

Graf, Stich top seeds for Hopman Cup

SYDNEY, Oct 26 : The German pairing of Wimbledon champion Steffi Graf and world number 13 Michael Stich will be top seeds for the International mixed team Hopman Cup tennis tournament in Perth early next year, reports Reuter.

Graf and Stich, playing together for the first time, were preferred as favourites for the annual 12-nation event ahead of strong Czechoslovak pair Petr Korda and Jana Novotna.

The Germans received the top seeding mainly because of Stich's doubles play this year, Tennis Australia vicepresident Harry Spilsbury said.

Stich, the 1991 Wimbledon champion, partnered Boris Becker to win the Olympic doubles gold medal in August.

"The relative merits of the teams were determined by a range of criteria including rankings, recent performances, individual ability and capacity in mixed doubles," Spilsbury said in a news release on Monday.

Defending champions Switzerland, represented by Jakob Hlasek and Manuela Maleeva-Fragniere, were named sixth of the eight seeded nations in the event from January 2 to 9.

The top four seeds, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Spain and the United States, have first round byes in the 500,000 US dollar tournament.

Seedings:
1-Germany (Michael Stich-Steffi Graf); 2-Czechoslovakia (Petr Korda-Jana Novotna); 3-Spain (Emilio Sanchez-Arantxa Sanchez Vicario); 4-US (Malival Washington-Mary Joe Fernandez); 5-France (Guy Forget-Natalie Tauziat); 6-Switzerland (Jakob Hlasek-Manuela Maleeva-Fragniere); 7-South Africa (Wayne Ferreira-Amanda Coetzer); 8-Austria (Thomas Muster-Judith Wiesner).



Germany's Steffi Graf proudly holds the Brighton Indoor tennis championship trophy after beating Jana Novotna of Czechoslovakia 4-6, 6-4, 7-6 in the final at the Brighton Conference Centre, England on Sunday. —AFP photo

Courier is back after 6-week lay-off

STOCKHOLM, Oct 26: Jim Courier is back in one of his favourite European tennis towns to play his first ATP Tour event in six weeks, reports AP.

"Stockholm and Paris are among my favourite tournaments," the two-time French Open champion said. "I really enjoy playing in both cities."

The American, who lost in four sets to Pete Sampras in the US Open semifinals Sept 12, his last ATP Tour tournament, has fond memories of the Swedish capital.

In 1988, Courier made his big breakthrough by reaching the Stockholm Open semifinals at age 18, eight months after turning pro. He was beaten by Swede Peter Lundgren, who incidentally lost a third-round qualifying match Sunday to miss a berth in the main draw.

Courier, who helped the United States beat Sweden in the Davis Cup semifinals Sept 25-27 for his only other outing in the last six weeks, dropped to second in the ATP Tour rankings after the US Open.

But he regained the top spot early this month despite being idle while Edberg, who had held No 1 for three weeks after beating Sampras for his second straight US Open title, dropped to third. The Swede has since moved to second after playing well in Sydney and Tokyo.

Courier, as well as the other 15 seeded players, received a first-round bye and will not see action until Tuesday or Wednesday against the winner between fellow American Derrick Rostagno and Magnus Norman, a 17-year-old Swedish qualifier.

No 2 seed Edberg, who won the Stockholm Open twice 1986-87 and a finalist in the last two years, plays the winner between Olivier Delatree of France and Andrei Medvedev of Russia.

Sampras, the No 3 seed and winner of an ATP tournament Sunday in Lyon, France, takes on either Todd Woodbridge of Australia or Thomas Hogstedt of Sweden in his opening match here.

Other top 10-ranked players in the \$1.3 million tournament are Goran Ivanisevic (5) of Croatia, Petr Korda (6) of Czechoslovakia, two-time defending champion Boris Becker (7) of Germany and Wayne Ferreira (10) of South Africa.

Egypt drub Togo

LOME, Oct 26: Egypt steamrollered Togo 4-1 here on Sunday in their World Cup Africa zone qualifier in Group C, reports AFP.

Togo spent virtually the whole match on the defensive as El Mansour opened the scoring for Egypt in the 24th minute, Hassan added two more and Hani Ramzi slotted home an 80th minute penalty.

AC Milan step into record books



PARIS, Oct 26 : AC Milan marched into the record books with a 2-0 win over Parma on Sunday that left them unbeaten in 41 matches, overtaking a record held by Fiorentina since the Florence club's golden 1954-56 period, reports AFP.

New signing Stefano Eranio engineered the victory over the mid-table Italian Cup holders, sending over an inch-perfect cross for French striker Jean Pierre Papin to head home in the 62nd minute and then striking a superb long-range drive in the dying seconds for the second.

The victory saw Fabio Capello's champions stretch their lead at the top of the table to two points as nearest rivals Inter Milan and Sampdoria were both beaten.

Elsewhere in Europe, Nantes' bargain-basement team continued to defy the laws of the free market by dishing out a 6-0 thrashing to Montpellier to stay top of the French League and La Coruna maintained their surprise lead in Spain, despite a 0-0 draw away to lowly Real Burgos.

In the match of the day in Italy, Juventus went down 3-1 to Inter Milan in the San Siro Stadium, they share with AC.

Inter's win was a personal triumph for Salvatore Totti Schillaci. The Italian World Cup star, discarded by the Turin giants in the summer, has a hand in all three goals, although he missed a glorious chance to get on the score-sheet when clean through late on.

Uruguay's Ruben Sosa opened for Inter following a sweet one-two going into the box, German Mathias Sammer added a second after Schillaci chested down and Russia's Igor Shalimov completed the rout in the 79th minute.

German International Andreas Moller scored from 25 yards four minutes from time for a late consolation for Juventus.

Sampdoria, last year's European Cup finalists, went down 4-0 at Fiorentina with Francesco Baiano and Argentina's Gabriel Battistuta scoring two apiece while a penalty from Belgian playmaker Enzo Scifo gave Torino a 1-0 victory over Udinese that lifted them into second place.

Lazio moved into fifth with England's Paul Gascoigne again impressing in his comeback from injury. Gazza played for 75 minutes and made Lazio's first goal for Giuseppe Signori.

Bottom-of-the-table Ancona had their first victory of the season, a 3-0 win over Foggia with Sergio Fabian Zarate scoring twice and were then told they would have to sell the long-haired Argentinian striker.

Club president Edoardo Longarini is facing corruption charges and the club is in administration, making it impossible to complete payment for Zarate, recently signed from

Ivory Coast held to a draw
NIAEMEY, Oct 26: Niger held African champions Ivory Coast to a goalless draw here on Sunday in their World Cup Africa zone qualifier in Group E, reports AFP.

Niger had most of the possession in the first half, restricting Ivory Coast to hopeful long passes from midfield to strikers Abdoulaye Traore and Joel Tiehi which were almost invariably short on accuracy.

The one opportunity which fell to Tiehi was wasted in the 42nd minute with only Niger goalkeeper Mahamadou Mikko to beat.

At the other end the visitors' goalkeeper Alain Goumenc was kept busy by Niger's raiding parties before an uninspiring second half.

Ivory Coast coach Yeo Martial put the disappointing draw down to "difficulties when preparing for the match, and especially the tiredness from travelling and the intense playing schedule."

Grobelaar, sent off as he gave away two goals against Moscow Spartak in the European Cup Winners' Cup in midweek, hung his head in misery again after a dreadful mix-up with Danish defender Torben Piechnik.

Ian Butterworth took advantage from a resulting corner to give Norwich the lead after only 65 seconds.

But thanks to the deadly marksmanship of Michael Thomas, Don Hutchison and David Burrows plus a last minute Mark Walters penalty, Liverpool snuffed out the Norwich challenge.

Liverpool fans were stunned into silence when Piechnik and Grobbelaar combined in farcical style to give away a corner almost straight from the kick-off.

Germany's FC Nuremberg.
NANTES STILL ON TOP
Cheap-and-cheerful Nantes proved they are serious contenders for the French title with a 6-0 thrashing of Montpellier and a thrilling display of flowing, attacking football.

Japhet N'doram and Nicolas Ouedec each scored twice in the biggest French First Division win of the season, played in front of a delighted 30,000 crowd that will have brought extra cheer to the hard-up west coast club.

With only one defeat in 12 games, Nantes, threatened with relegation in the summer because of their precarious fi-



SCHILLACI
nances, have sweetly turned the tables on their wealthier rivals.

Their monthly wage bill reportedly adds up to less than Manuel Amoros earns for playing in the reserves at Olympique Marseille.

"I'm not saying we'll be at the top at Christmas," said club president Guy Scherer, "I just want them to keep playing entertaining football. I'll look after the money."

Liberian international George Weah — who scored twice against Napoli in midweek — got both Paris St Germain's goals in their 2-0

win at struggling Toulon. Free-spending Paris St Germain remain one point behind Nantes.

Weah was overtaken at the top of the strikers' table by Caen's Xavier Gravelaine who scored a hat-trick in the 3-0 win over Lens to lift his total to nine in the league.

Marseille bounced back from two straight defeats, including one against Nantes, with a 1-0 win over St Etienne. Auxerre stayed in third place though, despite being held 0-0 at home by third-from-bottom Toulouse.

BAYERN'S RUN ENDS
Two goals by New Zealand striker Wynton Rufer shut-



JEAN-PIERE PAPIN
tered Bayern Munich's unbeaten record as Werder Bremen beat the German league leaders 3-1.

Bayern Leverkusen drew 2-2 with Eintracht Frankfurt but did not go top under Germany's points system, which puts more emphasis on a club's win/lose ratio than goal difference.

It was a superb result for embattled Bremen, struggling in the Bundesliga and with only slim hopes of retaining the European Cup Winners' Cup.

Olaf Thon got Bayern's consolation goal, converting a

penalty 12 minutes from time. That goal kept Bayern just ahead at the top.

The leading four clubs all have 15 points, and the top three have all conceded 10 goals. Bayern have the same win/lose record as Eintracht, but have scored 21 goals to their rivals' 20.

Bayern Leverkusen are third and Borussia Dortmund fourth after crushing Moenchengladbach 4-1.

La Coruna stayed at the top of the Spanish league after a goalless draw with Real Burgos, but both Real Madrid and Barcelona won to narrow the gap on the surprise early leaders.

Champions Barcelona put recent erratic form behind them with a 3-0 win over Valencia, Bulgarian Christo Stoichkov getting two and Denmark's Michael Laudrup the third. Laudrup could have had a hat-trick but twice saw shots, one from 30-yard come back off the bar with the keeper beaten.

In Madrid, the Bernabeu Stadium witnessed the return of Rafael Martin Vazquez after sojourns at Torino and Marseille.

The Spanish international was Real's outstanding player in the 2-0 win over Athletic Bilbao, Chile's Ivain Zamorano and Emilio Butragueno getting the goals.

The Dutch league was decimated by bad weather, but PSV Eindhoven had time to beat Groningen 3-0 on Saturday to extend their lead at the top to three points.

Matches involving the chasing Twente Enschede, Feyenoord and Ajax were all called off by storms.

Anderlecht beat Gent 1-0 to stay top in Belgium, but their goal difference lead was eaten away by Standard Liege who won 5-2 at Cercle Brugge.

AIK secured their first Swedish title for 55 years by beating Malmo FF 3-2 in the final championship playoff matches.

Napoli win one for the coach



ROME, Oct 26: While AC Milan swept serenely to a 2-0 victory at Parma, setting a new record of 41 straight league games without defeat, the day's most emotional scenes were witnessed down south in Naples, reports AP.

At the start of the season Napoli had high hopes and expectations of providing serious challenge to Milan. But prior to Sunday's game against AS Roma they had collected only one victory, suffering consecutive home defeats to Internazionale of Milan, Juventus, and Paris Saint Germain in the UEFA Cup.

After the cup defeat rumours began to circulate that coach Claudio Ranieri would be sacked if Napoli lost to Roma. The Napoli club management did not deny the rumours, but several players spoke out in favour of the coach.

The most outspoken was young Uruguayan striker Daniel Fonseca, who was coached by Ranieri at Cagliari before being bought by Napoli. "We understand that the match with Roma is Ranieri's last chance. It's a difficult situation but they (the management) are making it worse."

Ranieri came to Naples at the start of last season, charged with establishing a new post-Maradona era. He succeeded in keeping Napoli in the top five of the standings and qualifying for a place in the UEFA Cup.

But this season very little

has gone right, and Ranieri's dealings on the pre-season transfer market have been criticised by management.



CARECA
New midfield signings have disappointed, the defence has looked fragile, and only Fonseca, scoring in almost every game, has been a complete success.

With added irony, Roman born and raised Ranieri faced the stiffest test of his career against the team of his childhood.

Defended by his players in midweek, Ranieri received further support from the fans before the game, with chants and banners in favour of the actual coach and against the rumoured replacements.

The week's events and the presence of over 50,000 spec-

tators created a highly charged atmosphere that was reflected in the tenacious attacking play of the home team.

Fonseca scored the first Napoli goal just before half time, and the whole team ran straight to Ranieri on the touchline to celebrate. New midfielder Angelo Carbone, bought from AC Milan, was seen to make a rude gesture in the direction of the management in the grandstand.

There was more joy at the start of the second half when Antonio Careca made it 2-0 for Napoli. Just before the hour Roma pulled back to 2-1, but Napoli hung on, defending as determinedly as they had attacked earlier.

The triumphant final scenes were not witnessed by club president Corrado Ferlaino, who left at the end of the first half, saying he would talk after the game. He didn't, but one of his management colleagues deplored Carbone's behavior and said that players, including Fonseca and midfielder Massimo Mauro, who had spoken against the club in midweek, would be fined.

When it was all over Ranieri expressed his gratitude to the players, they remarked that "exams never end."

Another bad run of results and Ranieri could find his job on the line again.

Defender Ciro Ferrara best summed up the mood in the locker room: "We're happy about today's victory, but the bitterness about what happened in midweek remains."

Graf's sixth in seven years



BRIGHTON, England, Oct 26: Defending champion Steffi Graf won the Brighton Indoor tennis

title for the sixth time in seven years on Sunday, battling back from the brink of defeat in the final against Jana Novotna, reports Reuter.

Wimbledon champion Graf stood two points from defeat when she trailed 5-4 in the final set and 30-0 on the Czechoslovak fifth seeds serve before summoning up her best tennis of the match to win 4-6, 6-4, 7-6.

It was Graf's 30th successive match victory at Brighton but by far the toughest.

The two had already fought

two three-sets this month — in Leipzig and Zurich, with Graf scraping through both times — and it was no surprise when Sunday's showdown also went the distance.

The German top seed finally gained control only in the final tiebreak which she won 7-3.

"I have to say sorry to Jana because every time I come out and win when she is ahead," Graf said.

"You give Steffi a little and she takes it all," Novotna, who had held the initiative for much of the match, said. "That's why she is number two in the world."

Graf looked anything but the second-best player in the world when she was overwhelmed by Novotna's serve-and-volley tactics in the first

set. She saved two set points at 5-3 and another at 5-4 but Novotna snatched the set with a bludgeoning ace.

Novotna looked on her way to a straight sets win when she broke Graf on the way to a 3-1 lead in the second set, but the 23-year-old German broke back twice to level the match.

Novotna's big chance came in the decider, when, having swapped breaks at the start of the set, she broke Graf again and led 30-0 on her own service.

But the defending champion reeled off the next four points and clinched victory after two hours 32 minutes on her second match point when Novotna pushed a crosscourt forehand wide.

Sampras retains Lyon Open



LYON, France, Oct 26: Top seed Pete Sampras erased a painful memory when he retained his title

at the Lyon Tennis Open in a 6-4, 6-2 thrashing of France's Cedric Pioline on Sunday, reports Reuter.

The American top seed, who dismissed the unheralded Frenchman in just over an hour, last year won the 600,000 tournament at the expense of another Frenchman, Olivier Delatree.

A month later, he suffered

Ivanisevic sued

LYON, France, Oct 26: Big serving Croat Goran Ivanisevic is being sued by the organisers of the Lyon tennis Open for allegedly failing to honour an agreement to enter the tournament, reports Reuter.

"Players cannot be free to do whatever they wish. That's why I decided to sue him even if it is a first on the circuit," said organiser Gilles Moretton on Sunday.

Top seed Pete Sampras retained the title on Sunday with a 6-4, 6-2 defeat of France's Cedric Pioline.

Swiss bank sues Premier League

LONDON, Oct 26: English soccer's Premier League is being sued by a Swiss bank for \$1.3 million, reports AP.

The Swiss Bank Corporation alleges it is owed the money as commission for helping the league negotiate a lucrative \$1.3 million television contract earlier this year.

The writ, issued Friday, also named Premier League chief executive Rick Parry and league chairman Sir John Quinton.

Parry said Monday: "The advice from our lawyers is that we have a very strong defence to this writ and so we are resisting it. We will be defending it vigorously and believe we can do so successfully."

of the most severe defeats in his career when he lost to France's hero Henri Leconte in the Davis Cup final on the same Centre Court in Lyon.

"I was undecided about coming back here after the



PETE SAMPRAS

Davis Cup nightmare last year. But I'm happy I did," he said.

Against Pioline, playing in his first ATP tour final, the world number three hustled as much as in his semifinal when he crushed compatriot Malval

Washington in just 52 minutes. Serving almost perfectly, hammering his opponent with aces, he broke Pioline to love in the 10th game of the match to take the first set in 36 minutes.

The second set was even more one-sided. Sampras broke for 3-1 then 5-2 to take the match in one hour and five minutes.

"He did not play very well today. But it was difficult for both of us because of the crowd, which was obviously behind him," Sampras said.

The unseeded Pioline, who beat compatriot and second seed Guy Forget on his way to his first final, confessed he had cracked a little under pressure.

"Sampras serves and plays really well. I'm not used to such a level of play," he said. "I was too emotional and there wasn't much I could do."

Despite the defeat, the 23-year-old Parisian secured a berth in the world's top 30 for the first time in his career thanks to his performance through the week.



Minister for Works Barrister Rafiqul Islam Mian (2nd from right) with the guests and participants of the ninth DR Q M H International Masters' chess competition prize-giving ceremony yesterday at the NSC conference room. —Star photo