



2004

Scots tennis 'courting disaster'

Despite helping to produce world-class young players Scotland's top tennis trainer has quit in disgust, writes Tom Lynch

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There's a wistful note to coach Murray's voice when she recalls the moment. A hint of pride too. "I couldn't believe that the kids I started off with when they were eight or nine were in the biggest tournament in the world."

Now, as a summer fog descends on her Dunblane home, Murray's mood has changed. All the optimism has been replaced by frustration.

Last week she resigned from her post at Tennis Scotland, disgusted at the lack of backing from the country's sports administrators and its politicians and fearing that youngsters who have the talent to win top titles could be forced to leave the game.

She is not alone in her thinking. According to Murray, three of the four tennis development staff in Scotland have quit this year, allegedly fed up with their puny resources.

Next to go, Murray fears, will be the country's outstanding crop of young players, forced out of the game because there is simply not the money to help them break through into the big time, to compete alongside the Tim Henmans and Greg Rusedskis for the top honours.

The tragic thing is, she says, is that she and her colleagues have produced tremendous talents "against all the odds".

For, while the Scottish executive plans to spend £30m on football to make it competitive again on the world stage, funding for tennis has been slashed by 60%.

“Now these kids are 17, 18, 19, we have no training base, we have no internationally experienced coaches,” she says. “There is no residential base and no indoor courts that belong to Tennis Scotland, the game’s ruling body. They need three or four years of investment to allow them to make the transition to the professional game.”

Local clubs need to do more, she argues, but to achieve that there has to be a semblance of leadership in the game. Tennis Scotland has a 16-strong amateur board, but Murray wants to see a professional structure, employing people with skills in business, finance and marketing. In other words, simple progressive steps for a sport whose youngsters have shown they can compete on the world stage.

The tragedy for Murray is seeing her efforts trickle away — the years of work with dedicated young people. It seems a ridiculously simple explanation, but for Murray, coaching was something which was “just there”.

For a discipline she came to so casually, Murray is remarkably proficient. In the space of around 10 years she twice held the position of national coach in Scotland, schooling champions and nurturing talent to great effect.

Under her tutelage, earlier this year, the country could boast two of the top six junior players in the world, an achievement that has gone largely unremarked on home soil.

One of these outstanding stars of the future is Jamie Baker. The fact that the other is Murray’s son, Andy, speaks volumes for his mother.

Yet despite the satisfaction of this success, Murray speaks sadly of the game she loves.

“I work up to 70 hours a week and most of my time is spent on the road. When I am not travelling around tennis clubs in Scotland to coach I am abroad, supervising youngsters playing in tournaments. I feel I am being spread far too thinly and not achieving anything,” she says.

“There is not point producing world class youngsters if we cannot support them as they try to break into the senior game.”

Despite her reluctance to play tennis these days, Murray was born with a racket in her hand.

Her love of the sport was fostered by parents who played at county level in her native Dunblane and who were keen all-round sports players. Without ever taking a formal lesson, Murray’s record as a youngster was phenomenal. She won the Scottish schools championship at 15, and went on to win 64 Scottish titles and 27 international caps.

But her progress to a world-class coach was almost accidental. As a prominent player in the area, she was invited to give prizes at a children’s tennis tournament in Stirling. At the ceremony, she offered to contribute a prize of her own — tennis lessons for two of the under-10s.

News of the tennis lessons spread, and Murray found she enjoyed taking them. “I like to teach, I like to see the kids improving,” she says.

Local people began to bring their children round, asking Murray to teach them the finer points of the game. They were happy to pay too, even though part of the price of Murray’s lessons was that the parents had to baby-sit little Jamie and Andy.

But it was the perfect job for a mum with two lively youngsters. When they were a bit older, she could take them along to any of the tennis clubs where she was teaching.

She quickly worked her way up that ladder — she was the first coach in Scotland to hold the LTA Performance Coach Award, the top certificate in the UK, and first became Scottish national coach in 1995, but quit after her first term to spend more time with the family.

Now comes the bitter end of her second term. These days, she explains, the lack of facilities in Scotland means that producing a tennis pro isn’t cheap. A plan to develop a national tennis centre at Heriot Watt University was scrapped a few years ago. Recently, tennis missed out on a £230m Scottish executive plan to develop new sports facilities. That means that aspiring young players have to go abroad, at a cost of about £25,000 a year.

On top of that there are the costs of playing in overseas competitions: there is no prize money for juniors and not very much on the first rung of a senior tour. Last year, SportScotland allocated just £76,000 to tennis. This year, pleading a fall in lottery takings, that already derisory figure is set to fall to £30,000. About enough to fund a single player.

This public money was allocated in April, but Murray says the players still have not seen a penny of it as Tennis Scotland has dithered over how it is going to be parcelled out.

Three Scots have got automatic qualification for the US Open next month. Murray is still trying to beg free flights for them, and does not know how they are going to raise money to put a roof over their heads for the few days of pre-tournament practice.

“We could have some of the top tennis pros in the world,” she says. “I have been working with these kids since they were 8, 9, 10 and in six months they may have to quit the game. They are looking to me to help them and my hands are tied because the board of Tennis Scotland isn’t supporting me.”

She has now decided to take time out. “I have got very grumpy recently,” she concedes. She will work with her older son Jamie, another of the UK’s top tennis prospects. (Andy is well supported by the LTA.) But, despite her apparent diffidence, she will always want to be involved in the game, and in the final analysis does not expect a complete career change. She once ran a children’s shop in Dunblane with her mother, but doesn’t hanker after a return to retailing.

One thing she might do is play a little tennis — she says she does not play the game at all just now. If she wants a sporty evening she would rather go for a game of badminton — playing tennis would be too much like work.

As for the young Scots players on the verge of great careers, there is still hope, Murray believes, “if SportScotland wakes up to the fact that they have some of the best young players in the world”.

Maybe one day, the game’s administrator and the politicians will wake up, and proper investment will help talented young players realise their true potential. It’s an attractive thought but when the great day dawns, Judy Murray, perhaps the most successful coach in Scottish tennis history, will be gone.

Murray beginning to realise his youthful promise

By Magnus Linklater

Published at 12:00AM, September 14 2004

This *Times* writer reflects on his close ties with the sporting family and its outstanding protégé

LOUNGING back in his chair, complete with baseball cap, shellsuit and trainers, he looks like any other teenager. Now he has won the US Open Junior Championship in New York, Andy Murray has moved into the top class of young tennis stars, fulfilling the potential that those of us who have been watching him over the past five years always knew he had.

A year ago, at the age of 16, the young Scot became the No 2 junior tennis player in the world — and since the classification of junior includes players up to the age of 18, he was clearly destined for great things. But in December last year, he developed a serious knee injury that put him out of the game for six months. To have come back from that to win in New York is a remarkable achievement.

A practice session with his older brother, Jamie, on the court at the Institute of Sport at Stirling University, where I met him, was a revelation. Long, raking ground shots rocketed low across the net, hit with unerring ferocity from backhand and forehand. Serves, so fast the eye could hardly follow them, skidded off the court surface and reared up high over the baseline. There is, on his face, a look that is all too rare in Scottish sport

— the look of a winner. Like so many young prodigies, Andy has been addicted to sport from boyhood.

His mother, Judy, Scotland's national tennis coach, had encouraged him and his brother from their days at Dunblane High School, but Andy's talent is entirely natural. Almost from the moment he could hold a racket, he seemed to have an instinctive feel for the game. Like most Scots children, however, football seemed to hold more attraction for him and at the age of 11 he was still wavering over which sport to adopt. He remembers precisely the day his decision was made.

"I was practising on this very court and I was supposed to go for football training. My Dad came to collect me and I was just walking off court when I stopped and said, 'Forget the football, I'm going back to my tennis training'."

It was not, perhaps, surprising. He had won the Orange Bowl in Miami — the unofficial world championship for players 12 and under. His coach, Leon Smith, from Glasgow, who has watched his career develop from the age of 11, believes that he has always been a special player. "He has a good touch, he can read the game very well, he is very aggressive," Smith says. "Above all, he wants to win."

It is that competitive edge that sets him apart and he says that he probably inherited much of it from his mother. "I remember taking part in a handicap competition at North Berwick and Mum standing at the back of the court shouting at me." He grins at the memory. Judy, however, is very far from the image of the pushy Mum. She has deliberately held back to let her boys find their level at their own pace. She remembers ferrying Andy and his brother to football and mini-rugby matches, taking care to stay in the background. "It's not very cool at that age to have your Mum hanging around too much," she says. "I've always managed his programme, but he had to want to do it himself."

She was one of the Dunblane mothers who stood outside the high school on that fateful day in March 1996 waiting for news about the murderous attack by Thomas Hamilton that led to the death of 16 children. Andy was one of the pupils inside and it was not for two hours that she knew he was safe. "No one could tell us what had happened," she recalls.

Andy says that he was too young to understand what had happened. He was on his way to the gym, where the massacre took place, when he and his class were ordered to lie down and shelter beneath their desks. They did not find out what had happened until they got home later that day.

"The scariest thing was that we knew the guy who did it," he says. "We used to go to his youth camps and a couple of times we gave him lifts from the station."

Tennis for Andy has meant giving up the life of a normal teenager. He went on his first tour at the age of 11 and has had to fit classes around an increasingly gruelling training schedule. Faced with the choice of training in England with the LTA or going abroad, he and Judy decided that he should go to Barcelona, to join the academy set up by Emilio Sánchez and Sergio Casal, the Spanish Davis Cup duo. It has given him a harder edge.

Andy pays tribute not just to his mother and his coach but to Scotland's Institute of Sport, which has tennis facilities as good, he says, as any in the world. His sights are set high. "Tim Henman is only going to play for another two or three years," he says. "By then I want to be in the top 100 in the world."

Smith puts it more succinctly. "I don't see any reason why Andy shouldn't get to the highest rank in tennis," the coach says. But can he take the pressure of tennis at the top? Judy answers carefully. "There is a disadvantage in Britain because everyone is so desperate to find the next Henman," she says. "But Andy knows that all that pressure is part and parcel of the job."

That, and the will to win.

Elitism wins — even in a land of losers

Magnus Linklater

Published at 12:00AM, September 15 2004

TENNIS is not exactly Scotland's national sport. The weather is against it. The facilities are minimal. The coaching is limited. Also, the whole idea of selecting talent and encouraging winners goes against the national ethos. As Scotland's First Minister put it only last week, in discussing education: "There will be centres of excellence, but let me be clear. There will be no elitist selection of pupils . . . choice and diversity for different talents and ambitions will be available for all."

How then to explain the astonishing victory last weekend of the young Scot, Andy Murray, who, at the age of 17, became US Junior Open Champion? How, in addition, to explain a Scottish tennis squad that includes three other equally promising youngsters, including Jamie Baker, who reached the quarter-finals of Junior Wimbledon, and Andy's brother, another Jamie, who partnered him to the semi-finals in New York? The answer owes nothing to coincidence, everything to the single-minded, even ruthless, nurturing of elite talent and emerging prodigies.

There is no shame in that. It is the kind of approach that produces medal-winning Chinese gymnasts or world-beating American swimmers. But it is the very opposite of "excellence for all", and no amount of muddled jargon about choice and diversity can conceal the fact. Young Andy and his team would never have made it without the driving ambition of his mother, Judy, herself a championship player, and the Institute of Sport at Stirling University, which makes no bones about picking outstanding talent and offering it the concentrated expertise that makes champions. It describes itself as "developing programmes for elite and potential elite athletes".

In Andy's case this has included some highly specialised training, working on strength and conditioning, giving him psychological training, teaching him how to deal with the media, and then, when he went out to New York, sending out a video team to provide detailed analysis of all his opponents — the kind of cutthroat approach that sounds almost un-British. As one of its officials put it: "We cater for a very narrow elite, but that elitism depends purely on talent, nothing else."

So how does the Scottish Executive square this approach with its refusal to countenance the selection of talent? The answer is: it doesn't. The institute receives no government money. It is dependent on lottery funding, together with some private sponsorship. The same goes for the English, Welsh and Northern Irish institutes. Since the lottery is a declining resource, there will, inevitably, be doubts about their future.

So where do governments, north and south of the border, stand on this issue of spotting talent and nurturing it? They lose no opportunity of congratulating British athletes who achieve international success. Yet they are deeply ambivalent when it comes to addressing the means by which this can be achieved. Even in England, where there are specialist schools, city academies, and colleges of sport, the language is, at best, opaque. Under the heading of "selection", the Department for Education mumbles about criteria "as agreed with the Secretary of State", and emphasises that they must be "consistent with the code of practice on admissions". Nowhere is there any suggestion that a promising young athlete will be picked out, given the best coaching, then sent to whatever college or university is suited to his or her talents. In nine cases out of ten this will depend instead on a pushy parent or a sharp-eyed teacher who is prepared to fight his corner to ensure that a talented youngster gets specialist training and single-minded encouragement.

That, of course, is where most promising athletic careers begin, and sometimes end — the Williams sisters would never have progressed so far in tennis without their ferociously ambitious father driving them on. No government can or should be expected to play that role. But what it can do is create the climate in which excellence is properly accepted and nurtured. It can provide the facilities which gives emerging talent the best opportunity of flourishing. And it can acknowledge that this will mean selecting the best and focusing on them, even if that means excluding the mediocre and the also-rans. Is this elitist? Almost certainly. Is it to be condemned? Of course not. Everyone likes a winner — ask Andy Murray, as he bathes this week in the glory of his triumph. But we should understand that victories like his do not come cheap, that there is a long hard road to be travelled before they are achieved; and that only a few will be good enough to go the distance.



Tennis: Knocking on Henman's door

Andy Murray is in the Davis Cup squad because he deserves to be, and Britain's No 1 is certain he won't let them down

Barry Flatman

Published: 19 September 2004

For Andy Murray to emulate what Henman's New York assailant, Roger Federer, or even the British No 1 himself has accomplished is the ultimate dream of any young hopeful. Yet, for a

brief moment, fantasy became reality as the 17-year-old heir apparent showed the ability to extend the man he is expected to succeed.

Those who look for signs would have pointed out that the sun had just broken through a thick black cloud that had threatened to douse the first strokes between the very English Henman and Scotland's Murray at Britain's Spanish training base for this week's Davis Cup match with Austria. Henman has no time for symbolism, but he acknowledged that the quality of the Murray forehand he had just failed to return underlined his optimism for what the US Open junior champion might go on to achieve.

"You have to say first and foremost that Andy has the ability and a good understanding of the game," said Henman, ranked fourth in the world after a sixth Grand Slam semi-final disappointment at Flushing Meadows. "He looks the part and is a player already. He's got a good head screwed on tightly to his shoulders, and, looking at his temperament, he's determined to succeed."

Henman is relieved that his duties next weekend in Portschach, with a place in the Davis Cup's World Group at stake, will extend only to playing three best-of-five set matches in as many days. The decision on whether to blood Murray against Austria falls to the British captain, Jeremy Bates.

The other options are risking Greg Rusedski in a similarly gruelling schedule in the knowledge that he finished last year's tie in Morocco suffering from acute physical exhaustion, or recalling Alex Bogdanovic just six months after he was expelled from the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) for lack of commitment.

If Murray is chosen to play on the pedestrian clay he finds so convivial, but which Rusedski abhors, he will become Britain's youngest Davis Cup player by almost a year. Roger Becker was 18 years, 101 days when he made his debut against Yugoslavia in Belgrade in 1952.

"Andy is very competitive," said Bates, whose thinking is sure to be influenced by the knowledge that Murray loves clay, having spent two years at the Sanchez-Casal Academy in Barcelona, which served as the alma mater for the new US Open women's champion, Svetlana Kuznetsova.

"He hates losing and takes great enjoyment out of beating people. He wants to become a good professional and is not remotely carried away by winning the US Open title. He sees it for what it is — a stepping stone. It's terrific to be working with somebody who has the whole thing in perspective.

"Technically, he has fantastic hand skill, good timing and racket-head speed. His technique is solid from the ground, and one of his biggest attributes is that he understands very clearly how to hurt somebody and where the gaps are. He has the ability to open up the court and put the ball where the other guy doesn't like it. He reads the game well and can use all his skills on clay because it's like a game of chess out there."

Murray arrived in La Manga on Tuesday, interrupting his journey from New York to call in briefly at home in Dunblane to collect his clay-court shoes and take stock. Henman's private

jet did not touch down in Spain until Friday morning. A reassuring MRI scan on the back injury that almost forced him out of the US Open before it started and the demands of moving house were the main reasons for his late arrival.

A 2½-hour hit on court with the British team enabled him to concur with Bates's technical assessment of his new teammate. "To be honest, I had not seen Andy play a great deal, but he is clearly very talented and has enormous potential," said Henman. "Who knows if he is 'the one', but we all hope he goes from strength to strength. We have all been guilty of identifying promising youngsters in the past, and they've fallen by the wayside. One thing is for certain — he is far ahead of me at an equivalent age."

Henman will never forget being told by his former mentor, David Lloyd, that all he possessed was an outside chance of scraping a living as a doubles player. Fortunately, he possessed a streak of determination and sufficient natural talent to convince Bill Murray, the LTA men's chief at the time, that there were reasons to persevere.

Murray's potential has long been accepted by most within the LTA, and Henman was adamant when he insisted: "It's wrong to make comparisons between Andy and myself. As a 17- or even 18-year-old, I simply wasn't good enough to play the US Open junior, let alone win it. I'd somehow managed to get into the Australian and French Opens, losing in the first round of both. Then, in my only Wimbledon as a junior, I lost 6-2 6-1 to a Mexican called Enrique Abaroa, who has hardly set the world on fire since. It's fair to say there weren't too many people who held much hope for me."

What a young Henman had in common with Murray was an understanding and passion for the sport. They both watch and analyse matches other than their own, and Murray was encouraged by the fact that Henman regularly took time out from his own New York campaign to follow his progress and offer advice. Regardless of a 12-year age difference, the relationship has become firmer since Henman arrived in Spain.

There is plenty more advice on offer. "It's important that he learns for himself, but I will definitely be there to offer help if he wants to ask," said Henman, 30, who regularly tapped into the experiences of Bates and former world No 1 Pete Sampras. "There's a whole load of learning processes Andy has to go through, and there's going to be lots of comparisons and criticism. But the bottom line is, all that means absolutely nothing.

"The only thing that should be important to him is that when he steps onto the court, he believes if you play well, work hard and act as a dedicated professional, the results will happen. That way you are going to compete in the biggest and best tournaments and aspire to a certain lifestyle that goes alongside."

Henman highlights the fact that Murray remained focused during a seven-month absence after being diagnosed with a separated kneecap late last year. Within weeks of his return, he had won Futures tournaments in Spain and Italy. Henman said: "It is easy when you are winning, but it takes times of adversity to find out about yourself. He strikes me as the type of guy who would be strong if things didn't go well or he had a bad experience.

“It’s great that Andy won the US Open junior title, but I look at his game and the results he’s had on the men’s circuit against vastly more experienced players than himself. He was out injured for all that time and came back to play four tournaments in a tough environment on clay, and he won two of them. Winning the US Open juniors is a little irrelevant if he’s getting results like that. He is playing professionally and he’s winning, and it doesn’t matter what level it’s at.

“Playing the juniors is a great experience, but basically it is just fun and games. You go to the four Grand Slams and other big events. You stay in nice hotels and walk around in the same locker rooms and lounges as the top players. But suddenly, you start playing professionally and you realise this is a serious business. You have people from every corner of the globe ready to intimidate you, and you’re off for months on end to the less salubrious parts of the world. That’s where you find out if you have a passion for the game.”

Henman was a contemporary of James Baily, the last British youngster to win a junior Grand Slam title, at the Australian Open nearly 12 years ago. Within six months, Baily had decided that the life of a professional tennis player was not for him and opted for university. Henman said there was no danger of Murray following the same route: “James was always a great kid, but I wouldn’t particularly say he loved what he did. At a young age he was good because he was very strong and a good athlete, but there was never a passion for the game.”

Murray is committed to a long-term future in tennis. Now we will see whether he is ready as a boy, albeit an extremely talented one, for a man’s world. Bates said: “I didn’t name him in this team just to make up the numbers. If he is good enough, he is old enough.”

Improving Murray rising to challenge

From [Neil Harman](#) Tennis Correspondent in Paris

Published at 12:00AM, November 3 2004

ANDY MURRAY took a set from Carlos Moyà on clay in Spain yesterday. It might have been only a practice set, but Moyà is a former French Open champion, has been No 1 in the world and even if his shoulder was not quite strong enough to play in the BNP Paribas Masters here this week, he is getting in trim for the Masters Cup and the Davis Cup final in the next month. These people do not practise for kicks.

Murray, Britain's first US Open junior singles champion, has been back at the Emilio Sánchez-Sergio Casal ranch in Barcelona, his base outside Scotland, for the past ten days, building up his power and his contacts — he also hit with Guillermo Coria, the Argentinian who is acknowledged as the world's finest clay-court player, yesterday — before tackling an arduous trip to Bolivia, Brazil and Colombia for a series of Challenger events.

His mentor on the tour is Pato Alvarez, the Colombian who has coached any number of players into the top 50, Sánchez included. "His track record says that, statistically, he is one of the best coaches ever," Murray said. "It is just a short-term situation, but it's good to know he's on my side."

Murray's progress from junior to senior — he is ranked No 505 in the world — will be measured against his contemporaries and, given the extraordinary feats of Gaël Monfils and Jo-Wilfried Tsonga, the French youngsters, in their first Masters event on home soil — that measurement is compelling. Tsonga was granted a day's rest after defeating Mario Ancic, the Wimbledon semi-finalist from Croatia, but Monfils, having beaten Thomas Enqvist on Monday, was ushered back out to face Lleyton Hewitt, who had not played for more than a month, a rest period interrupted by a call from Kim Clijsters breaking off their engagement.

Monfils slugged it out for all his 18-year-old worth against the former world No 1. Some of the shot-making was breathtaking — at one stage Monfils replicated the trademark Clijsters splits shot that must have been unnerving for his opponent — but having gone ahead in the second-set tie-break, carelessness and exhaustion overcame him and he lost 6-3, 7-6.

Tsonga — who is a year older than Murray — beat Moyà in Beijing last month and has risen to No 179 in the Champions race. He and Monfils, who won the first three junior grand-slam titles this year before Murray's triumph in New York, are lithe and strong. They have a natural flair and expression for the game; they are going to be stars for certain.

Murray noted their results. "It's very impressive, but I'd be even more impressed if they could do it on slow outdoor clay," he said. "They have big serves, they're terrific athletes, but I've beaten both of them, so that's a confidence boost for me. If they can do it, so can I."

Murray will not fail for the want of self-confidence and he feels that he is getting stronger, having come through a series of tests on his physique and development with flying colours. He will miss the Australian Open juniors in January to play a series of satellite events in Spain — “always the strongest satellites of the year because there are so many experienced players getting their clay-court miles in,” he said. The release that comes with qualification for the Masters Cup was evident as Tim Henman, dropping only two points on serve in the second set, beat Paradorn Srichaphan, of Thailand, 6-3, 6-4 to reach the third round.



Murray in a hurry to fulfil coach's optimism

By Neil Harman

Published at 12:00AM, December 13 2004

SURROUNDED by more Spaniards than he could shake a stick at, Andrew Murray emerged with success in the third Futures tournament of his curtailed year yesterday and offered just an inkling that he might yet live up to his new coach's assertion that he could be a top 100 player next year. Just to confirm his potential, the Scot was last night presented with the BBC's Young Personality of the Year award by Boris Becker.

Murray, 18, from Dunblane, took the clay-court title in Orense, Spain, defeating Andis Juska, the No 4 seed from Latvia, 1-6, 6-3, 7-5 in the final, the third time in five matches that he has come back from losing the first set to win. It says much for his self-belief that he should clinch the event in such a style.

This was Murray's first event since Pato Álvarez, the Colombian veteran, was brought in to help to guide him through a critical period of his career. Álvarez held nothing back, insisting that if Murray continued with his present form and attitude, there was no reason why he should not be in the top 100 — he started the week at No 517 — by the time of the French Open in May.

That would require a remarkable series of high-level results. Murray, the US Open junior champion, has played little tennis this year because of a knee operation caused by hard courts and a growth spurt that has seen him rocket to 6ft 1in, but he has made up for lost time, winning back-to-back Futures events on clay in Spain and Italy in October.

2005

Murray handed chance after hit parade

By Neil Harman, Tennis Correspondent

Published at 12:00AM, February 19 2005

ANDY MURRAY will be named in the Great Britain Davis Cup team on Monday as Jeremy Bates, the captain, eschews caution and form, preferring to trust immense potential, ice-cold nerve and the word of what was once the country's unshakeable first-choice pair.

Murray, not 18 until May, has spent the past few days hitting with Tim Henman and Greg Rusedski to the extent that both have sought the captain's ear and bent it sagely. The outcome is that when Bates confirms his nominations to face Israel in a Euro-African zone one tie the week after next, Murray will be in, even though he has not played a single match in a main draw thus far in 2005.

It is a remarkable selection but then these are remarkable times, the first in ten years with Henman unavailable for selection other than for reason of injury. The Britain No 1's retirement from the competition has concentrated the captain's mind more powerfully than has needed to be the case for years.

Murray stands out as the country's most naturally gifted teenage player in years (Henman did not begin to show his considerable talents until the age of 21) but even so, picking him is precarious. Although he is clearly striking the ball beautifully, there is a rustiness to his competitive edge that the prospect of a couple of matches in a satellite in Portugal next week will hardly dissipate. He was unable to qualify for either of the two clay court events in Chile last month and came home nursing a bad back.

That, thankfully, has been put down to little more than overdoing the desire to play as much as he can, and the growth of almost another inch since Christmas. "It was always going to be tough playing my first challengers outside Europe but I thought the experience was really beneficial," Murray said. "I got a lot of hitting in, I did a lot of running on the clay. I've loved being able to hit with Tim and Greg in the past couple of weeks and the experience of being the hitting partner in the Davis Cup in Austria last year really whetted my appetite to play in the competition itself. Jeremy knows I'll give it everything I've got."

With luck on his and Britain's side, Murray's appearances in Tel Aviv, whether in singles or doubles, will be the first of many. A Britain victory will secure a September qualifier for a place in the 2006 World Group. The rest of the squad is named on Monday, when Bates will reveal if he has chosen four singles players or, as has been the preference of several nations, two singles players and a specialist doubles pair.

Even though he will not be playing the event again, Henman says that he has been giving the selection conundrum a good deal of thought this week. "It is a tricky scenario for a

captain because if you pick two singles players and a doubles team and one of the singles players gets injured, it makes things a lot tougher,” Henman said. “In terms of the team as a whole, someone has to grasp this opportunity. Boggo [Alex Bogdanovic] has had a few decent recent results, Arvind [Parmar] has always been committed to the cup and the chance to blood Andy is obviously high in Jeremy’s thoughts.”

Henman’s hopes of reaching a fourth final of the ABN/AMRO championships in Rotterdam ended when he came up short in two tie-breaks and was beaten 7-6, 7-6, by Mario Ancic, the Croat proving his quarter-final nemesis again after last year’s Wimbledon victory at the same stage.



Murray steeled for historic singles opportunity

By **Neil Harman**, Tennis Correspondent

Published at 12:00AM, February 25 2005

ANDY MURRAY is lined up for a Davis Cup singles debut a week today that will be of the stuff to tell his grandchildren about. The 17-year-old from Dunblane is poised to become the youngest player to compete for Great Britain in their 105-year participation in the event.

Laurie Doherty was 27 when he, the younger of the London brothers, a classic pairing of the 19th century, made his singles debut in the final of 1902, Fred Perry was 22 when he played in the 1931 competition, and Tim Henman was 20 when he stepped into the breach in 1994.

Murray, though, is being considered seriously by Jeremy Bates, the Great Britain captain, for the No 2 singles position against Israel in Tel Aviv.

His selection for singles would represent something quite extraordinary, given that he is ranked No 15 in Britain and has not played a main-draw singles since winning a futures event on clay in Spain two months ago. But such is the young Scot's stock in the game, and the impression he makes on everyone whose path he crosses, that Bates doubts whether holding him back would do any good.

The decision will rest between Murray, Arvind Parmar and David Sherwood, the last of the three having come into the squad mainly for his talents as a doubles player, although, in an ATP challenger in Lübeck, Germany, this week, he took Raemon Sluiter, of the Netherlands, once ranked in the top 60 and who played in a Davis Cup semi-final three years ago, to a third set tie-break before losing.

Parmar is No 4 in the singles rankings in Britain but he has had a couple of devastating experiences in Davis Cup — not least against Ecuador at Wimbledon five years ago —

and they will weigh heavily on the captain's mind as he toys with his line-up for a Euro-African zone one tie that could bear an enormous impression on the country's long-term future in the event.

Henman spent much of his time in between the Australian Open and his forays in Rotterdam and Dubai hitting with a number of British players, none of whom impressed him as much as Murray. It is clear that a word from the wise was always going to help the Scot's cause and even though he decided to withdraw from an event in Portugal this week with a couple of twinges in a back that has given him some trouble in the past month, only a severe setback in that department will deny him the chance of standing up to the tallest of orders next week.

There were those who wanted Murray to be blooded in Austria last September when he was in the British squad and, for the last day of singles, Greg Rusedski was clearly troubled by an injury to his left hand and was unlikely to beat Stefan Koubek in the fifth rubber that would determine the outcome. Rusedski was tempted to play and the result went as expected.

What Murray had received a taste of, however, was the magic of the event, one that inspires him to want to play on any surface at any time, and that in Tel Aviv will evoke happy memories, similar as it is to that on which he triumphed in the US Open juniors last year.

Henman did not flinch in the face of the unequal burden that was often his and the way he played in the second round of the Dubai Duty Free Open yesterday, he remains up for all that is thrown at him. Although he forfeited two set points on his serve in the first set tie-break, the British No 1 recovered his poise beautifully to defeat Igor Andreev, the excellent young Russian, 7-6, 6-1 to move into the quarter-finals.

Murray ready to have fun on Davis Cup rollercoaster

By Boris Becker

Published at 12:00AM, March 4 2005

I PLAYED in the US Open junior final in 1984 — losing to Mark Kratzmann, of Australia — but I thought that I was ready to play in the Davis Cup for Germany for the first time in my life later in the month in a qualifying match for the World Group. Nikki Pilic, who was the Germany captain then, thought otherwise, that I was too young and we had quite a big argument about it. Even at 16, I was pretty headstrong.

Germany won that particular match against Romania 5-0 so I didn't have too much of a leg to stand on, but Pilic picked me for the first round the year after, with Michael Westphal as my team-mate in the singles and myself and Andreas Maurer in the doubles. We defeated a Spain side that included Sergio Casal and Emilio Sánchez 3-2. Casal was

one of those players who always raised his levels and gave me trouble in the Davis Cup — my overall record in the event was 38-6 — and three of those times I lost were to him. Casal and Sánchez now run a very successful academy in Barcelona, where a certain Andrew Murray is based. I see he is going to become the youngest player for Great Britain this weekend in Israel (I beat him to it by 178 days), and I have a pretty clear idea what he will be going through. He has gone one better than me by winning the junior title in New York, so he must have a hardcourt game, from all I hear he is extremely gifted and the British press is saying nice things about him. They don't praise without good reason.

I was lucky in that I had no fear playing at any time and the Davis Cup did not worry me. Once I got my first sweat on and hit a couple of good shots, I was able to forget where I was and just play the opponent as if it was any other game. The thing is, it isn't. There has to be a huge element of wanting to represent your country, never mind your age, where the match is being played, and who is in and who is out. He probably thinks that he should have played before now, as I did at the start.

At 17, you are still quite naive — the future is a long way ahead, it's not worth thinking about and even in matches you don't find yourself thinking too much about "how am I going to win this"? It is about hitting the ball and having fun. I hope that is Murray's attitude if he plays tomorrow.

I say "if" because no doubles selection is set in stone. A lot may depend on how the first day goes, I am sure Jeremy Bates, the Britain captain, would want Greg Rusedski to play as much as he can and if he is fresh after day one, the team may change. A rookie doubles team playing in the Davis Cup is never easy, especially as it is such an emotional rollercoaster of an event that is difficult enough to deal with if you have played 30 times. Who is going to lean on whom? Who is going to turn to whom for advice? And it is not as if they have untested opponents, for Jonathan Erlich and Andy Ram have a tremendous recent record together and say they have never played better as a team.

I don't expect there will be many loud British noises in the crowd either. It will be primarily Israeli and it is not easy if 5,000 people are cheering your every mistake. Both Murray and David Sherwood have a real test on their hands. I shall be intrigued to hear how the kid does. From the bits I have seen, it is clear he is not afraid to play. He likes to mix up his game, a bit of serve and volley as well, which has to help him in doubles play. Sherwood is a real unknown quantity for me but he has played an enormous amount of tennis at the lower levels and it is time for someone like that to step up.

One day, who knows, they may be as famous in their country as Andre Agassi is in his. He is returning for the United States against Croatia this week, at 34, and the first time in five years. The match is in California, near to his backyard and these are the right circumstances for him to come back.

Murray may get chance after Britain become bogged down

From [Neil Harman](#), Tennis Correspondent in Tel Aviv

Published at 12:00AM, March 5 2005

OF THOSE urging Alex Bogdanovic to make a match of his second opportunity in the Davis Cup and all but settle this tie in Great Britain's favour, Andy Murray was by far the most animated. However, the obvious conclusion to be drawn from Bogdanovic's downfall yesterday is that, when push comes to shove in the reverse singles tomorrow, Bogdanovic will get the push and Murray the shove.

Bogdanovic had his chances — four big ones — to have won the first set against Noam Okun in the second singles match. What a further shift in fortunes in Britain's direction that would have provided, for Okun was on as tight a string as Harel Levy, his compatriot, had been through his straight-sets defeat by Greg Rusedski in the one-sided opener. The first opportunity, a forehand that sat up perfectly within Bogdanovic's strike zone, will be cursed for many a long time.

Eventually, Bogdanovic's defeat — his second in straight sets in this event — was every bit as conclusive as Rusedski's success had been. It all leaves Jeremy Bates, the Britain captain, with a brace of dilemmas, not least whether he should select Rusedski, who struck the ball with panache in his 6-4, 6-3, 6-0 victory over Levy, in the doubles, rather than stay with a rookie pairing. Once that match is out of the way and Rusedski, one assumes, defeats Okun in the opening reverse singles, can Bates stay loyal to Bogdanovic?

This match will probably go down to the fifth rubber and Britain have not won one of those to win a tie since 1997 in Ukraine. Bates would not be drawn last night, nor should he have been, for the element of surprise is often half the battle. Murray has not yet played in the event, he is scheduled to take to the court in the doubles and his desire to be a part of this competition is evident in every element of his body language. The sooner he can release his pent-up emotions in the heat of battle, the better.

This was never going to be an easy tie for Britain, given the circumstances and the partisanship of a crowd who are into their team every bit as passionately as any Britain have faced on their travels. Yes, they threw paper planes, whistled during ball tosses, made line calls on behalf of their brethren sitting on the lines, but they were no worse than any crowd in Mexico, Ecuador, Romania, or the former Yugoslavia. These are harsh environs, requiring solid character in response.

In the opening match, Levy was taut. He punched the air after his first couple of winners, found perceived injustices in every other line call with a vehemence that must have drained him of energy and played the start of each set so wretchedly that Rusedski could hardly decline the invitation to attack. He did so with relish and Britain must be grateful. Rusedski entered the press-room — the gymnasium at the Ramat Hasharon Centre — to warm down, determined to return swiftly to follow the progress of Bogdanovic, his

protégé. The 20-year-old aped Rusedski's pattern, leaping into a 3-0 lead in the first set, and seemed set fair at 5-2. But the set points went in a blur, the initial netted forehand conspiring with a limp service return, another forehand that failed to clear the net and a fourth that sailed wide to hand the initiative to Okun. Although the Israel No 1 had three chances in the eleventh game yet was broken back, he regrouped in the tie-break, taking it 7-3.

Okun disappeared for eight minutes, a "toilet-break" tactic well within the rules but one that is being stretched to cynical limits by too many players too often these days for it to continue to go unpunished. Bogdanovic had to don a tracksuit top and shake warmth into his legs. He lost the next five games and the match consequently slid through his numbed fingers, 7-6, 6-2, 6-2.

"The momentum had swung Okun's way when he took the break," Bates, not ready to use that as an excuse for defeat, said. Next to him, Bogdanovic emphasised his readiness to play again, if asked. We shall see.

Marvellous Murray makes Mother's Day

The 17-year-old Scot thrives in the demanding atmosphere of Davis Cup, with more than a little parental encouragement, reports Barry Flatman

Published: 6 March 2005

"I've been speaking to him on the telephone during the week and he's just aching to play," said Murray's mother Judy. "He told me that it looked as though he was going to play in the doubles but he kept saying, 'Mum, I want to play in the singles as well.' He thinks he's ready and he knows his own mind."

Now it seems certain that Murray will get his wish today as a replacement for Bogdanovic in the concluding singles. Whether it will decide the match or be a dead rubber depends on how Greg Rusedski, 14 years senior to his new Scottish teammate, fares this morning against Israel's No 1 player, Noam Okun. But the youngster will be ready. Though Jeremy Bates, the team's captain, did not adhere to the popular belief that Rusedski should have been pressed into doubles service, he knows that he cannot possibly gamble on Bogdanovic, whose chronic lack of application has long been a concern. Murray is something altogether different. The US Open junior champion simply burns with ambition.

Marching onto court alongside fellow debutant David Sherwood with the Proclaimers' 500 Miles anthem pumping through his earphones, he never once allowed himself to consider the possibility of stage fright.

“I was not nervous at all before I came onto court, just more excited because it’s always been my aim to play in the Davis Cup,” said the 17-year-old from Dunblane, who displaces Roger Becker from the early 1950s as the youngest player to represent Britain.

“The song is something I always play before a match. My football team are Hibernian (his grandfather, Roy Erskine, used to play at Easter Road) and they play it every time the team scores. It’s motivational and makes me feel very Scottish, which is something that has always been very important to me. I revelled in the experience of beating such a good doubles team as Erlich and Ram and now if Jeremy tells me I’ll be playing the last singles, I’ll view it as a great honour.”

Though Murray had never previously played a best-of-five-sets match and was forced to withdraw from a third-tier Futures tournament on Portugal’s Algarve 10 days ago with back pains attributable to a growth spurt, he does not feel physical issues will be a problem.

Based in Barcelona and now coached by the experienced Spaniard Pato Alvarez, Murray has long been prepared to make sacrifices for his career. A year ago he was far from full fitness after suffering a serious knee injury that threatened his development, but still insisted on hobbling on to court to hit with Tim Henman and Rusedski before the Davis Cup tie in Luxembourg.

Last September he hid his frustrations at being nothing more than a cheerleader as the British team lost their World Group qualifying match against Austria. What added to his inner agitation was knowing that the slow clay of Portschach was more suited to his game than the naturally attacking partnership of Henman and Rusedski.

But at last, with Henman no longer interested in representing his country and Rusedski insisting his prime role is to acclimatise the new generation, Murray’s time has arrived. As far as his mother is concerned, not before time.

Tennis: Young guns lift British hopes

The unheralded pairing of Andrew Murray and David Sherwood earn a crucial advantage over Israel with a thrilling doubles victory

BARRY FLATMAN IN TEL AVIV

Published: 6 March 2005

And if Greg Rusedski secures victory over Israel in the aptly named Canada stadium this morning and proves the international retirement of Tim Henman is far from terminal for Britain’s aspirations, he will still be applauding the two debutants as the true heroes.

The wisdom of British captain Jeremy Bates in resisting the temptation to bring Rusedski into the doubles against an Israeli duo ranked fifth in the world this year was widely questioned as Murray and Sherwood trooped out for their debuts. But less than 3½ hours later, Bates was being applauded for backing his young pairing as they celebrated a memorable victory.

Two weeks earlier Jonathan Erlich and Andy Ram had beaten the world's best doubles team — Zimbabwe's Wayne Black and Kevin Ullyett — in the semi-final of the prestigious Rotterdam tournament, and a day later won the title. This morning they are smarting with embarrassment after the British duo scored a 6-4 7-6 2-6 7-6 win that gave their team a 2-1 lead in the tie. "I was in shock during that final tie-break," admitted Bates. "I must have looked a complete prat, but this was an amazing performance. It's true we have not achieved anything yet and we just hope Greg maintains his form in the singles against Noam Okun to tie up the victory. But this was real David and Goliath stuff."

Murray, more than two months short of his 18th birthday, became the youngest player to represent Britain in the Davis Cup. Sherwood, son of Olympic medallists from the 1968 Games in Mexico City, may possess athletic genes, but his commitment has regularly been questioned by the Lawn Tennis Association, and a year ago he was shown the door in disgrace. Although sporadic financial support has since been resumed, he remains an outsider. Yet together they produced a brand of precocious, stubborn and often breathtaking tennis. "We came here to build for the future," said Bates. "The Davis Cup is all about desire and raising yourself to play for your country. These two guys were astounding."

There is no better time to show notice of intent than the opening point of the match, and Murray, the US Open junior singles champion, unleashed the most precise double-fisted backhand return of service. It was a shot bereft of nerves and full of skill. The gauntlet had been thrown down.

Israeli captain Oded Ya'akov was suitably impressed: "He is certainly an enormous talent, who has a very bright future in the game. It was very enterprising of Jeremy Bates to throw two completely untried players into such an important match. They took us by surprise."

Erlich, the senior of the two Israelis, suffered the ignominy of having his service broken in the opening game, and if he and Ram had any preconceived notions of an easy win against a pair of rookies, they had been dispelled. The Scot and the Yorkshireman were gelling, both coming up with some stunning returns. Murray also unleashed three aces. Britain took the first set in less than 45 minutes.

Ram's serve was broken immediately in the second, and before long the muscular right-hander directed a frustrated forehand so long it hit the backstop on the full. What was coming at him from the opposing side of the net was not what he expected. Even when Murray's serve was broken twice, there was still resolve from the British duo and they rallied from behind in the first tie-break.

After squandering two set points in the second set, the Israelis found their rhythm in the third and won five games in succession after a Sherwood double-fault. A break of Sherwood's serve early in the fourth hinted further of Israeli victory, but Murray refused to take notice.

He cajoled Sherwood through his period of self-doubt and the Israelis helped by wasting two set points, Ram even supplying a double-fault.

Another followed to usher a second tie-break and the British dug deep. They required three match points to secure the win amid increasing tension. Danish umpire Sune Alenkaer warned the crowd they were on the verge of earning their team a point penalty; then Sherwood let fly with a final serve that Ram returned into the net.

A new chapter in British tennis history had been written.

Young double act moving Britain up in the world

From [Neil Harman](#), Tennis Correspondent in Tel Aviv

Published at 12:00AM, March 7 2005

ANDY MURRAY and David Sherwood were not spared the plastic dustbin full of ice serving as a form of water torture that is designed to restore the equilibrium of the body after excessive physical stress. It was the only prospect that fazed the pair on a day when British tennis stuck its toe into uncharted waters and emerged invigorated to the point of saturation.

The sons of Dunblane and Sheffield had combined for a doubles victory so immense in its quality and significance that it was impossible to remember when something as momentous had happened to a Great Britain tennis team.

In apparently leaving the nation high and dry with his decision to retire from the Davis Cup, Tim Henman has paved the way for a spreading of the wings that had remained unfurled when he was in the team. In harmonious flight, Murray, 17, and Sherwood, 24, made for a remarkable spectacle. They had not even introduced themselves to each other until last week, for theirs is the head down, think-of-yourself attitude that prevails most weeks on the tennis circuit and conspired against such niceties.

In a week, though, they found a connection, a spirit of common purpose and a dedication to each other that should be bottled for future use. They did not look a team — Murray in Fred Perry wear for the first time since signing a deal with that famous name, Sherwood in everyday adidas — but these appearances were deceptive.

They broke serve in the first game of their first Davis Cup tie together, won their first set together, lost their first set together, won their first and second tie-breaks together and held it all together. They were freakishly good. Their stories as individuals are intriguing enough; Murray, who hated to lose at anything from the age of 5; Sherwood, the son of Olympic athletes, who loved to party, might have lost his way but always had the talent to succeed.

Murray was coached by his mother, Judy, until a couple of years ago, while Ian Barclay, the Australian coach who guided Pat Cash to the 1987 Wimbledon title, was Sherwood's mentor at the national school in Bisham Abbey when employed by the LTA. At the time, Barclay described the teenager as the best athlete he had seen in tennis since Cash. Athleticism abounded in the pair's 6-4, 7-6, 2-6, 7-6 victory over Jonathan Erlich and Andy Ram, who are one of the best doubles teams in the world and two weeks ago beat the top-ranked Wayne Black and Kevin Ullyett. That would have been a sobering prospect to many, but Murray and Sherwood had not been in that kind of company, so it did not matter.

From the first point, on which Murray unleashed a crunching backhand service return and an aggressive growl, this was an edge-of-the-seat occasion. They did not take a backward step, they saw each other through the occasional faltering, they laughed in the face of opposition winners and Murray had enough bravado to climb the umpire's chair to debate a call, which suggests that the work of Jimmy Connors, brought in by the LTA last year to spice up Britain's juniors, is paying dividends.

It was aggressive tennis, the kind that gets children into the sport, and three times the Britain combination hit their opponents with the ball — Murray's dismissive gesture after one ferocious volley landed in the groin of Ram suggests that he did not much care — and faced every setback with an outrageous belief in their abilities.

Text messages flowed from Scotland to the Inter-Continental hotel on Saturday night as Willie and Judy Murray, Andy's parents, savoured their son's prominence with, apparently, everyone who has met them. Willie, who had flown only in the early hours in the hope that he would see his lad play, said he was in tears when he was enveloped by the squad at the end of the match.

Britain must let the good times roll

By **Neil Harman**, Tennis Correspondent

Published at 12:00AM, March 8 2005

MEMBERS of the Great Britain Davis Cup team prepared to go their very separate ways last night — Greg Rusedski to Indian Wells, Andy Murray to Salinas, David Sherwood to Lille and Alex Bogdanovic to Sarajevo — knowing that they have forged something over ten days together in Israel that can profit enormously the health of their sport at home. With their 3-2 triumph in Tel Aviv, they have hauled their country to a World Group play-off in September that will be daunting on paper but need not be quite so frightening

if they rediscover the comradeship and spirit that marked their initiation as a team. What matters now is that such a feeling spreads to others how uplifting it is to share success in the extraordinary experience of this competition.

Just by walking on to court for the opening ceremony with his iPod attached, Murray has given tennis something of the street credibility it requires for more youngsters to treat it as a serious sport of choice. If few people in Britain felt that they could connect with Henman's innate middle-class nature, Murray is Scottish, plays with his brave heart on his sleeve and when he talks there is a compellingly refreshing decisiveness about him. Henman decided that he could not invest enough of himself any more into what are draining periods of the year. Rusedski is nowhere near done yet, Murray and Sherwood will take the memory of their blooding in the Ramat Hasharan Centre to greater heights and Bogdanovic, it is to be hoped, will have studied their body language and attempt to rid his game of its self-defeating passivity. All will play this week and beyond with a greater bounce in their step.

Jeremy Bates, the Britain captain, emerged with his reputation enhanced and his selection of Bogdanovic as the second singles player was perfectly right, despite the performance of the 20-year-old proving the one troubling element. Murray sets off for Ecuador at the end of the week and then, almost certainly, to plenty of court time in Miami, where Pato Alvarez, the Colombian who is taking a pastoral influence in his career, hopes that he might be given a wild card into the qualifying draw for the Nasdaq-100 Open and can start brushing shoulders with the tour's big guns. Whether or not that succeeds, the range of Alvarez's tennis network means plenty of opportunities for Murray to practise against those whom he is desperate to test himself. The best players will be in the United States for the next three weeks and one or two could be facing Britain later in the year.

Although the formula is still to be rationalised, a seeding system for the Davis Cup takes into account each player's Indesit ATP ranking. Thus, of those who Britain are likely to come across in September, Switzerland hope to have Roger Federer back in their ranks, the US — hurting badly after defeat by Croatia — will parade Andy Roddick but probably not Andre Agassi; Spain, the dethroned champions, expect Juan Carlos Ferrero and Rafael Nadal to be fully firing; and Sweden have the two Johanssons, Joachim and Thomas, and the speedily improving Robin Soderling. What Britain would not give for a home tie after two years of constant travel, although, of their prospective opponents, only Austria and the Czech Republic would guarantee that.

Determined Kuznetsova braced for life at the top

From Neil Harman, Tennis Correspondent, in Key Biscayne, Florida
Published at 12:00AM, March 24 2005

THEY were mostly lured to the beauty with the blonde hair tumbling to her shoulders, rather than the one who cannot wait to get rid of braces after 15 months of talking as if she had marbles in her mouth. Svetlana Kuznetsova may not match Maria Sharapova in the “cor blimey” stakes, but she has every intention of becoming just as accustomed to a leading position amid the women’s tennis hierarchy.

A year ago, at the Nasdaq-100 Open, an invitation to meet the top eight women’s seeds was more of a fireside chat with Serena and Venus Williams. Sharapova, then untapped as a player of grand-slam event-winning potential, was ignored but for a couple of British writers. Yesterday, Sharapova was the main attraction, and not many players who have lost their previous match 6-0, 6-0 garner such devotion.

Sharapova is ranked No 3 in the world behind Lindsay Davenport, the American who is absent this week, and Amélie Mauresmo, of France. There follows in the Sony Ericsson WTA Tour standings another three Russians, Elena Dementieva, who has not won a grand-slam title, and Anastasia Myskina and Kuznetsova, who both have. Kuznetsova is the US Open champion, having conquered New York last September in a year when her 60 singles wins was third only to Davenport and Mauresmo’s 63.

There is something brutally frank about Kuznetsova that is positively disarming. “I am always open, I have nothing to hide,” she says. She attacks the English language with all the gusto of her ball-striking. There is a lack of compromise, which is, she says, “the Russian thing”.

She has spent the past six years as a part-time boarder at the Emilio Sánchez/Sergio Casal academy in Barcelona, the same one that Andy Murray, the great Scottish hope, frequents. They have hit together but when his name is mentioned, she frowns. “Oh, Moore-ray,” she laughs, the braces glinting in the island sunshine. “I did not understand your accent. Yes, I know him, an unbelievable player, I think he can do very well, an unbelievable talent, who plays unbelievably (no doubt about her favourite word). Every tournament he plays he wins, when he strikes the ball you can see his talent.

“I need to put my game more together like him. I am an attacking player with a powerful game, good serve, good forehand. I should maybe come in [to the net] more, but I like my style. My form is great but I still need to improve.”

A spell playing doubles with Martina Navratilova — they won five titles in 2003 — has helped her. “She has taught me how to be a professional and what it takes to be No 1 because that is what I want to be,” Kuznetsova said. “Every day you must go on the court and give your best. All other things have to be out of your mind.”

She casts a glance to where the world is fawning on Sharapova. “We are all different,” Kuznetsova says. “We have relationships with each other, our parents, our coaches, our agents. We all want to be the best we can be. We have to live together on tour maybe for ten years, but everyone is different. Sometimes I need to have a clearer view of how to play and what to do. The only question I have is whether I believe in myself 100 per cent.”

That has never been a worry with Serena Williams. Last night she taped an edition of *Oprah*, the US talk show, discussing the book that she has written with her

sister, *Venus and Serena — Serving from the Hip, 10 better ways to Living, Loving and Winning.*

It is about helping kids with tips on promoting self-esteem, diets and weight control, using their position as athletic and race role-models to have a decisive impact. “It tells them that they can be like us,” Serena says, barely blushing.

Murray joining the top table

From **Neil Harman**, Tennis Correspondent in Monte Carlo

Published at 12:00AM, April 16 2005

ANDY MURRAY joins the big boys for the first time next week, the free entry gained into an ATP tournament proper reward for where he has trained than any seismic shift in his recent ranking. For a 17-year-old who has just nudged into the top 400 players in the world, it is some jolt in status.

Murray will play one match at least in Barcelona — home of the Casal/Sanchez academy, where he has spent much of his development — and what he can learn from the experience will be of enormous importance. Murray is playing in a futures event in Cremona, Italy, this week, getting clay-court miles under his belt. In the years to come, he will hope that making stops at the Monte Carlo Country Club becomes a regular practice.

This is a place where legends can be made, as Richard Gasquet and, to a lesser extent, Roger Federer will testify. Yesterday, amid scenes of utter delirium, the 18-year-old from Béziers played a match that he will not forget, to defeat the world No 1 6-7, 6-2, 7-6, the 10-8 tie-break that clinched it one of the most memorable for many a year.

It included three match points for Federer, but such was the teenager's outrageous shot-making that it was the Swiss who could not make it over a line he had reached in 52 of his previous 53 matches. The previous time that Federer had match points and could not close a match out was this year's Australian Open semi-final against Marat Safin.

This had been a strange day all round. Federer clambered into a min-van with Mirka Vavrinec, his girlfriend, at 8.45 in the morning, needing to reach the club before all the roads were closed for Prince Rainier's funeral. With more than eight hours to kick his heels before he went out on court, it was not surprising that Federer looked tetchy from the outset, not least because Gasquet consistently ran down his second serves and crunched winners from it.

Murray takes step up ladder with eye on Nadal's ascent

By **Neil Harman**, Tennis Correspondent

Published at 12:00AM, April 19 2005

RAFAEL NADAL remembers Andy Murray. "Yes, yes, we play in Winter Cup juniors, but only doubles," he said. "Good player, good, good player." It is a fine testimony from the man-boy of the moment. In a few hours, Murray will make his debut on the ATP Tour proper, which is resounding to the brilliance of the Spanish teenager.

Nadal will be 19 in June, a month after Murray turns 18. Nadal has risen six places, after an extraordinary week, to No 11 in the Indesit ATP world rankings, Murray is No 397. Nadal will be the star of the show at this week's Open SEAT Godó event in Barcelona whatever he does, Murray would be ecstatic to win one match, considering that he has been unable to land any of this year's Futures titles.

Fresh from Monte Carlo, where the tournament was dominated by two storylines — Nadal's first Masters Series title and that of Richard Gasquet's victory over Roger Federer in the quarter-finals — perhaps there are further implausibilities ahead. Should Murray win, it would be something, given that his opponent, Jan Hernych, of the Czech Republic, is ranked No 79 in the world, but this is "teen time" on the tour.

Federer is five years older than Nadal and yet it is only the astonishing start to 2005 of the Wimbledon champion (five tournament victories and only two singles defeats, in which he had match points in both) that is keeping him ahead of the bull-like left-hander at the head of the table for points gained this calendar year.

Gasquet has responded to the effects of being tossed to the lions at 15 — it was all too much for such a diffident, nervous boy — by returning a more rounded person, fit in mind and body, to take on the ravenous world that tennis professionals inhabit. Today we will see how Murray might cope.

The wild card that he has received into the tournament in Barcelona, the third level of men's events behind the grand-slam championships and Masters Series, comes courtesy of favours being called in. Murray's semi-permanent base is the Casal-Sánchez academy in the city, where his clay-court game is honed when he is not trying to win matches. Pato Álvarez, Murray's Colombian mentor, coached Emilio Sánchez into the world's top ten 15 years ago and has a huge network of friends in the sport. Whether or not this is too soon for Murray to be placed on such a stage, today will begin to answer.

If he responds in the manner of his Davis Cup debut in Israel last month, all will be well, but the Americans have found showering Donald Young, the 15-year-old prodigy, with wild-card presents has not proved successful and he risks having his development impaired after failing to win a tour match. Murray has more than one thing on his side, most prominently a belief that this is where he belongs.

Tim Henman did not exactly have that when, in Tokyo in April 1994, he dipped a toe in the waters for the first time, defeating Kelly Jones (now coach to Xavier Malisse) in the first round and Darren Cahill (now coach to Andre Agassi) in the second, before losing to one Pete Sampras in the third. At 19, Henman had nothing of the expectation that is falling upon Murray's shoulders.

Gasquet could tell the Scot a lot about perspective. He was on the cover of the *Tennis Magazine de France* at 9 and *L'Equipe*, the French sports daily, at 15 after beating Franco Squillari, of Argentina, a French Open semi-finalist in 2000, in the first round of the tournament in Monte Carlo in 2002. Three years on, he has beaten Federer. It has been a difficult journey.

As Murray embarks on a new phase of his career, let us hope that he carries one essential feature with him: patience.

Frustrated Murray shows signs of promise

By **Neil Harman**, Tennis Correspondent

Published at 12:00AM, April 20 2005

WHEN he comes to reflect on what could have been an astonishing start to his ATP career, Andy Murray should not beat himself up too badly. He takes a loss as hard as any player who has endured many more than he, but the bigger picture is what matters and the 17-year-old Scot has been adding bright colours to it since he first shone as a teenager of real promise.

Murray's 3-6, 6-4, 6-4 defeat by Jan Hernych, of the Czech Republic, in the first round of the Open SEAT Godó tournament in Barcelona yesterday was hugely creditable, as their ranking discrepancy of more than 300 places signifies. That Murray had points for a 4-1 lead in the final set will multiply his frustration.

It was a taste, a 2hr 24min one against a tall, heavy-hitting opponent, of what lies in store in the months ahead as Murray seeks to establish a secure foothold on the tour ladder. There are many rungs above him and what matters most now is that he does not try to take too many at once, for fear of how that could affect him.

When it was suggested by Pato Álvarez, his Colombian coach, last November that Murray could be in the top 100 by the time this year's French Open started, one thought that the wily old bird should have known better. It would have required Murray to win almost every event he entered. He needs matches, matches and more matches, at the right level, on the right surface and at the right time.

Last week, for instance, he found himself playing a Futures event on a hard court in Italy as preparation for his first ATP event proper on clay, his preferred surface, which suggests that someone in his entourage experienced crossed wires.

A disappointed Murray said: "I have never been more angry with myself. I had so many opportunities and it's a match I should have won in straight sets. But what today has done is convince me even more that I have the ability to be a top-100 player and I just have to keep working on my game at the smaller tournaments."

Murray on mission to sustain rate of progress

From [Neil Harman](#), Tennis Correspondent, in Paris

Published at 12:00AM, June 1 2005

LARRI PASSOS, the ebullient figure who guided Gustavo Kuerten to three French Open titles only for the pair — more the father the Brazilian lost, when he was 9, and son — to part this year, watched in a state of intense detachment yesterday as Andy Murray, of Britain, began to play in the manner of a clay-court class act.

It could be mere coincidence that Passos showed up on Court No 2 at Roland Garros with a member of Murray's management group as the Scot, stricken with a stomach upset for the first two rounds, gave vent to the gifts of innate skill and purpose driving him to reach as far as he can in the sport. More likely, it was a coach's sixth sense as the 18-year-old searches for the man who will transform promise to enduring success and the network is abuzz with the chatter of interested candidates.

"I need to make sure I make the right decision where a coach is concerned," Murray, who defeated Gianluca Naso, of Italy, 6-2, 6-2 to reach the quarter-finals of the boys' event, said. "I know these next few months are going to be very important."

The timing and wisdom of his choice is critical because the men's game is developing at a prodigious rate and one only has to look at an awesome Rafael Nadal to appreciate what it will take for any junior to carry a torch successfully on to the tour proper.

Whether Murray lifts his second junior grand-slam title — and his match against Juan Martin Del Potro, of Argentina, tomorrow promises a vibrant mixture of Scottish and Latin passion — he has half an eye on the grass-court season, although he remains frustrated that Stella Artois Championships officials have still not decided whether to

award him a wild card into next week's main draw. Nadal has gone on record as saying that he cannot wait to return to Wimbledon.

Right now, the clay has a wonderful feel to it and Nadal, having won the past five events, including two Masters Series, that he has entered on the surface, has reached a grand-slam semi-final for the first time, defeating David Ferrer, his fellow Spaniard, 7-5, 6-2, 6-0. The young bull will be 19 on Friday and his present is to play Roger Federer, who, by an interesting twist, is in the uncharted waters of a first French Open semi-final.

For once, Court Suzanne Lenglen was the place for which to have a Tuesday ticket. Justine Henin-Hardenne had barely left after delivering a second clay-court lesson in a month to Maria Sharapova than Nadal and Ferrer were covering their tracks. In the first set, Sharapova looked as if she might offer a real challenge, happy to move forward, to drive-volley, to take the ball on the up. But once the Belgian's ground strokes were grooved, the intensity of her game overwhelmed the Wimbledon champion. She won 6-4, 6-2 and meets Nadia Petrova, the highest-ranked player left in the draw at No 7, in the semi-finals tomorrow.

Sharapova will seek out the relatively genteel surroundings of Edgbaston Priory, Birmingham, to begin to prepare for her Wimbledon defence. The title-holder there, she will be welcomed with open arms and a frenzy of flashbulbs. "I'll have some retail therapy in Paris first, though," she said and no one could argue that the salons here have an edge over those in New Street.

If Sharapova is the most photogenic face in the female game, she is hard-pressed to keep Nadal out of frame. There was a sense of urgency when he had to save three set points at 5-4 in the opening set against Ferrer, then drew away, losing only two further games as his compatriot's movement was restricted by twinges in his back. For the second time this championship, Nadal walked off with his arm across his opponent's shoulders — first it was Richard Gasquet, a fellow teenager and local favourite. Both Gasquet and Ferrer would confess that playing Nadal is like developing the first symptoms of chronic inadequacy.

Hungry Pierce feasts on crumble before final test

From **Neil Harman**, Tennis Correspondent, in Paris

Published at 12:00AM, June 3 2005

THIS was a day of spilt blood and the bloodless. Andy Murray ripped the skin from his knuckles digging for the victory over Juan Martín Del Potro, of Argentina, that secured a place in the semi-finals of the French Open boys' singles. The matches at that stage of the women's event were thoroughly depressing, if not for Justine Henin-Hardenne and Mary Pierce.

Pierce beamed as she walked on to Court Philippe Chatrier, it was all she could do not to burst out laughing at the end, she giggled through her TV interview and was probably in

stitches when she dined in her brasserie of choice last night. A semi-final of a grand-slam championship is supposed to be the tennis equivalent of hard labour, where each point should have to be chiselled out.

Henin-Hardenne was stretched on occasions by Nadia Petrova, a player who has reached the lofty heights of the top ten on the Sony Ericsson WTA Tour without a single tournament win, but had plenty in hand, winning 6-2, 6-3. Pierce swallowed Elena Likhovtseva whole, a 6-1, 6-1 mismatch that had one wishing that Sesil Karatantcheva, the feisty 15-year-old Bulgarian, had held her nerve against Likhovtseva in Tuesday's quarter-final.

Surely, Karatantcheva would not have capitulated in the embarrassing manner of the Russian, who, at 29, is unlikely to figure in any more matches of this stature. For that the sport should be grateful.

Pierce cannot have thought that she would return to such levels, not ten years after her first grand-slam victory in the Australian Open in 1995, when she defeated Arantxa Sánchez-Vicario, or five since beating Conchita Martínez to become the first French female champion in Paris since 1967.

She did not have to play well to win; she did not have to do much of anything really because the minute the ball was in her striking zone — and Likhovtseva helpfully kept placing it there — Pierce slugged it back for a winner.

The 30-year-old reached match point with the lightest of cross-court touches, completing the task with another venomous forehand down the line. Likhovtseva, as usual, was flailing around miles away.

It will not be the same tomorrow because Henin-Hardenne has reached her second French Open final on the back of 23 successive wins on clay (it was her 23rd birthday this week and victory tomorrow would represent her 23rd singles title triumph on the WTA Tour) and although she appeared a mite restricted physically, struggling for breath in the afternoon heat, she will put herself through one more thorough examination. She knows no other way.

Remember, this is a player who, after defeating Jennifer Capriati in a wondrous US Open semi-final two years ago, spent hours on an intravenous drip before returning the next day to beat Kim Clijsters in what is one of the great tales of sporting courage.

"I can fight on the court," she said, as if that was in doubt. "I have a lot of energy, which hasn't happened for months. I have been aggressive and patient when I've had to be. It will very special against Mary, especially with the crowd because I, too, feel as if I'm playing at home, which is beautiful."

Murray's 6-4, 6-2 victory over Del Potro was an impressive statement of intent against an Argentinian who has shown marked improvement since he lost to the Scot — who yesterday received a wild card into the Stella Artois Championships this month at Queen's Club — in the US Open boys' singles last summer. There is a fire back in Murray's belly after the first couple of rounds, when his body rebelled against something he had eaten. There is also a sense that he is driven by the last words spoken to him by Pato Álvarez, before he split with the Colombian coach two weeks ago.

“We were arguing a lot,” Murray revealed. “The last week we were together, it got a bit nasty. He was saying bad things about my tennis and bad things about me. I don’t really need somebody that negative in my corner just now. So I thought the best thing for me to do was to stop with him. He said if I continue like I have been the last two months, I’m not going to be any good.” Even at 18, it pays not to cross Mr Murray.

In today’s semi-final, he plays Marin Cilic, a 6ft 4in Croatian, coached by Bob Brett, who once held the reins of Boris Becker and Goran Ivanisevic and was the protégé of Harry Hopman, the famed Australian coach. Brett would not be a bad catch.

Murray seeking new coach

Barry Flatman

Published: 5 June 2005

The lack of a coach alongside Murray in the French Open junior competition was possibly as crucial to his semi-final demise against Croatia’s Marin Cilic as the fatigue he felt after playing an extended doubles match the night before.

Would an experienced adviser have allowed the US Open junior champion to openly admit his expectation of beating Cilic with ease if he played at the same level as in the previous round? Would he even have been allowed to think along those overconfident lines? Murray split acrimoniously from the seasoned Colombian coach Pato Alvarez a week or so before arriving at the French Open, and now many other respected tutors are showing an interest in furthering his education.

Throughout the grass-court season he will work with Mark Petchey, the Lawn Tennis Association’s manager of men’s training, but only temporarily. Murray’s agents, Octagon, his mother, Judy, and the young man himself will sift through a list of notable possibilities. Larri Passos, coach to Gustavo Kuerten during the Brazilian’s three French Open titles, watched most of Murray’s matches at Roland Garros, while Emilio Sanchez, co-director of the Barcelona academy where the young Scot has been based for the past couple of years, maintained a close watch.

“I’m not going to rush into this,” Murray said. “I’ll take my time and talk to a few people, because it’s got to be right. I don’t want to get into a situation like the last one, because at the end that wasn’t that much fun.”

However, both John Lloyd and Pat Cash are adamant that the credentials of Australian Bob Brett, a disciple of the hallowed coaching guru Harry Hopman and former mentor to Boris Becker and Goran Ivanisevic, are perfect for Murray. “Andy has enormous potential,” Lloyd said. “But he needs somebody to take him on to the next level and Brett would be perfect.”

Cash concurred. “Murray has a lot of things going for him, but at the age of 18 he needs to develop,” he said. “A coach like Brett has the right sort of track record with talented kids of that age.”

Spirited Murray rewards his host of supporters

By **Neil Harman**, Tennis Correspondent

Published at 12:00AM, June 7 2005

WHEN Santiago Ventura, of Spain, contrived to end four successive points with drop shots yesterday, it could have been one of the routine drills that Andy Murray endures every day at the Barcelona Academy that is his tennis home from home. But this was a grass court in West London, in weather best described as dreich, when woollen cardigans and hip flasks were pretty much the essentials.

Neither Ventura, at No 110 in the Indesit world rankings, nor Murray, at No 357, had played an ATP Tour match on grass before, indeed it was only Murray’s second outing at this level. At the conclusion of the 18-year-old’s 6-1, 6-2 victory and a place in the second round of the Stella Artois Championships yesterday, an English crowd rightly acclaimed a Scottish performance full of bravura and positive intentions.

Within an hour of the victory, news emerged that Wimbledon was awarding him a wild card into the All England Championships, starting on Monday week, along with four fellow Britons, Jonny Marray, David Sherwood, Josh Goodall and Alan Mackin. Goodall and Mackin actually made it to Centre Court at Queen’s yesterday — Murray was wowing them on Court No 1 — and though both were beaten, Goodall by Greg Rusedski and Mackin after making Igor Andreev, of Russia, work for every point, they had proved worthy recipients.

Too much has tended to be thrown too soon to the wrong people down the years in British tennis, such has been the desire for someone who showed a spark of effectiveness, or even better won two matches in a row. That Murray and Mackin hail

from north of the border, and thus have a drive that tends to unnerve the English, makes them different and fascinating at the same time.

Yesterday, both had LTA coaches in their corner, Murray with Mark Petchey, the head of men's national training, and Mackin with Andrew Richardson, who once played in the Davis Cup. For both, these may be temporary arrangements, because the queue to become Murray's permanent coach is stacked with big names and if Mackin's shortlist of candidates is a good deal shorter, at least the man knows he will get value for whatever Mackin makes for him.

Queen's Club is not a venue where either has ever felt particularly comfortable. It does not sit with their attitude to tennis life and the gritty, bare-knuckle attitude with which they feel more in tune. Pimm's is not their favoured tippie, but they relished the atmosphere generated yesterday, Mackin warming to the roar that greeted his securing of the second set against Andreev and reacting to their support when he was 5-0 down in the third by recovering to 5-3.

In the end, Andreev, the Russian with the extraordinary forehand grip who reached the quarter-finals last year before running into Lleyton Hewitt, was happy to hang on by the skin of his teeth. Mackin had beaten three higher-ranked players to qualify, the fourth was a much tougher ask, but he said: "I just need more experiences at this level and I am sure I will improve. You realise that there are no freebies from these people that there are at the level I usually play. Maybe I've played a little too much on clay over the years, I need to play more on faster surfaces."

A lot of futures hang on Murray's and a few more matches such as the one he played against Ventura will soothe the nerves. Once the Spaniard realised he had a player who could more than match him from the back of the court, with slices and spin, he did not have much of a clue what to do next.

Murray played a practice set on Sunday with Mario Ancic, last year's Wimbledon semifinalist, so he has a feel for what he might expect should Taylor Dent, the net-rushing No 9 seed from the United States, earn the right to meet him in the second round. "You get big [ranking] points, so there's a chance for me to bring my ranking up in the next few weeks," Murray said. "And here, you feel there a lot of people wanting me to win."

Murray in mint form with victory over Dent

By [Neil Harman](#), Tennis Correspondent

Published at 12:00AM, June 9 2005

TIME was that a clenched fist and gritted teeth were frowned upon in British tennis — not the done thing, old boy. We had better start to get used to them both as well as the

accompanying shouts of “Vamos”, which is something of a new sound around the stately grounds of Queen’s Club.

Andy Murray, who has picked up the shout of inspiration from his training in Spain, keeps on coming of age and on the day that Rafael Nadal found, in Germany, that grass can contrive to bring a player rudely down to earth, Murray’s stunningly mature, bravura performance in reaching the third round of the Stella Artois Championships completed one of those great days when everything in the British tennis garden looks rosy.

It was not so much that Murray defeated Taylor Dent, the world No 30 from the United States, 6-3, 6-3, but the way he went about his victory that continues to mark him out as a very unusual person in his chosen environment. Give him a problem to solve and he loves to solve it. Tell him — as Pato Alvarez, the Colombian coach that he let go two weeks ago, did — that he is not a good player and that gets him riled.

As disappointed as he was to walk out of Roland Garros last week without the French Open junior title, his exit had more to do with his failure to rouse himself for a world that he feels he has grown out of. It is here, in showcase events such as the world’s second most important grass-court championships, where the 18-year-old Scot wants to thrive — and thrive he certainly did against Dent, who might argue he was rusty, having not played tournament tennis in a couple of months.

Still, Dent was snared by Murray’s superb returning and excellent co-ordination that enabled him to fashion passing winners from improbable angles. He also has an awesome belief in his own ability. Murray will relish the task against Thomas Johansson, the 2002 Australian Open champion from Sweden, for it will pose an altogether different test for him, against a player who is much more Mats Wilander than Stefan Edberg. If he is full of life on the court — he walked on with his iPod playing *Let’s Get It Started* by the Black Eyed Peas — he is as straight as a die off it. “I returned serve very well today,” he said, “but I always return well. Tomorrow will be a completely different match because of the way Johansson plays. I will judge how well I am playing by the way I play tomorrow. The result looks easier than it was.”

It is a long time since a Scot was the talk of the Pimm’s bar. They usually discuss the faultlines in Tim Henman’s game or Greg Rusedski’s accent. The impact of Murray’s success is such that the tournament director has chosen to put him on Centre Court today, sending Rusedski out to Court No1 against Radek Stepanek, the No 4 seed. It is a move that has angered the Rusedski camp.

Rusedski played grass-court tennis of such a vintage at times yesterday that the image of a British champion this week did not seem far-fetched. But because he earned a place in the third round by winning the third set 6-4 against a Russian being coached by a famed clay-court tactician, it became necessary not to let one’s imagination run riot. Rusedski, remember, had not won two matches in an ATP tournament since St Petersburg last October. Invariably, he has found himself against the top seed in a tournament, the best player on a particular surface, or, occasionally, someone who just wanted to wipe that blooming grin off his face.

His 6-1, 6-7, 6-4 victory over Dmitry Tursunov yesterday was another piece in the complex Rusedski jigsaw. In the crowd was his father, Tom, who guided him into the

sport and made sure that his practice sessions as a teenager had a relentless drive about them.

Murray the fallen hero after challenge collapses at the last

By **Neil Harman**, Tennis Correspondent

Published at 12:00AM, June 10 2005

HE WALKED gingerly back to the baseline muttering “fight, fight”, although that has been the case all his life. True to his character, that was the enduring image yesterday of Andy Murray, full of blue-blooded endeavour, whose spirit was willing, even if he was fearful that his legs might not be able to sustain him.

Murray could have beaten Thomas Johansson, the world No 20, on Centre Court at the Stella Artois Championships at Queen’s Club in West London, the same Johansson who, in 2002, came from nowhere at the Australian Open — Tim Henman had been the highest remaining seed entering the second week — and snaffled one of the crown jewels of professional tennis. Maybe he would have done it had he not required 20 points to hold serve in the seventh game of the final set and 14 more in the ninth.

Although he survived, these were punishing moments and it was clear that Murray’s legs had begun to lose their spring. Indeed, as every rally stretched the nerves and nagged at the muscles, the young Scot, who seemingly had victory in his grasp, looked to be out on his feet and succumbed 7-6, 6-7, 7-5. Even Johansson, who has played at the highest level for years, had begun to shake his head, wondering if he could escape the snares that Murray was laying for him. For it was the better player who was chalking up the errors. Murray suspected that he had his foe for the taking and yet he could not quite make it. It was breaking him up inside and he shook his head at changeovers, as Mark Petchey — whose part-time tenure as coach might become something more substantial if this is how the 18-year-old responds to him — held up his bottle of orange juice, imploring him to take on more fluids. The cramping, though, was getting worse and when he pursued a volley in the tenth game — ironically, had the Swede hit it truer he might have given up the chase — his legs crumbled.

Murray had managed to toss up a lob, only to crash into a heap at a line judge’s feet. Johansson, a commendable sportsman, went over and helped the ailing Scot to his feet, the teenager leaning on his opponent and Sune Alenkaer, the Danish umpire, who assisted him back to his chair. He did not want his ankle taped and came back out, only to collapse again a couple of points later with what looked like cramp through his entire lower body. After three minutes of massage he was back, but he could barely run. “Don’t shake hands, don’t shake hands,” David Felgate, the LTA’s director of performance, whispered after Murray lost his serve to love to trail 6-5. Murray thumped his racket into his bag, for he knew the match had slipped away, but as he left the stage four points later, a lot of people who had not seen him play before could say they were

there the day a phenomenon arrived, one likely to hold them in his thrall for a few years to come.

This was only Murray's fourth match on the ATP Tour and any concerns he might have had about the transition from clay — where he plays most of his tennis — to grass have surely been allayed. He serves well, he does not mind coming in if the need arises, he loves to finesse his shots off the ground, he has a repertoire of strokes and his thrill for the duel is unquenchable, all things that make him as well-rounded a player as Britain has produced in years. And he has that certain something, that *je ne sais quoi* that Johansson, who has seen it all, was quick to point out.

"Andy is someone who could be a very special player, I was truly impressed with him today," the Swede said. "I think he has the ability to be a top-50 player and then we will see what happens from there."

Murray went straight from the court into the medical room, where he was attached to an Aircast compression support, a piece of equipment making its debut at the event this year. His left ankle, which he has turned a few times before, was covered in ice to reduce the swelling, which had gone down enough for him to trek to the interview room. "I'm bitterly disappointed because I played a pretty good match and I'm a little annoyed I couldn't see it through," he said.

"But I have taken a grand-slam champion to 7-5 in the third set. I think I have maybe earned his respect and hopefully that of other players as well. I thought I heard a crack when I first went down at 5-4, 30-0, and that's why I didn't chase the shot because I think I still might have been able to win the point and get to match point."

Which is Murray all through.

Murray in a hurry to get Petchey on board

By **Neil Harman**, Tennis Correspondent

Published at 12:00AM, June 16 2005

MARK PETCHEY may have spent less than a fortnight helping Andy Murray to adjust his many talents to the vagaries of a grass court, but the experience has been positive enough for the 18-year-old Scot to want their partnership to become a permanent arrangement.

The pair — who worked together before and during last week's Stella Artois Championships and immediately hit it off — have spoken at length about the prospect of a deal as Murray embarks on what is likely to be a critical two-year period of a career that promises so much. It is an opportunity that Petchey would undoubtedly relish, but it has left him contemplating a period of deep soul-searching.

Not only is he the father of two young children and does not want to spend more time than necessary away from them, but he is also a highly regarded member of the commentary team for Sky television whose tennis portfolio and quality of coverage has been significantly enhanced. Last — and by no means least — he is the LTA's manager of men's training.

Dropping everything for Murray would be a huge decision but the thought of being at the side of the teenager from Dunblane, the most gifted young player to emerge in Britain for ten years, is inevitably nagging at the back of Petchey's mind. He feels, especially, enormous loyalty to Vic Wakeling, Sky's head of sport, and said: "Though I have to make a decision for what is best for me, I would have to talk to them first."

Murray is expected to have his first practice session at Aorangi Park, the Wimbledon practice courts, today after injuring his left ankle when within two points of victory over Thomas Johansson in the third round of the Stella Artois Championships at Queen's Club a week ago. His likely hitting partner is Rafael Nadal, the French Open champion. He knows that the choice of his next coach is of paramount importance. "At this stage I need to travel with a coach full time, it needs to be someone I regard as a long-term coach and right now Mark Petchey is the man I want," Murray said. "I know we've only been together for a short time but everything has worked out perfectly. There is a respect between us — all that he says I listen to, and that's not always the case with me. I don't think I'm the easiest person to coach because I have my set ways and I think I know a lot about the game and am able to work things out for myself. I want someone who wants to have constructive chats about the sport and not say to me that it is his way or no way. "I'm going to try my hardest to make him my coach but it's going to be difficult because he has other commitments."

From the moment he showed talent with a racket, Murray's coaching has largely been undertaken by Judy, his mother, who is also the LTA's national coach in Scotland. At 15, funded in part by the LTA and Sport Scotland but largely by his parents and a host of small sponsors, he took up residence at the Emilio Sanchez/Sergio Casal academy in Barcelona, where he has nurtured his play, especially on clay.

Last year, he became Britain's first junior grand-slam winner in 11 years when he lifted the US Open title and marked his Davis Cup debut with victory in the doubles with David Sherwood against Israel in Tel Aviv three months ago. He and Sherwood are among six Britons with wild cards into Wimbledon's main draw.

LTA gives blessing to Murray's Petchey plan

By **Neil Harman**

Published at 12:00AM, June 17 2005

IN WHAT David Felgate, the LTA's director of performance, describes as a "win-win" situation, both official blessing and financial impetus will be given to the prospective

player-coach partnership between Andy Murray and Mark Petchey should both sides agree to go ahead with it in the aftermath of Wimbledon.

Responding to the story in *The Times* yesterday in which Murray, the 18-year-old Scot, revealed that he wanted Petchey, the LTA's men's national team manager, to become his coach, Felgate said that he was in a similar position ten years ago, when the opportunity to coach Tim Henman on a full-time basis was put to him.

"It is a very difficult thing to resist but I see it, if it can be worked out, as a win-win for Mark and Andy," Felgate said. "If they decide to go together, that's fantastic and we, as the LTA, will put something in place where we can put support towards it and make it happen. If they go down a different route, we will help to make sure that Andy gets what he needs." Felgate yesterday instigated a meeting with Andy and Judy Murray, his mother, at the All England Club about financial support over the next three years.

The loss of Petchey would be a huge blow to the LTA. He has been the driving force behind the changes in tournament structure and player attitude that has helped to give a shot in the arm to performance levels. Few men in his position have been held in greater esteem by the players. He feels a lot more is to be done but wonders whether his commitment to Sky TV would enable him to achieve his aims — and that was before the chance to work with Murray was mentioned.

Should he be lost to the association, Felgate would be in a position where, with Keith Wooldridge, the women's national manager, retiring after the championships, he would need to embark on a staff restructure. "That is my job to worry about if it comes to that," he said. "I know what needs to happen and I haven't become a suit who sits in an office. A lot of things have happened recently and maybe some of the positions can change slightly."

Murray will not know his first opponent in the Wimbledon main draw until this morning, when the qualifiers are placed. "I surprised myself how nervous I was watching the draw on TV," he said. "The qualifiers will have had three matches on grass this week, and a couple of days off to rest and recuperate."

Should he survive, a potential second-round meeting with Radek Stepanek is in the offing. Stepanek, from the Czech Republic, is being coached through the grass-court summer by Tony Pickard, once Great Britain's Davis Cup captain and former coach of Stefan Edberg, a two-time Wimbledon champion.

Murray entrusted with taking on the baton

It would be wrong to expect too much of the Scottish teenager who debuts at Wimbledon this week

BARRY FLATMAN

Published: 19 June 2005

Nobody over 30 has won a major title since Andre Agassi reigned supreme at the Australian Open for the fourth time 17 months ago and it is necessary to trace the Melbourne Park history books all the way back to Petr Korda in 1998 to find the last first-time champion in the fourth decade of his life.

All of which only goes to underline the common belief that the best chances of Tim Henman to end the long and embarrassing wait for a British men's champion have sadly gone. And although Greg Rusedski has come closest to winning a major, reaching the 1997 US Open final, he is now expected to only fill a fleeting cameo role.

So the stage is set, albeit extremely prematurely, for the grand entrance of Andy Murray; the most notable Scottish born talent since the late Winnie Shaw arrived on the women's scene in the 1960s and just a couple of weeks past his 18th birthday the player entrusted with taking on the baton from Henman and Rusedski.

There can be no debate that the boy from Dunblane is somebody who rises to the occasion; not only did he produce absolute heroics on becoming Britain's youngest ever Davis Cup debutant against the experienced Israeli doubles team in Tel Aviv three months ago, but he also revelled in the lager-fuelled atmosphere of the Stella Artois Championships, beating a couple of infinitely more seasoned players until the combination of Thomas Johansson's guile and the ravages of cramp got the better of him.

If the furore of the last couple of weeks is to be believed, Henman Hill is in danger of soon being renamed Murray's Mount but sense should be allowed to prevail when the youngster makes his Wimbledon debut in the next few days against qualifier George Bastl.

The Swiss is far from a pushover. After reducing the great Pete Sampras to a distinct state of emotional distress when he sent the seven times champion away from his beloved lawns for the last time three years ago, 30 year-old Bastl is clearly at home on the grass and three rounds of qualifying, the last albeit truncated when American Justin Gimelstob retired after just a few games, have again acclimatised him to the surface.

Murray, by his own admission, is no great lover of the green stuff and has not allowed much of it to get under his feet in the last week after cautiously allowing the ankle he injured at Queen's to sufficiently heal to take his place in the 128-strong singles draw. He is still very much in the learning stage of his career and should he lose to an opponent with almost a decade's more experience, the defeat should not be treated as a national disaster.

In a week's time Murray will return to the junior ranks and contest the boys singles. It will unquestionably be an anti-climax for the player who won the US Open junior title last September but likened playing in the French boys event as rather like going back to school after going out to work for nine months.

Such was Murray's lack of motivation that he lost tamely in the semi-final to an opponent he should have beaten with ease and two days later went on to lift the trophy. Ultimately it was

a painful lesson to learn, Murray's sponsors would have loved to acclaim him as the holder of two Grand Slam junior titles going into Wimbledon.

As he walked down to Wimbledon's practice courts in the wake of defending champion and top seed Roger Federer, Murray bore the countenance of a person positively chuffed by the position in which he found himself.

For the time being at least that should be the most important aspect for the future of British tennis but it will take more time for Murray to belong in the top flight.

Fired-up Murray takes next giant step

By Julian Muscat

Published at 12:00AM, June 24 2005

AS ANDY MURRAY walked out on to No 1 Court just before 5 o'clock yesterday afternoon, he will have known what Tim Henman has endured for the past nine years. Murray was the last Briton standing at Wimbledon. Two hours later he was still there, having grown at least an inch in outplaying a seasoned opponent in the second round. It was an auspicious show-court debut from the Scot. There were times when he toyed with Radek Stepanek, seeded No 14. There were times when he worked the crowd into a frenzy; there were times when he retreated silently into himself. At all times, however, he was in control. It was a joy to behold from an 18-year-old as green to the big occasion as the grass on which he played.

Murray would have known of Henman's defeat before he left the locker-room. When he returned it was to dizzy levels of expectation after his 6-4, 6-4, 6-4 triumph. He has the talent, like so many others before him. What sets him apart is an exemplary temperament. For much of the match, he looked like he was burying an inferior opponent in the quiet of Battersea Park.

More than 11,500 fretted over his every shot. Cries of anguish — what else does a British audience know? — coursed through the stands like an audible Mexican wave. And Murray orchestrated it, sometimes demanding more, at others shutting it out in accordance with his mood.

Murray fought hard for an opening in the opening set. Having saved a break point at 4-3 down, the decisive moment came at 4-4, when Murray retrieved superbly throughout a

long rally until Stepanek drove long. Cue bedlam. The break was secured and, with it, the set — which Murray sealed with a 122mph ace.

What followed was the stuff of fantasy. Stepanek had tormented Greg Rusedski at Queen's Club two weeks ago but Murray was returning the pain now. An early break increased Murray's already formidable confidence, so much so that when Stepanek netted a drop shot, Murray showed him the way two points later.

Murray's clay-court education was plain for all to see. It made a curious sight to watch a Briton outrallying an Eastern European opponent, but there it was. Not only was Murray outlasting Stepanek, he was out-thinking him, too.

Curiously, Murray withdrew into himself halfway through the second set. He still unleashed a series of dazzling winners, many through his potent service return against an advancing opponent. Of the absence of fist-pumping, he would say: "I wasn't feeling so well at that point. When I woke up this morning I had a sore head and stomach." Whatever was bothering him did not linger. On he charged through a third set memorable for the momentum that he had generated through the match. Another early break for a 2-1 lead becalmed stray nerves, and from then Murray knew that a third-round place would be his if he could simply hold serve. He was largely untroubled. At 5-3, hearts fluttered when a second match point eluded him after Stepanek contrived a drop-dead net cord. But when Murray took the balls in hand one game later, he made no mistake. He won the decisive point as he had won the match as a whole: by rallying his opponent into errors.

When he had finished off the Czech, grandmothers waved flags and mothers wanted to introduce him to daughters who screamed for him as though they had known him for ever.

Nerves? Only the smallest hint. "It's just natural for me," Murray said. "I enjoy playing in front of a crowd and didn't feel nervous at all. I was a bit annoyed with him at the end. He tried to put me off and he ended up looking stupid."

Succinct, short on hyperbole, long on promise. That is Andy Murray, the new holder of the British tennis baton. Good luck to the man. If he does half as well as Henman, he will have quite a career. Then again, he might go farther. Murray's promise seems infinite.

Murray is ours, Scots remind Sassenachs

By David Lister, Scotland Correspondent

Published at 12:00AM, June 25 2005

KEN GRAY had a message yesterday for millions of excited tennis lovers south of the border. "Andy Murray has made us all intensely proud," he said, before adding with a smile, "but he's Scottish first, and then British."

As critics hailed the 18-year-old's thrashing of Radek Stepanek, the No 14 seed, and Wimbledon spectators acclaimed him as the next Tim Henman, the pretty little city of Dunblane was determined to put its English neighbours straight.

Tom McLean, the landlord at the Dunblane Hotel, said: "I don't want to get the English backs up, but he'll never be the next Tim Henman because he's Scottish and he's very proud of it. He's not slow to let people know that." Mr McLean was planning to put up a couple of posters advertising cheap beer at the hotel bar for the game today, but this was by far the most extravagant gesture in Dunblane yesterday.

In a city where most are wary of the media since the massacre of 16 children at the primary school in 1996, there was little outward evidence of celebration. Many said that they had been too busy to watch Thursday's match or expressed surprise at the level of interest in the tennis star, who grew up less than a mile from the city's Gothic cathedral and was a nine-year-old at Dunblane Primary School when Thomas Hamilton went on his shooting spree.

There were no bunting or banners, and even Murray's uncle, Niall Erskine, admitted that he had been too busy to watch his nephew's games. Mr Erskine, 40, an optician who will fly at short notice to London today for the match against the former Wimbledon finalist David Nalbandian, said: "Don't get me wrong. Andy isn't anti-British or anti-English, but he's Scottish first and British second. He's fiercely proud of his nationality." He added: "I think if this was happening in England people might be getting a bit more carried away. We are a bit more reserved here. I never like to refer back to what happened (the massacre), but things come around and if you get something positive like this you should enjoy it in your own way."

From behind the counter of Carlow Pharmacy in the main street, Mr Gray, the pharmacist, said: "When we feel proud, we're quietly proud. I watched the game against Stepanek and Andy impressed me. He loves the crowd and he doesn't seem to be fazed by any of it. But we're not getting too excited — that's an English trait."

Evelyn Douglas-Roberts, 58, the custodian at the 17th-century Leighton Library, said: "Most people remember Dunblane for one thing only, the massacre, and it's nice to be able to speak about the town in a positive way." She added: "But I can't see the people here turning into Murray maniacs. It's not that kind of place. In a way you are seeing the same phlegmatic approach that helped them to get over the problem of the shootings and to rise above it."

Ann Stuart, 47, who works at the Ian McNab Gallery, was equally sanguine. She said: "I've seen bits of the games he's played but I haven't sat down much. He's young. You never know, he might even do better than Tim Henman."

All were playing down Murray's chances of advancing into the second week, none more so than Roy Erskine, his grandfather, who admitted that he had placed a £10 bet against his grandson on Thursday with one of the greenkeepers at the local golf club. Mr Erskine said: "He knows nothing about tennis, but he was convinced Andy was going to win, so we had a £10 bet on it," Murray will play on Centre Court today in the third match after the noon start.

Murray ready to grasp big chance of life at the top

By **Neil Harman**, Tennis Correspondent

Published at 12:00AM, June 25 2005

FRED PERRY would have loved Andy Murray, a teenager with a head for the heights he achieved, a heart just as big and a nature as prickly as the emblem of the nation that will be captivated by its 18-year-old son walking out on to the biggest stage in tennis today. Murray wears the king's clothes and they are a snug fit.

In his Fred Perry attire — a four-year deal was struck in January on the back of his US Open junior success and a welter of optimistic noises — Murray faces David Nalbandian, the 2002 runner-up and No 18 seed, in the third round of the Wimbledon Championships. The Scot says that he will lose but does not really believe it. Be prepared for a sight for sore British eyes, one of the nation's own on Centre Court performing as if it was an everyday occurrence.

The odds are that the Argentinian will not drop a set, for in most other worlds the No 19 delivers to the No 317 a thorough shin-kicking. Murray is going to meet the prospect of triumph and disaster — as encapsulated in Kipling's famous poem that he will read just before the door to Centre Court opens — head-on. That is the kind of teenager he is.

On a day that turned as black as coal yesterday, he put the finishing touches to his preparation with Mark Petchey, the former British Davis Cup player who was asked to help him through the grass-court season and wants to stay on permanently if he can reconcile that with home and working commitments, with Sky Television and the Lawn Tennis Association.

For the past three weeks, Petchey's eyes have been opened to Murray's world in a manner he did not expect. "One of the reasons I have always had so much belief in him is that (in his role as men's national manager) I have never had to talk about effort or competing. It's just tennis with Andy," Petchey said. "He is a student of the game. When we talk strategy, he is very analytical but he is up there with you and often ahead of you.

"He is so single-minded, very stubborn, characteristics a champion must have. He is totally immersed in every aspect of the sport. It might sound silly for someone who is nearly 35 to talk about someone of 18, but I believe you never stop learning in life and it doesn't matter who you learn from. Whoever it is who ends up working with him will be challenged. They might want to put their stamp on him, but that is not the way it would work with Andy.

"A coach does 10 per cent of the work, a player does 90. He is the one who came up with the break points at 4-4 in the first set against (Radek) Stepanek on Thursday, he is the one who served it out after losing match points in seriously bizarre circumstances. He had to steel himself to do that, which takes a helluva lot of nerve and guts."

Murray is different. Anyone who knows anything about the sport in Britain realises that. In the aftermath of the defeats of Tim Henman and Greg Rusedski — and only David Sherwood of the British male wild-card entries won a round — Murray's resolve and uncluttered views on himself and his position in the grand scheme of things make such a fascinating difference.

"Tim has gone about his business in a way that is great for his career and rightly so," Petchey said. "Andy is the same and he shouldn't be knocked for that. They are two totally different characters, in fact Andy is different to anyone I have ever encountered in the British game. He has that X-factor.

"This is a bloody hard sport where to succeed you have to want to be exposed for hours in front of thousands of people, so you had better make sure you've done all you can to prepare yourself for that. That is what Andy loves about tennis. He will not make excuses because this is the career he has chosen, and the way he's played in the past two matches you would have to say he's made some pretty good decisions in his life already.

Today is about Andy really finding out where he is at. Nalbandian is a truly class player. When the balls come off his racket it makes a special noise. He seems to have hours to play his shots. I know one thing, Andy will relish pitting his game against someone as good as him."

Hugh McIlvanney: Keep a lid on patriot games

The voice of sport

Published: 26 June 2005

As one vehicle for extravagant dreams took an apparently terminal lurch away from believability, another was revving up, ready to tow the bandwagon. And it gathered a dizzying momentum yesterday as 18-year-old Andy Murray captivated the Centre Court by taking a two-set lead over the 18th seed, David Nalbandian of Argentina, a man with a world ranking 293 places above the Scot at the start of the week, and then battling bravely against tiredness and cramp before losing in the fifth. That disappointment did nothing to reduce the incredible impact Murray has made at his first Wimbledon. The standard of performance he delivered yesterday and when sweeping aside Radek Stepanek, the Czech 14th seed, on

Thursday warrants unbridled acclaim. Not only did the prodigy from Dunblane halt a wave of sporting genocide in SW19 by refusing to figure in the otherwise total extermination of British challenges by the fourth day (including, of course, Tim Henman's); more importantly, he demonstrated the genuineness under pressure of an armoury of skills and natural attributes sufficiently remarkable to permit serious optimism about his chances of progressing into the upper echelons of tennis.

He is likely to grow beyond his present height of 6ft 1in, which should further strengthen a serve that is already precociously powerful and effective. The adroitness and authority of Murray's returns also create problems for seasoned opponents, especially the backhand strokes frequently angled viciously across the court with both hands on the racket. His touch and imagination, notably when going for lobs or drop-shots, can be exceptional. But at this stage of his development nothing is more striking than the discrepancy between the impression of coltish immaturity conveyed by his gangling teenager's body and mirror-of-emotions face and the steely, almost bloody-minded competitiveness he brings to his play.

With such aggressive self-confidence backing up his talent, a swelling of national expectation is not merely in order but inevitable. Yet I can't help hoping, however forlornly, that popular reaction to Murray will stay below the level of patriotic fever (with accompanying hallucinations) engendered by Henman's doomed annual attempts to become the first home-bred male champion at Wimbledon since Fred Perry completed a treble of consecutive triumphs in 1936. Perhaps ardently proclaimed Scottishness will diminish the risk of a recycled, renamed version of Henmania, which has always come across as intrinsically a south-of-England phenomenon. Many claimed to see it as a pleasantly dotty punctuation of the English summer but I long ago confessed to finding it ersatz and boring, largely a camera-conscious exercise in exhibitionism sustained by people as concerned with their own displays as with Henman's. Nevertheless, suggestions that the mawkish cult following (and stoking of fantasies in the media) imposed an intolerable burden on him year after year, undermining his prospects of capturing the title, are unconvincing. There is no evidence he ever thought that way.

The truth about Henman's limitations is starkly represented by his failure to reach a single Grand Slam final during a lengthy career. Some of us have been chastised for declining to call him a great player but the facts insist that describing him as extremely good is as far as we should go. With his 31st birthday coming up in September, there must still be a possibility he will force us to tweak that judgement but it is surely remote. Where I disagree with the least charitable of his obituarists is in the questioning of his heart. It is the character of his game, not the gameness of his character, that has kept him from scaling the heights. Notwithstanding the many strengths of his technique, his tools have proved too lightweight to flourish in modern tennis. There is a crucial shortage of animal vigour, basic physical vehemence. His record as an escapologist testifies to his spirit and if he has sometimes looked helpless in the last phase of losing a major battle that is because reality cannot be permanently held at bay.

Murray's combativeness is rawer, more robust and he won't need suburbanite adulation to bolster his self-belief. But he could do without the wilder responses to his dramatic arrival in the Wimbledon story. His coach, Mark Petchey, did him no favours by declaring he could be bigger than Wayne Rooney, who just happens to be one of the very best players now active in

the planet's most popular sport. Nor was it sensible of a BBC interviewer to ask Boris Becker to assess how Murray was feeling on Thursday on the basis of how the great German had felt in 1985. In that summer Becker, as a 17-year-old, had won not a second-round match but the championship, the whole ball of wax. We have every right to celebrate Andy Murray but let's wait until he has at least a few minor titles in the bag before deafening ourselves with nationalistic trumpet-blowing.

Murray's Field of Dreams

Keny Farquharson & Camillo Fracassini

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“When we arrived the mood was really quite hyper,” said Minchin, a 25-year-old property agent from London. “But before long everyone began to get disheartened. The mood just changed and then, when Henman actually lost, it was all a bit of a let-down.”

But all was not lost. The two friends, who had taken the day off work to get “the real Wimbledon experience”, were about to witness a moment of British tennis history.

“We didn't really know what to expect of Andy Murray but as soon as he came on the court he was quite cocky,” said Smart, a 25-year-old trainee solicitor. “Then he started playing and he was really exciting, just so much more flamboyant than Henman. In fact he didn't strike us as your typical British sportsman at all. There he was, aged 18, getting the crowd going, oozing the sort of confidence and determination that Henman lacks.”

With his straight sets victory over Radek Stepanek, Murray had, at a stroke, catapulted himself into the tennis stratosphere. Despite losing a gruelling five-set match to David Nalbandian last night, the teenager from Dunblane has launched an entire industry in sporting hyperbole. As the headline writers sharpened their pencils, Murray was hailed as the new Henman, the saviour of British tennis, the country's next great sporting hero — bigger even than Wayne Rooney.

As Murray left Court No 1 after his demolition of Stepanek, stopping to sign autographs for the deluge of fans who crowded him, Henman slunk away in his chauffeured Jaguar. Henman Hill was renamed Murray Field and Britain was enjoying its first taste of “Andymonium”. As the back pages put it:

“The king is dead. Long live the king.”

The next day young Scots were trying to emulate their new hero. At the end of the main road in Murray's home town in Stirlingshire is Dunblane Sports Club where, on a dismal afternoon last Friday, the courts were packed.

Katie Gater, 14, playing tennis with her mother, is coached by Murray's mother Judy. "It's not usually like this. It's usually just me and my sister out playing when it is windy and rainy. But now everybody's out," she said.

Another hopeful on the courts was Gregor MacLean, 11, who is on the Scotland tennis team and has played against Murray: "He would say to us, 'If you can return my serve I'll give you a fiver'. But no one could come close."

For Murray, tennis is not a gentlemanly way to pass a pleasant summer afternoon, it is a gladiatorial contest. His all-time sporting hero is not a tennis great like McEnroe or Bjorg, but Muhammad Ali. What particularly struck Murray's new fans at Wimbledon was his aggression — a side of his game that becomes easier to understand when you learn that he sees many similarities between tennis and boxing.

"Both sports are basically one-on-one confrontations, with the two contestants trying to use skill, strength and power to wear down one another," he said recently.

The contemporary boxer he most admires is Britain's 26-year-old WBU champion Ricky Hatton, known as the Hit Man. "I've read that he is a normal, well-balanced young man but once he goes through the ropes he becomes cold-blooded and merciless," said Murray. "They are qualities I'd like to think I take onto the tennis court. I don't want to be a runner-up or a semi-finalist. Only titles will satisfy me."

Murray first swung a racket in anger when he was three years old. It was a natural game for him to try; his mother was the Scottish national tennis coach and a former professional player.

"She took me round to the local courts and I just started playing," Murray recalled. "I'm not sure if I took to it straight away. I can't really remember but my mum said I wasn't very good."

He soon improved and Judy could see he had promise. But he was not convinced that the sport was for him and would give up for months on end, playing football with his pals in the park and in the school team where he excelled.

Rangers made an offer of a schoolboy deal. For his mother it was a watershed moment — would her son turn his back on tennis and choose the preferred sport of 99% of Scottish boys? Tennis won out. "I'm not so good when I'm part of a team," Murray said later. "I'm better when I'm by myself." He notched up success after success, starting with the Under-12s Orange Bowl world championships in Florida in 1999.

Ellinore Lightbody, the Scottish national coach, recalls seeing the young Murray at the under-14s tournament at Tarbes in France. "In the semi-final he came back from way, way down and that is an episode that sticks in my mind because he just decided he wasn't going to be beaten. Even then he was very, very competitive and he refused to accept mediocrity."

With Murray's potential obvious to all, the Lawn Tennis Association begged him to move to one of its south of England training centres. Judy Murray had other ideas. Her elder son Jamie had been down that route. He had been homesick and his performance had dipped.

She chose the Sanchez-Casal Academy in Barcelona, Europe's premier tennis school. With 29 courts and four different surfaces, plus open-air swimming pools in landscaped grounds, nowhere was better. Both mother and son knew it would mean harder work, even more commitment and only five weeks at home in Scotland every year. But Murray was hungry for it and settled in with no trouble. The £30,000-a-year fee was met by the UK tennis authorities and sponsors.

Emilio Sanchez, the former Spanish star who helped to found the academy, is a Murray fan. "This kid will go far if he becomes strong in the legs," he said. "He has many different options to hurt an opponent."

Although Judy's influence is undeniable, Lightbody insists that his mother has never put Murray under undue pressure and has encouraged him to make friends and lead the life of a normal teenager off court: "His mum knows when to push and when to back off and let him be a kid and grow up. That is what has been done incredibly well with Andy, in terms of allowing his personality to develop while challenging him in the right direction. But his tennis has always been his priority — it has to be to get to his level."

Murray was named BBC Young Sports Personality of the Year in 2004. Until last week the pinnacle of his career was winning last year's US Open junior singles championship, an achievement in itself.

Last March he became Britain's youngest Davis Cup player and served notice of his form in a pivotal doubles win against Israel in Tel Aviv, playing with David Sherwood. Six weeks later he played his first match on the ATP tour and was narrowly defeated by Jan Hernych, a Czech ranked 79th in the world.

Murray then reached the third round of the Stella Artois tournament at Queen's Club. It was a foretaste of the damage he would inflict on his elders and betters at Wimbledon.

Murray is Scotland's best tennis hope for a generation: the last time a Scot wowed Wimbledon was Winnie Shaw, who reached the quarter-finals in 1970 and 1971 and the semi-final of the ladies' doubles in 1972. Recently Shaw was inducted into the Scottish Sports Hall of Fame.

One member of the selection panel is Grant Jarvie, professor of sports studies at Stirling University and author of *Scottish Sport in the Making of the Nation*. He believes there are certain characteristics that Scots look for in a national sporting hero: "They like someone who is proud of their Scottishness and is ready to take on anyone. At the same time they like people to keep their feet on the ground and not be too big for their boots, while still believing in a quiet way that you can be the best in the world. And they expect a never-say-die attitude, even against the odds. I see a lot of that in Andrew Murray."

With fame and fortune comes a price. The pressures of the game took its toll on his parents' marriage. Judy is said to have grown apart from her husband William, a retail manager, as she travelled around the world pursuing her own career. They divorced last March. "William is very much in the background regarding Andrew's tennis," said a friend of the family.

"He and Judy had very different lifestyles. While tennis was Judy's life, William had an everyday job and she was often away. Their split was mutual and amicable and William is still very, very close to Andrew."

When Murray's biography is written, much will be made of the day in March 1996 when Thomas Hamilton walked into his primary school in Dunblane and shot dead 16 children and a teacher. Murray was one of the lucky ones: he was walking towards the gym where the killings took place when he was ushered away by a teacher. They sat singing songs in another part of the school until the police assured them it was safe.

Murray was two years older than the children who died and was friends with some of their siblings. He had attended Hamilton's youth clubs. But he dislikes talking about it and his mother has been known to describe their home town as Stirling so as to escape the inevitable questions.

"You have to try to make some sense of it, but that is very hard when you're a primary school child and suddenly some of your friends aren't there any more," Murray once said.

"It was only about four or five years later that I finally got to grips with the scale of what happened at the school — but I know I was one of the lucky ones and I am eternally grateful for that."

When Murray marched out on Centre Court yesterday he was listening to music on his iPod to get himself psyched up. His favourite track by the US rap band Black Eyed Peas is Let's Get It Started, which has the line, "Burn it till it's burned out, Turn it till it's turned out."

Poor Henman looks burnt out, although some would argue he never caught fire in the first place. For Murray, after a remarkable week in SW19, things are beginning to hot up.

Tired teenager captures hearts back home

In the Scottish tennis club where Andy Murray learnt his game, a captivated young audience lived every point along with their hero, writes Neil White

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The place is packed with the youngsters that Murray has enchanted this past week. They are all on their feet, every sinew stretching towards the TV screen high on the wall. Less than a minute after his tired legs haul Murray off court, these kids are making the opposite journey and they will be out there on the clay until the sun goes down.

“It has been great for them,” says Gavin Vickery, the Australian coach who oversaw Murray’s work here when he was recovering from a serious knee injury two years ago. “Usually the level of interest doesn’t rise that much for Wimbledon, but this year — definitely. There isn’t a kid in the programme here that doesn’t know about Andy, he’s a local hero, someone they can look up to and try to emulate.”

This defeat will have taught Murray one lesson. Martina Navratilova acclaimed his many talents on the morning of the match, but doubted his conditioning, the fault that cost him a place in the fourth round at Wimbledon. Karen Ross is the high performance coach for Tennis Scotland and shifts from one side of her seat to the other as the balance of power flip-flops similarly in the fourth set. “His defeat at Queen’s showed that fitness might be an issue,” she says. “He loves being on court, he loves doing what he does best. If it is a problem, if this run shows him that, then it won’t be a problem for long. He will get to work on it.”

Two years ago he had to fix another problem. Aged 16, he returned from training camp in Barcelona with a stabbing pain in his right knee, the result of a congenital problem in the joint combined with the intense competition of the junior circuit and a sudden growth spurt.

The Scottish Institute of Sport decided to unload all their resources and research on him. Sports psychologists broke down his mental attitude towards his forced time-out, performance analysis software reshaped his service action and improved his mobility, and he hit the gym to get back into the shape.

He embraced their ground-breaking methods, psychological, physical and technical, so heartily that his recovery is now used as a case study at the Institute, based at the University of Stirling, a mile down the road from Bridge of Allan. When he was better, and when the sun came out, he was back on the red clay at Bridge of Allan. He will find it harder to have a quiet game when he comes back home again.

A mean streak that marks out the real tennis hope

Profile: Andy Murray

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Another travesty for the nation's tennis? Certainly not. In 18-year-old Andy Murray, Britain may have found the answer to its quest for a new player on whom the nation can pin its hopes and weep its sorrows once Tim Henman is over his Hill.

Tiger Tim may have been a frequent tabloid headline, but Henman has always been far too much the polite middle-class Englishman to have anything in his tank other than the occasional expletive reserved for a ballboy.

Murray, Scottish, self-assured and brash, is made of different stuff. For one, his tennis hero is John McEnroe, the superbrat of 1980s tennis.

Take his manners on court. On his Davis Cup debut he played a backhand service return winner down the line as his very first shot and then ran to the net to shake his fist in the face of his perplexed opponent.

Last week, making his senior debut at Wimbledon and starting out ranked 317th in the world, he showed he could be an angry winner. Despite demolishing George Bastl, a one-time conqueror of Pete Sampras, in 100 minutes, he repeatedly called himself a twat and shook his head in disgust at the slightest mistake he made.

Disturbingly for umpires but encouraging for tennis fans who want a new hero, he says he only acts like this when he has a big audience. "I am a bit fiery on court," says Murray, "but I'm always going to be like that and I don't want to change. If I don't get annoyed on court I don't play well, so I'm not going to stop it just because a few people don't like it."

Turn back the clock to March 13, 1996, and we have another explanation for what drives him.

Murray was nine years old and on his way to the gymnasium at the primary school in Dunblane, central Scotland, when Thomas Hamilton, a deranged gunman, burst into the school.

The young Murray knew Hamilton. He and his older tennis-playing brother Jamie, now 19, had attended youth groups organised by the 43-year-old former Scout leader.

A teacher ushered them away. As the shooting started, Murray remembers fleeing to the headmaster's study with other classmates. They found out later that Hamilton had killed 16 children and their teacher before turning the gun on himself.

Murray has revealed that he pushes himself at tennis to give his home town something to be proud of since the massacre. "Because I was so young, I did not understand how big a world event it was," he said last year.

"It was not until three or four years ago that I fully realised what had happened and how many people were affected. I was very upset and struggled to understand why it happened. A lot of my classmates lost brothers and sisters and every family in Dunblane knows somebody affected."

He added: "Dunblane has coped really well with getting itself back on its feet, but it is still known around the world for the wrong reasons. I would like to think I am bringing some hope to everyone in Dunblane and also putting it in the headlines for the right reasons."

Paramount among the people of Dunblane whom Murray wants to cheer is his mother Judy, a former Scotland number one tennis player who until recently coached the national team.

"He was too young to understand but his success is a very positive thing for the town," she said. "He is aware that he will be asked questions about it but he is happy carrying the hopes of the community on his shoulders."

Not surprising with such parentage, Murray first picked up a racket at the age of three. Two years later he played his first tournament.

By the age of 12 he had rejected a schoolboy deal with Glasgow Rangers and abandoned his beloved football boots to concentrate totally on tennis. It paid off. Within a year he had become one of only two British players to win a singles title at the prestigious Orange Bowl junior world championships in Florida.

A junior competitor at Wimbledon by the age of 15, he beat a host of experienced seniors in Glasgow in September 2003 to become the youngest ever Briton to win a £10,000 tournament prize.

Spurning overtures from the Lawn Tennis Association to move south to London and base himself either at the Queen's club or Sutton, Murray moved instead to a tennis academy on the outskirts of Barcelona run by former Spanish Davis Cup stalwarts Emilio Sanchez and Sergio Casal.

"Down in London I think the young players tend to get a little bit spoilt," Murray said at the time. "I chose to go to Spain because I thought it would mean harder work and be better for my tennis."

As if to prove his point, Murray has been living in a cramped wooden bungalow less than 100 yards from the red clay courts of the academy. He sleeps on the top of a bunk bed and has a Ukrainian as his roommate. The surroundings encourage him to spend six hours a day every day on the courts training. The £30,000-a-year fee has been met by the UK tennis authorities.

It has paid off. In September last year he won the US Open junior title, joining the likes of Andy Roddick, Pat Cash and Stefan Edberg on the roll of honour.

It made him the first British "boy" to win a junior Grand Slam title since James Bailey in Australia in 1993. It also propelled him into the top 500 male tennis players in the world.

So can Murray go all the way, or he is one of the British also-rans like Buster Mottram, Jeremy Bates and Mark Cox? Roger Taylor, the former Davis Cup captain, said: "You'd have to say that Andrew is the one to watch. He's obviously a very good player and seems to have a good understanding of the game.

"Britain does have a record of producing promising juniors. But that doesn't guarantee that you're going to do well at senior level. It's his character and competitiveness that will be decisive."

Certainly Murray has both in spades. "I hate losing," he says. "I don't play any tournaments to come second best."

But he has to overcome the injuries that have dogged him as he has grown. He was sidelined for part of last year with a knee injury and discovered that he was born with a bipartite patella in his right knee, which meant his kneecap was effectively in two pieces. Yesterday on Centre Court he wore a brace and strapping on an ankle injury picked up at the recent Stella Artois championship.

"This is a street fighter," Boris Becker, the former Wimbledon champion, said yesterday. "His ankle isn't good but he will be out there until he breaks his legs."

It was almost the case. His stamina ebbing, he succumbed to cramp in the fourth set and could barely move in the fifth, which he lost last night to the Argentinian David Nalbandian 6-1.

Murray, a fan of Britain's world boxing champion Ricky "the Hitman" Hatton, and Wimbledon could yet come to blows. He psyched himself up for last week's matches there by listening to Let's Get It Started by the American hip-hop band the Black Eyed Peas.

"At Wimbledon the all-white clothing rule may be fine for 50-year-olds watching, but it hardly appeals to people my age," says Murray. "They want to see players running around in the latest outfits and looking sharp, not stuck in the dark ages.

That's why it (tennis) isn't as popular in Britain as it is in other countries. Young people just think it's boring."

And what of the man Murray seems destined to replace within a few years? “I obviously admire what Tim Henman has done but I don’t style myself on his play or think he is the best player to watch,” he says.

“I don’t think he will ever win a Grand Slam event because he seems to be mentally resigned to losing.”

It is not a flaw Andy Murray ever intends to inherit.

Wimbledon: Murray crashes out in five-set thriller

Andrew Longmore at Wimbledon

Published: 26 June 2005

Gallant defeat here has become a tradition in recent years, but this was different. Nobody could recall a more accomplished performance by a British teenager not just at Wimbledon but in one of the world’s great sporting theatres. “To play on Centre Court was always a dream and then to play like that was unbelievable,” said Murray. “The support I got as I walked off made me feel as if I belonged there.”

For almost two hours, the bandwagon rolling down the newly renamed Murray Field seemed unstoppable. After the early exit of Tim Henman, Murray had shouldered the traditional burdens of a British sportsman on Centre Court and thrived on the attention. In the players’ box he was watched by his mother, Judy, a former national coach of Scotland, and his father Willie, an engineer. But the reception given to Murray at the end reflected a nation’s pride.

Having beaten Radek Stepanek, the No 14 seed, in the second round, he led Nalbandian, a Wimbledon finalist ranked nearly 300 places above him, by two sets and seemed on course for the fourth round in his first Wimbledon. Although he lost the third set, Murray broke early in the fourth and was a mere five points from reaching the last 16 of his first Grand Slam event. But on the verge of one of the finest victories by a British player, and one of the biggest upsets in the history of the Centre Court, he visibly slowed, the experienced Argentinian winning four games in a row to level the match.

Murray called for the trainer at the end of the fourth set and lay flat on his face receiving treatment. His brave resistance, though, had been broken and Nalbandian romped through

the deciding set to win 6-7 1-6 6-0 6-4 6-1 in three hours and 12 minutes. "He surprised me a little bit," said Nalbandian. "He played a very good match. He serves very good and he has a very good return. He looks very confident on grass. All the time it was tough. He has a good forehand, a good backhand, good slice. What can he achieve in the future? He's too young so I'm not the right person to tell you. But I think he needs to work more. I think he lost this match because of a physical problem."

A year ago, Murray was losing in the third round of junior Wimbledon, but the decision to move to the Sanchez-Casal Academy in Barcelona as opposed to working with the LTA began to show dividends when he won the US Open junior title in the autumn. The pace of his education quickened last week.

"I know now I can compete with the top guys in the world," Murray said. "But it's not about doing it for one week of the year, but for 30 weeks. My tennis is at the right level, I just have to work on my fitness."

Murray's heroics eclipsed the earlier action on Centre Court, where Roger Federer, the defending champion and top seed, survived a brief scare to beat Nicolas Kiefer in four sets in a match carried over from Friday. Andy Roddick, the second seed, also progressed to the last 16 with a straight-sets win over Igor Andreiev. In the women's singles, there were wins for Maria Sharapova, Kim Clijsters and Venus Williams. Fourth seed Serena Williams lost in straight sets to Jill Craybas.

Fitness key to Murray future

Britain's new tennis hero can take some valuable lessons from his experience at Wimbledon this year

Nick Pitt at Wimbledon

Published: 26 June 2005

Murray won his first senior matches on grass at Queen's a fortnight ago, beating players far ahead of him in the rankings until the combination of injury, cramp and a former Grand Slam champion halted his progress. At Wimbledon, he has graduated. His first match in the main draw was hardly a problem; his first on Court One, against a seed, was a stroll; and his first on Centre Court yesterday gave the most conclusive evidence yet that a terrific British player has come among us.

Each test was a step up, and the latest was the most significant. Murray's win against Radek Stepanek in the second round was easy, as Murray himself admitted, because Stepanek played awfully. But Nalbandian is in a different category. He has played a Wimbledon final;

like Murray, he won the junior title at the US Open, beating Roger Federer in the final; he is a hardened professional, a man that none of the other top players enjoys meeting. Yet Murray, learning as we watched, handled him, at first with difficulty, but later, until he ran out of energy, with ease.

The first indication that there would be something rather un-British in Murray's approach to Centre Court came with the cheer that greeted his entrance. The teenager was shambling in with a lack of veneration, his Fred Perry shorts crumpled and his iPod ear-piece in his left ear. He was carrying a plastic bag full of drinks bottles. Nalbandian looked immaculate.

His tennis was immaculate, too, until Murray began to undermine it. After a flawless opening service game, Nalbandian was broken in the third game. His response was ominous. He broke back immediately by feasting on Murray's second service. At that stage, the Murray first-service was out of commission.

In those early exchanges, Nalbandian confirmed his reputation with fierce, accurate hitting from the back, burning the turf with raking drives, especially with his double-handed backhand. It was man against boy, as Murray struggled to stay with the pace and a stream of errors ended weakly in the net.

Nalbandian at that stage was a bit quicker, hit harder and was more solid. But one of Murray's great assets is a clear tactical head. He began to slice his backhand rather than try to slug it out with Nalbandian. He used drop shots to good effect, and his first service began to work.

First, Murray climbed to parity. There were three breaks of serve each in the first set. Murray's hitting was achieving authority, and he began to win those long rallies in which both men were at full stretch.

Murray was now firing winners from both wings. Most came from his two-fisted flat backhand, but the one that really excited the Centre Court was a cross-court forehand winner to win the eighth game. It was shot of which Federer would have been proud and it brought the crowd to its feet as Murray celebrated with an excess of fist-pumping. It also demonstrated that Murray has every shot.

Like Stepanek and others before him, Nalbandian began to falter and crumble. After losing the first set tie-break, he was all at sea. Incredibly, Murray was out-hitting Nalbandian, working him from side to side, bossing the action. His first service — usually in excess of 130 mph, an impressive speed — was now his faithful friend. Nalbandian was the one who was late on the shot, caught on the back foot, made to seem a novice.

Like their hero, the crowd was learning. They had begun by shouting "Go on Murray," then, in anxiety had called out "C'mon Andy", which was too similar to "C'mon Tim" for comfort. But with Murray battling to take the first set and commanding the second, the most appropriate cry in a Scottish accent was "Come on Braveheart". In the Royal Box, Sean Connery could hardly contain his excitement.

Murray had proved himself at least equal to Nalbandian as a shot-maker. But soon he faced another trial — the stamina test. When Nalbandian took a handy lead in the third set, making his big effort, Murray's movement around the court, which had been electric after his faltering start, began to slow.

He then made a decision that few top players would ever contemplate: he threw away the third set to gather himself for the fourth. It took no insight to see what he was up to, for there were balls that Murray made no attempt to reach.

It was a dangerous tactic for it gave Nalbandian the knowledge that Murray was tired and desperate. Yet it almost worked, and perhaps it was his only chance. Murray had his opportunities to win that fourth set, but when they were spurned, and particularly when the trainer was called on before the final set, the outcome was painfully obvious.

The teenager had been given his lesson, and it will be of immense value to him. Murray can seem a strange, geeky kind of person, and his on-court demeanour is, at times, obnoxious. His opinion of himself and what he has to offer the world knows no bounds and his interests are limited to tennis and rankings, especially his own. And, as he has shown yesterday and before, he is fearless. It would be normal for a youngster to be nervous when making his entrance on the big stage. He has such impudence that even on Wimbledon's show courts he is able to enjoy himself and even to conduct the audience in his support.

He believes he can beat his elders and betters. He has learnt that empty stare at opponents that the macho players think makes them look so tough, even if tennis is a non-contact sport played with a fuzzy ball.

But all these faults are significant virtues in the making of a champion. To put it more generously, he is single-minded, has remarkable presence of mind and the all-important killer instinct. He needs to be stronger and fitter. Then we will discover how high he can fly.

Centre court rises to new kid on the block

Despite losing 7-6 6-1 0-6 4-6 1-6 last night, the teenage prodigy has come of age on the greatest stage of all

Barry Flatman, tennis correspondent

Published: 26 June 2005

The most memorable All England Club debut of a British youngster has proved that Murray possesses sufficient talent and character to mature into a player worthy of taking on the best in the world. All the 18-year-old Scot now needs to do is drastically improve the physical

conditioning that was ultimately found wanting in his greatest test to date. With improved fitness and greater resilience, Murray could this morning be contemplating a confrontation with fellow teenager Richard Gasquet. Instead he will wake up still aching, contemplate a mixed doubles commitment alongside Israel's Shahar Peer knowing his limitations sadly saw him crumble from a two-set lead over a player that has actually experienced a Wimbledon final to lose 7-6 6-1 0-6 4-6 1-6 on Centre Court.

At least the bookmakers will be happy. "Andy Murray's defeat at Wimbledon has saved the betting industry £5m," said William Hill spokesman, Graham Sharpe. "There has been an unprecedented gamble on Murray, which threatened to dwarf even those in the past for Tim Henman.

"There was a patriotic plunge which saw Murray's odds tumble from 500/1 at the start of the tournament to as short as 16/1 at one stage. We are mightily relieved financially that he will not now win the tournament."

Nalbandian, runner-up to Lleyton Hewitt in 2002, had to register a career first by recovering from a two-set deficit but the Argentinian's five-year seniority and hugely superior stamina allowed him to overhaul the brave youngster, who eventually had to resort to on court attention from physiotherapist Michel Novotny to finish his most public of tennis examinations.

It should be remembered this was a day Murray, still technically a junior although the description now offends him greatly, was supposed to play his opening round match in the boy's singles. By long-standing national tradition, British wild cards are never around to vie for a place in Wimbledon's second week, but the Scot has little in common with most domestic hopefuls who have gone before him.

At a comparable age, Henman appeared an undernourished youth who was told he might eke out a career as a doubles player if he was fortunate, but for almost 90 minutes Murray showed he was a competitor beyond his years.

The Argentinian's serve has long been regarded as the weakest facet of his game, and it was certainly something to exploit.

Just as he did in the previous round against Radek Stepanek, Murray was soon firing his signature shot, the double-fisted backhand return, and the results were impressive.

Yet while Czech's performance was viewed as lame and uncommitted by the majority of the male playing fraternity, Nalbandian is reputed to be one of the game's more resolute fighters.

Three years ago, he strode an improbable path to the Wimbledon final at his first attempt, but with a crowd willing to forget the ethics of impartiality and cheer their new hero Murray on every shot, he soon found himself intimidated and more than a little rattled. Twice he attempted drop shots that would have undoubtedly ended winners on the clay, but this particular part of Britain is so much different.

When the first set extended to a tie-break, Murray's inexperience could have proved susceptible. After all, he had only played two tie-breaks at the highest level, whereas Nalbandian had contested 85, but it was the novice who struck first, registering a mini-break with the most impudent of backhand volleys that demonstrated both anticipation and courage.

A Nalbandian overhead levelled things, but another strange twist was around the corner and, inexplicably, the Argentinian sent a simple forehand wide. Things might have been taxing for Murray, both physically and mentally, but he moved to set point with the most precocious of backhand drop shots and, after 52 minutes of Centre Court baptism, he took a one-set lead by firing a service winner that all the assurance of a player who had been performing on this exalted stage for years.

Nalbandian's reaction was extraordinary. He is an experienced performer who has represented his country in the Davis Cup in venues where he and his compatriots were literally regarded as the enemy, and he's performed in a Grand Slam final and the Masters Cup. But for the entire second set he allowed himself to become intimidated by the partisan atmosphere. Those who insist the Wimbledon Centre Court don't get behind their men with the same passion as the Parisians of Roland Garros or new Yorkers of Flushing Meadows may care to think again.

Optimists in the crowd were already beginning to herald a third consecutive straight sets victory for their new hero, but many chose to blind themselves from the increasingly obvious signs.

Murray was showing the first signs of physical distress, repeatedly flexing his legs, massaging his back and looking up to the players' box where his family and coach nodded back loyal reassurance.

Cramp struck Murray in his full debut against Jan Hernych in Barcelona a couple of months ago and again at Queen's Club a fortnight ago, when victory over former Australian Open champion Thomas Johansson seemed a possibility. The ugly black brace wrapped around Murray's suspect left ankle was another reminder of that painful evening just across the River Thames that limited the debutant to just two days of preparation before the tournament began.

Murray soon realised the third set was effectively history, and, long before it ended, he decided the priority was to regroup for the fourth.

Initially, he competed with rekindled vigour and, leading with a break of serve at 4-2, it seemed as though victory was still within his reach, but weariness soon began to tell again and his shot selection suffered.

Nalbandian effectively killed off Murray's last hope when he moved wide to hit an unplayable return that levelled the set at 4-4 and from that moment on the identity of the winner was never really in doubt.

When the pain subsides, Murray can congratulate himself on a week that has revitalised British tennis. Temporarily, he may have to be content with a world ranking still outside the top 200 when the ATP computer reveals its first list immediately after the Championships end, but he is moving in the right direction.

So long as he learns the lessons taught and ensures fitness will soon cease to become an issue.

New star programmed for success

Published: 26 June 2005

Like most 18-year-olds, the Scot has spent hours sitting in front of his laptop computer, but instead of playing games, he has been studying performance analysis to keep on top of his game and also that of his opponents.

At the beginning of last year, the Scottish Institute of Sport agreed to fund a computer performance analysis consultant to work with Murray, using video and state-of-the-art software to pinpoint his strengths and weaknesses.

Pamela Stevenson laboriously recorded each of his performances. Murray and his mother, Judy, are convinced the process has been beneficial, and Stevenson said: "We are able to identify opponents' weaknesses and Andy can use his strengths to exploit that potential. Andy thinks it gives him an edge and I'm sure it has played a part in his success."

Murray became convinced of the benefits when he won last year's US Open juniors after Stevenson had provided analysis. She explained: "We basically categorise all those pieces of information through the video and interactively look at those in a systematic order.

"It can be the way Andy hits his serve or an opponent returns or hits his ground strokes. We are able to identify the opponents' weaknesses, then feed back to Andy and he is able to think how he can use his strengths to exploit that potential."

However, Stevenson was not courtside for Murray's wins over George Bastl or Radek Stepanek, and watched yesterday's third-round defeat against David Nalbandian from her Glasgow home instead of on Centre Court.

“We were not expecting Andy to be given a wild card into Wimbledon’s main draw and therefore no plans were made,” Stevenson added.

“But Judy has become sufficiently accustomed to the process and she has been filming potential opponents and Andy’s matches. I’m assured the work has been valuable.”

It will certainly prove value for money should Murray continue to progress. The teenager could earn up to £60m in winnings, endorsements and sponsorship over 10 years. He is poised to earn £6m a year on the back of his spectacular success, and he has been inundated with sponsorship offers.

Despite being relatively unknown outside the tennis world at the start of last week, having played just four senior games, Murray is now one of Britain’s most bankable sports stars. His agent, Sian Masterton, is in talks with leading firms such as the Royal Bank of Scotland, Robinson’s, Head and Fred Perry. In common with most top-flight players, his prize-money is likely to be eclipsed by earnings from endorsements. He is expected to make millions from instructional videos, television programmes and publishing deals.

Ambitious Murray to put foot on accelerator

By **Neil Harman**, Tennis Correspondent

Published at 12:00AM, June 27 2005

ANDY MURRAY’S entry into the Campbell’s Hall of Fame grass-court championships at Newport, Rhode Island, next month — the venue is referred to by the locals as the casino — is his third wild card in a row from tournaments who see great things for him. What chance of a fourth, into the main draw for the US Open at Flushing Meadows in August, where he is, after all, the junior champion?

If all this might be happening a little too fast for a player who takes life at a languid pace, it is because there is never time to sit still in tennis. The sport moves from continent to continent at breakneck speed and that Murray went go-karting yesterday as a means of getting Saturday out of his system suggests that he is going to deal comfortably with the accelerating demands on his still-growing body.

Andrew Foster remains the last wild card to have reached the last 16 of Wimbledon, a feat he achieved 12 years ago, when he managed to tweak the tail of Pete Sampras for a set and a bit. No one really believed that Foster, ranked No 332 then, would take the quantum leap being prophesied for Murray. There is still much to be done behind the scenes and talks will begin in earnest today to resolve the situation of coach, sponsors, fitness regime and whatever else he needs.

Judy Murray, his mother, said yesterday: "We know what he is up against now, the matches against Thomas Johansson at Queen's and David Nalbandian at Wimbledon have shown he's by no means there and he ran out of steam in his legs. We have to make this happen for Andy to give him the best chance there can be.

"There are no half-measures now, it is absolutely crucial we get everything in place to allow him to fulfil his potential. My job this week is to sort out the coach, the training base, the fitness situation, and make sure the whole package is in place. The LTA is our first port of call and we will see what they come up with."

Mark Petchey, the LTA men's national training manager, says that he will make a decision on becoming Murray's coach by the end of the week. He wants to talk with his bosses, both in tennis and at Sky television, to work out a means of opening a possible Pandora's Box of opportunity.

Yet it was a simple conversation during the French Open that triggered the prospect of a new job. "Andy called to ask me my views on the trouble he was having with his coach [Pato Alvarez, the Colombian] at the time and I said he had to be honest with himself, why it wasn't working out and what he wanted to do further down the line.

"I told him, if he wanted, I'd see him through the grass-court season and talk about what we could put in place for him after that. Wearing my LTA hat, I've been involved with him a lot for the past 20 months or so, helping as much as he wanted. Now things have moved on. Of course, I'd love to be involved with him, whether it might last a year or ten years. There's so much to bring out of him."

The sages agree. Nick Bollettieri, the American guru who has delivered on Andre Agassi, Jim Courier and Monica Seles, all of whom were world No 1s, told Murray through the BBC's *Sportsworld* programme yesterday: "Maybe you ain't nothing yet, but you have the chance to be something. You obviously want to be noticeable, so you had better be ready to produce. You need a very good support team. I cannot begin to estimate where he might end up, he has only had a tiny bit of success, but he definitely has something going for him."

Today, Murray plays in the mixed doubles with Shahar Peer, the 18-year-old from Israel, against Lucas Arnold, of Argentina, and Emanuelle Gagliardi, of Switzerland. "He asked me this morning if I felt he should go for it," his Mum said. "I told him 'of course, you want to win it don't you?' But he meant should he go for his first serve full out when he serves to the girl. That's the gentleman in him."

Petchey to start Murray on road to the top

The rising star of British tennis has secured the services of the coach he feels can steer him towards the biggest titles in the game. By Barry Flatman

Published: 3 July 2005

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When Murray declared that he wanted Mark Petchey to become his full-time coach, the news was met with scepticism in many quarters, not least in the Petchey household in Wimbledon, where two infant children sob every time they see their father haul down his luggage and head for Heathrow.

Yet that was the route Petchey took on Friday afternoon, destined for Newport, Rhode Island, and this week's Campbell's Hall of Fame Championships, leaving behind not just his family but a previous day job as Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) manager of men's national training and a seat in the BBC radio commentary box for today's men's final.

“When I first started working with Andy a month ago, when he came home from the French Open juniors and was about to start the Stella Artois tournament at Queen's, it was supposed to be temporary. The thought of going back on the road hadn't crossed my mind,” said Petchey. “Things had turned sour with his former coach (70-year-old Colombian Pato Alvarez) in Barcelona and

Andy just wanted a little bit of guidance and friendship from somebody a little closer to his own age who knew his way around grass. But things have become more exciting than I envisaged and we've developed a good understanding. Of course there are factors which made this decision a tough one, but if I turned it down, it might be something I'd always regret."

Petchey did not just have to talk long and hard with his wife, Michelle, to square a return to the travelling life he thought he had left behind when retiring as a player seven years ago at 27. The LTA post did not have a bearing on the decision, as he had become frustrated and did not intend to renew his contract when it expired later this summer. (Performance director David Felgate, Petchey's boss at the LTA, made the same career decision a decade earlier when he became Tim Henman's full-time coach.) However, a prominent place on the Sky Sports team to cover this summer's Masters Series events in Cincinnati and Montreal, as well as the US Open, figured in Petchey's thinking. Without the need for too much cajoling, Sky gave him special dispensation. The decision could even have benefits, with Petchey possibly being on site for the Masters Series events instead of commentating from a room at Sky headquarters in Isleworth, Middlesex, as TV images are fed to him through a monitor.

Petchey reached a financial agreement with Murray's management group and pen was put to paper a few hours before player and coach headed across the Atlantic.

After accepting a wild-card entry to the Newport tournament, where Greg Rusedski defends the title,

Murray intends to play second-tier Challenger competitions in Californian outposts such as Aptos and Tarzana, as well as Lexington, Kentucky. He could also try to qualify for main Tour events in Indianapolis, Los Angeles and Washington DC. Another wild card into the US Open, beginning at Flushing Meadows on August 29, is a possibility, as Murray is the reigning boys' champion.

Ecosse: The Andy and Judy show

If Andy Murray fulfils his dream and becomes a men's tennis champion, he will have his mother to thank. But success brings problems of its own and they will both have to get used to living their lives in the glare of publicity, writes **Adrian Turpin**

Published: 3 July 2005

No matter that, in much smaller print below that screaming headline after Andrew Murray's Wimbledon heroics, Judy Murray added: "which is probably not often."

David Beckham, Wayne Rooney, Shane Warne: the number of sports stars who have been forced to watch their family laundry being washed in public is legion. But it's quite a different thing if it's your mum loading the machine. On day one of Wimbledon, Judy revealed, she treated her son to a chocolate cream frappuccino — adding that it was a cross between a milk shake and a knickerbocker glory.

"For my special treat I get to wash Andy's socks. Although his clothing sponsor, Fred Perry, provides him with 12 sets of shirts, shorts and socks, I find I'm doing a full wash every second day — especially those socks of his!" Too much information perhaps?

There will always be a particular fascination about sporting prodigies and their parents. Until his health failed, Earl Woods was always better copy from his position beside the golf course than Tiger, his son, was on it. (Remember when he said that Scotland "sucks. It's for white people" or declared his son would be bigger than Gandhi?)

Only this week the similarly larger-than-life Richard Williams, father of Venus and Serena, was making headlines by claiming he was fitter than his daughters, who had allegedly lost their hunger for the game.

Parental love and the steeliness needed to propel a child to the top do not always sit easily together. It's only natural that we tend to look at these relationships with one eye seeking any fault lines within them.

All of which has made Judy Murray an intriguing figure. The 44-year-old former Scottish ladies tennis champion has crept into the national consciousness. In between points, the cameras would cut to her in the stands, scrunching her fists and trying to keep in her seat, somehow struggling to find a median between the analytical objectivity of a coach and the passion of a mother.

Open a newspaper and there's a picture of her pecking Willie, her former husband, chastely on the cheek on the day of the match against David Nalbandian from Argentina.

And then there is Judy the spokeswoman for British and, in particular, Scottish tennis.

Last year she walked away from her job as Tennis Scotland's head coach. The reason given was that she wanted to spend more time on her children's careers (her other son, Jamie, is also a tennis professional and a promising doubles player), yet it was widely perceived as a protest against the lack of money put into the sport.

Earlier this week she took up the theme in an opinion piece in an Edinburgh paper. "It is truly depressing when our nation's chances for sporting success . . . is dependent on scratchcard sales," she wrote. "We can't provide the quality or quantity of training or the number of players to make a competitive training environment. Other mothers . . . deserve the chance to watch their children fulfil their potential." The next day there were reports that she was to be invited to Holyrood, with Andy, to discuss the funding. People were starting to listen.

It is less than a week since Andy bowed out of the Wimbledon tournament with a first-round defeat in the mixed doubles with his Israeli partner, Shahar Peer. Yet he and Judy are still making use of the facilities.

When we first speak on the phone Judy seems tired and tetchy. The next day, by the indoor courts at SW19 as she waits in the sunshine to talk to her son on the physio's table, a little of her natural resilience and good humour seem to have returned.

How many interviews has she done in the past seven days? "I couldn't even begin to count," she says. "It has been a pretty chaotic week" — although clearly a productive one

Andy finally has a new coach. The Murray camp had approached Mark Petchey, the former Davis Cup player, but it had not been certain whether his broadcasting commitments as an analyst for Sky television or his young family would enable him to take the job. The deal they have struck will see him travelling for 30 weeks of the year with Andy. There is little time to draw breath.

The day after our interview, the Murray roadshow is set to move on to Newport, Rhode Island, in America, where Andy has been given a wild card into a grass court tournament. Life for Andy and his mother will never be quite the same again. But if Judy knows this, she

is careful to play it down. That is probably wise after the extraordinary, almost unseemly haste with which her son displaced Tim Henman in the public consciousness.

Reading some of the coverage, you might be forgiven for thinking that Henman hadn't just had a bad tournament, but also had died and been buried under the patch of earth formerly known as Henman Hill.

Judy seems understandably tickled by the hill's new name. "We like Murray Field. We thought Murray Mount a bit posh," she says (though with the natural contrariness of a teenager, her son now says he prefers the latter). She also sounds like she hasn't quite got over seeing Sean Connery jumping around in his box.

"I thought, 'There's James Bond supporting my son'." But she is also eager to stress that Andy's recent wins have only pushed him to 210 in the singles ranking, "which is a long way from being a tour regular".

The real change, she says, is to do with public expectations. Before Wimbledon, Andy was a virtual nobody. Now members of the British press will be following him to America this week.

"For him to sustain the level of performance at Wimbledon or Queen's is probably too much to expect," says Judy. "At some point he will fall on his face, and now the attention will be on him. That's probably something he needs to be prepared for."

When Andy won the US Open Junior event last year, he may have received an intimation of some of the press coverage soon to be coming his way. It was a week after the Beslan school massacre and the New York Post wanted to hear his thoughts on it as somebody who had survived the Dunblane shooting ("Without question, the worst day of my life," said Judy).

The comparisons with Henman began to be wheeled out, too. "He's getting old," said Andy — which is probably how Henman does look if you're 18 years old. "I'd love to do what he's done with a bit less pressure from the media."

Since then, that kind of attention has multiplied exponentially. Julie Burchill recently described Andy as looking like something out of *Trainspotting*. He has been called a "slovenly teenager" for his loose-fitting kit and compared to Harry Enfield's character Kevin.

"Friends" of the family have been quoted talking about Judy and Willie's divorce. Her parents told reporters that the long separations of the tennis circuit had driven them apart.

Andy's love life received a similar treatment. He had, it was said, split up with Tatjana Priachin, a German girl who went to the same tennis academy as him in Barcelona.

"He's a real gentleman," she was quoted as saying. "He's gorgeous, tall and sweet. But we were always apart. Tennis had to come first." It was even claimed he had a picture of Maria Sharapova on his bedroom wall.

For the most part he seems to have dealt with this sort of thing well, joking with reporters at his press conference that the female attention was the best part of his success, and claiming he had turned down a fan's marriage proposal by saying he was too young.

Judy's response has been to try to ignore it. "You've got to get used to people poking around in your private life," she says. "Andy does need to be on his guard. But one of the good things for him is he's based abroad, so outside of Wimbledon he shouldn't get bothered so much."

In retrospect, Andy's decision to go to the Sanchez-Casal Academy in Barcelona at 15 years of age may have been the best move of his career. His outsider status should serve him well, insulating him from some of the loonier attention lavished on Henman.

That he has spent so long in Spain also, perhaps, sheds a little light on his relationship with his mother. Reading Judy describe the time she spent with Andy at Wimbledon, you might conclude she was rather over-indulgent towards him.

It's not just the laundry and £3-a-pop frappuccinos. She describes letting him sleep late, folding his trousers, ordering chicken pizza for him while he lounges on the sofa watching an Adam Sandler film, running to the chemist for a thermometer to make sure his bath is exactly 37 degrees, as prescribed by the physio. Even she jokes:

"I'll spoil the lad if I'm not careful."

But this claustrophobic domestic vignette is only part of the picture. For much of the year, Andy is in Barcelona (when he first went to the academy, he took to it so well he hardly wanted to go home for Christmas), and Judy does not always travel with him to tournaments.

The game at junior level seems to be full of pushy parents. Was she ever one of them?
"Absolutely not. When my two boys were going through the junior ranks, I was the Scottish national coach and I think that made me more relaxed. Sometimes I'd be driving the minibus and there would be 11 or 12 children, which I think deflected a lot of the pressure."

The only reason she was with Andy for four weeks was that he had split from his previous coach, Pato Alvarez, shortly before the French Open. If she does spoil him a little, it's not because she's afraid to cut the apron strings, but because it's rare to see him for any length of time.

"Sometimes it's quite nice to have him around, actually," she says, jokily but with an underlying tenderness. "For me, it's a rare treat to spend four weeks with him on the road."

Realising that Andy's first senior Wimbledon was likely to be a big story, she tried to give him some security by renting a flat in Wimbledon for four weeks, "so he wouldn't just be alone in a hotel room. I'm there to make the food and to keep him company in the evenings". The fact that it was a basement flat with no mobile phone reception was one of the attractions.

If Judy's cooking paid dividends, then so did her attention on the court. Her secret mission to video and analyse the training session of Georg Bastl, Andy's first-round opponent, was a crucial part of his downfall and earned her the tag "spy mum".

It bodes well for Andy's future success that, despite his sometimes shambolic, dragged-through-a-tennis-net-backwards appearance, he seems to have inherited his mother's meticulousness where it matters.

When he lost to Nalbandian he was so mentally and physically drained that he sat in the changing room unable to move for 10 minutes.

"It was a bit odd for me not being able to talk to him," says Judy, "because obviously I'm not allowed in the men's locker room. Then he had to go straight to the physio and on to the press conference."

The next day he was still exhausted, but instead of descending into what would have been an understandable sulk about the biggest defeat of his career to date, he sat down in front of the video to watch the highlights of the match and dissect the weaknesses in his game.

Does Judy think she will see her son win a Grand Slam tournament? "I've no idea," she says, feet on the ground. "I've seen him do it in the juniors, but the seniors is quite a different thing."

But if he fails it shouldn't be because he cracks under the stress of unreasonable parental pressure.

Judy is more Sharon Osbourne than Damir Dokic (Jelena's father, who was famously ejected from a UK tournament for cheering too loudly for his daughter). She may be ambitious, but never blinkered. And as for the penchant for washing dirty laundry in public, I can see the Persil advert now.

Murray puts heart into building on tour success

By **Neil Harman** Tennis Correspondent

Published at 12:00AM, July 6 2005

THE scenery might have shifted from the suffocating embrace of auld England SW19 to the invigorating sea air of New England in the United States, but there was no indication yesterday that Andy Murray had any intention of being blown off the course he has set for a steady climb up the tennis rankings.

Murray, who leapt 99 places to No 213 in the Indesit ATP standings after his successes on grass in the Stella Artois Championships at Queen's Club, West London, and at Wimbledon, maintained his encouraging level of progress yesterday, defeating Gregory

Carraz, of France, ranked No 126, 6-4, 7-5 in the opening round of the Campbell's Hall of Fame Championships in Newport, Rhode Island. Murray will now face another Frenchman after Antony Dupuis beat James Blake, of the United States, 6-2, 6-4.

Even a six-hour delay in his scheduled arrival in the US — he said that the £1,400 that he and Mark Petchey, his coach, saved by flying to two airports rather than catching a direct flight to Boston would gain him brownie points from those who are digging deep to fund him — did not undermine Murray's preparations. He might have had to wait 17 hours for his rackets to arrive, but nothing unnerves this 18-year-old.

After the maelstrom of Wimbledon, the chance for a few hours by themselves, to work on future plans and see how much their ideas meshed, was time well spent for Petchey, who, over the weekend, had to deal with too many people who are eager to question whether they are right for each other.

"We certainly didn't struggle for things to talk about," Petchey said. "It was a great trip, we discussed what he wants to do and where he wants to go. This is only the start of what we both hope will be a tremendous working relationship.

"It was a really nice start today. The courts were low-bouncing, they didn't play to Andy's strengths but he played a solid match and found a way to get through. That is what it is all about. His first outing after the hype of Wimbledon was always going to be difficult. Andy knows this is his third wild card in a row but he hasn't let the previous two events down and he is determined to do as well as he can here."

A quarter-final meeting with Greg Rusedski is still on the cards after the British No 2 and title-holder here fought back from a set down to win his first-round match against Uros Vico, of Italy, 2-6, 6-4, 6-4. Rusedski will now play Robin Vik, of the Czech Republic. Carraz is no mug, he is the doubles champion in Newport and a player who, 15 months ago, was at his highest ranking of No 54. At the 2003 US Open, he defeated Rusedski in a five-set first-round match and his compatriot, Arnaud Clément, a grand-slam finalist, in the second, before losing to Guillermo Coria, of Argentina.

In the aftermath of Wimbledon, it is often difficult to find a rhyme or reason to a player's form. Joachim Johansson, the Swede who knocked out Rusedski in the second round, lost to Fernando González in the third and promptly dismissed his coach, lost in the Bastad Open in his native Sweden to Jan Vacek, of the Czech Republic, whereas Rafael Nadal, the French Open champion, swamped Juan Monaco, of Argentina, for the loss of only two games.

Harrison gives Murray a mountain to climb

Scotland's boxing champion invites the Wimbledon hero to join his fitness regime by running up Ben Nevis. By Camillo Fracassini and Barry Flatman

Published: 10 July 2005

Harrison, aware that Murray's current lack of stamina and resilience appears to be the main question mark over the 18-year-old's ability to compete with tennis's elite, has issued an invitation to his Highland training camp for the boxing-obsessed fellow Scot. The gruelling prospect of hill-running wearing 50lb backpacks, shadow boxing, sparring and intensive weight training appeals to Murray, who two weeks ago watched Floyd Mayweather's WBA light-welterweight title victory against Arturo Gatti in the US until almost 5am following his Wimbledon demise to David Nalbandian.

Harrison's father and trainer, Peter, maintained: "While tennis players and boxers may seem different, they have a lot in common. Both sports are one-on-one and they both involve the transfer of energy through the arm into the hand, either to hit somebody or to strike a ball. Boxing training is the hardest training you can get, it makes you physically tough and mentally tough. When amateur boxers turn professional they really have to work on going the longer distance. Andy has been used to playing three sets and we would help him go longer, work for three or four hours."

Murray has received similar offers of assistance from Olympic and Commonwealth Games gold medalist Allan Wells and Frank Dick, the former director of coaching with the British Athletics Federation who has tennis experience after working with Boris Becker and Marat Safin. Though the Dunblane youngster is more than grateful for all the interest shown in him, both Murray's coach, Mark Petchey, and his parents realise the need for a fitness trainer versed in the techniques and requirements specific to tennis. "I think that is the most important thing," said Judy, his mother. "Andy will jump at the chance of spending a few days in the company of a boxer he reveres, but we are looking for a full-time fitness expert who is experienced in the tennis scene and can travel."

Initial talks have already taken place between Petchey and the leading candidate, London-based Kenyan Kieron Vorster, who spent three years ensuring Tim Henman was one of the fittest tennis players on the ATP circuit and previously coached South Africa's Wayne Ferreira to a place in the world's top 10.

"I'm waiting to hear a bit more from Petch but the prospect of working on Andy's fitness obviously appeals," said Vorster, who is free to spend time on the road with Murray and at

his Barcelona training base. “Andy’s not unfit, but he’s still growing and there are clearly things that need to be addressed like his stamina and the cramping issue. With the experience I have, I feel I can do a worthwhile job because tennis has a different intensity to other sports and there is a high level of specialisation.”

Vorster was integral in the introduction of Murray to the Frenchman Jean Pierre Bryuree, who is contracted by the LTA to work 30 weeks a year as the specialist fitness advisor with top players such as Greg Rusedski, and also works independently with Henman when the British No 1 is at home. However, constant travel is difficult for Bryuree, whose main income comes from being a private fitness and injury consultant to Chelsea owner Roman Abramovich.

Murray is currently with Petchey in California for next week’s \$75,000 Challenger event in Aptos, where the player has been awarded a wild card. His opening-round win over Gregory Carraz in the Newport, Rhode Island tournament is guaranteed to improve his current world ranking of 213 to a new personal best. oRusedski reaches final, Sports Round-up, page 28

Tennis: Scot aims at big time

British tennis hope Andy Murray can test himself against the best in the world, writes Barry Flatman

Published: 17 July 2005

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Murray’s progress to today’s final of the Aptos Challenger in northern California has not only guaranteed sufficient ranking points to enter the world’s top 200 for the first time — he will also overtake Alex Bogdanovic, Arvind Parmar and Mark Hilton to become Britain’s third-highest player when the ATP’s latest list is released tomorrow.

The 18-year-old’s position could be much higher if he maximises the opportunity afforded by the wild card he has been handed into next week’s \$575,000 RCA Championships in Indianapolis following the withdrawal of second seed Agassi, due to sciatic nerve problems.

Given his form at Queen’s, then at Wimbledon, last week’s event at Newport, Rhode Island and on the hard courts of Aptos, Murray will be confident as he goes into his first-round match with Brazil’s Flavio Saretta.

The South American has not won on concrete since last October. Murray, in contrast, has made an almost seamless transition from grass to cement, reaching his first semi-final on the second-tier Challenger circuit at Aptos, near Santa Cruz, with four straight-sets victories.

Murray was too good for the 174th-ranked American Bobby Reynolds and moved through to his first Challenger final with a 6-4 6-3 win. Today, he faces Rajeev Ram, a 21-year-old right-hander, who at 291 in the world is ranked considerably lower than the fast-rising Murray.

Murray and coach Mark Petchey intended to head down Highway One for next week's Challenger event in Tarzana Park, in northern Santa Monica. Instead, they will head east for the infinitely more lucrative opening tournament in the US Open series. Top seed Andy Roddick is intent on his third successive Indianapolis trophy and Rusedski, champion in 2002, is seeded seventh and gets a first-round bye.

Murray rises to challenge with tournament win

By **Neil Harman**, Tennis Correspondent

Published at 12:00AM, July 19 2005

ANDY MURRAY has won his first ATP Challenger event, risen 41 places to No 164 in the world rankings, become Britain's official No 3, received his seventh wild card of the year and flown straight to the RCA Championships in Indianapolis, where Andy Roddick is the top seed. A place in the qualifying event for next month's US Open is a certainty and the organisers may offer him a spot in the main draw proper as a reciprocation for James Blake, the American, being granted one into Wimbledon.

Of the 33 British men in the world's top 1,000, the rankings of 20 improved last week and as three more, including Tim Henman and Greg Rusedski, were stationary, so why not celebrate signs of buoyancy? And of those 33, ten are playing in group one in the LTA Summer County Cup at Devonshire Park, Eastbourne, this week, an event many in high places regard as an unnecessary distraction but which has been popular since before Fred Perry was a twinkle in his parents' eye.

Perry played in the Inter-County hard-court event in Gloucester in 1931 and remembered how much it irked him that he received his international colours before being called up for his county, such was the strength in depth of the Middlesex men's team 75 years ago. They are in group three in Cambridge, one of the seven sites around the country this week reverberating to the glorious sights and sounds of doubles with no umpires and no line judges, where the players' sense of fair play is almost as imperative as that of volleying.

Murray should be persuaded to play next year if North of Scotland are promoted for the first time to group one. When one former international prowling the grounds yesterday was reminded of Perry's appearance in Inter-County Week, he said: "All our Davis Cup players did (play in the tournament) then." It bore a rasping reference to today's indifference.

The group one debutants this year are Hertfordshire, whose non-playing captain, Jeff Wayne, produced *The War of the Worlds* and was instrumental in the rise of David

Essex to iconic rock status in the 1970s and 1980s. *Gonna Make You a Star* was among their collaborative hits and those bidding for places in the British tennis constellation can use this week to important effect.

One of Wayne's selections is Neil Bamford, a 23-year-old from Brookmans Park, who demonstrated brilliant possibilities as a teenager but found the lifestyle too much to his liking and took three years to make up his mind to come back. He won his first ATP Futures event in Frinton-on-Sea, Essex, on Sunday and was slugging it out amid the gusts that tore at the backdrops and the ball tosses yesterday.

Bamford and David Corrie (whose world singles ranking took the biggest British leap of all, 122 places to No 1,003) combined to win the Frinton doubles title and such was the rich texture of their form that it carried across to Eastbourne. In the second round of matches against Yorkshire, last year's runners-up and the 2003 champions, Bamford and Corrie routed David Sherwood and Jason Torpey for the loss of three games. That is the same Sherwood who made his Davis Cup debut for Great Britain in Israel in March and never refuses the opportunity to appear for his county when the call comes. For that is what this week is about, making yourself available, giving your all, doing it for the colours. Although bitterly upset at his form, Sherwood still had words of encouragement for his less-experienced team-mates when Yorkshire attempted, unsuccessfully, to dig themselves from a deepening first-day hole as Hertfordshire won 5-4.

At least no one has suggested that County Week should mess with the rules as the ATP, the men's governing body, has in declaring that it is "enhancing" doubles with no-advantage games and sets being played to five games rather than six from the US Open onwards. Its hierarchy should travel to Eastbourne and argue the case. They would be hounded out of town.

Vanquished Murray has sense of belonging

From Simon Cambers in Cincinnati

Published at 12:00AM, August 18 2005

ANDY MURRAY has come a long way in the past seven weeks, winning two Challenger Series events and moving to within range of the world's top 100, all at the age of 18. Marat Safin, the Australian Open champion from Russia, eventually proved to be a step too far with a 6-4, 1-6, 6-1 victory in the second round of the Western & Southern Financial Masters yesterday, but not before the Briton had given him an almighty scare. British representation may have slipped from three to none last night, with defeats for Tim Henman and Greg Rusedski, but Murray at least showed that he deserves his place among the world's best.

Having more than justified his wild-card entry into his first Masters Series event by beating Taylor Dent, of the United States, in the first round, Murray, the world No 132, took the second set off the world No 4 and can carry plenty of confidence to his next port of call, the qualifying competition for the US Open.

Safin, in his first tournament since Wimbledon after an injury to his left knee, was not at his best, but Murray played well enough to suggest that a place in the top 100 will come sooner rather than later. When you consider that Henman did not break into the top 150 until after his 20th birthday, his progress is exceptional.

Safin was always going to be a tougher proposition than Dent and the Russian bullied his way to an early lead, only to be pegged back to 3-3. Another break in the seventh game, though, was enough for the Russian to go on and take the set.

At that point, it seemed the vastly more experienced Russian would ease to victory, but as he lost his way, Murray broke in the second and fourth games of the set to level the match. For a moment, the unthinkable seemed possible, but Safin shut the door on Murray with an early break and in the end was a comfortable winner.

Henman, whose first-round win over Nicolas Massu, of Chile, was his first success since Wimbledon, suffered another disappointing defeat when he was beaten 6-4, 6-4 by Juan Ignacio Chela, of Argentina. One break in each set was enough to give Chela victory but Henman will need to improve on a listless effort if he is to perform well at the US Open, where he reached the semi-finals last year.

Rusedski will be kicking himself after losing 1-6, 7-5, 6-4 to a below-par Lleyton Hewitt, the No 3 seed from Australia, but he will take solace from the fact that he is almost certain to be included among the 32 seeds at the US Open, starting on August 29. That will keep him away from the big names in the first two rounds at Flushing Meadows, where he reached the final in 1997, but with Hewitt recovering from the virus that caused him to withdraw from his opening match at the Rogers Cup in Montreal last week, Rusedski let slip a golden chance to oust one of the biggest stars.

“I think I had more of the chances, especially in the first 2½ sets,” Rusedski said. “I think I got the tactics and the mix particularly well. Maybe one or two opportunities I should have chipped and charged on.

“But it’s been a good month for me. It’s going to give me a few days off now, which is always a bonus. I’ll be in the top 32 (at the US Open) and I think my preparation for the US Open is very, very good.”

Rusedski will go to Flushing Meadows full of confidence, having successfully defended his title in Newport, Rhode Island, and reached the semi-finals in Indianapolis and last week in Montreal.

“I thought I’d have this run earlier in the year, with all the work I did in November and December,” he said. “I lost a lot of tough matches but it was just a matter of time before everything came good. And now I’m just really excited and looking forward to the US Open.”

Tennis: Injured Murray faces race against time

The Scot still hopes to qualify for the US Open but is wary of aggravating the shoulder muscle strain he picked up in Cincinnati last week. By Barry Flatman

Published: 21 August 2005

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Had the 18-year-old Scot been awarded a wild-card entry into the 128-strong main draw, he would have had at least 12 days to rest the shoulder muscle he injured against the Australian Open champion last Wednesday in the Cincinnati Masters.

However, the United States Tennis Federation granted nine of its 10 wild-card entries to American players, the other being given to 1990 finalist Mark Philippoussis. So Murray, who has not had a competitive break since Wimbledon seven weeks ago, faces the prospect of playing three matches in four days from the start of qualifying at New York's Flushing Meadows on Tuesday.

Murray and coach Mark Petchey travelled from Cincinnati to Manhattan last Friday, but practice has been out of the question over the weekend and the pair will wait for the arrival of the Lawn Tennis Association's fitness consultant Jean Pierre Bryuree tomorrow, when the player will undergo a close examination of his injury.

"The shoulder certainly has not recovered as well as we hoped," said Petchey. "Andy has not picked up a racket since walking off court from losing to Safin, and he's been icing his shoulder for much

of the time since. But he's still in quite a bit of pain and has had trouble sleeping, which is unlike him.

"Jean Pierre is an expert at assessing injuries and what effects they might have, but clearly there is no point in any undue aggravation of injury just for the sake of playing one tournament.

"It's clear to everyone that Andy will have lots more opportunities over the course of his career and it's not worth taking the chance of doing more damage that could potentially rule him out for much of what's left in 2005."

Murray was hopeful of being awarded one of the wild-card entries after winning the Boys' Championship at last year's US Open and rising to a career-high ranking of 123rd on the ATP computer after being placed 357th at the beginning of the British grasscourt season less than three months ago.

"It was disappointing to hear that Andy wasn't going to get a wild card but the news wasn't totally unexpected," said Petchey. "

Roger Federer reached today's Cincinnati final after defeating Robby Ginepri 4-6 7-5 6-4. Lleyton Hewitt was last night facing Andy Roddick in the other semi-final. oMaria Sharapova will become the world's top-ranked woman player tomorrow, despite pulling out of the JPMorgan Chase Open at the quarter-final stage with an injured chest muscle. The 18-year-old overtakes America's Lindsay Davenport, who didn't play in Toronto, to become the first Russian woman to top the rankings

Tennis: 'I thought the people at Wimbledon would have wanted to support me'

After qualifying for this week's US Open, Andy Murray expresses his anger at the British tennis establishment

BARRY FLATMAN IN NEW YORK

Published: 28 August 2005

- [Comment \(0\)](#)
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Murray, who now takes his place in the tournament's 128-strong main draw against the more experienced Romanian Andrei Pavel, is disappointed by the lack of support the Wimbledon organisers have shown him at the year's last Grand Slam event, dismayed by widespread suggestions that he is not yet fit enough to play best-of-five matches and disgusted by less than complimentary comments about his abilities by former British Davis Cup captain Tony Pickard and Elena Baltacha's coach, Alan Jones.

As John McEnroe illustrated, anger is a tool that can be utilised to heighten the intensity of a tennis match. With an injured shoulder that has become more painful as the week has

progressed, the 18-year-old from Dunblane refused to drop a set in a three-match progression through qualifying, rounding off with a 6-0 7-6 win over the Ecuadorian Giovanni Lapentti. "I don't think I got a lot of credit for Wimbledon about how tough it was and physic-ally I wasn't in the best of shape," said Murray, who is guaranteed to move a step closer towards his aim of admission to the world's top 100 players this year.

"I know a lot of people like Tony Pickard and Alan Jones said I was soft. I proved a lot of people wrong this week. I'm 18 and I don't need that at this stage in my career.

"Every single person in Britain is so negative about the young players. All they are waiting to do is just put them down, and I think this week I have showed that possibly I might go on and do well."

Murray's feisty single-minded temperament is apparent to anybody who spends more than a couple of minutes in his company and he may become more obstreperous with age. But if he takes the court against 71st-ranked Pavel fired by the same sense of injustice he showed against Dudi Sela of Israel, Italy's Paolo Lorenzi and Lapentti, then the 31-year-old who lost in the first round of the French and the second at the Australian and Wimbledon might make a fourth early exit.

"Wimbledon's attitude has been a big disappointment," said Murray, who believes the All England Club's lack of interest in striking a deal with the US Tennis Federation has done him a disservice and resulted in him not being given a wild card into the draw that would have allowed him a week's rest to ease the shoulder problems.

"When I heard the US Open wanted to give me the wild card and Wimbledon didn't want to do a trade, it made me quite cross. I thought the people at Wimbledon would have wanted to support me after what I did at their tournament and have subsequently carried on my good form over the next six or seven weeks. I generated a bit of interest in tennis around Britain and would have hoped they would like to see me get into the top 100 as quickly as possible, meaning they don't need to give me a wild card into their tournament next time."

Murray is 122 in the world after winning Challenger events in Aptos, California, and Binghampton, New York. A win over Pavel would probably pitch him into a match with former world No 1 and French champion Juan Carlos Ferrero.

Although he is spending the weekend undergoing laser and manipulative treatment to try to ease his shoulder, the Scot is aware that Pavel is not one to strike fear into a Flushing Meadows rookie. Since reaching the final on the Munich clay courts in April, Pavel has won only three of his 13 matches and has suffered six first-round defeats. Although he was ranked a career-high 13th last October, things have been on the downward slope since.

Murray, meanwhile, insists his shoulder will not taint his lifelong ambitions for an event where he was junior champion a year ago. "I am quite a strong person and I don't give up when I'm hurt," he maintained, the troublesome joint swathed in cling-film and ice. "I knew it was just a muscular thing with a lot of inflammation and there was going to be pain.

“But after having the MRI scan which showed there was no tear, I didn’t think I was going pull anything because I feel I have got smooth shots. Things haven’t got any better. The shoulder has got worse as the week has gone on but it was something that I had to put to the back of my mind. The US Open is a tournament I have always dreamt of playing the main draw in. It’s my favourite tournament. So if I was feeling sore, it was not going to make a difference.”

Murray looks a much more battle-hardened player than he did at Wimbledon. His legs appear far stronger, although he still moves with ease. Most importantly his self-belief has spiralled. Some of his play against Lapentti, the younger of the brothers who five years ago inflicted Britain’s most humiliating Davis Cup defeat when he recovered from a two-set deficit to beat Arvind Parmar in the deciding fifth rubber at Wimbledon, was sublime.

Mark Petchey, his coach, said: “This week hasn’t told me anything that I didn’t already know, but he’s been vindicated in some ways. He’d done enough to earn a wild card and allow himself a week off to get the shoulder right, but after not getting one, he’s knuckled down and got through a tough section.”

New York fans are never reluctant to voice immediate impressions and in a packed crowd that would not have looked out of place on the first day on the tournament proper tomorrow, a voice bawled out: “Hey, this kid has got it all.”

However Jones, under whose charge Baltacha managed to win just one game in her attempt at qualifying, and Pickard, once coach to former world No 1 Stefan Edberg but now a critic of many aspects of British tennis, might care to argue.

Several months ago, Pickard offended Murray’s mother, Judy, by questioning why her son was based in Spain and not playing domestic tournaments. “He was very rude and thinks he knows what is best for everyone,” said Murray. “He asked her what I thought I was doing hiding by not playing small British events. My mum said I was happy and doing well where I was but he kept going on. Just before walking off, he whispered in my mum’s ear, ‘I know about the men’s Tour, you know. I used to coach Stefan Edberg’. How rude is that? “I do have respect for what he achieved with Edberg, who was a great player, but I thought he could have come up to me and said ‘well done’ after he coached Radek Stapanek at Wimbledon and I beat him. But he didn’t. He just said to my coach, Mark Petchey, that he thought I’d played a bad match.”

Murray calls for calm as he collects cult following

From [Neil Harman](#), Tennis correspondent, in New York

Published at 12:00AM, August 29 2005

THEY'RE just wild about Andy. And not necessarily Roddick. Though the 2003 US Open champion has a following here that bridges generations, it is last year's junior champion who is in the throes of establishing a minor cult. To get to Andy Murray in the grounds of Flushing Meadows often involves beating back a phalanx of kids eager to plug in to the electricity he brings to his sport.

The older folk feel a keen sense of affinity with Murray, too, if conversation during his final qualifying-round qualifying victory over Giovanni Lapentti, of Ecuador, is anything to go by. "We like this kid," sums it up.

Murray's spirit has not gone unnoticed by the powers that be at the USTA, for Arlen Kantarian, the man who has infused American tennis with innovative and pyrotechnic nous, is keen to see his first round against Andrei Pavel — and the Romanian, with respect, is not exactly a draw card — given a decent billing on one of the Open's show courts. "Let's get him out there in front of as many people as we can because New Yorkers will love the kind of drive he brings to the sport," the chief executive of US professional tennis, said.

The player himself is trapped between wanting to be allowed to concentrate on what he feels is the best way to improve himself — away from madding crowds and prying eyes — yet thrilled to be out here in a spotlight all of his own making. He is too young to become distracted by what he regards as the injustice of the All England Club's reluctance to support his desire for a wild card into the main draw and get quite so hot under the collar at what certain people might or might not be saying about him.

Indeed, the more obstacles placed in his path, the more desire he has to blow them away. Murray is fired up, in his own deadpan way. The more immediate concern is whether his injured right shoulder can stand the rigours of best-of-five set tennis here and in Geneva a month hence, when Great Britain will cross swords with one Roger Federer in the Davis Cup.

"I think qualifying for the Open as an 18-year-old is a pretty big deal," Murray said. "I don't think many guys can say that they've done that. I'm getting myself closer to the top 100, which was my goal at the start of the year. I know everybody thought I was stupid when I said it."

As for the degree of interest in him? "I've grown up reading everything about Tim Henman and I'm still in shock that he comes across as a failure because of what he's done and what he's achieved as a tennis player," Murray said. "And when I'm just starting out as an 18-year-old, why is there so much pressure on somebody my age to do so well? I'd rather everybody just left me alone to concentrate on my tennis."

While he keeps winning and keeps improving in the manner he is, though, it is going to be difficult to ignore him. Roddick, the other Andy, said of him last night: "I like what he's doing because he's committed to it. He's been here in the States for two months, playing Challengers. It was a little bit much what happened at Wimbledon, but for him to go back to basics after all that attention, that was impressive."

Last Briton Murray suffers epic victory

From Neil Harman, Tennis Correspondent in New York

Published at 12:00AM, August 31 2005

ANDY MURRAY is a young man who would spill everything to win a tennis match and on an increasingly convulsed Grand Stand court at Flushing Meadows last night, he did that and more. Murray came from behind to win his first match at the US Open against Andrei Pavel, of Romania, in a fifth set that contained a series of remarkable incidents. Murray won 6-3, 3-6, 3-6, 6-1, 6-4 in three hours and 19 minutes and his reaction, as in the final round of qualifying, was to hold an index finger to his lips. No one can question his courage again.

Coming back out to serve at 2-1 in the fifth, Murray twice vomited on the side of the court. "I'm the sickest I have ever felt in my life," he said, as he was helped back to his chair. There was a 15-minute delay as the court was cleared and Murray took on plenty of fluid. He immediately dropped serve but regained the initiative in the seventh game when, having mimicked Murray's attempt to rouse the crowd — Pavel actually said: "It works" — the Romanian was stunned by an overrule from Tony Nimmons, the umpire, on a baseline call.

Such was his annoyance that Pavel, having dropped serve, was docked a penalty point and Murray began the eighth game 15-0 up. The crowd went wild and threatened to turn totally on to Pavel's side but the Scot would not be fazed and, having saved one break point and getting only one first serve over the net when serving for the match, stayed strong for another famous victory.

It was Britain's lone success on an otherwise dark day.

Tim Henman said the pain was like being prodded with a knife. Greg Rusedski's game was sliced apart by a level of shot-making from James Blake that suggested a potential third-round match here against Rafael Nadal is a classic in the making. Together, the British pair prepared to fly home — Rusedski dashed straight to JFK last night — quite possibly one place apart in the world rankings.

Henman, stricken with muscle problems in his back, never had a chance and lost 6-4, 6-2, 6-2 to Fernando Verdasco, of Spain, while Rusedski had a point for the first set and two for the second before being picked apart 7-5, 7-6, 6-3 by the resurgent Blake. The end of Henman's interest and the consequent ranking damage — a drop to somewhere between 25 and 30 from his present No 12 equates to a nine-year low —

came in the depressing manner many prophesied given his lack of form and the fact he was struggling to move freely after 15 minutes.

Rusedski knew he had to reach the third round to overhaul Henman as the British No 1 but may not have to wait too long for it to happen. He had begun this event at No 30 and should not suffer unduly, for his result matched his past two US Opens, a first-round loss. Henman, a semi-finalist last year, will forfeit 1,110 ranking points, dropping him to what is likely to be No 29.

A first-round exit here to go with those in the third round at the Australian Open, the second in Paris and the second at Wimbledon makes this one of the unhappiest periods of his career. At this event a year ago, Henman faced Federer in the semi-finals and put up a respectable performance. Since then, precious little has gone right, either in terms of his health. Rusedski had fewer reasons to be downhearted. "It is fractions you are talking about in this sport," he said. "James came out and hit some fantastic shots."

Jeremy Bates, the Great Britain Davis Cup captain, has announced that Murray is his second singles choice for next month's world group qualifier in Switzerland and that he had no doubt the 18-year-old could play three matches on successive days for the first time in his career. Murray is joined by Rusedski, David Sherwood and Alan Mackin, who made his one appearance against Australia in February, 2003.

Murray's show of guts earns him band of admirers

From [Neil Harman](#), Tennis Correspondent in New York

Published at 12:00AM, September 1 2005

A SIMPLE pump of the fist was Andy Murray's response to discovering that three of the five-man Great Britain Davis Cup squad to play Switzerland in three weeks' time come from Scotland. No more needed to be said, which is what it is like watching Murray play his tennis. No explanations, no frilly analysis, just sport at its most straightforward. Those people at home still glued to their televisions at 12.45 yesterday morning were treated to a sight they have not been privileged to witness in the recent history of the British game. And that does not just mean watching a man throw up twice on court, then choke in the metaphorical sense, before steeling himself to a famous US Open victory in five riveting sets.

It was the air of the 18-year-old from Dunblane, the urgency, the gestures, the ferocious competitive spirit, the control, the way he plays as if being 40-0 down at any time is an insult to his integrity, and how that messes with his opponents' minds; as the vanquished Andrei Pavel, the world No 39 from Romania, said: "I had the feeling all the time I was winning the points but somehow I was losing; it was a strange situation."

At the point of his 6-3, 3-6, 3-6, 6-1, 6-4 victory, Murray once more held one finger to his lips, a similar gesture to that at the end of his final qualifying-round win, one that admonishes those who have been outrageous enough to doubt his capabilities. If tomorrow he defeats Arnaud Clément, his French second-round opponent, in five sets, Murray says he will repeat the message.

Better strap yourself in for a ride through at least the next five years, when Murray will indulge us with a profusion of exploits as he seeks to carve for himself a place in the upper echelons of the sport, where many experts have begun to predict he is destined. He may not gather as many friends as he does admirers along the way, but he will do what it takes to make it, of that we can be sure.

What is certain is that should he beat Clément, the former Australian Open finalist who, like Murray, qualified here, the Scot will move inside the top 100. That was his target for the end of the year, so he is ahead of the game. He is thriving in the United States, where he has spent the past ten weeks on a procession of short, sharp, shock tennis initiations, winning two Challenger Series events, saving match points, infused and enthused.

But he would not have been able to achieve what he has if the bedrock was not so secure, a game of infinite possibilities because of its structure, its moments of calm, followed by explosions of power, his improving footwork and serve, the stronger legs (if not insides) and the iron resolve. It helps that he does not have to generate the atmosphere he loves so much, for no nation quite loves heart-on-the-sleeve sport as fervently as they do here. "They make so much noise and it's much easier to play when it's like that, even when they're not all for you, because you don't feel you have to please them or you have to win, because they're just enjoying the match," he said. "It's much easier here than in Wimbledon."

And, so far, he is recognised only on the courts of Queens; in downtown Manhattan he is able to stroll the streets anonymously. That may soon change, not least if nicknames such as "The Regurgitator" stick. At the Stella Artois Championships in June, Murray collapsed because he had not drunk enough fluids; here it was because the Lucozade sodium drink, which is supposed to be the antidote to the cramping that beset him in London, reacted powerfully with his pre-match meal. "I felt like I was going to burp," he said. "I suppose I'll find it funny in the morning."

The 15-minute delay was caused by the inability to find things as routine as a mop and a bucket of water. These events can have all the court-drying paraphanelia in the world, but they are not used to dealing with vomit. Mike Morrissey, the British supervisor, said that Murray wanted to continue after the first episode but once he had been sick for a second time, he was advised to sit down and wait for the doctor. The court had to be cleared, wetted, then dried.

There was the semblance of a choke when Murray served for the match, he managed only two of ten first serves and the rest landed halfway up the net. But he saw that through as well and the sick man of British tennis was the toast of the town.

Murray on high road to another landmark

From [Neil Harman](#), Tennis Correspondent, in New York

Published at 12:00AM, September 2 2005

AFTER ten weeks smothering himself in the “can do” culture of North America, Andy Murray is poised on the cusp of a place in the world’s top 100 tennis players. There will be plenty of locals at Flushing Meadows today willing him to yet one more significant stage of what has already been a breathtaking process of development. It is not easy to be low-key here, where everything comes bigger and noisier and structurally more eye-catching than anywhere else in the world.

The 18-year-old, from middle Dunblane in Scotland, is unusually free-and-easy in this frenetic place, possibly because he is such a chilled character that nothing — not even a shunt in a his yellow cab when he smacked into the panel between passenger and driver during the qualifying event — unnerves him that much.

Certainly not a decent billing at a grand-slam championship. Bring it all on. Watching him grow over the past few months is nothing compared to what we are going to be in for as his career unfolds. Murray has not stopped sprouting, either as a man or a player — a situation that makes charting his progress the single greatest fascination in the short term for British tennis.

He towers over Arnaud Clément, of France, his second-round opponent in the US Open, by five inches, but that may not be the end of it.

“We’ve been told that Andy has possibly two more years of growing to do, which is why we have to be so careful with him and his body,” Mark Petchey, his coach, said yesterday. Murray could become a Mario Ancic, who is 6ft 5in, possibly even a Joachim Johansson, at 6ft 6in, though he will never quite be able to look the 6ft 10in Ivo Karlovic straight in the eye.

His sights are set ever higher, although this time, having been what he considers unfairly ridiculed for suggesting he could finish this year inside the top 100, he will not be letting on. “It’s very difficult to say how I’m going to do because I’ve been playing Challengers recently and not week in, week out on the full tour,” Murray said. “But I’ve got a winning record when I have played in it the tour] and if I can maintain that, I’m pretty much certain to be a top 50 player, so I hope my ranking could get pretty high. We’ll have to see because I know it’s not going to be easy. I think I’ll keep what I think to myself, I don’t want anybody to think I’ve got a big head.”

Perishing that thought, Murray knows he must not underestimate Clément, who slid from a top-ten ranking four years ago to No 104 at the end of 2004 but is re-engorged. He is at present currently the ninth-best French player at No 91, which shows how far behind is Britain’s overall development.

Clément runs everything down, he possesses a sharper serve than people give him credit for and has been to the fourth round of the US Open four times, as well as reaching the final of the Australian Open in 2001, when he lost to Andre Agassi. A second long match for Murray is to be expected, but he is in improving shape, both mentally and physically.

He will still be wearing the black ankle brace on his left leg — indeed he may have to wear it for the rest of his career — as a piece of protection. “Look at Andy Roddick, and Lleyton Hewitt, they play with ankle protectors all the time., It is something we will look at when we know exactly how big Andy is going to finish up,” Petchey said. “We have a wobble board with us, which is used to

help to strengthen him and improve his balance, but most of the physical work he has done since we’ve been here has simply been playing matches, which is good because that’s the best exercise of all.”

Petchey, like his charge, could not be happier with the way their relationship has worked since they came together formally after Wimbledon. “It was good to get away because everyone is so positive about Andy here and we both feed off that,” he said.

Murray hobbles out fighting to the very end

From [Neil Harman](#), Tennis Correspondent in New York

Published at 12:00AM, September 3 2005

THERE was the tinge of anti-climax at the end of the US Open journey for Andy Murray last night only because he had had the courage to fight his way back into a match that might have passed by far too quickly for a man with such unswerving belief in himself. The 18-year-old from Dunblane lost 6-2, 7-6, 2-6, 6-7, 6-0 to Arnaud Clément, the Frenchman who was beaten by Fabrice Santoro, his compatriot, in the first round of last year’s French Open in a match of six hours and 33 minutes, the longest in history.

By those standards, four hours and two minutes on Grandstand Court at Flushing Meadows was the equivalent of a 10K run through Central Park. Clément could have gone on longer had it been required; the gas was running thin for Murray, who cared enough not to want to disappear in straight sets. His right leg cramped in the second game of the final set, the soothing balm did not work and he tried to shorten the points, only to find that the 28-year-old Frenchman was in no mood for games.

From the outset, Clément was into a quick-footed stride, whereas Murray, by comparison, looked leaden. Unable to get to where he wanted his feet to take him, the Scot was slow into his shots and missed enough of them by a fraction for the cumulative effect to drain him of early impetus.

The Frenchman had beaten Juan Carlos Ferrero, the Spanish former world No 1 and US Open finalist, in straight sets in the first round and there were signs of the impishness and spirit that had left him last year returning to Clément's game.

He barely missed a trick in the initial stages, which made Murray's task especially difficult. The first gruelling rally of the match ended with Clément completing the opening break of serve, one that he was soon to consolidate to secure the first set in 33 minutes.

Murray spent the changeover between the sets examining the palm of his right hand as if it were betraying him. He had been uncharacteristically quiet during the first set, his first audible contribution arriving on the second point of Clément's first service game, via a screaming forehand winner. Murray believed he would have a second chance to break that serve when, on deuce, there was no call from a forehand that appeared to clean the line. Clément, certain the ball was long, did not play a shot and could not believe the sound of silence that engulfed him.

Under protest, Carlos Ramos, the Portuguese umpire, beckoned the lineswoman forward to the chair, where she told him that, with the sunlight fading, she had not seen the ball bounce. Ramos could do nothing but demand the point be replayed, riling Murray to the extent that he ridiculed "such an awful decision".

Having staved off three break points in the fourth game, Murray was flexing his thighs, as if to suggest he was struggling to find enough life in his legs to counter the scampering purpose of the Frenchman.

The second set looked to be slipping through the teenager's fingers when he lost his service in the eighth game with two double faults, only to take Clément's immediately to love. Three aces in four points sent the set into a tie-break, where a brilliant backhand lob gave Murray a 2-1 lead, but it was the last point he would win as Clément's experience and court savvy were once again telling factors.

Could Murray possibly win two back-to-back five-set matches, only this time, for the first time in his career, from two sets down? He certainly opened the third in a finer groove, looking the more composed in the rallies, a little more settled in his mind and stronger off the ground to the extent that Clément's serve foundered on the third break point in the sixth game. He was to stumble again with a couple of netted forehands as the Scot gave his followers a glimmer of hope.

Tennis: Murray's boot camp

The richly talented young Scot will put the accent on fitness in France in a determined effort to climb up the world rankings

BARRY FLATMAN IN NEW YORK

Published: 4 September 2005

Murray barely had the strength to amble to the net, tug off his baseball cap and shake Arnaud Clement by the hand after what had looked like a magnificent comeback ultimately disintegrated into a sad fifth-set capitulation in the second round of the US Open.

By his own admission the Scot simply “ran out of gas” against the Frenchman, who has experience of such lengthy encounters; his 2004 French Open clash with his compatriot Fabrice Santoro, at 6hr 33min, is the longest match in tennis history.

Clement required just a minute more than four hours to end Murray’s aspirations 6-2 7-6 2-6 6-7 6-0 but in terms of British interest the most relevant moment came after 3hr 42min when Murray succumbed to cramp, called for an on-court trainer and ultimately concluded his “tank was dry”.

“I couldn’t move,” he lamented. “Mentally, I lost it. I just got really, really tired. I found myself completely drained. I’ve learnt a lot about myself the last three months and about my tennis, what I need to work on.”

Murray’s cramp came more than 75 minutes longer into the match than when he spectacularly regurgitated the contents of his stomach in the previous round against the vastly more experienced Andrei Pavel; and 90 minutes longer than when fatigue struck against David Nalbandian in his maiden five-setter at Wimbledon.

So the learning curve, so regularly spoken about in connection with this hugely talented 18-year-old from Dunblane, is undeniably on the rise. And 10 weeks on the road are bound to take their toll on even the most practised of travellers.

But the time has come to tackle Murray’s apparent physical deficiencies, so in the two weeks between leaving New York and linking up with the British Davis Cup team for the World Group qualifying tie with Switzerland in Geneva, he will travel to France for the most meticulously scientific assessments.

Jean Pierre Bruyere, his physical consultant who also provides a similar service for Roman Abramovich and some of his key Chelsea players, has offered two options: the university at Dijon where Formula One teams such as Ferrari, Renault and Minardi monitor drivers, or the revered Institut National du Sport et de l’Education Physique in Bois de Vincennes just outside Paris.

“Fitness-wise is he good or bad?” said Bruyere. “I don’t know. “But frankly I am not surprised Andy has been experiencing these problems. He is still a young, developing guy who is not used to this level of competition. What I do know is that emotions are a large part of the cramping. During Wimbledon so much was made about the fitness but we are talking about a teenage boy who could still go out and play the junior tournament next week if he so desired.”

Bruyere said the assessment would look into Murray's levels of speed, agility, vision, bone and joint strength as well as endurance and stamina: "The energy needs to be managed better and it is very difficult for these boys. It's hard to go out there and play at a tense level for long periods. Four hours is a long time to play. People are bound to make comparisons with (Rafael) Nadal but he is the strongest teenager most people have ever seen in tennis since Boris Becker.

"Andy has become a massive tennis prospect for a country looking for somebody to eventually take over from Tim (Henman) and Greg (Rusedski). The mental aspect of the kid is difficult. He may look very relaxed when he talks but inside he is boiling all the time. That takes it toll because the energy he is expending with that emotion is enormous."

Murray and his coach Mark Petchey are pleased with the less demonstrative approach on court that has been nurtured on the long trip around North America. Now Petchey must take the role of physical taskmaster — not an easy one if Murray's former coach Leon Smith is to be believed: he maintains the youngster's idea of purgatory is a couple of hours on a running track or in a gym. Petchey knows what lies in store for his charge. "Hours of training, hours of running," he said. "There is no magic secret and it's going to be up to me to motivate Andy to get out there and work. We are obviously going to do these tests in France and make it scientific but at the end of the day nothing is going to beat putting the miles in.

"Now it's time to take stock of everything we have learnt on the trip, improve certain areas of his tennis and obviously work hard on the fitness side.

"Again Andy has showed his fighting qualities and for the most part all the tennis elements are there. The bottom line is he's still not fit enough and that's why he fell away physically in the fifth and that's what we are going to address."

After his expected singles debut in the Davis Cup, Murray plans to play in tournaments in Bangkok and Tokyo. And by the time of the Australian Open next January he intends to be sufficiently well-ranked to gain direct entry into the draw rather than play the qualifying rounds or rely on a wild card.

Murray put his US Open exit defeat into perspective when he said: "I'm not as disappointed as I was after the Nalbandian match at Wimbledon because I proved to myself in the match against Pavel that I was fine to go five sets. I learnt I could cope with guys that are in the top 100 in the world and I'm good enough to get there."

Of that there can be little debate, but Murray could do a lot worse than ponder repeatedly on the words of Clement. "He has lot of qualities, but he still has to work to improve his game," said the Frenchman. "He didn't play the last set. He didn't move during the final 20 minutes. His main faults are his fitness."

Murray's French leave fits in perfectly

From Neil Harman, Tennis Correspondent, in New York

Published at 12:00AM, September 5 2005

THE phone calls from Scottish newspapers seeking accreditation for the second week of the US Open have ceased and the saltires have been packed away, but the analysis into where Andy Murray goes from here is only just beginning. The first five matches of few grand-slam careers have generated so much fascination.

After ten weeks of constant travel, matches and progress, Murray will spend a bit of time before the Davis Cup match against Switzerland relaxing while those charged with shaping his future take stock. How much should he play between now and the end of the year, where and with whom for company? Everything needs to be handled just right, for this is, arguably, the most important period of his development.

That Murray is heading for France for a complete assessment at the National Institute for Sport and Physical Education is apt, given that the French federation is planning to send full-time physiotherapists into the field to supplement the burgeoning careers of Richard Gasquet, who reached the fourth round here yesterday, and Paul-Henri Mathieu. Patrice Hagelauer, the former LTA director of performance who returned to his native country two years ago, regards such an investment as critical.

"These are the players who we believe will be challenging in the second week of grand-slams in the next few years I am sure and we have to give them every assistance," Hagelauer said. "The game is changing, the rackets and the way they are strung means the ball is hit so much harder, and the players need to be in the best physical shape all the time."

It is a programme that the British game should adopt. Whether Murray is backed by the LTA or private companies is beside the point. The 18-year-old deserves all the help that money can buy and the return will be enormous.

Gaël Monfils, another hugely talented French player, is part of a group backed by Arnaud Lagardère, a media entrepreneur who pays for the travel and upkeep of the player and his coaches, Thierry Champion and Pierre Barbarin. Are there not individuals or companies who have cash to burn in Britain who would want their name associated with helping Murray to make the most of his prodigious talents?

Hagelauer, like everyone else here, is intrigued by what happens next. He was in Arnaud Clément's corner on Friday night, but had more than half an eye on his opponent. "What I would say is that Andy is a fabulous talent," he said. "If I could offer a piece of advice, it would be that he does not get involved so much with arguing because that takes a lot out of him."

The thought of the Scot challenging the likes of Gasquet, Monfils, Rafael Nadal, Tomas Berdych, the Czech Republic player who gave Andre Agassi a run for his dollars in the third round, Novak Djokovic, a tremendous talent from Serbia and Montenegro, and the

rejuvenated James Blake at the top of the game is impossible to resist. Murray was not born when Agassi made his debut at the Open in 1986. That the 35-year-old is reckoned to be fitter now than ever is proof of the need for a totally trustworthy physical trainer to attend to the fitness details.

Gil Reyes has been at Agassi's side for 15 years and they make every tennis-related decision together, as in bypassing Wimbledon this year to rest an inflamed sciatic nerve that caused him to limp out of the French Open.

"My game has had to evolve with the rest of the game," Agassi said. "It has become a lot more aggressive than it used to be, but the most important things that have changed about my game is my training and scheduling. I had to get smarter with those decisions to help my body and my mind."

Lack of fitness is cramping Murray

By Matthew Syed

Published at 12:00AM, September 6 2005

Our correspondent offers the rising British star some advice about his ailments

ANDY MURRAY raised his index finger to his lips after his five-set, first-round victory over Andrei Pavel at the US Open last week in the apparent belief that he had silenced those critics who had questioned his fitness. This is the same Andy Murray who, 72 hours later, pitifully capitulated against Arnaud Clément after suffering cramp in the second game of the final set. The 18-year-old barely moved for the remaining four games of the match.

This is not the first time that the likeable Scot has been let down by his body. On his ATP Tour debut in Barcelona against Jan Hernych in April, he was looking good until derailed by cramp. At the Stella Artois Championships against Thomas Johansson in June he was again scuppered by muscle spasms.

Then, at Wimbledon, he blew a two-set lead against David Nalbandian after getting, you guessed it, cramp. Even in his victorious match at Flushing Meadows, Murray vomited twice during the fifth set — not the surest sign of somebody in tiptop condition.

He is, apparently, planning to go to the National Institute for Sport and Physical Education in Paris for tests. He should save himself the train fare. Anyone who saw the youngster prostrate on the ground at Queen's Club this summer, his body seemingly in spasm after only three sets of grass-court tennis, could provide him with the diagnosis: you are not fit enough, laddie.

Word has it that, although Murray will happily hit tennis balls for hours, he is far less enamoured of the gym and running track. It is an indictment of Mark Petchey, his coach, that he has yet to resolve this glaring problem.

Judy, Andrew's mother, has reportedly organised a meeting next week with Frank Dick, the former head of British athletics, but this will achieve nothing unless Murray stops

messing around and actually gets down to some lung-busting cardio sessions. Unless he is prepared to go through the pain barrier in training, he will continue to endure the humiliation of being unable to last his matches.

And it is humiliating. I suffered from cramp at exactly the same stage of my sporting development. In 1989, I collapsed in dramatic circumstances in the deciding game of the semi-finals of the English Table Tennis Championships — at the time one of the biggest matches of my career — and suffered the ignominy of standing there like a geriatric, unable to move for fear of further excruciating spasms in my left quad.

I was 18 and my response was just like that of Murray. I started taking electrolyte tablets. I consulted doctors. I listened to those who assured me that it would disappear when I stopped growing. Anything, in fact, to avoid the running track. Two months later, I cramped again in a big competition. Only when I started torturing my body on a day-to-day basis did things change. In fact, I never suffered from cramp again.

On top of his weekly work on the court, Murray must steel himself for three muscle-trembling weight sessions, three varied track workouts and must take on board enough water to ensure that his urine runs crystal clear. That is the answer — but does the headstrong youngster want to hear it?

Courier delivers Murray verdict

By [Neil Harman](#), Tennis Correspondent

Published at 12:00AM, September 21 2005

JIM COURIER would have loved the chance to fix Roger Federer in his sights and, although 11 years separate them, enough spirit rages inside the American to believe that he would take a few games from the maestro. The closest that Courier, 35, can come is to interview Federer and the present crop on court after centre-stage matches at the Australian Open, where the former world No 1 has developed a distinctive fireside-chat style.

His gentle coaxing on Rod Laver Arena is very different from the unyielding commitment that Courier brought to a career which ended in 1999 with four grand-slam singles titles in his total of 23 (he was also runner-up at Wimbledon and the US Open), the No 1 ranking and two Davis Cup medals, one of which came in 1992 against Switzerland in a United States team embracing John McEnroe, Pete Sampras and Andre Agassi.

Last weekend, Courier was thinking ahead to the Davis Cup at the same time as winning the latest stop on the Delta Tour of Champions at Stade Jean-Bouin, a five-minute stroll across Paris from Roland Garros, which puts him in the running for a place in the Masters, the finale to the Delta Tour, at the Albert Hall in London in November.

The US play Belgium in Brussels this week at the world group play-off level, where Great Britain are pitted against Switzerland in Geneva. Which presumes a match on Friday between Federer and Andy Murray, a ripsnorter of an occasion.

Like everyone else, Courier has been mesmerised by the world No 1's ascent and wonders how anyone, let alone a teenager who has not played a Davis Cup singles match, can beat him. It has happened only three times in 2005 and twice Federer had a match point. It puts Murray's prospects into perspective. "You can't say Federer's the greatest until you are allowed a hindsight view," Courier said. "But he's the most complete player I've ever seen. I would reiterate what Andre (Agassi) said after the US Open last week, that Roger doesn't have a single weakness that's exploitable.

"Fabrice Santoro gave him some awkward moments in the second round, but he (Federer) plays in a totally different way to anyone else. Tim Henman gave him trouble in the past by playing a relentless pressure game, but the minute you allow Roger to control the rally, you're done, be it on his forehand or backhand. His sliced backhand is supposed to be a weakness, but the opponent is never sure whether to slice and move in himself or stay back and rally because those rallies tend to end up with Roger saying, 'OK, where do you want me to put this winner?'"

So does Courier give Murray — or Greg Rusedski, for that matter — any hope of upsetting the Swiss cheese-cart? "What is imperative is that Andy plays this match," he said. "I know that Jeremy (Bates, the Britain captain) might be thinking of saving him for later in the tie, but he has to be tested against the best and this is trial by fire of the best kind. While Murray is the prohibitive underdog, the experience he is going to gain in the long run is the important factor.

"I feel the passion he brings to the court. Fear would be the first reaction of most people to a match like this, but I don't sense that in Murray. He has to be spot-on perfect and hope Federer has an off-day, sure, and there are physical issues with him (Murray), but they can wait until he stops playing this year. There are times when the game gets ahead of your head and your body.

"They manifest themselves in a couple of ways — losing because you aren't aware of what's going on and not knowing how to spend your energy. He'll learn. It wasn't until I hooked up with Pat Etcheberry (the renowned physical trainer) after a couple of years on the tour and got a fully complementary fitness regime for my cardio, muscles, agility and endurance that I stopped losing matches through fatigue.

At certain times, Murray looks like a young horse who doesn't know his legs, but once he finds them, everything will change

Hold back Murray for best chance in mission impossible

By Boris Becker

Published at 12:00AM, September 22 2005

THERE are so many elements that combine to make the Davis Cup one of the greatest of team competitions in sport, not least that tennis players, by and large, aren't brought up to be team players. The lucky ones get to enjoy the sensation four times a year, because they are the two world group finalists.

Great Britain and Switzerland — not to mention Germany — are a long way from that situation this week. Getting back into the world group is each nation's priority (Germany are in the Czech Republic, a daunting task) and that means, for Britain, finding a way to beat Roger Federer, which means trying to keep him out on court for as long as possible. Which brings us to the dilemma facing Jeremy Bates.

A captain has one thing to do: select a side that can win him three points. Federer gives the tie a whole different dimension because, in normal considerations, he will be on the winning end of his three matches, two singles and the doubles. Bates, the captain, has to settle on a way to try to stop him, which brings the conversation around, inevitably, to Andy Murray.

But first, it is important to appreciate that Stanislas Wawrinka, the Switzerland No 2, is not a mug and to win both matches against him is by no means a given. But that has to be the expectation for Britain. The question is: does Murray play on the first day against Federer? There are good reasons to say that he should — better ones to believe he should be held back.

That bit is easy to say. I never wanted to miss a match, I would have kicked and screamed if I didn't play but we had a captain in Nikki Pilic, who is in charge of Croatia in the semi-finals this week, who you did not mess around with. Of course, he would talk to me, as a good captain should, but he was also powerful and strong in his mind. He would do what was best for the team — that is the captain's job. The players have to respect that.

My situation for Germany in the 1980s was much like Federer's for Switzerland now. I was expected to win. The other players in the squad didn't mind my position, they knew it came with some special privileges but so long as I came along on Friday, Saturday and Sunday and won, everything was fine.

But believe me, I don't care how good you are, winning three best-of-five matches in successive days on a clay court is as tough as it gets in tennis. Even what seems like a routine 6-4, 6-4, 6-3 can be 2½ hours on court, then there is the doubles and, although the points are quicker, if the tie is still alive, the No 1 player plays the first match on Sunday. He will be tired, it's only natural. I wonder whether clay was the best surface for the Swiss to choose, because on hard or grass, or indoors, no one could beat him. So to Murray. Of course he wants to play against Federer, he will give it all he has, but surely he will lose and what has the team gained? If he is fresh for the doubles and he wins that match — as he has done in the Davis Cup before — then the tie remains alive. If Greg Rusedski has beaten Wawrinka on the first day, it is very much alive.

I have read some ill- conceived pieces about Murray's fitness. Yes, he has had a struggle, but the pressure on the boy is immense. I am delighted to see he is teaming up with Frank Dick, the former director of coaching for UK Athletics, who came into my life a couple of years after I won my first Wimbledon. Bob Brett, my coach at the time, thought I needed someone like him to work on what were considered weaknesses in the physical side of my development.

Frank is a man of incredible detail, who put together a programme tailored to my needs. I didn't see him every week but when I did, he was one tough SOB! I hope Andy likes hard work. It helped me, too, that Frank had Daley Thompson under his wing at that time and we trained together, Frank on one side, Daley on the other and poor me in the middle. A lot of it was frightening but it was a great opportunity for me and it will be for Murray, so long as he takes it in the right way and realises Frank is the best in his business.

Murray succumbs to pressure and leaves Britain on brink of defeat

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From **Neil Harman**, Tennis Correspondent, in Geneva

Published at 12:00AM, September 24 2005

CUNNING plans are all very well in theory, and there was a good deal of rubbing of British hands when Jeremy Bates announced his first-day Davis Cup picks to face Switzerland. The trouble with such ruses, as Baldrick routinely discovered, is their ability to leave the instigator wiping soot from his face.

It was dark-look time on the banks of Lake Geneva for Bates and the Brigadoon Boys yesterday, when Great Britain did not win a set on the opening day of their World Group qualifier and were left pondering another year spent agonising in the second division of world tennis.

Will that be enough to keep Greg Rusedski — the man omitted yesterday — onside for 2006? Someone has to nobble Roger Federer and Stanislas Wawrinka good and proper for that not to be the case.

Alan Mackin went the way many had expected against Federer, the world No 1, winning two games in what passed for little more than an extended practice session, before the bit for which Bates had not planned came to pass. On his past performances in the competition — he had fought really hard but been unable to secure a victory — Wawrinka had to be considered the soft underbelly, one ripe for a teenager of Andy Murray's exuberant self-belief.

What actually happened in the Palexpo stadium was that Wawrinka performed in a manner expected of a player ranked No 60 in the world and Murray in that of the No 110. The Swiss No 2 won 6-3, 7-6, 6-4 to put his country 2-0 up with three matches, including two involving Federer, to play.

One day soon Murray will probably pass the 20-year-old Wawrinka in the standings, but for now he had to accept, as gut-wrenching as it was, being put in his place. "I felt I played OK," the teenager from Dunblane said. "But I didn't serve as well as I would have liked and I certainly didn't return as well from the ad court, but I thought he served really well on the big points today. I put a bit too much pressure on myself maybe."

Which is what happens in this competition. Strokes that come naturally when playing in a Challenger in sunny California only have to be a bit off when the BBC is there, all Scotland is slavering, the Wimbledon chairman is in the front row and the British Association of Tennis Supporters has fallen silent, for you to look not quite the player you would want to look.

Murray loves to play the drop shot, that is well-known. When it comes off, it is a brilliant shot; when it hits the top of the tape and bounces back, you feel like a bit of a chump. At 3-0 up in the second-set tie-break, Murray went for a backhand slice again, it landed in the net and the match's entire scenery shifted. So much so that, on set point, the Scot decided to serve-and-volley for the only time, with the inevitable dumped backhand volley.

Murray led 2-0 in the final set, went break point down in the fourth game from another netted drop shot and succumbed to a glorious whipped forehand winner. Wawrinka, hitting out with elegant control, then served himself into prominence again. So much for the British hoping that he might be consumed by nerves.

Can the tide be turned? Murray is having trouble with his first serve. The ball toss is something that Mark Petchey, his coach, has been working on intently, but Petchey was not invited out to be with his man for the ten days before the event and there was no one but relative strangers to turn to when he looked for guidance.

At least he was not unduly taxed by yesterday's exertions and Rusedski will be spirited as ever, but Federer and Yves Allegro should have enough firepower to clinch the victory that would send Switzerland back into the elite. The world No 1 did not have to raise a training-

ground trot to defeat Mackin, who was gallant in defeat — he said he enjoyed losing 6-0, 6-0, 6-2, which suggests that he finds enjoyment in strange things.

Britain's prospects rest on Murray's rapid development

From Neil Harman, Tennis Correspondent, in Geneva

Published at 12:00AM, September 26 2005

ROGER FEDERER said he does not do dead rubbers. Andy Murray was withdrawn from the conflict as well yesterday as the Davis Cup match everyone had come to see became the victim of Great Britain's skewed team selection and the world No 1's impatience to have the tie home and hosed inside two days.

The next stop on the schedule of both men is the Thailand Open in Bangkok, starting today, when the Wimbledon champion is the main draw and Murray receives his seventh wild card of the year. The Asians are keen to plug into the Scot's personality in what promises to be an awesome initiation for the 18-year-old to the world where Paradorn Srichaphan is a god and the endorsement prospects are manifold for a starlet with as much earning potential as he has, so long as he wipes the sleep from his eyes.

By his own admission, Murray is not a morning person and there was no need for him to be up with the lark beside the lake here yesterday. He picked apart the strings of one of his old rackets, mumbled a few words and looked fascinated by the conversation only when it was put to Jeremy Bates, the Britain captain, that "the team" had gone on bended knee to Tim Henman asking that he put his retirement from the competition on hold for this one match and that he had declined.

Whereas Henman was once the leader of the British tennis pack, whoever was sitting in the captain's chair, the baton is on its way to Murray and he does not give anything up without a fight. Considering that he has played only three rubbers in the event, losing twice and winning once, it is remarkable that he has come so far and holds so many fates in his hands.

On Thursday, Britain — having crumpled 5-0 to Switzerland and taken one set in the process, their heaviest loss in a decade — will discover who they meet in the Euro-African Zone match next spring and, from then, fingers will be crossed that Murray's maturing process is maintained along the meticulous lines being planned for him. He will be glad, after ten days away from Mark Petchey, his coach, that the pair can pick up where they left off during ten weeks of excellent progress in the United States during the summer.

Should he win a couple of rounds in Bangkok — where Georges Bastl, the Swiss he might have met in the first dead rubber yesterday, is his first-round opponent — Murray will have become a top 100 player, not bad for someone who began the year at No 407 in the

Indesit ATP rankings and did not mind letting on that he had targeted the place he is about to reach.

Then there is the prospect of direct entry into a grand-slam tournament for the first time in January's Australian Open. "I'd have to lose the first round of every event I play for the rest of the year to miss out on that, and I don't do that very often," Murray said. He remains, for the most part, Britain's one hope of clinging to the prospect of a return to the Davis Cup World Group any time soon. Jamie Baker, ranked No 444, a fellow Scot and diarist for *The Times*, has done enough good work on the practice court here to have caught the eye of Bates and Greg Rusedski and it is a pity that he could not have been manoeuvred into one of the dead matches yesterday.

By the time the next tie rolls around, Rusedski will be a father for the first time and a daunting tie away from home is something that he may be pressured into skipping. That would be a truly worrying prospect for the LTA, which places such store in an international team worthy of prime time on terrestrial television. The BBC vans were leaving by mid-morning yesterday, once Federer and Murray were pulled from the schedules.

The Swiss may be the closest thing there is to an unbeatable team with Federer playing two singles and a doubles in Davis Cup, but the manner in which Stanislas Wawrinka and Yves Allegro stepped up to the plate at the weekend further emphasised the quality of players at their disposal as opposed to Britain's meagre resources. Once Rusedski, at 32, follows Henman into international retirement, the picture is resoundingly bleak.

The nine LTA national coaches invited here as a reward for their dedicated service over the past year have to take the Murray example back to their academies and clubs and preach his gospel to the kids who might aspire to emulate him. Then, Britain may have a future in this championship based on more than crossed fingers.

Murray's giant leap forward rewarded with a trip home

By **Neil Harman**, Tennis Correspondent

Published at 12:00AM, September 30 2005

THE text message summed it up with the precision of a textbook Andy Murray forehand: "I did it Mum." Murray, the 18-year-old Scot, has broken into the top 100 in men's tennis, a massive step for him and, by its very nature, a colossal footprint in the annals of the British game.

Murray's 7-6, 7-6 victory yesterday over Robin Soderling, of Sweden, which put him into the quarter-finals of the Thailand Open in Bangkok, occurred two hours before the draw for the Davis Cup Euro-African Zone tie in which he will play a decisive role. Great Britain will play either Israel or Serbia and Montenegro, whose best player, Novak Djokovic, has emerged as a talent every bit as impressive as Murray.

A first-round match in February will determine Britain's April opponents but at least a home tie beckons, for the first time in three years. It is about time. In his present form, Murray will not be concerned by the quality of the opposition but he knows from his close friendship with Djokovic what a difficult proposition the Serbians would present.

At 18 years, four months and 14 days, Murray's win yesterday meant that he is the youngest British player to break into the top 100 since Buster Mottram in 1973. The previous time Britain had three players at such a level was three years ago, when Martin Lee briefly occupied a career-high ranking of 94.

It is unlikely that Murray will suffer the kind of career dip that Lee — at present No 551 — has endured. Today, he meets Robby Ginepri, a recent semi-finalist in the US Open, and, knowing him, he believes that he will win. His progress from No 407 at the start of the year is an impressive template for other British players to follow, one that, as his mother, Judy, said on receipt of her text message yesterday morning, "is about taking a risk".

That has been a common factor in Murray's rise. He has regarded no barrier as insurmountable, no challenge too strong. Whatever is placed in front of him, he believes that he will overcome it. If there were more players with such selfbelief in the British game today, it would not be in a position where a Davis Cup Euro-African Zone draw offers perilous possibilities.

Jeremy Bates, the Great Britain captain, reacted to Murray's achievement by saying: "This is fantastic for Andy and to have another player in the top 100 is a big boost for everyone else. It has happened phenomenally quickly for him but, also, it is no great surprise. The signs were always there for Andy in his development as a player and he will not rest now.

"As far as the draw is concerned, we haven't played at home for so long, so this is a huge bonus, but the draw could have been a bit easier for us. Serbia has a number of players ranked around 100 in the singles (they have three in the top 130, with Djokovic at No 81), which will make it very tough if we face them. I don't think there is any doubt in our belief that we have the ability to win."

In the meantime, Murray continues to draw upon an ever-growing fan base. Such is the impact of tennis in Asia that Murray's recent progress was bound to receive immediate recognition on his debut in Asia. The teenager has barely been able to walk through the foyer of his hotel in Bangkok without being pestered for photographs, a burden he has taken on with his usual equanimity.

Mark Petchey, his coach, said: "The most difficult thing for Andy here has been the travelling and the time difference. When he arrived it took until 6am for him to fall asleep, his first match was at 7pm and yesterday he played at midday, which has made it very difficult. But this has been a great period for him, this is where we want to be and he has responded brilliantly to everything he's been asked to do.

"Of course we want more top 100 players. Andy has shown that you can get there reasonably quickly if you have the right talent and attitude. I'd like to see those around

300, which is a long way from where Andy started the year, having the same approach that he has shown because I know there are players in Britain who have it in them.”

Murray on the verge of final ordination

By **Neil Harman**, Tennis Correspondent

Published at 12:00AM, October 1 2005

THERE will be one man on Andy Murray's side in the Impact Arena — Mark Petchey, his coach — and he may not have many supporters, at least those willing to admit to it publicly, in the whole country. Paradorn Srichaphan is about to pledge a vow of silence and one can imagine the noise levels in Bangkok today if the god of Thai tennis should lose to the precocious young titan of Scotland.

It is a reckless fool who fancies getting ahead of himself in any sport, certainly in tennis, but it is impossible not to peek around the corner and notice that Roger Federer is on the threshold of his eleventh final of the year. In his previous ten, he has won every time and, given its status relative to the jewels of the season, the Thailand Open in Bangkok would normally be ticked off pretty smartish for the Swiss back pocket.

But the world No 1 — should he overcome Jarkko Nieminen, of Finland, today — will play Murray or Srichaphan in the final, which guarantees a fabulous story whatever the cut of your jib. For British consumption, the progress of the 18-year-old to his first ATP final in this, the year he made his bow on the tour proper, continues to be irresistible. The matter-of-fact, almost ho-hum manner with which the teenager greeted his 4-6, 6-4, 6-3 victory over Robby Ginepri, a career-high US Open semi-finalist three weeks ago, is a further indication that the big stage is where he knows he belongs.

Srichaphan has had, by his standards, a woeful 2005, having tumbled from No 27 to No 57 in the Indesit ATP world rankings since the turn of the year and, apart from reaching the final of Chennai Open in the first week of the season, has suffered 12 first-round losses. That and, at the end of the year, he is to be ordained as a monk, a Thai tradition of gratitude to one's parents.

“I plan to spend a week in the Thung Setthi Temple at the end of November,” he said. “It had always been my intention to be ordained.” Most eyes will be on the female who is chosen to carry the new monk's pillow at the service, for Thai tradition has it that the woman will become the wife of the ordained man.

If that is a bit over Murray's head — and we are still waiting for him to finish his own growing — the quality of the tennis he is producing conclusively vindicates the offer of a wild card into the event and confirms the depths of his promise. In fact, we should not talk of his promise any more, for Murray has become a deliverer. He will be ranked around No 80 next week whatever today's outcome.

By the end of his match against Ginepri, it was the American who was thrashing his racket into the hard-court surface, the latest in a line of players whose game has been lured into the Murray web and slowly had the life sucked out of it. For that reason alone, to defeat someone in such great shape in such a manner, Petchey was right to describe it as Murray's finest performance to date.

"When you're young and trying to make it in this sport there can be lots of pressure and stress but I thought today, once Andy began to serve as we know he can, things began to flow for him," Petchey said. "He's done a wonderful job, not least because of all the travel involved after Davis Cup. Roger [Federer] has said he's struggled with the time zones and changes so that puts Andy's performances into perspective.

"With the kind of game he has, I would back Andy to break anyone's serve at least once a set and if we can just find a bit more consistency in his own service games, he's going to be a real force. But the last two sets today were probably the best I've seen him play."

Tennis: Chasing Federer

Andy Murray reached the Thailand Open final where he will try to stop the world No 1 winning his 24th final in a row

BARRY FLATMAN, TENNIS CORRESPONDENT

Published: 2 October 2005

Murray once again underlined his reputation as not just the most emergent talent on the ATP tour but also a proven master of surprise. Even in his most optimistic of moments the 18-year-old Scot could not have expected to be en route to his first main tour final when he stumbled jet-lagged from his overnight journey from Geneva to Bangkok via Heathrow six mornings ago.

However, the physical nature of his semi-final victory against Thailand's very own sporting icon, in a tournament originally instigated for Paradorn Srichaphan to win, was yet another gesture to Murray's gaggle of critics who insist he is not yet strong enough to be taken seriously as a true contender.

"How am I thinking to be through to the final against a player ranked No 1 in the world and probably one of the greatest ever to play this game?" asked Murray, playing the tournament courtesy of a late wild-card entry after Tim Henman was forced to withdraw injured. "I'm

thinking it's great. To do this after only just arriving on the tour and still being only 18 is like a dream."

Last week in Geneva, after losing the doubles to Federer and his compatriot Yves Allegro, Murray tapped the Swiss on the shoulder after the customary handshake and told him it was an honour to be on the same court. Such sentiment will unquestionably remain today but Murray, aiming to succeed where the likes of Andre Agassi, Andy Roddick, Lleyton Hewitt, Rafael Nadal and Henman have repeatedly failed in finals against the Swiss, will not be a player overawed.

Racket talent in abundance and a nature that is both stubborn and audacious played their part in Murray beating Srichaphan to earn the right to try to end Federer's magnificent run of 23 consecutive victories in finals. Yet the main reason Murray prevailed 6-7 7-5 6-2 after a testing two hours and 36 minutes was that he was physically more resilient and better equipped to deal with the pressures of an extended match than his Thai opponent, eight years his senior, much more experienced and backed by a 6,500-strong Impact Arena crowd that eventually contributed to his downfall.

As Srichaphan succumbed to cramp, Murray immediately recognised the signs and mercilessly tortured his flagging opponent with a lust for victory that augurs very well for the future. Even when Srichaphan called for the attentions of tour trainer Stephane Vivier and legitimately asked him to stall proceedings by rubbing hot cream into his aching thighs, Murray remained calm. It didn't matter that the Thai had a day off previously after second seeded Lleyton Hewitt declared himself unfit with a groin strain while Murray had to joust three sets with US Open semi-finalist Robby Ginepri. It was irrelevant that Srichaphan had been in Bangkok for almost three weeks, playing Davis Cup for his country whereas Murray had been on international duty thousands of miles away in Switzerland. Such excuses would have been an easy resort for a player of lesser resolve, but Murray delights in proving his doubters wrong and his final ruthless offensive that saw him win the concluding four games was an impressive display that even Federer could not have failed to notice.

"This was the best performance of his career so far," admitted coach Mark Petchey, who before the match had been concerned that his young charge was suffering from a knee injury suffered in the resurgence from an early deficit against Ginepri. "It was the first time Andy had played in the semi-final on a main tour event and he did not get off to the best of starts," he said. "But the way he hauled himself back adds to the belief everyone has in him."

Had Federer looked up from his massage table to the locker-room television during the first set after his routine 6-3 6-4 semi-final win over Finland's Jarkko Nieminen, he would have seen an apparently jaded Murray struggling with his first serve and gifting his opponent far too many gift points with unforced errors. The youngster's natural body language between points is based around the concept of the slouch and should any needy cause north of the Border require their funds to be boosted, perhaps they should suggest a swear box beside the court.

Murray's mother Judy cannot have been impressed by the vocabulary demonstrated as the semi-final seemed to be a match too far, but the balance of power was to swing decisively. Srichaphan, ranked ninth in the world less than two years ago, is accepted as being

something of an inconsistent performer prone to buckling under pressure and producing errors at such inopportune moments that his opponent cannot help but capitalise.

Petchey is proving a master tactician in mapping out Murray's match strategy and the decision to employ far more aggressive serve and volleying tactics in the second set proved crucial. It did not matter that until that stage, Murray had managed to get only an alarming 43% of his first serves into play. A change of pace was necessary and it paid dividends.

Though Murray was below par in the first set, he only lost it in a tiebreak after a double fault and a ruthless Srichaphan forehand attack on the second serve produced the requisite mini-breaks. But the second set was an altogether different matter and the teenager did not allow the hometown favourite the merest sniff of a break point.

Perfectly equipped to play the role of the hunter, Murray bided his time and then pounced to level the match when the weight and precision of his returns forced Srichaphan to direct two crucial volleys into the net. And that just after Murray had alarmingly called for the attentions of the trainer after seeming to strain his right wrist going for a wide ball.

Statistics seemed ominous for the fearful Srichaphan as the pair set out to go the full distance. Previously this year he had won only five of his 16 three-set matches whereas Murray, for all his supposed fitness issues, possessed a 70% success record. Srichaphan did register one early break point, but it was negated by the most precise of forehands and from then on Murray was in control. He broke serve to lead 4-2 with a similarly breathtaking forehand and with the Thai's morale in tatters, finished affairs with an impudent backhand pass.

Murray revels in final fling

By **Neil Harman**, Tennis Correspondent

Published at 12:00AM, October 3 2005

ROGER FEDERER headed off to be pampered at the best spa Bangkok has to offer before an overnight flight to Shanghai, where, today, he will be given the finest Chinese red-carpet treatment and officially open the venue where he defends his Masters title in November. Andy Murray prepared for the long journey home to Britain, his mother's hope being that he will have treated himself to a business-class sleeper seat. Before Shanghai's three-year term as host to the Masters comes to an end, the dream of British tennis is that Murray makes the elite field of eight. His worthiness for a place in such exalted company is clear, for each week of the past five months has taken him to a new and more startling level.

His first tour match, first grand-slam appearance, first Davis Cup singles, first ATP quarter-final, semi-final, then final, first time inside the top 100, first top-to-toe clothing contract, first singles match against the best player in the world, first kiss from Miss Universe (she presented the bouquets in Bangkok yesterday, before anyone gets any ideas) and, if Judy, his mother, puts her foot down today, his first haircut for quite a while.

The climax to the Thailand Open at the Impact Arena yesterday was the expected straight-sets victory, 6-3, 7-5, for Federer, who won his 24th successive final and extended his win-loss record on hard courts to 66-1. Last weekend, after they had played Davis Cup doubles in Geneva, Murray told Federer that it was an honour to be on the same court.

When Murray whispered something into Federer's ear as the players shook hands at the end, he may well have been saying: "You've not seen the last of me." For that was the message of the match.

When he had to step it up, Federer did as the best will do. But there was an awful lot of stepping up in an hour and 26 minutes and the match might have been a good deal closer had the teenager not lost his opening service game in both sets. It is worth noting, though, that Federer was ranked No 64 in the world at the same age as Murray, who, when the new Indesit numbers are issued today, can expect to be about No 68. And Federer's joy at victory yesterday seemed every bit as great as if he had won an event of much greater prestige.

Federer paid Murray rich tribute. "He was hanging tough in my service games and broke me at 6-3, 3-2, which I wasn't expecting," the Swiss, winner of six grand-slam titles, said. "I had to be careful not to let the momentum shift and at the end I had to play some tough points to stay in control and close it out. In finals you have to get a really good start, and I wanted to put pressure on him. I could have closed it out earlier today and it was a little disappointing to let him back in.

"Murray has a big repertoire of shots, there's a lot of qualities. However, he's got to figure out how he wants to use his potential. If he works hard he'll be a good player. I was impressed by him. I wanted to keep the streak of final victories going and it is a lot of pressure, but I've been in this situation before so many times and I rely on all my experience to better myself. I'm not getting sick of winning, I've worked very hard to get to this point. There are many challenges out there."

Murray, who looked disappointed to be the runner-up, said: "I started erratically. In my first service game I was up 40-15 and then lost it. When I won my second game (at 4-1 down), I relaxed more. You feel like you have to go for it against him and I was going for the lines too much. At five-all in the second (set), I lost the first point and then he went into control and ran off with it.

"I've never been to the quarters before, let alone a final. I'm still young, I'll keep working on all my game and I hope it all comes together in a few years. Reaching the final will have an effect on my future. It gives me so much confidence when I'm only 18 and have so much to work on."

No more Mr Nice Guy, here's St Andy

By Boris Becker

Published at 12:00AM, October 3 2005

BEING at St Andrews any week is as close to perfection as you could want, but this week it has seemed nearer than before. A lot of Scottish children have been coming up to me asking not how my golf game is shaping, but what I think of Andy Murray. To them, he is a new, bit more rebellious, St Andy.

It is an encouraging trend for tennis in Britain and more so when Murray has the kind of week he has had, reaching his first ATP Tour final and playing Roger Federer. It is exactly what our sport needs at a time when others, such as golf, in which there are so many excellent young British players, and cricket, after the summer results against Australia, are so popular. Murray is becoming a real focus, a wilder, unorthodox, very different focus than there was in Tim Henman.

It is difficult not to be impressed with all that Murray has achieved so rapidly this year and especially since Wimbledon. This week, for instance, he made the transition from indoor clay in the Davis Cup to a hard court several time zones away in Thailand, arriving fatigued. Federer has done the same, but we expect it from the best player in the world who is at the top of his game. Murray handled it all and was still able to test Federer.

He had long matches against Robby Ginepri and Paradorn Srichaphan and won both from a set down, he has been practising with and pitting his wits against the very best. We knew he had the talent and determination; what we have discovered is that he has the body — even though he is still growing — and the concentration to see these kind of matches through. He has shown he is someone to count on.

And this, with the whole country on his shoulders, a place where expectations after Wimbledon were sky high and yet he went to the United States and he delivered on what he hoped to do. A lot of players are talented, but they don't apply that talent. You cannot say that about Murray. Since Wimbledon, what he and Mark Petchey set out to do, they have done. This is a massive compliment for both of them, that their goals keep changing and they keep achieving together. Murray is not the future. He is the now.

His character and that of Henman could not be more different. I've said it before and I think it's worth repeating, Murray is not going to be your Mr Nice Guy, he is not going to say "yes, hooray" and give the media everything it wants from him because that is not part of his winning strategy. He is a young man who knows his own mind, he is finding his own way and the bottom line is, win or lose, to keep doing what he thinks is right. My attitude was always: I don't care about a bad press, as long as I win. I won grand-slam championships and they still find fault with me, so it didn't really matter whether they were good or bad anyway.

The reasons for Murray to play tennis in the first place are also different from Tim. Henman came through a private scheme, into the LTA, he was with a group of players

before heading off with a coach, the proper, British way. Andy comes across much more as an outsider, more of a rebel (they have had lots of those in Scotland, I hear), he believed in doing it in a certain manner, he said at Wimbledon that he wanted Petchey, who worked for the LTA, to be his coach, and he got what he wanted. He has good surroundings now. It is important he keeps making the right moves and, being young and confident, he will not want to stop playing. Apart from a period at home over Christmas, he should play as much as he wants because it is not good to rest on your laurels too long. He is part of a generation that includes Rafael Nadal, Richard Gasquet and Gaël Monfils, who can challenge in the next five years and, for what he has achieved in the past seven months, I put Murray second to Nadal.

The shame for British tennis is that after him there is a such a long silence.

Murray's advisers planning the next step on glory trail

By **Neil Harman**, Tennis Correspondent

Published at 12:00AM, October 3 2005

AS TIM Henman succumbed further to the back problems that are increasingly likely to plague what is left of his career, the trouble for Andy Murray's camp was how to tell him to rein back the colt-like frenzy with which he is attacking the first dramatic phase of life as a senior.

Henman says that the time is not yet right to test his back, not only on a long flight to Japan but in the heat of the battle, preferring to wait until the Madrid Masters the week after next before returning to the circuit. Murray may be in the field with him, although the runner-up to Roger Federer in the Thailand Open yesterday would probably require a wild card into the qualifying.

One of the most diverting elements of the arrival of fresh blood on the tennis circuit is how many people want a piece of it. The post Davis Cup plan was for Murray to play in five consecutive Challenger events and build his ranking, whereas one wild card into the event in Bangkok, and his return on it, has done the job for him.

"We've had to make so many snap decisions in recent weeks, booking flights, changing schedules, responding to different situations," Judy, his mother, said yesterday. "You

cannot turn down these opportunities when they are offered and they have worked out really well for Andy so far. The thing is, he thrives on the competition, which is normal when you're young and going well, but there comes a time when you have to decide to take a bit of a holiday."

Thus the Murray family and Mark Petchey, his coach, will sit down the week after next and map out where they want him to play the rest of this year and the beginning of 2006, with the Australian Open in January fast moving into focus. As of last night, Murray was still scheduled to play in a Challenger in Mons, Belgium, starting tomorrow, though that would mean a jet-lagged late arrival and the prospect of a jaded player.

The going is not going to get any easier, even if he doesn't play Federer for another year. "What excites me," Judy said, "is that there is still so much to come, so many areas to improve on, the next of which is to get more out of his first serve. When it goes in, it's big, but it's not consistent yet and there's also a lot of physical development still to come. "He will have learnt an awful lot from playing Federer but there's more to learn when he watches the video. There were a significant number of times when he tried to play a big shot too early in a rally, which may have had something to do with the opposition."

Petchey concurred. "It is almost how you handle the aura of Federer than the player himself," he said. "He doesn't give you anything, bad points, bad body language, nothing. You always feel you've got to play that little bit better than maybe you need to. We've been watching Roger for months, studying him because he is where Andy wants to get to. I felt Andy was clear in his own mind the way he wanted to play and the thing about him as ever was how impressively well he went about his business. There will be other times."

Murray rises to latest challenge in quest for new high

By [Neil Harman](#)

Published at 12:00AM, October 6 2005

ANDY MURRAY did his duty by a Belgian challenger tournament that he said he would play and honoured his word. The Scot submitted an entry for the event in Mons before the remarkable journey that stretched the imagination in Bangkok last week and he strode impressively past first base yesterday.

From playing the Swiss No 1, Roger Federer, in the final of the Thailand Open, via an overnight stop in a London hotel to a meeting with a former Swiss No 1, Ivo Heuberger, and a 6-4, 6-4 victory that promises a second-round meeting with Xavier Malisse, a Wimbledon semi-finalist in 2002, there is just no stopping the teenager.

Murray will have to reach the semi-finals at the very least for the results in Mons to have any uplifting effect on his ranking of No 72 and that is a tall order after all that he has been through in the past few weeks. It may be a step down in tournament status but the learning curve remains on a high.

It is likely that Murray will play four more weeks of tennis this year before taking the time to rest his body and make sure that it is in the best possible shape for a potentially dramatic year ahead.

From Mons, he will probably play another challenger in Denmark, thus turning down an opportunity to qualify for the Madrid Masters the week after next. A wild card into the main draw was always unlikely — two of the three have been awarded to Albert Costa, the former French Open champion, and Fernando Verdasco, who defeated Tim Henman in the first round of the US Open this year.

The tournament has come up with a novel way of deciding on the third — readers of *Marca*, the sports daily, which is normally filled from cover to cover with football, will be asked to nominate their favoured attraction, from Alberto Martín, of Spain, Nicolas Massu, of Chile, and James Blake, of the United States, one of the stars of the US Open.

Tennis: Time out for British star

Andy Murray's injury was inevitable given his gruelling recent schedule, writes Barry Flatman

Published: 9 October 2005

Murray has fallen foul of that most basic of sporting injuries; a pulled hamstring in his left thigh. Tomorrow he will consult the Lawn Tennis Association's injury specialist, Jean Pierre Bruyere, and undergo a full examination after he quit midway through his Ethias Trophy quarter-final against Xavier Malisse on Friday.

The Scot returned to Britain yesterday morning after he decided to play the second-tier Challenger event in Belgium just a couple of days after facing Roger Federer in Bangkok.

Given the schedule Murray has kept over the past three months, an injury of this nature was only to be expected. From Wimbledon he set off for North America, constantly darting across time zones to play seven tournaments in as many weeks before qualifying for the US Open. Then he returned to represent Britain in the Davis Cup in Switzerland before heading to Asia and back.

The ranking points he gathered in Bangkok more than accomplished his avowed aim for the remainder of 2005: to crack the world's top 100 and guarantee himself a place in the first of

next year's major tournaments without having to qualify. Sitting as the world No 72, he is comfortably assured not only a place in the Australian Open, which begins on January 16, but also entrance into next year's opening two Masters Series events in Indian Wells and Key Biscayne.

"Of course he was going to be tired, given the number of matches and air miles he's experienced in the past couple of months, but hindsight is a wonderful thing," said coach Mark Petchey.

"He's now got to take a rest, but a hamstring is nothing too serious and the important thing was he quit the Malisse match as soon as it began hurting, so no deep damage could have been done."

Murray's comeback is likely to be the Davidoff Swiss Open, in Federer's home town of Basel, beginning on October 24, where Murray has been granted a wild card.

Meanwhile, Williams is unlikely to play again before the Australian Open after knee and ankle injuries and has withdrawn from her two remaining events of 2005, the Zurich Open and the Advanta Championships in Philadelphia.

Murray puts tennis centre court at home

The rising star of tennis has served an ace for the sport domestically, writes
Louisa Pearson

Published: 16 October 2005

This is the revitalised world of Scottish tennis, swept up in the Andy Murray phenomenon. These Edinburgh tennis enthusiasts aren't grizzled veterans immune to the elements, but rather young Scots who have been fired up and spurred on by the heroic efforts of the country's fastest rising sports star.

"He's such an inspiration," says 14-year-old Sarah Tupper, a member of Meadows City tennis club. "He's putting Scotland on the map and making us proud."

Murray, now ranked 72 in the world, has already enjoyed far greater success than any other Scottish tennis player in history. But Sarah converted to the game even before Murray

became the new darling of the Centre Court. She started playing at an after-school club and enjoyed it so much that she now plays four or five times a week.

The club does all it can to keep young players interested, even providing a trip to Wimbledon.

Keeping Sarah company is her friend, 13-year-old Hannah Chrisp. "I never really liked playing tennis, but three weeks ago Sarah twisted my arm," she says. "Now I'm really enjoying it."

Most clubs are used to a post-Wimbledon flurry of interest, which quickly fades, but this is different. Murray's continuing success, breaking into the top 100 and reaching the final of the Thailand Open, has ensured that the ripple effect keeps on rolling out.

As well as coaching the young hopefuls on the Meadows, Alex Harkins is tennis development officer at Edinburgh city council. "Because of Andy Murray, I think we've got a good chance of keeping teenagers interested in the sport," says Harkins.

Across the country, tennis clubs are reporting a similar rise in membership and interest. "There's definitely been a buzz on the tennis scene in Glasgow this summer," says Mike Kolacz, Glasgow city council's tennis development officer. Open days organised for youngsters to go along and play for free regularly attract more than 100 participants.

"A lot of these kids are then feeding into our coaching programmes that run throughout the year," says Kolacz. "Andy has grabbed their attention. It's good for them to have someone to follow throughout the season."

Murray's performance has also grabbed the attention of the great and the good, from Sir Sean Connery to the Scottish executive. While tennis facilities have improved in recent years, there's always space for further improvement. "If there is a high level of interest, then it's a lot easier to put forward a proposal for funding," says Kolacz.

At Tennis Scotland, the sport's governing body, the mood is equally optimistic. "Andy Murray is a very good role model for the youngsters," says the development director, Matthew Hulbert. "His success has brought tennis into focus, and because of that the Scottish executive and other organisations are thinking, 'What can we do for tennis?' So we're hopeful for the future."

If Murray has fuelled interest in tennis in Scotland, he's not a lone driving force. The mini-tennis initiative involves using much smaller courts and equipment to allow young children to get involved, and this has been promoted successfully in schools. "It's less intimidating," says Hulbert. "And it's also safer than having five-year-olds belting tennis balls around the room."

Tapping into the executive's Active Schools initiative, Tennis Scotland has also been promoting the sport via local authorities, delivering licensed coaches to teach children basic strokes.

As for those youngsters who show promise for the future, Hulbert says there is a structure in place to develop their skills. Soon they will have access to the national centre, currently being built in Stirling for top-level players.

With Murray set to captain Scotland against England at the inaugural Aberdeen Cup next month, it looks like tennis will continue to grow. On the wind-swept courts on the Meadows, you get the feeling they'll still be out there volleying, whatever the weather

Murray gets chance to hasten fall of Henman

By **Neil Harman**, Tennis Correspondent

Published at 12:00AM, October 25 2005

ANDY MURRAY helped to preside at the draw ceremony yesterday for the Davidoff Swiss Indoors tournament in Basle, at which the plum of all plums was pulled. What could better encapsulate the twin moods at the heart of British tennis today than for the two men who are its real pulse to see who — for one day at least — beats the stronger. Thus, tomorrow, on a carpet at the St Jakobhalle, Murray and Tim Henman will compete as professionals for the first time for a place in the second round of a championship that Henman won twice when he was the undoubted king of a crumbling castle. Along has come the teenage Scot to turn the face of the sport in his direction, while Henman has struggled this year because of the degenerating effect of holding the body and soul of British tennis together for so long.

For doing that, Henman has been in turn glorified and reviled, depending upon your point of view and whether you care about what he has done, or simply brushed it aside as an insignificance because he never won Wimbledon. In some quarters, they are trying to anticipate when it is that Murray will supersede Henman in the rankings, the passing of the chalice. In this week's Indesit ATP rankings, Henman is No 28, Murray No 70, but there is much more to this than mere statistical technicality.

Both want to win because that is the nature of the beast. Murray's rise has been a spectacularly self-confident one; Henman had none of that inner belief as an 18-year-old but has stayed around in the top ten without winning a grand-slam event longer than any

player in modern history. The last time he lost to a fellow Briton was his defeat in November 1998 by Greg Rusedski in the old ATP World Championships in Hanover. Other than that, Jeremy Bates can lay claim to defeating the 21-year-old Henman at the Stella Artois Championship ten years ago.

The pair practised together in Basle on Sunday and Henman had a premonition that this match might be the first round. "I was sitting with Petch (Mark Petchey, Murray's coach) in the players' lounge today when the news came through and we had a bit of a chuckle," Henman said. "These aren't the easiest matches to play, whatever the circumstances. I've managed them pretty well in the past but it's going to be slightly different against Andy.

"His development has been so much quicker than mine, he is physically much stronger than I was at his age and he's probably mentally tougher, too. He is totally different to the way I was as a junior, but there's no right or wrong way to prepare for the life of a professional. It's a matter for the individual."

Henman has heard about Murray's comments on the kind of exposure he can expect as his career unfolds and his hope that he receives a fairer crack of the whip from the media than Henman.

"There is no point Andy worrying about what might be said about him, this is a job where opinions are given and it is up to him to pick and choose which he accepts or ignores," Henman said. "He's got a good solid head on his shoulders, I don't see a problem for him.

"What can I help about what's written about this match? I want to win, I am a competitive person in a highly competitive sport. Andy wants to win. Things will be built up over which we have no control, but I know what I want and so does he. He has a great game, he's only going to get better."

Murray beats Henman in three sets

By Times Online, Neil Harmann and Agencies

Published at 12:00AM, October 26 2005

Andy Murray held his nerve to defeat the British No 1 in Basle and secure the biggest win of his career. Murray served for the match at 5-4 in the second set at the Davidoff Swiss Indoors but lost the next three games as Henman battled back to force a decider. Henman looked to have the upper hand as the match progressed but the 18-year-old from Dunblane won the decisive tie-break 7-4 to seal a memorable 6-2 5-7 7-6 victory. Murray broke serve in the opening game of the match after being gifted two break points by a wild forehand from Henman. And the teenager repeated the trick in the third game as Henman again demonstrated his weakness on the forehand wing with a costly miss.

Murray, now ranked 70th in the world, had to save one break point in the fifth game before serving out for the set after 34 minutes.

Henman, 31, has failed to reach a semi-final in any of his 17 tournaments this year and has not won two matches in a row since June, slumping to 28th in the world rankings. And it looked as if he was destined for another early exit when Murray recovered from a 3-1 deficit to serve for the match at 5-4 in the second set.

The British number one refused to give in, however, and broke back to level at 5-5 before taking the next two games as well to take the set 7-5 and force a decider.

Murray's frustration was obvious to see at the beginning of the decider, an audible obscenity indicating his anger at wasting his chance to seal victory in straight sets. But he maintained his composure enough to hold serve throughout the set and take the match into a decisive tie-break, and quickly raced into a 3-0 lead.

Henman stayed in touch at 5-3 but then dumped a simple backhand into the net to give his young opponent three match points. A winner which clipped the baseline saved the first of those but Murray held his nerve to put away a forehand volley on the next to seal an historic first triumph.

Murray started the match on brilliant form to cruise through the first set. He dominated the opening exchanges racing into a 3-0 lead and taking the set 6-2 against the British number one, seeking only his fourth victory since Wimbledon.

Murray broke serve in the opening game of the match after being gifted two break points by a wild forehand from Henman. The 18-year-old repeated the trick in the third game as Henman again demonstrated his weakness on the forehand wing with a costly miss. Murray, now ranked 70th in the world, had to save one break point in the fifth game before serving out for the set after 34 minutes.

Murray's growing stature proves to be greatest weapon

From **Simon Barnes**, Chief Sports Writer in Basle

Published at 12:00AM, October 27 2005

ANDY MURRAY has been taking on all sorts of opponents over the course of the year. Yesterday he took on two at the same time, and managed to squeeze past them both. The first was Tim Henman, the second was Murray himself. He overcame a horrid and utterly uncharacteristic fit of the jitters — at least, British tennis watchers, bracing themselves for a decade of Murray-watching, certainly hope it is uncharacteristic — to win 6-2, 5-7, 7-6.

He was in control for long stretches of the match, and would have won in straight sets but for that unsightly choke in the second set. He came out of the blocks with a huge surge of confidence, which had Henman groping, playing either too safe or too dangerous. Murray, the 18-year-old, had Henman, the 31-year-old, thinking wrong from the start.

Murray reeled off the first four games for the loss of eight points, a start that no one expected, least of all the players. Though perhaps Murray always expects that sort of thing. Henman seemed to be playing the occasion and the reputation: Murray the ball before him. It was this apparent indifference to all the baggage that gave Murray the edge; and ultimately the match.

Henman has always had the ability to use a big occasion and rise to it, to surf the crowd's emotions. The reverse side of the coin is that a flat occasion often finds him flat. The St Jakobshalle, with an audience of polite chocolate-suckers, was not one to give him a lift, while the occasion itself — the match for the future of British tennis, nothing less — was trying to his nerves.

Henman has many virtues but has never had the gift of authority. His attempt to boss the occasion and his youthful opponent never amounted to much, not until Murray had his little wobble. Henman was more himself in the second set, breaking Murray, but was then broken back, leaving Murray to serve for the match.

Murray has astonished everybody this year with his nerveless approach to big matches, and with his total lack of humility when playing the big names in the game. That was why it was all so unexpected when he bent the knee to Henman, dropping three successive games with barely a whimper. It was his last gift.

The third set was a classic. It began timidly, with both players like diners picking at their food, rather wishing that they hadn't ordered the vindaloo. But then both hotted up their game and began to play quite close to their best, and we got a pretty enthralling few games.

Correct sporting cliché: "It's all about who wants it most."

Ed Smith, the former England batsman and writer, has questioned this. He says that often, the exact opposite is true. The one who wants it less, or has convinced himself that he wants it less, plays without care, without thought, without fear.

Of the two, then, Murray wanted it least, or appeared to. For it was Henman's desire that prompted his wincemaking unforced errors, without which he might even have carried the day. Henman cranked up the pressure at the crucial points but it was not enough. Henman's errors, Murray's heart for a contest: that was the match in brief.

They reached the tie-break after each had made a stunning raid on the other's service game, and each had been repelled by fine tennis and a considerable display of guts. Which brought us to the tie-break, and again, the man less hagridden by care was Murray. He found the shots when needed and the sheer brass neck to put away Britain's eternal No 1. Murray has come a long way already. He has changed in shape, looking burlier, more at home in his own skin. He is more confident in interviews, less edgy, less brash, aware that a

serious thought seriously offered gains more respect than bluster. He has had a crash course in the process of maturing and yesterday was another significant advance.

No one knows how far he will go, but the thrill of promise is beginning to harden into something very like achievement. And if he can, indeed, go farther than Henman, it will be because of that majestic quality of indifference. If he can always make sure that it is himself, not the occasion, not the opponent, and not the crowd that sets the agenda — he'll be a man, my son.

New era dawns as Henman hands over torch to Murray

From **Simon Barnes**, Chief Sports Writer in Basle

Published at 12:00AM, October 27 2005

THEY keep on lining up tests for Andy Murray, and he just keeps on passing them. Yesterday, it was his task to play for the future of British tennis as he met Tim Henman in the Davidoff Swiss Indoors tournament. Despite a freely admitted attack of nerves, Murray won 6-2, 5-7, 7-6. "I've passed the torch," Henman said. "Or is it the baton? Well, whatever it is, I'm more than happy for Andy to have it."

Murray won a match that was full of emotional difficulties for both players. Murray was clearly choked up at the finish, but recovered to pay a fittingly humble tribute to the man he had just conquered, calling it the biggest win of his career so far.

Note that "so far" stuff. Murray has clear visions of the long and difficult road that stretches before him, and of how far he means to travel. But it was Henman who showed not only where the road lay, but that a mere Brit could walk it. "I have so much respect for him," Murray said. "Without him, I probably wouldn't be playing the game. He is an inspiration."

It was a hard match for them both yesterday, because there are so few British players who are any good. We have been lucky to have Henman and Greg Rusedski, we are remarkably lucky to have a successor. It is rather glorious, then, that the waning of Henman's powers coincides with the waxing of this turbulent young Scot.

There was something deeply fitting about the events here yesterday, for if it was sad to see the humbling of the old master, it was cheering to see the considerable strengths of his successor. Murray recalls meeting Henman at a photo-shoot when he was "about 13". It was a very much *de-haut-en-bas* business then and he didn't expect Henman to recall it.

They first met "properly" 18 months ago, when Murray was a hitting partner for the use of the Davis Cup squad against mighty Luxembourg.

“It’s an honour to play against him,” Murray said. “But it will always be a difficult match.” Murray showed his nervousness by losing the second set from a match-winning position, all of which made his recovery so intriguing to watch. “Very good for you mentally,” Murray said, his voice filled with a justified satisfaction.

Henman was asked about his own poor patches. “Just nerves, isn’t it?” he said, with a rather unexpected frankness. “These matches are not easy and he dealt with it a bit better.”

The testing of nerves was exactly what the occasion was all about. Tennis is a fraught game, hard on the nerves because of the strong and ever-changing emotions of the game, and its dreadful solitude. Henman has put his followers through the wringer over the years: sometimes rising to great heights, at other times playing with a dismaying lack of belief.

Murray gave a glimpse, perhaps, of what there is to come by playing a difficult match in a less troubled way than his opponent. He dealt with the occasion and its reverses with a kind of passionate serenity, and that was the difference between the men. Age, like youth, carries its own neuroses: Murray handled his own in a way that was far from perfect, but was certainly good enough.

“I never want to lose,” he said in that matter-of-fact, flat Scottish voice. “I want to win every match I play.” He allowed us to savour this, then added: “I think that’s one of my main strengths.” Another of his main strengths seems to be that he actually does.

But we must not get ahead of ourselves. There are still about 42 ranking places between them. Murray is now 70. Henman, who has fallen from six to 28, has had a poor year by his standards, but is far from out of love with the game. “He has one or two good years left in him,” Murray said.

It’s not the end, no. But it’s the beginning of the end and both players know it.

Murray rolls on but the end is nigh for Henman

By **Simon Cambers**

Published at 12:00AM, October 28 2005

“IF HE plays the way he can, he can still be in the top 30 or even 20.” Those were the words not of Tim Henman after his defeat by Andy Murray in Basle on Wednesday, but of the young Scot, giving his assessment of the old man’s future in the game.

Considering that Henman has almost single-handedly kept British tennis afloat for the best part of a decade, it was hardly a glowing tribute from a teenager who was inspired to play the game, in part, by Henman's feats.

Murray avoided a let-down last night as he beat Tomas Berdych, of the Czech Republic, 6-4, 2-6, 6-4 to reach the quarter-finals of the Davidoff Swiss Indoors tournament. While Murray plays Fernando González, the fourth seed from Chile, today, Henman might well have been mulling over the cheek, and more tellingly the truth, in Murray's words.

Both men denied that Murray's momentous 6-2, 5-7, 7-6 victory over Henman signifies a changing of the guard — "I think we both realise that in the context of a career, or even a year's worth of tennis, it's just another match," Henman said, protesting a little too much perhaps — but there is not much doubt that the two are at either end of their careers.

Having climbed more than 400 places to No 70 in the world rankings this summer, Murray is on the verge of breaking into the top 50 while Henman, who finished last year at No 6 — his best season-ending ranking — is in danger of dropping out of the top 30. Coupled with the fact that his hold on the British No 1 spot is weakening by the day, with Greg Rusedski and now Murray snapping at his heels, even the enduringly positive Henman must be considering his future.

Rusedski, who has had his own battles to fight back from adversity, shed some light on how Henman may be feeling. "He's got to look in the mirror and ask himself whether he still wants to do this," Rusedski said. "He's got to look at his family situation. He's got two kids, he's happily married and life is very good. If you look at it with most players, (Pat) Rafter retired at 28 and (Stefan) Edberg was 30. But no matter what I say, it comes down to him at the end of the day."

The vagaries of the sport's ranking system mean that a run back into the top ten is by no means impossible, since Henman will have few points to defend in 2006, but, at 31, time is running out.

His talent has never been in question — 11 singles titles and six grand-slam singles semifinal appearances is a record of which he can rightly be proud — but tennis players are ultimately judged on the number of grand-slam titles that they win.

On that score, Henman is seemingly destined never to figure and the emergence of Rafael Nadal, the French Open champion from Spain, to join Roger Federer, the world No 1, as the dominant players on the world stage makes his quest even more difficult

The chronic back injury that has affected him over the past 18 months means that no matter how well he feels on any given day, he could still wake up the next unable to move well enough to compete. The suspicion is that if his back fails him one more time, then, with a wife and two young children to lessen the blow, he may just decide to call it a day. While Henman turns his attention toward his final outing of the year, the Paris Masters Series event, which begins on Monday, Rusedski made another positive move yesterday in his attempt to end the year as the British No 1.

At No 37, only nine places behind Henman going into this week, Rusedski recovered from a slow start to beat Kevin Kim, of the United States, 4-6, 6-3, 6-4 to reach the quarter-finals of the St Petersburg Open.

Rusedski will today take on Thomas Johansson, the second seed from Sweden.

Murray takes swipe at LTA

By **Neil Harman**, Tennis Correspondent

Published at 12:00AM, November 29 2005

ANDY MURRAY will front the latest drive to get teenagers hooked on his sport tomorrow when he launches Raw Tennis in an NCP car park in London. He exposed a few nerves in the corridors of power yesterday with what was a damning one-sentence critique on failed mainstream coaching systems in Britain.

Murray's anger that a Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) school in Cambridge "ruined my brother for a few years" struck at the heart of why he chose to hone the basics at a training camp in Barcelona. Jamie Murray, his elder brother by 15 months, left Scotland for East Anglia when he was 13 and, according to Andy, returned the worse for the experience.

There could be some anxious folk at the Lawn Tennis Writers' Association dinner in London on Monday, when Murray Jr accepts the LTA Player of the Year Award, for he has given warning that he wants to say a few words. Not one to hide his light beneath a bushel, it may be as well that the LTA's coaching hierarchy has chosen next week to take a group of "Performance Players" to La Manga for a training camp.

It should be added that the present performance staff were not responsible for the recruitment of coaches six years ago, but Murray made no bones about where the blame lies for the fact that his brother is a long way behind him in terms of technical development. "My brother is very talented," he said. "He was the No 2 junior in the world when he was 13, then he went down to an LTA school in Cambridge and they ruined him. It was their fault.

"I want him to come back and do well because he is a good guy who works very hard. I think he's shown he has the talent."

Jamie is No 923 in the ATP world rankings to Andy's No 65 and is being talked of as a Davis Cup player, especially because he and his brother form a left/right-handed partnership and have a tremendous desire to win for each other — as illustrated in the inaugural Aberdeen Cup at the weekend, when they teamed up to help Scotland to beat England.

But they are not alike as people. A ferocious spirit drives Andy on and has been the cornerstone of his astonishing rise through the rankings to the cusp of a place in the world's top 50, which he may well reach within a month of the new year. Jamie is far more detached, a good deal more shy and those characteristics — as much as the oft-

chronicled failings in coaching in Britain — will probably have contributed to his inability to achieve the strides made by his brother.

Rather than dwell on Jamie's case, David Felgate, the LTA's director of performance, offered the customary mantra. "We recognise that different players react to different approaches, which is why we've introduced flexibility into our performance system and support our best players wherever they want to train, be it in Britain or not," he said. The problem is, armed with the evidence behind Andy's rise, there may be more parents inclined to send their children abroad where, experience suggests, they will have a better chance of working in an appropriate climate, on the appropriate courts, with the appropriate coaches.

With ten years on tour representing Great Britain, Canadian-born Greg Rusedski has seen it all and has an opinion on most things. "There's a lot of room for improvement [in coaching] here, that's for sure," he said. "It's about finding kids who have something different and parents who are really involved with them. Judy Murray is very involved with Andy's tennis [Jamie's, too] and he is a fighter. It is about finding kids that are like him from a young age and, whether inside the system or not, finding a way to develop them."

Future of Murray is becoming everyone's business

By Neil Harman, Tennis Correspondent

Published at 12:00AM, December 1 2005

THE next decision made by Andy Murray is likely to be the most crucial of a career that, although barely under way, has started to be measured in terms that Britain has not experienced with an 18-year-old tennis player. Who in the sport is best suited to look after the interest in him that has begun to assume a runaway momentum?

The choice of management company to handle the Scot through a momentous period is likely to be confirmed before he starts his first full year on the ATP Tour in Australia next month. As one of the genuine likely lads of world tennis, Murray is in an exceedingly powerful position and those vying for the opportunity to represent him are intoxicated by such promise.

Octagon, with whom he signed as a promising junior, is in the box seat to retain him, but the company is increasingly nervous that Murray is being wooed by rival firms. It is understood that representatives from International Management Group (IMG), founded by Mark McCormack and regarded as the most prestigious of management companies, has had a meeting with the Murray family.

As the world No 64 has quickly discovered, every move he makes and every word he utters can have profound consequences. In September 2004, his appearance in the US Open boys' final could not even woo every British writer in New York to watch him play; now busloads follow him to exhibition events that have little or no meaning.

Yesterday, on the third floor of an NCP car park in London's Soho, he launched Raw Tennis, seeking to energise Britain's teenagers to take up a sport many will have regarded with disdain until he came along. With his shock of hair, slight disregard for formality and full-frontal approach, he offers a radical difference from what tennis has been used to in this country. His Octagon shadow was never more than five yards from him at all times. And why wouldn't she be?

It is the difference in Murray, his marketability, his personality and his enormous potential to which companies are desperate to be attached. The competition is compelling, not least in that Octagon, which represented Steffi Graf, Michael Chang and Lleyton Hewitt, grand-slam title-winners all, are regarded as the little brother to IMG and SFX, the former having Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal and the latter having Andy Roddick on their client lists.

Tim Henman has been on IMG's books since he broke on to the professional scene in the mid-Nineties and is represented by Jan Felgate, wife of David, the LTA's director of performance. Bill Ryan, once of IMG and Henman's former mentor, has recently joined forces with Patricio Apey at Acegroup, and between them they offer a massive amount of experience and international goodwill.

Ion Tiriac, the Romanian who guided Boris Becker to enormous wealth, still has a foot in the management business, representing Goran Ivanisevic and Marat Safin, although he is a huge influence, also, in tennis politics as the owner of the Madrid Masters Series event. Tiriac would delight in helping Murray, although the previous time he offered his services to British tennis — he said 15 years ago that if he was given £250,000 and free rein, he would unearth at least one grand-slam champion — the LTA turned him down.

Such defensive attitudes are no good to Murray, who has his differences with the LTA, as confirmed in his condemnation of the experience of his brother. "I'm always going to speak my mind," he said yesterday, having insisted this week that the coaches in Cambridge "ruined" Jamie, his elder brother, when he was based at one of the LTA's regional training centres. "Things have changed for the better now, but I stand by what I said."

The Scot did not mind stoking new levels of interest in the sport on a chill November afternoon — perfect weather for the introduction of Raw Tennis, the tennis equivalent of kicking a football around in your backyard. Wimbledon it is not.

"People look at tennis, see the all-white clothing stuff and it doesn't really look that much fun," he said. "I think things like this are great to get kids started playing. The main thing I want to change in Britain is the attitude to the sport."

He is the one person who can do it. Which is why the clamour for him grows by the day.

Murray gives the credit to Petchey after raising a few eyebrows

By [Neil Harman](#), Tennis Correspondent

Published at 12:00AM, December 7 2005

ANDY MURRAY, true to his reputation as a bit of a rebel, turned up late, received the accolade as the British player of the year while wearing trainers, eschewed the obligatory tie and lauded the coach who quit the establishment to throw in his lot with him. As for the award, it is the first of many. As for clearly stating that he would not be where he is without the input and influence of Mark Petchey, who, this time six months ago, was in charge of men's national training at the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA), it was a none-too-gentle dig.

There are going to be few dull moments in the coming years if this first of Murray's senior career is anything to go by. From No 407 to No 64 in the world rankings upon a surfeit of astonishing results — most notably at Challenger level and his first appearance in an ATP tour final in Bangkok against Roger Federer, the world No 1 — bravura performances and moments of physical collapse, the 18-year-old Scot's emergence has been of unparalleled fascination.

Non-conformity is all part of the Murray cult and if there may have been some members of the Lawn Tennis Writers' Association on Monday night whose bow-ties seemed to tighten at Murray's open-necked appearance, it did not deflect the lad from telling it like it is.

"I owe all this to Mark [Petchey]," he said. "I couldn't have done it without him. I'd also like to thank his wife for putting up with me around the house."

Petchey's decision to quit the security of a powerful position at the LTA and answer Murray's call to work together was one of the bravest of the year and it is strange that there was no mention of a Coach of the Year Award, which normally commands a high profile. Giving it to so harsh a critic (who does not have one of its coaching badges) would have stuck in the LTA's craw.

Kim Clijsters, the Belgian who broke her grand-slam duck at the US Open in September and climbed from No 133 in March to No 2 at the completion of the 2005 Sony Ericsson WTA Tour, became the inaugural winner of the LTWA/Stella Artois international award, presented by Sue Barker, of the BBC.

Alan Mills, the retiring Wimbledon referee, collected the trophy for services to British tennis and pleaded with the media not to treat Murray as harshly as Tim Henman, who has often been a target for his "failure" to win the Wimbledon title. "Tim has never been a failure," Mills said.