



Paul Gascoigne is through with a kick during a training session on Sunday of the English World Cup squad preparing for its crucial tie against the Netherlands at Wembley on Wednesday. (From right) John Barnes, David Platt look on.

FIFA won't ban Zimbabwe

ZURICH, Apr 27: FIFA, world soccer's ruling body, on Tuesday backed off a threat to ban Zimbabwe from 1994 World Cup qualifying matches over the government's replacement of top soccer officials for alleged corruption, reports AP.

As its investigation showed the case has "special circumstances," FIFA said it has "no objection" if the state Sports and Recreational Council temporarily takes over the running of the Zimbabwe Football Association.

But new elections for the posts must be held within 60 days under the association's statutes, a FIFA statement said. Last Wednesday, Zimbabwe's sport council named replacements for elected leaders of the association whom the council fired for allegedly wasting millions of dollars that should have gone into soccer over the past year.

Pioneer soccer

It seems that the Janata Bank Pioneer soccer league play-off between K R Boys and Shatalal Samajik and Sanskritik Sangha has come under some demonic spell, once again having to be called off for the second consecutive day.

The match, which fell through on Monday after heavy downpour left the ground unplayable, was abandoned yesterday after a disputed decision irked the spectators and a section of rowdy fans invaded the field forcing the players and officials to run for cover.

At that stage, fifteen minutes from the final whistle, K R Boys were leading through a goal from Saiful.

The play-off round had to be introduced after five teams of the Group A finished with the same number of points. The top two teams make it to the last four.

Dipali Jubo Sangha and Swadesh Samaj Kalyan Sangha are through to the semifinals from Group B.



Action from yesterday's Janata Bank Pioneer soccer league Group A play-off between K R Boys and Shatalal Samajik and Sanskritik Sangha at the Outer Stadium. The match was called off after unruly crowd invaded the pitch.

Taylor turns to English fans



LONDON, Apr 27: England manager Graham Taylor has made an impassioned plea to fans for patriotic support to lift his team in Wednesday's crucial World Cup match against the Netherlands, reports Reuter.

Taylor, who believes the Dutch will be feeling most pressure because they have already lost once in Group Two, fears the crowd may barrack his players as they did in the last World Cup game at Wembley.

Taylor has demanded the rallying tune "Land of Hope and Glory" be played when his team walks out in an attempt to get the crowd behind them. "There's nothing wrong with showing a little bit of patriotism—there's nothing wrong with being proud to be English," said Taylor.

Liverpool winger John Barnes, expected to play against the Dutch, was constantly booed in the game against San Marino and Taylor said it had a demoralising effect on the team. "Any booing of the manager and players before we've even kicked the ball produces negative vibes."

England have never lost a World Cup qualifier at home, but expect to be tested to the limit by the Netherlands who will be missing several star players through injury.

Norway, but who have played one game fewer than the Dutch. They have already lost one game and, while you can still qualify with that, you can't afford to lose a second game. So the pressure is not on us for this game—it's on the Dutch boys."

Dutch coach Dick Advocaat, who promises an attacking game, said, "We may be without Van Basten, Koeman, Van Aarle and (Wim) Jonk, but we have players who may not be well known to England fans but hopefully will be on Thursday."

He named Ajax's 20-year-old winger Marc Overmars and Anderlecht striker Peter van Vossen as a pair who could win the game for the Dutch.

"We realise we can't afford to lose. If we were to lose we'd have to win all our other matches to qualify and that would be a very difficult task," said Advocaat.

Wimbledon to offer \$8m this year

WIMBLEDON, Apr 27: The Wimbledon tennis championships will offer nearly \$8 million in prize money this year, with the men again receiving more than the women, reports AP.

The All England Club announced Tuesday that total prize money for the June 21-July 4 tournament will be slightly over 5 million pounds, equivalent to \$7.97 million at current exchange rates. The figure represents a 14 per cent increase in terms of pounds. But since the pound has depreciated against other currencies during the year, the increase in terms of dollars is only 2.3 per cent.

The men's champion will receive 3,05,000 pounds, or \$4,81,900. The women's winner will get 2,75,000 pounds, or \$4,34,500. Of the four Grand Slam tournaments, the US Open and Australian Open offer equal prize money to men and women. Wimbledon and the French Open continue to give more to the men.

John Curry, chairman of the All England Club, said Wimbledon officials held talks on the issue with the Women's Tennis Association. "We talk to them every year," Curry said. "We want to hear both sides of the issue. But we still believe that, on the whole, the majority of the public prefer men's tennis."

Dittmar, Rodney in fine shape

NEW YORK, Apr 27: Chris Dittmar and Rodney Martin spearhead the Australian challenge in the quarter-finals of the squash Tournament of Champions after comfortable victories on Monday night, reports Reuter.

Dittmar, the world number two from Adelaide, overcame a shaky start to beat unseeded compatriot Mark Carlyon 17-15, 15-11, 15-7 in 48 minutes. And former world champion Martin, the third seed from Brisbane, looked back in form after his shock first-round defeat in the British Open in London two weeks ago with a 15-13, 15-4, 15-12 win over England international Mark Cairns.

Both Australians are gunning for world number one and top seed Jansher Khan—but first they face tricky quarter-finals today.

Dittmar meets England's world number five Peter Marshall, who has already given him tough battles this year in the Welsh Classic and British Open.

And 27-year-old Martin faces fellow-Aussie Rodney Eyles, who is flying high after scoring a dramatic win over Jansher in Portugal last month. Also boosting the Australian challenge is Rodney's 30-year-old brother Brett Martin, who reached the last eight with a 15-4, 15-9, 7-15, 15-6 win over Jason Nicolle of England.

He now plays surprise quarter-finalist Mir Zaman Gul, currently ranked world number 251 after spending a year out of the game through disciplinary suspension.

He last reached a major quarter-final at the US Open in New York in 1990, but says it was so long ago he could not remember.

Jansher was given a good workout by England's world number 19 Danny Meddings as he came through 15-5, 15-10, 15-12 in 53 minutes and looks to have the easiest task today against qualifier Paul Johnson of England, ranked world number 40.

Christie injured

ALBUFEIRA, Portugal, Apr 27: Olympic 100-metre sprint champion Linford Christie cut short a training visit after suffering a slight knee injury Tuesday while preparing for the upcoming world championships, reports AP.

Christie, who won a gold medal for Britain in the 1992 Olympics in Barcelona, also complained of back pains, the Portuguese news agency Lusa reported.

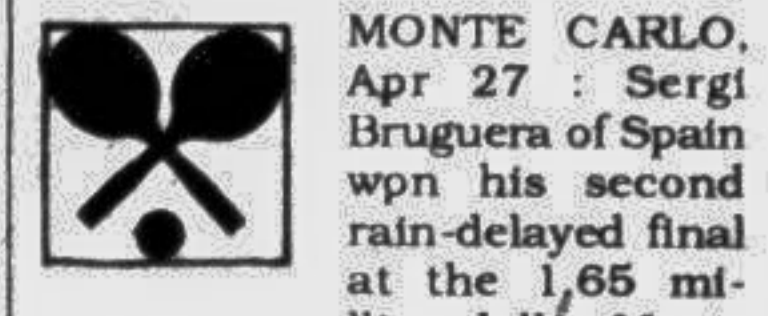
Christie was not available for comment. However, a source close to the runner said the injuries were not serious and Christie should resume training soon, Lusa reported.

Lusa quoted the source as saying Christie planned to return to Britain on Tuesday and said his injuries required no major treatment.

Christie had been training in this southern Portuguese seaside town for the past week and plans to return after he recovers from his injuries, Lusa said.

In addition to this summer's world championships in Stuttgart, Germany, Christie is also preparing for the 100-metre showdown in Britain against world record holder Carl Lewis.

Monte Carlo suits Bruguera fine



MONTE CARLO, Apr 27: Sergi Bruguera of Spain won his second rain-delayed final at the 1,65 million dollar Monte Carlo Open on Monday when he beat Frenchman Cedric Pioline in a match interrupted by the weather, reports Reuter.

world, finally pulled back to 5-5 and after 11th seed Bruguera served to make it 6-5, slight rain became too heavy for play to continue.

After a break of more than two hours, play finally resumed on a covered court and Pioline was rarely in it from that moment on.

Bruguera, who had won the tournament in 1991 against Boris Becker of Germany in a final completed on Monday, beat the unseeded Frenchman 7-6, 6-0.

Pioline, the first French player to reach the final since Yannick Noah in 1986 and aiming to be the first winner from France in 30 years, was outclassed for most of the match.

But he made a great surge from 5-0 down in the first set, saving six set points as he fought back to force a tie-break.

The 23-year-old Pioline, playing in only his second career final after knocking out Swede Stefan Edberg and Petr Korda of the Czech Republic, was woeful at first on Centre Court.

But at 15-40 down when serving at 0-5 he decided to go for winners and soon had the 22-year-old Bruguera on the ropes.

He held serve, broke the Spaniard for the first time and then fended off three more set points at 5-2. Pioline, ranked 29th in the



HE managed to save a sixth set point at 5-6 but was completely outmaneuvered in the tie-break, which he lost 7-2. World number 16 Bruguera

won the last six points of the tie-break in a row and extended the run to 25 points out of 29 to open a 4-0, 40-0 lead in the second set.

Pioline suggested he was about to stage another comeback when he saved six break points in that game but eventually lost it on the seventh before Bruguera served out the match to love.

Because of the conditions, organisers had decided to make the match a best-of-three set rather than the usual best-of-five.

It was the seventh title of Bruguera's career and his first of the year though he reached the finals in Milan and Barcelona.

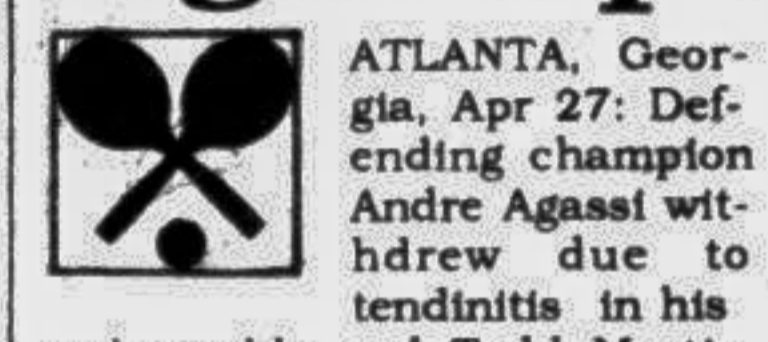
"I had to fight for every point," Bruguera said. "I was playing very well, hitting very deep all the time and that is maybe why I won (the second set) 6-0."

"But it was very hard to play all the time like that. It is difficult to play a rain-delayed game. You have to have a very good mental approach," he said. "But I think I like to play when it is tight."

Pioline said he was not vigilant enough. "The other players I played were attackers on clay. All I had to do was return the ball. Everything was clear," he said.

"Instead, today it was a typical clay-court game. You have to be ready to spend four hours on the court until the moment when your opponent gets tired."

Agassi pulls out, Martin bows



ATLANTA, Georgia, Apr 27: Defending champion Andre Agassi withdrew due to tendinitis in his right ankle and Todd Martin was the first seed to fall in opening-round action at the 300,000 dollar AT and T Challenge on Monday, reports Reuter.

has won for four consecutive years. He has a 20-0 match-winning record in Atlanta. Agassi was due to fly in today to be examined by tournament doctors, obligatory if he is to avoid a fine and loss of ranking points for pulling out

right ankle and Todd Martin was the first seed to fall in opening-round action at the 300,000 dollar AT and T Challenge on Monday, reports Reuter.

Martin, the fifth seed and ranked 39th in the world, was upset by 102nd-ranked Ronald Agener of Haiti 7-6(7-4), 7-5.

Agassi, the second seed, withdrew without playing a match in the tournament he

Graf moves up

HAMBURG, Apr 27: World No 2 Steffi Graf defeated Austrian Judith Wiesner 6-2, 7-5 Monday in the first round of the \$375,000 Kraft Tour Citizens Cup, reports AP.

But it wasn't an easy win for Graf, who showed concentration problems after a three-week layoff caused by a knee injury.

No 4 seed Jana Novotna of the Czech Republic had an easier time, sweeping past unseeded Jo Durie of Britain 6-0, 6-2.

The top American, Jennifer Santrock, was beaten 6-3, 6-1 by Germany's Wilrud Probst.

Graf is trying to regain top form before a possible showdown against Monica Seles, the world's top-ranked player and the tournament No 1 seed. Seles sees action Tuesday against Maria Strandlund of Sweden.

Graf, who experimented with stop balls and rushed the net more than usual, fell behind 5-4 in the second set against Wiesner, the world No 24. But she recovered to gain back-to-back breaks and close out the match in 72 minutes.



ANDRE AGASSI

of the tournament after the draw was made. Agassi's spot in the draw was taken by a lucky loser from the qualifying event, Canadian Andrew Schnajder.

On a bad day for seeded players, eighth-seeded Aaron Krickstein was upset by unseeded fellow American Jeff Tarango 2-6, 6-1, 6-3.

In a match between two tour veterans, 33-year-old Andres Gomez of Ecuador, the 1990 French Open champion, defeated 29-year-old American Jimmy Arias 6-3, 6-3.

Martin let a 5-1 first-set lead slip away against Agener, a baseliner more comfortable than Martin on the clay court surface.

Agener used steady, looping groundstrokes to fight back to 5-5, then recovered after trailing in the tiebreak to win the

Becker bites dust

MADRID, Apr 27: Unseeded Argentine Franco Davin upset the world's No 4 tennis player, Boris Becker, for the second time in as many weeks, thrashing the German 6-2, 6-2 Tuesday in the opening round of the city of Madrid Grand Prix, reports AP.

The 23-year-old Davin outran the faltering Becker, who has been plagued by a viral infection since mid-February.

Becker, 25, missed tournaments in Stuttgart, Germany, Rotterdam, Holland, and Osaka, Japan. He dropped out in the third round of a tournament in Key Biscayne, Florida, last month, again with a virus.

Becker returned as a late wild card entry at the Nice Open two weeks ago, but fell to Davin in the second round, 4-6, 6-3, 6-1.

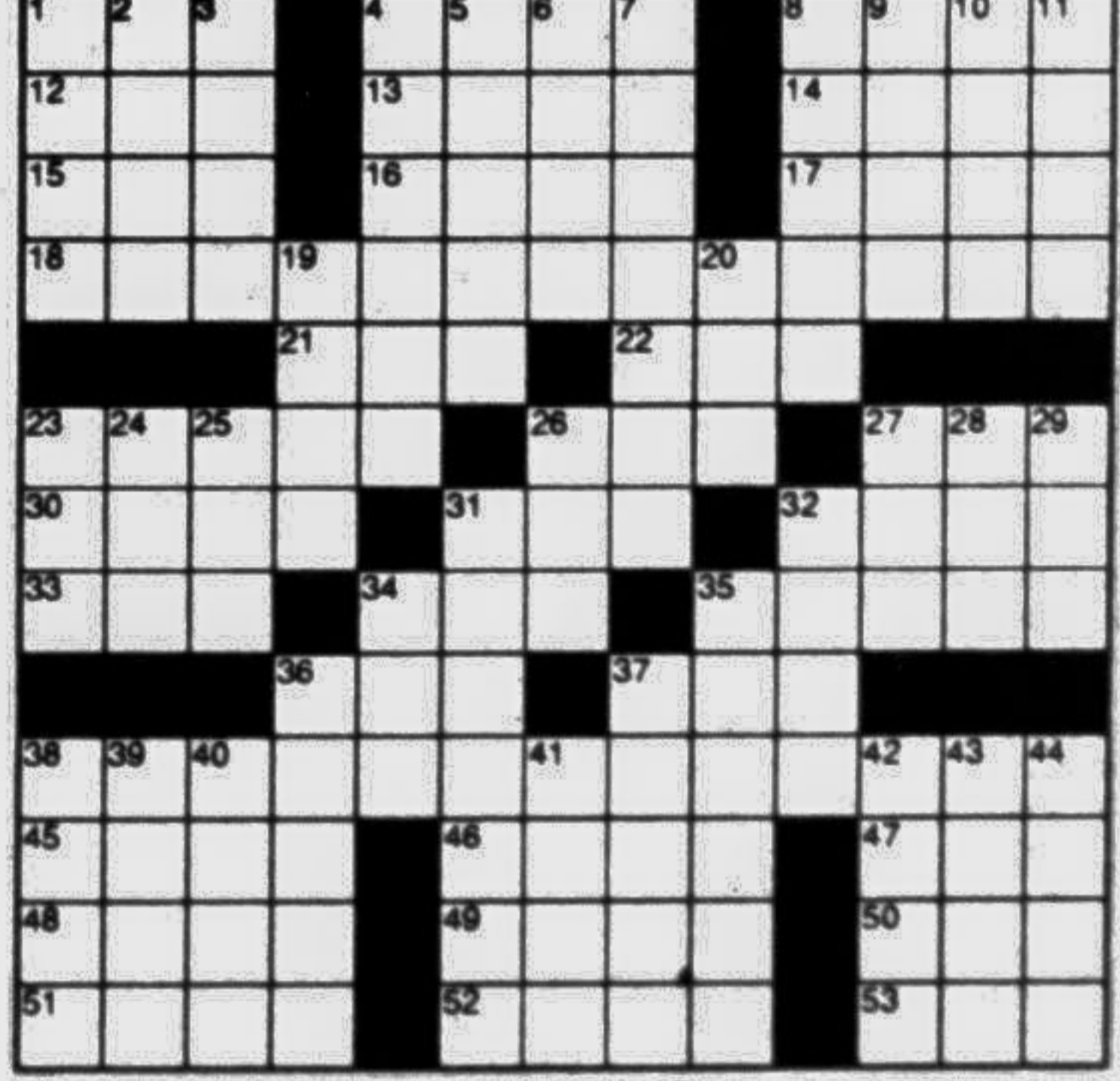
Last week in Monte Carlo, Becker lost his first match to Switzerland's Marc Rosset after drawing an opening round bye.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS
1 Edge
4 Hula-Hoop, coonskin cap, etc.
8 "I—man who wasn't there"
12 Harem chamber
13 Greatly
14 Berke
15 In need of repair
16 "Who's the Boss?" role
17 Milieu for Witt
18 Rendezvous sites
21 Invisibile
22 Powell costar
23 Star of many Westerns?
26 Implore
27 Trot
30 Thought
31 Chestnut seed case
32 "... puddyat!"
33 Acknowledge applause
34 Festive

DOWN
1 Leeway
2 Between jobs
3 Put together
4 Feast antithesis
5 Un-escorted
6 Vietnam money
7 Carpenter's gun, e.g.
8 Type of
9 Grand-scale
10 Tommy of Broadway
11 Sends invitations
19 Frat-party garb, often
20 Diary

Solution time: 23 mins.



CRYPTOQUIP

RLGV SKJGM RUNL NHH
IKVF MUSSUJBTN GZKIC,
GZLKBCNGM CNBMGVNC
NBEVGM NGCNF.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: VIOLINIST'S GIRLFRIEND WAS VERY ANGRY, FOR HE WAS STRINGING HER ALONG.

Today's Cryptoquip clue: S equals F
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.