



PHOTO: AFP

NOW AND THEN: Romanian gymnastics legend Nadia Comaneci stands in front of a photo of herself at the 1976 Olympic Games where she scored a perfect '10', at Raffles City in Singapore on Monday, ahead of Wednesday's IOC vote for the 2012 Summer Games host city. Comaneci is lobbying for New York.

RACE FOR 2012 GAMES

Paris, London battle for bragging rights

Five cities hold their breath for Wednesday's vote

OLYMPICS

AFP, Singapore

London and Paris traded barbs on Monday over their rival bids for the 2012 Olympic Games amid frantic last-minute lobbying by all five candidate cities ahead of the mid-week vote in Singapore.

The row overshadowed a charm offensive by British Prime Minister Tony Blair, who took advantage of French President Jacques Chirac not arriving in Singapore until Tuesday, to press London's case with the International Olympic Committee.

Paris, the front-runner from the outset, still remains the slight favourite for Wednesday's vote, although London is regarded as running a very close second. New York, Madrid and Moscow are the other cities in the running.

The London campaign ignited the row with their European rival when two advisers to the bid criticised Paris' Stade de France stadium in comments at a press conference that came dangerously close to breaching IOC rules.

"I think the Paris stadium is a wonderful stadium. I really like going there to watch rugby but unfortunately rugby is not part of the Olympics," said Rod Sheard, an architect who has worked on London's proposed stadium.

"There are fundamental compromises when you introduce other sports into an Olympic stadium, into an athletics stadium."

Jim Sloman, who was the chief operating officer for the Sydney 2000 Games and now advises the London team, said in response to a question on the Stade de France that there was no advantage in having a stadium already built.

"The one thing you do have with an existing stadium is that it has

been built for football, it hasn't been built for athletics," he said.

"It still has sight line problems. The London stadium will be built specifically for athletics."

Under rules set down by the IOC's ethics commission, bid teams are not allowed to criticise rival cities.

Paris mayor Bertrand Delanoe responded to the criticism with some barbs of his own.

"I think that to deserve victory you have to respect the Olympic spirit and demonstrate fair play," he said when asked about the remarks, then emphasised that London did not even yet have an Olympic stadium.

"One good thing about the Stade de France is that it exists."

French Sports Minister Jean Francois Lamour also rejected suggestions the stadium would be too old in 2012. "It was 20 years ahead of its time when it was built and it is updated every year," he said.

The London campaign later tried

to play down the controversy by pointing out that Sloman and Sheard were not officially linked to its bid, despite the pair making the comments at an official press conference for the British capital.

"Very few candidate cities have spoken about another candidate city at all. There is good spirit among the candidate cities, we get along very well," British Olympic Association chairman Craig Reedie said.

London mayor Ken Livingstone and Britain's culture minister, Tessa Jowell, who is in charge of the city's bid, shared the stage with Sloman and Sheard.

Although the French were clearly unhappy with the comments, the Paris bid said it would not lodge an official complaint with the IOC, and IOC President Jacques Rogge said no action would be taken.

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Peerless Federer



WIMBLEDON

AP, Wimbledon

Closing in on his third consecutive Wimbledon title, Roger Federer hit one shot so hard it darted between Andy Roddick's legs.

Federer wanted this one badly, which is why he played so well. With his typical mix of precision and power, the Swiss marvel drubbed Roddick 6-2, 7-6 (2), 6-4 in Sunday's final.

Even by the top-ranked Federer's high standards, his latest performance was special. Gliding across the lawn he loves, he always seemed to be in the right place to choose the right shots -- some of which only he could hit.

By beating the No 4-ranked Roddick and No 2 Lleyton Hewitt in the last two rounds without dropping a set, Federer strengthened his case for consideration among the game's great players. He became the third man since 1936 to win three consecutive Wimbledon crowns, joining seven-time champion Pete Sampras and five-time winner Bjorn Borg.

Still just 23, Federer joined a list of three-time Wimbledon winners that includes Boris Becker and John

McEnroe.

"I can't believe the way he played," Becker said.

"We are watching greatness unfold."

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GENTLEMEN OF WIMBLEDON

AFP, London

Recent winners of the men's singles title at Wimbledon after Roger Federer's victory over Andy Roddick on Sunday:

2005	Roger Federer (SUI)
2004	Roger Federer (SUI)
2003	Roger Federer (SUI)
2002	Lleyton Hewitt (AUS)
2001	Goran Ivanisevic (CRO)
2000	Pete Sampras (USA)
1999	Pete Sampras (USA)
1998	Pete Sampras (USA)
1997	Pete Sampras (USA)
1996	Richard Krajicek (NED)
1995	Pete Sampras (USA)
1994	Pete Sampras (USA)
1993	Pete Sampras (USA)
1992	Andre Agassi (USA)
1991	Michael Stich (GER)



PHOTO: AP

Wimbledon champion Roger Federer poses with his girlfriend Mirca Vavrinc at London's Savoy Hotel for the traditional Champions ball on Sunday.

Tigers' camp on Whatmore's return

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh selectors are hoping to start the Tigers' camp for their next assignment in Sri Lanka as soon as coach Dav Whatmore returns from Australia.

Whatmore, who had to fly back home from England in the middle of the NatWest tri-series to be with his ailing father who later passed away, is expected to return to Dhaka within the next couple of weeks.

Chief selector Faruque Ahmed said that they were thinking of arranging a short camp as the players are understandably tired after a long tour of England.

Faruque also informed that they would in all probability announce an 18-member squad for the three-match one-day international series and the two-Test rubber. The first one-day is on September 1.

"We are thinking of announcing one squad for both the one-dayers and the Tests. That is why there will be more players in the team," said Faruque.

He ruled out any major changes from the team that toured England but hinted that they would keep one

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BANGLADESH TO PLAY

India to host U-19 cricket meet in Dec

PTI, Mumbai

India will play host to a four-nation under-19 one-day tournament in December with Vishakapatnam being the venue for the event, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) said on Monday.

BCCI's joint secretary and convener of its tours programmes and fixtures committee Gautam Dasgupta said apart from the hosts, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh would be seen in action in the tournament.



Did U Know?

Australia and England recorded their second 'tied' game at Lord's -- both in England. In the 1989 Trent Bridge limited-overs international, both countries had their first 'tied' game.



Venus Williams

(American tennis star)

"I always felt like a champion in my heart because every single time I walked out on the court, I always gave my best. Whatever it was at that time, I gave a hundred per cent."

After her win over Lindsay Davenport in the Wimbledon singles final.

'We are separating'



Cricket

AFP, Sydney

Australian cricket star Shane Warne's wife confirmed she is separating from her husband after intense media speculation that the blond spinner was involved in another sex scandal, reports said Monday.

The record breaking 35-year-old bowler had begged his wife to take him back after they split over his repeated extramarital affairs, week-end news reports here said.

They also showed photographs of the cricketer with a protective arm around his wife taken during the past week while they were holidaying together in Spain, leading to speculation a reconciliation was on the cards.

However, Simone Warne made clear the announcement of the separation made nine days ago still stands.

"Due to the increased interest and misinformation, I wish to confirm that Shane and I are separating," Simone said in a statement issued late Sunday to Channel Nine television, which employs her husband.

"We are on a previously planned family holiday in Spain and we are trying to sort out what is best for our children."

"We have always tried to protect them and we will continue to do so. My priority right now is to get my family back to Australia."

The couple announced their separation last month after British tabloid newspapers reported the cricketer had had affairs with other women.

Warne, 35, has been linked to three different women since arriving in England in March to play county



SIMONE WARNE

cricket.

"Through all of this I am finding it difficult to deal with the continual media speculation," Simone Warne wrote in her statement.

"This is something Shane and I need to resolve in private. Please respect that in this time I need to dedicate my energy to my children. When the time is right for me, I will talk to you all, but just not right now."

Sydney's Daily Telegraph reported Monday that Warne was prepared to pay generous alimony to his wife and their children -- Brooke, 7, Jackson, 5 and Summer, 3.