

Madrid to host 2010 UCL final

AFP, Madrid

The final of the 2010 Champions League will be played in Real Madrid's Santiago Bernabeu stadium, the club announced on Friday.

European football governing body UEFA selected the Spanish capital ahead of Munich, Berlin and Wembley during their executive committee meeting Friday at Vaduz, Liechtenstein.

It will be the fourth time that the Madrid stadium has hosted the final of Europe's premier football competition after 1957, 1969 and 1980.

The decision comes four months after UEFA conferred the 'Elite Stadium' status on the Santiago Bernabeu, an essential condition for hosting European finals.

The 2010 UEFA Cup final will take place in Hamburg.

The German city beat Dublin, London and Gelsenkirchen, Germany for the right to host the final of Europe's second-tier competition.

Hamburg last hosted the event in 1982.

Aussies will send record-breaking Olympic team

AFP, Sydney

Australia will send one of its strongest ever Olympic swimming teams to this year's Beijing Games with seven individual long-course world record holders named in a 42-strong squad here Saturday.

The traditional swimming power finalised its team after the national trials which netted eight world records, headed by the sport's current fastest male and female swimmers, Eamon Sullivan and Libby Trickett.

Sullivan and Trickett broke 50-metre freestyle world records during the trials to underline Australia's sprinting strength.

Australia's other current long-course world record holders are Grant Hackett, Leisel Jones, Jessicah Schipper, Stephanie Rice and Sophie Edington.

Australian Olympic Committee chief John Coates believes the swim team is on track to improve on their record medal haul from Athens at Beijing.

Pre-trials rankings had the Australian swim team bringing home 18 medals from Beijing, and Coates said those expectations were still just as high considering their phenomenal form four months out from the Games.

"We've shown the performances of our sports last year and it calculated around 45 (medals) and they were predicated with the case of swimming on 18," Coates said.

"Nothing here has concerned me about not getting those numbers." Australia with 15 medals, seven of them gold, finished second to the United States (28/12) in Athens and were runners-up behind the USA at last year's world championships in Melbourne, 36 medals to 21.

Australian head coach Alan Thompson said he is expecting the upcoming trials for other nations, notably USA in late June, to seriously challenge some of the recent performances by his team but says the ultimate judgment will be made in China.

"How good we are will be decided on the 18th of August (last day of swimming)," he said.

"As of now we have put a good performance on the board."

Hackett, bidding for a record three Olympic 1500m gold medals in Beijing, will be joined by fellow triple Olympians Jones, Adam Pine and Ashley Callus.

Twelve other swimmers are off to their second Olympics and there are 26 Olympic rookies, with backstroke Emily Seeborn the youngest member of the team aged 15.

The team announcement came after the conclusion of what has been rated one of the fastest national Olympic trials staged in the country.

There were eight world records, a further 13 Commonwealth records and another four Australian records established during the eight days' competition.

The Olympic team announcement at the Sydney Olympic pool was made in front of a gathering of Olympic gold medalists including Dawn Fraser, Shane Gould, John Devitt, Murray Rose, John Konrads, Michelle Ford and Jon Seiben.

Bremen target Pizarro

AFP, Berlin

Bundesliga club Werder Bremen are interested in signing their former Peruvian international striker Claudio Pizarro from Chelsea.

"I consider Claudio an interesting player. A player who will soon be 30 years is not too old for us," Werder sporting director Klaus Allofs told the daily Bild.

"From a financial point of view it doesn't seem feasible but I'm going to ask," he added.

Pizarro, 29, joined Chelsea last summer after six seasons with Bayern Munich. He has made 21 appearances for the Premiership side, mostly as a substitute, scoring four goals.

According to Bild, Chelsea are ready to let him leave at the end of this season for three million euros (4.7 million dollars).

Romario retires finally

Football

AFP, Rio De Janeiro

Former Brazilian international striker Romario announced Friday that he will retire this weekend when his contract with Vasco de Gama expires.

"I'm not playing any more. I no longer have the form. It's over for me," the 42-year-old told the daily O Dia.

The 1994 World Cup winner said that from March 30 he "would be unemployed and looking for a job".

The last match he played was on November 4.

But he did not rule out playing some farewell games.

"I always wanted to end as I began - without anyone noticing. I said that when it was least expected I would stop. But it could happen that I could still do one or two farewell games... who knows?"

"I'm in this situation because I want to be. I've taken advantage to stay with my children. That's what makes me happy."

As for the future, the player who scored 1,000 goals is open to offers.

"There was the possibility of doing something with Fla(mengo) TV. Kleber Leite (Flamengo vice-president) was meant to contact me but I've heard nothing yet," explained Romario.

"I'm going to wait until something terrific turns up. I wanted to do something for the 2014 World Cup. I would like to participate in a commission."

FACTFILE

Surname: De Souza Farias

First name: Romario

Nationality: Brazilian

Date of birth: 29 January 1966

Place of birth: Rio de Janeiro

Height: 1.68 m

Weight: 66 kg

Sport/Discipline: Football/striker

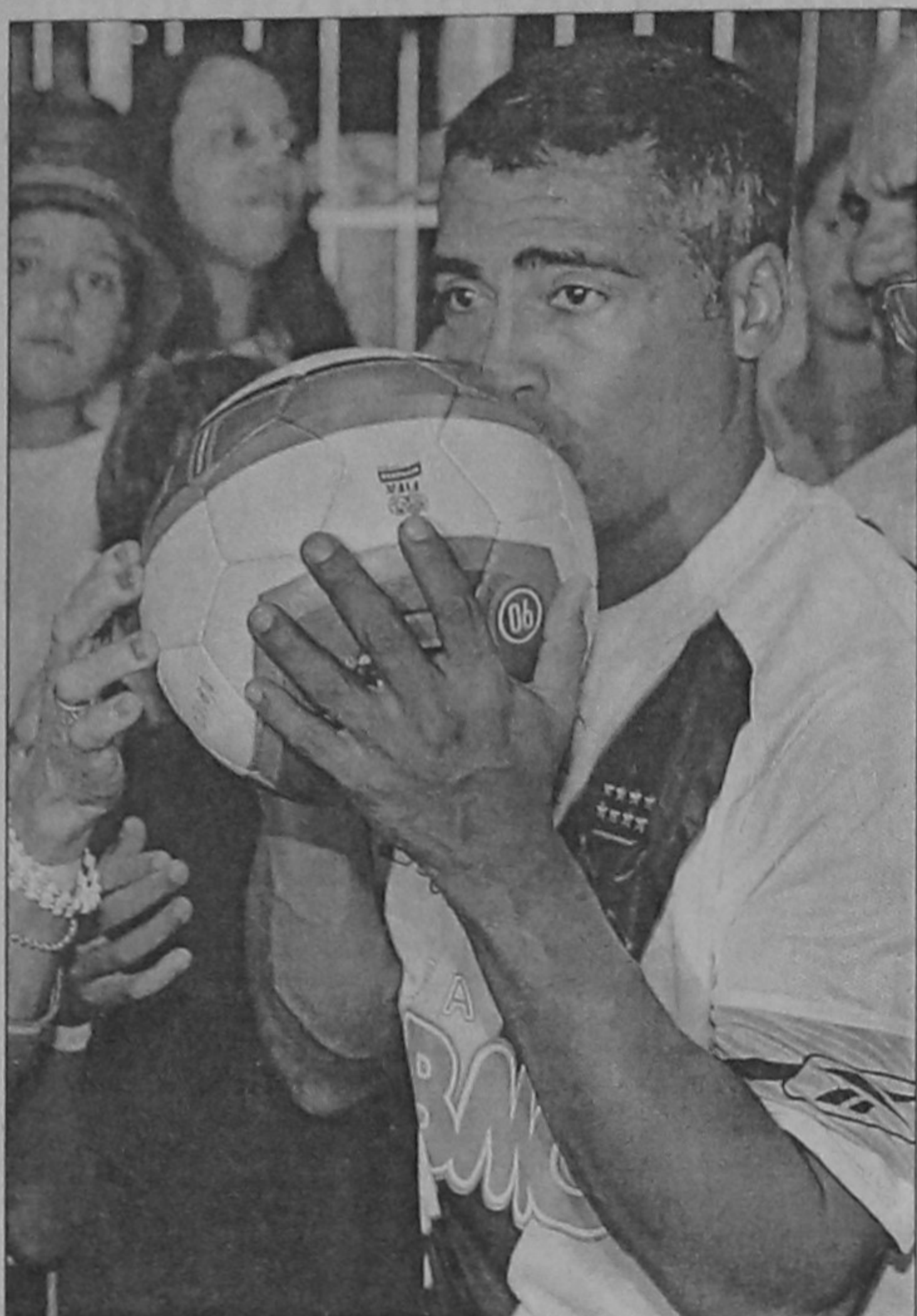
CLUBS

Vasco de Gama (BRA/1986-1988),

PSV Eindhoven (NED/1988-1993), FC Barcelona (ESP/1993-1995), Flamengo (BRA/1995-1996), Valencia (ESP/1996-1998), Flamengo (BRA/1998-2000), Vasco de Gama (BRA/2000-2002), Al Saad (QAT/2003), Fluminense (BRA/2003-2005), Vasco de Gama (BRA/2005-2006), Adelaide Force (AUS/2006-2007), Vasco de Gama (BRA/since October 2007)

TROPHIES

World Cup (1994)
Confederations Cup (1997)
Copa America (1989, 1997)
Dutch league title (1989, 1991, 1992)
Spanish league title (1994)
Brazilian league title (2000)
Dutch Cup (1989, 1990)
Top scorer in Dutch league (1989, 1990, 1991)
Top scorer in Spanish league (1994)



Brazilian legend Romario kisses the ball after scoring his "thousandth goal" while playing for Vasco da Gama in Rio de Janeiro on May 20, 2007.

'Capello lacks int'l experience'

AFP, London

Former England boss Terry Venables believes that Fabio Capello is showing his international inexperience by his decision to rotate captains.

Steven Gerrard led the side for Capello's first match in charge of England against Switzerland in January with Rio Ferdinand taking over in France last Wednesday.

Capello is planning to give at least two more players the captaincy before settling on a permanent skipper for the World Cup qualifiers.

But Venables believes the system causes "aggravations where there should not be any".

Writing in the Sun, he said: "It worries me to see the England captaincy turned into some sort of audition. Why is Fabio Capello wasting precious time asking these questions when the World Cup qualifiers are getting closer by the minute?"

"Capello has never managed an international team before. But believe me, it is a whole new ball game. Decisions have to be made sharp and quick."

Venables has thrown his weight behind Chelsea skipper John Terry, who was captain under former boss Steve McClaren, for the role.

"I would give the skipper's job to John Terry, who is a natural leader," added Venables. "Rio Ferdinand has a nice way, Steven Gerrard leads by example, but JT has the edge - as long as he puts all his off-field nonsense behind him."

Cahill breaks his foot

INTERNET, undated

Everton's Socceros star Tim Cahill is unlikely to play in June's World Cup qualifiers after the Toffees confirmed he will miss the rest of the Premier League season with a broken foot.

Cahill, who missed Australia's 0-0 draw away to China in an Asian 2010 World Cup qualifier on Wednesday, was injured just 10 minutes into last weekend's league match at home to West Ham United, the club said on its website (www.evertonfc.com).

"Tim Cahill has a broken foot. I think it's obvious that he will be out for the rest of the season," manager David Moyes told the website.

Cahill is thought to have aggravated a metatarsal fracture he suffered in March 2007.

The 28-year-old, who has scored 10 goals in all competitions this season for Everton, could miss one or more of Australia's four World Cup qualifiers in June.

Australia, who lead Asian Group One with four points from two matches after a 3-0 win over Qatar in February, are at home to Iraq on June 1 and away to the Asian champions six days later. They visit Qatar on June 14 and host China on June 22.

Everton are fifth in the Premier League standings, two points behind Liverpool, and vying with their city rivals for England's fourth Champions League berth. They meet in the Merseyside derby at Anfield on Monday.

Peru ban duo for 18 months

REUTERS, Lima

Peru have banned strikers Claudio Pizarro and Jefferson Farfan from international football for 18 months as punishment for indiscipline.

Defender Santiago Acasiete and forward Andres Mendoza were also suspended for the same period by a disciplinary tribunal, the Peruvian Football Federation (FPF) said in a statement on Friday.

The quartet had been provisionally banned since December over alleged incidents at the team hotel in Lima after a World Cup qualifier against Brazil in November.

The bans have been backdated to November and effectively mean the four players will miss eight World Cup qualifiers.

Peru have taken just two points from their first four qualifiers for the 2010 World Cup.

The absence of PSV Eindhoven forward Farfan and Chelsea's Pizarro is likely to be a huge blow, although Pizarro has been frequently criticised for his performances for his country.

Peru drew 1-1 with Brazil but were hammered 5-1 by Ecuador three days later when Farfan was left out of the lineup.

Peruvian football has been plagued by in-fighting among the directors for years and the country has not qualified for a World Cup since 1982.

The players are often accused of indiscipline but, in turn, complain of harassment by tabloid newspapers and television stations.

Jose denies Inter talks

Football

AFP, Lisbon

Former Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho vehemently denied on Saturday he had held talks with Serie A leaders Inter Milan about taking over next season from Roberto Mancini as had been widely reported.

The 45-year-old - known as 'The Special One' - issued a statement rubbishing the rumours and contradicting his own spokesman who had confirmed that he had held a meeting in Milan with Inter president Massimo Moratti.

"I say categorically that it is not true that I went to Milan, that I met with Massimo Moratti (the Inter president), who I do not have the pleasure of knowing personally," read the statement sent to the Portuguese national agency Lusa.

"It is false to say that I am on the point of signing a contract with Inter Milan."

Mourinho was responding to

the front page headlines plastered all over Saturday's Portuguese newspapers announcing his imminent departure for Inter after holding talks with Moratti in Milan on Friday - something which was confirmed to 'Diario de Noticias' by Mourinho's spokesman, Eladio Parames.

Mourinho, who lifted the Champions League with Porto before guiding Chelsea to two Premiership titles and an FA Cup, is the most sought after coach following his abrupt departure from Chelsea last September while Mancini has cast doubt on his own future of late.

The 43-year-old former Italy international, whose contract runs till 2012, announced on March 11 after the two-time defending Italian champions had been knocked out of the Champions League by Liverpool that he would be stepping down from the job he has held for four years.

However, he announced he had changed his mind a day later.

Inter presently lead the title race

by four points over AS Roma with eight matches remaining.

Bruckner faces 5-week lay-off

AFP, Prague

Czech coach Karel Bruckner will be laid up for at least five weeks after undergoing a successful operation on his upper spine in hospital, the Czech and Moravian football federation (CMFS) announced on Friday.

"Karel Bruckner on Friday underwent a planned operation on his spinal column. The operation took place without complications," the CMFS said.

The operation was aimed at removing a bone deformation between the fifth and sixth vertebra, the CTK agency said.

Bruckner, 68, "will stay in hospital for a dozen days before recovering at home for another four weeks," the federation added.

Trickett sets new 50m WR

Swimming

AFP, Sydney

Australia's Libby Trickett became the world's fastest woman in the pool with a world record in the 50-metre freestyle on the final night of the national Olympic trials here Saturday.

Trickett, formerly Lenton, powered home to nab the record in the one-lap skelter following team-mate Eamon Sullivan's record-shattering feats in the men's equivalent event this week.

Trickett clocked 23.97 seconds to carve 0.12secs off the five-day-old mark held by Dutchwoman Marleen Veldhuis at the European championships in Eindhoven.

It was more than half a second off Trickett's best time in the 50m to finish the trials on a high.

"To be honest I really thought the 50 world record was going to be out of my reach for a lot longer," the 23-year-old said.

"It has always been a bit of a target and it has always seemed such a distant time that I never

really thought I could get there."

Trickett beat home rising young sprint star Cate Campbell, 15, who was expected to be the one hunting down Veldhuis's record on Saturday rather than Trickett.

In the men's, team captain Grant Hackett claimed his signature 1500m freestyle event winning the national title in a time of 14 minutes 48.65 seconds ahead of Craig Stevens (14:53.18).

Hackett's quest for three Olympic 1500m titles in Beijing is taking shape after posting his fastest time in three years.

It was Hackett's fastest time since winning the world title in 2005 and having shoulder surgery in 2006 which prevented him competing at the Melbourne Commonwealth Games.

His time was faster than the effort of Russian Yuri Prilukov (14:50.40) in winning the European championship just last week.

However, Hackett was still 14 seconds off his world record time swum at the 2001 world championships in Japan and his time was slower than both his previous Olympic victories.

"There was not too much plan tonight, to be honest," Hackett said.

"I did not feel great in the warm-up. But I held the pace up well considering how I felt and it is a solid time."

Hackett won gold in the distance event at the Sydney 2000 and Athens 2004 Games and if he is successful in China he would become the first man to win three successive Olympic titles in the same event.

"That's the first step out of the way with qualifying," he said. "Now I'm really looking forward to putting my head down and doing some hard training."

"It would be great to win a third title."

"I would love to win it for Australia because we've had such a great representation in this event."

It was one of the fastest national trials ever held in Australia with a total of eight world records, a further 13 Commonwealth records and another four Australian records established over the eight days.

Anderson stuns Djokovic

Tennis

AFP, Miami

South African qualifier Kevin Anderson sent defending champion Novak Djokovic packing on Friday, ending the third-seeded Serbian's bid for a second straight ATP Masters Series title.

Anderson, ranked 122nd in the world, defeated the world number three and reigning Australian Open champion 7-6 (7/1), 3-6, 6-4 in a second-round match at the 7.54 million-dollar Sony Ericsson Open, which features both the prestigious ATP Masters Series draw and a WTA tournament.

One of the 32 seeded players to enjoy a first-round bye, Djokovic was launching his title defense fresh from claiming the first Masters Series title of 2008 at Indian Wells on Sunday.

Anderson, 21, notched the biggest win of his career - his first over a top-10 player.

"I really don't know even what to say right now," Anderson said. "I really tried to give myself the best shot walking in today. I kept telling myself I can do this. I've just got to believe in myself, play my game."

"But even still, just knowing what he's done and what a great player he is, and to have actually beaten him, it's a tremendous

experience for me."

The South African newcomer to the ATP circuit had already shown he was on form this season.

He reached the final of the ATP event in Las Vegas earlier this month, where he fell to American Sam Querrey. Prior to that run, Anderson had lost the only two ATP matches he had ever played.

Djokovic, 20, defeated Argentinian Guillermo Canas in the championship match here last year, becoming the youngest player in the 23-year history of the tournament to take the title.

Surprised in the first set by Anderson, Djokovic responded in the second, and broke early in the third to take a 2-0 lead.

But in the following game, Djokovic appeared rattled by a time violation warning while preparing to serve at 40-all.

He was broken, and broken again at love in his next service game.

Anderson made the most of his advantage, finishing off the contest on his third match point.

"It was our first meeting, and I never saw him playing before," Djokovic said. "He surprised me with the way he was serving. I wasn't moving on my returns good enough, and obviously that resulted in easy service games."

"He was winning too easy in the first set his service games, and I wasn't aggressive enough. Then

when I needed to use my chances in the third set, I made some unforced errors, which were really crucial."

"I was maybe going for too much," Djokovic added. "Obviously, he's really tall, and with that height, you expect him not to move so well. But he has a good coordination. He has a good feel for the ball. He's a good player."

In other second-round men's matches on Friday, second-seeded Rafael Nadal eased into the third round with a 7-5, 6-2 victory over German qualifier Benjamin Becker.

Nadal, who fell to Djokovic in the semifinals at Indian Wells at the weekend, is seeking his first title of 2008.

Two top-eight seeds fell, as Russian Dmitry Tursunov outlasted number eight Richard Gasquet of France 6-3, 6-7 (2/7), 7-6 (7/5) and Belgian Xavier Malisse made short work of seventh-seeded David Nalbandian of Argentina 6-1, 6-4.

In women's play, top-seeded Belgian Justine Henin and defending champion Serena Williams moved smoothly into the third round.

Henin, runner-up to Williams here last year, defeated Germany's Angelique Kerber 6-4, 6-2, while Williams, the eighth seed, beat Romanian Edina Gallovits 6-1, 6-2.



South African Kevin Anderson makes a forehand return against Serbian Novak Djokovic during the Sony Ericsson Open at Florida on Friday.