

Sport

A silent Seles outclassed by Graf

WIMBLEDON, England, July 5: No grunt, no Grand Slam. A muted Monica Seles gave in to her critics and melted silently in the rain Saturday as Steffi Graf hummed to her fourth Wimbledon title, 6-2, 6-1, reports AP.

It took nearly 5 1/2 hours to play 58 minutes of tennis in a match that was interrupted three times by rain and finally ended in the gloom of a dark gray evening at 7:29 pm.

"There's been so much talk about that grunting, maybe it got to her and it bothered her," Graf said.

Like Samson shorn, Seles seemed powerless without her trademark grunts. Her game lacked rhythm and accuracy as she wandered the court aimlessly with a distracted, frustrated frown.

Graf, perfectly relaxed and strong as ever, did her part to spoil Seles' bid for a third major title this year and a chance to match the Grand Slam that Graf achieved in 1988.

Chasing down shots from corner to corner, putting away winners on the run, whacking back killer returns and serving hard and deep, Graf might have beaten Seles even with the grunts.

"I just hoped I could start somewhere, so I felt maybe I could start here in the finals," Seles said of her ill-timed attempt to muffle herself and change a habit that has been with her for years.

But she didn't use it as an excuse.

"I don't win my matches because of grunting," she said. "I don't lose to Steffi today because I was not grunting."

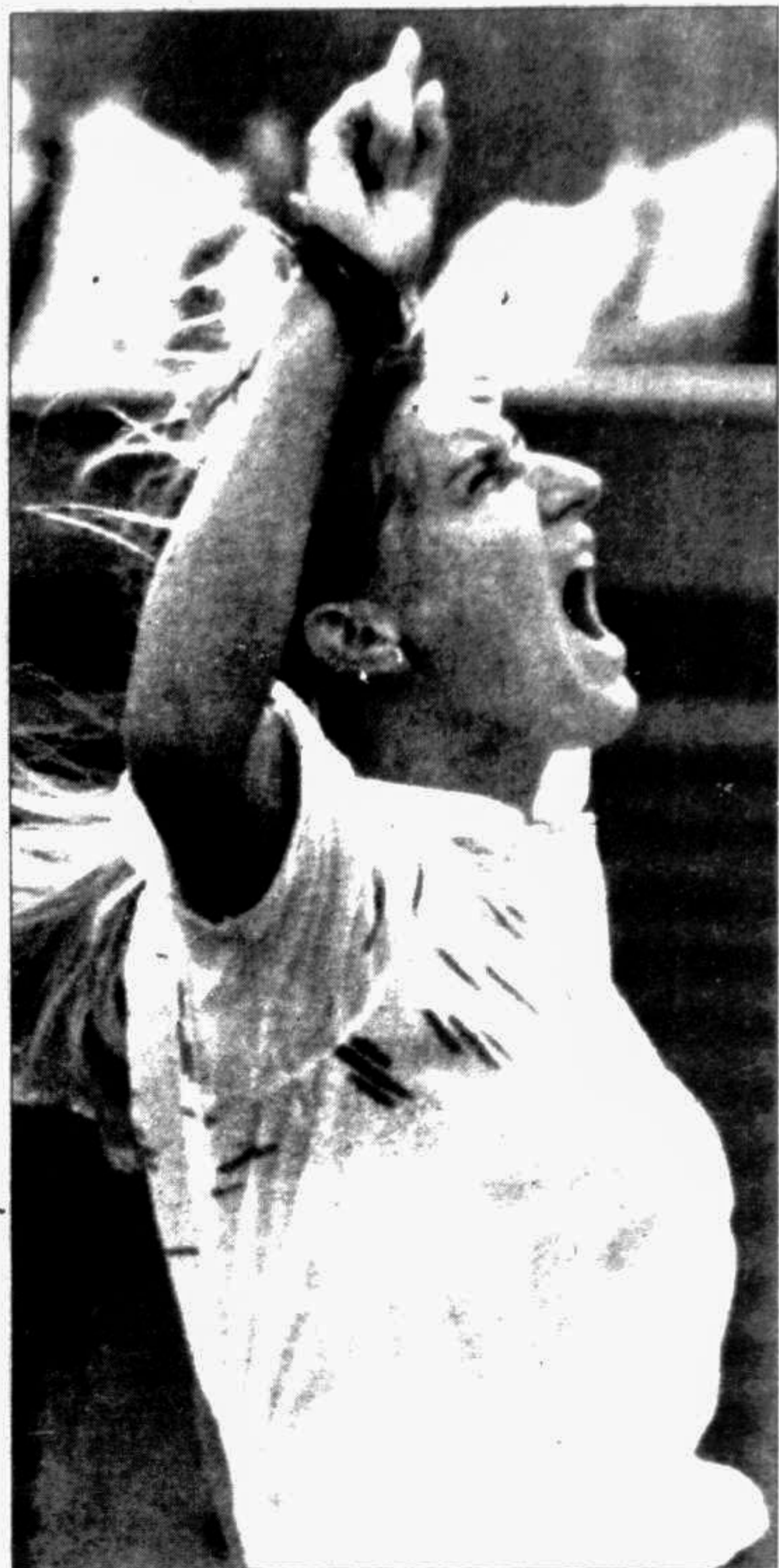
Seles' high-pitched braying — U-n-n-h-h-h-E-E-E-I-I-I-I-I — on almost all her shots in previous matches brought criticism from officials and ridicule in the British press.

As she stepped onto Centre Court for her first Wimbledon final, fans in the stands carried tabloids that called her "PUBLIC ENEMY NO. 1" and "LITTLE MISS GRUNT." One paper bannered: "MONICA: I WILL BEAT THE HATE MOB," while another asked, "WILL THEY HAVE THE COURAGE TO SILENCE MONICA?"

Even one of the highbrow papers commented loftily, "We must trust that she learns to curb the sound effects before the women's game begins to go the way of all-in wrestling."

Seles sounded overwhelmed by it all.

"Every day, the papers, the headlines, the grunts, and everything — a lot of people making such a big fuss," she said. "I'm not the only one



STEFFI GRAF...a most self-satisfying victory

who's doing it, and I thought why are they picking on me?"

"When I was in the locker room and read my letters, 95 percent of the people said, 'Don't listen to them. So I'm in the middle now. I don't know which way to go. Even if I don't keep grunting... it's such an issue.'"

Giving up the grunts may have pleased the aesthetes and Graf, but the 18-year-old Seles paid a high price for her sacrifice.

She had won the last five Grand Slam events she entered, missing only last year's Wimbledon because of shin splints, and taking 41 straight Grand Slam matches.

But this was one of the worst defeats of her career.

her in long rallies, Graf broke her to take a 3-1 lead. Seles accommodated with an abundance of errors, including a mis-hit forehand on break point.

Graf's backhand slice kept the ball low on the moist grass, making it difficult for Seles to pick up. Seles prefers the high bouncing balls on clay and hard courts and still in learning the nuances of grass-court play. That was especially evident against Graf, an expert on this surface.

Graf's variety of shots — slices and topspins from both sides — her angled, inside-out forehands, drops and lobs, exasperated Seles more than the rain.

Graf moved Seles around like a puppet, bringing her in, then sending her back, moving her from one side to another. Graf ended that one-sided opening set with a perfect forehand crosscourt pass after drawing Seles in on a short backhand that clipped the net cord.

The first rain delay, which lasted 47 minutes, came with Graf leading 1-0 in the second set. The players returned to play at 3:31 pm, got in five points in two minutes, then were chased away again by rain.

They came back again at 5:20 pm, and this time managed to get in a few more games.

Graf, closing in on her second straight championship, led 6-2, 4-1, with Seles to serve at 15-30 when the match was halted for the third time. Nearly two hours later, they returned to the court, given bouquets of flowers, then set about to finish it up.

Seles took the next point, but then netted a forehand for the first of four break points. On the last, she netted an easy backhand to fall behind 5-1.

With charcoal clouds scudding overhead, Graf didn't risk another delay. A fan offered encouragement as she stepped up to serve, yelling with a German accent, "Just do it!" She did.

Seles took the first point on a superb lunging backhand return crosscourt, then watched Graf sweep through the final four points.

Everything Graf hit was near perfect, even her mistakes. She mis-hit a forehand, and it angled crosscourt for a winner. She smacked a deep serve that Seles dove into the net. Graf hit a forehand deep into the corner, and it clipped Seles' outstretched racket edge to set up championship point at 40-15. And in a blink of an eye it was over, Graf serving an ace up the middle that Seles just stared at, again in silence.

Wimbledon may see McEnroe again

LONDON, July 5: John McEnroe may have played his last Wimbledon — but then again he may not.

The American was beaten in straight sets in the men's singles semifinals by Andre Agassi on Saturday but said later he felt encouraged by his achievements, reports Reuter.

"I'm really happy with this tournament," he said. "I feel great about it. It's hard to feel that good about it right now but I know I'll feel proud of it soon."

So would he return next year?

"I don't know," McEnroe replied. "Before the tournament I said that was a possibility, that I would play, and it's certainly encouraging to get to the semifinals. So I think it's certainly a possibility that I will play."

McEnroe, who has three children with his wife Tatum, said the calls of family life were getting louder.

"I'm not going to play a full-time schedule but it certainly makes me feel good that I'm still capable of playing great tennis and that I'm still a legitimate top player."

That's a good feeling. Whether or not I'm a legitimate contender, at least I'm a legitimate top player."

McEnroe pondered over his doubles future.

He has reached the semifinals of the men's doubles at Wimbledon and said he felt the burden of playing twice as many matches had cost him a lot in the past.

"There were a couple of times where it cost me perhaps winning the title," said McEnroe, three times a winner of the singles here, referring to his glory days.

"As you get older, it is more difficult... having a family for example, you want to spend more time with them. You don't want to go sitting around here all day every day."

"I enjoy playing doubles... but it does complicate things," added McEnroe, whose Wimbledon partner is 1991 singles champion Michael Stich of Germany.

Young Africans clock year's best times in Oslo

OSLO, July 5: Two exciting young Africans set year's best times on the track during a memorable meeting staged on a warm, cloudless Scandinavian night in the Bislett Games Grand Prix on Saturday, reports Reuter.

Twenty-year-old Ethiopian Fita Bayissa ran the fifth-fastest time ever over 10,000 metres, clocking 27 minutes 14.26 seconds with a scorching last lap of 54.8 seconds.

Organisers announced it was Bayissa's first attempt at the distance but he later said he ran the distance three months ago.

"I will run both the 5,000 and 10,000 at the Olympics but I think my best chance is at the 5,000," he said.

Kenya's Paul Bitok also ran a swift final lap to win the 5,000 metres in a year's best of 13:08.89.

Bitok, who outprinted Morocco's Khalid Skah in a thrilling last lap, said he was surprised at the result.

"I had not expected to win," he confessed.

Zelezny's world javelin record

OSLO, July 5: Technique and technology combined to give Jan Zelezny the finest series of Javelin throws in history on Saturday — culminating with a world record, reports Reuter.

After three successive throws over 90 metres, the 26-year-old Czechoslovak hurled the javelin 94.74 metres, more than three metres further than the previous record of 91.46 metre by Briton Steve Backley this year.

Zelezny, who still lists his occupation as a soldier despite what must be a full-time career as a field athlete, found history repeating itself with almost eerie precision at Oslo's Bislett Games.

Two years ago, during the same competition, Zelezny picked up the latest javelin designed by Hungary's former Olympic champion and world record holder Miklos Nemeth.

On a warm night, similar to Saturday, Zelezny launched the javelin a world record 89.66 metres with his sixth and final throw.

The Nemeth model, used also by Finn Seppo Raty and Backley to set world records in 1990, was later ruled illegal by the International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF).

The IAAF said the record should revert to the last mark set by a javelin with a smooth tail, which happened to be Backley's throw of 89.58 in the same year.

Zelezny, who has thrown in only three competitions this year because of a back injury, was using Nemeth's latest offering on Saturday.

But in a further irony, although the javelin satisfies IAAF criteria, Nemeth himself said it had not been submitted to the IAAF technical committee and accordingly could not be used at this month's Barcelona Olympics.

Seles takes setback in stride

LONDON, July 5: By all the unwritten rules of Wimbledon, Monica Seles should have been red-eyed and close to tears after losing Saturday's women's final, reports Reuter.

Instead the Yugoslav top seed, her dreams of winning all the 1992 Grand Slam titles in tatters, giggled merrily and joked her way through her post-match news conference.

If she had performed as well on the court she might have won.

Steffi Graf, who played her off the court in two rainhit sets, appeared almost mournful in comparison.

Even the "grunting issue" did not dampen Seles' girlish enthusiasm, on a grey day of intermittent rain.

"I really had a lot of fun here," she said.

"I really personally never thought I would win the Grand Slam this year."

Reporters, who have interrogated the world number one mercilessly in the past two weeks over her distinctive grunting noises on court, held fire in amazement.

What had she learned at Wimbledon this year, someone inquired, possibly angling for a reaction to the endless series of newspaper stories about her noise levels.

"I really had a wonderful time here tennis wise," the Yugoslav said, choosing her words carefully. "It was really nice to be back after what happened last year."

Last year Seles missed Wimbledon in mysterious circumstances, spawning a run of increasingly outlandish rumours including one that she might be pregnant.

Looking composed, with make-up and earrings, Seles was frank about her remark-

able defeat.

"She just played a better match than me" she said.

"Today I just couldn't handle the returns. Not just on the first serve but also on the second."

But where was the grunting?

"It was a deafening silence," somebody ventured.

"Oh was it?" She replied innocently.

ceived a lot of letters from fans urging her to carry on grunting. "Ninety-five per cent of the letters say don't listen to them," she said.

But she insisted she had no hard feelings.

"I try not to read the stories. I really never had to deal with so many things outside the court as here. With last year's Wimbledon, the mystery thing, it was a little different."



JAN ZELEZNY

set by a javelin with a smooth tail, which happened to be Backley's throw of 89.58 in the same year.

Zelezny, who has thrown in only three competitions this year because of a back injury, was using Nemeth's latest offering on Saturday.

For the same reason the 1990 Nemeth model was not used in the 1990 European Championships, won by Backley.

"I still believe that 90 metres is going to win the Olympic Games," said Backley, runner-up on Saturday with 85.06.

"I think it's almost ironically similar to the 1990 scene."

Zelezny, speaking through an interpreter, said his technique was not yet fully honed for Barcelona.

"I don't think it was a perfect throw," he said. "Anybody could see it went too much to the right side."

He said he did not plan to throw again before the Games.

"I'm going to use the time to improve my technique," he said. "My technique is not perfect."

Zelezny was fully aware of the parallels with the 1990 Bislett Games during Saturday's competition.

"I said to myself, I want to make the sixth throw my best," he said.

It's best was good enough to improve the world mark by more than three metres. Suddenly, despite the IAAF's best efforts to change the javelin's specifications, throws are again reaching distances which put other athletes in danger.

Sotomayor wins int'l event

EBERSTADT, Germany, July 5: World record holder Javier Sotomayor cleared 2.36 metres (7 feet 8 1/2 inches) to equal the best performance of the season and win an international high jump competition Saturday, reports AP.

The Cuban's performance three weeks before the start of the Barcelona Olympics equaled the height cleared earlier in the season by Lambros Papakostas of Greece.

"I had four very good weeks of preparation in Mexico in April and I feel very confident before the Olympics," Sotomayor said.

On a rainy day, Sotomayor failed to clear 2.40 (7-10 1/2), a height that would have earned him a luxury Audi car offered by organizers.

Hollis Conway of the United States, the Olympic silver medalist in 1988, cleared 2.33 (7-7 1/2) to place second, while Carlo Thranehand of Germany finished third at 2.30 (7-6 1/2).

Graf profits from being ignored

WIMBLEDON, July 5: It seems odd, but Steffi Graf's run through Wimbledon went virtually unnoticed, reports AP.

Only two years ago, when she was knocked out in Wimbledon's semifinals by Zina Garrison, Graf was hounded by Britain's tabloid press over a messy family scandal.

This year, however, the harsh spotlight fell on Monica Seles over her on-court grunts that raised the ire of opponents.

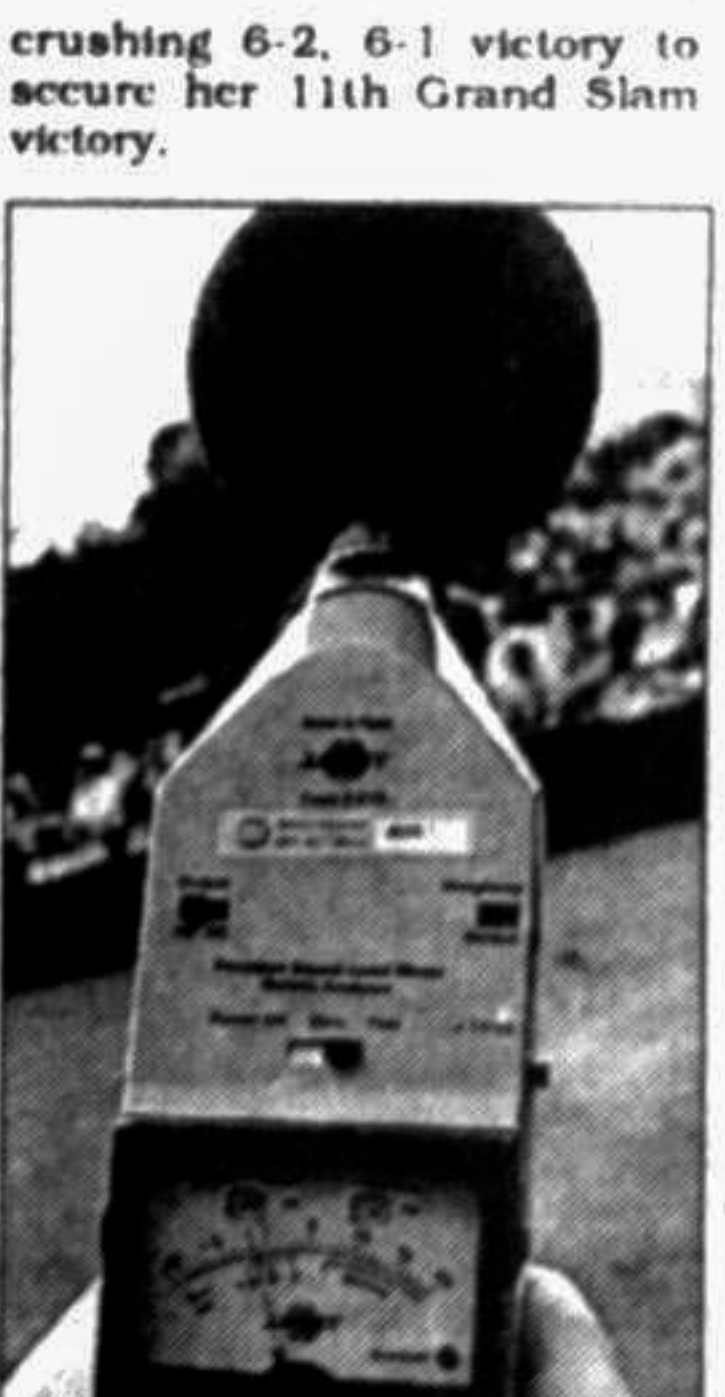
Except for one dust-up with the tabs — after they gave out her Wimbledon address and brought crowds of the curious to her house — she has been allowed to play tennis in peace.

Showing the form that raised her to the No. 1 ranking and produced a Grand Slam sweep in 1988, Graf roared into Wimbledon's final.

After some uncertainty in early matches against Mariana de Swardt and Patty Pendek, who each took a set, Graf steadily picked up her game.

Her powerful serve and famous forehand ripped through Natalia Zvereva in the quarter-finals and overpowered Gabriela Sabatini in the semis.

Against Seles in Saturday's rain-interrupted final, Graf was even more formidable in a



A so-called 'gruntometer'

crushing 6-2, 6-1 victory to secure her 11th Grand Slam victory.

thing else to worry about.

Graf said it was the best match she played "in a long, long time."

"I knew I had it in me. I was frustrated that I didn't show it."

Seles already had an inkling that the old 23-year-old Graf was regaining her old form. Seles needed all her determination on her favourite clay surface in the final of the French Open to hold off Graf in an epic struggle that finished 10-8 in the decisive third set.

Her 1990 semifinal elimination was a low point for Graf. Troubled by a sinus ailment and harassed by a media frenzy over allegations about her father's relations with a nude model, Graf flew home to Germany in the middle weekend.

But Seles that year was to get a hint of what would hit her over the past two weeks. The tabloids had begun keeping track of her grunting.

She was spared such last year with her last-minute withdrawal from the tournament blaming injury.

While Graf objected this time to the publication of her address and to questions whether a man photographed with her was a boyfriend, she was basically ignored.

Such headlines as "Public Enemy No. 1" were reserved for Monica Seles.

Zitui's triumph

SAPPORO, Japan, July 5: Kenjiro Zitui of Japan won the Sapporo International half marathon Sunday, beating Barcelona Olympic marathon hopefuls Isidro Rico of Mexico and Ed Eyestone of the United States, reports AP.

Italian hopes rest in team sports

ROME, July 5: If Italy is to achieve its aim of matching the 14 medals captured in Seoul, the success will probably be far from the spotlight of the athletics track, reports AP.

The athletics strength which earned it three medals in Seoul is now on the wane, and Arrigo Gattai, head of the National Olympic Committee, is wary of becoming a hostage to fortune in any sport.

"I don't want to make any predictions," he insists.

"The standards at Barcelona are going to be a great deal higher with all the new coun-

tries that have become affiliated to the International Olympic Committee. Especially with the prospect of South Africa's return and the presence of teams from Slovenia and Croatia."

"Nevertheless, I think Italy can play its part, and I would be delighted if we can continue the excellent results."

In particular, Gattai rates Italy's chances in the volleyball and water-polo tournaments, sports where the "Squadra Azzurra" has established itself as a major world player.

Italy is home to one of the world's top volleyball leagues, and its men's team are the reigning world champions.

They were also European Championship finalists last year.

More recently, they finished top of Group C at the end of the first phase of the World League, losing only one game in 12 — the best performance in the tournament so far.

"Mind you, the football team seems to be just as strong as them this year" says Gattai. "And I can see it winning a medal."

After hosting the 1990 World Cup and failing even to reach the final, and then being knocked out of the European Championship qualifiers, Italy's under-23 footballers would be-

come heroes if they managed to restore national pride with an Olympic gold.

Away from the team sports, the medal hopes lie with the country's humbly — archers, swordsmen and sharp shooters — with traditional strengths in boxing and the swimming pool following the athletics trend.

In these disciplines, as in many others at Barcelona, Italians are counting on a respectable fifth or sixth place, but praying for better.

More than anything, they would dearly love a repeat of the Seoul marathon, which provided the closest finish in 68 years as Gelindo Bordin beat Kenya's Douglas Wakithuri at the death.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	1 Heroic deed	5 Lou's partner	8 "Welcome..." (movie)	12 Ballet leap	14 Elevator man	15 Stop it!	16 Skater's arena	17 Asian festival	18 Chooses by ballot	20 Rank above captain	23 Nicholas or Ivan	24 King of comedy	25 Disappointment	28 Disease of sheep	29 Spars	30 Over, to Keats	32 Be unhappy	34 Unit of metrical time	35 Numerical suffix	
	36 Rose-colored dye	37 Coral atoll in the Pacific	40 Ancient Above	42 Supported staunchly	47 Apple or pear	48 Outer	49 Leon or Ed. of films	50 Colonial import	51 Not any											
										DOWN	1 Govt. commission	2 Water, in halfpenny	21 First Arabic letter	22 Worn-out horse	23 Lloyd Bentsen, for one	25 Fail in a wager	26 Courts	27 St. Philip		

Solution time: 25 min.

BOOR OLEG JAW
OBOE SOLE UMA
LIZA CUBE TOR
DEED ADO NERD
MAR WHO
SATYRS SONNET
AGILE MEARA
DOMINO PEWTER
PAX ART
AXIS FUR ABCD
POR FORT XRAY
SUM ERG EASE
ETA EDEN STAR

CRYPTOQUIP

VIU XIP HWVHU GWRPPYPN
YNPAPND STFU QFWXIPD:
XIPNP'D CW JQQWSCXOCT
AWN XJDXP

Today's Cryptoquip clue: Q equals C

The Cryptoquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.