

Courier spoils Connors dream

NEW YORK, Sept 8: Thirty-nine-year-old Jimmy Connors ran out of miracles at the US Open on Saturday when he ran into the hottest player in the tournament, French Open champion Kim Courier, reports Reuter.

Courier, who was only four years old when Connors won

four-time champion Martina Navratilova 7-6, 6-1 to win the women's title.

Connors had captured the imagination of the tennis world with his inspiring run to the semifinals — highlighted by two miraculous come-from-behind, five-set wins — eight years after winning his last Open.

His unlikely advance through the draw was assisted by the upsets of top-10 players Andre Agassi and Boris Becker and there appeared to be some form of divine intervention pushing Connors toward his eighth Open final.

"Fate was pushing me that way, but Courier played some unbelievable tennis," Connors said.

"He played the game the way he wanted to and was successful at it. I told him if he played like that tomorrow he'll have a hell of a shot."

Courier, who beat defending champion Pete Sampras of reach the semifinals took the opening set behind a single service break in the sixth game.

Connors brought his 20,000 cheerleaders to life early in the second set when he broke Courier to lead 3-1 with the help of a controversial line call.

At break point, Courier drilled a forehand crosscourt shot that appeared to catch the umpire said 'deuce', but the shot had been called out and Connors prepared to serve, leaving Courier shaking his head in confusion.

Courier's concentration, however, was as keen as his shotmaking. He took the crowd out of the match by taking Connors' next serve at love as he began a backbreaking winning string of nine games in a row that gave him the second set and 4-0 lead in third.

"I was aware he's never out of it until it's over so I was just trying to stay in every point", said the soft-spoken Courier.

The crowd sat in stunned silence as Courier lost just three points from the third through seventh games of the middle set.

Connors ended Courier's string when fourth seed double faulted to lose his serve in the fifth game. But Courier came right back with one of his many backhand passing shots to break Connors for 5-1.

Connors, whose 'never-say-

die' attitude is legendary, kept fighting despite the huge deficit.

With Courier serving for the match, Connors came up with one more break when he slammed a forehand volley winner that brought the crowd to its feet as they sensed perhaps one more miracle comeback from their hero.

But it was not to be.

reached 15-40 and broke the five-time champion to end the match with yet another backhand crosscourt passing shot.

Asked about Connors' history of success at the Open, Courier said: "Five US Open titles, I'd be in heaven to win one."

Now only Edberg stands between Courier and a little bit of heaven.



JIMMY CONNORS

the first of his five US Open titles sent 20,000 fans home somewhat disappointed with his 6-3, 6-3, 6-2 victory.

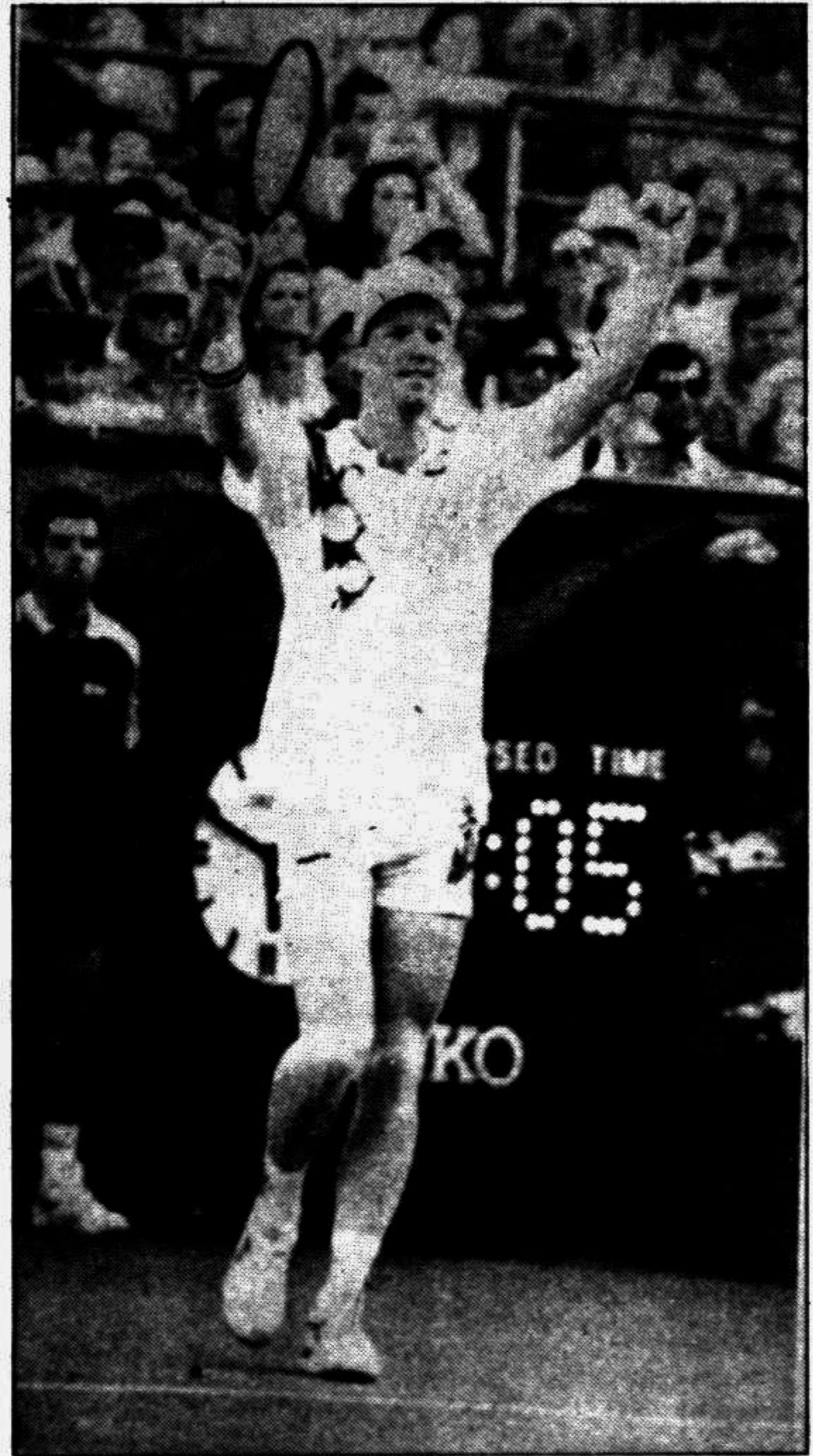
As always, the gritty Connors fought like mad to the very end. But the end came fast as Courier produced another in a string of near-perfect performances.

The 21-year-old Floridian is the only player in the tournament — man or woman — who has not lost a set.

Remarkably, prior to Saturday's semifinal, Courier had lost his serve only four times in five matches.

In his first US Open final, the fourth-seeded Courier will face second seed Stefan Edberg, who earlier put on a brilliant serve — and volley show to dominate three — time champion Ivan Lendl 6-3, 6-3, 6-4.

"Super Saturday" turned out to be a total loss for the old-timers as 17-year-old Monica Seles steamrolled 34-year-old



Jim Courier of the US raises his arms after winning a match-point in his game against Jimmy Connors of the US during their US Open semifinal match on Sept 7. Courier won the match 6-3, 6-3, 6-2.

Refusing to let Connors back into the match, Courier said, "I'm 21. Courier said, 'This is my dream and I'm living it.'"

Al-Hera champs

JHENIDAH, Sept 8: Jhenidah Al-Hera Islamic Institute emerged district champion in handball in the national school and madrasa sports competition on Friday reports UNB.

Al-Hera Institute defeated Chaprail School of Kaliganj upazila by 4-3 goals at the Jhenidah Government High School ground here this afternoon.

Deputy Commissioner of Jhenidah Mirza Mohammad Ali Faruk witnessed the final match as chief guest and distributed prizes among the winners.

Delhi pulls out

SYDNEY, Sept 8: New Delhi has withdrawn from the race for the 1998 Commonwealth Games, leaving Adelaide and Kuala Lumpur to contest the right to host the sporting event, officials said today, reports AFP.

Two visiting senior Commonwealth Games Federation officials told reporters in Adelaide they had been told Delhi had withdrawn.

The federation's legal adviser Shared Rao said he was in formally advised by Indian games officials before leaving London yesterday that New Delhi would not pursue its bid.

Federation Secretary David Dixon cited recent political problems in India as a possible factor.

Rao and Dixon are here on a three-day trip to inspect facilities and discuss commercial proposals, including sponsorship. They fly to Kuala Lumpur on a similar mission Wednesday.

The Games bring together athletes from members of the Commonwealth nations every four years.

The site of the 1998 Games is due to be announced after a vote by federation officials on July 23 next year in Barcelona just before the Olympic Games.

New Delhi lost to Victoria in Canada to host the next Games in 1994.

Navy handball

KHULNA Sept 8: The annual handball championship of the Bangladesh Navy got underway at the BNS Titumir playground here yesterday, reports BSS.

BNS Issa Khan team humbled the BN frigate squadron team by 19-9 goals in the opening match of the five-day meet.

Earlier the Naval officer in charge, Khulna Captain A K M Azad inaugurated the meet as the chief guest.

All-Soviet women's final in Wimbledon

LONDON, Sept 8: European women's singles badminton champion Pernille Nedergaard suffered a shock defeat in the Wimbledon Open semifinals here Saturday night by Soviet number two Irina Serova, reports AFP.

The top-seed from Denmark went down 12-10, 6-11, 11-6 to Serova, who will meet Soviet number one Elena Rybkina in today's final after her 11-0, 0-11, 11-5 victory over erratic English player Felicity Gallup.

The men's singles final will be between England's Anders Nielsen and defending champion Poul-Erik Hoyer-Larsen of Denmark.

The injury jinx which has plagued Steve Butlers' badminton career struck again in the semifinals just when he was locked in a great battle with Nielsen, his great English rival.

Butler, the England number two, looked in great form as he came back from 8-6 down to take the first set 15-8.

But the England number three fought back to build a 13-4 lead in the second set and eventually took it 15-11.

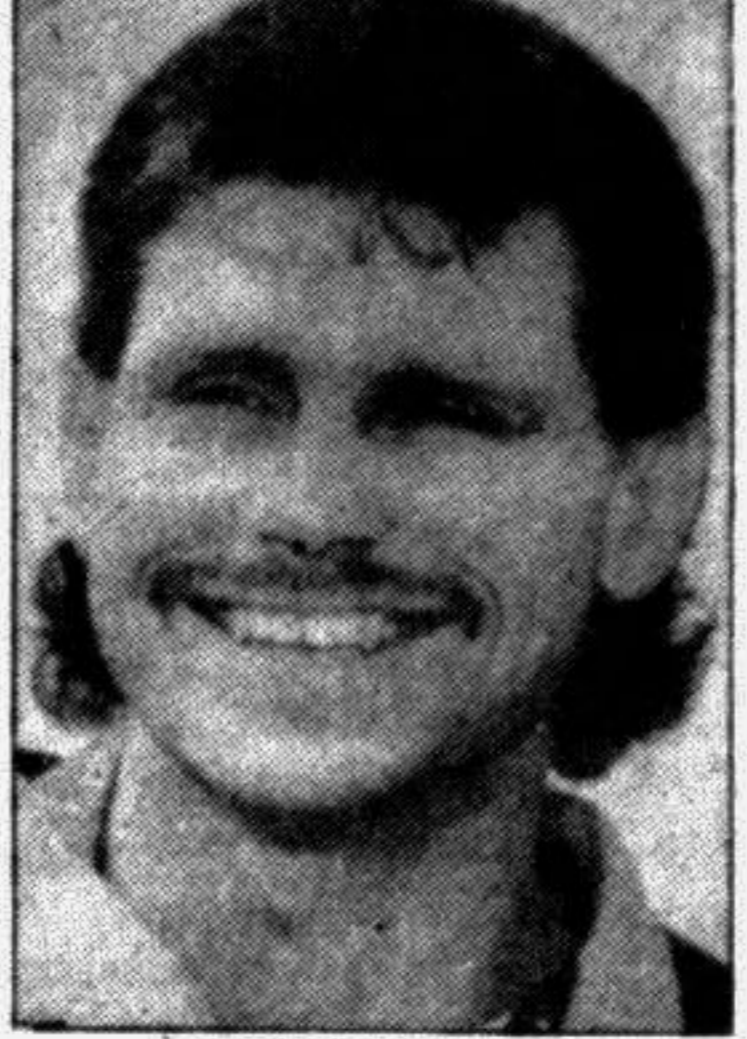
Then, with the match finely poised in the deciding set, Butler, who has been nursing his ankle all week, decided enough was enough and retired at 9-6.

Earlier, Hoyer-Larsen knocked out England number one Darren Hall in an equally gruelling contest.

Hants lift Natwest Trophy

LONDON, Sept 8: Young all-rounder Jon Ayling clipped a legside boundary to give Hampshire a dramatic win and their first success in the Natwest Trophy with just two balls to spare at Lord's on Saturday, reports Reuter.

Hampshire had appeared to



ROBIN SMITH

be coasting to victory in the final when they needed 45 off the last 10 overs with eight wickets in hand. But they then lost four quick wickets.

Although Ayling bolstered their late run chase, Hampshire owed their victory to England Test batsman Robin Smith, afterwards voted man-of-the-match.

He defied a late onslaught from Pakistani fast bowler Waqar Younis in gathering gloom as he made 78 off 94 balls before being dramatically run out with just 10 required.

Opener Tony Middleton, making his debut in the Natwest Trophy, had helped put Hampshire on course for their target of 241 with a well paced 78.

He added 90 for the first wicket with Paul Terry (32) and another 70 with Smith before he was yoked by Tony Murphy.

David Gower, acting Hampshire captain in the absence of the injured Mark Nicholas, was trapped lbw for nine by Waqar and Kevan James was dismissed for nought by Martin Bicknell four balls later.

Hampshire were then 193 for four in the 52nd over and Surrey were right back in con-

tenion.

But with 24 required off the last three overs, Ayling hammered 13 off our balls from Murphy, including a six over cover.

Murphy struck back by running out Smith in a piece of quick thinking. Smith's drive hit the stumps at the non-striker's end and Murphy threw down the other wicket as Smith tried to dive back into his ground.

But Ayling saw Hampshire home with an unbeaten 18.

Surrey's total of 240 for five

was built on a fine innings of 93 from Graham Thorpe.

He and England batsman Alec Stewart put on 114 after Surrey had struggled to 25 for one in the 15th over.

Stewart was bowled by Ayling for 61 but David Ward helped keep the momentum going.

Thorpe finally holed out to mid on off pacesman Cardigan Connor after making his best score in the competition. But Ward, with 43 off 36 balls, helped lift the scoring rate to four an over.

Bishop is fit again

PORT OF SPAIN, Trinidad, Sept 8: West Indies fast bowler Ian Bishop of Trinidad, who injured his lower spine earlier this year, is fit again and ready for the World Series and World Cup later this year in Australia, his manager said on Saturday, reports Reuter.

Colin Murray, who manages Bishop in Trinidad and Tobago, said doctors at a Sheffield clinic in England have given the 24-year-old pace bowler a clean bill of health after results of a scan showed no sign of a stress fracture.

The doctors say the results prove the injury is fully healed," Murray told Reuter. "Bishop is, therefore, ready to rejoin the West Indies team."

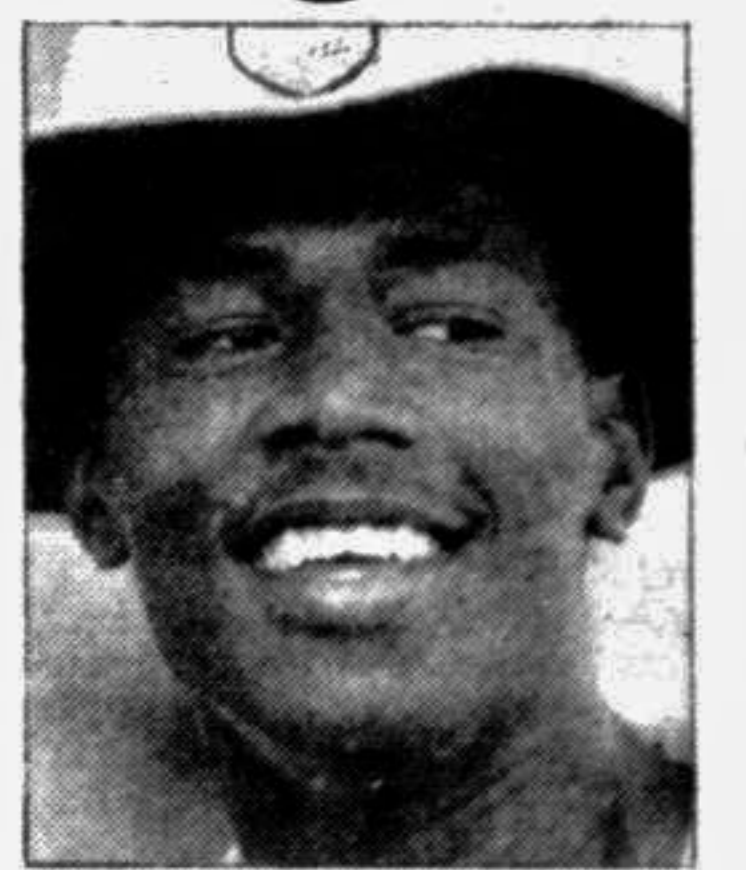
Bishop, regarded as the fastest bowler in the world, injured his back in the first Red Stripe Cup match in Trinidad and Tobago, missing the rest of the regional series, the Australian tour of the Caribbean and the West Indies visit to England.

He now plays with Sheffield Collegiate in a minor league in the United Kingdom.

Murray said Bishop will be back in Trinidad later this month to wait for a recall to the West Indies team for the tour to Sharjah, Bangladesh, and the two Australian series.

"There is now no lingering doubt about his fitness. He is raring to go and is available to rejoin the next West Indies team," Murray said.

Meanwhile, middle-order batsman Gus Logie, who missed the last Test against England because of injury to



IAN BISHOP

his right knee, is back in his native Trinidad, recuperating from an operation.

He received a national award last Saturday from the Trinidad and Tobago government for his services to cricket.

Logie, who has been a member of the West Indies team since 1980, said he felt fine and was keen on going to Australia.

At its annual general meeting from September 28 to 30, the West Indies Cricket Board of Control will most likely pick the team for the Australian series.

All-Chinese affair

BANGKOK, Sept 8: Top two seeds Li Fang and Tang Min of China entered the women's singles final in the Volvo Ladies Cup tennis tournament here Saturday, reports AFP.

Li beat American Amy Delone 6-2, 7-5 while Tang defeated Tanti Trayono of Indonesia 6-1, 6-3.

The finals in both the singles and doubles events will be played today.

Soviet gymnasts reign, but Americans outshine Chinese

INDIANAPOLIS, Indiana, Sept 8: Soviet coach Alexander Alexandrov's last-minute substitution paid dividends in the women's team compulsories at the World Gymnastics Championships here Saturday, reports AFP.

Oksana Tchuosvitina, brought in for Elena Groudnova, responded with the best individual performance of the three rounds — A combined score of 39.07 points to put the Soviets in command.

Kerri Strug, with 38.886, and Hilary Grivich, 38.712, put the Americans second ahead of China's Li Yifang and Zhang Wenning.

France were provisional leaders of the team event but only because they had three gymnasts competing in the

first three rounds of the nine compulsory exercises.

They should fall to 10th, behind the Soviet Union, the United States, China, Romania, Bulgaria, Australia, Germany, Hungary and South Korea when these countries have completed their schedule.

Valeri Balenky, the 1990 world cup champion, led the Soviet men to an emphatic lead over China and Japan at the halfway stage of the men's compulsories.

Tchuosvitina, who scored 9.875 in the floor exercises, was given two hours to prepare for her unexpected display.

"At the last minute, I thought Tchuosvitina was better prepared than Groudnova, so I put her in," Alexandrov said. American women's coach

Bela Karolyin was more than pleased with his choice of, Grivich and Strug, the two youngest-members of the team.

"I hope that tomorrow we'll have another night like this one," he said. "If we do, we'll be very confident going into the optionals."

Grivich, the number five American gymnast, turned in particularly strong performances in the floor exercises and on the vault.

"I don't usually stick my landings and I did this time," she said. "The crowd helps a lot. I didn't know what to expect, but it went pretty well."

Earlier report said Soviet may be breaking apart politically but its gymnastics appear as strong as ever, taking the early lead at the World Gymnastics

Championships on Saturday, reports Reuter.

The Soviet men, holding first and second place, totalled 173.175 points, a 1.95 edge over China.

The Soviet women, who also held on to first and second, scored 78.410, giving them a slim 1.812 lead over the United States.

Grigori Musutin, Valeri Belenki and Alexei Voropaev of the Soviet Union took the first, second and sixth individual places for the men after roughly half the men completed.

The other half of the men's field, generally the stronger half, will compete in compulsory exercises today.

Despite his strong showing with 9.775 on both the floor exercise and parallel bars, Mistutin was not satisfied with his performance.

"It could have been better for me today," he said. "I made small mistakes, and I must not repeat that in the optional exercises."

In the men's competition, Japan held third place followed by the United States, Germany and Romania.

On the women's side, traditional powers China, Romania and Bulgaria held their to fifth place.

Americans Kerri Strug and Hilary Grivich came third and fourth in a strong beginning for the US team.

Communism's collapse sends coaches westward

INDIANAPOLIS, Sept 8: It began soon after the Berlin Wall was reduced to rubble, and has picked up momentum now that communism seems headed for a similar fate: Eastern-bloc coaches coaching Western athletes, reports AP.

"I've been approached by five coaches for jobs in my gym since I arrived in Indianapolis," said Ed Burch, an assistant coach for the US men's gymnastics team competing in the World Championships. When you look at the podium and watch the athletes train, you can't believe the number of coaches from other countries training those other countries.

Australia has Chinese coaches. Kuwait has a former Russian gymnast coaching its athletes. They're infiltrating

everywhere.

"They were the experts in the sport and they're going to lose that because they're not going to be supported by their governments anymore. Now they need jobs. It's like unemployment time."

While the political winds of change may be thinning the coaching ranks in Eastern Europe, Burch said it will take at least five more years for contenders like the US to make a noticeable dent in the Soviet Union's dominance of gymnastics.

"I don't think you'll see it in the '92 Games as much as you will in '96," Burch said Thursday. "Right now, the Soviets are still very, very good. In terms of skill level, we're not even close. We com-

peted against them recently and they had some problems in some of the events and still beat us by over five points."

With athletes like Igor Korobchinsky, Valeri Belenky, Svetlana Boguiniskaia and Natalia Kalintina, the Soviet Union it expected to add significantly to the 237 medals its gymnasts have won since 1954 — the first time the Soviets competed in the World Championships.

Korobchinsky and Boguiniskaia won the all-around titles at the 1989 World Championships in Stuttgart, West Germany. Boguiniskaia, now 18, also won three medals, including the gold in vaulting at the 1988 Olympics and swept every individual event at the 1990 European Championship.

Chinese women crowd semis

SAPPORO, Japan, Sept 8: Csilla Batorfi of Hungary pulled off a mild upset and became the only

European to move into the women's singles semifinals at the 60,000-dollar Japan open table tennis tournament here Saturday, reports AFP.

The former European champion, ranked ninth in the world, showed powerful drives to beat third-seeded Chan Tang-Lui of Hong Kong 21-11, 13-21, 18-21, 21-18, 21-19.

In the semi-finals, she will face former singles world champion Qiao Hong of China, who outclassed Japan's Fumiyko

Yamashita 21-15, 21-12, 21-12.

The other semifinal will pit current world champion Deng Yaping top seed, against Gao Jun in an all-Chinese match.

Deng eliminated Chai Po-Wa of Hong Kong 21-11, 19-21, 21-10, 21-16, while Gao Gao downed Shizuka Matsuzaki of Japan 17-21, 21-13, 21-14, 21-8.

In the men's singles competition, Sweden strongly booked four places in the quarter-finals with favourites Jorgen Persson, top seed, and Jan-Ove Waldner, second seed, moving a step closer toward their final encounter.

Unseeded Peter Karlsson,

ranked 35th, caused another upset beating third-seeded Jean-Philippe Gatten of France 21-10, 21-17, 26-24, while Erik Lindh downed Japans Kouji Matsushita 18-21, 21-18, 22-20, 21-17.

Other third-round winners were Johnny Huang of Canada, Yu Shentong, Xiong Ke and Wang Yonggang of China, and Chih Chin - Shui of Taiwan.

Former singles world champion Jiang Jialiang of China, who once retired from the competition and is currently doing a year as a trainer in Malaysia, failed to regain his top form losing to Canadian Gideon Jooing 14-21, 6-21, 7-21, in the second round.



The Tangail District Women's Sports Association team who won Milman's women's volleyball title defeating Sylhet DWSA in the final on Saturday at Dhanmondi.

Hendry outplays Parrott

NEW DELHI, Sept 8: Stephen Hendry won his second 555 challenge snooker title Saturday with a comfortable 9-5 win over John Parrott in a one-sided final here, reports AP.

The 22-year-old world number one, who had won the Hong Kong event of the three-leg series last week, proved too strong for the listless Parrott in an anti-climatic end to the Indian leg.

Hendry's efforts earned his 20,000 pounds (\$33,600 dollars) and put him firmly in line for the series bonus of a further

Warring wins

SALEMI, Sicily, Sept 8: James Warring knocked out fellow American James Pritchard with a right hook to the chin in the first round Saturday to win the vacant IBF cruiserweight title, reports AP.

Warring, a 35-year-old from Miami who turned from kick-boxing to traditional boxing only recently, floored his younger opponent only 24 seconds into the fight.

"I must thank God for his victory. It was also the result of several hours of daily training," said Warring, who later burst into tears.

Warring threw a couple of left jabs before landing his right and improving his record to 12-1 with eight knockouts.

Pritchard, 29, who was considered the favorite because of his professional boxing experience, fell to 27-2 with 22 of victories by knock-

20,000 pounds, even if he loses the final leg in Monte Carlo in December.

Parrott, the reigning world champion, pocketed 10,000 pounds (\$16,800 dollars) while the two losing semifinalists Steve Davis and Gary Wilkinson picked up 7,000 pounds (\$11,800 dollars) each.



STEPHEN HENDRY

Parrott affected by an upset stomach for the last three days, was never in with a chance after the in-form Hendry ran up a 3-0 lead in the first hour of the best of 17-frames final. The match appeared to be handed for an early finish as Hendry, who led 5-3 after the morning session, easily won the first two frames on resumption to make it 7-3.

The visibly tiring Parrott hit back by winning the next two frames, but then faded away as

Hendry's superior potting helped him wrap up the match in the next 25 minutes.

"I will not put my illness as an excuse for losing, Stephen was a very deserving winner," said Parrott, who had beaten Hendry twice last season.

Hendry said he was delighted at his current form and looked forward to playing in the Monte Carlo event, scheduled December 18-21.

"I played well today and whenever I do that, I know I can beat any opponent by a decent margin," he said.

Famechon regains consciousness

SYDNEY, Australia, Sept 8: Former world featherweight boxing champion Johnny Famechon regained consciousness in a Sydney hospital on Sunday, two weeks after he was struck by a car and lapsed into a coma, reports AP.

Famechon, 46, of Melbourne, was injured as he was leaving a Sydney racetrack.

Dr. Colin MacArthur of Liverpool Hospital said Famechon's condition, had improved significantly over the weekend.

"He has now opened his eyes and can write his name," MacArthur said.

Famechon won the world featherweight title in May 1969 and defended it twice before losing the title to Argentine Vicente Saldivar in May 1970.

Sevilla stun Barcelona

SEVILLA, Spain, Sept 8: Children forward Ivan Zamorano scored two first-half goals and set up a third as Sevilla beat defending champion FC Barcelona 4-2 Saturday in a Spanish major league soccer match, reports AP.

It was Sevilla's second victory in as many games and dropped Barcelona to one win and one loss. The remaining 18 first-division teams were slated to play their second-round matches Sunday.

Sevilla played a tremendous first half for coach Victor Esparrago, stealing numerous balls in the midfield and repeatedly testing Barcelona's three-man defense.

But Bulgarian Hristo Stoichkov and Eusebio Sacristan came back with goals for Barcelona before Cortijo sealed it with Sevilla's fourth in a wide-open second half.

Zamorano opened the scoring in the 11th minute, running onto Ignacio Conte's

cross and drilling it into the far corner.

In the 39th, it was Conte who headed the ball in after Zamorano headed him a perfect centering pass.

Zamorano struck again in the 43rd, redirecting Cortijo's low ball into the left corner of the net.

Both teams kept up the tremendous pace in the second half. Stoichkov nudged home a defense-splitting pass by Antoni Goicoechea to put Barcelona on the board in the 56th.

Sevilla nearly scored several times. Zamorano flashed a header off the post two minutes later. Then Uruguayan Pablo Bengoechea took a heel pass from Cortijo and drove it just outside the post.