

Bring on Serena: Murray!

AFP, London

US Open champion Andy Murray has challenged women's world number one Serena Williams to a showdown in Las Vegas that would evoke memories of the famous 'battle of the sexes' 40 years ago. Murray threw down the gauntlet to Serena after responding to a Twitter follower who claimed the American could beat her male counterpart.

The world number two's proposal, however light-hearted he intended it to be, sparked thoughts of the time when 55-year-old Bobby Riggs, a tennis superstar of the 1930s and 1940s, took on female greats Margaret Court and Billie Jean King.

Those matches in 1973 drew huge worldwide attention, with Riggs easily beating Court in the first clash.

That prompted King to challenge Riggs to a match in Houston and this time it was the woman who won an historic meeting which is now regarded as a defining moment in the rise in popularity of the feminist movement.

In 1992, Jimmy Connors defeated Martina Navratilova in Las Vegas.

Eagles hold nerve

SPORTS REPORTER

Eagles recorded a nerve-racking 58-54 win over Rangers in the Citycell Premier Division Basketball League at the Dhanmondi Basketball Gymnasium yesterday. The winners led the first half 32-21.

On Wednesday, Eagles posted another narrow victory with a 72-69 win over Old DOHS after leading the first half slimly 34-31.

Chess team in Incheon

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh national chess team left Dhaka on Wednesday to participate in the 4th Asian Indoor and Martial Arts Games to be held from June 30 to July 7 in Incheon, South Korea.

GM Niaz Murshed, IM Minhazuddin Ahmed Sagar, WIM Shamima Akter Liza, WFM Sharmin Sultana Shirin will represent Bangladesh in four events – men's individual classical chess, women's individual classical chess, team rapid chess and team blitz chess. Bangladesh Chess Federation vice president Mohammad Jahangir Alam will accompany the chess players.

Walton h'ball from July 6

SPORTS REPORTER

The Walton Invitational National Handball tournament will get underway from July 6 at the Shaheed (captain) M Mansur Ali National Handball Stadium with ten teams, split into three groups, taking part in the meet.

Participating teams are Border Guard Bangladesh, Bangladesh Police, Chittagong Metropolis, Chapainawabganj, Jessore, Kushtia, Mymensingh, Madaripur, Sunamganj and Chuadanga.

Sponsors Walton will provide Tk 3 lakh out of the estimated budget of Tk 4 lakh.

SAFF CHAMPIONSHIP

Booters get more time to train

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh national football team hardly get enough time to prepare for any international tournament but for the SAFF Championship the national booters have been given two full months to prepare under the guidance of newly-appointed Dutch coach Lodewijk De Kruif in a bid to bring the coveted trophy of the subcontinent home for the second time.

Initially 35 footballers, including three expatriate players, were called up for the two-month camp and they are scheduled to report to manager Iqbal Hossain and local coach Syed Golam Jinali at the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) House today.

The national team are also supposed to visit Thailand for a ten-day training programme and for a friendly match against Thailand on July 19.

Coach Kruif, his assistant Rene Koster and Dutch trainer Mohammed Yamali are scheduled to arrive here on Monday, although the training will start from Saturday at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

Expatriate forward Jamal Bhuiyan is supposed to arrive on Saturday. The 23-year old marksman once visited Bangladesh for a trial for the World Cup pre-qualifying round in 2011 but returned to Denmark as he failed to cope with local conditions.

Australian-born Anando Rahman is supposed to arrive here on Sunday. The 20-year old attacking midfielder played for Balmain Tigers FC, Sydney City FC and Hurstville Zagreb FC from 2011 to 2012 in the Under-20 tournament.

Meanwhile, the SAFF Championship is scheduled to be held in Nepal from September 1 to 11.

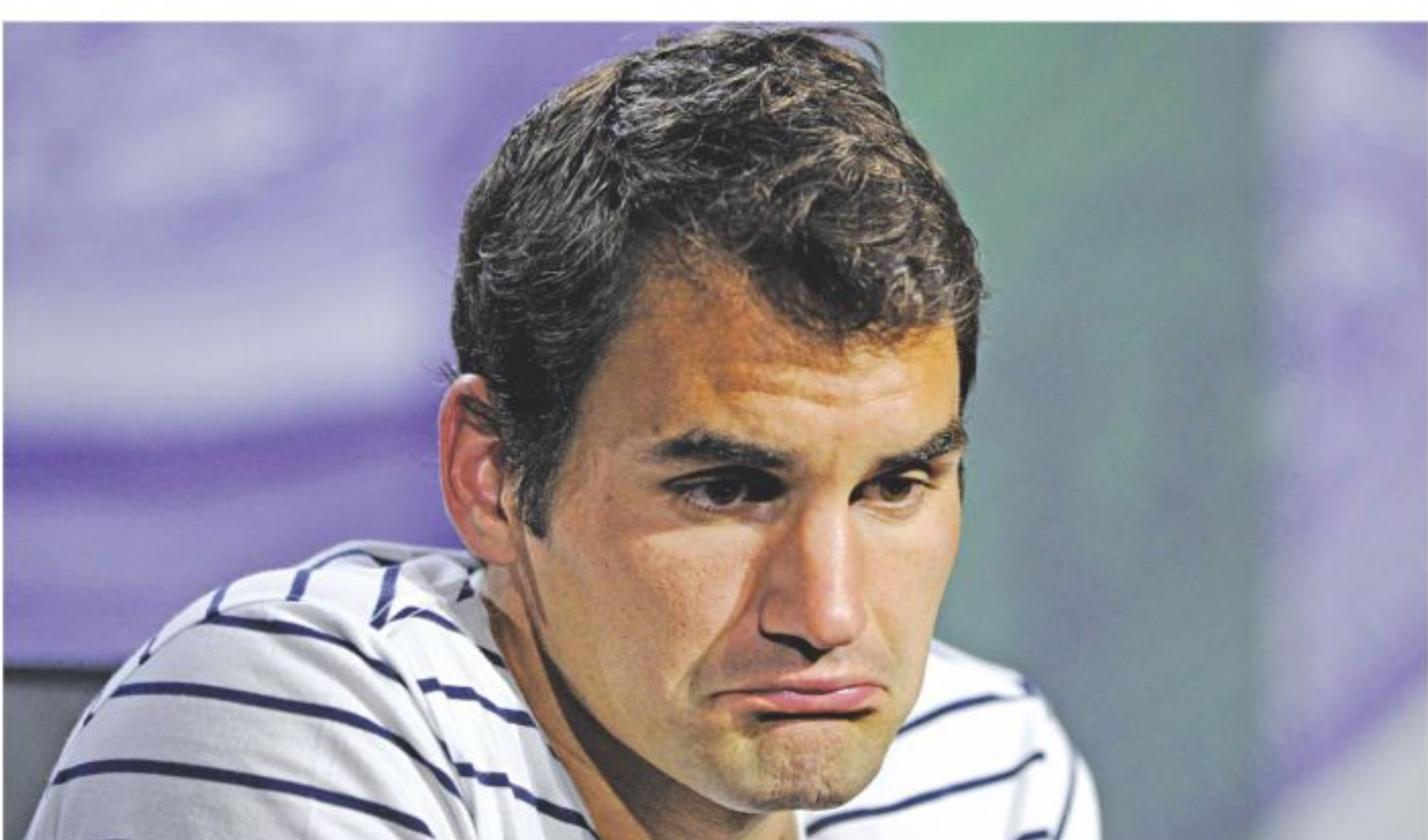
2nd round greeted by washouts

SPORTS REPORTER

The second round of the 33rd National Cricket Championship endured a damp and eventually false start as both matches were abandoned due to rainfall yesterday.

At the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra, after being asked to bat by Narayanganj, Rangpur were all out for 206 with Tanvir Haider hitting 52. Narayanganj's reply could only extend till the 13th over as rain played foul thereafter. Narayanganj finished on 62 for two with Jony Talukdar unbeaten on 28.

It was an even more bleak affair at the Dinajpur Stadium where only one over of play was possible in the match between Jessore and Pabna. Pabna were asked to bat first and played out a maiden over when weather intervened.



FEDEXED: Swiss tennis legend Roger Federer shrugs when answering questions about his shock Wimbledon second-round exit at the hands of Ukraine's Sergiy Stakhovsky on Wednesday. It was the first second-round exit of Federer's career.

PHOTO: AFP

Fed not finished yet!

AFP, London



Roger Federer insisted he will play on for many more years to come despite crashing out of Wimbledon in a shock defeat that brought his extraordinary Grand Slam run to a juddering halt.

Though downbeat, the Swiss legend said he would not go into panic mode after being knocked out by unfancied Ukrainian Sergiy Stakhovsky in the second round on Wednesday.

The world number three said there was perhaps a sea change happening in tennis where lower-ranked players now had the belief to mix it with the sport's best, like himself, Novak Djokovic, Andy Murray and Rafael Nadal.

Federer's shock 6-7 (5/7), 7-6 (7/5), 7-5, 7-6 (7/5) loss to world number 116 Stakhovsky on his Centre Court stomping ground brought the curtain down on his run of 36 consecutive Grand Slam quarterfinal appearances, which started at Wimbledon 2004.

At 31 years old, some are questioning whether Federer's all-conquering powers are

now openly in decline.

But the man himself insisted he had plenty left in the tank.

"I still have plans to play for many more years to come," the seven-time Wimbledon winner said.

"It's normal that after all of a sudden losing early after being in the quarters 36 times, people feel it's different.

"I wish it wasn't going to end here. But I don't think that's something fans are going to mourn.

"It's a great number. I can be proud of it. But I'm moving on."

He said he would reflect on the run "when I'm retired -- and that's not right now."

Federer plans to use his unscheduled time off to recharge and focus on the rest of the season.

"What do you do after something like this? What do you do? Do you do the 24-hour rule? You don't panic at this point, that's clear. Just go back to work and come back stronger.

"Somewhat simple; hard to do sometimes. But usually I do turnarounds pretty good. I'm looking forward to what's to come. I hope I can play a good end to the season."



PHOTO: AFP

Serena Williams of the US acknowledges the Wimbledon crowd's applause after defeating France's Caroline Garcia in their second round match yesterday.

Novak restores normalcy

AFP, London



Novak Djokovic avoided becoming the latest star to crash out of Wimbledon as the world number one recovered from a slow start to defeat American qualifier Bobby Reynolds 7-6 (7/2), 6-3, 6-1 in the second round on Thursday.

While several of Djokovic's title rivals have fallen foul of the shock defeats and injury withdrawals that have rocked Wimbledon over the last four days, the 26-year-old has progressed serenely to the last 32 and is yet to drop a set.

Both Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal suffered stunning losses at the hands of unheralded opponents in the other half of the draw, leaving Djokovic as the only former

Wimbledon champion left.

And a defeat for Djokovic in his first meeting with Reynolds, the world number 156, would have been just as shocking.

But, although the Serb never hit peak form, he did enough to see off his obdurate opponent with 41 winners and 12 aces in one hour and 56 minutes.

Djokovic will play French 28th seed Jeremy Chardy or German qualifier Jan-Lennard Struff for a place in the last 16.

Reynolds's exit was one of the least surprising results in an otherwise shock-filled week, but it did carry historic significance as there will be no American men in the Wimbledon third round for the first time in 101 years.

Women's defending champion Serena Williams and evergreen Kimiko

Date-Krumm, two players with a combined age of 73, set up a battle of Wimbledon senior citizens earlier in the days.

Top seed Williams extended her winning streak to 33 matches, just two behind the record set by sister Venus in 2000, with a 6-3, 6-2 win over French 19-year-old Caroline Garcia, who she also beat at the French Open.

Date-Krumm, 42, reached the Wimbledon third round, 17 years after she last did so, with a 6-4, 7-5 win over Romania's Alexandra Cadantu, 19 years the Japanese's junior, to become the oldest woman to make the last 32 at the All England Club.

The previous oldest player was Britain's Virginia Wade, who was 39 years and 362 days old when she made the same stage in 1985.

BD qualify for bridge c'ship

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Senior Bridge Team qualified for the World Bridge Championship after finishing second in the Bridge Federation of Asia and The Middle East (BFAME) Championship.

The World Bridge Championship, known as Bermuda Bowl, is scheduled to be held in Bali, Indonesia in September 2013.

Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka took part in the qualifying round for Zone 4 of the World Bridge Federation which was held in Ahmedabad, India from June 4-11.

Who's against India?

Caribbean tri-series starts today

AFP, Kingston



With India enjoying an additional 48 hours to bask in the glory of their Champions Trophy triumph, West Indies and Sri Lanka get the tri-nation one-day international series underway on Friday at Sabina Park.

Both teams have points to prove after being steamrolled by the ODI kings over the previous fortnight in England.

For the Sri Lankans, this fixture marks just the second time that they are playing an

FIXTURES

June 28: West Indies v Sri Lanka -- Jamaica
June 30: West Indies v India -- Jamaica
July 02: India v Sri Lanka -- Jamaica
July 05: West Indies v India -- Trinidad
July 07: West Indies v Sri Lanka -- Trinidad
July 09: India v Sri Lanka -- Trinidad
July 11: Final -- Trinidad.

ODI at major international cricket's westernmost venue.

The only other occasion came at the 2007 World Cup when Mahela Jayawardene's unruffled unbeaten hundred led his side comfortably past New Zealand in the semi-finals, only for them to be upended by hattrick-seeking Australia in the final three days later in Barbados.

West Indies were the first to feel the weight of India at their best at the Champions Trophy at the group stage of the competition before missing out on the last four agonisingly when Kieron Pollard's dismissal just before the rains came at Cardiff left the Caribbean side trailing South Africa on the Duckworth-Lewis System.

While no-one wants to have to return to the sometimes bewildering formulae and calculations necessitated by Duckworth-Lewis, it will be no surprise if batting second and then staying ahead of the par score becomes a priority during the seven matches of this tournament.



Bangladesh's under-16 footballers stretch during a practice session on the BFF Artificial Turf yesterday, ahead of the SAFF U-16 Championship in Nepal from July 20 to July 30.

PHOTO: STAR