

WEEKEND SPORTS WEEKEND

The lethal impact of Wasim Akram

Derek Hodgson looks at Lancashire's and Pakistan's feared sharpshooter

If Wasim Akram can exercise his highly explosive talents to the full this year for Pak-Istan and Lancashire, numerous bowlers and batsmen will suffer



He is not so much a cricketer as an explosion. A gentle courteous man off the field, give Wasim Akram a ball or bat and he becomes a sudden, violent force of such impact that he may turn a Test match or decide a one-day international in the space of an over.

In 1991, in the shires of England, he can confirm Imran Khan's prediction that he would become the world's leading all-rounder. And as the No. 1 he can, along with Waqar Younis and Aaqib Javed, establish Pakistan as world champions; they have been on the brink now for 18 months.

Another year for Wasim, 25, Waqar, 20, and Aaqib, 20, could produce the most potent attack since Holding, Roberts and Garner bowled together for the West Indies. Their almost simultaneous rise raises the question: how much more raw talent is hidden in the dusty hills of Pakistan? Imran has long believed that many promising players fall to rise above club fixtures in his country "because our first-class standard is so poor we cannot harness the potential."

In part of answer this criticism the Pakistan Board began organising training camps in Lahore to which unrecognised players could be invited.

"I was lucky", Wasim told the Australian journalist, Peter Hook, earlier this year: "I was in camp when Javed saw me bowl in the nets and insisted I be brought into the squad against New Zealand. The manager said it was much too soon for an 18-year-old. Javed said if I didn't play he wouldn't either."

Such an unorthodox selection was endorsed majestically

on a green pitch in Dunedin, where Wasim's variations of left-arm pace and intelligent use of the conditions brought His voice took an edge: "What I do object to is these entrepreneurial tours which may be good for the promoter and the players but intrude on the time given to rest and recuperation and have to influence how that player performs for his principal employer."

England will also see the rare sight of Wasim with the new ball. Hughes said: "He can swing the old ball more and we have had class new-ball men in Patterson, Paul Allott and Daffy [Phillip DeFreitas] but he'll certainly see more of it next season. It depends on circumstances. There have been times, for instance, when he has come on first or second change to counter someone like Graeme Hick."

Wasim is able to retain energy for his explosions by

virtue of a short run-up and abbreviated delivery. He explained: "My pace comes from the wrist, not from a long run or a high jump." His basic delivery is the inswinger to the right-hander, interspersed with the faster ball that the batsman thinks is straightening up until it cuts away. With such a swift delivery action the batsman has very little time to anticipate the bounce.

The Lancashire coach, Alan Ormrod, has straightened his batting without, he hopes, affecting that magnificent natural swing.

Lancashire value him for more than his talent. Hughes said: "It's a privilege to have him in the dressing-room. It's no secret that not all big-name overseas professionals have pulled their weight in county cricket. Wasim gives 90 per cent. is a dedicated team man and a good mate."

He added: "Our public like

winning one-day competitions, we know, but deep in this club is the hunger to win a Championship that hasn't been to Old Trafford, outright, for knock him five wickets in each innings of the last Test.

Those same training camps have since uncovered both of Wasim's younger colleagues; it might pay an English county to post a scout to the next jamboree. Since then Wasim has produced such performances as 5 for 21 against Australia at Melbourne, 6 for 91 and 66 (including sixes off Marshall and Patterson) against the West Indies in Faisalabad.

To most English watchers he has been the feared sharpshooter Lancashire would call in from the distant range to rake one-day opponents. For three years they have been able to alternate him with Pat Patterson, but now English rules allow only one overseas professional Wasim is no longer the specialist in reserve but the top gun.

His captain, David Hughes, confirmed: "He'll be our first choice No. 6 in all our matches if fit. A full season will confirm his status as the best. I wouldn't put him in the Kapil Dev or Botham class as a batsman yet, but that is partly because neither in our team nor in Pakistan's has he had the regular opportunity to prove himself. That will come this summer."

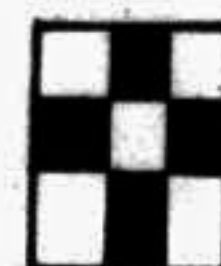
The qualifying phrase with Wasim is "if fit". Hughes continued: "I believe much of his recurring groin trouble is because he is overworked. He has had two operations and a further manipulative operation. It is in our interests, and Pakistan's, to reduce the demands made on him."

"We have to accept his country have first call on him and I was depressed to read that Pakistan were planning to play 12 Tests, plus Lord knows how many internationals, this winter. Fortunately, it seems the series against India may be cancelled and Wasim will come to us comparatively fresh."

ing on 70 years. The club want it. I want it before I go and, who knows, with a full summer of Wasim we might achieve it."

The challengers' round: A review

by Alexander Roshal



Matches at the initial challengers' stage have been played. Seven winners plus Antoly

Karpov will now from quarter-finals. The draw to determine new pairs took place in Linares on February 22, when an international tournament with world champion Garry Kasparov at the head opened in the Spanish city.

There were no sensations worth the name in the challengers' matches. Andrei Dreyev (USSR), for example, when leaving for Madras, India, the homeland of his opponent, kept saying with concern: "The unpredictable Anand is awaiting me there ..." What else could he say, if celebrities all around are complaining of time pressure, while only the young Indian does not spend even half of the strict time allotted per game in major encounters? I know the authoritative people who are perfectly serious in their belief that Viswanathan Anand is a hero, though his name, according to Sanskrit connoisseurs, means only "joy". The Indian Grandmasters' personal assets combined with the local weather and other conditions Dreyev was unaccustomed to led the Soviet player to a grim setback 1.5-4.5.

An even more superior score was registered in the match played in Riga, Latvia, between Vasily Ivanchuk and Leonid Yudasin (both USSR): 4.5-0.5.

Though he had put up a successful performance at the preceding tournament abroad, Yudasin was, evidently, not in good from this time. He made blunders quite untypical of Grandmaster class. Hence Yudasin's self-assessment partially projected upon his opponent whom he respects: "Vasily played like a decent master against an average candidate master." As for Ivanchuk, he does not conceal that he cashed in mainly on the opponent's inaccuracies. At the same time, however, he deliberately opted for tense struggle, with quality suffering and the probability of errors increasing. We witnessed further evidence of chess gaining importance as a sport.

Jan Timman of the Netherlands arrived for his match against Robert Huebner without official seconds but

with wife, who, it is to be supposed, disciplined him. The famed Svetozar Gligoric, the chief umpire, pointed out later that the Dutch Grandmaster had displayed greater professionalism than the German one. Timman even demonstrated once something

chess players are now accustomed to anything, such games at times proved unbearable for observers having a vital interest therein. During one of the decisive encounters a real misfortune occurred: the ailing uncle of Pedrag Nikolic of Yugoslavia

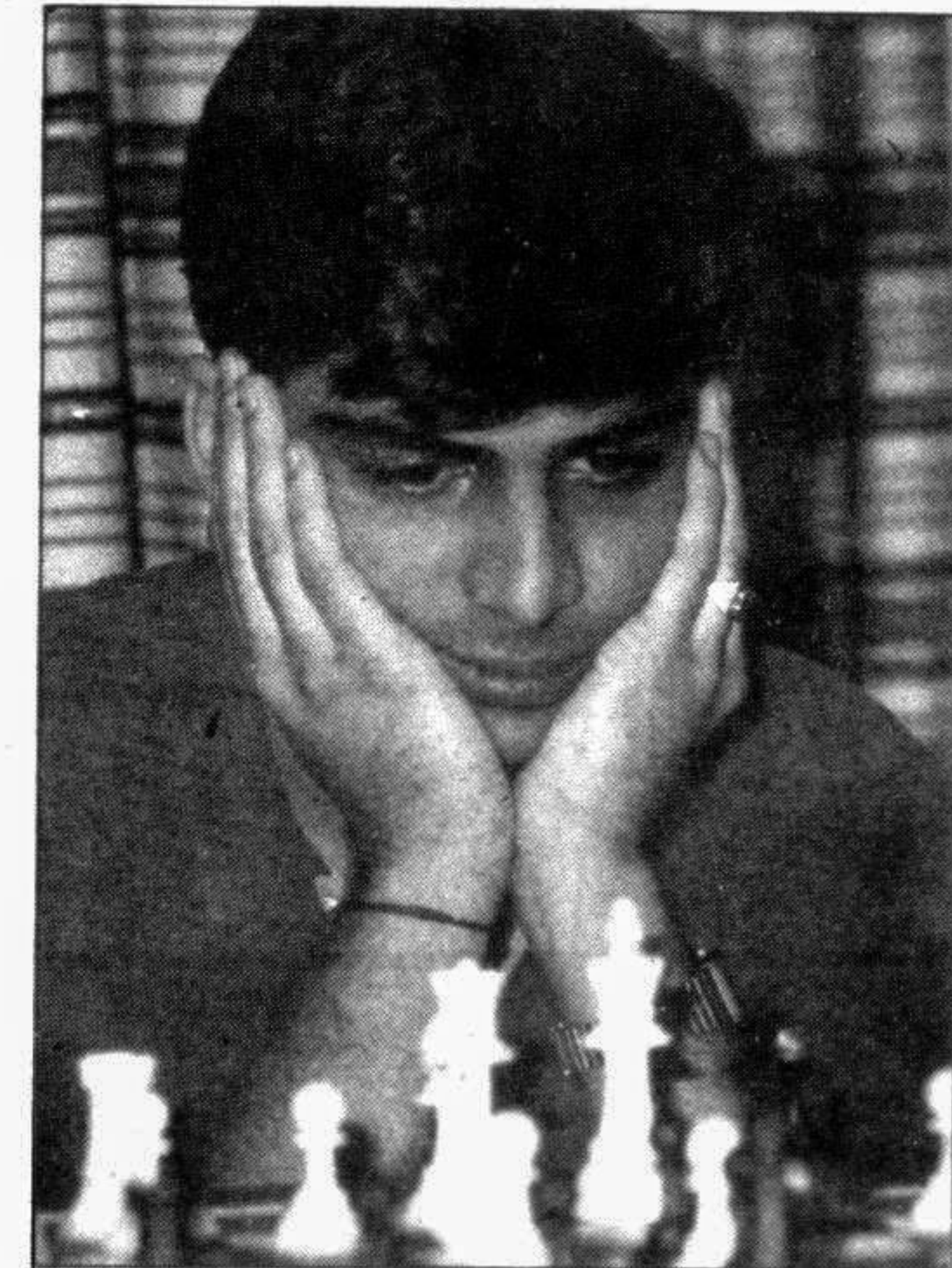
than enough. Experts noted, however, that Korchnoi had recently lacked confidence in playing against precisely this Hungarian grandmaster. Here, too, psychology came to the fore and, according to eyewitnesses from Holland, both time trouble and other unexpected things happened during the match. Be that as it may, having won the first additional game and drawn the second one, Korchnoi stays as one of the challengers on the eve of his 60th birthday.

The tensest of all, as it had been expected, was the match between Artur Yusupov and Sergei Dolmatov (both USSR). The Bosnian friends, who had once rotated in winning the world cadet chess title and had Dvoretzky as their common coach, play, as a rule, uncompromisingly against each other.

On the eve of the challengers' match, Yusupov got ill, and, as play could not be postponed, he had to leave for Holland straight from hospital. Dolmatov was very much concerned about his friend. Yet he had to play against him, and this made its imprint on the dramatic situation as it was. As a second to the world champion in New

York and Lyons, Dolmatov had, evidently, reserved too little time for his own preparations for the challengers' match. He lost Game Eight not because of his poor performance at the opening stage but because of bad nerves. Yusupov, whose will-power deserves every praise, evened up the score on the home stretch (which was not really 'home') and then proceeded to forge ahead. But Dolmatov (good for him) had his revenge then and there. In the subsequent additional game, Yusupov prevailed, winning the match 6.5-5.5, something that could hardly be predicted. Jonathon Speelman of Britain is hardly in the mood for smiles. He lost his second extra game and, consequently, the match 4.5-5.5 Nigel Short (25) has qualified for the next stage.

While these challengers' matches were being played, Anatoly Karpov did not change his habit. A week after this return home from the world-title match, the ex-world champion entered a very representative tournament at Reggio Emilia, Italy. Behind the many events of our tempestuous time.



Indian genius Viswanathan Anand

that was familiar from the recent chess match at top level: in a better position, avoiding unnecessary risks, he offered a draw, after which the opponent was left with practically no chances to make up for it. Timman won the match versus Huebner 4.5-2.5.

The remaining matches in this series called for 'extra time', which is no surprise at all in view of the limited number of basic games (only eight) and the comparative equality of the opponents' strength. It must also be considered that the number of 'decisive' encounters in quick-chess matches greatly increases, and so does the consumption of one's nervous energy. With the score at 4-all, two additional games a day were played with shorter time control: 45 minutes per 60 moves by each player. Though

died of a heart failure.

It is inadmissible to explain Boris Gelfand's win in the second additional game against Nikolic by this tragedy (final score: 5.5-4.5). On the contrary, what needs explaining is the not very convincing play of Gelfand whose chances were, undoubtedly, put higher. In the opinion of Kapengut, the merited coach of Byelorussia, his young charge, very likely, was paralysed by his status as favourite. Boris himself is vexed with his bad form and hastens to attribute the causes behind his 'unhappy victory'.

Viktor Korchnoi, Switzerland, is much better known to the public at large than Gyula Sax of Hungary, and already this circumstance combined with the generally recognised class of the many-time challenger looked more

WHERE HANG-GLIDERS FIND VULTURES COME IN HANDY

By BOB HOLMES

Although a monk is said to have flown by some sort of rudimentary contraption in the 11th Century, hang-gliding has taken off as a sport only in the last 20 years — a spin-off from space research. Today the sport is fast growing and in Brazil 150 pilots from 40 countries are now taking part in world championships. Gemini News Service reports on the people who enjoy leaping off a clifftop with 100lb of sail and frame strapped to their backs.

debited Bahrainis gave Holmes a concession to drill for oil. Again British companies turned down the offer.

Holmes turned to America and three companies: Gulf Oil, Standard Oil and Texas Oil. They formed a consortium under the Bahrain Oil Company. Oil was struck in 1932 and by 1936, the company was producing 620,000 tons a year.

The New Zealander became

the advocate for an American company, fighting the claims made by a British concern. His opponent in that struggle was the 30-year-old Archibald Chisholm.

Holmes and Chisholm lived almost as neighbours in Kuwait. Their rivalry continued for two years until they got together in church one Sunday and became allies. Soon after a joint American-British com-

pany was formed — the Kuwait Oil Company — to drill for oil.

At that time, one well-known geologist was quoted as offering to "drink every pint of oil ever found in Kuwait or Saudi Arabia."

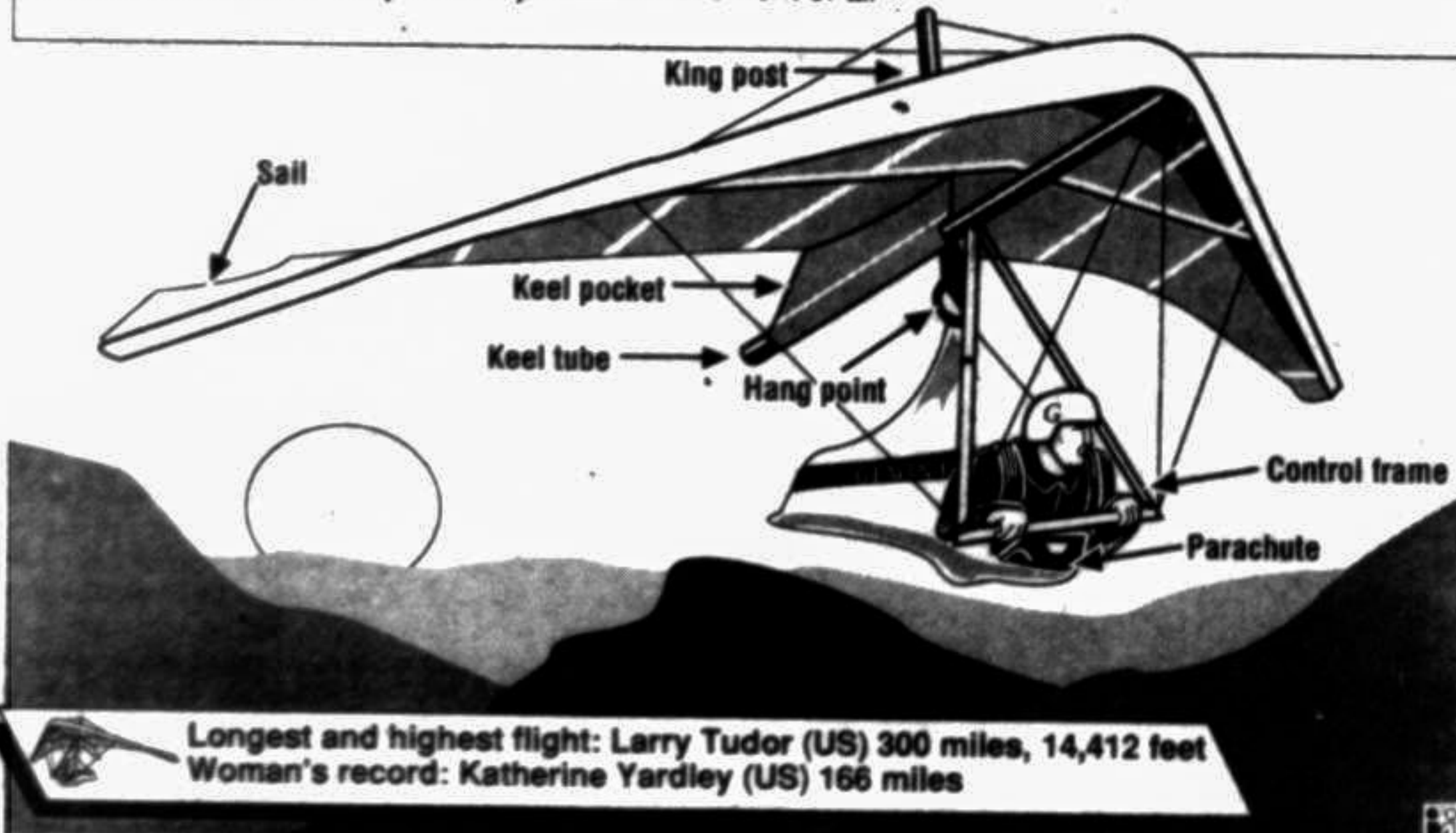
Two years later, in 1936, oil was gushing up all over the sands of Kuwait, mainly because of Holmes' persistence.

His syndicate sold its rights for a few thousand pounds and a tiny royalty. Holmes and his wife returned to their farm. Later Holmes became the official agent in London for the Sheikh of Kuwait. He died in 1947 aged 73.

Chisholm wrote in an obituary: "Of powerful physique, blunt speech and great strength of character, Holmes also had those qualities of generosity, friendliness and frankness which Arabia most admires." — GEMINI NEWS

The clean way to fly

Hang gliding is quietest, cleanest, simplest form of flying. Gliders pack down in minutes and can be carried on shoulder. They use only natural movement of air



UEFA boss moots plans for a brighter game



STOCKHOLM, Mar 7: There are 11 players on a soccer team. But why not 10 if it could open up the game and lead to more goals, asks European Football Union (UEFA) President Lennart Johansson of Sweden, reports Reuter.

The UEFA chief is chairman of a task force charged with proposing ways of making the sport more appealing ahead of the 1994 World Cup finals in the United States — the richest country left for the sport to conquer.

"The (1990) finals in Italy had their beauty spots. There were very few goals and a lot of defensive tactics during the late rounds," Johansson told Reuters in an interview.

"The fact that the next finals are in the United States makes it an excellent time to reform soccer and win over a new continent in the process," he said.

Johansson was disinclined to reveal his views before the International Football Federation (FIFA) task force starts work in April. But he clearly indicated which ideas he felt were worth discussing.

"Soccer players today are better trained, have better equipment, and play on better surfaces. It might be that the pitch is becoming overcrowded.

"In the old days a defender hardly crossed the centre line. Now we have total soccer," Johansson, speaking in his office in Stockholm's Rasunda Stadium where Pele rose to stardom in the memorable 1958 World Cup final when Brazil beat Sweden 5-2.

"It wouldn't change the character of the sport if teams had 10 players instead of 11. I wouldn't oppose a trial run," he said.

The 10-strong FIFA group, including French national manager and former star Michel Platini, German striker

Rudi Voeller and English Football Association chief executive Graham Kelly, would meet with an open mind.

"We can't just say that football is more than 100 years old and nothing may be changed. There is an overly conservative attitude in many quarters," Johansson said. "We're not about to change the heart of soccer, but we must be prepared to take measures which satisfy spectator demand for more offensive soccer, more goals, dazzling individual achievements and glitter."

And dropping the offside rule would probably result in a very strange game.

Cosmetic rule changes to alter things like prolonged free kick preparations and back passing to the goalkeeper were on the agenda, he said.

"It gets exceedingly boring for the spectator to watch the goalkeeper pick up the ball 50 times and nurse it like a newborn baby."

But Johansson stressed that reforms must be tested for at least a year, perhaps in one or two national leagues, before being widely implemented.

He said the structure of the month-long World Cup finals, which encourages defensive play by eliminating only eight of 24 teams in the first phase, would be discussed.

"I think the American's will find it very hard to accept a tournament which lasts almost five weeks. Perhaps we should tighten up the qualification series for a two-week finals with only the very best teams."

Johansson said his panel would take a hard look at the practice of zonal qualification under which countries compete regionally for an allotted number of places in the finals.

De-zoned qualification tournaments would effectively end arguments over regional quotas, he said.

"If Africa wants more places at Europe's expense, let them prove they are better. Let's settle it on the pitch."

But the most important thing for the future of the sport, Johansson said, was that referees must be stricter in enforcing existing rules in order to allow individual talent to shine.

"The destructive forces must be defeated. Crime must not be allowed to pay."

"An entire World Cup can be lit up by a Maradona in peak form or a bandaged Beckenbauer directing his troops. Such images are printed indelibly on our minds."

One idea was to replace or complement the traditional penalty kick with a charge from the centre line, creating a realistic one-on-one situation.

"Spectators might find that fascinating," he said.

But Johansson categorically rejected some radical suggestions made in the aftermath of the Italy finals such as widening the goalposts and the pitch or scrapping the offside rule.

"I don't believe in that at all, not just because it would require enormous investments.



One Maradona can light up a meet