

# Federer too good for Roddick

AFP, New York



Andy Roddick has tested Roger Federer, even forced the world number one to make some astonishing shots. But for the 14th time in 15 matches, the top US player could not beat the Swiss tennis magician.

Three-time defending champion Federer beat Roddick for the 10th time in a row on Wednesday, taking a 7-6 (7/5), 7-6 (7/4), 6-2 US Open quarterfinal victory over the fifth seed in a night quarterfinal at Arthur Ashe Stadium.

"I'm not walking off with any questions in my head this time," Roddick said. "I'm not walking with my head down. I played my ass off out there tonight. I played the right way. It helps. But that doesn't mean I can't be pissed off."

The rematch of last year's US Open final was the sixth Grand Slam meeting between Federer, seeking his 12th Slam title this week, and Roddick, whose lone Slam crown came at the 2003 US Open.

"I played well. I don't know about

better or whatever but I played well," Roddick said.

Federer was pushed into making his best shots of the Flushing Meadows fortnight, the most impressive being an instinctive blocked backhand return on the line of a 140-mph service blast from Roddick.

"I didn't make mistakes. If he hits a 140, hits the back of the line, whatever," said Roddick, who added that such shots are no longer a surprise when they come from Federer.

"I've seen it done too many times," Roddick, whose only victory over Federer came in a 2003 Montreal semifinal, said he wasn't sure if Federer was getting better and would not call the latest defeat his best effort against Federer.

But asked if he thought he has shown he can hurt Federer, Roddick replied, "I hope so."

Roddick said he would not be playing if he didn't think he could beat Federer and said that more nights like this one might help him end the drought even though he took a set off Federer in the 2006 final, unlike Wednesday.

"If I play like that consistently,

who knows," Roddick said. "I don't think it was a piece of cake for him. I thought I made him play as well as he could play."

"I felt pretty good from the first ball. I had a game plan. I felt like I executed it pretty well most of the time. I just tried to keep going."

Roddick has no intention of feeling sorry for himself simply because he has come to form in an era Federer has dominated, winning 11 of the past 13 non-clay Slams.

"If I feel sorry for myself I'm a real asshole," Roddick said. "I get to play in atmospheres like that. I get a lot of opportunities. I'm very lucky. If I start feeling sorry for myself, I need a serious sense of perspective."

Enjoying the support of more than 23,000 supporters, Roddick was enjoying the moment if not the results.

"I was having a lot of fun out there. I'd have to be completely out of touch not to realize what the atmosphere is like and appreciate it," he said.

"If I didn't have fun in that, I wouldn't have fun playing tennis. You can just feed off the energy it's a show."



PHOTO: AFP

Top seed Roger Federer makes a forehand return to fifth seed Andy Roddick during their Men's singles quarterfinal at the US Open in Flushing Meadows on Wednesday.

# Key role for Schweini

AFP, Cologne



As the most experienced German midfielder on Cardiff's Millennium Stadium pitch this Saturday, baby-faced Bastian Schweinsteiger will lead Germany's attack in their Euro 2008 qualifier against Wales.

With midfielders Michael Ballack and Torsten Frings out injured, plus veteran Bernd Schneider serving a one-match ban, 23-year-old Schweinsteiger has been handed a key-role by head coach Joachim Loew.

Germany lead Group D by five points and are odds-on favourites to reach the finals of next summer's European Championships, but Loew will switch "Schweini" from his usual role on the left to a more central position.

"Of course, this is all new for me, because I normally play on the left, but it's going to be a challenge and I am looking forward to it," said Schweinsteiger, who has dyed his hair silver, in Wednesday's press conference.

And as one of Germany's brightest stars, Loew had no reservations about promoting the Bayern Munich man.

"He will play an important central role, in light of the players we have lost," said Loew.

"He will lead our attack, play a guiding role and control things."

With 43 caps and 13 goals for Germany, only striker Miroslav Klose (68 caps), defender Arne Friedrich (50) and Jens Lehmann (47) will have more international game time.

"He is one of the most experienced players in our team and I have spoken to him about what I expect," said Loew.

The German coach is wary of the Welsh, who poached a 1-0 win over Germany in Cardiff the last time the teams met in 2002 when Derby County striker Robert Earnshaw scored on his debut.

The Germans are expected to play a 4-4-2 combination and Loew

expects a far tougher time against Wales than his side had in their 2-1 win over England at Wembley last month.

"One can assume Wales will be harder to beat than England," said Loew.

"They are a team of fighters and

are used to struggling against the odds, we are looking forward to a good, hard game."

Meanwhile, Arsenal goalkeeper Jens Lehmann will start in goal for Germany having recovered from an Achilles tendon injury and sore elbow.



PHOTO: AFP

Germany midfielder Bastian Schweinsteiger, sporting new silver locks, plays keepy-uppy during a training session in Cologne on Wednesday.

# Wenger agrees new deal

Football

AFP, London

Arsene Wenger has agreed a new contract with Arsenal that will keep him in charge of the English club until 2011, British media reported on Thursday.

Arsenal would not confirm or deny the reports that the Frenchman was about to sign a three-year contract extension worth around four million pounds a year.

But Wenger had told Arsenal fans last weekend to expect an announcement on his future by Friday and all his recent statements have pointed towards him extending his stay in north London.

Speculation that the 57-year-old might leave Arsenal had been rife in the wake of the April resignation of vice-chairman David Dein, and the subsequent summer sale of Thierry Henry to Barcelona.

Dein, who brought Wenger to London in 1996, is a close friend of the manager and worked closely with him on transfer deals.

Wenger, however, said last

weekend that Dein's departure had not affected his relationship with the club's hierarchy and would not be a barrier to him signing a new deal.

"What I think when I'm negotiating the deal is whether I have the freedom to work the way I want to," he said. "I always had that with David Dein and, since David has gone, I still have it."

The Frenchman has also been encouraged by Arsenal's positive start to the season and the way his young squad have coped without Henry.

"Since the beginning of the season something has been happening in this team," he said. "They fight for each other, they have a great togetherness and love for the game."

Wenger has also dismissed suggestions that uncertainty over Arsenal's future ownership would not prevent him from extending his time in charge following the expiry of his current deal at the end of this season.

Speculation about a possible takeover of the club has been fuelled by Russian billionaire

Alisher Usmanov's recent acquisition of a near 15 percent stake in the club from Dein and his appointment of the former vice-chairman as the chairman of a holding company charged with acquiring more shares.

But Wenger said those developments had no bearing on his position. "I consider myself, as always, an employee of the club," he explained. "I have not one share and that's not a coincidence because I never want to be involved in any struggle, structure or strategy."

Since moving to England, Wenger has transformed Arsenal's fortunes on and off the field.

He has guided the club to three Premier League titles and four FA Cup wins playing a brand of entertaining football that has won plaudits throughout the football world.

That success, combined with the Frenchman's astute transfer dealings, underwrote the club's 2006 move from Highbury to their new 60,000-capacity Emirates Stadium, a move that has significantly enhanced the club's revenues.

# Lehmann loses cool

AFP, Cologne

German goalkeeper Jens Lehmann lost his cool on Thursday during a press conference for the Germany team when he was persistently asked about his future at English giants Arsenal.

The 37-year-old, set to play for Germany against Wales on Saturday, has been under increasing pressure at the North London club since he made costly blunders against Fulham and Blackburn recently in the Premier League.

But Germany's first-choice shot-stopper ran out of patience when asked to comment on statements made by Arsenal boss Arsene Wenger which had been interpreted in a negative light by a German journalist.

"Your whole interpretations of what has been said gets on my nerves," said an angry Lehmann during Thursday's press conference in Cologne ahead of Germany's Euro 2008 qualifier in Cardiff.

"Do not ask me to interpret your interpretations."

Lehmann will play for Germany in Saturday's Euro 2008 qualifier in Cardiff after recovering from a damaged achilles tendon, he suffered during Germany's 2-1 win over England last month, and a sore elbow.

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# 'Barca before Cameroon'

AFP, Madrid

Spanish league giants Barcelona are trying to stop star striker Samuel Eto'o, currently out injured, playing for Cameroon in the African Nations Cup finals at the end of January 2008 in Ghana.

Eto'o had a successful operation last Saturday on his right leg and will be out for two to three months, accordingly Barcelona, want him to be available for the rest of the season.

The club will be negotiating to avoid losing the striker for national duties after his recovery, Barcelona president Joan Laporta said on the club's Internet site.

"He must first play for Barcelona before the other teams," said Laporta of the 26-year-old who missed four months through injury last season.

# Sosa out for six weeks

AFP, Munich

Bayern Munich's summer signing Jose Ernesto Sosa will be out for the next six weeks after having an ankle operation earlier this week, the German giants revealed on Thursday.

The 22-year-old attacking midfielder signed from Argentinian premier division side Estudiantes over the summer, but stretched his ankle ligaments in pre-season and has also struggled with a back injury since his arrival.

Sosa made the second of his two brief appearances off the bench in last Sunday's 1-1 draw in Hamburg, but aggravated his ankle and bone splinters were removed on Monday.

If Sosa's recovery proceeds according to plan, the Argentinian international could be back for Bayern's Bundesliga trip to Bochum on 20 October.

# Sheva also confused

Football

THE GUARDIAN

Andriy Shevchenko has added to the intrigue surrounding his non-appearance for Chelsea this season by admitting he does not know why he has not played. The manager, Jose Mourinho, has insisted that Shevchenko has not been match fit following a nagging back injury. But Shevchenko, who played for 55 minutes in Ukraine's 2-1 friendly win over Uzbekistan on August 22, appears to disagree.

The striker is now back with the Ukraine squad to prepare for their Euro 2008 qualifying ties, away to Georgia on Saturday and at home to Italy next Wednesday. He is primed to start against Georgia. "At Chelsea, I am not playing and I don't know why," he said. "I have not understood this but I am waiting for my chance."

Shevchenko played in Chelsea's three matches on their pre-season

tour of the United States and then appeared in the subsequent friendlies against Feyenoord and Rangers. He did not travel to Denmark for the final pre-season friendly with Brondby but he did train in the countdown to the Community Shield showpiece against Manchester United on August 5 and expected to feature.



ANDRIY SHEVCHENKO

At the time, Shevchenko's adviser Fabio Parisi, said: "It's a small problem and it's not something that has suddenly happened. His back is tired, it's been a gradual thing. Jose Mourinho did not want to take the risk [in the Community Shield]."

Mourinho has not included Shevchenko in any of his match-day squads in the Premier League this season, most recently at Aston Villa on Sunday. He signed Claudio Pizarro on a Bosman free transfer from Bayern Munich over the summer to swell his attacking options that already included Didier Drogba and Salomon Kalou, and Shevchenko has been left under no illusions that he must fight for prominence.

"He's got to wait for his opportunity and when he gets it, he has to take it," said Steve Clarke, the assistant manager. "There are another three strikers there as well as Shevchenko."

Chelsea's owner, Roman Abramovich, counts Shevchenko

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# Ronaldo close to return

INTERNET, undated



Milan's trip to Siena on September 15.

Reports have suggested that Il Fenomeno has become increasingly agitated by the lack of a definite diagnosis for a thigh injury that has left him on the sidelines for the opening weeks of the season.

The Selecao star spent pre-

season addressing a weight problem caused by a medical condition and reached a high level of fitness before complaining of a thigh pain in late July.

Diavolo boss Carlo Ancelotti has been insistent that Ronaldo would be back in action for the clash against Siena after the international break and latest medical tests seem to prove him correct.

"We started on August 8 when we gave Ronaldo a scan that showed a severe strain," doctor Jean-Pierre Meersseman explained.

"The X-rays weren't very clear, so we decided to wait for a bit before giving him another scan. That one

revealed that the strain is less serious and he should be back playing within four weeks."

Press whispers had alleged that Ronaldo was furious with Milan's medical team as his return date has been pushed back, but Meersseman refutes that idea.

"Ronaldo isn't angry and has complete faith in Milan," he declared. "He just wants to get better as quickly as possible and is a little perplexed."

"The recovery has taken a little longer than expected, but only around a week. We are sure that he will be available for the game against Siena."

# Davydenko aims for perfection

AFP, New York

Nikolay Davydenko says that only perfection will do if he is to advance to the next level at the US Open and reach the final of a Grand Slam tournament for the first time.

The 26-year-old Russian made it through to the last four in one of the four majors for the fourth time on Wednesday impressively defeating Tommy Haas 6-3, 6-3, 6-4.

He has yet to drop a set, the only man in the draw not to have done so, but now the going gets decidedly tougher.

He next goes up against the winner of another quarterfinal tie opposing top seed and defending champion Roger Federer and the remaining American hope Andy Roddick.

The omens are not good in either case scenario. Davydenko has lost all nine games he has played against Federer and all four he has played against Roddick.

"I always try to get up to this level against Federer or (Rafael) Nadal. It is very important for me," he said.

"I feel like I'm a top 10 player, but I'm not feeling like a number one player."

"To beat Federer or Nadal I need to be more physically strong because these guys play perfect. You need to get the body and everything to play very well. You need to play perfect."

# WC 2010 enters operational phase

AFP, Johannesburg

Preparation for the 2010 World Cup in South Africa has entered its "operational phase", the chief executive officer of the Local Organising Committee (LOC), Dany Jordaan, said on Thursday.

"The 1,000 days countdown signals to us now the beginning of the operational phase", he told a press conference ahead of the symbolic September 15 date marking 1,000 days to the start of the world soccer fiesta.

He enumerated LOC's achievements so far: "selection of nine host cities, signing of contracts with cities, finalisation of legislation, establishment of right committees, finalisation of match schedule, selection of management team and start of construction site."

"The first thing to deliver is preliminary draw for the qualifying phase", scheduled for November 27 in Durban, he added.

More than 3,000 officials of the LOC, FIFA, national coaches, notable names in football and media are expected at Durban ceremony.

Then, the "Confederation Cup", will follow in 2009 in five South African stadium which should be ready "in December 2008", he also said.

"To build all our stadium on time is a huge challenge ... we believe we have the winning formula."

"Yes, we will have difficulties in stadium construction, but we are confident in the capacity of the construction industry in this country."

To mark the "countdown to 1,000 days to the competition", the LOC has planned series of events,

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PHOTO: AFP

Fuwas, one of the five mascots for the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, kicking a soccer ball, decorates the fence of a school at Shenyang in north-eastern Chinese province of Liaoning on Thursday. Chinese government has recently included an extra subject in the country's 500,000 schools to create awareness among some 400 million children about Olympic movement.