SPORT



THE CHELSEA CARAVAN: Chelsea players Didier Drogba (L) and Mikael Forsell (2nd L) ride around the pitch on a groundsman buggy during the celebrations following the game against Charlton at Stamford Bridge in London on Saturday.

India, Sri Lanka to play 8 ODIs in August? AFP, Colombo

India and Sri Lanka will clash in at least eight one-day internationals in August, according to a proposal drawn up by Sri Lanka's govern-

ment-run cricket board. India will join the West Indies and live in Germany as kidnapping fears hosts Sri Lanka in a tri-series over grow back in their homeland. August 2-14 before Sri Lanka travel to India two days later for five more Marcelinho persuaded his mother to one-dayers, an official said on leave the tough Paraiba area of

Sunday. The five matches in India are to make up for the one-day series in April which was cancelled due to the reluctance of Indian players to take part soon after a gruelling tour by Pakistan.

Bild. "I am too afraid to say anything The Indian board has not yet else. reacted to Sri Lanka's proposal.

Hertha team-mate and compa-The West Indies will tour the triot Gilberto also wants his mother island nation for two Test matches in to move to Berlin fearing her safety July followed by the triangular is at risk. where each team plays the other "Germany is the safest place in twice in the league before the final.

After the proposed five-match Gilberto series in India, the Sri Lankans will return home to face Bangladesh in two Tests and three one-dayers in September.

India will tour Zimbabwe in the same period for two Tests and a triseries also featuring New Zealand. Sri Lanka are also scheduled to

tour India in November for three Test matches, according to the 10-year AFP, Berlin programme drawn up the International Cricket Council (ICC).

Mom worry for Brazilians

Football

AFP, Berlin

is another exported Brazilian concerned for the welfare of his family members

"The fear of kidnapping has become bigger by the day," revealed Cacau. "My mother is Several Brazilian players plying afraid and is asking whether she can their trade in the Bundesliga want their family members to come and come to Germany.

This month the mother of Brazilian defender Marinho, who plays for Brazilian first division side Hertha Berlin midfielder Corinthians, became the fifth kidnapping of the mother of a top player in the past six months. Brazil -- where poverty is rife -- to

In December 2004 the mother of Brazilian international Robinho was kidnapped at gunpoint and returned after 41 days when a 40 million euro ransom had been paid.

FC Santos star Robinho, 21, is one of the most promising talents in Brazil with Real Madrid and Chelsea reportedly weighing up a multinillion bid for the Samba sensation. Brazilian police are still hunting for the mother of FC Porto striker

Luis Fabiano, who was abducted in

the world for my mother," explained March VfB Stuttgart marksman Cacau

Sharapova still eyeing No 1 spot

AFP, Rome

Maria Sharapova insists her dream of becoming world number one for the first time is still very much on course as she heads into the Rome Masters, which starts on Monday, as the top seed.

thwarted in her bid to top the rankings when she lost to Justine Henin-Hardenne in the guarterfinals of the German Open last week.

think I should be number one next week. I am not going to go away and cry," said the Wimbledon champion. Sharapova's chances of winning

Open, have been boosted by the absence of former triple Grand Slam titleholder Henin-Hardenne.

are Russian, have all been given byes to the second round.

Abramovich breaks silence Japan happy with venue

Football

AFP, London

Chelsea owner Roman Abramovich on Saturday broke his self-imposed silence to hail his club's first Premiership title in 50 years.

"I view this championship as just the beginning of a new era for Chelsea and would like to reiterate my long-term commitment to the club," he wrote in the programme for Saturday's match against Charlton. The Russian billionaire, who has

oumped over 300 million pounds into buying a galaxy of top players and bringing in one of the world's top managers in Jose Mourinho, added: 'Much has been said about the financial outlay over the past two vears.

"However, this must be seen in the context of placing Chelsea on a

PREMIERSHIP

AFP, London

The battle for Premiership survival will go to the final day of the season after Norwich climbed out of the bottom three with a 1-0 win at home to 10-man Birmingham at Carrow Road on Saturday.

Elsewhere Crystal Palace were heading out of the relegation zone against fellow strugglers Southampton until a 90th minute equaliser from Danny Higgin-botham rescued a point for the visitors.

Both clubs had a man sent-off two of five Premiership red-cards on Saturday. Meanwhile, West Brom, were left

bottom of the table despite a 1-1 draw away to Manchester United in Saturday's late kick-off match.

The results meant that no club had been relegated before the last round of matches a week on Sunday.

These will see West Brom (31

Federer back in action

AFP, Hamburg

World number one Roger Federer returns to action after a three-week break to defend his title at the Masters Series ATP event which

begins here on Monday. Federer regards last year's success at the Rothenbaum stadium as one of his most important because it suggested he may be capable of winning a Grand Slam on clay, the surface on which he has yet to win one.

But Federer's return to action is Agassi 7-5, 7-6. based neither on psychological

advantage nor sentimental prefer-

Kenyon, Jose Mourinho, John Terry, level playing field with the other top clubs in England and Europe for a the staff and players on bringing the sustained period.

"We have made solid investments on the field in players, management, training facilities and an academy that will nurture the next generation of home-grown talent. "Off the field, a team of execu-

tives and senior managers has been put together to grow the business and capitalise on the playing success.

"All of this is a deliberate. longterm strategy with the aim of building the most successful football club in the world in the next 10 years and beyond

"Under chairman Bruce Buck, chief executive Peter Kenyon and Jose Mourinho, we have a strong leadership team that shares my vision.'

He offered his congratulations to the board of directors. Peter

Focus shifts to bottom Football noints) at home to Portsmouth 21st minute quickly-taken free-kick

Palace (32 points) at Charlton for a south London derby, Southampton (32 points) hosting United and

ahead against West Brom. Norwich (33 points) away to But Polish reserve keeper Fulham Tomasz Kuszczak then produced a At the other end of the table. string of saves to keep West Brom in Everton cemented their grip on the game before Robert Earnshaw fourth place and a Champions scored from the spot in the 63rd

League spot with a 2-0 win against minute after Geoff Horsfield was 10-man Newcastle while fouled in the box by John O'Shea. Middlesbrough edged UEFA Cup rivals Tottenham 1-0 behind Arsenal in the race for second-place and automatic entry into

Should Champions League finalists Liverpool fail to beat Arsenal on Sunday then Everton will be assured of fourth place.

Earlier Chelsea, who won the Premiership last week, were presented with the trophy after beating Charlton 1-0 in their final home match of the season.

In other matches, Bolton qualified for the UEFA Cup following a 1draw against Portsmouth while Manchester City won 2-1 at Aston Villa as Fulham enjoyed a 3-1 victory away to Blackburn.

At Old Trafford, Ryan Giggs's

AFP, Rome

6, 6-4, 7-5.

Coria, Nadal face-off Tennis his nerves were jangling when sixth

seed Agassi stormed 5-2 ahead in the second set.

"I was worried, but then I started to play like I did in the first set," said Teen sensation Rafael Nadal the 23-year-old. "I knew that if I just reached the final of the Rome kept my serve I could break him." Masters on Saturday after battling Coria insisted that even with 12 years on Agassi, the veteran back from a set down to beat Spanish compatriot David Ferrer 4-American proved a tough oppo-

nent. "Every year you think it's going to be his last and he comes back stronger than ever," he said.

Guillermo Coria in Sunday's final after the Argentinian beat eight-time Nadal won a gripping semifinal Grand Slam champion Andre against Ferrer to extend his winning streak to 16 matches and take his clay record for the season to where he enjoyed a lot of success. 30-2. Kluivert, who scored 91 goals in Nursing a heavily swollen blood 183 league appearances for Barca. blister on the index finger of his left is a target for several Spanish clubs hand, he lacked the fluency that including Valencia, Seville and the took him to the last four. latter's city rivals Real Betis. But after Ferrer broke in the 10th game of a nail-biting deciding set. Nadal raised his game to break to love before serving out the match Ranked a career-best seventh in the world, 18 places abover Ferrer, Nadal is the first left-hander to reach the final here since Marcelo Rios in 1998. Should he win Sunday's final, the 18-year-old Spaniard will move to within 10 points of world number one Roger Federer in the ATP race. The Rome Masters, a warm-up tournament as he sat on the bench for the French Open which starts with Manchester United striker on May 23, is the fourth of nine ATP Ruud van Nistelrooy and Roy Masters Series tournaments and Makaay of Bayern Munich being one of its three clay court events. preferred. There are four tournaments on hard courts and two are indoors.

the News of the World on Sunday. The 28-year-old has scored just four times in 18 Premiership appearances for the Magpies - who have an option to sign him for an extra two years - since moving from Barcelona last summer and he is esperate to go back to

tions if I am asked 'how about port. I am very honoured to share in Thailand?" Japan Football Associa-"My heart also goes out to the tion president Saburo Kawabuchi long-term supporters who did not told reporters. "Aside from China, live to see Chelsea reach the pinna-

title to Stamford Bridge.

your joy

trophy to them.

"Winning the league this year is

especially moving as it comes on the

50th anniversary of Chelsea's last

title and at the beginning of the

gratulate the fans. You have waited

patiently and this victory has only

been possible thanks to your sup-

not have to wait that long again.'

with keeper Russell Hoult stranded

because of a groin injury, put United

The result left United three points

OP SIX

English Premiership table after Saturday's

natches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals fo

7 1

 36
 28
 7
 1
 68
 13
 91

 35
 23
 8
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 55

37 15 10 12 46 42 55

68 13

the Champions League proper.

36 28

goals against, points)

helsea

Arsenal

Man Utd

Everton

Liverpool

Bolton

"I would especially like to con-

club's centenary year celebrations.

DHAKA MONDAY MAY 9, 2005

change

AFP, Tokyo

there will be no difference." cle of English football once again, Kawabuchi has vowed to oppose and I would like to dedicate this any move to stage the June 8 qualifier in China, a close ally and neigh-"Fifty years is much too long to bour of North Korea, because of wait - and I am confident that we will violent anti-Japanese protests which swept through Chinese cities last month.

Japan's football chief said Sunday

he had no objections to moving their

away World Cup qualifier against

North Korea to the neutral venue of

Bangkok following crowd trouble at

"I have no reason to raise objec-

previous matches in Pyongyang.

He was commenting the day after it was learned that the world football governing body FIFA had contacted Thailand's Football Association about the possibility of staging the North Korea-Japan match in Bangkok.

"After consulting with the association president and executives we replied to FIFA that we are willing to host that match, and as of now we are waiting for more details and information from FIFA," Worawi Makudi, secretrary general of the Thai association, said in Bangkok

on Saturday. FIFA was expected to contact Thailand this week for final details on the match, Worawi told AFP.

FIFA's disciplinary committee ruled nine days ago that the Japan-North Korea match be played on neutral ground and without spectators. The committee also fined the

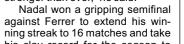
impoverished Stalinist state 16,800 dollars North Korean players jostled the referee and fans threw chairs, bottles and other objects onto the pitch when their team lost to Iran 2-0 at home on March 30. FIFA also

cited trouble at North Korea's match against Bahrain on March 25. Iran stand at the top of the Asian Group B with two wins and one draw, followed by Japan with two wins and one loss. Bahrain follow with one win, one loss and one draw

and North Korea are winless Kluivert

wants out

AFP, London Dutch international striker Patrick Kluivert is set to return to Spain and end his disappointing spell at Premiership outfit Newcastle he told



The top eight seeds, five of which

Sharapova begins her campaign against either compatriot Alina Jidkova or Spain's Anabel Medina Garrique

Henin on course

Saturday.

Schnyder aside.

were unpleasant for almost every-

The brilliant Belgian was given

making available for her an even

wider arsenal of attacking strokes

than usual, and resulting in a torrent

of multi-lavered attacks which swept

Tennis

join him in the German capital on

holiday and he is not too keen to see

is close to me," Marcelinho told daily

"I am really glad that my mother

her return to Brazil alone.

"I played a very solid match and I for the spectators than the players." Schnyder had previously got am very pleased," said Henin. "Against Patty Schnyder you past Miami and Indian Wells cham-

The Russian teenager was

But despite her defeat in Berlin, Sharapova insisted she wasn't wilting under the pressure.

"I am 18 years old and everyone

n Rome, a warm-up for the French

Abahani

FROM PAGE 12

ball possession and reduce the margin through Walid.

Yellow cards: Shipon, Ujjal (Abahani) and Mamun, Johnny (Farashgani).

The first semifinal between Sheikh Russel Krira Chakra and Arambagh Krira Sangha will be held today.

The second semifinal is due tomorrow but Muktijoddha, who meet East Bengal in Dhaka in an AFC Cup match on Wednesday, are expected to field a weak team against Abahani featuring guest players. TEAMS

ABAHANI: Nizam, Obaidur, Pradeep, Shipon, Lajuk, Ndem, Joy, Ujjal, Parvez (Faisal), Ibrahim and Cristiana (Farhad),

FARASHGANJ: Piru (Zia), Khaled, Scylla, Faisal, Apu, Kabir, Johnny, Amirul (Rony), Kelesku, Walid and Mamun.

Skipper Smith

FROM PAGE 12 Wavell Hinds, the part-time bowler for West Indies in such tight situations, made the breakthrough when he had Dippenaar bowled in the 23rd over.

Smith and Kallis helped the South Africans make steady progress to their target, but the South African captain's landmark was looming, and he eventually reached it when he slashed a delivery from his namesake Dwayne Smith to third man for the last of his 13 boundaries.

BRIEF SCORES

WEST INDIES: 253 all out in 48.5 overs (Sarwan 72, Chanderpaul 49, Smith 46; Ntini 4-46, Langeveldt 2-41. Nel 2-43) SOUTH AFRICA: 255 for two in 45 overs (Smith 103, Dippenaar 56, 51, Gibbs 40; Smith 1-21, Kallis Hinds 1-25) Result: South Africa won by eight wickets. Toss: West Indies.

Man-of-the-match: Graeme Smith.

it will be another match entirely. good.' on Saturday at the WTA German

titleholder did that with a rampaging 6-0. 6-1 win over Patty Schnyder. the seventh-seeded Swiss player which carried her to the final of the

Henin's opponent in the final will be Nadia Petrova, the sixth-seeded Russian, who enjoyed a 6-4, 6-7, 6-3 victory over Jelena Jankovic, the 13th seed from Serbia.

ened by a persistent virus during something which has not been done

The last woman to capture three successive titles or more in the

Referee: Azad Rahman.

Justine Henin-Hardenne moved to within one victory of concluding her French Open build-up by winning three clav court titles in a row here

Open. The former triple Grand Slam

German Open.

one, actually appeared ideal for Henin Henin, whose career was threatmore time in which to prepare,

seven months away from the game, has won Charleston and Warsaw in the two months since she returned to the WTA Tour and if she wins the title tomorrow she will achieve

for a decade.

difficulties with them. French Open build-up was Conchita tennis in nice sunny conditions, but Martinez, the former Wimbledon champion, who won four in 1995. the conditions were probably worse

have to stay aggressive all the time pion Kim Clijsters and US Open If I play one millimetre from my best champion Svetlana Kuznetsova, but now against the inspired Henin "I was going for the corners and she lasted only 51 minutes.

making winners and it was very It was still drizzling at the end of a miserable experience which Henin's form must make her Schnyder would have liked to avoid unofficial favourite for Roland by delaying the match until the Garros. She was outstanding during weather improved. her straight sets victory over top-

"They still do whatever they want seeded Maria Sharapova on Friday so there is not point in arguing," she and if anything was better still on

"I argued last night in our doubles The match was played almost match and they made us play for throughout in a slight drizzle, and ever, so I wasn't into arguing." the grey, heavy conditions which

Petrova made hard work of a win which looked close when she served for the match at 5-4 in the second set and then led 5-3 in the tie-breaker.

She also took a ten-minute injury time out in the third game of the final set, when the official trainer came on court to apply treatment to Petrova's left thigh.

Not long after the restart the tenacious mobile Jankovic broke "It's better that you just accept the conditions," said Henin, back to reach 3-4 and was within obliquely referring to Schnyder's two points of reaching 4-4 before a last push by Petrova made her a "Of course it's better to play very relieved-looking winner.

ence but upon physical progress, for he feels that his problems with his feet have receded He had been struggling with

blisters on both soles for several weeks - without making excuses which makes his record of 35 wins in 37 matches this year all the more special.

The second of those defeats occurred in his last match, against the 18-year-old Frenchman Richard Gasquet in Monte Carlo, though this may be a blessing in disguise because it helped persuade Federer to miss the Masters Series in Rome this week.

That may help insure against his greatest opponent last year - exhaustion - and a fresher Federer may rapidly warm to his task again, even though the Hamburg weather can sometimes turn brass monkeys blue.

He may need to be rolling right away because his opening match may be none-too-easy. He faces Fernando Verdasco, the improving 21-year-old left-handed Spaniard who upset Andy Roddick in Miami six weeks ago.

Akram asks

FROM PAGE 12 panels. How can they check your fitness?" he said, adding Pakistan will badly miss Akhtar on the West Indies tour. "With Akhtar dropped and

Mohammad Sami injured, Pakistan bowling lacks depth and would find it hard to cope against a resurging West Indies," he said.

The best of Real

FROM PAGE 12 Ronaldo scored his 100th league goal in Spain when he hit the spotkick high into the net. The strikersupreme took just 113 matches to reach the mark

Raul added a third by drilling home after Aouate could only manage to push a Roberto Carlos cross into his path eight minutes after the break

The Real skipper then fired a low shot into the corner after Owen had picked him out on the edge of the area.

Ronaldo put the icing on the cake in stoppage time when he scored his 20th of the season, rounding Aouate with a trademark shimmy and rolling the ball into the empty net after a perfectly weighted through ball from substitute Luis Figo.

PHOTO: STAF

Ninth seed Coria will be out for revenge having lost to Nadal in the Monte Carlo final last month.

The fifth seed, going for his fifth

singles title this year, will face

Nadal admitted Friday's threesetter against Czech 15th seed Radek Stepanek had taken a lot out ofhim

"I felt a little bit tired, mentally and physically, but I've played a lot of matches this year" he said.

"David played better than me in the first two sets, but I finished the match playing at my highest level. "I fought for every ball and the important thing was that I came good at the end

Nadal insisted he never doubted himself, even when Ferrer saved two match points to break his serve and level at 5-5 in the deciding set. "I had some problems, but then

he had some problems, too," he said

Coria, who held two match points in last year's French Open final only to lose to Gaston Gaudio, admitted

slangily

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(Fr.)

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review

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Wallach

e.g.

24 Super-

structure

17 Largest

"Goodbye

flag

12 Compe-

tent

14 Dixie

Kluivert, scorer of 40 goals in his 79 internationals, has ruled out moving to Turkish side Fenerbahce. "I am going back to Spain and not Turkey," he told the newspaper. Kluivert has also all but ruled himself out of playing for the national side anymore stating in March that even if he was selected

he probably wouldn't go. Kluivert had a miserable Euro 2004 where his poor relations with the then national coach Dick Advocaat saw him play no part in the

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CRYPTOQUIP

KXXQ NKXFC N KXJ SWX SNH HENMQAR LXY ZACCOMZ WOPHAIL NII PFRRJ: "ZYOPA

EFMOHWPAMC NMR Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF YOU CHEERED FOR SOMEONE PULLING UP PLANTS, ONE COULD SAY YOU'RE ROOTING FOR HIM.

Bangladesh Ansar's Hasib, who won, in action against Shanta Jhenidah during their match of the Meril 27th



National Table Tennis Championship at the Suhrawardi National Indoor Stadium in Mirpur on Sunday.