



Granada forward Youssef El-Arabi (C) is challenged by Real Betis midfielders Jose Canas (R) and Benat Etxebarria during their Primera Liga match at the Benito Villamarin Stadium on Friday. Granada won 2-1.

PHOTO: AFP

Andy sweeps into semis

Tennis

AFP, London

Andy Murray swept into the semifinals of the ATP Tour Finals as the world number three defeated France's Jo-Wilfried Tsonga 6-2, 7-6 (7/3) at London's O2 Arena on Friday.

After Novak Djokovic's win over Tomas Berdych earlier on Friday, Murray knew he only needed to take one set off seventh seeded Tsonga to guarantee his third appearance in the last four of the season-ending event.

The 25-year-old took just 33 minutes to achieve his goal and he eventually sealed his second win of the tournament, advancing from Group A in second place behind Djokovic, despite a late flurry from Tsonga.

After a glorious year which has featured his first Grand Slam title at the US Open, a gold medal in the Olympic singles and a first appearance in the Wimbledon final, Murray would love to cap the campaign with a first Tour Finals crown.

To do that he is likely to have to get past defending champion Roger Federer, who will be the Scot's semifinal opponent on Sunday if, as expected, the Wimbledon champion finishes top of Group B.

Later, on Saturday, Roger Federer was beaten 7-6, 4-6, 6-3 by Juan Martin Del Potro in their Group B match. This means that the top spot in Group B will now be decided by the outcome of the evening encounter between Janko Tipsarevic and David Ferrer. If Tipsarevic wins, Del Potro faces Murray; if Ferrer wins, Federer plays the Brit.

Tsonga, beaten in his previous two group matches, required a straight sets victory to sneak through at Murray's expense, but his track record suggested the outcome wouldn't go his way.

Murray had won six of their previous seven clashes.

A Field day

INTERNET, Undated

Matchday Four of the Champions League provided plenty of excitement, but it was a particularly eventful round of games for one gambler.

Feeling confident of the outcome of four matches from Wednesday evening, punter Dan Field placed £11 (\$17.50) in a 'Yankee' (a type of accumulator bet) with English book-maker William Hill.

By correctly predicting that Manchester Utd would beat Braga 3-1, Benfica would beat Spartak Moscow 2-0, Valencia would win 4-2 against BATE and Chelsea would overcome Shakhtar Donetsk 3-2, Field won a whopping £189,597.50 (around \$301,000).

After winning more than 17,000 times his initial investment, he took to Twitter and posted evidence of his lucky betting slip.

Field has received much (deserved) adulation from fellow Twitter users and has said he will be putting all his winnings on Stoke to win 5-1 against QPR.

Chelsea face bogey team

AFP, London



Roberto Di Matteo admits Liverpool have become Chelsea's "bogey team" ahead of the visit of Brendan Rodgers' side to Stamford Bridge on Sunday.

The importance of maintaining the pressure on Premier League leaders Manchester United will inevitably provide a more powerful incentive to the Blues, but Di Matteo's side are also anxious to end a run of four straight league defeats against the Anfield club.

Chelsea savoured success by beating Liverpool in last season's FA Cup final, but with the current title race threatening to be a tight, three-way battle between the Blues, United and Manchester City, league points are now the immediate priority.

Manager Di Matteo said: "They are our bogey team. They seem always to play exceptionally well against us and get results. It is always difficult and very difficult to beat them."

"It hasn't happened too often in the last three years. We have to be aware of that and be very focused and try to play a very good game."

"First of all, they have very good players and they seem to have an

exceptional game, one of their best of the season, whenever they play us.

"They always find to play us in a moment when we are not at our best. Sunday, we are in good spirits, full of confidence and the team is playing well. Hopefully it will be a different story."

Di Matteo's desire to reverse the recent trend will be shared by Fernando Torres who has yet to score against his former club since his £50 million move in January 2011.

Torres' performances have improved this season and he scored in the midweek Champions League victory over Shakhtar Donetsk but the Spain international has yet to reproduce the form he showed at Anfield.

"Sometimes playing against your old team gives extra motivation, sometimes it inhibits you," said Di Matteo. "It depends on his frame of mind playing against his old team."

"I am happy with his contribution. It is not about him repaying my faith. It's about him performing for the club. I hope every player feels they have the confidence of the manager."

Martin Skrtel, the Liverpool defender, shares Di Matteo's view that Torres - who has scored seven goals this season - remains a potent

force.

Skrtel said: "Even if he isn't scoring goals at the moment he is still one of the best strikers in the world and still dangerous."

Torres is certain to start but John Terry's inclusion on his return from a four-match domestic ban is far from guaranteed after Di Matteo's decision to leave the Chelsea captain on the bench against Shakhtar.

Liverpool manager Rodgers is more concerned with the threat offered by Juan Mata, Eden Hazard and Oscar who have provided Chelsea with a different attacking dimension this season.

Rodgers' side have only managed two Premier League wins in their 10 matches so far this season and the Reds already trail Sunday's opponents by 13 points.

But the manager, who rested nine players for the 1-0 defeat to Anzhi in the Europa League, maintains there is nothing to fear in the trip to London.

He said "Chelsea are very dynamic, they're great technicians. They have three No 10s in their team really."

"They have Oscar, Hazard and Mata and we know the danger that they possess between them."

GATTUSO'S Swiss eye-opener

Football

AFP, Sion

With his killer stare and impeccable track record, Gennaro Gattuso isn't a man who's easily overawed. But the former AC Milan midfielder is staggered by the number of coaches Sion has gone through.

Now 34, the 2006 World Cup winner joined the Swiss club on a two-year contract in the close season, opting for "quality of life" in the peaceful small town near Lake Geneva, as he plays out the twilight years of his stellar career.

His friend and former Italy teammate Alessandro Del Piero, whom Sion also approached, hesitated and instead preferred the warmer climes of Sydney, Australia.

"I've spoken to him about it. I told him that here you've got to smile because it's not the life you led at Juventus (Del Piero's former club). There's something else -- the passion of the fans," he said.

The arrival of such a decorated star in the humble Swiss league led to an explosion in the sale of replica team shirts -- more than 10,000 instead of the usual 800 sold for a top player.

Sion's Stade Tourbillon may not be filled with the ghosts of its legendary past like at Milan's San Siro but its name -- "the whirlwind" -- takes on a whole new meaning because of its no-nonsense president and owner Christian Constantin.

He took on the might of European football's governing body UEFA and its president, former France captain Michel Platini, to court in Switzerland last year in an ultimately unsuccessful challenge against exclusion from this year's Europa Ligue.

The Swiss club had been found guilty of violating FIFA transfer regulations, also prompting a 36-point penalty which would have led to relegation from the top flight had Neuchatel Xamax not been expelled after going bankrupt.

Since saving Sion itself from the verge of bankruptcy, Constantin has been through a staggering 27 coaches.

"I've only played

under 10 coaches in my entire career but in four months at Sion I've had three," said Gattuso. "It's a bit strange."

When out-of-contract Gattuso joined Sion after 13 years at Milan, Sebastien Fournier was in charge but left on September 4. The second, Michel Decastel, was shown the door at the end of October.

Pierre-Andre Schuermann is now in charge and the club is now in third place in the league.

"There's no getting away from the fact that when you change coach three times it disrupts the players and the club," said Gattuso. "But we can't use it as an excuse. We've all got to assume our responsibilities."

"We've got a competitive team and we have to do more with the side we've got."

Gattuso said he holds Constantin in high regard, not just because he's been made captain.

"There are few clubs in the world where you've got a president who puts in his own money," he added.

But Gattuso, who wants to go into coaching himself one day, said he can't imagine cutting his teeth at Sion.

Constantin said that Gattuso, who played 73 times for the Azzurri, is discovering a different world at the club.

"AC Milan is a team which up until recently has practically limitless funds and one of the biggest budgets in European football," he said.

"With that you can buy the best players and there's less call for such radical measures."

"On the other hand when you're a club with a budget that's 15 times smaller -- for us it's 20 million euros (\$25.5 million) -- you've got to work harder to succeed and secure a European cup place."

The fact remains, though, that no manager has stayed at Sion for more than a year under Constantin's watch.

"I've had a lot of managers here who've resigned when I've looked straight in their eyes," he added.

As for what he expects from a coach, Constantin looks to his Alpine surroundings.

"A coach increasingly has to be more of a sherpa who has to lead his group to the summit of a mountain. If the sherpa lacks energy, he's going to be replaced by another sherpa -- but the gradient and the altitude are still the same," he said.



What to WATCH

STAR Cricket

Australia v South Africa

First Test, Day 3

Live from 6:00am

ESPN

English Premiership

Man City v Tottenham

Live from 7:25pm

Chelsea v Liverpool

Live from 10:00pm

STAR Sports

La Liga

Mallorca v Barcelona

Live from 10:45pm

Atletico Madrid v Getafe

Live from 12:45am (Monday)

Levante v Real Madrid



DAY'S EVENT

National Cricket League

(Four-day match, Day-3)

Rajshahi v Rangpur

Venue: Rangpur Cricket Garden

Khulna v Chittagong

Venue: Shaheed Chandu Stadium,

Bogra

Sylhet v Dhaka

Venue: Sylhet Divisional Stadium

Barisal v Dhaka Metro

New ball Aussies' 'trump card'

Cricket

AFP, Brisbane

The imminent second new ball is the trump card up Australia's sleeve as they attempt to battle their way back into the rain-hit first Test against South Africa, coach Mickey Arthur said Saturday.

He spoke as the entire second day was washed out with the top-ranked Proteas in the box seat at 255 for two after a strong opening day, with Hashim Amla (90) and Jacques Kallis (84) nearing centuries.

It was the first time in 29 years that a full day's play had been rained off at the Gabba ground since the final day of Australia's second Test with Pakistan on November 29, 1983.

South Africa will be one batsman down for the rest of the Test after JP Duminy was ruled out for the remainder of the three-Test series with a ruptured Achilles tendon, suffered during a warm-down drill after Friday's play.

Arthur, who was South Africa's coach when the Proteas pulled off an historic 2-1 series win over Australia on their last tour there in 2008-09, said Australia would have to turn around an indifferent opening day to salvage the match.

"We first have to get seven wickets now. There's been a huge chunk of the game taken away," Arthur said.

"We've still got to play very, very well to give ourselves an opportunity to win it, and if we can't win it then make sure we don't lose it."

"There's a massive amount of cricket still to be played, so it's a bit premature to be talking about what we're going to do."

"We've still got that second new ball up our sleeve, that's the one trump we have up our sleeve."

