

Sport

Agassi begins title defence in style

LONDON, June 22: Andre Agassi made a stylish winning return to the Centre Court at Wimbledon on Monday but not everybody agreed the flamboyant American had proved he was capable of retaining his title, reports AFP.

Germany's Michael Stich, in impressive form as he dispatched Jan Siemerink of the Netherlands in straight sets, played down the significance of Agassi's 7-5, 6-4, 6-0 victory over Bernd Karbacher.

"He played a guy who had a virus for the last two weeks and couldn't even play doubles. I don't think that that was a real test for him," Stich, the 1991 champion and a winner last week at Queen's Club, said after he had confirmed his own status as a serious rival for the men's title.

Agassi was sidelined for two months before last week because of tendinitis in his right wrist. He was delighted to have got a potentially tricky obstacle out of the way and with the enthusiastic reception he got from the show crowd.

"This is the second best feeling of my career. The best was winning here last year," the American eighth seed said. "Today I would have played ten sets. I didn't want to leave the court."

Having cleared the awkward first hurdle — not without difficulty for he trailed 5-2 in the first set — Agassi now believes he can play himself into good enough form to have a chance of retaining his title.

Having been beaten by Carl-Uwe Steeb in his first match last week at Halle, Agassi has come into the tournament on the back of a week of intense physical training.

"That is all I have to go on to be honest, coming into this tournament. Now as I get through a match or two then I will be able to start counting on my mental frame of mind."

That view was born out of Karbacher, who predicted: "If he can get to the last 16 then he can beat anyone."

Stich and Agassi could meet in the semifinals although both of them have formidable barriers in their way Richard Krajicek and Pete Sampras for Agassi and Boris Becker for Stich.

Agassi ruled out any suggestion that his wrist injury might force him to pull out of the tournament.

"I still need treatment to keep it healthy. It's an injury that more wear and tear can stimulate," he said.

"They don't suspect that it could swell up with a match or during a tournament but they suspect that over the long haul the abuse that it takes could mean I could not compete."

"I competed for three months with the pain because the pain was at a certain level so to say that the pain is going to come back to an intense level where I can't compete is unlikely."

Agassi now plays Britain's Ross Matheson or Brazilian Joao Cunha Silva and has a comfortable path to the fourth round where he is due to meet Richard Krajicek.

Krajicek, the fastest server on the tour, was a straight sets winner over Niklas Kulti of Sweden.

Stefan Edberg might have lost his status as the bookmaker's favourite after struggling for four sets against Canadian Greg Rusedski.

The Swede, bidding for his third Wimbledon title, made hard work of getting past a qualifier who refused to lie down and die but finally clinched victory 6-4, 6-4, 6-7, 7-6 in a fourth set tiebreak.

Ivan Lendl must have thought he was relieving his worst nightmare as he dropped the first set to qualifier Brian Devening. But the seventh seed, who crashed out

of the French Open in the first round to a qualifier, pulled his game together and ran out a 6-7, 6-4, 6-1, 6-3 winner.

Czech 15th seed Karel

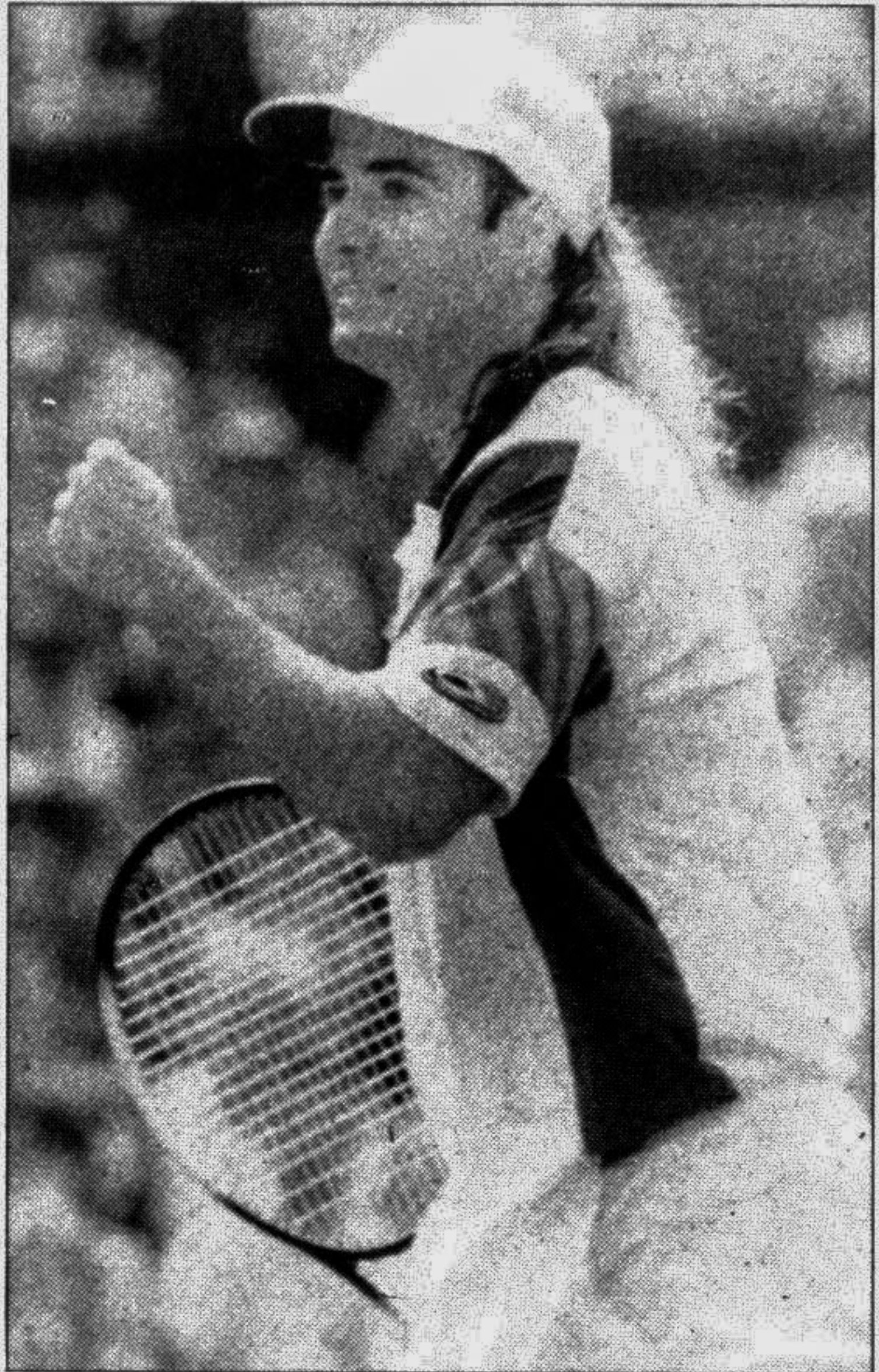
for the women's title in action on the opening day.

The fourth seeded Argentinian beat Carrie Cunningham 7-5, 6-2 but had a

round opponent, tottered, on action on the opening day.

Coezter had to save five break points in a critical game at 2-2 in the final set.

Bulgarian sisters Magdalena Maleeva and Manuela Maleeva Fragner, seeded tenth and 11th, both came through their first round matches.



Defending champion Andre Agassi of America rejoices after unleashing a winner against his first round opponent German Bernd Karbacher in the Wimbledon tennis championship on Monday. The flamboyant Floridian, seeded eighth this year, marked his return to the All-England Club with a stylish 7-5, 6-4, 6-0 win.

— AFP photo

Novacek, who squandered a two sets to love lead before losing in five to Mexico's Luis Herrera, was the first major casualty.

Jim Courier got his title bid off to a flying start, beating Italy's Gianluca Pozzi 6-0, 7-5, 6-4, but the third seed was still downplaying his chances on a surface where he always been ill at ease.

"Wimbledon for me, it's not my natural surface. It's a crapshoot," the American said. Courier said it would take "a lot of good tennis and a little bit of luck" for him to add this title to his Australian and French crowns.

SABATINI SAILS

Gabriela Sabatini was the only one of the major competi-

much tougher-than-expected battle to win.

Sabatini, who has not won a tournament for over a year, looked much better when she started to attack the net in the second set — a tactic which brought her the only Grand Slam title she has yet to claim at the 1990 US Open.

"I'm feeling very good and I think I am playing a lot better than last year," Sabatini said.

Anke Huber, the German ninth seed who Sabatini should meet in the fourth round, also had to struggle. She beat Cecilia Dahlman of Sweden 11-9 in a second set tiebreak after scraping through the first set 7-5.

South African Amanda Coetzter, the 14th seed, and Steffi Graf's scheduled fourth

Table with 10 rows and 2 columns: Rank, Player (Country). 1. P. Sampras (USA), 2. S. Edberg (SWE), 3. J. Courier (USA), 4. B. Becker (GER), 5. G. Ivanisevic (CRO), 6. M. Stich (GER), 7. I. Lendl (USA), 8. A. Agassi (USA), 9. R. Krajicek (NED), 10. A. Medvedev (UKR)

The top ten for the men's singles in the ongoing Wimbledon tennis championships. American world number one Pete Sampras tops the seedings although London bookies bill Stefan Edberg, the second seed, favourite to win his third Wimbledon. Defending champion Andre Agassi is seeded eighth and the tenth man Andrei Medvedev of Ukraine can pose serious problems for the favourites.

— Star TV photo



O tempora! O mores! A young girl is seen blowing an bubble for the Wimbledon tennis championships.

— Star TV photo

Hairy dilemma

LONDON, June 22: Fans of defending Wimbledon champion Andre Agassi have found themselves in a tangle over the American's hairy stomach and chest, reports AFP.

Where has it gone?

Agassi looks to have lost the body hair which did not pass unnoticed at Wimbledon in 1992, according to a photograph published by the tabloid Daily Star on Tuesday.

Arms, legs and the designer stubble all seem to have been given the chop, much to the chagrin of female admirers.

Emma Langham, 16, visiting the tournament for the first time, said: "It's a very bad idea. He's better hairy — he looks more masculine. What happens when it grows? It will get all stubbly. I prefer him the way he was."

Natalie Bawarshi, 15, said: "He's definitely sexier with the hair. How could he shave it off?"

But Sarah Keeling, 21, who is working as a guide at the championships, said Agassi was better bare-chested.

He looks more sexy. Too much hair is real turnoff. Like him without that line to his navel — but it does make him look as if he has got more of a pot belly."

Ruddock won't stay with Spurs

LONDON, June 22: Tottenham centre-back Neil Ruddock sparked a transfer scramble on Tuesday when he rejected a new contract from the English Premier side, reports AFP.

The 25-year-old, who wants to leave the London club following the sacking of Terry Venables as chief executive, could not be persuaded to change his mind by new boss Ossie Ardiles, despite being offered an improved deal.

"We offered him a super-super deal, much better than his current contract," said the Argentinean. "But every time we seemed to be close, his adviser seemed to put up another obstacle."

"It came to a point when I said I don't do business like this. I have no doubt that he wants to play for us, but there are somehow complications. If he withdraws his transfer request, then we'll talk to him."

"If an offer came in for him, then we would consider it, but I'm still hoping that he'll change his mind."

Ruddock, who still has three years to go on his current agreement, claims that the Ardiles offer falls short of an improved contract tabled by Venables before his sacking. "I feel as though I've been let down," said the defender. "Tottenham have kicked me in the teeth and I'm angry and frustrated. They've gone back on the first offer and it has left a nasty taste in the mouth."

Honours easy in President's Cup

SEOUL, June 22: Romania and Czechoslovakia fought to a 1-1 draw in the South Korean President's Cup International football tournament here Tuesday, reports AFP.

At half-time Czechoslovakia led 1-0.

Hogen Roman headed in a goal in the 35th minute but Romania equalised in the second half with Clurea Gheorghe's shot into the net in the 56th minute.

In the second match of the day, South Korea "B" and Australia also registered a 2-2 draw.

South Korea took the initiative to open the scoring, getting a goal in the first minute by Han Jung-Kuk and netting a second goal when Park Kun-Ha headed the ball in off a corner in the 22nd minute.

However, Australia embarked on a two-goal spree in the final five minutes.

Gary van Egmond got the first goal with a header in the 87th minute and two minutes later, Australia scored again with a turning shot by Jean Paul de Marigny.

No celebration for Barcelona

BARCELONA, June 22: Celebrations to mark Barcelona's third straight Spanish football title success were cancelled on Monday following the double bomb attack in Madrid that killed seven people, reports AFP.

The regional and city authorities decided it was too dangerous to go ahead with a planned parade through the Catalan capital, an official said.



Australian qualifier Neil Borwick doing a bit of gardening after some patches of the court came loose during his first round tie against world number one American Pete Sampras at the All-England Club yesterday.

— Star TV photo

Basuki feels at home on grass



LONDON, June 22: Indonesia's Yayuk Basuki, aiming to improve on last year's fourth round appearance at Wimbledon, looks so at home on grass everyone assumes she was brought up on the stuff, reports AFP.

"People are always saying I have got a natural grass court game but actually the first time I played on grass was here at Wimbledon," she says.

But she admits that grass is probably her favourite surface and there is no doubt that Wimbledon is the tournament that means more to her than any other.

"Reaching the last 16 here last year was definitely the highest of my career. I got to the fourth round of a Grand Slam tournament and I had to beat some good players, like Anke Huber, to get there."

"I know I won tournament at Pattaya and Jakarta this year but the level was different."

Playing almost exclusively on the Asian circuit has almost certainly stalled Basuki's progression since she became the first Indonesian player to win a professional event at Pattaya in 1991.

Now 22, she has no regrets about perhaps failing to realise all her potential. The choice of playing in Asia allowed Basuki, the daughter of a retired police officer, to continue her studies at the Academy of Bank Management in Jakarta.

On Wednesday, Basuki, currently ranked 40th in the

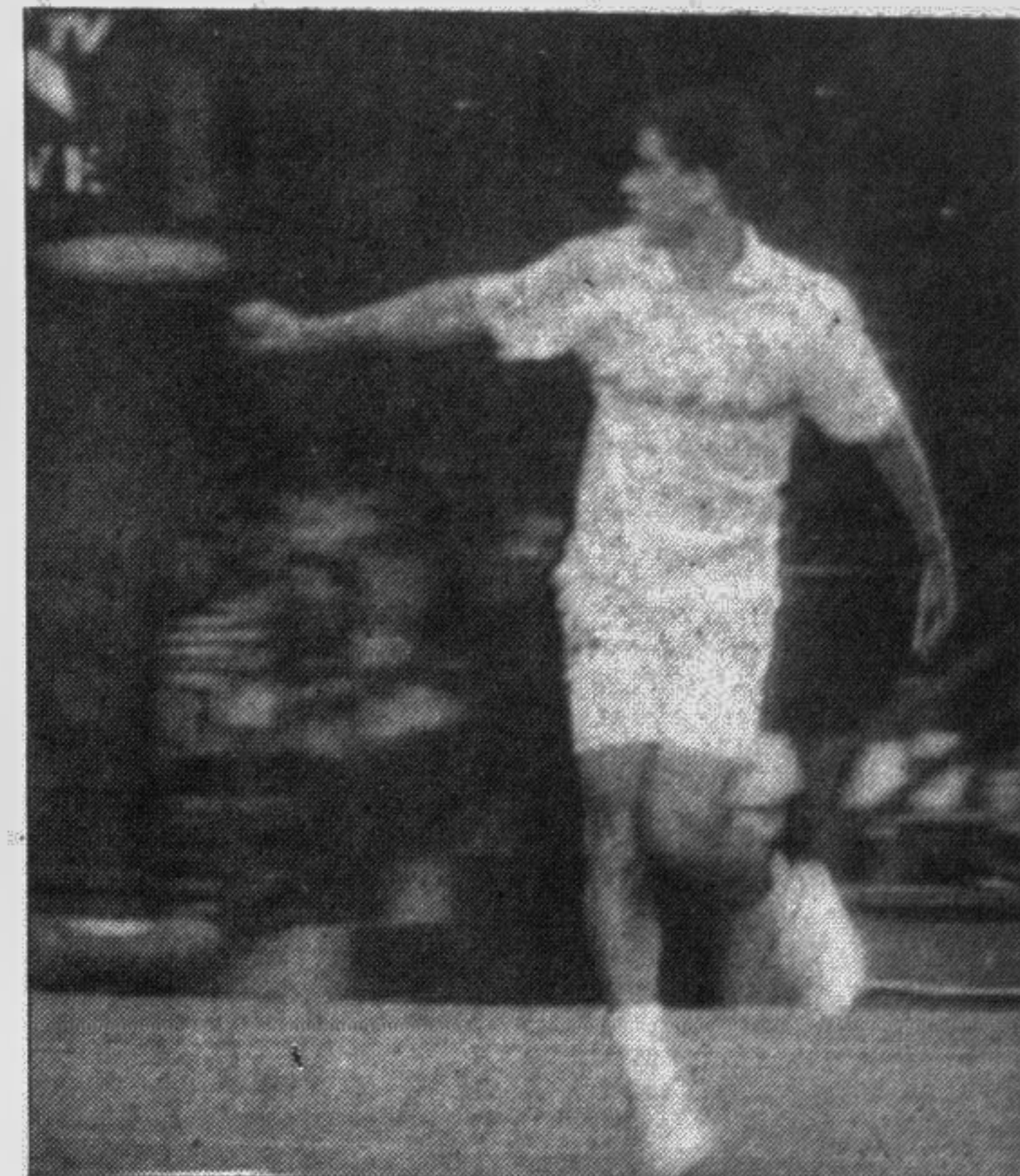
world, takes on American Robin White for a place in the third round. White is ranked 86 but is a former top 20 player who is at much at ease with the pace and low bounce of the Wimbledon lawns as Basuki.

The Indonesian expects a tough battle but if she comes through she has every reason to hope for an even better run than last year.

"I have got a pretty good draw — a lot of players about my level," she said.

Basuki also knows she has nothing to fear on grass from the seeds in her quarter, Spain's Conchita Martinez and Bulgaria's Magdalena Maleeva.

"On grass anybody can beat anybody — you just have to look at Andre Agassi here last year."



American world number one Pete Sampras makes a backhand return during his first round match against Australian Neil Borwick in the Wimbledon tennis championships at the All-England Club yesterday. Sampras, top seed for the meet, overcame early hiccups to etch a 6-7, 6-3, 7-6, 6-3 victory.

Leading players' apathy for strict security

LONDON, June 22: Leading players are snubbing increased security arrangements at the Wimbledon tennis championships, reports AFP.

The All-England Club have provided minders for all players following the stabbing of former world number one Monica Seles at a German tournament 10 weeks ago.

However, many have not taken up the offer. Indeed, on Tuesday defending women's champion Steffi Graf wandered to and from her practice court without any protection at all.

Graf - shocked by the attack on Seles by a crazed fan who did it so the German could regain her top ranking — sauntered casually among spectators as they flooded into the ground for the second day of the championships.

She seemed unconcerned by her vulnerability, in stark contrast to her comments after the Seles incident, when she called for greater security to ensure players' safety.

Players also continued to turn their court chairs round, from the safer side-on position, so they had their backs to spectators only a few feet behind them.

However, chief inspector Des Wyke, in charge of policing at the tournament, stressed that it was a matter of choice for the players if they wanted escorts.

"It is up to each individual player," he said. "They can do as they wish."

Quebec to get govt support

QUEBEC CITY, June 22: The Canadian government said Monday it would provide 2.5 million dollars (1.95 million US) to support Quebec City's bid to host the Olympic Winter Games in 2002, reports AFP.

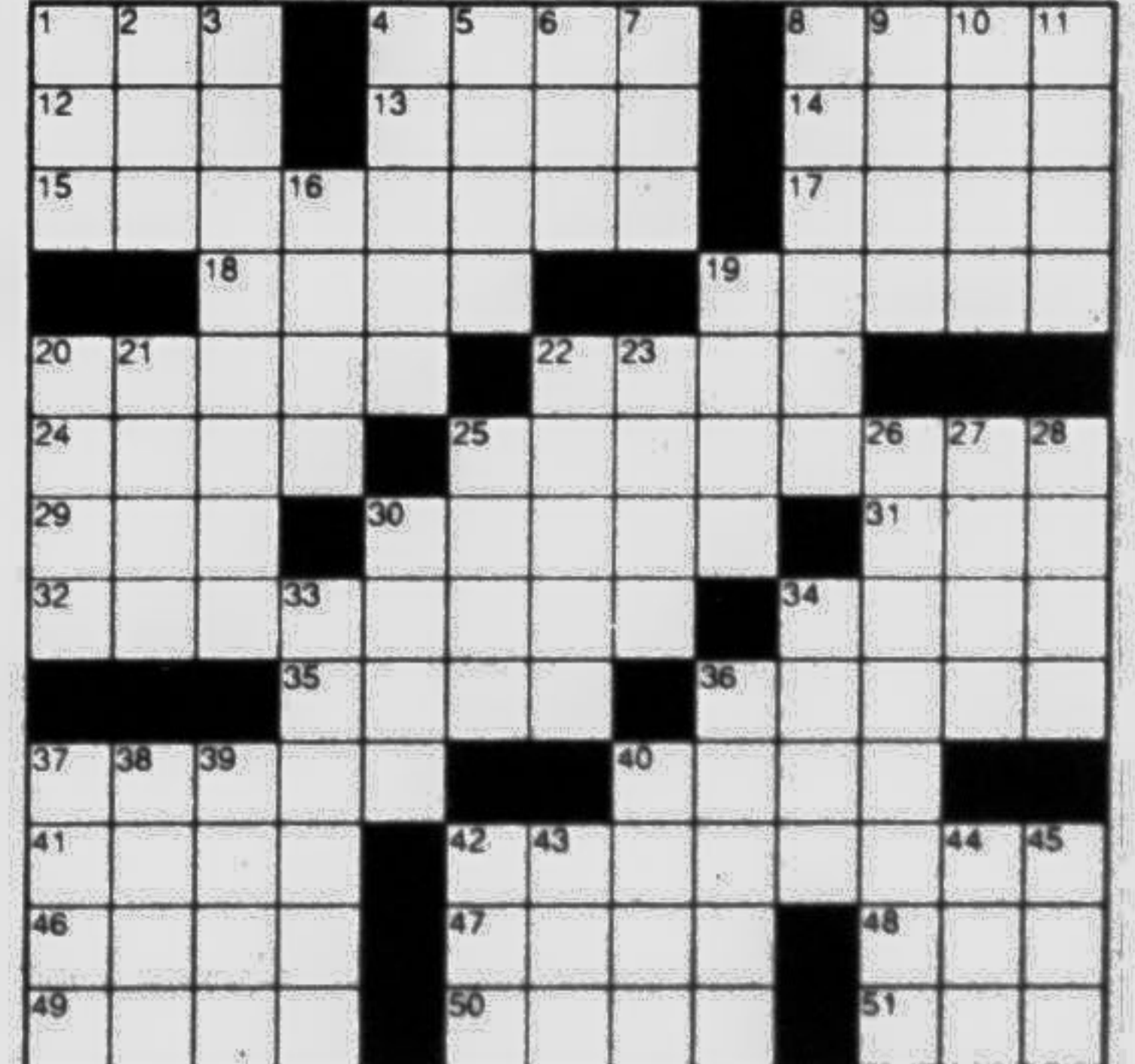
Total budget for the bid is 12 million dollars (9.4 million US).

A decision on the site for the 2002 Games is due to be made by the international Olympic Committee in 1995.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS: 1 Inseparable, 4 Make it through, 8 What an X might mean, 12 Irritate, 13 Jai follower, 14 Garfield cohort, 15 Leaves dismissed, 18 Unforgettable singer, 19 Chases after flies, 20 Photo finish?, 22 Gaffer's goal, 24 Pennsylvania city, 25 A husky type?, 29 Take top honors, 30 Worked as a cobbler, 31 Business deg., 32 Wisdom, 34 Writer Kingsley, 35 Buddies, 36 Beauty, to Keats, 37 Computer hookup, 40 Game show host Bob, 41 Karras of 'Webster', 42 1990 Cher film, 46 Transportation company, 47 Mosque priest, 48 Bronx attraction, 49 Santa's load, 50 Oswald's assassin, 51 Here, appropriately, Solution time: 21 mins.

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CRYPTOQUIP: FB Y XRMU ZYETXR FX TDWMY OBYR FBWRKT KX OEXRK WT P EYZPWEDPR. Yesterday's Cryptoquip: BUY HOT DOGS ON THE STREET AND YOU'LL BE CURBING YOUR APPE-TITE. Today's Cryptoquip clue: D equals M. 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.