

Peru romp past Uruguay

Bolivia spoil Venezuela party

SPORTINGLIFE, undated



Peru got their Copa America campaign off to a great start with a n impressive 3-0 win over Uruguay in Group A.

Miguel Villalba, Juan Carlos Marino and Paolo Guerrero were on target in the Metropolitano Stadium as Peru shocked their opponents, considered by many as dark horses for the prestigious tournament taking place in Venezuela.

The Uruguayans, missing Alvaro Recoba after the Internazionale forward was ruled out with a muscle problem, began the stronger of the two sides and Villarreal striker Diego Forlán squandered two good chances to open the scoring.

But it was the Incas who struck first as defender Miguel Villalba powered home a header from Juan Carlos Marino's corner after 26 minutes to give the Peruvians a narrow half-time lead.

Manager Oscar Tabarez brought on Diego Rodriguez and Sebastian Abreu during the interval in a bid to make Uruguay more of an attacking threat and the duo combined after 66 minutes to hand the former a great chance to level, only for Rodriguez to waste the opening.

The hosts had the first attempt on target as Fernando De Ornelas' long

range shot was well held by Bolivian keeper Galarza before opening the scoring after 20 minutes when midfielder Giancarlo Maldonado found the back of the net from inside the box.

However, Erwin Sanchez's side pulled level after 39 minutes when Jaime Moreno escaped the attentions of the Venezuelan defence before unleashing a shot that deflected in off Alejandro Cichero's leg.

Man of the match Ricardo Paez put Venezuela back in front in the 55th minute with a classy finish and Richard Paez's men then spurned a number of opportunities to extend their lead.

And they were made to pay for their profligacy after 83 minutes when Corinthians' young striker Juan Carlos Arce applied the finish to Gonzalo Galindo's pass.

AFP adds: "These players are starting to change the course of Peruvian soccer," Peru coach Julio Cesar said.

"But we need to keep displaying the same professionalism and keep things simple. We have won an important game but there is still plenty of work to do."

"I am convinced that my team can play a lot better."



PHOTO: AFP

Peru's Claudio Pizarro (in the foreground) is under pressure from Uruguay's Fabian Canobio during the opening match of the Copa America at Merida in Venezuela on Tuesday.

Serena, Andy surge ahead

AFP, London



Andy Roddick and Serena Williams led a super-powered United States surge at Wimbledon on Wednesday as

American players continued to salvage a reputation so badly damaged at the French Open.

American men suffered their worst ever performance on the Roland Garros clay, making the grass of the All England Club even more of a welcome sight this year.

Roddick, beaten in the first round in Paris, has twice been a Wimbledon runner-up, and he eased into the third round on Wednesday with a 6-3, 6-4, 7-6 (7/3) over Thailand's Asian Games champion Danai Udomchoke.

Williams, the women's champion in 2002 and 2003 and a quarter-finalist at the French Open, also made the third round with a 7-6 (7/4), 6-3 win over Australia's Alicia Molik.

Veteran American Laura

Granville put out Austrian 20th seed Sybille Bammer 6-1, 6-4 to reach the third round while compatriot Meilen Tu booked her place in the second round with a 4-6, 6-2, 6-2 win over Romania's Edina Gallovits.

Now faces French Open runner-up Ana Ivanovic, the sixth seed, who beat Melinda Czink 6-0, 7-6 (7/3).

Despite her defeat in Paris, Ivanovic said the reception she received in Belgrade, along with fellow Serbian semi-finalists Jelena Jankovic and Novak Djokovic after the tournament, had been outstanding.

"After Paris, we were treated really well. In Belgrade, we were taken to the parliament building and it was a great honour," said Ivanovic.

"Usually it's the Serbian teams like the basketball players who are invited so for individual sportsmen to be invited was a great honour."

Meanwhile, China's hopes in the women's singles came to an end when Yan Zi, half of the women's doubles winning team here in 2006, lost 3-6, 6-2, 6-3 to Italian 21st seed Tathiana Garbin.

Britain's Tim Henman, fresh from his epic five set win over Carlos Moya in the first round, makes a quick return to Centre Court where he duels with another Spaniard, Feliciano Lopez.

Pakistan's Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi, the world 279 and who came through qualifying, has the huge task of trying to defeat former world number one Marat Safin.

Qureshi is the first Pakistani player to reach the second round since Haroon Rahim in 1976.

Nakamura happy at Celtic

AFP, Glasgow

Japan international midfielder Shunsuke Nakamura is happy at Scottish double winners Celtic, despite claims from an Italian agent claiming the player could use a get-out clause in his contract.

Italian agent Angelo Massoni claimed there could be a one million pounds (2 million dollars) get-out clause in Nakamura's contract, which he signed last summer, and stated that four giants of world football wanted to sign him.

However Celtic have now rubbed Massoni's suggestion, and the 29-year-old's agent Robert Takuda said Nakamura is settled in the west of Scotland.

In a statement on their website, www.celticfc.net, the club said: "Celtic can state categorically that there is absolutely no 'get-out clause' in Shunsuke Nakamura's contract."

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I'm still a daddy's girl

AFP, London

Maria Sharapova has a message for the thousands of love-struck young men who'd happily fall at her feet - she's just a daddy's girl at heart.

The world's most high-profile sportswoman paid tribute to her father Yuri, who famously was side-by-side with her when they left their Russian home for Florida to build the platform for what has become a lucrative franchise and a Grand Slam winning career.

"Both my mom and dad sacrificed so much and I'm very lucky because he probably loves me more than anyone else in the world," said the 20-year-old.

"He's a character but unfortunately you only get to see him when I'm playing tennis and he's in the stands."

"By himself, he'd make a really good reality show. That's one of the things I have proposed to him once my career is over. He's a really hilarious guy."

"When I'm playing badly, he's like: 'Are you kidding me?' That was not Maria. It's your sister. Bring her back."

Sharapova, the 2004 Wimbledon champion, opened her 2007 campaign on Tuesday with a 6-1, 7-5 win over Taiwan's Chan Yung-Jan.

But such is the global appeal of the Russian pin-up that she spends more time in her post-match news conferences discussing her family

Henman stars in Round 1

AFP, London



Tim Henman rolled back the years to emerge triumphant from an epic battle with Carlos Moya in the pick of the day's action at

Wimbledon on Tuesday.

On a day when the only real surprise was the unexpected appearance of the sun, French Open champion Rafael Nadal tamed big-serving American Mardy Fish while 2004 winner Maria Sharapova and defending champion Amelie Mauresmo eased into the second round of the women's singles.

But even Sharapova's eye-catching outfit - a layered dress inspired by the ballet Swan Lake - could not deprive Henman of the limelight after he finally overcame former world number one Moya in a 24-game fifth set after more than four hours of high-quality tennis.

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 put to the legions of fans watching on "Henman hill" through another hour of nail-biting before a double fault by Moya finally brought the match to a close.

That offered the former British number one the opportunity to reflect with typically modest satis-

faction on a 6-3, 1-6, 5-7, 6-2, 13-11 win that was the perfect riposte to those who had suggested it was time to hang up his racket.

It was only the third match the former British number one has managed to win all year. But, having reached four semi-finals here over the years, he will now have his sights set on reaching the second week, although he has a tricky second round clash with Feliciano Lopez, a Spaniard who loves to get to the net.

"Having played at that level, it is a fantastic start, but it is only a start and I want to build on that," Henman said.

Nadal took a leaf out of Roger Federer's book as he began his campaign to become the first man since Bjorn Borg to win back-to-back French Open and Wimbledon titles.

The Spaniard believes Federer gains a crucial edge over his rivals from the ease with which he dispatches opponents in the early rounds and Nadal made short work of Fish, swatting back his 130mph serves with almost contemptuous ease at times on his way to a 6-4, 7-6 (7/4), 6-3 win.

Lleyton Hewitt, the 2002 champion and the last man to win Wimbledon before Federer began his winning streak, was equally untroubled against British wildcard Richard Bloomfield, winning 7-5, 6-3, 7-5.

There were also wins for fourth seed Novak Djokovic and sixth seed Nikolay Davydenko.

Despite wearing a thigh support to avoid aggravating a slight groin injury, Mauresmo needed just over an hour to complete a 6-1, 6-3 defeat of American Jamea Jackson, who is in the early stages of a comeback following hip surgery at the end of last year.

"Not bad," was Mauresmo's verdict on a performance that sends her into a second round meeting with Austria's Yvonne Meusburger.

"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."

Sharapova did not have too much trouble compiling a 6-1, 7-5 win over Chan Yung-Jan of Taiwan but Venus Williams admitted she was short of match practice after squeezing past Russian teenager Alla Kudryavtseva 2-6, 6-3, 7-5.

"The first set went so fast and my balls were just flying out and I didn't have any answers," triple champion Williams said.

"I eventually had to take something off the ball because I just couldn't seem to get it in today. I haven't played a match in a few weeks, so I think that could be a factor."

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 Richard Bloomfield, winning 7-5, 6-3, 7-5.

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L'pool's Torres hunt on

SPORTINGLIFE, undated

Liverpool are reportedly edging closer to sealing a record deal for Atletico Madrid striker Fernando Torres.

According to The Sun, Reds manager Rafael Benitez has agreed to pay £25million for the 23-year-old Spain international.

However the deal could be held up because Torres is entitled to 10 per cent of any fee and Atletico insist Liverpool should pay it.

The Premier League side are adamant this cash, all £2.5million of it, should come out of the overall transfer pot.

Atletico president Enrique Cerezo said: "Every player has a price and if they pay the transfer clause there is nothing we can do to stop Torres leaving."

"But at the moment what is certain is that there is nothing going on with Torres and any other club."

Benitez's own agent Garcia Quilon is trying to broker a deal and Liverpool are confident they will get their man.

Torres has long been linked with a move to England with his impressive 82 goals in 212 games for Atletico really raising awareness of his raw talents.

Meanwhile Liverpool have been expected to throw Djibril Cisse into the deal as part of a player-plus-cash arrangement while Luis Garcia could also be included.

Mirza cruises to second round

AFP, London

Indian tennis starlet Sania Mirza blasted her way into the second round at Wimbledon on Tuesday, easing past Russia's Yaroslava Shvedova in straight sets.

Mirza, 20, wasted no time on Court 6 as she demolished the 19-year-old Muscovite 6-0, 6-3 in 55 minutes.

However, Mirza was frustrated by her opponent at 5-2 up in the final set, being pegged at deuce before world number 80 Shvedova finally won the game.

And she lost two match points in the final game before finally sealing it as the Russian misfired.

Mirza, who signed autographs for the Indian fans in the crowd as she left, now faces Russian 11th seed Nadia Petrova in the second round.

World number 44 Mirza's best Wimbledon performance was reaching the second round in 2005, while her best Grand Slam outing was at the US Open in the same year, when she reached the fourth round.



PHOTO: AFP

Russian superstar Maria Sharapova follows through on a return during her Wimbledon Championships first round engagement against Yung-Jan Chan of Chinese Taipei in London on Tuesday.

Henry warns Europe

Football

AFP, Madrid

I'm 29, soon to be 30, and I don't know everything about the club.

"I need to talk with the captain Carles Puyol and also with Eto'o, Ronaldinho, (Andres) Iniesta, Xavi.... players that have been here for many years."

Another challenge facing Henry will be learning the language.

Having spent eight years at Arsenal and a year before that at Juventus, Henry is accustomed to foreign fields but he does not yet speak Spanish.

"For me it's a priority to learn Castilian (Spanish) or Catalan as quickly as possible because it's very important to communicate, not just in the dressing room but from day to day. I want to get to know the culture, the Catalans and the people."

Quite apart from the challenges ahead, Henry is looking forward to being a part of a team that plays some of the most fluid, enterprising football in Europe.

With the likes of Ronaldinho,

Eto'o and Messi in the squad, Henry, who began his career as a winger, is not sure to be given a starting berth in his preferred central striking role.

"In a team of Barca's level, no one can demand what position to play in. You think only about the group."

"I think Barca is the only team in the world that has never changed its style of play."

That kind of talk is likely to further endear the Frenchman to the Catalans faithful, who have already taken him to their hearts.

It is thought that 30,000 people turned out to watch his official presentation, more than came to see Ronaldinho when he signed in 2003.

"I will remember that day for the rest of my life. I thought there would be quite a few people but I have to admit that when I turned around and saw all those people, I was really impressed."