



**ANDY MURRAY ARTICLES 2006-2008 |**

**In 2006 Andy Murray began his voyage into World top 20 Tennis players. Starting with a tame Australian Open campaign which led to a strained relationship with the bullish British press. His first ATP tour title in San Jose beating two Former Grand Slam Champions along the way. While a rather upsetting coaching split and a trouncing of the World number 1 filled a year where progress was there for the tennis public to see but attitude and off court issues usually filled the journalists copy.**

## 2006

# Scrappy Murray prevails after sluggish start

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By [Neil Harman](#), Tennis Correspondent

Published at 12:00AM, January 4 2006

HIS first match of 2006 reassured Andy Murray's followers yesterday that the element of his game that stands him in such stead as a professional of rare promise — his love of a scrap — is undimmed.

From every standpoint, Murray's defeat of Paolo Lorenzi, an Italian qualifier, in the first round of the Next Generation Adelaide International, was exactly the kind of thrash in the dark of which these first-week events are chock-full. He served seven aces, six double faults, broke serve seven times in 12 attempts, lost his own service three times and won the final five games.

The one statistic to matter was a 3-6, 6-0, 6-2 victory and a place in the second round today against Tomas Berdych, a player being touted every bit as fiercely in his native Czech Republic as Murray is in Britain. Berdych's last defeat was against Murray in the second round of the Davidoff Swiss Indoors in Basle in October, after which the Scot was almost buried in headlines about the passing of the British baton — he defeated Tim Henman in the first round — while Berdych went on to overhaul a star-studded field and lift the Paris Masters.

"He [Berdych] obviously has a lot of confidence," Murray said. "If he plays well, he's very difficult to beat. He's beaten [Roger] Federer and [Rafael] Nadal and a lot of other top-ten players.

"I have to get used to playing matches again. It's been over two months, and that was indoors, so it takes a while to get used to the conditions. I know I've set myself a goal of getting into the top 20 by the end of the year and, to do that, I'm going to have to play better than I did today."

# Resolute Murray out but not down

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By **A Correspondent**

Published at 12:00AM, January 6 2006

THE spirit was willing yesterday, but Andy Murray found Tomas Berdych, of the Czech Republic, a touch too strong, a 7-6, 4-6, 6-1 victory sending the Scot out of the Next Generation Championship in Adelaide.

For the 18-year-old, the next stop is Auckland, then on to the Australian Open. "I played twice as well as I did in the first match and to go three sets with Berdych in the second match of the year means I'm looking forward to the Australian Open and playing my best tennis there," Murray said. "This year it's going to be difficult because a lot of guys want to beat me."

# Henman happy to play second fiddle

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By **Neil Harman**

Published at 12:00AM, January 9 2006

As the Australian Open approaches, the local media is taking Andy Murray to their hearts

A TWO-PAGE centre spread for one, a feel of Australia's centre court for the other — a week away from the first grand-slam tournament of the year and there are rare tributes for British tennis players who are normally treated here as figures to be either ridiculed or pitied.

Andy "He's Scot The Lot" Murray, is, according to the Melbourne Age "young, talented, honest and outspoken, without an air or a grace". Tim Henman could say that he is all those as well, though it took him a long time to be confident enough to be as outspoken as comes naturally to the Scot. And there has always been a grace about him even when seized at the most disappointing moments of his career.

Yesterday, beneath a blazing sun — it is supposed to reach 36C (97F) this afternoon — Henman worked out at a near-deserted Rod Laver Arena, ironing the kinks from a body that, while it remains sleekness personified, shelters the aches and pains that drive him, at 31, to consider planning this year without a defined long-term vision. This will become for Henman a campaign of short, sharp, hopefully effective bursts.

Much like his practice session, which took place under the watchful gaze of Jean-Pierre Bruyere, the fitness coach who has become one of the most important characters in the careers of both men. Bruyere is here to make certain that the physical programmes Murray and Henman were given after their recent visits to the French medical institute in Dijon, are adhered to in the prescribed manner.

Henman reported: "Everything is good, no complaints," after his brief serving hit. Murray, in Auckland for the Heineken Open, the second of his build-up tournaments to the Australian Open, has been made aware of the regime he must follow to make the maximum use of his physical attributes.

If Henman has been the mainstay of British efforts at this and every other grand-slam championship, for the best part of a decade, the coverage of Murray yesterday indicates a shifting of accent and emphasis that is remarkable to behold. "I'm more than happy not to share the spotlight; he can have it all," Henman said. "I thought when I lost to him in Basle in October, I made one of my better all-time comments to the media, about the torch being passed and that he was more than welcome to it. I know that judgments are being made already on both Andy and on myself. I was never able to stop them and neither will he be. To be frank, some of them are just embarrassing."

The great pity for Britain is that we shall never see a Davis Cup team with the two players together. It was this week last year that Henman rocked everyone by retiring from the competition to which he will return one day as Great Britain's captain, when the time is right. Murray will be its talisman for the next decade, starting in Glasgow in April with a tie against either Serbia and Montenegro or Israel.

"Yes, it would have been fantastic to have an opportunity to play in a team with Andy and Greg [Rusedski] but in that idyllic world, you would just rock up on Friday ready to play," he said. "Then there is the reality of it, and the preparation and workload that goes with Davis Cup. When, at the end of a very successful 2004 I looked at everything, what I had achieved on the tour and what that took out of me, something had to give. I didn't know it at the time but I was physically and mentally exhausted."

Henman talks about having enjoyment and motivation back at the start of his twelfth full season as a professional player. "I appreciate I may not always feel my best this year, but it will definitely be a lot better for me than 2005," he said.

If that happens to Murray, then we really will have a phenomenon on our hands. As far as the Australians are concerned, that is already the case. Not even in 2002, the year when, as the men's singles entered its fourth round and he was the top seed left in the draw (he promptly lost in straight sets to Jonas Bjorkman, of Sweden) was Henman given quite the treatment being meted out to the 18-year-old.

"He is Wayne Rooney with a brain," they say. "Could the British, fresh from finally unearthing the 'next Ian Botham' in Freddie Flintoff, be so lucky as to have discovered in the same year a potential legitimate contender for a Wimbledon crown? OK, any grand-slam would do but Wimbledon would be nice."

In the light of the succession of top-line withdrawals from the Australian Open — Andre Agassi is a confirmed absentee, Rafael Nadal and Marat Safin, the defending champion, will not play and Mariano Puerta, of Argentina, was in the original acceptance list until his eight-year ban for a doping offence — Henman, ranked No 36, may yet find that he is among the 32 seeds. For Murray, such a benefit can only be a couple of grand-slam tournaments away.

# Murray progresses despite 'playing like a woman'

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By Times Online and Agencies

Published at 12:00AM, January 9 2006

Andy Murray is through to the second round of the Heineken Open in Auckland, but not without offending the crowd with his post-match comments.

Britain's No 3 was a comfortable 7-5, 6-2 winner over Denmark's Kenneth Carlsen, but drew a chorus of heckling for claiming "we both played like women in the first set".

When quizzed further about what he had said, Murray stressed he was referring to comments made by Russian Hopman Cup player Svetlana Kuznetsova. "I was watching a Hopman Cup match on TV from here and Kuznetsova said it after there were nine breaks in the first set, so that's why I said it," said Murray.

Murray will next play Mario Ancic, the big-serving Croatian who defeated Tim Henman in straight sets at Wimbledon in 2004. "He's always going to be difficult to play against because he serves so well, and when the ball's moving around quickly like it does here it's always hard to read his serve," Murray said. "I think if I serve well, read a lot of balls and don't make so many unforced errors I've got a good chance of pushing him."

## Auckland to double his luck with Murray plea

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

Published at 12:00AM, January 10 2006

IN AUCKLAND, Andy Murray won his second match of a year of unremitting promise; in Melbourne, James Auckland awaited the call that he hopes will spark the liaison with Murray that can inject a timely momentum into Great Britain's Davis Cup cause.

Auckland, one of five British men who will play in the qualifying competition at the Australian Open from Thursday, has made enough steady progress up the rankings, both in singles and doubles, in the past few years to pluck up the courage to ask Murray if he would consider playing doubles in the championship proper. The pair would be an automatic entry.

It is a prospect that would have the blessing of Jeremy Bates, the Britain captain, with a tie against either Serbia and Montenegro or Israel in Glasgow in April that will determine if Britain can attempt to qualify in late summer for a place in the 2007 world group. By then, Greg Rusedski could well have become too comfortable with fatherhood — he is awaiting the birth of his first child and is not competing in Australia — to want another year on tennis's long and winding road.

Auckland, like Murray, is making his debut at Melbourne Park, although few men could be more different in disposition. If opposites attract, Bates should package them together at once. Murray is brooding purpose and directness, and it is hard to imagine him referring to a quote from Abraham Lincoln, as Auckland did yesterday, alluding to his career as “having five hours to cut down a tree and spending the first four sharpening the axe”.

Now comes the time to cut his way through qualifying on merit into the main draw of a grand-slam tournament for the first time. “I don't think I have ever been on full throttle before, through a fear of failing,” the 25-year-old Auckland, No 288 in the Indesit ATP rankings, said. “My ranking has been gradually improving over the years and a lot of my better wins have come in hotter climates . The courts here should suit me.

“My doubles ranking is on the verge of reaching the top 100 and I don't think a British player has been there for a while. I've asked Andy if he wants to play doubles at the Open and I'd like to think he sees it as a benefit. I'd love to play Davis Cup.”

Auckland is joined in the qualifiers by Jonathan Marray, Jamie Delgado, Arvind Parmar and Richard Bloomfield, the last of whom was due to arrive here last night, with only one full day to acclimatise. Elena Baltacha, on the mend after another bout of ill health, and Anne Keothavong, are the two British women in the qualifying draw.

Murray is spared that anguish by virtue of his dash up the rankings that has taken the British game by storm. His 7-5, 6-2 victory over Kenneth Carlsen, of Denmark, in the first round of the Heineken Open in Auckland was not without incident: a warning for racket abuse, the loss of a 4-0 lead in the first set and a courtside comment after the match that he and Carlsen had “played like women” in the first set that drew a few catcalls from the crowd.

But who would not want to be a part of his crusade? He will not want to hear it, of course, but there are those who still believe that only an increased level of fitness stands between the Scot and a fully-fledged assault on the world's top ten.

One such character is Walt Landers, who has supervised the fitness regimes of eight world No 1 players, including Pete Sampras and Carlos Moyà, and was in Marat Safin's corner last year when the Russian lifted the Open title.

# Monfils ready to rival Murray in courting glory

By [Neil Harman](#)

Published at 12:00AM, January 11 2006

**The French prodigy has an aggressive approach that has catapulted him into the world's top 25**

GAËL MONFILS was asked if he had spotted a weakness in Roger Federer's game during their set-to in the final of the Qatar Open in Doha on Sunday. "Speak up," Andy Roddick chipped in. Monfils, smiling shyly, whispered "maybe a leetle beet", but was unwilling to expand in a public forum.

Monfils, a 19-year-old of Guadeloupe/Martinique stock, is the French rookie in the field for the AAMI Classic at Kooyong, the annual warm-up for the Australian Open that, this year, contains five of the world's top ten, including Federer and Roddick. Monfils was the high riser inside the top 30 this week, climbing to No 25 in the Indesit ATP world rankings.

Suggesting that he is France's answer to Andy Murray does both men a disservice, but when the competition is scoured for players challenging Murray to break through into the hierarchy, Monfils has to be accorded a prime place.

He is a year farther down the road of experience than Murray, he has won his first tournament — in Sopot, Poland, last August — and has reached two further finals with risk-takingly ferocious tennis, in contrast to the web-spinning that ensnares so many of Murray's opponents. Murray will fascinate a crowd, Monfils will leave them breathless. It is appropriate that a 6ft 3in player, who is all artistic arms and legs and covers the court like a basketball pro, draws his inspiration from Arthur Ashe and that his style is reminiscent of Yannick Noah, both of whom dared to be unconventional and earned the admiration of the world for it.

There is some way to go before Monfils can emulate either of those men and at the introductory rites at Kooyong yesterday — Monfils was playing Roddick in the second of the first day's round-robin matches — he was seated at one end of the table while Federer held court in the middle. But you could see that Monfils was listening to every word and catching every nuance.

As Thierry Champion, his coach, said: "For Gaël to play Federer in the final was just perfect for him. Before the start of the tournament, he was nervous, as nervous as I had ever seen him, especially as he practised for six weeks in the winter much better than last year. Then he wins four matches, not playing his best tennis, but winning. And so he plays Federer. It showed him so much. I can tell him what his weaknesses may be, but when Federer shows you, it means something more. When Federer started to use his slice, Gaël did not know how to respond."

Monfils led 5-3 in the second set tie-break before Federer unleashed four successive winners in less than a minute. Match over.

But there is so much to work on between the partnership of Champion, a French Open quarter-finalist in 1990, and Rémi Barbarin, fitness trainer for the French Federation on permanent secondment to Monfils.

Champion could not be more enthused about what may lie in store. “When you talk about a heart, he has a heart this size,” he said, spreading his arms wide. “He gives so much of himself on the court, the people love him for it. His way of seeing tennis is different, he has his own culture.

“He is influenced very much by Yannick. I rang him two weeks ago — he was playing video games as usual — and told him he was missing a documentary about Yannick’s life on TV. Gaël immediately watched it and next day he was very emotional. When we first started together 18 months ago, he wanted to be the best within a month. I said we should give it three years.

“Last year he didn’t do well in the grand slams — our aim is to reach the second week of one of them this year. The ranking will take care of itself. I think guys like Gaël and Murray will be top 20. They do not fear but have a great respect for each other’s talents. And they are both people to believe. Gaël never tells a lie; even when he does something I have told him he shouldn’t, he tells me the next day.”

And there is no avoiding the truth in the promise that is Gaël Monfils.

# Murray ponders squandered chances

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**By Times Online and Agencies**

Published at 12:00AM, January 11 2006

Andy Murray’s preparations for the Australian Open were disrupted after he was knocked out in the second round of the Heineken Open in Auckland, losing 3-6, 6-7 (4-7) to Mario Ancic, the Croatian.

Ancic, the fifth seed, took control early in the match, breaking Murray’s serve in the sixth game of the opening set and rallying after the Scot took the lead in the second. Murray, ahead 5-4 at one point, wasted two chances to force a third set.

“I had a lot of chances. In the first set I had break point on his first service game and was 30-0 up on one of his other service games,” Murray said. “I just didn’t take my chances. I didn’t serve as well as I had to against him because he has obviously got a great serve and it is difficult to break him.”

Tommy Haas, the German, caused an upset at the Kooyong Classic, beating Roger Federer, the world No 1, 3-6, 6-4, 6-4. The Swiss appeared to struggle with his timing, hitting forehands long or wide, while Haas scrambled for every point, producing a succession of spectacular passing shots.

“I didn’t think I played that badly,” Federer said. “I think [in] my last couple of years my first round at Kooyong has always been a struggle. It’s not a setback.”

# Tennis: Secret’s out

High-profile wins by Andy Murray mean opponents know what to expect of the Scot on his debut in Melbourne this week

*BARRY FLATMAN IN MELBOURNE*

Published: 15 January 2006

Melbourne Park’s interview room was packed with journalists from around the world yesterday as Murray came to the realisation that his first Australian Open appearance would be only slightly less high profile than his debut at Wimbledon six months ago.

Murray was aware that any concerted attempt to deflect interest would be futile, but he tried nonetheless. “Not every 18-year-old is Rafael Nadal, you know,” he said. “It took (Roger) Federer three years before he won a match at Wimbledon and now he’s pretty much unbeatable there. You can’t expect to win so many matches so early.”

The attention is part of the new reality that Murray must face — and will be reflected on court. This year will prove more testing than last because he is no longer an unknown quantity to more seasoned opponents. Regardless of how well he adapted to particular situations in his rookie year, and repeatedly he was nothing short of exemplary, wins such as those over Taylor Dent at Queen’s, Radek Stepanek at Wimbledon, Robby Ginepri in Bangkok and Tomas Berdych in Basle were partly down to the man on the other side of the net not knowing what to expect.

Berdych was far more prepared for the task when they met again two weeks ago in Adelaide, winning 7-4 4-6 6-1. “Everybody is going to get to know your game the more you play, it’s just a fact of life,” Murray conceded. “I would say that everybody knows how I play a bit better now than they did before Wimbledon last year and within a few more months that knowledge will have spread even more.”

Though tennis is an individual sport, there is networking between compatriots, particularly in the coaching fraternity. Walk through any players’ lounge or restaurant and there is

invariably a gathering of Spaniards, Argentinians, Czechs or Russians comparing notes on the strengths and weaknesses of the new players on the men's tour.

Actual documentation may not be swapped but Murray's coach Mark Petchey will prepare for Juan Ignacio Chela, his charge's first-round opponent in Melbourne, not just by delving into his own mental database but by seeking the advice of Tim Henman, who is aware of the Argentinian's failings after playing him eight times in the past five years.

"Have no doubt, the Argentinians will also be pooling what they know about Murray," says Pat Cash, who is well aware of the coaching cabals after his days spent working on the tour with Greg Rusedski and Mark Philippoussis. "Within minutes of the draw being made on Friday, Roberto Azar (Chela's coach) would have contacted David Nalbandian's man Franco Mastelli and asked what happened in that five-setter at Wimbledon last summer.

"In this particular case he would not have learnt too much because Mastelli didn't get the gig with Nalbandian until late last year but there were plenty of other guys from Argentina who watched the match and the common belief is, of course, that Murray was found increasingly wanting for strength the longer it went on.

"So what is Chela going to be told to do? Not allow Murray to dictate points and move the kid around the court as much as possible."

Cash recalls several players who made an impressive breakthrough only to slip quickly back down the rankings, citing the two Germans Rainer Schüttler (who rose to a peak of world No 6 two years ago but now languishes closer to the 100 mark) and Florin Mayer (whose improvement of more than 200 places to No 35 at the end of 2004 was followed by a decline to 75th place last year).

"Nobody is saying those two guys possessed equal talent to Murray but it's a fact of life that the second year on the main tour is always harder than the first," says Cash. "It's very hard to keep a secret in this game and there are dossiers being built up on Andy all around the locker room."

Most of those dossiers will be marked by their admiration for the young Scot. The inquisitive nature of professionals has been luring many of the world's top coaches to the youngster's matches since he won the US Open junior title in 2004.

Bob Brett, the Australian who took charge of harnessing Boris Becker's talents when the German was 19 and then did the same job with an even younger Goran Ivanisevic, enthused: "Apart from an abundance of talent, the thing I most like about Murray is his character and ability to win.

"He has a long way to go and plenty of things to develop, but if he improves a hundred things by just 1% then he is going to be an extremely competent player. Maybe it will take a couple of years but he will get fitter, stronger and better at the execution of his shots.

“The great thing is he will not allow himself to be intimidated just because he is only 18. Those who are willing him to win a Grand Slam title cannot expect it for some time but it just might happen quicker than we all expect.”

Murray for his part maintains his initial aim for the year is to be named among Wimbledon’s 32 seeds in late June, and with few ranking points to defend over the next five months that would certainly appear a possibility. Sven Groeneveld, long-time coach to both Greg Rusedski and Mary Pierce and recently head-hunted by adidas to identify and help potential champions, concurred, saying: “There is certainly not too much wrong with his game and I firmly believe Andy’s improvement will continue this year.

“What I like is the way he is not afraid to win. His victory over Tim Henman in Basle was a huge test of his mind rather than his game but he did not let the situation fluster him at all, even in the tie-break.

“You can analyse his shots and perhaps a few need a little bit of work, but the thing that really gives him potential is the fact he has a good head for the game.”

Importantly, Murray is now comfortable with his surroundings. At Wimbledon last summer and then at the US Open where he came through qualifying, he repeatedly insisted that he still felt something of an outsider when it came to walking into the locker room. Now it’s different. “I’m part of the tour now,” he says. “I’m going to be playing against these guys week in, week out. When I do beat a top guy, it’s not going to be a surprise any more.”

## Murray remains serious about his long-term future

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

Published at 12:00AM, January 16 2006

“HE’S Yahoo Serious,” an Australian journalist, who had never set eyes on Andy Murray before yesterday, exclaimed, likening the young Scot — the facial expression, fierce mop of red-brown curls, slightly off-the-wall air — to the Australian actor who landed on the front page of *Time* magazine in celebration of his cinematic portrayal of Young Einstein. It does not take an Einstein, young or otherwise, to work out that Murray is one match from becoming a genuine focal point of the opening grand-slam championship of the year, a situation he relished the first time at Wimbledon last summer, taking David Nalbandian, of Argentina, to five sets on Centre Court, and his second, dispatching his previous night’s dinner on the Grandstand Court while defeating Andrei Pavel, of Romania, in the first round of the US Open.

Here, it would be facing Lleyton Hewitt, the Australian anti-hero, although for Mark Petchey, Murray's coach, getting one game ahead of the game is a dangerous proposition. Nonetheless, when Murray steps out to face Juan Ignacio Chela, of Argentina, tomorrow — a match the 18-year-old should lose but has the talent to win — the prospect of an evening date on Rod Laver Arena against Hewitt in the second round looms irresistibly large.

But Petchey is right. The statistics bear him out to an extraordinary degree: of the ten players who have finished the year with Murray's ranking of 64 in the past decade, only two reached the top 50 and of those, Byron Black, of Zimbabwe, has retired and Karol Beck, of Slovakia, has a greatest claim to fame that he defeated Tim Henman in the Stella Artois Championships at Queen's Club in 2004, after winning the LTA Surbiton Challenger, but still finished the year ranked No 45.

Of those who did not immediately live up to their reputation, Fernando Meligeni, of Brazil, who reached No 64 at the end of 1995 but fell to No 93 a year later, turned his career around, reaching the semi-finals of the French Open in 1999. A lot can come to he who waits.

It is a salutary moment for those predicting that Murray is about to waltz to every title under the sun and cover every event he plays as if the outcome is life and death. Henman was barely a blot on the landscape at 18, a skinny lad of little consequence who was said to be a decent doubles prospect. Murray is much more than that — although he has declined a plea from James Auckland, his compatriot, to play doubles in the main draw here — and both he and those around him know it.

Hence the fact that he was left alone after practice with Henman yesterday, a light-hearted affair that went a long way to confirming how much the pair enjoy each other's company, and it was Petchey who preferred to answer the pertinent questions. "Andy is going to have to find his best tennis to come through against Chela," he said. "It is going to be bloody tough.

"There are still people who question his fitness, but you can't expect him to become like Rafael Nadal, who is a different muscle type — that is a totally unfair comparison. It is only May last year that he was a junior, we should remember that. He will be analysed every week in public, but it will take him time to find his way. I am looking at the next few years, not the next two weeks."

Hewitt does not have such a luxury. The demands of the Australian public are as non-negotiable on Hewitt, who will be 25 next month, as those ever placed on Henman and, terrifyingly, in the future, on Murray by the British. But for him to match last year, when he reached the final here, would be astonishing. He remains desperately unhappy with the Rebound Ace surface, claiming that it resembles more the clay of the French Open than what is supposed to be a hard court.

None of these shenanigans, however, fazes Roger Federer, who remains a short-priced certainty. "I enjoy being the big favourite, not just the favourite, but the big one," he said. "I always said, I prefer to be the favourite because the contender needs to do their work and this is where the favourite, he can see what the other guys do. I have to make sure I win my matches, but mentally I'm that tough that I don't have a problem with that.

We cannot underestimate because we all know guys ranked outside of the top 150, 200, who are dangerous opponents. I beat [Carlos] Moyà when I was No 300 and he was No 4. Everything is possible. You don't know how to win a slam [for the first time] — you have got to create a way to do it, to keep a great intensity level up for a long time.”

## Murray can learn from his teenage kicks, says Courier

By [Neil Harman](#)

Published at 12:00AM, January 19 2006

JIM COURIER was a non-conformist when he was 18. In fact, his hostility towards the media — and not only those in his native United States — meant that he was regarded as a demon with freckles and blue eyes. “He was what we used to call a red-a\*\*\*,” one veteran commentator recalled yesterday.

Almost 18 years on, Courier has words of caution for another teenager getting his kicks in first. Andy Murray has remained here to play in the doubles — he and Novak Djokovic, his partner from Serbia and Montenegro, play the No 5 seeds, Fabrice Santoro, from France, and Nenad Zimonjic, also of Serbia, today — while the fallout from his decision to lay a share of the blame for his elimination from the singles on unwarranted pressure from the media, continues to command attention.

Murray decided that the British press played no small part in his first-round defeat by Juan Ignacio Chela, of Argentina, conveniently overlooking that there was not a single British newspaper that suggested that he would have to play anything other than his utmost to have a ghost of a chance of winning.

And while it is not too hard to imagine the tremors awaiting Murray all alone in the bearpit of unrealistic ambition that befalls any decent British player, it is best that he has everyone onside. “When I was his age, I wanted to fight everyone, both on court and off, and I realised only later that I needed to conserve all my energies for those on the court,” Courier said last night. “I wish I learnt my lesson about dealing with the media before it caused me so much trouble.

“I believe someone needs to get to Andy as quickly as possible and tell him that this is not the way to go. Who is it, for example, whose coverage of him is going to help bring in all those millions that are going to be his if he succeeds at this sport?” Courier speaks with the authority of a former world No 1, twice French and Australian Open champion and someone who played in a ferociously competitive manner, as does Murray, and who, like the Scot, came from a blue-collar background. Courier spent his formative years at the Nick Bollettieri Tennis Academy in the United States, breaking through when, as a 20-year-old, he won at Roland Garros.

As well as his support for the seniors tour, Courier has also become a highly regarded analyst and has replaced John McEnroe as on-court interviewer and commentator at the Australian Open.

# Forget the money, Andy, just play the game

*PAT CASH*

Published: 22 January 2006

I'm not surprised he is complaining about feeling the burden of expectation. The way he — or, probably more accurately, his former advisers — allowed his profile to be exploited out of all proportion during the second half of last year, and then leading up to the Australian Open, was guaranteed to inject enormous pressure into the mind of a rookie.

With the start of the new year, he now has a different management group, and I hope sense will prevail.

Murray has enormous potential. That is not a statement designed to add to the load on his youthful shoulders; it's a fact. He could ultimately become a top-10 player and win Grand Slam titles. However, I use the word *could* rather than *will*. Some of the early evidence I have seen brings doubt into my thinking.

The Scot is already as good as if not better than many of those ranked above him — and regardless of the emphatic nature of Juan Ignacio Chela's straight-sets win and subsequent success over Lleyton Hewitt in the Australian Open, I include the Argentinian in that equation. Murray's game is perfectly equipped for the demands of 2006 and the stronger and fitter he becomes, the more likely he is to improve.

But precocious talent does not always guarantee lasting success. It's easy to allow unnecessary distractions to take hold. A few years ago America's Jan-Michael Gambill arrived on the scene, won a few titles and reached the top 20. But, being a good-looking young guy, he was seen as a huge asset by his management company, which wanted him to lead a double life as a tennis star and model.

He appeared on a series of magazine covers and, inevitably, his tennis suffered. However, he clearly enjoyed the money, because he developed a hobby of collecting Jaguar cars. Now aged 28, he is ranked 193rd in the world.

I'm not saying Murray will follow suit. As far as I know he hasn't even passed his driving test yet, but the way he and his mother, Judy, seemed to agree to every interview during his first Wimbledon filled me with concern. Then, to hear that he had agreed a six-figure deal to write exclusively in The Sun underlined the fact that in my mind, the kid has got his priorities wrong. How can he complain about the pressure being put on him by the British press while accepting a bumper cheque? By signing on the dotted line he immediately became a pawn in the tabloid circulation wars. The people taking a healthy percentage in return for giving him advice should have told him that.

Throughout my playing career it's fair to say I did not exactly possess a healthy regard for the agents, but from my perspective, the main problem for Murray is that he has been mismanaged. Once you get to the top of the game, then by all means capitalise on the financial possibilities that present themselves, but not when you are 18 and have been on the Tour for only a few months.

I have some experience of shouldering the burden of national expectations at a young age. It was not a happy experience. I was playing in a Davis Cup final at Murray's age and felt the whole country was depending on me.

It was a slack time for Australian cricket and rugby union, so there weren't too many other heroes to produce the goods and I felt the pressure. The Australian press was not always sympathetic to my cause and it got to the point where I so dreaded coming home that I set up house in London.

At least Murray is unlikely to find himself being criticised by a national icon. I still shudder at the memory of John Newcombe comparing my game to that of Mats Wilander, saying it was like comparing a crack in the wall with the Grand Canyon. Would Tim Henman ever say that about Andy Murray? I don't think so.

But enough of me. None of the criticism Murray has received has been damning and most of the advice aimed in his direction has been well-meant. In Mark Petchey, he has a coach who seems dedicated to the task, and I'm sure the partnership will improve his game.

Murray is a spirited young man who is not afraid to speak his mind, but there are lessons he should learn. If he believes that the press is scrutinising his every move, he should stop reading newspapers, and he should tell those around him that he doesn't want to know what his critics are saying. Finally, it is always better to spend an extra half-hour gathering your thoughts and composure after a tough defeat than to rush into the interview room and vent your anger on those asking questions about your performance. They didn't lose that match, you did.

There were some ugly incidents with the Australian press during my younger days, involving both me and my father. Hindsight is a wonderful thing and, naturally, I have regrets about some of the things I said and did.

Losing in the first round of a Grand Slam tournament is a huge disappointment for any player and Murray knows he didn't perform. Nobody is expected to win every match he plays and there will be many other opportunities, so this is not a disaster. But it would be tragic if

Murray were to fail to fulfil his potential by concentrating too little on his game and too much on what he can earn.

## Fish provides fresh bait as Murray seeks form

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**By Simon Cambers**

Published at 12:00AM, February 13 2006

CONSIDERING his disappointing start to the year, Andy Murray is probably relishing his return this week to the United States, the country where his rise up the world rankings began in earnest last summer.

Having ended 2005 as the world No 64, Murray has struggled to reproduce that kind of form to date, winning only two matches in four tournaments.

But if anything is to give him a sense of comfort it could be his surroundings this week. The HP Pavilion in San Jose, which hosts this week's SAP Open, is about half an hour's drive from Aptos, the small town in California where Murray won his first Challenger event last July.

The 18-year-old begins his title bid tonight against Mardy Fish, the free-hitting American who beat the Scot in their only meeting, a three-set victory in the Masters Series event in Indianapolis last year.

On that occasion fatigue got the better of Murray, but he will expect to defeat Fish, who has only just returned to action after an operation to his left wrist.

Andre Agassi, the second seed, who is bidding for a record sixth San Jose title, is in action before Murray, while John McEnroe, the former world No 1 who will celebrate his 47th birthday on Thursday, is due to make his first appearance on the main ATP Tour since 1994 when he partners Jonas Björkman, of Sweden, in the doubles event.

Amélie Mauresmo, the Australian Open champion of France, took her winning run to 11 matches when she beat Mary Pierce, her compatriot, 6-1, 7-6 to take the Gaz de France title yesterday.

## Murray prepared for second-year growing pains

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From Simon Cambers in San Jose, California

WHEN Andy Murray climbed 449 places in 12 months to end last year as the world No 64, many observers, including John McEnroe, the former world No 1, felt it was only a matter of time before the Scot reached the world's top 20.

McEnroe suggested that it could even come before Wimbledon and with almost no ranking points to defend before the Stella Artois Championships, at Queen's Club, West London, in June, it is by no means impossible. But life at the sharp end of the tennis world is cut-throat and Murray is finding it tougher at the top.

A first-round defeat at the Australian Open last month suggested that expectations, elevated after he reached his first ATP Tour final, in Bangkok, in September, were weighing on his young shoulders. But any additional pressure he may have been feeling was not in evidence as he crushed Mardy Fish, of the United States, 6-2, 6-2 in the first round of the SAP Open here.

"I know this year is going to be more difficult," Murray said. "I know a lot of people think that once you get into the top 100, that's the hard part done and that it's easy to move up. But it's not. It gets even harder because you're playing against the top guys every week." The history of the tour is littered with players who break through one year only to slide back down the rankings as they are unable to match their achievements the next year. Players they beat the first time learn quickly from mistakes.

"I don't think they (the players) are gunning for me or anything, but I just think they know your game a bit better and know how to play against you a bit better," Murray said. "But if I play like I did (against Fish), I think things will go in the right direction."

Murray's path here was made easier, in theory at least, when James Blake, the No 5 seed from the US, lost 6-3, 7-5 to Wang Yeu-Tzuoo, the world No 88 from Taiwan, on Tuesday night. Murray, the world No 60, will expect to beat Wang today to claim a quarter-final place and the Scot, back in the part of the world where he stormed up the rankings last summer, is enjoying being out of the spotlight.

"It's much more relaxed here," he said. "It's a little easier to concentrate on tennis. The questions are a bit easier — they're only usually about tennis. At home, even the smallest thing you say is picked up on."

After his defeat by Juan Ignacio Chela, of Argentina, in the Australian Open, Murray criticised the British press for putting too much expectation on him. But after speaking to Tim Henman, the British No 1, who knows a bit about dealing with the media, Murray appeared much more content.

"It's difficult because I am not sure he (Henman) has always come across the way he would have liked to, but he has helped me," Murray said. "I just try not to say anything too controversial."

"I had a few really good conversations with Tim and my coach (Mark Petchey) after I came back from Zagreb (where he lost in the first round to Ivan Ljubicic, the No 1 seed)," he said. "He helped me with a few things and speaking to him gives me quite a bit of confidence because I think he believes in me and that's great."

Murray also had an interesting take on the discussion as to whether the length of the Tour is contributing to an increase in injuries among the players.

Henman withdrew from the tournament in Marseilles this week and Andre Agassi pulled out of the one here, but this week is the first of five consecutive events for Murray.

“I don’t think the schedule is too long,” he said. “Why not play just 15 events instead of playing 22 and saying you’re tired at the end of the 22nd one? Maybe the Masters Series events should not be back to back, especially at the end of the year (in Madrid and Paris), but that’s about it.”

## Murray survives ‘toughest’ test

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**By Times Online and Agencies**

Published at 12:00AM, February 17 2006

Andy Murray admitted he had to come through the “toughest set I’ve played on the tour so far” to book his place in the last eight of the ATP SAP Open in San Jose, United States. The Briton lost the first three games of the opening set against Yeu-Tzuoo Wang, of Taipei, but broke back to level at 3-3 and then held his service in a marathon eighth game before breaking again to take the set 6-4.

Murray broke Wang’s opening serve to take control of the second set and complete a 6-4 6-2 victory to set up a quarter-final clash against Robin Soderling, of Sweden.

Murray said: “I think I can say the first set was the toughest set I’ve played on the tour so far. The first few games were kind of tight. I’d lost my serve... but then I’d have some chances in his service games.

“I think that at 5-3 or 4-4 (they) were some of the toughest games I’ve played.

“It was a pretty long match for 6-4, 6-2 and I’m really happy to come through because I didn’t feel like I served very well and I was under a lot of pressure in my service game.

“I held it together pretty well.”

Murray is looking forward to his second meeting with Soderling. In their first match - in the second round of the Thailand Open last year - Murray prevailed in two tie-breaks to move into the top 100 of the ATP rankings for the first time.

He went on to reach his first ATP final, losing to world number one Roger Federer.

# Angry Murray roars ahead

The teenager's behaviour is not winning friends on court, but it has made a fan of John McEnroe, reports Barry Flatman

Published: 19 February 2006

Murray and McEnroe practise together intermittently and both are competing in the event; McEnroe, making a one-off return to the main Tour, combined with Jonas Bjorkman to beat Ashley Fisher and Tripp Phillips 6-1 7-5 in the doubles, while Murray overcame Robin Soderling in three tough sets to set up a confrontation with top seed Andy Roddick. If Murray can get past the American, he will play Lleyton Hewitt in the final after the Australian beat Vince Spadea 6-3 6-4.

Soderling complained to umpire Norm Chryst about Murray's behaviour during the 4-6 7-5 6-4 encounter. The British No 3 threw his racket four times and earned a code violation warning, but contrition is not one of his strengths: "I was trying to get myself going because I started the match so sloppy. It obviously worked. You don't want to be unpopular on Tour, but when you are on the court you have to do what you have to do to win."

McEnroe looked on knowingly. "Is there a changing of the guard in British tennis? I think there is," he said. "A lot of time there is hype and people talking about players when deep down they know it's not going to happen, but this time you have a guy that is really capable of being a great player.

"He has a way of keeping you off balance, he has a feel for the game and he's playing with the most confidence he has ever had.

"The issue with him is probably more physical than mental. Mentally he's proven to be a pretty tough customer . . . he doesn't seem to need a whole lot of help.

"He plays hard, he shows a lot of emotion. He's a breath of fresh air."

## Murray takes another giant leap to greatness

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From Simon Cambers in San Jose, California

Published at 12:00AM, February 20 2006

IT IS a favourite line of Andy Murray's, when he is facing a higher-ranked player, to say that he thinks he will lose. But as soon as he completed a stunning 7-5, 7-5 win over

Andy Roddick, the world No 3, in the semi-finals of the SAP Open, he knew the game was up.

Regardless of the outcome of last night's final between Murray, the world No 60, and Lleyton Hewitt, the former world No 1 from Australia, the 18-year-old from Dunblane took a huge leap forward with his first victory over a top-ten player. As if in anticipation of the world's reaction, he was quick to dampen the inevitable expectation in Britain, insisting that Wimbledon is "not the most important tournament" for him this season as he seeks to mature into one of the world's top players.

Despite the fact that the win over Roddick guaranteed Murray a breakthrough into the top 50, and kept alive the prospect of his ranking climbing enough for him to be seeded at the All England Club, he said: "Wimbledon is not really the most important thing. Probably the most important thing is that I'm improving and my game is getting better. "I want to get to the stage where I'm 21, 22, fully developed and have worked on every area of my game. I feel if I can put the hardest work in possible then it's not so much about the ranking, it's about maturing as a player, knowing how to win the matches. There's 11 more months of tournaments around Wimbledon and everybody is going to put a lot of pressure on me and expect a lot from me, but if I'm not seeded there I could potentially draw Federer, Roddick, Hewitt — any of the top-ranked players. "If I lose in the first round or get to the semi-finals, nothing is going to change too much for me as long as everything is going in the right direction."

Murray became the youngest player to reach the final in San Jose since Michael Chang got there as a 16-year-old in 1988, and now has the belief that, after running some big names close in the past, he can actually go on and beat them.

"To be pushing your ranking in the right direction and to get into the top 50 is a pretty decent achievement at 18 years of age," he said. "It's come pretty quickly but I feel I deserved it. I didn't have the best start to the year but I've been working very hard and I just have to get a few matches under my belt and get a bit of confidence.

"I've got so much respect for someone like Roddick. He's won a grand slam and been No 1 in the world. It's just great to be on the same court as someone like him and to win against him is amazing. To win against a top-ten player gives me a lot of confidence because I've had chances before and not taken them."

There was no luck involved. Roddick, the former world No 1, had his game dismantled by a player who this time last year was losing in the qualifying rounds of events on the Challenger Tour.

The Roddick serve, which has bullied far more experienced players, was made to look almost toothless as the Scot returned outstandingly. Once the rallies developed, it was Murray who was the more composed, patient when he needed to be, aggressive when the situation warranted it.

After saving two break points in the sixth game, Murray grew in confidence and as Roddick, the winner here for the past two years, began to simmer with frustration, the Scot broke to lead 6-5 and served out to love to take the opening set.

Murray broke again in the fifth game of the second set with a rasping backhand pass but Roddick lifted himself to break back. By now, though, Murray was dictating play, and it was no surprise when he broke again to lead 6-5. Murray double-faulted twice, once on match point, but saved a break point with a brave foray to the net and clinched victory when Roddick missed a backhand.

“He played well and there were a lot of times when I felt like I hit three in a row with good speed and good pace and then I was back at neutral,” the American said. “I know he can play and he had nothing to lose. But I thought he served well and that got him out of trouble a lot.”

John McEnroe, the former world No 1, has long been an admirer of Murray. After reaching the final of the men’s doubles here in partnership with Jonas Bjorkman on Saturday — in his first ATP event since 1994 and at 47 — McEnroe was gushing in his praise.

“I’d be surprised if he [Murray] is not in the top 20 really soon,” McEnroe said. “He’s got top-ten potential. I think Andy’s a really smart player. He plays with his head and that’s good to see.”

## ‘Murray is giving everyone in tennis cause to take notice’

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By **Neil Harman**, Tennis Correspondent

Published at 12:00AM, February 20 2006

THIS is a convulsive time for tennis in Britain — when did the sport here exist in any other state? — and Andy Murray is only going to emphasise its spasmodic nature the better he does. The lad knows it, too, which makes his inexorable progress towards the world’s top 50 all the more fascinating.

At the same time as it does all it can to ingratiate itself with the Murray camp — although he has intimated that he probably will not accept its invitation to play in the Red Letter Days Open in Nottingham the week before Wimbledon — so the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) is unable to finalise the protracted sale of Queen’s Club in West London; Stuart Smith, the new president, prefers not to be drawn on any policy initiatives; and the £40 million LTA National Tennis Centre draws closer to throwing wide its doors (it would be nice to think that there might be a crush at the opening).

What these have to do with Murray winning the SAP Open in San Jose becomes clearer as the clock winds down on the careers of Tim Henman and Greg Rusedski — despite their protestations to the contrary, it would be an astonishing achievement should either

contend for a significant title again. The Scot has a lot of futures riding on what looks to be an increasingly firm grip.

The sport has never had anyone like him to contend with. Somnambulist one minute, surging the next, he is a freak in British terms — just as Henman was — but with his head screwed on to such an extent that he knows exactly what he is going to say and has a decent idea as to the impact of his words. When he gives Roger Federer, Marat Safin, Ivan Ljubicic and David Nalbandian extremely decent runs for their money and sends Andy Roddick, the former world No 1, into a lather of self-defeating angst, he becomes a very dangerous property indeed.

British 18-year-olds are not expected to defeat the world No 3 and say “it was quite a good effort”. And say that getting to the top 50 is “a pretty decent achievement”. But that is Murray’s manner. He does his stuff, he makes the right choices, he picks his coach because he has an innate sense that he is the right man, he sticks it to his critics, he drops one of the sport’s foremost management groups in favour of a smaller, more select company and he can barely hide his contempt at the way the sport is run here.

It is why someone with all John McEnroe’s bravado looks upon him with something approaching kinship. It is why the LTA chooses to stage its next Davis Cup tie in Glasgow. It is why Murray says Wimbledon is not his most important tournament (he does not have the feel for the place that British players are expected to have).

It is why he is full of disdain for what tennis is supposed to be in favour of a teenager’s grasp of what it should be if kids with his spark are taught by people who excite them, and they have a respect for. Murray is giving everyone in tennis — and not just the British game in which rumours of change abound — cause to sit up and take notice.

Paul Annacone, Henman’s coach, has sensed the “tumultuous stage” the Scot has reached. “There are lots of peaks and valleys ahead,” Annacone said. “There will be a lot to have to deal with. The truly great players get away with more than the not-so-great players.”

Last night, Murray defeated Lleyton Hewitt, of Australia, who became the world No 1, won a couple of grand-slam tournaments, loves the Davis Cup and is a constant thorn in the side of the Aussie establishment. One is tempted to say that here are two men who may — one day — have an awful lot in common.

## Murray signals his arrival as big-hitter on world stage

From Simon Cambers in San Jose, California  
Published at 12:00AM, February 20 2006

ANDY MURRAY sent a signal to the world's elite here last night as he fought back to beat Lleyton Hewitt, the former world No 1 from Australia, 2-6, 6-1, 7-6 to win the SAP Open, his first ATP Tour title.

Hewitt romped through the first set but Murray increased the tempo to level the match and though Hewitt saved two match points, both with aces, the Scot clinched victory with a stunning backhand winner for the best win of his career.

"This is the biggest moment of my life in tennis so far," Murray said. "The first two match points he hit two aces and I was getting a bit nervous, but I came through. This is perfect."

At 18 and nine months, Murray will be inside the world's top 50 when the new rankings are released today, but more importantly, in defeating Hewitt and Andy Roddick, the world No 3 whom he beat in the semi-finals, back-to-back, he must now be considered a big threat at the year's grand-slam events.

Hewitt contributed to his own downfall with 11 double faults, but Murray more than matched him in every other part of the game and fully deserved his win. To put the victory in perspective, Murray is more than three years younger than Tim Henman was when he won his first title, and a year younger than Greg Rusedski when he earned his first triumph.

After defeating Roddick in the semi-final, it would have been no surprise had Murray suffered a let-down in form. But he began well, forcing a break point in the opening game, which Hewitt saved with a delicate backhand drop volley. The Scot then netted a forehand to drop his own serve but showed his resilience as he broke back immediately, thanks in part to a double fault from Hewitt.

With a succession of long rallies, Murray and Hewitt were testing each other out, seeing who would crack first and for a fleeting moment it looked as if it would be Hewitt as a forehand winner gave Murray the chance to break for 3-2.

But the former Wimbledon and US Open champion did not achieve the world No 1 ranking by making mistakes and after saving the break point he held for serve and then broke Murray to lead 4-2 as two backhand errors handed the No 3 seed the edge. After holding for 5-2, a good forehand approach from Hewitt forced another error from Murray and gave him the set.

If Hewitt thought Murray was going to capitulate, however, he was sorely mistaken, as a brilliant backhand lob and then a missed backhand from Hewitt handed the Scot a break in the first game.

Having tried to wait for mistakes in the first set, Murray began to increase the power and two brilliant backhand passes helped to clinch a double break at 3-0. Hewitt then attempted to take the game to Murray, but almost every time he approached the net, his opponent rifled winners past him and when Hewitt double faulted for the seventh time, the match was level.

Murray always held the upper hand in the third set, leading 2-0 and 4-2, but Hewitt would not go away as he levelled at 4-4. Murray held for 5-4 and then forced a match point but

Hewitt aced him, and amazingly the pattern was repeated two games later as the Australian forced a tie-break.

But after storming to a 6-3 lead in the tie-break, Murray would not be denied and he crunched another backhand cross-court to secure victory.

## Mutual respect allows coach and pupil room to manoeuvre

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By **Neil Harman**, Tennis Correspondent

Published at 12:00AM, February 20 2006

MARK PETCHEY took a flight from London to Memphis, Tennessee, yesterday — not all that remarkable, only that Andy Murray was in San Jose and his coach was not. Perhaps the most enlightening element of Murray's achievement in reaching his second ATP final last night was that he spent the week in sole control of his destiny.

Before those who would relish driving a wedge between Murray and Petchey at this fledgling stage rise to the bait, it should be emphasised the coach had asked to spend school half-term with his wife and two daughters, given that the rest of his 2006 diary barely has another free week in it. Murray thinks too much of his coach to have stood in his way.

Thus, Petchey was reduced to daily telephone contact and watching points tick over on the internet — probably worse than being courtside — as the 18-year-old, who admittedly is not the most organised individual, went about getting to practice on time, lining up training partners, organising his laundry and dealing with a succession of late-night match scheduling that would have disorientated people with ten times more experience. That Murray handled this and coped with the small matter of defeating Andy Roddick in the semi-finals before a partisan American crowd for his finest win is testament to his strength of character as he continues to rise to every challenge. Petchey would be the first to say a lot of hard yards were spent once Murray returned, unfulfilled, from the Australian Open, but the coach has been more thrilled than anyone at how his man has coped with another defining week.

The coach would not have missed the time with his family for the world. But there is much Petchey and his young charge can look forward to this year and beyond, as Murray's success this past week tantalisingly underlined.

The pair have matured together since Murray asked Petchey to take over two weeks before last year's Wimbledon — Petchey long emphasising his doctrine is to build a secure platform to enhance any bursts Murray makes up the rankings. "I can't speak more highly of what Andy has done up until now and how he dealt with everything this week," Petchey said. "We aren't under any illusions. It is going to be a difficult year, the

schedule is going to be rough on him — and me. We need to be together sometimes and also have our space. That was why there was so much soul searching before we set out. “I knew he had the pick of a lot of people when he decided on a change last year, and he believed I was the one who could help him achieve his goals as quickly as he possibly could. When someone like him says that to you, you have to go for it. You have to be yourself and comfortable with that, whatever anyone else may be saying.”

## Flying Scot heads towards summit

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By **Neil Harman**, Tennis Correspondent, and **Simon Cambers**

Published at 12:00AM, February 21 2006

ANDY MURRAY sets up camp this week in the birthplace of the blues. An icy blast might have been blowing through Main Street, Memphis, yesterday as the winter chill declined to relinquish its grip, but for this remarkable son of Dunblane the prospects are only bright and beautiful.

Murray was not due to arrive in Tennessee until past midnight local time, after one of the headiest evenings of his life. In what state he would be after a day spent crossing the United States, no one could properly tell, but he was bound to be overwhelmingly satisfied.

The British No 1 ranking could be his by the end of the week, although Greg Rusedski's first-round victory over Robin Vik, of the Czech Republic, in the ABN AMRO Championship in Rotterdam yesterday made it less likely.

It will happen soon. Murray is too good a player for it not to be so. But domestic matters do not bother him. “I would rather be the No 10 player in the world and the British No 3 than the No 25 in the world and the British No 1,” he said. “It is the lowest of the low of my priorities.” Try to persuade Rusedski, who has set his heart on wresting the position from whoever may hold it before he rides into the sunset, to side with that position.

But Murray's name is playing on the sport's lips, whatever the prosaic demands, and that does not happen often to British players. He might have been more than an hour late for a scheduled debrief with the media yesterday, but no one chided him for it. He is too valuable to chide.

His 2-6, 6-1, 7-6 victory over Lleyton Hewitt, the former world No 1 in the final of the SAP Open in San Jose, California, deep into Sunday night, was exceptional not only for the bare statistical face of success — he became the youngest Briton to win a tour event in amateur or professional eras — but that he had beaten Andy Roddick, another former No 1, the previous day.

Tim Henman defeated, successively, Sébastien Grosjean, Gustavo Kuerten, Roger Federer, Roddick and Andrei Pavel in a stellar run to the most important title of his career, the 2003 BNP Paribas Masters, and can appreciate what it took for Murray to achieve his tournament breakthrough at such a tender age. To have done it without a coach to refer to was even more commendable.

Roger Rasheed, Hewitt's coach, said that it was "the best I have seen from Murray", while adding that he felt that his man was underdone in terms of matchplay this year. Murray and Petchey will be reacquainted this morning. "I spoke to him last night and he was a bit worried I was going to sack him and hire my girlfriend," Murray said of his flame, Kimberly Sears, the daughter of Nigel Sears, the respected British coach, who watched his entire week's play.

"I've been working on my composure and not showing too much emotion against these guys, who give you so little," he said. "They make so few errors. There wasn't any pressure for me to win. For that reason, I didn't get too angry or emotional and it helped me. I know that I've got a good chance of winning against some of those guys now, but Memphis is going to be difficult. I'll only have one day of practice on those courts. I'm just going to take things one match at a time. This might get me to the top 50 (he is at No 47), but there are still 46 guys out there who are better.

After the tournament in Memphis, he will travel to Las Vegas for the Tennis Channel Open, the first time the tour has stopped at that unique metropolis. "You're going to have a gamble, right?" he was asked by an American writer. Murray replied: "No, you can't unless you're 21, which is a bit of a shame because that's the thing I was most looking forward to going there for. I'm not a gambler, but it would have been nice to have a go." And whatever colour he had chosen, most people would have placed a few dollars upon. He has that kind of charm.

## Murray pays more than lip service to secret girl

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Published at 12:00AM, February 21 2006

**After the week of Murray's life, we can bask in the enjoyment of the exploits of a favourite nephew, says Chief Sports Writer Simon Barnes**

THERE are many intriguing aspects to the close observation of a thrilling young talent and one of these is the way the entire nation turns into a benevolent old uncle at the drop of a set. Or aunt. We are concerned, supportive, occasionally worried, frequently elated, but we have no direct responsibility. All the pleasures of avuncularity are available to us. There was the great uncle moment when Gary Lineker said of Wayne Rooney, playing in an England shirt: "I think we've got one 'ere." And that is the way it is with Andrew Murray, as we learn more of his nature and more of his talent.

And like all good uncles, we rub our hands as if it were all our own doing. Each new revelation of character and talent seems to be a compliment to ourselves for recognising the talent at an early age. And so, after the week of Murray's life — so far — we can bask in the enjoyment of the exploits of a favourite nephew.

Beating Andy Roddick in the semi-finals in San Jose was good; didn't we always say he had it in him? Beating Lleyton Hewitt in the final was a lot better; that was putting two big games together, one after the other. We may have said that he would do that one day, but the speed of it took us by surprise.

But there were still more revelations of his precocity. Victory complete, he turned not to mother or to coach, but to a pretty girl and tasted victory from her lips. He had beaten two of the finest players on the planet, one after the other, and then given his girl a hearty snog at the end of it all. Damn and blast it all, why wasn't my youth like that? Or yours? Still, as uncles (or aunts) we can still enjoy it vicariously.

The lips belonged to Kimberly Sears. Like Murray, she is 18. She was Murray's entire entourage in San Jose. She was on her half-term holiday. Now Murray goes to a tournament in Memphis, Tennessee, while the information is that Kimberly goes back to Brighton to carry on with her A-levels. Drama, music and art, since you ask, although Murray could give her a few lessons in drama.

She is the daughter of Nigel Sears, a British tennis coach working with Daniela Hantuchova. Murray met Kimberly during the US Open last year and managed to keep it quiet until the incontinent moment of victory blew the gaff.

This was a great teenage adventure. Murray's coach, Mark Petchey, didn't travel to San Jose, wanting to spend half-term with his family. So the kids did it on their own and in this mock-grown-up jaunt Murray found within himself the reserves to outplay Roddick and Hewitt.

You can say what you like about Murray, but he's not Tim Henman. Murray, rightly and wisely, speaks eloquently of his debt to Henman, but more and more he is showing that he is not only Henman's successor but is his antithesis. Henman, at his magisterial best, was cold.

Murray is hot. He has a singed-barbed-wire haircut, he does wild expressions and Celtic yells, he is always passing out or vomiting, he is usually in a ferment and in the moment of triumph, he fought his way through to his girl for a triumphant, public kiss. Not very Henman, no

"We have absolutely no worries for Kimberley," Sears père said. "She is a very sensible girl who loves to have fun. They are two young kids who are very happy."

The avuncular nation cheers these words. This highly promising boy is in the process of becoming a man of achievement. He moves up to No 47 in the world — top 50 and rising. We make cautious predictions, but Murray is always that bit ahead of us. No doubt Kimberly can take that in her stride.

Responsibility is a fine thing when it comes and it allows those of us who have acquired responsibilities to look back on the carefree years with a glowing nostalgia. Especially when we see the principle of carefree youth acted out so lusciously before us. Go to California for half-term and hijack world tennis; not bad. Life should be like that.

# Henman's advice and support for young rival

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By Neil Harman

Published at 12:00AM, February 21 2006

Our correspondent on the special relationship between Andy Murray and the rival he has in his sights

TIM HENMAN spoke to Mark Petchey, Andy Murray's coach, on Friday about the pitfalls that may lie ahead for the teenager after what was a potentially seminal weekend. "Petch asked if there was anything I could offer — well I said I could tell him how not to play against (Lleyton) Hewitt, if it should come to that," Henman said.

Henman's 0-8 career win-loss record against the Australian — with only two sets won in the those matches — meant that he could offer only circumstantial clues as to prospective weaknesses in the Hewitt make-up.

It may be hard for those who will take a jaundiced delight at Henman being knocked — as he probably will — from his British No 1 perch this week to realise the depth of admiration that he has for his young rival.

Henman's reaction to Murray's first tournament victory, in San Jose, was: "What a week — now let's hope I can follow that in Rotterdam." A first-round meeting tonight with Thomas Johansson, the 2002 Australian Open champion from Sweden, will be a thorough examination of Henman's form and his dodgy back.

Whatever happens, he is thrilled for Murray. "I know how down and frustrated he was after Australia and then Zagreb (where Murray lost in the first round to Ivan Ljubicic, the top seed, of Croatia)," Henman said. "I told him that with his ability and if he put in the work the right way, it was bound to pay off at some stage. I'm sure even he will be pleasantly surprised how quickly it has. Beating (Andy) Roddick and Hewitt in successive days — to win that young, in those circumstances, says so much.

"We've had some great conversations, I like him and I'm keen to pass on my experiences. There are things he can do better on and off the court, the journey won't be easy. When I was 18, there was no way I could compete at the physical level that Andy can and to be able to play at that level is such an advantage."

# View from the heights should sustain belief and confidence

Published at 12:00AM, February 21 2006

**Last year Andy Murray had the right attitude and mental capacity to compete, and now he has the body as well as the strokes, writes Boris Becker**

I REMEMBER my first tournament win on the tour as if it were yesterday — at Queen's Club in 1985, beating Johan Kriek in the final after winning against Pat Cash in the quarters and Paul McNamee in the semis. I was 17. It is what I had dreamt of doing and now it was a dream no more.

Andy Murray is 18 and it is his turn to feel that he has reached the mountain top. In the heat of the moment against Lleyton Hewitt in the final in San Jose, playing cat and mouse with a former world No 1, he will have had a sense that that is where he belonged, a feeling that all is normal but surreal at the same time. Then he woke up yesterday morning and spoke to his friends and read the newspapers — what he has done will have sunk in and he will appreciate that it is quite an achievement.

And it is important that he lives it fully. He needs to say, “how great it is”, to revel in his time in the sunshine, because there will be plenty of other moments when life is not so rosy. We could see last year that he did not yet have the body to compete, but he had the mental capacity, the right attitude. Now he has the body as well as the strokes.

What it shows me is that all the hype was well-founded. There is a lot more to come. He believed he could beat Hewitt the day after he nailed Andy Roddick — two of the world's best players — and that is a message not only to him but the rest of tennis as well. And the rest will have taken note, believe me. When you are on the kind of roll Murray is experiencing, you want to keep riding it. He is playing for the next six weeks straight and as long as he does not get fatigued, he could be involved in a lot of matches. If I were Jeremy Bates, the Great Britain Davis Cup captain, I might hope that Murray has one or two lean weeks, or he could be really tired for the tie against Serbia and Montenegro in early April. And a lot rests on him then.

For Murray today, nothing can top the exhilaration of being a champion. Am I surprised it happened? No. Am I surprised it happened at this moment? Yes. After a poor Australian Open, I wondered what might become of him in the next few weeks. Wonder no more. He has the game to handle the world's best, he has the courage and the confidence.

At the end of last year's Wimbledon, I felt it would be an achievement for Murray to be in the main draw this year without the aid of a wild card. Now, it looks as if he may be seeded. This kid is really good.

# Henman shows no hurry to step aside for Murray

By [Neil Harman](#)

Published at 12:00AM, February 23 2006

TIM HENMAN reiterated this week, as if there remained any doubt, that he will not play Davis Cup tennis for Great Britain again, so when he takes on Novak Djokovic, of Serbia and Montenegro, in the second round of the ABN/Amro tournament in Rotterdam tonight, there is no extra significance riding on the result. The fact that he may lose his British No 1 standing in the process is neither here nor there.

Domestic bragging rights are still up for grabs after Henman's 6-4, 6-4 victory over Thomas Johansson, of Sweden, the 2002 Australian Open champion, a match completed an hour after Andy Murray, fresh — or perhaps not so fresh — from victory in San Jose, California, on Sunday, came from a set and a break down to beat Rainer Schüttler, of Germany, the finalist in Melbourne in 2003, in the Regions Morgan Keegan Championships in Memphis.

These two results, allied to Greg Rusedski's defeat in Rotterdam on a day that four Britons were involved in matches of significance on the ATP Tour — a red-letter afternoon if ever there was one — means that Murray may have to wait longer for the coronation that he says means little to him.

But remarkably, of the two victories, maybe Henman's over Johansson, last year's Wimbledon semi-finalist, was less expected, given that the British No 1 had pulled out of the tournament in Marseilles last week with a frozen back and could not be sure how it would respond against Johansson, a player who has made a reputation as one of the most durable on the circuit.

"I played aggressively and took my chances," Henman said. "I guess most importantly I felt physically good out on court. I've had an ongoing back issue for quite some time, probably nearly 18 months, and it's sometimes a bit unpredictable. I was pleased with the whole performance tonight."

Djokovic is one of the rising stars of the tour and, in April, in Glasgow, he will be at the forefront of Serbia's attempt to send a Henman-less team deeper into the bowels of Davis Cup anonymity. Murray is going to need some support if present form is anything to go by. Could Arvind Parmar yet come to the rescue?

When Rafael Nadal cried off from Rotterdam on Sunday, there was a good deal of sympathy for Richard Krajicek, the tournament director, who had already suffered the loss of Roger Federer and Marat Safin from his initial assignment of superstars. Into the No 1 seed's place on the top line of the draw came Parmar, ranked No 230 in the world. Krajicek was hardly doing handstands.

When the 27-year-old from Hertford beat Paradorn Srichaphan, the former top-ten player from Thailand, in the first round, tournament officials swallowed hard and offered the British No 5 their congratulations.

Today, Parmar, whose performances this week have assured him of a place back inside the top 200, will play in the quarter-finals of an ATP Tour event on foreign soil for the first time in nine years as a professional.

His 6-3, 6-3 victory over Dominik Meffert, of Germany, tells only a section of the story, for Meffert was the man who defeated him in the final round of qualifying on Sunday morning, after which Parmar was summoned into the main draw as a "lucky loser". The result has been one of the more remarkable four days of his life.

"I'm under no illusions, getting to the quarter-finals is great but I want to do much better," he said. "And not just this week, but into the future."

He admits to being inspired by the exploits of Murray, a feeling he senses is shared by many young British players. "Of course, I'd love to be in the position he's in, but he's deserved everything that's come his way," Parmar said. "I'm not interested in being 190 or 150 and I'm willing to put in the work that's going to help me become a lot better than that."

Rusedski was not expected to offer a great deal of trouble to Nikolay Davydenko, the No 2 seed Russian who reached the quarter-finals of the Australian Open last month. Rusedski led 4-2 in the opening set but once Davydenko got into his stride, the match turned on its head, Rusedski winning just one of the remaining 11 games.

## Murray puts an end to Henman's home rule

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By **Neil Harman**, Tennis Correspondent

Published at 12:00AM, February 24 2006

JUST over a year ago, Andy Murray was ranked No 514 in the world. Tim Henman was at No 6, having just completed his most memorable season, reaching the semi-finals of both the French and US Opens, a grand-slam bonanza. The pair were on nodding terms, Murray the precocious if reserved young buck, Henman the master craftsman.

Just before midnight last night, however, Murray defeated Rik De Voest, a South African lucky loser, in three sets in the second round of the Regions Morgan Keegan tournament in Memphis, Tennessee, and leapfrogged both Henman and Greg Rusedski to become the No 1 player in Great Britain.

Henman has enjoyed that accolade for the best part of a decade, but now the climate in tennis in this country has changed radically and one wonders how long it will be before it alters again.

There were moments of indecision in Murray's 7-6, 3-6, 7-5 victory over De Voest. It was the kind of match in which he may have come to a sticky end, for lucky losers — those who were defeated in qualifying but have earned a place in the main draw through someone else's misfortune — tend to ride their luck the second time around.

Thus De Voest, ranked No 149, was likely to be tricky. For once this was a match Murray was expected to canter and he made heavy weather of it.

Though he will not be pleased to hear it, Henman's 5-7, 6-3, 6-4 defeat by Novak Djokovic, of Serbia and Montenegro, at the same stage of the ABN/AMRO Championship in Rotterdam, means that the ranking points he will lose, and those Murray will gain, confirm what, even a couple of months ago, most judges did not think would happen until Wimbledon at least.

But Murray is top of the pile, Scotland rules — and it is remarkable that two of his brethren, Alan Mackin and Colin Fleming, should be contesting today's final of the LTA satellite Masters in Sheffield. There is no stopping them.

It was put to Murray the day before yesterday that the British No 1 position could well be his in the short term and he responded with a derisive snort. He said he could not care if he was the country's leading player and ranked No 25 in the world, he would much prefer to be Britain's No 3 and ranked inside the top 10. As a way of thinking, it is utterly right, for this country more than any other sticks numbers after their players on a regular basis. Who, for instance, has ever heard of Roger Federer being called the Swiss No 1? Henman has ridden the wave here for so long, but a concern much greater than dropping beneath Murray — and possibly Rusedski — is that he has three tournaments on the horizon, in Dubai, Indian Wells and Key Biscayne, in which he reached the quarter-finals in 2005. Should he fail to match those performances inside the next six weeks, his international standing will plummet still further. That will really hurt.

"I felt the quality of tennis was pretty high," Henman said after yesterday's defeat. "At this level it boils down to the big points and in the first set I was the one that won them.

"It was a tough match, I felt like there was some pretty good quality tennis but he deserved to win in the end."

For Murray, it is ever upwards. Today he meets Robin Soderling, of Sweden — a player he defeated in San Jose last week — for a place in the semi-finals in Memphis, and suddenly there is not a single seed left in his half of the draw.

Surely, back-to-back victories is too much to ask for. But who knows with this extraordinary 18-year-old. What is more likely is that he will decide to withdraw from the Tennis Channel Open in Las Vegas the week after to concentrate on getting himself fresh for the Masters Series events in Indian Wells and Key Biscayne in mid-March.

# Soderling and fatigue too much for Murray

By **Neil Harman**, Tennis Correspondent

Published at 12:00AM, February 25 2006

HE SAVED seven match points in seven minutes but Andy Murray's first defeat in eight matches in Memphis last night doused him with a shower of reality after the storm of the past few days.

Murray lost 6-1, 6-4 to Robin Soderling of Sweden in the quarter-finals of the Regions Morgan Keegan Championships — revenge for defeat at the same stage the previous week when Murray went on to win his maiden ATP title in San Jose — and now has a bit of time to breathe.

"I was a little bit tired mentally," Murray said. "It's really difficult to keep a run going, especially after the week I had last week. I'm a little bit disappointed to lose but happy with the last couple of weeks."

For the new British No 1 to have stayed competitive as long as he did in Tennessee after the tumult of his exploits last week made this the most demanding of weeks.

Now Murray can head to Las Vegas for the Tennis Channel Open next week with a bit of time on his hands. There was a shock on Thursday night when the Scot's name appeared to have been erased from the list of competitors, whereas it should have been Gilles Muller of Luxembourg who had been withdrawn.

Such is the following that Murray is building in America, there was an immediate succession of phone calls from the tournament director to make certain that he was competing.

Arvind Parmar's hopes of reaching his first ATP Tour semi-final were extinguished when he lost 6-3, 6-3 to Christophe Rochus, of Belgium, in the ABN/AMRO tournament in Rotterdam.

## Tennis: Major ambition

Andy Murray's first tour title was a reward for his improved fitness and suggests Grand Slam glory awaits

*BARRY FLATMAN*

Published: 26 February 2006

So the fact that he squandered a glorious opportunity to add a second ATP title to the one he collected by beating former world No 1s Lleyton Hewitt and Andy Roddick in San Jose a week ago will gnaw away at him — but not for long. Britain's new No 1 is a driven athlete, and that will help him bury the disappointment of defeat and move on.

Nobody knows the 18-year-old from Dunblane better than his elder brother Jamie. He recalls signs from their childhood. "We would go on the PlayStation together, playing the football game. If I won, I would not be allowed to leave the room until he won a rematch. It's the way he is — very stubborn and determined that nobody will get the better of him."

Murray's fervent desire to succeed will earn him enemies in the coming years. Robin Soderling, the Swede who ended his run at the quarter-final stage of the Regions Morgan Keegan Championships in Memphis, a week after complaining about the same opponent's on-court demeanour in San Jose, admitted: "He is not going to go away and is never going to give you a free point. He plays every ball as though it really matters."

Scant consolation for Murray as he agonises over the fact that only one of yesterday's semi-finalists, Germany's Tommy Haas, was either seeded or placed higher than him on the Indesit ATP world rankings. But he should temper his frustration with the acceptance that this time last year he was ranked 514 in the world and had yet to hit a competitive shot on the men's Tour.

Successive titles are not unheard of for a teenager. A year ago, Spain's Rafael Nadal won consecutive tournaments: first on the Brazilian clay of Costa do Sauipe, then at the glitzy Mexican playground of Acapulco. Less than two months later, he repeated the feat, winning his first Masters Series event in Monte Carlo before proving unbeatable at Barcelona, where Murray made his full ATP debut.

Nadal is convinced that his greatest contemporary rival over the next decade will be the Scot. "There are many good young players now making their reputation," said the 19-year-old French Open champion. "Novak Djokovic from Serbia, (Marcos) Baghdatis, (Richard) Gasquet and (Gael) Monfils from France, but Murray is the one I know best because he came to Spain.

"He has a fire burning inside that makes him forever want to get better. He is somebody that always fights and never wants to stand still. He can already play with the big guys."

Just 10 months after that Barcelona bow, Murray is one of the most talked-about players in the game, and organisers of this week's Tennis Channel Open in Las Vegas, still miffed about Andre Agassi opting to savour the luxury of the rival Dubai event rather than play in his home city, view the teenager as a big attraction.

Murray would probably be wiser to skip this event to ensure that he has mentally and physically recovered for the more important and lucrative Masters Series events in Indian Wells and Miami. Yet he seems to thrive on life on the American road. Last summer he cut his competitive teeth with a demanding eight-week stint that saw him rack up the air miles by crossing and re-crossing the continent. This spring promises to be equally arduous.

However, in the same way that Murray appreciated that it was necessary to leave home at 14 and head to the Sanchez-Casal Academy in Spain to hone his tennis skills, he believes it is imperative that he plays as many tournaments as possible to realise his aim of being seeded for this summer's French Open and Wimbledon.

And while physical fitness appeared a glaring issue for much of 2005, that seems to be a thing of the past. Jean-Pierre Bruyère, the Frenchman handed responsibility for getting Murray fit enough to compete with the best, was bed-ridden with flu when his charge scored successive victories over Roddick and Hewitt. But the news from San Jose was a tonic, and a long, demanding second round in Memphis against South African Rik de Voest underlined the level of his physical improvement.

Bruyère, who recommended that Murray undergo a complete physical examination at the University of Dijon, one of the bastions of French sports science, acknowledged: "It's well known that Andy got annoyed that so many people were focusing on his apparent lack of fitness last year, but it only made him more determined to prove them all wrong. Andy understood what needed to be done and went to work immediately.

"He didn't allow himself any rest period whatsoever and his desire to become a very, very good tennis player was enormous. People who have known him since he was a boy say he didn't like the gym or running, but he worked so hard throughout the winter before going to South Africa for some warm-weather training over Christmas. I sent him away with a programme and he stuck to it.

"Andy is very special in his determination. He is happy to make the sacrifices, and although he likes to wear the face of a teenager who sometimes seems set on doing things his way, underneath the surface he is totally professional and won't take any short cuts."

On the eve of Murray being officially declared Britain's top player, it would be crass to suggest that in July he will end a 70-year wait and succeed Fred Perry as a British male Wimbledon champion.

Grass is the least conducive surface to his particular talents, and winning Wimbledon has never been his overriding ambition. Should Murray lift a Masters Series title, it will arguably be the most notable British achievement in men's tennis since Perry's 1936 triumph.

## Back to the drawing board as Murray is blown off court

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From [Neil Harman](#), Tennis Correspondent, in Indian Wells, California

Published at 12:00AM, March 13 2006

JUST a little too certain, just a little too steady, Nikolay Davydenko was just a little too good at everything for Andy Murray here last night. Absolutely no dishonour in that.

The Russian has not risen — with precious scant fanfare — to No 5 in the world without being a darned good player and thus his 6-1, 3-6, 6-3 victory over the 18-year-old Scot in the second round of the Pacific Life Open was predictable in its way. There were flashes of Murray at his best but there is a machine-like quality about the dapper Davydenko that draws in and chews out players better than the British No 1. Murray lost in time for him to consider playing the Sunrise challenger in Florida this week, giving him more match play before the next Masters Series event, in Key Biscayne, Florida, which starts on Wednesday week.

The scenery was magnificently alluring, as the weekend's snow had coated two thirds of the ranges. When he pulled back the curtains yesterday morning, Murray could have been looking at the Cairngorms. The priest's sermon at the local church began with the greeting "welcome to polar bear country".

The edge had gone from the cold by the time the match was called, but a stiff wind blew straight across an unprotected court, meaning that any degree of misjudgment off the ground would be punished, as Murray found to his initial cost. It did not help his cause that Davydenko was the personification of precision, especially with his forehand deep to the Scot's forehand corner. He was barely missing.

Murray, on the other hand, was unable to get into any kind of discernible rhythm, as the Russian's clean hitting took a heavy toll. Three breaks of serve in the first set and the No 5 seed appeared to be heading for a decisive victory. But Murray has endured sluggish starts many times and once Davydenko had tossed in three double faults in his first two service games of the second set, he was 3-0 down. In the midst of this, Murray had played his best point of the match, a backhand "get" lob, which Davydenko pursued, turned and struck back into play only for the Scot to cut it off with a touch volley. The crowd, which had been strangely quiet, began to warm to the task. Murray held serve in an arduous sixth game, during which he had skimmed the top of the net with one sliced backhand and, rather than hold up his hand by means of apology — and which player really means it? — he pumped his fist. When he stumbled, chasing yet another deep ground stroke by Davydenko two games later, the Russian did not ask after his opponent's wellbeing — what do they expect, a bunch of flowers?

Slow courts, heavy balls, another kid who could take ferocious swings and hit a stream of winners — all the ingredients that offered Greg Rusedski food for despairing thought about the future of a sport that used to be sprinkled with variation.

Rusedski's 6-2, 6-4 defeat by Stanislas Wawrinka, of Switzerland, was a further punishing reminder that unless something is done to reverse the deadening of court surfaces and give players decently weighted tennis balls rather than the cannonballs on offer at present, we are heading towards the dreary prospect of years of baseline attrition and the consequent pain of player burnout. "I've been lucky, to be around for 15 years," Rusedski said, "but I don't expect there will be too many like me around in the future. I give them eight years at most; they can't keep going in the current conditions."

# The grand design: how Murray has found route to the top

By [Neil Harman](#)

Published at 12:00AM, March 16 2006

## Our correspondent meets the teenager who intends to conquer the tennis world

IN AUSTRALIA two months ago, Andy Murray was described as “Wayne Rooney with a brain”, and like the footballer there is already a book in the offing. But Murray’s involvement in the prospective tome is merely as the central character in an unlikely tale of a Scottish tennis player who rises above. The £5 million deals may have to wait, but they will surely come.

The mountains apart, there is little in the azure-skied, wildflowered wilderness of Indian Wells to remind Murray of home. Yet this is where it’s at for him now, in the company of the best players in the world, a restlessly competitive teenager eager to push at the boundaries of his talent.

He has spent the two days since defeat in the second round of the Pacific Life Open by Nikolay Davydenko, the world No 5 from Russia, “being a kid”: playing golf with Tim Henman, David Lloyd and Mark Petchey, his coach, enjoying a spot of pool in the players’ lounge and, because it is the expected thing, glad-handing guests in the suite of Charlie Pasarell and Ray Moore, the tournament directors.

Murray’s style — classically unkempt in appearance but sharp, dry and laconic in conversation — is disarming. The relentless, live-for-the-moment optimism of the Americans sits snugly with the 18-year-old. Rather here than dreary, negative old Britain.

Your job is to probe him, yet he loves to probe back. The intricacies of the sport, the people in it, why they say what they say (especially about him) or do what they do is an endless if occasionally troubling fascination. He said that he will be “p\*\*\*\*\*d” if he does not win the ATP’s newcomer-of-the-year award next week, and with reason. No freshman made a bigger impact on tennis in 2005 than Murray. And so it has gone on.

The talk turns to ambition. “I said at the end of 2004 I wanted to be in the top 100 by the end of the next year,” he said. “I had a couple of bad tournaments at the start and people said, ‘He should keep his mouth shut.’ But there were ten months of the year to go. I knew how well I was playing in practice and what Carlos Moyà and Guillermo Coria were saying to my coach confirmed that.

“And what would people prefer, someone who said they wanted to be inside the top 100 and finished 120, or someone whose ambition was to get inside 300 and finished 280? “Greg Rusedski has believed in himself more than anyone on the tour and that’s why he’s had such a successful career. I don’t know if other players haven’t been ambitious or

good enough, but when a 17-year-old says what I said, why can't people just be happy that there's someone who wants to do well, rather than wanting to be mediocre? "No one cares about players who are 250 in the world — well, maybe it's different in Britain because they have a chance of being in the Davis Cup team. But nobody in Spain or France or Argentina cares. People want top-100 players because that means you're a bloody good player."

The chances are that Murray will be at No 40 next week. A seeding at the French Open or Wimbledon is not out of the equation. He won his first ATP tournament in San Jose, California, last month, after which, in an uncharacteristic show of emotion, he jumped into the crowd to share his joy with Kimberly Sears, his student girlfriend, and he has just competed in his first Masters tournament on ranking merit. Next week, in Key Biscayne, Florida, comes the second.

"(Roger) Federer and (Rafael) Nadal won four Masters each last year and for me it is a chance to learn so much because I have to raise my game," Murray said. "It's difficult because you're going to play a seeded player in the second round and this sport is so competitive, so physical. I have to prepare great coming into these events."

We were interrupted by coverage of Federer versus Olivier Rochus on television. "Do you know Federer's Masters record at the start of his career?" Murray said. "He lost nine of his first 11 matches and didn't win a title until his fourth year. Look at him now." The message is clear: he can, why can't I? A Scot winning a grand-slam tournament — that would be something. And if we did not know it before, the pride that Murray feels to be a man of his nationality is regularly dropped into the dialogue. He wonders if Sir Alex Ferguson would be interested in tennis.

"Probably not, but he'd be intrigued by you," I said. Murray replied: "That's because we Scots have a fierce pride in the things we do that others can never appreciate. I am the British No 1, but I would prefer to be the British No 1 from Scotland every time."

Great Britain's next Davis Cup tie will be staged at the Braehead Arena in Glasgow, thanks to you know who. It will be played against Serbia and Montenegro on a fast indoor court, which is a mystery considering that Murray would have preferred something of a more medium pace with a high bounce. Taking a vital tie to his back room and not asking whether he would like lino or carpet suggests that something has been lost in the translation.

If he holds the English in friendly (one hopes) contempt, there is one Englishman of whom he cannot speak too highly. "Tim Henman's career — people see it as not winning Wimbledon and therefore he's a failure," Murray said. "He was one set against (Goran) Ivanisevic (in the Wimbledon semi-finals in 2001) from being the No 2 player in the world, one player better than him on the planet.

"The amount of weeks Tim has spent in the top ten in ten years when three of the best players in history — Sampras, Agassi and Federer — were against him is amazing. I can't see how he is judged on one tournament.

"OK, winning a slam takes a player to a different level and I think I have a decent chance. If I don't, will I get the same sort of thing? I don't want to think about ending my career without a grand slam because I believe I can.

“At Wimbledon, I might be in the best 32 players. To do that when you are 19, it’s a pretty big achievement because you’re playing guys ten years older, much more mature and experienced, and if you are not fully grown and you haven’t got the experience, imagine what could happen when you are?”

## Bates wary of weight on Murray’s shoulders

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By **Neil Harman**, Tennis correspondent, in Key Biscayne, Florida

Published at 12:00AM, March 27 2006

FOR someone who played in the Davis Cup in hothouses such as Mexico City, Delhi and Bucharest — the latter in the turbulent days immediately after the assassination of Nicolae Ceausescu, the Romanian dictator — Jeremy Bates should find Glasgow next week a serene experience. Yet this is his debut as captain in a home tie and never will the chair seem so distinctly warm.

On each of the three days of the tie against Serbia and Montenegro, Bates will be seated next to Andy Murray, and choice of words is going to be as important to Great Britain’s chances as the names he writes on the teamsheet.

He points to the fact that it was he who asked Murray to travel with the team to Luxembourg in 2004, when he was a 16-year-old of huge promise in need of a gee-up as he underwent rehabilitation from injury.

“I haven’t seen huge amounts of him live in the past couple of years, but I’ve always had an enormous amount of belief,” Bates said. “I thought it would be a great boost for Andy to experience being in a team with Tim [Henman] and Greg [Rusedski] around when he was getting over his injury and people forget that. I had no hesitation in playing him against Israel in the doubles last year and though no one could have known how he would perform on the match court, I believed he had it in him.

“He needs everyone to get behind him because it’s not an easy journey he’s on and we need to respect that. Mentally, he’s one of the strongest 18-year-olds I’ve encountered in my life and a great match player, technically very aware and he’s really good fun, too, when you get to know him. I have as much time for him as he wants from me.”

Bates knows that enhancing his relationship with Murray is essential if his tenure as the captain will be marked with the team’s return to the World Group. The fact that the next tie is staged in Scotland adds piquancy to the mix. The team gather on Saturday, Bates having flown home from the Nasdaq-100 Open here yesterday after sparring on the practice court with Rusedski and nuzzling closer to Murray’s camp than had been the case before.

He insists that he will not compromise on doing “the right thing”, by those he includes or leaves out. “I know who is honest and who isn’t and that’s how I’ll judge whether people should play,” he said.

“I’ve brought different people in [Jonny Marray, David Sherwood, Alan Mackin and, for the first time next week, James Auckland], and I’ve made difficult decisions. I don’t have the luxury of being able to select both Tim and Greg now and that brings a new dynamic.”

It also makes the winning of ties that much more difficult. Rusedski, having given a discourse after his 6-4, 6-4 second-round defeat by Juan Ignacio Chela, of Argentina, on how slow the surfaces and the balls have become, eagerly awaits the feel of a fast carpet beneath his feet.

“It will be a nice adjustment,” he said. But even a court that suits a 32-year-old may not be enough against a Serbia and Montenegro side built around the huge promise of Novak Djokovic, a teenager who played doubles with Murray at the Australian Open this year and is among the crop expected to challenge for places in the world’s top ten within the next two years.

What Bates would not give for the opportunity to field Henman in his form of the past 72 hours? Victories over Marat Safin and Lleyton Hewitt, two former world No1s, have shown Henman in the glorious form some felt he would be unable to rediscover. He is supremely relaxed and today faces Simon Greul, a lanky German qualifier, who has already pocketed the scalps of Paradorn Srichaphan and Dominik Hrbaty.

“Whether I’m ranked 75 or 25, I’m playing good tennis,” Henman said. “There’s still a lot ahead for me.”

# Murray lacking mint condition

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From [Neil Harman](#), Tennis Correspondent, in Key Biscane, Florida

Published at 12:00AM, April 1 2006

THEY departed a few days ago now but the impact of the British contingent at the Nasdaq-100 Open reverberates on. Tim Henman has been shown to be the worst challenger of line calls in the men’s draw and Andy Murray’s heavy fall on the Grandstand Court two weeks ago could have dramatic repercussions on Great Britain’s Davis Cup hopes.

Henman asked for the revolutionary Hawk-Eye technology to be used eight times in his three matches and didn't get a single challenge right. Murray, beaten in the first round by Stanislas Wawrinka, of Switzerland, snapped the protective black brace on his left ankle when he fell attempting a difficult twisting turn in the second set and, though he carried on, his instinct was that harm had been done. So sharp was the noise when the brace broke that Jeremy Bates, the Britain captain seated in the stands, feared that the British No1 had broken his ankle.

The results of a scan in London on Wednesday have confirmed ligament damage. "We will need to monitor my progress on a daily basis," Murray said. "I'll practise with the team and continue the rehabilitation with caution so as not to aggravate it further and will reassess the injury on Wednesday after practice to determine whether or not I am fit to play on Friday."

If losing Murray is not a mortal blow to Britain's chances of success against Serbia and Montenegro that would guarantee a World Group qualifier in the autumn, it will severely reduce the strength of a team already without Henman, whose retirement from the competition is not negotiable, and Alex Bogdanovic, the No4, who feels that he is not mentally ready to be thrown back into the fray.

The effect on the tie would be enormous. The LTA chose the Braehead Arena, in Glasgow — which was sold out in 48 hours — because of one man. Murray flew to Scotland with the squad yesterday but it was clearly not the happy trip home it might have been. Precaution is the watchword when Bates would undoubtedly have preferred his squad to have had a succession of full-throttle practice sessions.

Back in the Sunshine State, Ivan Ljubicic, second in singles wins behind Roger Federer in 2006, moved smoothly into his third final of the year, thrashing David Nalbandian, the world No3 from Argentina, 6-1, 6-2.

Ljubicic, doubling up as Croatia's Davis Cup captain for their quarter-final tie against Nalbandian's nation next week, performed with rock steadiness off the ground and wasted precious few opportunities when the ball was dropped short. It was a stunning endorsement of his belief that, on present form, he is the second best player in the world. In tomorrow's final, Ljubicic plays either Federer or David Ferrer, of Spain.

Maria Sharapova set up a meeting with Svetlana Kuznetsova in today's women's final when Tatiana Golovin, her opponent in the last four, was forced to retire with an ankle injury in the third set.

# Profanity may cost flawed genius dear

An expectant Scottish public were prepared for fireworks but their ardent young hero provided a less than savoury spectacle as he slumped to defeat, writes Neil White

Published: 9 April 2006

“That’s not the kind of thing we expect to hear on a tennis court,” said Andrew Castle, commentating live on the BBC’s interactive television service. Never mind pressing the red button, how about bringing back the red triangle that used to warn prudish viewers that they were watching the kind of show in which you heard things you wouldn’t expect to hear on a tennis court? Castle’s comments contrasted with Murray’s own response. Talking to reporters afterwards, the 18-year-old appeared to think that the problem was not what he had said (he called Adel Aref, the Tunisian umpire, a “f\*\*\*\*\* c\*\*\*”), but that there had been a microphone open when he said it. “It’s quite difficult,” said Murray, “you see footballers swearing after every bad decision, every foul. Because he had a microphone under his chair . . .” Murray tailed off, leaving us to ponder where this goes now. Before ‘what happens next’, how about a ‘what if’? No microphone, no problem. There appeared little reaction inside the arena to Murray swearing like a sailor. Even his target did not display the outrage one would expect. His command of English may not stretch to registering offence to such a slur, delivered in Murray’s laconic drawl.

Without excusing what was said in anger, it is hard to ignore the comparison Murray makes. Watch any of today’s live matches and you will see footballers swear, often quite clearly at the referee. Should any of them repeat Murray’s mouthful face-to-face with an official they will surely be sent off, yet Murray’s response suggests this is not an anomaly in tennis. Isn’t this just Super Brat for the new millennium? John McEnroe appalled the generation before him by working the officials like nobody ever had. Pre-McEnroe, the sight of both British players and their captain, Jeremy Bates, attacking the umpire’s chair in a pincer movement, as they did over a suspect call here, would have shocked the sport. It is now a common sight. History remembers McEnroe as a champion whose genius could not be extrapolated from his rage.

Somebody like Lleyton Hewitt is as aggressive today and we call it a competitive edge, the lack of which keeps a technically gifted player like Tim Henman from greatness. Temper without talent, such as that displayed by Jeff Tarango at Wimbledon in 1995, when, amid a torrent of trash-talk, he accused an umpire, Bruno Rebeuh, of being “one of the most corrupt officials in the game”, prompts ridicule, not outrage.

So what of Murray’s image after this? He may consider apologising; it should take a lot more than a bad line call for somebody to be subjected to that kind of abuse, after all. Unfortunately he may also be the subject of something as unwholesome as anything that

came out of his potty mouth; a hurricane of hypocritical hysteria from those who have built him up and can now knock him down. Andy Murray as the embodiment of ned culture! Andy Murray taught your kids the F-word! And the C-word! As the Serbia and Montenegro team high-fived and hugged and accepted gracious applause from a crowd hollowed by defeat, Murray was out of the arena faster than one of Ilija Bozoljac's serves. The 21-year-old was up in the 150mph range at times and unreturnable. His delivery overshadowed that of Greg Rusedski, who was way off the kind off heat that broke the world record for serve speed in 1998. Those booming aces aside, Bozoljac reminded us of what Murray, and not Rusedski, was missing due to illness, injury and medication. The fire that was in Bozoljac, wrestling wildly to control his raw power and dancing around with nervous energy between points, just wasn't in Murray yesterday. Not until the end, when it was too late and all wrong.

# Tennis: Murray's obscene volley of abuse at umpire

*Barry Flatman in Glasgow*

Published: 9 April 2006

Murray had been incensed by a line call at the beginning of the fourth set as he and Greg Rusedski lost 6-3 3-6 6-3 6-4 to Nenad Zimonjic and Ilija Bozaljac, giving the Serbians a 2-1 lead going into the final day of the Euro/African zone Group One tie at the Braehead Arena.

His anger was heightened by a code violation warning after he aimed a ball high into the 4,000-strong crowd. Then, as he walked towards the umpire's chair at the end of the match, he swore at the Tunisian official. Courtside photographers said Murray called Aref a "f\*\*\*\*\* \*\*\*\*." He faces a heavy fine and suspension from the competition for up to three years.

The match was screened live on BBC television and commentator Andrew Castle apologised to viewers, saying: "That's not the kind of thing we expect to hear on a tennis court."

Match referee Norbert Pieck was sitting behind the umpire's chair and will make a report to Bill Babcock, executive director of Davis Cup and men's tennis for the International Tennis Federation.

Babcock said: "We will have to wait for the report and then make a full investigation of all the evidence open to us. The Davis Cup is like the Grand Slams and the ATP. There are two categories of offences and if it happened during the match I'm sure that Murray would have been defaulted there and then. When we come to a conclusion, the punishments that are open to us are a maximum three-year suspension and \$100,000 fine."

After an emotional week that had seen the 18-year-old struggle to recover from an ankle injury he sustained at the Nasdaq-100 Open in Miami and then confined to bed with a bacterial infection that ruled him out of the opening day's singles, he admitted: "I told the umpire how bad he was during the match.

"You see footballers swearing after every single foul that is given or every time the referee makes a decision. They have a microphone just below the umpire's chair and I swore. It's tough. I would have preferred everybody not to hear but that's how I felt and that's what happens sometime in sport when you feel angry. Hopefully not too many people heard it.

# Yes, Murray is a \*\*\*\* for swearing, but he is still \*\*\*\*ing talented

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Published at 12:00AM, April 10 2006

## Simon Barnes says we should overlook the furore about the Scot's profanities

A PRETTY poor weekend, on the whole. You're feeling like a piece of \*\*\*\*, you lose a \*\*\*\*ing tennis match and then your team get fined \$2,500 because you said \*\*\*\* to the wrong person. But to make the weekend even \*\*\*\*ier, if that were possible, every \*\*\*\*ing \*\*\*\*er in the whole \*\*\*\*ing country is on your case, tut-tutting and moralising, especially people who you know say \*\*\*\* all the \*\*\*\*ing time. Or if not, they're being \*\*\*\*ing patronising and telling you that they appreciate your \*\*\*\*ing passion. \*\*\*\* the lot of them.

Andy Murray's Braveheart return to Scotland did not go quite according to the script. The idea was to have Murray leading Great Britain to victory in a Davis Cup tie against Serbia and Montenegro in front of a crowd of mad, revved-up Scots drunk on patriotism and Murraymania and turning the Braehead Arena in Glasgow to a mixture of Ibrox on Auld Firm night and a medieval bearbaiting session.

But Murray had an ankle injury and then went down with a fever and so he couldn't play the first day. He played in the doubles with Greg Rusedski on Saturday, face white as a sheet, and found himself, unsurprisingly, ever-so-slightly out of sorts with himself, his game, his partner and the world.

The frustration drove him nuts. His game was just a fraction out, but minute errors of timing turn into lost points and lost opportunities, and ultimately into lost matches. A bad line-call in the last set cost them a break, they broke back but then had the desperate frustration of being broken again. Murray sent a ball whanging at the ceiling and at the end had a go at the umpire. Said \*\*\*\* and so forth, rather too pointedly.

And so Britain duly went on to lose the tie yesterday, despite Rusedski's heroics. For a tiny moment, it seemed that Rusedski might pull off an impossible win and that Murray would then do an arise-Lazarus and win the fifth and deciding rubber. But when weekends go wrong as badly as Murray's weekend did, such things don't happen. Should have stayed in \*\*\*\*ing bed.

Things could be worse, though. Murray may have had a \*\*\*\*ing awful weekend, but at least he exists. There will be other weekends, other tennis matches, other occasions when his passion is more decoratively and more effectively expressed. Britain may have lost yet another Davis Cup tie, and the nation's strength in depth is once again uncompromisingly exposed, but Murray lives on and when not feeling like a piece of \*\*\*\*, he is a \*\*\*\*ing good tennis player.

Let's not worry about the bad behaviour overmuch — though let's not excuse it by talk of passion, either. A teenager said \*\*\*\* to the umpire: all right. Fine the silly \*\*\*\*\* and move on. It's not a big deal. The big deal is his talent — shown in brief, tantalising glimpses on Saturday — and the temperament that goes with it.

With Rusedski and Tim Henman in their thirties and on the down slope, it's an unexpected pleasure to have someone on the up slope, particularly a spiky kid with a bit of attitude. When that attitude is directed at opponents rather than umpires, and expressed by means of furry balls rather than words with Anglo-Saxon etymology, it's a thing to wonder at. I doubt if he'll be the man to take Britain storming to Davis Cup credibility — there needs to be at least one more of him, for a start — but he's going to win some more tennis matches.

He is also going to have to do his growing up in public. I am glad that newspapers did not report every single foolish thing I did or said when I was a teenager (or an adult, for that matter). Still, if it meant that I was going to be wealthy and famous and adored by millions, it might — just — have been worth it. Provided they didn't print the story of when I got \*\*\*\*ed and — but hush. I was only a teenager.

So is Murray, and that's the point. We've got something like a decade and a half of him to enjoy, if all goes well, to wince at his indiscretions and marvel at his fire, to tut at his misdemeanours (remember that Henman's first memorable act at Wimbledon was to flatten a ballgirl) and to revel in his zest for the struggle.

Chrissie Hynde said a marvellous thing about girl singers who prink and preen: "This is rock and roll. It's not \*\*\*\* me, it's \*\*\*\* you." All sports, including tennis, are on the \*\*\*\*-you side of things. So let's celebrate Murray's God-awful weekend, because he'll have better ones. Because he might just go on to be \*\*\*\*ing great.

# Murray splits with coach Petchey

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by times online and agencies

Published at 12:00AM, April 14 2006

Andy Murray has split from Mark Petchey, his coach, with immediate effect. Petchey became Murray's coach just before Wimbledon last year, where he reached the third round before losing in five sets to David Nalbandian.

"Mark has been a big part of my success in the last 10 months and we had a great run together, but we have had a difference of opinion regarding some aspects of my game," said Murray. "It was a very difficult decision and based solely on the development of my tennis."

The Dunblane-born teenager has achieved great success in ten months with Petchey, reaching number 44 in the world rankings and winning his first ATP Tour title, beating Lleyton Hewitt at the SAP Open in February.

"From a personal point of view, Mark and his family have been very supportive of me and I am very grateful," he added. "I have not thought about my next coach yet and will take my time to try to find one that can help me develop the next stages of my tennis."

"We are not in a hurry. It has barely been a full year that I have been on the professional tour and I am continuously learning new things."

"I am very proud of what we have achieved together; getting Andy into the top 50 and winning his first ATP title at the age of 18," said Petchey in a statement. "I have no doubt that Andy will make the top 10 and be a Grand Slam winner in the future and wish him every success."

# Murray serves up a shock by cutting Petchey loose

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By [Neil Harman](#), Tennis Correspondent

Published at 12:00AM, April 15 2006

TEN months after agonising whether he had made the right decision to throw in his lot and help to pilot Andy Murray's career, Mark Petchey became the British No 1's former coach yesterday just as everything was taking the shape that promised a genuine assault on the highest echelons of world tennis. It is bound to be a crushing blow.

Amid the back-slaps for a job well done was the sense that, in such a short space of time, Petchey barely scratched the surface of what makes the 18-year-old Scot tick and, as Murray had feared, the pressures of spending so much time away from a young family

was taking a decisive toll. Yet, they were all with him in Monte Carlo yesterday, the venue for next week's Masters Series event — the first of the clay-court season — when Petchey was told his tenure was ending.

This time last year, Petchey was the LTA's head of men's national training and worked part-time for Sky Sports as a commentator and analyst, and Murray was making steady strides on the challenger tour and preparing for the French Open junior championships. Before the Stella Artois Championships at Queen's Club, the pair came together for a trial period that was formalised as Murray reached the third round of Wimbledon. They liked each other immensely, were not far removed in age — at 18 and 34 — and though Petchey knew he was giving up the prospect of a steady career, he debated with friends and decided that the lure of pushing Murray to the limits was too captivating an opportunity to refuse.

Since then, Murray has become a top-50 player, with most in the game suspecting that he is at the very least a top-20 performer in the making. The queue to replace Petchey has, one suspects, already begun to form, certainly in the mind of Judy, his mother and career protector, and Patricio Apey, his manager.

Murray said: "Mark has been a big part of my success in the last ten months and we had a great run together but we have had a difference of opinion regarding some aspects of my game. It was a very difficult decision and based solely on the development of my tennis. From a personal point of view, Mark and his family have been very supportive of me and I am very grateful.

"I have not thought about my next coach yet and will take my time to try to find one that can help me develop the next stages of my tennis. We are not in a hurry."

For a man who used to be chatty and outgoing but had become increasingly insular as his period as Murray's coach unfolded, Petchey's response was precise. "I am very proud of what we have achieved together — getting Andy into the top 50 and winning his first ATP title at the age of 18. I have no doubts that Andy will make the top ten and be a grand-slam winner in the future and wish him every success."

What next for Murray will be the stuff of many a shaken crystal ball, but what next for Petchey, a man who has given an awful lot to the British game and who went out on a limb when he chose to coach the Scot, is just as fascinating. Petchey famously described the building of the £40 million LTA National Tennis Centre as a waste of money and so may find a route back into the coaching mainstream a trifle tricky.

# Headstrong young Scot may be wanting to play own game again

By Neil Harman

Published at 12:00AM, April 15 2006

AT THE Lawn Tennis Writers' Association annual dinner last December, Andy Murray dedicated his Player of the Year trophy to one man: the man who was told a couple of days after booking his family into a hotel on the shores of the Mediterranean that he was no longer Murray's coach.

All good things come to an end, but for Mark Petchey to lose his job after only ten months is ferociously quick. He knew that spending weeks with a headstrong 18-year-old would be tough but could see the merits in assisting Murray to greatness.

"I can't speak more highly of what Andy has done up until now," Petchey said late last year. "The schedule is going to be rough on him — and me — we need to be together sometimes and also have our space. But I believe this is a wonderful opportunity." There were those who poured scorn on Murray's choice — that Petchey was too inexperienced. Greyer-haired coaches wondered why they had been overlooked but Murray had decided last spring that Pato Álvarez, a wily Colombian in his seventies, was both too old and too negative. He could hardly have chosen a more positive replacement.

But, as the months went by, Petchey had become more wary of saying anything or doing anything that might not sit well with the Murrays. Conversations with him were clipped whereas they had once burnt one's ears. Murray spent so many hours in the Petchey household, he was as good as a member of the family, with all those inherent tensions. Most importantly, as yesterday's statement suggests, the pair were at increasing loggerheads over Murray's style.

Petchey had tried to make him more adventurous, to pre-empt, rather than react to how his opponents played. In the midst of his first-round defeat by Juan Ignacio Chela, of Argentina, at the Australian Open in January, Murray, who lost in three one-sided sets, twice shouted out: "This isn't me!" Clearly, the player and Judy, his mother, who has an enormous influence on him, believe he needs to be himself again.

# Murray can hit heights but needs good man in his corner

*PAT CASH*

Published: 16 April 2006

However, there was one crucial difference between Murray and the Pat Cash who graduated from becoming the world's best junior to playing a key role in a Davis Cup final and winning titles on the main tour. I was fortunate enough to have almost a second father in my coach Ian Barclay and a committed uncle in Australian captain Neale Fraser. Right now, Murray looks a kid very much on his own.

My experiences with Mark Philippoussis and Greg Rusedski convinced me that I never wanted to take up a coaching job again, but I admit that I would have to think twice if the opportunity to work with Murray presented itself.

The locker-room grapevine is rarely wrong and word had been circulating that all was not well between Murray and Mark Petchey. Although I teamed up with Barclay at the age of 13 and stayed with him through to the tail-end of my career, such a long alliance is unusual. Splits between players and coaches are an inevitable part of modern-day tennis; such relationships are often oppressive, given the amount of time two people are forced to spend with each other and if the chemistry is not right, then it's better to part sooner rather than later.

What went wrong? Only two people know the answer and there could be a multitude of reasons. Perhaps it was tennis issues, maybe some personal conflict, or perhaps money. But I noticed some bad signals when Murray lost early in the Nasdaq-100 Open recently and cited weariness after playing too many tournaments. When asked who made that decision, he said it was his coach.

Any player should be comfortable with his schedule. It should be something agreed after sensible discussion between him, his coach and his management company. That said, didn't

Murray insist not too long ago that he loved being on the road? At the age of 18, he needs to find a coach he can stick with for at least five years because I believe he has the potential to be winning Grand Slam titles within no more than three. But he should not rush and if it means a couple of short-term appointments to get him through the French Open, Wimbledon and the US Open, then so be it.

I don't see too many problems with his game, although of course there will be little glitches that need to be ironed out from time to time. But basically it's a question of finding a good motivator who is tactically astute enough to formulate game plans to take on specific opposition and can educate the kid on how to deal with life on the road. Jean-Pierre Bruyere has a big say in Murray's physical conditioning, but he's not there week in and week out. It is vital he can turn to some- body who can monitor fitness levels and make those visits to the gym a challenge rather than purgatory.

Murray and his advisers must be careful because there are a lot of dud coaches out there who can do more harm than good. They come out of academies and think they know it all. Just walking around the practise courts and hearing them makes me cringe. To me they sound like the Simpsons, they just yell slogans at their players like "Go for it!" What on earth does that mean? Look at the real quality players and they had a stable coaching environment in their formative years. Roger Federer had Peter Carter, Andy Roddick had Tarik Benhabiles, Lleyton Hewitt had Darren Cahill, Andre Agassi had Nick Bollettieri.

So who is available? Brad Gilbert could do the job, and Bob Brett has an impeccable pedigree after working with Boris Becker and Goran Ivanisevic.

I repeat the belief that Miles MacLagan could be a good choice. He's Scottish, albeit with a fair bit of Zambian thrown in, and has attained fine results coaching the likes of Wayne Black, Kevin Ullyett and Paul Hanley on the doubles circuit. There's a fire burning in the kid that I recognise only too well from my youth, and I don't mind that. I don't even care about what he said to that umpire in Glasgow last week because it demonstrates passion.

And that's what is needed if he is to succeed.

# Tennis: Split personalities

Andy Murray's decision to ditch Mark Petchey came as no surprise, but what the young Scot needs now is stability

*BARRY FLATMAN*

Published: 16 April 2006

Just 10 months after making significant sacrifices in his family and professional life to travel the world and coach the hugely talented but equally single-minded young Scot, Mark Petchey

has found that putting his foot down too firmly has shattered the relationship. Rather sooner than he expected, Petchey can now spend more time with his wife and two young daughters and return to the Sky Sports commentary box.

The surprise announcement came even as he was preparing Murray for the Monte Carlo Master Series event, which begins this week. A brief statement on Friday cited a difference of opinion regarding certain aspects of Murray's game and doubtless that was a factor. Quite rightly Petchey was intent on adding more variety to the right-hander's predominantly baseline approach and making him more comfortable in the art of attacking the net. Petchey was not alone in wanting Murray to dictate more rallies, rather than being just a counter-puncher. No coach would be doing his job properly if he said a player was playing to the full extent of his ability.

Many seasoned members of the British tennis fraternity had long been perplexed by Petchey's change from a normally gregarious personality to somebody withdrawn and reluctant to share his feelings. The fact that the pair roomed together on the road also caused a certain bemusement but Murray countered: "Travelling one-on-one with somebody like Petch, who is in his 30s, is great. You have to chat about most things. It's not going to work if I am just talking about computer games the whole time. I probably have changed a lot. We have good fun."

It seems that evaporated over the course of mere months, but there can be no disputing that Petchey did an exemplary job during his tenure. When he first took on the task of coaching Murray, before last year's Stella Artois Championships at London's Queen's Club, the player was ranked 357th in the world. Now he stands at 44th after peaking three places higher almost a month ago. Along the way he has gathered more than \$350,000 in prize-money.

Petchey was not courtside when Murray won his first tour title in San Jose during February, but there was nothing sinister about his absence. It was agreed in advance and the coach was on hand the following week in Memphis and throughout the spring sweep through the United States.

The first signs of disharmony appeared during the recent Masters Series event in Miami when an out-of-sorts Murray lost disappointingly to Switzerland's Stanislas Wawrinka in the first round. Wawrinka may have been placed 18 places lower in the Indesit ATP world rankings but he had also triumphed in their only previous meeting in last September's Davis Cup match.

Previously Murray had said he did not enjoy extended spells at home and much preferred life on the road. But after losing to Wawrinka, he complained of being weary and admitted: "It's tough when you are coming to the end of a trip like this and you know if you do well, you've still got another six or seven weeks of hard work before the next Grand Slam."

Asked why he had planned such a relentless schedule, Murray replied: "My coach decides." So, he was asked, did he have any say? "I don't, no. I think if I feel I need a week's rest, I can say so if I am not feeling great or have an injury. But it's up to my coach to make the schedule. That's one of the things where I leave him in charge."

Many who know both parties aren't surprised that the alliance did not win any long-service awards. Even the most loyal of players realise it is necessary to seek new impetus from a change of guidance after a certain period of time. Petchey himself, in one of the rare insights he allowed into their partnership, admitted: "If I went into this thinking it is a career-long relationship I could definitely be accused of being deluded."

But the timing of the 35-year-old's ejection from the Murray camp seems little short of bizarre. Tomorrow marks the grand opening of the European clay court season with the year's third Masters Series tournament in Monte Carlo. It is a surface Murray enjoys — his game was honed on crushed brick during his formative years at the Sanchez-Casal Academy in Barcelona.

Yet after disappointing performances in the tournaments that count this year (a first-round exit at the Australian Open, just one win in Indian Wells and that opening-round demise to Wawrinka in Miami), for Murray to subject himself to the turbulence of sacking somebody who not only offered him friendship and guidance but put a roof over his head in London seems ludicrous just three days before a significant event.

The French Open is in six weeks' time, Wimbledon in 10. Although it would be preposterous to suggest Murray has a legitimate chance of winning either Grand Slam, he requires stability through a period that is going to be arduous, given the intensity of the British media.

Some will point the finger of blame at Murray's mother Judy who, despite vowing to take a more withdrawn role once a permanent coach was recruited, remains a constant presence at most tournaments. But late last year Petchey was insistent: "I cannot say enough about what she's done for me."

Another distraction could be the romance that has blossomed between Murray and Kim Sears. Kim is the 18-year-old daughter of revered British coach Nigel Sears, whose working relationship with Daniela Hantuchova is best viewed as tenuous. Sears Sr is a friend of Petchey and would not be comfortable stepping into his shoes.

For the time being, Murray's physical trainer Jean-Pierre Bruyere will adopt the role of coach, as the Scot faces what ought to be an easy task in the first round at Monte Carlo, where he plays 141st-ranked Jean-Rene Lisnard. But things will quickly get tougher with French Open champion Rafael Nadal lying in wait next (assuming he beats Arnaud Clement of France). Tim Henman plays Gaston Gaudio while Greg Rusedski faces Juan Ignacio Chela, who beat him three weeks ago in Miami.

Murray and Henman are joining forces to play in the doubles when, presumably, the older man will be giving Murray some advice about what he should do next.

# Federer finds time to join debate over Murray's split

By [Neil Harman](#), Tennis Correspondent, in Monte Carlo

Published at 12:00AM, April 18 2006

THE tennis social circle is so intertwined that everyone knows plenty about everyone else's business, or if they don't, they are keen to scratch the surface to see what lies at the layer below. Roger Federer is, therefore, intrigued when 18-year-olds — especially those with Andy Murray's championship potential — split from their coaches and is agitated to get to the bottom of the tale.

The world No 1's avowed intent is to stay where he is, on top of the pack and, at 116 weeks and counting, he's doing a particularly decent job. Having made certain that Novak Djokovic, the scourge of Great Britain in the Davis Cup the weekend before last, did not steal a march on him at the Monte Carlo Country Club yesterday, Federer was in quizzical mood. "So what *is* the story with Murray?" he asked. He is told that it is something to do with a difference of opinion over playing styles with Mark Petchey. "Really?" he responds and the sideways smile suggests he thinks there may be something more to it.

When he was 18, Federer was still a year from being the No 1 in Switzerland, where Marc Rosset held sway. His coach then was Peter Carter, an Australian who became Switzerland's Davis Cup captain and was killed in a road accident in South Africa in August 2002. By that time, Federer had decided upon the Swede, Peter Lundgren, to coach him on a full-time basis rather than Carter — "the most difficult decision of my life," he said then. That partnership was brought to a sharp end in December 2003 with Federer having won both Wimbledon and the Masters Cup for the first time.

"I'm very interested to see what Murray decides," Federer said. "Any ideas?" As Murray has none of his own firmly in place — and his manager chooses that moment to walk between us — the guessing game ends. The Scot — now the only British player in the singles here after first-round defeats for Tim Henman and Greg Rusedski — said he "doesn't want to bring anyone in quickly and have some problems, because it's quite an important decision. I think I'll make a good one. There is an important chunk of tournaments coming up that ends with Wimbledon. I need the right person for my tennis."

Federer has long been in control of his destiny but his bow on clay this year was as scratchy as one might expect, Djokovic went hammer and tongs for his shots and for a while, the No 1 sprayed frightening errors. Then he shakes his head, does the same with his right arm and it is as if two different people occupy the same body. Djokovic is then pinned to the baseline, scurrying for all his worth. Federer won 6-2, 2-6, 6-3 and is on his way.

Thanks to a wild card into the doubles with Murray, Henman is sticking around as well and it has become a veritable lifeline for him. Henman's 6-1, 6-3 defeat by Gaston Gaudio, the player he might have met in the French Open final of 2004, was a

demonstration of how tough it is to bring one's "A" game to red clay at the season's first outing. Henman was a bit short here and there, Gaudio was grooved and as successive opportunities were missed, the 31-year-old consistently tossed his head to the heavens, as if in mental anguish.

No support was forthcoming and the unpalatable truth is that six players stand between Henman and automatic qualification for the main draw of the next Masters in Rome — a championship he has not missed in ten years — and he is 13 away from appearing the next week in Hamburg. He is going to take some time to consider his options, which may include playing the week before the French Open, in Pö rtschach, Austria, where he last appeared for Britain in the Davis Cup 18 months ago.

Rusedski had never won a match in Monte Carlo in five previous visits but when he won the second set from Juan Ignacio Chela, of Argentina, in a tie-break, he felt perhaps he may lay that particular ghost. Then the groundstaff grabbed the hoses and began to water the court; Rusedski shrugged his shoulders and accepted the inevitability of a 6-4, 6-7, 6-1 defeat. "Heavy balls, heavy court, this is where these guys make their living," he said. "I'm not a clay-courter, let's be honest. I can't wait for the grass."

# Murray returns to roots with approach for Perlas

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By [Neil Harman](#)

Published at 12:00AM, April 20 2006

**The Scot opts for a Latin influence in his search for a new coach**

JOSÉ PERLAS has been asked if he would fancy taking over as Andy Murray's coach. The answer was "no", but it was well worth the inquiry because Perlas, a Spaniard, has coached two French Open champions in Carlos Moyà and Albert Costa and it is to him that Juan Carlos Ferrero has turned to rejuvenate his career from its relative low of No 26 in the world.

It was a touch odd, during his defeat by Jean-Rene Lisnard here at the Monte Carlo Masters Series event on Tuesday, to see Murray turning to his girlfriend, manager and physical trainer, when they can offer only moral support. The decision to replace Mark Petchey after ten productive months prompted grand debates about why the crunch came — a couple of on-court clashes in Indian Wells last month were the beginning of the end — and it leaves Murray vulnerable at a crucial moment.

The networking has already begun and Perlas would have been a mighty catch. However, Ferrero, the 2003 French Open champion, pounced when Perlas split with Guillermo Coria after a year trying to coax the Argentinian to live up to his talents. Antonio Martínez, who has mentored the 26-year-old Ferrero since he was 9, remains in the background for spiritual guidance.

The player just wanted a different voice offering the daily mantra. “I want to show everybody and especially my new coach that I can be the same as before,” Ferrero, who became No 1 in the world after reaching the 2003 US Open final, said yesterday. “I want new words and new motivation.” Nothing there about changing styles, said to be the sole reason behind Petchey’s departure.

So what is a coach other than, as Brad Gilbert, who has tutored Andre Agassi and Andy Roddick, says, someone to blame when his player loses? They do whatever they can to make their charge comfortable, speak when spoken to, give encouragement at the appropriate moment — coaches invariably nod at their players even when they have made a total hash of a shot — make sure the courtesy car arrives when wanted, scout the opposition and pray their man or woman does not wake up one morning and loathe the sight of them.

Perlas lasted a year before Coria, on whom Murray bases much of his game, responded to a fractured 2005 (two defeats in finals by Rafael Nadal and one grand-slam quarter-final) by dropping him like a stone in favour of José Higuera, another Spaniard who inspired Michael Chang and Jim Courier to their French Open successes. But what can a man in the stands do when, as Coria was against Paul-Henri Mathieu yesterday, his charge is 6-1, 5-1 down and serving like Anna Kournikova at her double fault-ridden worst?

Coria kept shooting glances across and what he got back from Higuera was the sense of calm that finally transported itself into his game. He saved four match points and on his own seventh, nailed a forehand pass to win 1-6, 7-6, 6-4 in two hours and 47 minutes. He could almost forget the 20 double faults. “I hired Higuera especially because I want to get to a higher level,” the world No 9 said. “We are in a period where we’re getting to know each other. We will work through Wimbledon and make another decision. He had very good results as both a player and a coach.”

One player is usually enough to be getting on with, but Riccardo Piatti, of Italy, coaches two — Ivan Ljubicic, the world No 5, and Novak Djokovic, the teenage Serb at No 67 coming of age every bit as swiftly as Murray. “I consider Novak to be one of the top players already. He has more talent at his age than Ivan, but he has to learn about the vision of a professional, he needs to understand ‘the way.’” Piatti said. “Like Murray, he needs to make mistakes, to go through all the experiences. They have to be able to control themselves through so many problems. Only that way can they learn.”

Bob Brett, who took over Boris Becker’s stellar career in 1987 and remained until 1991, described his role as “managing the product”. Ion Tiriac, Becker’s manager, had preferred to hire someone with a prodigious playing record, but Becker held sway and chose Brett — “because he wanted commitment and passion, which I had brought to the careers of both John Lloyd and Robert Seguso,” Brett said. “And we just clicked.”

Murray requires that clicking sensation and his own product management. The move for Perlas indicates the likelihood of a return to Latin influences. The Scot spent the best part of three years at the Barcelona academy run by Sergio Casal and Emilio Sánchez, two former professionals, learning the basics of point construction, how hard he would have to work for his pay and they, in turn, found him an excellent pupil. Turning that into gold is the next man’s task, whoever it may be.

# Henman seems an ideal fit as Murray mentor

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

Published at 12:00AM, April 21 2006

IT WAS meant in jest, though for a second it sounded like the sanest of compromises — Tim Henman coaching Andy Murray. “You couldn’t afford me,” Henman said. He doesn’t have a coaching certificate, either, although several in Britain who do are either ill-equipped or too lazy to teach youngsters the basics of a backhand slice. Henman and Murray had combined to play a second-round doubles, losing in a champions’ tie-break decider to Fabrice Santoro and Nenad Zimonjic, the latter of whom was Henman’s partner in their 2004 title success in the Master Series event here. As the British combination teased, tussled and talked through a series of tremendous rallies, the realisation that this is the finest Davis Cup team Great Britain will never have was a constant nag.

Against Israel in July — facing Jonathan Erlich and Andy Ram — the doubles point will be critical in determining the outcome of a tie that Britain can hardly afford to lose. Henman has retired from the competition, largely because he had had enough of the pressures and the exhaustive preparation of so many ties, but is he not talented enough to turn up a couple of days in advance in good nick and play a doubles if the mood takes him? The manner in which the two thrive in each other’s company can be an unqualified asset for the sport. Between his first-round singles defeat, when cramps bedevilled him and turning out for their first match together, Murray was more or less in Henman’s hands, to the extent that the former British No 1 helped to rub life back into his legs and rebind his ankle strapping between offering words of encouragement.

When next they will play together is a moot point. Murray is heading to Barcelona for next week’s tournament and Henman will be scanning the lists of injured players to see if he might make the next Masters Series stop, in Rome. His present ranking is not sufficient for direct entry. “I’m very, very keen to play if I can,” he said.

If not Murray’s coach, then Henman is an able assistant. “There are mental aspects I can help him with, things that are very important to focus on now,” he said. With that, the pair went their separate ways and you wondered at what stage their careers will be when next they meet.

# Murray eyes up Latin quarter

The British No 1 has plenty of admirers who want to guide him to the next level, but it would be a mistake to appoint Nick Bollettieri

*BARRY FLATMAN*

Published: 23 April 2006

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*Vamos*

# Murray eyes up Latin quarter

The British No 1 has plenty of admirers who want to guide him to the next level, but it would be a mistake to appoint Nick Bollettieri

*BARRY FLATMAN*

Published: 23 April 2006

Murray hails from Scotland, plays under the national banner of Great Britain and insists that Tim Henman is his shining example, but his game and mindset are Latin in concept. Those formative years grinding out the ground- strokes on the clay of the Casal-Sanchez academy in Barcelona made their mark; now he thinks and plays more like a Spaniard or Argentinian than any player from these isles.

So it seems inevitable that the man chosen to succeed Mark Petchey as coach to the 18-year-old will hail from these countries. If not, then from somewhere else in South America.

There are many who yearn to work with a player accepted as one of the finest prospects in the game, but how many are equipped with the credentials to cajole and develop Murray? One who certainly isn't is Nick Bollettieri. Regardless of an impeccable list of former students that includes Andre Agassi, Jim Courier, Monica Seles and, more recently, Maria Sharapova and Nicole Pietrangeli, the publicity-conscious former paratrooper is, at 74, five years older than Pato Alvarez, the wily Colombian clay court guru who was fired by Murray before Petchey's appointment. Age difference was cited as one reason for incompatibility.

For more than a decade Bollettieri has functioned more as an occasional overseer, with staff coaches from his academy taking care of the players on a day-to-day basis. Murray needs far more constant cajoling and high-level expertise.

However, any desire for a radical change in approach, which might be forthcoming from respected shot mechanics such as Brad Gilbert or Bob Brett, would not be warmly received. Petchey found that disagreeing on tactics can result in a swift termination of employment.

Murray knows what he is and what he wants to be, and the games of Guillermo Coria or Juan Carlos Ferrero are more to his taste than the net-rushing athleticism of a Stefan Edberg or a Patrick Rafter, which are increasingly tactics of a bygone age.

Jose Perlas is a Spaniard who worked with Coria until recently. He was not out of a job for too long after he was fired early this year by the little Argentinian, who was runner-up at Roland Garros in 2004.

With the names of two former French Open champions, Carlos Moya and Albert Costa, on his CV, it came as no surprise that Perlas's services were rapidly snapped up by Ferrero, who has spent the past three years desperately trying to recapture the game that saw him win the French Open in 2003.

Murray has yet to hit such heights, so it should come as no surprise that Perlas decided to stay where he was when a speculative approach was reportedly made last week.

Currently available names among the game's Latin quarter include Mariano Marchetti (until a few days ago coach to the world No 19 Tommy Robredo and another former mentor of Coria) and Patricio Rodriguez, who worked with Ecuador's Nicolas Lapentti, and Paolo Martin, at a loose end since the drug ban on Guillermo Canas.

Yet the most intriguing name of all is that of Larry Passos, who coached Gustavo Kuerten to three French Open titles and has long kept an eye on Murray's progress. His credentials are of the quality that can be taken most seriously.

# Murray runs out of steam as Ferrer digs deep for victory

SO CLOSE and yet so far. Having scrambled past a local boy making his ATP Tour debut on Monday, Andy Murray produced his most complete clay-court performance to date yesterday

as he pushed David Ferrer, the world No 12 and one of the foremost exponents on the surface, to the limit before going down 4-6, 7-6, 6-1 in a gruelling second-round encounter. "I think that performance kind of proved that I am not a bad clay-court player," Murray said. "If I keep improving then I think that by the time of the French Open I will be playing some pretty good tennis."

Murray served for the match at 6-5 in the second set, having saved two set points, but was broken to love and let slip a 3-0 lead in the tie-break as Ferrer won it 7-4. As Murray tired, the Spaniard eased through the third set to claim his place in the third round.

Where he had been cumbersome against Marcel Granollers-Pujol, the world No 291, in the first round, he was sure-footed against Ferrer. The mistakes that had flowed on Monday were gone and though naturally he was disappointed to have lost — "I think if I had served better I probably could have won comfortably" — when the clay has settled he will leave Barcelona hugely encouraged that a good run at the French Open in Paris next month is more probable than possible.

Murray is due to play in Estoril next week, with the back-to-back Masters Series events in Rome and Hamburg to follow. "I am still down to go to Estoril," he said. "It would be good to get a couple more matches in before Rome and Hamburg."

## Murray is happy to keep going it alone for now

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By Simon Cambers

Published at 12:00AM, April 29 2006

### The Scot's search for a coach may take time and lead to someone outside the game

FOR some, the idea of being left alone is something to dread. But not, it seems, for Andy Murray. The 18-year-old Scot has been hot-footing it around Europe without a coach for the past two weeks and although he is likely to name a replacement for Mark Petchey soon, a little bit of Murray-time seems to be suiting him nicely.

"It's not the nicest thing being on your own, but I think when you are my age it is quite good to be on your own for a while," Murray said.

"You have to find your own guys to practise with and it helps as you have to make an effort to chat to them a bit more and get to know them. When you have a coach, they tend to organise everything, book the practice courts and things, and sometimes you don't speak to anyone. It's been good."

Of course, Murray has not been completely alone. His mother, Judy, joined him in Monte Carlo last week and accompanied him to the Barcelona Open, while his agent, Patricio Apey, spent time with him at both events.

But the chance to concentrate on what he enjoys most, playing tennis, has clearly been a positive move. Indeed, when he won his first ATP Tour title in San Jose, California, in February, Murray was accompanied only by his girlfriend, Kimberly Sears. Back-to-back victories over Andy Roddick and Lleyton Hewitt, both former world No 1s, suggested that all was well.

A host of big names, from Brad Gilbert, the former coach of Andre Agassi and Roddick, to Larry Passos, who guided Gustavo Kuerten to three French Open titles and the world

No 1 ranking, have been mooted as possible replacements. With Agassi turning 36 today, even Darren Cahill, the American's coach, could be a target.

Whoever it is, and whenever he is appointed, the next man will need to have a proven track record. "Mark Petchey did an excellent job and is a very good coach," Apey said. "The next coach has to be better, and Mark has set the bar pretty high. We are not just looking to change coaches. Some people like to change coaches all the time, but we are not in that situation. It is a long-term vision.

"If you saw the shortlist I have, you couldn't call it short. We are evaluating all the possibilities. I am getting e-mails from coaches I haven't heard from in years. I've got an idea in my mind and Andy's got ideas in his mind. At the end of the day, he's the boss. He's got people to advise him, but it will be his decision."

Apey said that the new man could come from outside tennis. While it might be a bit of a stretch to suggest that someone such as Sir Clive Woodward, the former England rugby head coach, could use his motivational powers to good effect, with South Americans seemingly in fashion a lateral move is not out of the question.

"Unfortunately, Luiz Felipe Scolari is not available," Apey said. "The fact that Scolari has won the World Cup and that he is at the top with another team . . . we don't have such deep pockets, but that's the kind of person I am going to recommend."

With the French Open and Wimbledon looming, to play a grand-slam event without the guidance of a coach would be a brave choice. But Apey said that time was not the main issue. "Since I started working with Andy, we have always looked at the bigger picture. The French Open will be hopefully one of many French Opens he plays, and one of many grand-slams.

"If the right person becomes available and has the possibility to work at the French Open, then great. If it's Wimbledon, great. If it's the US Open, great. If it's next January, then great.

We are not going to rush into a decision."

What is clear is that Murray will have the final say, but for now he is quite happy doing his own thing. "It's not that I am in no hurry (to get a new coach)," Murray said. "But it's just that it is not the most important thing right now."

## Ferreira in running to join forces with Murray

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By **Neil Harman**, Tennis Correspondent

Published at 12:00AM, May 24 2006

WAYNE FERREIRA, the South African who played in more consecutive grand-slam tournaments than any other player, has said that he is keen to take his first steps in professional coaching by guiding Andy Murray through the 2006 grass-court season and beyond.

Ferreira, 34, retired from the professional circuit at the end of 2004 and settled in California, but he has been kicking his heels in recent months and is tempted by the prospect of spending the summer in Britain at Murray's right hand. Bill Ryan, Ferreira's former agent, is a powerful influence at Acegroup, the Scot's management company.

In the five weeks since Murray, 19, parted company with Mark Petchey, his coach of ten months, various names have been linked with the British No 2, who will play in his first French Open main draw next week in the company of Leon Smith, the fellow Scot who nurtured him from aspiring child to US Open junior champion, in 2004, and has remained a close friend and confidant.

One of the options being considered for Murray, if no one who fits the bill of full-time coach emerges in the short term, is to appoint people who are able to assist him in quick bursts on the different court surfaces. Thus, Ferreira, who won the first of his 15 ATP tour titles at the 1992 Stella Artois Championships at Queen's Club, West London, and was a quarter-finalist at Wimbledon in 1994, would be seen as an excellent candidate. Only his lack of any serious coaching pedigree — he has worked as an assistant coach at the University of California at Berkeley — may be seen as a stumbling block.

What helps is that the pair are only 15 years apart in age, and have similar characteristics; Ferreira was a fierce competitor, extremely single-minded, was not deterred by being outspoken when the need arose and was a fluid mover and superb technician, who played largely from the back of the court but possessed a great touch at the net.

He broke into the world's top ten for the first time as a 20-year-old in 1992, the year he reached his first grand-slam semi-final, at the Australian Open, a feat he would repeat 11 years later, the longest gap in the Open era. When he bowed out at the 2004 US Open, it marked Ferreira's 56th consecutive grand-slam event, having overhauled the previous record of 54, held by Stefan Edberg, of Sweden.

Undoubtedly, he would come highly recommended, in that Kieron Vorster and Johan de Beer, past and present fitness trainers to Tim Henman, both worked with Ferreira during his career.

Larry Stefanki, the American who once coached Henman, is among many whose views have been sought over the prospect of working with Murray, but he is more likely to team up with Fernando González, the world No 9 from Chile, who does not want a full-time assistant but someone with whom to work for a set number of weeks — Stefanki's preference.

Murray leaves for Paris today with Smith, who knows his game and personality better than anyone, having been through the crucial period of his development from pre-teen to the cusp of the professional tour. "I got a call from Andy on Sunday and I couldn't be happier to do what I can," Smith said yesterday. "Andy needs someone around him who knows what makes him tick. This is an important time for him, he's 19 and it's vital the preparation for tournaments like the French is as good as we can make it."

# Cautious Murray wary of Monfils threat

Two of the most talked-about teenagers in tennis clash in the first round of the French Open, with Britain's No 2 not focusing on past success, writes Barry Flatman

Published: 28 May 2006

Casting his gaze across Roland Garros, he focused on an outside court and briefly recalled a second-round junior match three years ago that saw him beat Monfils 6-4 6-1. Just 11 days ago the scoreline was exactly the same in Murray's favour at the Hamburg Masters Series event.

Apart from a first-round win over world No 291 Marcel Granollers-Pujol in Barcelona, the Hamburg triumph represents Murray's sole victory on clay this year and his lone success since disposing of the coaching services of Mark Petchey. Too often since then he has appeared a player without a game plan, and opponents have plundered his indecision. The win over Monfils was different. Murray struck on a strategy and executed it impressively, although in the next round his deficiencies were again exposed by James Blake's aggressive hard hitting.

"Since that junior match he's changed just about everything in his game, and this will be very different to Hamburg because Monfils will be playing in front of his own crowd," said Murray, who has temporarily reverted to guidance from Leon Smith, who coached him throughout most of his junior career.

Monfils admits that he was in a lackadaisical mood for his most recent encounter with Murray. Four days previously he had played Rafael Nadal in the semi-final of Rome's Masters Series event and the cold, heavy conditions enveloped him with a sense of anticlimax.

"Murray just had to play a regular match to beat me in Hamburg, nothing more," said the 19-year-old Parisian, who went on to win the French Open junior title a year after losing to his Scottish peer. "My state of mind was not good, but it will be different at Roland Garros, because the French Open means a lot. For me it is the tournament to win."

Apart from preparing his own strategy, Murray was asked to formulate a game plan for his British Davis Cup teammate Greg Rusedski, who faces the Chilean Grand Slam debutant Paul Capdeville, who has only recently graduated from the Challenger circuit. Rusedski has not won a match at Roland Garros since 2001, but boosted his clay-court confidence with a couple of wins in Rome and goes into the tournament he once referred to as purgatory with renewed enthusiasm.

“I know winning this event is a total impossibility, but I take the view that winning a round or two will be perfect preparation for the forthcoming grass-court season, which is my main goal,” said Rusedski, who has been re-established as the British No 1.

“There aren’t many players I don’t know something about, but Capdeville is one of them. I know he practised at the Barcelona academy at the same time as Andy, so I will be picking his brains to try and get an idea or two.”

Two years after reaching the Paris semi-final, Tim Henman is relegated to third billing among the British players and faces one of the few players in the draw who is older than him, Denmark’s Kenneth Carlsen.

Regardless of his current world ranking of 70, Henman has been chosen as one of the select players for today’s innovative Sunday start.

Henman supports the decision, based entirely as a money-making exercise to satisfy the demands of French television, but maintains that other issues were involved.

“I think it’s good for tennis,” he said, “but perhaps the Grand Slams should put something back into tennis after asking us players to provide an extra day’s entertainment.

I’m not talking in terms of financial reward for us actually competing, because we are well rewarded, but perhaps they should make some new commitment to the pension funds of past players.”

## Brave Murray shuffles out of Paris

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By Times Online and PA

Published at 12:00AM, May 30 2006

Andy Murray suffered a lower-back problem in the third set of his match with Gael Monfils, of France, to wreck his chances of progressing beyond the first round of the French Open.

The Scot battled on to take a two-sets to one lead, but eventually succumbed to Monfils in five sets, 6-4 6-7 1-6 6-2 6-1, in three hours and 42 minutes.

It was a valiant display from the youngster from Dunblane on the chilliest of afternoons although his continuing physical problems must be a concern for his future. He damaged an ankle at Queen’s last year, cramped continually on court at Wimbledon, vomited on court at the US Open and has struggled with his fitness in the longest matches.

It was a match full of drama and incident. The first set was halted for five minutes for a rain shower after Murray had won the first game but while he returned to race into a 3-0 lead, it was Monfils who proved the pedigree which has sped him to a world ranking of 28, reeling off five successive games.

Murray began the second set strongly, this time racing into a 4-2 lead in a match which was rapidly becoming an intriguing duel of deft drop shot and counter drop as much as power. In the eventual tie-breaker Murray took the initiative, a brilliant backhand down the line seeing him take the breaker 7-2.

The British No 2 sped into a 3-0 lead in the third set, but then promptly called for the trainer and received treatment, lying flat on court, for what appeared to be an injury to his lower back. He was in obvious pain and his serving speed fell to around 75mph, but he battled on to take advantage of an opponent who seemed to have been as upset as himself by the interruption.

The zip, however, eventually left Murray's game and suddenly the Frenchman was in total control, taking five successive games in the fourth set as Murray spasmodically clutched his back and grimaced in pain. The fifth set was a mere formality, Monfils running out an easy winner as Murray continued to struggle.

Meanwhile, Andy Roddick, the fifth seed, was knocked out when he retired from his first round match with Alberto Martin, the Spaniard.

The American was trailing 6-4, 7-5, 1-0 when he decided he could no longer play with an injured ankle.

## More injury woes place Murray in position of doubt

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

Published at 12:00AM, May 31 2006

THERE have been many twists in the Andy Murray story. And tweaks. And contortions. They certainly have not helped him to settle cosily into the complex role of British tennis hope and the latest, on Court Philippe Chatrier at the French Open yesterday, was just as extraordinary as many in the past.

There was Murray, making mincemeat of Gaël Monfils, his fellow 19-year-old, in the second-set tie-break of their first-round encounter when he felt his back tighten up. It was a cold day, he had been suffering stiffness in practice and a doctor in Germany had said last year that the bottom part of his spine had not fully grown yet, which could have been the cause of his cramping dilemma last summer and, most recently, in Monte Carlo. But the Scot was on a roll. Indeed, even when he was reduced to tossing in serves that Blind Pugh would have had a chance of returning, he was all over Monfils, the Frenchman's thigh muscles tightening and nerves suffocating. But once Monfils unravelled his self-doubt, the match was as good as over. For a bit of ointment was not to do the trick for Murray's back and with his 6-4, 6-7, 1-6, 6-2, 6-1 defeat, the British No 2 departed Roland Garros unable, again, to do himself justice. And that is horribly cruel.

The problem was said last night to be a “hyperextension injury” caused while Murray was serving. He now faces the prospect of missing the Stella Artois Championships at Queen’s Club, an event crucial to his Wimbledon build-up.

Now comes a decision or two of real significance. A Spanish colleague immediately recounted the story of Roberto Carretero, the boys’ champion in Paris in 1993, who shot up in height, failed to take proper care of himself and was never able to live up to his potential. She doesn’t know where he is now. “If he (Murray) has to stop to get it right, then he must stop, because we want to see him play for a long time,” she said.

That has to be right. He cannot take risks and one Wimbledon does not matter in the longer term. Murray said that the idea of stopping crossed his mind, albeit fleetingly, yesterday. “But I don’t normally pull out (of matches),” he said. “I decided to keep playing. It shows that I’m going to try to keep playing until the end. Otherwise people might be saying that Andy Murray is injury-prone, that he isn’t a fighter.”

No one should doubt his fighting instincts. He said that he should have won in straight sets and when you have a hatful of opportunities in your opponent’s first six service games, and are a set down and 1-1 in the second, it is a dire case of missing the *bateau*. Murray was hanging on in the latter stages of that second set, saving three break points of his own in the eleventh game of seven deuces with strokes of impudence, character and self-control. Then he played a rousing tie-break, interrupted only by that terrible twinge. What had been a wonderful match degenerated as Monfils lost the third set in a puff of dust, but Murray could not move at anything more than three-quarter pace and winning grand-slam matches in such circumstances is nigh-on impossible, even for someone with his giant heart.

“There’s no need to panic,” he said. “I’m going to be playing these tournaments hopefully for another 10, 12 years. I’m pretty well grounded. I realise how many more chances I’m going to get to play.”

No one said that Andy Roddick was not a fighter when he pulled the plug against Alberto Martín, of Spain, having lost the first two sets and trailing 1-0 in the third. Roddick, who had turned an ankle in the World Team Cup in Düsseldorf last week, gave his situation mature thought and chose to protect his interests. He is grown up, Murray is still growing.

Andy Murray’s on-court woes have all come in the past year. At Queen’s Club last June, he suffered cramps and collapsed against Thomas Johansson, of Sweden; he ran out of steam against David Nalbandian, of Argentina, in the third round of Wimbledon; was physically sick in the first round of the US Open against Andrei Pavel, of Romania, but won in five sets; cramped up in the first round of Monte Carlo last month, losing to Jean-René Lisnard; and felt twinges in his lower back in the French Open yesterday against Gaël Monfils.

# Murray pleads for patience

*Simon Buckland*

Published: 4 June 2006

In the frankest interview of his meteoric career, the 19-year-old Scot asks for his critics to judge him in four years, when he expects to realise his potential. "The real results will start to happen when I'm 22 or 23. That's when I'll expect more pressure on me at Wimbledon, but expecting me to do it at 19 is a bit unrealistic," said Murray.

Murray's fitness was questioned after he exited the French Open in the first round last Tuesday. However, he will play at the Stella Artois at Queen's Club next week. The nationalist and football fan, who has previously said he will cheer any team that faces England, is hoping Sven-Göran Eriksson's side deflect some of the spotlight from his Wimbledon performance.

"If England do well in Germany I think it will be more calm at Wimbledon," Murray told *The Sunday Times*. "I've been asked a few times 'how do you think you will do this year?' but it depends on the draw. The most important thing is that my game keeps going in the right direction. Every time after losing in five sets, it's 'the guy was stronger' or 'you're not fit enough'. There should be more perspective."

Murray, who suffered cramp at Wimbledon last year, remains deeply suspicious of the media, a feeling that has increased since the coverage given to his abuse of the umpire during a Davis Cup doubles rubber alongside Greg Rusedski for Great Britain against Serbia and Montenegro last April.

The young Scot defied medical advice and played despite a throat infection, only to pick up a code violation after complaining about a line call, and later television microphones picked up another outburst.

Murray has defended his actions, saying too much is expected of young men such as Wayne Rooney and himself. "Journalists at Braehead said, 'if you don't play the team is going to lose'. They put so much pressure on me. I was 18. It's like with Rooney and England. They're now saying if Rooney doesn't play England are going to lose, but what about Lampard, Gerrard, Owen, Beckham, Terry, Campbell and Cole? He is only 20. Stop rushing him!" His desire to win has never been in doubt and, significantly, the new star of British tennis rates his "most satisfying performance" a triumph over adversity rather than his first ATP final, defeating Tim Henman, Andy Roddick or Lleyton Hewitt.

In the first-round draw of the US Open against Andrei Pavel of Romania, Murray had a shoulder problem, was two sets to one down and came back after throwing up on court to win. "Given the pressure I was under, and all that was being said about my fitness, that was pretty satisfying."

# Five-set failure exposes Murray

Andy Murray's first-round exit from the French Open once again showed that he lacks the fitness and strength to go the distance in major tournaments

*PAT CASH*

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"Talent isn't enough. You also have to have that inner burning desire that forces you to work when your body is screaming to rest. Half-measures are useless. Shortcuts leave you lost. If you want it, then you have to put in the hard yards."

Sadly, Nails isn't around any more, but if he were, I would point him in the direction of Andy Murray. Almost a year has passed since we witnessed Murray collapsing with cramp at the Stella Artois Championships. A lot has happened in the interim; he's won an ATP title and got himself into the world's top 50 in double-quick time. But can he honestly look at himself in the mirror and insist he's done everything possible to get himself fit? I don't think so.

When you look at Murray's ability to play shots, you have to like what you see. There's not much wrong with his forehand or backhand technique, and he possesses the capacity to produce the unexpected. I am convinced he has the potential to get right to the top of the sport.

However, to do that he must be strong and durable, with the resilience to fight his way through the pain barrier when required. Once again in the first round of the French Open we saw irrefutable evidence that Murray is still not sufficiently physically conditioned. Five sets were just too much for him and the fact that he complained of problems deep down at the base of his back set my alarm bells ringing.

Then, to compound the situation, he ignores the problem and endangers not just his participation at Wimbledon but his future career by playing doubles. What sort of lunacy prevailed to allow him back on court in cold, dark conditions? I was much the same age as

Murray when I first developed spinal problems and was left in no doubt that unless I wanted my career to disintegrate, long hours in the gym were required to strengthen my lower back. I well recall the painful tedium that ensued as I repeatedly carried out various exercises that seemed mundane and for a long time ineffective, but it was made plain to me that I would not be able to play at 100% unless I put in hour upon hour in the gym.

What spurred me on was the fact that it was my career at stake, nobody else's. Does Murray possess the same determination? I hope so.

The win in San Jose was a tremendous high point of Murray's playing career, but take that out of the equation and you don't see a lot to enthuse about.

The second year on tour is traditionally far tougher than the first. New players can take opponents by surprise, but word soon spreads about them in the locker room as coaches compare notes. From what I hear, the initial apprehension about facing this feisty young Scot has died down all too quickly.

The signs are indisputably there that all the optimism that has surrounded him since last summer could have been misdirected.

Andy, you never got to know Nails Carmichael, but Pat Rafter, Lleyton Hewitt and even Tim Henman, did. I implore you to take heed of his message.

# The Big Interview: Andy Murray

He may appear every inch the stropky teenager, but Paul Kimmage finds there is much more to the young Scot

The Big Interview: Andy Murray He may appear every inch the stropky teenager, but Paul Kimmage finds there is much more to the young Scot

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When you've talked broom cupboards with Boris Becker over breakfast and skeletons in the cupboard with Greg Norman over lunch and everything in the cupboard with Anna Kournikova over dinner. When your daily trip to work is a ticket to The Masters or the World Cup or the Olympics or Wimbledon or the Tour de France or the Prix de L'Arc or the Monaco Grand Prix or The Open, you know that sooner or later the bubble has to burst. And it does. Payback. A call from my boss at Mission Control.

"What about Andy Murray?" he suggests.

"What about him?" I reply.

“We can get you an hour with him in Paris next week.”

“Oh. Really? I don’t suppose you could postpone it for another 10 years?” Confession: I had no wish to interview Andy Murray. No offence to Fred Perry (his sponsor) or Judy (his mum) or Willie (his dad) or Jamie (his brother) or Dunblane (his home) or Patricio (his manager) or Kim (his girlfriend) or to 6ft 1in tennis prodigies around the world, but there had to be at least eight good reasons to avoid the feisty Scot.

1. Murray is 19. When did you last meet a 19-year-old with an interesting view on anything? Shouldn’t we postpone this for at least 10 years?

2. When Murray was eight, a crazed Thomas Hamilton entered the gymnasium at his primary school in Dunblane and began shooting at the teachers and pupils at random. Murray found refuge with some classmates in the headmaster’s study and had to wait two hours for the nightmare to end. Some of his friends lost brothers and sisters, but it’s the one subject he refuses to discuss in interviews. How can I ignore such a huge incident in his life?

3. Murray has played terrifically in the past 12 months, but hasn’t yet reached the final of a Grand Slam event. He needs a coach to nurture his talent and take him to the next level. He’ll be a much better interview in 2016.

4. Murray abandoned school at the age of 15 and hasn’t read a book for six years. What are you going to discuss for the hour? Acne? His groundstrokes? How do you plan to write 3,000 words on this guy?

5. Murray adores his PlayStation and his iPod and all of those computer games you argue constantly about with your son. How do you plan to connect with this kid? Shouldn’t you be calling Tim Henman or Greg Rusedski or Sue Barker or John Lloyd? Whatever happened to Virginia Wade? Now that’s a story.

6. Murray’s idea of a great movie is Saw and Saw II. Hasn’t he ever heard of Crash or Brokeback Mountain? How can we have an intelligent discussion on Saw? His favourite music is Eminem and 50 Cent. Enough said. Agghhh!

7. Murray is fascinated by the great tennis champions but doesn’t read autobiographies because most are written with the assistance of a ghost. He prefers television to the written word.

8. Murray’s contempt for the press is unbridled. How do you build a bridge to somebody like that? What’s he going to say if he doesn’t respect you? But my extremely persuasive boss insisted I travel to Paris: “I think it’s a great time to interview him. He’ll be back at Queen’s next week after a very interesting year.” And Murray’s extremely helpful manager, Patricio Apey, was sure we’d get along. “Andy’s a great kid,” he said. “I think you’ll really enjoy him.”

So we sat, staring across a table at each other on the eve of the French Open: the tennis player who doesn’t read and hates journalists, and the journalist who doesn’t play tennis and wished he was some place else. And as I wearily unwrapped my tape recorder, I was

reminded of a passage written by an American sportswriter, Gene Collier, who grew tired of hanging round locker rooms. “How stupid is this? I don’t want to wait for this guy. This guy doesn’t want me to wait for him. I know what he’s going to say. He knows what I’m going to ask. The readers know what I’m going to write. And I know what they’re going to say if they read it.”

But Andy Murray was a surprise.

THE INTERVIEW is 20 minutes old and I’ve offered him the chance of dinner with three legends from the game. “Borg,” he replies instantly. “I’d like to have dinner with him . . . and I’d take McEnroe and Sampras and Agassi — but that would be four.”

“Okay, make it four,” I concede. “To hell with the expense.”

“I’d have to have Agassi,” he insists. “He’s won on all surfaces, one of the few players alive that’s won all four Grand Slams. I’d take Sampras because he has the record of Grand Slam wins and Borg won five Wimbledons in a row and six French Opens.”

“But what would you ask them? How would you pick their brain?” “I’d ask: ‘How do you prepare for the big matches? How do you get yourself in the right frame of mind?’ I’d ask: ‘How do you get yourself out of difficult situations? What are you thinking when you are serving for a match in the final of a Grand Slam?’ I’d ask them how it feels. They might all say completely different things — that’s the beauty of tennis, it’s such an individual sport.

“Sampras might be thinking, ‘Okay, I’m going to go for a big ace down the middle’. Agassi might say, ‘Okay, I’m going to put my first serve into the guy’s backhand and then I’m going to hit some big groundstrokes’. But it would just be great to sit down and find out how they played in the big moments and how they dealt with pressure.”

Dealing with the pressure will be foremost on his mind next week when he returns to the Stella Artois Championship at Queen’s. Twelve months ago he arrived at the tournament a fresh-faced kid with a bright future from Scotland at the bottom of the world rankings. Six weeks later he was the new star of British sport and his career was heading for orbit.

In October he reached the final of the Thailand Open in Bangkok — his first on the ATP Tour — and played well against an untouchable Roger Federer. That month he travelled to an indoor event in Switzerland and won his first head-to-head with Tim Henman. In February in San Jose he played superbly against Andy Roddick and Lleyton Hewitt and won for the first time on the Tour.

In April, illness and a much-publicised bout of frustration (he swore at an umpire) ruined what should have been a glorious homecoming for Murray in the Davis Cup defeat by Serbia & Montenegro in Glasgow. Later that month he split with his coach, Mark Petchey, and has struggled to find his best form.

“I have a good shot at being one of the best in the world,” he explains, “but it’s going to take time because my game is quite complicated. I can do a lot of things but don’t really

know how to put them all together yet. I got it right in San Jose against Hewitt and Roddick, but the key is to do it over and over again. I don't quite have the consistency yet.

"The past few weeks have been quite difficult. I don't have a coach just now, it's my first stretch on clay on the main Tour and I've lost some close matches that I really could have won. Sometimes I have to remind myself to look at the positives and not the negatives so much. This time last year I was still playing in the juniors. To get to where I am has been a pretty big step, and regardless of whether I'm winning or losing, it's just a good experience."

After his first-round exit from Roland Garros last week, questions have been raised about his fitness. "I'm only 19," he says. "I'm still growing. I've hardly played any five-set matches and it takes some getting used to. I'm working on it, and if I'm working on it, what else can you ask, instead of people just being negative about it."

A story he tells when asked about his "most satisfying ever performance" is revealing. Last August, after an eight-week run of tournaments in the US, Murray came through the qualifiers at the US Open to secure a place in the first-round draw against Andrei Pavel of Romania. He won the first set, lost the second and third, won the fourth and was leading 2-1 in the fifth as he sat down for the change of ends.

He towelled his face and hands, took a swig from his sports drink and had just stood up to walk back on when he was suddenly, violently ill and vomited all over the court. A 15-minute delay ensued before the mess was cleared and Murray was ready to resume.

"I'd played eight weeks in a row in America and won two tournaments. I'd had a problem with my shoulder, come through qualifying at the US Open and was two sets to one down and came back after throwing up on court to win in five sets. Given the pressure I was under, and all that was being said about my fitness, that was pretty satisfying."

"But you're saying it was the most satisfying?" I confirm.

"Yeah."

"Really? That's a surprise."

"Yeah."

"Because people might say, 'Surely beating Hewitt and winning his first tournament was more satisfying?' " "Well, satisfying in that I came off court and thought: 'Yes'. I'd proved everybody wrong who said I was in bad shape."

"Why do you listen to that?" "I haven't read a newspaper article since the Davis Cup this year because of what was written. I don't have respect for the majority of people in the press. I don't respect their opinion. They tell me, 'You have to trust us. We all want you to win and do well' and then try to stitch me up."

“How did they stitch you up?” “They said the team was going to get a \$100,000 fine and a three-year ban. I said to the umpire, ‘You were f\*\*\*\*\* useless’, but they tried to say basically that I had called him a \*\*\*\*t. But what 19-year-old doesn’t swear? There’s 64 first-round matches here at Roland Garros and I guarantee you that in 20 of them, a player will tell the ref to f\*\*\* off. But they tried to make it into a huge story when it was really nothing, and after that I said, ‘No, I’m not reading it any more’.

“A few people said things to my coach before he started working with me. ‘He doesn’t work hard’, ‘He’s soft’, ‘He’s lazy’, ‘He’s this’, ‘He’s that’, and you ask, ‘Why do you listen to it?’ But every time I go into a press conference after losing a match in five sets, it’s: ‘The guy was stronger than you. You’re not fit enough’. And even when I’m not reading it, I know that’s what they’re writing. They try to make everything sensational. There has to be a huge headline: ‘Murray does this’. ‘Murray is a spoiled brat’. ‘This guy thinks Murray is an arse’.”

“It’s obvious that it really irritates you,” I suggest.

“Well, when I see what’s happened to Tim (Henman) over the years and the way they tried to stitch me in the Davis Cup — I mean, I was told by the doctor not to play, but I wanted to try and help my country, and instead of making me look like an arse, they could have tried to be more positive: ‘He was frustrated that he played badly. He was passionate in front of his home crowd, and, yeah, he swore at the referee, but big deal’ — it happens at every football match 10 times in every game, but because it’s tennis they pick up on it.”

“But isn’t that a consequence of life in the goldfish bowl?” “Yeah, maybe it is, but I just think basically . . . it’s like, I come into the press conference after the match and get asked by one of the journalists, ‘The general consensus is that if you don’t play tomorrow, the team is going to lose’. They put so much pressure on me. I was 18 at the time! It’s like with Rooney and the England team. They’re saying that if Rooney doesn’t play, England are going to lose, but what about Lampard, Gerrard, Owen, Beckham, Terry, Campbell, Cole! He is only 20! Stop rushing him!”

IT IS THE morning after our interview in Paris and I’m sitting on a Eurostar to London when my boss calls with a game he often plays called How Did It Go? A polite way of asking, “Will we be needing the lawyers this week?” “How did it go?” he asks.

“Yeah, it went well,” I reply.

“Tell me about him.”

“Intense, very intense . . . all through the interview he kept pulling at his neck like there was something grating on him — I thought at first it was me, but I think it was more of a reflection on the state of his life right now.”

“How do you mean?” “Well, he hasn’t found time to sit his driving test yet and he seems a bit frustrated that he hasn’t got a pad of his own.”

“Why doesn’t he buy a place?” “He’s not sure who his next coach is going to be or where he’s going to be based. The uncertainty is obviously troubling him a bit and affecting his game.”

“Anything else stand out?” “Yeah, his control was a real surprise. He went on a 29-minute rant about his contempt for the press, and though his fury was obvious, he never lost control. Every word was considered and delivered in a flat, calm, monotone voice. Remarkable. I’ve never witnessed that before.”

“Did you warm to him?” he asks.

“Good question, but I’m not quite sure how to answer it.”

“Explain.”

“Well, if I say, ‘No’, it implies I didn’t like him, and that wouldn’t be accurate or fair. But if I say, ‘Yes’, that wouldn’t be accurate either, because I actually didn’t warm to him, which is not to say that I don’t admire him. Am I making any sense?”

WHEN asked to explore the roots of his extraordinary ability with a racket, Murray directs you, somewhat surprisingly, not to the winning genes of his mother, a former Scottish champion, but to the pain of a childhood of losing to his older brother, Jamie.

“Not many people realise this, but up until the age of 14 my brother was rated the No 2 or 3 in the world. He beat (Gael) Monfils (Murray’s conqueror at Roland Garros) once at an under-13 tournament in France 6-0 6-1. He was up there with the best. Growing up, I was always trying to find a way to beat him.

“I hated losing. He’d make jokes and wind me up, but it was good for me, because although it’s good to learn how to win, it’s almost better to learn from defeat, and I think my brother was a huge reason why I’m doing well just now.

“The first time I ever beat him was in the final of an under-10 tournament in Solihull. It was my favourite tournament and I remember beating him on an artificial grass court 7-6 6-3. My mum had taken a group of Scottish players down and we were on our way back that night in a minibus when I started teasing my brother that I had beaten him.

“We were sitting opposite each other and I had my arm on the arm-rest when he decided he’d had enough. He shouted at me and pounded my hand with his fist. An hour later my finger was blue and black and purple. I woke up next morning and the nail was growing into my skin. I had to get an injection from the doctor, but my nail never recovered.”

By the age of 13 Murray was a double national champion, had won the Orange Bowl in Florida and replaced his older brother as the brightest prospect in tennis until suddenly, inexplicably, he fell out of love with the game.

“I had been to America and it was great, but I was missing out on doing things with my friends. I’d finish school and instead of going to my friend’s house to play, or to play

football, I was going to the tennis court. I'd finish practising at 6.30, go home, do my homework, and that was it. You need time to spend with your friends and people your age and I just decided to take a break."

Gairdoch United was the local football team. He signed up with a few friends, spent a couple of sessions at the Rangers school of excellence and decided after a couple of weeks to revert to tennis. "I'm not sure exactly why I stopped playing football. I remember my dad picking me up to drive me to training and saying, 'Dad, I don't want to go. I want to play tennis'."

A year later, after a 2-1 defeat by Spain in the final of the European Cup, he returned to Dunblane screaming at his mother about a kid called Nadal: "Do you know who he practises with? Carlos Moya! Do you know who I practise with? My big brother! How am I supposed to compete with that!" He couldn't, so they made the decision that he would leave school and join the Sanchez-Casal Academy in Barcelona.

"We lost the final rubber in doubles against Nadal and his partner," he recalls, "and after the match we went bowling and I asked Nadal who he practised with. At that time Moya had been No 1 in the world and had won the French Open and I was feeling a bit jealous. The tennis was always more important for me than my schoolwork. It was a big gamble at that age, but it's what I wanted to do and my parents supported me."

Two years later, in September 2004, he won the US Open junior title in New York and knew that he had chosen well. "I remember standing on the top step of the main court on the night of the women's final. There must have been 18,000 people there and I thought, 'I want to play in front of crowds like these'. There is no better feeling than playing against someone 100% full-out and coming off the court after winning, knowing that you've given it everything and that they've given it everything. I don't think tennis players get enough respect for how physically tough it is."

Next week he returns to London for the packed galleries of Queen's and another summer in the goldfish bowl. "This year I've got lucky because of the World Cup. If England do well, I think it will be a little more calm at Wimbledon, and if they don't do well, the interest will be huge. There's a lot of pressure, because you know you have to perform, and that's tough, but it's also very positive.

"I've been asked a few times: 'How do you think you will do this year?' and obviously I'd like to do better than last year, but it all depends on the draw. I'm not going to be seeded this year and could draw Federer in the first round, and not many people beat Federer, so . . . The most important thing for me is that my game keeps going in the right direction."

"Do you find it difficult staying patient?" I ask. "No, I just think the media have to get a bit more perspective on it. I don't think the way I play just now is good enough to win a Grand Slam, but if I keep working hard and find the right coach, the real results will start to happen when I'm 22 or 23. That's when I'll expect to have pressure on me at Wimbledon, but expecting me to do it at 19 is a bit unrealistic."

# Agassi praises Murray's mettle

Published: 11 June 2006

writes *Andrew Longmore*

"He's a great mover, he controls the ball very well, he's got a nice return and he knows what he's doing when he comes to the net," said the 36-year-old American, who will be playing his first tournament for three months after a back injury. "Add in a competitor's heart and mind and the future is pretty open for him."

The difficulty, says Agassi, is shouldering all the expectations of a country so desperate for success at Wimbledon. As the British

No1, Murray will take over the pressure traditionally reserved for Tim Henman, who Agassi faces in the first round at Queen's.

"Putting the expectation on anyone to win Wimbledon is a tall order, but you've got someone there who's going to get the best out of their game and their career and that's the most you can hope for. Tim will leave a big void when he decides to go, but it's nice to see someone else stepping up to the plate."

Agassi also offered a word of advice on Murray's search for a new coach, widely expected to be Brad Gilbert, who guided Agassi to four grand slams. "Brad helped me a lot and he's capable of helping Andy tremendously too," said Agassi.

"Nineteen is a crucial time in a player's life, he should be steered and moulded correctly because that's when you're establishing the mould you're going to play in for the rest of your career.

"Brad knows the game as well as anyone. It's more tactical than motivational. Right now, Andy needs to come to terms with what his strengths are and what he needs to do to improve."

For Agassi himself, the hours are running out. The Stella Artois, which begins tomorrow, might prove to be the last hurrah for one of the game's great showmen. After missing the last two Wimbledon through injury, his season has been curtailed by persistent back trouble, which might mean the end is nigh or just provide a suitably neon-lit backdrop to a fairytale Wimbledon fortnight.

"I want to be on court with the real expectation I can play a great match and win it, whatever round that is," he says. "But there are a lot of pieces of the puzzle — concentration, discipline, shot selection, movement — that when you've not played a lot is not a comfortable process.

“If I’m not winning it means I’m not doing a few things I should be doing and I’d better have a good reason for that or I’ll lose interest real quick.”

# Brooding Murray struggles to shake off storm clouds

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By **Neil Harman**, Tennis Correspondent

Published at 12:00AM, June 14 2006

UNDER normal circumstances, Andy Murray would have spent four hours with a coach who was able to get between his ears, cut through any negativity and tell him how to turn what is left of his first match on grass this year into a worthy win. Last night, he had Judy, his mother, to give a few home truths to a 19-year-old son in a state of drift.

From his entry on to court at the Queen’s Club yesterday, Murray was surrounded by dark clouds and, through the first hour of his match against Janko Tipsarevic, of Serbia and Montenegro, they appeared to be embedded in his every stuttering move. In stark contrast to the sunny disposition and warmth that greeted Tim Henman’s victory on Monday, the Scottish tenderfoot was, initially, self-defeatingly, ill at ease.

When the rain arrived, he was turning the match around, putting more zip into his strokes, moving across the baseline with greater purpose and promising a place in the second round of the Stella Artois Championships. He returns this morning at 11.30 on what is forecast to be an interruption-free day at 6-7, 5-2 and his opponent a point from moving to within two games.

The disparity in the rankings between Murray’s No 45 and the No 114 of Tipsarevic was hardly mirrored in the exchanges that marked a first set which Murray began, as is his single-minded wont, with a backhand drop shot. On the fourth break point of a game that lasted seven minutes, when one might have been transported back 48 hours to Roland Garros, Murray drew an error on the Tipsarevic backhand to gain a decent foothold.

All was going according to plan until the sixth game when the British No 2’s forehand went to pieces and he lost his serve to love. Indeed, he had given up nine consecutive points when he drew Tipsarevic forward to chase down a sliced drop shot and the Serb slid awkwardly. Even then, though, Murray played another slipshod service game but was granted passage back when Tipsarevic, on break point, smashed wildly with his nose on the net cord.

Murray was not in the mood to make things too easy. He got into further trouble in the tenth game, saving one set point with a casual drop shot and two more with aces. Still, though, the crowd refused to give full vent, even in a tie-break, which was designed to inspire audience participation as much as to shorten matches.

A beautiful flicked forehand push gave Tipsarevic the early advantage and when Murray netted a routine backhand to trail 3-1, he screamed out a remark of such intense anger

that Jake Garner, the umpire, called him for a verbal obscenity. A coach would not have been too enamoured, either, of his temperamental racket-bouncing. There was a total hush during the changeover after six points, even less noise when Murray's forehand error surrendered the set.

It could have been a whole lot worse when he was broken in the first game of the second set but the situation brought out the spirited animal in him, and when Tipsarevic had an opportunity to lead 2-0, it was negated by a deep forehand approach and cleverly angled forehand volley. From then on, Murray broke twice in succession and looked in decent nick until drizzle forced the pair from court at 3.40.

Twice the covers were removed, twice more they were rolled back almost as quickly and so Robby Ginepri, of the United States, last year's US Open semi-finalist, who plays the winner, already had the significant advantage of a contented night's sleep.

## Tennis: Convincing Murray in no-whine situation

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By **Neil Harman**, Tennis Correspondent

Published at 12:00AM, June 21 2006

WHEN Andy Murray lifted his right leg, draped an arm over it and relaxed in the chair behind a table piled high with microphones and flower displays (he should search those for discreetly hidden bugs), a genuine air of serenity descended upon the frenetic carnival trailing his every move. One victory at the Red Letter Days Open in Nottingham, one performance of absolute conviction and this was a day of roses and no whine.

There have been few enough of those in recent times for Murray to enjoy this one, not least that he had to pick himself up from his customary horizontal pose on a grass court, shake all anxiety aside and beat Dmitry Tursunov, the Russian whose tendency to go for British throats has been all too frequently chronicled in the past year.

The strangled cries were coming from Tursunov at the close of a first-round match played in conditions more appropriate for the Fastnet Race, lanyards whipping ceaselessly against their flagpoles, the trajectory of the balls as much dictated by gusts of wind as the guiding hands of the players.

In such conditions, Murray could not have been more in control of himself and his game, playing nervelessly at occasional times of strife and with real clarity of thought throughout.

The final two points of Murray's 6-4, 6-3 victory that earned him a second-round meeting with Max Mirnyi, of Belarus, last year's runner-up, summed up its character. A 21-shot rally ended when one of the few misplaced Murray backhand slices drifted wide, and an ace down the middle, called good by Steve Ullrich, the umpire, after the centre-service linesman had suggested it was wide.

A full-throated cheer greeted that decision, in stark contrast to the hush that had descended on Centre Court in the tenth game of the first set when Murray, in pursuit of a third set point, collapsed in a heap and gripped his right leg. For 30 seconds, all you could see from the opposite end of the court was his head bobbing up and down. Ullrich climbed down from his chair and summoned help. Tursunov was clearly distressed and later charged that Murray had deliberately stalled. "There wasn't an injury time-out called and play was stopped for at least five minutes," he said. "I won't let that happen to me again."

On the resumption, Murray made good on his third set point and though he was grimacing, clutching the back of his right leg and flexing his foot in the manner of one trying to get the circulation flowing, he managed to sneak a 3-0 lead at the start of the second set, three games in which he gave up only four points.

The most important game thereafter was the fifth, as Murray snatched the 15-30 point with a brilliant backhand volley caressed into open court from an attempted Tursunov pass that packed all of his pent-up venom. From then on, the 19-year-old Scot's serving was cleaner and more spicily varied than it had been in weeks.

"I've nothing to be unhappy about today," Murray, who admitted that his decision to choose to serve on winning the toss marked a sea-change in his attitude, said. "I don't think I've done that for about two years, but I felt I needed to be aggressive. For me, this week isn't about how many matches I win, but how I perform."

Murray felt that he had fallen because of the moisture in the patches at the far ends of the court, where most players do not often stray.

"The court itself is excellent, the bounce is truer to my mind than at Queen's last week," Murray said. "I just jarred my ankle and I wanted to make sure the trainer felt I wouldn't do any more harm if I carried on. He said I shouldn't hurt it any more."

He will have a test this morning to make sure he is fit to face the mighty Max.

Alex Bogdanovic gave a creditable account against Mirnyi yesterday, going ace for ace and pass for pass with the Belarussian, whose anxiety was keenly shown when he preferred to serve and stay back deep in the second set. One mini-break was enough for him to snag the second set tie-break and he held steady to win 4-6, 7-6, 6-3.

## Weather-beaten Murray fails to raise his game

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By **Neil Harman**, Tennis Correspondent

Published at 12:00AM, June 23 2006

THERE is a case for leaving your mark on a tennis court but in the context of Andy Murray yesterday they were increasingly in the form of indentations where he was sinking his racket into the Nottingham turf. One can only hope that when he is informed of this morning's Wimbledon draw, he is not taking it out on one of the club's sacred practice courts.

There are always those days when the elements and your opponent's apparent disdain of them combine to leave you deeply frustrated. When Murray looked out over the courts in Las Vegas earlier this year, as the winds tore down the Strip and threatened to uproot the local flora, he did not fancy playing at all. It was not exactly idyllic for the quarter-finals of the Red Letter Days Nottingham Open yesterday.

Whipping gusts and permanent semi-darkness are not what you want with Wimbledon just around the corner and Murray's 7-6, 4-6, 6-1 defeat by Andreas Seppi, of Italy, was a classic case of one man putting what he could do nothing about out of his mind, while the other let them get the better of him. A great pity, too, because victory would have moved Murray to inside the world's top 40 for the first time.

When Murray won the second set and had Seppi at 0-30 in the first game of the third, he looked to be one the way. And when he held his serve from 0-40 down in the second game, you would have put a few pounds on him to triumph, but the 12-point third game was filled with improbable shot-making from the wafer-thin Italian, ranked No 72 in the world, and whatever Murray did, whether it was hitting deep, trying the drop shot, attempting to push Seppi wide, his opponent had something up his sleeve.

Seppi held his serve and then broke Murray in the next game, a couple of powerful forehand returns placing enough negative impressions in Murray's mind for the teenager to double fault. Having lost that game, he then double-faulted away the sixth as well and was fortunate that his frustrated slash at the ball just missed the ballboy stationed at the net post. The headlines could have been devastating.

As things stand, they will only be half-heartedly critical. Murray said himself that it was difficult to judge what he did well and what didn't quite work because so much of what he wanted to do, he couldn't. "You'd hit a good shot and the ball would sail five yards long and the next would land half-way up the net," he said. "I didn't start serving well until the second set and I struggled with everything else. It's difficult to explain but I just didn't have any confidence in the weather."

He should know all about that, where he comes from. There is no need for deep recriminations after a couple of wins against Dmitry Tursunov and Max Mirnyi that ought to stand him in fine stead, whichever section he finds himself in when the discs are pulled from the velvet bag at the All England Club today. "If I get Roger Federer, Lleyton Hewitt or Andy Roddick, chances are I won't do better than the third round of last year," he said.

Janko Tipsarevic, who defeated Murray in the first round of the Stella Artois at Queen's Club last week, was beaten in his quarter-final by Robin Soderling, of Sweden, walked out of the grounds and hailed a taxi to take him to London. Given that the LTA is on such decent terms with Serbia at present, he'll probably send the bill to the governing body.

# Tennis: Murray to stand firm under vast weight of expectation

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By **[Neil Harman](#)**

Published at 12:00AM, June 24 2006

The new object of a nation's hopes tells our correspondent that he is on course to deliver

OUR hero is fiddling with his racket half an hour after a defeat in Nottingham that could have sent him into a right grump. "A lot of people say that about me, that I'm permanently miserable on the court, and in a way I agree," Andy Murray says, offering the remnants of his prawn crisps. "I'd say to them, 'If you had to put up with everything I did when I was 18, how do you think you'd have felt?'"

Note the use of the past tense — "when I was 18". Now that Murray is 19, are we about to witness the blooming of the boy from Dunblane? If he can translate the mood of our meeting into a permanent state of thoughtful good sense and mutual jousting, what a pleasure the next few years will be.

"When my problems have been sorted out, I'll be the happiest guy on court," he says. "But there are still a lot of things I'm struggling with." Least among those is his positive attraction to sponsors. The Royal Bank of Scotland, which pinned its colours to his sleeve when he was 14 and struggling to muster the funds to move to a training base in Spain, has added two years to its agreement. "I'm very lucky to be from Britain — it's easy to be greedy because you're sponsored so well," he says. "When I was younger money was a real issue and now it's not a problem. The help takes a lot of the pressure away."

But, as he acknowledges, it is a two-way street because sponsors have got lucky with him. Last year, entering Wimbledon, he was a gangly teenager ranked No 312 in the world; now he is in much better shape, physically and psychologically, and is ranked No 45. It is nothing short of meteoric and if he has stalled recently, with six wins from 18 matches since his breakthrough success on the ATP tour in San Jose, California, in February, he is at pains to point out that he is on the course he set himself.

This time last year, Mark Petchey was fretting about whether he should take up the offer to be Murray's coach. Ten months into their partnership it was halted for reasons that they have chosen not to make public. Since then, Murray, who will play Nicolas Massu, the No 31 sees from Chile in the first round in SW19, has flown solo. Most unemployed coaches with a decent track record and some with no reputation at all have had their names in print.

"I hope I'm getting close," [to appointing a new coach] Murray says. "I don't mind it [the speculation]. I'd just love to come out and say, 'I want this guy to be my coach', but if

something falls through and it doesn't happen, I look like a d\*\*\* and other people will say, 'So and so doesn't want to coach him, there's obviously a reason for that'." Murray's talent cannot be a factor, nor his willingness to embrace the illogical hopes pinned to a British player of immense promise — especially during the next two weeks. As days pass and he gets a tighter grip on what his story entails, Murray has begun to appreciate where he is, what he does and how it is perceived.

"There aren't too many negatives," he says. "I suppose the only downside is the extra attention, but sponsors like that. And I wouldn't be getting paid as well to do something I love if it wasn't for that.

"There have been difficult moments. I had to get something off my chest in Australia [when he criticised the press for putting too much pressure on him] and I think that did me good. I want to be myself and then things get twisted." He described a match in New Zealand as "like a women's match", which caused offence when he meant it in jest, and he still does not know where supposed comments about him wearing a Paraguay shirt during England's first World Cup match came from. "I didn't say it and there were radio debates about it," he says. "How does that make me feel? "But I do think I'm beginning to understand what this is all about. Once my life gets sorted out, I won't have these issues, I won't be getting uptight. By the end of the year you'll see a real change. It's not like I'll be coming out of my shell, but I'll be letting my personality show a little more." And so back to Wimbledon, where, last year, he played on the three show courts, defeating Radek Stepanek, the No 14 seed, in the second round on No 1 and going down, his body giving up on him, to David Nalbandian, the 2002 finalist, after leading two sets to one on Centre Court.

It's one place in the world where I will have 13,000 people all wanting me to win," Murray says. "The downside is knowing if you're playing badly, or putting in a bad performance, there's however many millions watching and they're saying, 'For God's sake, what's he doing?' If you're playing well, it's great; if you're losing, you can let things get on top of you because you can hear the 'Oh, come *on*, Andy.' If you're in front of your own crowd and playing like a d\*\*\* it is, like, you know you want to perform and play better, but it's easy to get frustrated with things. There's that many people on your side, you want to do so well."

He was not that disappointed to lose in the quarter-finals in Nottingham. "It's not always a great thing to win the tournament before a grand-slam," he says. "Now I can get to Wimbledon and spend a couple of days working on the things I want to before the tournament starts."

## Murray says he likes the English really

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By Sam Knight

Published at 12:00AM, June 29 2006

Andy Murray, the young Scottish tennis player who carries Britain's hopes into the second round of Wimbledon today, has denied he is anti-English after receiving a swarm of unpleasant messages on his website.

Despite an impressive, straight-sets win in his first match on Tuesday, Murray's preparations for the tournament have been dogged by an interview he gave earlier this month in which he said, like many Scots, he would be supporting "anyone but England" in the World Cup.

The comment, which echoed the sentiments of Jack McConnell, Scotland's First Minister, and seemed to emphasise Murray's studied coolness towards things English — in the past, the 19-year-old has stated his preference for the US Open over Wimbledon — provoked a stream of abuse in the comments section of "The Locker Room", the weblog he is updating every day throughout the tournament.

In amongst the hundreds of postings, many from supportive Scots and plenty from tennis fans who don't seem to care either way, are the taunts: "Go for it Andy - the plane to Paraguay I mean..." runs one. "As you will be supporting whoever is playing against England, I will support whoever plays against you. Seems fair!" is another.

"If you are going to be so anti-England and anti-English don't take the lottery money or expect any support at Wimbledon... Come on Julien Benneteau [Murray's opponent today] whoever that is." Yesterday, Murray responded, first through a statement by his agent, and then in a posting on his website, andymurray.com, in which he described his affection for his fellow British tennis player, Tim Henman, and Ricky Hatton, the boxing champion from Manchester.

"Want to say that I'm not anti-English!" He wrote.

"I have supported Tim [Henman] the last 10 years and he is English! Ricky Hatton is one of my favourite boxers and he is English.

"I said I think England will beat Portugal in my press conference! I made a joke, I don't mind whether England win or lose! Press blew it out of proportion!"

The UK's number one ranked tennis player meets Benneteau, a 24-year-old Frenchman who reached the quarter finals of the French Open last month, on Centre Court this afternoon. Looking ahead to the match, Benneteau, who is ranked 11 places lower than Murray in the world, at 55, had no doubts who would be the crowd's favourite.

"I will play against the new star of Britain. Everyone is behind him, and it will be difficult for me because now he is at home like I was in Paris. Now it is his turn," he said. "There was a very good atmosphere for him when he played last year, and this year it will be the same or maybe more. But if it can put a bit of pressure on him that will be good for me, for sure."

**Anti-Murray postings from "The Locker Room":**

What nationality is Andy's next opponent? I need to go out and get that nation's football shirt to cheer him on.

If you are going to be so anti England and anti English dont take the lottery money or expect any support at wimbledon. I couldnt care less about tennis - i mean its not like its a proper sport is it, but I will be supporting whoever plays against you, come on Julien Benneteau whoever that is.

Please get over it Scotland. Our ancestors may have took your freedom and I am sorry for that. Do you know how much money per year we give you ungrateful people ? Why not completely cut yourselves off from us? Because you would be skint thats why! Unlucky Tim (the last true Brit at Wimbledon)

## Murray forced to play waiting game after late stumble

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By **Neil Harman**, Tennis Correspondent

Published at 12:00AM, June 30 2006

YOU would not have wanted to spend time making idle small talk with Andy Murray last night. The 19-year-old was on the verge of completing the Saturday extravaganza the All England Club had been praying for since the men's singles draw was made a week ago — Andre Agassi v Rafael Nadal and Andy Roddick v Scotland the Brave — when he took his eye off the main chance and was forced to trudge off Centre Court and home knowing that he comes back today with at least one further set to play.

Murray, the Great Britain No 2, had led Julien Benneteau, of Bourg-en-Bresse, France, by two sets and 4-2 in their second-round match. It would be presumptuous to suggest that he started to see Roddick's serves in his mind's eye because Benneteau had proved throughout to be an intrepid competitor, one who matched the Scot for audacity, drop shot for drop shot, tumble for tumble, brilliant winner for brilliant winner, fighting gesture for fighting gesture.

Maybe it is well that the light had begun to fade in concert with Murray's late third-set form, because if he had been made to continue, the likelihood is that we would have been contemplating a one-set shoot-out some time this afternoon. That would not have been good for anyone with a suspect circulation.

The first game should have offered an inkling of the labours to come. Murray had to save a couple of break points, the first with an ace, the second when he tempted Benneteau to strike a running forehand a touch wide. The trend of nip and tuck had been set. So had the course of the match, which would become a mixture of captivating currents and eddies.

At the intermission, Murray leads 7-6, 6-4, 4-6 but it is Benneteau, a curly haired, slim, gutsy competitor who has a subtle psychological advantage. At least the court will have had a morning's sun to settle it — and the tracks of Max Mirnyi, from Belarus, and the No 8 seed, James Blake, of the United States, today's opening fixture, to have bedded down — and, one hopes, sapped some of its moisture.

There were a couple of teeth-grinding moments yesterday when Murray, who has never been the steadiest on his feet, tumbled over, clutching first the black protector on his left ankle and then his right as he endeavoured to turn around a 3-0 deficit in the second set after he had taken the first in a thrilling tie-break. That set had seen the first in a series of drop shots that were so poorly executed that only someone not possessed of the Scot's doggedness would have dropped the tactic forthwith.

But, as we know, Murray does not like to think he cannot succeed at anything he lends his hand to. He gritted and grinded his way back in the second, though he was fortunate not to have trailed 4-1 when a call against Benneteau on a sideline was shown to be erroneous.

Instead, Murray won eight of nine games, fashioning a series of supremely gifted winners, one running backhand pass on the first point of the tenth game the prelude to a love service hold that ought to have drawn all the spirit from the world No 55.

The points were beginning to become as drawn out as those that test the patience of a saint at Roland Garros. One 28-stroke rally in the sixth game of the second set was won by Benneteau with a superb backhand winner; but Murray clinched it, which went some way to underlining the composition of the afternoon. Then Benneteau, not put off when a pigeon flew across his eye-line as he prepared to serve, proved the steadier.

Roddick, who defeated Florian Mayer, of Germany, 6-4, 6-1, 6-2 said: "I wasn't that thrilled to go on a little after 7.30 but it felt right on the court tonight, I was aggressive and did what I wanted to do. I was reacting and playing and that felt normal, which is welcome at this point."

Roddick was beaten by Murray in the semi-finals of the San Jose tournament in February that marked the teenager's most vivid impression on the tour.

He was asked whether he felt Brad Gilbert, who coached him to the US Open title in 2003, would be a decent fit for Murray. "Well, California and Texas [Gilbert's home and Roddick's] aren't that far apart but California and Ireland, that's different."

"I think you mean Scotland," someone said. "Oh, I've shot myself in the foot there," Roddick answered. We have to hope that today, on Centre Court, the trend isn't catching.

## Murray's website deluged with anti-Scots gibes

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By **Will Pavia**

Published at 12:00AM, June 30 2006

ANDY MURRAY, Britain's last hope at Wimbledon, has found himself at the centre of a row over national identity and the delicate matter of England's hopes in the World Cup. What began with an off-hand comment during a press interview this month — that the Scottish teenager would be supporting “anyone but England” in the World Cup — occupied the Commons, the Scottish Parliament and senior government ministers yesterday.

By the afternoon Murray's website, where he keeps a blog, had attracted more than 1,000 comments: criticism, abuse and support about his remark. One writer referred to the massacre that took place at the primary school in Dunblane, when the player was a 9-year-old pupil.

In the Commons Peter Wishart, of the Scottish National Party, called for an end to the “sickening hate mail”. Jack Straw, Leader of the House, said: “Everybody needs to have a sense of proportion in this.”

In the Scottish Parliament Nicola Sturgeon called on members to “condemn the disgraceful anti-Scottish abuse that's been directed at Andy Murray”. The player's comments have revived the debate started by Jack McConnell, Scotland's First Minister, when he said that he would not be supporting the England team. Murray has tried to calm matters through his blog.

“Want to say that I'm not anti-English,” he has written. “I have supported Tim [Henman] the last ten years and he is English. Ricky Hatton is one of my favourite boxers and he is English. I said I think England will beat Portugal in my press conference! I made a joke I don't mind whether England win or lose! Press blew it out of all proportion.”

Donna Nieghorn, landlady of the Crooked Billet, in Wimbledon village, said: “He made a few comments that haven't given him the sort of support Tim had. However, we are so desperate to win that even a Scot who doesn't like England will do.”

## Murray in a hurry to secure Roddick showdown

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By **Neil Harmon, Tennis Correspondent**

Published at 12:00AM, July 1 2006

ANDY MURRAY was supposedly more anxious about how hard he should hit the ball at Sofia Arvidsson, of Sweden, in a bit of frolicky mixed doubles last evening than whether it would take one or two sets on Centre Court to settle on Wimbledon's own version of Super Saturday. He never doubted against Julien Benneteau for a moment.

A 25-minute cameo of why Murray is such a thrilling addition to the Wimbledon scene — and you can forget that ballyhoo about him wanting to win the US Open more — was

presented yesterday as he took the fourth set against the Frenchman at a pulsating clip. He may have been the last player to land a place in the third round but he saved his very best for it.

There was precious little for the crowd to get its teeth into. Benneteau punched the air once, when he took his first service game to love for, from there, this was a Scottish procession, as the opposition secured only nine more points. A little self-consciously — for he is given to expression more when he's fermenting inside than when he wins — Murray applauded the crowd and tossed his Saltired wristband into it. Thankfully, it fell to a decent chap who didn't take any offence and put it in his pocket.

Of course, the 19-year-old had to toss in a couple of drop shots, for this would not be Murray if he didn't indulge a little, but so many of his efforts were struck from the sweet spot, he either took the pace away or stepped it up when the mood took him, sensing that Benneteau was decidedly more nervous in the full glare of the afternoon sun than he had been the previous evening. A couple of double faults in his final service game underscored Gallic insecurity.

Now comes Andy Roddick, all muscled intent and bombastic attitude. In San Jose, in February, Murray returned the American's serve brilliantly and mixed up the rallies so judiciously that the former world No 1 was tied up in knots. It was the first of only two semi-finals he has reached this year, the other coming in the Stella Artois Championships a fortnight ago when James Blake frazzled him.

Roddick was at home "mellowing out", watching Murray yesterday. In the past three years at Wimbledon, he has been a losing semi-finalist and twice the runner-up, losing on all three occasions to Roger Federer. Murray is the only non-seed left in his section and, as such, has to be a rank outsider. But factor in the fervour, the demands on Roddick, the way that the Scot can creep under an opponent's skin and Roddick will need a good deal more than simply a serve to get by. said by way of deference. "He has played against guys he has lost to and has come back and beaten them four, five times in a row. It is for me just to have the belief that I can beat him if I play really, really well. He's not going to lay down easily. He's one of the best fighters in the game and gets himself out of tough situations all the time.

"If I play like I did today and in my match against [Nicolas] Massu in the first round, I think I'll give the best players a good match. But he has played bigger matches than this one, the occasion isn't going to get to him at all. I read a lot of his serves in San José, and he didn't have a high first service percentage that day. Whoever uses their break points better is going to come out on top."

The presence of Jimmy Connors in the grounds yesterday was fascinating. Roddick has asked the two-time former Wimbledon champion, to study his game closely in the next few months and to offer any advice he can as to how Roddick might step up his intensity levels. It is not as though the 23-year-old has come over all coy but he wants to find a bit more mental beef.

# Battling Baghdatis sure to turn up the heat of battle

By Brad Gilbert

Published at 12:00AM, July 3 2006

THERE was great expectation in Wimbledon Village yesterday for what is going to unfold in the championships today. Andre Agassi and Andy Murray were in the same restaurant for lunch — Andre wished the guy good luck. I know he thinks an awful lot of him.

This is Moving Day as I call it. We'll be left with eight men and eight women in the draw, and the locker-rooms will be emptying out. The highlight is obviously Murray against Marcos Baghdatis. Six days ago, we were showing Baghdatis against the British guy, Alan Mackin, on American TV and the Cypriot was down on the mat, physically sick and calling for the trainer. Now he's in the second week, which tells you a lot about him.

Baghdatis brings a lot to the table. When he reached the final of Australian Open, I thought he would have a bunch of good tournaments on the back of it but that didn't happen. There are a lot of life adjustments to make, more demands on your time, and he obviously struggled with everything because he couldn't get past the second round of a succession of events and only really clicked again when he got to the semis in Rosmalen, the Netherlands, the week before Wimbledon. If he is getting hot — and to beat Sébastien Grosjean on grass means he must be — then he's going to be a rough customer for Murray. They are completely different characters but they both play with their emotions on their sleeve.

Both players let you know how they are feeling out there. Once again, the crowd reaction is going to be important for Murray but how well did he play against Andy Roddick, especially when the buzz was going around during the penalty shoot-out? What struck me most was his calm, his sense of belonging. He didn't get caught up in anything but playing his match, everything about him was pretty relaxed. Even when he got angry with himself, he did it in a controlled manner. I liked that.

The number 33 worries me. That's what it is forecast to be in celsius today and boy, that's hot. But, after today, there could only be nine sets to the finishing line, they know that. How huge would it be for Murray as a player to make a grand-slam quarter-final? Once again, the key is for Murray to take care of his serve because you've got to figure he will get some breaks. He played the break points brilliantly against Roddick but he doesn't want to have to contend with too many of those, particularly as Baghdatis has a better return than Roddick.

I love the mix of the men's last 16. There's so much exciting youth: Murray, Baghdatis, Rafael Nadal, Novak Djokovic and Tomas Berdych. There are the old guys, too, such as Jonas Björkman and Max Mirnyi, the doubles partners who face each other. Couldn't be better.

The oldest of them all is going home later today, and I was with him over the weekend, chilling out, taking a couple of beers. Andre gave it his all and he's OK with the way it turned out. He had his chance, at 5-3 in the tie-break when Nadal was on the floor and Andre netted his return. Then he missed a forehand up the line and Nadal came up with an unbelievable cross-court winner. That was the match right there. Let's not beat around the argument, Nadal can play seriously good tennis on *any* surface.

Of course my dream was for Andre to win but the greatest thing about Nadal was that he didn't do his scissor kicks or his leaps. There was too much respect and restraint. Andre went down to a champion and the kid handled himself with great class. For Murray, I believe there is more in the tank. If he is satisfied with just getting into the second week of a grand slam, then that's all he will do. I know he thinks more of himself than that.

## The saltire in SW19

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Published at 12:00AM, July 3 2006

### Andy Murray, tennis phenomenon and British diplomat

It was tragedy in the East, but westward look: the land is bright. In the evening heat in a Southwest London suburb, a 19-year old Scot played the match of his life to demolish an American powerhouse and keep the Union flag flying high amid the wreckage of the summer's other sporting hopes.

Andy Murray knows that he now needs not only the protection of his saltire wristband and the support of nationalists North of the Border, but the goodwill, cheers and blessing of the whole United Kingdom. And he set about winning it with the same skill that won him those straight sets. "It would have been great for England to have won the World Cup," he said with nary a hint of insincerity after his victory against Andy Roddick. It would have been "great for British sport". With diplomacy worthy of champions twice his age, he slipped subtly from "England" to "British" — silencing those who had chided him for not backing Beckham's boys and adding the crosses of St George and St Patrick to the flag that has so far been his banner.

Sport, it sometimes seems, is nationalism in a track suit. But though passions have risen high, they have been kept within bounds. England's squad shook hands, swapped shirts (some of them) and managed a final rueful smile for their victorious rivals. Scots, English, Irish and Welsh can now set aside the spats of their divided loyalties (never more on unruly display than on the playing fields of Westminster) and rally around the Union flag. Their united support might even help produce something almost as rare as a British World Cup win — a British champion on Centre Court.

## Murray at loss to explain absence of spark

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By **Neil Harman**, Tennis Correspondent

Published at 12:00AM, July 4 2006

TO SVEN-GÖRAN Eriksson's nine "sorrys", you can add Andy Murray's half a dozen "no excuses". An hour and 54 minutes of anticlimax on Centre Court yesterday unburdened Murray of the tumult of British expectation but as he left the grounds, there was a tangible sense that one day, when he is really ready, he will walk tall.

On his bow in the fourth round of a grand-slam tournament, Murray's performance was a pale reflection of his talent and he was beaten 6-3, 6-4, 7-6 by Marcos Baghdatis, of Cyprus, in a match that fell desperately short of the promise embedded in its presumptive build-up. Those who assumed that Murray would be playing Lleyton Hewitt in the quarter-finals tomorrow took far too much for granted.

For a start, it would have needed Murray to have played somewhere near the levels of his victory over Andy Roddick on Saturday, and only Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal in the present men's game have access to certainty's tap. Murray is still a learner, albeit a quick one. It would have required Baghdatis to play the part of soft-bellied accomplice, and that is not in his character. Murray had never been to a grand-slam second week; Baghdatis had reached this year's Australian Open final and had Federer on the rack. Essentially, Murray was left at the starting gate and was choking on fumes, not least from the smoke that wafted over the court from a fatal fire in nearby Arthur Road. After a first set without any of the requisite snap and vigour in which he played one decent game, almost breaking Baghdatis to sneak back to 5-4 down, Murray led 4-1 in the second only to play an horrendous service game of two double faults and forehand gifts.

It was then that Murray chose, not for the first time, an inappropriate moment to try to drop-shot Baghdatis out of his stride. But the No 18 seed was far more tactically astute, far more convincing in his movement. Even a couple of dozy line-calls could not rev up Murray and his eyeballing of Mohamad Lahyani, the most agreeable of umpires, looked a trifle foolish.

At most changeovers after the baseline non-call in the second game of the third set that upset him so — Baghdatis's smash was clearly long — Murray and Lahyani were locked in conversation that can have served only as a distraction to the Scot.

The tie-break began with a Murray double fault, sagged in the middle with another and was dashed from him when Baghdatis, who replied with an amazing backhand to a cross-court pass, then softened the pace of a forehand, drawing Murray to net his. It was a wonderful flourish from the Cypriot, who was excellent value for his finest championship in SW19 by far. He lost in the first round last year and was two sets to one down to Alan Mackin, Murray's fellow Scot, at the same stage a week ago.

Although his heart was hurting at the end, Murray remembered not to walk off in a huff and leave Baghdatis standing there. Everyone will want a say and in Jimmy Connors's case, though the former champion could not understand Murray's passivity, he suggested that it is "time for him to move to the next level. He has the tools and the opportunity and the rest is up to him."

Murray, whose ranking should rise to the mid-thirties, will play the next two weeks on grass and said: "I'm going to win Newport (the Hall of Fame Championships) next week, I mean it."

He will return for Great Britain's Davis Cup tie in Eastbourne against Israel, by which time he will know the identity of the man whose task it will be to draw the full range of Murray's talents out. Tony Pickard and Stefan Edberg were in the Royal Box yesterday, a reminder of how it was in the 1980s and 1990s. Edberg may be nothing like Murray in personality but when it came to finding the right person to ignite his soul, Pickard was the perfect fit. That is what Murray, understandably hurt yesterday, must find. He said: "It's the worst I've returned this year, I've never missed so many second-serve returns, I just struggled. I didn't feel good the whole match. It's very difficult to explain."

## Murray moves closer to deal with Gilbert

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Published at 12:00AM, July 7 2006

ANDY MURRAY has confirmed that Brad Gilbert is the man he wants as his coach and that talks have taken place between the British No 2 and the American.

"It is not a done deal, but I have spoken to Brad," Murray said. "He's obviously someone that coached [Andre] Agassi and [Andy] Roddick and got both of them to No 1 in the world. He's got a very good record . . . and he is somebody that I'd like to work with."

Gilbert's services will be expensive but Roger Draper, the LTA's new chief executive, is reported to be willing to offer £500,000 for him to join the LTA and work with Murray, who has been without a travelling coach since splitting with Mark Petchey in April. Murray reached the fourth round at Wimbledon before losing to Marcos Baghdatis and the Scot has expressed hope that his new coach will be in place before the Toronto Masters Series tournament, which begins on August 7.

# Tennis: Gilbert looks primed to put name to Britain cause

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**By Neil Harman, Tennis Correspondent**

Published at 12:00AM, July 12 2006

BRAD GILBERT has never been to Eastbourne. That the celebrated American coach is scheduled to arrive on the Sussex coast next week indicates that one of the most significant deals in the history of British tennis is about to be confirmed. The sport's landscape may never be quite the same again.

As Andy Murray saved five match points against Ricardo Mello, of Brazil, before winning 6-1, 1-6, 7-6 to take his place in the second round of the Campbell's Hall of Fame grass-court championships in Newport, Rhode Island, yesterday, so the small print of the agreement to entice Gilbert to become the fulcrum of Roger Draper's celebration of 100 days as the LTA's chief executive was being meticulously checked.

Exactly what the final draft will entail has become a popular guessing game, but confirmation of Murray's selection for next week's EuroAfrica zone group one Davis Cup tie against Israel at Devonshire Park, and that Gilbert will be lurking at the side of the court, confirms that there definitely is a deal. Where the former coach of Andre Agassi and Andy Roddick will be placed strategically in the LTA hierarchy remains the greatest poser.

Murray has informed Jeremy Bates, the Great Britain captain, that he is available for selection for a tie in which victory is essential if the nation wants to be playing off for a return to the competition's World Group by 2007. The last time Jamie Delgado was selected, in the 4-1 defeat by the Czech Republic in Ostrava in 2000, Britain were seeking their first victory at the highest level since 1986. Nothing has changed. Delgado returns after a six-year absence as Murray's probable doubles partner against Jonathan Erlich and Andy Ram, the latter of whom became a Wimbledon mixed doubles champion on Saturday.

In the enforced absence of Greg Rusedski through injury, the other places in the squad are filled by Alex Bogdanovic, restored after he preferred not to be considered for selection against Serbia and Montenegro in April, and Alan Mackin, who is earning his third Davis Cup cap having been on two losing sides, against Australia in 2003 and Switzerland last year.

Changes in the Davis Cup team are as nothing compared with those likely to be unveiled today as part of the upheaval instigated by Draper, when he announces what measures he has chosen to implement after a little over three months in charge. A number of positions within the association are likely to be up for grabs as Draper seeks to realign old staff with new and offer his blueprint for the future of the sport.

Where Gilbert stands in all this is the most intriguing question. He is clearly going to spend a lot of time on the road with Murray, as well as a definitive period in Britain overseeing a coaching programme that has plenty of idealistic protégés, none of whom has the experience of the big time that Gilbert can bring to the table.

# Tennis: Murray will learn to win ugly

Andy Murray may have lost last night, but he has made a winner's choice in securing the services of Brad Gilbert

*BARRY FLATMAN*

Published: 16 July 2006

Rather than greet the good news with victory, Murray last night failed in his attempt to reach the third ATP final of his career. Despite being top seed in the Campbell's Hall of Fame Championships on the grass of Newport, Rhode Island, he lost out at the semi-final stage to Justin Gimelstob 6-1 7-6.

That will not, however, overshadow the fact that, after a fortnight of intense negotiations, Gilbert is expected in Britain this week to formally sign the contract, novel in its terms. The 44-year-old Californian, who guided both Andre Agassi and Andy Roddick to be world No 1s, will be primarily employed by the LTA, but they will loan his services for an expected 28 weeks a year to Murray. But he is not to be given the title of director of performance, left vacant since the sacking of David Felgate three months ago.

Coaching Britain's most talented player is just part of the remit formulated by the LTA's new chief executive Roger Draper. Gilbert will also be expected to spend at least another couple of months at the new £40m National Tennis Centre at Roehampton, working to improve the level of his fellow British coaches, while also attending training camps at venues such as the LTA's Spanish base at La Manga.

Draper met Gilbert to discuss their potential partnership during Wimbledon. The LTA, once beleaguered by the bureaucracy of committees, now considers itself executive led and Draper's initial insistence when named in the post was to lure the world's best talent. Since that initial meeting, negotiations have been extended by lawyers on both sides and there have been several sticking points, most notably the LTA's demands that Gilbert should live in Britain when not on the road with Murray. But the obstacles seem to have been surmounted and now there is a genuine belief that Gilbert could also eventually succeed Jeremy Bates as Britain's Davis Cup captain. For the time being, the American has been invited by Bates to attend next weekend's tie with Israel. "He's coming because I would like him to be there," said Bates. "Andy would like Brad to be there too and he's got lots to offer."

The move underlines the LTA's belief that Murray is the standard-bearer who can raise the sport's profile in Britain, most notably among the most physically gifted youngsters who hitherto have opted to take up other sports. The LTA previously budgeted £160,000 a year towards Murray's coaching and other back-up, but Gilbert's services come a lot more expensive than that.

Not only is he required to move from his home from San Rafael in northern California, but he is also expected to resign from commentating for ESPN, the American sports

television channel, his employer since Roddick fired him after an alliance of 18 months in December 2004.

The prospect of working with one of the most talented young players on the ATP tour has sparked Gilbert's imagination. But so, too, is the temptation of succeeding where his two most vehement critics have failed — both John McEnroe and Jimmy Connors came to primary agreements to work for the LTA before negotiations broke down.

Connors, the original architect of the seniors tour, so detested Gilbert that he refused to allow his fellow American to compete on the circuit. McEnroe once insisted that he was so shame-faced after being defeated by Gilbert, a player he maintained did not deserve to be on the same court as him, that he refused to play for the following six months. Many insist that the truculent New Yorker was never quite the same again.

Although Gilbert rose as high as fourth in the world rankings, won 20 singles titles and earned more than \$5m in prize money from his competitive career, he made no claims that he was a gifted player and never got beyond the quarter-final of a Grand Slam tournament in 32 attempts. He famously penned a book entitled *Winning Ugly*, specifically designed to help lesser players beat more accomplished opponents.

But it was his acumen as a coach that won him accolades and he insisted: "I like coaching more than anything else I have done. And I'm in it for the long haul. As a coach I set out to be a motivator, a friend, an adviser, a go-getter. I work out the X's and the O's. I'm not one of these guys that hangs around for just a few months."

Agassi initially saw the potential when Gilbert was still playing on the tour and the pair spent a total of eight years together, with the Las Vegan not only winning six Grand Slam titles, but revitalising his career after injuries had seen his ranking drop as low as 144 in the world. Within a year, he was back in the top 10 and he still credits Gilbert as his prime motivational force.

"For BG there was never a shortcut to success," recalled Agassi after their split. "What Brad helped me with most was the ability to believe in myself by learning to think for myself. A great coach can lead you to a place where you don't need him any more."

After an 18-month hiatus, Gilbert answered a plea for help from Roddick in the summer of 2003 and within 36 hours was by the player's side in London as he attempted to overcome the disappointment of an early French Open exit at Queen's. Roddick won his first Stella Artois championship less than a week later and added four other titles before the end of the year, including the US Open.

Throughout the American hard court summer he won 27 of his 28 matches and by the beginning of November was world No 1. "With Brad the coolest thing was that it wasn't all this technical mumbo-jumbo," said Roddick, who, since dispensing with Gilbert's services, has also parted with replacement Dean Goldfine and currently stands outside the world's top 10 for the first time in four years. "He made it very simple," said Roddick.

Such credentials should be perfect for Murray, who has repeatedly admitted that he has suffered greatly from a lack of guidance since parting with Mark Petchey in April. In the interim, Murray has sought the counsel of his mother Judy, his junior coach Leon Smith and the LTA's physical consultant Jean-Pierre Bruyere.

Murray will undoubtedly benefit from Gilbert's attention to detail. The American has long insisted that when the world's best players compete, the slightest advantage or problem can make all the difference. He meticulously scouts opposition, lays out the day's training process, formulates specific game plans for each opponent and is even prepared to act as a butler and valet, bringing in early morning breakfast and coffee to hotel rooms.

Hopefully, given the financial investment, he will revel in the environment, and Gilbert is clearly excited by the prospect of working with a player whose talent suggests he will be challenging for Grand Slams before too long. However, by reputation, Murray is not the easiest of characters and certain ground rules will be laid down early in the relationship. Going into a new partnership, one of Gilbert's beliefs seems particularly apposite. "When you have two really strong personalities, there is either the potential for something great or something disastrous," he said.

Nevertheless, he is a man who guarantees he will always be on call for his player wherever needed. As he repeatedly insists to those who employ him: "No matter what, I've got your back. Whatever it is. And when you go into battle, I'm there."

## Gilbert plays waiting game as Murray assumes anchor role

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By **Neil Harman**, Tennis Correspondent

Published at 12:00AM, July 20 2006

THE storms forecast to strike the Sussex coast are not the reason behind Brad Gilbert improving his water-skiing skills on the idyllic Lake Tahoe in Nevada this weekend rather than enjoying a spot of Davis Cup tennis in Eastbourne.

Nor is the fact that the presence of an Israel team in these uncertain days lends the tie more than its share of heart-rending turmoil and tension.

Gilbert would like to have spent quality time in Andy Murray's company in such emotional circumstances, getting a feel for how the teenager deals with the special burden that comes with being Great Britain's No 1 for the first time in the Davis Cup now that Tim Henman and Greg Rusedski have been consigned to the competition's history books.

But the 44-year-old American — still a few days from probable confirmation as Murray's coach and the LTA's brashest employee — accepts that it is best if he relaxes with his children rather than overshadow an occasion bursting with intrigue. Jeremy Bates, the

Britain captain, can therefore concentrate on what is happening on the court, rather than concern himself with who is doing what behind his back.

The bottom line is that this Europe/Africa group one tie that starts tomorrow is one Britain dare not lose if they want to end this year with a respectable place in the world order. The 3-2 victory in Tel Aviv 16 months ago ought to be replicated — or bettered — on the Devonshire Park grass because Murray is the best player on either team and Israel have only one recognised singles player in their ranks.

Distractions are the last thing anyone needs, so Gilbert staying at home is a wise decision. Having him on site would have served only to increase the pressure on Murray, who, at 19, has shown immense maturity amid the search for a new coach by standing firm in his desire to discuss the appointment only when it is made, and not before. For the venture to go belly-up at such a tricky moment would be an inconvenience to Gilbert, a setback to Murray and a minor catastrophe for the LTA, whose chief executive, Roger Draper, has staked so much personal credibility on attracting high-profile personalities to join his get-up-and-go regime. The chances are that everything will be agreed by next week, but delicacy and diplomacy are the watchwords.

As they are for everything else to do with a tie that promises so much for Britain and yet which will be played to an undercurrent of apprehension, given the political pandemonium in the Middle East. Those who wondered why Eastbourne was chosen as the venue will be breathing a sigh of relief at the decision, given the town's reputation for tranquillity and tolerance.

The LTA will not go into specifics on any beefed-up security measures for its guests from Israel, saying only that it is "our responsibility to provide a safe, welcoming environment for players and spectators alike". But there is a sense of unease that probably will disperse only when the tie is completed.

That safe and welcoming environment has helped to smooth the return of Alex Bogdanovic and Jamie Delgado to Britain's colours. Bogdanovic did not want to play against Serbia and Montenegro in the previous tie in April but has been warmly received and knows that this is the time for him to play as he should in the Davis Cup.

## Murray to the rescue as Bogdanovic fails again at highest level

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By **Neil Harman**, Tennis Correspondent

Published at 12:00AM, July 22 2006

THESE are particularly stressful times at Devonshire Park. A team from Israel in town is putting everyone on edge but staff were confiscating poles and, to make matters worse, snaffling the Union Jacks attached to them. There was a public apology for those who had flags wrestled from their grasp and a proclamation that they would be returned if requested.

It might have been more apt had security stopped Andy Murray and Alex Bogdanovic and checked whether their Davis Cup credentials were in order.

For Murray had to recover from two sets down to win for the first time to see off Israel's ninth-ranked singles player, while with Bogdanovic's third straight loss it has to be doubted whether he can ever prosper in this uniquely stifling atmosphere.

The flags were being brandished again at the close of play when Murray defeated Andy Ram, whose face never lost its sunny disposition, 2-6, 4-6, 7-5, 6-2, 6-3. The teenager's first singles victory in the competition was much cherished, for it keeps this Europe-Africa group one tie alive, an idea as remote as a sea breeze before the Scot's evening renaissance.

Bogdanovic had been sent on his way in mid-afternoon and Murray was being creamed by a player whose doubles proficiency is undoubted, but who had never played like this in singles before. When it finally turned in favour of the world No 36, he was cranking his shot-making to such levels you wondered who had been passing himself off as the Scot for the first two sets. It was reminiscent of the Murray who lost at Wimbledon to Marcos Baghdatis, becoming the one who thumped Andy Roddick. Which is what makes watching him so compelling.

Bogdanovic's 6-4, 7-5, 6-2 defeat by a highly-pumped Okun in the opening singles showed that whatever progress he has made in the past 16 months, it is not enough to invest the 22-year-old with that special something that drives players through physical and mental torture to win for their nation.

The moment he lost his serve in the first game of the match yesterday, trouble was writ large. In the blink of an eye he was 5-1 down, and equally rapidly, losing only two of 14 points, he had sneaked back to 5-4. A point to break back again was ripped from him as Okun seized the net and put away a backhand volley. The door had been closed, only to come ajar a couple more times.

Bogdanovic is never likely to rip anything from its hinges. The Incredible Hulk he is not. He possesses wonderful stroke-making ability — Roger Taylor, the former Davis Cup captain, once likened his backhand to Rod Laver's — but there has to be something to back it up, a genuine self-belief, and that is so obviously lacking. Would he be a liability in a fifth rubber, if the tie comes to that? Suggestions to Jeremy Bates, the British captain, pronto.

It is to be hoped that those local schoolchildren enticed to the tie (those not in tears for having their flags taken away) were watching Okun, more the warrior type that Roger Draper, the LTA chief executive who fidgeted uneasily through much of the afternoon, wants to find in British players.

# Tennis: Pain in the neck for Murray

Great Britain's No1 must drag his exhausted body through one more match today, knowing that defeat will mean a Davis Cup relegation battle

*BARRY FLATMAN*

Published: 23 July 2006

Over the past two days the 19-year-old Scot has played the maximum 10 sets, five in Friday's singles and another marathon in yesterday's doubles before he and Jamie Delgado succumbed to Jonathan Erlich and Andy Ram. After three hours and 18 minutes of intense evening conflict, the British pair went down 3-6 6-3 5-7 6-3 6-4, leaving Jeremy Bates's team knowing they must win both singles today to survive.

Now Murray, still a relative newcomer to Davis Cup, must drag his aching body back on court today to face Israel's leading player, Noam Okun, who had nothing but the tension of watching to drain him yesterday after a simple win over Alex Bogdanovic on day one.

To compound matters, Murray appeared to strain a muscle in his neck during the later stages of the match and for the last set he was constantly trying to ease the obvious discomfort. "The neck is not great and I will have to see how it is in the morning," said Murray, who was under orders last night to minimise any movement of the neck and undergoing loosening massage from team chiropractor Jean-Pierre Bruyere.

"It always feels worse just as you walk away from the match but the time I have spent on court does not worry me. If the neck is all right, I'll be more than ready for the singles. Okun is a good player but I should be able to beat him, regardless of playing two five-set matches in two days."

Briefly it seemed as though victory was going to be Britain's as Delgado and Murray led 4-1 with a break of serve in the final set. But after a spirited performance from Delgado, the Israeli duo targeted Murray's serve as susceptible and they were repaid for their awareness. A forehand sat up to be punished by the young Scot but amazingly he sent it into the net.

From that moment, victory seemed certain for Israel. An acrobatic forehand volley from Erlich pulled back the break and from then on a mixture of patriotism, experience, compatibility and determination to avenge the defeat they suffered in Israel 16 months ago paid off as the British duo were effectively spent and a final tired Delgado forehand eventually ended the match.

Murray's rookie victory with David Sherwood over Erlich and Ram on the cement of Ramat Hasharon will stand as one of Britain's finest doubles victories and for a while it seemed as though history could repeat itself as the pair chosen by Bates struck an unlikely cohesion.

With a small gaggle of protesters venting their views over the latest Israeli conflict with Lebanon, the mention of matters in the visiting players' homeland has been intentionally kept to a minimum over the past few days. But the elation of victory caused Ram to insist: "It's hard to explain just how important it was for us to win this match. Because of everything that is going on back home, this means so much to us. We have been told it is a great thing for morale."

If the world rankings were to be believed, the British duo had no chance. Erlich and Ram are one of the most accomplished teams in the world, currently ranked sixth in the race to qualify for the season-ending Tennis Masters Cup in Shanghai. They can boast a collection of titles and high-profile finals and last year alone they played 25 tournaments. Such a regular partnership allows almost a telepathy to exist.

In contrast, Murray and Delgado were barely on nodding acquaintance before Murray flew home early last week after reaching the semi-final of the Hall of Fame tournament in Newport, Rhode Island. They seem to recall practising together some time in the past, but most certainly had never teamed up before and more than once it was clear of their uncertainty with each other's role. At times rackets clattered together in the centre of the court. On others one looked at the other as an unchallenged ball flew with neither in chase. But they benefited from some early fortune when Erlich, running at full tilt for a wide ball, stumbled dangerously into the umpire's chair. Just minutes earlier Ram had seemed to limp on court, the after-effects of his five-set singles encounter with Murray 24 hours earlier still seeming to have an effect on his left hamstring. Perhaps it was just a case of loosening the injury but the British pair were only too happy to capitalise and after a fortunate net-cord from Delgado, a Ram volley flew long and Bates's duo were a break to the good.

Murray was playing with his third different doubles partner in four Davis Cup outings and the combination with Delgado was an intriguing one. The shorter man is 10 years the senior and to many something of a forgotten performer, having made his last international appearance back in 2000.

Suddenly the former schoolmate of Tim Henman is playing with a purpose and despite a singles ranking of 437, his doubles play this year has more than justified a return to the team. Ram and Erlich's grass court form made them fearsome opponents. The weekend before Wimbledon they successfully defended their title at Nottingham while Ram won Wimbledon's mixed doubles with Russia's Vera Zvonereva.

The Israelis' class became apparent at the start of the second set as Delgado's serve was put under pressure and a break of serve swiftly ensued. Only once did that lead seem in danger and when it did Ram came up with a punishing smash.

The third set could have gone either way but Israel's poise took the spoils only for Britain to hit back again and leave the way clear for the nerve-racking final set.

Despite defeat there was a pride from the British team and captain Bates insisted: “How can I have any complaints? I’m very proud of the performance. It was very courageous and the players put it all out there.”

Now Bates must show a similar courage. Should Murray recover sufficiently and beat Okun to level the match, the outcome will decide on the concluding fifth rubber. After a second disappointing performance in as many Davis Cup outings by Bogdanovic, Bates should pitch the spirited Delgado into the fray.

## Here’s your wake-up call Andy, because hard work starts now

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By Brad Gilbert

Published at 12:00AM, July 27 2006

**Andy Murray’s new coach looks forward to getting back into mainstream coaching with Murray as well as the rest of the British hopefuls**

IT’S just gone five in the morning, I’m on my second cup of coffee, I’m a morning man. It’s a beautiful time of the day. The philosophy is that you get your practice in early, then maybe you get another one in later in the day — but the first one you definitely do early. If Andy Murray isn’t an early-morning person, that’s going to change. The standards I set are those I learnt from my only coach, Tom Chivington from Foothills College in Los Altos, California — you put in an honest, hard day’s work every day. It doesn’t mean you are going to win every time but it sure gives you a better chance. Every day you want to be that little bit better.

And it can never be the coach’s way or the highway; the player will have his opinions and I hear Andy’s are pretty strong. I’ll certainly have mine and it’s about where we meet. Basically, we spend the first few weeks learning about who the other is — we’re getting it on for the first time in Washington tomorrow — and it’s gonna take time to implement all that I want to do. I don’t want to take away his self-confidence, or want him to throw himself under a bus.

In the week leading up to the US Open next month and during the Open itself, I’ll be doing a lot of observing, getting to know his habits. The best time to make changes will be after the Open; it’s hard to make any real big impressions when he is going straight into tournaments. What he’ll learn from me is that I love the game, that I talk about it a lot. He’s got a lot of listening to do but I’m not a bone-killer.

I’m not going to put pressure on Andy but we are going after it and that means working hard. If he does that, he is going to achieve a lot of the goals he has set for himself in the game. He wants to become the best player he can be and I share that desire. People who want that have to make the sacrifices. He’ll have to work harder than he’s done before, but that’s a fun sacrifice, isn’t it?

I don't see myself as a hard-ass but I do lead by example. When we meet in Washington, that's day one. What happened in the past is over and doesn't concern me. Let's get after it. I'll be in the gym early to work out and Andy will be there with me. I'll be doing the very best I can to help him; I'll be getting him into the position where good things can happen, that's for sure. There is a card game called Texas Hold 'Em where the most important thing is reading the person. It's about him learning to read me and me him. Sometimes I'll be watching up real close, sometimes from afar, and these are the things that take some getting used to. I talk really fast, he talks a little slow and methodical. We're going to have to strike a happy medium on that one.

But I woke up yesterday morning and there was a completely different buzz to my life again. The nerves are different. I'm ready to go to work. I loved my time with TV but I'm a coach and coaching is something I have a great passion about. With Andy it's not going to be about two weeks or five weeks or two months before we make judgments. To me every day is going to be a step in the right direction.

There's no magic pill to take that makes you a better player, Andy needs to become physically stronger and over the next year that will be a big focus for us. He needs to be more hardened if he wants to be a really successful professional player. All you have to do is to look at Rafael Nadal: he has set the fitness bar to a new level for the other guys.

Andy is 19, and I love that. No question there's a lot of time to mould his game. What I've seen in the past few months is that he has a great talent, like a cross between Wayne Ferreira and Miloslav Mecir. He is a good size, has great eyes and he reads the game really well. I think over the next year to 18 months, we can start doing some real exciting things. He'll be spending quite a bit of time in California at my place, where he can have some peace and be a kid, then we'll train together in Florida, getting him ready for next year.

This is a unique turn of events for me. I'm used to working with just one player, but now I'm working for the entire LTA. These guys will discover that the passion I have will extend to everything they want me to do. I'm eager to see the new facility at Roehampton, I want to meet the other coaches and the players — but I can tell them all as well, we'll be on the courts early, no late starts.

It's easy to criticise but I don't know what happened in the past, who did what and why. It's no point looking back because then you spiral backwards.

Roger Draper, the LTA chief executive, isn't like what we think of as the typical stodgy British guy. He has a vision and wants to make things happen. He's not interested in being in the middle of the pack, he wants to get better.

I know people have talked about what I might be earning, but that's up to them. I'm not doing this because of the money. That doesn't matter to me. I'm doing this because I love it and I feel I can make a difference. All I'm thinking about is working.

I hear, though, I might have to be measured for a suit. Apart from finals day at Wimbledon this year, I hadn't worn one of those since my grandmother's funeral. Things really are going to have to.

# Gilbert gets immediate results out of Murray

From Kathy Orton in Washington

Published at 12:00AM, August 3 2006

IN HIS first match as Andy Murray's coach, Brad Gilbert had a simple goal for his protégé's opening encounter at the Legg Mason Classic in Washington DC. It did not involve tactics, just four simple words: game, set, match, Murray.

"Those are the four most valuable words in tennis," Gilbert said. "Get to those four words. Obviously, you want to play well, but in these kind of conditions, they are a little bit of an equaliser because it is so oppressive and weird things can happen."

The result was highly encouraging for the future of the partnership. Murray had clearly listened, beating Ramon Delgado 6-4, 6-3 last night to reach the last 16. Today he will play either Teimuraz Gabashvili or Feliciano López.

Murray, who seemed fully recovered from the neck injury that forced him to pull out of Great Britain's Davis Cup tie against Israel last month, outlasted the 29-year-old Paraguayan by playing the bigger points better. He suffered a few mental lapses but they did not prove costly. "He [Gilbert] gave me a C for my performance," Murray said. "He said I played a bad service game at 5-2."

Murray had four chances to win the first set before finally closing it out. Then in the second, after breaking Delgado to go 5-2 up, he was broken when he double-faulted away the game. Murray eventually prevailed when Delgado sent a forehand long.

Gilbert's association with Murray began a mere six days ago and the American is not looking to make immediate changes with the tempestuous 19-year-old. "I really like poker, and kind of like a poker game, right off the bat, you don't want to go all in on the first day," Gilbert said.

"You want to take your time. So over a couple weeks, I want to learn his mannerisms. I think we'll be able to do more changes maybe after the [US] Open, after the season's over. But one thing we're going to start working on is his fitness and we'll try to make little tweaks in his game, but not big changes because we don't want to take away his confidence."

Gilbert has already started to leave his imprint. He had Murray practise with Andre Agassi on Tuesday and Gilbert, who moulded Agassi and Andy Roddick into grand-slam tournament winners, hopes that practising with the 36-year-old will give his pupil an idea of what it takes to play at the highest level. "Andre has great practice habits," Gilbert said. "

Hopefully, a few more times this summer, Andy can watch Andre because he comes out on to the court every time prepared and gives his all."

Gilbert also had Murray out on the court in the blazing heat three hours before his 4pm match, but only for some light hitting. More important, Gilbert was already working on Murray's mental approach to the match. "Andy is not the biggest fan yet of playing in the heat," Gilbert said. "That's a big emphasis we're going to make over the next 6-12 months, working on his fitness."

## Composed Murray reels in Fish

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By Kathy Orton

Published at 12:00AM, August 5 2006

IT IS probably too early to give Brad Gilbert the credit for Andy Murray's confident form, but whatever the reason, Murray has improved with each match at the Legg Mason Classic in Washington DC and had little trouble dispatching Mardy Fish, the American, yesterday.

Murray defeated Fish 6-2, 6-4 to reach the semi-finals, his third appearance in the last four this year. The British No 1 will play the winner of the late match between Tim Henman and Dmitry Tursunov, his Russian nemesis. If Henman wins, it will be only the second meeting between Britain's top two players, with the 19-year-old Scot having won their first encounter, in Basle last year.

Even though Fish needed only 54 minutes to defeat his previous opponent, Andrea Stoppini, and Murray suffered a rain delay before seeing off Feliciano Lopez in straight sets on Thursday night, Murray appeared the crisper player while Fish sprayed many of his shots wide or into the net.

Murray, who is ranked at a career-high of 35, broke Fish in the third and fifth games to take the first set in 31 minutes. He broke him again in the third game of the second set and to love in the fifth game. The Scot looked well on his way to winning in less than an hour until he suffered a lapse in concentration. Fish broke Murray in the eighth game, fended off match point in the ninth game and then again in the tenth when Murray sent a backhand into the net. Finally, in the 77th minute, Murray prevailed when Fish sent a forehand long.

Asked what Gilbert, his new coach, had said afterwards, Murray replied: "He was a little disappointed. He thought I got a little bit tentative at the end, which I did."

But Murray was satisfied with his performance. "I think today was the best match I've played [in this tournament]," he said. "The second set, when I was 5-1 up, that's probably the best six games that I've played since I've been on tour."

With the departure of Andre Agassi, Andy Roddick, James Blake and Lleyton Hewitt — a 7-6, 6-4 loser to Arnaud Clément — Murray stands a good chance of winning his second career title. Marat Safin, the Russian who plays Wesley Moodie in a later match, looks the biggest threat.

# Tennis: Flying Scot Murray races to final

The British No1 turns on the style to beat Dmitry Tursunov 6-2 7-5 and book his place in the final of the Legg Mason Classic. By Derek Clements

Published: 6 August 2006

Murray, seeking his second ATP Tour title, almost broke his Russian opponent's serve in the first game of the match, but Tursunov held on. He was simply delaying the inevitable as Murray made the breakthrough at the second time of asking.

Seventh seed Tursunov, who beat Tim Henman in the quarter-final, committed a flurry of unforced errors, unable to find his range with either backhand or forehand and struggling to get his first serve in. In no time at all, Murray found himself 5-1 ahead before Tursunov finally stopped the rot.

Murray, ranked 35 in the world before this tournament began, held serve to take the set 6-2 in a little more than 30 minutes. By now, it seemed that his opponent had lost interest, although he managed to regroup sufficiently to hold serve in the opening game of the second set before finally realising he had a match to play.

The first crisis for Murray came in the sixth game when he made several unforced errors and allowed Tursunov to break him and lead 4-2 after an hour on court. At 5-3, the Russian served for the set, but Murray broke back with a fabulous backhand and then held to level at five-all. A flashing return in the next game gave Murray another break and he was serving for the match. It was a formality. The British No1 is now certain to be seeded at the US Open — an amazing achievement for a 19-year-old who was ranked 375 at the start of last year's Wimbledon Championships.

With Gilbert chuntering away on the sidelines last night, Murray went about his work, producing a series of rasping forehands to which Tursunov had no answer.

The coach is clearly a hard taskmaster. After Murray's 6-2 6-4 quarter-final victory over American Mardy Fish, the Scot revealed that Gilbert thought he could have done better.

"Brad and I spoke at the end of the match," said Murray. "He was disappointed, thought I got tentative at the end. I still thought I was playing good tennis. I don't think I am a better tennis player yet. But technically, I'm getting there. My game isn't that much better yet, but I'm gaining confidence.

“I got five good days of practice in and was maybe rusty in my first game, but I’ve been getting better. Today was my best. The second set was the best six games I’ve played.”

Murray faces Arnaud Clement, of France, in today’s final. Clement beat Marat Safin 7-6 7-6 in a match notable for the Russian’s behaviour. He argued with himself, the umpire and the line judges and received a warning for smashing a ball in anger after dropping a point during the second set. He also broke a racket after throwing it to the ground when he missed a routine forehand. Safin further helped the Frenchman’s cause by producing an incredible 40 unforced errors as he crashed to defeat.

## Spell is broken as Murray falls at the final hurdle

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From Kathy Orton in Washington  
Published at 12:00AM, August 7 2006

BRAD GILBERT claims he is no magician. Yet one would think he has waved a magic wand over Andy Murray by the way the 19-year-old Scot has played this week at the Legg Mason Classic.

Whatever spell Gilbert cast was broken yesterday afternoon by Arnaud Clément, the resurgent Frenchman, who defeated Murray 7-6, 6-2, denying the British No 1 his second career ATP title. Murray’s run to the final in Washington will be rewarded with a rise up the world rankings, in which he sits at No 35 at present.

Murray insists that he has played more confidently with Gilbert in his corner, but that confidence evaporated against Clément, the world No 57, who beat Lleyton Hewitt and Marat Safin to reach his second ATP final of the year. For Clément, a ten-year ATP veteran, this represented his fourth career title and the first outside France. The 28-year-old also won earlier this year in Marseilles. “He Clément raised his game,” Murray said. “My level dropped a bit. I definitely had my chances.”

The last time Murray played Clément was in the second round of last year’s US Open, when the Frenchman won in five tight sets. This was a much quicker affair, lasting only one hour 43 minutes.

On a bright, sunny, searing hot day, neither player shied away from sustained baseline rallies. But Clément, who moves fluidly around the court and is a crafty shot-maker, was the more consistent of the two. Murray, who had committed a total of 31 unforced errors in his last two matches, equalled that number yesterday.

A lanky teenager at 6ft 1in, Murray had hoped to use his height to his advantage against the 5ft 8in Clément, but his nine aces, including one that topped 134mph, hardly bothered Clément.

Murray said this match would come down to whoever played the bigger points better, and he was right. Both players were adept at placing and pacing their shots, but Clément came up with crucial winners at key times.

Murray broke Clément in the first game, taking a 3-1 lead. Clément fought back, breaking Murray in the sixth game after the Scot had double-faulted twice, both times at deuce.

Clément won four of the next five games to take a 5-4 lead. The two men held serve until the tie-break, which Clément eventually took by producing an angled cross-court volley that whistled past Murray's outstretched racket. After falling 2-0 behind, Murray requested medical treatment for two blisters on his right hand and was bothered by the injury for the rest of the match. Murray claimed that he had never suffered from blisters before this week and his racket felt uncomfortable in his hand with tape on his fingers. Gilbert speculated that by changing his grips earlier this week because of the humidity, Murray's fingers may have been caused to blister.

Clément won the first four games of the second set, including the fourth game to love, before Murray regained his composure to take the fifth and threaten a comeback. "Andy, this is not you, come on," shouted one fan.

In the final game, Murray pushed Clément to deuce before sending a backhand wide to confirm his fate.

"It was a good week," Murray said. Getting to an ATP final at my age is a good week in anyone's book, unless you're [Rafael] Nadal (the world No 2). Probably he'd be disappointed. My first week with Brad has gone well. I've nothing to complain about."

Murray, who has won 13 of his past 17 matches, next heads to Toronto for the Rogers Cup, the second stop in his three-week warm-up for the US Open. He will play David Ferrer in the first round; Roger Federer is the top seed.

Murray becomes the third Gilbert pupil to reach a final in the first tournament after enlisting the 44-year-old Californian as a coach. Andy Roddick won at Queen's Club, West London, in 2003, while Andre Agassi lost to Pete Sampras in Miami in 1994.

## Murray makes Henman pay for errors

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From Patrick Tolon in Toronto

Published at 12:00AM, August 10 2006

ANDY MURRAY reasserted his position as British No 1 last night with his second win against Tim Henman. The 6-2, 7-6 triumph in the Rogers Cup Masters Series event was the Scot's sixth victory under Brad Gilbert against one defeat and the driving influence of his new coach, who was celebrating his 45th birthday yesterday, was clear for all to see.

When one call appeared to go against Henman in the sixth game of the first set, Gilbert, seated at that end of the court, shouted: "That was a terrible call, it was inside the line."

Then with Murray serving at 4-2, another call seemed to go against Henman and then yet another, on an overrule by Gerry Armstrong, the British umpire. On the latter, Murray looked up at Gilbert, indicating he wanted to give the point to Henman, but Gilbert said: "No, no, you've got to play the calls."

Murray's second-round victory, combined with his win over Henman in Basle last October, gives the Scot a 2-0 lead in their head-to-head matches. In today's third round, Murray will take on Carlos Moyà, the Spaniard who was a 6-1, 6-4 winner yesterday over Dennis Gremelmayer, of Germany.

Murray was the steadier of the two Britons yesterday, making 22 unforced errors opposed to Henman's 43. Indeed, Henman made such elementary errors that it looked as if his back was bothering him. Just before the match and also before he served at 3-0 down in the second set, Henman rotated his torso as if he were testing it for discomfort. Murray broke serve for 3-1 in the opening set with a forehand pass before Henman broke back in the next game with a backhand winner. Murray closed out the set and took a 4-1 lead in the second set as Henman became increasingly error prone.

But Henman still managed to stage a fightback, breaking Murray twice and then serving for the set at 6-5. Murray had four break points but Henman failed to convert a set point. He had only to punch a backhand volley into an open court on a desperate pass from Murray but put it into the net. In the tie-break, Henman went off the boil, allowing Murray to win it 7-3.

Murray expressed satisfaction afterwards. "I thought I did well to fight my way out of it at 5-6 [in the second set] and save a set point, and then I played a good tie-break," he said. "I didn't let my head go down, I kept fighting."

Henman, though, can expect a call soon from John Lloyd, who was officially appointed as Great Britain's new Davis Cup captain yesterday.

Lloyd will try to persuade Henman, who retired from Davis Cup competition in January of last year, to come out of retirement and represent his country once again. Lloyd's first task is to select a team for the relegation play-off against Ukraine at the end of next month.

"I don't think Tim ever said he had retired from Davis Cup for good. It was one of those 'never say never' situations," Lloyd said. "If there was any chance of him playing — in this match, in the next match, in any match, I'd love to have him in there. I will speak with Tim. Greg Rusedski is willing to play, injuries permitting."

Murray last night backed Lloyd's credentials to captain the side. "He's a friend of mine, he's got a lot of experience, he's good fun, he's got good stories, and I think he's got the right sort of personality to do it," Murray said. "He's pretty upbeat."

# Masterful Murray makes net gains with new coach

From Patrick Tolon in Toronto

Published at 12:00AM, August 11 2006

ANDY MURRAY reached the first significant quarter-final of his career yesterday with a 6-2, 6-4 win over Carlos Moyà, of Spain, at the Rogers Cup Masters Series here, and there was more good news as his potential semi-final opponent, Rafael Nadal, the world No 2, was beaten by Tomas Berdych, of the Czech Republic.

Playing the 1998 French Open champion for the first time, Murray was never really threatened, breaking for 3-1 in the opening set before finishing it off in 36 minutes.

A sloppy opening two games of the second set by Murray gave Moyà, who turns 30 in two weeks and whose ranking has fallen to No 49, a glimmer of hope. However, it did not last long as Murray won three games on the trot and then broke serve to lead 5-3. Though he then dropped his service, the Scot was able to break Moya in the next game to wrap up the 76-minute encounter.

Murray won 16 of the 19 points when he went to the net and looked sharper in all phases of the game on a sunny but windy afternoon. "I thought I came in pretty well today," Murray said. "It's always going to be tough playing him from the back because he has a huge forehand. So I had to try and neutralise that by coming in on his backhand and shortening the points a little bit because I'm a little bit tired. I thought I followed my game plan pretty well."

Generally, Murray used his superior court craft to maintain control. "The good thing about him," Moyà, the world No 1 in 1999, said, "is that he doesn't do anything special but he wins most of his matches easily. That means that he's good.

"He has no weaknesses, is always in the right spot and hits the ball really clean. It surprised me how he played. He's already a great player but he can get better."

Comparing Murray, 19, to Nadal, the 20-year-old, Moyà said of his fellow Majorcan: "Rafael was already playing on the tour when he was 15 or 16 but that doesn't mean he's going to be better overall. Rafael has won 20 tournaments and two grand slams, but it's going to be a good battle in the future."

There will be no clash here, though, as Nadal lost 6-1, 3-6, 6-2 to Berdych. Murray next plays Jarkko Nieminen, the No 14 seed from Finland, or Davide Sanguinetti, the qualifier from Italy.

## Murray masters his nerves

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**From Patrick Tolon in Toronto**

Published at 12:00AM, August 12 2006

ANDY MURRAY reached the semi-finals of a Masters Series event for the first time in his short career last night with a 6-4, 6-7, 6-3 victory over Jarkko Nieminen.

The Scot overcame the Finnish world No 15 and his own errors to set up a meeting with Richard Gasquet, of France, in today's Rogers Cup Masters Series semi-finals.

The victory took the 19-year-old's impressive run under Brad Gilbert, his new coach, to eight wins and just one defeat, in the final of the Legg Mason Classic in Washington DC last week. His progress in Toronto will also see Murray move into the top 25 in the world rankings for the first time, from his current position of No 31.

Although Murray seemed to balk at closing out the match, he eventually clinched victory by sending a pinpoint lob over Nieminen. After winning a hard-fought first set, Murray had served for the match at 5-3 in the second but he failed to convert, providing Nieminen, who had been looking weary, with a second chance.

The Finn, seeded No 14, had been on court for 2hrs 10mins on Thursday, saving five match points before outlasting Davide Sanguinetti, the Italian qualifier, 3-6, 6-3, 7-6. But he was able to mount a comeback and force a tie-break as Murray's game appeared to go to pieces.

An increasingly agitated Murray made consecutive unforced errors on the first five points of the tie-break and he wound up losing it 7-0.

The Scot, though, recovered his composure and was able to secure the important first service break in the deciding set. He then broke Nieminen's serve for the second time to lead 5-2 only to fail to serve out the match once again. But in the next game he emphatically took control, breaking Nieminen to love.

Murray finished with a flourish with a beautiful backhand top-spin lob that left the Finn looking helplessly over his shoulder as the ball sailed over his head.

"I played great until I served for it [the match], which I don't seem to be able to do this week," Murray said. "Then I started to get a little bit nervous in the tie-break but I managed to get it together in the third set."

The ratio of winners to unforced errors for the match was indicative of the generally low standard of play, Murray hitting 39 winners and 55 unforced errors.

The Finn said afterwards that his erratic play had contributed to his own downfall. "I guess I was a little bit too much up and down against a player like Murray," he said. "I think that decided the match. He was a little bit more solid in the end."

Murray will be facing Gasquet for the first time in his career. The 20-year-old Frenchman easily defeated Tomas Berdych 6-4, 6-1, a day after the Czech had produced the biggest upset of the tournament by beating Rafael Nadal, the Spanish second seed and defending champion.

Murray expects a tough match against Gasquet. "It's going to be difficult," he said. "He is one of the best up and coming players in the game. I will have to play my best match of the week if I want to win.

"The last few months I have been playing like I deserve to be in the top 15 but I had a bad few months earlier in the year. I will have to concentrate hard and I must keep up this level because that's what top players do."

# Tennis: Shattered Murray runs out of gas

The British No1's dream of reaching his first Masters Series final ends with a 6-2 7-5 loss to Richard Gasquet, writes Derek Clements

Published: 13 August 2006

The British No 1 would probably have been better advised to keep his thoughts to himself because it is a racing certainty that Gasquet would have been hanging on every word.

And so it proved, with the Frenchman running away with the match, 6-2 7-5. Murray was desperate to reach his first Masters Series final, but it was never on the cards — from the opening game, Gasquet made the Scot run all over the court in increasingly vain attempts to get the ball back.

If Murray was tired before the match started, heaven knows how he felt afterwards. Gasquet is a year older than Murray but looks physically stronger, and he wasted no time in racing through the first set. The Scot did at least make a decent fist of it in the second set, but, serving to stay in the match at 6-5 down, Gasquet broke him for the fourth time.

Tellingly, the 20-year-old Frenchman won 32 out of 39 of his first serves. It was the first time the pair had faced one another, but they seem certain to establish a keen rivalry in the years that lie ahead.

Victory gives Gasquet a chance to win his third title in as many months. He has won an impressive 15 of his last 17 matches, including titles at Nottingham in June and Gstaad last month, and he becomes the first unseeded finalist at this event in three years. He will face either world No 1 Roger Federer or 15th-seeded Fernando Gonzalez of Chile in today's final.

“I had a lot of confidence before this match because I beat Tomas Berdych and James Blake on this court,” Gasquet said.

The Frenchman is regarded as one of the brightest prospects in the game. He is ranked 51, having been as high as 12, and is tipped by many as a future Wimbledon champion, should Roger Federer ever deign to lose a match on grass. Indeed, Gasquet beat the world’s best player at the Monte Carlo Masters last year.

Murray will have little time to rest after his defeat because he now heads straight to Cincinnati, where he faces Tim Henman in the first round. The two met in the second round in Toronto, with Murray winning the clash comfortably.

By admitting to exhaustion, Murray seems to have realised he is not fit enough to stand the rigours of competing at the highest level, week in, week out. There is no doubt that Brad Gilbert, his new coach, will have already identified his charge’s fitness as an area of concern, and worked out a schedule aimed at building up his physique and improving his stamina. Bearing all this in mind, Gilbert cannot help but be impressed at the way the 19-year-old continues to improve.

Putting his defeat to Gasquet to one side, Murray can be satisfied with his progress during the past couple of weeks. Having reached the final of the Legg Mason Classic in Washington seven days ago, he beat David Ferrer, Henman, Carlos Moya and Jarkko Nieminen to reach the last four in Toronto, displaying a new-found maturity that augurs well for the future, although he did throw a couple of hissy-fits when things did not go his way against Gasquet.

He started the week at a career-high 31 in the world rankings and is now knocking on the door of the top 20. And in an era dominated by power and serves that consistently flash past at speeds in excess of 130mph, Murray seems to have found a way to win even when his own serve is misfiring.

He admits he is not at his best first thing in the morning, preferring to stay in bed, but there was never any question of Gilbert allowing him to continue that regime.

The player claims he is finding it easier to get up than he used to, although he has little choice. Gilbert is a hard taskmaster, but Murray certainly knew that before they got together.

“I love the American way of life. You get up at 6am in the morning and go downstairs. Normally, in most countries, everyone will be looking sleepy, but they’re all really happy to see you,” Murray said.

“I just prefer it a little bit more. It makes it easier for me to get up in the morning. I like my sleep. Here, I find it much easier to get up. But if I’m staying with Brad . . . he was up at 2am this morning, which is ridiculous.”

Murray may have been allowed an extra hour in bed today, but he will be all too aware that the hard work resumes tomorrow.

# Dedicated approach reaps quick dividends for Murray

By Matthew Syed

Published at 12:00AM, August 15 2006

Our Correspondent says young Scot is going places with Gilbert cracking the whip

HE HAD a pot belly, a dodgy line in multicoloured shirts and took the view that sunglasses were for pansies. In all other respects, however, Denis Neale was just like Brad Gilbert.

The straight-talking northerner became England table tennis coach in 1994 and within five minutes had told me that I was an overpaid prima donna, that my forehand top spin was effeminate and that I had a big nose. Five minutes later, he had given me a blow-by-blow account of his latest divorce. This, I thought, is a man I can do business with

The thing about Neale's brutal honesty was that it made me believe him when he told me that I could beat any opponent. In our first three months together, I won competitions in Chicago and London and led in the deciding game against the world No 1 in a European league match. For a while, I started to believe that I would win an Olympic medal.

Andy Murray is surfing a similar wave with Gilbert. Since the American gunslinger swaggered into town, the Scottish teenager has reached a final in Washington, a semi-final in Toronto and has rocketed to No 21 in the latest ATP world rankings. Today, at the Cincinnati Masters, he faces Tim Henman for the second time in a week, and nobody would bet against him beating the former British No 1 for the third time out of three.

Gilbert promised to shoot from the hip and Murray has responded like a young colt snapped into life by the crack of a bullet. In the past few weeks, he has looked more focused, more professional and significantly better prepared. His tactics have been more astute. His pre-match practice sessions have been more tightly defined. He has even started to comb his hair.

The successful relationship with a coach is a bit like a relationship with a new lover — you believe everything they tell you. Go on, darling, try on that bright purple jacket — it will really suit you. Go on, Andy, tuck in your shirt and you will become Wimbledon champion.

When I first started to work with Chen Xinhua (my coach before Neale), I took him at his word when he told me to practise my backhand smash at all times. Everywhere I went for the next couple of years I would swat the air with a wristy flourish. People at university thought that I had a rather extravagant nervous twitch. But it worked.

Trust is everything. Gilbert has been critical of Murray — even when the 19-year-old has won — but the Scot has responded positively because he believes implicitly in the

American's judgment. There has been a meeting of minds between these two inflammable characters. Who knows, they might even be enjoying each other's company. The only problem, however, with the honeymoon period between a player and a coach is that it eventually comes to an end. It is inevitable that there will be a couple of bad results, a disagreement or two, even a tiff. That is when the hard work begins.

An inspirational pep talk can lift a player only so far, so often. Long-term improvement depends on raising the level of a sportsman's core game. For Murray, this means fitness. As anyone with half a brain cell could tell the teenager, he will not make it to the top if he spends the fifth set cramping, vomiting and falling over.

Gilbert said the right things in this respect when he was offered the job. He was well aware that the young Scot had the reputation for shirking the lung-busting cardio sessions and promised to rectify that. He articulated his core philosophy using the vocabulary of a boot-camp sergeant. This will have come as manna from heaven to British tennis fans and the suits at the LTA. It is time for Murray to wake up and smell his Nikes.

The big, unanswered question, however, is whether these two no-nonsense characters can work effectively in the long term. We know from experience that Murray will dismiss Gilbert the second that he feels that things would improve with another man in his corner. This is part of what makes Murray the sportsman he is.

But even if the relationship fails to survive the full three years, this does not mean that it will not have been highly beneficial to Murray. This is a talented young man who was in desperate need of a short, sharp shock.

## Murray digs deep to maintain hold over Henman

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From **Simon Cambers in Cincinnati**

Published at 12:00AM, August 16 2006

**FINDING** a way to win when the odds were against him was Brad Gilbert's trademark and yesterday Andy Murray took a leaf out of his new coach's book as he beat Tim Henman 4-6, 6-4, 7-5 to reach the second round of the Western & Southern Financial Group Masters.

Trailing 3-1 in the deciding set, Murray looked in trouble, but for the third time in three meetings and for the second time in the space of a week, he came through to clinch a place in the second round.

"I think last week was a little bit more comfortable for me," Murray said. "Tim didn't serve that well then, but he served much better today and I had to hang in there."

“My serve was good today. My passing shots at times weren’t so good, but when I needed them in the third set they were pretty solid. I am a bit tired, but that’s normal. I think I have played ten matches in 11 days. But considering I was tired, I did well to fight hard.” Having beaten Henman in straight sets in Toronto last week and risen to a career-high world ranking of No 21, Murray was a strong favourite to win this match, but he was not at his fluent best and Henman, the world No 59, broke in the seventh game on his way to securing the opening set.

But Murray, a finalist in Washington and semi-finalist in Toronto, broke back in the fourth game of the second set and as Henman’s chip-and-charge game, which had been so successful early on, lost its edge, Murray ripped a series of backhands past him to lead 5-2.

A lapse of concentration allowed Henman to break back in the ninth game, but just as quickly he gave it away and the match was level. That should have given Murray the momentum to push on in the third set, but a hint of mental fatigue after his recent efforts seemed to set in and Henman took advantage to break for 2-1 before holding to lead 3-1.

That was as good as it got for the elder Briton, though, as Murray broke back for 3-3 and, after an entertaining tenth game, when Henman successfully challenged two line calls, the 19-year-old broke two games later to clinch victory.

“I don’t particularly enjoy it (playing against Henman), to be honest,” he said. “I don’t feel satisfied at the end of a match having won against him. It’s just one of those things that you have to do. It’s your job. I don’t like having to shake Tim’s hand at the end of the match having won against him.

“It’s difficult to explain, but I don’t want to have to play Tim in tournaments. It’s just a difficult match to play because of what he means to me. Regardless of what people say because he hasn’t won a grand slam, he is one of the best players of the last ten years. There’s no denying that, if you look at his statistics. Tim is someone that I have looked up to immensely. To win against him means a lot.”

Despite coming so close to winning, Henman was clearly impressed by Murray. “I think there are areas that he will keep improving, which is obviously exciting because he’s 21 in the world right now and he’s going to get better and better,” he said.

Murray’s reward for his victory over Henman is likely to be a match against Roger Federer, the world No 1 and top seed, who was scheduled to play Paradorn Srichaphan, of Thailand, in the first round last night.

Greg Rusedski’s presence here lasted less than an hour as he was easily beaten 6-3, 6-4 by Ivan Ljubicic, the No 4 seed from Croatia. The British No 3 missed Wimbledon because of a hip injury and his world ranking has plummeted to No 127, prompting rumours that retirement could be on the horizon.

But although he has not won a match since May, Rusedski remained upbeat. “The injury is getting better every week and that’s the main thing for me,” he said. “I just want to have a good run at the US Open and hopefully get that ranking up,” he said.

# Murray gives himself a reason to believe

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From Simon Cambers in Cincinnati

Published at 12:00AM, August 17 2006

ANYONE who questioned whether Andy Murray has what it takes to cut it at the top of the men's game can give it up after the 19-year-old Scot stunned Roger Federer, the world No 1, 7-5, 6-4 in the second round of the Western & Southern Financial Group Masters last night.

In a mature and confident display, Murray took advantage of an out-of-sorts Federer, outplaying the holder of three of the four grand-slam titles and ending his run of 55 consecutive wins in North America.

It was only Federer's fifth defeat this year, the other four all being at the hands of Rafael Nadal, the world No 2 from Spain. Murray's victory also ended the Swiss's remarkable run of 17 successive tournament finals which began in Halle in 2005, cutting him off one short of the record set by Ivan Lendl between 1981-82.

Murray, who lost to Federer in the first ATP final of his career in Bangkok last October, clinched victory with a backhand pass and after shaking hands at the net, he put his head in his hands and sat on his chair for several minutes as the victory began to sink in.

Brad Gilbert, who began his job as Murray's coach in Washington two weeks ago, put his fist to his heart at Murray's achievement, his tenth win in 12 matches since the two joined forces. "It is the biggest win of my career," Murray, the world No 21, said. "I wasn't expecting to win the match. I don't think Roger played his best match, but I have to give myself a bit of credit because not many people beat Roger Federer, even when he's playing badly."

Gilbert was full of praise for his new charge. "It was unbelievable, he broke Federer's serve seven times and there was a lot of ebb and flow in the match," he said. "It was a great win for the kid and, hopefully, that will just boost his confidence even more that he can play with anyone in the world."

After struggling past Paradorn Srichaphan in the first round, Federer had said "I don't have bad days", but he was nowhere near his best yesterday.

"I think there comes a time when it's kind of meant to be," Murray said. "Federer winning against [Pete] Sampras at Wimbledon [in the fourth round in 2001], that's when everybody looked at him and said, 'This guy's special.' It [his win] is obviously not the same as beating him in a grand-slam. Just because I won this match doesn't mean I am going to win as many grand-slams as him, not at all. But maybe now the other guys will see me as a contender for grand-slams."

It is Federer's earliest defeat in a tournament since he was beaten by Dominik Hrbaty, of Slovakia, in the first round here in 2004 and it was the first time he has lost in straight sets in a mammoth 194 matches.

“There’s no reason to be [disappointed] because I’m on an incredible run,” Federer said. “You always expect a loss once in a while. Why be disappointed if I win over 90 per cent of my matches?”

Murray broke first and held to lead 3-1 before handing the break back in the sixth game. Neither man could hold serve thereafter, it seemed, and Murray was broken when serving for the set at 5-4. Federer double-faulted to give Murray another break and this time he held to move ahead.

Even Federer’s superhuman forehand was fallible as Murray broke for 1-0 in the second set, but the Swiss broke back immediately. Games went with serve until 3-3 when Murray broke again, but once more the Swiss broke back.

That seemed as if it might be Murray’s last chance, but another framed forehand from Federer went out. After missing his first match point, Murray rifled a backhand down the line to secure victory and set up a match against either Dmitry Tursunov, of Russia, or Robby Ginepri, of the United States.

Murray said that Gilbert has been a hugely positive influence on him. “He basically said to me the most important thing was to believe and think that you had a shot of winning going into the match,” he said. “He’s probably the most positive guy that I’ve met. He’s always on good form. He’s never in a bad mood. I love people that are like that, that just enjoy life. So in that respect, he’s helped me a lot.”

## Murray gets self-belief as new mentor shows worth

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From Simon Cambers in Cincinnati  
Published at 12:00AM, August 18 2006

EVEN by Brad Gilbert’s lofty standards, the speed of Andy Murray’s progression under his tutelage has been a surprise. Gilbert coached Andre Agassi to six grand-slam titles and helped Andy Roddick to win the US Open title and secure the world No 1 ranking in the space of a few months.

But on the evidence of Murray’s 7-5, 6-4 victory over Roger Federer, the world No 1, at the ATP Masters Series event on Wednesday night, his relationship with the Scot has the makings of something equally exciting.

To suggest that Murray will go on to match Agassi’s tally of grand-slam titles is premature, but what is clear is that Gilbert has instilled a belief that he can compete with the best in the big tournaments. “Having him in your corner is special,” Murray said.

“There are not too many people around like him. He is definitely one of the best coaches in the world.”

The game plan against Federer worked perfectly. Even though the Swiss was below his best, Murray varied his pace and angles superbly, never allowing Federer to find his rhythm and keeping the ball away from his opponent’s forehand. Seeing the world No 1 receive a warning for ball abuse and continually look uncomfortable was a rare sight.

Gilbert made the best of his own ability, finding a way to win against much more talented players through detailed homework and superior tactics. His upbeat nature is infectious and the effect on Murray has been immediate, with the teenager winning ten of his 12 matches under the American.

“I know he gets nervous during matches, but he hides it well,” Murray said. “He wears sunglasses, so you can’t see what his eyes are doing, and he has his hat down pretty low. I know when I turn my back on him, sometimes he’ll put his head down and he takes his hat off and hits his thigh. But when I look up, he’s always positive and he’s always trying to help me. That’s all you can ask for.”

Murray’s efforts have not gone unnoticed. He is the new favourite to win the BBC Sports Personality of the Year award and bookmakers make the Scot only 16-1 to become the world No 1 by the end of 2007. That may be pushing it, but Gilbert has convinced Murray, almost immediately, that he has what it takes to win the big events.

“Now guys might see me as more of a contender to go deep into grand slams because I have won against the best player in the world and a guy who’s won eight grand slams,” Murray said. “It’s not to say that I am going to win grand slams, I just think that [it] shows that I can do it. But I have to keep working hard.

“I think now I’ll have a bit more belief going into grand slams, though I don’t think physically I’m good enough to win one just yet. It may take a few years. But my game is getting better all the time and Brad has helped a lot. Physically, I’ll get stronger. I think I’ll have a good chance in a couple of years. To win a grand slam, you have to be in unbelievable shape and not too many 19-year-olds win grand slams. I can play five-set matches, but five-set matches back to back is what you have to do in slams. If I was to win every match in straight sets, yeah, I probably could do it. But if I have a lot of long matches, I’m probably not strong enough just yet.”

Murray is said to be heading to Florida next week to train at the camp of Nick Bollettieri as he builds towards the US Open. With the packed calendar, much of the hard physical work will be done in December before the Australian Open, so Murray should not expect too much of an off-season.

**Whisper it, but I think we’ve got one ‘ere  
so raise a glass to the young Scot**

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**Simon Barnes**

Published at 12:00AM, August 18 2006

**IS THERE** anything in life to compare to that first magic moment: that moment when you realise that there is an infinity of possibilities opening up before you?

Is there anything to compare to the moment when your eyes meet across a crowded room and somehow you know, even then, that some day you'll see her again and again?

Well, yes, as a matter of fact there is. It is less sharp, less thrilling, less filled with the shock of danger. It is a quieter, deeper and more searing form of pleasure. It happens in all walks of life, not just love, and sport — as is sport's wont — dramatises this principle better than almost any other area of life. It is the moment when the spark of possibility becomes the flame of confirmation.

It happened this week with Andy Murray. We all felt the spark of possibility when Murray made his dramatic entrance into British hearts and minds at Queen's Club in the summer of 2005. That was a wonderful time. Out of the blue, it seemed, we had a British tennis player to cheer when we were beginning to believe that Tim Henman was the first and last of his kind.

In that magic moment we glimpsed the infinite possibilities: he could be good, he could be very good, he could be top 20, he could be top ten, he could win a tournament or two, he might — he just might — win Wim. . . But hush, enough. Let us savour the spark of possibility while it still glows hot and red.

But now we move on. This week, Murray has beaten Roger Federer. Murray has beaten the man who, according to many wise observers, is the finest player to pick up a tennis racket. Murray beat him in straight sets, in the second round of the ATP Masters Series event in Cincinnati. With this extraordinary and utterly unexpected result, there is no question: before us, flickering bravely, we can see the flame of confirmation.

It happens in love — hours, days, weeks, even longer — after the initial magical crackle of static electricity, the spark struck between two people. It might happen when dawn makes the sky pale, her sleeping head on your arm and the realisation that there is no going back, nor any wanting to.

It might happen when you suddenly notice that the conversation has gone on without pause for three hours and shows no sign of stopping. It might happen when the phone rings and you hear her voice and it is all that matters in the world and you know that she is thinking exactly the same thing. It is the flame of confirmation.

This week, Murray has confirmed what we first felt with the spark of possibility. True, Federer had that impossible thing, an off day. The point is that Murray was good enough, brave enough, confident enough, smart enough to take advantage of it. His victory said: "I have a right to be here, I have a right to be considered among the top players in the world. This is my place and I am happy here."

That Murray has a new coach in Brad Gilbert is not without significance. The first ecstasies of their relationship clearly have been mutually satisfactory. But that is not the point. As Gilbert will be the first to point out, coaches do not win matches. They don't even play them. Murray played his match against Federer this week, won it and it is a result that confirms all we had first hoped.

No one knows what will happen next. Nothing is guaranteed. As idyllic love affairs go wrong for unimaginable reasons, so do sporting careers. But this week's victory confirms — if you like, objectively — what we knew all along: that Murray is the real thing. The second stage of the adventure is ready for us to enjoy.

I have seen it before, many times, in different people, in different sports. There was the spark of possibility in Wayne Rooney's early appearances for England, when Gary Lineker summed up the feelings of the nation with his archetypal remark: "I think we've got one 'ere." Then, as England increasingly took their tone from Rooney in the European Championship of 2004 before his injury, it was clear that spark had become flame.

It happens in horse racing. The spark comes when the two-year-old, in two or three elastic daisy-cutting strides, goes three or four lengths ahead of his companion on the gallops. The flame comes when he takes on a field of crack Classic colts and goes past the lot as if they were standing still. What a horse! He will surely win the Der . . . But hush, enough. Let us savour the flame of confirmation while it still burns.

We have seen it happen this year with Monty Panesar. I felt the spark when I watched him bowl in India — that stately action, that unemphatic but profound self-confidence, the way he dismissed Sachin Tendulkar, the Federer of cricket. I felt the flame in the present Test series against Pakistan, when he bowled Younis Khan with a perfect ball. Not a freak, a fluke, an out-of-the-blue thing, but as part of the armoury of a considerable cricketer.

It happens with teams as well as with individuals. It happened with the England rugby union team in 2002. This was already a strong unit and certainly the spark had long been glimmering. But I was aware of the flame when they played South Africa at Twickenham and the South Africans tried to make it a punch-up.

England were led by Martin Johnson, not a man famous for shirking punch-ups. But England did not retaliate, not with fists. They did so with tries, penalties and conversions, and when the South Africans chided them for this unmanly approach, the England players laughed and pointed to the scoreboard, which displayed half a century of points to their credit. And I felt then, sitting in the stands, that this was, indeed, a decent team. Why, they could win the Wor . . . But hush. Enough. They did.

The sighting of the flame does not guarantee ultimate success, but it makes it a hell of a lot more likely. It is not that hope has become a certainty, rather that the mood of hope has become more direct, more focused, more urgent. The possible is inching its way towards the probable.

But neither the spark nor the flame is an invitation to wish our lives away, any more than we think about where to send the children to school as a love affair reaches its moment of confirmation. The future will get to us in its own good time. The moment to appreciate the flame of confirmation is now. This evening, raise a glass to Andy Murray and savour.

# Gilbert's tough love will ensure golden future for Murray

*PAT CASH*

Published: 20 August 2006

Better still, perhaps I should ask Brad Gilbert and Jimmy Connors, their respective new coaches. The answers would be illuminating. One thing is certain: Gilbert's response would not be brief. Rumour has it there was once 30 seconds when he wasn't talking, but nobody was around to bear witness. However, there's no disputing the fact that the guy knows his subject.

Gilbert linking up with Murray makes sense, even though £500,000 a year is a hell of a lot of money for the Lawn Tennis Association to gamble on a potentially combustible relationship. Brad is perfectly equipped to help Murray graduate his game from what it is now — brimful of talent but lacking in fitness and professionalism, to a place in the world's top 10.

I am stating the obvious, but Murray has enormous potential. He plays the modern game, predominantly from the baseline, while having the ability to resort to so many options.

He also has a great mind. Never has that been better illustrated than last week in Cincinnati when he never once seemed fazed by the position he found himself in against Roger Federer.

But before the appointment of Gilbert, the requirement was obvious. Murray needed somebody to toughen him up, smooth out the juvenile wrinkles and get him really prepared in the physical aspect and mental toughness. I can't think of anybody better than Gilbert, although it's not going to be a relationship without confrontation.

Brad likes to be on hand 24/7, he gets up very early in the morning and doesn't like hanging around for a player who is not keen on rising from his bed until later. There can be no sulks, no horrendous body language on the court, no blaming other people for defeat. After working with Andre Agassi, Gilbert demands total professionalism. That's the level to which Murray must aspire.

Three weeks into the relationship, things look good: a final in Washington, a semi-final in Toronto and the exploits of these past few days, which predictably ended because of near physical exhaustion, but nevertheless propelled the 19-year-old into the top 20 for the first time. Not bad for somebody who hadn't even made his ATP debut a year and a half ago and was outside the world's top 300 before last year's Wimbledon.

However, it would be wrong for Murray or anybody else to sit back and savour the achievement. Now is the time to knuckle down; many young players can look back on a slight relaxation in intensity with regret, and concede that they never quite recaptured the momentum.

It has been said many times, but the most important thing for Murray right now is to get himself fit. He admits that he is not physically durable enough to play seven best-of-five-sets matches in a Grand Slam fortnight. He has the shots, he has the heart and on a good day he has the mind, but he doesn't yet have the body.

Nobody on the tour will go lightly on Murray just because he's still something of a tenderfoot, particularly as the kid is now a top 20 player. He is big news, he will be the talk of the locker room and he has a scalp that everybody else wants to take. Life is going to get immeasurably tougher from here on and he has to put in the hard yards.

Gilbert was not afraid to do that as a player. Even now he can be found in hotel gymnasiums around the world at some ungodly hour of the morning. He is a caffeine junkie who maintains that he cannot get started without six or seven cups of strong coffee at breakfast, but he also possesses a tremendous work ethic.

As John McEnroe and Connors will tell you, he wasn't exactly a talented player, but he made the most of himself; *Winning Ugly* was a perfect title for his book. Hard work and determination got him to No 4 in the world, won him 20 singles titles and earned him more than \$5.5m in prize-money. A first-round loss to Gilbert at the 1985 Masters so incensed McEnroe that it drove him into temporary retirement for the best part of a year.

Perversely, Gilbert loved Cincinnati, one of the ugliest cities on the tour, where only the tough survive. He won the title in 1989 with a run that saw him beat Pete Sampras, Michael Chang, Boris Becker and Stefan Edberg in succession. He scored two wins over Sampras there, reached the final again a year later and got to the quarters on three other occasions. And his third-round win over Agassi in 1991 did a lot to earn him the honour of coaching Andre for all those years.

On hearing of Connors's appointment with Roddick, I felt puzzled. Nobody holds the winner of eight Grand Slam titles, including five at the US Open, in greater esteem as a competitor and consummate professional than I do, but what does Jimmy know about coaching? As Arthur Ashe once observed: "All his life Connors was trained not to trust anyone and to look out for nobody but himself."

Jimmy wasn't even courtside as Roddick beat Murray, but what he seems to have done is inspire his player to become more aggressive and gutsy, which was a great Connors strength.

Now, I don't want to see Andy Murray winning ugly like his coach, but I want to see him knuckle down off court and make himself a true top-flight competitor inside the match arena.

# NEWS

# Tennis: 'You're giving me nothing. I'm dying out here'

The Scot's outburst at Brad Gilbert on his way to defeat shows how much work he has to do to be a contender

*BARRY FLATMAN*

Published: 20 August 2006

Typically, Murray had to find somebody else to blame when his own physical shortcomings proved too much to overcome. The person in the firing line this time appeared to be his new coach, Brad Gilbert. Few people could argue that Gilbert has done his job admirably since the pair first met up before the Legg Mason Tennis Classic in Washington DC less than a month ago. When sense prevailed in the locker room after Murray's 6-3 6-4 quarter-final demise, one hopes that an air of contrition was forthcoming from player to coach.

Roddick had not been subjected to 13 matches in 17 days, having sat out last week's Masters Series event in Toronto because of a strained ribcage muscle. He had also been allowed the luxury of playing at night in his previous rounds, whereas Murray was forced to endure the ferocity of the afternoon sun during his momentous wins over Roger Federer and Robby Ginepri.

Put simply, Roddick is already a fully conditioned top-flight performer. Murray beat him in their two previous confrontations, but would be deluding himself to suggest he is in the same fitness league.

Murray has repeatedly admitted in the past week that he needs to improve his fitness. After recovering from his latest workout, he said: "I wasn't going into the match expecting to win. I considered pulling out when I woke up in the morning and about a half an hour before I went on. Mentally it's been a big battle, and physically as well."

So Gilbert is fully conversant with two challenges he faces from his new charge. One is to improve his fitness. Before the US Open, which begins a week tomorrow, the pair head to Bradenton, Florida, and Nick Bollettieri's academy to recuperate from the rigours of the past three weeks and then undergo a few days of physical work. Gilbert may also enlist the help of Gil Reyes, the conditioning expert who has been so integral to Andre Agassi's longevity in the game.

Murray's propensity to allow his anger to erupt, become distracted and cast the blame on to others is another challenge for a coach who during his playing days delighted in raising the ire of the likes of John McEnroe and Jimmy Connors.

Gilbert may have a remedy. One of his favourite mantras says: "Anger is a powerful force in competition, but is impossible to separate from fear." He points out that his career was proof that the firepower anger generates can be defeated by "speed, spin, tenacity

and strategy". Roddick's anger management was a big issue for Gilbert when the pair began an 18-month working relationship in June 2003.

Although coaching a player during a match is banned, except in the Davis Cup, the pair formulated a plan that involved Roddick looking across to Gilbert whenever he felt anger rising. His coach would point his two index fingers towards his temples. "To us it meant KIT — keep it together — and your game will take you out of these tense situations," explained Gilbert. "If your brain takes you out of the game, it's hard for your game to bring you back to where you want to be."

Not surprisingly, given the three characters involved, there was an air of confrontation in the early exchanges on Friday as the players drilled shots in the general direction of their opponent's head. After a Murray near-miss, Roddick wagged a finger at the Scot.

Regardless of not winning a title in 10 months and slipping out of the world's top 10, Roddick is a spirited opponent and the recent influence of his occasional coach and mentor Jimmy Connors is clearly having an effect. After holding off Murray's early offensive that saw three break-point opportunities go to waste, he began to make inroads on his opponent's serve, and he finally savoured a horrendous Murray volley error that dumped lamely into the net.

Roddick produced three aces in four serves to round out the set before Murray let his physical condition be known by calling on an ATP trainer to massage his aching left thigh. "What is it?" asked Roddick. "An injury, or is he just tired?" The answer was apparent to all, and just two games later Murray's body language told a familiar story. He shook his head, he tried to flex his knees, he held his head in his hands. In response Roddick kept firing the big serves before breaking again.

A second break made it 5-2 to the 23-year-old American. The end seemed near, but Murray again showed his fighting qualities. Relying on talent and willpower, he pulled back one service break with a couple of quality passing shots before saving two match points as he defended his own serve.

Three more aces in Roddick's concluding service game finally shattered any remnants of resistance, and a final service winner saw him through to a semi-final against Chile's Fernando Gonzalez.

After some introspection Murray viewed the positives of his defeat. "It's not a bad thing for me to have lost, because if I'd gone all the way to the final, then I'd want to take two, three days off anyway, and then I might not be able to prepare as well for the US Open as I would want," he said. "Now I've got 10 days, and I'll take two, three days off and train hard for four or five days. Then I can taper down before the tournament starts."

In that time coach and player will clearly spend a little more time getting to know each other a little better. Angry declarations of the kind directed from one man to the other on Friday should soon be a thing of the past.

# Murray more hip-hop than robot

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By Brad Gilbert

Published at 12:00AM, August 23 2006

## The young Scot's tennis guru on coaching and hanging out with a kid less than half his age

IT WAS so cold in the kid's room, like walking into a cave. The air conditioning was on full blast, but I was happy he slept most of the day last Sunday. We were down at Nick Bollettieri's academy in Bradenton, Florida, for four days before we fly up to New York today for our first grand-slam event together, the US Open. For the past two days, we've grinded again and he was ready for that. He'd deserved his rest.

I've been with Andy for three weeks, he has played 14 matches in 17 days in gruelling conditions and he discovered on Monday that he was ranked No 19 in the world, though he knew that already because he's a terrible nerd about stats. Our time together so far has been about turning him into a professional and he's well on the way to that.

He's a really bright kid, a good thinker. He looks as if he's 15 but when he acts, when he speaks, you forget that tennis players grow up faster than probably anyone else. A lot of times, kids who are 19 have all the physical attributes needed, but what is fascinating about Andy is that he has the mental side first and I believe it's easier to get it physically than to get it mentally.

He thinks a lot about what he's doing, he has an amazing total recall about his matches and so it showed how dead tired he was when he played Robby Ginepri in the round of 16 in Cincinnati. When I told him afterwards how together he was to ask for a call on set point in the first set, he couldn't remember doing it. And he could barely walk off court. He had given everything and though he was disappointed not to have played better against Andy Roddick in the quarter-finals — he said he was dying out there — the fact is he still gave it everything. That's the kind of kid he is. He understands he has an obligation to himself and to his sport.

From day one, we just went to work. He knows now that every day I show up, I love doing what I'm doing and that I'm very un-British in that there's no negativity, I'm just so positive all the time. The first few days in Washington were gut-wrenchingly hot, 99 per cent humidity, but he just got on with it. The only time he's been confrontational has been *on* the court — off it, he's very relaxed, very engaging, not grating at all. He's been a pleasure to be around.

At 45, it's hard to change your ways. I'm up before him, but he's getting better. Of course we have differences — he thinks my taste in music is pitiful and his is so lame. I'm a Foreigner and Tom Petty man, he keeps saying, "who the hell is Foreigner?" He likes that rap stuff, which I don't understand at all. He says, "how can listening to Foreigner make the hairs on the back of your neck stand up?" We hang out a lot so we talk about all kinds of stuff. I'm trying to get him to appreciate American Football but he isn't crazy about it. I'm getting more into soccer and I love that Peter Crouch, he's my favourite, an awesome

guy and I said to Andy he ought to try that robot dance when he wins a match and maybe get hold of one of his England shirts. He thinks I'm losing it.

We share a love of boxing and his knowledge of it is incredible. When he played Roddick I thought about that. He had nothing in his legs, but he still had his chin.

I understand that a tremendous amount was made about his victory over Roger Federer in Cincinnati and rightly so. He played an excellent match and if Federer never plays a bad one we probably caught him on the right day. He looked a little jaded after winning the Toronto Masters Series. We have to remember that Andy is 19 and two years away from being the best player he can be. If you become too good too young, you can become too set in your ways, but when he's fully grown physically, he will blossom even more.

I remember my old coach talking about the importance of short-term memory loss. It's about what happens today and tomorrow, not yesterday. It is about being in pursuit of yourself, getting better day by day and there are many ways he can still improve. I'm not a big fan of the drop shot — he knows that — but it speaks for his uniqueness as a player.

I don't like it especially when he's 4-4, break point. He looks up at me all the time during matches *except* when he's played a drop shot. Then he's on his own for a few seconds. Roddick sent me grey, and the more Murray does that, the balder I'll get.

But I'm not a yeller, or a screamer. That doesn't get you anywhere. It's about the hard work and dedication you put in and you have to have a lot of love to do what he is doing. The kid has a lotta love.

## Agassi encourages Murray to maintain head for heights

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

Published at 12:00AM, August 26 2006

ANDRE AGASSI asked that Andy Murray extend himself to his full height — “because you don't hold your head up enough on the court”.

Agassi had guessed Murray was about 6ft 1in (1.85m) but thought, when his lunch companion pushed back from the table and stood straight, he was more like 6ft 2¼in. In the matter of sporting impressions, small measurements can make all the difference.

At the 2006 US Open, which starts here on Monday, Agassi hopes to be the tallest 5ft 11in player in the world, but with his back continuing to play up, he could be cut down in the opening round by Andrei Pavel, of Romania, and what a tragedy that would be for those enticed to New York on the wings of an American fairytale.

The 36-year-old's iconic status is assured, though, whatever fate befalls him in his 61st and final grand-slam event. Murray is a comparative learner driver, he is 17 years younger, the US Open will be his sixth grand-slam event and only at Wimbledon last month has he reached the second week. But, as Brad Gilbert, once Agassi's coach and the man now plotting Murray's course, repeats: "Whatever life offers you, never be late for it."

Which means that Murray should not waste a precious second of all the good that is happening at the moment, because the feel-good factor does not last forever. Making his way through the rain pummelling the city yesterday to two more practice sessions, the Scot could not have been much more content, a seeding of No 17 meaning that he was provided with a luxury leather-seated car rather than the crowded buses that had once been his mode of transport.

"People might view me a little bit differently now because of the recent wins I've had, but I don't regard myself in that way," Murray, who will play a qualifier in the first round, said.

"I suppose the other players give me more respect because not too many guys in their careers reach the top 20 — and the next step is to get into the top ten. It is good to be in this kind of mix but I still have to keep winning matches in order for my ranking to stabilise — it's only going to get harder. But I've won at least three matches in every tournament I've played since Queen's, so that's a good sign."

Murray reached the second round of last year's US Open, having beaten Pavel in a marathon first match during which he was sick on the court.

That evening seems deep in the distant past, a murky memory of an 18-year-old at odds with his body and his place in the tennis order. Seeing him a stronger person in every respect is an encouraging portent. And yet he does not regard his progress as anything to get worked up about.

"Andy Roddick had this same kind of leap in the rankings and I suppose because it has not really happened in Britain before it might be considered remarkable, but I've not really changed," Murray said. "I always believed in myself. I said at the start of the year that I wanted to be in the top 20 but it's come a couple of months earlier than I thought, but it's not remarkable."

## Britons have diverse reasons for cheer

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

Published at 12:00AM, September 2 2006

NO ONE expected more of Tim Henman than the man himself and if his exit from the US Open in the second round was the day's most expected result, there was scope for

sanguine appraisal of what lies in store for a soon-to-be 32-year-old and his desire to live with today's muscle-bound behemoths.

Every day Andy Murray's name is breathed as a prospective grand-slam tournament champion, but debate centres on how the Scot needs to get himself into the kind of shape that once made Charles Atlas the envy of the world.

There was no need for Murray even to flex his muscles yesterday, his 6-0, 6-1, 6-1 victory over the pallid Alessio Di Mauro, of Italy, the most comprehensive of his 13 matches in grand-slam events.

There will be a good deal more grunt and groan when the 19-year-old meets Fernando González, the No 10 seed, for a place in the fourth round, as the Chilean — who defeated him in the quarter-finals in Basle last year — scorns the graceful elements of the game and is tutored by Larry Stefanki, once Henman's coach, and who was on Murray's hit-list before attention turned to Brad Gilbert.

Henman's 6-3, 6-4, 7-5 defeat by Roger Federer, the world No 1 and defending champion, offered moments of genuine encouragement — he might have been 4-0 down in the first set and destined for humiliation, for one thing — for him not to want to join Greg Rusedski in the queue to cash in his ATP pension plan just yet.

Everywhere he looks, the emphasis is on bigger and bigger, more physical intimidation, days spent pounding the mountain bike, running the hills and yet, in his way, no one has been more devoted to exploring any way to enhance his playing longevity than Henman. It is a tribute to him, in this day of neanderthal tendencies, that he is competitive at all. That being said, he has not won a set from Federer in their past six matches, so he can forget about winning a grand-slam title, because Henman would come across him at sometime in the pursuit of such a glorious finale.

All he can hope to do is challenge for the "minors" and it is only if he is truly satisfied with such a prospect that Henman need continue flogging himself.

"I can't quite believe my eyes sometimes when, on a daily basis, I look at the other players," he said. "The kind of techniques and shots being hit, you just don't think are possible — that is speaking from a technical viewpoint but also physically, the way guys move now and how demanding it is. It has changed so, so, much.

"Reflecting on this year, there are times when it could not have been much worse (his second-round defeat by Federer at Wimbledon an explicit example), I don't really feel like there's been anything that's been particularly good, or gone my way. But that's the challenge and the motivation to improve. Today, I was able to serve and move and lunge, and tomorrow I might get off the flight home and I can't move and I think 'what am I doing?' It's a difficult battle."

## rray has dynamic response to the electric

- [Post a comment](#)

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From Neil Harman, Tennis Correspondent in New York

Published at 12:00AM, September 4 2006

THERE is something about the Grandstand Court at Flushing Meadows that brings out the devil in its participants. Boris Becker loved its cosy confines, the electric atmosphere it generates, its cauldron-like feel. Andy Murray is getting to know how Becker felt.

The Scot was sick and seizing up on the court in the first round a year ago, lost his next round on it, returned to triumph in the second round two days ago for the loss of a mere couple of games and yesterday, with a burgeoning wind in his sails, he defeated Fernando González, of Chile, the No 10 seed, 6-3, 3-6, 2-6, 6-3, 6-2 in two hours, 44 minutes to reach the fourth round in New York for the first time. He will play either Nikolay Davydenko, of Russia, or Lukasz Kubot, the Pole, and one knows where he would like it to be staged.

The completion of his victory was Murray at his mercurial finest. He began the fifth set winning back-to-back games without dropping a point and withstood the ferocity of the Chilean's fightback, which, when it foundered, turned him into Mr Nasty. And how good he must have felt to see his opponent's game seize up, a mangled racket at the side of the court, a point penalty for lashing a ball into the stands and temperamental meltdown.

Murray had a couple of indisciplined moments himself but this was his most mature performance on a foreign field, every bit as compelling as his straight-sets victory over Andy Roddick in the third round of Wimbledon. He completed the task with an exquisite love service game, a forehand crosscourt winner to secure it perhaps the best effort of the lot.

González, like Murray, was a summer form horse. The pair were second and third in the US Open Series, a sequence of tournaments packaged from the start of August to build a momentum going into the year's final grand-slam tournament. On the premise of his three successive semi-final appearances, two in back-to-back Masters, González was slightly ahead of Murray in the pecking order.

A flurry of service breaks came in the first set, the fifth of which, in Murray's favour, required all his patience and fortitude, completing it when the Chilean's attempt at an audacious forehand volley found the bottom of the net. He hastily built on that advantage, serving out the set to love.

The difficulty against González is falling into a rhythm, for he is the flashiest of players, one minute content to go backhand slice to backhand slice with his opponent, the next unleashing forehands accompanied by throaty groans of such intensity that they frighten the birds in the nearby foliage. A brilliant pass from deep in his own forehand corner galvanised González in the eighth game of the second set, one he pinched from Murray — setting off on a surge that gave him emphatic command.

At one stage, so angry was Murray that he lashed his racket into his bag, splitting the cover of his plastic water bottle and sending its contents splashing out over all the fancy electronic gadgets he keeps. He had to empty its contents hurriedly and actually left his wallet in the open air in New York on a chair where lots of people could see it. Now that's brave.

There was increasing courage in Murray's match manner as well. He is a difficult player to read from the sidelines, so what it must be like from across the net is anyone's guess. Just when you think he is rocking, he starts to roll.

A break of serve from almost nowhere as González's backhand began to crumble gave him the fourth set and at the onset of the fifth, he was in total control, sweeping into a 4-0 lead without appearing to prod the accelerator too outrageously.

## Murray requires urgent improvement to avoid washout

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By **Neil Harman**, Tennis Correspondent, in New York

Published at 12:00AM, September 6 2006

FOR Andy Murray to remain in the 2006 US Open beyond the fourth round, it has to be hoped that the rains that swept through Flushing Meadows last night contrived to flush all the negative elements from his body. There is much to be done today and Britain's No 1 may have precious little time in which to do it.

Murray was sent racing from the Louis Armstrong Stadium yesterday at two sets to one down against Nikolay Davydenko, of Russia. As the timing of these interruptions go, this one can only be beneficial. For some inexplicable reason, and we are not short of those where Murray is concerned, he had allowed Davydenko back into a match that appeared there for the teenager's taking.

When he lost the first two games of the third set — the first two sets having been shared — there was a distant, day-dreamy look in Davydenko's eyes, as if he did not know how to deal with the young man who can sleepwalk his way to domination of a tennis match. A 2-0 lead should have been 3-0 but Murray knocked a backhand over the baseline and the No 7 seed then produced a forehand winner after a cunning first serve.

From there, Davydenko won five of the next six games, played almost all of the exquisite angles and dinks that Murray uses so well and trumped the third set so that the Russian's 6-1, 5-7, 6-3 lead requires him to play as he did either at the beginning or the end of this match to reach the quarter-finals of the Open for the first time. Murray knows this is akin to sudden death.

However much he is earning from the LTA in the shape of wages and bonuses, Brad Gilbert, Murray's coach, will deserve a decent downpayment if he can rally his man out of yesterday's torpor. It has been long acknowledged that Murray isn't the sharpest starter and he had to be ready and fresh for an early practice yesterday to be prepared properly for an 11am start.

His sluggish opening was punished as his serve was broken three times in a 27-minute first set. He has found serving sets to their conclusion to be a difficult task and so it was no surprise when he stumbled on the threshold of clinching the second, losing his serve at 5-4 only to break Davydenko's serve to love in response and then hold to love, a stretch of eight points to bring the match all square.

Even in the midst of snaffling the Russian's first service game in the third set, Murray was full of selfadmonishment. "Stop focusing on not making errors, you're so tight when the ball comes to you," he screamed.

Negative words from one end of the court, negative shot-making at the other, but Murray could not benefit from Davydenko's drift. It can only be hoped that he rallies today as he did in his third round against Fernando González, of Chile, when he trailed two sets to one and never got so down on himself.

# 'Mopey Murray' talks himself out of upset

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From Neil Harman, Tennis Correspondent in New York

Published at 12:00AM, September 7 2006

INVARIABLY, where Andy Murray is concerned, the glass is either half-full or half-empty. In the fourth round of the US Open, Nikolay Davydenko played the best set of tennis anyone has produced against him, Murray performed like a drain. Davydenko was solidity personified, Murray tossed his towel around once too often.

Whichever way your breakfast stack crumbles, however, facts are facts and Murray's US Open interest was rudely interrupted by a couple of bouts of morning tennis from the Russian to which the British No 1's response contrived only monologues and indifference. Yesterday, in 36 minutes, Murray was on his way home, 6-1, 5-7, 6-3, 6-0. It is a telling scoreline.

The teenager professed upbeat feelings, but dovetailing that with the manner of the start he produced both on Tuesday and yesterday takes some explaining. He preferred to study the bigger picture.

The opportunity to reach a grand-slam quarter-final is never a guarantee, although by the law of averages and given his innate talents, Murray ought to reach that stage one day. This winter, he will spend hours beneath the Florida sun, working with Brad Gilbert, his coach, and Mark Grabow, a fitness trainer, on the technical and physical requirements that are essential for his development. He said that we should suspend judgments until then.

From 2-0 and two break points ahead in the third set, Murray won a single game from the next 13 and yesterday was several degrees worse than Tuesday. He served first, threw in three double faults and each time a rally was extended beyond 20 strokes, the Russian prevailed. Murray's mind was in a state of wander.

"I did speak a lot on the court and that's something I've spoken to Brad about," he said. "Maybe, subconsciously, that's what happens when I get nervous, I speak a little too much. I don't know why I was doing it, but it's something I've got to stop because it's definitely not good for my tennis.

"But I'm not disappointed at all. I've had a great summer and couldn't have asked for anything more. I'm not going to walk away from here with any negative thoughts."