

Henin crushes Vaidisova

AFP, Eastbourne

Confident top seed Justine Henin schooled teenaged Nicole Vaidisova on the grass, administering a 6-2, 6-2 lesson to reach the semifinals of the WTA Eastbourne Championships

Thursday.

Henin, basking in the glow of her fourth French Open title in the past five editions, remains an undefeated 6-0 at Devonshire Park after winning the Wimbledon tune-up event at her 2006 debut.

Czech Vaidisova, seeded fifth with a world number 14 ranking, never found her comfort zone on a surface where she reached the Wimbledon fourth round a year ago.

Henin, the world number one, is polishing her game after another triumph on clay in Paris, and has had few problems so far in making the switch over to grass.

The 25-year-old Belgian will Friday face the winner from the match between Russian fourth seed Elena Dementieva and France's Marion Bartoli.

Henin was ruthless in grinding out her victory in less than an hour, her third without the loss of a set against Vaidisova. She started with a 5-0 lead in the opening set as Vaidisova struggled from the start.

The Belgian dominated with four breaks of the Czech's serve. Vaidisova donated a fifth double-fault to hand over a match point, which Henin took with a winner to advance.

Second seeded Wimbledon holder Amelie Mauresmo was playing her quarterfinal after against Israeli sixth seed Shahar Peer.

Aussies seek Asian glory

Football

AFP, Sydney

Australia deserve to be favourites to win next month's Asian Cup and if the Socceroos do not make the Jakarta final it will be considered a failure, national coach Graham Arnold said Thursday.

The Australian-based members of the squad left here Thursday for Singapore where they will have their final warm-up game before opening their first-ever Asian Cup campaign against Oman in Bangkok on July 8.

Arnold relishes his team being installed as tournament favourites, even though they are now ranked below Japan and Iran in the region.

"I want favouritism to be a positive, not a negative," Arnold told reporters at the airport before departure.

"I want people to give us the favouritism tag because we deserve it."

"A pass is reaching the semi-finals, but I'll put pressure on myself by saying a failure is not making the final."

"In the big picture you have to get in the top four in Asia to get into the World Cup in 2010, so it's a good

test for us."

"I walk past the trophy cabinet in Football Australia (offices) every day and it's empty, so it would be nice to put something in it."

Middlesbrough goalkeeper Mark Schwarzer said Australia had to back up their top Asian team tag earned at last year's World Cup in Germany where they beat Japan 3-1 on the way to reaching the knockout second round.

"There's a high expectation from everyone concerned, and rightly from ourselves as well," he said.

"If you look at the performance at the World Cup we're rightly Number one in Asia."

"But that was 12 months ago and we have to back it up in this sort of competition. It's going to be a difficult competition and conditions are very harsh."

"But we've got enough quality to win the tournament."

Arnold welcomed reports that key midfielder Vince Grella has signed for Italian club Torino on a free transfer from Parma.

"I think it's a great move for Vinnie," Arnold said.

"He's a guy that loves playing in Italy. The Italian game suits him. At least he'll be coming to the Asian Cup mentally ready and won't have

any problems or worries about injury."

Arnold said Grella had kept him informed while the negotiations with Torino were finalised, and made it part of his contract that he would be available for the Asian Cup.

Arnold said he expected Liverpool ace Harry Kewell to play in the warm-up game against Singapore on June 30, even though he will not join the squad until the weekend.

Everton midfielder Tim Cahill's return from a broken bone in his foot will be delayed until the Asian Cup, Arnold said.

Cahill accompanied other squad members Thursday and will be met in Singapore by Everton's head physiotherapist Nick Rathbone for more intensive work on his foot.

"I'm very positive, and really confident that I can come back and produce," Cahill said.

Arnold is expecting his players to take time to come to terms with the hot, humid conditions, especially as they are coming off a four or five week break from their European seasons.

Real interested in Tevez

AFP, Madrid

Spanish champions Real Madrid, looking to cement their league dominance next season, may bid for West Ham's Argentine striker Carlos Tevez, AS sports daily reported on Thursday.

"There have been contacts," AS reported in revealing it had information Real sporting director Pedrag Mijatovic had had talks in Israel on Tuesday with the agent of Tevez Kia Joorabchian, head of Media Sport Investments (MSI).

The 23-year-old Tevez was instrumental in keeping the Hammers in the English Premiership last season with his goals in the final third of the campaign after the Londoners had appeared doomed.

Tevez's signing, along with that of compatriot Javier Mascherano -- who later joined Liverpool -- was controversial and earned West Ham a 5.5 million pounds (10.9 million dollars) fine for infringing ownership rules, although relegation rivals believed the club should have been docked points.

Tevez came to Upton Park after impressing during the World Cup and two seasons with Brazilian outfit Corinthians, having begun his career with Boca Juniors.



PHOTO: INTERNET
Getafe coach Bernd Schuster walks past the pitch of Coliseum Alfonso Perez Stadium after a training session on Thursday. Getafe president Angel Torres, angered by reports that Real Madrid may have struck a secret deal with Schuster, has issued a warning to the Spanish powerhouse.

Schuster laments Becks move

INTERNET, undated



Getafe coach Bernd Schuster, tipped to take charge of Real Madrid despite Fabio Capello's Liga triumph last weekend, has said that he views David Beckham's move to the United States as a grave error.

Former Madrid favourite Schuster is set to lead his players out at the Santiago Bernabeu for the Copa del Rey final against Sevilla for what could be his last match in charge after four years at the helm in the capital's satellite town.

"I think Beckham will be bored to tears in Los Angeles," Schuster told Cadena Ser. "He could have played for two or three more years in Madrid. It's a shame he has left."

Beckham left to play in the MLS

the two.

"(Christophe Metzelder) played at a very young age at the World Cup in Japan and Korea, but has later suffered from physical problems. If he came without these problems he could be a great centre half."

Madrid's favourite son Raul would be safe in the club's colours if the German took charge.

"With Raul (all the criticism) is exaggerated. He is from Madrid, it is his club and he wants to retire in Madrid, like (Paolo) Maldini in Milan."

"They have used him in an unfavourable position because Raul is a forward that prowls the area like (Emilio) Butragueno. If you move him elsewhere he fulfils his brief without complaining."

"If he says he does not want to go then it is important to keep him -- although it is a complicated subject."

C'wood set for hot seat

Cricket

BBC ONLINE, undated

Paul Collingwood is expected to be named captain when England name their one-day squad on Friday.

The Durham star is the clear favourite after Kevin Pietersen ruled himself out of the position, which

became vacant when Michael Vaughan quit on Monday.

The selectors are expected to make several changes following the team's dismal World Cup and could bring in some of the England Lions A team.

Vaughan expects to be left out to give the new captain a chance to settle in.

Head coach Peter Moores, fresh from a 3-0 series Test win over West

Indies, is looking to rebuild for the 2011 World Cup in Asia and knows he needs a new approach to the team's tactics.

"What's really exciting about the one-day game is that we've got scope because we've got some really good players," said Moores.

"They haven't quite yet gelled together or found a formula that brings success and that's one of the challenges I've got, along with the new captain and the team."

"They've got to find a way of playing and a style of playing that they can repeat and they can start moving up those rankings."

Next week, they have back-to-back Twenty20 matches against West Indies followed by three one-day internationals and, later this summer, they have a seven-match one-day series with India followed by the Twenty20 World Cup in South Africa.

Moores accepts that the new skipper will have to work closely with Test captain Vaughan if England are to be successful.

"I think we can make it work, I really do and I think it's a real positive for both sides," he said.

Former captain Graham Gooch and BBC cricket correspondent Jonathan Agnew have backed Collingwood, 31, to become cap-

tain.

Test wicketkeeper Matt Prior will be hoping to regain his place in the one-day squad after a 14-month absence and could keep World Cup keeper Paul Nixon on the sidelines.

Alastair Cook could return to the squad but Andrew Strauss' place could be in jeopardy after a poor run in the Test series and it seems too early for Marcus Trescothick to be brought back.

Seamer Liam Plunkett will hope his match-winning display in Durham's Friends Provident Trophy semi-final win over Essex will earn him a place in the squad after he was left out of the Test side.

Left-arm seamer Ryan Sidebottom could also be in contention after an impressive return to Test cricket.

And England Lions players, among them James Anderson, Owais Shah, Ed Joyce, Stuart Broad and Vikram Solanki, will all be hoping for call-ups.

England will be without injured all-rounders Andrew Flintoff and Ravi Bopara for the matches, which start with the first Twenty20 international at the Oval on 28 June.

Marshall to earn more

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Hamish Marshall's decision to stay in England's county cricket as a local player could earn him four times the salary he would receive for staying in New Zealand. Marshall said he stressed about his move for a fortnight before emailing his teammates to confirm he was remaining in England.

"They all understand my reasons and while Braces (John Bracewell) was disappointed, he understood that these things happen," Marshall told The Dominion Post. "I've got much respect for Braces as a coach, a person and a friend, so telling him was not easy. I haven't had a lot of contact with Flem (Stephen Fleming), but I think our paths may cross in the next week or so."

The paper reported Marshall was expected to leave Gloucestershire and switch to a higher-profile team, which could earn him NZ\$210,000 a season for the next three years, compared to the NZ\$48,000 he was guaranteed if he accepted a New Zealand contract. Marshall said his Irish passport had always allowed him the freedom to become a local player in England but he had not considered it seriously until now.

"I guess to make a decision like I have, sure, you have to have something there, you'd be foolish to do it otherwise, but I can't really say much more at the moment," he said. "When I was over here an opportunity came to me and then New Zealand Cricket came out with their contracts and what they offered me was fair, but unless you are in the top echelon of players the guaranteed money is not great. If you are a fringe player there is not that certainty and that is what tipped me to the county move. In the end I took the plunge and right now I'm quite comfortable with it."

I'm going to miss playing for New Zealand and I know my family is really going to miss me playing for them, but the security of playing over here for the next four years was too good to pass up."

Marshall conceded he was disappointed that he failed to make the most of his talent during an international career he described as "patchy". "I made a great start then went on an emotional rollercoaster, so I went through everything you could, but I wouldn't give it away for anything," he said. "Last year in county cricket I found myself as a first-class batsman and I thought I could take that to New Zealand level, but I struggled a little bit."

He has not ruled out a return to New Zealand in the future and there is even the possibility he could stay on with Northern Districts in 2007-08 as an "overseas" player. "Nothing has been discussed yet, but I'd definitely think about it," he said. "I hold Northern dear to my heart but they may want a bowler rather than a batter. We'll just have to wait and see."

Atalanta release Vieri

AFP, Rome

Former Italian international Christian Vieri has been released by Atalanta, the Bergamo-based Serie A club. Atalanta confirmed on Thursday.

The 33-year-old striker joined Atalanta in April after spending a year on the sidelines with a knee injury which he suffered while playing for French club Monaco.

Vieri, whose former clubs include Juventus, Inter Milan and Spanish side Atletico Madrid, scored 23 goals in 49 appearances for Italy.

12x3

10x3