



Serena Williams of the US celebrates after defeating Dinara Safina of Russia in the US Open semifinal at Flushing Meadows on Friday.

PHOTO: AFP

## OPEN SECRETS

INTERNET, undated

Andy Murray's successful run to the semi-finals of the US Open has London bookmakers tipping him for an outside hope at the title. The 21-year-old is 3/1 to beat world No. 1 Rafael Nadal in their final-four weekend clash and progress to the final at Flushing Meadows.

"Murray is in with a chance on his favourite surface against Nadal who has looked far from all-conquering in reaching the last four," said a spokesman for betting house Ladbrokes.

"But the Spaniard, who so often produces it when it matters most, will be favourite to make the final." Murray is 1/4 to claim a major title before his 30th birthday.

World No. 1 Nadal is 10/11 for the trophy while Roger Federer stands 2/1 to win his fifth in a row at Flushing Meadows.

## EMOTIONAL JANKOVIC

Jelena Jankovic broke through on her fifth attempt, reaching a Grand Slam final for the first time with a 6-4, 6-4 defeat of Olympic champion Elena Dementieva at the US Open on Friday. The second-seeded Serb trailed in both sets but never gave up the fight against her Russian opponent, advancing as Dementieva ended her own 11-match win streak with the 42nd error of the afternoon on the second of three match points.

Jankovic was overcome with emotion after finally going over the line. "I have tears in my eyes. I have played five Grand Slam semi-finals and to get to a final for the first time is unbelievable."

"I'm thrilled." Jankovic kept her error count to just 22 as Dementieva handed over point after point.

The pair withstood a run of four consecutive breaks of serve in the second set, with Jankovic breaking one more time to end with the victory as a Dementieva return sailed long.

The 23-year-old Serbian winner faces a Saturday night final - weather permitting, as rain is forecast for the day - against either Serena Williams or Beijing runner-up Dinara Safina.

"I was down in both sets and just kept fighting," said Jankovic, aiming to take back the number one ranking she held for just a week prior to the Olympics.

## Keegan to make U-turn?

## Football

AFP, Newcastle

Two days on from Kevin Keegan's resignation as Newcastle United manager local media intimated Saturday the former England boss might return - if owner Mike Ashley sells.

Keegan quit the Premier League just eight months into his second spell in charge on Thursday, blasting the management structure which retail tycoon Ashley has put in place stripping the coach of responsibility for matters such as transfer policy.

But according to Alan Oliver, chief sports writer at the Newcastle Evening Chronicle, "Keegan Keegan could be back as Newcastle United manager - if Mike Ashley sells out to any of the consortiums who want to buy the club".

Oliver said he had spoken to Keegan late Friday and "he was definitely upbeat" about his future plans amid reports that Indian billionaire Anil Ambani and his

Reliance Group might be interested in buying out the club.

Ashley only bought United last year but the venomous outpourings against him from fans since news emerged of Keegan leaving could give him food for thought.

According to the Chronicle representatives of Ambani are due in England on Monday - but the exact purpose of their visit is unknown.

The paper added that another former England boss, Terry Venables, was a name in the frame to replace Keegan.

Oliver said Keegan had appeared fatalistic after last Saturday's 3-0 defeat by Arsenal at The Emirates, telling him that when the club "goes backwards it goes backwards at twice the pace and that is the problem".

On resigning, Keegan said: "It's my opinion that a manager must have the right to manage and that clubs should not impose upon any manager any player that he does not want."

Newcastle are believed to have gone against Keegan's wishes by

trying to offload both England striker Michael Owen and troubled midfielder Joey Barton, while signing players he did not want.

Keegan's position had been brought into question when Dennis Wise was appointed director of football in January without his knowledge just two weeks after the former took over for a second time following the sacking of Sam Allardyce.

The Magpies are now looking for their sixth manager in four years and fan groups have threatened to boycott the home game with Hull on September 13.

Keegan has been idolised on Tyneside since he led Newcastle to promotion to the top flight as a player in 1982.

He took over as manager for the first time in 1992, once again leading them to promotion before narrowly missing out on the title in 1995 after a rollercoaster season.

But in 1997 he quit to be followed in the hotseat by Kenny Dalglish, Ruud Gullit, Sir Bobby Robson, Graeme Souness, Glenn Roeder and Sam Allardyce.

## Capello wants respect

## Football

AFP, Barcelona

England manager Fabio Capello has called on club managers around the country to show him respect by not launching public criticism at the national team.

Capello was appointed following England's failure to qualify for the 2008 European Championships with the task of leading them to the World Cup in South Africa in 2010.

And ahead of Saturday's World Cup qualifier with Andorra here, the respected Italian coach believes he can be helped in that quest if club managers around the country show a little bit more respect.

Portsmouth manager Harry Redknapp launched a particularly scathing attack after England's 2-2 draw with the Czech Republic at

Wembley last month.

Capello says he never gives opinions about the dozens of club games he witnesses up and down the country - and he wants other managers and coaches to follow suit in terms of England.

He said: "Have I had enough support from the clubs? Yes, I speak with the managers to check the different positions of some players and football matters and they are always friendly with me."

"But I also make a point of not talking about any of the club games that I see. I'm the present England manager and I respect the club managers."

"The other managers have to respect me. They support me enough, all the managers. But I'd prefer it if other managers didn't comment on England's performances."

Capello also made it clear he only

wants players in his squad who are fully committed to England.

His comments followed on from former England defender Jamie Carragher who said he hurt more when on the losing side with Liverpool than his country.

Capello said: "I remember my country (Italy) and in other countries I've managed, like Spain also, that all the players like to play with their national team."

"My message is, if you don't have the heart for the national team 'stay at home'."

"The players here have the heart for the national team. The players here have to sacrifice something to be proud to be here. That's very important. They have to be proud to be here."

"We are now into competitive matches and now we need to play hard, to play for the England shirt, and that's very important. But we also have to play for the result."

## Real after Podolski

AFP, Berlin

Spanish giants Real Madrid want to sign Bayern Munich's disgruntled Germany striker Lukas Podolski during January's transfer window, according to German sports agency SID.

The summer transfer deadline expired at the end of August and Real want to sign Germany star Podolski at the next available opportunity.

The 23-year-old made just four starts for Bayern in the Bundesliga last season and has been mainly kept on the bench so far this term by new Munich coach Jurgen Klinsmann.

Podolski, who is set to play for his country on Saturday in the 2010 World Cup qualifier in Liechtenstein, reacted angrily last week to comments from Bayern manager Uli Hoeness who said he should stop whining and accept his position as third-choice striker.

But with 55 caps and 28 goals for Germany, Podolski is desperate for first-team football and SID report Real's German coach Bernd Schuster has already agreed to sign him.

After failing to sign Manchester United's Cristiano Ronaldo and David Villa, from Valencia, while Brazilian Robinho was sold to Manchester City, Schuster is frustrated with his attacking options at Real.

## Rajkovic banned for spitting

AFP, Paris

Serbian defender Slobodan Rajkovic was on Friday banned for 12 months for spitting at the referee following his side's 2-0 defeat by Argentina in a group match at the Beijing Olympics, FIFA announced.

The incident took place after 19-year-old Rajkovic, who plays at Chelsea but has been loaned out to Dutch side Twente, had been one of two Serbian players shown a red card by Abdullah Al Hilali.

A statement from the FIFA Disciplinary Committee read: "At its 1 September 2008 meeting, the FIFA Disciplinary Committee decided to suspend Slobodan Rajkovic (Serbia) for 12 months for spitting at the referee on 13 August 2008 after the Argentina vs. Serbia match at the Olympic Football Tournaments."

"This suspension applies to all national and international matches including club competitions. This decision may be appealed."

## Libya upset Ghana

AFP, Johannesburg



South Africa

A three-goal second half burst helped the Desert Foxes of Algeria edge the Teranga Lions of Senegal 3-2 in Blida and take one-point advantage in Group 6 with one round to play.

Long serving Ahmed Saad was the hero of Libya as his goal six minutes from full-time earned a 1-0 win over Ghana in a top-of-the-table Group 5 Tripoli clash marred by an injury to Chelsea midfielder Michael Essien.

Malawi were the latest team to inflict misery on Group 12 whipping boys Djibouti, winning 3-0 in the tiny Horn of Africa state via

goals from Chiukepo Msoyoya, Moses Chavula and Atosaye Nyondo.

After a goalless first half in Blida, Issiar Dia put the previously unbeaten Senegalese ahead only for Yacine Bezzaz, Rafik Saifi and Antar Yahia to score within 14 minutes.

Mamadou Sougou grabbed a stoppage-time consolation goal for Senegal, who host Gambia in their final match next month while Algeria travel to group strugglers Liberia.

Libya won their fourth consecutive match without conceding a goal after suffering a hiding in Ghana last June, and a point from their away fixture against Gabon on October 11 would seal first place.

A blunder by defender Harrison Afful led to the winner as he failed to clear a through ball, allowing Saad to beat goalkeeper Richard Kingson from an acute angle.

Essien, who had been a doubtful

starter, was the victim of a cynical foul midway through the opening half and Stephen Appiah came on to end a nine-month injury induced absence from the Black Stars.

Appiah, who has been linked with West Ham after quitting Fenerbahce, delivered a series of defence-splitting passes which were squandered by Junior Agogo and Sulley Muntari.

Malawi climbed above African champions Egypt on goal difference into second place on the standings in Group 12, one of the most hotly contested in Africa with Democratic Republic of Congo also strong challengers for top spot.

The 12 group winners and the best eight runners-up advance to the final qualifying phase where they will be split into five groups with the winners joining hosts South Africa at the first World Cup to be staged by Africa.

## Man City tried to sign Gomez

AFP, Berlin

Premier League side Manchester City made an eleventh-hour bid to sign Germany striker Mario Gomez from Bundesliga club VfB Stuttgart last Sunday, the forward revealed on Saturday.

Gomez, who is under contract in Stuttgart until 2012, told German tabloid Bild there was a multi-million euro offer for him from City just before the transfer window closed on Monday September 1, but this club refused.

With new Arabian investors at the helm, City recruited Brazilian Robinho for a British transfer record of £32.5 million (\$57.5 million US dollars) last Monday and bid for Gomez who scored in Stuttgart's 2-0 win over Hannover last Sunday.

"Yes, that is correct. After our win over Hannover, Manchester City made an offer which our manager, Horst Heldt, rejected," confirmed Gomez in Bild.

Gomez, 23, was voted Germany's player of the year in 2007, but lost his place in the Mannschaft during last June's Euro 2008 tournament after a string of poor performances.

German giants Bayern Munich have repeatedly tried to sign him. Although prone to injury, Gomez is a powerful forward and has already scored two goals in three games for Stuttgart this season after netting 19 times in 25 Bundesliga matches last term.

"My goal is to play for a top club abroad one day in either Italy, England or Spain," Gomez told Bild.

## Zlatan Italy's mogul

INTERNET, undated

Inter Milan striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic this season leads the pack of Serie A moneyed stars leapfrogging Brazilian Kaka of AC Milan. Statistics published Saturday on La Gazzetta dello Sport say that the Swedish international of the Italian champions saw his net pay rise from 6 million euros (9 million dollars) per season to 11 million euros, while Kaka remained on 9.

The two Milanese powerhouses are even on 120 million euros spent this season for players and staff, a figure that includes about 50 per cent for taxes.

Clubs' expenses to run their business have gone up by 100 million euros this year, for a total of 768 million euros. The amount keeps up a steady rise from the 508-million low of the 2005-2006 season, when Italian football was rocked by a major corruption scandal.

Juventus, who paid for their involvement in the scandal with a relegation to the Serie B, are back with the big boys, spending 115 million euros, while Roma trail far behind with 65 million.

The expenses of the remaining 16 clubs are dramatically lower. Fiorentina, who closed the past season in fourth position behind Inter, Roma and Juventus, spend 37 millions, twice as much as Siena, and three times more than Atalanta and Reggina, the least spending clubs with 12.5 and 11.4 million, respectively.

## Sneijder makes rapid recovery

AFP, Madrid

Key Real Madrid midfielder Wesley Sneijder could return to action for the reigning Spanish champions far quicker than expected, according to reports Saturday.

Doctors said Sneijder would be sidelined for at least three months after he picked up a ligament injury in his left knee while playing against Arsenal in the Emirates Cup in early August.

But according to Marca newspaper Saturday the 24-year-old Dutch international has made a rapid recovery and could return to Spanish league action in early October.

Sneijder, formerly of Ajax, scored nine goals and helped in the creation of six others during last season's triumphant La Liga campaign.

## Brazil upset at Lula praise

## Football

INTERNET, undated

Brazil goalkeeper Julio Cesar said Friday he was "really annoyed" about the praise that Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva lavished on Argentine striker Lionel Messi. "It made me very sad as a Brazilian citizen, especially because I voted for him. I read about it and it really annoyed me," Cesar said. "I think he should be naturalized as an Argentine and go and live there."

The Brazilian team was in Teresopolis, in the state of Rio de Janeiro, preparing for a crucial away game against Chile on Sunday.

"When I see Messi - who is the best player in the world in my opinion - lose the ball, he runs off until he gets it back or commits a foul. Our guys lose the ball and fold their arms," Lula was quoted as saying Thursday by Brazilian daily Folha de Sao Paulo in their online edition.

The president complained that players in the current Brazil squad "don't have a soul."

Brazil coach Carlos Dunga also commented on Lula's remarks.



LUIZ INACIO LULA DA SILVA

"Of course we would like to have his support, his motivation at a time like this, (we would want) him to be on Brazil's side," Dunga said.

The coach admitted that there is "great rivalry" between neighbours Brazil and Argentina, but he used

their recent record to boost his team's confidence.

"Argentina has not won a title since 1993, while Brazil has since won two editions of the Copa America, two editions of the Confederations Cup and a World Cup," Dunga said.

Argentina - with a junior team built around senior team stars like Lionel Messi - has just won its second consecutive Olympic gold medal. Brazil failed to get its first ever Olympic football gold in Beijing 2008 and had to settle for bronze after a lacklustre performance.

In the South American qualifiers for the 2010 World Cup in South Africa, Argentina is currently second with 11 points in six games, while Brazil trails in fifth place with nine points.

If the qualifiers were to end today, Brazil - the winner of five editions of the World Cup - would need to win a playoff against a team from North, Central America and the Caribbean in order to secure a place in South Africa 2010.

## Hamilton takes pole

AFP, Spa-Francorchamps



World championship leader Lewis Hamilton

oozed confidence after he secured pole position for the Belgian Grand Prix with a dazzling lap in Saturday's qualifying session.

The 23-year-old Briton, in a McLaren, claimed his fifth pole of this season and the 11th of his career with a perfectly-timed lap to outpace title rival the Ferrari of Brazilian Felipe Massa.

Hamilton's supreme lap lifted him clear of Massa by three-tenths of a second and proved he is fully recovered from his sore neck suffered in Spain two weeks ago.

Finland's Heikki Kovalainen in the second McLaren was third fastest and starts ahead of defending champion and compatriot Kimi Raikkonen in the second Ferrari on row two.

German Nick Heidfeld was fifth for BMW Sauber ahead of two times champion Spaniard Fernando Alonso in a Renault.

Australian Mark Webber was seventh for Red Bull ahead of Poland's Robert Kubica in the second BMW, Frenchman Sebastien Bourdais in a Toro Rosso and Sebastian Vettel of Germany in the second Toro Rosso.

Hamilton leads Massa by six points going into the penultimate European race of the year and oozed confidence. "It was a perfect lap, one of my four perfect laps so I was very happy," he said.

"I made no mistakes and the team made no mistakes so we are looking good," said Hamilton.

Massa said he also did a perfect lap. "It was as good as I could have done," he said. "Sometimes you do your best, do a perfect lap and then you find it is not enough, and that is what happened today."

Hamilton, however, warned: "It is not over yet and it is going to be a very challenging day for me and all of us tomorrow. But I am feeling really good."

"I am all over, much better than I felt in Valencia. I feel better than ever now and we had perfect preparation for this race."

"I have got a big smile on my face, but I hope I still have tomorrow."

After a morning of heavy rain, the afternoon session was run in dry, if cloudy conditions and Hamilton was swiftly out to top the times after Massa and then Raikkonen had laid down good marker laps.

In the final minute, and as the flag fell, both Massa and Hamilton were pushing as hard as possible and the Brazilian went top briefly before the leader took over again to

get the prime grid position.

The first part-session was topped unexpectedly by the bespectacled Frenchman Sebastien Bourdais in his Toro Rosso.

It also saw the elimination from the fray of the bottom five runners led by the two Honda men Briton Jenson Button and Brazilian Rubens Barrichello, both of whom had a wretched session.

German Adrian Sutil and his Force India teammate, Italian veteran Giancarlo Fisichella, were also removed along with the Japanese Kazuki Nakajima in a Williams.

At least the rain held off for an hour of action after a wet morning as the drivers took on the demands and challenges of arguably the greatest circuit on the calendar.

In the second part-session, it was another surprise as Finn Heikki Kovalainen clocked the fastest time in his McLaren while behind him, in the scrap for a top ten finish and a place in the final shootout, German Nico Rosberg failed to make it in his Williams.

He ended up qualifying 15th ahead of the back markers while Italian Jarno Trulli in his Toyota was 11th and out also.

Brazilian Nelson Piquet for Williams, German Timo Glock in the second Toyota, and Briton David Coulthard in his Red Bull were also knocked out.