozled England goalkeeper David Seaman and earned Everton a memorable win over the double holders.

Dechy, Cargill cruise

Tennis

AFP, Sarasota

French seventh seed Nathalie Dechy and 21-year-old American wild card entry Ashley Cargill booked a quarter-final matchup at the 140,000-dollar WTA Sarasota Open with victories here Wednesday.

Dechy, whose first WTA singles title came at Gold Coast in January, outlasted Swiss standout Marie-Gaiaeh Mikaelian 6-2, 6-7, 6-4 while Cargill dispatched Thailand's

Tamarine Tanasugarn 6-1, 4-6, 6-4. Cargill is 6-8 in WTA career matches and in her first career quarter-final on the clay here in the first tuneup for next month's French Open.

France's Mary Pierce knocked off qualifier compatriot Marion Bartoli 6-4, 6-2. The former French Open champion next faces fifth seed Elena Dementieva of Russia.

Russian qualifier Nadia Petrova got past countrywoman Elena Likhovtseva, 6-4, 6-3, and will meet another Russian in the second round, second seed Anastasia Myskina.



ESPN

Western Union World Football Repeat at 11:00 am
English Premier Football League Newcastle United vs Arsenal Repeat at 6:30 pm
Sportscentre Hindi Sport News Live at 8:30 pm
STAR Sports Futbol Mundial Repeat at 8:00 am Sportsline Tonight Sport News Live at 8:00 pm

Hooper keen

FROM PAGE 8

"Once he is in form and he makes himself available, he is someone that I would like to have around. That can only be good for the team."

Meanwhile, the West Indies Cricket Board (WICB) has backed down on its announcement that Australian Bennett King had been appointed to coach the team.

King told BBC Sport on Tuesday the board had been premature in heralding the deal.

"The WICB ... endorsed the recom-

mendation of the recruitment panel that King, head coach of the Australia Cricket Academy, be offered the position of coach," the board said in a statement.

"King indicated that he was excited about the prospect of being the coach of the West Indies team, but is awaiting a formal offer before confirming a decision."

Former Test batsman Gus Logie is serving as interim coach for the two home series.

Lanka hit by

FROM PAGE 8

"He is being treated by the physio now and we will just have to see how that goes before we select the side tonight," said Jayasekera.

With the selectors having axed Pulasthi Gunaratne, their fifth seamer, Sri Lanka are now left with only the inexperienced Buddhika Fernando and Prabath Nissanka as back-up.

Hosts' matches

FROM PAGE 8

and 250 respectively. The BCB is likely to make an official announcement regarding the rate of tickets after confirming the name of the bank that would sell the tickets. Premier Bank is likely to get the right for the distribute tickets as disclosed by the source.

Meanwhile, the rates for the hospitality boxes have been announced yesterday.

An AC box will cost Taka 75,000 (seventy five thousand) including food for the entire series while the rate of a non-AC box has been fixed at Taka 50,000 (fifty thousand).

Paes, weather worry Kiwi Cuppers

AFP, Calcutta

New Zealand hope to overcome Indian ace Leander Paes and the weather when they clash with the hosts in the Asia-Oceania Group 1 second-round tie here on Friday.

"Paes could be the key to the rubber," non-playing New Zealand captain Glenn Wilson said Thursday after the draws, which pitted Paes against Mark Nielsen in the opening singles on the grass courts here.

New Zealander Alistair Hunt will clash with top Indian player Rohan Bopanna in the second singles.

"We are good on grass and hope to catch Paes early on because he has not played any singles match for seven weeks. He might be difficult to catch once he gets going," said Wilson.

Williams in for McGrath

FROM PAGE 8

Jane, a former flight attendant, is the mother of James, 3, and Holly, 18 months.

Chairman of selectors Trevor Hohns said the uncertainty meant the selectors had to make a decision on a replacement player.

"It is an unfortunate situation confronting the McGrath family and it was important that Glenn return home to be with his wife, Jane," Hohns said in the ACB statement.

"We will talk with Glenn over the weekend to ascertain his position and see how everything is progressing. While we expect he will be able to return to the West Indies, we needed to make an urgent decision about a replacement player after consulting with team management."

Hohns said that with (batsman) Damien Martyn (injured finger) joining the squad later in the tour and Jason Gillespie's recent recovery from a heel problem, "We felt it was necessary to call in another player to boost the bowling stocks."

"Brad has bowled consistently during the summer and has been in contention for some time, so we expect him to slot in nicely with the balance of the team and make a strong impact with his pace and accuracy."

McGrath is the second-highest Australian Test wicket-taker behind Shane Warne, with 422 wickets in 91

Target Duff, Kahveci

Football

AFP, London

Manchester United were reported Tuesday to be set to make summer bids for Blackburn's Irish winger Damien Duff and Turkish midfielder Nihat Kahveci.

The 24-year-old Duff, also wanted by Liverpool, was understood to have agreed a 10 million pound move with Manchester manager Alex Ferguson who was told by chief executive Peter Kenyon on Tuesday he would have to off-load players if he wanted to make any major buys.

The left-footed Irishman's arrival at Old Trafford would probably lead to Ryan Giggs leaving for Inter Milan.

And Ferguson was also reported to have asked his England players to give him an assessment of Kahveci in Wednesday's Euro 2004 qualifier at Sunderland.

Ferguson's brother Martin has already watched 23-year-old Kahveci play for Spanish side Real Sociedad who have already denied United have made a bid.

Former Manchester striker Jordi Cruyff, now with Alaves, told the Manchester Evening News Kahveci had improved tremendously since John Toshack signed him from Turkish side Besiktas last season.

"He is unbelievably quick and shoots from everywhere. If he played alongside a big centre forward he is very good feeding off that type of player because he is so incredibly fast," Cruyff told the News.

Cruyff saw him as a perfect foil to

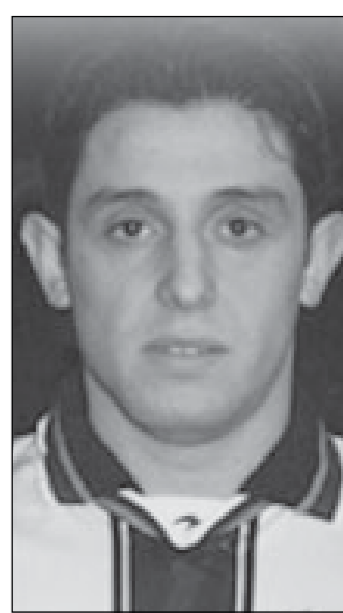
Dutch striker Ruud van Nistelrooy.

Liverpool were reported to have turned down a Leeds offer of Australian Harry Kewell in January in the belief Duff would be joining them.

That offer may be repeated in the off-season with Leeds struggling to cope with debts of 80 million pounds (120 million dollars) and new chairman John McKenzie vowing to balance the books.



DAMIEN DUFF



NIHAT KAHVECİ

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer