

Agassi v Roddick looms



AFP, Melbourne

Defending champion Andre Agassi and top-seed Andy Roddick raced into the last 16 of the Australian Open Friday as women's favourite Justine Henin-Hardenne passed her first serious test.

Agassi and Roddick both blasted aside their opponents to record straight sets victories and move a step closer to a semifinal 'clash of the generations.'

World number one Roddick overwhelmed 27th seed Taylor Dent in the evening match, bombarding his American compatriot with a crushing 6-2, 6-0, 6-2 in just 71 minutes.

"Taylor didn't have his best night tonight and I played pretty well," said Roddick, who now plays 16th seed Sjeng Schalken in the fourth round.

"I was pretty happy with the way I played and I'm just pleased to be in the fourth round."

Agassi was similarly emphatic in his 6-0, 6-3, 6-3 demolition job of Sweden's Thomas Enqvist, who has the best record of any active player against the 33-year-old American -- now an even 5-5.

"I did everything I was looking to do," said Agassi, who set the tone for the encounter by hurtling through a 21-minute first set and breaking serve a total of seven times.

Agassi now faces Thailand's Paradorn Srichaphan, the 13th

seed going into the Open's fourth round for the first time after beating former world number one Gustavo Kuerten 6-3, 7-5, 6-4.

In other men's results Friday, fiery Russian Marat Safin kept his cool to beat US veteran Todd Martin in a five-set marathon 7-5, 1-6, 4-6, 6-0, 7-5.

The show of level-headedness by the former world number one opened the possibility Safin could emerge as a dark horse.

Robby Ginepri, the 32nd seeded American, dismissed French wildcard Nicolas Escude 6-2, 6-3, 6-4, and fellow American James Blake powered past the last remaining men's qualifier in the tournament, Olivier Patience of France, 6-1, 6-3, 6-2.

On the women's side, Henin-Hardenne survived the first real challenge to her quest for back-to-back Grand Slam titles in a hard fought match against 30th seeded Svetlana Kuznetsova of Russia.

The top seeded Belgian, who lost only five games in breezing past her first two opponents, had her serve broken twice and committed 27 unforced errors in the one hour, 17 minutes it took her to beat Kuznetsova 6-2, 7-5.

It was a far from convincing performance from Henin-Hardenne, the hot tournament favorite after winning the US Open in September and who now faces Italian qualifier Mara Santangelo.

Nevertheless Henin-Hardenne insisted she was pleased with her form, saying she was glad to be tested after routine victories in her opening two matches.

"It was a good fight. It's the kind of match that I like to play very early in the tournament," said Henin-Hardenne, who rose to the top of women's tennis last year with victories in the French and US Opens.

"I'm pretty happy because she's a tough opponent and I won in two sets. It's great to have this kind of match in the third round because I knew that before going to court, I had to be 100 percent if I wanted to win.

"The kind of matches I got in the first two rounds don't help me too much to improve my game."

Henin-Hardenne's biggest hurdle to another Grand Slam final, fourth seeded Amelie Mauresmo of France, had far less difficulty ousting unseeded Anabel Medina Garrigues of Spain 6-1, 6-2 in just a minute over one hour.

But the Frenchwoman, a 1999 Australian Open runner-up, was twice treated during the second set for tightness in the muscles of her lower left leg, a problem she said had been nagging her for several days.

"It bothers me a bit and I will really try to take care of it, but I don't really know where it comes from or what it is, so it's difficult to say," she said. "I've never had this before."

Asked if the problem could derail her title hopes here, Mauresmo said only, "I hope not."

Also in the same half of the draw is fifth seeded American Lindsay Davenport, who recovered from 4-1 down in the opening set to oust world number 54 Laura Granville 6-4, 6-0.

School cricket

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Gaibandha Boys High School defeated Akbar Ali Khan High School by six wickets in the inaugural match of the Standard Chartered 22nd National School Cricket Championship at the Gaibandha Government Boys High School ground yesterday.

In the second match of the day, Harisingha High School defeated Dariyapur High School by 30 runs.

A total of 10 schools of Gaibandha district region are participating in the meet.

Singer chess

SPORTS REPORTER

Five players jointly shared the lead with 6.5 points each after the end of the eighth round games of the preliminary phase Singer 30th National Chess Championship at the NSC yesterday.

They are: FM Khandkar Aminul Islam, Shawkat Hossain Pallab, FM Sheikh Nasir Ahmed, Debaraj Chattarjee and Aminul Islam Polish.

In this round Nasir beat FM Rezaul Haque, Debaraj beat Sohail Chowdhury, Maleq beat Din Muhammad, Arman beat Humayun Kabir, Javed beat Taherul Islam and Enayet beat Uten. Amin drew with Pallab and Lavlu drew with Polish.

Int'l Open chess

SPORTS REPORTER

Grand Master Ziaur Rahman earned maximum 2 points after the second round games of the first International Open Chess tournament yesterday which is now being held at Chennai, India.

Zia beat Rahul Sangma of India. IWM Rani Hamid, Zakia Sultana and Afroza Khanam Bably earned 1 point each.

Total 105 players from different countries are taking part in the meet.

Inzamam stays skipper

AFP, Karachi

The Pakistan Cricket Board Friday retained current captain Inzamam-ul-Haq for the upcoming year, which will include the ice-breaking home series against rival India in March.

"The chairman of the PCB Shaharyar Khan has reposed confidence in Inzamam and has appointed him captain for the calendar year 2004," it was announced in a statement.

"The PCB is optimistic that under his leadership, the Pakistan cricket team will continue to make upward progress," Khan said.

Pakistan won the two-match Test series in New Zealand 1-0 but lost the one-day series 4-1 in an unimpressive manner.

The 33-year-old portly cricketer from Multan took over as Pakistan captain in the one-day series against Bangladesh after Rashid Latif was suspended for the series on charges of claiming an unfair catch in a Test.

Primera Liga preview

Valencia feel like Real



AFP, Madrid

Valencia have swept aside the importance of their 3-0 Spanish Cup defeat to Real Madrid in midweek to affirm they are now the main challengers to the reigning Spanish league champions.

"We have taken over from Barcelona as the main rivals of Madrid, stepping into the vacuum Barca have left behind," Valencia president Jaime Orti declared earlier this week.

"We are on a par with Real. Valencia have won, and deserve the respect of everybody, not just Madrid," added Orti.

Orti's affirmation may be bold but it comes as no surprise. Valencia, the champions in 2002, lead Real by one point in the league table and will be out to boost their title hopes by beating Osasuna at home on Sunday.

Valencia have won their last four games at their Mestalla stadium and are unbeaten in nine outings - while the Pamplona-based side have only won once in 24 visits to Valencia, and that was 12 seasons ago.

"The players will want to show in the best way possible that the defeat in Madrid was not a reflection of their true abilities," Valencia coach Rafa Benitez suggested on Thursday.

FA Cup preview

Bet on Scarborough!



AFP, London

Elvis is more likely to be found alive than Scarborough are to win the FA Cup.

At least that is the view taken by Britain's bookmakers, who offer odds of 5,000-1 against the non-league side going all the way to the Millennium Stadium in May, compared with only 1,000-1 against a confirmed sighting of the king of rock and roll. A bit hard on the club known as the Seadogs perhaps. But the vagaries of odds setting do give a realistic indication of the scale of the task facing the Nationwide Conference club as they prepare to entertain Chelsea in the fourth round of the tournament on Saturday.

The club that manager Russell Slade has guided to the last 32 of the world's oldest tournament for the first time in its 125-year history has twice been on the verge of financial extinction in the last two years.

Claudio Ranieri's squad cost 150 million pounds (280 million dollars) to put together. Slade's was assembled for the grand total of 2,000 pounds, less than some Chelsea players earn for a morning's work.

The one thing Scarborough do have on their side is a little bit of history.

Benitez will be without Spanish international midfielder Ruben Baraja, suspended, and Mohamed Sissou, who is on African Nations Cup duty for Mali, leaving Valencia short of a midfield playmaker.

In order to fill this particular vacuum, Benitez is expected to ask Pablo Aimar to play deeper than usual, leaving his options open as to who will accompany Mista Ferrer up front.

Real meanwhile host Villarreal on Saturday and know that their 100 per cent home record in the league will be under more threat than on most of the other 10 occasions they have won in the Santiago Bernabeu stadium in this campaign.

Last season, Villarreal managed a 1-1 draw and, with them flying high in fifth position and bidding for a place in Europe next season, they are determined to go one better this time around.

Real Madrid coach Carlos Queiroz has a few dilemmas to resolve ahead of Villarreal's visit.

Queiroz will have to replace his suspended Spanish international Ivan Helguera and the Portuguese coach is expected to turn to Jose Maria 'Guti' Gutierrez.

There is also a big question mark over the fitness of Ronaldo, who pulled a thigh muscle in Wednesday's win over Valencia.

Real medical staff will examine Ronaldo again on Friday before deciding if he can play.

If Ronaldo gets the thumbs down, Javier Portillo is likely to grab what would be his third start this season with both hands.

Real are also without FIFA World Player of the Year Zinedine Zidane. The Frenchman is out for at least another week after tearing a thigh muscle.

Catalan giants Barcelona travel to Sevilla on Sunday and a win could see them finally claw their way back into the top six after an erratic first half of theseason.

However, Barca's beleaguered Dutch coach Frank Rijkaard will keep his fingers crossed that Thursday night's Spanish Cup game against Real Zaragoza will not leave him with more players on his club's already extensive injury list.

FIXTURES

Saturday (kick off GMT): Real Madrid v Villarreal (1830), Albacete v Atletico Madrid (2030) Sunday: Celta Vigo v Real Sociedad (1600), Espanyol v Real Betis (1600), Malaga v Valladolid (1600), Racing Santander v Murcia (1600), Valencia v Osasuna (1600), Real Zaragoza v Real Mallorca (1600), Sevilla v Barcelona (1800), Athletic Bilbao v Deportivo La Coruna (2000)

Ronaldo warns of Roman power!

REUTERS, Madrid

Chelsea's buying power under the ownership of Russian billionaire Roman Abramovich is a concern for Real Madrid, Brazilian striker Ronaldo said on Friday.

Ronaldo was fined by Real for making an unauthorised trip to London earlier this month and arriving back late for training.

The player has categorically denied newspaper speculation that the trip might have had something to do with interest from Chelsea but he recognises why the story caused disquiet at Real.

"I'm very happy here at Real Madrid and the stories are all just rumours," Ronaldo was quoted as saying in an interview with Cadena Copre radio in Spain.

"Real haven't asked me to explain the trip because it was just to have some (publicity) photos taken ... (but) with the Russian guy (Abramovich) wanting to sign everyone they're scared."

Chelsea signed Claude Makelele from Real Madrid just before the start of the season but Ronaldo said he had no plans to join the French midfielder in London.

"Abramovich has never called me," he said. "If they are interested, it's always nice to be appreciated."

Ronaldo is Real's top scorer this season with 15 league goals.

Office hockey Super League today

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh Kriya Shikha Protistan (BKSP) and Morning Sun moved into the Super League of the Office Hockey League eliminating their respective rivals at the Maulana Bhashani National Hockey Stadium yesterday.

In the day's first match, BKSP outplayed Bangladesh Navy 7-1 while Morning Sun blanked Bangladesh Police 4-0 in the second match.

Four teams - Bangladesh Army, Friends Library, BKSP and Morning Sun will play in the super league today at the same venue.

Mi, Roy write

FROM PAGE 13

earned them 60 ITF junior points respectively. The losing finalists, on the other hand, collected 45 points.

The boys' doubles final turned out to be an anti-climax when Roy and his partner Anushuman Dutta were awarded the title after one of their opponents had to retire having conceded the first set 6-2.

The press release faxed by the Bangladesh Tennis Federation failed to mention the names of who Roy and Dutta were playing.

On the concluding day Bangladesh Olympic Association secretary general Zafar Imam gave away prizes among the winners.

MSC decision

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Anwarul Haque Helal denied Lokman's claim that they would disallow the goal.

"No one has the authority to change the verdict of the referee no matter how wrong it may be. So we can not cancel that goal. Besides, we also can not take action against the referee because it is the matter of Referee's Association to review the performance of the officials," said Helal.

Helal admitted that the emergency meeting has been called only to discuss the Mohammedan issue and expressed his hopes for a positive solution.

The DMFLC, in an emergency meeting on Wednesday evening, postponed all the matches of the league until today (January 24).

In the name

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"It's been a terrible thing what has happened and the guys really felt yesterday, there was a fair bit of emotion out there, and we really wanted to walk away with a win.

"I think deep down somebody was watching and helping us last night when we were out there for those last couple of balls."

Booters

FROM PAGE 13

Union), Titumir Chowdhury, Rukunuzzaman Kanchan, Papal Mahmud (Muktijoddha), Khaled Hossain, Atiqul Islam Tareq, Ashraful Karim, Shamsur Alam, Arman Aziz and Kallol Kumra Ghosh (Arambagh), Kamal Hossain, Harisuzzaman, Jahangir Alam (Sheikh Russell), Noor Islam, Hafizur Rashid, Al-Amin (Badda Jagarani), Ratan Ali (Dhanmondi), Ishrafil (Victoria), Zahidul Hossain, Monir Hossain, Sabbir Ahmed (Wanderers), MN Shakil (Mohakhali XI), Akram Hossain (Prantik), Masud Alam (Farashganj), Rafiqul Islam (Wari), Enamul Haq (Youngmen's Club), Shakil Ahmed and Babu Das (Rahmatganj).

The above mentioned players have been asked to report to BFF's member secretary of team management committee Sayed Hasan Kanan on January 27, Tuesday at 9am at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium.

Easy victory

FROM PAGE 13

1997/10 in 35 overs (Arefin 83 n.o., Russell 20; Masubur 3-42)

BADC HIGH SCHOOL: 164/10 in 27.1 overs (Ziaul 21; Sajjad 4-27, Russell 2-21, Sultantar 2-25)

Result: MA Latif Memorial won by 35 runs.

KEYA KINDERGARTEN: 195/10 in 33.2 overs (Bilal 31, Judge 24, Hossain 22; Sumon 2-20, Ali 2-26, Anit 2-36)

SONNET KINDERGARTEN AB HIGH SCHOOL: 173/9 in 35 overs (Rockey 24; Sabuj 4-21, Bilal 2-28)

Result: Keya Kindergarten won by 22 runs.

ANANADHARA BENAROSH: 90/10 in 24 overs (Wahid 13, Al-Amin 2-13, Jamal 2-14, Babul 2-14)

BLS SCHOOL: 93/7 in 22.4 overs (Sumon 22, Jamal 22, Jasim 3-31, Ali 2-14)

Result: BLS School won by 3 wickets.

Red Crescent Fund Raising Cup held

SPORTS REPORTER

Air Commodore Muhammed Murad Hossain won the men's title while I W Hong clinched the ladies' crown in the Red Crescent Fund Raising Cup golf tournament at the Kurmitola Golf Club yesterday.

182 golfers including 6 ladies took part in the meet.

Chief of Army Staff and president of Kurmitola Golf Club Lt General Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury gave away prizes among the winners.

OTHER RESULTS

Senior winner: Abdul Wahed, Junior winner: Master Shariar Khan, Best Gross: Sadiq Quddus, Ladies Best Gross: Ayesha Farid, Second Best Gross: Masud Ahmed, Runner-up: Mohammed Baten, Second runner-up: Iftekhar Rahman, Nearest to Pin: Maj Gen Jiban Kanai Das, Longest Drive: Shawkat-uz-Zaman.

Ashes going

FROM PAGE 13

to speak to Cricket Australia and the insurers about.

"We'd like as many cricket fans as possible to see them but whether the urn could be safely transported around the country is something we would have to look into."

It has long been a sore point in Australian cricket that, regardless of the result of an Ashes series, the urn itself has remained with the MCC where it is usually displayed in the Lord's museum.

Australia have 'held' the Ashes since 1989 with England's last series win over their oldest cricketing opponents coming on their 1986-87 tour.

The only time the urn left London was in 1988 when it was taken to Australia for the country's bicentennial celebrations.

In order to try to remedy the perceived unfairness of the urn staying in England regardless of series results, the MCC commissioned an Ashes-shaped Waterford crystal trophy which was first presented to Australia captain Mark Taylor after the 1998-99 Ashes series.

In contrast to the Ashes, this new trophy remains the property of the winning side.

BCB beat Media

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) XI defeated a combined Media XI by six wickets in a friendly match at the Old DOHS ground yesterday.

Opting to bat first, the Media team scored 126 for 9 in the stipulated 25 overs with Mim making the highest 47.

In reply, BCB's media committee chairman Rezauddin Al Mamun cracked 56 off just 45 balls as his side eclipsed the 137 required in 20 overs for the loss of four wickets. Mamun was later declared man-of-the-match.

PCB chief

FROM PAGE 13

The old committee had been accused of nepotism over the selection of the Pakistan under-17 team currently touring India, which includes the son of one of the selectors.

Sohail, who had also been criticised for being a commentator while serving as chief selector, defended his time in the post.

"I did my job honestly and am happy that I have revived a team which, if it plays up to its potential, can beat India," he said.



President of Kurmitola Golf Club and Chief of Army Staff Lt Gen Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury (fifth from right) poses with dignitaries after teeing-off the Red Crescent Fund Raising Cup Golf Tournament yesterday.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down words.

Cryptoquip puzzle grid with numbers and letters.

CRYPTOQUIP K O A H C X M A H C U G W Y M M A E U H L Y E C E K L J H L D A A H C M U H L J C Y , K E K U U W Y D K G R H O U W Y X K U U Y M ? Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHEN THE ENGLISH TEACHER DECIDES TO LOWER YOUR TEST SCORE, HAS HE DEGRADED YOU? Today's Cryptoquip Clue: M equals R The Cryptoquip 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.

Muballik Ctg's hero

FROM PAGE 13

Table with player names and scores for Muballik Ctg's hero.

Result: Chittagong won by one run.

Man-of-the-match: Sabbir Khan and Habib Muballik (Chittagong)

KHULNA V SYLHET Venue: Shamsul Huda Stadium, Jessore

SYLHET I m t i a z b Al-Amin 6

Mabud c Hasibul b Russell 6

Parvez c b Raj 38

Nasir d b Shafiul 1

Mowla lbw b Nizamuddin 21

Atiq c Hasanuzzaman b Bashir 9

Sami run out 4

Rana run out 1

Ejaz c Jalaluddin b Raj 8

Jakwan c Bashir b Russell 1

Nabil not out 0

Extras: (b-4, lb-1, nb-4, w-6) 15

Total: (All out in 38.4 overs) 115

Fall of wks: 1-14, 2-18, 3-33, 4-68, 5-89, 6-93, 7-97, 8-111, 9-115, 10-115

Result: Khulna won by six wickets

Man-of-the-match: Hasanuzzaman (Khulna)

RAJSHAHI V BARISAL Venue: Rangpur Cricket Garden

RAJSHAHI Rafiqul b Salahuddin 0

Murad run out 32

Shamimul c Nayan b Anisur 8

Nuruzzaman b Mustad 47

Anisur b Arman 15

Hasanuzzaman lbw b Anisur 7

Rezwanul c Anisur b Tariqul 18

Mahbub not out 16

Shahjada c Anisur b Mustad 12

Shafaq c Anisur b Tariqul 1

Saifullah b Anisur 0

Extras: (b-4, lb-2, w-18) 13

Total: (All out in 49.2 overs) 170

Fall of wks: 1-2, 2-24, 3-72, 4-118, 5-120, 6-133, 7-159, 8-163, 9-170, 10-170

Result: Barisal won by 2 wickets

Man-of-the-match: Imran c Anisur b Mahbub 38

Fazle c Rezwanul b Shafaq 0

Jamal st Shamimul b Saifullah 27

Nahidul lbw b Rezwanul 8

Nayan run out 0

Italian Cup

Milan in semis