

Stormy ride for Seles, Navratilova

NEW YORK, Nov 20: It wasn't easy, but Monica Seles and Martina Navratilova eventually did what was expected — both advanced to the semifinals of the Virginia Slims Championships, reports AP.

The top-seeded Seles fought out of a deep hole to overcome Jana Novotna 3-6, 6-4, 6-1 after Navratilova, seeded fourth, shook off the mid-match blahs to defeat pesky Arantxa Sanchez Vicario 6-1, 2-6, 6-2.

"I'm lucky I escaped today," Seles said.

Their opponents in Saturday's semifinals won't be known until after Friday night's quarterfinal. Seles, seeking her third consecutive Slims Championships crown, will meet the winner of a quarterfinal pitting third-seeded Gabriela Sabatini against No 7 Jennifer Capriati, while Navratilova will take on the No 8 Conchita Martinez-Lori McNeil winner.

The unique best-of-5-sets final will be played Sunday afternoon, with the winner of this dir\$ 3 million, 16-player event pocketing dir\$ 250,000 and dir\$ 120,000 going to the runner-up.

Already gone from this 16-player field is second-seeded Steffi Graf, ousted in the opening round by McNeil. At first, it appeared as if Seles would join her on the sidelines.

Novotna applied continual pressure on Seles by taking the net at every opportunity and keeping her groundstrokes deep. Seles was just slightly off her usually explosive game, but that may have been caused by her Czechoslovak opponent.

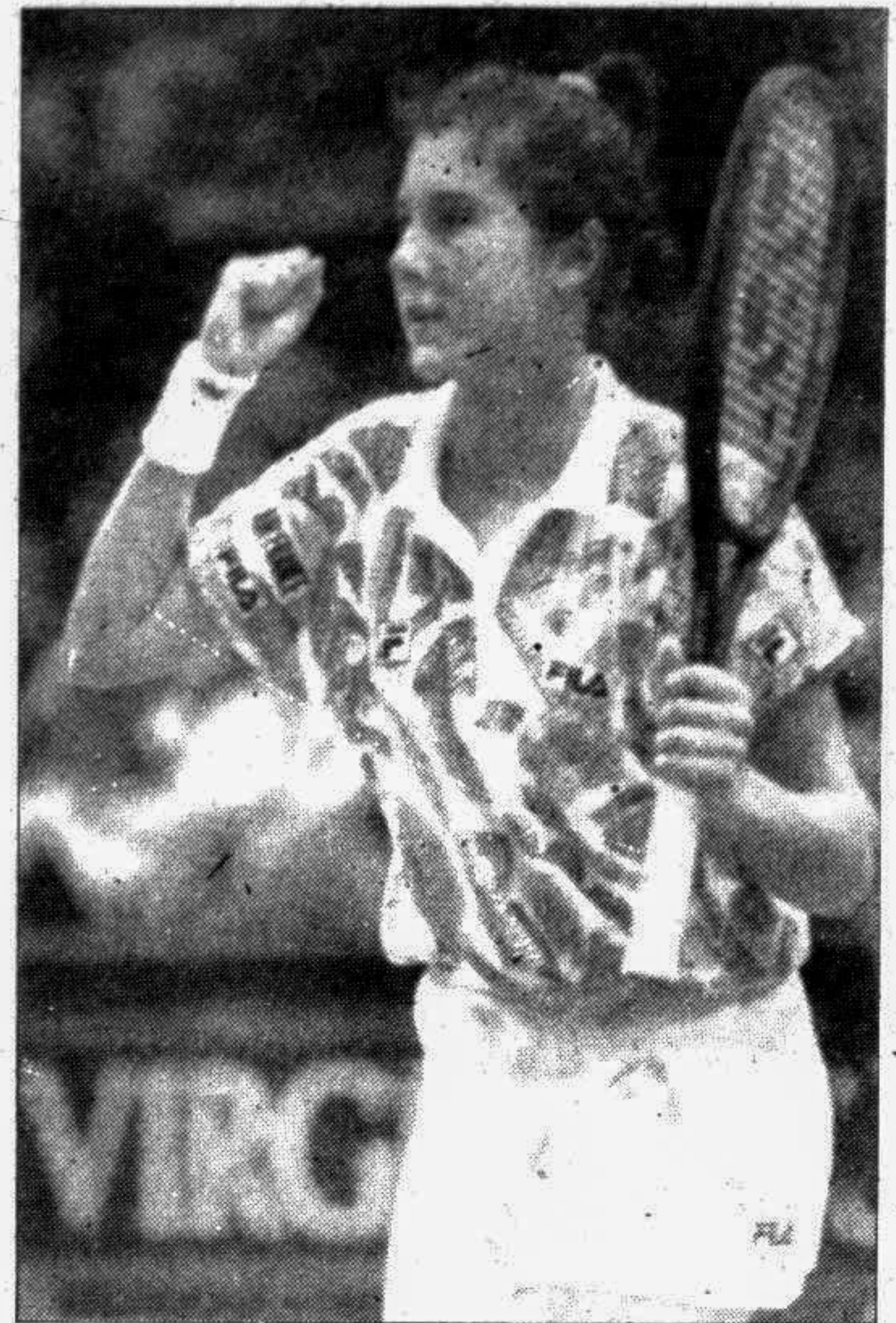
Novotna seemed to always guess correctly whether Seles was going to hit down the line or cross-court. Her sharply hit volleys punctuated a lot of points, while her court coverage forced Seles to go for even sharper angles.

"She was doing everything right," Seles said. "She wasn't making many unforced errors." The match began with three straight service breaks. And when Novotna held in the fourth game, she led 3-1.

The right-hander, playing nearly perfect tennis, broke Seles again in the fifth game to close out the set, then broke her two games later as she grabbed a 3-0 lead in the

second set. But that was as close to victory as Novotna would come.

I lost my first serve in the first set, it threw me off a bit. I don't know why it took me so



Top-seeded Monica Seles raises her racket after beating Jana Novotna of Czechoslovakia at the Virginia Slims championships in New York on Thursday. Seles won 3-6, 6-4, 6-1. — AFP photo



M NAVRATILOVA

long to get into the match." But get back into it she did.

Seles, winner of three of the four Grand Slams tournaments for the second straight year, broke Novotna in the fifth game at 30 as the Czech had problems putting her first serve into play. That allowed Seles to jump all over the second serve, hitting unreturnable returns.

"I just kept playing as hard as I could," Novotna said. "I did everything right in the first set. In the beginning of the second set, everything was working so well. Unfortunately, Monica picked up her game."

As mistakes began creeping into Novotna's game, Seles

applied even more pressure, her laser-guided groundstrokes finding the corners of the Madison Square Garden. She broke Novotna again in the seventh game after the two battled through three deuces.

And when she held her next two service games, she had wrapped up the second set and evened the match.

By then, Seles was in full stride, and nothing Novotna could do would slow down the Yugoslav's rush into the semifinals. To make matters worse, Novotna's serve deserted her completely as she double-faulted to lose her serve in the third game of the final set, then double-faulted again at match point.

In her prime, Navratilova raced through her opponents, grudgingly giving up games. Against Sanchez Vicario, the No. 4 seed was almost as dominant in the opening set as in the old days.

Now 36, Navratilova broke the fifth-seeded Sanchez Vicario in the second and sixth games and, even in the one game Sanchez won, the Spaniard had to come from 0-40 down.

But Sanchez Vicario raised the level of her game. After the two battled to 2-2 in the second set, Sanchez Vicario ripped through the last four games to knot the match at one set apiece.

"The first set went so easily," Navratilova said. "I was holding serve so easily, and then she broke me. The next thing I knew, the second set was over."

"I had to regroup. I think I wasn't pressing enough. I was attacking in the first set, then not enough in the second set."

Repeatedly coming up with great stab volleys, Navratilova dominated the net and kept her opponent at bay. She broke Sanchez Vicario at 30 in the opening game of the third set, then at 15 in the third game.

Navratilova said a point in the fourth game led her to victory. Three times Sanchez Vicario reached break point. Three times, Navratilova came up with a winner.

And when Navratilova served wide to the Spaniard's forehand, Sanchez Vicario just barely touched the ball.

That gave Navratilova a 4-0 lead, and even a seven-minute, 14-point sixth game didn't halt her march into the semifinals.

End of an era

NEW YORK, Nov 20: One of the most powerful line-ups in women's tennis has decided to call it a day after a twelve-year partnership, reports AP.

Martina Navratilova and Pam Shriver announced that they will probably never play together again after being beaten in the quarter-finals of the doubles at the Women's Championships here late Thursday by Helena Sukova of Czechoslovakia and Arantxa Sanchez of Spain.

Navratilova, now 36, has made it clear that she intends to reduce her playing programme considerably in 1993 and will only compete in doubles at Grand Slam events.

"It has been fantastic playing alongside Pam," said Navratilova after the 4-6, 5-7, defeat. "But now that I am cutting back Pam will be finding a new regular doubles partner."

Navratilova and Shriver, who have won 79 titles together—twenty of them in Grand Slam events—were bidding for an eighth win here.

They were unbeaten for 109 matches between June 1983 and July 1985.

Meanwhile, AP adds: The winning doubles team in tennis history, Martina Navratilova and Pam Shriver, lost in the semifinals of the Virginia Slims Championships Thursday night, but said they may play together again.

"We're not going to play full-time as a team any more," Shriver said after she and Navratilova lost to the top-seeded team of Helena Sukova and Arantxa Sanchez Vicario 6-4, 7-5.

"We're still going to play some doubles before our careers are over," Navratilova said, "but not fulltime. Pam will have a fulltime partner next year and I won't have one. I'm not going to play that much doubles."

The team of Navratilova, now 36, and Shriver, 30, won 20 Grand Slam tournament titles and 79 overall. They were undefeated in 109 consecutive matches between June 23, 1983, and July 9, 1985.

This year, they won two doubles titles, in Chicago and San Antonio.

Hernandez retains WBA title

TOKYO, Nov 20: American Genaro Hernandez battered Japanese challenger Yuji Watanabe with punches from all angles to retain his World Boxing Association (WBA) junior lightweight title here Friday by technical knockout, reports AP.

Venezuelan referee Enzo Montero stopped the fight 59 seconds into the sixth round.

Nat'l jr wrestling concludes today

The finals of the all ten events of the ninth national junior wrestling championships will be held today at the National Sports Council gymnasium today.

Forty-four bouts of the second round were held yesterday, the second day of the three-day meet.

Forty-five bouts of the first round were decided on Thursday, the inaugural day of the competition.

Azizul Huq, secretary in charge of Youth and Sports Ministry, will distribute the prizes this afternoon as chief guest.

Seventy-five wrestlers representing 11 teams are taking part in the championships organised by the Bangladesh Amateur Wrestling Federation.

Bowe's next fight up in the air

NEW YORK, Nov 20: Heavyweight champion Riddick Bowe will be grounded on Thanksgiving Day as a participant in the Macy's Parade, whose starts—a bunch of big balloons—will be up in the air, reports AP.

Who Bowe will fight next is also up in the air.

Will it be Lennox Lewis? Or could it be Big George Foreman?

Some in the fight business are charging that Rock Newman, Bowe's manager, is puffed up with success. Those people think Bowe should abide by an agreement to make his first defence against Lewis.

But Newman says he sees no reason why Bowe shouldn't have a voluntary defence before fighting a mandatory defence against Lewis.

A meeting is scheduled in Washington Friday between Newman and his attorney, Milton Chwasky, promoters Dan Duva, who has options on three Bowe fights, and Bob Arum, who represents Foreman. Newman is based in Washington.

Lewis and his manager, Frank Maloney, along with Jose Sulaiman, president of the WBC, don't want to hear any talk of a title defence against anyone other than Lewis.

In fact, Sulaiman has said if Bowe doesn't fight Lewis, of

England, in his first defence, the WBC will withdraw title recognition from Bowe and recognize Lewis as champion. Lewis stopped Razor Ruddock in the second round of what was billed as a WBC championship elimination match Oct. 31 at London.

After Bowe outpointed Evander Holyfield last Friday night for the undisputed (IBF,



RIDDICK BOWE

WBA, WBC) championship, Newman wondered if it wouldn't be better for Lewis to have another fight in order to become better known in the United States.

Maloney has accused Bowe of ducking Lewis, who outpointed him in the super heavyweight final at the 1988 Olympics.

Maloney has made an offer

of dir\$ 12 million for Bowe to fight Lewis in London, but Bowe's attorney, Milton Chwasky, scoffed at it. "Does he think we can't get a better offer over here?" he asked.

"We would go from here if possible with Foreman before Lewis, but there are a lot of problems," Chwasky said.

The 43-year-old Foreman has a three-fight deal with HBO and the first fight already is being advertised. It's a 10-round match between Foreman and Pierre Coetzer Jan. 16 at Reno, Nev.

While Foreman almost certainly will be held to that fight, it is possible that a deal can be worked out for him to fight Bowe next should he beat Coetzer. HBO and TVKO, which would handle the pay-per-view telecast of a Bowe-Foreman bout, as it did the Bowe-Holyfield match, are both Time-Warner companies.

"If George fights in January, we'd have to have the Bowe fight in May," Duva said. "George coming off a big win would be helpful promotionally."

In Bowe's last fight before he won the title, he stopped Coetzer.

"Promotionally it would be best if Riddick fights Lennox Lewis, but under our agreement Rock decides who Riddick is going to fight," Duva said. "Once Rock decides, then I promote."

\$12m way too little for Bowe

NEW YORK, Nov 20: New heavyweight champion Riddick Bowe's camp turned down a 12 million dollar offer from number-one challenger Lennox Lewis on Thursday, reports Reuters.

"It's absolutely ridiculous," said Mil Chwasky, a lawyer for Bowe's manager, Rock Newman. "There was a fax offering 12 million dollars. Who ever heard of negotiating through a fax?"

"It's way too little. There's much more money in the United States. This guy's panicking," said Chwasky, referring to Lewis's manager Frank Maloney, who faxed the offer from London proposing that the fight be held there in the spring.

Many people closely connected with promoting heavyweight title fights say they believe a Bowe-Lewis fight would take place in the United States, most likely in Las Vegas.

Lewis, who holds both Canadian and British passports, became a top con-

tender for the title after beating Canadian Razor Ruddock nearly three weeks ago. Before that fight, Lewis and Bowe's camp had signed an agreement that the winners of the Lewis-Ruddock fight and last Friday's Bowe-Evander Holyfield fight would meet next for the undisputed heavyweight title.

"The (Lewis) offer was faxed to Rock yesterday (Wednesday)," said Kathy Duva, whose husband Dan is the head of main events, the promoter for Lewis and Holyfield.

Basically it's more up to Rock than anybody else. "We can't schedule a fight between Lennox Lewis and Riddick Bowe until Riddick Bowe tells us he wants to fight Lennox Lewis. At this point I don't think they have made that decision," she said.

"Because he (Newman) turned down this offer, I don't think that means he's turned down the fight. I think that he believes he is entitled to more than 12 million which is not an unreasonable position."

Duva said that Holyfield was guaranteed 15 million dollar

and will probably get about 18 million dollar by the time all the pay-per-view broadcast sales are counted.

Bowe received about 7 million dollar.

Even before Bowe won the title from Holyfield in a 12-round unanimous decision after one of the most exciting heavyweight title fights in recent years, Newman was threatening to break the agreement and have Bowe fight George Foreman or someone else before Lewis.

The World Boxing Council (WBC), one of boxing's three main government bodies, said it would strip Bowe of its version of the title if the new champion did not honour the agreement to fight Lewis.

The WBC has set December 14 as the deadline for a Bowe-Lewis deal to be struck or it will strip Bowe.

Foreman has signed to fight South African Pierre Coetzer on January 16. In order for a Foreman-Bowe fight to sell well, it is generally agreed that grandfather Foreman must win impressively.

Ivanisevic blasts Courier off court

FRANKFURT, Nov 20: Hard-hitting Goran Ivanisevic cruised to a merciless straight-set demolition of Jim Courier to secure a place in the last four of the ATP World Championship on Thursday, reports Reuters.

In earlier action, injured Richard Krajcek limped to a three-set victory over Michael Chang, showing rare courage to score a 2-6, 6-3, 7-6 win and ruin Chang's hopes of reaching the semifinals.

New terror of tennis Ivanisevic needed just over an hour to tame world number one Courier 6-3, 6-3.

Courier, who struggled to overcome Dutchman Richard Krajcek on Tuesday, can still make it if he beats Chang in his last round-robin match today.

Ivanisevic fired six aces but proved he was not merely a serving machine by overpowering Courier from the baseline.

"I just played too well for him," he said. "I was hitting the ball too hard and there was nothing he could do."

Once regarded as gifted but inconsistent, Ivanisevic confirmed he had gained mental strength by converting three break opportunities out of four.

He took the first set in just 28 minutes and never looked in danger while Courier, searching to regain top form,

tried in vain to return his powerful serves.

The American had his only break points when he took a 0-

40 lead at 3-1 in the second set but wasted all three.

"I'm, just a good tennis player," said Ivanisevic, who

finished it up with another winning serve. "Now I want to win a Grand Slam and then I am going to think about being number one."

"I have to say he played pretty well today," said Courier, a long-time critic of the big servers.

Ivanisevic will play his last first round match today against Krajcek in a much-awaited clash between arguably the two strongest servers on the circuit.

Krajcek moved the 9,000 crowd packing Frankfurt's Festhalle by defeating Chang despite an injury.

Chang was leading 4-1 in the first set when Krajcek slipped and fell heavily on his left knee.

Despite a bad bruise, a limping Krajcek managed to fight his way back into the match to stay in contention for a place in the last four.

"The court was a little bit slippery and I had new shoes," said Krajcek. "The pain was really bad and it still hurts but I will have the doctor take a look at it and it should be okay in the morning."

The Dutchman added: "After it I felt more confident, I started to serve better and everything came my way. Perhaps Chang found it difficult because it's never easy to play somebody who's hurt."

Krajcek, who became the first Dutchman to enter the top 10 since Tom Okker in 1975 by winning in Antwerp on Sunday, said he was confident ahead of meeting Ivanisevic.

"I know he serves well but so do I and my chances are pretty good," he said.

In the day's last game, holder Pete Sampras recovered from a poor start to clinch a 3-6, 6-3, 6-3 win over Petr Korda of Czechoslovakia.

American Sampras recorded his third victory in a row to take first place of his group of four.

The gifted but erratic Korda, who has lost his two opening matches, had no chances of reaching the semifinals.

Weah, Guerin guide PSG to the top

PARIS, Nov 20: Paris St Germain moved to the top of the French First Division on Thursday, for 24 hours at least, when they beat rivals for the title Auxerre 2-0, reports Reuters.

Goals from Liberian striker George Weah in the 62nd minute and midfielder Vincent Guerin a minute later sealed the match.

Belgium, Brazil in 5-a-side 2nd round

HONG KONG, Nov 20: Belgium and Brazil entered the second round of the FIFA five-a-side Indoor World Championships here Thursday with expected victories over Costa Rica and Australia in their Group C matches, reports AP.

Defending champions Brazil routed Costa Rica 15-1, while Belgium scored a hard-fought 2-1 victory over Australia as both sides kept their unbeaten records intact.

In group D, Spain, Europe's only professional team, showed their class and experience as they fashioned out a workmanlike 5-3 win over the United States. Tactically far superior, the Spanish team came good in the second half after leading 1-0 at the break.

The Spanish — who have more than 150,000 league players back home — created space in front of the American goal with superb movement of the ball, which combined with clinical finishing was too much for the American challenge.

Their wealth of experience proved to be the difference between us and them," American coach John Kowalski said afterwards.

The United States began the second half in spectacular fashion, scoring two quick goals from captain Jim Gabarra and Dale Ervine to take a 2-1 lead.

But Spain's effervescent Francisco Ledesma, the linchpin of his side's attack, levelled the score as the European powerhouse gradually asserted control.

Two bad blunders by the United States gave the Spanish a 4-2 lead. The first mistake was by goalkeeper Victor Noguera, who, beaten by a powerful left-foot drive from Ledesma, saw the ball hit the post and rocket off his body into the goal.

US morale dipped further when a badly taken free kick was intercepted by Spain's Alvaro Munoz, who dribbled the length of the pitch before coolly slotting the ball past a hapless Noguera.

Ledesma piloted the

agony for the Americans with his second goal as Spain took a commanding 5-2 lead with eight minutes left.

Terry Woodberry pulled one back for the Americans, but their fightback was in vain.

"Our second-half performance was something like what I wanted. But we can play better," Spanish coach Javier Lozano said.

Group D's two qualifiers will be decided Saturday after the Americans meet China and Russia take on Spain, with only the Chinese already out of the reckoning.

The Russians warmed up for their vital match by thrashing China 10-1, with forward Konstantine Eremenko accounting for seven of his side's goals, all in the second half, in a one-sided rout.

As well as Belgium and Brazil, Argentina and Poland from Group A are also into the second round.

The eight teams that qualify for the second round will be divided into two mini-leagues, who play a round robin series after which the top two of each move on to the semifinals.



Grapplers Qamruzzaman of Dinajpur and Babar Ali of Jessore in action in the ninth national junior wrestling championships at the NSC gym yesterday. — Star photo

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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