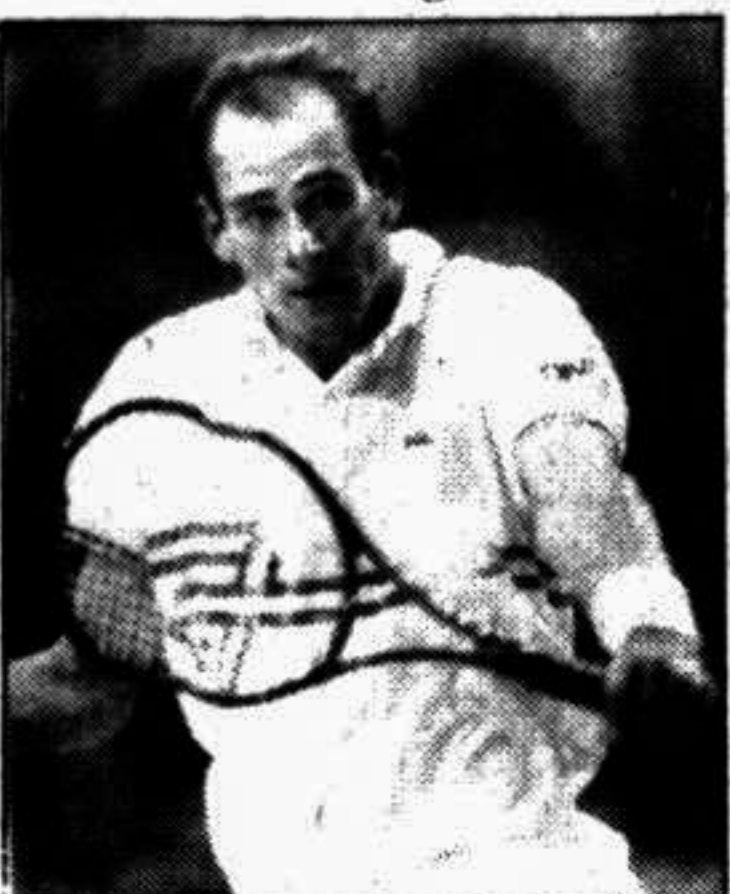


US players dare the Frenchmen

LYON, Nov 27: America's Davis Cup players admit they are ready for anything when they face France in this weekend's final—including the return of Yannick Noah, reports AFP.

Robert Seguso and Ken Flach, finalists at the world doubles championships in Johannesburg at the weekend, said they would not be surprised if the French captain picked himself for the doubles and named Henri Leconte as the second singles player with Guy Forget.

"I think they will play Leconte in the singles and that



GUY FORGET

Yannick will play with Forget in the doubles," said the 28-year-old Seguso who with Flach has been beaten only once in ten matches since making his Davis Cup debut in 1985.

"Leconte is always dangerous, and if they are looking for a result from their second singles player then he's the player who may get it for them."

"I was surprised when Yannick didn't name himself on the French team—but he can still put himself down up to one hour before the draw. And that's what I think he will do since it would be too much to expect Leconte to play the doubles as well as two five-set singles with his back problem."

"But it doesn't really worry us who we play. We have played them all so many times before. We have faced both Forget and Leconte and Forget and Noah in major matches so we will know what to expect."

Noah is refusing to say exactly who will play but he gave a little away when he admitted: "I wouldn't be training four or five hours a day if I wasn't going to play."

Seguso said he was de-

lighted with their form. "It was good to get our matches under our belt in Johannesburg and reach the final," he said after a vigorous hitting session with ATP champion Pete Sampras.

"I think we have been playing really well and we are delighted to be back in the Davis Cup team."

The French decision to use the Japanese-made Kennex balls which are not sold in the United States, had little effect on the players.

"I really like the balls," said Seguso.

And he was not worried by the Supreme Court surface. "We are used to having to change surfaces. It only takes us a couple of days to adapt," he said.

Andre Agassis and Sampras made it clear they didn't care who they played.

"We have just come from the World Championships," said Agassis after a sharp workout with Luke Jensen. "Pete won it and I reached the semi-finals."

With his streaked fair hair in a pony-tail pined under a white baseball cap, Mauve shorts and coloured tennis shoes, the 21-year-old Agassis looked very much at home among the flags and colours of the Gerland Stadium.

"I've been hitting really well right from the first ball here," he grinned.

"It's been great. The court plays very true and the bounce is consistent. I've gotten really comfortable very early so I'm very excited about what's to come."

Sampras, who won the Lyon Grand Prix last month and who will be making his Davis Cup debut, said: "The court is playing slightly faster than it was then, but I don't think that will make any difference."

The 20-year-old, who spent most of last week practising with Agassis at the Nick Bollettieri Academy in Florida, said he had a score to settle with Forget.

The French number one beat him in five sets in the Paris Open final three weeks ago.

"I've just watched a film of that match and I really feel I should have won," Sampras said. "I'll be going all out to put the record straight next weekend."

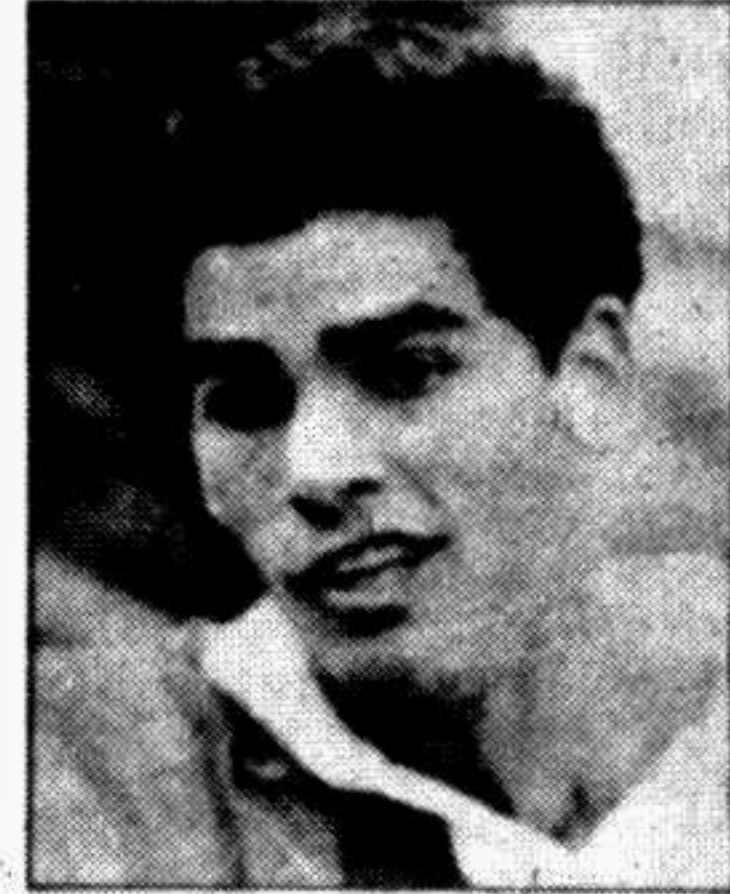
American captain Tom Gorman, a Wimbledon semi-finalist 20 years ago, shrugged off their relaxed approach to

the showdown. "We are doing things here the way we always do them," he said.

"We know this is going to be very difficult. When we beat the Australians in last year's final we were playing at home. Playing away gives us more headaches. But our players have been performing really well."

France are a good team and anyone who reaches the final are a good team, so we shall be taking nothing for granted," he stressed.

In marked comparison, the French arrived in Lyon after 10 days intensive training at a health farm in Switzerland.



PETE SAMPRAS

"I don't think we need to spend any extra time together. Gorman said. "The players are training all the time and they get plenty of practice. I'm sure they would soon get tired if they saw me around them all the time."

Reuter from Paris adds French captain Yannick Noah is keeping all but his team guessing by refusing to reveal who he has chosen to face the United States in the Davis Cup final starting on Friday in Lyon.

Noah told his four-man squad of Guy Forget, Henri Leconte, Olivier Delaitre and Arnaud Boetsch at the weekend of his selection for the two singles place and the doubles pairing against the Americans.

But he has barred the players from talking to the media and has added the mystery by hinting he could even play in the final himself as a late replacement for one of the others.

"I would not be training four or five hours a day if I had no intention of playing," he told reporters. "Leconte is playing well but then so am I."

There is no doubt that Forget, the world number seven, will be the first singles player and the anchor man of the doubles team but after that all options are open.

Title holders the United States, whose captain Tom Gorman is making no such secret of his line-up, will be using Andre Agassis and Pete Sampras in the singles, giving Noah the problem of producing a conjuring trick to find a second player able to give bither a serious contest.

Noah's lips may be sealed but the betting is heavily on Leconte, his old comrade-in-arms from France's last Davis Cup final appearance when the France were defeated 4-1 by the Americans in Grenoble nine years ago.

The swashbuckling but unpredictable Leconte has talent and experience on his side. He is capable of beating anyone of his day—and equally of losing to anybody.

More importantly he has played 38 singles rubbers for France in the Davis Cup, has beaten Agassis twice in four meetings and now seems fully fit again after a third back operation during the summer.

The young Delaitre is the other main contender for the slot. He reached the final of last month's Lyon tournament at the Palais Des Sports where the Davis Cup showdown takes place before losing badly to Sampras.

But he has no Davis Cup experience and Noah would be taking a huge gamble if he threw him in at the deep end.

France's best chance of an upset rest on Forget winning both his singles matches—he beat Sampras earlier this month in the Paris Open final—and winning a third point from the doubles where the Americans field Flach and Robert Seguso.

Leconte, an accomplished doubles player, is once again the best bet but Noah may feel three five-setters in three days could be beyond him and field Boetsch instead.

Or Maybe he will turn to Noah the player and name himself. Under Davis Cup rules he does not have to finalise his squad until Thursday and can still change his doubles team up to one hour before Saturday's rubber.

The only certainty is that Noah will keep his opponents in the dark until just before Thursday's draw.

Eight Games records fell as the second day of competition ended with the host clinging to a fragile lead of one gold medal over the Indonesians, 18-17.

Thailand, which kept third place with eight golds, has amassed the most number of medals among the nine nations competing with a total medal tally of 40, counting its 14 silvers and 18 bronzes.

The Indonesians swept all three weightlifting events with Daryanto and Sodikim leading the team's assault on the record books by setting new Games marks for total lift in the 60-kg and 56-kg category.

The defending champions also swept aside most of the competition in judo, grabbing three of the four golds at stake in the sport.

Indonesian swimmers completed the charge by winning the men's 3,100 metre freestyle in a record time of three minutes, 32.74 seconds.

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in two days by winning the mens' 400 metres individual medley in four minutes, 32.66 seconds.

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Two other Filipino swimmers also broke Games records while Thailand's Sornswan Phuchit set a new standard in the women's 200 metre breaststroke by winning the event in two minutes 38.21 seconds, breaking her own previous Games record of 2:42.10 which she set in 1989 in Kuala Lumpur.

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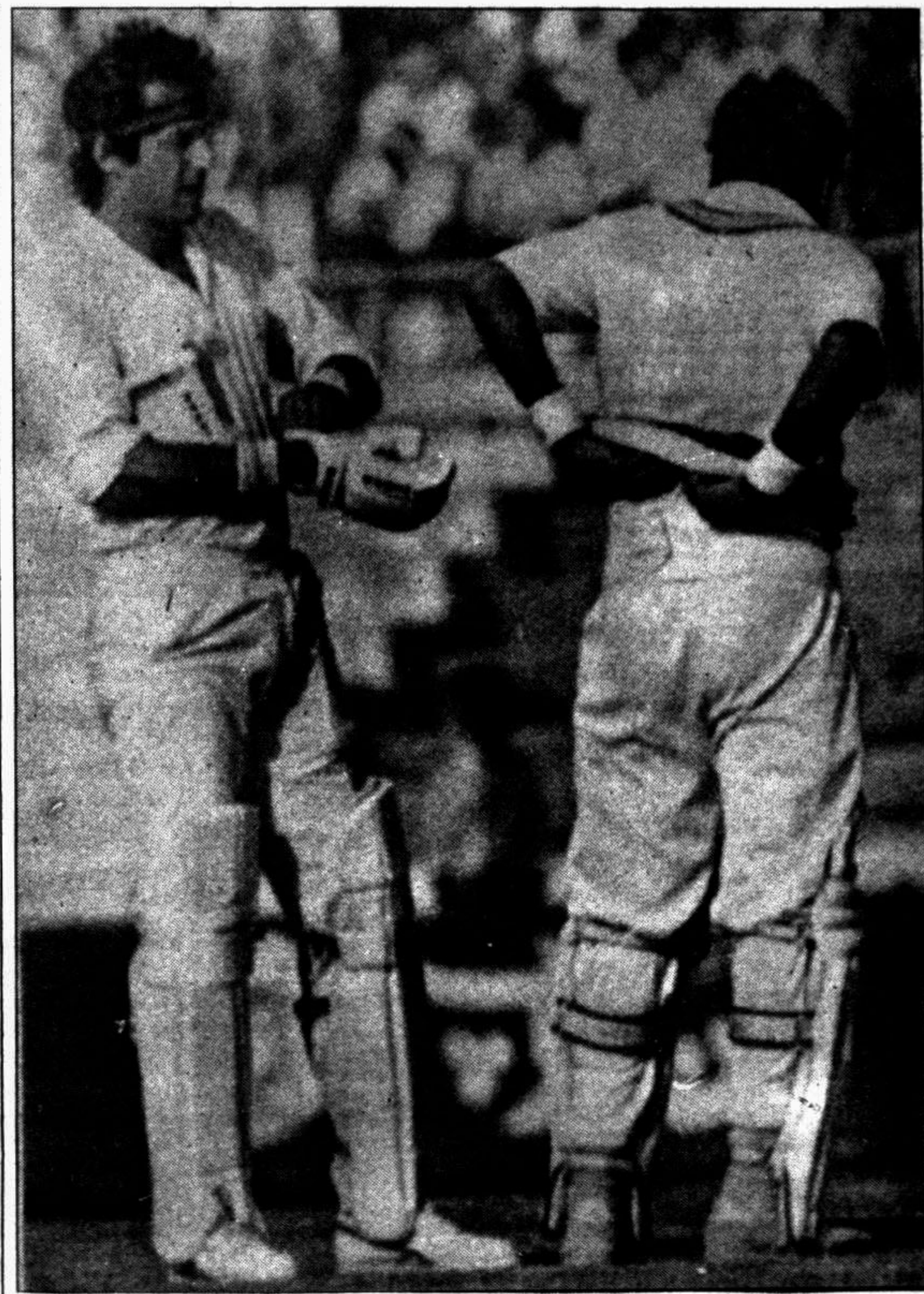
David Lim, whose false start in Monday's 4x200 relay cost Singapore a gold medal, made up for the error by winning the men's 100 metre backstroke on Tuesday in 58.50 seconds to give his country its first gold in the Manila Games.

"It's about time, Lim said after his victory. We should have won one yesterday. This will not replace the one we lost yesterday.... This will not eradicate the mistake I committed.

Medals standings on the second day of competition in the nine-nation South East Asian Games in Manila on Tuesday (tabulate under gold, silver and bronze).

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Vietnam	2	2	1
Singapore	1	7	5
Burma	1	2	2
Malaysia	0	3	3
Brunei	0	0	0
Laos	0	0	0

Note: Medal table does not tally because extra bronzes were awarded in some events.



Pakistani skipper Imran Khan (L) watches as batsman Javed Miandad (R) ties a pain-relieving thermal belt around his waist during the first one-day international match against the West Indies in Karachi on Nov 20.

Confident Lewis ready to fight any puncher

LONDON, Nov 27: Lennox Lewis is ready to take on anyone—including Mike Tyson, reports AFP.

The bold claim by the fighter's manager Frank Maloney follows the British and European champion's impressive three round demolition of Tyrell Biggs in Atlanta on Saturday.

"Judging by his frame of mind and if the money was right I feel he would fight Tyson tomorrow," insisted Maloney.

"I've never seen Lewis in this mood. The American press raved about him," added Maloney.

"His punch delivery and accuracy were tremendous. I gave his performance eight out of 10 and that is the best I have given him yet. He is so close to being the complete fighter."

"At the moment, I am looking at a world title eliminator in June," said Maloney.

The only worthwhile fight left in Britain would be against Frank Bruno.

Lewis' next outing will be in Las Vegas on February 1 against anyone of five opponents in the world top 10—a list including Italy's Francesco Damiani on the night of young heavyweights promotion.

Lewis is then set to defend his titles against Commonwealth champion Derek Williams by the end of March when outright ownership of a Lonsdale belt will be an additional incentive.

The double champion's progress after that probably hinges on Tyson and his court appearance on January 26.

Reports suggest that lawyers are seeking a postponement of the trial in order for his multi-million dollar crack at undisputed champion Evander Holyfield to go ahead.

US to host '92 Davis Cup

NEW YORK, Nov 27: The United States will host their Opening-round tie of the 1992 Davis Cup competition against Argentina in Hawaii, US Tennis Association said on Tuesday, reports Reuter.

The match will be played on a hard court outdoors at the Mauna Lani Racquet Club in Kohala Coast starting on January 31, the USTA said.

The United States, defending their title against the French in the final of the 1991 competition this weekend in Lyon, France, have beaten Argentina seven of 10 times in previous Davis Cup encounters.

Record profit for Wimbledon

LONDON, Nov 27: The Wimbledon Tennis Championships made a record profit of nearly 12 million pounds sterling (21.5 million dollars), organisers announced on Wednesday, reports Reuter.

The surplus from the Grand Slam tournament, which goes to the national Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) to help fund tennis in Britain, rose by almost 25 per cent on last year to 11,991,000 pounds.

This year's Wimbledon saw a break with tradition when the gates were opened on the middle Sunday—normally a rest day—to ease a backlog of matches due to days of rain.

Thousands of tennis fans snapped up the cheap tickets offered on the day and created a boisterous, fun atmosphere on the centre court where polite applause and the British stiff upper lip normally prevail.

Ian Peacock, the LTA chief executive, described the record profits as very satisfactory.

He said the LTA was expanding its national training scheme and building new tennis facilities.

"By the middle of this decade the objective is to have three men in the world's top 50," Peacock said. "If we do that we will be doing very well indeed."

Currently Britain can boast only one man in the world's top 200—29-year-old Jeremy Bates, ranked 162nd—and one woman in the top 100—31-year-old Jo Durie, who is number 60.

Although optimism is a diet on which the British tennis has lived for far too long, we can look forward to next year with more facilities, new tournaments and perhaps the labours of our new coaching team beginning to bear some fruit, Peacock said.

First round tie marks new FA Cup record

LONDON, Nov 27: Rotherham and Scunthorpe made FA Cup history when their first round tie became the first in the 120-year history of the competition to be decided by a penalty shoot-out, reports AFP.

With Tuesday night's replay finishing 3-3 after extra time, the shoot-out became necessary and Rotherham eventually won it 7-6.

Don Page had shot Rotherham into a 22nd minute but Ian Hellwell headed Scunthorpe level after 53 minutes.

Then, straight from the restart, Rotherham went back in front through Shaun Goodwin.

Scunthorpe forced extra time when Tony Daws equalised 12 minutes from the end of normal time. Substitute Jason White looked to have booked their passage into

round two when he scored in the 19th minute to extra time.

But four minutes later Page grabbed his second goal to ensure the two sides shared in a piece of cup history.

Queen's Park Rangers' home hood struck again in the Zenith Data Systems Cup but at least this time they went down fighting.

Manager Gerry Francis, who has seen his side lose three times at Loftus road in the space of a week, must have been proud with the rousing final flourish Rangers produced to rattle their London rivals in this thriller.

With 56 minutes gone Palace were 3-0 ahead and looking certain to reach the area semifinals.

But Rangers' revival began a minute later when David Bardsley bundled the ball in from close range.

And then substitute Andy Impey slipped the ball past Palace keeper Nigel Martyn and Ray Wilkins tapped in from a yard after 68 minutes.

Rangers were now rampant and ten minutes later Leeds Ferdinand looked to have levelled the tie but his effort was ruled out for offside.

But despite their rousing finish Rangers were unable to force extra time as a revived Palace held on to reach the area semifinals.

It had all gone so different earlier on as Palace took a vice like grip on the match.

Geoff Thomas cracked in a stunning opening goal after 26 minutes, and on the stroke of half-time Marco Gabbiadini sped through to score number two. Palace then appeared to seal a comfortable victory when Eric Young headed home after 56 minutes.

bowlers shall have to rise very high to break through this long and solid line-up.

In Javagal Srinath India has found a young man of promise. The veteran Kapil Dev, with 376 Test wickets in his bag, should act as the inspiring force for him and Prabhakar. If the Indians decide in favour of playing a fourth seamer, Subroto Banerjee is likely to make his debut in Brisbane. Shastrri could be the lone spinner in the team with Srikanth providing the occasional surprise.

It should also be remembered that the Indian batsmen are up against a very strong Australian attack. Mike Whitney, the main wrecker for NSW (5 for 82) earlier in the week, shall have the company of Craig McDermott, Merv Hughes and Paul Reffel. If the wicket is fast, as is the probability, the specialised spinner Peter Taylor may be side-lined and Paul Reffel shall be making his debut as well. Allan Border may be the lone spinner, just for adding variety. Incidentally, this will be Allan Border's 126th Test match; thereby he will be overtaking Sund Gavaskar in the number of Test appearances, but he is quite far away from Gavaskar's 10122 Test runs. At present Border is on 9257.

Judging the comparative

Weightlifters boost Indonesian hopes

MANILA, Nov 27: Defending champion Indonesia, powered by its weightlifters and judokas, snatched 11 gold medals on Tuesday and moved up to challenge early leader Philippines in the 16th South East Asian Games, reports Reuter.

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Thailand, which kept third place with eight golds, has amassed the most number of medals among the nine nations competing with a total medal tally of 40, counting its 14 silvers and 18 bronzes.

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A day of records

MANILA, Nov 27: The swimming competition dazed the crowds here Tuesday as four more meet records were smashed on the second day of the 16th South East Asian Games, reports AFP.

At least 6,000 people crowded the stands, with a further 1,500 shut outside, as Eric Buhain and Akiko Thomson become the first two Filipino swimmers to turn in double gold performances.

Semi-retired Lee Concepcion pulled the day's biggest surprise by winning the men's 200-meter breaststroke in a time of 2 min 21.41 sec, besting the Games record of 2:21.57 set by Indonesian Wirmandi Sugriat in Jakarta four years ago. Sugriat took the silver this time.

The 21-year-old Buhain blitzed through the men's 400-meter individual relay with a time of 4:32.66, besting his

own record of 4:35.35 also set in Jakarta.

Thomson, who gained Philippine citizenship through a presidential decree signed by the last dictator Ferdinand Marcos, outdid herself in the women's 200-meters backstroke with a record-breaking time of 2:20.65.

Two other records were shattered by Thailand and by defending Games champions Indonesia.

Thailand ended the day with two more swimming golds from Sornswan Phuchit in the women's 200-meters breaststroke and Raitporn Wong in the women's 100-meters butterfly.

Phuchit smashed her own Games record in the event with a time of 2:38.21. The Indonesian team broke another Games record in winning the 4 X100 freestyle relay in 3:32.34.

David Lim Fong turned in a 0:50.50 the men's 100-meters backstroke to gain Singapore's first gold in the Games.

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An IOC statement said the four-month reply period was lengthened to take into account "certain difficulties with postal deliveries."

A record 161 nations attended the 1988 Summer Olympics in Seoul.

Reuter adds: It said on Tuesday 156 out of 170 National Olympic Committees had accepted its invitations by a Monday deadline but 14 countries—including Jamaica—had yet to do so.

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Azhar's men face a daunting challenge in Australia

On Friday the Indians face the Australians in the opening Test match of the five-match series in Brisbane.

The tourists, who arrived late in order to accommodate the last-minute three one-day matches against the South Africans, had very little time to have a feel of the Australian atmosphere. Moreover, having played eight one-day internationals in a row in quick succession, they got very little time indeed to adjust to the changed rhythm of matches which continue for days together. After all, Test matches are a completely different brand of cricket. India's last Test outing was against the Sri Lankans in November 1990 and in the immediately preceding summer in England they did well to have lost only one Test in a series of five.

Literally rushing off from the Jawaharal Nehru Stadium, they flew to Perth and played the first match the very next day. The Down Under sky, figuratively speaking, for the Indian cricketers so far have been pretty dark and cloudy. But, as the saying goes, every dark cloud has a silver lining and for the Indians the teenage batting prodigy Sachin

Tendulkar provided the silver lining with his innings of 82 (in the first innings total of 209) and 59 (in the second innings total of 147) in the match against the New South Wales State team, the only four-day match they played, and that, too, finished before tea on the third.

In this match the Indians suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of the State team by an innings and eight runs. Mike Whitney ripped through the Indian batting and earned for himself a place in the Test team in Brisbane. It is obvious that the Indians take the field in the first Test in the backdrop of a gloom which pervades their camp and their manager's admonition to "pull up their socks" is quite timely and legitimate.

The Indian team has its obvious strength in batting. But their performance so far can hardly justify that claim. I have little doubt, once the Indian batsmen get settled to the changed conditions and get to know the hard and bouncy wickets, their batting performance cannot but improve and may even flourish. It is unfortunate that they got very little time for adjustment and changeover in mood and temperament.

In Manjrekar and Tendulkar India has two class

players, who do not lack in technique and quality and it is only a question of time for them. In their skipper Mohammad Azharuddin they have another batsman who, once he gets going, has the capability of facing up to any bowling attack. Vengsarkar and Shastrri, the two seasoned campaigners, have the ability and record of doing well on Australian wickets. Srikanth, chosen mainly on his past performance on the Australian wickets during the 1985-86 series, which India did very well to draw, is also likely to flourish.

In spite of the dismal show so far, I am inclined to believe that the Indian batting will stand up to the challenge. The sooner they can settle down to the Test match atmosphere and temperament the better for the Indians.

But the weakness of the Indian bowling is so obvious that I have heard people saying that they will not be able to get the Australians out twice in any of the Tests. Though this sounds pretty harsh, there may be some element of credibility in it. The Australian batting comprising Mark Taylor, Geoff Marsh, David Boon, Dean Jones, Mark Waugh and Allan Border is a formidable proposition, which may over-awe any bowling attack. The Indian

strengths of the contending sides, the Australians appear to be almost invincible, and, frankly speaking, the odds are against the Indians, who can afford no illusions. The Australian Test stars have already been sounding high and loud warning signals for the visitors; almost all of them are in good form. The Indians, because of their lack of the time for adjustment, definitely take the field in Brisbane facing an uphill task and the challenge could not be tougher. Supreme efforts come out only when the challenge is great. A few of the Indian batsmen do possess the capability of rising up to the challenge and I will not be surprised if some memorable performances come from some of them.

The series, as it appears, is going to be fought between two unequals, but it may also prove to be otherwise and in that case, the surprise will, of course, be a pleasant one in this part of the cricketing world. It should, however, be remembered that the Australians lost 1-2 to the West Indians early this year in the Caribbean Islands.

The records of the Indo-Australian Test matches clearly indicate an Australian superiority. The Indians, led by Lala Amarnath, first played Tests against the Aussies back

in 1947-48, when the great Sir Don Bradman was the Australian captain. Since then they have played 45 Tests, of which Australia have won 20, India Eight, 16 were drawn and the Madras Test in 1986-87 series ended in a thrilling tie. India, under the leadership of G. S. Ramchand, registered their first Test victory in a home Test against Richie Benaud's team in 1959-60. India's first success on Australian soil came in 1977-78 under the leadership of B. S. Bedi against the Packerless Australians under Bobby Simpson. So far, India has managed only three wins in Australia, the famous one being the Melbourne Test in the 1980-81 series.

Records as well as current form invariably point that the odds are against the Indians. But who knows what surprises are in store for the cricket lovers? The over-all result of the series is less likely to be pleasing to the Indian supporters, but they can optimistically look forward to some performances, which may be quite out of the ordinary. Sympathy of sportslovers usually is with the underdogs and often that sympathy is rewarded in the form of some bright spots, which shine in the back of the mind for quite some time.

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