



Did U Know?

Rajin Saleh's 77 against Zimbabwe in the third one-day international is now the highest score by a Bangladeshi at Chittagong, bettering Habibul Bashar's 65 vs. India last year.



Ronaldinho (Brazilian superstar) 'I'm sure we'll score stacks of goals, it would be incredible. If we had Raul, Adriano, Owen and so on then that would be a major headache for the coach. Every game would end up 8-7 or 7-7. I'd love them all to come here, as long as they didn't steal my place.' On Real Madrid's drive for strikers.

Serena

FROM PAGE 13 to beat me. Whether Williams will be at her best against Davenport is another thing altogether. Against Sharapova, Williams was heading for defeat as unforced errors - 53 in total - dogged her game. Against a player as experienced as Davenport, a similar count could normally expect to be costly. But Davenport, who defeated Williams in both of their meetings last season, has got her own problems. She staggered through her semi-final with France's Nathalie Dechy, flopping over the line with a 2-6, 7-6, 6-4 win. But she played poorly, committing 52 unforced errors and 10 double faults. Davenport, who put off retirement at the end of last season after convincing herself that she could still compete for titles at the highest level, knows she will have to raise her game if she is to win her fourth grand slam crown. 'My game's a little bit off from where I'd ideally want it to be, but it's there,' Davenport said. 'I look at it like I need to play better than I've played to be able to win, and I know I can do that.' The 28-year-old Californian top seed is also buoyed by her recent record against Williams, even if she still trails overall encounters 9-4. 'Before I played her last year I had lost to her a number of times in a row,' Davenport said. 'I've seen her play a lot recently and feel like I'll have some confidence after winning last year. Before I was going in with a bad record against her.' Williams played down Davenport's two wins against her. 'I'm a better player now than I was then,' she said. Davenport, one of the few players on the women's tour who is able to match Williams for raw power, said she would set out to be aggressive. 'I'm going to have to not let her dictate, and go for my shots,' she said. Davenport is determined to enjoy her first appearance in a Grand Slam final for five years. 'I guess I look pretty dumb now after talking about retirement after Wimbledon,' she laughed. 'But I'm ecstatic that I get another chance to try and win one.'

HEAD-TO-HEAD

Table with 2 columns: Player 1, Player 2. Rows include Lindsay Davenport (USA) vs Serena Williams (USA) 7-5, 6-4; 1997 Chicago Carpet SF Davenport 6-4, 6-4; 1998 Sydney Hard QF Williams 1-6, 7-5, 7-5; 1999 Indian Wells Hard Rd32 Williams 6-4, 6-2; 1999 US Open Hard SF Williams 6-4, 1-6, 6-4; 1999 Grand Slam Cup Hard SF Williams 6-3, 6-4; 2000 Los Angeles Hard F Williams 4-6, 6-4, 7-6 (7/11); 2000 US Open Hard QF Davenport 6-4, 6-2; 2001 Indian Wells Hard QF Williams 6-1, 6-2; 2001 US Open Hard QF Williams 6-3, 6-7 (7/9), 7-5; 2001 Sanex Championships Hard F Williams walkover; 2002 US Open Hard SF Williams 6-3, 7-5; 2003 Charleston Clay SF Williams 6-1, 7-5; 2004 Los Angeles Hard F Davenport 6-4, 6-3; 2004 Tour Championships Hard Rd1 Davenport 3-6, 7-5, 6-1; NB: x denotes seeding

Federer feels inspired

Australian Open

AFP, Melbourne

Roger Federer says Marat Safin's spectacular win over him has set up an exciting year ahead for men's tennis.

Tennis does not come much better than the unpredictable Russian's superb five-set win late Thursday that ended the world number one's unbeaten 26-match run stretching back to last August.

World number four Safin also became the first top-10 player to conquer the world number one after 24 straight wins since Federer last lost to Juan Carlos Ferrero in October 2003.

Federer was zeroing in on his third consecutive grand slam title after winning three majors last year along with the season-ending Masters Cup in Houston.

It became a question of who was going to stop the Fed Express. Safin stepped up on Thursday to answer the question.

The world's top four players all won through to the Australian Open semi-finals in a vintage year for the year's first grand slam.

'I'm very happy to see that all four guys again were in the semis,

like in Houston,' Federer said after his 5-7, 6-4, 5-7, 7-6, 9-7 semifinal loss late Thursday.

'For this reason it's an exciting tournament, an exciting future for tennis, for the men's game especially.'

'I'm looking forward to maintain my number one ranking in the future and beat them again.'

Federer graciously conceded that Safin was the better player in their 4hr 28min duel that captivated the capacity Rod Laver Arena crowd and a national television audience until well after midnight local time.

'Losing after having match point is always going to hurt, no matter how great the match was,' the Swiss conceded.

'But at least you can leave the place feeling good about yourself because I thought I gave it all I had, and that's all I got.'

'He was the better player in the end, because we don't have ties or draws in tennis. So the winner is the better man, and that's him.'

'Of course, I'm hoping for a rematch so I can beat him again. But it was a thrill actually to be a part of it.'

Federer warmly embraced his conqueror at the net after their stupendous match and praised the Russian's bravura performance.

'His serve was consistent. He hardly served any double-faults. When he needed his first serve, he got it. That's just the way he plays,' he said.

'He's got great returns, but I thought I battled them off quite well. I got what I expected. So it was no surprise.'

Federer made little of the considerable pressure burdening him to maintain his winning run against the world's best.

'I live my whole life with pressure, so this is nothing different. I thought it was a match like every other match.'

'He's one of the best players in the world. I like to play against him just because of the way he is on the court.'

'In the past we had some good matches. I was just hoping to win it, like every other match, but I didn't feel extra pressure.'

Federer's previous defeat was to Czech Tomas Berdych in the second round at the Athens Olympics last August.

The Swiss stylist had been bidding to become the first player to win three consecutive grand slams since American Pete Sampras in 1993-94 and the third man to do so along with Australian great Rod Laver in 1969.

Hoyzer admits fixing matches

Football

AFP, Berlin

Robert Hoyzer, the referee at the centre of Germany's biggest football scandal for 34 years, admitted Thursday to fixing matches he had gambled on.

'The public allegations against me are correct,' confessed Hoyzer. 'I regret my conduct in the extreme and apologise to the DFB, my refereeing colleagues and football fans.'

'I have explained what I know about these incidents to the relevant people and am willing to offer any further assistance to the DFB.'

The 25-year-old Hoyzer, who initially denied the allegations, said he had fixed the result of non-league SC Paderborn's 4-2 win over SV Hamburg in the

German Cup on August 21 last year.

Hoyzer awarded Paderborn two questionable penalties and sent off Hamburg's Emile Mpenza for complaining as Hamburg surrendered a two-goal lead.

And he had also admitted to manipulating the results of at least four other matches to bank five figure sums.

Hoyzer informed television channel TV.Berlin that 'a lot of other people' were involved in the match-fixing but refused to shed light on whether they were referees, players, management or outsiders.

There have been suggestions that Hoyzer was working for Croatian mafia circles in Berlin with German daily Bild reporting that one Croat made 500,000 euros from SC Paderborn's 4-2 win over SV Hamburg.

Hoyzer's guilty plea drew a

strong reaction from Sepp Blatter, president of world football's governing body FIFA.

In a statement Blatter said: 'FIFA is aggrieved to see a young and very promising referee break the ethical rules so dramatically.'

'Referees are the custodians of impartiality and of fair-play. That's why the moral demands we place on them are extremely high.'

Blatter has written to the DFB reminding them that as World Cup hosts they are very much in the public eye.

'With a little more than a year to go before the World Cup German football and the DFB are attracting all the attention,' he wrote.

He asked them to keep FIFA informed of the results of their investigations.

The DFB are also investigating the possibility that another referee, Dominik Marks, may have

also been involved in rigging results, notably the game between Hertha Berlin and Arminia Bielefeld won by Berlin 2-1 on August 11 last year.

Marks was due to referee Sunday's second division match between Alemannia Aachen and Ahlen but the DFB have decided to hand the game over to a replacement official.

German prosecutors have started legal proceedings into what is the biggest scandal in German football since 1971 when match-fixing and bribes engulfed the Bundesliga.

More than 50 players and 12 coaches were found guilty of offering bribes and fixing Bundesliga games prompting the DFB to dish out hefty fines and suspensions.

The timing of this scandal could not be any worse with the 2006 World Cup in Germany a little over 16 months away.

Tireless Hewitt downs

FROM PAGE 13 here in Melbourne. Now part of that dream's come true.

'I get an opportunity Sunday night. I know as well as anyone that I'm going to have to go out there and play one of my best matches to get up against Marat. I've put myself in a position to have a crack at it.'

The former world number one is bidding for his third grand slam title against Safin on Sunday following victory in the 2001 US Open and 2002 Wimbledon.

Roddick's game fell away in a welter of unforced errors in a lopsided fourth set as Hewitt surged into the final.

'I think it's a little bit of both,' Roddick said. 'He put himself in positions to win big points. I donated a little bit more than I would have wanted to tonight. And I did it at some bad times.'

Roddick served 31 aces, hit 66 winners, but made double the unforced errors than Hewitt (50-21), yet he could not overcome the tiger-

ish Hewitt, who got to the semi-final on the back of fighting five-set victories over Rafael Nadal and David Nalbandian.

It was the second time Roddick had lost in an Australian Open semi-final having been defeated by German Rainer Schuettler in 2003.

Roddick started strongly, breaking Hewitt in the second game and with his serve on song he confidently fended off the Australian's attempts to break back in the ninth with six aces to take the opening set.

Roddick's hot streak continued with four consecutive aces on his first service game of the second set, making a run of seven, one of them hurtling down at 231 kmh (144 mph).

Hewitt had break point opportunities but the American's booming serves were keeping him at bay.

But Roddick played a poor second set tie-break and fell behind three set points only to crash an easy backhand into the net to level the match.

Roddick cashed in when Hewitt

coughed up three double-faults to drop serve in the second game, but the Australian kept at Roddick and broke back when the second seed served back-to-back double-faults.

Again the match went to a tie-break and again Hewitt handled it the better as Roddick made several errors to hand the home favourite two set points.

Hewitt rolled a delightful backhand cross court to take the a two sets to one lead.

The tide was turning strongly in Hewitt's favour and he broke Roddick's opening serve in the fourth set when his backhand let him down.

Roddick was only a shadow of his form in the opening sets and Hewitt broke him a second time in the sixth game for a 5-1 lead.

Hewitt served out for the match to home pandemonium in the stadium, getting to two match points and sinking to his knees when Roddick's backhand was long.



Lt Gen Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury (6th from R), Chief of Army Staff and President of Kurmitola Golf Club, poses with other dignitaries after teeing-off the Aga Khan Gold Cup Golf Tournament at the Kurmitola Golf Club yesterday.

Aga Khan Cup Golf starts

SPORTS REPORTER

The prestigious 33rd Aga Khan Gold Cup Golf Tournament began at the picturesque Kurmitola Golf Course yesterday.

The two-day tournament was inaugurated by Lt Gen Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury, Chief of Army Staff and President Kurmitola Golf Club, in the morning.

The tee-off was witnessed by Kamaluddin Abdul Aziz, president, Prince Aga Khan Shia Imami Ismaili Council for Bangladesh, Fatima J Husein, vice-president, Aga Khan Council, Mubarak Ali, chairman, Aga Khan Foundation, Sulaiman Ajane, chairman, Aga Khan Education Service, Bangladesh and other members of the Aga Khan National Council. The Aga Khan Council are the sponsors of the meet.

Gaibandha cricket

OUR CORRESPONDENT

Sunrise Sporting Club defeated GKSP by 100 runs in the First Division Cricket League at the Gaibandha Stadium yesterday.

Winning the toss, Sunrise Sporting scored 226 all out in 50 overs. In reply, GKSP managed just 126 in 32.1 overs.

Crunch match

FROM PAGE 13 will be no different tomorrow,' he said.

'I reckon 270 will be a good score, batting first,' added Taibu when asked what could be a reasonable score to defend.

Taibu also felt that the Bangabandhu Stadium was a lucky ground for them.

'Bangladesh beat India here and we beat them here too. We played better Test cricket here and they played better in Chittagong. So it's also a good ground for us.'

Pietersen

FROM PAGE 13 starting in Johannesburg Sunday.

The tall, powerful Pietersen, 24, was educated in South Africa and played against the 1999/2000 English tourists in his debut match for KwaZulu-Natal, batting at number nine and hitting an aggressive 61 not out. He had been picked mainly as an off-spin bowler and took four wickets.

He took advantage of a British passport and qualified for England by playing county cricket for Nottinghamshire, with his batting soon outstripping his bowling. He made his international debut in the one-day series against Zimbabwe last November.

Not originally picked for the South Africa leg of the tour, he was added to the current squad following impressive performances in Zimbabwe.

Palmer marries again at 75

AFP, Kahuku (Hawaii)

Golf legend Arnold Palmer married fiancée Kathleen Gawthrop in a beachfront cottage here at an Oahu resort where the 75-year-old star will play in a seniors event, Palmer announced Thursday.

It was the second marriage for both Palmer and Gawthrop. Palmer's wife of 45 years, Winnie, died in 1999. Palmer has two daughters and seven grandchildren while Gawthrop has a son, two daughters and five grandchildren.

The private ceremony Wednesday evening was attended by Palmer's main pilot, Pete Luster, and Cori Britt, Palmer's staff assistant and caddie. Pastor Ron Valenciana performed the ceremony.

Palmer, who was to play in the 50-and-over Champions Tour's Turtle Bay Championship, ushered in the modern American golf era with his success on the course as well as with promotions, making the game a greater spectator event.

Palmer won seven major titles. He captured the Masters four times - in 1958, 1960, 1962 and 1964 - in addition to taking the 1961 and 1961 British Opens and the 1960 US Open crown.

Ronaldo goes home

REUTERS, Madrid

Real Madrid striker Ronaldo will miss this weekend's match against Numanca as he is returning home to Brazil due to a family illness, the Primera Liga club said on Friday.

The 28-year-old was given permission to fly to Brazil on Friday morning and is not expected to return to Madrid until next week.

Real are due to play basement side Numanca on Sunday, though the game is under threat because of a frozen pitch.

PREVIEW: SERIE A Both ends meet

AFP, Rome

Top meets bottom in Serie A on Sunday as league leaders Juventus visit relegation favourites Atalanta.

A massive 36 points separates them and an away win looks a nailed-on certainty for Juve, but the outcome of the Italian Cup tie between the two teams suggests the visitors may be in for a bumpy ride in Bergamo.

Named after a Greek warrior goddess, Atalanta knocked a near full-strength Juve out of the competition earlier this month thanks to a 5-3 aggregate victory, with rising star Andrea Lazzari scoring all five of their goals.

Defeat away to Lecce last week left Atalanta seven points adrift of second-from-bottom Siena, but Juventus will not be underestimating their seemingly doomed opponents.

Juventus' win over Brescia last weekend saw them extend their lead over AC Milan to five points, but it came at a heavy price with Pavel Nedved badly twisting his left knee. The dynamic Czech midfielder has been ruled out of action for three weeks. Atalanta, who lost 1-0 at home to Inter Milan on Thursday in the first leg of their Italian Cup quarter-final, will be missing experienced midfielder Demetrio Albertini, who joined Spanish league leaders Barcelona on Monday.

AC Milan will be looking to erase the memory of their 1-0 defeat at Livorno last week by taking three points from their home match against Bologna.

FIXTURES

(all 1400 GMT unless stated) Saturday: Chievo v Livorno (1700), Parma v Udinese (1930)

Sunday: AC Milan v Bologna, Atalanta v Juventus, Brescia v Lecce, Cagliari v Fiorentina, Reggina v Lazio, Roma v Messina, Sampdoria v Siena, Palermo v Inter Milan (1930)

Controversial DVD withdrawn

AFP, London

The FA has scrapped an official DVD of England's greatest post-war internationals because it did not feature a single black player, a spokesman announced Thursday.

The DVD, entitled 'The Pride of the Nation', has been included in a welcome pack for newcomers to the 'englandfans' official members' club.

The initial list given to video producers Octagon was understood to have included black players but none of them made the final cut when the running time was reduced to 30 minutes.

Many of the remaining 17 players are not controversial choices, including Bobby Moore, Gary Lineker, Bobby Charlton, Paul Gascoigne, Alan Shearer, Bryan Robson, David Beckham and Terry Butcher.

However, Martin Peters, Chris Waddle, Stuart Pearce and Steven Gerrard were also included.

But black players such as Rio Ferdinand, Sol Campbell, Paul Ince, John Barnes, Ashley Cole and Viv Anderson - who in 1978 became England's first black international - were overlooked.

And following complaints, the governing body is now set to produce a new DVD featuring black players as the old one is withdrawn.

PREVIEW: PRIMERA LIGA Barca have a tough outing

Football

AP, Madrid

FC Barcelona has 18 league games remaining to maintain its leadership of the Spanish standings and clinch its first title since 1999.

But on Saturday, Frank Rijkaard's team faces one of the most testing encounters of the season when it visits fourth-place Sevilla in the frenzied atmosphere of the Ramon Sanchez Pizjuan Stadium.

Sevilla boasts an unbeaten home record and is pushing hard to gain its first berth in the Champions League by finishing in the top four places this season.

Rijkaard says Barcelona needs to continue displaying the qualities which have marked the season so far.

'What's most important is that the players keep showing that their mentality, attitude and unity is the best,' the Dutch-born coach said.

Barcelona boosted by its confident 3-0 victory last weekend over Racing Santander, which dispelled doubts that the pressure of heading the league was affecting the team's play.

Since then, the Catalan team has acquired Italian veteran midfielder Demetrio Albertini, who will go straight into the squad for

Saturday's match. Argentine striker Maxi Lopez was also expected to join the club from River Plate on Friday.

Sevilla will be without injured defenders Javi Navarro and Pablo Ruiz, although young Brazilian midfielder Adriano Correia, the club's new signing from Coritiba, may be included in the squad for the first time.

Barcelona has 48 points, while Real Madrid has 41. Valencia has 36 points, one ahead of Sevilla.

Hoping for a Barcelona slip-up, Madrid travels to last-place Numanca on Sunday with its title hopes revived since Vanderlei Luxemburgo's arrival last month.

The Brazilian coach enjoys a perfect league record so far, making a winning debut in the seven-minute encounter with Real Sociedad which completed a game abandoned because of a bomb scare and then leading Madrid to wins against Atletico Madrid, Zaragoza and Mallorca.

Only last week's Copa del Rey elimination by second-division Valladolid has soured the Brazilian's early success.

Luxemburgo however, has to do without Brazilian superstar Ronaldo who had to fly back to Rio de Janeiro because of the illness of someone close.

While Numanca has been humiliated on the road, having gained just one point from a possi-

ble 3-3, Maximo Hernandez's team has been beaten just twice at home.

Spain has been gripped by icy weather over recent days but the teams hope for a thaw to enable Sunday's game to go ahead. Numanca's Copa del Rey encounter with Atletico Madrid at its Los Pajaritos stadium on Wednesday was postponed because of a frozen field.

Depleted Valencia hosts eighth-place Athletic Bilbao on Sunday and can ill afford another setback following a defeat last weekend which left it 12 points behind Barcelona.

The 3-0 loss against Villarreal ended Valencia's nine-game unbeaten streak and left its hopes of retaining the title looking slim.

While Bilbao is unbeaten in its last six matches, Valencia will be heartened that the Basque team is a poor traveler, with only one road victory this season.

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FIXTURES

Saturday (kick off times in GMT): Atletico Madrid v Albacete (1900), Sevilla v Barcelona (2030)

Sunday: Espanyo v Real Betis (1600), Real Mallorca v Getafe (1600), Osasuna v Deportivo La Coruna (1600), Racing Santander v Levante (1600), Real Sociedad v Villarreal (1600), Real Zaragoza v Malaga (1600), Numanca v Real Madrid (1800), Valencia v Athletic Bilbao (2000)

PREVIEW: FA CUP Yeovil's friendly big brothers

Football

AFP, London

Yeovil Town are hoping that a helping hand from Jose Mourinho will help them write a new chapter in the west country club's illustrious history of FA Cup giant-killing.

The Glovers, who face Premiership side Charlton at The Valley on Saturday, can no longer exactly be classified as minnows given their current promotion-chasing position at the top of League Two.

They are however the lowest-ranked team to have made it through to the fourth round with a daunting 61 teams between them and Charlton in English football's league structure.

But Yeovil have never had much time for the established hierarchy.

As a non-league outfit a combination of spirit and the club's legendary sloping pitch enabled them to account for no less than 20 unsuspecting league clubs over the years.

This time around, manager Gary Johnson is hoping that a little bit of Chelsea's current form will rub off on his squad after Mourinho agreed that Yeovil could use the Blues' training ground on the outskirts of London for their eve-of-match training session.

The arrangement came about because Paul Terry, brother of Chelsea captain John, is a Yeovil player.

'Paul spoke to his brother about the chances of using their training facilities and I believe John had a word with Jose Mourinho and the end result is that we are going there,' Johnson revealed.

'I am very grateful to PT and JT and of course Chelsea and Mr

Mourinho. It will be an ideal place to prepare for our big game on Saturday.'

Yeovil have not beaten top flight opposition in the Cup since 1949, when they dumped Sunderland out at the same stage.

FIXTURES

(1500 GMT unless stated) Saturday: Arsenal v Wolverhampton, Blackburn v Colchester, Brentford v Hartlepool, Burnley v Bournemouth, Charlton v Yeovil, Derby v Fulham, Everton v Sunderland, Manchester Utd v Middlesbrough (1720 GMT), Newcastle v Coventry, Nottingham Forest v Peterborough, Reading v Leicester, Southampton v Portsmouth (1230 GMT), West Brom v Tottenham, West Ham v Sheffield Utd

Sunday: Chelsea v Birmingham (1600 GMT), Oldham v Bolton (1345 GMT)

Lara in Lara mood

FROM PAGE 13

Pakistan, who needed someone to produce a spectacular innings if they were going to challenge the West Indies, seemed to lack passion.

They were well served by Mohammad Hafeez who scored a run-a-ball 41 then later by Yousuf Youhana who made 45 from 46 deliveries and Abdul Razaq with 44 from 48 but never looked like threatening the Windies' total.

Pakistan captain Inzamamul Haq said Lara was almost unstoppable at his best and was the clear difference.

'Lara played outstanding today, that's why they made 340,' Inzamam said.

'When he's getting runs his team must win.'

For the West Indies, key strike bowler Pedro Collins could only manage four overs before he had to be replaced with a thigh strain while Ian Bradshaw was suffering from a sore heel.

Yet Pakistan could not take full advantage of the lack of depth in their opponents' bowling line-up and seemed content to let the match go.