

Brothers end league in a dismal fashion

Federation Cup champions Brothers Union completed their Star Premier Division football League engagements with a tame goalless draw against Mukti Joddha Sangsad at the floodlit Dhaka Stadium yesterday, reports UNB.

Brothers Union, the third power of country's soccer arena who have earlier confirmed the third slot this season, played a dull match yesterday to finish at 23 points after completing all the 18 league ties.

In the other Premier Division match, last year's number four-ranked team Arambagh KS save themselves from relegation when they beat Wari Club 1-0 in their last match at the same venue earlier in the afternoon.

Azad scored the all important goal in the 60th minute by a rebounder after a sunny attempt came his way hitting the bar (1-0).

Later, Azad was given the marching order for receiving two yellow cards during the match.

With this shocking defeat, Wari Club face relegation with Rahmatgan MFS and PWD SC, all three securing 13 points but PWD has a match in hand against Agrani Bank. Arambagh KS finished at 14 points.

In the Star First Division league, Fakirpool Youngmen's Club maintained their solo lead in the points table after a one-all draw with Dhaka Wanderers Club at the Hockey Stadium.

Zahir put Wanderers Club ahead in the 14th minute. Sohel Masum scored the equaliser for Fakirpool in the 60th minute.

Fakirpool have earned 21 points while Wanderers Club managed 17, playing 16 matches each.

Bhutan to send a small squad

Bhutan will send a 14-member contingent to the sixth South Asian Federation (SAF) Games to be held in Dhaka from December 20-27 this year, reports BSS.

According to a press release of the organising committee of Sixth SAF Games yesterday, Bhutan will participate only in table tennis.

The team will comprise five men and four women players and five officials including one woman.

Kabaddi results

Sonali Bank Club trounced Surjo Kumar Club 54-14 in the only match of the Metropolis kabaddi league at the Outer Stadium kabaddi court yesterday, reports UNB.

The bankers' earned five bonus and led the first session 24-7.

Maniknagar Unnayan Samity will take on Bangladesh Boys Club while Jurain Janata Club meet Sreejoni Sangsad today.

Army v'ball

COMILLA, Sept 22: Dhaka Infantry defeated Anti-Aircraft Artillery 15-11, 15-12 and 15-10 in a round robin league match on the second day of the army volleyball championship at the Comilla cantonment this morning, reports BSS.

In another match of the day, Jessor Area beat Dhaka Signals 15-5, 15-1 and 15-4.

On the opening match of the meet yesterday, hosts Comilla Area beat Savar Area in straight sets.

Games 2000 bid live on BBC

HONG KONG, Sept 22: BBC World Service Television on STAR-TV will carry the International Olympic Committee (IOC) decision on the venue of the 2000 Olympic Games, according to a Star TV news release.

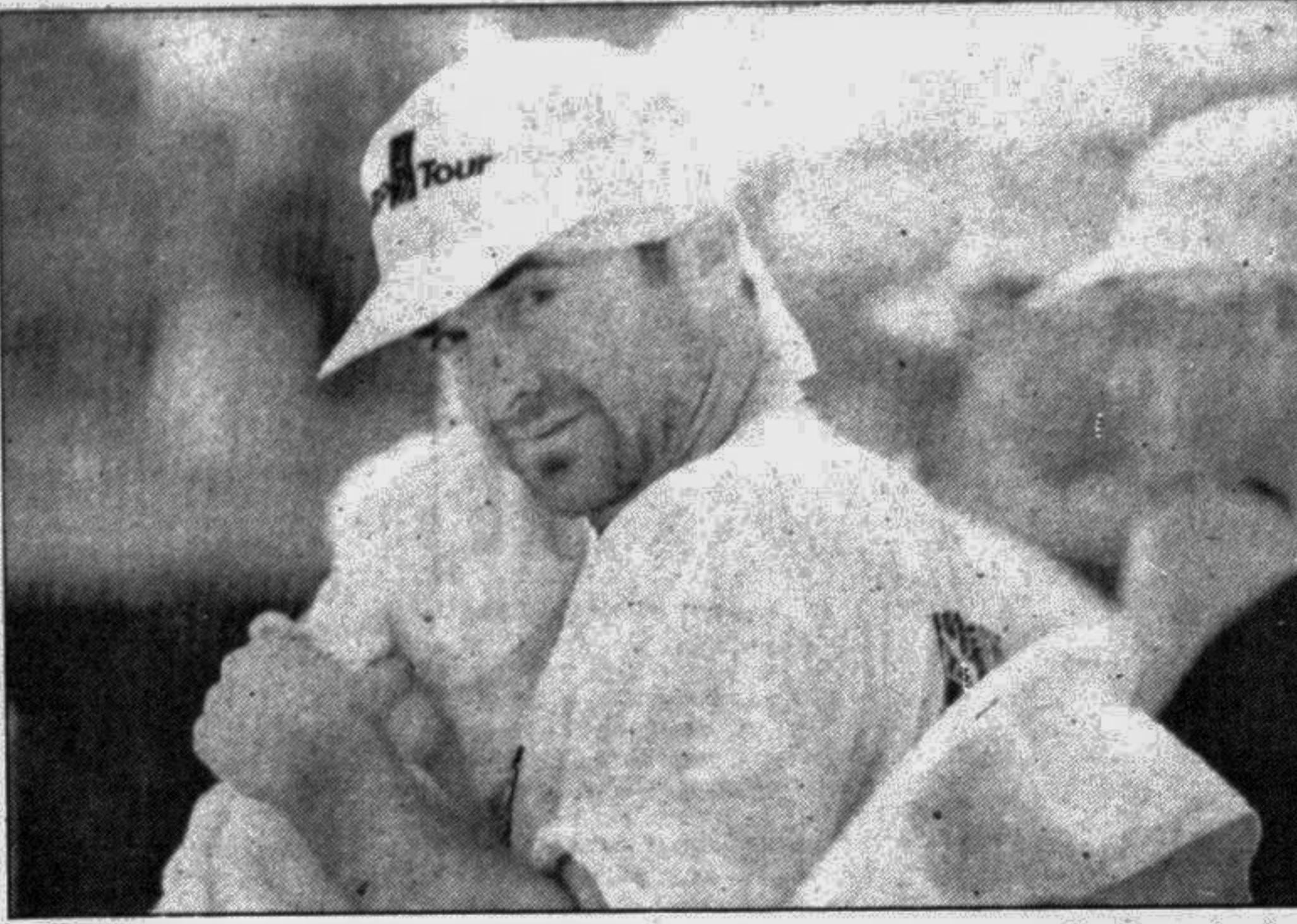
The long-awaited announcement will be seen live in a special World Service Television programme "Olympic 2000: Decision Day," on Friday, 24th September at 2400 (local time). Five cities are bidding for the chance to hold the Games: Beijing, Sydney, Manchester, Istanbul, and Berlin.

Cubans lose without a fight

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo., Sept 22: The Cuban women's volleyball team, gold medalists at the 1992 Olympics, forfeited to Canada on Tuesday night because the US government has held up visas for the players and coaches, reports AP.

The match, part of a regional qualifying tournament for next year's World Championship, was awarded to Canada by a score of 15-0, 15-0, 15-0. It is not clear when the Cubans will be allowed to enter the country.

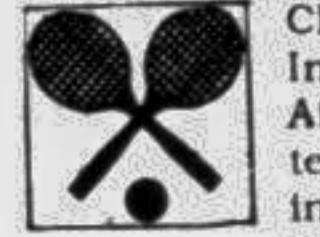
"We are disappointed that we were unable to play Cuba," Canada coach Mike Burchuck said. "However, we did win our pool, and now we must look ahead to either the United States or Cuba in the later rounds."



Australian Davis Cupper Wally Masur takes a break during a practice session yesterday in Chandigarh, two days ahead of the Davis Cup semifinal against India. Heat and humidity can play a determining role in the outcome of the Aussie-India tie.

— AFP photo

Krishnan, Paes not so alike



CHANDIGARH, India, Sept 22: After unexpectedly taking India to this week's Davis Cup semifinal, Ramesh Krishnan and Leander Paes find themselves at the opposite ends of a career in tennis, reports AFP.

Krishnan, 32, nicknamed "Surgeon" for his precise tennis touch, is contemplating a graceful exit and slugger Paes, 20, searching for the elusive career break through.

At this level of the game, it is all coming to an end for me," Krishnan said, with his knee in ice pack after the team prepared for Friday's start of the semifinal against Australia.

"At my age, there are always problems here and there, there are other priorities like family. It is becoming more and more tough to keep playing on the circuit. Travel is not easy."

After 15 years of tennis, a bad back needs constant care, the legs are heavy, the waistline expanding and he is bothered by niggling injuries.

His world ranking is at the wrong side of 200 after peaking at 23 in 1987 — the year in which he took India into the Davis Cup final where they lost to Sweden.

But non-playing skipper Naresh Kumar says no opponent can take the quiet and unassuming Krishnan lightly even now.

"To beat Ramesh is like making par on a golf course," he said. "His opponents have to keep playing good shots."

Wang on a winning trail



TOKYO, Sept 22: Taiwan's number one player Wang Shih-Ting fought off a tough three-set match against American Robin White here Wednesday to advance to the second round of the 35,000 dollar Nichirei women's tennis tournament.

Fresh from her first professional victory in Hong Kong last weekend to reach her career-best of 29th in the world, the 19-year-old baseliner from Taiwan, pulled off a 6-7 (5-7), 6-4, 6-3 win over the aggressive serve-and-volleyer.

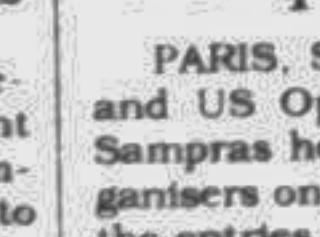
It earned her a second-round meeting with Japan's top player, third-seeded Kimiko Date, who also faced a tough challenge to beat Karin Kischwendt of Germany 6-4, 3-1, 6-3.

"Actually, I beat her (Date) twice before, but it was long, long time ago when I played juniors and we haven't played since then," said Wang.

"She is really doing well, she almost advanced to the semifinals in the US Open and she is very confident when she plays in Japan. She won the Japan Open twice ... just try to do my best."

Wang showed sizzling low returns and passing shots to break in the first, third and ninth games in the opening set, but each time White broke back to even the score and went on to win the tie-breaker 7-5.

Sampras heads marquee names



PARIS, Sept 22: Wimbledon and US Open champion Pete Sampras heads the field as organizers on Tuesday announced the entries for the US Open Paris Open tennis tournament.

All of the top 10 players are scheduled to play in the Nov 1-7 event at the Bercy Sports Palace on Supreme Court.

Last year, Boris Becker won his third Bercy title in the seven years of the tournament. He went on from there to win the ATP World Championship.

— AFP photo

Argentine Gabriela Sabatini makes a backhand return during her first round match against Chinese Li Fang in the Nichirei women's tennis championship in Tokyo yesterday. Sabatini won 6-1, 6-2.

FIFA satisfied at FFF action

ZURICH, Switzerland, Sept 22: World soccer's governing body FIFA on Wednesday said it was satisfied with the French Soccer Federation's action against Olympique Marseille and pulled back from a threat to bar France from international soccer, reports AP.

"It is with satisfaction that FIFA has taken note of the decisions taken by the French Football Federation," FIFA said in a statement.

French soccer officials probing a payoff scandal earlier Wednesday suspended three Marseille players, barred Marseille's ex-manager from the sport and stripped the team of their 1993 European Champions Cup title.

"FIFA feels that these decisions have preserved the credibility of French football as a whole, and have thus settled a matter which was of great concern to the world football federation," the statement said.

WILDCARDS

PARIS, Sept 22: Olympic Marseille will be stripped of their fifth league title by the French Football Federation (FFF) when it meets again Wednesday over the club's alleged involvement in a match-fixing scandal, an authoritative source said, reports AFP.

The source said the sanction, to be announced before midday Wednesday at a press conference at the headquarters of the FFF, will be effective until the court looking into the affair gives its ruling.

Two Valenciennes players, Christophe Robert and Jorge Burruchaga, and Marseille player Jean-Jacques Eydelie, are to be suspended. The three had told a judge that Marseille general manager Jean-Pierre Bernes had bribed the Valenciennes players to throw a title match, reports Reuter.

Marseille clinched their fifth consecutive league title after winning the match against Valenciennes.

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Marseille, who won the European League Cup, has been banned from competing for the cup this season over the scandal.

French football has also been threatened by the world governing body FIFA with a worldwide ban if authorities did not take sanctions against Marseille before Thursday.

Krishtan took a break from Davis Cup from 1988 until Paes came along in 1990. A normally private person with few words, he opened up to Paes, who took to tennis after a knee injury ruled out a soccer career at age 12.

"One of the ways to mature is that a senior player imparts his experience to a youngster," said Paes's father, who played hockey for India in the 1972 Munich Olympics.

"On his own, Leander can be an excitable kid. Ramesh has been helped him mature."

Paes's progress has been unspectacular but steady. Ranked 195 now, he is looking to break into the top 100 and thinks he will hit his peak at age 23.

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