

## Alonso grab pole position

AFP, Budapest

Fernando Alonso's charge for a third consecutive world title picked up pace here on Saturday when he grabbed pole position for the Hungarian Grand Prix.

Alonso's McLaren teammate Lewis Hamilton had looked set to claim pole but a hold up in the McLaren garage prevented him from recording a final flying lap.

Alonso, still only 26, possesses class and experience in bucket-loads and he used all his ability to take full advantage of Hamilton's misfortune and seal his place at the front of the grid.

It was the seventeenth pole position of his career yet surprisingly only his second this season after Monaco back in May.

Behind Alonso and Hamilton will be BMW Sauber's German Nick Heidfeld who was third in front of Finland's Kimi Raikkonen who qualified fourth for Ferrari.

German Nico Rosberg was fifth in the other BMW Sauber and will share the grid's third row with Ralf Schumacher.

BMW's Pole Robert Kubica will start from seventh ahead of Italian Giancarlo Fisichella in a Renault.

Jarno Trulli of Toyota and Red Bull's Australian Mark Webber complete the top ten.

## Madrid bounce

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Moments later, and with injury time looming, the visitors netted a fifth when Saviola exchanged passes and after the keeper had saved at the feet of the Argentinian, Blaboa raced in to score from the rebound.

The day's other match had to be decided on penalties, with PSV just edging their more famous opponents thanks to missed penalties from Yoann Gourcuff and Clarence Seedorf.

## Unchanged

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The Oval tends to favour tall pacemen who can generate sharp bounce and swing bowler Anderson, one of several players on both sides who let themselves down with verbal abuse during an ill-tempered match at Trent Bridge, is vulnerable after a return of one for 157 in 42 overs in helpful conditions.

Broad's inclusion would also strengthen England's lower order batting. At Trent Bridge, England's last five wickets fell for 51 and 68 in the first and second innings respectively.

"Some people have missed out but I think everyone is playing pretty good cricket but we need to think about things and make a decision," said England coach Peter Moores.

England have been unbeaten in 11 home series, comprising 41 Tests, since losing the 2001 Ashes.

India are now eyeing their first series success in England since 1986 and only third overall.

Up until three years ago India had won only one series out of 19 against major Test opposition on foreign soil since their last triumph in England.

But victory in Pakistan was followed up last year by a 1-0 win in a four-match series in the West Indies and beating England, ranked the world's second-best Test side behind Australia, on their own turf would be a notable achievement for India.

## Lampard injury

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Chelsea's statement said: "Contrary to speculation, Frank Lampard has only suffered a minor injury, sustained over three weeks ago whilst training in Los Angeles."

"The injury has not required any painkilling injections nor affected Frank's ability to play or to take part in any one of Chelsea's training sessions."

"This season, I feel we should be able to finish in the top 10," he told the Manchester Evening News.

"The second season we should be aiming for the top six and qualifying for Europe. I accept the first year is a learning curve but we should start to be successful by the third. That is what I would expect."

"I am pleased with what Sven has done. He has set about reshaping the side and has handled both the existing players and the new ones very well. He has given everyone their chance."

"Sven has proved to be quite a draw when it comes to signing players. His name and reputation have proved to be valuable."

"There is more money to spend if he feels he needs it but we will not be held to ransom by other clubs."

Isner ousted Britain's Tim



PHOTO: AFP

Russian starlet Anna Chakvetadze makes a double-handed backhand return against American Venus Williams during their quarterfinal clash of the Acura Classic at the La Costa Resort and Spa in California on Saturday.

## Chakvetadze downs Williams

### Tennis

AFP, Carlsbad

Anna Chakvetadze saddled Venus Williams with her first loss San Diego Classic defeat since 1999 on Friday to set up an all-Russian semifinal with Maria Sharapova.

Chakvetadze, the third seed who arrived here seeking her third title in as many weeks, defeated Wimbledon champion Williams 6-7, 7-6, 6-2.

Chakvetadze struggled through a collapse in the first set, throwing away a 5-2 lead, missing on two set points and finally losing a tiebreaker.

But the 20-year-old hung tough, taking the second set in a decider as Williams stuffed an easy volley into the net after two hours on court.

The third set turned into a runaway for the Russian, who has now won a dozen straight matches. Williams was stunned after striking 79 unforced errors and missing on a match point.

"She saved her best for San Diego," Williams said. "I was not at my best level. I'm really tired and it showed. Lots of things went wrong in my game tonight."

Chakvetadze said that the crowd of 5,500 helped pull her through the

marathon that lasted two and a half hours.

"I'll have to try and do my best tomorrow, but I don't know what my strategy against Maria will be. I'm tired now and will have to see how I feel on the day."

"I'll try to move her around and hope for the best," said the winner of July events in Cincinnati and Stanford.

By contrast, top seed Sharapova earned an efficient 6-2, 6-1 win over India's Sania Mirza to book her her place in the final four of the 1.3 million-event.

Sharapova has won her last two events against Chakvetadze, both played this season, leading the series 4-1.

Swiss 11th seed Patty Schnyder continued her roll, upsetting Russian fourth seed Nadia Petrova 6-4, 6-4 to reach only her second semi-final of the season. She had stalled seven times at the quarterfinal stage this year.

She will play ninth seed Elena Dementieva, who moved into her second semi of the season with a 6-2, 6-4 victory over fellow Russian Maria Kirilenko.

Schnyder followed up her three-set win over compatriot Martina Hingis in Thursday's third round with a com-

prehensive victory against Petrova.

"I made her run a lot and really got my game going well," said Schnyder, who played a third straight quarterfinal after Cincinnati and Stanford.

"I'm feeling great on the court, especially these past three days. Everything seems to fit well in my game. I just want to keep this up for the weekend."

Sharapova, playing through a lingering shoulder problem, was pleased with her performance.

"I had a good start and was able to play my game," said the world number two, one of five Russian to reach the quarterfinals during the final edition of this tournament.

"Sania is a solid player, so it's good to get some matches like I've won this week behind my back."

Sharapova lost serve only once, in the second set, but got it straight back on the way to victory in just 61 minutes.

"I've had three good matches, I much prefer it this way than running around for a long time in the hot sun to win," added Sharapova, who is nursing a sore shoulder. "I've got confidence, and I'm ready to step it up in my next match."

## Roddick moves into semis

### Tennis

AFP, Washington

US top seed Andy Roddick rolled into the ATP Washington Classic semifinals with a 7-6, 6-2 victory Friday over South Korean fifth seed Lee Hyung-Taik while Marat Safin and Tommy Haas were ousted. Roddick fired 16 aces and improved to 10-1 lifetime against Lee to book a Saturday date with seventh seed Ivo Karlovic, who defeated Chile's Paul Capdeville 4-6, 6-3, 7-6.

Saturday's other semi-final sends 22-year-old US newcomer John Isner - who beat German second seed Haas 6-4, 6-7, 7-6 - against 20-year-old fleet Frenchman Gael Monfils, who eliminated Russian third seed Safin 6-3, 7-5.

The final four average 6 1/2 feet with lanky Roddick the smallest.

"I'm sorry for bringing the height average down," Roddick said. "Guys are getting bigger. I don't know if you can pigeonhole it just to tennis."

Roddick, the 2001 and 2005 Washington winner, improved to 40-10 for the year in quest of his 23rd career ATP title and second of the season after winning at Queen's in June.

"This season, I feel we should be able to finish in the top 10," he told the Manchester Evening News.

"The second season we should be aiming for the top six and qualifying for Europe. I accept the first year is a learning curve but we should start to be successful by the third. That is what I would expect."

"I am pleased with what Sven has done. He has set about reshaping the side and has handled both the existing players and the new ones very well. He has given everyone their chance."

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winner ended matters after two hours and 26 minutes.

Haas, playing his first event since pulling out of Wimbledon last month with a torn stomach muscle, joked that he wants an ATP ban on giants like Isner.

Haas, who was denied his 400th career ATP triumph, also wants to dump the Hawk-Eye replay appeal system, saying he could see a serve mark out but lost a challenge when he appealed to the computer system.

"It's not accurate at all. I found that out today," Haas said. "You can't call it Hawk-Eye because it's wrong."

"It's frustrating when you have a mark where you can really see it and the ref can see it and the Hawk-Eye calls it in. That's unfortunate."

## Federer to resume rivalry with Nadal

### Tennis

APP, MONTREAL

Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal begin the countdown to this month's US Open as the top two in the world resume their rivalry atop the field at the Montreal Masters.

The event, which begins on Sunday in an effort to attract more fans, is the first of back-to-back elite events as the big names swing into action on the hard courts of North America.

Federer has not played since lifting a fifth straight Wimbledon title, beating Nadal in five sets on the only prior meeting.

Karlovic, ranked a career-best 41st, blasted 29 aces to avenge a loss at Memphis that launched Capdeville to his only prior ATP quarterfinal. The Croatian seeks his third crown of the year after Houston and Nottingham stop.

While top 10 Americans including Andy Roddick and James Blake have

played a limited schedule at home in recent weeks, Europeans have been holding off their debuts on the cement.

But with the year's final Grand Slam starting in just three weeks, the seeding depth reflects the seriousness of the big names, with all of the top 16 taking their places.

Heading back to action after three months out with a wrist injury will be Scot Andy Murray, who takes the 13th seed and opens against slumping American Robby Ginepri.

Richard Gasquet at number eight is the only seeded Frenchman in a tournament that alternates each year between Francophone Montreal and Toronto.

The leading eight seeds benefit from byes. In the second round, Federer will put his July training at his hot-weather base in Dubai to an early test against either huge-serving Croatian Ivo Karlovic or Max Mirnyi of Belarus.

## No foreigners

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participate in the competition.

The BFF also has short-listed five booters for the best player of the inaugural B. League award and the final name will be announced tonight at a prize distribution ceremony at the NSC Tower Auditorium.

The players are Wali Faisal, Kazi Nazrul Islam, Zahid Hossain, Emily (Dhaka Abahani), Zahid Hasan (Dhaka Mohammedan) and Mohammad Robin (Farashganj). The best player will receive Tk 25,000 while Brothers Nigerian recruit Junior will also get the same money as the highest scorer in the league with 16 goals to his credit.

National Sports Council (NSC) chairman and Army Chief General Moeen U Ahmed will be the chief guest at the function and will distribute the prizes and trophies.

Abahani became champions while their old foes Mohammedan finished runners-up in the professional league.

Meanwhile, Hela also informed that they already donated the saved amount of Tk 5 lakhs from the prize distribution ceremony to the Chef Adviser's relief fund.

The captain, Mahmoud, was going to Damascus to see his family, among

## Akhtar snubs ICL offer

### Cricket

APP, Karachi

Pakistani paceman Shoaib Akhtar said Saturday he had turned down an offer from a multi-million-dollar breakaway Indian league because representing his country was more important than money.

The 32-year-old bowler was among seven current Pakistan players offered lucrative deals to play in the Indian Cricket League (ICL).

The league is bankrolled by India's Essel Group, which controls India's biggest listed media firm, Zee Telefilms.

"I was offered a decent amount from the Indian league officials. I have decided that my country is far more important for me and I am important for my team so I have decided not to take the offer," Akhtar told AFP.

Others who reportedly received offers include current captain Shoaib Malik, all-rounder Shahid Afridi, Abdul Razzaq, paceman Mohammad Asif and batsmen Mohammad Yousuf and Younis Khan.

Akhtar was joined by new-ball partner Asif and all-rounder Afridi in turning down the rebel offer.

"Pakistan has given me name, fame

and money so I think I should stick to playing for the country," Afridi told AFP.

Asif shared those sentiments, saying he did not hesitate to turn down the offer.

"I was first offered a hefty sum to play for the league but when I did not reply they increased the offer, but I am not ready to play and I have told them no," said Asif.

There were reports that the seven players may not sign the central contracts with the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) which prohibit players from playing in any private league but Akhtar said he had signed the contract.

"I have also signed the central contract which proves that I am only willing to play for my country and for my people," said Akhtar.

The PCB Friday said eight out of 15 players had signed the central contracts while seven had asked for more time to go through the details. The PCB last month offered central contracts to 20 players.

Five players did not attend Friday's meeting but will sign the contracts in the next couple of weeks, the PCB said.

"Pakistan have to play in the Twenty20, then against South Africa, then against India and Australia, so I am more focused for the Pakistan assignments than playing any series which is not for my country," he said.

## Five-star Bose set the tone

### Cricket

AGENCIES, undated

Two contrasting innings from Wasim Jaffer and Gautam Gambhir, one cultured the other iffy, pushed the Indians to 127 for 2 at lunch on the second day at Grace Road.

Jaffer's soft dismissal, twenty minutes before lunch, was the only blot in a session where the