Graf has not been number

one on the women's tour com-

puter since September 199

and her return to the top

when the next official rankings

are released next week will

end a 91-week stretch of Seles

the 23 year-old Graf, remark-

ably the oldest player in either

the men's or women's semifi-

nal line-up, is that her form in

Paris has not been affected by

her shock over the Seles affair.

Roland Garros final in seven

years, although she has not

captured the title on the red

Fernandez match, she expects

a tougher test than her 10-0

record against the American

confidence and has definitely

improved over the past half-

year or so," said Graf. "She's

shown a lot more aggression

and toughness in the last two

Fernandez said last week. "It's

just matter of believing in your-

self and having the faith that

when you get to the big

matches, to win the last couple

vividly in her comeback from a

1-6, 1-5 deficit against Sabatini

Fernandez watched replays

nervous watching myself play

than actually when I was there,

she said Thursday. "It showed

me the way that I should be

playing, and what it takes to

Grand Slam finals were two

in the top 10 since 1989, yet

she often fell short in big

matches and rarely beat the top

players. Now, after 18 months

of coaching by Harold Solomon,

she is training harder and hit-

game all my life. Since I was a

little girl I was taught to hit the

ball back and not make any

mistakes," she said Thursday.

"It takes a while to change

thought Fernandez would be

ready to challenge for Grand

Slam titles by 1995. But after

she beat Sabatini, he said, "I

Two weeks ago, at the

German Open, Fernandez put

up her toughest fight against

Graf, winning a set for the first

time. Graf testified to Ferna-

"She never went the last step

... she never had the confidence

of winning one of the big tour-

naments," Graf said. "But for

the last few weeks, she has

shown a lot more eagerness and

toughness on the court."

ndez's improvement.

told her, You're ready now."

Solomon said he initially

"I have played a defensive

losses at the Australian Open.

Fernandez's only previous

Fernandez has been ranked

win those matches."

ting harder.

later on TV and was inspired.

That faith was displayed

"I found myself getting more

of games.

"I can beat anyone,"

Looking ahead to the

"She's showing a lot more

Parisian clay since 1988.

This will be her sixth

The main satisfaction for

domination.

Graf, Fernandez in French Open final



PARIS, June 4: Mary Joe Fernandez and Steffi Graf breezed through their respective semifinals for

the combined loss of only six games on Thursday to set up a title clash in Saturday's French Open final, reports Reuter.

Fernandez was a surprise 6-2, 6-2 winner against Spain's Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario while Graf made sure of regaining her old status at the top of the world rankings with a 6-1, 6-1 thrashing of German compatriot Anke Huber.

In the absence of Monica Seles, still recovering from a knife attack at the end of April, Graf and Sanchez-Vicario were expected to clash in the Roland Garros final, but Fernandez upset most predictions against the strangely timid Spaniard.

It will be the Americans third Grand Slam final compared with Grafs 19th, and she has got there the hard way having outlasted world number five Gabriela Sabatini 10-8 in the third set of their quarter

"I was a bit tired yesterday after my match with Gaby but I had a good rest," said Fernandez, still only 21. "I knew I had to attack from the start and that's just what I did. I'm very excited to be in the final."

Graf was understandably happier to talk about reaching the final rather than dwell on her rather hollow elevation to the world number one spot as Seles recovers from her attack by a Graf supporter.

"I'm in the final of a Grand Slam tournament, that's what matters to me," she said. "It doesn't matter what ranking

I've got." Neither Sanchez Vicario, the 1989 champion, nor Huber produced anything like their best tennis, ensuring the two semifinals barely lasted two hours in total.

Fernandez admitted her extraordinary 3-1/2 hour struggle against Sabatini, in which she saved five match points, had been something of a psychological breakthrough.

"Coming back from 5down doesn't happen very often and it gives you confidence," she admitted. "Over the last 15 months, I've seen that being more aggressive is the way to go."

Sanchez-Vicario has scam-Europe with significant results after the French Open for the recently, beating Graf in the final in Hamburg only last month, but on this occasion looked leaden and tentative.

When she fought back from 2-0 down in the second set to 2-2 it seemed she was about to wake from her reverie but, sadly for her supporters, it was not to be.

regather her composure in the

interlude when the players were reduced to just one ball, as if they were playing on a public court on a windy day.

The missing balls were eventually retrieved from under one of the stands and Fernandez, who dropped her serve amid the confusion. made sure Sanchez-Vicario could also find no hiding place.

The 18 year old Huber, in her first Grand Slam semifinal,



GRAF . .. NO 1 AGAIN

managed only 11 points in the entire first set and attracted her compatriot's sympathy once the final ball had been

"At times I felt sad for her because she didn't know how to get back into the match," Graf said. "I knew I had the right game to beat her but it was her first in a semifinal and she was probably a little bit



MARY JOE FERNANDEZ

Tell-tales of top two



pictures of Steffi Graf of Germany and Mary Joe Fernandez of the

United States who contest the women's final at the French Open championships on Saturday, reports Reuter. Steffi Graf: Age 23. Seeded:

One. Career prize-money: 11.27 million dollars. Tifles: 11 Grand Slam, 72 overall. Coach : Heinz Guenthardi, former Swiss Davis Cup player. Grand Slam record: Winner 1987 and 1988 French Open, 1988, 1989 and 1990 Australian Open, 1988, 1989, 1991 and 1992 Wimbledon and 1988 and 1989 US Open. Path to final: Beat Cecilia Dahlman (Sweden) 7-6, 6-1, Andrea Stranadova (Czech Republic) 6-1, 6-1, Laura Gildemeister (Peru) 6-2, 6-2, Iva Majoli (Croatia) 6-4, 7-6, Jenniser Capriati (US) 6-3, 7-5, Anke Huber (Germany) 6-1, 6-1, Record: First player to complete golden Grand Slam of four Grand Slam events and Olympic title in 1988. Number one ranked player for record (men or women) of 186 weeks from August 1987 to March pered around the clay courts of 1991, returns to number one

first time since September 1991. Playing style: Right-hander with devastating forehand and a much improved backhand, which had been restricted to playing sliced shots. Used to play her matches from the baseline but varies her game more now and is prepared to go forward on occa-Fernandez even had time to sions. Mentally tough though she has appeared to be more

PARIS, June 4: Personal: Born in Bruehl on 14 Following are pen June, 1969. 1.75 metres tall. Started playing at age four, turned professional in October 1982. Managed by her father Peter who sawed off a racket handle to allow her to start playing. Younger brother Peter is a Formula Three racing driver. Loves animals and owns four dogs. Enjoys music, art and photography. Has a Youth Tennis Centre in Leipzig,

Germany. Mary Joe Fernandez: Age : 21. Seeded: Five. Career prizemoney: 2.76 million dollars. Titles: Three. Coach: Harold Solomon, former US clay court player. Grand Slam record: finalist 1990 and 1992 Australian Open. Path to final: Beat Nancy Feber (Belgium) 6-2, 6-3, Ann Grossmann (US) 6-3, 3-6, 6-1, Kathy Rinaldi (US) 6-2, 6-2, Brenda Schultz (Netherlands) 2-6, 7-5, 6-3, Gabriela Sabatini (Argentina) 1-6, 7-6, 10-8, Arantsa Sanchez-Vicario (Spain) 6-2, 6-2. Playing style: Right-hander with two handed backhand. A baseline player, who likes clay surfaces. Had dramatic win by attacking Sabatini in the quarter-finals after trailing 6-1, 5-1 and having five match points against her. Personal: born in the Dominican Republic on August 19, 1971. She now lives in Florida, 1.78 metres tall. Turned professional in February 1986. Father, a lawyer, was born in Spain and mother is from Cuba. Won gold medal in doubles with Gigi Fernandez (no relation) at last year's Barcelona Olympics. Was youngest player to win a match at US Open in 1985 when she was 14. Hobbies include golf and water skiing.

Premature end Courier carries on a la Borg

ISLAMORADA, Florida, June 4 : An American swimmer was pulled from the sea on Thursday, ending an attempt to swim the 177 miles (285 km) from Cuba to the Florida Keys, an official monitoring the swim said, reports Reuter.

"He's out of the water," said Steve Crumley, an official based in Islamorada, where swimmer Skip Storch had been expected to make landfall on Friday.

"He was struggling against the wind and current," said Crumley, who was in radio contract with the boat accompanying Storch. "He was very dehydrated."

Crumley said Storch's boat crew made the decision to remove him from the water about 35 miles (55 km) north of Cuba.

Storch, 36, left Havana on Wednesday morning in an attempt to swim the 177-mile route from the Cuban capital to Islamorada in the Florida Keys.

Among the small group of Cuban officials and journalists who saw Storch off was Gustavo Gonzalez Radcliff, a Cuban who in 1952 was a member of an eight-man relay team that swam from Cuba to Florida.

Another well-wisher was Cuban President Fidel Castro, who visited Storch at the dockside in Havana on Tuesday.

Storch, who calls himself an environmental swimmer intended the swim to call attention to the plight of the world's coral reefs.

He was swimming within a specially-designed wire mesh shark cage for protection. Storch was expected to arrive in Islamorada by boat on Thursday evening.

Sonics eclipse Phoenix Suns

SEATTLE, Washington, June 4: The Seattle Supersonics beat the Phoenix Suns 118-102 here Thursday to force a seventh game in the National Basketball Association Western Conference finals, reports AFP.

The Sonics shut down Suns start Charles Barkley, limiting the 'Dream Team' member to 13 points, a big come down after his 43 points in game five on Tuesday night.

Dan Majerle, who also starred for the Suns on Tuesday with 34 points, was held to 12 points as the Sonics levelled the series at three games apiece.

The teams head back in Phoenix for the deciding game in the series on Saturday. Phoenix, who had the best

regular season record in the NBA, are trying to reach the championship finals for the first time since 1976 while Seattle are trying to get back for the first time since 1979.

For the Sonics, Rickey Pierce scored 27 points and Shawn Kemp had 22, Sam Perkins added 18 and Derrick McKey and Garry Payton had 16 each. It was the first time in the series that all of Seattle's starting line-up scored in double digits.

The Suns, who beat Los Angeles in five games and San Antonio in six to reach the conference final, looked tired. In the fourth quarter tempers flared when Danny Ainge fouled Michael Cage after Cage

the Sonics. Cage shoved Ainge, who was

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41 Score or

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SPOKEELKBUG

SHEPAM

VICTORHERBERT

Fernandez POLE JAY JOKE 50 An

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25 Farm

26 Literary

initials

28 Means of

snake

god of

pleasure

40 Old French

restraint

18 Airport

19 Artist's

15 Common

12 She's

song

13 Noted

4 Go-round

the famous footsteps of Bjorn

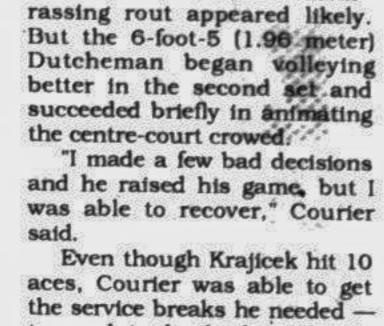
Borg on Friday by reaching the French Open final for the third consecutive year at the expense of Dutchman Ric-

hard Krajicek, report agencies. Courier beat the 12th seeded Krajicek 6-1, 6-7, 7-5, 6-2 with another determined display, ad-

PARIS, June 4: Borg." Jim Courier continued to retrace

He will play for the title Sunday against 10th-seeded Bruguera, who played forcefully from the baseline in a 6-0, 6-4, 6-2 victory while his 18-year-old foe from Ukraine self-destruc-

Medvedev, the No 11 seed, looked like a champion in ousting Stefan Edberg on Thursday, but committed 47 unforced errors Friday compared to



in their first set that an embar-

two each in the third and fourth sets. Eleven times he fired back service returns for winners, 13 times he scored on passing shots.

Krajicek also hit a few deadly service returns. One forehand in the third set was so powerful that Courier watched it fly by, then bowed in mock awe.

"That was the hardest I've ever been on the court with" Courier said. "After that, I tried to get them to his backhand."

Courier now has a 4-1 career edge over Krajicek. Bruguera had lost hist three previous matches with Medvedev and is

0-4 against Courier. It was Courier's 20th straight victory at the French Open. A victory Sunday would give him the second leg of this year's Grand Slam after winning

the Australian Open in Janu-Krajicek was impressed by Courier's speed, particularly in positioning himself to hit his devastating forehands.

"I couldn't get the balls to his backhand," Krajicek said. "As long as he's hitting forehands he's the one dictating points.

It was the fourth straight match here in which Courier has dropped the second set. Asked about this by a French reported, he replied in French, "Yes but I always win the fourth." Medvedev who was routed by

Courier last year in the fourth round, said Bruguera's rhythm was too quick for him. "I wasn't ready for the speed

that he gave me," he said. "I lost all coordination. I couldn't hit the forehand, I couldn't hit the backhand. My heartbeat was too fast. It was a good lesson." Bruguera the first Spaniard

in the final here since Manuel Orantes in 1974, said he tried to his every shot as hard as he could.

"It was my best match of the tournament," he said. "I knew ! had to play my best tennis."

With Fernandez and Courier. this is the first time Americans play in both the men's and women's finals here since 1984, when John McEnroe lost to Ivan Lendl and Martina Navratilova beat Chris Evert Lloyd. The last year Americans won both titles was 1954 - Tony Trabert and

first set after an extraordinary fragile in last few years. LA Kings lose their crowns



MONTREAL, June 4: Clinging to a one-goal lead with less than two minutes remaining, the Los

Angeles Kings lost Game 2 of the Stanley Cup final in overtime, reports AP.

This is not a new phenomenon for the comeback Kings. They've had the lead in sev-

eral playoff games only to lose, so coach Barry Melrose was calm as usual after Thursday night's 3-2 self-destruction. "Our mood's always," said

Melrose, a regular reader of books on positive thinking.

"We played in overtime quite a bit. We had a couple good chances to score before they came down and scored. We're fine. We expected this to be a very tough series".

The Kings led 2-1 with 1:45 remaining in regulation. Then

Montreal Canadians coach Jacques Demers asked officials

to measure the stick of Los Angeles defenceman Marty McSorley The stick's curve exceeded the maximum allowed, and McSorley was sent to the chances," he said. penalty box. The Canadians

scored on the ensuing power play to force overtime. Eric Desjardins completed a hat-trick with the winning goal 52 seconds into the extra session as the Canadians tied

the best-of-seven series at one game each. "Listen, they had to win tonight," Wayne Gretzky said. "If they got down 2-0 coming to LA, boy, life would have been

pretty miserable for them. It's on to Los Angeles for "We almost snuck out of

two games beginning Saturday. here with a win," said Gretzky, who had four points in

Tuesday's opener but wasn't a

factor in Game 2. They played a better team game tonight. They played us hard, they finished their checks. We had a couple of 4on-3s and 5-on-3s and we didn't capitalise on those

The Kings were outshot 41-24 and only stayed in the hunt on the strength of Kelly Hrudey's outstanding goaltend-

"Kelly played very well. Matter of fact, the winning goal hit one of those uprights on the glass and it came right back to Desjardins," Melrose

Even though the Canadians won, Gretzky figures they're the ones who will suffer in the days ahead while the Kings revel in the comfort of home

"They've got to fly six hours tomorrow.

our experiences of the 1984 Olympics when we sold 1.4 big events."

even cover the cost of our

But February and March Americans regularly involved in soccer were so successful that the organisers had to increase the number available.

That should have been hardest, a year-and-a-half in advance," said Rothernberg.

and nobody comes?"

"We disagreed with the marketing experts, but said regardless we had made a promise to the US soccer family that they could have first shot at buying some tickets and we said even if it's going to cost us money we have to carry out our promise.

what I thought it would be." The four-week tournament kicks off in Chicago on June 17 next year.

WC organisers target sell-out

Officials from FIFA soccer's world ruling body, said on Wednesday more than 600,000 tickets had already been sold in the first phase of marketing.

committee, admitted to some sleepless nights fearing he was arranging a party no one would "These experts were scar-

mail order ticket sales for first round matches aimed only at

ZURICH, June 4: The American organisers of the 1994 World Cup say they are on target to sell all 3.6 million tickets, defying marketing experts and delighting FIFA, re-

brought down a rebound for assessed a foul.

"This is going to be the

million seats. Americans like

the US World Cup organising

overjoyed with the response. We had predicted that we would sell out every single seat at every single match, all 3.6 million, and I did believe that had many a sleepless night when I'd wake up and say 'My God, what if we hold a party

Richard Krajicek in the French Open yesterday at Roland Garros. vancing to his fifth Grand Slam final in two years of consistent achievement.

BEAT THAT IF YOU CAN: Defending champion

Courier slugs one back for his Dutch semifinal rival

Borg, champion between 1978-1981, is the only player in history, excluding the war years when the tournament was closed to foreigners, to have won the French Open three

years in a row. Despite his remarkable record at Roland Garros - this was his 20th straight win - a modest Courier suggested it would be inaccurate "to men-

tion me in the same breath as

only nine for Bruguera. "He played unbelievable tennis today," Medvedev said. "I never played against an opponent like that except Jim

Courier last year."

- AFP photo

Bruguera has won seven titles in his career, all on clay, but in previous Grand Slams has done to better than a fourth-round loss here in 1989. He ousted top-seeded Pete Wednesday.

and Krajicek so uncomfortable

Sampras in the quarterfinals Courier was no dominant Maureen Connolly.

Zarak claims another scalp DUBAI, June 4: All-Stars team beat the Pakistan's Zarak



CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

2 Bea's

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fellow

"Golden

3 Mauna —

volcano)

(extinct

4 Eloquent

speaker

5 Brings to

6 Scrooge's

comment

7 That is, to

Caesar

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9 News-

paper

10 Jai -- *

11 Spanish

painter

16 - volente

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willing)

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public

Jahan Khan added another notable scalp to his growing collec-

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tion as he beat world number 16 Mansi Wiens of Germany 15-8, 15-6, 15-10 in the Emirates international squash team challenge on Thursday, reports Reuter.

And with his 21-year-old brother Zubair Jahan Khan staging a great fightback to beat Florian Possl 11-15, 9-15, 17-14, 15-9, 15-8, their Dubai

German Eagles 3-0 and looked well set for a place in Friday's

For 26-year-old Zarak, his 27-minute victory was doubly satisfying as he had lost a bad temperated match against Wiens when they last met at the Spanish Open in Madrid in

"This shows how much I have improved since then," said Zarak, who had been out of squash for a total of two years since 1990 through injury and suspension.

But since his return in January he has moved up 223 places to 28th after a string of superb results against higher ranked opponents.

"I am aiming to reach the top 16 by next month's rankings, then the top 10 by the end of the year," he added. Certainly he looked top 10

class as he swept Wiens aside. But Zubair seemed down and out at two games and 12-8 behind to Possl

But as the German player tired, Zubair fought back to take control

CRYPTOQUIP

VXB VCAG MQ HBANPENEP

FCWGLCWG

ADYYBI FBQMIB

LMLDRCI

AXMDRHBIA. XNA Saturday's Cryptoquip: DEVOID OF CASH, BAR-TENDER PUT HIS VACATION PLANS TO BUFFALO ON ICE.

Today's Cryptoquip clue: X equals H

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.



Graf who showed her no mercy to march into the final of the French Open on Thursday at Roland Garros, Paris. - Star TV photo

ports Reuter.

biggest World Cup ever," said FIFA spokesman Guido Tog-"We were always confident that it would be sold out from

Alan I. Rothernberg, head of

ing the living daylights out of us and they said we wouldn't

"It was remarkable. I am

31 Verve 33 Pitcher 35 Fit of pique ADD WET HAZEL 36 Poisonous "The response was probably 38 Egyptian