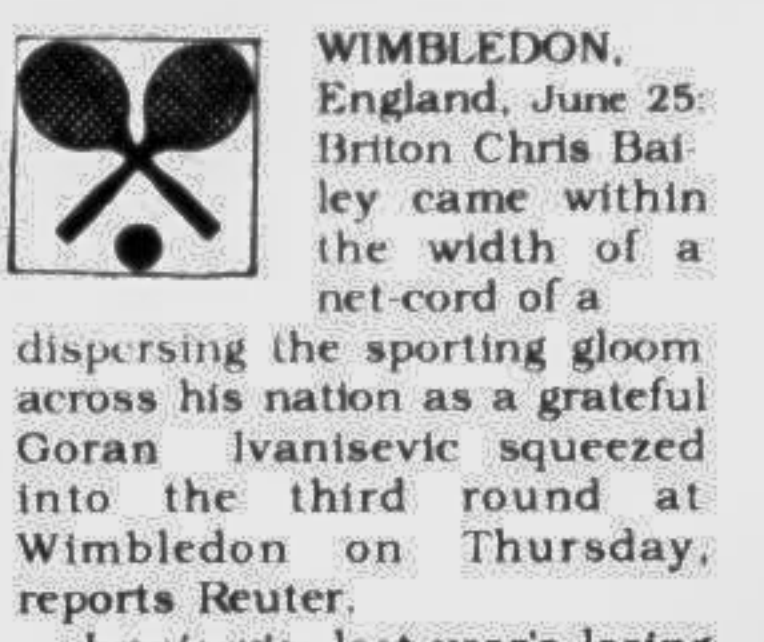


Ivanisevic escapes by a hair



WIMBLEDON, England, June 25: Britain's Chris Bailey came within the width of a net-cord of dispersing the sporting gloom across his nation as a grateful Goran Ivanisevic squeezed into the third round at Wimbledon on Thursday, reports Reuter.

Ivanisevic, last year's losing finalist, won 5-7, 7-6, 6-7, 6-4, 9-7 but only after he had saved a match point in the final set when a fortunate bounce off the cord avoided what would have been a fatal double-fault.

It was rough justice for Bailey who had looked capable of joining a small but significant mutiny by lower-ranked players against the bigger names in the men's draw.

Ivan Lendl's perpetual quest for a Wimbledon title hit the rocks for the umpteenth time against Arnaud Boetsch, while 10th seed Andrei Medvedev bowed out to another Frenchman Cedric Pioline, affected by personal problems he refused to divulge. But it was fifth seed Ivanisevic's escape from the clutches of the gallant Bailey that captivated the Centre Court crowd on the fourth consecutive sunny day of the championships.

The match spanned three hours 34 minutes and proved, if nothing else, that British tennis players need not be the bad joke they have frequently been labelled.

Bailey, ranked 263rd in the world, found himself 6-5 up with a match point in the final set having hit a sweet backhand with a brand new racket after breaking a string during the previous point.

The Croat's first attempt at a second serve almost settled it for Bailey, but his second was an ace down the middle which revealed bravery almost to the point of foolhardiness.

"It was a hit-or-miss shot," Bailey admitted later. "I've never seen anyone serve a second-serve ace like that in that sort of situation."

Referring to that crucial moment, Ivanisevic agreed the margin of error had been minimal.

"You have to give it a try. If you double-fault, bad luck, you're out. I was lucky, but not everyone can go for it like I did."

"It was the best five-set match I've ever played, but at times I saw myself at the port tomorrow checking my luggage in. I told myself it was too early to do that."

Ivanisevic's 34th ace of the match finally decided the issue, banishing some of the bad memories which have dogged him since his last appearance on the same court 12 months ago.

Then he served 37 aces in the final and 206 in the fortnight but still lost to Andre Agassi in another epic five-set encounter.

Since then, though, he has proved himself more than equal to the challenge of winning five-setters, including four such wins in a row at the Olympics in Barcelona.

It also redressed the balance of his recent meetings with British players. He lost to Nick Brown at Wimbledon two years ago and went down to Chris Wilkinson at Queen's earlier this month.

Wilkinson, ironically, was one British player who did reach the third round, but he will have to remove second seed Stefan Edberg from his path if he wants to progress any further.

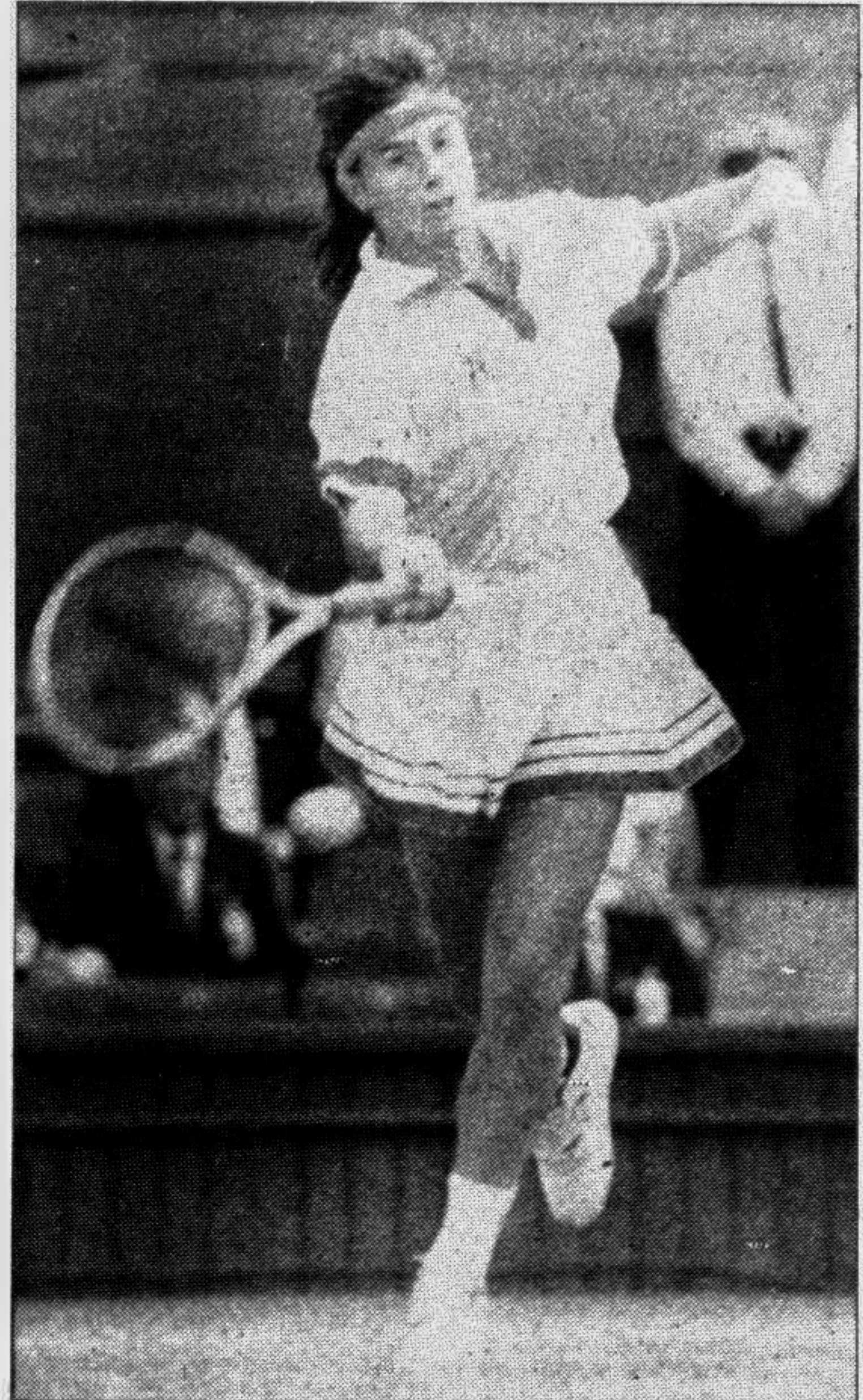
Edberg glided to a 6-3, 6-4, 6-4 victory in 99 minutes against Israel's Amos Mansdorf, while former world

number one Jim Courier also took his place in the last 32 with a 7-5, 6-1, 7-6 victory over Ronald Agener of Haiti.

Such ease on grass still eludes Lendl, winner of eight Grand Slam titles in a formidable career, who must now acknowledge his search for Wimbledon glory has gone.

The 33-year-old left the grounds without comment after leading 6-4, 4-2 when Gigi Fernandez had to withdraw with a shoulder injury.

Fernandez had not been expected to figure in the singles but she and Natalia Zvereva are the holders and top seeds in the doubles. Zvereva, who beat 12th seed Katerina Maleeva in the first round, had better luck, beating Andrea Strnadova 6-3, 6-2. Zvereva is a former



Argentinian star Gabriela Sabatini makes a forehand return in her women's singles second-round match at the Wimbledon tennis championships in England on June 24. Her opponent is South African Kathy Rinaldi.

ter being eliminated 4-6, 7-5, 6-3, 6-4 by Boetsch, making it an excellent day for the French who gave their own supporter little to shout about in Paris.

Pioline's 6-7, 7-6, 6-3, 6-4 win over Medvedev, however, was overshadowed by the teenage Ukrainian's post-match admission that "personal" worries were to blame. His distracted mood on court suggested his distress was genuine, but the cause remained uncertain.

The last of the women's second round matches were also completed with no further loss of seeds. Martina Navratilova continued to look the most serious threat to top seed Steffi Graf with a 6-0, 6-4 defeat of South African Ros Fairbank-Nidesser.

Earlier an AFP report said: Mary Joe Fernandez, the fifth seed, gave another compelling demonstration of her new attacking style to romp into the third round.

The recent French Open finalist whose baseline game has been radically overhauled by coach Harold Solomon gave Ruzandra Dragomir blisters as she played her across the court with some consistent and accurate hitting in a 6-3, 6-2 victory.

Fernandez now takes on former Wimbledon finalist Zina Garrison-Jackson, who was

world number five and she always does well in Grand Slams despite slipping to 25 in the rankings.

A quarter-finalist here last year, she plays Belgium's Sabine Appelmans for a place in the last 16.

Miriam Oremans, the Dutch 20-year-old tipped for a top ten place by Martina Navratilova, beat Australian Louise Field 6-3, 6-2.

Oremans has leapt more than 100 places in the rankings this year and after narrowly losing to Navratilova in the final at Eastbourne last week has just moved into the top 30.

She has a powerful service and is as comfortable at the net as on the baseline.

An ordinary career that was going nowhere was transformed last October when Oremans started working with coach Hugo Ekker.

He immediately ordered an intensive programme of weight loss and by the end of the winner Oremans had shed eight kilos (18 pounds) by running for one and a half hours every day for three months.

"I didn't like it but I knew I had to do it," she said.

After failing to get past the first round on two previous visits here, Oremans is now reaping the benefits of all that sweat.



Australian qualifier P Rafter looks unhappy over a line call during his match against defending champion Andre Agassi in the men's singles at Wimbledon yesterday. The world number eight Floridan was very well on course when he beat the Aussie 6-1, 6-7, 6-0, 6-3. —Star TV photo

For Sabatini tennis comes before romance

LONDON, June 25: Becoming world number one and winning a Wimbledon title take priority over romance for Gabriela Sabatini, reports AFP.

The Argentinian, whose looks make her the biggest off-court earner in women's tennis, admits that her fame makes it difficult to form lasting relationships.

"It is very difficult to find a boyfriend", she says. "I move around so much that it is hard to meet people or get to know them."

"I think that because I am famous it is sometimes difficult for men to approach me. I would love to have someone special who really loves me for myself rather than who I am — that is always a worry", the Argentinian told the Daily Telegraph.

"But I am only 23 so there is plenty of time. I do not want to get married now but one day I hope to."

While she waits to find true love, Sabatini, who has not won a tournament for over a year despite her enormous natural talent, is determined to prove that she is not finished as a serious contender.

"My ambition is still to be the number one in women's tennis — I am determined to win at Wimbledon one day."

Seeded fourth here, Sabatini's chances have been written off by the pundits who see the tournament as a straight scrap between Steffi Graf and Martina Navratilova.

But Sabatini has breezed through her first two rounds with sufficient ease to suggest she might be closer to realising her dream than expected. She plays Natalia Medvedeva next for a place in the last 16.

Indian Wimbledon hopes fizzle out

WIMBLEDON, June 25: India's fragile challenge in the main draw of the Wimbledon tennis championships fizzled out on Thursday when Davis Cupper Leander Paes and his Italian partner Laurence Tielemans were beaten 6-2, 7-6, 6-3 in a first round men's doubles match by the 15th seeded American pair David Wheaton and Richey Reneberg, reports PTI.

The Indo-Italian combination had dazzled during the Queen's Club tournament a few days before Wimbledon, and were expected to give a tough time to the highly ranked Americans.

In fact, Paes and Tielemans had scored two significant victories at Queen's, including one in the second round over the duo who beat them yesterday.

Poorest Aussie Open ever

MELBOURNE, June 25: Australia, the strongest nation in world squash, lost a big-money sponsor for the Australian Open on Thursday, reports Reuter.

Prize-money for the August event in Melbourne was slashed by 80 per cent to just US 10,000 — lower than competitions in non-established squash areas such as Bermuda, Japan and Argentina.

Two years ago, Australia hosted the World Open in Adelaide and Australian Open in Melbourne, with total prize-money of more than 160,000.

Victorian Squash Association executive director Paul Vear said: "The decision has not been taken lightly, but has been forced upon us by the withdrawal of a major sponsor and the rapid decline of the Australian dollar."

Australia's world number two Chris Dittmar said from Johannesburg, where he is playing league squash: "Australia should be able to run a circuit of tournaments, let alone one major event. But if a sponsor doesn't materialise it is not the federation's fault. I know people have tried their best."

"I hate to say this as an Aussie, but I am afraid while Australia is a great nation for playing and watching sport, no one wants to put their hand in their pocket to pay for it."

Vasquez retains WBA crown

BORDEAUX, France, June 25: Wilfredo Vasquez of Puerto Rico knocked out Thierry Jacob of France to retain his World Boxing Association (WBA) junior-featherweight title on Thursday, reports Reuter.

Jacob, former World Boxing Council (WBC) super-bantamweight champion, said afterwards he was retiring from the ring.

Vasquez, who is noted for his big punch, ended a battling challenge by the Frenchman with a powerful right hook in the 10th round to clinch victory.



Three-time winner Boris Becker awaits Swiss Davis Cupper Jakob Hlasek's serve during their third round match in the Wimbledon men's singles yesterday. The world number four, aiming to become number one once again, won the first set 6-3 only to lose the second 3-6. —Star TV photo

IOC boss tells US to stay out

LAUSANNE, Switzerland, June 25: Olympic boss Juan Antonio Samaranch on Thursday called on the United States not to interfere politically in Beijing bid to stage the 2000 Summer Games, reports Reuter.

The IOC president told a news conference the US should respect his organisation's independence in the selection of a venue for the Games.

"The IOC is an independent body respecting all the other international political bodies," Samaranch said. "What we are asking is the same respect to the IOC."

A sub-committee of the House of Representatives has passed a resolution strongly opposing Beijing's candidature on human rights grounds and the full House and the Senate are both expected to consider the issue.

"The IOC must be sensitive to public opinion but free from political pressure," he said of Beijing's controversial bid.

"The issue of human rights is one of the many factors that IOC members will consider as they make their own individual decisions. For some members, a poor human rights record will be a reason not to vote for a country."

Samaranch said he thought there was no risk of the kind of boycott which marred the 1980 Olympics in Moscow and the 1984 Los Angeles Games.

"The days of a boycott are already past," he said.

"Countries have realised that they only losers in a boycott are the athletes of their own countries."

working with the IOC could help to open a country and change many things as it was in 1988 on the occasion of the Games in South Korea.

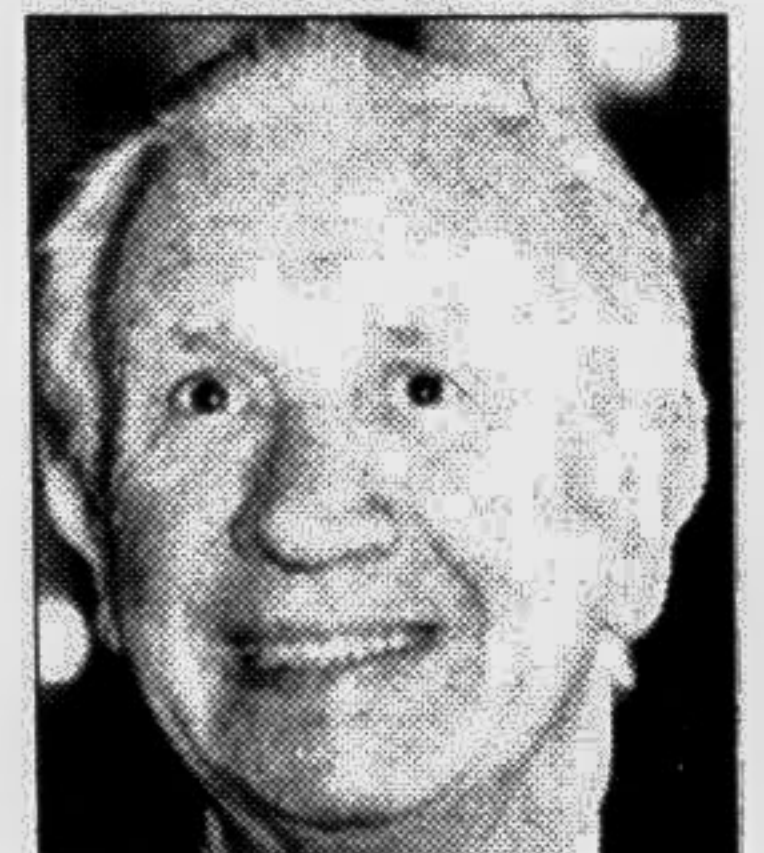
Beijing is bidding against Berlin, Brasilia, Istanbul, Manchester and Sydney to stage the 2000 Games. The venue will be decided by the IOC in Monaco on September 23.

IOC vice-president Kevan Gosper has expressed fears that US political interference could spark a boycott by some nations of the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta.

Gosper said on Thursday he stood by his statement but Samaranch said he thought there was no risk of the kind of boycott which marred the 1980 Olympics in Moscow and the 1984 Los Angeles Games.

"The days of a boycott are already past," he said.

"Countries have realised that they only losers in a boycott are the athletes of their own countries."



SAMARANCH

Burrell owes Carl Lewis one

RALEIGH, North Carolina, June 25: Eight times Olympic champion Carl Lewis has decided to skip the Stuttgart World Championships and will concentrate on the 100 and 200 metres, his business manager said on Wednesday, reports Reuter.

"He wants to give Leroy (Burrell) and some of the younger runners a chance," Joe Douglas told Reuters in a telephone interview from his Santa Monica, California office.

"It will also free him up to concentrate on the individual events, and he's happy about that."

By changing his mind, Lewis, who has led US teams to five world records in the 4x100-metre relay, free up a Stuttgart relay spot for Santa Monica Track Club teammate Burrell.

Burrell had qualified for the relay as an alternate after placing fifth in the 100 metres at the US Championships in Eugene, Oregon, last week. The top four finishers in the race automatically qualified for the Stuttgart relay with the next two selected as alternates.

Andre Cason won the race, followed by Denis Mitchell, Lewis and Jon Drummond. Mitchell ran with Lewis, Burrell and Olympic 200-metre champion Mike Marsh on the record-breaking relay team in Barcelona that clocked 37.40 seconds thanks to Lewis's stirring anchor.

Lewis also was second to Marsh in the 200 metres at the US Championships.

"He definitely wants to do well in both events at Stuttgart, and he'll definitely be ready," Douglas said.

"There's no animosity toward the US coaches in his decision not to run the relay."

Douglas said the powerful Santa Monica Track Club will begin their European schedule at the Grand Prix meeting in Lille, France on July 2.

They also will compete in Stockholm on July 5 and Lausanne on July 7 before returning to the United States to prepare for the World Championships scheduled for August 14-22.

The club will be back in Europe in time for Grand Prix meetings in Zurich on August 4 and Monte Carlo on August 7, Douglas said.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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CRYPTOQUIP

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GJC FBFKVVH LARN
WCM EW ZC APVVU MA
F RLP PHCKVQ.

Saturday's Cryptoquip: OPTOMETRIST'S FIRST ESTIMATE FOR PLEASING NEW GLASSES WAS RIGHT ON THE NOSE.

Today's Cryptoquip clue: U equals P

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.

Joe Luis postage for Clinton

WASHINGTON, June 25: President Bill Clinton received an enlarged version of the new Joe Louis postage stamp here Thursday when he met the son of the legendary heavy-weight champion, Joe Louis Barrow Jr, reports AFP.

Barrow presented the President with a framed picture of the stamp, and with four actual stamps, which were issued by the post office on Tuesday.

Louis held the world heavy-weight title longer than anyone else in history, 11 years and eight months from 1937 to 1949. His record in pro-fights was 63-3, with 49 knock-outs.

FIVB lifts ban on Italy

LAUSANNE, Switzerland, June 25: World champions Italy, banned from international volleyball two months ago, had their suspension lifted by the International Volleyball Federation (FIVB) on Wednesday, reports Reuter.

Italy were banned following allegations of electoral fraud against the Italian Volleyball Federation (FIPAV) whose officials were suspended by the country's Olympic Committee CONI.

A statement from the world volleyball's governing body said the suspension had been lifted following letters from CONI and FIPAV's new president confirming that fresh elections had taken place last weekend.

Italy could now take part in all international competitions for which the draw had not yet taken place, in particular the European Championships in September, FIVB said.

Manchester's new step to get the IOC nod

LAUSANNE, Switzerland, June 25: Manchester would set up a 25 million dollar fund to help Third World athletes prepare for the Olympics if the British city was awarded the Games in 2000, reports AFP.

Bob Scott, head of Britain's Manchester 2000 bid, proposed the Manchester Millennium Foundation at the week-long International Olympic Committee meeting here on Wednesday.

Manchester is one of six countries hoping to be awarded the Games at an IOC meeting in Monaco on September 23. Also in the race are Sydney, Beijing, Berlin, Brasilia and Istanbul.

Scott said: "We will provide other National Olympic Committees with that kind of assistance to give their athletes an opportunity to come and train in Great Britain and improve their performances."

"The funds will be in the hands of an independent body," he said.

The plan would be put into practice immediately after the Atlanta Games in 1996, if Manchester were to be chosen as the next hosts.

Although the front runners are seen to be Sydney and Beijing, Scott said that British hopes are rising.

"We have turned from a dark horse into a leading challenger. Manchester is now on the move."

Berlin is also willing to make money for training available, which it would give to the IOC, but has not said how much.

Consolation for Chris Bailey

WIMBLEDON, June 25: Chris Bailey, the British player who held a match point against Goran Ivanisevic at Wimbledon on Thursday, had some consolation for his defeat on Friday, reports Reuter.

He revealed the British Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) were reconsidering a decision to cease funding Bailey's coach Nick Carr, a New Zealander, in the wake of his superb performance against Ivanisevic, the world number six from Croatia.

"There are things in the pipeline", Bailey said. "We had a meeting and they are reviewing the situation."

According to Bailey, the LTA had told him they were unable to afford the 1,000 dollar a week bill for Carr's services, even though it made 14 million pounds sterling (20.6 million dollars) profit from Wimbledon last year.

But Richard Lewis, the LTA director of national training, has denied he told Bailey the funding would cease.

"There was a misunderstanding", he said. "We never said we could not afford it. What we did say was that we can't justify one-on-one coaching."