

# Pakistan hails its Wimbledon hero

## Tennis

AFP, Karachi

Pakistan on Wednesday celebrated a Wimbledon win by rising local star Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi, a rare tennis success in this cricket-obsessed South Asian nation.

The 27-year-old -- the first Pakistani to play in the Wimbledon men's singles since Haroon Rahim in 1976 -- outsmarted Britain's Lee Childs 6-3, 6-4, 7-6 (8/6) on his maiden Wimbledon singles appearance on Tuesday.

He now plays Russian Marat Safin in the second round, but win or lose, Qureshi's achievement was so unusual that it even pushed cricket off the sports pages of the newspaper.

Former great Khawaja Saeed Hai, who played the main rounds at Wimbledon for three consecutive years from 1954 to 1956, hailed Qureshi's "brilliant" performance.

"I used to get the world's top players in the first round but Qureshi got a lucky draw and won," said Hai,

who also played the US and French Open in 1960s.

"Now it is up to him to cash in and although Safin is not playing well these days the Russian would still be difficult to beat."

Qureshi's only previous experience of Wimbledon was in the doubles in 2002, when he created a storm by opting to defy the Pakistani Tennis Federation and play with Israel's Amir Hadad.

Pakistan, an Islamic republic, does not recognise the Jewish state.

The best performance by any Pakistani in a Wimbledon singles competition was by Haroon Rahim who reached the second round 31 years ago.

Hai said Qureshi's win must lift tennis in Pakistan, where it is overshadowed by cricket, hockey and squash.

"In the old days even my wins over English champions in tournaments never made a line in the newspapers, but now the media has projected Aisam's win and I hope that younger players will try to emulate his achievements," said

Hai.

Qureshi's win in the first round was covered by all the leading television channels while newspapers also joined in saluting the gutsy player from Lahore.

"It's child's play for Aisam as he sets up Safin date," wrote The News in its sports pages.

Khalid Rehmani, president of the tennis federation of southern Sindh province, said Qureshi had not only done Pakistan proud but also given a boost to tennis across Asia.

"Just four to five players from Asia play in the main rounds of a Grand Slam these days and Qureshi is among them. It will help tennis in Asia and I hope he extends his run by beating Safin which is not impossible," said Rehmani.

Qureshi admitted he had fulfilled his life's ambition after his first-round win.

"It is going to be mad back home and I hope my win goes a long way in promoting tennis in Pakistan," Qureshi told a private television channel.



PHOTO: AFP  
Soccer legend Diego Maradona of Argentina kicks off the Copa America as Venezuela President Hugo Chavez (C) looks on in San Cristobal on Tuesday.

## Angola's Maurito Marseille-bound

AFP, Luanda

Angola international Maurito is set to follow in the footsteps of a string of African football stars after announcing

Tuesday that he had agreed to join French giants Marseille next season.

Maurito, who has been playing

recently for Al-Wahda in Abu

Dhabi, told Angolan media that the

allure of playing Champions League

football had proved irresistible.

"The fact that it is a team that will

compete in the European

Champions League is something

that is good to relaunch my career,"

he was quoted as saying by the

state news agency Angop.

Maurito, whose full name is

Roberto Mullenassa, missed out on

the Black Antelopes' appearance in

last year's World Cup finals in

Germany after suffering a serious

leg injury.

moving midfield.

Now he is with the squad he is

feeling relaxed and quietly confi-

dent that Australia can win the

Asian Cup at their first attempt.

"I made the decision myself."

Viduka arrived here on Sunday

after completing his move to

Newcastle from Middlesbrough

and taking a holiday in Croatia.

He told the paper there was no

pressure from Newcastle to miss

the tournament to remain fresh for

the new English Premier League

season, adding that he was look-

ing forward to playing with new

teammate Michael Owen.

"I'm not sure if he's staying. I've

been on holidays but what's hap-

pening at Newcastle is exciting.

We've got new owners and it looks

very promising," Viduka said.

Viduka is a key part of Arnold's

tactics for the Asian Cup with his

ability to hold the ball and play as a

lone striker supported by a fast-

## Bronckhorst heads back home

AFP, Madrid

Barcelona defender Giovanni van Bronckhorst is set for a return home after signing for former club Feyenoord, the Spanish giants announced Wednesday.

Van Bronckhorst had extended his contract with Barcelona in December until 2008, however a clause allowing him to leave if clubs showed an interest in signing him was included.

The Dutchman, who has 67 caps and four goals for his country, won two Spanish league titles with Barcelona and a Champions League title.

The 32-year-old played for Rotterdam-based Feyenoord in 1993-1998, after which he played for Rangers then Arsenal.

"We are ready. We will deploy all our equipment, including bomb squads and dogs," said Lieutenant General Phanu Kerdlarpbhol, deputy head of Bangkok's metropolitan police.

About 13,000 soldiers have been on standby in Bangkok since mid-June as protests against the junta gather steam.

About 15,000 people attended a rally on June 15 and 6,000 marched to the army headquarters on July 23.

"We are preparing for all kinds of threats to the players, including bombs and hooliganism."

Evacuation routes have been planned at the main stadium in Jakarta, which will host the final on July 27.

South Korea, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Indonesia are based in the Indonesian capital.

Mustafa Mohamad, director of

# Wenger's Arsenal future in the balance

## Football

AFP, London

Arsenal chairman Peter Hill-Wood has said he is hopeful that Arsene Wenger will stay on with the club as coach, but admitted that his future hung in the balance.

The Frenchman has one year left to run on his contract and the transfer of star striker Thierry Henry to Barcelona has cast further doubts on whether he will sign a new deal.

Henry had said that the departure of chairman David Dein and the uncertainty surrounding Wenger's

position were key factors in his decision to leave Arsenal, but Hill-Wood said he was doubtful.

"I am not particularly worried about what Thierry said but whether it really influenced his decision or not we will have to wait and see," he told the Daily Telegraph.

"We certainly don't think Thierry Henry going and Arsene Wenger's contract situation are in any way linked. That was just an excuse."

Hill-Wood said that he hoped Wenger would remain at Arsenal, even if he does not sign a new deal this summer.

"I am really hopeful he will extend but at this moment I am only in a

position of hoping," he said.

"I've no reason to think that he won't but at the same time I have no reason to believe he will say yes."

Certainly we would like to see him sign a new contract - we have made no secret about that.

"But we have not talked any details about anything with him or the board. We will wait and see what he wants to do. Then we can sit down and discuss things if he is positive about it. I am very relaxed. We are in good shape."

Hill-Wood also said that Arsenal were still keenly watching the transfer market and would be eager to sign a player or two.

# Security up for Asian Cup

## Football

AFP, Singapore

the kingdom's Muslim-majority south, where rebels are waging a bloody battle for a separate state.

"I also don't think the insurgency will be a threat but we are providing full security," Phanu said.

A string of bomb attacks in Bangkok

on New Year's Eve killed three people

and injured 42.

No one has yet been charged, and it is still unclear whether they were related to the insurgency.

In Jakarta, the scene of several

deadly bombings in recent years, including at the Marriott hotel in 2003 and the Australian embassy in 2004, hotels have drastically tightened their security.

All cars entering are checked by police while visitors must walk through metal detectors and have their bags searched.

"We will provide the usual security protection to the players and officials, especially foreigners," Jakarta police spokesman Ketut Untung Yoga Ana said.

"Security will be provided from the time they arrive at the airport, at the hotel where they are staying, at the training ground, as well as match venues and everywhere they go, if they request it."

"We are preparing for all kinds of threats to the players, including bombs and hooliganism."

Trouble in football-mad Vietnam is rare although last month a national championship match was abandoned when rioting fans threw stones and bottles onto the pitch and set fire to

the stadium.

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the stadium.

"South Korea, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Indonesia are based in the Indonesian capital."

Vietnam, Japan, Qatar and UAE play in Hanoi.

# Pride brings Viduka back

## Football

AFP, Singapore

Mark Viduka says the pride of wearing the Australian shirt was behind his last-minute decision to play in the Asian Cup, insisting there was no pressure from new club Newcastle to miss the tournament.

The 31-year-old, preparing with the Socceroos in Singapore ahead of their first match on July 8, shelved international retirement plans at the 11th hour because playing for his country meant too much.

"Initially I was in two minds. I didn't know whether to retire or not and I mentioned it to Arnie (coach Graham Arnold) and I said it looks like I will go that way," Viduka told Sydney's Daily Telegraph newspaper.

"I'm not sure if he's staying. I've been on holidays but what's happening at Newcastle is exciting.

We've got new owners and it looks very promising," Viduka said.

Viduka is a key part of Arnold's tactics for the Asian Cup with his ability to hold the ball and play as a lone striker supported by a fast-