



PHOTO: AFP

Defending champion Amelie Mauresmo of France makes a forehand return against Jamea Jackson of United States during their first round match of the Wimbledon on Tuesday.

Mauresmo makes flying start

Henman wins epic battle

INTERNET, undated



Tim Henman swept away the clouds of glooms that have been hanging over him this year by coming through an epic battle with former world number one Carlos Moya on Tuesday.

After watching defending champion Amelie Mauresmo come through a one-sided contest with American Jamea Jackson, the Centre Court crowd were treated to some genuine drama as the home-grown hero finally prevailed 13-11 in the fifth set.

The two veterans had been interrupted by nightfall on Monday with the scores tied at 5-5 in the decisive set.

Henman had failed to take four match points then and he was to put his fans through the wringer by missing two more before a double fault by Moya finally brought the match to a close.

After four hours and 11 minutes on court, Henman won 6-3, 1-6, 7-5, 2-6, 13-11. "You'd like to finish on a running forehand pass but at that stage you take any gifts," he admitted.

It was only the third match the former British number one has managed to win all year, but he will now have his sights set on reaching the second week after progressing to a second round clash with Spain's Feliciano Lopez.

"Today is only a start and I want to build on that," the Briton, who turns 33 later this year but has rejected suggestions this could be his last Wimbledon.

Mauresmo needed just over an hour to complete a 6-1, 6-3 defeat of American Jackson.

"Not bad," was the fourth seed's verdict on a performance that sends her into a second round meeting with either fellow Frenchwoman Virginie Razzano or Austria's Yvonne Meusburger.

Mauresmo, who wore a thigh support to avoid aggravating a slight groin strain, added: "It is good to be back as the defending champion and I was keen to get started. It was a good, solid match to begin with."

Jackson, 20, had looked like a potential top 20 player at this time last year following a run to the final of the Wimbledon warm-up tournament at Birmingham in which she beat both Jelena Jankovic and Maria Sharapova.

But her career has since been hampered by a string of injuries which culminated in hip surgery at the end of last year and she has yet to win a match since returning to the senior tour at last month's French Open.

Mauresmo is also searching for full match fitness after being sidelined for two months earlier in the season following an operation to remove her appendix.

She was eliminated from the French Open in the third round but looked much closer to her best form last week as she advanced to the

final at Eastbourne, where she lost out in a final set tiebreak to Justine Henin, the woman she beat in last year's Wimbledon final.

The two could meet again in this year's final as Mauresmo has been placed in second seed Sharapova's half of the draw, which also includes former champion Venus Williams.

On the outside courts, Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi became the first Pakistani in 31 years to win a men's singles match at Wimbledon by knocking out British qualifier Lee Childs 6-3, 6-4, 7-6 (8/6).

Qureshi, a 27-year-old doubles specialist, now faces former world number one Marat Safin, who eliminated South African qualifier Rik De Voest 7-6 (7/5), 6-4, 7-5.

And there was a rare British success in the women's singles when Katie O'Brien eliminated Sandra Kloesel of Germany 6-3, 7-5.

Later on Tuesday, Rafael Nadal was due to begin his campaign to become just the third man to win the French Open and Wimbledon in the same year against big-serving American Mardy Fish.

The Spaniard, fresh from a third successive French Open title where he also shattered Roger Federer's Grand Slam aspirations for another year, was a surprise runner-up here to the world number one last year.

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Tevez prefers Inter

INTERNET, undated

According to West Ham's Carlos Tevez, he has two of the world's biggest clubs chasing his signature.

Both La Liga champions Real Madrid and Serie A winners Internazionale have apparently declared their interest in the small striker and of the two, Tevez would prefer to ply his trade on Italian soil.

"Inter is a big club and there is certainly a real possibility that I will be wearing the 'nerazzurri' shirt next season," the Argentinean striker told Italy's La Gazzetta dello Sport.

He also announced to the Italian sports daily "it is also true" that Madrid are interested, "although my agent knows my thoughts; better Inter than Real".

A transfer to Inter would see Tevez team up with a number of fellow Argentines including Hernan Crespo, Julio Cruz and Javier Zanetti. But Real Madrid, FIFA's Team of the Century, are a strong magnet for any professional footballer.

If the Madrid reports are true, it is likely that Milan's Kaka will be a decisive factor in the move. Teves would be a good second-best for Madrid's president Ramon Calderon if he is unable to lure his number one transfer target from the San Siro.

Calderon pledged that on becoming El Presidente he would guarantee the arrival of Kaka, but this promise has as yet been an empty one.

The Madrid president recently

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Of mice and men

INTERNET, London



Squirrels, pigeons and mice -- Wimbledon's Centre Court has attracted a menagerie of animals over the years who brought many a tense match to a halt with their unwelcome intrusions.

Nowadays, though, it's streakers who are the bigger menace, prompting the tournament authorities last year to contemplate putting up a fence between spectators and players.

The problem of animal intruders came to a head in 1999 when German players Boris Becker and Nicolas Kiefer were twice dive-bombed from the grandstand roof by pigeons.

So the All England Club gratefully accepted the services of a full-time

falconer to patrol the courts with a swooping bird of prey, named Finnegan, acting as a highly effective deterrent.

Wimbledon librarian Alan Little, who boasts an encyclopedic knowledge of tournament history, has compiled for his annual Wimbledon compendium a history of the most intriguing Centre Court invasions.

Back in 1949, the Centre Court ball boys had to chase a squirrel off the hallowed turf while the players sat down to await the all-clear.

Pam Shriver once had to contend with a swarm of bees. One stung her opponent, Kathy Rinaldi, on the arm and Shriver gallantly went over to remove the sting.

John McEnroe and Stefan Edberg had their razor-sharp concentration disturbed in the 1989 semi-final by two sparrows swooping in low.

But the humans win the top prizes for the most eccentric interruptions.

In the 1957 gentleman's final, a Mrs Helen Jarvis invaded the court, shouting and waving a banner calling for a new world banking system.

A female streaker first took to the court in the 1996 men's final and, since then, the publicity-seeking temptation has proved overwhelming on several occasions.

Last year, Maria Sharapova was startled by a streaker who leapt on to Centre Court during her quarterfinal against Elena Dementieva.

She averted her gaze as he cart-wheeled naked in front of her before being bundled off court by security guards who wrapped him in a red blanket.

"I didn't want to look at all the details," Sharapova said.

But when told that some women spectators had been impressed by his physique, she replied: "Maybe next time I'll take a look."

Di Michele charged with gambling

AFP, Rome

Italy international David Di Michele was among four Italian footballers charged with illegal betting by the Italian football federation (FIGC) on Tuesday following a police investigation.

The 31-year-old striker, who plays for Serie A side Palermo and has made six appearances for Italy, together with Vicenza's Massimo Margiotta, Atalanta's Thomas Manfredini and Mantova's Vincenzo Sommesse, is accused of placing bets on official football matches organised by the FIGC, either directly or indirectly through a third party.

If found guilty the four players face bans of anything between three months and three years.

Atalanta also play in the top division, while Mantova and Vicenza play in the second division.

Mantova and Vicenza, along with Serie A club Udinese, have

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Argentine soccer takes one life

AP, Buenos Aires

One man was killed and 14 injured as rival soccer fans swinging metal pipes and throwing rocks clashed Monday after a match between Argentine clubs.

At least 78 arrests were reported in the fighting, which spilled out onto a busy rush-hour freeway after Tigre defeated Nueva Chicago 2-1, which was relegated from Argentina's first division.

"We regret to announce one death," said Dr. Alberto Crescenti, director of paramedics services for Buenos Aires. He said a 41-year-old man died from head wounds.

Police, who appeared initially overwhelmed by the fighting, were backed up by reinforcements firing tear gas and rubber bullets as rock-throwing fans scattered from the stadium in the Mataderos section of the capital.

Toure to Barca

AFP, Barcelona

Barcelona on Monday confirmed they have signed AS Monaco's Ivory Coast international midfielder Yaya Toure, without disclosing any transfer fee details.

Barca, who earlier showed off new star capture Thierry Henry from Arsenal in front of more than 20,000 fans, said Toure, who arrived in the Catalan metropolis on Sunday, would be unveiled officially on Tuesday.

Spanish media have reported that Barca and Monaco had been thrashing out a fee believed to be around the 12 million euros (18 million dollars) mark.

The 24-year-old, the younger brother of Arsenal defender Kolo Toure, joined Monaco in August 2006 from Greek side Olympiakos on a four-year contract.

Henry starts Catalan life



Football

AFP, Barcelona

French striker Thierry Henry on Monday began life as a Barcelona star by vowing to land the Catalan club the silverware which eluded them last season.

"I am really pleased to be here with Barca," Henry told a packed news conference at the Nou Camp in the Catalan language, before modestly giving the credit for his new language skills to former Arsenal teammate Cesc Fabregas, a former Barca star from the region.

"It has been a long chase but I'm finally here and happy to be here and I can't wait to go out there and show what I can do," Henry told reporters.

Asked about whether Barca's forward line can fit him in alongside close friend Samuel Eto'o, Ronaldinho and Lionel Messi, Henry, ever modest, said simply:

"Hopefully, I can be a great asset for the team.

"I haven't set any targets or objectives. It has to be a club target. Barcelona is always a club that wants to win everything. I am going to try my hardest to help as much as I can."

Club chairman Joan Laporta was delighted with his 24 million euro (32 million dollars) capture on a four-year deal on a day the club revealed Henry's release clause had been put at 125 million euros.

"Thierry Henry is a player we've been after for years and now he's here," said Laporta, adding that the club had first tracked the Monaco man before he joined Arsenal following an unhappy brief spell with Juventus in the 1999-2000 season.

"Today, it is a great pleasure to see him here," said Laporta.

"He is one of the best players in the world."

Henry came closest to winning the Champions League -- the medal missing from a collection which includes World and European glory

with France and a slew of domestic honours with Arsenal -- when the London side lost to Barca in the 2006 final, ironically in Paris.

Now he will chase the dream again in red and blue rather than red and white.

"It is a dream for everyone to win the Champions League and I'm sure it will be the dream of Barcelona to win it again next season," Henry said.

"It is the only thing I didn't win" in eight seasons in London.

"The most important thing is that Barcelona is successful and they win silverware," he stressed.

Arsenal boss Arsene Wenger said Henry left with his blessings.

"Thierry has been tremendous for us since he arrived in 1999. He has excelled both as part of a team and individually. In short, he has become an Arsenal legend," Wenger told Arsenal.com.

"Personally, I would like to

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Klose completes Bayern switch

AFP, Berlin

German international striker Miroslav Klose has completed his transfer from Werder Bremen to Bayern Munich, both Bundesliga clubs said on Tuesday.

Klose, 29, will have a medical on Thursday before signing a four-year contract and is due to start training with Bayern on Friday.

Bayern are believed to be paying an initial fee of 12 million euros (16.2 million dollars), but the final deal could be worth as much as 15 million euros depending on Klose's performances.

The fee for one of Europe's best forwards was relatively low because he would have been able to leave Werder on a free transfer at the end of the 2007-2008 season.

Klose will be expected to form a striking partnership with Italian World Cup winner Luca Toni, who joined from Fiorentina in an 12-million-euro deal, and Bayern spent 25 million euros on French midfielder Franck Ribery to bolster a team that finished fourth in the Bundesliga last season and failed to qualify for the Champions League.

Klose scored five goals to finish top scorer at last year's World Cup in Germany and has scored 33 goals for his country in 69 appearances.



PHOTO: AFP FILES

German goal-machine Miroslav Klose has just signed a four-year deal with Bundesliga powerhouse Bayern Munich.



PHOTO: AFP

Barcelona's new-signing French star Thierry Henry shows some of his skills with the ball to the Barca faithful during his unveiling at Nou Camp on Monday.