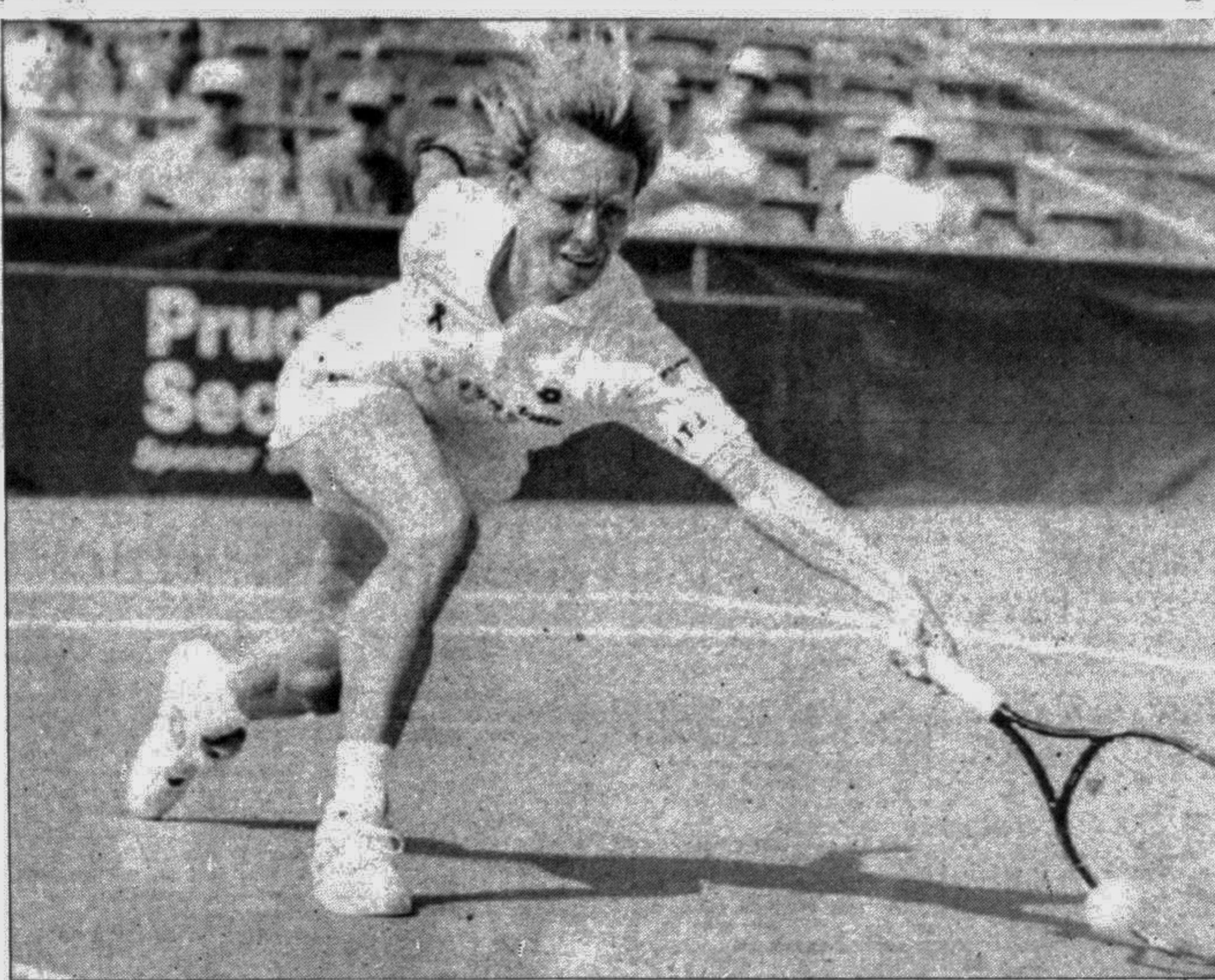
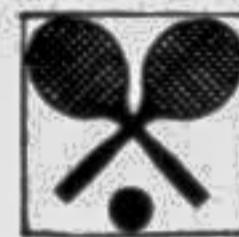


## Sport



Czech-born American Martina Navratilova stretches to dig up a low return from German Barbara Rittner during their fourth-round match in the US Open on September 5. —AFP photo

## Graf shatters her own image



NEW YORK, Sept 6: Steffi Graf and Mary Pierce looked like mirror images across the net: white braces on opposite knees, long blond hair, white skirts, reports AP.

The resemblance ended there.

Graf hit winners, Pierce errors, and a match that held the promise of excitement, if not an upset, dissolved quickly.

Graf whacked her left knee with her racket going for a shot during practice in the morning and required ice, painkillers and the brace. But she showed not a trace of discomfort as she thrashed Pierce 6-1, 6-0, in 48 minutes.

"I don't think I could have played much better than that," Graf said. "There weren't any mistakes. You don't play like that every day. You've got to treasure these moments. Sometimes it's there. You don't dominate everyday."

The top-ranked German practiced a little longer after hitting her knee but stopped when she twisted the knee on a forehand. She tested her knee just before playing Pierce.

"The more I practiced, the better it felt," Graf said. "I think that was important to have confidence that I could play on it."

She might have played on crutches and still reached the quarter-finals, considering the way Pierce slapped 20 unforced errors.

"Everybody was expecting a lot from me, not from her," Graf said. "I was surprised she was nervous. She has the shots. She plays everything fast. She could be in better shape, but she knows that herself. She definitely has the talent."

Not this time. Pierce No 13, won only nine points in the first set and eight points in the second.

"I can play as well as any player," Pierce said. "But when I

have to, I can't. It must be mental, because physically I have the game. I didn't I could do worse than I did in my first match here, but I did tonight. There's not much to learn. I didn't do anything well."

Gabriella Sabatini, the 1990 Open champion following Graf's two straight title runs, set up a quarter-final against Graf a little later by outlasting first-year pro Lindsay Davenport 6-7 (7-1), 6-4, 6-4.

Davenport, who beat Sabatini early this year, is a 6-foot-2 (1.90 metres), 17-year-old Californian with a bruising two-fisted backhand and strong serve. She overpowered Sabatini in the first set, but was undone by errors in the second and third sets amid increasing pressure from Sabatini. Davenport saved five matches points in the final set before yielding on the sixth with a wide crosscourt backhand.

"I started to get tired in the second set," Davenport said.

"But I hung in there and didn't give up. I just made too many

errors. I thought I lost the match more than she won it."

In the final night match, No 1 Jim Courier beat Malvina Washington 6-4, 6-4, 6-2 to reach the fourth round against No 15 Cedric Pioline.

In the grandstand earlier, there wasn't so much a tennis match as a 5-hour, 10-minute, man a mano slugfest.

It was Richard Krajicek surviving two match points in the third set, slamming his racket and getting booted in the fourth, absorbing all the power American Todd Martin came in the fifth. It was Martin leaping, lunging, diving for balls from start to finish.

And finally it was Krajicek smashing his 23rd and 24th aces. And just like that it was over.

With those two aces, the first at 117 mph (187 kph), the second at 118 (188.6 kph), Krajicek ended the longest match of the US Open this year and one of the longest in history with a 6-7 (7-4), 4-6, 7-6 (11-9), 6-4, 6-4 victory.

"I was lucky, very lucky in the third-set tiebreaker," Krajicek said. "I was lucky to come out of there alive."

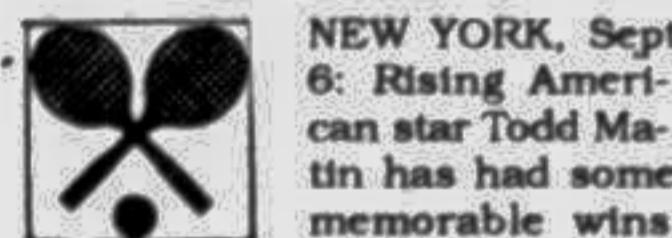
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when Martin broke him to make it 2-2 in the fourth set, bringing boos from a crowd rooting for the 23-year-old former All-American from Northwestern.

But Krajicek broke right back,

relying on his booming serves to the end.

## Macula in Martin's memory



NEW YORK, Sept 6: Rising American star Todd Martin has had some memorable wins this year, but the match he may remember the longest is one that got away, reports Reuter.

The 23-year-old from Lansing, Michigan, was inches away from a straight-set win over big-serving Richard Krajicek in the third round of the US Open on Sunday.

But the 10th-seeded Dutchman saved two match points in a tense third-set tie-break and went on to post a thrilling 6-7, (4-7) 4-6, 7-6, (11-9), 6-4, 6-4 win in an exhausting five hours and 10 minutes.

"One match point I remember well. The first one he hit an

unbelievable second serve. I could barely get my racket on it even though it was right at me," said Martin, who reached the quarter-finals at Wimbledon this year.

"He only lost one point on that serve (in the tie-break) and that was a double fault. That is pretty good tennis."

Martin has been touted as the next great American player, one who will be mentioned alongside Jim Courier and Pete Sampras in the not too distant future.

In fact, he feels he is already at the top echelon of the game after posting wins over the likes of Boris Becker, Michael Chang, Andre Agassi and Goran Ivanisevic this year.

The six-foot, six-inch (1.98m) Martin, who was a linguistics major at Northwestern University before turning pro in 1990,

Martin, a rising star in US tennis, reached the quarter-finals at Wimbledon after beating Goran Ivanisevic and David Wheaton. This time Martin came ever so close to beating another top player when he had a pair of match points against the No 10 Krajicek in the third-set tiebreaker.

But Krajicek dug himself out of trouble by going for second serves at nearly full speed and took a 10-9 lead on a forehand crosscourt that Martin lunged at and couldn't handle. Krajicek then closed the set with a 126 mph (201.6 kph) serve that Martin netted.

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## Karpov, Timman tie on

ZWOLLE, Netherlands, Sept 6: Jan Timman and Anatoly Karpov opened play Monday for a world chess crown that lost much of its luster when defending champion Garry Kasparov absconded to play in a rival title match in London, reports AP.

Karpov, a Russian and former world champion playing black, chose the Caro-Kann defense against his Dutch opponent in the match sanctioned by the International Chess Federation FIDE.

Shortly after the start of the match, FIDE's Filipino president Francisco Campomanes condemned the rebel championship match between Kasparov and British challenger Nigel Short, which begins Tuesday.

Kasparov and Short, who qualified for the FIDE title match, broke away to establish their own chess body earlier this year after complaining that the federation did not consult them in organizing the championship. Timman and Karpov were selected to replace them after having lost in the semifinals.

"It's like the body politic — there's been a cancer and this is just an excision," Campomanes said at a press conference, referring to FIDE's having stripped both players of their world ratings.

Campomanes asserted that "the whole structure of FIDE is in place and working," dismissing suggestions that the London championship had irretrievably split the chess world.

Fans ready to cheer Navratilova on all the way

NEW YORK, Sept 6: With old favourites John McEnroe and Jimmy Connors not playing this year, Martina Navratilova says the fans at the US Open are desperate to keep her in the tournament, reports Reuter.

"I guess, you know, I will help make it interesting. I think they like the way I play the game and you know they don't want to see me go," she said after struggling through a 6-4, 4-6, 6-2 third-round match with Barbara Rittner of Germany on Sunday to keep alive her quest for a fifth US Open title.

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when Martin broke him to make it 2-2 in the fourth set, bringing boos from a crowd rooting for the 23-year-old former All-American from Northwestern.

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