

Taylor accepts inevitable

LONDON, Nov 24: Graham Taylor on Tuesday gave English soccer what it demanded — his managerial head — and opened the way for a revolution at Lancaster Gate, home of the national games' hierarchy, reports Reuters.

Taylor's three-and-a-half-year reign ended at noon when he faced the Football Association (FA) and resigned, six days after World Cup elimination.

Chairman Sir Bert Millichip immediately made plans to appoint a temporary manager for the March 9 friendly against European champions Denmark at Wembley and the April 20 clash with world champions Germany in Hamburg.

Don Howe, coach to Bobby Robson when England reached the 1990 World Cup semi-finals, is a leading candidate for that role.

It looks odds on that the FA's long term strategy in the wake of Taylor's farewell will be to adopt a two-tier system favoured by a number of national teams, including Germany.

Taylor's number two Lawrie McMenemy also resigned.

Realistically, the pair had little option after England's flickering hopes of making it to the United States next summer were finally extinguished in Bologna last Wednesday.

However, the timing of the departure was a surprise with

Taylor's future expected to be thrashed out at a meeting of the FA's international committee next Tuesday.

But behind the scenes Taylor had set the resignation wheels in motion within 24 hours of the 7-1 win against San Marino — a victory rendered useless by the Netherlands' 3-1 win over Poland the same night.



GRAHAM TAYLOR

The Dutch joined Norway as qualifiers from European Group Two and Taylor knew he had to do the decent thing.

He met FA chief executive Graham Kelly within 24 hours of returning from Italy and spelled out his desire to step down.

Kelly told him to think things over for a few days but there was little chance that Taylor would change his mind—and he didn't.

The former Watford and

Aston Villa manager, who had six months of his contract to run, said: "If we did not qualify for the World Cup finals it was always my intention to offer my resignation."

"I feel this is the appropriate course of action in the circumstances."

It was a heartbreaking decision for Taylor but clearly there was also a sense of relief for the man tagged turmoil by one tabloid newspaper.

"No one can grasp the depths of my personal disappointment at not qualifying", he said.

Taylor took over from Robson after the 1990 World Cup finals in Italy, kicking off with the best start by any England manager, but things soon turned sour.

Asked if Taylor should have gone a long time ago, Kelly said: "I don't think there would have been any point, or very little point in him being sacked while we were in the middle of a qualifying campaign."

"We have stood by him and offered him as much support as we were able throughout the qualifying matches and we are just sad that it didn't work out."

Taylor had talked at length recently with Kelly about the structure he wanted, which would ensure continuity both on and off the field.

Restructuring would have taken place even if England had qualified for USA '94. Now it will go ahead without Taylor.

Ankle may nip Basten's career

ROME, Nov 24: AC Milan and Netherlands' striker Marco van Basten fears his soccer career may be prematurely ended by a persistent ankle problem, reports Reuters.

Van Basten, 29, has been out of soccer since December last year when he underwent surgery on his right ankle.

He told the Italian sports daily "Gazzetta Dello Sport" he had visited Belgian specialist Dr Marck Maertens and been advised to rest for three months.

"Everything is at risk, not just my participation at next summer's World Cup," Van Basten said.

"Just at the moment, no one can predict anything with 100 per cent certainty so we'll just have to wait and see what happens but I find it hard to think that my career might already be over."

MAMMOTH LAKES (Calif), Nov 24: The Women's World Cup of skiing will be hosted by the United States for the first time when the 1994 competition is held March 9-10 at California's Mammoth Mountain, reports AP.

"This is probably the biggest event we will have," Pam Murphy, the executive marketing director for Mammoth Mountain, said Monday when the decision was announced. "This is the creme de la creme of skiing. It will allow us to gain some notoriety and footage in the industry."

"The town of Mammoth Lakes has a chance to really shine."

Mammoth Lakes in limelight

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But Millichip-admitted the problems are deeper. Simply changing the manager just wouldn't solve them.

"I would like to think council members of the FA recognise this is the time we look at ourselves and say we need alterations," he said.

Asked if that could mean a revolution in the constitution of the FA, Millichip replied: "That is probably a good word; revolution is probably right."

British bookmakers saw Howard Wilkinson, who took Leeds to the league title two seasons ago, as the clear favourite as full-time successor to Taylor.

Among other contenders are Venables, Coppell, Kevin Keegan, a former England star who now is in charge at Newcastle; Aston Villa's Ron Atkinson and Gerry Francis of Queens Park Rangers.

Jack Charlton, who was on the England team that won the World Cup in 1966, is considered an outsider for the job. He has led Ireland's team to the tournament for the second time in a row.

Another longshot is Roy Hodgson, the English coach of World Cup qualifier Switzerland.

Vargas rewrites lifting record

PONCE, Puerto Rico, Nov 24: William Vargas of Cuba set a world weightlifting record in the 54-kilogram (119-pound) snatch class en route to winning three gold medals at a regional championship Tuesday, reports AP.

Vargas lifted a record 123 kilos (270.6 pounds), passing the 122.5-kilogram (270-pound) mark set two weeks ago in Melbourne, Australia, by both Hang Bin of China and Halli Multu of Turkey.

In clean jerk, he lifted 147.5 kilos (324.5 pounds). The third gold was for the total, 270.5 kilos (595 pounds).

Record entries for Thomas, Uber Cups

LONDON, Nov 24: Thomas Cup holders Malaysia and Uber Cup champions China qualify directly along with hosts Indonesia or next year's badminton finals in Jakarta in May, reports AP.

A record 103 entries in Tuesday's draw together some of the sport's top nations in two qualifying tournaments. The first three from both Singapore and Glasgow will go to Indonesia.

China, South Korea, Chinese Taipei and Thailand are seeded to fight out the three places for the Thomas Cup in the Singapore qualifying tournament in February.

Denmark, Sweden, Holland and England are the top seeds in Glasgow.

The two finalists and winner of the third-place play-off from each tournament qualify for the finals.

South Korea, Japan, Chinese Taipei and Thailand are the top seeds in Singapore for the Uber Cup. Denmark, Sweden, England and Russia are expected to fight out the three places in Glasgow.

Dirty tricks

PHOENIX, Nov 24: Investigators have seized about 60,000 trading cards featuring basketball star Michael Jordan, saying proceeds of their sale weren't being given to an Indian tribe as claimed, reports AP.

The unlicensed cards were seized Tuesday from Competitive Images, a local dealer. They show Jordan, who retired from the NBA earlier this year, in various poses and drawn by different artists.

A query let at Competitive Images during business hours Tuesday drew no response.

The Arizona Attorney General's Office said the company advertised that some of the proceeds from the cards would go toward "development of a Wild West camp for inner city kids on the Apache Reservation in Arizona."

The tribe and Bureau of Indian Affairs officials knew nothing of the card company, or that the tribe was to receive money from the card sales, the attorney general said.

Jeffery Laytin, an attorney for the NBA, told the attorney general that the company was told twice to stop selling or promoting the cards.

The company did not respond, Laytin said.

An eight-card set sold for between \$10 and \$15, depending on the amount ordered.



Netherlands' Lucas Buit holds the Squash Federation Challenge (SFC) trophy aloft after beating compatriot Erik Vender in the final in Karachi on Nov 22. — AFP photo

Indian Davis Cup squad would go for grass

NEW DELHI, Nov 24: India's new Davis Cup captain would prefer to play on grass when his team takes on the United States in the 1994 World group games, a newspaper reported Wednesday, reports AP.

Jaideep Mukherjee, a veteran of 85 Davis Cup matches, was named non-playing captain Monday, replacing Naresh Kumar who resigned after India's 1993 semifinal loss to Australia in September.

In an interview with the Pioneer, Mukherjee said the Americans will play the Lipton tournament on hard courts just before the Davis Cup, so they will "take some time to adjust to grass."

The matches will be played March 25 to March 27, either in New Delhi or Bombay. The All India Tennis Association will decide the venue, then consult Indian players before selecting a surface.

Mukherjee, who became a grandfather on the day his appointment was announced, said he would not be under any pressure because "nobody expects us to beat the US," the paper reported.

India has never won the Davis Cup, although it has reached the finals twice: in 1974 when it refused to play South Africa because of apartheid, and in 1977 when it lost to Sweden.

India's chances of beating the United States will be weakened further if its two top players are thrown off the team in a dispute over money with the All India Tennis Association. Ramesh Krishnan and Leander Paes have said they want more money than what is being offered by the AITA.

The association has rejected that demand and warned that if the two players do not accept its terms by late February they will be replaced when the team is announced in early March.

Ivanisevic has his aims set

ZAGREB, Nov 24: An ankle injury hobbled him for most of the 1993 season, but Croatian tennis star Goran Ivanisevic says his sights are set on the 1994 Grand Slam, reports AP.

"I have learned a lot this year. I have changed my shoes, throwing rackets and stuff... and it is possible that I'll take the next Grand Slam," Ivanisevic, 22, told Croatian television.

It was not immediately clear whether Ivanisevic was referring to the next Grand Slam tournament, the Australian Open in January, or the entire Grand Slam series, which no one has won since Rod Laver in 1969. Ivanisevic was not available for comment after the interview broadcast Monday.

Ivanisevic took a one-month break after twisting his ankle last January. The injury and the break affected his game, keeping him from winning until just two months ago.

Since then, he took three tournaments and made the semifinals of the ATP World Championship in Frankfurt, Germany, won last week by German Michael Stich. Ivanisevic finished the season as the world's 7th best.

"I played very well during the last three months but have become very exhausted and lost some weight," he said in the TV interview.

Taylor's job up for grabs

LONDON, Nov 24: Veteran coach Don Howe on Wednesday ruled himself out of the job of England soccer manager, even on a caretaker basis, reports AP.

Several papers speculated that Howe, 58, would soon be named by England's Football Association as temporary manager before a fulltime appointment is made early next summer.

England already had lined up games against Denmark in March and Germany in April before Graham Taylor quit as manager on Tuesday, six days after the team's elimination from the World Cup.

Howe has been a manager at club or international level since he quit playing in the mid-1960s. He worked as assistant to Ron Greenwood at the 1982 World Cup and was Bobby Robson's deputy in 1986 and 1990 so he has the experience to do the job.

It seems, however, he doesn't want it, either fulltime or on a short-term basis.

"I've had no approach from the FA and I don't expect to be asked," said Howe, who had just returned from coaching Indian youngsters in Bombay.

"I've had my go. It's a good time to try other people out. They've got the likes of Terry Venables and Steve Coppell —

they should be given the chance.

"I did 10 years and that was enough," said Howe, who also had a spell in charge at Turkish club Galatasaray. "I'll be happy to offer my help to any of the coaches who take over, but that's all."

Neither Venables nor Coppell are in charge of clubs right now. Former Barcelona coach Venables was fired as chief executive of Tottenham early this year and Coppell, a former Manchester United and England star, resigned as manager of Crystal Palace after they were relegated from the Premier League.

England's soccer authorities aren't in any hurry to replace Taylor. And the nation's top club managers aren't exactly banging on the doors of the FA's headquarters demanding the job.

After Taylor announced Tuesday that he was quitting six months before the end of his 4-year term, FA chairman Bert Millichip said a temporary manager would take charge of the exhibition games against Denmark and Germany.

After that, the FA would look for a permanent manager, or even two working in tandem, he said. Because England hosts the next European Championships in 1996, it doesn't have to qualify for another tournament until the

1998 World Cup in France.

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Slovakia's superb showing

LILLEHAMMER (Norway), Nov 24: Come February, count on Slovakia in the Olympic hockey tournament.

Since forming its federation Jan 1 following the breakup of Czechoslovakia, the Slovaks are 2-0 in tournament play and still unbeaten, reports AP.

They won the qualifying event to the Feb 12-27 Lillehammer Olympics earlier this fall and tied with USA 5-5 Sunday to win the Telehockey Cup pre-Olympic tournament.

"Playing for their country is unique for them so I think they had a lot of pride playing against teams like the United States, Canada and Russia," said USA team coach Tim Taylor.

"They are very well coached, very disciplined. They have good balance and are very good defensively. This was the only game here when they gave up many goals at all."

In four previous games, the Slovaks conceded seven goals.

But they had a good excuse Sunday. Most of the players didn't get more than six hours sleep. After beating Russia in a late game at Gjovik's Olympic Cavern Hall Saturday night, the Slovaks had to play USA at 10:30 am Sunday.

Said Peter Stastny, who has returned to Slovakia after an illustrious NHL career.

"A Canadian player asked me jokingly, 'Hey, guys, did you sleep in the dressing room?'"

"It was very close to that," added Stastny. "We didn't get much sleep. And even for me the schedule was very tough. Five games in six days is unthinkable. Not even in the NHL can you have that kind of schedule."

But Stastny, who is No 8 in career points in the NHL, didn't really mind now that Slovakia won the tournament.

"The teams here all play in

the A group, he said. "We proved not only that we belong there. We proved we belong to the top of the hockey world."

Slovakia, who didn't play in the Group C World Championships last season because their federation joined hockey's world governing body too late, finished with a 3-0-2 record in the Telehockey Cup.

Canada routed the Russian team, maimed by Second Division players 7-1 to also finish with eight points (4-1-0), but the Slovaks won their meeting 4-0 Thursday to prevail on the tiebreaking rule.

Branislav Janos, last season's top scorer in the former Czechoslovakian League, ace defencemen Robert Svehla and 1990 World Championship veteran Oto Hascak had commitments with their Swedish Elite League clubs last week.

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Parrott, a snooker player reborn

PRESTON, England, Nov 24: John Parrott declared himself a born again snooker player after a comprehensive 9-3 win over David Roe got him through to the UK Championship quarter-finals on Monday night, report AP.

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Women's tour too demanding?

NEW YORK, Nov 24: Steffi Graf of Germany is questioning the demand of becoming tennis' first three-million dollar girl this year, reports AP.

The 24-year-old German star ended the year with 2.7 million dollars after beating Spaniard Arantxa Sanchez Vicario on Sunday to win the 250,000-dollar WTA Championship first prize for her tenth tournament win. That took her past the 2.5 million dollars earnings record set by Seles, out since April after being stabbed in Hamburg, last year.

But foot surgery prevented Graf from fulfilling her commitment to the tour — which would have given her an extra half million dollars to top the magic three million mark.

"I've been injured and had chronic back pain since the US Open," Graf said. "I don't want another year like that."

Graf is not the only player feeling the pace. The rising physical demands of the tour have hit a series of players this year, sparking calls for a cut in events and even a rise in the minimum age.

The matter is currently being investigated by the Women's Tennis Association.

Bulgarian-born Manuela Maleeva-Fragniere of Switzerland, who is giving up tennis to start

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

- ACROSS
- 1 Grouch
 - 5 Band in Boston
 - 9 Peregrinate
 - 12 Wheels of fortune?
 - 13 "What — mind reader?"
 - 14 L'eau land
 - 15 Greatly
 - 16 Depend
 - 17 Prized possession
 - 18 Batman portrayer
 - 19 Inseparable.
 - 20 Hirsch sitcom
 - 21 Boy
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 - 11 Actress Moore
 - 20 Sweater type
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 - 26 "The Greatest"
 - 27 Marsh
 - 29 Daisy —
 - 30 Pub
 - 31 Sports-caster
 - 35 Commercial, on the telly
 - 36 Civil War fort
 - 39 Mickey's creator
 - 40 The Monongahela feeds it
 - 41 Demolish
 - 43 Swenson of "Benson"
 - 45 Pizzeria fixture
 - 46 Wind indicator
 - 47 Chip in a chip
 - 49 Kramden's carrier

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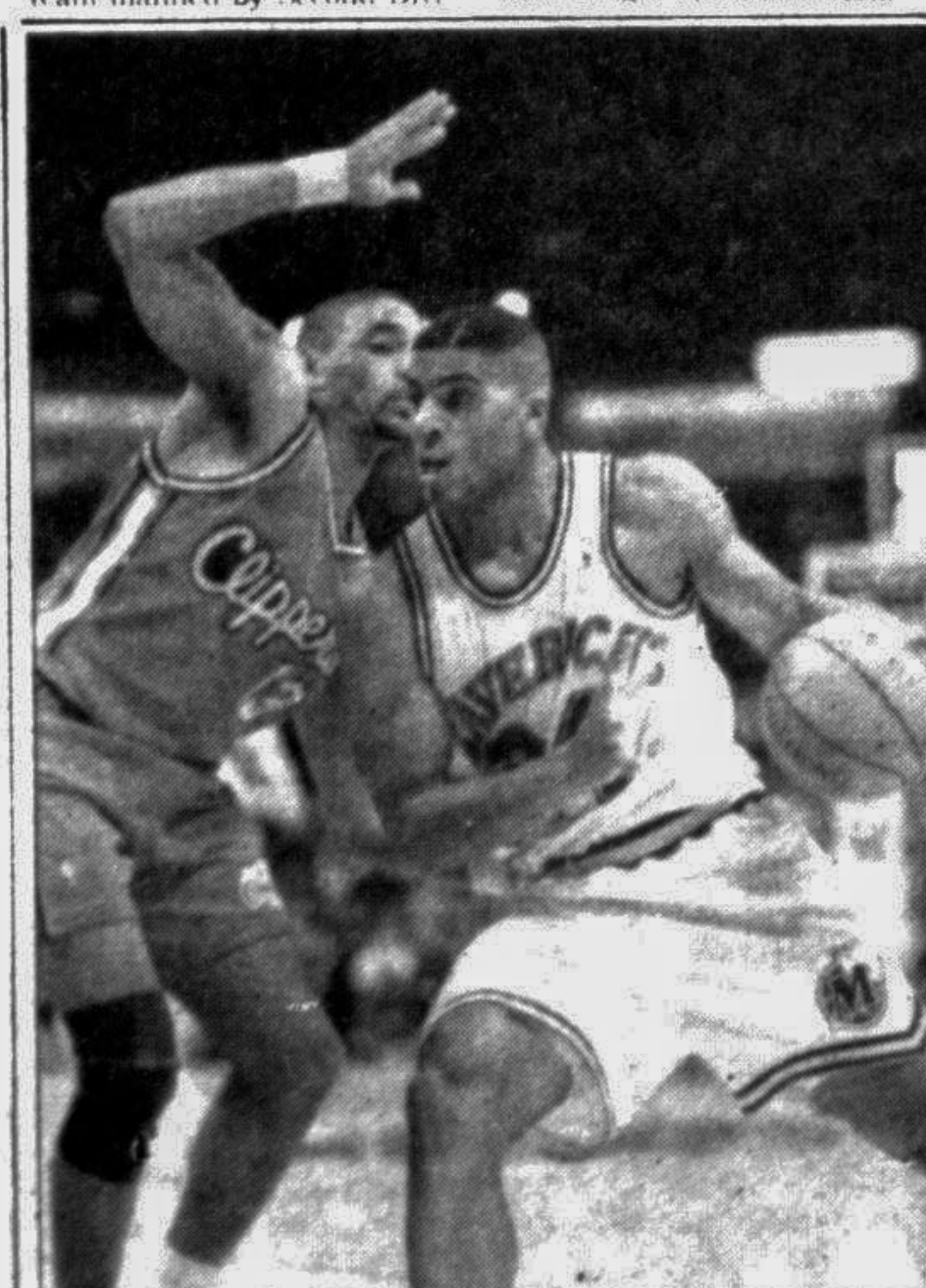
Solution time: 27 mins.

CRYPTOQUIP

P K I W X W K A H W G X G B
A G P K H E K G H B U W W
A P I W E K W E K
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: NURSERY SCHOOL TEACHER WAS SLOWLY TURNING INTO A WHINE CONNOISSEUR.

Today's Cryptoquip clue: K equals N

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.



Dallas Mavericks guard Jim Jackson (R) tries to outmaneuver Los Angeles Clippers' Mark Jackson (L) during the early action of their NBA match in Dallas on Nov 23. — AFP photo