

# Pioline, Masur complete quorum

**NEW YORK, Sept 10:** There's a French twist to the US Open semifinals. There's also a splash of Switzerland and a dash of Spain, along with players from the Czech Republic, Australia, Russia and Germany. And yes, America, too.

For the first time in history, the eight men's and women's US Open semifinalists will represent eight different countries.

Cédric Pioline of France was the last entry to the party, eliminating Andrei Medvedev of the Ukraine 6-3, 6-1, 3-6, 6-2 Thursday night. Earlier in the day, Australian Wally Masur became the 26th unseeded man to reach the semifinals since seeding began in 1927 when he defeated Sweden's Magnus Larsson 6-2, 7-5, 7-5.

"I was believing all the time I can win, I can win, I can win," said Pioline, the first Frenchman to reach the semifinals since Henri Cochet did it in 1932.

Friday, the women took the stage for their semifinals, with second-seeded Arantxa Sanchez Vicario of Spain meeting No. 12 Helena Sukova of the Czech Republic, followed by No. 1 Steffi Graf of Germany against No. 11 Manuela Maleeva-Fragniere of Switzerland.

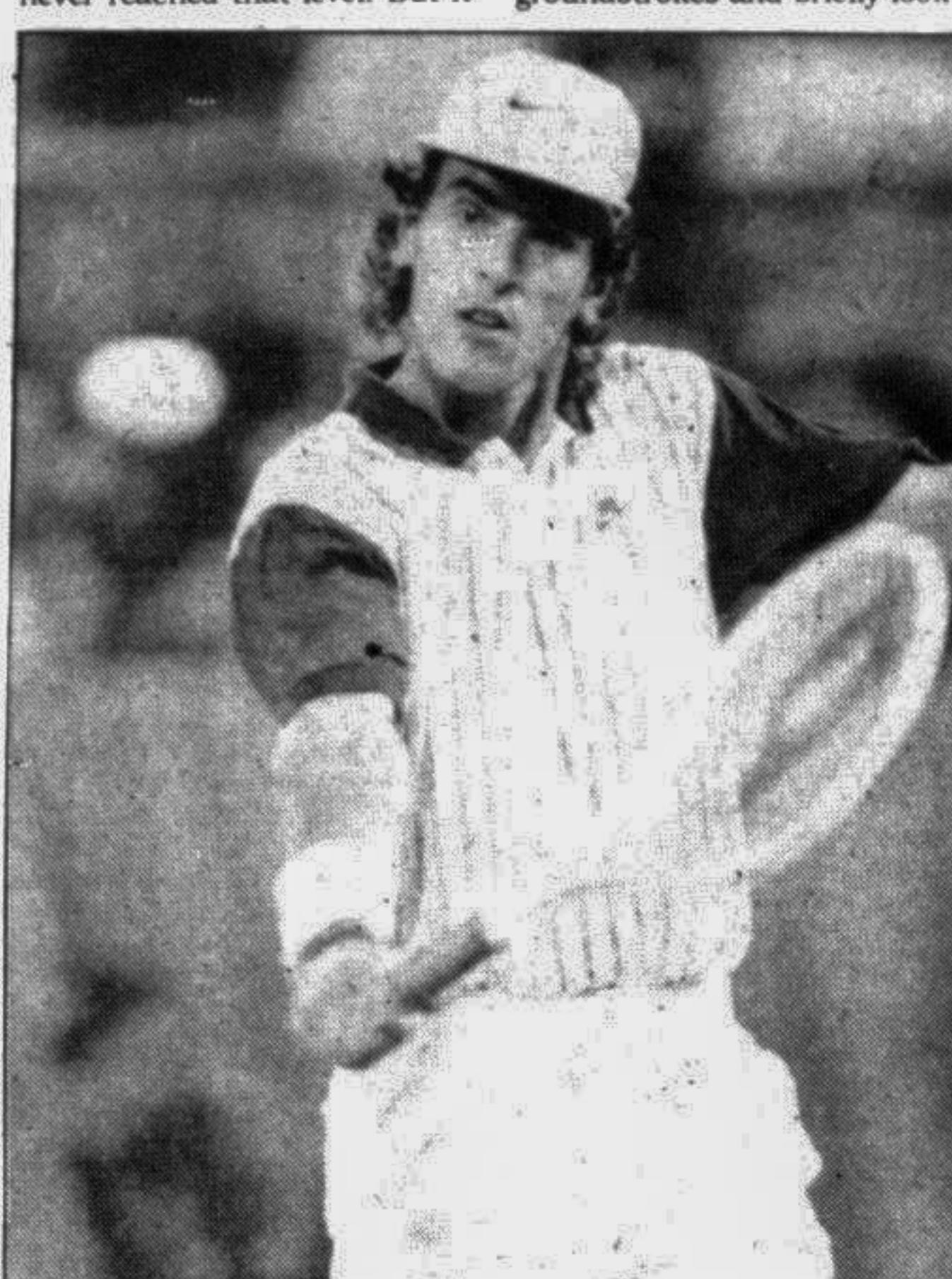
Sukova on Thursday teamed with Todd Woodbridge to win the mixed doubles, defeating Martina Navratilova and Mark Woodforde 6-3, 7-6 (8-6).

The men's doubles final Friday pits Ken Flach and Rick Leach against Martin Damm and Karel Novacek.

Pioline, a 24-year-old right-hander from Paris, has yet to

win a professional tournament. If he were to win Sunday's men's final on the hardcourts of the National Tennis Center, he would become the first man to have a Grand Slam title in his first pro victory since Mats Wilander captured the French Open in 1982.

Pioline played brilliantly in upsetting top-seeded Jim Courier in the fourth round. Against Medvedev, his game never reached that level. But it



Frenchman Cédric Pioline makes a backhand return during his quarterfinal match in the US Open tennis against eighth-seeded Ukrainian Andrei Medvedev at the National Tennis Centre on September 9. Pioline became the first French player to advance to the semifinal since Henri Cochet when he beat Medvedev.

— AFP photo

## US Open at a glance

**NEW YORK, Sept 10 (AP):** Highlights and key information Thursday from the US Open:

**WEATHER:** Cloudy with showers. High 79 degrees (26 degrees Celsius).

**ATTENDANCE:** 21,039 day session, 20,820 night session, 41,859 total.

**RESULTS:** Wally Masur, good as dead before a fifth-set comeback in the fourth round, became the first Australian in five years to reach the men's semifinals when he beat Magnus Larsson 6-2, 7-5, 7-5. He will play 15th-seeded Cédric Pioline, who beat eighth-seeded Andrei Medvedev 6-3, 6-1, 3-6, 6-2.

The first championship of the tournament went to Helena Sukova and Todd Woodbridge, who beat Martina Navratilova and Mark Woodforde 6-3, 7-6 (8-6) for the mixed doubles title. Sukova is aiming for the triple crown of women's singles and women's and mixed doubles.

**OFF THE COURT:** Tom Gorman resigned after eight years as US Davis Cup captain, and John McEnroe — who has lobbied for the job for several years — said he is interested in taking over. Gorman directed the US team to two cup titles but was criticized after losses to France in the 1991 final and in the first round to Australia this year.

**STAT OF THE DAY:** Masur won 72 per cent of his net approaches (59 of 82) against Larsson, and saved the only two break points against his serve.

**QUOTE:** "At least I lost to her in the final in this. She beat me in this tournament." — Martina Navratilova, after Sukova helped end her quest for a 55th Grand Slam title. Sukova eliminated Navratilova from the fourth round of singles.

**FRIDAY'S HIGHLIGHTS:** Sukova plays No. 2 Arantxa Sanchez Vicario and No 1 Steffi Graf plays No. 11 Manuela Maleeva-Fragniere in women's singles semifinals. Sukova and Sanchez Vicario then team for a women's doubles semifinal against top-seeded Gigi Fernandez and Natalia Zvereva.

## US Open Notebook



NEW YORK, Sept 10: There may be some bad blood brewing in Saturday's US Open semifinal between Pete Sampras and Alexander Volkov over a victory by the American a year ago, reports AP.

Volkov, the second-seeded men's player, said Sampras might not have given his all in a 6-4, 6-1, 6-0 defeat in the Open quarterfinals last year.

"What I remember of it, it was four, tank and tank," Sampras said after beating Michael Chang 6-7(0-7), 7-6(7-2), 6-1, 6-1 Wednesday night.

Volkov, who beat Thomas Muster 7-6(8-6), 6-3, 3-6, 2-6, 7-5 to set up the rematch, bristled when Sampras comments were related to him.

"No, I didn't tank," Volkov said. "He played very well. If you remember the match, he just destroyed me, because if you serve bad against him, you can just go away, just wait and see and then shake his hand. I mean no serve, no return, forget it."

A year ago, Sampras was a 21-year-old with a US Open championship to his credit. Volkov was four years older but playing in his first Grand Slam quarterfinal. Since then, Sampras has added Wimbledon to his championship credits, but Volkov has improved tremendously, winning his first tournament in Auckland and jumping to 15th place on the men's rankings.

"I respected him too much at that time," Volkov said. "May be now I am more experienced and I can play much better, I hope."

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**MOLODYETS, ALEXANDER:** The American national championships have their first Russian semifinalist.

Volkov snapped an 0-for-3 streak for quarterfinalists from republics that made up the old Soviet Union when he beat Muster about 1:45 am (0545 GMT) Thursday.

Besides his own quarterfinal appearance last year, Volkov had shared the honour with Andrei Cherkasov (1990) and Alex Metreveli (1974).

Volkov is from Kaliningrad.

**THIS PLACE SAVED FACE:** Sampras' victory over Chang did more than give him a berth in his second straight Open semifinal. It prevented the starcrossed tournament from making some more negative history.

If Chang, seeded seventh, had beaten Sampras, seeded second, it would have produced men's semifinals without a single one of the top four seeds for the first time in Open history.

No. 1 Jim Courier, No. 3 Stefan Edberg and No. 4 Boris Becker all lost earlier, Edberg in the first round.

As it is, this will be the first Open men's semifinals — and the third time overall — with only one of the top four players in '72, the semifinalists were No. 4 Ili Nastase, No. 6 Arthur Ashe, No. 12 Cliff Richey and unseeded Tom Gorman and in 1965 the semifinalists were No. 4 Manuel Santana, No. 5 Ashe, No. 6 Rafael Osuna and No. 8 Cliff Drysdale.

**Pair parts for time being**

NEW YORK, Sept 10: Doubles teammates Arantxa Sanchez Vicario and No 1 Steffi Graf play No. 11 Manuela Maleeva-Fragniere in women's singles semifinals. Sukova and Sanchez Vicario then team for a women's doubles semifinal against top-seeded Gigi Fernandez and Natalia Zvereva.

Maleeva-Fragniere was defeated by Sanchez-Vicario.

Both Sukova and Maleeva-Fragniere have enjoyed unexpected success at the Open.

Sukova missed three months this season with a broken foot, but made a strong comeback at Wimbledon, where she reached the quarterfinals, beating Sanchez-Vicario in the round of 16.

Maleeva-Fragniere was forced to withdraw from the doubles competition in the first round at the Open when she suffered a torn tendon in her left pinky, but remained in the singles competition and swept through to the semifinals.

Both Graf and Sanchez-Vicario hold impressive edges in head-to-head competition against Friday's semifinal opponents.

Graf has won all 17 previous meetings against Maleeva-Fragniere and is 34-6 in sets against her.

Sanchez-Vicario has won four of five previous meetings against Sukova, the lone loss coming at Wimbledon. She has won eight of 12 sets against her doubles partner.

Sukova also did Sanchez-Vicario a favour when she knocked off Martina Navratilova at the Open. That guaranteed Sanchez-Vicario the No 2 spot, her highest ever, when the new rankings are released next Monday. Navratilova moves to No 3 and the idle Seles, still recovering from an April stabbing attack, will be No 4. No 1 will belong to Graf, winner of both the French and Wimbledon and pursuing her first Open title since 1989.

If Graf is No 1 in the rankings, Sanchez-Vicario holds that spot in schedule. She has been the busiest player on the women's tour since Jan 1, 1991, playing 48 events and reaching at least the semifinals in 40 of those tournaments.

At Hamburg, the tournament where Seles was stabbed, Sanchez-Vicario surpassed \$4 million in career prize money, the eighth woman to pass that mark.

With all those accomplishments, she still has won just a single Grand Slam event, the 1989 French Open. Graf owns 13 Grand Slam victories.

In Friday's other semi, No 1 seed Steffi Graf, seeking her first Open title since 1989, played No 11 Manuela Maleeva-Fragniere. Both also made it to the Open semifinals a year ago when Graf lost to Seles and

didn't have to.

"The problem was with my game," admitted Medvedev, who only once or twice in the match showed flashes of the game that had made him the No. 8 seed.

Pioline, who came in seeded No. 15, took advantage of Medvedev's errors in the first two sets and double-faults on crucial points. Medvedev recovered in the third set, finding the angles and lines with his groundstrokes and briefly look-

ing as if he was ready to take charge.

That lasted only briefly, however, and he soon reverted to the form he showed in the first two sets, missing easy "sitters," double-faulting or plowing shots into the net.

"To beat him I have to show my best tennis," Medvedev said, "and I was far away from that."

Pioline felt his 19-year-old opponent was nervous at the start of his first match on the stadium court. But Pioline, 24, also acknowledged his own problems.

"I was very up and down," he said. "Sometimes I played very well, sometimes I play bad. I was more consistent than him."

Asked what worked best for him, Pioline responded, "My mind. Not really my game."

"It's fun," Pioline said of his semifinals Saturday against Masur. "He was not expecting me, and I wasn't expecting him. So it may be strange."

Masur indeed wasn't expected to reach this far. The 30-year-old from Sydney reached the Australian Open semifinals in 1987 and has won three tournaments in his career — the last one coming in 1988.

He trailed 5-0 in the fifth set before defeating fellow Aussie Jamie Morgan in the fourth round, winning seven straight games.

He didn't need that kind of heroics against Larsson, who, like the hard-working Masur, was unseeded.

"What keeps me going is the fact that I am still improving," Masur said. "If I wasn't still improving, I would have quit this game. I am getting better and that is only through hard work. No secrets."

Masur never lost a service game and took Larsson apart at the net, winning 59 of 82 approaches. Larsson ventured to the net only 26 times, winning just half those points.

Larsson's 15 aces kept him close, but when it came to the final point, he double-faulted for the match.

"I am happy to have made the semis, but I don't want to stop there," Masur said.

Masur, the oldest man left in the US Open, became the first unseeded man to reach the US Open semis since Jimmy Connors two years ago. Only one other man, Gene Scott in 1967, got as far as the semis without having to beat a seeded player on the way.

**Herrera's son kidnapped**

**MEDELLIN, Colombia, Sept 10:** Kidnappers put a damper on Thursday Colombia's jubilation at qualifying for the soccer World Cup by abducting the four-year-old son of one of the national team players, reports Reuter.

Policemen said four men riding motorcycles intercepted a school bus carrying Fernando Herrera, son of striker Luis Fernando "Chonto" Herrera, as it brought the young boy home after class. They forced him out of the bus and bundled him off on the back of one of the motorcycles.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the abduction, the police said.

The boy's father, who plays for Colombia's Atletico Nacional, received a substantial bonus payment this week along with other national team players for their outstanding performance in beating Argentina 5-0 last Sunday. The victory gave Colombia an undisputed ticket to next year's World Cup competition in the United States.

Colombia's radio and television stations voiced shock and outrage at the kidnapping and police in Medellin mounted a series of operations in various parts of the crime-ridden city to try to find the kidnappers.

**Li Lanqing to represent China in IOC council**

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British Nigel Short makes his opening move against world champion Garry Kasparov of Russia during their world championship chess challenge at the Savoy Hotel in London on Thursday. The game was drawn after the 49th move.

— AFP photo

## Short drives home a point

**Bowe visits Tyson**

**PLAINFIELD, Ind., Sept 10:** Heavyweight champion Riddick Bowe visited Mike Tyson at the prison where the former champion is serving a six-year term for rape and says the ex-champ is doing pretty good, reports AP.

The two met privately Thursday for about an hour, said Karen Grau, spokeswoman for the Indiana Department of Corrections.

"Mike looked excellent and I think he's taking all this in stride. Mike is doing pretty good," Bowe told television station WRTV of Indianapolis.

Bowe, who won the title last November from Evander Holyfield, is the latest in a line of celebrities who have visited Tyson since his sentencing in March 1992. Others include film producer Spike Lee, singer Whitney Houston, NBA All-Star Shaquille O'Neal, American news personality Ed Bradley and rap singer Hammer. Tyson wants to study rather than return to the ring, Bowe said.

"Mike really doesn't want to fight; he wants to go to college. I guess he'll deal with it when he gets out."

Tyson, whose bid for a new trial was struck down by the Indiana Court of Appeals last month, received support from the 25-year-old boxer.

"I thought Mike was railroaded and what have you. They should give him another trial or just let him go," he said.

Bowe said Tyson didn't appear bitter. "He's taking it much better than I could."

Tyson was convicted in February 1992 of raping beauty pageant contestant Desiree Washington of Rhode Island, while she was in Indianapolis for a beauty competition. Tyson's lawyers are appealing his conviction to the Indiana Supreme Court, although the high court is not obliged to hear Tyson's case.

Tyson is imprisoned in the Indiana Youth Centre, about 20 miles (32 kilometres) west of Indianapolis.