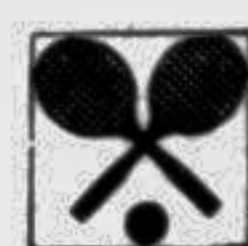


Wimbledon finalist Jana Novotna of the Czech Republic goes for a backhand return during her first round match in the US Open against Mexican Angelica Gavaldon on Tuesday. Novotna advanced to the next round winning 6-2, 6-4. —AFP photo

Enqvist makes Agassi eat the crow



NEW YORK, Sept 1: All of Andre Agassi's boasts suddenly sounded empty.

He bragged about his new work ethic, his renewed confidence. He thought he'd strut into the US Open without playing many matches and just stroll off with the trophy and the fat check.

Instead, he walked off a loser Tuesday in one round — just like Jennifer Capriati and Michael Stich. Two-time defending champion Stefan Edberg nearly did the same, while No. 1 Jim Courier and No. 2 Pete Sampras breezed ahead, reports AP.

Sweden's Thomas Enqvist, ranked 61, beat Agassi at his own game in a 3 1/2-hour affair, outhitting him from the baseline and making his head spin with 20 aces in a 6-4, 6-4, 3-6, 6-7, (3-7), 6-2 victory.

"I didn't really feel sharp from the first point to the last point," said Agassi, the 16th seed. "And when you are down two sets, it takes a lot of energy out of you to get back into it."

Agassi should know because he never has come back from two sets down.

Marv Joe Fernandez, the Women's No. 6 seed, withdrew because of abdominal pain. She was replaced by Maria Jose Gaidano of Argentina, a "lucky loser" from the qualifying tournament, who promptly showed up to beat Andrea Vieira of Brazil, 6-2, 5-7, 6-0.

Bye-bye, too, went Stich, the men's No. 6 from Germany, who succumbed to Sweden's Henrik Holm 6-3, 7-6 (10-8), 3-6, 6-3.

Not all the top players had a tough time. Courier dispatched Marco Aurelio Gorri of Spain 6-4, 6-3; No. 5 Gabriela Sabatini, also of Argentina, defeated American Patty Fendick 6-3, 6-2.

Women's No. 2 Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario downed Florencia Labat of Argentina 6-4, 6-3; No. 5 Gabriela Sabatini, also of Argentina, defeated American Patty Fendick 6-3, 6-2.

1, and No. 8 Jana Novotna, the Wimbledon finalist, beat Angelica Gavaldon of Mexico 6-2, 6-4.

Agassi complained he had trouble with the swirling winds, trouble with his backhand. Mostly he had trouble with double-faults — three in the final set — and with Enqvist's 125 mph (200-kph) serves.

He seemed as shocked by his upset as the crowd that had cheered so hard for him on stadium court.

"If you win," he said, "you feel like you're on top of the world. If you lose, you feel like I am right now. It will get worse if this guy gets his butt kicked in the next rounds."

Before Enqvist experienced the biggest victory of his life, his compatriot, Edberg, nearly suffered one of his worst losses.

In the heat of the day, Edberg lay sprawled on the court, knocked down at the net by a blistering backhand to his head. He rose slowly, like a boxer at the count of nine. He later claimed the shot hurt him.

And just as slowly, Edberg struggled back, exactly as he

did a year ago to win his second straight Open.

No defending men's champion ever lost in the first round of the US Open, much less a two-time defending champ like Edberg. Yet he barely avoided that dubious distinction, surviving 6-2, 0-6, 7-6 (9-7), 5-7, 6-3 in a 3 1/2-hour drama against 99th-ranked Olivier Delatre of France.

Less fortunate was Capriati, the women's No. 7 seed, drummed out in the first round by Lella Meskhi of Georgia, 1-6, 6-4, 6-4.

"I couldn't believe I could get totally off after the first set when I played great," said Capriati, who punched a forehead long to end an 18-shot rally on the final point. That was Capriati's 61st unforced error, more than double Meskhi's total.

Edberg's last loss at the Open came in the first round in 1990 against Alexander Volkov. Now Edberg seemed as if he might go that way again, playing against a man who knew all about first-round losses. Delatre fell a dozen times in the first round of ATP tournaments, and both times in his last two Opens, before switching to the easier Challengers circuit.

On this day, though, Delatre played well enough to take advantage of a flat champion, missing lobs and deep topspin groundstrokes, a crushing backhand and a decent, if not overwhelming, first serve. Compact and muscular at 5-foot-8 (137-cm), Delatre was a middleweight punnieling a 6-2 (188-cm) tennis heavyweight.

Edberg's legs looked dead, his serve seemed labored, his volleys erratic. His chipping backhand betrayed him, his forehands had little pace. Linesmen called him for six foot-faults on first serves. He double-faulted 11 times. On changeovers, he had a ballboy hold a big blue umbrella over him to shield the sun.

Charging the net with Delatre hitting a baseline backhand, Edberg got clipped on the back of the head near his left ear in the third game of the second set.

"I am normally pretty quick out there," Edberg said, "but I couldn't handle that one. He can hit ball hard. I mean, really, really hard. It was a good clean shot."

Delatre trailed 4-0 in the third-set tiebreaker, but came back to go ahead 7-6. He missed a chance to take the set when a forehand lob landed long by inches. Edberg didn't waste another opportunity, closing out the tiebreaker 9-7. Delatre refused to go quietly, taking the fourth set to force a showdown.

Open is safe

NEW YORK, Sept 1: The knife attack on Monica Seles during a Hamburg tournament four months ago sent officials at the US Open back to the drawing board to review security measures for the most crowded and unruly of the four Grand Slam events, reports Reuters.

"Obviously, we never discuss specifics on security," said Stephen Devoe, tournament director of the Open. "We reviewed what we've done in the past and frankly determined what we did was good for the fans and the players."

Despite his confidence over the effectiveness of past security, one change was quite obvious on the opening day of the tournament.

Two burly guards jump out from the photographer's pit and stand between the competitors and crowd during changeovers to prevent a repeat of the horrifying scene in Hamburg when a deranged spectator came over the stands and stabbed Seles in the back.

Hock stuns Kusuma

NEW DELHI, Sept 1: Ong Ewe Hock of Malaysia gave the World Cup men's singles a sensational start here Wednesday by scoring a shock win over fancied Indonesian Allan Budi Kusuma in a preliminary league match, reports AFP.

Playing a superb attacking game, Hock came from behind to upset Kusuma, the world number two, in three games in a Group C match at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium here.

Hock won 4-15, 15-9, 15-4 to set up an interesting race for a semifinal berth from the group which also includes Jens Oloson of Sweden and Sompol Kookasemki of Thailand.

Oloson defeated the Thai 15-10, 15-6 in another group match.

The 16 players in the men's singles of the game's premier invitation tournament have been divided into four groups with the leaders qualifying for the semifinals.

The Indonesians took revenge for Kusuma's defeat when world champion Joko Suprianto toyed with Malaysia's Pang Chen 15-6, 15-5 in a Group A match.

A third Indonesian, Herman Susanto, outclassed England's Anders Nielsen 15-1, 15-10 in Group D to keep their country's hopes alive of winning three titles in the five-event competition.

In other men's singles matches on the opening day, veteran Rashid Sidek of Malaysia downed Darren Hall of England and China's Wo Wenke defeated Indian wildcard entry Gopi Chand in straight games.

In women's singles, world number two Ye Zhaoying was given a tough fight by unfancied Indian Manjusha Pawandhar before winning a Group D match 11-3, 6-11, 11-2.

Top seeded Susanti of Indonesia begins her campaign Thursday against Joanne Murgidge of England, who lost in straight games to Sweden's Christine Magnusson.

Hot favourites Rexy Mainaky and Ricky Subagja completed a mixed day for the Indonesians with an easy win over Thai pair Sakrapee Thongsari and Pramote Teerawitana in the men's doubles.

Mkhaliphi faces disciplinary action

DURBAN, South Africa, Sept 1: A South African runner who claimed he had won the Leadville trial 100 miler in the United States is facing disciplinary action and possible life suspension, Road Running officials said on Wednesday, reports Reuters.

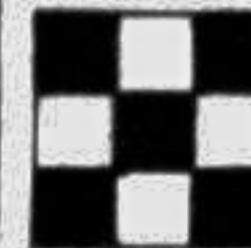
Sipho Mkhaliphi, who runs for the Merewent Athletics Club in Durban, claimed in radio and television interviews he had won last week's race in Boulder, Colorado, in a record time.

But South African Road Running officials contacted the US organisers and found that Mkhaliphi had dropped out after 60 kms (37 miles).

South African Road Runners Association director Cheryl Winn said the association would take disciplinary action against Mkhaliphi if Natal Road Running officials found him guilty of cheating.

Mkhaliphi's sponsors, the Durban Afrikaans Chamber of Commerce, said it was taking legal advice and was investigating fraud charges against the runner.

Battle of 'David' and 'Goliath'



LONDON, Sept 1: Spiky-haired, unassuming Briton Nigel Short meets flamboyant millionaire Garri Kasparov of Russia next week to battle for the highest prize in world chess, reports Reuters.

The 24-game World Championship, which begins on September 7 and will be played in a luxury London theatre over two months, is billed as the clash of the titans.

But it looks more like the struggle between David and

has beaten in only four out of 20 games.

He once called the brooding Azeri, who now plays for Russia, a "baboon" for his habit of openly deriding his opponent's moves as acting to the audience during tournaments.

Kasparov can't deal with human beings at all. He has no normal relationships. It's master-slave, that's all he can understand. He behaves on purpose," Short added.

Kasparov has contemptuously dismissed the pretender to his throne, saying the championship would be like the Briton — Short.

"Let Nigel have his best six months — his chess honeymoon. It will be all over by the end of this fall. Enjoy yourself Nigel while it lasts," Kasparov said earlier this year.

Short, born in a northern English coal-mining town, hit the limelight when he defeated Soviet Grandmaster Viktor Korchnoi in a simultaneous exhibition at the age of 10 and two years later beat 10-time British champion Jonathan Penrose.

In Iceland last year, he was voted the second most popular personality after American pop star Madonna, although most Britons would be hard-pressed to even identify him.

Short's inner calm and expressionless face while playing make a striking contrast to Kasparov's posturing. But he will need to summon all his cunning to wrest the title from the player with the highest ranking in the history of chess.

"Beating Garri Kasparov at chess is considerably more difficult than climbing Mount Everest or becoming a dollar billionaire," said Times newspaper chess correspondent and Grandmaster Raymond Keene.

"He comes to the board armed with a sharp axe dripping with blood from the previous day's games," Keene added.

While Short lives in a modest two-bedroom apartment in North London, Kasparov is a multimillionaire.

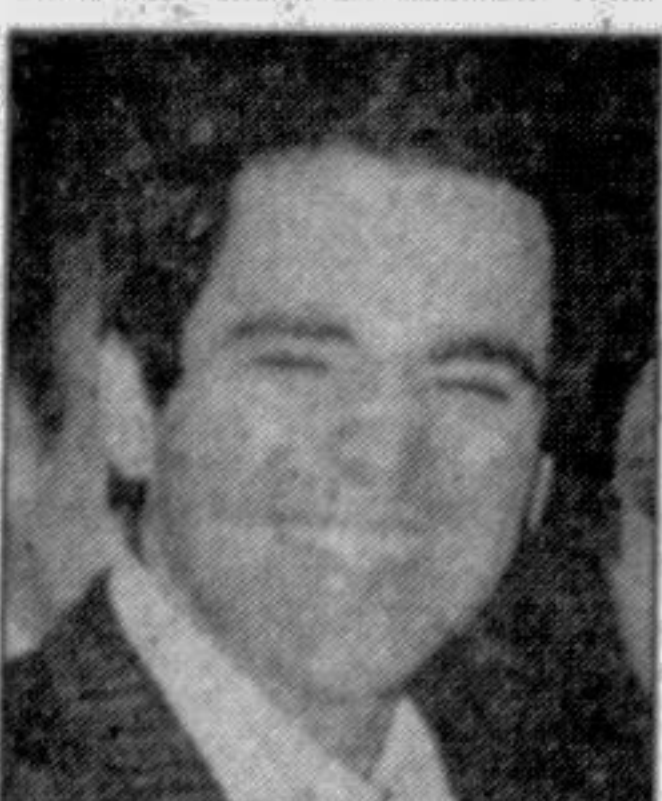
Born in the Caspian Port of Baku, he was playing 10 men simultaneously at the age of nine. He took the junior world title at the age of 17 and in

1985 beat fellow-Soviet Anatoly Karpov to become the youngest ever world chess champion at the age of 22.

He also has an astute business brain, running a trading company, acting as consultant to Swiss banks and endorsing a chess computer to an estimated annual income of 3 million dollars.

Marriage and a young baby have failed to dispel a 1980s playboy image earned for appearing in a television advert for a mixer drink with a blonde model draped over his shoulder.

Both men believe in clean



GARRI KASPAROV

Goliath, so different are the two players.

Short, the first Englishman this century to challenge for the world title and only the third non-Russian to do so since 1927, is a mild-mannered 28-year-old whose only idiosyncrasy appears to be a passion for playing punk rock guitar.

Kasparov, 30, world champion since 1985, sports a gold Rolex watch, Savile row suits and an aggressive style which has made him the most unpopular man in the game.

The only thing the two men have in common is mutual dislike and an overpowering will to win.

"People have this idea that to be a great chess player you have to be weird, but I don't believe this. It's good to have your head screwed on," says Short.

The angular Briton with the John Lennon, spectacles does not mind his words when it comes to Kasparov, whom he



NIGEL SHORT

living and exercise to supplement the hours spent assimilating and analysing every single move in hundreds of thousands of old chess games.

Kasparov has been training like an athlete, weight training, swimming, cycling and jogging. But his biggest problem is motivation. "I've won everything you can win in chess," he said.

Short concedes that he is the underdog but having nothing to lose could be his secret weapon. "My biggest advantage would be that he could never imagine losing to me," he said.

The 2.5 million dollar contest, largely arranged by the two men themselves, has split the chess world. It is not recognised by chess's main governing body FIDE, which has organised a rival contest starting in the Netherlands on September 6 between the two men last beaten by Kasparov and Short, Russian Anatoly Karpov and Dutch Grandmaster Jan Timman.

Street named for Fredericks



WINDHOEK, Namibia, Sept 1: Fresh from his victory in Stuttgart, Frankie Fredericks became one up on Namibia's President this week when he returned home and had a street named after him, reports AP.

Fredericks, 25, the world 200 metre champion was met at Windhoek Airport by three cabinet ministers, his mother, Riekie, and a cheering crowd of fans.

He was hardly back in the country a day when he was received by Windhoek Mayor Mathews Sikongo who named a street after him.

The tree-lined Frankie Fredericks Street runs several kilometres through Windhoek's new luxury suburb of Olympia.

Such an honour has not even been afforded President Sam Nujoma who invited Fredericks for a meeting after the ceremony.

Namibia takes its sports heroes seriously. But Fredericks has done a lot of leg work to put the southwestern African country on the map.

On August 20, he ran the fastest 200 metres at the World Athletics Championships in Stuttgart, Germany. He also

broke his own African record for the 200 metres sprint in a time of 19.85 seconds.

With a total population of less than 1.5 million, Namibia, which won its independence from South Africa in 1990, could only afford to send two runners to Stuttgart. But both of them came away with medals: Fredericks' gold and Luketz Swartbooi's silver in the marathon.

Both Namibian runners train in the United States. Fredericks is a graduate student at Brigham Young University in Utah where he expects to complete an MBA in marketing next year. Swartbooi is studying track and field coaching in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Fredericks speaks highly of the training he has received in the United States.

"It has helped me where I wanted to go, much faster," he says. "Actually, I've only been permitted to compete internationally for three years."

When Namibia was governed by South Africa before independence, its athletes fell under the anti-apartheid sports boycott and were denied the opportunity of taking part in may international events, including the Olympic Games.

A high school track star at Concordia in Windhoek, Fredericks is no newcomer to the 100 and 200 metres sprints. He ran for Bringham Young University as an undergraduate from 1987 until he got his BA degree in computer science in 1991.

By that time, he was able to compete internationally and won a silver medal in the 200 metres at the World Athletics Championships in Tokyo with a time of 20.34 seconds.

A month later, he won gold medals in both the 100 metres and 200 metre events at the Africa Games in Cairo. And in the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona, Fredericks won silver medals in both races.

Japanese booster for Beijing bid

BEIJING, Sept 1: A private Japanese group is sending 2,000 people to attend China's national game and show their support for Beijing's bid for the 2000 Olympics, the People's Daily newspaper said on Wednesday, reports Reuters.

It said the 2,000, from the Japanese International Cultural Friendship Association, would attend the opening ceremony for the national games on Saturday and would wear hats and wave flags to express their support for Beijing's bid.

Simmering Seles holds show



NEW YORK, Sept 1: Monica Seles talked almost as long as Steffi Graf and Martina Navratilova played, upstaging them on the first day of the US Open and taking swipes at her peers without lifting a racket, reports AP.

Graf dashed off in a hurry, dinner waiting. She beat Robin White 6-3, 6-0 in 42 minutes Monday and felt ready to play her next match right away. She could have won three matches and still not missed evening appetizers.

Graf covered the court with such speed and ease there wasn't a hint of the swollen bone in her foot, which required ice and anti-inflammatory drugs after she won the French Open and Wimbledon. There's a danger, though, the hard courts in New York could take a toll on her foot toward the end of the two-week tournament.

"I hope it won't come back," she said. "There is nothing that really bothers me right now."

Navratilova left almost as quickly, her exit after a 6-0, 6-1 victory delayed only by a long ovation when Gloria Pizzichini won her solitary game and lifted a weary finger to celebrate.

But this was a day on which few paid attention to the tennis. Barely 500 fans sat in the broiling stadium while Wayne Ferreira knocked off No. 9 seed Petr Korda 7-6 (7-2) 4-6, 7-6 (9-7), 3-6, 6-2. Fewer still saw women's No. 9 Anke Huber beat Karin Kschwendt 6-2, 6-2, or No. 10 Magdalena Maleeva beat Marianne Werdel 7-5, 6-4.

At night, a victory by No. 4 Conchita Martinez over Sandrine Testud, 6-2, 6-3, did little to excite the crowd. The evening programme ended with Paul Haarhuis outlasting David Wheaton 6-4, 7-6 (10-8), 6-4, 6-4.

Even a dogged comeback by Patrick McEnroe, John's younger brother and a native New Yorker, couldn't inspire the fans. Nearly the entire stadium crowd went home by the time he completed a 6-7 (7-4), 3-6, 6-2, 6-1, 6-2 victory over Marcos Ondruska. It was the opposite result of two years ago, when McEnroe lost a stirring first-round match against Jimmy Connors after winning the first two sets.

"I was thinking about that," McEnroe said. "But that was then and this is now."

The crowd packed the grandstand for a while to watch men's No. 14 Alexander Volkov beat Jonathan Stark 1-6, 6-3, 6-4, 6-7 (9-7), 6-3 in a match that was competitive if not

artistic. But the most enthusiastic fans were way out at Court 18, jamming the snail stands while kids poked their faces under the wire screens to cheer two-time NCAA champion Lisa Raymond as she beat Linda Ferrando 6-3, 7-6 (8-6).

With most of the marguerite players off until Tuesday, fans spent more time hobnobbing at the gourmet emporiums and sipping champagne than they did watching the lacklustre matches. And behind the scenes, the main buzz was about Seles, who returned to the Open a year after winning it for the second straight time.

Exactly four months had passed since a man obsessed with Graf stabbed Seles in Hamburg, Germany. And the shock of that event and the emotions it brought out in other players have given way to an uncomfortable frostiness.

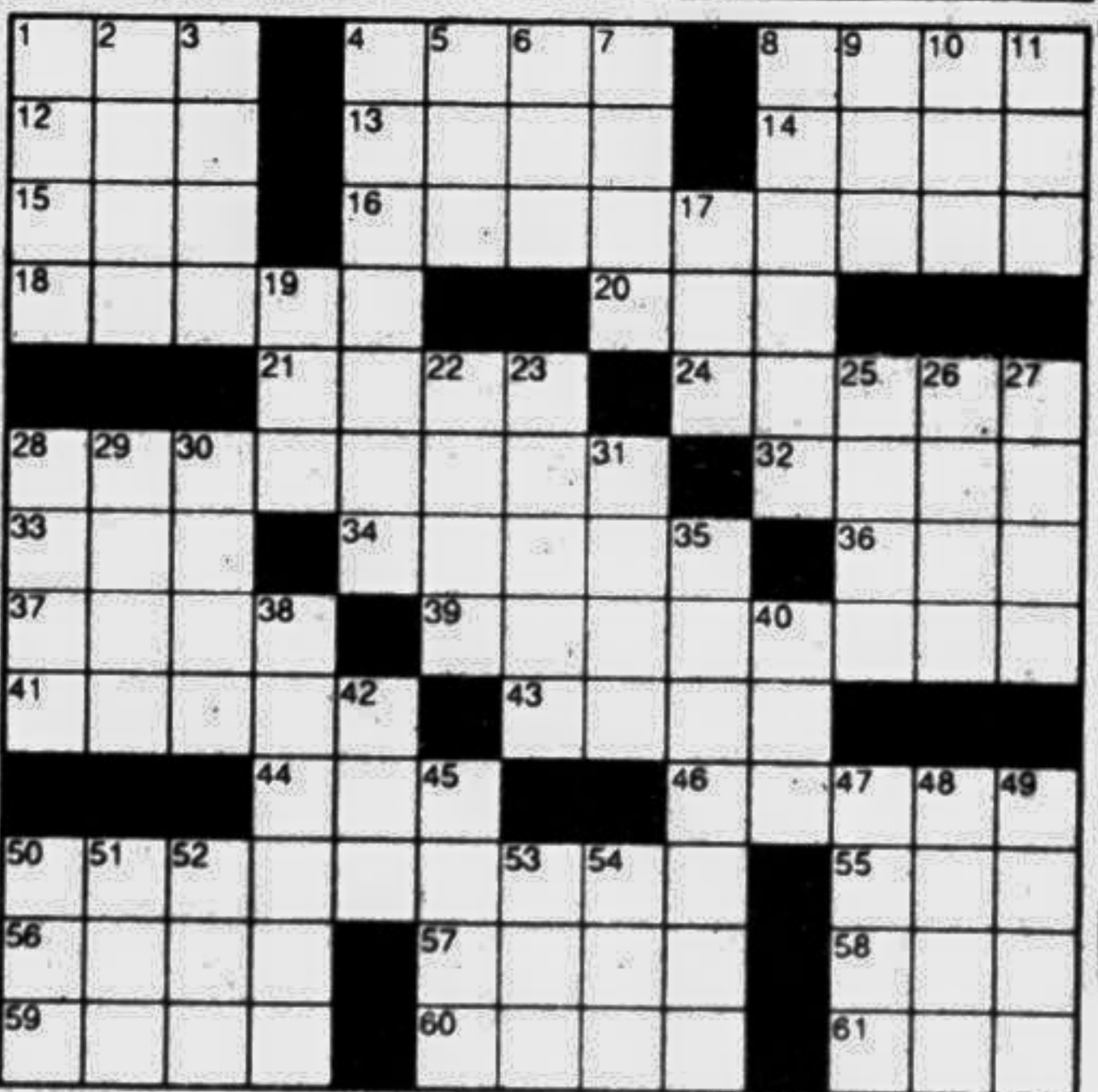
"I think for me (the vote) was very hard," Seles said. "Because the person who did this to me stabbed me for that reason, and pretty much he got his wish."



American world number one Jim Courier about to serve against Spaniard Marco Aurelio Gorri during their first-round match of the US Open at the National Tennis Center, Flushing Meadow on August 31. Courier rolled into the second round with a 6-1, 6-3, 6-3 victory. —AFP photo

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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8 Snatch	Serpent	enon	25 Comedi-
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CRYPTOQUIP

E J J B E F O T Z E F E V E F B K V F
I J J L F E P T K H I P F
P J K V F J B F T L F - Z H H
E F O K I F

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: FAMOUS BOYS' CHOIR, TOURING THE SOUTH, ASKS FOR A BREAKFAST OF HARMONY GRITS.

Today's Cryptoquip clue: E equals R

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.