



PHOTO: AFP
Last year's finalist Marcus Baghdatis of Cyprus holds his head in despair after losing a point during the second set of his second round match against Frenchman Gael Monfils at the Australian Open in Melbourne on Wednesday.

Capello to be fined

REUTERS, Madrid

Real Madrid coach Fabio Capello will be fined for his rude gestures towards two of the club's fans at the end of Sunday's 1-0 win over Real Zaragoza, the Primera Liga side said on Tuesday.

"In order to determine the size of the fine according to the club's internal disciplinary regime, the sporting staff will take into account the coach's explanations ... and the regret he has expressed for his unfortunate gesture," read a statement on the club's Web site.

Capello apologised for twice raising his middle finger towards some fans sitting in the stands near the dugout as he left the pitch at the end of Sunday's game at the Bernabeu.

"Since the first day I arrived there have been two people behind the bench who have continually offended me, and today it went too far," Capello said in the post-match news conference.

"They are the same ones that were here 10 years ago, but I shouldn't have done what I did."

Ronaldo on way to Milan

INTERNET, undated

Ronaldo is on the verge of leaving Real Madrid after agreeing financial terms with Milan, according to reports in Italy.

The Brazilian is ready to leave the Spanish giants and his agent Fabio Farah met Rossoneri Vice-President Adriano Galliani on Tuesday.

Farah has now flown back to Spain where he is scheduled to speak with Merengues sporting director Predrag Mijatovic about a transfer.

According to La Gazzetta dello Sport, Milan have offered the former Golden Ball winner a 4-million-pound per season contract, plus his entire image rights worth a lucrative 8-million-pound a year -- which Ronaldo currently shares with Real. The Rossoneri were initially interested in a loan deal, but have reportedly now decided to make a move to sign the player on a permanent basis until 2008.

Ronaldo is also a reported target for Flamengo, Arabian club Al-Ittihad and the MLS, but he seems interested in playing for one more important European club before ending his career elsewhere.

In the meantime, Real chief Ramon Calderon has renewed his threat of netting Milan star Kaka next summer.

"If I will still be the President in June, it is very likely that Kaka will join this club," said the official while meeting a group of students on Tuesday.

Calderon says sorry

REUTERS, Madrid



dents on Tuesday.

"I want to apologise a thousand times to anyone that might have been offended," Calderon told Real Madrid television. "But I want people to know that everything I've done since I got here has been for

the good of the club."

His comments to a student conference at the Villanueva University Centre were recorded without the knowledge of Real Madrid and later aired on national radio.

"There is vanity, egoism and they all think they are superstars," Calderon told the students when describing the Real Madrid dressing room.

"Real Madrid players never pay for anything. You have education and culture and that's something that they in general don't possess."

Calderon also took a swipe at David Beckham's decision to leave Real and sign a five-year deal

worth \$250 million for MLS side Los Angeles Galaxy.

"He's going to Hollywood to be half a film star," he said. "Our technical staff were right not to extend his contract and that has been proved by the fact that no other technical staff in the world wanted him except Los Angeles."

Calderon also went on to accuse former club president Florentino Perez of deliberately sabotaging his attempt to sign AC Milan's Brazilian midfielder Kaka in the close season.

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PHOTO: INTERNET
Middlesbrough's two-goal hero Mark Viduka (L) is hugged by teammate Julio Arca after scoring in their FA Cup third round replay against Hull at the Riverside on Tuesday.

Liverpool in Mascherano plea

AFP, London

Liverpool have sent a letter to FIFA asking the world football governing body to ease one of its rules so they can sign Argentinian midfielder Javier Mascherano on loan from West Ham, the BBC reported.

The Reds are keen to bring Mascherano, 22, to Anfield during the transfer window from their English Premiership rivals. However, under FIFA regulations, he cannot play for another club this season as he has already represented Brazilian side Corinthians and West Ham this season.

Nevertheless, a FIFA spokesman told the BBC on Tuesday that their "player status department" was considering the issue.

Mascherano arrived at Upton Park, the east London home of West Ham, with international teammate Carlos Tevez, back in August but has only played six minutes since the October 22 defeat against Tottenham.

Under a FIFA rule introduced in 2005, a footballer cannot play competitively for more than two different clubs between July 1 and June 30 the following year.

Serena drops a tear

AFP, Melbourne

Serena Williams said she was powerless to rein in her emotions as she continued her Grand Slam comeback here Wednesday, praising the cool demeanour of big sister Venus.

The double Australian champion expressed a gamut of feelings as she fought her way to a third round berth, admonishing herself for mishits, agast over disputed line calls and daydreaming happily until she realised her grip on the match was slipping.

"I'm an emotional person," she said. "I mean, on and off the court I'm extremely emotional."

"I'm crying in the movies. I'm crying, you know, just (out of) sympathy. I was watching 'Prison Break' and I almost started crying -- I am a really emotional person."

"So it's no surprise to me that on the court I do tend to wear my emotions on my sleeve."

Williams said her sister was the opposite and used her emotional detachment to great effect.

"It can work against you and it can work for you," she said. "One thing I've always admired about Venus is you can never tell whether she's down or she's up -- she's just going steady and I've always loved that."

"I've been trying to make it work for me more than anything."

"(Venus) has always been that

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BAGHDATIS FIZZES OUT

Federer, Roddick roll on



AFP, Melbourne

The 2005 champion Marat Safin squeaked through his second five-setter as top title hopes Roger Federer and Andy Roddick cruised into the third round of the Australian Open Wednesday.

But last year's finalist Marcos Baghdatis could not repeat the heroics as he was dumped out of the tournament by Frenchman Gael Monfils, 7-6 (7/5), 6-2, 2-6, 6-0.

Safin, who is 26th seed after fighting back from injury last year, regrouped after a fortuitous rain break to turn defeat into a thrilling 6-3, 5-7, 4-6, 7-6 (7/4), 6-0 win over Israeli qualifier Dudu Sela.

World number one Roger Federer expected no problems and didn't get any as he blasted veteran Swede Jonas Bjorkman out in straight sets.

The Swiss defending champion, chasing his third Australian title and 10th Grand Slam here, romped

past the 50th-ranked Bjorkman 6-2, 6-3, 6-2 in just 95 minutes.

The Fed Express will play Russian 25th seed Mikhail Youzhny in the next round.

"I was pretty much in control of the match today. I felt like if I got my serve going it was going to be tough for Jonas, because I can always have a look at his serve," Federer said.

Roddick, with the influence of coach Jimmy Connors rubbing off, sailed past Frenchman Marc Gicquel 6-3, 7-6 (7/4), 6-4 in just under two hours to set up a third round confrontation with Safin.

"When I saw the draw I expected to play Marat," Roddick said. "So if we play, then we play."

"I think we're both maybe better than a third-round match-up against each other."

"But that's the way it shakes out. You know, we both have to deal with it. I'm sure he's not thrilled about it either."

The pair last met in a Grand Slam in a five-set quarter-final at the 2004 Australian Open, which Safin won 6-4 in the deciding set. They are 3-3 head-to-head.

Safin, who beat Lleyton Hewitt

in the final here two years ago, was just two points from defeat at 6-5, 30-30 on his serve in the fourth set when rain forced the match to be suspended.

The interruption clearly aided the Russian, while upsetting Sela's momentum, and he sailed through the deciding set with three service breaks to win to love.

"The rain came and changed everything because otherwise I don't think I would win if the rain doesn't come I lost," Safin said.

"I asked them (umpire) to stop the match because it was really a little bit slippery, so I just wanted to stop the match."

Safin has the game to trouble everyone, even world number one Federer, who he vanquished 9-7 in the fifth set of an epic semi-final on the way to his victory over Hewitt in the 2005 final.

Baghdatis said he had felt the weight of expectations after last year's run.

"Gael (Monfils) played a great match, he was hitting the ball so aggressively and I just couldn't find a solution, I didn't want to be out there," he admitted.

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'HawkEye a nonsense'



AFP, Melbourne

Roger Federer says the HawkEye electronic line-calling technology is a nonsense and just puts the onus on players rather than tennis umpires to get the right calls.

The review system was partially adopted world-wide last season after it was first introduced at the ATP Masters Series event in Miami last March.

The system allows for fans to see on a giant video screen what the off-court umpire uses for review and encourages players to challenge calls.

But the world number one player is not a fan and says all it does is embarrass the players with the replay outcomes.

"I'm not a big fan of it. I think it's nonsense anyway in the first place," said Federer after advancing to the third round of the Australian Open here Wednesday.

"Now they (match officials) can hide even more behind these calls, that's for sure. But that's really our problem."

"It makes it really hard for us. Of course, we would like to be able to rely a little bit on umpires as well."

"They tend to now just let us do the work, the tough stuff. They let us get embarrassed basically with the two challenges there to be used."

Federer is also not a fan of the ATP experiment with a round-robin

format at 13 tournaments on different surfaces in different countries throughout the 2007 season.

The round robin format is where players are placed into groups and the top player in each group progresses to the knockout phase of the tournament to enable the players to have more matches.

"From my end, I'm not a round-robin guy. I'm not playing one of these events," he said.

"I'm happy about that this year. I hope they're not going to be around in 2008."

"But look, I'm not the only guy playing on tour. There's other players, as well, who have to agree with those things."

"I think it's going to be interesting to see where the game goes from here really."

Barca ride on Saviola



REUTERS, Madrid

Argentine striker Javier Saviola steered Barcelona into the quarterfinals of the King's Cup when he hit a hatrick in his side's 3-2 win over second division Alaves at the Nou Camp on Tuesday.

The victory earned the Spanish champions a 5-2 aggregate victory but an otherwise sloppy performance will have done little to allay fears that the Catalans have gone off the boil after winning just one of their last five league matches.

Saviola, who also scored both goals in the 2-0 win in last week's first leg, strengthened his case for a

regular place in the starting line-up with another fine individual performance.

His first came when he bundled the ball in from close range on 16 minutes after Alaves keeper Nicolas Arduin palmed the ball into his path following a Ronaldinho free-kick.

The pocket-sized Argentine made it 2-0 four minutes later when he ballooned a header over the French keeper after midfielder Thiago Motta had dinked a neat pass into the area.

But the Catalans relaxed too soon and Alaves were back on level terms in the game by halftime.

Brazilian forward Wellington Paulista chipped the ball over Albert Jorquera after a neat one-two on the edge of the area and fellow countryman Arthur left the Barca keeper

standing when he curled a superbly struck free kick around the wall from 25 metres out.

Wellington had a great chance to put Alaves ahead on the night when he broke free and rounded Jorquera early in the second half, but defender Carles Puyol managed to scramble the Brazilian's shot off the line.

Saviola ended any hopes of a comeback when he completed his hatrick soon after, volleying home from 15 metres out after Xavi had beaten the offside trap with a chipped pass over the Alaves back four.

The majority of the remaining ties will be played on Wednesday. Real Madrid host struggling Real Betis at the Bernabeu on Thursday after the two sides fought out a 0-0 draw in last week's first leg.



PHOTO: AFP
Barcelona forward Javier Saviola points to the heavens after scoring against Alaves during their King's Cup match at the Nou Camp in Barcelona on Tuesday.