



PHOTOS: AFP

World number one Roger Federer (L) and number two Rafael Nadal, in action during their semifinal matches at the Wimbledon yesterday. Federer made light work of Frenchman Richard Gasquet to wrap the match 7-5, 6-3, 6-4; while Nadal had an easier outing as his opponent Novak Djokovic of Serbia had to retire during the third set due to injury with the score 3-6 6-1 4-1 at that point.

The inevitable final

AFP, London



Rafael Nadal, who shattered Roger Federer's dreams of an historic Grand Slam in Paris, will attempt to torpedo the world number one's bid for a fifth successive Wimbledon title on Sunday.

Nadal goes into his second All England Club final in a row buoyed by a career 8-4 record over Federer and having been handed an easy passage into the final when Novak Djokovic was forced to retire from their semifinal with an injury in the third set.

Federer, bidding to emulate Bjorn Borg by winning five Wimbledon in a row, brushed past French 12th seed Richard Gasquet 7-5, 6-3, 6-4 in his semifinal.

Victory on Sunday will be his 11th Grand Slam title and leave him just three short of Pete Sampras's record of 14.

"A lot of things have changed in the last year," said Nadal who took a set off Federer in the 2006 final before going down to defeat.

"I am playing much better then last season but he is the favourite. I will come to the match determined to play aggressively and I will believe I can win."

Nadal, bidding to become the first Spaniard to win the men's singles title since Manolo Santana in 1966, praised Federer.

"He has all the shots and controls the speed of the ball," said the world number two.

"There are many things I have to improve on for Sunday, like my slice and volley. But I am just 21 years old."

Djokovic, who had been suffering with a sore back and required on-court treatment for a blister on his toe in Saturday's semifinal, had been on court for nine hours in his previous two matches against Lleyton Hewitt and Marcos Baghdatis.

But after requiring treatment on

his back during those matches as well, the 20-year-old Serb was not even sure on Saturday morning if he would be able to start the semifinal.

All seemed well as he took the first set but his movement became increasingly restricted in the second and he finally called a halt with Nadal lead 3-6, 6-1, 4-1.

On Centre Court, Borg, who set his five-in-a-row mark from 1976-1980, was on hand to see Federer edge closer to his record.

"I was thinking Gasquet was going to put me under pressure and play well but I was ready for that," said Federer who will be playing in his ninth consecutive Grand Slam final on Sunday.

"He should have got to a tiebreak in the first set and maybe even had won it. But I'm happy to be in another final."

Federer said he was not surprised that Djokovic had been forced to default.

"I saw him in the locker room before the match and I knew it was going to be difficult for him," said the

champion.

"Having to hang in there with Rafa was always going to be difficult for him."

Gasquet, playing in his first Grand Slam semi-final, had come back from two sets down to defeat former runner-up Andy Roddick in a marathon last eight clash on Friday.

Just 16 hours later, the 21-year-old was back on court to face the top seed.

He showed no signs of fatigue in a closely contested opening set and even had two break points in the 11th game.

Federer saved them both and made his opponent pay for his generosity by taking the first set in the next game when Gasquet dumped a backhand volley into the net.

The champion broke to go 2-0 ahead in the second set and then served a love-game to hammer home his advantage at 3-0.

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PHOTO: AFP

Former England manager Sven Goran Eriksson poses for photographers outside The city of Manchester Stadium, after being appointed as the manager of Premiership club Manchester City on Friday.

Changes afoot at City

AFP, Manchester



Sven-Goran Eriksson's appointment as the new manager of Manchester City was confirmed on Friday when the former England boss signed a three-year contract with the Premiership club.

Eriksson, who settled into the hot seat as former Thai premier Thaksin Shinawatra moved to the brink of completing his takeover of the club, immediately pledged to build a squad capable of delivering results in line with City's status as one of the best-supported clubs in England.

"This is an exciting challenge and I have already started making preparations for the new season," Eriksson said.

Describing the chance of managing City as too good to turn down, he added: "Manchester City is a

big, big football club. It is the Premier League - I think it is the best league in the world and if you get an opportunity to work in it you should take it and I did."

Eriksson, 59, has been out of work since stepping down as the national team manager following England's quarterfinal exit from the 2006 World Cup.

Although he was regarded by some as having failed to get the best out of a talented generation of England players, Eriksson has an impeccable record in club football, having won titles in his native Sweden, Portugal and Italy.

"Sven's vast experience of managing top clubs to success around Europe is one of the qualities that attracted us to him," City's chief executive, Alistair Mackintosh said.

"He also knows the English Premier League inside out during his time as national team manager."

Eriksson was catapulted into

pole position to succeed Stuart Pearce at the City of Manchester stadium after Claudio Ranieri, Thaksin's first choice, opted to join Juventus.

Eriksson revealed that he had turned down other job offers over the last year and shrugged off the fact that he had not been the club's first choice.

"I am happy I didn't accept the offers I had. I couldn't care less if I was second, third or fourth choice -- I am here and the job is mine."

England under-21 boss Pearce was sacked at the end of last season, which City ended just four points above the relegation zone.

Eriksson's task of reviving the club's fortunes has since been made harder by the departure of Joey Barton, the club's top scorer and best player last season, and former captain and defensive lynchpin Sylvain Distin, as well as Trevor Sinclair, Stephen Jordan,

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God Save le Tour

AFP, Paris

Revered French sports daily L'Equipe paid homage to Saturday's Tour de France start in London by publishing it's first ever front page in English.

Under the headline "God Save le Tour!" the paper said that the weekend focus would be firmly on the London area with the Tour prologue in the city streets, the closing stages of Wimbledon and the British Formula 1 Grand Prix at nearby Silverstone on Sunday.

It ran a closeup shot of top French cycle hope Christophe Moreau clad in French colours speeding past the Big Ben clock tower.

It will be the first time that the Tour de France has started from London although it is not uncommon for the race to get going outside of France.

Continuing with the British theme, the L'Equipe front page also

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Grosso signs for Lyon

AFP, Lyon

Inter Milan on Saturday agreed conditions over the transfer of Italian World Cup winning defender Fabio Grosso to six-times French champions Lyon.

"The player arrived late on Friday evening and passed his medical test before signing his contract with the club on Saturday morning, all three parties involved are in agreement," Olivier Blanc, communications director of the French club, told AFP.

The 29-year-old Italian will be present at a ceremony at Lyon's Town Hall to launch the French champions 2007-08 season.

Grosso is Lyon's highest-profile summer signing and will come as

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Sven glad to be back

AFP, Manchester

Sven-Goran Eriksson has described his year out of football as the most stressful of his career and vowed that he can handle the challenge of resurrecting Manchester City as a force in English football.

The former England boss, installed as manager on Friday by City's new Thai owners, has been out of work since England's quarterfinal exit from the 2006 World Cup, his hopes of landing a major club job having been hit by a perception that he did not get the most out of David Beckham and co. in Germany.

But with a managerial c.v. that includes titles in Sweden and Portugal as well as an Italian league

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300-million pound man

INTERNET, undated

Real Madrid made more than 300million pounds during David Beckham's four years at the club, according to marketing director Jose Sanchez.

The former England captain, who is set to make his debut for new club Los Angeles Galaxy in Major League Soccer in the USA later this month, moved to Spain in a 25million pound transfer from Manchester United in 2003.

However, Madrid reportedly sold one million shirts within the first six months of Beckham's arrival and the money continued to roll in over the course of his contract at the Bernabeu.

"In four years that Beckham played in Madrid we have generated more than 440 million euros (300,000m pounds) in marketing and commercial activities," Sanchez said in The Sun.

"In that time, profits from merchandising increased by 137%."

LA Galaxy will hope for a similar windfall after signing the 32-year-old Beckham on a five-year contract which could be worth up to 128million pound in salary and endorsements.

Chelsea unity to be tested

Football

INTERNET, undated

Chelsea must stop the infighting that damaged the club last season, chief executive Peter Kenyon said yesterday. "I hope we don't repeat last year. I think it over-shadowed a lot of positives," he said. "It was a tough year for everybody."

There will be an immediate test of that plea for unity with the arrival next week of Avram Grant, the Israeli coach who is to be appointed Chelsea's sporting director. He was not wanted by manager Jose Mourinho, who came close to leaving Chelsea and still has an uneasy relationship, with the club's head of scouting, Frank Arnesen.

Kenyon confirmed that Grant, Portsmouth's director of football, will join "in the next few days". But he refused to discuss the role he will take up at Chelsea after developing a close relationship with owner Roman Abramovich and the agent Pini Zahavi.

Sources at the club claim Grant will be a threat to Mourinho and be given wide-ranging duties including coaching, scouting and the recruit-

ment of players. Those close to the manager, however, insist the person who should feel under threat is Arnesen who will see his empire reduced.

Kenyon was clearer when discussing Chelsea's transfer dealings this summer and revealed that Florent Malouda is expected to join soon. Chelsea are close to agreeing a fee with Lyon of 20m euro (13.5m pounds) for the French winger who has also attracted interest from Arsenal and Liverpool, although both have dropped out as the fee has risen.

Kenyon claimed that Chelsea would then complete their squad with the defender Alex arriving from PSV Eindhoven. With Talal Ben Haim, Steve Sidwell and Claudio Pizarro already signed - without fees being paid - Kenyon said it meant a complete sweep of Chelsea's main summer targets. He insisted the club had no intention of signing a new right-back - ruling out moves for Tottenham's Pascal Chimbonda or Seville's Daniel Alves - and said that the return of Glen Johnson, from a loan spell at Portsmouth, was sufficient.

J o s e

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Dunga ditches 'jogo bonito'

INTERNET, undated



Brazil coach Dunga is ready to dump what Pele called "o jogo bonito" - the beautiful game - and win ugly to progress at the Copa America.

Brazil faces Chile on Saturday with a place in the quarterfinals on the line, and Dunga's only focus will be on the result, not the way the game is played.

"The teams that play expansive football never beat efficient teams," said Dunga, who captained the 1994 World Cup-winning Brazil team that was accused of betraying the entertaining traditions of Brazilian football.

"For me the jogo bonito is the efficient one. Our team has technical quality and at the same time they play efficiently, because we need that balance."

"The best (tactic) is to defend and keep a proper grip on our opponents while at the same time building good attacks."

Brazil will aim to put its indifferent first-round performance in the tournament behind it in Saturday's game.

Dunga's men have struggled through the group phase and have Robinho's goals to thank for their progress.

The Real Madrid striker scored all four goals in Brazil's three Group B games - including a hat trick against Chile - to help the defending champions into the last eight.

"Everybody is trying their best, but we must all get better," said Robinho, who is also the tournament's top scorer.

Dunga is becoming increasingly frustrated with the team's reliance on Robinho and has called on his players to stand up and be counted.

"Robinho is a great player, but he can't do everything for himself," said the coach. "He needs support. The team is improving one step at a time and I'm confident we will show our value."

The only doubt for Brazil is defender Maicon, who injured his left shoulder in the 3-0 win over Chile.

"He has a 50 percent chance of playing," said team doctor Jose Luis Runco.

Lured by Anfield magic

AFP, Liverpool



Ukraine striker Andriy Voronin has revealed how the nerve-tangling atmosphere of Anfield made him determined to become a Liverpool player.

Voronin got a taste of the unique quality of the club's famous old stadium two years ago when he played there in a European match for his previous club Bayer Leverkusen.

"I will never forget that night, even though my team didn't perform as well as we could," Voronin said after completing his move to England on Friday.

"Even for an opposition player, the supporters and the atmosphere in that stadium were unforgettable, and definitely the thing I remember most from that match."

"The Liverpool fans are world famous, and though this was not the

only reason I decided to join this club, it was certainly one of the main reasons. I can't wait to play at Anfield in a red shirt."

Voronin was part of Ukraine's 2006 World Cup squad and has won 44 caps. He has spent all of his senior career in Germany, playing for Cologne, Mainz and Borussia Monchengladbach before joining Leverkusen.

Benitez said he was confident that Voronin would enhance a Liverpool squad aiming to mount a serious challenge for the Premiership title next season.

"He is a player with pace and with good movement," Benitez said. "He plays between the lines, between defenders. He is a good worker also, and he scores goals."

"He's not the kind of player you can talk about strengths because he has many things he can give to us."

Voronin insists he is not concerned by the record purchase of Fernando Torres from Atletico

Madrid or the threat posed by Dirk Kuyt or Peter Crouch.

"I have not made this decision just to sit on the bench," he said. "I have come to get in the team and form a partnership with someone."

"The task in front of Liverpool at the start of every season is to win trophies and I want to be part of that," he said.

"I want to help them achieve things. After being in Germany for 12 years I felt it was time for a change, and then even more so when the offer came in from Liverpool."

"I am confident. If I wasn't confident, I would not have made the decision to come here. I feel I can adapt and be a success in the English game."

As one striker begins his Anfield career, another's looks to be over after Marseille claimed to have

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PHOTO: AFP

Thai girls perform during the opening ceremony of the Asian Cup football tournament at the Ratchamangla Stadium in Bangkok yesterday. Four countries, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and Vietnam are hosting the tournament that will run up to 29th of July.