

Davydenko slams 'boring' Wimbledon

INTERNET, undated

Nikolay Davydenko has joined his Russian Davis Cup teammate Marat Safin in criticising the way Wimbledon is run.

"Wimbledon is the world's most boring tournament," Davydenko told the Sovietsky Sport newspaper.

"There's hardly anything to do apart from tennis. You constantly find yourself yawning, there's no entertainment here."

The world number four has never found himself at ease on the slick grass courts at the All England Club, failing to progress beyond the second round in his five previous visits to London.

"We've staying in the city centre, so it's a bit better," said the Russian, who has made his breakthrough this year, coming from two sets down to beat Australia's Chris Guccione and reach the last 32 for the first time.

"If we rented a house near Wimbledon it would have been a total bore. There's absolutely nothing to do besides tennis."

Former world number one Safin was also highly critical of Wimbledon, complaining about the food prices and the security before he was knocked out by defending champion Roger Federer in the third round on Friday.

Palermo close in on Miccoli

INTERNET, undated

Juventus-owned Fabrizio Miccoli could be unveiled as a Palermo player as early as Monday morning, according to reports.

The Sicilians have been tracking the 'pocket striker' for several weeks and newspapers suggest his transfer is ready to be completed.

Former Perugia and Fiorentina starlet Miccoli has spent the last two seasons on loan in Portugal with Benfica.

He made it clear he wanted a return to the peninsula, but after an initial interest in bringing him back to Juve, it seems Palermo promised a first team place.

It is claimed that the Rosanero have sealed an agreement worth just under £3.5m to take Miccoli to Sicily.

He will replace David Di Michele, who is expected to sign for Parma over the course of the summer.

Palermo are also said to be in advanced negotiations to hand defender Christian Terlizzi over to their local rivals Catania.

Franco Brienza is also in talks to make the move across Sicily to the Etnei.

Hammers swoop for Faubert

AFP, London

West Ham are set to sign rising French star Julien Faubert after his club Bordeaux issued him with an ultimatum, his agent said Sunday.

Faubert had been angling for a move to Rangers in Scotland but after the Ibrox giants failed to meet Bordeaux's asking price, the French outfit told Faubert to join West Ham, whether he likes it or not.

His agent Philippe Sol said West Ham had made a significantly higher bid for the 23-year-old France international, who can play in midfield or defence.

"He was given an ultimatum by Bordeaux: West Ham or nowhere," Sol told the Sunday Herald.

"They were no longer interested in talking with Rangers and after everything that went on with Julien last week there really wasn't a way back for him at Bordeaux.

"He wanted to go to Rangers and

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Lupoli seals Viola switch

INTERNET, undated

Italian striker Arturo Lupoli has left Arsenal to join Serie A side Fiorentina.

The 20-year-old, who played on loan at Derby last season, joined Arsenal as a scholar in 2004.

He struggled to make the grade with the Gunners, making only one league appearance and being used as part of Arsene Wenger's second-string side featuring in the Carling Cup.

A statement on the Arsenal website: "Everyone at Arsenal would like to thank Arturo for his contribution to the club and wish him the best of luck during for the future.

"Arsenal supporters may have seen this transfer being announced in the media for some time. However, Arsenal.com would like to reiterate that Arsenal Football Club only communicates transfers when they are completed."



PHOTO: AFP

Uruguay's Vicente Sanchez is having a ride on the shoulders of Diego Perez after he scored against Bolivia during the sides' Copa America second round clash at San Cristobal in Venezuela on Saturday.

Raikkonen leads Ferrari one-two

INTERNET, undated



Kimi Raikkonen breathed some much-needed life into his world championship challenge by winning the French Grand Prix, heading a Ferrari one-two.

The 27-year-old Finn, who had not won since the opening round of the championship in Australia in March, started third but beat Britain's Lewis Hamilton off the line and then tailed his teammate Felipe Massa for the opening two thirds of the race.

But a series of lightning-fast laps just before his final pit-stop saw after the Ibrox giants failed to meet Bordeaux's asking price, the French outfit told Faubert to join West Ham, whether he likes it or not.

Raikkonen's victory was his second since joining Ferrari and the 11th of his career and Ferrari's whitewash was their first since seven-time world champion Michael Schumacher retired from the sport at the end of last year.

Championship leader Hamilton, who dropped to third at the start, pressured Raikkonen for the opening section of the race, but lost his chance of challenging the Finn when McLaren switched him onto a three-stop strategy.

who dropped to third at the start, pressured Raikkonen for the opening section of the race, but lost his chance of challenging the Finn when McLaren switched him onto a three-stop strategy.

The tactical gamble did nothing for his race but did not harm it either as he completed the podium -- continuing his record of having never finished outside the top three in his short career and increasing his championship lead from ten points to 14.

The most exciting part of his race came on lap 37 as Robert Kubica passed him at Estoril as Hamilton exited the pits for the second time. The 22-year-old Rookie kept his foot in though and seized the place back at the Adelaide hairpin -- the next corner.

Kubica, on his first race back after his horror crash in Canada, looked good on his way to fourth, but the main battles took place behind him and mostly involved Fernando Alonso.

After a McLaren gearbox problem in qualifying limited the world champion to tenth on the grid, Alonso started on the softer of the

two kinds of Bridgestone tyre on offer, hoping to charge up through the field early on.

He moved up to seventh on lap two, scything inside Nico Rosberg's Williams, but then became stuck behind Nick Heidfeld's BMW Sauber, briefly going by into the Lycee only to run wide and surrender the place.

A gamble to pit him early did not pay off and he lost a place to Giancarlo Fisichella's Renault at the first round of pit-stops, forcing him to make a do-or-die move on the Italian at Adelaide, which only came off at the third time of asking.

He quickly latched back onto Heidfeld's tail and produced one of the moves of the season to get by, nosing ahead at the 130 mph Imola sweep, forcing the German to cede the position or crash.

Fifth, or even fourth, looked to be Alonso's for the taking, but two off-track excursions after his final stop lost him all the time he had previously made up and allowed Heidfeld and Fisichella back past to finish fifth and sixth.

Behind Alonso the final point

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PHOTO: AFP

Ferrari's Kimi Raikkonen of Finland punches the air as he celebrates his victory at the Nevers Magny-Cours racetrack of the French Formula One Grand Prix yesterday.

Venezuela create history Uruguay turn it around

INTERNET, undated



Hosts Venezuela secured only their second ever win in the Copa America with a 2-0 victory over ten-man Peru, while Uruguay came back strongly in the tournament with a 1-0 win over Bolivia.

Second-half goals from Alejandro Cichero and substitute Daniel Arismendi were enough to give hosts Venezuela the points in a stormy encounter.

The game burst into life after just 14 minutes when Pedro Garcia was sent off for an alleged elbowing on Giancarlo Maldonado.

Peru held on until half-time but Venezuela broke the deadlock four minutes after the restart with Cichero heading home from a corner.

Peru almost caught Venezuela cold seconds later when Paolo Guerrero burst through on goal only to hit his shot against the post.

Peru had strong penalty claims waved away just past the hour mark when Hector Gonzalez appeared to trip Claudio Pizarro inside the box.

Venezuela were reduced to ten

I rejected Blues: Klinsmann

INTERNET, undated

Jeorgen Klinsmann has revealed he turned down the chance to manage Chelsea this summer.

The former Spurs striker led host nation Germany to the World Cup semi-finals in 2006 but decided to stand down afterwards and has since been living in California with his family.

He told the Sunday Mirror: "I realised that as a family we had to move back to Europe if I was going to take such a big job. I did not want to do that to my family.

"For me personally it was not the biggest problem if I had to go back to Europe. But for my family it was not a healthy situation.

"In California my wife and children are who they are. In Europe they would be the wife and children of Jeorgen Klinsmann.

"There would be constant attention, media focus and pressure that I would never want to put on them.

"The reason I packed up my job as national coach of Germany was the same as why I wanted to leave London and move to California in 1998 after I finished playing.

"It's a family decision why I decided not to take up one of the biggest jobs in football.

"I want my kids to grow up in surroundings where they are left alone and where the past and name of their father is not haunting them."

The likes of Frank Rijkaard and Guus Hiddink were also linked with the job towards the end of last season with relations between current boss Jose Mourinho and owner Roman Abramovich reported to be beyond repair.

However, Mourinho now looks certain to be in the hot-seat next season as Chelsea look to reclaim the Premier League title from Manchester United.

Milan wait on Sheva

INTERNET, undated

Milan are waiting for Andriy Shevchenko to demand a transfer from Chelsea. "He knows what to do," said Adriano Galliani.

"I speak to Sheva often. He knows what he has to do," the vice-president told 'Il Giornale' newspaper.

Patron Silvio Berlusconi and coach Carlo Ancelotti have also publicly stated that the Ukrainian is more than welcome to return to the San Siro just 12 months after his £30m move.

It is reported that Chelsea have rejected a loan deal and that Milan consider £15m to be too much to buy back the Balon d'Or winner.

Other candidates for the club include Antonio Cassano of Real Madrid and Inter's unsettled hitman Adriano.

"Is Cassano a real target or a bluff? You decide," added Galliani. "We have signed four players from Inter. Andrea Pirlo and Clarence Seedorf are still first team players, Dario Simic and Christian Brocchi just behind, while the ex-Rossoneri we sent to Apiano Gentile are long gone.

"After these precedents, I doubt Massimo Moratti would hand us his Press Officer, let alone Adriano!"

Milan had said they would bring back Massimo Donati, but instead sold him to Celtic for £3m, so will there be a major midfield acquisition?

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men 12 minutes from time when Ricardo Paez was dismissed for a second bookable offence after kicking the ball away.

The home side made the game safe a minute later when Arismendi beat a defender and fired in a shot from the edge of the box.

The game ended on a sour note with scuffles breaking out between both sets of players after some showboating from Venezuela's Cichero.

Vicente Sanchez's second-half goal was enough to give Uruguay a vital win as they bounced back from their opening defeat to Peru.

Both sets of players appeared to struggle in the rain-soaked conditions as both sides were guilty of giving away possession all too easily on numerous occasions.

Bolivia suffered a blow on 28

minutes when Ronald Garcia was forced off through injury after a heavy tackle by Pablo Garcia.

The best chance of the first half came right on the stroke of half-time when Uruguay caught Bolivia with a rapid counter attack as Cristian Rodriguez burst clear on goal, but goalkeeper Sergio Galarza was quickly off his line to block Rodriguez getting a shot in on goal.

Bolivia had a half chance three minutes after the restart when Ronald Raldes got on the end of a corner from Moreno only to flash his effort wide of the target.

Uruguay had strong penalty claims turned down on 53 minutes when Rodriguez went down in the box under a challenge from Raldes.

Uruguay broke the deadlock on 58 minutes with Vicente Sanchez

scoring from close-range.

Diego Perez got down right and crossed into the box for Diego Forlan who touched the ball goalwards where Sanchez was on hand to poke the ball home from six yards out.

The goal lifted Uruguay and Forlan tried his luck with an ambitious shot from fully 35 yards after spotting Galarza off his line, but the goalkeeper got back to smother the striker's effort.

Bolivia almost grabbed an equaliser in the dying seconds when Sacha Lima fired in a fierce shot from the edge of the box which Fabian Carini superbly tipped round the post.

Carini came to Uruguay's rescue again right at the death when he was quickly off his line to block Gualberto Mojica's close-range effort.



PHOTO: AFP

Venezuela's Alejandro Cichero (R) runs for joy after he scored the first goal against Peru in the Copa America at San Cristobal in Venezuela on Saturday.

Sharapova warns Williams

AFP, London



fourth round at Wimbledon.

Sharapova was overwhelmed by Williams' brutal power-hitting when they last met on the All England Club grass courts in 2005. The Russian crumbled in the second set of that semifinal and would love the chance to get revenge this year.

On Saturday, Sharapova eased into the last 16 with a 6-3, 6-3 over Japan's Ai Sugiyama and will face Williams if the three-time Wimbledon winner beats Akiko Morigami.

The American was a set up on Morigami when rain forced a suspension.

With a potential clash of the

former champions on the cards, Sharapova, who won the title in 2004, is adamant she has learned from that defeat two years ago.

"I felt like at that stage in my career I wasn't really ready," Sharapova said.

"She played really good tennis and I didn't think that I was capable of playing the same tennis for two or three sets. I was down in the first, then when I got back my level really dropped.

"It wasn't so much a wake-up call. I've always known there was so much room for improvement physically for me, but it was also the intensity level of putting two games together, breaking her and keeping that intensity after you break your opponent, being smart about things.

"Sometimes I felt like I was going for a little too much when I didn't have to. Against someone like her, you don't get away with it as much. That's something that I've

improved."

The world number two won her last match against Williams, on the hard courts in Miami this year, but admits that victory will count for nothing if they meet again at Wimbledon.

"If I play her, we always have really, really tough matches but it's a Grand Slam and you try to bring up the intensity with every match," she said.

"You can never really underestimate her as an opponent. She's a champion. She's achieved many things, won many Grand Slams. You know that when you go out against her, you always have to be at you best."

If Sharapova does face Williams, she will hope the shoulder and hamstring injuries that have troubled her for several weeks have receded.

She revealed she needs lengthy treatment every day to keep her in

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PHOTO: AFP

Frenchwoman Amelie Mauresmo waves to the crowd as she leaves the court after winning her match against Mara Santangelo of Italy in the third round of the Wimbledon Championships in London on Saturday.