

TENNIS

Going up in the world

Richard Bloomfield's stunning start to 2007 has propelled the Norfolk professional into the Davis Cup reckoning, according to new coach Peter Lundgren.

The 23-year-old from Alington reached the final of an LTA Challenger event for the first time in his career in Wrexham at the weekend and his performances in Wales caught the eye of Lundgren.

The Swedish coach – who has been given a two-year contract with the British Davis Cup team – admitted Bloomfield is in pole position to earn a shock call-up for April's must-win clash against Holland in Birmingham.

"This is the first time I've seen Richard play and he's done very well," said Lundgren, who guided Roger Federer to the top of the world game.

"He's got a big serve and his game looks to be in good shape and there's no reason at all why he can't make the team by April.

"Andy Murray and Tim Henman are the only players assured of their places – after that the players who are in form will play.

"There's a whole bunch of them at the moment but Richard has put down his marker already. It's up to him to carry this on."

Bloomfield was beaten by Poland's

HEAD

Michal Przysiezny 6-2 6-3 in Sunday's final but the 35 ranking points he earned were enough to move him up to a career-high 188 in the world. He has also overtaken Greg Rusedski to become the new British No 4 and Bloomfield further enhanced his Davis Cup hopes by making the final of the men's doubles in North Wales.

He partnered Robin Haase – who is likely to make the Dutch team in April – but they went down in the final 6-7 7-5 12-10 to French second seeds Thomas Oger and Nicolas Pietrangeli. But Lundgren added: "In Davis Cup it always helps to have players who can step into doubles and Richard proved he can do that.

"We can't just rely on Andy and Tim to play all weekend like the team has in the past – they will run out of steam.

"They need a rest at some point so it would be good to have players who can step in and do a job and Richard could do that."

Bloomfield's doubles ranking has also improved, up 46 places to 297, another career high, while Norwich player James Auckland's doubles ranking is up six places to 76, a career high for him.

Picture: PA



RISING STAR: Norfolk's Richard Bloomfield moved into Davis Cup contention at the weekend after reaching a Challenger final.